



# State of Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders Series

A Multifaceted Portrait of a Growing Population

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By Karthick Ramakrishnan and Farah Z. Ahmad      September 2014

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# Introduction and summary

Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders, or AAPIs, are the two fastest-growing populations in the United States, growing by an average of 46 percent and 40 percent, respectively, between 2000 and 2010, compared with the nationwide average growth of 10 percent during the same time period.<sup>1</sup> The rapid growth of AAPIs, propelled in large part by immigration, is one of the demographic shifts currently changing the face of the United States. The majority of the United States is projected to be people of color by 2043,<sup>2</sup> and it is imperative that we understand the diversity among these communities. Yet despite the remarkable growth of AAPIs, there is a significant gap in what is known about these communities. Part of this gap is due to the lack of centralized and accessible data across outcomes, rendering it difficult to make comprehensive sense of policy-relevant data.

In this series, the Center for American Progress and AAPI Data bring together the most salient data points on AAPIs in 10 reports on a range of topics, including public opinion, civic participation, immigration, language needs, labor-market outcomes, and consumer and business activity. In doing so, we provide comparisons between AAPIs and other racial groups in the United States, as well as comparisons within the AAPI community by detailed origin—ranging from Chinese Americans and Bangladeshi Americans to Native Hawaiians and Tongan Americans.

When understanding outcomes among AAPIs, both racial categories and categories of detailed origin are important. As detailed in the “Demographics” report, racial categories—such as Asian and Pacific Islander—are official government classifications that are based on key and salient commonalities in the history of how different groups have been incorporated into American society. These racial classifications inform the collection of government data by various federal, state, and local agencies.

At the same time, many Asian Americans—particularly first-generation immigrants—still identify primarily with their national origin,<sup>3</sup> and the AAPI community varies considerably by national origin on outcomes such as educational attainment and income. Despite these differences, there is also significant convergence in the policy attitudes of AAPIs, with relatively high levels of support for policies such as universal health care, immigrant legalization, higher taxes, and preservation of the social safety net.<sup>4</sup>

In summary, AAPIs are a significant and rapidly growing part of the United States. In order to have an accurate sense of our country’s economic, social, and political future, it is critical to have a current and detailed understanding of the AAPI population and its outcomes and trajectories on key policy dimensions. In this series of reports, we cover essential findings on the following key dimensions.

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## Demographics

AAPIs are concentrated in a few states, though there has been rapid growth in new regions during the past decade. More than half of the Asian American population—56 percent—lives in five states: California, Washington, Texas, New Jersey, and Hawaii. Two-thirds of the Pacific Islander population—67 percent—live in five states: Hawaii, California, Washington, Texas, and Utah.<sup>5</sup> This level of state residential concentration is comparable to Latinos—with 66 percent of residence concentrated in five states—but is much higher when compared with whites and blacks, where the top five states account for about 35 percent and 37 percent, respectively, of the national population of each group.<sup>6</sup> The top states of origin vary across detailed origin groups, with groups such as Filipino Americans and Taiwanese Americans concentrated in California, Bangladeshi Americans concentrated in New York, and Indian Americans dispersed across various states when compared with most other Asian groups.<sup>7</sup> States with high AAPI concentrations are not the states with the fastest-growing AAPI populations. In fact, New York and California have the slowest population growth of Asian Americans, while other states such as Nevada, Arizona, and North Dakota have the fastest-growing Asian American populations.<sup>8</sup>

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## Immigration

Immigration is particularly relevant to Asian Americans, considering that the Asian American population includes the highest proportion of immigrants compared with other racial and ethnic groups whether measured in terms of residents, adult citizens, or voters.<sup>9</sup> Among immigrants, Asian immigrants have consistently been among the fastest to naturalize, waiting an average of five to eight years, compared with a decade or more for immigrants from North America.<sup>10</sup> In addition, since 2008, there have been more immigrants coming from Asia than from any other region in the world, including Latin America.<sup>11</sup> A significant number of Asian immigrants are undocumented: 1.3 million were undocumented in 2011, or one in every eight of the 10 million foreign-born Asian Americans living in the United States that year.<sup>12</sup> Viewed another way, Asian Americans account for about one in every nine of the total unauthorized immigrant population in the United States.<sup>13</sup>

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## Language diversity and English proficiency

Asian Americans are among those most likely to be Limited English Proficient—defined as those who speak English “less than very well”—at a rate of 35 percent, identical to the Latino rate.<sup>14</sup> The Asian American population also has the highest proportion of residents who speak a language other than English at home, at a rate of 77 percent.<sup>15</sup> There is considerable variation in English proficiency by detailed origin, with Native Hawaiians, Indian Americans, and Filipino Americans possessing very high rates of proficiency and Vietnamese Americans, Chinese Americans, and Korean Americans possessing relatively low rates of proficiency.<sup>16</sup> Many of these groups face barriers to voting because of inadequate language assistance; this is true even in jurisdictions that are mandated to provide it.<sup>17</sup> These patterns in language use are also important to understand media consumption among Asian Americans, many of whom rely on ethnic media for their news on public affairs.<sup>18</sup>

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## Education

High levels of educational attainment among AAPIs mask significant differences across detailed origins. Many Pacific Islander groups and certain Asian American groups—including Vietnamese Americans, Cambodian Americans, Laotian Americans, and Hmong Americans—have lower educational attainment levels

than the national average, similar to African Americans and Latinos.<sup>19</sup> Conversely, Asian American groups with a high proportion of employment-based immigrants—including Indian Americans and Chinese Americans—tend to have the highest levels of educational attainment among all Americans.<sup>20</sup>

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## Public opinion

AAPIs' relatively high levels of support for progressive policies reveal a preference for an activist government and more public services, rather than smaller government and tax cuts.<sup>21</sup> AAPIs also generally express support for policies such as environmental protection, issues related to educational access and affordability, universal health care, and a pathway to citizenship for immigrants.<sup>22</sup> Additionally, recent survey data indicate that AAPIs view racial diversity positively and believe that increased racial diversity will bring increased opportunities for all.<sup>23</sup>

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## Civic participation and democracy

AAPI voters are growing rapidly nationwide and are a significant share of the electorate in many states and metropolitan areas. In the past decade, the number of AAPI voters has nearly doubled, from more than 2 million voters across the country in 2000 to 3.9 million voters in 2012.<sup>24</sup> Still, nationwide, AAPIs only account for about 3 percent of all voters.<sup>25</sup> At the same time, AAPIs tend to be concentrated in certain areas and therefore make up a significant share of the electorate in those places. For example, during the 2012 presidential election, AAPIs made up 50 percent of voters in Hawaii, 10 percent of voters in California, and 5 percent or more of voters in Nevada, Washington, and New Jersey.<sup>26</sup> Despite their growing presence, Asian Americans' voting participation is relatively low, likely due to the Asian American population possessing a large proportion of foreign-born residents, as well as low citizenship rates.<sup>27</sup> Pacific Islanders also have lower rates of voter registration, though registration and turnout rates vary greatly by detailed origin.<sup>28</sup> In terms of political affiliations, AAPIs do not overwhelmingly identify with a political party, but those who do tend to favor the Democratic Party—and in the 2012 presidential election, President Barack Obama won every major subgroup of AAPI voters.<sup>29</sup>

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## Labor-market outcomes

Asian Americans are the most rapidly growing segment of the U.S. labor force, with considerable occupational diversity across groups.<sup>30</sup> Labor-force participation among AAPIs is higher than the national average, particularly for Asian American men and Pacific Islander women.<sup>31</sup> Between 2010 and 2013, the Asian American labor force grew by 18 percent, faster than that of any other racial group.<sup>32</sup> Asian Americans also had the lowest rates of unemployment in recent years, but unemployed Asian Americans are among those with the longest duration of unemployment.<sup>33</sup> Finally, there is considerable occupational diversity across detailed origin: Indian Americans, Sri Lankan Americans, and Chinese Americans rank among the highest in terms of concentration in management and professional occupations, while Vietnamese Americans and Thai Americans are disproportionately more likely to work in service occupations.<sup>34</sup> Similar variations exist across Pacific Islander groups as well, pointing to the need for timely, disaggregated data on labor-market outcomes.<sup>35</sup>

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## Income and poverty

AAPIs have the highest average household incomes, but there is considerable internal group variation. For median household income, Asian Americans rank highest among all racial groups, and the level for Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islanders, or NHPs, is on par with the national average.<sup>36</sup> However, these averages mask significant variations across detailed origin groups, with Indian Americans, Filipino Americans, and Japanese Americans among the highest earners, and Samoan Americans, Cambodian Americans, Hmong Americans, and Bangladeshi Americans among the lowest.<sup>37</sup> Importantly, per-capita income among Asian Americans is much closer to whites, since the latter have smaller household sizes.<sup>38</sup> However, Asian Americans are much more likely than whites to be concentrated in states and metropolitan areas with the highest costs of living, meaning that their per-capita income is likely much lower when accounting for cost of living.<sup>39</sup> Finally, Asian American poverty rates are generally low but have been growing rapidly among native-born Asian Americans and are relatively high for seniors and members of particular ethnic groups such as Hmong Americans, Bangladeshi Americans, Samoan Americans, and Tongan Americans.<sup>40</sup>



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## Consumer power and business ownership

The Asian American consumer market is the fastest-growing market among all racial and ethnic groups and is heavily concentrated in urban areas.<sup>41</sup> AAPIs are among those with the fastest-growing buying power in the United States, given their rapid population growth and their high level of representation among high-skilled immigrants.<sup>42</sup> At \$713 billion today, the AAPI market outshines the economies of all but 22 countries in the world—and the buying power of AAPIs is projected to grow to nearly \$1 trillion by 2018.<sup>43</sup> The Asian American consumer market is distinctive in some key respects: It is more concentrated,<sup>44</sup> online,<sup>45</sup> and focused in certain areas of spending—such as housing, education, and transportation—than all other groups.<sup>46</sup>

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## Health care

Health insurance coverage for AAPIs has significantly improved, but barriers to care and health disparities remain. Before the Affordable Care Act, or ACA, lack of health insurance was a significant problem for many AAPIs, with uninsurance rates of 15 percent for Asian Americans<sup>47</sup> and 18 percent for Pacific Islanders.<sup>48</sup> Although there are no data on AAPI rates of uninsurance after the ACA, Asian Americans were disproportionately more likely than other groups to enroll in health insurance plans in the ACA's initial enrollment period.<sup>49</sup> Beyond the area of health insurance, however, other significant barriers to health care access remain, particularly those that relate to language barriers and insufficient provision of culturally competent health care.<sup>50</sup> In addition, there are serious disparities in health outcomes for particular groups on medical conditions such as Hepatitis B,<sup>51</sup> liver cancer,<sup>52</sup> diabetes,<sup>53</sup> and heart disease.<sup>54</sup>

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## Recommendations

The analysis and findings in the “State of Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders” report series serve as an introduction to the vast array of policy data and research that exist on Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders. Each report provides references to additional resources in the relevant issue area, including those that will continue to be updated on the AAPI Data website.<sup>55</sup>

But there are limitations with the data that currently exist on AAPIs. For many of the outcomes, disaggregated data by national origin do not exist or are made possible only by combining several years of data, rendering them less current and less comparable to data available for the rest of the U.S. population. For others, there is no good systematic data available even at the aggregated level of racial group. This is true, for instance, with lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender, or LGBT, issues; hate crimes; and other civil rights violations. While there are good, qualitative studies on these issues—particularly as they affect Muslims, Sikhs, and other South Asian groups—greater efforts are needed to make these data collections more comprehensive.

There have been notable improvements in the collection of disaggregated data on AAPIs, particularly with respect to Census data and health data. But persistent problems remain in the collection, standardization, and dissemination of disaggregated data on education, particularly at the institutional level for K-12 and higher education across states. In order to address this, there need to be improvements in the collection of government data along key dimensions such as detailed origin and race. Surveys also need to provide adequate language support and oversample respondents from subpopulations that are smaller or that are more likely to be undercounted.

The White House Initiative on Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders is engaged in a multistakeholder effort with the U.S. Department of Education, state education agencies, and various community organizations to improve the collection and dissemination of disaggregated data on educational attainment among AAPIs. The success of this effort—dubbed iCount—will depend on the ability of these various stakeholders to overcome the technical challenges of upgrading legacy systems, as well as political challenges to making data collection and dissemination a higher priority across various states and their systems of K-12 and public higher education. More generally, the White House Initiative on Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders is working with various federal agencies to meet benchmarks related to Executive Order 13515, which requires “improved data collection, analysis, and dissemination of AAPI-specific information” as part of a multipronged agency effort to increase access and participation of AAPIs in federal programs and services.<sup>56</sup>

Instituting these reforms will allow the federal government to collect more comprehensive data on Asian Americans, Native Hawaiians, and other Pacific Islanders and will also allow for cross-racial comparisons using the same datasets. As the United States becomes a nation where the majority of people are people of color, the future of sound policymaking that pays attention to group inequalities depends on comparable, timely, and readily accessible data.

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# Demographics

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## Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders and discrimination

Asian Americans have a long history in the United States with the earliest settlements composed of Filipino sailors in the mid-1700s; they first debarked in Mexico as part of the Manila-Acapulco galleon trade and subsequently settled in Louisiana.<sup>1</sup> A more sizable population of Chinese sailors and merchants arrived in the 1840s in New York, followed by an even bigger wave of miners and railroad workers to California following the Gold Rush.<sup>2</sup> Many other Asian immigrant groups arrived in the late 1800s, but an increasingly restrictive set of immigration laws and racial violence kept their numbers relatively small.<sup>3</sup> Only after the passage of the 1965 Immigration and Nationality Act, which eliminated national origin quotas, did Asian Americans grow in large numbers. Given the suppression of Asian migration prior to 1965, this sizable *numerical growth* has also meant rapid *rates of growth* that started in the early 1970s and continue to today, with a growth of 46 percent from 2000 to 2010 and a growth of 10 percent from 2010 to 2013 (Table 1.1). Interestingly, the U.S. Census Bureau did not even begin to classify Asians together as a racial group until 1990, when it included 10 groups under the category of Asian or Pacific Islander, or API.<sup>4</sup>

**TABLE 1.1**  
**Race and ethnicity in the U.S. Population, 2013**

		<b>Growth, 2010 to 2013</b>	<b>Growth, 2000 to 2010</b>
White	252,672,340	2%	7%
Hispanic or Latino	54,205,670	4%	43%
Black	45,070,740	4%	15%
Asian	19,397,080	10%	46%
American Indian and Alaskan Native	6,447,437	5%	27%
Native Hawaiian and other Pacific Islander	1,432,890	7%	40%

Note: Data per group include those who identified with that category either exclusively or combination with other race category. Hispanic can be of any race.

Source: 2013 data and 2010 growth comparison from Bureau of the Census, "Monthly Postcensal Resident Population plus Armed Forces Overseas, by single year of age, sex, race, and Hispanic origin," available at <http://www.census.gov/popest/data/national/asrh/2012/2012-nat-af.html> (last accessed March 2014); Growth rates from 2000 to 2010 based on calculations from Bureau of the Census, "Race Alone or in Combination and Hispanic or Latino: 2000, 2010," available at [http://factfinder2.census.gov/bkmk/table/1.0/en/DEC/00\\_SF1/QTP6](http://factfinder2.census.gov/bkmk/table/1.0/en/DEC/00_SF1/QTP6) and [http://factfinder2.census.gov/bkmk/table/1.0/en/DEC/10\\_SF1/QTP6](http://factfinder2.census.gov/bkmk/table/1.0/en/DEC/10_SF1/QTP6), respectively (last accessed March 2014).

In the 1990s, many Native Hawaiian and other Pacific Islander—known as NHPI or NHOPI—organizations advocated for a separate racial category—and for good reason. Unlike the migration history of most Asian Americans,<sup>5</sup> the history of Pacific Islanders in the United States has been one of colonial contact and conquest, with the growth of plantation economies and U.S. military power in the Pacific playing important roles.<sup>6</sup> The process of NHPI becoming a recognized racial group in the United States was thus very different from the experiences of Asian Americans. Furthermore, the NHPI population was, and remains, much smaller than the Asian American population. This masked important disadvantages in educational attainment, health, and labor market outcomes among NHPIs because they were lumped into a much larger API category. Since 2000, the U.S. Census Bureau has treated NHPI as a distinct racial category, and there are close to 1.5 million Pacific Islanders in the United States today.

### Subgroup diversity within the Asian and NHPI racial categories

Racial categories such as Asian and Native Hawaiian and other Pacific Islander have no scientific basis but are often the result of the interplay between Census categorization and the ways that various groups and institutions adopt, or seek changes to, those categories given historical legacies and new social and political developments.<sup>7</sup> Nationality has been an important way in which these two racial categories have been constructed.<sup>8</sup> Our early federal laws on immigration treated Asians

differently based on their national origins starting with the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882, and the colonial relationship with Pacific Islanders varied markedly across groups. Furthermore, given that most Asian Americans are still first-generation immigrants, national-origin differences are a significant basis for self-identification.<sup>9</sup>

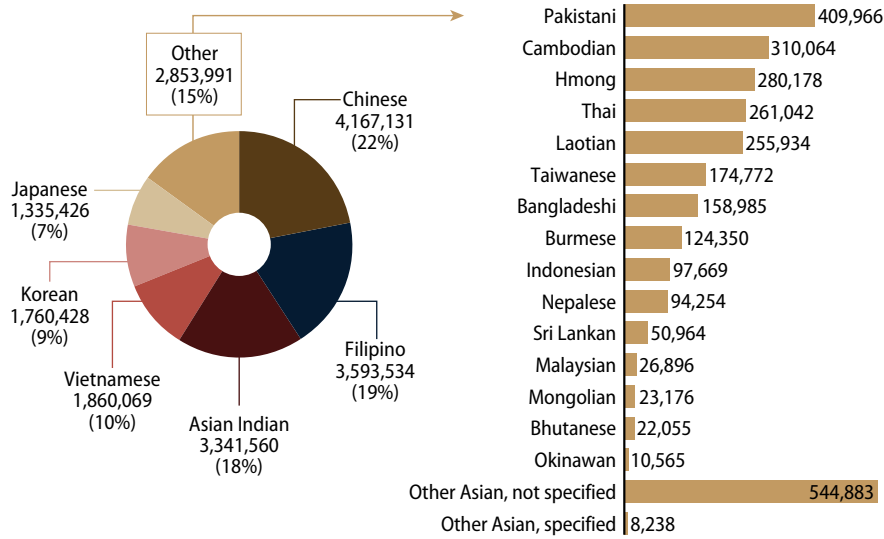
The composition of the Asian American community itself has now become much more diverse from the majority Chinese and Japanese American<sup>10</sup> make-up in the 20th century. Today, the Asian American community has many more groups that make up the majority of the population. The top six groups—Chinese, Filipino, Indian, Vietnamese, Korean, and Japanese—account for 85 percent of all residents. (see Figure 1.1) While this shows a fair amount of national origin concentration, it nevertheless represents a decline from 89 percent for these top six groups in 2000, as smaller Asian American groups have grown disproportionately in the last decade.

Chinese are still by far the largest group, but the growth rates for other national origin groups began to change faster during this decade. Indians and Filipinos, for example, are now about equal in size, due largely to the 76 percent growth rate of Indian Americans from 2000 to 2012, compared to the growth rate of Filipino Americans of only 52 percent during that same time period.<sup>11</sup> Additionally, some groups, such as Japanese Americans—who were once in the top two Asian American subpopulations but currently have a population of 1,335,426—have seen a decline in population share, although they are still among the top six largest groups.

While the smallest of the top six is the Japanese American population, there is still a substantial gap between this group and the next largest, Pakistani Americans, at 409,966 people.<sup>12</sup> However, some smaller groups such as Bangladeshi Americans are growing at an exceptional rate—177 percent between 2000 and 2010. If this rate is maintained, it will have a large impact on the future diversity of the Asian American community.<sup>13</sup> Indeed, we might even see new forms of detailed origin identification. For example, it is possible that, as these South Asian populations grow and settle longer in the United States, we might see a new consolidated subgrouping of South Asians that is used fairly commonly among second-generation immigrants on many college campuses and increasingly among social service organizations.<sup>14</sup>

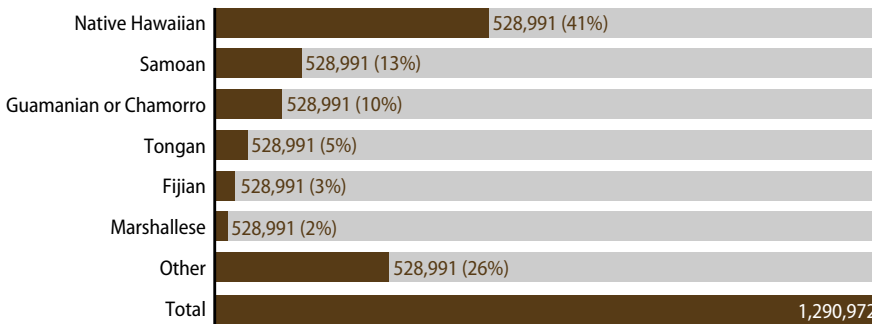


**FIGURE 1.1**  
**Ethnicity and national origin of the Asian American population, 2012**



Source: Bureau of the Census, "Asian alone or in any combination by selected groups, 2012," available at [http://factfinder2.census.gov/bkmk/table/1.0/en/ACS/12\\_1YR/B02018](http://factfinder2.census.gov/bkmk/table/1.0/en/ACS/12_1YR/B02018) (last accessed March 2014).

**FIGURE 1.2**  
**Ethnicity and national origin for Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander population, 2012**



Source: Bureau of the Census, "Native Hawaiian And Pacific Islander Or In Any Combination By Selected Groups, 2012" available at [http://factfinder2.census.gov/bkmk/table/1.0/en/ACS/12\\_1YR/B02019](http://factfinder2.census.gov/bkmk/table/1.0/en/ACS/12_1YR/B02019) (last accessed March 2014).

Similarly, the Pacific Islander population has a fair amount of national origin concentration among the six largest groups, although the concentration is even greater for the largest group, Native Hawaiians, who make up 41 percent, of the Pacific Islander population. The next largest group, Samoans, make up 15 percent of the NHPI population, followed by Guamanians, or Chomorro, who are 10 percent. Interestingly, the “other” category, which includes Pacific Islander populations with under 2 percent each of the share of the total NHPI population, nevertheless make up 26 percent of the total group. This large “other” population means that a great number of small Pacific Islander groups exist, making the Pacific Islander population particularly diverse. The Pacific Islander population is also further diversified by the fact that almost one of six Pacific Islanders—16 percent—is an immigrant, with most coming from various other countries in Micronesia and Melanesia.<sup>15</sup>

Asian Americans and NHPIs are highly concentrated in a few states. This is especially true when compared to whites and blacks, where the top five states account for about 35 percent and 37 percent, respectively, of the national population of each group. (see Table 1.2) By contrast, 56 percent of the Asian American population lives in the top five states of California, New York, Texas, New Jersey, and Hawaii. For NHPIs, the level of state concentration is even higher, as Hawaii and California together account for more than one half of the racial group’s national population.

**TABLE 1.2**  
**Top five states of residence, for each racial and ethnic group**

	Top five share	First state	Second state	Third state	Fourth state	Fifth state
<b>Asian</b>	<b>56%</b>	<b>California (32)</b>	<b>New York (9)</b>	<b>Texas (7)</b>	<b>New Jersey (5)</b>	<b>Hawaii (4)</b>
<b>Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander</b>	<b>67%</b>	<b>Hawaii (29)</b>	<b>California (25)</b>	<b>Washington (6)</b>	<b>Texas (4)</b>	<b>Utah (3)</b>
American Indian and Alaska Native	40%	California (13)	Oklahoma (10)	Arizona (7)	Texas (6)	New Mexico (4)
Black	37%	New York (8)	Florida (8)	Texas (8)	Georgia (7)	California (6)
Latino	66%	California (28)	Texas (19)	Florida (8)	New York (7)	Illinois (4)
White	35%	California (10)	Texas (8)	Florida (6)	New York (6)	Pennsylvania (4)

Note: Share of national population living in each state included in parentheses.

Source: State estimates derived from Bureau of the Census, “2010-2012 American Community Survey 3-Year Estimates: Tables B02008, B02009, B02010, B02011, B02012, B03001,” available at <http://factfinder2.census.gov/faces/nav/jsf/pages/index.xhtml> (last accessed March 2014).

## The concentration of Asian Americans in California, New York, and Texas varies by subgroup

While Asian Americans overall are concentrated in a few states, the extent of that concentration varies across subgroups. Hmong Americans are the most heavily concentrated in three states, with 79 percent living in either California, Minnesota, or Wisconsin. (see Table 1.3) Taiwanese and Japanese Americans are highly concentrated too, with just three states accounting for more than 60 percent of the national population for each group. By contrast, Asian Indians and Bhutanese Americans are among the least geographically concentrated. Finally, it is important to note that California accounts for more than one-third of the national population for many of the largest Asian groups, including Filipinos, Chinese, and Vietnamese Americans. However, the state is less prominent for many South Asian groups such as Asian Indians, Pakistanis, and Bangladeshis.

**TABLE 1.3**  
**Top three states of residence, for each detailed Asian group**

	Top three share	First state	Second state	Third state
Asian Indian	40%	California (19)	New York (12)	New Jersey (10)
Bangladeshi	59%	New York (46)	California (7)	Texas (6)
Bhutanese	30%	Texas (12)	New York (9)	Georgia (9)
Burmese	41%	California (18)	New York (12)	Texas (10)
Cambodian	56%	California (37)	Massachusetts (10)	Washington (8)
Chinese	57%	California (36)	New York (16)	Hawaii (5)
Filipino	57%	California (43)	Hawaii (10)	Illinois (4)
Hmong	79%	California (35)	Minnesota (25)	Wisconsin (19)
Indonesian	53%	California (41)	New York (6)	Texas (6)
Japanese	62%	California (33)	Hawaii (24)	Washington (5)
Korean	44%	California (30)	New York (9)	New Jersey (6)
Laotian	42%	California (30)	Texas (7)	Minnesota (5)
Malaysian	44%	California (21)	New York (15)	Texas (8)
Nepalese	36%	New York (13)	Texas (13)	California (10)
Pakistani	45%	New York (17)	Texas (15)	California (13)
Sri Lankan	46%	California (26)	New York (14)	Texas (6)
Taiwanese	63%	California (48)	New York (8)	Texas (7)
Thai	42%	California (28)	Texas (7)	Florida (6)
Vietnamese	55%	California (37)	Texas (13)	Washington (4)

Note: Share of national population living in each state included in parentheses.

Source: Bureau of the Census, "Asian alone or in combination with one or more other races, and with one or more Asian categories for selected groups," available at [http://factfinder2.census.gov/bkkm/table/1.0/en/DEC/10\\_SF1/PCT7/0100000US.04000](http://factfinder2.census.gov/bkkm/table/1.0/en/DEC/10_SF1/PCT7/0100000US.04000) (last accessed March 2014).

## Fastest-growing destination states in the South and Southwest

The fastest-growing states for Asian Americans are Nevada, Arizona, North Dakota, North Carolina, and Georgia, where the populations more than doubled between 2000 and 2012. (see Table 1.4) Importantly, with the exception of North Dakota, all of these states had baseline populations of more than 100,000 Asian residents in 2000. By contrast, the slowest-growing states for Asian Americans tend to be large, traditional destination states such as New York and California; although even in these states, the Asian American population has grown by more than 40 percent since 2000. For Pacific Islanders, the places with the fastest growth are Arkansas, Alaska, Nevada, and Utah.<sup>16</sup>

**TABLE 1.4**  
**Fastest- and slowest-growing states for the Asian American population**

	Asian American population 2012	Growth, 2000-2012	Growth, 2010-2012	Growth, 2000-2010
<b>Fastest-growth states</b>				
Nevada	267,558	138%	10%	116%
Arizona	263,383	122%	14%	95%
North Dakota	10,439	110%	14%	85%
North Carolina	285,348	109%	13%	85%
Georgia	403,991	102%	11%	83%
<b>Slowest-growth states</b>				
New York	1,713,859	47%	9%	35%
California	6,008,218	45%	8%	34%
Louisiana	92,485	44%	10%	31%
Rhode Island	40,282	42%	10%	30%
Hawaii	791,778	13%	1%	11%

Source: Data for 2012 from Bureau of the Census, "Resident Population by Sex, Race Alone or in Combination, and Hispanic Origin for States," available at <http://factfinder2.census.gov/bkmk/table/1.0/en/PEP/2012/PEPSR5H?slice=Year--est72012> (last accessed March 2014); Data for 2010 from Bureau of the Census, "Race Alone or in Combination and Hispanic or Latino, State," available at [http://factfinder2.census.gov/bkmk/table/1.0/en/DEC/10\\_SF1/QTP6/0100000US.04000](http://factfinder2.census.gov/bkmk/table/1.0/en/DEC/10_SF1/QTP6/0100000US.04000) (last accessed March 2014); Data for 2000 from Bureau of the Census, "Race Alone or in Combination and Hispanic or Latino: 2000," available at [http://factfinder2.census.gov/bkmk/table/1.0/en/DEC/00\\_SF1/QTP6/0100000US.04000](http://factfinder2.census.gov/bkmk/table/1.0/en/DEC/00_SF1/QTP6/0100000US.04000) (last accessed March 2014).

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## Important gender differences by nativity for Asian Americans

Similar to whites and blacks, Asian Americans are more likely to have a greater proportion of women than men. For whites and blacks, however, this pattern is due primarily to the longer life expectancy of women than men, and there are no sizable differences in the gender ratios of foreign-born or native-born residents. For Asian Americans, by contrast, the gender gap is primarily related to nativity; the gap is 46 percent male, 54 percent female among the foreign-born population, and 51 percent male to 49 percent female among the native-born population. (see Table 1.5)

This is most likely due to variation in marriage patterns among Asian males and Asian females in the first generation, as intermarriage rates among Asian American women are greater than among their male counterparts.<sup>17</sup> Latinos, by contrast, have no gender differences in intermarriage rates, and they have a higher proportion of males than females in the foreign-born population, which is due primarily to the greater proportion of Hispanic males in the immigrant workforce.<sup>18</sup> Finally, there are some important national-origin differences, as Asian Indians, Pakistanis, and Hmong are more likely to have more males than females, while females outnumber males for the rest of the Asian national origin groups.

**TABLE 1.5**  
**Female proportion of the population, by race and nativity**

	Overall	Native born	Foreign born
White	51%	51%	51%
Hispanic or Latino	49%	50%	48%
Black	52%	52%	52%
Asian	53%	49%	54%
American Indian and Alaskan Native	50%	51%	45%
Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander	49%	49%	50%

Note: Data for all racial groups provided use the race alone measure, except where noted. Hispanics can be of any race.

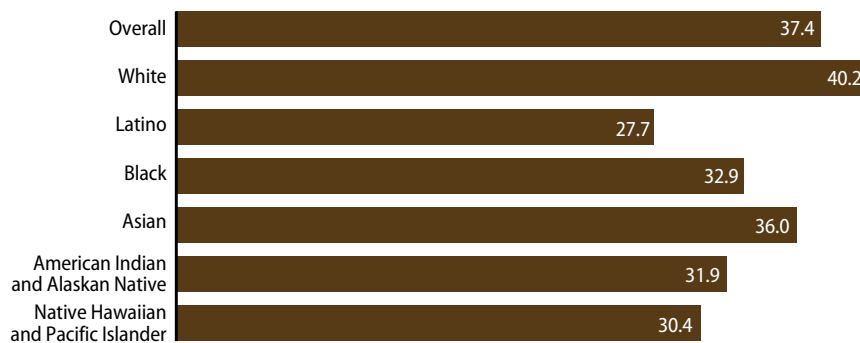
Source: Authors' analysis of Public Use Microdata Sample from Bureau of the Census, "American Community Survey 2008–2012 American Community Survey 5-year Estimates," available at [http://www.census.gov/acs/www/data\\_documentation/pums\\_data/](http://www.census.gov/acs/www/data_documentation/pums_data/) (last accessed March 2014).

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## Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders are younger than the national average

Asian Americans are slightly younger than the national average of 37.4 years, with a median age of 36. They are significantly younger than whites with a median age of 40.2; but they are older, on average, than Latinos, Pacific Islanders, and Latinos. However, immigration plays an important role here, as foreign-born Asian Americans tend to be much older—who have an average age of 43.1—than native-born Asian Americans—who have an average age of 21.5.<sup>19</sup> There are also important national-origin differences in the age structure of Asian Americans: Japanese Americans are among the oldest with an average age of 46.6 years and about 23 percent of the population ages 65 and over, followed by Filipinos with an average age of 38.5 and 12 percent of the population ages 65 and over.<sup>20</sup> By contrast, Hmong and Bangladeshis are the youngest, with average ages of 23.9 and 30.1, respectively, and with only 3 percent of their respective populations ages 65 and over. Still, the 65 and over population of Asian Americans is rapidly expanding, growing at a rate of 65 percent between 2000 and 2010, faster than the overall growth rate of 46 percent for Asian Americans.<sup>21</sup>

**FIGURE 1.3**  
**Median age by race**



Source: Bureau of the Census, "2012 1-Year American Community Survey Estimates: Tables B01002, B01002A-E and B01002I," available at <http://factfinder2.census.gov/faces/nav/jsf/pages/index.xhtml> (last accessed March 2014)

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## Asian Americans are the most religiously diverse racial group

Religious diversity is an important feature of the Asian American community. When compared to the national average, the Asian American community is more religiously diverse, with a greater proportion of Buddhists, Hindus, and Muslims than the U.S. average. Importantly, Asian Americans are also more likely to declare no religious affiliation, when compared to the U.S. average.

**TABLE 1.6**  
**Religious affiliation among Asian Americans**

	Asian American	Chinese	Filipino	Indian	Japanese	Korean	Vietnamese	U.S. average
Christian	<b>42</b>	31	89	18	38	71	36	<b>75</b>
- Protestant	<b>22</b>	22	21	11	33	61	6	<b>50</b>
- Roman Catholic	<b>19</b>	8	65	5	4	10	30	<b>23</b>
- Other Christian	<b>1</b>	*	3	2	1	*	*	<b>2</b>
Buddhist	<b>14</b>	15	1	1	25	6	43	<b>1</b>
Hindu	<b>10</b>	0	*	51	0	0	0	<b>*</b>
Jewish	<b>*</b>	*	1	*	*	0	0	<b>2</b>
Muslim	<b>4</b>	*	0	10	*	0	0	<b>1</b>
Unitarian Universalist	<b>*</b>	*	*	*	*	0	0	<b>*</b>
Sikh	<b>1</b>	0	0	5	0	0	0	<b>--</b>
Jain	<b>*</b>	0	0	2	0	0	0	<b>--</b>
Bahá'í Faith	<b>*</b>	*	0	*	0	*	0	<b>--</b>
Shinto	<b>*</b>	0	0	0	1	0	0	<b>--</b>
Confucian	<b>*</b>	*	0	0	0	0	0	<b>--</b>
Cao Dai	<b>*</b>	0	0	0	0	0	*	<b>--</b>
Other religion	<b>1</b>	1	2	1	2	*	*	<b>2</b>
Unaffiliated	<b>26</b>	52	8	10	32	23	20	<b>19</b>

Note: All numbers are percentages. The percentages greater than 0 but less than 0.5 percent are replaced by an asterisk (\*). Columns and rows may not total 100 percent due to rounding. Percentages for subgroups are not reported when the average is less than 100.

Source: Pew Research Center's Forum on Religion and Public Life, "Toplines by Country of Origin" (2012), available at <http://www.pewforum.org/files/2012/07/Asian-Americans-appendix-4-topline.pdf>.

## About 3 percent of AAPI adults identify as LGBT

The Census Bureau does not collect information on the sexual orientation of individuals. However, organizations such as the Williams Institute at University of California, Los Angeles, have arrived at estimates of the LGBT population by relying on survey data from organizations such as Gallup and information of same-sex adult households in the U.S. Census. Using these data sources, the Williams Institute estimates that about 2.8 percent of AAPI adults identify as LGBT, which accounted for 324,600 persons in 2010.<sup>22</sup> Furthermore, using data on same-sex adult households in the decennial Census, there were an estimated 33,000 AAPI individuals living in same-sex couples in the United States in 2010, and about 26 percent of these couples were raising children.

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- 8 See, for example, the enumeration of Chinese, Filipinos, Japanese, Koreans, and Hindus in the 1920 Census. Integrated Public Use Microdata Series, "1920 Census: Instructions to Enumerators, available at <https://usa.ipums.org/usa/voliii/inst1920.shtml> (last accessed March 2014).
- 9 Wong and others, *Asian American Political Participation*.
- 10 All of the groups mentioned in this report refer to people of Asian and Pacific Islander origin in the United States. When we refer to several groups in a series, we will add the term "Americans" at the end of the series, rather than in each instance.
- 11 Author's calculations based on data from the 2000 Census and Bureau of the Census, "Race Alone or in Combination for American Indian, Alaska Native, and for Selected Categories of Asian and of Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander: 2000," available at [http://factfinder2.census.gov/bkmk/table/1.0/en/DEC/00\\_SF1/QTP7](http://factfinder2.census.gov/bkmk/table/1.0/en/DEC/00_SF1/QTP7) (last accessed March 2014).
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# Immigration

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Asian Americans have the greatest proportion of immigrants of any U.S. racial group

Immigration is an issue that is particularly relevant to Asian Americans, especially considering that it is the racial group comprised of the greatest proportion of foreign-born residents in the United States. This pattern is due to changes in our nation's immigration policies over the past 150 years. The first set of national immigration control laws targeted the exclusion of migrants from China and other Asian countries, starting with the Chinese Exclusion Act in 1882 and continuing through the creation of the Immigration Act of 1917, also known as the Asiatic Barred Zone Act, and further restrictions in 1924.

This ensured that the Asian immigrant population in the United States would remain small relative to migration from Europe. In 1965, however, the United States eliminated its restrictive national origin quotas and adopted the current system that favors family reunification and employment-based preferences.<sup>1</sup> Consequently, the number of immigrants from Asia soared, contributing to an Asian American population that is still predominantly foreign born, as shown in Table 2.1. Looking at just the Asian population, about two-thirds of residents, or 66 percent, are foreign born, compared to 37 percent among Latinos; 16 percent among Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islanders, or NHPs; 8 percent among African Americans; and 8 percent among whites. Importantly, the nativity figures are slightly lower for the “Asian alone or in combination with other races” population because this larger population includes individuals who identify as multiracial, who are much more likely to be born in the United States than in Asia. Finally, the proportion of those who are foreign born is even higher when we look at the adult Asian American population, with immigrants accounting for nearly four in five adult residents, or 79 percent.

TABLE 2.1

**Proportion of foreign born as a proportion of residents, adults, and adult citizens**

Foreign-born population as a proportion of residents, adults, and adult citizens

	All residents	All adults	Adult citizens
White	8%	10%	5%
Hispanic	37%	52%	25%
African American	8%	11%	6%
Asian alone	66%	79%	69%
Asian alone or in combination	59%	74%	63%
American Indian	5%	7%	3%
Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander	16%	23%	12%

Source: Authors analysis of Public Use Microdata Sample from Bureau of the Census, "2008–2012 American Community Survey 5-year Estimates," available at [http://www.census.gov/acs/www/data\\_documentation/2012\\_release/](http://www.census.gov/acs/www/data_documentation/2012_release/) (last accessed March 2014).

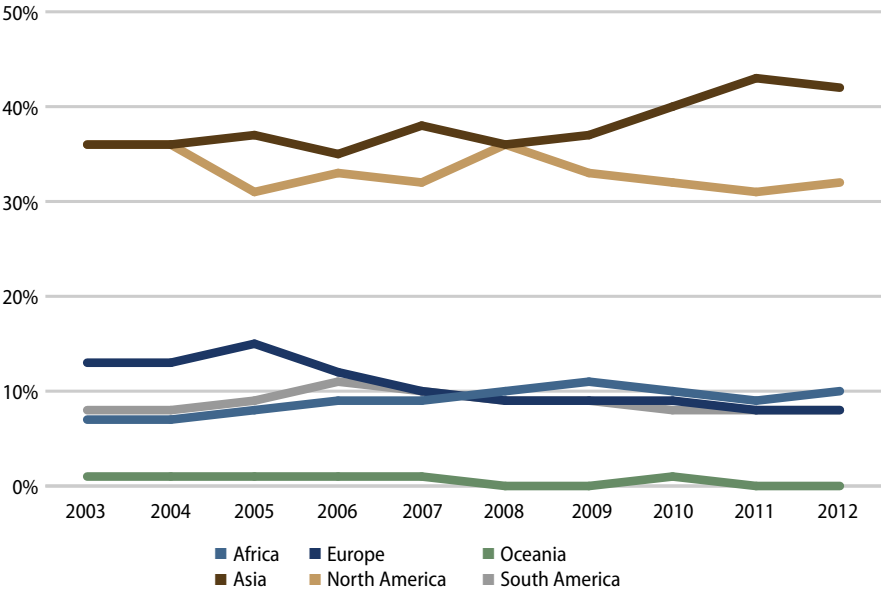
More immigrants now come from Asia than from any other region

An important development in the past decade is that there are more immigrants coming from Asia than from any other region in the world, including Latin America. This has not always been the case. Prior to 2007, the majority of foreign-born persons residing in the United States came from Latin America, but after 2008, this share fell to 41 percent.<sup>2</sup> On the other hand, the number of foreign-born people originally from Asian countries grew and eventually ballooned to more than 40 percent of the foreign-born population from 2008 onward, with Indian and Chinese immigrants accounting for an increasing share of the newly arrived, foreign-born residents. In fact, the composition of the foreign-born population who receive legal permanent resident status through green cards has also changed dramatically in recent years with the number of green card recipients from North America decreasing and recipients from Asia increasing. Figure 2.1 shows that beginning in 2010, a significant increase of the share of legal permanent resident admissions from Asian countries occurred from 37 percent in 2009 to 40 percent in 2010 to 43 percent in 2011.<sup>3</sup>

All of these data point to a consistent picture: Asian migration is getting more important, whether measured by the total population of foreign-born immigrants entering the country or specifically by legal permanent resident admissions. One big reason for the growing importance of Asian migration to the United States is the development of net-zero migration from Mexico in the past

several years due to changes in the U.S. economy, immigration enforcement, and changes in fertility and society in Mexico.<sup>4</sup> The growing importance of Asia is also attributable to migration from a handful of countries. In the past decade, China, India, and the Philippines have consistently ranked among the top five countries of origin among those obtaining lawful permanent resident, or LPR visas, which are also known colloquially as green cards. In 2012, the most recent year for which data are publicly available, about 146,000 green cards were issued to nationals from Mexico, followed by 82,000 from China, 66,000 from India, and 57,000 from the Philippines.<sup>5</sup>

**FIGURE 2.1**  
**Share of legal permanent resident admissions by region**



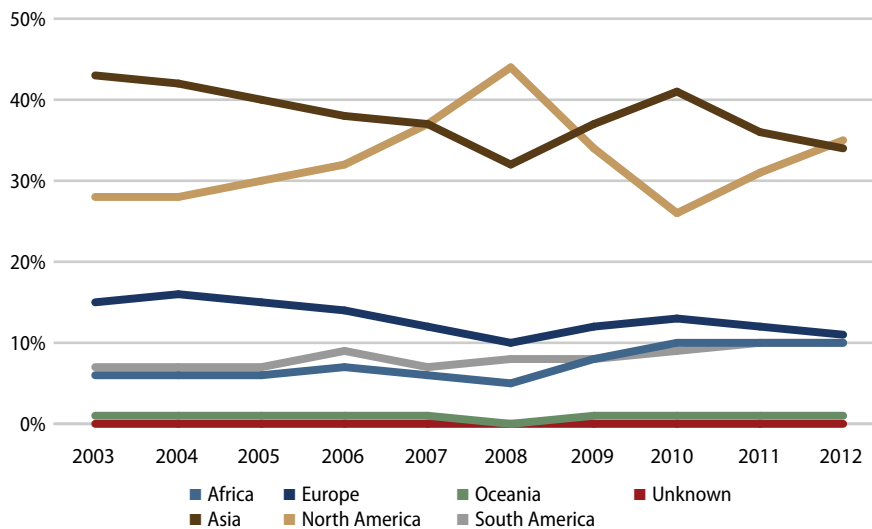
Source: U.S. Department of Homeland Security, "Yearbook of Immigration Statistics: 2012," available at <https://www.dhs.gov/yearbook-immigration-statistics-2012-legal-permanent-residents> (last accessed March 2014).

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## Naturalizations are highest among Asian immigrants in past decade

Along with the allocation of green cards for Asian immigrants, the share of naturalizations has also increased. In the past decade, naturalizations of Asian immigrants have outnumbered naturalizations of immigrants from North America every year, except for 2008 and 2012. During this time period, India, the Philippines, and China have consistently ranked among the top five countries of origin among those obtaining naturalization. In 2012, the most recent year for which public data are available, Mexico was the largest country of origin among those obtaining U.S. citizenship with 102,000 immigrants, followed by the Philippines with 45,000, India with 43,000, the Dominican Republic with 33,000, and China with 32,000.<sup>6</sup>

**FIGURE 2.2**  
**Share of naturalized citizens by region of birth**



Source: U.S. Department of Homeland Security, "Yearbook of Immigration Statistics: 2012," available at <https://www.dhs.gov/yearbook-immigration-statistics-2012-naturalizations> (last accessed March 2014).

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## Asian immigrants are among the quickest to naturalize

Another important aspect about naturalization is that Asian immigrants have consistently been among the fastest to naturalize. As Table 2.2 shows, the median years in legal permanent resident status for persons naturalized is also markedly different: Those from North American countries have waited a decade or more, while those from Asian countries have waited five to eight years.<sup>7</sup> There are a variety of factors that contribute to the speed at which a person is naturalized and may explain why many individuals from Asian countries are naturalizing almost twice as fast as those from North American countries. These factors include country of origin characteristics such as gross domestic product, or GDP; distance from the United States; and personal characteristics such as income and education.<sup>8</sup>

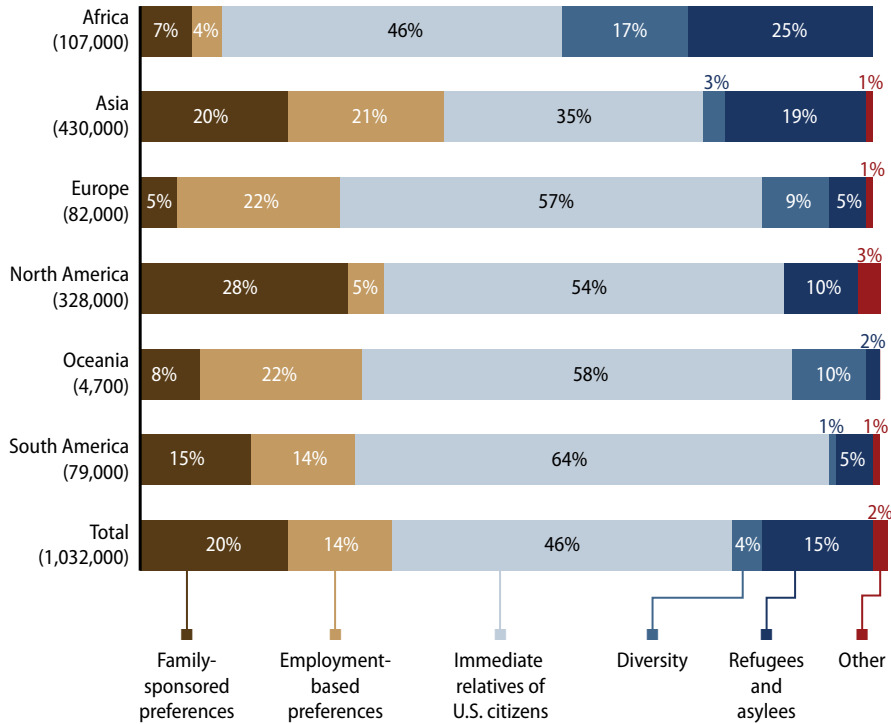
**TABLE 2.2**  
**Median years to naturalization by region of birth**

	2012	2010	2000	1990	1980
Total	7	6	9	8	8
Africa	5	5	7	7	7
Asia	6	5	8	7	7
Europe	7	6	7	10	10
North America	10	10	11	11	11
Oceania	8	7	11	10	8
South America	6	5	10	9	9

Source: James Lee, "Annual Flow Report—U.S. Naturalizations: 2012" (Washington: U.S. Department of Homeland Security, 2013), Table 7, available at [https://www.dhs.gov/sites/default/files/publications/ois\\_natz\\_fr\\_2012.pdf](https://www.dhs.gov/sites/default/files/publications/ois_natz_fr_2012.pdf).

The reasons for immigration to the United States have a large impact on the economic status of individuals once they arrive. Immigrants come to the United States for a myriad of reasons, including reuniting with their family, furthering their education, accepting employment, making investments, and escaping oppressive home countries. The largest share of Asian immigrants arrive in the United States on family-sponsored visas for immediate relatives of U.S. citizens. In fiscal year 2012, 35 percent of green cards issued to Asian immigrants were immediate relatives of U.S. citizens, and an additional 20 percent were issued to those who arrived on other family-sponsored preferences. As figure 2.3 indicates, this compares to 21 percent who arrived on employment-based preferences and 19 percent as refugees and asylees.

**FIGURE 2.3**  
**People obtaining legal permanent resident status**  
**by broad class of admission and region of birth**



Note: Totals from each region in 2012 in parentheses.  
 Source: U.S. Department of Homeland Security, "Yearbook of Immigration Statistics: 2012," available at <https://www.dhs.gov/yearbook-immigration-statistics-2012-legal-permanent-residents> (last accessed March 2014).

Notably, the proportion of Asian immigrants attaining legal permanent status through employment-based preferences, tallying in at 21 percent, is significantly higher than the average of 14 percent for all countries of origin.<sup>9</sup> Also notable is the total number of employment-based visas issued to immigrants from Asia, which account for 64 percent of all such cases, compared to 13 percent for Europe, 12 percent for North America, and 8 percent for South America.<sup>10</sup>

While education, employment, and wealth have brought many middle- and upper-class Asian immigrants to the United States, there is another important component to the Asian immigration story that is to the contrary. A significant share of Asian immigrants come to the United States as refugees. More than 47 percent of the 582,000 refugee arrivals in the United States between 2001 and 2010 were born in Asian countries—with large shares from Burma, Bhutan, and Vietnam.<sup>11</sup> Furthermore, during that same time period, 43.2 percent of asylum

grantees in the United States were from Asian countries—more than half of whom were Chinese nationals.<sup>12</sup> Refugees often have little wealth and education upon arrival in the United States, and they provide an important counterpoint in our understanding of educational attainment and income from those arriving on employment-based preferences.

