

## Community Survey results paint N.J. as wealthy, heavily populated with immigrants

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By **Star-Ledger Staff**

Nearly 20 percent of New Jersey residents were born outside the United States, one of the highest rates for immigrant populations in the country, according to the American Community Survey released Tuesday by the U.S. Census Bureau.

The five-year survey of nearly 3 million Americans, which provides the most detailed portrait of American life in the country's history, shows New Jersey ranks behind just New York and California for percentages of foreign-born residents.

"New Jersey has always been an immigrant gateway," said James Hughes, dean of the Edward J. Bloustein School of Planning and Public Policy at Rutgers University. "From the first immigration wave in the late 19th century."

Through the survey, an intricately detailed portrait of New Jersey life has emerged: While New Jerseyans are among the richest in the country, they have some of the longest travel times to work. New Jersey has among the highest home values in the country, but 20 percent of homeowners have secondary loans to pay the bills.

The survey was given to nearly 50,000 New Jersey residents each year from 2005 to 2009. Among the findings:

- Hunterdon, Morris and Somerset counties were among the 12 richest in the nation. New Jersey's median household income is \$68,981, among the top three in the country along with Maryland and Connecticut. The median household income nationally is \$51,425.
- Residents of Sussex County have among the longest travel times to work in the country, spending 37 minutes commuting each way. On average, New Jersey residents spend 30 minutes getting to work each way, the third worst commute in the country.
- Hudson, Bergen and Middlesex counties rank in the top 40 counties nationwide for residents born outside the United States. In at least seven New Jersey towns, a majority of the residents are immigrants: Palisades Park and Fairview in Bergen County; and East Newark, West New York, Union City, Guttenberg, and Harrison in Hudson County.



Jennifer Brown/The Star-Ledger

Jay J. Lin and his wife Irene shop at H Mart, a new Asian Grocery in Edison. Lin opened his own law practice in Edison about 20 years ago.

## LEAST POOR COUNTIES

Some U.S. counties with the lowest percentage of people below poverty in the last 12 months

COUNTY	STATE	PCT. EST.
Douglas	Colo.	2.8
Loudoun	Va.	2.8
Los Alamos	N.M.	3.2
<b>Somerset</b>	<b>N.J.</b>	<b>3.4</b>
Sublette	Wyo.	3.4
<b>Morris</b>	<b>N.J.</b>	<b>3.5</b>
Kendall	Ill.	3.5
McMullen	Texas	3.5
York	Va.	3.5
<b>Hunterdon</b>	<b>N.J.</b>	<b>3.6</b>
National average		23.4

Source: U.S. Census, American Community Survey 2005-2009

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## STATES WITH MOST FOREIGN BORN RESIDENTS

New Jersey has the country's largest foreign-born population for a non-border state and is third overall, even leading three states on the Mexican border: Texas, Arizona and New Mexico.

STATE	PERCENT FOREIGN BORN
California	26.8
New York	21.3
<b>New Jersey</b>	<b>19.7</b>
Nevada	18.7
Florida	18.7
Hawaii	16.8
Texas	15.8

Source: U.S. Census, American Community Survey 2005-2009

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The Census Bureau survey also estimates the size of different immigrant communities, revealing detailed diversity in certain towns like Edison, where there are roughly 17,300 Asian Indians living with more than 4,000 people of Chinese descent. The diversity is matched in Bloomfield, where about 2,000 residents born in Europe reside with roughly 1,400 Filipinos and about 4,000 immigrants from Latin America.

Catering to such diversity poses challenges for public officials, who must conduct outreach efforts in a variety of ways, said Anastasia Mann, of the Eagleton Institute of Politics. A study she conducted found only 15 percent of the eligible voters of Chinese origin in Edison had registered to vote.

Recently, the Edison Public Library added a "world language" section, offering books and films in Hindi, Gujarati and Mandarin Chinese, said Judith Mansbach, the library's director.

"I've lived in the town since 1985, and I've seen such a dramatic increase in diversification," Mansbach said.

Twenty years ago, Jay Lin opened an attorney practice near the Metuchen-Edison border for a simple reason: Asian people were moving into the area. Lin's office is near a Chinese-Korean neighborhood on Route 27 — where shops feature signs with Asian lettering. Lin said many Asians move to Edison because of the growing immigrant community and because it's a transportation hub at the crossroads of major highways.

"If you look at the past 20 years, the progress is enormous," said Lin, who was born in Taiwan. "And it's getting better and better."

**By Rohan Mascarenhas and Frederick Kaimann/The Star-Ledger**

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