

**ECONOMIC
CHARACTERISTICS
OF ASIAN AMERICANS
IN THE NEW YORK
METROPOLITAN AREA**



**THE ASIAN AMERICAN FEDERATION OF NEW YORK
NOVEMBER 10, 2005**

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**Asian American Federation of New York
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Executive Summary

Overview

This report provides a first-of-its-kind economic profile of Asian Americans in the New York Metropolitan Area,¹ based on census information. The document takes an unprecedented in-depth look at the work, income and housing characteristics of the rapidly-growing but under-examined Asian population in the New York region, in an effort to inform local employment practices and policy-making.

Information in this report is derived from analysis of Census 2000 long-form data on employment, work status, worker class, occupation, industry, earnings and income, poverty, home ownership, housing values, mortgage costs, and owner costs. The long form was sent to 1 in 6 Americans.

As the fastest-growing racial group in the New York metropolitan area from 1990 to 2000, Asians played an important role in the local economy in the last decade and continue to do so. The Asian population grew from 868,597 in 1990 to 1,587,782 in 2000 – an 83 percent increase. Also in that decade, Asians' share of the total Consolidated Metropolitan Statistical Area (CMSA) population rose from 4.6 percent to 7.5 percent.

This report presents economic statistics on two levels: 1) for the region's Asian population as a whole, and 2) for the six largest Asian ethnic groups in the metropolitan area. As of the 2000 census, those ethnic group populations were: Chinese (524,507), Indians (453,896), Koreans (179,344), Filipinos (176,902), Japanese (59,456), and Pakistanis (57,957).

Key Findings for Asian Americans Overall

Census 2000 shows that Asians participated actively in the economy of the New York metropolitan region. While Asians were slightly more likely to be employed than the general population, significant portions of Asians held lower-paying service and manufacturing jobs. As a result, Asians had lower median earnings and incomes than the general population.

Also, Asians were less likely to own their homes than the region's residents as a whole, which is likely related to their lower incomes. However, among those Asian who were homeowners, median housing values and monthly mortgage payments were higher than for the general population.

¹ In this report, the New York Metropolitan Area is defined as the New York-Northern New Jersey-Long Island, NY-NJ-CT-PA Consolidated Metropolitan Statistical Area (New York CMSA) used for Census 2000.

Major findings are as follows:

Employment

- **Asians participated in the labor force² at a higher rate than the general population.** The proportion of Asians in the work force was 64 percent, compared with 62 percent of the general population.
- **Asians had a lower unemployment rate than the general population.³** The overall Asian unemployment rate was 5.7 percent, compared with 6.7 percent for the entire regional population.

Occupations

- **For the following occupational groups more than a fifth of workers were Asian:**
 - Textile, apparel and furnishings workers (30 percent of workers were Asian)
 - Life and physical scientists (26 percent)
 - Physicians and surgeons (23 percent)
 - Motor vehicle operators, except bus and truck drivers (22 percent)
 - Computer specialists (21 percent)
- **Asian men and women were more heavily represented in certain occupations than the total male and female populations, as follows:**
 - **Men:**
 - Motor vehicle operators, except bus and truck drivers, accounted for 3.1 percent of jobs for Asian men, compared with 1.1 percent of jobs for all men.
 - Cooks and food preparation workers comprised 3 percent of jobs for Asian men, while only 1.5 percent of jobs for all men.
 - **Women:**
 - Textile, apparel and furnishings workers constituted 6.3 percent of female Asian employees, far exceeding 1.3 percent of all working women.
 - Computer specialists comprised 4.9 percent of jobs for Asian women, compared with 1.8 percent of jobs for all employed women.
 - Accountants and auditors was the occupational category for 4.1 percent of female Asian employees, while 1.8 percent of all women worked in this field.

Industries

- **For the following industry groups more than a fifth of employees were Asian:**
 - Apparel manufacturing (35 percent of all employees were Asian)
 - Gasoline stations (21 percent)
- **Asians were more heavily represented in certain industry groups relative to the total population:**
 - Accommodation and food services (8.1 percent of jobs held by Asians, compared with 4.8 percent of jobs held by the total labor force)
 - Apparel manufacturing (3.7 percent of jobs held by Asian, compared with 0.8 percent of jobs held by the total labor force)
 - Personal and laundry services (3.1 percent of jobs held by Asians, compared with 1.5 percent of jobs held by the total labor force)

² Participants in the labor force are defined as people who are working or actively seeking work.