Another important dimension of the visa process for Asian Americans is the long backlogs that many individuals face in sponsoring their family members to come to the United States. This is because the Immigration and Nationality Act does not permit any country to have more than 7 percent of the annual visas issued, which means a cap of about 26,000 visas in 2014.<sup>13</sup> As a consequence, applicants from countries with the most family visa applications, such as Mexico, the Philippines, and India, have to wait many years before being reunited with their families. Indeed, the longest wait times are for those in the Philippines who are brothers or sisters of adult U.S. citizens: They have to wait more than 23 years before being issued a green card.<sup>14</sup> Overall, Asian countries account for 42 percent of the estimated 4.2 million individuals waiting abroad due to backlogs in issuing of family visas,<sup>15</sup> and Asian countries constitute four of the top five countries of origin in the backlog—the Philippines, India, Vietnam, and China—with backlogs ranging from about 225,000 to 400,000 for each country, as Table 2.3 indicates. There is a much smaller number of individuals waiting on employer-based visas—112,000—and Asian countries account for 84 percent of this backlog.

**TABLE 2.3**  
**Countries with the longest waiting lists for family visas**

Country	Number	Share of Total
Mexico	1,308,761.00	31%
Philippines	401,880	10%
India	295,167	7%
Vietnam	255,202	6%
China	224,598	5%
Dominican Republic	175,227	4%
Bangladesh	162,527	4%
Pakistan	110,968	3%
Other Asian countries	310,769	7%
Other countries	965,872	23%
<b>Total</b>	<b>4,210,971</b>	

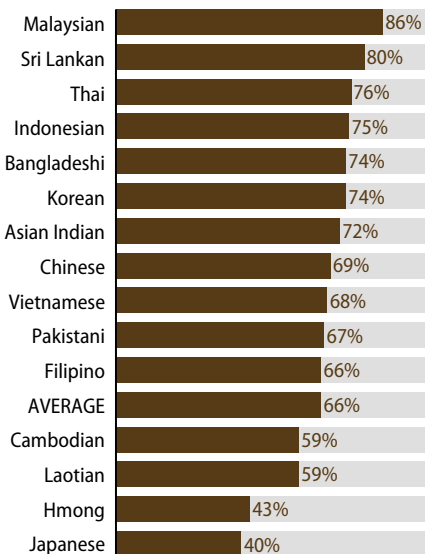
Source: Bureau of Consular Affairs, *Annual Report of Immigrant Visa Applicants in the Family-sponsored and Employment-based preferences Registered at the National Visa Center as of November 1, 2013* (U.S. Department of State, 2013), available at <http://travel.state.gov/content/dam/visas/Statistics/Immigrant-Statistics/WaitingListItem.pdf>.



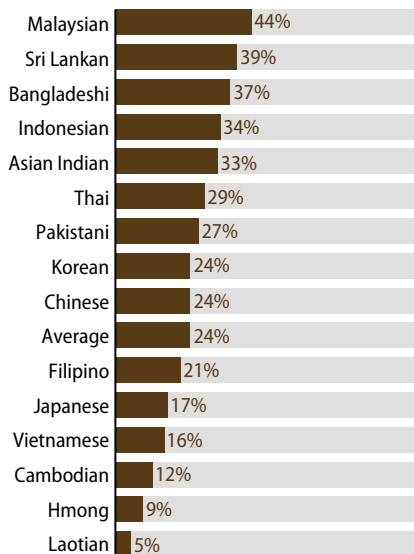
## National origin is an important indicator of immigration

While the vast majority of Asian Americans are foreign born, there are significant variations across national origins as to the share of foreign born versus native born. Japanese Americans, for example, have the smallest immigrant share of any Asian origin group due to several factors, including the fact that this population has the oldest age structure and has the most established, multigenerational settlement pattern in the United States. Additionally, migration flows from Japan have been comparatively small in recent years. Similarly, the Hmong and Laotians have not had as much recent migration since their earlier refugee waves in the 1970s. And by contrast, South and Southeast Asian groups—Malaysian, Sri Lankan, Thai, Indonesian, and Bangladeshi—are among the most heavily foreign born, as Figure 2.4a illustrates. Indeed, immigrants who have come to the United States since 2000 account for a third or more of all Malaysian, Sri Lankan, Bangladeshi, Indonesian, and Indian Americans currently living in the United States and more than a quarter of all Pakistani and Thai residents, as shown in Figure 2.4b. Thus, we see significant variation in the extent to which immigration affects different Asian American nationalities, whether we measure differences by nativity or by recentness of migration.

**FIGURE 2.4a**  
Proportion of residents who are foreign born



**FIGURE 2.4b**  
Proportion of residents who are immigrants arriving within the past 10 years



Source: Authors analysis of Public Use Microdata Sample from Bureau of the Census, "2008–2012 American Community Survey 5-year Estimates," available at [http://www.census.gov/acs/www/data\\_documentation/2012\\_release/](http://www.census.gov/acs/www/data_documentation/2012_release/) (last accessed March 2014).

The undocumented Asian immigrant population is growing, particularly for Indian immigrants

Finally, the issue of unauthorized immigration is significant for Asian Americans as an estimated 1.3 million of the unauthorized population in 2011 were from Asian countries.<sup>16</sup> These constitute about one out of every nine of the unauthorized population in the United States, which totaled 11.5 million in 2011, and about 12 percent of the total Asian immigrant population of 10 million in 2011.<sup>17</sup> As Table 2.4 indicates, the U.S. Department of Homeland Security estimates that about a quarter of a million each are from China, the Philippines, India, and the Koreas, and an additional 170,000 are from Vietnam. All of these groups have grown since 2000, with immigrants from India accounting for the fastest growth among the Asian unauthorized immigrant population.

**TABLE 2.4**  
**Country of birth for the unauthorized population**

	2011	2000	2000–2011 percent change
Total	11,510,000	8,460,000	36
Mexico	6,800,000	4,680,000	45
El Salvador	660,000	430,000	55
Guatemala	520,000	290,000	82
Honduras	380,000	160,000	132
China	280,000	190,000	43
Philippines	270,000	200,000	35
India	240,000	120,000	94
Korea	230,000	180,000	31
Ecuador	210,000	110,000	83
Vietnam	170,000	160,000	10
Other countries	1,750,000	1,940,000	-10

Source: Michael Hoefer, Nancy Rytina, and Bryan C. Baker, "Estimates of the Unauthorized Immigrant Population Residing in the United States: January 2011" (Washington: U.S. Department of Homeland Security, 2012), available at [https://www.dhs.gov/sites/default/files/publications/ois\\_ill\\_pe\\_2011.pdf](https://www.dhs.gov/sites/default/files/publications/ois_ill_pe_2011.pdf).

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Janelle Wong and others, *Asian American Political Participation: Emerging Constituents and Their Political Identities* (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 2011).

U.S. Department of Homeland Security, “Yearbook of Immigration Statistics,” available at <https://www.dhs.gov/yearbook-immigration-statistics-2012-legal-permanent-residents> (last accessed April 2014).

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## Endnotes

- 1 These restrictions started to be loosened during World War II and its immediate aftermath; the Magnuson Act of 1943, sometimes known as the Chinese Exclusion Repeal Act, allowed for a very limited flow of immigration from China—as many as 105 people per year—and the Luce-Celler Act of 1946 permitted as many as 100 Filipino and Indian immigrants to migrate every year. For the first time, both of these laws also allowed the relevant Asian, foreign-born populations to naturalize. See Mae M. Ngai, *Impossible Subjects: Illegal Aliens and the Making of Modern America* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2004).
- 2 Nathan P. Walters and Edward N. Trevelyan, “The Newly Arrived Foreign-Born Population of the United States: 2010” (Washington: Bureau of the Census, 2011), available at <http://www.census.gov/prod/2011pubs/acbr10-16.pdf>.
- 3 Office of Immigration Statistics, *Table 3: Persons Obtaining Legal Permanent Resident Status by Region and Country of Birth: Fiscal Years 2003 to 2012* (U.S. Department of Homeland Security, 2012), available at <https://www.dhs.gov/sites/default/files/publications/immigration-statistics/yearbook/2012/LPR/table3d.xls>.
- 4 Jeffrey S. Passel, D’vera Cohn, and Ana Gonzalez-Barre-ra, “Net Migration from Mexico Falls to Zero—and Perhaps Less” (Washington: Pew Research Center, 2012), available at <http://www.pewhispanic.org/2012/04/23/net-migration-from-mexico-falls-to-zero-and-perhaps-less/>.
- 5 U.S. Department of Homeland Security, *2012 Yearbook of Immigration Statistics*, Table 3. Personals Obtaining Legal Permanent Resident by Region and Country of Birth: Fiscal Years 2003 to 2012, available at <https://www.dhs.gov/yearbook-immigration-statistics-2012-legal-permanent-residents>
- 6 James Lee, “U.S. Naturalizations: 2012” (Washington: U.S. Department of Homeland Security, 2013), available at [https://www.dhs.gov/sites/default/files/publications/ois\\_nat\\_fr\\_2012.pdf](https://www.dhs.gov/sites/default/files/publications/ois_nat_fr_2012.pdf).
- 7 Lee, “U.S. Naturalizations: 2012.”
- 8 Garnet Pico and Feng Hou, “Analytical Studies Branch Research Paper Series: Divergent Trends in Citizenship Rates among Immigrants in Canada and the United States” (Ottawa, Canada: Statistics Canada, 2011), available at <http://www.statcan.gc.ca/pub/11f0019m/11f0019m2011338-eng.pdf>.
- 9 U.S. Department of Homeland Security, “Yearbook of Immigration Statistics: 2012,” available at <https://www.dhs.gov/yearbook-immigration-statistics-2012-legal-permanent-residents> (last accessed March 2014).
- 10 Author’s calculations based on *ibid.*
- 11 Jeanne Batalova, “Asian Immigrants in the United States,” Migration Policy Institute, May 24, 2011, available at <http://www.migrationinformation.org/USfocus/display.cfm?ID=841>; In 2011 and 2012, Asian countries accounted for more than half of refugee admissions, even after excluding countries in the Middle East and Central Asia, which have populations that are not traditionally seen as Asian American. See Office of Immigration Statistics, *Table 14, Refugee Arrivals by Region and Country of Nationality: Fiscal Years 2003 to 2012* (U.S. Department of Homeland Security, 2012), available at <https://www.dhs.gov/sites/default/files/publications/immigration-statistics/yearbook/2012/RFA/table14d.xls>.
- 12 Batalova, “Asian Immigrants in the United States.”
- 13 Bureau of Consular Affairs, *Annual Report of Immigrant Visa Applicants in the Family-sponsored and Employment-based preferences Registered at the National Visa Center as of November 1, 2013* (U.S. Department of State, 2013), available at <http://travel.state.gov/content/dam/visas/Statistics/Immigrant-Statistics/WaitingListItem.pdf>.
- 14 U.S. Department of State, “Immigrant Numbers for March 2014,” *Visa Bulletin* 66 (9) (2014): p. 1–8, available at [http://travel.state.gov/content/dam/visas/Bulletins/visabulletin\\_march2014.pdf](http://travel.state.gov/content/dam/visas/Bulletins/visabulletin_march2014.pdf).
- 15 Bureau of Consular Affairs, *Annual Report of Immigrant Visa Applicants in the Family-sponsored and Employment-based preferences Registered at the National Visa Center as of November 1, 2013*.
- 16 Michael Hoefer, Nancy Rytina, and Bryan C. Baker, “Estimates of the Unauthorized Immigrant Population Residing in the United States: January 2011” (U.S. Department of Homeland Security, 2012), available at [https://www.dhs.gov/sites/default/files/publications/ois\\_ill\\_pe\\_2011.pdf](https://www.dhs.gov/sites/default/files/publications/ois_ill_pe_2011.pdf).
- 17 *Ibid.*

# Language Diversity and English Proficiency

An important feature of Asian American and Pacific Islander, or AAPI, communities is their language diversity and variations in their levels of English proficiency across groups. English proficiency is important because it is significantly related to outcomes such as earnings, occupational mobility, quality of health care, and the ability to participate in civic and political life.<sup>1</sup>

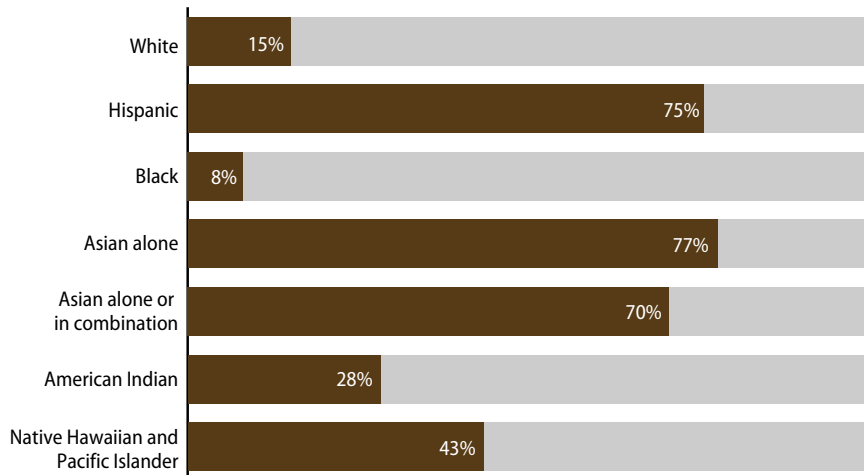
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## Linguistic diversity is a key feature of Asian American and Pacific Islander communities

Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders have significant national origin or ethnic group diversity, and this is also reflected in the linguistic diversity of these populations. The Asian American population in the United States has the highest proportion of residents who speak a language other than English at home. This proportion is somewhat higher among the Asian alone population, at 77 percent, than among the population that is Asian “alone or in combination with other races,” where it makes up 70 percent. By comparison, 75 percent of Latinos speak a non-English language at home, as do 43 percent of Native Hawaiians and Pacific Islanders, or NHPs, and 28 percent of American Indians and Alaskan Natives (see Figure 3.1).

Looking at the specific languages spoken at home among Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders, we see that Chinese is by far the most common language spoken at home, with more than 2.7 million speakers, followed by about 1.6 million Tagalog speakers, 1.4 million Vietnamese speakers, and 1.1 million Korean speakers (see Table 3.1). The linguistic diversity of South Asian immigrants is also evident in the language data, as there are about 638,000 Hindi speakers and a range of 231,000 to 377,000 speakers each of Bengali, Telugu, Panjabi, Gujarati, and Urdu. Finally, there are many other Asian languages spoken at home with more than 100,000 speakers each. By contrast, Spanish is by far the most dominant language for Latinos, accounting for 99 percent of the population that speaks a language other than English at home.<sup>2</sup>

**FIGURE 3.1**  
**Percent who speak a language other than English at home**



Note: Among ages 5 and older.  
 Source: Authors' analysis of Public Use Microdata Sample from Bureau of the Census, "American Community Survey 2008-2012 American Community Survey 5-year Estimates," available at [http://www.census.gov/acs/www/data\\_documentation/pums\\_data/](http://www.census.gov/acs/www/data_documentation/pums_data/) (last accessed May 2014).

**TABLE 3.1**  
**Prevalence of Asian languages spoken at home**

Chinese*	2,720,325	Formosan	77,630
Tagalog	1,599,040	Other Indian	69,733
Vietnamese	1,367,910	Marathi	69,732
Korean	1,130,727	Indonesian	65,700
Hindi	638,307	Samoan	63,861
Japanese	449,309	Burmese	55,068
Urdu	377,153	Kannada	46,261
Gujarati	368,925	Tongan	28,823
Panjabi	255,280	Bisayan	28,226
Telugu	235,307	Sinhalese	26,281
Bengali	231,468	Hawaiian	25,408
Hmong	217,921	Chamorro	19,975
Mon-Khmer, Cambodian	205,761	Mien	17,268
Tamil	177,345	Other Pakistani	15,269
Thai	155,242	Sebuano	14,770
Laotian	150,600	Malay	12,396
Malayalam	137,679	Other Indo-European languages	52,621
Ilocano	88,769	Other Asian languages	69,607
Nepali	78,360	Other Pacific Island languages	61,996

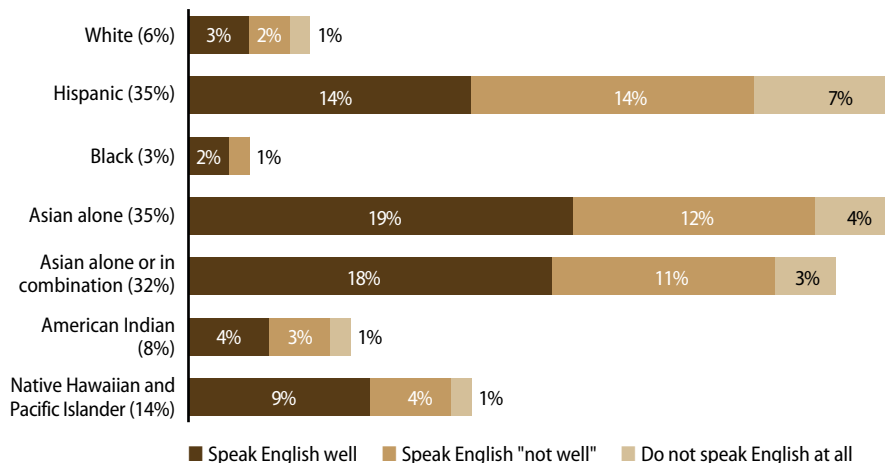
Note: Among ages 5 and older. \*Of the 2.7 million Chinese speakers, about 472,000 and 454,000 specified Mandarin and Cantonese, respectively.  
 Source: Authors' analysis of Public Use Microdata Sample from Bureau of the Census, "American Community Survey 2008-2012 American Community Survey 5-year Estimates," available at [http://www.census.gov/acs/www/data\\_documentation/pums\\_data/](http://www.census.gov/acs/www/data_documentation/pums_data/) (last accessed May 2014).

## Asian Americans are among the most likely to be limited English proficient

In addition to having a population with significant language diversity, the problem of limited English proficiency is significant for Asian Americans and, to a lesser extent, Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islanders, or NHPIs. The Census Bureau defines limited English proficiency, or LEP, as those who speak a language other than English at home and who speak English “less than very well.”<sup>3</sup> Using this definition, we see that, at 35 percent, the Asian alone population has the highest rates of limited English proficiency—with 4 percent not speaking English at all, 12 percent speaking English “not well,” and 19 percent only speaking English “well” but short of “very well.” The overall LEP figures among Asian Americans are on par with LEP rates among Latinos (see Figure 3.2).

Not surprisingly, nativity bears a strong relationship to English proficiency, as only 9 percent of the native-born “Asian alone” population is LEP, while the comparable figure for the foreign-born “Asian alone” population is 47 percent. There are some significant gender differences as well: At 48 percent, LEP rates are slightly higher among first-generation immigrant women than among first-generation men, who have a rate of 45 percent.

**FIGURE 3.2**  
**Limited English Proficient (LEP) population by English-speaking ability**

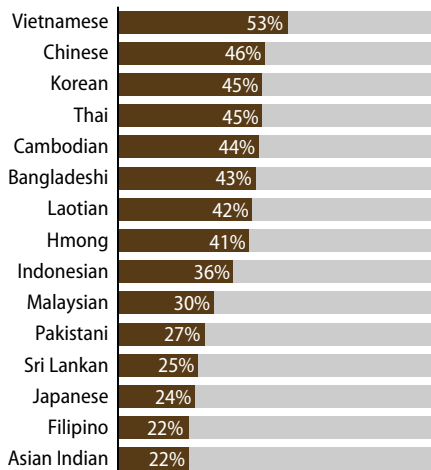


Note: Among ages 5 and older. Figures add up to the total limited English proficient population (those who speak English less than “very well”).  
Source: Authors’ analysis of Public Use Microdata Sample from Bureau of the Census, “American Community Survey 2008-2012 American Community Survey 5-year Estimates,” available at [http://www.census.gov/acs/www/data\\_documentation/pums\\_data/](http://www.census.gov/acs/www/data_documentation/pums_data/) (last accessed May 2014).

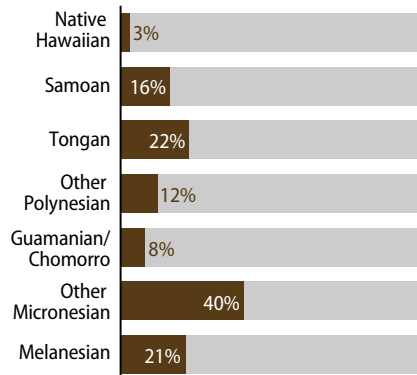
English proficiency varies widely by national origin, reflecting variations in Asian colonial histories

Significant differences in English proficiency exist between Asian subpopulations. Twenty-two percent of Indian Americans have limited English proficiency compared to 53 percent of Vietnamese Americans (see Figure 3.3a). Factors that influence these differences include the share of each group that is foreign born, the legacies of British or American colonialism in the home country, average levels of educational attainment for the group, and reasons for migration to the United States, such as arriving for highly skilled employment or as a refugee.<sup>4</sup> For example, a large proportion of Vietnamese Americans are foreign-born refugees with relatively low levels of educational attainment. Compare this to the 72 percent of Indian Americans who have a bachelor’s degree or higher—many of whom came to the United States on employment-based visas and from a country with English as a fairly common language among the upper middle class.<sup>5</sup>

**FIGURE 3.3a**  
Group differences in limited English proficiency (Asian American)



**FIGURE 3.3b**  
Group differences in limited English proficiency (Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander)



Note: Data are provided for those identifying with one national origin group and ages 5 and older.  
Source: Authors analysis of Public Use Microdata Sample from Bureau of the Census, "American Community Survey 2008-2012 American Community Survey 5-year Estimates," available at [http://www.census.gov/acs/www/data\\_documentation/pums\\_data/](http://www.census.gov/acs/www/data_documentation/pums_data/) (last accessed May 2014).



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## About one in five Asian American households is linguistically isolated

In addition to English proficiency at the individual level, the Census Bureau also measures the extent to which households are linguistically isolated, which means that there is no one in the household who is 14 years or older who speaks English exclusively or “very well.” As we can see from Table 3.2, about one in every five Asian American households is linguistically isolated. This proportion is similar to the linguistic isolation among Hispanic or Latino households, and considerably higher than the proportion of NHPI households, at 6 percent, and white households at 4 percent.

**TABLE 3.2**  
**Proportion of households that are linguistically isolated**

White	4%
Hispanic	21%
Black	2%
Asian alone	20%
Asian alone or in combination	18%
American Indian	4%
Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander	6%

Source: Authors' analysis of Public Use Microdata Sample from Bureau of the Census, "American Community Survey 2008-2012 American Community Survey 5-year Estimates," available at [http://www.census.gov/acs/www/data\\_documentation/pums\\_data/](http://www.census.gov/acs/www/data_documentation/pums_data/) (last accessed May 2014).

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## Linguistic isolation of households vary widely by national origin

Similar to English proficiency, there are significant differences across national origins when it comes to the prevalence of households that are linguistically isolated. Vietnamese American households have the highest rate of linguistic isolation, at 34 percent, followed by Chinese, Korean, and Bangladeshi Americans. For all of these groups, at least one in four households is linguistically isolated. On the other hand, Filipinos, Asian Indians, and Pakistanis have relatively low rates of linguistic isolation, accounting for about 1 in 10 households. Finally, among NHPI groups, linguistic isolation is highest among Micronesians (27 percent for those who are not Guamanian/Chomorro) and household linguistic isolation is lowest among the Native Hawaiian population.

TABLE 3.3

Proportion of households that are linguistically isolated by subgroup

Vietnamese	34%	Pakistani	11%
Chinese	30%	Asian Indian	10%
Korean	29%	Filipino	8%
Bangladeshi	25%		
Thai	24%	Native Hawaiian	1%
Indonesian	21%	Samoan	5%
Malaysian	21%	Tongan	4%
Hmong	19%	Other Polynesian	7%
Laotian	19%	Guamanian/Chomorro	3%
Cambodian	18%	Other Micronesian	27%
Sri Lankan	16%	Melanesian	8%
Japanese	15%		

Source: Authors analysis of Public Use Microdata Sample from Bureau of the Census, "American Community Survey 2008-2012 American Community Survey 5-year Estimates," available at [http://www.census.gov/acs/www/data\\_documentation/pums\\_data/](http://www.census.gov/acs/www/data_documentation/pums_data/) (last accessed May 2014).

Many jurisdictions do not adequately provide ballot language assistance despite legal requirements

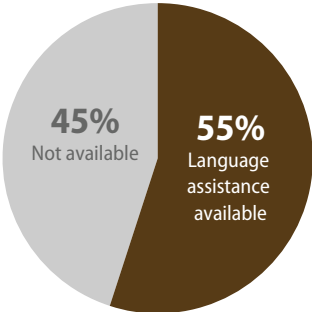
Given the proportion of the AAPI population with limited English proficiency, access to ballot language assistance is an important issue for effective civic participation. In several jurisdictions, Section 203 of the Voting Rights Act requires the provision of language assistance during the voting process. Whether a jurisdiction must do so is determined by a formula that requires the size of the relevant language group is at least 10,000 residents, or 5 percent of the population, and also requires that the group's illiteracy rate is higher than the national average.<sup>6</sup>

Prior to 2010, Section 203 jurisdictions were determined using data from the decennial census. However, in 2010, the census was redesigned to no longer contain a "long form" with data on language use, prompting the federal government to rely on 5-year American Community Survey files to revise the list of covered jurisdictions. As of 2011, there are 22 jurisdictions in the United States that are covered for Asian languages under Section 203, nearly all of which are counties. A total of nine Asian ethnic groups are covered: Asian Indian; Bangladeshi; Cambodian; Chinese; Filipino; Japanese; Korean; Thai; and Vietnamese.<sup>7</sup>

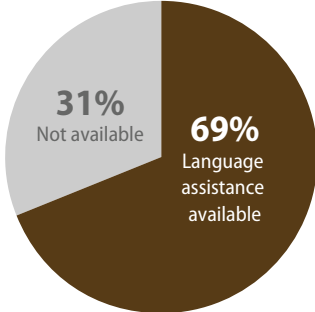
At the same time, data from the 2012 AAPI Post-Election Survey indicate that Asian American voters found the language assistance to be limited in jurisdictions that were mandated to provide them. As we can see from Figure 3.4, among those who voted in person only 55 percent of survey respondents living in covered jurisdictions said that “translated election documents or bilingual election workers” were available at the polls. At 69 percent, the proportion reporting adequate language assistance was higher among those who voted by mail but still fell short of the assistance required by law.

**FIGURE 3.4**  
**Access to language assistance among limited English proficient voters in Section 203 jurisdictions**

Voted in person



Voted by mail



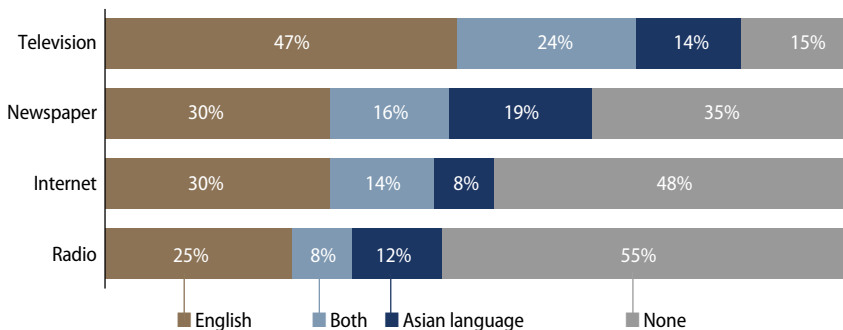
Source: Asian American Justice Center, Asian and Pacific Islander American Vote, and National Asian American Survey, “Behind the Numbers: Post-Election Survey of Asian American and Pacific Islander Voters in 2012” (2013), available at <http://naasurvey.com/reports/aapipes-2012.html>.

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## Asian-language news sources are vital to Asian Americans, especially those with limited English proficiency

Asian-language news sources play an important role in how Asian Americans are informed about politics and policy. In the 2008 National Asian American Survey, or NAAS, respondents were asked if they rely on particular types of sources for political information, and subsequently whether those sources were in English, an Asian language, or both. The results reveal that 38 percent of Asian Americans get information from Asian-language television, with 14 percent exclusively getting news from Asian-language television; 35 percent stay informed through Asian language newspapers, with 19 percent doing so exclusively; 22 percent from Asian-language Internet sources; and 20 percent from Asian-language radio. Among the six largest Asian groups, overall ethnic media consumption in the 2008 NAAS was highest among Vietnamese, at 69 percent, Korean, at 65 percent, and Chinese, at 65 percent—all are groups with low rates of English proficiency. Ethnic media consumption was lowest among groups with high rates of English proficiency, including, Asian Indians, at 16 percent, Filipinos, at 25 percent, and Japanese Americans, at 31 percent.

**FIGURE 3.5**  
**Where Asian Americans get their political news**



Source: Authors' analysis of Karthick Ramakrishnan, Jane Junn, Taeku Lee, and Janelle Wong, "National Asian American Survey, 2008" (Ann Arbor, MI: Resource Center for Minority Data, 2011), available at <http://www.icpsr.umich.edu/icpsrweb/ICPSR/studies/31481>.

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- 4 Karthick Ramakrishnan and Farah Z. Ahmad, "Immigration" (2014), available at <http://ampr.gs/AAPLeports2014>.
- 5 See Karthick Ramakrishnan and Farah Z. Ahmad, "Education" (2014), Table 4.2a: Educational attainment by Asian national origin, available at <http://ampr.gs/AAPLeports2014>; Saritha Rai, "India's New 'English Only' Generation," *The New York Times*, June 1, 2012, available at <http://india.blogs.nytimes.com/2012/06/01/indias-new-english-only-generation/>.
- 6 28 C.F.R. § 55.6, available at <http://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/CFR-2013-title28-vol2/xml/CFR-2013-title28-vol2-sec55-6.xml>.
- 7 Two of these language groups (Cambodian and Thai) have been added by the County of Los Angeles, California, to meet the Section 203 requirement of covering additional unspecified Asian language groups, based on data from the 2005–2009 American Community Survey 5-year Estimate. See Asian Americans Advancing Justice, "Voices of Democracy" (2013) and Asian American Center for Advancing Justice, "Help Asian Americans Protect their Voting Rights" (2012).

# Education

Asian American and Pacific Islanders are an increasing share of students today and in the future

As the United States undergoes large demographic shifts and becomes increasingly diverse, so too will its student population. The face of the nation is already changing: The majority of babies born today are babies of color, and before the end of this decade, the majority of all youth will be children of color.<sup>1</sup> Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders, or AAPI, youth have been a major contributor to this shift for decades and will continue to be. In fact, AAPI enrollment in K-12, has already undergone significant changes; for example, K-12 AAPI enrollment from 1979 to 2009 grew fourfold and is expected to grow another 31 percent by 2019—just short of the growth rate of Latinos at 36 percent.<sup>2</sup> As Table 4.1a shows below, the share of AAPI enrollment in K-12 public schools is projected to increase to 6 percent of all enrollees, compared to its 4 percent share in 1995. While this percentage may not seem significant, it is important to the education sector in the long run as college enrollment of AAPIs is projected to increase to 1.4 million students—nearly twice the amount of AAPI students enrolled in college in 1995, as indicated in Table 4.1b.

**TABLE 4.1a**  
Asian American and Pacific Islander enrollment in K-12 public schools

	Number	Share
1995	1,668,000	4%
2000	1,949,000	4%
2005	2,278,000	5%
2010	2,467,000	5%
2015*	2,678,000	5%
2020*	2,922,000	6%

**TABLE 4.1b**  
Asian American and Pacific Islander enrollment in colleges and universities

	Number	Share
1995	797,000	2%
2000	978,000	2%
2005	1,134,000	2%
2010	1,303,000	3%
2015*	1,337,000	3%
2020*	1,400,000	3%

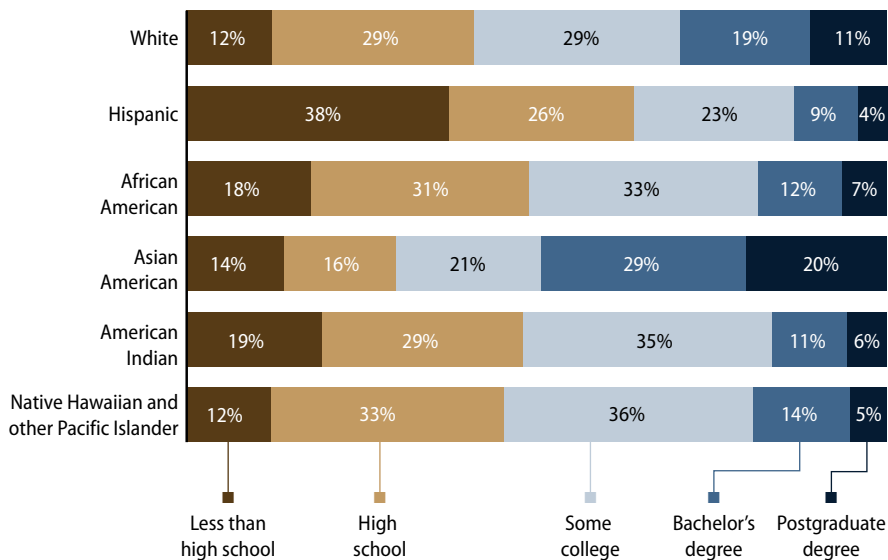
Note: Figures with \* are projections.

Source: William J. Hussar and Tabitha M. Bailey, "Projections of Education Statistics to 2022" (Washington: National Center for Education Statistics, 2014), available at <http://nces.ed.gov/pubs2014/2014051.pdf>.

## High average levels of education among Asian Americans mask important subgroup differences

Figure 4.1 illustrates that 49 percent of Asian Americans currently have a bachelor's degree or higher, compared to 30 percent among whites; 19 percent of African Americans; and 19 percent of Native Hawaiians and other Pacific Islanders, or NHPIs; 17 percent among American Indians and Alaskan Natives, or AIAN; and 13 percent among Latinos. Racial differences in educational attainment are particularly pronounced among those with postgraduate degrees. These account for 20 percent of the Asian American population, 11 percent of whites, 7 percent of African Americans, 5 percent of NHPIs, and 4 percent of Latinos. The proportion of Asian Americans and NHPIs with less than a high-school education is also lower than the rates for African Americans and Latinos.

**FIGURE 4.1**  
Educational attainment by race, for ages 25 and older



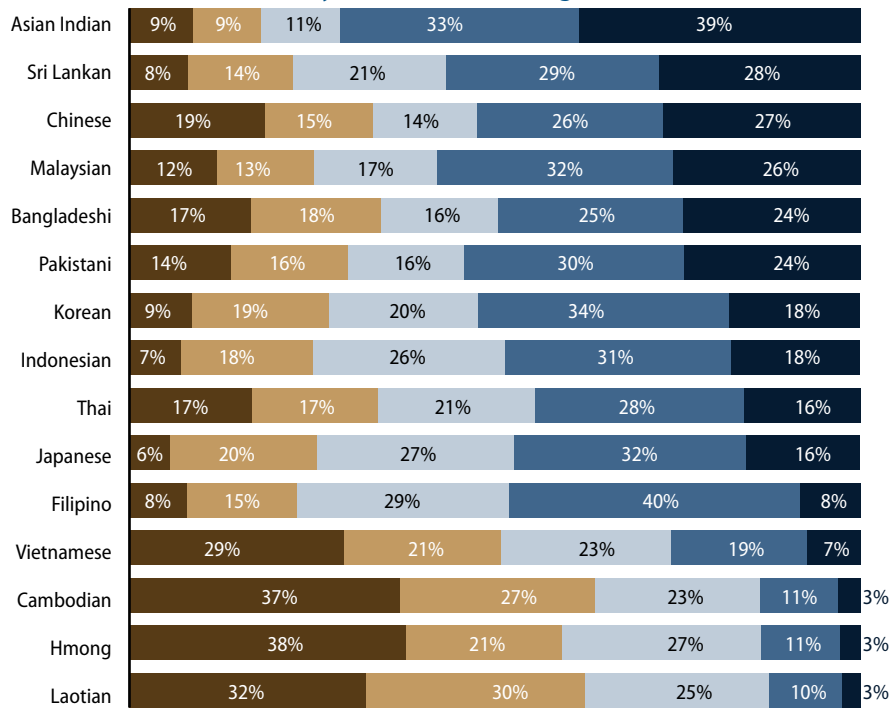
Source: Authors analysis of Public Use Microdata Sample from Bureau of the Census, "2008–2012 American Community Survey 5-year Estimates," available at [http://www.census.gov/acs/www/data\\_documentation/2012\\_release/](http://www.census.gov/acs/www/data_documentation/2012_release/) (last accessed March 2014).



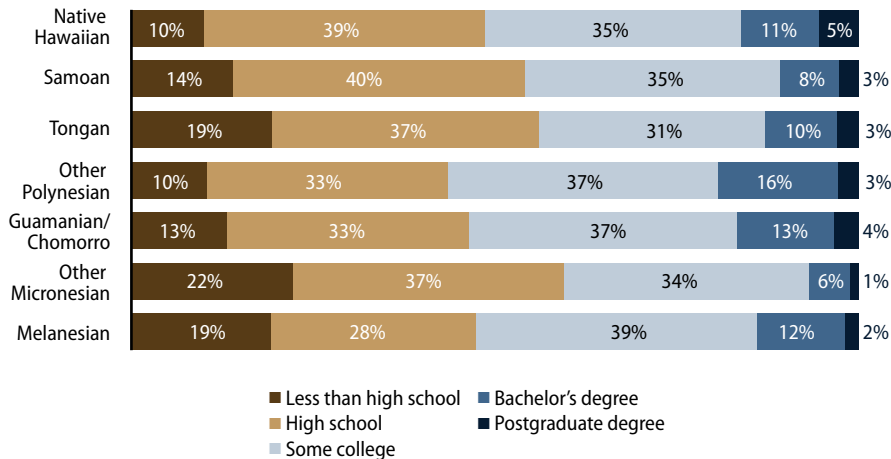
At the same time, the high level of educational attainment among Asian Americans masks significant differences across national origin groups. Among Asian Americans, Southeast Asian refugee populations tend to have the lowest levels of educational attainment, while national origin groups with a high proportion of employment-based visas tend to have the highest levels of educational attainment. Thus, for example, fewer than 15 percent of Cambodians, Hmong, and Laotians have a bachelor's degree or higher compared to 72 percent of Asian Indians, 57 percent of Sri Lankans, and 53 percent of Chinese Americans.

The selectivity of these Asian migration streams is further highlighted by the fact that the educational attainment of Indian and Chinese immigrants in the United States is considerably higher than the average rates of educational attainment in their countries of origin.<sup>3</sup> Finally, among NHPs, there are smaller yet still significant differences in educational attainment across subgroups. Tongans and Samoans have a lower proportion of adults who have completed high school, while Guamanians/Chamorros and Native Hawaiians have the highest proportion of adults with a bachelor's degree or higher—17 percent and 16 percent, respectively.

**FIGURE 4.2a**  
**Educational attainment by Asian national origin**



**FIGURE 4.2b**  
**Educational attainment by Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander subgroup**



Source: Authors analysis of Public Use Microdata Sample from Bureau of the Census, "2008–2012 American Community Survey 5-year Estimates," available at [http://www.census.gov/acs/www/data\\_documentation/2012\\_release/](http://www.census.gov/acs/www/data_documentation/2012_release/) (last accessed March 2014).

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## Gender differences in educational attainment vary by nativity

Educational differences among Asian Americans are also apparent by gender. Among first-generation immigrants, women are less likely than men to have completed high school and are less likely to have postgraduate degrees. This reflects, to a large extent, the gender composition of migrants entering on employment-based visas and gender disparities in educational attainment in Asian countries.<sup>4</sup> Importantly, however, these gender disparities disappear among native-born Asian Americans. Indeed, among the native-born population, women actually have slightly higher levels of educational attainment than men, with a slightly higher proportion earning bachelor's degrees and postgraduate degrees. Finally, there are no significant gender differences in educational attainment among NHPIs.

**TABLE 4.2**  
**Differences in educational attainment by gender and nativity, Asian Americans**

	Foreign born		Native born	
	Male	Female	Male	Female
Less than high school	14%	18%	5%	5%
High school	15%	17%	17%	15%
Some college	18%	19%	30%	29%
Bachelor's degree	28%	29%	31%	32%
Postgraduate degree	25%	17%	17%	19%

Source: Authors analysis of Public Use Microdata Sample from Bureau of the Census, "2008–2012 American Community Survey 5-year Estimates," available at [http://www.census.gov/acs/www/data\\_documentation/2012\\_release/](http://www.census.gov/acs/www/data_documentation/2012_release/) (last accessed March 2014).

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## Varying rates of educational attainment show the need for accessible, disaggregated data

Exceptional variations in educational attainment and other socioeconomic indicators such as health, poverty, and income between national origin groups show how incredibly important disaggregated data—or data broken down by national origin—are to understanding the Asian American community, determining different access to opportunities, and crafting policy targeted to address the needs of the AAPI community. For example, disaggregated data were used by the University of Guam to identify various student needs and then to create specific programs to address success and retention. The university ultimately used the data to become an Asian American Native American Pacific Islander-Serving Institution, or AANAPISI, which helped it increase efforts in recruitment, retention, and graduation rates. The university eventually increased the rate of course completion and student satisfaction among Pacific Islander students.<sup>5</sup> A recently published report of pilot intervention programs in three community colleges that used AANAPISI funds suggests substantial gains for disadvantaged AAPI students in terms of academic performance, time it takes to earn a degree, and rates of transfer to four-year colleges.<sup>6</sup>

Finally, some institutions of higher education have used disaggregated data to study inequalities that exist among AAPIs applying for admission. A 2010 study of disaggregated data at the University of California, Berkeley, revealed that certain AAPI groups were underrepresented compared to their proportion of the population of the state of California. Groups with particularly low representation included Pacific Islander applicants—Samoans, Guamanians, Tongans, and Native Hawaiians; Southeast Asians—Laotians, Cambodians, Hmong, and Vietnamese; and Filipinos.<sup>7</sup> These variations reveal a critical aspect of college admissions often overlooked: Higher-education institutions should not view all AAPIs as the same when making admission decisions. All AAPIs are not the same, and diversity does matter.

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# Public Opinion

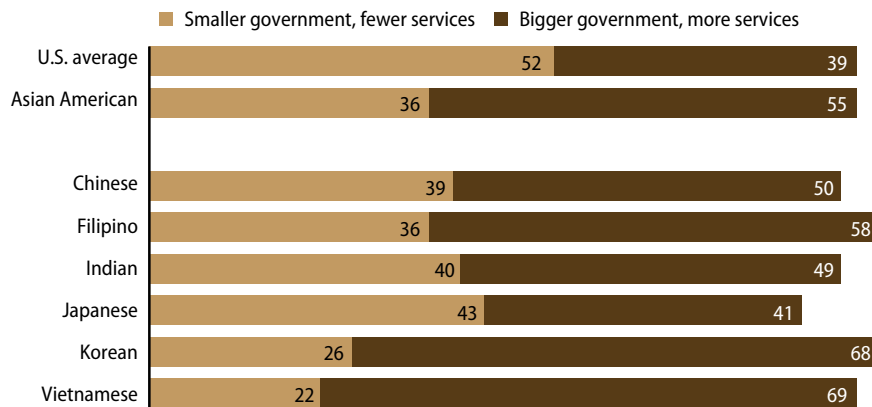
Where do Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders, or AAPIs, stand on key matters of public policy? While national public opinion data on AAPIs are not conducted with nearly the same frequency as opinion polls of whites, Latinos, and African Americans, there have been several national surveys of Asian Americans since 2008 that point to a community that is largely progressive on a range of issues.

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## Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders prioritize government spending over tax cuts

With respect to the size of government, Asian Americans are more likely than the U.S. average to prefer an activist government that provides more services than a smaller government that provides fewer services. Data from the 2012 Pew Asian American Survey show that 55 percent of Asian Americans opt for a more active government, compared to 39 percent for the U.S. average. Among particular groups, such as Korean Americans and Vietnamese Americans<sup>1</sup>, support for government involvement is even higher, at 68 percent and 69 percent, respectively.

**FIGURE 5.1**  
**Views on size and role of government**



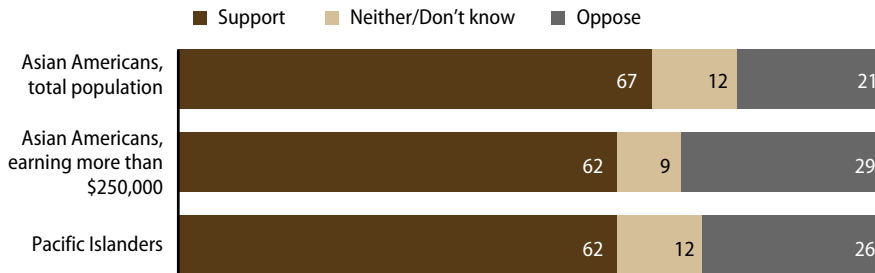
Note: The original question was: "If you had to choose, would you rather have a smaller government providing fewer services or a bigger government providing more services?"

Source: The Pew Research Center, "The Rise of Asian Americans" (2013), available at <http://www.pewsocialtrends.org/files/2013/04/Asian-Americans-new-full-report-04-2013.pdf>.

Another way to gauge AAPI opinion on fiscal matters is to examine their opinions on tax increases and cuts in government spending as ways to reduce the federal deficit. The 2012 National Asian American Survey asked both of these questions to a nationally representative sample of Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders. As the results indicate (see Figure 5.2), Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders are much more likely to support than oppose tax increases on high earners as a way to reduce the federal deficit. This was the proposal favored by President Barack Obama and the Democratic Party in 2012, and we see net support for this policy even among those Asian Americans whose income levels would have subjected them to higher income taxes. The alternate proposal—favored by former Gov. Mitt Romney (R-MA) and House Budget Committee Chairman Paul Ryan (R-WI) in 2012 and many Republican leaders since then—is to rely exclusively on cuts in government spending to reduce the federal deficit. Here, only 25 percent of Asian Americans and 26 percent of Pacific Islanders supported a cuts-only approach to reducing the federal deficit.



**FIGURE 5.2**  
**Support for tax increases on high earners**  
**as a means to reduce the federal deficit**



Note: The original question gauged the extent of agreement or disagreement with the following statement: "In order to reduce the national deficit, the federal government should raise taxes on those earning more than \$250,000 a year."

Source: Authors analysis of Karthick Ramakrishnan and Taeku Lee, "National Asian American Survey, 2012" (Ann Arbor, MI: Resource Center for Minority Data, forthcoming).

## Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders are strong supporters of environmental protection

When it comes to attitudes toward environmental protection, past surveys of the general population have taken two different approaches:

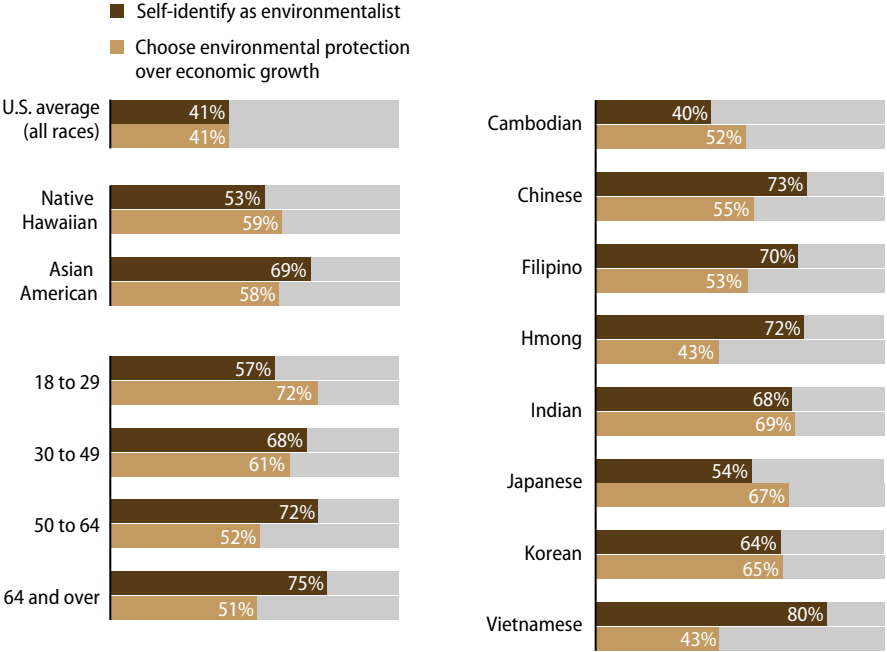
- To ask individuals if they self-identify as an environmentalist
- To present respondents with a tradeoff of choosing between more environmental protection with some risk to economic growth and the converse of more economic growth with some risk to the environment

The 2012 National Asian American Survey asked both of these questions and found that Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders rank much higher on their commitment and identification with environmentalism than the rest of the U.S. population.

As Figure 5.3 indicates, 69 percent of Asian Americans consider themselves environmentalists, about 30 points higher than the national average. Among some groups, including Chinese and Vietnamese, the proportions are even higher. Pacific Islanders are also more likely to self-identify as environmentalists than the national average, although the difference is smaller than it is for Asian Americans. Interestingly, young Asian American adults are not the ones most likely to self-identify as environmentalists. Only 57 percent of young Asian Americans, those between 18 and 24 years old, identified as an environmentalist compared to 75

percent of those age 64 and older, the age group most likely to identify as environmentalists. Finally, as Figure 5.3 indicates, Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders are significantly more likely than the national average to prioritize environmental protection over economic growth. This sentiment is especially strong among young adults, and among Indian Americans, Japanese Americans, and Korean Americans.

**FIGURE 5.3**  
**Environmental attitudes among Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders**



Note: The original questions were: "Do you consider yourself an environmentalist?" and "Which one of these statements about the environment and the economy do you most agree: Protection of the environment should be given priority, even at the risk of curbing economic growth, OR Economic growth should be given priority, even if the environment suffers to some extent."

Source: Authors analysis of Karthick Ramakrishnan and Taeku Lee, "National Asian American Survey, 2012" (Ann Arbor, MI: Resource Center for Minority Data, forthcoming).

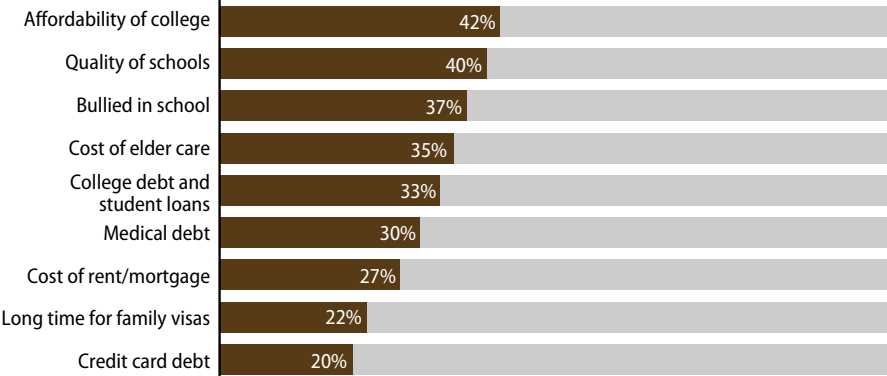
## Education ranks high among the list of concerns for Asian Americans

Among the issues that Asian Americans care about, education ranks high, whether in terms of access or affordability. The 2012 National Asian American Survey gave respondents a list of issues "people have mentioned as challenges they face" and then asked to assess "how serious of a problem each is for you and your family." Education-related issues were at the top of the list in terms of problem severity, with 40 percent of respondents indicating that the quality of schools is a very

serious problem. The problem of bullying in schools is also a significant issue for Asian American families, as 37 percent identify it as a very serious problem.<sup>2</sup> Finally, the affordability of higher education was also a significant concern, with 42 percent identifying the cost of college and 33 percent identifying college debt as very serious problems.

**FIGURE 5.4**  
**Proportion of Asian Americans identifying problem as “very serious” for self and family**

Respondents evaluated the importance of challenges they face



Note: The original question was: "Here are some issues other people have mentioned as challenges they face. Please tell me how serious of a problem each is for you and your family: Not at all serious, not very serious, fairly serious, or very serious." Don't Know and refuse responses were excluded from the analysis.

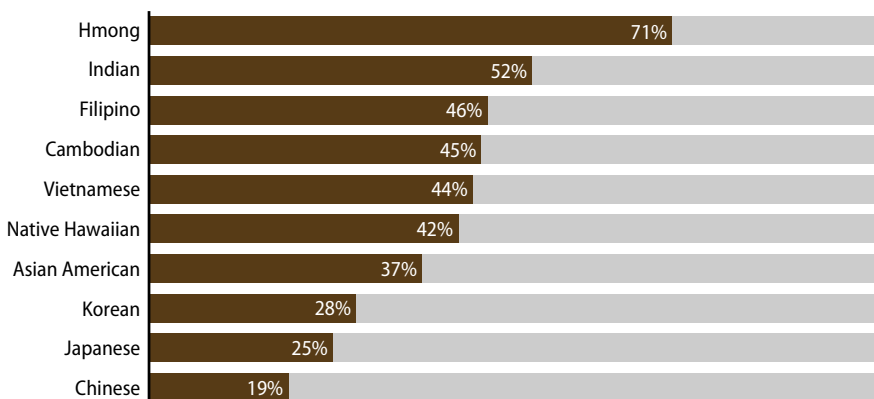
Source: Authors analysis of Karthick Ramakrishnan and Taeku Lee, "National Asian American Survey, 2012" (Ann Arbor, MI: Resource Center for Minority Data, forthcoming).

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### The school bullying is a serious concern and varies across subgroups

When it comes to the problem of school bullying, we find significant variation across national origin groups, with Southeast Asian and South Asian groups much more likely to report it as a serious problem. For example, 71 percent of Hmong respondents, 52 percent of Indian respondents, and 46 percent of Filipino respondents indicated that school bullying was a very serious problem for their families, while the comparable proportions of Chinese, Japanese, and Korean Americans were below 30 percent.

**FIGURE 5.5**  
**Proportion identifying bullying in schools as a “very serious problem”**



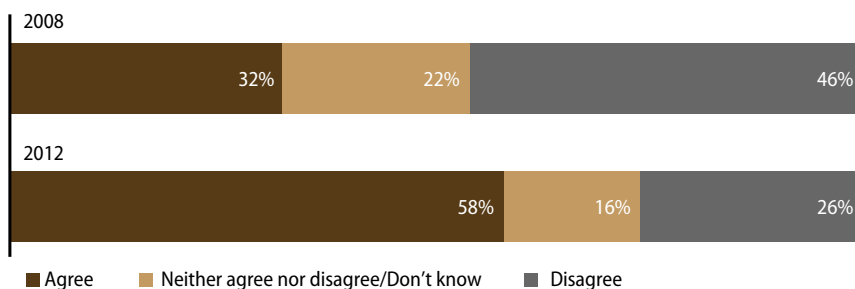
Note: The original question was “Here are some issues other people have mentioned as challenges they face. Please tell me how serious of a problem each is for you and your family: Not at all serious, not very serious, fairly serious, or very serious: Getting Bullied in School.” Don’t Know and refuse responses were excluded from the analysis.

Source: Authors analysis of Karthick Ramakrishnan and Taeku Lee, “National Asian American Survey, 2012” (Ann Arbor, MI: Resource Center for Minority Data, forthcoming).

## Asian Americans support a pathway to citizenship for undocumented immigrants

On the issue of undocumented immigration, Asian Americans are decidedly in favor of a pathway to citizenship. Questions on support for a pathway to citizenship were included in both the 2008 and 2012 National Asian American Survey. As Figure 5.6 indicates, a solid majority of Asian Americans in 2012—58 percent—supported a path to citizenship for undocumented immigrants. This is a major change in opinion from 2008, when just about a third of respondents supported a path to citizenship and 46 percent were opposed.

**FIGURE 5.6**  
**Support for pathway to citizenship among Asian Americans**



Note: The original questions gauged the extent of agreement or disagreement with the following statements: In 2008: "The U.S. should provide a path to citizenship for people in this country illegally." In 2012: "Undocumented immigrants should have the opportunity to eventually become U.S. citizens."

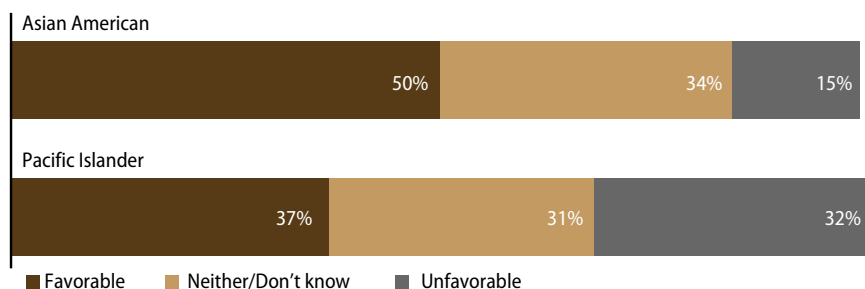
Source: Authors analysis of Karthick Ramakrishnan and Taeku Lee, "National Asian American Survey, 2008" (Ann Arbor, MI: Resource Center for Minority Data, 2011) and Karthick Ramakrishnan and Taeku Lee, "National Asian American Survey, 2012" (Ann Arbor, MI: Resource Center for Minority Data, forthcoming).

## Asian Americans are net supporters of the Affordable Care Act

A key aspect to the issue of health care is public opinion on the Affordable Care Act, or ACA, sometimes referred to as Obamacare. Surveys of the general population have shown that about 38 percent of Americans have a favorable impression of the law, and a greater proportion—46 percent—have an unfavorable impression.<sup>3</sup> Support has varied significantly across racial and ethnic groups, with significant opposition among non-Hispanic whites—with an average of 36 percent favorable and 50 percent unfavorable during the time of the 2012 National Asian American Survey—to majority support among Latinos—averaging 51 percent favorable and 29 percent unfavorable—to very strong support among African Americans—averaging 62 percent favorable, while 17 percent were unfavorable.<sup>4</sup>

How do Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders compare?

**FIGURE 5.7**  
**Asian American and Pacific Islander opinion on the Affordable Care Act**



Note: Numbers are rounded and may not add up to 100; The original question was: "As you may know, Congress passed a sweeping health care law, the Affordable Care Act, in 2010. It was then mostly upheld by the U.S. Supreme Court. Given what you know about the law, do you have a generally favorable or generally unfavorable opinion of it?"

Source: Authors analysis of Karthick Ramakrishnan and Taeku Lee, "National Asian American Survey, 2012" (Ann Arbor, MI: Resource Center for Minority Data, forthcoming).

As the results indicate in Figure 5.7, Asian Americans are much more favorably inclined toward the ACA than opposed to it. About 50 percent had a favorable impression of the health care law, more than three times the proportion of those who had an unfavorable opinion of it. These indicate a level of support for the ACA that are comparable to support among Latinos and African Americans and in strong contrast to the net opposition to the ACA among whites. Pacific Islanders, by contrast, had lower support for the law, although more had a favorable opinion of the law rather than unfavorable.

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### Asian Americans are the most positively inclined toward racial diversity

Finally, as we look ahead to the future demographic makeup of the United States, when no racial group will be in the majority by 2050, it is important to gauge how different groups react to this rising diversity and the extent to which they support a new equity agenda that would lift up both whites and communities of color. The Center for American Progress and PolicyLink conducted a survey in the summer of 2013 in collaboration with Latino Decisions that had a sizable sample of Asian Americans with language support in Chinese, Korean, and Vietnamese. The survey results indicate that Asian Americans are among the most open to diversity when compared to other racial groups. As measured by a 160-point scale based on 16 indicators, Asian Americans ranked an average of 96.9, when compared to 93.2

among African Americans, 90.1 among Latinos, and 83.8 among whites. In Table 5.1, we present where Asian Americans stand with respect to other racial groups on their agreement that increased diversity brings various types of new opportunities. In nearly all indicators, Asian Americans rank highest or second highest in their view that increased racial diversity will bring greater opportunities.

**TABLE 5.1**  
**Views on opportunities from diversity categorized by racial group**

	Total agree	White	African American	Latino	Asian
1. Americans will learn more from one another and be enriched by exposure to many different cultures.	70	66	76	75	87
2. A bigger, more diverse workforce will lead to more economic growth.	69	65	81	79	75
3. Diverse workplaces and schools will help make American businesses more innovative and competitive.	69	65	78	75	82
4. People will become more accepting of their differences and more willing to find common ground.	65	62	71	69	70
5. With more diverse people working and living together, discrimination will decrease.	61	59	59	66	70
6. The entry of new people into the American workforce will increase our tax base and help support our retiree population.	59	55	65	70	65
7. Our country's ideals of opportunity for everyone will be realized.	49	43	58	62	61
8. The country's global image will improve.	47	41	59	61	64

Source: Center for American Progress and Policy Link, "Building an All-In Nation: A View from the American Public."

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## References

Newly released reports and infographics at <http://aapidata.com/public-opinion/>.

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## Endnotes

- 1 All of the groups mentioned in this report refer to people of Asian and Pacific Islander origin in the United States. When we refer to several groups in a series, we will add the term “Americans” at the end of the series, rather than in each instance.
- 2 The problem of school bullying is also highlighted in a report about Asian American high-school students in New York by the Asian American Legal Defense and Education Fund and The Sikh Coalition, “One Step Forward, Half a Step Back: A Status Report on Bias-Based Bullying of Asian American Students in New York City Schools” (2013), available at [http://sikhcoalition.org/images/documents/onestepforward\\_bullying\\_report.pdf](http://sikhcoalition.org/images/documents/onestepforward_bullying_report.pdf).
- 3 Liz Hamel, Jamie Firth and Mollyann Brodie, “Kaiser Family Foundation Health Tracking Poll: March 2014” (Menlo Park, CA: Kaiser Family Foundation, 2014), available at <http://kff.org/health-reform/poll-finding/kaiser-health-tracking-poll-march-2014/>.
- 4 Ibid.
- 5 For a collection of responses to the question, “As you may know, Congress passed a sweeping health care law, the Affordable Care Act, in 2010. It was then mostly upheld by the U.S. Supreme Court. Given what you know about the law, do you have a generally favorable or generally unfavorable opinion of it?”, see authors analysis of Karthick Ramakrishnan and Taeku Lee, “National Asian American Survey, 2012” (Ann Arbor, MI: Resource Center for Minority Data, forthcoming).

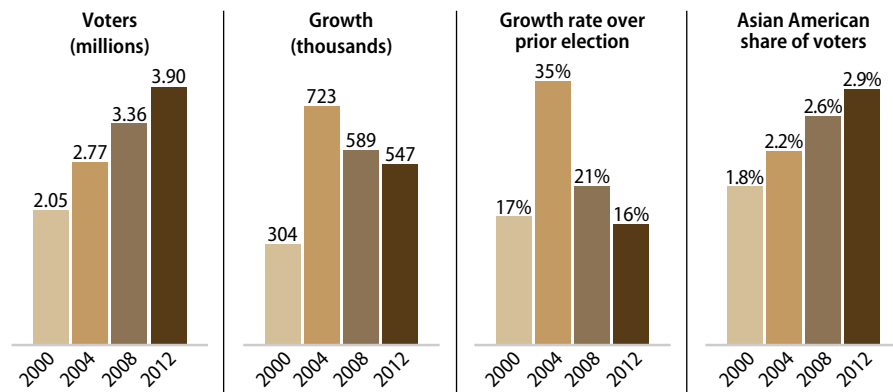


# Civic Participation and Democracy

## The Asian American electorate is growing rapidly

The number of Asian American voters in the last decade has nearly doubled from more than 2 million voters in 2000 to 3.9 million voters in 2012. (see Figure 6.1) The biggest growth spurt during this period occurred between the 2000 and 2004 elections as 723,000 new Asian American voters entered the electorate—a 35 percent increase from the record of more than 2 million set in 2000. Since 2004, there has been continued strong growth in the Asian American electorate with more than 500,000 new voters added every four years with a growth rate of 21 percent in 2008 and 16 percent in 2012. The Asian American share of the voting population has also steadily increased from 1.8 percent of all voters in 2000 and 2.2 percent in 2004, to 2.6 percent in 2008 and 2.9 percent in 2012. If future rates of change are projected for each racial group, based on trends over the past four presidential elections we estimate Asian Americans will reach 5 percent of the voting population by 2025 and 10 percent of the voting population by 2044.

**FIGURE 6.1**  
**Growth of Asian American voters, 2000 to 2012**



Source: Thom File, "The Diversifying Electorate—Voting Rates by Race and Hispanic Origin in 2012 (and Other Recent Elections)" (Bureau of the Census, 2013), available at <http://www.census.gov/prod/2013pubs/p20-568.pdf>.

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AAPI electorate is significant in many states, counties, and congressional districts

There are many parts of the United States where Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders, or AAPIs, are a significant share of the electorate. Take, for example, state voting populations: AAPIs in the 2012 presidential election amounted to 50 percent of voters in Hawaii, 10 percent of voters in California, and 5 percent or more of voters in Nevada, Washington, and New Jersey.<sup>1</sup> Looking more broadly at the citizen voting-age population, or CVAP, AAPIs are more than 5 percent of the CVAP in seven states: Hawaii, California, Nevada, Washington, New Jersey, New York, and Alaska.<sup>2</sup> Looking next at counties, AAPIs are 5 percent or more of the CVAP in 73 jurisdictions, including 33 jurisdictions where they are greater than 10 percent. These counties are mostly in Hawaii, California, New York, and New Jersey, but they also include Fairfax County, Virginia; Loudon County, Virginia; Fort Bend County, Texas; King County, Washington; and Montgomery County, Maryland.<sup>3</sup> When looking at congressional districts, there are 10 where AAPIs account for more than 25 percent of the CVAP, 35 districts where they account for between 10 percent and 25 percent, and 58 districts where they account for between 5 percent and 10 percent.<sup>4</sup>

**TABLE 6.1**  
**Jurisdictions where Asian American and Pacific Islanders are 5 percent or more of the citizen voting-age population**

	States	Counties	Congressional districts
Total	7	73	103
5% to 9.9%	5	40	58
10% to 24.9%	1	25	35
25% and above	1	8	10

Source: Authors' analysis of Public Use Microdata Sample from Bureau of the Census, "American Community Survey 2008 – 2012 American Community Survey 5-year Estimates," available at [http://www.census.gov/acs/www/data\\_documentation/pums\\_data/](http://www.census.gov/acs/www/data_documentation/pums_data/) (last accessed May 2014).

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## Significant gaps in citizenship and voter registration exist for Asian Americans

Despite the size and growth of the Asian American electorate, their rates of voting participation are comparatively lower than other racial groups. (see Table 6.2) Given the fact that Asian Americans have the highest proportion of foreign-born residents, their citizenship rate of 66 percent among adults during the 2012 election is significantly below the citizenship rates of whites, at 98 percent, African Americans, at 95 percent, and is comparable to the citizenship rate among Latinos, at 66 percent. Thus, even as Asian immigrants continue to be among the fastest to naturalize among eligible immigrants, the relatively high number of recent immigrants in this group means that their eligibility to vote is less than most other racial groups.<sup>5</sup> However, lack of citizenship is not as significant a barrier for Native Hawaiians and Pacific Islanders, or NHPIs, as 88 percent of the adult NHPI residents are U.S. citizens.

**TABLE 6.2**  
**Rates of citizenship, voter registration, and voting by race, 2012**

	Citizens (among adults)	Registered (among adult citizens)	Voted (among registered voters)	Voted (among adult citizens)
White	98%	73%	87%	64%
Hispanic	66%	59%	82%	48%
African American	95%	73%	91%	66%
Asian	66%	56%	84%	47%
American Indian	99%	64%	80%	51%
Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander	88%	58%	85%	49%

Source: Authors' analysis of Bureau of the Census, Current Population Survey November 2012: Voting and Registration Supplement File (U.S. Department of Commerce, 2012).

Voter registration is another significant barrier for AAPIs. (see Table 6.2) Even after taking into account differential rates of citizenship, Asian Americans are less likely to register to vote—registration sits at 56 percent among adult citizens—than whites, at 73 percent, and African Americans, at 73 percent. Their low rates of voter registration are comparable to those of Native Hawaiians and Pacific Islanders at 58 percent and Hispanics at 59 percent. Once Asian Americans and NHPs are registered to vote, turnout gaps with whites and African Americans are less significant. However, the gaps in registration produce some stark disparities in voting among the eligible electorate, with only 47 percent of Asian American adult citizens and 49 percent of NHPs reporting that they voted in the 2012 presidential election—comparable to the voting rate among Hispanics, at 48 percent, and American Indians, at 51 percent, but much lower than the voting rates among whites, at 64 percent, and African Americans, at 66 percent.

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### Significant differences in voting by nativity and national origin, but not by gender

Looking at variation in voting within the Asian American community, we find that naturalized citizens are significantly more likely to have voted in the 2012 presidential election than native-born citizens: 50 percent of naturalized citizens voted while 43 percent of native-born citizens did not.<sup>6</sup> However, this gap disappears after controlling for the effects of age: among Asian Americans who were eligible to vote in 2012, the foreign-born were about 13 years older, on average, than the native-born.<sup>7</sup> There were also some significant differences in voting by national origin in 2012, with Japanese Americans and Indian Americans reporting higher rates of voting than Chinese Americans, and with Korean Americans reporting among the lowest rates of voting.<sup>8</sup> These differences were evident at the voter-registration stage among adult citizens but not at the turnout stage among registered voters. However, these results should be interpreted with caution because of the relatively small national origin sample sizes in the Current Population Survey's Voter Supplement.

The 2012 AAPI Post-Election Survey found significant turnout differences by national origin. This survey conducted telephone interviews with 6,609 registered voters with comparable sample sizes across national origins.<sup>9</sup> For example, only 40 percent of Laotian American registered voters turned out to vote compared to more than 85 percent of Indian Americans, Japanese Americans, and Hmong Americans.<sup>10</sup> Most of these national origin differences persisted even after controlling for age and education. Finally, analysis of Current Population Survey Voter Supplement data reveal slight gender differences at the registration stage, with AAPI women more likely to register than AAPI men in 2012. Fifty-eight percent of Asian American women reported registering to vote versus 55 percent of Asian American men, and 59 percent of NHPI women reported registering versus 57 percent of NHPI men.<sup>11</sup> However, these differences were not statistically significant. Similarly, both the Current Population Survey Voter Supplement and the AAPI Post-Election Survey indicate slightly greater participation at the turnout stage among Asian American male registered voters, but these gender differences, too, are not statistically significant.

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### Campaigns had limited contact with AAPI voters in the 2012 election

The 2012 AAPI Post-Election Survey of registered voters found that only 31 percent of Asian Americans and 26 percent of Pacific Islanders had been contacted about the November election.<sup>12</sup> By contrast, 39 percent of African Americans, 36 percent of Latinos, and 43 percent of white registered voters reported getting election-related contact.<sup>13</sup> There were significant differences in contact across nationalities, with Indian Americans and Hawaiians being the least contacted in each of these groups at 25 percent, while Chinese Americans and Hmong Americans reported higher levels of contact at 39 percent and 49 percent respectively.<sup>14</sup> Contact was much higher in battleground states—48 percent—than in nonbattleground states—27 percent—and the Democratic Party was more likely than the Republican Party to make contact in either type of jurisdiction.<sup>15</sup> Community organizations also played a meaningful role, as 20 percent of Asian Americans contacted by community organizations were not contacted by either the Republican or Democratic Party.<sup>16</sup>

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## Asian Americans' participation rates are on par with other groups on some activities but lag behind in others

In Table 6.3, we present data from the 2008 National Asian American Survey, or NAAS, and the 2008 American National Election Studies, or ANES—the most recent year for which comparable questions were asked in both the NAAS and the ANES. When comparing across groups we see that the proportion of Asian Americans engaged in political campaigns is comparable to those of whites—4 percent and 3 percent, respectively—and rates of campaign contributions are the same at 13 percent. However, there are big differences in contacting government officials, as the participation rate among whites, at 21 percent, is more than twice the rate of Asian Americans at 9 percent. Differences also emerge in terms of rates of engagement in community activism—21 percent Asian Americans had “worked with others in [their] community to solve a problem,” lower than the 30 percent rate among whites and the 27 percent rate among African Americans.

**TABLE 6.3**  
**Political and civic participation beyond voting by race**

	White	Latino	Black	Asian American
Campaign work	4	4	6	3
Campaign contributions	13	5	8	13
Contact public officials	21	9	11	9
Community activism	30	21	27	21

Sources: Data on Asian Americans based on authors' analysis of Karthick Ramakrishnan, Jane Junn, and Taeku Lee, "National Asian American Survey, 2008" (Ann Arbor, MI: Resource Center for Minority Data, 2011), available at <http://www.icpsr.umich.edu/icpsrweb/ICPSR/studies/31481>; Data on other racial groups based on authors' analysis of the 2008 American National Election Study available at [http://www.electionstudies.org/study pages/download/datacenter\\_all\\_NoData.php](http://www.electionstudies.org/study pages/download/datacenter_all_NoData.php).

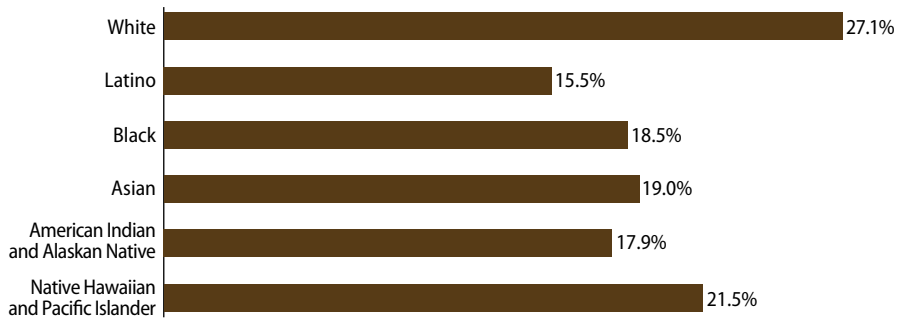
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## Rates of volunteerism among AAPIs are low compared to non-Hispanic whites

Similar to other communities of color, rates of volunteerism among Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders lag behind the participation rates of whites. Every year, the Current Population Survey conducts a supplemental survey of volunteerism, asking specifically about volunteer activities done “through or for an organization.”<sup>17</sup> Using the latest available data from September 2013 (see Figure 6.2), we see that 19 percent of Asian Americans ages 16 and older report having volunteered

in the past year, as do 21.5 percent of Pacific Islanders. These figures are comparable to the proportion of African Americans who volunteered, at 18.5 percent, and higher than the proportion of Latinos who volunteered, at 15.5 percent, but significantly lower than the proportion of whites who volunteer, at 27.1 percent.

**FIGURE 6.2**  
**Rates of volunteerism, by race, 2013**



Source: Authors' analysis of Bureau of the Census, Current Population Survey September 2013: Volunteer Supplement File (U.S. Department of Commerce, 2013).

Looking at differences within the Asian American community we find significant gender differences: 22 percent of women volunteer while only 16 percent of Asian American men choose to do so. Native-born Asian Americans are also much more likely to participate than foreign-born, with 24 percent of native-born volunteering and only 17 percent of foreign-born doing the same. In the case of voting, we find that participation rates in volunteerism are highest among Japanese Americans and Indian Americans at 25.5 percent and 24 percent, respectively. Other groups close to the average for Asian Americans include Filipino Americans, at 20.2 percent, and Korean Americans, at 17.6 percent. However, Chinese Americans, at 16.9 percent, and Vietnamese Americans, at 15.7 percent, have participation rates that are below the average for Asian Americans.

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### Growing number of AAPIs serve as elected officials nationally and locally

In the 113th Congress, 10 out of 435 representatives in the U.S. House of Representatives, or 2.3 percent, were Asian American or NHPI.<sup>18</sup> An additional two delegates from American Samoa and Northern Mariana Islands are NHPI, and one U.S. Senator—Mazie Hirono (D-HI)—is an Asian American of Japanese

descent. Given that Asian immigrants were not eligible for naturalization until the 1940s, the first Asian American to serve as a member of Congress did not occur until the election of Dalip Singh Saund (D-CA) in 1957.<sup>19</sup> Since then, there have been a total of six AAPI U.S. senators and 26 U.S. representatives.

Looking beyond the Congress to state legislatures, the Asian Pacific American Institute for Congressional Studies lists 98 AAPIs as serving in state legislatures (see Table 6.4). Of these, 57 serve in Hawaii, 11 serve in California, 7 serve in Washington, and the rest serve in Alaska, Connecticut, Maryland, Massachusetts, Michigan, Minnesota, New Jersey, New York, Texas, Utah, Vermont, and Virginia.<sup>20</sup> In addition, 20 serve in territorial legislatures in American Samoa, Guam, and the Commonwealth of Northern Mariana Islands.<sup>21</sup> Finally, there are more than 160 AAPIs serving as elected representatives in city government and 22 AAPI legislators in county government.<sup>22</sup>

**TABLE 6.4**  
**Asian American and Pacific Islander elected officials**

U.S. senators	1
U.S. House representatives	10
U.S. House delegates	2
State legislatures	98
Territorial legislatures	20
City government	161
County government	22

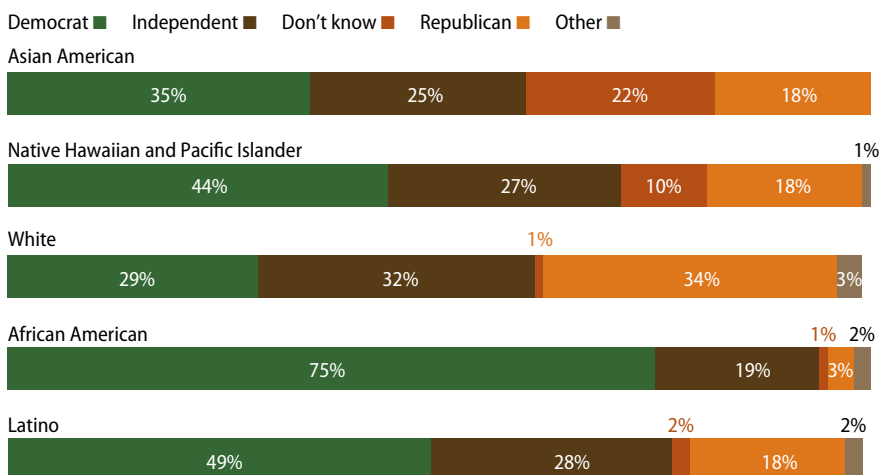
Source: Lorraine Tong, "Asian Pacific Americans in the U.S. Congress" (Washington: Congressional Research Service, 2010), available at <http://fpc.state.gov/documents/organization/138762.pdf>; Authors' analysis of data from Asian Pacific American Institute for Congressional Studies, "Political Database" available at <http://apaics.org/resources/political-database/> (last accessed May 2014).

### AAPI voters largely do not identify with political parties, but Democrats led among those who do

According to the 2012 AAPI Post-Election Survey, 47 percent of Asian American registered voters did not identify with either the Republican Party or Democratic Party. Twenty-five percent of AAPIs declared themselves to be independents and 22 percent indicated that they did not know or that they did not think in terms of political parties. This high level of AAPI political nonidentification overshadows the 33 percent of white registered voters choosing not to identify in 2012, 20 percent of African Americans, and 30 percent of Latinos. (see Figure 6.3) However, among those who do identify with a political party there is a clear advantage to the Democratic Party, with Asian American registered voters identifying as Democrat over Republican by nearly a 2-to-1 margin at 35 percent to 18 percent. The Democratic Party advantage is even greater for NHPs, with 44 percent of registered voters identifying as Democrats and 18 percent identifying as Republicans. This Democratic Party advantage stands in sharp contrast to the party identification of white registered voters, where there is a slight Republican Party edge over Democrats at 34 percent to 29 percent.



**FIGURE 6.3**  
**Party identification among registered voters, 2012**



Sources: Data on Asian Americans and Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islanders based on authors' analysis of Asian American Justice Center, "Asian and Pacific Islander American Vote, and National Asian American Survey, 'Behind the Numbers: Post-Election Survey of Asian American and Pacific Islanders in 2012'" (2013), available at <http://www.naasurvey.com/resources/Presentations/2012-aapipe-national.pdf>; Data on other racial groups based on authors' analysis of the "2012 American National Election Study," available at [http://www.electionstudies.org/study pages/download/datacenter\\_all\\_NoData.php](http://www.electionstudies.org/study pages/download/datacenter_all_NoData.php) (last accessed May 2014).

## Party identification and presidential voting varied by language of interview

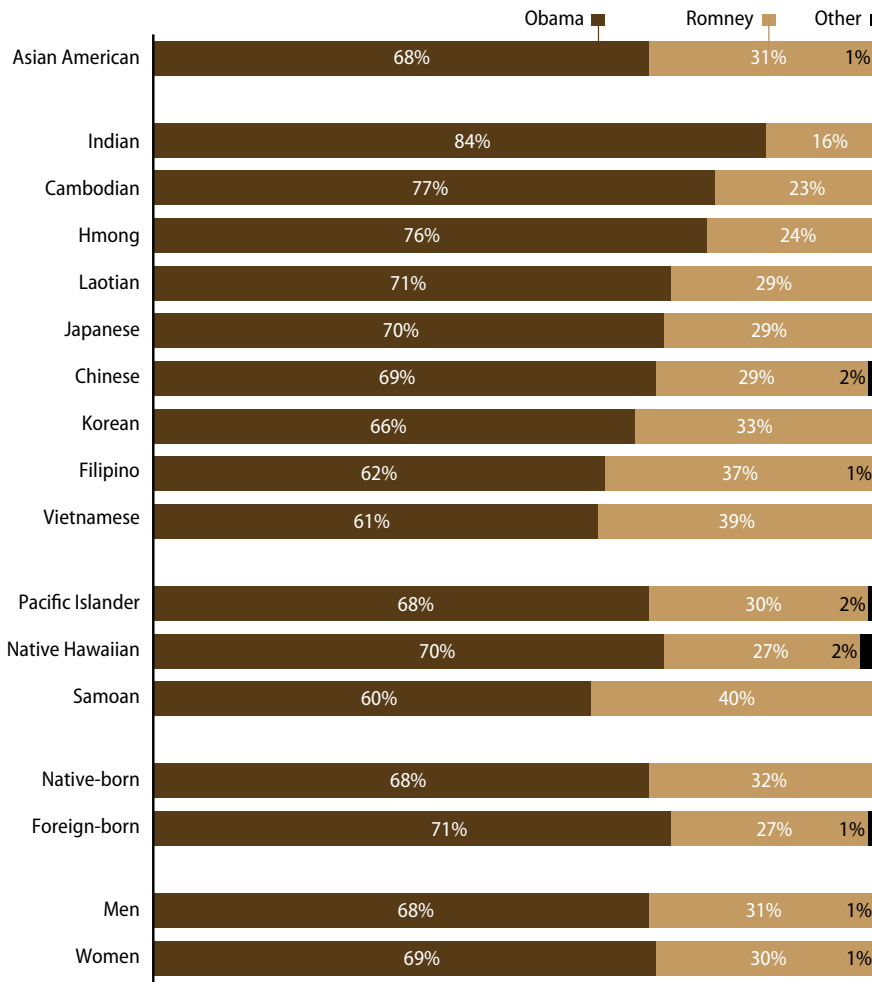
According to the 2012 AAPI Post-Election Survey, Barack Obama won 68 percent of the Asian American vote compared to 31 percent for Mitt Romney, while 1 percent voted for a different candidate. Importantly, there was a significant difference in presidential voting based on language of interview. Among those who took the survey in an Asian language, 65 percent reported voting for Obama, while for those who took the survey in English, this figure was 72 percent. Notably, this latter figure is nearly identical to the Asian American estimate provided by the National Election Pool, and widely reported in news stories, of 73 percent choosing to vote for Obama.<sup>23</sup> The National Election Pool survey was conducted only in English and Spanish, and comparisons of these two surveys suggest that English-only surveys of the Asian population can produce biased estimates of presidential vote choice. English-only surveys are also likely to produce biased estimates of other aspects of public opinion, as the 2012 AAPI Post-Election Survey found much higher levels of party nonidentification among registered voters taking the survey in an Asian language, at 55 percent, than those taking the survey in English, at 38 percent.<sup>24</sup>

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## Obama won every major subgroup of AAPI voters

In the 2012 presidential election, Barack Obama not only won the AAPI vote, he did so decisively, winning the vast majority of every national origin group. (see Figure 6.4) The highest support for Obama was among Indian Americans at 84 percent and the lowest among Samoans at 60 percent.<sup>25</sup> Importantly, he won the Vietnamese American vote by a 61-to-39 margin, which is notable because this group of voters has traditionally been viewed as strongly Republican.<sup>26</sup> Finally, there was no significant difference in support for Obama between Asian American men and women—a notable difference from the gender gap among white voters, with white men much less likely than white women to vote for Obama in 2012.<sup>27</sup>

**FIGURE 6.4**  
**Presidential vote by ethnicity, age, and gender**



Source: Data on Asian Americans and Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islanders based on authors' analysis of Asian American Justice Center, Asian and Pacific Islander American Vote, and National Asian American Survey, "Behind the Numbers: Post-Election Survey of Asian American and Pacific Islanders in 2012" (2013), available at <http://www.naasurvey.com/resources/Presentations/2012-aapipe-national.pdf>.

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- 20 Asian Pacific American Institute for Congressional Studies, "Political Database," available at <http://apaics.org/resources/political-database/> (last accessed March 2014).
- 21 Ibid.
- 22 Ibid.
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- 24 Asian American Justice Center, Asian and Pacific Islander American Vote, and National Asian American Survey, "Behind the Numbers."
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- 26 The largest concentration of Vietnamese Americans has been in Orange County, California, and most Vietnamese American elected officials from this region have been Republican. See Wong and others, *Asian American Political Participation: Emerging Constituents and Their Political Identities*. The 2000–2001 Pilot National Asian American Political Survey indicates a 57–43 ratio of Republican Party to Democratic Party identification, but the sample sizes are too small to definitively conclude a Republican advantage among Vietnamese in the early 2000s. See Pei-te Lien, "Pilot National Asian American Political Survey (PNAAPS), 2000–2001" (Ann Arbor, MI: Inter-university Consortium of Political and Social, 2004), available at <http://www.icpsr.umich.edu/icpsrweb/ICPSR/studies/3832>.
- 27 *The New York Times*, "President Exit Polls."

# Labor-Market Outcomes

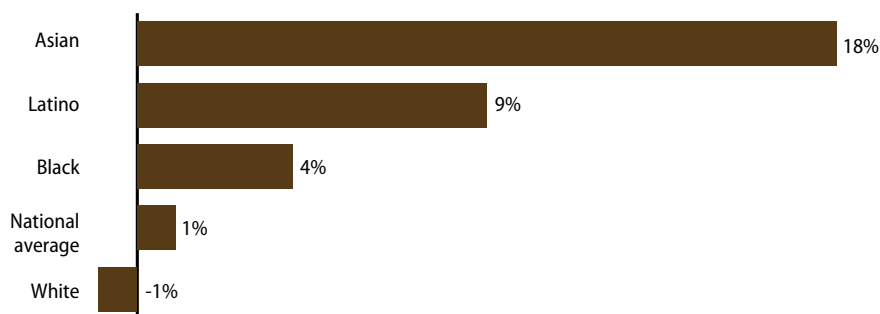
The importance of Asian American and Pacific Islander, or AAPI, communities to the U.S. economy is evident—not only in their role as consumers and entrepreneurs but also as workers. There are distinct patterns that emerge when we examine labor-market outcomes such as unemployment rates, labor-force participation by gender, occupation, and industry specialization. These distinct patterns emerge not only across racial groups but also in terms of national origin differences within the AAPI community.

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Asian Americans are the most rapidly growing segment of the U.S. labor force

In 2013, out of a total labor force of about 155 million, Asian Americans accounted for about 8.6 million, or 5.5 percent, and Pacific Islanders accounted for another 0.6 million, or 0.4 percent. Notably, the Asian American labor force has grown by nearly 20 percent since 2010, when there were 7.2 million residents in the labor force. This growth was higher than the labor-force growth of any other group. In fact, comparable rates for other racial groups during this period were an increase of 9 percent among Latinos, 4 percent for blacks, and a reduction of 1.4 percent among whites. The overall labor force during this period grew by only 1 percent, from 153.9 million to 155.4 million.<sup>1</sup>

**FIGURE 7.1**  
**Change in labor force, 2010 to 2013**



Source: 2010 data from Bureau of Labor Statistics, Labor Force Characteristics by Race and Ethnicity, 2010 (U.S. Department of Labor, 2011), available at <http://www.bls.gov/cps/cpsrace2010.pdf>; Bureau of Labor Statistics, "Employment status of the civilian noninstitutional population by age, sex, and race," available at <http://www.bls.gov/cps/cpsaat03.htm> (last accessed July 2014); Bureau of Labor Statistics, "Employment status of the Hispanic or Latino population by age and sex" available at <http://www.bls.gov/cps/cpsaat04.htm> (last accessed July 2014).

## The labor-force participation rate of Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders is higher than the national average

Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders rank higher than the national average when it comes to their labor-force participation rate, which is defined by the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics as the “share of the population 16 years and older working or seeking work.”<sup>2</sup> According to our analysis of pooled Current Population Survey, or CPS, data, the overall labor-force participation rate among Asian Americans in 2013 was 64.8 percent, nearly 1.5 percentage points higher than the national average. (see Table 1)

**TABLE 7.1**  
**Labor force participation rates in 2013**

Population percentage, by race and gender

	Total	Men	Women
National average	63.4	70.0	57.4
Asian	64.8	73.1	57.4
Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander	70.3	73.8	67.0
White	63.6	70.5	57.1
Latino	66.1	76.2	56.0
Black	61.4	63.7	59.5
Native American	59.2	65.1	53.6

Source: Authors' analysis of monthly 2013 Current Population Survey data, see Current Population Survey, "Basic Monthly CPS," available at [http://thedataweb.rm.census.gov/ftp/cps\\_ftp.html](http://thedataweb.rm.census.gov/ftp/cps_ftp.html) (last accessed July 2014).

This higher rate was driven entirely by the higher participation rates of Asian American men, who rank 3 percentage points higher than the national employment average, while the participation rate for women was in line with the national average. By contrast, at 70.3 percent, the labor-force participation rate among Pacific Islanders is the highest among all racial and ethnic groups. And while Pacific Islanders have a labor-force participation rate that is higher than the national average for both men and women, they have the highest rates of women's labor-force participation of any racial group at 67 percent. Finally, looking within the Asian American community, there are significant differences in labor-force participation rates. (see Table 2) Filipinos and Indians tend to have the highest rates of labor-force participation, and they are particularly high for Asian Indian men and Filipino American women. By contrast, Japanese Americans and Korean Americans tend to have rates of labor-force participation less than the average for Asian Americans.<sup>3</sup>

**TABLE 7.2**  
**Labor force participation rates for Asian Americans, 2013**

	Total	Men	Women
Asian American average	64.8%	73.1%	57.4%
Asian Indian	68%	82%	53%
Chinese	63%	68%	59%
Filipino	69%	73%	66%
Japanese	59%	71%	50%
Korean	61%	69%	53%
Vietnamese	65%	72%	60%

Source: Authors' analysis of monthly 2013 Current Population Survey data, see Current Population Survey, "Basic Monthly CPS," available at [http://thedataweb.rm.census.gov/ftp/cps\\_ftp.html](http://thedataweb.rm.census.gov/ftp/cps_ftp.html) (last accessed July 2014).

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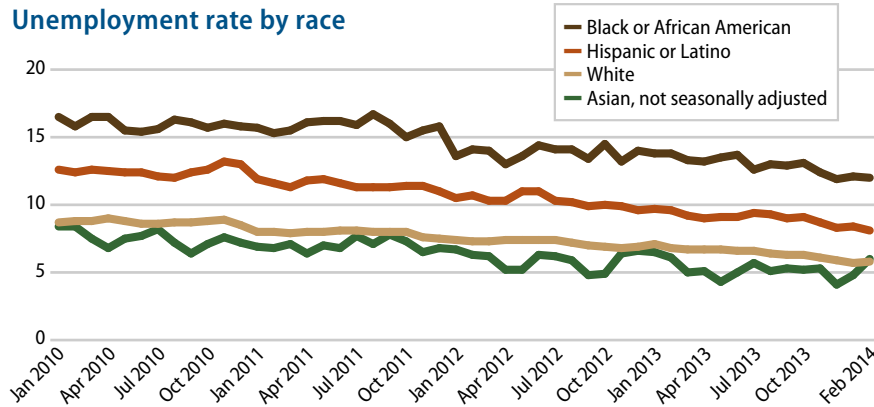
Asian Americans have lowest unemployment rates—but among the jobless, their unemployment duration has been among the longest

Since 2010, the unemployment rate among Asian Americans has consistently been among the lowest for any racial or ethnic group. As indicated in Figure 2, the unemployment rate averaged around 7 percent in 2010 and 2011, before declining to around 6 percent in 2012 and 5 percent in 2013. Given the relatively smaller sample size of Asian American respondents in the monthly CPS, the Bureau of

Labor Statistics does not report seasonally adjusted unemployment data for Asian Americans, making unemployment comparisons over time particularly difficult because of the potential impacts of seasonal influences. Furthermore, the CPS does not report any monthly unemployment data for Pacific Islanders.<sup>4</sup>

FIGURE 7.2

Unemployment rate by race



Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics, "Employment Situation Archived News Releases," available at [http://www.bls.gov/schedule/archives/empisit\\_nr.htm](http://www.bls.gov/schedule/archives/empisit_nr.htm) (last accessed July 2014).

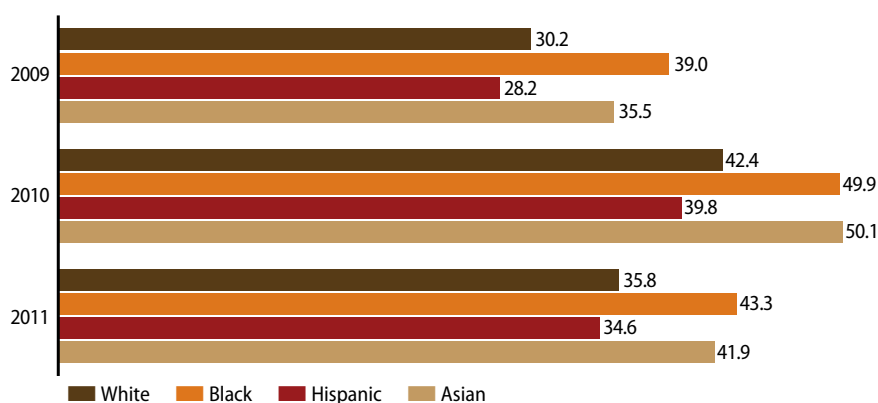
However, when we pool the monthly data in 2013, we see that the average unemployment rate among Pacific Islanders was 10.3 percent. These average annual figures are not seasonally adjusted and are on par with the average rate for Latinos—9.2 percent—in 2013 and significantly higher than the unemployment rate for whites and Asian Americans, at 6.6 percent and 5.3 percent, respectively. Pooling the data across 2013 also allows us to examine national origin differences in unemployment for Asian Americans. At 3.4 percent, Japanese Americans had the lowest unemployment rates during this period, followed by Chinese at 4.4 percent; Asian Indians at 4.7 percent; Vietnamese at 5.1 percent; Koreans at 5.4 percent; and Filipino Americans at 5.8 percent.<sup>5</sup>

While Asian Americans have had the lowest rates of unemployment in recent years, they are among those with the longest duration of unemployment. (see Figure 3) In 2011, for example, the long-term unemployed—those unemployed for 27 weeks or more—accounted for one out of every two Asian Americans who were unemployed, or 50.1 percent—a figure that was comparable for African Americans who were unemployed—49.9 percent—and significantly higher than the rates of long-term unemployment among whites and Latinos who were unemployed—42.4 percent and 39.8 percent, respectively.<sup>6</sup> While these figures dropped



for all groups in 2013, the long-term unemployed still constitute a larger share of the Asian American unemployed. In fact, 41.9 percent of the unemployed Asian American population were long-termed unemployed in 2013, compared to 35.8 percent of the white unemployed and 34.6 percent of the Latino unemployed.<sup>7</sup> The sample sizes of Pacific Islanders and detailed Asian groups are too small to provide information on the long-term unemployment rates among the unemployed. However, we do have sufficiently large samples to know that the long-term unemployment is higher for Asian American women than men, at 45 percent and 40 percent, respectively, and for those who are foreign born versus native born, at 44 percent and 38 percent, respectively.<sup>8</sup>

**FIGURE 7.3**  
Share of long-term unemployed, among all unemployed



Source: Authors' analysis of monthly 2013 Current Population Survey data, see Current Population Survey, "Basic Monthly CPS," available at [http://thedataweb.rm.census.gov/ftp/cps\\_ftp.html](http://thedataweb.rm.census.gov/ftp/cps_ftp.html) (last accessed July 2014); Algernon Austin, "Asian Americans continued to suffer the most from long-term unemployment in 2011" (Washington: Economic Policy Institute, 2012), available at <http://www.epi.org/publication/ib3235-asian-american-unemployment-update/>; Marlene Kim, "Unfairly disadvantaged? Asian Americans and unemployment during and after the Great Recession (2007-10)" (Washington: Economic Policy Institute, 2012), available at <http://www.epi.org/publication/ib323-asian-american-unemployment/>.

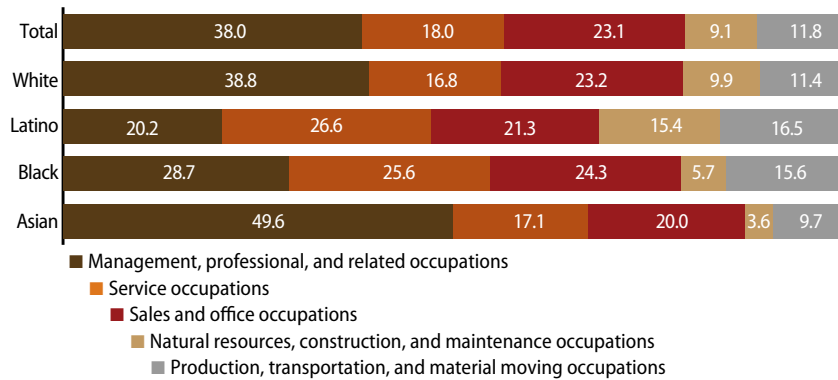
## The occupational diversity of Asian Americans varies significantly from other groups.

Among the employed, Asian Americans are significantly more likely than other groups to be concentrated in management, professional, and related occupations. (see Figure 4) Thus, while nearly one in two Asian Americans employed in 2013 worked in these types of jobs, only about one in five Latinos and more than one in four African Americans did so.<sup>9</sup> When compared to Latinos and African Americans, Asian Americans are also considerably less likely to work in service occupations and in those jobs classified by the federal government as

production, transportation, and material moving occupations.<sup>10</sup> Finally, when compared to whites, Asian Americans are more likely to work in management and professional occupations and less likely to work in natural resources, construction, and maintenance occupations.<sup>11</sup>

**FIGURE 7.4**  
**Occupation among employed persons, 2013**

Percent of total population, by race and ethnicity



Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics, "Employed persons by occupation, race, Hispanic or Latino ethnicity, and sex," available at <http://www.bls.gov/cps/cpsaat10.htm> (last accessed July 2014).

