



New Americans in New Jersey: The Political and Economic Power of Immigrants, Latinos, and Asians in the Garden State

Immigrants, Latinos, and Asians account for large and growing shares of the economy and electorate in New Jersey. Immigrants (the foreign-born) make up more than 1 in 5 Garden Staters, and half of them are naturalized U.S. citizens who are eligible to vote. “New Americans”—immigrants and the children of immigrants—account for 20.5% of all registered voters in the state. Moreover, Latinos and Asians (both foreign-born and native-born) wield \$92.3 billion in consumer purchasing power, and the businesses they own had sales and receipts of \$40.1 billion and employed more than 160,000 people at last count. Immigrant, Latino, and Asian workers, consumers, and entrepreneurs are integral to New Jersey’s economy and tax base—and they are an electoral force with which every politician must reckon.

Immigrants and their children are growing shares of New Jersey’s population and electorate.

- The foreign-born share of New Jersey’s population rose from 12.5% in [1990](#),¹ to 17.5% in [2000](#),² to 21.6% in [2013](#),³ according to the U.S. Census Bureau. New Jersey was home to 1.9 million immigrants in [2013](#),⁴ which is more than the population of the entire [state of Nebraska](#).⁵
- 53% of immigrants (or over 1 million people) in New Jersey were naturalized U.S. citizens in [2013](#)⁶—meaning that they are eligible to vote.
- Unauthorized immigrants comprised 5.8% of the state’s population (or 525,000 people) in [2012](#), according to a report by the Pew Hispanic Center.⁷
- 20.5% (or 888,411) of registered voters in New Jersey 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 2012 Census Bureau data by the [American Immigration Council](#).⁸

More than 1 in 4 New Jerseyans are Latino or Asian.

- The Latino share of New Jersey’s population grew from 9.6% in [1990](#),⁹ to 13.3% in [2000](#),¹⁰ to 18.9% (or 1,684,014 people) in [2013](#).¹¹ The Asian share of the population grew from 3.5% in [1990](#),¹² to 5.7% in [2000](#),¹³ to 9% (or 801,879 people) in [2013](#),¹⁴ according to the U.S. Census Bureau.

- Latinos comprised 10.8% (or 395,000) of New Jersey voters in the 2012 elections, and Asians 4.9% (or 179,000), according to the [U.S. Census Bureau](#).¹⁵
- In New Jersey, 87.5% of children with immigrant parents were U.S. citizens in [2009](#), according to data from the Urban Institute.¹⁶
- In [2009](#), 84.9% of children in Asian families in New Jersey were U.S. citizens, as were 91.5% of children in Latino families.¹⁷

Immigrant, Latino, and Asian entrepreneurs and consumers add billions of dollars and tens of thousands of jobs to New Jersey's economy.

- The 2014 purchasing power of New Jersey's Latinos totaled \$46 billion—an increase of 415% since 1990. Asian buying power totaled \$46.3 billion—an increase of 727% since 1990, according to the [Selig Center for Economic Growth](#) at the University of Georgia.¹⁸
- Immigration boosts housing values in communities. From 2000 to 2010, according to the [Americas Society/Council of the Americas](#), the value added by immigration to the price of the average home was \$3,730 in Bergen County; \$6,121 in Middlesex County; \$1,875 in Essex County; \$2,050 in Monmouth County; \$2,096 in Hudson County, \$2,509 in Union County, and \$1,896 in Camden County.¹⁹
- New Jersey's 67,755 [Asian-owned](#) businesses had sales and receipts of \$29.9 billion and employed 115,024 people in 2007, the last year for which data is available.²⁰ The state's 68,374 [Latino-owned](#) businesses had sales and receipts of \$10.2 billion and employed 48,059 people in 2007, according to the U.S. Census Bureau's Survey of Business Owners.²¹
- From 2006 to 2010, there were 101,251 new immigrant business owners in New Jersey, and they had total net business income of \$6.2 billion, which makes up 22.4% of all net business income in the state, according to Robert Fairlie of the University of California, Santa Cruz.²²
- In 2010, [28% of all business owners](#) in New Jersey were foreign-born, according to the Fiscal Policy Institute.²³ In 2013, [35.3% of business owners](#) in the New York-Northern New Jersey-Long Island metropolitan area were foreign-born, according to the Fiscal Policy Institute and Americas Society/Council of the Americas.²⁴ Furthermore, 49% of "Main Street" business owners—owners of businesses in the retail, accommodation and food services, and neighborhood services sectors—in the New York-Northern New Jersey metro area were foreign-born in 2013.²⁵

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

- Immigrants comprised 27.4% of the state's workforce in [2013](#) (or 1,282,490 workers), according to the U.S. Census Bureau.²⁶

- More than 40% of the state's scientists and engineers with advanced degrees were foreign-born in [2006](#), according to the same study.²⁷
- Latinos in New Jersey paid \$4.8 billion in federal taxes and \$2.7 billion in state/local taxes in 2013, according to the [Partnership for a New American Economy](#). In particular, foreign-born Latinos paid \$2.5 billion in federal taxes and \$1.5 billion in state/local taxes.²⁸
 - The federal tax contribution of New Jersey's Latino population included \$3.8 billion to Social Security and \$883 million to Medicare in 2013. Foreign-born Latinos contributed \$2.1 billion to Social Security and \$482 million to Medicare that year.²⁹
- Unauthorized immigrants comprised 8.2% of the state's workforce (or 400,000 workers) in [2012](#), according to a report by the Pew Hispanic Center.³⁰
- If all unauthorized immigrants were removed from New Jersey, the state would lose \$24.2 billion in economic activity, \$10.7 billion in gross state product, and approximately 103,898 jobs, even accounting for adequate market adjustment time, according to a report by the [Perryman Group](#).³¹

Unauthorized immigrants pay taxes.

- Unauthorized immigrants in New Jersey paid \$613.4 million in state and local taxes in [2012](#), which includes \$276 million in sales taxes, \$51.4 million in personal income taxes, and \$286 million in property taxes, according to data from the Institute on Taxation and Economic Policy.³²
- Were unauthorized immigrants in New Jersey to have lawful permanent residence, they would pay over \$701.5 million in state and local taxes, including \$303.7 million in sales taxes, \$83.3 million in personal income taxes, and \$315 million in property taxes.³³

Immigrants are integral to New Jersey's economy as students.

- New Jersey's 17,127 foreign students contributed \$531.4 million to the state's economy in tuition, fees, and living expenses for the 2013-2014 academic year, according to [NAFSA: Association of International Educators](#).³⁴
- Foreign students contribute to New Jersey's metropolitan areas. From 2008 to 2012, according to the [Brookings Institution](#), 101,586 foreign students paid \$2.6 billion in tuition and \$1.7 billion in living costs in the Chicago-Joliet-Naperville metropolitan area. In the Trenton-Ewing metro area, 2,320 foreign students paid \$78 million in tuition and \$38 million in living costs.³⁵
- Foreign students also contribute to innovation in New Jersey. In 2009, "non-resident aliens" comprised 49.9% of master's degrees and 49.7% of doctorate degrees in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) fields, according to the [Partnership for a New American Economy](#).³⁶

Naturalized citizens excel educationally.

- In New Jersey, 40.4% of foreign-born persons who were naturalized U.S. citizens in [2011](#) had a bachelor's or higher degree, compared to 29.6% of noncitizens. At the same time, only 15.4% of naturalized citizens lacked a high-school diploma, compared to 26.9% of noncitizens.³⁷
- The number of immigrants in New Jersey with a college degree increased by 57.5% between 2000 and 2011, according to [data](#) from the Migration Policy Institute.³⁸
- In New Jersey, 87.4% of children with immigrant parents were considered “English proficient” as of [2009](#), according to data from the Urban Institute.³⁹
- The English proficiency rate among Asian children in New Jersey was 88.2%, while for Latino children it was 85.8%, as of [2009](#).⁴⁰

Endnotes

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32. Institute on Taxation and Economic Policy, [*Undocumented Immigrants' State and Local Tax Contributions*](#) (Washington, DC: April 2015).
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