

A Snapshot of Immigrant Women in the United States



There are over 23 million female immigrants in the United States, and they play a valuable role in U.S. society and the economy.¹ Immigrant women come from all over the world and outnumber immigrant men. They are more likely than men to come to the United States through the family-based immigration system and are more likely to become U.S. citizens. Over one-third of immigrant women aged 25 and older have a bachelor's degree or more education. Among those from the top 10 countries of origin for female immigrants, women from India are the most highly educated.

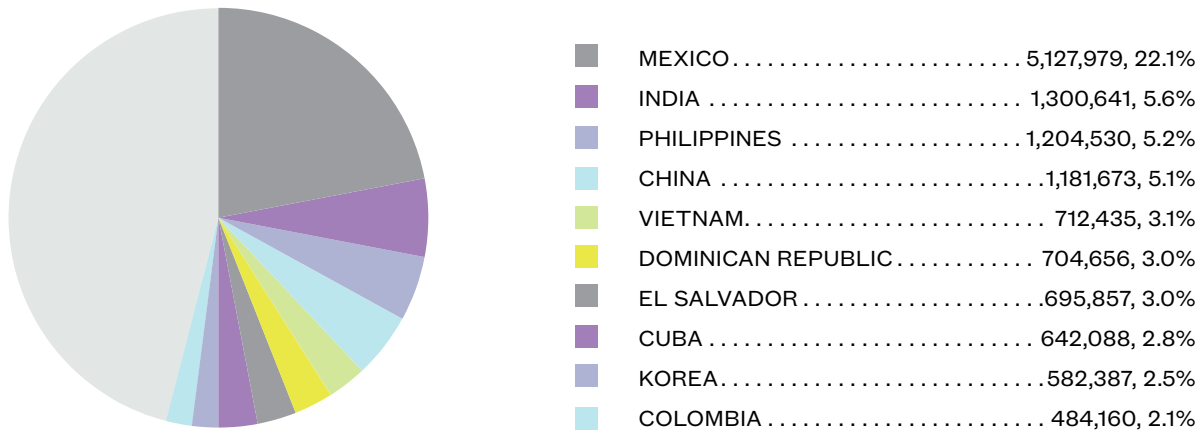
Immigrants account for 16 percent of women currently in the U.S. labor force. Certain subsets of immigrant women participate in the labor force at higher rates than U.S.-born women. Women from the Philippines, Colombia, the Dominican Republic, and Vietnam are all more likely to be in the labor force than U.S.-born women. The 12.7 million immigrant women active in the United States labor force occupy roles across the educational and occupational spectrum. Immigrant women are particularly vital in the Health Care and Social Assistance industry, followed by Professional Services,² and Hospitality. Women from the Philippines are particularly likely to work in Health Care and Social Assistance, with 42 percent working in this industry sector. Even though the work that immigrant women do adds critical value to our economy and society, immigrant women earn less than foreign-born men, and less than U.S.-born men or women.

KEY FINDINGS

- **Mexico is the single largest country of origin for female immigrants.**
- **Immigrant women outnumber immigrant men.**
- **Immigrant women are more likely than men to come to the United States through the family-based immigration system.**
- **Most immigrant women are naturalized citizens.**
- **Immigrant women from India are highly educated.**
- **The 12.7 Million immigrant women active in the United States labor force occupy roles across the educational and occupational spectrum.**
- **Immigrant women in the labor force earn less than any other demographic.**

DEMOGRAPHICS

- Mexican-born women accounted for **22.1%** of foreign-born women living in the United States in 2021, followed by India at 5.6%, the Philippines at 5.2%, and China at 5.1%.
- Showcasing the diversity of national origins, **45.6%** of foreign-born women came from countries other than the top 10.



In 2021,

23.2M

female immigrants were living in the United States.

51.3%

of the total foreign-born population were female.

14.0%

of the entire female population in the United States were immigrants.

Men outnumbered women among immigrants from **Mexico** and **India**, the two countries with the highest share of immigrants in the United States.

1. Unless otherwise noted, all data comes from American Immigration Council Analysis of the 2021 American Community Survey, downloaded from IPUMS USA, University of Minnesota, www.ipums.org.
2. Professional services: Most of these industries include professions that require a degree or a license, such as legal services, accounting, scientific research, consulting services, etc.
3. Office of Immigration Statistics, U.S. Department of Homeland Security, 2021 Yearbook of Immigration Statistics, Table 9. <https://www.dhs.gov/immigration-statistics/yearbook/2021>
4. Office of Immigration Statistics, U.S. Department of Homeland Security, 2021 Yearbook of Immigration Statistics, Table 9. <https://www.dhs.gov/immigration-statistics/yearbook/2021>

CITIZENSHIP & IMMIGRATION

Data from the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) indicates that female immigrants are more likely than male immigrants to come to the United States through the family-based class of admissions, rather than through employment.

In Fiscal Year (FY) 2021,

228,555 women



156,793 men



obtained lawful permanent resident (LPR) status because they were an **immediate relative of a U.S. Citizen**.³

Naturalization rates differ by country of origin. Among those from the top ten countries, women from **Vietnam** are the most likely to be naturalized citizens (77.0%), followed closely by the **Philippines** (74.0%), Cuba (70.0%) and **Korea** (68.9%).

Female immigrants from **China, Colombia, Cuba, the Dominican Republic, El Salvador, India, Korea, Mexico, and the Philippines** become naturalized citizens at higher rates than men from the same countries.

In contrast,

93,347 women



99,990 men



obtained LPR status under **employment-based preferences**.⁴

 **54.8%**

of immigrant women were naturalized U.S. citizens in 2021.

 **50.1%**

of immigrant men were naturalized U.S. citizens in 2021.

EDUCATION

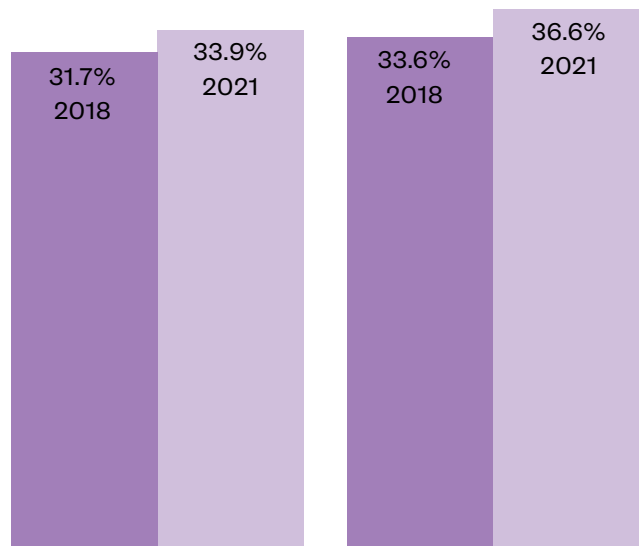
77.2%

of Indian-born women in the United States have a **bachelor's degree or higher**.

- Women from **Korea**, the **Philippines**, and **China** are all more likely than U.S.-born women to have obtained a bachelor's degree or higher.
- Among the same group of countries, women from **Mexico**, and **El Salvador** are the least likely to have obtained a bachelor's degree or higher, both at **9.3%**.
- Female immigrants from the **Philippines**, **Cuba**, the **Dominican Republic**, **El Salvador**, and **Mexico** had a higher percentage of bachelor's degrees or higher than male immigrants from the same country.

Between 2018 and 2021, the share of women with a bachelor's degree or higher increased by:

Immigrant women **+2.2%** U.S.-born women **+3.0%**



LABOR FORCE

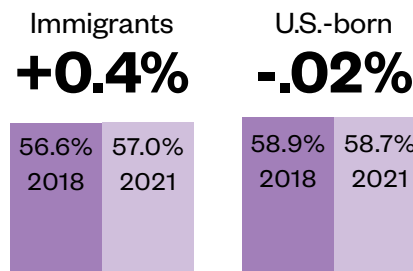
16.0%

of women in the U.S. labor force are immigrants.

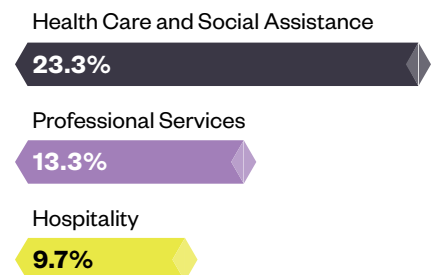
2.7M

women from **Mexico** made up the largest share of immigrant women in the U.S. labor force in 2021.

From 2018 to 2021, labor force participation rates for women in the United States increased/ decreased by:



In 2021, immigrant women were particularly vital in these industries:

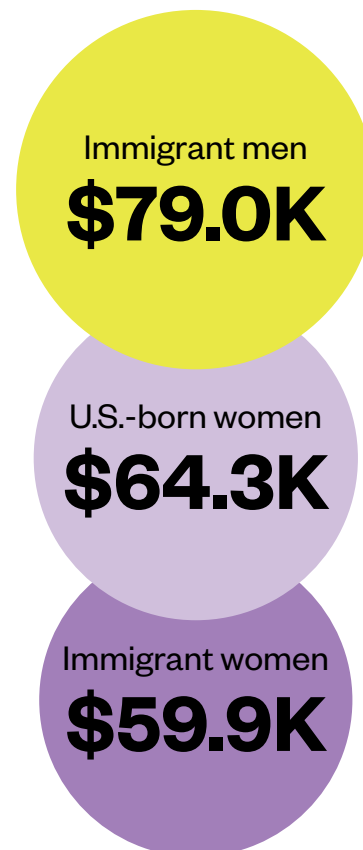


LABOR FORCE (CONTINUED)

Among the top ten origin countries for foreign-born women:

