

# Recent Asian Pacific Immigrants The Demographic Background

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As is well known, the passage of the Immigration Act of 1965 reformed the immigration policies of the United States. Under that act, racial quotas were abolished and an emphasis was placed on family unification and occupational skills. Ironically, in passing the act, neither Congress nor the President wished to alter the racial and ethnic composition of the nation, yet the act has done exactly that (Kitano and Daniels, 1988, Hing, 1993).

As the number of immigrants has increased, so too has the controversy over them increased. Immigration is now a salient political issue. Yet as with many issues, a controversy rages in the absence of much scientifically based data. To help rectify that situation, this analysis examines the demography of Asian Pacific immigrants. More specifically, it focuses on: (1) the background characteristics of immigrants, (2) their human capital, and (3) their economic status. In each case, immigrants are contrasted to the native born, and in some cases, a contrast is drawn between immigrants and the nation as a whole.

The analysis is based on data drawn from the 1990 Census of Population, five percent Public Use Microdata Sample (PUMS). These data are for individuals and are a sample of the United States population. Because they are a sample, the data presented here might not precisely match figures found in other publications based on other samples from the 1990 Census. The differences, however, should be within random sampling error.

In the Census, race is a matter of self identification. The Census questionnaire presents a list of racial categories and the person who fills out the questionnaire selects a category for everyone in the household. Using these categories, eleven groups were selected for analysis. The groups are as follows:

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- 1 Asian Indian
- 2 Cambodian
- 3 Chinese
- 4 Filipino
- 5 Hmong
- 6 Japanese
- 7 Korean
- 8 Laotian
- 9 Pacific Islander
- 10 Thai
- 11 Vietnamese

To some extent, group size played a role in the decision to analyze these particular groups and not others. The principle was simple: there had to be a sufficient number of people in a given group to warrant statistical analysis. Although what constitutes “sufficient” might be debated, the smallest group, the Thai, numbered 90,000 people. While this figure might seem large, the following tables will show that for many statistical purposes the number is rather small. Also for reasons of size, various Pacific Island groups were combined into a generic group called “Pacific Islander.” In doing so, the distinctiveness of each Pacific group is lost, yet the aggregated information is better than no information at all.

Throughout, the terms *native born* and *immigrant* are used. Note, however, that the PUMS data do not contain a direct measure of immigrant status, nor do the data address the question of “what is an immigrant?” Instead, the PUMS data indicate where people were born. Operationally, this means that an immigrant is a person residing in the United States but who was born in a foreign place.

## **Background Characteristics**

In this section, several demographic characteristics of the eleven groups are examined. Taken collectively, these characteristics help to form an overall picture of Asian Pacific immigrants, especially in contrast to the native born.

### **Immigrant Population**

Probably the most basic question one can ask about Asian Pacific immigrants being studied is “how many are there?” Table 1 addresses this question (see Table 1. Tables and figures located at the end of this essay. All tables and figures based on 1990 Census data).

The table shows the number of native born and immigrants for each group. The largest number of immigrants is found among the Chinese (about 1.2 million) while the smallest number is among the Hmong (62,000). Of course, the absolute number of immigrants should vary as group size varies: larger groups will contain, all else equal, more immigrants than smaller groups. This effect is easily controlled by taking the number of immigrants in a group as a percentage of the group's total size. These data are shown on Figure 1.

Except for Japanese and Pacific Islanders, the figure shows that immigrants constitute over half of the population of each group being studied, and in some instances equal or exceed 80 percent. The percentage of immigrants among the Japanese is low, but that is not too surprising. Japan is a wealthy nation, and there are few negative factors pushing the Japanese to emigrate. Indeed, the most important push factor might be Japanese firms operating in the United States. Employees of these firms, especially higher ranking managers and technical personnel, may immigrate to work in the firm's United States division. This results in a comparatively small immigration stream. Japanese immigrants intend to stay for short periods and then return home. In effect, these immigrants are a contemporary version of the old sojourners (Siu, 1952).

Before the 1965 act, Asian Pacific immigrants were minuscule in number, and the Chinese and Japanese were the largest Asian groups in the United States. Because of Asian exclusion laws, the population of these two groups could not be replenished by newcomers and native-born segments became proportionately larger than the immigrant segment. Asian exclusion, in other words, was forcing these groups to become overwhelming native born (Jiobu, 1988). Except for Japanese Americans, this is no longer the case today: the majority of Asian Pacific people are now immigrants, and their diversity is expanding dramatically.

### **Region of Residence**

In the past, Asian Pacific immigrants overwhelmingly settled on the West Coast, especially in California. The same is true today, as the data in Table 2 indicate. In general, Asian Indians are the most geographically dispersed, while Pacific Islanders are the most concentrated. Interestingly, the native born tend to concentrate on the West Coast more than immigrants. This might be due to selective re-migration. Asian Pacific young people born outside of the Pacific Coast might, when they mature, selectively migrate to the Pacific Coast. Anecdotal evidence suggests that many

Asian Pacific youths who were reared in the Midwest move to California after graduating from college. Their specific motives may vary, but typically reasons center around the desire to experience life in a place where Asian Pacific people are more numerous (Jiobu, 1994).

