

Demographics

Part of the “State of Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders” Series

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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.¹ 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.² 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.³ 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.⁴

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

		Growth, 2010 to 2013	Growth, 2000 to 2010
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 and 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,⁵ 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.⁶ 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.⁷ Nationality has been an important way in which these two racial categories have been constructed.⁸ Our early federal laws on immigration treated Asians

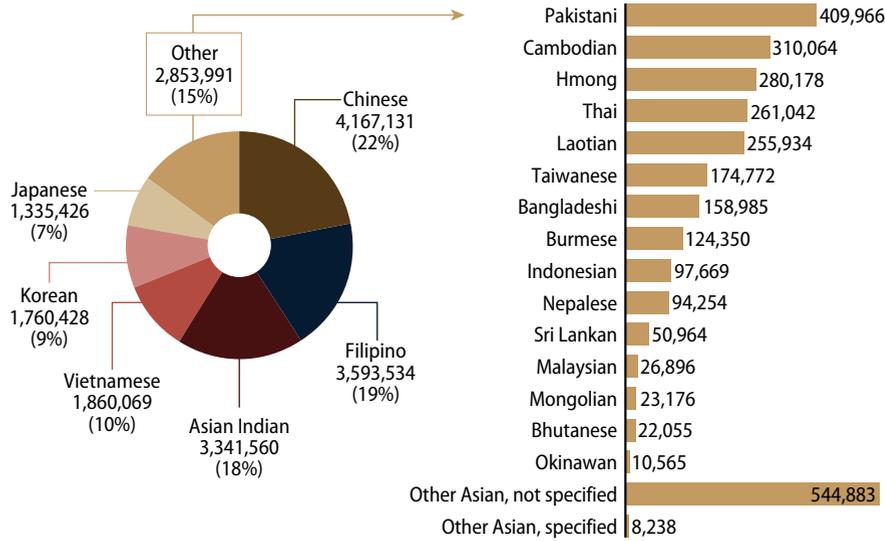
differently based on their national origins starting with the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882, and the colonial relationship with Pacific Islanders varied markedly across groups. Furthermore, given that most Asian Americans are still first-generation immigrants, national-origin differences are a significant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

The composition of the Asian American community itself has now become much more diverse from the majority Chinese and Japanese American¹⁰ 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.¹¹ 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.

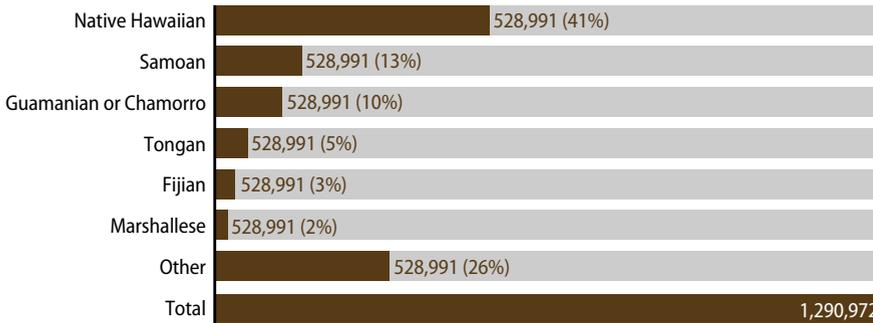
While the smallest of the top six is the Japanese American population, there is still a substantial gap between this group and the next largest, Pakistani Americans, at 409,966 people.¹² However, some smaller groups such as Bangladeshi Americans are growing at an exceptional rate—177 percent between 2000 and 2010. If this rate is maintained, it will have a large impact on the future diversity of the Asian American community.¹³ 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.¹⁴

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 (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 (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.¹⁵

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
Asian	56%	California (32)	New York (9)	Texas (7)	New Jersey (5)	Hawaii (4)
Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander	67%	Hawaii (29)	California (25)	Washington (6)	Texas (4)	Utah (3)
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 (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.¹⁶

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
Fastest-growth states				
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%
Slowest-growth states				
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/PEPSRSH?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 (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 (last accessed March 2014).

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.¹⁷ 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.¹⁸ 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%

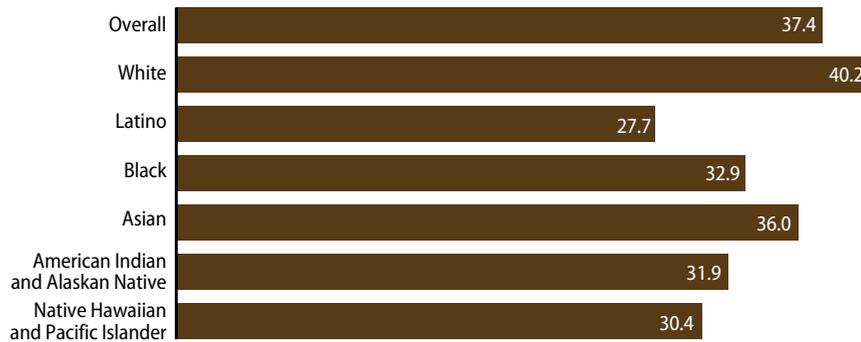
Note: Data for all racial groups provided use the race alone measure, except where noted. Hispanics can be of any race.

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/ (last accessed March 2014).

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 21.5.¹⁹ 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.²⁰ 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.²¹

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)

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	42	31	89	18	38	71	36	75
- Protestant	22	22	21	11	33	61	6	50
- Roman Catholic	19	8	65	5	4	10	30	23
- Other Christian	1	*	3	2	1	*	*	2
Buddhist	14	15	1	1	25	6	43	1
Hindu	10	0	*	51	0	0	0	*
Jewish	*	*	1	*	*	0	0	2
Muslim	4	*	0	10	*	0	0	1
Unitarian Universalist	*	*	*	*	*	0	0	*
Sikh	1	0	0	5	0	0	0	--
Jain	*	0	0	2	0	0	0	--
Bahá'í Faith	*	*	0	*	0	*	0	--
Shinto	*	0	0	0	1	0	0	--
Confucian	*	*	0	0	0	0	0	--
Cao Dai	*	0	0	0	0	0	*	--
Other religion	1	1	2	1	2	*	*	2
Unaffiliated	26	52	8	10	32	23	20	19

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 2010.²² 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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Acknowledgements

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Endnotes

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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.
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