

A Profile of Immigrants in Virginia's Economy

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Prepared by Sarah Hanke, Shaswat Sapkota, and Stephanie Vallez
with assistance from Joe Lahouchuc

The Thomas Jefferson Program in Public Policy
The College of William and Mary
Williamsburg, Virginia

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Executive Summary

The subject of immigration has long garnered national attention and has been the object of many heated debates between politicians and the American people. There are thousands of reports and studies on immigration, and many opinions, facts, rumors, and false statements circling about immigrants. Some studies present the facts in an attempt to lend clarity to the immigration discussion, some report opinions and false statements and some lie in between. Virginia has been in the immigration spotlight recently and has been a talking point in state and local elections. This report uses data from the American Community Survey to provide a factual account of the status of immigration in Virginia. Areas investigated include country of origin, length of stay in the United States, housing, income, occupation, education, English proficiency, entrepreneurship, and citizenship status.

The state of Virginia has many geographic and demographic differences and circumstances unique to particular regions, so it was necessary to break Virginia into regions in addition to analyzing the state as a whole. The five regions are Northern Virginia, Tidewater Virginia, Northwest Virginia, Southwest Virginia, and Central Virginia. The regions were created using the Public Use Microdata Areas and data from the American Community Survey. A complete analysis of each region follows the state-wide analysis.

Virginia has a diverse immigrant population. Virginia immigrants come from many different nations, and no one nation constitutes more than 10 percent of Virginia's immigrant population. By comparison, Mexican immigrants compose 31 percent of the national immigrant population. This diversity is reflected in Virginia's immigrants' occupations, education levels, and other areas.

Virginia's immigrants are doing better than the immigrant population of the United States in terms of demographic categories like income level, education, English proficiency, rates of homeownership, and rates of naturalization. The median income for Virginia immigrants was \$24,000 in 2007, compared to \$18,000 for immigrants nationwide. One-third of Virginia's immigrants achieved a Bachelor's degree or higher as the highest level of education attained, compared to only 23 percent of immigrants nationally. Virginia immigrants also had higher rates of English proficiency, homeownership, and naturalization than United States immigrants.

Virginia immigrants either compare to or surpass the native-born population of Virginia in several of the areas studied. Virginia immigrants have higher rates of Bachelor's and advanced degrees than the native-born population, at 33 percent for the immigrant population and 26 percent for the native-born population. Virginia immigrants are represented in several

occupations, like Sales and Office, in similar proportions as the native-born population.

Virginia immigrants are worse off in terms of income levels and homeownership rates than the native-born population of Virginia, but this may be changing. The income gap between the foreign-born and native-born populations of Virginia decreased steadily from 2000 to 2007. In 2007, the income gap was only \$1000, while the income gap for United States immigrants and United States native-born is not showing this type of improvement. Virginia immigrants also have lower rates of homeownership than the native-born population of Virginia.

The regional analysis of Virginia highlighted important similarities and differences between the foreign-born and native-born populations in each region, as well as differences among the regions compared to each other. Immigrants in Northern Virginia constitute 70 percent of all immigrants in Virginia; in other terms, immigrants make up 20 percent of the population of Northern Virginia, much higher than in other regions. Therefore, statewide averages for many measurements tend to follow the trend of Northern Virginia immigrants. However, in certain areas, other regions of Virginia stand out.

All regions have diverse countries of origin for immigrants and all regions have high levels of English proficiency. Northern Virginia immigrants have the highest median levels of income and rates of entrepreneurship. Southwest Virginia immigrants have the highest proportion of advanced degrees as the highest level of education attained. All regions consistently had high proportions of immigrants in Construction, Office, Production/Factory, Sales, and Food Service occupations, although Southwest Virginia did stand out with 19 percent of its immigrant population working in Education jobs.

Methodology

In this report “immigrant” is defined as someone who is currently residing in the United States but was born in a foreign country to parents who were not United States citizens. The criterion for being an immigrant is strictly based on country of birth, and thus excludes a person’s current United States citizenship or legal status. The term foreign-born is used interchangeably with immigrant in this report. People born inside the United States including United States territories, and children born abroad to United States citizens will be referred to as native-born or United States-born.

This report used the dataset from the American Community Survey (ACS) from the years 2000 to 2007. The American Community Survey is a nationwide survey conducted by the US Census Bureau each year. The survey provides detailed information on economic, social, demographic, and housing information on households across the country. The survey began in 1996 in a selected number of states, and countrywide data is available starting from the year 2000. At the time of the data analysis for this report, 2007 was the latest dataset available for use.

The ACS datasets come in two forms - population records and household records. Since this report analyzed both household and population level variables, population records and household records for each year were merged into a single file. To identify individual cases as being foreign-born or native-born, a dummy variable was created as a recode of the citizenship variable. This variable records the respondent’s citizenship status based on the definition of an immigrant employed by this report.

State specific analyses were conducted using the state variable that provides a unique code for all states within the United States. For determining the regions within Virginia, Public Use Microdata Area (PUMA) codes were used. However, these codes were available only in the datasets for the years 2005 and after, limiting our ability to conduct regional analyses in Virginia.

All the income figures are reported in nominal US dollars. This was done because all income analysis were comparisons between groups, and any change in real value of the dollar due to inflation rates would apply to all groups equally. Thus, using nominal dollar values gives the same comparative conclusions as using the real values.

All the other relevant variables that were used for the purpose of analysis are found in the ACS codebook, which can be downloaded from the following World Wide Web address:

<http://usa.ipums.org/usa/volii/codebooks.shtml>

Illegal Immigration

It is difficult to estimate the impact of illegal immigration nationally, let alone locally, but there are some well-established estimates from top research institutions that might help shed some light on this heated topic. The Pew Research Center estimated there were 11.9 million unauthorized immigrants living in the United States¹. The institution also found that unauthorized immigrants contribute to the workforce at a higher rate than citizens. Immigrants comprise an estimated 4 percent of the nation's population, but 5.4 percent of the labor force. The Pew Research Center found rapid growth between 1990 and 2008, but a recent study released by the institution shows a leveling off of this trend, likely due to a combination of the recession and more stringent immigration enforcement policies. New data collected by the Census Bureau shows that, as of March 2008, there were 8.3 million unauthorized immigrants in the labor force.

Undocumented immigrants from Mexico make up 59 percent of the unauthorized population, encompassing an estimated 7 million individuals. The next highest contributors are Asia and Central America, each with an 11 percent share, South America with 7 percent, and the Caribbean with 4 percent. The Middle East only accounts for 2 percent of the unauthorized immigrant population.

States with longstanding prevalence of unauthorized immigrants include California, Texas, Florida, New York, and New Jersey. A number of states have experienced an influx of unauthorized immigrants in recent years, including North Carolina and Virginia. Virginia is estimated to have the tenth highest population of unauthorized immigrants, with 300,000. Estimates range from 275,000 to 325,000.

While undocumented workers from Mexico are the largest and most commonly discussed group of illegal immigrants, there is a complex and diverse set of factors that contribute to illegal immigration. A large percentage of unauthorized immigrants are not border jumpers, but individuals who overstay their visas or fail to update their visa category. This group includes everything from workers who enter on nonimmigrant visas to students who take up jobs to help pay for their education to tourists who overstay their 30 day window of travel. Illegal enterprises, such as human trafficking, also contribute to the total of unauthorized immigrants.

Understanding the complexity of illegal immigration is key to interpreting the estimates for Virginia's unauthorized immigrant population.

¹All facts in this section from the following source: Passel, Jeffrey S. "A Portrait of Unauthorized Immigrants in the United States." *Pew Research Center*. April 14, 2009.

It is highly likely that a large percentage of the 300,000 individuals living in Virginia unlawfully are not migrant farm workers or low-wage Hispanics, but it is also just as likely that many of the illegal immigrants are migrant farm workers. The key to determining the composition of this population consists of two parts. First, it requires an understanding of the unique characteristics of the immigrant populations in each of Virginia's five major regions. Second, it will require region-level data providing estimates of the unauthorized population in different areas of Virginia, which is not available for this study, but would be valuable to collect for a future study. The combination of these data will paint a better picture of the role of Virginia's unauthorized population, and better prepare Virginia's policymakers for responding to the particular societal demands of each group.

This study provides the first piece of that puzzle by building a detailed description of the role Virginia's immigrants play in the state's five regions. In the regional descriptions you will find repeated examples of the diversity of Virginia's immigrant population as well as examples of where the region's population excels in different categories. The descriptions also spotlight distinctive regional characteristics that tend to get lost in the broad discussion of Virginia's overall composition.

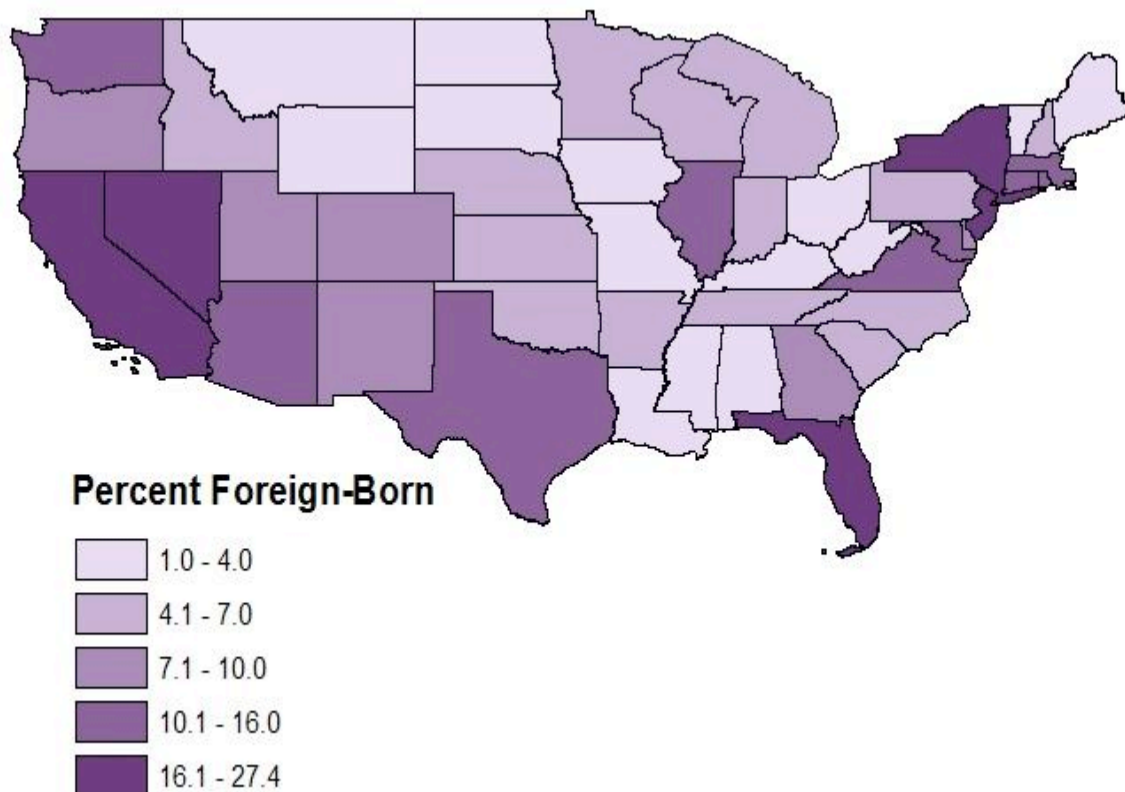
Virginia

Virginia Has Fewer Immigrants than the Nation as a Whole

With 786,380 foreign-born residents, Virginia has the 10th highest number of immigrants in the United States and the 16th highest percentage of immigrants in its total population. While these figures suggest a prominent immigrant presence, that presence, at 10.2 percent of the total population, is smaller than the 12.6 percent national average. Virginia's foreign-born presence is similar to that experienced by the Southern region of the United States but higher than all neighboring states except Maryland. Maryland, at 12.4 percent, is just below the national average. Figure 1 shows selected percentages of immigrants in each state in the contiguous United States.

The reason for these seemingly conflicting results is a high concentration of immigrants in border-states and states near major cities. There are an estimated 38 million immigrants across the United States. California alone hosts over 10 million, and New York and New Jersey combined host almost 6 million. Florida hosts another 3.4 million and Texas 3.8 million, a solid 16 percent of its population. While Virginia's foreign-born population represents a significant portion of the nation's total foreign-born population, it is hardly the dominating presence experienced by these states with historically high immigrant populations.

Figure 1. Concentration of Foreign-born Residents in the United States, 2007

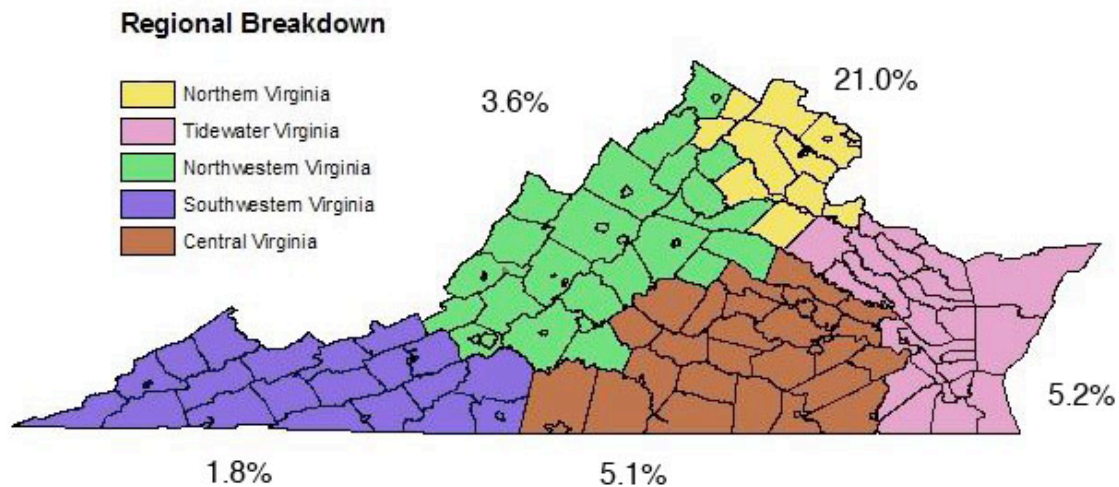


Source: ACS PUMS 2007

The steady growth in immigrant presence from 8.2 percent of the population in 2000 to its current levels, suggests that, at least in the experience of the Commonwealth, immigration is poorly defined as an unstable epidemic. This slight change in proportion represents a net increase of about 229 thousand immigrants over seven years. There is a steady increase over time that could have as much to do with increases in incoming residents as it does with increasing length of stay for immigrants already present in Virginia.

While Virginia ranks in the high end nationally in terms of both number and proportion of immigrants, the statewide foreign-born population has drastic regional differences, as shown in Figure 2. Northern Virginia hosts the bulk of the immigrant population, with 70 percent of the state's total foreign-born population. At 550 thousand people, immigrants account for 21 percent of the region's total population. The remaining four regions host much smaller immigrant populations that are similar in proportion to their neighboring states.

Figure 2. Percent of Virginia's Population that is Foreign-born by Region, 2007

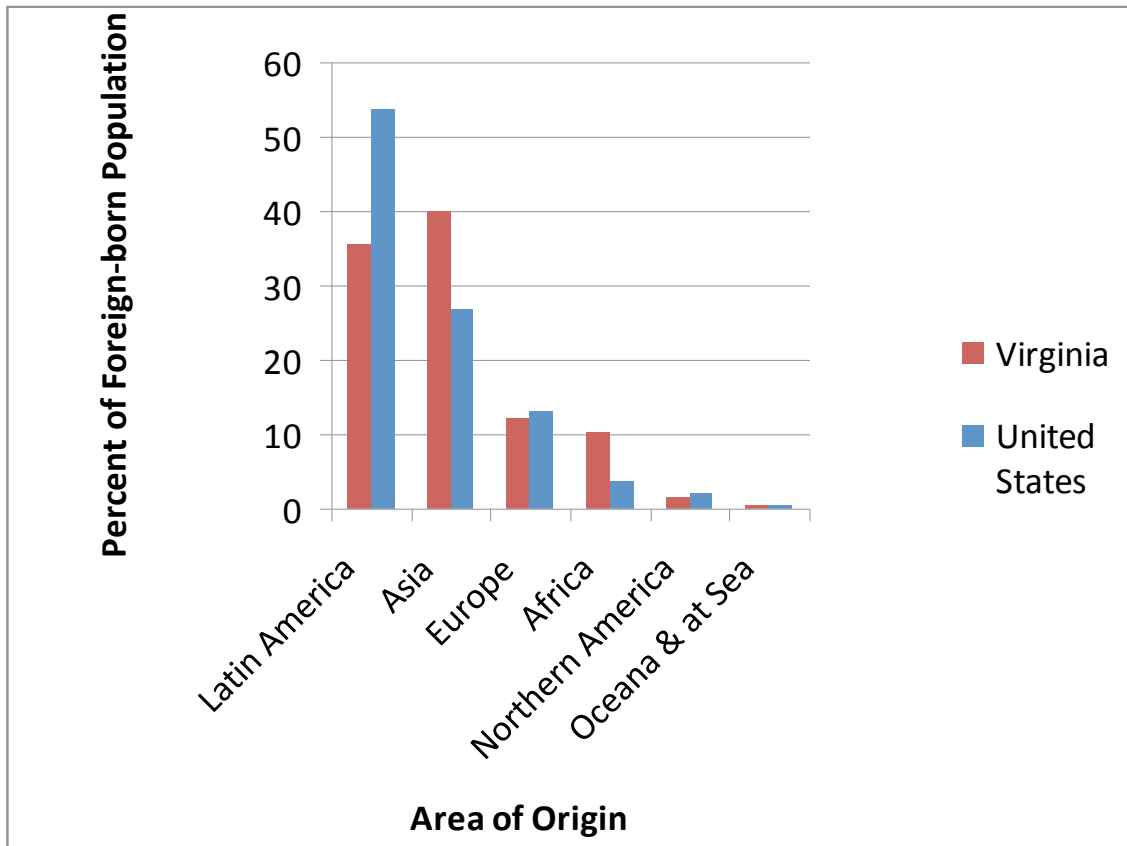


Source: ACS 2007

Where Immigrants are From

As reflected in Figure 3, Virginia has a very diverse immigrant population compared to the rest of the nation. Across the United States, Mexican nationals account for about 30 percent of all immigrants, but in Virginia no one nation accounts for more than 10 percent of the immigrant population. There has been slight growth in immigrants from such countries as El Salvador and Mexico over other Latin American countries and a slight decline in the proportion of immigrants from India. This trend is reflected among the highest contributors as well as the rest of the population.

Figure 3. Area of Origin for Foreign-born Residents of the United States and Virginia



Source: ACS 2000-2007

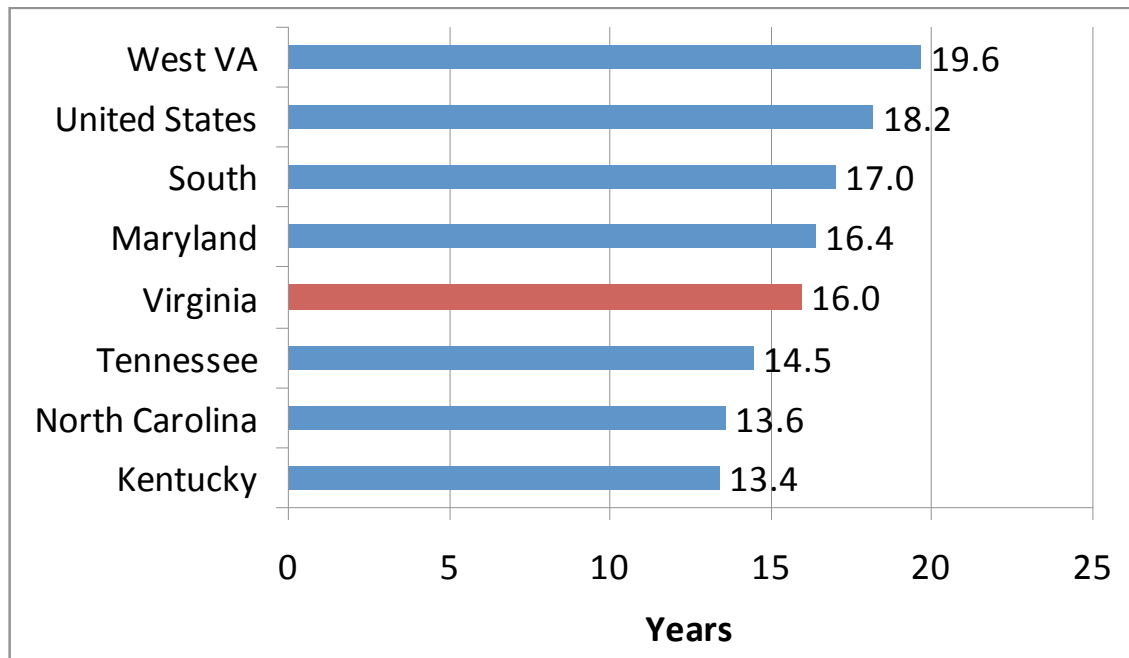
The top five contributing countries have changed slightly over time. In 2000, they were El Salvador, India, the Philippines, Guatemala, and Korea, ranging from 7.5 percent to 3.9 percent respectively. By 2007, the top countries had shifted to El Salvador, Mexico, Korea, India, and the Philippines, ranging from 9.6 percent to 5.9 percent. El Salvador continues to be the number one contributor, and its portion of the immigrant population has increased relative to the whole. This is part of a slight decrease in the diversity of the foreign-born population since 2000. In 2000, there were 32 countries with at least a 1 percent share of the population. In 2007, there were only 21. However, while there has been a slight shift over time to a more concentrated set of nations, the number of nations with significant representation is still high compared to the national immigrant population.

Length of Stay

Figure 4 shows how the length of stay in the country for Virginia immigrants compares to neighboring states, the South region, and the United

States overall. In 2007, the average immigrant in Virginia had been in the U.S. for almost 16 years (15.96). This is over two years less than national average of around 18 years and one year short of the Southern average of almost 17 years. Relative to its six neighboring states, Virginia falls directly in the middle of the pack. West Virginia boasted the longest average length of stay at 19.6 years, followed by Maryland. Below Virginia were Tennessee, North Carolina, and Kentucky, respectively.

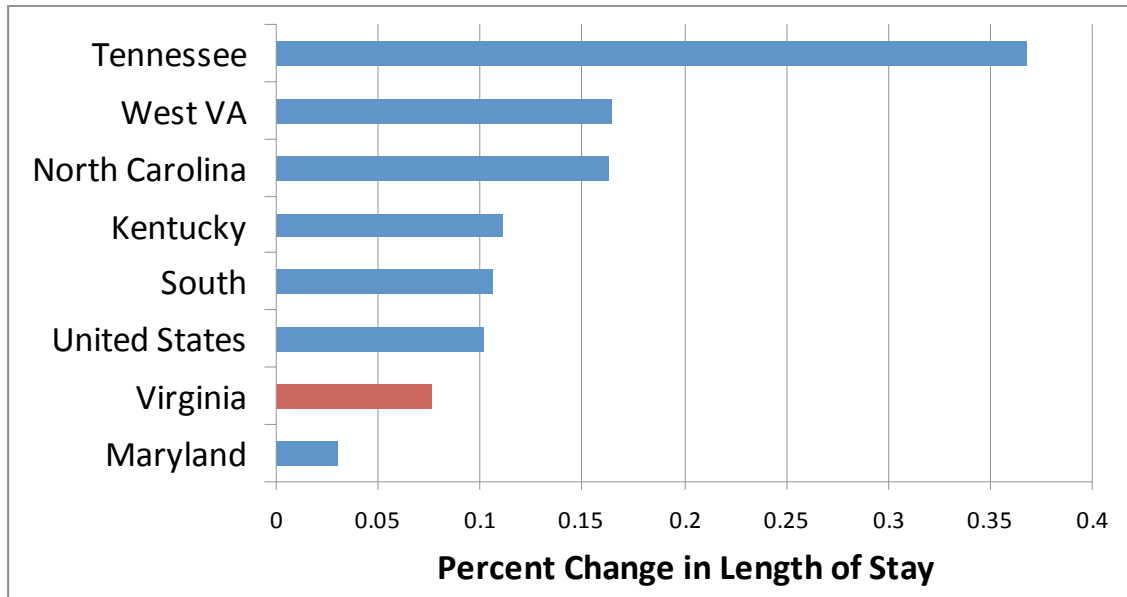
Figure 4: Length of Stay of Foreign-born Residents (as of 2007)



Source: ACS 2007

The average length of stay for Virginia's immigrants is growing, but at a lesser rate than the national average and its regional counterparts. Since 2000, Virginian immigrants' average length of stay grew by 7.6 percent, whereas the national average was 10 percent. As Figure 5 illustrates, the only neighboring state with a slower growth rate during the period was Maryland.

