



## Immigrants in Washington

Washington—one of the highest food-producing states in the nation—relies heavily on its growing immigrant population. While roughly one in seven Washington residents is foreign-born, over half of the state’s farmers, fishers, and foresters are immigrants. As neighbors, business owners, taxpayers, and workers, immigrants are an integral part of Washington’s diverse and thriving communities and make extensive contributions that benefit all.

**About one in seven Washington residents is an immigrant, while another one in seven residents is a native-born U.S. citizen with at least one immigrant parent.**

- In 2018, 1.1 million immigrants (foreign-born individuals) comprised 15 percent of the population.<sup>1</sup>
- Washington was home to 538,989 women, 500,147 men, and 65,714 children who were immigrants.<sup>2</sup>
- The top countries of origin for immigrants were Mexico (23 percent of immigrants), India (8 percent), China (7 percent), the Philippines (6 percent), and Vietnam (6 percent).<sup>3</sup>
- In 2018, 1.1 million people in Washington (15 percent of the state’s population) were native-born Americans who had at least one immigrant parent.<sup>4</sup>

**Nearly half of all immigrants in Washington are naturalized U.S. citizens.**

- 538,513 immigrants (49 percent) had naturalized as of 2018,<sup>5</sup> and 185,635 immigrants were eligible to become [naturalized U.S. citizens](#) in 2017.<sup>6</sup>
- More than three-fourths (79 percent) of immigrants reported speaking English “well” or “very well.”<sup>7</sup>

**Immigrants in Washington are distributed across the educational spectrum.**

- More than a third (38 percent) of adult immigrants had a college degree or more education in 2018, while over one-fifth (22 percent) had less than a high school diploma.<sup>8</sup>

Education Level	Share (%) of All Immigrants	Share (%) of All Natives
College degree or more	38	36
Some college	21	36
High school diploma only	19	22
Less than a high school diploma	22	5

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

### Over 170,000 U.S. citizens in Washington live with at least one family member who is undocumented.

- 240,000 [undocumented immigrants](#) comprised 23 percent of the immigrant population and 3 percent of the total state population in 2016.<sup>9</sup>
- 351,016 people in Washington, including 171,602 U.S. citizens, lived with at least one [undocumented family member](#) between 2010 and 2014.<sup>10</sup>
- During the same period, about one in 12 children in the state was a U.S. citizen living with at least one undocumented family member (130,326 children in total).<sup>11</sup>

### Washington is home to more than 16,000 Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) recipients.

- 16,030 [active DACA recipients](#) lived in Washington as of March 2020, while DACA has been granted to about 19,308 people in total since 2012.<sup>12</sup>
- As of 2019, 63 percent of [DACA-eligible immigrants](#) in Washington had applied for DACA.<sup>13</sup>
- An additional 6,000 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.<sup>14</sup>

### About one in five workers in Washington is an immigrant, together making up a vital part of the state's labor force in a range of industries.

- 717,441 immigrant workers comprised 19 percent of the labor force in 2018.<sup>15</sup>

- Immigrant workers were most numerous in the following industries:

Industry	Number of Immigrant Workers
Health Care and Social Assistance	102,277
Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services	90,712
Retail Trade	83,975
Manufacturing	74,952
Accommodation and Food Services	65,721

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:<sup>16</sup>

Industry	Immigrant Share (%) (of all industry workers)
Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing, and Hunting	42
Administrative & Support; Waste Management; and Remediation Services	23
Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services	22
Transportation and Warehousing	22
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 Washington workforce in a range of occupations.**

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

Occupation Category	Number of Immigrant Workers
Computer and Mathematical	70,152
Management	67,992
Transportation and Material Moving	66,861
Office and Administrative Support	58,281
Sales and Related	55,440

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:<sup>18</sup>

Occupation Category	Immigrant Share (%) (of all workers in occupation)
Farming, Fishing, and Forestry	53
Computer and Mathematical	33
Building and Grounds Cleaning & Maintenance	30
Healthcare Support	23
Production	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 Washington's workforce in 2016.<sup>19</sup>

**Immigrants in Washington have contributed billions of dollars in taxes.**

- [Immigrant-led households in the state paid](#) \$9.7 billion in federal taxes and \$3.9 billion in state and local taxes in 2018.<sup>20</sup>
- Undocumented immigrants in Washington paid an estimated \$678.7 million in federal taxes and \$367.9 million in [state and local taxes](#) in 2018.<sup>21</sup>
- Washington [DACA recipients](#) and DACA-eligible individuals paid an estimated \$49.8 million in state and local taxes in 2018.<sup>22</sup>

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

- Washington residents in immigrant-led households had \$34.3 billion in [spending power](#) (after-tax income) in 2018.<sup>23</sup>

**Immigrant entrepreneurs in Washington generate billions of dollars in business revenue.**

- 80,984 immigrant business owners accounted for 19 percent of all self-employed Washington residents in 2018 and generated \$2.3 billion in business income.<sup>24</sup>
- In the following Washington metropolitan areas in 2018, at least one in ten business owners was an immigrant. Immigrants accounted for:
  - 31 percent in the Seattle/Tacoma/Bellevue metro area and
  - 11 percent of business owners in Portland/Vancouver/Beaverton (which stretches from Oregon through Washington).<sup>25</sup>

## 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](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. Ibid.
9. Pew Research Center, “U.S. unauthorized immigration population estimates, 2016,” February 5, 2019, [www.pewhispanic.org/interactives/unauthorized-immigrants/](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, [www.americanprogress.org/issues/immigration/news/2017/03/16/427868/state-state-estimates-family-members-unauthorized-immigrants/](http://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](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](http://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](http://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](http://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.