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NEW AMERICANS IN THE GRAND CANYON STATE: The Political and Economic Power of Immigrants, Latinos, and Asians in Arizona

Immigrants, Latinos, and Asians account for large and growing shares of the economy and electorate in Arizona. Immigrants make up 15.6% of the state's population, and roughly one-third of them are naturalized U.S. citizens who are eligible to vote. "New Americans"—immigrants and the children of immigrants—account for one-in-ten registered voters in Arizona. The state's immigrant workers contributed \$2.4 billion in state tax revenue in 2004, while immigrant-headed households commanded \$10.5 billion in consumer spending power that supported roughly 66,500 full-time jobs. Moreover, Latinos and Asians wield roughly \$37 billion in consumer purchasing power, and the businesses they own had sales and receipts of \$12.2 billion and employed nearly 65,000 people at last count. Immigrant, Latino, and Asian workers, consumers, and entrepreneurs are integral to Arizona'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 Arizona's population and electorate.

- **The foreign-born share** of Arizona's population rose from 7.6% in [1990](#),¹ to 12.8% in [2000](#),² to 15.6% in [2007](#),³ according to the U.S. Census Bureau. Arizona was home to 991,584 immigrants in [2007](#),⁴ which is more than the population of [San Jose, California](#).⁵
- **29.7% of immigrants (or 294,541 people) in Arizona were naturalized U.S. citizens in [2007](#)**⁶—meaning that they are eligible to vote.
- **10.6% (or 252,108) of all registered voters** in Arizona 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 One-Third of Arizonans are Latino or Asian.

- The **Latino share of Arizona's population** grew from 18.8% in [1990](#),⁸ to 25.3% in [2000](#),⁹ to 29.7% (or 1,882,610 people) in [2007](#).¹⁰ The **Asian share of the population** grew from 1.4% in [1990](#),¹¹ to 1.8% in [2000](#),¹² to 2.4% (or 152,130 people) in [2007](#),¹³ according to the U.S. Census Bureau.
- **Latinos comprised 11.7% (or 291,000) of Arizona voters in the 2008 elections**, according to the [U.S. Census Bureau](#).¹⁴

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Immigrant, Latino, and Asian entrepreneurs and consumers add billions of dollars and tens-of-thousands of jobs to Arizona's economy.

- **The 2004 consumer spending power of immigrant-headed households in Arizona totaled \$10.5 billion**, according to a [2008 study](#) by the Udall Center for Studies in Public Policy at the University of Arizona.¹⁵ This spending:
 - Supported approximately **66,500 full-time jobs**.
 - Accounted for **\$10.2 billion in state economic output**.
 - Generated **tax revenues of roughly \$776 million**, consisting of \$362 million in sales taxes, \$328 million in business taxes, and \$85 million in personal taxes.
- **The 2008 purchasing power of Arizona's Latinos totaled \$31.3 billion**—an increase of 472.9% since 1990. **Asian buying power totaled \$5.8 billion**—an increase of 664.2% since 1990, according to the [Selig Center for Economic Growth](#) at the University of Arizona.¹⁶
- Arizona's 35,104 **Latino-owned businesses** had sales and receipts of \$4.3 billion and employed 39,363 people in 2002, the last year for which data is available.¹⁷ The state's 10,215 **Asian-owned businesses** had sales and receipts of \$2.4 billion and employed 24,405 people in 2002, according to the U.S. Census Bureau's Survey of Business Owners.¹⁸

Immigrants are integral to Arizona's economy as workers.

- Immigrants comprised **19.3% of the state's workforce** in [2007](#) (or 586,663 workers), according to the U.S. Census Bureau.¹⁹
- Unauthorized immigrants comprised **9.8% of the state's workforce** (or 300,000 workers) in [2008](#), according to a report by the Pew Hispanic Center.²⁰
- The total economic output attributable to Arizona's immigrant workers was **\$44 billion** in 2004, which **sustained roughly 400,000 full-time jobs**, according to a [2008 study](#) by the Udall Center for Studies in Public Policy.²¹
- **Immigrant workers contributed \$2.4 billion in state tax revenue in 2004**, consisting of \$1 billion in sales taxes, \$967 million in business taxes, and \$367 million in personal taxes, according to the [same study](#).²²
- If all unauthorized immigrants were removed from Arizona, **the state would lose \$26.4 billion in expenditures, \$11.7 billion in economic output, and approximately 140,324 jobs**, even accounting for adequate market adjustment time, according to a report by the [Perryman Group](#).²³

Naturalized Citizens Excel Educationally.

- In Arizona, **24.5% of foreign-born persons** who were naturalized U.S. citizens in [2007](#) **had a bachelor's or higher degree**, compared to 13.1% of noncitizens. At the same time, only 26.5% of naturalized citizens lacked a high-school diploma, compared to 50.7% of noncitizens.²⁴
- The number of immigrants in Arizona with a college degree **increased by 79.0%** between 2000 and 2007, according to [data](#) from the Migration Policy Institute.²⁵
- In Arizona, **71.2% 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 [2007](#).²⁶

Endnotes

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

² Ibid.

³ 2007 American Community Survey (1-Year Estimates).

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Ibid.

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 2007 American Community Survey (1-Year Estimates).

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

¹² Ibid.

¹³ 2007 American Community Survey (1-Year Estimates).

¹⁴ 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](#).

¹⁵ Judith Gans, [Immigrants in Arizona: Fiscal and Economic Impacts](#) (Tucson, AZ: Udall Center for Studies in Public Policy, University of Arizona, 2008).

¹⁶ Jeffrey M. Humphreys, [The Multicultural Economy 2008](#) (Athens, GA: Selig Center for Economic Growth, University of Arizona, 2008).

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

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

¹⁹ 2007 American Community Survey (1-Year Estimates).

²⁰ Jeffrey S. Passel and D’Vera Cohn, [A Portrait of Unauthorized Immigrants in the United States](#) (Washington, DC: Pew Hispanic Center, April 14, 2009).

²¹ Judith Gans, [Immigrants in Arizona: Fiscal and Economic Impacts](#) (Tucson, AZ: Udall Center for Studies in Public Policy, University of Arizona, 2008).

²² Ibid.

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).

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

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Ibid.