



Immigrants in West Virginia

West Virginia is home to a small but vital community of immigrants, with many hailing from Mexico and China. While foreign-born residents account for a small share of the state's total population, immigrants help support West Virginia and its economy. Immigrants account for 18 percent of workers in farming, fishing, and forestry occupations, and 11 percent in the life, physical, and social sciences. Most immigrants in West Virginia have pursued higher education. As neighbors, business owners, taxpayers, and workers, immigrants are an integral part of West Virginia's diverse and thriving communities and make extensive contributions that benefit all.

Two percent of West Virginia residents are immigrants, while another 2 percent of residents are native-born U.S. citizens with at least one immigrant parent.

- In 2018, 27,605 immigrants (foreign-born individuals) comprised 2 percent of the population.¹
- West Virginia was home to 13,112 women, 12,168 men, and 2,325 children who were immigrants.²
- The top countries of origin for immigrants were Mexico (11 percent of immigrants), China (9 percent), India (7 percent), the Philippines (6 percent), and Germany (5 percent).³
- In 2018, 31,448 people in West Virginia (2 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 West Virginia are naturalized U.S. citizens.

- 14,303 immigrants (52 percent) had naturalized as of 2018,⁵ and 6,993 immigrants were eligible to become [naturalized U.S. citizens](#) in 2017.⁶
- More than nine in ten (93 percent) immigrants reported speaking English "well" or "very well."⁷

Immigrants in West Virginia tend to be college educated.

- More than two-fifths (42 percent) of adult immigrants had a college degree or more education in 2018, while 12 percent had less than a high school diploma.⁸

Education Level	Share (%) of All Immigrants	Share (%) of All Natives
College degree or more	42	21
Some college	29	27
High school diploma only	17	40
Less than a high school diploma	12	12

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

Nearly 2,000 U.S. citizens in West Virginia live with at least one family member who is undocumented.

- Fewer than 5,000 [undocumented immigrants](#) comprised 14 percent of the immigrant population and less than half a percent of the total state population in 2016.⁹
- 4,941 people in West Virginia, including 1,999 U.S. citizens, lived with at least one [undocumented family member](#) between 2010 and 2014.¹⁰
- During the same period, 1,296 children in the state were U.S. citizens living with at least one undocumented family member.¹¹

West Virginia is home to dozens of Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) recipients.

- 110 [active DACA recipients](#) lived in West Virginia as of March 2020, while DACA has been granted to 125 people in total since 2012.¹²

Immigrants are an important part of the West Virginia workforce in a range of industries.

- 13,864 immigrant workers comprised 2 percent of the labor force in 2018.¹³

- Immigrant workers were most numerous in the following industries:

Industry	Number of Immigrant Workers
Educational Services	3,422
Health Care and Social Assistance	2,924
Retail Trade	1,633
Accommodation and Food Services	1,612
Manufacturing	1,092

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:¹⁴

Industry	Immigrant Share (%) (of all industry workers)
Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing, and Hunting	11
Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation	5
Information	4
Educational Services	4
Other Services (except Public Administration)	3

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 West Virginia workforce in a range of occupations.

- In 2018, immigrant workers were most numerous in the following occupation groups:¹⁵

Occupation Category	Number of Immigrant Workers
Healthcare Practitioners and Technical	2,282
Office and Administrative Support	2,000
Educational Instruction and Library	1,912
Transportation and Material Moving	1,871
Food Preparation and Serving Related	1,719

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:¹⁶

Occupation Category	Immigrant Share (%) (of all workers in occupation)
Farming, Fishing, and Forestry	18
Life, Physical, and Social Science	11
Arts, Design, Entertainment, Sports, and Media	6
Educational Instruction and Library	4
Healthcare Practitioners and Technical	3

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 less than half a percent of West Virginia's workforce in 2016.¹⁷

Immigrants in West Virginia have contributed more than a quarter-billion dollars in taxes.

- [Immigrant-led households in the state paid](#) \$185.7 million in federal taxes and \$72.8 million in state and local taxes in 2018.¹⁸
- West Virginia [DACA recipients](#) and DACA-eligible individuals paid an estimated \$270,000 in state and local taxes in 2018.¹⁹

As consumers, immigrants add hundreds of millions of dollars to West Virginia's economy.

- West Virginia residents in immigrant-led households had \$628.7 million in [spending power](#) (after-tax income) in 2018.²⁰

Immigrant entrepreneurs in West Virginia generate tens of millions of dollars in business revenue.

- 1,204 immigrant business owners accounted for 2 percent of all self-employed West Virginia residents in 2018 and generated \$36.2 million in business income.²¹

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. 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.
14. Ibid.
15. 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.
16. Ibid.
17. Pew Research Center, “U.S. unauthorized immigration population estimates, 2016,” 2019.
18. 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/>.
19. 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>.
20. New American Economy, “Map the Impact,” section Taxes and Spending Power.
21. “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.