

July 8, 2010

**NEW AMERICANS IN THE ALOHA STATE:
The Political and Economic Power of Immigrants, Asians, and Latinos in Hawaii**

Immigrants, Asians, and Latinos account for growing shares of the economy and electorate in Hawaii. At least one-in-six Hawaiians 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 15% 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 \$24.2 billion in consumer purchasing power, and the businesses they own had sales and receipts of \$13.1 billion and employed more than 95,000 people at last count. At a time of economic recession, 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 17.8% in [2008](#),³ according to the U.S. Census Bureau. Hawaii was home to 229,348 immigrants in [2008](#),⁴ which is more than the total population of [Orlando, Florida](#).⁵
- **53.0% of immigrants (or 121,656 people) in Hawaii were naturalized U.S. citizens in [2008](#)**⁶—meaning that they are eligible to vote.
- **15.3% (or 75,329) 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 2006 Census Bureau data by [Rob Paral & Associates](#).⁷

Nearly half of all Hawaiians are Asian or Latino.

- **The Asian share of Hawaii’s population** was 38.5% (or 495,956 people) in [2008](#).⁸ **The Latino share of the population** grew from 7.4% in [1990](#)⁹ to 8.7% (or 112,073 people) in [2008](#),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, **nearly nine-in-ten (or 89% of) children in immigrant families were U.S. citizens** in [2007](#),¹² according to the Center for Social and Demographic Analysis at the University of Albany.

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

- The 2009 purchasing power of Asians in Hawaii totaled \$21.6 billion—an increase of 73.9% since 1990. Latino buying power totaled \$2.6 billion—an increase of 166.6% since 1990, according to the [Selig Center for Economic Growth](#) at the University of Georgia.¹³
- Hawaii's 44,924 [Asian-owned](#) businesses had sales and receipts of \$12.6 billion and employed 92,218 people in 2002, the last year for which data is available.¹⁴ The state's 3,095 [Latino-owned](#) businesses had sales and receipts of \$482.6 million and employed 3,655 people in 2002, according to the U.S. Census Bureau's Survey of Business Owners.¹⁵

Immigrants are essential to Hawaii's economy as workers.

- Immigrants comprised 20.6% of the state's workforce in 2008 (or 144,408 workers), according to the U.S. Census Bureau.¹⁶

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

- Unauthorized immigrants comprised roughly 4.0% of the state's workforce (or 25,000 workers) in 2008, according to a report by the Pew Hispanic Center.¹⁷
- 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](#).¹⁸

Immigrants are integral to Hawaii's economy as students.

- Hawaii's 5,275 foreign students contributed \$111.3 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](#).¹⁹

Naturalized citizens advance educationally.

- In Hawaii, 22.7% of foreign-born persons who were naturalized U.S. citizens in 2008 had a bachelor's or higher degree. At the same time, 20.1% of naturalized citizens lacked a high-school diploma, compared to 21.6% of noncitizens.²⁰
- The number of immigrants in Hawaii with a college degree increased by 15.1% between 2000 and 2008, according to [data](#) from the Migration Policy Institute.²¹
- In Hawaii, 69.7% of all children between the ages of 5 and 17 in families that spoke a language other than English at home also spoke English "very well" as of 2008.²²

Endnotes

- ¹ U.S. Census Bureau, [*The Foreign-Born Population: 2000*](#), December 2003.
- ² Ibid.
- ³ 2008 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 2008).
- ⁸ 2008 American Community Survey (1-Year Estimates).
- ⁹ U.S. Census Bureau, [*The Hispanic Population: 2000*](#), May 2001.
- ¹⁰ 2008 American Community Survey (1-Year Estimates).
- ¹¹ U.S. Electoral College, [*2008 Presidential Election: Popular Vote Totals*](#).
- ¹² Center for Social and Demographic Analysis, [*Children in Immigrant Families in Hawaii*](#) (Albany, NY: University of Albany, SUNY, September 2009).
- ¹³ Jeffrey M. Humphreys, [*The Multicultural Economy 2008*](#) (Athens, GA: Selig Center for Economic Growth, University of Georgia, 2008), p. 64.
- ¹⁴ U.S. Census Bureau, [*Asian-Owned Firms: 2002*](#), August 2006.
- ¹⁵ U.S. Census Bureau, [*Hispanic-Owned Firms: 2002*](#), August 2006.
- ¹⁶ 2008 American Community Survey (1-Year Estimates).
- ¹⁷ Jeffrey S. Passel and D’Vera Cohn, [*A Portrait of Unauthorized Immigrants in the United States*](#) (Washington, DC: The Pew Charitable Trusts, April 14, 2009), p. 30.
- ¹⁸ 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.
- ¹⁹ NAFSA: Association of International Educators, [*The Economic Benefits of International Education to the United States for the 2008-2009 Academic Year: A Statistical Analysis*](#) (Washington, DC: NAFSA: Association of International Educators, 2009).
- ²⁰ Migration Policy Institute Data Hub, [*Hawaii: Language & Education*](#).
- ²¹ Ibid.
- ²² Ibid.