Figure 5: Percent Change in Length of Stay of Foreign-born Residents from 2000 to 2007



Source: ACS 2000-2007

Education

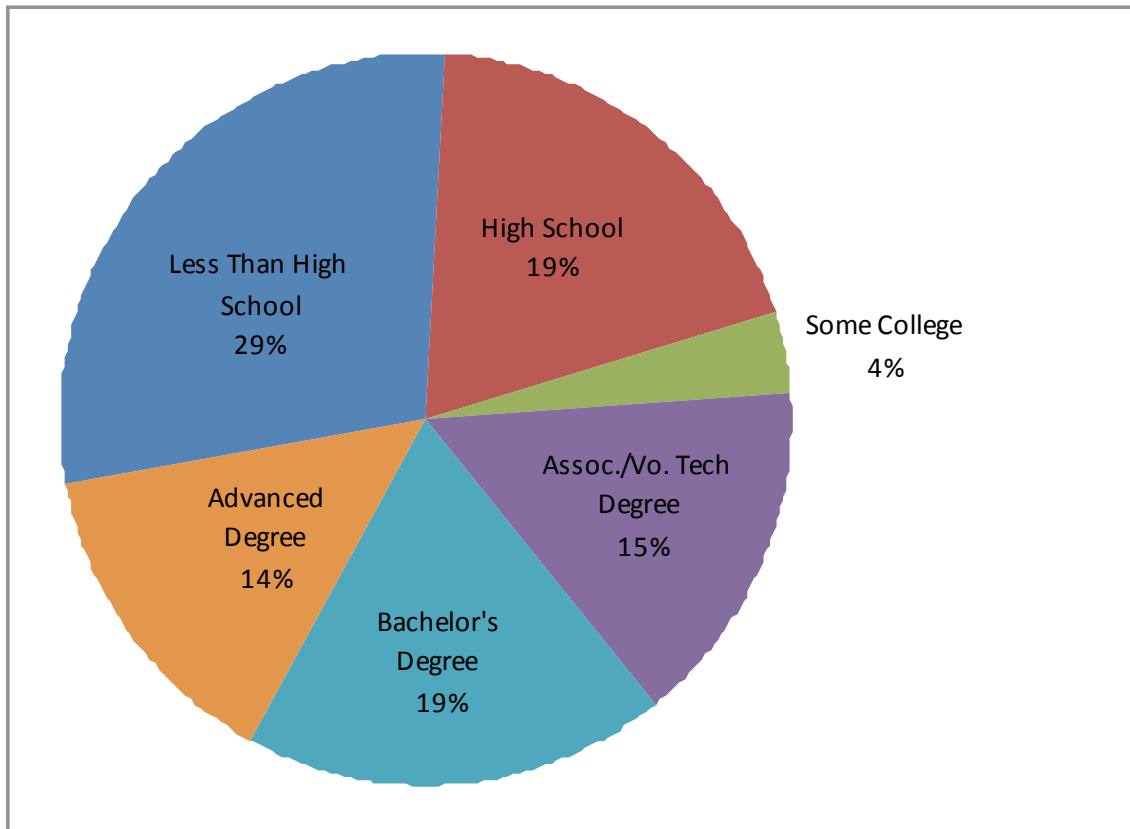
The level of educational attainment of the immigrant population in Virginia is another important aspect in understanding Virginia’s immigrants. There is a popular perception in Virginia and the United States as a whole that immigrants work primarily in low-wage jobs with little or no formal education. An examination of the actual data shows that this perception is limited at best, and plainly inaccurate at worst. One-third (33 percent) of Virginia’s foreign-born population over the years 2000-2007 held a Bachelor’s Degree or advanced degree, which is defined as any degree above a Bachelor’s (Master’s, Ph.D., M.D, etc). Obviously, the foreign-born population in Virginia has a large segment of highly educated individuals. In fact, the foreign-born population of Virginia has a higher percentage of such highly educated residents than the native-born population of Virginia, which over the same period averaged only 26 percent holding a Bachelor’s Degree or higher.

Foreign-born residents in Virginia compare favorably to the national immigrant population with regards to education. Virginia’s immigrant residents are much more likely to hold at least a Bachelor’s Degree than the United States’ foreign-born population as a whole. Additionally, a smaller percentage of Virginia immigrants do not hold a high school diploma than the national immigrant population. Virginia foreign-born residents show comparable or higher levels of educational attainment than the neighboring states of Maryland, West Virginia, Kentucky, Tennessee, and North Carolina.

As opposed to the common perception, it is clear that Virginia's immigrants contain a large contingent of highly educated individuals. The level of education of Virginia's foreign-born residents directly impacts the economy of Virginia, as is shown in the Occupations and Entrepreneurship sections of this report. The immigrants of Virginia are diverse in their educational backgrounds, with significant portions of the population in each of the educational categories studied.

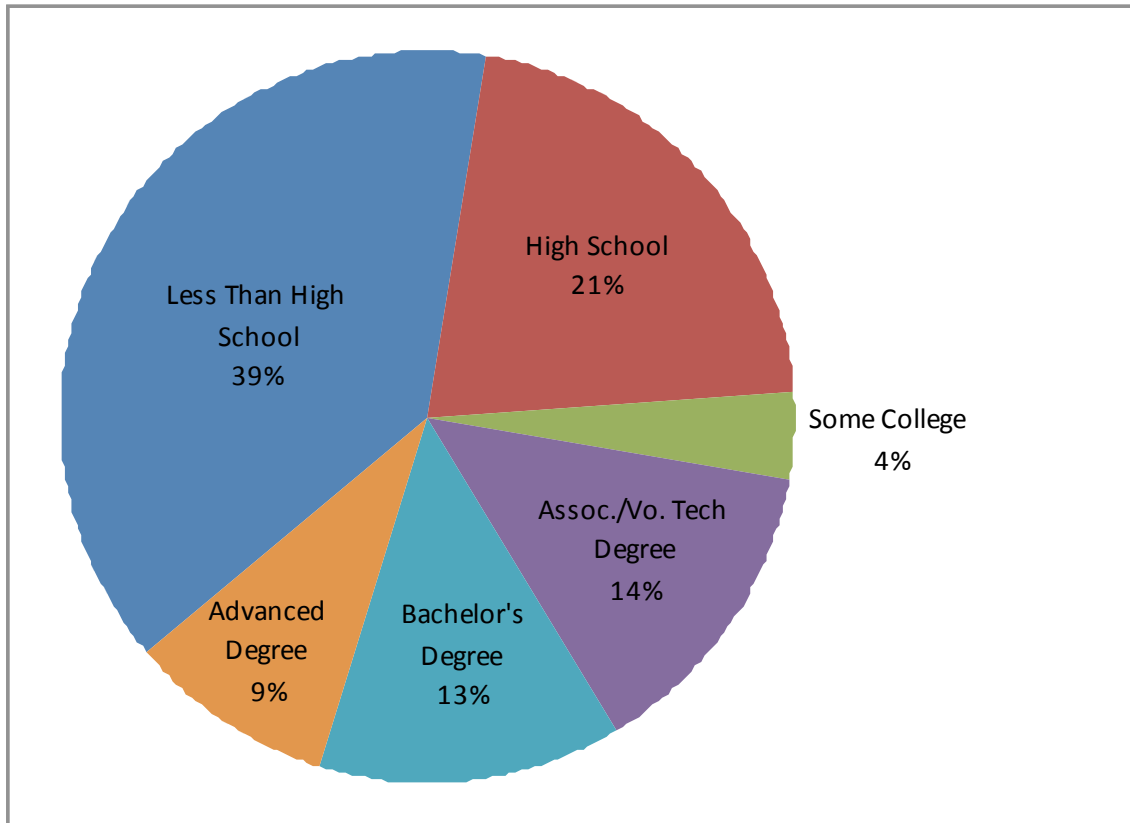
Virginia's immigrants show several important differences in educational attainment from the national population. This can be seen directly by comparing Figure 6 and Figure 7, showing the population breakdown for Virginia and United States foreign-born residents. On the whole, Virginia immigrants are more highly educated than the national immigrant population, with a lower portion of the population not holding even a high school diploma, and 52 percent of Virginia immigrants having at least some education beyond high school compared to the national figure of only 40 percent.

Figure 6: Highest Level of Education Attained by Virginia Foreign-born Residents (2000-2007 Mean)



Source: ACS 2000-2007

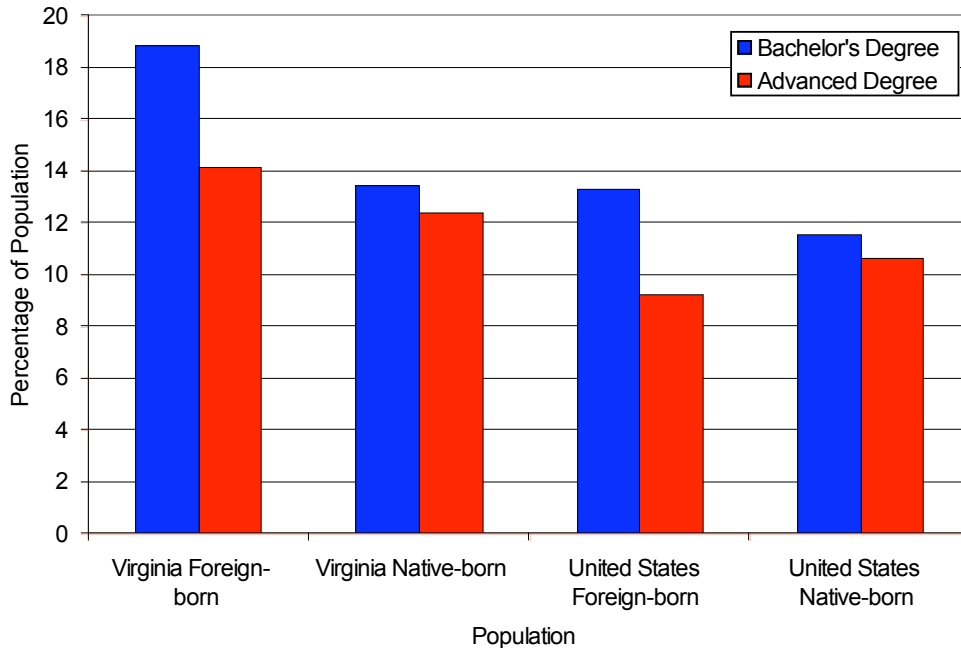
Figure 7: Highest Level of Education Attained by United States Foreign-born Residents (2000-2007 Mean)



Source: ACS 2000-2007

Immigrants in Virginia contain higher shares of the highest educational attainment levels, Bachelor's and advanced degrees, than immigrants nationwide. During the period from 2000 to 2007, an average of 19 percent of Virginia immigrants held a Bachelor's degree as their highest educational attainment; over the same period, only 13 percent of immigrants nationwide fell into the same category. A similar relationship is true for advanced degrees. From 2000 to 2007, an average of 14 percent of Virginia immigrants held a degree beyond a Bachelor's degree, while an average of 9 percent of immigrants nationwide held an advanced degree.

Figure 8: Educational Attainment of Virginia and United States Foreign-born and Native-born Residents (Mean Values 2000-2007)



Source: ACS 2000-2007

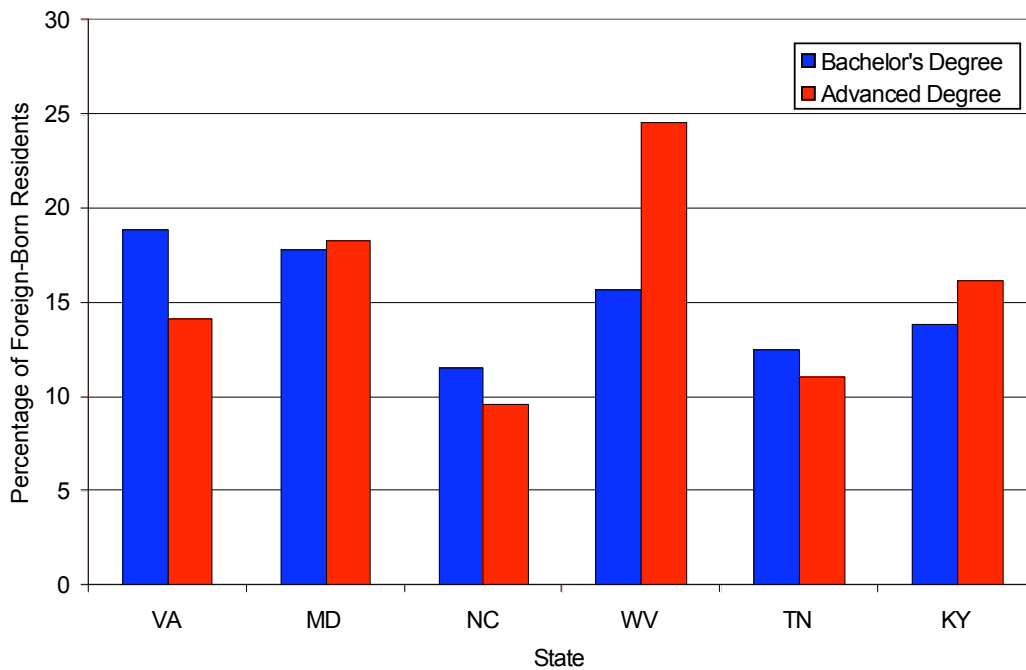
As could be expected based on the higher levels of Bachelor's and advanced degrees, Virginia immigrants were less likely to not have attained a high school diploma than immigrants nationwide. Virginia immigrants had a 2000-2007 mean of 29 percent with less than a high school degree, compared to 39 percent of immigrants nationwide averaged over the same period. Virginia immigrants were slightly less likely than immigrants nationwide to have only a high school diploma, with shares of 19 percent for Virginia and 21 percent for the nation.

Clearly, the foreign-born population in Virginia outpaces the national foreign-born population concerning education. Perhaps one of the most interesting findings is that the trends spoken of above when comparing Virginia immigrants to the national immigrant population are similar when comparing Virginia immigrants to the national native-born population. Virginia immigrants are significantly more likely to have a Bachelor's or advanced degree than the native-born population of both Virginia and the United States.

Virginia immigrants have high levels of education, especially Bachelor's degrees, compared to immigrants in neighboring states. Virginia

immigrants are more likely to have a Bachelor's degree than immigrants in any of its neighboring states (Maryland, North Carolina, Kentucky, Tennessee, and West Virginia). Virginia immigrants are more likely to have an advanced degree than North Carolina immigrants or Tennessee immigrants. However, immigrants in West Virginia, Kentucky and Maryland are more likely to have an advanced degree than immigrants in Virginia.

Figure 9: Educational Attainment of Foreign-Born Residents of Virginia and Neighboring States (Mean Values 2000-2007)



Source: ACS 2000-2007

As can be seen from Figure 9 above, from 2000 to 2007 an average of 14 percent of Virginia immigrants held an advanced degree; in the same period, residents holding an advanced degree accounted for an average of 24.5 percent of West Virginia immigrants, an average of 18 percent of Maryland immigrants, and an average of 16 percent of Kentucky immigrants.

Virginia immigrants are more likely than immigrants to the Southern region of the United States to have a Bachelor's or advanced degree. From 2000 to 2007, an average of 19 percent of Virginia immigrants had only a Bachelor's degree, while during the same period, Southern immigrants showed only 12 percent. Similarly, an average of 14 percent of Virginia immigrants held an advanced degree while an average of 9 percent of Southern immigrants held an advanced degree.

Virginia immigrants are actually more likely to have higher levels of Bachelor's and advanced degrees than the native-born population of Virginia. As mentioned above, 19 percent of Virginia immigrants held Bachelor's degree compared to an average of 13 percent of native-born Virginians from 2000-2007. Over the same period, 12 percent of native-born Virginians held an advanced degree, compared to the 14 percent of Virginia immigrants cited earlier. Virginia immigrants are less likely than native-born Virginians to have less than a high school diploma and also slightly less likely than native-born Virginians to have only a high school diploma.

Occupation

A common perception of immigrants is that most work in minimum wage or low paying agricultural or food service jobs. A different but also common view is that highly educated immigrants dominate jobs in the engineering, science, information technology, and education sectors, squeezing out jobs for native-born citizens. As it turns out, neither scenario is the case with Virginia immigrants. Virginia immigrants have similar occupations to native-born Virginians. Virginia immigrants also are comparable to the national immigrant and native-born populations. All three populations worked in Sales, Office, and Management, and to a lesser degree, Construction, Production/Factory, Cleaning, and Food Service occupations. To facilitate ease of discussion, data from 2007 is used in all analyses in this section of the report, because occupational trends did not change significantly over time for any population group.

Table 1 lists 26 occupation categories for Virginia and United States immigrants, sorted by the percentage of the Virginia immigrant population. Virginia immigrants are comparable to national immigrants when examining the three largest occupation categories for both populations. The three top occupations for Virginia immigrants are Construction, Sales, and Office, while the three top occupations for United States immigrants are Construction, Production/Factory, and Office, with Sales occupations a close fourth. After the three top occupations are considered, Virginia immigrants seem to have jobs in more highly educated sectors of the economy than the national population. Virginia immigrants are more likely to be employed in the Management, Information Technology, and Legal sectors than immigrants nationwide. Virginia immigrants are less likely to be employed in Cleaning, Agriculture/Forestry, Production/Factory, and Transportation occupations than immigrants nationwide.

Table 1: Occupation of United States and Virginia Foreign-born, 2007

	Virginia	United States
Construction	10.6	10.0
Sales	10.4	9.4
Office	10.3	9.7
Food Service	7.7	7.7
Information Technology	6.3	2.9
Cleaning	6.3	8.3
Management	6.2	4.8
Transportation	5.3	6.9
Personal Care and Service	4.8	4.1
Production/Factory	4.6	9.7
Medical	4.0	4.3
Education	3.8	3.7
Repair/Mechanics	3.2	2.9
Finance	2.8	1.9
Business	2.4	1.3
Engineering	2.1	1.9
Health (nursing/therapists)	1.8	2.5
Entertainment	1.6	1.5
Science	1.3	1.0
Legal	1.1	0.5
Protective Services	0.9	1.0
Agriculture/Forestry	0.9	2.1
Counseling/Religious	0.8	0.9
Unemployed	0.7	0.7
Military	0.4	0.1
Extraction	0.0	0.1

Source: ACS 2007

In terms of occupation, Virginia's immigrants have more in common with the native-born population of Virginia than with immigrants from neighboring states. As previously mentioned, the top three occupations for Virginia immigrants are Construction, Sales, and Office jobs. Immigrants in neighboring states have very different patterns of occupation, as seen from Table 2. Maryland immigrants most closely resemble the occupation trends of Virginia immigrants, with the most striking difference being that Maryland

immigrants are about twice as likely to work in Medical professions. North Carolina immigrants are less likely to work in Sales or Office jobs than Virginia immigrants, but more likely to work in Agriculture/Forestry, Construction, and Production/Factory jobs. Virginia immigrants are twice as likely to work in Information technology than North Carolina immigrants. The story is similar with Kentucky immigrants. Kentucky immigrants are more than twice as likely to work in Production/Factory jobs or Education jobs than Virginia immigrants, while Virginia immigrants work in Information Technology and Sales jobs at twice the rate of Kentucky immigrants. Tennessee immigrants are more likely to work in Production/Factory and Food Service jobs than Virginia immigrants, while Virginia immigrants are more likely to work in Information Technology and Finance jobs than Tennessee immigrants. West Virginia immigrants are an interesting case, in that a high percentage (14.5 percent) work in Medical professions. This is more than three times the rate at which Virginia immigrants work in Medical professions. West Virginia immigrants are also more likely to work in Counseling/Religious, Education, Food Service, and Personal Care and Service occupations than Virginia immigrants. Virginia immigrants are more likely to work in the Office, Cleaning, and Business sectors than West Virginia immigrants. Virginia immigrants are also much more likely to work in Construction occupations than West Virginia immigrants, at 10.6 percent compared to 0.4 percent.

Table 2. Occupation of Virginia Foreign-born Residents Compared to Neighboring States, 2007

	VA	NC	MD	KY	TN	WV
Construction	10.6	17.0	9.8	6.5	13.3	0.4
Sales	10.4	7.3	9.9	5.2	9.0	10.4
Office	10.3	6.7	10.3	9.5	6.7	4.9
Food Service	7.7	8.8	6.9	8.5	9.5	11.0
Information Technology	6.3	3.1	5.9	3.2	2.3	5.4
Cleaning	6.3	7.4	6.9	6.3	7.4	2.3
Management	6.2	4.4	5.4	5.0	4.7	6.2
Transportation	5.3	5.6	3.9	7.2	6.7	5.9
Personal Care and Service	4.8	2.2	4.6	2.7	2.9	11.1
Production/Factory	4.6	14.2	3.8	12.4	15.2	6.1
Medical	4.0	3.9	7.4	5.2	4.6	14.6
Education	3.8	3.8	4.7	7.3	4.5	5.8
Repair/Mechanics	3.2	2.1	2.4	2.7	1.7	0.0
Finance	2.8	1.2	2.6	1.4	0.6	1.6

	VA	NC	MD	KY	TN	WV
Business	2.4	1.0	1.4	1.0	1.0	0.0
Engineering	2.1	1.6	2.4	3.1	1.6	1.6
Health (nursing/therapists)	1.8	1.2	3.0	2.4	1.4	0.9
Entertainment	1.6	1.4	1.4	2.5	1.1	3.1
Science	1.3	1.2	2.6	1.8	1.4	1.9
Legal	1.1	0.3	1.1	0.1	0.5	0.5
Protective Services	0.9	0.4	1.3	0.4	0.8	1.8
Agriculture/Forestry	0.9	3.2	0.4	4.3	1.5	0.0
Counseling/Religious	0.8	0.8	1.1	0.9	0.9	3.4
Unemployed	0.7	0.8	0.7	0.3	0.3	1.0
Military	0.4	0.5	0.1	0.2	0.3	0.3
Extraction	0.0	0.0	0.1	0.0	0.2	0.0

Source: ACS 2007

Virginia immigrants appear to be competitive with Virginia's native-born population regarding the three largest categories of occupations. As shown in Table 3, the three top occupations for immigrants in Virginia in 2007 were Construction, Sales, and Office. The three top occupations for native-born residents in Virginia are Office, Sales, and Management. These trends hold true in the period of 2000 to 2007, so data presented is from 2007 for ease of discussion. After considering the top three categories, the picture of occupation changes and Virginia immigrants become complementary to the native-born population of Virginia. Virginia immigrants were more likely to work in Information Technology, Cleaning, and Construction jobs than the native-born population. The native-born population was more likely to work in Education, Protective Services, and Counseling/Religious occupations. In highly educated professions, such as Engineering, Science, Legal, Medical, and Health, the percentage of Virginia immigrants in the profession was similar to the percentage of the native-born population in the profession. For example, in 2007 Engineers comprised 2.05 percent of the immigrant population and 2.11 percent of the native-born population.

Table 3: Occupation of Virginia Residents, 2007

	Foreign-born	Native-born
Construction	10.6	5.7
Sales	10.4	11.6
Office	10.3	14.4
Food Service	7.7	5.1

	Foreign-born	Native-born
Information Technology	6.3	3.6
Cleaning	6.3	3.1
Management	6.2	7.3
Transportation	5.3	5.5
Personal Care and Service	4.8	3.1
Production/Factory	4.6	5.2
Medical	4.0	4.4
Education	3.8	6.5
Repair/Mechanics	3.2	3.6
Finance	2.8	2.4
Business	2.4	2.8
Engineering	2.1	2.1
Health (nursing/therapists)	1.8	1.9
Entertainment	1.6	2.2
Science	1.3	1.0
Legal	1.1	1.6
Protective Services	0.9	2.8
Agriculture/Forestry	0.9	0.5
Counseling/Religious	0.8	1.7
Unemployed	0.7	0.6
Military	0.4	1.5
Extraction	0.0	0.1

Source: ACS 2007

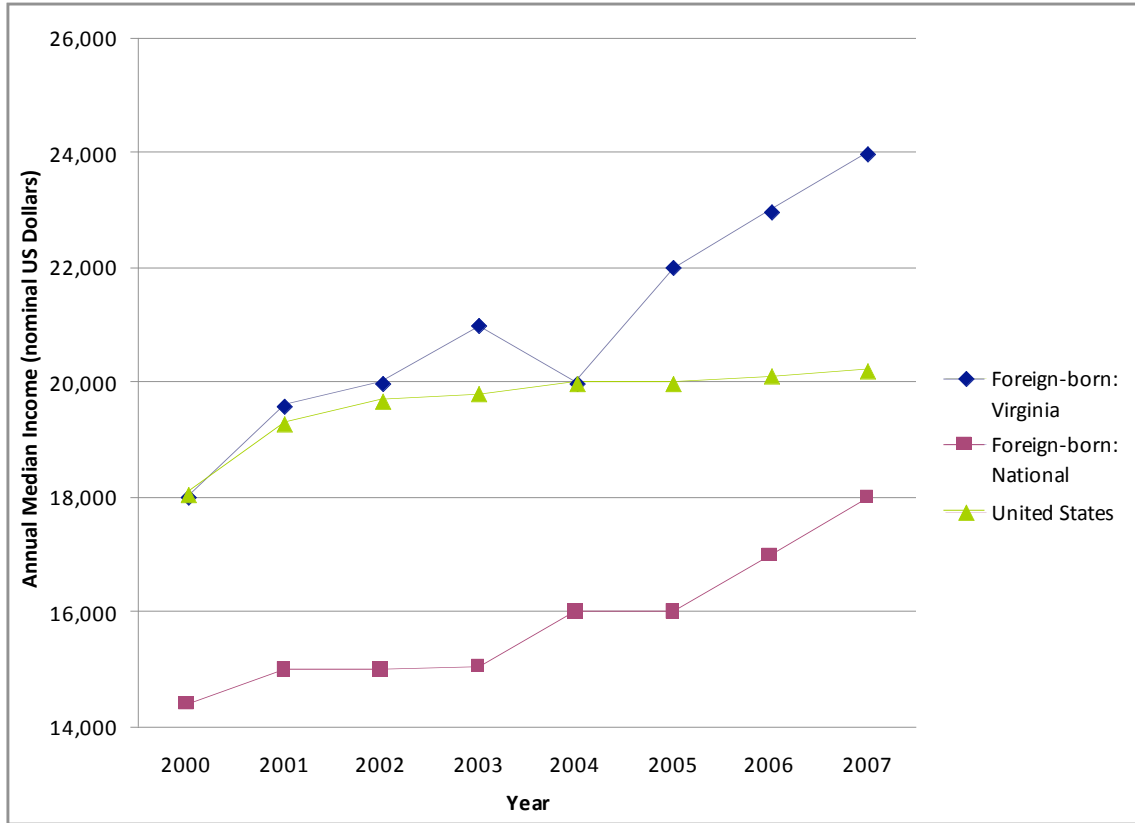
Income

The income of foreign-born residents has been increasing steadily since the year 2000. This pattern is visible for all areas observed in this report—national, state level and regional within Virginia.

On average, foreign-born residents in Virginia tend to have higher earnings than their counterparts in the nation. For example, in 2000 the median income for a foreign-born resident in Virginia was \$18,000 while the national median income for a foreign-born resident was \$14,400. This gap in income has been increasing steadily. By 2007, the median income for foreign-born residents in Virginia was \$24,000 while the national median income for the foreign-born residents was \$18,000. This shows that immigrants in Virginia are generally doing well economically compared to

immigrants in the Nation. The relationship between incomes of immigrants in Virginia and immigrants at the national level is shown in Figure 10.

Figure 10: Foreign-born Residents in Virginia Earn Higher than the National Average



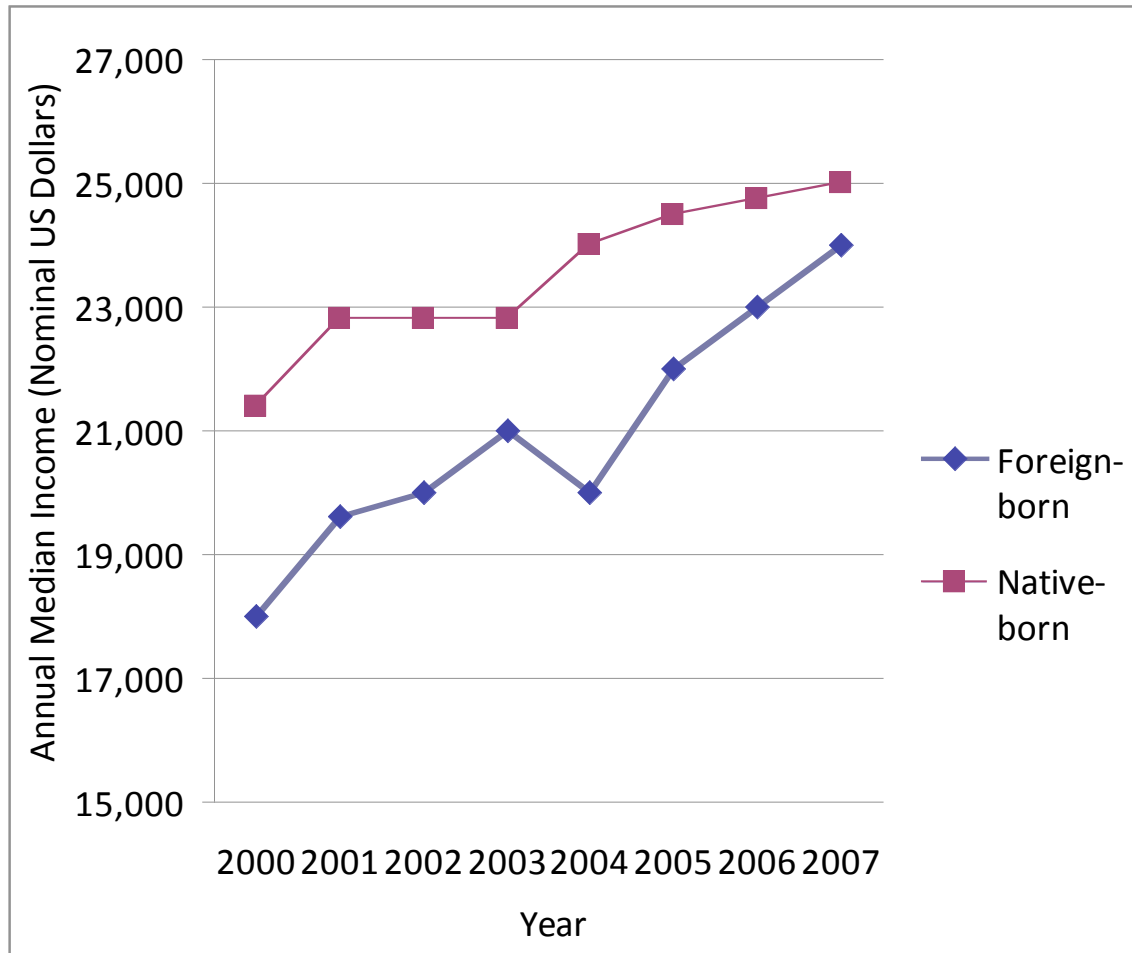
Source: ACS 2000-2007

Figure 10 also reveals an interesting finding. The median income of the foreign-born population in Virginia is not only higher than that of the national foreign-born population, but is also consistently higher than the median income of the total US population. In fact, the figure shows that the median income of the foreign-born population in Virginia is increasing at a higher rate than it is growing for the total population of the country. For example, in 2004 the median income for both categories was \$20,000; by 2007 this increased to \$24,000 for foreign-born residents of Virginia, but only to \$20,220 for the total population of the country. This trend not only shows that immigrants in Virginia are economically better off than the general United States population, but also that their economic well being is improving faster than that of the rest of the population.

The income gap between foreign-born and native-born Virginia residents is also declining steadily. For example, the gap in median income between these two groups was \$3,400 in 2000, with the native-born median

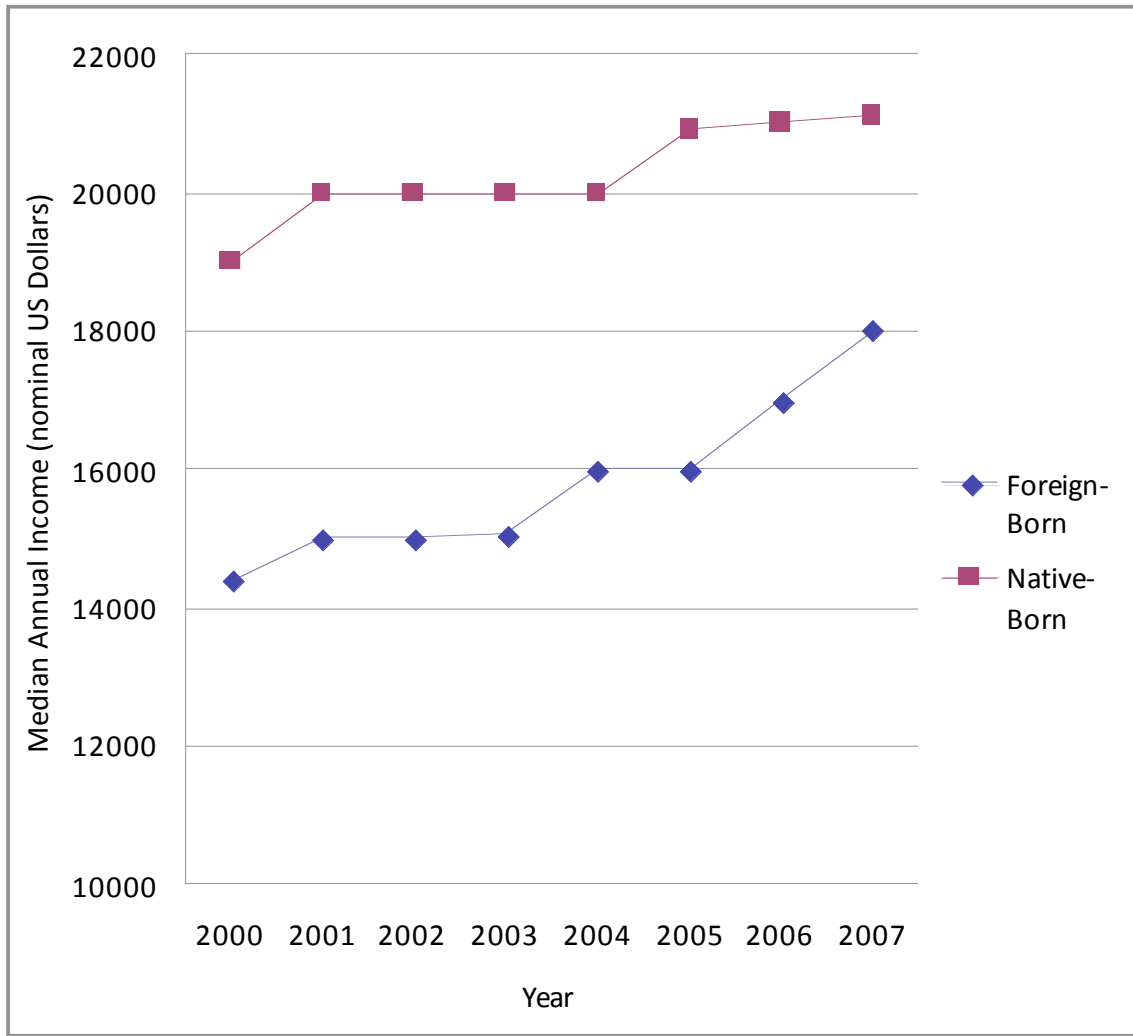
income being the higher of the two. With immigrants consistently performing well economically alongside the native-born-population, the gap has been reduced to only \$1,000 in 2007 and is almost at a point of convergence (Figure 11). This is in contrast to national level statistics, where the income gap between foreign-born and native-born residents does not show such strong signs of converging (Figure 12).

Figure 11: The Income Gap Between Virginia's Foreign-born and Native-born Residents is Decreasing Over Time



Source: ACS 2000-2007

Figure 12: Income Gap Between Foreign-born and Native-born Residents of the United States



Source: ACS 2000-2007

Despite the aforementioned differences, there are similarities in income statistics between foreign-born Virginians and foreign-born United States residents. For both the groups, the annual median income is smaller compared to their native-born counterparts, albeit showing some converging trends. Also, the increases in median income for foreign-born Virginia residents reflects the growth in median income across Virginia, while the increases in median income of immigrants at the national level goes hand-in-hand with the increases in the national median income. This finding seems to support the argument that earnings of immigrants are strongly linked to the well being of the economy of which they are part.

Immigrants in Virginia have higher median yearly incomes than immigrants in the South and most of its neighboring states. The only neighboring state that has a higher median income than Virginia for foreign-born residents is Maryland. This shows that immigrants in Virginia perform well economically compared to other immigrants in this part of the nation.

Figure 13 portrays this relationship across time. Foreign-born residents in Maryland and Virginia consistently have considerably higher median income levels than Virginia's other neighbors. For example, in 2005 the median income for foreign-born residents in Virginia was \$22,000, while the corresponding figure was \$17,300 in Kentucky, \$16,000 in Tennessee, \$16,100 in West Virginia, and \$15,000 in North Carolina. However, the median income for foreign-born residents in Maryland was \$23,000. Figure 13 shows that the median income of foreign-born residents in Virginia is closer to the median income of the same population group in Maryland than that of the other neighboring states. In fact, the gap between the incomes for immigrants between these two states is closing. In 2005 the income gap was \$1300, but in 2007 it was only \$600.

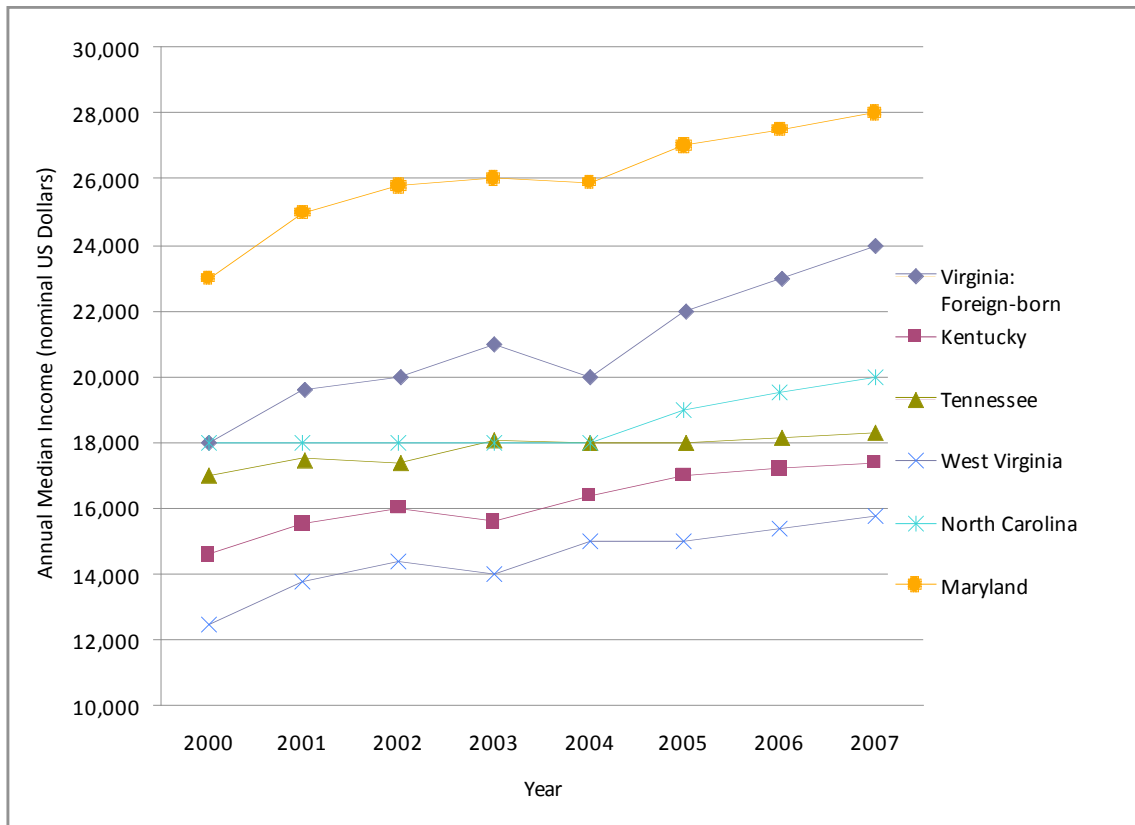
Figure 13: Foreign-born Residents in Virginia have Higher Incomes than Foreign-born Residents in Most Neighboring States



Source: ACS 2000-2007

The economic well being of Virginia's foreign-born residents is also corroborated by the finding that their annual median income exceeds the median incomes of *all* residents in neighboring states except Maryland. In other words, an immigrant in Virginia at the middle of the income distribution earns more than a resident of any citizenship status with the same position in the income distribution in Tennessee, West Virginia, North Carolina and Kentucky. Only residents of Maryland earn higher (Figure 14).

Figure 14: Comparison of Incomes of Virginia's Foreign-born Population with Median Income of Neighboring States



Source: ACS 2000-2007

This finding should not be surprising. It is in line with the earlier findings that immigrant earnings are strongly linked to the well being of their local economy. Since Maryland has a higher median income than Virginia, it is only reasonable to expect that its residents, native-born and foreign-born, would have higher median incomes than foreign-born residents of Virginia.

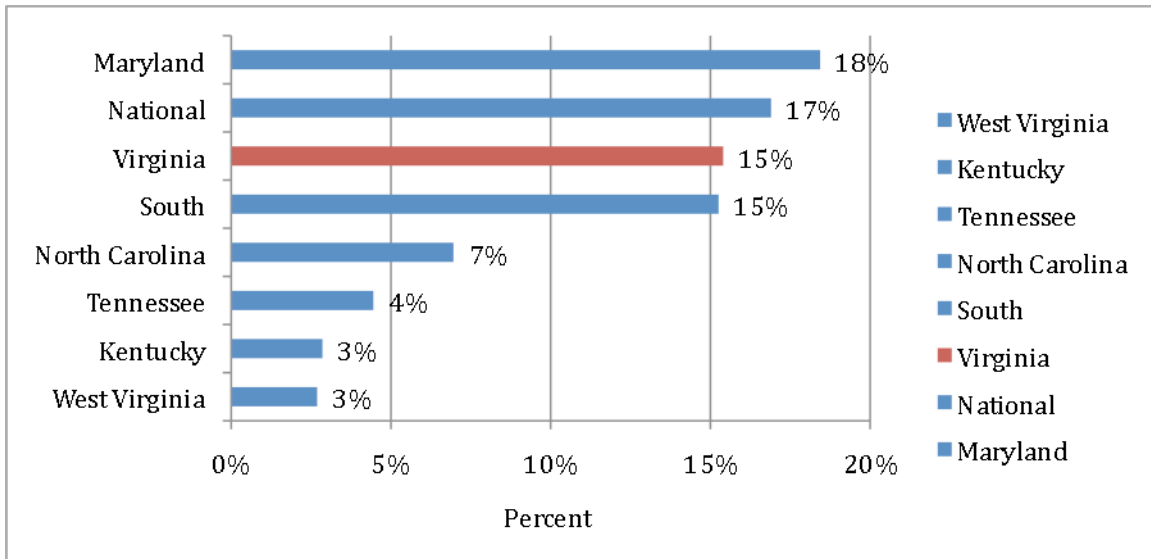
A comparison of incomes of foreign-born residents of Virginia to incomes of foreign-born residents in the South produces similar findings. The median income for immigrants in Virginia is higher than that of immigrants in

the South, an observation holding true for all years of analysis. Immigrants in Virginia not only earn higher than their counterparts in the South, but also earn higher than the native-born and overall population in the South. Again, this finding is compatible with the earlier conclusion that economic productivity of foreign-born residents is associated with the economic well being of their respective regions.

Entrepreneurship

Virginia’s immigrant entrepreneurs make up 15 percent of the state’s total entrepreneurial activities, a rate similar to the national and regional averages but comfortably exceeding that of its neighboring states (with the exception of Maryland). Immigrants in Virginia are overrepresented in the entrepreneurial sector relative to their share of the workforce. Immigrants comprise 15 percent of the state’s entrepreneurial activities while composing only 13 percent of the larger labor force. This phenomenon, however, is not unique to Virginia, as illustrated by Figure 15.

Figure 15: Foreign-born Residents’ Percent Share of Entrepreneurial Activity

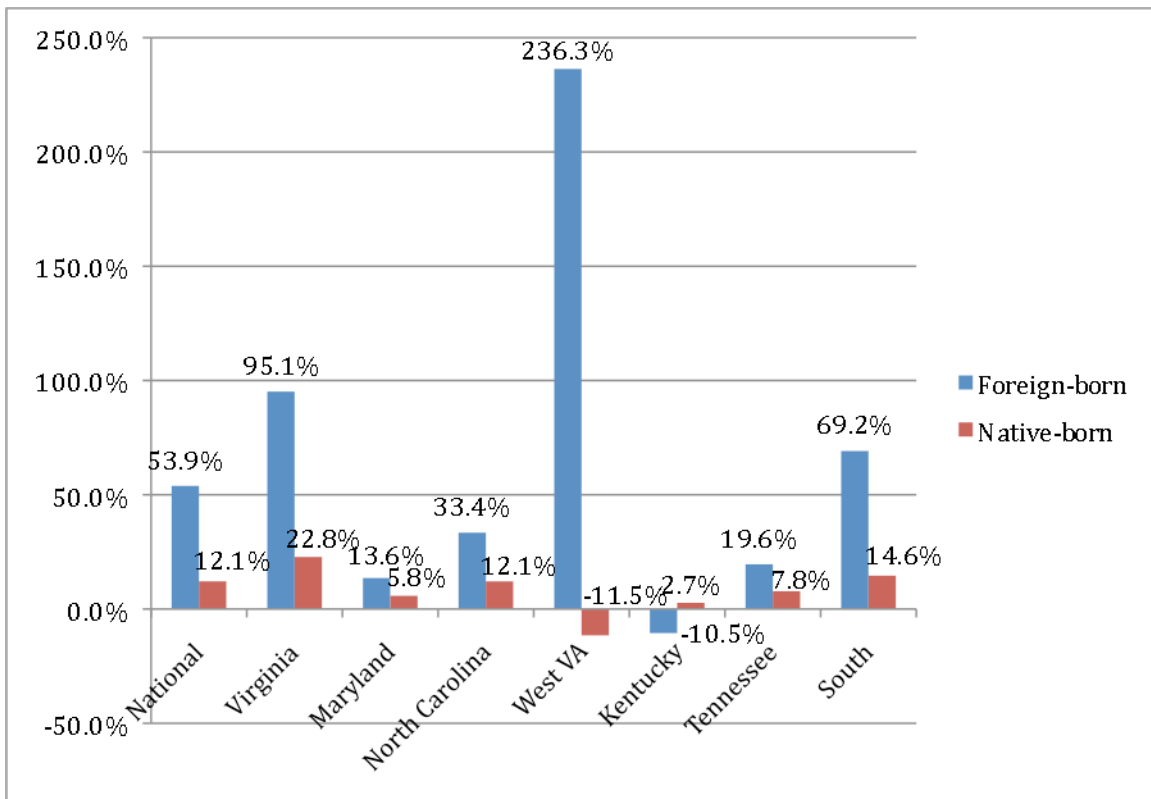


Source: ACS 2000-2007

Foreign-born entrepreneurship is not only thriving in Virginia, it is also growing, as seen in Figure 16. From 2000 to 2007, entrepreneurship by immigrants in Virginia increased 95 percent, compared to only 23 percent by native-born residents. This level of growth is not mirrored in the states neighboring Virginia. North Carolina, Maryland, and Tennessee all showed more modest increases (between 14 and 33 percent) in foreign-born

entrepreneurship, while West Virginia foreign-born entrepreneurship increased by over 230 percent. Kentucky showed the only loss in foreign-born entrepreneurship of the states neighboring Virginia (-10.5 percent). The native-born entrepreneurship growth of the neighboring states also differs from that seen in Virginia, with North Carolina, Maryland, Tennessee, and Kentucky showing more modest levels of growth (3 to 12 percent) and West Virginia showing a loss of 11.5 percent in the native-born entrepreneurship rate from 2000 to 2007. Also noteworthy is that Virginia's foreign-born entrepreneurship numbers outpace the national average by 41 percent and the regional average by 26 percent.

