



# IMMIGRATION POLICY CENTER

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## **NEW AMERICANS IN THE SUNSHINE STATE: Florida's Immigrants and Latinos are a Political and Economic Powerhouse**

There are few states where the growing political and economic clout of immigrants, children of immigrants, and Latinos is as apparent as Florida. Immigrants account for nearly one-in-five Floridians, and close to half of them are U.S. citizens eligible to vote. Latinos comprised roughly one-in-seven of the state's voters in the 2008 elections, while immigrants and their children were one-in-seven of the state's registered voters as of 2006. Latinos in Florida wield over \$100 billion in consumer purchasing power and, at last count, owned one out of every six businesses in the state. Immigrant and Latino workers and entrepreneurs are integral to Florida's economy and tax base—and they are an electoral force with which every politician must reckon.

### **Immigrants and their children are a large and growing share of Florida's electorate.**

- According to the U.S. Census Bureau, the foreign-born share of Florida's population rose from 12.9% in [1990](#),<sup>1</sup> to 16.7% in [2000](#),<sup>2</sup> to 18.9% in [2007](#).<sup>3</sup>
- 45.6% of immigrants in Florida were naturalized U.S. citizens in [2007](#)<sup>4</sup> (up from 42.9% in [1990](#)<sup>5</sup>)—meaning that they are eligible to vote.
- An analysis of 2006 Census Bureau data by [Rob Paral & Associates](#) found that **14% of all registered voters** in Florida 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.<sup>6</sup>

### **More than 1 in 5 Floridians is Latino—and they vote.**

- According to the U.S. Census Bureau, the Latino share of Florida's population grew from 12.2% in [1990](#),<sup>7</sup> to 16.8% in [2000](#),<sup>8</sup> to 20.6% in [2007](#).<sup>9</sup>
- [CNN exit polls](#) indicate that Latinos comprised **14% of Florida voters** in the 2008 elections. Barack Obama defeated John McCain among Latino voters in Florida by 57% to 42%.<sup>10</sup> In contrast, George W. Bush won 56% of the state's Latino vote [2004](#).<sup>11</sup>

**Immigrant workers and taxpayers are integral to Florida's economy.** According to a [2007 study](#)<sup>12</sup> by Florida International University:

- From 2002 to 2004, Florida's immigrant workers paid an estimated annual average of \$10.49 billion in federal taxes, \$4.5 billion in state and local taxes, \$1.3 billion in property taxes, and \$3.2 billion in sales taxes. That's nearly \$20 billion in tax revenue each year.
- Immigrants made up 23% of Florida's labor force in 2005, up from 19% in 2000.

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**A DIVISION OF THE AMERICAN IMMIGRATION LAW FOUNDATION**

1331 G STREET, NW, SUITE 200 • WASHINGTON, DC 20005-3141 • TEL: (202) 507-7500 • FAX: (202) 742-5619

[www.immigrationpolicy.org](http://www.immigrationpolicy.org)

## Latino and Asian consumers and business owners are essential to Florida's economy.

- The Selig Center for Economic Growth at the University of Georgia estimates that the [purchasing power](#) of Latinos in Florida (\$101.3 billion in 2008) was the third highest of any state in the nation and increased by 409% since 1990. Latino consumers accounted for about 15% of the state's total buying power. In addition, Asians in Florida commanded \$15.8 billion in purchasing power in 2008.<sup>13</sup>
- The Census Bureau's 2002 Survey of Business Owners found that Florida was home to 266,688 [Latino-owned](#) businesses with sales and receipts of \$40.9 billion in 2002<sup>14</sup> (the last year for which data is available). Latino businesses comprised about [17%](#) of all businesses in the state.<sup>15</sup> There were also 41,258 [Asian-owned](#) businesses in the state, with sales and receipts of \$11.2 billion.<sup>16</sup>

## Endnotes

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<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> U.S. Census Bureau, [The Foreign-Born Population: 2000](#), December 2003

<sup>6</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>7</sup> U.S. Census Bureau, [The Hispanic Population: 2000](#), May 2001.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

<sup>9</sup> 2007 American Community Survey (1-Year Estimates).

<sup>10</sup> CNN, Election Center 2008: [Presidential Exit Polls: Florida](#).

<sup>11</sup> CNN, America Votes 2004: [Presidential Exit Polls: Florida](#).

<sup>12</sup> Emily Eisenhauer, et al., [Immigrants in Florida: Characteristics and Contributions](#) (Miami, Florida: Research Institute for Social and Economic Policy of the Center for Labor Research and Studies, Florida International University: May 21, 2007)

<sup>13</sup> Jeffrey M. Humphreys, [The Multicultural Economy 2008](#) (Athens, GA: Selig Center for Economic Growth, University of Georgia, 2008).

<sup>14</sup> U.S. Census Bureau, [Hispanic-Owned Firms: 2002](#), August 2006.

<sup>15</sup> 2002 Survey of Business Owners.

<sup>16</sup> U.S. Census Bureau, [Asian-Owned Firms: 2002](#), August 2006.