



Immigrants in Virginia

Virginia has a sizeable immigrant community, making up 13 percent of the state's total population. Most of the state's immigrants are naturalized citizens and pursued higher education. The majority of immigrants speak English well and are naturalized citizens.

One in six Virginia workers is an immigrant, while foreign-born entrepreneurs account for a fifth of the state's self-employed business owners. Across sectors, the Virginia economy benefits from the participation of immigrants, who represent nearly a quarter of Virginians working in the computer and math sciences. As neighbors, business owners, taxpayers, and workers, 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 one in nine residents is a native-born U.S. citizen with at least one immigrant parent.

- In 2018, 1.1 million immigrants (foreign-born individuals) comprised 13 percent of the population.¹
- Virginia was home to 517,013 women, 469,997 men, and 78,066 children who were immigrants.²
- The top countries of origin for immigrants were El Salvador (12 percent of immigrants), India (9 percent), the Philippines (6 percent), Korea (5 percent), and Mexico (5 percent).³
- In 2018, 939,718 people in Virginia (11 percent of the state's population) were native-born Americans who had at least one immigrant parent.⁴

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

- 573,998 immigrants (54 percent) had naturalized as of 2018,⁵ and 164,243 immigrants were eligible to become [naturalized U.S. citizens](#) in 2017.⁶
- More than four in five (83 percent) immigrants reported speaking English "well" or "very well."⁷

Immigrants in Virginia tend to be college educated.

- More than two-fifths (44 percent) of adult immigrants had a college degree or more education in 2018, while nearly one-fifth (19 percent) had less than a high school diploma.⁸

Education Level	Share (%) of All Immigrants	Share (%) of All Natives
College degree or more	44	39
Some college	19	28
High school diploma only	19	25
Less than a high school diploma	19	9

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2018 American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates.

Tens of thousands of U.S. citizens in Virginia live with at least one family member who is undocumented.

- 275,000 [undocumented immigrants](#) comprised 27 percent of the immigrant population and 3 percent of the total state population in 2016.⁹
- 326,492 people in Virginia, including 143,300 U.S. citizens, lived with at least one [undocumented family member](#) between 2010 and 2014.¹⁰
- During the same period, about 1 in 20 children in the state was a U.S. citizen living with at least one undocumented family member (98,768 children in total).¹¹

Virginia is home to thousands of Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) recipients.

- 9,410 [active DACA recipients](#) lived in Virginia as of March 2020, while DACA has been granted to 12,368 people in total since 2012.¹²
- As of 2019, 35 percent of [DACA-eligible immigrants](#) in Virginia had applied for DACA.¹³
- An additional 5,000 residents of the state would satisfy all but the educational requirements for DACA, and fewer than 1,000 would become eligible as they grew older.¹⁴

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

- 730,057 immigrant workers comprised 17 percent of the labor force in 2018.¹⁵

- Immigrant workers were most numerous in the following industries:

Industry	Number of Immigrant Workers
Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services	102,994
Health Care and Social Assistance	91,279
Construction	89,538
Retail Trade	75,180
Accommodation and Food Services	74,057

Source: Analysis of the U.S. Census Bureau's 2018 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	26
Administrative & Support; Waste Management; and Remediation Services	23
Transportation and Warehousing	22
Other Services (except Public Administration)	20
Accommodation and Food Services	19

Source: Analysis of the U.S. Census Bureau's 2018 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 2018, immigrant workers were most numerous in the following occupation groups:¹⁷

Occupation Category	Number of Immigrant Workers
Management	77,523
Construction and Extraction	74,348
Office and Administrative Support	63,163
Computer and Mathematical	62,882
Sales and Related	61,984

Source: Analysis of the U.S. Census Bureau's 2018 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	29
Construction and Extraction	28
Computer and Mathematical	23
Farming, Fishing, and Forestry	22
Personal Care and Service	22

Source: Analysis of the U.S. Census Bureau's 2018 American Community Survey 1-year PUMS data by the American Immigration Council.

- Undocumented immigrants comprised 5 percent of Virginia's workforce in 2016.¹⁹

Immigrants in Virginia have contributed billions of dollars in taxes.

- [Immigrant-led households in the state paid](#) \$8.8 billion in federal taxes and \$3.8 billion in state and local taxes in 2018.²⁰
- Undocumented immigrants in Virginia paid an estimated \$441.3 million in federal taxes and \$260.5 million in [state and local taxes](#) in 2018.²¹
- Virginia [DACA recipients](#) and DACA-eligible individuals paid an estimated \$29.4 million in state and local taxes in 2018.²²

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

- Virginia residents in immigrant-led households had \$31.2 billion in [spending power](#) (after-tax income) in 2018.²³

Immigrant entrepreneurs in Virginia generate nearly \$2 billion in annual business revenue.

- 84,983 immigrant business owners accounted for 21 percent of all self-employed Virginia residents in 2018 and generated \$1.7 billion in business income.²⁴
- In 2018, immigrants accounted for 31 percent of business owners in the Washington, D.C. metropolitan area (which spans D.C., Maryland, and Virginia) and 17 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, 2018 American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates. The American Immigration Council elected to use data from the 2018 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 2018 American Community Survey 1-year PUMS data by the American Immigration Council.
4. Analysis of data from the 2018 Current Population Survey by the American Immigration Council, using IPUMS CPS. Sarah Flood, Miriam King, Renae Rodgers, Steven Ruggles and J. Robert Warren, *Integrated Public Use Microdata Series, Current Population Survey: Version 7.0* [dataset] (Minneapolis, MN: IPUMS, 2020), <https://doi.org/10.18128/D030.V7.0>.
5. 2018 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 April 2020, data.cmsny.org/state.html.
7. Figure includes immigrants who speak only English. Data based on survey respondents age 5 and over. Analysis of 2018 ACS 1-Year Estimates by the American Immigration Council.
8. Data based on survey respondents age 25 and older. Ibid.
9. Pew Research Center, “U.S. unauthorized immigration population estimates, 2016,” February 5, 2019, 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, 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 number of DACA recipients reflects USCIS’ estimate of those with active DACA grants as of March 31, 2020. U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS), “Approximate Active DACA Recipients: As of March 31, 2020” [dataset], July 22, 2020, <https://www.uscis.gov/sites/default/files/document/data/Approximate%20Active%20DACA%20Receipts%20-%20March%2031%202020.pdf>. DACA grants reflect USCIS Form I-821D initial requests approved from Aug. 15, 2012-Mar. 31, 2020, as of April 2020. USCIS, “Number of Form I-821D, Consideration of Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals, Status, by Fiscal Year, Quarter, and Case Status: Aug. 15, 2012-Mar. 31, 2020,” July 22, 2020, https://www.uscis.gov/sites/default/files/document/data/DACA_performance_data_fy2020_qtr2.pdf.
13. Estimates of the DACA-eligible population as of 2019 include unauthorized immigrant youth who had been in the United States since 2007, were under the age of 16 at the time of arrival, were under the age of 31 as of 2012, and who met DACA eligibility requirements as of 2016. Migration Policy Institute (MPI) analysis of U.S. Census Bureau data from the 2012-16 American Community Survey (ACS) pooled, and the 2008 Survey of Income and Program Participation (SIPP), with legal status assignments by James Bachmeier and Colin Hammar of Temple University and Jennifer Van Hook of The Pennsylvania State University, Population Research Institute, as cited in “Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) Data Tools,” accessed April 2020, www.migrationpolicy.org/programs/data-hub/deferred-action-childhood-arrivals-daca-profiles.
14. Ibid.
15. Analysis of 2018 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 2018 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,” 2019.
20. New American Economy analysis of 2018 ACS microdata using IPUMS. New American Economy, “Map the Impact,” section Taxes and Spending Power, January 31, 2020, <https://www.newamericaneconomy.org/locations/>.
21. Ibid. at sec. Undocumented Immigrants.
22. Institute on Taxation and Economic Policy, *State & Local Tax Contributions of Young Undocumented Immigrants* (Washington, DC: April 2018), Appendix 1, <https://itep.org/state-local-tax-contributions-of-young-undocumented-immigrants>.
23. New American Economy, “Map the Impact,” section Taxes and Spending Power.
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 2018 ACS 1-year PUMS data by the American Immigration Council.
25. American Immigration Council analysis of 2018 CPS data. Flood, King, Rodgers, Ruggles, and Warren, *IPUMS CPS* dataset.