



Immigrants in North Carolina

North Carolina is home to a growing immigrant community. While 8 percent of the state's total population is foreign-born, immigrants make up a significant share of North Carolina's labor force. One-third of all residents working in farming, fishing, and forestry occupations are immigrants, as well as one-fifth of residents working in computer and math sciences. As neighbors, business owners, taxpayers, and workers, immigrants are an integral part of North Carolina's diverse and thriving communities and make extensive contributions that benefit all.

Eight percent of North Carolina residents are immigrants, while 7 percent of residents are native-born U.S. citizens with at least one immigrant parent.

- In 2018, 824,177 immigrants (foreign-born individuals) comprised 8 percent of the population.¹
- North Carolina was home to 382,256 women, 385,102 men, and 56,819 children who were immigrants.²
- The top countries of origin for immigrants were Mexico (28 percent of immigrants), India (9 percent), Honduras (4 percent), China (3 percent), and El Salvador (3 percent).³
- In 2018, 766,355 people in North Carolina (7 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 North Carolina are naturalized U.S. citizens.

- 322,458 immigrants (39 percent) had naturalized as of 2018,⁵ and 146,916 immigrants were eligible to become [naturalized U.S. citizens](#) in 2017.⁶
- Three-fourths (76 percent) of immigrants reported speaking English "well" or "very well."⁷

Immigrants in North Carolina are distributed across the educational spectrum.

- More than a third (34 percent) of adult immigrants had a college degree or more education in 2018, while over a quarter (29 percent) had less than a high school diploma.⁸

Education Level	Share (%) of All Immigrants	Share (%) of All Natives
College degree or more	34	32
Some college	17	33
High school diploma only	21	26
Less than a high school diploma	29	10
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2018 American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates.		

More than 200,000 U.S. citizens in North Carolina live with at least one family member who is undocumented.

- 325,000 [undocumented immigrants](#) comprised 39 percent of the immigrant population and 3 percent of the total state population in 2016.⁹
- 429,169 people in North Carolina, including 201,209 U.S. citizens, lived with at least one [undocumented family member](#) between 2010 and 2014.¹⁰
- During the same period, 7 percent of children in the state were U.S. citizens living with at least one undocumented family member (170,487 children in total).¹¹

North Carolina is home to tens of thousands of Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) recipients.

- 24,050 [active DACA recipients](#) lived in North Carolina as of March 2020, while DACA has been granted to 29,665 people in total since 2012.¹²
- As of 2019, 64 percent of [DACA-eligible immigrants](#) in North Carolina had applied for DACA.¹³
- An additional 14,000 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 nine North Carolina workers is an immigrant, together making up a critical part of the state’s labor force across industries.

- 548,197 immigrant workers comprised 11 percent of the labor force in 2018.¹⁵

- Immigrant workers were most numerous in the following industries:

Industry	Number of Immigrant Workers
Manufacturing	87,871
Construction	80,211
Accommodation and Food Services	62,978
Health Care and Social Assistance	54,703
Retail Trade	49,968

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)
Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing, and Hunting	23
Construction	21
Administrative & Support; Waste Management; and Remediation Services	15
Manufacturing	12
Accommodation and Food Services	12

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 North Carolina 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
Construction and Extraction	71,590
Production	59,766
Management	47,600
Transportation and Material Moving	46,515
Food Preparation and Serving Related	45,836

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)
Farming, Fishing, and Forestry	34
Construction and Extraction	24
Computer and Mathematical	20
Building and Grounds Cleaning & Maintenance	19
Life, Physical, and Social Science	17

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 North Carolina's workforce in 2016.¹⁹

Immigrants in North Carolina have contributed billions of dollars in taxes.

- [Immigrant-led households in the state paid](#) \$4.8 billion in federal taxes and \$2.2 billion in state and local taxes in 2018.²⁰
- Undocumented immigrants in North Carolina paid an estimated \$377 million in federal taxes and \$262.7 million in [state and local taxes](#) in 2018.²¹
- North Carolina [DACA recipients](#) and DACA-eligible individuals paid an estimated \$58.6 million in state and local taxes in 2018.²²

As consumers, immigrants add nearly \$20 billion to North Carolina's economy.

- North Carolina residents in immigrant-led households had \$19.5 billion in [spending power](#) (after-tax income) in 2018.²³

Immigrant entrepreneurs in North Carolina generate over a billion dollars in business revenue.

- 61,838 immigrant business owners accounted for 12 percent of all self-employed North Carolina residents in 2018 and generated \$1.1 billion in business income.²⁴
- In the following North Carolina metropolitan areas in 2018, at least one in eight business owners was an immigrant. Immigrants accounted for:
 - 13 percent of business owners in the Raleigh/Carey metro area,
 - 15 percent in Charlotte/Gastonia/Concord (which spans the Carolinas), and
 - 17 percent in Virginia Beach/Norfolk/Newport News (which extends from North Carolina to Virginia).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%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.