### **Gender**

Gender and age are two fundamental demographic characteristics. The sex ratio has implications for the growth of the group. A group with relatively few women cannot establish many traditional family units. If fertility is channeled through the traditional family, then the scarcity of women means that few families can be formed and few children will be born. Accordingly, Figure 2 shows the percentage of each group's population which is female.

The image of a mostly male immigrant stream is no longer applicable. In fact, the majority of groups studied here are fifty percent female or higher. Even among groups which are less than fifty percent female, the male predominance varies only from two to four percentage points—hardly overwhelming.

The number of females in this current immigration stream reflects a sharp break with past trends. The break may be due to employment opportunities, which have increased for women but decreased for men. Moreover, the 1965 act's emphasis on family unification, absent in past legislation, has meant an increase in the relative number of immigrant women (Gill, Glazer, and Thernstrom, 1992; Hing, 1993).

### **Age Composition**

Age is a primary demographic consideration. A young group, for example, has many people in the child bearing ages, a factor that increases the group's fertility. With high fertility, the group must then devote considerable resources to child support, leaving relatively less for elders or for investment in economic endeavors. At the same time, a young group has many people who are in the early stages of their careers and are not likely to have reached their full earnings potential (Jiobu, 1988).

In order to examine the age composition of the Asian Pacific groups being studied here, age categories were divided beginning with 0-9 and ending with 80 or older. Although these categories are somewhat arbitrary, they do render a reasonably clear picture of age structure. The data are shown on Table 3.

Based on these figures, one pattern stands out: the predominance of youth, especially among the native born. About half of the native born

population is under twenty, while some 90 percent of native born Cambodians, Hmong, and Laotians are nine or younger. Even though immigrants are older than the native born, immigrants are still fairly young too.

### **Marital Status**

A major value in American culture concerns the family unit. Whether one approaches this concern from the viewpoint of traditional values or from the viewpoint of new age values, the family (or family-like unit) plays a central role in forging community cohesion and socializing children. With regard to immigration, this role underlies the family unification provisions of the 1965 act.

Precisely what constitutes a family, however, may be debated. Most people in the United States would agree that a wife and husband unit constitutes one type. The PUMS data contain an item that asks respondents their marital status. These responses are shown on Table 4 for people who are 18 years or older, an age cut-off that excludes children and young teenagers from the results.

The table shows that immigrants are more likely to be married than the native born, sometimes by substantial margins. For instance, 74 percent of immigrant Asian Indians are married as contrasted to 26 percent of the native born. Consistent with these differences, the native born are more likely to never have been married than immigrants.

One explanation for these results is age. Even though the data are limited to people 18 and older, marriage is often discouraged for youths, especially if they are in school or have not established themselves in a career. Moreover, the age of marriage is rising throughout the United States, and there is no reason to believe that Asian Pacific people are exempt from this trend.

The data in Table 4 also speak to social disorganization. The divorce rate is sometimes used to index individual and community stability. This rate varies from three to eight percent among the native born and from 2 to 7 percent among immigrants. All of these rates are low compared to the 1990 national divorce rate of 15 percent (U. S. Bureau of the Census, 1994). According to this indicator, then, Asian Pacific groups being studied are characterized by cohesive family units, which contributes to community cohesion.

## Human Capital

Human capital is the investment people make in themselves to enhance their earnings (Becker, 1975). This concept rests on the assumption that human capital investments are costly but that over time, the amount of earnings generated by these investments will pay for themselves and then accrue a profit. Examples of human capital are education, job experience, and English proficiency.

### Education

Of all the forms of human capital people might acquire, education is undoubtedly the one that comes to mind most readily. Education, which has been called America's secular religion, constitutes a ladder of upward social mobility. Some claim that education is also a strong cultural value among many Asian Pacific groups (Daniels and Kitano, 1988; Hing, 1993).

Table 5 shows the educational attainment of each group. Note that data have been calculated only for persons 25 or older. The standard assumption is that by age 25, people will have attained all of the education, including any graduate-level work, that they are likely to attain. This cut-off is somewhat arbitrary, of course, but some cut-off is necessary.

The breakdown of educational attainment begins with those with less than high school and goes through those who have attained a doctorate or professional degree. The attainment of at least a bachelor's degree is a key to upward mobility. Figure 3 contains a single educational category: attainment of a bachelor's degree or higher.

The figure suggests that no clear pattern exists, either among immigrants or in contrasting immigrants and native born. Some immigrant groups, notably Asian Indians, have considerable college attainment while others, notably the Hmong, have relatively little. In some cases, the native born have more college education than their immigrant counterparts, and in other cases the opposite is true. Although the data do not indicate where immigrants attended school, we might suspect that some groups bring a large endowment of educational capital with them when they immigrate and others do not.<sup>1</sup>

### English Proficiency

Proficiency in English is an important dimension of human capital, enabling people to interact with the dominant culture and thereby enhancing their earning potential. Ability to speak English is also politically controversial. An English-only movement, seeking to make English the offi-

cial language, has emerged, especially in states with large ethnic populations. Even in places that have relatively few immigrants, sentiment exists to make English the official language.

