

WE-4

We the Americans:

Pacific Islanders

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Acknowledgments

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e, the American Pacific Islanders

Introduction

We, the American Pacific Islanders, are a small but distinct and important component of the Asian and Pacific Islander population.

A companion report, "We, the American Asians" provides a statistical portrait of the Asian component of the Asian and Pacific Islander population.

The 1990 census counted 365,024 Pacific Islanders, a 41 percent increase over the 1980 count of 259,566. We were about 5 percent of all Asian and Pacific Islander Americans in 1990. Pacific Islanders include diverse populations who differ in language and culture. They are of Polynesian, Micronesian, and Melanesian backgrounds. The Polynesian group is the largest of the three and includes Hawaiians, Samoans, Tongans, and Tahitians. The Micronesian group, the second largest, is primarily Guamanian (or Chamorros), but also includes other Mariana Islanders, Marshall Islanders, Palauans, and several other groups. The Fijian population is the largest Melanesian group.

Immigration was a major factor in the growth of the Asian and Pacific Islander population as a whole, with large numbers coming to the United

States from Asia and the Pacific Islands following the adoption of the Immigration Act of 1965.

Immigration played a much more varied role, however, in the growth of our Pacific Islander population. Only 13 percent of us were foreign born. Hawaiians are, of course, native to this land. Persons born in American Samoa are United States nationals with the right of free entry into the United States, and since 1950 inhabitants of Guam are United States citizens.

In addition to immigration and natural increase, part of our growth 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.

Although some groups are small, all Pacific Islander groups are important and make continuing contributions to the diversity of the United States. The table at the end of this report shows some characteristics for selected Pacific Islander groups. This report, however, will focus on the five largest Pacific Islander groups.

Our population grew 41 percent between 1980 and 1990, from 259,566 to 365,024.

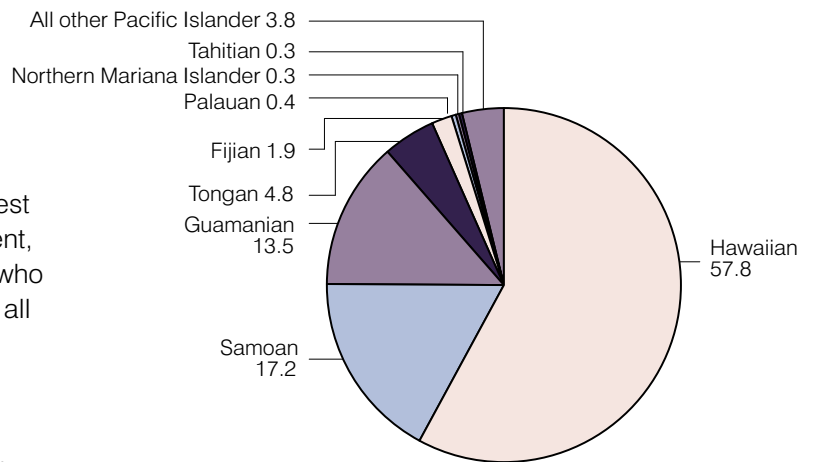
Hawaiians, the largest Pacific Islander group, were 58 percent of the total Pacific Islander population.

Samoans and Guamanians were the next largest groups, representing 17 percent and 14 percent, respectively, followed by Tongans and Fijians who were 5 percent and 2 percent, respectively, of all Pacific Islanders.

Other Pacific Islanders, including Palauans, Northern Mariana Islanders, and Tahitians each constituted less than one-half of 1 percent of Pacific Islander Americans.

Tongans grew more rapidly (146 percent) during the 1980's than any of the top three groups.

