

WE-3

# **W**e the Americans: **Asians**

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## Acknowledgments

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# **e, the American Asians**

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## **Introduction**

*We, the American Asians, number 6.9 million, a 99 percent increase since the 1980 census. This report focuses on Asian Americans — Chinese, Filipinos, Koreans, Asian Indians, Japanese, Vietnamese, Cambodians, Laotians, Hmong, and Thai. Pacific Islanders are profiled in a companion report, “We, The American Pacific Islanders,” in this series.*

*For the last two decades, the number of Asians and Pacific Islanders in the United States doubled, from 1.5 million in 1970 to 3.7 million in 1980 to 7.3 million in 1990. The percentage of Asians and Pacific*

*Islanders in the total population also nearly doubled during the 1980’s, from 1.5 percent to 2.9 percent.*

*Our dramatic increases are the result of increased immigration from China, India, Korea, the Philippines, and other Asian and Pacific Island areas following the adoption of the Immigration Act of 1965.*

*In addition to immigration and natural increase, part of the growth of our numbers during the 1970’s reflect changes in the census race definition to include more groups, as well as improvements in review procedures in the 1990 census.*

**We, the American Asians are a rapidly growing, diverse part of America.**

The 1990 census counted 6,908,638 Asians, a 99 percent increase over the 1980 census count of 3,466,847.

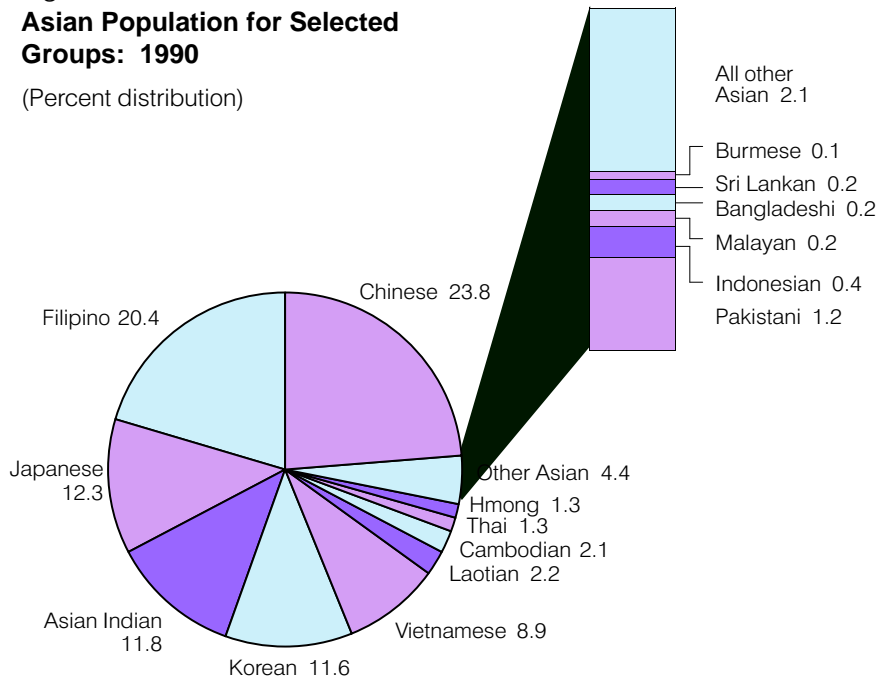
In 1990, the largest proportions of Asian Americans were Chinese (24 percent) and Filipino (20 percent) followed by Japanese, with 12 percent of the Asian population.

Newer immigrant groups—Laotian, Cambodian, Thai, and Hmong—each accounted for 2 percent or less of the Asians in America.

Note: All Asian groups, regardless of size, are important and make continuing contributions to the diversity of the United States. This discussion focuses on only the 10 largest Asian groups.

Figure 1. **Asian Population for Selected Groups: 1990**

(Percent distribution)



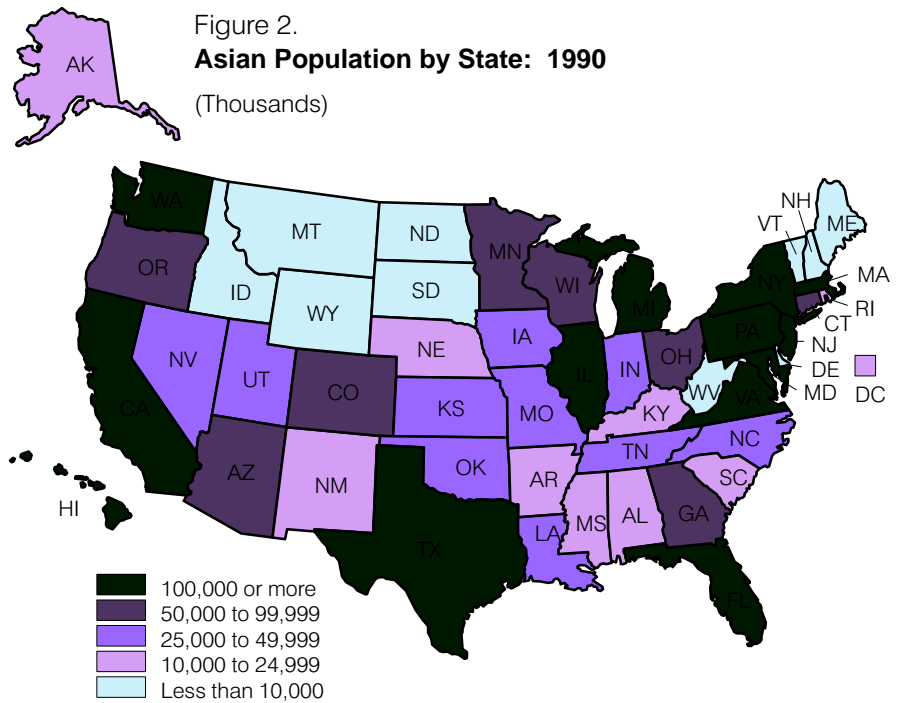
**Most of us make our homes in the West.**

Fifty-four percent of the Asian population lived in the West in 1990 compared with 21 percent of the total population.

Approximately 66 percent of Asians lived in just five States—California, New York, Hawaii, Texas, and Illinois. The Asian population was highly concentrated in California, New York, and Hawaii, but the concentration varied by Asian groups.

Figure 2. **Asian Population by State: 1990**

(Thousands)



**Many of us were born in other countries.**

Immigration has contributed heavily to the growth of the Asian population in the past two decades, but the percentages who are foreign born differ considerably among groups.

Sixty-six percent of Asians were born in foreign countries. Among Asian groups, Vietnamese, Laotian, and Cambodian groups had the highest proportion of foreign born, while Japanese had the lowest proportion.

Thirty-eight percent of Asians entered the United States from 1980 to 1990. The Cambodians, Laotians, and Hmong had the highest proportion of persons who entered the United States during this period.

The IndoChina Migration and Refugee Assistance Act of 1975 established a program of resettlement for refugees who fled from Cambodia and Vietnam. One year later, the Immigration Act of 1976 made Laotians eligible for the same refugee resettlement programs. Seventy-five percent or more of the Vietnamese, Cambodian, and Laotian born entered the country since 1975.

**We are a young population.**

Asians had a median age of 30 years in 1990, younger than the national median of 33 years. Only 6 percent of Asians were 65 years old and older compared with 13 percent for the total population.

The Japanese were the eldest of the Asian populations with a median age of 36 years, in part because fewer Japanese were foreign born.

The Hmong and Cambodian, with their large proportions of recent immigrants were the youngest Asians with a median age of 13 years and 19 years, respectively. Immigrant populations tend to have higher fertility than native populations.

