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## **NEW AMERICANS IN THE SUNSHINE STATE: The Political and Economic Power of Immigrants, Latinos, and Asians in Florida**

There are few states where the growing political and economic clout of immigrants, children of immigrants, and Latinos is as apparent as Florida. Immigrants (the foreign-born) account for nearly one-in-five Floridians, and close to half of them are U.S. citizens eligible to vote. Latinos comprised roughly one-in-seven of the state's voters in the 2008 elections, while immigrants and their children were one-in-seven of the state's registered voters as of 2006. Immigrants not only contribute to the state's economy as workers, but also account for billions of dollars in tax revenue and consumer purchasing power. Moreover, Latinos and Asians (both foreign-born and native-born) wield \$116.7 billion in consumer purchasing power, and the businesses they own had sales and receipts of \$52.1 billion and employed more than 300,000 people at last count. At a time of economic recession, Florida would be ill-advised to alienate a significant component of its tax base and business community.

*Immigrants and their children are a large and growing share of Florida's electorate.*

- **The foreign-born** share of Florida's population rose from 12.9% in [1990](#),<sup>1</sup> to 16.7% in [2000](#),<sup>2</sup> to 18.5% in [2008](#),<sup>3</sup> according to the U.S. Census Bureau. Florida was home to 3,391,511 immigrants in [2008](#),<sup>4</sup> which is nearly the total population of [Los Angeles, California](#).<sup>5</sup>
- **47.1% of immigrants (or 1,598,880 people) in Florida were naturalized U.S. citizens in 2008**<sup>6</sup> (up from 42.9% in [1990](#)<sup>7</sup>)—meaning that they are eligible to vote.
- **14% (or 1,099,736) of registered voters** in Florida 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](#).<sup>8</sup>

*1-in-5 Floridians are Latino—and they vote.*

- The **Latino share of Florida's population** grew from 12.2% in [1990](#),<sup>9</sup> to 16.8% in [2000](#),<sup>10</sup> to 21.0% (or 3,848,951 people) in [2008](#).<sup>11</sup> The **Asian share of the population** grew from 1.2% in [1990](#),<sup>12</sup> to 1.7% in [2000](#),<sup>13</sup> to 2.3% (or 421,552 people) in [2008](#),<sup>14</sup> according to the U.S. Census Bureau.
- **Latinos accounted for 15.4%** (or 1,227,000) of Florida voters in the 2008 elections, and **Asians 1.1%** (or 84,000), according to the [U.S. Census Bureau](#).<sup>15</sup> The number of Latino and Asian voters far exceeded the margin of victory ([236,450 votes](#)) by which Barack Obama defeated John McCain in Florida.<sup>16</sup>

- In Florida, **more than four-in-five (or 84% of) children in immigrant families were U.S. citizens** in [2007](#),<sup>17</sup> according to the Center for Social and Demographic Analysis at the University of Albany.

***Immigrant workers and taxpayers are integral to Florida’s economy.***

- Florida’s immigrant workers contribute an estimated \$20 billion to the state in taxes each year, according to a 2007 study by [Florida International University](#):<sup>18</sup>
  - \$10.5 billion in federal taxes
  - \$4.5 billion in state and local taxes
  - \$1.3 billion in property taxes
  - \$3.2 billion in sales taxes.
- Immigrants comprised **23.2% of the state’s workforce** in [2008](#) (or 2,121,988 workers), according to the U.S. Census Bureau.<sup>19</sup>
- Unauthorized immigrants comprised **8.2% of the state’s workforce** (or 750,000 workers) in [2008](#), according to a report by the Pew Hispanic Center.<sup>20</sup>
- Immigrants accounted for **38% of total economic output in the Miami metropolitan area** and **13% of total economic output in the Tampa metropolitan area** as of 2007, according to a study by the [Fiscal Policy Institute](#).<sup>21</sup> 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.”<sup>22</sup>
- If all unauthorized immigrants were removed from Florida, **the state would lose \$43.9 billion in economic activity, \$19.5 billion in gross state product, and approximately 262,436 jobs**, even accounting for adequate market adjustment time, according to a report by the [Perryman Group](#).<sup>23</sup>

***Latino and Asian consumers and business owners are integral to Florida’s economy.***

- **The 2009 purchasing power of Latinos in Florida totaled \$101.2 billion**—an increase of 408.9% since 1990. **Asian buying power totaled \$15.5 billion**—an increase of 552.5% since 1990, according to the [Selig Center for Economic Growth](#) at the University of Georgia.<sup>24</sup>
- Florida’s 266,688 **Latino-owned businesses** had sales and receipts of \$40.9 billion and employed 222,516 people in 2002,<sup>25</sup> the last year for which data is available. The state’s 41,258 **Asian-owned businesses** had sales and receipts of \$11.2 billion and employed 91,422 people in 2002,<sup>26</sup> according to the U.S. Census Bureau’s Survey of Business Owners.

***Immigrants are integral to Florida’s economy as students.***

- Florida’s 30,386 **foreign students contributed \$806.6 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](#).<sup>27</sup>

### *Naturalized citizens excel educationally.*

- In Florida, **27.9% of foreign-born persons** who were naturalized U.S. citizens in [2008](#) had a bachelor's or higher degree, compared to 21.9% of noncitizens. At the same time, only 19.9% of naturalized citizens lacked a high-school diploma, compared to 30.2% of noncitizens.<sup>28</sup>
- The number of immigrants in Florida with a college degree **increased by 62.9%** between 2000 and 2008, according to [data](#) from the Migration Policy Institute.<sup>29</sup>
- In Florida, **79.9% 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](#).<sup>30</sup>

### **Endnotes**

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

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> 2008 American Community Survey (1-Year Estimates).

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

<sup>7</sup> U.S. Census Bureau, [The Foreign-Born Population: 2000](#), December 2003

<sup>8</sup> 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).

<sup>9</sup> U.S. Census Bureau, [The Hispanic Population: 2000](#), May 2001.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

<sup>11</sup> 2008 American Community Survey (1-Year Estimates).

<sup>12</sup> U.S. Census Bureau, [The Asian Population: 2000](#), February 2002.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

<sup>14</sup> 2008 American Community Survey (1-Year Estimates).

<sup>15</sup> 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](#).

<sup>16</sup> U.S. Electoral College, [2008 Presidential Election: Popular Vote Totals](#).

<sup>17</sup> Center for Social and Demographic Analysis, [Children in Immigrant Families in Florida](#) (Albany, NY: University of Albany, SUNY, September 2009).

<sup>18</sup> Emily Eisenhauer, et al., [Immigrants in Florida: Characteristics and Contributions](#) (Miami, FL: Research Institute for Social and Economic Policy of the Center for Labor Research and Studies, Florida International University: May 21, 2007)

<sup>19</sup> 2008 American Community Survey (1-Year Estimates).

<sup>20</sup> Jeffrey S. Passel and D’Vera Cohn, [A Portrait of Unauthorized Immigrants in the United States](#) (Washington, DC: The Pew Charitable Trusts, April 14, 2009), p. 30.

<sup>21</sup> 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.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid., p. 1.

<sup>23</sup> 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).

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

<sup>25</sup> U.S. Census Bureau, [Hispanic-Owned Firms: 2002](#), August 2006.

<sup>26</sup> U.S. Census Bureau, [Asian-Owned Firms: 2002](#), August 2006.

<sup>27</sup> 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).

<sup>28</sup> Migration Policy Institute Data Hub, [Florida: Language & Education](#).

<sup>29</sup> Ibid.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid.