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

Immigrants, Latinos, and Asians account for large and growing shares of the economy and electorate in the swing state of Colorado. One in ten Coloradans is an immigrant (foreign-born), and one in five is Latino. Nearly one-third of immigrants in Colorado are naturalized U.S. citizens who are eligible to vote. “New Americans”—immigrants and the children of immigrants—account for 5.4% of all registered voters in the state. Moreover, Latinos and Asians (both foreign-born and native-born) wield \$26.2 billion in consumer purchasing power. At last count, businesses owned by Latinos and Asians had sales and receipts of \$7.6 billion and employed more than 53,000 people. Immigrant, Latino, and Asian workers, consumers, and entrepreneurs are integral to Colorado’s economy and tax base—and they are an electoral force with which every politician must reckon.

*Immigrants and their children are growing shares of Colorado’s population and electorate.*

- **The foreign-born share** of Colorado’s population rose from 4.3% in [1990](#),<sup>1</sup> to 8.6% in [2000](#),<sup>2</sup> to 10.1% in [2008](#),<sup>3</sup> according to the U.S. Census Bureau. Colorado was home to 499,179 immigrants in [2008](#),<sup>4</sup> which is more than the total population of [Sacramento, California](#).<sup>5</sup>
- **31.8% of immigrants (or 158,866 people) in Colorado were naturalized U.S. citizens in [2008](#)**<sup>6</sup>—meaning that they are eligible to vote.
- **5.4% (or 122,867) of all registered voters** in Colorado 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](#).<sup>7</sup>

*1 in 5 Coloradans are Latino—and they vote.*

- **The Latino share of Colorado’s population** grew from 12.9% in [1990](#),<sup>8</sup> to 17.1% in [2000](#),<sup>9</sup> to 20.2% (or 997,770 people) in [2008](#).<sup>10</sup> **The Asian share of the population** grew from 1.7% in [1990](#),<sup>11</sup> to 2.2% in [2000](#),<sup>12</sup> to 2.6% (or 128,426 people) in [2008](#),<sup>13</sup> according to the U.S. Census Bureau.
- **Latinos comprised 8.4% (or 195,000) of Colorado voters in the 2008 elections**, and Asians 2.1% (or 48,000), according to the [U.S. Census Bureau](#).<sup>14</sup> The number of Latino and Asian voters exceeds the margin of victory ([214,987 votes](#)) by which Barack Obama defeated John McCain.<sup>15</sup>

- In Colorado, more than **four-in-five (or 83% of) children in immigrant families were U.S. citizens** in [2007](#),<sup>16</sup> according to the Center for Social and Demographic Analysis at the University of Albany.

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

- **The 2009 purchasing power of Colorado's Latinos totaled \$21.4 billion**—an increase of 437.3% since 1990. **Asian buying power totaled \$4.8 billion**—an increase of 517.9% since 1990, according to the [Selig Center for Economic Growth](#) at the University of Georgia.<sup>17</sup>
- Colorado's 24,054 **Latino-owned businesses** had sales and receipts of \$5.1 billion and employed 32,465 people in 2002, the last year for which data is available.<sup>18</sup> The state's 10,910 **Asian-owned businesses** had sales and receipts of \$2.5 billion and employed 21,343 people in 2002, according to the U.S. Census Bureau's Survey of Business Owners.<sup>19</sup>

*Immigrants are integral to Colorado's economy as workers.*

- Immigrants comprised **11.6% of the state's workforce** in [2008](#) (or 319,617 workers), according to the U.S. Census Bureau.<sup>20</sup>
- Immigrants accounted for 10% of total economic output in the Denver metropolitan area as of 2007, according to a study by the [Fiscal Policy Institute](#).<sup>21</sup> In fact, "immigrants contribute to the economy in direct relation to their share of the population. The economy of metro areas grows in tandem with the immigrant share of the labor force."<sup>22</sup>
- Unauthorized immigrants comprised **5.4% of the state's workforce** (or 150,000 workers) in [2008](#), according to a report by the Pew Hispanic Center.<sup>23</sup>
- If all unauthorized immigrants were removed from Colorado, **the state would lose \$8.0 billion in economic activity, \$3.6 billion in gross state product, and approximately 39,738 jobs**, even accounting for adequate market adjustment time, according to a report by the [Perryman Group](#).<sup>24</sup>

*Unauthorized immigrants pay taxes.*

- Unauthorized immigrants in Colorado paid **between \$159 million and \$194 million** in state and local taxes in [2005](#), according to a study by the Bell Policy Center,<sup>25</sup> which includes:
  - \$24 million to \$30 million in state income taxes.
  - \$10 million to \$13 million in property taxes.
  - \$125 million to \$151 million in sales taxes.
- In addition, **Colorado employers paid between \$12 million and \$15 million in unemployment insurance taxes** to the state on behalf of unauthorized workers in 2005, according to the [same study](#). Unauthorized workers are prohibited by state law from collecting unemployment insurance benefits.<sup>26</sup>

### ***Immigrants are integral to Colorado's economy as students.***

- Colorado's 6,857 **foreign students contributed \$187.4 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>27</sup>

### ***Naturalized citizens excel educationally.***

- In Colorado, **36.3% of foreign-born persons** who were naturalized U.S. citizens in [2008 had a bachelor's or higher degree](#), compared to 17.7% of noncitizens. At the same time, only 20.7% of naturalized citizens lacked a high-school diploma, compared to 49.3% of noncitizens.<sup>28</sup>
- The number of immigrants in Colorado with a college degree **increased by 48.6%** between 2000 and 2008, according to [data](#) from the Migration Policy Institute.<sup>29</sup>
- In Colorado, **71.8% 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](#).<sup>30</sup>

### **Endnotes**

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

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> 2008 American Community Survey (1-Year Estimates).

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<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 2008).

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

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

<sup>10</sup> 2008 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> 2008 American Community Survey (1-Year Estimates).

<sup>14</sup> 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](#).

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

<sup>16</sup> Center for Social and Demographic Analysis, [Children in Immigrant Families in Colorado](#) (Albany, NY: University of Albany, SUNY, September 2009).

<sup>17</sup> Jeffrey M. Humphreys, [The Multicultural Economy 2009](#) (Athens, GA: Selig Center for Economic Growth, University of Georgia, 2009).

<sup>18</sup> U.S. Census Bureau, [Hispanic-Owned Firms: 2002](#), August 2006.

<sup>19</sup> U.S. Census Bureau, [Asian-Owned Firms: 2002](#), August 2006.

<sup>20</sup> 2008 American Community Survey (1-Year Estimates).

<sup>21</sup> David Dyssegaard Kallick, [Immigrants in the Economy: Contribution of Immigrant Workers to the Country's 25 Largest Metropolitan Areas](#) (New York, NY: Fiscal Policy Institute, December 2009), p. 11.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid., p. 1.

<sup>23</sup> Jeffrey S. Passel and D'Vera Cohn, [A Portrait of Unauthorized Immigrants in the United States](#) (Washington, DC: Pew Hispanic Center, April 14, 2009).

<sup>24</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).

<sup>25</sup> Robin Baker and Rich Jones, [State and Local Taxes Paid in Colorado by Undocumented Immigrants](#) (Denver, CO: The Bell Policy Center, 2006).

<sup>26</sup> Ibid.

<sup>27</sup> 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).

<sup>28</sup> Migration Policy Institute Data Hub, [Colorado: Language & Education](#).

<sup>29</sup> Ibid.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid.