



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 50.3% of them are naturalized U.S. citizens who are eligible to vote. “New Americans”—immigrants and the children of immigrants—accounted for 10.8% of Virginia voters in 2012. Immigrants are not only essential to the state’s economy as workers, but also account for hundreds of millions of dollars in tax revenue and consumer purchasing power. Moreover, Latinos and Asians (both foreign-born and native-born) wield more than \$45.9 billion in consumer purchasing power, and the businesses they own had sales and receipts of \$19.1 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 11.5% in [2013](#),³ according to the U.S. Census Bureau. Virginia was home to 948,963 immigrants in [2013](#),⁴ which is nearly the total population of [San Jose, California](#).⁵
- 50.3% of immigrants (or 477,236 people) in Virginia were naturalized U.S. citizens in [2013](#)⁶—meaning that they are eligible to vote.
- Unauthorized immigrants comprised roughly 3.5% of the state’s population (or 275,000 people) in [2012](#), according to a report by the Pew Hispanic Center.⁷
- 10.8% (or 456,250) 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 2012 Census Bureau data by the [American Immigration Council](#).⁸

Nearly 1 in 7 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 8.6% (or 707,962 people) in [2013](#).¹¹ The Asian share of the population grew from 2.5% in [1990](#),¹² to 3.7% in [2000](#),¹³ to 5.9% (or 484,497 people) in [2013](#),¹⁴ according to the U.S. Census Bureau.

- Latinos comprised 2.7% (or 103,000,000) of Virginia voters in the 2012 elections, and Asians 3.1% (or 118,000), 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

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

- The 2014 purchasing power of Virginia's Latinos totaled \$20.6 billion—an increase of 849% since 1990. Asian buying power totaled \$25.3 billion—an increase of 882% since 1990, according to the [Selig Center for Economic Growth](#) at the University of Georgia.¹⁸
- Immigration boosts housing values in communities. From 2000 to 2010, according to the [Americas Society/Council of the Americas](#), the value added by immigration to the price of the average home was \$7,414 in Fairfax County and \$5,646 in Prince William County.¹⁹
- Virginia's 44,575 [Asian-owned](#) businesses had sales and receipts of \$13.2 billion and employed 92,141 people in 2007,²⁰ 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 2007,²¹ according to the U.S. Census Bureau's Survey of Business Owners.
- From 2006 to 2010, there were 53,709 new immigrant business owners in Virginia who had total net business income of \$3 billion (14.9% of all net business income in the state), according to Robert Fairlie of the University of California, Santa Cruz.²²
- In 2010, [17.1% of all business owners](#) in Virginia were foreign-born, according to the Fiscal Policy Institute.²³
 - In the Washington-Arlington-Alexandria metropolitan area, [32.9% of business owners](#) were foreign-born in 2013, according to the Fiscal Policy Institute and Americas Society/Council of the Americas. Furthermore, 56.4% of "Main Street" business owners—owners of businesses in the retail, accommodation and food services, and neighborhood services sectors—were foreign-born in 2013.²⁴
 - In the Richmond metropolitan area, [12.2% of business owners](#) were foreign-born in 2013, and 34.1% of "Main Street" business owners were foreign-born.²⁵ In the Virginia Beach-Norfolk-Newport News metropolitan area, [10.8% of business owners](#) were foreign-born in 2013, and 30.9% of "Main Street" business owners were foreign-born.²⁶

Immigrants are essential to Virginia's economy as workers and taxpayers.

- Immigrants comprised 15% of the state's workforce (or 654,115 workers) in [2013](#),²⁷ according to the U.S. Census Bureau.
- Latinos in Virginia paid \$2.4 billion in federal taxes and \$1 billion in state/local taxes in 2013, according to the [Partnership for a New American Economy](#). In particular, foreign-born Latinos paid \$1.1 billion in federal taxes and \$556 million in state/local taxes.²⁸
 - The federal tax contribution of Virginia's Latino population included \$1.7 billion to Social Security and \$394 million to Medicare in 2013. Foreign-born Latinos contributed \$891 million to Social Security and \$208 million to Medicare that year.²⁹
- Unauthorized immigrants comprised 5.1% of the state's workforce (or 220,000 workers) in [2012](#), according to a report by the Pew Hispanic Center.³⁰
- 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](#).³¹

Unauthorized immigrants pay taxes.

- Unauthorized immigrants in Virginia paid \$240.4 million in state and local taxes in [2012](#), including \$121.6 million in sales taxes, \$55.6 million in personal income taxes, and \$63.3 million in property taxes, according to data from the Institute on Taxation and Economic Policy.³²
- Were unauthorized immigrants in Virginia to have lawful permanent residence, they would pay \$317.1 million in state and local taxes, including \$133.7 million in sales taxes, \$113.8 million in personal income taxes, and \$69.6 million in property taxes.³³

Immigrants are integral to Virginia's economy as students.

- Virginia's 17,145 foreign students contributed \$487.5 million to the state's economy in tuition, fees, and living expenses for the 2013-2014 academic year, according to [NAFSA: Association of International Educators](#).³⁴
- Foreign students contribute to Virginia's metropolitan areas. From 2008 to 2012, according to the [Brookings Institution](#), 2,385 foreign students paid \$45 million in tuition and \$22 million in living costs in the Richmond metropolitan area. In the Charlottesville metro area, 2,789 foreign students paid \$91 million in tuition and \$40 million in living costs. In the Virginia Beach-Norfolk-Newport News metro area, 2,615 foreign students paid \$52 million in tuition and \$28 million in living costs. In the Blacksburg-Christiansburg-Radford metro area, 3,425 foreign students paid \$66 million in tuition and \$26 million in living costs.³⁵

- Foreign students also contribute to innovation in Virginia. In 2009, “non-resident aliens” comprised 21.3% of master’s degrees and 46.2% of doctorate degrees in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) fields, according to the [Partnership for a New American Economy](#).³⁶

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.³⁷
- 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.³⁸
- 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.³⁹
- In Virginia, 86.6% of children with immigrant parents were considered “English proficient” as of [2009](#), according to data from the Urban Institute.⁴⁰
- The English proficiency rate among Asian children in Virginia was 86.6%, while for Latino children it was 84.9%, as of [2009](#).⁴¹

Endnotes

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