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

Immigrants, Latinos, and Asians account for growing shares of the economy and population in Oklahoma. Immigrants (the foreign-born) make up more than 1 in 20 Oklahomans, and nearly one-third of them are naturalized U.S. citizens who are eligible to vote. “New Americans”—immigrants and the children of immigrants—account for 3.3% 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 \$8.2 billion in consumer purchasing power, and the businesses they own had sales and receipts of \$3.5 billion and employed more than 24,000 people at last count. At a time when the economy is in a slump, Oklahoma 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 Oklahoma’s population and electorate.*

- **The foreign-born share** of Oklahoma’s population rose from 2.1% in [1990](#),<sup>1</sup> to 3.8% in [2000](#),<sup>2</sup> to 5.5% in [2010](#),<sup>3</sup> according to the U.S. Census Bureau. Oklahoma was home to 206,382 immigrants in [2010](#),<sup>4</sup> which is nearly the total population of [Montgomery, Alabama](#).<sup>5</sup>
- **31.9% of immigrants (or 65,938 people) in Oklahoma were naturalized U.S. citizens in [2010](#)**<sup>6</sup>—meaning that they are eligible to vote.
- **3.3% (or 59,334) of registered voters** in Oklahoma 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>7</sup>

*Nearly 1 in 9 Oklahomans are Latino or Asian.*

- The **Latino share of Oklahoma’s population** grew from 2.7% in [1990](#),<sup>8</sup> to 5.2% in [2000](#),<sup>9</sup> to 8.8% (or 331,030 people) in [2010](#).<sup>10</sup> The **Asian share of the population** grew from 1.0% in [1990](#),<sup>11</sup> to 1.4% in [2000](#),<sup>12</sup> to 1.7% (or 63,949 people) in [2010](#),<sup>13</sup> according to the U.S. Census Bureau.
- **Latinos accounted for 2.2% (or 33,000) of Oklahoma voters** in the 2008 elections, according to the [U.S. Census Bureau](#).<sup>14</sup>
- In Oklahoma, **89.1% of children with immigrant parents were U.S. citizens in [2009](#)**, according to data from the Urban Institute.<sup>15</sup>

- In [2009](#), **94.2% of children in Asian families** in Oklahoma were U.S. citizens, as were **92.7% of children in Latino families**.<sup>16</sup>

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

- **The 2010 purchasing power of Latinos in Oklahoma totaled \$6.2 billion**—an increase of 763% since 1990. **Asian buying power totaled \$2 billion**—an increase of 373.9% since 1990, according to the [Selig Center for Economic Growth](#) at the University of Georgia.<sup>17</sup>
- Oklahoma's 7,663 **Latino-owned businesses had sales and receipts of \$1.7 billion and employed 8,940 people** in 2007, the last year for which data is available.<sup>18</sup> The state's 6,736 **Asian-owned businesses had sales and receipts of \$1.8 billion and employed 15,673 people** in 2007, according to the U.S. Census Bureau's Survey of Business Owners.<sup>19</sup>

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

- Immigrants comprised **7.2% of the state's workforce** in [2010](#) (or 132,232 workers), according to the U.S. Census Bureau.<sup>20</sup>
- Unauthorized immigrants comprised roughly **3% of the state's workforce** (or 55,000 workers) in [2010](#), according to a report by the Pew Hispanic Center.<sup>21</sup>
- If one half of all the state's immigrant labor force (roughly 50,000 people) was removed, Oklahoma's economy would be reduced by **1.32% in the short run—a reduction of nearly \$1.8 billion** relative to 2006 production levels, according to a 2008 study by the [Economic Impact Group](#).<sup>22</sup>
- If all unauthorized immigrants were removed from Oklahoma, **the state would lose \$580.3 million in economic activity, \$257.8 million in gross state product, and approximately 4,680 jobs**, even accounting for adequate market adjustment time, according to a report by the [Perryman Group](#).<sup>23</sup>

*Unauthorized immigrants pay taxes.*

- Unauthorized immigrants in Oklahoma paid **\$81.1 million** in state and local taxes in [2010](#), according to data from the Institute for Taxation and Economic Policy,<sup>24</sup> which includes:
  - \$13.3 million in state income taxes
  - \$8.4 million in property taxes
  - \$59.4 million in sales taxes

*Immigrants are integral to Oklahoma's economy as students.*

- Oklahoma's 8,445 **foreign students contributed \$174.6 million** to the state's economy in tuition, fees, and living expenses for the 2008-2009 academic year, according to [NAFSA: Association of International Educators](#).<sup>25</sup>

## *Naturalized citizens excel educationally.*

- In Oklahoma, **29.2% of foreign-born persons** who were naturalized U.S. citizens in [2009](#) **had a bachelor's or higher degree**, compared to 15.6% of noncitizens. At the same time, only 25% of naturalized citizens lacked a high-school diploma, compared to 49.9% of noncitizens.<sup>26</sup>
- The number of **immigrants in Oklahoma with a college degree increased by 45.4%** between 2000 and 2009, according to [data](#) from the Migration Policy Institute.<sup>27</sup>
- In Oklahoma, **85.7% of children with immigrant parents** were considered “English proficient” as of [2009](#), according to data from the Urban Institute.<sup>28</sup>
- The English proficiency rate among **Asian children in Oklahoma was 90.1%**, while for **Latino children it was 85.1%**, as of [2009](#).<sup>29</sup>

## Endnotes

<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> U.S. Census Bureau, *2008 Annual Estimates of the Resident Population for Counties*, May 13, 2009.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

<sup>7</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>8</sup> U.S. Census Bureau, *The Hispanic Population: 2000*, May 2001.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

<sup>10</sup> 2010 American Community Survey (1-Year Estimates).

<sup>11</sup> U.S. Census Bureau, *The Asian Population: 2000*, February 2002.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

<sup>13</sup> 2010 American Community Survey (1-Year Estimates).

<sup>14</sup> U.S. Electoral College, *2008 Presidential Election: Popular Vote Totals*.

<sup>15</sup> [The Urban Institute](#), data from the Integrated Public Use Microdata Series datasets drawn from the 2005 - 2009 American Community Survey.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

<sup>17</sup> Jeffrey M. Humphreys, *The Multicultural Economy 2010* (Athens, GA: Selig Center for Economic Growth, University of Georgia, 2010).

<sup>18</sup> U.S. Census Bureau, *Estimates of Business Ownership by Gender, Ethnicity, Race, and Veteran Status: 2007*, June, 2011.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

<sup>20</sup> 2010 American Community Survey (1-Year Estimates).

<sup>21</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>22</sup> Economic Impact Group, LLC, *A Computable General Equilibrium (CGE) Analysis of the Impact of the Oklahoma Taxpayer and Citizen Protection Act of 2007* (Edmond, OK: Economic Impact Group, 2008).

<sup>23</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>24</sup> The Immigration Policy Center, *Unauthorized Immigrants Pay Taxes, Too* (Washington, DC: April 2011).

<sup>25</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>26</sup> Migration Policy Institute Data Hub, [Oklahoma: Language & Education](#).

<sup>27</sup> Ibid.

<sup>28</sup> [The Urban Institute](#), data from the Integrated Public Use Microdata Series datasets drawn from the 2005 - 2009 American Community Survey.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid.