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NEW AMERICANS IN THE BAY STATE: The Political and Economic Power of Immigrants, Latinos, and Asians in Massachusetts

Immigrants, Latinos, and Asians account for growing shares of the economy and electorate in Massachusetts. Immigrants (the foreign-born) make up roughly one-in-seven Bay Staters, and nearly half of them are naturalized U.S. citizens who are eligible to vote. “New Americans”—immigrants and the children of immigrants—account for one-in-eight registered voters in the state. Immigrants are not only integral 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 \$25.1 billion in consumer purchasing power, and the businesses they own had sales and receipts of \$7.1 billion and employed more than 50,000 people at last count. At a time of economic recession, Massachusetts 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 Massachusetts’s population and electorate.

- **The foreign-born share** of Massachusetts’s population rose from 9.5% in [1990](#),¹ to 12.2% in [2000](#),² to 14.4% in [2008](#),³ according to the U.S. Census Bureau. Massachusetts was home to 937,200 immigrants in [2008](#),⁴ which is more than the total population of [San Francisco, California](#).⁵
- **49.0% of immigrants (or 459,123 people) in Massachusetts were naturalized U.S. citizens** in [2008](#)⁶—meaning that they are eligible to vote.
- **12.7% (or 403,915) of registered voters** in Massachusetts 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

Roughly 1 in 7 Bay Staters are Latino or Asian—and they vote.

- The **Latino share of Massachusetts’s population** grew from 4.8% in [1990](#),⁸ to 6.8% in [2000](#),⁹ to 8.6% (or 558,825 people) in [2008](#).¹⁰ The **Asian share of the population** grew from 2.4% in [1990](#),¹¹ to 3.8% in [2000](#),¹² to 5.0% (or 324,898 people) in [2008](#),¹³ according to the U.S. Census Bureau.
- **Latinos accounted for 2.5% (or 77,000) of Massachusetts voters** in the 2008 elections, and **Asians 2.5%** (76,000), according to the [U.S. Census Bureau](#).¹⁴
- In Massachusetts, **more than four in five (or 86% 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 tens of billions of dollars and tens of thousands of jobs to the Massachusetts economy.

- **The 2009 purchasing power of Asians in Massachusetts totaled \$12.7 billion**—an increase of 494.8% since 1990. **Latino buying power totaled \$12.4 billion**—an increase of 381.5% since 1990, according to the [Selig Center for Economic Growth](#) at the University of Georgia.¹⁶
- Massachusetts's 18,081 **Asian-owned businesses** had sales and receipts of \$5.0 billion and employed 37,193 people in 2002, the last year for which data is available.¹⁷ The state's 15,933 **Latino-owned businesses** had sales and receipts of \$2.1 billion and employed 15,319 people in 2002, according to the U.S. Census Bureau's Survey of Business Owners.¹⁸

Immigrants are integral to Massachusetts's economy as workers and taxpayers.

- Immigrants comprised **17.3% of the state's workforce** in [2008](#) (or 626,751 workers), according to the U.S. Census Bureau.¹⁹
- **Immigrants accounted for 16% of total economic output in the Boston metropolitan area** as of 2007, according to a study by the [Fiscal Policy Institute](#).²⁰ 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."²¹
- Immigrant-headed households in Massachusetts paid **\$1.2 billion in state income taxes** in [2005](#), according to a report by the Institute for Asian American Studies at the University of Massachusetts-Boston.²²
- Immigrant-headed households in Massachusetts paid **\$346 million in sales and excise taxes** in [2006](#) and nearly **\$1.1 billion in local property taxes** in [2007](#), according to the same study.²³
- Unauthorized immigrants comprised **4.3% of the state's workforce** (or 140,000 workers) in [2008](#), according to a report by the Pew Hispanic Center.²⁴
- If all unauthorized immigrants were removed from Massachusetts, **the state would lose \$12.0 billion in economic activity, \$5.3 billion in gross state product, and approximately 55,467 jobs**, even accounting for adequate market adjustment time, according to a report by the [Perryman Group](#).²⁵

Immigrants are integral to Massachusetts's economy as students.

- Massachusetts's 33,838 **foreign students contributed \$1.1 billion** to the state's economy in tuition, fees, and living expenses for the 2008-2009 academic year, according to the [NAFSA: Association of International Educators](#).²⁶

Immigrants excel educationally.

- The number of immigrants in Massachusetts with a college degree **increased by 44.4%** between 2000 and 2008, according to [data](#) from the Migration Policy Institute.²⁷

- In Massachusetts, **80.0% 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](#).²⁸

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 Massachusetts](#) (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 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.

²¹ Ibid., p. 1.

²² Alan Clayton-Mathews, John W. McCormack, and Paul Watanabe, Ph.D., [Massachusetts Immigrants by the Numbers: Demographic Characteristics and Economic Footprint](#) (Boston, MA: The Immigrant Learning Center, Inc., June 2009).

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ 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.

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), p. 69.

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, [Massachusetts: Language & Education](#).

²⁸ Ibid.