

The Growth of the Asian Pacific American Population: Twenty Million in 2020

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The fastest growing minority group in the United States today is Asian and Pacific Americans. Although this group only comprised 2.9 percent of the total United States population in 1990, it increased in size by 95 percent from 1980 to 1990 (see table 1). Whites, on the other hand, make up 80.3 percent of the total U.S. population, yet their increase over the 1980s was merely 6 percent. African Americans were 12.1 percent of the total population in 1990 and saw only a 13.2 percent increase in the 1980s. And lastly, Hispanics, who constitute 9 percent of the total population, grew 53 percent from 1980 to 1990.¹ With an extraordinary growth rate, Asian Pacific Americans as a share of the total U.S. population grew from 0.7 percent in 1970 to 2.9 percent in 1990.

The rapid growth of the Asian Pacific American population over the last quarter of the century will likely continue well into the next century, and this increase poses an enormous policy challenge not only to the Asian Pacific American community, but also to the nation as a whole. To take a proactive stance requires us to go beyond reaction to today's pressing problems. We must create a vision for the next quarter century

that will ensure that Asian Pacific Americans will find a just and equitable place in American society and the economy—a position that will also enable Asian Pacific Americans to contribute constructively to the building of a truly multicultural society.

TABLE 1. Asian Pacific Americans
Population by Ethnicity: 1980 and 1990

	1980	1990	Percent Growth
Total Asian Pacific	3,726,440*	7,273,662	95%
Chinese	806,040	1,645,472	104%
Filipino	774,652	1,406,770	82%
Japanese	700,974	847,562	21%
Asian Indian	361,531	815,447	125%
Korean	354,593	798,849	125%
Vietnamese	261,729	614,547	135%
Hawaiian	166,814	211,014	26%
Samoan	41,948	62,964	50%
Guamanian	32,158	49,345	53%
Other Asian Pacific	226,001	821,692	264%

*The 1980 number for Asian Pacific Americans in this table is slightly higher than that used in other published reports because it includes the count for “other” Asian Pacific American groups. Other published census reports include only nine specific Asian Pacific American groups for the 1980 count. Therefore, our calculation of percent growth is 95%, which is lower than the published 108% growth.²

Population projections are a key tool in helping frame a meaningful discussion of the policy issues facing Asian Pacific Americans.³ Understanding current and future demographic patterns and trends provides insights to the struggles and conflicts in the educational, economic, and social service arenas, as well as the broad set of interracial and intereth-

nic relationships that influence and shape public policy. Although the Bureau of the Census does project the white, black, and Hispanic populations, the Bureau unfortunately does not do so for the Asian Pacific American population. At best, we are in the residual "other" category.

This project fills the gap by projecting Asian Pacific Americans to the year 2020. Depending on the underlying assumptions regarding birth rates and net immigration, the Asian Pacific population in 2020 will be from 17.9 million to 20.2 million, a 145 percent to 177 percent increase from 1990.

Population Model

Our population model is an augmented cohort-survival model. Like any other projection model, our estimates are essentially educated guesses based upon reasonable assumptions. There is no guarantee that these will be accurate. Given the changing dynamics of the United States, it would not be surprising if these projections were inaccurate. Nonetheless, these Asian Pacific population projections provide us with valuable information of the changing demographics of the Asian Pacific population.

Following standard practice, the model estimates the population by gender and by age-cohorts in five-year increments. The projection for a given age group is calculated as the sum of the number of surviving persons of the younger age-cohort five years earlier plus net migrations for that group. For example, the 15-to-19-year-old population in 1995 is calculated to be the number of surviving 10-to-14-year-old children in 1990 plus the net migration of teenagers who would be 15 to 19 years old in 1995. This estimation is done for every age-cohort. The new 0-4 group is defined as the number of infants born during the five-year interval. This process is repeated five additional times to derive projections for the year 2020.

The 1980 and 1990 census data and California vital statistics were used to derive net migration, fertility rates, and mortality rates. The base population estimates were taken from the published 1980 Census' detailed population characteristics reports, the published 1980 Asian and Pacific Islanders census report, and the 1990 Census Summary Tape File 1 (STF1). The numbers are based on the racial self-identifier.

