City of Alexandria, Virginia
Department of Planning and Zoning
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Alexandria, VA 22314

Alexandria's Racial and Ethnic Groups and Foreign-Born Population
A Brief Look at Diversity

February 19, 2015

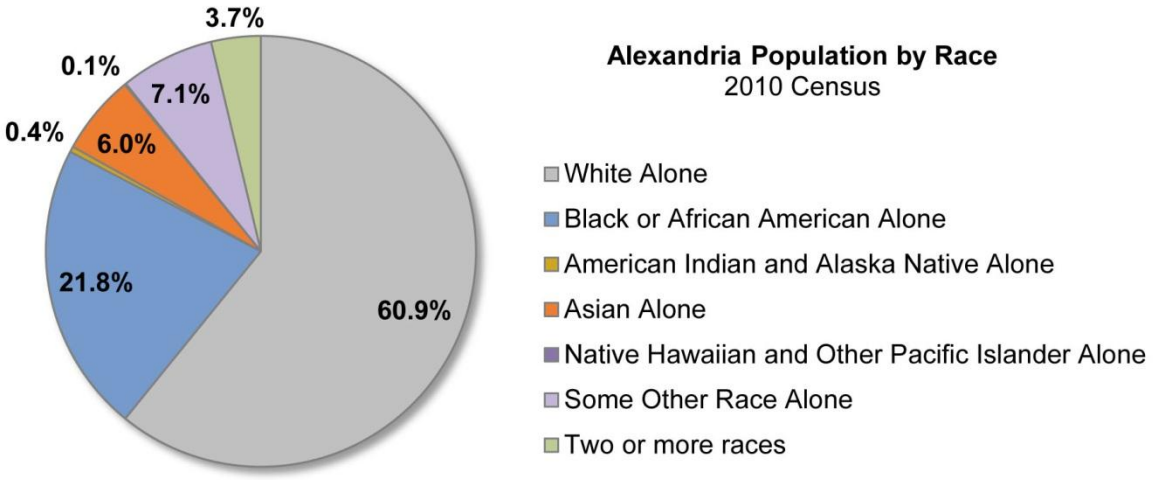
Introduction and Summary

This report focuses on the largest racial and ethnic groups in Alexandria, and an important related and overlapping group, the foreign-born population. The major racial and ethnic groups in Alexandria today include the Black and African American population, the Hispanic population, the Asian population and the Non-Hispanic White population. Data in this report is taken from both the 2010 Decennial Census and the 2009-2013 American Community Survey 5-year average estimates, an average centered on the year 2011. The purpose of this memo is to document how these groups differ in some key economic, social and demographic measures from each other and from the total population of Alexandria. In looking at similarities and differences, the report considers the age distribution of each population, the types of households each lives in, household income and poverty, educational attainment, and housing tenure.

Summary of Findings

The review of basic household, economic and social characteristics of these groups showed substantial differences among them in types of households they live in, in household income, and in educational attainment. In some cases these differences are similar to differences among these populations in the nation as a whole. However, each group has some unique characteristics in Alexandria that are different from those characteristics in the nation as a whole, particularly in the case of each group's share of foreign-born population and places of origin in the world.

Racial and Ethnic Groups



The pie chart on the previous page shows one view of the responses of Alexandria residents to the 2010 Census question on race. This graph puts everyone in the city in a unique category adding to 100%, by putting anyone identified as being of a single race in a racial category (including "some other race") and the remainder in a group labeled "two or more races."

Alexandria's Black and African American population of 30,491 in the 2010 Census was 21.8% of the total population of Alexandra. This share has been relatively constant since 1980. However, the Black and African American population is now more than one third foreign born according to the 2009-2013 American Community Survey estimates, compared to 8.7% nationwide. Of the foreign-born Black and African American population in Alexandria, an estimated 40% are naturalized U.S. citizens.

The city's Asian population of 8,432 in 2010 made up about 6% of the city's total population. The Asian population is not heavily concentrated in people from any one part of Asia, but includes 21% who identify as Asian Indian, the largest group; and 16% Filipino, 15% Chinese, and 13% of Korean heritage. Based on the 2009-2013 American Community Survey 5-year average data, 77% of the city's Asian population is foreign born, and 48% of these are naturalized citizens. Nationwide, 66.5% of the population identifying as Asian is foreign born, and 58% of those are naturalized citizens.

The city's white population of 89,445 made up 60.9% of the city total in 2010. 11.5% of the white population identified as Hispanic, leaving the non-Hispanic white population with a much slimmer 53.5% majority. According to American Community Survey estimates, the non-Hispanic white population is 9.5% foreign born, with 54% of these naturalized U.S. citizens.

The city's Hispanic or Latino population of 22,524 in 2010 was 16.1% of the citywide population, and included people of a number of racial categories. The largest racial category is white, with 46% of the Hispanic population. Other predominate racial categories identified include some other race with 42%, 7.6% two or more races, and 3.2% Black or African American.

Of the population identifying themselves as Hispanic or Latino in Alexandria, 18.3% identify themselves as of Mexican origin, compared to 64.5% of Hispanics nationwide. 6.4% were Puerto Rican, 1.8% Cuban and 0.9% Dominican. 49.3% identify their origin as Central American, compared to 8.8% of Hispanics in the U.S. as a whole. 60% of Alexandria's Central Americans are of Salvadoran heritage, with most of the others from Guatemala and Honduras. 18.9% of Alexandria's Hispanics identify as South American, and 4.4% as of other Hispanic origin.

54.5% of the city's Hispanic population is foreign born, compared to 36.2% nationwide, according to the 2009-2013 American Community Survey estimates. Naturalized U.S. citizens make up 20% of the foreign-born Hispanic population.

Alexandria's foreign-born population makes up a substantial share of the total population of the city, and that share may be increasing. The 2006-2010 American Community Survey 5-year average data showed the foreign-born population as 24% of the city's total population, compared to 25.4% in the 2000 Census and a national share of about 12%. The 2013 American Community Survey 1-year estimate of 29.6% foreign-born in Alexandria indicates that the share may be increasing again.

Distribution Within Alexandria

The maps on the following pages show the distribution of the Black and African American and Hispanic populations within the city, and how the Hispanic and Black or African American distribution has changed over time.

The Black or African American population has been part of Alexandria from the first Decennial Census in 1790, when it made up about 22% of the population, approximately the same share as today. The share grew to nearly 40% just after the Civil War, then fell gradually to a low of about 11% in 1960. Data on the Hispanic population is spotty over the historical record, and is available generally only since 1970.

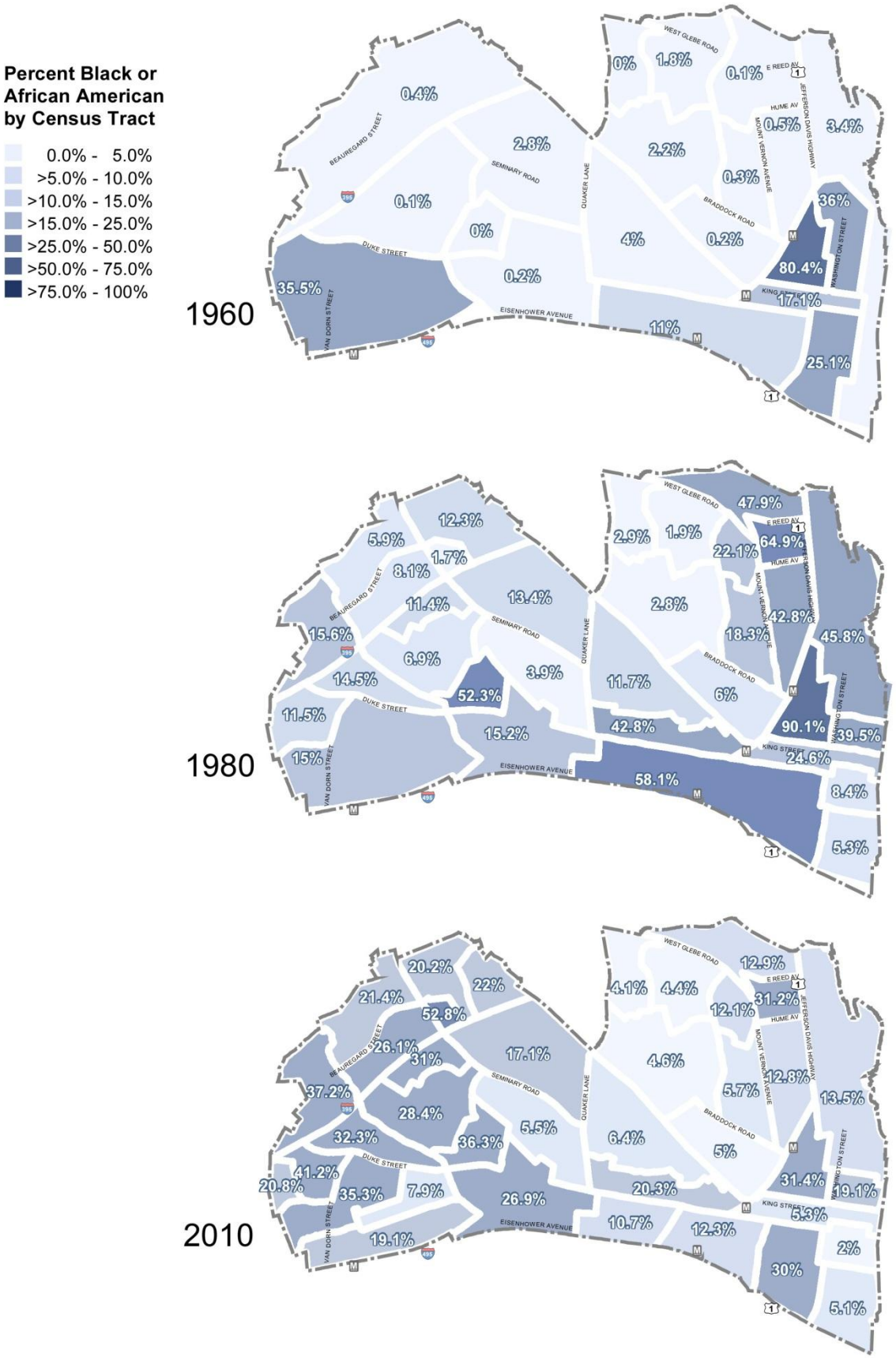
The figure on the following page shows the distribution of the Black and African American population as a percent of the total by census tract in 1960, 1980 and 2010.

In 1960, the Black and African American population constituted 11.4% of Alexandria's total population. About 43% of the Black population lived in Tract 16 near the current location of the Braddock Road Metrorail station, which was 80.4% Black. Most of the remainder of the Black population lived tracts 18 and 20, between Fairfax Street and Washington Street, and many of the remaining tracts had fewer than 25 Black residents.

By 1980, Tract 16 had become over 90% Black and African American, and the Black or African American population had grown to 22.3% of the total population of the City. While many tracts still had a negligible Black population, there was a much wider distribution of this population through the rest of Alexandria.

In 2010, the Black or African American population of Tract 16 had declined to 31.4% of the tract total, and a number of tracts had 25% or more Black population, as a combination of dispersal of the previous Black residents throughout the region and an influx of African immigrants as well as new young Black families helped maintain the Black population as about the same share of population as in 1980.

The figure on page 5 shows a similar set of maps for the Hispanic population, for 1990, when the Hispanic population was about 9.7% of the city's population, 2000 and 2010, when the Hispanic population had grown to 16.1% of the total. The Hispanic population was historically more dispersed in Alexandria than the Black population, but even today maintains a strong concentration in the Arlandria area and nearby, as well as throughout the city's West End.


Percent Black or African American by Census Tract
0.0% - 5.0%
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>10.0% - 15.0%
>15.0% - 25.0%
>25.0% - 50.0%
>50.0% - 75.0%
>75.0% - 100%
1960
1980
2010
WEST GLEBE ROAD
E REED AV
HUME AV
JEFFERSON DAVIS HIGHWAY
MOUNT VERNON AVENUE
BEAUREGARD STREET
SEMINARY ROAD
QUAKER LANE
BRADDOCK ROAD
WASHINGTON STREET
DUKE STREET
KING STREET
EISENHOWER AVENUE
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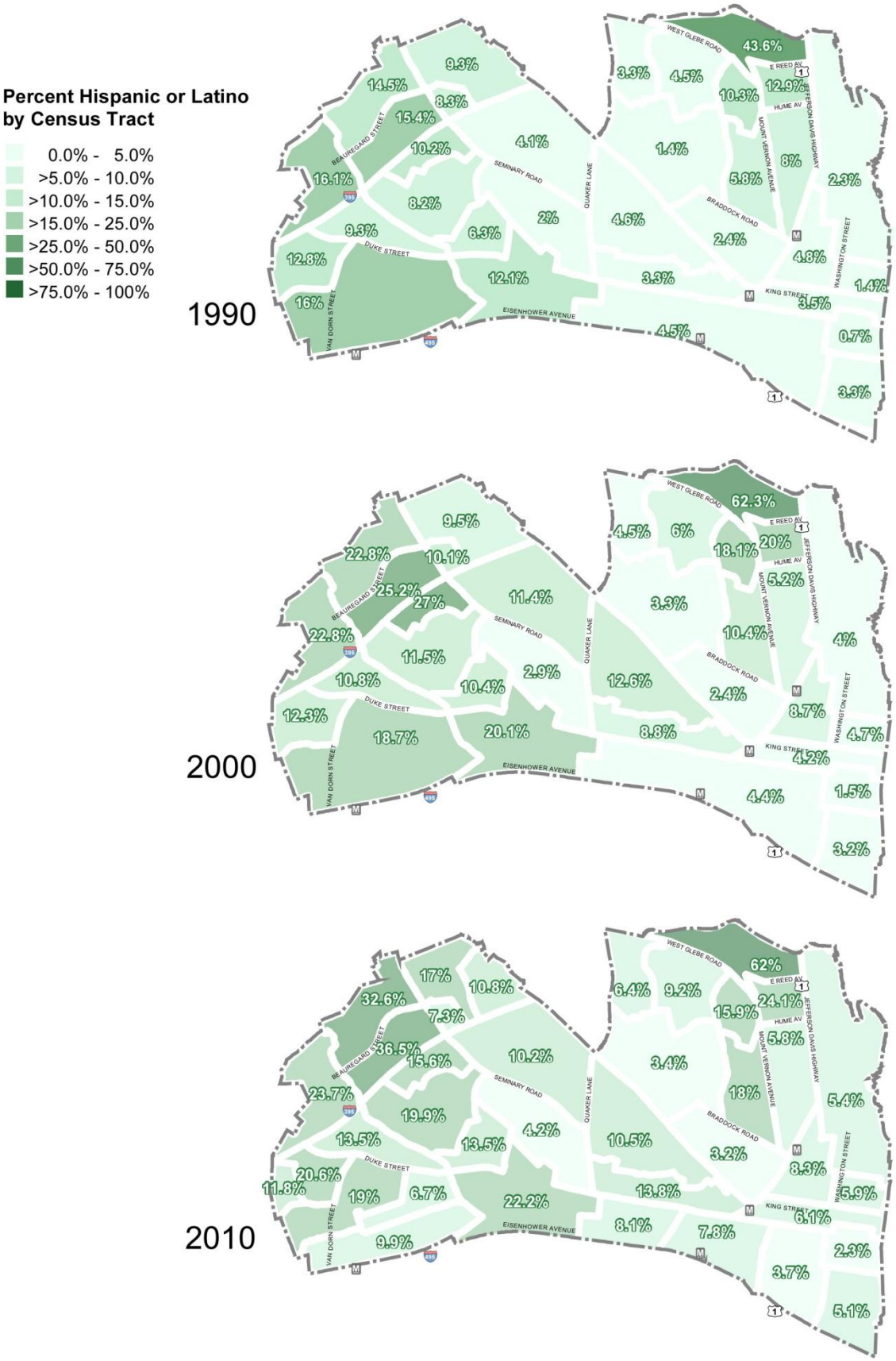
Percent Hispanic or Latino by Census Tract
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1990
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WEST GLEBE ROAD
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JEFFERSON DAVIS HIGHWAY
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BEAUREGARD STREET
SEMINARY ROAD
QUAKER LANE
BRADDOCK ROAD
WASHINGTON STREET
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EISENHOWER AVENUE
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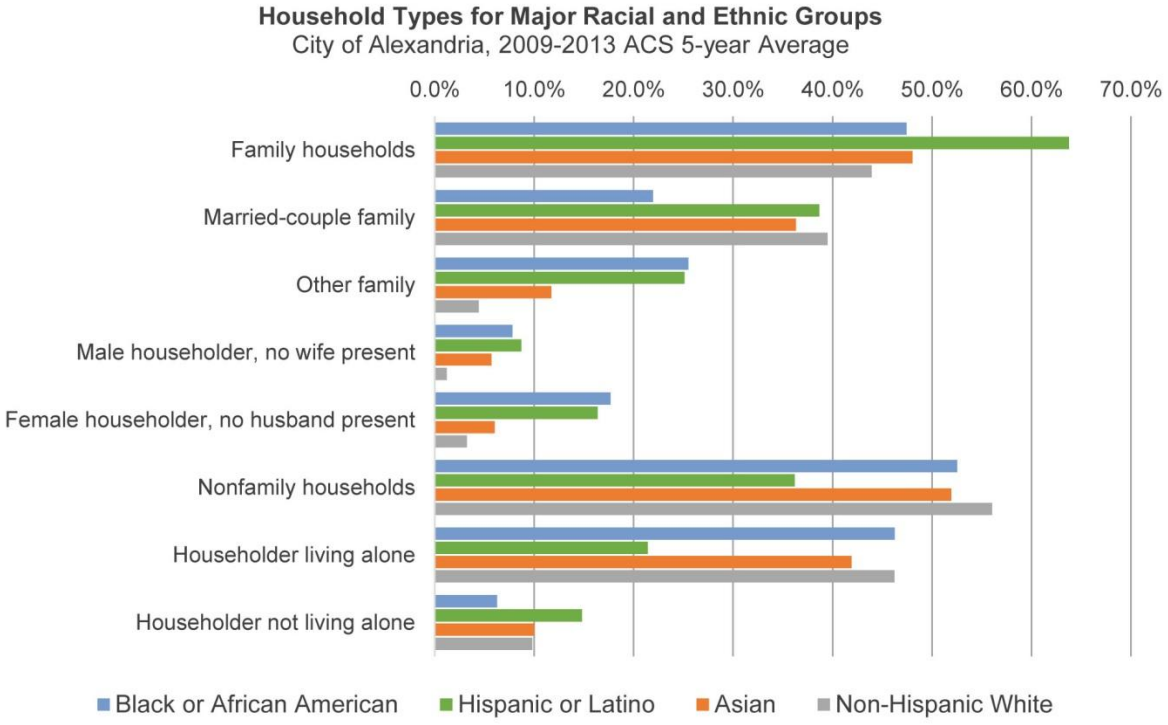
Households and Families by Race and Ethnicity



