



Immigrants in Alabama

Alabama has a small but growing immigrant population. Immigrants represent a small share of the state's total population, yet a variety of industries rely heavily on immigrants. Roughly one out of every seven workers in life, physical, and social sciences is an immigrant, as are 9 percent of construction and extraction employees. The majority of immigrants speak English well and are naturalized citizens or eligible for naturalization. As neighbors, business owners, taxpayers, and workers, immigrants are an integral part of Alabama's diverse and thriving communities and make extensive contributions that benefit all.

Three percent of Alabama residents are immigrants, while another 3 percent of residents are native-born U.S. citizens with at least one immigrant parent.

- In 2018, 162,567 immigrants (foreign-born individuals) comprised 3 percent of the population.¹
- Alabama was home to 79,394 women, 70,377 men, and 12,796 children who were immigrants.²
- The top countries of origin for immigrants were Mexico (27 percent of immigrants), China (6 percent), India (6 percent), Guatemala (5 percent), and Germany (5 percent).³
- In 2018, 166,266 people in Alabama (3 percent of the state's population) were native-born Americans who had at least one immigrant parent.⁴

Two in five immigrants in Alabama are naturalized U.S. citizens.

- 67,130 immigrants (41 percent) had naturalized as of 2018,⁵ and 31,237 immigrants were eligible to become [naturalized U.S. citizens](#) in 2017.⁶
- Three in four (76 percent) immigrants reported speaking English "well" or "very well."⁷

Immigrants in Alabama are distributed across the educational spectrum.

- One-third (33 percent) of adult immigrants had a college degree or more education in 2018, while more than one-quarter (27 percent) had less than a high school diploma.⁸

Education Level	Share (%) of All Immigrants	Share (%) of All Natives
College degree or more	33	25
Some college	18	31
High school diploma only	22	31
Less than a high school diploma	27	13

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2018 American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates.

Nearly 40,000 U.S. citizens in Alabama live with at least one family member who is undocumented.

- 55,000 [undocumented immigrants](#) comprised 34 percent of the immigrant population and 1 percent of the total state population in 2016.⁹
- 91,947 people in Alabama, including 39,378 U.S. citizens, lived with at least one [undocumented family member](#) between 2010 and 2014.¹⁰
- During the same period, about 3 percent of children in the state were U.S. citizens living with at least one undocumented family member (32,204 children in total).¹¹

Alabama is home to thousands of Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) recipients.

- 3,970 [active DACA recipients](#) lived in Alabama as of March 2020, while DACA has been granted to 4,707 people in total since 2012.¹²
- As of 2019, 58 percent of [DACA-eligible immigrants](#) in Alabama had applied for DACA.¹³
- An additional 3,000 residents of the state would satisfy all but the educational requirements for DACA, and fewer than 1,000 would become eligible as they grew older.¹⁴

Immigrants are an important part of the Alabama workforce across industries.

- 96,292 immigrant workers comprised 4 percent of the labor force in 2018.¹⁵

- Immigrant workers were most numerous in the following industries:

Industry	Number of Immigrant Workers
Manufacturing	18,050
Construction	14,871
Retail Trade	12,667
Accommodation and Food Services	12,284
Educational Services	10,287

Source: Analysis of the U.S. Census Bureau's 2018 American Community Survey 1-year PUMS data by the American Immigration Council.

- The largest shares of immigrant workers were in the following industries:¹⁶

Industry	Immigrant Share (%) (of all industry workers)
Construction	8
Other Services (except Public Administration)	6
Accommodation and Food Services	6
Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing, and Hunting	5
Manufacturing	5

Source: Analysis of the U.S. Census Bureau's 2018 American Community Survey 1-year PUMS data by the American Immigration Council.

Immigrants are an integral part of the Alabama workforce in a range of occupations.

- In 2018, immigrant workers were most numerous in the following occupation groups:¹⁷

Occupation Category	Number of Immigrant Workers
Production	11,721
Construction and Extraction	11,598
Food Preparation and Serving Related	10,316
Transportation and Material Moving	8,273
Building and Grounds Cleaning & Maintenance	8,074

Source: Analysis of the U.S. Census Bureau's 2018 American Community Survey 1-year PUMS data by the American Immigration Council.

- The largest shares of immigrant workers were in the following occupation groups:¹⁸

Occupation Category	Immigrant Share (%) (of all workers in occupation)
Life, Physical, and Social Science	15
Construction and Extraction	9
Personal Care and Service	8
Food Preparation and Serving Related	7
Building and Grounds Cleaning & Maintenance	7

Source: Analysis of the U.S. Census Bureau's 2018 American Community Survey 1-year PUMS data by the American Immigration Council.

- Undocumented immigrants comprised 2 percent of Alabama's workforce in 2016.¹⁹

Immigrants in Alabama have contributed over a billion dollars in taxes.

- [Immigrant-led households in the state paid](#) \$944.6 million in federal taxes and \$355.7 million in state and local taxes in 2018.²⁰
- Undocumented immigrants in Alabama paid an estimated \$54.1 million in federal taxes and \$37.6 million in [state and local taxes](#) in 2018.²¹
- Alabama [DACA recipients](#) and DACA-eligible individuals paid an estimated \$11.4 million in state and local taxes in 2018.²²

As consumers, immigrants add billions of dollars to Alabama's economy.

- Alabama residents in immigrant-led households had \$3.7 billion in [spending power](#) (after-tax income) in 2018.²³

Immigrant entrepreneurs in Alabama generate hundreds of millions of dollars in business revenue.

- 12,670 immigrant business owners accounted for 6 percent of all self-employed Alabama residents in 2018 and generated \$319.8 million in business income.²⁴

Endnotes

1. “Foreign born” does not include people born in Puerto Rico or U.S. island areas or U.S. citizens born abroad of American parent(s). U.S. Census Bureau, 2018 American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates. The American Immigration Council elected to use data from the 2018 ACS 1-Year estimates wherever possible to provide the most current information available. Since these estimates are based on a smaller sample size than the ACS 5-year, however, they are more sensitive to fluctuations and may result in greater margins of error (compared to 5-year estimates).
2. Children are defined as people age 17 or younger. Men and women do not include children. Ibid.
3. Analysis of the U.S. Census Bureau’s 2018 American Community Survey 1-year PUMS data by the American Immigration Council.
4. Analysis of data from the 2018 Current Population Survey by the American Immigration Council, using IPUMS CPS. Sarah Flood, Miriam King, Renae Rodgers, Steven Ruggles and J. Robert Warren, *Integrated Public Use Microdata Series, Current Population Survey: Version 7.0* [dataset] (Minneapolis, MN: IPUMS, 2020), <https://doi.org/10.18128/D030.V7.0>.
5. 2018 ACS 1-Year Estimates.
6. Augmented IPUMS-ACS data, as published in “State-Level Unauthorized Population and Eligible-to-Naturalize Estimates,” Center for Migration Studies data tool, accessed April 2020, data.cmsny.org/state.html.
7. Figure includes immigrants who speak only English. Data based on survey respondents age 5 and over. Analysis of 2018 ACS 1-Year Estimates by the American Immigration Council.
8. Data based on survey respondents age 25 and older. Ibid.
9. Pew Research Center, “U.S. unauthorized immigration population estimates, 2016,” February 5, 2019, www.pewhispanic.org/interactives/unauthorized-immigrants/.
10. Silva Mathema, “State-by-State Estimates of the Family Members of Unauthorized Immigrants,” University of Southern California’s Center for the Study of Immigrant Integration and the Center for American Progress, March 2017, www.americanprogress.org/issues/immigration/news/2017/03/16/427868/state-state-estimates-family-members-unauthorized-immigrants/.
11. American Immigration Council analysis of data from the 2010-2014 ACS 5-Year, using Silva Mathema’s “State-by-State Estimates of the Family Members of Unauthorized Immigrants” and IPUMS-USA. Steven Ruggles, Katie Genadek, Ronald Goeken, Josiah Grover, and Matthew Sobek, *Integrated Public Use Microdata Series: Version 7.0* [dataset] (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota, 2017).
12. The number of DACA recipients reflects USCIS’ estimate of those with active DACA grants as of March 31, 2020. U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS), “Approximate Active DACA Recipients: As of March 31, 2020” [dataset], July 22, 2020, <https://www.uscis.gov/sites/default/files/document/data/Approximate%20Active%20DACA%20Receipts%20-%20March%2031%202020.pdf>. DACA grants reflect USCIS Form I-821D initial requests approved from Aug. 15, 2012-Mar. 31, 2020, as of April 2020. USCIS, “Number of Form I-821D, Consideration of Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals, Status, by Fiscal Year, Quarter, and Case Status: Aug. 15, 2012-Mar. 31, 2020,” July 22, 2020, https://www.uscis.gov/sites/default/files/document/data/DACA_performance_data_fy2020_qtr2.pdf.
13. Estimates of the DACA-eligible population as of 2019 include unauthorized immigrant youth who had been in the United States since 2007, were under the age of 16 at the time of arrival, were under the age of 31 as of 2012, and who met DACA eligibility requirements as of 2016. Migration Policy Institute (MPI) analysis of U.S. Census Bureau data from the 2012-16 American Community Survey (ACS) pooled, and the 2008 Survey of Income and Program Participation (SIPP), with legal status assignments by James Bachmeier and Colin Hammar of Temple University and Jennifer Van Hook of The Pennsylvania State University, Population Research Institute, as cited in “Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) Data Tools,” accessed April 2020, www.migrationpolicy.org/programs/data-hub/deferred-action-childhood-arrivals-daca-profiles.
14. Ibid.
15. Analysis of 2018 ACS 1-year PUMS data by the American Immigration Council. Categories are based on the 2012 North American Industry Classification System (NAICS), www.census.gov/eos/www/naics/index.html.
16. Ibid.
17. Analysis of 2018 ACS 1-year PUMS data by the American Immigration Council. Categories are based on the 2010 Standard Occupational Classification (SOC) system, www.bls.gov/soc/major_groups.htm.
18. Ibid.
19. Pew Research Center, “U.S. unauthorized immigration population estimates, 2016,” 2019.
20. New American Economy analysis of 2018 ACS microdata using IPUMS. New American Economy, “Map the Impact,” section Taxes and Spending Power, January 31, 2020, <https://www.newamericaneconomy.org/locations/>.
21. Ibid. at sec. Undocumented Immigrants.
22. Institute on Taxation and Economic Policy, *State & Local Tax Contributions of Young Undocumented Immigrants* (Washington, DC: April 2018), Appendix 1, <https://itep.org/state-local-tax-contributions-of-young-undocumented-immigrants>.
23. New American Economy, “Map the Impact,” section Taxes and Spending Power.
24. “Business owners” include people who are self-employed, at least 18 years old, and work at least 15 hours per week at their businesses. Analysis of 2018 ACS 1-year PUMS data by the American Immigration Council.