

From the Plains to the Peaks

*A look at the contributions of immigrants
to Colorado's communities and economy*

APRIL 2026



Since its founding, Colorado has been built and shaped by the contributions of immigrants. In every corner of the state one can feel the diverse contributions of people from all different places and cultures, coming together to create vibrant, dynamic, and welcoming communities, as well as an economy and workforce that leads the country in innovation and growth.

In lieu of meaningful federal reforms, local organizations, business leaders, and elected officials have worked together to advocate for and advance commonsense policies to protect immigrants and increase the benefits of their contributions, including policies that expand and protect access to higher education, professional licensure, driver's licenses, and legal defense. FWD.us is proud to have worked alongside local leaders in these efforts over the past decade, and into the future.

This report highlights Colorado's immigrant populations, how their contributions benefit the whole state, and how choices about the future of immigration policy in America will impact all Coloradans in the years to come.

Immigrants from all backgrounds call Colorado home

An estimated **720,000 immigrants live in Colorado, making up 12% of the total population.**

Immigrants live in 16% of households in Colorado. In the Denver metro area, 494,000 immigrants make up 16% of the total population, living in 19% of households.

Immigrants of all backgrounds boost Colorado's communities. Some 269,000 immigrants, or about 37% of all immigrants in Colorado, are U.S. citizens. About 149,000 are lawful permanent residents, and 47,000 are temporary immigrants (including nonimmigrant visa holders and international students).

An estimated 8% of individuals in Colorado, or some 458,000, are either undocumented immigrants or live with an undocumented immigrant. Some 80,000 U.S. citizen children in Colorado live with an undocumented parent, while some 23,000 U.S. citizen spouses are married to an undocumented immigrant. Some 110,000 undocumented individuals in Colorado have lived in the U.S. for more than 10 years, with 65,000 of those living in the U.S. for more than 20 years.

Dreamers—undocumented immigrants who came to the U.S. as children before 2021 and are either in school or have graduated from high school—number 41,000.

Some 12,000 are Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) recipients. Temporary Protected Status (TPS) holders—immigrants who cannot safely return to their home countries—number 28,000, while an estimated 75,000 immigrants in Colorado are waiting for a decision on their asylum claim.

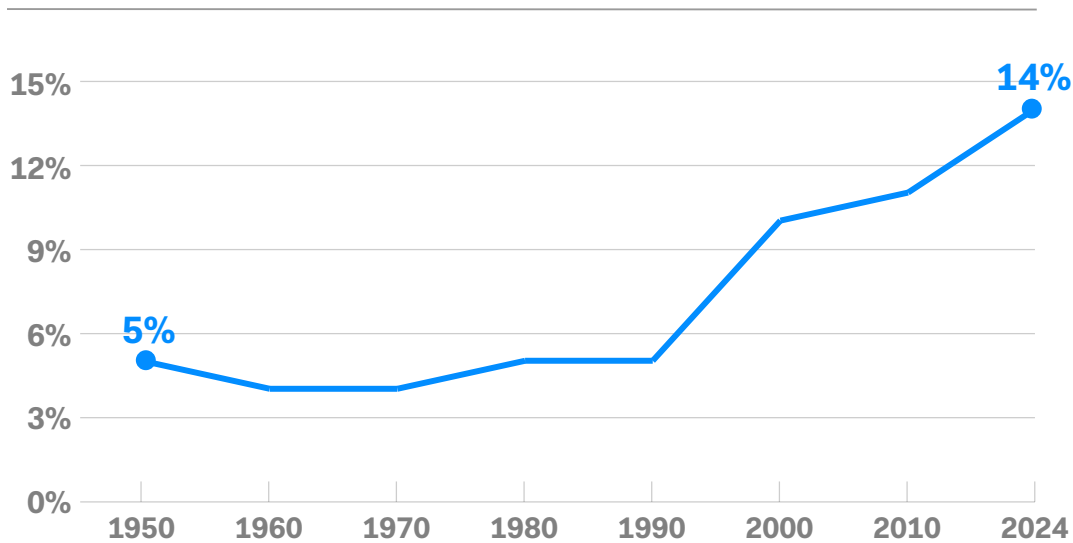
Colorado's immigrant population is highly integrated into the state's communities. Some 92% of immigrants in Colorado speak English, about 55% are homeowners, and 74% have lived in the U.S. for a decade or longer. Some 21% of Colorado's population lives in a household with at least one immigrant.