In 1990, Asian males were younger than Asian females, with median ages of 29 years and 31 years, respectively, in part because females tend to live longer.

Figure 3.

**Foreign Born by Year of Entry: 1990**

(Percent)

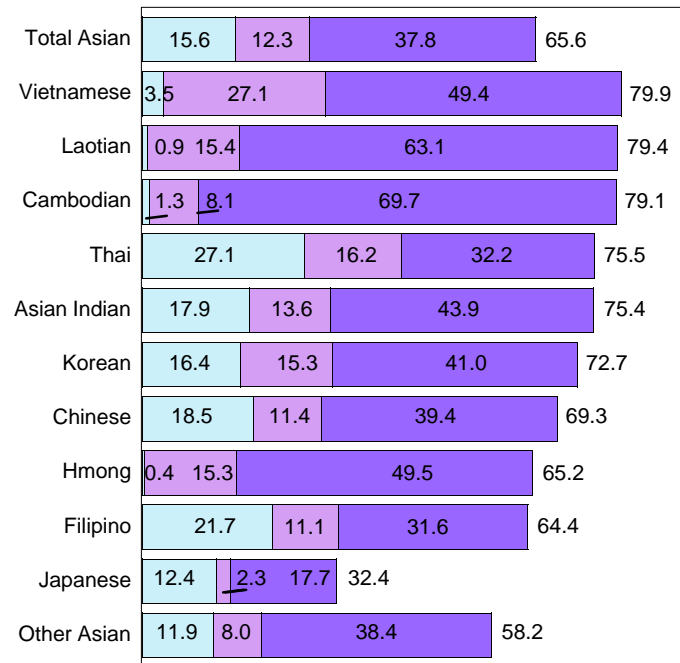
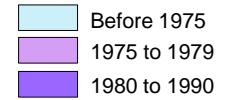
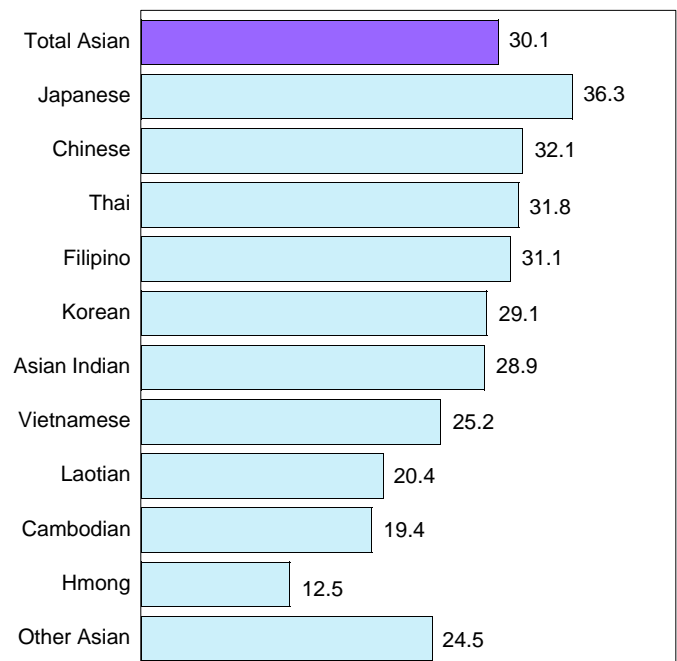


Figure 4.

**Median Age: 1990**



**Our families are larger than the average American family.**

The average Asian family had 3.8 persons in 1990, larger than the average of 3.2 persons for all U.S. families. Asian families were larger partly because the percentage of children under 18 years old who lived with both parents was higher than the general population, 81 percent versus 70 percent.

Among Asian groups, Hmong had the largest family size with 6.6 persons, and Japanese the smallest family size with 3.1 persons. Other groups with more than four persons per family were Filipino, Vietnamese, Cambodian, and Laotian.

The proportion of Asian families maintained by a husband and wife was 82 percent, slightly higher than the national figure of 79 percent. The proportion of Asian female-headed families with no husband present was significantly less than the national average, 12 percent versus 17 percent. However, two groups had proportions above the national average: Cambodian, 26 percent and Thai, 20 percent.

**Our educational attainment varied widely by group.**

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

Education is highly valued in Asian communities, but the educational attainment of different groups varied widely. The proportion completing high school or higher was 88 percent for Japanese, compared with 31 percent for Hmong.

In general, Asian men had higher rates of high school graduation or higher than Asian women: 82 percent versus 74 percent in 1990. Japanese women had a high school or higher completion rate of 86 percent compared with 19 percent for Hmong women.

At the college level, 38 percent of Asians had graduated with a bachelor's degree or higher by 1990, compared with 20 percent of the total population. Asian Indians had the highest attainment rates, and Cambodians, Laotians, and Hmong had the lowest.

Figure 5.  
**Persons Per Family: 1990**

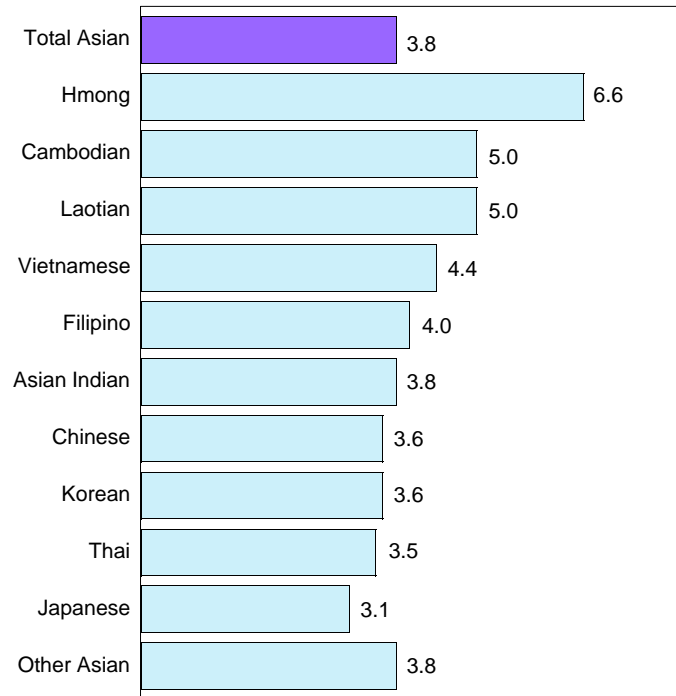


Table 1.  
**Educational Attainment by Sex: 1990**  
(Percent 25 years old and over)

	High school graduate or higher		Bachelor's degree or higher	
	Male	Female	Male	Female
<b>Total population</b>	<b>75.7</b>	<b>74.8</b>	<b>23.3</b>	<b>17.6</b>
Total Asian . . . . .	81.7	73.9	43.2	32.7
Chinese . . . . .	77.2	70.2	46.7	35.0
Filipino . . . . .	84.2	81.4	36.2	41.6
Japanese . . . . .	89.9	85.6	42.6	28.2
Asian Indian . . . . .	89.4	79.0	65.7	48.7
Korean . . . . .	89.1	74.1	46.9	25.9
Vietnamese . . . . .	68.5	53.3	22.3	12.2
Cambodian . . . . .	46.2	25.3	8.6	3.2
Hmong . . . . .	44.1	19.0	7.0	3.0
Laotian . . . . .	49.4	29.8	7.0	3.5
Thai . . . . .	88.6	66.2	47.7	24.9
Other Asian . . . . .	85.9	78.7	47.5	34.2

**Nearly two-thirds of us spoke an Asian or Pacific Islander language at home.**

Of the 4.1 million Asians 5 years old and over, 56 percent did not speak English “very well,” and 35 percent were linguistically isolated.

