

East Bay Immigrant Workers

EBase Fact Sheet March 2008

Summary:

1. *Immigrants make up a substantial portion of the East Bay workforce (34.7%), totaling 371,051 workers in a variety of occupations and industries.*
2. *Many immigrant workers are concentrated in low-skilled, low wage occupations and industries, where standards need to be raised the most.*

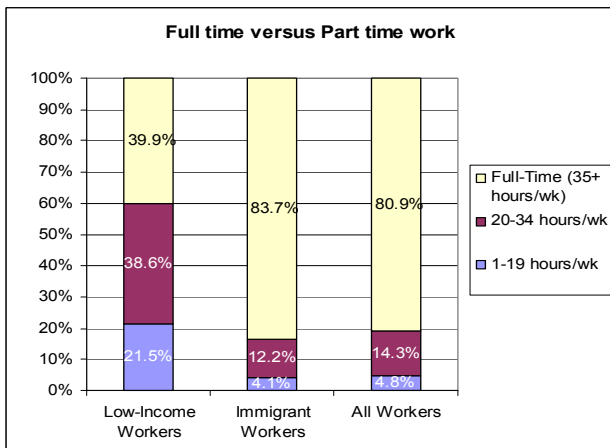
A. California and the East Bay have much larger immigrant populations than the nation.

Total immigrant population

	U.S.	California	East Bay
Not A Citizen	7.3%	15.5%	14.0%
Naturalized citizen	5.3%	11.7%	13.8%
Total Immigrant population (% total population)	12.5%	27.2%	27.9%

While immigrants are 27.9% of East Bay residents, they make up an estimated, 34.7% of the East Bay workforce.

B. Most immigrants work full-time, despite uneven levels of educational attainment.



Immigrants, particularly immigrant men, tend to have higher rates of labor force participation and are more likely to be working at any given time, compared to native workers.¹

The vast majority of immigrant workers are employed full-time (83.7%). The table above suggests more immigrants are working and making a significant contribution to the regional economy.

Data Source: U.S. Census 2006 American Community Survey (ACS), an annual sample survey. Additional sources are cited in footnotes to supplement our understanding of conditions facing immigrant workers.

East Bay: Alameda and Contra Costa counties.

Immigrant workers: Foreign-born non-citizens and naturalized citizens, as categorized as immigrants by the U.S. Census Bureau. The Census does not collect information on the legal status of immigrants. There was insufficient data on low-wage immigrant workers, so the immigrant worker category includes all immigrant workers regardless of income.

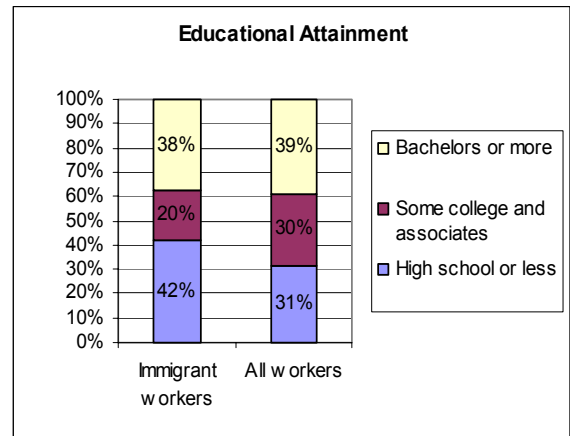
Income: Average annual salary. Includes full and part time workers, as well as full and part-year workers.

Low-income workers: The bottom 20% (one-fifth) or lowest earning workers. Therefore, there are over 200,000 low-income workers in the East Bay.

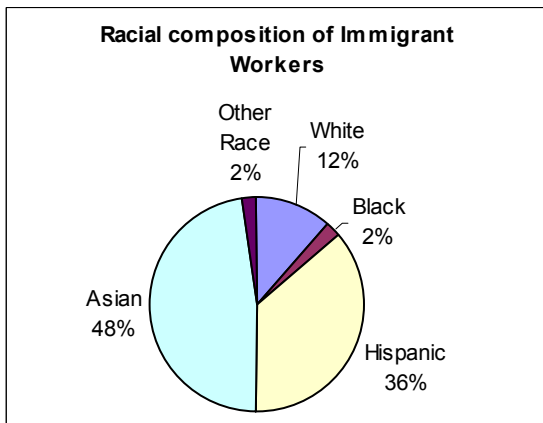
Racial categories: Native Americans, other races, and mixed races are missing due to insufficient sample size.

¹ Passel, Jeffery, Karina Fortuny, and Randy Capps. 2007. "The Characteristics of Unauthorized Immigrants in California, Los Angeles County, and the United States." Urban Institute. March. Retrieved 1-28-2008. http://www.urban.org/UploadedPDF/411425_Characteristics_Immigrants.pdf

Immigrant workers have uneven educational attainment, with the largest portion at high school or less (42%), 20% in the middle with some college, and a significant 38% at the top with a Bachelors degree or higher. The table to the right suggests that immigrants occupy both highly skilled jobs that require high levels of education, as well as lower-skilled jobs that require a high school education or less.

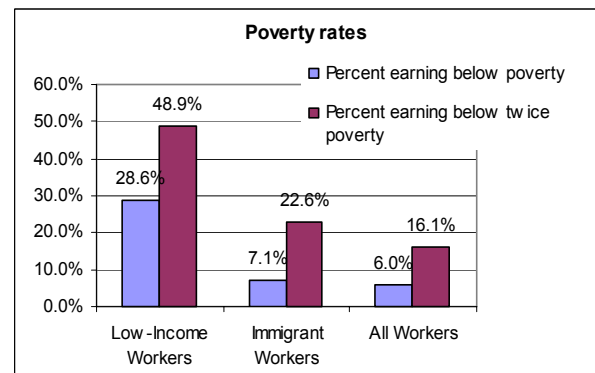


C. The immigrant workforce is racially and ethnically diverse, and they struggle to provide for their families.



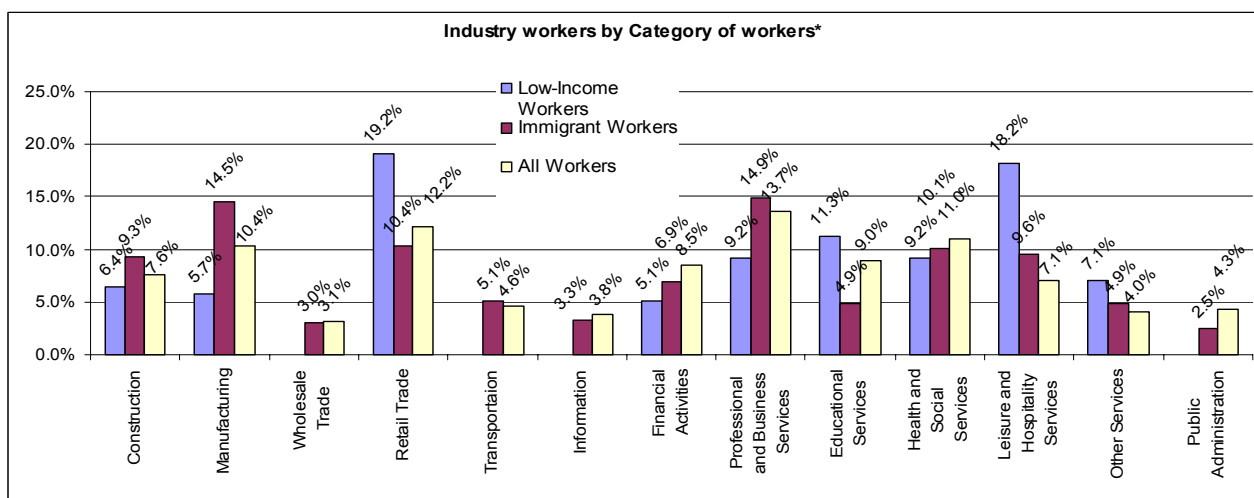
The largest share of immigrant workers are Asian (48%) and the second largest are Hispanic (36%). There are likely class and immigrant status differences between these groups that are not apparent from these overall statistics.

