



Profile of Asian American Seniors in the United States

Asian American Federation Census Information Center

Population Growth and Distribution

The Asian population age 65 and older rose from over 800,000 to over 1.2 million, an increase of 52 percent from 2000 to 2007, representing a major demographic shift in the community.¹ The overall increase of seniors nationwide was 6 percent over the same time period. In addition, the total Asian American population grew from 11.9 million to 14.9 million, or an increase of 25 percent.

Asian seniors are mainly concentrated in the western and northeast United States as shown in Figure 1. More than half a million Asian seniors reside in California, followed by more than 110,000 in Hawaii

and New York. The next largest state was Texas with less than 50,000 Asian seniors.

Table 1 presents the ethnic breakdown for the states with more than 20,000 Asian seniors. In Hawaii and New York, the majority of Asian seniors are of one ethnicity (Japanese and Chinese, respectively). In two states, the majority of Asian seniors were either of two ethnicities: Chinese and Filipino for California and Indian and Chinese for New Jersey. Nationwide, Chinese seniors were 28 percent of the Asian senior population, Filipinos were 21 percent, Japanese 15 percent, Indian 11 percent, Vietnamese 10 percent, and Koreans 9 percent.

Figure 1: Map of Asian Senior Population in 2005-2007



Table 1: States with More than 20,000 Asian Seniors

State	Asian Senior Population	Major Ethnicities
California	491,104	Chinese (32%), Filipino (26%), Japanese (13%), Vietnamese (10%), Korean (9%), Indian (6%)
Hawaii	111,774	Japanese (57%) Filipino (23%), Chinese (12%), Korean (4%)
New York	110,884	Chinese (51%), Indian (18%), Filipino (11%), Korean (9%), Japanese and Vietnamese (3% each)
Texas	48,012	Vietnamese (26%), Indian (19%), Chinese (18%), Filipino (14%), Korean (9%), Pakistani (2%)
New Jersey	45,393	Indian (32%), Chinese (24%), Filipino (23%), Korean (11%), Vietnamese (3%)
Illinois	41,465	Filipino (29%), Indian (23%), Chinese (20%), Korean (13%), Japanese (7%), Vietnamese (4%)
Washington	38,252	Chinese (24%), Filipino (21%), Japanese (20%), Korean (12%), Vietnamese (11%), Indian (5%)
Florida	21,260	Indian (25%), Filipino (23%), Vietnamese (15%), Chinese (14%), Korean (8%)
Virginia	25,586	Filipino (23%), Korean (19%), Vietnamese (18%), Chinese (15%), Indian (14%)
Maryland	23,247	Chinese (27%), Indian and Korean (20% each), Filipino (13%), Vietnamese (8%)

Immigration and Citizenship

Asian seniors were more likely to be immigrants than seniors in the general population. While 12 percent of seniors in general were immigrants, 81 percent of Asian seniors were foreign-born. Asian seniors were also arrived much later. Three-quarters Asian seniors who were immigrants arrived in the United States after 1970, while 46 percent of all seniors who were immigrants arrived after 1970. For Asian senior immigrants, 21 percent arrived in the 1970s, 24 percent in the 1980s, 21 percent in the 1990s, and 9 percent in the current decade. For senior immigrants in general, 14 percent arrived in the 1970s, 13 percent in the 1980s, 12 percent in the 1990s, and 6 percent in the current decade.

Asian senior immigrants had a similar naturalization rate as senior immigrants in general. While 72 percent of senior immigrants in general were citizens, 73 percent of Asian senior immigrants were citizens. Overall, 22 percent of all Asian seniors were not citizens, compared with 3 percent of all seniors.

Education and English Ability

There is a wide gap in education levels among Asian seniors. While 30 percent of Asian seniors had a bachelor's degree or higher compared to one fifth of

all seniors, a third of Asian seniors never graduated high school, compared to just over a quarter of all seniors in the United States.

Many Asian seniors were also linguistically isolated. While most Asian seniors lived in family households, almost a third (31%) of Asian seniors lived in linguistically isolated households.² About three in five Asians seniors had difficulty speaking English,³ compared to 8 percent of all seniors.

Poverty

Nationwide 1 in 8 Asian seniors were living below the federal poverty threshold,⁴ compared with 1 in 10 of all seniors and 7.8 percent of non-Hispanic white seniors. The overall poverty rate for all Asian Americans was 10.9 percent. The number of Asian seniors living in poverty increased by 52 percent from 95,244 in the Census 2000 to 144,537 in the 2005-2007 American Community Survey (ACS).

Table 2 shows the populations of Asian seniors in poverty and the poverty rates for Asian seniors for states with more than 2,500 Asian seniors in poverty. California, New York and Hawaii had the largest populations of Asian seniors in poverty. However there was a large gap between each of those states. New York's population of poor Asian seniors was

Table 2: Population of Asian Seniors in Poverty and Poverty Rate by State

State	Asian Seniors in Poverty	Poverty Rate
California	50,451	10%
New York	24,355	22%
Hawaii	9,701	9%
Texas	7,555	16%
Washington	6,627	18%
Illinois	5,053	12%
Massachusetts	4,909	26%
Florida	4,094	13%
New Jersey	3,359	8%
Pennsylvania	3,248	18%
Virginia	2,502	10%

Table 3: Senior Populations and Poverty Rates by Ethnic Group, 2005-2007

Ethnic Group	Population	Poverty Rate
All Seniors	37,265,110	9.9
Non-Hispanic White Alone	30,201,960	7.8
Black Alone	3,114,189	21.0
Hispanic	2,379,100	19.7
Asian alone	1,176,698	12.5
Bangladeshi alone	1,491	18.2*
Cambodian alone	11,079	22.2
Chinese alone	325,868	17.2
Chinese, except Taiwanese, alone	318,242	17.4
Taiwanese alone	7,626	11.1*
Filipino alone	250,250	7.0
Hmong alone	6,171	20.0
Indian alone	133,058	8.5
Indonesian alone	3,575	12.9*
Japanese alone	177,230	6.7
Korean alone	108,118	20.0
Laotian alone	9,891	20.1
Pakistani alone	7,413	8.5*
Sri Lankan alone	2,054	4.7
Thai alone	6,975	11.1*
Vietnamese alone	114,533	16.3

Note: Because the sample sizes in the ACS were so small for these ethnic groups, poverty rates with an asterisk (*) may not reflect real differences from the poverty rate for all seniors (i.e., did not pass the test for statistical significance).

less than half of California’s and, in turn, Hawaii’s population was less than half of New York’s.

Massachusetts and New York had the highest Asian senior poverty rates, which were 26 and 22 percent, respectively. New Jersey and Hawaii had the lowest Asian senior poverty rates at 8 and 9 percent, respectively.

Table 3 shows the senior population and poverty rate estimates by ethnic groups. The data show the diversity in the Asian community both in ethnicities and economic circumstances. Cambodian, Hmong, Korean, and Laotian seniors were more than twice as likely as seniors in general to be living in poverty. At the other end, Filipino, Indian, Japanese, and Sri Lankan seniors had lower poverty rates than the general senior population.

Living Arrangements

The living arrangements of Asian seniors differed from the general population. Only 15 percent of Asian

seniors in households were living alone compared with 27 percent of all seniors in households. Among those living below the poverty level, 36 percent of Asian seniors in households were living alone, compared with 56 percent of all poor seniors in households. This means that poor Asian seniors were more likely to be living with other family members, whether it is their spouse or their children.

Footnotes

¹ Data sources used in this brief were the 2005-2007 American Community Survey (ACS) Special Population Profile, the Census Bureau Population Estimates Program and the Census 2000 and are for the Asian Alone or in Any Combination category, unless otherwise noted. The 2005-2007 ACS represents a three-year period estimates and represents the best available data on small populations as of January 2009.

² Linguistically isolated households were households where everyone over the age of 13 had difficulty speaking English, as defined in footnote 3.

³ Difficulty speaking English, also known as “Limited English Proficiency,” refers to individuals who reported speaking a language other than English at home and spoke English “well,” “not well,” or “not at all”.

⁴ Families and individuals were classified as below the poverty line if their total family income or unrelated individual income was less than the poverty threshold specified for the applicable family size, age of householder, and number of related children younger than 18 present. For these thresholds, please see <http://www.census.gov/hhes/www/poverty/threshld.html>.

Technical Notes

Race Categories

Beginning with the Census 2000, the Census Bureau collects data in which respondents were allowed to mark more than one race. As a consequence, race information is far more complicated than such data from previous censuses. For example, 2000 data include results for single-race as well as multiple-race responses. “Asian Alone” corresponds to the respondents who reported exactly one Asian group and no other race category. “Alone” should be considered the minimum population size in any analysis that uses Census Bureau data.

To be as inclusive as possible, this profile uses “Asian Alone or in Any Combination” numbers where possible. “Alone or in Any Combination” corresponds to the responses (not respondents) that included the selected Asian group, either alone or in any combination with other Asian groups or other race categories. If a respondent selected an Asian group and another racial group (e.g., Pakistani and black), that individual, while excluded from the “Asian Alone” count, was tallied in the “Alone or in Any Combination” count for the Asian group and the other racial group. Hence, some overlap in the “In Any Combination” numbers occurred. “Alone or in Any Combination” should be considered the maximum population size in any analysis that uses Census Bureau data.

American Community Survey

As part of the redesign of the decennial census, the Census Bureau has implemented the American Community Survey (ACS) as the replacement for the Decennial Census Long Form. Instead of collecting Long Form data (demographic, housing, social, and economic information) once every ten years, the ACS will eventually supply communities at the local level with new data every year. In order to obtain sufficiently large number of samples for small populations, the ACS will make use of the concept of period estimates. For Census tracts, five-year period estimates will be updated annually starting in 2010. For communities with 20,000 or more people, annual three-year period estimates will be released at the end of each year beginning with 2008. Populations with 65,000 or more people will receive annual single-year estimates starting in 2006.

About This Profile

This is one of a series of Asian American population profiles prepared by the Asian American Federation Census Information Center (CIC) to increase understanding of the rapidly-growing and diverse Asian American population in the New York metropolitan area. For more on the Federation, visit www.aafederation.org.

Data citations from this profile should include the following acknowledgment: “Data derived from analysis by the Asian American Federation Census Information Center.”

For More Information

For more information regarding this profile, please contact the Asian American Federation Census Information Center at (212) 344-5878 x19 or howard.shih@aafederation.org, or visit www.aafederation.org/cic/.

Version 1.0 – 02/09

Funding support for this profile has been provided generously by the United Way of New York City and Carnegie Corporation of New York.

© 2009 Asian American Federation
120 Wall Street, 3rd Floor, New York, NY 10005
Tel.: (212) 344-5878 | Fax: (212) 344-5636
E-mail: info@aafederation.org
Web Site: www.aafederation.org