Immigrant Access and Participation in DSS-Sponsored Education and Training Programs

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Introduction

The Office of New Americans (ONA) is interested in understanding access and barriers to workforce development programs for work-authorized immigrants. To that end, ONA requested a descriptive analysis of participation in workforce programs for Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) clients served by the Department of Social Services (DSS). The Department of Social Services funds a number of education and training initiatives serving low-income and other vulnerable populations, with the ultimate goal of increasing self-sufficiency, that may be available to immigrants. For the purposes of this report, we define "immigrant" as being foreign-born; this definition is inclusive of naturalized citizens and non-citizens, such as refugees and legal permanent residents.

In this report, we address two questions: (1) is there equity in TANF participation overall on the basis of qualified immigrant status; and (2) is there equity in access across TANF workforce programs for eligible immigrants (e.g. VIEW, VTP)? To receive VIEW benefits, adult clients are required to participate in employment, education, and/or training-related activities with the purpose of fostering self-sufficiency. Clients' unique circumstances and barriers play a role in activity assignment. The absolute and relative impacts of welfare-to-work components on employment and earnings have been debated for several decades; more recently, federally-funded research has emphasized career pathways, interventions for hard-to-employ populations, and market-oriented approaches.

We define "equity" as parity in the participation of eligible residents on the basis of subgroup membership—in this case, immigrant status. It is very important to keep in mind that not all immigrants lawfully residing in the United States are eligible for TANF and other social safety net programs. In the next section we survey TANF-related programs in the Commonwealth and describe eligibility standards as they relate to immigration. We then briefly discuss recent studies of immigrant take-up of public benefits programs, which informs our research design using administrative and publicly available micro-data.

Consistent with other studies, our analysis shows low-income immigrants in Virginia access TANF at lower rates than U.S.-born citizens. Low-income families headed by an immigrant are roughly a third as likely to receive welfare benefits as low-income families headed by a U.S.-born citizen. Of the work-eligible adult participants, we find that in many cases immigrants access services to enhance self-sufficiency at higher rates, including education, training, and employment experiences. However, we stress the limitations of this study—while we include covariates such as educational attainment, it does not directly assess the degree to which barriers are addressed by the services offered; it also does not consider differences in outcomes (i.e. earnings); nor does it explore experiences or outputs stemming from particular components.

Background

The Department of Social Services is involved directly and indirectly in the provision of workforce development programs for a variety of target populations; some are integral components of benefits programs (e.g. TANF), while others are executed via external partnerships (see Table 1a in the appendix for a more comprehensive snapshot of the other initiatives DSS funds). This report will limit its focus to the education, training, and job readiness opportunities available via TANF. In order to maintain benefits adult TANF recipients are required to participate in VIEW, which offers participants services to increase their self-sufficiency, including opportunities to prepare for work (ex: job readiness, structured job search), gain work experience (ex: subsidized employment, on the job training), and increase education and job-related skills (ex: GED acquisition, vocational training). The DSS offers subsidized employment to TANF recipients via the Full Employment Program (FEP), which incentivizes private businesses, nonprofits, and other public entities to employ TANF recipients for at least 20 hours a week. Parents leaving VIEW may also be eligible for ongoing services and non-cash benefits in the 12 months post-period through the View Transitional Payments (VTP) program. Each of these programs is also offered to eligible households with two able-bodied parents, referred to as VIEW-UP and VTP-UP.

Not all immigrants are eligible for federally-funded social safety net programs, and TANF is no exception. Naturalized citizens, lawful permanent residents of greater than five years, and particular classes of non-citizens (such as refugees) are eligible to receive TANF. States have some discretion in establishing their own eligibility standards for immigrants (Bitler and Hoynes 2011). However, it is possible for households with children who are qualified but reside with guardian(s) who are not eligible on the basis of immigration status to receive benefits as "child-only" cases.[1] Because child-only cases are exempt from work requirements (and VIEW participation), they will be excluded in subsequent analyses of workforce program participation.

The size and direction of differences in public benefits take-up between U.S.-born citizens and immigrants depends on the program. In their nationwide analysis of immigrant participation in an array of social safety net programs, Bitler and Hoynes (2011) conclude that low-income immigrant families

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[1] In Virginia, over half of all TANF cases do not have an adult recipient. Only 3.6 percent of child-only TANF cases were due to citizenship in 2020. See tables 3 and 8 of the ACF report "Characteristics and Financial Circumstances of TANF Recipients: Fiscal Year (FY) 2020" for more information.

have consistently had lower levels of take-up for AFDC/TANF compared to their native-born counterparts between 1995 and 2010. Possible reasons for this disparity include changes in the labor market, misinformation about eligibility, and fear of deportation (Ziliak 2016). Receipt of public benefits can have important implications for immigration status. For example, the "public charge" rule stipulates that the propensity for reliance on cash benefits, such as TANF, be taken into account by immigration officers processing visa applications. In 2018, the Trump administration sought to expand this rule to include non-cash benefits (such as SNAP) in their decision-making (Haley et al 2020). Subsequent surveys indicate immigrant families with children reported avoiding non-cash public benefit programs out of concern for the potential impacts on immigration status for themselves or a family member, even though the new policy had not gone in to effect (Haley et al 2020). Awareness of programs, social isolation, and language barriers may also contribute to administrative burden for applicants, exacerbating gaps in take-up of social safety net programs (Ku 2009). For example, bilingual application assistance increased Medicaid enrollment for Hispanic and Asian children in California (Aizer 2007).

A condition of adult ongoing eligibility for TANF programs is the participation in assigned employment, education, and training activities with the goal of increasing self-sufficiency. At intake, caseworkers work with clients to assess employability. To avoid reductions in their TANF block grant allocation, states must hit a target work participation rate; there are twelve categories of activities that may count towards that rate, including community service, job search and readiness, and some forms of education or training (Falk 2012). Welfare agencies have promoted a variety of strategies in their implementation of TANF, with some emphasizing a "work first" approach over a human capital development framework.[2] Studies of the impacts of various welfare-to-work models on employment and earnings have produced conflicting findings. An evaluation of the 11-site federal NEWWS program concluded that welfare-to-work interventions increased employment but did not increase income, and that labor force attachment (LFA) approaches were more beneficial than human capital development (HCD) with respect to both employment and earnings (Hamilton et al 2001). Subsequent scholarship has concluded otherwise. A re-analysis of GAIN pilot sites in California revealed activities promoting labor force attachment (e.g. job clubs, resume writing) may have short-term advantages, while components emphasizing human capital development (e.g. education, training) have long-term advantages (Hotz et al 2006). Dyke et al (2006) also identify long-term benefits of more intensive training programs for TANF recipients in Missouri and North Carolina. These studies reflect conditions of decades past; contemporary innovations in policy and research have focused less on the dichotomy between LFA and HCD and more on career pathways, market-oriented approaches, and addressing barriers for hard-to-employ populations.

Research Design

We answer our two research questions using descriptive statistics and ordinary least squares regression. To understand overall program participation, we rely on analyses of the American Community Survey, due to limitations with the administrative data. (These limitations are discussed in

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[2] The federal government limits which types and duration of education and training activities that count towards the work participation rate (WPR). See: Falk (2017).

greater detail below.) To consider participation in particular components of VIEW, such as remedial education or job readiness activities, we analyze administrative data using descriptive statistics and ordinary least squares regressions with robust standard errors. We estimate the relationship between immigration category, controlling for a vector of sociodemographic factors, and two different variables—any participation in a given activity, and the sum of participation days in that activity.

We utilize the U.S. Census 2019 American Community Survey (ACS) and 2014 5-Year Estimates to compare overall participation by immigration status to the incidence of poverty in Virginia.[3] The ACS collects a rich array of socioeconomic data, including citizenship status, which allows us to consider multiple sub-populations. Of the publicly available and commonly used datasets to study social program participation, the ACS also has the largest sample. We limit our analysis to residents of Virginia over this ten year period. We also elect to trim the data set to only include low-income families with underage children to more accurately estimate disparities in access, over disproportionality.[4][5]

Interpreting the results of this analysis requires care. Firstly, program eligibility is based on a variety of factors—we do not directly observe immigration status for non-citizens in this survey that would be highly salient to eligibility. Secondly, it is well documented that receipt of TANF and other public transfer programs is underreported in household surveys, including the ACS (Ziliak 2014; Meyer et al 2009). If we could assume underreporting receipt is randomly distributed across subpopulations, this could be less of a statistical concern to include analysis of access across subpopulations using the ACS. However, the same reasons that immigrants may face barriers to accessing social programs for which they are eligible may also apply in responding to a government survey.

To compare participation in various workforce development activities, we query the VaCMS database for VIEW, VIEW-UP, VTP, and VTP-UP cases served during the last two years prior to the Public Health Emergency declaration (2017 to 2019), as work activity requirements have been suspended during the pandemic. The unit of observation is the individual-program; we lump all spells per program together, and individuals who participate in two different programs (such as VIEW and then VTP) would show up in the data as two observations. We collect data on adult participants, including demographics (race, ethnicity, education, gender, age, marital status) and activity participation for given components to create an indicator for any participation and length of time.[6]

One of the key challenges for this project is identifying immigrant status in the administrative data; it is clear in the data which clients have citizenship, but parsing naturalized citizenship from birthright citizenship is much more difficult as it is not directly recorded by the case worker. To overcome this challenge, we use the identity verification method to infer naturalization or U.S.-born

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[3] Data obtained from IPUMS USA, University of Minnesota, www.ipums.org.

[4] For more discussion, see: McDaniel, Marla, Tyler Woods, Eleanor Pratt, and Margaret C. Simms. 2017. "Identifying Racial and Ethnic Disparities in Human Services: A Conceptual Framework and Literature Review." OPRE Report #2017-69. Office of Planning, Research, and Evaluation, Administration for Children and Families, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

[5] This variable is inclusive of Supplemental Security Income (SSI) for the elderly, blind, and/or disabled. Removing households that do not have underage children reduces the risk that we count SSI receipt in our analysis, but does not eliminate it.

[6] We exclude age in most analyses because a large portion of the resident recipients shared a birthdate prior to the year 1900 in the administrative system; it may be the case that birthdate was not known and therefore a placeholder was entered. These values were replaced as missing in the data.

status. Our sample included 31 different categories. We designate a client as being a naturalized citizen, for example, if they present a Certificate of Naturalization or U.S. Citizen ID Card (I-197 or I-179), and as being a U.S.-born citizen if they present a U.S. birth certificate or are verified via the Office of Vital Records. However, there are several categories for which it is impossible to differentiate—such as verification through Census records or SSA SVES.

We can categorize 55.1% of the 40,632 observations in our data set. The remainder are of unknown status due to the ambiguity of the recorded identity verification method (Table 1). In subsequent regression analyses, we only include observations for which we can infer immigration category. As such, it is important to keep in mind the results may not be generalizable the entire client population; the verification method used is not random and there may be systemic reasons one method may be used over another.[7] We conduct difference of means tests for a selection of demographics to address this potential (see appendix for full table and discussion).

Table 1: Identification of Immigration Status, 2017 to 2019

| Category	Share of Total Sample
Residents	
Refugee	6.9%
Nonrefugee	9.4%
Citizens	
Naturalized	1.7%
US-Born	37.1%
Unknown	44.9%
N=40,632	

Clients of VIEW and related programs are assigned activities to meet program requirements; this could include some form of employment (which may be subsidized or include on-the-job training), job search and readiness (e.g. job club, individual job search), or education and training (e.g. remedial education, vocational training). There are 7 broad classifications and 36 activity subtypes; we bucket salient activities together, focusing on three main categories: Education and Training (E&T), Employment, and Job Search and Readiness (JSR). We also analyze sub-categories. For E&T, we study remedial education, postsecondary and vocational training, and English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL); for Employment, we consider On-The-Job (OTJ) training, regular employment, and volunteer opportunities. A table detailing how each of these is comprised is in the appendix. We merge demographic data with employment services administrative data to understand patterns in overall participation in these components and length of time in a category, which is a sum of days across a given type of assignment. For the former, any assignment is coded as a "1". We include the latter to unearth any differences in intensity or dosage—if a client does not participate in a given activity, they are recorded as having zero days. Clients could be assigned more activities concurrently (and thus clocking more days), assigned to programs that are fundamentally more intensive in a given category (e.g. 6-

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[7] The most prevalent verification method used for the "unknown" category is SSA SVES.

month training versus a 3-month training), or may be spending more time in similar assignments (e.g. requiring additional time to master a skill).

## Prevalence of Poverty and Benefit Receipt by Immigration Status

To provide context, we first compare immigrant and non-immigrant families with respect to poverty. We use the ACS data to understand the prevalence and distribution of poverty for families with children, which is the potential target population for TANF. Roughly 86 percent of all people in households with children in Virginia are U.S.-born citizens, while 6 percent are naturalized citizens (Figure 1). The remainder are non-citizens, over two-thirds of which have been in the United States for over five years (the threshold for lawful permanent residents to be eligible for TANF, given other requirements are met).

Figure 1: People in Families with Children in Virginia, by Immigration Status

Non-Citizens 8%

Naturalized Citizens 6%

U.S. Born Citizens 86%
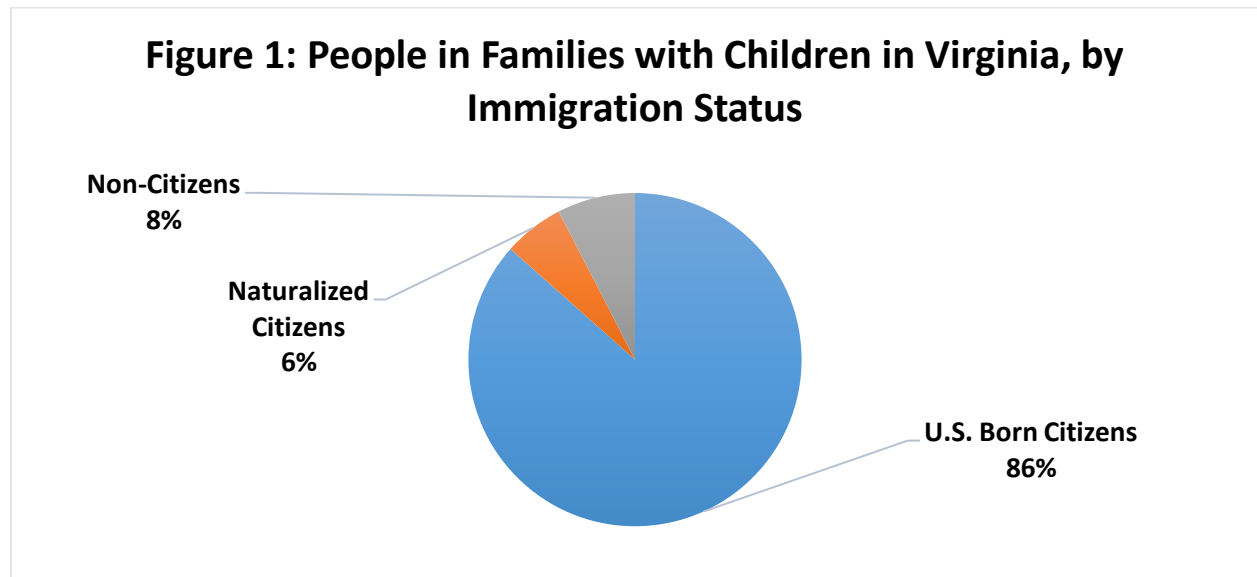
Notes: ACS person weights applied. 2019 and 2014 ACS 5-Year Estimates.

Do U.S.-born and foreign-born residents of Virginia differ in their poverty rates? Because immigration status may vary within a family, we examine the prevalence of poverty by householders' immigration status; children of immigrants are often U.S.-born citizens. Compared to families headed by U.S.-born citizens, families led by naturalized citizens are less likely to be low-income, defined as having an income below 200 percent of the federal poverty line (Figure 2). Only 2.5 percent of naturalized citizen-led households are extremely poor (<50% FPL), compared to nearly 6 percent of native-born citizen-led families. Among these subpopulations in Virginia, non-citizens are most likely to have families living in poverty—nearly half report incomes at or below 200 percent of the federal poverty line.

Figure 2: Prevalence of Poverty for Households with Children, by Immigration Status

	<50%FPL	50-100%FPL	100-150%FPL	150-200% FPL
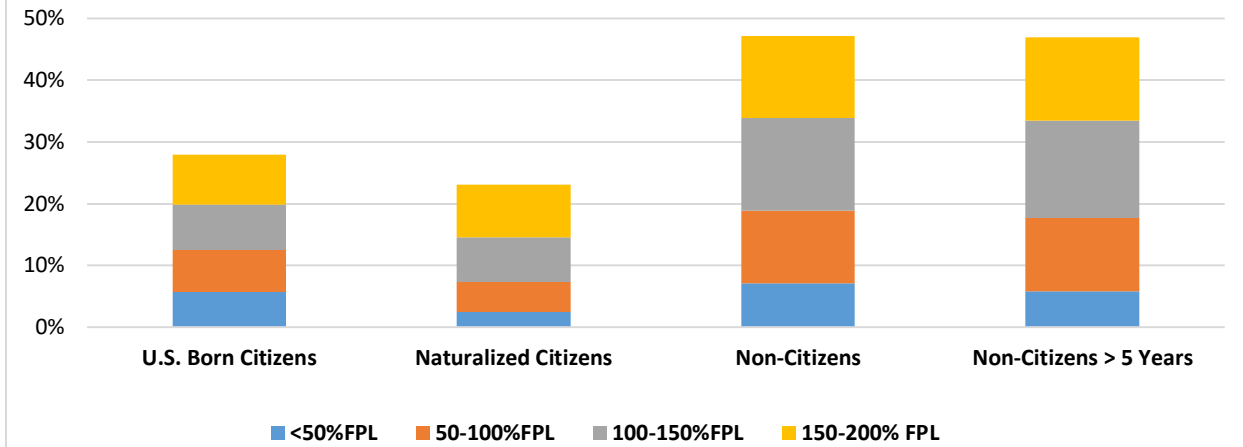
Notes: ACS household weights applied. 2019 and 2014 ACS 5-Year Estimates.

There are several observable demographic differences between the adults in the low-income families by immigration status (Table 2). Immigrant adults in low-income families with children are less likely to be female or white, but more likely to be Hispanic or married. Immigrants in all categories are much more likely to report either not speaking English well or at all. Naturalized citizens in this cohort are the least likely to have a child under five years old. Multigenerational households are more common among U.S.-born and naturalized citizens, but roughly 30 percent less so for non-citizens. Immigrants, regardless of status, have higher rates of labor force participation, employment, and usual hours worked than U.S.-born citizens.

The trends in educational attainment are quite nuanced. Nearly 17 percent of low-income U.S.-born citizens have a post-secondary degree of some kind, while 31 percent of low-income naturalized citizens report the same. Interestingly, naturalized citizens are also slightly more likely to have not completed high school (or an equivalent) than U.S.-born citizens. Non-citizens have lower levels of educational attainment at all levels—they are over twice as likely to not have a high school diploma, and have slightly lower rates of postsecondary degree attainment than low-income U.S.-born citizens.

Table 2: Demographic Characteristics of Adults in Low-Income Families, by Immigration Status in Virginia

	U.S. Born Citizens	Naturalized Citizens	Non-Citizens	Non-Citizens > 5 Years
Age (in years)	36.43	42.82	36.99	37.76
Female	63.00%	55.04%	57.26%	55.49%
White	58.90%	31.63%	48.77%	52.15%
Hispanic	5.70%	30.19%	66.75%	77.42%
Married	38.27%	68.51%	56.90%	57.00%
Multigenerational household	20.46%	19.34%	13.70%	12.31%
Family size	4.04	4.46	4.34	4.41
Child(ren) <5 years old	31.51%	29.65%	36.86%	38.23%

Language barrier	0.48%	16.35%	44.44%	45.08%
Not in labor force	34.87%	27.45%	30.34%	26.35%
Employed	54.86%	65.35%	63.47%	68.01%
Unemployed	10.27%	7.20%	6.19%	5.64%
Usual hours worked	22.75	26.64	25.18	27.05
Postsecondary degree	16.78%	31.06%	16.61%	11.95%
Bachelor's degree	7.03%	16.95%	9.36%	6.30%
Master's degree	1.89%	5.22%	2.92%	1.79%
Professional or PhD degree	0.41%	1.62%	0.91%	0.79%
Associate's degree	7.45%	7.27%	3.41%	3.07%
Secondary degree	65.21%	47.35%	36.72%	37.01%
High school/GED graduate	37.44%	27.99%	26.37%	26.91%
Some college	27.77%	19.36%	10.35%	10.10%
No high school diploma/GED	18.01%	21.59%	46.68%	51.04%
	N=38,238	N=3,610	N=6,877	N=4,941

ACS person weights applied.

Figure 3 shows the percent of low-income (<200% FPL) families that report to the ACS receiving welfare income in Virginia. According to the ACS survey data, low-income families led by naturalized citizens report receiving welfare at 35 percent the rate of families led by U.S.-born citizens. Families led by a non-citizen report slightly higher rates of welfare receipt than naturalized citizens, but still lower than 5 percent of low-income families. While the ACS underreports welfare receipt in general, these relative trends between subpopulations are consistent with previous nationwide analyses (Bitler and Hoynes 2011).

Figure 3: Prevalence of Public Assistance Receipt Among Low-Income Families
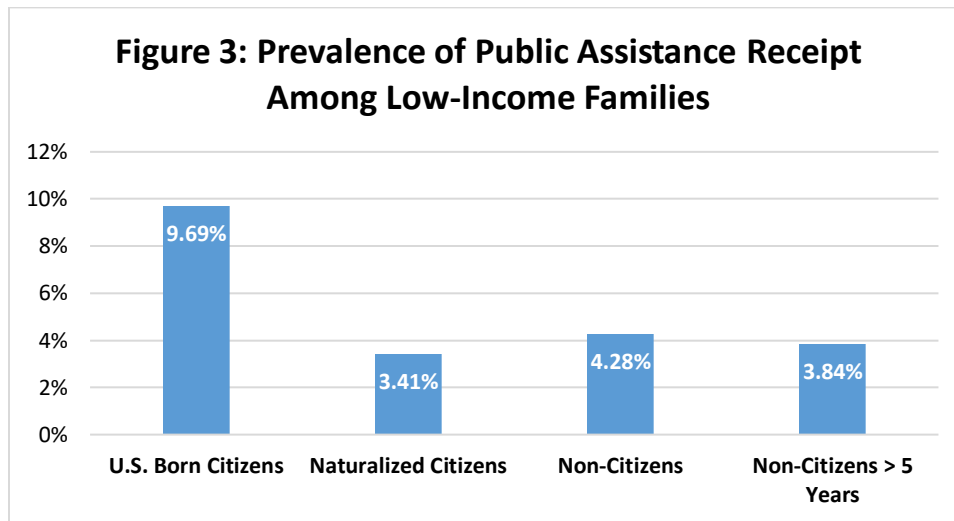
Notes: ACS household weights applied. 2019 and 2014 ACS 5-Year Estimates.

Participation in TANF Workforce Development Programs

To answer our second research question, we turn to analyses of administrative data, starting with a descriptive summary of participation by immigration category. Roughly half of the sample participated in VIEW, but there is considerable variation by immigration category (Table 3). Roughly 70 percent of U.S.-born citizens are VIEW participants, and 57 percent of resident refugees in VIEW-UP. Nonrefugee residents were most likely to participate in VTP (45 percent), while naturalized citizens were most likely to participate in VIEW-UP (42 percent).

Table 3: Client Counts, by Program and Immigration Categories 2017-2019

	Program Category				
	VIEW	VTP	VTUP	VWUP	Total
Residents					
Refugee	498	184	518	1,608	2,808
Nonrefugee	446	1,706	467	1,201	3,820
Citizens					
Naturalized	234	64	99	293	690
US-Born	10,505	2,443	409	1,728	15,085
Total	11,683	4,397	1,493	4,830	22,403

We also observe demographic differences between immigrants and U.S.-born clients of these programs (Table 4). On average, immigrants were more likely to be male or married by wide margins. Immigrants also tended to be older, and identify as white, Asian, or Hispanic. Nearly all immigrants are living in urban localities, while eight out of ten US-born clients are in metropolitan areas. While U.S.-born clients are dispersed across regions (a third live in the Eastern region), over half of the immigrant clientele in our sample call the Northern region home.

Most salient to the work of this project are the trends in educational attainment. Of U.S.-born participants, six in ten had a high school diploma or less, and two in ten had some experience with postsecondary education. Nearly three in ten naturalized citizens had attended postsecondary institutions, but only one in ten nonrefugee residents had. Across categories, immigrants were more likely to have "unknown" levels of education, particularly for nonrefugee residents (nearly 70 percent of the sample). There are several potential explanations for such high proportions of unknown educational attainment; for example, this may indicate difficulties in identifying appropriate U.S. equivalents for credentials obtained overseas.

