



New Americans in Wisconsin: The Political and Economic Power of Immigrants, Latinos, and Asians in the Badger State

Immigrants, Latinos, and Asians account for growing shares of the economy and population in Wisconsin. Immigrants (the foreign-born) make up 4.8% of the state's population, and more than two-fifths of them are naturalized U.S. citizens who are eligible to vote. "New Americans"—immigrants and the children of immigrants—account for 3.5% of registered voters in the state. Immigrants are not only integral to the state's economy as workers, but also account for tens of million of dollars in tax revenue and consumer purchasing power. Moreover, Latinos and Asians (both foreign-born and native-born) wield \$12.5 billion in consumer purchasing power, and the businesses they own had sales and receipts of \$4.7 billion and employed more than 26,500 people at last count. As the economy continues to recover, Wisconsin can ill-afford to alienate such an important component of its labor force, tax base, and business community.

Immigrants and their children are growing shares of Wisconsin's population and electorate.

- The foreign-born share of Wisconsin's population rose from 2.5% in [1990](#),¹ to 3.6% in [2000](#),² to 4.8% in [2013](#),³ according to the U.S. Census Bureau. Wisconsin was home to 274,687 immigrants in [2013](#),⁴ which is more than the total population of [Jersey City, New Jersey](#).⁵
- From 2000 to 2010, [several cities](#) in Wisconsin saw their population increase mostly or in part due to immigration, according to the Chicago Council on Global Affairs: Sheboygan (82.5% change in population due to immigration), Appleton-Oshkosh (11.7% change), Eau Claire (8.6% change), Green Bay (18.7% change), Janesville (24.8% change), La Crosse (30% change), Madison (18.8% change), Milwaukee (46.6% change), and Racine (27.1% change).⁶
- 43.6% of immigrants (or 119,720 people) in Wisconsin were naturalized U.S. citizens in [2013](#)⁷—meaning that they are eligible to vote.
- Unauthorized immigrants comprised roughly 1.5% of the state's population (or 85,000 people) in [2012](#), according to a report by the Pew Hispanic Center.⁸
- 3.5% (or 117,334) of registered voters in Wisconsin 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 2012 Census Bureau data by the [American Immigration Council](#).⁹

Roughly 1 in 12 Wisconsinites are Latino or Asian — and they vote.

- The Latino share of Wisconsin's population grew from 1.9% in [1990](#),¹⁰ to 3.6% in [2000](#),¹¹ to 6.3% (or 362,407 people) in [2013](#).¹² The Asian share of the population grew from 1.1% in [1990](#),¹³ to 1.7% in [2000](#),¹⁴ to 2.5% (or 142,590 people) in [2013](#),¹⁵ according to the U.S. Census Bureau.
- Latinos accounted for 2.3% (or 71,000) of Wisconsin voters in the 2012 elections, and Asians 0.5% (15,000), according to the [U.S. Census Bureau](#).¹⁶
- In Wisconsin, 88.4% of children with immigrant parents were U.S. citizens in [2009](#), according to data from the Urban Institute.¹⁷
- In [2009](#), 92.7% of children in Asian families in Wisconsin were U.S. citizens, as were 91.4% of children in Latino families.¹⁸

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

- The 2014 purchasing power of Latinos in Wisconsin totaled \$7.4 billion—an increase of 855% since 1990. Asian buying power totaled \$5 billion—an increase of 856% since 1990, according to the [Selig Center for Economic Growth](#) at the University of Georgia.¹⁹
- Immigration boosts housing values in communities. From 2000 to 2010, according to the [Americas Society/Council of the Americas](#), the value added by immigration to the price of the average home was \$1,936 in Milwaukee County; \$979 in Dane County; and \$454 in Waukesha County.²⁰
- Wisconsin's 6,785 Asian-owned businesses had sales and receipts of \$2.3 billion and employed 15,808 people in 2007, the last year for which data is available.²¹ The state's 5,619 Latino-owned businesses had sales and receipts of \$2.4 billion and employed 10,901 people in 2007, according to the [U.S. Census Bureau's Survey of Business Owners](#).²²
- From 2006 to 2010, there were [10,342](#) new immigrant business owners in Wisconsin, and new immigrant business owners had total net business income of \$589 million (which is 4.6% of all net business income in the state), according to Robert Fairlie of the University of California, Santa Cruz.²³
- In 2010, [4.7% of all business owners](#) in Wisconsin were foreign-born, according to the Fiscal Policy Institute.²⁴ In the Milwaukee-Waukesha-West Allis metropolitan area, [7.9% of business owners](#) were foreign-born in 2013, according to the Fiscal Policy Institute and Americans Society/Council of the Americas.²⁵ Furthermore, 11% of "Main Street" business owners—owners of businesses in the retail, accommodation and food services, and neighborhood services sectors—in the Milwaukee metro area were foreign-born in 2013.²⁶

Migrant workers are integral to Wisconsin's economy as laborers and taxpayers.

