Immigrants in Colorado

Colorado has a growing community of immigrants, many of whom hail from Mexico. Immigrants make up one out of every ten residents and another one in ten residents was born in the U.S. to at least one immigrant parent. Nearly one in eight Coloradan workers is an immigrant, as well as one in six business owners in the state's densely populated Denver metro area. As neighbors, business owners, taxpayers, and workers, immigrants are an integral part of Colorado's diverse and thriving communities and make extensive contributions that benefit all.

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

- In 2018, 549,181 immigrants (foreign-born individuals) comprised 10 percent of the population.[1]

- Colorado was home to 262,992 women, 251,267 men, and 34,922 children who were immigrants.[2]

- The top countries of origin for immigrants were Mexico (40 percent of immigrants), India (5 percent), China (3 percent), Vietnam (3 percent), and Canada (3 percent).[3]

- In 2018, 609,402 people in Colorado (11 percent of the state's population) were native-born Americans who had at least one immigrant parent.[4]

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

- 247,015 immigrants (45 percent) had naturalized as of 2018,[5] and 114,617 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 Colorado are distributed across the educational spectrum.

- Nearly a third (30 percent) of adult immigrants had a college degree or more education in 2018, while over a quarter (29 percent) had less than a high school diploma.[8]

Education Level	Share (%) of All Immigrants	Share (%) of All Natives
College degree or more	30	43
Some college	19	31
High school diploma only	22	21
Less than a high school diploma	29	5
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2018 American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates.		

Nearly 142,000 U.S. citizens in Colorado live with at least one family member who is undocumented.

- 190,000 underdocumented immigrants comprised 34 percent of the immigrant population and 3 percent of the total state population in 2016.[9]

- 276,589 people in Colorado, including 141,705 U.S. citizens, lived with at least one undocumented family member between 2010 and 2014.[10]

- During the same period, about 1 in 11 children in the state was a U.S. citizen living with at least one undocumented family member (110,634 children in total).[11]

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

- 14,520 active DACA recipients lived in Colorado as of March 2020, while DACA has been granted to 18,555 people in total since 2012.[12]

- As of 2019, 64 percent of DACA-eligible immigrants in Colorado had applied for DACA.[13]

- An additional 6,000 residents of the state would satisfy all but the educational requirements for DACA, and fewer than a thousand would become eligible as they grew older.[14]

One in eight workers in Colorado is an immigrant, together making up an important part of the state's labor force across industries.

- 363,714 immigrant workers comprised 12 percent of the labor force in 2018.[15]

- Immigrant workers were most numerous in the following industries:

Industry	Number of Immigrant Workers
Construction	57,830
Accommodation and Food Services	42,333
Health Care and Social Assistance	42,061
Manufacturing	37,547
Retail Trade	34,181
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)
Construction	21
Administrative & Support; Waste Management; and Remediation Services	19
Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing, and Hunting	17
Manufacturing	17
Accommodation and Food Services	14
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 Colorado 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
Construction and Extraction	53,200
Building and Grounds Cleaning & Maintenance	39,417
Office and Administrative Support	32,801
Sales and Related	30,771
Food Preparation and Serving Related	30,625
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	31
Construction and Extraction	27
Farming, Fishing, and Forestry	21
Production	20
Life, Physical, and Social Science	18
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 Colorado's workforce in 2016.[19]

Immigrants in Colorado have contributed billions of dollars in taxes.

- Immigrant-led households in the state paid $3.5 billion in federal taxes and $1.5 billion in state and local taxes in 2018.[20]

- Undocumented immigrants in Colorado paid an estimated $272.8 million in federal taxes and $156.5 million in state and local taxes in 2018.[21]

- Colorado DACA recipients and DACA-eligible individuals paid an estimated $31.5 million in state and local taxes in 2018.[22]

As consumers, immigrants add billions to Colorado's economy.

- Colorado residents in immigrant-led households had $14.2 billion in spending power (after-tax income) in 2018.[23]

Immigrant entrepreneurs in Colorado generate a billion dollars in business revenue.

- 42,844 immigrant business owners accounted for 12 percent of all self-employed Colorado residents in 2018 and generated $1 billion in business income.[24]

- In 2018, one in six (16 percent) business owners in the Denver/Aurora metropolitan area was an immigrant.[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_performancedata_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.