



Immigrants in Arkansas

Arkansas has a small but growing immigrant population, representing 5 percent of the state's total population. While relatively few in number, immigrants help support the Arkansas economy. The state's manufacturing industry, for example, relies on immigrants for over 12 percent of its workers, while 16 percent of Arkansas residents with computer-science related jobs are immigrants. As workers, business owners, taxpayers, and neighbors, immigrants are an important part of Arkansas' diverse and thriving communities and make notable contributions that benefit all.

Nearly 5 percent of Arkansas residents are immigrants, while another 4 percent are native-born U.S. citizens with at least one immigrant parent.

- In 2015, 142,841 immigrants (foreign-born individuals) comprised 4.8 percent of the population.¹
- Arkansas was home to 63,803 women, 67,229 men, and 11,809 children who were immigrants.²
- The top countries of origin for immigrants were Mexico (38.1 percent of immigrants), El Salvador (12.8 percent), India (6.7 percent), Guatemala (4 percent), and China (3.6 percent).³
- In 2016, 115,733 people in Arkansas (3.9 percent of the state's population) were native-born Americans who had at least [one immigrant parent](#).⁴

One in three immigrants in Arkansas is a naturalized U.S. citizen.

- 47,232 immigrants (33.1 percent) had naturalized as of 2015,⁵ and 25,362 immigrants were eligible to become [naturalized U.S. citizens](#) in 2015.⁶
- Nearly 7 in 10 immigrants (69.9 percent) reported speaking English "well" or "very well."⁷

Immigrants in Arkansas are distributed across the educational spectrum.

- More than one in five adult immigrants had a college degree or more education in 2015, while almost two in five had less than a high school diploma.⁸

Education Level	Share (%) of All Immigrants	Share (%) of All Natives
College degree or more	22.1	21.8
Some college	14.7	30.4
High school diploma only	23.3	34.8
Less than a high-school diploma	39.8	13.0

Over 40,000 U.S. citizens in Arkansas live with at least one family member who is undocumented.

- 70,000 [undocumented immigrants](#) comprised 48 percent of the immigrant population and 2.4 percent of the total state population in 2014.⁹
- Roughly 85,888 people in Arkansas, including 38,248 born in the United States, lived with at least one [undocumented family member](#) between 2010 and 2014.¹⁰
- During the same period, 1 in 20 children in the state was a U.S. citizen living with at least one undocumented family member (33,354 children in total).¹¹

Nearly 5,000 Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) recipients live in Arkansas.¹²

- As of 2016, 73 percent of [DACA-eligible immigrants](#) in Arkansas, or 5,606 people, had applied for DACA.¹³
- Another 3,000 residents of the state satisfied all but the educational requirements for DACA, and up to 2,000 others would be additionally eligible as they grew older.¹⁴

One in 15 workers in Arkansas is an immigrant, together making up an important part of the state's labor force across industries.

- 91,047 immigrant workers comprised 6.7 percent of the labor force in 2015.¹⁵

- Immigrant workers were most numerous in the following industries:

Industry	Number of Immigrant Workers
Manufacturing	27,586
Construction	12,212
Retail Trade	9,782
Accommodation and Food Services	8,563
Health Care and Social Assistance	7,716

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)
Manufacturing	12.3
Construction	10.7
Administrative & Support; Waste Management; and Remediation Services	8.3
Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing & Hunting	8.2
Other Services (except Public Administration)	7.6

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 Arkansas 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
Production	22,253
Construction and Extraction	12,089
Building and Grounds Cleaning & Maintenance	9,314
Transportation and Material Moving	7,867
Office and Administrative Support	7,410

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)
Computer and Mathematical Sciences	16.4
Production	15.0
Farming, Fishing, and Forestry	14.6
Life, Physical, and Social Sciences	13.6
Building and Grounds Cleaning & Maintenance	12.6

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

- Undocumented immigrants comprised 3.5 percent of the state's workforce in 2014.¹⁹

Immigrants in Arkansas have contributed billions of dollars in taxes.

- [Immigrant-led households in the state paid](#) \$614.4 million in federal taxes and \$291.1 million in state and local taxes in 2014.²⁰
- Undocumented immigrants in Arkansas paid an estimated \$62.8 million in [state and local taxes](#) in 2014. Their contribution would rise to \$77.2 million if they could receive legal status.²¹
- [DACA recipients](#) in Arkansas paid an estimated \$15.9 million in state and local taxes in 2016.²²

As consumers, immigrants add billions of dollars to Arkansas' economy.

- Arkansas residents in immigrant-led households had \$2.3 billion in [spending power](#) (after-tax income) in 2014.²³

Immigrant entrepreneurs in Arkansas generate millions of dollars in business revenue.

- 9,331 immigrant business owners accounted for 6.5 percent of all self-employed Arkansas residents in 2015 and generated over \$162 million in business income.²⁴

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 Arkansas (New York, NY: August 2016), 5, <http://www.newamericaneconomy.org/research/the-contributions-of-new-americans-in-arkansas/>.
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 Arkansas, 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.