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**NEW AMERICANS IN VIRGINIA:
The Political and Economic Power of Immigrants, Latinos, and Asians
in the Old Dominion State**

Immigrants, Latinos, and Asians constitute large and growing shares of the economy and electorate in Virginia. Immigrants (the foreign-born) account for 1 in 9 Virginians, and 47% of them are naturalized U.S. citizens who are eligible to vote. “New Americans”—immigrants and the children of immigrants—accounted for 9.3% of Virginia voters in 2008. Moreover, Latinos and Asians (both foreign-born and native-born) wield more than \$43 billion in consumer purchasing power, and the businesses they own had sales and receipts of \$19 billion and employed more than 126,000 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.

1 in 9 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 11.1% in [2011](#),³ according to the U.S. Census Bureau. Virginia was home to 900,243 immigrants in [2011](#),⁴ which is nearly the total population of [San Jose, California](#).⁵
- **47% of immigrants (or 423,345 people) in Virginia were naturalized U.S. citizens in [2011](#)**⁶—meaning that they are eligible to vote.
- Unauthorized immigrants comprised roughly **2.7% of the state’s population** (or 210,000 people) in [2010](#), according to a report by the Pew Hispanic Center.⁷
- **9.3% (or 367,384) 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 2008 Census Bureau data by [Rob Paral & Associates](#).⁸

Nearly 1 in 8 Virginians are Latino or Asian—and they vote.

- The **Latino share of Virginia’s population** grew from 2.6% in [1990](#),⁹ to 4.7% in [2000](#),¹⁰ to 8% (or 648,793 people) in [2011](#).¹¹ The **Asian share of the population** grew from 2.5% in [1990](#),¹² to 3.7% in [2000](#),¹³ to 5.6% (or 455,242 people) in [2011](#),¹⁴ according to the U.S. Census Bureau.
- **Latinos comprised 2.0% (or 48,000) of Virginia voters** in the 2008 elections, and **Asians 3.7% (or 136,000)**, according to the [U.S. Census Bureau](#).¹⁵
- In Virginia, **88.3% of children with immigrant parents** were U.S. citizens in [2009](#), according to data from the Urban Institute.¹⁶

- In [2009](#), **88.4% of children in Asian families** in Virginia were U.S. citizens, as were **90.7% of children in Latino families**.¹⁷

Unauthorized immigrants contribute to Virginia's economy.

- **Households headed by unauthorized immigrants in Virginia paid \$165.3 million in state and local taxes** in [2010](#), according to data by the Institute for Taxation and Economic Policy.¹⁸
- Unauthorized immigrants in Virginia paid **between \$260 million and \$311 million in total taxes** in [2007](#), according to a study by the Commonwealth Institute.¹⁹ This included:
 - \$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](#),²⁰ 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](#),²¹ 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 **14.6% of the state's workforce** (or 624,635 workers) in [2011](#),²² according to the U.S. Census Bureau.
- Unauthorized immigrants comprised **3.9% of the state's workforce** (or 160,000 workers) in [2010](#), according to a report by the Pew Hispanic Center.²³
- 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](#).²⁴

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

- **The 2012 purchasing power of Virginia's Latinos totaled \$19.5 billion**—an increase of 801% since 1990. **Asian buying power totaled \$23.5 billion**—an increase of 811% since 1990, according to the [Selig Center for Economic Growth](#) at the University of Georgia.²⁵
- Virginia's 44,575 **Asian-owned** businesses had sales and receipts of **\$13.2 billion and employed 92,141 people** in 2007,²⁶ the last year for which data is available. The state's 28,578 **Latino-owned** businesses had sales and receipts of **\$5.9 billion and employed 34,177 people** in 2007,²⁷ according to the U.S. Census Bureau's Survey of Business Owners.

Immigrants are integral to Virginia's economy as students.

- Virginia's 15,169 **foreign students contributed \$405.5 million** to the state's economy in tuition, fees, and living expenses for the 2011-2012 academic year, according to [NAFSA: Association of International Educators](#).²⁸

Naturalized citizens excel educationally.

- In Virginia, **48.8% of foreign-born persons** who were naturalized U.S. citizens in [2011](#) had a bachelor's or higher degree, compared to 33.5% of noncitizens. At the same time, only 10.4% of naturalized citizens lacked a high-school diploma, compared to 27.1% of noncitizens.²⁹
- The number of immigrants in Virginia with a college degree **increased by 91.1%** between 2000 and 2011, according to [data](#) from the Migration Policy Institute.³⁰
- **41.2% of Virginia's foreign-born population** age 25 and older had a bachelor's or higher degree in [2011](#), compared to **34.1% of native-born persons** age 25 and older.³¹
- In Virginia, **86.6% of children with immigrant parents** were considered "English proficient" as of [2009](#), according to data from the Urban Institute.³²
- The English proficiency rate among **Asian children in Virginia was 86.6%**, while for **Latino children it was 84.9%**, as of [2009](#).³³

Endnotes

- ¹ U.S. Census Bureau, [*The Foreign-Born Population: 2000*](#), December 2003.
- ² Ibid.
- ³ 2011 American Community Survey (1-year Estimates).
- ⁴ Ibid.
- ⁵ Ibid.
- ⁶ Ibid.
- ⁷ Jeffrey S. Passel and D’Vera Cohn, [*Unauthorized Immigrant Population: National and State Trends, 2010*](#) (Washington, DC: Pew Hispanic Center, February 1, 2011), p. 24.
- ⁸ Rob Paral & Associates and the Immigration Policy Center, [*The New American Electorate: The Growing Political Power of Immigrants and Their Children*](#) (Washington, DC: American Immigration Council, October 2010).
- ⁹ U.S. Census Bureau, [*The Hispanic Population: 2000*](#), May 2001.
- ¹⁰ Ibid.
- ¹¹ 2011 American Community Survey (1-year Estimates).
- ¹² U.S. Census Bureau, [*The Asian Population: 2000*](#), February 2002.
- ¹³ Ibid.
- ¹⁴ 2011 American Community Survey (1-year Estimates).
- ¹⁵ 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*](#).
- ¹⁶ [The Urban Institute](#), data from the Integrated Public Use Microdata Series datasets drawn from the 2005 - 2009 American Community Survey.
- ¹⁷ Ibid.
- ¹⁸ Immigration Policy Center, [*Unauthorized Immigrants Pay Taxes, Too: Estimates of the State and Local Taxes Paid by Unauthorized Immigrant Households*](#) (Washington, DC: American Immigration Council, April 18, 2011).
- ¹⁹ Michael Cassidy and Sarah Okos, [*Fiscal Facts: Tax Contributions of Virginia’s Undocumented Immigrants*](#) (Richmond, VA: The Commonwealth Institute, 2009).
- ²⁰ Ibid.
- ²¹ Ibid.
- ²² 2011 American Community Survey (1-year Estimates).
- ²³ Jeffrey S. Passel and D’Vera Cohn, [*Unauthorized Immigrant Population: National and State Trends, 2010*](#) (Washington, DC: Pew Hispanic Center, February 1, 2011), p. 24.
- ²⁴ 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).
- ²⁵ Jeffrey M. Humphreys, [*The Multicultural Economy 2012*](#) (Athens, GA: Selig Center for Economic Growth, University of Arkansas, August 2012).
- ²⁶ U.S. Census Bureau, [*Estimates of Business Ownership by Gender, Ethnicity, Race, and Veteran Status: 2007*](#), June 2011.
- ²⁷ Ibid.
- ²⁸ NAFSA: Association of International Educators, [*The Economic Benefits of International Students to the U.S. Economy: Academic Year 2011-2012*](#) (Washington, DC: NAFSA: Association of International Educators, 2012).
- ²⁹ Migration Policy Institute Data Hub, [*Virginia: Language and Education*](#).
- ³⁰ Ibid.
- ³¹ Ibid.
- ³² [The Urban Institute](#), data from the Integrated Public Use Microdata Series datasets drawn from the 2005 - 2009 American Community Survey.
- ³³ Ibid.