

July 2013

**NEW AMERICANS IN NORTH CAROLINA:
The Economic and Political Power of Immigrants, Latinos, and Asians
in the Tar Heel State**

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 7.3% of the state's population, while more than 1 in 10 North Carolinians are Latino or Asian. Moreover, Latinos and Asians wield \$22.9 billion in consumer purchasing power. At last count, businesses owned by Latinos and Asians had sales and receipts of \$10.1 billion and employed more than 63,000 people. At a time when the economy is still recovering, 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 7.3% in [2011](#),³ according to the U.S. Census Bureau. North Carolina was home to 708,350 immigrants in [2011](#),⁴ which is more than the total population of [Detroit, Michigan](#).⁵
- **33.1% of immigrants (or 234,546 people) in North Carolina were naturalized U.S. citizens** in [2011](#)⁶—meaning that they are eligible to vote.
- Unauthorized immigrants comprised roughly **3.5% of the state's population** (or 325,000 people) in [2010](#), according to a report by the Pew Hispanic Center.⁷
- **3.6% (or 176,461) 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 2008 Census Bureau data by [Rob Paral & Associates](#).⁸

More than 1 in 10 North Carolinians are Latino or Asian.

- The **Latino share of North Carolina's population** grew from 1.2% in [1990](#),⁹ to 4.7% in [2000](#),¹⁰ to 8.6% (or 828,104 people) in [2011](#).¹¹ The **Asian share of the population** grew from 0.8% in [1990](#),¹² to 1.4% in [2000](#),¹³ to 2.2% (or 211,328 people) in [2011](#),¹⁴ 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](#).¹⁵ 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.¹⁶

- In North Carolina, **85.1% of children with immigrant parents** were U.S. citizens in [2009](#), according to data from the Urban Institute.¹⁷
- In [2009](#), **86% of children in Asian families** in North Carolina were U.S. citizens, as were **85.9% of children in Latino families**.¹⁸

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

- The **2012 purchasing power of North Carolina's Latinos totaled \$14.0 billion**—an increase of 1,571% since 1990. **Asian buying power totaled \$8.9 billion**—an increase of 1,169% since 1990, according to the [Selig Center for Economic Growth](#) at the University of Georgia.¹⁹
- North Carolina's 20,157 **Asian-owned** businesses had sales and receipts of **\$5.9 billion and employed 44,288 people** in 2007, the last year for which data is available.²⁰ The state's 21,301 **Latino-owned** businesses had sales and receipts of **\$4.2 billion and employed 18,997 people** in 2007, according to the U.S. Census Bureau's Survey of Business Owners.²¹

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

- Immigrants comprised **9.8% of the state's workforce** in [2011](#) (or 474,244 workers), according to the U.S. Census Bureau.²²
- Unauthorized immigrants comprised **5.4% of the state's workforce** in [2010](#) (or 250,000 workers), according to a report by the Pew Hispanic Center.²³
- 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](#).²⁴

Unauthorized immigrants pay taxes.

- Unauthorized immigrants in North Carolina paid **\$253.1 million** in state and local taxes in [2010](#), according to data from the Institute for Taxation and Economic Policy, which includes \$53.8 million in state income taxes, \$26.1 million in property taxes, and \$173.1 million in sales taxes.²⁵
- Were unauthorized immigrants in North Carolina to have legal status, they would pay **\$336.6 million** in state and local taxes, including \$183.4 million in sales taxes, \$125.1 million in state income taxes, and \$28.1 million in property taxes.²⁶

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

- North Carolina's 13,770 **foreign students contributed \$338.8 million** to the state's economy in tuition, fees, and living expenses for the 2011-2012 academic year, according to [NAFSA: Association of International Educators](#).²⁷

Naturalized immigrants excel educationally.

- The number of immigrants in North Carolina with a college degree **increased by 99.1%** between 2000 and 2011, according to [data](#) from the Migration Policy Institute.²⁸
- **38.6% 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 [2011](#), compared to 18.7% of noncitizens and 27% of native-born citizens.²⁹
- In North Carolina, **78.9% of children with immigrant parents** were considered “English proficient” as of [2009](#), according to data from the Urban Institute.³⁰
- The English proficiency rate among **Asian children in North Carolina was 88.4%**, while for **Latino children it was 75.4%**, as of [2009](#).³¹

Endnotes

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

² Ibid.

³ 2011 American Community Survey (1-Year Estimates).

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Jeffrey S. Passel and D’Vera Cohn, [Unauthorized Immigrant Population: National and State Trends, 2010](#) (Washington, DC: Pew Hispanic Center, February 1, 2011), p. 24.

⁸ Rob Paral & Associates and the Immigration Policy Center, [The New American Electorate: The Growing Political Power of Immigrants and Their Children](#) (Washington, DC: American Immigration Council, October 2010).

⁹ U.S. Census Bureau, [The Hispanic Population: 2000](#), May 2001.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ 2011 American Community Survey (1-Year Estimates).

¹² U.S. Census Bureau, [The Asian Population: 2000](#), February 2002.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ 2011 American Community Survey (1-Year Estimates).

¹⁵ 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](#).

¹⁶ U.S. Electoral College, [2008 Presidential Election: Popular Vote Totals](#).

¹⁷ [The Urban Institute](#), data from the Integrated Public Use Microdata Series datasets drawn from the 2005 - 2009 American Community Survey.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Jeffrey M. Humphreys, [The Multicultural Economy 2012](#) (Athens, GA: Selig Center for Economic Growth, University of Georgia, 2010).

²⁰ U.S. Census Bureau, [Estimates of Business Ownership by Gender, Ethnicity, Race, and Veteran Status: 2007](#), June, 2011.

²¹ Ibid.

²² 2011 American Community Survey (1-Year Estimates).

²³ Jeffrey S. Passel and D’Vera Cohn, [Unauthorized Immigrant Population: National and State Trends, 2010](#) (Washington, DC: Pew Hispanic Center, February 1, 2011), p. 24.

²⁴ 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).

²⁵ Institute on Taxation and Economic Policy, [Undocumented Immigrants’ State and Local Tax Contributions](#) (Washington, DC: July 2013).

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ NAFSA: Association of International Educators, [The Economic Benefits of International Students to the U.S. Economy: Academic Year 2011-2012](#) (Washington, DC: NAFSA: Association of International Educators, 2010).

²⁸ Migration Policy Institute Data Hub, [North Carolina: Language & Education](#).

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ [The Urban Institute](#), data from the Integrated Public Use Microdata Series datasets drawn from the 2005 - 2009 American Community Survey.

³¹ Ibid.