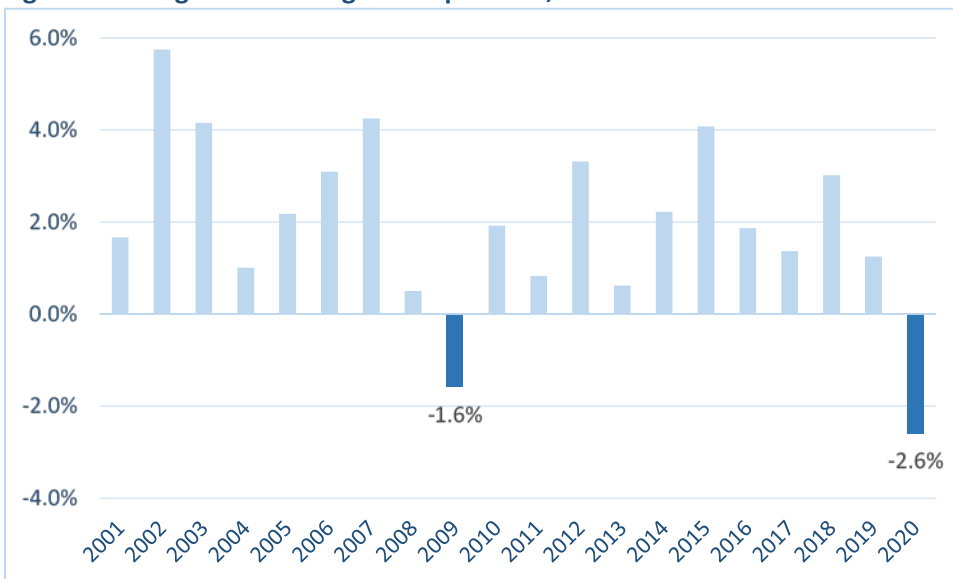


UC Merced Community and Labor Center Estimates Decline among US Immigrant Population

Recent US Census Bureau data suggest the US immigrant population has experienced a sharp population decline (2.6%) since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Figure 1. Change in US Immigrant Population, 2000-2020



Source: IPUMS-CPS Current Population Survey, Basic Monthly Survey, March-July 2000-2020

The UC Merced Community and Labor Center analyzed the US Census Bureau's Current Population Survey- Basic Monthly Survey for 2000-2020.¹ The decline in the US immigrant population in 2020 (-2.6%) is unprecedented in recent decades, even surpassing that during the Great Recession of 2008-2009 (-1.6%) (see figure 1).

While some immigrants form the backbone of the workforce in essential industries such as agriculture or meatpacking, others have been displaced by the economic slowdown in service sector industries. A by the **University of California Merced Community and Labor Center** had found that California's economic growth was among the slowest in the nation following the pandemic. Several of California's industries had been hit particularly hard, such as the arts and entertainment, recreation, hotel and accommodations, and food services industries, where more than four in ten jobs were lost.

¹ (The analysis was limited to the months that followed the onset of the pandemic, March to July).

Table 1. Immigrant Population, US and California 2019-2020

	2019	2020	Change	Change %
California	10,344,805	9,702,784	-642,021	-6.2%
Non-California US	34,965,435	34,434,190	-531,246	-1.5%
Total US	45,310,240	44,136,974	-1,173,266	-2.6%

Source: IPUMS-CPS Current Population Survey, Basic Monthly Survey, March-July, 2000-2020

The new analysis finds that immigrant population decline has not only been higher in the past twenty years than any other year—it is even higher in California (-6.2%) (see table 1). In 2019, California’s immigrant population was 10.3 million, but after the pandemic it declined to 9.7 million. California’s estimated loss of immigrants (-642,021) is even higher than that of all other states combined (-531,246).

Table 2. Decline in Immigrant Population, by Age

Age Cohort	2019	2020	Change	Change %
0-17	2,588,582	2,592,996	4,414	0.2%
18-34	10,453,037	10,469,458	16,421	0.2%
35-50	15,126,711	14,719,816	-406,895	-3.5%
51-65	10,684,937	10,156,856	-528,081	-3.8%
66+	6,456,973	6,163,537	-293,436	-4.5%

Note: "Age cohort" is reported by age in 2019; for 2020, first age cohort would be 1-18 years old

Source: IPUMS-CPS Current Population Survey, Basic Monthly Survey, March-July, 2000-2020

The new analysis also finds that the US immigrant population decline is occurring among those aged 35 and above. Between 2019 and 2020, the population of immigrants declined among cohorts aged 35-50 (-3.5%), 50-65 (-3.8%), and 66 and above (-4.5%) (see table 2). In contrast, there was no decline among cohorts aged 0-17 or 18-34. This suggests that a significant number of immigrants leaving the US do not have children—though 406,895 are still in “prime working age” years (age 50 or under).

A decline of US immigrants may have far-reaching consequences, beyond filling the jobs necessary to continue the ongoing operation of critical, essential workforce sectors such as agriculture and meatpacking.

Pandemic-related immigrant population decline will accelerate already-declining population growth, and create greater challenges for employer efforts to fill jobs and policymakers' efforts to stimulate economic growth following the recession.

States with a greater loss of immigrants and the working-age population will face greater challenges in filling jobs necessary to stimulate an economic recovery.

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