Figure 1.
Distribution of the Pacific Islander Population: 1990
(Percent)



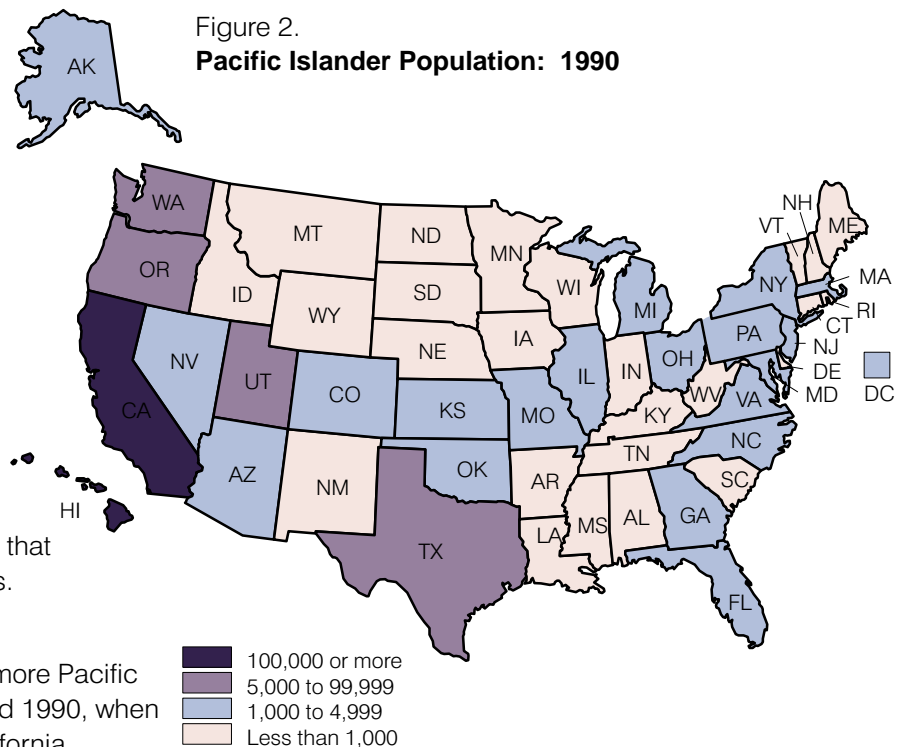
Most of us live in the West.

Eighty-six percent of the Pacific Islander population lived in the West in 1990 compared with 56 percent of the Asian and Pacific Islander group as a whole and 21 percent of the total population.

Approximately 75 percent of Pacific Islanders lived in just two States — California and Hawaii. These two States had more than 100,000 Pacific Islanders.

Washington was the only other State that had 15,000 or more Pacific Islanders.

Figure 2.
Pacific Islander Population: 1990



The number of States with 5,000 or more Pacific Islanders doubled between 1980 and 1990, when Oregon, Texas, and Utah joined California, Hawaii, and Washington.

Most of us are native born.

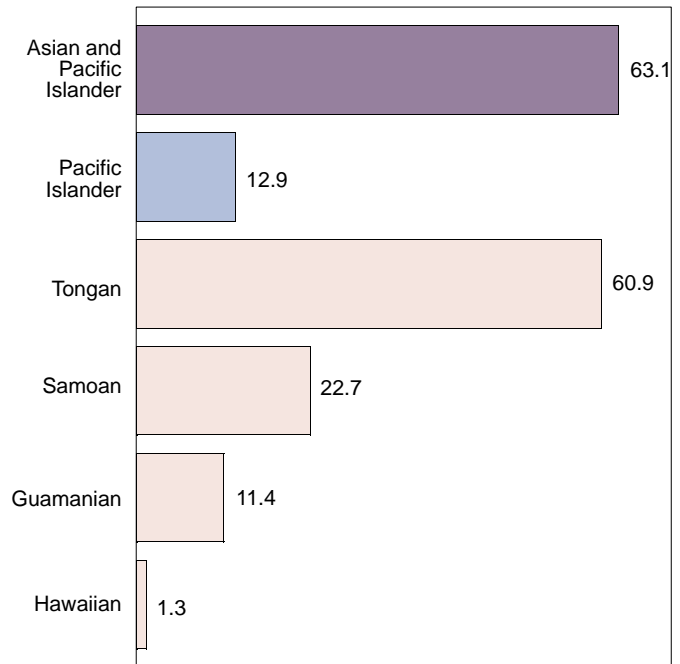
Only 13 percent of Pacific Islanders were foreign born, much lower than the 63 percent for the total Asian and Pacific Islander population.