Figure 16: Percent Change in Entrepreneurship Participation Rates from 2000 to 2007



Source: ACS 2000-2007

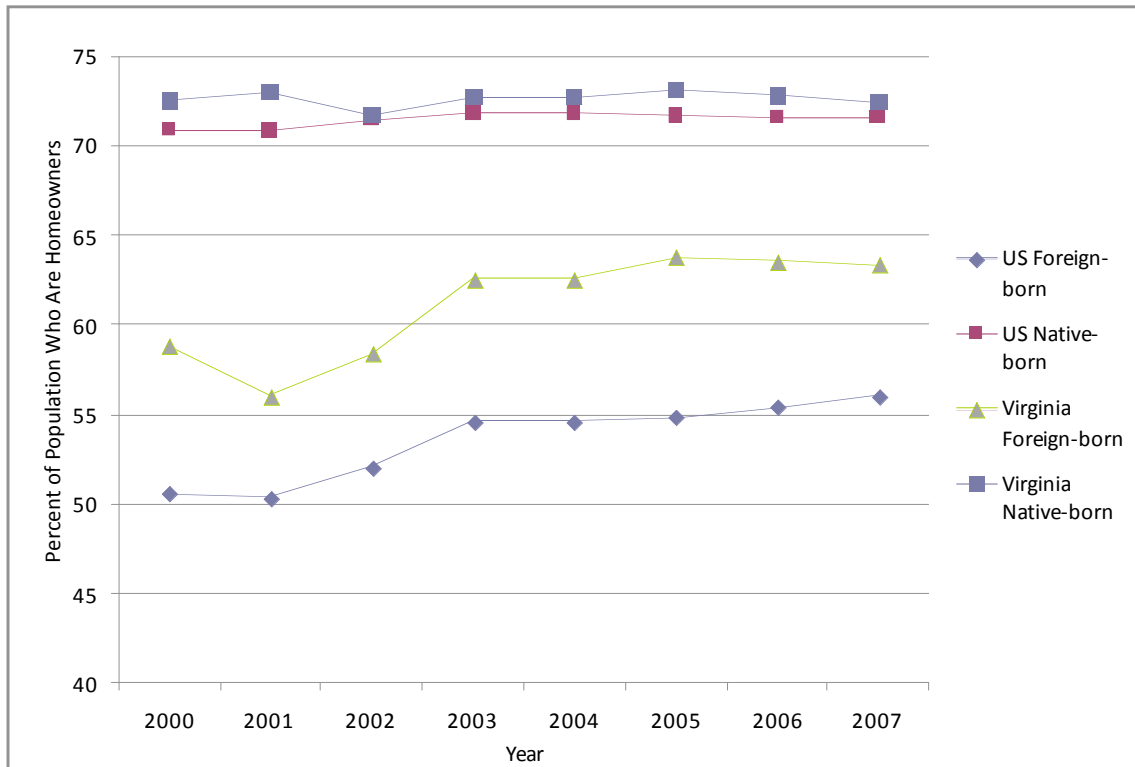
Housing

Homeownership rates have been tied to community involvement and integration, and the lure of the American dream of a home with a white picket fence is still a powerful one. Homeownership rates among immigrants can be an important statistic to determine the level of integration within communities

and whether immigrants desire a similar lifestyle to the native-born population.

Virginia immigrants have higher levels of homeownership than immigrants nationwide by about 10 percent. As shown in Figure 17, both the percentage of Virginia immigrants and United States immigrants who own homes increased from 2000 to 2007, with Virginia immigrants remaining about 10 percentage points ahead of United States immigrants.

Figure 17. Homeownership Rates from 2000 to 2007



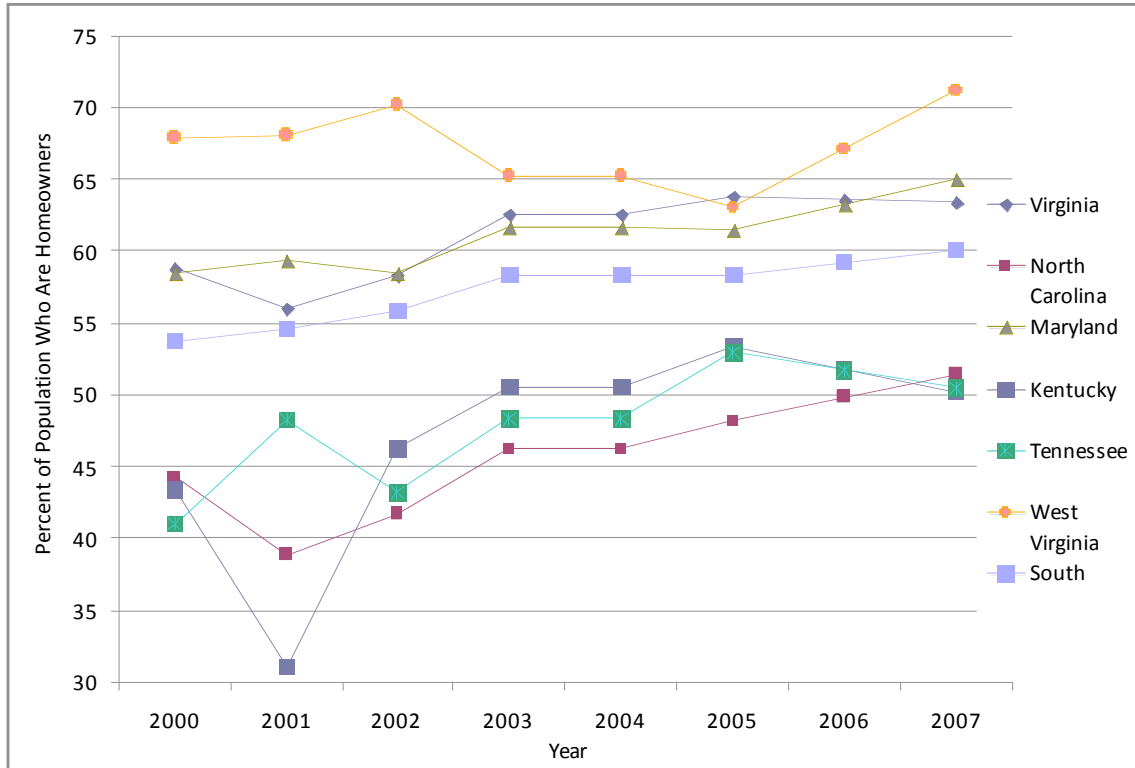
Source: ACS 2000-2007

Virginia immigrants have lower rates of homeownership than either United States native-born or the Virginia native-born population. However, while the rate of homeownership for both native-born populations held steady from 2000 to 2007, the rate of homeownership for Virginia immigrants increased.

From a statewide and regional context, Virginia immigrants are on the high end of home ownership. Immigrants in Kentucky, Tennessee and North Carolina have lower rates of homeownership, immigrants in West Virginia have higher rates of homeownership, and immigrants in Maryland have comparable rates of home ownership to immigrants in Virginia. Virginia immigrants have higher homeownership rates than immigrants in the

Southern region of the United States, as can be seen from Figure 18. The national average is in between the two groups of states.

Figure 18. Homeownership Rates from 2000-2007

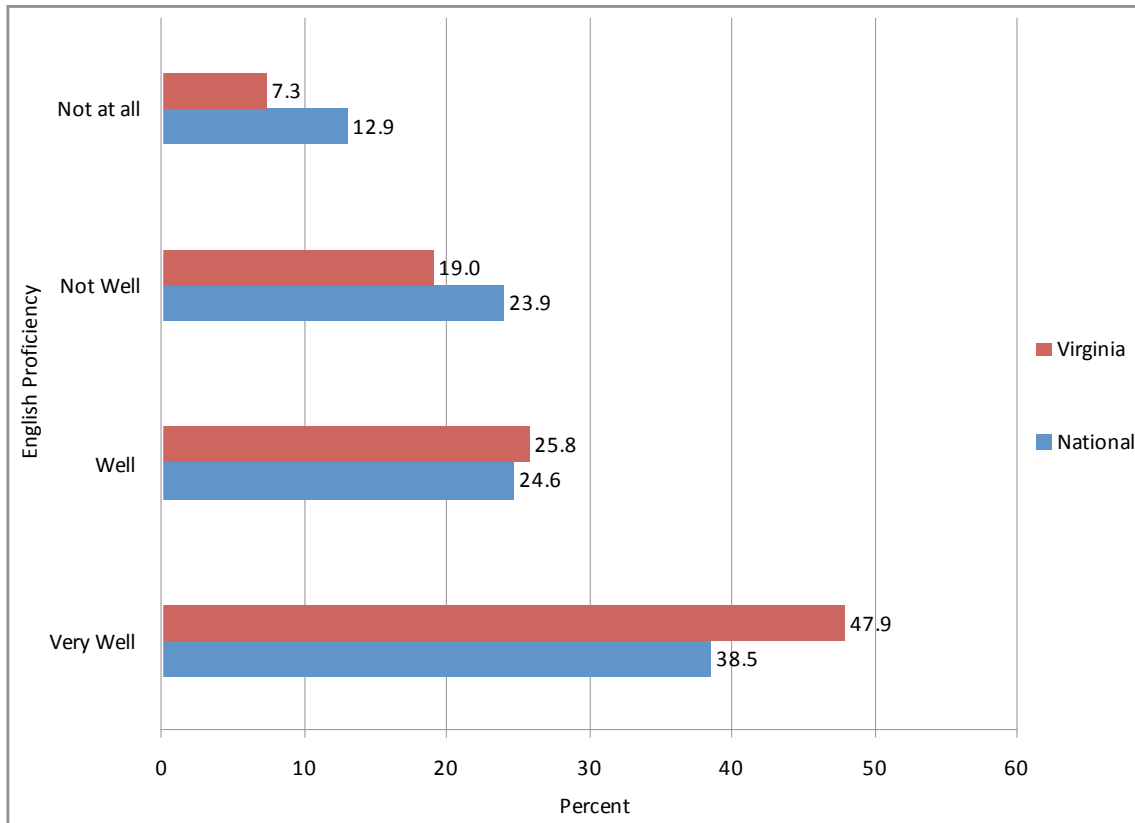


Source: ACS 2000-2007

English Speaking Ability

Immigrants in Virginia have better English language speaking abilities than immigrants in the rest of the United States. Taking the mean values from 2000-2007, represented in Figure 19, the percentage of immigrants in Virginia who reported speaking English “very well” was almost 48 percent, while the corresponding figure for immigrants from the United States was only about 35 percent. The percentage of immigrants reporting that they spoke English “well” was similar in Virginia to the national level. Among immigrants in the United States, 12 percent did not speak any English at all, while only 7 percent of Virginia’s foreign-born residents did not speak any English at all.

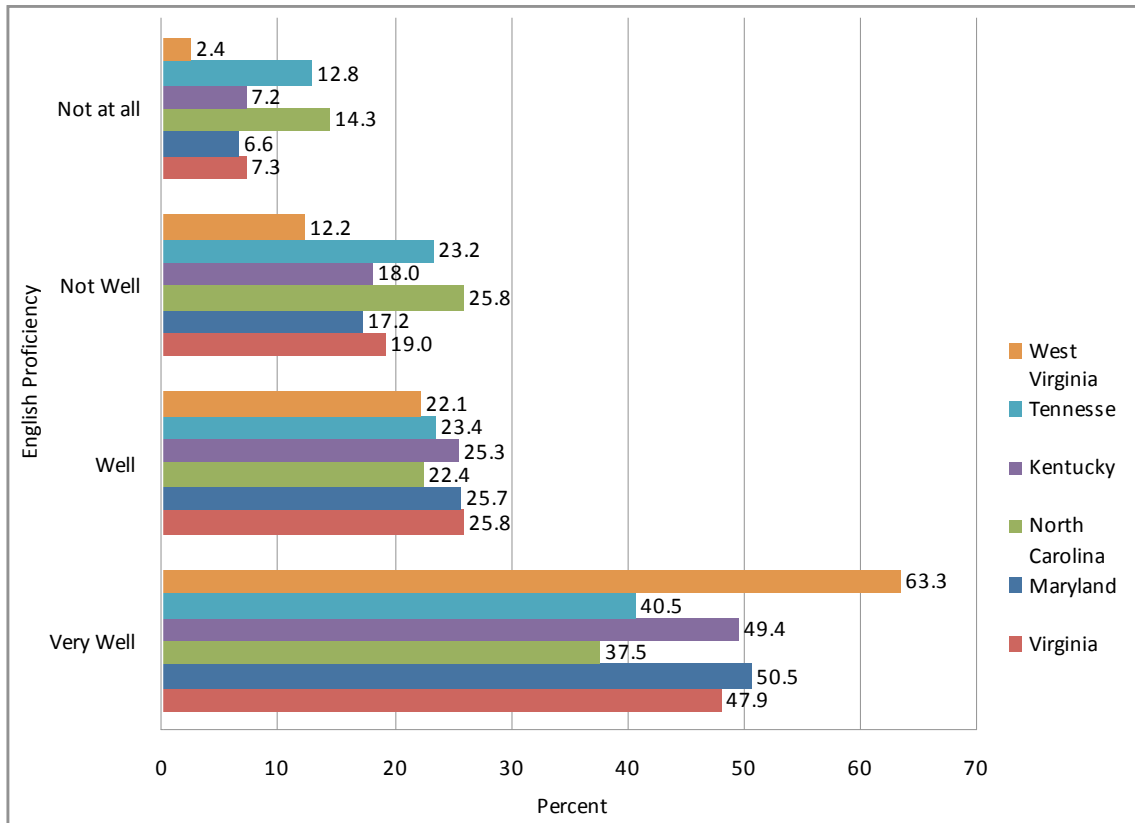
Figure 19. English Proficiency of Foreign-born Residents in the United States and Virginia (2000-2007 Mean Values)



Source: ACS 2000-2007

Immigrants in Virginia have higher English language proficiency than immigrants in some neighboring states, as shown in Figure 20. North Carolina and Tennessee have a smaller percentage of immigrants who speak English “very well”, whereas Maryland, Kentucky and West Virginia have higher percentages. In Virginia the percentage of immigrants who did not speak any English at all was around 7 percent; lower than North Carolina’s 14 percent and Tennessee’s 12 percent, but comparable to Kentucky’s 7 percent and Maryland’s 6.6 percent.

Figure 20. English Proficiency of Foreign-born Residents, State Comparison (2000—2007 Mean Values)



Source: ACS 2000-2007

Compared to the South region, immigrants in Virginia are more proficient in the English language. Taking the mean values from 2005-2007, 48 percent of Virginia’s immigrants say they speak English “very well”, compared to only 39 percent of immigrants in the entire South region. The proportion of immigrants speaking no English at all in Virginia is half that of immigrants in the South - while 14 percent in the South compared to only 7 percent of foreign-born Virginia residents.

Citizenship

There are a number of reasons why immigrants come to the United States. Some come to be reunited with family and establish new lives. Others come for temporary visits to study, work, or travel. To meet the needs of these varying levels of membership desired by immigrants, there are similarly varying types of visas. Temporary visitors can enter on nonimmigrant visas, and those interested in long-term residency or citizenship can enter under immigrant visas. No distinction has been made

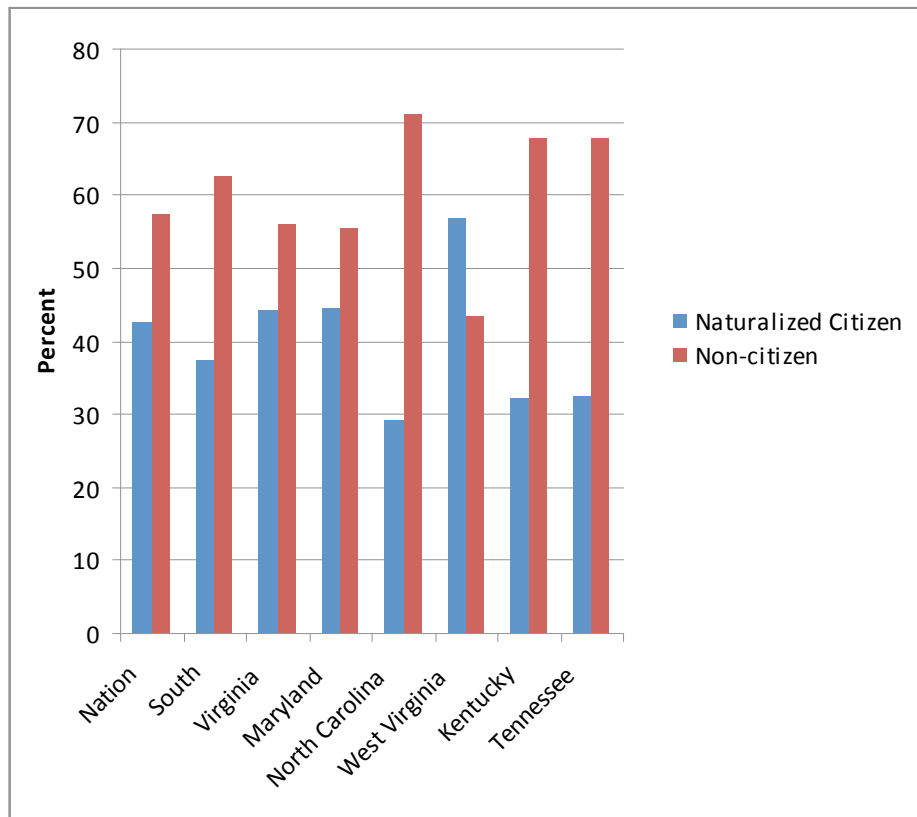
between the visa types for the purposes of this study. All foreign-born are considered immigrants. Measuring the foreign-born constituency in Virginia based on visa type would be complicated and problematic due to the constantly changing framework of immigration legislation handed down by Congress and the expanding number of visa options that reach well into the double digits. It is, however, possible to gain an understanding of community acclimation by studying naturalization rates.

Naturalization is the mode by which foreign-born residents become United States citizens. To gain a sense of the relationships immigrants are building with their communities, we will compare the proportion of naturalized citizens to non-citizens in the immigrant population. Then, to get an understanding of both the process by which immigrants naturalize and the relative willingness of Virginian immigrants to do so, we will study how the portion of naturalized citizens versus non-citizens changes over time based on date of entry. While these numbers do not incorporate long-term permanent residents – those who settle in the United States for decades, establishing deep ties to their local communities while building families and careers – our numbers do provide a mode of comparison between immigrants in different parts of Virginia and the United States.

Nationwide in 2007, 43 percent of the foreign-born population had completed the naturalization process and become US citizens. The ratio of naturalized citizens to non-citizens has risen slightly over time from 40 percent in 2000. The South has a significantly lower rate of naturalization at 37.5 percent. However, the South does show the national trend of steady growth in naturalization rates over time, since in 2000 the naturalization rate for the South region was slightly lower (36 percent).

Virginia's naturalization rate is more consistent with the nation than the rest of the South, but with significant regional disparities. A comparison of the naturalization rates in Virginia and those of neighboring states, the South region, and the United States is given in Figure 21. The state naturalization rate is 44 percent, just higher than the national average. This means that almost half of Virginia's immigrants have completed the naturalization process.

Figure 21. Naturalization Rates by State



Source: ACS 2000-2007

The naturalization figures given in this report only account for those immigrants who have completed the process. They do not include immigrants who intend to naturalize but have not yet initiated or completed the process. As a result, they vastly underestimate the potential long-term commitment of Virginia's foreign-born population. Because of the structure of immigration, obtaining citizenship is a long process. Continuous residency requirements can extend the timeline ten years or more in many cases. It is highly possible that many non-citizens who emigrated here in the most recent decades fully intend to complete the naturalization process, but for any number of reasons have not yet done so. Measuring the membership aspirations of immigrants by citizenship attainment is deceptive, especially considering 44 percent of Virginia immigrants and 55 percent of all immigrants in the United States have entered since 2000. These recent immigrants are significantly less likely to have completed naturalization by 2007.

To further demonstrate this point Table 4 immigrants based on decade of entry and citizenship status. Table 4 shows that naturalization rates for the earliest entry dates are consistently above 90 percent, and entry dates closer to the present experience a significant drop-off in naturalization rate. In other

words, the less time since an immigrant’s entry date, the less likely they are to have naturalized. On the other hand, the longer the stay, the more likely an immigrant is to complete the naturalization process and commit to citizenship.

Table 4. Percent of Foreign-born Who have Naturalized Based on Decade of Entry

	Nation	Virginia
Before		
1950	92.0	89.5
1950s	87.3	92.9
1960s	80.7	84.4
1970s	73.5	83.8
1980s	58.9	70.9
1990s	35.5	41.6
2000s	9.0	9.0

Source: ACS 2000-2007

Based on the 2007 data, just over 90 percent of those who entered the United States before 1950 are now U.S. citizens. The Virginia statistic matches that number at 90 percent. For more recent entry dates, there is an interesting difference between Virginia and the rest of the United States. Nationally, naturalization rates dip below 80 percent after 1970, but this does not occur in Virginia until after 1980. Similarly, naturalization rates fall below 60 percent on the national level after 1980 but do not do so in Virginia until 1990. This means that while Virginia has a naturalization rate similar to that of the nation as a whole, Virginian immigrants who do naturalize do so more quickly than immigrants elsewhere. This was true in the year 2000 as well, implying a continuous occurrence unique to Virginia. One possible explanation is Virginia’s large military presence. Military service is a direct path to citizenship that results in attainment of citizenship much more quickly than more traditional naturalization paths. This is, however, only one of many possible reasons for the unique experience of Virginia’s immigrants.

It should be noted that while Virginia has a similar rate of naturalization to the nation as a whole, a larger percentage of immigrants choose to become citizens in Virginia than in the rest of the Southern Region, where only 37.5 percent of the foreign-born population are naturalized, based on 2007 data. West Virginia, with 56 percent of its population having obtained citizenships, is the only state in the area with a significantly higher proportion of naturalized immigrants than Virginia. Maryland has a similar rate of naturalization at 44.5 percent, and less than a third of the foreign-born population have naturalized in North Carolina, Kentucky, and Tennessee.

Virginia Regional Analysis

To further investigate attributes of immigrants within Virginia, this study divided Virginia into five regions. The regional demarcations were based on the Public Use Microdata Area (PUMA) codes in the 2005 and 2007 American Community Survey. The five regions are Northern Virginia, Tidewater Virginia, Northwestern Virginia, Southwestern Virginia, and Central Virginia.

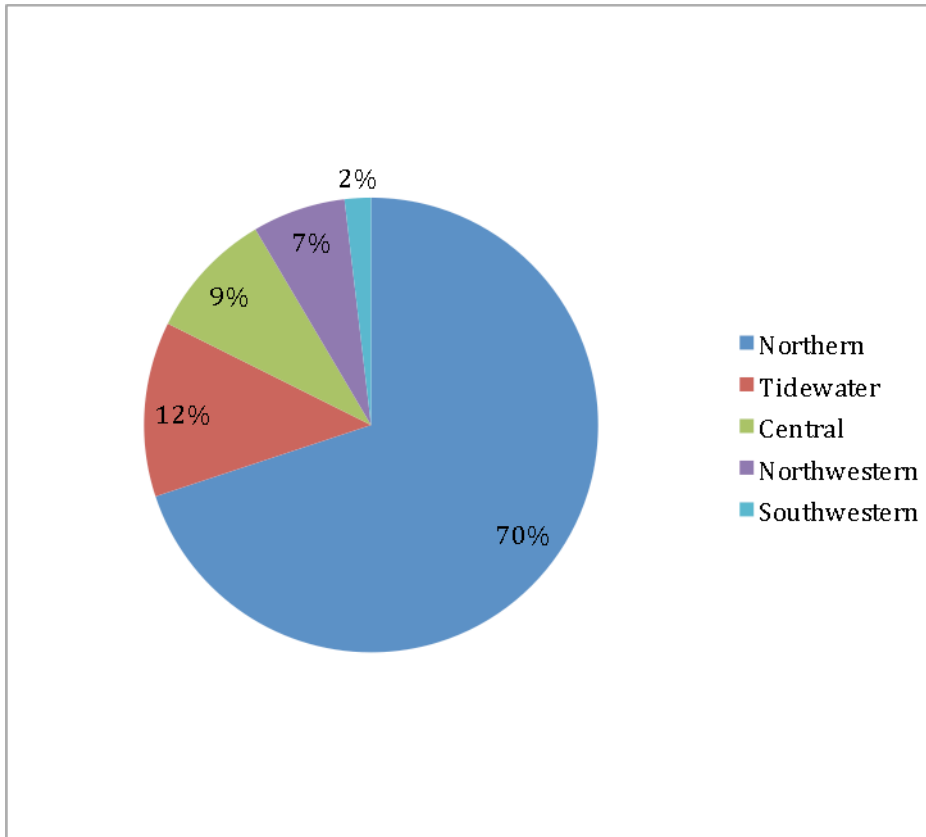
While all regions have unique attributes, Northern Virginia clearly stood out from other regions due to the large amount of immigrants in the region. Northern Virginia is home to almost 70 percent of the Virginia's total foreign-born population. This accounts for approximately 20 percent of Northern Virginia's population. Hence, state-wide averages for the immigrant population tend to be skewed toward those of Northern Virginia. This distinction aside, the immigrant populations of the other four regions of Virginia are large enough to draw conclusions on the well-being of immigrants in Virginia and are therefore thoroughly analyzed in this report.

