In Virginia, Asians are an increasingly important part of the population. As of the last census on April 1, 2010, over 400,000 Asians were living in Virginia, representing 5.5 percent of the population.

While Virginia's total population ranks 12th in the nation, its Asian population ranks 9th. The Asian population increased by almost 70 percent between 2000 and 2010, from 260,000 to 440,000.

The Asian population is not evenly distributed throughout the commonwealth. Ninety-three percent of Asian Virginians live in the state's three main metropolitan areas: Northern Virginia, Richmond, and Virginia Beach. The majority of Asians (71 percent) live in Northern Virginia alone.

Where do Asians live?
71% Northern Virginia
13% Virginia Beach area
9% Richmond area
7% Other areas of Virginia

Who is Asian?
The Federal Office of Management and Budget provides the standards for collecting statistical data on race and ethnicity. These standards, used in the census, include five categories for data on race. One of these categories, Asian, is defined as:

"A person having origins in any of the original peoples of the Far East, Southeast Asia, or the Indian subcontinent including, for example, Cambodia, China, India, Japan, Korea, Malaysia, Pakistan, the Philippine Islands, Thailand, and Vietnam."

The other race categories are American Indian/Alaska Native, Black/African American, Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander, and White.

People who identify themselves as Asian include immigrants from Asian countries as well as their U.S.-born offspring. Twenty-eight percent of Virginia's Asians are native-born Americans, and more than half were born in Virginia. The others were born elsewhere in the U.S., primarily New York, Maryland, and California.

Of the foreign-born Asians in Virginia, more than half are naturalized U.S. citizens. The others are non-citizen residents. Three quarters of the Asians living in Virginia were born outside of the U.S. in India, Korea, the Philippines, Vietnam, or China.
Asians in Virginia

The Demographics & Workforce Group

May 2011

Age

The Asian population is similar to the Virginia population overall, yet has slightly larger proportions of young children and working-age adults. Asians in Virginia include mainly immigrants in their prime working ages and their children (either born in the U.S. or in their home countries).

Immigration by working-age adults and their children is reflected in the median age of population groups. In Virginia, the median age for whites is 39; for blacks and Asians, 33; and for Hispanics, 26.

Education and Language

The Asian population is highly educated. Thirty-three percent of non-Asian Virginians over the age of 25 have a Bachelor’s (B.A.) degree or higher, compared with 56 percent of Asians. Among Asian adults born in the U.S., 63 percent has a B.A. or higher.

The Asian population also has high levels of language proficiency, with many Asians being multilingual. Among native-born Asians, 58 percent speaks English and at least one additional language.

Among the foreign-born Asian population, 11 percent speaks only English, 73 percent speaks English well or very well, and 13 percent speaks English, but does not speak it well. Less than 3 percent does not speak English at all.

Income, Occupation & Poverty

The median household income in Virginia is $59,990. For Asian-headed households it is much higher: $83,800. The median income for native-born Asian households is $90,000, while that of foreign-born households is $83,000.

High median household incomes correlate with employment in high-paying occupations. Among Asian adults ages 25 and above, the three most common occupations are:

- computer software engineer
- accountant/auditor
- computer scientist/systems analyst

High levels of educational attainment and employment make Asian-headed households less likely to be in or near poverty. Twenty-five percent of all Virginia households are in or near poverty, compared to 19 percent of Asian-headed households.

Source: Demographics & Workforce Group Analysis of 2009 American Community Survey (ACS) IPUMS and 2010 Decennial Census Data.
Note: ACS estimates are subject to sampling and non-sampling errors.

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