

What the United States Economy Stands to Lose: Latino Immigrant Labor in the Crosshairs

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November 19, 2025



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Acknowledgments

This brief was made possible with the generous support of the James Irvine Foundation. The authors thank Misael Galdámez for his valuable insights and review, as well as Yina Marin and Angelina Wu for their design support.

The UCLA Latino Policy and Politics Institute acknowledges the Gabrielino and Tongva peoples as the traditional land caretakers of Tovaangar (the Los Angeles basin and Southern Channel Islands) and that their displacement has enabled UCLA's flourishing. As a land grant institution, we pay our respects to the Honuukvetam (Ancestors), Ahiihirom (Elders), and Eyoohiinken (our relatives' nations) past, present, and emerging.

Disclaimer

The views expressed herein are those of the authors and not necessarily those of the University of California, Los Angeles as a whole. The authors alone are responsible for the content of this report.

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Introduction

In 2023, Latinos contributed \$4.1 trillion to the United States' [gross domestic product](#), with California alone, accounting for approximately \$1 trillion.¹ Without Latino workers and consumers, California's global economic ranking would have dropped from fifth to eighth place.² Immigrants make up 43% of the United States's working-age Latino population,³ underscoring their central role in sustaining economic growth. Using data from the Census Bureau's 2023 American Community Survey (ACS), this brief examines the economic contributions of Latino immigrant labor in U.S. states with the largest Latino immigrant populations. The analysis considers the potential economic implications if states were to lose a substantial share of this essential workforce due to intensified immigration-related policies.



Data and Approach

The brief uses data from the 2023 American Community Survey (ACS) 1-year estimates to identify the ten states with the largest Latino immigrant populations and their political alignments (see Table 1). The Latino immigrant population includes naturalized citizens and noncitizens. Political alignment was determined using three criteria: (a) the party that won the state in the 2024 presidential election; (b) the party that carried the state in at least three of the four presidential elections since 2012; and (c) the party currently holding a majority in the state legislature. The top ten states with the largest Latino immigrant population are: California, Texas, Florida, New York, New Jersey, Illinois, Arizona, Georgia, North Carolina, and Virginia.

Table 1. Top 10 States with the Largest Number of Latino Immigrants by Political Leaning

State	Party	Total Population	Total Latinos	Latino Immigrant Population	Latino Immigrant Share of Total Population
California	Blue	38,965,000	15,760,000	5,117,000	13%
Texas	Red	30,503,000	12,136,000	3,429,000	11%
Florida	Red	22,611,000	6,198,000	2,892,000	13%
New York	Blue	19,571,000	3,875,000	1,494,000	8%
New Jersey	Blue	9,291,000	2,105,000	900,000	10%
Illinois	Blue	12,550,000	2,379,000	805,000	6%
Arizona	Red	7,431,000	2,346,000	576,000	8%
Georgia	Red	11,029,000	1,224,000	506,000	5%
North Carolina	Red	10,835,000	1,237,000	474,000	4%
Virginia	Blue	8,716,000	970,000	384,000	4%
Top 10 States		171,503,000	48,231,000	16,577,000	10%
United States		334,915,000	65,137,000	21,413,000	6%

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Note: Estimates are rounded to the nearest thousand.

Source: UCLA LPPI analysis of the U.S. Census Bureau's ACS 2023 1-year Estimates.

Key Findings



Key Finding 1. Latino immigrants are the backbone of state economies across red and blue states.

