



Immigrants in the United States¹

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 U.S. citizens. Nearly 70 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 two-fifths of all farming, fishing, and forestry workers—as well as one quarter of those working in computer and math sciences. The highest number of immigrants work in the health care and social assistance 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 2019, 44.9 million immigrants (foreign-born individuals) comprised 14 percent of the national population.²
- The United States was home to 22.0 million women, 20.4 million men, and 2.5 million children who were immigrants.³
- The top countries of origin for immigrants were Mexico (24 percent of immigrants), India (6 percent), China (5 percent), the Philippines (4.5 percent), and El Salvador (3 percent).⁴
- In 2019, 38.3 million people in the United States (12 percent of the country’s population) were native-born Americans who had at least one immigrant parent.⁵

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

- As of 2019, 23.2 million immigrants (52 percent) had naturalized⁶ and 8.1 million immigrants were eligible to become naturalized U.S. citizens.⁷
- The majority of immigrants (69 percent) reported speaking English “well” or “very well.”⁸

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

- A third of adult immigrants had a college degree or more education in 2019, while over a fourth had less than a high school diploma.⁹

Education Level	Share (%) of All Immigrants	Share (%) of All Natives
College degree or more	33	33
Some college	19	31
High school diploma only	22	28
Less than a high-school diploma	26	8

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2019 American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates.

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

- 10.3 million undocumented immigrants comprised 23 percent of the immigrant population and 3 percent of the total U.S. population in 2019.¹⁰
- 6.1 million U.S.-citizen children under the age of 18 lived with an undocumented family member as of 2018,¹¹ including 4.4 million who lived with at least one undocumented parent.¹²
- 16.7 million people, including 7 million born in the United States, lived with at least one undocumented family member between 2010 and 2014.¹³

The United States is home to over 590,000 Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) recipients.¹⁴

- Approximately 590,070 active DACA recipients lived in the United States and its territories as of June 30, 2021,¹⁵ while DACA has been granted to approximately 832,881 people in total since 2012.¹⁶
- As of 2020, approximately 44 percent of DACA-eligible immigrants in the United States had applied for DACA.¹⁷
- An additional 384,000 people in the United States would satisfy all but the educational requirements for DACA, and another 14,000 would be eligible as they grew older.¹⁸

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.

- 28.5 million immigrant workers comprised 17 percent of the U.S. labor force in 2019.¹⁹
- Immigrant workers were most numerous in the following U.S. industries:²⁰

Industry	Number of Immigrant Workers
Health Care and Social Assistance	4,174,133
Manufacturing	3,387,894
Accommodation and Food Services	2,970,435
Construction	2,948,808
Retail Trade	2,886,515

Source: Analysis of the U.S. Census Bureau’s 2019 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:²¹

Industry	Immigrant Share (%) (of all industry workers)
Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing, and Hunting	26
Administrative Support and Waste Management and Remediation Services	23
Construction	22
Other Services (except Public Administration)	20
Transportation and warehousing	19
Accommodation and Food Services	19

Source: Analysis of the U.S. Census Bureau’s 2019 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 2019, immigrant workers were most numerous in the following occupation groups:²²

Occupation Category	Number of Immigrant Workers
Management Occupations	2,689,819
Transportation and Material Moving Occupations	2,655,709
Sales and Related Occupations	2,481,724
Construction and Extraction Occupations	2,476,967
Office and Administrative Support Occupations	2,382,252

Source: Analysis of the U.S. Census Bureau’s 2019 American Community Survey 1-year PUMS data by the American Immigration Council.

- The largest shares of immigrant workers were in the following occupation groups:²³

Occupation Category	Immigrant Share (%) (of all workers in occupation)
Farming, Fishing, and Forestry Occupations	41
Building and Grounds Cleaning and Maintenance Occupations	31
Computer and Mathematical Occupations	25
Construction and Extraction Occupations	25
Healthcare Support Occupations	21

Source: Analysis of the U.S. Census Bureau’s 2019 American Community Survey 1-year PUMS data by the American Immigration Council.

