THE IMMIGRANT PRESENCE IN PENNSYLVANIA

A Compilation of Recent Census and Research Findings on Immigrants in Pennsylvania

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The following information about immigrants in Pennsylvania was drawn from census and other government data, as well as several published reports. This summary presents a snapshot of key facts about Pennsylvania's newcomer population.

Immigrants are a vibrant force in Pennsylvania's changing demographics:

- Approximately one in 20 of all Pennsylvania residents (5.3%) are foreign-born – considerably below the national average of 12.5%. According to the 2008 American Community Survey, 660,426 Pennsylvania residents are immigrants.[1]

- The number of immigrants in Pennsylvania seems to be trending upwards. The foreign-born share of the state's population rose from 3.1% in 1990, to 4.1% in 2000, to 5.3% in 2008.[2]

- Immigrants in Pennsylvania are much more heterogeneous than those in the nation as a whole and come from virtually every region and country of the world. 37% are from Asia, 27% from Europe, 26% from Latin America, and 7% from Africa.[3]

- Sixty-one (61) percent of the foreign-born in Pennsylvania live in only seven of the state's 67 counties: Philadelphia, Monroe, Lehigh, Montgomery, Chester, Delaware, and Bucks -- all located in the eastern part of the state.

- Immigration has had an important impact on the Greater Philadelphia area. The metropolitan area appears to be outpacing its peers, i.e. former immigrant gateway cities like Cleveland and St. Louis, in attracting newcomers. Between 2000 and 2006, Greater Philadelphia's immigrant population grew by 113,000.[4] However, most newcomers are now settling in the Philadelphia suburbs, which attracted 69% of all new arrivals from abroad.[5]

- The top five countries of birth of the foreign born in Pennsylvania were India, Mexico, China (excluding Taiwan), Korea, and Vietnam.[6] The five largest immigrant communities in the City of Philadelphia in 2006 were: Indians, Chinese, Vietnamese, Ukrainians, and Jamaicans.

- 49% of Pennsylvania's immigrants are U.S. citizens.[7]

- Migration is a vital element of Pennsylvania's important agricultural sector. Each year, some 45,000 to 50,000 migrant and seasonal workers harvest and process the state's fruit, vegetable, and mushroom crops. 95% of these workers are foreign-born, with the vast majority coming from Mexico. Chester and Adams Counties have the largest numbers of migrant workers.[8]

- There are an estimated 140,000 unauthorized immigrants in Pennsylvania. They make up 1.5% of the state's workforce.[9]

- Over 1.1 million Pennsylvania residents age 5 or older (9.4%) speak a language other than English at home. Of this group, 410,650 (37%) have trouble speaking English. They speak a wide array of languages, with Spanish-speakers constituting 47% of the limited English proficient population. [10]

Data compiled by Dr. Nicholas V. Montalto, Diversity Dynamics, LLC, Cranford, New Jersey.

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[1] U.S. Census Bureau, 2008 American Community Survey, Data Profile Highlights.

[2] New Americans in the Keystone State, Immigrant Policy Center, July 28, 2009. http://www.immigrationpolicy.org/sites/default/files/docs/New%20Americans%20in%20the%20Keystone%20State.pdf

[3] U.S. Census Bureau, 2008 American Community Survey, Selected Social Characteristics: 2006.

[4] Audrey Singer et al, Recent Immigration to Philadelphia: Regional Change in a Re-Emerging Gateway, Metropolitan Policy Program, Brookings Institution, November, 2008, 4-7. "Greater Philadelphia" includes Camden and other nearby New Jersey communities.

[5] ibid., 12.

[6] Migration Policy Institute, Migration Data Hub, Pennsylvania summary of 2008 American Community Survey data

[7] U.S. Census Bureau, 2008 American Community Survey, Selected Social Characteristics: 2008.

[8] Katherine L. Carson & Anastasia Snyder, "The Health and Nutrition of Hispanic Seasonal Farm Workers," The Center for Rural Pennsylvania, November, 2004, 5-6. Available at: http://www.rural.palegislature.us/migrant_farm_workers.pdf April 27, 2010

[9] Pew Hispanic Center, A Portrait of Unauthorized Immigrants in the United States, April 14, 2009, 29-30.

[10] U.S. Census Bureau, 2008 American Community Survey, Selected Social Characteristics: 2008.