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NEW AMERICANS IN LOUISIANA

The Political and Economic Power of Immigrants, Latinos, and Asians in the Pelican State

Immigrants, Latinos, and Asians account for large and growing shares of the economy and population in Louisiana. Immigrants (the foreign-born) make up 3.8% of the state's population, and 38.7% of them are naturalized U.S. citizens who are eligible to vote. "New Americans"—immigrants and the children of immigrants—account for 1.7% of all registered voters in the state. Immigrants are not only integral to the state's economy as workers, but also account for tens of million of dollars in tax revenue and consumer purchasing power. Moreover, Latinos and Asians (both foreign-born and native-born) wield \$7.7 billion in consumer purchasing power, and the businesses they own had sales and receipts of \$5.2 billion and employed more than 33,000 people at last count. At a time when the economy is in a slump, Louisiana can ill-afford to alienate such a critical component of its labor force, tax base, and business community.

Immigrants and their children are growing shares of Louisiana's population and electorate.

- **The foreign-born share** of Louisiana's population rose from 2.1% in [1990](#),¹ to 2.6% in [2000](#),² to 3.8% in [2010](#),³ according to the U.S. Census Bureau. Louisiana was home to 172,866 immigrants in [2010](#),⁴ which is nearly the population of [Jackson, Mississippi](#).⁵
- **38.7% of immigrants (or 66,954 people) in Louisiana were naturalized U.S. citizens in [2010](#)**⁶—meaning that they are eligible to vote.
- **1.7% (or 40,677) of registered voters** in Louisiana 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—according to an analysis of 2008 Census Bureau data by [Rob Paral & Associates](#).⁷

Roughly 1 in 17 Louisianans are Latino or Asian.

- The **Latino share of Louisiana's population** grew from 2.2% in [1990](#),⁸ to 2.4% in [2000](#),⁹ to 4.3% (or 195,402 people) in [2010](#).¹⁰ The **Asian share of the population** grew from 1.0% in [1990](#),¹¹ to 1.2% in [2000](#),¹² to 1.6% (or 72,708 people) in [2010](#),¹³ according to the U.S. Census Bureau.
- **Latinos accounted for 1.5% (or 32,000) of Louisiana voters** in the 2008 elections, and, according to the [U.S. Census Bureau](#).
- In Louisiana, **87.2% of children with immigrant parents were U.S. citizens in [2009](#)**, according to data from the Urban Institute.¹⁴
- In [2009](#), **88.7% of children in Asian families** in Louisiana were U.S. citizens, as were **91.2% of children in Latino families**.¹⁵

Latino and Asian entrepreneurs and consumers add billions of dollars and tens of thousands of jobs to Louisiana's economy.

- **The 2010 purchasing power of Latinos in Louisiana totaled \$5.3 billion—an increase of 342.2% since 1990. Asian buying power totaled \$2.4 billion—an increase of 403.4% since 1990, according to the [Selig Center for Economic Growth](#) at the University of Georgia.**¹⁶
- **Louisiana's 10,365 [Asian-owned](#) businesses had sales and receipts of \$2.6 billion and employed 20,401 people in 2007, the last year for which data is available.**¹⁷ **The state's 11,068 [Latino-owned](#) businesses had sales and receipts of \$2.6 billion and employed 13,271 people in 2007, according to the U.S. Census Bureau's Survey of Business Owners.**¹⁸

Immigrants are integral to Louisiana's economy as workers and consumers.

- **Immigrants comprised 5.3% of the state's workforce in [2010](#) (or 116,180 workers), according to the U.S. Census Bureau.**¹⁹
- **Unauthorized immigrants comprised 2% of the state's workforce (or 40,000 workers) in [2010](#), according to a report by the Pew Hispanic Center.**²⁰
- **If all unauthorized immigrants were removed from Louisiana, the state would lose \$947 million in economic activity, \$421 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](#).**²¹

Latino workers have been essential to rebuilding the Gulf Coast region after Hurricane Katrina.

- **The number of Latino workers in New Orleans' reconstruction zone (Jefferson and Orleans Parishes) more than doubled from 60,000 in 2006 to 150,000 in 2008, according to a [study](#) by the Americas Society and Council of the Americas.**²²
- **Latino workers contributed to making 86.9% of households habitable after Hurricane Katrina in six parishes surrounding New Orleans in 2008, according to the [same study](#).**²³

Unauthorized immigrants pay taxes.

- **Unauthorized immigrants in Louisiana paid \$80.7 million in state and local taxes in [2010](#), according to data from the Institute for Taxation and Economic Policy,**²⁴ **which includes:**
 - \$9.5 million in state income taxes.
 - \$5.7 million in property taxes.
 - \$65.5 million in sales taxes.

Immigrants contribute to Louisiana's economy as students.

- **Louisiana's 7,245 foreign students contributed \$138.2 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](#).**²⁵

Naturalized citizens excel educationally.

- **In Louisiana, 25.2% of foreign-born persons who were naturalized U.S. citizens in [2009](#) had a bachelor's or higher degree, compared to 27% of noncitizens. At the same time, 21.9% of naturalized citizens lacked a high-school diploma, compared to 31.8% of noncitizens.**²⁶

- **26.2% of Louisiana’s foreign-born population** age 25 and older **had a bachelor’s or higher degree** in [2009](#), compared to 21.2% of native-born persons age 25 and older.²⁷
- In Louisiana, **86% of children with immigrant parents** were considered “English proficient” as of [2009](#), according to data from the Urban Institute.²⁸
- The English proficiency rate among **Asian children in Louisiana was 86.4%**, while for **Latino children it was 88.4%**, as of [2009](#).²⁹

Endnotes

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

² Ibid.

³ 2010 American Community Survey (1-Year Estimates).

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ 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 2010).

⁸ U. S. Census Bureau, [The Hispanic Population: 2000](#), May 2001.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ 2010 American Community Survey (1-Year Estimates).

¹¹ U. S. Census Bureau, [The Asian Population: 2000](#), February 2002.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ 2010 American Community Survey (1-Year Estimates).

¹⁴ [The Urban Institute](#), data from the Integrated Public Use Microdata Series datasets drawn from the 2005 - 2009 American Community Survey.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Jeffrey M. Humphreys, [The Multicultural Economy 2010](#) (Athens, GA: Selig Center for Economic Growth, University of Georgia, 2010).

¹⁷ U. S. Census Bureau, [Estimates of Business Ownership by Gender, Ethnicity, Race, and Veteran Status: 2007](#), June, 2011.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ 2010 American Community Survey (1-Year Estimates).

²⁰ 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.

²¹ 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.

²² Americas Society and Council of the Americas, [U. S. Business and Hispanic Integration: Expanding the Economic Contributions of Immigrants](#) (New York, NY: Americas Society and Council of the Americas, July 2008).

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ The Immigration Policy Center, [Unauthorized Immigrants Pay Taxes, Too](#) (Washington, DC: April 2011).

²⁵ 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).

²⁶ Migration Policy Institute Data Hub, [Louisiana: Language & Education](#).

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ [The Urban Institute](#), data from the Integrated Public Use Microdata Series datasets drawn from the 2005 - 2009 American Community Survey.

²⁹ Ibid.