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Issue Brief: Asian American Immigration

Key Words: immigration reform, DREAMers, “model minority”

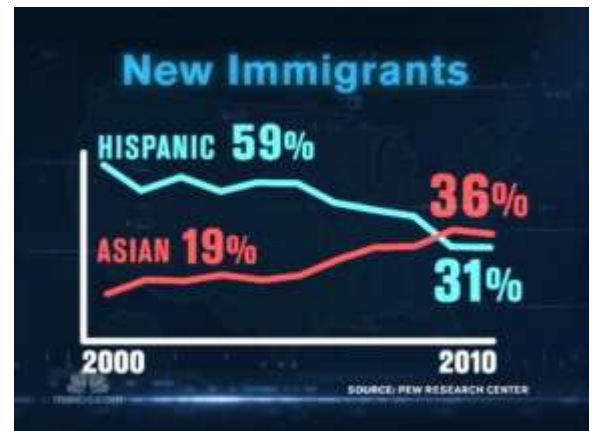
Description: Asian Americans are now the fastest growing group in the United States in large part due to recent immigrants. Immigration reform can no longer be thought of as a predominately Latino issue.

Key Points:

- Asian Americans are now the fastest growing ethn racial group in the US, in large part due to a recent surge in immigration.
- In 2010, for the first time ever more Asian immigrants arrived in the US than Hispanic immigrants.
- Most Asian immigrants arrive through family reunification programs, but over 1.3 million are undocumented.
- The majority of Asian Americans want immigration reform, regardless of their political party.

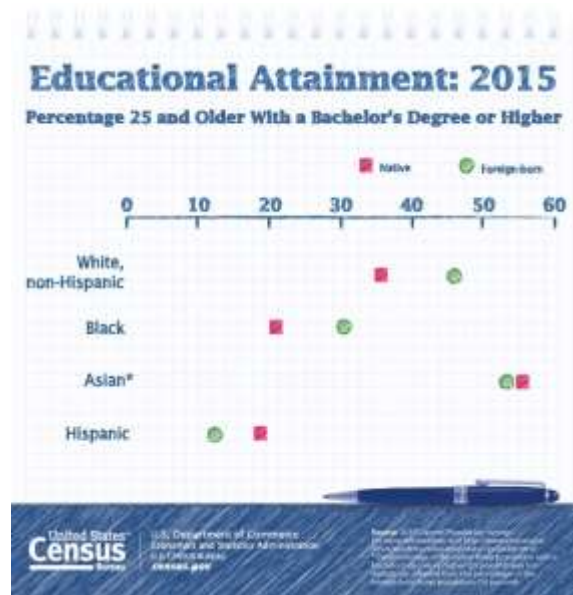
Brief:

Immigration issues in the United States are most often associated with immigrants from Latin America, yet in 2010, more Asian American immigrants entered the country than Hispanic immigrants. Asian Americans now make up the fastest growing ethnic group in the United States. This was a substantial change from just ten years before, when Hispanic immigrants outnumbered Asian



immigrants by nearly three to one. According to 2011 Census data, over half of the immigrants currently in the US came from Asia. The three biggest nationality groups are Chinese, Indian, and Filipino. The vast majority settled in the West, especially in California (Trounson). Of these immigrants, over half arrive through the family reunification visa program. With this increase in population came an increase in political power. The Asian American electorate grew by an astonishing 128 percent between 1996 and 2008 (Kieu).

While most Asian immigrants arrive through family reunification programs, the system is severely backed up due to the country quotas. Filipinos can wait up to 26 years to gain a visa. There is also a significant segment of the population who arrive illegally. About 12% of all unauthorized immigrants in the United States, or around 1.3 million, are Asian. In general, Asian Americans have a higher level of education, and a higher income than other



ethnoracial groups. While Asian Americans are often considered the “model minority,” there are certain ethnic groups within the pan ethnic label that fail to fit this ideal (Kieu). Due to immigration policy in the US favoring highly skilled workers, many Asian immigrants come with a higher level of education than other ethnic groups. However, this is not true for all Asian immigrants, and calling the entire pan ethnic group “model minority” is actually a disservice to those Asian immigrants who may actually need more support (Lee). Over 60 percent of Laotian and Cambodian adults do not have more than a high school degree, and nearly 1 in 10 DREAMers are Asian American (Kieu).

Immigration reform is most often thought of as a Latino issue, yet well over half of all Asian Americans, regardless of their political party, support immigration reform (“2012 Exit Poll Presentation”). The 2013 Senate proposal for immigration reform included some new policies that would help Asian immigration, including getting rid of the quotas for family reunification. However the plan would have also prevented siblings of US citizens from entering under this process. Immigration reform has been and will remain a major concern for Asian Americans in the coming years, and may prove to be an important factor in determine their vote in upcoming elections.



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Relevant Websites:

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- www.migrationpolicy.org
- www.americanprogress.org