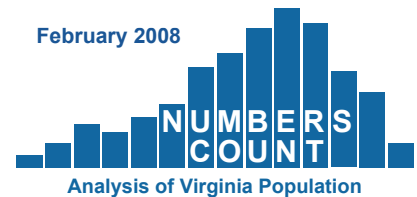


# Hispanic *Immigrants* and *Citizens* in Virginia

By Qian Cai



## INTRODUCTION

One in ten Virginians is foreign-born. Among them, 40 percent were born in Asia, and 36 percent in Latin America. While the foreign-born may be classified as immigrants since they have located here from another country, the term “immigrant” does not adequately describe their status in the United States. Foreign-born residents may be naturalized U.S. citizens; permanent residents (“green card” holders); people with valid but temporary student, worker, business or visitor visas; refugees and asylees; and individuals without authorization. They may have lived here for six months or sixty years; speak English well or not at all; work in food preparation or stem cell research. In short, knowing that a person is from another country, or suspecting so because of the individual’s name, color, or ethnic heritage, is insufficient for predicting that person’s citizenship or immigration status.

With immigration policies at the forefront of debates at the national, state, and local levels, sound research on the resident foreign-born population is essential. As part of a series of studies on Virginia’s immigrants, this paper addresses a few basic questions about Virginia’s Hispanic population in the hope that these demographic facts broaden understanding of this sector of the population. This study investigates both Hispanic immigrants and their citizen counterparts. It compares demographic and socio-economic characteristics of these two elements of the Hispanic population, and draws comparisons to Virginia’s population overall. The results supply information to answer the following specific questions: 1) how many Hispanics live in Virginia, and what proportion is immigrants; 2) what are the demographic characteristics of Hispanic immigrants and citizens; and, 3) how are Hispanic citizens and immigrants engaged in life in Virginia?

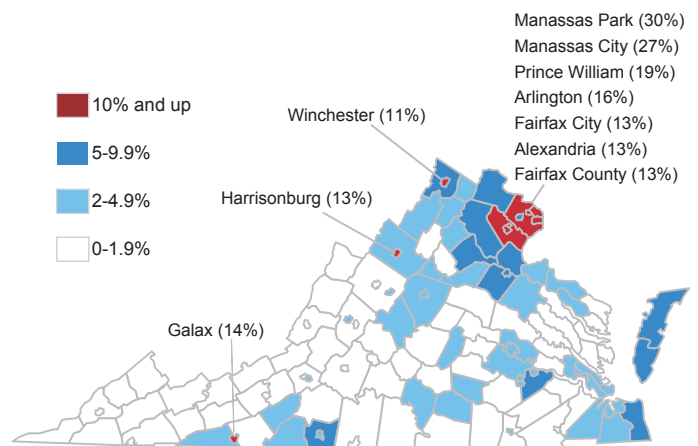
In this study, the term “Hispanic citizens” includes both U.S.-born citizens and naturalized citizens of Hispanic origin. The term “Hispanic immigrants” refers to non-citizen Hispanic people living in the U.S. with or without authorization. The data analyzed for this study are from the Census Bureau’s 2006 American Community Survey, the 2006 Current Population Survey, and decennial censuses from 1980 to 2000.

Since neither the federal census nor other Census Bureau surveys ask questions about immigration status, our data on Hispanic immigrants include both those authorized and unauthorized. Authorized immigrants typically include green card holders; people with valid temporary visas for working, studying or visiting; and refugees and asylees. Unauthorized immigrants include those who entered the country without inspection, and those who were legally admitted but stayed beyond the date they were required to leave. As you read this study, remember that the category of Hispanic immigrants includes both those living here with authorization of some form, and those who are here unauthorized.

## VIRGINIA'S HISPANIC POPULATION

### Population Size and Growth

Virginia’s Hispanic population tripled from 152,000 in 1990 to more than 460,000 in 2006, and now represents 6 percent of the population in the Commonwealth (as compared to 15 percent in the nation as a whole). The increase in Virginia’s Hispanic population may be attributed both to immigration and to births. A total of 188,000 Hispanic immigrants were identified in the 2006 American Community Survey, up from 132,000 in the 2000 Census and 55,600 in the 1990 Census.