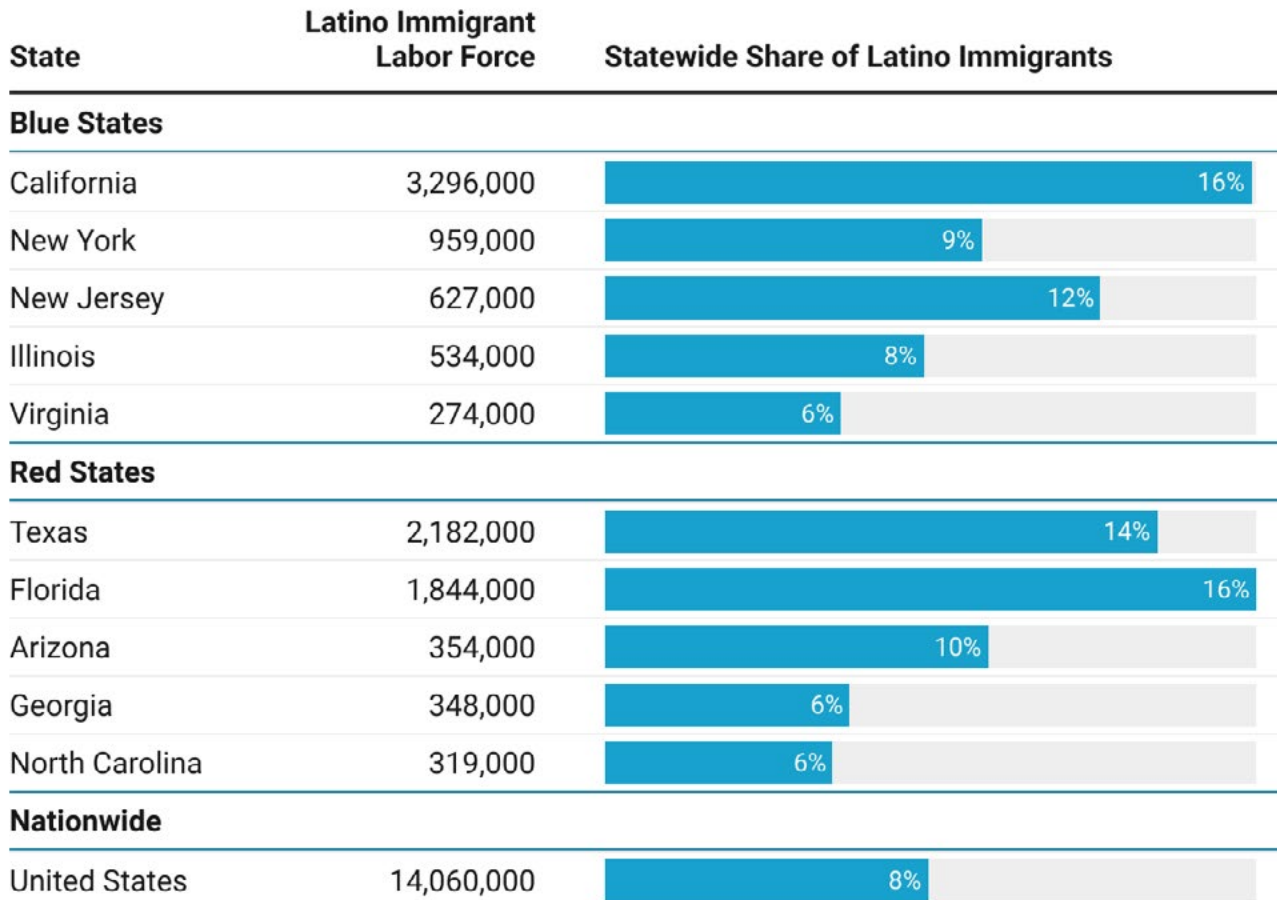
Latino immigrants are essential to the U.S. labor force, representing 14.1 million workers nationwide. Despite harsh anti-immigrant rhetoric in some red states, such as Texas and Florida, these states depend on Latino immigrant workers at rates comparable to blue states, like California and New York. In fact, Florida and California are the most dependent on Latino immigrant labor, as measured by the share of Latino immigrants in each state's labor force (see Figure 1).

Across the ten states with the largest Latino immigrant populations, more than 10.7 million Latino immigrants are in the labor force, accounting for 76% of the country's Latino immigrant workforce.

Blue States: Approximately 5.7 million Latino immigrants are in the labor force across California, New York, New Jersey, Illinois, and Virginia.

Red States: More than 5 million Latino immigrants are in the labor force across Texas, Florida, Arizona, North Carolina, and Georgia.

Figure 1. Latino Immigrant Share of Statewide Labor Forces, 2023



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Note: The share of Latino immigrant labor force was calculated by dividing the number of Latino immigrants in the labor force by the size of the total labor force in each state, rounded to the nearest percentage point (see Appendix 1). Estimates are rounded to the nearest thousand.

Source: LPPI analysis of data from the Census Bureau's American Community Survey 2023 1-year Estimates.

