



The Economic State of Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders in the United States

This fact sheet provides a snapshot of the current economic state of Asian American and Pacific Islanders (AAPI) in the United States.¹ It includes measures of economic well-being, such as income and poverty rates, as well as data on educational attainment, unemployment, and health insurance rates. Together, these measures help paint a portrait of the AAPI community’s economic health while demonstrating that headlines often mask variation within the group.

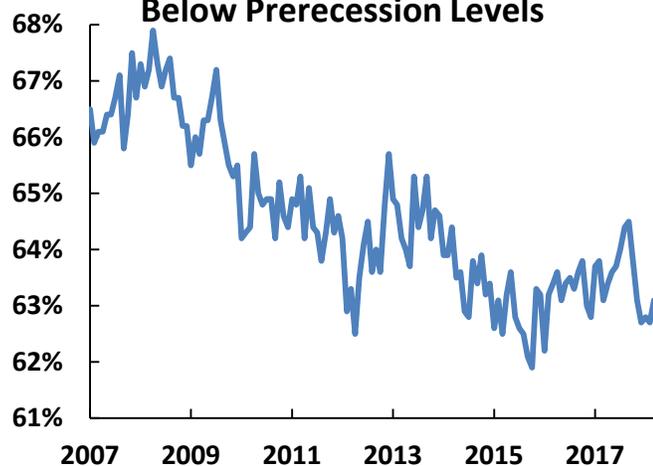
AAPIs are the fastest-growing racial group in the U.S. From 2011 to 2016, the AAPI population grew by 18 percent, compared to population growth of 4 percent nationwide. South Dakota, Wyoming, North Dakota, Indiana, and Iowa saw the fastest AAPI growth rates, with each state experiencing at least a 30% increase.² Today, about 30 percent of American immigrants were born in Asia and many arrived in recent years: over half of Burmese and Nepalese Americans entered the United States in 2010 or later.³

Asian American spending power growth has grown the fastest. Asian American buying power grew 257 percent from 2000 to 2017, outpacing other racial and ethnic groups. It is expected to grow from today’s \$986 billion, representing 6.8 percent of the total U.S. buying power, to \$1.3 trillion, or 7.7 percent of the total, in 2022.⁴

Labor force participation remains low for Asian Americans after the Great Recession. As with all Americans, the Asian American population suffered in the labor market following the Great Recession. The Asian American unemployment rate is now 2.8 percent, a substantial recovery since its peak of 8.4 percent in December 2009. Currently, 63 percent of Asian Americans are in the labor force, still below its prerecession level of 68 percent in April 2008.

AAPIs drive entrepreneurial activity across the nation. In 2012, AAPIs owned nearly 2 million firms with 3.6 million paid employees and \$707 billion in total gross receipts. The number of AAPI businesses grew by 24 percent from 2007 to 2012, compared to only 2 percent for all firms

Labor Force Participation of Asian Americans Below Prerecession Levels



Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics

nationwide. In particular, the number of Samoan-owned and Guamanian/Chamorro-owned businesses nearly doubled in that time period.⁵

On average, Asian Americans have a high median household income at \$81,000, compared with a national average of \$58,000. Native Hawaii and Pacific Islander (NHPI) household income is slightly lower than the national average at \$57,000. However, median incomes range widely, from \$39,000 for Burmese Americans to \$110,000 for Indian Americans.

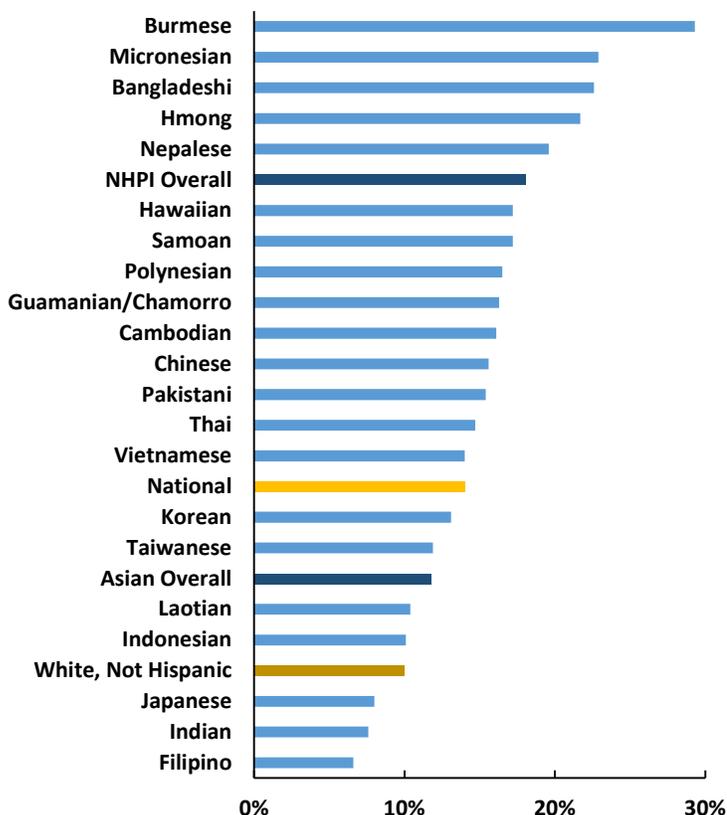
Poverty rates vary widely and are higher for AAPI seniors. Overall, the Asian American poverty rate is slightly lower than the national average, at 11.8 percent compared with 14 percent. Rates across subgroups vary widely: Micronesian, Bangladeshi, and Hmong Americans all have poverty rates at least 50 percent higher than the national average. Senior poverty among both Asian Americans and NHPIs sits at 12.9 percent and 14.6 percent, respectively, which is greater than the national average of 9.2 percent.⁶