Table 4: Demographic Characteristics of VIEW, VIEW-UP, VTP, and VTP-UP, by Immigrant Category

	Citizens		Residents	
Variable	U.S.-Born	Naturalized	Nonrefugees	Refugees
Female	86.7%	63.9%	69.7%	55.1%
Age - Years	31.3 years	36.2 years	34.5 years*	35.1 years
Race/Ethnicity				
White	36.6%	42.3%	40.3%	42.8%
Black	58.7%	23%	30.2%	12.1%

Asian	0.8%	21.7%	17.3%	31.5%
Hispanic	3.4%	5.2%	7.2%	3.2%
Married	13.8%	65.8%	83.1%	88.5%
Education				
Unknown	15.7%	26.1%	69.5%	43.5%
< HS Diploma	13.2%	10.6%	7.5%	17.9%
HS Diploma/ GED	49.8%	34.5%	13%	24.3%
Voc Training	2.6%	1.2%	0.4%	0.7%
2-Year Degree	2%	2.2%	0.5%	0.7%
Some College	14%	15.4%	3.7%	6.8%
BA+ Degree	2.6%	10.1%	5.4%	6.2%
Non-English Speaker	0.9%	13.3%	58.1%	18.8%
Metro Locality	82.6%	99.3%	92.5%	99.7%
	N=15,085	N=690	N=3,820*	N=2,808

Age is only recorded for 2,067 nonrefugees.

Tables 5 and 6 present means for our outcomes of interest, overall activity participation and length of time, for each immigration category. One of the key findings is the diversity of experience among immigration categories. Compared to U.S.-born citizens, naturalized citizens are twice as likely to engage in any education and training activity. Of the four groups, refugees are most likely to have participated in any education and training activity. Drilling down to E&T activity subtypes, all categories of immigrants are more likely to engage in any remedial education than U.S.-born citizens, but postsecondary and vocational education are less prevalent. Immigrants across categories are also less likely to participate in job search and readiness activities, but the trends regarding employment activities are less clear-cut. Roughly two thirds of U.S.-born and naturalized citizens alike have at least one employment activity, but only 40 percent of nonrefugee residents do. Refugees have the highest employment participation rate—almost four in five refugee clients engage in any employment activity.

Table 5: Average Program Activity Participation – Any, by Immigrant Category

	Citizens		Residents	
Variable	U.S.-Born	Naturalized	Nonrefugees	Refugees
Education & Training	15.5%	31.6%	25.3%	47.2%
Remedial Edu	1.7%	2.8%	3.3%	6.1%
ESOL Classes	0.5%	21.3%	19.7%	39.5%
Postsecondary & Vocational	14%	13.5%	9.7%	12.4%
Employment	67.5%	67.7%	40.4%	79.3%
Volunteer	16.8%	11.6%	7.8%	16.7%
Subsidized	0.1%	0%	0%	0.1%
OTJ Training	0.5%	0.4%	0.2%	0.2%
Regular	63.9%	65.1%	39.1%	78%
Job Search & Readiness	50%	47.7%	29.2%	43.3%
	N=15,085	N=690	N=3,820	N=2,808

Examining the average length of time in particular activities unearths additional insights. While naturalized citizens are twice as likely to engage in any E&T activity than their U.S.-born peers, they are averaging three times as many activity-days, which appears to be primarily driven by ESOL. We see that

the average remedial education dosage is three times as high for naturalized citizens, compared to U.S.-born citizens. These trends are largely mirrored by the resident categories, with the exception of postsecondary education and training—naturalized citizens and refugees average higher dosages but nonrefugees lower dosages than U.S.-born citizens. Naturalized citizens average significantly more days in employment activities, particularly regular employment, than U.S.-born citizens, even though the overall participation rate is very similar. Nonrefugees average many fewer employment assignment days across all components, but refugees average the highest number of employment activity days of all the immigration categories. Lastly, even though all of the immigrant groupings have lower participation rates in job search and readiness activities than U.S.-born clients, they are averaging much higher dosage levels.

Table 6: Average Program Activity Participation – Length in Activity Days, by Immigrant Category

	Citizens		Residents	
Variable	U.S.-Born	Naturalized	Nonrefugees	Refugees
Employment & Training	20.3 days	79.3 days	73.1 days	133.5 days
Remedial Edu	1.9 days	6.1 days	6.2 days	10.7 days
ESOL	0.8 days	51.3 days	50.9 days	101.0 days
Postsecondary & Vocational	17.5 days	21.8 days	16.0 days	21.7 days
Employment	321.3 days	423.1 days	280.9 days	578.2 days
Volunteer	104.3 days	101.6 days	96.1 days	202.6 days
Subsidized	0.2 days	0 days	0 days	0 days
OTJ Training	0.7 days	0.5 days	0.3 days	1.1 days
Regular	299.3 days	404.3 days	266.3 days	544.7 days
Job Search & Readiness	33.3 days	57.2 days	44.9 days	49.0 days
	N=15,085	N=690	N=3,820	N=2,808

While a useful overview, comparing averages for these outcomes is limited. It does not tell us much about the degree to which individual barriers to self-sufficiency are being met. Activities are not randomly assigned; case workers develop individualized plans with participants based on their unique circumstances. Immigrants may have fundamentally different barriers to self-sufficiency. We use OLS regression to control for observable differences that might account for activity assignment to examine differences by immigration category. Put differently, holding all else constant (educational attainment, gender, marital status), how does participation vary by immigration group status? Because there are differences between the VIEW and VTP programs, we separate analyses of these participants. We present the coefficients of interest graphically; the full regression tables may be found in the appendix.

Overall Participation in E&T, Employment, and JSR

Controlling for other observable factors, immigrants across categories were 13 to 34 percent more likely to participate in any E&T activities, and for longer periods of time (Figures 4 and 5). Nonrefugees are roughly a fifth (VTP) and a third (VIEW) more likely to participate in E&T. The magnitude with respect to length of time for E&T is equally striking; immigrants are logging between 30 and 100 more days in E&T activities, holding sociodemographic factors constant. The relationship between immigration category and participation in employment or JSR is less clear cut. Residents in VIEW are more likely to participate in employment (but not in VTP), and at higher dosages across programs. Naturalized citizens are not more or less likely to engage in employment activities in either

VTP nor VIEW, but they do experience higher lengths of time in employment activities. The relationship between immigration category and JSR is even less clear—generally, nonrefugees are more likely to participate and at higher dosages, but refugees and naturalized citizens less likely.