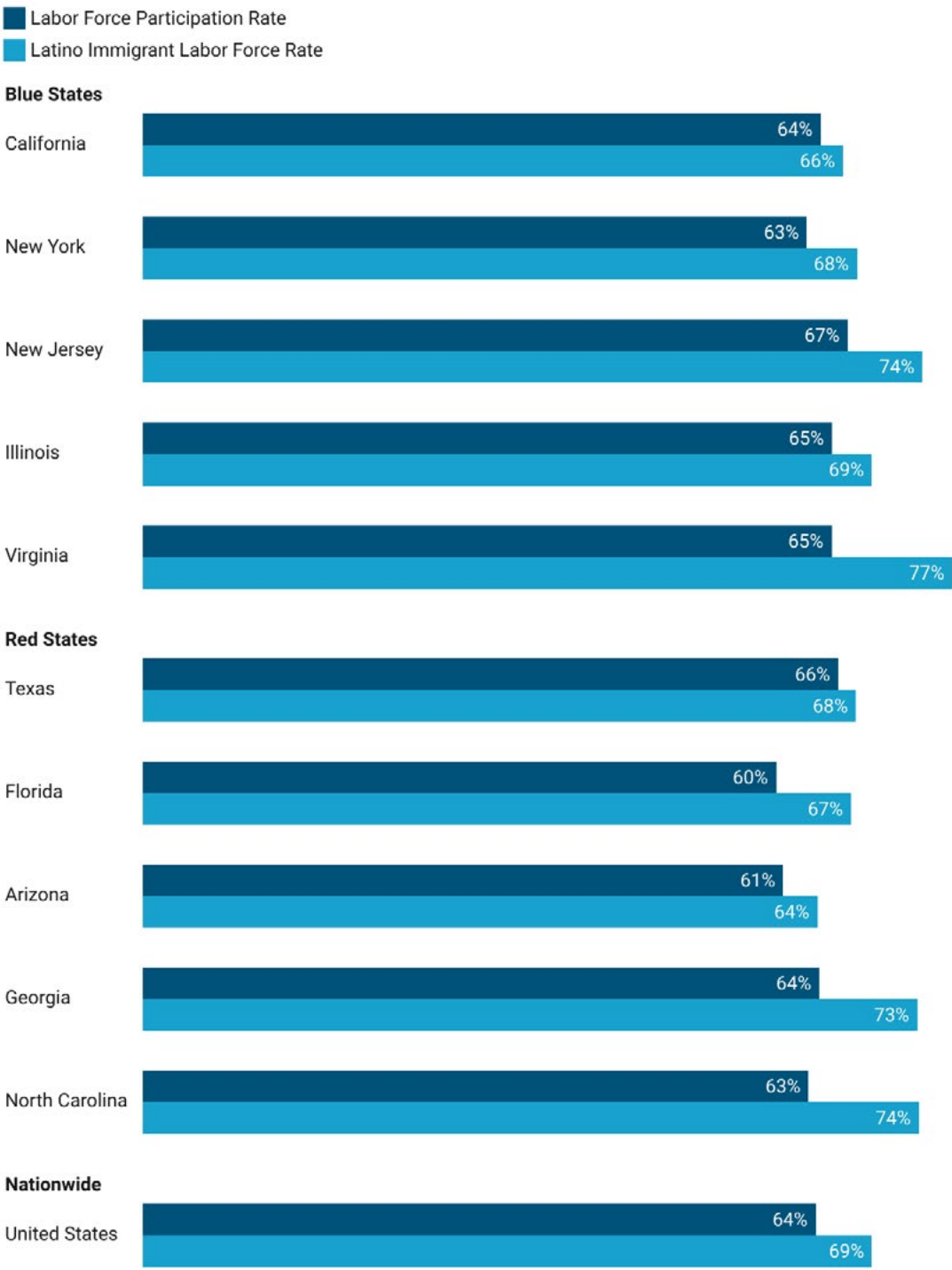
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Key Finding 2. Latino immigrants participate in the labor force at higher rates than the overall population.

Latino immigrants in the U.S. and across the ten states with the largest Latino immigrant populations have higher labor force participation rates than the overall rates for the state's population (see Figure 2). This pattern highlights the crucial role of Latino immigrants in sustaining state economies and meeting workforce demands. The gap is especially pronounced in North Carolina, Virginia, and Georgia, where Latino immigrant participation rates exceed statewide averages by nearly 10 percentage points, highlighting their central contribution to workforce stability and economic growth.



Figure 2. Labor Force Participation Rates, 2023



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Source: LPPI analysis of data from the Census Bureau’s American Community Survey 2023 1-year Estimates.

