Immigrants in Texas

Texas has a long history of immigration, with the majority of immigrants hailing from Mexico. Immigrants now account for 17 percent of the state's total population and support the local economy in a growing number of industries. Construction—one of the state's largest and fastest growing industries—pulls nearly 40 percent of its workers from immigrants in the community. As workers, business owners, taxpayers, and neighbors, immigrants are an integral part of Texas' diverse and thriving communities and make extensive contributions that benefit all.

One in six Texas residents is an immigrant, while 15 percent of residents are native-born U.S. citizens with at least one immigrant parent.

- As of 2015, 4.7 million immigrants (foreign-born individuals) comprised 17 percent of the population.¹
- Texas was home to 2.2 million women, 2.2 million men, and 317,104 children who were immigrants.²
- The top countries of origin for immigrants were Mexico (55.1 percent of immigrants), India (5 percent), El Salvador (4.3 percent), Vietnam (3.7 percent), and China (2.3 percent).³
- In 2016, 4.1 million people in Texas (15 percent of the state's population) were native-born Americans who had at least one immigrant parent.⁴

Over a third of all immigrants in Texas are naturalized U.S. citizens.

- 1.7 million immigrants (35.8 percent) had naturalized as of 2015,⁵ and 982,471 immigrants were eligible to become naturalized U.S. citizens in 2015.⁶
- The majority of immigrants (62.6 percent) reported speaking English 'well' or "very well."⁷

Immigrants in Texas are found across the educational spectrum.

- Nearly one in four adult immigrants had a college degree or more education in 2015, while two in five had less than a high school diploma.⁸
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Education Level</th>
<th>Share (%) of All Immigrants</th>
<th>Share (%) of All Natives</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>College degree or more</td>
<td>23.5</td>
<td>29.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some college</td>
<td>15.4</td>
<td>32.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High school diploma only</td>
<td>20.6</td>
<td>26.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Less than a high-school diploma</td>
<td>40.5</td>
<td>10.8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

More than 1 million U.S. citizens in Texas live with at least one family member who is undocumented.

- 1.7 million undocumented immigrants comprised 35 percent of the immigrant population and 6.1 percent of the total state population in 2014.\(^9\)

- 2.7 million people in Texas, including 1.2 million born in the United States, lived with at least one undocumented family member between 2010 and 2014.\(^10\)

- During the same period, one in seven children in the state was a U.S.-citizen child living with at least one undocumented family member (1 million children in total).\(^11\)

Nearly 125,000 Texas residents have been approved for Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA).\(^12\)

- As of 2016, 80 percent of DACA-eligible immigrants in Texas, or 140,688 people, had applied for DACA.\(^13\)

- An additional 57,000 residents of the state satisfied all but the educational requirements for DACA, and another 37,000 would be eligible as they grew older.\(^14\)

Immigrants make up more than a fifth of the labor force in Texas and are integral to a range of industries.

- 2.9 million immigrant workers comprised 21.6 percent of the labor force in 2015.\(^15\)
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>Construction</td>
<td>467,292</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manufacturing</td>
<td>343,237</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accommodation and Food Services</td>
<td>342,030</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Retail Trade</td>
<td>324,093</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health Care and Social Assistance</td>
<td>315,292</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:16

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Industry</th>
<th>Immigrant Share (%) (of all industry workers)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Construction</td>
<td>38.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Administrative &amp; Support; Waste Management;</td>
<td>28.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>and Remediation Services</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Services (except Public Administration)</td>
<td>28.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accommodation and Food Services</td>
<td>26.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing &amp; Hunting</td>
<td>26.1</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 Texas workforce in a range of occupations.

In 2015, immigrant workers were most numerous in the following occupation groups:17

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Occupation Category</th>
<th>Number of Immigrant Workers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Construction and Extraction</td>
<td>446,103</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Building and Grounds Cleaning &amp; Maintenance</td>
<td>291,294</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Production</td>
<td>282,715</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Food Preparation and Serving Related</td>
<td>273,636</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sales and Related</td>
<td>267,191</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:18

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Occupation Category</th>
<th>Immigrant Share (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Building and Grounds Cleaning &amp; Maintenance</td>
<td>45.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Construction and Extraction</td>
<td>42.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Farming, Fishing, and Forestry</td>
<td>40.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Production</td>
<td>33.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Food Preparation and Serving Related</td>
<td>28.4</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 8.5 percent of the state’s workforce in 2014.19

Immigrants in Texas have contributed tens of billions of dollars in taxes.

Immigrant-led households in the state paid $20.4 billion in federal taxes and $8.7 billion in state and local taxes in 2014.20

Undocumented immigrants in Texas paid $1.6 billion in state and local taxes in 2014. Their contribution would rise to $1.7 billion if they could receive legal status.21

Undocumented immigrants who were enrolled in the DACA program in 2016 paid $313.1 million in state and local taxes.22

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

Texans in immigrant-led households had $89.6 billion in spending power (after-tax income) in 2014.23

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

361,493 immigrant business owners accounted for 27.5 percent of all self-employed Texas residents in 2015 and generated $8.1 billion in business income.24

In 2015, immigrants accounted for 42.2 percent of business owners in the Houston/Baytown/Sugar Land metropolitan area, 22.6 percent in the Dallas/Fort Worth/Arlington metro area, 19.3 percent in San Antonio, and 11.8 percent in the Austin/Round Rock metro area.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, 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 age 25 and older. Ibid.


14. Ibid.


16. Ibid.


18. Ibid.


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