



Census Profile: New York City's Asian American Elderly Population

Asian American Federation of New York Census Information Center

Introduction

This profile outlines characteristics and trends in New York City's growing Asian American elderly population, based on an analysis of 2000 and 1990 U.S. census data.¹ It presents statistics on population growth, composition and distribution, as well as immigration, education, English ability, income, poverty and housing. Comparisons with the city's total Asian and elderly populations² provide perspective.³

Elderly Asian American Statistics at a Glance

Population	
2000 Alone or in-Combination Population in New York City	63,312
Queens (as a Percentage of NYC Population)	28,483 (45%)
Manhattan	15,804 (25%)
Brooklyn	14,335 (23%)
Bronx	2,791 (4%)
Staten Island	1,899 (3%)
1990 Population	33,214
Population Growth From 1990 to 2000	91%
Immigration	
Foreign-Born Population	58,740
Foreign-Born Percentage of Total Population	94%
Educational Attainment	
Number of Adults Without a High School Diploma	36,916
Percentage of Adults Without a High School Diploma	59%
Limited English Proficiency (Speaks English "Well," "Not Well" or "Not at All")	
Number of Individuals With LEP	45,831
Percentage of Population With LEP	73%
Income	
Mean Per Capita Income	\$17,261
Mean Household Income	\$42,932
Mean Family Income	\$50,556
Poverty	
Number of Individuals Living in Poverty	14,803
Percentage of Population Living in Poverty	24%
Housing Types	
Number of Elder Households as Renting	30,865 (54%)
Number of Elder Households as Owning	26,604 (46%)
Household Types	
Men Living in Married-Couple Households	19,938 (35%)
Men Living Alone	1,942 (3%)
Women in Married-Couple Households	18,947 (33%)
Women Living Alone	5,632 (10%)



Chinese-American Planning Council's Project Open Door Senior Citizens Center in Manhattan

The census analysis points to major differences between New York City's Asian elderly population and the city's overall Asian and elderly populations. The growth of the Asian senior-citizen population from 1990 to 2000 outpaced that of both other populations. In addition, as of Census 2000, socioeconomic indicators, such as educational attainment, Limited English Proficiency and income measurements, were significantly lower for elderly Asians than for either comparison group.

Population

The New York metropolitan area had the third-largest Asian elderly population⁴ in a major U.S. metropolitan area: 100,253.

From 1990 to 2000, the Asian senior population in New York City grew from 33,214 to 63,312 – an increase of 91 percent. This growth rate exceeded a 71 percent increase in the city's overall Asian population⁵ and contrasted with a 2 percent decrease in the total number of elderly New Yorkers.

Of elderly Asians, 40,183 (or 63 percent of this population) were 65 to 74 years old, while the remaining 23,129 (37 percent) were 75 or older. Among all New York City seniors, 53 percent were 65 to 74 years old. Based on "Asian Alone or in-Combination" data, the five largest Asian elderly

groups in New York City in 2000 were Chinese⁶ (39,060), Indian (8,401), Korean (6,043), Filipino (4,528), and Japanese (1,232).⁷ The first four of these groups and their order were the same as for Asian New Yorkers as a whole. However, within the city's total Asian population, Pakistanis were the fifth-largest ethnic population and Japanese were the seventh-largest group.

The gender distribution in New York City's Asian senior population was about the same in 1990 and 2000. In 1990, women comprised 54 percent (or 18,055) of the population and men made up the remaining 46 percent (15,159). In 2000, the gender split was 55 percent women (35,033) and 45 percent men (28,279). Women accounted for 54 percent of Asians 65 to 74 years old, as well as 58 percent of Asians age 75 or older, in 2000. By comparison, among all elderly New Yorkers, 58 percent of those age 65 to 74 and 66 percent of those 75 or older were women.

Almost 3 out of 4 Asian seniors had limited English ability, according to the 2000 Census.

In 2000, the largest percentage of Asian seniors (45 percent, or 28,483) lived in Queens, followed by Manhattan (25 percent, or 15,804); Brooklyn (23 percent, or 14,335); the Bronx (4 percent, or 2,791); and Staten Island (3 percent, or 1,899). Meanwhile, 50 percent of the city's total Asian population lived in Queens, followed by Brooklyn (24 percent), Manhattan (18 percent), the Bronx (5 percent), and Staten Island (3 percent). The distribution of the overall senior population in the city was 30 percent in Queens, 30 percent in Brooklyn, 20 percent in Manhattan, 14 percent in the Bronx, and 5 percent in Staten Island.

Immigration

In 2000, the vast majority (94 percent, or 58,740) of elderly Asians in New York City were immigrants—surpassing 76 percent of all Asian New Yorkers and 37 percent of all elderly New Yorkers. More than half (54 percent) of elderly Asian immigrants had arrived in the United States in the last 20 years, contributing to recent population growth. Specifically, 21 percent

(12,643) entered this country from 1990 to March 2000; 33 percent (19,615) immigrated from 1980 to 1989; and 46 percent (27,159) arrived before 1980.