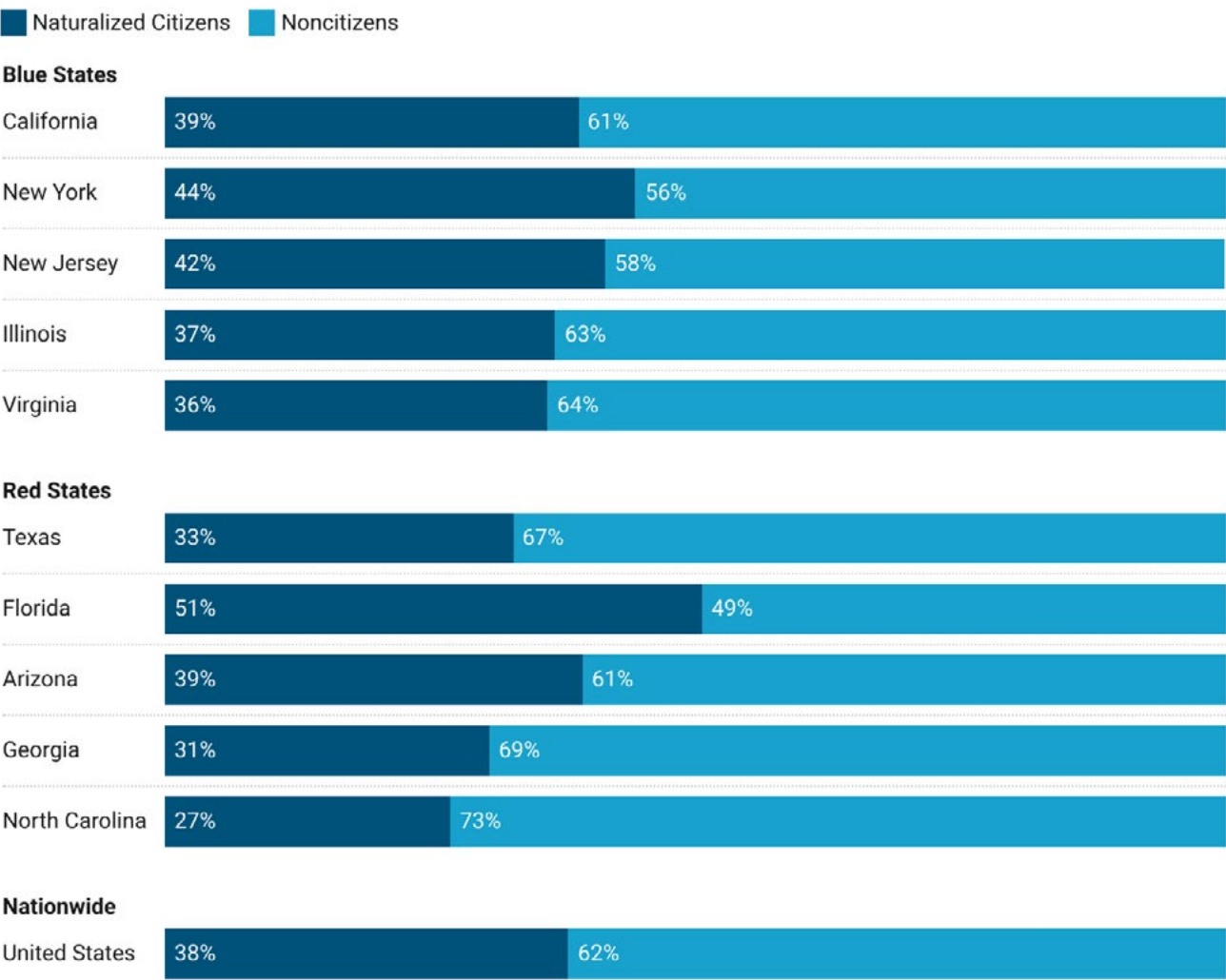
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Key Finding 3. Many Latino immigrants contribute without U.S. citizenship.

Across the nation's largest Latino immigrant states, the majority of Latino immigrant workers are not U.S. citizens, despite their important economic contributions. In North Carolina, Georgia, and Texas, more than two-thirds of Latino immigrant workers are noncitizens (see Figure 3). In every state analyzed, with the exception of Florida, noncitizens make up the majority of Latino immigrant workers, underscoring how deeply state economies depend on noncitizen workers. Given the recent escalation in immigration enforcement activities affecting Latino noncitizens, including those with lawful residency,⁴ these workers remain particularly vulnerable to policy shifts and economic disruptions.



Figure 3. Citizenship Status of Latino Immigrant Workers, 2023



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Source: LPPI analysis of data from the Census Bureau’s American Community Survey 2023 1-year Estimates.

