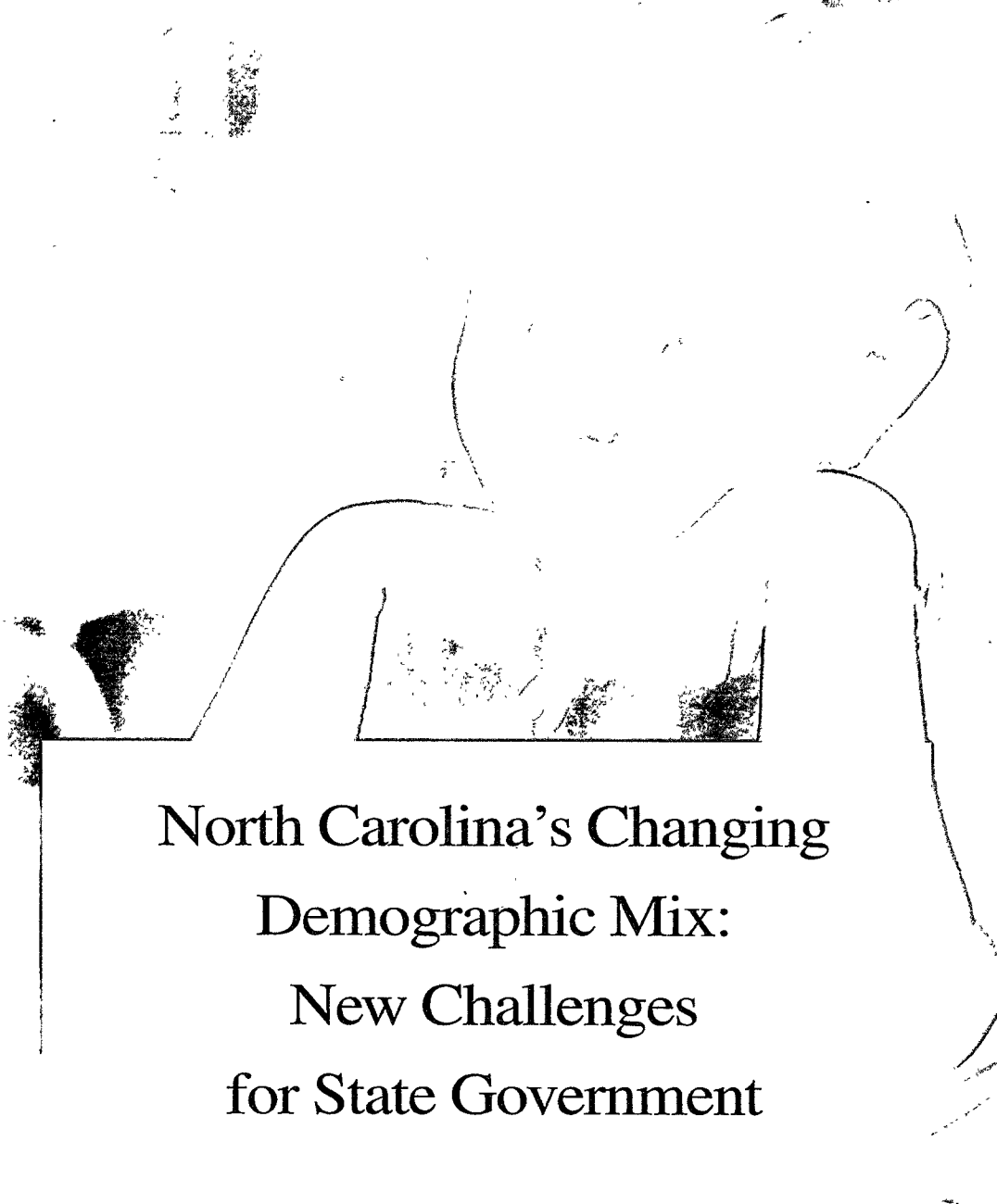


*Race, Ethnicity, and  
Public Policy Outcomes:  
From parity to Parity*



North Carolina's Changing  
Demographic Mix:  
New Challenges  
for State Government

by Mike McLaughlin

**F**or decades and even centuries, diversity in North Carolina meant three distinct demographic groups: (1) whites, (2) blacks or African Americans, and (3) Native Americans or American Indians. Now diversity has been redefined. North Carolina ranks among the national leaders in Spanish-speaking immigrants, and Hispanics/Latinos now represent 4.7 percent of the population. Asians, representing 1.4 percent, now outnumber the 1.2 percent of the population who identify themselves as American Indians in North Carolina, according to the 2000 U.S. Census. Though whites still make up 72.1 percent, and blacks are by far the largest minority at 21.6 percent, the preconceived notion of who is a North Carolinian has been stretched and reshaped.

Ed Aguirre, a Raleigh geologist who provides environmental services in the construction industry, has watched since the mid-1980s as the trickle of Hispanics into North Carolina has become a flood, observing the changes the wave of immigration has wrought in North Carolina's labor market. "I'm in construction," says Aguirre, a second generation Mexican American. "The Spanish-speaking men in that labor force took over from the predominantly black labor force. We see a predominantly Hispanic labor force. . . . Usually, one or two of them are crew leaders, and most of the rest of them don't speak English."

Aguirre's observations are borne out by anyone who takes more than a casual glance. Spanish-speaking workers are making their presence felt in nearly every hardworking, low-wage field, joining the ranks of Hispanic/Latino workers who are represented in every field or profession. The public schools are struggling to educate students who show up on the doorstep lacking even a basic vocabulary in English. Some 60,000 students now are enrolled in English-as-a-second-language courses in North Carolina, according to the N.C. Department of Public Instruction. Churches are conducting dual services—one in Spanish and one in English—as cultures overlap and blur.

While Spanish-speaking immigrants are by far the largest group of North Carolina newcomers, they are also far from being the only new arrivals bringing with them different customs and languages. According to the U.S. Bureau of the Census, Latin America has been the primary source of immigration to North Carolina in the past decade,

and Mexico dwarfs every other country of origin. Of 378,963 persons of Hispanic/Latino descent living in North Carolina at the time of the 2000 census, 258,520 (68 percent) claimed Mexico as their country of origin. An additional 43,859 (11.6 percent) hailed from Central America—primarily El Salvador (12,444), Honduras (11,647), and Guatemala (8,335). South America accounted for 19,211 Hispanic/Latino immigrants, while other Hispanics totaled 12,468.<sup>1</sup>

Despite the influx of Hispanics/Latinos, and, to a lesser degree, Asians and Europeans, North Carolina remains "overwhelmingly black and white," says Bill Tillman, a demographer in the Office of State Planning, N.C. Department of Administration. Hispanics have gotten the public's attention by mushrooming 394 percent in a decade—from 76,726 to 378,963. "But out of 8 million?" asks Tillman. "Overwhelmingly, the minority in North Carolina is still black [21.6 percent of the population]." Native Americans, Tillman says, "are regionally focused. Most live in and around Robeson County and a few Eastern Band of the Cherokee live out West [in North Carolina]. You have a young Asian group that has come in for high tech," says Tillman. The remaining populations, Tillman says, are microscopic from a demographic standpoint.

However, Nolo Martinez, Governor Mike Easley's former director of Hispanic/Latino Affairs, says Tillman's assessment of North Carolina as primarily black and white shortchanges a number of growing ethnic populations. "There is overwhelming evidence that more and more counties, towns, and cities show significant presence of immigrants and do not look like the black and white North Carolina of years back," says Martinez.

---

Mike McLaughlin is editor of North Carolina Insight.

**Table 1.**  
**Top 10 N.C. Counties in Percent**  
**Hispanic/Latino Population**

County	Total Hispanic/Latino Population	Percent of County Population
1) Duplin	7,426	15.1%
2) Lee	5,715	11.7
3) Sampson	6,477	10.8
4) Montgomery	2,797	10.4
5) Chatham	4,743	9.6
6) Greene	1,151	8.0
7) Johnston	19,090	7.7
8) Durham	17,039	7.6
9) Hoke	2,415	7.2*
Onslow	10,896	7.2*
11) Cumberland	20,919	6.9

\* Indicates tie

Source: 2000 U.S. Census

Martinez mentions Guilford County for its resettlement of Vietnamese immigrants and a dozen or more rural or metro areas with high numbers of Latinos. "It's not just Chatham anymore," says Martinez. "[You have] crab pickers in the east, Christmas tree communities in the west, construction workers in Charlotte, metro districts in the Triad, Mecklenburg, Wake, and Orange, and a high birth rate everywhere in North Carolina."

These immigrants join the state's traditional minorities, who lag the white majority on a broad range of indicators—from education levels, to income, to health status as indicated by death and illness rates. In addition, African Americans have higher rates of incarceration and even a greater likelihood of being put to death by the state [see "Race and Ethnicity: What Is the Impact on Outcomes?" pp. 16–75, for more on these disparities]. All of these facts have broad implications for state government, which has a duty to serve, educate, and protect all of its citizens.

Now added to the mix are Hispanics/Latinos, who also lag on a number of these same indicators.

Tillman points to three main drivers of the Hispanic/Latino influx: the military, migrant laborers working in agriculture, and immigrants moving in to take jobs in poultry processing, construction, and other occupations involving hard labor and low pay. Gabriela Zabala of the Office of Minority Health and Health Disparities in the N.C. Department of Health and Human Services adds that Spanish-speaking immigrants are moving to North Carolina from other states and "slowly moving out of agriculture" for jobs providing better pay.

For a long time, the counties with the highest percentage of Hispanics were Onslow and Cumberland because these counties are home to major military installations—Fort Bragg, Camp Lejeune, Pope Air Force Base, and Cherry Point Naval Air Station. Tillman says that's because the United States as a whole has a higher percentage of Latino residents than does North Carolina, and the military more closely resembles the makeup of the nation's population as a whole.

Areas of the state with industries employing high numbers of Hispanics/Latinos include Chatham County with its poultry processing plants in and around Siler City. "In a town as small as Siler City with a lot of Hispanics, it's a big deal [in terms of changing the cultural mix]," says Tillman.

Among the top 10 counties in percentage of Hispanic population, Duplin is the leader at 15.1 percent, followed by Lee County at 11.7 percent, Sampson County at 10.8 percent, and Montgomery County at 10.4 percent. (See Table 1). Chatham County ranks fifth with a Hispanic population of 9.6 percent. Statewide, the Hispanic/Latino population totals 4.7 percent.

All of the five highest-ranking counties feature low-wage manufacturing and agriculture as key components of their economies. Duplin County is the prime example, with a migrant labor population initially drawn to work in the fields but eventually shifting over to manufacturing. Now manufacturing jobs are a draw in themselves, according to Woody Brinson, director of the Duplin County Economic Development Authority. "It definitely has created some cultural barriers because the majority don't speak English," says Brinson. "But without the Hispanic population in the work force, we could not have had the growth we've had in the last 10 years. We may never get the majority to understand it—there are too many prejudices—but they are an asset and not a liability."

Brinson offers two examples of industries where Hispanics/Latinos have stepped in to take jobs local residents shunned because they were con-

sidered too difficult or undesirable. One is Carolina Turkey, a 2,400 employee turkey processing plant. "Their work force is two-thirds Hispanic," says Brinson. "Nobody local would take the jobs." The other is Accuform Polymers Inc., which uses a heat process to mold plastics. Local residents, whether white or African American, did not last long in the jobs, Brinson says. "Too hot," they would complain. But with the Hispanic/Latino influx, the company has now grown from eight to 50 workers.

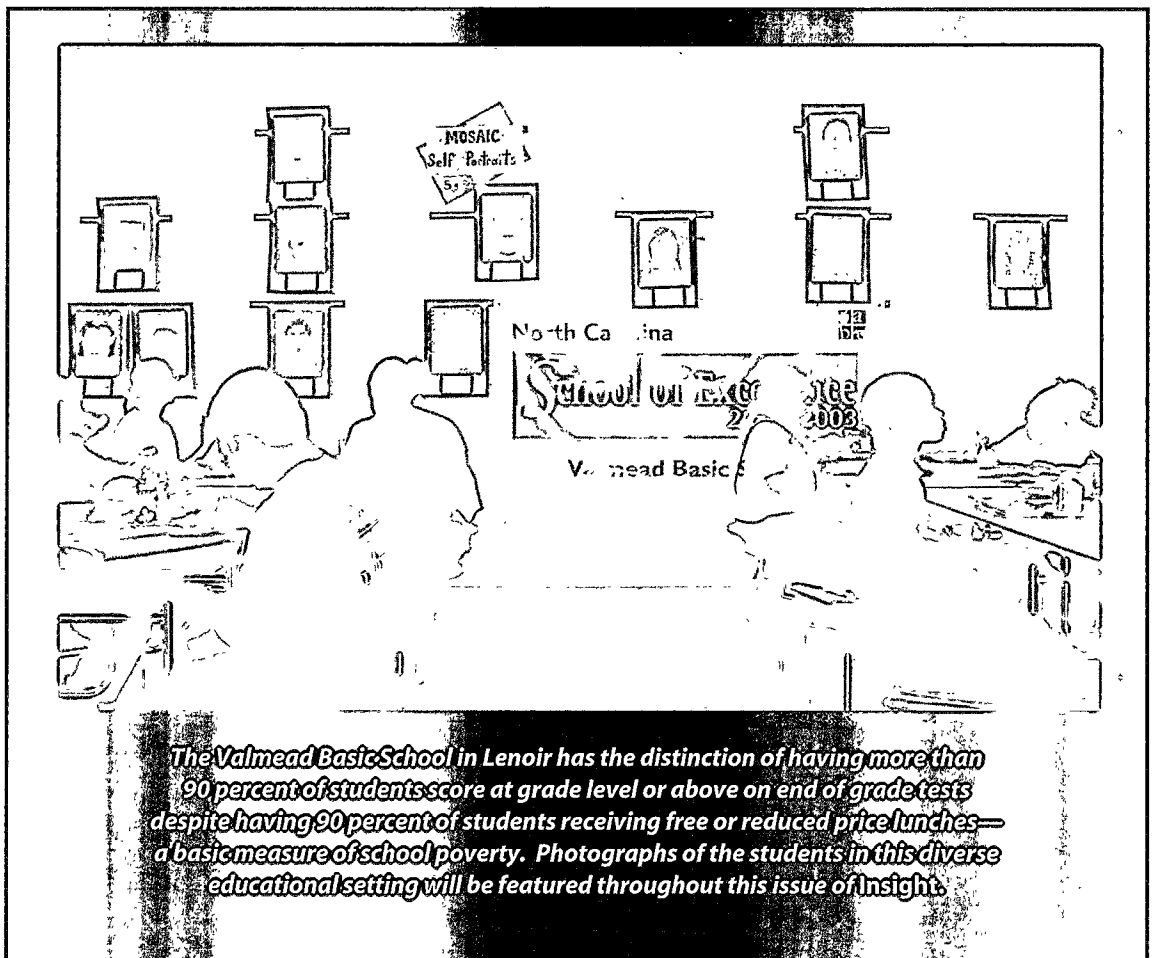
Though they're a smaller percentage of the population overall, Hispanics/Latinos have made their presence felt in more urban counties of the state as well. While Cumberland ranks only 11th in percentage of Hispanic population at 6.9, an estimated 20,919 Hispanics/Latinos now call the county home. While many undoubtedly reside in Cumberland because of its strong military presence, the non-military counties of Durham, Mecklenburg, and Wake claim similar numbers.

