



Immigrants in Illinois

Illinois has a growing community of immigrants, many hailing from Mexico. While one in seven residents in the state is an immigrant, more than one in six workers in Illinois is an immigrant and nearly a third of all business owners in the Chicago metro area are immigrants. Across sectors, immigrants support the state in many ways. For example, over a fifth of Illinoisans working in the food and accomodation industry are immigrants, as are a quarter of those working in computer and math occupations.

As neighbors, business owners, taxpayers, and workers, immigrants are an integral part of Illinois's diverse and thriving communities and make extensive contributions that benefit all.

One in seven Illinois 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, 1.8 million immigrants (foreign-born individuals) comprised 14 percent of the population.¹
- Illinois was home to 866,951 women, 844,506 men, and 79,856 children who were immigrants.²
- The top countries of origin for immigrants were Mexico (36 percent of immigrants), India (10 percent), Poland (7 percent), the Philippines (5 percent), and China (4 percent).³
- In 2018, 1.7 million people in Illinois (14 percent of the state's population) were native-born Americans who had at least one immigrant parent.⁴

More than half of all immigrants in Illinois are naturalized U.S. citizens.

- 926,873 immigrants (52 percent) had naturalized as of 2018,⁵ and 321,304 immigrants were eligible to become [naturalized U.S. citizens](#) in 2017.⁶
- More than three in four (77 percent) immigrants reported speaking English "well" or "very well."⁷

Immigrants in Illinois are distributed across the educational spectrum.

- A third (33 percent) of adult immigrants had a college degree or more education in 2018, while a quarter (25 percent) had less than a high school diploma.⁸

Education Level	Share (%) of All Immigrants	Share (%) of All Natives
College degree or more	33	35
Some college	18	31
High school diploma only	24	27
Less than a high school diploma	25	7

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

395,000 U.S. citizens in Illinois live with at least one family member who is undocumented.

- 400,000 [undocumented immigrants](#) comprised 22 percent of the immigrant population and 3 percent of the total state population in 2016.⁹
- 817,066 people in Illinois, including 395,179 U.S. citizens, lived with at least one [undocumented family member](#) between 2010 and 2014.¹⁰
- During the same period, about 1 in 10 children in the state was a U.S. citizen living with at least one undocumented family member (292,127 children in total).¹¹

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

- 33,940 [active DACA recipients](#) lived in Illinois as of March 2020, while DACA has been granted to 45,002 people in total since 2012.¹²
- As of 2019, 51 percent of [DACA-eligible immigrants](#) in Illinois had applied for DACA.¹³
- An additional 16,000 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 six workers in Illinois is an immigrant, together making up an important part of the state’s labor force in a range of industries.

- 1.2 million immigrant workers comprised 18 percent of the labor force in 2018.¹⁵

- Immigrant workers were most numerous in the following industries:

Industry	Number of Immigrant Workers
Manufacturing	218,530
Health Care and Social Assistance	158,663
Accommodation and Food Services	125,897
Retail Trade	112,570
Construction	96,137

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)
Administrative & Support; Waste Management; and Remediation Services	26
Manufacturing	25
Construction	23
Accommodation and Food Services	22
Other Services (except Public Administration)	21

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 Illinois 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
Production	140,075
Transportation and Material Moving	139,123
Office and Administrative Support	111,063
Sales and Related	105,114
Management	98,765

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)
Building and Grounds Cleaning & Maintenance	32
Production	29
Computer and Mathematical	26
Construction and Extraction	25
Life, Physical, and Social Science	25

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 Illinois's workforce in 2016.¹⁹

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

- [Immigrant-led households in the state paid](#) \$12.7 billion in federal taxes and \$7.7 billion in state and local taxes in 2018.²⁰
- Undocumented immigrants in Illinois paid an estimated \$945.5 million in federal taxes and \$708.9 million in [state and local taxes](#) in 2018.²¹
- Illinois [DACA recipients](#) and DACA-eligible individuals paid an estimated \$120.5 million in state and local taxes in 2018.²²

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

- Illinois residents in immigrant-led households had \$47.8 billion in [spending power](#) (after-tax income) in 2018.²³

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

- 137,907 immigrant business owners accounted for 23 percent of all self-employed Illinois residents in 2018 and generated \$2.8 billion in business income.²⁴
- In 2018, immigrants accounted for 32 percent of business owners in the Chicago/Naperville/Joliet metropolitan area (which stretches from Wisconsin to Indiana through Illinois) and 3 percent of business owners in the St. Louis metro area (which straddles Illinois and Missouri).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%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.
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.