

SEPTEMBER 2020



NORTH CAROLINA STATE PROFILE

NEWAMERICAN VOTERS 2020

TOGETHER
WE ARE
La COALICIÓN

 **La COALICIÓN**
Latin American Coalition

 **NPNA**
NATIONAL PARTNERSHIP
for NEW AMERICANS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

North Carolina could be one of the most pivotal states in determining who will win the White House and Senate in 2020, with newly naturalized citizens playing an outsized role, largely represented by immigrants who are originally from Mexico, India, Vietnam, China, and the Philippines.

The impact that recently naturalized citizens will play, however, largely depends on the Latin American Coalition and other grassroots efforts in the state to reach this rising electorate in languages and cultural ways that connect. There are many challenges to voter engagement work in North Carolina and throughout the country, including a lack of language access, the need for nonprofit organizations to adapt to the coronavirus pandemic, the Trump administration's threats to limit absentee ballots, and ongoing efforts to limit access to the ballot. One emerging form of voter suppression is the backlog of over 700,000 citizenship applications before U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS), which will prevent immigrants who are eligible for citizenship from naturalizing in time to register to vote in November, despite, in North Carolina in some cases, having applied over a year ago.¹ In North Carolina, the backlog, according to USCIS' latest data, is 8,843 applications.² And while the national average processing delay is 8.8 months, USCIS offices in North Carolina exceed that delay, including Raleigh, where the delay ranges from six to nine months and Charlotte, where the delay ranges from 7.5 to 15.5 months.³ The number of would-be citizens who risk being disenfranchised by USCIS mismanagement is not minor, especially in a state like North Carolina, where, for example, the backlog of citizenship applicants is close to the 2016 margin of victory (10,277 votes) for the North Carolina governorship that is up for re-election this year.⁴

Despite these challenges, newly naturalized citizens can sway the outcome of national, state, and local elections. For example, the number of citizens in the state who naturalized from 2014 to 2018 is 62,555, with an anticipated 98,937 to have naturalized from 2014 through 2020, though the 2020 figure may decrease due to USCIS' unwillingness to hold remote oath ceremonies when it closed its offices during the coronavirus pandemic and its current slowwalking of interviewing naturalization applicants. Still, both of these numbers exceed the margin of victory (48,511 votes) for the Senate seat that is up for reelection in 2020.⁵ The largest concentration of newly naturalized citizens, like in many other states, are those who are originally from Mexico, followed by those who are from Asian and Pacific Island countries like India, Vietnam, China, and the Philippines. The next largest groups of naturalized citizens in North Carolina are originally from Colombia, El Salvador, and Burma. These new citizens, if they vote, can have an enormous impact on what happens electorally in 2020.

¹ Number of Form N-400, Application for Naturalization By Category of Naturalization, Case Status, and USCIS Field Office Location, January 1 - March 31, 2020," U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services, accessed September 10, 2020, https://www.uscis.gov/sites/default/files/document/data/N400_performancedata_fy2020_qtr2.pdf; "Check Case Processing Times," U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services, accessed September 10, 2020, <https://egov.uscis.gov/processing-times/>.

² Number of Form N-400, Application for Naturalization By Category of Naturalization, Case Status, and USCIS Field Office Location, January 1 - March 31, 2020," U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services, accessed September 10, 2020, https://www.uscis.gov/sites/default/files/document/data/N400_performancedata_fy2020_qtr2.pdf.

³ "Historical National Average Processing Time (in Months) for All USCIS Offices for Select Forms By Fiscal Year," U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services, accessed September 10, 2020, <https://egov.uscis.gov/processing-times/historic-pt>; "Check Case Processing Times," U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services, accessed September 10, 2020, <https://egov.uscis.gov/processing-times/>.

⁴ "North Carolina Governor Results: Roy Cooper Wins," New York Times, August 1, 2017, <https://www.nytimes.com/elections/2016/results/north-carolina-governor-mccrory-cooper>.