While it appears that Asian Americans have the strongest representation in management, professional, and related occupations—which tend to be higher paying jobs compared to service occupations and production-related jobs—there are important national-origin differences in occupational patterns among the Asian American community.<sup>12</sup> Although the Current Population Survey, or CPS, does not have sufficiently large sample sizes to examine occupational diversity within the Asian American community, we can do this analysis using pooled data from the American Community Survey, or ACS. (see Figure 5a) As the results indicate, certain groups, including Asian Indians, Sri Lankans, and Chinese Americans, rank among the highest in terms of their concentration in management and professional occupations. Meanwhile, other groups, such as Vietnamese and Thai Americans, are disproportionately more likely than other Asian Americans to work in service occupations.<sup>13</sup> Significantly, Southeast Asian refugee populations—from Cambodian, Hmong, Laotian, and Vietnamese populations—rank significantly higher than the group average for occupations related to production, transportation, and material moving.<sup>14</sup>

In a similar manner, an examination of occupational diversity in the ACS reveals important differences within the Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander, or NHPI, racial group. (see Figure 5b) Native Hawaiians and Melanesians are the groups with the highest proportion of jobs in management and professional occupations, while Tongans are among those most likely to be employed in service professions, and Samoans are among those most likely to work in occupations related to production, transportation, and material moving.<sup>15</sup>

FIGURE 7.5a

Occupation among employed persons by national origin, Asian

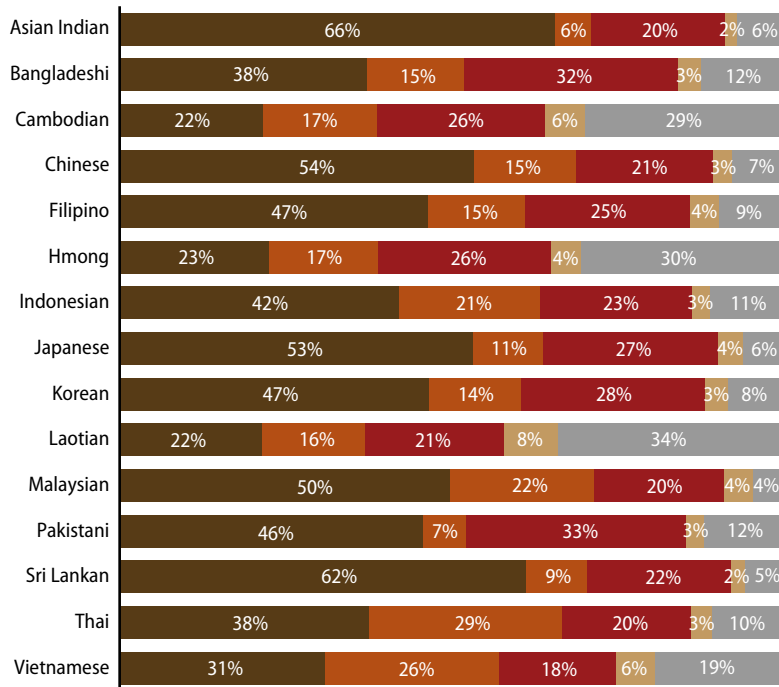
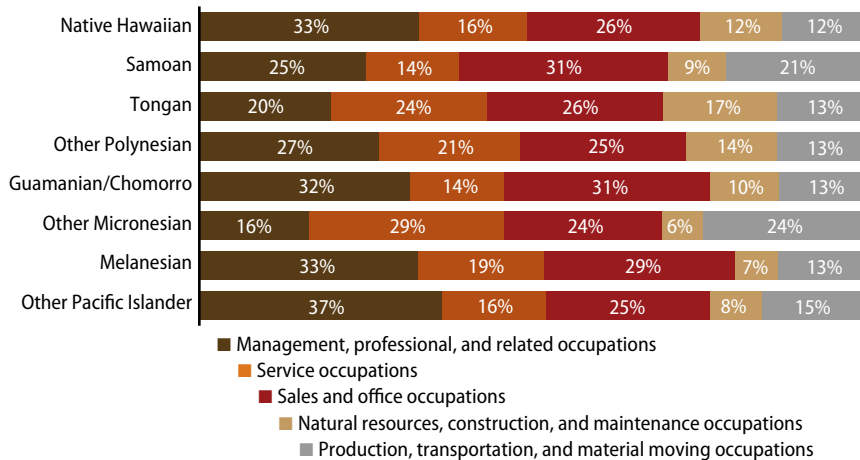


FIGURE 7.5b

Occupation among employed NHPI persons by origin



Source: Authors' analysis of data from Bureau of the Census, "American Community Survey 2008-2012 5-Year Estimates," available at [https://www.census.gov/acs/www/data\\_documentation/2012\\_release/](https://www.census.gov/acs/www/data_documentation/2012_release/) (last accessed July 2014).

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# Income and Poverty

The story of income and poverty among Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders, or AAPIs, is a tale of contrasts. On the one hand are certain groups with household incomes that are higher than the national average, such as Indian and Filipino Americans whose selective migration patterns to the United States are characterized by a relatively high level of employer-based, high-skilled visas. Conversely, Southeast Asian populations such as Cambodian, Hmong, and Laotian Americans—who predominantly came to the United States as refugees with limited educational attainment in their home countries—have relatively high levels of poverty and low levels of household income. Poverty rates are also high among particular Pacific Islander groups, and there are also important variations in poverty rates by geography and nativity.

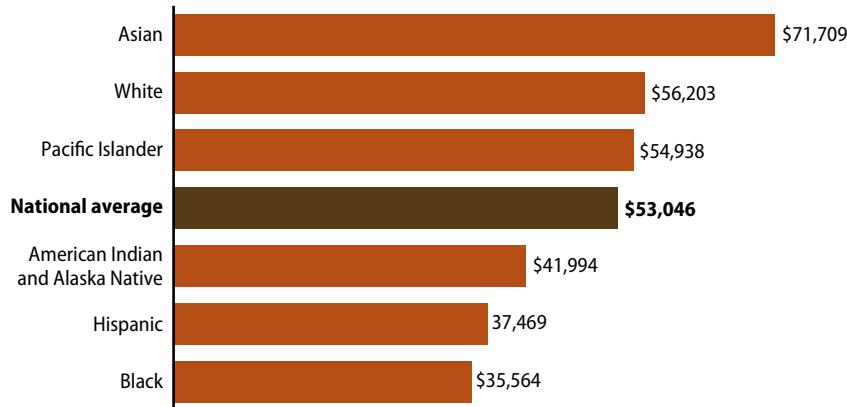
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Asian Americans have the highest average household incomes, but there is considerable internal group variation

Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders, on average, have relatively high levels of household income. As the data from the American Community Survey between 2008 and 2012 reveal, the median household income among Asian Americans averaged about \$72,000—well above the median household income of \$53,000 for the country, and the average of \$56,000 among whites. (see Figure 1) By contrast, Pacific Islanders had median household incomes that were slightly below those among whites, averaging about \$55,000 from 2008 to 2012.

**FIGURE 8.1**  
**Median household income by race and ethnicity**

Median household income in the past 12 months, 5-year estimates  
(in 2012 inflation-adjusted dollars)



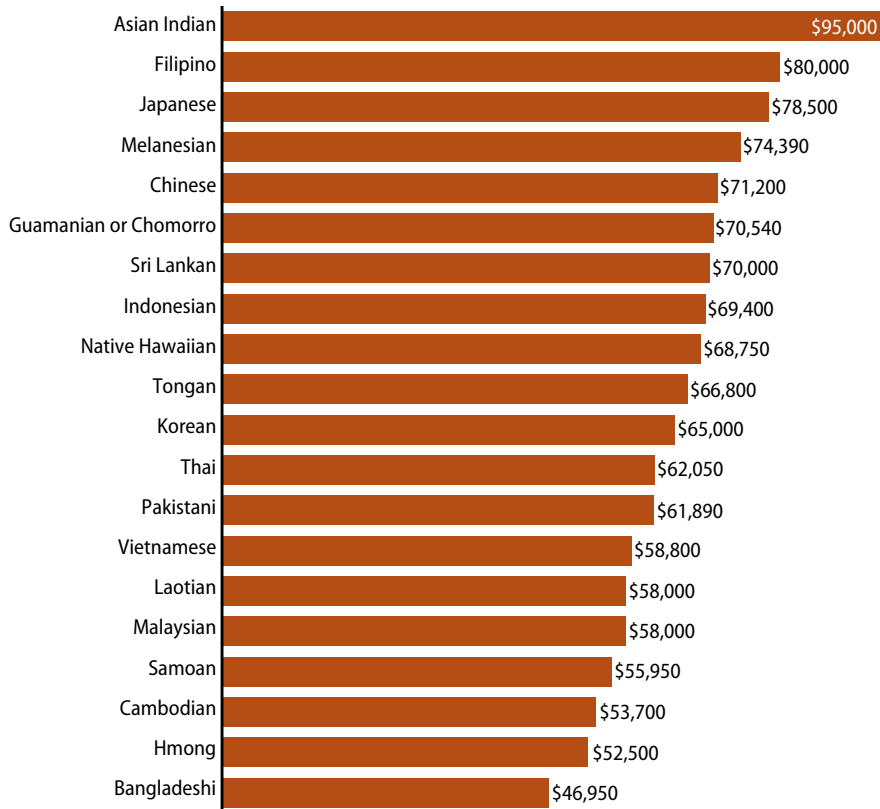
Source: Authors' analysis of Bureau of the Census, "Table B19013: Median Household in the Past 12 Months (in 2012 Inflation-Adjusted Dollars) (2008-2012), available at [http://factfinder2.census.gov/bkmk/table/1.0/en/ACS/12\\_5YR/B19013](http://factfinder2.census.gov/bkmk/table/1.0/en/ACS/12_5YR/B19013) (last accessed June 2014).

At the same time, there is considerable variation in median household income within the broader racial categories of Asian and Native Hawaiian and other Pacific Islander, or NHPI. Our analysis of American Community Survey data from 2008 to 2012 reveals stark differences in the median household incomes of AAPIs across national origins. (see Figure 2) Asian Indians and Filipinos have the highest levels of household income, which reflects their relatively high levels of educational attainment<sup>1</sup> and selective patterns of high-skill immigration to the United States.<sup>2</sup> By contrast, Hmong, Cambodian, and Bangladeshi Americans have the lowest levels of household income for Asian Americans, and lower than the national average of \$53,000. Finally, among Pacific Islanders, too, there is considerable variation in median household income, as Guamanians and Native Hawaiians have considerably higher levels of household income than Samoans.



**FIGURE 8.2**  
**Median household income by detailed origin**

Median household income in the past 12 months, 5-year estimates  
(in 2012 inflation-adjusted dollars)



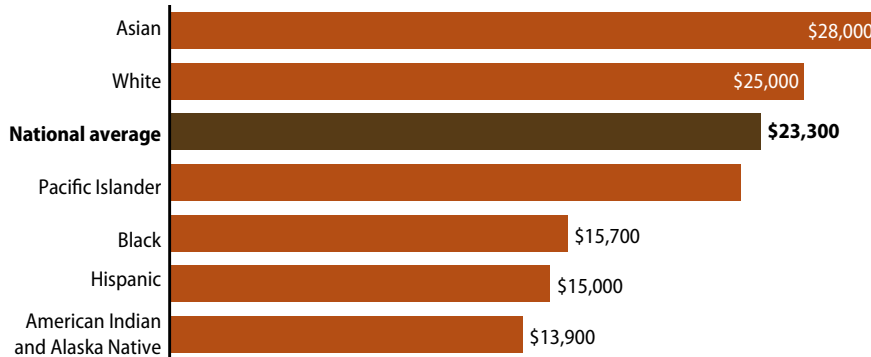
Source: Authors' analysis of data from Bureau of the Census, "American Community Survey 2008-2012 5-Year Estimates," available at [https://www.census.gov/acs/www/data\\_documentation/2012\\_release/](https://www.census.gov/acs/www/data_documentation/2012_release/) (last accessed July 2014).

Income figures for Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders look very different when adjusting for household size and cost of living

Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders have larger households—with an average of 3.02 and 3.63 persons, respectively—than the national average of 2.58 persons and white households that have an average size of 2.46 persons. As a consequence, the ordering of per-capita income figures by race and ethnicity looks very different. Unlike in the case of median household income, we find that per-capita income among Asian Americans is comparable to those among whites, and the per-capita income among Pacific Islanders is comparable to the national average. (see Figure 3)

**FIGURE 8.3**  
**Per-capita household income by race and ethnicity**

Average per-capita income in the past twelve months, 5-year estimates  
(in 2012 inflation-adjusted dollars)



Source: Authors' analysis of data from Bureau of the Census, "American Community Survey 2008-2012 5-Year Estimates," available at [https://www.census.gov/acs/www/data\\_documentation/2012\\_release/](https://www.census.gov/acs/www/data_documentation/2012_release/) (last accessed July 2014).

Finally, Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders are disproportionately more likely to live in states and metropolitan areas with the highest costs of living. According to the Bureau of Economic Analysis, states with the highest regional price parity scores—a measure that compares regional prices for goods to the national average—are Hawaii, New York, New Jersey, and California.<sup>3</sup> Together, these four states account for a disproportionately high share of the AAPI population in the United States: 50 percent of all Asian Americans and 58 percent of all Pacific Islanders live in Hawaii, New York, New Jersey, and California, in comparison to 19 percent of whites.<sup>4</sup> Thus, accounting for regional costs of living would lead to adjusted estimates of per-capita income that would be significantly lower for Asian Americans than for whites. Furthermore, the disadvantage faced by Pacific Islanders would be even starker than what we find in the case of per-capita income without cost-of-living adjustments.

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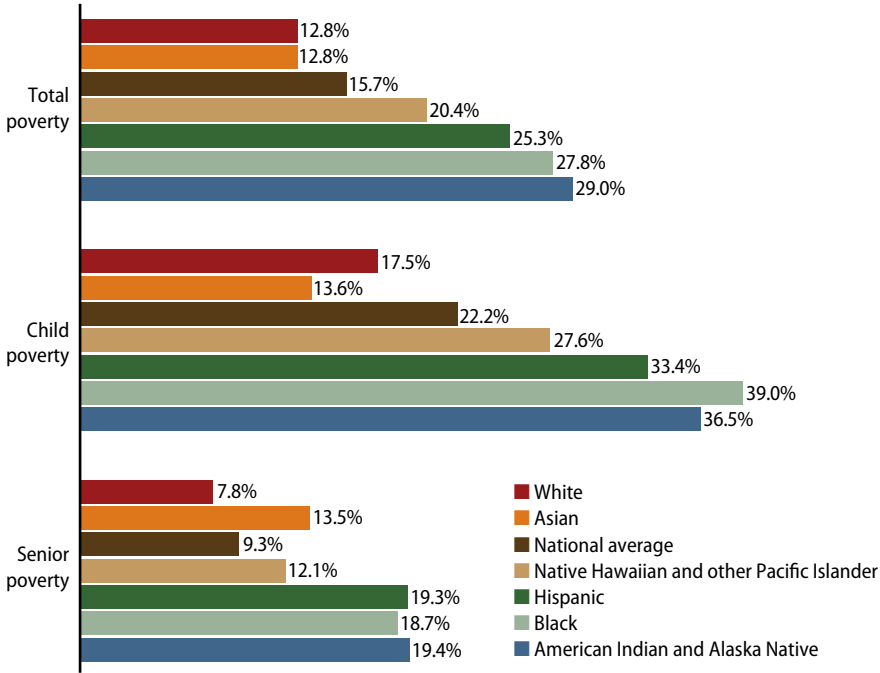
Poverty rates are lowest among Asian Americans, but are twice as high for Pacific Islanders, particularly for Pacific Islander children

Given that the household incomes vary highly among the Asian American community, it is no surprise that poverty rates reflect that same variation. In the aggregate, Asian Americans have the lowest poverty rates among all racial and ethnic groups. According to the 2012 American Community Survey's three-year estimates, Asian Americans had a poverty rate of 12.8 percent and Pacific Islanders

had a poverty rate of 20.4 percent, as compared to whites at 12.8 percent, African Americans at 27.8 percent, Hispanics at 25.3 percent, and Native Americans at 29 percent.<sup>5</sup> (see Figure 4) The poverty picture looks different, however, when examining children and seniors in particular. For all groups, the child poverty rate was greater than the total poverty rate, but the child poverty rate was lowest for Asian American children compared to children of other races. By contrast, Pacific Islander children had a poverty rate of 27.6 percent, more than twice the child poverty rate of their Asian American counterparts—13.6 percent. This pattern is not found, however, among seniors—those aged 65 years and older. Unlike in the case of children, Pacific Islander seniors had a lower poverty rate than Asian Americans, but at 12.1 percent it was still higher than the national average for seniors of 9.3 percent. Asian American seniors, too, have a comparatively high poverty rate of 13.5 percent. This statistic stands in sharp relief with the national average, and in particular with the average of white seniors, 7.8 percent.

**FIGURE 8.4**  
**Poverty status by race and ethnicity**

Total poverty, child poverty, and senior poverty



Source: Bureau of the Census, "Poverty Status in the Past 12 Months by Sex and Age," available at [http://factfinder2.census.gov/bkmk/table/1.0/en/ACS/12\\_3YR/C17001](http://factfinder2.census.gov/bkmk/table/1.0/en/ACS/12_3YR/C17001) (last accessed June 2014).

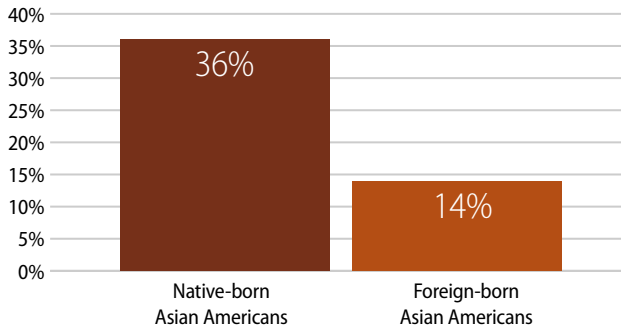
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## Asian Americans experienced the fastest growth rates in poverty, with high poverty growth among native-born Asian Americans

A closer look at the data reveals that just as AAPIs are one of the fastest-growing populations in the United States, they are also one of the fastest-growing populations in poverty since the Great Recession. In fact, from 2007 to 2011, the number of Asian Americans in poverty increased by 37 percent and Pacific Islander poverty increased by 60 percent—far higher than any other group and well surpassing the U.S. national increase of 27 percent.<sup>6</sup> Interestingly, 58 percent of the net increase of poverty among AAPIs comes from an increasing native-born poor population, while the majority of the population growth of non-poor Asian Americans is due to immigration.<sup>7</sup> In fact, the native-born Asian American population in poverty grew by 36 percent from 2000 to 2010, while the foreign-born Asian American population in poverty grew by only 14 percent during that same time period. (see Figure 5)

**FIGURE 8.5**  
**Growth in poverty among AAPIs by nativity, 2000 to 2010**

Average percent growth in poverty in the past 12 months, 10-year estimates



Source: Josh Ishimatsu, "Spotlight on Asian American and Pacific Islander Poverty: A Demographic Profile" (Washington: National Coalition for Asian Pacific American Community Development, 2013), available at <http://assetbuildingpolicynetwork.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/08/National-CAPACD-Asian-American-and-Pacific-Islander-Poverty.pdf>.

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## Poverty in the AAPI community is concentrated in some ethnic groups much more than others

Because the AAPI population includes a vast array of ethnic diversity, so too does AAPI poverty. For example, primarily due to the large size of their populations, the ethnic groups with the most people in poverty in 2010 were Chinese Americans, with 449,356 people living in poverty, and Asian Indian Americans, with 246,399

people living in poverty. However, these ethnic groups' 2006 to 2010 aggregate poverty rates were relatively low, at 12.2 percent and 8.5 percent, respectively. Furthermore, the ethnic groups with the highest concentrations of poverty have some of the smallest representation in the total U.S. population. The 2006 to 2010 aggregate poverty rate for Hmong Americans was 27 percent and it was 21.1 percent for Bangladeshi Americans. While those rates are relatively high, the actual number of people in poverty was only 63,553 and 21,284, respectively.<sup>8</sup> The Pacific Islander ethnic groups with the highest poverty rates are Tongan Americans, at 18.9 percent, and Samoan Americans, at 16.2 percent, while the actual number of people in poverty in both groups in 2010 was 9,562 Tongan Americans and 24,333 Samoan Americans.<sup>9</sup> And while the poverty rate did increase among AAPIs, the poor AAPI population did not increase significantly within any ethnic groups.<sup>10</sup> One hypothesis is that Asian Americans, who have high rates of limited English proficiency, or LEP—defined by the Census Bureau as those who those who speak a language other than English at home and who speak English “less than very well”<sup>11</sup>—are more likely to be in poverty.<sup>12</sup> In fact, 35 percent of the Asian population alone is limited English proficient, similar to the LEP rates among Latinos.<sup>13</sup>

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### Asian American and Pacific Islander poverty is concentrated

Pacific Islanders are the most concentrated group in poverty, closely followed by Asian Americans. In fact, 50 percent of poor Asian Americans and 55 percent of poor Pacific Islanders reside in just 10 metropolitan statistical areas, or MSAs.<sup>14</sup> The top 10 MSAs with the most Asian Americans living in poverty are New York, New York; Los Angeles, California; San Francisco, California; Chicago, Illinois; San Jose, California; Houston, Texas; Sacramento, California; Philadelphia, Pennsylvania; Boston, Massachusetts; and Seattle, Washington. The top 10 MSAs with the most Native Hawaiian and other Pacific Islanders living in poverty are Honolulu, Hawaii; Los Angeles, California; Hilo, Hawaii; Seattle, Washington; San Francisco, California; Salt Lake City, Utah; Kahului, Hawaii; San Diego, California; Fayetteville, North Carolina; and Las Vegas, Nevada.<sup>15</sup> Many of these areas are contain some of the most expensive housing markets in the country. In fact, nearly half of all poor AAPIs live in the 20 most expensive housing markets.<sup>16</sup> And while poor AAPIs generally live in close proximity to one another, they also cluster near other poor people in general, regardless of race.<sup>17</sup> Additionally, poor AAPIs are most likely to live in diverse multicultural neighborhoods with no single population as the majority—most poor AAPIs live in neighborhoods where the majority of residents are people of color.<sup>18</sup>

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# Consumer Power and Business Ownership

An important but oft overlooked aspect of Asian American and Pacific Islander, or AAPI, communities is their presence in the marketplace as both consumers and as business owners. While the AAPI share of the population may not be as large as other ethnic groups, their population growth rate is the fastest in the United States, and many segments of the population have incomes higher than the national average. Consequently, their national buying power share is greater than their population share—and is also the fastest growing buying power share of any racial or ethnic group in the country.<sup>1</sup>

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## The buying power of Asian Americans is the fastest growing

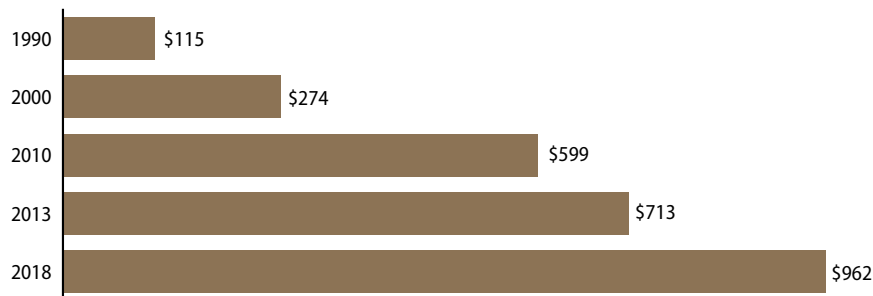
American buying power has been increasing consistently over the past few decades—from \$4.2 trillion in 1990 to \$12.4 trillion in 2013—and it is projected to grow to \$15.2 trillion by 2018.<sup>2</sup> Buying power is the total personal income of residents available for spending, after taxes, on goods and services in a given year.<sup>3</sup> Notably, it is not a measure of wealth nor does it include dollars that are borrowed, saved in previous years, or what tourists spend during their visits to the United States.<sup>4</sup>



Asian Americans are among those with the fastest growing buying power in the United States given their rapid population growth<sup>5</sup> and their high level of representation among high-skilled immigrants to the United States.<sup>6</sup> The Selig Center at the University of Georgia's Terry School of Business estimates that Asian American buying power grew rapidly from \$115 billion in 1990 to \$274 billion in 2000 and has continued growing since, reaching about \$600 billion in 2010 and more than \$700 billion in 2013.<sup>7</sup> Notably, the buying power of Asian Americans is projected to approach \$1 trillion after 2018.<sup>8</sup> (see Figure 9.1)

**FIGURE 9.1**  
**Asian American buying power in billions**

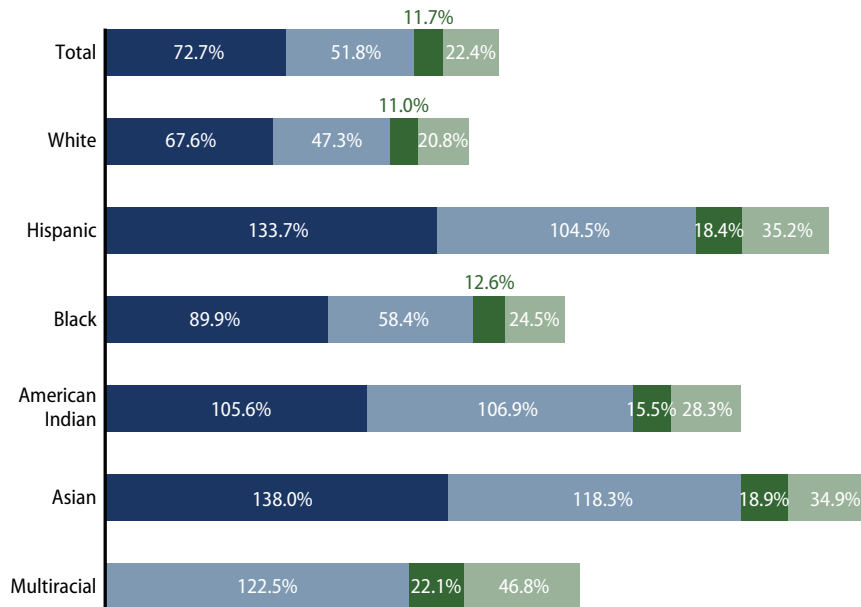
Actual and projected



Source: Jeffrey M. Humphreys, "The Multicultural Economy 2013" (Athens, GA: Selig Center for Economic Growth, Terry School of Business, University of Georgia, 2013), available at <http://www.terry.uga.edu/about/centers-institutes/selig/publications>.

