

IMMIGRANTS IN VIRGINIA

Virginia's population grows through both births and migration. Migration may involve people moving across states as well as people moving from other countries. Until 1970, only 1 in 100 Virginians was born outside of the United States; by 2012, 1 in every 9 Virginians is foreign-born.

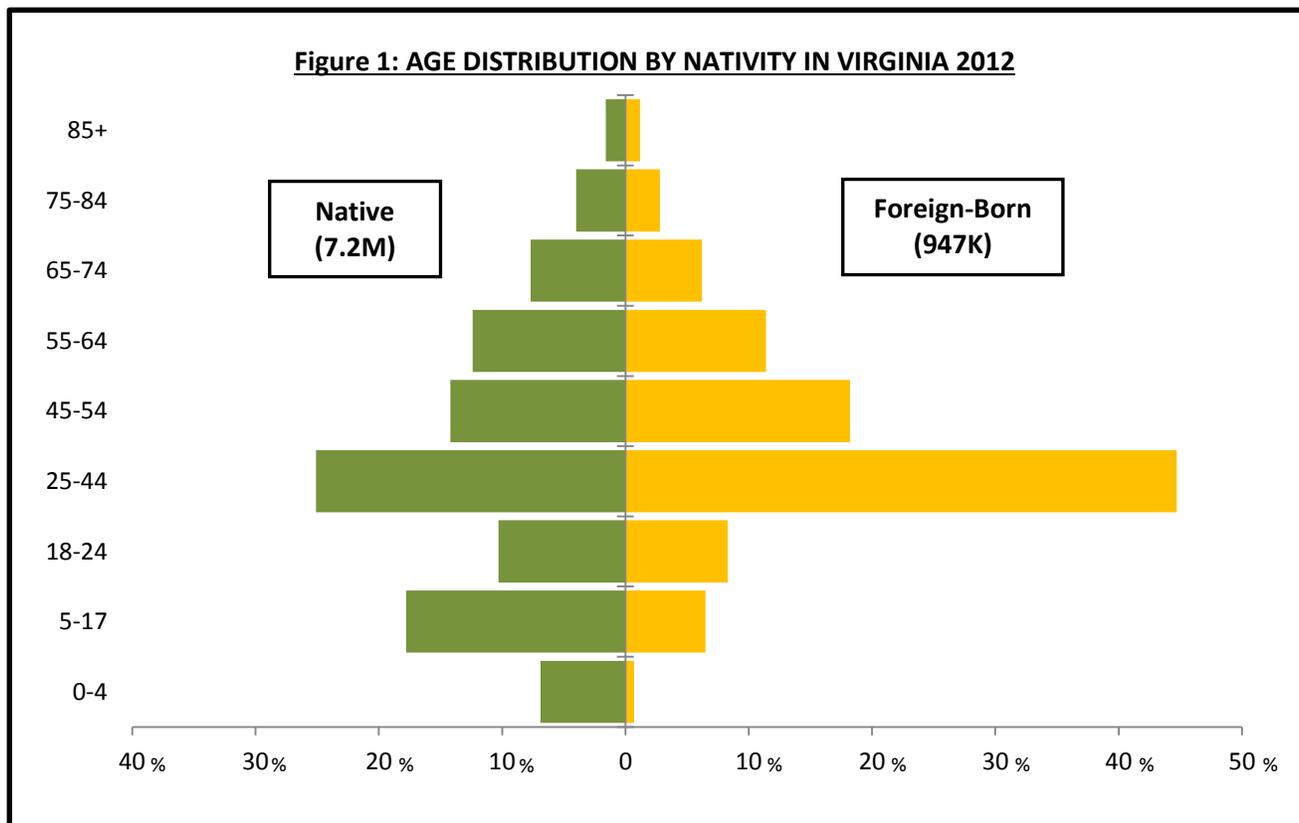
Not only has the *percentage* of foreign-born people within the Commonwealth been consistently rising, there also has been a large shift in the *composition* of the immigrant population over time. In the early 1900's, a majority of foreign-born immigrants to Virginia were from European countries (Germany, Ireland, England, Russia, Scotland) while Asia and Latin America were negligible contributors. Currently, the set of sending countries is much more diverse, with most of the immigrants coming

from either Asia (42%) or Latin America (35%) while Europe (10%) and Africa (10%) lag far behind. As of 2012, the top 5 countries of birth for the foreign-born population of Virginia are:

- El Salvador
- India
- Mexico
- Philippines
- Korea

Of all foreign-born residents, more than two-thirds (68%) live in Northern Virginia and they account for nearly a quarter (23%) of the area's population.

The ***age-distribution*** for foreign-born (947,320) and native (7.2 million) Virginians, seen in *Figure 1*, tells an interesting story about the two population



groups. On the native side, school-age children (5-17) and working-age adults (25-44) have the major shares. For the foreign-born, the most noticeable feature is the disproportionately large share of 25-44 year-olds. This relatively young cohort is perfectly positioned for two activities: *production* and *reproduction*, both of which will crucially impact Virginia's demographics and workforce.

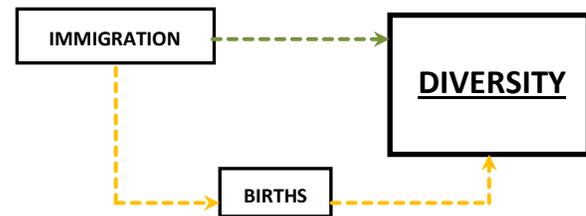
Since 25-44 is the golden age for participating in the ***workforce***, prosperous employment opportunities likely explains the growing presence of immigrants in Virginia. Labor force participation for natives is at about 65% in comparison to more than 73% for the foreign-born, who comprise 15% of Virginia's workforce. A large number of foreign-born workers are employed as computer software engineers, managers, cashiers, accountants & auditors, and retail salespersons, making these highly common occupations for immigrants.

Most foreign-born people are in the life stage of raising ***families***. While some of their children may be foreign-born as well, many are U.S.-born and belong to the 5-17 age cluster on the native side, which partially explains this group's sizeable share in the population pyramid. Among children of immigrants, 96% are U.S. citizens, either by birth or through naturalization. Also, almost a fifth of native-born children under the age of 18 have at least one foreign-born parent.

With more than 11% of Virginians originating from a different country, their presence is a significant contributor to non-native ***diversity*** within the Commonwealth. Migration not only brings new

people into the state but many immigrants who settle here have families, and their children will add to the demographic diversification of Virginia.

Figure 2: PATHWAYS TO DIVERSITY



As illustrated in *Figure 2*, migration and births - both key elements of population change, are making the state more diverse. Immigration increases diversity as foreign-born individuals residing in Virginia add to the prevailing variety of languages, customs and cuisines. Children of immigrants contribute to this cultural collage and increase the likelihood that it will prevail, as they grow up and become citizens, workers, and voters of the future. Multicultural diversity, not just from different races and ethnicities but also from diverse countries of origin, is definitely on the rise in the Commonwealth. Foreign-born people and their offspring are and will continue to be an integral part of Virginia's population.

ENDNOTE: The U.S. Census Bureau uses ***foreign-born*** to denote anyone who is not a U.S. citizen at birth (includes naturalized citizens, lawful permanent residents, temporary migrants such as foreign students, humanitarian migrants such as refugees, and undocumented migrants). The term ***native-born*** refers to those born in the United States, Puerto Rico, or a U.S. Island Area, or those born abroad with at least one U.S. citizen parent.

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