

What Jobs Are Asylum Seekers Likely to Get?

Over the past year and a half, a large number of asylum seekers have come to New York City. Many are already seeking work, and more will if and when they gain work authorization. What are the first jobs they are likely to get?

If the jobs asylum seekers get in New York City follow the trend of jobs currently held by immigrants in low-wage jobs, the top 10 would be as follows.

10 MOST LIKELY FIRST JOBS FOR ASYLUM SEEKERS

1. Home Health Aides
2. Janitors and Cleaners
3. Taxi Drivers
4. Construction Laborers
5. Maids and Housekeepers
6. Cashiers
7. Nursing Assistants
8. Truck Drivers
9. Childcare Workers
10. Cooks

... and, important sources of jobs not included above: delivery service workers and street vendors.

Fig 1. Prediction of likely first jobs for asylum seekers is based on the jobs currently held by immigrants in New York City in low-wage positions. IRI analysis of 2019 American Community Survey 5-year data. Low-wage occupations are defined as in the IRI report “Immigrants in the U.S. Economy: Overcoming Hurdles, Yet Still Facing Barriers.”

Together, the Top 10 detailed occupations make up about half (45 percent) of the jobs currently held by immigrants in low-wage work.

These low-wage jobs are an estimate of the first positions asylum-seekers are likely to get. If and when they gain work authorization, a number of asylum seekers will likely get better-paying positions soon after their first job, since many come with prior work qualifications that will let them quickly shift jobs and improve their wages.

Two notable categories that are important sources of work for asylum seekers but not included in data analysis for the Top 10 list are delivery service workers and street vendors. These are two groups of workers that fall between the cracks of Census categories and are difficult to identify either in the data about either employees or self-employed individuals. News reports and information from community and labor groups has made it clear that these are areas where asylum seekers are finding work.

This Top 10 list is for what are called *detailed* occupations. If we look at *broad* occupational categories, we can see that by far the largest group is service jobs. This includes jobs such detailed occupations as home health aides, janitors, and housekeepers.

LIKELY FIRST JOBS FOR ASYLUM SEEKERS: BROAD OCCUPATIONAL CATEGORIES

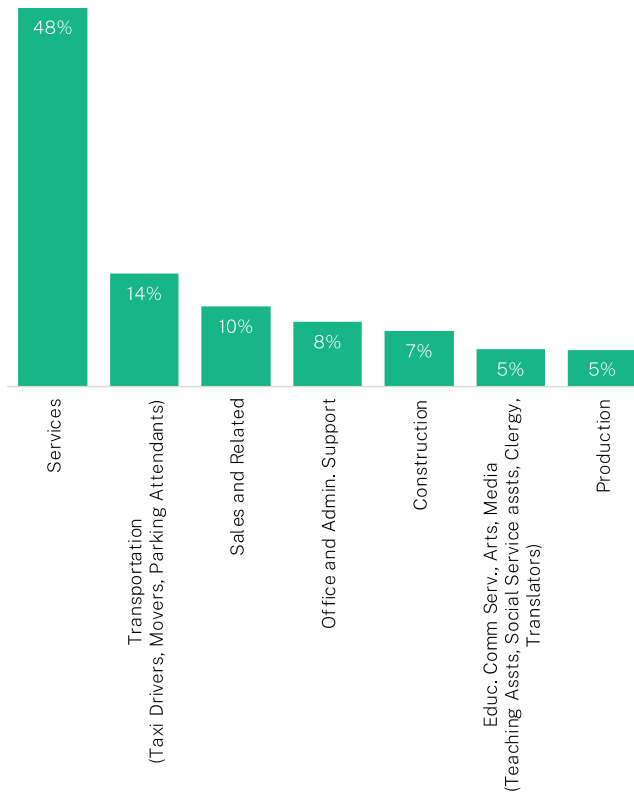


Fig 2. IRI analysis of 2019 ACS 5-year data. Occupational categories with less than three percent of immigrants are not shown here.

While detailed occupational categories give a sharper picture of the types of jobs immigrants hold, the broad occupational categories give a better sense of how immigrants are fitting into the overall low-wage labor market.

By David Dyssegaard Kallick.

Data analysis performed by Anthony Capote.

David Dyssegaard Kallick is director of Immigration Research Initiative.

Anthony Capote is senior data and policy analyst at Immigration Research Initiative.