Northern Virginia

Number of Immigrants in Region

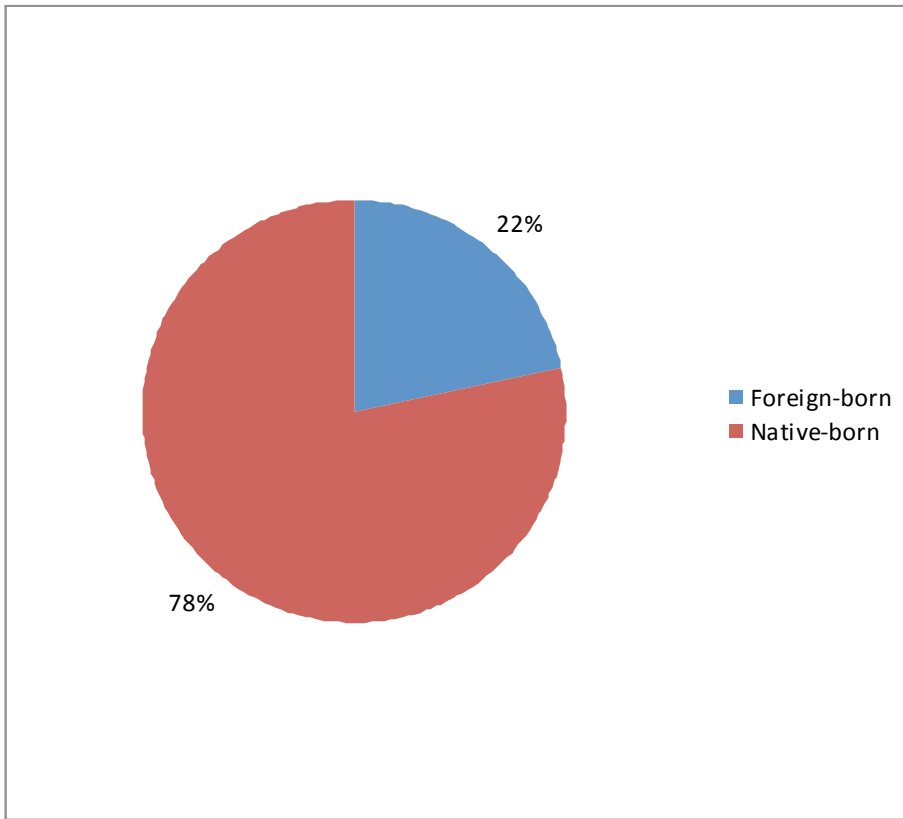
Northern Virginia accounts for by far the largest portion of Virginia's foreign-born population, shown in Figure 22. In 2007, 70 percent of the state's total foreign-born population lived in Northern Virginia, which accounted for over one fifth of population in the region, shown in Figure 23. The portion of foreign-born residents in the region has grown slightly over time, from 21.0 percent to 21.7 percent between 2005 and 2007, a trend consistent with the rest of the state.

Figure 22. Percent of Foreign-born Population by Region in Virginia



Source: ACS 2000-2007

Figure 23. Population Composition of Northern Virginia



Source: ACS 2005-2007

Where Immigrants are From

Northern Virginia, with its proximity to Washington, DC, is often seen as a hotbed for cultural diversity on a domestic and international level. The breadth of nationalities represented in the Northern Virginia immigrant population supports this sentiment. Only one nation, El Salvador at 12.7 percent, represents more than ten percent of the area’s immigrant population. The top five countries of origin for Northern Virginia Immigrants is shown in Table 5.

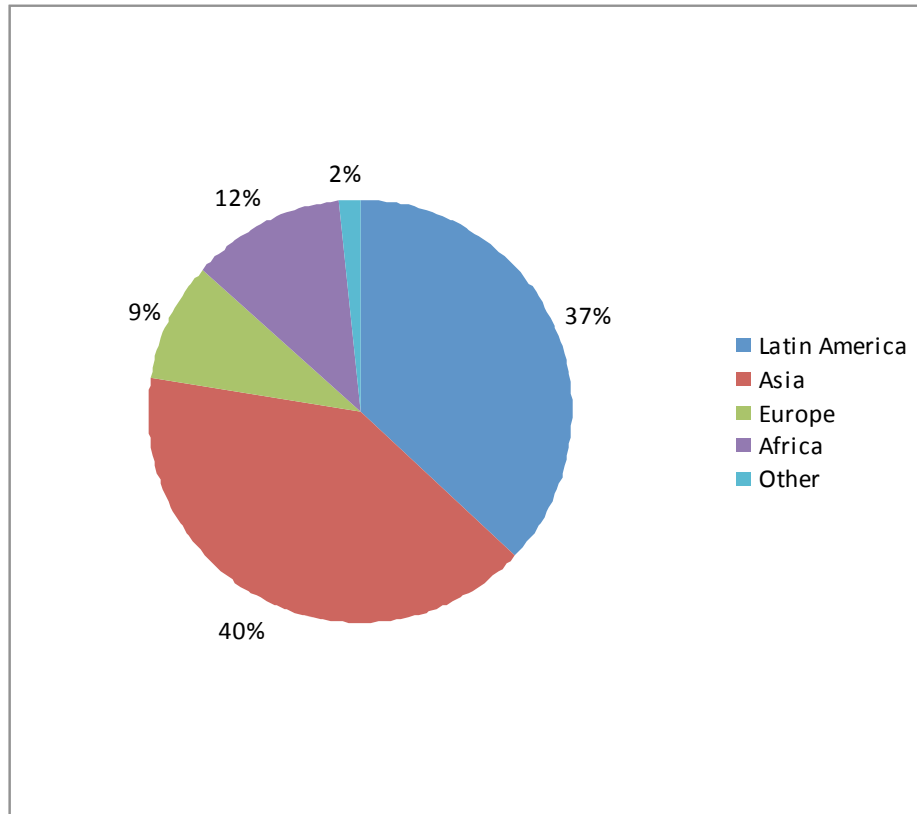
Table 5. Top Five Countries of Origin for Northern Virginia Foreign-born

Country	Percentage
El Salvador	12.7
Korea	7.1
India	6.3
Vietnam	5.8
Mexico	5.0

Source: ACS 2000-2007

Otherwise, the region has a similarly varied immigrant makeup to the rest of Virginia, the only major difference being a lower prevalence of Europeans in the immigrant population. Statewide, 12 percent of immigrants come from Europe, while in Northern Virginia the figure is only 9 percent, as shown in Figure 24. This difference is balanced by a slightly higher percentage of immigrants from Latin America and Africa.

Figure 24. Northern Virginia Foreign-born Area of Origin



Source: ACS 2005-2007

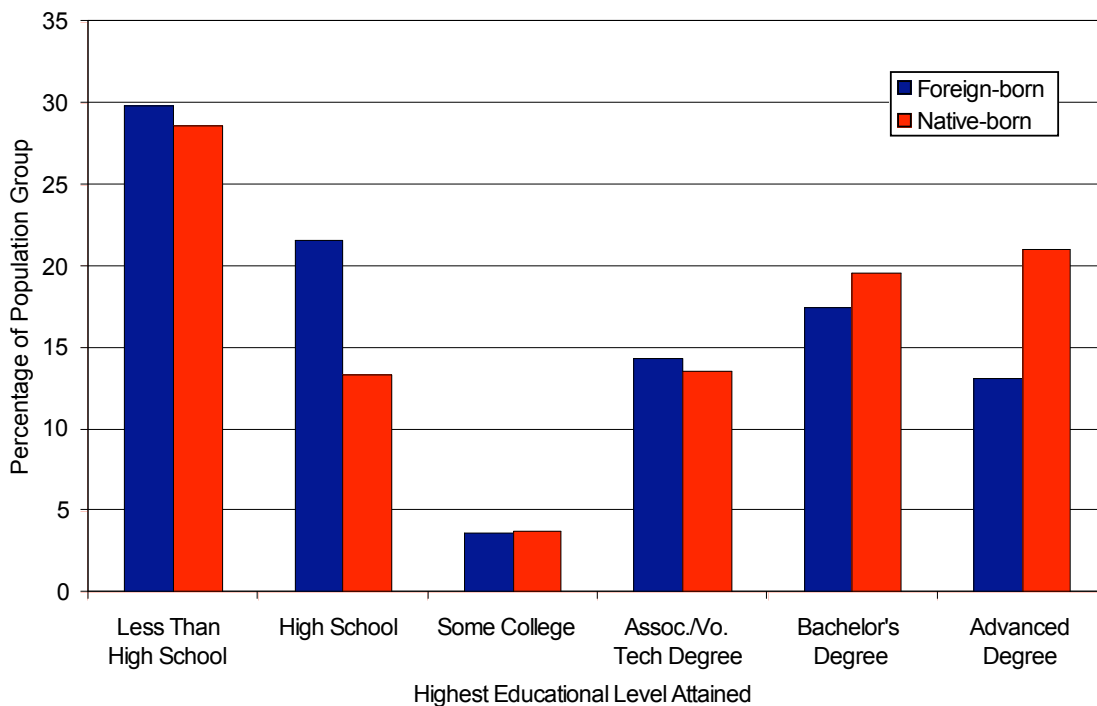
Length of Stay

The available data from 2005 revealed the average length of stay in the US for immigrants in Northern Virginia to be 15 years. By 2007, the average length of stay increased slightly to 15.5 years, a 3.3 percent increase over the period from 2005 to 2007.

Education

Figure 25 shows that immigrant education levels for the Northern Virginia region are comparable to those of the native-born population with two exceptions: those with only a high school diploma and those with an advanced degree. The immigrant population is more likely than the native-born population to have a high school diploma as the highest level of education. However, the native-born population is more likely than the immigrant population to have an advanced degree.

Figure 25. Educational Attainment of Northern Virginia Residents (2000-2007 Mean Values)



Source: ACS 2000-2007

Occupation

Immigrants in Northern Virginia are competitive with the native-born population in some occupations, and fill niches left by the native-born population in other occupations. The percentages of each population in the various occupational sectors are provided in Table 6. The top three occupations for immigrants are Sales, Office, and Construction, while the top three occupations for the native-born population are Sales, Office, and Management. About 7 percent of immigrants work in Information Technology, which is approximately the same proportion as the native-born population. Immigrants also work in Finance, Engineering, and Science

occupations in the same proportions as the native-born population. Immigrants are more likely than the native-born population to work in Food Service, Cleaning, Personal Care and Service, and Construction jobs than the native-born population, thereby filling voids in the workforce.

Table 6. Occupation of Northern Virginia Residents, 2007

	Foreign-born	Native-born
Office	11.0	14.4
Sales	10.6	10.4
Construction	10.3	3.5
Information Technology	7.5	7.8
Food Service	7.1	3.4
Management	6.6	9.8
Cleaning	6.5	1.7
Personal Care and Service	5.4	3.1
Transportation	5.2	3.1
Repair/Mechanics	3.4	2.1
Medical	3.4	2.7
Finance	3.1	3.8
Production/Factory	2.9	1.7
Education	2.8	8.0
Business	2.5	5.0
Engineering	2.0	2.8
Health (nursing/therapists)	1.9	0.9
Entertainment	1.6	3.2
Science	1.3	1.8
Legal	1.3	3.7
Protective Services	1.0	2.8
Unemployed	0.9	0.4
Counseling/Religious	0.9	1.7
Agriculture/Forestry	0.5	0.2
Military	0.3	1.3
Extraction	0.0	0.0

Source: ACS 2007

From 2005 to 2007, the distribution of occupations for immigrants in Northern Virginia remained fairly steady. There were slight decreases in the

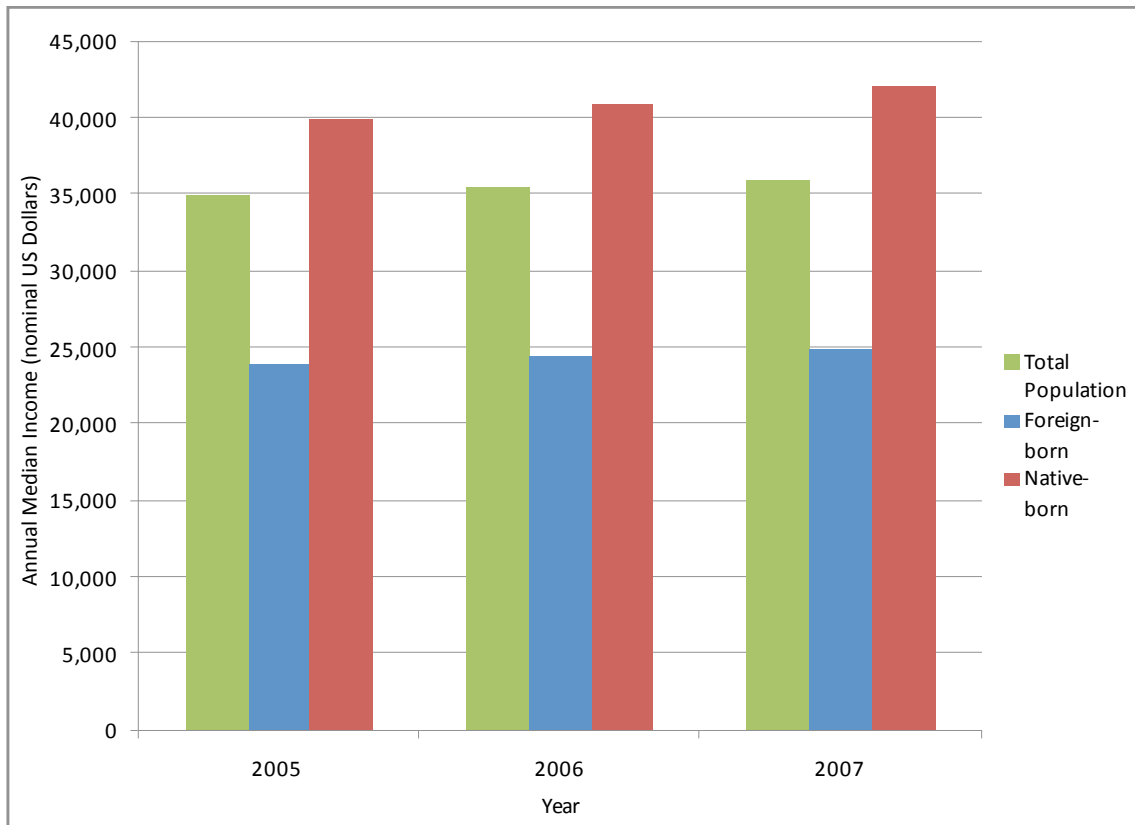
percent of immigrants working in Information Technology, Education, and Food Service occupations and slight increases in the percent of immigrants working in Personal Care and Service and Repair/Mechanic occupations.

Income

As seen in earlier comparison of income statistics, the foreign-born population tends to do well in regions with better economic performance. Therefore it is no surprise that foreign-born residents of Northern Virginia have a higher median income than immigrants in other parts of Virginia, as well as native residents of all other regional demarcations in Virginia. In 2007 the median income for a foreign-born resident in Northern Virginia was \$25,000, while the median income for a native-born resident in Tidewater Virginia was \$24,000, \$21,600 in Northwestern Virginia, \$15,000 in Southwestern Virginia, and \$ 22,800 in Central Virginia.

However, the median income of immigrants in Northern Virginia is considerably lower than the median income for native-born residents and the total population in the region. Despite the gap in incomes, the median income for immigrants is rising for each year, as shown in Figure 26 below.

Figure 26: Income of Northern Virginia Residents

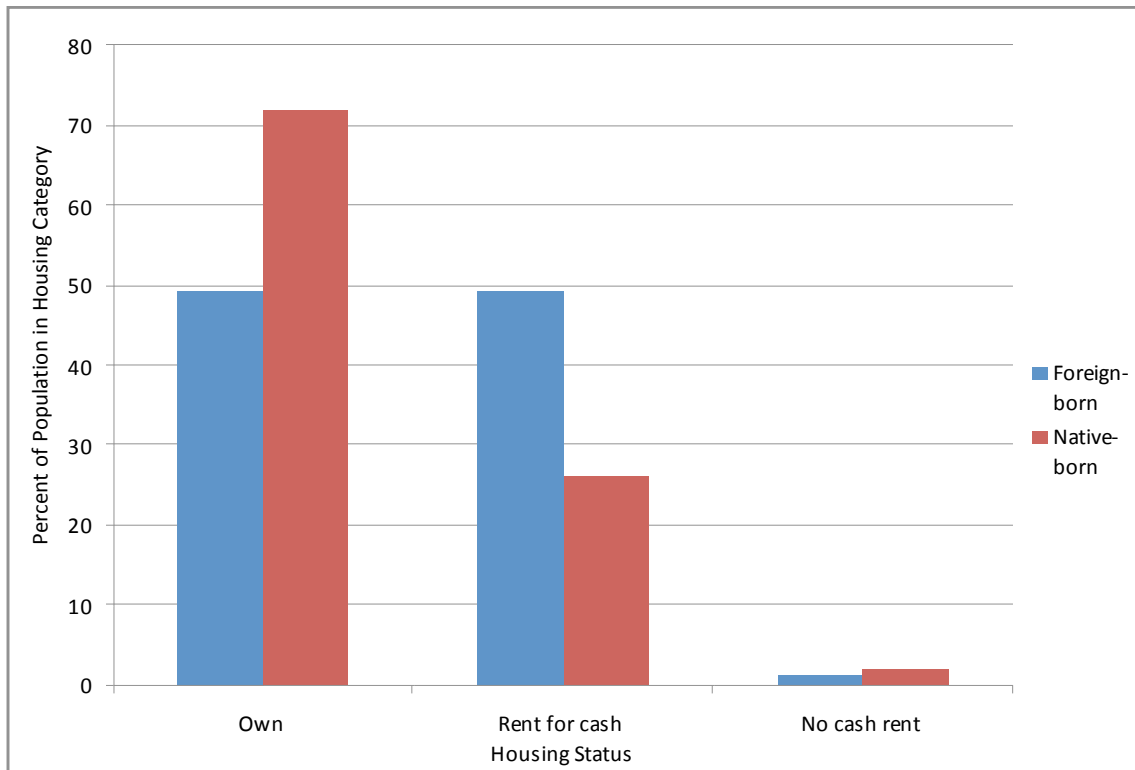


Source: ACS 2005-2007

Housing

Immigrants in Northern Virginia have a lower rate of homeownership than the native-born population, at 66 percent compared to 77 percent for the native-born population. This is demonstrated in Figure 27, which shows the breakdown of housing for both the native-born and foreign-born population in Northern Virginia.

Figure 27. Homeownership Rates in Northern Virginia



Source: ACS 2005-2007

Entrepreneurship

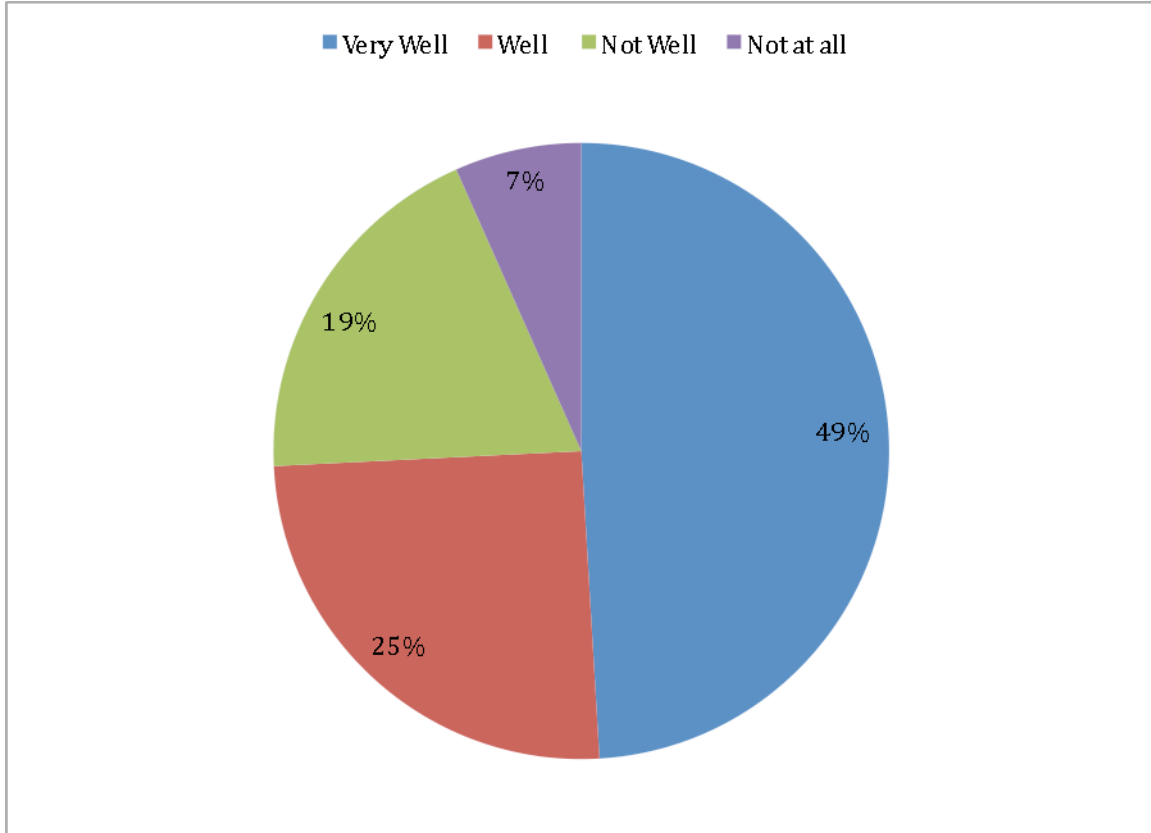
Northern Virginia possesses by far the greatest number of immigrant entrepreneurs in the state, both in absolute and relative terms. The region's immigrant entrepreneurs account for 31 percent of all entrepreneurship in the region. Northern Virginia houses 74 percent of the state's immigrant entrepreneurs with 47,883. This quantity outstrips the second most populous region of immigrant entrepreneurs, Tidewater, by over 41,000 individuals. Its share of regional entrepreneurship is also much larger, with Tidewater immigrants only possessing 8 percent of the region's entrepreneurship. From 2005 to 2007, immigrant entrepreneurship showed a 20 percent growth while total entrepreneurship rose only 7 percent. The 2007 numbers for the Northern Virginia region boast almost a 3 percent increase in the share of the region's total entrepreneurship.

English Speaking Ability

Among the foreign-born population in Northern Virginia, 49 percent speak English "very well", 25 percent speak English "well", and 19 percent do not speak English well. Therefore around 75 percent of the immigrant

population in Northern Virginia either speaks English very well or well. Only 7 percent of the immigrants do not speak any English. Figure 28 represents these numbers visually.

Figure 28. English Proficiency of Northern Virginia Foreign-born Residents (2005-2007 Mean Values)



Source: ACS 2005-2007

Citizenship

While Northern Virginia stands out from the rest of Virginia in a number of ways, it is on par in terms of citizenship attainment. In Northern Virginia, 44 percent of foreign-born residents are naturalized citizens. Of the region's immigrant, 53 percent have entered since 2000, a proportion similar to its northern neighbor Maryland and the rest of the nation. The average presence of naturalized citizens masks an unusual story. Every decade of entry, including 2000-2007, has a rate of naturalization over 50 percent. This means that recent immigrants to Northern Virginia are naturalizing much more quickly than immigrants in the rest of the nation. While it is difficult to judge the source of this anomaly, it could be a combination of factors, including military presence and higher refugee counts due to proximity to DC.

Tidewater Virginia

Number of Immigrants in Region

Tidewater accounts for Virginia's second highest portion of immigrants, with 12 percent of the overall total. Foreign-born residents were 5.4 percent of Tidewater's total population in 2007, up slightly from the 2005 figure of 5.2 percent. Tidewater is home to Hampton Roads metropolitan area, the third largest metropolitan area in Virginia. The foreign-born presence is actually slightly smaller in Hampton Roads than the rest of the region. Immigrants account for 4.6 percent of the population in Hampton Roads. This variation is likely due to the prevalence of migrant farm workers in the northernmost portion of the Tidewater region.

Where immigrants are From

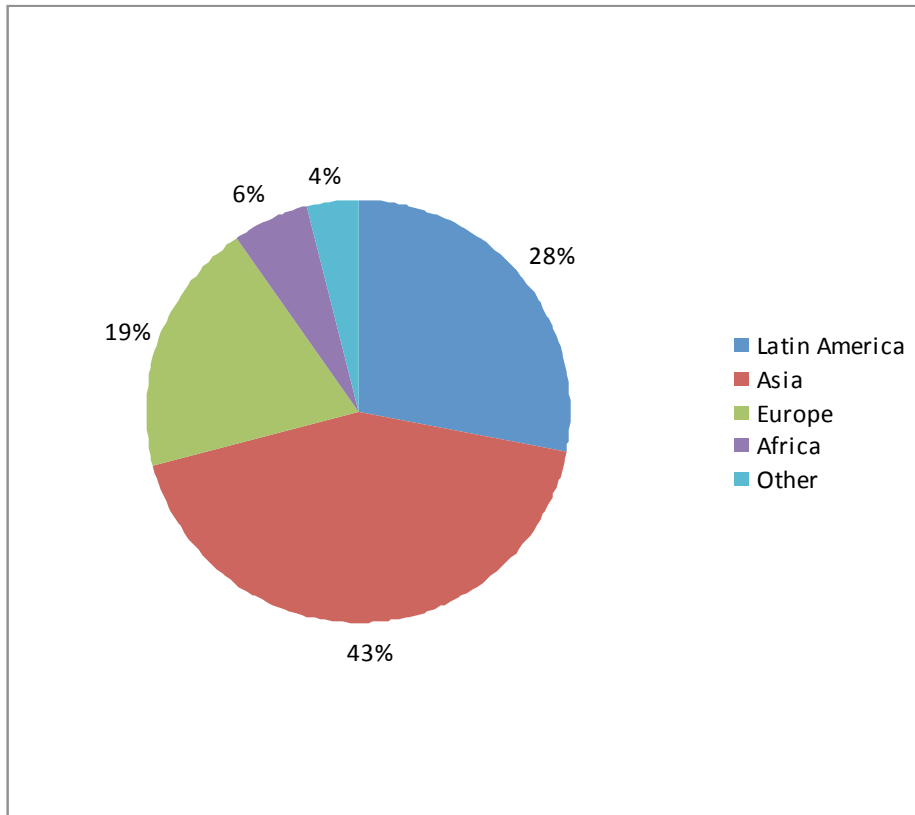
The most notable attribute of Tidewater's immigrant population in terms of country of origin is the strong presence of Philippine nationals. A full 21.4 percent of immigrants in Tidewater are from the Philippines. The next largest group is Mexican nationals with 7.9 percent of the population. The prevalence of Philippine nationals is lower in Hampton Roads than the rest of Tidewater, though still strong at 17.2 percent. This large population explains the slightly higher percentage of Asian immigrants compared to the rest of the state. Significantly, Latin America and Africa only account for 27.9 and 6.0 percent of the immigrant population in Tidewater respectively, but 35.4 and 10.2 percent in the rest of the state. European immigrants are 19.3 percent of the regional immigrant population, but just 12.1 percent of the immigrant population in the state as a whole. Table 7 shows the statistics for the top 5 countries of origin for Tidewater immigrants, and Figure 29 gives a breakdown of the area of origin for Tidewater immigrants.

Table 7. Top Five Countries of Origin for Tidewater Virginia Foreign-born

Country of Origin	Percent of Population
Philippines	21.4
Mexico	7.85
Germany	5.5
Korea	4.2
Vietnam	4.2

Source: ACS 2005-2007

Figure 29. Area of Origin for Tidewater Virginia Foreign-born Residents



Source: ACS 2005-2007

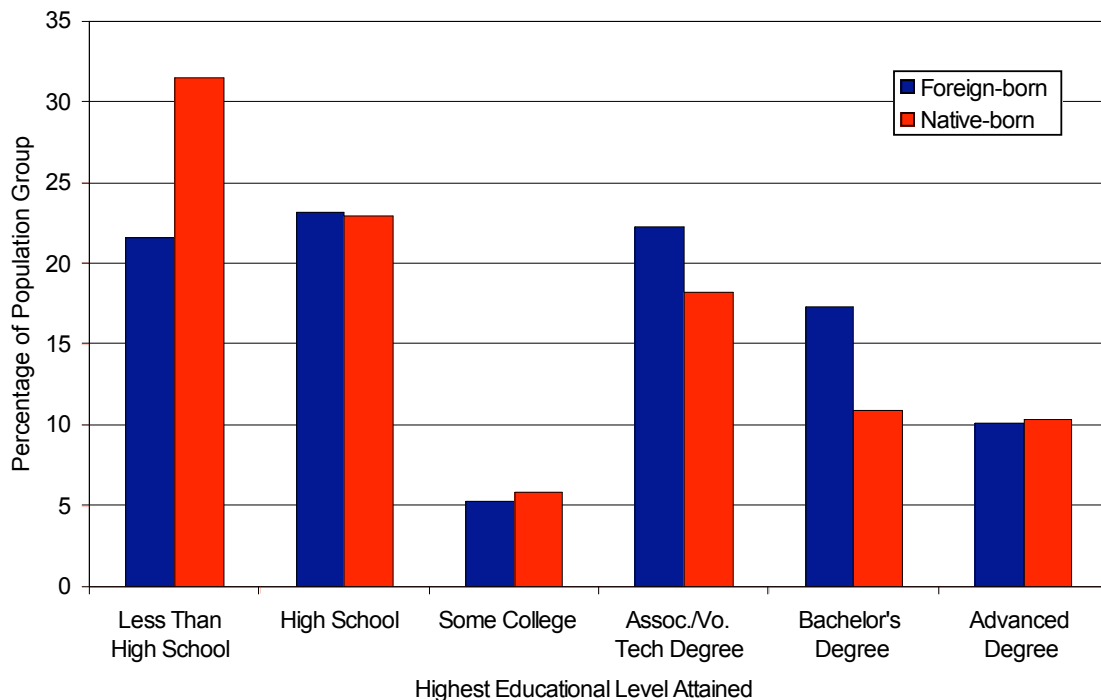
Length of Stay

In 2007, the average length of stay for immigrants in Tidewater was 19.6 years, the longest in the state. This number was down from its 2005 level of 20.5 years, representing a 4.6 percent reduction.

Education

The percentage of the immigrant and native-born population of the Tidewater region in each level of education is similar for the high school diploma, some college, and advanced degree categories, but differs for the less than high school diploma, Associate's/Vo-tech degree, and Bachelor's degree categories. Figure 30 shows that the native-born population is more likely than the immigrant population to have achieved less than a high school diploma, and that immigrants are more likely than the native-born population to have achieved an Associate's/Vo-tech degree or a Bachelor's degree.

Figure 30: Educational Attainment of Tidewater Virginia Residents



Source: ACS 2005-2007

The education situation for immigrants in Tidewater is changing. From 2005 to 2007, fewer immigrants have not achieved a high school diploma, while the percentage of immigrants achieving a high school diploma as the highest level of education increased from 19 percent to 28 percent. The percent of immigrants receiving an Associate's/Vo-tech degree as the highest level of education increased, but the percent of immigrants with an advanced degree decreased.

Occupation

Immigrants in Tidewater Virginia are comparable to the native-born population of Tidewater in terms of occupation. Immigrants are twice as likely to work in Food Service, eight times as likely to work in Agriculture/Forestry, twice as likely to work in Production/Factory, and one and a half times as likely to work in Construction occupations than the native-born population. The native-born population, on the other hand, is more likely to work in Management, Counseling/Religious, Protective Services, Office, Repair/Mechanics, and Military occupations than the immigrant population. As can be expected due to the large military presence in Tidewater Virginia, immigrants and the native-born population work in Military occupations at a higher rate than either population elsewhere in Virginia. As discussed in the

Citizenship section of the state as a whole, military service is a fast-track to citizenship for immigrants. Table 8 provides the overall breakdown of occupations for foreign-born and native-born Tidewater residents.

Table 8. Occupation of Tidewater Virginia Residents, 2007

	Foreign-born	Native-born
Sales	10.9	12.2
Office	9.7	14.3
Construction	9.6	6.5
Food Service	9.5	5.8
Production/Factory	8.6	4.5
Medical	5.7	4.4
Transportation	5.6	5.6
Education	4.9	5.8
Management	4.6	6.7
Personal Care and Service	4.1	2.9
Cleaning	4.1	3.2
Finance	2.8	1.7
Agriculture/Forestry	2.7	0.4
Information Technology	2.7	2.1
Engineering	2.5	2.4
Repair/Mechanics	2.5	4.8
Health (nursing/therapists)	2.1	2.0
Military	1.6	4.1
Business	1.5	2.0
Entertainment	1.5	1.9
Science	0.8	0.5
Protective Services	0.6	2.9
Legal	0.4	0.8
Counseling/Religious	0.4	1.8
Extraction	0.2	0.1
Unemployed	0.2	0.6

Source: ACS 2007

Rates of employment in different occupations among Tidewater immigrants did not change much from 2005 to 2007. There were small increases in the percent of immigrants in Finance, Food Service,

Agriculture/Forestry, Construction, and Transportation jobs. There were small decreases in the percent of immigrants in Management, Engineering, Education, Sales, and Office jobs.

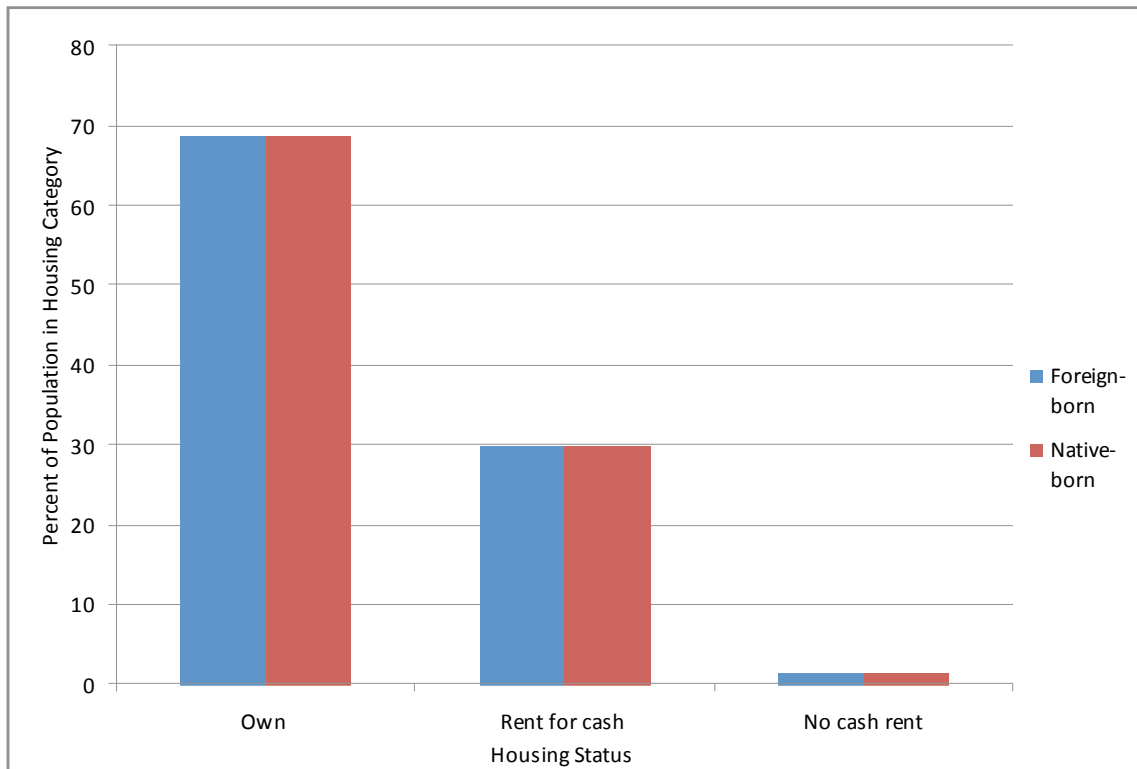
Income

In 2005, the median income for immigrants in Tidewater Virginia was \$21,200. By 2007, the median income for foreign-born residents had decreased to \$20,000. This is the only region in Virginia where the median income for the foreign-born population decreased between 2005 and 2007. The median income for the native-born population in the region, however, increased from 2005 to 2007. In 2005, the median income for native-born residents was \$23,400, and in 2007 it was \$24,000. The median income for the total population also showed an upward trend from 2005 to 2007, with income increasing from \$23,200 to \$23,800.

Housing

As can be seen from Figure 31, immigrants in Tidewater have exactly the same rates of homeownership as the native-born population.

Figure 31. Homeownership Rates in Tidewater Virginia



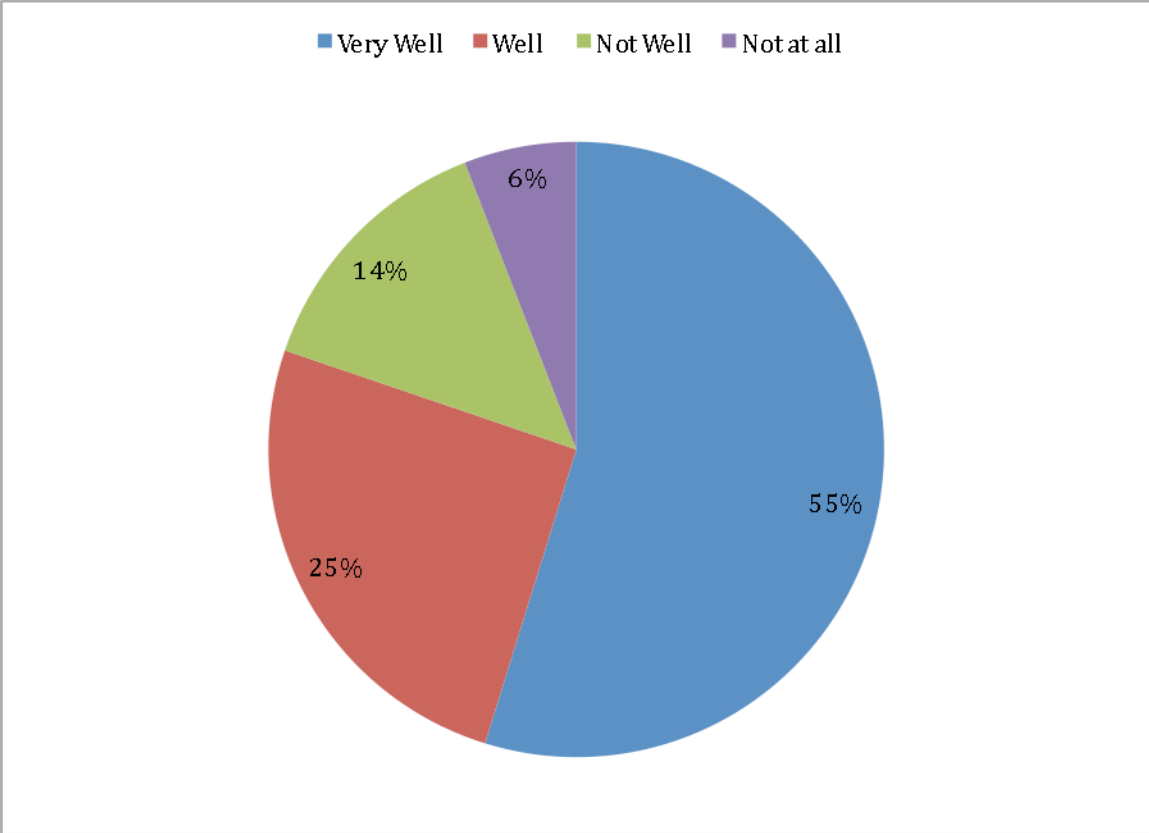
Entrepreneurship

The Tidewater region houses the second largest population of immigrant entrepreneurs in Virginia, though possibly not for much longer. As of 2007, the region included 6,436 foreign-born entrepreneurs, a 9 percent decline (since 2005) when total entrepreneurship fell by only 5 percent. Immigrants composed 8 percent of total regional entrepreneurship, compared to 12 percent of total immigrant entrepreneurship statewide.

English Speaking Ability

Immigrants in Tidewater Virginia have impressive English speaking ability compared to other regions in Virginia. As shown in Figure 32, more than half of the region's foreign-born population (55 percent) speaks English "very well" and only 6 percent speaks no English at all. A quarter of the immigrants in the region speak English "well", while 14 percent of immigrants rate their proficiency as "not well".

Figure 32. English Proficiency of Tidewater Virginia Foreign-born Residents (2005-2007 Mean Values)

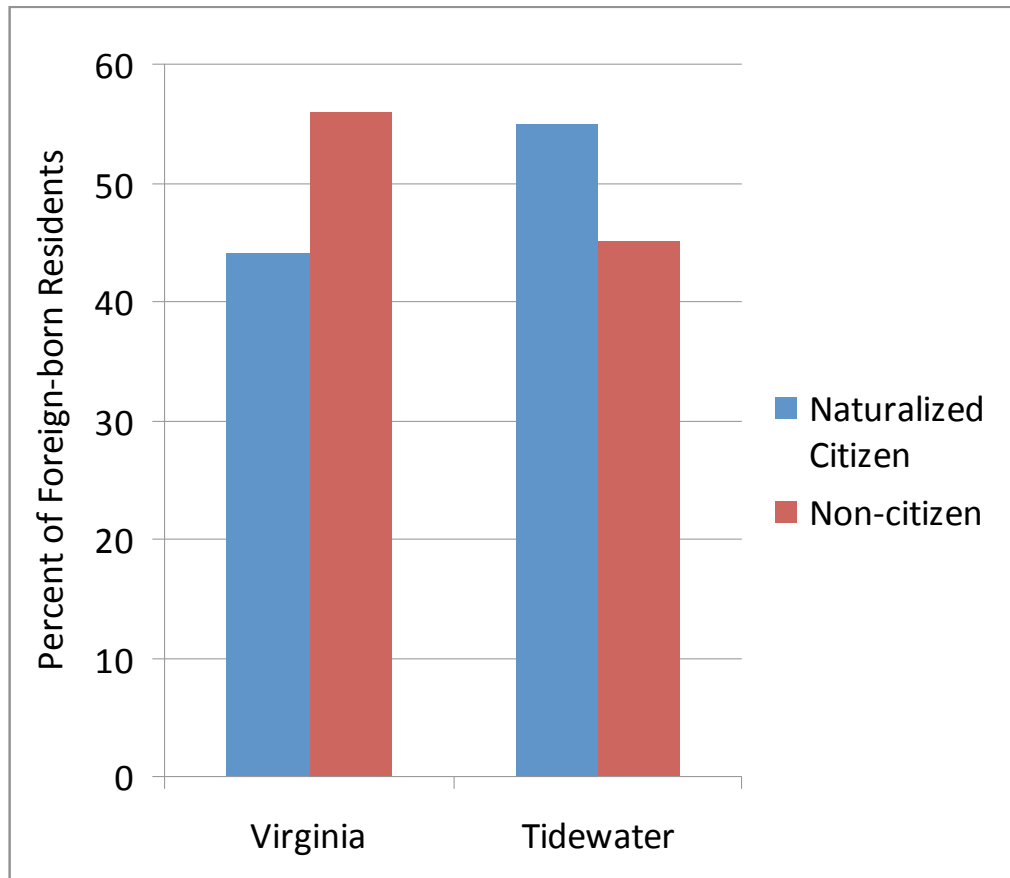


Source: ACS 2005-2007

Citizenship

Tidewater has a unique immigrant composition when it comes to citizenship status, nearly the opposite of the state as a whole. In Tidewater, 55 percent of foreign-born residents are naturalized with only 45 percent having non-citizen status, with the opposite being true for Virginia as a whole. Figure 33 illustrates this comparison. This is likely due to the large military presence in Hampton Roads, though Hampton Roads' value is less than a percentage point higher than the rest of the region. Immigrants in Hampton Roads do naturalize more quickly than those in the rest of the region, and immigrants in the region naturalize more quickly than the rest of the state, though not nearly to the level of Northern Virginia.

Figure 33. Naturalization Rates for Virginia and Tidewater Virginia Foreign-born Residents



Source: ACS 2005-2007

Northwestern Virginia

Number of Immigrants in Region

Northwestern Virginia accounts for 7 percent of Virginia's overall immigrant population and hosts just over one million immigrants, totaling 4.3 percent of the regional population in 2007. This is up from the 2005 estimate of 3.6 percent.

Where Immigrants are From

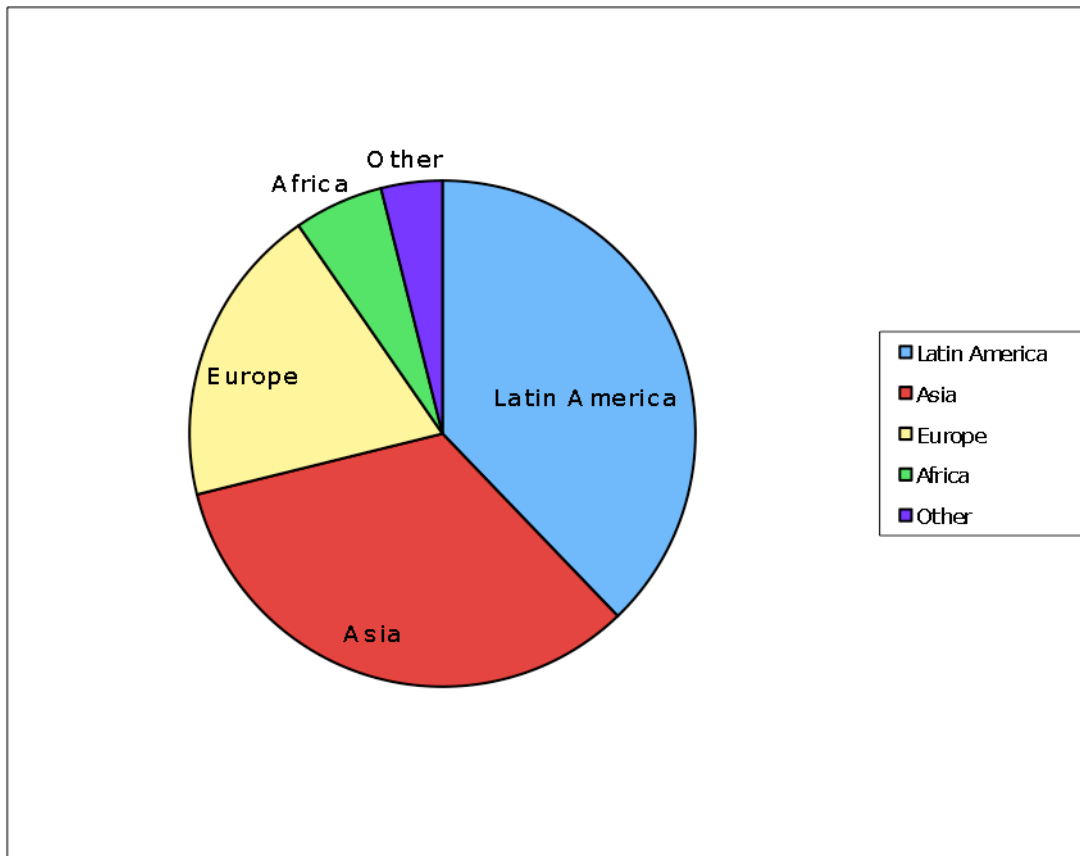
Northwestern Virginia has only one subpopulation that captures more than 5 percent of the immigrant population. At 19.7 percent of the whole, Mexican nationals dominate the immigrant landscape of this region. While this is 10 percentage points lower than the national average, it is also about 10 percentage points higher than the state average. Otherwise, the population is evenly balanced between immigrants hailing from Latin America, Asia, and Europe, with Africa and the remaining categories making up less than 10 percent of the region's immigrant population. Table 9 gives the top 5 countries of origin for immigrants in Northwestern Virginia, and the global areas of origin are represented in Figure 34.

