



# STATE OF IMMIGRANTS IN LOS ANGELES COUNTY

# 20 24

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# ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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The USC Equity Research Institute (ERI) would like to thank all those who contributed to the production of the 5th annual *State of Immigrants in L.A. County* (SOILA) report. We extend gratitude, first, to the hundreds of survey respondents who shared their lived experiences and perceptions with us and allowed for a nuanced assessment of the county's immigrant communities. We also thank the members of the Council on Immigrant Inclusion for their invaluable and inspiring ideas throughout the process. It is through the insights of representatives from community-based organizations, government offices, foundations, and more, that this report has come to fruition. This level of collaboration shows the local collective commitment to cultivate a just future and a strengthened movement for immigrant inclusion.

We extend our appreciation to Cynthia Moreno who led the writing, data prep, and survey analysis of this report in close partnership with ERI team members: Thai Le, Khia Duncan, Dalia Gonzalez, Paris Vilorio, and Rhonda Ortiz. Graduate Student Researchers Clara Alvarez Caraveo and Fernando Moreno's support was instrumental in literature review preparation, analysis, mapping, writing, and fact checking of the report. We thank Manuel Pastor (who also provided invaluable leadership, direction, and feedback on this report), as well as Arpita Sharma, Jeffer Giang, and Justin Scoggins (who provided thorough data checks, ensuring data accuracy and integrity) for the months of work updating the estimates that underlie our key data indicators over time. We also sincerely thank Sabrina Kim and Debora Esayas Gotta for designing and configuring a beautiful report. Thanks also go to Amber Arias and Eunice Velarde Flores for administration and finance management; and Gladys Malibiran for all things related to communications and promotion. Thank you to our funders, the California Community Foundation, the James Irvine Foundation, and Bank of America. Lastly, we express our immense gratitude toward CCF for its unwavering commitment, partnership, and support of immigrant communities across L.A. County.



# LAND ACKNOWLEDGMENT

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The land we call Los Angeles County is located within the ancestral and unceded homelands of the Chumash, Tataviam, Serrano, Cahuilla, Juaneño, Luiseño, and Tongva Peoples. We pay our respects to the original caretakers of the land, the Tongva Nation, their ancestors, elders, and relations past, present, and forthcoming who have been Indigenous to this region for at least 7,000 years.<sup>1</sup> While L.A. County and California state are home to many Indigenous groups, including people from Tribal Nations who were the original inhabitants of these lands, there are also many Native Americans from other regions of the land now known as the U.S. (representing hundreds of non-Californian Tribes and Native Nations, many of whom were forced into California and Californian urban areas via U.S. policies and actions, such as the Indian Relocation Act), and Indigenous immigrants (including Canadian First Nations and Inuit, Central and South American Indigenous Peoples, and Pacific Islander Nations and People), many of whom were also forced to migrate to California due to U.S. foreign policies and actions.

SOILA provides data and analysis on immigrant and refugee communities that challenges the inaccurate narrative that this land was “built by immigrants.” We encourage readers to acknowledge that the land we reside on was taken by a settler-colonial state; one that violently exploited Native, immigrant, migrant, and enslaved people—stealing labor, knowledge, and skills—to build what we now call L.A. County. Indigenous stewardship and rightful claims to these lands have never been voluntarily relinquished nor legally extinguished. Immigrant communities and U.S.-born citizens alike must grapple with what it means to live on stolen land, understand our roles and responsibilities as guests on Native American homelands, and be committed to racial justice and social change by supporting the struggle for Native Nations' sovereignty and self-determination. We recognize this land acknowledgment is limited and requires us to engage in an ongoing process of learning and accountability.

For more information and resources on Native American/Indigenous organizing, please visit the California Native Vote Project, the Los Angeles City/County Native American Commission, Sacred Places Institute for Indigenous Peoples, UCLA American Indian Studies Center, and United American Indian Involvement.



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# CCF FOREWORD

As part of our continued commitment to Los Angeles County's diverse immigrant communities, we present this 5th Annual *State of Immigrants in Los Angeles County* (SOILA) report showcasing immigrant stories and their important contributions to the fabric of our region. As SOILA has underscored each year, Los Angeles County has the honor of being called home by millions of immigrants from all over the world. Each report produced by our partners at the USC Equity Research Institute (ERI) has highlighted the footprint of immigrant Angelenos and the evolving challenges they face in an effort to direct attention and investment to the communities that make this region rich and diverse.

This year's report investigates immigrant data over time and serves as a measure for holding decision-making entities in Los Angeles County accountable for making this region an inclusive place for immigrants. This includes ensuring immigrants are civically engaged, have equitable access to economic mobility, and feel a true sense of welcome. To support this data, USC ERI conducted a public online survey to collect the perceptions of immigrants and those with at least one immigrant parent on their experiences living in this region to represent the lived experiences of our diverse communities.

SOILA 2024 serves as a crucial opportunity to, reframe the immigration narrative nationally, protect the rights of immigrants, and cultivate a place for immigrants to thrive. This comes at a national inflection point where we have seen an accumulation of political turmoil, budget challenges, economic uncertainty, housing and food insecurity, climate crises, and more, leading up to the 2024 Presidential Election. Advocating for the recognition and rights of immigrants is not isolated to one region—it is a pressing and critical global issue that requires the cooperation and expertise of our grassroots and nonprofit communities, academic institutions, private partners, philanthropy, and governments. In Los Angeles County, we have proven that immigrant inclusion is not only the right thing to do, but is also key to our region thriving civically and economically.

Shaped by the Council on Immigrant Inclusion—a body of immigrant inclusion leaders and advocates co-led by the California Community Foundation (CCF) and USC ERI—this report is an effort to assess how immigrant Angelenos are faring in our region across select issue areas and how L.A. County's leadership entities can be accountable to immigrant needs as it continues to serve as a model to other regions for championing immigrant communities. Ahead of the research and findings presented, we call on decision-makers from L.A. County and across the nation to partner with us and recognize immigrants' humanity, strengths, and contributions.

Thank you for joining us in this effort.



Miguel A. Santana, President & Chief Executive Officer, California Community Foundation

# INTRODUCTION

Now halfway through 2024, we face a difficult social and political landscape for immigrants and their families: global humanitarian crises, a looming presidential election, and exclusionary immigration policies that have fallen short of the once-lofty promises of immigration reform. At the state level, budget cuts are infringing on much-needed services to immigrant communities who often have the least access to health and economic opportunities. At the local level, housing affordability remains out of reach for many while barriers to language access exclude our immigrant residents from critical services.

Even as this political and economic landscape continues to exacerbate existing challenges and create new ones, there are still opportunities in L.A. County to build on previous policy wins and strengthen our commitment to the millions of immigrants that call this region home. In this crucial moment, we need to leverage the existing infrastructure—of funding, partnerships, programs, and resources—to continue our fight of improving the lives of immigrant Angelenos and prepare for the challenges ahead. In its 5th iteration, the goal of the *State of Immigrants in Los Angeles County* (SOILA) report remains the same: to highlight the realities that immigrants experience in our county—through rigorously produced data analysis—and to provide local leadership with enough direction to make tangible and meaningful change. In previous years, we accomplished the latter half of this goal through interviews of L.A. County immigrant-serving institutions and organizations that have helped us craft detailed recommendations for local leaders—elected officials, foundations, city and county departments, business entities, and more—to consider.

This year, through a publicly available online survey, we turned to immigrant communities themselves to share with us how they are feeling and faring in the county. We used that data to understand the perspectives of immigrants and their descendants, as well as to build our recommendations for this pivotal year. As you will see throughout this report, survey highlights are offered in conjunction with data on different indicators that analyze data on immigrants over time. This report first delves into the global, federal, state, and local challenges that impact the decisions made in L.A. County, as well as some of the immigrant inclusion wins and shortcomings amidst a challenging landscape. After a demographic breakdown of immigrant Angelenos, you will see our findings, both of data indicators and survey highlights, and related recommendations on the following issues:

**1. Linguistic Isolation**

**2. Naturalization**

**3. Digital Divide**

**4. Income**

**5. Employment**

**6. Housing**

**7. Access to Services**

**8. Deportation Cases**

**9. Hate Crimes**

## Setting the Context: The Moment in Time and a Look at What's Ahead

To understand where L.A. County has set itself apart and where we have work to do, we must first grasp the environment around us. At the **global** level, climate change has become an increasing cause of concern for migration. This is especially true for those in regions and continents such as Latin America, Africa, Eastern Europe, as well as Central, South, Southeast, and East Asia who are more vulnerable to droughts and other climate disasters. Migration will also be spurred by increasing social and economic precarity tied to the destabilizing effects caused by climate disasters which disproportionately devastate communities in these regions.<sup>2</sup> This has led to displacement, and both internal and international migration globally,<sup>3</sup> which necessitates a level of preparedness by federal, state, and local governments to adequately receive and welcome these communities. Further, there are many regions where violence and political turmoil are forcing people to flee. Consider Venezuela, a country facing a humanitarian emergency that has forced more than 7.7 million Venezuelans to flee, since 2014, due to human right abuses and lack of access to health care as well as nourishment.<sup>4</sup> In Sudan, in light of ongoing political conflict, over the past year, the war that has ensued has led to about 16,000 deaths and millions displaced.<sup>5</sup> And in Haiti, violence has reached a record high, amidst political turmoil and deteriorating economic circumstances.<sup>6</sup>

Another conflict of immediate importance for those working with immigrants and refugees is the continued violence against and forced displacement of Palestinians. The world continues to witness the sharp displacement of Palestinians as a result of ongoing violence and occupation by Israel,<sup>7</sup> igniting protests that call on American universities,<sup>8</sup> corporations,<sup>9</sup> governments, and other investment vehicles to divest from companies and activities supporting Israeli military actions. These protests have been met with severe censorship and punishment, including here at home on USC, UCLA, and CSULA campuses. Leaders and advocates urged President Biden to designate a temporary status to Palestinians in the U.S. In February 2024, the Biden administration announced the Deferred Enforced Departure (DED) designation for certain Palestinians, deferring their deportation and granting employment authorization for 18 months due to the ongoing struggle.<sup>10</sup> Although these crises occur abroad, our mission of racial equity and immigrant inclusion is inextricably linked to the liberation of all oppressed groups globally.

At the **federal** level, the Biden administration is under deep scrutiny around immigration policy. Throughout the first three years, this administration has commenced 535 immigration actions, including a brief expansion of Title 42, the implementation of the Circumvention of Lawful Pathways rule (known as the Asylum Transit Ban), and Temporary Protected Status (TPS) designation for Venezuelan nationals, among many others.<sup>11</sup> While the Biden administration worked to rescind some of the harmful policies of the previous administration,<sup>12</sup> these efforts have stalled and fallen short of the promises for immigration reform.<sup>13</sup> Indeed, as of May 2024 under a recent regulation, while DACA recipients are eligible to purchase health coverage, first-time DACA applicants continue to be blocked from applying due to the holding in the *Texas, et al. v. Texas*.<sup>14</sup> The future of the program remains in jeopardy, continuing to impact the approximately 579,000 individuals who had active DACA status as of March 2023—70,050 of whom live in the Los Angeles-Long Beach-Anaheim metro area.<sup>15</sup>

On May 9, 2024, the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) published a Notice of Proposed Rulemaking that would allow asylum officers to deny certain asylum seekers early on in the process.<sup>16</sup> This proposal would mean that the screening interviews that asylum seekers should be entitled to, will be more challenging, opening the door to erroneous denials of asylum seekers. Earlier in the year, more than 150 organizations—many of whom are L.A. County leaders in immigrant inclusion—signed a letter discouraging



President Biden from enacting this proposal, noting the harm and danger to asylum seekers.<sup>17</sup> With a looming presidential election ahead, the future of immigration policy remains a concerning uncertainty.<sup>18</sup>

Most recently, on June 4, 2024, President Biden signed an executive order further restricting the right to seek asylum at the border.<sup>19</sup> Among one of the many implications, the order denies asylum to anyone crossing the southern border by closing asylum requests once the number of individuals entering reaches 2,500 on a given day. In addition, migrants entering the U.S. would be subject to a more strenuous process as they seek humanitarian relief. Immediately following the announcement, advocates around the nation—from national organizations<sup>20</sup> and elected officials<sup>21</sup> to community-based organizations<sup>22</sup> with direct experience at the border—have already decried the order highlighting both its ineffectiveness and potential for risking the lives of asylum seekers.

While the federal political landscape may appear daunting, it is nevertheless important to highlight the context under which local actors are operating. More importantly, in spite of these challenges, there are many immigrant inclusion wins that are already creating a difference. For example, earlier this year the Biden administration announced changes to the naturalization fees, including the expansion of the eligibility requirements for the naturalization fee waiver for individuals with income between 200 and 400 percent of the federal poverty level—representing a remarkable win for immigrant advocates and immigrants now able to naturalize.<sup>23</sup>

At the **state** level, to close the budget gap, Governor Newsom initially proposed revisions that would terminate funding for much-needed services that benefit immigrant Californians. On June 29, 2024, Governor Newsom signed the 2024 state budget to support the fiscal stability of programs and maintain funding for key programs.<sup>24</sup> A part of the state budget agreement includes signing to maintain benefits provided through In-Home Supportive Services (IHSS), regardless of immigration status but to delay the expansion of the California Food Assistance Program (CFAP) by two years for undocumented immigrants ages 55 and older.<sup>25</sup>

At the **local** level, L.A. County faces several challenges—issues that were exacerbated during the COVID-19 pandemic and still remain. A persistent issue has been the rising costs of living for both immigrants and U.S.-born residents—this is particularly worrying given that high costs of housing can push people out of the region or further into poverty.<sup>26</sup> In recognizing this issue, Los Angeles Mayor Karen Bass has led efforts to increase affordable housing through Executive Directive 1—but this, too, has seemingly created it's own challenges.<sup>27</sup> In addition to continued housing obstacles, our estimates show that the median income for immigrant-headed households in L.A. County from 2017-2021 is \$64,300, compared to \$83,700 for households headed by U.S.-born residents (see page 29). Linguistic isolation also continues to be a barrier. While efforts such as the Language Access Plan developed by both L.A. City and L.A. County are underway,<sup>28</sup> there is still work to be done as Asian American and Latino immigrant households consistently experience significant degrees of linguistic isolation (see page 19).

While L.A. County must contend with challenging immigration policy from the global to the local level, immigrant Angeleno communities are far from alone with the existence of unrelenting immigrant inclusion advocates and organizers. In the last year, L.A. County has received and welcomed about 1,000 migrants (between June and November 2023) that were bused to Los Angeles by Texas Governor Abbott whose political actions have constituted an irresponsible and inhumane response to migrants arriving to the U.S.<sup>29</sup> The L.A. Welcomes Collective has come together to provide critical assistance and resources to migrants arriving to the region.<sup>30</sup> Moreover, the RepresentLA program, a multi-million dollar investment, continues

to provide free legal assistance to undocumented Angelenos—many of whom face deportation and would not otherwise have access to expert legal services—amidst significant government budget cuts, due to the continued work of immigrant advocates and community organizations.<sup>31</sup>

### Immigrant Inclusion in Tough Times

Amidst a continuously tumultuous landscape, L.A. County remains strong in its commitment to the immigrants that choose this region as their home. Our county can and must continue to seize the opportunity to assert and strengthen its efforts for immigrant inclusion. The 5th annual *State of Immigrants in Los Angeles County* (SOILA) report provides analysis on data of key indicators over time; presents key highlights from a survey administered to immigrant Angelenos and their descendants; and offers recommendations for L.A. County leaders across all sectors to keep our region moving forward on the path to inclusion for all.

As in previous years, we organize our findings by starting with a demographic analysis of immigrant Angelenos, followed by three main pillars we use to assess immigrant inclusion—civic engagement, economic mobility, and warmth of welcome. Usually, we place economic mobility first in our analysis, however, given how important the topics within our civic engagement section are to accessing jobs and thriving economically (i.e. language access, protected immigration status, and reliable broadband)—we begin our findings by assessing how immigrants are faring civically. That said, our full definition of immigrant inclusion envisions that immigrants are fully integrated and included into society when:

- ▶ Immigrants are able to **civically engage in and shape in their communities**. This includes evaluating the connectedness of immigrants to their communities, governments, and schools through civic opportunities, and the ability of immigrants to exercise power over decisions that affect their lives.
- ▶ Immigrants have equitable access to resources and opportunities that allow them to fully **thrive economically** by being prepared to find quality jobs or start businesses. This type of economic mobility can be measured, first, by assessing the current economic wellbeing of immigrants and, second, assessing their economic wellbeing over time. The economic wellbeing of immigrants over time is not only assessed in the growth of monetary contributions to our economy through increased incomes, spending power, and taxes paid, but also through the opportunities created that allow all immigrants to achieve their life goals.
- ▶ The **receiving society welcomes immigrants**. These criteria can sometimes be difficult to measure but aims to examine social and systemic opportunities such as services accessible to immigrants—or on the opposite end—the threat of hate crimes or deportation. These criteria evaluate the warmth of welcome (or lack thereof) and the degree to which immigrants are included in society. It takes into consideration the needs of immigrants, their families, and their communities when developing government policies at the city, regional, state, and federal level.

Most important: we insist that ***immigrant inclusion is everyone's business***. It is a dynamic, reciprocal relationship in which immigrants and their receiving society both benefit as they work together to build safe, thriving, and connected communities. Working collaboratively with stakeholders on all levels is crucial to creating an economically thriving, civically connected, and welcoming environment for all Angelenos.

## Note on Methodology

### Data

Unless otherwise noted, all data discussed throughout the report are USC ERI's analysis of data from the 2012-2016 and 2017-2021 5-year American Community Survey (ACS) microdata from IPUMS USA. To estimate immigrant status (e.g., undocumented, naturalized citizen, lawful resident), we rely on an approach developed by Pastor, Le, and Scoggins (2021). This approach relies on an increasingly common strategy that involves first determining who among the non-citizen population is least likely to be undocumented due to a series of conditions (a process called "logical edits") and then sorting the remainder into documented and undocumented based on a series of probability estimates.

All non-citizens not tagged as undocumented are assumed to be either Lawful Residents or holders of student or H-1B visas. Student visa holders include those who immigrated as adults and were enrolled in higher education at the time they were surveyed. H-1B visa holders are identified through a procedure that considers age, country of origin, length of time in the U.S., and occupation. Those not identified as student or H-1B visa holders are assumed to be Lawful Residents. Unless otherwise noted, demographic data of the L.A. County immigrant population are estimates by USC Equity Research Institute. For a full data methodology, please see Appendix C, page 58.

### Public Survey

For this 5th annual report, one of the research goals was to gather the experiences of immigrant communities themselves—which led to the creation of a public online survey open to L.A. County immigrants and their descendants (Angelenos with at least one immigrant parent). The survey was intended to gather information to support our indicator data and contribute to the creation of recommendations for local leadership.

In line with our goal to capture the perspectives of immigrant communities, the survey was available in ten languages: Arabic, English, Farsi, French, Korean, Mandarin, Spanish, Tagalog, Thai, and Vietnamese. No names or other identifying information were required but respondents were able to provide an email address if they wanted to voluntarily elect to participate in a free prize drawing to win an online gift card. Due to timeline limitations, we were unable to embark on long-term intentional outreach with all communities, especially for specific communities like Indigenous migrants that requires in-person outreach and an interpretation plan in collaboration with trusted community partners.

Additionally, having the survey publicly available online introduced biases to the dataset. This led us to embarking on a thorough data validation process that included investigating highly duplicated IP addresses, contradictory responses, and more. This allowed us to reduce the dataset to a universe of 830 responses that we deemed reliable. An online survey additionally skewed the survey respondent pool towards a more digitally connected or younger audience. The final pool of respondents, while robust, also under-sampled certain groups like Latino, Asian American, senior, and LGBTQ+ communities. The survey did indeed oversample Black immigrants which makes the survey useful in understanding a frequently overlooked population.

# DEMOGRAPHICS OVERVIEW

## ▶ DATA POINTS

- ▶ As of 2021, L.A. County was home to 3.5 million immigrants, equating to 35% of the county—18% are naturalized citizens, 9% are lawful residents, and 8% are undocumented immigrants.
- ▶ In 2021, about 55% of the immigrant population identified as Latino, 28% identified as Asian American, 14% identified as white, and 2% identified as Black.
- ▶ Between 2012 and 2021, the top countries of origin among immigrant Angelenos were Mexico, El Salvador, the Philippines, China, Guatemala, and Korea.

## ▶ SURVEY

- ▶ Of 830 total respondents, 61% of those surveyed were immigrants and 39% were U.S.-born descendants of immigrants.
- ▶ A substantial share of survey respondents identified as Black or African American (39%), followed by white (21%), Asian American (17%), Latino (14%), Other (4%), Native American or Alaskan Native (3%), Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander (1%), and Multiracial (1%).
- ▶ The top 5 regions of origin of all respondents were: East Africa (12%), Asia (11%), West Africa (9%), Southwest Asia (8%), and Europe (7%).

## ▶ RECOMMENDATIONS

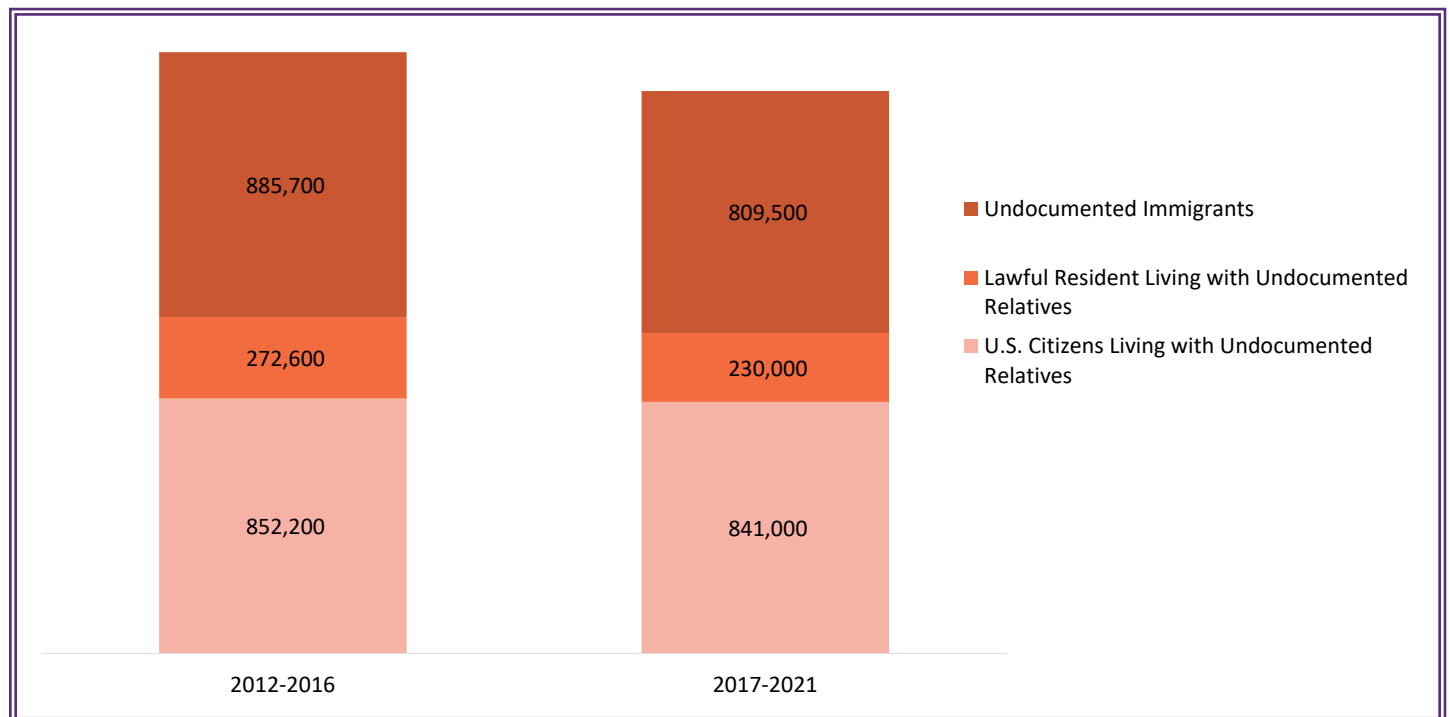
**Given the vast diversity of immigrant Angelenos in our region, it is necessary to center and invest in immigrant groups that are often excluded from targeted attention—such as immigrants that are aging, queer, trans, Black, Indigenous, as well as those living with disabilities.** The rich array of perspectives and experiences that diverse immigrant communities bring to our region is one of L.A.'s strongest assets. However, these groups are often not adequately represented in data. For example, L.A. County is home to a vibrant Indigenous migrant population that is often not captured in data. Black immigrants are another group that are invisibilized even though there were nearly 60,000 Black immigrants living in L.A. County in 2021. This reality emphasizes the need for intentional approaches to ensure their lived experiences are centered in the creation of programs, policies, and investments. Disaggregating data by race/ethnicity, gender identities, age, and beyond is one way to ensure that diverse communities are captured in the data that leaders use to shape future progressive policies from the county to the federal level.

# IMMIGRANT ANGELENOS AT A GLANCE

L.A. County continues to be home to diverse immigrant communities, both long-settled and recent arrivals, who form an invaluable part of the region. The county hosts about 3.5 million immigrant Angelenos who hold distinct immigration statuses—among the immigrant share of our population 18 percent are naturalized citizens, 9 percent are lawful residents, and 8 percent are undocumented immigrants. However, there are numerous immigration status designations—each of which create their own unique circumstances—that exist within these broader categorizations, such as Temporary Protected Status (TPS), Deferred Enforced Departure (DED), Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA), H-1B visa holders, and many others.

Because of the distinct statuses that immigrants hold, many Angelenos live in mixed-status households where there may be U.S.-born citizens, lawful residents, or undocumented Angelenos under the same roof. As of 2012-2016, the number of Angelenos who are either a U.S. citizen or lawful resident living with an undocumented immigrant, or are an undocumented Angeleno themselves, was more than 2 million (see Figure 1). In comparison, as of 2017-2021, that number decreased slightly to under 1.9 million—still, revealing that about 19 percent of Angelenos were either undocumented themselves or living with someone who was. The decrease here could be due to the fact that the undocumented population has

**Figure 1. Immigration Status and Family Ripple Effects, L.A. County, 2012/2016 – 2017/2021**



Source: USC Equity Research Institute analysis of 2016 and 2021 5-year American Community Survey microdata from IPUMS USA and the 2014 Survey of Income and Program Participation. Note: See “Data and Methods” section for details on estimates of the undocumented and documented population. Data represents 2012 through 2016 and 2017 through 2021 averages.

decreased nationwide, as well as continued high costs of living and housing throughout the state that drive many residents out.<sup>32</sup> Moreover, many mixed-status families continue to face barriers in accessing public services, such as fear in being deemed a “public charge”<sup>33</sup> or the risk of deportation.

Beyond the sheer number of immigrant Angelenos, they remain quite diverse in many ways. Between 2012 and 2021, the top five countries of origin among immigrant Angelenos were Mexico, El Salvador, the Philippines, China, and Guatemala. Furthermore, ERI analysis found that, in 2021, about 55 percent of the immigrant population identified as Latino, followed by 28 percent who identified as Asian American, 14 percent who identified as white, and 2 percent who identified as Black.

Yet, these racial/ethnic categories only begin to uncover the county's diversity. Many immigrants get overlooked, like Middle Eastern and North African immigrants who are lumped in with white communities, as well as Indigenous communities that are often lumped under the Latino umbrella. Organizations like Comunidades Indígenas en Liderazgo's (CIELO) data collection efforts have begun to change that for Indigenous migrants. Data collected by CIELO through their Undocu-Indigenous Fund in 2021 showed that among the undocumented Indigenous Migrant families receiving mutual aid funds in Los Angeles and Monterrey Counties, 65 percent identified as Zapotec, 9 percent as K'iche, 8 percent as Triqui, 6 percent as Chinantec, 5 percent as Mixe, and 3 percent as Mixteco.<sup>34</sup>

Additionally, Black immigrants comprise a sizeable share of the population, yet the Black racial category can often exclude individuals in mixed-race groupings. When looking at the all-inclusive definition of the Black racial category—that includes those who are mixed-race—L.A. County is home to nearly 73,000 Black immigrants. When we look at the Black Angeleno population more closely, we find that 12 percent are immigrants and 10 percent are the second-generation U.S.-born children of immigrants—revealing that about 1 in 5 Black Angelenos are either immigrants themselves or have at least one immigrant parent.

Immigrants in our communities also often have diverse gender identities—and tend to be underrepresented in data. The Williams Institute at the UCLA School of Law aims to address this and recently published a report on transgender immigrants across California. The report estimates that there are 41,000 transgender immigrants living in the state.<sup>35</sup> Their analysis of data from the California Health Interview Survey (CHIS) between 2015-2021 also revealed that trans immigrants in the state were most likely between the ages of 50-64 (34.2 percent) and largely long-settled (82.5 percent lived in the U.S. over 10 years). Finally, 32.3 percent of transgender immigrants in California lived in Southern California (outside of L.A.) and 12.8 percent reside in L.A.<sup>i</sup>

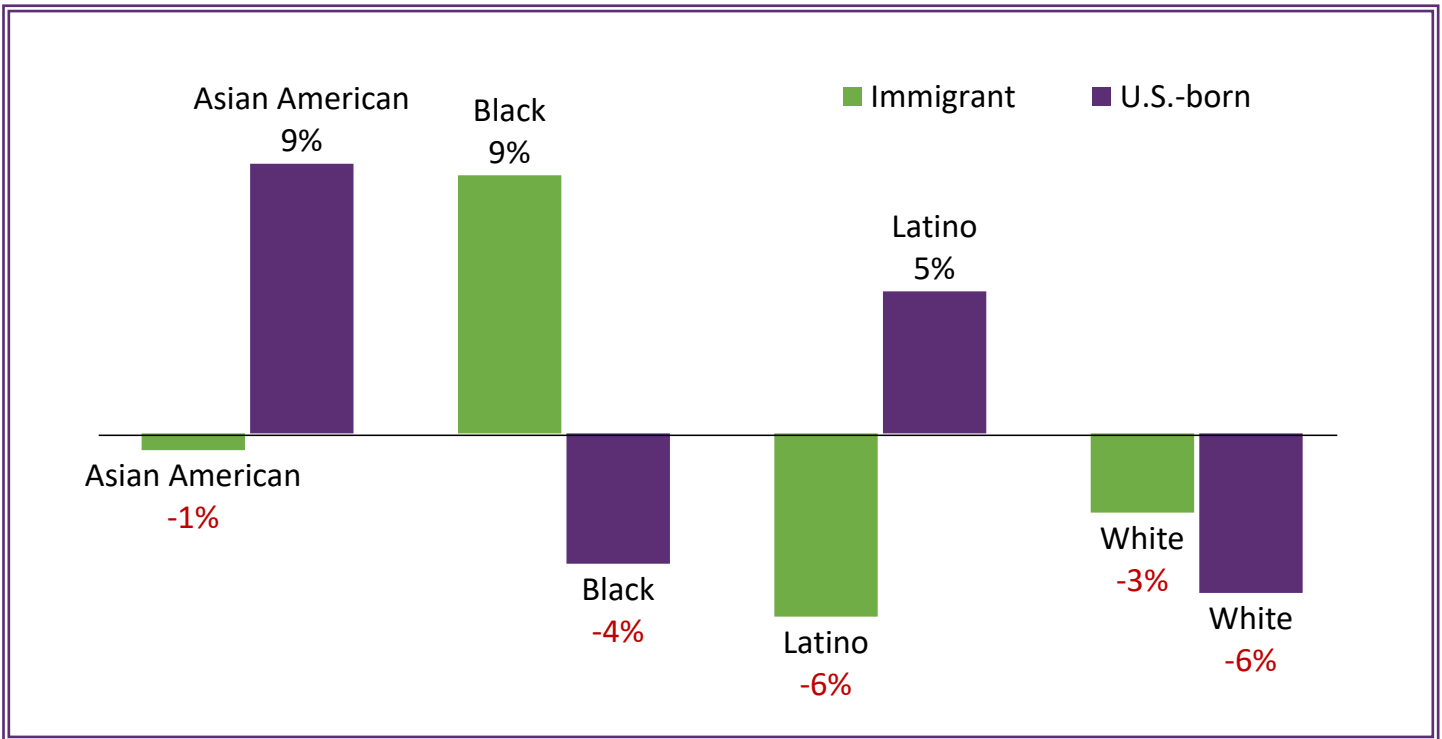


### Survey Highlight

**Of the 322 survey respondents who identified as Black or African American, 227 were immigrants, and their top 3 regions of origin were East Africa (32%), West Africa (24%), and Central Africa (13%).**

<sup>i</sup> Note: The Williams Institute's breakdown of the demographic characteristics of transgender and cisgender adult participants in the CHIS, are organized into the following regions: North/Sierra counties, Greater Bay Area, Sacramento Area, San Joaquin Valley, Central Coast, Los Angeles, and other Southern California. See their full report for additional details: <https://williamsinstitute.law.ucla.edu/wp-content/uploads/Trans-Immigrants-CA-Jan-2024.pdf>.

**Figure 2. Population Change by Nativity and Race/Ethnicity, L.A. County, 2012/2016 – 2017/2021**

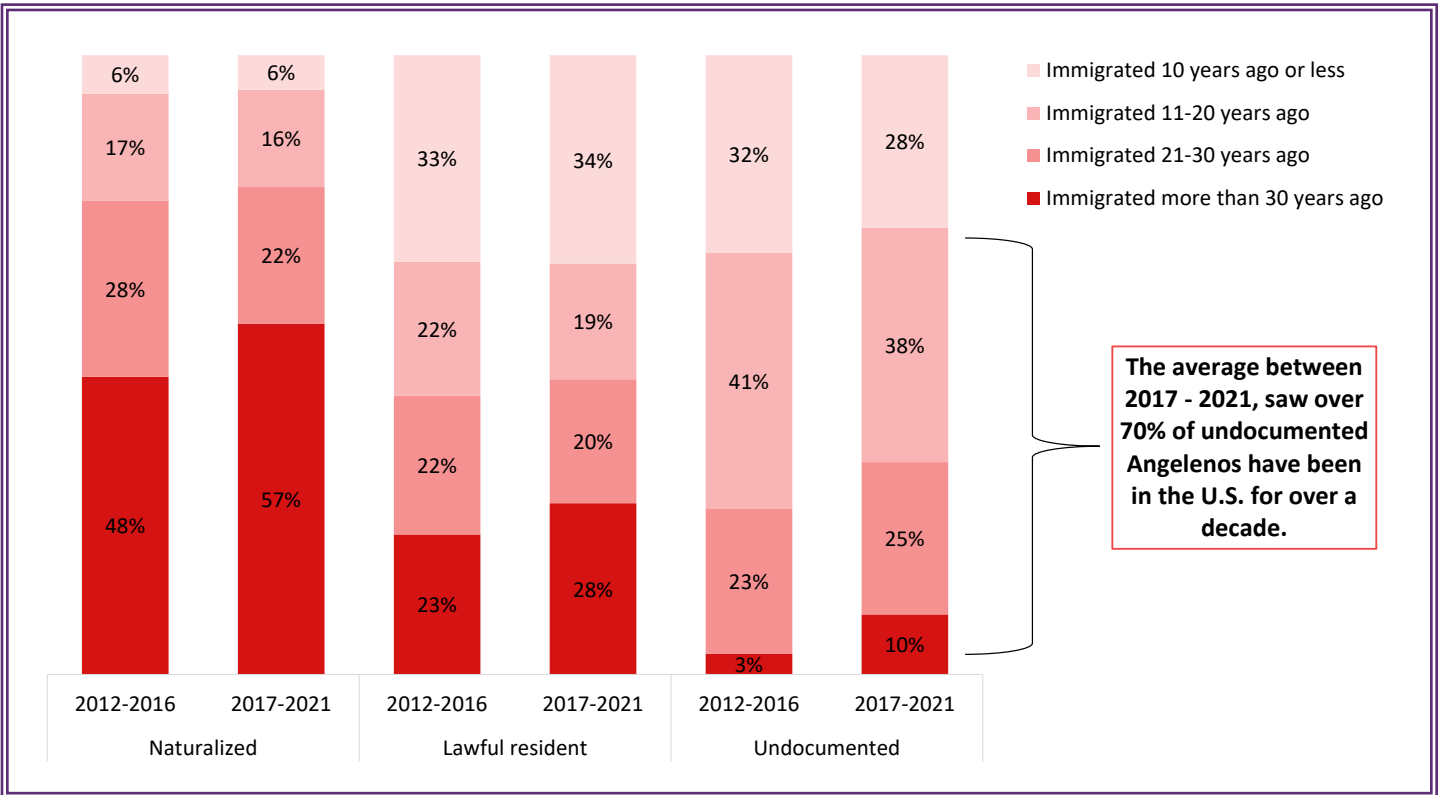


Source: USC Equity Research Institute analysis of 2016 and 2021 5-year American Community Survey microdata from IPUMS USA. Note: 5-year pooled weights were used to estimate the change in population between the two datasets. Data represents 2012 through 2016 and 2017 through 2021 averages.

When looking at data over time, it is evident that the share of L.A. County's population by nativity and race/ethnicity has changed (see Figure 2). Relative population changes as of 2012-2016 and 2017-2021 show that U.S.-born Asian Americans and Black immigrants experienced the highest relative population growth at 9 percent each, followed by U.S.-born Latinos at 5 percent. On the other hand, U.S.-born Black Angelenos, Latino immigrants, and both U.S.-born and white immigrants have experienced a decline. For example, white U.S.-born Angelenos and immigrant Latinos experienced a 6 percent population decline each, followed by Black U.S.-born Angelenos (a 4 percent decline) and white immigrants (a 3 percent decline).

Data over time also shows that the immigrant population continues to be long-settled, establishing roots through families, friendships, and communities. Between 2012 and 2021, the median number of years the immigrant population had lived in the U.S. increased from 22 to 28 years. Disaggregating recency of arrival by immigration status reveals additional patterns. In 2012, the median number of years naturalized immigrants had lived in the U.S. was 28, and by 2021, that number was 34. Moreover, as of 2012-2016, 48 percent of naturalized immigrants had been living in the U.S. for more than 30 years; as of 2017-2021 that share was 57 percent (as shown in Figure 3 below). Among lawful residents, 23 percent had lived in the U.S. for more than 30 years as of 2012-2016; as of 2017-2021, that share grew to 28 percent. As of 2012-2016, 32 percent of undocumented immigrants in L.A. County had been living in the U.S. for less than 10 years; as of 2017-2021, that share reduced to 28 percent—revealing that more undocumented immigrants are becoming increasingly embedded in our region.

**Figure 3. Recency of Arrival of Immigrant Population by Immigration Status, L.A. County, 2012/2016 – 2017/2021**



Source: USC Equity Research Institute analysis of 2016 and 2021 5-year American Community Survey microdata from IPUMS USA. Note: Universe includes foreign-born residents. See "Data and Methods" section for details on estimates of the undocumented and documented population. Data represents 2012 through 2016 and 2017 through 2021 averages.



## Survey Highlights

39% of all survey respondents were the U.S.-born child of an immigrant parent and 61% were immigrants.

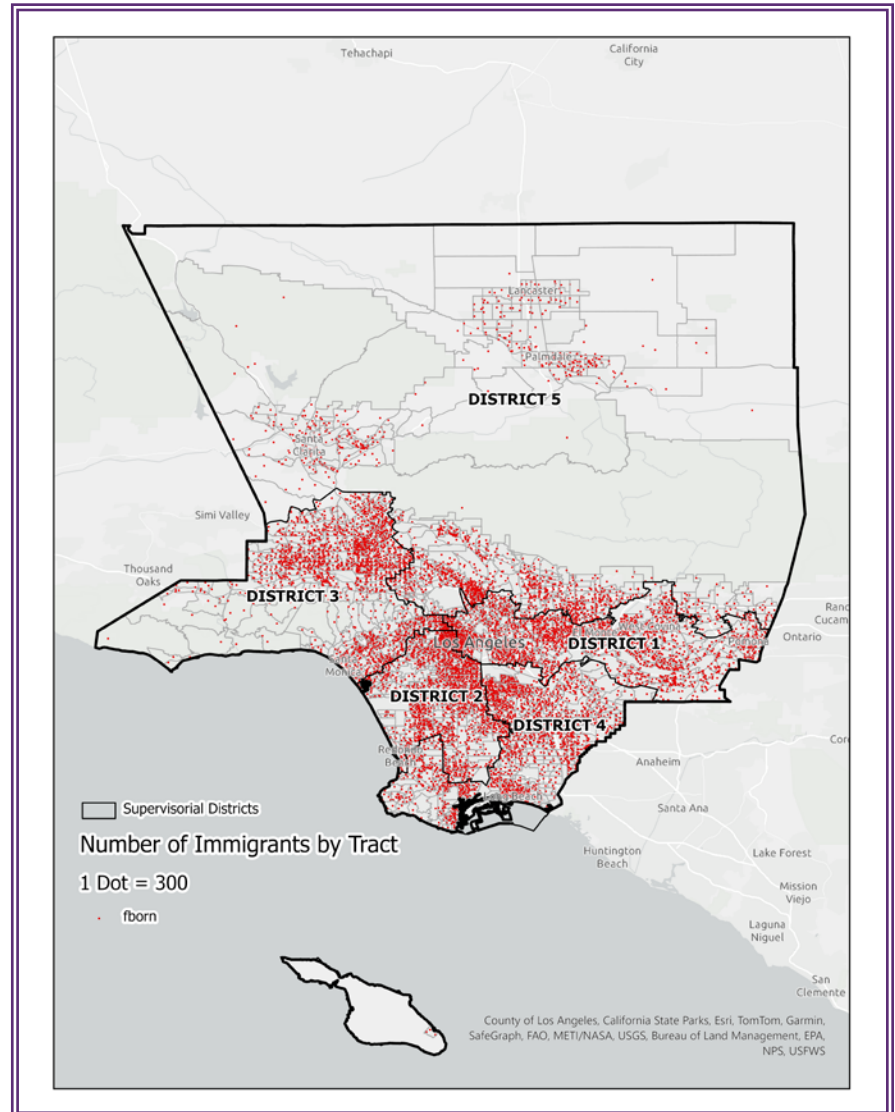
A majority of respondents identified as women (about 52%), 47% identified as men, and 1.1% identified as either transgender women, transgender men, or non-binary.



Just as important as how long immigrants have been in the U.S. is where they live in our region. Figure 4 shows 300 immigrants per one red dot—showing that, as of 2022, there are immigrant communities all throughout the region, the highest concentration of immigrants appear to be in Supervisorial Districts 1 and 2.

