

April 2013

**NEW AMERICANS IN KENTUCKY:  
The Political and Economic Power of Immigrants, Latinos, and Asians  
in the Bluegrass State**

Immigrants, Latinos, and Asians account for growing shares of Kentucky's economy and population. Immigrants (the foreign-born) make up 3.2% of the state's population, and more than one-third of them are naturalized U.S. citizens who are eligible to vote. "New Americans"—immigrants and the children of immigrants—account for 1.8% of registered voters in the state. Immigrants are not only important 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 \$5.1 billion in consumer purchasing power, and the businesses they own had sales and receipts of over \$3 billion and employed more than 23,000 people at last count. At a time when the economy is still recovering, Kentucky can ill-afford to alienate a significant component of its tax base and business community.

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

- **The foreign-born share** of Kentucky's population rose from 0.9% in [1990](#),<sup>1</sup> to 2.0% in [2000](#),<sup>2</sup> to 3.2% in [2011](#),<sup>3</sup> according to the U.S. Census Bureau. Kentucky was home to 140,433 immigrants in [2011](#),<sup>4</sup> which is more than the total population of [Springfield, Illinois](#).<sup>5</sup>
- **35.6% of immigrants (or 49,994 people) in Kentucky were naturalized U.S. citizens in [2011](#)**<sup>6</sup>—meaning that they are eligible to vote.
- Unauthorized immigrants comprised roughly **1.8% of the state's population** (or 80,000 people) in [2010](#), according to a report by the Pew Hispanic Center.<sup>7</sup>
- **1.8% (or 40,655) of registered voters** in Kentucky 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 2008 Census Bureau data by [Rob Paral & Associates](#).<sup>8</sup>

*Latinos and Asians make up 4.1% of Kentucky's population.*

- **The Latino share of Kentucky's population** grew from 0.6% in [1990](#),<sup>9</sup> to 1.5% in [2000](#),<sup>10</sup> to 3.0% (or 131,508 people) in [2011](#).<sup>11</sup> **The Asian share of the population** grew from 0.5% in [1990](#),<sup>12</sup> to 0.7% in [2000](#),<sup>13</sup> to 1.2% (or 50,424 people) in [2011](#),<sup>14</sup> according to the U.S. Census Bureau.
- In Kentucky, **83.7% of children with immigrant parents were U.S. citizens** in [2009](#), according to data from the Urban Institute.<sup>15</sup>

- In [2009](#), **81.6% of children in Asian families** in Kentucky were U.S. citizens, as were **89.3% of children in Latino families**.<sup>16</sup>

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

- **The 2012 purchasing power of Latinos in Kentucky totaled \$2.6 billion**—an increase of 1,033.3% since 1990. **Asian buying power totaled \$2.5 billion**—an increase of 750.7% since 1990, according to the [Selig Center for Economic Growth](#) at the University of Georgia.<sup>17</sup>
- Kentucky's 5,559 [Asian-owned](#) businesses had sales and receipts of **\$2.1 billion and employed 16,941 people** in 2007, the last year for which data is available.<sup>18</sup> The state's 3,663 [Latino-owned](#) businesses had sales and receipts of **\$906.9 million and employed 6,705 people** in 2007, according to the U.S. Census Bureau's Survey of Business Owners.<sup>19</sup>

*Immigrants contribute to Kentucky's economy as workers and taxpayers.*

- Immigrants comprised **4.2% of the state's workforce** in [2011](#) (or 87,404 workers), according to the U.S. Census Bureau.<sup>20</sup>
- Immigrants contributed more than **\$30 million in state sales and excise taxes** to Kentucky in [2000](#), according a 2002 report by the Legislative Research Commission.<sup>21</sup>

*Unauthorized immigrants contribute to Kentucky's economy as workers, consumers, and taxpayers.*

