



Immigrants in Massachusetts

Massachusetts has a history of immigration dating back to America's first settlements of newcomers, when English pilgrims arrived to build colonies along the New England coast. These immigrants went on to establish some of the foundational institutions of American life, including the nation's first university.

Immigrants continue to play a vital role in Massachusetts today, making up 16 percent of the state's population. A fifth of the Massachusetts labor force is foreign born, with immigrants supporting the state's healthcare, science, and service industries, among others. As workers, business owners, taxpayers, and neighbors, immigrants are an integral part of Massachusetts' diverse and thriving communities and make extensive contributions that benefit all.

Nearly one in six Massachusetts residents is an immigrant, while one in six residents a native-born U.S. citizen with at least one immigrant parent.

- In 2015, 1.1 million immigrants (foreign-born individuals) comprised 16.1 percent of the population.¹
- Massachusetts was home to 539,003 women, 497,730 men, and 59,220 children who were immigrants.²
- The top countries of origin for immigrants were China (8.8 percent of immigrants), the Dominican Republic (7.4 percent), India (6 percent), Brazil (5.6 percent), and Haiti (5.1 percent).³
- In 2016, 979,006 people in Massachusetts (14.4 percent of the state's population) were native-born Americans who had at least [one immigrant parent](#).⁴

Over half of all immigrants in Massachusetts are naturalized U.S. citizens.

- 572,765 immigrants (52.3 percent) had naturalized as of 2015,⁵ and 244,151 immigrants were eligible to become [naturalized U.S. citizens](#) in 2015.⁶
- More than three-quarters of immigrants (78 percent) reported speaking English "well" or "very well."⁷

Over a third of all immigrants in Massachusetts have a college degree or more.

- Nearly 37 percent of adult immigrants had a college degree or more education in 2015, while just over 21 percent had less than a high school diploma.⁸

Education Level	Share (%) of All Immigrants	Share (%) of All Natives
College degree or more	36.8	42.6
Some college	17.6	25.1
High school diploma only	24.3	25.4
Less than a high-school diploma	21.3	6.8

More than 100,000 U.S. citizens in Massachusetts live with at least one family member who is undocumented.⁹

- 210,000 undocumented immigrants comprised 19 percent of the immigrant population and 3.1 percent of the total state population in 2014.¹⁰
- 233,035 people in Massachusetts, including 77,183 born in the United States, lived with at least one undocumented family member between 2010 and 2014.¹¹
- During the same period, 1 in 20 children in the state was a U.S.-citizen child living with at least one undocumented family member (66,803 children total).¹²

Nearly 6,000 Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) recipients live in Massachusetts.¹³

- As of 2016, 50 percent of DACA-eligible immigrants in Massachusetts, or 9,517 people, had applied for DACA.¹⁴
- An additional 2,000 residents of the state satisfied all but the educational requirements for DACA, and another 2,000 would be eligible as they grew older.¹⁵

One in five workers in Massachusetts is an immigrant, together making up a vital part of the labor force in a range of industries.

- 728,067 immigrant workers comprised 20 percent of the labor force in 2015.¹⁶

- Immigrant workers were most numerous in the following industries:

Industry	Number of Immigrant Workers
Health Care and Social Assistance	143,791
Manufacturing	92,247
Accommodation and Food Services	85,230
Educational Services	74,002
Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services	73,506

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:¹⁷

Industry	Immigrant Share (%) (of all industry workers)
Administrative & Support; Waste Management; and Remediation Services	26.2
Accommodation and Food Services	25.9
Manufacturing	24.7
Other Services (except Public Administration)	22.9
Transportation and Warehousing	21.2

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

Immigrants are an integral part of the Massachusetts workforce in a range of occupations.

- In 2015, immigrant workers were most numerous in the following occupation groups:¹⁸

Occupation Category	Number of Immigrant Workers
Management	76,285
Office and Administrative Support	66,625
Food Preparation and Serving Related	64,821
Building and Grounds Cleaning & Maintenance	61,736
Sales and Related	60,611

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:¹⁹

Occupation Category	Immigrant Share (%) (of all workers in occupation)
Building and Grounds Cleaning & Maintenance	39.8
Life, Physical, and Social Sciences	33.4
Healthcare Support	30.3
Production	30.0
Computer and Mathematical Sciences	27.9

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

- Undocumented immigrants comprised 4 percent of the state's workforce in 2014.²⁰

Immigrants in Massachusetts have contributed billions of dollars in taxes.

- [Immigrant-led households in the state paid](#) \$6.5 billion in federal taxes and \$3 billion in state and local taxes in 2014.²¹
- Undocumented immigrants in Massachusetts paid an estimated \$184.6 million in [state and local taxes](#) in 2014. Their contribution would rise to \$240.8 million if they could receive legal status.²²
- [DACA recipients](#) in Massachusetts paid an estimated \$24.3 million in state and local taxes in 2016.²³

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

- Massachusetts residents in immigrant-led households had \$27.3 billion in [spending power](#) (after-tax income) in 2014.²⁴

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

- 68,364 immigrant business owners accounted for 20 percent of all self-employed Massachusetts residents in 2015 and generated \$2.1 billion in business income.²⁵
- In 2015, immigrants accounted for 21 percent of business owners in the Boston/Cambridge/Newton metropolitan area (which spans Massachusetts and New Hampshire) and 17 percent in the Providence/Warwick metro area (which spans Rhode Island and Massachusetts).²⁶

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 Analysis of 2010-2014 ACS 5-Year data by the American Immigration Council. Data aggregated from Steven Ruggles, Katie Genadek, Ronald Goeken, Josiah Grover, and Matthew Sobek, *Integrated Public Use Microdata Series: Version 7.0* [IPUMS-USA dataset] (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota, 2017) and 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/>.

¹⁰ Pew Research Center, “U.S. unauthorized immigration population estimates,” November 3, 2016, www.pewhispanic.org/interactives/unauthorized-immigrants/.

¹¹ Silva Mathema, “State-by-State Estimates of the Family Members of Unauthorized Immigrants.”

¹² American Immigration Council analysis of 2010-2014 ACS 5-Year data, using IPUMS-USA and Mathema, “State-by-State Estimates.”

¹³ 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>.

¹⁴ “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.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ 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.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ 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.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Pew Research Center, “U.S. unauthorized immigration population estimates.”

²¹ New American Economy, *The Contributions of New Americans in Massachusetts* (New York, NY: August 2016), 8, <http://www.newamericaneconomy.org/research/the-contributions-of-new-americans-in-massachusetts/>.

²² 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/>.

²³ 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/>.

²⁴ New American Economy, *The Contributions of New Americans in Massachusetts*, 8.

²⁵ “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.

²⁶ American Immigration Council analysis of 2016 CPS data. Flood, King, Ruggles, and Warren, *IPUMS CPS* dataset.