

# Workers Impacted by the 2025 Los Angeles County Wildfires

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**UCLA** Labor Center

# Introduction

The January 2025 wildfires in the Los Angeles region have had far-reaching and complex impacts on communities beyond the initial human death toll of 29 and the devastation of physical injuries, property damage, residential displacement, and decimation of wildland ecosystems. Tens of thousands of workers employed within fire perimeters and evacuation zones have suffered temporary or permanent job loss. New risks may emerge for those returning to work or seeking jobs in the recovery and rebuilding efforts. Research has found that employers are more likely to violate health and safety regulations and exploit low-wage immigrant and undocumented workers in the aftermath of natural disasters.<sup>1 2</sup>

A truly equitable recovery must recognize the displacement of entire workforces in the fire perimeter and evacuation zones and prioritize protections for workers engaged in clean-up and recovery. While some studies have examined the impact of fires on communities, jobs, and businesses, limited data has made it challenging to capture the full scope of the impacts. This research brief addresses that gap by focusing on workers in all industries affected by the wildfires and advancing a much-needed shift toward a worker-centered approach to recovery. We present estimates of the number of workers affected and their demographic and job characteristics, including race, ethnicity, gender identity, education levels, and industries where they are employed. We also provide estimates on the number of affected workers earning low wages, as well as those likely engaged in the informal sector, as a way to further illustrate their economic vulnerability.

## Impacts on Workers

This section provides our estimates of the number of workers affected by the major wildfires that impacted the Los Angeles region in January 2025, specifically the Eaton, Palisades, Hughes, Hurst, Kenneth, and Sunset fires. Given the difference in scale of each of these fire incidents, we provide detailed estimates for the Eaton and Palisades fires, which had the most significant impact on the local workforce. Our estimates focus on three main categories of impacted workers:

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<sup>1</sup>Theodore, Nik, *Recovering from Climate Disasters: Immigrant Day Laborers as 'Second Responders,'* (Chicago: Center for Urban Economic Development University of Illinois Chicago and National Day Laborer Organizing Network, 2022),

<https://ndlon.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/04/Recovering-from-Climate-Disasters-Report-2.26.22.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> Instituto de Educación Popular del Sur de California (IDEPSCA), *On the Front Lines: The Role of Domestic Workers and Day Laborers in Confronting Recent Wildfires in Southern California* (Los Angeles, IDEPSCA, 2020),  Wildfires and Domestic Workers.Day Laborers Format.docx-4.pdf

- **Workers within the fire perimeters:** Those whose primary employment was in the fire zones.
- **Workers affected by evacuation orders:** Those employed at businesses in areas under evacuation orders.
- **Workers affected by evacuation warnings:** Those employed at businesses in areas under evacuation warnings.

These categories help us assess the potential level of disruption to workers' employment based on their proximity to the fires. The wildfires may have also affected some additional businesses bordering these areas, such as restaurants or other establishments impacted by decreased customer traffic. Because we cannot include estimates for workers at businesses bordering the fire perimeter and evacuation zones, our analysis may slightly underestimate the total number of affected workers. Our estimates also do not specify how workers were impacted, such as whether they experienced permanent or temporary job loss. However, the location of employment within a fire perimeter, evacuation order zone, or evacuation warning zone indicates the possible degree of disruption.

We estimate that 10,000 workers were employed within fire perimeters, including 6,000 within the Palisades fire perimeter and 3,000 within the Eaton fire perimeter (See Table 1). Workers within the fire perimeters are the most likely to have experienced permanent job losses or job displacement, as their primary job locations were within the burn areas and more likely to have been damaged or destroyed.