Educational Attainment

Elderly Asians had very low educational attainment as measured in Census 2000. At the low end of the educational spectrum, more than half (59 percent, or 36,916) did not have a high school diploma, compared with 30 percent of all Asian adults in the city and 43 percent of all elderly New Yorkers.⁸ In addition, 45 percent (28,297) of elderly Asians had less than a ninth-grade education – more than double the 20 percent rate for all Asian adults and far exceeding 24 percent for all elderly city residents. At the high end of the educational scale, 20 percent (12,548) of elderly Asians had a college degree, compared with 40 percent of all Asian adults and 18 percent of the general elderly population in the city.

Education levels were lower among Asians age 75 or older. In this category, 65 percent (14,183) of individuals had not finished high school and 53 percent (11,493) had not completed ninth grade. Sixteen percent of Asians in this age group had a college degree. By comparison, among all city residents age 75 or older, 46 percent did not have a high school diploma, 27 percent had less than a ninth-grade education, and 15 percent had a college degree.

English Ability

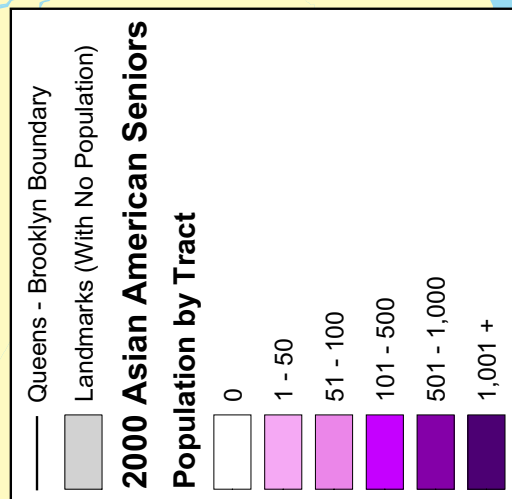
Limited English Proficiency (LEP) was a major issue for New York City's elderly Asian population as of the 2000 census.⁹ Nearly three-quarters (73 percent, or 45,831) of Asian seniors spoke English “well,” “not well” or “not at all,” compared with 49 percent of all Asian adults and 27 percent of all seniors city-wide. Almost half (49 percent) of elderly Asians lived in a linguistically isolated household, compared with 35 percent of all Asian adults and 18 percent of the overall senior population in the city.¹⁰

Income

Elderly Asians had lower income than New York City's overall Asian and elderly populations, according to Census 2000 measurements.

Mean per capita income for the entire Asian senior population was \$17,261—less than half of the comparable figure of \$37,524 for all Asians and well

2000 Distribution of the Asian American Senior Population in New York City



Produced by the Asian American Federation of New York.
 Source: 2000 U.S. Census Bureau Summary File One.
 Single Race Alone or in-Combination category.

below \$30,694 for all seniors. For Asians age 75 or older, mean per capita income was \$13,681, compared with \$27,153 for all city residents in that age group.

Households headed by Asians 65 or older had a mean income of \$42,932, below \$64,496 for all Asian-led households and \$48,354 for all senior-headed households city-wide. For households headed by individuals 75 or older, the mean income was \$32,410 for Asian households and \$40,888 overall.

The mean income for families headed by Asian seniors was \$50,556, compared with \$67,334 for Asian-headed families as a whole and \$66,167 for senior-led households overall in the city. Families headed by Asians 75 or older had a mean income of \$39,573, compared with \$59,134 for all city families led by individuals in that age bracket.¹¹

Nearly a quarter of elderly Asians lived in poverty, exceeding the city's general senior poverty rate.

Poverty

The Asian senior poverty rate, at 24 percent (14,803), was higher than 20 percent for all Asian New Yorkers and 18 percent for all city seniors in the 2000 census.¹² Of city residents 75 or older, 27 percent of Asians and 18 percent of the general population lived below the poverty level.

Housing

More than half (54 percent) of New York City households headed by elderly Asians in 2000 were renters, compared with 66 percent for all Asian New Yorkers and 56 percent for the city's overall senior population. Among Asian-senior households, the percentage of renters was 52 percent for those headed by individuals 65 to 74 years old and 57 percent for households led by people 75 or older. Similarly, rental percentages for households headed by individuals in those age groups city-wide were 53 percent and 56 percent, respectively.

However, living arrangements for Asian seniors differed markedly from those for all Asians and all elderly New Yorkers in 2000, with Asian seniors more likely to live as married couples. More than

two-thirds (68 percent) of elderly Asians lived in a married-couple household, compared with 58 percent of all Asians and 44 percent of the total elderly population. Among Asians, 72 percent of individuals age 65 to 74 and 59 percent of those 75 or older lived in a married-couple household, surpassing 51 percent and 37 percent, respectively, for the general senior population in those age ranges.

