

# New American Voters in Georgia

*Building the Electoral Power of Naturalized Voters*



August 2022

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# Executive Summary

The high stakes of the 2022 U.S. midterm elections showcase the urgency of engaging all eligible voters to ensure a fully participatory, representative democracy. In Georgia, a bloc of New American Voters — recently naturalized citizens that have earned the right to vote — has the potential to play an outsized role in the outcomes of critical federal and state races. This voting bloc is multiracial, multigenerational, geographically diverse, and majority female. New American Voters hold distinct ideologies, experiences, and viewpoints, and will be motivated by a variety of issues this November. Georgia became the center of the political universe during the November 2020 presidential election, with newly naturalized citizens comprising a critical part of the record turnout among voters of color in the state. With a competitive Senate election (rated “toss up” by the [Cook Political Report](#)) and a contested gubernatorial election (rated “toss up” by the [Cook Political Report](#)) in 2022, Georgia will again be one of the most critical states during November elections. Georgia ranks first in the nation in the New American Voters Impact Model, which was created by the National Partnership for New Americans (NPNA) and the U.S. Immigration Policy Center (USIPC) at the University of California, San Diego to showcase the potential electoral power of this critical voting bloc. This report offers data that illustrates how New American Voters can have an outsized impact.

- Georgia is home to 96,469 citizens naturalized between 2016 and 2020. This number exceeds the state’s November 2020 presidential election margin of 11,779 votes by over eight times. It also exceeds the 2021 Senate runoff election margin of 93,272 votes.
- Newly naturalized citizens in Georgia are particularly racially and ethnically diverse, with 39 percent (37,773) originally from Asia, 36 percent (34,479) from the Americas, and 16 percent (15,510) from Africa. Each cohort is larger than the 11,779-vote margin of victory during the November 2020 presidential election. The number of newly naturalized citizens originally from India, 11,188, is also larger than the margin of victory during the November 2020 presidential election.
- More than 54 percent of Georgia’s newly naturalized citizens are women and approximately 61 percent are under the age of 45 years.
- The Atlanta-Sandy Springs-Roswell metropolitan area has the highest concentration of newly naturalized citizens at over 480,000.

Georgia’s cohort is part of an estimated 5.19 million newly naturalized citizens across the U.S., according to [New American Voters 2022: Harnessing the Power of Naturalized Citizens](#), a report released by NPNA, the Service Employees International Union (SEIU), APIAVote, and the U.S. Immigration Policy Center at the University of California San Diego. The power of this potential voting bloc is determined by individuals’ ability to both register and vote this November. This electoral season presents many challenges, including the need for organizations to adapt their voter engagement work to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, language access issues, and ongoing efforts to restrict access to voting, particularly targeting voters of color. One form of voter suppression that has emerged in recent years is the increasing backlog and processing delays of citizenship applications. According to the latest data from U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS), there are over 700,000 pending citizenship applications nationwide, with 23,533 citizenship applications backlogged in USCIS’ offices in Georgia.<sup>1</sup> While the national average processing delay is around 11 months, it is nearly 18 months in USCIS’ Atlanta office. This means that immigrants who are eligible for citizenship and who would have otherwise naturalized and have had time to register to vote in this year’s elections may not be able to do so given the naturalization application backlog.

Georgia-based organizations named in this report are partnering with NPNA’s New American Voters Campaign, a non-partisan nationwide effort to address naturalization barriers and encourage newly naturalized citizens to register and vote. The 2022 collaboration continues momentum from the 2020 campaign, which engaged naturalized voters and builds on decades of organizing efforts to register and mobilize voters of color in Georgia. Georgia’s New American Voters are a constituency whose voices will be heard and whose issues should be addressed by all political parties and candidates.

<sup>1</sup> U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services, “Number of Form n-400 Application for Naturalization by Category of Naturalization, Case Status and USCIS Field Office Location.” October 1, 2021 - December 31, 2021. [https://www.uscis.gov/sites/default/files/document/reports/N400\\_performancedata\\_fy2022\\_qtr1.pdf](https://www.uscis.gov/sites/default/files/document/reports/N400_performancedata_fy2022_qtr1.pdf)

# Methodology

This report is based on USCIS data on naturalizations that occurred from Fiscal Year 2016 through FY 2020 and naturalization applications that the agency approved in FY 2021.<sup>2</sup> Estimates for naturalizations during FY 2021 are based on previous spikes in naturalizations between FY 2019 and FY 2020, right before the presidential election.

“Newly naturalized citizens” are defined as those who have naturalized since FY 2016. “New American Voters” are defined as those who have naturalized since FY 2016 and can subsequently register to vote.

This report utilizes United Nations regional classifications to specify newly naturalized citizens' region of origin.<sup>3</sup> These classifications are Americas, Asia, Europe, Africa, and Oceania. All of the tables referenced throughout this report are based on USCIS data from 2016–2020. Additionally, data on naturalization gaps is based on the 2020 1-Year ACS.<sup>4</sup>

The New American Voters Impact Model (Figure 1) ranks states' relative “political importance” based on six factors: 1) newly naturalized citizens from 2016 to 2020 as a multiple of the state’s 2016 presidential vote margin; 2) the average presidential election margin (in 2012, 2016, and 2020); 3) group density; 4) the presence of a competitive U.S. Senate race; 5) the presence of a competitive gubernatorial race; and 6) the presence of a competitive race for control of state legislative chambers. All of these factors are multiplied by each other in order to arrive at a raw score. That raw score is standardized on a 1 to 99 scale. The 15 highest-scoring states are termed “politically important states” throughout this report. A more in-depth explanation of the model factors can be found in NPNA’s companion national report.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> See “Naturalizations,” U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services, accessed May 9, 2022, <https://www.dhs.gov/immigration-statistics/naturalizations>. “Immigration and Citizenship Data,” U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services, accessed May 9, 2022, <https://www.uscis.gov/tools/reports-and-studies/immigration-and-citizenship-data>

<sup>3</sup> See “Countries or Areas,” United Nations Statistics Division, accessed May 9, 2022, <https://unstats.un.org/unsd/methodology/m49/#geo-regions>

<sup>4</sup> See “American Community Survey,” United States Census Bureau, accessed May 9, 2022, <https://data.census.gov/cedsci/>

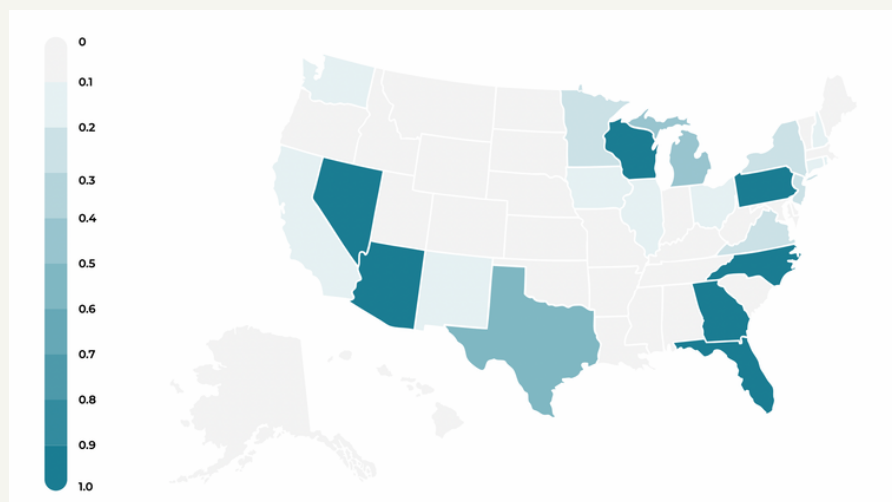
<sup>5</sup> National Partnership for New Americans, Service Employees International Union, U.S. Immigration Policy Center at the University of California San Diego, and APIA Vote, “New American Voters 2022: Harnessing the Power of Naturalized Citizens,” July 2022, [https://newamericanvoters.org/assets/2022/07/NPNA\\_2022-New-American-Voters-Report.pdf](https://newamericanvoters.org/assets/2022/07/NPNA_2022-New-American-Voters-Report.pdf)

# Why Georgia is so Important in 2022

In November 2020, Georgia made history by voting for a Democratic presidential candidate for the first time since 1992, a victory that was fueled by historic turnout among a diverse coalition of voters of color. Not only did winning Georgia give Joe Biden the presidency, but it also forced two runoff elections, the results of which gave Democrats control of the U.S. Senate. New American Voters in Georgia can again play a critical role in the November 2022 midterm elections. Georgia ranks first in the nation according to the New American Voters Impact Model, based on factors like the November 2020 presidential election margin of victory; the average margin of victory during the last three presidential elections; the size of the foreign-born population in a state; and the presence of competitive senatorial or gubernatorial races. (See Figure 1.)

