

# THE EVOLVING FACE OF US IMMIGRATION

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**RALEIGH, N.C. (AP)** — When Manasi Gopala immigrated to America, she finally got the chance to row crew.

As a child in India, she had dreamed of the sport from watching Olympic telecasts. Now, twice a week, she pulls a pair of oars as her scull glides along tree-lined Lake Wheeler, far from her birthplace of Bangalore.

Gopala is among throngs of educated Indians who have moved in recent years to North Carolina's tech-laden Research Triangle and other areas across America. A 39-year-old software developer, she peppers her emails with an adopted "y'all." She became a U.S. citizen three years ago.

"America has given me the opportunity to pursue my own life," she said.

Increasingly, the face of U.S. immigration resembles Gopala.

For all of Donald Trump's talk of building a border wall and deporting 11 million unauthorized immigrants who are mainly Hispanic — and for all of the enduring contention over illegal immigration — immigrants to the U.S. are now more likely to come from Asia than from Mexico or Latin America. And compared with Americans overall, immigrants today are disproportionately well-educated and entrepreneurial. They are transforming the nation in ways largely ignored by the political jousting over how immigration is affecting America's culture, economy and national security.

As of three years ago, Census figures show, India and China eclipsed Mexico as the top sources of U.S. immigrants, whether authorized or not. In 2013, 147,000 Chinese immigrants and 129,000 Indians came to the U.S., compared with 125,000 Mexicans. Most of the Asian immigrants arrived in the United States legally — through work, student or family visas.

Immigrants are also more likely now to be U.S. citizens. Nearly half of immigrants over the age of 25 — 18 million people — are naturalized citizens, compared with just 30 percent back in 2000, according to Census figures.

Simultaneously, more Mexicans without documentation are returning home. The number of Mexicans in the United States illegally has tumbled nearly 8 percent in the past six years to 5.85 million, the Pew Research Center found. Border Patrol apprehensions, one gauge of illegal crossings, last year reached their lowest point since 1971.

With the share of U.S. residents born abroad at its highest level in a century, immigrants increasingly defy the stereotypes that tend to shape conversations on the issue. Consider:

—About 40 percent of Indian immigrants hold a graduate degree. Fewer than 12 percent of native-born Americans do. And earnings for a median Indian immigrant household exceed \$100,000 — more than twice the U.S. median.

—A majority of Chinese immigrants have come to the United States to seek education. China has become the dominant source of foreigners attending U.S. universities, with 304,000 student

visas in the past academic year. India is second, with 133,000 visas. In addition, a quarter of immigrants from China hold graduate degrees.

—Since 2011, a majority of Indian and Chinese immigrants have been between ages 15 and 29. Their youth means they're likely to have children born as U.S. citizens, who will then become prime contributors to American population growth in the years ahead, according to an analysis by Census officials.

The influx of Asians has not only reshaped the face of America's immigrant population. It has also sharpened the divide within the immigrant population — between well-educated Asians, and arrivals from Mexico and Latin America who have little money or education. The result is that America's 40 million-plus immigrants more and more reflect the extremes of America's economic spectrum, from super-rich tech titans to poor agriculture workers.

Yet economists say immigrants from both ends of the divide are benefiting the economy. At a time when the growth of the U.S. workforce has slowed, immigrants and their collective spending have become a key source of economic fuel.

These disparate groups of immigrants have helped reshape towns and cities, populated new suburban housing developments and revived main streets in some decaying rural communities. The changes flash into view on a visit to the political swing state of North Carolina. The proportion of immigrants in the state's population has quadrupled from 1990 to nearly 8 percent. Similar trends have emerged in Georgia, Colorado, Oregon and Washington.

None of these states approaches the more than 20 percent share in California and New York. Yet the transformations are evident in a drive across the dense highways that connect North Carolina's Research Triangle. The suburbs sandwiched among Chapel Hill, Durham and Raleigh have exploded with plazas crowded with upscale lunch spots and designer gyms.

Indian immigrants have put their distinctive stamp on this area. Their prevalence here is similar to the many educated Chinese immigrants who have settled around Los Angeles, San Francisco and New York.

On evenings in the Research Triangle, many of the cars on Aviation Parkway pull off to stop at the 20-acre Hindu Society of North Carolina in Morrisville, which hosts yoga classes and religious services.

In 2000, when the society's temple was built, Morrisville was home to just 230 Indians. Now, there are 4,300. Those with roots in the community dating to the 1960s recall a period when a grocery run for authentic Indian ingredients required a five-hour drive to Washington, D.C. Those treks are no longer necessary.

Their rising numbers have established a broad community of Indians that has made it easier for new arrivals to integrate than it was for prior generations.

"Now, you come from India, you don't really have to know anything else," said Pranav Patel, a 57-year-old software developer. "The system is here to help you adjust. There are no real hardships."

Asked how they have been received in the community, about a dozen Asian immigrants said they have generally been warmly accepted despite the national furor over immigration. One, oncologist Dr. Neeraj Agrawal, said he could recall a patient having to overcome an initial reluctance to be treated by a foreigner. But that was a rare exception.

"There's a dramatic change in attitudes about skilled, educated immigrants: 'You're welcome. You're a good neighbor. You're a good addition to society,'" said Agrawal, who was born and educated in India.

In August, Gopala went to the Hindu Society to celebrate India's independence day. Over the entrance of the temple is the symbol for "om," representing knowledge — a reminder of education's vaunted status. Music blared over the crowd amid dancing and honors paid to statues of deities. Gopala enjoyed the festivities. Yet she saw few white and black guests sharing in the moment.

Weeks later, she wondered: Did part of integrating mean inviting others to share your culture, to welcome neighbors with samosas and other delicacies?

One prominent outsider did show up: Gov. Pat McCrory, a Republican in a heated re-election campaign that has been fueled in part by a crackdown on illegal immigration.

McCrory flattered the crowd.

"This is the best of America," he said, sharing the stage with a life-sized statue of Mahatma Gandhi. "This is the best of India. We work together. We learn together. We can pray together. We love family values together."

Not all immigrant groups enjoy that same Southern hospitality from North Carolina's government.

McCrory has backed laws to deny basic services and forms of identification to immigrants without legal status and their children. The governor signed a law last year barring North Carolina cities from helping unauthorized immigrants, whom he has associated with crime, and overcrowded schools and hospital emergency rooms.

His policies are premised on the belief that less-educated immigrants without legal status are burdens for taxpayers. But the arrival of Mexican immigrants helped save Duplin County, a quiet stretch of leafy tobacco fields and prefab homes about 70 miles south of Raleigh.

Until the 1990s, Duplin County's population had been roughly a flat 40,000 for 50 years. Then Hispanic farmworkers began immigrating, and the population nears 60,000 today. About 7,200 immigrants now live in Duplin County, most from Latin America; there are no clear estimates of how many are there legally.

Nearly three out of four didn't finish high school, but even these immigrants have helped rural North Carolina — opening businesses and keeping farms in operation despite harsh work conditions.

One Mexican immigrant arrived in North Carolina nearly two decades ago illegally, after a brutal crossing where he saw a fellow Mexican robbed. Having dropped out of school at 13 with little fluency in English, he took whatever jobs were available.

Planting and cutting tobacco was the hardest, he said. In one case, a building contractor offered to pay \$500 a week, only to give him just \$350 after five long days of labor. The immigrant said there was no one to protect him from this abuse.

Ultimately, this immigrant, who agreed to speak only anonymously because of his legal status, saved enough to open a small business.

"For me, this is my pueblo," he said of his adopted country. "I love this place."

Americans' sentiments about him and other immigrants have largely hardened along racial, political and demographic lines. Overall feelings toward immigrant workers remain negative. But sentiment has improved since 2006, possibly a sign that the growth of educated immigrants has begun to reshape attitudes, according to a Pew survey released this month.

Two-thirds of Republicans and 54 percent of whites said they think immigration harms U.S. workers. But a majority of Democrats, Hispanics and the college-educated said they felt immigrants made society better off.

By comparison, almost all economists view immigrants as helpful — even essential — for the nation's continued prosperity. On the one hand, some visa programs have deprived U.S. workers of jobs. And some companies have been accused of hiring cheaper foreign workers to replace older workers in similar jobs. But academic research has debunked the claims that immigration on the whole takes jobs away from natives, said Bill Kerr, a professor at Harvard University's Business School whose research has shown that immigration helps business formation.

"Ultimately, our economies are able to grow, absorb people and do a number of dynamic things," Kerr said.

Because of the aging U.S. population causing more retirements, most economists say immigrants are needed to ensure that the workforce increases at a sufficient pace to sustain overall growth in the long term.

Anti-immigration groups such as the Federation for American Immigration Reform argue that the United States should cap all immigration levels. These groups contend that lesser-educated workers from Latin America diminish economic growth because they receive government-funded health care and education. And they argue that the jobs that are going to educated immigrants should be directed toward U.S. citizens.

"Trying to grow your economy through the importation of bodies is rudimentary and Neanderthal-like," said Dan Stein, FAIR's executive director. "It's backward."

Other research disputes this claim, finding value among the largely Hispanic group of less-educated immigrants. For every dollar spent on health care and education, North Carolina got \$11 back from Hispanic residents in terms of consumer spending and taxes paid — a finding that includes unauthorized immigrants, said James Johnson, a demographer at the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill.

While much of the debate has focused on the economic effects of immigration, many opponents fear a burden on taxpayers and the cultural changes in a nation coming to grips with its widening diversity.

The anti-immigrant rhetoric has concerned Gopala. She feels fortunate to no longer be among the millions of foreigners still applying for U.S. residency.

"I got very lucky that my green card was processed when immigration wasn't a bad word," Gopala said.

"America has given me the opportunity to pursue my own life. On the day you're born in India, your life is written. But here, that is not true."

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- Notice the date this was written. This is very relevant to all of us today.
- The article was written in North Carolina, but its principles apply to our country as whole.
- Please read the larger font areas. I have included the entire article for those interested.
- This article was taken from ksl.com

## Questions to Consider

- How do Asian migrants differ from Latin America's?
- What is the migrant effect on America's economy?
- What is the migrant effect on America's dependency ratio?
- What is the migrant effect on America's taxes or taxpayers?
- How are migrants generally welcomed? Does their place or origin effect that?

Benefits of Migration (Pros)	Pitfalls of Migration (Cons)

## Assignment:

- In four paragraphs, using four different examples, argue EITHER FOR or AGAINST the benefit to international migrants to the United States (there is no wrong side as long as you defend your answer).
- Use data FROM THE ARTICLE to support your argument (data/opinions from other sources will not be accepted).
- Note: Please use your own words for this assignment. Nothing should be copied, even quotes, from the article. Don't even reference it. Only use the article to gain an opinion and some background information.