- Unauthorized immigrants comprised roughly **2.6% of the state's workforce** (or 55,000 workers) in [2010](#), according to a report by the Pew Hispanic Center.<sup>22</sup>
- If all unauthorized immigrants were removed from Kentucky, **the state would lose \$1.7 billion in economic activity, \$756.8 million in gross state product, and approximately 12,059 jobs**, even accounting for adequate market adjustment time, according to a report by the [Perryman Group](#).<sup>23</sup>
- Unauthorized immigrants in Kentucky paid **\$85.1 million** in state and local taxes in [2010](#), according to data from the Institute for Taxation and Economic Policy,<sup>24</sup> which includes:
  - \$29.5 million in state income taxes.
  - \$5.7 million in property taxes.
  - \$49.9 million in sales taxes.

*Immigrants contribute to Kentucky's economy as students.*

- Kentucky's 5,787 **foreign students contributed \$137.1 million** to the state's economy in tuition, fees, and living expenses for the 2011-2012 academic year, according to [NAFSA: Association of International Educators](#).<sup>25</sup>

### *Naturalized citizens excel educationally.*

- In Kentucky, **38% of foreign-born persons** who were naturalized U.S. citizens in [2011](#) **had a bachelor's or higher degree**, compared to 29.1% of noncitizens. At the same time, only 18.8% of naturalized citizens lacked a high-school diploma, compared to 31.2% of noncitizens.<sup>26</sup>
- The number of immigrants in Kentucky with a college degree **increased by 79.9%** between 2000 and 2011, according to [data](#) from the Migration Policy Institute.<sup>27</sup>
- In Kentucky, **80.6% of children with immigrant parents** were considered “English proficient” as of [2009](#), according to data from the Urban Institute.<sup>28</sup>
- The English proficiency rate among **Asian children in Kentucky was 85.3%**, while for **Latino children it was 82.4%**, as of [2009](#).<sup>29</sup>

### Endnotes

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

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> 2011 American Community Survey (1-Year Estimates).

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

<sup>7</sup> Jeffrey S. Passel and D’Vera Cohn, [Unauthorized Immigrant Population: National and State Trends, 2010](#) (Washington, DC: Pew Hispanic Center, February 1, 2011), p. 24.

<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 2010).

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

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

<sup>11</sup> 2011 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> 2011 American Community Survey (1-Year Estimates).

<sup>15</sup> [The Urban Institute](#), data from the Integrated Public Use Microdata Series datasets drawn from the 2005 - 2009 American Community Survey.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

<sup>17</sup> Jeffrey M. Humphreys, [The Multicultural Economy 2012](#) (Athens, GA: Selig Center for Economic Growth, University of Georgia, 2010).

<sup>18</sup> U.S. Census Bureau, [Estimates of Business Ownership by Gender, Ethnicity, Race, and Veteran Status: 2007](#), June, 2011.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

<sup>20</sup> 2011 American Community Survey (1-Year Estimates).

<sup>21</sup> Lauren Anderson, et al., [Immigration in Kentucky: A Preliminary Description](#), Research Report No. 305 (Frankfurt, KY: Legislative Research Commission, March 2002).

<sup>22</sup> Jeffrey S. Passel and D’Vera Cohn, [Unauthorized Immigrant Population: National and State Trends, 2010](#) (Washington, DC: Pew Hispanic Center, February 1, 2011), p. 24.

<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), p. 69.

<sup>24</sup> The Immigration Policy Center, [Unauthorized Immigrants Pay Taxes, Too](#) (Washington, DC: April 2011).

<sup>25</sup> NAFSA: Association of International Educators, [The Economic Benefits of International Students to the U.S. Economy: Academic Year 2011-2012](#) (Washington, DC: NAFSA: Association of International Educators, 2012).

<sup>26</sup> Migration Policy Institute Data Hub, [Kentucky: Language & Education](#).

<sup>27</sup> Ibid.

<sup>28</sup> [The Urban Institute](#), data from the Integrated Public Use Microdata Series datasets drawn from the 2005 - 2009 American Community Survey.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid.