



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 7.6% of the state's population, while more than one in 10 North Carolinians are Latino or Asian. Moreover, Latinos and Asians wield \$25.7 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. As the economy continues to grow, 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 7.6% in [2013](#),³ according to the U.S. Census Bureau. North Carolina was home to 749,426 immigrants in [2013](#),⁴ which is more than the total population of [Detroit, Michigan](#).⁵
- 31.9% of immigrants (or 239,232 people) in North Carolina were naturalized U.S. citizens in [2013](#)⁶—meaning that they are eligible to vote.
- Unauthorized immigrants comprised roughly 3.6% of the state's population (or 350,000 people) in [2012](#), according to a report by the Pew Hispanic Center.⁷
- 5.6% (or 299,149) of all 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 2012 Census Bureau data by the [American Immigration Council](#).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 8.8% (or 867,205 people) in [2013](#).¹¹ The Asian share of the population grew from 0.8% in [1990](#),¹² to 1.4% in [2000](#),¹³ to 2.4% (or 238,502 people) in [2013](#),¹⁴ according to the U.S. Census Bureau.
- Latinos comprised 2.1% (or 95,000) of North Carolina voters in the 2012 elections, and Asians 0.7% (or 34,000), according to the [U.S. Census Bureau](#).¹⁵

- In North Carolina, 85.1% of children with immigrant parents were U.S. citizens in [2009](#), according to data from the Urban Institute.¹⁶
- In [2009](#), 86% of children in Asian families in North Carolina were U.S. citizens, as were 85.9% of children in Latino families.¹⁷

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

- The 2014 purchasing power of North Carolina’s Latinos totaled \$15.5 billion—an increase of 1,753% since 1990. Asian buying power totaled \$10.2 billion—an increase of 1,437% since 1990, according to the [Selig Center for Economic Growth](#) at the University of Georgia.¹⁸
- 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 \$5,923 in Mecklenburg County, \$5,463 in Wake County, \$1,881 in Guilford County, and \$1,240 in Forsyth County.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
- From 2006 to 2010, there were [33,120](#) new immigrant business owners in North Carolina. The new immigrant business owners had total net business income of \$1.7 billion (7.7% of all net business income in the state), according to Robert Fairlie of the University of California, Santa Cruz.²²
- In 2010, 8.6 percent of all business owners in North Carolina were foreign-born, according to the [Fiscal Policy Institute](#).²³
 - In the Charlotte-Gastonia-Rock Hill metropolitan area, [16.3% of business owners](#) were foreign-born in 2013, according to the Fiscal Policy Institute and Americans Society/Council of the Americas. Furthermore, almost 1 in 3 (32.6%) “Main Street” business owners—owners of businesses in the retail, accommodation and food services, and neighborhood services sectors—in the Charlotte metro area were foreign-born in 2013.²⁴
 - In the Raleigh-Cary metropolitan area, [13.5% of business owners](#) were foreign-born in 2013, according to the Fiscal Policy Institute and Americans Society/Council of the Americas. Furthermore, over 1 in 4 (28.8%) “Main Street” business owners in the Raleigh metro area were foreign-born in 2013.²⁵

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

- Immigrants comprised 10.3% of the state's workforce in [2013](#) (or 504,232 workers), according to the U.S. Census Bureau.²⁶
- Latinos in North Carolina paid \$1.6 billion in federal taxes and \$885 million in state/local taxes in 2013, according to the [Partnership for a New American Economy](#). In particular, foreign-born Latinos paid \$867 million in federal taxes and \$534.5 million in state/local taxes.²⁷
 - The federal tax contribution of California's Latino population included \$1.2 billion to Social Security and \$289 million to Medicare in 2013. Foreign-born Latinos contributed \$734.5 million to Social Security and \$172 million to Medicare that year.²⁸
- Unauthorized immigrants comprised 5.2% of the state's workforce in [2012](#) (or 250,000 workers), according to a report by the Pew Hispanic Center.²⁹
- 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](#).³⁰

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 on 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.³¹
- 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.³²

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

- North Carolina's 15,943 foreign students contributed \$416.6 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](#).³³
- Foreign students contribute to North Carolina's metropolitan areas. From 2008 to 2012, according to the [Brookings Institution](#), 11,503 foreign students paid \$312 million in tuition and \$178 million in living costs in the Durham-Chapel Hill metropolitan area.³⁴ In the Charlotte-Gastonia-Rock Hill metro area, 3,767 foreign students paid \$59 million in tuition and \$35 million in living costs.

- Foreign students also contribute to innovation in North Carolina. In 2009, “non-resident aliens” comprised 30.6% of master’s degrees and 31.6% of doctorate degrees in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) fields, according to the [Partnership for a New American Economy](#).³⁵

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.³⁶
- 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.³⁷
- In North Carolina, 78.9% of children with immigrant parents were considered “English proficient” as of [2009](#), according to data from the Urban Institute.³⁸
- The English proficiency rate among Asian children in North Carolina was 88.4%, while for Latino children it was 75.4%, as of [2009](#).³⁹

Endnotes

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32. Ibid.
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