Along with the age and gender breakdowns, we project the Asian

Pacific American population by nativity and for two major regions in the United States. It is crucial to estimate the number of foreign-born Asian Pacifics because they face intense cultural and economic barriers that dramatically differ from those of American-born Asian Pacifics. Thus, these foreign-born individuals need special programs and social services to help them adjust to a new society. We also project the Asian Pacific American population for California and a region comprised of three Mid-Atlantic states (New York, New Jersey, and Pennsylvania).

California has been the primary area for Asian immigration. Initially, large numbers of Chinese immigrants came to California in pursuit of economic prosperity that was created by the Gold Rush. Subsequently, other Asian Pacific ethnic groups, such as the Japanese and Filipinos, settled in this area. As a result, ethnic communities and resources were established, which ultimately attracted more Asian immigrants such as Koreans and Southeast Asians. In 1970 the total number for the Asian Pacific population in California was 0.6 million. This population grew to 1.3 million in 1980, and to 2.8 million in 1990. In 1990, 2.8 million Asian Pacifics comprised 10 percent of the California population and 40 percent of the entire U.S. Asian Pacific American population.

The Mid-Atlantic area has a substantial number of Asian Pacifics. In 1970, there were .22 million, .51 million in 1980, and 1.1 million in 1990. New York has the largest population of Asian Pacifics among the three states. Of the Asian Pacific immigrants who entered the United States between 1982 and 1989, approximately 11 percent (210,000) indicated that New York was their proposed state of residence. Although it could have been extremely useful to have projections by ethnicity (e.g., Chinese, Japanese, etc.), the required data are not yet available, and using the existing data yields inconsistent results. We include as an appendix some information on several major Asian Pacific American ethnic groups.

Fertility and Survival Rates

The annual birth rates and corresponding fertility rates were calculated from California vital statistics.⁴ We matched births in 1990 with the population reported in the Census. In order to minimize the influence of random fluctuations, we used data from three years to adjust 1990 births. The percentage distribution of live births to women (age 15 to 44) by five-

year age groups was calculated for the period from 1988 to 1990, and this distribution was applied to the total number of births for 1990. Next, the estimated number of births per age group was divided by the number of females for the corresponding age group.

The completed fertility rate is defined as five times the sum of the annual birth rate for women in five-year age groups. This imputed fertility rate assumes that the current birth rates, or child-bearing behavior, remain stable over time. This is not a safe assumption. With economic mobility and acculturation, the fertility rates of Asian Pacifics decrease and approach the norm of non-Hispanic Whites.⁵ Our estimated fertility rate is 2.01. This is lower than the 2.3 to 2.4 rate used by others.⁶

Survival rates are also estimated from vital statistics for California. We use the rates developed by California's Center for Health Statistics (1983), which are published as abridged life tables.⁷ Rates are available by race, age-group, and gender.⁸

Immigration Rates

Immigration rates, which are the most important component of Asian Pacific American population growth, are calculated from Census reports, and cross checked with INS data and refugee information. The 1980 Census provides information on the native- and foreign-born populations and persons; however, the data on nativity of individual ethnic groups for 1990 are not yet available. This information will not become public until the year 1993. We estimate the 1990 foreign-born population by projecting the 1980 Asian Pacific population by nativity. The 1980-based projections for 1990 provide an estimate of the 1990 population with the assumption of no (zero) net immigration. Births during the 1980s are based on both the observed 1980 total Asian Pacific population and the 1990 total Asian Pacific population. We then define the net immigration for the 1980s as the difference between the 1990 estimates based on the 1980 population and observed 1990 population. By combining the new immigrants with the surviving immigrants from 1980, we derive a total foreign-born population for 1990. Our estimate (4.6 million) is very close to the number of persons born in Asia recorded in the 1990 Census (4.5 million).

Based on the above analysis, we then developed sets of immigration rates for the population model. In the baseline population projection,

immigration is assumed to continue at the same level as in the 1980s at 210,000 Asian Pacific immigrants per year. The birth rates are also speculated to remain constant since the 1980s at 2.01 Asian Pacific births per female. This linear extrapolation simply assumes a continuance of past trends. The second projection posits a rise in the population of Asian Pacific immigrants, yet at the same time a decrease in the overall birth rates. The projected immigration begins with roughly 210,000 persons per year with an increase of approximately 40,000 over a ten-year period; and the birth starts at the higher 2.3 births per female with a decrease of about 0.1, or 4 percent to 5 percent, every ten years. The final projection surmises that the number of immigrants slowly increases at a rate of 10,000 per ten years. At the same time, the birth rate will also grow from 2.0 at a rate of 0.1, or 4 percent to 5 percent, every ten years. We believe that the second set of assumptions is the most realistic.

These three sets of assumptions are not meant to produce the traditional low, medium, and high projections. We believe that the second set of assumptions leads to the “best” or “most likely” projections. The other two sets of assumptions lead to low projections and provide us with a way of understanding how differences in birth rates and immigration can affect the outcome.

Overall Projections

This section discusses and analyzes our population projections for the year 2020. Table 2 shows the projections for the year 2020 for Asian Pacifics by age. Our second and preferred projection shows that the total population for all Asian Pacific ethnic groups will increase from 7.3 million in 1990 to 20.2 million in the year 2020. This shows a growth of approximately 145 percent. Interestingly, the first and third projections are similar, although when we developed the assumptions, arriving at similar projections was not the intent.

Our projections differ from the projections by U.S. Census Bureau.⁹ Because the Census uses a residual category (i.e., not White and not Black) that is predominantly but not exclusively Asian Pacific American, we compare the absolute growth of the Bureau of the Census populations with ours. Our second projection shows that the Asian Pacific population will grow by 13 million, which is considerably higher than the 9.3 million in the Census’ middle projection series. The major difference is

that the Census assumes an annual net immigration of 176,000, which is significantly lower than the trend in recent years. The Census' high projections series, which is based on an immigration level of 220,000, produces an increase of 12.7 million, which is consistent with our second projection.

TABLE 2. Projections of the Asian Pacifics
in the United States by Age (x1000)

Asian Pacific Americans	1990	2020A	2020B*	2020C
<15	1,749	3,706	4,370	3,439
15-24	1,224	2,509	3,013	2,511
25-44	2,659	5,309	6,160	5,492
45-64	1,187	4,333	4,614	4,392
65+	454	2,057	2,089	2,065
Total	7,274	17,914	20,246	17,904

*preferred projection

Age Group Projections

The number of Asian Pacific children and young adults (age 0 to 24) will increase from approximately three million in 1990 to 6.2 million in 2020. This is an increase of 107 percent for the base projection. However, the number of foreign-born children and young adults shows a slight decrease of 1.2 million to one million, or roughly 16 percent. Our second assumption forecasts that the individuals age 0 to 24 will also increase by 150 percent, from three million in 1990 to 7.4 million in 2020. The foreign-born children and young adults show a growth as well: 1.2 million and 1.4 million, respectively, or 16 percent. And last, our third projection sees

an increase of these individuals from 2.9 million in 1990 to seven million in 2020, or approximately 140 percent. The foreign-born children and young adult population shows a slight decrease from 1.2 million to 1.1 million, roughly 8 percent. In each of these projections, Asian Pacific children and young adults comprise approximately 34 to 38 percent of the total Asian Pacific population. Of this amount, roughly 15 to 18 percent are foreign born.

The growth of working-age Asian Pacifics will have a great impact on the labor force in the United States. Our baseline assumption projects that the working-age adults (age 25 to 64) will increase 151 percent, from 3.8 million in 1990 to 9.6 million in 2020. The second projection sees this age cohort increasing 180 percent, from 3.8 million to 11 million. And last, the third projection assumes that the Asian Pacific working-age group will increase 157 percent to 9.9 million by the year 2020. Of this age group approximately 67 percent were foreign born in 1990, and 71 percent are projected to be foreign born in 2020.

