



Immigrants in North Carolina

North Carolina is home to a small but growing immigrant community. While nearly 8 percent of the state's total population is foreign-born, immigrants make up a significant share of North Carolina's labor force. Over 44 percent of all residents working in farming, fishing, and forestry occupations are immigrants, as well as over 20 percent working in computer and math sciences. As workers, business owners, taxpayers, and neighbors, immigrants are an integral part of North Carolina's diverse and thriving communities and make extensive contributions that benefit all.

Nearly 1 in 12 North Carolina residents is an immigrant, while 1 in 15 is a native-born U.S. citizen with at least one immigrant parent.

- In 2015, 794,684 immigrants (foreign-born individuals) comprised 7.9 percent of the state's population.¹
- North Carolina was home to 359,390 women, 379,964 men, and 55,330 children who were immigrants.²
- The top countries of origin for immigrants were Mexico (30.6 percent of immigrants), India (7.6 percent), Honduras (4.6 percent), El Salvador (3.6 percent), and Guatemala (3.3 percent).³
- In 2016, 658,217 people in North Carolina (6.7 percent of the state's population) were native-born Americans who had at least [one immigrant parent](#).⁴

More than a third of all immigrants in North Carolina are naturalized U.S. citizens.

- 297,427 immigrants (37.4 percent) had naturalized as of 2015,⁵ and 136,862 immigrants were eligible to become [naturalized U.S. citizens](#) in 2015.⁶
- The majority of immigrants (72 percent) reported speaking English "well" or "very well."⁷

Immigrants in North Carolina are distributed across the educational spectrum.

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

Education Level	Share (%) of All Immigrants	Share (%) of All Natives
College degree or more	29.6	29.4
Some college	17.5	32.1
High school diploma only	20.4	27.1
Less than a high-school diploma	32.6	11.4

Over 200,000 U.S. citizens in North Carolina live with at least one family member who is undocumented.

- 350,000 [undocumented immigrants](#) comprised 43 percent of the immigrant population and 3.4 percent of the total state population in 2014.⁹
- 429,169 people in North Carolina, including 186,930 born in the United States, lived with at least one [undocumented family member](#) between 2010 and 2014.¹⁰
- During the same period, 1 in 15 children in the state was a U.S. citizen child living with at least one undocumented family member (170,487 children in total).¹¹

More than 25,000 Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) recipients live in North Carolina.¹²

- As of 2016, 72 percent of [DACA-eligible immigrants](#) in North Carolina, or 29,584 people, had applied for DACA.¹³
- An additional 16,000 residents of the state satisfied all but the educational requirements for DACA, and another 8,000 would be eligible as they grew older.¹⁴

One in ten North Carolina workers is an immigrant, together making up a critical part of the state’s labor force across industries.

- 521,577 immigrant workers comprised 10.7 percent of the labor force in 2015.¹⁵

- Immigrant workers were most numerous in the following industries:

Industry	Number of Immigrant Workers
Manufacturing	84,275
Construction	81,980
Accommodation and Food Services	64,141
Retail Trade	58,499
Health Care and Social Assistance	49,359

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)
Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing & Hunting	29.6
Construction	20.5
Administrative & Support; Waste Management; and Remediation Services	15.8
Accommodation and Food Services	13.6
Manufacturing	12.0

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 North Carolina 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	74,115
Production	65,249
Building and Grounds Cleaning & Maintenance	51,531
Food Preparation and Serving Related	46,035
Sales and Related	45,514

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)
Farming, Fishing, and Forestry	44.2
Construction and Extraction	24.1
Building and Grounds Cleaning & Maintenance	21.7
Computer and Mathematical Sciences	20.3
Production	14.8

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

- Undocumented immigrants comprised 5 percent of the state's workforce in 2014.¹⁹

Immigrants in North Carolina have contributed billions of dollars in taxes.

- [Immigrant-led households in the state paid](#) \$3.6 billion in federal taxes and \$1.5 billion in state and local taxes in 2014.²⁰
- Undocumented immigrants in North Carolina paid an estimated \$277.4 million in [state and local taxes](#) in 2014. Their contribution would rise to \$370.8 million if they could receive legal status.²¹
- [DACA recipients in North Carolina](#) paid an estimated \$63.6 million in state and local taxes in 2016.²²

As consumers, immigrants add hundreds of billions of dollars to North Carolina's economy.

- North Carolina residents in immigrant-led households had \$14.2 billion in [spending power](#) (after-tax income) in 2014.²³

Immigrant entrepreneurs in North Carolina generate over a billion dollars in business revenue.

- 55,867 immigrant business owners accounted for 11.7 percent of all self-employed North Carolina residents in 2015 and generated \$1 billion in business income.²⁴
- In 2015, immigrants accounted for 14.9 percent of business owners in the Raleigh/Carey metropolitan area and 11.8 percent in the Charlotte/Gastonia/Concord metro 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” 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 North Carolina* (New York, NY: August 2016), 5,

<http://www.newamericaneconomy.org/locations/north-carolina/>.

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 North Carolina*, 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.