



## Immigrants in South Carolina

South Carolina has a small but growing immigrant population. While 1 in 20 South Carolinians is an immigrant, foreign-born residents make up a vital, educated share of the state's labor force. Combined, immigrants account for one-fifth of all residents working in fishing, forestry, and farming, as well as 17 percent in construction and extraction jobs. The majority of immigrants speak English well and are naturalized citizens or eligible for naturalization. As neighbors, business owners, taxpayers, and workers, immigrants are an integral part of South Carolina's diverse and thriving communities and make extensive contributions that benefit all.

### **Five percent of South Carolina residents are immigrants, while nearly 5 percent of residents are native-born U.S. citizens with at least one immigrant parent.**

- In 2018, 256,765 immigrants (foreign-born individuals) comprised 5 percent of the population.<sup>1</sup>
- South Carolina was home to 117,404 women, 119,994 men, and 19,367 children who were immigrants.<sup>2</sup>
- The top countries of origin for immigrants were Mexico (24 percent of immigrants), India (7 percent), Germany (5 percent), Honduras (5 percent), and the Philippines (5 percent).<sup>3</sup>
- In 2018, 213,949 people in South Carolina (4 percent of the state's population) were native-born Americans who had at least one immigrant parent.<sup>4</sup>

### **More than two out of five immigrants in South Carolina are naturalized U.S. citizens.**

- 111,188 immigrants (43 percent) had naturalized as of 2018,<sup>5</sup> and 40,424 immigrants were eligible to become [naturalized U.S. citizens](#) in 2017.<sup>6</sup>
- Four in five (80 percent) immigrants reported speaking English "well" or "very well."<sup>7</sup>

### **Immigrants in South Carolina are distributed across the educational spectrum.**

- One-third (33 percent) of adult immigrants had a college degree or more education in 2018, while more than one-fifth (22 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	33	28
Some college	19	31
High school diploma only	27	30
Less than a high school diploma	22	11

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2018 American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates.

**Tens of thousands of U.S. citizens in South Carolina live with at least one family member who is undocumented.**

- 85,000 [undocumented immigrants](#) comprised 35 percent of the immigrant population and 2 percent of the total state population in 2016.<sup>9</sup>
- 107,798 people in South Carolina, including 49,729 U.S. citizens, lived with at least one [undocumented family member](#) between 2010 and 2014.<sup>10</sup>
- During the same period, about 4 percent of children in the state were U.S. citizens living with at least one undocumented family member (40,205 children in total).<sup>11</sup>

**South Carolina is home to thousands of Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) recipients.**

- 5,750 [active DACA recipients](#) lived in South Carolina as of March 2020, while DACA has been granted to 6,930 people in total since 2012.<sup>12</sup>
- As of 2019, 65 percent of [DACA-eligible immigrants](#) in South Carolina had applied for DACA.<sup>13</sup>
- An additional 4,000 residents of the state would satisfy all but the educational requirements for DACA, and fewer than 1,000 would become eligible as they grew older.<sup>14</sup>

**Immigrants are an important part of the South Carolina workforce across industries.**

- 158,772 immigrant workers comprised 6 percent of the labor force in 2018.<sup>15</sup>

- Immigrant workers were most numerous in the following industries:

Industry	Number of Immigrant Workers
Construction	27,696
Manufacturing	27,605
Accommodation and Food Services	22,392
Health Care and Social Assistance	15,517
Retail Trade	14,748

Source: Analysis of the U.S. Census Bureau's 2018 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)
Construction	14
Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing, and Hunting	11
Accommodation and Food Services	8
Administrative & Support; Waste Management; and Remediation Services	8
Manufacturing	8

Source: Analysis of the U.S. Census Bureau's 2018 American Community Survey 1-year PUMS data by the American Immigration Council.

**Immigrants are an integral part of the South Carolina workforce in a range of occupations.**

- In 2018, immigrant workers were most numerous in the following occupation groups:<sup>17</sup>

Occupation Category	Number of Immigrant Workers
Construction and Extraction	25,021
Building and Grounds Cleaning & Maintenance	17,956
Production	15,893
Food Preparation and Serving Related	15,123
Management	14,693

Source: Analysis of the U.S. Census Bureau's 2018 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	20
Construction and Extraction	17
Building and Grounds Cleaning & Maintenance	13
Architecture and Engineering	10
Computer and Mathematical	10

Source: Analysis of the U.S. Census Bureau's 2018 American Community Survey 1-year PUMS data by the American Immigration Council.

- Undocumented immigrants comprised 3 percent of South Carolina's workforce in 2016.<sup>19</sup>

### Immigrants in South Carolina have contributed billions of dollars in taxes.

- [Immigrant-led households in the state paid](#) \$1.5 billion in federal taxes and \$635.4 million in state and local taxes in 2018.<sup>20</sup>
- Undocumented immigrants in South Carolina paid an estimated \$99.4 million in federal taxes and \$60.8 million in [state and local taxes](#) in 2018.<sup>21</sup>
- South Carolina [DACA recipients](#) and DACA-eligible individuals paid an estimated \$11.1 million in state and local taxes in 2018.<sup>22</sup>

### As consumers, immigrants add billions of dollars to South Carolina's economy.

- South Carolina residents in immigrant-led households had \$5.9 billion in [spending power](#) (after-tax income) in 2018.<sup>23</sup>

### Immigrant entrepreneurs in South Carolina generate hundreds of millions of dollars in business revenue.

- 23,670 immigrant business owners accounted for 10 percent of all self-employed South Carolina residents in 2018 and generated \$719.6 million in business income.<sup>24</sup>
- In 2018, immigrants accounted for 15 percent of business owners in the Charlotte/Gastonia/Concord metropolitan area, which spans North Carolina and South Carolina.<sup>25</sup>

## 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, 2018 American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates. The American Immigration Council elected to use data from the 2018 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 2018 American Community Survey 1-year PUMS data by the American Immigration Council.
4. Analysis of data from the 2018 Current Population Survey by the American Immigration Council, using IPUMS CPS. Sarah Flood, Miriam King, Renae Rodgers, Steven Ruggles and J. Robert Warren, *Integrated Public Use Microdata Series, Current Population Survey: Version 7.0* [dataset] (Minneapolis, MN: IPUMS, 2020), <https://doi.org/10.18128/D030.V7.0>.
5. 2018 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 April 2020, [data.cmsny.org/state.html](http://data.cmsny.org/state.html).
7. Figure includes immigrants who speak only English. Data based on survey respondents age 5 and over. Analysis of 2018 ACS 1-Year Estimates by the American Immigration Council.
8. Data based on survey respondents age 25 and older. Ibid.
9. Pew Research Center, “U.S. unauthorized immigration population estimates, 2016,” February 5, 2019, [www.pewhispanic.org/interactives/unauthorized-immigrants/](http://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, [www.americanprogress.org/issues/immigration/news/2017/03/16/427868/state-state-estimates-family-members-unauthorized-immigrants/](http://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 number of DACA recipients reflects USCIS’ estimate of those with active DACA grants as of March 31, 2020. U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS), “Approximate Active DACA Recipients: As of March 31, 2020” [dataset], July 22, 2020, <https://www.uscis.gov/sites/default/files/document/data/Approximate%20Active%20DACA%20Receipts%20-%20March%2031%2C%202020.pdf>. DACA grants reflect USCIS Form I-821D initial requests approved from Aug. 15, 2012-Mar. 31, 2020, as of April 2020. USCIS, “Number of Form I-821D, Consideration of Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals, Status, by Fiscal Year, Quarter, and Case Status: Aug. 15, 2012-Mar. 31, 2020,” July 22, 2020, [https://www.uscis.gov/sites/default/files/document/data/DACA\\_performance\\_data\\_fy2020\\_qtr2.pdf](https://www.uscis.gov/sites/default/files/document/data/DACA_performance_data_fy2020_qtr2.pdf).
13. Estimates of the DACA-eligible population as of 2019 include unauthorized immigrant youth who had been in the United States since 2007, were under the age of 16 at the time of arrival, were under the age of 31 as of 2012, and who met DACA eligibility requirements as of 2016. Migration Policy Institute (MPI) analysis of U.S. Census Bureau data from the 2012-16 American Community Survey (ACS) pooled, and the 2008 Survey of Income and Program Participation (SIPP), with legal status assignments by James Bachmeier and Colin Hammar of Temple University and Jennifer Van Hook of The Pennsylvania State University, Population Research Institute, as cited in “Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) Data Tools,” accessed April 2020, [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).
14. Ibid.
15. Analysis of 2018 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).
16. Ibid.
17. Analysis of 2018 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).
18. Ibid.
19. Pew Research Center, “U.S. unauthorized immigration population estimates, 2016,” 2019.
20. New American Economy analysis of 2018 ACS microdata using IPUMS. New American Economy, “Map the Impact,” section Taxes and Spending Power, January 31, 2020, <https://www.newamericaneconomy.org/locations/>.
21. Ibid. at sec. Undocumented Immigrants.
22. Institute on Taxation and Economic Policy, *State & Local Tax Contributions of Young Undocumented Immigrants* (Washington, DC: April 2018), Appendix 1, <https://itep.org/state-local-tax-contributions-of-young-undocumented-immigrants>.
23. New American Economy, “Map the Impact,” section Taxes and Spending Power.
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 2018 ACS 1-year PUMS data by the American Immigration Council.
25. American Immigration Council analysis of 2018 CPS data. Flood, King, Rodgers, Ruggles, and Warren, *IPUMS CPS* dataset.