



Immigrants in the United States

The United States was built, in part, by immigrants—and the nation has long been the beneficiary of the new energy and ingenuity that immigrants bring. Today, 14 percent of the nation’s residents are foreign-born, over half of whom are naturalized citizens. Nearly 75 percent of all immigrants, who come from diverse backgrounds across the globe, report speaking English well or very well.

Immigrants make up significant shares of the U.S. workforce in a range of industries, accounting for over a third of all farming, fishing, and forestry workers—as well as nearly 25 percent of those working in computer and math sciences. The highest number of immigrants work in the health care and social service industry, with over 4 million immigrants providing these services. As workers, business owners, taxpayers, and neighbors, immigrants are an integral part of the country’s diverse and thriving communities and make extensive contributions that benefit all.

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

- In 2018, 44.7 million immigrants (foreign-born individuals) comprised 14 percent of the national population.¹
- The United States was home to 21.9 million women, 20.3 million men, and 2.5 million children who were immigrants.²
- The top countries of origin for immigrants were Mexico (25 percent of immigrants), India (6 percent), China (5 percent), the Philippines (4 percent), and El Salvador (3 percent).³
- In 2018, 39.4 million people in the United States (12 percent of the country’s population) were native-born Americans who had at least one immigrant parent.⁴

Over half of all immigrants in the United States are naturalized citizens.

- 22.6 million immigrants (51 percent) had naturalized as of 2018,⁵ and 8.4 million immigrants were eligible to become [naturalized U.S. citizens](#) in 2017.⁶
- The majority of immigrants (74 percent) reported speaking English “well” or “very well.”⁷

Immigrants in the United States are concentrated at both ends of the educational spectrum.

- Nearly a third of adult immigrants had a college degree or more education in 2018, while over a fourth had less than a high school diploma.⁸

Education Level	Share (%) of All Immigrants	Share (%) of All Natives
College degree or more	32	33
Some college	19	31
High school diploma only	22	28
Less than a high-school diploma	27	8

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

Millions of U.S. citizens live with at least one family member who is undocumented.

- 10.7 million [undocumented immigrants](#) comprised 24 percent of the immigrant population and 3 percent of the total U.S. population in 2016.⁹
- 16.7 million people, including 7 million born in the United States, lived in the country with at least one [undocumented family member](#) between 2010 and 2014.¹⁰
- During the same period, 1 in 12 children in the country was a U.S. citizen living with at least one undocumented family member (5.9 million children in total).¹¹

The United States is home to over 643,000 Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) recipients.¹²

- Approximately 643,560 active [DACA recipients lived in the United States](#) and its territories as of March 2020, while DACA has been granted to approximately 825,998 people in total since 2012.¹³
- As of 2019, 49 percent of [DACA-eligible immigrants](#) in the United States had applied for DACA.¹⁴
- An additional 363,000 people in the United States would satisfy all but the educational requirements for DACA, and another 39,000 would be eligible as they grew older.¹⁵

One in six U.S. workers is an immigrant, together making up a vital part of the country’s labor force in a range of industries.

- 28.4 million immigrant workers comprised 17 percent of the U.S. labor force in 2018.¹⁶

- Immigrant workers were most numerous in the following U.S. industries:

Industry	Number of Immigrant Workers
Health Care and Social Assistance	4,124,557
Manufacturing	3,437,569
Accommodation and Food Services	3,022,991
Retail Trade	2,979,800
Construction	2,858,953

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 U.S. industries:¹⁷

Industry	Immigrant Share (%) (of all industry workers)
Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing, and Hunting	26
Construction	23
Administrative Support and Waste Management and Remediation Services	22
Other Services (except Public Administration)	21
Accommodation and Food Services	20

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 U.S. workforce in a range of occupations.

- In 2018, immigrant workers were most numerous in the following occupation groups:¹⁸

Occupation Category	Number of Immigrant Workers
Transportation and Material Moving Occupations	2,683,238
Sales and Related Occupations	2,580,721
Management Occupations	2,529,218
Office and Administrative Support Occupations	2,494,354

Construction and Extraction Occupations	2,487,351
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:¹⁹

Occupation Category	Immigrant Share (%) (of all workers in occupation)
Farming, Fishing, and Forestry Occupations	38
Building and Grounds Cleaning and Maintenance Occupations	31
Construction and Extraction Occupations	25
Computer and Mathematical Occupations	24
Life, Physical, and Social Science Occupations	22
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 the workforce in 2016.²⁰

Immigrants in the United States contribute billions of dollars in taxes.

- [Immigrant-led households](#) across the United States contributed a total of \$308.6 billion in federal taxes and \$150 billion in combined state and local taxes in 2018.²¹
- Undocumented immigrants in the United States paid an estimated \$20.1 billion in federal taxes and \$11.8 billion in combined [state and local taxes](#) in 2018.²²
- [DACA recipients](#) and those meeting the eligibility requirements for DACA paid an estimated \$1.7 billion in combined state and local taxes in 2018.²³

As consumers, immigrants add over a trillion dollars to the U.S. economy.

- In the United States, residents of immigrant-led households had \$1.2 trillion in collective [spending power](#) (after-tax income) in 2018.²⁴

Immigrant entrepreneurs in the United States generate tens of billions of dollars in business revenue.

- 3.6 million immigrant business owners accounted for 21 percent of all self-employed U.S. residents in 2018 and generated \$84.3 billion in business income.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, <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. 2018 ACS 1-Year Estimates.
9. Pew Research Center, “U.S. unauthorized immigration population estimates, 2016,” February 5, 2019, <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, <https://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 “Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals” (DACA) initiative began in 2012 and provides certain immigrants (those who were brought to the United States as children and meet specific requirements) with temporary relief from deportation, or deferred action. American Immigration Council, “The Dream Act, DACA, and Other Policies Designed to Protect Dreamers,” September 3, 2019, <https://www.americanimmigrationcouncil.org/research/dream-act-daca-and-other-policies-designed-protect-dreamers>. 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>.
13. USCIS, “Approximate Active DACA Recipients: As of March 31, 2020”. DACA grants reflect USCIS Form I-821D total cumulative 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_performancedata_fy2020_qtr2.pdf.
14. Estimates refer to the individuals who could have become eligible for DACA before it was terminated by the Trump administration in September 2017. 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,” U.S. Total, accessed April 2020, www.migrationpolicy.org/programs/data-hub/deferred-action-childhood-arrivals-daca-profiles.
15. Ibid.
16. 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.
17. Ibid.
18. 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.

19. Ibid.
20. Pew Research Center, "U.S. unauthorized immigration population estimates, 2016," 2019.
21. 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/>.
22. Ibid. at sec. Undocumented Immigrants.
23. 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/>.
24. New American Economy, "Map the Impact," section Taxes and Spending Power.
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 2018 ACS 1-year PUMS data by the American Immigration Council.