⁵ "North Carolina Election Results: Tillis Defeats Hagan," New York Times, December 17, 2014, <https://www.nytimes.com/elections/2014/north-carolina-elections>.

WHY NORTH CAROLINA IS SO IMPORTANT IN 2020

North Carolina ranks sixth as the state in which newly naturalized citizens can have the greatest electoral influence this year, according to the New American Voters Impact Model, created by the National Partnership for New Americans (NPNA) and based on factors like the 2016 presidential election margin of victory; the margin of victory average during the last three presidential elections; the number and concentration of new citizens in the state; and the occurrence of a senatorial, gubernatorial, or state legislative election and their competitiveness.⁶

From 2014 to 2018, 62,555 citizens naturalized in North Carolina. From 2014 to 2020, an estimated 98,937 new citizens naturalized, which is half of the margin of victory in the 2016 presidential election (173,315 votes).⁷ The number of new citizens exceeds the margin of victory for the Senate seat that is up for reelection in 2020 (48,511 votes) as well as the margin of victory for the governorship (10,277 votes), which is also up for election this year. The numbers of new citizens are based on USCIS data on naturalizations that occurred from Fiscal Year (FY) 2014 through FY 2018 and naturalization applications that the agency approved in FY 2019.⁸ The estimates for naturalizations during FY 2020 is based on previous spikes in naturalizations in FY 2016, before that calendar year's presidential election.⁹ "Newly naturalized citizens" or "recently naturalized citizens" are defined as those who have naturalized since FY 2014. "New American Voters" are defined as those who have naturalized since FY 2014 and can subsequently register to vote.

These estimates of new citizens were made in NPNA's report, *The Power of Newly Naturalized Citizens in the 2020 Elections*, released in June 2020. The report calculated that from FY 2014 through FY 2020, there would be 5.3 million new citizens who naturalized, the majority of which, 3.1 million, naturalized since the election of Donald Trump to President. Since the report's release, USCIS has released data indicating that around 290,000 naturalization applicants awaiting their interview will not be naturalized in time to register to vote, meaning that NPNA's original estimates of 5.3 million will be reduced to around 5 million new citizens.¹⁰ Nevertheless, USCIS mismanagement will not hold back the approximately 5 million new citizens, including their large numbers in North Carolina.

⁶ Iñiguez-López, Diego, "The Power of Newly Naturalized Citizens in the 2020 Elections," National Partnership for New Americans, June 2020, newamericanvoters2020.org/assets/2020/06/NAV-REPORT-2020-UPDATED.pdf.

⁷ See "North Carolina Results," New York Times, August 1, 2017, <https://www.nytimes.com/elections/2016/results/north-carolina>.

⁸ See "Naturalizations," U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services, accessed August 12, 2020, <https://www.dhs.gov/immigration-statistics/naturalizations>; "Immigration and Citizenship Data," U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services, accessed August 12, 2020, <https://www.uscis.gov/tools/reports-and-studies/immigration-and-citizenship-data>.

⁹ See Iñiguez-López, Diego, "Naturalize Now, Vote Tomorrow: New Americans Vote 2020," National Partnership for New Americans, February 2020, https://partnershipfornewamericans.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/Naturalize_Now_Vote_Tomorrow_FINAL.pdf.

¹⁰ See Rampell, Catherine, "The 'Missing' Immigrant Voters Whose Absence Might Swing the Election," Washington Post, August 27, 2020, https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/the-missing-immigrant-voters-whose-absence-might-swing-the-election/2020/08/27/db144c16-e897-11ea-97e0-94d2e46e759b_story.html; "The Fix Is In — Nearly 300,000 Immigrants Won't Become U.S. Citizens In Time For the 2020 Election," Boundless, September 3, 2020, <https://www.boundless.com/blog/immigrants-citizenship-vote-2020/>.

