



DRAFT BUDGET

MAYOR TODD GLORIA

VOLUME 1
City Profile



HOUSING | PROTECT & ENRICH | INFRASTRUCTURE | SUSTAINABILITY | PROSPERITY

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San Diego at a Glance

The City of San Diego, known as America's Finest City, is best known for its ideal climate, beautiful beaches, and world-class attractions. As the eighth largest city in the nation and the second largest city in the State of California, the City's total population is estimated at 1,388,320 as of July 1, 2023. San Diego's population has increased by 1,388 people from the 2020 Census. 2023 population estimates were released on May 16, 2024.¹

San Diego covers 326 square miles of land area and an additional 46 square miles of water area for an aggregate total of 372 square miles.² Due to the city's unique topography, which includes numerous beaches, mesas, mountains, and canyons, the climate can vary significantly over short geographical distances, resulting in microclimates throughout the region.

San Diego spans over 70 miles of pristine Pacific Ocean coastline and offers a wide variety of beaches and amenities. With its great weather and miles of sandy beaches, San Diego is known worldwide as one of the best tourist destinations and is a great place for residents to relax year-round.



Center for Education & Research

San Diego is a center for education and research, with both public and private colleges and universities. San Diego State University, Point Loma Nazarene University, the University of San Diego, and the University of California San Diego (UC San Diego) are the most well-known higher education institutions in San Diego. U.S. News & World Report recently released their rankings of the 2025 best national universities in the United States. UC San Diego ranked at 29 and University of San Diego and San Diego State University tied at 109.³

UC San Diego is world-renowned and recognized as one of the top universities for research and development (R&D). For Fiscal Year 2024 (July 2023 – June 2024), it received \$1.73 billion in new research funding.⁴ Research centers under the umbrella of UC San Diego include the Scripps Institution of Oceanography (Scripps Oceanography), San Diego Supercomputer Center, California Institute for Telecommunications, and Information Technology (Calit2), Center for Energy Research, and Office of Innovation & Commercialization Center. Scripps Oceanography is one of the world's largest and most renowned centers for ocean, earth, and atmospheric science research. San Diego State University received an increased investment in research with nearly \$229.8 million in grant and research funding during that same time frame.⁵ San Diego State University plans to expand its academic and research programs, aided by its expansion into Mission Valley and adjacent land to the University.

¹ Schedule. United States Census Bureau website. Retrieved June 2024.

² 2024 Census Gazetteer Files-Places. United States Census Bureau website. Retrieved March 2025.

³ Best Colleges in San Diego. USnews website. Retrieved March 2025.

⁴ UCSD Office of Research and Innovation-Annual Update. UCSD website. Retrieved March 2025.

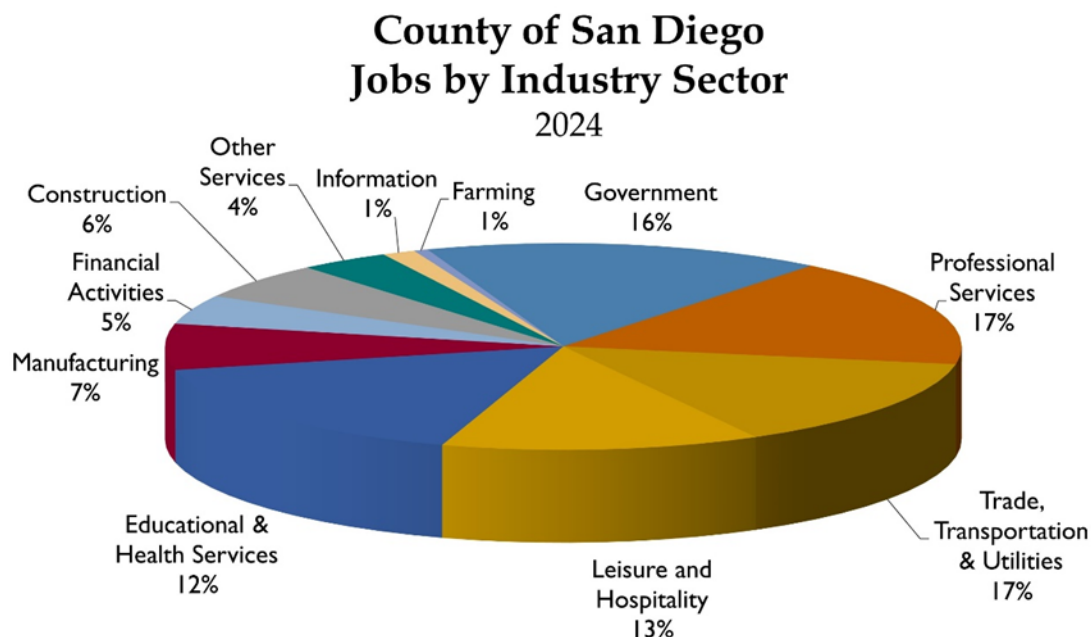
⁵ SDSU Newscenter. SDSU website. Retrieved March 2025.

