



New Americans in Washington: The Political and Economic Power of Immigrants, Latinos, and Asians in the Evergreen State

Immigrants, Latinos, and Asians account for growing shares of the economy and electorate in Washington. Immigrants (the foreign-born) make up 1 in 7 Washingtonians, and 46.3% of them are naturalized U.S. citizens who are eligible to vote. “New Americans” —immigrants and the children of immigrants—account for 13.2% 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 \$44.7 billion in consumer purchasing power, and the businesses they own had sales and receipts of \$22 billion and employed more than 94,000 people at last count. Immigrant, Latino, and Asian workers, consumers, and entrepreneurs are integral to Washington’s economy and tax base—and they are an electoral force with which every politician must reckon.

Immigrants and their children are growing shares of Washington’s population and electorate.

- The foreign-born share of Washington’s population rose from 6.6% in [1990](#),¹ to 10.4% in [2000](#),² to 13.5% in [2013](#),³ according to the U.S. Census Bureau. Washington was home to 943,664 immigrants in [2013](#),⁴ which is more than the total population of Jacksonville, Florida.⁵
- 46.3% of immigrants (or 436,834 people) in Washington were naturalized U.S. citizens in [2013](#)⁶—meaning that they are eligible to vote.
- Unauthorized immigrants comprised roughly 3.3% of the state’s population (or 230,000 people) in [2012](#), according to a report by the Pew Hispanic Center.⁷
- 13.2% (or 467,799) of registered voters in Washington 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 the [American Immigration Council](#).⁸

1 in 5 Washingtonians are Latino or Asian — and they vote.

- The Latino share of Washington’s population grew from 4.4% in [1990](#),⁹ to 7.5% in [2000](#),¹⁰ to 11.9% (or 831,976 people) in [2013](#).¹¹ The Asian share of the population grew from 4.0% in [1990](#),¹² to 5.5% in [2000](#),¹³ to 7.7% (or 536,093 people) in [2013](#),¹⁴ according to the U.S. Census Bureau.

- Latinos accounted for 4.4% (or 139,000) of Washington voters in the 2012 elections, and Asians 5.3% (169,000), according to the [U.S. Census Bureau](#).¹⁵
- In Washington, 86.5% of children with immigrant parents were U.S. citizens in [2009](#), according to data from the Urban Institute.¹⁶
- In [2009](#), 89.8% of children in Asian families in Washington were U.S. citizens, as were 92% of children in Latino families.¹⁷

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

- The 2014 purchasing power of Asians in Washington totaled \$26.4 billion—an increase of 791% since 1990. Latino buying power totaled \$18.3 billion—an increase of 806% 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 \$12,129 in King County; \$4,140 in Snohomish County; \$1,950 in Pierce County; and \$1,462 in Clark County.¹⁹
- Washington's 37,373 [Asian-owned](#) businesses had sales and receipts of \$12.3 billion and employed 71,421 people in 2007, the last year for which data is available.²⁰ The state's 17,795 [Latino-owned](#) businesses had sales and receipts of \$9.7 billion and employed 23,051 people in 2007, according to the U.S. Census Bureau's Survey of Business Owners.²¹
- From 2006 to 2010, there were 45,696 new immigrant business owners in Washington who had total net business income of \$2.4 billion (13.1% of all net business income in the state), according to Robert Fairlie of the University of California, Santa Cruz.²²
- In 2010, [15% of all business owners](#) in Washington were foreign-born, according to the Fiscal Policy Institute.²³ In 2013, [19.6% of business owners](#) in the Seattle-Tacoma-Bellevue metropolitan area were foreign-born, according to the Fiscal Policy Institute and Americas Society/Council of the Americas.²⁴ Furthermore, 31.7% of "Main Street" business owners—owners of businesses in the retail, accommodation and food services, and neighborhood services sectors—in the Seattle-Tacoma-Bellevue metro area were foreign-born.²⁵

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

- Immigrants comprised 17% of the state's workforce in [2013](#) (or 603,555 workers), according to the U.S. Census Bureau.²⁶

- Immigrants contributed \$1.5 billion in tax revenue to the Washington state economy in [2007](#), accounting for 13.2% of all taxes paid in the state, according to a 2009 study by OneAmerica.²⁷
- Latinos in Washington paid \$1.9 billion in federal taxes and \$1.1 billion in state/local taxes in 2013, according to the [Partnership for a New American Economy](#). In particular, foreign-born Latinos paid \$706 million in federal taxes and \$524 million in state/local taxes.²⁸
 - The federal tax contribution of Washington's Latino population included \$1.5 billion to Social Security and \$343 million to Medicare in 2013. Foreign-born Latinos contributed \$635 million to Social Security and \$149 million to Medicare that year.²⁹
- Immigrants accounted for 16% of total economic output in the Seattle metropolitan area as of [2007](#), according to a study by the Fiscal Policy Institute.³⁰
- Unauthorized immigrants comprised roughly 4.9% of the state's workforce (or 170,000 workers) in [2012](#), according to a report by the Pew Hispanic Center.³¹
- If all unauthorized immigrants were removed from Washington, the state would lose \$14.5 billion in economic activity, \$6.4 billion in gross state product, and approximately 71,197 jobs, even accounting for adequate market adjustment time, according to a report by the [Perryman Group](#).³²

Unauthorized immigrants pay taxes.

- Unauthorized immigrants in Washington paid \$301.9 million in state and local taxes in [2012](#), including \$229.7 million in sales taxes and \$72.2 million in property taxes, according to data from the Institute on Taxation and Economic Policy.³³
- Were unauthorized immigrants in Washington to have lawful permanent residence, they would pay \$332.1 million in state and local taxes, including \$252.7 million in sales taxes and \$79.4 million in property taxes.³⁴

Immigrants are integral to Washington's economy as students.

- Washington's 25,554 foreign students contributed \$737 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 Washington's metropolitan areas. From 2008 to 2012, according to the [Brookings Institution](#), 13,290 foreign students paid \$292 million in tuition and \$179 million in living costs in the Seattle-Tacoma-Bellevue metropolitan area. In the Spokane metro area, 2,646 foreign students paid \$32 million in tuition and \$15 million in living costs.³⁶

- Foreign students also contribute to innovation in Washington. In 2009, “non-resident aliens” comprised 22.7% of master’s degrees and 28.5% 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 Washington, 33.4% of foreign-born persons who were naturalized U.S. citizens in [2011](#) had a bachelor’s or higher degree, compared to 26.3% of noncitizens. At the same time, only 18.2% of naturalized citizens lacked a high-school diploma, compared to 35.6% of noncitizens.³⁸
- The number of immigrants in Washington with a college degree increased by 78.3% between 2000 and 2011, according to [data](#) from the Migration Policy Institute.³⁹
- In Washington, 79.8% 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 Washington was 87.9%, while for Latino children it was 79.2%, as of [2009](#).⁴¹

Endnotes

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