- Undocumented immigrants comprised approximately 5 percent of the workforce in 2017.²⁴

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

- Immigrant-led households across the United States contributed a total of \$330.7 billion in federal taxes and \$161.7 billion in combined state and local taxes in 2019.²⁵
- Households headed by undocumented immigrants in the United States paid an estimated \$18.9 billion in federal taxes and \$11.7 billion in combined state and local taxes in 2019.²⁶
- Households headed by DACA recipients and those meeting the eligibility requirements for DACA paid an estimated \$3.4 billion in federal taxes and \$2.7 billion in combined state and local taxes in 2019.²⁷

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

- In the United States, residents of immigrant-led households had \$1.3 trillion in collective spending power (after-tax income) in 2019.²⁸

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

- 3.2 million immigrant business owners accounted for 22 percent of all self-employed U.S. residents in 2019 and generated \$86.3 billion in business income.²⁹

Endnotes

1. Erica Knox of Rob Paral and Associates processed and analyzed the American Community Survey data in this fact sheet.
2. “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, 2019 American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates. The American Immigration Council elected to use data from the 2019 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).
3. Children are defined as people age 17 or younger. Men and women do not include children. Ibid.
4. Analysis of the U.S. Census Bureau’s 2019 American Community Survey 1-year PUMS data by the American Immigration Council.
5. Analysis of data from the 2019 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>.
6. 2019 ACS 1-Year Estimates.
7. Augmented IPUMS-ACS data, as published in “State-Level Unauthorized Population and Eligible-to-Naturalize Estimates,” Center for Migration Studies data tool, accessed September 2021, <http://data.cmsny.org/state.html>.
8. Figure includes immigrants who speak only English. Data based on survey respondents age 5 and over. Analysis of 2019 ACS 1-Year Estimates by the American Immigration Council.
9. Data based on survey respondents age 25 and older. 2019 ACS 1-Year Estimates.
10. Augmented IPUMS-ACS data, as published in “State-Level Unauthorized Population and Eligible-to-Naturalize Estimates,” Center for Migration Studies data tool, accessed September 2021, <http://data.cmsny.org/state.html>.
11. Julia Preston, “The True Costs of Deportation” (New York, NY: The Marshall Project, June 18, 2020), <https://www.themarshallproject.org/2020/06/22/the-true-costs-of-deportation>.
12. Randy Capps, et al., *Unauthorized Immigrants in the United States: Stable Numbers, Changing Origins* (Washington, DC: Migration Policy Institute, December 2020), 9, https://www.migrationpolicy.org/sites/default/files/publications/mpi-unauthorized-immigrants-stablenumbers-changingorigins_final.pdf.
13. 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/>.
14. 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 (DACA): An Overview,” July 27, 2021, <https://www.americanimmigrationcouncil.org/research/deferred-action-childhood-arrivals-daca-overview>.
15. U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS), “Count of Active DACA Recipients By Month of Current DACA Expiration As of June 30, 2021,” <https://www.uscis.gov/sites/default/files/document/data/Active%20DACA%20Recipients%20%E2%80%93%20June%2030.%202021.pdf>.
16. USCIS, “Number of Form I 821D, Consideration of Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals - Requests by Intake and Case Status, by Fiscal Year, Aug. 15, 2012 - Jun. 30, 2021,” https://www.uscis.gov/sites/default/files/document/data/DACA_performance_data_fy2021_qtr3.pdf.
17. Estimates refer to the individuals who could have become eligible for DACA under the program’s original 2012 rules. Federal courts kept DACA alive after the Trump administration acted to terminate the program in September 2017, but limited eligibility to those who currently or previously had DACA status. In January 2021, the Biden administration reopened the program to first-time applicants. MPI analysis of U.S. Census Bureau data from the 2014-18 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 September 2021, <https://www.migrationpolicy.org/programs/data-hub/deferred-action-childhood-arrivals-daca-profiles>.
18. Migration Policy Institute, “National and State Estimates of Immigrant Populations Eligible for the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) Program, December 2020,” accessed September 17, 2021, https://www.migrationpolicy.org/sites/default/files/datahub/State%20Estimates%20of%20DACA-Eligible%20Population_Dec%202020.xlsx.

19. Analysis of 2019 ACS 1-year PUMS data by the American Immigration Council.
20. Analysis of 2019 ACS 1-year PUMS data by the American Immigration Council. Categories are based on the 2012 North American Industry Classification System (NAICS), <https://www.census.gov/naics/?58967?yearbck=2012>.
21. Ibid.
22. Analysis of 2019 ACS 1-year PUMS data by the American Immigration Council. Categories are based on the 2010 Standard Occupational Classification (SOC) system, https://www.bls.gov/soc/2010/2010_major_groups.htm.
23. Ibid.
24. Abby Budiman, “Key findings about U.S. immigrants” (Washington, DC: Pew Research Center, August 20, 2020), <https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2020/08/20/key-findings-about-u-s-immigrants/>.
25. New American Economy analysis of 2019 ACS microdata using IPUMS. New American Economy, “Map the Impact,” at section “Taxes and Spending Power,” accessed September 17, 2021, <https://www.newamericaneconomy.org/locations/>.
26. Ibid. at section “Undocumented Immigrants.”
27. Ibid. at section “The DACA-Eligible Population.”
28. Ibid. at section “Taxes and Spending Power.”
29. “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 2019 ACS 1-year PUMS data by the American Immigration Council.