

# New American Voters in Pennsylvania

## *Building the Electoral Power of Naturalized Voters*



PICC and CASA members at the PA State Capitol, Photo Courtesy of PICC



**NPNA**  
NATIONAL PARTNERSHIP  
FOR NEW AMERICANS

**SEIU**



US IMMIGRATION  
POLICY CENTER

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# Table of Contents

- 3 Executive Summary
- 4 Methodology
- 5 Why Pennsylvania is So Important in 2022
- 6 Who are Pennsylvania's New American Voters?
- 9 Where are Pennsylvania's New American Voters?
- 11 Engaging Pennsylvania's New American Voters



Proud Voters Photo, Courtesy of CASA

# Executive Summary

The high stakes of the 2022 U.S. midterm elections showcase the urgency of engaging all eligible voters to ensure a fully participatory, representative democracy. In Pennsylvania, a bloc of New American Voters — recently naturalized citizens that have earned the right to vote — has the potential to play an outsized role in the outcomes of critical federal and state races. This voting bloc is multiracial, multigenerational, geographically diverse, and majority female. New American Voters hold distinct ideologies, experiences, and viewpoints, and will be motivated by a variety of issues this November.

With a competitive Senate election (rated “toss up” by the [Cook Political Report](#)) and a contested gubernatorial election (rated “lean D” by the [Cook Political Report](#)), Pennsylvania will be one of the most critical states during the November 2022 midterm elections and New American Voters can sway the outcome. Pennsylvania ranks 4th in the nation according to the New American Voters Impact Model, which was created by the National Partnership for New Americans (NPNA) and the U.S. Immigration Policy Center (USIPC) at the University of California, San Diego to showcase the potential of this critical voting bloc to influence the outcome of midterm elections in 50 states. This report offers data that illustrates how New American Voters can have an outsized impact.

- Pennsylvania is home to 85,083 citizens naturalized between 2016 and 2020. This number exceeds the state’s 80,555-vote margin in the November 2020 presidential election.
- Newly naturalized citizens in Pennsylvania are racially and ethnically diverse, with 45 percent from Asia, 27 percent from the Americas, 15 percent from the African continent, and 13 percent from Europe.
- Approximately 63 percent of newly naturalized citizens are below the age of 45 and more than 54 percent are women.
- The New York-Newark-Jersey City metropolitan area, which includes Pennsylvania, New York, and New Jersey, has the highest concentration of naturalized citizens, at 3.8 million, followed by the Philadelphia-Camden-Wilmington metropolitan area, which includes Pennsylvania, Delaware, Maryland, and New Jersey, with over 440,000, and then the Pittsburgh metropolitan area with approximately 52,000.

Pennsylvania’s cohort is part of an estimated 5.19 million newly naturalized citizens across the U.S., according to [New American Voters 2022: Harnessing the Power of Naturalized Citizens](#), a report released by NPNA, the Service Employees International Union (SEIU), APIAVote, and USPIC. The power of this potential voting bloc is determined by individuals’ ability to both register and vote this November.

This electoral season presents many challenges, including the need for organizations to adapt their voter engagement work to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, language access issues, and ongoing efforts to tighten and restrict access to voting, particularly targeting voters of color. Another challenge that has emerged in recent years is the increasing backlog and processing delays of citizenship applications.

According to the latest data from U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS), there are over 672,000 pending citizenship applications nationwide, with 17,284 applications backlogged in USCIS’ two offices in Pennsylvania.<sup>1</sup> While the national average processing delay is around 11 months, approximately 80 percent of applications are processed within 14 months in USCIS’ Philadelphia office and approximately 80 percent of applications are processed within 14 months in USCIS’ Pittsburgh office. This means that immigrants who are eligible for citizenship and who would have otherwise naturalized and have had time to register to vote in this year’s elections may not be able to do so given the naturalization application backlog.

Pennsylvania-based organizations, including [CASA](#), the [Pennsylvania Immigration and Citizenship Coalition](#) (PICC), and [Make the Road Pennsylvania](#), are partnering with NPNA’s [New American Voters Campaign](#), a non-partisan nationwide effort to address naturalization barriers and encourage newly naturalized citizens to register and vote.

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<sup>1</sup> Number of Form N-400 Application for Naturalization by Category of Naturalization, Case Status and USCIS Field Office Location, April 1, 2022 - June 30, 2022,” accessed October 19, 2022, [https://www.uscis.gov/sites/default/files/document/data/N400\\_performancedata\\_fy2022\\_qtr3.pdf](https://www.uscis.gov/sites/default/files/document/data/N400_performancedata_fy2022_qtr3.pdf).

# Methodology

This report is based on USCIS data on naturalizations that occurred from Fiscal Year 2016 through FY 2020 and naturalization applications that the agency approved in FY 2021.<sup>2</sup> Estimates for naturalizations during FY 2021 are based on previous spikes in naturalizations between FY 2019 and FY 2020, right before the presidential election.

“Newly naturalized citizens” are defined as those who have naturalized since FY 2016. “New American Voters” are defined as those who have naturalized since FY 2016 and can subsequently register to vote.

This report utilizes United Nations regional classifications to specify newly naturalized citizens' region of origin.<sup>3</sup> These classifications are Americas, Asia, Europe, Africa, and Oceania. All of the tables referenced throughout this report are based on USCIS data from 2016–2020. Additionally, data on naturalization gaps is based on the 2020 1-Year ACS.<sup>4</sup>

The New American Voters Impact Model (Figure 1) ranks states' relative “political importance” based on six factors: (1) newly naturalized citizens from 2016 to 2020 as a multiple of the state’s 2016 presidential vote margin; (2) the average presidential election margin in 2012, 2016, and 2020; (3) group density; (4) the presence of a competitive U.S. Senate race; (5) the presence of a competitive gubernatorial race; and (6) the presence of a competitive race for control of state legislative chambers. All of these factors are multiplied by each other in order to arrive at a raw score. That raw score is standardized on a 1 to 99 scale. The 15 highest-scoring states are termed “politically important states” throughout this report. A more in-depth explanation of the model factors can be found in NPNA’s companion national report.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> See “Naturalizations,” U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services, accessed May 9, 2022, <https://www.dhs.gov/immigration-statistics/naturalizations>. “Immigration and Citizenship Data,” U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services, accessed May 9, 2022, <https://www.uscis.gov/tools/reports-and-studies/immigration-and-citizenship-data>

<sup>3</sup> See “Countries or Areas,” United Nations Statistics Division, accessed May 9, 2022, <https://unstats.un.org/unsd/methodology/m49/#geo-regions>

<sup>4</sup> See “American Community Survey,” United States Census Bureau, accessed May 9, 2022, <https://data.census.gov/cedsci/>

