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**NEW AMERICANS IN ALABAMA:
The Economic Power of Immigrants, Latinos, and Asians in the Yellowhammer State**

Immigrants, Latinos, and Asians account for growing shares of the economy and population in Alabama. Immigrants (the foreign-born) make up 3.5% of the state's population, and nearly one third of them are naturalized U.S. citizens who are eligible to vote. Immigrants are not only important 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 \$5.7 billion in consumer purchasing power, and the businesses they own had sales and receipts of \$3.6 billion and employed more than 25,000 people at last count. At a time when the economy is in a slump, Alabama 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 Alabama's population and electorate.

- **The foreign-born share** of Alabama's population rose from 1.1% in [1990](#),¹ to 2.0% in [2000](#),² to 3.5% in [2010](#),³ according to the U.S. Census Bureau. Alabama was home to 168,596 immigrants in [2010](#),⁴ which is more than the total population of [Alexandria, Virginia](#).⁵
- **28.5% of immigrants (or 48,099 people) in Alabama were naturalized U.S. citizens in [2010](#)**⁶—meaning that they are eligible to vote.⁷
- **0.8% (or 19,504) of registered voters** in Alabama 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](#).⁸

Nearly 5% of Alabamans are Latino or Asian.

- The **Latino share of Alabama's population** grew from 0.6% in [1990](#),⁹ to 1.7% in [2000](#),¹⁰ to 3.8% (or 181,841 people) in [2010](#).¹¹ The **Asian share of the population** grew from 0.5% in [1990](#),¹² to 0.7% in [2000](#),¹³ to 1.1% (or 52,638 people) in [2010](#),¹⁴ according to the U.S. Census Bureau.
- In Alabama, **84.6% of children with immigrant parents were U.S. citizens in [2009](#)**, according to the Urban Institute.¹⁵
- In [2009](#), **87.8% of children in Asian families** in Alabama were U.S. citizens, as were **85.1% of children in Latino families**.¹⁶

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

- **The 2010 purchasing power of Latinos in Alabama totaled \$3.7 billion**—an increase of 1,237.4% since 1990. **Asian buying power totaled \$2 billion**—an increase of 592.4% since 1990, according to the [Selig Center for Economic Growth](#) at the University of Georgia.¹⁷
- Alabama's 4,439 **Latino-owned** businesses had sales and receipts of **\$1 billion and employed 7,346 people** in 2007, the last year for which data is available.¹⁸ The state's 6,908 **Asian-owned** businesses had sales and receipts of **\$2.6 billion and employed 17,993 people** in 2007, according to the U.S. Census Bureau's Survey of Business Owners.¹⁹

Immigrants are important to Alabama's economy as workers.

- Immigrants comprised **4.9% of the state's workforce** in **2010** (or 111,670 workers), according to the U.S. Census Bureau.²⁰

Unauthorized immigrants are important to Alabama's economy as workers and taxpayers.

- Unauthorized immigrants in Alabama paid **\$130.3 million** in state and local taxes in **2010**, according to data from the Institute for Taxation and Economic Policy.²¹ This includes:
 - \$25.8 million in state income taxes.
 - \$5.8 million in property taxes.
 - \$98.7 million in sales taxes.
- Unauthorized immigrants comprised roughly **4.2% of the state's workforce** (or 95,000 workers) in **2010**, according to a report by the Pew Hispanic Center.²²
- If all unauthorized immigrants were removed from Alabama, **the state would lose \$2.6 billion in economic activity, \$1.1 billion in gross state product, and approximately 17,819 jobs**, even accounting for adequate market adjustment time, according to a report by the [Perryman Group](#).²³

Immigrants contribute to Alabama's economy as students.

- Alabama's 6,364 **foreign students contributed \$122.9 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](#).²⁴

Naturalized citizens excel educationally.

- In Alabama, **44.3% of foreign-born persons** who were naturalized U.S. citizens in **2009 had a bachelor's or higher degree**, compared to 22.5% of noncitizens, according to data from the Migration Policy Institute. At the same time, only 15.1% of naturalized citizens lacked a high-school diploma, compared to 41.2% of noncitizens.²⁵

- The number of immigrants in Alabama with a college degree **increased by 66.1%** between 2000 and 2009.²⁶
- In Alabama, **80.6% of children with immigrant parents** were considered “English proficient” as of [2009](#), according to data from the Urban Institute.²⁷
- The English proficiency rate among **Asian children was 88.6%**, while for **Latino children it was 79%**, as of [2009](#).²⁸

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 2010 American Community Survey (1-year Estimates).

⁸ 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).

⁹ U.S. Census Bureau, [The Hispanic Population: 2000](#), May 2001.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ 2010 American Community Survey (1-Year Estimates).

¹² U.S. Census Bureau, [The Asian Population: 2000](#), February 2002.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ 2010 American Community Survey (1-Year Estimates).

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 2010 American Community Survey (1-Year Estimates).

²¹ The Immigration Policy Center, [Unauthorized Immigrants Pay Taxes, Too](#) (Washington, DC: April 2011).

²² 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.

²³ 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.

²⁴ 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).

²⁵ Migration Policy Institute Data Hub, [Alabama: Language & Education](#).

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ [The Urban Institute](#), data from the Integrated Public Use Microdata Series datasets drawn from the 2005 - 2009 American Community Survey.

²⁸ Ibid.