



# Orange County Regional Snapshot

## Region 8



Known as the O.C., Orange County (Region 8) is a suburban coastal area with densely populated inland cities. It is the third most populous county in California and the sixth most populous county in the United States. The county is known for attractions like Disneyland and beaches along the Pacific coastline.

The rich ethnic diversity of Northern Orange County is reflected in the cultural districts with dense commercial areas and culinary destinations. Little Saigon in Garden Grove and Westminster is home to the largest concentration of Vietnamese outside of Vietnam. It began as a result of the influx of Vietnamese refugees in the late 1970s. The Little Arabia District in Anaheim grew significantly in the 1990s with the arrival of immigrants from Egypt, Syria, Lebanon, and Palestine. Calle Cuatro in downtown Santa Ana is an urban center reflecting the diversity of its residents, businesses, and restaurants, and is reflective of Mexican and other Latin American cultures.

The county's population growth and change in demographics have been driven by growing Latino, Asian, and Pacific Islander populations. The majority of the Latino population is of Mexican origin. Almost a third of the county is foreign-born, and 18% of the population is considered limited English proficient. The majority of the Asian population is Vietnamese, with growing Korean, Chinese, and Filipino families.



OCPSC consults with community-based organizations for Regional "Community Connections"

Languages spoken include Spanish, Vietnamese, Korean, Chinese, Farsi, Tagalog, Mandarin, Arabic, and Japanese.

Recognizing how population data can miss disaggregated populations and language needs, a collective of 17 organizations was established, dedicated to the South Asian, Middle Eastern, and North African (SAMENA) community in Orange County. The community includes more than 26 ethnic and national identities, speaking more than 12 languages. Many of them do not speak English very well, which creates challenges in accessing services and opportunities. The collective aims to advocate for strengthening information access and serving the community's diverse needs.

**The Office of Community Partnerships and Strategic Communications (OCPSC)**, housed within the Governor's Office of Service and Community Engagement (GO-Serve), was established in July 2022 to tackle California's pressing statewide issues through effective public awareness and community engagement. Regional Snapshots can be used as a starting point for state agencies to understand demographic data and effective outreach approaches for community engagement. The Snapshots are a result of facilitated conversations with OCPSC's Trusted Messenger Network.



## Region 8 Snapshot

**Total Population: 3,164,063**

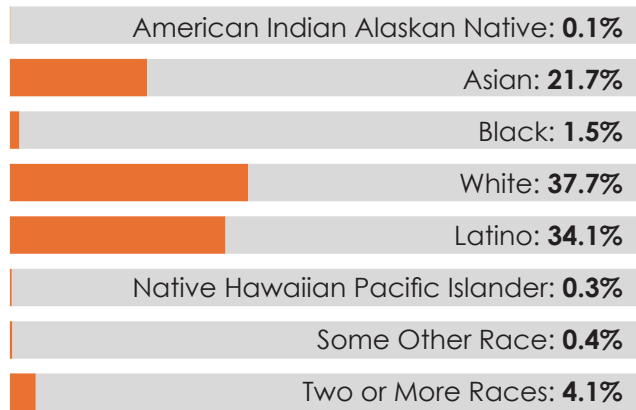


**8.0%**

of State Population



### Population by Race/Ethnicity



**18.0%**  
of Population  
with Limited  
English  
Proficiency

California: 17.2%

### Top Languages Spoken other than English:

- Spanish
- Vietnamese
- Korean

### Population **Below** 200% Federal Poverty

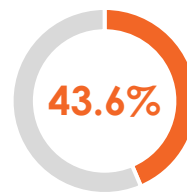


**Orange  
County**

**Counties:** Orange

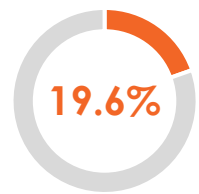
**Largest Populated Cities:**

Anaheim, Irvine, Santa Ana



**Renter  
Population  
Percentage**

California: 44.2%



**Housing Units in  
Hardest to Count  
Census Tracts**

California: 27.3%

**6.8%**  
*Uninsured* **Adults**



California: 6.9%

**5.5%**  
*without* **Broadband**



California: 7.4%

**DATA NOTES:** The data above was obtained from the 2019 -2023 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates. The Hard-to-Count totals were created by the Demographic Research Unit, a department of the California Department of Finance, and is from the 2025 vintage.

