



## New Americans in Illinois: The Political and Economic Power of Immigrants, Latinos, and Asians in the Prairie State

Immigrants, Latinos, and Asians account for growing shares of the economy and electorate in Illinois. Nearly 1 in 7 Illinoisans are immigrants (foreign-born), and almost half of them are naturalized U.S. citizens who are eligible to vote. “New Americans”—immigrants and the children of immigrants—account for 12.2% of 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 \$77.5 billion in consumer purchasing power, and the businesses they own had sales and receipts of \$28.8 billion and employed more than 180,000 people at last count. Immigrant, Latino, and Asian workers, consumers, and entrepreneurs are integral to Illinois’ economy and tax base—and they are an electoral force with which every politician must reckon.

### 1 in 7 people in Illinois are immigrants.

- The foreign-born share of Illinois’ population rose from 8.3% in [1990](#),<sup>1</sup> to 12.3% in [2000](#),<sup>2</sup> to 14% in [2013](#),<sup>3</sup> according to the U.S. Census Bureau. Illinois was home to 1,807,468 immigrants in [2013](#),<sup>4</sup> which is more than the total population of [Philadelphia, Pennsylvania](#).<sup>5</sup>
- From 2000 to 2010, [over half](#) (53.8%) of the Chicago metro area’s population gain was attributable to immigration, according to the Chicago Council on Global Affairs.<sup>6</sup> Other metro areas in Illinois also saw their populations increase in part due to immigration: Bloomington (30.3% change due to immigration), Champaign (47.9% change), Kankakee (16.8% change), Peoria (21.1% change), and Rockford (27.2% change).<sup>7</sup>
- 47.2% of immigrants in Illinois (or 852,962 people) were naturalized U.S. citizens in [2013](#)—meaning that they are eligible to vote.<sup>8</sup>
- Unauthorized immigrants comprised roughly 3.7% of the state’s population (or 475,000 people) in [2012](#), according to a report by the Pew Hispanic Center.<sup>9</sup>
- 12.2% (or 784,042) of all registered voters in Illinois 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 2012 Census Bureau data by the [American Immigration Council](#).<sup>10</sup>

## **1 in 5 Illinoisans are Latino or Asian — and they vote.**

- The Latino share of Illinois' population grew from 7.9% in [1990](#),<sup>11</sup> to 12.3% in [2000](#),<sup>12</sup> to 16.4% (or 2,118,514 people) in [2013](#).<sup>13</sup> The Asian share of the population grew from 2.5% in [1990](#),<sup>14</sup> to 3.4% in [2000](#),<sup>15</sup> to 4.9% (or 635,385 people) in [2013](#),<sup>16</sup> according to the U.S. Census Bureau.
- Latinos accounted for 5.4% (or 295,000) of Illinois voters in the 2012 elections, and Asians 3.6% (198,000), according to the [U.S. Census Bureau](#).<sup>17</sup>
- In Illinois, 89.8% of children with immigrant parents were U.S. citizens in [2009](#), according to data from the Urban Institute.<sup>18</sup>
- In [2009](#), 89.2% of children in Asian families in Illinois were U.S. citizens, as were 92.8% of children in Latino families.<sup>19</sup>

## **Immigrant, Latino, and Asian entrepreneurs and consumers add tens of billions of dollars and tens of thousands of jobs to Illinois' economy.**

- The 2014 purchasing power of Illinois' Latinos totaled \$47.2 billion — an increase of 435% since 1990. Asian buying power totaled \$30.3 billion — an increase of 494% since 1990, according to the [Selig Center for Economic Growth](#) at the University of Georgia.<sup>20</sup>
- 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 \$2,573 in Cook County; \$3,296 in DuPage County; \$3,482 in Lake County; \$4,665 in Will County; and \$3,049 in Kane County.<sup>21</sup>
- Illinois' 56,567 [Latino-owned](#) businesses had sales and receipts of \$10.3 billion and employed 77,449 people in 2007,<sup>22</sup> the last year for which data is available. The state's 59,367 [Asian-owned](#) businesses had sales and receipts of \$18.5 billion and employed 102,991 people,<sup>23</sup> according to the U.S. Census Bureau's 2007 Survey of Business Owners.
- From 2006 to 2010, there were [99,810](#) new immigrant business owners in Illinois, and they had total net business income of \$5.4 billion, which makes up 16.5% of all net business income in the state, according to Robert Fairlie of the University of California, Santa Cruz.<sup>24</sup>
- In 2010, [21.8% of all business owners](#) in Illinois were foreign-born, according to the Fiscal Policy Institute.<sup>25</sup> In 2013, [27% of business owners](#) in the Chicago metropolitan area were foreign-born, according to the Fiscal Policy Institute and Americas Society/Council of the Americas.<sup>26</sup> Furthermore, 38% of "Main Street" business owners — owners of businesses in the retail, accommodation and food services, and neighborhood services sectors — in the Chicago metro area were foreign-born in 2013.<sup>27</sup>