Table 1: Number of workers employed within 2025 Los Angeles County fire perimeters

	<b>Workers employed within fire perimeter</b>
<b>Eaton</b>	<b>3,000</b>
<b>Palisades</b>	<b>6,000</b>
<b>All fires</b>	<b>10,000</b>

*Source: Authors' analysis of 2022 Longitudinal Employer-Household Dynamics data accessed through On the Map and 2018-2022 IPUMS American Community Survey data.*

*Note: These estimates are for W2 employees and self-employed independent contractors. The all fires category includes the Eaton, Palisades, Hughes, Hurst, Kenneth, and Sunset fires. See the Technical Appendix for more details on how these estimates were produced.*

We estimate that 68,000 workers were employed outside the fire perimeters but within areas under an evacuation order, including 34,000 from the Eaton fire and 11,000 from the Palisades fire (See Table 2). These workers were required to leave their workplaces

due to imminent danger. Some evacuation orders were in place for days, and others lasted for weeks. Workers who are unable to work remotely and do not have access to paid leave likely experienced at least a temporary loss of employment while the evacuation orders were in place. They may have still experienced permanent or long-lasting job loss if their employers experienced a loss of customers or revenue as a result of their proximity to the wildfires.

Table 2: Number of workers employed in areas under evacuation orders (outside of fire perimeters)

	<b>Workers employed in areas with evacuation orders (outside of fire perimeters)</b>
<b>Eaton</b>	<b>34,000</b>
<b>Palisades</b>	<b>11,000</b>
<b>All fires</b>	<b>68,000</b>

*Source: Authors' analysis of 2022 Longitudinal Employer-Household Dynamics data accessed through On the Map and 2018-2022 IPUMS American Community Survey data.*

*Note: These estimates are for W2 employees and self-employed independent contractors. The all fires category includes the Eaton, Palisades, Hughes, Hurst, Kenneth, and Sunset fires. See the Technical Appendix for more detail on how these estimates were produced.*

An additional 161,000 workers were employed in areas with evacuation warnings (See Table 3). Businesses in these areas may also have to shut down temporarily as they were advised to prepare for potential evacuation. While many of the workers employed in evacuation zones may have returned to work once the threat passed, these disruptions in employment likely caused financial instability, particularly for low-wage and hourly workers without paid leave or remote work options.

Table 3: Number of workers employed in areas under evacuation warnings (outside of fire perimeters and areas with evacuation orders)

	<b>Workers employed in areas with evacuation warnings (outside of fire perimeters)</b>
<b>Eaton</b>	<b>19,000</b>
<b>Palisades</b>	<b>50,000</b>
<b>All fires</b>	<b>161,000</b>

*Source: Authors' analysis of 2022 Longitudinal Employer-Household Dynamics data accessed through On the Map and 2018-2022 IPUMS American Community Survey data.*

*Note: These estimates are for W2 employees and self-employed independent contractors. The all fires category includes the Eaton, Palisades, Hughes, Hurst, Kenneth, and Sunset fires. See the Technical Appendix for more detail on how these estimates were produced.*

Altogether, we estimate that 238,000 workers were employed within fire perimeters or in areas under evacuation orders or warnings (Table 4). This represents 5 percent of the total workforce in Los Angeles County—about one out of every twenty workers. To provide a clearer picture, we also break down the impact by fire incident, specifically focusing on the Eaton and Palisades fires. Notably, a larger number of workers were employed within the Palisades fire perimeter and evacuation zones (67,000) compared to the Eaton fire (56,000).

Table 4: Number of workers employed in fire perimeters and evacuation zones

	Workers employed in fire perimeters and evacuation zones
Eaton	56,000
Palisades	67,000
All fires	238,000

Source: Authors’ analysis of 2022 Longitudinal Employer-Household Dynamics data accessed through On the Map and 2018-2022 IPUMS American Community Survey data.

Note: These estimates are for W2 employees and self-employed independent contractors. The all fires category includes the Eaton, Palisades, Hughes, Hurst, Kenneth, and Sunset fires. See the Technical Appendix for more details on how these estimates were produced.

## Industry of Impacted Workers

We next describe the industries that employ workers impacted by wildfires. Our analysis reveals that workers employed within the fire perimeters were most likely to work in Health Care and Social Assistance (15 percent), Accommodation and Food Services (14 percent), Retail Trade (12 percent), Educational Services (9 percent), and Other Services (9 percent), which include repair and maintenance jobs, personal care, laundry services, nonprofits, and private household work such as gardening and domestic jobs. Together, these five sectors account for 59 percent of the total workforce in the fire perimeters, or approximately 5,900 workers. Compared to all workers in LA County, workers employed within the fire perimeters were more likely to work in Accommodation and Food Services, Retail, and Other Services ( see Table 5)—service industries that typically pay low wages .<sup>3</sup> This highlights the vulnerability of service sector workers, in particular, whose jobs are at high risk of disruption during natural disasters or public health and safety emergencies.

<sup>3</sup> UC Berkeley Labor Center. 2024. Low-Wage Work in California Data Explorer 2024. <https://laborcenter.berkeley.edu/low-wage-work-in-california-data-explorer-2024/>

Table 5: Industries of workers employed in fire perimeters

	Workers employed in fire perimeters	All LA County workers
Health Care and Social Assistance	15%	16%
Accommodation and Food Services	14%	8%
Retail Trade	12%	9%
Educational Services	9%	10%
Other Services	9%	3%
Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services	8%	7%
Transportation and Warehousing	5%	5%
All Other Industries	28%	36%

Source: Authors' analysis of 2022 Longitudinal Employer-Household Dynamics data accessed through On the Map and 2018-2022 IPUMS American Community Survey data.

Note: These estimates are for W2 employees and self-employed independent contractors. See the Technical Appendix for more details on how these estimates were produced. The Other Services industry includes a wide range of firms, such as repair and maintenance, personal and laundry services, religious and social service organizations, and private households.

There are notable differences between the impact of the fires in the Palisades and Eaton areas (see Tables 6 and 7). In the Palisades fire perimeter, half of the workers were employed in the service industries (see Table 6). These public-facing jobs include Accommodation and Food Services (22 percent), Retail Trade (16 percent), and Other Services (12 percent).

Table 6: Industries of workers employed in the Palisades fire perimeter

	Workers employed in Palisades fire perimeter
Accommodation and Food Services	22%
Retail Trade	16%
Other Services	12%
Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services	10%
Health Care and Social Assistance	8%
Educational Services	8%
Transportation and Warehousing	1%
All Other Industries	24%

Source: Authors' analysis of 2022 Longitudinal Employer-Household Dynamics data accessed through On the Map and 2018-2022 IPUMS American Community Survey data.

Note: These estimates are for W2 employees and self-employed independent contractors. See the Technical Appendix for more details on how these estimates were produced. The Other Services industry includes a wide

range of firms, such as repair and maintenance, personal and laundry services, religious and social service organizations, and private households.

In contrast, the Eaton fire perimeter saw the highest impact in Health Care and Social Assistance (30 percent), followed by Educational Services (13 percent) and Transportation and Warehousing (11 percent).

Table 7: Industries of workers employed in the Eaton fire perimeter

	Workers employed in Eaton fire perimeter
Health Care and Social Assistance	30%
Educational Services	13%
Transportation and Warehousing	11%
Retail Trade	8%
Other Services	7%
Accommodation and Food Services	6%
Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services	6%
All Other Industries	20%

Source: Authors' analysis of 2022 Longitudinal Employer-Household Dynamics data accessed through On the Map and 2018-2022 IPUMS American Community Survey data.

Note: These estimates are for W2 employees and self-employed independent contractors. See the Technical Appendix for more detail on how these estimates were produced. The Other Services industry includes a wide range of firms such as repair and maintenance, personal and laundry services, religious and social service organizations, and private households.

We also see significant differences in the industries most impacted when looking at the broader group of workers employed within fire perimeters and evacuation zones (see Tables 8 and 9). In the Palisades region, the industries with the most workers employed in evacuation zones were Accommodation and Food Services (13 percent), Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services (13 percent), and Educational Services (12 percent). Meanwhile, in the Eaton area, Health Care and Social Assistance employed the most workers in evacuation zones (21 percent), followed by Educational Services (17 percent) and Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services (16 percent).

Table 8: Industries of workers employed in Palisades evacuation zones

	Workers employed in Palisades evacuation zones
Accommodation and Food Services	13%
Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services	13%
Educational Services	12%
Health Care and Social Assistance	11%
Retail Trade	8%
Administration & Support Services	7%
Other Services	6%
All Other Industries	33%

Source: Authors' analysis of 2022 Longitudinal Employer-Household Dynamics data accessed through On the Map and 2018-2022 IPUMS American Community Survey data.

Note: These estimates are for W2 employees and self-employed independent contractors. See the Technical Appendix for more details on how these estimates were produced. The Other Services industry includes a wide range of firms, such as repair and maintenance, personal and laundry services, religious and social service organizations, and private households.

Table 9: Industries of workers employed in Eaton evacuation zones

	Workers employed in Eaton evacuation zones
Health Care and Social Assistance	21%
Educational Services	17%
Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services	16%
Retail Trade	10%
Accommodation and Food Services	8%
Other Services	4%
Transportation and Warehousing	2%
All Other Industries	23%

Source: Authors' analysis of 2022 Longitudinal Employer-Household Dynamics data accessed through On the Map and 2018-2022 IPUMS American Community Survey data.

Note: These estimates are for W2 employees and self-employed independent contractors. See the Technical Appendix for more details on how these estimates were produced. The Other Services industry includes a wide range of firms, such as repair and maintenance, personal and laundry services, religious and social service organizations, and private households.

When examining industries that may have been impacted either temporarily or permanently due to their location within the fire perimeter or evacuation zones, we find



that Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services and Health Care and Social Assistance were the most affected industries, each comprising 13 percent of the impacted workforce (see Table 5). These are closely followed by Accommodation and Food Services (11 percent), Educational Services (11 percent), and Retail Trade (9 percent).

Table 10: Industries of workers employed in all evacuation zones

	Workers employed in all evacuation zones
Health Care and Social Assistance	13%
Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services	13%
Accommodation and Food Services	11%
Educational Services	11%
Retail Trade	9%
Other Services	4%
Transportation and Warehousing	1%
All Other Industries	31%

Source: Authors’ analysis of 2022 Longitudinal Employer-Household Dynamics data accessed through On the Map and 2018-2022 IPUMS American Community Survey data.

Note: These estimates are for W2 employees and self-employed independent contractors. See the Technical Appendix for more details on how these estimates were produced. The Other Services industry includes a wide range of firms, such as repair and maintenance, personal and laundry services, religious and social service organizations, and private households.

## Characteristics of Impacted Workers

Understanding the demographics of workers affected by the Eaton and Palisades wildfires provides insight into the communities most likely to have been impacted by employment loss, job displacement, or loss of income. In this section, we present estimates on key characteristics, including gender, race and ethnicity, age, and education level. Because most of the workers affected live in areas outside the fire perimeter, we also include estimates of workers’ places of residence. Analyzing these factors helps highlight potential disparities in how different groups experienced job disruptions due to the fires.

While the estimates presented in previous sections of the research brief include both W2 employees and self-employed workers, our estimates of worker characteristics include only W2 employees due to data limitations.

More women workers likely experienced permanent job losses and displacement compared to men. Women comprised 53 percent of workers in fire perimeter areas, even though they represent only 49 percent of all workers in LA County. The disparity was even greater in the Eaton area, where women accounted for 58 percent of affected workers.