While the poverty rates for immigrant workers (7.1%) are similar to all workers (6.0%), a much larger share of immigrant workers earns less than twice the poverty level (22.6% versus 16.1% for all workers).



(6.0%), a much larger share of immigrant workers earns less than twice the poverty level (22.6% versus 16.1% for all workers). Immigrant workers face challenges in making ends meet and many do not earn enough to escape poverty.

E. Immigrants work in a variety of industries and occupations, but they tend to be concentrated in low-paying, low-road sectors.



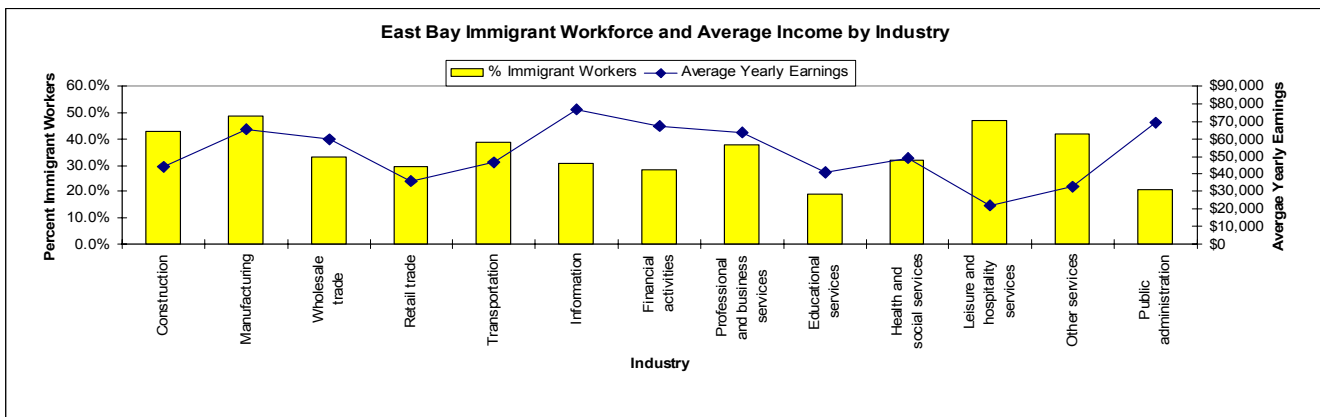
* Wholesale, Transportation, Information, and Public Administration lack complete data on low-income workers due to small sample size.

Immigrant workers are most highly concentrated in the following industries (The percentages reflect the share of immigrant workers in the industry, as a proportion of all immigrant workers.):

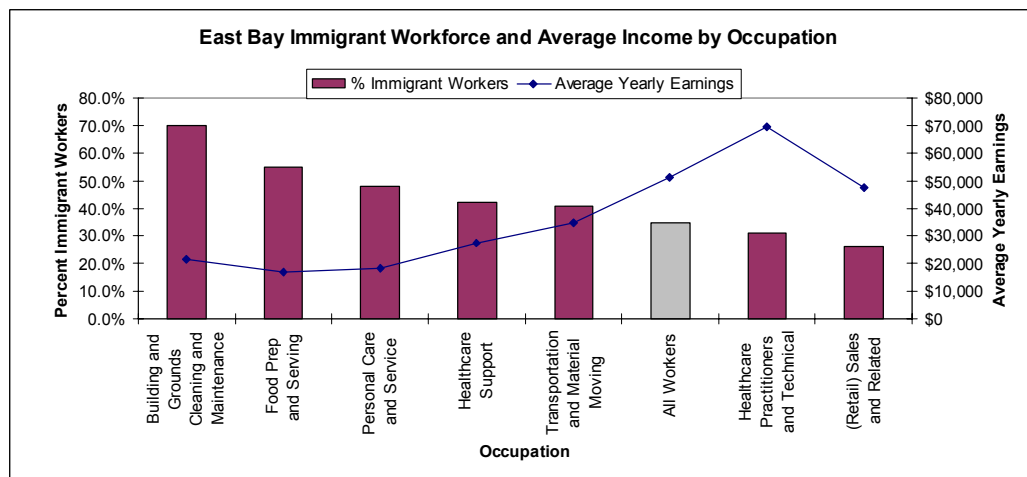
- *Professional and Business Services (14.9%)*: Professional and Business Services include executives as well as administrative support and waste management so janitors and groundskeepers are included.
- *Manufacturing (14.5%)*: Manufacturing includes machine, food, and apparel manufacturing, among many other types of manufacturing jobs.
- *Retail (10.4%)*: Retail includes cashiers, stock keepers, and clerks.

