

Immigrants in Northern Virginia

Data Relevant to the COVID-19 Crisis Response

Since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, local leaders in communities across the country have been working tirelessly to ensure that all community members have access to the services and support they need. The immigrant population is both essential to our country's rapid response efforts and especially vulnerable to gaps in our social safety nets. Understanding this population helps better inform local leaders as they aim to implement inclusive emergency response policies.

One of the country's fastest growing immigrant destinations, Northern Virginia also has one of the most

diverse foreign-born populations in the United States. This diversity means that immigrants are some of the most vulnerable residents in the region but also heavily represented among the area's frontline healthcare and essential workforce fighting against the virus and keeping the region running.

Using the latest data from the 2018 American Community Survey 5-year sample, this brief provides a glimpse at the role of immigrants in Northern Virginia during the Covid-19 pandemic as well as the impact that the pandemic has had on the immigrant community.

IMMIGRANTS IN NORTHERN VIRGINIA

In 2018, foreign-born residents—those born abroad to non-U.S. citizen parents—made up more than 1 in 4 residents of Northern Virginia. Included among them were almost 72,000 resettled refugees, who made up almost 3 percent of the area's total population.

FIGURE 1: FOREIGN-BORN POPULATION IN NORTHERN VIRGINIA, 2018

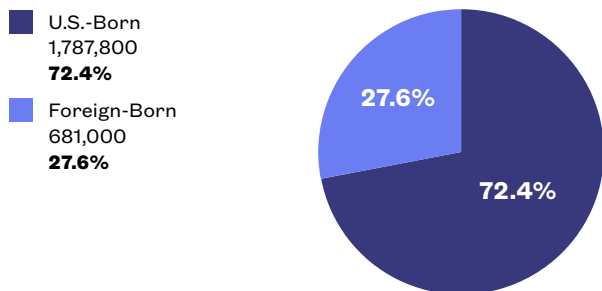
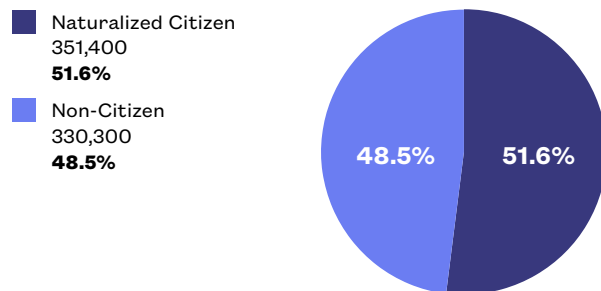


FIGURE 2: CITIZENSHIP STATUS OF FOREIGN-BORN POPULATION, 2018



IMMIGRANTS IN ESSENTIAL INDUSTRIES

Overall, there were more than 410,000 workers in Northern Virginia who worked in essential industries or lines of work. This included not only frontline healthcare workers, but also workers critical to the basic functioning of the region, such as workers in grocery stores, utilities, transportation, public safety, the manufacturing of specific goods, repair services and construction. The data shows that nearly half, or 47.9

percent of all essential workers in Northern Virginia were foreign-born, including more than 60 percent of all essential construction workers, and more than half of all workers in essential personal services, transportation, and food service. Immigrants also play an outside role when it comes to their share of the essential healthcare workforce, with more than 40 percent of all essential healthcare workers in the region being foreign-born.

FIGURE 3: ESSENTIAL INDUSTRIES IN NORTHERN VIRGINIA, 2018¹

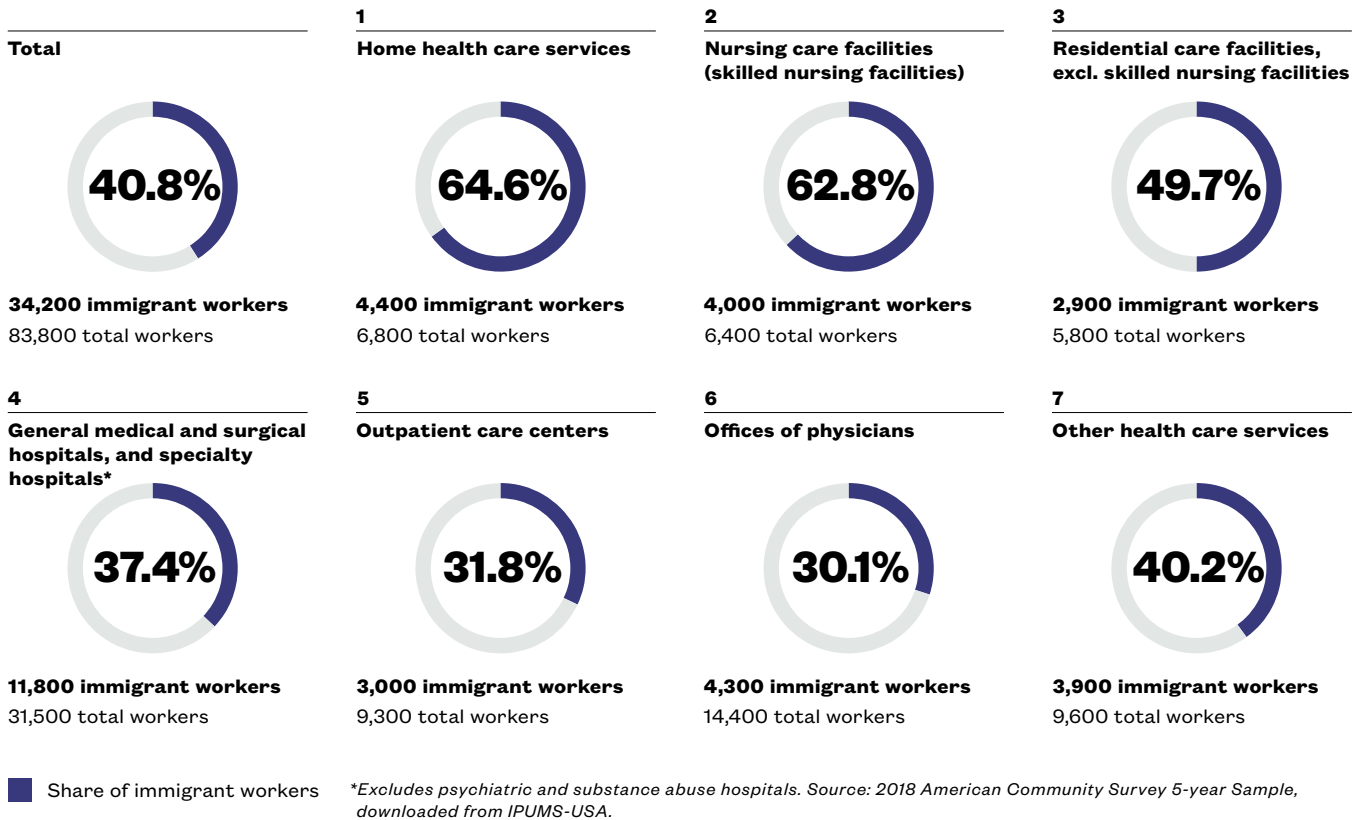


■ Share of immigrant workers

Source: 2018 American Community Survey 5-year Sample, downloaded from IPUMS-USA. Totals may not add up due to rounding and exclusion of industries with sample size-issues from the figure.

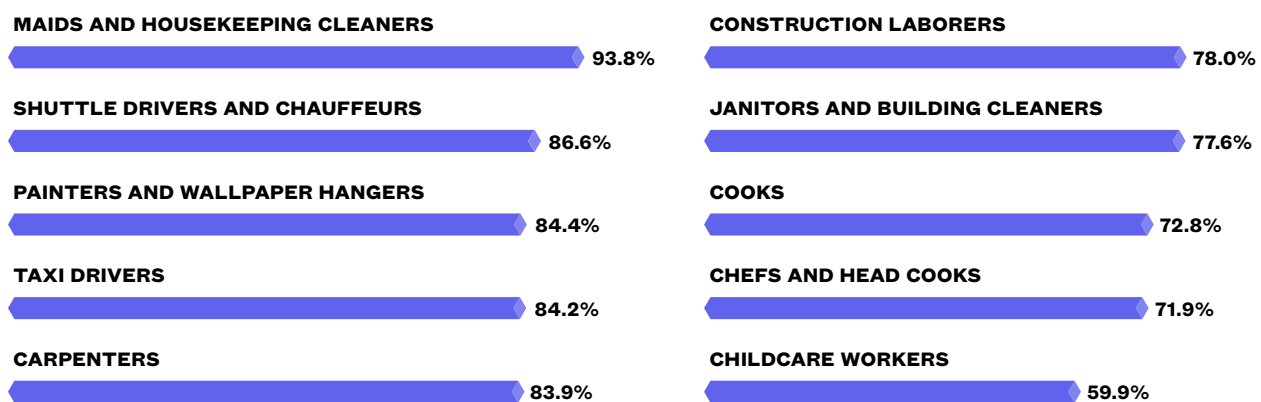
Looking more closely at immigrants in healthcare, we find that they are instrumental to some of the most critical healthcare industries. In 2018, nearly two-thirds, or 64.6 percent of all workers in home health care services were foreign-born. Similarly, 62.8 percent of all workers in nursing care facilities were immigrants.

FIGURE 4: IMMIGRANTS IN SPECIFIC ESSENTIAL HEALTHCARE INDUSTRIES, 2018



Workers in essential industries are typically unable to work remotely, increasing their risk of exposure to the disease. Among essential workers overall, there were some occupations in which immigrants tend to concentrate. In addition to the occupations outlined below, many other occupations had a majority immigrant workforce, including driver/sales workers and truck driver (58.3 percent) and food preparation workers (56.6 percent).⁶

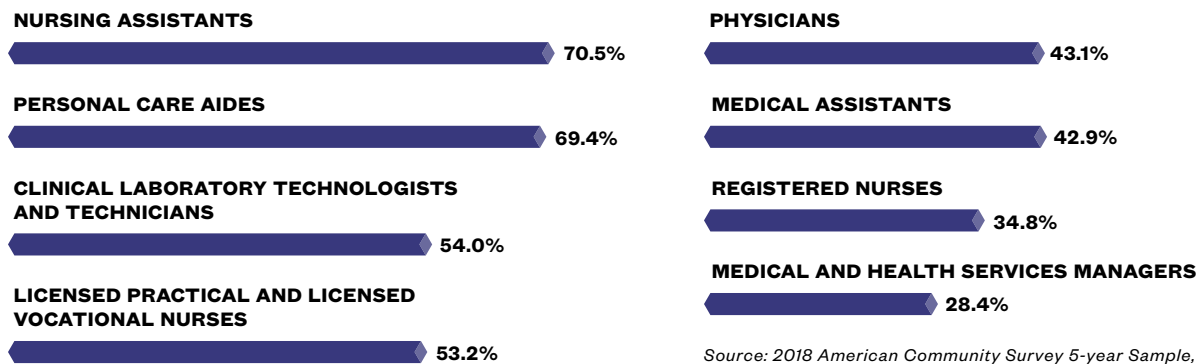
FIGURE 5: TOP OCCUPATIONS FOR IMMIGRANTS IN ESSENTIAL INDUSTRIES BY SHARE OF IMMIGRANT WORKERS



Source: 2018 American Community Survey 5-year Sample, downloaded from IPUMS-USA.

Within essential healthcare, immigrants also made up more than half of all nursing assistants, personal care aides, lab technologists and technicians, and licensed practical or vocational nurses. Immigrants also made up more than 43 percent of all physicians in Northern Virginia in 2018.

FIGURE 6: TOP OCCUPATIONS FOR IMMIGRANTS IN ESSENTIAL HEALTHCARE BY SHARE OF IMMIGRANT WORKERS, 2018



Source: 2018 American Community Survey 5-year Sample, downloaded from IPUMS-USA.

WORKERS AND ENTREPRENEURS IN NON-ESSENTIAL INDUSTRIES

For those workers deemed non-essential, the economic fallout from the coronavirus outbreak has been severe, especially for those who cannot work remotely or whose businesses and places of work depend normally on face-to-face interaction. This includes more than 319,000 immigrant workers who make up 38.7 percent of all workers in “non-essential” industries.

Communities across the country, facing similar challenges during the pandemic, have acted quickly to create programs that help support vulnerable members of their communities. The city of Boston created a \$25 million [Boston Resiliency Fund](#) to support organizations providing critical, essential services to residents impacted by COVID-19, and prioritizing support for organizations that support undocumented immigrants, residents with limited English proficiency, and front-line workers. In Minneapolis, the city created a [Gap Funds for Businesses](#), which provides \$2.2 million in emergency no-interest loans for small businesses, regardless of immigration status. In Northern Virginia, the city of Alexandria created the [ACT Now COVID-19](#)

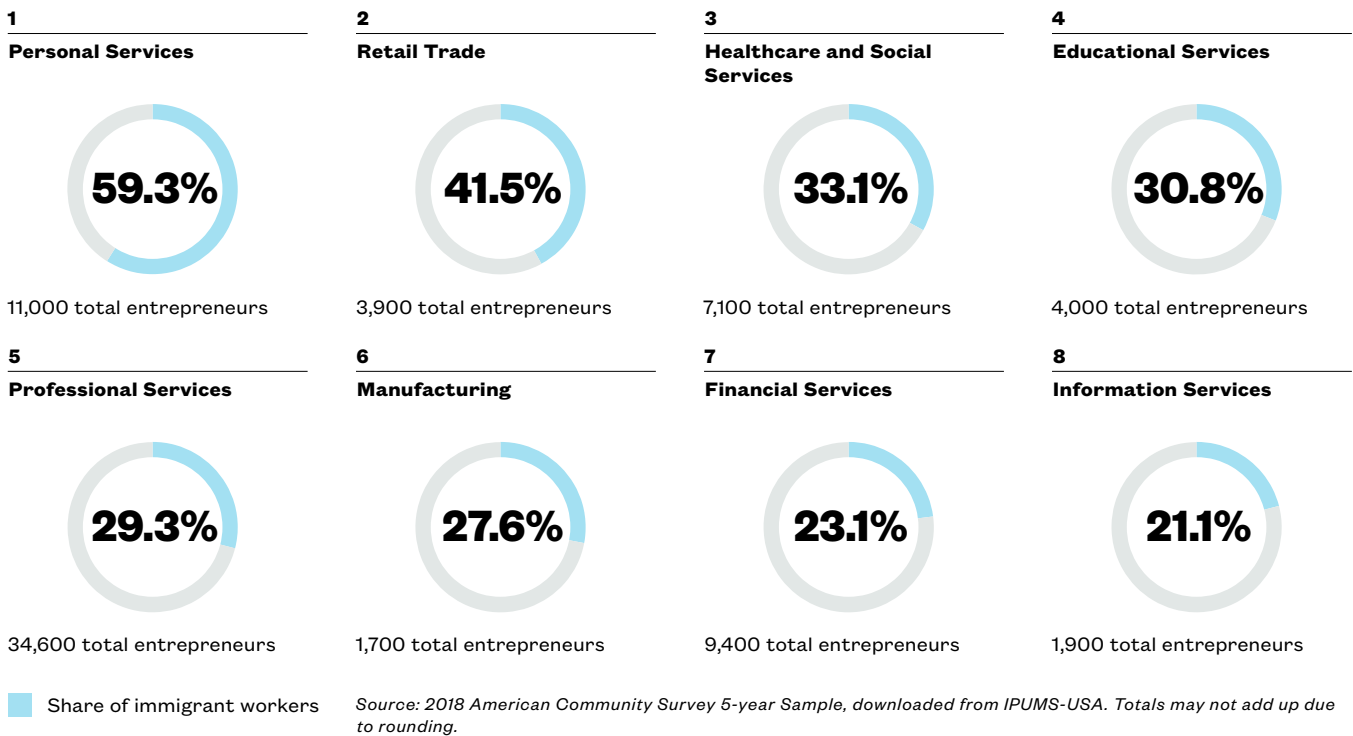
[Response Fund](#) and raised over \$1.1 million for local community organizations that provide emergency relief to individuals, including immigrants, impacted by the pandemic.

FIGURE 7: NON-ESSENTIAL INDUSTRIES BY SHARE OF WORKFORCE, FOREIGN-BORN, 2018

| Non-Essential Industries | Foreign-Born Workers | Total Workforce | Foreign-Born Share |
|------------------------------------|----------------------|-----------------|--------------------|
| Construction | 50,800 | 84,600 | 60.1% |
| Hospitality | 47,000 | 88,400 | 53.2% |
| Retail Trade | 45,100 | 111,300 | 40.5% |
| General Services | 32,700 | 81,200 | 40.3% |
| Healthcare | 35,700 | 90,000 | 39.6% |
| Professional and Business Services | 97,100 | 331,100 | 29.3% |
| Manufacturing | 11,000 | 38,900 | 28.3% |
| TOTAL | | | 38.7% |

Source: 2018 American Community Survey 5-year Sample, downloaded from IPUMS-USA. Totals may not add up due to rounding.

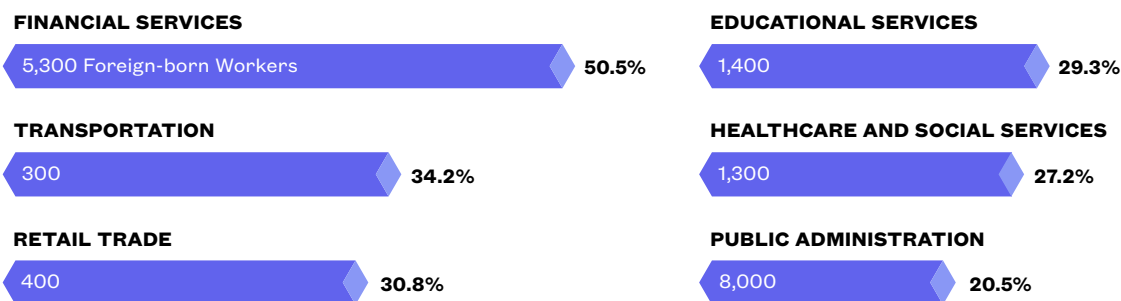
FIGURE 8: IMMIGRANT ENTREPRENEURS IN NON-ESSENTIAL INDUSTRIES, 2018



IMMIGRANTS AS STEM WORKERS

Looking at particularly vital industries to Northern Virginia, the data show that immigrants make up much higher shares of the STEM workforce than their overall numbers in the workforce would suggest. For example, immigrants make up more than half of all STEM workers in the financial services industry and more than one-third of all STEM workers in the transportation sector.