Map 1. Percent Hispanic in Each Locality, 2006

In addition to immigration, the birth rate increases the Hispanic population, as Hispanics tend to have a fertility rate

higher than all other racial and ethnic groups in the U.S. Nationally, the total fertility rate (a synthetic indicator calculating how many children a woman has in her lifetime) is 2.8 for Hispanics, 2.1 for Blacks, and 1.9 for Asian and non-Hispanic whites. According to the Virginia Department of Health, non-Black minority births (primarily Hispanic and Asian) accounted for 4.5 percent of the total births in Virginia in 1995. Ten years later, that number increased to 10 percent.

*Geographic Distribution*

The distribution of Virginia's Hispanic population is highly uneven, concentrating in the state's three major metropolitan areas, and selected rural areas. In Northern Virginia, Hispanics represent more than 15 percent of the populations of Manassas Park City, Manassas City, Prince William County, and Arlington County; Fairfax County, the largest county in Virginia, is home to more than one-quarter of all of Virginia's Hispanic residents. Additionally, a number of rural localities in Virginia show a significant increase in the number of Hispanics residents. Included among them is Galax City in Southwest Virginia, with 14 percent of its population being Hispanic.

*Citizenship*

Sixty percent of Virginia's Hispanics are United States citizens, with a majority being U.S.-born (and 13 percent naturalized). The remaining 40 percent of Virginia's Hispanics are non-citizen immigrants, residing here with or without authorization. Citizenship status among children under age 18, however, is quite different. 85 percent of Hispanic children in Virginia are U.S.- born citizens, 3 percent are naturalized citizens, and 12 percent are immigrants.

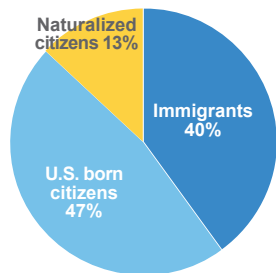


Figure 1. Hispanics by Citizenship

Among Hispanic citizens, almost one-half (45 percent) are “first-generation” (both of their parents were foreign-born). Less than one-half (40 percent) of Hispanic citizens are the offspring of two U.S.-born parents.

*Age Structure*

More than 72 percent of Virginia's Hispanic immigrants are between the prime working ages of 20-45 (double the percentage of Virginians in this age bracket) and 60 percent are male. Additionally, very few Hispanic immigrants are over the age of 60 or under the age of 10. This atypical age distribution for Hispanic immigrants suggests that opportunities in Virginia's labor market motivate young Hispanics, particularly young males, to relocate to Virginia.

The age structure for Hispanic citizens is quite different from that for Hispanic immigrants and from that for the overall population. One-half of Hispanic citizens are under the age of 20, compared to only slightly more than one-quarter of the overall population. Among U.S.-born Hispanic children under age 18, 55 percent are the offspring of two foreign-born parents; 14 percent have one foreign-born parent. The remaining 31 percent of U.S.-born Hispanic children under 18 have both parents born in the U.S.

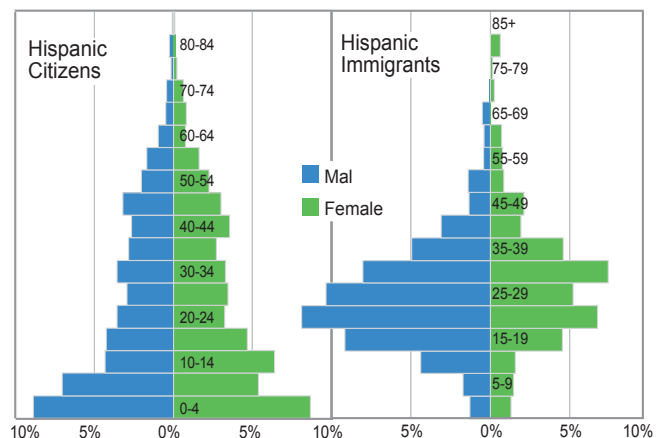


Figure 2. Population Pyramids for Hispanic Citizens and Immigrants

HISPANIC LIFE IN VIRGINIA

*Labor Force Participation*

Labor force participation rates among Virginia's Hispanic immigrants confirm the hypothesis of a strong labor migration. Participation in the labor force (defined as currently working or actively looking for work) characterizes 68 percent of Virginians age 16 and above, and 80 percent of Hispanic immigrants. While the Hispanic population's younger age structure contributes to this higher rate of participation (as older workers are more likely to be retired or disabled), the stark contrast indicates that immigrants are mainly here to work.

