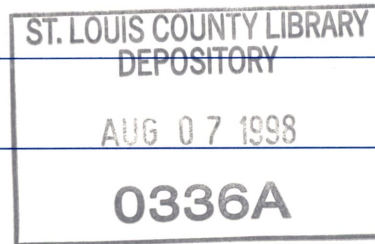


Facts on Working Women

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U.S. Department of Labor
Women's Bureau



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Facts About Asian American¹ and Pacific Islander Women

Population--

Asian and Pacific Islanders are a heterogeneous group. They differ in language, culture, and recency in immigration. Several Asian groups, such as Chinese and Japanese, have been in this country for generations. Pacific Islanders, as well, have been coming to the United States for more than a century. Relatively few Pacific Islanders are foreign born. Immigration is a major factor in the growth of the Asian and Pacific Islander population as a whole, with large numbers coming to the United States following the adoption of the Immigration Act of 1965.

Asians include: Chinese; Filipino; Japanese; Asian Indian; Korean; Vietnamese; Laotian; Thai; Cambodian; Pakistani; Indonesian; and Hmong. *Pacific Islanders* include: Polynesian (Hawaiian, Samoan, and Tongan); Micronesian (Guamanian); and Melanesian (Fijian). The number of Asian and Pacific Islanders in the United States was 1.5 million in 1970, 3.5 million in 1980, 7.3 million in 1990, 9.6 million in 1996, and in February 1998 there were an estimated 10.2 million Asian and Pacific Islanders, comprising 3.8 percent of the total U.S. population. About 51 percent (4.9 million) were female.

Table 1
Population of Asian and Pacific Islanders, March 1996
(numbers in thousands)

<u>Age groups</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>Women</u>	<u>Men</u>
16 years and over	7,066	3,627	3,445
15 to 19 years	714	364	350
20 to 24 years	830	423	407
25 to 34 years	1,776	891	889
35 to 44 years	1,583	822	762
45 to 54 years	1,062	536	520
55 to 64 years	637	339	293
65 and over	618	349	274

Source: U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, Current Population Survey, March 1996.

¹The term "Asian American" used in the fact sheet title equates to the term "Asian", as defined by the U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census.

In addition to immigration and natural increase, part of the growth of Asian and Pacific Islanders between 1970 and 1990 reflects changes in the race question on the census form to include more groups, as well as improvements in collection and processing procedures in the 1990 census.

There are more Asian and Pacific Islander women between the ages of 25 to 34 years--thus reflecting their median age of 30.5 years. In 1990, Asian women were slightly older than Asian males, with median ages of 31 years and 29 years, respectively, in part because females tend to live longer.

Because of the shorter migration route and in many instances similar climate to their homeland, it is no surprise that the majority of Asian and Pacific Islanders reside in the western portion of the United States--mainly in California. In 1996, 55 percent lived in the West, compared with 58 percent in 1980. States with the highest concentrations of Asian and Pacific Islanders were California and Hawaii. Approximately 75 percent of Pacific Islanders lived in California and Hawaii. These two states had more than 100,000 Pacific Islanders. Hawaiians, of course, are native to Hawaii. Sixty-six percent of the Asian population lived in just five States--with higher concentrations in California, New York, and Hawaii, and smaller groups in Texas and Illinois.

Civilian Labor Force--

Asian and Pacific Islander women are very active in the labor force. In March 1996, approximately 59 percent were labor force participants. This rate mirrors participation by black and white women (see Table 2). Asian and Pacific Islander women's participation rate was higher than women of Hispanic origin (53.4 percent).

Table 2
Employment Status of Women by Racial Groups,
March 1996 and 1996 Annual Averages
 (numbers in thousands)

<u>Employment Status</u>	<u>Asian and Pacific Islander March 1996</u>	<u>White 1996</u>	<u>Black 1996</u>	<u>Hispanic 1996</u>
Civilian noninstitutional population	3,626	86,828	13,029	9,610
In civilian labor force	2,125	51,325	7,869	5,128
Labor force participation rate	58.6	59.1	60.4	53.4
Employed	2,032	48,920	7,086	4,602
Unemployed	93	2,404	784	525
Unemployment rate	4.4	4.7	10.0	10.2
Not in labor force	1,501	35,503	5,159	4,482

Source: U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, Current Population Survey, March 1996 and U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, *Employment and Earnings*, January 1997.

