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**NEW AMERICANS IN IDAHO:
The Political and Economic Power of Immigrants, Latinos, and Asians
in the Gem State**

Immigrants, Latinos, and Asians account for growing shares of the economy and population in Idaho. Immigrants (the foreign-born) make up 6% of the state's population, and one-third of them are naturalized U.S. citizens who are eligible to vote. "New Americans"—immigrants and the children of immigrants—account for 4.2% of registered voters in the state. Immigrants are not only integral to the state's economy as workers, but also account for billions of dollars in tax revenue and consumer purchasing power. Moreover, Latinos and Asians (both foreign-born and native-born) wield \$4.1 billion in consumer purchasing power, and the businesses they own had sales and receipts of \$939.5 million and employed more than 7,300 people at last count. At a time when the economy is still recovering, Idaho can ill-afford to alienate such an important component of its labor force, tax base, and business community.

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

- **The foreign-born share** of Idaho's population rose from 2.9% in [1990](#),¹ to 5.0% in [2000](#),² to 6% in [2011](#),³ according to the U.S. Census Bureau. Idaho was home to 95,386 immigrants in [2011](#).⁴
- **32.5% of immigrants (or 31,019 people) in Idaho were naturalized U.S. citizens in [2011](#)**⁵—meaning that they are eligible to vote.
- Unauthorized immigrants comprised roughly **2.2% of the state's population** (or 35,000 people) in [2010](#), according to a report by the Pew Hispanic Center.⁶
- **4.2% (or 30,347) of registered voters** in Idaho 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

1 in 8 Idahoans are Latino or Asian.

- The **Latino share of Idaho's population** grew from 5.3% in [1990](#),⁸ to 7.9% in [2000](#),⁹ to 11.5% (or 181,740 people) in [2011](#).¹⁰ The **Asian share of the population** grew from 0.8% in [1990](#),¹¹ to 0.9% in [2000](#),¹² to 1.3% (or 20,913 people) in [2011](#),¹³ according to the U.S. Census Bureau.

- **Latinos accounted for 4.7% (or 30,000) of Idaho voters** in the 2008 elections, and **Asians 0.9% (6,000)**, according to the [U.S. Census Bureau](#).¹⁴
- In Idaho, **85.8% of children with immigrant parents were U.S. citizens** in [2009](#), according to data from the Urban Institute.¹⁵
- In [2009](#), **84.7% of children in Asian families** in Idaho were U.S. citizens, as were **94% of children in Latino families**.¹⁶

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

- **The 2012 purchasing power of Latinos in Idaho totaled \$3.5 billion**—an increase of 779% since 1990. **Asian buying power totaled \$634 million**—an increase of 466% since 1990, according to the [Selig Center for Economic Growth](#) at the University of Georgia.¹⁷
- Idaho's 3,875 [Latino-owned](#) businesses had sales and receipts of **\$457.3 million and employed 4,145 people** in 2007, the last year for which data is available.¹⁸ The state's 1,269 [Asian-owned](#) businesses had sales and receipts of **\$482.2 million and employed 3,185 people** in 2007, according to the U.S. Census Bureau's Survey of Business Owners.¹⁹

Immigrants are integral to Idaho's economy as workers and taxpayers.

- Immigrants comprised **7.5% of the state's workforce** in [2011](#) (or 57,247 workers), according to the U.S. Census Bureau.²⁰
- Unauthorized immigrants comprised roughly **2.8% of the state's workforce** (or 20,000 workers) in [2010](#), according to a report by the Pew Hispanic Center.²¹
- If all unauthorized immigrants were removed from Idaho, **the state would lose \$428.8 million in economic activity, \$190.4 million in gross state product, and approximately 3,060 jobs**, even accounting for adequate market adjustment time, according to a report by the [Perryman Group](#).²²

Unauthorized immigrants pay taxes.

- Unauthorized immigrants in Idaho paid **\$26.7 million** in state and local taxes in [2010](#), including \$21.7 million in sales taxes, \$2.6 million in state income taxes, and \$2.4 million in property taxes, according to data from the Institute for Taxation and Economic Policy.²³
- Were unauthorized immigrants in Idaho to have legal status, they would pay **\$32.2 million** in state and local taxes, including \$23.1 million in sales taxes, \$6.8 million in state income taxes, and \$2.4 million in property taxes.²⁴

Immigrants are important to Idaho's economy as students.

- Idaho's 2,956 **foreign students contributed \$60.2 million** to the state's economy in tuition, fees, and living expenses for the 2011-2012 academic year, according to [NAFSA: Association of International Educators](#).²⁵

Naturalized citizens excel educationally.

- In Idaho, **24.5% of foreign-born persons** who were naturalized U.S. citizens in [2011 had a bachelor's or higher degree](#), compared to 14% of noncitizens. At the same time, only 24.9% of naturalized citizens lacked a high-school diploma, compared to 55% of noncitizens.²⁶
- The number of immigrants in Idaho with a college degree **increased by 124.8%** between 2000 and 2011, according to [data](#) from the Migration Policy Institute.²⁷
- In Idaho, **82% 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 Idaho was 89.8%**, while for **Latino children it was 89.1%**, as of [2009](#).²⁹

Endnotes

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

² Ibid.

³ 2011 American Community Survey (1-Year Estimates).

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ 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.

⁷ Rob Paral & Associates and the Immigration Policy Center, [The New American Electorate: The Growing Political Power of Immigrants and Their Children](#) (Washington, DC: American Immigration Council, October 2010).

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

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ 2011 American Community Survey (1-Year Estimates).

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

¹² Ibid.

¹³ 2011 American Community Survey (1-Year Estimates).

¹⁴ U.S. Electoral College, [2008 Presidential Election: Popular Vote Totals](#).

¹⁵ [The Urban Institute](#), data from the Integrated Public Use Microdata Series datasets drawn from the 2005 - 2009 American Community Survey.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Jeffrey M. Humphreys, [The Multicultural Economy 2012](#) (Athens, GA: Selig Center for Economic Growth, University of Georgia, 2012).

¹⁸ U.S. Census Bureau, [Estimates of Business Ownership by Gender, Ethnicity, Race, and Veteran Status: 2007](#), June, 2011.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ 2011 American Community Survey (1-Year Estimates).

²¹ Jeffrey S. Passel and D'Vera Cohn, [Unauthorized Immigrant Population: National and State Trends, 2010](#) (Washington, DC: Pew Hispanic Center, February 1, 2011), p. 25.

²² 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.

²³ Institute on Taxation and Economic Policy, [Undocumented Immigrants' State and Local Tax Contributions](#) (Washington, DC: July 2013).

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ NAFSA: Association of International Educators, [The Economic Benefits of International Students to the U.S. Economy: Academic Year 2011-2012](#) (Washington, DC: 2012).

²⁶ Migration Policy Institute Data Hub, [Idaho: 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.