



## Immigrants in California

California has long been home to the largest number of immigrants in the United States, as European explorers arrived at its seaports as far back as the 17th century. Immigrants now account for over one-quarter of the state's population and comprise a third of the entire labor force. As neighbors, business owners, taxpayers, and workers, immigrants are an integral part of California's diverse and thriving communities and make extensive contributions that benefit all.

### **More than a quarter of California residents are immigrants, while nearly one in four residents is a native-born U.S. citizen with at least one immigrant parent.**

- In 2018, 10.6 million immigrants (foreign-born individuals) comprised 27 percent of the population.<sup>1</sup>
- California was home to 5.3 million women, 4.9 million men, and 421,025 children who were immigrants.<sup>2</sup>
- The top countries of origin for immigrants were Mexico (38 percent of immigrants), the Philippines (8 percent), China (7 percent), India (5 percent), and Vietnam (5 percent).<sup>3</sup>
- In 2018, 9.6 million people in California (24 percent of the state's population) were native-born Americans who had at least one immigrant parent.<sup>4</sup>

### **More than half of all immigrants in California are naturalized U.S. citizens.**

- 5.6 million immigrants (52 percent) had naturalized as of 2018,<sup>5</sup> and 2.2 million immigrants were eligible to become [naturalized U.S. citizens](#) in 2017.<sup>6</sup>
- More than two-thirds (69 percent) of immigrants reported speaking English "well" or "very well."<sup>7</sup>

### **Immigrants in California are concentrated at either end of the educational spectrum.**

- More than a quarter (29 percent) of adult immigrants had a college degree or more education in 2018, while nearly a third (32 percent) had less than a high school diploma.<sup>8</sup>

Education Level	Share (%) of All Immigrants	Share (%) of All Natives
College degree or more	29	37
Some college	19	34
High school diploma only	20	21
Less than a high school diploma	32	7
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2018 American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates.		

### Over 2 million U.S. citizens in California live with at least one family member who is undocumented.

- 2.2 million [undocumented immigrants](#) comprised 20 percent of the immigrant population and 6 percent of the total state population in 2016.<sup>9</sup>
- 4.7 million people in California, including 2.4 million U.S. citizens, lived with at least one [undocumented family member](#) between 2010 and 2014.<sup>10</sup>
- During the same period, about one in five children in the state was a U.S. citizen living with at least one undocumented family member (1.7 million children in total).<sup>11</sup>

### California is home to over 183,000 Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) recipients.

- Approximately 183,460 [active DACA recipients](#) lived in California as of March 2020, while DACA has been granted to about 238,432 people in total since 2012.<sup>12</sup>
- As of 2019, 47 percent of [DACA-eligible immigrants](#) in California had applied for DACA.<sup>13</sup>
- An additional 114,000 residents of the state would satisfy all but the educational requirements for DACA, and another 12,000 would become eligible as they grew older.<sup>14</sup>

### One in three workers in California is an immigrant, together making up a vital part of the state's labor force in a range of industries.

- 6.6 million immigrant workers comprised 33 percent of the labor force in 2018.<sup>15</sup>

- Immigrant workers were most numerous in the following industries:

Industry	Number of Immigrant Workers
Manufacturing	887,849
Health Care and Social Assistance	882,041
Retail Trade	653,716
Accommodation and Food Services	630,990
Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services	566,778

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:<sup>16</sup>

Industry	Immigrant Share (%) (of all industry workers)
Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing, and Hunting	63
Manufacturing	45
Administrative & Support; Waste Management; and Remediation Services	41
Other Services (except Public Administration)	40
Wholesale Trade	39

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 California workforce in a range of occupations.**

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

Occupation Category	Number of Immigrant Workers
Transportation and Material Moving	650,160
Management Occupations	604,093
Office and Administrative Support	599,733
Sales and Related	591,817
Building and Grounds Cleaning & Maintenance	572,823

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:<sup>18</sup>

Occupation Category	Immigrant Share (%) (of all workers in occupation)
Farming, Fishing, and Forestry	74
Building and Grounds Cleaning & Maintenance	59
Production	51
Construction and Extraction	43
Computer and Mathematical	42

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 9 percent of California's workforce in 2016.<sup>19</sup>

**Immigrants in California have contributed tens of billions of dollars in taxes.**

- [Immigrant-led households in the state paid](#) \$80.8 billion in federal taxes and \$38.9 billion in state and local taxes in 2018.<sup>20</sup>
- Undocumented immigrants in California paid an estimated \$4.5 billion in federal taxes and \$2.5 billion in [state and local taxes](#) in 2018.<sup>21</sup>
- California [DACA recipients](#) and DACA-eligible individuals paid an estimated \$497.6 million in state and local taxes in 2018.<sup>22</sup>

## As consumers, immigrants add hundreds of billions of dollars to California’s economy.

- California residents in immigrant-led households had \$290.9 billion in [spending power](#) (after-tax income) in 2018.<sup>23</sup>

## Immigrant entrepreneurs in California generate tens of billions of dollars in business revenue.

- 936,795 immigrant business owners accounted for 38 percent of all self-employed California residents in 2018 and generated \$24.5 billion in business income.<sup>24</sup>
- In the following California metropolitan areas in 2018, at least one-third of business owners was an immigrant. Immigrants accounted for:
  - 46 percent of business owners in the Los Angeles-Long Beach-Anaheim metro area,
  - 38 percent in Riverside-San Bernadino,
  - 45 percent in Sacramento-Arden Arcade-Roseville,
  - 35 percent in San Diego-Carlsbad-San Marcos,
  - 41 percent in San Francisco-Oakland-Fremont, and
  - 53 percent in San Jose-Sunnyvale-Santa Clara.<sup>25</sup>

## Endnotes

- “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).
- Children are defined as people age 17 or younger. Men and women do not include children. Ibid.
- Analysis of the U.S. Census Bureau’s 2018 American Community Survey 1-year PUMS data by the American Immigration Council.
- 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>.
- 2018 ACS 1-Year Estimates.
- 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](http://data.cmsny.org/state.html).
- 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.
- Data based on survey respondents age 25 and older. Ibid.
- Pew Research Center, “U.S. unauthorized immigration population estimates, 2016,” February 5, 2019, [www.pewhispanic.org/interactives/unauthorized-immigrants/](http://www.pewhispanic.org/interactives/unauthorized-immigrants/).
- 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/](http://www.americanprogress.org/issues/immigration/news/2017/03/16/427868/state-state-estimates-family-members-unauthorized-immigrants/).
- 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).
- 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%2C%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\\_performancedata\\_fy2020\\_qtr2.pdf](https://www.uscis.gov/sites/default/files/document/data/DACA_performancedata_fy2020_qtr2.pdf).
- 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](http://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](http://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](http://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.
25. American Immigration Council analysis of 2018 CPS data. Flood, King, Rodgers, Ruggles, and Warren, *IPUMS CPS* dataset.