



Immigrants in Colorado

Colorado has a growing community of immigrants, making up nearly 10 percent of all residents. Immigrants comprise nearly 14 percent of all business owners in the state's densely populated Denver metro area. As workers, business owners, taxpayers, and neighbors, immigrants are an integral part of Colorado's diverse and thriving communities and make extensive contributions that benefit all.

Nearly 1 in 10 Colorado residents is an immigrant, and a similar share of residents are native-born U.S. citizens who have at least one immigrant parent.

- In 2015, 537,066 immigrants (foreign-born individuals) comprised 9.8 percent of the state's population.¹
- Colorado was home to 250,879 women, 249,029 men, and 37,158 children who were immigrants.²
- The top countries of origin for immigrants were Mexico (43.3 percent of immigrants), India (4.4 percent), Vietnam (3.2 percent), Germany (3.2 percent), and China (3.1 percent).³
- In 2016, 508,934 people in Colorado (9.4 percent of the state's population) were native-born Americans who had at least [one immigrant parent](#).⁴

More than a third of all immigrants in Colorado are naturalized U.S. citizens.

- 207,694 immigrants (38.7 percent) had naturalized as of 2015,⁵ and 115,709 immigrants were eligible to become [naturalized U.S. citizens](#) in 2015.⁶
- The majority (72.6 percent) of immigrants reported speaking English "well" or "very well."⁷

Immigrants in Colorado are concentrated at both ends of the educational spectrum.

- More than one in four adult immigrants had a college degree or more education in 2015, while fewer than one in three had less than a high school diploma.⁸

Education Level	Share (%) of All Immigrants	Share (%) of All Natives
College degree or more	27.0	41.0
Some college	17.5	32.0
High school diploma only	23.2	21.5
Less than a high-school diploma	32.3	5.5

More than 140,000 U.S. citizens in Colorado live with at least one family member who is undocumented.

- 200,000 [undocumented immigrants](#) comprised 37 percent of the immigrant population and 3.8 percent of the total state population in 2014.⁹
- An estimated 276,589 people in Colorado, including 127,582 born in the United States, lived with at least one [undocumented family member](#) between 2010 and 2014.¹⁰
- During the same period, 1 in 11 children in the state was a U.S.-citizen child living with at least one undocumented family member (110,634 children in total).¹¹

More than 17,000 Colorado residents have been approved for Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA).¹²

- As of 2016, 82 percent of [DACA-eligible immigrants](#) in Colorado, or 19,103 people, had applied for DACA.¹³
- An additional 6,000 residents of the state satisfied all but the educational requirements for DACA, and another 4,000 would be eligible as they grew older.¹⁴

One in nine workers in Colorado is an immigrant, together making up an integral part of the state’s labor force in a range of industries.

- 342,387 immigrant workers comprised 11.8 percent of the labor force in 2015.¹⁵

- Immigrant workers were most numerous in the following industries:

Industry	Number of Immigrant Workers
Construction	59,034
Accommodation and Food Services	43,882
Health Care and Social Assistance	36,974
Retail Trade	36,901
Administrative & Support; Waste Management; and Remediation Services	33,283

Analysis of the U.S. Census Bureau's 2015 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	22.6
Administrative & Support; Waste Management; and Remediation Services	20.6
Accommodation and Food Services	15.9
Manufacturing	14.9
Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing & Hunting	14.1

Analysis of the U.S. Census Bureau's 2015 American Community Survey 1-year PUMS data by the American Immigration Council.

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

- In 2015, immigrant workers were most numerous in the following occupation groups:¹⁷

Occupation Category	Number of Immigrant Workers
Construction and Extraction	55,897
Building and Grounds Cleaning & Maintenance	42,077
Office and Administrative Support	33,844
Sales and Related	32,906
Food Preparation and Serving Related	30,416

Analysis of the U.S. Census Bureau's 2015 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)
Building and Grounds Cleaning & Maintenance	31.9
Construction and Extraction	27.5
Farming, Fishing, and Forestry	22.6
Production	21.2
Transportation and Material Moving	14.7

Analysis of the U.S. Census Bureau's 2015 American Community Survey 1-year PUMS data by the American Immigration Council.

- Undocumented immigrants comprised 4.9 percent of the state's workforce in 2014.¹⁹

Immigrants in Colorado have contributed billions of dollars in taxes.

- [Immigrant-led households in the state paid](#) \$2.3 billion in federal taxes and \$1 billion in state and local taxes in 2014.²⁰
- Undocumented immigrants in Colorado paid an estimated \$139.5 million in [state and local taxes](#) in 2014. Their contribution would rise to \$172.3 million if they could receive legal status.²¹
- Undocumented immigrants who were [enrolled in the DACA program](#) in 2016 paid an estimated \$34 million in state and local taxes.²²

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

- Colorado residents in immigrant-led households had \$10.8 billion in [spending power](#) (after-tax income) in 2014.²³

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

- 35,162 immigrant business owners accounted for 10.4 percent of all self-employed Colorado residents in 2015 and generated \$826 million in business income.²⁴
- In 2015, immigrants accounted for 13.8 percent of business owners in the Denver/Aurora metropolitan area.²⁵

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, 2015 American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates. The American Immigration Council elected to use data from the 2015 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 2015 American Community Survey 1-year PUMS data by the American Immigration Council.
4. Analysis of data from the 2016 Current Population Survey by the American Immigration Council, using IPUMS-CPS. Sarah Flood, Miriam King, Steven Ruggles, and J. Robert Warren, *Integrated Public Use Microdata Series, Current Population Survey: Version 5.0* [dataset] (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota, 2017).
5. 2015 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 August 2017, data.cmsny.org/state.html.
7. Figure includes immigrants who speak only English. Data based on survey respondents age 5 and over. Analysis of 2015 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,” November 3, 2016, 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 “Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals” (DACA) initiative began in 2012 and provides certain immigrants (those who were brought to the United States as children and meet specific requirements) with temporary relief from deportation, or deferred action. American Immigration Council, “Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals: A Q&A Guide,” August 17, 2012, www.americanimmigrationcouncil.org/research/deferred-action-childhood-arrivals-qa-guide. U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services, “Number of Form I-821D, Consideration of Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals” as of March 31, 2017, published June 2017, https://www.uscis.gov/sites/default/files/USCIS/Resources/Reports%20and%20Studies/Immigration%20Forms%20Data/All%20Form%20Types/DACA/daca_performancedata_fy2017_qtr2.pdf.
13. “DACA-eligible” refers to immigrants who were immediately eligible to apply for DACA as of 2016. Migration Policy Institute analysis of U.S. Census Bureau data from the 2014 American Community Survey (ACS), 2010-14 ACS pooled, and the 2008 Survey of Income and Program Participation (SIPP), as cited in “Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) Data Tools,” accessed June 2017, www.migrationpolicy.org/programs/data-hub/deferred-action-childhood-arrivals-daca-profiles.
14. Ibid.
15. Analysis of 2015 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 2015 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.
20. New American Economy, *The Contributions of New Americans in Colorado* (New York, NY: August 2016), 6, <http://www.newamericaneconomy.org/research/the-contributions-of-new-americans-in-colorado/>.
21. Institute on Taxation & Economic Policy (ITEP), *Undocumented Immigrants’ State & Local Tax Contributions* (Washington, DC: March 2017), 3, www.itep.org/undocumented-immigrants-state-local-tax-contributions-2/.
22. ITEP, *State & Local Tax Contributions of Young Undocumented Immigrants* (Washington, DC: April 2017), Appendix 1, www.itep.org/state-local-tax-contributions-of-young-undocumented-immigrants/.
23. New American Economy, *The Contributions of New Americans in Colorado*, 6.
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 2015 ACS 1-year PUMS data by the American Immigration Council.
25. American Immigration Council analysis of 2016 CPS data. Flood, King, Ruggles, and Warren, *IPUMS CPS* dataset.