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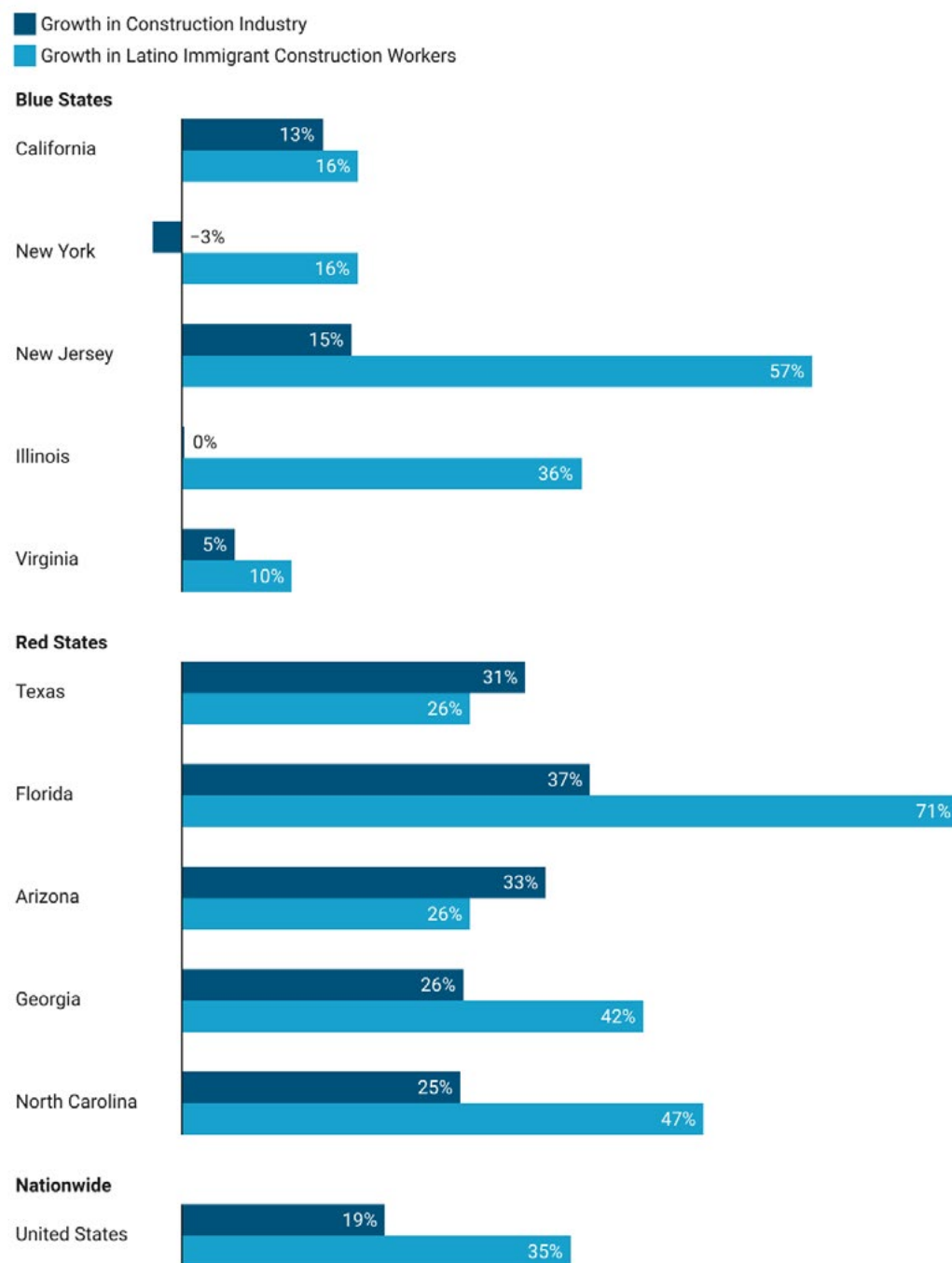
Key Finding 4. Latino immigrants are fueling growth in the construction workforce.

In 2023, the U.S. construction industry was valued at nearly \$2 trillion, with projections approaching \$2.24 trillion by 2027.⁵ Over the past decade, the construction labor force has expanded in nearly all of the ten states analyzed. While the overall construction labor force increased in most states, the number of Latino immigrants in the construction industry grew at a much faster pace, often doubling the rate of the overall industry workforce growth (see Figure 4).

For example, in states such as Florida, the number of Latino immigrants in construction increased by roughly 71%, while the overall industry only grew by 37%. These trends suggest that construction booms in states such as Florida and North Carolina have been powered by Latino immigrant labor, which continues to fill an essential role in meeting workforce needs across both red and blue states.



