



Census Profile: New York City's Korean American Population

Asian American Federation of New York Census Information Center

Introduction

This profile of New York City's Korean American population is based on an analysis of 2000 and 1990 U.S. census data.¹ It examines population size, growth, geographic distribution, and age, as well as immigration patterns, citizenship status, education levels, English ability, income, poverty, and housing patterns. Comparisons with New York City's total population provide perspective.²

Korean American Statistics at a Glance

Population	
2000 Alone or In-Combination Population in New York City	90,896
Queens (as a Percentage of NYC Population)	63,906 (70%)
Manhattan	12,459 (14%)
Brooklyn	7,392 (8%)
Bronx	3,750 (4%)
Staten Island	3,389 (4%)
1990 Population	69,718
Population Growth from 1990 to 2000	30%
Immigration	
Foreign-Born Population	71,907
Foreign-Born Percentage of Total Population	79%
Educational Attainment (Adults 25 and Older)	
Number of Adults Without a High School Diploma	10,140
Percentage of Adults Without a High School Diploma	16%
Limited English Proficiency (Speaks English "Not Well" or "Not at All")	
Total Number	29,454
Percentage of Total Population	40%
Income	
Median Household Income	\$37,094
Median Family Income	\$39,144
Per Capita Income	\$19,094
Number of Households Earning Less Than \$20,000	8,606
Percentage of Households Earning Less Than \$20,000	27%
Number of Households Earning More Than \$100,000	3,580
Percentage of Households Earning More Than \$100,000	11%
Poverty	
Number of Individuals Living in Poverty	15,002
Percentage of Total Population Living in Poverty	17%
Number of Children (Under 18) Living in Poverty	2,532
Percentage of Children Living in Poverty	14%
Number of Elderly (65 and Older) Living in Poverty	1,716
Percentage of Elderly Living in Poverty	28%



Union Street in Flushing, Queens

Like many Asian American populations in New York City, the Korean American population grew from 1990 to 2000, with immigration as the primary driver. Korean adults were less skilled in English but more educated than the city's total adult population. Poverty was more common among Korean senior citizens than among New York's elderly residents as a whole, while general and child poverty rates for Koreans were lower than comparable city-wide rates.

Population

In 2000, New York City had the second-largest population of Korean Americans in the United States (exceeded only by Los Angeles' Korean population). Approximately 71 percent of the Korean American population in New York State lived in New York City. At 10 percent of the Asian American population, Koreans were the third-largest Asian group in New York City.³ The Korean population in the city grew by 30 percent from 69,718 in 1990 to 90,896 in 2000.⁴

Within New York City, the majority (70 percent, or 63,906) of Koreans lived in Queens, followed by Manhattan (with 14 percent, or 12,459); Brooklyn (8 percent, or 7,392); the Bronx (4 percent, or 3,750); and Staten Island (4 percent, or 3,389).

By age, 19 percent (17,704) of New York City's Korean residents were children (younger than 18); 74 percent (66,881) were working-age adults (18

to 64); and 7 percent (6,311) were senior citizens (65 and older). The age distribution for the entire city population was 24 percent children, 64 percent working-age adults, and 12 percent elderly.

Immigration and Citizenship

Immigrants comprised the vast majority of the Korean population in New York City in 2000. Nearly 8 in 10 Korean New Yorkers (79 percent, or 71,907) were foreign-born, compared with 36 percent of the total city population.

More than 1 in 4 elderly Korean Americans in New York City lives in poverty.

Most of the foreign-born Korean population in New York City entered the United States in 1980 or later. Specifically, 43 percent (31,072) came from 1990 to March 2000; 38 percent (27,145) immigrated from 1980 to 1989; and 19 percent (13,690) arrived before 1980.

Overall and for those arriving in the last two decades, Korean individuals born outside the United States had a lower frequency of becoming naturalized citizens than their city-wide counterparts. Roughly 36 percent (25,615) of all Korean immigrants were naturalized citizens, compared with 45 percent of all New York City immigrants. Foreign-born Koreans who came from 1990 to March 2000 became naturalized citizens at a rate of 9 percent (2,849 people) - half the rate for the city's entire foreign-born population (18 percent). Among Korean immigrants who arrived in the 1980s, 43 percent (11,704) became naturalized citizens - compared with the 49 percent city-wide naturalization rate for immigrants who entered the United States during that decade.

On the other hand, among pre-1980 immigrants, 81 percent (11,062) of Koreans became citizens, surpassing 78 percent of all New Yorkers who came to this country before 1980.

Educational Attainment

Out of the Korean adult population in New York, 16 percent (10,140) did not have a high school diploma, in contrast with 28 percent of all city adults.⁵ Furthermore, 11 percent (6,708) of Korean adults had

not completed ninth grade, compared with 15 percent of adults city-wide. At the high end of the educational spectrum, 60 percent (38,389) of Koreans had some form of post-secondary schooling, exceeding 48 percent of the city's total adult population.

About 88 percent (13,273) of Korean American school-age children were enrolled in the public school system, compared with 81 percent of all New York City children.⁶

English Proficiency

Koreans had a higher occurrence of Limited English Proficiency (LEP) than New York City's general population.⁷ Approximately 40 percent (29,454) of the total Korean adult population in the city spoke English "not well" or "not at all" - indicating greater language barriers for Koreans than for adult New Yorkers overall, of whom about 13 percent experienced LEP.

The LEP definition applied to almost three-quarters (73 percent, or 4,591) of Korean senior citizens, as opposed to 18 percent of the city's total elderly population.

Income

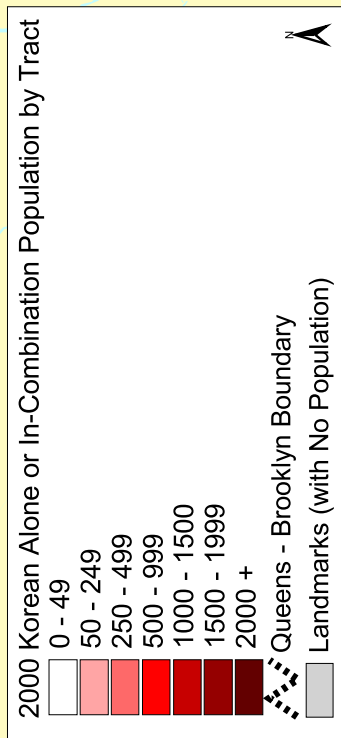
By several major measures, Korean incomes were lower than those of the overall New York City population. This pattern held for Korean median household income (\$37,094, lower than \$38,293 city-wide); median family income (\$39,144, below \$41,887 for the entire city); and per capita income (\$19,094, short of \$22,402 for the total New York population).⁸

Poverty

More than 1 in 4 Korean senior citizens in New York City (28 percent, or 1,716) lived below the poverty line, markedly surpassing the city's overall elderly poverty rate of 18 percent.

On the other hand, Koreans in general and Korean children were less apt to encounter poverty than the comparable total population groups.⁹ Roughly 17 percent of all Koreans in New York (15,002) lived below the poverty line, compared with an overall city rate of 21 percent. Moreover, 14 percent (2,532) of Korean children lived in poverty, for an incidence of less than half the city's overall child poverty rate of 30 percent.

Distribution of the Korean American 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

More than three-quarters (78 percent, or 1,938) of New York's Korean children in poverty lived in two-parent families.

Housing

Korean New Yorkers were more likely to rent their homes and to carry a heavy rent burden than city residents overall. In addition, Korean households tended to have more people than average for the city.

In terms of renting or homeownership, 81 percent of Koreans rented and 19 percent owned their homes, compared with 70 percent renters and 30 percent owners in the city as a whole.

Koreans had a slightly larger average household size (2.77 people) than the general New York City population (2.59 people).

Footnotes

¹ All numbers are from Summary Files (SF) One, Two, Three and Four of the U.S. census. However, SF One and SF Two data refer to information collected from a 100 percent U.S. population survey while SF Three and Four data represent a sample survey.

² Rates and percentages for each section of this profile are derived from the data universe related to the topic at hand. Therefore, population tallies for one particular subject will not necessarily correspond with those for another topic.

³ Chinese Americans (374,321, or 42 percent of New York City's Asian American population) were the largest Asian group in the city, followed by Indian Americans (206,228, or 23 percent of the city's Asian population).

⁴ Based on a comparison of the Korean Alone total in 2000 with the 1990 Korean number, the population increased by 24 percent (16,755).

⁵ For education tabulations, adults were defined as individuals age 25 and older.

⁶ The school system is defined as a combination of kindergarten, grade school, middle school and high school.

⁷ Limited English Proficiency is defined by census categories as speaking English "not well" or "not at all."

⁸ Household income refers to the combined 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.

⁹ Families and individuals are 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 uses 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., Korean 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. Hence, 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 Asian American 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 CIC in the New York area focused on serving the Asian American community. Established in 2000, the center provides census information, conducts data and policy analysis, and encourages census participation. For more information on the Federation, visit www.aafny.org.

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

For more information regarding this profile, please contact Andrew Yan, data manager, Asian American Federation of New York Census Information Center, at (212) 344-5878 x19 or andrew@aafny.org, or visit www.aafny.org/cic/.

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Asian American Federation of New York

120 Wall Street, 3rd Floor, New York, NY 10005
Tel: (212) 344-5878 | Fax: (212) 344-5636