

July 2010

**NEW AMERICANS IN THE KEYSTONE STATE:
The Political and Economic Power of Immigrants, Latinos, and Asians in Pennsylvania**

Immigrants, Latinos, and Asians account for large and growing shares of the economy and population in the electoral swing state of Pennsylvania. Immigrants (the foreign-born) make up 5.3% of the state's population, and roughly half of them are naturalized U.S. citizens eligible to vote. "New Americans"—immigrants and the children of immigrants—account for 5.2% of all registered voters in the state. Latinos and Asians (both foreign-born and native-born) account for more than 7% of all Pennsylvanians and wield \$24.2 billion in consumer purchasing power. At last count, businesses owned by Latinos and Asians had sales and receipts of \$8.2 billion and employed nearly 53,000 people. At a time of economic recession, Pennsylvania 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 Pennsylvania's population and electorate.

- **The foreign-born share** of Pennsylvania's population rose from 3.1% in [1990](#),¹ to 4.1% in [2000](#),² to 5.3% in [2008](#),³ according to the U.S. Census Bureau. Pennsylvania was home to 660,426 immigrants in [2008](#),⁴ which is roughly equal to the total population of [Memphis, Tennessee](#).⁵
- **48.8% of immigrants (or 322,607 people) in Pennsylvania were naturalized U.S. citizens in [2008](#)**⁶—meaning that they are eligible to vote.
- **5.2% (or 311,525) of all registered voters** in Pennsylvania were "New Americans"—immigrants or the children of immigrants—according to an analysis of 2006 Census Bureau data by [Rob Paral & Associates](#).⁷

Nearly 1 in 14 Pennsylvanians are Latino or Asian.

- The **Latino share of Pennsylvania's population** grew from 2.0% in [1990](#),⁸ to 3.2% in [2000](#),⁹ to 4.8% (or 597,517 people) in [2008](#).¹⁰ The **Asian share of the population** grew from 1.1% in [1990](#),¹¹ to 1.8% in [2000](#),¹² to 2.4% (or 298,759 people) in [2008](#),¹³ according to the U.S. Census Bureau.
- **Latinos comprised 2.8% (or 161,000) of Pennsylvania voters** in the 2008 elections, and **Asians about one-half of one percent (or 31,000)**, according to the [U.S. Census Bureau](#).¹⁴ Although the numbers of Latino and Asian voters were relatively small, they were equivalent to nearly one-third of the margin of victory ([624,551 votes](#)) by which Barack Obama defeated John McCain.¹⁵

- In Pennsylvania, **more than four-in-five (85% 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.

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

- The **2009 purchasing power of Pennsylvania's Latinos totaled \$12.7 billion**—an increase of 491.2% since 1990. **Asian buying power also totaled \$11.5 billion**—an increase of 398.9% since 1990, according to the [Selig Center for Economic Growth](#) at the University of Georgia.¹⁷
- Pennsylvania's 22,631 [Asian-owned businesses](#) had sales and receipts of \$6.5 billion and employed 42,743 people in 2002, the last year for which data is available.¹⁸ The state's 11,023 [Latino-owned businesses](#) had sales and receipts of \$1.7 billion and employed 10,051 people in 2002, according to the U.S. Census Bureau's Survey of Business Owners.¹⁹

Immigrants are essential to Pennsylvania's economy as workers.

- Immigrants comprised **6.3% of the state's workforce** in [2008](#) (or 407,726 workers), according to the U.S. Census Bureau.²⁰
- Immigrants accounted for **nearly three-quarters of labor-force growth in Philadelphia** between 2000 and 2006, according to a report by the [Brookings Institution](#).²¹
- Immigrants accounted for **10% of total economic output** in the Philadelphia metropolitan area and **4% of economic output** in the Pittsburgh metropolitan area as of 2007, according to a study by the [Fiscal Policy Institute](#).²² 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."²³
- Unauthorized immigrants comprised **1.5% of the state's workforce** in [2008](#) (or 100,000 workers), according to a report by the Pew Hispanic Center.²⁴
- If all unauthorized immigrants were removed from Pennsylvania, **the state would lose \$5.3 billion in economic activity, \$2.3 billion in gross state product, and approximately 27,718 jobs**, even accounting for adequate market adjustment time, according to a report by the [Perryman Group](#).²⁵

Immigrants are integral to Pennsylvania's economy as students.

- Pennsylvania's 27,529 **foreign students contributed \$820.3 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](#).²⁶

Immigrants in Pennsylvania Excel Educationally.

- The number of immigrants in Pennsylvania with a college degree **increased by 47.2%** between 2000 and 2008, according to [data](#) from the Migration Policy Institute.²⁷

- 37.5% of Pennsylvania’s foreign-born population age 25 and older **had at least a bachelor’s degree** in [2008](#), compared to 25.5% of native-born persons age 25 and older.²⁸
- In Pennsylvania, **75.2% 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 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 Pennsylvania](#) (Albany, NY: University of Albany, SUNY, September 2009).

¹⁷ Jeffrey M. Humphreys, [The Multicultural Economy 2009](#) (Athens, GA: Selig Center for Economic Growth, University of Georgia, 2009).

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

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

²⁰ 2008 American Community Survey (1-Year Estimates).

²¹ Audrey Singer, et al., [Recent Immigration to Philadelphia: Regional Change in a Re-Emerging Gateway](#) (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution, November 2008).

²² 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.

²³ Ibid., p. 1.

²⁴ Jeffrey S. Passel and D’Vera Cohn, [A Portrait of Unauthorized Immigrants in the United States](#) (Washington, DC: Pew Hispanic Center, April 14, 2009).

²⁵ 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).

²⁶ 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).

²⁷ Migration Policy Institute Data Hub, [Pennsylvania: Language & Education](#).

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Ibid.