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NEW AMERICANS IN THE SILVER STATE: The Economic and Political Power of Immigrants, Latinos, and Asians in Nevada

There are few states where the growing political and economic clout of immigrants, Latinos, and Asians is as apparent as in Nevada. Immigrants make up nearly 20% of Nevada's population, and 38% of them are naturalized U.S. citizens who are eligible to vote. Immigrants and the children of immigrants account for nearly 15% of all registered voters in the state. Latinos account for one-quarter of all Nevadans and wield over \$14 billion in consumer purchasing power. At last count, the sales and receipts of businesses owned by Latinos and Asians totaled \$3.6 billion and employed more than 25,000 people. Immigrant, Latino, and Asian workers, consumers, and entrepreneurs are integral to Nevada's economy and tax base—and they are an electoral force with which every politician must reckon.

Nearly 15% of registered voters in Nevada are immigrants or the children of immigrants.

- **The foreign-born share** of Nevada's population rose from 8.7% in [1990](#),¹ to 15.8% in [2000](#),² to 19.4% in [2007](#),³ according to the U.S. Census Bureau. Nevada was home to 497,821 immigrants in [2007](#),⁴ which is roughly equal to the total population of [Atlanta, GA](#).⁵
- **38.1% of immigrants in Nevada (or 189,707 people) were naturalized U.S. citizens in [2007](#)**—meaning that they are eligible to vote.⁶
- **14.8% (or 133,890) of all registered voters** in Nevada are “New Americans”—naturalized citizens or the U.S.-born children of immigrants who were raised during the current era of large-scale immigration from Latin America and Asia which began in 1965—according to an analysis of 2006 Census Bureau data by [Rob Paral & Associates](#).⁷

One quarter of Nevadans are Latino—and they vote.

- The **Latino share of Nevada's population** grew from 10.4% in [1990](#),⁸ to 19.7% in [2000](#),⁹ to 25.1% (or 643,910 people) in [2007](#).¹⁰ The Asian share of the population grew from 2.9% in [1990](#),¹¹ to 4.5% in [2000](#),¹² to 6.1% (or 156,488 people) in [2007](#),¹³ according to the U.S. Census Bureau.
- Latinos comprised 11.6% (or 119,000) of Nevada voters in the 2008 elections, and Asians 3.4% (or 35,000), according to the [U.S. Census Bureau](#).¹⁴ The numbers of Latino and Asian voters exceeded Barack Obama's margin of victory over John McCain ([120,909 votes](#)) in this electoral battleground state.¹⁵

THE IMMIGRATION POLICY CENTER

1331 G STREET, NW • WASHINGTON, DC 20005 • TEL: (202) 507-7500 • FAX: (202) 742-5619

www.immigrationpolicy.org

Latino immigrants are essential to Nevada's economy as workers, taxpayers, and consumers.

- Latino immigrants in Nevada paid roughly **\$2.6 billion in federal taxes** and **\$1.6 billion in state and local taxes** (including \$500 million in sales taxes) in 2005. The money that Latino immigrants “earn and spend in Nevada accounts for about 25% of the State’s Gross State Product,” and Latino immigrant “employment, income and spending results in the creation of 108,380 jobs in Nevada,” according to a [2007 report](#) from the Progressive Leadership Alliance of Nevada.¹⁶
- Latino immigrants comprised about **16% of the state’s entire workforce** in 2005, and an even higher share in select industries: 81% of the agricultural workforce, 47% of the construction and mining workforce, and 22% of the entertainment and tourist services workforce, according to a [2007 report](#) from the Progressive Leadership Alliance of Nevada.¹⁷
- Unauthorized immigrants comprised **12.2% of the state’s workforce** in [2008](#) (or 170,000 workers), according to a report by the Pew Hispanic Center.¹⁸
- If all unauthorized immigrants were removed from Nevada, **the state would lose \$9.7 billion in expenditures, \$4.3 billion in economic output, and approximately 45,533 jobs**, even accounting for adequate market adjustment time, according to a report by the [Perryman Group](#).¹⁹

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

- The [Selig Center for Economic Growth](#) at the University of Georgia estimates that the 2008 purchasing power of Nevada’s Latinos totaled \$14.4 billion—an increase of 965.1% since 1990. Asian buying power totaled \$6.3 billion—an increase of 1,020.2% since 1990.²⁰
- The U.S. Census Bureau’s 2002 Survey of Business Owners found that Nevada’s 9,741 [Latino-owned](#) businesses had sales and receipts of \$1.6 billion and employed 12,874 people.²¹ The state’s 8,872 [Asian-owned](#) businesses had sales and receipts of \$2 billion and employed 12,713 people.²²

Endnotes

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

² Ibid.

³ 2007 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 2008).

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

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ 2007 American Community Survey (1-Year Estimates).

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

¹² Ibid.

¹³ 2007 American Community Survey (1-Year Estimates).

¹⁴ 2008 Current Population Survey, [Table 4b: Reported Voting and Registration of the Voting-Age Population, by Sex, Race and Hispanic Origin, for States: November 2008](#).

¹⁵ U.S. Electoral College, [2008 Presidential Election: Popular Vote Totals](#).

¹⁶ Robert Ginsberg, Ph.D., [Vital Beyond Belief: The Demographic and Economic Facts about Hispanic Immigrants in Nevada](#) (Las Vegas, NV: Progressive Leadership Alliance of Nevada, 2007).

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Jeffrey S. Passel and D'Vera Cohn, [A Portrait of Unauthorized Immigrants in the United States](#) (Washington, DC: Pew Hispanic Center, April 14, 2009).

¹⁹ 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).

²⁰ Jeffrey M. Humphreys, [The Multicultural Economy 2008](#) (Athens, GA: Selig Center for Economic Growth, University of Georgia, 2008).

²¹ U.S. Census Bureau, [Hispanic-Owned Firms: 2002](#), August 2006.

²² U.S. Census Bureau, [Asian-Owned Firms: 2002](#), August 2006.