



## Immigrants in Kentucky

Kentucky has a small but growing immigrant community. While 4 percent of the state’s population was born in another country, foreign-born residents make up a vital, educated share of the labor force. A third of immigrants in Kentucky possess a college or higher degree, and three-fourths report speaking English well. The state also benefits from the various ways immigrants participate in the economy—from working in arts, design, entertainment, sports, and media professions to accounting for 17 percent of Kentucky’s fishing, farming, and forestry employees. As neighbors, business owners, taxpayers, and workers, immigrants are an integral part of Kentucky’s diverse and thriving communities and make extensive contributions that benefit all.

### **Four percent of Kentucky residents are immigrants, while 3 percent of residents are native-born U.S. citizens with at least one immigrant parent.**

- In 2018, 169,346 immigrants (foreign-born individuals) comprised 4 percent of the population.<sup>1</sup>
- Kentucky was home to 75,440 women, 78,639 men, and 15,267 children who were immigrants.<sup>2</sup>
- The top countries of origin for immigrants were Mexico (16 percent of immigrants), Cuba (7 percent), China (6 percent), India (5 percent), and Honduras (4 percent).<sup>3</sup>
- In 2018, 111,946 people in Kentucky (3 percent of the state’s population) were native-born Americans who had at least one immigrant parent.<sup>4</sup>

### **Two out of five immigrants in Kentucky are naturalized U.S. citizens.**

- 68,807 immigrants (41 percent) had naturalized as of 2018,<sup>5</sup> and 33,829 immigrants were eligible to become [naturalized U.S. citizens](#) in 2017.<sup>6</sup>
- Three in four (76 percent) immigrants reported speaking English “well” or “very well.”<sup>7</sup>

### **Immigrants in Kentucky are distributed across the educational spectrum.**

- One-third (33 percent) of adult immigrants had a college degree or more education in 2018, while one-fourth (25 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	33	24
Some college	19	30
High school diploma only	23	33
Less than a high school diploma	25	13

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

### More than 24,000 U.S. citizens in Kentucky live with at least one family member who is undocumented.

- 35,000 [undocumented immigrants](#) comprised 22 percent of the immigrant population and 1 percent of the total state population in 2016.<sup>9</sup>
- 56,157 people in Kentucky, including 24,250 U.S. citizens, lived with at least one [undocumented family member](#) between 2010 and 2014.<sup>10</sup>
- During the same period, about 2 percent of children in the state were U.S. citizens living with at least one undocumented family member (19,713 children in total).<sup>11</sup>

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

- 2,710 [active DACA recipients](#) lived in Kentucky as of March 2020, while DACA has been granted to 3,277 people in total since 2012.<sup>12</sup>
- As of 2019, 62 percent of [DACA-eligible immigrants](#) in Kentucky had applied for DACA.<sup>13</sup>
- Fewer than 2,000 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.<sup>14</sup>

### Immigrants are vital members of Kentucky's labor force across industries.

- 107,721 immigrant workers comprised 5 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	22,777
Retail Trade	15,648
Accommodation and Food Services	14,910
Construction	10,657
Health Care and Social Assistance	10,361

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)
Management of Companies and Enterprises	10
Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing, and Hunting	10
Accommodation and Food Services	8
Wholesale Trade	7
Manufacturing	7

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 Kentucky 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
Production	15,995
Transportation and Material Moving	12,510
Office and Administrative Support	12,321
Food Preparation and Serving Related	10,219
Building and Grounds Cleaning & Maintenance	9,455

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	17
Life, Physical, and Social Science	11
Computer and Mathematical	10
Building and Grounds Cleaning & Maintenance	10
Production	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 1 percent of Kentucky's workforce in 2016.<sup>19</sup>

**Immigrants in Kentucky have contributed over a billion dollars in taxes.**

- [Immigrant-led households in the state paid](#) \$900.7 million in federal taxes and \$465.2 million in state and local taxes in 2018.<sup>20</sup>
- Undocumented immigrants in Kentucky paid an estimated \$83.2 million in federal taxes and \$53.3 million in [state and local taxes](#) in 2018.<sup>21</sup>
- Kentucky [DACA recipients](#) and DACA-eligible individuals paid an estimated \$8.1 million in state and local taxes in 2018.<sup>22</sup>

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

- Kentucky residents in immigrant-led households had \$3.6 billion in [spending power](#) (after-tax income) in 2018.<sup>23</sup>

**Immigrant entrepreneurs in Kentucky generate hundreds of millions of dollars in business revenue.**

- 11,238 immigrant business owners accounted for 6 percent of all self-employed Kentucky residents in 2018 and generated \$321.4 million in business income.<sup>24</sup>
- In 2018, immigrants accounted for 9 percent of business owners in the Cincinnati/Middleton metropolitan area (which spans Ohio, Kentucky, and Indiana).<sup>25</sup>

## 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](http://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/](http://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/](http://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](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](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.