Table 11: Workers employed in fire perimeter areas by gender

	Workers employed in Palisades fire perimeter	Workers employed in Eaton fire perimeter	Workers employed in fire perimeters	All LA County workers
Female	53%	58%	53%	49%
Male	47%	44%	47%	51%

Source: 2022 LEHD On the Map, Primary Jobs

Note: These estimates are for W2 employees only. See the Technical Appendix for more detail on how these estimates were produced.

Table 12: Workers employed in fire evacuation zones by gender

	Workers employed in Palisades fire evacuation zones (orders and warnings)	Workers employed in Eaton fire evacuation zones (orders and warnings)	Workers employed in 2025 LA County fire evacuation zones (orders and warnings)
Female	53%	53%	50%
Male	47%	47%	50%

Source: 2022 LEHD On the Map, Primary Jobs

Note: These estimates are for W2 employees only. See the Technical Appendix for more detail on how these estimates were produced.

White workers, including those who identify as both white and Latinx, make up 78 percent of the workers employed within the fire perimeter areas, despite comprising 71 percent of the total workforce in Los Angeles County. Due to dataset limitations, we are unable to identify Latinx workers within the race data separately. For context, an estimated 33 percent of white workers in LA County identify as Latinx.<sup>4</sup>

Latinx workers accounted for over a third (38 percent) of all workers affected within fire perimeters, with notable variation across fire zones. They represented 42 percent of affected workers in the Eaton fire area, compared to 35 percent in the Palisades fire perimeter. Black workers were more likely to be impacted by the Eaton Fire, making up 13

<sup>4</sup> Authors' analysis of 2018-2022 IPUMS American Community Survey data.

percent of affected workers within the Eaton fire perimeter despite representing only 9 percent of the county’s workforce.

In the Palisades fire perimeter, white workers (including those who identify as white and Latinx) likely faced higher rates of job loss and displacement, accounting for 81 percent of workers, even though they make up only 71 percent of LA County’s workforce.

Table 13: Workers employed in fire perimeter areas by race and ethnicity

	Workers employed in Palisades fire perimeter	Workers employed in Eaton fire perimeter	Workers employed in fire perimeters	All LA County workers
<b>Race</b>				
White Alone	81%	71%	78%	71%
Black or African American Alone	5%	13%	8%	9%
American Indian or Alaska Native Alone	1%	2%	1%	1%
Asian Alone	9%	11%	10%	16%
Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander Alone	1%	0%	0%	0%
Two or More Race Groups	3%	3%	3%	3%
<b>Ethnicity</b>				
Not Hispanic or Latino	65%	58%	61%	59%
Hispanic or Latino	35%	42%	39%	41%

Source: 2022 LEHD On the Map, Primary Jobs

Note: These estimates are for W2 employees only. See the Technical Appendix for more detail on how these estimates were produced.

We observe a similar trend among workers in areas affected by evacuation orders and warnings. White workers, including workers who identify as white and Latinx, account for 77 percent of workers in these areas. A recent study by the Latino Politics & Policy Institute showed that Latinx Latinos hold 34 percent of jobs despite representing just 7 percent of the population in fire-affected areas.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>5</sup> Silvia R. González, Chhandara Pech, and Paul Ong, *Wildfires and Latino Communities: Analysis of Residents, Workers, and Jobs*, (Los Angeles: UCLA Latino Policy & Politics Institute and UCLA Center for Neighborhood Knowledge, January 14, 2025), <https://latino.ucla.edu/wp-content/uploads/2025/01/UCLA-LPPI-Wildfires-and-Jobs.pdf>.

Table 14: Workers employed in fire evacuation zones by race and ethnicity

	Workers employed in Palisades fire evacuation zones (orders and warnings)	Workers employed in Eaton fire evacuation zones (orders and warnings)	Workers employed in 2025 LA County fire evacuation zones (orders and warnings)
<b>Race</b>			
White Alone	78%	73%	77%
Black or African American Alone	6%	7%	7%
American Indian or Alaska Native Alone	1%	1%	1%
Asian Alone	11%	16%	12%
Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander Alone	0%	0%	0%
Two or More Race Groups	3%	3%	3%
<b>Ethnicity</b>			
Not Hispanic or Latino	66%	64%	64%
Hispanic or Latino	34%	36%	36%

Source: 2022 LEHD On the Map, Primary Jobs

Note: These estimates are for W2 employees only. See the Technical Appendix for more detail on how these estimates were produced.

There were no significant differences in impact by age. However, older workers (55 and older) may have experienced slightly higher job loss and displacement rates, accounting for 27 percent of affected workers employed within the fire perimeter areas while making up 25 percent of the county's workforce.

Table 15: Workers employed in fire perimeter areas by age

	Workers employed in Palisades fire perimeter	Workers employed in Eaton fire perimeter	Workers employed in fire perimeters	All LA County workers
Age 29 or younger	21%	20%	20%	20%
Age 30 to 54	51%	52%	52%	55%
Age 55 or older	28%	28%	27%	25%

Source: 2022 LEHD On the Map, Primary Jobs

Note: These estimates are for W2 employees only. See the Technical Appendix for more detail on how these estimates were produced.

Table 16: Workers employed in fire evacuation zones by age

	Workers employed in Palisades fire evacuation zones (orders and warnings)	Workers employed in Eaton fire evacuation zones (orders and warnings)	Workers employed in 2025 LA County fire evacuation zones (orders and warnings)
Age 29 or younger	20%	19%	20%
Age 30 to 54	54%	53%	54%
Age 55 or older	26%	28%	26%

Source: 2022 LEHD On the Map, Primary Jobs

Note: These estimates are for W2 employees only. See the Technical Appendix for more detail on how these estimates were produced.

Regarding educational attainment, workers employed in fire perimeter areas generally align with averages across all workers in Los Angeles County. However, in the Palisades fire perimeter, a slightly larger proportion of workers have a Bachelor's degree or higher, at 47 percent, compared to the county average of 44 percent.

Table 17: Workers employed in fire perimeter areas by educational attainment

	Workers employed in Palisades fire perimeter	Workers employed in Eaton fire perimeter	Workers employed in fire perimeters	All LA County workers
Less than high school	16%	17%	17%	16%
High school or equivalent, no college	16%	17%	17%	17%
Some college or Associate degree	20%	24%	22%	23%
Bachelor's degree or advanced degree	26%	22%	24%	24%
Educational attainment not available (workers aged 29 or younger)	21%	20%	20%	20%

Source: 2022 LEHD On the Map, Primary Jobs

Note: These estimates are for W2 employees only. See the Technical Appendix for more detail on how these estimates were produced.

# Economic Vulnerability of Impacted Workers

This section examines the economic vulnerability of workers affected by the wildfires by providing estimates on the number of workers with lower job earnings and those employed in informal or cash-based jobs. Workers in these roles are already facing economic hardship as they often earn low wages and are excluded from formal workplace protections, such as minimum wage, paid leave, and access to key safety net benefits like unemployment insurance or workers’ compensation.

The proportion of workers employed within the fire perimeters earning less than \$3,333 per month is higher than the county average, with 44 percent of workers in the fire areas earning below this threshold, compared to 39 percent countywide. In the Eaton area, this disparity is even more pronounced, with 55 percent of workers earning below \$3,333 per month.

Table 18: Workers employed in fire perimeter areas by monthly earnings

	Workers employed in Palisades fire perimeter	Workers employed in Eaton fire perimeter	Workers employed in fire perimeters	All LA County workers
\$1,250 per month or less	12%	15%	13%	12%
\$1,251 to \$3,333 per month	27%	40%	31%	27%
More than \$3,333 per month	60%	45%	57%	61%

Source: 2022 LEHD On the Map, Primary Jobs

Note: These estimates are for W2 employees only. See the Technical Appendix for more detail on how these estimates were produced.