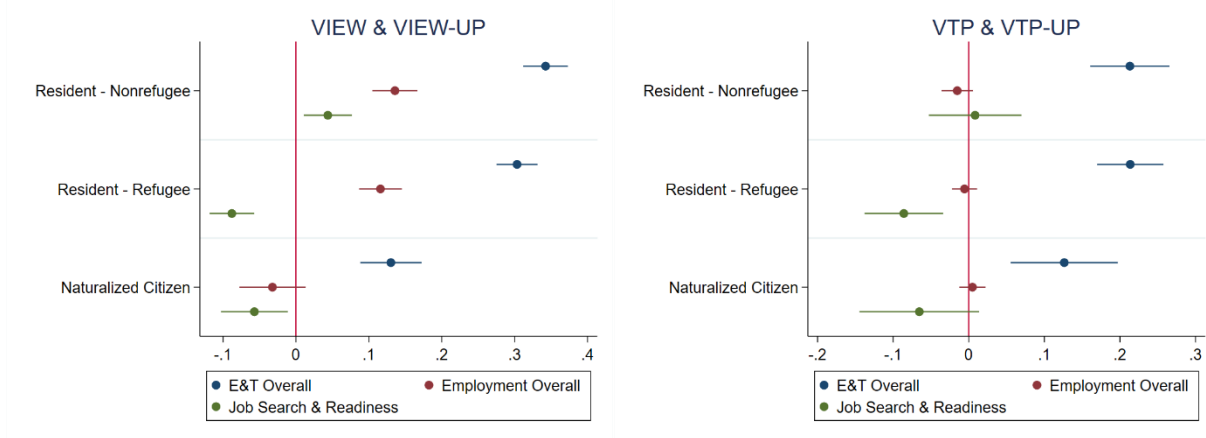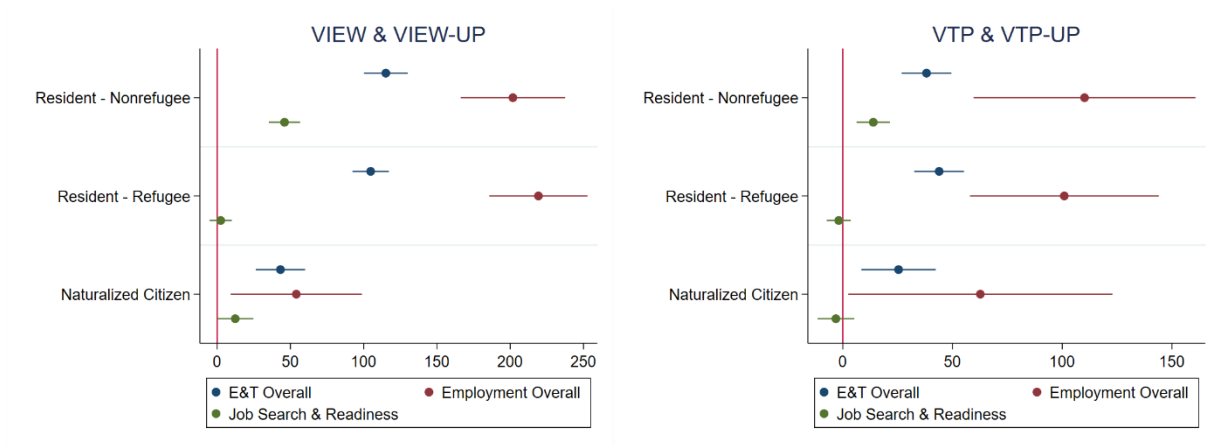**Figure 4: Relationship between Immigration Category and Overall Activity Participation**

Figure 5: Relationship between Immigration Category and Participation in Activity-Days

Participation in Activity Subtypes

We estimate the relationship between immigration category and participation in E&T and employment activity subtypes (Figures 6-9). One of the clearest findings across welfare program and immigration category is the positive relationship with ESOL participation; this finding is unsurprising, given English is not the predominant language in the vast majority of other countries. The relationship between immigration category and postsecondary/vocational education is generally statistically insignificant, with the exception of nonrefugee residents (slightly more likely in both VIEW and VTP) and naturalized citizens (less likely in VTP only). Controlling for education, noncitizens are slightly more likely to participate in remedial education.

Figure 6: Relationship between Immigration Category and E&T Activity Participation
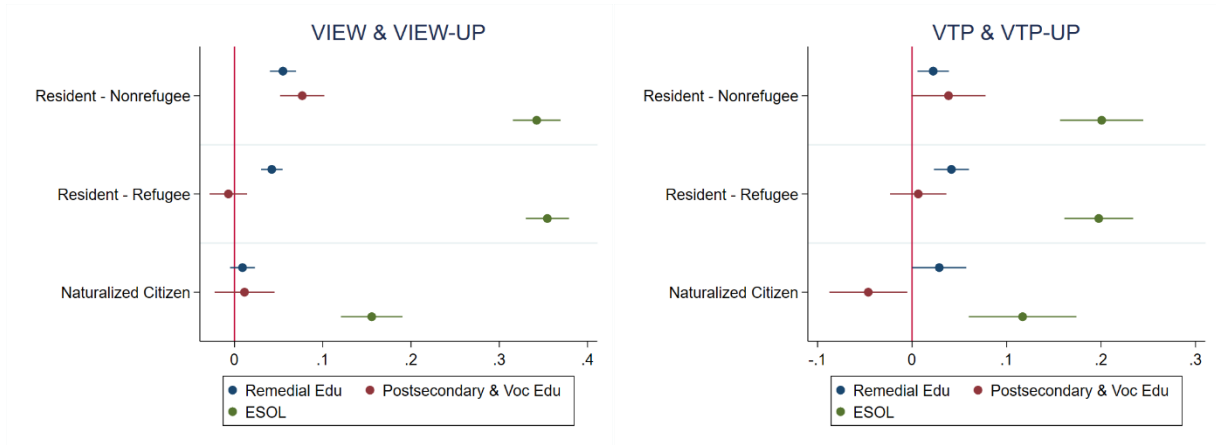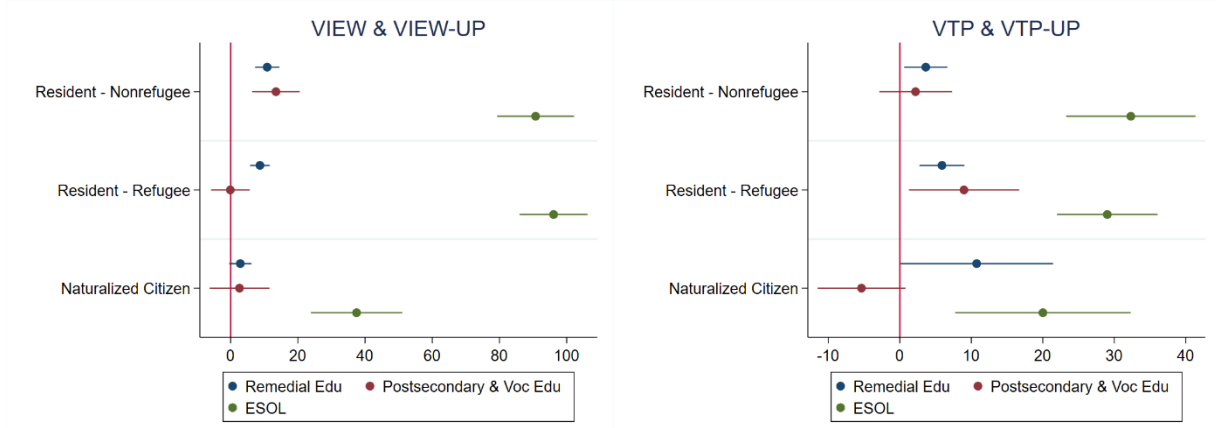