Meanwhile, 14 percent (7,574) of all elderly Asians lived alone, compared with 20 percent of the city's overall Asian population and 34 percent of all seniors in the city. By senior age group, rates of living alone were 10 percent for Asians and 28 percent for all city residents age 65 to 74, as well as 19 percent for Asians and 42 percent for all New Yorkers 75 or older.

Among Asian seniors, as in the general elderly population, more women than men lived alone. Overall, elderly Asian women (of whom 5,632 lived alone) were more than 2½ times as likely to live by themselves as elderly Asian men (of whom 1,942 lived alone). Of city residents 75 or older, 15 percent of Asian women and 5 percent of Asian men lived alone, compared with 50 percent of women and 26 percent of men in the general elderly population.

Implications

This profile depicts a vulnerable and growing population requiring additional attention from health and social services planners, providers and policy-makers. Demographic characteristics suggest several critical needs and issues to be addressed.

The rapid growth of New York City's elderly Asian population has implications for the supply and cultural appropriateness of formal and informal health and social supports, including the health-care system; physically-accessible housing stock; and such related programs and facilities as assisted-living accommodations, nursing homes, and end-of-life care. In addition, family caregivers need more resources, such as culturally appropriate respite services, home-health aides, interpreter access, and entitlement information and services.

The very high poverty rate and low educational attainment of elderly Asians in the city point to a need to improve economic conditions for this population of recent immigrants. Requirements include retirement protections, particularly for those not

eligible for Social Security; more affordable housing in home communities; employment and educational opportunities for those able to work; and affordable, accessible health insurance for seniors, especially those who do not have Medicare or Medicaid.

Asian seniors are a vulnerable and growing group requiring additional culturally appropriate health and social support.

Moreover, the predominantly immigrant composition and limited spoken English of the Asian senior population in New York City indicate a need for more culturally and linguistically suitable services, such as English instruction. Population-tailored English classes are key to more active participation in society and easier navigation of health-care and social services systems.

Footnotes

¹ This profile defines Asian American elderly as Asian Americans age 65 or older in 2000. In addition to “elderly,” the terms “senior citizens” and “seniors” are used interchangeably to describe this population group.

² All numbers are from Summary Files (SF) Two and Four of the U.S. census and are for the “Asian Alone or in-Combination” category. SF Two information was collected from a 100 percent U.S. population survey while SF Four data represent a sample survey. Additional data were derived from the One Hundred Percent (100%) Detail File and the Sample Edited Detail File for Census 2000 via the U.S. Census Bureau’s Advanced Query tool.

³ Rates and percentages for each section of this profile were derived from the data universe related to the topic at hand. Therefore, population tallies for one subject do not necessarily correspond with those for another topic.

⁴ In 2000, only the metropolitan areas for Los Angeles (with 171,230) and San Francisco (133,032) had larger Asian American elder populations.

⁵ Due to 1990 census methodology, Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islanders (NHOPI) were grouped with Asian Americans. Comparing a combination of 2000 Asian and NHOPI Alone data with combined 1990 Asian and Pacific Islander numbers, the population increased by 91 percent (31,430).

⁶ In 2000, Chinese population numbers did not include Taiwanese.

⁷ Based on “Asian Alone” categories, the five largest Asian elderly groups in New York City in 2000 were Chinese (38,009), Indian (6,838), Korean (5,870), Filipino (4,121), and Japanese (1,117).

⁸ For education tabulations, adults are defined as individuals age 25 and older.

⁹ “Limited English Proficiency,” as used in the profile, refers to individuals who spoke English “well,” “not well” or “not at all” as of Census 2000.

¹⁰ A “linguistically isolated household” is defined as “a household in which no person 14 years old and over speaks only English and no person 14 years old and over who speaks a language other than English speaks English ‘very well.’” In other words, a household in which all members 14 or older speak a non-English language and also speak English less than “very well” (*i.e.*, have difficulty with English) is “linguistically isolated.” All members of a linguistically isolated household, including any individuals 14 or older who speak only English, are tabulated as “linguistically isolated.”

¹¹ Household income refers to the income of all occupants of a housing unit. Family income refers to the earnings of a group of two or more people (one of whom is the householder) related by birth, marriage or adoption and residing together.

¹² In the 2000 census, 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 in 1999.

For these thresholds, please see <http://www.census.gov/hhes/poverty/threshld/thresh99.html>.

Technical Note

Race Categories

The 2000 census was the first decennial census in which respondents were allowed to mark more than one race. As a consequence, Census 2000 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 employs Census 2000 data. To be as inclusive as possible, this profile uses “Asian Alone or in Any Combination” numbers.

“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.*, Chinese 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. Thus, some overlap in the “In Combination” numbers occurred. “Alone or in Any Combination” should be considered the maximum population size in any analysis that uses Census 2000 data.

About This Profile

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

The Asian American Federation of New York, a nonprofit leadership organization that works collaboratively to meet the critical needs of Asian Americans in the New York metropolitan area, was selected by the U.S. Census Bureau to operate the only Asian American-focused CIC in the Northeast. Established in 2000, the center provides census information, conducts data and policy analysis, and encourages census participation.

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

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