



IMMIGRATION POLICY CENTER

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

April 3, 2009

NEW AMERICANS IN THE TAR HEEL STATE: The Growing Economic and Political Clout of Immigrants and Latinos in North Carolina

Over the past two decades, North Carolina has experienced dramatic growth in its immigrant and Latino populations. Immigrants now account for 7% of North Carolina's population, and more than a quarter of them are U.S. citizens eligible to vote. Latinos comprise 7.1% of the state's population and accounted for 3% of voters in the 2008 elections. The number of Latino voters in 2008 who were immigrants or the children of immigrants was nearly double the size of the very slim margin by which President Obama won the state. Immigrants and their child, especially those who naturalize, excel in school over time. Moreover, the revenue generated by Latino and Asian taxpayers, consumers, and entrepreneurs sustains thousands of jobs and contributes billions of dollars to the state's coffers. At a time of deepening recession, North Carolina can ill-afford to alienate or marginalize such a fast-growing component of its labor force, tax base, and business community.

Immigrants and their children represent a growing share 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% in [2007](#),³ according to the U.S. Census Bureau.
- 28.9% of immigrants in North Carolina were naturalized U.S. citizens in [2007](#)⁴—meaning that they are eligible to vote.
- 1.9% 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](#).⁵

Integrated Immigrants and their Children Excel in Education Over Time:

- In North Carolina, 36.5 % of foreign-born persons who were naturalized in [2007](#) had a bachelor's or higher degree compared to 20.6% of noncitizens. At the same time, only 18.2% of naturalized citizens lacked a high school diploma compared to 43.2% of noncitizens.⁶
- 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.⁷
- In North Carolina, 69.6% of all children in families that spoke a language other than English reported having oral English proficiency.⁸

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

Latino and Immigrant Power at the Polls:

- The Latino share of North Carolina's population grew from 1.2% in [1990](#),⁹ to 4.7% in [2000](#),¹⁰ to 7.1% in [2007](#),¹¹ according to the U.S. Census Bureau.
- Latinos comprised 3% of North Carolina voters in the 2008 elections, according to [CNN exit polls](#).¹²
- Obama won by approximately 14,000 votes in [North Carolina](#), yet received the votes of nearly 26,000 more Latino New Americans than McCain. The additional votes that Obama received from Latino New Americans who chose him over McCain was nearly double his margin of victory.¹³

Economic Impact of Latino Workers and Taxpayers:

- Latinos in North Carolina ([56%](#) of whom are foreign-born¹⁴) contributed \$9.2 billion to the state's economy through their purchases and taxes in 2004, according to a [2006 study](#) by researchers at the University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill.¹⁵
- The [impact of spending](#) by North Carolina's Latinos in 2004 included 89,600 additional jobs, \$2.4 billion in additional labor income, \$455 million in extra state taxes, and \$661 million in extra federal taxes.¹⁶
- In addition, Latinos in North Carolina [directly contributed](#) \$294 million in personal income taxes, property taxes, and small-business taxes.¹⁷

Latinos and Asians as Consumers and Business Owners:

- In 2008, the purchasing power of Latinos in North Carolina totaled \$11.9 billion, while the purchasing power of Asians was \$5.9 billion. Between 1990 and 2008, the purchasing power of the state's Latinos increased 1,314%, and that of Asians 730%—both of which were the second highest growth rates of any state in the nation, according to the [Selig Center for Economic Growth](#) at the University of Georgia.¹⁸
- North Carolina's 9,043 [Latino-owned businesses](#) had sales and receipts of \$1.8 billion and provided jobs to 11,615 workers in 2002¹⁹ (the last year for which data is available). The state's 13,695 [Asian-owned firms](#) had sales and receipts of \$3.5 billion and provided jobs to 32,759 workers, according to the U.S. Census Bureau.²⁰

Endnotes

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

² Ibid.

³ 2007 American Community Survey (1-Year Estimates).

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ 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).

⁶ Migration Policy Institute Data Hub, [North Carolina: Language & Education 2007](#).

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Ibid.

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

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ 2007 American Community Survey (1-Year Estimates).

¹² CNN, Election Center 2008: [Presidential Exit Polls: North Carolina](#).

¹³ The Immigration Policy Center, [Latino “New American” Voters Wield Influence in New States” Immigrant Latinos Top Native-Born Latinos in Preference for Obama](#)” (Washington, DC: November 2008).

¹⁴ 2007 American Community Survey (1-Year Estimates).

¹⁵ 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).

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Jeffrey M. Humphreys, [The Multicultural Economy 2008](#) (Athens, GA: Selig Center for Economic Growth, University of Georgia, 2008).

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

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