FIGURE 9: IMMIGRANTS IN STEM OCCUPATIONS IN SELECTED INDUSTRIES, 2018



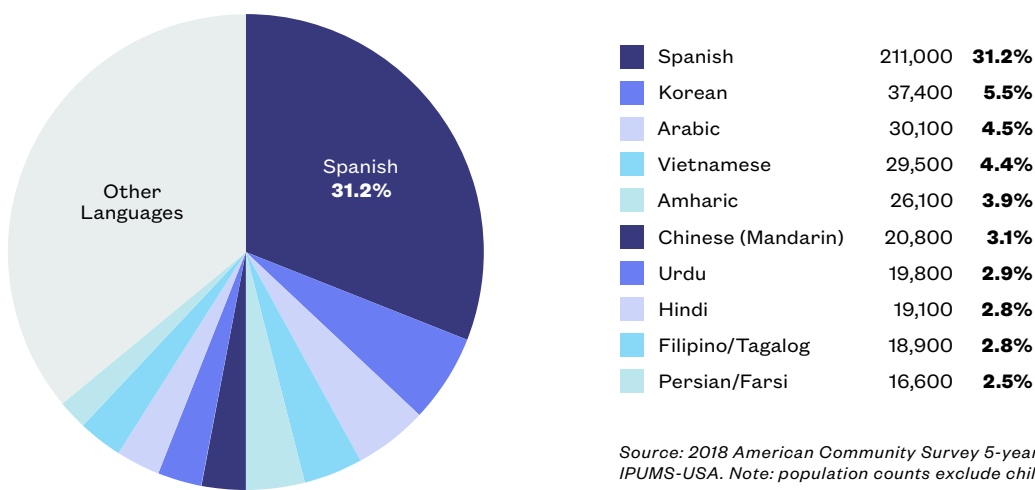
Source: 2018 American Community Survey 5-year Sample, downloaded from IPUMS-USA.

LANGUAGES SPOKEN AT HOME

The immigrant population in Northern Virginia is reflected in the number of languages other than English spoken at home. In total, nearly 584,800 people in Northern Virginia live in a household where English is not spoken at home as the primary language. Of them, 31.2 percent speak Spanish at home, followed by Korean (5.5 percent), Arabic (4.5 percent), Vietnamese (4.4 percent), and Amharic (3.9 percent). Understanding

those with limited English proficiency is particularly critical for the quick and accurate dissemination of health and safety information in the response and recovery of this pandemic. For instance, in Northern Virginia the Arlington County government has published [guides](#) on how to get tested for COVID-19 in eleven languages.

FIGURE 10: TOP 10 LANGUAGES SPOKEN AT HOME OTHER THAN ENGLISH, 2018



Source: 2018 American Community Survey 5-year Sample, downloaded from IPUMS-USA. Note: population counts exclude children under the age of five.

RESIDENTS OF NORTHERN VIRGINIA WITH LIMITED ENGLISH PROFICIENCY

In 2018, there were 134,200 people in Northern Virginia who reported speaking English less than well, making up 5.4 percent of the area's total population.

FIGURE 11: NUMBER OF LEP SPEAKERS, 2018



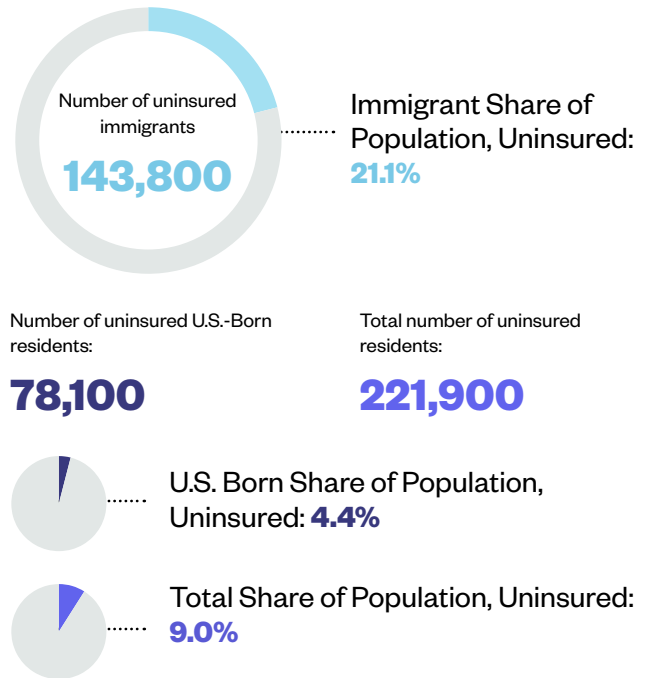
Source: 2018 American Community Survey 5-year Sample, downloaded from IPUMS-USA.

LACK OF HEALTHCARE COVERAGE

In 2018, there were almost 222,000 residents of Northern Virginia that reported having neither public nor private healthcare insurance, about 9.0 percent of the total population. However, immigrants made up a significant share of those lacking any form of health insurance. There were almost 144,000 immigrants in Northern Virginia that were uninsured. In other words, despite making up just 27.6 percent of the population, immigrants made up almost 65 percent of all uninsured people.

During this health crisis, many communities are looking at creative ways to ensure that everyone stays safe and healthy. In Albuquerque, NM, the [city offers free testing and medical care](#) for immigrants seeking COVID-19 relief, regardless of their immigration status, and several cities like [Brownsville](#), [Detroit](#), and [New Haven](#), are offering free testing for members of their community—regardless of their immigration status. In Northern Virginia, [Prince William County](#), [Fairfax County](#), and the [city of Alexandria](#) all provide free COVID-19 testing to residents, regardless of their immigration status.

FIGURE 12: UNINSURED RESIDENTS, BY NATIVITY, 2018



Source: 2018 American Community Survey 5-year Sample, downloaded from IPUMS-USA.

