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 16 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 workers, business owners, taxpayers, and neighbors, immigrants are an integral part of Massachusetts’ diverse and thriving communities and make extensive contributions that benefit all.

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

- In 2015, 1.1 million immigrants (foreign-born individuals) comprised 16.1 percent of the population.¹
- Massachusetts was home to 539,003 women, 497,730 men, and 59,220 children who were immigrants.²
- The top countries of origin for immigrants were China (8.8 percent of immigrants), the Dominican Republic (7.4 percent), India (6 percent), Brazil (5.6 percent), and Haiti (5.1 percent).³
- In 2016, 979,006 people in Massachusetts (14.4 percent of the state's population) were native-born Americans who had at least one immigrant parent.⁴

**Over half of all immigrants in Massachusetts are naturalized U.S. citizens.**

- 572,765 immigrants (52.3 percent) had naturalized as of 2015,⁵ and 244,151 immigrants were eligible to become naturalized U.S. citizens in 2015.⁶
- More than three-quarters of immigrants (78 percent) reported speaking English “well” or “very well.”⁷

**Over a third of all immigrants in Massachusetts have a college degree or more.**

- Nearly 37 percent of adult immigrants had a college degree or more education in 2015, while just over 21 percent had less than a high school diploma.⁸
Education Level | Share (%) of All Immigrants | Share (%) of All Natives
--- | --- | ---
College degree or more | 36.8 | 42.6
Some college | 17.6 | 25.1
High school diploma only | 24.3 | 25.4
Less than a high-school diploma | 21.3 | 6.8

More than 100,000 U.S. citizens in Massachusetts live with at least one family member who is undocumented.⁹

- 210,000 undocumented immigrants comprised 19 percent of the immigrant population and 3.1 percent of the total state population in 2014.¹⁰
- 233,035 people in Massachusetts, including 77,183 born in the United States, lived with at least one undocumented family member between 2010 and 2014.¹¹
- During the same period, 1 in 20 children in the state was a U.S.-citizen child living with at least one undocumented family member (66,803 children total).¹²

Nearly 6,000 Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) recipients live in Massachusetts.¹³

- As of 2016, 50 percent of DACA-eligible immigrants in Massachusetts, or 9,517 people, had applied for DACA.¹⁴
- An additional 2,000 residents of the state satisfied all but the educational requirements for DACA, and another 2,000 would be eligible as they grew older.¹⁵

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

- 728,067 immigrant workers comprised 20 percent of the labor force in 2015.¹⁶
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>Health Care and Social Assistance</td>
<td>143,791</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manufacturing</td>
<td>92,247</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accommodation and Food Services</td>
<td>85,230</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Educational Services</td>
<td>74,002</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services</td>
<td>73,506</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Industry</th>
<th>Immigrant Share (%) (of all industry workers)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Administrative &amp; Support; Waste Management; and Remediation Services</td>
<td>26.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accommodation and Food Services</td>
<td>25.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manufacturing</td>
<td>24.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Services (except Public Administration)</td>
<td>22.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transportation and Warehousing</td>
<td>21.2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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 Massachusetts workforce in a range of occupations.

In 2015, 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>Management</td>
<td>76,285</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Office and Administrative Support</td>
<td>66,625</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Food Preparation and Serving Related</td>
<td>64,821</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Building and Grounds Cleaning &amp; Maintenance</td>
<td>61,736</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sales and Related</td>
<td>60,611</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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:19

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Occupation Category</th>
<th>Immigrant Share (%) (of all workers in occupation)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Building and Grounds Cleaning &amp; Maintenance</td>
<td>39.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Life, Physical, and Social Sciences</td>
<td>33.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Healthcare Support</td>
<td>30.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Production</td>
<td>30.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Computer and Mathematical Sciences</td>
<td>27.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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 percent of the state’s workforce in 2014.20

Immigrants in Massachusetts have contributed billions of dollars in taxes.

- Immigrant-led households in the state paid $6.5 billion in federal taxes and $3 billion in state and local taxes in 2014.21
- Undocumented immigrants in Massachusetts paid an estimated $184.6 million in state and local taxes in 2014. Their contribution would rise to $240.8 million if they could receive legal status.22
- DACA recipients in Massachusetts paid an estimated $24.3 million in state and local taxes in 2016.23

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

- Massachusetts residents in immigrant-led households had $27.3 billion in spending power (after-tax income) in 2014.24

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

- 68,364 immigrant business owners accounted for 20 percent of all self-employed Massachusetts residents in 2015 and generated $2.1 billion in business income.25
- In 2015, immigrants accounted for 21 percent of business owners in the Boston/Cambridge/Newton metropolitan area (which spans Massachusetts and New Hampshire) and 17 percent in the Providence/Warwick metro area (which spans Rhode Island and Massachusetts).26
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.
5 2015 ACS 1-year Estimates.
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 ages 25 and older. 2015 ACS 1-Year Estimates.
15 Ibid.
17 Ibid.
19 Ibid.
20 Pew Research Center, “U.S. unauthorized immigration population estimates.”
25 “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.