



Immigrants in Oklahoma

Oklahoma has a small but growing immigrant community, much of which emigrated from Mexico. While 6 percent of Oklahoma's population was born in another country, foreign-born residents support the state's economy across sectors and make up a vital share of the labor force. For example, 24 percent of all farmers, fishers, and foresters in Oklahoma are immigrants, as are 16 percent of the state's construction industry employees. As workers, business owners, taxpayers, and neighbors, immigrants are an integral part of Oklahoma's diverse and thriving communities and make extensive contributions that benefit all.

Immigrants account for 6 percent of residents in Oklahoma, while more than 5 percent of residents are native-born U.S. citizens with at least one immigrant parent.

- In 2015, 235,350 immigrants (foreign-born individuals) comprised 6 percent of the state's population.¹
- Oklahoma was home to 102,699 women, 114,596 men, and 18,055 children who were immigrants.²
- The top countries of origin for immigrants were Mexico (48.5 percent of immigrants), Vietnam (6.9 percent), Guatemala (3.7 percent), China (3.6 percent), and the Philippines (3.4 percent).³
- In 2016, 223,293 people in Oklahoma (5.7 percent of the state's population) were native-born Americans who had at least [one immigrant parent](#).⁴

A third of all immigrants in Oklahoma are naturalized U.S. citizens.

- 78,382 immigrants (33.3 percent) had naturalized as of 2015,⁵ and 36,916 immigrants were eligible to become [naturalized U.S. citizens](#) in 2015.⁶
- Nearly 7 in 10 immigrants (69.7 percent) reported speaking English "well" or "very well."⁷

Immigrants in Oklahoma are found across the educational spectrum.

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

Education Level	Share (%) of All Immigrants	Share (%) of All Natives
College degree or more	20.6	25.0
Some college	16.3	32.3
High school diploma only	24.1	32.2
Less than a high-school diploma	39.0	10.6

More than 60,000 U.S. citizens in Oklahoma live with at least one family member who is undocumented.

- 95,000 [undocumented immigrants](#) comprised 41 percent of the immigrant population and 2.4 percent of the total state population in 2014.⁹
- 125,989 people in Oklahoma, including 55,665 born in the United States, lived with at least one [undocumented family member](#) between 2010 and 2014.¹⁰
- During the same period, 5 percent of children in the state were U.S. citizens living with at least one undocumented family member (47,937 children in total).¹¹

More than 6,000 Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) recipients live in Oklahoma.¹²

- In 2016, 74 percent of [DACA-eligible immigrants](#) in Oklahoma, or 7,488 people, had applied 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 vital members of Oklahoma’s labor force across industries, accounting for 1 in 12 workers.

- 154,133 immigrant workers comprised 8.3 percent of the labor force in 2015.¹⁵

- Immigrant workers were most numerous in the following industries:

Industry	Number of Immigrant Workers
Accommodation and Food Services	26,417
Construction	25,766
Manufacturing	22,251
Health Care and Social Assistance	13,594
Retail Trade	13,307

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	15.6
Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing & Hunting	15.2
Accommodation and Food Services	13.8
Administrative & Support; Waste Management; and Remediation Services	13.3
Manufacturing	11.1

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 Oklahoma 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	26,203
Production	22,729
Building and Grounds Cleaning & Maintenance	20,595
Food Preparation and Serving Related	18,868
Management	12,755

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	24.0
Building and Grounds Cleaning & Maintenance	22.2
Construction and Extraction	17.2
Production	16.1
Life, Physical, and Social Sciences	12.1

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

- Undocumented immigrants comprised 3.4 percent of the state's workforce in 2014.¹⁹

Immigrants in Oklahoma contribute more than a billion dollars in yearly taxes.

- [Immigrant-led households in the state paid](#) \$714.7 million in federal taxes and \$346.1 million in state and local taxes in 2014.²⁰
- Undocumented immigrants in Oklahoma paid an estimated \$84.8 million in [state and local taxes](#) in 2014. Their contribution would rise to \$104.6 million if they could receive legal status.²¹
- [DACA recipients](#) in Oklahoma paid an estimated \$17.4 million in state and local taxes in 2016.²²

As consumers, immigrants add billions of dollars to Oklahoma's economy every year.

- Okies in immigrant-led households had \$3.2 billion in [spending power](#) (after-tax income) in 2014.²³

Immigrant entrepreneurs represent 1 in 11 Oklahoma business owners, generating hundreds of millions of dollars in combined annual revenue.

- 18,118 immigrant business owners accounted for 9.1 percent of all self-employed Oklahoma residents in 2015 and generated \$423.6 million in business income.²⁴
- In 2015, immigrants accounted for 10.5 percent of business owners in the Oklahoma City 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 Oklahoma* (New York, NY: August 2016), 5, <http://www.newamericaneconomy.org/locations/oklahoma/>.

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 Oklahoma*, 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.