

# Wildfires and Latino Communities: Analysis of Residents, Workers, and Jobs

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The UCLA Latino Policy and Politics Institute addresses the most critical domestic policy challenges facing Latinos and other communities of color through research, advocacy, mobilization, and leadership development to expand genuine opportunities for all Americans.

The UCLA Center for Neighborhood Knowledge specializes in empirical spatial analysis to inform policy and planning action and explicitly emphasizes the study of immigrant enclaves, low-income neighborhoods, and ethnic minority communities.

The UCLA Latino Policy and Politics Institute and the Center for Neighborhood Knowledge acknowledge the Gabrielino Tongva peoples as the traditional land caretakers of Tovaangar (the Los Angeles basin and So. Channel Islands). As a land grant institution, we pay our respects to the Honuukvetam (Ancestors), 'Ahihirom (Elders), and 'Eyoohiinkem (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.

## FOR MORE INFORMATION

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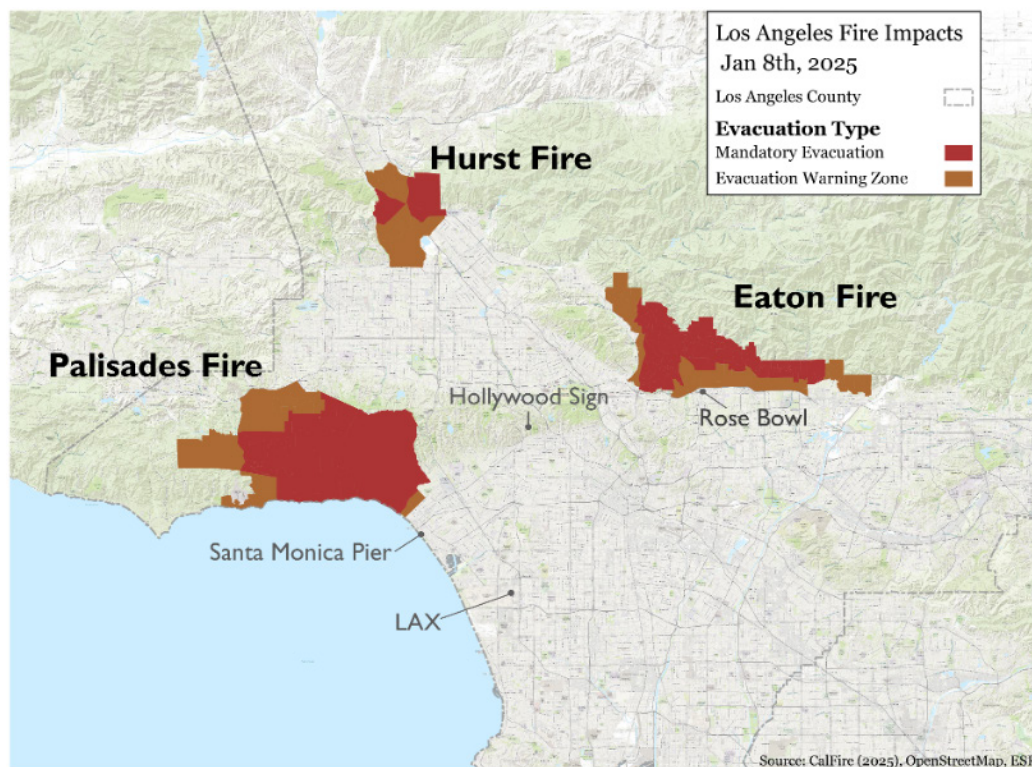
## INTRODUCTION

Since last week, wildfires have swept through various communities in Los Angeles County, leaving destruction in their wake. In addition to the loss of lives and property, these disasters disrupt the livelihoods and economic stability of affected communities. For Latinos, who make up a significant portion of the Los Angeles workforce, these rippling effects are particularly severe. This brief summarizes the potential workforce dynamics across three major fire evacuation zones in Los Angeles County on January 8th, 2025, at 2 pm, emphasizing the significant representation of Latinos. The findings underscore the pressing need for equitable disaster response and recovery strategies that ensure the most affected communities receive the resources and support they need to rebuild and thrive.

## Key Findings

Map 1 illustrates the evacuation and warning zones for the three wildfire sites. The Palisades Fire, originating in Pacific Palisades, spread from coastal communities to inland areas, prompting widespread evacuations and tragic loss of life. The Eaton Fire, located in Eaton Canyon near Pasadena and Altadena, has caused significant structural damage and fatalities. The Hurst Fire in Sylmar threatens communities in the northeast San Fernando Valley. Other fires have also plagued Los Angeles; however, we do not capture these due to the timing of data collection.

**Map 1. Evacuation Order & Warning Zones for Eaton, Palisades, and Hurst Fires**



Note: The map displays the mandatory evacuation and warning zones associated with the Eaton, Palisades, and Hurst Fires as of January 8, 2025, at 2:00 pm PST.

Source: CalFire, [available online](#).



