



COVID-19's Impact on Immigrant Communities: Facts at a Glance

Immigrants are playing a vital role in the frontline response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

- Immigrants and their U.S.-born children number approximately 90 million, accounting for **28% of the overall U.S. population** in 2018 (Batalova et al., 2020).
- **29% of physicians, 38% of home health aides, 23% of retail-store pharmacists, and 42% of food packers and packagers are immigrants** (Gelatt, 2020).

Immigrants are experiencing significant barriers to accessing health care, relief programs, and other support systems.

- Latinx workers, who comprise 47% of the immigrant workforce, reported the highest unemployment rates among all racial and ethnic groups since April 2020 (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2020).
- An estimated **9.3 to 10.8 million noncitizens are uninsured during the pandemic** (Capps & Gelatt, 2020).
- Recent national, state and local data indicate an overrepresentation of racial-ethnic minorities, particularly Black and Hispanic people, in hospitalization and death due to COVID-19 (e.g., CDC, 2020; Gross et al., 2020; New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene, 2020).

- Although **undocumented residents pay billions of dollars (\$31.9 billion in 2018) per year in federal, state, and local taxes** (New American Economy, 2020), the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, Economic Security (CARES) Act, and the Families First Coronavirus Response Act excluded them from testing and treatment, cash and food assistance, and unemployment insurance.
 - It is estimated that **9.9 million undocumented immigrants, along with 3.7 million children and 1.7 million spouses who are either U.S. citizens or green-card holders, are excluded from the stimulus payments due to the restriction of the CARES Act.**
- Although the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) clarified that any COVID-19 test, treatment, or preventive care would not affect immigrants' public charge analysis, **the Public Charge Rule still prohibits immigrant families from seeking all other types of public assistance** (Vance, 2020).
- As the U.S. strives to reopen the economy, low-wage **immigrant workers are forced to choose between surviving financially or surviving the COVID-19 pandemic.** Ongoing efforts could pose further health risks for **immigrant families, children, and their community.**

The suspension of immigrant benefits processing, travel bans, and international student guidelines poses complications for those who need timely adjudications to remain lawful to work and study legally.

- Temporary immigrant workers face a host of uncertainties right now due to suspended services of U.S. embassies and consulates, limited in-person services of USCIS, and travel bans, all of which determine the process to extend or change their immigrant status.
- The U.S. Student Exchange and Visitor Program (SEVP) announced that international students will be forced to leave the country (or may not enter or reenter the country) if all of their classes will be delivered remotely, placing over 1 million international students at increased risk of either contracting the coronavirus (by attending in-persons classes or traveling) or losing their lawful legal status.
 - Although the policy was soon rescinded due to major lawsuit filings from numerous educational institutions (e.g., Treisman, July 14,

2020), students and institutions continue to brace for new threats to **the legal status of millions of international students.**

Dangerous and inhumane conditions in detention centers are placing detained immigrants at disproportionate risk of contracting COVID-19:

- As of June 24, the U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) announced a total of **2,489 confirmed cases of COVID-19 among 8,858 tested detainees in ICE custody.** The high testing-positive rate (**28%, compared to the nation-wide rate of 8%**) suggests that the facilities are only testing those with obvious symptoms and not casting a wide enough net to know how much COVID-19 is spreading within the detention facilities (López, 2020).

Recommendations for Policymakers:

- Create and enforce workplace safety guidelines to ensure the health and safety of immigrant workers.
- Partner with community organizations to provide remotely accessible, culturally competent, and language-specific healthcare and social services.
- Make short-term revisions to the Public Charge Rule to allow inclusive access to relief programs and other services.
- Adjust law and immigration enforcement strategies to protect the health of immigrant communities, and to alleviate fear and confusion among the undocumented community.

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