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

Immigrants, Latinos, and Asians account for growing shares of the economy and population in Wisconsin. Immigrants (the foreign-born) make up 4.7% of the state's population, and more than two-fifths of them are naturalized U.S. citizens who are eligible to vote. "New Americans"—immigrants and the children of immigrants—account for 4.6% of registered voters in the state. Immigrants are not only integral to the state's economy as workers, but also account for tens of million of dollars in tax revenue and consumer purchasing power. Moreover, Latinos and Asians (both foreign-born and native-born) wield \$11.8 billion in consumer purchasing power, and the businesses they own had sales and receipts of \$4.7 billion and employed more than 26,500 people at last count. At a time when the economy is still recovering, Wisconsin 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 Wisconsin's population and electorate.

- **The foreign-born share** of Wisconsin's population rose from 2.5% in [1990](#),¹ to 3.6% in [2000](#),² to 4.7% in [2011](#),³ according to the U.S. Census Bureau. Wisconsin was home to 269,734 immigrants in [2011](#),⁴ which is more than the total population of [Jersey City, New Jersey](#).⁵
- **44.3% of immigrants (or 119,363 people) in Wisconsin were naturalized U.S. citizens in [2011](#)**⁶—meaning that they are eligible to vote.
- Unauthorized immigrants comprised roughly **1.8% of the state's population** (or 100,000 people) in [2010](#), according to a report by the Pew Hispanic Center.⁷
- **4.6% (or 142,380) of registered voters** in Wisconsin 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](#).⁸

Roughly 1 in 12 Wisconsinites are Latino or Asian—and they vote.

- The **Latino share of Wisconsin's population** grew from 1.9% in [1990](#),⁹ to 3.6% in [2000](#),¹⁰ to 6% (or 345,297 people) in [2011](#).¹¹ The **Asian share of the population** grew from 1.1% in [1990](#),¹² to 1.7% in [2000](#),¹³ to 2.3% (or 130,617 people) in [2011](#),¹⁴ according to the U.S. Census Bureau.
- **Latinos accounted for 2.3% (or 66,000) of Wisconsin voters** in the 2008 elections, and Asians 1.1% (31,000), according to the [U.S. Census Bureau](#).¹⁵

- In Wisconsin, **88.4% of children with immigrant parents** were U.S. citizens in [2009](#), according to data from the Urban Institute.¹⁶
- In [2009](#), **92.7% of children in Asian families** in Wisconsin were U.S. citizens, as were **91.4% of children in Latino families**.¹⁷

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

- **The 2012 purchasing power of Latinos in Wisconsin totaled \$7.2 billion**—an increase of 829.3% since 1990. **Asian buying power totaled \$4.6 billion**—an increase of 772.5% since 1990, according to the [Selig Center for Economic Growth](#) at the University of Georgia.¹⁸
- Wisconsin's 6,785 **Asian-owned businesses had sales and receipts of \$2.3 billion and employed 15,808 people** in 2007, the last year for which data is available.¹⁹ The state's 5,619 **Latino-owned businesses had sales and receipts of \$2.4 billion and employed 10,901 people** in 2007, according to the U.S. Census Bureau's Survey of Business Owners.²⁰

Migrant workers are integral to Wisconsin's economy as laborers and taxpayers.

- Migrant workers constituted **more than 40% of all hired dairy employees** (totaling roughly 5,316 individuals) in [2008](#), according to a study at the University of Wisconsin-Madison.²¹
- **More than 5,000 migrant workers, plus 1,000 dependents, arrive annually** in Wisconsin to work in canning, food-processing, and agriculture, according to 2003 [study](#) at the University of Wisconsin-Madison.²²
- Migrant workers' direct spending generated about **\$14.9 million per year in income** to Wisconsin residents and business, **roughly \$8.7 million in tax revenue** to state and local governments and the creation of **417 jobs for Wisconsinites** annually, according to the [same study](#).²³

Immigrants are important to Wisconsin's economy as workers.

- Immigrants comprised **5.5% of the state's workforce** in [2011](#) (or 167,501 workers), according to the U.S. Census Bureau.²⁴
- Unauthorized immigrants comprised **2% of the state's workforce** (or 65,000 workers) in [2010](#), according to a report by the Pew Hispanic Center.²⁵
- If all unauthorized immigrants were removed from Wisconsin, **the state would lose \$2.6 billion in economic activity, \$1.2 billion in gross state product, and approximately 14,579 jobs**, even accounting for adequate market adjustment time, according to a report by the [Perryman Group](#).²⁶

Unauthorized immigrants pay taxes.

- Unauthorized immigrants in Wisconsin paid **\$94.5 million** in state and local taxes in [2010](#), according to data from the Institute for Taxation and Economic Policy,²⁷ which includes:

- \$21.8 million in state income taxes.
- \$6.1 million in property taxes.
- \$66.6 million in sales taxes.

Immigrants are important to Wisconsin's economy as students.

- Wisconsin's 9,987 **foreign students contributed \$256.4 million** to the state's economy in tuition, fees, and living expenses for the 2011-2012 academic year, according to the [NAFSA: Association of International Educators](#) (NAFSA).²⁸

Naturalized citizens advance educationally.

- In Wisconsin, **30.2% of foreign-born persons** who were naturalized U.S. citizens in [2011](#) **had a bachelor's or higher degree**, compared to 26.5% of noncitizens. At the same time, only 22.5% of naturalized citizens lacked a high-school diploma, compared to 35.8% of noncitizens.²⁹
- The number of immigrants in Wisconsin with a college degree **increased by 61.4%** between 2000 and 2011, according to [data](#) from the Migration Policy Institute.³⁰
- In Wisconsin, **81.3% 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 **Asian children in Wisconsin was 82.9%**, while for **Latino children it was 84.2%**, as of [2009](#).³²

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 Ibid.

⁷ 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.

⁸ Rob Paral and Associates, [The New American Electorate: The Growing Political Power of Immigrants and Their Children](#) (Washington, DC: Immigration Policy Center, American Immigration Law Foundation, October 2010)..

⁹ U.S. Census Bureau, [The Hispanic Population: 2000](#), May 2001.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ 2011 American Community Survey (1-Year Estimates).

¹² U.S. Census Bureau, [The Asian Population: 2000](#), February 2002.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ 2011 American Community Survey (1-Year Estimates).

¹⁵ U.S. Electoral College, [2008 Presidential Election: Popular Vote Totals](#).

¹⁶ [The Urban Institute](#), data from the Integrated Public Use Microdata Series datasets drawn from the 2005 - 2009 American Community Survey.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Jeffrey M. Humphreys, [The Multicultural Economy 2012](#) (Athens, GA: Selig Center for Economic Growth, University of Georgia, 2012).

¹⁹ U.S. Census Bureau, [Estimates of Business Ownership by Gender, Ethnicity, Race, and Veteran Status: 2007](#), June, 2011.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Jill Harrison, Sarah Lloyd, and Trish O'Kane, [Overview of Immigrant Workers on Wisconsin Dairy Farms](#) (Madison, WI: Program on Agricultural Technology Studies, University of Wisconsin-Madison, February 2009), p. 2.

²² Doris P. Slesinger and Steven Deller, [Economic Impact of Migrant Workers on Wisconsin's Economy](#) (Madison, WI: Center for Demography and Ecology, University of Wisconsin-Madison, February 2003), p. 27.

²³ Ibid., p. 26.

²⁴ 2011 American Community Survey (1-Year Estimates).

²⁵ 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.

²⁶ 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.

²⁷ The Immigration Policy Center, [*Unauthorized Immigrants Pay Taxes, Too*](#) (Washington, DC: April 2011).

²⁸ NAFSA: Association of International Educators, [*The Economic Benefits of International Students to the U.S. Economy: Academic Year 2011-2012*](#) (Washington, DC: 2012).

²⁹ Migration Policy Institute Data Hub, [*Wisconsin: 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.