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NEW AMERICANS IN THE SILVER STATE: The Political and Economic Power of Immigrants, Latinos, and Asians in Nevada

There are few states where the growing political and economic clout of immigrants, Latinos, and Asians is as apparent as in Nevada. Immigrants make up nearly 20% of Nevada's population, and 38% of them are naturalized U.S. citizens who are eligible to vote. Immigrants and the children of immigrants account for nearly 15% of all registered voters in the state. Latinos account for one-quarter of all Nevadans and wield over \$14 billion in consumer purchasing power. At last count, the sales and receipts of businesses owned by Latinos and Asians totaled \$3.6 billion. Immigrant, Latino, and Asian workers and entrepreneurs are integral to Nevada's economy and tax base—and they are an electoral force with which every politician must reckon.

Demographics Are Destiny and the Numbers Don't Lie

Nearly 15% of registered voters in Nevada are immigrants or the children of immigrants.

- **The foreign-born share** of Nevada's population rose from 8.7% in [1990](#),¹ to 15.8% in [2000](#),² to 19.4% in [2007](#),³ according to the U.S. Census Bureau.
- **38.1% of immigrants in Nevada were naturalized U.S. citizens** in [2007](#)—meaning that they are eligible to vote.⁴
- **14.8% of all registered voters** in Nevada are “New Americans”—naturalized citizens or the U.S.-born children of immigrants who were raised during the current era of large-scale immigration from Latin America and Asia which began in 1965—according to an analysis of 2006 Census Bureau data by [Rob Paral & Associates](#).⁵

One quarter of Nevadans are Latino—and they vote.

- The **Latino share of Nevada's population** grew from 10.4% in [1990](#),⁶ to 19.7% in [2000](#),⁷ to 25.1% in [2007](#).⁸ The Asian share of the population grew from 2.9% in [1990](#),⁹ to 4.5% in [2000](#),¹⁰ to 6.1% in [2007](#),¹¹ according to the U.S. Census Bureau.
- **CNN exit polls** indicate that Latinos comprised **15% of Nevada voters** in the 2008 elections, and Asians 3%. Barack Obama defeated John McCain among Latino voters in Nevada by 76% to 22%.¹² In [2004](#), Bush won 39% of the Latino vote in Nevada.¹³

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Nevada's Economic Engine is Boosted by Immigration

Latino immigrants are essential to Nevada's economy as workers, taxpayers, and consumers.

- Latino immigrants in Nevada paid roughly **\$2.6 billion in federal taxes** and **\$1.6 billion in state and local taxes** (including \$500 million in sales taxes) in 2005. The money that Latino immigrants “earn and spend in Nevada accounts for about 25% of the State’s Gross State Product,” and Latino immigrant “employment, income and spending results in the creation of 108,380 jobs in Nevada,” according to a [2007 report](#) from the Progressive Leadership Alliance of Nevada.¹⁴
- Latino immigrants comprised about **16% of the state’s entire workforce** in 2005, and an even higher share in select industries: 81% of the agricultural workforce, 47% of the construction and mining workforce, and 22% of the entertainment and tourist services workforce, according to a [2007 report](#) from the Progressive Leadership Alliance of Nevada.¹⁵

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

- The [Selig Center for Economic Growth](#) at the University of Georgia estimates that the 2008 purchasing power of Nevada’s Latinos totaled \$14.4 billion—an increase of 965.1% since 1990. Asian buying power totaled \$6.3 billion—an increase of 1,020.2% since 1990.¹⁶
- The U.S. Census Bureau’s 2002 Survey of Business Owners found that Nevada’s 9,741 [Latino-owned](#) businesses had sales and receipts of \$1.6 billion and employed 12,874 people.¹⁷ The state’s 8,872 [Asian-owned](#) businesses had sales and receipts of \$2 billion and employed 12,713 people.¹⁸

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 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).

⁶ U.S. Census Bureau, [The Hispanic Population: 2000](#), May 2001.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ 2007 American Community Survey (1-Year Estimates).

⁹ U.S. Census Bureau, [The Asian Population: 2000](#), February 2002.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ 2007 American Community Survey (1-Year Estimates).

¹² CNN, Election Center 2008: [Presidential Exit Polls: Nevada](#).

¹³ CNN, America Votes 2004: [Presidential Exit Polls: Nevada](#).

¹⁴ Robert Ginsberg, Ph.D., [Vital Beyond Belief: The Demographic and Economic Facts about Hispanic Immigrants in Nevada](#) (Las Vegas, NV: Progressive Leadership Alliance of Nevada, 2007)

¹⁵ Ibid.

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

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

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