- Migrant workers constituted more than 40% of all hired dairy employees (totaling roughly 5,316 individuals) in [2008](#), according to a study at the University of Wisconsin-Madison.²⁷
- Migrant workers' direct spending generated about \$14.9 million per year in income to Wisconsin residents and business, roughly \$8.7 million in tax revenue to state and local governments per year, and the creation of 417 jobs for Wisconsinites, according to the [same study](#).²⁸

Immigrants are important to Wisconsin's economy as workers and taxpayers.

- Immigrants comprised 5.6% of the state's workforce in [2013](#) (or 172,619 workers), according to the U.S. Census Bureau.²⁹
- Unauthorized immigrants comprised 1.8% of the state's workforce (or 55,000 workers) in [2012](#), according to a report by the Pew Hispanic Center.³⁰
- Latinos in Wisconsin paid \$605 million in federal taxes and \$420 million in state/local taxes in 2013, according to the [Partnership for a New American Economy](#). In particular, foreign-born Latinos paid \$228 million in federal taxes and \$178 million in state/local taxes.³¹
 - The federal tax contribution of Wisconsin's Latino population included \$511 million to Social Security and \$120 million to Medicare in 2013. Foreign-born Latinos contributed over \$215 million to Social Security and \$50 million to Medicare that year.³²

Unauthorized immigrants pay taxes.

- Unauthorized immigrants in Wisconsin paid \$98.7 million in state and local taxes in [2010](#), including \$66.9 million in sales taxes, \$22.9 million in state income taxes, and \$8.9 million in property taxes, according to data from the Institute on Taxation and Economic Policy.³³
- Were unauthorized immigrants in Wisconsin to have legal status, they would pay \$131.3 million in state and local taxes, including \$69.9 million in sales taxes, \$52.2 million in state income taxes, and \$9.1 million in property taxes.³⁴
- If all unauthorized immigrants were removed from Wisconsin, the state would lose \$2.6 billion in economic activity, \$1.2 billion in gross state product, and approximately 14,579 jobs, even accounting for adequate market adjustment time, according to a report by the [Perryman Group](#).³⁵

Immigrants are important to Wisconsin's economy as students.

- Wisconsin's 11,718 foreign students contributed \$308.6 million to the state's economy in tuition, fees, and living expenses for the 2013-2014 academic year, according to [NAFSA: Association of International Educators](#) (NAFSA).³⁶
- Foreign students contribute to Wisconsin's metropolitan areas. From 2008 to 2012, according to the [Brookings Institution](#), 6,477 foreign students paid \$151 million in tuition and \$111 million in living costs in the Madison metropolitan area. In the Milwaukee-Waukesha-West Allis metro area, 4,056 foreign students paid \$79 million in tuition and \$45 million in living costs.³⁷
- Foreign students also contribute to innovation in Wisconsin. In 2009, "non-resident aliens" comprised 29.2 percent of masters degrees and 39.1 percent of doctorate degrees in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) fields, according to the [Partnership for a New American Economy](#).³⁸

Naturalized citizens advance educationally.

- In Wisconsin, 30.2% of foreign-born persons who were naturalized U.S. citizens in 2011 had a bachelor's or higher degree, compared to 26.5% of noncitizens. At the same time, only 22.5% of naturalized citizens lacked a high-school diploma, compared to 35.8% of noncitizens.³⁹
- The number of immigrants in Wisconsin with a college degree increased by 61.4% between 2000 and 2011, according to data from the Migration Policy Institute.⁴⁰
- In Wisconsin, 81.3% of children with immigrant parents were considered "English proficient" as of 2009, according to data from the Urban Institute.⁴¹
- The English proficiency rate among Asian children in Wisconsin was 82.9%, while for Latino children it was 84.2%, as of 2009.⁴²

Endnotes

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