



## Immigrants in Tennessee

Tennessee has a small but growing immigrant population, accounting for 5 percent of the state's total population. While relatively few in number, immigrants are a vital share of the labor force. Nearly 23 percent of all Tennessee residents working in farming, fishing, and forestry are immigrants, as well as roughly 17 percent of life, physical, and social sciences employees. As workers, business owners, taxpayers, and neighbors, immigrants are an integral part of Tennessee's diverse and thriving communities and make extensive contributions that benefit all.

### **Five percent of Tennessee residents are immigrants, while 4 percent are native-born U.S. citizens with at least one immigrant parent.**

- In 2015, 331,570 immigrants (foreign-born individuals) comprised 5 percent of the population.<sup>1</sup>
- Tennessee was home to 146,013 women, 154,709 men, and 30,848 children who were immigrants.<sup>2</sup>
- The top countries of origin for immigrants were Mexico (27.1 percent of immigrants), India (5.8 percent), Guatemala (4.5 percent), Egypt (3.5 percent), and the Philippines (3.4 percent).<sup>3</sup>
- In 2016, 285,789 people in Tennessee (4.3 percent of the state's population) were native-born Americans who had at least [one immigrant parent](#).<sup>4</sup>

### **One in three immigrants in Tennessee is a naturalized U.S. citizen.**

- 120,762 immigrants (36.4 percent) had naturalized as of 2015,<sup>5</sup> and 54,642 immigrants were eligible to become [naturalized U.S. citizens](#) in 2015.<sup>6</sup>
- Nearly three-quarters of immigrants (73.7 percent) reported speaking English "well" or "very well."<sup>7</sup>

### **Immigrants in Tennessee are distributed across the educational spectrum.**

- More than a quarter of adult immigrants had a college degree or more education in 2015, while nearly 30 percent had less than a high school diploma.<sup>8</sup>

Education Level	Share (%) of All Immigrants	Share (%) of All Natives
College degree or more	27.3	25.6
Some college	17.3	27.8
High school diploma only	25.8	33.6
Less than a high-school diploma	29.6	12.9

**Over 70,000 U.S. citizens in Tennessee live with at least one family member who is undocumented.**

- 120,000 undocumented immigrants comprised 37 percent of the immigrant population and 1.9 percent of the total state population in 2014.<sup>9</sup>
- 151,743 people in Tennessee, including 63,621 born in the United States, lived with at least one undocumented family member between 2010 and 2014.<sup>10</sup>
- During the same period, 1 in 25 children in the state was a U.S.-citizen child living with at least one undocumented family member (70,982 children in total).<sup>11</sup>

**Nearly 8,000 Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) recipients live in Tennessee.<sup>12</sup>**

- As of 2016, 67 percent of DACA-eligible immigrants in Tennessee, or 9,321 people, had applied for DACA.<sup>13</sup>
- An additional 6,000 residents of the state satisfied all but the educational requirements for DACA, and another 3,000 would be eligible as they grew older.<sup>14</sup>

**Immigrants are an integral part of the Tennessee workforce across industries.**

- 211,557 immigrant workers comprised 6.6 percent of the labor force in 2015.<sup>15</sup>
- Immigrant workers were most numerous in the following industries:

Industry	Number of Immigrant Workers
Construction	32,587
Manufacturing	31,704
Health Care and Social Assistance	25,611
Accommodation and Food Services	25,399
Retail Trade	20,585

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:<sup>16</sup>

Industry	Immigrant Share (%) (of all industry workers)
Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing & Hunting	13.9
Construction	13.9
Administrative & Support; Waste Management; and Remediation Services	10.0
Accommodation and Food Services	8.0
Manufacturing	6.7

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

### Immigrants are critical to the Tennessee labor force in a range of occupations.

- In 2015, immigrant workers were most numerous in the following occupation groups:<sup>17</sup>

