



THE
COMMONWEALTH
INSTITUTE

*Building a Prosperous
Virginia for All*

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

June 10, 2016

Media Contact

Patrick Getlein

Communications Director

patrick@thecommonwealthinstitute.org

804-396-2051 x103

www.thecommonwealthinstitute.org

Immigrants Play Key Role in Northern Virginia Economy

Four out of five are in prime working years

RICHMOND, VA – A higher share of Northern Virginia residents are immigrants than in any other part of the state or in the country as a whole. And most immigrants in Northern Virginia -- 4 out of 5 -- are between the ages of 18 and 64, according to new analysis released today by the Commonwealth Institute, an economic research and policy organization based in Richmond. Among U.S.-born residents of the region, the rate is 3 out of 5.

“That’s an important finding because it means immigrants are making economic contributions right now, and that’s a big benefit for the region,” says Institute President Michael Cassidy. “Too often the economic contributions of immigrants gets overlooked in the public discussion about policies that affect foreign-born residents,” he says. “That needs to change.”

Among the report’s key findings:

- **Immigrants living in Northern Virginia are diverse, and most have been in the United States for many years.**
 - The most common country of birth for immigrants living in Northern Virginia is El Salvador, followed by India and Korea, but even combined these three countries account for less than 30 percent of the region’s immigrants.
 - More than half of foreign-born residents of the region have been in the United States for more than 15 years.
 - Half of the immigrants living in Northern Virginia are U.S. citizens.
- **Foreign-born residents of Northern Virginia are mostly working-age and many are operating businesses.**
 - Four out of five immigrants in Northern Virginia are between the ages of 18 and 64.
 - Northern Virginia’s working immigrants include 47,000 self-employed workers, of whom 19,000 own their own incorporated business. Immigrants in Northern Virginia are 50

percent more likely than U.S.-born residents of the region to be working at their own incorporated business.

- **Immigrants in Northern Virginia are well educated.**
 - Almost half have at least a bachelor's degree, and 21 percent have an advanced degree. These rates are far higher than in the United States as a whole.

Still, with as much success as they have achieved, immigrants also face a number of challenges. Despite high employment levels, many immigrants in Northern Virginia lack health insurance; and nearly 1 in 3 immigrant workers in the region makes less than \$12 an hour. In addition, there are still large numbers of immigrant workers with less than a high school education or who are unable to speak English very well. And immigrant families often struggle with the region's high cost of living--nearly a third of immigrant homeowners in Northern Virginia are paying more than the recommended 30 percent of their income on housing costs, as are half of immigrants who rent their home.

"We shouldn't forget those who are struggling when we talk about the economic contributions of immigrants," Cassidy says. "We need to work together to make sure all of our region's workers and families have the opportunity to succeed."

The full report, *Vital for Prosperity: The facts about immigrants and their contributions to the Northern Virginia economy*, can be found online at www.thecommonwealthinstitute.org.

####

About The Commonwealth Institute

The Commonwealth Institute for Fiscal Analysis provides credible, independent, and accessible information and analyses of fiscal and economic issues with particular attention to the impacts on low- and moderate-income persons. Our products inform fiscal and budget policy debates and contribute to sound decisions that improve the well-being of individuals, communities and Virginia as a whole. Visit www.thecommonwealthinstitute.org for more information.