It is important to acknowledge the population of recent arrivals that may not be reflected in the data. Title 42 and the Circumvention of Lawful Pathways (CLP) rule, otherwise known as the Asylum Transit Ban, have aimed to restrict the right for migrants to seek asylum at the border.<sup>36</sup> Migrants that are able to enter the U.S. often face additional obstacles—among those is their forced transport from places like Texas to other parts of the nation, a move by electeds to chaotically and irresponsibly shuffle responsibility. Since April 2022, and as of February 2024, Texas Governor Greg Abbott has forcibly transported over 102,000 migrants out of Texas to other areas across the U.S. Between June and November 2023, it was estimated that about 1,000 migrants, ranging from newborns to seniors, were transported to Los Angeles.<sup>37</sup> L.A. was quick to mobilize as a group of immigrant advocates and organizations formed the L.A. Welcomes Collective to provide critical services to the migrants bused in from Texas, in partnership with the local government—underscoring just how L.A. County immigrant inclusion advocates step up to the plate and serve as examples for the nation.<sup>38</sup>

**Figure 4. Map of Number of Immigrants by L.A. County Supervisorial District, 2022**



# CIVIC ENGAGEMENT OVERVIEW

## LINGUISTIC ISOLATION

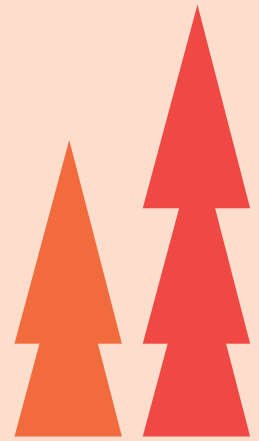
### ▶▶ DATA POINTS

- ▶ In 2021, 27% of Asian American immigrant households and 22% of Latino immigrant households were linguistically isolated—i.e. there was no one in the household 14 years or older who spoke English at least very well.
- ▶ From 2020 to 2021, Black immigrant households that experienced linguistic isolation more than doubled—from 4% to 10%.



### ▶▶ SURVEY

- ▶ 43% of immigrants surveyed require translation or interpretation services at least some of the time in their daily lives.
- ▶ 26% of immigrants surveyed say it is difficult to feel connected to community due to language barriers.



### ▶▶ RECOMMENDATIONS

**L.A. County has made dedicated investments in language justice—and the data shows further investment remains critical, especially for Asian American and Latino immigrant households, and increasingly for Black immigrant households.** Indeed, linguistic isolation rates vary across racial/ethnic groups and understanding the diversity of languages spoken is important in allocating resources. Asian American and Latino immigrant households stand to benefit greatly from language access resources as they have consistently faced the highest rates of linguistic isolation among immigrants in this county. The same is true for Black immigrant households that have recently experienced a pronounced increase in linguistic isolation. There have been promising steps forward to ensure all Angelenos receive access to services in their preferred language, such as the Countywide Language Access Plan, and continued attention to this issue will only propel the region further in the fight for language accessibility and justice.

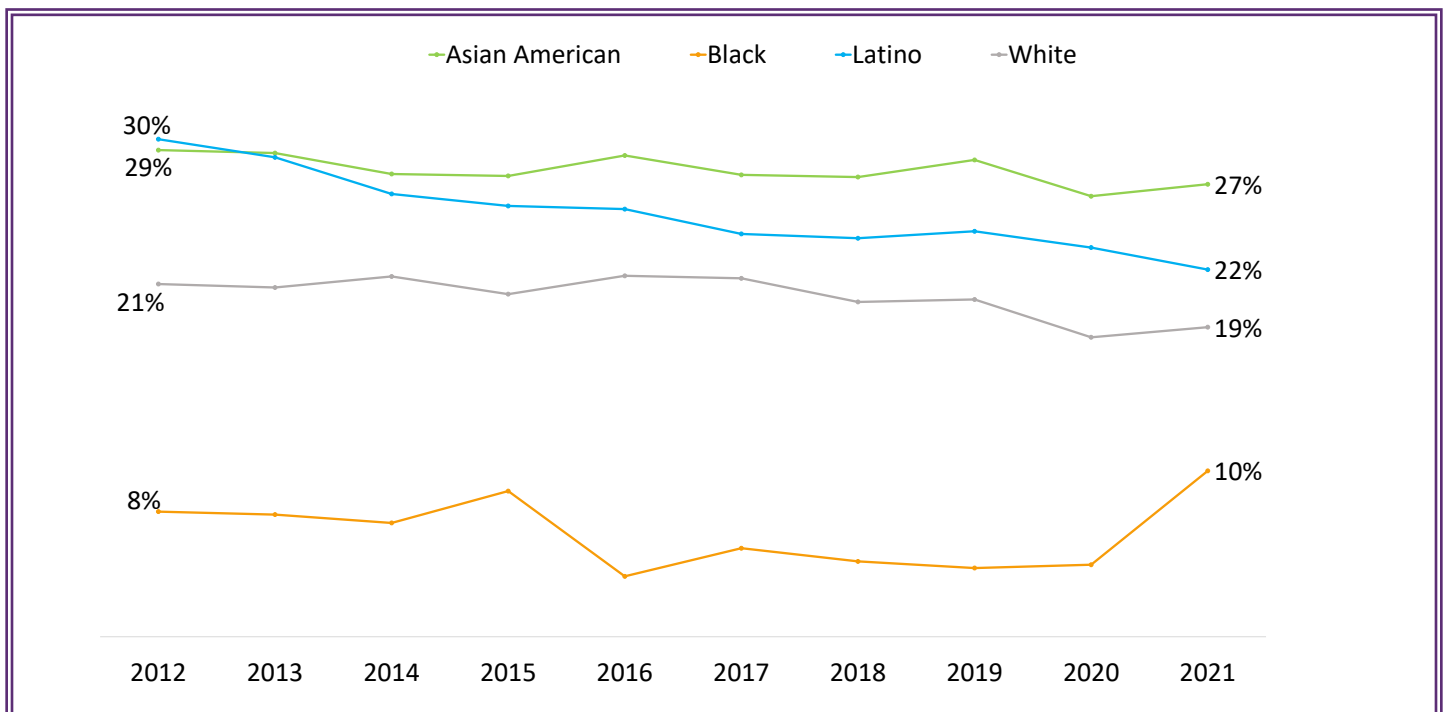
# CIVIC ENGAGEMENT:

## ▶ LINGUISTIC ISOLATION

A necessary component of fostering engagement among immigrants is providing them every ability to speak in their preferred language. Linguistic barriers not only make it difficult to connect with others, but may also inhibit one from seeking opportunities to engage civically. One way we measure this issue is by investigating “linguistically isolated” households, defined as households in which no member aged 14 or older speaks English at least “very well.” This issue, many immigrant inclusion leaders agree, is of great importance as the implications of living in a linguistically isolated household include being at least partly disconnected from civic opportunities, having a lack of access to information, and facing barriers to social services.<sup>39</sup> When we look at the data, we see that the issue has fluctuated slightly over time but has consistently affected different racial/ethnic groups of immigrants disproportionately.

As seen in Figure 5, Asian American immigrant households experience linguistic isolation at a higher rate than other major racial/ethnic groups. In 2021, more than 1 in every 4 Asian American immigrant households (27 percent) lived in a linguistically isolated household; followed by over 1 in every 5 Latino immigrant households (22 percent). It is important to note between 2012 and 2021, that while Black immigrant households have experienced lower rates of linguistic isolation, between 2020 and 2021, there was a significant uptick for this community (more than doubling from 4 percent to 10 percent)—indicating a potential increase in need that County leaders should be mindful of. Even more recent than this data,

**Figure 5. Share of Immigrant Population in Linguistically Isolated Households by Race/Ethnicity, L.A. County, 2012 – 2021**



Source: USC Equity Research Institute analysis of 2016 and 2021 5-year American Community Survey microdata from IPUMS USA. Note: Universe includes foreign-born residents in households (excludes group quarters). Single-year weights were estimated by multiplying the 5-year pooled and undercount weights by five.

the New York Times reported a sharp rise in African migrants and asylum seekers to the U.S., where the number of African migrants arriving at the southern border in 2023 was 58,462, a significant increase from 13,406 the year prior.<sup>40</sup> This, too, could foreshadow an emerging need should this recent group of arrivals require language assistance.

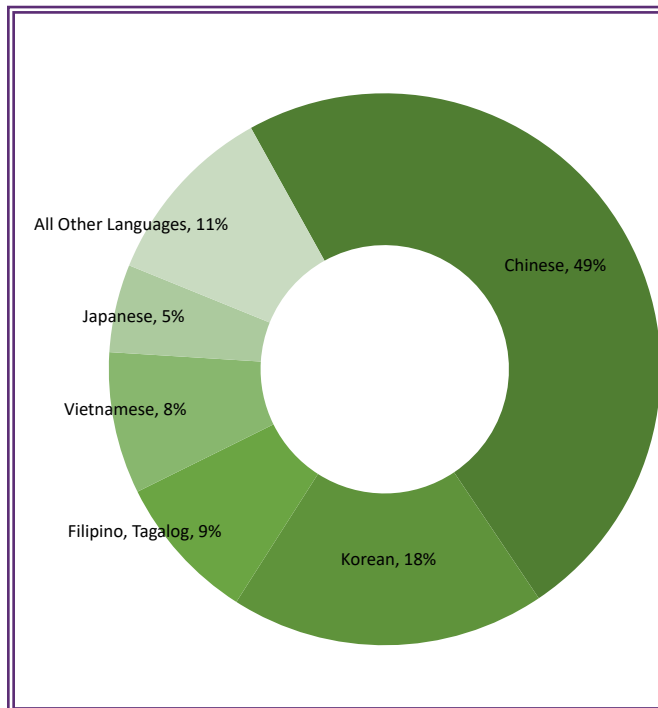
Zooming in on Asian American households that are linguistically isolated, Figure 6 shows the top three languages spoken among this group are Chinese (49 percent), Korean (18 percent), and Tagalog (9 percent). For Black immigrant households, Figure 7 shows the top three languages spoken are Amharic and Ethiopian (50 percent), Niger-Congo regions (21 percent), and Bantu (11 percent). When we look at this issue by immigration status, we found that undocumented households tend to face the highest rates of linguistic isolation, at about 31 percent.



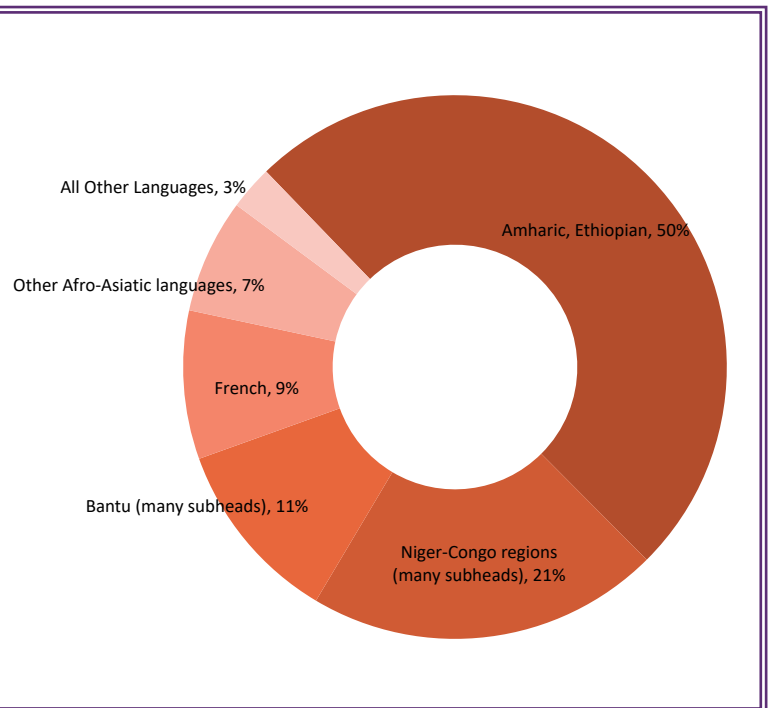
**Survey Highlights on Linguistic Isolation**

**43% of all immigrants surveyed require translation or interpretation services at least some of the time in their daily lives—over half of Asian American immigrants and 23% of Black immigrants surveyed.**

**Figure 6. Share of Asian Immigrants Population in Linguistically Isolated Households by Top Languages, L.A. County, 2021**



**Figure 7. Share of Black Immigrant Population in Linguistically Isolated Households by Top Languages, L.A. County, 2021**



Source: USC Equity Research Institute analysis of 2016 and 2021 5-year American Community Survey microdata from IPUMS. Note: Universe includes households (excludes group quarters). Single-year weights were estimated by multiplying the 5-year pooled and undercount weights by five. Additionally, the label of “Amharic, Ethiopian” provided by ACS does not go into further detail.

# CIVIC ENGAGEMENT OVERVIEW

## NATURALIZATION

### ▶▶ DATA POINTS

- ▶ As of 2017-2021, the rate of naturalization for those above 150% federal poverty level (FPL) was 75%, compared to 65% for immigrants below 150% FPL.
- ▶ Of immigrants who are eligible to naturalize, Latino immigrants have the lowest rate of naturalization when compared to other groups at 64%.



### ▶▶ SURVEY

- ▶ 58% of all respondents surveyed believe that it is difficult for immigrants to naturalize—for Latinos surveyed (both immigrants and U.S.-born), that jumps to 75%.
- ▶ 21% of immigrants surveyed do not feel they have access to enough information on how to apply for citizenship.



### ▶▶ RECOMMENDATIONS

**Naturalization remains key for immigrants to engage civically and thrive economically—and yet, different immigrant groups naturalize at disproportionate rates, indicating that the county must continue to reduce barriers by advocating for reduced fees and investing in local naturalization programs.** As a region with a high number of immigrants, County officials must invest in naturalization efforts and promote civic participation in local, state, and federal elections. This is particularly important to reach those that qualify for free or reduced fees under the new U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services naturalization fee structure. As the 2024 federal elections approach, it is key to ensure that immigrants continue to naturalize and those that can, are prepared to participate in the upcoming presidential election. Given the significantly lower rates of naturalization among Latino eligible-to-naturalize adults and the large numbers that qualify under the new fee structure, they would stand to benefit from targeted naturalization support.

# CIVIC ENGAGEMENT:

## ▶ NATURALIZATION

Becoming a U.S. citizen through naturalization introduces multiple benefits to the lives of immigrants from being able to engage civically through voting to improving their economic standing by accessing higher paying jobs and public benefits. That said, the process of naturalizing is long, arduous, and expensive. The issue of expense is partially addressed by the recent expansion of fee waivers to those with a household income between 150% and 400% of the FPL, which cut

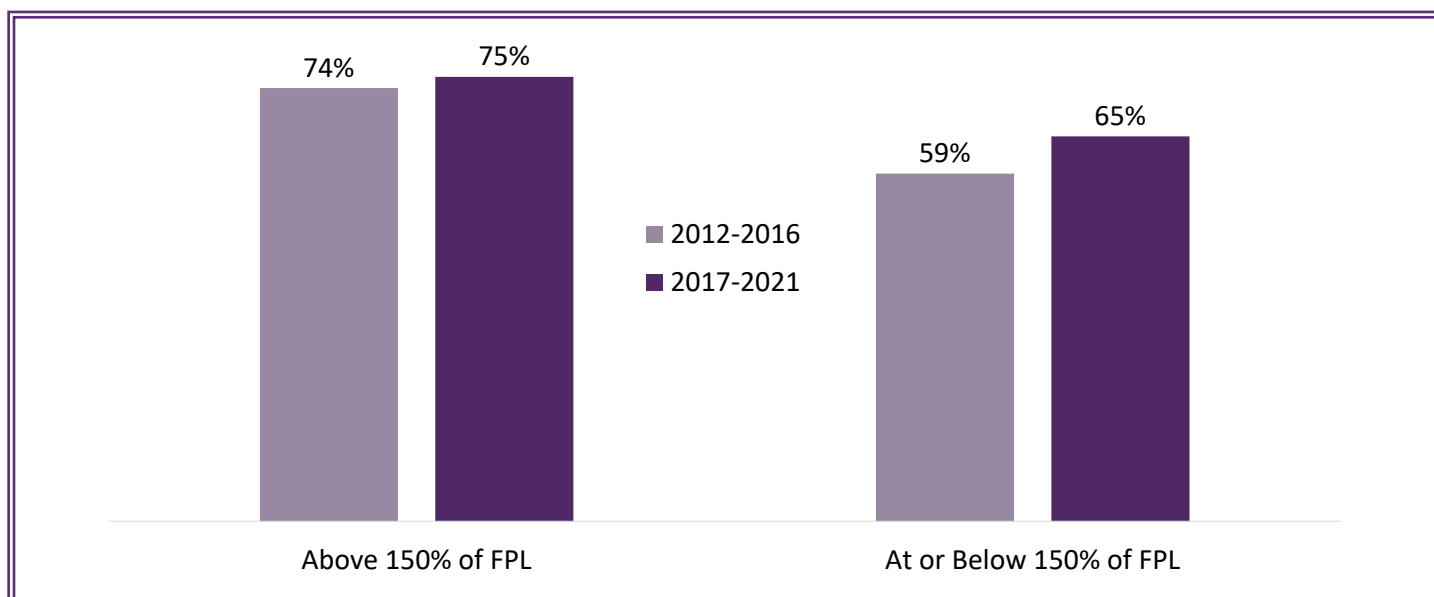
the costs of naturalizing in half for almost 2 million immigrants.<sup>41</sup> The accomplishment of expanded fee waivers is a prime example of the progress that can be made when powerful advocacy is supported by reliable data—and the data below shows why. Naturalization cost is particularly important when we see that the rate of naturalization for those living at or below 150% of the federal poverty level (FPL) is consistently lower than those above 150% FPL. Figure 8 shows that as of 2012-2016, 74 percent of eligible immigrants with household incomes above 150% FPL are naturalized citizens, compared to only 59 percent of eligible immigrants with household incomes at or below 150% FPL. As of 2017-2021, the naturalization rate increased for both groups, but the gap remains at 75 percent and 65 percent, respectively, which emphasizes the need to continue making naturalization as affordable as possible.



### Survey Highlight on Naturalization

21% of immigrants surveyed do not feel they have access to enough information on how to apply for citizenship.

**Figure 8. Naturalization Rate for Eligible-to-Naturalize Adults by Poverty Status, L.A. County, 2012/2016 – 2017/2021**



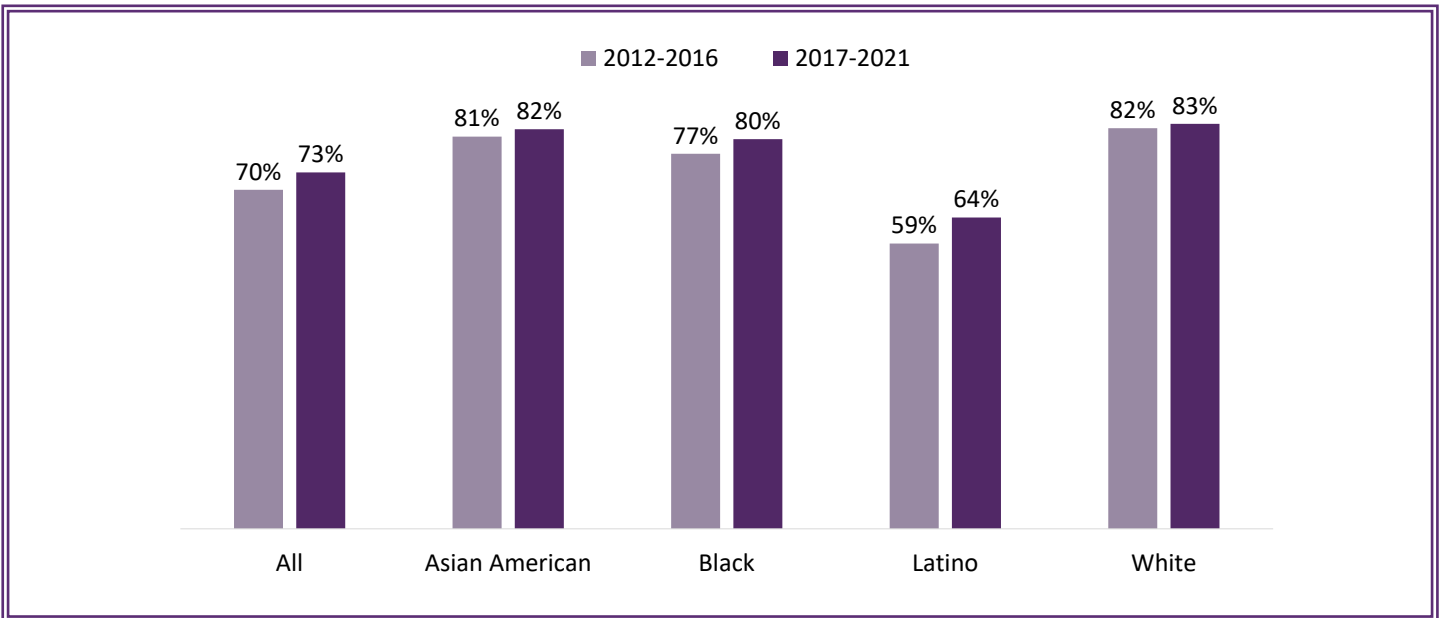
Source: USC Equity Research Institute analysis of 2016 and 2021 5-year American Community Survey microdata from IPUMS USA. Note: Naturalization rate was estimated by dividing the number of naturalized citizens by the total of naturalized citizens and eligible-to-naturalize immigrants. See “Data and Methods” section for details on how the eligible-to-naturalize population is estimated. Data represent 2012 through 2016 and 2017 through 2021 averages.

For those immigrants who were eligible to naturalize,<sup>42</sup> Latino immigrants have the lowest rate of naturalization when compared to other major racial/ethnic groups at 64 percent, as of 2017-2021 (see Figure 9). This points to continued barriers among eligible-to-naturalize Angelenos—some of which may be attributed to fears of endangering oneself or their loved ones by naturalizing, such as exposing undocumented members of the same household to increased governmental scrutiny, or lack of assistance and access to resources due to the challenging process.<sup>43</sup> Related, we found that among our Latino survey respondents (both immigrant and U.S.-born), 3 in every 4 respondents found naturalization difficult—which may provide more insight into why naturalization rates are significantly lower for immigrants within this community.

**Survey Highlights on Naturalization**

58% of those surveyed believe that it is difficult for immigrants to naturalize. For Latinos surveyed (both immigrants and U.S.-born), that increases to about 3 out of every 4 respondents or 75%.

**Figure 9. Naturalization Rate for Eligible-to-Naturalize Adults by Race/Ethnicity, L.A. County, 2012/2016 – 2017/2021**



Source: USC Equity Research Institute analysis of 2016 and 2021 5-year American Community Survey microdata from IPUMS USA. Note: Naturalization rate was estimated by dividing the number of naturalized citizens by the total of naturalized citizens and eligible-to-naturalize immigrants. See “Data and Methods” section for details on how the eligible-to-naturalize population is estimated. Data represent 2012 through 2016 and 2017 through 2021 averages.

# CIVIC ENGAGEMENT OVERVIEW

## DIGITAL DIVIDE

### DATA POINTS

- ▶ The digital divide—i.e. lacking reliable access to a computer and high-speed internet at home—has decreased slightly since 2017. Yet, undocumented-headed households consistently experience the highest levels of digital inaccessibility—42% in 2021, compared to only 24% of U.S.-born households.
- ▶ In 2021, 49% of immigrant households at or below 200% FPL experienced a lack of digital access, compared to only 26% of those above 200% FPL.



### SURVEY

- ▶ Social media was the most selected method through which immigrant respondents receive voting information at 68% of immigrants surveyed—highlighting the importance of digital access for civic engagement.
- ▶ Over 1 in every 4 (26%) immigrants surveyed do not have reliable access to internet services at least sometimes.



### RECOMMENDATIONS

**Recent federal, state, and local programs that address the digital divide have likely contributed to decreased rates of digital inaccessibility—yet the issue remains important for undocumented and low-income households—indicating that continued attention in this area could make a larger impact.** Given that access to the internet has become essential in today's society, L.A. County leaders must continue to create programs that promote digital access, as well as literacy. The data shows that some digital access has increased for immigrant Angelenos over time—likely due in part to programs like L.A. County's Delete the Divide or the federal Affordable Connectivity Program (ACP)—however, inequities persist among immigrants such as undocumented households and immigrants living below 200% of the federal poverty level. Continuing and adding to existing investments (especially as the ACP program winds down) can better situate L.A. County to overcome these disparities and provide immigrant communities with not only affordable internet access, but adequate digital literacy.



# CIVIC ENGAGEMENT:

## ▶▶ DIGITAL DIVIDE

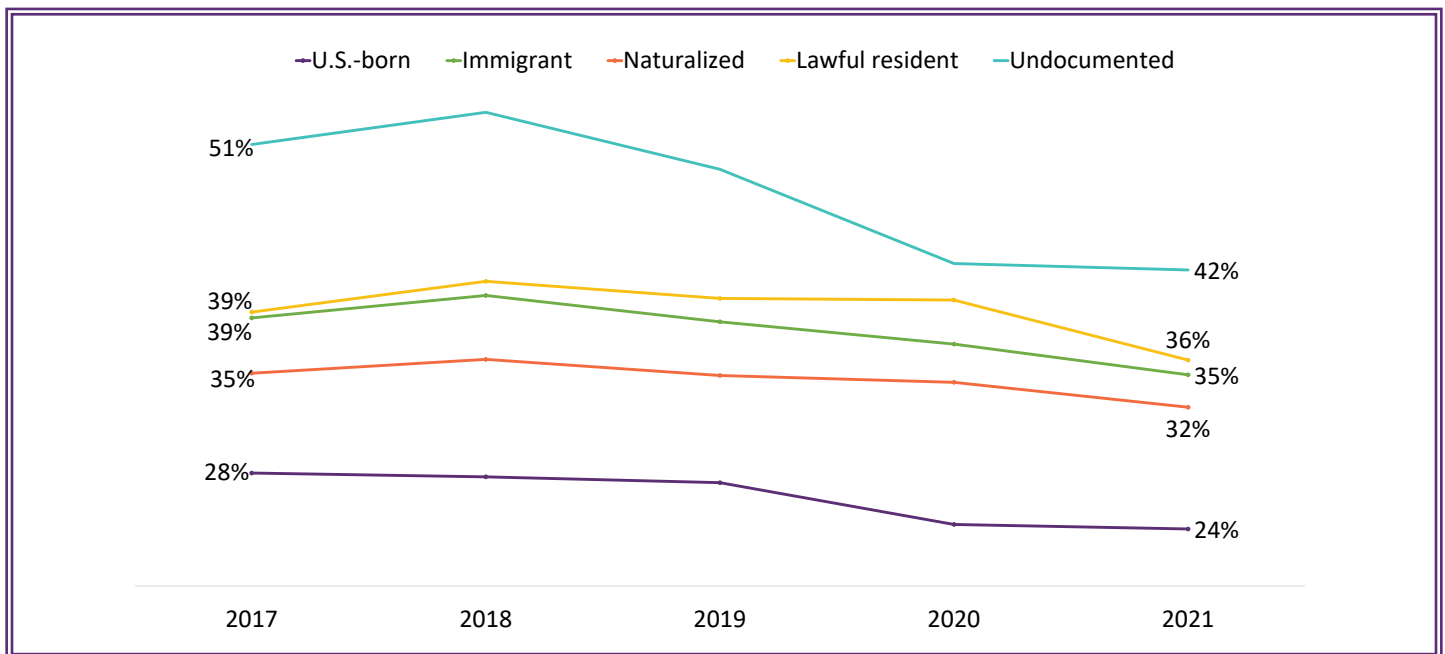
When we consider how to connect communities with civic opportunities, access to internet has increasingly become a necessity. The internet is where much of our civic information is kept—on government websites or online newsletters and emails. The COVID-19 pandemic only emphasized the need for virtual information-sharing and helped uncover the fact that numerous communities lack access to online services and information. Although measuring digital accessibility is relatively new in L.A. County (and explains why the data in this section begins in 2017), the data shows that immigrant communities are more likely than their U.S.-born counterparts to lack consistent and reliable access to computers and a broadband connection. Figure 10 shows that between 2017 and 2021, households headed by undocumented Angelenos have consistently experienced the highest level of inaccessibility—at 42 percent in 2021, compared to only 24 percent of households headed by someone who is U.S.-born. While access for all is important and something that the state and county have already embarked on addressing through programs like Broadband for All (state) and Delete the Divide (county)—these programs do not have a specific immigrant lens and so may be leaving



### Survey Highlight on Digital Divide

**26% of immigrants surveyed do not have reliable access to internet services at least sometimes.**

**Figure 10. Digitally Divided Households by Nativity and Immigration Status, L.A. County, 2017 – 2021**



Source: USC Equity Research Institute analysis of 2016 and 2021 5-year American Community Survey microdata from IPUMS USA. Note: Households are considered to be digitally divided if they report not having both a computing device (e.g., computer, laptop) and a broadband connection. See “Data and Methods” section for details on estimates of the undocumented and documented population. Single-year weights were estimated by multiplying the 5-year pooled weights by five.

immigrants vulnerable to being left out of receiving assistance.<sup>44</sup>

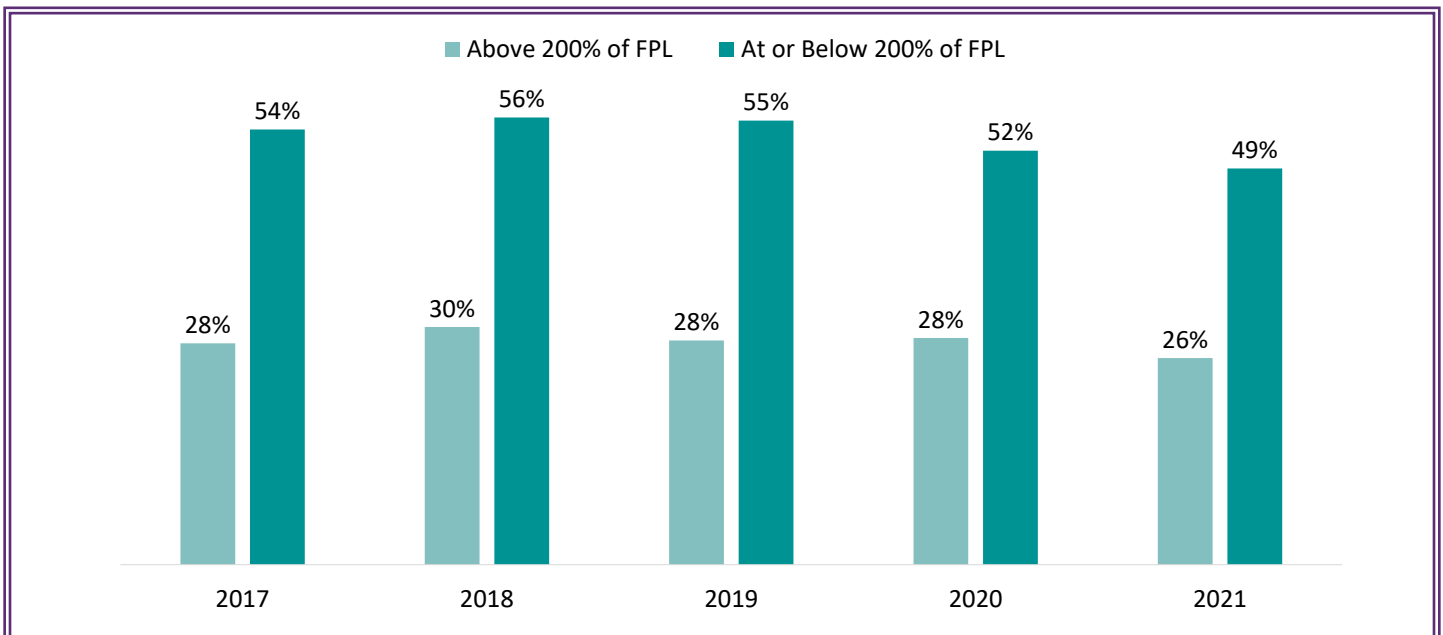
When we look at the same time period for immigrant-headed households, Figure 11 shows that about half of households at or below 200 percent of the federal poverty level (FPL) experience a lack of digital access. This is at significantly higher rates than those above 200 percent of the FPL. This finding is striking alone but becomes significantly important when we look at one of the most prominent digital access programs like the Affordable Connectivity Program (ACP) that is winding down.<sup>45</sup> The ACP—which was open to immigrant communities and allowed the use of ITINs to apply—has created internet payment subsidies for households living below this threshold and has recently stopped accepting applications, which is likely to affect many immigrant households in the county and nationwide.<sup>46</sup> If the County wants to see continued improvement on closing the divide for immigrants Angelenos, it must either fill the gap left behind by the ACP or increase advocacy efforts for a comprehensive replacement program.



**Survey Highlight on Digital Divide**

Social media was the most selected method through which immigrant survey respondents said they receive their voting information at 68% of all immigrant respondents—showing the consequences that a lack of digital access poses for civic engagement.

**Figure 11. Digitally Divided Immigrant-Headed Households by Poverty Status, L.A. County, 2017 – 2021**



Source: USC Equity Research Institute analysis of 2016 and 2021 5-year American Community Survey microdata from IPUMS USA. Note: Households are considered to be digitally divided if they report not having both a computing device (e.g., computer, laptop) and a broadband connection. Single-year weights were estimated by multiplying the 5-year pooled weights by five.

# ECONOMIC MOBILITY OVERVIEW

## INCOME

### ▶▶ DATA POINTS

- ▶ As of 2017-2021, undocumented households had a median household income of \$46,500 annually, compared to almost \$84,000 for U.S.-born-headed households.
- ▶ As of 2017-2021, immigrant households consistently earn higher median household incomes the more time they live in the U.S. However, even those immigrant households residing in the U.S. for over 25 years earned a median of \$65,800 annually—still significantly less than the median for all Angeleno households (\$75,000).



### ▶▶ SURVEY

- ▶ Over 1 in every 3 (35%) immigrants surveyed do not feel their income has adequately increased to keep up with the cost of living in the last year.
- ▶ 28% of immigrants surveyed said that they cannot comfortably afford their daily needs.



### ▶▶ RECOMMENDATIONS

**Median household incomes have increased over time, but disparities remain among immigrant households depending on their status—indicating that county leaders must continue to work towards ensuring immigrant communities have the access and training necessary for jobs that pay livable wages.** Although over time there has been an increase in median household incomes for all Angelenos, immigrants still fall behind their U.S.-born counterparts. This issue is particularly important for undocumented households who have consistently had the lowest median household income at \$46,500 in 2021, compared to \$75,000 among all Angelenos. Additionally, greater accessibility to information about how to properly start and sustain small businesses is critical for those immigrants looking to become entrepreneurs—especially undocumented immigrants who face barriers to employment opportunities and often resort to the informal sector or seek self-employment.

# ECONOMIC MOBILITY:

## ▶ INCOME

As significant economic contributors, immigrant Angelenos power the vitality and growth of the county. Thus, it is important to support immigrant families in building secure economic standing and futures in our region. Immigrants that choose to call L.A. County home should receive access to living wages that go beyond funding their basic needs—because when immigrants succeed economically, the entire region succeeds. One marker of success is income. When looking at the changes in median household income, it is important to measure how economic conditions may have improved or worsened over time. Using the 5-year samples from the American Community Survey (ACS) datasets, we examined the median household incomes for immigrants who migrated to the U.S., utilizing the 2012-2016 and 2017-2021 pooled datasets. We then grouped the sample of immigrants in each dataset by time in the U.S., using increments of five years up to 30 years. We used this grouping to define the cohorts of immigrants to conduct a pseudo-cohort analysis.

In Figure 12, we see that the median household income for cohort A in 2012-2016 (arrived in the U.S. 0-5 years ago) was \$39,800, compared to \$63,000 in 2017-2021 (arrived in the U.S. 6-10 years ago). It is important to note that each immigrant cohort across datasets is not likely to measure the exact same

**Figure 12. Median Household Income (2021\$) for Immigrant-Headed Households by Time in the United States, L.A. County, 2012/2016 – 2017/2021**

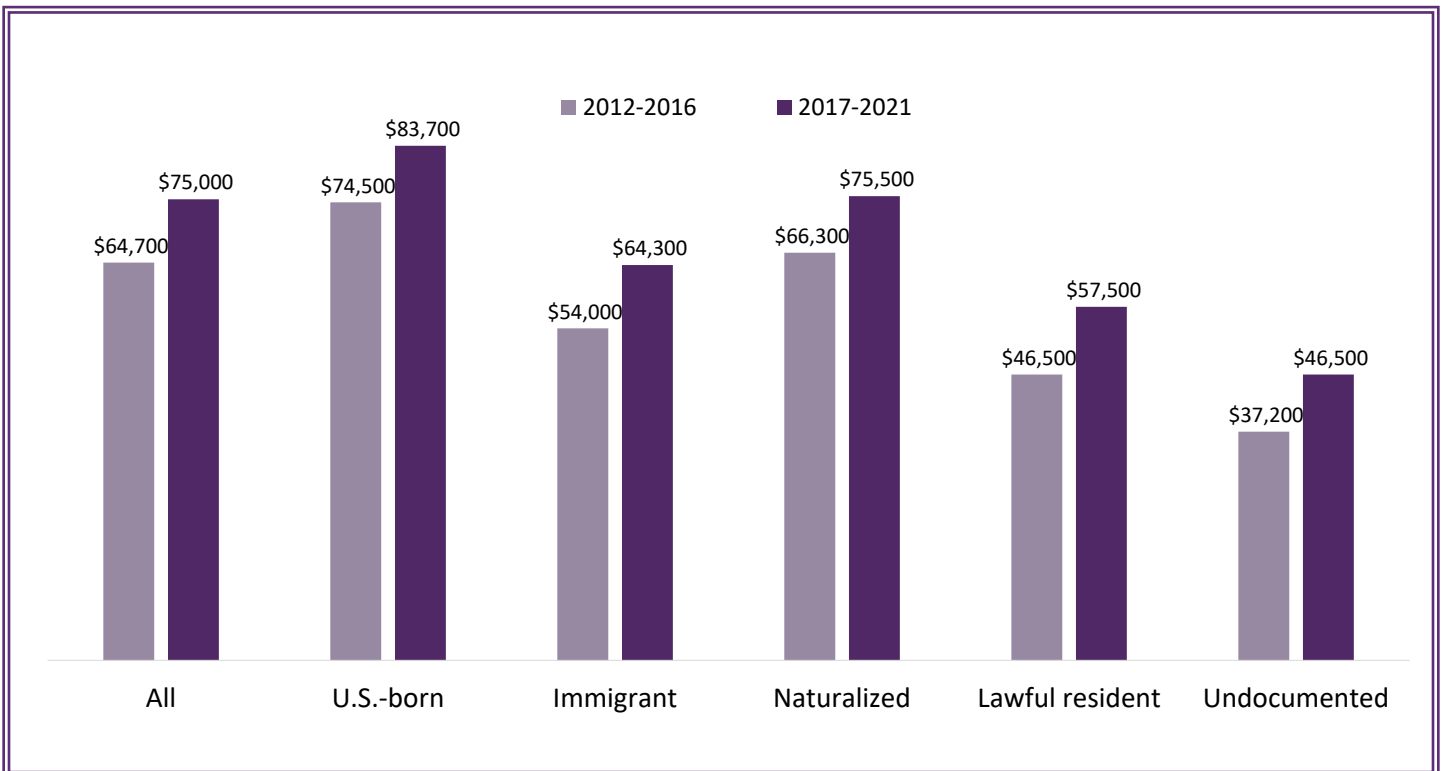


Source: USC Equity Research Institute analysis of 2016 and 2021 5-year American Community Survey microdata from IPUMS USA. Note: This pseudo cohort analysis estimates the aggregated change in median household income for immigrants over time based on number of years in the U.S. (grouped by 5 year increments). For example, we assume those who indicated that they arrived less than 5 years ago in the 2012-2016 5-year microdata are on average the same group who indicated they arrived to the U.S. 6 to 10 years ago in the 2017-2021 5-year microdata. Universe includes foreign-born heads of households (excludes group quarters). All estimates are adjusted to 2021 dollars using the consumer price index.

people but takes the averages across samples to create comparative groups. Whereas cohort A represents the more recently arrived immigrant group, each subsequent cohort represent groups that have been in the U.S. longer. Regardless of which cohort, however, we see that the longer each group has been in the U.S., the greater the median household income (see Figure 12). Across all cohorts, immigrant households saw an increase in their income over time, showing that the economic conditions have slightly improved but not enough to compensate for the soaring cost of living and housing. With a limited supply of available homes and the average price of a single detached home being \$959,400 in 2024,<sup>47</sup> income earned by immigrant Angelenos with aspirations to one day becoming homeowners might not be enough.

Despite the economic contributions made by immigrants at the county level, many immigrant Angelenos still require greater support from County and City officials to alleviate the conditions giving rise to their financial constraints. As of 2017-2021, the median household income for all immigrant Angelenos was less than \$65,000. Households headed by undocumented immigrants have the lowest median household income, around \$46,500 annually (see Figure 13). Greater support is needed for undocumented immigrant workers to sustain a quality life for themselves and their families where they are not living paycheck to paycheck.

**Figure 13. Median Household Income (2021\$) by Householder Nativity and Immigration Status, L.A. County, 2012/2016 – 2017/2021**



Source: USC Equity Research Institute analysis of 2016 and 2021 5-year American Community Survey microdata from IPUMS USA. Note: Universe includes heads of households (excludes group quarters). See "Data and Methods" section for details on estimates of the undocumented and documented population. All estimates are adjusted to 2021 dollars using the consumer price index. Data represent 2012 through 2016 and 2017 through 2021 averages.

As seen in Figure 14, when broken down by race/ethnicity, Latino immigrant households continue to earn the least at about \$56,000. Asian American immigrant households appear to make the highest median income, however, when we disaggregate the data, it reveals much lower rates for Chinese, Korean, and Cambodian households, each of which earn a median of under \$65,000 as of 2021.

Additionally, when asked whether our survey respondents believed that their income has adjusted to the rising cost of living, half of Latinos surveyed disagreed or strongly disagreed. The results gathered from our survey and the ACS show that, while some progress has been made, there is still great work to be done to improve the economic conditions for all immigrant Angelenos that allow them to increase their financial capacity and access economic opportunities.