FIGURE 13: UNINSURED RESIDENTS, BY COUNTRY OF BIRTH, 2018

| Country of Origin | Number of Uninsured | Foreign Share of Population, Uninsured |
|-------------------|---------------------|--|
| El Salvador | 37,800 | 26.3% |
| Honduras | 13,800 | 9.6% |
| Guatemala | 10,400 | 7.2% |
| Mexico | 7,800 | 5.4% |
| Bolivia | 7,700 | 5.3% |
| Korea | 7,100 | 5.0% |
| Ethiopia | 5,800 | 4.0% |
| Pakistan | 3,900 | 2.7% |
| Peru | 3,700 | 2.5% |
| Vietnam | 3,100 | 2.2% |
| India | 2,700 | 1.9% |
| China | 2,500 | 1.7% |

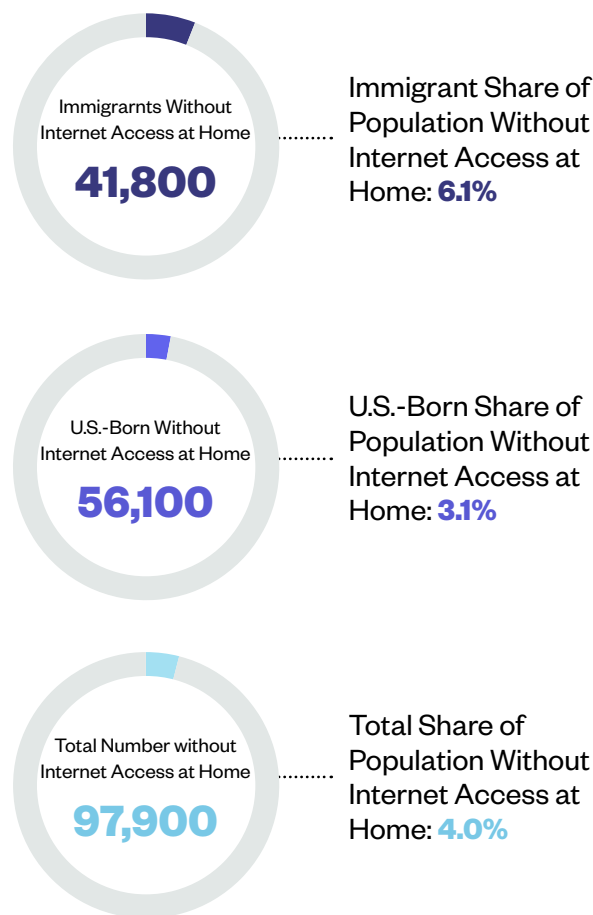
Source: 2018 American Community Survey 5-year Sample, downloaded from IPUMS-USA.

LACK OF INTERNET ACCESS

In 2018, approximately 4.0 percent of Northern Virginians, or 97,900 people, reported lacking access to the internet at home. On top of this, a further 150,200 people reported only having access to the internet at home through a mobile phone connection, rather than through dial-up or broadband access. In total, 1 in 10 residents lacked a wired connection to the internet at home, with immigrants being disproportionately affected. Of the 97,900 people without internet of any form at home, 42.7 percent were foreign-born.

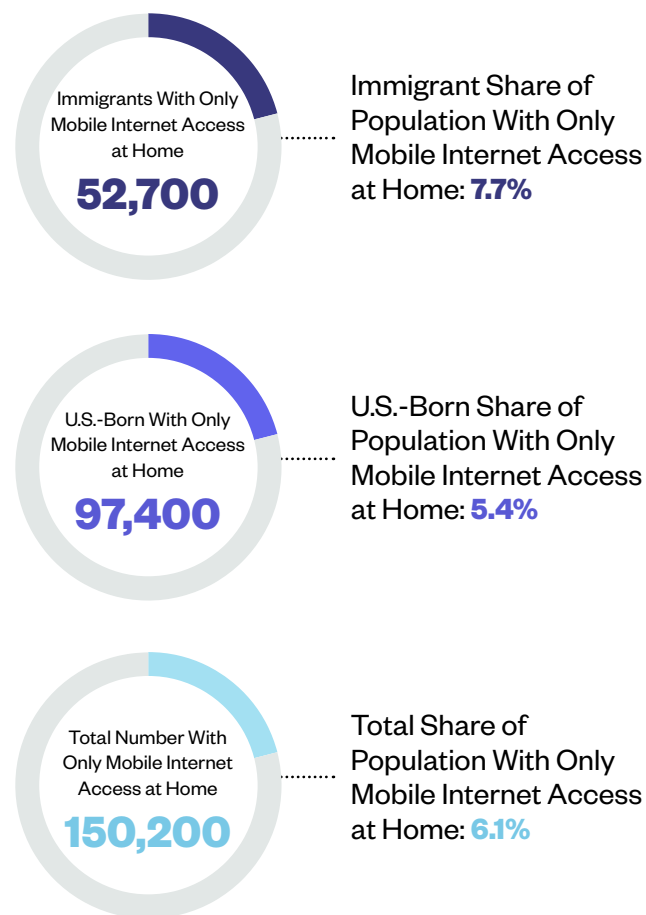
As school districts across the country hold classes online due to COVID-19, limited or no internet access at home puts children in foreign-born households at risk of falling behind. For foreign-born residents limited access to the internet can lead to severe economic fallout, from limiting one’s ability to work remotely to hindering a small business’s transition to online.

FIGURE 14: POPULATION LACKING ANY INTERNET ACCESS AT HOME, 2018



Source: 2018 American Community Survey 5-year Sample, downloaded from IPUMS-USA.

FIGURE 15: POPULATION WITH ONLY MOBILE ACCESS TO THE INTERNET AT HOME, 2018



Source: 2018 American Community Survey 5-year Sample, downloaded from IPUMS-USA. Totals may not add up due to rounding.

HOUSEHOLD SIZE

In general, immigrant households were larger than their U.S.-born counterparts in Northern Virginia. Whereas U.S.-born headed households had 2.4 people on average, immigrant-headed households had 3.2 people. This number varied significantly based on the country of birth of the household head.

Since COVID-19 is spread through close contact with other people who test positive for the virus, households with more occupants present opportunities for transmission among members within that household.

