

July 2010

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

Immigrants, Latinos, and Asians account for large and growing shares of the economy and population in the electoral swing state of Ohio. Immigrants (the foreign-born) make up nearly 4% of the state's population, and almost half of them are naturalized U.S. citizens eligible to vote. "New Americans"—immigrants and the children of immigrants—account for 2.4% of all registered voters in the state. Latinos and Asians (both foreign-born and native-born) account for slightly more than 4% of all Ohioans and wield \$13.7 billion in consumer purchasing power. At last count, the sales and receipts of businesses owned by Latinos and Asians totaled \$6.4 billion. Ohio is also home to the nation's second largest Somali population, whose many businesses contribute to the state's economy. At a time of economic recession, Ohio can ill-afford to alienate an important component of its labor force, tax base, and business community.

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

- **The foreign-born share** of Ohio's population rose from 2.4% in [1990](#),¹ to 3.0% in [2000](#),² to 3.7% in [2008](#),³ according to the U.S. Census Bureau. Ohio was home to 427,040 immigrants in [2008](#),⁴ which is roughly equal to the total population of [Miami, Florida](#).⁵
- **48.3% of immigrants (or 206,449 people) in Ohio were naturalized U.S. citizens in [2008](#)**⁶—meaning that they are eligible to vote.
- **2.4% (or 142,061) of all registered voters** in Ohio 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](#).⁷

4.1% of Ohioans are Latino or Asian.

- **The Latino share of Ohio's population** grew from 1.3% in [1990](#),⁸ to 1.9% in [2000](#),⁹ to 2.6% (or 298,634 people) in [2008](#).¹⁰ **The Asian share of the population** grew from 0.8% in [1990](#),¹¹ to 1.2% in [2000](#),¹² to 1.5% (or 172,289 people) in [2008](#),¹³ according to the U.S. Census Bureau.
- **Latinos comprised 1.3% (or 74,000) of Ohio voters** in the 2008 elections, and **Asians just under 1% (or 51,000)**, according to the [U.S. Census Bureau](#).¹⁴ Although the numbers of Latino and Asian voters were relatively small, they were equivalent to nearly half of the narrow margin of victory ([258,897 votes](#)) by which Barack Obama won this key battleground state.¹⁵

- In Ohio, **seven-in-ten (or 70% of) children in immigrant families were U.S. citizens** in [2007](#),¹⁶ according to the Center for Social and Demographic Analysis at the University of Albany.

Franklin County is home to roughly a quarter of Ohio's foreign-born population—especially the Somali refugee community—and they contribute to the state's political and economic landscape.

- **The share of Franklin County's foreign-born population** increased from 3.4% in [1990](#),¹⁷ to 6.0% in [2000](#),¹⁸ to 8.6% (or 96,589 people) in [2007](#),¹⁹ according to the U.S. Census Bureau.
- **Columbus, Ohio, ranked 2nd in percent of new foreign-born residents** (those who came to the United States since 2000) compared to other major metropolitan areas, according to a study by [Community Research Partners](#).²⁰
- The [Somali Community Access Network](#) estimates that Central Ohio is home to **more than 45,000 Somali Americans**—making it the second largest Somali population in the United States; second only to Minneapolis, Minnesota.²¹
- Somalis own **more than 400 small businesses** in Columbus, Ohio, which contribute revenue to the local economy.²²
- Somali community leaders estimate that as **much as 30% of the Somali population** in Central Ohio (roughly 14,000 people) has now gained U.S. citizenship—and they vote, according to [news reports](#).²³

Latino and Asian entrepreneurs and consumers add tens of billions of dollars and tens of thousands of jobs to Ohio's economy.

- **The 2009 purchasing power of Ohio's Latinos totaled \$6.8 billion**—an increase of 334.7% since 1990. **Asian buying power totaled \$6.9 billion**—an increase of 270.4% since 1990, according to the [Selig Center for Economic Growth](#) at the University of Georgia.²⁴
- Ohio's 13,740 **Asian-owned businesses** had sales and receipts of \$5.1 billion and employed 42,955 people in 2002, the last year for which data is available.²⁵ The state's 7,109 **Latino-owned businesses** had sales and receipts of \$1.3 billion and employed 11,348 people in 2002, according to the U.S. Census Bureau's Survey of Business Owners.²⁶

Immigrants are essential to Ohio's economy as workers.

- Immigrants comprised **4.2% of the state's workforce** in [2008](#) (or 253,096 workers), according to the U.S. Census Bureau.²⁷
- Unauthorized immigrants comprised **1.1% of the state's workforce** in [2008](#) (or 65,000 workers), according to a report by the Pew Hispanic Center.²⁸
- Immigrants accounted for **7% of total economic output** in the Cleveland metropolitan area and **5% of economic output** in the Cincinnati metropolitan area as of 2007, according to a study by the [Fiscal Policy Institute](#).²⁹ 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.”³⁰

- If all unauthorized immigrants were removed from Ohio, **the state would lose \$4.0 billion in economic activity, \$1.8 billion in gross state product, and approximately 25,019 jobs**, even accounting for adequate market adjustment time, according to a report by the [Perryman Group](#).³¹

Immigrants are integral to Ohio's economy as students.

- Ohio's 20,725 **foreign students contributed \$506.7 million** to the state's economy in tuition, fees, and living expenses for the 2008-2009 academic year, according to [NAFSA: Association of International Educators](#).³²

Immigrants in Ohio excel educationally.

- The number of immigrants in Ohio with a college degree **increased by 33.2% between 2000 and 2008**, according to [data](#) from the Migration Policy Institute.³³
- 40.1% of Ohio's foreign-born population age 25 and older **had a bachelor's or higher degree in 2008**, compared to 23.3% of native-born persons age 25 and older.³⁴
- In Ohio, **71.6% 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](#).³⁵

Endnotes

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

² Ibid.

³ 2008 American Community Survey (1-Year Estimates).

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ 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).

⁸ U.S. Census Bureau, [The Hispanic Population: 2000](#), May 2001.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ 2008 American Community Survey (1-Year Estimates).

¹¹ U.S. Census Bureau, [The Asian Population: 2000](#), February 2002.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ 2008 American Community Survey (1-Year Estimates).

¹⁴ 2008 Current Population Survey, [Table 4b: Reported Voting and Registration of the Voting-Age Population, by Sex, Race and Hispanic Origin, for States: November 2008](#).

¹⁵ U.S. Electoral College, [2008 Presidential Election: Popular Vote Totals](#).

¹⁶ Center for Social and Demographic Analysis, [Children in Immigrant Families in Ohio](#) (Albany, NY: University of Albany, SUNY, September 2009).

¹⁷ U.S. Census Bureau, [Franklin County Estimates](#), 1990.

¹⁸ U.S. Census Bureau, [Franklin County Estimates](#), 2000.

¹⁹ 2007 American Community Survey (1-Year Estimates).

²⁰ Community Research Partners, [Benchmarking Central Ohio 2009](#) (Columbus, OH: Community Research Partners, March 2009).

²¹ Jibril Hirsi, "[The Somali Community is a Promising Economic Powerhouse in Ohio Source](#)," *SomaliCAN Outreach Newsletter*, August 2009.

²² Ibid.

²³ Tom Bergerding, "[Columbus Somalis Gain U.S. Citizenship, Head For The Polls](#)," WOSU News, October 29, 2008.

²⁴ Jeffrey M. Humphreys, [The Multicultural Economy 2009](#) (Athens, GA: Selig Center for Economic Growth, University of Georgia, 2009).

²⁵ U.S. Census Bureau, [Asian-Owned Firms: 2002](#), August 2006.

²⁶ U.S. Census Bureau, [Hispanic-Owned Firms: 2002](#), August 2006.

²⁷ 2008 American Community Survey (1-Year Estimates).

²⁸ Jeffrey S. Passel and D’Vera Cohn, [*A Portrait of Unauthorized Immigrants in the United States*](#) (Washington, DC: Pew Hispanic Center, April 14, 2009).

²⁹ David Dyssegaard Kallick, [*Immigrants in the Economy: Contribution of Immigrant Workers to the Country’s 25 Largest Metropolitan Areas*](#) (New York, NY: Fiscal Policy Institute, December 2009), p. 11.

³⁰ Ibid., p. 1.

³¹ 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).

³² NAFSA: Association of International Educators, [*The Economic Benefits of International Education to the United States for the 2008-2009 Academic Year: A Statistical Analysis*](#) (Washington, DC: NAFSA: Association of International Educators, 2009).

³³ Migration Policy Institute Data Hub, [Ohio: Language & Education](#).

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ Ibid.