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**NEW AMERICANS IN SOUTH CAROLINA:
The Political and Economic Power of Immigrants, Latinos, and Asians
in the Palmetto State**

Immigrants, Latinos, and Asians account for large and growing shares of the economy and population in the state of South Carolina. Immigrants (the foreign-born) make up 4.7% of the state's population and nearly one-third of immigrants in South Carolina are naturalized U.S. citizens who are eligible to vote. "New Americans"—immigrants and the children of immigrants—account for 2.3% of all registered voters in the state. Latinos and Asians (both foreign-born and native-born) wield \$7.1 billion in consumer purchasing power. At last count, businesses owned by Latinos and Asians had sales and receipts of \$4.6 billion and employed more than 29,000 people. At a time when the economy is still recovering, South 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 South Carolina's population and electorate.

- **The foreign-born share** of South Carolina's population rose from 1.4% in [1990](#),¹ to 2.9% in [2000](#),² to 4.7% in [2011](#),³ according to the U.S. Census Bureau. South Carolina was home to 221,933 immigrants in [2011](#),⁴ which is more than the entire population of [Birmingham, Alabama](#).⁵
- **33.7% of immigrants (or 74,818 people) in South Carolina were naturalized U.S. citizens** in [2011](#)⁶—meaning that they are eligible to vote.
- Unauthorized immigrants comprised roughly **1.2% of the state's population** (or 55,000 people) in [2010](#), according to a report by the Pew Hispanic Center.⁷
- **2.3% (or 54,846) of all registered voters** in South 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

Roughly 1 in 16 South Carolinians are Latino or Asian—and they vote.

- The **Latino share of South Carolina's population** grew from 0.9% in [1990](#),⁹ to 2.4% in [2000](#),¹⁰ to 5.2% (or 241,008 people) in [2011](#).¹¹ The **Asian share of the population** grew from 0.6% in [1990](#),¹² to 0.9% in [2000](#),¹³ to 1.4% (or 63,356 people) in [2011](#),¹⁴ according to the U.S. Census Bureau.
- **Latinos comprised 0.9% (or 18,000) of South Carolina voters in the 2008 elections**, according to the [U.S. Census Bureau](#).¹⁵

- In South Carolina, **84.6% of children with immigrant parents were U.S. citizens** in [2009](#), according to data from the Urban Institute.¹⁶
- In [2009](#), **87% of children in Asian families** in South Carolina were U.S. citizens, as were **88.2% of children in Latino families**.¹⁷

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

- **The 2012 purchasing power of South Carolina's Latinos totaled \$4.4 billion**—an increase of 1,096% since 1990. **Asian buying power totaled \$2.7 billion**—an increase of 773% since 1990, according to the [Selig Center for Economic Growth](#) at the University of Georgia.¹⁸
- South Carolina's 6,658 [Asian-owned](#) businesses had sales and receipts of **\$2.7 billion and employed 19,977 people** in 2007, the last year for which data is available.¹⁹ The state's 5,971 [Latino-owned](#) businesses had sales and receipts of **\$1.9 billion and employed 9,273 people** in 2007, according to the U.S. Census Bureau's Survey of Business Owners.²⁰

Immigrants are integral to South Carolina's economy as workers.

- Immigrants comprised **6.3% of the state's workforce** in [2011](#) (or 142,549 workers), according to the U.S. Census Bureau.²¹
- Unauthorized immigrants comprised **2.1% of the state's workforce** (or 45,000 workers) in [2010](#), according to a report by the Pew Hispanic Center.²²
- If all unauthorized immigrants were removed from South Carolina, **the state would lose \$1.8 billion in economic activity, \$782.9 million in gross state product, and approximately 12,059 jobs**, even accounting for adequate market adjustment time, according to a report by the [Perryman Group](#).²³

Unauthorized immigrants pay taxes.

- Unauthorized immigrants in South Carolina paid **\$33.4 million** in state and local taxes in [2010](#), including \$25.4 million in sales taxes, \$3.8 million in state income taxes, and \$4.3 million in property taxes, according to data from the Institute for Taxation and Economic Policy.²⁴
- Were unauthorized immigrants in South Carolina to have legal status, they would pay **\$40.7 million** in state and local taxes, including \$26.9 million in sales taxes, \$9.5 million in state income taxes, and \$4.3 million in property taxes.²⁵

Immigrants are important to South Carolina's economy as students.

- South Carolina's 4,883 **foreign students contributed \$121.8 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](#).²⁶

Naturalized citizens excel educationally.

- In South Carolina, **35.1% of foreign-born persons** who were naturalized U.S. citizens in **2011 had a bachelor's or higher degree**, compared to 20.7% of noncitizens. At the same time, only 14.6% of naturalized citizens lacked a high-school diploma, compared to 35.7% of noncitizens.²⁷
- The number of immigrants in South Carolina with a college degree **increased by 87.8%** between 2000 and 2011, according to [data](#) from the Migration Policy Institute.²⁸
- In South Carolina, **83.1% of children with immigrant parents** were considered “English proficient” as of [2009](#), according to data from the Urban Institute.²⁹
- The English proficiency rate among **Asian children in South Carolina was 92.9%**, while for **Latino children it was 79%**, as of [2009](#).³⁰

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

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Jeffrey M. Humphreys, [The Multicultural Economy 2012](#) (Athens, GA: Selig Center for Economic Growth, University of Georgia, 2010).

¹⁹ U.S. Census Bureau, [Estimates of Business Ownership by Gender, Ethnicity, Race, and Veteran Status: 2007](#), June, 2011.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ 2011 American Community Survey (1-Year Estimates).

²² 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.

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

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ NAFSA: Association of International Educators, [The Economic Benefits of International Students to the U.S. Economy: Academic Year 2011-2012](#) (Washington, DC: 2012).

²⁷ Migration Policy Institute Data Hub, [South Carolina: Language & Education](#).

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ [The Urban Institute](#), data from the Integrated Public Use Microdata Series datasets drawn from the 2005 - 2009 American Community Survey.

³⁰ Ibid.