Asian and Pacific Islander women were *least* likely to experience unemployment than any other group of women. Their unemployment rate of 4.4 percent in March 1996 was lower than the national average for all women and consequently, lower than any other group of women--Hispanic women, 10.2 percent; black women, 10.0 percent; and white women, 4.7 percent.

Occupations--

Asian and Pacific Islander women are employed in all occupational groups. They show their strongest attachment to the technical, sales, and administrative support jobs, which is also true for all other female racial groups. Their occupational distribution is similar to white women in managerial/professional specialty and service jobs. The high percentage of Asian and Pacific Islander women in management and professional jobs reflects, in part, their high educational attainment. Their distribution in technical, sales, administrative support and operator, fabricator, and laborer jobs closely resembles the distribution for black women.

Table 3
Occupational Distribution of Employed Women, By Race, 1996

<u>Occupation</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>Asian and Pacific Islander</u>	<u>White</u>	<u>Black</u>	<u>Hispanic</u>
Mgt. & professional specialty	30.3	30.9	31.5	22.8	17.4
Tech., sales, & admin. support	41.4	37.8	41.9	38.4	38.4
Service	17.5	16.6	16.3	25.4	25.0
Precision, production, craft & repair	2.1	3.3	2.0	2.2	2.9
Operators, fabricators, & laborers	7.6	11.1	6.9	11.0	11.1
Farming, forestry & fishing	1.2	0.4	1.3	0.2	1.9

Source: U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, Current Population Survey, March 1996 and U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, *Employment and Earnings*, January 1997.

Income and Earnings--

The median *income*² for Asian and Pacific Islander women who worked year-round, full-time in 1996 was \$26,313--73 percent of the \$35,788 earned by their male counterparts. Asian and Pacific Islander women had the highest median income of all female groups--white women, \$24,264; black women, \$21,079; and women of Hispanic origin, \$17,855.

²Income is defined as the sum of money wages and salaries, net income from self-employment and income other than earnings. Components of income are: wages, salary, commissions, bonuses, and tips; self-employment income, farm self-employment; interest, dividends, net rental income, royalty income, income from estates and trusts; social security or railroad retirement; Supplemental Security Income (SSI), Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), or other public assistance or public welfare payments; and retirement, survivor, or disability pensions.

Of all year-round, full-time women workers, Asian and Pacific Islander women also had the highest median *earnings*³ among female groups. At \$25,555, they out-earned white women at \$25,358; black women at \$21,990; and women of Hispanic origin, \$19,272.

In 1996, their *median family income* for married couple families was \$49,105; married couple families, \$54,864; and for a female householder, no husband present, \$27,367. These relatively high family income figures reflect a strong attachment to labor force participation and educational attainment

Educational Attainment—

Many Asian and Pacific Islanders have come to America in pursuit of higher education. As a racial group, education is highly valued in their communities, however, educational attainment of different Asian and Pacific Islander groups varies widely. The 1990 census showed that among Asians, only 31 percent of Hmongians had graduated from high school compared with 88 percent of Japanese. For Pacific Islanders, those with at least a high school diploma ranged from 64 percent for Tongans and 80 percent for Hawaiians.

Of the 2.9 million Asian and Pacific Islander women age 25 and older in March 1996, 80 percent had at least a high school diploma. In addition, 57 percent had attended college and/or received an associate's or bachelor's degree. About 20 percent had not completed high school.

Marital Status, Family, and Poverty—

For the 3.7 million Asian and Pacific Islander women age 15 and over, over half (55 percent) were in married-couple families. Because Asian and Pacific Islander women are a fairly young group, very few are widowed or divorced. Only seven percent were widowed, four percent divorced, and three percent separated. The remaining 30 percent were single, never married.

There were 2.1 million Asian and Pacific Islander families in March 1996. Eighty percent were married-couple families, 12 percent had female householders, no spouse present, and the remaining 8 percent consisted of male householders, no spouse present.

Asian and Pacific Islander families are large: 22 percent had five persons or more persons, compared to 14 percent of all families. Asian families were larger partly because the percentage of children under 18 years old who live with both parents was higher than the general population, 81 percent versus 70 percent. Pacific Islander families were larger partly because of higher fertility rates, but also because many maintain traditions of strong and cohesive extended families.

Between 1987 and 1996, the number Asian and Pacific Islanders 18 years of age and over below the poverty level increased by 61 percent from 566,000 to 884,000 persons. Their poverty rate remained fairly constant--12.9 percent in 1987 and 12.3 percent in 1996. Their family poverty rate of 12.7 percent was lower than that of any other group except white, non Hispanic families--white, non Hispanics, 6.5 percent; black, 26.1 percent; and Hispanic origin, 26.4 percent.

³Earnings is defined as the sum of money wages or salary and net income from farm and nonfarm self-employment.

**U.S. DEPARTMENT OF LABOR
WOMEN'S BUREAU
REGIONAL ADDRESSES/CONTACT INFORMATION**

Region I: Boston

Jacqueline Cooke, RA
J.F.K. Federal Building
Government Center
Room E-270
Boston, MA 02203
Phone: (617) 565-1988
1-800-518-3585
Fax: (617) 565-1986
(Connecticut, Maine, Massachusetts,
New Hampshire, Rhode Island, Vermont)

Region II: New York

Mary C. Murphree, RA
201 Varick Street
Room 601
New York, NY 10014-4811
Phone: (212) 337-2389
Fax: (212) 337-2394
(New Jersey, New York, Puerto Rico, Virgin Islands)

Region III: Philadelphia

Cornelia Moore, RA
Gateway Building
Room 2450
3535 Market Street
Philadelphia, PA 19104
Phone: (215) 596-1183
1-800-379-9042
Fax: (215) 596-0753
(Delaware, District of Columbia, Maryland,
Pennsylvania, Virginia, West Virginia)

Region IV: Atlanta

Delores L. Crockett,
Field Coordinator/RA
Atlanta Federal Center,
61 Forsyth Street, SW Suite 7T95
Atlanta, GA 30303
Phone: (404) 562-2336
1-800-672-8356
Fax: (404) 562-2413
(Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Mississippi,
North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee)

Region V: Chicago

Nancy Chen, RA
230 S. Dearborn Street, Room 1022
Chicago, IL 60604
Phone: (312) 353-6985
1-800-648-8183
Fax: (312) 353-6986
(Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, Minnesota, Ohio,
Wisconsin)

Region VI: Dallas

Delores L. Crockett, Acting RA
Federal Building
525 Griffin Street, Suite 735
Dallas, TX 75202
Phone: (214) 767-6985
1-888-887-6794
Fax: (214) 767-5418
(Arkansas, Louisiana, New Mexico, Oklahoma, Texas)

Region VII: Kansas City

Rose Kemp, RA
City Center Square Building
1100 Main Street, Suite 1230
Kansas City, MO 64105
Phone: (816) 426-6108
1-800-252-4706
Fax: (816) 426-6107
(Iowa, Kansas, Missouri, Nebraska)

Region VIII: Denver

Oleta Crain, RA
Terese Obrigewitch, EOA
1801 California Street, Suite 905
Denver, CO 80202-2614
Phone: (303) 844-1286
1-800-299-0886
Fax: (303) 844-1283
(Colorado, Montana, North Dakota, South Dakota,
Utah, Wyoming)

Region IX: San Francisco

Barbara Sanford, Acting RA
71 Stevenson Street, Suite 927
San Francisco, CA 94105
Phone: (415) 975-4750
1-877-923-6509
Fax: (415) 975-4753
(Arizona, California, Guam, Hawaii, Nevada)

Region X: Seattle

Karen Furia, RA
1111 Third Avenue, Room 885
Seattle, WA 98101-3211
Phone: (206) 553-1534
Fax: (206) 553-5085
1-888-296-7011
(Alaska, Idaho, Oregon, Washington)

Women's Bureau Clearinghouse

1-800-827-5335

Fair Pay Clearinghouse

1-800-347-3743

Internet Address

<http://www.dol.gov/dol/wb/>

E-mail Address

wb-wwc@dol.gov