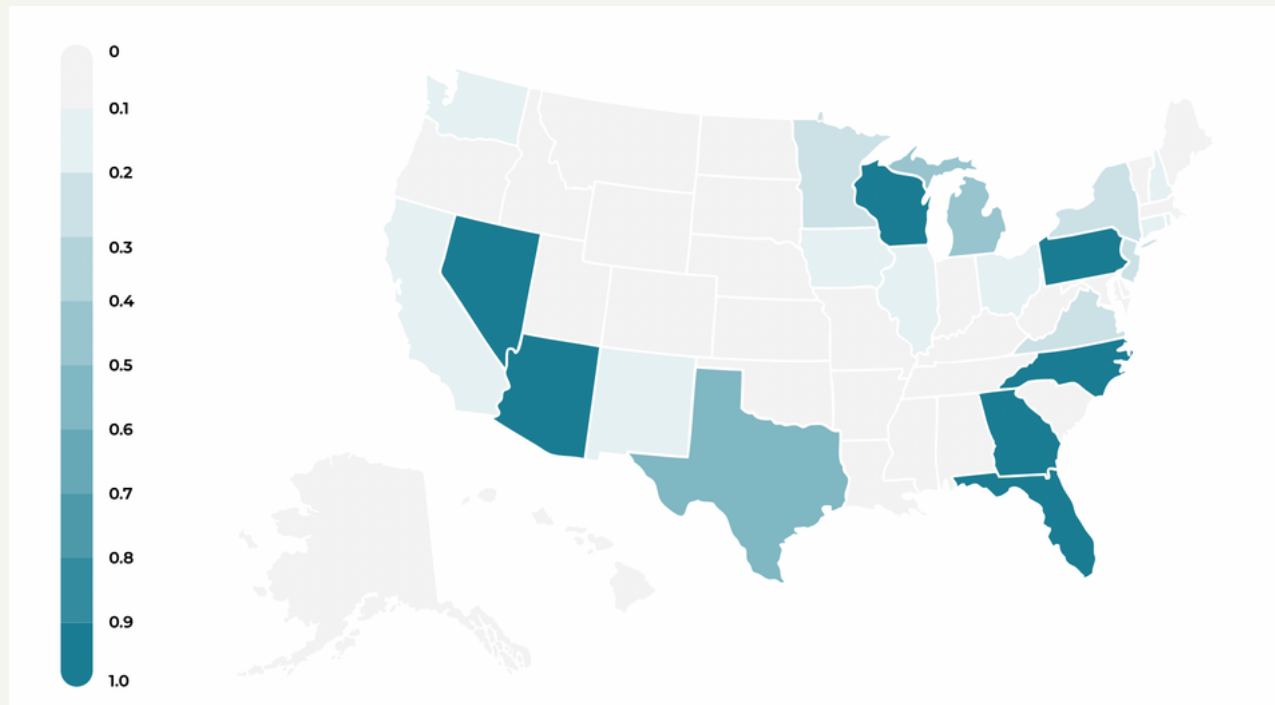
<sup>5</sup> National Partnership for New Americans, Service Employees International Union, U.S. Immigration Policy Center at the University of Pennsylvania San Diego, and APIA Vote, “New American Voters 2022: Harnessing the Power of Naturalized Citizens,” July 2022, [https://newamericanvoters.org/assets/2022/07/NPNA\\_2022-New-American-Voters-Report.pdf](https://newamericanvoters.org/assets/2022/07/NPNA_2022-New-American-Voters-Report.pdf)



# WHY PENNSYLVANIA IS SO IMPORTANT

There are more than 490,000 naturalized citizens in Pennsylvania, nearly 4 percent of the population.. As Figure 2 shows, approximately one-quarter of all naturalized citizens in Pennsylvania have naturalized since the 2016 presidential election.

**Figure 1: Politically Important States, according to the New American Voters Impact Model, 2022**  
This map shows how states score in the NPNA New American Voters Impact Model



**Figure 2: Pennsylvania State Population Figures 2022**

TOTAL POPULATION	REGISTERED VOTERS	ALL NATURALIZED CITIZENS	NEWLY NATURALIZED CITIZENS 2016-2020
12,808,018	8,738,175 <sup>6</sup>	494,359	85,083

From 2016 through 2020, Pennsylvania added an estimated 85,083 newly naturalized citizens, which exceeds Pennsylvania's 80,555-vote margin of victory during the 2020 presidential election. Pennsylvania's cohort is part of an estimated 5.19 million newly naturalized citizens across the U.S.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>6</sup> "Voting and Election Statistics," Pennsylvania Department of State, Accessed August 30, 2022, <https://www.dos.pa.gov/VotingElections/OtherServicesEvents/VotingElectionStatistics/Pages/VotingElectionStatistics.aspx>

<sup>7</sup> National Partnership for New Americans, Service Employees International Union, U.S. Immigration Policy Center at the University of California San Diego, and APIA Vote, "New American Voters 2022: Harnessing the Power of Naturalized Citizens," July 2022, [https://newamericanvoters.org/assets/2022/07/NPNA\\_2022-New-American-Voters-Report.pdf](https://newamericanvoters.org/assets/2022/07/NPNA_2022-New-American-Voters-Report.pdf)

# WHO ARE PENNSYLVANIA'S NEW AMERICAN VOTERS?

Of the total number of persons who naturalized in Pennsylvania from 2016 to 2020, approximately 45 percent are from Asia, which includes Asian and Pacific Islander countries, approximately 27 percent are from the Americas, which includes Latin America and the Caribbean, approximately 15 percent are from the African continent, and approximately 13 percent are from Europe. (See Figure 3.)

