

Latinos in North Carolina: A Growing Part of the State's Economic and Social Landscape



[1]By [Hannah Gill](#) [2]

North Carolina has become a hub of Latino migration to the South. While many think this migration came suddenly, North Carolina has, in fact, been welcoming and integrating Mexican and other Latino migrants for generations. Over the last three decades, the Latino population in North Carolina grew from less than a half percent of the total population to 8.4 percent—more than 800,000 people. North Carolina, which now has more agricultural guest workers than any other state in the nation, has contributed to a quickly growing national population of 50 million Latinos, now the largest minority group in the country. But much is at stake for Latinos, native and newly arrived, as the state and region experience demographic transformation.

The polarized nature of the current immigration debate has made the steady growth of Latinos in North Carolina more noticeable and more politically charged. The role of Latinos in North Carolina, however—as workers and residents—is an important and over-looked story of how North Carolina continues to grow and evolve in a changing economy and world.

In this [Perspectives](#) [1], the author finds that North Carolina has become an important barometer of contemporary immigration debates for the nation and especially for the Southeast, which has become a new frontier for Latin American migration to the United States. While Latinos in North Carolina, as they do elsewhere in the United States, have much to contribute to regional identities and histories, aggressive anti-immigrant policies and the climate of reception that they threaten hundreds of thousands of people across the state.

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