Figure 4. Percent Change in Construction Labor Force, 2013–23



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Notes: The construction industry is defined using ACS IND code 770, corresponding to NAICS code 23. Growth of the construction industry is determined by the percent change in the number of construction workers in the labor force between 2013 and 2023 (see Appendix 2).

Source: LPPI analysis of data from the Census Bureau’s American Community Survey 2013 1-year Estimates and 2023 1-year Estimates.

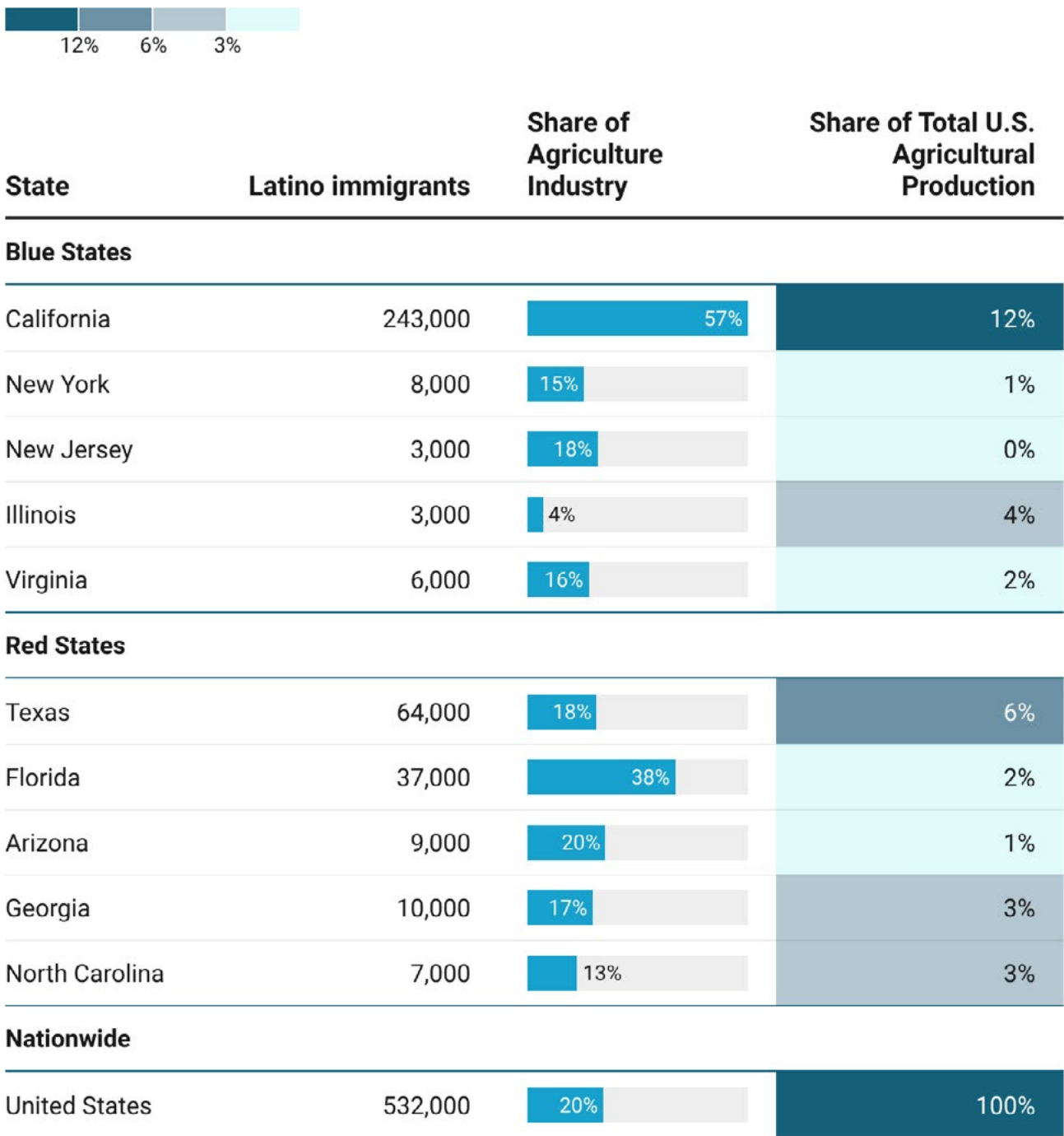
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Key Finding 5. Latino immigrants sustain America's agricultural production.

