

September 2013

North Carolina has long benefited from the immeasurable economic contributions of its immigrant population. Coming from all over the world, immigrants play a vital role in the Tar Heel state as neighbors, entrepreneurs, consumers, and taxpayers. Immigrants help position North Carolina for growth and cultural vitality, bringing with them ingenuity and a variety of languages, practices, and beliefs. Put simply, immigrants share Tar Heel values—they work hard to provide for their families and to make the state a more prosperous, connected, and successful place to live for all North Carolinians.

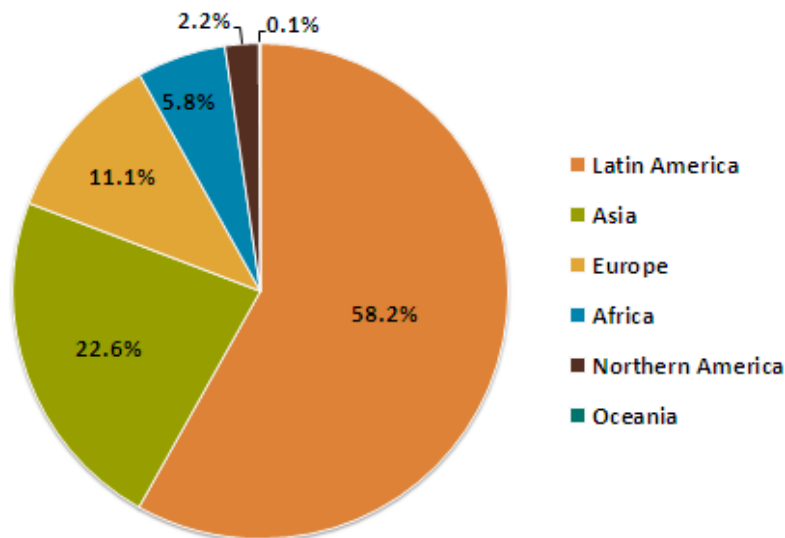
North Carolina would be incomplete without the innovation and intellect of its immigrant community, which is a growing share of the state’s total population.

- 7.3 percent of North Carolinians are immigrants, up from 5.3 percent in 2000.¹
- 3 percent—or 400,000—of all undocumented immigrants in the US live in North Carolina.²
- Immigrants in NC are more likely to have an advanced degree—but less likely to have a bachelor’s degree—than US-born North Carolinians.

North Carolina’s immigrant population is diverse, with immigrants coming from all over the world. Communities not only benefit from this diversity but also from immigrants’ civic and social contributions.

- Immigrants in NC come from regions across the world, with the majority coming from Latin America and Asia.
- 1 in 3 immigrants are naturalized citizens and able to vote and engage in the policymaking process, with more than half entering the US before the year 2000.
- The future character of NC’s diversity will be driven in-part by its children, including immigrants’ children who comprise 16 percent of the state’s child population.³

Immigrants in NC Come From All Over the World



Not only do immigrants make vast contributions to the cultural fabric of the state’s communities but they are also determined to succeed. They make great strides towards learning English—a factor that opens the door to staying attached to the labor force and participation in civic life in many parts of the state.

- More than 69 percent of immigrants in NC ages 5 years and over speak English “well” or “very well.”

Immigrants are innovators and small-business owners whose contributions create jobs and help grow the state’s economy—and that is good for every North Carolinian. They open retail stores and grocery stores, generating revenues and expanding opportunities in their neighborhoods. And as workers, they bring a willingness to work hard to succeed and build a stronger economy.

- 1 in 10 workers ages 18 to 64 and 1 in 10 small-business owners are immigrants in NC.⁴
- Immigrants account for 8 percent—or nearly \$11 billion—of NC’s total economic output.⁵
- Approximately 4 in 10 immigrants work white-collar jobs and another 4 in 10 work blue-collar jobs. The rest are employed in service and farming occupations.
- The average annual unemployment rate for immigrants in NC is 9.1 percent, nearly 3 percentage points lower than the US rate for this group.

A Profile of Immigrants in Gaston County (5-Year Estimates)

- 4.8 percent of North Carolinians in Gaston County are immigrants, up from 3.3 percent in 2000.
- 30.3 percent of immigrants in Gaston County are naturalized citizens and able to vote and engage in the policymaking process.
- 55.7 percent of immigrants in Gaston County entered the US before 2000.
- Gaston County’s immigrant population is diverse, with immigrants coming from all over the world.
 - 17.8 percent are from Asia
 - 4.5 percent are from Africa
 - 9.6 percent are from Europe
 - 65 percent are from Latin America
 - 2.6 percent are from Northern America

Unless otherwise noted, all state-level data come from the Census Bureau’s 2011 American Community Survey and all county-level data come from the 2007-2011 American Community Survey. “Immigrant” generally describes a foreign-born person living in the US, regardless of their immigration status or whether they have become a US citizen.

¹ 2000 estimate comes from the Census Bureau’s 2000 Decennial Census.

² Data reflects point-in-time estimate. Department of Homeland Security. “Estimates of the Unauthorized Immigrant Population Residing in the United States: January 2011.” March 2012. Available here: http://www.dhs.gov/xlibrary/assets/statistics/publications/ois_ill_pe_2011.pdf

³ Urban Institute. “Children of Immigrants: Growing National and State Diversity.” October 2011. Available here: <http://www.urban.org/UploadedPDF/412433-children-of-immigrants-brief5-nat-state-diversity.pdf>

⁴ Entrepreneurship estimate comes from Economic Policy Institute’s analysis of the 2009-2011 American Community Survey.

⁵ Ibid.