Before examining the data, note that the Census Bureau uses a rating system, not a test, to measure English proficiency. The person who fills out the Census questionnaire rates everyone in the household as to English-speaking ability. This procedure leaves many questions unanswered, such as how respondents define the categories of "very well," "well," and so forth. And what reference group do they have in mind: other immigrants, the native born, the media, or some other standard? Because of these problems, the proficiency ratings need to be interpreted with some reservation. Consider also the rating category, "speaks only English." Taken literally, of course, few people speak only English (virtually everyone knows a few words of another language). The common meaning of the phrase, however, indicates a person who does not have command of another language. Rating this aspect of English proficiency requires a dichotomous choice of yes or no, but this is likely more reliable than the multiple choices regarding how well a person speaks English. The data are shown on Table 6.

Although one would expect the native born to be more proficient in English than immigrants, this is not always the case. For example, among Asian Indians, Filipinos, Japanese, and Pacific Islanders, a larger proportion of immigrants rate their English as "very well" than do the native born. A partial explanation for these results is that Asian Indians, Filipinos, and Pacific Islanders come from cultures where English is a common language. That fact, of course, does not explain ratings of the Japanese.

A popular stereotype of Asian Pacific immigrants portrays them as inarticulate in English, but the majority of every group (except the Hmong) rates itself as speaking English well or very well. If these data are believed, a lack of English proficiency should neither impede acculturation nor constitute a costly lack of human capital.

With reference to speaking only English, no group had more than a quarter of its population fall into that category. This fact may be interpreted in two ways: (1) Most immigrants are not well assimilated because relatively few speak only English; or (2) *A priori*, one would anticipate that virtually no Asian Pacific immigrants would speak only English; the fact some do indicates a drive toward assimilation.

## Economic Status

Although some instances of hostility toward immigrants are difficult to explain in terms other than private attitudes based on conscious and unconscious emotional processes, some hostility is rooted in economic fear. For instance, the media is replete with stories about the declining competitiveness of American industry and the threat that foreigners pose to American jobs. Even academic authors have implicitly incorporated this theme into their works, as illustrated by titles such as *Clamor at the Gates* (Glazer 1985), *Have We Decided to Control our Borders?* (Gill, et al., 1992: title to chapter 20), and *Mass Immigration and the National Interest* (Briggs 1992). These titles project the image of a beleaguered people desperately defending their nation from hordes of foreigners with different cultures and different skin color. The "Yellow Peril," as it were, has reappeared in a more politically correct guise of protecting America.

Although Census data do not directly tap discrimination, the data can indicate the economic status of immigrants and non-immigrants. Table 7 shows several such indicators.

One of the most basic determinants of economic attainment is employment. The larger the percentage of a group's population that participates in the labor force, the more workers the group has to generate earnings. Nationwide, about two-thirds of the population over 16 in 1990 was in the labor force (U. S. Bureau of the Census, 1991).

The data on Table 7 show that the participation rates for the immigrant groups being studied are, for the most part (except for the Hmong), close to the national figure. In general, immigrants participate in the labor force to a greater extent than the native born, but recall that the native born are very youthful.

Participating in the labor force is one type of economic behavior; another is unemployment. This measure is also shown in Table 7. Bearing in mind that the unemployment rate was about five percent in 1990 (U. S. Bureau of the Census, 1991), the unemployment rates among the groups being studied are, like the labor force participation rates, not unique. An exception to this conclusion are Cambodians, whose high unemployment rates are difficult to explain with the data at hand.

Another indicator of economic status is poverty. Approximately 13 percent of the nation in 1989 was defined as poor, that is, an individual earned less than \$6,451 per year, (U. S. Bureau of the Census, 1994; U. S. Bureau of the Census, 1990). Table 7 shows that the poverty rates among



immigrants are about the same or somewhat higher than the rates among the native born. In absolute terms, the rates are higher than average (above 20 percent) for almost half of the groups being studied here: Cambodians, Hmong, Laotians, Pacific Islanders, and Vietnamese.

We often hear the argument that immigrants take advantage of the welfare system and thus are a burden to the government and the taxpayer. While the census data used here do not contain a direct measure of welfare, they do report income from public assistance such as Supplemental Security Income (SSI) and Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC). This type of income can be used as a proxy for "being on welfare," but one should understand that the outcomes will not necessarily match outcomes based on other data sources (for example, Ong and Blumenberg, 1994a).

According to this measure, immigrants tend to have a higher public assistance rate than the native born. Nevertheless, the differences are, with some exceptions, rather modest. In absolute terms, the rates are fairly low, but they reach a very high level among certain refugee groups: Cambodians, Hmong, and Laotians.

Another indirect index of welfare usage can be calculated from the percentage of poor people within a group who receive income from public assistance. This index is based on the assumption that even though poor people are most likely to receive welfare, not all poor people do. The culture of Asian Pacific Americans contains many stories of poor people who steadfastly refused to go on welfare (Kitano, 1976).

For the most part, Table 7 indicates that Asian Pacific immigrants are not likely to burden the welfare system. In no case is the majority of impoverished immigrants receiving public assistance payments, although in the case of the Cambodians, Hmong, Laotians, and Vietnamese a substantial percentage do. With an occasional and minor exception, the percentage of poor people with public assistance income is lower among immigrants than among the native born.