Of the more than 305,000 naturalized citizens in North Carolina, approximately one third are new citizens. Since the release of NPNA's June 2020 report, which utilized American Community Survey (ACS) data from 2017, ACS released 2018 data, which this report uses.¹¹

TOTAL POPULATION	REGISTERED VOTERS	ALL NATURALIZED	NATURALIZED 2014-2020
10,155,624	7,067,058	305,259	98,937

WHO ARE NORTH CAROLINA'S NEW AMERICAN VOTERS

Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders represent 33% of new citizens, 31% are Latin American, 14% are European, 13% are African, 6% are Middle Eastern and North African and 3% are Caribbean. The chart below provides totals for 2014-2018.

ASIAN AMERICAN & PACIFIC ISLANDER	20,613	33%
LATIN AMERICAN	19,581	31%
EUROPEAN	8,515	14%
AFRICAN	7,879	13%
MIDDLE EASTERN & NORTH AFRICAN	4,055	6%
CARIBBEAN	1,912	3%
TOTAL 2014-2018	62,555	
TOTAL 2014-2020	98,937	

The following map represents the top 20 countries of origin for newly naturalized citizens.



¹¹ "Nativity and Citizenship Status in the United States," United States Census Bureau, accessed September 11, 2020, <https://data.census.gov/cedsci/table?q=B05001%3A%20NATIVITY%20AND%20CITIZENSHIP%20STATUS%20IN%20THE%20UNITED%20STATES&g=0400000US39&tid=ACSDT5Y2018.B05001&moe=false&tp=false&hidePreview=true>.

The following chart represents the top 20 countries of origin for newly naturalized citizens.

RANK	COUNTRY	TOTAL
1	MEXICO	7,411
2	INDIA	5,806
3	VIETNAM	2,919
4	CHINA	2,270
5	PHILIPPINES	1,996
6	COLOMBIA	1,815
7	EL SALVADOR	1,754
8	BURMA	1,576
9	UNITED KINGDOM	1,519
10	CANADA	1,448
11	DOMINICAN REPUBLIC	1,388
12	SOUTH KOREA	1,090
13	NIGERIA	1,074
14	PAKISTAN	971
15	HONDURAS	937
16	PERU	899
17	JAMAICA	877
18	KENYA	823
19	ECUADOR	816
20	GHANA	752

Two-thirds of newly naturalized citizens in North Carolina from 2014-2018 were below the age of 45 when they naturalized. Like in most states and nationwide, recently naturalized citizens are slightly majority women. The full breakdown by age and gender is shown in the following table:

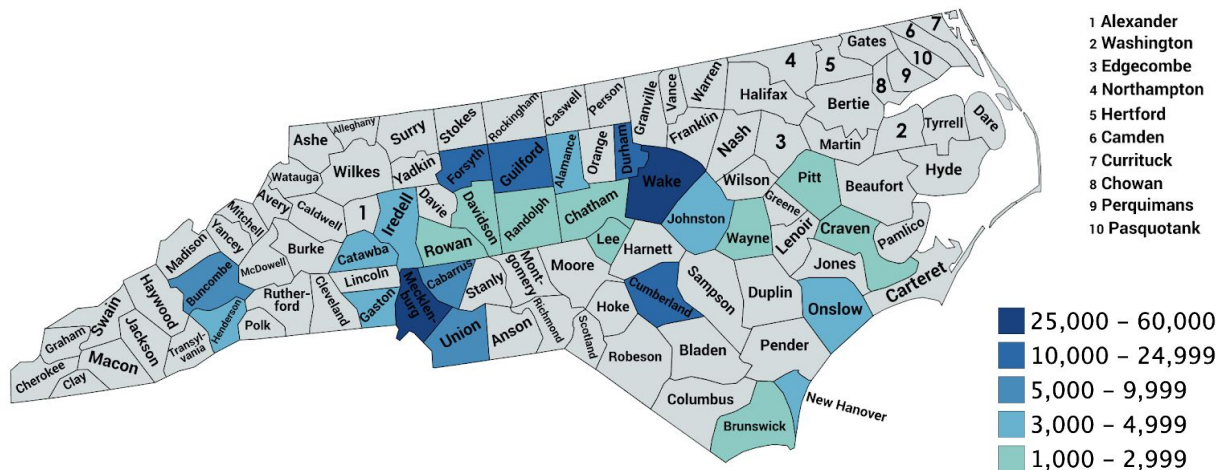
NORTH CAROLINA 2014-2018 NATURALIZED BY AGE				
AGE	FEMALE	MALE	TOTAL	%
18-24 YEARS	3,005	2,767	5,772	9%
25-34 YEARS	8,796	7,178	15,974	25%
35-44 YEARS	10,028	8,773	18,802	30%
45-54 YEARS	6,082	5,931	12,013	19%
55-64 YEARS	3,350	3,063	6,413	10%
65 YEARS AND OVER	2,059	1,699	3,758	6%
TOTAL	33,320	29,411	62,732	

