



Immigrants in Massachusetts

Massachusetts has a history of immigration dating back to America's first settlements of newcomers, when English pilgrims arrived to build colonies along the New England coast. These immigrants went on to establish some of the foundational institutions of American life, including the nation's first university.

Immigrants continue to play a vital role in Massachusetts today, making up 17 percent of the state's population. A fifth of the Massachusetts labor force is foreign-born, with immigrants supporting the state's healthcare, science, and service industries, among others. As neighbors, business owners, taxpayers, and workers, immigrants are an integral part of Massachusetts's diverse and thriving communities and make extensive contributions that benefit all.

One in six Massachusetts residents is an immigrant, while one in seven residents is a native-born U.S. citizen with at least one immigrant parent.

- In 2018, 1.2 million immigrants (foreign-born individuals) comprised 17 percent of the population.¹
- Massachusetts was home to 591,823 women, 527,886 men, and 78,439 children who were immigrants.²
- The top countries of origin for immigrants were China (8 percent of immigrants), Dominican Republic (8 percent), Brazil (7 percent), India (7 percent), and Haiti (5 percent).³
- In 2018, 1 million people in Massachusetts (15 percent of the state's population) were native-born Americans who had at least one immigrant parent.⁴

More than half of all immigrants in Massachusetts are naturalized U.S. citizens.

- 643,642 immigrants (54 percent) had naturalized as of 2018,⁵ and 223,182 immigrants were eligible to become [naturalized U.S. citizens](#) in 2017.⁶
- Nearly four in five (79 percent) immigrants reported speaking English "well" or "very well."⁷

Immigrants in Massachusetts tend to be college educated.

- Two in five (40 percent) adult immigrants had a college degree or more education in 2018, while one in five (20 percent) had less than a high school diploma.⁸

Education Level	Share (%) of All Immigrants	Share (%) of All Natives
College degree or more	40	46
Some college	17	24
High school diploma only	22	24
Less than a high school diploma	20	6
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2018 American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates.		

More than 100,000 U.S. citizens in Massachusetts live with at least one family member who is undocumented.

- 250,000 [undocumented immigrants](#) comprised 22 percent of the immigrant population and 4 percent of the total state population in 2016.⁹
- 233,035 people in Massachusetts, including 100,946 U.S. citizens, lived with at least one [undocumented family member](#) between 2010 and 2014.¹⁰
- During the same period, about 1 in 20 children in the state was a U.S. citizen living with at least one undocumented family member (66,803 children in total).¹¹

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

- 5,480 [active DACA recipients](#) lived in Massachusetts as of March 2020, while DACA has been granted to 7,684 people in total since 2012.¹²
- As of 2019, 32 percent of [DACA-eligible immigrants](#) in Massachusetts had applied for DACA.¹³
- An additional 2,000 residents of the state would satisfy all but the educational requirements for DACA, and fewer than a thousand would become eligible as they grew older.¹⁴

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

- 776,782 immigrant workers comprised 20 percent of the labor force in 2018.¹⁵
- Immigrant workers were most numerous in the following industries:

Industry	Number of Immigrant Workers
Health Care and Social Assistance	151,603
Manufacturing	90,488
Accommodation and Food Services	89,938
Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services	84,742
Educational Services	79,921

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:¹⁶

Industry	Immigrant Share (%) (of all industry workers)
Accommodation and Food Services	27
Administrative & Support; Waste Management; and Remediation Services	26
Manufacturing	25
Transportation and Warehousing	24
Other Services (except Public Administration)	24

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 Massachusetts workforce in a range of occupations.

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

Occupation Category	Number of Immigrant Workers
Management	74,645
Food Preparation and Serving Related	68,424
Building and Grounds Cleaning & Maintenance	66,324
Office and Administrative Support	66,194
Transportation and Material Moving	64,741

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

Occupation Category	Immigrant Share (%) (of all workers in occupation)
Building and Grounds Cleaning & Maintenance	40
Life, Physical, and Social Science	32
Healthcare Support	30
Production	29
Computer and Mathematical	28

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 Massachusetts's workforce in 2016.¹⁹

Immigrants in Massachusetts have contributed billions of dollars in taxes.

- [Immigrant-led households in the state paid](#) \$10.6 billion in federal taxes and \$4.5 billion in state and local taxes in 2018.²⁰
- Undocumented immigrants in Massachusetts paid an estimated \$593.6 million in federal taxes and \$252.5 million in [state and local taxes](#) in 2018.²¹
- Massachusetts [DACA recipients](#) and DACA-eligible individuals paid an estimated \$20.1 million in state and local taxes in 2018.²²

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

- Massachusetts residents in immigrant-led households had \$36.4 billion in [spending power](#) (after-tax income) in 2018.²³

Immigrant entrepreneurs in Massachusetts generate billions of dollars in business revenue.

- 79,304 immigrant business owners accounted for 23 percent of all self-employed Massachusetts residents in 2018 and generated \$2.3 billion in business income.²⁴
- In 2018, immigrants accounted for 21 percent of business owners in the Boston/Cambridge/Newton metropolitan area (which spans Massachusetts and New Hampshire) and 29 percent in the Providence/Warwick metro area (which spans Rhode Island and Massachusetts).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.
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.
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/.
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 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_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.
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.
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.
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.