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City Profile

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 1,406,106 as of July 1, 2025. San Diego's population has increased by 19,174 people from the 2020 Census. 2025 population estimates were released on May 14, 2026.¹



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 (UCSD) are the most well-known higher education institutions in San Diego. U.S. News & World Report recently released its rankings of the 2026 best national universities in the United States. UCSD ranked 29, the University of San Diego ranked 110, and San Diego State University ranked 117.³

UCSD is world-renowned and recognized as one of the top universities for research and development (R&D). For Fiscal Year 2025 (July 2024 – June 2025), it received \$1.7 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, Center for Energy Research, and the 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. After three straight years of growth, San Diego State University saw a reduction in grant and research funding, totaling \$200.8 million.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.

Local Economy

San Diego policymakers, businesses, and educators are working collaboratively to create a thriving innovation ecosystem that includes some of the world's most innovative companies and a talented, loyal workforce. The City's proximity to Mexico and global recruitment capabilities gives San Diego easy access

¹ Schedule. United States Census Bureau website. Retrieved July 2026.

² 2025 Census Gazetteer Files-Places. United States Census Bureau website. Retrieved March 2026.

³ Best Colleges in San Diego. USnews website. Retrieved March 2026

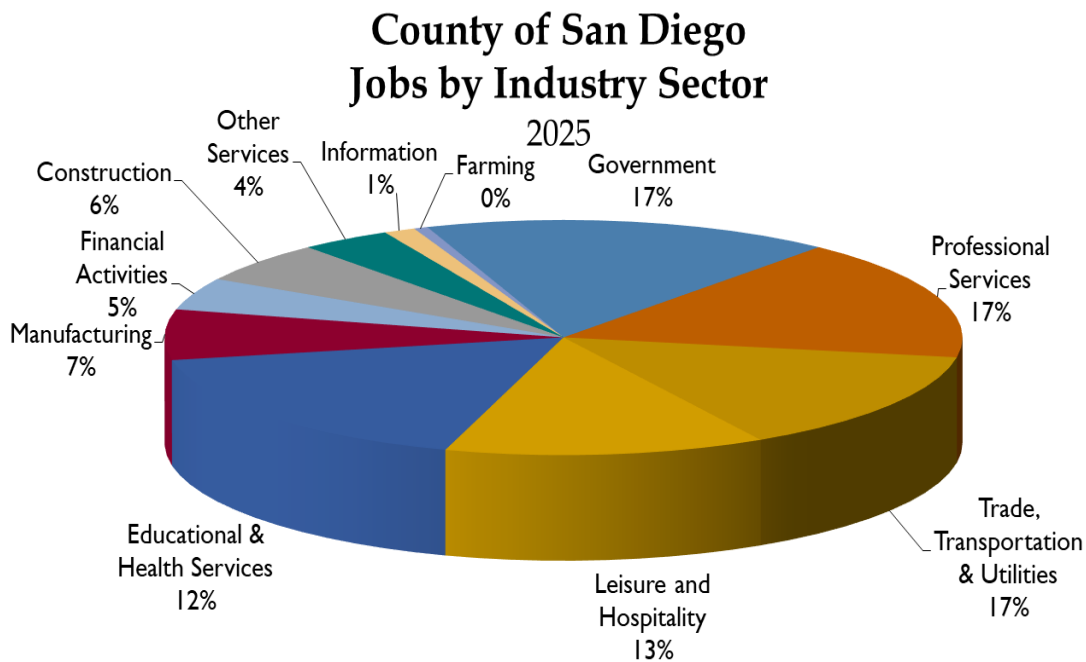
⁴ UCSD Behind Every Breakthrough Article. UCSD website. Retrieved March 2026.

⁵ SDSU Newscenter. SDSU website. Retrieved March 2026.

to international markets. Built on a strong foundation in defense spending, the San Diego economy has benefited from increased demand for global trade, high-tech manufacturing, research and development, the advantages of a blue economy, and a dynamic tourism industry. San Diego's economic base has transformed in recent years, becoming more diversified, helping to hedge against the risks of impacts from a single 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 November 2025 (SDMAC Study), estimating that from October 1, 2024, to September 30, 2025, defense-related activities and spending generated approximately \$61.3 billion of Gross Regional Product (GRP) for San Diego County, or 22.2 percent of the region's total GRP. Furthermore, the military was responsible for approximately 357,000 jobs, or 22.4 percent of all employment in the region. The SDMAC Study also estimates that \$19.8 billion in federal defense funds were allocated to San Diego County.

