Immigrant Workers are Critical to Colorado’s Economy

Colorado immigrants are a crucial – and growing – part of the state’s economy, with many industries relying on their labor. In addition, many immigrants are entrepreneurs, bringing new businesses and jobs to Colorado.

Immigrants are a Growing Share of Colorado’s Population

Foreign-born Coloradans are often overlooked by policymakers despite being a growing proportion of our state’s population.

- In 2015, 9.8 percent of Coloradans were foreign-born.
- From 2000 to 2015, Colorado’s immigrant population grew by 45.1 percent compared to 39 percent in the United States.
- Colorado’s population grew by 1.2 million people from 2000 to 2015, and 14.5 percent of that population growth can be attributed to the foreign-born Coloradan.

Work Force Participation

Colorado’s immigrant population participates widely in the workforce at rates similar to their native-born counterparts.

- The share of foreign-born Coloradans who participate in the work force is the same as native-born Coloradans.
- While only one in 10 Coloradans is foreign-born, immigrants make up 12 percent of the total labor force.
- In 2015, 3.2 percent of immigrants were unemployed compared to 3.5 percent of native-born Coloradans.

Immigrants Make a Critical Contribution to the Economy

- Immigrants paid $3.3 billion in state, local and federal taxes and had the spending power of nearly $10 billion.
- Undocumented immigrants contribute significantly as well. In 2014, undocumented immigrants contributed nearly 140 million in local and state taxes alone.

A Growing Share of Colorado’s Entrepreneurship Comes from Immigrants

Immigrants also contribute to Colorado’s economy by establishing businesses at similar rates as U.S.-born Coloradans.

- In 2015, 11.7 percent of all entrepreneurs in Colorado were immigrants.
- In 2015, the majority of immigrant businesses were in the professional, scientific, administrative and waste management service industries. Businesses in this industry perform routine support activities for the day-to-day operations of other organizations.

Share of Foreign-born Workers Across Industries

Businesses Created by Immigrants, by Industry

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Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2015 American Community Survey PUMS

Colorado Fiscal Institute
1905 Sherman Suite 225,
Denver CO, 80203

(1) New American Economy, 2014 analysis
(2) Institute on Taxation and Economic Policy, March 2017