Immigrants are our Commonwealth

Immigrants bring diversity to Massachusetts¹
Immigrants bring a diverse range of skills to the United States, contributing to the cultural, social, and economic fabric of the country. Immigrants in the United States bring cultural diversity, multilingualism, entrepreneurship, educational drive, and a strong work ethic.

Immigrants in Massachusetts total 1.2 million (over 17%) of the state’s population, or about 1 in every 6 residents. The top countries of origin of immigrants in Massachusetts are China (9.2%), Brazil (7.9%), Dominican Republic (7.8%), India (7.2%), and Haiti (5.0%).

Immigrants are involved in our communities
Massachusetts’ foreign-born population tends to be college educated. According to 2021 U.S. Census Bureau data, approximately 40.4% of foreign born individuals in Massachusetts have a bachelor’s degree or higher. In fact, a higher percentage of foreign born have attained a postgraduate level education when compared to Massachusetts’ native-born residents.²

In addition, DACA-recipients are more likely to pursue higher education than their undocumented peers who do not have DACA.³ In Massachusetts, DACA-recipients make significant contributions in their communities not only through their participation in education, but also their participation in community organizations and volunteer work.⁴

Immigrants are vital to Massachusetts' economy and key industries
Foreign-born individuals make up a significant proportion of Massachusetts’ workforce, with 1 in 5 workers being foreign-born. Immigrants play a vital role in supporting key industries such as healthcare, manufacturing, accommodation and food services, science, and education, with 29.1% of STEM workers in Massachusetts being immigrants. Additionally, immigrant entrepreneurs make a significant contribution to Massachusetts' economy, generating billions of dollars in business revenue.⁵ A quarter of new U.S. businesses are founded by immigrants, and in Massachusetts, approximately 79,304 immigrant business owners accounted for 23% of all self-employed residents, generating $2.3 billion in business income in 2018.⁶

Immigrants are a crucial part of COVID-19 response
During the COVID-19 pandemic, the state experienced a decrease in the number of available workers. The Massachusetts labor force, which is the sum of all individuals that are employed and unemployed, saw a high of 3,846,200 available workers in June 2019. By April 2020, the Massachusetts labor force plummeted to 3,476,000 available workers. Most recent data from January 2023 show that the Massachusetts labor force is still 3.0% less than pre-pandemic numbers.⁷

Although immigrants made up 17% of all United State workers in 2018, immigrants were over-represented in jobs critical to the COVID-19 response, including 29% of physicians, 22% of nursing assistants, 39% of food processing workers, and 48% of general agricultural workers.⁸ During the COVID-19 pandemic, DACA-recipients in Massachusetts were on the front lines, providing essential service with an estimated 2,000 DACA-recipients in Massachusetts working in healthcare, education, and the food industry.⁹
Immigrants support Massachusetts’ population trends

Immigrants support Massachusetts population in a time when the state has seen lower birth rates in the last 20 years, falling nearly 30% since 1990, with the second lowest total birth rate in the nation. Furthermore, Massachusetts has seen an increase in the aging population. International immigration in Massachusetts has also plateaued over the last 25 years, and no longer offsets domestic out-migration.

Immigrants have significant spending power

In 2019, immigrants in Massachusetts had $38.0 billion in spending power, with refugees and temporary protected status holders having $2.0 billion and $218.1 million in spending power, respectively.

Additionally, immigrant-led households paid an estimated $4.2 billion in rent. With 244,093 immigrant homeowners in Massachusetts, there is an approximate $134.1 billion in housing wealth held by immigrant households.

Immigrants contribute to our tax revenue

In 2019, immigrants in Massachusetts paid a total of $14.2 billion in taxes, with $4.6 billion spent on state and local taxes.

Immigrants have strong voting power

In 2020, approximately 607,821 immigrants in Massachusetts were eligible to vote in federal and state elections. As of 2022, there are approximately 249,870 green card holders living in Massachusetts who are eligible to become U.S. citizens.

Note: This fact sheet was last updated on March 27, 2023.

1. Unless otherwise noted, data in this factsheet was gathered from American Immigration Council, https://map.americanimmigrationcouncil.org/locations/massachusetts/

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