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**NEW AMERICANS IN ALASKA:  
The Political and Economic Power of Immigrants, Latinos, and Asians  
in the Last Frontier**

Immigrants, Latinos, and Asians account for growing shares of the economy and electorate in Alaska. Immigrants (the foreign-born) make up 6.9% of the state’s population, and nearly half of them are naturalized U.S. citizens who are eligible to vote. “New Americans”—immigrants and the children of immigrants—account for 6.9% 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 roughly \$2.5 billion in consumer purchasing power. Asian-owned businesses had sales and receipts of \$477 million and employed more than 4,000 people at last count. At a time when the economy is in a slump, Alaska 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 Alaska’s population and electorate.*

- **The foreign-born share** of Alaska’s population rose from 4.5% in [1990](#),<sup>1</sup> to 5.9% in [2000](#),<sup>2</sup> to 6.9% in [2010](#),<sup>3</sup> according to the U.S. Census Bureau. Alaska was home to 49,319 immigrants in [2010](#).<sup>4</sup>
- **48.9% of immigrants (or 24,102 people) in Alaska were naturalized U.S. citizens in [2010](#)**<sup>5</sup>—meaning that they are eligible to vote.
- **6.9% (or 23,823) of registered voters** in Alaska 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](#).<sup>6</sup>

*1 in 9 Alaskans are Latino or Asian.*

- The **Latino share of Alaska’s population** grew from 3.2% in [1990](#),<sup>7</sup> to 4.1% in [2000](#),<sup>8</sup> to 5.5% (or 39,249 people) in [2010](#).<sup>9</sup> The **Asian share of the population** grew from 3.2% in [1990](#),<sup>10</sup> to 4.0% in [2000](#),<sup>11</sup> to 5.4% (or 38,135 people) in [2010](#),<sup>12</sup> according to the U.S. Census Bureau.
- **Latinos accounted for 2.6% (or 8,000) of Alaska voters** in the 2008 elections, and **Asians 2.3% (7,000)**, according to the [U.S. Census Bureau](#).<sup>13</sup>

- In Alaska, **92.2% of children with immigrant parents were U.S. citizens** in [2009](#), according to the Urban Institute.<sup>14</sup>
- In [2009](#), **94.6% of children in Asian families** in Alaska were U.S. citizens, as were **96.2% of children in Latino families**.<sup>15</sup>

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

- **The 2010 purchasing power of Latinos in Alaska totaled \$1.3 billion**—an increase of 475.3% since 1990. **Asian buying power totaled \$1.2 billion**—an increase of 311.1% since 1990, according to the [Selig Center for Economic Growth](#) at the University of Georgia.<sup>16</sup>
- Alaska's 2,148 **Asian-owned businesses had sales and receipts of \$477.4 million and employed 4,219 people** in 2007, the last year for which data is available.<sup>17</sup>

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

- Immigrants comprised **8.8% of the state's workforce** in [2009](#) (or 33,511 workers), according to the U.S. Census Bureau.<sup>18</sup>
- Unauthorized immigrants comprised **less than 1.5% of the state's workforce** (or fewer than 10,000 workers) in [2010](#), according to a report by the Pew Hispanic Center.<sup>19</sup>
- If all unauthorized immigrants were removed from Alaska, **the state would lose \$484.7 million in economic activity, \$215.3 million in gross state product, and approximately 1,980 jobs**, even accounting for adequate market adjustment time, according to a report by the [Perryman Group](#).<sup>20</sup>

***Immigrants contribute to Alaska's economy as students.***

- Alaska's 515 **foreign students contributed \$11.7 million** to the state's economy in tuition, fees, and living expenses for the 2009-2010 academic year, according to [NAFSA: Association of International Educators](#).<sup>21</sup>

***Immigrants excel educationally.***

- The number of immigrants in Alaska with a college degree **increased by 31.9%** between 2000 and 2009, according to [data](#) from the Migration Policy Institute.<sup>22</sup>
- In Alaska, **90.9% of children with immigrant parents** were considered "English proficient" as of [2009](#), according to data from the Urban Institute.<sup>23</sup>
- The English proficiency rate among **Asian children was 85.2%**, while for **Latino children it was 98.8%**, as of [2009](#).<sup>24</sup>

## Endnotes

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- <sup>1</sup> U.S. Census Bureau, [\*The Foreign-Born Population: 2000\*](#), December 2003.
- <sup>2</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>3</sup> 2010 American Community Survey (1-Year Estimates).
- <sup>4</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>5</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>6</sup> 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).
- <sup>7</sup> U.S. Census Bureau, [\*The Hispanic Population: 2000\*](#), May 2001.
- <sup>8</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>9</sup> 2010 Census Summary File 1.
- <sup>10</sup> U.S. Census Bureau, [\*The Asian Population: 2000\*](#), February 2002.
- <sup>11</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>12</sup> 2010 Census Summary File 1.
- <sup>13</sup> U.S. Electoral College, [\*2008 Presidential Election: Popular Vote Totals\*](#).
- <sup>14</sup> [The Urban Institute](#), data from the Integrated Public Use Microdata Series datasets drawn from the 2005 - 2009 American Community Survey.
- <sup>15</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>16</sup> Jeffrey M. Humphreys, [\*The Multicultural Economy 2010\*](#) (Athens, GA: Selig Center for Economic Growth, University of Georgia, 2010).
- <sup>17</sup> U.S. Census Bureau, [\*Estimates of Business Ownership by Gender, Ethnicity, Race, and Veteran Status: 2007\*](#), June 2011. Data on Latino-owned businesses was withheld by the Census Bureau because the estimate “did not meet publication standards.”
- <sup>18</sup> 2009 American Community Survey (1-Year Estimates).
- <sup>19</sup> Jeffrey S. Passel and D’Vera Cohn, [\*Unauthorized Immigrant Population: National and State Trends, 2010\*](#) (Washington, DC: The Pew Charitable Trusts, February 1, 2011), p. 25.
- <sup>20</sup> 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.
- <sup>21</sup> NAFSA: Association of International Educators, [\*The Economic Benefits of International Education to the United States for the 2009-2010 Academic Year: A Statistical Analysis\*](#) (Washington, DC: NAFSA: Association of International Educators, 2010).
- <sup>22</sup> Migration Policy Institute Data Hub, [Alaska: Language & Education](#).
- <sup>23</sup> [The Urban Institute](#), data from the Integrated Public Use Microdata Series datasets drawn from the 2005 - 2009 American Community Survey.
- <sup>24</sup> Ibid.