Similarly, about 44 percent of workers employed in the Eaton fire perimeter or areas under evacuation orders and warnings had monthly incomes below \$3,333, compared to 35 percent of workers in the Palisades area (See Table 19).

Table 19: Workers affected in fire evacuation zones by monthly earnings

	Workers employed in Palisades fire evacuation zones (orders and warnings)	Workers employed in Eaton fire evacuation zones (orders and warnings)	Workers employed in 2025 LA County fire evacuation zones (orders and warnings)
\$1,250 per month or less	11%	14%	12%
\$1,251 to \$3,333 per month	24%	31%	27%
More than \$3,333 per month	65%	56%	61%

Source: 2022 LEHD On the Map, Primary Jobs

Note: These estimates are for W2 employees only. See the Technical Appendix for more detail on how these estimates were produced.

Many of the workers affected by the fires are employed informally or as cash workers, such as domestic workers or gardeners. To estimate the number of these workers that were affected, we use the proportion of workers who are self-employed at their main job as a proxy. Notably, in the Palisades fire perimeter, the proportion of self-employed workers is higher at 17 percent, compared to the 11 percent of all workers in Los Angeles County. Compared to all workers in Los Angeles County, workers in the Palisades fire perimeter were much more likely to work in Other Services (see Table 6), an industry that has a much higher proportion of self-employed workers than other industries in Los Angeles County (33 percent).<sup>6</sup> In the Eaton area, the proportion of workers who are self-employed is 13 percent.

Table 20: Self-employed workers employed in fire perimeter areas

	Workers employed in Palisades fire perimeter	Workers employed in Eaton fire perimeter	Workers employed in fire perimeters	All LA County workers
Self-employed	17%	13%	12%	11%

Source: Authors' analysis of 2022 Longitudinal Employer-Household Dynamics data accessed through On the Map and 2018-2022 IPUMS American Community Survey data.

Note: These estimates are of workers who are self-employed at their main job. See the Technical Appendix for more detail on how these estimates were produced.

<sup>6</sup> Authors' analysis of 2022 IPUMS American Community Survey data.

Table 21: Self-employed workers affected in fire evacuation zones

	Workers employed in Palisades fire evacuation zones (orders and warnings)	Workers employed in Eaton fire evacuation zones (orders and warnings)	Workers employed in 2025 LA County fire evacuation zones (orders and warnings)
<b>Self-employed</b>	<b>10%</b>	<b>13%</b>	<b>11%</b>

Source: Authors' analysis of 2022 Longitudinal Employer-Household Dynamics data accessed through On the Map and 2018-2022 IPUMS American Community Survey data.

Note: These estimates are of workers who are self-employed at their main job. See the Technical Appendix for more detail on how these estimates were produced.

## Conclusion

The findings of this report highlight the far-reaching impact of the January 2025 wildfires on workers throughout Los Angeles County. Thousands of workers likely faced significant disruptions due to fire damage, evacuation orders, and business closures. Certain groups—such as women, Latinx, Black, and low-wage workers—were disproportionately affected, facing higher rates of job loss and displacement. While the precise scale of the economic and employment consequences remains unclear, these findings underscore the critical need for recovery efforts targeting the communities most affected by the fires.

However, additional data is necessary to better understand the full scope of the damage. While this report provides estimates of workers employed within fire perimeters and evacuation zones, it does not shed light on the specific impacts those workers experienced. The following are some preliminary recommendations to expand the scope of data available:

1. **Conduct Surveys and Focus Groups:** Engaging workers and employers directly through surveys or focus groups would provide valuable insights into the nature of the disruptions workers have experienced as a result of the fires. This could help determine whether workers experienced permanent job loss, temporary layoffs, displacement to other job locations, or a reduction in work hours. This data would be crucial in assessing the varied impacts of the fires on different groups of workers.



2. **Investigate Health and Safety Violations:** Additional data collection could also reveal whether the wildfires led to increased violations of health and safety regulations or wage and hour laws. Workers in affected industries may have faced additional hazards or exploitation as a result of workplace disruptions, and capturing these issues will be essential for developing comprehensive recovery strategies.
  
