



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 5.9% of the state's population, and more than one third of them are naturalized U.S. citizens who are eligible to vote. "New Americans"—immigrants and the children of immigrants—account for 4.8% 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. As the economy continues to grow, 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 5.9% in [2013](#),³ according to the U.S. Census Bureau. Idaho was home to 95,525 immigrants in [2013](#).⁴
- 37.6% of immigrants (or 35,903 people) in Idaho were naturalized U.S. citizens in [2013](#)⁵—meaning that they are eligible to vote.
- Unauthorized immigrants comprised roughly 3.1% of the state's population (or 50,000 people) in [2012](#), according to a report by the Pew Hispanic Center.⁶
- 4.8% (or 35,468) of all 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 2012 Census Bureau data by [American Immigration Council](#).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 11.8% (or 190,250 people) in [2013](#).¹⁰ The Asian share of the population grew from 0.8% in [1990](#),¹¹ to 0.9% in [2000](#),¹² to 1.5% (or 24,845 people) in [2013](#),¹³ according to the U.S. Census Bureau.
- Latinos accounted for 3.9% (or 27,000) of Idaho voters in the 2012 elections, and Asians 0.3% (2,000), 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

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

- The 2014 purchasing power of Latinos in Idaho totaled \$3.34 billion—an increase of 9,756% since 1990. Asian buying power totaled \$796 million—an increase of 6,107% since 1990, according to the [Selig Center for Economic Growth](#) at the University of Georgia.¹⁷
- Immigration boosts housing values in communities. From 2000 to 2010, according to the [Americas Society/Council of the Americas](#), the value added by immigration to the price of the average home was \$1,083 in Ada County.¹⁸
- 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.¹⁹ 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](#).²⁰
- From 2006 to 2010, there were [4,051](#) new immigrant business owners in Idaho. These businesses had total net business income of \$192 million, which is 4.7% of all net business income in the state, according to Robert Fairlie of the University of California, Santa Cruz.²¹
- In 2010, 5.3% of all business owners in Idaho were foreign-born, according to the [Fiscal Policy Institute](#).²²

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

- Immigrants comprised 7.2% of the state's workforce in [2013](#) (or 55,198 workers), according to the U.S. Census Bureau.²³
- Unauthorized immigrants comprised roughly 4.6% of the state's workforce (or 35,000 workers) in [2013](#), according to a report by the Pew Hispanic Center.²⁴
- 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](#).²⁵
- Latinos in Idaho paid \$338 million in federal taxes and \$169 million in state/local taxes in 2013, according

to the [Partnership for a New American Economy](#). In particular, foreign-born Latinos paid \$135 million in federal taxes and \$75 million in state/local taxes.²⁶

- The federal tax contribution of Idaho's Latino population included \$217 million to Social Security and \$63 million to Medicare in 2013, Foreign-born Latinos contributed over \$119 million to Social Security and \$28 million to Medicare that year.²⁷

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 on Taxation and Economic Policy.²⁸
- 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.²⁹

Immigrants are important to Idaho's economy as students.

- Idaho's 3,810 foreign students contributed \$89.7 million to the state's economy in tuition, fees, and living expenses for the 2013-2014 academic year, according to [NAFSA: Association of International Educators](#).³⁰
- Foreign students also contribute to innovation in Idaho. In 2009, "non-resident aliens" comprised 28.4% of master's degrees and 36.2% of doctorate degrees in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) fields, according to the [Partnership for a New American Economy](#).³¹

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.³²
- 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.³³
- In Idaho, 82% of children with immigrant parents were considered "English proficient" as of [2009](#), according to data from the Urban Institute.³⁴
- The English proficiency rate among Asian children in Idaho was 89.8%, while for Latino children it was 89.1%, as of [2009](#).³⁵

Endnotes

1. U.S. Census Bureau, [*The Foreign-Born Population: 2000*](#), December 2003.
2. Ibid.
3. 2013 American Community Survey (1-Year Estimates).
4. Ibid.
5. Ibid.
6. Jeffrey S. Passel, D'Vera Cohn, and Molly Rohal, [*Unauthorized Immigrant Totals Rise in 7 States, Fall in 14: Decline in Those From Mexico Fuels Most State Decreases*](#) (Washington, DC: Pew Hispanic Center, November 18, 2014), p. 29.
7. Walter A. Ewing and Guillermo Cantor, [*New Americans in the Voting Booth: The Growing Electoral Power of Immigrant Communities*](#) (Washington, DC: American Immigration Council, October 2014), p. 25.
8. U.S. Census Bureau, [*The Hispanic Population: 2000*](#), May 2001.
9. Ibid.
10. 2013 American Community Survey (1-Year Estimates).
11. U.S. Census Bureau, [*The Asian Population: 2000*](#), February 2002.
12. Ibid.
13. 2013 American Community Survey (1-Year Estimates).
14. 2012 Current Population Survey, [Table 4b. Reported Voting and Registration, by Sex, Race and Hispanic Origin, for States: November 2012](#).
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 2014*](#) (Athens, GA: Selig Center for Economic Growth, University of Georgia, 2014), pp. 22, 24.
18. Jacob Vigdor, [*Immigration and the Revival of American Cities: From Preserving Manufacturing Jobs to Strengthening the Housing Market*](#) (New York, NY: Americas Society/Council of the Americas, 2013).
19. U.S. Census Bureau, [*Estimates of Business Ownership by Gender, Ethnicity, Race, and Veteran Status: 2007*](#), June, 2011.
20. Ibid.
21. Robert W. Fairlie, [*Open for Business: How Immigrants are Driving Small Business Creation in the United States*](#) (New York, NY: Partnership for a New American Economy, 2012), p. 32.
22. David Dyssegaard Kallick, [*Immigrant Small Business Owners: A Significant and Growing Part of the Economy*](#) (New York, NY: Fiscal Policy Institute, 2012), p. 24.
23. 2013 American Community Survey (1-Year Estimates).
24. Jeffrey S. Passel, D'Vera Cohn, and Molly Rohal, [*Unauthorized Immigrant Totals Rise in 7 States, Fall in 14: Decline in Those From Mexico Fuels Most State Decreases*](#) (Washington, DC: Pew Hispanic Center, November 18, 2014), p. 29.
25. 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.
26. Partnership for a New American Economy, [*The Power of the Purse: The Contributions of Hispanics to America's Spending Power and Tax Revenues in 2013*](#) (New York, NY: Partnership for a New American Economy, 2014).
27. Ibid.
28. Institute on Taxation and Economic Policy, [*Undocumented Immigrants' State and Local Tax Contributions*](#) (Washington, DC: July 2013).
29. Ibid.
30. NAFSA: Association of International Educators, [*The Economic Benefits of International Students to the U.S. Economy: Academic Year 2013-2014*](#) (Washington, DC: 2014).
31. Partnership for a New American Economy, [*Help Wanted: The Role of Foreign Workers in the Innovation Economy*](#) (New York, NY: Partnership for a New American Economy, 2013), p. 21.
32. Migration Policy Institute Data Hub, [Idaho: Language & Education](#).
33. Ibid.
34. [The Urban Institute](#), data from the Integrated Public Use Microdata Series datasets drawn from the 2005 - 2009 American Community Survey.
35. Ibid.