



IMMIGRATION POLICY CENTER

...providing factual information about immigration and immigrants in America

September 22, 2009

NEW AMERICANS IN THE NATURAL STATE: The Political and Economic Power of Immigrants, Latinos, and Asians in Arkansas

Immigrants, Latinos, and Asians account for large and growing shares of the economy and population in Arkansas. Immigrants make up 4.2% of the state's population, and roughly one-third of them are naturalized U.S. citizens who are eligible to vote. Immigrants, who account for more than 5% of Arkansas workers, added nearly \$3 billion to the state's economy in 2004. Moreover, Latinos and Asians wield roughly \$3.7 billion in consumer purchasing power, and the businesses they own had sales and receipts of \$988 million and employed more than 10,000 people at last count. At a time of economic recession, Arkansas can ill-afford to alienate such a critical component of its labor force, tax base, and business community.

Immigrants and their children are growing shares of Arkansas's population and electorate.

- **The foreign-born share** of Arkansas's population rose from 1.1% in [1990](#),¹ to 2.8% in [2000](#),² to 4.2% in [2007](#),³ according to the U.S. Census Bureau. Arkansas was home to 118,405 immigrants in [2007](#),⁴ which is more than the population of [Springfield, Illinois](#).⁵
- Arkansas had the **fastest-growing Latino population** of any state in the nation between 2000 and 2005, and the **fourth-fastest-growing immigrant population**, according to a [study](#) by the Urban Institute.⁶
- **28.1% of immigrants (or 33,316 people) in Arkansas were naturalized U.S. citizens** in [2007](#)⁷—meaning that they are eligible to vote.
- **1.4% (or 18,425) of registered voters** in Arkansas were “New Americans”—naturalized citizens or the U.S.-born children of immigrants who were raised during the current era of immigration from Latin America and Asia which began in 1965—according to an analysis of 2006 Census Bureau data by [Rob Paral & Associates](#).⁸

More Than 6% of Arkansans are Latino or Asian.

- The **Latino share of Arkansas's population** grew from 0.8% in [1990](#),⁹ to 3.2% in [2000](#),¹⁰ to 5.2% (or 147,409 people) in [2007](#).¹¹ The **Asian share of the population** grew from 0.5% in [1990](#),¹² to 0.8% in [2000](#),¹³ to 1.2% (or 34,018 people) in [2007](#),¹⁴ according to the U.S. Census Bureau.

THE IMMIGRATION POLICY CENTER

1331 G STREET, NW • WASHINGTON, DC 20005 • TEL: (202) 507-7500 • FAX: (202) 742-5619

www.immigrationpolicy.org

Immigrant, Latino, and Asian entrepreneurs and consumers add billions of dollars and tens-of-thousands of jobs to Arkansas's economy.

- **Spending by immigrants generated \$2.9 billion in Arkansas business revenues** in 2004, according to a [study](#) by the Urban Institute.¹⁵
- **Immigrants (and their U.S.-born children) paid \$19 million more in taxes than they consumed** in education, health services, and corrections, according to the [same](#) study.¹⁶
- **The 2008 purchasing power of Arkansas's Latinos totaled \$2.7 billion**—an increase of 1,535.8% since 1990. **Asian buying power totaled \$972 million**—an increase of 552.5% since 1990, according to the [Selig Center for Economic Growth](#) at the University of Arkansas.¹⁷
- Arkansas's 2,013 [Asian-owned businesses](#) had sales and receipts of \$614 million and employed 7,099 people in 2002, the last year for which data is available.¹⁸ The state's 2,094 [Latino-owned businesses](#) had sales and receipts of \$374 million and employed 3,198 people in 2002, according to the U.S. Census Bureau's Survey of Business Owners.¹⁹

Immigrants are integral to Arkansas's economy as workers.

- Immigrants comprised **5.3% of the state's workforce** in [2007](#) (or 71,335 workers), according to the U.S. Census Bureau.²⁰
- Without immigrant workers, **the state's manufacturing industry output would be lowered by about \$1.4 billion**—or about 8 percent of the industry's \$16.2 billion total contribution to the gross state product in 2004, according to a [study](#) by the Urban Institute.²¹
- Unauthorized immigrants comprised **2.8% of the state's workforce** (or 40,000 workers) in [2008](#), according to a report by the Pew Hispanic Center.²²
- If all unauthorized immigrants were removed from Arkansas, **the state would lose \$798 million in expenditures, \$354 million in economic output, and approximately 6,660 jobs**, even accounting for adequate market adjustment time, according to a report by the [Perryman Group](#).²³

Naturalized Citizens Excel Educationally.

- In Arkansas, **20.9% of foreign-born persons** who were naturalized U.S. citizens in [2007](#) **had a bachelor's or higher degree**, compared to 18.1% of noncitizens. At the same time, only 33.1% of naturalized citizens lacked a high-school diploma, compared to 49.4% of noncitizens.²⁴
- The number of immigrants in Arkansas with a college degree **increased by 68.1%** between 2000 and 2007, according to [data](#) from the Migration Policy Institute.²⁵

- In Arkansas, **68.0% of all children** between the ages of 5 and 17 in families that spoke a language other than English at home also spoke English “very well” as of [2007](#).²⁶

Endnotes

¹ U.S. Census Bureau, [The Foreign-Born Population: 2000](#), December 2003.

² Ibid.

³ 2007 American Community Survey (1-Year Estimates).

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Randy Capps and Everett Henderson, [A Profile of Immigrants in Arkansas](#) (Washington, DC: The Urban Institute, April 2007), p. 1.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Rob Paral and Associates, [The New American Electorate: The Growing Political Power of Immigrants and Their Children](#) (Washington, DC: Immigration Policy Center, American Immigration Law Foundation, October 2008).

⁹ U.S. Census Bureau, [The Hispanic Population: 2000](#), May 2001.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ 2007 American Community Survey (1-Year Estimates).

¹² U.S. Census Bureau, [The Asian Population: 2000](#), February 2002.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ 2007 American Community Survey (1-Year Estimates).

¹⁵ Randy Capps and Everett Henderson, [A Profile of Immigrants in Arkansas](#) (Washington, DC: The Urban Institute, April 2007), p. 5.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Jeffrey M. Humphreys, [The Multicultural Economy 2008](#) (Athens, GA: Selig Center for Economic Growth, University of Arkansas, 2008), p. 64.

¹⁸ U.S. Census Bureau, [Hispanic-Owned Firms: 2002](#), August 2006.

¹⁹ U.S. Census Bureau, [Asian-Owned Firms: 2002](#), August 2006.

²⁰ 2007 American Community Survey (1-Year Estimates).

²¹ Randy Capps and Everett Henderson, [A Profile of Immigrants in Arkansas](#) (Washington, DC: The Urban Institute, April 2007), p. 6.

²² Jeffrey S. Passel and D’Vera Cohn, [A Portrait of Unauthorized Immigrants in the United States](#) (Washington, DC: Pew Hispanic Center, April 14, 2009), p. 30.

²³ The Perryman Group, [An Essential Resource: An Analysis of the Economic Impact of Undocumented Workers on Business Activity in the US with Estimated Effects by State and by Industry](#) (Waco, TX: April 2008), p. 69.

²⁴ Migration Policy Institute Data Hub, [Arkansas: Language & Education](#).

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Ibid.