Figure 1 County of San Diego Jobs by Industry Sector for 2025.



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, driven by 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 \$3.6 billion in venture capital funding in 2025.⁶

The City's economic base is anchored by higher education and major scientific research institutions, which provide a foundation for developing new manufacturing products. The top exports from the San Diego Area are computer and electronic parts, machinery, chemicals, transportation equipment, and other

⁶ 2025 Connect Impact Report. Connect website. Retrieved March 2026.

miscellaneous manufacturing goods. The San Diego area ranked 19th among U.S. Metro areas in 2024, with an export value of \$24.9 billion.⁷

In 2025, San Diego County's life science workforce consisted of over 61,000 direct employees and remained a driving force in the local economy despite experiencing a 2.6 percent decline from 2024. Life science jobs in San Diego County pay an average of \$203,000 per year, representing a regional economic impact of \$55.2 billion. Biotechnology accounted for 46 percent of life sciences direct employment, with biopharmaceuticals following at 18 percent.⁸

Tourism

In calendar year 2025, visitors to San Diego County spent an estimated \$14.4 billion during their stays, with total visitation reaching 32.4 million.⁹ This industry typically generates over \$1.0 billion in total tax revenue for the region annually. Since the height of the COVID-19 pandemic, the San Diego tourism industry has rebounded strongly. According to the San Diego Tourism Marketing District, San Diego County had the fourth-highest hotel occupancy in the country in Fiscal Year 2025, averaging 73.8 percent county-wide.¹⁰ The primary economic drivers of transient occupancy tax include room rates, occupancy, and room demand,



which are projected to experience tempered growth in calendar year 2027 according to the April 2026 San Diego County Lodging Forecast, prepared for the San Diego Tourism Authority by Tourism Economics. This is primarily due to consumers navigating general economic uncertainty and inflationary pressures.¹¹

The Fiscal Year 2027 Adopted Budget projects transient occupancy tax revenues to continue to see moderate growth. Additional details on the impacts and recovery related to tourism revenue are 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 a variety of activities for visitors seeking cultural and recreational experiences. Balboa Park, for example, is a 1,200-acre urban park with 17 museums and cultural institutions, several performing arts venues, gardens, hiking trails, art galleries, and various cultural attractions that draw millions of visitors each year.

The San Diego Convention Center is a 2.6 million square foot convention center located on San Diego Bay, 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 has historically been the Convention Center's largest economic generator and one of the largest for the City of San Diego. Comic Con International has committed to staying in San Diego through 2030. Comic Con's 2025 main event attracted over 130,000 attendees and generated a regional economic impact of \$160.0 million. The San Diego Convention Center's Fiscal Year 2025 Annual Report notes that because of 92 Convention Center events, and over 730,000 visitors from around the world, spending at restaurants, hotels, and attractions

⁷ San Diego-Chula Vista-Carlsbad, CA Goods Exports. Department of Commerce. Retrieved March 2026.

⁸ California Economic Impact Report. Biocom California Website. Retrieved July 2026.

⁹ San Diego Travel Forecast. San Diego Tourism Authority website. Retrieved July 2026.

¹⁰ San Diego Tourism Marketing District FY 2025 Annual Performance Report. Sdtmd.org. Retrieved July 2026.

¹¹ San Diego Tourism Authority Lodging Forecast. San Diego Tourism Authority Website. Retrieved July 2026.

reached over \$921.0 million with a record breaking regional impact of \$1.57 billion, making it one of the biggest drivers in the City for sales, lodging, and tourism revenue.¹²

Transportation

San Diego is well connected to the rest of Southern California 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. Since then, air traffic has had a continual recovery and ended 2025 with a record breaking 25.3 million passengers.¹³ 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 four primary lines that operate daily and a heritage streetcar line that operates on holidays. The trolley system serves over 60 stations and connects San Diego's Downtown with East County, UC San Diego, South Bay, and the Mexico Border. The Metropolitan Transit System also operates 97 bus routes, including nine high-frequency, limited-stop Rapid bus service lines. The Metropolitan Transit System has freeway level transit stations to enhance the 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 connecting the South Bay community to downtown San Diego.¹⁴

The City of San Diego is focused on creating a balanced, equitable, and sustainable mobility system. In furtherance of this goal, the City Council adopted the City's first-ever Mobility Master Plan that combines community, mode, and objective-specific planning into one comprehensive document to prioritize mobility projects and to identify programs that will have the most significant benefit in communities and on the environment.

The City's efforts will be adapted as needed over time, but are currently guided by three themes:

- Safety – Ensuring all users are safe when using any mode of transportation, the City has further committed to the Vision Zero goal of eliminating all traffic fatalities and severe injuries.
- Sustainability – Reshaping the mobility system using technology, design, and sustainable transportation options to help reduce emissions and vehicle miles traveled, encourage mode shift, and promote environmental health.
- Equity – Ensuring that transportation infrastructure and services are accessible, affordable, and inclusive for all, regardless of age, gender, physical ability, income level, or geographic location.

¹² SDCC Annual Report FY2025. San Diego Convention Center website. Retrieved March 2026.

¹³ San Diego Passenger Traffic Record. San Diego International Airport website. Retrieved March 2026.

¹⁴ South Bay Rapid. Metropolitan Transit System website. Retrieved July 2026.

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 2024, the population of the City has increased by 1,654. San Diego reached a population peak of 1,425,976 in 2018 and is estimated at 1,406,106 as of July 1, 2025. Estimates for city populations as of July 1, 2026, are scheduled for release in May 2027.

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 foreign-born persons. 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.

San Diego's strong history and reputation with the military and defense industry have built the nation's largest military community, which accounts for nearly 10.0 percent of the region's population. The San Diego Association of Governments (SANDAG) forecasts the City's population to be 1.44 million in 2035 and 2050.¹⁵

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.

Figure 2: Population
By Age >

Source: U.S. Census
Bureau, 2020 - 2024
American Community
Survey 5-Year Estimates.

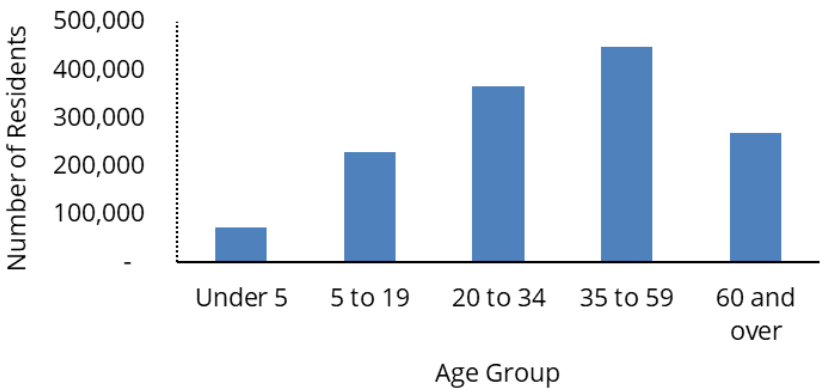
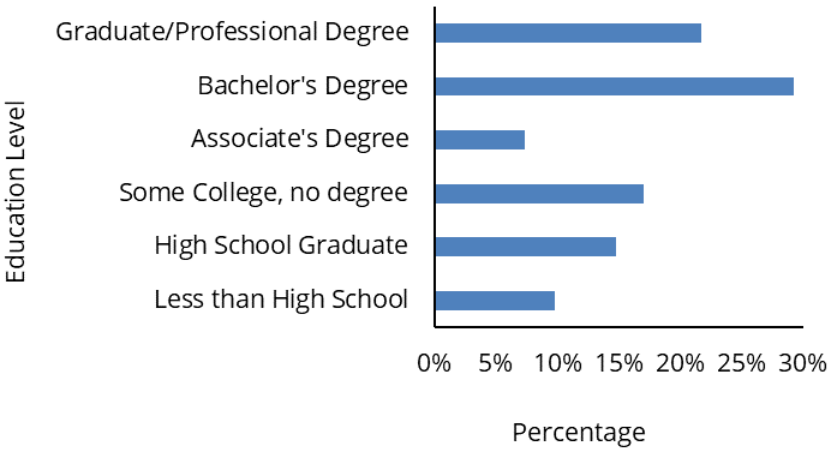


Figure 3: Educational
Attainment >

Source: U.S. Census
Bureau, 2020 - 2024
American Community
Survey 5-Year Estimates.



¹⁵ SANDAG Series 15 Regional Growth Forecast. SANDAG website. Retrieved March 2026.

Figure 4: Race Identification >

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2020 - 2024 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates.