Figure 7: Relationship between Immigration Category and E&T Activity-Days

Drilling down to the three employment subtypes, we see several marked trends. Firstly, immigration category has no statistically significant relationship with OTJ training, in either VIEW or VTP. Secondly, noncitizens in general engage with sheltered and regular employment experiences to a higher degree. Noncitizens are more likely to have any regular employment in VIEW programs, and at much higher dosages (roughly 200 days); the trend holds true for volunteer and subsidized employment experiences in VIEW. With respect to participation in any employment-related activities in VTP, only refugees are slightly more likely to participate in a sheltered work experience.

Figure 8: Relationship between Immigration Category and Employment Activity Participation
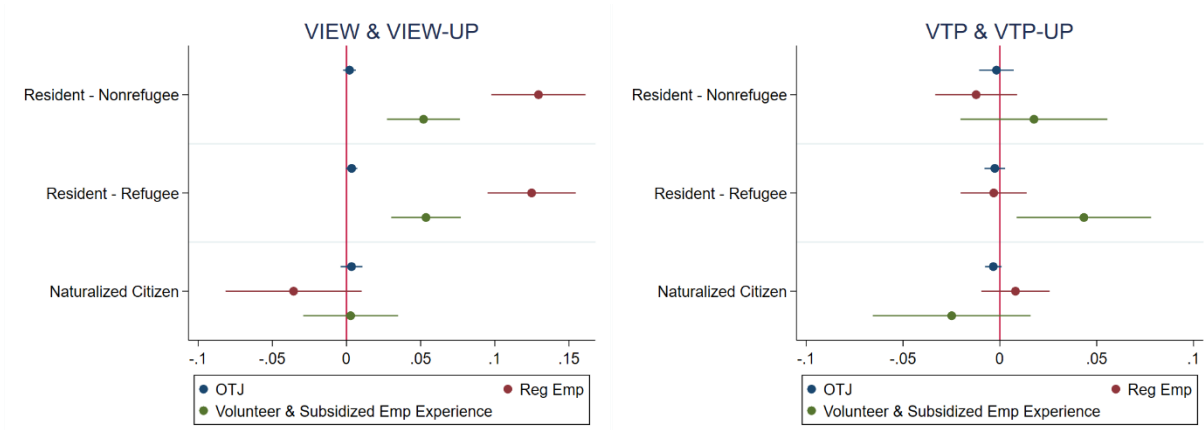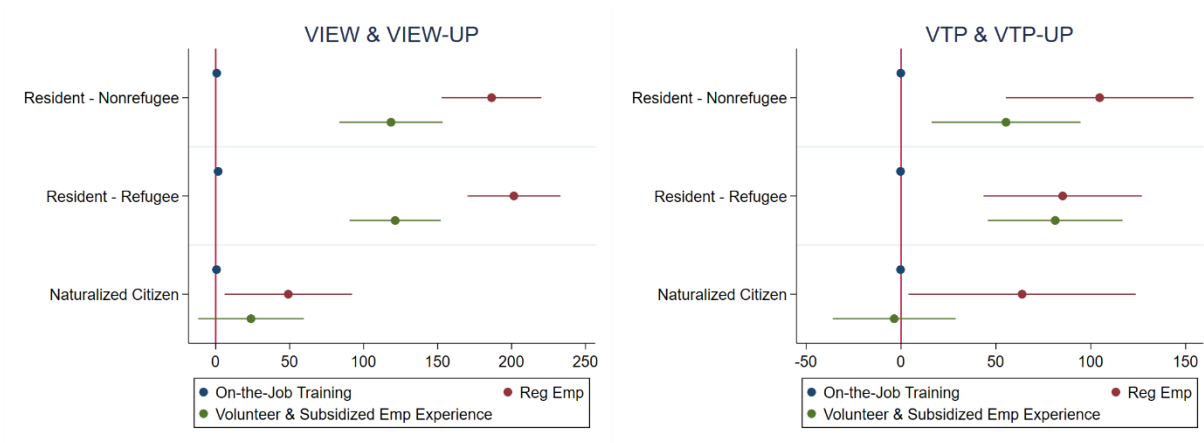

Figure 9: Relationship between Immigration Category and Employment Activity-Days

Discussion

We can draw several broad conclusions from this analysis. Consistent with other studies, low-income immigrants in Virginia access TANF at lower rates than U.S.-born citizens; while it is true that many low-income residents are not eligible for benefits, naturalized citizens are afforded the same access as U.S.-born citizens and participate at much lower rates. Secondly, for recipient adults deemed work eligible, the descriptive statistics nor the regression results show disparate levels of access to education, training, and employment services on the basis of immigration category. To the contrary, there is some evidence of higher levels of participation in ESOL, remedial education, and employment. Job search and readiness services are the notable exception; refugees and naturalized citizens are less likely to participate, holding other variables constant.

There are many limitations of this study that should contextualize the results. While we include covariates in the regression analysis for things like gender, educational attainment, and region, we do

not directly assess the degree to which barriers to self-sufficiency are being addressed by the services offered. For example, while a participant may receive vocational training, they may have other needs that have not been met. There are also many ways to interpret the relationship between our measure of dosage, activity-days, and immigration category. Higher average dosage levels are consistent with higher participation rates in general, but could also be masking other relationships—for example, it is possible some groups are participating in a higher number of activities in a given subtype, or may require more time to complete an individual activity. Furthermore, the data is incomplete for immigrants, particularly for age and educational attainment; this in and of itself highlights potential challenges. Lastly, we do not examine differences in outputs or outcomes from participation, including wages, length of benefit receipt, and job retention. These limitations could serve the basis for future research projects.

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Appendix

We find that clients verified using methods that do not indicate naturalized versus U.S.-born citizenship (such as SSA SVES) are statistically different than clients verified using unambiguous documents; they are more likely to be racial minorities, not married, and live in rural areas for example. Most salient to this study, though, are the differences in educational attainment, as credentials are highly salient to self-sufficiency. Clients verified via citizenship-ambiguous methods are more likely to have obtained only a high school diploma or some college. The differences in means for other credentials are not statistically significant.

Table A1: Difference of Mean Tests, by Verification Methods

	Ambiguous Verification	Non-Ambiguous Verification
Female	85.06%***	79.14%***
Age	32.00 years***	32.27 years***
Race/Ethnicity		
White	39.29%	38.19%
Black	55.55%***	46.75%***
Asian	1.51%***	8.12%***
Hispanic	3.72%	4.05%
Married	15.55%***	32.16%***
Education		
< Hs Diploma	13.10%	12.75%
HS/GED	47.05%***	39.87%***
Voc. Training	2.42%	1.96%
2-yr Degree	1.93%	1.58%
Some College	13.70%*	11.37%*
BA+ Degree	3.17%	3.78%
Non-English Speaker	1.31%***	13.35%***
Metro Locality	80.93%***	86.97%***
	N=18,229	N=22,403

*$p<0.05$,**$p<0.01$,***$p<0.001$

Table A2: Activity Code Crosswalk

Component	Included Activity Codes
Employment & Training	Top-level category; inclusive of below activities
Remedial Edu	ABE, GED, high school, below post-secondary,
Postsecondary & Vocational	Associate's degree, certificates, job skills, vocational training, baccalaureate degree
ESOL	English as a Second Language (ESL)
Employment	Top-level category; inclusive of below activities
Volunteer	Volunteer or subsidized work experience
OTJ Training	Apprenticeships, OJT, paid internships, paid college work study, WIA-related training, sheltered workshops
Regular	Part-time, full-time, self-employment

Job Search & Readiness	Top-level category; inclusive of individual and group activities (e.g. job club, job search training)

Table A3: Relationship between Immigration Category and E&T Participation

	VIEW, VIEW-UP		VTP, VTP-UP	
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
	E&T - Overall	E&T - Days	E&T - Overall	E&T - Days
Resident - Nonrefugee	.3424***	115.1***	.2132***	38.15***
	(.01563)	(7.657)	(.02675)	(5.778)
Resident - Refugee	.3033***	104.8***	.2136***	43.9***
	(.0143)	(6.336)	(.02233)	(5.785)
Naturalized Citizen	.1302***	43.2***	.1264***	25.41**
	(.02142)	(8.595)	(.03614)	(8.64)
Female	.0006169	-2.391	.006474	.8907
	(.009036)	(3.943)	(.01599)	(3.981)
White	.01823*	4.43	-.01435	-.6364
	(.007348)	(2.891)	(.01354)	(3.143)
Hispanic	-.08042***	-23.42***	-.007895	-3.519
	(.01756)	(5.787)	(.03026)	(6.302)
Married	.0494***	25.34***	.07248***	18.14***
	(.009646)	(3.363)	(.01558)	(3.126)
Non-English Speaker	.03072	11.03	.02683	.243
	(.0184)	(9.092)	(.03132)	(7.763)
Less than HS Diploma	.01618	7.687	.01886	6.606
	(.01112)	(4.724)	(.02094)	(4.232)
High School Diploma/GED	.01771*	5.907	.05768***	13.6***
	(.008771)	(3.455)	(.01514)	(3.616)
Some College	.04713***	17.41***	.05498**	14.82**
	(.0119)	(4.663)	(.01968)	(5.484)
Vocational Training	.1021***	33.7***	.09106*	22.64**
	(.0246)	(8.672)	(.03961)	(7.76)
2-Year Degree	.06495*	25.53*	.09989*	5.99
	(.02785)	(10.29)	(.04693)	(5.36)
BA or More	.05198**	24.8**	.1167***	27.64**
	(.02001)	(9.455)	(.03344)	(8.999)
Metro Locality	.03446***	15.19***	.01006	6.78**
	(.009522)	(2.093)	(.01674)	(2.259)
Region Indictors	Y	Y	Y	Y
Constant	.03243*	-13.5*	-.02549	-14.21*
	(.01546)	(5.365)	(.02766)	(5.822)
Observations	16072	16072	4072	4072
R^2	0.134	0.131	0.110	0.088

Standard errors in parentheses
* $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$

Table A4: Relationship between Immigration Category and Employment Participation

VIEW, VIEW-UP	VTP, VTP-UP

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
	Emp - Overall	Emp - Days	Emp - Overall	Emp - Days
Resident - Nonrefugee	.1358***	201.8***	-.01523	110.2***
	(.01579)	(18.17)	(.0106)	(25.8)
Resident - Refugee	.1159***	219.2***	-.005607	100.9***
	(.01495)	(17.11)	(.008495)	(21.95)
Naturalized Citizen	-.03219	54.02*	.004911	62.68*
	(.02318)	(22.83)	(.008842)	(30.69)
Female	-.02409*	-16.1	.006224	-.04611
	(.01015)	(11.18)	(.005778)	(15.67)
White	.0501***	-10.18	.00325	-48.9***
	(.008504)	(8.167)	(.004283)	(12.33)
Hispanic	-.08274***	-69.44***	-.01317	-12.04
	(.02108)	(18.73)	(.01319)	(29.15)
Married	.00106	89.32***	.01058	99.28***
	(.01171)	(10.88)	(.006596)	(16.77)
Non-English Speaker	-.01296	20.71	-.003398	9
	(.01743)	(23.84)	(.009266)	(28.24)
Less than HS Diploma	-.03437**	3.605	-.02211*	1.366
	(.01295)	(13.08)	(.009068)	(21.03)
High School Diploma/GED	-.002188	19.6	-.008399	32.62*
	(.01038)	(10.41)	(.005235)	(15.07)
Some College	.003557	31.62*	-.008879	41.71*
	(.01388)	(13.37)	(.007254)	(19.1)
Vocational Training	.05569*	64.19*	.01099**	68.93
	(.02684)	(25.33)	(.004237)	(37.16)
2-Year Degree	.06487*	12.9	-.01302	-13.71
	(.02959)	(25.37)	(.01666)	(41.23)
BA or More	-.0109	17.21	.0001633	61.02*
	(.02038)	(23.29)	(.007404)	(28.27)
Metro Locality	.01535	19.5	.007381	12.72
	(.01307)	(10.58)	(.009312)	(18.61)
Region Indictors	Y	Y	Y	Y
Constant	.5779***	258.6***	.9619***	475.2***
	(.01931)	(17.84)	(.01422)	(27.95)
Observations	16072	16072	4072	4072
R^2	0.020	0.062	0.008	0.048

Standard errors in parentheses

* $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$