Immigrants contribute significantly to Colorado’s workforce and economy

Immigrants help power major sectors of the state’s workforce, driving innovation, creating American jobs, and boosting economic growth.

Immigrants make up one in seven workers in Colorado’s labor force (14%), more than doubling the share from three decades ago, according to a FWD.us analysis of the most recent U.S. Census Bureau data.¹ With some 480,000 workers, Colorado has one of America’s largest immigrant workforces.

IMMIGRANTS MAKE UP ONE IN SEVEN WORKERS IN COLORADO’S LABOR FORCE



Source: FWD.us analysis of 1950 to 2000 decennial Census data, 2010 and augmented 2024 American Community Survey data (see 2024 ACS methodology at [fwd.us/2024-ac-s-methodology](https://www.fwd.us/2024-ac-s-methodology) for more information)

Immigrants in Colorado’s workforce contribute an estimated **\$29 billion to the Centennial State’s economy annually in personal income**, making up about 1 in 10 of all spending-power dollars in the state. They also pay \$9.5 billion annually in combined federal, state, and local taxes.

Of that total, **Dreamers contribute \$1.2 billion annually to Colorado’s economy, and \$136 million in state and local taxes each year.** TPS holders contribute \$498 million to the state economy annually, while asylum applicants contribute \$1.7 billion.

FWD.us analysis shows that immigrants in Colorado make up significant shares of workers in industries like construction (22%), transportation, warehousing, and utilities (17%), leisure and hospitality (14%), manufacturing (14%), agriculture (14%), and business services (13%). Immigrants make up even larger shares of more specific industries, including 55% in taxi services, 45% in building services, and 39% in bakery manufacturing.

¹ Figures are based on U.S. Census data for 1950 to 2000 and American Community Survey (ACS) data for 2010 and 2024. Unless otherwise specified, statistics represent analysis from the 2024 ACS. See FWD’s methodology on how immigrant status is assigned to the 2024 ACS, available at www.fwd.us/wp-content/uploads/2026/03/FWD-ACS-2024-methodology.pdf.

About 46,000 immigrants in Colorado work in STEM-related jobs, of which 22% are temporary immigrants on H-1B and other temporary work visas. In all, 15% of STEM degree holders in Colorado are immigrants. Roughly 66,000 immigrants in Colorado are self-employed.

Immigrants make up an even greater share—18%—of the workforce in Denver, including 34,000 in STEM jobs, 43,000 who are self-employed, and 48,000 individuals with deportation protections and work permits who contribute an estimated \$218 million annually in state and local taxes.

Colorado benefits from the contributions of immigrants to grow its economy, and the immigrant labor force cannot be taken for granted.

With work authorization, immigrants in different statuses are able to work, support their families, and contribute to communities

Some 190,000 immigrant workers in Colorado are naturalized U.S. citizens, an estimated 90,000 are lawful permanent residents, and 35,000 have a nonimmigrant status, like H-1B visa workers or other temporary immigrant visas. Together, these U.S. citizens and people with some form of legal status make up 9% of Colorado's total labor force.

Additionally, FWD.us estimates that nearly 160,000 workers in Colorado are immigrants without legal status or with temporary protections, representing about 5% of the total workforce. Through their wages, they contribute more than \$6.7 billion to the economy annually, with nearly \$1.9 billion in combined federal, state, and local taxes.

Immigrant groups currently protected from deportation and authorized to work—**DACA recipients, TPS holders, people seeking asylum, and those waiting for a permanent residency visa—make up an estimated 63,000 workers in Colorado's labor force, and pay an estimated \$279 million annually in state and local taxes.**

IMMIGRANT WORKERS MAKE UP LARGE SHARES OF SEVERAL INDUSTRIES IN COLORADO



55%
in taxi services



45%
in building services



39%
in bakery manufacturing



22%
in construction



14%
in agriculture

Source: FWD.us analysis of 2023 American Community Survey data, with projections through 2024.

These workers have become critical to the labor infrastructure of the state, as larger shares are employed in sectors like building and grounds occupations (19% of all building and grounds jobs), construction (18%), and agricultural (14%).

Immigrant workers without legal status or with temporary protections are also highly integrated into Colorado's communities and society, with about a third owning homes.

The Trump administration's immigration agenda is driving up prices for Colorado families

Unfortunately, the Trump administration's immigration agenda is sacrificing the valuable contributions that immigrants make to our state, harming our local communities and families, and raising costs of everyday goods and services for all Coloradans.

FWD.us projects that, nationwide, **American families will see a \$2,150 annual increase to the combined costs of everyday goods and services** they purchase under new immigration policies that have been implemented and proposed by the Trump administration.²

In Colorado, that will translate to a loss of \$3.6 billion annually for the state economy, in addition to an estimated \$410 million in foregone state and local taxes that would have been contributed by these workers each year.³

These policies include the cancellation of work permits for hundreds of thousands of authorized workers, the mass deportations of millions of immigrants in various statuses, and significant reductions in legal immigration in the years ahead. These policies will shrink Colorado's workforce and expose families, including U.S. citizens, to the threat of family separation and removal.

The higher costs include a 14.5% increase on food costs, 6.1% on housing, and a 3.9% increase to leisure and hospitality services by the end of 2028. The impacts will be heaviest in industries that are crucial to Colorado's economy, like construction/housing and leisure/hospitality.

2 FWD.us, "Prices for all Americans are set to unnecessarily rise under recent and proposed immigration policies impacting the U.S. labor force," June 2025, <https://www.fwd.us/news/new-immigration-policies-will-increase-prices-for-americans>.

3 FWD.us, "Prices will rise in Colorado as new immigration policies impact crucial sectors of Colorado's labor force," June 2025, <https://www.fwd.us/wp-content/uploads/2026/04/Colorado-Prices.pdf>.

IN COLORADO, THIS WOULD LEAD TO THOUSANDS OF REMOVED WORKERS FROM CONSTRUCTION AND LEISURE AND HOSPITALITY INDUSTRIES.

Estimated number of impacted workers, by industry

Industry	Expiration of work permits for temporarily protected workers	Deportation of 1 million immigrants without legal status each year	Reduction of future legal immigration by half
Construction-Housing	9,300	8,300	2,000
Leisure-Hospitality	2,400	1,700	2,600
Other industries	39,500	26,600	19,400
All industries	51,200	36,600	24,000

Note: Estimates rounded to thousands.

Source: FWD.us immigrant status assignments from augmented 2024 American Community Survey data.

Conclusion

Immigration continues to power Colorado’s success and shape its future. Immigrants help power major sectors of the state’s workforce, driving innovation, creating American jobs, and boosting economic growth. If Colorado wants to continue being a leading global economy, then we need to continue advocating for and enacting policies that build a vibrant, inclusive, welcoming environment for immigrants of all backgrounds. Doing so will help ensure a more prosperous future for all Coloradans.

Let's Work Together!

Contact **Zaira Garcia** (zaira@fwd.us), FWD.us Regional Government Relations Director, to learn more about our work in Colorado and how we can work together.

Additional Resources

To learn more about the contributions of immigrants in Colorado, including fact sheets and estimates at the state, congressional district, and major metro area levels, as well as for key industries, scan the QR code:



About FWD.us

FWD.us is a policy organization working to advance better and more politically resilient solutions on criminal justice and immigration. For too long, our harmful criminal justice and immigration systems have held us back and been weaponized in ways that undermine our nation's promise and democratic ideals. For over a decade, FWD.us has advanced criminal justice and immigration reforms that expanded freedom and opportunities to tens of millions of people in the United States. Working with partners in red, blue, and purple jurisdictions, we have secured legislative and judicial victories and executive actions despite often-challenging political conditions.