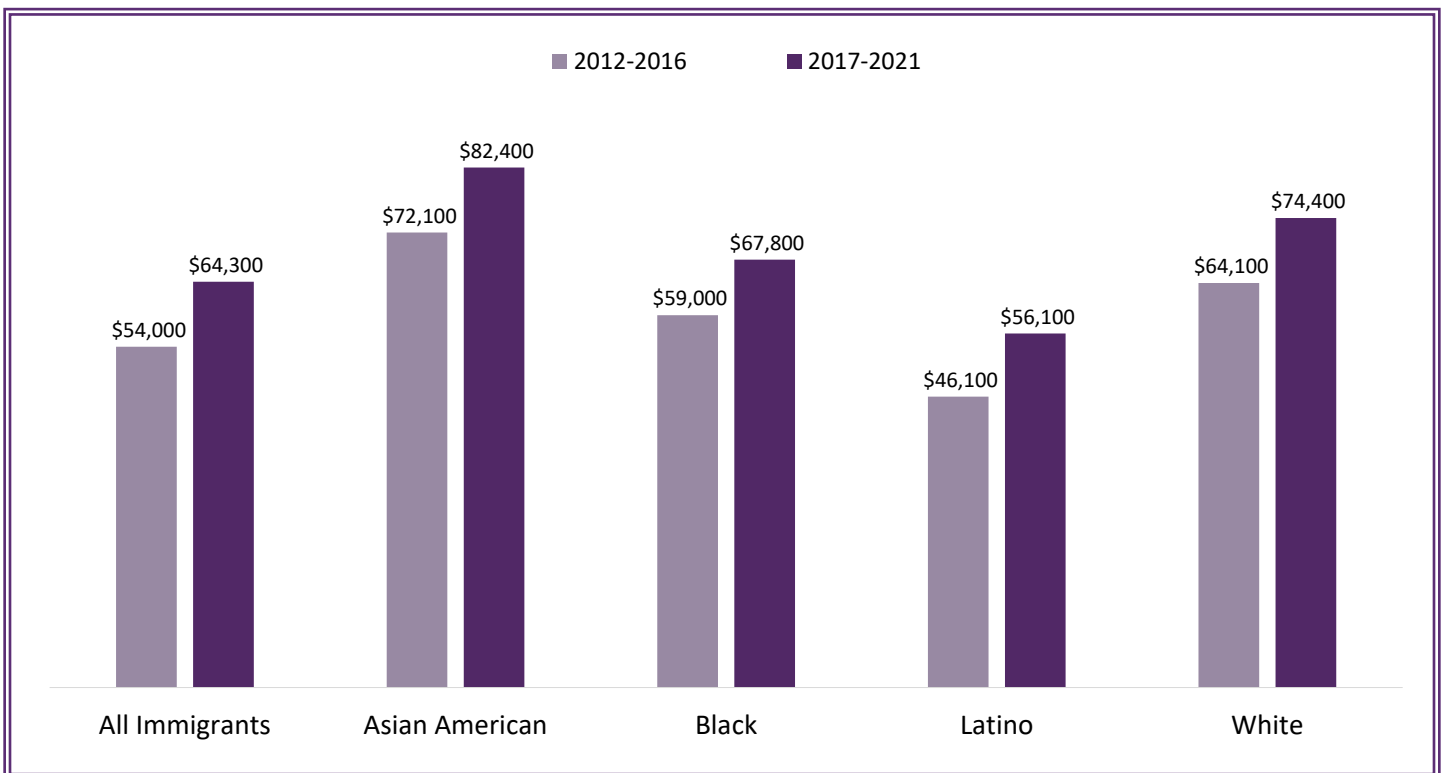


## Survey Highlights on Income

**35% or over 1 in every 3 immigrants surveyed do not feel their income has adequately increased to keep up with the cost of living in the last year.**

**28% of immigrants surveyed say they cannot comfortably afford their daily needs.**

**Figure 14. Median Household Income (2021\$) by Immigrant Householder Race/Ethnicity, L.A. County, 2012/2016 – 2017/2021**



Source: USC Equity Research Institute analysis of 2016 and 2021 5-year American Community Survey microdata from IPUMS USA. Note: Universe includes foreign-born heads of households (excludes group quarters). All estimates are adjusted to 2021 dollars using the consumer price index. Data represent 2012 through 2016 and 2017 through 2021 averages.

# ECONOMIC MOBILITY OVERVIEW

## HOUSING

### ▶▶ DATA POINTS

- ▶ As of 2021, 67% of undocumented households are rent-burdened, compared to 56% for U.S.-born households.
- ▶ 16% of undocumented immigrants are living in overcrowded housing as of 2017-2021.



### ▶▶ SURVEY

- ▶ Over 1 in 3 respondents (36%) shared that they cannot comfortably afford rent or mortgage. This rises to 37% for immigrant respondents.
- ▶ 1 in 4 (25%) immigrants surveyed do not believe they can build a secure future in L.A. County.



### ▶▶ RECOMMENDATIONS

**Housing costs remain an issue for all, and the issue is especially acute for undocumented immigrants, thus efforts to address the housing and houseless crises must intentionally consider the barriers faced by immigrant Angelenos.** Indeed, the rate of households that are rent-burdened has remained consistently high between 2012 and 2021. In 2021, 56% of U.S.-born households and 67% of undocumented households were rent-burdened. As housing costs have only worsened over time, county leadership must consider how local housing rates leave many vulnerable to eviction or loss of housing. Additionally, more is still needed to address the large majority of renters who are overburdened and have limited capacity to save up for a home. To address relief for renters and create pathways to permanent housing, local leadership must continue to invest in deeply affordable permanent housing, rent relief, and homeownership programs that connect immigrants—regardless of status—to resources necessary for immigrants to envision a secure future in the region.

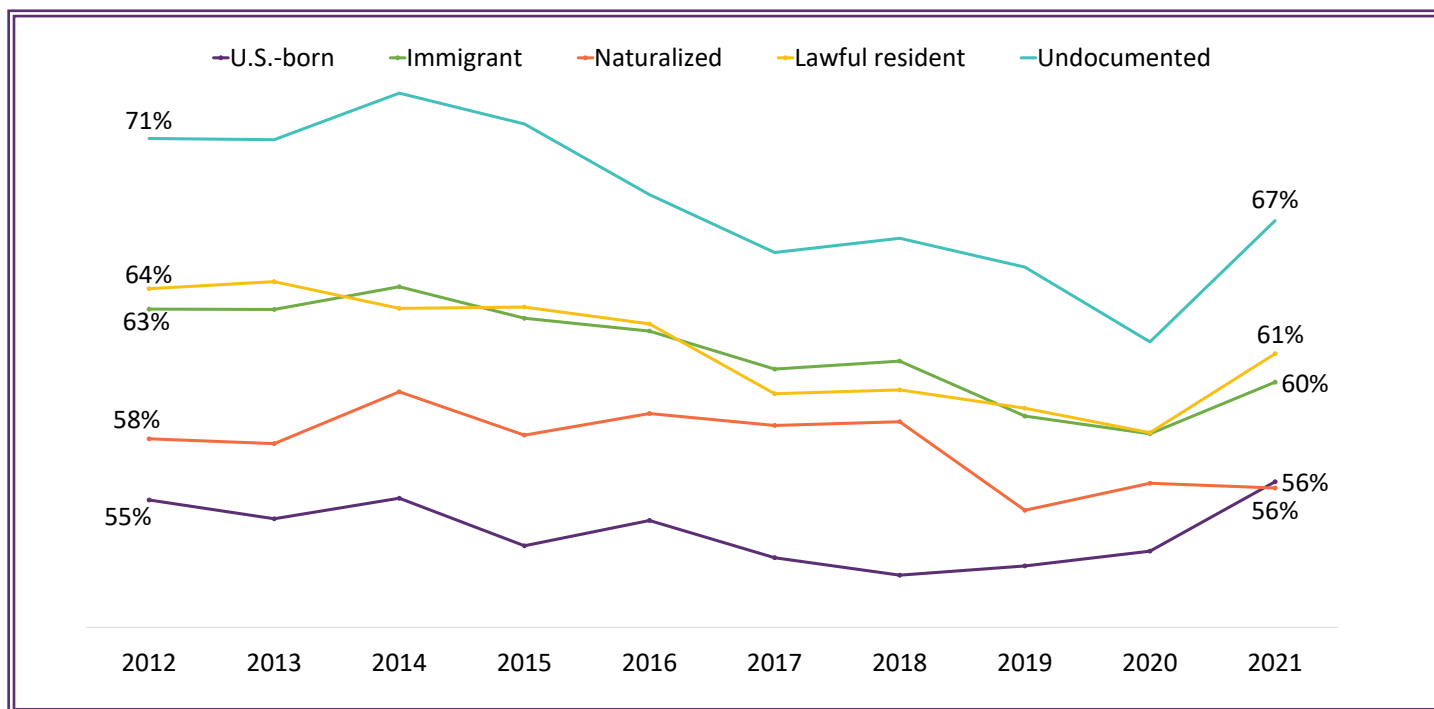
# ECONOMIC MOBILITY:

## HOUSING

In the face of rising housing costs and stagnant wage growth, many immigrant Angelenos are burdened by exorbitant housing costs—furthering the distance to stable and safe housing, and enabling instability. Housing cost burden is defined as owner- and renter-occupied households that spend 30 percent or more of their income on housing costs. As seen in Figure 15, from 2012 to 2021, the proportion of immigrant renter households experiencing rent burden has decreased from 63 percent to 60 percent. Still, in 2021, over half of all Angelenos, regardless of their status, are rent-burdened. Further disaggregating the data by nativity and status, undocumented households have the highest rate of rent burden at 67 percent. Housing unaffordability is a persistent issue for all races and ethnicities, as well, according to the UCLA Latino Policy and Politics Institute. The institute found that Afro-Latino renters, specifically, experience the highest rate of severe housing burden (spending 50 percent or more of income on housing) at 32 percent.<sup>48</sup>

Yet another marker of housing unaffordability is found when we look at L.A. County, which has the second largest number of unhoused people in the nation.<sup>49</sup> According to the Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority (LAHSA), in 2023, Latinos made up 48 percent of the total population in L.A. County but 42.6 percent of the county's unhoused population, followed by Black/African American residents who made up 7.6 percent of the total county population and 31.7 percent of the county's unhoused population. This data reveals a large overrepresentation of Black/African American residents and a large proportion of Latino

**Figure 15. Rent-Burdened Households by Householder Nativity and Immigration Status, L.A. County, 2012 – 2021**



Source: USC Equity Research Institute analysis of 2016 and 2021 5-year American Community Survey microdata from IPUMS USA. Note: See "Data and Methods" section for details on estimates of the undocumented and documented population. Single-year weights were estimated by multiplying the 5-year pooled weights by five.

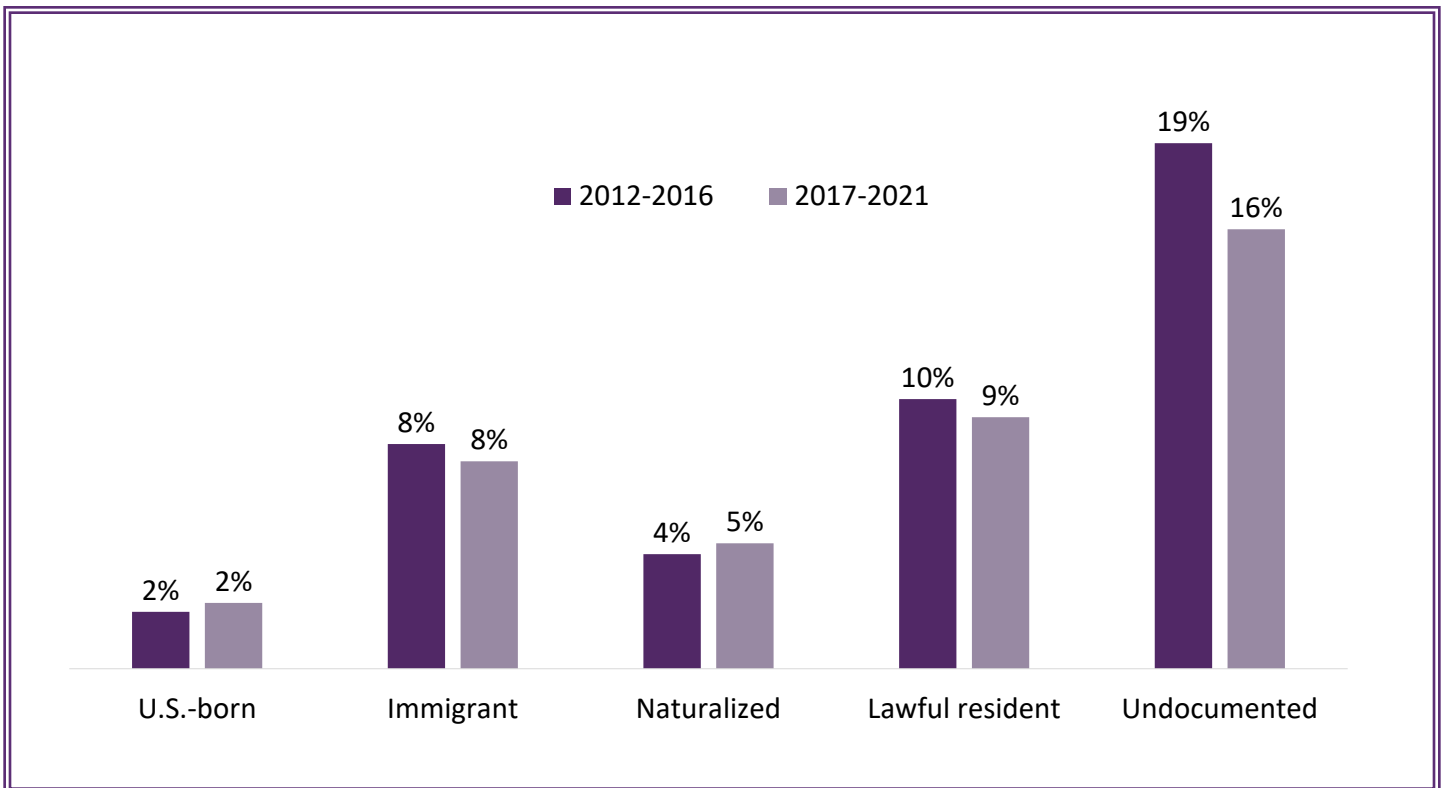


residents in need of accessing permanent housing options.<sup>50</sup> Upon taking office, L.A. Mayor Karen Bass declared a state of emergency on homelessness<sup>51</sup> and promised to commit \$1.3 billion dollars in funding to find permanent housing solutions to address the city's homelessness crisis but later reduced it to \$950 million in her proposed budget for 2024-25.<sup>52</sup>

Additionally, as housing costs in L.A. County become more expensive year after year, reaching record setting home prices in a generation,<sup>53</sup> this leaves little room for households to have disposable income and often leaves communities needing to “double-up” to afford their housing—thus creating overcrowded households. Figure 16 shows that undocumented households have consistently experienced higher rates of overcrowded households when compared to other groups, reaching 16 percent of households, compared to only 2 percent of U.S.-born households as of 2017-2021.

Despite the impact of the housing crisis, the rate of homeownership among immigrants has increased over time for those living in the U.S. for longer periods. As seen in Figure 17, when we look at cohort A, we see that 24 percent of immigrant households who arrived in the U.S. 6 to 10 years prior in the 2017- 2021 dataset are homeowners, compared to only 11 percent of the same cohort in the 2012-2016 dataset.<sup>i</sup> Homeownership has often been categorized as a primary means of accumulating generational wealth and,

**Figure 16. Overcrowded Households by Householder Nativity and Immigration Status, L.A. County, 2012/2016 – 2017/2021**



Source: USC Equity Research Institute analysis of 2016 and 2021 5-year American Community Survey microdata from IPUMS USA. Note: See “Data and Methods” section for details on estimates of the undocumented and documented population. Data represent 2012 through 2016 and 2017 through 2021 averages.

<sup>i</sup> Definition of cohort analysis is based off USC Equity Research Institute analysis of 2016 and 2021 5-year American Community Survey microdata from IPUMS USA. This pseudo cohort analysis estimates the aggregated change in homeownership for immigrants over time based on number of years in the United States (grouped by 5 year increments).

for many immigrants living in the county, a lifelong dream. However, the barriers to entry leave many feeling that the dream is unattainable due to both their status and their lack of funds to support the costly process. Assembly Bill 1840 aims to support this dream by amending the current California Dream for All Program eligibility requirements to include explicit language that will expand eligibility to all applicants regardless of their immigration status.<sup>54</sup>

As immigrants create deeper roots in our communities and economic conditions improve, homeownership becomes a viable option for immigrants able to build enough savings to become homeowners—this is true across cohorts and reveals a shift in the state of homeownership for current and future immigrants. However, more work is still needed

to address the large majority of renters who are overburdened and have limited capacity to save up for a home. To address relief for renters and create pathways to permanent housing, local leadership must continue to invest in deeply affordable permanent housing, rent relief, and homeownership programs that connect immigrants to resources necessary to building a secure future.

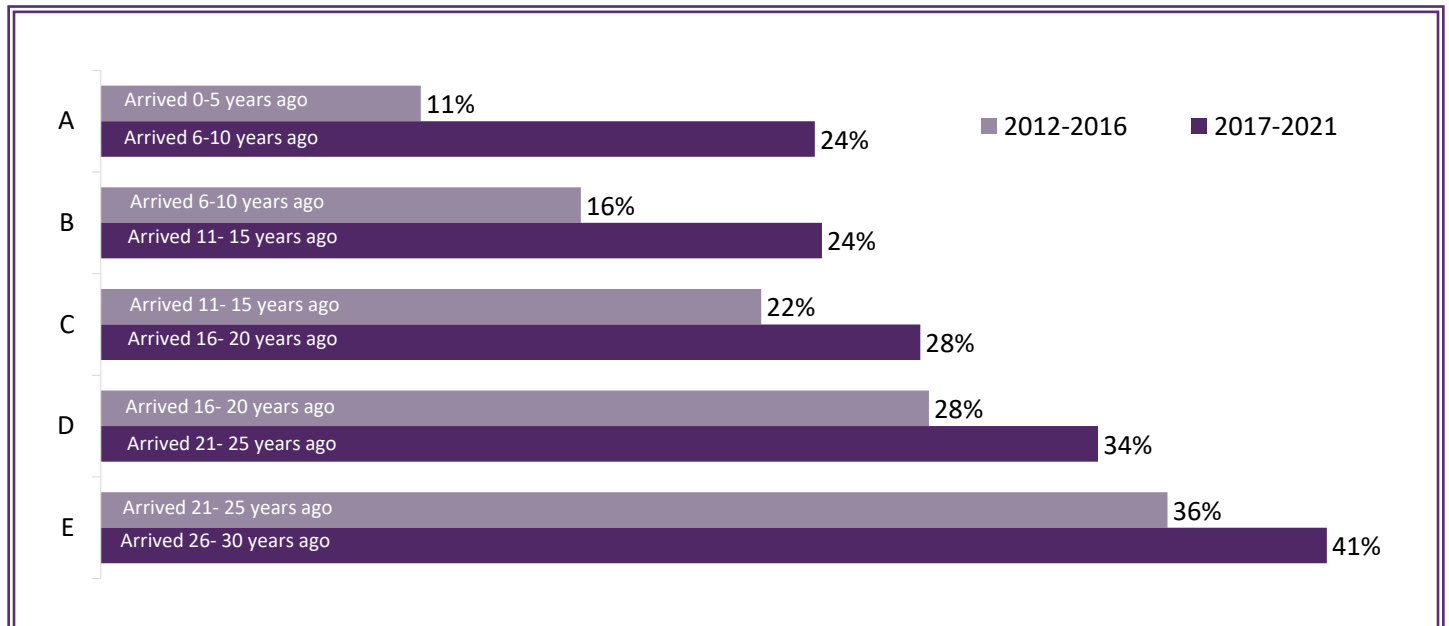


**Survey Highlights on Housing**

**Over 1 in 3 (37%) immigrants surveyed shared that they cannot comfortably afford rent or mortgage.**

**1 in 4 (25%) immigrants surveyed do not believe they can build a secure future in L.A. County.**

**Figure 17. Homeownership Rate for Immigrant-Headed Households by Time in the United States, L.A. County, 2012/2016 – 2017/2021**




Source: USC Equity Research Institute analysis of 2016 and 2021 5-year American Community Survey microdata from IPUMS USA. Note: This pseudo cohort analysis estimates the aggregated change in median household income for immigrants over time based on number of years in the U.S. (grouped by 5 year increments). For example, we assume those who indicated that they arrived less than 5 years ago in the 2012-2016 5-year microdata are on average the same group who indicated they arrived to the U.S. 6 to 10 years ago in the 2017-2021 5-year microdata. Universe includes foreign-born heads of households (excludes group quarters). All estimates are adjusted to 2021 dollars using the consumer price index.


# ECONOMIC MOBILITY OVERVIEW

## EMPLOYMENT

### ▶▶ DATA POINTS

- ▶ Naturalized U.S. citizens aged 25 to 64 have the highest rate of employment in 2017 to 2021, with 75% employed.
  - ▶ As of 2017-2021, 84% of immigrant men and 62% of immigrant women, ages 25 to 64, are employed.
- 

### ▶▶ SURVEY

- ▶ 28% of immigrant men and 35% of immigrant women surveyed believe there are not enough job opportunities in the county.
  - ▶ 28% of immigrant men and 27% of immigrant women surveyed have trouble finding training to prepare for jobs they want.
- 

### ▶▶ RECOMMENDATIONS

**The contributions that immigrants make to our local economy and workforce are undeniable—and it is necessary to provide them with the support to ensure they have access to the economic opportunities they desire.** We have long relied on a narrative that portrays immigrants as economic assets to society. While the economic contributions of immigrants are substantial and help make our region as strong as it is, the inherent value of immigrant Angelenos is in the fact that they are fellow human beings who also choose to call this region home—and so deserve to be invested in and have the same opportunities as non-immigrants. At the same time, we must shift the narrative to value and support the generational economic growth of immigrant families to foster a truly welcoming L.A. County for all immigrants. We do this through targeted investments in programs that promote workforce development, emphasize workplace standards, and strengthen access to entrepreneurship—with emphasis on immigrant women and undocumented workers. This includes ensuring immigrants receive information about these programs and are provided the technical assistance needed to truly benefit from these interventions.