Among the Pacific Islander groups, Tongans had the highest proportion of foreign born at 61 percent.

Samoans and Guamanians had much lower proportions of foreign born, 23 percent and 11 percent, respectively.

Only 1 percent of Hawaiians, natives to this land, were foreign born.

Figure 3.
Foreign-Born Population: 1990
(Percent)



We are a relatively young population.

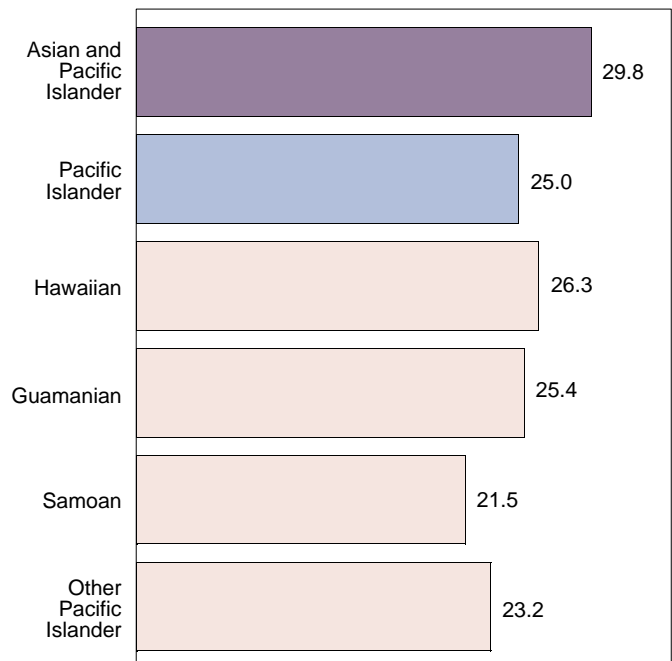
Pacific Islanders had a median age of 25 years in 1990. The median age was about 30 years for the Asian and Pacific Islander population as a whole and 33 for the total population.

Only 4 percent of Pacific Islanders were 65 years old and over compared with 6 percent of all Asians and Pacific Islanders and 13 percent of the total population.

In 1990, Hawaiians had the oldest median age among Pacific Islanders, 26 years, followed by Guamanians with a median age of 25.

Samoans, at 22 years, had the youngest median age among Pacific Islanders.

Figure 4.
Median Age: 1990



We have larger families than the average for the Nation.

The average Pacific Islander family had 4.1 persons in 1990, larger than the average number of persons per family for Asians and Pacific Islanders (3.8 persons) and all American families (3.2 persons). Pacific Islander families were larger partly because of higher fertility rates, but also because many maintain traditions of strong and cohesive extended families.

Family size ranged from 4.8 persons for Samoans to 3.8 persons for Hawaiians. Among Pacific Islander families, 73 percent were maintained by a husband and wife compared with 81 percent of Asian and Pacific Islander families.

Pacific Islanders were more likely to have a female householder with no spouse present (19 percent) than all Asians and Pacific Islanders (12 percent).

Many of us first come to America to pursue higher education.

In 1990, 76 percent of all Pacific Islanders 25 years old and over were at least high school graduates. The rate for all Asians and Pacific Islanders was 78 percent and the national rate was 75 percent.

Within the Pacific Islander group, the proportion who received a high school diploma or higher ranged from 80 percent for Hawaiians to 64 percent for Tongans.

In general, Pacific Islander men had higher rates of high school completion than women, 77 percent versus 75 percent. Tongan women, however, had higher rates of high school completion than Tongan men.

At the college level, 11 percent of Pacific Islanders were graduates compared with 37 percent of all Asians and Pacific Islanders and 20 percent of the total population.

Hawaiians had the highest college completion rate among Pacific Islanders at 12 percent, followed by Guamanians at 10 percent, Samoans at 8 percent, and Tongans at 6 percent.

Figure 5.
Persons Per Family: 1990

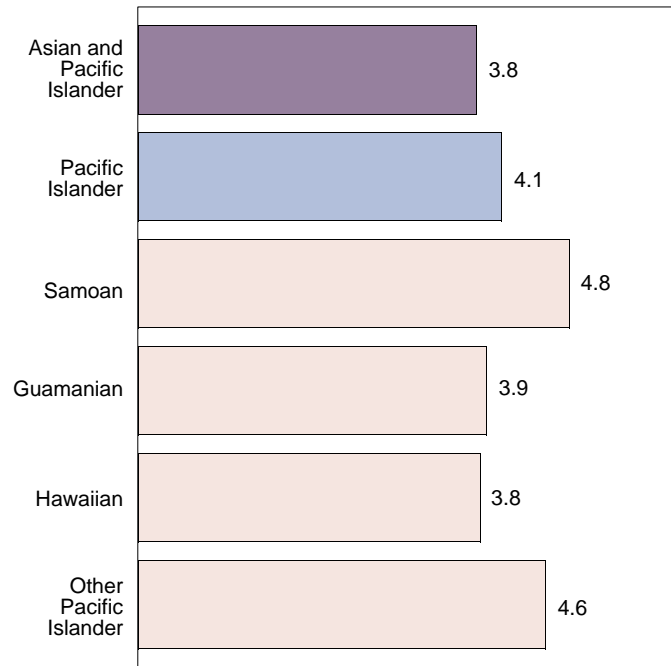


Table 1.
Educational Attainment by Sex: 1990
(Percent 25 years old and over)

	High school graduate or higher		Bachelor's degree or higher	
	Men	Women	Men	Women
Total	75.7	74.8	23.3	17.6
Asian and Pacific Islander .	81.5	74.0	41.9	31.8
Pacific Islander . .	77.2	75.0	12.0	9.6
Hawaiian	79.9	79.0	13.0	10.7
Samoan	74.7	66.5	9.8	6.1
Tongan	61.4	66.8	5.6	5.9
Guamanian	73.9	70.6	11.8	8.2

One-fourth of us speak a language other than English at home.

Of the 78,000 Pacific Islander persons 5 years old and over speaking a language other than English at home, 25 percent spoke an Asian or Pacific Islander language at home. Thirty-three percent of these did not speak English “very well,” and 11 percent were “linguistically isolated.”

Among Pacific Islanders, Tongans and Samoans had the highest proportion of persons 5 years old and over speaking an Asian or Pacific Islander language at home. Hawaiians had the lowest proportion.

Tongans had the highest proportion of persons who were linguistically isolated among Pacific Islander groups.

We are well represented in the labor force.

A larger proportion of Pacific Islanders participated in the labor force than did the Asian and Pacific Islander population as a whole. Only Samoans and Tongans were below the Pacific Islander average.

Guamanians had the highest labor force participation rate at 72 percent.

Sixty-three percent of Pacific Islander women were in the labor force compared with 60 percent of all Asian and Pacific Islander women and 57 percent of all women in the United States.

The percent of Pacific Islander women in the labor force ranged from 55 percent for Samoans to 63 percent for Guamanians.

