



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 3.9% of the state's population, and 41.6% of them are naturalized U.S. citizens who are eligible to vote. "New Americans"—immigrants and the children of immigrants—account for 1.9% 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 millions of dollars in tax revenue and consumer purchasing power. Moreover, Latinos and Asians (both foreign-born and native-born) wield \$10.2 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. 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 3.9% in [2013](#),³ according to the U.S. Census Bureau. Louisiana was home to 182,559 immigrants in [2013](#),⁴ which is nearly the population of [Jackson, Mississippi](#).⁵
- 41.6% of immigrants (or 76,033 people) in Louisiana were naturalized U.S. citizens in [2013](#)⁶—meaning that they are eligible to vote.
- Unauthorized immigrants comprised 1.2% of the state's population (or 55,000 people) in [2012](#), according to a report by the Pew Hispanic Center.⁷
- 1.9% (or 47,454) of all 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 2012 Census Bureau data by [American Immigration Council](#).⁸

Roughly 1 in 16 Louisianans are Latino or Asian.

- The Latino share of Louisiana's population grew from 2.2% in [1990](#),⁹ to 2.4% in [2000](#),¹⁰ to 4.7% (or 218,620 people) in [2013](#).¹¹ The Asian share of the population grew from 1.0% in [1990](#),¹² to 1.2% in [2000](#),¹³ to 1.6% (or 74,227 people) in [2013](#),¹⁴ according to the U.S. Census Bureau.

- Latinos comprised 2.2% (or 48,000) of Louisiana voters in the 2012 elections, according to the [U.S. Census Bureau](#).¹⁵
- In Louisiana, 87.2% of children with immigrant parents were U.S. citizens in [2009](#), according to data from the Urban Institute.¹⁶
- In [2009](#), 88.7% of children in Asian families in Louisiana were U.S. citizens, as were 91.2% of children in Latino families.¹⁷

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

- The 2014 purchasing power of Latinos in Louisiana totaled \$6.8 billion—an increase of 466% since 1990. Asian buying power totaled \$3.4 billion—an increase of 612% since 1990, according to the [Selig Center for Economic Growth](#) at the University of Georgia.¹⁸
- 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 \$1,379 in Jefferson Parish and \$679 in East Baton Rouge Parish.¹⁹
- 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.²⁰ 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](#).²¹
- From 2006 to 2010, there were [14,726](#) new immigrant business owners in Louisiana who had total net business income of \$691 million (6.7% of all net business income in the state), according to Robert Fairlie of the University of California, Santa Cruz.²²
- In 2010, [7.6% of all business owners](#) in Louisiana were foreign-born, according to the Fiscal Policy Institute,²³ and [12.4% of business owners](#) in the New Orleans-Metairie-Kenner metropolitan area were foreign-born in 2013, according to the Fiscal Policy Institute and Americas Society/Council of the Americas.²⁴ Furthermore, over 1 in 4 (26.6%) of "Main Street" business owners—owners of businesses in the retail, accommodation and food services, and neighborhood services sectors—in the New Orleans metro area were foreign-born in 2013.²⁵

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

- Immigrants comprised 5.4% of the state's workforce in [2013](#) (or 118,068 workers), according to the U.S. Census Bureau.²⁶
- Unauthorized immigrants comprised 1.8% of the state's workforce (or 40,000 workers) in [2010](#), according to a report by the Pew Hispanic Center.²⁷

- Latinos in Louisiana paid \$727 million in federal taxes and \$316 million in state/local taxes in 2013, according to the [Partnership for a New American Economy](#). In particular, foreign-born Latinos paid \$276 million in federal taxes and \$137 million in state/local taxes.²⁸
- The federal tax contribution of Louisiana's Latino population included over \$478 million to Social Security and \$112 million to Medicare in 2013. Foreign-born Latinos contributed over \$197 million to Social Security and \$46 million to Medicare that year.²⁹

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.³⁰
- 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](#).³¹

Unauthorized immigrants pay taxes.

- Unauthorized immigrants in Georgia paid \$85.9 million in state and local taxes in [2010](#), including \$68.3 million in sales taxes, \$9.3 million in state income taxes, and \$8.3 million in property taxes, according to data from the Institute on Taxation and Economic Policy.³²
- Were unauthorized immigrants in Georgia to have legal status, they would pay \$103 million in state and local taxes, including \$72.3 million in sales taxes, \$21.7 million in state income taxes, and \$9 million in property taxes.³³
- 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](#).³⁴

Immigrants contribute to Louisiana's economy as students.

- Louisiana's 6,976 foreign students contributed \$175 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](#).³⁵
- Foreign students contribute to Louisiana's metropolitan areas. From 2008 to 2012, according to the [Brookings Institution](#), 2,514 foreign students paid \$22 million in tuition and \$27 million in living costs in the Baton Rouge metropolitan area. In the New Orleans-Metairie-Kenner metro area, 3,114 foreign students paid \$79 million in tuition and \$39 million in living costs.³⁶

- Foreign students also contribute to innovation in Louisiana. In 2009, “non-resident aliens” comprised 58.6% of master’s degrees and 31.1% of doctorate degrees in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) fields, according to the [Partnership for a New American Economy](#).³⁷

Naturalized citizens excel educationally.

- In Louisiana, 30.4% of foreign-born persons who were naturalized U.S. citizens in [2011](#) had a bachelor’s or higher degree, compared to 20.5% of noncitizens. At the same time, 19.4% of naturalized citizens lacked a high-school diploma, compared to 35% of noncitizens.³⁸
- 24.9% of Louisiana’s foreign-born population age 25 and older had a bachelor’s or higher degree in [2011](#), compared to 20.9% of native-born persons age 25 and older.³⁹
- In Louisiana, 86% of children with immigrant parents were considered “English proficient” as of [2009](#), according to data from the Urban Institute.⁴⁰
- The English proficiency rate among Asian children in Louisiana was 86.4%, while for Latino children it was 88.4%, as of [2009](#).⁴¹

Endnotes

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