Immigrants in Georgia

Georgia has a sizeable immigrant community, much of which hails from Mexico. One in ten Georgians was born in another country, while 1 in 13 residents is a native-born U.S. citizen with at least one immigrant parent. The state benefits from the various ways foreign-born residents participate in the economy and labor force, with immigrants accounting for one-quarter of all farmers, fishers, and foresters in the state and one-quarter of computer and math science employees. As neighbors, business owners, taxpayers, and workers, immigrants are an integral part of Georgia’s diverse and thriving communities and make extensive contributions that benefit all.

One in ten Georgia residents is an immigrant, while 7 percent of residents are native-born U.S. citizens with at least one immigrant parent.

- In 2018, 1.1 million immigrants (foreign-born individuals) comprised 10 percent of the population.\(^1\)
- Georgia was home to 502,347 women, 493,737 men, and 67,989 children who were immigrants.\(^2\)
- The top countries of origin for immigrants were Mexico (22 percent of immigrants), India (9 percent), Jamaica (4 percent), Korea (4 percent), and Guatemala (4 percent).\(^3\)
- In 2018, 717,062 people in Georgia (7 percent of the state’s population) were native-born Americans who had at least one immigrant parent.\(^4\)

More than two in five immigrants in Georgia are naturalized U.S. citizens.

- 480,192 immigrants (45 percent) had naturalized as of 2018,\(^5\) and 182,406 immigrants were eligible to become naturalized U.S. citizens in 2017.\(^6\)
- More than three-fourths (78 percent) of immigrants reported speaking English “well” or “very well.”\(^7\)

Immigrants in Georgia are concentrated at either end of the educational spectrum.

- More than a third (35 percent) of adult immigrants had a college degree or more education in 2018, while one-quarter (25 percent) had less than a high school diploma.\(^8\)
Education Level | Share (%) of All Immigrants | Share (%) of All Natives
--- | --- | ---
College degree or more | 35 | 31
Some college | 18 | 29
High school diploma only | 22 | 29
Less than a high school diploma | 25 | 10

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

More than 236,000 U.S. citizens in Georgia live with at least one family member who is undocumented.

- 400,000 undocumented immigrants comprised 36 percent of the immigrant population and 4 percent of the total state population in 2016.⁹

- 503,155 people in Georgia, including 236,662 U.S. citizens, lived with at least one undocumented family member between 2010 and 2014.¹⁰

- During the same period, about 1 in 13 children in the state was a U.S. citizen living with at least one undocumented family member (186,822 children in total).¹¹

Georgia is home to nearly 21,000 Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) recipients.

- 20,610 active DACA recipients lived in Georgia as of March 2020, while DACA has been granted to 25,743 people in total since 2012.¹²

- As of 2019, 48 percent of DACA-eligible immigrants in Georgia had applied for DACA.¹³

- An additional 16,000 residents of the state would satisfy all but the educational requirements for DACA, and fewer than 2,000 would become eligible as they grew older.¹⁴

One in eight workers in Georgia is an immigrant, together making up a vital part of the state’s labor force in a range of industries.

- 701,962 immigrant workers comprised 13 percent of the labor force in 2018.¹⁵
Immigrants in Georgia | American Immigration Council | 2020

Immigrant workers were most numerous in the following industries:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Industry</th>
<th>Number of Immigrant Workers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Manufacturing</td>
<td>99,559</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Construction</td>
<td>89,245</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Retail Trade</td>
<td>84,638</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health Care and Social Assistance</td>
<td>72,848</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accommodation and Food Services</td>
<td>63,971</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Industry</th>
<th>Immigrant Share (%) of all industry workers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Construction</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Services (except Public Administration)</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Administrative &amp; Support; Waste Management; and Remediation Services</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manufacturing</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Information</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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 Georgia workforce in a range of occupations.

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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Occupation Category</th>
<th>Number of Immigrant Workers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Construction and Extraction</td>
<td>77,966</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Production</td>
<td>68,321</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Management</td>
<td>67,532</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sales and Related</td>
<td>67,197</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transportation and Material Moving</td>
<td>63,057</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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:\(^{18}\)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Occupation Category</th>
<th>Immigrant Share (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Construction and Extraction</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Computer and Mathematical</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Farming, Fishing, and Forestry</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Building and Grounds Cleaning &amp; Maintenance</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Production</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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 5 percent of Georgia’s workforce in 2016.\(^ {19}\)

**Immigrants in Georgia have contributed billions of dollars in taxes.**

- Immigrant-led households in the state paid $6.6 billion in federal taxes and $3.2 billion in state and local taxes in 2018.\(^ {20}\)
- Undocumented immigrants in Georgia paid an estimated $563.7 million in federal taxes and $355.2 million in state and local taxes in 2018.\(^ {21}\)
- Georgia DACA recipients and DACA-eligible individuals paid an estimated $61.4 million in state and local taxes in 2018.\(^ {22}\)

**As consumers, immigrants add tens of billions of dollars to Georgia’s economy.**

- Georgia residents in immigrant-led households had $26.3 billion in spending power (after-tax income) in 2018.\(^ {23}\)

**Immigrant entrepreneurs in Georgia generate nearly $2 billion in business revenue.**

- 88,290 immigrant business owners accounted for 17 percent of all self-employed Georgia residents in 2018 and generated $1.8 billion in business income.\(^ {24}\)
- In 2018, nearly one-quarter (23 percent) of business owners in the Atlanta-Sandy Springs-Marietta metropolitan area were immigrants.\(^ {25}\)
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, 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.


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.


14. Ibid.


16. Ibid.


18. Ibid.


21. Ibid. at sec. Undocumented Immigrants.


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.