



Immigration is a top issue in 2021, but the national conversation often misses what is really happening on the ground in Colorado. It has become imperative that we, our policy makers and the general public, better understand the economic impacts of immigration in our communities and the benefits modern immigration policies will bring to our state.

Frequently Asked Questions

What does immigration reform mean? Is this a local, state or federal issue?	<p>Modernizing our immigration system ultimately requires a solution on the federal level with congressional action.</p> <p>Sensible immigration reforms will help the economy grow and create jobs for fellow Coloradans while also improving national security to create a cohesive and safe working system.</p>
Why immigration reform now?	<p>The U.S. has long been the destination for the world’s hardest working, entrepreneurial, and talented immigrants. However, U.S. immigration policy has remained virtually unchanged since the 1980s and is not designed to fit today’s economy.ⁱ The last major effort for reform by Congress was in 2013 when the U.S. Senate passed comprehensive immigration reform legislation by a bipartisan and overwhelming vote of 68-32.ⁱⁱ The legislation was not taken up by the U.S. House of Representatives.ⁱⁱⁱ</p> <p>The intensifying need for reform affects the daily lives of businesses and associations that drive Colorado’s demanding economy. We are seeing the clear and visible impact on the economy by immigrants across the skills spectrum, especially with frontline and essential workers during the response and recovery to the COVID-19 crisis.^{iv} Immigrants are vital to every aspect of Colorado’s economy and workforce, from entrepreneurs and innovators, to agriculture and dairy, healthcare, construction, STEM careers, and more.^v</p> <p>Mounting labor shortages in top Colorado industries have brought this issue to an inevitable tipping point. Employers need a modern immigration system to address worker shortages and long-term labor needs.</p>

Frequently Asked Questions

Colorado’s population has been growing at a rapid pace in recent years, so why are there labor shortages? How does immigration play a role?

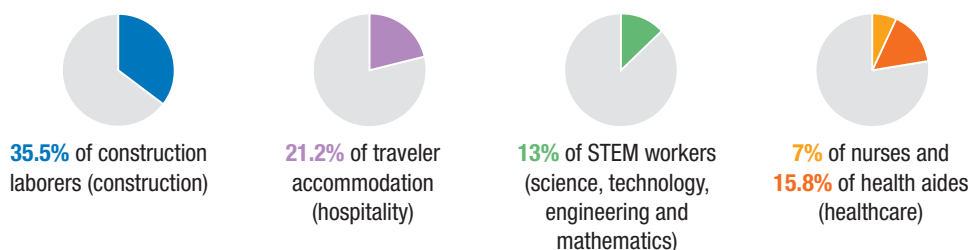
Colorado employers are facing worker shortages for both high-skill and lesser-skilled positions.

When it comes to high-skill positions, Colorado companies are already experiencing a workforce shortage among STEM workers, especially within the high-tech industry. For example, 67% of STEM jobs are in computing.^{vi} In Colorado, there were 14,921 open computing jobs in January 2021 - 2.6 times the average demand rate in the state.^{vii} However, only 1,266 students graduated with a bachelor’s degree in Computer Science in 2018 in the state, leaving 13,655 open computing jobs if everyone in-state is hired.^{viii}

Lesser-skilled worker shortages are regularly found in Colorado’s agriculture and hospitality industries where the work is often temporary, labor-intensive and physically demanding – all of which have been shown to be unappealing to American workers.^{ix}

Colorado Immigrants and the Workforce^x

Immigrants are plugging gaps across the skills spectrum, from construction and hospitality to STEM and healthcare. Immigrants make up just under 10% of the state population but provide:



Immigration is not the only answer, but it is a critical one for many industries. Work visas allow employers to fill urgent open positions while also providing the necessary time to implement long-term solutions to the mounting labor shortages.

There have been several changes to work visa allocations by executive order this past year, do these types of changes impact economic growth in Colorado?

Unpredictable changes to work visa programs and other immigration policies disrupt business operations, negatively impact the lives of employees, and ultimately harm our ability to rebuild the economy. Businesses are more likely to invest and grow in Colorado if they know the government will administer U.S. immigration laws in a transparent, consistent and predictable manner. Those businesses are also better situated to bring key employees to Colorado who will contribute to our communities and economy, rather than work remotely from another country.^{xi}

How does a modern approach consider border security?

National security is incredibly important and encompasses much more than security efforts at our borders. It is important for our immigration policies to provide strong national security through the use of cutting-edge technology balanced with reforms that promote economic growth, support job creation, and boost our global competitiveness.^{xii}

Just as Colorado companies employ leading innovations to improve processes and keep America competitive, the government should use cutting-edge technology to enhance national security and improve the administration of immigration laws.^{xiii}



Frequently Asked Questions

Would a balanced reform approach addressing both national security and visa reform really impact the Colorado economy?

According to a 50-state analysis conducted by the national Business Roundtable on the economic effects of immigration policies there would be a positive impact to the Colorado economy.^{xiv}

Components of Balanced Reform & Enforcement Only Scenarios^{xv}

Scenario 1: Balanced Reform

- Improved Border Security & Enforcement
- Temporary High-Skilled Workers (H-1B Reform)
- Temporary Agricultural Workers (H-2A Reform)
- Temporary Nonagricultural Lesser-Skilled Workers
 - Green Card Reform

Scenario 2: Enforcement Only

- Aggressive Border Security and Enforcement
 - Deportation and Voluntary Departure

Impact to Colorado: Balanced Reform vs. Enforcement Only^{xvi}

	Balanced	Enforcement Only
GDP \$ (10-Year)	\$12.51BB	-\$11.29BB
GDP % (10-Year)	3.11%	-2.78%
JOBS # (10-Year)	132.84k	-125.46k
WAGES \$ (First Year)	\$242.85	-\$179.81

To view the national Business Roundtable's 50-state analysis visit [The Economic Effects of Immigration Policy Choices](#).

Does immigration impact our higher education systems? Do international students play a role in the Colorado economy?

International students support Colorado's higher education institutions, local communities, and contribute millions of dollars to the Colorado economy. In 2020, the 11,631 international students at Colorado colleges and universities contributed an estimated \$428.8 million to the Colorado economy through their tuition payments and day-to-day spending.^{xvii}

A high percentage of STEM graduate students at U.S. universities are foreign born, and it is important for U.S. economic and innovation leadership to be able to retain and employ them.^{xviii} Other international students are also graduating into economically critical fields like healthcare where they are assisting in meeting the healthcare needs in rural and lower-income communities.^{xix}

High-skilled immigrants also create American jobs. Past research shows that for each international student who graduates from an American university and remains in the country to work in a STEM-related field, an additional 2.62 American jobs are created.^{xx}

Our universities attract the best and brightest from around the world, but our immigration system requires that many of them go home after graduation, only to compete with us from abroad.^{xxi}

Removing barriers to attracting and retaining foreign-born students at Colorado universities and ensuring stable student visa program policies would benefit our higher institutions and the Colorado economy.

Frequently Asked Questions

What do you think is the biggest misconception some Americans have about immigrants and immigration in the U.S.?

The biggest misconception about immigration is often the belief that immigrants take American jobs. However, the data shows that is not the reality. In industry after industry, including here in Colorado, immigrants have helped our companies grow, and will continue to help us recover from the economic downturn.

Immigrant Entrepreneurs in Colorado^{xxii}

Immigrants are **twice as likely** to start a business than individuals born in the U.S.

There are **43,684** immigrant entrepreneurs in Colorado employing over 100,000 people, with a total business income of \$1.2 billion

To hear more from Colorado immigrant business owners, visit COBRT's Faces of Business campaign at www.cobrt.com/facesofbusiness.

Immigrants are more likely to be of working age which is helping us address our aging worker crisis.^{xxiii} They are helping address worker shortages in top Colorado industries ensuring our companies remain globally competitive while locally rooted. Immigrants are employing Coloradans through their self-owned businesses. They are contributing millions of tax dollars into our state and local economies.^{xxv}



About Partners



Colorado Business Roundtable

The Colorado Business Roundtable (COBRT) is a public policy organization comprised of executives from some of the state's largest employers working to strengthen Colorado's economic vitality. COBRT engages with elected leaders, business and nonprofit leaders, and other strategic allies to improve the business climate in our state by unapologetically amplifying the voice of business in all four corners of Colorado.