The Hmong, Laotians, and Cambodians had the highest proportions of persons 5 years old and over speaking an Asian or Pacific Islander (API) language at home. Asian Indians, at 15 percent, had the lowest proportion.

Hmong and Cambodians who spoke an Asian or Pacific Islander language at home had the highest proportion of linguistically isolated, 61 percent and 56 percent, respectively.

**We are more likely to participate in the labor force than the population as a whole.**

In 1990, 67 percent of Asian Americans, compared with 65 percent of all Americans, were in the labor force. Filipino, Asian Indian, Thai, and Chinese had participation rates higher than the national average — 75 percent, 72 percent, 71 percent, and 66 percent, respectively.

Asian women had a higher participation rate than all women. Sixty percent of Asian women were in the labor force compared with 57 percent of all women in the United States.

Asian men had about the same participation rate as all men, 75 percent and 74 percent, respectively, and Asian Indian men had the largest participation rate of 84 percent.

Table 2.  
**Asian or Pacific Islander Language Spoken at Home and Ability to Speak English: 1990**

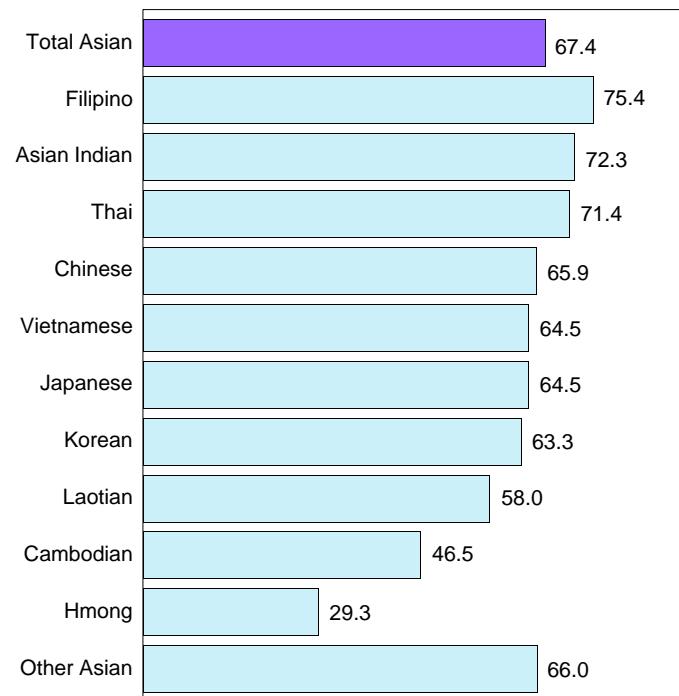
(Percent)

	Speak Asian or Pacific Islander language at home	Do not speak English “very well”	Linguistically isolated
<b>Total Asian</b>	<b>65.2</b>	<b>56.0</b>	<b>34.9</b>
Chinese	82.9	60.4	40.3
Filipino	66.0	35.6	13.0
Japanese	42.8	57.7	33.0
Asian Indian	14.5	31.0	17.2
Korean	80.8	63.5	41.4
Vietnamese	92.5	65.0	43.9
Cambodian	95.0	73.2	56.1
Hmong	96.9	78.1	60.5
Laotian	95.6	70.2	52.4
Thai	79.1	58.0	31.8
Other Asian	21.0	49.9	30.2

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 Rates: 1990**

(Percent 16 years old and over)