Occupation Category	Number of Immigrant Workers
Construction and Extraction	30,939
Production	21,471
Building and Grounds Cleaning & Maintenance	19,888
Food Preparation and Serving Related	18,425
Sales and Related	18,275

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:<sup>18</sup>

Occupation Category	Immigrant Share (%) (of all workers in occupation)
Farming, Fishing, and Forestry	22.7
Life, Physical, and Social Sciences	16.8
Construction and Extraction	15.7
Building and Grounds Cleaning & Maintenance	13.0
Computer and Mathematical Sciences	10.2

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

- Undocumented immigrants comprised 2.8 percent of the state's workforce in 2014.<sup>19</sup>

### **Immigrants in Tennessee have contributed billions of dollars in taxes.**

- [Immigrant-led households in the state paid](#) \$1.5 billion in federal taxes and \$493.9 million in state and local taxes in 2014.<sup>20</sup>
- Undocumented immigrants in Tennessee paid an estimated \$107.5 million in [state and local taxes](#) in 2014. Their contribution would rise to \$118.3 million if they could receive legal status.<sup>21</sup>
- [DACA recipients](#) in Tennessee paid an estimated \$21.3 million in state and local taxes in 2016.<sup>22</sup>

### **As consumers, immigrants add billions of dollars to Tennessee's economy.**

- Tennessee residents in immigrant-led households had \$5.9 billion in [spending power](#) (after-tax income) in 2014.<sup>23</sup>

### **Immigrant entrepreneurs in Tennessee generate hundreds of billions of dollars in business revenue.**

- 20,861 immigrant business owners accounted for 7 percent of all self-employed Tennessee residents in 2015 and generated \$450 million in business income.<sup>24</sup>
- In 2015, immigrants accounted for 11.4 percent of business owners in the Nashville metropolitan area and 9.9 percent in the Memphis metro area (which straddles Tennessee, Arkansas, and Mississippi).<sup>25</sup>

## Endnotes

<sup>1</sup>“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).

<sup>2</sup>Children are defined as people age 17 or younger. Men and women do not include children. Ibid.

<sup>3</sup>Analysis of the U.S. Census Bureau’s 2015 American Community Survey 1-year PUMS data by the American Immigration Council.

<sup>4</sup>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).

<sup>5</sup>2015 ACS 1-Year Estimates.

<sup>6</sup>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](http://data.cmsny.org/state.html).

<sup>7</sup>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.

<sup>8</sup>Data based on survey respondents age 25 and older. 2015 ACS 1-Year Estimates.

<sup>9</sup>Pew Research Center, “U.S. unauthorized immigration population estimates,” November 3, 2016, [www.pewhispanic.org/interactives/unauthorized-immigrants/](http://www.pewhispanic.org/interactives/unauthorized-immigrants/).

<sup>10</sup>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/>.

<sup>11</sup>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).

<sup>12</sup>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](http://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>.

<sup>13</sup>“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](http://www.migrationpolicy.org/programs/data-hub/deferred-action-childhood-arrivals-daca-profiles).

<sup>14</sup>Ibid.

<sup>15</sup>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](http://www.census.gov/eos/www/naics/index.html).

<sup>16</sup>Ibid.

<sup>17</sup>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](http://www.bls.gov/soc/major_groups.htm).

<sup>18</sup>Ibid.

<sup>19</sup>Pew Research Center, “U.S. unauthorized immigration population estimates,” 2016.

<sup>20</sup>New American Economy, *The Contributions of New Americans in Tennessee* (New York, NY: August 2016), 5, <http://www.newamericaneconomy.org/research/the-contributions-of-new-americans-in-tennessee/>.

<sup>21</sup>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/>.

<sup>22</sup>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/>.

<sup>23</sup>New American Economy, *The Contributions of New Americans in Tennessee*, 5.

<sup>24</sup>“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.

<sup>25</sup>American Immigration Council analysis of 2016 CPS data. Flood, King, Ruggles, and Warren, *IPUMS CPS* dataset.