Perhaps the most important indicator of economic well-being is money. Accordingly, Table 7 shows total mean income for each group. This mean, it should be noted, is calculated only for persons 25 years or older who are employed in the civilian labor force. The reason for restricting the analysis to this age group is to control the extreme youthfulness of many Asian-Pacific groups (see Table 3). Interestingly, the mean income of Asian Indians and Japanese immigrants are the highest on the table. In the main, however, the data suggest that immigrants do about as well as the native

born. Although immigrants surely have more difficulty adapting to American culture than the native born, immigrants somehow manage to overcome the difficulty with respect to income attainment.

### **Occupational Attainment**

In the past, immigrants tended to be largely blue collar workers and laborers. Today they are much more diversified, as shown in Table 8.

The data are fairly detailed but attention usually focuses on the upper and lower extremes of the occupational rankings. In general, relatively few immigrants are in professional occupations compared to the native born. Conversely, a relatively large percentage of immigrants, especially Cambodians, Hmong, and Laotians, are in the laborer/operative category. Finally, among both the native born and immigrants, the largest percentage of workers is usually found in the technical/sales category.

### **Conclusions**

In summary, the data indicate the following:

- Demographically, the Asian Pacific immigration stream contains relatively more females than males. The native born are extremely youthful while immigrants are older.
- Immigrants marry at a fairly high rate and divorce at a fairly low rate, suggesting a substantial degree of family and community cohesion.
- The data on education both support and contradict the popular image of Asian Pacific immigrants as a highly educated minority.
- A small proportion of immigrants speak only English, but a majority speak English well or very well.
- Economically, immigrants participate in the labor force to a greater extent than native born but unemployment is about the same for both groups.
- Among immigrants, the rates of poverty and welfare assistance are mostly low, with the exception of Southeast Asian groups.
- Immigrants tend to have as much or more income than the native born.

Given these findings and what is already known, three overall conclusions are warranted. *First*, no simple generalizations can be made about Asian Pacific immigrants as a whole. For instance, Asian Indians and the Hmong are clearly different from each other and from the other groups being studied here. These differences include historical backgrounds, culture, demography, and economic characteristics.

*Second*, the various Asian Pacific groups form two distinct clusters: those who are doing well economically and those who are not. In the latter cluster fall the Hmong, Laotians, Cambodians, and to a lesser extent, the Vietnamese. Given the war-induced circumstances of their arrival, we should not be surprised to find that they are not doing as well as, say, many Japanese and Filipino immigrants who have come voluntarily with good jobs in hand.

*Third*, Asian Pacific immigrants embody the best of American values. Their levels of education, English proficiency, rates of marriage, rates of divorce, levels of poverty, and percentage receiving public assistance payments all point to high levels of family cohesion, self sufficiency, and a drive to interact with the broader society. This does not mean, of course, that all Asian Pacific immigrants do not have problems. Some do fall into low income categories of poverty, welfare, and low occupational attainment.

Historically, Asian Pacific immigrants have made important contributions to American society. They have worked hard and paid taxes; they have developed businesses and established entire industries; they have created stable family units and cohesive communities; and they have participated in civic society and have fought in America's wars. In all these ways, and in others, they have continually moved from being marginal sojourners to the mainstream of American life (Okihiro 1994). The current data do not suggest a different outcome for today's immigrants from Asia and the Pacific.

## Notes

- <sup>1</sup> Editor's Note: see the essay on education in this report by Paul Ong and Linda Wing.

**Table 1**  
**Immigration Status among Asian Pacific Americans**

Immigration Status	Asian Indian	Cambodian	Chinese	Filipino	Hmong	Japanese	Korean	Laotian	Pacific Islander	Thai	Vietnamese
Native Born (x1,000)	180	31	488	447	31	560	142	30	260	18	107
Immigrants (x1000)	601	120	1160	970	62	305	654	122	92	72	480
Total (x1000)	781	151	1648	1417	93	865	796	152	352	90	587

Source: Information generated from 1990 Census of Population, five percent Public Use Microdata Sample (PUMS)

**Table 2**  
**Region of Residence among Asian Pacific Americans**

NATIVE BORN											
Region	Asian Indian	Cambodian	Chinese	Filipino	Hmong	Japanese	Korean	Laotian	Pacific Islander	Thai	Vietnamese
New England	4%	10%	4%	1%	1%	1%	3%	5%	1%	2%	3%
Mid Atlantic	27%	5%	19%	7%	*	3%	18%	4%	2%	9%	5%
East North Central	17%	3%	6%	6%	18%	4%	11%	8%	2%	12%	4%
West North Central	2%	4%	1%	1%	17%	1%	3%	8%	1%	3%	5%
South Atlantic	15%	7%	6%	7%	1%	2%	11%	5%	3%	13%	8%
East South Central	2%	1%	1%	1%	*	*	1%	2%	1%	1%	2%
West South Central	9%	5%	4%	3%	*	*	4%	8%	2%	10%	18%
Mountain	2%	3%	3%	2%	2%	4%	3%	5%	5%	5%	3%
Pacific	22%	62%	56%	72%	61%	84%	46%	55%	83%	45%	52%
Total Percent	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
IMMIGRANT											
Region	Asian Indian	Cambodian	Chinese	Filipino	Hmong	Japanese	Korean	Laotian	Pacific Islander	Thai	Vietnamese
New England	4%	14%	4%	1%	2%	4%	2%	6%	1%	2%	3%
Mid Atlantic	32%	3%	25%	10%	*	15%	21%	4%	3%	11%	7%
East North Central	14%	4%	6%	8%	22%	10%	10%	9%	2%	10%	4%
West North Central	3%	4%	2%	1%	20%	3%	4%	9%	2%	4%	4%
South Atlantic	14%	8%	7%	8%	2%	9%	13%	8%	6%	16%	10%
East South Central	2%	1%	1%	1%	*	2%	2%	3%	1%	2%	2%
West South Central	8%	6%	5%	3%	*	4%	5%	10%	5%	9%	15%
Mountain	2%	2%	2%	2%	2%	4%	3%	4%	8%	6%	3%
Pacific	21%	55%	48%	66%	52%	49%	40%	47%	72%	40%	52%
Total Percent	100%	97%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