Table 2.
Language Spoken at Home and Ability to Speak English: 1990

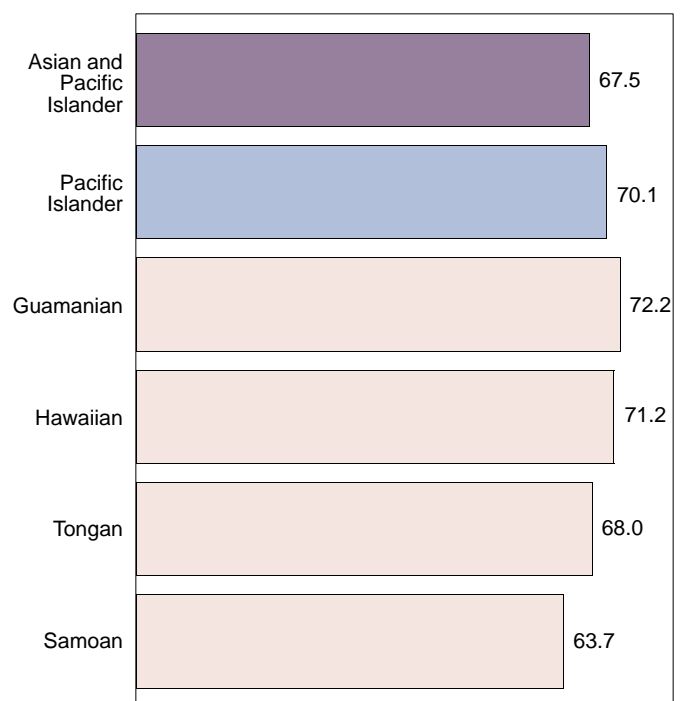
(Percent 5 years old and over)

	Speak Asian or Pacific Islander language at home	Do not speak English “very well”	Linguistically isolated
Asian and Pacific Islander . . .	63.3	55.6	34.4
Pacific Islander . . .	24.9	33.4	11.1
Hawaiian	7.7	26.7	8.1
Samoan	63.9	32.7	9.3
Tongan	72.4	47.4	21.6
Guamanian . . .	30.2	24.1	7.1

Note: Linguistic isolation refers to persons in households in which no one 14 years old or over speaks only English and no one who speaks a language other than English speaks English “very well.”

Figure 6.
Labor Force Participation: 1990

(Percent persons 16 years old and over)



Nearly one-third of Pacific Islanders are employed in technical, sales, and administrative support jobs.

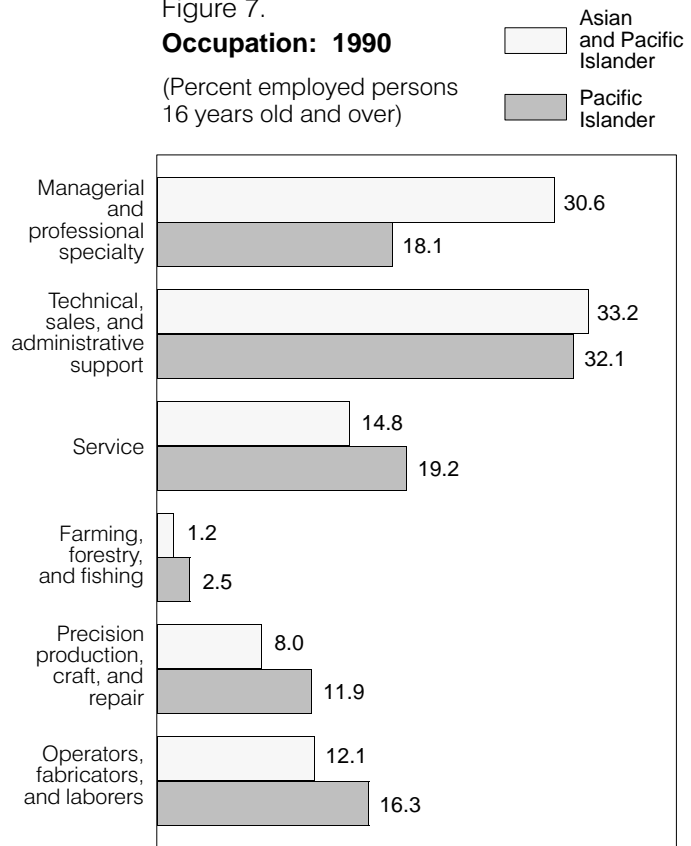
Pacific Islanders were more likely to be in service occupations than the total Asian and Pacific Islander population, but less likely to be in managerial or professional occupations.

