



Immigrants in Virginia

Virginia has a sizeable immigrant community, making up more than 12 percent of the state's total population. One in six Virginia workers is an immigrant, while foreign-born entrepreneurs account for more than a fifth of the state's self-employed business owners. Across sectors, the Virginia economy benefits from the participation of immigrants, who represent more than a fifth of Virginians working in the computer and math sciences, for example. As workers, business owners, taxpayers, and neighbors, immigrants are an integral part of Virginia's diverse and thriving communities and make extensive contributions that benefit all.

One in eight Virginia residents is an immigrant, while 1 in 11 is a native-born U.S. citizen with at least one immigrant parent.

- In 2015, 1 million immigrants (foreign-born individuals) comprised 12.2 percent of the state's population.¹
- Virginia was home to 494,795 women, 454,726 men, and 69,105 children who were immigrants.²
- The top countries of origin for immigrants were El Salvador (10.6 percent of immigrants), India (8.1 percent), Korea (5.4 percent), Vietnam (5.2 percent), and Mexico (5.2 percent).³
- In 2016, 773,852 people in Virginia (9.4 percent of the state's population) were native-born Americans who had at least [one immigrant parent](#).⁴

Over half of all immigrants in Virginia are naturalized U.S. citizens.

- 519,086 immigrants (51 percent) had naturalized as of 2015,⁵ and 168,564 immigrants were eligible to become [naturalized U.S. citizens](#) in 2015.⁶
- More than four in five immigrants (81.7 percent) reported speaking English "well" or "very well."⁷

The greatest shares of immigrants in Virginia are college-educated.

- Two-fifths of adult immigrants had a college degree or more education in 2015, while one-fifth had less than a high school diploma.⁸

Education Level	Share (%) of All Immigrants	Share (%) of All Natives
College degree or more	40.5	36.3
Some college	19.9	28.7
High school diploma only	20.4	25.4
Less than a high-school diploma	19.2	9.6

More than 140,000 U.S. citizens in Virginia live with at least one family member who is undocumented.

- 300,000 [undocumented immigrants](#) comprised 28 percent of the immigrant population and 3.5 percent of the total state population in 2014.⁹
- 326,492 people in Virginia, including 113,072 born in the United States, lived with at least one [undocumented family member](#) between 2010 and 2014.¹⁰
- During the same period, 5 percent of children in the state were U.S.-citizens living with at least one undocumented family member (98,768 children in total).¹¹

Over 10,000 Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) recipients live in Virginia.¹²

- In 2016, 47 percent of [DACA-eligible immigrants](#) in Virginia, or 13,967 people, had applied for DACA.¹³
- An additional 6,000 residents of the state satisfied all but the educational requirements for DACA, and another 4,000 would be eligible as they grew older.¹⁴

One in six workers in Virginia is an immigrant, together making up a vital part of the state’s labor force across industries.

- 689,661 immigrant workers comprised 16 percent of the labor force in 2015.¹⁵
- Immigrant workers were most numerous in the following industries:

Industry	Number of Immigrant Workers
Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services	89,022
Accommodation and Food Services	84,071
Retail Trade	82,410
Health Care and Social Assistance	81,905
Construction	77,417

Analysis of the U.S. Census Bureau’s 2015 American Community Survey 1-year PUMS data by the American Immigration Council.

- The largest shares of immigrant workers were in the following industries:¹⁶

Industry	Immigrant Share (%) (of all industry workers)
Construction	24.1
Administrative & Support; Waste Management; and Remediation Services	21.5
Accommodation and Food Services	20.3
Other Services (except Public Administration)	20.1
Transportation and Warehousing	17.7

Analysis of the U.S. Census Bureau's 2015 American Community Survey 1-year PUMS data by the American Immigration Council.

Immigrants are an integral part of the Virginia workforce in a range of occupations.

- In 2015, immigrant workers were most numerous in the following occupation groups:¹⁷

Occupation Category	Number of Immigrant Workers
Management	77,385
Sales and Related	71,941
Office and Administrative Support	68,489
Construction and Extraction	64,760
Food Preparation and Serving Related	59,380

Analysis of the U.S. Census Bureau's 2015 American Community Survey 1-year PUMS data by the American Immigration Council.

- The largest shares of immigrant workers were in the following occupation groups:¹⁸

Occupation Category	Immigrant Share (%) (of all workers in occupation)
Building and Grounds Cleaning & Maintenance	28.4
Construction and Extraction	25.1
Computer and Mathematical Sciences	23.6
Personal Care and Service	20.2
Food Preparation and Serving Related	19.0

Analysis of the U.S. Census Bureau's 2015 American Community Survey 1-year PUMS data by the American Immigration Council.

- Undocumented immigrants comprised 5 percent of the state's workforce in 2014.¹⁹

Immigrants in Virginia have contributed billions of dollars in taxes.

- [Immigrant-led households in the state paid](#) \$6.7 billion in federal taxes and \$2.7 billion in state and local taxes in 2014.²⁰
- Undocumented immigrants in Virginia paid an estimated \$256 million in [state and local taxes](#) in 2014. Their contribution would rise to \$356 million if they could receive legal status.²¹
- [DACA recipients in Virginia](#) paid an estimated \$34.7 million in state and local taxes in 2016.²²

As consumers, immigrants add tens of billions of dollars to Virginia's economy.

- Virginians in immigrant-led households had \$27.1 billion in [spending power](#) (after-tax income) in 2014.²³

A fifth of self-employed Virginia business owners are immigrants.