Source: Information generated from 1990 Census of the Population, five percent Public Use Microdata Sample (PUMS)  
 \* Less than one percent

**Table 3**  
**Age Composition of Asian Pacific Americans**

<b>NATIVE BORN</b>											
Years of Age	Asian Indian	Cambodian	Chinese	Filipino	Hmong	Japanese	Korean	Laotian	Pacific Islander	Thai	Vietnamese
0 - 9	57%	91%	38%	39%	90%	13%	55%	90%	26%	48%	76%
10 - 19	31%	7%	21%	28%	8%	11%	27%	7%	20%	44%	20%
20 - 29	7%	1%	14%	15%	1%	15%	8%	1%	18%	5%	2%
30 - 39	2%	*	12%	8%	*	17%	3%	1%	14%	1%	1%
40 - 49	1%	*	6%	5%	*	12%	2%	*	9%	1%	*
50 - 59	1%	*	3%	3%	*	10%	1%	*	6%	*	*
60 - 69	*	*	3%	2%	*	13%	2%	*	4%	*	*
70 - 79	*	*	2%	*	*	7%	1%	*	2%	*	*
80 +	*	*	1%	*	*	2%	1%	*	1%	*	*
Total Percent	100%	200%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
<b>IMMIGRANT</b>											
Years of Age	Asian Indian	Cambodian	Chinese	Filipino	Hmong	Japanese	Korean	Laotian	Pacific Islander	Thai	Vietnamese
0 - 9	5%	15%	3%	3%	19%	7%	10%	10%	7%	3%	4%
10 - 19	11%	23%	11%	11%	27%	7%	15%	27%	16%	10%	23%
20 - 29	22%	19%	20%	18%	21%	18%	19%	22%	26%	20%	25%
30 - 39	26%	20%	25%	23%	14%	24%	22%	21%	23%	27%	24%
40 - 49	21%	12%	17%	20%	8%	17%	17%	11%	13%	30%	14%
50 - 59	9%	6%	11%	11%	5%	15%	10%	5%	8%	7%	7%
60 - 69	4%	3%	8%	7%	3%	8%	4%	2%	4%	2%	3%
70 - 79	*	1%	4%	5%	2%	1%	2%	1%	2%	*	*
80 +	*	1%	1%	2%	1%	3%	1%	1%	1%	*	*
Total Percent	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

Source: Information generated from 1990 Census of the Population, five percent Public Use Microdata Sample (PUMS)

\* Less than one percent

**Table 4**  
**Marital Status of Asian Pacific Americans**  
**Percent of Persons 18 Years or Older**

<b>NATIVE BORN</b>											
Marital Status	Asian Indian	Cambodian	Chinese	Filipino	Hmong	Japanese	Korean	Laotian	Pacific Islander	Thai	Vietnamese
Married	26%	32%	44%	43%	56%	57%	33%	36%	51%	20%	30%
Widowed	3%	2%	3%	2%	9%	6%	3%	0%	4%	2%	3%
Divorced	4%	5%	5%	7%	2%	6%	6%	5%	9%	4%	5%
Separated	2%	5%	1%	2%	5%	1%	1%	6%	30%	2%	0%
Never Married	65%	56%	47%	46%	28%	30%	57%	53%	33%	72%	62%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	127%	100%	100%
<b>IMMIGRANT</b>											
Marital Status	Asian Indian	Cambodian	Chinese	Filipino	Hmong	Japanese	Korean	Laotian	Pacific Islander	Thai	Vietnamese
Married	74%	58%	67%	66%	70%	65%	68%	65%	63%	64%	54%
Widowed	3%	8%	5%	6%	7%	7%	5%	4%	3%	2%	3%
Divorced	3%	3%	3%	4%	2%	5%	4%	3%	6%	7%	3%
Separated	1%	4%	1%	2%	2%	1%	2%	2%	3%	2%	3%
Never Married	20%	27%	24%	22%	19%	22%	21%	26%	25%	3%	37%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	78%	100%

Source: Information generated from 1990 Census of the Population, five percent Public Use Microdata Sample (PUMS)