Local Economy

San Diego policymakers, businesses and educators are working collaboratively to create a thriving innovation ecosystem of some of the world's most innovative companies and a talented and loyal workforce. The City's proximity to Mexico and global recruitment capabilities gives San Diego easy access to international markets. Built upon a strong foundation in defense spending, the San Diego economy has benefited from the increase in demand for global trade, high-tech manufacturing, research and development, and the advantages of a blue economy and a dynamic tourism industry. San Diego's economic base has transformed in recent years to become more diversified, which has helped hedge the risk of impacts from one specific sector.

However, the defense and military industries play a significant role in the San Diego economy. The San Diego Military Advisory Council (SDMAC) issued a Military Economic Impact Study in October 2024 (SDMAC Study), estimating that in 2024, defense-related activities and spending generated approximately \$63.2 billion of Gross Regional Product (GRP) for San Diego County, or 23.7 percent of the region's total GRP. In 2024, the military was responsible for approximately 369,000 jobs in the region, or 24.2 percent of all employment in the region. The SDMAC Study further estimates that \$20.6 billion in federal defense funds were allocated to San Diego County.

Figure 1 County of San Diego Jobs by Industry Sector for 2024.



Source: State of California Economic Employment Development

Innovation

The San Diego region is known for having one of the largest concentrations of high-tech companies in the United States, with companies focused on information and communication technology, biotech and life sciences, clean-tech, and maritime technology. San Diego's innovation economy is a center for scientific breakthroughs and discoveries because of its research institutions and scientific research and development. Research institutions, as well as commercial research and development businesses, are significant economic contributors to the region, bringing in more than \$4.1 billion and \$5.8 billion in venture

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capital funding in 2023 and 2024, respectively. Now, San Diego is only behind four other cities in receiving venture capital investment in the United States.⁶

The City's economic base is anchored by higher education and major scientific research institutions, which provide a foundation to create new manufacturing products. The top exports from the San Diego Area are computer and electronic parts, machinery, chemicals, transportation equipment, and other miscellaneous manufacturing goods. The San Diego area was the 22nd largest exporter among U.S. Metro areas with an export value of \$23.0 billion in 2023.⁷

In 2023, San Diego County's life science workforce consisted of over 75,000 direct employees and continued to be a driving force in the local economy. Life science jobs in San Diego County paid an average of \$160,000 yearly, which represents a regional economic impact of \$56.6 billion. Biotechnology represented 44 percent of life sciences direct employment, with research and testing following at 18 percent.⁸

Tourism

In 2024, San Diego is estimated to have had approximately 32.2 million visitors, who spent approximately \$14.8 billion at San Diego area businesses.⁹ This industry typically generates over \$1.0 billion annually in State and local taxes. Since the height of the COVID-19 pandemic, the San Diego tourism industry has rebounded strongly. According to the San Diego Tourism Authority, San Diego had the third-highest hotel occupancy in the country over the course of 2024, reaching 74.3% with 17.5 million room nights sold. The primary economic indicators of transient occupancy tax include room rates, occupancy, and room demand, all of which are projected to see growth in 2026 which exceed or nearly reach 2019 levels, indicative of increased tourism in the region.¹⁰



General Fund transient occupancy tax revenues exceeded pre-pandemic levels in Fiscal Year 2024 by approximately \$31.8 million and the Fiscal Year 2026 Draft Budget projects transient occupancy tax revenues to continue to see moderate growth. Additional details on the impacts and recovery related to tourism revenue is discussed in detail in the General Fund Revenues Section of this Volume.

