



Immigrants in Alabama

Alabama has a small but growing immigration population. Immigrants represent nearly 4 percent of the state's total population, yet a variety of industries rely heavily on immigrants. Nearly 13 percent of all workers in life, physical, and social sciences are immigrants, as are 12 percent of construction and extraction employees. As workers, business owners, taxpayers, and neighbors, immigrants are an integral part of Alabama's diverse and thriving communities and make extensive contributions that benefit all.

Immigrants make up over 3 percent of Alabama residents, and about 3 percent of residents are native-born U.S. citizens who have at least one immigrant parent.

- In 2015, 169,972 immigrants (foreign-born individuals) comprised 3.5 percent of the state's population.¹
- Alabama was home to 74,369 women, 79,775 men, and 15,828 children who were immigrants.²
- The top countries of origin for immigrants were Mexico (32 percent of immigrants), Guatemala (8 percent), India (5 percent), Korea (4 percent), and Germany (4 percent).³
- In 2016, 148,160 people in Alabama (3.1 percent of the state's population) were native-born Americans who had at least [one immigrant parent](#).⁴

Over a third of all immigrants in Alabama are naturalized U.S. citizens.

- 61,631 immigrants (36.3 percent) had naturalized as of 2015,⁵ and 29,740 immigrants were eligible to become [naturalized U.S. citizens](#) in 2015.⁶
- Nearly three-quarters (73 percent) of immigrants reported speaking English "well" or "very well."⁷

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

- More than a quarter of adult immigrants had a college degree or more education in 2015, while nearly one-third had less than a high school diploma.⁸

Education Level	Share (%) of All Immigrants	Share (%) of All Natives
College degree or more	28.1	24.0
Some college	19.4	30.1
High school diploma only	20.1	31.5
Less than a high-school diploma	32.4	14.4

Nearly 40,000 U.S. citizens in Alabama live with at least one family member who is undocumented.

- 65,000 [undocumented immigrants](#) comprised 39 percent of the immigrant population and 1.3 percent of the total state population in 2014.⁹
- 91,947 people in Alabama, including 37,029 born in the United States, lived with at least one [undocumented family member](#) between 2010 and 2014.¹⁰
- During the same period, 3 percent of children in the state were U.S. citizens living with at least one undocumented family member (32,204 children in total).¹¹

Nearly 4,000 Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) recipients live in Alabama.¹²

- As of 2016, 55 percent of [DACA-eligible immigrants](#) in Alabama, or 4,803 people, had applied for DACA.¹³
- An additional 4,000 residents of the state satisfied all but the educational requirements for DACA, and another 2,000 would be eligible as they grew older.¹⁴

Immigrants are an integral part of the Alabama workforce across industries.

- 100,932 immigrant workers comprised 5 percent of the labor force in 2015.¹⁵

- Immigrant workers were most numerous in the following industries:

Industry	Number of Immigrant Workers
Manufacturing	22,053
Construction	17,978
Accommodation and Food Services	14,686
Retail Trade	10,528
Health Care and Social Assistance	9,549

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)
Construction	10.1
Accommodation and Food Services	6.9
Manufacturing	6.2
Administrative & Support; Waste Management; and Remediation Services	5.8
Other Services (except Public Administration)	5.0

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

Immigrants are a vital part of the Alabama 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
Construction and Extraction	17,694
Production	15,392
Food Preparation and Serving Related	11,332
Building and Grounds Cleaning & Maintenance	9,443
Sales and Related	8,940

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)
Life, Physical, and Social Sciences	12.9
Construction and Extraction	11.9
Building and Grounds Cleaning & Maintenance	8.0
Architecture and Engineering	7.0
Food Preparation and Serving Related	6.9

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

- Undocumented immigrants comprised 1.8 percent of the state's workforce in 2014.¹⁹

Immigrants in Alabama have contributed hundreds of millions of dollars in taxes.

- [Immigrant-led households in the state paid](#) \$719.7 million in federal taxes and \$252.6 million in state and local taxes in 2014.²⁰
- Undocumented immigrants in Alabama paid an estimated \$62.3 million in [state and local taxes](#) in 2014. Their contribution would rise to \$80 million if they could receive legal status.²¹
- [DACA recipients](#) in Alabama paid an estimated \$13.2 million in state and local taxes in 2016.²²

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

- Alabama residents in immigrant-led households had \$2.7 billion in [spending power](#) (after-tax income) in 2014.²³

Immigrant entrepreneurs in Alabama generate hundreds of millions of dollars in business revenue.

- 9,211 immigrant business owners accounted for 5 percent of all self-employed Alabama residents in 2015 and generated \$179.3 million in business income.²⁴
- In 2015, immigrants accounted for 20 percent of business owners in the Birmingham/Hoover metropolitan area.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. 2015 ACS 1-Year Estimates.

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,

<https://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 Alabama* (New York, NY: August 2016), 5,

<http://www.newamericaneconomy.org/research/the-contributions-of-new-americans-in-alabama/>.

²¹ Institute on Taxation & Economic Policy (ITEP), *Undocumented Immigrants’ State & Local Tax Contributions* (Washington, DC: March 2017), 3, <https://itep.org/undocumented-immigrants-state-local-tax-contributions-2/>.

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 Alabama*, 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.