- Women from the **Philippines** participate in the labor force at the highest rate (**62.4%**), followed by women from **Colombia (62.1%)**, **Dominican Republic (61.0%)** and **Vietnam (60.8%)**. Women from these countries as well as **Vietnam, India**, and **El Salvador** participate in the labor force at higher rates than U.S.-born women, whose labor force participation rate is **58.7%**.
- Women from **Cuba** have the lowest rate of participation in the labor force at **50.8%**
- Women from **El Salvador** are less likely to have obtained an advanced degree (only **9.3%** hold a bachelor's degree or higher), yet they participate in the labor force at a higher rate than U.S.-born women.
- Women from the **Philippines** play a vital role in healthcare and social assistance in the United States. A large share (**42.0%**) currently works in this industry.
- Women from **India** had the highest median household income in 2021 at **\$123,000**. They were followed by four other Asian countries: the **Philippines (\$97,000)**, **Korea (\$70,000)**, **China (\$67,000)**, and **Vietnam (\$65,000)**.
- Women from the **Dominican Republic** earned the lowest median household income at **\$40,000**. Four other Latin American origin countries rounded out the bottom five for median annual household income among the top 10 origin countries: **Cuba (\$47,000)**, **Mexico (\$49,000)**, **El Salvador (\$51,400)**, and **Colombia (\$58,000)**.
- In all top countries of origin shared by both men and women, men earned more than immigrant women.

MEDIAN HOUSEHOLD INCOME BY SEX AND BIRTHPLACE



Appendix

NATURALIZATION RATES

	# Naturalized		Share Naturalized	
	Female	Male	Female	Male
Vietnam	548,485	476,731	77.0%	77.6%
Philippines	891,318	584,261	74.0%	73.8%
Cuba	449,580	398,036	70.0%	62.5%
Korea	401,390	281,076	68.9%	66.0%
Colombia	301,479	232,035	62.3%	61.3%
Dominican Republic	398,229	285,185	56.5%	50.4%
China	649,759	464,055	55.0%	48.8%
India	641,605	644,896	49.3%	45.4%
El Salvador	266,222	245,331	38.3%	33.9%
Mexico	1,851,336	1,810,457	36.1%	32.4%

SHARE WITH A BACHELOR'S DEGREE OR HIGHER

	# With a BA+		Share with a BA+	
	Female	Male	Female	Male
India	901,839	1,045,281	77.2%	82.6%
Korea	293,042	241,684	53.9%	63.6%
Philippines	602,369	331,766	53.8%	46.8%
China	501,129	441,637	49.4%	53.7%
Colombia	149,201	117,564	33.7%	34.3%
Vietnam	172,526	167,428	26.1%	29.7%
Cuba	146,997	137,061	24.9%	23.3%
Dominican Republic	115,963	71,619	19.1%	15.4%
Mexico	437,685	399,734	9.3%	7.8%
El Salvador	56,138	54,411	9.3%	8.7%

LABOR FORCE PARTICIPATION RATES OF IMMIGRANTS BY SEX AND BIRTHPLACE

	# in Labor Force		Share in Labor Force	
	Female	Male	Female	Male
Philippines	775,553	582,374	62.4%	70.3%
Colombia	298,831	298,236	62.1%	78.3%
Dominican Republic	417,429	402,168	61.0%	73.7%
Vietnam	432,310	413,170	60.8%	67.5%
India	746,054	1,132,518	60.2%	83.9%
El Salvador	403,242	583,823	59.9%	83.5%
China	660,918	611,770	57.0%	65.8%
Korea	322,913	308,351	53.8%	70.7%
Mexico	2,693,553	4,526,261	52.6%	81.1%
Cuba	323,561	438,982	50.8%	69.4%

TOP INDUSTRIES FOR IMMIGRANT WOMEN

Industry	# in Industry	Share in Industry
Health Care and Social Assistance	2,738,263	23.3%
Professional Services	1,563,723	13.3%
Hospitality	1,139,123	9.7%
Retail Trade	1,121,300	9.5%
Education	1,116,712	9.5%
Manufacturing	1,041,175	8.8%
General Services	803,819	6.8%
Finance	754,294	6.4%
Public Administration	374,538	3.2%
Transportation and Warehousing	364,975	3.1%
Wholesale Trade	220,870	1.9%
Construction	184,860	1.6%
Information	156,280	1.3%
Agriculture	133,878	1.1%
Utilities	29,853	0.3%
Military	19,154	0.2%
Mining, Quarrying, and Oil and Gas Extraction	9,867	0.1%

MEDIAN HOUSEHOLD INCOME BY SEX AND BIRTHPLACE

Country	Female	Male
India	\$123,000	\$153,000
Philippines	\$97,500	\$107,300
Korea	\$70,000	\$90,000
China	\$67,600	\$93,000
Vietnam	\$65,000	\$80,000
Colombia	\$58,000	\$73,200
El Salvador	\$51,400	\$66,100
Mexico	\$49,900	\$61,000
Cuba	\$47,000	\$59,000
Dominican Republic	\$40,000	\$60,000