[Visit COBRT for more information.](http://www.cobrt.com)



COLORADO BUSINESS COALITION for IMMIGRATION SOLUTIONS

Colorado Business Coalition for Immigration Solutions

"The Colorado Business Coalition for Immigration Solutions (CBSIS) is a statewide group of more than 45 businesses, industry, and trade organizations dedicated to making the economic case for a modernized immigration system. Members are guided by the tenets of the Colorado Compact, a set of key principles outlining the need for smart federal and statewide immigration policies that ensure the future growth and stability of Colorado's economy. They utilize research provided by New American Economy to make their case.

[Visit CBCIS for more information.](http://www.cbcis.com)



Resources

- i "Immigration Reform and Control Act of 1986." S.1200, 99th Cong., 1986, <https://www.govtrack.us/congress/bills/99/s1200>.
- ii "Border Security, Economic Opportunity, and Immigration Modernization Act." S.744, 113th Cong., 2013, <https://www.congress.gov/bill/113th-congress/senate-bill/744>.
- iii Ibid.
- iv "Immigration and COVID-19." *New American Economy*, 2020, <https://research.newamericaneconomy.org/report/immigration-and-covid-19/>.
- v "Immigrants and the Economy in Colorado". *New American Economy*, 2019, <https://www.newamericaneconomy.org/locations/colorado/>.
- vi "Why Computer Science?" Code.org, January 15, 2021, <https://code.org/promote>.
- vii "Colorado." Code.org, January 15, 2021, <https://code.org/promote/co>.
- viii Ibid.
- ix "Labor-Intensive Industries." *New American Economy*, January 15, 2021, <https://www.newamericaneconomy.org/issues/labor-intensive-industries/>.
- x "Immigrants and the Economy in Colorado". *New American Economy*, 2019.
- xi "2020 Fact Sheet: Colorado." Open Doors, 2020, https://opendoorsdata.org/fact_sheets/colorado/.
- xii "Economic Effects of Immigration Policies: A 50-State Analysis." Business Roundtable., 2017, <https://www.businessroundtable.org/economic-effects-of-immigration-policies>.
- xiii "A Modern Approach to U.S. Immigration Policy." Business Roundtable, 2019, <https://www.businessroundtable.org/a-modern-approach-to-us-immigration-policy>.
- xiv "How the Future of American Immigration Can Impact the Economy: The Economic Effects of Immigration Policy Choices." Business Roundtable, 2017, <https://www.businessroundtable.org/policy-perspectives/immigration/how-the-future-of-american-immigration-can-make-or-break-the-economy>.
- xv Ibid.
- xvi Ibid.
- xvii "2020 Fact Sheet: Colorado." Open Doors, 2020, https://opendoorsdata.org/fact_sheets/colorado/.
- xviii "A Modern Approach to U.S. Immigration Policy." Business Roundtable, 2019.
- xiv "International Students and Graduates in the United States: 5 Things to Know." Fwd.us., September 28, 2020, <https://www.fwd.us/news/international-students-and-graduates-in-the-united-states-5-things-to-know/>.
- xx "Help Wanted: The Role of Foreign Workers in the Innovation Economy." *New American Economy*, 2012, <https://www.newamericaneconomy.org/sites/all/themes/pnae/stem-report.pdf>.
- xxi "State of Immigration: Retention of International Students Postgraduation." Business Roundtable, 2015, <https://www.business-roundtable.org/policy-perspectives/immigration/state-of-immigration/retention-of-international-students-postgraduation>.
- xxii "Immigrants and the Economy in Colorado". *New American Economy*, 2019.
- xxiii "Immigrants and the Economy in the United States of America." *New American Economy*, January 15, 2021, <https://www.newamericaneconomy.org/locations/national/>.
- xxiv "Immigrants and the Economy in Colorado". *New American Economy*, 2019.
- xxv Ibid.

Additional Resources

Business Roundtable

New American Economy