

January 2012

NEW AMERICANS IN HAWAII: The Political and Economic Power of Immigrants, Asians, and Latinos in the Aloha State

Immigrants, Asians, and Latinos account for growing shares of the economy and electorate in Hawaii. Nearly 1 in 5 residents of Hawaii are immigrants (foreign-born), 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 14.4% 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 \$26.3 billion in consumer purchasing power, and the businesses they own had sales and receipts of \$18.9 billion and employed more than 115,000 people at last count. At a time when the economy is in a slump, Hawaii 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 Hawaii’s population and electorate.

- **The foreign-born share** of Hawaii’s population rose from 14.7% in [1990](#),¹ to 17.5% in [2000](#),² to 18.2% in [2010](#),³ according to the U.S. Census Bureau. Hawaii was home to 248,213 immigrants in [2010](#),⁴ which is more than the total population of [Jersey City, New Jersey](#).⁵
- **56.9% of immigrants (or 141,320 people) in Hawaii were naturalized U.S. citizens in [2010](#)**⁶—meaning that they are eligible to vote.
- **14.4% (or 75,221) of registered voters** in Hawaii 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

Nearly half of all residents of Hawaii are Asian or Latino.

- **The Asian share of Hawaii’s population** was 38.9% (or 530,449 people) in [2010](#).⁸ **The Latino share of the population** grew from 7.4% in [1990](#)⁹ to 8.9% (or 121,362 people) in [2010](#).¹⁰ according to the U.S. Census Bureau.
- **Asians accounted for 43.5% (or 199,000) of Hawaii voters** in the 2008 elections, and **Latinos 3.3%** (or 15,000) according to the [U.S. Census Bureau](#).¹¹
- In Hawaii, **88% of children with immigrant parents were U.S. citizens in [2009](#)**, according to data from the Urban Institute.¹²

- In [2009](#), **94.7% of children in Asian families** in Hawaii were U.S. citizens, as were **98.9% of children in Latino families**.¹³

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

- The **2010 purchasing power of Asians in Hawaii totaled \$23.4 billion**—an increase of 92% since 1990. **Latino buying power totaled \$2.9 billion**—an increase of 208.5% since 1990, according to the [Selig Center for Economic Growth](#) at the University of Georgia.¹⁴
- Hawaii's 56,872 **Asian-owned businesses had sales and receipts of \$18.2 billion and employed 111,924 people** in 2007, the last year for which data is available.¹⁵ The state's 4,374 **Latino-owned businesses had sales and receipts of \$671.7 million and employed 3,977 people** in 2007, according to the U.S. Census Bureau's Survey of Business Owners.¹⁶

Immigrants are essential to Hawaii's economy as workers.

- Immigrants comprised **21.4% of the state's workforce** in [2010](#) (or 156,013 workers), according to the U.S. Census Bureau.¹⁷

Unauthorized immigrants are important to Hawaii's economy as workers and consumers.

- Unauthorized immigrants comprised roughly **4.6% of the state's workforce** (or 30,000 workers) in [2010](#), according to a report by the Pew Hispanic Center.¹⁸
- If all unauthorized immigrants were removed from Hawaii, **the state would lose \$2.0 billion in economic activity, \$900.3 million in gross state product, and approximately 8,460 jobs**, even accounting for adequate market adjustment time, according to a report by the [Perryman Group](#).¹⁹

Unauthorized immigrants pay taxes.

- Unauthorized immigrants in Hawaii paid **\$50.6 million in state and local taxes** in [2010](#), according to data from the Institute for Taxation and Economic Policy,²⁰ which includes:
 - \$10.7 million in state income taxes
 - \$3.5 million in property taxes
 - \$36.5 million in sales taxes

Immigrants are integral to Hawaii's economy as students.

- Hawaii's 5,000 **foreign students contributed \$116.8 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](#).²¹

Naturalized citizens advance educationally.

- The number of immigrants in Hawaii with a college degree **increased by 34%** between 2000 and 2009, according to [data](#) from the Migration Policy Institute.²²
- In Hawaii, **86% of children with immigrant parents** were considered "English proficient" as of [2009](#), according to data from the Urban Institute.²³

- The English proficiency rate among **Asian children in Hawaii** was **93.4%**, while for **Latino children it was 96.3%**, as of 2009.²⁴

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

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 2010 American Community Survey (1-Year Estimates).

⁹ U.S. Census Bureau, *The Hispanic Population: 2000*, May 2001.

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

¹¹ U.S. Electoral College, *2008 Presidential Election: Popular Vote Totals*.

¹² *The Urban Institute*, data from the Integrated Public Use Microdata Series datasets drawn from the 2005 - 2009 American Community Survey.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Jeffrey M. Humphreys, *The Multicultural Economy 2010* (Athens, GA: Selig Center for Economic Growth, University of Georgia, 2010).

¹⁵ U.S. Census Bureau, *Estimates of Business Ownership by Gender, Ethnicity, Race, and Veteran Status: 2007*, June, 2011.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ 2010 American Community Survey (1-Year Estimates).

¹⁸ Jeffrey S. Passel and D'Vera Cohn, *Unauthorized Immigrant Population: National and State Trends, 2010* (Washington, DC: Pew Hispanic Center, February 1, 2011), p. 25.

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), p. 69.

²⁰ The Immigration Policy Center, *Unauthorized Immigrants Pay Taxes, Too* (Washington, DC: April 2011).

²¹ 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).

²² Migration Policy Institute Data Hub, *Hawaii: Language & Education*.

²³ *The Urban Institute*, data from the Integrated Public Use Microdata Series datasets drawn from the 2005 - 2009 American Community Survey.

²⁴ Ibid.