

Asian Americans in North Carolina

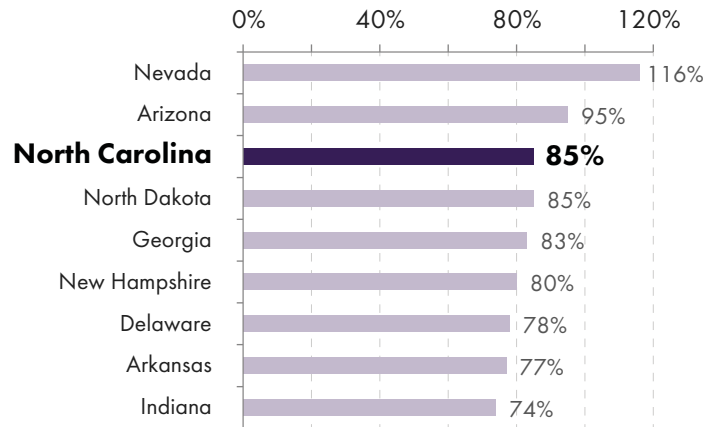
A battleground state's newest and fastest-growing community — March 2016

In recent years, the Asian-American population in North Carolina has boomed. This new immigrant community has brought with it a rich diversity of Asian languages and cultures. As they become more integrated into the fabric of the state, Asian Americans will have a growing presence and voice in North Carolina.

A FAST-GROWING COMMUNITY

Between 2000 and 2010, North Carolina's Asian-American population grew by 85 percent — the fastest rate among Southern states and the third-fastest in the country. Statewide, Asian Americans were the second-fastest growing racial/ethnic group after Latinos; since 2010, Asian-American growth has outpaced that of Latinos. Today, there are 300,000 Asian Americans in North Carolina who make up 3 percent of the state's population.

Percentage growth in Asian-American population by state, 2000–2010

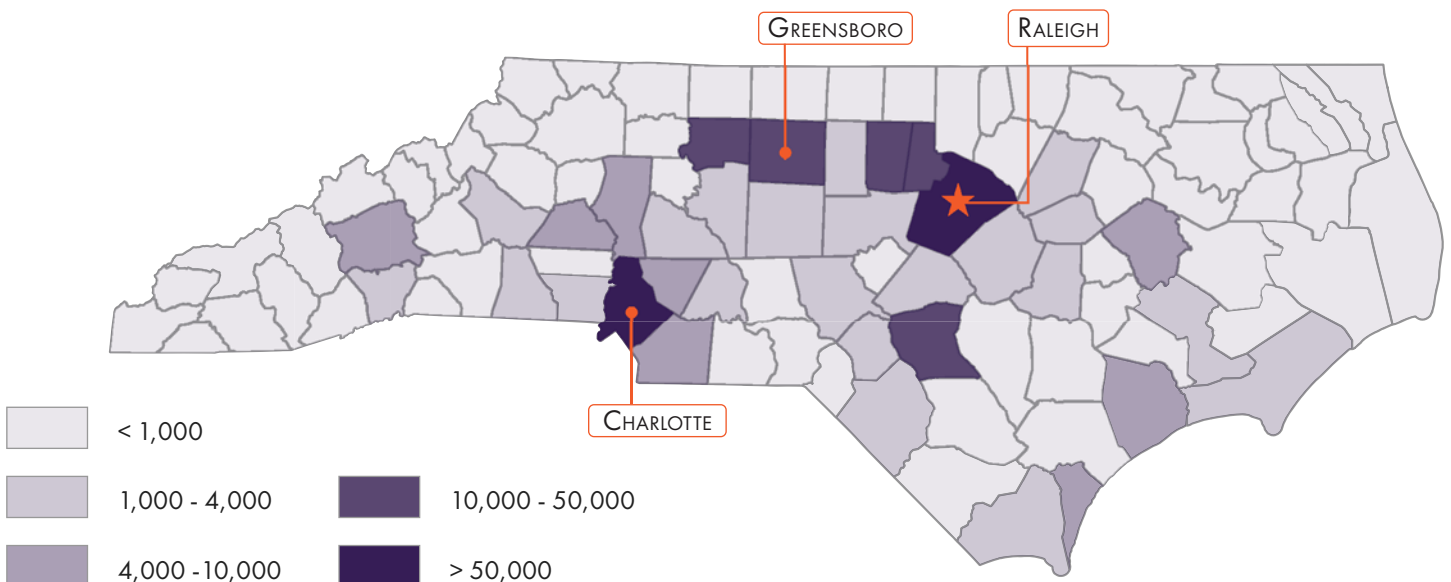


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A BASE IN NORTH CAROLINA CITIES

The largest Asian-American communities are concentrated in the state's two major metros: Raleigh and Charlotte. Wake County, home to Raleigh, has the largest Asian-American population with 72,000 residents. Neighboring Durham and Orange counties also have sizable Asian-American populations. The county with the second-largest population is Mecklenburg, home to Charlotte, with 61,000 Asian-American residents.

Population of Asian Americans in North Carolina, 2014



ORIGINS ACROSS ASIA

The Asian-American population in North Carolina is extremely diverse, with over 20 Asian ethnicities and countries of origin represented. Asian Indians are the largest ethnic group by far, making up over 25 percent of the state's Asian-American population; they are followed by Chinese (15 percent), Vietnamese (12 percent) and Filipinos (12 percent). The state is also home to several ethnic minority groups including the Hmong and the Montagnards from Southeast Asia.

AN ARRAY OF LANGUAGES

With ethnic diversity comes linguistic diversity. Among the dozens of Asian languages spoken in the state are Hindi, Urdu, Korean, Tagalog, Hmong, Laotian, Gujarati and Montagnard languages like Bunong, K'ho and Rhade. Chinese is the most common; over 30,000 North Carolinians speak Mandarin, Cantonese or other varieties of Chinese language. Vietnamese and Arabic are the next most commonly spoken languages.



Asian-American voters are a growing segment of the state's electorate with great potential for further engagement.

AN IMMIGRANT COMMUNITY

The Asian-American community in North Carolina is largely made up of immigrants, with nearly 60 percent of the population born abroad. About half of these immigrants have become naturalized U.S. citizens, although naturalization rates vary by ethnicity and country of origin. Despite having largely foreign roots, the overall Asian-American population in North Carolina has a remarkably high citizenship rate: about 7 in 10 are citizens.

A GROWING VOICE

Asian-American voters are a growing segment of the state's electorate with great potential for further engagement. The number of Asian Americans registered to vote statewide increased 130 percent between 2006 and 2014. Nearly 90,000 Asian Americans were registered to vote statewide for the midterm elections in 2014, yet more work is needed if they are to reach their full electoral potential. While 70 percent of all eligible North Carolina residents are registered to vote, only 58 percent of eligible Asian-American residents are.



Southeast Asian Coalition (SEAC) youth conduct grassroots mobilizing efforts to increase civic engagement. Pictured: Tao, Hien and Dieu (Jrai-American students from West Charlotte High School). Photo courtesy of SEAC

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Sources: U.S. Census Bureau, 2014 American Community Survey One and Five-Year Estimates. U.S. Census Bureau, 2006 and 2014 Current Population Surveys. U.S. Census Bureau, 2000 and 2010 Decennial Censuses. U.S. Census Bureau, 2014 Population Estimates. North Carolina State Board of Elections, 2014 Voter Records (Asian Americans Advancing Justice analysis).