

# Immigrants are our Commonwealth



## Immigrants bring diversity to Massachusetts <sup>1</sup>

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.<sup>2</sup>

In addition, **DACA-recipients are more likely to pursue higher education than their undocumented peers who do not have DACA.**<sup>3</sup> 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.<sup>4</sup>

## 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.<sup>5</sup> 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.<sup>6</sup>

## 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.**<sup>7</sup>

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.<sup>8</sup> 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.<sup>9</sup>



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## 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.**<sup>10</sup>

## 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.<sup>11</sup>

**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/#>
2. Educational attainment, employment data, and key industry data sourced from 2021 U.S. Census Bureau data, [https://data.census.gov/table?q=labor+force+massachusetts&tid=ACSST5Y2021\\_S0501&moe=false](https://data.census.gov/table?q=labor+force+massachusetts&tid=ACSST5Y2021_S0501&moe=false)
3. Center for American Progress. (2018). DACA Recipients' Economic and Educational Gains Continue to Grow. Retrieved from <https://www.americanprogress.org/article/daca-recipients-economic-educational-gains-continue-grow/>
4. New American Economy, "Map the Impact," section Taxes and Spending Power.
5. MPI tabulation of data from the 2018 ACS, discussed in Julia Gelatt, Immigrant Workers: Vital to the U.S. COVID-19 Response, Disproportionately Vulnerable (Washington, DC: MPI, 2020).
6. Data sourced from Immigrant Entrepreneurship, National Bureau of Economic Research, July 2016 and from an analysis of 2018 ACS 1-year PUMS data by the American Immigration Council, [https://www.americanimmigrationcouncil.org/sites/default/files/research/immigrants\\_in\\_massachusetts.pdf](https://www.americanimmigrationcouncil.org/sites/default/files/research/immigrants_in_massachusetts.pdf)
7. Massachusetts Executive Office of Labor and Workforce Development. (n.d.). Current Employment Statistics: CES Results. Retrieved March 22, 2023, from <https://lmi.dua.eol.mass.gov/lmi/CurrentEmploymentStatistics/CESResults?GA=000025&Sopt=Y&I=00000000&Copt=2&TF=3&Y=2023|2022|2021|2020|2019&MD=&Dopt=TEXT#>
8. Migration Policy Institute (MPI). (2021). A Look Back at U.S. Immigration in the COVID-19 Year. Retrieved from [https://www.migrationpolicy.org/sites/default/files/publications/migration-policy-institute-covid-us-immigration-lookback\\_final.pdf](https://www.migrationpolicy.org/sites/default/files/publications/migration-policy-institute-covid-us-immigration-lookback_final.pdf)
9. Center for American Progress. (2020, April 16). Demographic Profile of DACA Recipients on the Frontlines of the Coronavirus Response. Retrieved from <https://www.americanprogress.org/article/demographic-profile-daca-recipients-frontlines-coronavirus-response/>.
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11. U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services. (2022). Eligible to Naturalize Fact Sheet Massachusetts. Retrieved from [https://www.uscis.gov/sites/default/files/document/fact-sheets/Eligible\\_to\\_Naturalize\\_Fact\\_Sheet\\_MASSACHUSETTS.pdf](https://www.uscis.gov/sites/default/files/document/fact-sheets/Eligible_to_Naturalize_Fact_Sheet_MASSACHUSETTS.pdf)