



Immigrants in Iowa

Iowa has a small but growing immigrant community, much of which emigrated from Mexico. Nearly 5 percent of Iowa's population was born in another country, and over 4 percent of residents are native-born Americans who have at least one immigrant parent. While relatively few in number, immigrants help support Iowa's economy and remain a critical component of the state's labor force: 20 percent of all residents working in the computer and math sciences are immigrants, as are 13 percent of production employees. As workers, business owners, taxpayers, and neighbors, immigrants are an integral part of Iowa's diverse and thriving communities and make extensive contributions that benefit all.

Nearly 5 percent of Iowa residents are immigrants, while more than 4 percent are native-born U.S. citizens with at least one immigrant parent

- In 2015, 148,721 immigrants (foreign-born individuals) comprised 4.8 percent of the state's population.¹
- Iowa was home to 66,474 women, 69,751 men, and 12,496 children who were immigrants.²
- The top countries of origin for immigrants were Mexico (29.3 percent of immigrants), China (7.7 percent), India (7.1 percent), Vietnam (4.5 percent), and Bosnia and Herzegovina (3.3 percent).³
- In 2016, 135,759 people in Iowa (4.4 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 Iowa are naturalized U.S. citizens.

- As of 2015, 55,685 immigrants (37.4 percent) had naturalized,⁵ and 23,465 immigrants were eligible to become [naturalized U.S. citizens](#) in 2015.⁶
- Seven in 10 immigrants (71.2 percent) reported speaking English "well" or "very well."⁷

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

- One in four adult immigrants had a college degree or more education in 2015, while nearly a third had less than a high school diploma.⁸

Education Level	Share (%) of All Immigrants	Share (%) of All Natives
College degree or more	27.0	26.8
Some college	18.0	33.7
High school diploma only	22.7	32.6
Less than a high-school diploma	32.3	6.9

More than 25,000 U.S. citizens in Iowa live with at least one family member who is undocumented.

- 40,000 [undocumented immigrants](#) comprised 26 percent of the immigrant population and 1.3 percent of the total state population in 2014.⁹
- 58,956 people in Iowa, including 24,639 born in the United States, lived with at least one [undocumented family member](#) between 2010 and 2014.¹⁰
- During the same period, 3 percent of children in the state were U.S. citizens living with at least one undocumented family member (20,915 children in total).¹¹

Approximately 2,500 Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) recipients live in Iowa.¹²

- As of 2016, 76 percent of [DACA-eligible immigrants](#) in Iowa, or 3,131 people, had applied for DACA.¹³
- Up to an additional 2,000 residents of the state satisfied all but the educational requirements for DACA, and up to 1,000 others would be additionally eligible as they grew older.¹⁴

Immigrants are vital members of the Iowa labor force across industries.

- 96,089 immigrant workers comprised 5.8 percent of the labor force in 2015.¹⁵
- Immigrant workers were most numerous in the following industries:

Industry	Number of Immigrant Workers
Manufacturing	27,168
Health Care and Social Assistance	14,013
Accommodation and Food Services	10,122
Educational Services	9,356
Construction	8,208

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)
Manufacturing	9.6
Accommodation and Food Services	8.6
Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services	8.5
Finance and Insurance	6.6
Construction	6.3

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

Immigrants are an important part of the Iowa 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
Production	21,467
Transportation and Material Moving	12,273
Food Preparation and Serving Related	9,866
Computer and Mathematical Sciences	7,665
Construction and Extraction	6,871

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)
Computer and Mathematical Sciences	19.5
Production	12.7
Food Preparation and Serving Related	8.6
Life, Physical, and Social Sciences	8.4
Transportation and Material Moving	7.9

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

- Undocumented immigrants comprised 1.8 percent of the state's workforce in 2014.¹⁹

Immigrants in Iowa contribute over a billion dollars in yearly taxes.

- [Immigrant-led households in the state paid](#) \$820.3 million in federal taxes and \$348.9 million in state and local taxes in 2014.²⁰
- Undocumented immigrants in Iowa paid an estimated \$36.7 million in [state and local taxes](#) in 2014. Their contribution would rise to \$45.6 million if they could receive legal status.²¹
- [DACA recipients](#) in Iowa paid an estimated \$6.8 million in state and local taxes in 2016.²²

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

- Iowa residents in immigrant-led households had \$3 billion in [spending power](#) (after-tax income) in 2014.²³

Immigrant entrepreneurs in Iowa generate millions of dollars in annual business revenue.

- 4,435 immigrant business owners accounted for 2.5 percent of all self-employed Iowa residents in 2015 and generated \$54.6 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, 2015 American Community Survey (ACS) 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. 2015 ACS 1-Year Estimates.

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, <https://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. The number of DACA recipients reflects U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services’ (USCIS) estimate of those with active DACA grants as of September 4, 2017. USCIS CLAIMS3 and ELIS Systems, *Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals: Population Data* (Washington, DC: Dept. of Homeland Security, September 20, 2017), Approximate Active DACA Recipients: State of Residence as of September 4, 2017 [dataset], <https://www.uscis.gov/daca2017>.

¹³ 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 Iowa* (New York, NY: August 2016), 5, <http://www.newamericaneconomy.org/research/the-contributions-of-new-americans-in-iowa/>.

²¹ Institute on Taxation & Economic Policy (ITEP), *Undocumented Immigrants’ State & Local Tax Contributions* (Washington, DC: March 2017), 3, <https://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, <https://itep.org/state-local-tax-contributions-of-young-undocumented-immigrants/>.

²³ New American Economy, *The Contributions of New Americans in Iowa*, 5.

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 2015 ACS 1-year PUMS data by the American Immigration Council.