Yet another interesting development is that Asians have surpassed Native Americans as the fourth largest racial or ethnic group in the state with

1.4 percent for the state's population claiming roots in the Far East, Southeast Asia, or the Indian sub-continent, according to the U.S. Bureau of the Census. Orange County claims the greatest concentration of persons of Asian descent, at 4.1 percent of the population (See Table 3, p. 10). Other counties with Asian populations exceeding 3 percent of the population are Burke at 3.5 percent, Wake at 3.4 percent, Durham at 3.3 percent, and Mecklenburg at 3.1 percent.

By contrast, Native Americans, representing 1.2 percent of North Carolina's population, are much more concentrated in some regions of the state. Robeson County in the southeast, for example, has a Native American population of 38 percent—most of them Lumbee Indians, who are seeking federal recognition as a tribe (See Table 4, p. 10). Swain County in the far west, home of the Eastern Band of the Cherokee, has a Native American population of 29 percent. Other counties with high concentrations of Native Americans include Hoke County in the east at 11.4 percent, Jackson

—continues on page 10



Karen Tamm

**Table 2. North Carolina Population,  
by County and Racial or Ethnic Group, 2000**

County	Population	White	African American	Hispanic/Latino*	Asian	American Indian
ALAMANCE	130,800	98,900 75.6%**	24,544 18.8%	8,835 6.8%	1,172 0.9%	462 0.4%
ALEXANDER	33,603	30,915 92.0%	1,557 4.6%	841 2.5%	348 1.0%	50 0.1%
ALLEGHANY	10,677	10,217 95.7%	131 1.2%	530 5.0%	21 0.2%	28 0.3%
ANSON	25,275	12,519 49.5%	12,295 48.6%	211 0.8%	143 0.6%	113 0.4%
ASHE	24,384	23,691 97.2%	162 0.7%	590 2.4%	57 0.2%	79 0.3%
AVERY	17,167	16,129 94.0%	598 3.5%	413 2.4%	33 0.2%	58 0.3%
BEAUFORT	44,958	30,768 68.4%	13,051 29.0%	1,455 3.2%	99 0.2%	74 0.2%
BERTIE	19,773	7,178 36.3%	12,326 62.3%	195 1.0%	21 0.1%	87 0.4%
BLADEN	32,278	18,469 57.2%	12,235 37.9%	1,198 3.7%	31 0.1%	657 2.0%
BRUNSWICK	73,143	60,200 82.3%	10,516 14.4%	1,960 2.7%	198 0.3%	494 0.7%
BUNCOMBE	206,330	183,761 89.1%	15,425 7.5%	5,730 2.8%	1,368 0.7%	803 0.4%
BURKE	89,148	76,678 86.0%	5,984 6.7%	3,180 3.6%	3,106 3.5%	270 0.3%
CABARRUS	131,063	109,127 83.3%	15,961 12.2%	6,620 5.1%	1,190 0.9%	443 0.3%
CALDWELL	77,415	71,017 91.7%	4,223 5.5%	1,927 2.5%	301 0.4%	162 0.2%
CAMDEN	6,885	5,551 80.6%	1,189 17.3%	49 0.7%	39 0.6%	29 0.4%
CARTERET	59,383	53,611 90.3%	4,151 7.0%	1,035 1.7%	323 0.5%	258 0.4%
CASWELL	23,501	14,352 61.1%	8,583 36.5%	415 1.8%	36 0.2%	45 0.2%
CATAWBA	141,685	120,422 85.0%	11,862 8.4%	7,886 5.6%	4,146 2.9%	365 0.3%
CHATHAM	49,329	36,969 74.9%	8,422 17.1%	4,743 9.6%	292 0.6%	201 0.4%
CHEROKEE	24,298	23,040 94.8%	387 1.6%	303 1.2%	69 0.3%	396 1.6%
CHOWAN	14,526	8,794 60.5%	5,450 37.5%	219 1.5%	50 0.3%	43 0.3%
CLAY	8,775	8,600 98.0%	70 0.8%	73 0.8%	8 0.1%	29 0.3%
CLEVELAND	96,287	73,955 76.8%	20,155 20.9%	1,433 1.5%	669 0.7%	145 0.2%
COLUMBUS	54,749	34,737 63.4%	16,934 30.9%	1,269 2.3%	123 0.2%	1,706 3.1%
CRAVEN	91,436	63,952 69.9%	22,966 25.1%	3,677 4.0%	908 1.0%	388 0.4%
CUMBERLAND	302,963	167,093 55.2%	105,731 34.9%	20,919 6.9%	5,694 1.9%	4,691 1.5%
CURRITUCK	18,190	16,445 90.4%	1,318 7.2%	261 1.4%	71 0.4%	83 0.5%
DARE	29,967	28,393 94.7%	797 2.7%	666 2.2%	111 0.4%	83 0.3%
DAVIDSON	147,246	128,184 87.1%	13,463 9.1%	4,765 3.2%	1,204 0.3%	545 0.4%
DAVIE	34,835	31,504 90.4%	2,368 6.8%	1,209 3.5%	109 0.3%	79 0.2%
DUPLIN	49,063	28,785 58.7%	14,198 28.9%	7,426 15.1%	75 0.2%	113 0.2%
DURHAM	223,314	113,698 50.9%	88,109 39.5%	17,039 7.6%	7,350 3.3%	660 0.3%
EDGECOMBE	55,606	22,278 40.1%	31,949 57.5%	1,554 2.8%	70 0.1%	109 0.2%
FORSYTH	306,067	209,552 68.5%	78,388 25.6%	19,577 6.4%	3,172 1.0%	923 0.3%

Table 2, continued

County	Population	White	African American	Hispanic/Latino*	Asian	American Indian
FRANKLIN	47,260	31,190 66.0%	14,193 30.0%	2,100 4.4%	140 0.3%	208 0.4%
GASTON	190,365	157,965 83.0%	26,405 13.9%	5,719 3.0%	1,814 1.0%	525 0.3%
GATES	10,516	6,213 59.1%	4,120 39.2%	81 0.8%	26 0.2%	44 0.4%
GRAHAM	7,993	7,346 91.9%	15 0.2%	60 0.8%	13 0.2%	547 6.8%
GRANVILLE	48,498	29,459 60.7%	16,943 34.9%	1,951 4.0%	176 0.4%	222 0.5%
GREENE	18,974	9,835 51.8%	7,820 41.2%	1,511 8.0%	17 0.1%	57 0.3%
GUILFORD	421,048	271,686 64.5%	123,253 29.3%	15,985 3.8%	10,294 2.4%	1,944 0.5%
HALIFAX	57,370	24,424 42.6%	30,151 52.6%	579 1.0%	312 0.5%	1,801 3.1%
HARNETT	91,025	64,744 71.1%	20,481 22.5%	5,336 5.9%	591 0.6%	794 0.9%
HAYWOOD	54,033	52,330 96.8%	684 1.3%	763 1.4%	114 0.2%	266 0.5%
HENDERSON	89,173	82,505 92.5%	2,725 3.1%	4,880 5.5%	546 0.6%	245 0.3%
HERTFORD	22,601	8,464 37.4%	13,459 59.6%	354 1.6%	71 0.3%	269 1.2%
HOKE	33,646	14,982 44.5%	12,664 37.6%	2,415 7.2%	278 0.8%	3,852 11.4%
HYDE	5,826	3,650 62.7%	2,043 35.1%	131 2.2%	21 0.4%	18 0.3%
IREDELL	122,660	100,785 82.2%	16,762 13.7%	4,182 3.4%	1,553 1.3%	328 0.3%
JACKSON	33,121	28,378 85.7%	552 1.7%	577 1.7%	169 0.5%	3,379 10.2%
JOHNSTON	121,965	95,237 78.1%	19,090 15.7%	9,440 7.7%	368 0.3%	494 0.4%
JONES	10,381	6,329 61.0%	3,724 35.9%	282 2.7%	16 0.2%	37 0.4%
LEE	49,040	34,343 70.0%	10,032 20.5%	5,715 11.7%	328 0.7%	206 0.4%
LENOIR	59,648	33,685 56.5%	24,115 40.4%	1,891 3.2%	202 0.3%	106 0.2%
LINCOLN	63,780	57,557 90.2%	4,108 6.4%	3,656 5.7%	196 0.3%	172 0.3%
MCDOWELL	42,151	38,853 92.2%	1,753 4.2%	1,214 2.9%	388 0.9%	122 0.3%
MACON	29,811	28,969 97.2%	357 1.2%	454 1.5%	117 0.4%	84 0.3%
MADISON	19,635	19,169 97.6%	162 0.8%	266 1.4%	45 0.2%	53 0.3%
MARTIN	25,593	13,447 52.5%	11,611 45.4%	528 2.1%	61 0.2%	74 0.3%
MECKLENBURG	695,454	445,250 64.0%	193,838 27.9%	44,871 6.5%	21,889 3.1%	2,439 0.4%
MITCHELL	15,687	15,353 97.9%	34 0.2%	311 2.0%	32 0.2%	70 0.4%
MONTGOMERY	26,822	18,527 69.1%	5,857 21.8%	2,797 10.4%	431 1.6%	108 0.4%
MOORE	74,769	60,002 80.2%	11,589 15.5%	2,981 4.0%	332 0.4%	506 0.7
NASH	87,420	54,152 61.9%	29,664 33.9%	2,939 3.4%	495 0.6%	397 0.5%
NEW HANOVER	160,307	128,098 79.9%	27,203 17.0%	3,276 2.0%	1,333 0.8%	627 0.4%
NORTHAMPTON	22,086	8,633 39.1%	13,125 59.4%	161 0.7%	20 0.1%	71 0.3%
ONSLOW	150,355	108,351 72.1%	27,790 18.5%	10,896 7.2%	2,526 1.7%	1,108 0.7%
ORANGE	118,227	92,272 78.0%	16,298 13.8%	5,273 4.5%	4,845 4.1%	457 0.4%

—continues

**Table 2, continued**

County	Population	White	African American	Hispanic/Latino*	Asian	American Indian
PAMLICO	12,934	9,464 73.2%	3,178 24.6%	171 1.3%	49 0.4%	68 0.5%
PASQUOTANK	34,897	19,866 56.9%	13,975 40.0%	429 1.2%	300 0.9%	130 0.4%
PENDER	41,082	29,882 72.7%	9,689 23.6%	1,496 3.6%	74 0.2%	201 0.5%
PERQUIMANS	11,368	8,051 70.8%	3,182 28.0%	68 0.6%	24 0.2%	20 0.2%
PERSON	35,623	24,504 68.8%	10,049 28.2%	746 2.1%	53 0.1%	218 0.6%
PITT	133,798	83,061 62.1%	45,019 33.6%	4,216 3.2%	1,443 1.1%	357 0.3%
POLK	18,324	16,906 92.3%	1,079 5.9%	551 3.0%	44 0.2%	34 0.2%
RANDOLPH	130,454	116,370 89.2%	7,342 5.6%	8,646 6.6%	830 0.6%	582 0.4%
RICHMOND	46,564	30,193 64.8%	14,215 30.5%	1,319 2.8%	316 0.7%	770 1.7%
ROBESON	123,339	40,460 32.8%	30,973 25.1%	5,994 4.9%	404 0.3%	46,896 38.0%
ROCKINGHAM	91,928	71,087 77.3%	17,987 19.6%	2,825 3.1%	254 0.3%	250 0.3%
ROWAN	130,340	104,294 80.0%	20,562 15.8%	5,369 4.1%	1,105 0.8%	433 0.3%
RUTHERFORD	62,899	54,592 86.8%	7,066 11.2%	1,136 1.8%	206 0.3%	125 0.2%
SAMPSON	60,161	35,955 59.8%	18,018 30.0%	6,477 10.8%	186 0.3%	1,086 1.8%
SCOTLAND	35,998	18,535 51.5%	13,434 37.3%	423 1.2%	182 0.5%	3,197 8.9%
STANLY	58,100	49,196 84.7%	6,657 11.5%	1,237 2.1%	1,049 1.8%	144 0.2%
STOKES	44,711	41,774 93.4%	2,084 4.7%	836 1.9%	86 0.2%	109 0.2%
SURRY	71,219	64,383 90.4%	2,965 4.2%	4,620 6.5%	403 0.6%	165 0.2%
SWAIN	12,968	8,602 66.3%	221 1.7%	191 1.5%	20 0.2%	3,765 29.0%
TRANSYLVANIA	29,334	27,476 93.7%	1,235 4.2%	298 1.0%	111 0.4%	83 0.3%
TYRRELL	4,149	2,343 56.5%	1,636 39.4%	150 3.6%	31 0.7%	8 0.2%
UNION	123,677	102,441 82.8%	15,480 12.5%	7,637 6.2%	720 0.6%	475 0.4%
VANCE	42,954	20,709 48.2%	20,749 48.3%	1,957 4.6%	167 0.4%	85 0.2%
WAKE	627,846	454,544 72.4%	123,820 19.7%	33,985 5.4%	21,249 3.4%	2,152 0.3%
WARREN	19,972	7,769 38.9%	10,882 54.5%	317 1.6%	26 0.1%	957 4.8%
WASHINGTON	13,723	6,626 48.3%	6,716 48.9%	311 2.3%	44 0.3%	7 0.1%
WATAUGA	42,695	41,181 96.5%	680 1.6%	622 1.5%	251 0.6%	108 0.3%
WAYNE	113,329	69,452 61.3%	37,422 33.0%	5,604 4.9%	1,088 1.0%	412 0.4%
WILKES	65,632	61,008 93.0%	2,733 4.2%	2,262 3.4%	213 0.3%	95 0.1%
WILSON	73,814	41,210 55.8%	29,032 39.3%	4,457 6.0%	310 0.4%	199 0.3%
YADKIN	36,348	33,638 92.5%	1,246 3.4%	2,357 6.5%	62 0.2%	59 0.2%
YANCEY	17,774	17,417 98.0%	101 0.6%	478 2.7%	23 0.1%	60 0.3%
<b>N.C.</b>	<b>8,049,313</b>	<b>5,804,656</b> 72.1%	<b>1,737,545</b> 21.6%	<b>378,963</b> 4.7%	<b>113,689</b> 1.4%	<b>99,551</b> 1.2%

## Table 2, *continued*

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2000 Census.

\* Individuals identified as Hispanic/Latino are those who classify themselves as "Mexican," "Puerto Rican," "Cuban," "other Spanish, Hispanic, or Latino."

\*\* Percents appear in italics.

Table compiled by former Center intern Meredith Flowe.

**White.** A person having origins in any of the original peoples of Europe, the Middle East, or North Africa. It includes people who indicate their race as "White" or report entries such as Irish, German, Italian, Lebanese, Near Easterner, Arab, or Polish.

**Black or African American.** A person having origins in any of the Black racial groups of Africa. It includes people who indicate their race as "Black, African Am., or Negro," or who provide written entries such as African American, Afro American, Kenyan, Nigerian, or Haitian.

**American Indian and Alaska Native.** A person having origins in any of the original peoples of North and South America including Central America, and who maintain tribal affiliation or community attachment. It includes people who classify themselves as described below.

*American Indian.* Includes people who indicate their race as "American Indian," entered the name of an Indian tribe, or report such entries as Canadian Indian, French-American Indian, or Spanish-American Indian.

*Alaska Native.* Includes written responses of Eskimos, Aleuts, and Alaska Indians as well as entries such as Arctic Slope, Inupiat, Yupik, Alutiiq, Egegik, and Pribilovian. The Alaska tribes are the Alaskan Athabaskan, Tlingit, and Haida. The information for Census 2000 is derived from the American Indian Detailed Tribal Classification List for the 1990 census and was expanded to list the individual Alaska Native Villages when provided as a written response for race.

**Asian.** A person having origins in any of the original peoples of the Far East, Southeast Asia, or the Indian subcontinent including, for example, Cambodia, China, India, Japan, Korea, Malaysia, Pakistan, the Philippine Islands, Thailand, and Vietnam. It includes "Asian Indian," "Chinese," "Filipino," "Korean," "Japanese," "Vietnamese," and "Other Asian."

*Asian Indian.* Includes people who indicate their race as "Asian Indian" or identify themselves as Bengalese, Bharat, Dravidian, East Indian, or Goanese.

*Chinese.* Includes people who indicate their race as "Chinese" or who identify themselves as Cantonese or Chinese American. In some census tabulations, written entries of Taiwanese are included with Chinese while in others they are shown separately.

*Filipino.* Includes people who indicate their race as "Filipino" or who report entries such as Philippino, Philippine, or Filipino American.

*Japanese.* Includes people who indicate their race as "Japanese" or who report entries such as Nipponese or Japanese American.

*Korean.* Includes people who indicate their race as "Korean" or who provide a response of Korean American.

*Vietnamese.* Includes people who indicate their race as "Vietnamese" or who provide a response of Vietnamese American.

*Other Asian.* Includes people who provide a response of Bangladeshi, Burmese, Cambodian, Hmong, Indonesian, Laotian, Pakistani, Sri Lankan, or Thai.



**Table 3. Top 10 N.C. Counties in Percent Asian Population**

County	Total Asian Population	Percent of County Population
1) Orange	4,845	4.1%
2) Burke	3,106	3.5
3) Wake	21,249	3.4
4) Durham	7,350	3.3
5) Mecklenburg	21,889	3.1
6) Catawba	4,146	2.9
7) Guilford	10,294	2.4
8) Cumberland	5,694	1.9
9) Stanly	1,049	1.8
10) Onslow	2,567	1.7

Source: 2000 U.S. Census

**Table 4. Top 10 N.C. Counties in Percent Native American Population**

County	Total Native American Population	Percent of County Population
1) Robeson	46,896	38.0%
2) Swain	3,765	29.0
3) Hoke	3,852	11.4
4) Jackson	3,379	10.2
5) Scotland	3,197	8.9
6) Graham	547	6.8
7) Warren	957	4.8
8) Halifax	1,801	3.1
9) Bladen	657	2.0
10) Sampson	1,086	1.8

Source: 2000 U.S. Census

—continued from page 5

County in the west at 10.2 percent, and Scotland County in the east at 8.9 percent.

Tillman notes that both the Asian and Hispanic/Latino population are young, with strong family ties to their native lands. This increases the chances that they may return to their country of origin and makes future population projections difficult for these demographic groups. Based on household income figures alone, Tillman surmises that some Hispanics/Latinos who do not learn English and assimilate into the larger culture ultimately will not be able to afford to retire in North Carolina and may return to their country of origin. But if some Hispanics/Latinos may not be able to afford to stay, Tillman says some Asians may not be able to afford to leave as they earn too much money in their high-tech jobs compared to what those jobs pay in their home countries.

Brinson agrees that Hispanic/Latino workers may be prone to move back and forth between their native country and North Carolina. "It depends on whether they bring their families," he says. Those who do leave their jobs typically will give notice and find somebody to take their place, Brinson adds.

Martinez, on the other hand, believes families left behind ultimately will be brought to the United States rather than workers returning to an economy that could not sustain them in the first place. He says family reunification—in the United States—will be a driving force for the Hispanic/Latino population for the foreseeable future. As to failure to assimilate, Martinez points to decades of growth in the Hispanic/Latino population in other areas of the United States and believes the same will occur here.

Enrique Gomez Palacio, a Hillsborough resident who writes frequently about immigration issues, believes the large Mexican population is here to stay, though the population may never fully assimilate due to its close proximity to Mexico. He believes that North Carolina is yet to confront the issues around a Hispanic/Latino population that could grow to 15 to 20 percent in as little as a decade, many of whom lack legal immigration status. "The problem we are facing in North Carolina has to do less with lack of jobs for immigrants and more with the fact that most undocumented immigrants are unable to participate fully in the formal economy, where economic opportunities come with clear rights and responsibilities," he writes.<sup>2</sup>

Nonetheless, Hispanics/Latinos born in the United States are legal U.S. citizens, and the number of Hispanics/Latinos born in the United States is increasing rapidly. Indeed, a study by the Pew Hispanic Center in Washington, D.C., indicates that the number of Hispanics/Latinos born in the United States now exceeds the number who immigrate to the U.S. each year.<sup>3</sup> Within two decades, the Center projects, the Hispanics/Latinos born in the U.S. will be the majority—with full rights as citizens.

The influx adds a new and important player to the traditional Tar Heel cultural mix of whites of predominantly European origin, African Americans, and a smaller indigenous population of Native Americans. It also adds a new set of public policy challenges as cultural differences are heightened by a language barrier. What are some of these challenges and how are they being addressed—or not addressed—as North Carolina moves into the 21st century? In this edition of *North Carolina Insight*,

the North Carolina Center for Public Policy Research addresses these questions in a broad-ranging examination of race, ethnicity, and public policy outcomes in North Carolina. ☐☐

## FOOTNOTES

<sup>1</sup> Steven A. Camarota and Nora McArdle, "Where Immigrants Live—An Examination of the Foreign Born by Country of Origin in 1990 and 2000," Center for Immigration Studies, Washington, D.C., September 2003, p. 11. The Center for Immigration Studies is an independent, nonpartisan think tank which some view as having an anti-immigration bias. The center's mission statement indicates, "The Center is animated by a pro-immigrant, low-immigration vision which seeks fewer immigrants but a warmer welcome for those admitted."

<sup>2</sup> Enrique Gomez Palacio, "North Carolina's Mexican Future," *The Independent Weekly*, Durham, N.C., Jan. 22, 2003, p. 1. On line at [www.indyweek.com/durham/2003-01-22/first.html](http://www.indyweek.com/durham/2003-01-22/first.html).

<sup>3</sup> Robert Surn and Jeffrey S. Passel, "The Rise of the Second Generation: Changing Patterns in Hispanic Population Growth," Pew Hispanic Center, Washington, D.C., October 2003, p. 3.



■  
*I note the obvious differences  
in the human family.  
Some of us are serious,  
some thrive on comedy.*

...  
*The variety of our skin tones  
can confuse, bemuse, delight,  
brown and pink and beige and purple,  
tan and blue and white.*

...  
*I note the obvious differences  
between each sort and type,  
but we are more alike, my friends,  
than we are unlike.*

—MAYA ANGELOU  
"HUMAN FAMILY"