FIGURE 16: AVERAGE HOUSEHOLD SIZE, 2018

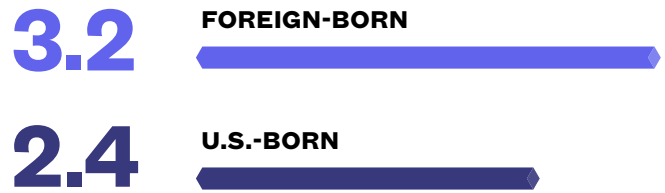


FIGURE 17: TOP AND BOTTOM COUNTRIES OF BIRTH BY AVERAGE HOUSEHOLD SIZE, 2018

TOP COUNTRIES

| Country of Birth | Average Household Size |
|------------------|------------------------|
| El Salvador | 4.2 |
| Pakistan | 4.2 |
| Honduras | 4.0 |
| Guatemala | 4.0 |
| Sudan | 4.0 |
| Mexico | 3.8 |
| Afghanistan | 3.7 |
| Bangladesh | 3.6 |
| Bolivia | 3.5 |
| Nepal | 3.4 |

BOTTOM COUNTRIES

| Country of Birth | Average Household Size |
|------------------|------------------------|
| Germany | 2.0 |
| Poland | 2.0 |
| Japan | 2.1 |
| United Kingdom | 2.2 |
| France | 2.3 |
| Jamaica | 2.4 |
| Turkey | 2.5 |
| Iran | 2.6 |
| Canada | 2.6 |
| Lebanon | 2.6 |

Taking into account income, even after accounting for household size (per capita household income), we find that immigrant-headed households, especially those on the lower end of the income spectrum are significantly larger than their U.S.-born counterparts. The gap between the foreign-born and the U.S.-born shrinks as with each higher income quintile, almost reaching parity at the top among the highest earning households.

FIGURE 18: AVERAGE HOUSEHOLD SIZE BY HOUSEHOLD INCOME, ADJUSTED FOR HOUSEHOLD SIZE, BY NATIVITY, 2018

| Household Income Quintile | U.S.-born | Foreign-born |
|---------------------------|-----------|--------------|
| Lowest 20% | 2.9 | 3.8 |
| 2nd Quintile | 3.1 | 3.5 |
| Middle 20% | 2.6 | 2.9 |
| 4th Quintile | 2.2 | 2.4 |
| Highest 20% | 1.8 | 2.0 |

Source for Figures 16-18: 2018 American Community Survey 5-year Sample, downloaded from IPUMS-USA.

HOUSING CHARACTERISTICS OF IMMIGRANTS

Of the approximately 259,300 immigrant households in Northern Virginia, there were 149,600 that lived in homes that they owned, or about 58 percent of the total. This meant that about 42 percent of immigrant households rented the homes in which they resided.

During these tumultuous times, we see some local communities taking a very proactive role as they aim to tackle housing instability—particularly with communities less likely to receive federal assistance. In Northern Virginia, the Loudoun County government established a [limited rent assistance program](#) for

households that were financially impacted by the pandemic; immigration status was not part of the eligibility criteria for this program. Prince George, MD established a [COVID-19 Emergency Rental Assistance Fund](#) for low-income residents, regardless of their immigration status, and the City of Richmond, VA recently [launched a new program](#) that provides up to \$1,500 in rent or mortgage assistance to undocumented immigrants.

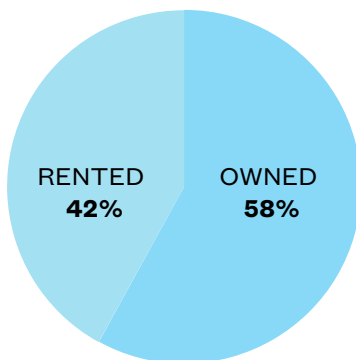
FIGURE 19: HOMEOWNERSHIP STATUS AMONG IMMIGRANT HOUSEHOLDS

Number of foreign-born households who own or mortgage their own homes

149,600

Number of foreign-born households are renters

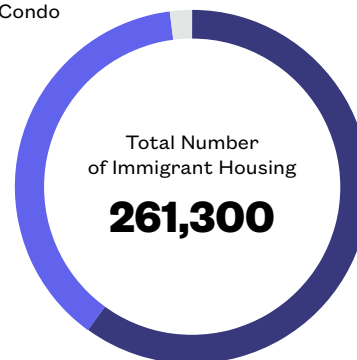
109,700



Source: 2018 American Community Survey 5-year Sample, downloaded from IPUMS-USA.

FIGURE 20: TYPE OF IMMIGRANT HOUSING

- Single-family House
158,100
60.5%
- Multi-family Apartment/Condo
98,000
37.5%
- Other
5,200
2.0%



Source: 2018 American Community Survey 5-year Sample, downloaded from IPUMS-USA. Note: Other includes mobile home or trailer, boat, tent, van, or other, and group quarters and institutions. Group quarters and institutions were not counted towards the Total Homeownership Status Among Immigrant Households, as the census does not consider group quarters to be households.

Hispanic Immigrants in Northern Virginia

A Closer look at the Hispanic Population

Nationally, Hispanic immigrants remain both essential and highly vulnerable to the ongoing health and economic crisis brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic. Despite making up just 17.5 percent of the total population, Hispanic residents in Northern Virginia made up over 50 percent⁷ of the COVID-19 cases [reported](#) as of September 2020. When we take

a closer look at this critical population in Northern Virginia, we see that Hispanic immigrants, who account for 52 percent of Hispanic residents, may be especially vulnerable due to the increased risks of infection associated with frontline and essential work, gaps in healthcare coverage and internet connectivity issues.

HISPANIC IMMIGRANTS IN ESSENTIAL INDUSTRIES

Out of the more than 410,000 essential workers in Northern Virginia, almost 1 in 4 (24.2 percent) are Hispanic immigrants.

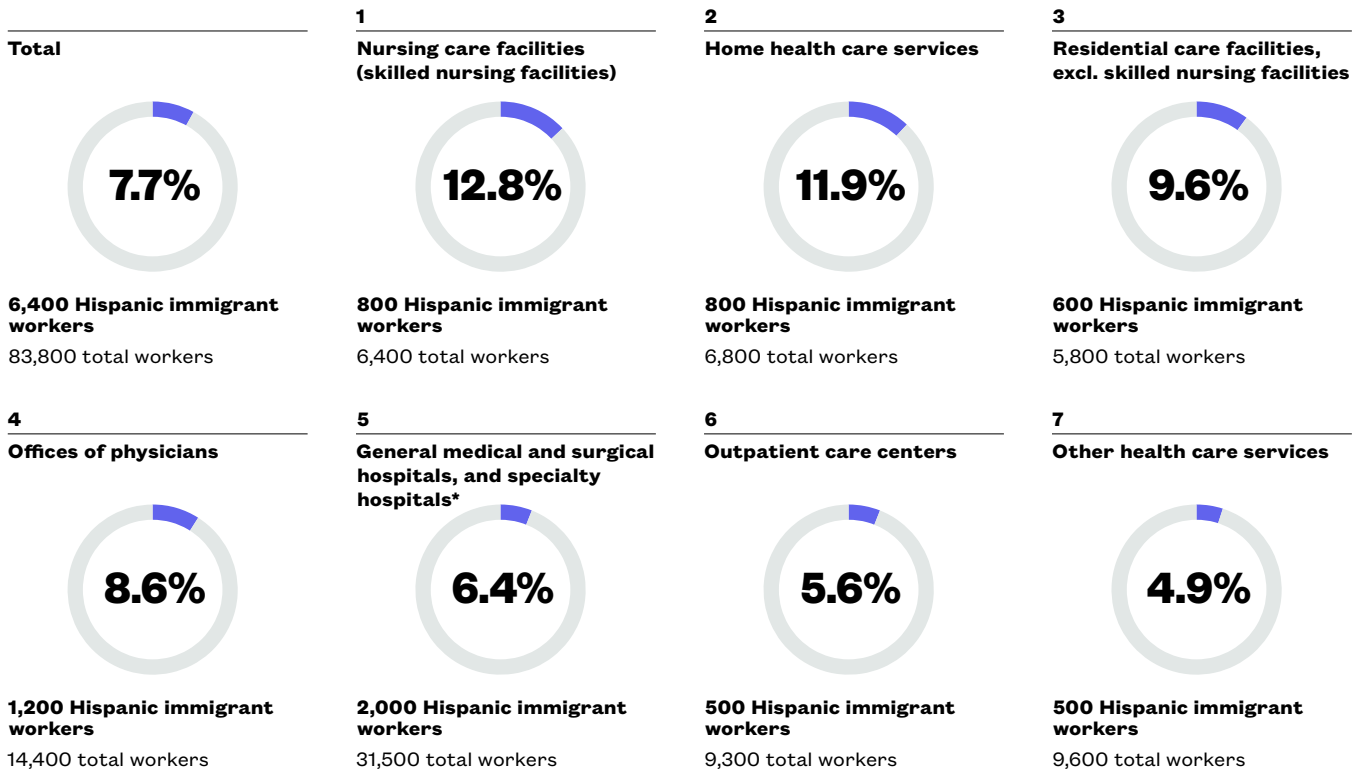
FIGURE 21: HISPANIC IMMIGRANTS IN ESSENTIAL INDUSTRIES IN NORTHERN VIRGINIA, 2018⁸

| Essential Industry Sector | Hispanic Foreign-Born Workers | Total Workforce | Hispanic Foreign-Born Share |
|--------------------------------|-------------------------------|-----------------|-----------------------------|
| Construction | 42,600 | 84,600 | 50.3% |
| Essential Services | 19,600 | 48,300 | 40.6% |
| Food Service | 18,300 | 71,700 | 25.6% |
| Food Manufacturing | 1,100 | 4,700 | 24.7% |
| Transportation and Warehousing | 5,400 | 42,000 | 12.8% |
| Essential Retail Trade | 4,000 | 37,000 | 10.7% |
| Healthcare | 6,400 | 83,800 | 7.7% |
| Public Safety | 700 | 24,200 | 3.0% |
| TOTAL | 99,300 | 410,100 | 24.2% |

Source: 2018 American Community Survey 5-year Sample, downloaded from IPUMS-USA. Totals may not add up due to rounding and exclusion of industries with sample size-issues from the table.

When zooming in on the healthcare industry, we find that Hispanic immigrants are overrepresented in nursing care facilities as well as home health care services, where they make up 12.8 percent and 11.9 percent respectively.

FIGURE 22: HISPANIC IMMIGRANTS IN SPECIFIC ESSENTIAL HEALTHCARE INDUSTRIES, 2018



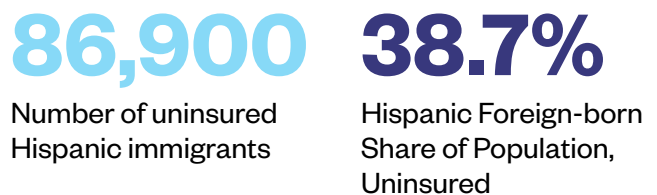
■ Share of Hispanic immigrant workers

*Excludes psychiatric and substance abuse hospitals. Source: 2018 American Community Survey 5-year Sample, downloaded from IPUMS-USA.

HISPANIC IMMIGRANTS AND HEALTHCARE COVERAGE

While only 4.4 percent of the U.S.-born population lacked healthcare coverage in 2018, as many as 38.7 percent of Hispanic immigrants reported being without both private or public insurance. Notably, this means that over 60 percent of immigrants without any healthcare coverage are Hispanic.

FIGURE 23: UNINSURED RESIDENTS, BY NATIVITY, 2018



Source: 2018 American Community Survey 5-year Sample, downloaded from IPUMS-USA.

HISPANIC IMMIGRANTS AND LACK OF INTERNET

Out of the 41,800 immigrants lacking any internet access at home, 26,400 or 63.2 percent are Hispanic. Similarly, out of the 50,700 immigrants reporting only having mobile access to the internet in their household, 24,300 or 46.1 percent are Hispanic.

All in all, out of the 248,100 residents in Northern Virginia either without internet access or with only mobile access, 50,700 or 20.4 percent are Hispanic immigrants.