The graph above shows household type as a percentage of all households for households with the householder in one of the four largest racial and ethnic groups in Alexandria. (For brevity in the rest of this memo, we will refer to households by the race or ethnicity of the householder, even though the other members of the household may be of any race or ethnicity.) In the category at the top of the graph, family households, the Hispanic group stands out as having a significantly higher percentage of family households than the other groups. Nearly 64% of Hispanic households are family households, in which one or more other members of the household is related by birth, marriage or adoption to the householder. Of all Alexandria households, 47.2% were estimated to be family households in the 2013 American Community Survey 5-year average.

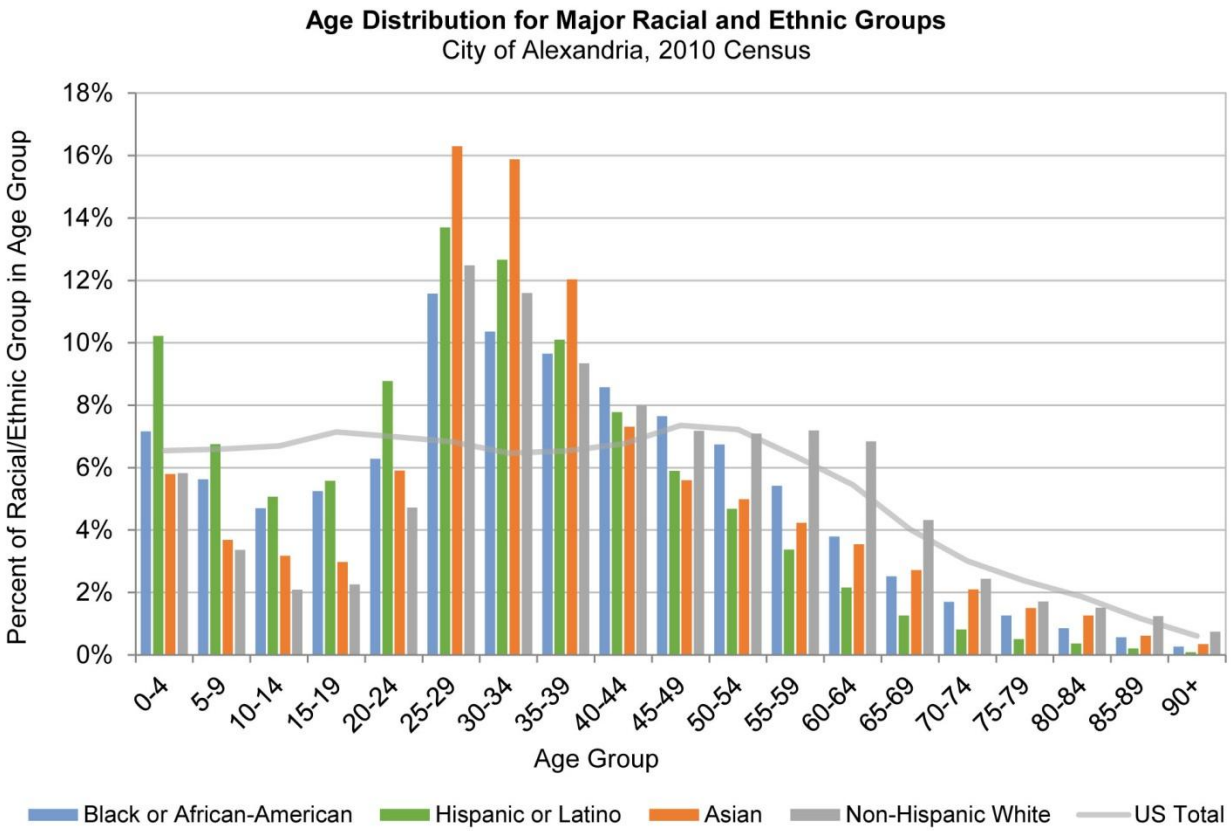
The three other groups, with Black or African American, Asian or Non-Hispanic White householders, all have family groups living in less than half of these households.

With respect to married-couple families, Hispanic, Non-Hispanic White and Asian households have similar rates, with a little under 40% of households for these groups. Black or African-American households are the outliers in this category, with only 22% married-couple households.

Most family households that are not married-couple households are single-parent households in which the father or mother lives with one or more children. For both Hispanic and Black or African American households, more than 25% of households consist of a householder with no spouse present living with other family members. Such households make up about 12% of Asian households and only 4.4% of Non-Hispanic White households.

Alexandria has had an unusually high percentage of single-person households since 1980 when compared to the national average, and showed 43.0% single-person households in the 2009-2013 American Community Survey 5-year average. While the Black or African American, Asian and Non-Hispanic White populations all show a share of single-person households between 42% and 47%, Hispanic households include only 21.4% single-person households.

Age by Race and Ethnicity



The graph above shows the age distribution of the four largest racial and ethnic groups in Alexandria. The slightly wavy gray line across the graph shows the percentage of the total U.S. population in each of these same 5-year age categories.

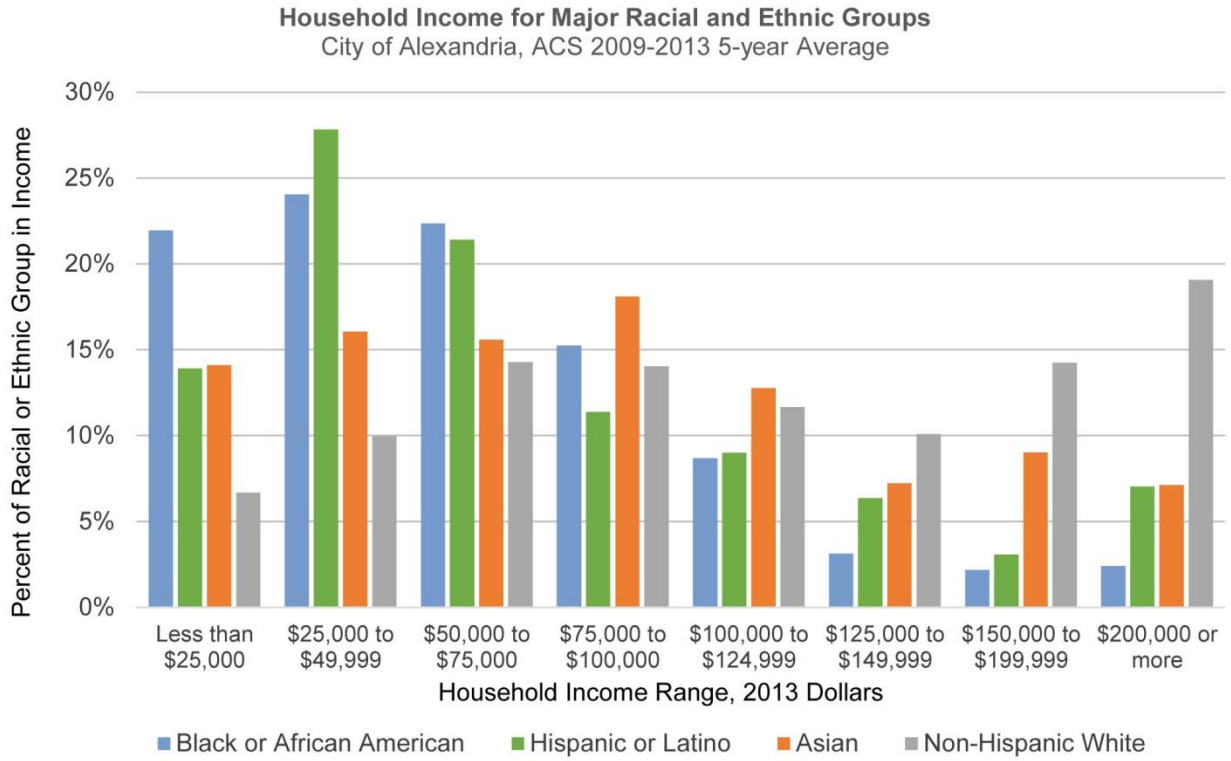
Alexandria's location in the region and its inventory of housing has resulted in this distribution of population by age that is quite different than that of the nation and the Washington, D.C. region as a whole. It is dominated by young workers in their late 20s and 30s, with a much smaller share of school-age children and seniors than the national average. This young adult population tends to have a substantial number of very young children, but fewer children of school age. This underrepresentation of school-age children in the population compared to the national average is true of all four of the major ethnic and racial groups profiled here. The Hispanic population has a higher percentage of school-age children than the other groups, with the Black of African American group close behind. The Non-Hispanic White and Asian groups have a substantially lower share of school-age children.

Many of these young families move out of Alexandria for housing with more bedrooms and more land when their families get larger and begin to enter school. Alexandria City Public Schools kindergarten enrollment is typically only about 60% or less of the number of births five years before to mothers living in the city, indicating that the families of many children born in Alexandria move elsewhere before these children enter school. A more complete discussion of the characteristics of Alexandria's housing stock that contribute to this low share of children in Alexandria can be found on line in the Alexandria 2010 Census Data Profile report. A detailed examination of student generation by housing type and the limits of the city's housing stock in providing family housing was documented as part of the background work for the Long Range Educational Facilities Plan.

A particularly interesting characteristic of the distribution by race and ethnicity is the very high proportion of the Asian population that is in their late 20s and early 30s. This is in part a consequence of the high share of recent immigrants in this population group, discussed later in this report.

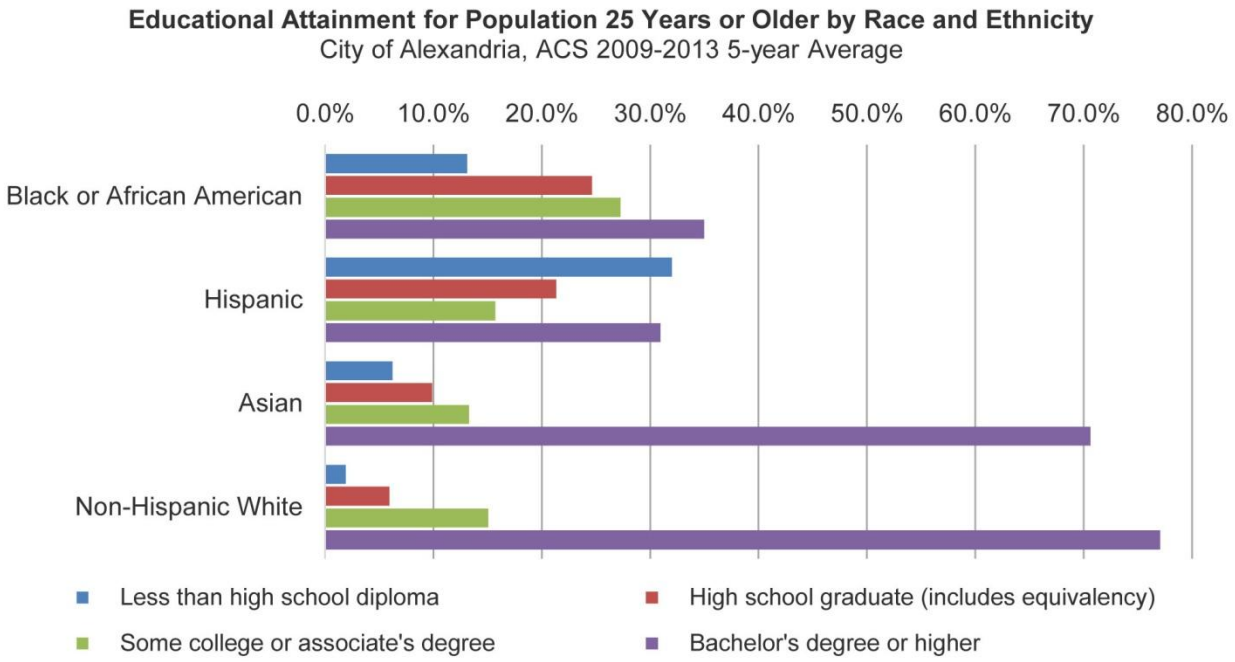
Household Income by Race and Ethnicity.

These statistics on family households help to explain some of the difference among the racial and ethnic groups in the comparison of household income.



The above graph shows the percentage of each of the four major racial and ethnic groups in a number of ranges of household income. Black and African-American households stand out in this graph, having the highest share with incomes below $25,000 at about 22%. The median household income for the 2009-2013 5-year average was $53,885 for Black or African American

households, $60,119 for Hispanic or Latino households, $80,774 for Asian households and $109,040 for non-Hispanic White households. The Non-Hispanic White population tends to be older on average than the other racial and ethnic groups in Alexandria, with a substantial share of population in their 40s, 50s and 60s when earnings tend to be higher than for younger workers.

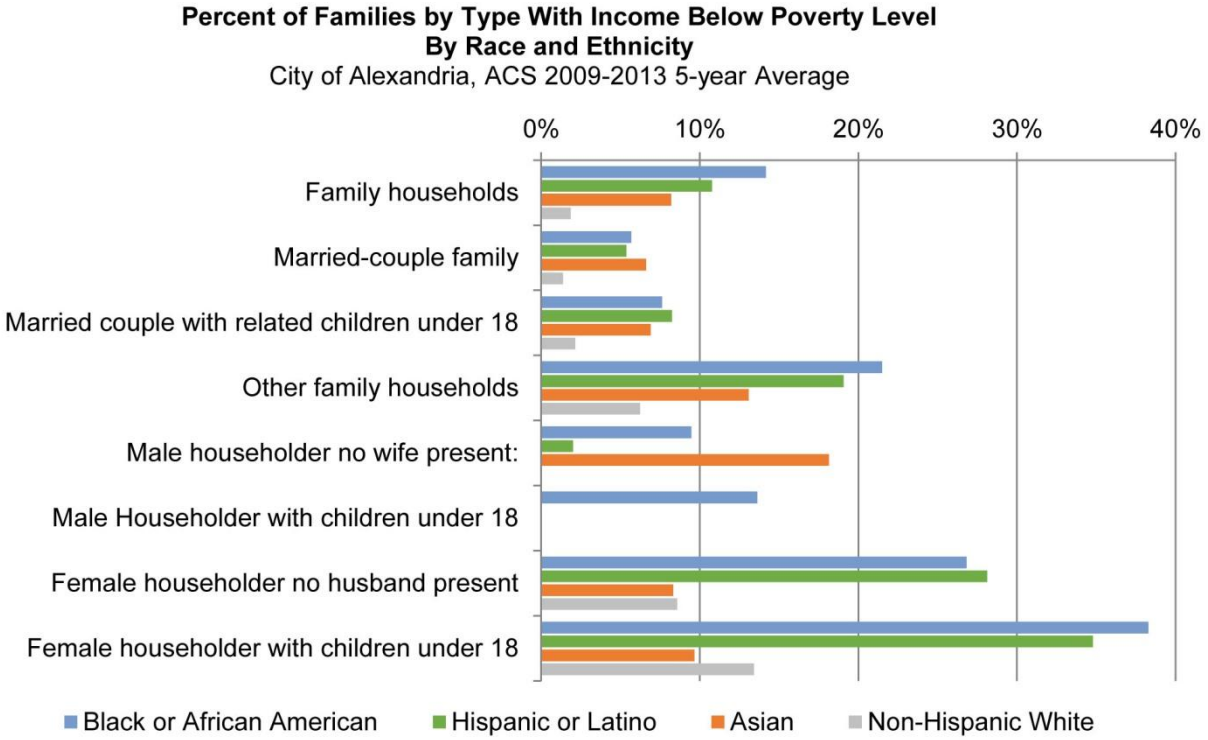


Educational Attainment by Race and Ethnicity

The graph above shows dramatic differences in educational attainment between the four racial and ethnic groups in Alexandria. 32% of Hispanics over 25 in Alexandria have not completed high school, more than twice the share of any other group evaluated here. Only 31% of Hispanics and 35% of Blacks and African Americans 25 years or older in the city have a four-year college degree or higher. While these are substantially higher shares of higher education for these groups than in the rest of the U.S., they fall far below the attainment of the other two groups in Alexandria. More than 70% of Asians and Non-Hispanic Whites have at least a four-year college degree. These differences create substantial obstacles to finding better-paying jobs for Black and African American and Hispanic workers in the highly competitive labor market in the Washington, D.C. metropolitan region.

Educational attainment is an important factor contributing to the substantial differences in income and poverty between these racial and ethnic groups.

Poverty by Race and Ethnicity

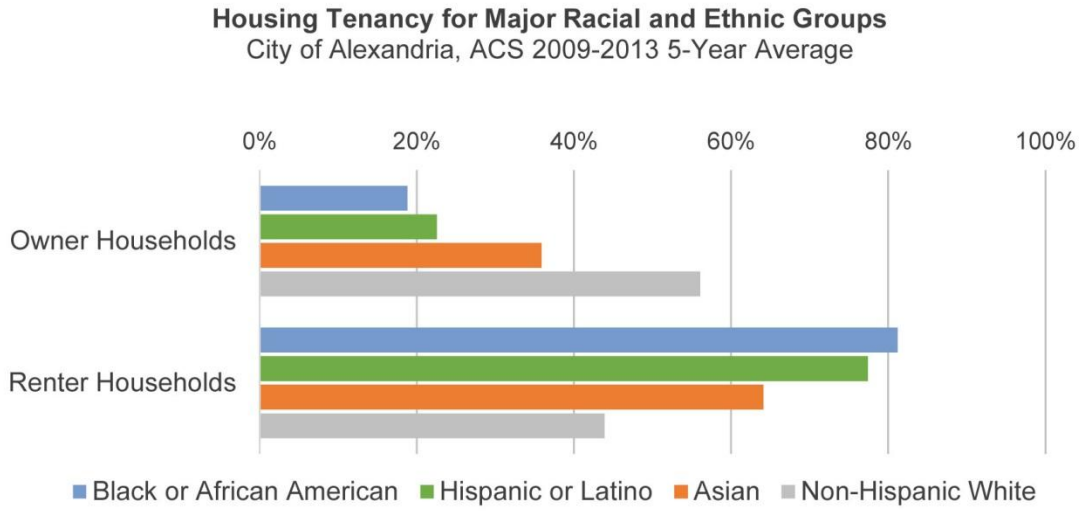


The graph above shows the current proportion of families in poverty by household type and race and ethnicity. There are individuals in non-family households who are also in poverty not shown by this graph. The principal concern illustrated here is for children growing up in families in poverty. More than one third of Black or African American and Hispanic families with female householders with children were living in poverty in Alexandria over the five-year period of the average.

Poverty is a very simple measure of economic hardship and does not capture all families struggling for economic survival in Alexandria. The poverty level is a nationwide dollar amount that varies with household type and household size, but does not vary by housing or other living costs among regions or between cities and rural areas. The 2013 poverty threshold for a three-person household with two children under 18 was $18,769. A single householder with two children falls in this category. For a single householder with one child, the poverty level was $16,057.

Children in married-couple households are far less likely to fall below the poverty threshold regardless of race or ethnicity. Less than 8% of married-couple families with children in any racial or ethnic category shown had incomes below the poverty level over the 5-year period of the estimate.

Housing Tenure



Alexandria has a substantially higher share of rental housing than the national average, with an estimated 43.3% of households living in owner-occupied housing and 56.5% living in rental housing. However, this higher rental share is common in inner suburbs throughout the U.S. The national average is 64.9% of households living in owner-occupied units and 35.1% living in rental housing.

Only the non-Hispanic White group showed a higher percentage living in owner-occupied units than rental units. Of the other groups, the Hispanic and Black and African American populations were substantially lower than the citywide average for home ownership. This reflects in part the younger age and lower incomes of these populations. Renter households in general show lower household incomes than owner households.

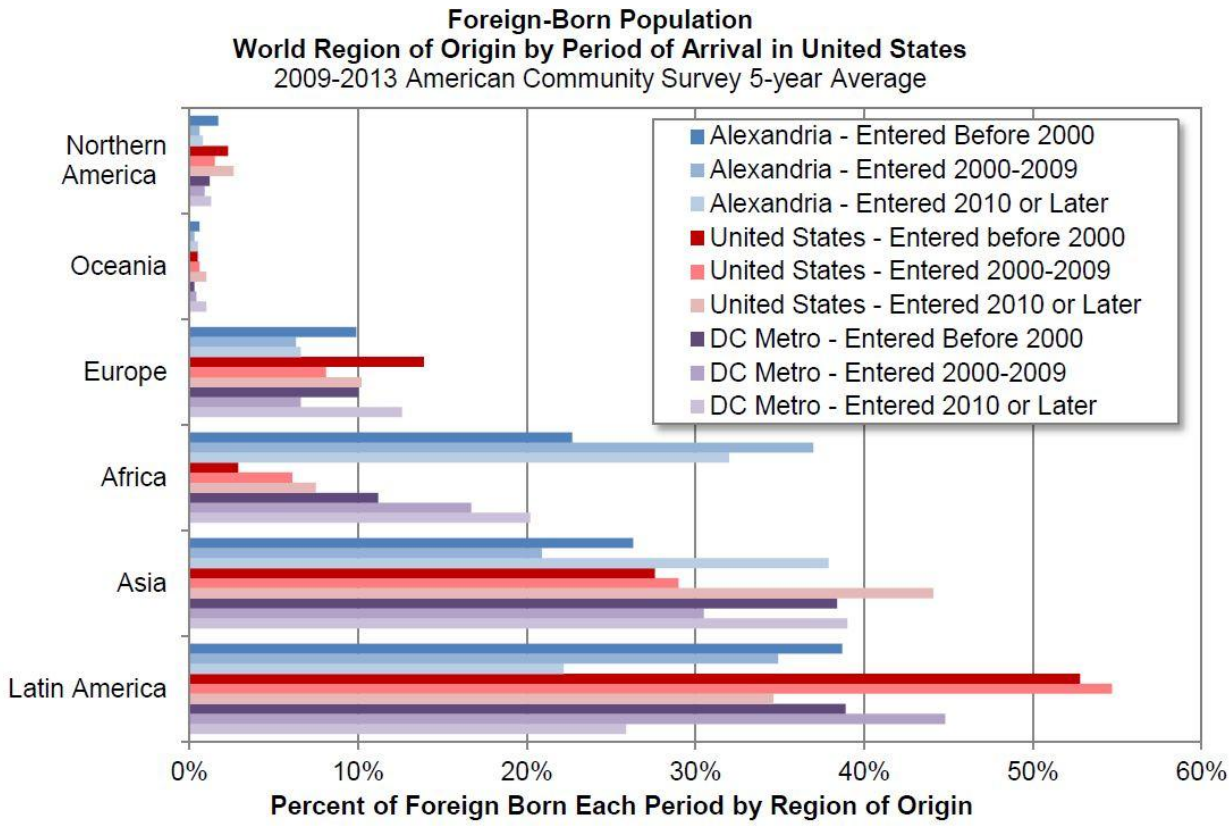
Native-Born and Foreign-Born Populations

The foreign-born population of the city has a substantially higher share of Hispanics and Asians than the native-born population. Children of U.S. citizens born abroad are not included in the foreign-born population – they are considered native born.

The graph on the following page shows the world region of origin of the foreign-born populations of Alexandria, the U.S. and the region by time of arrival in the U.S. Of the foreign-born arrivals now living in Alexandria who arrived in 2010 or later, Asia was the region of origin of approximately 38%, the largest share of any of the world regions of origin tabulated. For those current residents who arrived between 2000 and 2009, Africa is the region of origin of the largest share at 37%, and of those arriving prior to 2000, Latin America has the largest share at about 39%. Latin America is the region of origin of the largest share of all of today's foreign-born residents of the city at 35.4%.

54% of the foreign-born population is in the 25-44 year age group, substantially more than the 38% of the native-born population who fall in this age group. The city's native- and foreign-born

populations also have substantial differences in occupations, annual earnings and educational attainment, which are outlined in the discussion below.



One of the interesting findings from the 2013 American Community Survey annual data is that the share of the city's population that is foreign born for 2013 was estimated at 29.6%. Census figures showed a decline in the foreign-born population from 25.4% in 2000 to the 24.0% share in the American Community Survey 2006-2010 average. The recent increase to 29.6% foreign born in the 2013 estimates indicates a substantial change in direction of this trend if it accurately represents the foreign-born share of the city's population.

Because of the small sample size in the annual American Community Survey data, the unusually high 2013 figure can best be considered an indicator that the share of foreign-born population in the city may be increasing after the apparent decline from 2000 to 2010. Even at 24%, the foreign-born population is a substantial share of the city's population. This memo uses the most recent American Community Survey data to help describe who the foreign-born residents of Alexandria are, how they are similar to or different from the foreign-born population of the nation as a whole, and how they are similar to or different from the native-born population in the city. Unless otherwise indicated, all the numbers and percentages in the discussion below are based on the 2009-2013 American Community Survey 5-year average data.

The foreign-born population includes both naturalized U.S. citizens and those who are not citizens. Of the estimated 40.3 million foreign-born residents of the U.S. as a whole, 45.1% are estimated to be naturalized citizens, and 54.9% are not citizens. In the decennial census and in the

American Community Survey, in order to encourage participation by all residents, the Census Bureau makes no attempt to determine the legal status of non-citizens, who often live in households including native-born citizens as well as foreign-born naturalized citizens. Non-citizens are counted as residents as long as they are considered current residents of the residential unit being surveyed and not merely temporary visitors or guests who have a different permanent residence.

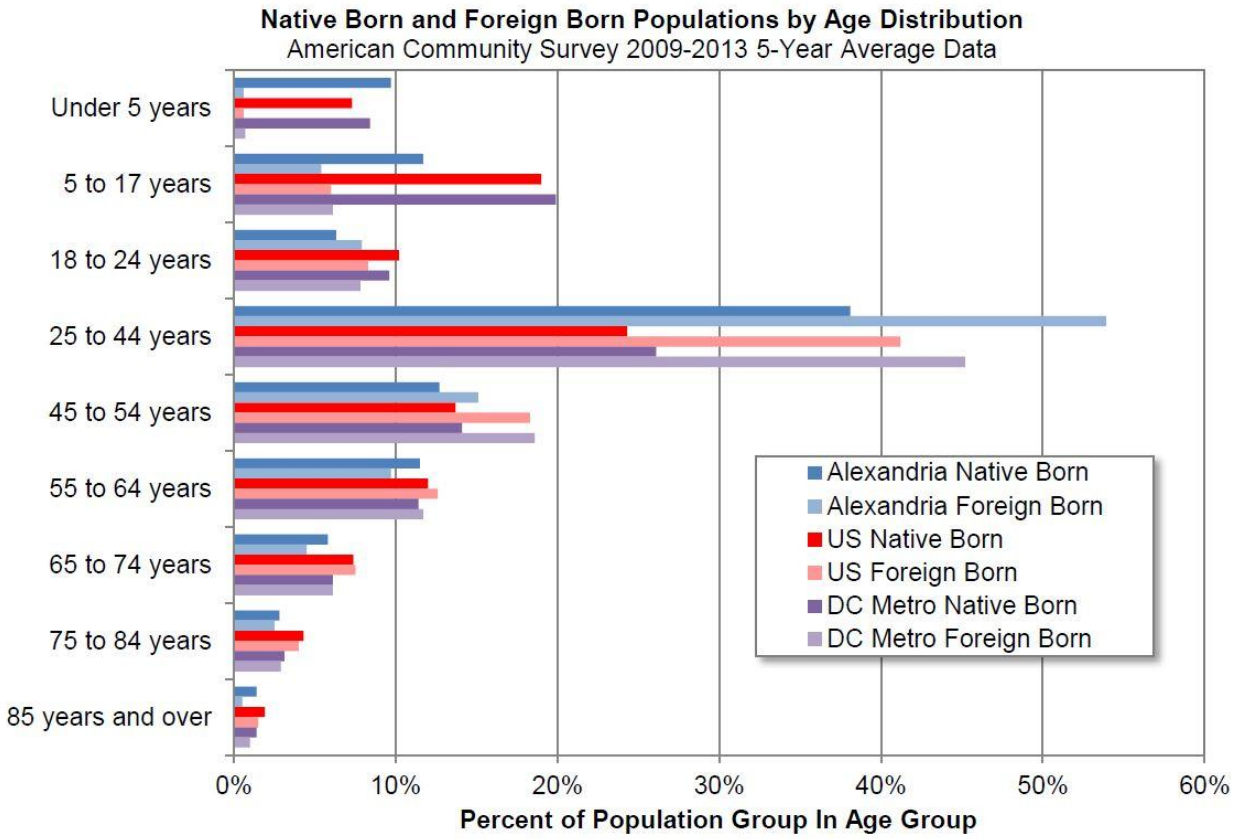
Of Alexandria's estimated 37,855 foreign-born residents, 37.8% were estimated to be naturalized citizens and 62.2% to be non-citizens. In the Washington, D.C. metropolitan area, of an estimated approximately 1,246,000 foreign-born residents, 46.8% were estimated to be naturalized U.S. citizens, and 53.2% non-citizens.

Alexandria, the United States and the Washington, D.C. Metropolitan Area share at least one characteristic of their foreign-born populations: Latin America is the most common region of origin of all current foreign-born residents of all three.

In spite of this similarity, the graph above does show some striking differences between Alexandria, the DC Metro Area and the U.S., and shows some changes in the mix of origins over time. The most recent arrivals, those arriving in 2010 or later, are in the palest colors on the graph.

Alexandria shows a much higher proportion of its current foreign-born population coming from Africa than the either the U.S. or the region. However, the share of Alexandria's current foreign-born residents who came from Africa is lower for those arriving after 2010 than it is for those arriving between 2000 and 2009. Of Alexandria's current foreign-born residents, the share of those arriving between 2000 and 2009 is greatest from Africa at 37.0%. For residents who arrived before 2000, the share is greatest from Latin America (38.7%), and for residents who arrived 2010 or later, the share is greatest from Asia (37.9%).

For the U.S. as a whole, the largest share of current foreign-born residents is from Latin America (52.5%), but of those arriving since 2010, the greatest share is from Asia (44.1%).

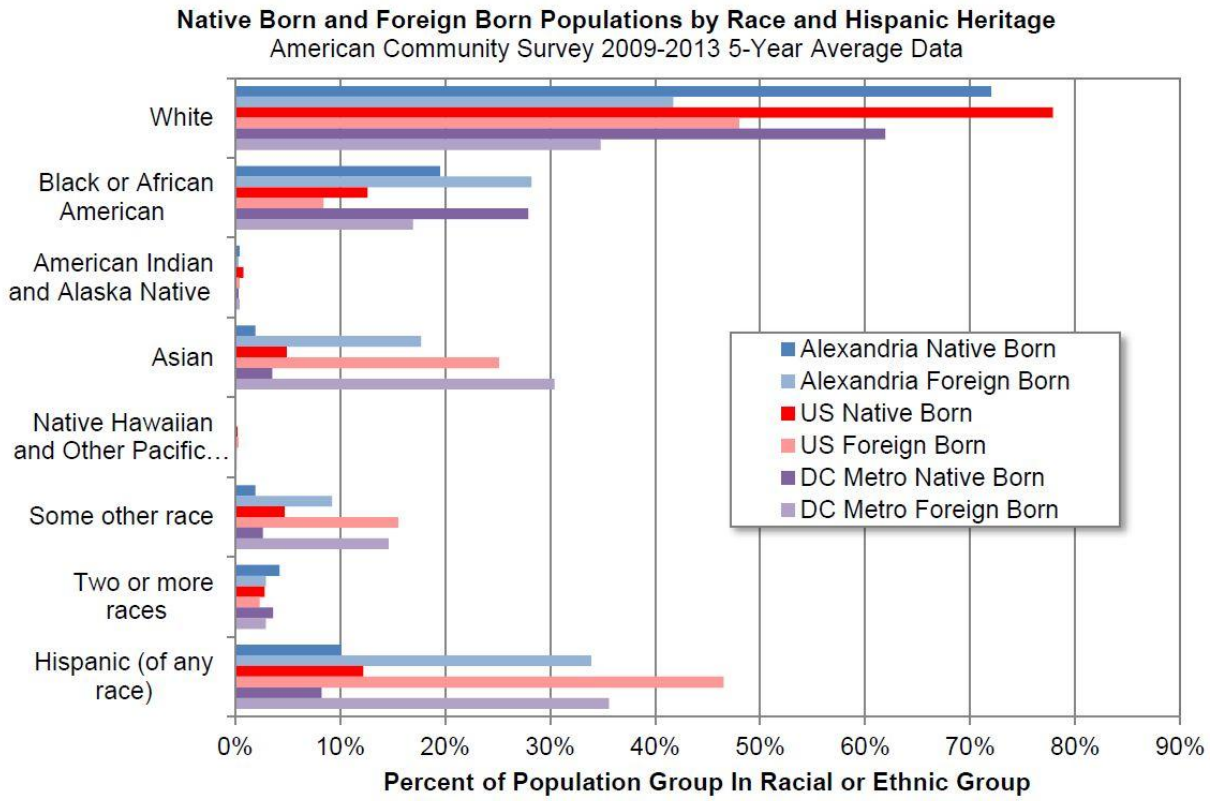


Age Distribution of Native-Born and Foreign-Born Populations

For all three geographic areas compared, the share of foreign-born population is very low for pre-school and school-age children. This indicates that only a small percentage of foreign-born arrivals enter the country with children. The share of total native-born population in the 18-24 year age group is similar to that of the foreign-born population at 10% or a bit less for all three geographic areas.

