



# IMMIGRATION POLICY CENTER

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## **NEW AMERICANS IN THE PEACH STATE: The Political and Economic Power of Immigrants, Latinos, and Asians in Georgia**

Immigrants, Latinos, and Asians account for large and growing shares of the economy and population in the state of Georgia. Immigrants make up 9.1% of the state's population and roughly one-third of immigrants in Georgia are naturalized U.S. citizens who are eligible to vote. "New Americans"—immigrants and the children of immigrants—account for 3.7% of all registered voters in the state. Latinos and Asians wield approximately \$24 billion in consumer purchasing power. At last count, businesses owned by Latinos and Asians had sales and receipts of \$12.2 billion and employed nearly 75,000 people. At a time of economic recession, Georgia 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 Georgia's population and electorate.*

- **The foreign-born share** of Georgia's population rose from 2.7% in [1990](#),<sup>1</sup> to 7.1% in [2000](#),<sup>2</sup> to 9.1% in [2007](#),<sup>3</sup> according to the U.S. Census Bureau. Georgia was home to 868,413 immigrants in [2007](#),<sup>4</sup> which is more than the entire population of [San Francisco, California](#).<sup>5</sup>
- **32.6% of immigrants (or 283,201 people) in Georgia were naturalized U.S. citizens in [2007](#)**<sup>6</sup>—meaning that they are eligible to vote.
- **3.7% (or 146,139) of all registered voters** in Georgia 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](#).<sup>7</sup>

### *More than 10% of Georgians are Latino or Asian.*

- **The Latino share of Georgia's population** grew from 1.7% in [1990](#),<sup>8</sup> to 5.3% in [2000](#),<sup>9</sup> to 7.6% (or 725,401 people) in [2007](#).<sup>10</sup> **The Asian share of the population** grew from 1.1% in [1990](#),<sup>11</sup> to 2.1% in [2000](#),<sup>12</sup> to 2.8% (or 267,253 people) in [2007](#),<sup>13</sup> according to the U.S. Census Bureau.
- **Latinos comprised 3.1% (or 128,000) of Georgia voters in the 2008 elections**, according to the [U.S. Census Bureau](#).<sup>14</sup>

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

- **The 2008 purchasing power of Georgia's Latinos totaled \$15.1 billion**—an increase of 1037% since 1990. **Asian buying power totaled \$8.9 billion**—an increase of 698.8% since 1990, according to the [Selig Center for Economic Growth](#) at the University of Georgia.<sup>15</sup>

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- Georgia's 26,925 [Asian-owned businesses](#) had sales and receipts of \$8.0 billion and employed 54,556 people in 2002, the last year for which data is available.<sup>16</sup> The state's 18,310 [Latino-owned businesses](#) had sales and receipts of \$4.2 billion and employed 20,412 people in 2002, according to the U.S. Census Bureau's Survey of Business Owners.<sup>17</sup>

*Immigrants are integral to Georgia's economy as workers.*

- Immigrants comprised **11.9% of the state's workforce** in [2007](#) (or 572,366 workers), according to the U.S. Census Bureau.<sup>18</sup>
- Unauthorized immigrants comprised **6.3% of the state's workforce** (or 325,000 workers) in [2008](#), according to a report by the Pew Hispanic Center.<sup>19</sup>
- If all unauthorized immigrants were removed from Georgia, **the state would lose \$21.3 billion in expenditures, \$9.5 billion in economic output, and approximately 132,460 jobs**, even accounting for adequate market adjustment time, according to a report by the [Perryman Group](#).<sup>20</sup>

*Unauthorized immigrants contribute to the state's economy.*

- Undocumented immigrants in Georgia **contributed between \$215.6 million and \$252.5 million** in aggregated sales, income and property tax (using an income tax compliance rate of 50% and estimating the state's undocumented population to be between 228,000 and 250,000), according to a [2006 study](#) by the Georgia Budget and Policy Institute.<sup>21</sup>
- The average undocumented family in Georgia **contributed between \$2,340 and \$2,470** in state and local sales, income, and property tax, according to the [same study](#). An undocumented family that does not pay income taxes would have a **sales and property tax contribution of \$1,800 to \$1,860**.<sup>22</sup>

*Naturalized Citizens Excel Educationally.*

- In Georgia, **39.0% of foreign-born persons** who were naturalized U.S. citizens in [2007](#) **had a bachelor's or higher degree**, compared to 24.6% of noncitizens. At the same time, only 15.3% of naturalized citizens lacked a high-school diploma, compared to 38.2% of noncitizens.<sup>23</sup>
- The number of immigrants in Georgia with a college degree **increased by 73.9%** between 2000 and 2007, according to [data](#) from the Migration Policy Institute.<sup>24</sup>
- **29.9% of Georgia's foreign-born population** age 25 and older **had a bachelor's or higher degree** in [2007](#), compared to 26.7% of native-born persons age 25 and older.<sup>25</sup>
- In Georgia, **72.1% 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>26</sup>

**Endnotes**

<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.

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- <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> 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> 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> Jeffrey M. Humphreys, [\*The Multicultural Economy 2008\*](#) (Athens, GA: Selig Center for Economic Growth, University of Georgia, 2008).
- <sup>16</sup> U.S. Census Bureau, [\*Hispanic-Owned Firms: 2002\*](#), August 2006.
- <sup>17</sup> U.S. Census Bureau, [\*Asian-Owned Firms: 2002\*](#), August 2006.
- <sup>18</sup> 2007 American Community Survey (1-Year Estimates).
- <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> Sarah Beth Coffey, [\*Undocumented Immigrants in Georgia: Tax Contributions and Fiscal Concerns\*](#) (Atlanta, GA: Georgia Budget and Policy Institute, 2006)
- <sup>22</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>23</sup> Migration Policy Institute Data Hub, [Georgia: Language & Education.](#)
- <sup>24</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>25</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>26</sup> Ibid.