- 78,180 immigrant business owners accounted for 20.8 percent of all self-employed Virginia residents in 2015 and generated \$2 billion in business income.²⁴
- In 2015, immigrants accounted for 50.7 percent of business owners in the Washington, D.C. metropolitan area (encompassing parts of Virginia and Maryland), 18.2 percent in the Richmond metro area, and 9.2 percent in the Virginia Beach/Norfolk/Newport News metro area (which spans Virginia and North Carolina).²⁵

Endnotes

¹ “Foreign born” does not include people born in Puerto Rico or U.S. island areas or U.S. citizens born abroad of American parent(s). U.S. Census Bureau, 2015 American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates. The American Immigration Council elected to use data from the 2015 ACS 1-Year estimates wherever possible to provide the most current information available. Since these estimates are based on a smaller sample size than the ACS 5-year, however, they are more sensitive to fluctuations and may result in greater margins of error (compared to 5-year estimates).

² Children are defined as people age 17 or younger. Men and women do not include children. Ibid.

³ Analysis of the U.S. Census Bureau’s 2015 American Community Survey 1-year PUMS data by the American Immigration Council.

⁴ Analysis of data from the 2016 Current Population Survey by the American Immigration Council, using IPUMS-CPS. Sarah Flood, Miriam King, Steven Ruggles, and J. Robert Warren, *Integrated Public Use Microdata Series, Current Population Survey: Version 5.0* [dataset] (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota, 2017).

⁵ 2015 ACS 1-Year Estimates.

⁶ Augmented IPUMS-ACS data, as published in “State-Level Unauthorized Population and Eligible-to-Naturalize Estimates,” Center for Migration Studies data tool, accessed August 2017, data.cmsny.org/state.html.

⁷ Figure includes immigrants who speak only English. Data based on survey respondents age 5 and over. Analysis of 2015 ACS 1-Year Estimates by the American Immigration Council.

⁸ Data based on survey respondents age 25 and older. 2015 ACS 1-Year Estimates.

⁹ Pew Research Center, “U.S. unauthorized immigration population estimates,” November 3, 2016, www.pewhispanic.org/interactives/unauthorized-immigrants/.

¹⁰ Silva Mathema, “State-by-State Estimates of the Family Members of Unauthorized Immigrants,” University of Southern California’s Center for the Study of Immigrant Integration and the Center for American Progress, March 2017, <https://www.americanprogress.org/issues/immigration/news/2017/03/16/427868/state-state-estimates-family-members-unauthorized-immigrants/>.

¹¹ American Immigration Council analysis of data from the 2010-2014 ACS 5-Year, using Silva Mathema’s “State-by-State Estimates of the Family Members of Unauthorized Immigrants” and IPUMS-USA. Steven Ruggles, Katie Genadek, Ronald Goeken, Josiah Grover, and Matthew Sobek, *Integrated Public Use Microdata Series: Version 7.0* [dataset] (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota, 2017).

¹² The “Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals” (DACA) initiative began in 2012 and provides certain immigrants (those who were brought to the United States as children and meet specific requirements) with temporary relief from deportation, or deferred action. American Immigration Council, “Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals: A Q&A Guide,” August 17, 2012, www.americanimmigrationcouncil.org/research/deferred-action-childhood-arrivals-qa-guide. The number of DACA recipients reflects USCIS’ estimate of those with active DACA grants as of September 4, 2017 U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services CLAIMS3 and ELIS Systems, *Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals: Population Data* (Washington, DC: Dept. of Homeland Security, September 20, 2017), Approximate Active DACA Recipients: State of Residence as of September 4, 2017 [dataset], <https://www.uscis.gov/daca2017>.

¹³ “DACA-eligible” refers to immigrants who were immediately eligible to apply for DACA as of 2016. Migration Policy Institute analysis of U.S. Census Bureau data from the 2014 American Community Survey (ACS), 2010-14 ACS pooled, and the 2008 Survey of Income and Program Participation (SIPP), as cited in “Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) Data Tools,” accessed June 2017, www.migrationpolicy.org/programs/data-hub/deferred-action-childhood-arrivals-daca-profiles.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Analysis of 2015 ACS 1-year PUMS data by the American Immigration Council. Categories are based on the 2012 North American Industry Classification System (NAICS), www.census.gov/eos/www/naics/index.html.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Analysis of the 2015 ACS 1-year PUMS data by the American Immigration Council. Categories are based on the 2010 Standard Occupational Classification (SOC) system, www.bls.gov/soc/major_groups.htm.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Pew Research Center, “U.S. unauthorized immigration population estimates,” 2016.

²⁰ New American Economy, *The Contributions of New Americans in Virginia* (New York, NY: August 2016), 7, <http://www.newamericaneconomy.org/research/the-contributions-of-new-americans-in-virginia/>.

²¹ Institute on Taxation & Economic Policy (ITEP), *Undocumented Immigrants’ State & Local Tax Contributions* (Washington, DC: March 2017), 3, <https://itep.org/undocumented-immigrants-state-local-tax-contributions-2/>.

²² ITEP, *State & Local Tax Contributions of Young Undocumented Immigrants* (Washington, DC: April 2017), Appendix 1, <https://itep.org/state-local-tax-contributions-of-young-undocumented-immigrants/>.

²³ New American Economy, *The Contributions of New Americans in Virginia*, 7.

²⁴ “Business owners” include people who are self-employed, at least 18 years old, and work at least 15 hours per week at their businesses. Analysis of 2015 ACS 1-year PUMS data by the American Immigration Council.

²⁵ American Immigration Council analysis of 2016 CPS data. Flood, King, Ruggles, and Warren, *IPUMS CPS* dataset.