In the 25-44 year age group, Alexandria has a much higher share of both total native-born and total foreign-born population than either the U.S. or the Washington, D.C. region. More than half of Alexandria's foreign-born population is in this age group. For all three geographic areas, the share of foreign-born population in this age group is much higher than the share of the native-born population in the same age group. This higher share of the foreign-born population carries over into the 45-54 year age group as well for all three areas. This indicates that a substantially larger share of the foreign-born population is in the prime working years of life than the share of the native-born population in these age groups.

For the older age groups, the share of the total foreign-born population in each age group is similar to the share of native-born population in that age group, though the share of total foreign-born population in each age group declines more rapidly with age than that of the native-born population.

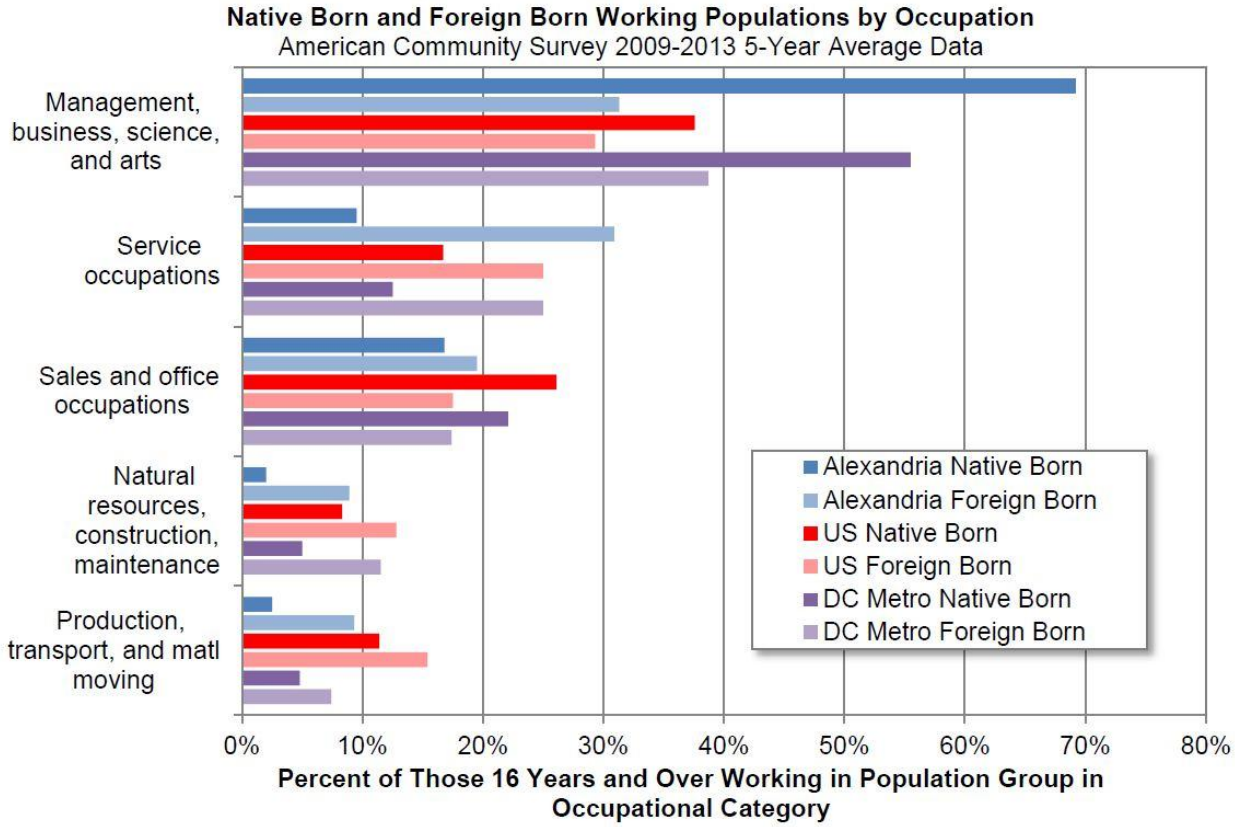


Race and Ethnicity of Native-Born and Foreign-Born Populations

In all three geographic areas compared here, the share of the native-born population that is White is much larger than the share of the foreign-born population that is White. In the United States as a whole, 78% of the native-born population is White, and 48% of the foreign-born population is White. In Alexandria, 72% of the native-born population is White, while 42% of the foreign-born population is White.

For Black and African American resident populations, Alexandria's share of Black or African American among foreign-born residents is 28.2%, compared to 19.5% among native-born residents, reflecting the high percentage of Alexandria's foreign-born population who came from Africa. For both the United States and the Washington, D.C. region, the share of native-born residents who are Black or African American is higher than that of foreign-born residents.

For Asian residents, residents of some other single race, and Hispanic residents of any race, the share of these populations among foreign-born residents is much higher than the share among native-born residents for all three geographic areas compared. For Alexandria, the share of foreign-born residents who are Asian is estimated at 17.7%, while the share of native-born residents who are Asian is estimated at just 1.9%. The share of foreign-born residents of Alexandria who are Hispanic of any race is estimated at about 34%, while the share of native-born residents of Alexandria who are Hispanic is estimated at about 10%.

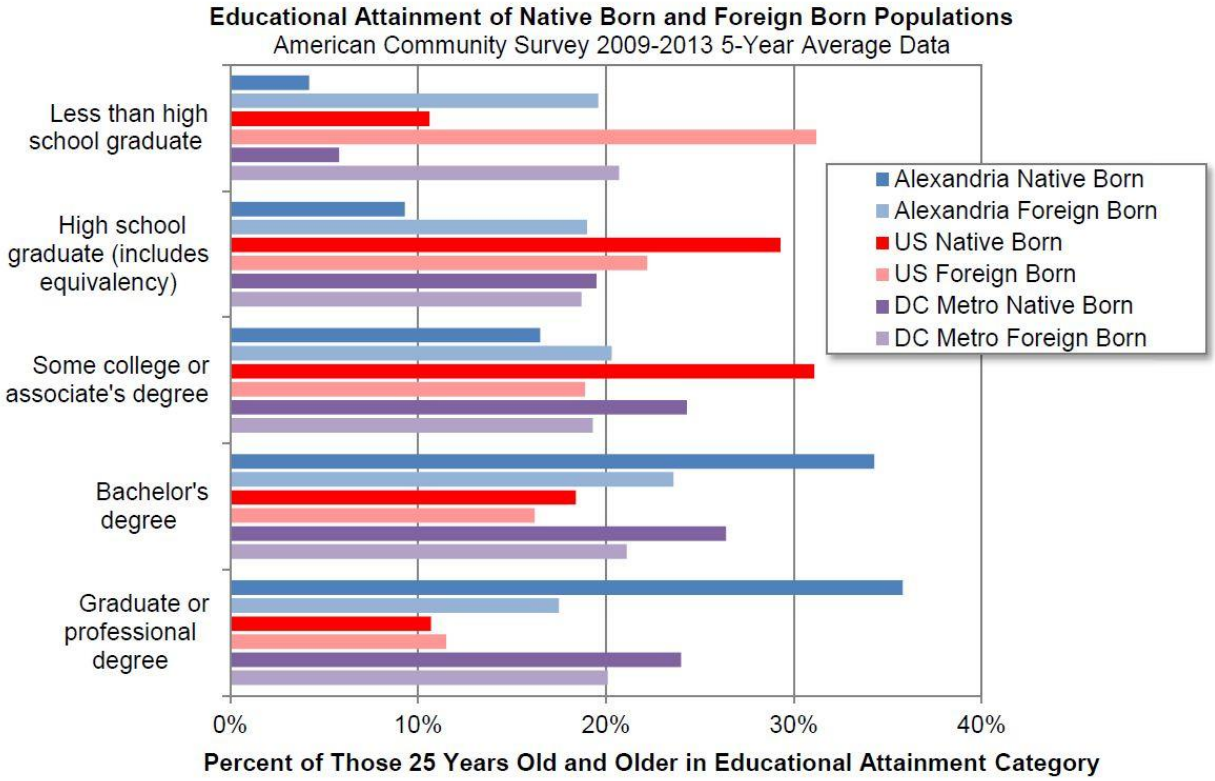


Occupations of Native-Born and Foreign-Born Populations

More than 69% of Alexandria's native-born population who are employed work in management, business, science and arts occupations. Only 31.3% of the city's employed foreign-born residents are in these occupations.