# Community Insights

## Conduct outreach in community settings

Community-based organizations meet people where they are by targeting outreach to high-traffic locations such as ethnic grocery stores, faith-based spaces, community centers, and food banks. By integrating services into familiar community settings, they make it convenient for individuals to access resources and participate in civic initiatives.

*"We try to make a difference by offering accurate information through experiential learning activities at beaches and parks to engage youth on climate action and environmental impacts. They then talk to their peers about the significance of environmental actions. It's a contagious thing when kids get excited about something."*

**Marianne Hugo**, Community Outreach Program Manager, Orange County Coastkeeper



The Mexican BINGO game, *Lotería*, is an interactive way to learn about extreme heat.

## Reach immigrants and refugees through ethnic media

A one-size-fits-all approach does not work for Orange County's diverse population. Ethnic media outlets disseminate culturally and linguistically relevant information to influence the behaviors and actions of their audience. Spanish-language and Vietnamese media use a variety of platforms, including radio, news publications, and online platforms, to inform and engage communities.

*"Why should we partner with other CBOs? We can't do everything ourselves, and we don't want to. We want to be authentic. We want the community to feel comfortable. All our partners have different languages and communities that they support. You're going to make so much more progress if you support each other. We've been able to expand our reach and impact through partnerships with local, smaller organizations that focus on specific populations or neighborhoods."*

**Mario Ortega**, CEO, Abrazar, Inc



## Incubating small community-based organizations

Small community-based organizations may be fiscally sponsored by a more established organization that serves as an administrative intermediary. This allows the smaller, emerging organization to focus on its programming and gain administrative experience. These smaller community-based organizations in Orange County often support refugee, immigrant, and newcomer communities. The staff of these organizations support underserved and multicultural communities to access employment opportunities and navigate basic services.





## Region 8 Orange County

### Gathering Spaces to create Belonging

In the early 1980s, a large wave of Cambodian refugees, who escaped the “killing fields” of the Communist Khmer Rouge, began coming to the United States. Many came to Orange County and settled in the Minnie Street neighborhood of Santa Ana in crowded low rent apartment complexes. In 1982, Cambodian refugee leaders pooled resources and began helping other Cambodians with English classes, adjustment counseling and translation.



The Cambodian Family and Census 2020 Team

**The Cambodian Family** builds on their experience of serving newly arrived individuals and families who have fled their homelands for dreams of a better life. They provide civic engagement and immigrant services, such as English and citizenship classes and referrals to free or low-cost legal services.

Their clientele has grown to include immigrants and refugees from all over the world, including Mexico, Central America, Vietnam, Laos, Iran, Iraq, Afghanistan, Russia, Ukraine, Bosnia, Ethiopia and Somalia. This tapestry of diverse clientele presents opportunities for collaborations with over 55 organizations.

Through its wellness programs, **The Cambodian Family** addresses the stigma of mental health to reduce health disparities in the communities they serve. They integrate youth behavioral health support, with their programs on peer support, stress management, and educational workshops.

*“Our clientele trusts us because of years of service to the community – we’ve provided COVID vaccines, food relief, and youth activities, as well as information on the 2020 Census. Our frontline staff are hired directly from our communities and most of us can empathize with the trauma of being uprooted from our homes and the impact on families. Our holistic programming helps immigrants and refugees to improve their social well-being and create community.*

*Our mental health work creates a space for gathering which is very important in our culture. The word gathering speaks to a value many Cambodians bring with them which is the importance of the collective over the individual.*

*In order for us to serve, we must serve the whole person. We are not just translating, taking them to the doctor, or providing language needs. We understand that we need to serve the whole person, family and the community in order to meet the needs of one person.*

*The photograph below, captures the essence of belonging. This is a community garden that was created from a lot behind our building. After we turned this vacant space into a place of beauty; Mings (Aunties) found their way there, laid out the katel (blanket) and spread out food.*

*This is when I realized what we do is far greater than outreach. We provide a place for women to gather, talk, share meals and experiences in a new land.”*

**Amina Sen**, Director of Health and Mental Health Program