**FIGURE 3: PENNSYLVANIA NATURALIZED CITIZENS  
BY REGION OF ORIGIN 2016-2020**

REGION	NUMBER OF NEWLY NATURALIZED CITIZENS	PERCENTAGE OF NEWLY NATURALIZED CITIZENS
Asia	38,095	45%
Americas	22,618	27%
Africa	12,476	15%
Europe	11,456	13%
Oceania	262	0.3%
Other/Unknown	176	0.2%
Total 2016-2020	85,083	

Source: U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services, Department of Homeland Security, 2021



Figure 4 shows the top 20 countries of origin for persons who naturalized in Pennsylvania from 2016 to 2020. Newly naturalized citizens from India lead the way, followed by the Dominican Republic, then China.

**FIGURE 4: PENNSYLVANIA NEWLY NATURALIZED CITIZENS BY COUNTRY OF ORIGIN, 2016-2020**

RANK	COUNTRY	TOTAL
1	India	9,306
2	Dominican Republic	6,795
3	China, People's Republic	4,893
4	Bhutan	4,498
5	Vietnam	3,107
6	Mexico	2,596
7	Jamaica	2,482
8	Liberia	2,307
9	Philippines	2,043
10	Ukraine	1,781
11	Korea, South	1,757
12	Haiti	1,677
13	Pakistan	1,577
14	United Kingdom	1,524
15	Bangladesh	1,338
16	Nepal	1,313
17	Colombia	1,253
18	Egypt	1,229
19	Nigeria	1,183
20	Russia	1,059

# 28%

Newly naturalized U.S. citizens  
35-45 years old

# 26%

Newly naturalized U.S. citizens  
25-34 years old

# 18%

Newly naturalized U.S. citizens  
45-55 years old

# 11%

Newly naturalized U.S. citizens  
55-65 years old

# 9%

Newly naturalized U.S. citizens  
18-24 years old

Approximately 63 percent of persons who naturalized in Pennsylvania from 2016 to 2020 were below the age of 45 and more than 54 percent were women. The full breakdown by age and gender is shown in Figure 5.

**Figure 5: Pennsylvania Newly Naturalized Citizens By Age and Gender\* 2016-2020**

AGE	FEMALE	MALE	TOTAL	Percent of Total
18-24 YEARS	4,328	3,762	8,090	9%
25-34 YEARS	13,177	10,193	23,370	26%
35-45 YEARS	13,405	11,459	24,864	28%
45-55 YEARS	8,411	7,755	16,166	18%
55-65 YEARS	5,137	4,386	9,523	11%
65 YEARS AND OLDER	4,137	3,041	7,179	8%
TOTAL	48,595 (54.5% of total)	40,596 (45.5% of total)	89,192	

\*USCIS does not collect data on transgender or non-binary individuals.



# WHERE ARE PENNSYLVANIA'S NEW AMERICAN VOTERS?

Figure 6 shows the total number of naturalized citizens in metropolitan areas in Pennsylvania. The New York-Newark-Jersey City metropolitan area, which includes Pennsylvania, New York, and New Jersey, has over 3.8 million naturalized citizens, followed by the Philadelphia-Camden-Wilmington metropolitan area, which includes Pennsylvania, Delaware, Maryland, and New Jersey, with over 440,000 naturalized citizens, and then the Pittsburgh metropolitan area with approximately 52,000 naturalized citizens.<sup>8</sup>

**Figure 6: Pennsylvania Naturalized U.S. Citizens By Metro Area and Region of Origin, 2022**

Metropolitan Area	Total	Africa	Americas	Asia	Europe	Oceania
New York-Newark-Jersey City, NY-NJ-PA	3,859,089	167,773	159,8354	1,501,568	586,821	4,014
Philadelphia-Camden-Wilmington, PA-NJ-DE-MD	446,154	43,662	106,566	219,277	75,934	715
Pittsburgh, PA	51,798	6,097	8,408	22,431	14,510	352
Allentown-Bethlehem-Easton, PA-NJ	48,179	3,231	23,020	12,619	9,033	276
Harrisburg-Carlisle, PA	23,013	3,821	1,696	14,424	3,041	31
Scranton--Wilkes-Barre--Hazleton, PA	22,052	724	10,900	6,950	3,326	152
Lancaster, PA	19,354	978	4,391	9,824	4,161	N/A
Reading, PA	14,597	82	10,274	2,208	2,033	N/A
East Stroudsburg, PA	13,679	247	4,166	3,961	5,305	N/A
York-Hanover, PA	9,039	578	3,841	2,559	2,061	N/A
Youngstown-Warren-Boardman, OH-PA	6,381	112	1,272	3,012	1,985	N/A
Erie, PA	5,703	602	157	1,983	2,961	N/A
State College, PA	3,413	N/A	1,114	1,122	1,177	N/A
Lebanon, PA	2,803	34	166	2,250	353	N/A
Johnstown, PA	858	N/A	156	462	240	N/A

Note: This table includes figures of **all** naturalized citizens in named regions, not just newly naturalized.

<sup>8</sup> Estimates obtained from the 2020 American Community Survey (ACS) 1-Year Public Use Microdata (PUM).



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**New Citizens = New Voters  
Register to Vote Today!**

 **Pennsylvania Immigration and Citizenship Coalition**  
*Advocating for Immigrants, Refugees and Migrants in Pennsylvania*  
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# ENGAGING PENNSYLVANIA'S NEW AMERICAN VOTERS

The 2022 New American Voters campaign is a non-partisan nationwide effort coordinated by NPNA to encourage newly naturalized citizens to register and vote. Newly naturalized citizens in Pennsylvania interested in becoming citizens or new voters can connect with the following NPNA member and partner organizations below for more information.

## Pennsylvania Partners

**The Pennsylvania Immigration and Citizenship Coalition (PICC)** is a diverse coalition of over 50 member organizations across the state. PICC leads and supports campaigns to advance immigrant rights at the local, state, and federal levels; builds immigrant electoral power through voter registration and education; supports grassroots community-led organizations through training and capacity building; and helps increase access to immigration services through the PA is Ready! Project. Learn more at [paimmigrant.org](http://paimmigrant.org)

**Make the Road Pennsylvania** works to build power for justice in Latinx and immigrant communities and working-class communities of color. Empower community members to be the principal agents and leaders in challenging and dismantling systemic oppression through community organizing, policy innovation, transformative education, and dismantling systemic oppression through civic engagement and advocacy. learn more at [maketheroadpa.org](http://maketheroadpa.org)

**SEIU 32BJ** - with more than 175,000 members, we are the largest union of property service workers in the U.S. We are concentrated in the Northeast – in Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Rhode Island, Connecticut, New Jersey, New York, Delaware, Pennsylvania, Maryland, Northern Virginia, and Washington, D.C. – but our reach extends to southern Florida. We work primarily as cleaners, property maintenance workers, doormen, security officers, window cleaners, building engineers, and school and food service workers, and airport workers. Learn More at [www.seiu32bj.org](http://www.seiu32bj.org)

## National Partners

**The National Partnership for New Americans (NPNA)** is a national multiethnic, multiracial organization that represents 60 of the largest regional immigrant and refugee rights organizations in 40 states. Its members provide large-scale services for the communities, to leverage their collective power and expertise for a national strategy. Learn more at [partnershipfornewamericans.org](http://partnershipfornewamericans.org)

**The Service Employees International Union (SEIU)** unites 2 million diverse members in the United States, Canada and Puerto Rico. SEIU members working in the healthcare industry, in the public sector and in property services believe in the power of joining together on the job to win higher wages and benefits and to create better communities while fighting for a more just society and an economy that works for all of us, not just corporations and the wealthy. Learn more at [www.seiu.org](http://www.seiu.org)

**The U.S. Immigration Policy Center (USIPC)** at UC San Diego was the lead author of this report in partnership with NPNA and SEIU. USIPC conducts and supports rigorous social science research to advance understanding of the foundations and consequences of U.S. immigration policy. Immigration has played an integral role in American history and is sure to feature prominently in America's future. But what should the immigration policies of our nation of immigrants be? The USIPC brings together leading academics, policy analysts, immigrant rights leaders, and policymakers across all levels of government to conceptualize, debate, and design a new U.S. immigration policy agenda that meets the demands of the 21st century. Learn more at [www.usipc.ucsd.edu](http://www.usipc.ucsd.edu)