## **Immigrants are essential to the Illinois economy as workers and taxpayers.**

- Immigrants comprised 17.6% of the state’s workforce in [2013](#) (or 1,182,201 people), according to the U.S. Census Bureau.<sup>28</sup>
- Immigrants accounted for 18% of total economic output in the Chicago metropolitan area as of 2007, according to a study by the [Fiscal Policy Institute](#).<sup>29</sup>
- Immigrants are a large part of Illinois’ [advancing job sectors](#), representing 27.7% of all net job creation in the “health diagnosing” sector from 2000 to 2005.<sup>30</sup>
- In just the Chicago metro area, the consumer expenditures of unauthorized immigrants alone generated more than 31,000 jobs in the local economy and added \$5.5 billion annually to the gross regional product, according to a 2002 [survey](#) by the University of Illinois at Chicago.<sup>31</sup>
- Latinos in Illinois paid \$5.1 billion in federal taxes and \$3.2 billion in state/local taxes in 2013, according to the [Partnership for a New American Economy](#). In particular, foreign-born Latinos paid \$2.8 billion in federal taxes and \$1.8 billion in state/local taxes.<sup>32</sup>
  - The federal tax contribution of Illinois’ Latino population included \$3.9 billion to Social Security and \$907 million to Medicare in 2013. Foreign-born Latinos contributed \$2.2 billion to Social Security and \$507 million to Medicare that year.<sup>33</sup>
- Unauthorized immigrants comprised roughly 5.2% of the state’s workforce (or 350,000 workers) in [2012](#), according to a report by the Pew Hispanic Center.<sup>34</sup>
- If all unauthorized immigrants were removed from Illinois, the state would lose \$25.6 billion in economic activity, \$11.4 billion in gross state product, and approximately 119,214 jobs, even accounting for adequate market adjustment time, according to a report by the [Perryman Group](#).<sup>35</sup>

## **Unauthorized immigrants pay taxes.**

- Unauthorized immigrants in Illinois paid \$793.7 million in state and local taxes in [2012](#), including \$367.1 million in sales taxes, \$99.9 million in personal income taxes, and \$326.8 million in property taxes, according to data from the Institute on Taxation and Economic Policy.<sup>36</sup>
- Were unauthorized immigrants in Illinois to have lawful permanent residence, they would pay \$959 million in state and local taxes, including \$403.8 million in sales taxes, \$195.8 million in personal income taxes, and \$359.4 million in property taxes.<sup>37</sup>

## **Immigrants are integral to Illinois' economy as students.**

- Illinois' 42,527 foreign students contributed nearly \$1.3 billion to the state's economy in tuition, fees, and living expenses for the 2013-2014 academic year, according to [NAFSA: Association of International Educators](#).<sup>38</sup>
- Foreign students contribute to Illinois' metropolitan areas. From 2008 to 2012, according to the [Brookings Institution](#), 35,204 foreign students paid \$956 million in tuition and \$452 million in living costs in the Chicago-Joliet-Naperville metropolitan area. In the Champaign-Urbana metro area, 13,003 foreign students paid \$428 million in tuition and \$201 million in living costs.<sup>39</sup>
- Foreign students also contribute to innovation in Illinois. In 2009, "non-resident aliens" comprised 52.2% of master's degrees and 48.1% of doctorate degrees in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) fields, according to the [Partnership for a New American Economy](#).<sup>40</sup>

## **Naturalized citizens excel educationally.**

- In Illinois, 34.6% of foreign-born persons who were naturalized U.S. citizens in [2011](#) had a bachelor's or higher degree, compared to 22.5% of noncitizens. At the same time, only 21.1% of naturalized citizens lacked a high-school diploma, compared to 38.6% of noncitizens.<sup>41</sup>
- The number of immigrants in Illinois with a college degree increased by 46.7% between 2000 and 2011, according to [data](#) from the Migration Policy Institute.<sup>42</sup>
- 38% of all college graduates entering the Illinois labor force are foreign-born, according to a [2006 study](#) by Rob Paral and Associates.<sup>43</sup>
- In Illinois, 80.4% of children with immigrant parents were considered "English proficient" as of [2009](#), according to data from the Urban Institute.<sup>44</sup>
- The English proficiency rate among Asian children in Illinois was 87.9%, while for Latino children it was 80.6%, as of [2009](#).<sup>45</sup>

## Endnotes

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10. Walter A. Ewing and Guillermo Cantor, *New Americans in the Voting Booth: The Growing Electoral Power of Immigrant Communities* (Washington, DC: American Immigration Council, October 2014), p. 25.
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