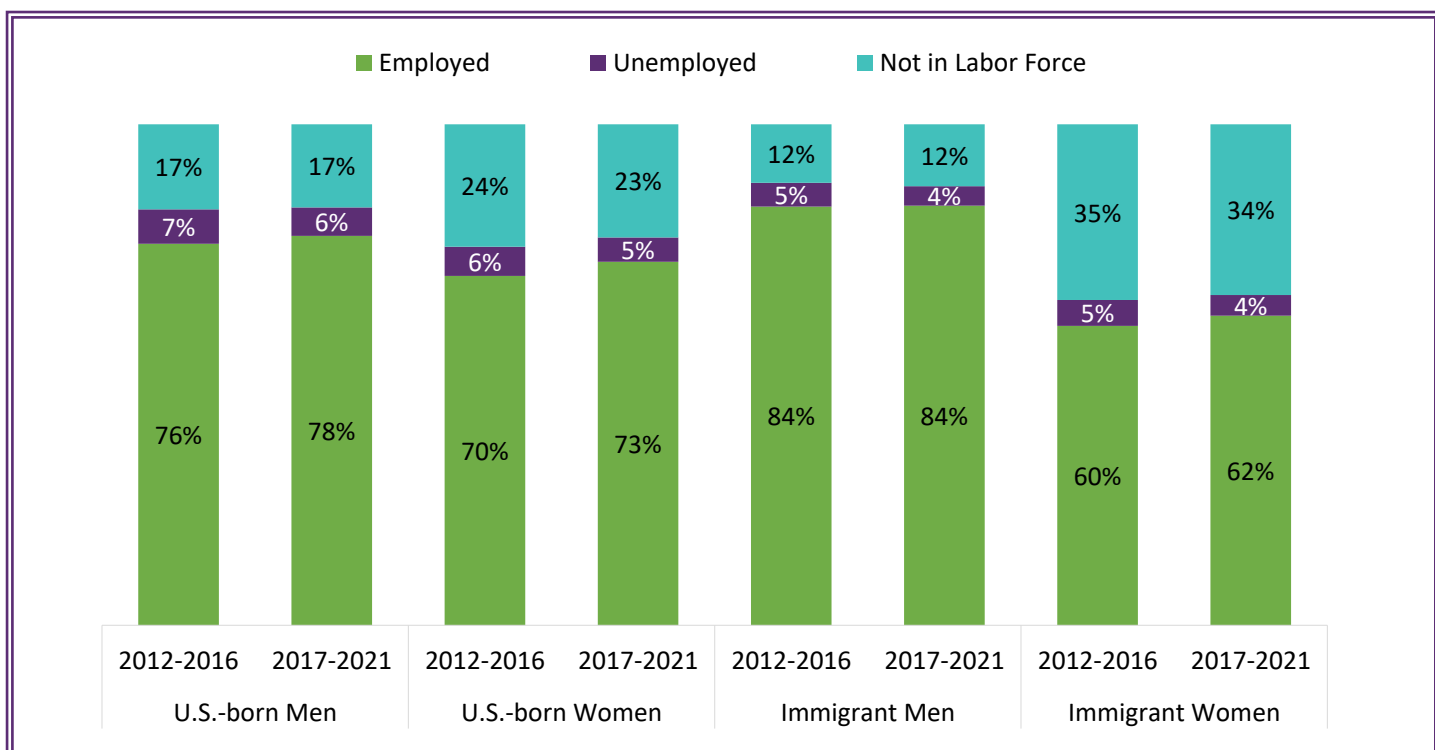
# ECONOMIC MOBILITY:

## ▶ EMPLOYMENT

In the 2024-2025 state budget, Governor Newsom's budget cuts totaled at about \$16 billion, and included cuts for healthcare workforce development that stands to impact both immigrant and U.S.-born workers alike.<sup>55</sup> This reduction comes at a time where our nation's workforce demands are changing,<sup>56</sup> and immigrant workers deserve a fighting chance at well-paying job opportunities that will boost their economic standing. Immigrant workers are a large and strong component of our workforce,<sup>57</sup> but often work in roles that make them susceptible to exploitation of labor and wage theft. A 2023 report released by the Los Angeles Worker Center Network details that, "80% of all low-wage workers in Los Angeles experience wage theft," which undoubtedly impacts immigrant Angelenos greatly.<sup>58</sup>

Also highlighted in the report, in 2019, many immigrants living in the county were employed and made up a large percentage of the workforce in industries like construction (56 percent) and manufacturing (54 percent).<sup>59</sup> Immigrants often employed within these industries are also susceptible to wage theft and are more likely to earn below minimum wage.<sup>60</sup> Labor statistics such as these paint a picture of other inequities that might arise as we take a deeper look at race/ethnicity and gender, as well as one's ability to meet their basic needs while earning below or at minimum wage. As seen in Figure 18, both U.S.-born and immigrant men have higher rates of employment, but the difference between men and women is quite

**Figure 18. Employment Status for Population by Nativity and Gender, Ages 25 to 64, L.A. County, 2012/2016 – 2017/2021**



Source: USC Equity Research Institute analysis of 2016 and 2021 5-year American Community Survey microdata from IPUMS USA. Note: Universe includes full-time civilian noninstitutionalized wage and salary workers ages 25 to 64. Data represent 2012 through 2016 and 2017 through 2021 averages.

stark for immigrants—more than a 20 percent difference in those that are employed. Despite many immigrants being employed, immigrant women continue to have the lowest rate of employment—highlighting the impact of relatively limited opportunities due to low wages,<sup>61</sup> gender inequities, workplace conditions, and more.<sup>62</sup> Data made available by U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) shows that, 93 percent of H-4 dependent visa holders experience discrimination as dependent visa holders—with a large majority of them being women. This leaves many to become reliant on the circumstances set for them by the primary visa holder.<sup>63</sup> Depending on their status or visa type, immigrant women can experience violence in the workplace, with undocumented immigrant women identified as the most vulnerable workers in the United States.<sup>64</sup>



### Survey Highlights on Employment

**28% of immigrant men and 35% of immigrant women surveyed believe there are not enough job opportunities in the county.**

**28% of immigrant men and 27% of immigrant women surveyed have trouble finding training to prepare for jobs they want.**

Naturalized U.S. citizens aged 25 to 64 in L.A. County continue to have the highest rate of employment over time, with a consistent 75 percent employed (see Figure 19). Many immigrants are impacted by the growing labor market that feels to be excelling at a pace beyond the availability of job opportunities. According to the experiences from survey respondents, 28 percent of immigrant men surveyed, and 36 percent of immigrant women surveyed believe there are not enough job opportunities in the county. This is important to consider in the context of Los Angeles, where the ratio of available fair market rent apartments to two adult minimum wage workers with one child is 30 to 50 percent.<sup>65</sup> Reflecting on this context, greater investment appears necessary to broaden the scope of economic opportunities for immigrants. With the County<sup>66</sup> and City of Los Angeles minimum wage increasing to \$17.28 on July 1st, 2024,<sup>67</sup> it is a step in the right direction and the result of immigrant-serving organizations' continued fight for labor rights. Still, policy reform at the state and federal government level is needed. As efforts continue throughout the region to improve labor rights, by investing in workforce development training programs, the County can prepare immigrant adults and youth with skills needed to thrive in growing industries like electronics, manufacturing, legal and accounting, computer design, and more.<sup>68</sup>

**Figure 19. Share of Population Employed by Nativity and Immigration Status, Ages 25 to 64, L.A. County, 2012/2016 – 2017/2021**



Source: USC Equity Research Institute analysis of 2016 and 2021 5-year American Community Survey microdata from IPUMS USA. Note: Universe includes full-time civilian noninstitutionalized wage and salary workers ages 25 to 64. See “Data and Methods” section for details on estimates of the undocumented and documented population. Data represent 2012 through 2016 and 2017 through 2021 averages.

# WARMTH OF WELCOME OVERVIEW

## ACCESS TO SERVICES

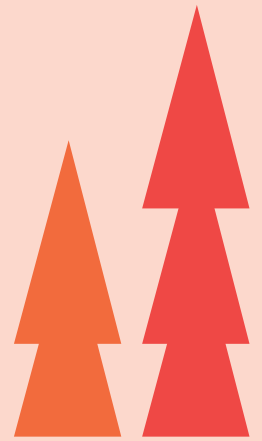
### ▶▶ DATA POINTS

- ▶ As of 2022, the highest concentration of welfare offices and immigrant legal services appear to be in areas of L.A. County where high concentrations of immigrants living below 150% of the federal poverty level (FPL) reside.
- ▶ County Districts 1, 3, and 5 have significant numbers of low-income immigrant residents, yet lack the presence of welfare and immigration legal services, which may require residents to travel far or go without these services altogether.



### ▶▶ SURVEY

- ▶ 25% of immigrants surveyed feel that they do not have adequate access to County services in their preferred language.
- ▶ 26% of immigrants surveyed feel that the Supervisor for their district does not prioritize the needs of immigrants.



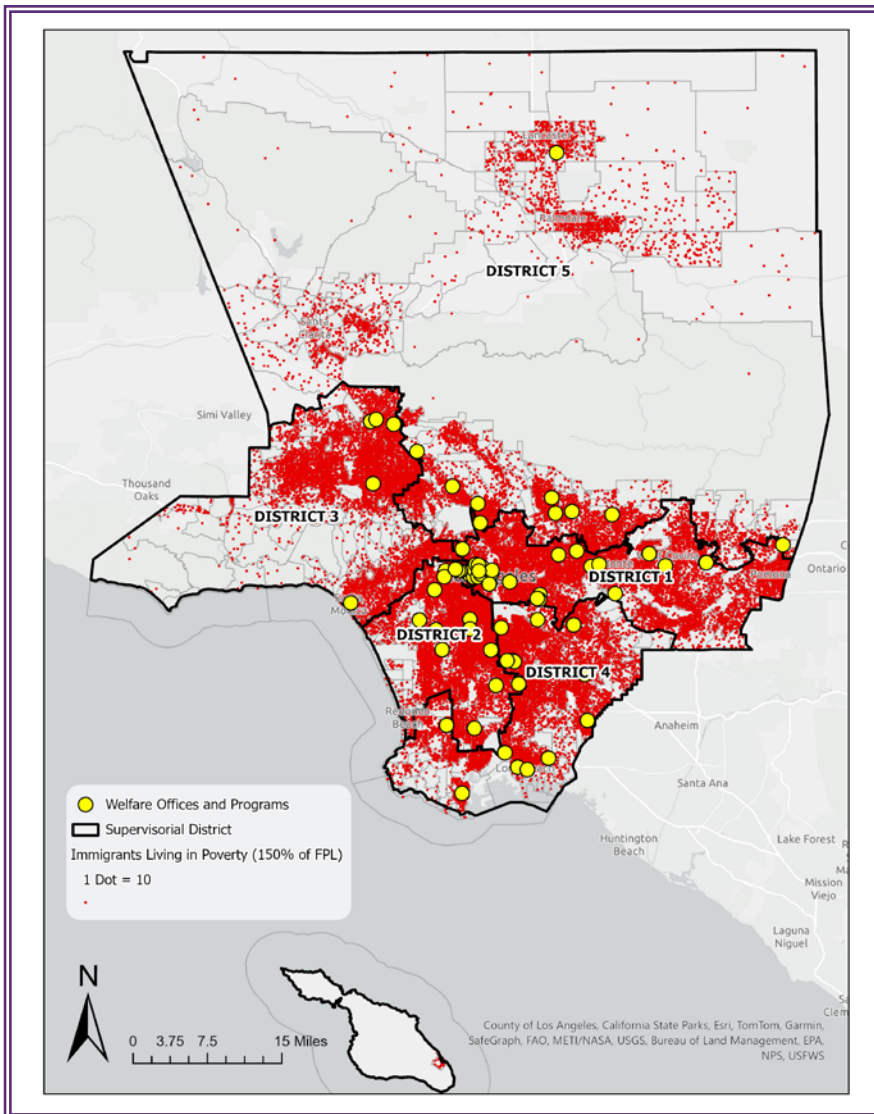
### ▶▶ RECOMMENDATIONS

**With the vast numbers of immigrants throughout our region, it is essential to ensure critical services—such as welfare and legal services—are physically available where immigrants may require them. Investing in stronger data-collecting mechanisms that capture where immigrants live and where these types of interventions are needed is essential to providing consistent and accessible resources.** In this effort, it is important to allocate sufficient time and capacity to partner with L.A. immigrant-serving organizations and institutions to develop strategic methods that reach communities and capture their needs. Certain data collection methods, for example, may inherently hold biases that miss key immigrant groups (e.g. online surveys might skew toward younger generations or those with digital access; and over-sampling certain groups is necessary to capture the experiences of smaller communities)—thus working with trusted organizations that know immigrant needs best is key to overcoming those biases as much as possible and gathering representative samples. Creating these mechanisms will allow L.A. County to consistently meet the needs of immigrants and evaluate its progress over time.

# WARMTH OF WELCOME:

## ▶ ACCESS TO SERVICES

**Figure 20. Map of Welfare Offices and Programs and Immigrants living Below 150% of the Federal Poverty Level by County Supervisorial District, L.A. County, 2022**



The presence—or lack thereof—of necessary social services is just one way that a region communicates its level of welcome for its residents. Social service offices offer enrollment assistance for critical basic needs programs that provide food, shelter, and accessible health insurance to low-income families. Thus, evaluating how well the social safety net catches low-income immigrant families can be a way to measure the extent to which L.A. County leaders prioritize and support immigrant communities. These offices are especially important since immigrants tend to have less familiarity with navigating bureaucratic institutions and may require enrollment assistance in different languages. For this reason, we mapped where immigrants living below 150% of the federal poverty level (FPL) reside (shown as red dots) throughout the county and where commonly needed services are located.

Figure 20 depicts the location of welfare offices and programs in L.A. County. This data was obtained from the County of Los Angeles' GIS program and represents the state of the social safety net as of April 16th, 2022. According to the County's reports, there are 80 programs

throughout the region, with several programs run and maintained within the same brick-and-mortar location.<sup>69</sup> Figure 21 represents the immigration and legal services ecosystem in L.A. County. According to the most recent County estimates, there are 3,749 legal service programs in the county as of April 2022.<sup>70</sup>



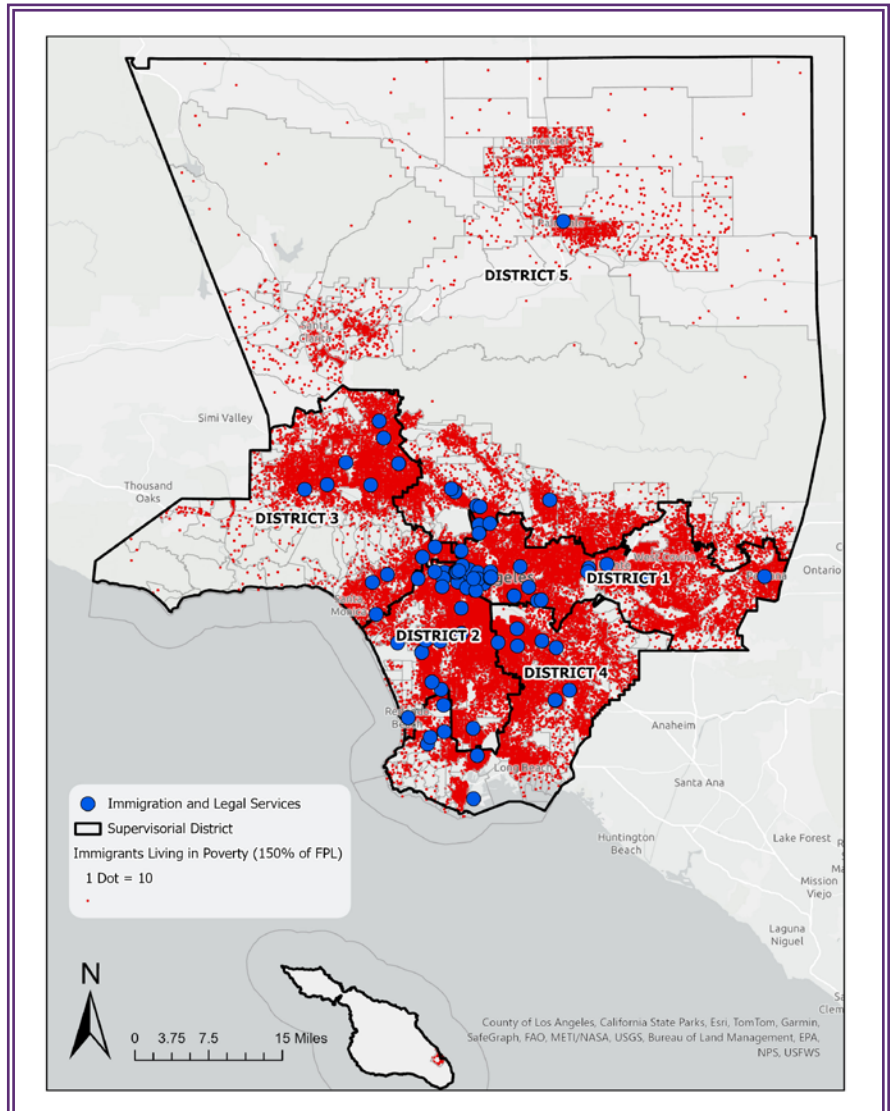
Each map has a base layer depicting where low-income immigrant residents reside, which is represented as red points on the map. The location of immigrants below 150% of the FPL was generated using American Community Survey 5-year 2021 estimates at the census tract level. Each red dot represents 10 individuals and is centered within each census tract using ArcGIS Pro mapping techniques. The locations of programs are represented as larger dots, where services are depicted in yellow for Figure 20 and in blue for Figure 21. An additional map in Appendix B depicts the location of the nearly 6,000 food assistance programs that exist across L.A. County as of 2022.

When looking at the maps, they reveal clear clusters of services in the City of Los Angeles where many low-income immigrant residents live—a reassuring sign that those services are located in places where need is highest. At the same time, both maps reveal areas where many low-income immigrants may be lacking adequate access. One location that stands out is County Supervisorial District 1, where there are high numbers of low-income immigrant residents throughout the district but as you go further east, there is a significant absence of both welfare and immigration legal services locations. The same is true in District 3 and District 5—where each district may be home to relatively less low-income immigrants but limited access to services may be placing undue burden on these communities should they need access to welfare or legal support.

**Survey Highlight on Access to Services**

25% of immigrants surveyed feel they do not have adequate access to County services in their preferred language.

**Figure 21. Map of Immigration and Legal Services and Immigrants living Below 150% of the Federal Poverty Level by County Supervisorial District, L.A. County, 2022**



# WARMTH OF WELCOME OVERVIEW

## DEPORTATION CASES

### ▶▶ DATA POINTS

- ▶ 2020 and 2021 saw less than 10,000 deportation proceedings each year—a significant drop from over 24,000 cases in 2019.
- ▶ In deportation cases from 2001-2021, 71% of cases without legal representation resulted in a removal order, compared to under 20% for cases where representation was present.



### ▶▶ SURVEY

- ▶ 43% of immigrants surveyed believe that deportation is a threat for immigrants in the county.
- ▶ 21% of immigrants surveyed do not feel that local representatives in the county have helped them feel welcome.



### ▶▶ RECOMMENDATIONS

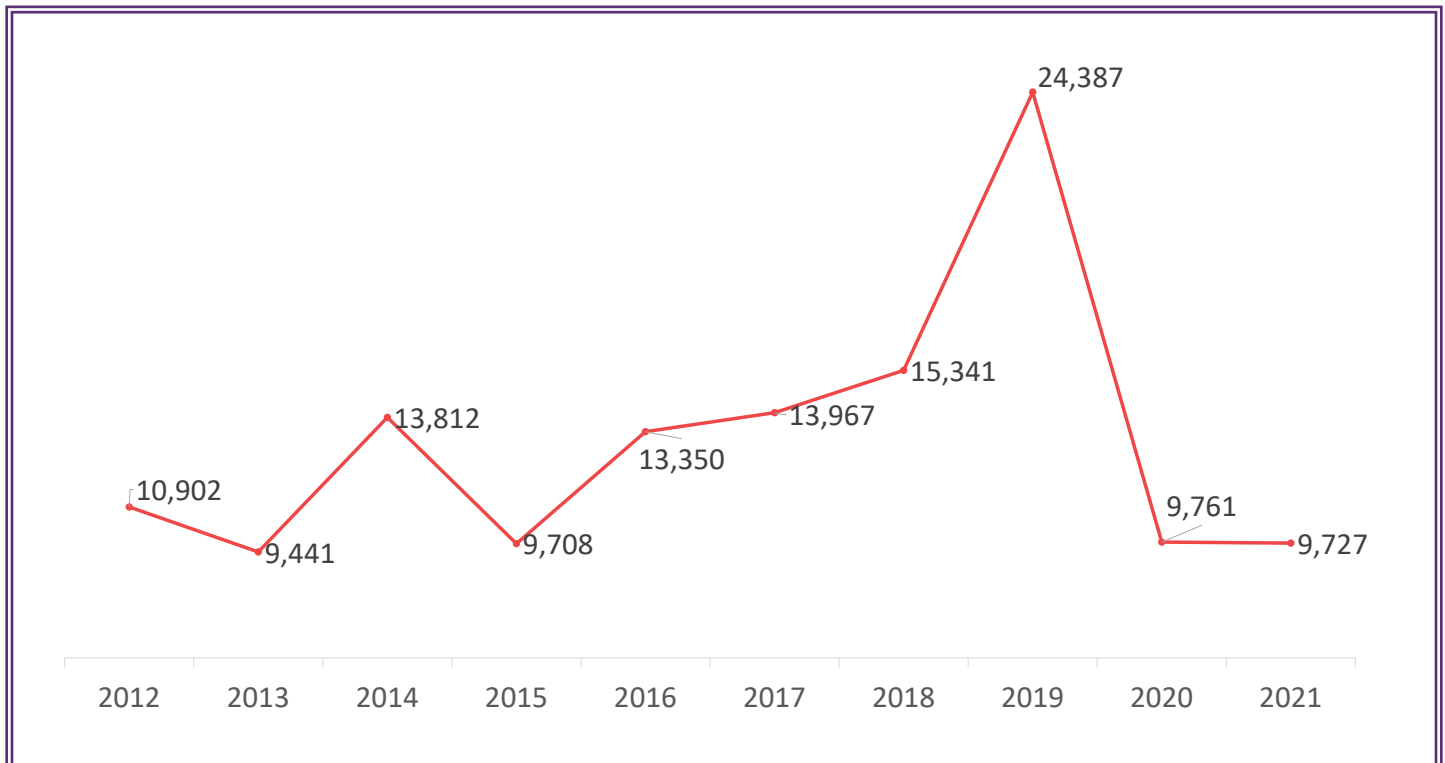
**Continue to create innovative policy and programs that situate Los Angeles as an influential leader in immigrant inclusion for other federal and state actors.** While many local leaders are committed to making this region a welcoming home for all, immigrants face many challenges in the county. Removal orders are just one of those issues—and ensuring that immigrants have adequate support to fight their deportation cases is one way the County can express its support for immigrants. In light of an upcoming election, it is important that L.A. County is prepared to face a challenging immigration policy landscape once more. It is critical that Los Angeles leaders look to the blueprint of groundbreaking programs—such as RepresentLA that aims to increase legal representation for immigrants—that contribute to the improved livelihoods of immigrant Angelenos across our region. As the data shows, legal representation within removal order cases makes a striking difference in the outcome of one's case—indicating that current and future investments in this area make all the difference in the futures of immigrant communities and should direct county leaders to continue creating bold and robust resources for the immigrants that choose L.A. County as their home.

# WARMTH OF WELCOME:

## ▶ DEPORTATION CASES

The level of welcome that immigrants experience in any given place and time is also dependent on the likelihood that deportation poses to their lives. For many immigrants, like new arrivals without permanent status, those whose status is in jeopardy, or mixed-status families, this threat may be more present. Additionally, those with precarious status in areas of the nation with higher numbers of removal orders may consider this risk more frequently—compared to other parts of the country, L.A. County had the third most removal orders at almost 6,000 orders from October 2023 to March 2024.<sup>71</sup> This high ranking may not come as a surprise given the millions of immigrants that reside in the region, however, the reality of these numbers may contribute to immigrant Angeleno concerns about the likelihood of receiving a removal order. Data on court deportation proceedings dating back to 2012 (see Figure 22) shows that our region has fluctuated over the years on this issue, with 2020 and 2021 seeing less than 10,000 proceedings each. This is a large drop from the significantly higher number of over 24,000 cases in 2019, under the Trump administration,<sup>72</sup> and then drastically reduced likely due in part to the COVID-19 pandemic.<sup>73</sup>

**Figure 22. Total Court Deportation Proceedings Trend, L.A. County, 2012 – 2021**



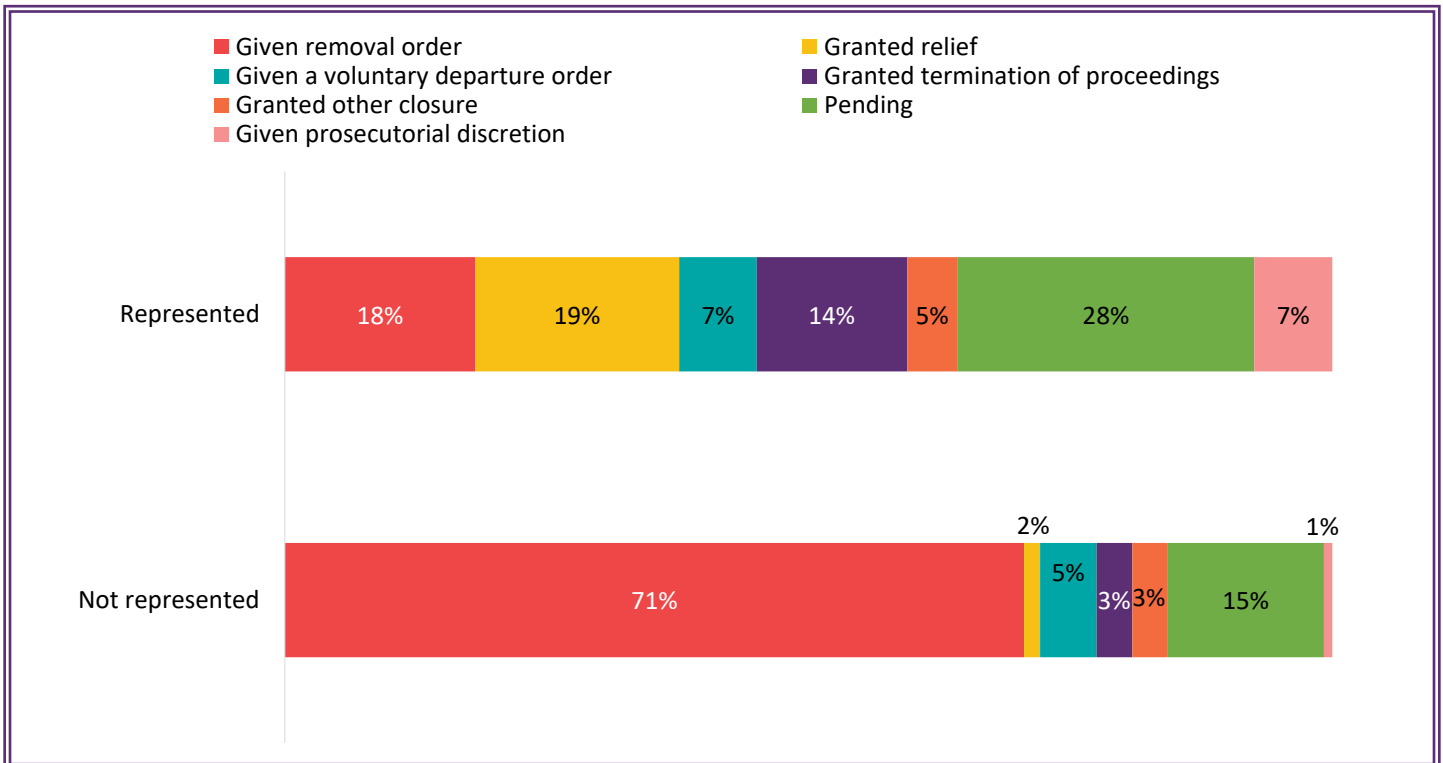
Source: USC Equity Research Institute analysis of the State and County Details on Deportation Proceedings in Immigration Court from the Transactional Records Access Clearinghouse, Syracuse University, [trac.syr.edu](https://trac.syr.edu/phptools/immigration/nta/), <https://trac.syr.edu/phptools/immigration/nta/>. Universe: All deportation proceedings initiated by the Department of Homeland Security and its predecessor, the Immigration and Naturalization Service, for immigrants residing in California. For more information, visit the California Immigrant Data Portal: <https://immigrantdataca.org/indicators/court-deportation-proceedings?break-down=trend&geo=04000000000006037>

A related issue is the importance of having legal representation during a removal order case—as this equips immigrants with the knowledge and support required to appear in court and fight their case. As seen in Figure 23, deportation cases in the county from 2001-2021 were much more likely to end in a removal order if the defendant lacked legal representation. When legal assistance was present, the range of outcomes changes drastically, with removal orders dropping from 71 percent to under 20 percent—showing the immense importance of having legal representation. For this reason, the County’s commitment to providing more legal representation for immigrants is especially groundbreaking and important as exemplified by RepresentLA, a countywide public-private program that provides critical legal representation not only to those in detention or with active removal cases, but also those seeking to adjust their status before the threat of removal becomes a reality.<sup>74</sup> Pushing forward these types of programs that utilize both local governmental and philanthropic investments is a prime example of how to create a more welcoming and inclusive home for us all.

**Survey Highlight on Deportation Cases**

**43% of immigrants surveyed believe that deportation is a threat for immigrants in the county.**

**Figure 23. Deportation Cases by Legal Representation and Case Outcome, L.A. County, 2001 – 2021**



Source: USC Equity Research Institute analysis of the State and County Details on Deportation Proceedings in Immigration Court from the Transactional Records Access Clearinghouse, Syracuse University, [trac.syr.edu](https://trac.syr.edu/phptools/immigration/nta/), <https://trac.syr.edu/phptools/immigration/nta/>. Universe: All deportation proceedings initiated by the Department of Homeland Security and its predecessor, the Immigration and Naturalization Service, for immigrants residing in California. For more information, visit the California Immigrant Data Portal: <https://immigrantdataca.org/indicators/court-deportation-proceedings?break-down=representation-and-outcome&geo=04000000000006037>

# WARMTH OF WELCOME OVERVIEW

## HATE CRIMES

### DATA POINTS

- ▶ Reports of hate crime events motivated by race, ethnicity, or national origin have increased significantly since 2012—peaking at 474 hate crime events in 2022.
- ▶ Of 2,873 reported hate crime events from 2012-2022 motivated by race, ethnicity, or national origin, the top group that was recorded as the target of the crime was African Americans at over 1,500 hate crime events.



### SURVEY

- ▶ 42% of all those surveyed (39% of immigrants) feel that immigrants are often the targets of discrimination.
- ▶ Over 1 in every 3 of all survey respondents (37%), feel that the level of welcome in the county is superficial at best. This increases to 56% for Black immigrants surveyed.



### RECOMMENDATIONS

**Fostering a region free of hostility towards immigrants is essential to promoting safety for immigrant Angelenos. However, hate crimes are still a reality and it is necessary for the County to make reporting these crimes safe and accessible, and also create a narrative where immigrants are seen as deserving of support and dignity.** As the data shows, reported hate crime events motivated by race, ethnicity, or national origin rose significantly to almost 500 reported events in 2022—and yet may still be underreported due to barriers like fear of retaliation, negative experiences with law enforcement, and more. Simultaneously, the demographics of L.A. County are changing—an aging immigrant population and new arrivals from communities of color means that our region will need to allocate resources to ensure these groups feel safe and welcome. In addition to supporting efforts to collect data on crimes against immigrants, this also translates into investing in a robust social safety net, wraparound assistance for new arrivals, adequate inclusion into our educational systems, and beyond. It is essential that leaders across all sectors set the tone for us all to embrace the diverse demographics of our communities—with the goal of ensuring that all Angelenos are safe, welcome, and able to thrive.

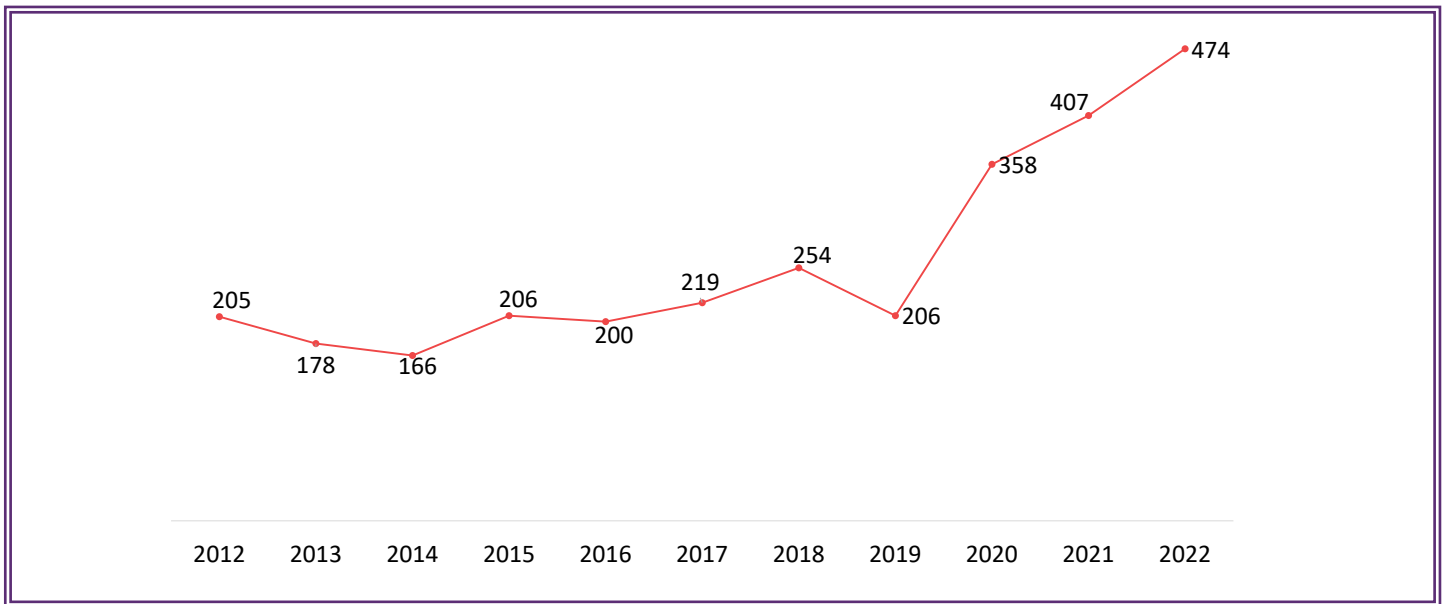
# WARMTH OF WELCOME:

## ▶ HATE CRIMES

Perhaps the antithesis of a community that is welcoming to immigrants is one where xenophobic hate crimes occur often and without accountability. While simply recording the occurrence of these crimes does not prevent more from happening, the commitment of local actors to bring awareness to the issue is one way of supporting the victims of these crimes. Hate crimes have been a concern that has long plagued the nation. In recognition of how these crimes affect both immigrants and other communities vulnerable to attacks (i.e. communities of color, religious minorities, or LGBTQ+ residents), L.A. County's Commission on Human Relations (HRC) records hate crimes reported to sources such as law enforcement, community-based organizations, schools, and the County's LA vs Hate effort where residents can report crimes independently.<sup>75</sup>

From 2012-2022, HRC has logged a total of 5,396 separate hate crime events where there were a total number of 6,304 victims.<sup>i</sup> The HRC highlights that crimes committed with specific anti-immigrant sentiment are often difficult to pinpoint as many of these crimes can also be identified as motivated by the victim's race, ethnicity, religion, or another motivator. Additionally, hate crimes committed against immigrants may

**Figure 24. Count of Hate Crimes Events Motivated by Race/Ethnicity/National Origin Trend, L.A. County, 2012 – 2022**



Source: USC ERI analysis of L.A. County Commission on Human Relations (HRC) data on hate crimes from 2012 to 2022. Note: In an effort to highlight the number of different hate crime events that have occurred throughout the county, ERI analysis reports on separate hate crime events instead of hate crime victims.

<sup>i</sup> L.A. County HRC collects data on hate crimes reported and, in some instances, there are multiple victims in any given hate crime. For the analysis in this report, in effort to focus on the number of different hate crime events that have occurred throughout the county, USC ERI analysis looks at separate hate crime events instead of hate crime victims, which is a slightly different way of interpreting the data and yields different counts and percentages than HRC reporting.

**Survey Highlight on Hate Crimes**

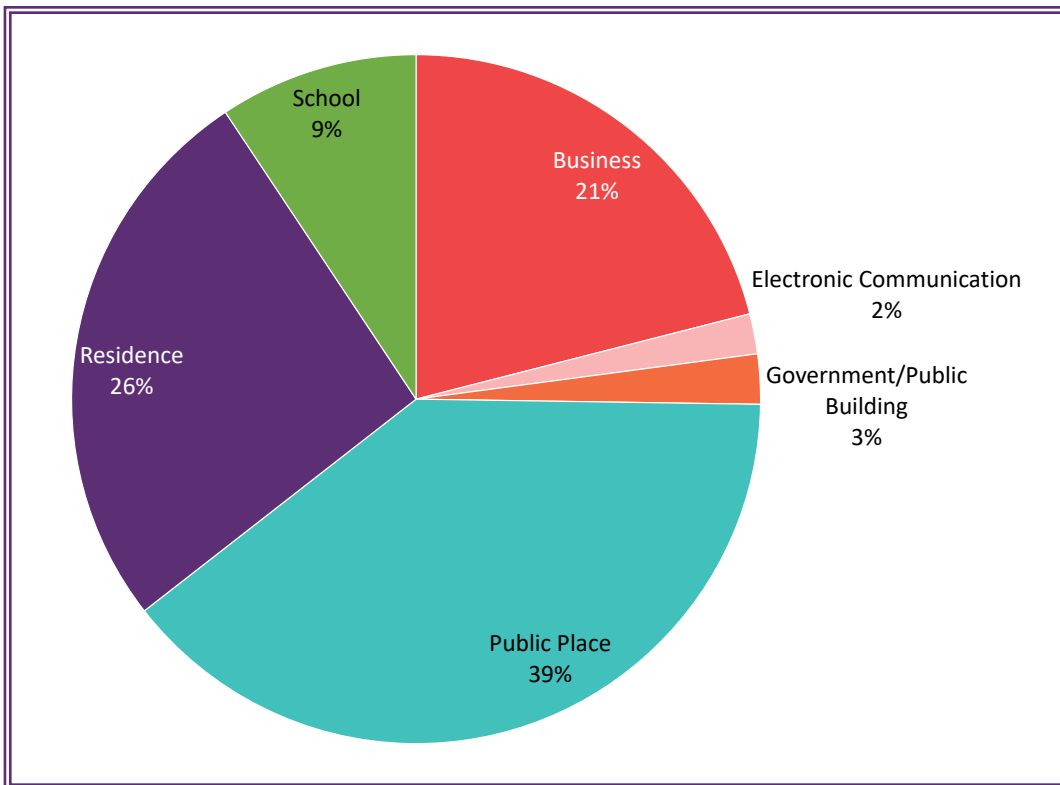
42% of all those surveyed (39% of immigrants surveyed) feel that immigrants are often the targets of discrimination.

go unreported due to viewing the event as insignificant, feeling distrust towards law enforcement, fear of exposing a victim's immigration status, or facing language barriers,<sup>76</sup> all of which make reporting these events both emotionally and logistically difficult.

However, the robust data gathered by HRC allows us to examine the subset of crimes motivated by race, ethnicity, or national origin more deeply—which is the type of crime we focus our analysis on here. Over half of the hate crimes reported between 2012 and 2022—53 percent or 2,873—were found to be motivated by race, ethnicity, or

national origin (with a total of 3,358 victims). Figure 24 above shows that there has been an overall increase in reports of these types of crimes—peaking at 474 reported hate crime events in L.A. County in 2022. It is important to note that this increase over time is not necessarily indicative of more crimes occurring. It could also be attributed to greater awareness about how to safely report crimes, or residents feeling more empowered to come forward and report crimes made against them or their loved ones.

**Figure 25. Hate Crime Events Motivated by Race/Ethnicity/National Origin by Location Type, L.A. County, 2012 – 2022**



In addition to the motivation behind hate crime events, HRC catalogs where these events take place. Data on the hate crime events motivated by race, ethnicity, or national origin reveals that public places (39 percent), residences (26 percent), and businesses (21 percent) were the most common places where these hate crime events were reported to have happened (see Figure 25).

Source: USC ERI analysis of L.A. County Commission on Human Relations (HRC) data on hate crimes from 2012 to 2022. Note: In an effort to highlight the number of different hate crime events that have occurred throughout the county, ERI analysis looks at separate hate crime events instead of hate crime victims.

Further details about hate crime events reported include their “sub-motivation,” as well as the “targeted group” that was intended to be the target of the crime. Of the 2,873 reported hate crime events that were motivated by race, ethnicity, or national origin, 379 were sub-motivated by “immigrant bashing” that were categorized as such for including anti-immigrant slurs or phrases.<sup>77</sup> Finally, Figure 26 shows the top 5 groups that were recorded as the target of these crimes, with African Americans as the most targeted group, followed by Latinos and Asian/Pacific Islanders. It is important to note that the number of victims in this table does not necessarily mean that every victim was a part of the “targeted group” (i.e. the target group could be Latinos, but the people victimized in the crime could be of different ethnicities). However, all victims were still part of the attack—cementing how hate crimes, while intended towards a certain group, can have ripple effects for the community and should be acknowledged for the harm they produce for all Angelenos.



**Survey Highlights on Hate Crimes**

Over 1 in every 3 of all survey respondents (37%) feel that the level of welcome in the county is superficial at best. This rises to over half (56%) for Black immigrants surveyed.

**Figure 26. Top 5 Targeted Groups of Hate Crimes Motivated by Race, Ethnicity, or National Origin by Number of Events and Number of Victims, L.A. County, 2012 - 2022**

Targeted Group	# of Hate Crime Events	# of Total Victims
African American	1548	1741
Latino	609	791
Asian/Pacific Islander	270	309
White	213	254
Middle Easterner	66	77

Source: USC ERI analysis of L.A. County Commission on Human Relations (HRC) data on hate crimes from 2012 to 2022. Note: The number of victims identified does not necessarily mean that every victim was a part of the “targeted group” but were still present and victimized as part of the crime.