Nationwide, about 38% of employed native-born residents work in management, business, science and art occupations, while 29% of employed foreign-born residents work in these occupations.

Foreign-born residents of Alexandria are much more likely than native-born residents to work in service occupations; natural resources, construction and maintenance occupations; and in production, transportation and material moving occupations. The degree of difference between native-born and foreign-born residents in these occupational groups is much less among residents of the U.S. as a whole than it is among residents of Alexandria.

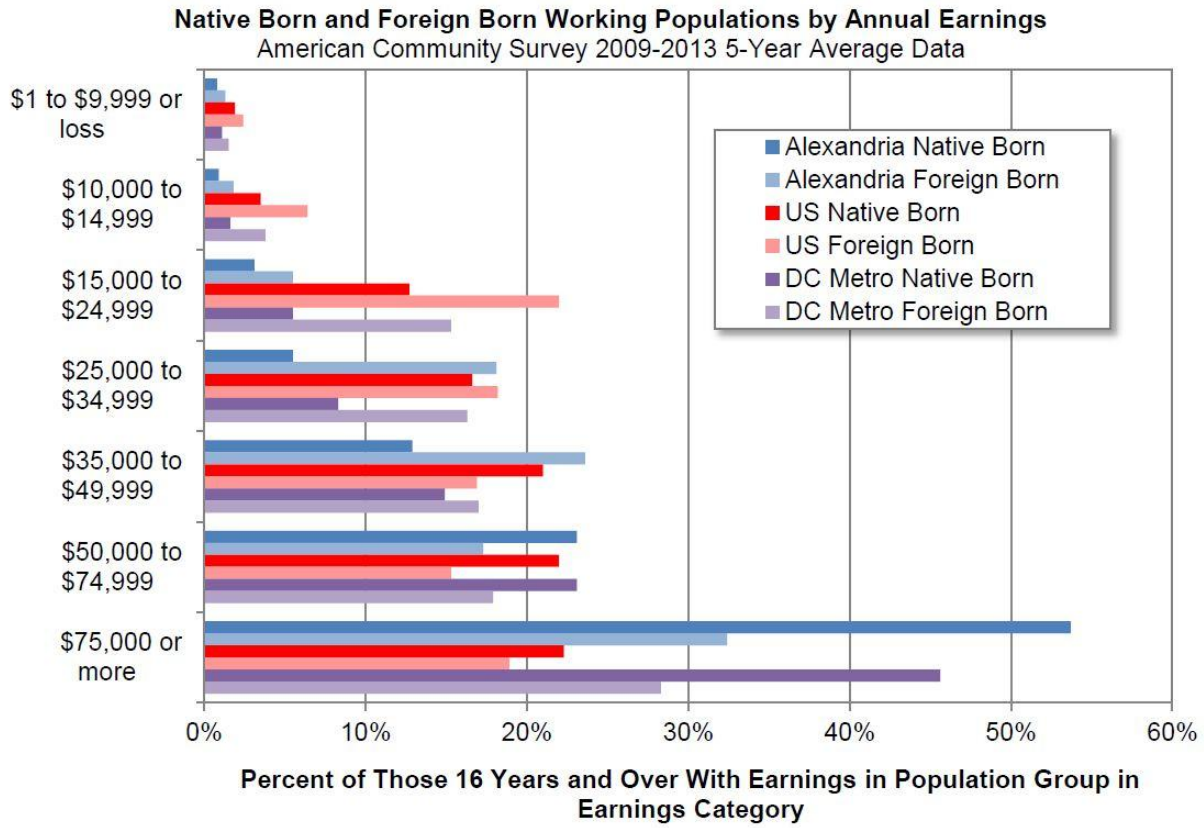


Educational Attainment of Native-Born and Foreign-Born Populations

Foreign-born residents of all three geographic areas compared are much more likely to lack a high-school education than native-born residents. In Alexandria, almost 20% of foreign-born residents 25 years old or older lack a high school education, while only 4.2% of native-born residents 25 or older have not graduated from high school. For the U.S. as a whole, about 31% of foreign-born residents lack a high school education, while 10.6% of native-born residents have not graduated from high school.

For the United States as a whole, foreign-born residents are more likely to have an advanced degree than native-born residents, but are somewhat less likely to have only a four-year college degree.

For Alexandria and the Washington, D.C. region as a whole, native-born residents 25 years old or older are much more likely to have a four-year college degree or an advanced degree than foreign-born residents 25 or older. However, foreign-born residents of Alexandria and the Washington, D.C. region are more likely to have a four-year degree or an advanced degree than native-born residents of the U.S. as a whole, reflecting the very high degree of educational attainment common to the Washington, D.C. region compared to that of the nation as a whole.



Annual Earnings of Native-Born and Foreign-Born Populations

Native-born residents tend to have higher earnings than foreign-born residents in the three geographic areas compared here. Because of the generally high wages and educational levels in the Washington, D.C. area, foreign-born residents of Alexandria and the Washington, D.C. Metropolitan Area are more likely to earn $75,000 per year or more than either native-born or foreign-born residents of the U.S. as a whole.

Other Characteristics of Native-Born and Foreign-Born Populations

Poverty. Foreign-born residents of all three geographic areas are more likely to live in a household with income below the poverty level than native-born residents.

In Alexandria, an estimated 7.6% of native-born residents live in a household that is below the poverty level, compared to 10.7% of foreign-born residents. Of the foreign-born residents who are naturalized citizens, 7.2% were estimated to live in a household with income below the poverty level, while 12.8% of those who are non-citizens are estimated to live in households below the poverty level.

For the United States as a whole, 15.4% of the total population is estimated to live in a household with income below the poverty level, while an estimated 14.9% of native-born residents and 18.7% of foreign-born residents do so.

Owner-Occupied vs. Renter-Occupied Housing. In Alexandria, 49.5% of native-born residents are estimated to live in owner-occupied housing units, while only 24.4% of foreign-born residents live in owner-occupied housing. 34.9% of foreign-born who are naturalized citizens are estimated to live in owner-occupied housing, while only 13.7% of non-citizens do so. Nationwide, an estimated 67% of native-born and 52.1% of foreign-born residents live in owner-occupied housing units, with 34.7% of non-citizen foreign-born living in owner-occupied housing.

Rent Burden. Gross rent of 30% of household income or more is a guideline used to determine whether a household is significantly burdened by housing costs compared to other costs of living. In Alexandria, 36.8% of native-born residents living in rental housing were estimated to live in households in which rent was 30% or more of household income. An estimated 56.0% of foreign-born residents living in rental housing had rents more than 30% of household income, and 59.4% of foreign-born non-citizens were estimated to live in households paying more than 30% of household income for rent.

In the U.S. as a whole, an even larger share of native-born residents in rental housing (47.3%) was estimated to live in a household paying more than 30% of income for rent, while a smaller share of foreign-born residents than in Alexandria (52.3%) was living in households paying more than 30% of income for rent. An estimated 53.4% of non-citizens in rental housing were living in households paying less than 30% of income for rent nationwide.

About the Data

The American Community Survey is a survey conducted continually by the U.S. Census Bureau since 2005. The survey is completed by only about 1% of households each year, but provides information on a wide variety of community characteristics. The 2013 annual data for the city as a whole was summarized in the report American Community Survey 2013 Narrative Summary. That report also compares the 2013 estimates with estimates from prior years and to the 2010 and 2000 Decennial Census data for a number of characteristics.

The 2009-2013 5-year average data, which has a smaller sampling error in its estimates than the annual survey data because it is based on a larger sample of the population, was released by the Census Bureau on December 4, 2014. The 5-year average carries some uncertainty about current characteristics because changes can occur over the 5-year period of the average. The 2006-2010 5-year average data was used extensively in the report Alexandria 2010 Census Data Profile, to report on many characteristics of the city's population and housing such as household income, employment, commuting, and educational attainment that are no longer covered in the decennial census. The most recent 2009-2013 data overlaps that period for the years 2009 and 2010.

In order to best identify changes over time using 5-year average data, the Census Bureau recommends that non-overlapping 5-year averages be used. The 2010-2014 5-year average data expected to be released at the end of 2015 will be the first 5-year average data set that provides an opportunity to compare American Community Survey 5-year average data sets that do not overlap.

Additional Information

Additional information including detailed thematic tables showing these characteristics may be found on the Census Bureau's web site, www.census.gov. The data referenced in this memo on the foreign-born population is found in tables S0501 and S0502 of the 2009-2013 American Community Survey 5-year average. Additional tables and graphs from the 2013 survey, and information on additional characteristics and trends from the initial nine years of the American Community Survey, will be posted from time to time on the city's statistics and demographics web page at www.alexandriava.gov\Demographics.

Contact Information

For questions or additional information about the data provided in this memorandum, or for assistance obtaining other census data, please contact Pat Mann, Urban Planner, at 703.746.3857.