**More of our family members are in the work force.**

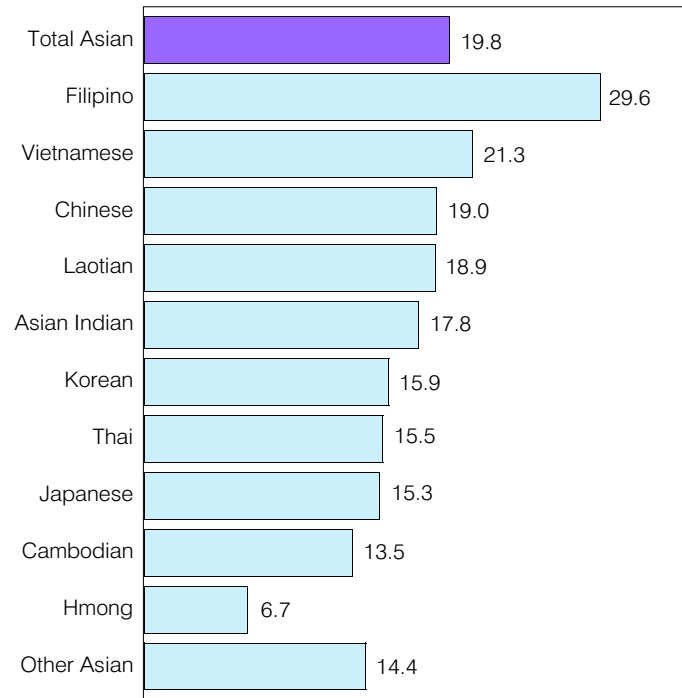
The proportion of Asian families with three or more workers was 20 percent compared with the national proportion of 13 percent.

Among Asian families, Filipinos (30 percent) and Vietnamese, (21 percent) had the highest proportions of families with three or more workers.

Hmong families had the lowest proportion with three or more workers.

Figure 7.  
**Families With Three or More Workers: 1990**

(Percent)



**Many of us work in higher paying occupations, in part because of higher educational attainment.**

Asians were more likely to be in technical, sales, and administrative support, and managerial and professional specialty jobs (33 percent and 31 percent, respectively) than the total population — 32 percent and 26 percent, respectively.

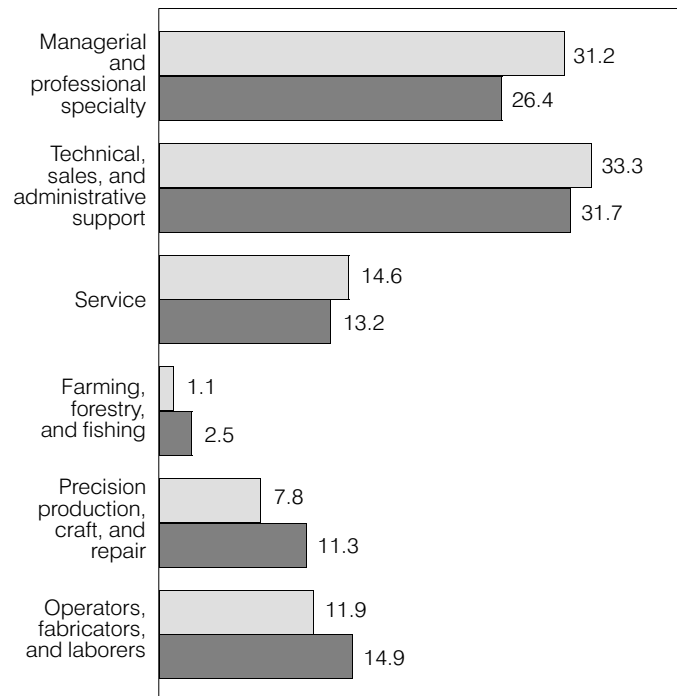
The proportion in technical, sales, and administrative support occupations varies from 37 percent for Korean workers to 5 percent for Laotian workers.

Asians were less likely than the total population to work in precision production, craft, and repair occupations or to work as operators, fabricators, and laborers.

