



# IMMIGRATION POLICY CENTER

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## **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 make up 5.4% 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 account for nearly 7% of all Pennsylvanians and wield \$22.6 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.

*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](#),<sup>1</sup> to 4.1% in [2000](#),<sup>2</sup> to 5.4% in [2007](#),<sup>3</sup> according to the U.S. Census Bureau. Pennsylvania was home to 665,176 immigrants in [2007](#),<sup>4</sup> which is roughly equal to the total population of [Memphis, TN](#).<sup>5</sup>
- **50.8% of immigrants (or 338,238 people) in Pennsylvania were naturalized U.S. citizens in [2007](#)**<sup>6</sup>—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](#).<sup>7</sup>

*Nearly 7% of Pennsylvanians are Latino or Asian.*

- The **Latino share of Pennsylvania's population** grew from 2.0% in [1990](#),<sup>8</sup> to 3.2% in [2000](#),<sup>9</sup> to 4.5% (or 559,476 people) in [2007](#).<sup>10</sup> The Asian share of the population grew from 1.1% in [1990](#),<sup>11</sup> to 1.8% in [2000](#),<sup>12</sup> to 2.4% (or 298,387 people) in [2007](#),<sup>13</sup> 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](#). 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.

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

- The 2008 purchasing power of Pennsylvania's Latinos totaled \$11.3 billion—an increase of 429.5% since 1990. Asian buying power also totaled \$11.3 billion—an increase of 391.3% since 1990, according to the [Selig Center for Economic Growth](#) at the University of Georgia.<sup>14</sup>
- 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.<sup>15</sup> 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.<sup>16</sup>

***Immigrants are essential to Pennsylvania's economy as workers.***

- Immigrants comprised **6.3% of the state's workforce** in [2007](#) (or 396,707 workers), according to the U.S. Census Bureau.<sup>17</sup>
- Immigrants accounted for **nearly three-quarters of labor-force growth in Philadelphia** between 2000 and 2006, according to a report by the [Brookings Institution](#).<sup>18</sup>
- 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.<sup>19</sup>
- If all unauthorized immigrants were removed from Pennsylvania, **the state would lose \$5.3 billion in expenditures, \$2.3 billion in economic output, and approximately 27,718 jobs**, even accounting for adequate market adjustment time, according to a report by the [Perryman Group](#).<sup>20</sup>

***Immigrants in Pennsylvania Excel Educationally.***

- The number of immigrants in Pennsylvania with a college degree **increased by 43.5%** between 2000 and 2007, according to [data](#) from the Migration Policy Institute.<sup>21</sup>
- 36.7% of Pennsylvania's foreign-born population age 25 and older **had at least a bachelor's degree** in [2007](#), compared to 25.1% of native-born persons age 25 and older.<sup>22</sup>
- In Pennsylvania, **75.1% 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 [2007](#).<sup>23</sup>

**Endnotes**

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

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> 2007 American Community Survey (1-Year Estimates).

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

<sup>7</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>8</sup> U.S. Census Bureau, [The Hispanic Population: 2000](#), May 2001.

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- <sup>9</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>10</sup> 2007 American Community Survey (1-Year Estimates).
- <sup>11</sup> U.S. Census Bureau, [The Asian Population: 2000](#), February 2002.
- <sup>12</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>13</sup> 2007 American Community Survey (1-Year Estimates).
- <sup>14</sup> Jeffrey M. Humphreys, [The Multicultural Economy 2008](#) (Athens, GA: Selig Center for Economic Growth, University of Georgia, 2008).
- <sup>15</sup> U.S. Census Bureau, [Asian-Owned Firms: 2002](#), August 2006.
- <sup>16</sup> U.S. Census Bureau, [Hispanic-Owned Firms: 2002](#), August 2006.
- <sup>17</sup> 2007 American Community Survey (1-Year Estimates).
- <sup>18</sup> Audrey Singer, et al., [Recent Immigration to Philadelphia: Regional Change in a Re-Emerging Gateway](#) (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution, November 2008).
- <sup>19</sup> Jeffrey S. Passel and D'Vera Cohn, [A Portrait of Unauthorized Immigrants in the United States](#) (Washington, DC: Pew Hispanic Center, April 14, 2009).
- <sup>20</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>21</sup> Migration Policy Institute Data Hub, [Pennsylvania: Language & Education 2007](#).
- <sup>22</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>23</sup> Ibid.