Table 9. Top Five Countries of Origin

Country of Origin	Percent of Population
Mexico	19.7
Korea	4.8
India	4.8
Canada	3.8
Germany	3.7

Source: ACS 2005-2007

Figure 34. Area of Origin for Northwestern Foreign-born



Source: ACS 2005-2007

Length of Stay

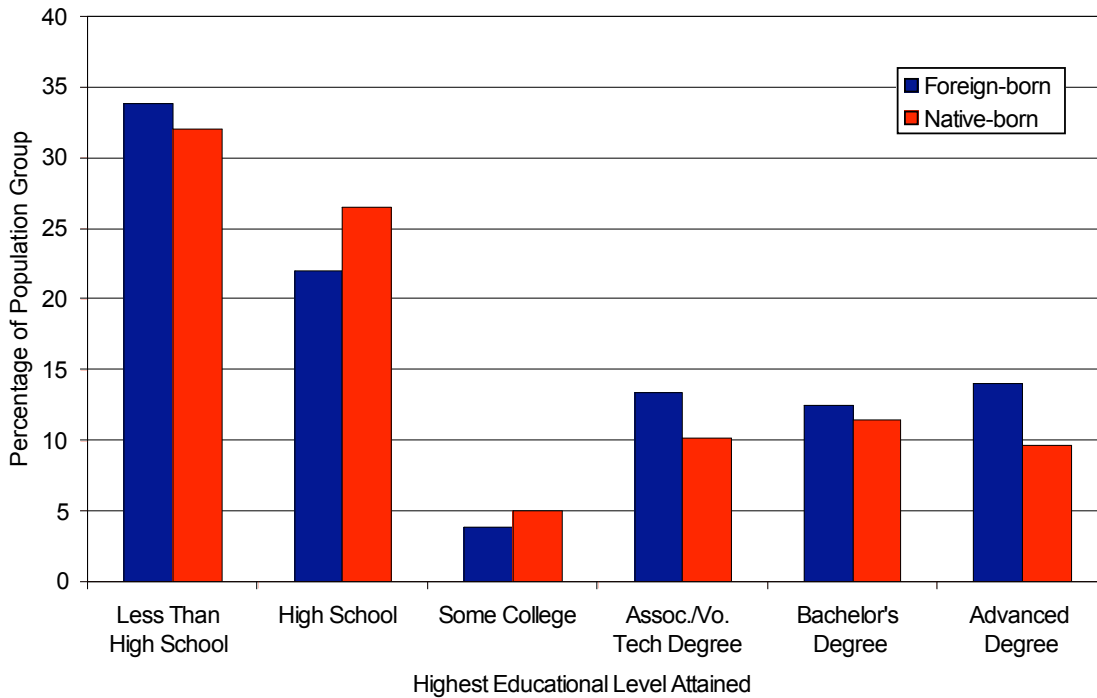
The Northwestern region exhibits the second highest average length of stay of all Virginia regions after the Tidewater region. The 2007 level of 16 years for Northwestern Virginia demonstrated a 2.1 percent rise since 2005.

Education

The immigrant and native-born populations of Northwestern Virginia are fairly similar in the highest levels of education attained, as can be seen in Figure 35. From 2005 to 2007, the native-born population was more likely to have achieved a high school diploma as the highest level of education - 26 percent of the native-born population as opposed to 22 percent of the immigrant population. The immigrant population was slightly more likely to have achieved an Associate's/Vo-tech degree as the highest level of education, and immigrants were much more likely to have achieved an advanced degree. From 2005 to 2007, an average of 14 percent of immigrants held an advanced degree, while only 9.5 percent of the native-born

population on average had achieved an advanced degree during the same period.

Figure 35. Educational Attainment of Northwestern Virginia Residents (2005-2007 Mean)



Source: ACS 2005-2007

Occupation

Immigrants in Northwestern Virginia have very similar rates of occupation as the native-born population, with a few exceptions. Immigrants are more likely to work in Entertainment, Food Service, Cleaning, and Construction than the native-born population. The native-born population is more likely to work in Management, Medical, Health, Protective Services, Sales, and Office occupations. The most drastic difference in occupation levels in Northwestern Virginia is that immigrants are twice as likely as the native-born population to work in Construction jobs, at 12 percent versus 6.5 percent for the native-born population. Table 10 summarizes the occupation distribution for the Northwestern Virginia region, with the data sorted by the percentage of foreign-born workers in each occupation.

Table 10. Occupation of Northwestern Virginia Residents, 2007

Foreign-born Native-born

	Foreign-born	Native-born
Construction	12.1	6.5
Office	10.5	14.1
Production/Factory	9.4	8.0
Sales	8.5	12.1
Food Service	7.1	5.6
Cleaning	6.3	4.0
Education	6.3	6.4
Transportation	6.2	6.4
Management	4.4	6.7
Entertainment	4.2	1.8
Personal Care and Service	3.9	3.2
Medical	3.7	5.2
Business	2.8	1.5
Repair/Mechanics	2.3	3.9
Information Technology	2.0	1.7
Engineering	1.9	1.7
Science	1.7	0.7
Finance	1.5	2.0
Counseling/Religious	1.5	1.7
Legal	1.3	0.8
Agriculture/Forestry	0.6	0.7
Military	0.6	0.1
Protective Services	0.6	2.5
Health (nursing/therapists)	0.4	2.4
Unemployed	0.3	0.3
Extraction	0.0	0.1

Source: ACS 2005-2007

Occupation rates for immigrants in Northwestern Virginia changed dramatically from 2005 to 2007. In 2005 8.5 percent of immigrants were in Management occupations, compared to 4 percent in 2007. The percentage of immigrants in Engineering, Scientist, Health, Food Service, and Cleaning occupations decreased, while the percent of immigrants in Business, Legal, Entertainment, Sales, Office, and Construction occupations increased.

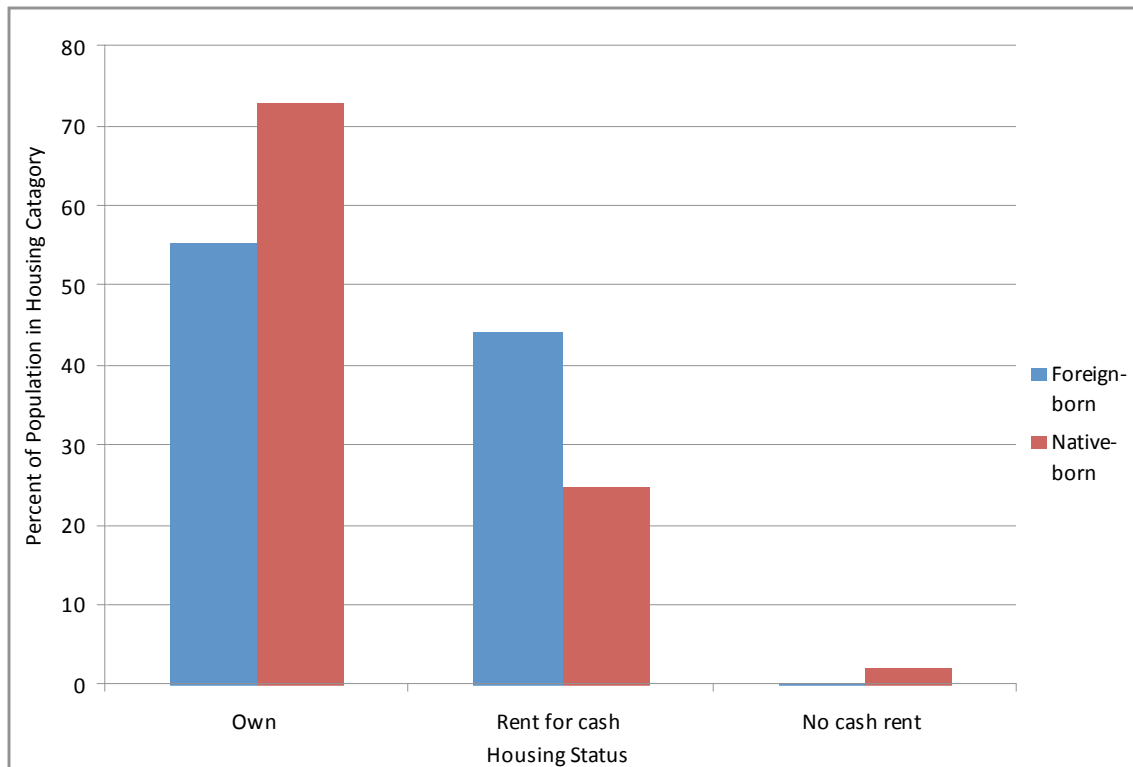
Income

In 2005, foreign-born residents in Northwestern Virginia had a median income of \$15,500. This figure increased to \$16,240 by 2007. For the native-born population, the median income increased from \$21,000 in 2005 to \$21,600 in 2007. Over the same time period, the median income for the total population in Northwestern Virginia increased from \$20,600 to \$21,200. Thus, the median annual income of the foreign-born population in this region increased by almost 4 percent from 2005 to 2007, while the corresponding change for the native-born population was only around 2.8 percent. The growth in median income for the total population was approximately 3 percent.

Housing

Immigrants in Northwestern Virginia have lower rates of homeownership than the native-born population, as can be seen from Figure 36, which gives the housing breakdown for the region.

Figure 36. Homeownership Rates in Northwestern Virginia



Source: ACS 2005-2007

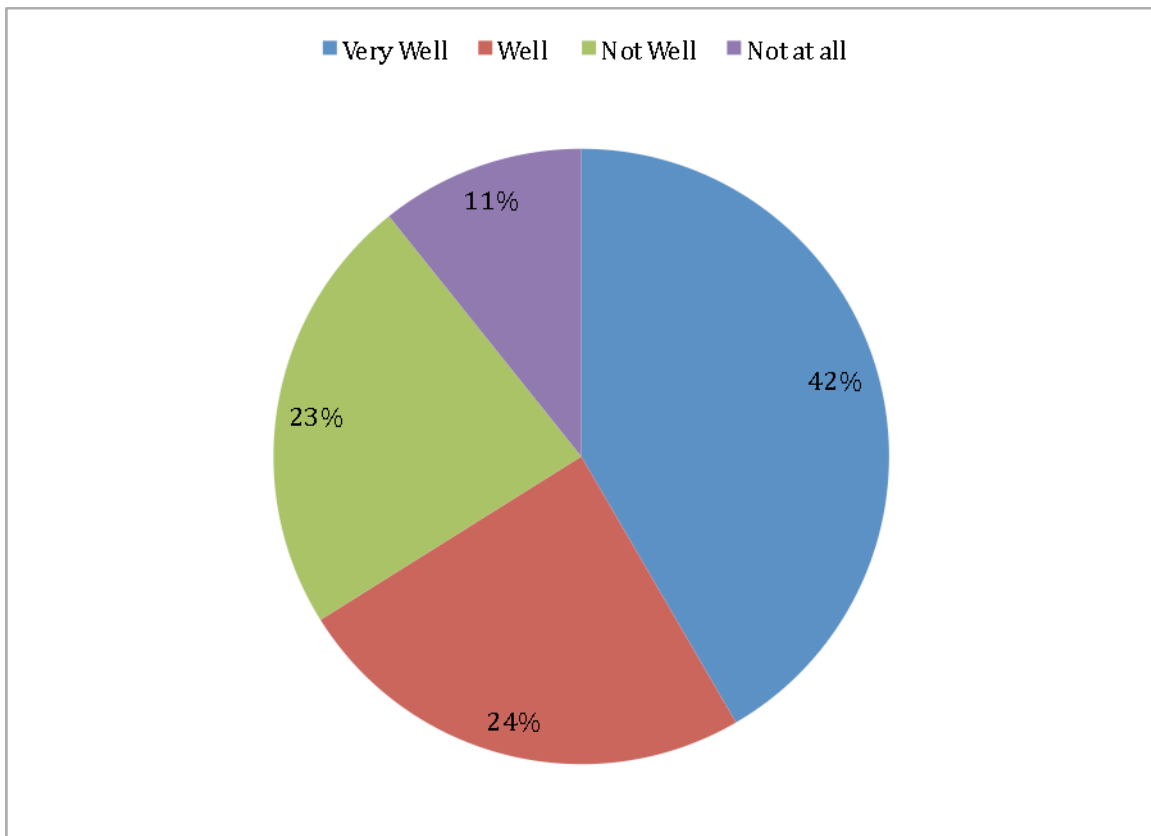
Entrepreneurship

In 2007, the Northwestern Virginia region was home to 3,609 immigrant entrepreneurs who made up 5 percent of the region's total entrepreneurial population. This region's immigrant entrepreneurs made up 7.1 percent of the state total. In the 2005-2007 period, immigrant entrepreneurship fell by 11 percent in the region - the largest percentage of any region. This drop was slightly more extreme than the region's 8 percent overall decline in entrepreneurship.

English Speaking Ability

Approximately 65 percent of immigrants in Northwestern Virginia speak English either "very well" or "well", as represented in Figure 37. On the other hand, 23 percent of immigrants rate their English proficiency as "not well" and 11 percent of immigrants indicate that they do not speak any English at all. The percentage of the immigrant population with no English proficiency is higher than other regions in Virginia.

Figure 37. English Proficiency of Northwestern Virginia Foreign-born Residents (2005-2007 Mean Values)



Source: ACS 2005-2007

Citizenship

Northwestern Virginia has the second lowest proportion of naturalized citizens to non-citizens within its immigrant population of all the regions in Virginia. Only 35.5 percent of all immigrants in the region are naturalized. This is slightly higher than the rates in the nearby border states of Kentucky and Tennessee, but is much lower than the citizenship rates in the rest of Virginia. Naturalization over time for immigrants in this region is similar to that of Central Virginia, but slightly slower overall, meaning either that Northwestern Virginia has a greater presence of temporary residents or that foreign-born residents in this region take longer to complete the naturalization process.

Southwestern Virginia

Number of Immigrants in Region

Southwestern Virginia hosts the smallest population of immigrants in Virginia and also has the lowest percentage of immigrants within its regional population. Both figures stand at about 2 percent. The foreign-born portion of the regional population rose slightly between 2005 and 2007, in line with the statewide trend.

Where Immigrants are From

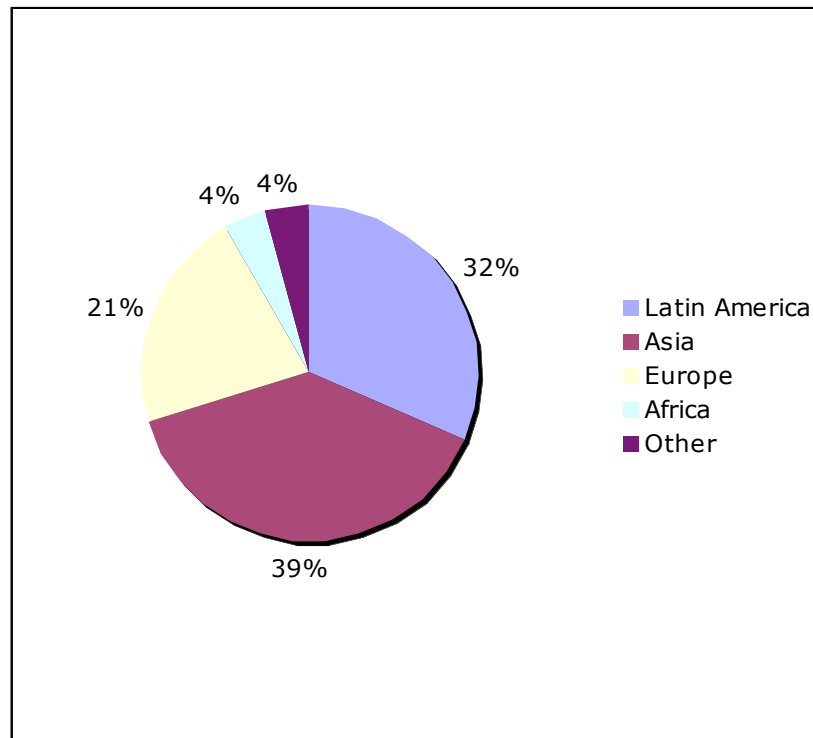
Southwestern Virginia has two large immigrant groups. Chinese immigrants comprise about 12 percent of the total foreign-born population in the region and Mexican immigrants compose about double that population. The top 5 countries of origin represented in the region are given in Table 11. The region has a similar world area representation to Northwestern Virginia, but with greater representation from Asia and less from Latin America, as shown in Figure 38.

Table 11. Top Five Countries of Origin for Southwestern Virginia Foreign-born

Country	Population
Mexico	3,594
China	1,806
Russia	977
Iran	713
India	664

Source: ACS 2005-2007

Figure 38. Area of Origin for Southwestern Virginia Foreign-born Residents



Source: ACS 2005-2007

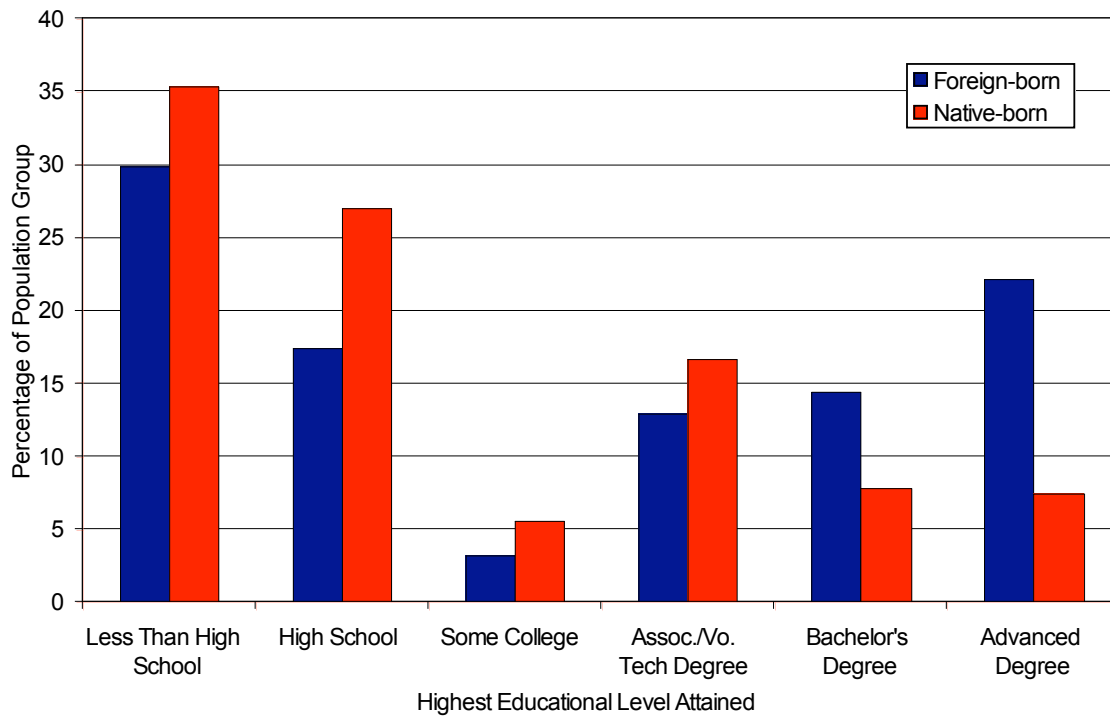
Length of Stay

The Southwestern Virginia region features the lowest average length of stay of the state as of 2007 at only 12.2 years. This number was down from 14.6 in 2005, showing a 16.6 percent decline.

Education

Immigrants in Southwestern Virginia differ greatly from the native-born population in terms of educational attainment. For example, from 2005 to 2007, an average of 27 percent of the native-born population had a high school diploma as the highest level of education, compared to 17 percent of the immigrant population during the same period. From 2005 to 2007, immigrants were twice as likely as the native-born population to have a Bachelor's degree as the highest level of education, and three times as likely as the native-born population to have attained an advanced degree. Figure 39 shows the differences between the two populations in the region.

Figure 39. Educational Achievement of Southwestern Virginia Residents, 2000-2007 Mean



Source: ACS 2005-2007

Immigrant education levels in Southwestern Virginia are changing over time. The percent of immigrants achieving a Bachelor’s degree as the highest level of education decreased from 2005 to 2007, as did the percent of immigrants receiving an advanced degree. The percent of immigrants in Southwestern Virginia receiving an advanced degree is still significantly higher than in any other region in Virginia, however. From 2005 to 2007, an average of 22 percent of Southwest Virginia immigrants had an advanced degree as the highest level of education, compared to 15 percent of immigrants in Northern Virginia, the region with the next highest level of immigrants with advanced degrees.

Occupation

Immigrants in Southwestern Virginia are more clustered in certain occupation categories than are immigrants in the other regions of Virginia. Almost 40 percent of Southwestern immigrants work in two occupation categories: Education and Production/Factory. The breakdown of occupations for the regions is presented in Table 12. By comparison, only 6 percent of the native-born population works in Education and only 10 percent of the native-born population works in Production/Factory occupations.

Immigrants also have higher percentages of their population working in highly educated fields such as Management, Information Technology, Engineering, Science, and Education than does the native-born population in this region. However, the native-born population is more likely to work in the Medical and Health professions than the immigrant population.

Table 12. Occupation of Southwestern Virginia Residents, 2007

	Foreign-born	Native-born
Production/Factory	20.5	10.0
Education	19.0	5.9
Management	9.5	4.3
Sales	8.8	10.7
Food Service	8.3	7.3
Cleaning	6.5	4.2
Office	5.4	13.1
Construction	5.2	6.7
Transportation	4.6	8.8
Science	3.8	0.6
Information Technology	2.5	1.4
Engineering	2.3	1.5
Medical	1.6	4.6
Military	0.9	0.1
Business	0.6	1.3
Agriculture/Forestry	0.5	0.8
Finance	0.0	1.1
Counseling/Religious	0.0	1.7
Legal	0.0	0.8
Entertainment	0.0	1.4
Health (nursing/therapists)	0.0	2.7
Protective Services	0.0	2.5
Personal Care and Service	0.0	3.3
Extraction	0.0	0.6
Repair/Mechanics	0.0	3.9
Unemployed	0.0	0.8

Source: ACS 2005-2007

From 2005 to 2007, there were significant changes in the percentages of immigrants in certain occupations in Southwestern Virginia. The percent of immigrants in Engineering decreased from 8 percent to 2 percent, the percent in Food Service increased from 1.5 percent to 8 percent, the percent in Sales doubled to almost 9 percent, the percent in Production/Factory doubled to 20.5 percent, and the percent in Transportation decreased from 17 percent to 4.5 percent.

Income

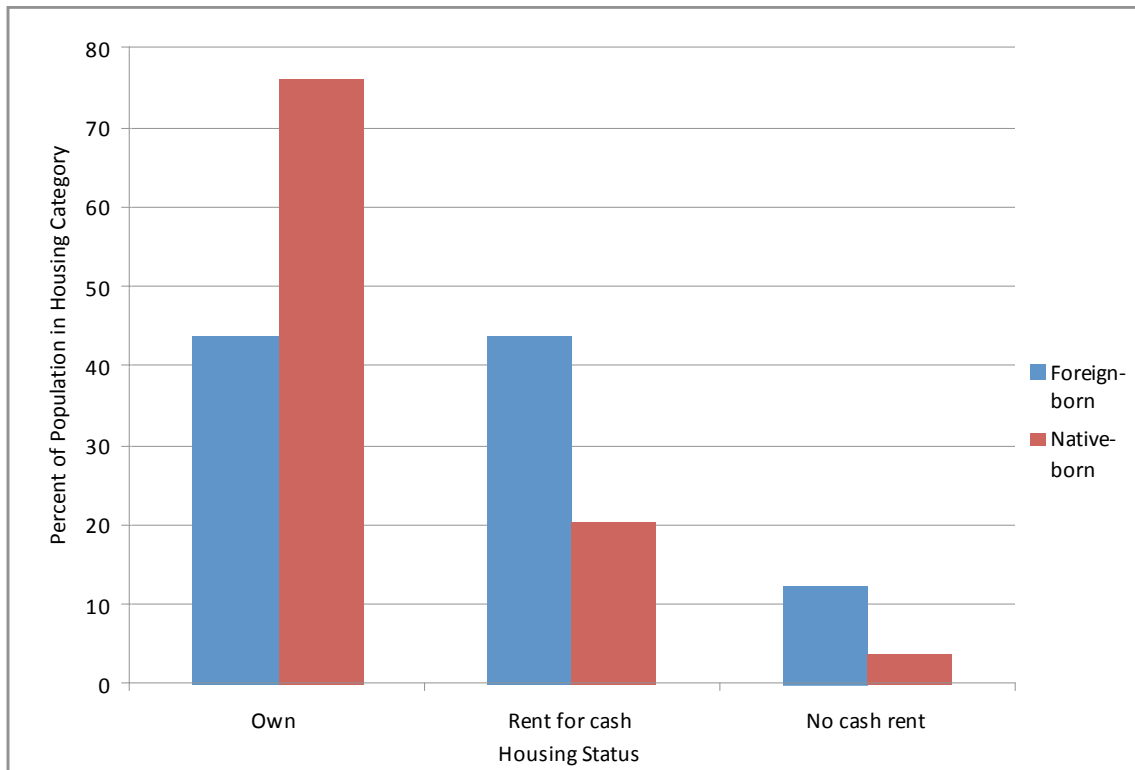
Southwestern Virginia saw a rapid increase in median yearly income for its foreign-born population from 2005 to 2007. In 2005, the median income for immigrants in the region was only \$12,000, but by 2007 this figure had risen to \$17,300. There was also a change in median income for the native-born population, but to a much smaller degree - from \$14,500 to \$15,000. For the total population, the median income changed from \$14,400 to \$15,000.

In comparison to the other regions in Virginia, the degree of change in annual median income was greatest for foreign-born residents of Southwestern Virginia. Also, Southwestern Virginia is the only region within Virginia where median income for foreign-born residents is higher than it is for native-born residents (as of 2007). In 2005, however, median income for the foreign-born population was less than it was for the native-born population.

Housing

The immigrant rate of homeownership in Southwestern Virginia is much lower than that of the native-born population, as can be seen from Figure 40. Southwestern Virginia has a much higher percentage in both populations in the No cash rent category than any of the other Virginia regions.

Figure 40. Homeownership Rates in Southwestern Virginia



Source: ACS 2005-2007

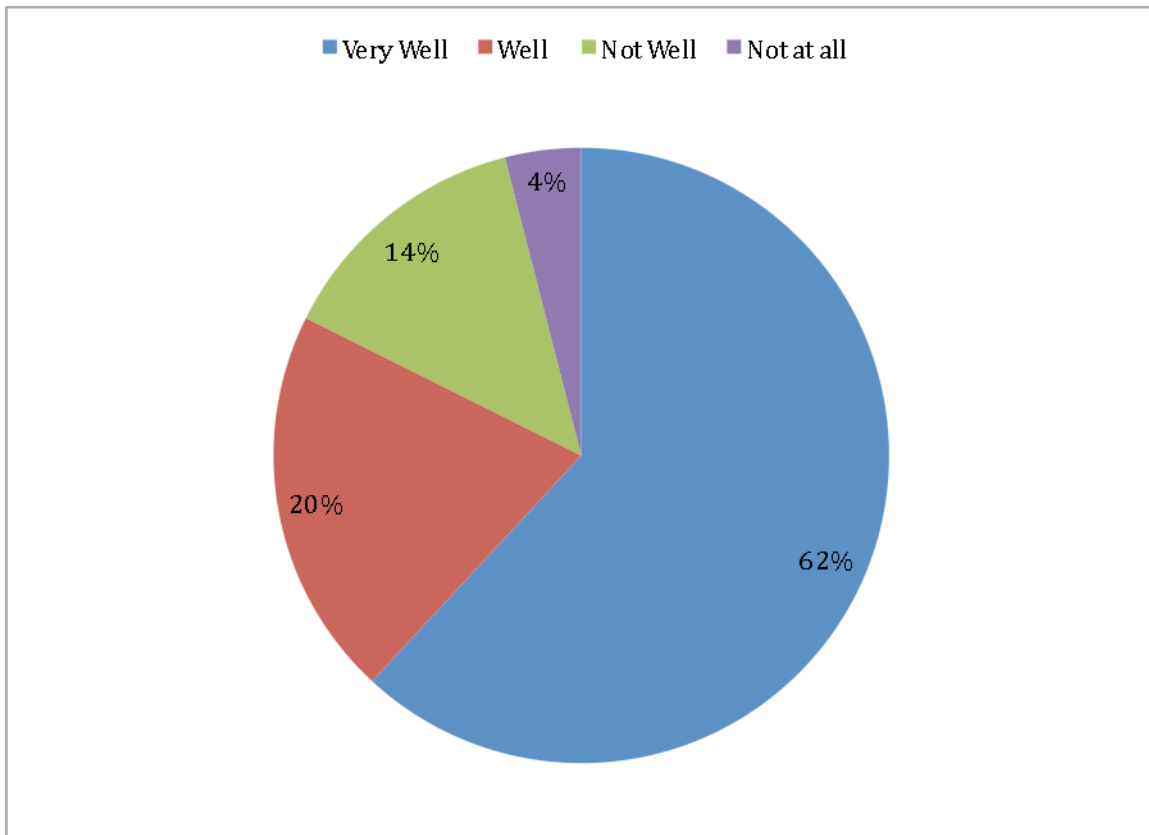
Entrepreneurship

As of 2007, the Southwestern region features the least immigrant entrepreneurs of any region in Virginia. With only 1,436, immigrant entrepreneurs constituted only 1.8 percent of immigrant entrepreneurs statewide and 4 percent of all entrepreneurs in the region. There are signs of growth in the immigrant entrepreneurship in the region, however; although total entrepreneurship in the region fell 5 percent in the period of 2005 to 2007, entrepreneurship by immigrants grew by 37 percent.

English Speaking Ability

Southwestern Virginia has the highest proportion of immigrants (62 percent) that speak English “very well” of all the regions in Virginia, as shown in Figure 41. With 20 percent of immigrants speaking English “well”, the percentage of immigrants in Southwestern Virginia speaking English either “well” or “very well” is well above 80 percent. Only 4 percent of the immigrants in Southwestern Virginia speak no English at all.

Figure 41. English Proficiency of Southwestern Virginia Foreign-born Residents (2005-2007 Mean Values)



Source: ACS 2005-2007

Citizenship

Southwestern Virginia has the lowest ratio of naturalized citizens to non-citizens in Virginia. Only 34 percent of all immigrants in the region are naturalized citizens. This is on par with border-states Kentucky and Tennessee and slightly lower than the percentages in Northwestern Virginia, while it is much lower than the state as a whole. Interestingly, immigrants that have entered since 2000 have citizenship levels higher than would be expected based on a standard rate of decline. Immigrants in this area that entered the United States before 2000 have a much lower rate of naturalization than other regions. However, around 20 percent of immigrants in this region who have entered the country since 2000 have naturalized. In Tidewater, the area with the highest rate of naturalization and second highest rate of naturalization for those entering after 1970, the corresponding figure is only 14.4 percent. This suggests a recent shift in the composition and goals of the immigrant population living in Southwestern Virginia. Either the region is attracting different kinds of visa holders than it has in the past, or immigrants

are building stronger ties to the community. It is likely some combination of both.

Central Virginia

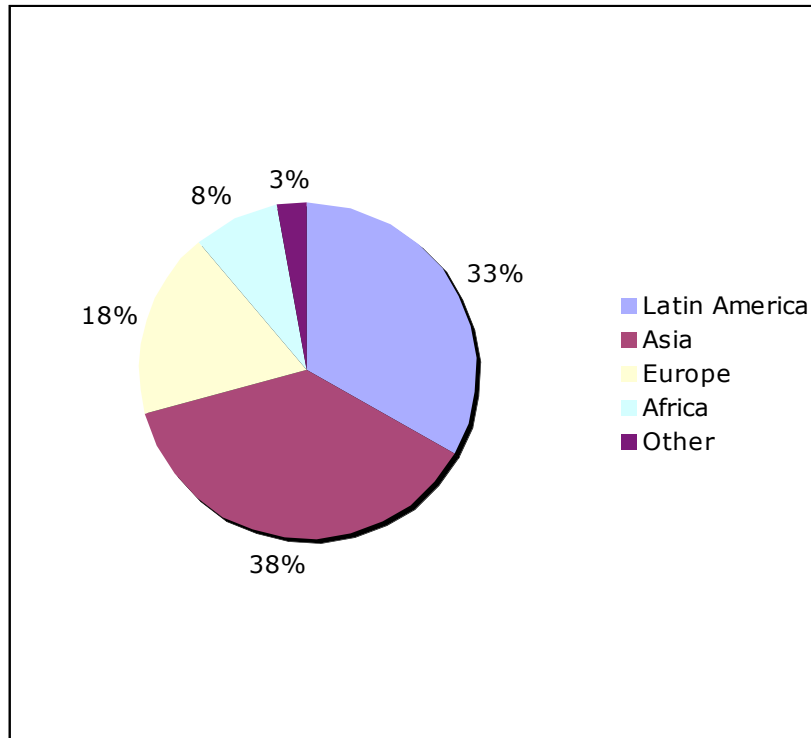
Number of Immigrants in Region

Central Virginia has a similar volume of immigrants to Tidewater. Just less than 5 percent of the regional population in Central Virginia is foreign-born, accounting for 9 percent of Virginia's total immigrant population. In terms of urban-rural dynamics, however, Central Virginia has the opposite distribution of Tidewater, with Richmond experiencing a slightly higher prevalence of immigrants than the rest of the region. Richmond had a foreign-born presence of 6.4 percent in 2005, a number that fell to slightly less than 6 percent by 2007, but which is still greater than the rest of the Central region. This slight negative shift is consistent with the overall trends of the region, but unique when compared to other regions in Virginia.

Where Immigrants are From

Central Virginia has two fairly large subpopulations within its immigrant population. India is the country of origin for almost 10 percent of the immigrant population in the region, while around 14 percent of immigrants list Mexico as their country of origin. Despite the significant concentration within these two subgroups, there is still a fairly large percentage of immigrants from Europe and Africa, though Africa's share is lower than the state average and Europe's is higher, as shown in Figure 42. Table 13 shows the five most common countries of origin in the region.

Figure 42. Area of Origin for Central Virginia Foreign-born Residents



Source: ACS 2005-2007

Table 13. Top Five Countries of Origin for Central Virginia Foreign-born

Country of Origin	Percent of Population
Mexico	14.2
India	9.9
China	5.6
Korea	4.6
El Salvador	4.2

Source: ACS 2005-2007

Length of Stay

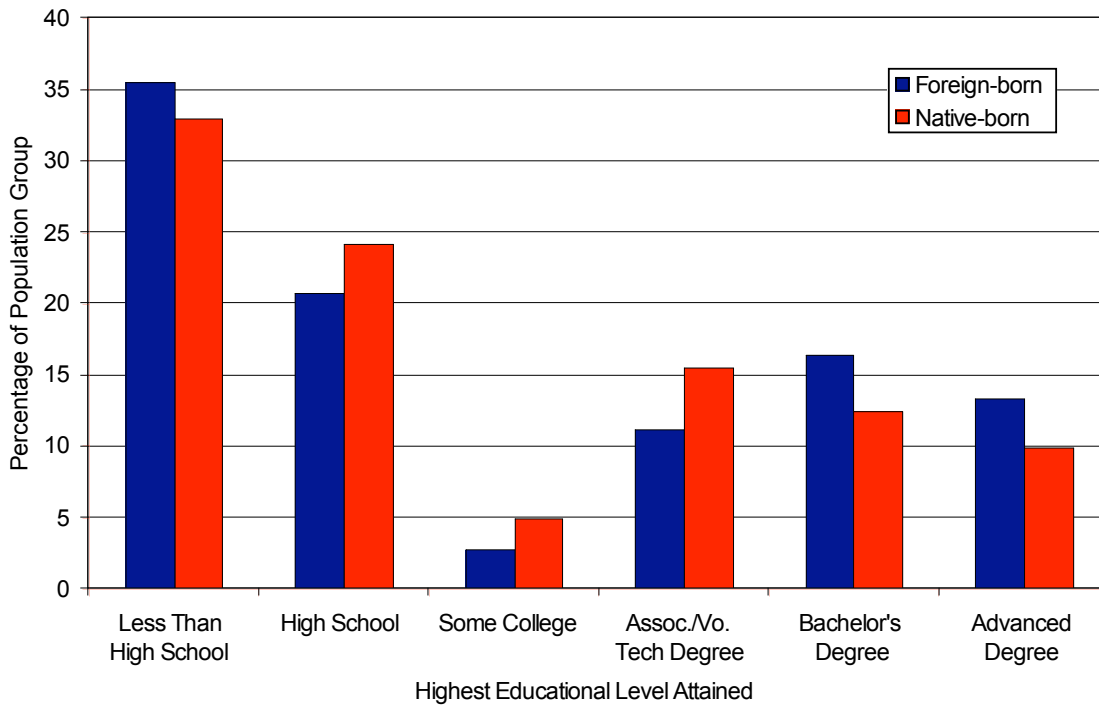
The average length of stay in the US for immigrants in Virginia’s Central region was 15 years in 2007, marking a 13.7 percent increase from its 2005 level.

Education

Education levels between the immigrant and native-born population of Central Virginia are fairly consistent, with only a few small differences, as can

be seen in Figure 43. Immigrants are either on par with or slightly more educated than the native-born population. From 2005 to 2007, an average of 16 percent and 13 percent of immigrants held Bachelor's degrees and advanced degrees as the highest level of education received, respectively. By comparison, during the same period, an average of 12 percent of the native-born population held a Bachelor's degree as the highest level of educational attainment, and an average of 10 percent held an advanced degree.

**Figure 43. Educational Attainment of Central Virginia Residents
(2000-2007 Mean)**



Source: ACS 2005-2007

Occupation

The prevalence of immigrants in most occupations in Central Virginia is similar to the prevalence of the native-born population, with a few exceptions. Table 14 gives the entire distribution of occupations. Immigrants are more likely to work in Information Technology, Medical, Food Service, Cleaning, and Construction occupations than the native-born population in the region. The native-born population is more likely to work in Sales and Office occupations than the immigrant population, with the difference in the Sales sector being the most pronounced.

Table 14. Occupation of Central Virginia Residents, 2007

	Foreign-born	Native-born
Construction	14.1	6.8
Food Service	9.6	5.0
Sales	9.6	12.5
Cleaning	7.2	3.7
Medical	7.1	4.6
Office	6.4	15.2
Management	6.2	6.8
Information Technology	6.2	2.1
Education	5.5	5.7
Production/Factory	5.4	6.2
Transportation	5.3	6.1
Business	2.4	2.3
Personal Care and Service	2.3	3.2
Finance	1.8	2.5
Agriculture/Forestry	1.7	0.6
Health (nursing/therapists)	1.7	2.5
Engineering	1.6	1.4
Repair/Mechanics	1.6	3.9
Science	1.1	0.8
Entertainment	1.0	1.8
Counseling/Religious	0.7	1.5
Protective Services	0.7	2.9
Unemployed	0.4	0.9
Legal	0.2	0.9
Military	0.1	0.2
Extraction	0.0	0.2

Source: ACS 2005-2007

From 2005 to 2007, there were not dramatic changes in the percentages of immigrants in most occupations in Central Virginia, but the percentage of immigrants in Information Technology, Education, Medical, Food Service, and Transportation occupations increased. The percent of immigrants in Construction and Production/Factory occupations decreased.

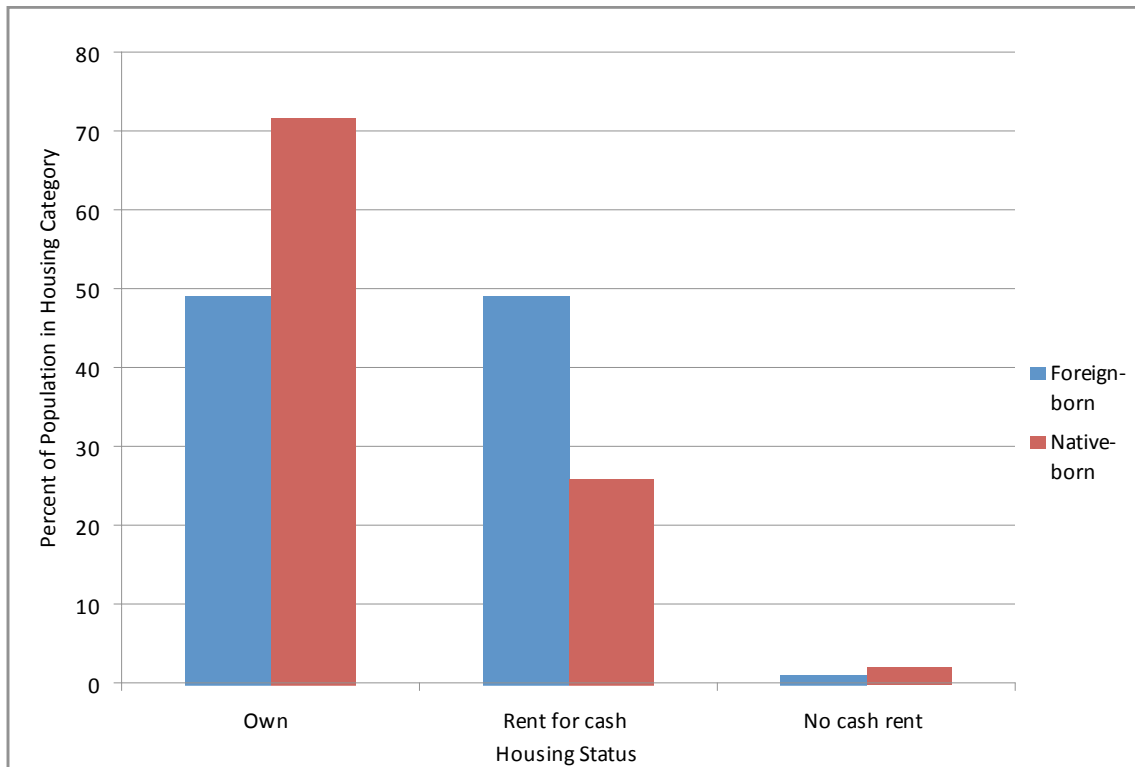
Income

In 2005, foreign-born residents in Central Virginia had a median income of \$19,300. This number increased to \$22,600 by 2007. For native-born residents, the median income rose from \$22,300 in 2005 to \$22,800 in 2007. The corresponding change in median income for the entire population of the region was from \$22,000 in 2005 to \$22,800 in 2007. Despite having the greatest increase in annual median income of any Virginia region, the foreign-born population in this region of Virginia still has a median yearly income that is less than the median yearly income for the native-born population of the region.

Housing

The homeownership rate of immigrants in Central Virginia is lower than that of the native-born population by more than 20 percent, as can be seen in Figure 44.

Figure 44. Homeownership Rates of Central Virginia Residents



Source: ACS 2005-2007

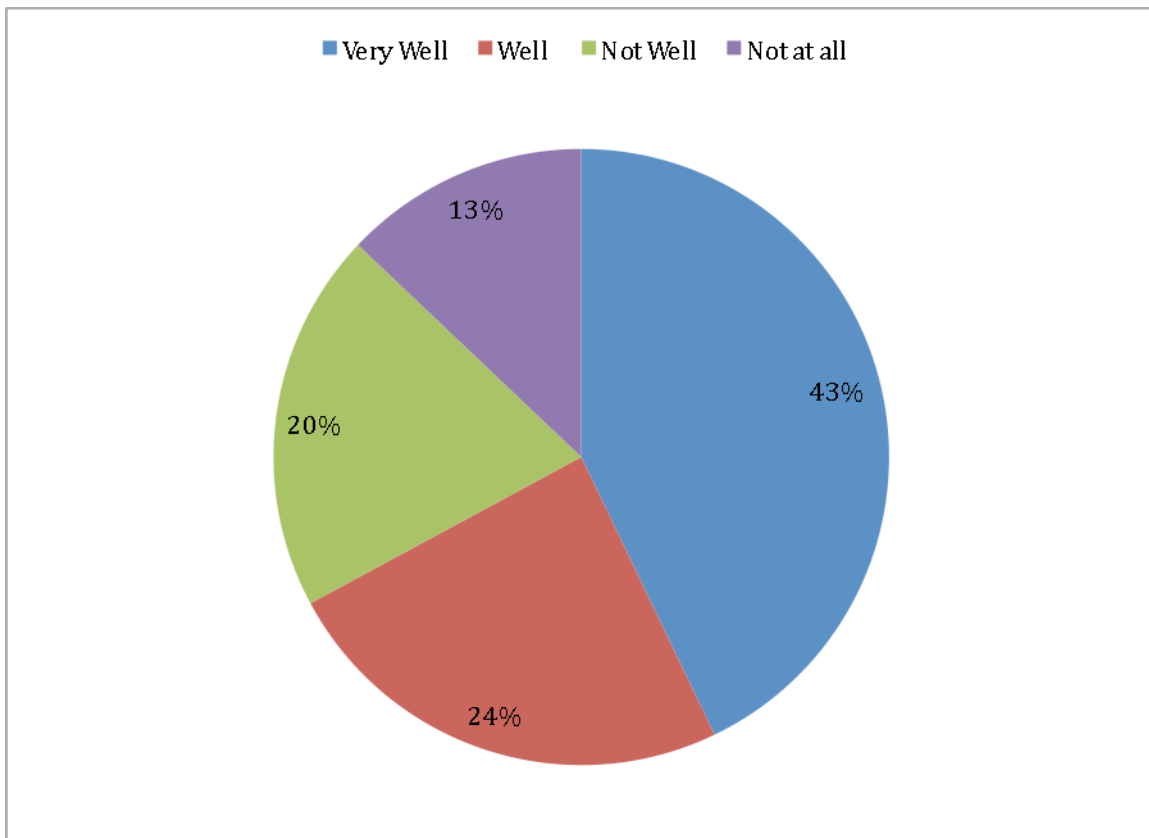
Entrepreneurship

Virginia's Central region includes the third highest percentages in every category for immigrant entrepreneurship of all regions in Virginia after the Northern and Tidewater regions. Its 5,429 foreign-born entrepreneurs in 2007 made up 7 percent of the region's total entrepreneurs and 9 percent of immigrant entrepreneurship in the state. Between 2005 and 2007, the 4 percent growth of immigrant entrepreneurship just barely outpaced the region's 3 percent total entrepreneurial growth.

English Speaking Ability

Immigrants in Central Virginia have similar English proficiency to immigrants in Northwestern Virginia. With 43 percent of immigrants speaking English "very well" and 24 percent of immigrants speaking English "well", more than half of the immigrant population is well versed in the language, as shown in Figure 45. However, the percentage of immigrants in Central Virginia who do not speak any English at all is very high (13 percent) compared to other Virginia regions.

Figure 45. English Proficiency of Central Virginia Foreign-born Residents



Source: ACS 2005-2007

Citizenship

Central Virginia's naturalization rate of 38 percent is only slightly lower than the state value. Additionally, immigrants in Central Virginia naturalize slightly slower than those in the rest of the state. This is consistent across the region as a whole, including both Richmond and more rural areas, though immigrants in Richmond have a marginally faster naturalization experience. This is not to say that the process is different for immigrants based on where they choose to reside once they come to the United States, but that average naturalization rates and speed of process might differ across locations based on the prevalence of certain types of visa-holders attracted to each region.

Summary

As this report demonstrates, immigrants in Virginia do not conform to general stereotypes about immigrants. In fact, immigrants in Virginia are very similar to the native-born residents of the state. Moreover, looking at several socio-economic indicators discussed in this report it becomes clear that Virginia's immigrants perform considerably better than immigrants in the United States. They earn higher incomes, they are better educated, they are more proficient in English, and they are more entrepreneurial. These findings should motivate further research that would enable policy discussions about immigration to be founded in fact and disengaged from reliance on stereotypes.