

## IOWA and IMMIGRATION

A guide for 2020

*Immigration is one of the top issues in 2020, but the national conversation misses what is actually happening on the ground in Iowa. This guide highlights the stories that aren't being told -- the people, communities, and data that show how voters might consider this issue when they go to the polls.*

### Key Data Points<sup>1</sup>:

- **The 2018 midterms in Iowa showed how anti-immigrant policies and rhetoric are out of step with Iowa voters. Meanwhile, steadily changing demographics mean that the Iowa electorate will be more diverse than ever by 2020.**
  - **Eligible Voter Demographics**
    - There are **2.2 million eligible voters** in Iowa, including:
      - 2.0 million non-Hispanic Whites, 65,800 Hispanic Americans, 55,500 African Americans, and 26,000 Asian Americans
      - Almost **53,000 immigrant voters**
    - More than 582,000 of the eligible voters in Iowa had at least a bachelor's degree.
  - **Unregistered Voters**
    - Based on demographic and past electoral data, we estimate that there are 561,000 unregistered voters in Iowa, including:
      - 485,000 Non-Hispanic Whites, 26,800 Hispanic Americans, 18,000 African Americans, 10,700 Asian Americans
      - More than 18,000 voting-eligible immigrants
  - **Demographic change**
    - Between 2010 and 2017, the non-Hispanic White share of eligible voters fell from 93.3% to 92.0%. Meanwhile, over this same period, Asian Americans increased from 0.9% to 1.2% and Hispanic Americans increased from 2.2% to 3.0%.
  - **Turnout Rates**
    - Based on past electoral data, we estimate that 2020 turnout rates for all groups will be similar to those seen in 2016:
      - 59.2% African Americans, 50.2% Asian Americans, 49.7% Hispanic Americans
      - 56.6% among all immigrant voters.
- **Across industries like STEM fields, agriculture, and animal processing, immigrants are vital to Iowa's economy. Learn more [here](#).**
  - Immigrants make up 5% of Iowa's **population**, paying \$1.2 billion in **taxes** every year and holding \$3.4 billion in **spending power**.
  - Immigrant **entrepreneurs** in Iowa employ 24,227 people.
  - Immigrants support **key industries** as members of the workforce, especially in: Animal slaughtering and processing (49%), Computer systems design/related services (17%), Restaurants/other food services (14%), Animal production and aquaculture (12%), Colleges, universities, and professional schools (9%).
  - Almost 41,000 **undocumented immigrants** live in Iowa and more than 90% are of working age. These immigrants \$67.1 million in taxes each year.

<sup>1</sup> Data Sources:

American Community Survey 2010-2017, U.S. Census Bureau, downloaded from IPUMS.org; Current Population Survey, Voting Supplement, 2008-2018, U.S. Census Bureau, downloaded from IPUMS.org; Voter Turnout Data 2016, United States Election Project, electproject.org; MapTheImpact.org, New American Economy [www.maptheimpact.org](http://www.maptheimpact.org)

- More than 20,000 **refugees** live in Iowa. They paid more than \$150 million in federal, state, and local taxes, and held more than \$422.9 million in spending power.
  - **While DC stalls on immigration reform, Iowa faces record low levels of unemployment, and local communities like Des Moines, Cedar Rapids, Ames, and Siouxland are taking the lead to create an environment that welcomes and attracts immigrant talent. See their stories and contact info for individual voters to talk to below.**
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### **What happened in the 2018 midterms? The anti-immigrant message lost.**

- In the 2018 midterms, Iowans ousted GOP Reps. David Young and Rod Blum in favor of Democrats Cindy Axne and Abby Finkenauer, while longtime incumbent GOP Rep. Steve King narrowly won. These outcomes were attributed in part to changing demographics and anti-immigrant ads that failed to resonate with voters:
  - **IA-1:** In this district, the share of white voters has declined by 0.7 percentage points since 2016 while the number of Hispanic and Asian American voters grew by 0.2 percentage points or 1,400 voters. Republican incumbent Rod Blum ran anti-immigrant ads marked by photos of Hispanic men with tattoos and claims of “[criminal illegal aliens on our streets.](#)” Outside groups supported him with [ads about illegal aliens, sanctuary cities, and more crime](#). Blum lost his reelection to Democrat Abby Finkenauer.
  - **IA-3:** In this Republican-leaning district, incumbent Republican Rep. David Young ran ads warning about [sanctuary cities](#). Outside groups joined in with ads about [open borders, crime, and drugs](#). But Young’s district had added more than 3,000 Hispanic and Asian American voters since 2016. Young lost.
  - **IA-4:** In this district, the share of white voters has declined by 0.8 percentage points since 2016 while the number of Asian or Hispanic voters has increased by 0.8 percentage points or about 4,300 voters. Rep. Steve King narrowly won his election in 2018, despite being an eight-term incumbent in a deeply red district. Many attributed his narrow victory to anti-immigrant rhetoric throughout the campaign.

### **Iowa’s communities are taking the lead on immigration at the city and state level. Learn more about their stories and connect directly with voters from both sides of the aisle.**

- **Siouxland Region** (cross-section of IA, NE, and IN): The Siouxland Chamber, One Siouxland Region, and others created a [plan](#) to attract more immigrants. It includes 1) creating a community resource center, 2) increasing language access services, 3) creating a leadership development program to help underrepresented populations succeed in business, government, and nonprofit sectors.
  - **Data:** See research on the economic contribution of immigrants to Siouxland [here](#).
  - **Voters to talk to (all contact info avail upon request):**
    - Erica DeLeon of One Siouxland, an organization that helps businesses and residents navigate changing demographics.
    - Balbina Valadez, immigrant from Mexico and head of translation/interpretive services at the Mary J. Treglia Community House in Sioux City. Read her profile [here](#).
    - JoAnn Nguyen, immigrant from Vietnam in Sioux City, nail salon worker, from a family of meatpacking workers. Read her profile [here](#).
- **Des Moines:** The region’s chamber of commerce, the Greater Des Moines Partnership, developed a [strategic plan](#) for attracting talent, and is now working with leaders from local government and civil society to develop a [Welcome Center](#) to help new immigrants navigate life and work in Des Moines.
  - **Data:** See research on the economic contributions of immigrants to Des Moines [here](#).
  - **Voters to talk to (all contact info avail upon request):**
    - Jay Byers, CEO, Greater Des Moines Partnership (the area’s economic development org). Read his profile [here](#).

- Madeline Sturms, City Planner in Greater Des Moines. Read her profile [here](#).
- Ben Champ, President of the American Planning Association’s Iowa Chapter on immigrants and rural revitalization. Read his profile [here](#).
- Mike Ralston, President, Iowa Association of Business and Industry (Signer of Iowa Compact with Culhane and Byers). Read the op-ed he co-authored with Jay Byers and Dan Culhane [here](#).
- **Cedar Rapids:** The City of Cedar Rapids and the Cedar Rapids Metro Economic Alliance, the region’s economic development group, recently released a [set of recommendations](#) for how the region can be more welcoming to immigrants. The business community has been outspoken on federal immigration reform, signing an [open letter](#) from 60 chambers of commerce calling on Congress to protect Dreamers and TPS holders.
  - **Voters to talk to (all contact info avail upon request):**
    - Doug Neumann, Executive Director, Cedar Rapids Metro Economic Alliance
    - John Hughes, President, Iowa Nursery and Landscape Association (Compact Signatory)
    - Kyle Gingrich, Vice President of Operations, Apache, Inc. (Compact Signatory)
    - Mark Nolte, president of the Iowa City Area Development Group (Compact Signatory)
- **Ames:** The Ames Chamber of Commerce has penned [op-eds](#) on the importance of immigrants to the regional economy, and signed open letters calling on Congress to protect Dreamers and TPS holders.
  - **Voters to talk to (all contact info avail upon request):**
    - Dan Culhane, President & CEO, Ames Chamber of Commerce. Read his profile [here](#).
  - **Data:** See research on the economic impact of immigrants in Ames [here](#).
- **Statewide Activity:** In February 2019, [45 civic and business leaders](#) across the state to launch the [Iowa Compact on Immigration](#), a set of principles to guide the immigration discussion at the state and federal level.

**More Iowa Immigration Voters to talk to (all contact info avail upon request):**

- Lorena Lopez is the formerly undocumented owner of Iowa’s largest Spanish-language newspaper. Read her profile [here](#).
- Suku Radia is the immigrant former CEO of Iowa’s largest bank (recently retired). Read her profile [here](#).
- Olivia Calvin is a young voter who helped turn IA-1 blue in 2018. Read her [op-ed on millenials and immigration](#).
- Anoushe Seiff is another young voter thinking about immigration at the ballot box. Read [her op-ed here](#).
- Agriculture depends on an immigrant workforce and a functioning immigration system. Learn more from these voters:
  - John Weber, Past President of the National Pork Producers Council (Soybean, Corn, and Pig farmer).
  - Aaron Juergens, Farm Construction and Production in Carroll, IA.
  - Jen Sorenson, National Pork Producers Board of Directors/Chair of the Immigration Availability Committee.
  - Dale Reicks, Pig farmer in Lawler, IA.
  - Pat McGonegele, CEO, Pork Producers, Des Moines, IA. Bill Winkelman, National Pork Board.

**Local Institutions to Visit:**

- The [Sioux City Lewis and Clark Interpretive Center](#) is a cultural center featuring art and activities that explore how we live together as diverse people. The NAE-supported [“Looking for America”](#) exhibit will be on display through 2020.
- The [Iowa International Center](#) is a programs and services organization dedicated to providing access to education and cultural resources for Iowans, immigrants, and international visitors.
- [Oasis Falafel](#) in Iowa City is an Israeli restaurant owned by immigrant Naftaly Strammer. Read his profile [here](#). **(Contact info avail upon request).**