

January 2012

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

Immigrants, Latinos, and Asians account for growing shares of the economy and population in Nebraska. Immigrants (the foreign-born) make up 6.1% of the state's population, and 40.6% of them are naturalized U.S. citizens who are eligible to vote. "New Americans"—immigrants and the children of immigrants—account for 3.2% 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 \$4.4 billion in consumer purchasing power, and the businesses they own had sales and receipts of more than \$1.2 billion and employed 8,500 people at last count. At a time when the economy is in a slump, Nebraska 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 Nebraska's population and electorate.

- **The foreign-born share** of Nebraska's population rose from 1.8% in [1990](#),¹ to 4.4% in [2000](#),² to 6.1% in [2010](#),³ according to the U.S. Census Bureau. Nebraska was home to 112,178 immigrants in [2010](#),⁴ which is nearly the same as the population of [Berkeley, California](#).⁵
- **40.6% of immigrants (or 45,513 people) in Nebraska were naturalized U.S. citizens in [2010](#)**⁶—meaning that they are eligible to vote.
- **3.2% (or 30,038) of registered voters** in Nebraska 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 9 Nebraskans are Latino or Asian.

- The **Latino share of Nebraska's population** grew from 2.3% in [1990](#),⁸ to 5.5% in [2000](#),⁹ to 9.2% (or 168,399 people) in [2010](#).¹⁰ The **Asian share of the population** grew from 0.8% in [1990](#),¹¹ to 1.3% in [2000](#),¹² to 1.6% (or 29,287 people) in [2010](#),¹³ according to the U.S. Census Bureau.
- **Latinos accounted for 2.8%** (or 24,000) **of Nebraska voters** in the 2008 elections, **and Asians 0.9%** (or 8,000), according to the [U.S. Census Bureau](#).¹⁴
- In Nebraska, **85.3% of children with immigrant parents** were U.S. citizens in [2009](#), according to data from the Urban Institute.¹⁵

- In [2009](#), **87.3% of children in Asian families** in Nebraska were U.S. citizens, as were **92.5% of children in Latino families**.¹⁶

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

- **The 2010 purchasing power of Latinos in Nebraska totaled \$3.3 billion**—an increase of 870.4% since 1990. **Asian buying power totaled \$1.1 billion**—an increase of 694.2% since 1990, according to the [Selig Center for Economic Growth](#) at the University of Georgia.¹⁷
- Nebraska's 2,277 **Asian-owned businesses had sales and receipts of \$483.6 million and employed 5,425 people** in 2007, the last year for which data is available.¹⁸ The state's 3,063 **Latino-owned businesses had sales and receipts of \$786.7 million and employed 3,351 people** in 2007, according to the U.S. Census Bureau's Survey of Business Owners.¹⁹

Immigrants make vital economic contributions to Nebraska's state and local economy.

- Immigrant spending accounted for **\$1.6 billion worth of total production in Nebraska's economy** and generated roughly **12,000 jobs for the state** in 2006, according to a [study](#) from the University of Nebraska-Omaha.²⁰
- Immigrant spending made a large impact on the state's local economies in [2006](#),²¹ including:
 - \$1.14 billion in production and 8,331 jobs in Omaha and Lincoln.
 - \$204 million in production and 1,275 jobs in Nebraska's Eastern region.
 - \$238 million in production and 1,896 jobs in Nebraska's Western region.
- Nebraska's immigrants also **contributed roughly \$154 million in property, income, sales, and gas tax revenue** in 2006, according to the [same study](#).²²
- Unauthorized immigrants in Nebraska paid **\$43.3 million** in state and local taxes in [2010](#), according to data from the Institute for Taxation and Economic Policy,²³ which includes:
 - \$6.8 million in state income taxes.
 - \$4.4 million in property taxes.
 - \$32.1 million in sales taxes.

Immigrants are integral to Nebraska's economy as workers.

- Immigrants comprised **7.4% of the state's workforce** in [2010](#) (or 74,250 workers), according to the U.S. Census Bureau.²⁴
- Unauthorized immigrants comprised **3% of the state's workforce** (or 30,000 workers) in [2010](#), according to a report by the Pew Hispanic Center.²⁵
- If all unauthorized immigrants were removed from Nebraska, **the state would lose \$852.4 million in economic activity, \$378.6 million in gross state product, and approximately 5,400 jobs**, even accounting for adequate market adjustment time, according to a report by the [Perryman Group](#).²⁶

Immigrants are integral to Nebraska's economy as students.

- Nebraska's 4,142 **foreign students contributed \$89.7 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](#).²⁷

Naturalized citizens excel educationally.

- The number of immigrants in Nebraska with a college degree **increased by 60.7%** between 2000 and 2009, according to [data](#) from the Migration Policy Institute.²⁸
- In Nebraska, **75% of children with immigrant parents** were considered "English proficient" as of [2009](#), according to data from the Urban Institute.²⁹
- The English proficiency rate among **Asian children in Nebraska was 83.2%**, while for **Latino children it was 81.7%**, as of [2009](#).³⁰

Endnotes

¹ U.S. Census Bureau, [The Foreign-Born Population: 2000](#), December 2003.

² Ibid.

³ 2010 American Community Survey (1-Year Estimates).

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ 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).

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

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ 2010 American Community Survey (1-Year Estimates).

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

¹² Ibid.

¹³ 2010 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 2010](#) (Athens, GA: Selig Center for Economic Growth, University of Georgia, 2010).

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

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Christopher S. Decker, [Nebraska's Immigrant Population: Economic and Fiscal Impacts](#) (Omaha, NE: Office of Latino/Latin American Studies, University of Nebraska at Omaha, October 2008).

²¹ Ibid.

²² Ibid.

²³ The Immigration Policy Center, [Unauthorized Immigrants Pay Taxes, Too](#) (Washington, DC: April 2011).

²⁴ 2010 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 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).

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.