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**NEW AMERICANS IN THE LAND OF ENCHANTMENT:
The Political and Economic Power of Immigrants, Latinos, and Asians in New Mexico**

Immigrants, Latinos, and Asians account for growing shares of the economy and electorate in New Mexico. Immigrants (the foreign-born) make up nearly one-in-ten New Mexicans, and more than a quarter of them are naturalized U.S. citizens who are eligible to vote. “New Americans”—immigrants and the children of immigrants—account for 3.8% 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 \$19 billion in consumer purchasing power, and the businesses they own had sales and receipts of \$5.3 billion and employed more than 52,000 people at last count. At a time of economic recession, New Mexico 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 New Mexico’s population and electorate.

- **The foreign-born share** of New Mexico’s population rose from 5.3% in [1990](#),¹ to 8.2% in [2000](#),² to 9.6% in [2008](#),³ according to the U.S. Census Bureau. New Mexico was home to 191,025 immigrants in [2008](#),⁴ which is nearly the total population of [Fort Lauderdale, Florida](#).⁵
- **28.8% of immigrants (or 55,108 people) in New Mexico were naturalized U.S. citizens in [2008](#)**⁶—meaning that they are eligible to vote.
- **3.8% (or 36,122) of registered voters** in New Mexico 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 New Mexicans are Latino or Asian.

- The **Latino share of New Mexico’s population** grew from 38.2% in [1990](#),⁸ to 42.1% in [2000](#),⁹ to 44.9% (or 890,976 people) in [2008](#).¹⁰ The **Asian share of the population** grew from 0.9% in [1990](#),¹¹ to 1.1% in [2000](#),¹² to 1.4% (or 27,781 people) in [2008](#),¹³ according to the U.S. Census Bureau.
- **Latinos accounted for 34.2% (or 289,000) of New Mexico voters** in the 2008 elections, and **Asians 1.4% (14,000)**, according to the [U.S. Census Bureau](#).¹⁴ The number of Latino and Asian voters was more than double the margin of victory ([125,590 votes](#)) by which Barack Obama defeated John McCain in New Mexico.

- In New Mexico, **more than four-in-five (or 84% of) children in immigrant families were U.S. citizens** in [2007](#),¹⁵ 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 New Mexico's economy.

- **The 2009 purchasing power of Latinos in New Mexico totaled \$17.9 billion**—an increase of 260.5% since 1990. **Asian buying power totaled \$1.1 billion**—an increase of 492.3% since 1990, according to the [Selig Center for Economic Growth](#) at the University of Georgia.¹⁶
- New Mexico's 29,708 **Latino-owned businesses** had sales and receipts of \$4.7 billion and employed 44,896 people in 2002, the last year for which data is available.¹⁷ The state's 2,364 **Asian-owned businesses** had sales and receipts of \$631.3 million and employed 7,508 people in 2002, according to the U.S. Census Bureau's Survey of Business Owners.¹⁸

Immigrants are integral to New Mexico's economy as workers and taxpayers.

- Immigrants comprised **11.9% of the state's workforce** in [2008](#) (or 115,193 workers), according to the U.S. Census Bureau.¹⁹
- Unauthorized immigrants in New Mexico contributed **\$64.7 million in sales, income, and property taxes** to the state economy in [2004](#), according to a study by New Mexico Fiscal Policy Project.²⁰
- Unauthorized immigrants comprised roughly **4.5% of the state's workforce** (or 40,000 workers) in [2008](#), according to a report by the Pew Hispanic Center.²¹
- If all unauthorized immigrants were removed from New Mexico, **the state would lose \$1.8 billion in economic activity, \$809.1 million in gross state product, and approximately 12,239 jobs**, even accounting for adequate market adjustment time, according to a report by the [Perryman Group](#).²²

Immigrants are integral to New Mexico's economy as students.

- New Mexico's 2,622 **foreign students contributed \$49.9 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](#).²³

Naturalized citizens excel educationally.

- In New Mexico, **21.9% of foreign-born persons** who were naturalized U.S. citizens in [2008](#) **had a bachelor's or higher degree**, compared to 11.2% of noncitizens. At the same time, only 32.7% of naturalized citizens lacked a high-school diploma, compared to 60.4% of noncitizens.²⁴
- The number of immigrants in New Mexico with a college degree **increased by 42.0%** between 2000 and 2008, according to [data](#) from the Migration Policy Institute.²⁵

- In New Mexico, **81.0% 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](#).²⁶

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

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ 2008 American Community Survey (1-Year Estimates).

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

¹² Ibid.

¹³ 2008 American Community Survey (1-Year Estimates).

¹⁴ U.S. Electoral College, [2008 Presidential Election: Popular Vote Totals](#).

¹⁵ Center for Social and Demographic Analysis, [Children in Immigrant Families in New Mexico](#) (Albany, NY: University of Albany, SUNY, September 2009).

¹⁶ Jeffrey M. Humphreys, [The Multicultural Economy 2009](#) (Athens, GA: Selig Center for Economic Growth, University of Georgia, 2009).

¹⁷ U.S. Census Bureau, [Hispanic-Owned Firms: 2002](#), August 2006.

¹⁸ U.S. Census Bureau, [Asian-Owned Firms: 2002](#), August 2006.

¹⁹ 2008 American Community Survey (1-Year Estimates).

²⁰ New Mexico Fiscal Policy Project, [Undocumented Immigrants in New Mexico: State Tax Contributions and Fiscal Concerns](#) (Albuquerque, NM: NM Voices, May 2006), p. 4.

²¹ 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.

²² 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.

²³ 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).

²⁴ Migration Policy Institute Data Hub, [New Mexico: Language & Education](#).

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Ibid.