



New Americans in West Virginia: The Economic Power of Immigrants, Latinos, and Asians in the Mountain State

Immigrants, Latinos, and Asians account for growing shares of West Virginia's population and economy. Immigrants (the foreign-born) make up 1.4% of the state's population, and nearly half of them are naturalized U.S. citizens who are eligible to vote. Immigrants not only contribute to the state's economy as workers, but also account for millions of dollars in tax revenue and consumer purchasing power. Moreover, Latinos and Asians (both foreign-born and native-born) wield \$1.3 billion in consumer purchasing power, and the businesses they own had sales and receipts of \$722.8 million and employed more than 5,600 people at last count. As the economy continues to grow, West Virginia can ill-afford to alienate a significant component of its labor force, tax base, and business community.

Immigrants and their children are growing shares of West Virginia's population.

- The foreign-born share of West Virginia's population rose from 0.9% in [1990](#),¹ to 1.1% in [2000](#),² to 1.5% in [2013](#),³ according to the U.S. Census Bureau. West Virginia was home to 27,828 immigrants in [2013](#).⁴
- 48.6% of immigrants (or 13,538 people) in West Virginia were naturalized U.S. citizens in [2013](#)⁵—meaning that they are eligible to vote.
- Unauthorized immigrants comprised 0.2% of the state's population (or less than 5,000 people) in [2012](#), according to a report by the Pew Hispanic Center.⁶

Over 37,000 West Virginians are Latino or Asian.

- The Latino share of West Virginia's population grew from 0.5% in [1990](#),⁷ to 0.7% in [2000](#),⁸ to 1.4% (or 26,586 people) in [2013](#).⁹ The Asian share of the population grew from 0.4% in [1990](#)¹⁰ to 0.6% (or 10,455 people) in [2013](#),¹¹ according to the U.S. Census Bureau.
- In West Virginia, 83% of children with immigrant parents were U.S. citizens in [2009](#), according to data from the Urban Institute.¹²
- In [2009](#), 89% of children in Latino families in West Virginia were U.S. citizens.¹³

Immigrant, Latino, and Asian entrepreneurs and consumers add hundreds of millions of dollars and thousands of jobs to West Virginia's economy.

- The 2014 purchasing power of Latinos in West Virginia totaled \$600 million—an increase of 545% since 1990. Asian buying power totaled \$736 million—an increase of 268% since 1990, according to the [Selig Center for Economic Growth](#) at the University of Georgia.¹⁴
- West Virginia's 899 [Latino-owned](#) businesses had sales and receipts of \$176.6 million and employed 1,430 people in 2007, the last year for which data is available.¹⁵ The state's 1,526 [Asian-owned](#) businesses had sales and receipts of \$546.2 million and employed 4,251 people in 2007, according to the U.S. Census Bureau's Survey of Business Owners.¹⁶
- From 2006 to 2010, there were [1,486](#) new immigrant business owners in West Virginia, and new immigrant business owners had total net business income of \$139 million (which is 5.1% of all net business income in the state), according to Robert Fairlie of the University of California, Santa Cruz.¹⁷
- In 2010, 4.0% of all business owners in West Virginia were foreign-born, according to the [Fiscal Policy Institute](#).¹⁸

Immigrants contribute to West Virginia's economy as workers and taxpayers.

- Immigrants comprised 1.8% of the state's workforce in [2013](#) (or 15,021 workers), according to the U.S. Census Bureau.¹⁹
- Latinos in West Virginia paid \$66.4 million in federal taxes and \$32.7 million in state/local taxes in 2013, according to the [Partnership for a New American Economy](#).²⁰ In particular, foreign-born Latinos paid \$12.6 million in federal taxes and \$7.5 million in state/local taxes in 2013.
 - The federal tax contribution of West Virginia's Latino population included \$47.7 million to Social Security and \$11.2 million to Medicare in 2013.²¹ In particular, foreign-born Latinos contributed \$10.7 million to Social Security and \$2.5 million to Medicare in 2013.

Unauthorized immigrants contribute to West Virginia's economy as workers.

- Unauthorized immigrants comprised 0.2% of the state's workforce (or under 5,000 workers) in [2012](#), according to a report by the Pew Hispanic Center.²²
- If all unauthorized immigrants were removed from West Virginia, the state would lose \$26.6 million in economic activity, \$11.8 million in gross state product, and approximately 180 jobs, even accounting for adequate market adjustment time, according to a report by the [Perryman Group](#).²³

Unauthorized immigrants pay taxes.

- Unauthorized immigrants in West Virginia paid \$4.1 million in state and local taxes in [2012](#), including \$2.9 million in sales taxes, \$875,000 in personal income taxes, and \$413,000 in property taxes, according to data from the Institute on Taxation and Economic Policy.²⁴
- Were unauthorized immigrants in West Virginia to have lawful permanent residence, they would pay \$5.5 million in state and local taxes, including \$3.1 million in sales taxes, \$1.9 million in personal income taxes, and \$455,000 in property taxes.²⁵

Immigrants contribute to West Virginia's economy as students.

- West Virginia's 2,733 foreign students contributed \$65.3 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](#).²⁶
- Foreign students contribute to West Virginia's metropolitan areas. From 2008 to 2012, according to the [Brookings Institution](#), 2,600 foreign students paid \$46.7 million in tuition and 29.6 million in living costs in the Morgantown metropolitan area.²⁷
- Foreign students also contribute to innovation in West Virginia. In 2009, "non-resident aliens" comprised 44% of master's degrees and 67.9% of doctorate degrees in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) fields, according to the [Partnership for a New American Economy](#).²⁸

Naturalized citizens advance educationally.

- In West Virginia, 48.3% of foreign-born persons who were naturalized U.S. citizens in [2011](#) had a bachelor's or higher degree.²⁹
- The number of immigrants in West Virginia with a college degree increased by 14.1% between 2000 and 2011, according to [data](#) from the Migration Policy Institute.³⁰
- In [2011](#), 42.1% of West Virginia's foreign-born population age 25 and older had a bachelor's or higher degree, compared to 18.1% of native-born persons above age 25.
- In West Virginia, 94.6% of children with immigrant parents were considered "English proficient" as of [2009](#), according to data from the Urban Institute.³¹
- The English proficiency rate among Latino children in West Virginia was 96.6% as of [2009](#).³²

Endnotes

1. U.S. Census Bureau, [*The Foreign-Born Population: 2000*](#), December 2003.
2. Ibid.
3. 2013 American Community Survey (3-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*](#) (Washington, DC: Pew Research Center's Hispanic Trends Project, November 18, 2014), p. 30.
7. U.S. Census Bureau, [*The Hispanic Population: 2000*](#), May 2001.
8. Ibid.
9. 2013 American Community Survey (1-Year Estimates).
10. U.S. Census Bureau, [*The Asian Population: 2000*](#), February 2002.
11. 2013 American Community Survey (1-Year Estimates).
12. [The Urban Institute](#), data from the Integrated Public Use Microdata Series datasets drawn from the 2005 - 2009 American Community Survey.
13. Ibid.
14. Jeffrey M. Humphreys, [*The Multicultural Economy 2014*](#) (Athens, GA: Selig Center for Economic Growth, University of Georgia, 2014), pp. 22, 24.
15. U.S. Census Bureau, [*Estimates of Business Ownership by Gender, Ethnicity, Race, and Veteran Status: 2007*](#), June 2011.
16. Ibid.
17. 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).
18. David Dyssegaard Kallick, [*Immigrant Small Business Owners: A Significant and Growing Part of the Economy*](#) (New York, NY: Fiscal Policy Institute, 2012).
19. 2013 American Community Survey (3-Year Estimates).
20. 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: 2014).
21. Ibid.
22. Jeffrey S. Passel, D'Vera Cohn, and Molly Rohal, [*Unauthorized Immigrant Totals Rise in 7 States, Fall in 14*](#) (Washington, DC: Pew Research Center's Hispanic Trends Project, November 18, 2014), p. 30.
23. 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.
24. Institute on Taxation and Economic Policy, [*Undocumented Immigrants' State and Local Tax Contributions*](#) (Washington, DC: April 2015).
25. Ibid.
26. NAFSA: Association of International Educators, [*The Economic Benefits of International Students to the U.S. Economy: Academic Year 2013-2014*](#) (Washington, DC: 2014).
27. Neil Ruiz, [*The Geography of Foreign Students in U.S. Higher Education: Origins and Destinations*](#) (Washington, DC: The Brookings Institution, 2014).
28. Partnership for a New American Economy, [*Help Wanted: The Role of Foreign Workers in the Innovation Economy*](#) (New York, NY: 2013).
29. Migration Policy Institute Data Hub, [West Virginia: Language & Education](#).
30. Ibid.
31. [The Urban Institute](#), data from the Integrated Public Use Microdata Series datasets drawn from the 2005 - 2009 American Community Survey.
32. Ibid.