Compared to all other states, North Carolina ranks 11th for Latina American new citizens, 12th for Caribbean, and 14th for Asian American & Pacific Islander, European, African and Middle Eastern & North African.

TOP 15 STATES BY REGION								
LATIN AMERICA			AAPI			EUROPE		
Rank	State	Total	Rank	State	Total	Rank	State	Total
1	California	314,645	1	California	302,467	1	California	69,325
2	Florida	266,187	2	New York	131,603	2	New York	55,372
3	Texas	155,321	3	Texas	80,503	3	Florida	34,438
4	New York	138,284	4	New Jersey	57,651	4	Illinois	31,056
5	New Jersey	69,942	5	Illinois	41,225	5	New Jersey	23,112
6	Illinois	36,444	6	Virginia	37,600	6	Massachusetts	20,328
7	Massachusetts	34,288	7	Florida	34,613	7	Washington	17,473
8	Arizona	32,893	8	Washington	32,572	8	Texas	16,685
9	Virginia	24,555	9	Pennsylvania	31,916	9	Pennsylvania	13,261
10	Georgia	23,826	10	Massachusetts	30,770	10	Michigan	12,689
11	North Carolina	19,581	11	Georgia	29,527	11	Connecticut	10,017
12	Nevada	18,049	12	Maryland	24,857	12	Virginia	9,860
13	Maryland	17,432	13	Ohio	21,848	13	Georgia	9,586
14	Washington	15,954	14	North Carolina	20,613	14	North Carolina	8,515
15	Pennsylvania	15,907	15	Michigan	19,099	15	Ohio	8,174
AFRICA			MENA			CARIBBEAN		
Rank	State	Total	Rank	State	Total	Rank	State	Total
1	Texas	25,907	1	California	62,108	1	Florida	62,494
2	New York	25,509	2	Michigan	21,860	2	New York	57,642
3	Maryland	24,438	3	New York	20,615	3	New Jersey	12,599
4	California	17,151	4	Texas	15,726	4	Massachusetts	12,447
5	Minnesota	15,555	5	New Jersey	13,128	5	Georgia	6,862
6	Massachusetts	15,493	6	Florida	11,709	6	Connecticut	6,477
7	Georgia	14,124	7	Illinois	10,536	7	Pennsylvania	5,088
8	Virginia	14,120	8	Virginia	10,007	8	Maryland	4,680
9	Ohio	11,910	9	Massachusetts	8,746	9	Texas	3,169
10	New Jersey	10,177	10	Pennsylvania	6,280	10	California	2,441
11	Pennsylvania	9,600	11	Ohio	5,710	11	Virginia	2,193
12	Washington	8,522	12	Arizona	4,917	12	North Carolina	1,912
13	Illinois	8,263	13	Tennessee	4,104	13	Illinois	1,653
14	North Carolina	7,879	14	North Carolina	4,055	14	South Carolina	1,448
15	Florida	6,027	15	Maryland	4,034	15	Ohio	919

WHERE ARE NORTH CAROLINA'S NATURALIZED VOTERS

The following shows counties with 1,000 or more naturalized citizens. Wake and Mecklenburg counties each have over 50,000 total naturalized citizens. Guilford, Durham, Cumberland, and Forsyth each have more than 10,000 naturalized citizens.



COUNTY	TOTAL	LATIN AMERICAN	ASIAN	AFRICAN	EUROPEAN	OCEANIA
Wake	56,392	11,757	27,285	7,571	7,791	211
Mecklenburg	55,420	18,820	19,085	8,152	8,440	85
Guilford	20,305	4,307	8,909	3,651	2,950	44
Durham	11,965	3,124	4,748	1,827	1,650	35
Cumberland	11,563	4,401	4,381	843	1,767	57
Forsyth	11,319	5,307	3,018	1,020	1,780	9
Union	8,699	3,255	2,424	512	2,271	0
Orange	7,368	1,129	3,909	471	1,601	15
Buncombe	6,171	1,880	1,519	188	2,373	39
Cabarrus	5,879	2,271	1,958	673	809	51
Gaston	4,757	2,167	1,587	296	590	37
Onslow	4,657	1,923	1,682	261	693	0
New Hanover	4,638	1,230	1,205	355	1,537	0
Catawba	4,414	1,315	2,267	57	582	0
Alamance	3,821	1,922	953	224	655	10
Iredell	3,642	1,295	1,300	127	804	19
Johnston	3,310	1,964	631	219	275	38
Henderson	3,175	1,317	683	23	1,011	0

Davidson	2,962	1,109	1,166	73	582	0
Harnett	2,855	1,283	791	98	595	7
Brunswick	2,512	680	476	29	1,164	7
Pitt	2,426	798	1,026	145	355	0
Randolph	2,291	1,251	649	15	348	0
Wayne	2,258	1,148	671	4	346	0
Lee	2,227	1,647	306	0	207	2
Rowan	2,144	1,073	631	111	320	0
Craven	2,119	698	915	48	380	0
Chatham	1,963	587	619	160	469	7

BORDERING COUNTIES FROM SOUTH CAROLINA

The following table shows the number of naturalized citizens in South Carolina counties that border North Carolina.

County	Total	Latin American	Asian	African	European	Oceania	North American
York	5,902	1,641	2,241	335	1,271	0	414
Lancaster	1,686	934	254	68	322	0	108
Chester	313	131	45	0	20	0	10

TESTIMONIAL: YISEL POMIER MOREN

Leaving Cuba was hard for me, coming from a really poor family. At one point in my life my sister and I had to share the same pair of shoes. We are just nine months apart. My mom put my sister in the morning class and put me in the afternoon class. I had to wait for her to come home to put on the same pair of shoes that she was wearing and go to school. I didn't have money to get out of the country. I didn't know anybody outside of Cuba. The only thing that I had was my brain.

I arrived at the U.S. border on November 8, 2014. There was a ["wet foot, dry foot"](#) regulation before President Obama ended it in 2016. You have to show them that you are Cuban and want asylum. I had been walking through the jungle, jumping, hiding, I had forty dollars with me, one set of clothes, my Cuban ID, and a copy of my passport that I kept hidden on my body. When I was finally able to settle in the United States, I connected with a friend, we went to the University together in Cuba, and she moved to Charlotte, North Carolina. When I got to Houston, another friend bought me an airplane ticket to Charlotte and I'm still here. After I got documentation, I got a job in a factory on an assembly line. I told my girlfriend I'm going to learn English in five months and I'm going to get out of this factory. I will find a job in customer service. After four months, I began working at AT&T selling phones. It was part-time, but I was really good. I was the number four top seller because every time I set my goal, I tripled it. It was my plan all along to become a U.S. citizen. I was waiting, counting the days. I studied my citizenship questions. You can apply three months before the five-year date that you become eligible and I did that. I had a colleague, Ivonne, at NPNA member organization, the Latin American Coalition, who is my friend as well who supported me in this process.

I became a citizen on January 7, 2020. I went and I bought expensive clothes for that day because it was my day. I wanted to be professional, and I wanted to be elegant, but I wanted to be cute. It was so nice to see how many people from different countries were taking that oath. The guy next to me was from the Middle East. It was super hard for him to get citizenship and super expensive. He was waiting 20 years for citizenship and he was crying away. We hugged each other. I didn't even know that guy, but I thought, "You are my brother." It was beautiful, but at the same time it was sad for me that I received my oath at a time that this president is

spreading so much hate. I saw people crying because we believe in the freedom and in the beauty of this country. Today, I am a field worker for the National Domestic Workers Alliance. I'm not scared to go out of the country because I know that I can come back. Being a green card holder doesn't guarantee that they cannot stop you from coming back to the country, even if you have been building a family or a life for years. After the oath ceremony, I was encouraging people to register for voting because you could do it right there. I grew up with so many "no's," now that I have the vote, believe me, I'm going to use it.



RESOURCES

IMMIGRANT LEGAL CENTER: VIRTUAL INTAKES 1 (704) 531-3848 Ext. 4

Any immigrant, regardless of nationality, in North Carolina and surrounding areas, earning less than 200% of the federal poverty guidelines, may be eligible for our services. Clients must contact our phone number, and complete an intake form to determine eligibility for immigration relief.

Cases we take:

- U visas for victims of violent crimes
- VAWA petitions
- Special Immigrant Juvenile Status (must have custody order in place)
- DACA (Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals)
- Temporary Protected Status (TPS)
- Family-based petitions
- Consular processing
- Naturalization
- Adjustment of Status
- Waivers of inadmissibility
- Green card renewals and replacements
- Work permit renewals

COALICIÓN HELPLINE: 1 (980) 320-3743

Direct line to assist with crises, resources, and information for the Spanish speaking community in Charlotte, NC.

WORKER CENTER: 1 (980) 320-3741

At LAC's worker's center, we provide a safe environment for day laborers to connect with employment opportunities.

LAC IMMIGRANT WELCOME CENTER: 1 (704) 531-3848

The Immigrant Welcome Center (IWC) houses our Neighbor 2 Neighbor Resource Center (N2N), designed to provide support for immigrants seeking assistance in navigating systems in Charlotte. La Coalición staff and volunteers are prepared to assess needs and facilitate exchange of information on community resources of la Coalición and others available in the Charlotte area. Every year we serve close to 5000 individuals.

For more information please visit LATINAMERICANCOALITION.ORG

ABOUT US

THIS REPORT WAS CREATED BY NPNA AND LATIN AMERICAN COALITION



The National Partnership for New Americans is a national multiethnic, multiracial partnership. We represent the collective power of the country's 41 largest regional immigrant and refugee rights organizations in 37 states. Our members provide large-scale services—from Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals application processing to voter registration to health care enrollment—for their communities, and they combine service delivery with sophisticated organizing tactics to advance local and state policy. We exist to leverage their collective power and expertise for a national strategy.

To learn more about the National Partnership for New Americans, visit partnershipfornewamericans.org.



Since its inception in 1990 the La Coalición Latinoamericana -- the Latin American Coalition -- has stood for immigrant integration in a remarkable way. Partnering with Latino families to create access, opportunity and voice, while at the same time making spaces for others to learn about and connect with their community. We are a steadfast and vocal advocate for unity and dialogue between diverse populations to counteract the cultural backlash and friction brought about by the dramatic demographic shifts in the region.

To learn more about Latin American Coalition, visit latinamericancoalition.org