While San Diego is primarily known for its miles of beaches and amazing weather, San Diego is also home to an abundance of attractions for visitors of all ages. These destinations include the world-renowned San Diego Zoo, San Diego Zoo Safari Park, and Sea World. In addition, San Diego offers other activities for visitors seeking cultural and recreational experiences. Balboa Park is a 1,200-acre urban park with 21 museums and cultural institutions, several performing arts venues, gardens, hikes, art galleries, and various cultural attractions that bring millions of people to visit the park each year.

The San Diego Convention Center is a 2.6 million square foot convention center located on San Diego Bay and next to San Diego's historic Gaslamp Quarter. Every year, the convention center hosts several large events and conventions, but the most well-known is Comic Con International, which is historically the largest economic generator for the Convention Center and one of the largest for the City of San Diego.

⁶ 2024 Connect Impact Report. Connect website. Retrieved March 2025.

⁷ San Diego-Chula Vista-Carlsbad, CA Goods Exports. Department of Commerce. Retrieved March 2025.

⁸ California Economic Impact Report. Biocom California Website. Retrieved March 2025.

⁹ San Diego Travel Forecast. San Diego Tourism Authority website. Retrieved March 2025.

¹⁰ San Diego Lodging Forecast. San Diego Tourism Authority website. Retrieved March 2025.

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Comic Con International has committed to staying in San Diego through 2027. Comic Con's 2023 main event attracted approximately 135,000 attendees and generated a regional economic impact of \$161.1 million. The San Diego Convention Center's Fiscal Year 2024 Annual Report notes that because of 80 Convention Center events, and over 663,000 visitors from around the world, spending at restaurants, hotels, and attractions reached over \$855 million with a regional impact of \$1.5 billion, making it one of the biggest drivers in the City for sales, lodging, and tourism revenue.¹¹



Transportation

San Diego is well connected to the Southern California region by interstates, trains, and light rail. The region is served by the San Diego International Airport at Lindbergh Field. The San Diego International Airport prior to 2020 broke traffic records for six consecutive years with 25.2 million passengers recorded for 2019; however, the COVID-19 pandemic significantly impacted air travel. As of 2024, air traffic has fully recovered and ended the year with 25.2 million passengers.¹² San Diego International Airport is focused on advancing the Airport Development Plan to further support and expand air travel to and from San Diego.

San Diego, in cooperation with the San Diego Metropolitan Transit System, has established a light-rail system that connects downtown with other outlying communities in the northern, eastern, and southern portions of the county. Amtrak also provides intercity passenger rail service from downtown San Diego to Los Angeles, and north to San Luis Obispo.

The Metropolitan Transit System's San Diego Trolley includes three lines serving many popular areas and attractions throughout San Diego. The Mid-Coast Corridor Transit Project began in fall of 2016 and went into service on November 21, 2021.¹³ The trolley project extended Trolley service from the Santa Fe Depot in Downtown San Diego to the University City community, next to the University of California San Diego. Metropolitan Transit System also operates 94 bus routes, including eight high-frequency, limited-stop Rapid bus service lines. The Metropolitan Transit System has freeway level transit stations to enhance reliability and efficiency of a service that connects the Mid-City communities with Downtown San Diego and Escondido. Additionally, the Metropolitan Transit System has limited South Bay rapid bus service to the South Bay community, which connects the southern community to downtown San Diego.¹⁴

¹¹ SDCC Annual Report FY2024. San Diego Convention Center website. Retrieved March 2025.

¹² San Diego Passenger Traffic Record. San Diego International Airport website. Retrieved March 2025.

¹³ Mid-Coast Trolley Extension. SANDAG Website. Retrieved March 2023.

¹⁴ South Bay Rapid. Metropolitan Transit System website. Retrieved July 2023.

The City of San Diego is focused on creating more options for mobility, and is working on land use changes, incorporating new perspectives on community design, promoting active transportation, and changing parking rules and standards to contribute to expanded mobility options.

The City's efforts include:

- Installing pedestrian improvements, including sidewalks, street lighting and parklets
- Expanding bike lanes and installing more bike racks
- Reducing parking space requirements when building developments near transit
- Retiming traffic signals to reduce vehicle fuel consumption and installing roundabouts
- Implementing the "City of Villages" strategy of the City's [General Plan](#), which focuses on growth in pedestrian-friendly, mixed-use areas linked to an improved transit system

The City is concentrating much of its efforts in Transit Priority Areas, which are areas within half a mile of existing or planned transit stops.¹⁵

Demographic Statistics

As the eighth largest city in the United States and the second largest in California, the City of San Diego has 1.4 million residents comprised of an ethnically and culturally diverse population. Since 2022, the population of the City has increased by 7,158; San Diego reached a population peak of 1,425,976 in 2018 and is estimated at 1,388,320 as of July 1, 2023. Estimates for City populations as of July 1, 2024, are scheduled for release in May 2025.

Influenced by its proximity to an international border and the Pacific Rim, more than 40.0 percent of the City's population speaks a language other than English at home, and more than 25.0 percent are considered a foreign-born person. Immigration from various parts of the world has been and continues to be a major contributor to San Diego's ethnic and cultural diversity. Having the privilege of being a multicultural melting pot positions the City's labor force for success in the global economy.

The following **Figures 2 through 4** provide more detail about the City of San Diego's demographics including: Population by Age, Educational Attainment, and Race Identification, respectively.

San Diego's strong history and reputation with the military and defense industry have built the nation's largest military community, which makes up nearly 10.0 percent of the population in the region. The San Diego Association of Governments (SANDAG) forecasts the City's population to be 1.44 million in 2035 and 2050.¹⁶

Figures 2 through 4 provide more detail about the City of San Diego's demographics including: Population by Age, Educational Attainment, and Race Identification, respectively.

¹⁵ Mobility and Land Use. City of San Diego Sustainability and Mobility Department website. Retrieved July 2023.

¹⁶ SANDAG Series 15 Regional Growth Forecast. SANDAG website. Retrieved March 2025.

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Figure 2: Population By Age

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2019 - 2023 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates.

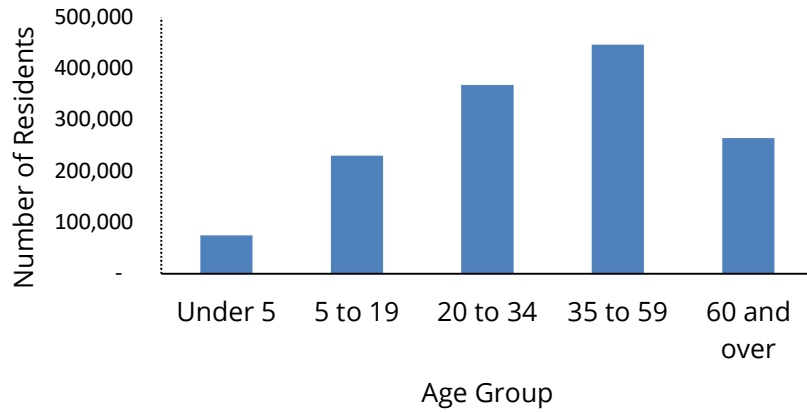


Figure 3: Educational Attainment

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2019 - 2023 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates.

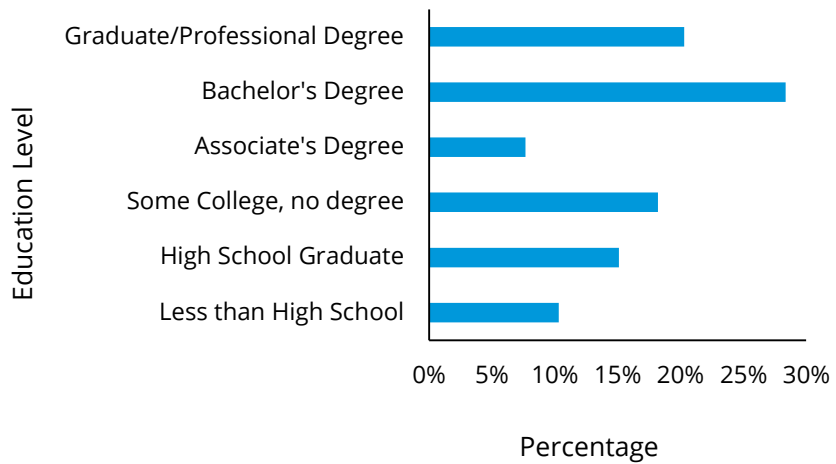


Figure 4: Race Identification

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2019 - 2023 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates.