# LOOKING AHEAD & RECOMMENDATIONS

As a county home to millions of immigrants from across the world, it will always be within the best interest of this region to not only address the issues that immigrants and their families face, but to proactively honor their contributions to our society in a way that makes it so they can thrive. As we look to the future with continued global crises, an impending presidential election, and ongoing battles for statewide funds, L.A. County has reasons to be proud *and* much work left on the table. To continue to push ourselves further as a leader on immigrant inclusion, we offer the following recommendations to local leadership, foundations, and elected officials:

- 1. Our county must shift the narrative to value immigrants beyond their economic contributions and instead foster a region that provides them with the support necessary to build the futures they desire.** We have long relied on a narrative that portrays immigrants as economic assets to society. While the economic contributions of immigrants are substantial and help make our region as strong as it is, the inherent value of immigrant Angelenos is in the fact that they are fellow human beings who also choose to call this region home—and so deserve to be invested in and have the same opportunities as non-immigrants. At the same time, we must support the generational economic growth of immigrant families to foster a truly welcoming L.A. County for all immigrants. We do this through targeted investments in programs that promote workforce development, emphasize workplace standards, and share information about entrepreneurship—with emphasis on immigrant women and undocumented workers. This includes ensuring immigrants receive information about these programs and are provided the technical assistance needed to truly benefit from these interventions.
- 2. Given the vast diversity of immigrant Angelenos in our region, it is necessary to center and invest in immigrant groups that are often excluded from targeted attention—such as immigrants that are aging, queer, trans, Black, Indigenous, as well as those living with disabilities.** The rich array of perspectives and experiences that immigrants bring to our region is one of L.A.'s strongest assets. However, these groups are often not represented in data. For example, L.A. County is home to a vibrant Indigenous migrant population that is often not captured in data. Black immigrants are another group that are invisibilized even though there were nearly 60,000 Black immigrants living in L.A. County in 2021. This reality emphasizes the need for intentional approaches to ensure their lived experiences are centered in the creation of programs, policies, and investments. Disaggregating data by race/ethnicity, gender identities, age, and beyond is one way to ensure that diverse communities are captured in the data the leaders use to shape future progressive policies from the county to the federal level.
- 3. L.A. County has made dedicated investments in language justice—and the data shows further investment remains critical, especially for Asian American and Latino immigrant households, and increasingly for Black immigrant households.** Indeed, linguistic isolation rates vary across

racial/ethnic groups and understanding the diversity of languages spoken is important in allocating resources. Asian American and Latino immigrant households stand to benefit greatly from language access resources as they have consistently faced the highest rates of linguistic isolation among immigrants in this county. The same is true for Black immigrant households who have seen a pronounced increase in linguistic isolation. There have been promising steps forward to ensure all Angelenos receive access to services in their preferred language, such as the Countywide Language Access Plan, and continued attention to this issue will only propel the region further in the fight for language accessibility.

- 4. Naturalization remains key for immigrants to engage civically and thrive economically—and yet, different immigrant groups naturalize at disproportionate rates, indicating that the county must continue to reduce barriers by advocating for reduced fees and investing in local naturalization programs.** As a region with high number of immigrants, County officials must invest in naturalization efforts and promote civic participation in local, state, and federal elections. This is particularly important to reach those that qualify for free or reduced fees under the new U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services naturalization fee structure. As the 2024 federal elections approach, it is key to ensure that immigrants continue to naturalize and those that can, are prepared to participate in the upcoming presidential election. Given the significantly lower rates of naturalization among Latino eligible-to-naturalize adults and the large numbers that qualify under the new fee structure, they would stand to benefit from targeted naturalization support.
- 5. Recent federal, state, and local programs that address the digital divide have likely contributed to decreased rates of digital inaccessibility—yet the issue remains important for undocumented and low-income households—indicating that continued attention in this area could make a larger impact.** Given that access to the internet has become essential in today's society, L.A. County leaders must continue to create programs that promote digital access as well as literacy. The data shows that some digital access has increased for immigrant Angelenos over time—likely due in part to programs like Delete the Divide or the Affordable Connectivity Program (ACP)—however, inequities persist among immigrants such as undocumented households and immigrants living below 200% of the federal poverty level. Continuing and adding to existing investments (especially as the ACP program winds down) can better situate L.A. County to overcome these disparities and provide immigrant communities with not only affordable internet access but adequate digital literacy.
- 6. Median household incomes have increased over time, but disparities remain among immigrant households depending on their status—indicating that county leaders must continue to work towards ensuring immigrant communities have the access and training necessary for jobs that pay livable wages.** Although over time there has been an increase in median household incomes for all Angelenos, immigrants still fall behind their U.S.-born counterparts. This issue is particularly important for undocumented households who have consistently had the lowest median household income at \$46,500 in 2021, compared to \$75,000 among all Angelenos. Additionally, greater accessibility to information about how to properly start and sustain small businesses is critical for those immigrants looking to become entrepreneurs—especially undocumented immigrants who face barriers to employment opportunities and often resort to the informal sector or seek self-employment.

- 7. Housing costs remain an issue for all, and the issue is especially acute for undocumented immigrants, thus county efforts to address the housing and houseless crises must intentionally consider the barriers faced by immigrant Angelenos.** Indeed, the rate of households that are rent-burdened has remained consistently high between 2012 and 2021. In 2021, 56% of U.S.-born households and 67% of undocumented households were rent-burdened. As housing costs have only worsened over time, county leadership must consider how local housing rates leave many vulnerable to eviction or loss of housing. Additionally, more is still needed to address the large majority of renters who are overburdened and have limited capacity to save up for a home. To address relief for renters and create pathways to permanent housing, local leadership must continue to invest in deeply affordable permanent housing, rent relief, and homeownership programs that connect immigrants—regardless of status—to resources necessary for immigrants to envision a secure future in the region.
- 8. With the vast numbers of immigrants throughout our region, it is essential to ensure critical services—such as welfare and legal services—are physically available where immigrants may require them. Investing in stronger data-collecting mechanisms that capture where immigrants live and where these types of interventions are needed is essential to providing consistent and accessible resources.** In this effort, it is important to allocate sufficient time and capacity to partner with L.A. immigrant-serving organizations and institutions to develop strategic methods that reach communities and capture their needs. Certain data collection methods, for example, may inherently hold biases that miss key immigrant groups (e.g. online surveys might skew toward younger generations or those with digital access; and over-sampling certain groups is necessary to capture the experiences of smaller communities)—thus working with trusted organizations that know immigrant needs best is key to overcoming those biases as much as possible and gathering representative samples. Creating these mechanisms will allow L.A. County to consistently meet the needs of immigrants and evaluate its progress over time.
- 9. Fostering a region free of hostility towards immigrants is essential to promoting safety for immigrant Angelenos. However, hate crimes are still a reality in the county and it is necessary for the County to make reporting these crimes safe and accessible, and also create a narrative where immigrants are seen as deserving of support and dignity.** As the data shows, reported hate crime events motivated by race, ethnicity, or national origin rose significantly to almost 500 reported events in 2022—and yet may still be underreported due to barriers like fear of retaliation, negative experiences with law enforcement, and more. Simultaneously, the demographics of L.A. County are changing—an aging immigrant population and new arrivals from communities of color means that our region will need to allocate resources to ensure these groups feel safe and welcome. In addition to supporting efforts to collect data on crimes against immigrants, this also translates into investing in a robust social safety net, wraparound assistance for new arrivals, adequate inclusion into our educational systems, and beyond. It is essential that county leadership in all sectors set the tone for us all to embrace the diverse demographics of our communities—with the goal of ensuring that all Angelenos are safe, welcome, and able to thrive.
- 10. Continue to create innovative policy and programs that situate Los Angeles as an influential leader in immigrant inclusion for other federal and state actors.** While many local leaders are committed to making this region a welcoming home for all, immigrants face many challenges in the

## LOOKING AHEAD & RECOMMENDATIONS *CONTINUED*

county. Removal orders are just one of those issues—and ensuring that immigrants have adequate support to fight their cases is one way the county can express its support for immigrants. In light of an upcoming election, it is important that L.A. County is prepared to face a challenging immigration policy landscape once more. It is critical that Los Angeles leaders look to the blueprint of groundbreaking programs—such as RepresentLA that aims to increase legal representation for immigrants—which contributes to the improved livelihoods of immigrant Angelenos across our region. As the data shows, legal representation within removal order cases makes a striking difference in the outcome of one’s case—indicating that current and future investments in this area make all the difference in the futures of immigrant communities and should direct county leaders to continue crating bold and robust resources for the immigrants that choose L.A. County as their home.

Our political, social, and economic future continues to be unsettled and uncertain. The one thing that is for certain is that L.A. County will continue to hold the honor of being home to immigrants and the families they build. Immigrants of all statuses, including those who are undocumented, are settled in our neighborhoods, schools, and workplaces. These new Americans contribute to our economic and civic life, particularly when they find support from a robust ecosystem of immigrant-serving organizations and institutions. These organizations then represent the needs of immigrants to decision makers who are ultimately accountable to making this region a welcoming one. New arrivals sent from other parts of the nation find themselves welcomed by unrelenting advocates and service providers that use every resource available to integrate them into the fold. While we find ourselves burdened by consistently challenging conditions, the rest of the nation must also answer to L.A. County’s bold policy, organizing, and programming that will not stop fighting for true immigrant inclusion until all immigrants in this nation thrive.



# APPENDICES

## ▶ APPENDIX A: SURVEY RESPONDENT DEMOGRAPHICS

<b>Table 1. Survey Respondents by Nativity (n=830)</b>	<b>%</b>
Immigrant	61%
U.S.-born citizen of an immigrant parent	39%
<b>Total</b>	<b>100%</b>

Source: USC Equity Research Institute analysis of survey data gathered from the Immigrant Communities in L.A. County survey, administered between January and March of 2024.

<b>Table 2. Survey Respondents by Race/Ethnicity (n=827)</b>	<b>%</b>
Asian American	16.8%
Black or African American	38.9%
Latino or Hispanic	14.3%
Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander	0.8%
Native American or Alaska native	2.9%
White	20.7%
Multiracial	1.3%
Other	4.2%
<b>Total</b>	<b>100%</b>

Source: USC Equity Research Institute analysis of survey data gathered from the Immigrant Communities in L.A. County survey, administered between January and March of 2024.

## APPENDIX A: SURVEY RESPONDENT DEMOGRAPHICS *CONTINUED*

<b>Table 3. Respondents by Age Group (n=825)</b>	<b>%</b>
18-24	15.2%
25-34	43.9%
35-44	27.0%
45-54	8.8%
55-64	4.1%
Over 65 years	0.5%
<b>Total</b>	<b>99%</b>

Source: USC Equity Research Institute analysis of survey data gathered from the Immigrant Communities in L.A. County survey, administered between January and March of 2024.

<b>Table 4. Respondents by Gender (n=826)</b>	<b>%</b>
Man	46.6%
Woman	51.6%
Transgender man	0.4%
Transgender woman	0.1%
Non-binary	0.5%
Other	0.1%
Prefer not to answer	0.2%
<b>Total</b>	<b>99.5%</b>

Source: USC Equity Research Institute analysis of survey data gathered from the Immigrant Communities in L.A. County survey, administered between January and March of 2024.

## APPENDIX A: SURVEY RESPONDENT DEMOGRAPHICS *CONTINUED*

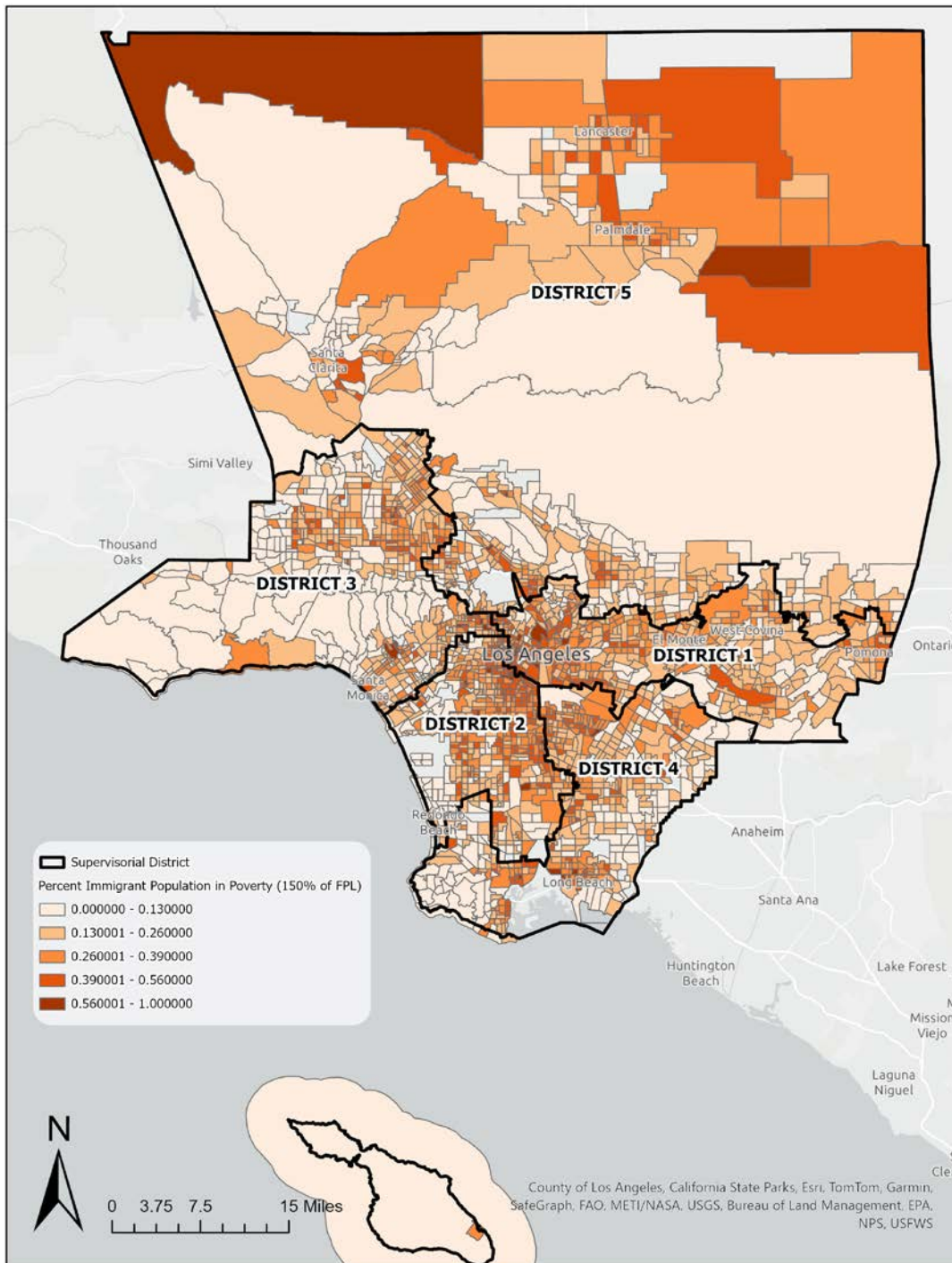
<b>Table 5. Respondents by Region of Origin (n=618)</b>	<b>%</b>
Asia	10.7%
Southeast Asia	3.0%
Southwest Asia	8.1%
Middle East	0.7%
Mexico	6.4%
Canada	2.0%
Central America	1.7%
South America	0.6%
Europe	6.5%
Caribbean	0.5%
North Africa	4.0%
West Africa	8.7%
East Africa	12.4%
South Africa	3.6%
Central Africa	4.3%
Other	1.0%
<b>Total</b>	<b>74.2%</b>

Source: USC Equity Research Institute analysis of survey data gathered from the Immigrant Communities in L.A. County survey, administered between January and March of 2024.

# APPENDICES

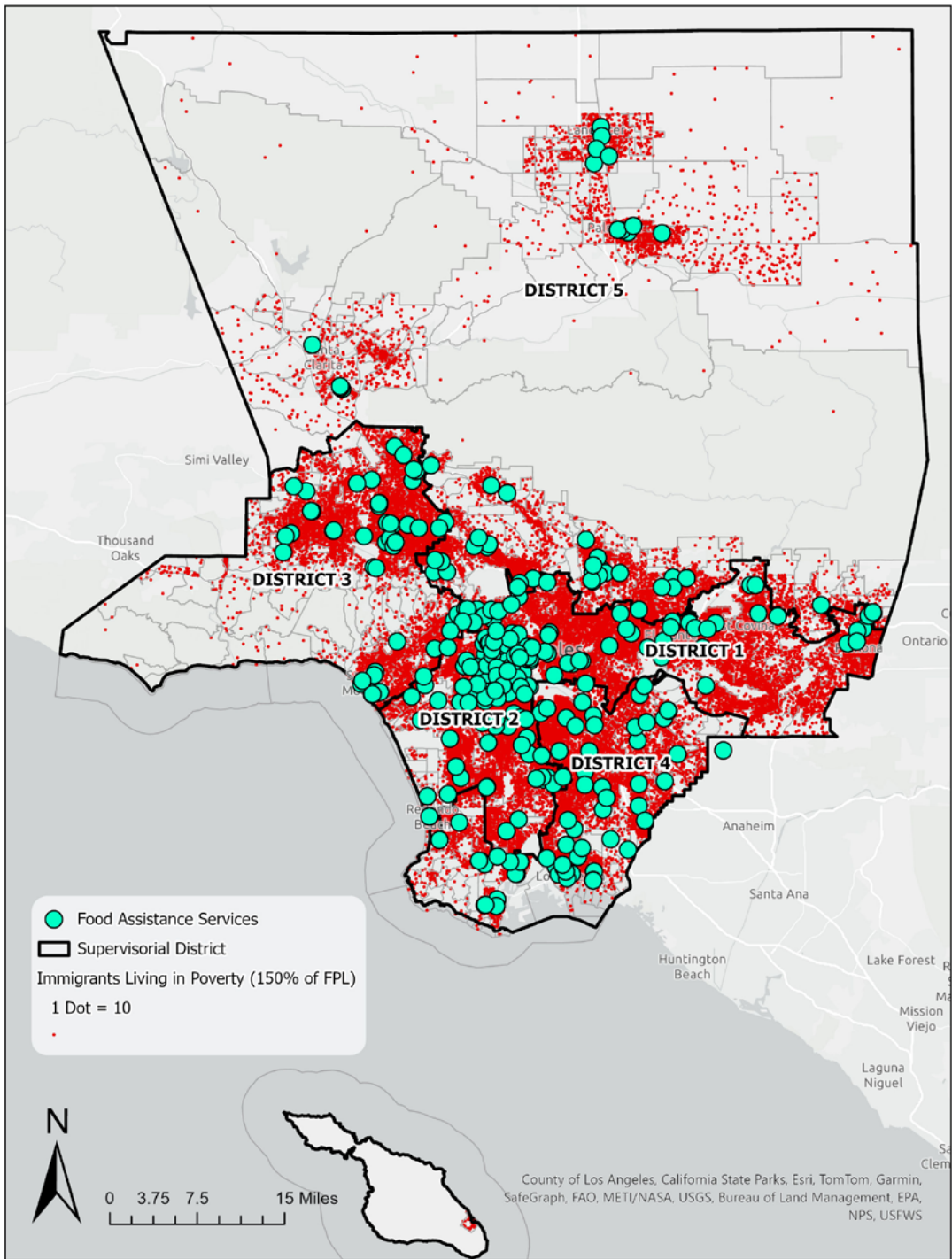
## ▶ APPENDIX B: MAPS ON ACCESS TO SERVICES

Map 1. Immigrants living Below 150% of the Federal Poverty Level by County Supervisorial District. L.A. County, 2022





Map 2. Food Assistance Services and Immigrants living Below 150% of the Federal Poverty Level by County Supervisorial District, L.A. County, 2022



# APPENDICES

## ▶ APPENDIX C: METHODOLOGY

### Immigrant Status Data

To estimate immigrant status (e.g., undocumented, naturalized citizen, lawful resident), we rely on an approach developed by Pastor, Le, and Scoggins (2021).<sup>78</sup> This approach relies on an increasingly common strategy that involves first determining who among the non-citizen population is least likely to be undocumented due to a series of conditions (a process called “logical edits”) and then sorting the remainder into documented and undocumented based on a series of probability estimates. The probability estimates are derived from a logistic regression model run on the 2014 Survey of Income and Program Participation (SIPP) from the U.S. Census Bureau, from which coefficients are then applied to non-citizen, non-Cuban immigrants in the 5-year ACS microdata from IPUMS USA to estimate each respondent's probability of being undocumented. Unlike most surveys, the questions included in the SIPP allow researchers to deduce documentation status.

Individuals in the ACS microdata who are not assumed to be documented based on the logical edits are then tagged as “undocumented” until estimated control totals from experts at the Office of Immigration Statistics, the Migration Policy Institute, and the Center for Migration Studies are met. Estimated control totals at both the national level by country of origin, and at the state level (for all countries combined) are applied. It is important to note that when tagging individuals as “undocumented,” the tagging is not simply done from the top down in terms of estimated probabilities of being undocumented but is rather done in such a way that the distribution of probabilities for those tagged as undocumented mimics the distribution observed among those identified as undocumented in the SIPP.

All non-citizens not tagged as undocumented are assumed to be either Lawful Permanent Residents (LPRs) or holders of student or H1B visas. Student visa holders include those who immigrated as adults and were enrolled in higher education at the time they were surveyed. H1B visa holders are identified through a procedure that considers age, country of origin, length of time in the U.S., and occupation. Those not identified as student or H1B visa holders are assumed to be LPRs. Unless otherwise noted, demographic data of the LA County immigrant population are estimates by USC Equity Research Institute.

### Pseudo-cohort Analysis

Using the 5-year samples from the American Community Survey (ACS) datasets, we examined the data for immigrants who migrated to the U.S. utilizing the 2012-2016 and 2017-2021 pooled datasets. We then grouped the sample of immigrants in each dataset by time in the U.S. using increments of five years up to 30 years. We used this grouping to define the cohorts of immigrants to conduct a pseudo-cohort analysis. For example, we assume those who indicated that they arrived less than 5 years ago in the 2012-2016 5-year microdata are on average the same group who indicated they arrived to the U.S. 6 to 10 years ago in the 2017-2021 5-year microdata. Universe includes foreign-born heads of households (excludes group quarters). For the data on median household incomes, all estimates are adjusted to 2021 dollars using the consumer price index.

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