**Table 5**  
**Educational Attainment among Asian Pacific Americans**  
**Persons 25 Years or Older**

**NATIVE BORN**

Educational Attainment	Asian Indian	Cambodian	Chinese	Filipino	Hmong	Japanese	Korean	Laotian	Pacific Islander	Thai	Vietnamese
Less than High School	19%	46%	8%	16%	58%	12%	12%	48%	22%	23%	30%
High School Diploma	17%	13%	16%	28%	15%	26%	24%	16%	38%	13%	29%
Some College	19%	32%	25%	35%	23%	28%	27%	11%	29%	9%	23%
Bachelors Degree	24%	9%	33%	16%	4%	24%	22%	12%	8%	38%	11%
Masters Degree	11%	0%	11%	3%	0%	6%	9%	5%	2%	14%	5%
Doctorate or Professional	10%	0%	7%	2%	0%	4%	6%	8%	1%	3%	2%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

**IMMIGRANT**

Educational Attainment	Asian Indian	Cambodian	Chinese	Filipino	Hmong	Japanese	Korean	Laotian	Pacific Islander	Thai	Vietnamese
Less than High School	15%	64%	29%	18%	13%	13%	20%	60%	32%	26%	39%
High School Diploma	12%	12%	15%	14%	27%	27%	25%	19%	31%	16%	18%
Some College	14%	17%	17%	26%	24%	24%	20%	14%	29%	25%	26%
Bachelors Degree	25%	5%	20%	34%	25%	25%	22%	5%	6%	20%	12%
Masters Degree	20%	1%	13%	3%	7%	7%	8%	1%	1%	9%	3%
Doctorate or Professional	14%	1%	6%	5%	4%	4%	5%	1%	1%	4%	2%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

Source: Information generated from 1990 Census of the Population, five percent Public Use Microdata Sample (PUMS)



**Table 6**  
**English Proficiency among Asian Pacific Americans**

<b>NATIVE BORN</b>											
English Proficiency	Asian Indian	Cambodian	Chinese	Filipino	Hmong	Japanese	Korean	Laotian	Pacific Islander	Thai	Vietnamese
Very Well	43%	33%	37%	15%	22%	13%	39%	35%	11%	40%	45%
Well	7%	27%	10%	3%	34%	6%	9%	31%	2%	7%	24%
Not Well	3%	25%	4%	1%	35%	3%	6%	23%	1%	4%	12%
Not at All	1%	3%	1%	1%	6%	0%	1%	3%	1%	1%	1%
Speak only English	46%	12%	48%	80%	3%	78%	45%	8%	85%	48%	18%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
<b>IMMIGRANT</b>											
English Proficiency	Asian Indian	Cambodian	Chinese	Filipino	Hmong	Japanese	Korean	Laotian	Pacific Islander	Thai	Vietnamese
Very Well	57%	24%	32%	55%	20%	28%	29%	28%	43%	32%	31%
Well	18%	31%	32%	24%	29%	31%	28%	30%	20%	38%	35%
Not Well	7%	32%	22%	6%	32%	21%	23%	31%	10%	13%	24%
Not at All	2%	10%	9%	1%	17%	3%	5%	9%	2%	2%	5%
Speak only English	16%	3%	5%	14%	2%	17%	15%	2%	25%	15%	5%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

Source: Information generated from 1990 Census of the Population, five percent Public Use Microdata Sample (PUMS)

**Table 7**  
**Economic Status of Asian Pacific Americans**  
**Labor Force Participation, Unemployment, Poverty, Public Assistance Payments & Income**

**NATIVE BORN**

Economic Status Variable	Asian Indian	Cambodian	Chinese	Filipino	Hmong	Japanese	Korean	Laotian	Pacific Islander	Thai	Vietnamese
In the Labor Force (%)*	48%	63%	68%	72%	20%	69%	56%	51%	70%	48%	58%
Unemployed (%)**	4%	16%	3%	4%	--	2%	3%	2%	5%	6%	6%
In Poverty (%)*	8%	43%	8%	7%	63%	4%	12%	40%	16%	7%	6%
Receiving Public Assistance Payments	2%	8%	2%	3%	25%	2%	2%	15%	6%	1%	14%
Poor Receiving Public Assistance Payments	6%	9%	4%	12%	38%	6%	4%	25%	21%	--	14%
Mean Total Income, 1989 (x \$1,000)***	30	12	36	25	13	33	30	19	23	24	21

**IMMIGRANT**

Economic Status Variable	Asian Indian	Cambodian	Chinese	Filipino	Hmong	Japanese	Korean	Laotian	Pacific Islander	Thai	Vietnamese
In the Labor Force (%)*	74%	48%	65%	76%	29%	55%	64%	58%	69%	74%	65%
Unemployed (%)**	4%	4%	3%	4%	5%	2%	3%	5%	6%	4%	5%
In Poverty (%)*	10%	40%	16%	6%	63%	12%	14%	33%	22%	12%	25%
Receiving Public Assistance Payments	2%	27%	5%	4%	36%	1%	4%	19%	5%	2%	11%
Poor Receiving Public Assistance Payments	6%	40%	9%	8%	40%	2%	7%	32%	11%	2%	23%
Mean Total Income, 1989 (x \$1,000)***	35	17	27	25	14	36	25	16	20	23	21

Source: Information generated from 1990 Census of the Population, five percent Public Use Microdata Sample (PUMS)

