

July 2010

**NEW AMERICANS IN THE GARDEN STATE:
The Political and Economic Power of Immigrants, Latinos, and Asians in New Jersey**

Immigrants, Latinos, and Asians account for large and growing shares of the economy and electorate in New Jersey. Immigrants (the foreign-born) make up roughly 20% of the state's population, and half of them are naturalized U.S. citizens who are eligible to vote. "New Americans"—immigrants and the children of immigrants—account for 15.1% of all registered voters in the state. Moreover, Latinos and Asians (both foreign-born and native-born) wield roughly \$68 billion in consumer purchasing power, and the businesses they own had sales and receipts of \$25.7 billion and employed more than 125,000 people at last count. Immigrant workers contributed at least \$47 billion to the state economy in 2006. At a time of economic recession, New Jersey 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 New Jersey's population and electorate.

- **The foreign-born share** of New Jersey's population rose from 12.5% in [1990](#),¹ to 17.5% in [2000](#),² to 19.8% in [2008](#),³ according to the U.S. Census Bureau. New Jersey was home to 1,718,034 immigrants in [2008](#),⁴ which is more than the population of [Phoenix, Arizona](#).⁵
- **49.9% of immigrants (or 857,649 people) in New Jersey were naturalized U.S. citizens** in [2008](#)⁶—meaning that they are eligible to vote.
- **15.1% (or 526,565) of registered voters** in New Jersey 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

Nearly one-in-four New Jerseyans are Latino or Asian.

- **The Latino share of New Jersey's population** grew from 9.6% in [1990](#),⁸ to 13.3% in [2000](#),⁹ to 16.3% (or 1,415,274 people) in [2008](#).¹⁰ **The Asian share of the population** grew from 3.5% in [1990](#),¹¹ to 5.7% in [2000](#),¹² to 7.6% (or 659,882 people) in [2008](#),¹³ according to the U.S. Census Bureau.
- **Latinos comprised 9.3% (or 337,000) of New Jersey voters** in the 2008 elections, and **Asians 5.9% (or 215,000)**, according to the [U.S. Census Bureau](#). The number of Latino and Asian voters in New Jersey is equivalent to more than 90% of Barack Obama's margin of victory ([602,215 votes](#)) over John McCain.¹⁴

- In New Jersey, **nearly nine-in-ten (or 89% of) children in immigrant families were U.S. citizens** in [2007](#),¹⁵ 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 New Jersey's economy.

- **The 2009 purchasing power of New Jersey's Latinos totaled \$36.8 billion**—an increase of 307.2% since 1990. **Asian buying power totaled \$31.6 billion**—an increase of 459.5% since 1990, according to the [Selig Center for Economic Growth](#) at the University of Georgia.¹⁶
- New Jersey's 51,957 [Asian-owned businesses](#) had sales and receipts of \$18.5 billion and employed 85,171 people in 2002, the last year for which data is available.¹⁷ The state's 49,841 [Latino-owned businesses](#) had sales and receipts of \$7.2 billion and employed 40,422 people in 2002, according to the U.S. Census Bureau's Survey of Business Owners.¹⁸

Immigrants are integral to New Jersey's economy as workers.

- Immigrants comprised **25.0% of the state's workforce** in [2008](#) (or 1,168,770 workers), according to the U.S. Census Bureau.¹⁹
- **Immigrant workers contributed at least \$47 billion** to New Jersey's gross state product in 2006, according to a [study](#) at the Eagleton Institute of Politics at Rutgers University.²⁰
- **More than 40% of the state's scientists and engineers** with advanced degrees were foreign-born in 2006, according to the same [study](#).²¹
- Immigration to New Jersey **raised the wages of native-born workers without a high-school diploma by 3.0%** between 1990 and 2000, according to the same [study](#).²²
- Unauthorized immigrants comprised **9.2% of the state's workforce** (or 425,000 workers) in [2008](#), according to a report by the Pew Hispanic Center.²³
- If all unauthorized immigrants were removed from New Jersey, **the state would lose \$24.2 billion in economic activity, \$10.7 billion in gross state product, and approximately 103,898 jobs**, even accounting for adequate market adjustment time, according to a report by the [Perryman Group](#).²⁴

Immigrants are integral to New Jersey's economy as students.

- New Jersey's 14,785 **foreign students contributed \$435.7 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](#).²⁵

Naturalized citizens excel educationally.

- In New Jersey, **39.7% of foreign-born persons** who were naturalized U.S. citizens in [2008](#) had a bachelor's or higher degree, compared to 32.1% of noncitizens. At the same time, only 15.5% of naturalized citizens lacked a high-school diploma, compared to 28.0% of noncitizens.²⁶
- The number of immigrants in New Jersey with a college degree **increased by 43.8%** between 2000 and 2008, according to [data](#) from the Migration Policy Institute.²⁷
- **36.2% of New Jersey's foreign-born population** age 25 and older had a bachelor's or higher degree in [2008](#), compared to 33.8% of native-born persons age 25 and older.²⁸
- In New Jersey, **81.7% 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](#).²⁹

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 U.S. Electoral College, *2008 Presidential Election: Popular Vote Totals*.

¹⁵ Center for Social and Demographic Analysis, *Children in Immigrant Families in New Jersey* (Albany, NY: University of Albany, SUNY, September 2009).

¹⁶ Jeffrey M. Humphreys, *The Multicultural Economy 2009* (Athens, GA: Selig Center for Economic Growth, University of Georgia, 2009).

¹⁷ U.S. Census Bureau, *Hispanic-Owned Firms: 2002*, August 2006.

¹⁸ U.S. Census Bureau, *Asian-Owned Firms: 2002*, August 2006.

¹⁹ 2008 American Community Survey (1-Year Estimates).

²⁰ Ira N. Gang and Anne Morrison Piehl, *Destination, New Jersey: How Immigrants Benefit the State Economy* (New Brunswick, NJ: Eagleton Institute of Politics, Rutgers University, December 2008), p. 17.

²¹ Ibid, p. 11.

²² Ibid, p. 16.

²³ 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.

²⁴ 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.

²⁵ 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).

²⁶ Migration Policy Institute Data Hub, *New Jersey: Language & Education*.

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Ibid.