Overall higher levels of educational attainment mask continuing disparities. One in two Asian Americans and nearly one in five NHPIs over the age of 25 has a bachelor’s degree or higher, compared with one in three adults nationwide. High educational attainment is partially driven by Asian immigrants entering the country with higher levels of education.⁷ Yet, within subgroups, 10 out of 21 have lower levels of college degree attainment than the national average.

Asian Americans are generally insured at higher rates, but disparities persist. Nearly 7 percent of Asian Americans are uninsured, slightly below the national average but still above the average for white, non-Hispanic Americans. About half of AAPI subgroups have uninsured rates above the national average.⁸

Homeownership rates for AAPIs are below the national average. In the most recent quarter, the AAPI homeownership rate was 57 percent, compared to the national average of 64 percent.⁹

Poverty Rates Vary Across AAPI Subgroups



Source: JEC Democratic Staff tabulations of 2016 ACS 1-year estimates
 Note: Race refers to race alone, including Hispanic. AAPI refers to Asian American or Pacific Islander. NHPI refers to Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander.

AAPIs By the Numbers

Ethnicity	Population (1000s)	Educational Attainment		Median Household Income	Poverty Rate		Uninsured Rate	Businesses	
		Less than HS	Bachelor's or Higher		Overall	Seniors		# of Firms (2012)	% Growth (2007-2012)
National	323,128	13%	31%	57,617	14%	9%	9%	27,626,360	2%
White, Not Hispanic	197,479	8%	35%	63,155	10%	7%	6%	21,539,858	-5%
Asian	17,557	13%	53%	80,720	12%	13%	7%	1,917,902	24%
NHPI	596	14%	17%	57,112	18%	15%	10%	54,749	45%
Bangladeshi	176	15%	48%	46,806	23%	23%	12%	N/A	N/A
Burmese	153	47%	21%	38,971	29%	19%	13%	N/A	N/A
Cambodian	260	30%	19%	58,391	16%	16%	8%	N/A	N/A
Chinese	4,049	18%	54%	72,827	16%	19%	7%	528,702	25%
Filipino	2,812	7%	49%	88,745	7%	7%	6%	193,336	18%
Guamanian/Chamorro	82	14%	21%	65,321	16%	11%	8%	6,559	81%
Hawaiian	179	11%	20%	54,563	17%	12%	7%	25,774	22%
Hmong	279	26%	18%	57,496	22%	20%	7%	N/A	N/A
Indian	3,813	8%	74%	110,026	8%	7%	5%	377,486	22%
Indonesian	77	7%	46%	70,539	10%	6%	11%	N/A	N/A
Japanese	790	5%	51%	76,175	8%	7%	4%	119,163	10%
Korean	1,439	8%	56%	63,677	13%	19%	10%	224,891	17%
Laotian	205	29%	16%	58,772	10%	11%	10%	N/A	N/A
Micronesian	173	20%	15%	52,689	23%	20%	13%	N/A	N/A
Nepalese	156	29%	40%	50,497	20%	5%	14%	N/A	N/A
Pakistani	461	13%	57%	73,157	15%	13%	11%	N/A	N/A
Polynesian	360	11%	18%	57,254	17%	14%	8%	N/A	N/A
Samoan	120	10%	16%	60,404	17%	18%	9%	5,892	96%
Taiwanese	166	4%	77%	90,221	12%	11%	5%	N/A	N/A
Thai	203	16%	46%	66,976	15%	10%	11%	N/A	N/A
Vietnamese	1,804	27%	29%	62,958	14%	18%	8%	310,864	36%

Source: JEC Democratic Staff tabulations of 2016 ACS 1-year estimates and 2012 and 2007 Survey of Business Owners.

Note: Race refers to race alone. White for firm statistics includes Hispanics.

¹ This report will use Asian American, Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander (NHPI), and Asian American and Pacific Islander (AAPI) as relevant for the data. The Census Bureau through the American Community Survey collects data on over 20 AAPI subgroups.

² JEC Democratic Staff calculations based on 2007-2011 and 2012-2016 ACS 5-year estimates.

³ JEC Democratic Staff calculations based on 2016 ACS 1-year estimates;

⁴ <https://www.migrationpolicy.org/article/asian-immigrants-united-states>

⁴ <http://www.nielsen.com/us/en/insights/reports/2018/asian-americans-consumers.html>

⁵ JEC Democratic Staff calculations based on the 2012 and 2007 Survey of Business Owners. American Factfinder Table 00CSA01.

⁶ JEC Democratic Staff calculations based on 2016 ACS 1-year estimates.

⁷ <https://www.migrationpolicy.org/article/asian-immigrants-united-states>

⁸ JEC Democratic Staff calculations based on 2016 ACS 1-year estimates.

⁹ <https://www.census.gov/housing/hvs/files/currenthvspress.pdf>