

Pillars of the Central Virginia Community: A Profile of Our Immigrant Neighbors



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Our neighbors who are immigrants are integral to Virginia's communities and economy. They move to Virginia for many of the same reasons as people born in other areas of the United States — job opportunities, good schools, and thriving communities. They also help create and maintain those aspects of our community. This has been made even more evident as the state economy and

labor market grapple with the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. For example, in Virginia, 16% of all front-line, essential workers are immigrants.

Immigrant Virginians are, of course, important members of local communities across the commonwealth, contributing in ways that include and go beyond the purely economic. It is clear now more

than ever that immigrant and non-immigrant Virginians are interdependent, and it is important to understand and recognize immigrant residents and their contributions. The analysis below presents a profile of immigrants in the central Virginia region using the most recent available data, which is from before the 2020 recession and other challenges related to COVID-19.

Central Virginia immigrants are diverse, long-standing pillars of the community

In the central Virginia region, there are about 100,087 immigrants. Foreign-born Virginians make up 9% of the region's residents — less than the rate of the state's foreign-born population (13%) and the national average of 14%. Seen another way, almost 1 in 10 of all foreign-born Virginians live in central Virginia. And 44% of immigrants in the region reside in Henrico County.

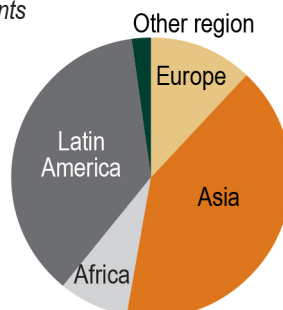
Central Virginia's immigrant residents come from a variety of places. Almost 8 in 10 immigrants in the area were born in Asia or Latin America, with most being from Asia. India is the most common country of birth among area immigrants, accounting for 13% of all foreign-born residents. Following India, El Salvador, Mexico, Guatemala, and Vietnam make up the top five places of origin. Other common countries of birth are China (excluding Taiwan and Hong Kong), the Philippines, Korea, and Honduras.

The race and ethnicity of immigrants is also diverse. Over 8 in 10 immigrants in the region are people of color. More specifically, more than one-third (36%) of foreign-born area residents self-report their race and ethnicity as Hispanic and any race, and around 33% self-report as non-Hispanic Asian-American or Pacific Islander. Around 1 in 10 area immigrants self-report as Black, and almost 2 in 10 identify as white (17%).

Nearly half (47%) of foreign-born residents of central Virginia are naturalized citizens, slightly lower than the statewide and nationwide rates. This means that they have completed a lengthy process including several years of residence and passing a test on U.S. history, laws, and customs, among other requirements. And most area immigrants are not newcomers: around 20% have resided in the area since before 1990, and half entered the United States between 1990 and 2009.

Diverse Origins

Regions of birth for central Virginia immigrants

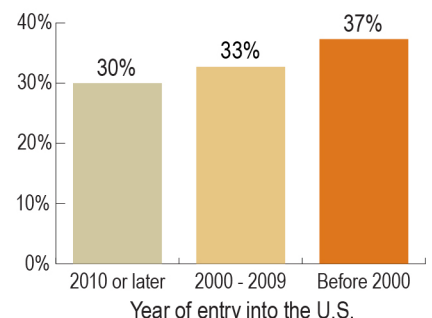


Source: TCI analysis of ACS 2014-2018 5 year data

Been Here Awhile

Over two thirds of immigrants living in central Virginia entered U.S. before 2010

Share of foreign-born



Source: TCI analysis of ACS 2018 data

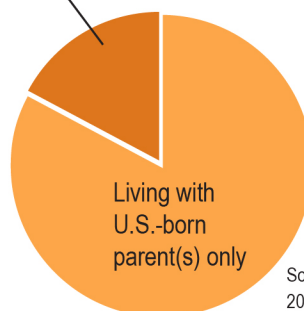
Methodology Note: These reports define the "U.S.-born" population as those who were U.S. citizens at birth, including those born in any of the 50 states, the District of Columbia, Guam, Puerto Rico, and the U.S. Virgin Islands, and those born to U.S. citizens abroad. The term "foreign-born" and "immigrants" are used interchangeably within these reports to refer to those who were born abroad and were not U.S. citizens at birth.

Many people continue to choose Virginia as their new home, with nearly one third of immigrant residents moving to the area after 2010. And while there are few foreign-born children in central Virginia, many native-born children have parents who were born outside of the U.S. About 17% of children in the area have at least one foreign-born parent, demonstrating that many Virginia immigrants put down roots, build families, and are raising tomorrow's community leaders and innovators.

Many Central Virginia Kids Have Immigrant Parents

Share of central Virginia children ages 0-17

Living with at least one foreign-born parent: 17%



Source: TCI analysis of ACS 2014-2018 5 year data

Central Virginia immigrants work in a variety of occupations & support the labor force

Immigrants play a large role in Virginia's labor force and economy. Area immigrants are primarily working age (age 20 through 59), and this is reflected in their labor force participation. About 71% of foreign-born immigrants in the region are employed — higher than the 65% of U.S.-born area residents that are employed. And they work in a variety of occupations, including the region's biggest employment sectors. Of those who are employed, around 1 in 5 area immigrants work in service occupations, which covers a wide variety of work from home health aides to restaurant servers, dental assistants, and more.

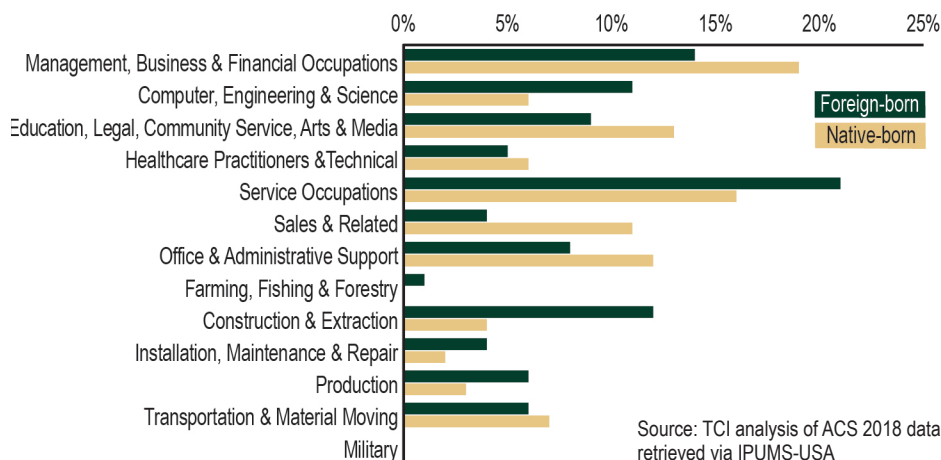
Many central Virginia immigrants work in “white-collar” occupations, rather than “blue-collar” occupations that typically require manual labor. About 28% of the working population works in what are considered blue-collar occupations, while 51% work in what are considered

white collar occupations. Following service occupations, 14% of foreign-born immigrants work in management, business, and financial occupations. While it is the second most common sector of work that area immigrants are employed in, they are still underrepresented when compared

to the native-born population. Around 19% of U.S.-born area residents make up that sector of the labor market, which tends to be highly-paid. Finally, many area immigrants work in construction (12%) and computer, engineering, and science occupations (11%).

Immigrants Work in the Region's Major Industries

Share of native-born and foreign-born employment in central Virginia



Source: TCI analysis of ACS 2018 data retrieved via IPUMS-USA

While well educated, earnings lag for area immigrants

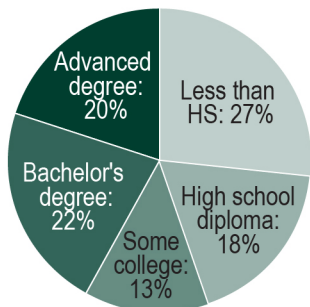
Many area immigrants are also well educated. Over half (55%) of the foreign-born population in central Virginia have attained at least some college education or higher, and 4 in 10 have a bachelor's degree or a professional degree — higher

rates than for the foreign-born population nationally. However, immigrant residents are over twice as likely to have only attained some (and not completed) high school than U.S.-born residents. This may signal that greater efforts should be made

to connect students with educational services that meet their needs. Now that in-state college tuition is available regardless of citizenship status, more students who are immigrants may feel that a high school diploma offers a realistic