1.

**At least 35,000 jobs held by Latinos were at risk of temporary or permanent displacement due to the wildfires.**

Figure 1 provides estimates of the Latino population and workforce across the three major fires. Although Latinos comprise just **23% of the population** across the three evacuation zones, they account for 36% of all workers in those areas. The disparity is particularly striking in the Palisades Fire zone, where Latinos **hold 34% of jobs** despite **representing just 7% of the population**. Similarly, Latinos account for 33% of residents but 47% of workers in the Hurst Fire zone. The comparable percentages in the Eaton Fire zone are 27% and 35%. The data shows that Latinos are vital to the local workforce, especially in the Palisades Fire zone.

**Figure 1. Latino Representation Among Residents and Jobs in Fire Evacuation Zones**

Evacuation Zones	Latino Residents	Percent of Total Population	Jobs Held by Latinos	Percent of Total Jobs
Eaton Fire	57,936	27%	19,601	35%
Palisades Fire	4,997	7%	10,015	34%
Hurst Fire	11,352	33%	5,470	47%
All Evacuation Zones	74,285	23%	35,086	36%

*Note: Latinos include those who identify as Hispanic or Latino of any race. The percent of total represents the percentage within each evacuation zone. Evacuation zones include mandatory and warning zones as outlined by [CalFire](#) on January 8, 2025, at 2 p.m. PST.*

*Source: Tabulated by authors from the 2020 Decennial Census, 2022 LEHD LODES.*







## 2. Latino workers face greater economic instability due to limited opportunities for remote work.

Latino workers in evacuation zones are more vulnerable to economic disruptions than white workers because they are disproportionately employed in occupations and industries that do not allow for remote work. Figure 2 shows the share of workers 16 and over who work from home in Los Angeles County. While 22% of white workers in Los Angeles County can work from home, only **7% of Latino workers** share this option. This disparity underscores the overrepresentation of Latinos in jobs requiring a physical presence, such as service, retail, and manual labor. These roles are particularly susceptible to temporary layoffs during wildfire-related disruptions and, in some cases, permanent job loss if workplaces are damaged or destroyed. The financial disruption is particularly hard on those living paycheck to paycheck.

**Figure 2. Percentage of Workers (16+) who Work from Home in Los Angeles County**



*Note: Latinos include those who identify as Hispanic or Latino of any race. White workers exclude those who identify as Hispanic or Latino.*

*Source: Tabulated by authors from the 2018-2022 5-year ACS PUMS.*

## 3. Latino workers face greater economic instability due to employment in vulnerable industries and occupations.

Worker vulnerability is especially evident in more affluent evacuation zones such as Pacific Palisades, where many household workers, such as maids, housekeepers, and home health aides, commute daily to support households. These roles are disproportionately held by Latino workers. In Los Angeles County, **85% of individuals** employed as household workers are Latino, reflecting broader systemic patterns in labor distribution. These workers are particularly vulnerable during wildfires, as their jobs rely entirely on physical presence, which is disrupted by evacuations.

Moreover, these roles often lack formal protections such as paid leave, and many workers are self-employed, making them ineligible for unemployment insurance benefits. Among Latinos employed as household workers, **47% are self-employed entrepreneurs**, compared to 27% of their white counterparts. This exacerbates the economic instability caused by wildfire-related job interruptions, especially for those living paycheck to paycheck. Additionally, the self-employed status of many domestic workers complicates their inclusion in traditional labor data and disaster response systems, further contributing to their systemic invisibility and the challenges they face during crises.



#### 4. Latinos will be central to recovery efforts after wildfires, particularly in key industries such as construction.

Latinos will play a pivotal role in recovery efforts following wildfires, especially in the construction industry. This sector is critical to the regional economy and essential for rebuilding homes and infrastructure. Notably, Latinos comprise 84% of construction workers in the industry, while white workers account for only 11% of construction workers. These numbers highlight the overrepresentation of Latinos in this vital sector and underscore their indispensable contributions to wildfire recovery and rebuilding efforts.



## CONCLUSION

It is difficult to grasp the magnitude of the wildfires in Los Angeles. The information we have only scratches the surface. In a city as interconnected as ours, examining how these fires affect residents, businesses, and workers is essential. The data show Latinos constitute a large share of the workforce. Equally important, they are among the most vulnerable workers due to their already precarious position in the labor market. As a result, they face a greater risk of economic displacement and financial hardship.

We must fully include underserved communities in media narratives, policy decisions, and recovery efforts to ensure their voices and needs are not overlooked. Relief efforts during the COVID-19 pandemic, such as the Pandemic Unemployment Assistance program, offer valuable lessons in providing aid to self-employed workers. We also need to protect Latino construction workers during the rebuilding process, as they face exposure to toxic chemicals and other hazards at the burned sites. At the same time, better data to determine exactly how many people have been affected and in what ways. This information is key to making sure recovery efforts are fair and effective.

## ENDNOTES

1. See technical report for information on data, methods and supporting information.

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