

New Americans in Our Nation's Capital

The Political and Economic Power of Immigrants, Latinos, and Asians in Washington, D.C.

Immigrants and their children are growing shares of Washington, D.C.'s population and electorate.

- **The foreign-born share** of Washington, D.C.'s population rose from 9.7% in [1990](#) [1], to 12.9% in [2000](#) [1], to 13.2% in [2008](#) [2], according to the U.S. Census Bureau. Washington, D.C. was home to 77,884 immigrants in [2008](#) [2].
- **35.0% of immigrants (or 27,221 people) in Washington, D.C. were naturalized U.S. citizens** in [2008](#) [2]—meaning that they are eligible to vote.
- **9.7% (or 26,705) of registered voters** in Washington, D.C. 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](#) [3].

Nearly one-in-eight Washingtonians are Latino or Asian.

- The **Latino share of Washington, D.C.'s population** grew from 5.4% in [1990](#) [4], to 7.9% in [2000](#) [4], to 8.6% (or 50,898 people) in [2008](#) [2]. The **Asian share of the population** grew from 1.8% in [1990](#) [5], to 2.7% in [2000](#) [5], to 3.4% (or 20,122 people) in [2008](#) [2], according to the U.S. Census Bureau.
- **Latinos accounted for 3.6%** (or 11,000) **of Washington, D.C. voters** in the 2008 elections, and **Asians 1.6%** (5,000) according to the [U.S. Census Bureau](#) [6].
- In Washington, D.C., **more than four-in-five (or 86% of) children in immigrant families were U.S. citizens** in [2007](#) [7], according to the Center for Social and Demographic Analysis at the University of Albany.

Latino and Asian entrepreneurs and consumers add billions of dollars and tens of thousands of jobs to Washington, D.C.'s economy.

- **The 2009 purchasing power of Latinos in Washington, D.C. totaled \$1.8 billion**—an increase of 270.2% since 1990. **Asian buying power totaled \$1.1 billion**—an increase of 383.0% since 1990, according to the [Selig Center for Economic Growth](#) [8] at the University of Georgia.
- Washington, D.C.'s 2,169 **Latino-owned** [9] **businesses** had sales and receipts of \$548.2 million and employed 3,936 people in 2002, the last year for which data is available. The District's 2,411 **Asian-owned** [10] **businesses** had sales and receipts of \$1.0 billion and employed between 5,000 and 9,999 people in 2002, according to the U.S. Census Bureau's

Survey of Business Owners.

Immigrants are essential to Washington, D.C.'s economy as workers and taxpayers.

- Immigrants comprised **16.9% of the District's workforce** in [2008](#) [2] (or 56,616 workers), according to the U.S. Census Bureau.
- Immigrants accounted for **20% of total economic output** in the Washington, D.C. metropolitan area as of 2007. 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, according to a study by the [Fiscal Policy Institute](#) [11]."
- Immigrant households in the Washington, D.C. metropolitan area **contributed \$9.8 billion in taxes** in [2000](#) [12], according to the Urban Institute.

Unauthorized immigrants are integral to Washington, D.C.'s economy as workers and taxpayers.

- Unauthorized immigrants comprised roughly **7.1% of the District's workforce** (or 25,000 workers) in [2008](#) [13], according to a report by the Pew Hispanic Center.
- If all unauthorized immigrants were removed from Washington, D.C., **the District would lose \$1.1 billion in economic activity, \$490.5 million in gross product, and approximately 5,400 jobs**, even accounting for adequate market adjustment time, according to a report by the [Perryman Group](#) [14].

Immigrants are integral to Washington, D.C.'s economy as students.

- Washington, D.C.'s 8,485 **foreign students contributed \$304.1 million** to the District's economy in tuition, fees, and living expenses for the 2008-2009 academic year, according to [NAFSA: Association of International Educators](#) [15].

Naturalized citizens excel educationally.

- In Washington, D.C., **56.5% of foreign-born persons** who were naturalized U.S. citizens in [2008](#) [16] **had a bachelor's or higher degree**, compared to 41.7% of noncitizens. At the same time, only 14.5% of naturalized citizens lacked a high-school diploma, compared to 33.4% of noncitizens.
- The number of immigrants in Washington, D.C. with a college degree **increased by 34.6%** between 2000 and 2008, according to [data](#) [16] from the Migration Policy Institute.
- In Washington, D.C., **81.8% 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](#) [16].

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Links:

- [1] <http://www.census.gov/prod/2003pubs/c2kbr-34.pdf#page=3>
- [2] http://factfinder.census.gov/servlet/STTable?_bm=y&-context=st&-qr_name=ACS_2008_1YR_G00_S0501&-ds_name=ACS_2008_1YR_G00_&-CONTEXT=st&-tree_id=308&-redoLog=true&-_caller=geoselect&-geo_id=04000US11&-format=&-_lang=en
- [3] <http://www.immigrationpolicy.org/../../../../default/files/docs/NewCitizenVotersWEBversion.pdf%2523page%3D24>
- [4] <http://www.census.gov/prod/2001pubs/c2kbr01-3.pdf#page=4>
- [5] <http://www.census.gov/prod/2002pubs/c2kbr01-16.pdf#page=5>
- [6] http://www.census.gov/population/socdemo/voting/cps2008/Table_4b.xls
- [7] http://mumford.albany.edu/children/reports/Data_Briefs/AECF_immigrant_families_brief_dc.pdf
- [8] <http://www.terry.uga.edu/selig/docs/GBEC0903q.pdf>
- [9] <http://www.census.gov/prod/ec02/sb0200cshisp.pdf#page=19>
- [10] <http://www.census.gov/prod/ec02/sb0200csasian.pdf#page=19>
- [11] http://www.fiscalpolicy.org/ImmigrantsIn25MetroAreas_20091130.pdf#page=18
- [12] http://www.urban.org/UploadedPDF/411338_civic_contributions.pdf#page=7
- [13] <http://pewhispanic.org/files/reports/107.pdf#page=40>
- [14] http://americansforimmigrationreform.com/files/Impact_of_the_Undocumented_Workforce.pdf#page=69
- [15] http://www.nafsa.org/_/File/_/eis09/dc.pdf#page=2
- [16] <http://www.migrationinformation.org/datahub/state2.cfm?ID=dc#5>
- [17] http://www.immigrationpolicy.org/sites/default/files/docs/New_Americans_in_our_Nations_Capital_2010_0.pdf