3. **Analyze the Disaster Unemployment Assistance Program:** An analysis of California's Disaster Unemployment Assistance program could offer important context regarding the scale of economic disruption. Examining data such as the number of workers who applied, their industries, the duration of their benefits claims, and their locations relative to fire perimeters or evacuation zones would help provide a more detailed picture of the wildfire's impact on different types of workers.

By collecting and analyzing this additional information, we can better understand the full extent of the wildfire's impact on workers and communities and shape more targeted and equitable recovery efforts.

# Technical Appendix

The following describes the data sources and methods used to produce the estimates in this research brief.

## Identification of workers employed in fire perimeters and evacuation zones

We use open-source shapefiles accessed through the City of Los Angeles Geohub to identify the boundaries of fire perimeters and evacuation zones. We restrict these only to include areas within the borders of Los Angeles County. To identify workers employed within these zones, we uploaded the shapefiles to OntheMap, an online tool that allows analysis of Longitudinal Employer-Household Dynamics (LEHD) data. LEHD data is derived from a number of administrative datasets, including unemployment insurance records, Census data, and Social Security Administration data.

## Estimates of the number of workers employed in fire perimeters and evacuation zones

Because LEHD data is based on unemployment insurance records, these estimates only include W2 employees and exclude self-employed independent contractors or workers paid off the books. We first use LEHD OnTheMap data to produce estimates of the number of W2 workers whose primary job is located within the fire perimeters and evacuation zones by major industry. We then estimate the proportion of Los Angeles County workers in each of these major industries that are self-employed at their main job using 2022 IPUMS American Community Survey data.<sup>7</sup> We apply these estimates of self-employment by major industry to our LEHD estimates of the number of W2 workers in each major industry to estimate the total number of workers employed in each major industry. Our total worker estimates are the sum of our estimates of workers in each major industry.

The addresses identified as each employee's work location in LEHD data are based on the establishment addresses reported by employers in the unemployment insurance system and may not always reflect actual worksites (e.g., construction workers assigned to a central office but working at various job sites). We round our estimates of the number of impacted workers to reflect the presence of some error in the identification of worksite location.

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<sup>7</sup> "U.S. Census Data for Social, Economic, and Health Research," IPUMS USA, accessed May 22, 2024, <https://usa.ipums.org/usa/index.shtml>.

## Estimates of worker industry

Our estimates of the proportion of workers employed in major industries are based on our estimates of the number of W2 employees and self-employed workers.

## Estimates of worker characteristics

Our estimates of worker characteristics come from LEHD data and therefore only describe W2 employees. LEHD OnTheMap data differ from household surveys such as the American Community Survey (ACS) and Current Population Survey (CPS) due to differences in how the data are collected and how demographic categories are defined. We provide estimates for Los Angeles County workers overall as a benchmark for comparison.

## Identification of economically vulnerable workers

Our estimates of the proportion of workers that are low-wage are based on estimates of hourly wages for W2 employees only, as household survey data has been shown to be unreliable for estimating hourly wages of self-employed workers.<sup>8</sup>

## Identification of workers in the informal economy

Our estimates of the number of workers in the informal economy are based on estimates of the proportion of workers who are self-employed independent contractors at their primary job. However, many workers are W2 employees at their main job and do informal work as a side job. We therefore likely underestimate the number and proportion of workers that rely at least in part on earnings from informal work.

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<sup>8</sup> Annette Bernhardt, Sarah Thomason, Chris Campos, Allen Prohofsky, Aparna Rameshand, and Jesse Rothstein, *Independent Contracting in California: An Analysis of Trends and Characteristics Using Tax Data* (Berkeley: UC Berkeley Labor Center, 2022)

<https://laborcenter.berkeley.edu/independent-contracting-in-california/>