



## Fact Sheet: Asian and Pacific Americans Heritage Month 2007

### History

- President Jimmy Carter signed a joint resolution of Congress in 1978 designating the first week of May as Asian Pacific American Heritage Week.
- In 1990, President Bush extended the week observation into the entire month of May.
- In 1992, Public Law made Asian Pacific American Heritage Month an annual celebration. May was selected in part to honor the first Japanese immigrants, who arrived in May 1843, and the completion of the transcontinental railroad in May 1869.
- In 1997, under a directive by the Office of Management and Budget, the Asian or Pacific Islander racial category was separated into “Asian” and “native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander.”

### Population Profile

- 14.4 million estimated U.S. residents in July 2005 who said they were Asian or Asian in combination with one or more other races. This group comprised 5 percent of the total population. California had both the largest population (4.8 million) and the largest numerical increase (123,000) of people of this group since July 2003; Hawaii is the state where Asians made up the highest proportion of the total population (58 percent).
- The 2000 Census allowed respondents to choose, for the first time, “one or more races,” resulting in 10.2 million U.S. residents (3.6% of the total population) who considered themselves “Asian alone,” and another 1.7 million (.6 percent) who considered themselves Asian in combination with another race.
- The 2000 Census split up the Asian/Pacific Islander category into two distinct race categories. About 874,000 U.S. residents considered themselves “Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander” alone or in combination with another race.
- The U.S. Asian and Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander (NPI) population includes many groups who differ in language, culture, and the length of time they have been in the U.S. Some of the Asian groups, such as the Chinese and Japanese, have been here for several generations, beginning in the mid-1800s. Others, such as the Vietnamese, Laotians, and Cambodians, immigrated to the U.S. comparatively recently; these three groups have come primarily since 1975. Relatively few Pacific Islanders are foreign-born, as most are native Hawaiian.
- 3.3 million Asians are of Chinese descent. Chinese-Americans are the largest Asian group, followed by Filipinos (2.8 million), Asian Indians (2.5 million), Vietnamese (1.5 million), Koreans (1.4 million) and Japanese (1.2 million).
- According to Census projections, 33.4 million U.S. residents in 2050 will identify themselves as single-race Asians. They would comprise 8 percent of the total population by that year.

- 990,000 estimated U.S. residents in July 2005 said they are Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander, or Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander in combination with one or more other races. This group comprised 0.3 percent of the total population. There were 282,000 Native Hawaiians or Other Pacific Islanders in Hawaii, which led all states.
- There was a 1.5 percentage growth of the Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander population between 2004 and 2005, the highest of any race group except for Asians, which was 3%.

### **Foreign-Born Asian Population**

- Of the increase of 421,000 in the Asian population between 2004 and 2005, 182,000 were because of natural increase and 239,000 were because of immigration.
- The 1965 Immigration and Nationality Act Amendments eliminated national origin quotas, which restricted Asian immigration in favor of European. The U.S.'s close ties to the Philippines and military involvement in Vietnam and Korea also contributed to the high percentage of Asian immigrants in recent years.
- A large percentage of the Asian-born population came to the U.S. in recent decades: 16 percent entered the U.S. since 2000; 35 percent entered between 1990 and 2000, 27 percent in the 1980s, 16 percent in the 1970s, and five percent before 1970.

### **Geographic Concentration**

- 1.4 million Asians (alone or in combination with one or more other races) in Los Angeles County, Calif., in 2005, which tops the nation's counties
- 62% of Honolulu County, Hawaii, residents who are Asian American. Honolulu is the only county in the nation where Asians comprise a majority of the total population. Meanwhile, Hawaii County, Hawaii, with 30 percent of its population being native Hawaiian and other Pacific islander, leads in that race category. (Rankings limited to counties with minimum populations of 100,000.)

### **Households and Family**

- About 60% of Asian households consisted of a married-couple family in 2006.
- In 2004, 83 percent of children were raised in homes with two married parents, 13 percent were raised by mother alone, two percent were raised by fathers alone and three percent did not live with either parent.
- Asian and Pacific Islander households made up 73% of families. Among these, nearly 2-in-10 had five or more members

### **Education**

- 86% of single-race Asians 25 and older who have at least a high school diploma; compared to 84 percent for all people 25 and older.
- 49% of single-race Asians 25 and older has a bachelor's degree or higher level of education. This compares to 27 percent for all people 25 and older.
- 83% of Native Hawaiians and Other Pacific Islanders 25 and older have at least a high school diploma; compares with 84 percent for the total population this age.

## Language

- English proficiency varies significantly by age among Asians. Of those aged five to 17 years in 2000, 31 percent spoke only English, 62 percent spoke English “well” or “very well” (and spoke at least one other language), and seven percent spoke English “not well” or “not at all”.
- Among native Hawaiians, 73 percent spoke English, 8 percent spoke Pacific Island languages, 5 percent spoke Tagalong, 5 percent spoke Japanese and 3 percent spoke Chinese in 2000.
- 2.3 million people 5 and older who speak Chinese at home; in 2005. After Spanish, Chinese is the most widely spoken non-English language in the country. Tagalong and Vietnamese have more than 1 million speakers each.

## Employment & Income

- Asian households had the highest median income among the race groups. Their 2005 median income was \$61,094, about 120 percent of the median for non-Hispanic White households
- According to 2005 Census data, the median family income of Asian American families is \$14,700 higher than the national median income for all households. 11 percent of Asian Americans compared to 10.6 percent of Caucasians live at the poverty. 2.2 percent of Asian Americans compared to 1.3 percent of Caucasians live on public assistance.
- About 75 percent of Asian and Pacific Islander men age 16 and over and 59 percent of women are in the civilian labor force. Among these, 41 percent of men and 37 percent of women are in managerial and professional occupations.
- 47% of civilian employed single-race Asians 16 and older work in management, professional and related occupations, such as financial managers, engineers, teachers and registered nurses. Additionally, 23 percent work in sales and office occupations, 15 percent in service occupations and 11 percent in production, transportation and material moving occupations.
- The three-year average (2003-2005) median income of households whose householders reported their race as Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander but did not report any other race was \$54,318.

## Health

- The total fertility rate for Asian and NPI women was 1900.5 in 2004, lower than the overall U.S. rate of 2048.5.
- In 2004, Asian and NPI teenagers ages 15 to 19 had 17.4 births per 1,000 women, fewer than half of the total U.S. teen birthrate of 41.2 per 1,000 women.
- The uninsured rates [health care] for the rate for Asians increased to 17.9 percent in 2005, from 16.5 percent in 2004.
- The three-year average (2003-2005) percentage without health insurance for those who reported their race as Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander but did not report any other race was 21.8%.
- Asian American women have the highest life expectancy (85.8 years) of any other ethnic group in the U.S. Life expectancy varies among Asian subgroups: Filipino (81.5 years), Japanese (84.5 years), and Chinese women (86.1 years).

This factsheet was updated in April 2007 by Larry Wilcher of the Population Resource Center. Sources include various publications from: U.S. Department of Commerce; Economics and Statistics Administration; U.S. CENSUS BUREAU, U.S. Census Bureau 2000 Census and Current Population Survey, CDC National Vital Statistics Reports, and the Bureau of Citizenship and Immigration Services. For more information or specific citations, please contact PRC at (202) 467-5030, [prc@prcdc.org](mailto:prc@prcdc.org), 1725 K Street NW, Suite 1102, Washington DC 20006; or visit our website at [www.prcdc.org](http://www.prcdc.org).