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**NEW AMERICANS IN THE TREASURE STATE:
The Economic and Political Power of Immigrants, Latinos, and Asians in Montana**

Immigrants, Latinos, and Asians account for a significant share of the population and economy in Montana. Immigrants (the foreign-born) make up 1.7% of the state's population, and more than half of them are naturalized U.S. citizens who are eligible to vote. "New Americans"—immigrants and the children of immigrants—account for 2.3% of registered voters in the state. Immigrants are not only important 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 \$791 million in consumer purchasing power, and the businesses they own had sales and receipts of nearly \$200 million and employed 1,519 people at last count. At a time of economic recession, Montana can ill-afford to alienate a significant component of its labor force, tax base, and business community.

Immigrants and their children are significant shares of Montana's population and electorate.

- **The foreign-born share** of Montana's population was 1.7% in [2008](#) (21,285 people),¹ according to the U.S. Census Bureau.
- **52.7% of immigrants (or 11,214 people) in Montana were naturalized U.S. citizens** in [2008](#)²—meaning that they are eligible to vote.
- **2.3% (or 11,779) of registered voters** in Montana 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 2006 Census Bureau data by [Rob Paral & Associates](#).³

3.2% of Montanans are Latino or Asian.

- The **Latino share of Montana's population** grew from 1.5% in [1990](#),⁴ to 2.0% in [2000](#),⁵ to 2.8% (or 27,088 people) in [2008](#).⁶ The **Asian share of the population** was 0.7% (or 6,772 people) in [2008](#),⁷ according to the U.S. Census Bureau.
- **Latinos accounted for 1.7% (or 8,000) of Montana voters** in the 2008 elections, according to the [U.S. Census Bureau](#).⁸
- In Montana, **more than nine-in-ten (or 94%) children in immigrant families were U.S. citizens** in [2007](#), according to the Center for Social and Demographic Analysis at the University of Albany.⁹

Latino and Asian entrepreneurs and consumers add millions of dollars and thousands of jobs to Montana's economy.

- **The 2009 purchasing power of Latinos in Montana totaled \$599.4 million**—an increase of 596.3% since 1990. **Asian buying power totaled \$192.0 million**—an increase of 378.9% since 1990, according to the [Selig Center for Economic Growth](#) at the University of Georgia.¹⁰
- Montana's 511 [Asian-owned](#) businesses had sales and receipts of \$99.9 million and employed 1,519 people in 2002, the last year for which data is available.¹¹ The state's 964 [Latino-owned](#) businesses had sales and receipts of \$99.1 million in 2002, according to the U.S. Census Bureau's Survey of Business Owners.¹²

Immigrants are important to Montana's economy as workers.

- Immigrants comprised **2.1% of the state's workforce** in [2008](#) (or 10,807 workers), according to the U.S. Census Bureau.¹³
- Unauthorized immigrants comprised less than **0.5% of the state's workforce** (or fewer than 10,000 workers) in [2008](#), according to a report by the Pew Hispanic Center.¹⁴
- If all unauthorized immigrants were removed from Montana, **the state would lose \$96.3 million in economic activity, \$42.8 million in gross state product, and approximately 720 jobs**, even accounting for adequate market adjustment time, according to a report by the [Perryman Group](#).¹⁵

Immigrants are important to Montana's economy as students.

- Montana's 1,227 **foreign students contributed \$28.4 million** to the state's economy in tuition, fees, and living expenses for the 2008-2009 academic year, according to [NAFSA: Association of International Educators](#).¹⁶

Immigrants excel educationally.

- The number of immigrants in Montana with a college degree **increased by 32.1 percent** between 2000 and 2008, according to [data](#) from the Migration Policy Institute.¹⁷
- In Montana, **81.5% of all children** between the ages of 5 and 17 in families that spoke a language other than English at home also spoke English "very well" as of [2008](#).¹⁸

Endnotes

¹ 2008 American Community Survey (1-Year Estimates).

² Ibid.

³ 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 2008).

⁴ U.S. Census Bureau, [*The Hispanic Population: 2000*](#), May 2001.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ 2008 American Community Survey (1-Year Estimates).

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ U.S. Electoral College, [*2008 Presidential Election: Popular Vote Totals*](#).

⁹ Center for Social and Demographic Analysis, [*Children in Immigrant Families in Montana*](#) (Albany, NY: University of Albany, SUNY, September 2009).

¹⁰ Jeffrey M. Humphreys, [*The Multicultural Economy 2009*](#) (Athens, GA: Selig Center for Economic Growth, University of Georgia, 2009).

¹¹ U.S. Census Bureau, [*Hispanic-Owned Firms: 2002*](#), August 2006.

¹² U.S. Census Bureau, [*Asian-Owned Firms: 2002*](#), August 2006.

¹³ 2008 American Community Survey (1-Year Estimates).

¹⁴ Jeffrey S. Passel and D’Vera Cohn, [*A Portrait of Unauthorized Immigrants in the United States*](#) (Washington, DC: The Pew Charitable Trusts, April 14, 2009), p. 30.

¹⁵ 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.

¹⁶ NAFSA: Association of International Educators, [*The Economic Benefits of International Education to the United States for the 2008-2009 Academic Year: A Statistical Analysis*](#) (Washington, DC: NAFSA: Association of International Educators, 2009).

¹⁷ Migration Policy Institute Data Hub, [*Montana: Language & Education*](#).

¹⁸ Ibid.