



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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The City of Portland Uses New Research to Inform Immigrant-inclusive COVID-19 Relief Measures

New research from New American Economy shows immigrants play a critical role as job creators, making up 32.9 percent of business owners in Hospitality and 20.9 percent of business owners in General Services in Portland.

Portland, OR – New research from [New American Economy](#) (NAE) released today in partnership with the City of Portland, highlights how immigrants are both essential to Portland's rapid response efforts and especially vulnerable due to gaps in our federal relief package, barriers in language access, and increased risks of infection associated with frontline and essential work.

Key findings from this report include:

- **Immigrants serve in essential industries and carry out vital roles that keep Portland, and the country, functioning but put them at higher risk of infection.** Despite making up just 13.5 percent of the city's residents in 2018, immigrants comprise more than 21.1 percent of all Restaurant and Food Service workers and 20.1 percent of all Transportation and Warehouse workers in Portland.
- **Immigrants play an important role in Portland as job creators but face significant economic challenges stemming from the economic shutdown.** Immigrants make up 32.9 percent of business owners in Hospitality, 20.9 percent of business owners in General Services and 16.4 percent of business owners in Healthcare.
- **Culturally sensitive and language accessible emergency materials are in demand.** In 2018, over 28 percent of immigrants, or 24,510, living in Portland had limited English language proficiency. Among them, the top five languages spoken at home other than English were: Spanish (32 percent), Vietnamese (21.3 percent), Chinese (13.7 percent), Russian (8.8 percent), and Ukrainian and related (3.3 percent).

- **Access to healthcare and medical services remains critical for all Portland residents during this pandemic.** In 2018, 44,101 Portland residents were without insurance, over 28 percent of which were immigrants.

The city of Portland is [one of twelve communities](#) that received NAE research to inform culturally sensitive emergency response measures that ensure all residents are included, regardless of immigration status. Portland's customized research report highlights the demographic nuances of the city's immigrant population and will inform the advocacy, development, and implementation of inclusive local emergency responses.

"The immigrant population is essential to keeping Portland running, yet especially vulnerable to gaps in our social safety nets," said Mo Kantner, Director of State and Local Initiatives at New American Economy. "This new NAE research will support efforts by local communities to work quickly and innovatively to fill critical gaps in federal programs and ensure that response and recovery efforts reach all residents."

"The COVID-19 crisis has demonstrated how vital it is to share culturally-specific communications in a timely manner—we need every Portlander to have access to life-saving information and social support," said Commissioner Chloe Eudaly. "This New American Economy research will support our efforts to effectively reach Portland's immigrant communities and to address gaps in federal programs."

"Oregon's immigrant and refugee population contributes significantly to our state's culture and economy." Said Touk Keo, the City of Portland's Immigrant & Refugee Supervisor. "The research provided by NAE will help us to build strong a case for how the City of Portland can continue to work with these communities, provide them with valuable resources, and support their growth, especially during our national health crisis."

[Read the full research report here.](#)

About New American Economy

New American Economy (NAE) is a bipartisan research and advocacy organization founded to educate, empower and support policymakers, influencers, and citizens across the country that see the economic and social benefits of a smart approach to immigration reform. NAE has created a coalition of civic, business, and cultural leaders who span the political spectrum and represent all 50 states. NAE makes the case for smart immigration reform in four ways: 1) we use **powerful research** to demonstrate how immigration impacts our economy, 2) we **organize champions** at the grassroots and influencer levels to build support for immigration, 3) we **partner with state and local leaders** to advocate for policies that recognize the value immigrants add locally, and 4) we show **immigrant contributions to American culture** through film, food, art, sports, comedy, and more.

Visit www.newamericaneconomy.org to learn more.