Figure 8.  
**Occupation: 1990**

(Percent employed persons 16 years old and over)

Asian  
Total



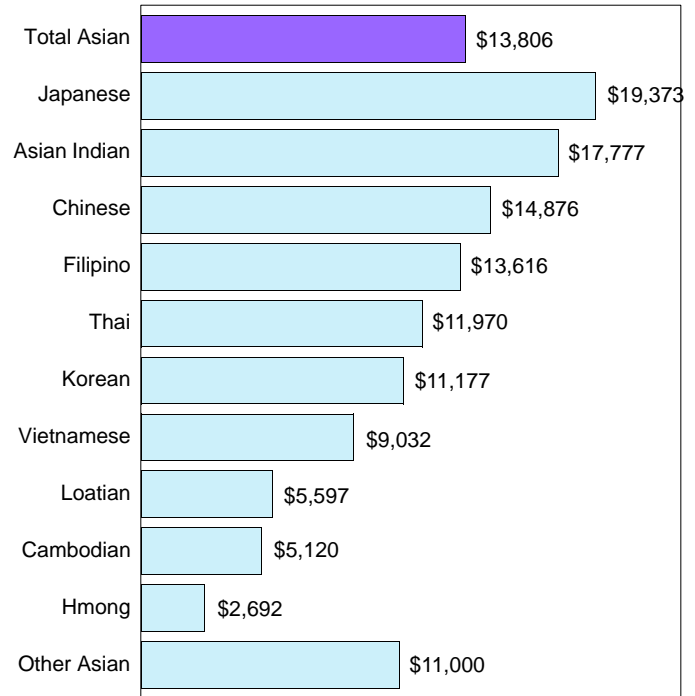


**Japanese had the highest per capita income at \$19,373 and Hmong, one of the most recent Asian immigrant groups, had the lowest at \$2,692.**

In 1989, the Asian per capita income was \$13,806 compared with the national per capita income of \$14,143.

Asian families had higher median family incomes (\$41,583) in 1989 than all families (\$35,225), partly because of more family members in the work force and higher educational attainment.

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



**We experience poverty rates slightly higher than all Americans, despite our higher median family income.**

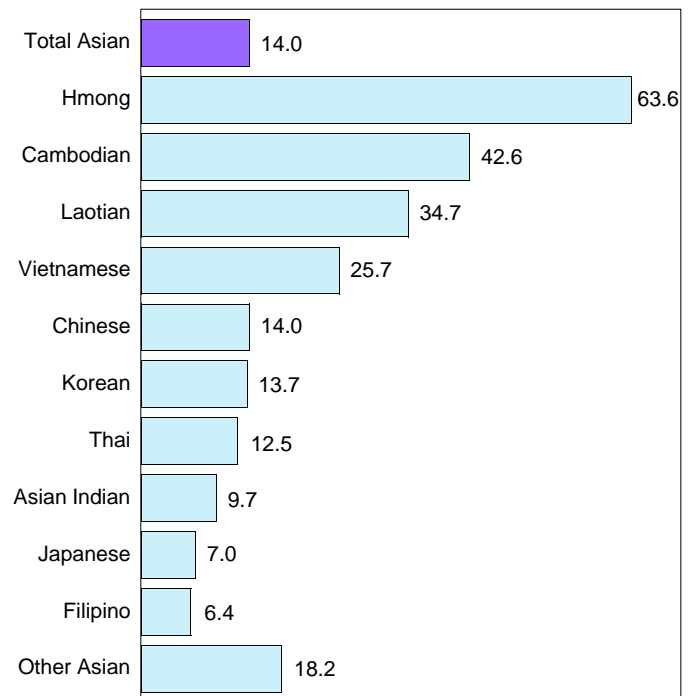
About 14 percent of Asian Americans lived in poverty in 1989, a rate slightly higher than the 13 percent for the entire Nation.

The Hmong had one of the highest poverty rates followed by the Cambodians and Laotians. The lowest poverty rates were for the Japanese and Filipinos.

About 11 percent of Asian families were in poverty in 1989, a rate slightly higher than the 10 percent for all American families.

Hmong and Cambodian families had the highest family poverty rates, 62 percent and 42 percent, respectively. The lowest poverty rates were for Filipino (5 percent) and Japanese (3 percent) families.

Figure 10.  
**Poverty Rates for Asian Persons: 1989**  
(Percent)



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 counts 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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