Differences in labor force participation between Hispanics and the overall population also vary by gender, most noticeably among males. Ninety percent of male Hispanic immigrants are in the labor force, compared to 74 percent for the male population overall. There is a small difference in labor force participation between female immigrants and the female population overall. This is largely because Hispanic immigrants tend to have young families; and many women stay home with their young children.

*Language*

As language is one of the most defining elements of culture, language proficiency is often used as a measure of cultural assimilation for immigrants. Immigrants from non-English speaking countries experience varying degrees of language difficulties in the U.S., especially in the early years after their arrival. Of all Hispanic immigrants in Virginia, nearly 90 percent arrived in the U.S. in the last 15 years, 66 percent in the last 10 years, and 44 percent in the last five years.

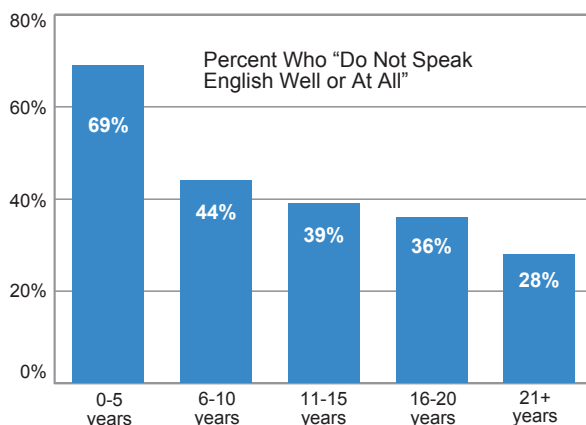


Figure 3. Language Proficiency of Hispanic Immigrants by Years of Residence

Among Hispanic immigrants arriving in the last five years, 69 percent do not speak English well or at all. That percentage drops significantly to 44 percent for those living in the U.S. for 6 to 10 years, and to 39 percent for those who have lived in the U.S. for 11 to 15 years. Assuming these groups do not differ significantly in terms of their education, the figures suggest that immigrant English ability improves as years in the U.S. increase.

Among Hispanic citizens (including both U.S.-born and naturalized), 94 percent are English proficient, 4 percent do not speak English well, and 2 percent do not speak English at

all. Length of residency in the U.S. and the requirements of the naturalization process may account for English proficiency among naturalized citizens, who typically have resided in the U.S. for long periods of time.

*Living Arrangements*

Household size and living arrangements may reflect both cultural preferences and non-culture-specific factors, such as economic constraints. While the typical Virginia household averages 2.5 persons-per-household, households headed by Hispanic citizens average 2.8, and households headed by Hispanic immigrants average 3.6. Twenty-seven percent of Hispanic immigrant households contain non-relatives, compared to 15 percent of Hispanic citizen households, and 9 percent of Virginia households overall.

Several factors may contribute to Hispanic immigrants' larger household size. First, as a survival strategy, immigrants tend to live not only in the community where their relatives, friends, or fellow countrymen live, but also with their extended families or non-relatives, especially in the first few years after arrival. This arrangement facilitates sharing limited resources, and provides a network of support as immigrants cope with the risks and uncertainties of life in a new country. Second, like Asians, Hispanics come from a cultural background in which co-residing with extended family is more common, and often highly valued. Third, Hispanic families tend to have more children than average American families. Higher fertility rates result in larger households.

Hispanic citizens' living arrangements share characteristics with their immigrant counterparts and with the overall population. Similarity to the overall population indicates cultural and economic assimilation. Continuing similarity to Hispanic immigrants may signal shared and enduring cultural heritage.

*Educational Attainment*

Among people age 25 and older, 43 percent of Hispanic immigrants do not have a high school diploma, compared to 15 percent of Virginians in this age group. At the other end of the educational spectrum, 15 percent of Hispanic immigrants have a bachelor's or graduate degree, compared to 33 percent of all Virginians.

Hispanic citizens, on the other hand, have very similar educational attainment to the overall population, with slightly

higher proportions having some college and having earned a college or graduate degree.

	Hispanic Immigrants (%)	Hispanic Citizens (%)	Overall Population
Less than HS	43	15	15
HS Graduate	29	20	27
Some College	13	31	25
Bachelor's Degree	9	20	20
Graduate Degree	6	15	13

Table 1. Educational Attainment of Adults Age 25 & Over

*Occupation and Income*

Hispanic immigrants account for 3.4 percent of Virginia's labor force. Employed in a wide range of occupations, they are concentrated in a few occupational sectors that require little education. For example, Hispanic immigrants represent nearly 15 percent of workers in construction, farming, and buildings & grounds cleaning and maintenance. Food preparation and serving also employ large numbers of Hispanic immigrants. Additionally, more than 3 percent of Virginia's military employees are Hispanic immigrants.

Occupational patterns of Hispanic citizens, on the other hand, are more closely aligned with their overall share in the labor force, with one particular exception: more than 6 percent of Virginia's military employees are Hispanic citizens. Compared to their presence in the overall population, Virginia's Hispanics, including both citizens and immigrants, are over-represented in the military.

Income is largely determined by education and occupation. Virginia's median household income in 2006 was \$55,500. The corresponding number for households headed by Hispanic immigrants was \$48,300. Since Hispanic immigrants tend to co-reside with extended families and non-relatives, that median household income (which includes earnings of every member in the household) may be higher than expected – and on average is used to support more people per dollar earned. Households headed by Hispanic citizens, on the other hand, with a median income of \$62,800, exceed the Virginia median income.

*Welfare and Subsidy Programs*

The 1996 Welfare Reform Act limits immigrants from receiving federal benefits through Social Security and such need-based programs as Food Stamps, Medicaid (other than

emergency services), and Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF). The Census Bureau's Current Population Survey identifies recipients of various social welfare programs and benefits including GED training; nutritional programs for women, infants and children (better known as WIC); job search programs; job training; child care assistance; transportation assistance; and work program for cash assistance. The survey also asks about various public subsidy programs including public housing, rent and energy subsidies, food stamps, and free and reduced price lunch for children in public schools. Since the Current Population Survey sample size is relatively small, data on Hispanic citizens and immigrants are combined.

Hispanics (both citizens and immigrants) received benefits

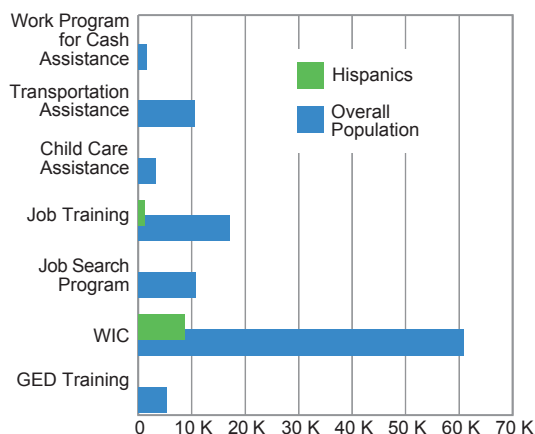


Figure 4. Numbers of Welfare Recipients

and were over-represented in two social welfare programs (WIC and job training) and two public subsidy programs (rent subsidies and free-and-reduced-price school lunch). Of nearly 61,000 WIC recipients, 14 percent were Hispanics. Of 17,000 job-training recipients, 7 percent were Hispanics. Hispanic households are also over-represented in uptake of rent subsidies and free and reduced priced lunch (accounting for 20 and 16 percent, respectively, of the total recipient households), but were significantly under-represented in the remaining three categories (public housing, food stamps, and energy subsidies).

*Health Insurance*

Hispanic immigrants are less likely to have health insurance than the overall population. In 2006, 57 percent of Hispanic immigrants lacked health insurance, compared to 27 percent of Hispanic citizens, and 14 percent of all Virginians. Hispan-

ic immigrants and citizens accounted for 13 and 7 percent, respectively, of the state’s total uninsured. The high percentage of Hispanic immigrants lacking health insurance may be the result of their employment in occupations and industries in which insurance is not provided.

*Transportation*

Similar to the overall population, most Hispanic immigrant workers drive to work, although slightly more (9 percent) take public transportation, compared to 4 percent of the overall population. Among those driving to work, 39 percent of Hispanic immigrants carpool, compared to 15 percent of Hispanic citizens, and 13 percent of the overall population. The ability to afford a car or to get a driver’s license and concentration in the large metro areas may explain the higher rates of public transportation usage and carpooling.

Hispanic citizens’ transportation patterns are similar to the overall population, bearing no resemblance to their immigrant counterparts.

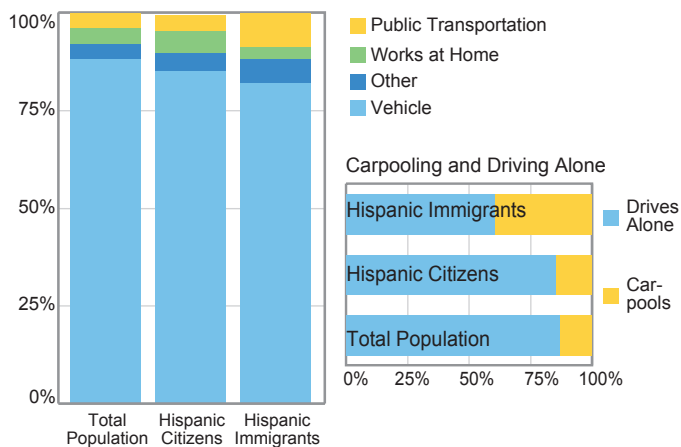


Figure 5. Commuting And Carpooling

**SUMMARY**

Several points can be drawn from this study.

First, the majority of Hispanics present in Virginia are U.S. citizens. Forty percent are immigrants, including both authorized and unauthorized.

Second, when compared to the population overall, Hispanic immigrants are less educated, poorer, more likely to lack health insurance, and live in larger households. Their lower

socio-economic status, however, does not necessarily make them heavy recipients of welfare and subsidies. Other than WIC, job training, and rent and school lunch subsidies, Hispanic immigrants receive very little or none of most other welfare programs. They tend to pool and share resources (such as housing and vehicles) with family and non-family members to reduce costs and risks. Hispanic immigrants are young and make up a significant portion of low-skilled, yet fast-growing, occupational sectors.

Third, adult Hispanic citizens do better than the overall population in terms of educational attainment and household income. They are well represented in all occupational sectors, and over-represented in Virginia’s military.

Fourth, cultural and socio-economic assimilation takes place over generations among Hispanic citizens and immigrants, with citizens doing especially well. While 60 percent of Hispanic citizens have at least one parent foreign-born, they speak English well. And while nearly 30 percent of adult citizens are first-generation (having both parents foreign-born), they share many characteristics with the overall population – they speak, educate, work and transport like typical Virginians. English proficiency among Hispanic immigrants improves as their years in the U.S. increase.

Finally, cultural values and traditions continue to influence Hispanics’ way of life. Households headed by Hispanic citizens, for example, tend to be bigger and are more likely to have co-residing relatives and non-relatives than Virginia’s households overall. The extent, however, is not as great as that for immigrants.

Virginia’s Hispanic population is complex, varied, and deeply engaged in significant sectors of the Virginia economy. Its presence in the overall population is likely to increase in the future years. According to the Virginia Employment Commission’s projections, Virginia’s Hispanic population will double between 2006 and 2030 as a result of both natural increase (births minus deaths) and migration to the Commonwealth. A thorough understanding of this population’s composition and characteristics provides a factual framework for policy deliberations.

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