Across both red and blue states, from Florida to California, Latino immigrants are essential to sustaining the nation's agricultural production. Latino immigrants fill the labor-intensive and physically demanding roles that keep food production running and grocery shelves stocked. In California, which produces 12% of total U.S. agricultural output, over half of all agricultural workers are Latino immigrants (see Figure 5). In Florida, Latino immigrants account for over one-third of the agricultural workforce. These figures underscore how deeply the country's food system depends on Latino immigrant workers. Given that the ACS undercounts undocumented workers, the true scale of their contribution is almost certainly higher.⁶



Figure 5. Share of Latino Immigrants in the Agriculture Industry, 2023



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Note: The Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing and Hunting, and Mining industry is defined using ACS codes 170-490, corresponding to NAICS 11-21. Estimates are rounded to the nearest thousand.

Source: LPPI analysis of data from the Census Bureau’s American Community Survey 2023 1-year Estimates. Share of total U.S. agricultural production was obtained from the [USDA Economic Research Service](#).

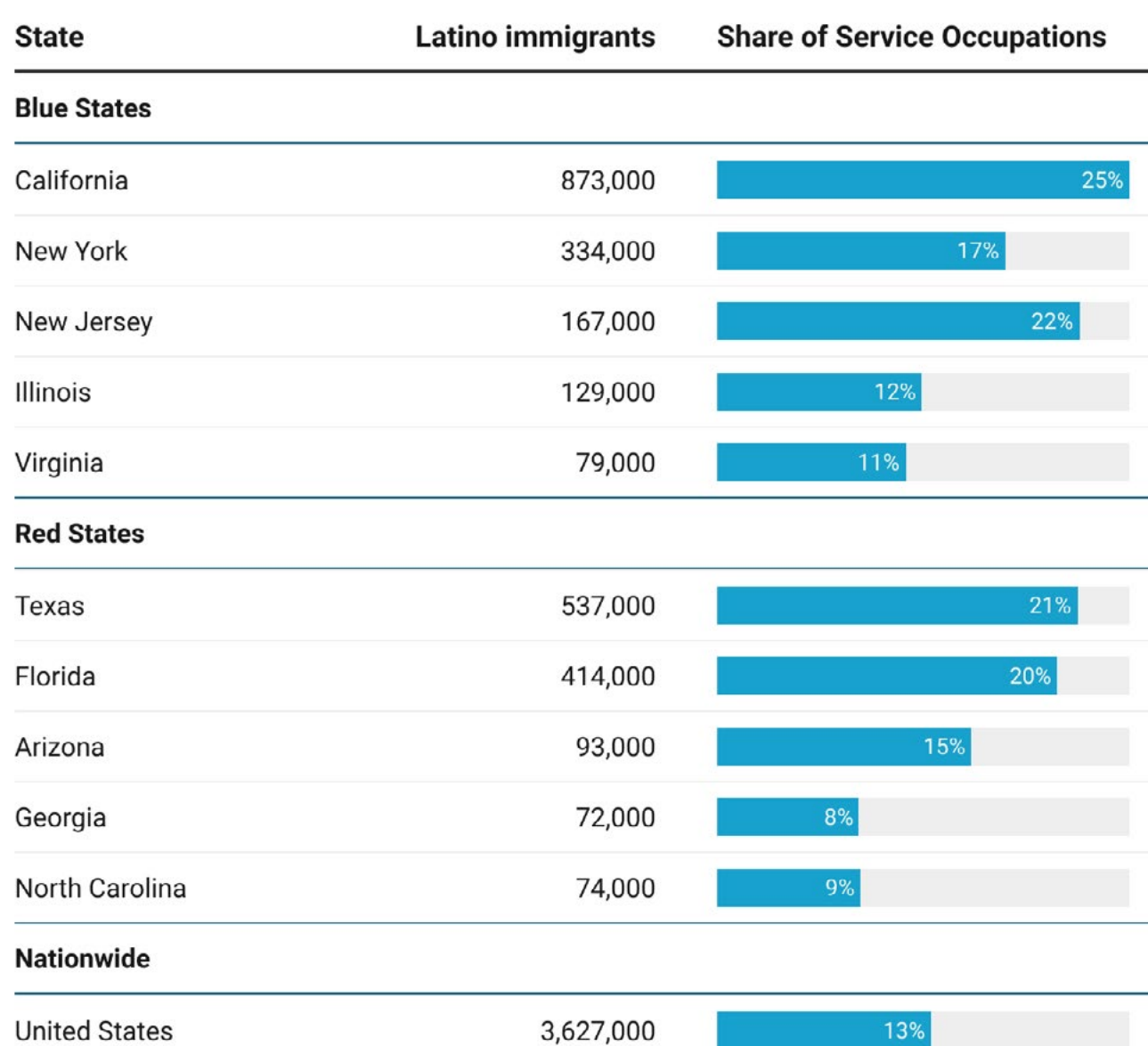
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Key Finding 6. Latino immigrants are the unseen force driving the country's service economy.