Table 3. Projections of Asian Pacifics in the United States by Nativity (x1000)

	US-Born	F-Born	Total	% F-Born	% US-Born	F-Born Growth	US-Born Growth
1990 Total	2,632	4,633	7,274	64%	36%		
2020A Total	8,211	9,703	17,914	54%	46%	110%	211%
2020B* Total	9,176	11,163	20,246	55%	45%	141%	244%
2020C Total	7,835	10,069	17,904	56%	44%	117%	197%

*preferred projection

The fastest growing age cohort among Asian Pacifics is the elderly (age 65 and older). Our three projections show that the total Asian Pacific elderly population will rise from approximately 450,000 in 1990 to 2.1 million in 2020, an increase of roughly 355 percent. The elderly comprised 6 percent of the total Asian Pacific population in 1990. However, in 2020, the elderly will make up approximately 12 percent of the total

Asian Pacific population. The foreign-born elderly will also see an increase of roughly 510 percent.

Foreign-Born and Regional Projections

The projections show that there will continue to be an increase of the Asian Pacific immigrant population (see table 3). For the baseline assumption (the birth rates and the immigration rates remain constant from 1990 to 2020), the immigrant population will rise from 4.6 million to 9.7 million, a growth of 110 percent over three decades. The second projection, with a decrease in the birth rate and an increase in the immigration flow, indicates the foreign-born population will show a growth of 4.6 million in 1990 to 11.2 million in 2020, or 141 percent. And last, the third assumption, a decreasing birth rate and a growing immigration rate, projects an expansion of the immigrant population of 4.6 million in 1990 to 10.1 million in 2020, an increase of 117 percent over 30 years. As a percent of the total population, the foreign-born population will show a decrease in all three projections. In 1990, the foreign-born population is 64 percent of the total Asian Pacific U.S. population; yet by 2020 this percentage will be between 54 and 56 percent. The majority of the foreign-born population will be the elderly.

Table 4. Asian Pacific Populations by Regions (x1000)

	1990	2020A	2020B*	2020C
CALIFORNIA	2,850	7,410	8,530	7,520
Net Increase		160%	199%	164%
MID-ATLANTIC (NY, NJ, PA)	1,100	2,920	3,400	2,300
Net Increase		165%	209%	109%
*preferred projection				

The Asian Pacific population projections for California show a substantial increase. Table 4 shows the 1990 Asian Pacific American population was 2.85 million, and by 2020 it will grow to an estimated 7.4 million to 8.5 million. This is a net increase of approximately 160 percent to 199 percent. This growth is substantial to the growth of Asian Pacific

populations in the United States.

Our projections for California are conservative compared to those by Bouvier.¹⁰ His medium projection places the Asian population at 9.4 million, compared to our preferred projection of 8.5 million. A part of the difference can be attributed to Bouvier's inclusion of the residual "other" racial/ethnic group with Asians. Accounting for this factor, we believe that our projections are in line with those by Bouvier.

The Mid-Atlantic states, New York, New Jersey, and Pennsylvania, also show a large growth of Asian Pacifics. Although this population was merely 15 percent of the total U.S. Asian Pacific population, the increase of this group was equally dramatic. The Mid-Atlantic Asian Pacific population will increase from 1.1 million in 1990 to between 2.3 million and 3.4 million in 2020. This is a growth of 109 percent to 209 percent. Unfortunately, there is no other independent projection against which we can compare ours.

Our preceding projections provide the readers with a glimpse of future Asian Pacific populations in the United States. In a little more than a quarter century, there will be approximately 20 million Asian Pacific Americans. Although there are uncertainties in our projections, there are even greater uncertainties regarding the social and economic status of this population in the future. Because of this rapidly growing minority group, not only must the Asian Pacific American community be concerned with the challenges and conflicts in the education, employment and public service arenas, but the national community must be prepared to address these issues as well.

Appendix

The following table shows the data on the native- and foreign-born population and the number of persons by place of birth for 1980 and 1990. For place of birth for the Chinese, we used the number of persons born in the People's Republic of China, Hong Kong, and Taiwan. The numbers for the 1980 foreign born and country of birth and 1990 country of birth are taken from published reports from the Bureau of the Census. The total foreign-born population in 1990 is estimated by using a ratio of persons foreign born to persons by country of birth in 1980. This ratio is then applied to the 1990 population of persons by country of birth which

gives the estimate of the 1990 foreign-born population. The estimated new immigration is determined by subtracting the 1980 Asian Pacific American foreign-born survivals from the 1990 foreign-born population. By doing so, the estimated new immigration accounts for the number of foreign-born deaths from 1980 to 1990. The published Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) data report the number of persons that are from the specific country of origin.

<u>Comparison of Immigration Data</u>					
	<u>Chinese</u>	Japanese	Korean	Filipino	Vietnamese
1980 by foreign-born	514,000	203,000	293,000	506,000	222,000
1980 by country of birth	286,000	222,000	290,000	501,000	231,000
1990 by foreign-born	977,000	387,000	670,000	1,006,000	534,000
1990 by country of birth	543,000	422,000	673,000	998,000	556,000
Estimated new immigration	456,000	193,000	382,000	555,000	315,000
Publ. INS report (80-89)	419,000	41,000	337,000	467,000	396,000

The numbers for the Koreans and Filipinos are roughly of the same size and appear quite reasonable. However, some ethnic groups, such as the Chinese, Japanese and the Vietnamese, have some disparity in their numbers.

Due to the complex historical patterns of Chinese migration within the Asian countries, a good portion of the immigrants identified and categorized as racially and ethnically Chinese do not come from the traditional sending sources, such as the People’s Republic of China, Hong

Kong, and Taiwan. Many are Southeast Asian refugees of Chinese descent, who had resided in Vietnam or Laos for many generations, and still consider themselves ethnically Chinese. Consequently, there is considerable variation in the numbers reported by the different sources in the above table.

The estimated Japanese foreign-born numbers also seem quite high. As in the previous table, the estimated new immigration is much greater than the INS reported population. This unusually high number of immigrants may be due to two factors: (1) the native-born Japanese who are born to Japanese-Caucasian couples may not define themselves as Japanese, and therefore may decrease the native-born population of the Japanese; and (2) the high estimation of the new immigration may be due to the number of Japanese nationals who were in the United States temporarily.

Vietnamese population numbers also present problems for the projections. The estimated new immigration for the Vietnamese is less than the reported INS data. This estimate may be underestimated because of the changing ethnic identity of the Southeast Asians of Chinese descent. Unfortunately, the census reports do not have data on Southeast Asians of Chinese descent, therefore making it difficult to determine who are of Chinese descent from the traditional sending sources and who are of Chinese descent from Southeast Asian countries.

Notes

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1. The Hispanic category includes all persons regardless of race, including a significant number of Latinos who are White. Consequently, the sum total of Whites, Blacks, Hispanics, and Asian Pacific Americans is greater than 100 percent.
2. U.S. Census Bureau, *United States Department of Commerce News*, Washington, D.C., June 1991.
3. Paul M. Ong, "California's Asian Population: Past Trends and Projections for the Year 2000," Graduate School of Architecture and Urban Planning, University of California, Los Angeles, May 1989.
4. We also reviewed national statistics but found the national data to be less detailed and complete than California's data.
5. The fertility rates differed considerably by ethnic groups. Among California's Asians, the Vietnamese have the highest birth rate at 2.68 with the Filipinos next at 2.40 births for women between 15 and 44 years of age. The Chinese and Korean population are almost identical

at 1.66 and 1.69 respectively. Similarly, the Asian Indians have a birth rate of 1.83. The lowest birth rate is for the Japanese at 1.57. Presently, the Japanese population consists of primarily U.S.-born second, third, and fourth generation Americans. The economic profile of this ethnic group approximates that of the Whites and they likewise have low fertility rates.

6. Leon F. Bouvier, *Fifty Million Californians?* (Washington, D.C.: Center for Immigration Studies, 1991), 11.
7. California Center for Health Statistics, "Data Matters," Sacramento, July 1983.
8. We used all the published rates except those for the oldest cohort (85+), which we adjusted upward slightly.
9. Gregory Spencer, "Projections of the Population of the United States, by Age, Sex, and Race: 1988 to 2080," U.S. Bureau of the Census, Washington, D.C., January 1989.
10. Bouvier, *Fifty Million Californians?*