³ People not working but actively seeking work are categorized as unemployed. On the other hand, people not working and not actively seeking work, who may include students, homemakers and discouraged workers, are not in the labor force and therefore are not counted as unemployed.

Earnings and Income

- Asians had lower median earnings and family income than the general population.
 - Median earnings for Asians were \$27,097, compared with \$29,983 for the total population.
 - The median family income for Asians was \$58,196, lower than \$60,254 for the general population.
- The median income for Asian households, at \$53,185, was higher than \$50,795 for all households. This relationship – contrary to those cited immediately above – likely reflected the fact that Asians had a larger average household size, indicating additional earners in many households.

Poverty

- **Asians had higher poverty rates than the general population.** Overall, 14 percent of Asians, compared with 13 percent of all regional residents, lived in poverty. Asian senior citizens and immigrants experienced higher poverty rates, as well as greater poverty gaps in relation to the general population and Asians as a whole.
 - For people age 65 to 74, poverty rates were 18 percent for Asians and 10 percent for the general population. For people older than 74, poverty rates were 21 percent for Asians and 12 percent for the general population.
 - The poverty rate for Asian immigrants overall was 16 percent, surpassing rates for the general population and the entire Asian population. Within the Asian foreign-born population, poverty was most prevalent for the most recent immigrants and people who were not naturalized U.S. citizens.
- **Asian poverty correlated with particular occupations.** Asian workers living in poverty were most apt to be employed as:
 - Textile, apparel and furnishings workers (9.8 percent of impoverished Asian employees)
 - Cashiers (6.4 percent of Asian workers in poverty)
 - Cooks and food preparation workers (5.2 percent of impoverished Asian employees)

Home Ownership

- Asians were less likely to own their homes and less apt to own single-family houses than the general population.
 - Only 44 percent of Asian homes were owner-occupied, compared with 53 percent of all homes in the region.
 - Two-thirds of Asian homeowners lived in single-family houses, compared with three-quarters of the region's entire homeowner population.
- **Asian homeowners were more likely to have a mortgage on their home.** Some 85 percent of Asian single-family homeowners had mortgages, exceeding 71 percent of all single-family homeowners. Of single-family homeowners who had mortgages, 23 percent of homeowners in general had second mortgages or home-equity loans on their property compared to only 18 percent of Asian homeowners.
- **Median housing values among Asian homeowners were higher than for the general population.** More than 60 percent of Asian owners of single-family homes lived in houses valued at \$200,000 or more, compared with just over half of all single-family homeowners.
- **Asians had higher median monthly mortgage payments than the population in general.** Among households with first mortgages, the median monthly payment for Asian households was \$1,399, compared with \$1,209 for the entire population. For households with a second mortgage or a home equity loan, the median monthly payment for Asians was \$461, compared with \$377 for the general population.

Key Findings for Six Largest Asian Ethnic Groups

The census analysis revealed diverse economic characteristics among the six largest Asian ethnic groups and, in some cases, among population segments within those groups. Some ethnic populations generally were on solid financial footing while others experienced circumstances worthy of further examination.

It should be noted that although this section points out concentrations of ethnic groups in certain occupations and industries, members of all major Asian ethnic groups could be found across the spectrum of the New York metropolitan economy.

Chinese

With a larger portion of the working population in occupations and industries associated with lower pay (especially apparel manufacturing and food service) than in the general population, Chinese as a whole were not faring as well as the general population.

- **Employment:** Chinese have a difference of 0.1 percent between the unemployment rates of men and women, representing the smallest difference among the general population and the six largest Asian ethnic groups.
- **Occupations:**
 - While Chinese constituted 2.5 percent of the total regional labor force, they held 22 percent of all textile, apparel and furnishings jobs. This occupational group was the most common among Chinese women, who held 14 percent of jobs in the category.
 - Food preparation and serving-related occupations accounted for 15 percent of all jobs for Chinese men.
- **Industries:**
 - The accommodation and food services industry employed 31,409 Chinese, three-quarters of whom were men.
 - Apparel manufacturing employed 21,399 Chinese, 77 percent of whom were women.
- **Income:** Chinese had lower incomes and earnings across all measures than the general population (Table ES-1).
- **Poverty:** Chinese households had a higher poverty rate (18 percent) than the general population (13 percent).

Filipinos

With much Filipino employment linked to health-care services which is in growing demand, Filipinos overall experienced better economic circumstances than the general population.

- **Employment:** Filipinos were more active in the economy and more likely to be employed than the general population. Labor-force participation among Filipinos was 70 percent; higher than 62 percent for the general population. The Filipino unemployment rate was 4.4 percent, compared with 6.7 percent region-wide.
- **Occupations:** While Filipinos constituted 0.83 percent of the labor force:
 - 9.3 percent of registered nurses were Filipino, holding 16,424 jobs. More than 25 percent of employed Filipino women were working as registered nurses, compared with 3.7 percent of all women.
 - 3.4 percent of physicians and surgeons were Filipino, representing 2,704 jobs.
 - 3.4 percent of health technologists and technicians were Filipino, holding 3,889 jobs.
- **Industries:** The largest employer of Filipinos was the health-care sector, accounting for more than one-third of Filipino employment (33,284 jobs).
- **Income:** In relation to the general population, Filipinos had higher household and family incomes but, apparently due to larger Filipino households, slightly lower per capita income (Table ES-1).
- **Poverty:** The Filipino household poverty rate was 4 percent, roughly one-third of the general poverty rate.

Indians

With a large portion of Indian men working as physicians and computer specialists, Indians as a whole were better off than the general population. However, Indian women experienced much higher unemployment rates than Indian men.

- **Employment:** The overall Indian unemployment rate was 5.7 percent. A large employment gap existed between Indian men and women, with unemployment rates of 4.7 percent and 7.4 percent, respectively.
- **Occupations:** Although Indians comprised 2.1 percent of the labor force:
 - 10.4 percent of physicians and surgeons were Indian, holding 8,228 jobs.
 - 9.3 percent of computer specialists were Indian, with 25,751 employed in that occupation. Computer specialists accounted for 15 percent of all jobs for Indian men, compared with 4 percent of jobs for all men.
- **Income:** Relative to the general population, Indians had higher household and family incomes but, evidently because of larger households, lower per capita income (Table ES-1).
- **Poverty:** The overall Indian poverty rate was 11 percent, lower than the general poverty rate of 13 percent. The poverty rate for Indian households headed by senior citizens slightly exceeded the rate for seniors overall, while the opposite was true for households led by younger people.

Japanese

With a higher percentage of men working as top executives, Japanese overall had better economic conditions than the general population. However, Japanese women were less likely to be part of the labor market than their general-population and Asian peers.

- **Employment:** Japanese women had a labor-force participation rate of 48 percent, less than for all Asian women and women in general; compared to 78 percent of Japanese men who were in the work force.
- **Occupations:** Although Japanese represented 0.28 percent of the labor force, they held 1 percent of top executive positions. While only 2.7 percent of jobs held by all men were top executives, 10 percent of jobs for Japanese men were top executive positions.
- **Income:** Japanese had higher incomes and earnings across all gauges than the general population (Table ES-1).
- **Poverty:** The overall Japanese poverty rate (14 percent) is relatively low. However, more than one-third of Japanese younger than 65 and living in non-family households or group quarters were below the poverty line, compared with 19 percent of the general population with those attributes.

Koreans

In relation to the general population, Koreans tended to have lower incomes despite having lower unemployment than all Asians and the general population. Koreans were more likely to operate small businesses engaged in retail sales and services.

- **Employment:** Nearly one-quarter of Korean men and 17 percent of Korean women were self-employed, compared with 12 percent of all men and 6 percent of all women.
- **Occupations:**
 - While Koreans had a 0.85 percent share of the labor force, 7.3 percent of personal appearance workers, of whom 93 percent were women, were Korean.
 - For Korean men, 14 percent of jobs were in other sales and related occupations, including supervisors.
- **Industries:** Personal and laundry services employed 11,929 Koreans, representing 14 percent of all Korean jobs.
- **Income:** Koreans had lower incomes and earnings across all measures than the general population (Table ES-1).
- **Poverty:** Korean senior citizens had a poverty rate of 21 percent, almost double the 11 percent rate for the general elderly population. On the other hand, Koreans younger than 65 had a poverty rate nearly equal to their age group in the general population.

Pakistanis

Pakistanis as a whole fared worse economically than the general population, and experiences varied widely based on gender. Among gender-related traits, while Pakistani men participated in the labor force and had an unemployment rate similar to other Asian men, Pakistani women were less represented in the labor force than women in general and Asian women overall.

- **Employment:**
 - Self-employment was common for Pakistani men, with 17 percent in that category. Pakistani men had a work-force participation rate of 75 percent and an unemployment rate of 5.7 percent.
 - Pakistani women were less likely to be employed or to work full-time than Pakistani men, women in general or Asian women as a whole.
 - Fewer than 3 in 10 Pakistani women were in the work force, compared with more than half of all women.
 - Pakistani women had a 12 percent unemployment rate, greatly surpassing 7 percent for women in general.
 - About one-third of working Pakistani women held part-time jobs, in contrast with roughly one-fourth of all working women.
- **Occupations:** While Pakistanis made up 0.27 percent of the labor force:
 - 4.4 percent of all motor vehicle operators, except bus and truck drivers, with 2,678 jobs, were Pakistani. All Pakistanis in this occupational group were men, and this job category accounted for 15 percent of jobs held by Pakistani men.
 - 0.7 percent of cashiers, representing 1,213 jobs, were Pakistani. Nearly one-fifth of working Pakistani women were cashiers (435 jobs) or retail sales workers, other than cashiers (344 jobs).
- **Industries:** The other-transportation industry group accounted for 15 percent of Pakistani employment, compared with 2 percent of employment for the general population.
- **Income:** Pakistanis had lower incomes and earnings across the board than the general population (Table ES-1).
- **Poverty:** More than one-fifth (21 percent) of Pakistani households were impoverished, far exceeding 13 percent for the general population.

**Table ES-1: Median Income and Earnings Measures
in 1999 for New York CMSA by Race, Gender and Ethnicity**

	Total Population	All Asians	Chinese	Filipinos	Indians	Japanese	Koreans	Pakistanis
Median Earnings	\$29,983	\$27,097	\$22,478	\$34,732	\$30,043	\$39,245	\$25,824	\$23,243
– Men	\$35,730	\$30,262	\$25,305	\$31,793	\$34,180	\$54,144	\$29,797	\$25,687
– Women	\$25,026	\$24,330	\$20,754	\$36,961	\$23,981	\$27,851	\$21,830	\$15,536
Household Income	\$50,795	\$53,185	\$46,368	\$76,260	\$61,179	\$55,317	\$44,059	\$43,894
Family Income	\$60,254	\$58,196	\$49,515	\$84,050	\$64,359	\$84,987	\$48,876	\$44,889
Per Capita Income	\$26,604	\$22,733	\$20,850	\$26,587	\$24,674	\$36,415	\$20,805	\$15,605

Source: Census 2000 Summary File 4

ABOUT THE ASIAN AMERICAN FEDERATION OF NEW YORK

The Asian American Federation of New York is a nonprofit leadership organization that works to advance the civic voice and quality of life of Asian Americans in the New York metropolitan area. Established in 1990, the Federation supports and collaborates with 37 member agencies to strengthen community services, promotes strategic philanthropy within the Asian American community, and conducts research and advocacy concerning critical issues.

Strengthening Community Service Organizations

The Federation augments the ability of its member agencies to address community needs and concerns. Primary forms of capacity-building support include:

- Management and technical assistance, especially in fund raising, financial management, information technology and organizational planning, to help members increase their effectiveness and improve their business practices;
- Access to resources, such as grants, training opportunities, volunteer consultants and donated computer equipment;
- Connections and collaboration opportunities to facilitate peer support; shared arrangements; and inter-agency cooperation on advocacy, fundraising and service planning; and
- Advocacy on policy issues that affect the well-being of Asian Americans and the ability of member agencies to meet community needs.

Asian American Philanthropy & Community Fund

A New Heritage of Giving, a Federation-sponsored initiative, encourages Asian Americans to contribute time, talents and financial resources to Asian American community organizations. This program links community assets with community needs via:

- Presentations and speaker panels on Asian American issues and ways to get involved;
- Networking events and other efforts to connect volunteers with community agencies;
- Giving circles, aimed at building the next generation of philanthropists; and
- A unique resource at www.asianamericanphilanthropy.org.

The Asian American Community Fund, created and managed by the Federation, provides meaningful ways for donors to invest in programs that advance the status and well-being of Asian Americans. Unrestricted gifts, as well as contributions to such specific fields of interest as elder care and civic participation, are welcome. A panel of grant-making professionals is responsible for funding recommendations.

Research

The Federation studies, raises awareness of and promotes solutions regarding Asian American community issues, living conditions and needs. Major channels for this work are:

- Research projects, including needs assessments, program evaluations, neighborhood-based service planning and design, and community economic analyses, to provide sound frameworks for program planning and development and for policy recommendations;
- The Federation's Census Information Center (CIC), the only federally-designated Asian American-focused center of its kind in the Northeast, which offers a searchable online databank, responds to inquiries, and publishes population profiles and issue briefs; and
- Briefings, forums, and participation on committees and task forces to share research findings and census information, help implement research-based policy recommendations, and foster dialogue on issues.

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