\* Percent of population

\*\* Percent of labor force

\*\*\* Persons 25 or older in the civilian labor force

**TABLE 8**  
**Occupational Attainment of Asian Pacific Americans**

**NATIVE BORN**

Occupational Category	Asian							Pacific			
	Indian	Cambodian	Chinese	Filipino	Hmong	Japanese	Korean	Laotian	Islander	Thai	Vietnamese
Professional	19%	8%	23%	9%	0%	19%	15%	12%	9%	17%	10%
Executive/Management	9%	0%	16%	10%	3%	15%	11%	0%	10%	8%	9%
Technical/Sales	44%	40%	40%	40%	10%	37%	45%	22%	32%	33%	35%
Craft	5%	30%	6%	11%	50%	12%	6%	24%	14%	4%	11%
Service	14%	10%	9%	17%	9%	9%	15%	8%	20%	28%	21%
Operative/Laborer	9%	12%	6%	12%	28%	8%	8%	34%	15%	10%	14%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

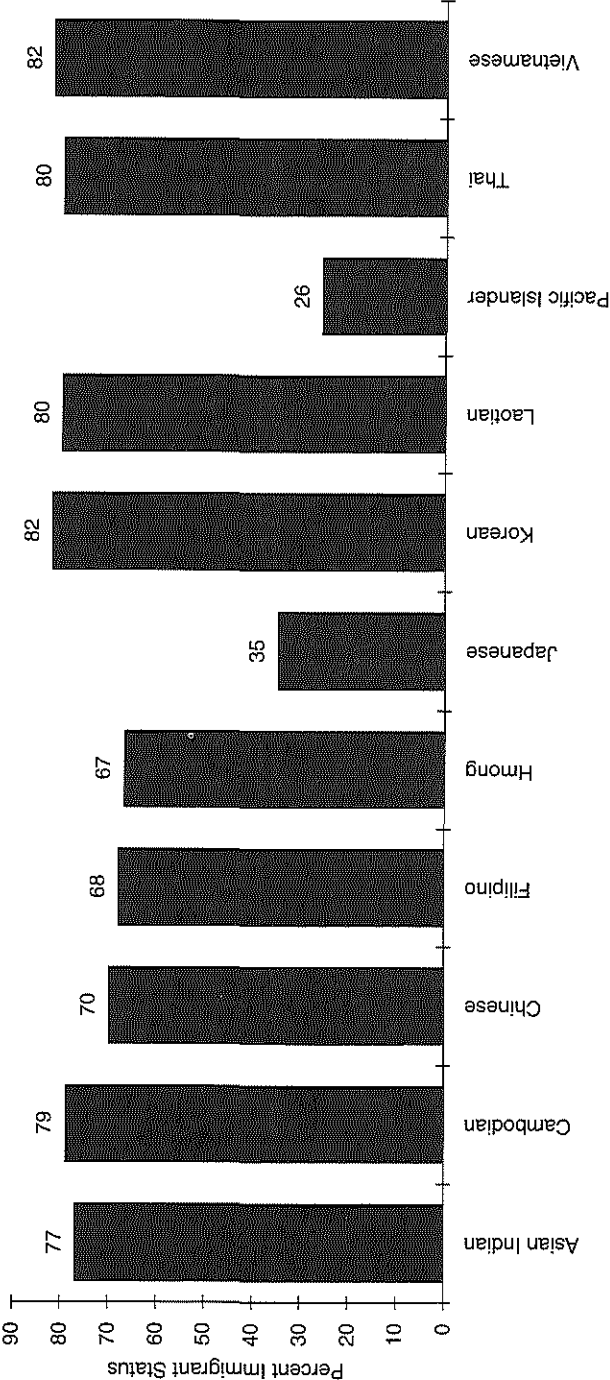
**IMMIGRANT**

Occupational Category	Asian							Pacific			
	Indian	Cambodian	Chinese	Filipino	Hmong	Japanese	Korean	Laotian	Islander	Thai	Vietnamese
Professional	28%	5%	19%	16%	7%	19%	13%	4%	6%	13%	10%
Executive/Management	13%	4%	13%	10%	4%	18%	11%	1%	7%	10%	6%
Technical/Sales	35%	23%	31%	36%	17%	30%	37%	16%	31%	27%	29%
Craft	6%	18%	6%	9%	18%	7%	9%	21%	16%	8%	17%
Service	8%	18%	19%	18%	24%	18%	17%	17%	22%	26%	16%
Operative/Laborer	10%	32%	12%	11%	30%	8%	13%	41%	18%	16%	22%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

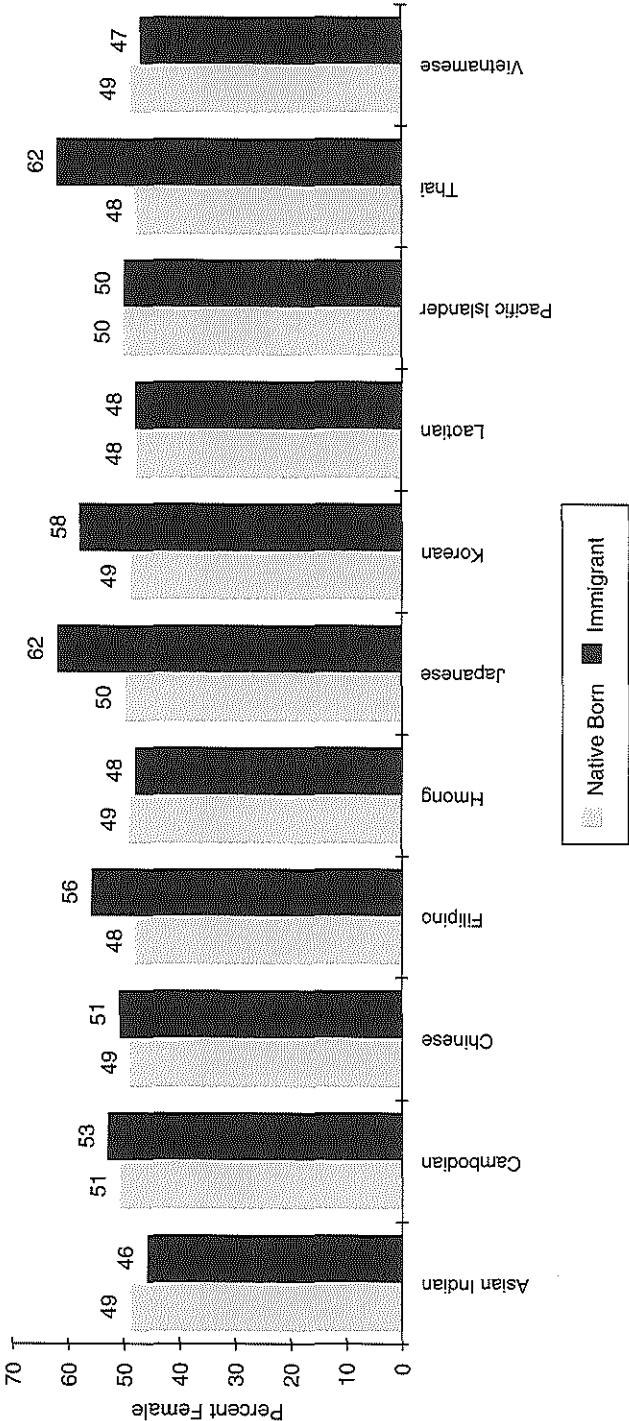
Source: Information generated from 1990 Census of the Population, five percent Public Use Microdata Sample (PUMS)

\* Persons 16 years or older who last worked 1985 or later.

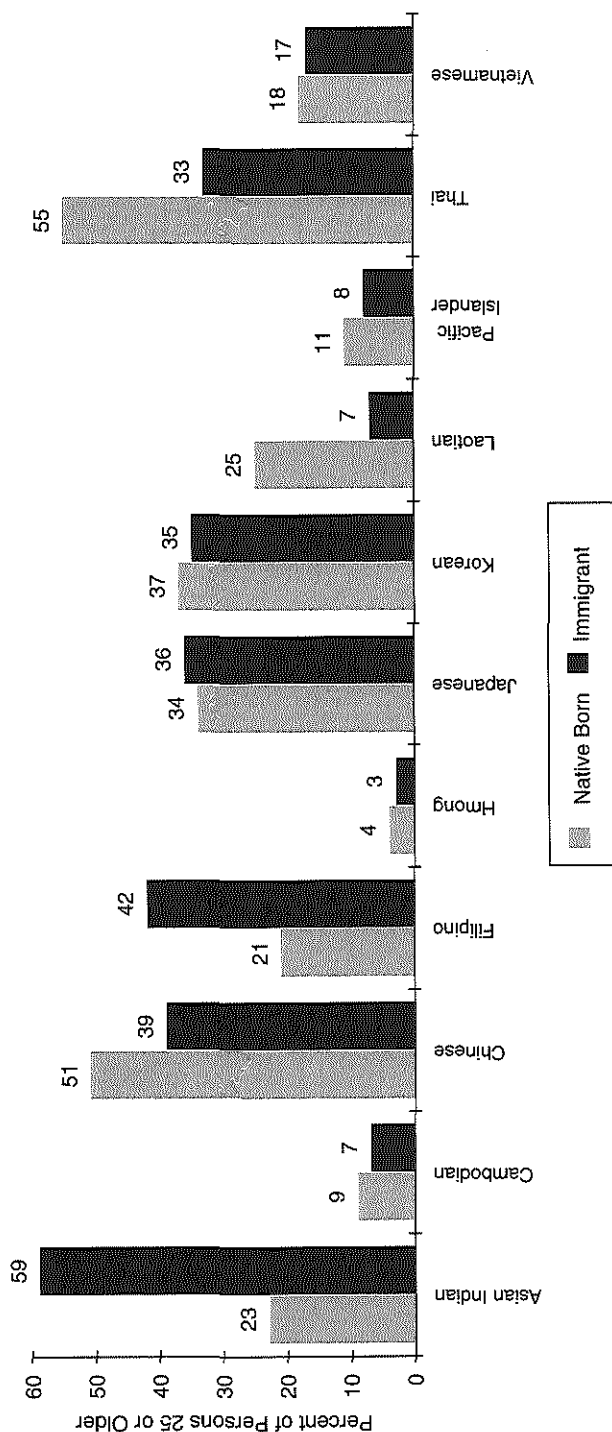
**Figure 1**  
**Asian Pacific American Immigrant Population by Ethnicity**



**Figure 2**  
**Female Asian Pacific Americans by Ethnicity and Immigrant Status**



**Figure 3**  
**Asian Pacific Americans with a Bachelors Degree or Higher**  
**by Ethnicity and Immigrant Status**



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