Many Immigrants in Region Have Advanced Educations

Highest level of education attained by foreign-born residents



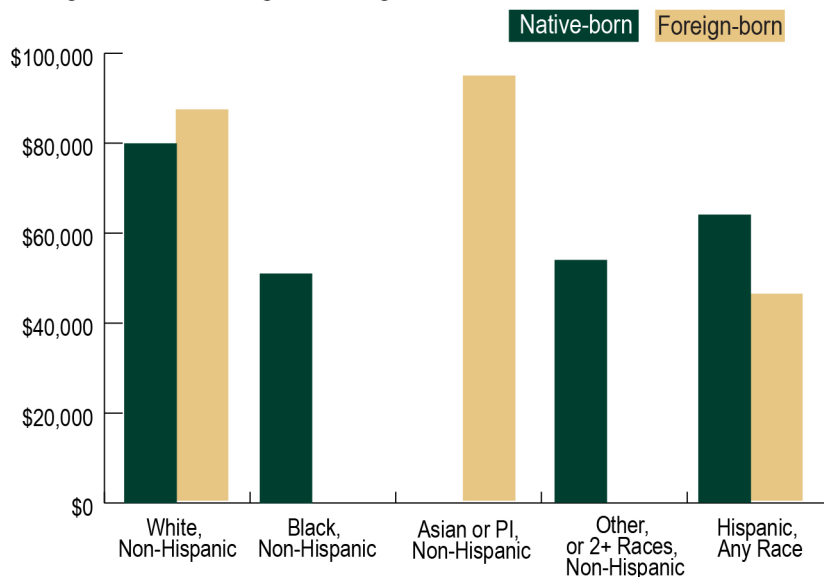
Source: ACS 2018, via IPUMS-USA

path forward to college and be able to access more affordable higher education, which will in turn increase the education levels of Virginia's workforce.

Most immigrants in the region also speak English fluently. More than half speak only English, speak English "very well", or "well", which has likely enabled their success in education and the labor force. However, many are still learning — more than 2 in 10 immigrants in the region speak English at levels lower than "well", and it is important to recognize their needs.

Median Household Income for Central Virginia Immigrants

Lower incomes may present challenges for some immigrants of color in meeting the cost of living in the region



Note: Due to small sample sizes data is not available for some categories

Source: TCI analysis of ACS 2018 data, retrieved via IPUMS-USA

Perhaps due to high education and employment levels, median household incomes for immigrants and for U.S.-born residents in central Virginia are similar and relatively high at about \$70,000. Looking more closely at this data by race shows that many immigrants of color have found economic success in the region. Median household incomes for immigrants who

are Asian American or Pacific Islander reach to \$94,500. Immigrants who are Latinx and any race, however, have median household incomes of about \$46,000, which may present challenges for some in meeting the cost of living in central Virginia. And despite overall high incomes, many pay a high share of it towards housing costs.

Policy options at the state level can help address barriers to housing and health

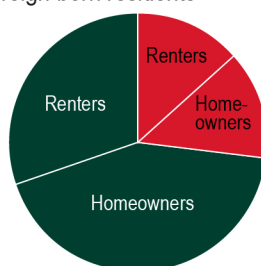
Housing costs a burden particularly for immigrant households

Housing costs in the region are one of the major challenges for all area residents, and particularly for immigrant families. Over a quarter of all foreign-born area residents pay more than 30% of their income towards housing costs, a share that the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development defines as a cost burden. Looking at U.S.-born area residents, around 21% pay more than 30% of their incomes towards housing costs. While it is clear that affordable housing is a challenge for all in the area, foreign-born residents experience slightly more of a burden.

