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

Immigrants, Latinos, and Asians account for a significant share of the population and economy in Montana. Immigrants (the foreign-born) make up 2% of the state's population, and more than half of them are naturalized U.S. citizens who are eligible to vote. "New Americans"—immigrants and the children of immigrants—account for 2.7% of registered voters in the state. Immigrants are not only important 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 \$869.7 million in consumer purchasing power, and the businesses they own had sales and receipts of more than \$300 million and employed more than 4,000 people at last count. At a time when the economy is in a slump, Montana can ill-afford to alienate a significant component of its labor force, tax base, and business community.

*Immigrants and their children are significant shares of Montana's population and electorate.*

- **The foreign-born share** of Montana's population was 2.0% in [2010](#) (20,031 people),<sup>1</sup> according to the U.S. Census Bureau.
- **57.4% of immigrants (or 11,506 people) in Montana were naturalized U.S. citizens in [2010](#)**<sup>2</sup>—meaning that they are eligible to vote.
- **2.7% (or 13,937) of registered voters** in Montana 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>3</sup>

*3.5% of Montanans are Latino or Asian.*

- **The Latino share of Montana's population** grew from 1.5% in [1990](#),<sup>4</sup> to 2.0% in [2000](#),<sup>5</sup> to 2.9% (or 28,565 people) in [2010](#).<sup>6</sup> **The Asian share of the population** was 0.6% (or 6,253 people) in [2010](#),<sup>7</sup> according to the U.S. Census Bureau.
- **Latinos accounted for 1.7% (or 8,000) of Montana voters** in the 2008 elections, according to the [U.S. Census Bureau](#).<sup>8</sup>
- In Montana, **97.6% of children with immigrant parents were U.S. citizens** in [2009](#), according to data from the Urban Institute.<sup>9</sup>
- In [2009](#), **99.5% of children in Latino families** in Montana were U.S. citizens.<sup>10</sup>

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

- **The 2010 purchasing power of Latinos in Montana totaled \$650.3 million**—an increase of 661% since 1990. **Asian buying power totaled \$219.4 million**—an increase of 451.5% since 1990, according to the [Selig Center for Economic Growth](#) at the University of Georgia.<sup>11</sup>
- Montana's 646 **Asian-owned businesses had sales and receipts of \$142.8 million and employed 1,735 people** in 2007, the last year for which data is available.<sup>12</sup> The state's 1,131 **Latino-owned businesses had sales and receipts of \$161 million and employed 2,436 people** in 2007, according to the U.S. Census Bureau's Survey of Business Owners.<sup>13</sup>

***Immigrants are important to Montana's economy as workers.***

- Immigrants comprised **2.1% of the state's workforce** in [2009](#) (or 10,845 workers), according to the U.S. Census Bureau.<sup>14</sup>
- Unauthorized immigrants comprised less than **1% of the state's workforce** (or fewer than 10,000 workers) in [2010](#), according to a report by the Pew Hispanic Center.<sup>15</sup>
- If all unauthorized immigrants were removed from Montana, **the state would lose \$96.3 million in economic activity, \$42.8 million in gross state product, and approximately 720 jobs**, even accounting for adequate market adjustment time, according to a report by the [Perryman Group](#).<sup>16</sup>

***Immigrants are important to Montana's economy as students.***

- Montana's 1,226 **foreign students contributed \$30 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>17</sup>

***Immigrants excel educationally.***

- The number of immigrants in Montana with a college degree **increased by 34.5 percent** between 2000 and 2009, according to [data](#) from the Migration Policy Institute.<sup>18</sup>
- In Montana, **91.3% of children with immigrant parents** were considered "English proficient" as of [2009](#), according to data from the Urban Institute.<sup>19</sup>
- The English proficiency rate among **Latino children in Montana was 99.3%** as of [2009](#).<sup>20</sup>

**Endnotes**

<sup>1</sup> 2010 American Community Survey (1-Year Estimates).

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</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>4</sup> U.S. Census Bureau, [The Hispanic Population: 2000](#), May 2001.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> 2010 Census Summary File 1.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

<sup>8</sup> U.S. Electoral College, [2008 Presidential Election: Popular Vote Totals](#).

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<sup>9</sup> [The Urban Institute](#), data from the Integrated Public Use Microdata Series datasets drawn from the 2005 - 2009 American Community Survey.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

<sup>11</sup> Jeffrey M. Humphreys, [The Multicultural Economy 2010](#) (Athens, GA: Selig Center for Economic Growth, University of Georgia, 2010).

<sup>12</sup> U.S. Census Bureau, [Estimates of Business Ownership by Gender, Ethnicity, Race, and Veteran Status: 2007](#), June 2011.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

<sup>14</sup> 2009 American Community Survey (1-Year Estimates).

<sup>15</sup> 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.

<sup>16</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>17</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>18</sup> Migration Policy Institute Data Hub, [Montana: Language & Education](#).

<sup>19</sup> [The Urban Institute](#), data from the Integrated Public Use Microdata Series datasets drawn from the 2005 - 2009 American Community Survey.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid.