



## Immigrants in the District of Columbia

The District of Columbia (D.C.) has a sizable community of immigrants, much of which emigrated from El Salvador. Over 14 percent of D.C.'s population was born in another country, and foreign-born residents make up a vital, educated share of the District's labor force. More than half of immigrants in D.C. possess a college or higher degree, while 86 percent report speaking English well. Immigrants support the District's economy in various ways—from starting new businesses in the region to making up over 44 percent of all Washingtonians working in the life, physical, and social sciences. As workers, business owners, taxpayers, and neighbors, immigrants are an integral part of D.C.'s diverse and thriving communities and make extensive contributions that benefit all.

### **More than one in seven D.C. residents is an immigrant, while another 1 in 10 residents is a native-born U.S. citizen with at least one immigrant parent.**

- In 2015, 95,117 immigrants (foreign-born individuals) comprised 14.1 percent of the District's population.<sup>1</sup>
- D.C. was home to 48,047 women, 42,852 men, and 4,218 children who were immigrants.<sup>2</sup>
- The top countries of origin for immigrants were El Salvador (15.3 percent of immigrants), China (4.9 percent), Ethiopia (4.7 percent), Mexico (4 percent), and India (3.9 percent).<sup>3</sup>
- In 2016, 74,814 people in the District (11.1 percent of the population) were native-born Americans who had at least [one immigrant parent](#).<sup>4</sup>

### **More than two in five immigrants in the District of Columbia are naturalized U.S. citizens.**

- 41,645 immigrants (43.8 percent) had naturalized as of 2015.<sup>5</sup>
- The vast majority of immigrants (85.7 percent) reported speaking English "well" or "very well."<sup>6</sup>

### **Most immigrants in D.C. have pursued education at or above the college level.**

- Nearly three in five adult immigrants had a college degree or more education in 2015, while one-fifth had less than a high school diploma.<sup>7</sup>

Education Level	Share (%) of All Immigrants	Share (%) of All Natives
College degree or more	57.3	56.6
Some college	11.5	16.5
High school diploma only	11.0	18.7
Less than a high-school diploma	20.2	8.1

**More than 10,000 U.S. citizens in D.C. live with at least one family member who is undocumented.**

- 25,000 [undocumented immigrants](#) comprised 26 percent of the immigrant population and 3.9 percent of the total population in 2014.<sup>8</sup>
- 23,979 people in the District, including 8,912 born in the United States, lived with at least one [undocumented family member](#) between 2010 and 2014.<sup>9</sup>
- During the same period, 7 percent of children in D.C. were U.S. citizens living with at least one undocumented family member (7,572 children in total).<sup>10</sup>

**Less than 1,000 Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) recipients live in Washington, D.C.<sup>11</sup>**

- 963 people in the District had applied for DACA as of 2017.<sup>12</sup>
- [DACA recipients](#) in D.C. paid an estimated \$2.7 million in local taxes in 2016.<sup>13</sup>

**Immigrants are vital to D.C.’s labor force across industries, accounting for more than one in six workers.**

- 70,657 immigrant workers comprised 17.9 percent of the labor force in 2015.<sup>14</sup>
- Immigrant workers were most numerous in the following industries:

Industry	Number of Immigrant Workers
Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services	12,612
Public Administration	12,527
Accommodation and Food Services	9,735
Other Services (except Public Administration)	6,874
Health Care and Social Assistance	6,836

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>15</sup>

Industry	Immigrant Share (%) (of all industry workers)
Construction	28.3
Accommodation and Food Services	27.4
Finance and Insurance	25.3
Manufacturing	24.6
Real Estate Rental and Leasing	23.4

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 D.C. workforce in a range of occupations.**

- In 2015, immigrant workers were most numerous in the following occupation groups:<sup>16</sup>

Occupation Category	Number of Immigrant Workers
Management	9,406
Building and Grounds Cleaning & Maintenance	8,222
Life, Physical, and Social Sciences	6,318
Food Preparation and Serving Related	5,559
Office and Administrative Support	5,519

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>17</sup>

Occupation Category	Immigrant Share (%) (of all workers in occupation)
Life, Physical, and Social Sciences	44.2
Building and Grounds Cleaning & Maintenance	42.6
Production	36.0
Construction and Extraction	28.0
Food Preparation and Serving Related	22.6

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

- Undocumented immigrants comprised 4.9 percent of the District's workforce in 2014.<sup>18</sup>

### **Immigrants in the District contribute hundreds of millions of dollars in yearly taxes.**

- [Immigrant-led households in D.C. paid](#) \$712.5 million in federal taxes and \$336.9 million in local taxes in 2014.<sup>19</sup>
- Undocumented immigrants in the District paid an estimated \$31.8 million in [local taxes](#) in 2014. Their contribution would rise to \$38.7 million if they could receive legal status.<sup>20</sup>

### **As consumers, immigrants add billions of dollars to the economy in Washington, D.C.**

- D.C. residents in immigrant-led households had \$2.9 billion in [spending power](#) (after-tax income) in 2014.<sup>21</sup>

### **Immigrant entrepreneurs account for half of all business owners in the Washington, D.C., metro area.**

- 5,543 immigrant business owners accounted for 20.4 percent of all self-employed D.C. residents in 2015 and generated \$163 million in business income.<sup>22</sup>
- In 2015, immigrants accounted for 50.7 percent of business owners in the Washington, D.C., metropolitan area (encompassing D.C. and parts of Virginia and Maryland).<sup>23</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> 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>7</sup> Data based on survey respondents age 25 and older. 2015 ACS 1-Year Estimates.

<sup>8</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>9</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>10</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>11</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 U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services’ (USCIS) estimate of those with active DACA grants as of September 4, 2017. USCIS 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>12</sup> Number represents total initial requests for deferred action received by USCIS as of June 30, 2017. USCIS, *Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals Process Through Fiscal Year 2017, 3rd Qtr* (Washington, DC: Dept. of Homeland Security, September 20, 2017), Number of Form I-821D: Consideration of Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals by Fiscal Year Quarter [dataset], <https://www.uscis.gov/tools/reports-studies/immigration-forms-data/data-set-form-i-821d-deferred-action-childhood-arrivals>.

<sup>13</sup> Institute on Taxation & Economic Policy (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>14</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>15</sup> Ibid.

<sup>16</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>17</sup> Ibid.

<sup>18</sup> Pew Research Center, “U.S. unauthorized immigration population estimates,” 2016.

<sup>19</sup> New American Economy, *The Contributions of New Americans in Washington, D.C.* (New York, NY: August 2016), 5, <http://www.newamericaneconomy.org/research/the-contributions-of-new-americans-in-washington-d-c>.

<sup>20</sup> ITEP, *Undocumented Immigrants’ State & Local Tax Contributions* (Washington, DC: March 2017), 3, <https://itep.org/undocumented-immigrants-state-local-tax-contributions-2/>.

<sup>21</sup> New American Economy, *The Contributions of New Americans in Washington, D.C.*, 5.

<sup>22</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>23</sup> American Immigration Council analysis of 2016 CPS data. Flood, King, Ruggles, and Warren, *IPUMS CPS* dataset.