These numbers illustrate that AAPI buying power has shown the quickest growth rate of any ethnic group. The 160 percent gain from 2000 through 2013 exceeds the increases in buying power projected of whites at 63 percent, the United States as a whole at 70 percent, blacks at 78 percent, Hispanics at 142 percent, and Native Americans at 139 percent. As Figure 7.1 shows, Asian Americans have had the highest growth rates in buying power, not only in the first decade of the 21st century but in the previous decade as well. Finally, at \$713 billion in 2013, the AAPI market already outshines the entire economies of all but 22 countries; in fact, the AAPI market is comparable in size to the gross domestic product, or GDP, of Saudi Arabia and the Netherlands.<sup>9</sup>

**FIGURE 9.2**  
**Percentage change in buying power**



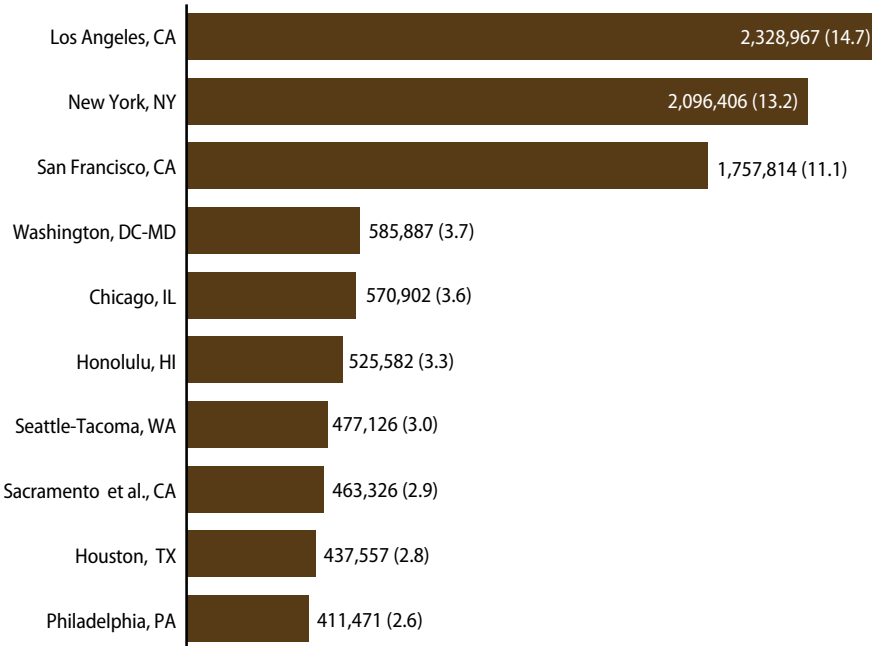
Source: Jeffrey M. Humphreys, "The Multicultural Economy 2013" (Athens, GA: Selig Center for Economic Growth, Terry School of Business, University of Georgia, 2013), available at <http://www.terry.uga.edu/about/centers-institutes/selig/publications>.

Asian American spending is online, well-researched,  
 and concentrated in urban markets

Asian American patterns of consumer spending are fairly distinct when compared to other communities. For example, consider the average level of household spending: In 2012, the Consumer Expenditure Survey from the Bureau of Labor Statistics revealed Asian American households spent an average of about \$61,400, an amount 19 percent greater than the average U.S. household.<sup>10</sup> Looking at particular spending categories, Asian Americans spend more than the national average on housing, food—including groceries and restaurants—education, and transportation.<sup>11</sup> They are also more likely to spend a greater amount on insurance, pensions, and Social Security.<sup>12</sup> At the same time, Asian Americans tend to spend significantly less than the national average on items such as alcohol, tobacco, pets, and toys.<sup>13</sup>

The high consumer spending levels of Asian American households nationally is related to higher than average levels of household income, larger household sizes,<sup>14</sup> as well as distinct residential patterns, as Asian Americans are more likely to live in states with a higher than average cost of living. As noted in the Center for American Progress report “State of Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders: Demographics,” Asian Americans are heavily concentrated in a few select states, such as California and New York.<sup>15</sup> Additionally, Asian Americans are concentrated in urban areas within these states. In fact, in 2011, almost one-third of Asian Americans lived in three metropolitan areas: Los Angeles, New York City, and San Francisco.<sup>16</sup> Because of this geographic concentration, the buying power among Asian Americans is also concentrated. Nearly 60 percent of Asian American buying power was concentrated in the five states with the largest Asian American consumer markets.<sup>17</sup> The concentration of the Asian American community in urban centers also has a profound effect on media and advertising in media markets in those urban centers. For example, 60 percent of Asian American television-owning households reside in the top-10 designated market areas—the largest being Los Angeles, New York, and San Francisco, which together make up close to 40 percent of the nation’s television market for Asian Americans. (see Figure 7.3)<sup>18</sup>

**FIGURE 9.3**  
**Top 10 Asian American television markets**



Note: The share of the national Asian American television market is noted in parentheses.  
Source: The Nielsen Company “Significant, Sophisticated and Savvy: The Asian American Consumer 2013 Report.”(2013) available at <http://www.aaja.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/12/Nielsen-Asian-American-Consumer-Report-2013.pdf>

In addition to data from the Consumer Expenditure Survey, Nielsen issued a report on Asian Americans in December 2013 summarizing the results from a variety of private firms, including the GfK Group and Scarborough.<sup>19</sup> According to this report, Asian Americans are two-thirds more likely to routinely purchase organic foods and prefer buying brand-name products, indicating their willingness to purchase certain items at a higher price. The Nielsen report also noted that Asian Americans are more likely than the national average to make their purchases online: In 2012, 77 percent of Asian Americans made an Internet purchase compared to 61 percent of the population overall.<sup>20</sup> A select portion of the Asian American community is relying heavily on online shopping with 12 percent spending more than \$2,500 annually online whereas the general population only spends about half that amount.<sup>21</sup>

Given this Internet-active community, it is not surprising that Asian Americans are more likely to read consumer reviews, procure coupons either online or from mobile applications, and utilize online deal outlets such as Groupon.<sup>22</sup> Finally, online activity also extends to shopping for insurance. Thirty percent of Asian Americans use blogs and social networking sites to learn about insurance options compared to only 11 percent of the general population. In fact, Asian Americans prefer to purchase their policies online at a higher rate too.<sup>23</sup>

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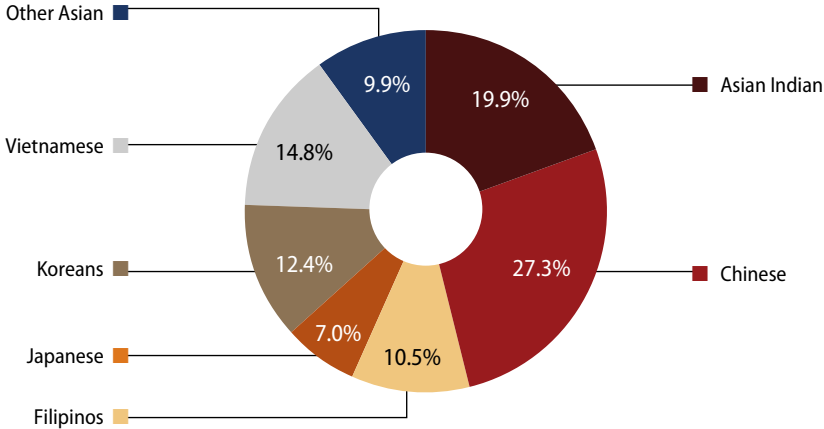
### Asian American-owned firms are among the fastest-growing

Not only do Asian Americans make up an impressive and unique share of the consumer market, they also have considerable weight as producers. The U.S. Bureau of Census conducts the Survey of Business Owners every five years and the 2007 survey is the last in which data by race and ethnicity are available. The 2007 Survey of Business Owners shows that the number of Asian American-owned firms increased by 40 percent from 2002 to 2007, more than double the average increase of 18 percent for all U.S. firms.<sup>24</sup> During this time period—excluding those firms composed only of self-employed workers—we also see a significant increase of Asian American-owned employer firms at 24.4 percent, totaling 397,484 firms in 2007. These firms employed 2.8 million persons, an increase of 27.5 percent from 2002, and had a total payroll of \$79.6 billion, an increase of 42.1 percent from 2002. In 2007, these firms generated \$455.2 billion in receipts, an increase of 56.3 percent from 2002.<sup>25</sup>

Another important aspect of Asian American-owned firms is that they are the highest grossing among all communities of color, totaling more than \$506 million in receipts in 2007 with Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander firms grossing \$6.32 million.<sup>26</sup> (see Figure 1.4) This compares to Hispanic-owned firm receipts at \$350 million, African American-owned firms at \$136 million, and Native American-owned firms at \$34 million.<sup>27</sup> By contrast, firms owned by non-Hispanic whites totaled \$10 billion.<sup>28</sup>

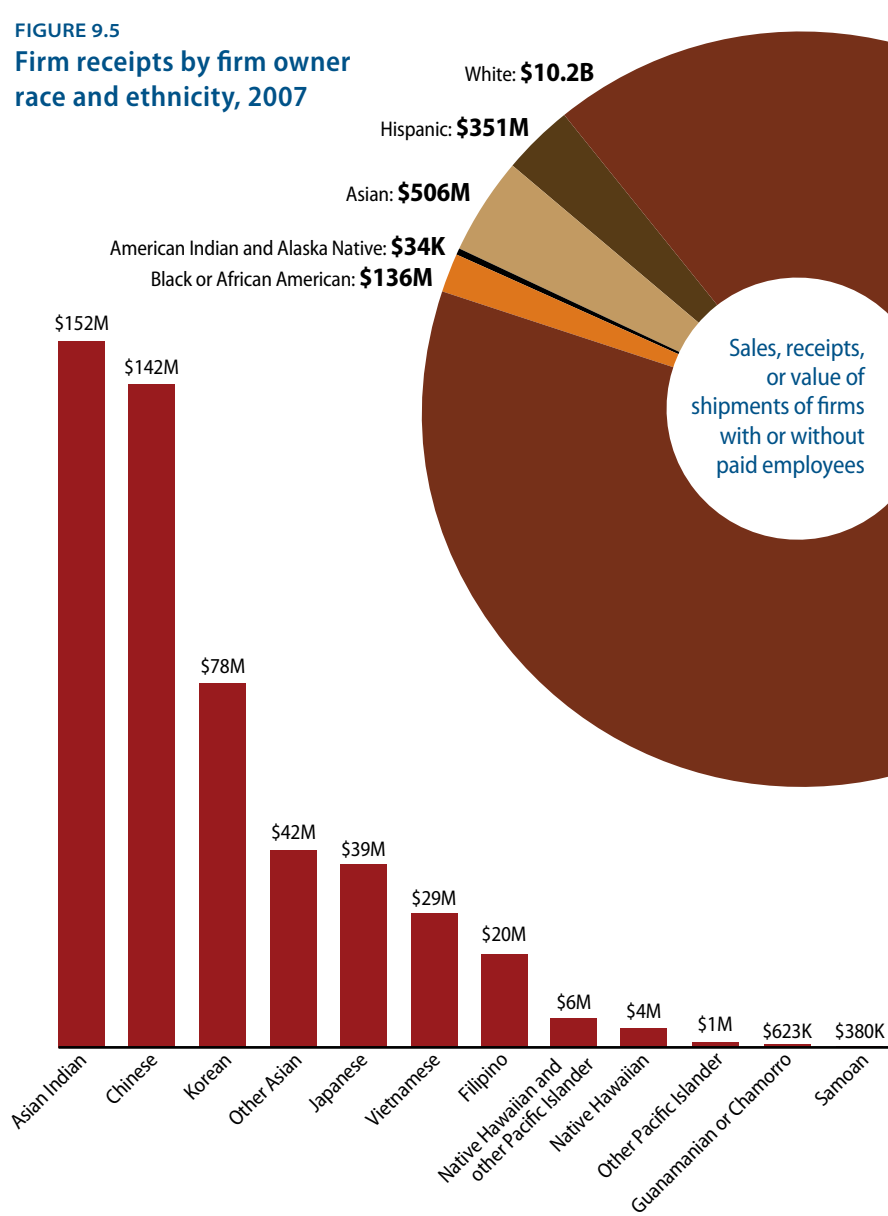
Among all firms owned by Asian and American and Pacific Islanders in the United States, Chinese Americans owned the largest share—more than one-quarter—followed by Asian Indians at 20 percent and Vietnamese at 14 percent.<sup>29</sup> (see Figure 1.3) Even though Chinese Americans owned most AAPI-owned firms, firms owned by Asian Indians grossed more receipts, on average, at \$152 billion when compared to Chinese American-owned firms at \$143 billion. Both far outperformed Vietnamese American-owned firms at \$29 billion.<sup>30</sup> (see Figure 1.4)

**FIGURE 9.4**  
**Percentage of Asian American-owned firms owned by ethnicity, 2007**



Source: Bureau of the Census, *Survey of Business Owners Summaries of Findings* (U.S. Department of Commerce, 2007), available at <https://www.census.gov/econ/sbo/getsof.html#07asian>.

**FIGURE 9.5**  
**Firm receipts by firm owner**  
**race and ethnicity, 2007**



**Asian American and Pacific Islander-owned firm receipts by ethnicity, 2007**

Source: Bureau of the Census, *Statistics for All U.S. Firms by Industry, Gender, Ethnicity, and Race for the U.S., States, Metro Areas, Counties, and Places: 2007 Survey of Business Owners* (U.S. Department of Commerce, 2007), available at [http://factfinder2.census.gov/faces/tableservices/jsf/pages/productview.xhtml?pid=SBO\\_2007\\_00CSA01&prodType=table](http://factfinder2.census.gov/faces/tableservices/jsf/pages/productview.xhtml?pid=SBO_2007_00CSA01&prodType=table).

These differences are likely related to a greater concentration of Indian American and Chinese American-owned firms in certain sectors of the economy: both groups are much more likely to specialize in “accommodation and food services”—at 10.4 percent and 12.7 percent respectively, compared to 8.7 percent for Koreans, 3.2 percent for Vietnamese Americans, and 2.9 percent for the national average.<sup>31</sup> By contrast, Vietnamese-owned firms are much more likely than the national average to be concentrated in the “other services” category with 59 percent occupying this classification compared to the national average of 12 percent. Although the Survey of Business Owner data do not specify the kinds of services in which these firms specialize, license data from the nail salon industry indicate that Vietnamese-owned firms account for more than 40 percent of nail salons in the United States and that nail salons account for about one in every six Vietnamese-owned firms.<sup>32</sup>

There is still a lot that we need to know with respect to AAPI-owned businesses given the specialization of particular national-origin groups in particular industries and the rapid growth of national-origin groups such as Bangladeshi and Pakistani Americans. Such efforts will need to combine data from the Survey of Business Owners with other types of statistical and qualitative studies of entrepreneurship among Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders.

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# Health Care and Health Outcomes

Access to health care and health status are two general sets of indicators of how Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders are doing with respect to health. There have been significant improvements in Asian American access to health care through the Affordable Care Act, or ACA. At the same time, Asian Americans face significant linguistic and cultural barriers to health care and significant gaps in health status remain, with disparities that vary by community.

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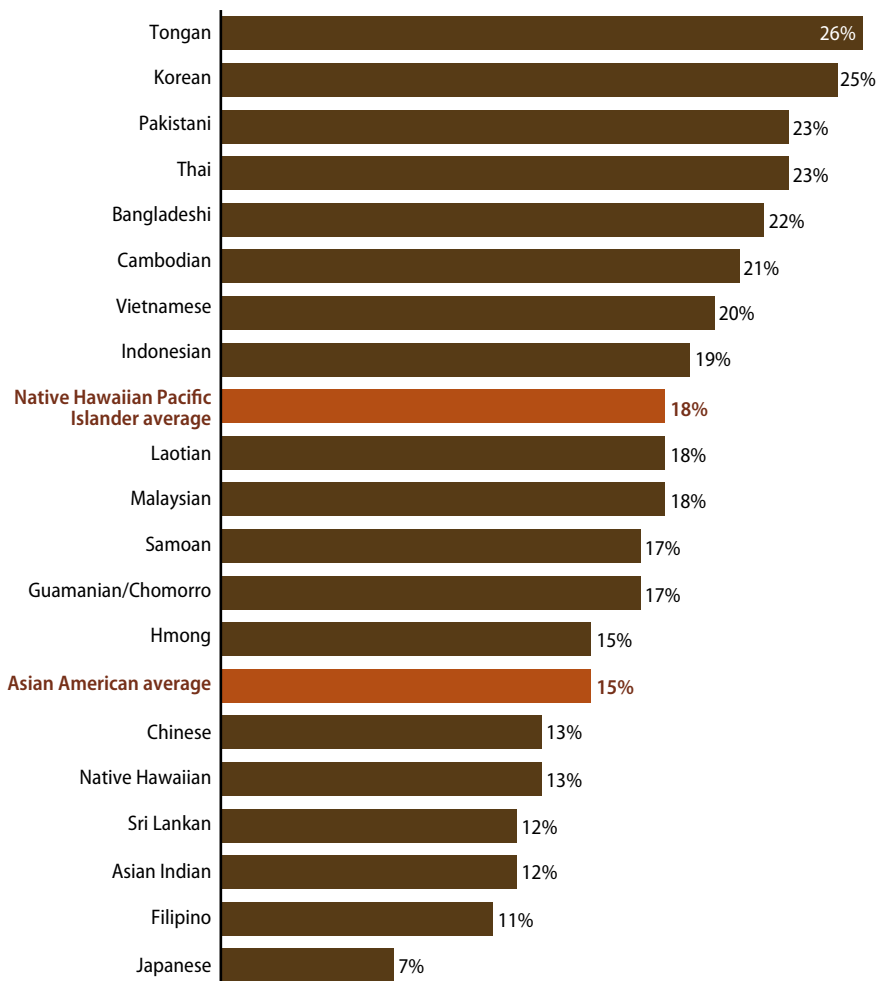
## Before the ACA, many Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders lacked insurance

According to the American Community Survey, 2.32 million Asian Americans and about 95,000 Native Hawaiians and Other Pacific Islanders, or NHPIs, did not have access to health insurance in 2012.<sup>1</sup> These numbers translated to an uninsurance rate of 15 percent for Asian Americans, on par with the national average of 14.8 percent in 2012.<sup>2</sup> Lack of access to health insurance among NHPIs was higher, at 18 percent, and on par with the uninsurance rate among African Americans in 2012.<sup>3</sup>

In contrast, uninsurance rates among whites in 2012 were lower at 13 percent, and they were significantly higher for Native Americans at 27 percent and Latinos at 29 percent. Finally, among seniors ages 65 and older, the proportion of Asian Americans without access to health insurance—4.6 percent—was on par with the proportion among Latinos at 5 percent. These rates were significantly higher than the national average of 1 percent, as well as higher than the uninsurance rates among white seniors—0.6 percent—and African American seniors, 1.5 percent. The proportion of uninsurance among NHPI seniors—2.5 percent—was similar to the rate among Native Americans, 2.7 percent.

As in the case of outcomes such as educational attainment,<sup>4</sup> there are significant differences in access to health insurance by detailed origin. Based on our analysis of individual-level data from the 2008–2012 American Community Survey 5-year Estimates (see Figure 10.1), we find that Tongans had the highest rates of uninsurance among AAPIs at 26 percent; closely following were Korean Americans at 25 percent and Pakistani and Thai Americans at 23 percent each. By contrast, Japanese Americans had the lowest rates of uninsurance at 7 percent, while Filipinos had a rate of 11 percent, and Asian Indians had a rate of 12 percent.

**FIGURE 10.1**  
**Percent without health insurance prior to the Affordable Care Act**



Source: Authors' analysis of "Public Use Microdata Sample" from Bureau of the Census, "American Community Survey 2008–2012 American Community Survey 5-year Estimates," available at [http://www.census.gov/acs/www/data\\_documentation/pums\\_data/](http://www.census.gov/acs/www/data_documentation/pums_data/) (last accessed August 2014).

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## The ACA had strong enrollment of Asian Americans in federal and state insurance exchanges

Asian Americans signed up for the ACA in very large numbers. By the end of the first open enrollment period, from October 2013 to April 2014,<sup>6</sup> about 299,000 Asian Americans had signed up for insurance through the federally facilitated marketplace, or FFM.<sup>7</sup> This accounted for 5.5 percent of all enrollees in the FFM and 7.9 percent of those who provided information on their race and ethnicity. By comparison, 5.1 percent of the uninsured population in 2012 was Asian American.

In California and Washington—where state-based exchanges reported racial data on health insurance enrollments—the Asian American share of those enrolled significantly exceeded their share of the uninsured. In California, for example, Asian Americans comprised 21 percent of enrollees in the state insurance exchange, amounting to 230,000 individuals.<sup>8</sup> This figure was nearly double their share of the uninsured in the state of 10.8 percent in 2012.<sup>9</sup> Likewise, in Washington, the 15,800 Asian Americans who enrolled in the state exchange represented 10.3 percent of all enrollees,<sup>10</sup> a share that was significantly higher than their share of the uninsured, which was 7.4 percent in 2012.<sup>11</sup> This disproportionately high level of enrollment of Asian Americans in the ACA was most likely due to the efforts of nonprofits that serve Asian Americans—such as the Action for Health Justice, which, along with their partners, provided enrollment assistance to 232,230 Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders<sup>12</sup>—and Asian American insurance agents in states such as California who provided in-language outreach.<sup>13</sup>

Native Hawaiians and Pacific Islanders also enrolled in the ACA, although at levels that were significantly below their share of the uninsured population. In the federally facilitated marketplace, about 3,200 NHPIs enrolled in the Affordable Care Act, accounting for 0.06 percent of all enrollees in the FFM.<sup>14</sup> By comparison, 0.2 percent of the uninsured population in 2012 was NHPI. In California, NHPIs represented 0.44 percent of the uninsured population but only represented 0.24 percent of those who enrolled in the state insurance exchange.<sup>15</sup> Only in the state of Washington did NHPI enrollment exceed their share of the uninsured population, with just 1.7 percent of enrollees as compared to 0.98 percent of the uninsured.<sup>16</sup>

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## AAPIs face language barriers and insufficient provision of culturally competent health care

As noted in the Center for American Progress issue brief, “Language Diversity and English Proficiency,” Asian Americans face language barriers at levels that are similar to Latinos. About three-quarters of Asian Americans—or 77 percent—speak a language other than English at home, and more than one-third—or 35 percent—are limited-English proficient, or LEP. But most health care facilities do not provide adequate language support, including in emergency room situations involving LEP patients, and only one in four U.S. teaching hospitals provide training for doctors to work with interpreters.<sup>17</sup> The lack of language support can be particularly harmful in a health context, as past research has shown that language barriers are associated with more emergency room visits, more lab tests, less follow-up from health providers, less health literacy among patients, and less overall satisfaction with health services.<sup>18</sup>

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## Serious AAPI health disparities vary according to group and the health outcome being considered

Assessments of Asian American and Pacific Islander health disparities vary according to the outcome being considered. Consider this contrast: Asian Americans have the highest life expectancy in the United States—87.3 years in 2010 and 2011, compared to 78.6 for the national average<sup>19</sup>—while Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islanders have been shown to have life expectancy rates that are well below Asian Americans<sup>20</sup> and non-Hispanic whites.<sup>21</sup>

At the same time, there are significant health disparities when it comes to particular medical conditions. Asian Americans, for example, account for about 50 percent of Americans living with chronic Hepatitis B, or about 10 times their share of the resident population.<sup>22</sup> Relatedly, liver cancer is also much more common among Asian Americans than among non-Hispanic whites. In fact, rates of liver cancer are more than three times higher for Asian Americans, according to studies based on California data,<sup>23</sup> and are particularly high among Vietnamese Americans and Korean Americans—eight times higher and five times higher, respectively.<sup>24</sup> At the same time, other medical conditions such as breast cancer are less prevalent among Asian Americans than among non-Hispanic whites.<sup>25</sup>

Other significant health disparities include: a higher rate of coronary artery disease among Asian Indians;<sup>26</sup> disproportionately high rates of heart disease, cancer, and diabetes among Native Hawaiians and Pacific Islanders;<sup>27</sup> and above-average rates of diabetes among Filipinos, Vietnamese, and South Asians.<sup>28</sup>

Reproductive and sexual health care disparities are also significant. Asian American women have the lowest cervical cancer screening rate of all racial and ethnic groups in the United States.<sup>29</sup> This has resulted in Asian American women having higher mortality from cervical cancer than the national average.<sup>30</sup>

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## Conclusion

While AAPIs had a relatively strong rate of enrollment in the Affordable Care Act, there are some significant barriers that remain, both with respect to access to care and health status. Linguistic and cultural barriers are very significant problems for Asian Americans in the health care context, and our understanding of the prevalence of this problem and its effects are limited by the lack of good administrative data on the provision of language assistance and culturally competent care.<sup>31</sup> Finally, given the number of studies that point to disparities in health outcomes for many AAPI populations, we need more consistent efforts at data disaggregation by national origin when it comes to health outcomes.

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