*This map shows how states score in the NPNA New American Voters Impact Model*

**Figure 1: Politically Important States, according to the New American Voters Impact Model**



There are nearly 542,000 naturalized citizens in Georgia, accounting for just over five percent of the total population.

As Figure 2 shows below, over one-quarter of all naturalized citizens in Georgia have naturalized since the 2016 presidential election.

**Figure 2: Georgia State Population Figures 2022**

TOTAL POPULATION	REGISTERED VOTERS	ALL NATURALIZED CITIZENS	NEWLY NATURALIZED CITIZENS 2016-2020
10,735,354	7,004,034 <sup>6</sup>	541,996	96,469

From 2016 through 2020, Georgia added an estimated 96,469 newly naturalized citizens, which exceeds the margin of victory in the November 2020 presidential election in the state. Georgia's cohort is part of an estimated 5.19 million newly naturalized citizens across the U.S.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>6</sup> Georgia Secretary of State, "Georgia Active Voters Report, accessed August 3, 2022, <https://sos.ga.gov/georgia-active-voters-report>

<sup>7</sup> See Footnote 5

# WHO ARE GEORGIA'S NEW AMERICAN VOTERS?

Of the total number of persons who naturalized in Georgia from 2016 to 2020, approximately 39 percent are from Asia, which includes Asian and Pacific Islander countries, approximately 36 percent are from the Americas, which includes Latin American and Caribbean countries, approximately 16 percent are from the African continent, and approximately 8 percent are from Europe. (See Figure 3.)

**FIGURE 3: GEORGIA NATURALIZED CITIZENS BY REGION OF ORIGIN 2016-2020**

REGION	NUMBER OF NEWLY NATURALIZED CITIZENS	PERCENTAGE
Asia	37,773	39%
Americas	34,479	36%
Africa	15,510	16%
Europe	8,180	8%
Oceania	311	0.3%
Other/Unknown	216	0.2%
<b>Total 2016-2020</b>	<b>96,469</b>	

39%

Newly Naturalized Citizens from Asian and Pacific Islander Countries

36%

Newly Naturalized Citizens from the Americas & Caribbean



Figure 4 shows the top 20 countries of origin for persons who naturalized in Georgia from 2016 to 2020. Newly naturalized citizens from India lead the way, followed by Mexico, then Vietnam.

**FIGURE 4: GEORGIA NEWLY NATURALIZED CITIZENS BY COUNTRY OF ORIGIN, 2016-2020**

RANK	COUNTRY	TOTAL
1	India	11,188
2	Mexico	9,894
3	Vietnam	4,478
4	Jamaica	4,433
5	South Korea	4,202
6	Nigeria	3,395
7	China	3,334
8	Colombia	2,948
9	Ethiopia	2,405
10	Brazil	1,917
11	Philippines	1,840
12	El Salvador	1,728
13	United Kingdom	1,660
14	Burma	1,623
15	Pakistan	1,614
16	Ghana	1,509
17	Haiti	1,334
18	Canada	1,229
19	Kenya	1,197
20	Bangladesh	1,160

# 29%

Newly naturalized U.S. citizens  
35-45 years old

# 23%

Newly naturalized U.S. citizens  
25-34 years old

# 20%

Newly naturalized U.S. citizens  
45-55 years old

# 11%

Newly naturalized U.S. citizens  
55-65 years old

# 9%

Newly naturalized U.S. citizens  
18-24 years old

Approximately 61 percent of persons who naturalized in Georgia from 2016 to 2020 were under the age of 45 and more than 54 percent were women. The full breakdown by age and gender is shown in Figure 5.

**Figure 5: Georgia Newly Naturalized Citizens By Age and Gender\* 2016-2020**

AGE	FEMALE	MALE	TOTAL	%
18-24 YEARS	4,043	4,332	8,375	9%
25-34 YEARS	12,673	9,948	22,621	23%
35-45 YEARS	15,467	12,677	28,144	29%
45-55 YEARS	10,108	9,226	19,334	20%
55-65 YEARS	5,947	5,038	10,985	11%
65 YEARS AND OLDER	4,112	2,898	7,010	7%
TOTAL	52,350 (54.3% of total)	44,119 (45.7% of total)	96,469	

\*USCIS does not collect data on transgender or non-binary individuals.



# WHERE ARE GEORGIA'S NEW AMERICAN VOTERS?

Figure 6 shows the total number of naturalized citizens in metropolitan areas in Georgia.

The Atlanta-Sandy Springs-Roswell metropolitan area has the highest concentration, with nearly 480,000 naturalized citizens.<sup>8</sup>

**Figure 6: Georgia Newly Naturalized U.S. Citizens By Metro Area and Region of Origin, 2022**

Metropolitan Area	Total	Africa	Americas	Asia	Europe	Oceania
Atlanta-Sandy Springs-Roswell, GA	477,568	71,191	160,252	204,536	40,927	662
Chattanooga, TN-GA	13,970	559	4,059	6,995	2,357	N/A
Augusta-Richmond County, GA-SC	11,465	933	3,793	5,624	1,115	N/A
Gainesville, GA	8,581	156	6,240	1,335	850	N/A

<sup>8</sup> Estimates obtained from the 2020 American Community Survey (ACS) 1-Year Public Use Microdata (PUM).



YOUTH FROM ASIAN AMERICANS ADVANCING JUSTICE ATLANTA GETTING OUT THE VOTE

# ENGAGING GEORGIA'S NEW AMERICAN VOTERS

The New American Voters 2022 campaign is a c3, non-partisan nationwide effort coordinated by the [National Partnership for New Americans \(NPNA\)](#) to encourage newly naturalized citizens to register and vote. Newly naturalized citizens in Georgia interested in becoming new voters can reach out to the following NPNA Member and partner organizations for more information.

## Georgia Organizations

**Asian Americans Advancing Justice Atlanta (AAAJA)** is a nonpartisan, nonprofit organization dedicated to protecting the civil rights of Asian Americans, Native Hawaiians, and Pacific Islanders (AANHPI) and other marginalized communities in Georgia and the Southeast. Learn more at [www.advancingjustice-atlanta.org](http://www.advancingjustice-atlanta.org).

**CASA** is the foremost immigrant organization in the mid-Atlantic region and a national leader in supporting immigrant families and ensuring that all individuals have the core support necessary for full participation in society. With over 122,000 lifetime Latino, immigrant, and working-class members across 46 US states, CASA creates change with its power building model blending human services, community organizing, and advocacy in order to serve the full spectrum of the needs, dreams, and aspirations of members. Learn more at [www.wearecasa.org](http://www.wearecasa.org).

**GALEO** is a non-partisan non-profit organization based in Norcross, Georgia, founded in 2003. GALEO strives for a better Georgia where the Latinx community's contributions civically. GALEO focuses on increasing civic participation of the Latinx community and developing prominent Latino leaders throughout Georgia. Learn more at [www.galeo.org](http://www.galeo.org).

**Latino Community Fund Georgia (LCF Georgia)** is a 501(c)(3) membership organization supporting Latinx/Hispanic communities in Georgia. We are both a philanthropic intermediary and a direct service provider working with and within Georgia's diverse communities. Learn more at [www.lcfgeorgia.org](http://www.lcfgeorgia.org).

## National Partners

**The Service Employees International Union (SEIU)** unites 2 million diverse members in the United States, Canada and Puerto Rico. SEIU members working in the healthcare industry, in the public sector and in property services believe in the power of joining together on the job to win higher wages and benefits and to create better communities while fighting for a more just society and an economy that works for all of us, not just corporations and the wealthy. Learn more at [www.seiu.org](http://www.seiu.org)

**The U.S. Immigration Policy Center (USIPC)** at UC San Diego was the lead author of this report in partnership with NPNA and SEIU. USIPC conducts and supports rigorous social science research to advance understanding of the foundations and consequences of U.S. immigration policy. Immigration has played an integral role in American history and is sure to feature prominently in America's future. But what should the immigration policies of our nation of immigrants be? The USIPC brings together leading academics, policy analysts, immigrant rights leaders, and policymakers across all levels of government to conceptualize, debate, and design a new U.S. immigration policy agenda that meets the demands of the 21st century. Learn more at [www.usipc.ucsd.edu](http://www.usipc.ucsd.edu)