

Fast Facts about Imperial County

Compiled by: Assembly Committee on Jobs, Economic Development, and the Economy
V. Manuel Pérez, Chair

Imperial County is located in the southeast corner of California, east of San Diego County and south of Riverside County. The Colorado River forms the eastern boundary of Imperial and the Arizona-California Border, and the southern border is shared with Mexico.¹ The region spans 4,174.73 square miles.² El Centro (population 37,835), Calexico (population 27,109), and Brawley (population 22,052) are the county's most populated cities.³

Demographics

- The total population of Imperial County in 2010 was 174,528.⁴
- There has been a 22.6% population change in Imperial County from 2000-2010. In comparison, California's population changed 10% during the same time period.⁵
- Foreign-born residents make up 29.6% of the population; 38.8% of those residents are naturalized U.S. citizens and 61.2% do not have U.S. citizen status.⁶
- Residents of Hispanic or Latino origin comprise 80.4% of the population, 13.7% are Caucasian, 2.9% are African American, 0.9% are American Indian and Alaska Native, and 1.3% are Asian.⁷
- Of residents over 25 years, 21.1% of the population have a high school degree, 10.2% have a Bachelor's degree, and 4.6% have a graduate or professional degree.⁸
- Residents living in a family household make up 79.7% of the population. The average household size is 3.34 occupants, and the average family size is 3.76 people.⁹
- The median household income is \$37,946 per year¹⁰ and 36.9% of the population lives on a household income of less than \$25,000 per year.¹¹
- There are 35,368 residents (22.8% of population) living in poverty, including 29.4% of the population under the age of 18.¹²

Employment

- As of May 2011, the labor force of Imperial County is 75,000; 54,200 are employed and 20,700 are unemployed. The county unemployment rate is 27.7%,¹³ the highest in California.¹⁴
- At the peak of the recession (2008-2009), employment took a sharp decline and 1,300 jobs were lost.¹⁵
- Occupations with the fastest job growth are Mobile Equipment Mechanics (projected 85.7% job growth between 2008-2018); Home Health Aides Mechanics (projected 46.7% job growth); and Purchasing Agents (projected 33.3% job growth).¹⁶
- The principal labor markets of 2010 were farming (11,500 employed); trade, transportation and utilities (10,200 employed); and retail trade (6,700 employed).¹⁷
- 44,600 of those employed in Imperial County are employed by a nonfarm industry.¹⁸
- 16.5% of businesses are Hispanic-owned (2007).¹⁹

Industry

- There are six principal business sectors in Imperial County. They are Manufacturing (3,934 employees); Food Manufacturing (1,512 employees); Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing, & Hunting (1,475 employees); Support Activities for Agriculture and Forestry (1,475 employees); and Support Activities for Crop Production (1,475 employees).²⁰
- Projected economic growth from 2010 to 2015 is 16.7% retail sales growth, 15.1% personal income growth, and 8.6% job growth.²¹

Nonfarm Industry In Imperial County

	Imperial County (2008)	California (2008)
Private nonfarm establishments	2,477	879,025
Private nonfarm employment	33,906	13,742,925
Private nonfarm employment (% change 2000-2008)	33.7%	6.7%
Non-employer Establishments	10,129	2,688,453

²² Source: <http://quickfacts.census.gov/qfd/states/06/06025.html>

Real Estate

- There are 49,126 occupied housing units in Imperial County, 55.9% of which are owner-occupied and 44.1% are renter-occupied.²³
- 25.1% of owner-occupied housing units without a mortgage spend \$250 or less in monthly housing costs.²⁴
- The homeownership rate from 2005-2009 was 56.6% (California's average is 57.9%).²⁵
- The median price of existing homes sold in January 2011 was \$513,460.²⁶
- Of the population living on less than \$20,000 per year, 12% spend 30% or more of their income on housing costs.²⁷

Infrastructure

- The major transportation routes in Imperial County are Interstate 8 (traverses Imperial County connecting San Diego to Arizona and beyond serving as an important route for goods, services, and people), State Route 7 (the only north/ south roadway connector to the Calexico East POE, that processed virtually all of the commercial goods movement through the international border), and State Route 78 (traverses Imperial County connecting San Diego to the Arizona border; the only east/ west highway alternative to I-8).²⁸
- The Colorado River is the only source of water for irrigation and domestic uses.²⁹
- About one third of Colorado River water that comes to the Imperial Valley ends up in the Salton Sea as drainage water. This drainage water is necessary to ensure that there is a uniform application of water in fields as well as to maintain soil salinity.³⁰
- The Bureau of Land Management has received 163 applications to build solar and wind projects on 1.6 million acres of federal land in California, almost all of which are planned for the Imperial Valley and the desert region north of the Valley. Untapped geothermal power in Imperial County is capable of powering 2 million homes.³¹

- ¹ <http://www.labormarketinfo.edd.ca.gov/cgi/databrowsing/localAreaProfileQSResults.asp?selectedarea=Imperial+County&electedindex=13&menuChoice=localAreaPro&state=true&geogArea=0604000025&countyName=>; accessed 6/23/11
- ² <http://quickfacts.census.gov/qfd/states/06/06025.html>; accessed 6/22/11
- ³ http://mapzones.org/Imperial_County_California.html; accessed 6/24/11
- ⁴ http://www.dof.ca.gov/research/demographic/state_census_data_center/census_2010/documents/DP2010-Imperial_County.pdf; accessed 6/22/11
- ⁵ <http://quickfacts.census.gov/qfd/states/06/06025.html>; accessed 6/22/11
- ⁶ http://factfinder.census.gov/servlet/ADPTTable?_bm=y&-context=adp&-ds_name=ACS_2009_1YR_G00_&-tree_id=309&-redoLog=true&-caller=geoselect&-geo_id=05000US06025&-format=&-lang=en; accessed 6/22/11
- ⁷ http://www.dof.ca.gov/research/demographic/state_census_data_center/census_2010/documents/DP2010-Imperial_County.pdf; accessed 6/22/11
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- ¹⁰ http://www.census.gov/cgi-bin/saipe/saipe.cgi?year=2009&type=county&table=county&submit=States%20%26%20Counties&display_data=Display%20Data&state=06&areas=06025; accessed 6/24/11
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- ²³ http://www.dof.ca.gov/research/demographic/state_census_data_center/census_2010/documents/DP2010-Imperial_County.pdf; accessed 6/22/11
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