Sectors of particular interest are those with *high rates of both low-income workers and immigrant workers*. The next two charts represent immigrant workers as a proportion of all workers in that industry or occupation, rather than immigrant workers in that industry as a proportion of all immigrant workers (the middle bar in the previous chart).

Below, the sectors with the *widest distance between the income line and the bar representing immigrant workers* represent industries with *low average wages and high portions of immigrant workers*. These industries are in need of higher standards to improve conditions for low-wage immigrant workers. These priority industries for immigrant workers include *Leisure and Hospitality Services, Other Services (such as laundry, parking attendants, and nail salons), and Construction*.



When analyzed by occupation, the occupations with the highest concentrations of immigrant workers include Buildings and Grounds Cleaning and Maintenance, Food preparation and selling, Personal care, and Health care support.



The occupations to the left of the “All Workers” reveal high concentrations of immigrant workers with relatively low incomes. Therefore, intervention into these occupations should take priority for raising standards for immigrant

workers. Note: Only the occupations with enough total workers to have statistically significant estimates are listed.

F. Undocumented Workers make up a large portion of the workforce.

Unauthorized immigrants are vital to the economy, and yet data on unauthorized or undocumented immigrant workers is difficult to attain, particularly using government data sources. There are several reasons why unauthorized immigrants would not be forthcoming with information on surveys, including fear of intimidation or retaliation at home, work, or at school, as well as fear of losing access to vital social services. These fears are exacerbated by waves of anti-immigrant political sentiment.

Industry	% Unauthorized Immigrant workers
Construction	20%
Leisure and Hospitality	17%
Manufacturing	14%
Professional and Business Services	13%
Wholesale and Retail Trades	11%
Other Services	7%
<i>All Other Industries</i>	<i>17%</i>

Therefore, we supplement our analysis of the U.S. Census Bureau’s data on East Bay immigrant workers with national non-governmental data analyzed by the Pew Hispanic Center.²

Across all industries, an *estimated 17% of all workers are unauthorized immigrant workers*, with the highest proportion in the construction industry (20%).

To understand the potential impacts on the economy, we use the construction industry as example of the impact and contributions of unauthorized immigrant labor to the national economy:

- According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics,³ there were 7.7 million people employed in construction across the nation, with average earnings of \$781 per week (or \$40,612 per year).
- Therefore, construction jobs generated an estimated \$312 billion in 2006.
- If we remove 20% of that personal income generated from the work of unauthorized immigrant labor in the construction industry, the loss is an estimated \$62 billion.

The value of immigrants’ labor is often lost in the rush to criminalize a critical part of the nation’s labor force. This brief analysis shows that the impact of SSA “no-match” letters, targeted at unauthorized immigrant workers, would be devastating not only to immigrants and immigrant workers themselves, but also would be detrimental to the national economy.⁴

For more information about EBASE’s worker demographics project, please contact Nick Peraino: nick@workingeastbay.org, or 510-893-7106 x. 30.

² Passel, Jeffery S. 2006. “The Size and Characteristics of the Unauthorized Migrant Population in the U.S.” Pew Hispanic Center. March 7. Retrieved 1-16-2008 <http://pewhispanic.org/files/reports/61.pdf>

³ Bureau of Labor Statistics. 2007. “Career Guide to Industries: Construction” <http://www.bls.gov/oco/cg/cgs003.htm#employ> Retrieved 1-29-2008

⁴ Social security “no-match” refers to a situation where the social security number a worker submits does not match the name of a worker. This data analyzed here does *not* include workers who are mis-identified as having a Social Security “no-match” due to errors in the SSA system.