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**NEW AMERICANS IN WASHINGTON, D.C.:
The Political and Economic Power of Immigrants, Latinos, and Asians
in Our Nation's Capital**

Immigrants, Latinos, and Asians account for growing shares of the economy and electorate in Washington, D.C. More than 1 in 8 Washingtonians are immigrants (foreign-born), and more than a third of them are naturalized U.S. citizens who are eligible to vote. “New Americans”—immigrants and the children of immigrants—account for 10.5% of registered voters in the District. Immigrants are not only integral to the District’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 \$4.5 billion in consumer purchasing power, and the businesses they own had sales and receipts of \$2.8 billion and employed more than 19,000 people. At a time when the economy is still recovering, Washington, D.C. 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 Washington, D.C.’s population and electorate.

- **The foreign-born share** of Washington, D.C.’s population rose from 9.7% in [1990](#),¹ to 12.9% in [2000](#),² to 13.5% in [2011](#),³ according to the U.S. Census Bureau. Washington, D.C. was home to 83,599 immigrants in [2011](#).⁴
- **37.8% of immigrants (or 31,573 people) in Washington, D.C. were naturalized U.S. citizens** in [2011](#)⁵—meaning that they are eligible to vote.
- Unauthorized immigrants comprised roughly **4.5% of the District’s population** (or 25,000 people) in [2010](#), according to a report by the Pew Hispanic Center.⁶
- **10.5% (or 33,990) of registered voters** in Washington, D.C. 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](#).⁷

1 in 8 Washingtonians are Latino or Asian.

- The **Latino share of Washington, D.C.’s population** grew from 5.4% in [1990](#),⁸ to 7.9% in [2000](#),⁹ to 9.5% (or 58,744 people) in [2011](#).¹⁰ The **Asian share of the population** grew from 1.8% in [1990](#),¹¹ to 2.7% in [2000](#),¹² to 3.6% (or 22,510 people) in [2011](#),¹³ according to the U.S. Census Bureau.
- **Latinos accounted for 3.6% (or 11,000) of Washington, D.C. voters** in the 2008 elections, and **Asians 1.6% (5,000)** according to the [U.S. Census Bureau](#).¹⁴

- In Washington, D.C., **86.6% children with immigrant parents** were U.S. citizens in [2009](#), according to data from The Urban Institute.¹⁵
- In [2009](#), **90.3% of children in Latino families** in Washington, D.C. were U.S. citizens.¹⁶

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

- **The 2012 purchasing power of Latinos in Washington, D.C. totaled \$2.6 billion**—an increase of 444% since 1990. **Asian buying power totaled \$1.9 billion**—an increase of 730% since 1990, according to the [Selig Center for Economic Growth](#) at the University of Georgia.¹⁷
- Washington, D.C.'s 3,428 [Latino-owned](#) businesses had sales and receipts of **\$975 million and employed 7,201 people** in 2007, the last year for which data is available.¹⁸ The District's 3,278 [Asian-owned](#) businesses had sales and receipts of **\$1.8 billion and employed 11,998 people** in 2007, according to the U.S. Census Bureau's Survey of Business Owners.¹⁹

Immigrants are essential to Washington, D.C.'s economy as workers and taxpayers.

- Immigrants comprised **16.8% of the District's workforce** in [2011](#) (or 59,303 workers), according to the U.S. Census Bureau.²⁰
- Immigrants accounted for **20% of total economic output** in the Washington, D.C. metropolitan area as of 2007 according to a study by the [Fiscal Policy Institute](#).²¹
- Immigrant households in the Washington, D.C. metropolitan area **contributed \$9.8 billion in taxes** in [2000](#), according to the Urban Institute.²²

Unauthorized immigrants are integral to Washington, D.C.'s economy as workers and taxpayers.

- Unauthorized immigrants comprised roughly **6.1% of the District's workforce** (or 20,000 workers) in [2010](#), according to a report by the Pew Hispanic Center.²³
- If all unauthorized immigrants were removed from Washington, D.C., **the District would lose \$1.1 billion in economic activity, \$490.5 million in gross product, and approximately 5,400 jobs**, even accounting for adequate market adjustment time, according to a report by the [Perryman Group](#).²⁴
- Unauthorized immigrants in Washington, D.C. paid **\$26.4 million** in state and local taxes in [2010](#), according to data from the Institute for Taxation and Economic Policy,²⁵ which includes:
 - \$5.7 million in state income taxes.
 - \$2.2 million in property taxes.
 - \$18.5 million in sales taxes.

Immigrants are integral to Washington, D.C.'s economy as students.

- Washington, D.C.'s 8,419 **foreign students contributed \$301.9 million** to the District's economy in tuition, fees, and living expenses for the 2011-2012 academic year, according to [NAFSA: Association of International Educators](#).²⁶

Naturalized citizens excel educationally.

- In Washington, D.C., **51.5% of foreign-born persons** who were naturalized U.S. citizens in **2011 had a bachelor's or higher degree**, compared to 47.2% of noncitizens. At the same time, only 15.2% of naturalized citizens lacked a high-school diploma, compared to 27.7% of noncitizens.²⁷
- The number of immigrants in Washington, D.C. with a college degree **increased by 45.4%** between 2000 and 2011, according to [data](#) from the Migration Policy Institute.²⁸
- In Washington, D.C., **90.8% of children with immigrant parents** were considered "English proficient" as of **2009**.²⁹
- The **English proficiency rate among Latino children** in Washington, D.C. was **83.9%**, as of **2009**.³⁰

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 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.

⁷ Rob Paral & Associates and the Immigration Policy Center, [The New American Electorate: The Growing Political Power of Immigrants and Their Children](#) (Washington, DC: American Immigration Council, October 2010).

⁸ U.S. Census Bureau, [The Hispanic Population: 2000](#), May 2001.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ 2011 American Community Survey (1-Year Estimates).

¹¹ U.S. Census Bureau, [The Asian Population: 2000](#), February 2002.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ 2011 American Community Survey (1-Year Estimates).

¹⁴ U.S. Electoral College, [2008 Presidential Election: Popular Vote Totals](#).

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 2012](#) (Athens, GA: Selig Center for Economic Growth, University of Georgia, 2012).

¹⁸ U.S. Census Bureau, [Estimates of Business Ownership by Gender, Ethnicity, Race, and Veteran Status: 2007](#), June 2011.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ 2011 American Community Survey (1-Year Estimates).

²¹ David Dyssegaard Kallick, [Immigrants in the Economy: Contribution of Immigrant Workers to the Country's 25 Largest Metropolitan Areas](#) (New York, NY: Fiscal Policy Institute, December 2009), p. 11.

²² Randy Capps, Everett Henderson, Jeffrey Passel and Michael Fix, [Civic Contributions: Taxes Paid by Immigrants in the Washington, DC, Metropolitan Area](#) (Washington, D.C.: The Urban Institute, May 2006)

²³ 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.

²⁴ 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 District and by Industry](#) (Waco, TX: April 2008), p. 69.

²⁵ The Immigration Policy Center, [Unauthorized Immigrants Pay Taxes, Too](#) (Washington, DC: April 2011).

²⁶ NAFSA: Association of International Educators, [The Economic Benefits of International Students to the U.S. Economy: Academic Year 2011-2012](#) (Washington, DC: 2012).

²⁷ Migration Policy Institute Data Hub, [Washington, D.C.: Language & Education](#).

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ [The Urban Institute](#), data from the Integrated Public Use Microdata Series datasets drawn from the 2005 - 2009 American Community Survey.

³⁰ Ibid.