

Issue Brief: Asian Americans and Discrimination

Key Words:

Asian American, Census, model minority, racial profiling, reverse discrimination, affirmative action

Description:

This issue briefs strives to illustrate how Asian Americans face discrimination today. It also shows that while discrimination varies within different categories in the Asian American group, they have been able to put up a unified front to fight discrimination against Asian Americans.

Key Points:

- The category Asian American is very broad. There’s a wealth of diversity within the Asian American population in the United States.
- South Asians are experiencing discrimination for a different reason than other Asian ethnicities due to 9/11
- Despite being labeled the “model minority” Asian Americans would not necessarily benefit from the removal of affirmative action.
- Asian Americans have a hard time being accepted as American.

Images:

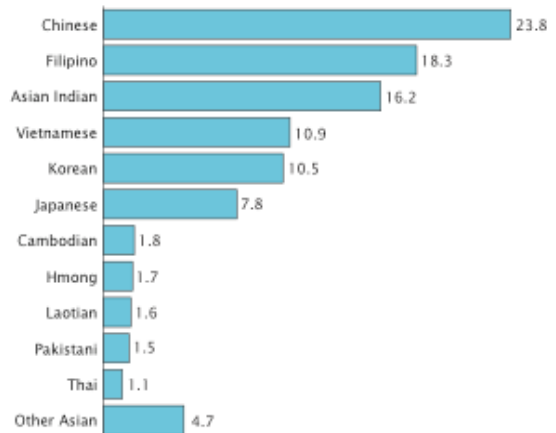
Table 1.
Asian Population by Detailed Group: 2000

(Data based on sample. For information on confidentiality protection, sampling error, non-sampling error, and definitions, see www.census.gov/prod/cen2000/doc/sf4.pdf)

Detailed group	Detailed Asian group alone		Detailed Asian group alone or in combination	
	Number	Percent of U.S. population	Number	Percent of U.S. population
Total	¹ 10,171,820	3.61	² 11,859,446	4.21
Asian Indian	1,645,510	0.58	1,855,590	0.66
Cambodian	178,043	0.06	212,633	0.08
Chinese	2,422,970	0.86	2,858,291	1.02
Filipino	1,864,120	0.66	2,385,216	0.85
Hmong	170,049	0.06	184,842	0.07
Japanese	795,051	0.28	1,152,324	0.41
Korean	1,072,682	0.38	1,226,825	0.44
Laotian	167,792	0.06	196,893	0.07
Pakistani	155,909	0.06	209,273	0.07
Thai	110,851	0.04	150,093	0.05
Vietnamese	1,110,207	0.39	1,212,465	0.43
Other Asian	³ 478,636	0.17	⁴ 561,485	0.20

Figure 1.
Asian Population by Detailed Group: 2000

(Percent distribution. Data based on sample. For information on confidentiality protection, sampling error, nonsampling error, and definitions, see www.census.gov/prod/cen2000/doc/sf4.pdf)



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Census 2000 special tabulation.



<http://www.tipatat.com/artworks/stereotypes/>

Brief:

There is a lot of diversity within the Asian American community. The term Asian American includes Asian Pacific, South Asians (Indian), Filipinos, and more. Therefore when discussing Asian Americans and discrimination it's important to consider that different subcategories experience different discrimination. For example, although Chinese Americans and Afghan and Indian Americans are all considered Asian Americans they experience discrimination for different reasons. In 1882 the Government passed the Chinese Exclusion Act in an effort to stop Chinese immigrants from entering the country. Discrimination at this time stemmed from competition between Chinese immigrants and American workers during the Gold Rush. Afghan Americans today face discrimination as a result of the 9/11 attacks. Unlike the Chinese Exclusion Act the discrimination faced by Afghans and South Asian Americans is not driven by government policy. Instead their experiences fall under racial profiling like "random" inspections at airports. It is also reminiscent of how Japanese Americans were treated during World War II. In the article "Japanese Americans Worry About Lessons Not Learned" Dale Minami, a lawyer who attended a remembrance event for the internment victims noted, " 'What happened to Japanese-Americans is happening to Arab Americans and Muslim Americans today, ' " said Minami, whose grandfather was taken from his job selling life insurance in Los Angeles in 1941. " 'The denial of constitutional rights and the repression, the war on dissent -- it's all being replicated' " (Model Minority).

Another reason why Asian Americans as a whole experience discrimination is because they are not totally accepted as Americans. Other Americans automatically assume every Asian person in the United States is not American and not a native. For instance, four-fifths of Asians spoke a language other than English at home, but about three-fifths spoke English "very well" (Census 2000). The article "Advancing Equality: Stopping Prejudice against Asian Americans," explains that Asian Americans "have their culture and differences in the cultures that do separate them from the 'American' description, but they are still Americans with citizenship" (Asian American Alliance). For this reason, Asian Americans are constantly in a battle to prove and solidify their citizenship.

There is a misconception that Asian Americans are adverse to Affirmative Action for Blacks and Latinos. There was a report that claimed Asian Americans would benefit from the eradication of Affirmative Action, receiving higher admittance into colleges and universities. As expressed by William Kidder this claim is not accurate. The unequal opportunity Asian Pacific Americans in particular face in terms of admittance is due to racial preference for whites (Kidder 2). On its site the American Justice Center

acknowledge that Asian Americans have come along way in assimilating in America, but that they are not to be excluded from the Civil Rights battle in the U.S. Despite being labeled “model minority” Asian Americans still have a long way to go to gain equal opportunity to White Americans. This includes gaining more representation in colleges and universities.

In an effort to reveal and fight for solutions to issues described above, the Asian American Justice Center was established. In 1991 the group was founded in order to “advance the human and civil rights for Asian Americans, and build and promote a fair and equitable society for all” (AAJC). Based in Washington D.C the AAJC (Asian American Justice Center) serves to educate both Asian Americans and Non-Asian Americans. They educate Asian Americans and other minorities by letting them know their rights and to fight and resist discriminatory behavior such as racial profiling and hate crimes. They also serve to open up more opportunities to Asian Americans in the education and professional spheres. Despite having relatively few Indian and South Asian representatives the AAJC is committed to providing opportunity to all Asian Americans.

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