



# IMMIGRATION POLICY CENTER

...providing factual information about immigration and immigrants in America

August 3, 2009

## **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 make up more than 7% of the state's population, while nearly 9% of North Carolinians are Latino or Asian. Although Latinos and Asians 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 \$17.8 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](#),<sup>1</sup> to 5.3% in [2000](#),<sup>2</sup> to 7% in [2007](#),<sup>3</sup> according to the U.S. Census Bureau. North Carolina was home to 629,947 immigrants in [2007](#),<sup>4</sup> which is roughly equal to the total population of [Charlotte, NC](#).<sup>5</sup>
- **28.9% of immigrants (or 182,104 people) in North Carolina were naturalized U.S. citizens** in [2007](#)<sup>6</sup>—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](#).<sup>7</sup>

### *Nearly 9% of North Carolinians are Latino or Asian.*

- The **Latino share of North Carolina's population** grew from 1.2% in [1990](#),<sup>8</sup> to 4.7% in [2000](#),<sup>9</sup> to 7.1% (or 643,333 people) in [2007](#).<sup>10</sup> The **Asian share of the population** grew from 0.8% in [1990](#),<sup>11</sup> to 1.4% in [2000](#),<sup>12</sup> to 1.8% (or 163,099 people) in [2007](#),<sup>13</sup> 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](#).<sup>14</sup> 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.<sup>15</sup>

---

A DIVISION OF THE AMERICAN IMMIGRATION LAW FOUNDATION

1331 G STREET, NW, SUITE 200 • WASHINGTON, DC 20005-3141 • TEL: (202) 507-7500 • FAX: (202) 742-5619

[www.immigrationpolicy.org](http://www.immigrationpolicy.org)

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

- The **2008 purchasing power of North Carolina's Latinos totaled \$11.9 billion**—an increase of 1,314.2% since 1990. **Asian buying power totaled \$5.9 billion**—an increase of 729.6% since 1990, according to the [Selig Center for Economic Growth](#) at the University of Georgia.<sup>16</sup>
- **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, according to a study by researchers at the [University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill](#).<sup>17</sup>
- 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.<sup>18</sup> 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.<sup>19</sup>

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

- Immigrants comprised **9% of the state's workforce** in [2007](#) (or 415,214 workers), according to the U.S. Census Bureau.<sup>20</sup>
- 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.<sup>21</sup>
- If all unauthorized immigrants were removed from North Carolina, **the state would lose \$14.5 billion in expenditures, \$6.4 billion in economic output, and approximately 101,414 jobs**, even accounting for adequate market adjustment time, according to a report by the [Perryman Group](#).<sup>22</sup>

***Naturalized Immigrants Excel Educationally.***

- The number of immigrants in North Carolina with a college degree **increased by 68.4%** between 2000 and 2007, according to [data](#) from the Migration Policy Institute.<sup>23</sup>
- 36.5% 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 [2007](#), compared to 20.6% of noncitizens and 25.6% of native-born citizens.<sup>24</sup>
- In North Carolina, **69.6% 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 [2007](#).<sup>25</sup>

**Endnotes**

---

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

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> 2007 American Community Survey (1-Year Estimates).

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

- 
- <sup>5</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>6</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>7</sup> 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).
- <sup>8</sup> U.S. Census Bureau, [\*The Hispanic Population: 2000\*](#), May 2001.
- <sup>9</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>10</sup> 2007 American Community Survey (1-Year Estimates).
- <sup>11</sup> U.S. Census Bureau, [\*The Asian Population: 2000\*](#), February 2002.
- <sup>12</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>13</sup> 2007 American Community Survey (1-Year Estimates).
- <sup>14</sup> 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.](#)
- <sup>15</sup> U.S. Electoral College, [2008 Presidential Election: Popular Vote Totals.](#)
- <sup>16</sup> Jeffrey M. Humphreys, [\*The Multicultural Economy 2008\*](#) (Athens, GA: Selig Center for Economic Growth, University of Georgia, 2008).
- <sup>17</sup> 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).
- <sup>18</sup> U.S. Census Bureau, [\*Asian-Owned Firms: 2002\*](#), August 2006.
- <sup>19</sup> U.S. Census Bureau, [\*Hispanic-Owned Firms: 2002\*](#), August 2006.
- <sup>20</sup> 2007 American Community Survey (1-Year Estimates).
- <sup>21</sup> Jeffrey S. Passel and D’Vera Cohn, [\*A Portrait of Unauthorized Immigrants in the United States\*](#) (Washington, DC: Pew Hispanic Center, April 14, 2009).
- <sup>22</sup> 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).
- <sup>23</sup> Migration Policy Institute Data Hub, [North Carolina: Language & Education 2007.](#)
- <sup>24</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>25</sup> Ibid.