FIGURE 24: POPULATION LACKING ANY INTERNET ACCESS AT HOME, 2018

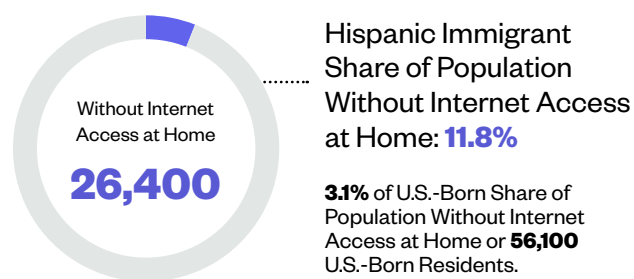
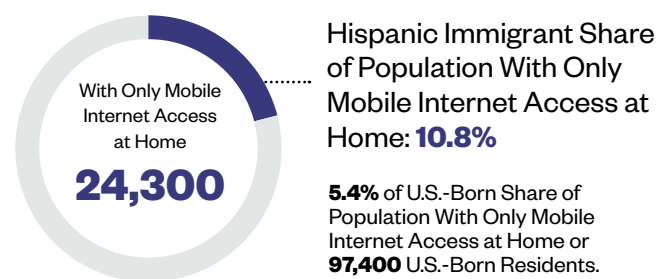


FIGURE 25: POPULATION WITH ONLY MOBILE ACCESS TO THE INTERNET AT HOME, 2018



Source: 2018 American Community Survey 5-year Sample, downloaded from IPUMS-USA.

HOUSEHOLD SIZE

While foreign-born households are already larger on average than U.S.-born ones, Hispanic immigrant-led households are even bigger, with an average size of 3.8 people. This number varies significantly depending on the households total income (adjusted for household size).

As previously noted, once you take into account income, the large differences between Hispanic immigrant households and U.S.-born ones disappear, with the majority of the gap existing within the lowest household income quintile.

FIGURE 26: AVERAGE HOUSEHOLD SIZE, 2018

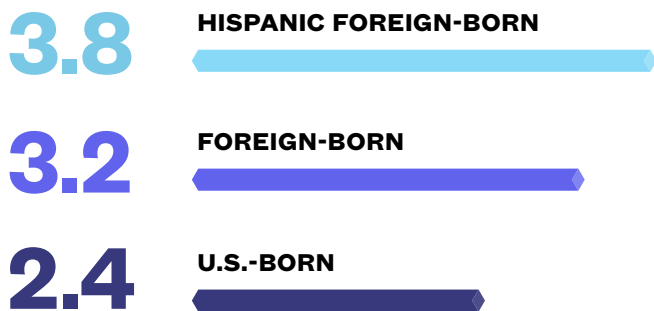


FIGURE 27: AVERAGE HOUSEHOLD SIZE BY HOUSEHOLD INCOME, ADJUSTED FOR HOUSEHOLD SIZE, BY NATIVITY, 2018

| Household Income Quintile | U.S.-born | Hispanic Foreign-Born |
|---------------------------|------------|-----------------------|
| Lowest 20% | 2.9 | 4.3 |
| 2nd Quintile | 3.1 | 3.6 |
| Middle 20% | 2.6 | 2.7 |
| 4th Quintile | 2.2 | 2.2 |
| Highest 20% | 1.8 | 1.9 |

Source: 2018 American Community Survey 5-year Sample, downloaded from IPUMS-USA.

Endnotes

- 1** Agriculture, mining and extracting are also essential industries in Northern Virginia that have been hard hit by the COVID-19 pandemic, however were excluded from this figure due to the small size of their workforce.
- 2** Essential Services includes: veterinary services; services to buildings and dwellings (except cleaning during construction and immediately after construction); waste management and remediation services; child day care services; automotive repair and maintenance; dry cleaning and laundry services; funeral homes; and cemeteries and crematories.
- 3** Essential Retail Trade includes: supermarkets, grocery stores and convenience stores; specialty food stores; beer, wine, and liquor stores; pharmacies and drug stores; health and personal care; gasoline stations; electronic shopping and mail-order houses; other direct selling establishments.
- 4** Food Manufacturing includes: food processing (packers, meat processing, cheese plants, milk plants, etc) facilities; livestock, poultry, seafood slaughter facilities; pet and animal feed processing facilities; human food facilities producing by-products for animal food; beverage production facilities; and the production of food packaging.
- 5** Essential Wholesale Trade includes: hardware, and plumbing and heating equipment, and supplies merchant wholesalers; drugs, sundries, and chemical and allied products merchant wholesalers; grocery and related product merchant wholesalers; farm product raw material merchant wholesalers; petroleum and petroleum products merchant wholesalers; alcoholic beverages merchant wholesalers.
- 6** Additional industries with a majority immigrant workforce include automotive service technicians and mechanics (56.4 percent), supervisors of construction trades and extraction workers (55.2 percent), supervisors of retail sales workers (54.4 percent), cashiers (54.4 percent), and plumbers, pipefitters, and steamfitters (52.4 percent).
- 7** COVID-19 counts and shares are calculated using cases where race was reported. As of September 2020, a total of 37,423 COVID-19 cases in Northern Virginia reported racial demographics.
- 8** Agriculture, essential wholesale trade, essential manufacturing, utilities, mining and extracting are also essential industries in Northern Virginia that have been hard hit by the COVID-19 pandemic, however were excluded from this figure due to the small size of their workforce.



The **Northern Virginia Regional Commission (NVRC)** is a regional council of thirteen local governments in the Northern Virginia suburbs of Washington, D.C. NVRC has provided services to its local government members and citizens for more than 50 years in a wide variety of areas including environmental, health, demography, workforce, community/military relations and energy. Northern Virginia is the economic engine of the Commonwealth of Virginia generating nearly 40% of State GDP.

www.novaregion.org

For COVID-19 resources in Northern Virginia: <https://www.coronavirus-novaregion.org/>



The **Community Foundation for Northern Virginia** grows philanthropy to respond to critical need, seed innovation and lead and convene the community. Comprised of donor advised funds, permanent funds, giving circles, and other charitable endowments, the Community Foundation connects donors to community and promotes a more equitable and inclusive prosperity that marries our economic strength with the full breadth of our diverse community. In 2019, the Community Foundation awarded more than \$5.4 million in grants and scholarships and reported more than \$72 million in managed philanthropic assets.

www.cfnova.org

New American Economy brings together more than 500 Republican, Democratic and Independent mayors and business leaders who support sensible immigration reforms that will help create jobs for Americans today.

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