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## **NEW AMERICANS IN THE GREAT LAKES STATE: The Political and Economic Power of Immigrants, Latinos, and Asians in Michigan**

Immigrants, Latinos, Asians, and Arab Americans account for large and growing shares of the economy and the electorate in Michigan. Immigrants (the foreign-born) make up 5.8% of the state's population, and nearly half of them are naturalized U.S. citizens who are eligible to vote. "New Americans"—immigrants and the children of immigrants—account 5.2% of all 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 \$17.5 billion in consumer purchasing power, and the businesses they own had sales and receipts of \$8.3 billion and employed more than 60,000 people at last count. Michigan is also home to the largest proportion of Arab Americans in the country, who generate an estimated \$544 million in state tax revenue each year. At a time of economic recession, Michigan can ill-afford to alienate such an important component of its labor force, tax base, and business community.

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

- **The foreign-born share** of Michigan's population rose from 3.8% in [1990](#),<sup>1</sup> to 5.3% in [2000](#),<sup>2</sup> to 5.8% in [2008](#),<sup>3</sup> according to the U.S. Census Bureau. Michigan was home to 582,742 immigrants in [2008](#),<sup>4</sup> which is nearly the total population of [Boston, Massachusetts](#).<sup>5</sup>
- **49.3% of immigrants (or 287,481 people) in Michigan were naturalized U.S. citizens in [2008](#)**<sup>6</sup>—meaning that they are eligible to vote.
- **5.2% (or 273,323) of all registered voters** in Michigan are "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>7</sup>

*6.4% of Michiganians are Latino or Asian—and they vote.*

- **The Latino share of Michigan's population** grew from 2.2% in [1990](#),<sup>8</sup> to 3.3% in [2000](#),<sup>9</sup> to 4.1% (or 410,140 people) in [2008](#).<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 2.3% (or 230,079 people) in [2008](#),<sup>13</sup> according to the U.S. Census Bureau.
- **Latinos comprised 1.4% (or 70,000) of Michigan voters in the 2008 elections, and Asians 1.1% (or 53,000)**, according to the [U.S. Census Bureau](#).<sup>14</sup>

- In Michigan, **more than four in five (or 85% of) children in immigrant families were U.S. citizens** in [2007](#),<sup>15</sup> according to the Center for Social and Demographic Analysis at the University of Albany.

*Michigan has the highest proportion of Arab Americans in the nation, and they contribute to the state's economy.*

- **The share of Michigan's population reporting Arab ancestry** rose from 0.8% in [1990](#),<sup>16</sup> to 1.2% in [2000](#),<sup>17</sup> to 1.5% (or 151,966 people) in [2008](#),<sup>18</sup> according to the U.S. Census Bureau.
- **Dearborn, Michigan, has the largest proportion** of Arab Americans in the United States, representing nearly 30% of the city's population in [2000](#) (the last year for which data is available). By way of comparison, Arab Americans represented 0.9% of the population in New York and 0.7% in Los Angeles as of 2000.<sup>19</sup>
- Arab American employment accounted for **\$7.7 billion in total earnings** in the four counties of the Detroit metropolitan area in southeast Michigan, generating an estimated \$544 million in state tax revenue in 2005, according to the [Center for Urban Studies](#) at Wayne State University.<sup>20</sup>
- Arab American business and consumer spending **supported an estimated 141,541 jobs** in the four-county region in 2005, according to the same [study](#).<sup>21</sup>

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

- **The 2009 purchasing power of Michigan's Latinos totaled \$8.9 billion**—an increase of 310.3% since 1990. **Asian buying power totaled \$8.6 billion**—an increase of 361.6% since 1990, according to the [Selig Center for Economic Growth](#) at the University of Georgia.<sup>22</sup>
- Michigan's 15,337 **Asian-owned businesses** had sales and receipts of \$5.1 billion and employed 44,587 people in 2002,<sup>23</sup> the last year for which data is available. The state's 9,841 **Latino-owned businesses** had sales and receipts of \$3.2 billion and employed 15,930 people in 2002,<sup>24</sup> according to the U.S. Census Bureau's Survey of Business Owners.

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

- Immigrants comprised **6.7% of the state's workforce** in [2008](#) (or 338,621 workers), according to the U.S. Census Bureau.<sup>25</sup>
- **Immigrants accounted for 11% of total economic output in the Detroit metropolitan area** as of 2007, according to a study by the [Fiscal Policy Institute](#).<sup>26</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>27</sup>
- Unauthorized immigrants comprised **1.3% of the state's workforce** in [2008](#) (or 65,000 workers), according to a report by the Pew Hispanic Center.<sup>28</sup>

- If all unauthorized immigrants were removed from Michigan, **the state would lose \$3.8 billion in economic activity, \$1.7 billion in gross state product, and approximately 20,339 jobs**, even accounting for adequate market adjustment time, according to a report by the [Perryman Group](#).<sup>29</sup>

### *Immigrants are integral to Michigan's economy as students.*

- Michigan's 23,617 **foreign students contributed \$592.4 million** 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](#).<sup>30</sup>

### *Immigrants excel educationally.*

- In Michigan, **38.3% of foreign-born persons** who were naturalized U.S. citizens in [2008](#) **had a bachelor's or higher degree**, compared to 34.4% of noncitizens. At the same time, only 19.3% of naturalized citizens lacked a high-school diploma, compared to 30.5% of noncitizens.<sup>31</sup>
- The number of immigrants in Michigan with a college degree **increased by 26.9%** between 2000 and 2008, according to [data](#) from the Migration Policy Institute.<sup>32</sup>
- 36.5% of Michigan's foreign-born population age 25 and older **had a bachelor's or higher degree** in [2008](#), compared to 23.8% of native-born persons age 25 and older.<sup>33</sup>
- In Michigan, **77.2% 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](#).<sup>34</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> 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.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

<sup>10</sup> 2008 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> 2008 American Community Survey (1-Year Estimates).

<sup>14</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>15</sup> Center for Social and Demographic Analysis, [Children in Immigrant Families in Michigan](#) (Albany, NY: University of Albany, SUNY, September 2009).

<sup>16</sup> U.S. Census Bureau, [The Arab Population: 2000](#), December 2003.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

<sup>18</sup> 2008 American Community Survey (1-Year Estimates).

<sup>19</sup> U.S. Census Bureau, [The Arab Population: 2000](#), December 2003.

<sup>20</sup> Center for Urban Studies, [Arab American Economic Contribution Study](#) (Detroit, MI: Wayne State University: March 2007).

<sup>21</sup> Ibid.

<sup>22</sup> Jeffrey M. Humphreys, [The Multicultural Economy 2009](#) (Athens, GA: Selig Center for Economic Growth, University of Georgia, 2009).

<sup>23</sup> U.S. Census Bureau, [Asian-Owned Firms: 2002](#), August 2006.

<sup>24</sup> U.S. Census Bureau, [Hispanic-Owned Firms: 2002](#), August 2006.

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<sup>25</sup> 2007 American Community Survey (1-Year Estimates).

<sup>26</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>27</sup> Ibid., p. 1.

<sup>28</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>29</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>30</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>31</sup> Migration Policy Institute Data Hub, [\*Michigan: Language & Education\*](#).

<sup>32</sup> Ibid.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid.