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**NEW AMERICANS IN THE TAR HEEL STATE:
The Economic and Political Power of Immigrants, Latinos, and Asians in North Carolina**

Immigrants, Latinos, and Asians account for growing shares of the economy and population in the electoral swing state of North Carolina. Immigrants (the foreign-born) make up 7% of the state's population, while nearly one-in-ten North Carolinians are Latino or Asian. Although Latinos and Asians (both foreign-born and native-born) comprised less than 3% of North Carolina voters in the 2008 election, their numbers far exceeded the narrow margin by which Barack Obama won the state. Moreover, Latinos and Asians wield \$18.8 billion in consumer purchasing power. At last count, businesses owned by Latinos and Asians had sales and receipts of \$5.3 billion and employed more than 44,000 people. At a time of economic recession, North Carolina 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 North Carolina's population.

- The **foreign-born share** of North Carolina's population rose from 1.7% in [1990](#),¹ to 5.3% in [2000](#),² to 7.0% in [2008](#),³ according to the U.S. Census Bureau. North Carolina was home to 641,130 immigrants in [2008](#),⁴ which is roughly equal to the total population of [Charlotte, North Carolina](#).⁵
- **28.3% of immigrants (or 181,436 people) in North Carolina were naturalized U.S. citizens** in [2008](#)⁶—meaning that they are eligible to vote.
- **1.9% (or 79,033) of registered voters** in North Carolina 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-in-ten North Carolinians are Latino or Asian.

- The **Latino share of North Carolina's population** grew from 1.2% in [1990](#),⁸ to 4.7% in [2000](#),⁹ to 7.4% (or 682,459 people) in [2008](#).¹⁰ The **Asian share of the population** grew from 0.8% in [1990](#),¹¹ to 1.4% in [2000](#),¹² to 1.9% (or 175,226 people) in [2008](#),¹³ according to the U.S. Census Bureau.
- **Latinos comprised 1.8% (or 77,000) of North Carolina voters** in the 2008 elections, and Asians about 1% (or 43,000), according to the [U.S. Census Bureau](#).¹⁴ Although the numbers of Latino and Asian voters were relatively small, they far exceeded the very narrow margin of victory ([14,177 votes](#)) by which Barack Obama defeated John McCain.¹⁵

- In North Carolina, **nearly half (or 46%) of the children in immigrant families were U.S. citizens** in [2007](#),¹⁶ 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 North Carolina's economy.

- The **2009 purchasing power of North Carolina's Latinos totaled \$12.8 billion**—an increase of 1,424.0% since 1990. **Asian buying power totaled \$6.0 billion**—an increase of 743.2% since 1990, according to the [Selig Center for Economic Growth](#) at the University of Georgia.¹⁷
- **Spending by Latinos** in North Carolina generated **89,600 spin-off jobs** and an additional \$2.4 billion in labor income, \$455 million in state tax revenue, and \$661 million in federal tax revenue in 2004, according to a study by researchers at the [University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill](#).¹⁸
- North Carolina's 13,695 **Asian-owned businesses** had sales and receipts of \$3.5 billion and employed 32,759 people in 2002, the last year for which data is available.¹⁹ The state's 9,043 **Latino-owned businesses** had sales and receipts of \$1.8 billion and employed 11,615 people in 2002, according to the U.S. Census Bureau's Survey of Business Owners.²⁰

Immigrants are essential to North Carolina's economy as workers and consumers.

- Immigrants comprised **9.1% of the state's workforce** in [2008](#) (or 436,889 workers), according to the U.S. Census Bureau.²¹
- Unauthorized immigrants comprised **5.3% of the state's workforce** in [2008](#) (or 250,000 workers), according to a report by the Pew Hispanic Center.²²
- If all unauthorized immigrants were removed from North Carolina, **the state would lose \$14.5 billion in economic activity, \$6.4 billion in gross state product, and approximately 101,414 jobs**, even accounting for adequate market adjustment time, according to a report by the [Perryman Group](#).²³

Immigrants are integral to North Carolina's economy as students.

- North Carolina's 12,220 **foreign students contributed \$276.6 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](#).²⁴

Naturalized immigrants excel educationally.

- The number of immigrants in North Carolina with a college degree **increased by 84.3%** between 2000 and 2008, according to [data](#) from the Migration Policy Institute.²⁵
- 38.8% of North Carolina's foreign-born population age 25 and over who were naturalized U.S. citizens **had at least a bachelor's degree** in [2008](#), compared to 21.9% of noncitizens and 26.0% of native-born citizens.²⁶

- In North Carolina, **68.0% 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](#).²⁷

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

¹⁶ Center for Social and Demographic Analysis, [Children in Immigrant Families in North Carolina](#) (Albany, NY: University of Albany, SUNY, September 2009).

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

¹⁸ John D. Kasarda and James H. Johnson, Jr., [The Economic Impact of the Hispanic Population on the State of North Carolina](#) (Chapel Hill, North Carolina: Frank Hawkins Kenan Institute of Private Enterprise, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill: January 2006).

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

²⁰ U.S. Census Bureau, [Hispanic-Owned Firms: 2002](#), August 2006.

²¹ 2008 American Community Survey (1-Year Estimates).

²² Jeffrey S. Passel and D’Vera Cohn, [A Portrait of Unauthorized Immigrants in the United States](#) (Washington, DC: Pew Hispanic Center, April 14, 2009).

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 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).

²⁵ Migration Policy Institute Data Hub, [North Carolina: Language & Education](#).

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Ibid.