Tongans were more likely than all Pacific Islanders to work in service occupations and less likely to be managers or professionals.

Pacific Islanders were more likely than all Asian and Pacific Islanders to work in precision production, craft, and repair occupations or as operators, fabricators, and laborers.

Although farming, forestry, and fishing are common in many Pacific Island areas, less than 3 percent of Pacific Islanders worked in farming, forestry, and fishing in the United States.

Figure 7.
Occupation: 1990
(Percent employed persons 16 years old and over)



Our families are well represented in the work force.

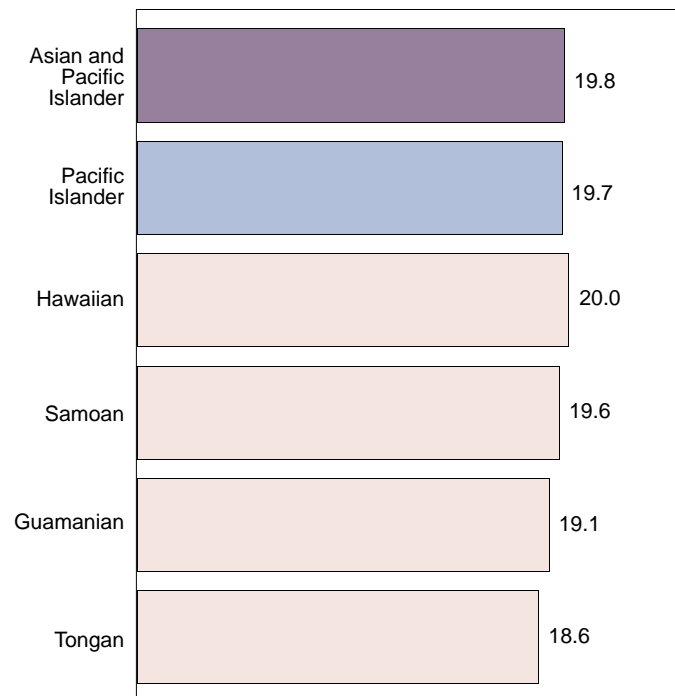
About 19.7 percent of Pacific Islander families and 19.8 percent of Asian and Pacific Islander families had three or more workers compared with 13.4 percent of the Nation's families.

Pacific Islander families were also less likely than all families to have no workers (9 percent compared with 13 percent). Only 3 percent of Tongan families had no workers.

About 26 percent of Pacific Islander families had one worker and 46 percent had two workers. These percentages were similar to those for all Asian and Pacific Islander families.

Samoans were somewhat more likely than Pacific Islanders as a whole to have one-worker families (30 percent compared with 26 percent) and less likely to have two-worker families (40 percent compared with 46 percent).

Figure 8.
Families With Three or More Workers: 1990
(Percent)



Our per capita income is below the National average.

In 1989, the Pacific Islander per capita income was \$10,342, lower than \$13,638 for Asians and Pacific Islanders and \$14,143 for the Nation.

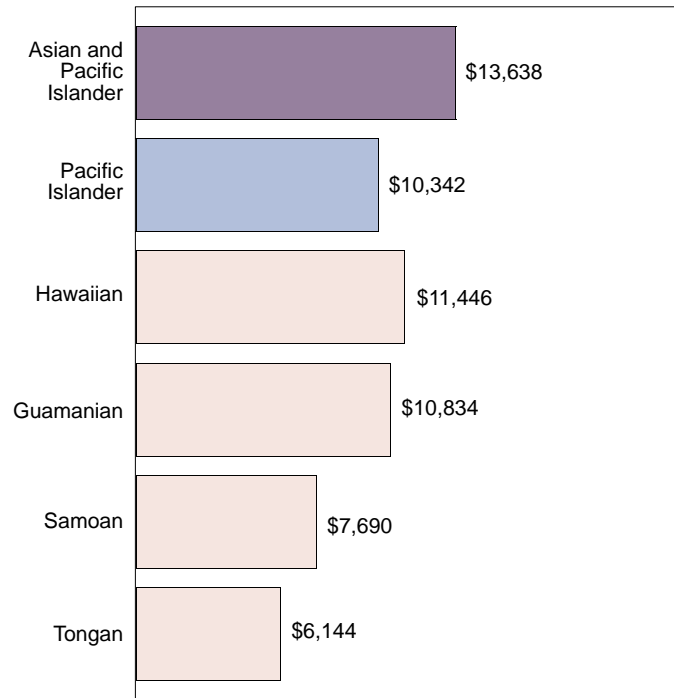
The lower per capita income of Pacific Islanders in part reflects the larger average size of Pacific Islander families (4.08) compared to all families nationally (3.16).

The median income of Pacific Islander families (\$33,955) is slightly lower than that for all families (\$35,225). Pacific Islanders' median household income in 1989 (\$31,980) was slightly higher than that for all households (\$30,056).

Hawaiians had the highest per capita income at \$11,446 of all Pacific Islander groups, followed by Guamanians with \$10,834.

Tongan and Samoan per capita income was about half the National per capita income, \$6,144 and \$7,690, respectively.

Figure 9.
Per Capita Income: 1990
(In 1989 dollars)



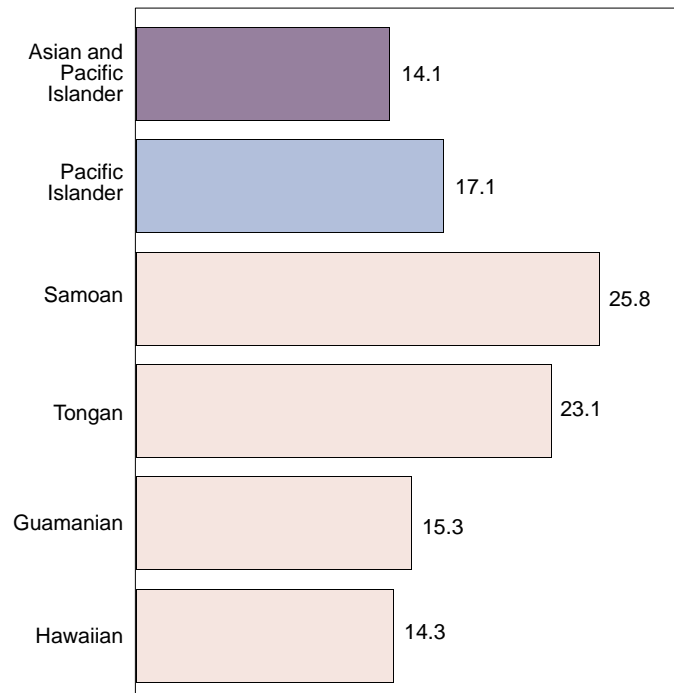
Our poverty rate is higher than that for all Asians and Pacific Islanders.

About 58,000 or 17 percent of Pacific Islanders lived below the poverty level in 1989, higher than the 14 percent poverty rate for all Asians and Pacific Islanders.

Among Pacific Islanders, Samoans had the highest poverty rate at 26 percent. Tongans had the next highest poverty rate in 1989 at 23 percent.

About 1 of every 4 Samoan families and 1 of every 5 Tongan families were below the poverty level in 1989.

Figure 10.
Poverty Rates for Persons: 1989
(Percent in poverty)



Information in this report is based on the 1990 Census of Population and Housing. Estimated population and housing unit totals based on tabulations from only the sample tabulations may differ from the official 100-percent counts. Such differences result, in part, from collecting data from a sample of households rather than all households. Differences also can occur because of the interview situation and the processing rules differing between the 100-percent and sample tabulations. These types of differences are referred to as nonsampling errors.

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