



Immigrants in Washington State

Washington—the state with the second-highest food production 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 workers, business owners, taxpayers, and neighbors, immigrants are an integral part of Washington’s diverse and thriving communities and make extensive contributions that benefit all.

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

- In 2015, 980,158 immigrants (foreign-born individuals) comprised 13.7 percent of the state’s population.¹
- Washington was home to 474,417 women, 445,423 men, and 60,318 children who were immigrants.²
- The top countries of origin for immigrants were Mexico (24.2 percent of immigrants), the Philippines (7.4 percent), India (6.7 percent), China (6.1 percent), and Vietnam (5.2 percent).³
- In 2016, 937,578 people in Washington (13.2 percent of the state’s population) were native-born Americans who had at least [one immigrant parent](#).⁴

More than 45 percent of immigrants in Washington are naturalized U.S. citizens.

- 458,313 immigrants (46.8 percent) had naturalized as of 2015,⁵ and 184,054 immigrants were eligible to become [naturalized U.S. citizens](#) in 2015.⁶
- Over three-quarters (76.8 percent) of immigrants reported speaking English “well” or “very well.”⁷

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

- One in three adult immigrants had a college degree or more education in 2015, while one in four had less than a high school diploma.⁸

Education Level	Share (%) of All Immigrants	Share (%) of All Natives
College degree or more	34.7	34.1
Some college	21.4	36.1
High school diploma only	20.2	23.7
Less than a high-school diploma	23.7	6.1

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

- 250,000 [undocumented immigrants](#) comprised 27 percent of the immigrant population and 3.6 percent of the total state population in 2014.⁹
- 351,016 people in Washington, including 151,209 born in the United States, lived with at least one [undocumented family member](#) between 2010 and 2014.¹⁰
- During the same period, 1 in 12 children in the state was a U.S. citizen living with at least one undocumented family member (130,326 children in total).¹¹

More than 16,000 Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) recipients live in Washington State.¹²

- In 2016, 73 percent of [DACA-eligible immigrants](#) in Washington, or 19,581 people, had applied for DACA.¹³
- An additional 10,000 residents of the state satisfied all but the educational requirements for DACA, and another 7,000 would be eligible as they grew older.¹⁴

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

- 621,793 immigrant workers comprised 17.2 percent of the labor force in 2015.¹⁵

- Immigrant workers were most numerous in the following industries:

Industry	Number of Immigrant Workers
Health Care and Social Assistance	90,011
Manufacturing	78,637
Retail Trade	75,524
Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services	68,419
Accommodation and Food Services	65,894

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

Industry	Immigrant Share (%) (of all industry workers)
Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing & Hunting	40.4
Accommodation and Food Services	21.2
Administrative & Support; Waste Management; and Remediation Services	20.1
Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services	19.7
Wholesale Trade	19.0

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 Washington workforce in a range of occupations.

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

Occupation Category	Number of Immigrant Workers
Management	59,764
Office and Administrative Support	57,388
Sales and Related	54,673
Building and Grounds Cleaning & Maintenance	51,087
Transportation and Material Moving	50,204

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

Occupation Category	Immigrant Share (%) (of all workers in occupation)
Farming, Fishing, and Forestry	53.2
Building and Grounds Cleaning & Maintenance	30.9
Computer and Mathematical Sciences	28.6
Production	22.2
Personal Care and Service	19.8

Analysis of the U.S. Census Bureau's 2015 American Community Survey 1-year PUMS data by the American Immigration Council.

- Undocumented immigrants comprised 5 percent of the state's workforce in 2014.¹⁹

Immigrants in Washington have contributed billions of dollars in taxes.

- [Immigrant-led households in the state paid](#) \$5.7 billion in federal taxes and \$2.4 billion in state and local taxes in 2014.²⁰
- Undocumented immigrants in Washington paid an estimated \$316.6 million in [state and local taxes](#) in 2014. Their contribution would rise to \$348.3 million if they could receive legal status.²¹
- [DACA recipients](#) in Washington paid an estimated \$51.3 million in state and local taxes in 2016.²²

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

- Washington residents in immigrant-led households had \$22.8 billion in [spending power](#) (after-tax income) in 2014.²³

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

- 65,036 immigrant business owners accounted for 17.2 percent of all self-employed Washington residents in 2015 and generated \$1.6 billion in business income.²⁴
- In 2015, immigrants accounted for 27.7 percent of business owners in the Seattle/Tacoma/Bellevue metropolitan area and 23.2 percent in the Portland/Vancouver/Beaverton metro area (which stretches from Oregon through Washington).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.
4. Analysis of data from the 2016 Current Population Survey by the American Immigration Council, using IPUMS-CPS. Sarah Flood, Miriam King, Steven Ruggles, and J. Robert Warren, *Integrated Public Use Microdata Series, Current Population Survey: Version 5.0* [dataset] (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota, 2017).
5. 2015 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 August 2017, data.cmsny.org/state.html.
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.
9. Pew Research Center, “U.S. unauthorized immigration population estimates,” November 3, 2016, 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 “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, “Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals: A Q&A Guide,” August 17, 2012, www.americanimmigrationcouncil.org/research/deferred-action-childhood-arrivals-qa-guide. The number of DACA recipients reflects USCIS’ estimate of those with active DACA grants as of September 4, 2017. U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services CLAIMS3 and ELIS Systems, *Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals: Population Data* (Washington, DC: Dept. of Homeland Security, September 20, 2017), Approximate Active DACA Recipients: State of Residence as of September 4, 2017 [dataset], <https://www.uscis.gov/daca2017>.
13. “DACA-eligible” refers to immigrants who were immediately eligible to apply for DACA as of 2016. Migration Policy Institute analysis of U.S. Census Bureau data from the 2014 American Community Survey (ACS), 2010-14 ACS pooled, and the 2008 Survey of Income and Program Participation (SIPP), as cited in “Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) Data Tools,” accessed June 2017, www.migrationpolicy.org/programs/data-hub/deferred-action-childhood-arrivals-daca-profiles.
14. Ibid.
15. Analysis of 2015 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 2015 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.
20. New American Economy, *The Contributions of New Americans in Washington* (New York, NY: August 2016), 5, <http://www.newamericaneconomy.org/research/the-contributions-of-new-americans-in-washington/>.
21. Institute on Taxation & Economic Policy (ITEP), *Undocumented Immigrants’ State & Local Tax Contributions* (Washington, DC: March 2017), p. 3, www.itep.org/undocumented-immigrants-state-local-tax-contributions-2/.
22. ²² ITEP, *State & Local Tax Contributions of Young Undocumented Immigrants* (Washington, DC: April 2017), Appendix 1, <https://itep.org/state-local-tax-contributions-of-young-undocumented-immigrants/>.
23. New American Economy, *The Contributions of New Americans in Washington*, 5.
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.
25. American Immigration Council analysis of 2016 CPS data. Flood, King, Ruggles, and Warren, *IPUMS CPS* dataset.