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**NEW AMERICANS IN THE OLD DOMINION STATE:
The Political and Economic Power of Immigrants, Latinos, and Asians in Virginia**

Immigrants, Latinos, and Asians account for large and growing shares of the economy and electorate in Virginia. Immigrants (the foreign-born) make up more than 10% of the state's population, and 45% of them are naturalized U.S. citizens who are eligible to vote. "New Americans"—immigrants and the children of immigrants—account for 6.4% of all registered voters in the state. Moreover, Latinos and Asians (both foreign-born and native-born) wield more than \$29 billion in consumer purchasing power, and the businesses they owned had sales and receipts of \$11.1 billion and employed nearly 100,000 people at last count. Immigrant, Latino, and Asian workers and entrepreneurs are integral to Virginia's economy and tax base—and they are an electoral force with which every politician must reckon.

More than 1 in 10 Virginians are immigrants.

- **The foreign-born share** of Virginia's population rose from 5.0% in [1990](#),¹ to 8.1% in [2000](#),² to 10.2% in [2008](#),³ according to the U.S. Census Bureau. Virginia was home to 795,712 immigrants in [2008](#),⁴ which is more than the total population of [Austin, Texas](#).⁵
- **45.3% of immigrants (or 360,108 people) in Virginia were naturalized U.S. citizens in [2008](#)**⁶—meaning that they are eligible to vote.
- **6.4% of all registered voters** in Virginia are "New Americans"—naturalized citizens or the U.S.-born children of immigrants who were raised during the current era of immigration from Latin America and Asia which began in 1965—according to an analysis of 2006 Census Bureau data by [Rob Paral & Associates](#).⁷

1 in 9 Virginians are Latino or Asian—and they vote.

- The **Latino share of Virginia's population** grew from 2.6% in [1990](#),⁸ to 4.7% in [2000](#),⁹ to 6.8% (or 528,298 people) in [2008](#).¹⁰ The Asian share of the population grew from 2.5% in [1990](#),¹¹ to 3.7% in [2000](#),¹² to 4.8% (or 372,916 people) in [2008](#),¹³ according to the U.S. Census Bureau.
- **Latinos comprised 2.0% (or 74,000) of Virginia voters** in the 2008 elections, and **Asians 3.7% (or 136,000)**, according to the [U.S. Census Bureau](#).¹⁴ The number of Latino and Asian voters roughly equaled the margin of victory ([234,527 votes](#)) by which Barack Obama defeated John McCain in Virginia.¹⁵
- In Virginia, **more than four-in-five (or 84% of) children in immigrant families were U.S. citizens** in [2007](#),¹⁶ according to the Center for Social and Demographic Analysis at the University of Albany.

Unauthorized immigrants contribute to Virginia's economy.

- Unauthorized immigrants in Virginia paid **between \$260 million and \$311 million** in taxes in [2007](#),¹⁷ including:
 - \$145 million to \$174 million in state income, excise, and property taxes
 - \$93 million to \$111 million in Social Security taxes
 - \$22 million to \$26 million in Medicare taxes
- In addition, Virginia employers paid **between \$119 million and \$142 million** in taxes on behalf of unauthorized workers in [2007](#),¹⁸ including:
 - \$93 million to \$111 million in Social Security taxes
 - \$22 million to \$26 million in Medicare taxes
 - \$4 million to \$5 million in state unemployment insurance taxes
- The state's unauthorized population, which **earned between \$2.6 billion and \$3.1 billion** in [2007](#),¹⁹ even *after* accounting for remittances sent back to their home countries, uses their income to purchase Virginia's goods and services.

Immigrants are essential to Virginia's economy as workers.

- Immigrants comprised **13.3% of the state's workforce** (or 560,300 workers) in [2008](#),²⁰ according to the U.S. Census Bureau.
- If all unauthorized immigrants were removed from Virginia, **the state would lose \$11.2 billion in economic activity, \$5.5 billion in gross state product, and approximately 62,918 jobs**, even accounting for adequate market adjustment time, according to a report by the [Perryman Group](#).²¹

Latino and Asian entrepreneurs and consumers add billions of dollars and tens-of-thousands of jobs to Virginia's economy.

- **The 2009 purchasing power of Virginia's Latinos totaled \$14.4 billion**—an increase of 560.3% since 1990. **Asian buying power totaled \$14.8 billion**—an increase of 470.3% since 1990, according to the [Selig Center for Economic Growth](#) at the University of Georgia.²²
- Virginia's 30,457 **Asian-owned businesses** had sales and receipts of \$7.7 billion and employed 70,026 people in 2002,²³ the last year for which data is available. The state's 18,987 **Latino-owned businesses** had sales and receipts of \$3.4 billion and employed 29,769 people in 2002,²⁴ according to the U.S. Census Bureau's 2002 Survey of Business Owners.

Immigrants are integral to Virginia's economy as students.

- Virginia's 14,606 **foreign students contributed \$337.9 million** to the state's economy in tuition, fees, and living expenses for the 2008-2009 academic year, according to [NAFSA: Association of International Educators](#).²⁵

Naturalized citizens excel educationally.

- In Virginia, **44.2% of foreign-born persons** who were naturalized U.S. citizens in [2008](#) **had a bachelor's or higher degree**, compared to 34.6% of noncitizens. At the same time, only 13.7% of naturalized citizens lacked a high-school diploma, compared to 29.9% of noncitizens.²⁶
- The number of immigrants in Virginia with a college degree **increased** by 59.7% between 2000 and 2008, according to [data](#) from the Migration Policy Institute.²⁷
- 39.3% of Virginia's foreign-born population age 25 and older had a bachelor's or higher degree in [2008](#), compared to 32.9% of native-born persons age 25 and older.²⁸
- In Virginia, **77.1% of all children** between the ages of 5 and 17 in families that spoke a language other than English at home also spoke English "very well" as of [2008](#).²⁹

Endnotes

¹ U.S. Census Bureau, [The Foreign-Born Population](#), December 2003

² Ibid.

³ 2008 American Community Survey (1-year Estimates).

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Rob Paral and Associates, [The New American Electorate: The Growing Power of Immigrants and their Children](#). (Washington, DC: Immigration Policy Center, American Immigration Law Foundation, October 2008)

⁸ U.S. Census Bureau, [The Hispanic Population: 2000](#), May 2001

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ U.S. Census Bureau, [The Asian Population: 2000](#), February 2002.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ 2008 American Community Survey (1-year Estimates).

¹⁴ 2008 Current Population Survey, [Table 4b: Reported Voting and Registration of the Voting-Age Population, by Sex, Race and Hispanic Origin, for States: November 2008](#).

¹⁵ U.S. Electoral College, [2008 Presidential Election: Popular Vote Totals](#).

¹⁶ Center for Social and Demographic Analysis, [Children in Immigrant Families in Virginia](#) (Albany, NY: University of Albany, SUNY, September 2009).

¹⁷ Michael Cassidy and Sarah Okos, [Fiscal Facts: Tax Contributions of Virginia's Undocumented Immigrants](#) (Richmond, VA: The Commonwealth Institute, 2009).

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ 2008 American Community Survey (1-year Estimates).

²¹ The Perryman Group, [An Essential Resource: An Analysis of the Economic Impact of Undocumented Workers on Business Activity in the US with Estimated Effects by State and by Industry](#) (Waco, TX: April 2008).

²² Jeffery M. Humphreys, [The Multicultural Economy 2009](#) (Athens GA: Selig Center for Economic Growth, University of Georgia, 2009).

²³ U.S. Census Bureau, [Asian-Owned Firms: 2002](#), August 2006.

²⁴ U.S. Census Bureau, [Hispanic-Owned Firms: 2002](#), August 2006.

²⁵ NAFSA: Association of International Educators, [The Economic Benefits of International Education to the United States for the 2008-2009 Academic Year: A Statistical Analysis](#) (Washington, DC: NAFSA: Association of International Educators, 2009).

²⁶ Migration Policy Institute Data Hub, [Virginia: Language and Education](#).

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Ibid.