Latino immigrants form the backbone of the nation's service economy, filling essential roles in frontline, care, and hospitality occupations that keep industries and businesses running each day. Across the ten states analyzed, Latino immigrants represent a substantial share of all service workers. In California (25%), New Jersey (22%), Texas (21%), and Florida (20%), Latino immigrants account for about one-fifth of the service workforce (see Figure 6). These workers sustain hospitals, restaurants, and households by preparing food, cleaning and maintaining public spaces, providing care, and supporting the country's growing older adult population. The Latino immigrant labor force supports industries that cannot be easily automated or outsourced, making them indispensable to the stability of state and national economies.



Figure 6. Share of Latino Immigrants in Service Occupations, 2023



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Note: Service occupations are defined using ACS codes 3601-4655, which include roles such as health aides, food preparation workers, housekeeping and janitorial workers, childcare workers, and others. Estimates are rounded to the nearest thousand.

Source: LPPI analysis of data from the Census Bureau's American Community Survey 2023 1-year Estimates.

Appendix

Appendix 1. Latino Immigrant Labor Force, 2023

	State	Latino Immigrant Labor Force	Statewide Labor Force	Share of Latino Immigrants
Blue States	California	3,296,439	20,306,690	16.23%
	New York	958,987	10,136,670	9.46%
	New Jersey	626,740	5,031,101	12.46%
	Illinois	534,156	6,664,959	8.01%
	Virginia	273,749	4,614,389	5.93%
Red States	Texas	2,182,120	15,734,699	13.87%
	Florida	1,844,469	11,272,655	16.36%
	Arizona	354,027	3,676,919	9.63%
	Georgia	348,336	5,658,404	6.16%
	North Carolina	318,948	5,553,821	5.74%
Nationwide	United States	14,060,472	173,090,903	8.12%

Created with Datawrapper

Source: LPPI analysis of data from the Census Bureau's American Community Survey 2023 1-year Estimates.

Appendix 2. Statewide Construction Industries, 2013-2023

State	2013	Latino Immigrants	2023	Latino Immigrants
	Total Construction Workers	Construction Workers	Total Construction Workers	Construction Workers
California	1,169,816	391,103	1,319,606	453,957
Texas	998,263	373,947	1,310,429	472,067
Florida	644,866	156,519	884,588	267,131
New York	583,080	104,120	567,761	120,777
New Jersey	273,051	53,630	315,234	84,388
Illinois	355,339	42,763	356,326	58,295
Arizona	215,862	55,428	287,409	69,973
Georgia	314,095	69,053	394,608	98,065
North Carolina	310,934	63,899	389,784	94,236
Virginia	275,900	54,597	289,210	60,076
United States	10,000,368	1,778,347	11,850,747	2,407,405

Created with Datawrapper

Note: The construction industry is defined using ACS IND code 770, corresponding to NAICS code 23.

Source: LPPI analysis of data from the Census Bureau's American Community Survey 2013 1-year Estimates and 2023 1-year Estimates.

Endnotes

- ¹ Dan Hamilton, Matthew Fienup, David Hayes-Bautista, and Paul Hsu, "2025 US Latino GDPReport," The Latino GDP Project, 2025, [available online](#).
- ² Dan Hamilton, Matthew Fienup, David Hayes-Bautista, and Paul Hsu, "2025 US Latino GDPReport," The Latino GDP Project, 2025, [available online](#).
- ³ UCLA LPPI analysis of U.S. Census Bureau's 2023 ACS 1-Year Estimates.
- ⁴ "Documented or not, Latinos are changing habits during ICE crackdown," The Washington Post, November 1, 2025, [available online](#).
- ⁵ "Construction industry in the U.S. - statistics & facts," Statistica, March 3, 2025, [available online](#).
- ⁶ Robert Warren, Undercount of Undocumented Residents in the 2020 American Community Survey and Estimates and Trends in the Undocumented Population from 2010 to 2020, by US State and Country of Origin. Journal on Migration and Human Security, 10(4), 228-237, [available online](#).

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