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**NEW AMERICANS IN ARKANSAS:  
The Political and Economic Power of Immigrants, Latinos, and Asians  
in the Natural State**

Immigrants, Latinos, and Asians account for large and growing shares of the economy and population in Arkansas. Immigrants (the foreign-born) make up 4.5% of the state's population, and more than one-quarter of them are naturalized U.S. citizens who are eligible to vote. Immigrants account for 6.1% of Arkansas workers and added nearly \$3 billion to the state's economy in 2004. Moreover, Latinos and Asians (both foreign-born and native-born) wield roughly \$4.4 billion in consumer purchasing power, and the businesses they own had sales and receipts of \$1.7 billion and employed more than 11,000 people at last count. At a time of budget shortfalls and high unemployment, Arkansas 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 Arkansas's population.***

- **The foreign-born share** of Arkansas's population rose from 1.1% in [1990](#),<sup>1</sup> to 2.8% in [2000](#),<sup>2</sup> to 4.5% in [2010](#),<sup>3</sup> according to the U.S. Census Bureau. Arkansas was home to 131,667 immigrants in [2010](#),<sup>4</sup> which is greater than the population of [Springfield, Illinois](#).<sup>5</sup>
- **27.7% of immigrants (or 36,435 people) in Arkansas were naturalized U.S. citizens in [2010](#)**<sup>6</sup>—meaning that they are eligible to vote.<sup>7</sup>
- Arkansas had the **fastest-growing Latino population** of any state in the nation between 2000 and 2005, and the **fourth-fastest-growing immigrant population**, according to a [study](#) by the Urban Institute.<sup>8</sup>

***More than 7% of Arkansans are Latino or Asian.***

- The **Latino share of Arkansas's population** grew from 0.8% in [1990](#),<sup>9</sup> to 3.2% in [2000](#),<sup>10</sup> to 6.3% (or 184,061 people) in [2010](#).<sup>11</sup> The **Asian share of the population** grew from 0.5% in [1990](#),<sup>12</sup> to 0.8% in [2000](#),<sup>13</sup> to 1.1% (or 32,138 people) in [2010](#),<sup>14</sup> according to the U.S. Census Bureau.
- In Arkansas, **88.2% of children with immigrant parents were U.S. citizens in [2009](#)**, according to data from the Urban Institute.<sup>15</sup>
- In [2009](#), **91.5% of children in Asian families** in Arkansas were U.S. citizens, as were **89.5% of children in Latino families**.<sup>16</sup>

***Immigrant, Latino, and Asian entrepreneurs, consumers, and taxpayers add billions of dollars and thousands of jobs to Arkansas's economy.***

- Spending by immigrants generated **\$2.9 billion** in Arkansas business revenues in 2004, according to a [study](#) by the Urban Institute.<sup>17</sup>
- Immigrants (and their U.S.-born children) paid **\$19 million more in taxes than they consumed** in education, health services, and corrections, according to the [same](#) study.<sup>18</sup>
- Unauthorized immigrants in Arkansas paid **\$73.3 million** in state and local taxes in [2010](#), according to data from the Institute for Taxation and Economic Policy,<sup>19</sup> which includes:
  - \$11.0 million in state income taxes.
  - \$3.0 million in property taxes.
  - \$59.4 million in sales taxes.
- The **2010 purchasing power of Arkansas's Latinos totaled \$3.3 billion**—an increase of 1,908.2% since 1990. **Asian buying power totaled \$1.1 billion**—an increase of 656.1% since 1990, according to the [Selig Center for Economic Growth](#) at the University of Arkansas.<sup>20</sup>
- Arkansas's 5,436 [Latino-owned](#) businesses had sales and receipts of **\$821 million and employed 4,269 people** in 2007, the last year for which data is available. The state's 3,322 [Asian-owned](#) businesses had sales and receipts of **\$855.7 million and employed 7,285 people** in 2007, according to the U.S. Census Bureau's Survey of Business Owners.<sup>21</sup>

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

- Immigrants comprised **6.1% of the state's workforce** in [2010](#) (or 84,955 workers), according to the U.S. Census Bureau.<sup>22</sup>
- Without immigrant workers, **the state's manufacturing industry output would be lowered by about \$1.4 billion**—or about 8% of the industry's \$16.2 billion total contribution to the gross state product in 2004, according to a [study](#) by the Urban Institute.<sup>23</sup>
- Unauthorized immigrants comprised **3% of the state's workforce** (or 40,000 workers) in [2010](#), according to a report by the Pew Hispanic Center.<sup>24</sup>
- If all unauthorized immigrants were removed from Arkansas, **the state would lose \$798 million in economic activity, \$354 million in gross state product, and approximately 6,660 jobs**, even accounting for adequate market adjustment time, according to a report by the [Perryman Group](#).<sup>25</sup>

### ***Immigrants contribute to Arkansas's economy as students.***

- Arkansas's 3,549 **foreign students contributed \$75.1 million** to the state's economy in tuition, fees, and living expenses for the 2009-2010 academic year, according to [NAFSA: Association of International Educators](#).<sup>26</sup>

### ***Naturalized citizens excel educationally.***

- In Arkansas, **23.1% of foreign-born persons** who were naturalized U.S. citizens in [2009](#) **had a bachelor's or higher degree**, compared to 11.9% of noncitizens. At the same time, only 28.9% of naturalized citizens lacked a high-school diploma, compared to 58.7% of noncitizens.<sup>27</sup>
- The number of immigrants in Arkansas with a college degree **increased by 47.2%** between 2000 and 2009, according to [data](#) from the Migration Policy Institute.<sup>28</sup>
- In Arkansas, **79.6% of children with immigrant parents** were considered "English proficient" as of [2009](#), according to data from the Urban Institute.<sup>29</sup>
- The English proficiency rate among **Asian children in Arkansas was 87.4%**, while for **Latino children it was 80.5%**, as of [2009](#).<sup>30</sup>

### **Endnotes**

<sup>1</sup> U.S. Census Bureau, [The Foreign-Born Population: 2000](#), December 2003.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> 2010 American Community Survey (1-Year Estimates).

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

<sup>7</sup> 2010 American Community Survey (1-Year Estimates).

<sup>8</sup> Randy Capps and Everett Henderson, [A Profile of Immigrants in Arkansas](#) (Washington, DC: The Urban Institute, April 2007), p. 1.

<sup>9</sup> U.S. Census Bureau, [The Hispanic Population: 2000](#), May 2001.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

<sup>11</sup> 2010 American Community Survey (1-Year Estimates).

<sup>12</sup> U.S. Census Bureau, [The Asian Population: 2000](#), February 2002.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

<sup>14</sup> 2010 American Community Survey (1-Year Estimates).

<sup>15</sup> [The Urban Institute](#), data from the Integrated Public Use Microdata Series datasets drawn from the 2005 - 2009 American Community Survey.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

<sup>17</sup> Randy Capps and Everett Henderson, [A Profile of Immigrants in Arkansas](#) (Washington, DC: The Urban Institute, April 2007), p. 5.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

<sup>19</sup> Immigration Policy Center, [Unauthorized Immigrants Pay Taxes, Too: Estimates of the State and Local Taxes Paid by Unauthorized Immigrant Households](#) (Washington, DC: American Immigration Council, April 18, 2011).

<sup>20</sup> Jeffrey M. Humphreys, [The Multicultural Economy 2010](#) (Athens, GA: Selig Center for Economic Growth, University of Arkansas, August 2010).

<sup>21</sup> U.S. Census Bureau, [Estimates of Business Ownership by Gender, Ethnicity, Race, and Veteran Status: 2007](#), June 2011.

<sup>22</sup> 2010 American Community Survey (1-Year Estimates).

<sup>23</sup> Randy Capps and Everett Henderson, [A Profile of Immigrants in Arkansas](#) (Washington, DC: The Urban Institute, April 2007), p. 6.

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<sup>24</sup> Jeffrey S. Passel and D’Vera Cohn, [\*Unauthorized Immigrant Population: National and State Trends, 2010\*](#) (Washington, DC: Pew Hispanic Center, February 1, 2011), p. 24.

<sup>25</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>26</sup> NAFSA: Association of International Educators, [\*The Economic Benefits of International Education to the United States for the 2009-2010 Academic Year: A Statistical Analysis\*](#) (Washington, DC: NAFSA: Association of International Educators, 2010).

<sup>27</sup> Migration Policy Institute Data Hub, [Arkansas: Language & Education](#).

<sup>28</sup> Ibid.

<sup>29</sup> [The Urban Institute](#), data from the Integrated Public Use Microdata Series datasets drawn from the 2005 - 2009 American Community Survey.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid.