

New Americans in the Golden State

The Political and Economic Power of Immigrants, Latinos, and Asians in California.

More than one-quarter of Californians are immigrants.

- **The foreign-born share** of California's population rose from 21.7% in [1990](#) [1], to 26.2% in [2000](#) [1], to 26.8% in [2008](#) [2], according to the U.S. Census Bureau. California was home to 9.9 million immigrants in [2008](#) [2], which is roughly equal to the total population of [Georgia](#) [3].
- **44.6% of immigrants (or 4.4 million people) in California were naturalized U.S. citizens** in [2008](#) [2] (up from 31.2% in [1990](#) [1])—meaning that they are eligible to vote.
- **24.4% (or 13.2 million) of all registered voters in California are “New Americans”**—naturalized citizens or the U.S.-born children of immigrants who were raised during the current era of large-scale immigration from Latin America and Asia which began in 1965—according to an analysis of 2006 Census Bureau data by [Rob Paral & Associates](#) [4].

Nearly half of Californians are Latino or Asian—and they vote.

- **The Latino share of California's population** grew from 25.8% in [1990](#) [5], to 32.4% in [2000](#) [5], to 36.6% (or 13.5 million people) in [2008](#) [2]. **The Asian share of the population** grew from 9.2% in [1990](#) [6], to 10.9% in [2000](#) [6], to 12.4% (or 4.5 million people) in [2008](#) [2], according to the U.S. Census Bureau.
- **Latinos comprised 21.4% (or 3 million) of California voters in the 2008 elections, and Asians 9.7% (or 1.3 million)**, according to the [U.S. Census Bureau](#) [7]. The number of Latino and Asian voters is one million more than the margin of victory ([3.3 million votes](#) [8]) by which Barack Obama defeated John McCain.
- In California, **nearly nine-in-ten (or 89% of) children in immigrant families were U.S. citizens** in [2007](#) [9], according to the Center for Social and Demographic Analysis at the University of Albany.

Immigrant workers, entrepreneurs, and taxpayers are integral to California's economy.

- **“Immigrants comprise more than one-third of the California labor force.** They figure prominently in key economic sectors such as agriculture, manufacturing and services. Immigrants provide leadership and labor for the expansion of California's growing economic sectors—from telecommunications and information technology to health services and housing construction,” according to the [California Immigrant Policy Center](#) [10].
- Immigrants in California [pay](#) [11] roughly **\$30 billion in federal taxes, \$5.2 billion in state**

income taxes, and \$4.6 billion in sales taxes each year. In California, “the average immigrant-headed household contributes a net \$2,679 annually to Social Security, which is \$539 more than the average US-born household.”

- Immigrants accounted **for 34% of total economic output in the Los Angeles metropolitan area, 29% in the San Francisco metropolitan area, 25% in the Riverside metropolitan area, and 23% in the San Diego metropolitan area** in 2007, according to a study by the [Fiscal Policy Institute](#) [12]. In fact, “immigrants contribute to the economy in direct relation to their share of the population. The economy of metro areas grows in tandem with the immigrant share of the labor force.”
- Unauthorized immigrants comprised **9.9% of the California’s workforce** in [2008](#) [13] (or 1.9 million workers), according to a report by the Pew Hispanic Center.
- If all unauthorized immigrants were removed from California, **the state would lose \$164.2 billion in economic activity, \$72.9 billion in gross state product, and approximately 717,352 jobs**, even accounting for adequate market adjustment time, according to a report by the [Perryman Group](#) [14].

Immigrant, Latino, and Asian entrepreneurs and consumers add hundreds of billions of dollars and a more than a million jobs to California’s economy.

- **The 2009 purchasing power of California’s Latinos totaled \$252.7 billion**—an increase of 263.8% since 1990. **Asian buying power totaled \$162.6 billion**—an increase of 271.4% since 1990, according to the [Selig Center for Economic Growth](#) [15] at the University of Georgia.
- California’s 427,678 [Latino-owned](#) [16] businesses had sales and receipts of \$57.2 billion and employed 445,820 people in 2002, the last year for which data is available. The state’s 371,530 [Asian-owned](#) [17] businesses had sales and receipts of \$125.8 billion and employed 745,874 people. Together, **businesses owned by Latinos and Asians comprised more than one-quarter [18] of all businesses in the state**, according to the U.S. Census Bureau’s 2002 Survey of Business Owners.

Most native-born Californians have experienced wage gains from immigration.

- “During 1990–2004, **immigration induced a 4 percent real wage increase for the average native worker**,” according to a [2007 study](#) [19] by economist Giovanni Peri of the University of California, Davis.
- The [reason](#) [19] for wage increases is that **“immigrant workers often serve as complements to native workers rather than as their direct competitors for jobs**, thereby increasing total economic output. Native workers benefit because they are able to specialize in more productive work.”

California’s immigrants move up the socioeconomic ladder over time—learning English, buying homes, and escaping poverty.

- A [study](#) [20] by demographer Dowell Myers of the University of Southern California found that:

- The share of California's foreign-born Latinos who reported being proficient in English as of 2000 rose from 33.4% of those who had been in the United States for less than 10 years to 73.5% among those who had been here for 30 years or longer.
 - The share of **foreign-born Latinos in California who owned their own homes as of 2005 rose** from 16.4% of those who had been in the United States for less than 10 years to 64.6% among those who had lived here for 30 years or more.
 - The share of California's **foreign-born Latinos who lived below the poverty line as of 2005 dropped** from 28.7% of those who had been in the United States for less than 10 years to 11.8% among those who had been here for 30 years or more.
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- The share of immigrants in Los Angeles County who owned their own homes as of 2005-06 rose from 14.8% of those who had come to the United States within the previous 10 years to 63.4% of those who had lived here for more than 30 years—compared to a homeownership rate of 54.2% among the native-born, according to a [study](#) [21] by Manuel Pastor and Rhonda Ortiz at the University of Southern California.

Immigrants are integral to California's economy as students.

- California's 93,124 **foreign students contributed \$2.8 billion** to the state's economy in tuition, fees, and living expenses for the 2008-2009 academic year, according to [NAFSA: Association of International Educators](#) [22].

Naturalized citizens excel educationally.

- In **California, 32.0% of foreign-born persons who were naturalized U.S. citizens in 2008 [23] had a bachelor's or higher degree, compared to 17.9% of noncitizens.** At the same time, only 25.6% of naturalized citizens lacked a high-school diploma, compared to 49.7% of noncitizens.
- The number of immigrants in California with a college degree **increased by 39.8%** between 2000 and 2008, according to [data](#) [23] from the Migration Policy Institute.
- In California, **76.3% 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 [2008](#) [23].

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[1] <http://www.census.gov/prod/2003pubs/c2kbr-34.pdf>

[2]

http://factfinder.census.gov/servlet/STTable?_bm=y&-context=st&-qr_name=ACS_2008_1

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