Housing Costs Create Challenges in Central Virginia

About 27% of all foreign-born area residents are considered cost burdened when it comes to housing costs, compared to 21% of U.S.-born area residents.

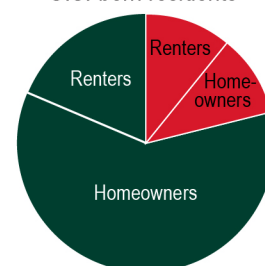
Foreign-born residents



Paying more than 30% of income

Paying less than 30% of income

U.S.-born residents



Note: This analysis excludes households with zero housing cost, zero income, negative income, and/or housing costs above 100% of income.

Source: TCI analysis of ACS 2018, via IPUMS-USA

Policymakers can take immediate and long-term steps to address housing challenges

There are a number of policy options that would alleviate some of this housing cost burden. In the short term, and more specifically during the upcoming special session, legislators should restore the funding increases made toward housing-related programs, which were temporarily suspended in response to the economic crises brought upon by the COVID-19 pandemic. This includes the Housing Trust Fund, which provides low-cost loans for affordable rental and homeownership opportunities, eviction defense/diversion and affordable housing pilot programs, and increases in permanent supportive housing. In addition to reenacting these new funds, lawmakers should make continued and increased investments in the Housing Trust Fund and related housing programs in order to make sure that basic needs are met for more people in Virginia.

Reducing barriers to new construction of high-density, affordable, and mixed-income housing could also lower housing

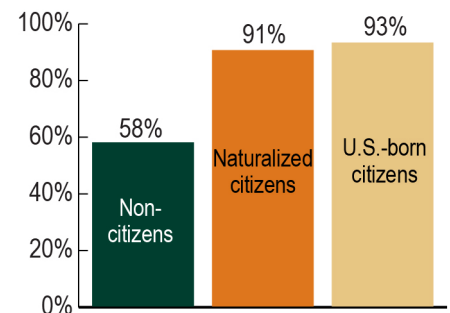
costs for both immigrant-born and U.S.-born households. Inclusionary zoning and zoning reform policies — the latter of which was proposed in the most recent legislative session — seek to require developers to sell or rent a portion of a residential housing development to people who have lower incomes and allow duplexes in areas zoned for only single-family homes in order to make affordable housing easier to build. These policies, alongside enforcement and strengthening nondiscrimination statutes, will help make sure families are not turned away from a home because of their race, nationality, or immigration status and would help alleviate housing challenges in the central Virginia region.

Lack of health coverage a concern, particularly for non-citizens

Access to health care coverage is another challenge for some in the region. While 93% of U.S.-born area residents are insured, only 74% of all foreign-born area residents have health insurance. This trend is more pronounced for area immigrants

Health Coverage Rates Lag for Immigrants

Share of central Virginians with any form of health insurance



Source: TCI analysis of ACS 2018 data

that are non-citizens, who have even lower rates of health coverage than the naturalized foreign-born population. Less than half as many non-citizens have public health coverage compared to U.S.-born area residents. And more than 4 in 10 — 21,973 area residents — of all non-citizens in the region have no health coverage at all.

Lawmakers can remove barriers, make intentional choices to support communities

The number of uninsured non-citizens has not changed significantly since 2014, showing that coverage gaps remain. Access to affordable health care coverage in the area was a challenge well before the COVID-19 pandemic, and it may be just one reason why COVID-19 is impacting residents who are Latinx and/or Black at higher rates. Policymakers should make sure that funding to eliminate barriers, such as the “40 quarter” rule, is fully restored during the upcoming special

legislative session in order to address some of the health care access challenges. And additional, intentional health care policy choices should be made that would support immigrants and people of color during this especially challenging moment and beyond.

Central Virginia residents who are immigrants — and immigrants all across the state — are key members of our communities and contributors to our

economy. As mostly long-time residents of the region, they have put down roots and have often found success. However, addressing challenges faced by many in the immigrant community in central Virginia — such as lower incomes, lack of health insurance, and language barriers — is critical to ensure the well-being of our communities and to build a Virginia that works for all of us.

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