

The Asian and Pacific Islander Population in the United States

March 1999

Population Characteristics

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This report presents data on the demographic, social, and economic characteristics of the Asian and Pacific Islander¹ population in the United States. The U.S. Census Bureau collected this information in the March 1999 supplement to the Current Population Survey (CPS).² The topics covered are geographic distribution; age distribution; marital status; family type and family size; educational attainment; labor force participation, unemployment, and occupation; family income; and poverty status.

GEOGRAPHIC DISTRIBUTION

The majority of Asians and Pacific Islanders live in the West.

In March 1999, the Asian and Pacific Islander population in the United States numbered 10.9 million, constituting 4 percent of the total population. Most Asians and Pacific Islanders (53 percent) resided in the Western region of the United States, with 20 percent in the South, 18 percent in the Northeast, and 10 percent in the Midwest³ (see Figure 1). In comparison,

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¹"Asian" refers to those having origins in any of the original peoples of the Far East, Southeast Asia, or the Indian subcontinent including, for example, Cambodia, China, India, Japan, Korea, Malaysia, Pakistan, the Philippine Islands, Thailand, and Vietnam. "Pacific Islander" refers to those having origins in any of the original peoples of Hawaii, Guam, Samoa, or other Pacific Islands. The Asian and Pacific Islander population is not a homogeneous group. Rather, it comprises many Asian and Pacific Islander groups who differ in language, culture, and length of residence in the United States. Some of the Asian groups, such as the Chinese and Japanese, have been in the United States for several generations. Others, such as the Hmong, Vietnamese, Laotians, and Cambodians, are comparatively recent immigrants. Relatively few of the Pacific Islanders are foreign born.

²The population universe for the March 1999 Current Population Survey is the civilian noninstitutionalized population of the United States plus members of the armed forces in the United States living off base or with their families on base, but it excludes all other members of the armed forces.

³No statistical difference existed between the proportion of Asians and Pacific Islanders living in the South and in the Northeast.

Figure 1.
Region of Residence by Race: 1999
(Percent distribution of population*)



*The percentages may not add to 100.0 percent because of rounding.
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Survey, March 1999.

non-Hispanic Whites numbered 193.1 million, with 20 percent residing in the West, 33 percent in the South, 20 percent in the Northeast, and 27 percent in the Midwest.⁴

Most Asians and Pacific Islanders live in metropolitan areas.

Nationally, 96 percent of the Asian and Pacific Islander population lived in metropolitan areas.⁵ The percentage of Asians and Pacific Islanders who lived in central cities (45 percent) was double the proportion for non-Hispanic Whites (22 percent). A somewhat higher proportion of non-Hispanic Whites (56 percent) than of Asians and Pacific Islanders (52 percent) lived outside central cities. Asians and Pacific Islanders were less likely than non-Hispanic Whites to live outside metropolitan areas (4 percent and 23 percent, respectively).

AGE DISTRIBUTION

The Asian and Pacific Islander population is young.

In 1999, 29 percent of Asians and Pacific Islanders were under age 18 compared with 24 percent of non-Hispanic Whites. A further indication of the relative youthfulness of the Asian and Pacific Islander population was that only 7 percent were age 65 and older, whereas 14 percent of non-Hispanic Whites were in this age group.

⁴No statistical difference existed between the proportion of non-Hispanic Whites living in the West and in the Northeast.

⁵The general concept of a metropolitan area (MA) is one of a large population nucleus, together with adjacent communities that have a high degree of economic and social integration with that nucleus. The Office of Management and Budget, with technical assistance from the Census Bureau, uses published standards to define MAs for use by federal agencies. See Office of Management and Budget, *Federal Register Notice*, Vol. 55, No. 62, March 30, 1990 and *OMB Bulletin*, No. 93-117, issued June 1993.

MARITAL STATUS

Among young adults, Asians and Pacific Islanders are more likely than non-Hispanic Whites to have never married.

In 1999, 8.3 million Asians and Pacific Islanders and 155.2 million non-Hispanic Whites were 15 years and older. A lower proportion of Asians and Pacific Islanders than of non-Hispanic Whites 15 years and older were married with their spouse present (53 percent and 57 percent, respectively). However, Asians and Pacific Islanders were about three times as likely as non-Hispanic Whites to be married with their spouse absent (3 percent compared with 1 percent). Asians and Pacific Islanders were less likely than non-Hispanic Whites to be widowed (4 percent compared with 7 percent) or divorced (5 percent compared with 10 percent), but just as likely to be separated (1 percent compared with 2 percent).⁶ The largest difference in marital status between Asians and Pacific Islanders and non-Hispanic Whites existed for those never married: 34 percent compared with 24 percent.

Marital status varies by age group. The percentage of divorced Asians and Pacific Islanders was about one-half the percentage of divorced non-Hispanic Whites for each of the age groups examined — 3 percent compared with 8 percent for those ages 25 to 34, 7 percent and 14 percent for those ages 35 to 44, and 8 percent and 15 percent for those ages 45 to 64. Among adults 25 years and older, the percentage of Asians and Pacific Islanders never married was highest among those ages 25 to 34 (45 percent) compared with

⁶No statistical difference existed in the proportion of Asians and Pacific Islanders widowed and those with spouse absent or divorced.

32 percent for non-Hispanic Whites in the same age group.

FAMILY TYPE AND SIZE

The majority of Asian and Pacific Islander families are maintained by married couples.

In 1999, the majority of the 2.5 million Asian and Pacific Islander and the 53.1 million non-Hispanic White families were maintained by married couples (80 percent and 82 percent, respectively).⁷ About 13 percent of both Asian and Pacific Islander and non-Hispanic White families were maintained by women with no spouse present. Families maintained by men with no spouse present made up 7 percent of Asian and Pacific Islander families and 5 percent of non-Hispanic White families.

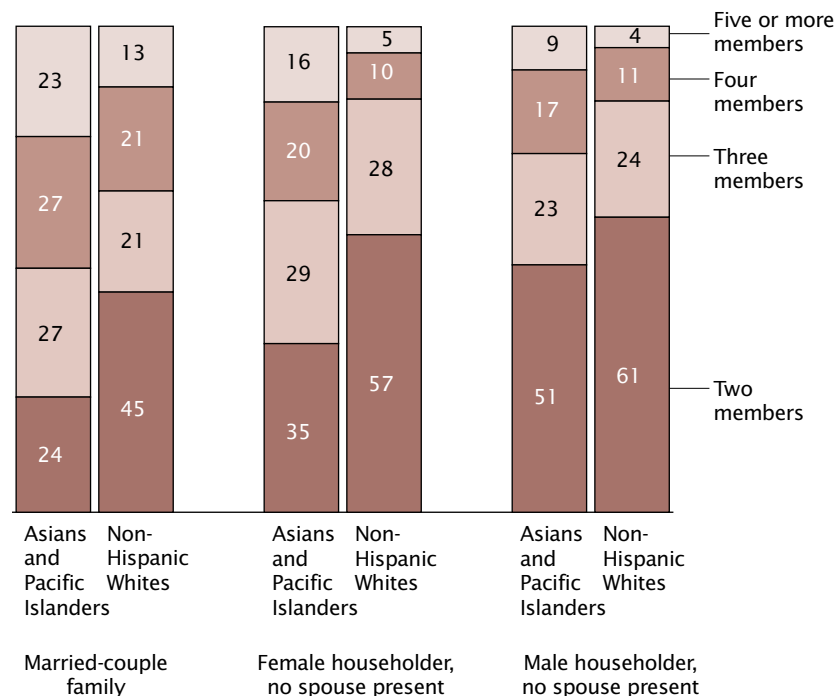
Asian and Pacific Islander families are larger than non-Hispanic White families.

Among married-couple families, 23 percent of Asian and Pacific Islander families consisted of five or more members, compared with 13 percent of non-Hispanic White families (see Figure 2). For families maintained by women with no spouse present, the comparable figures were 16 percent and 5 percent. About 9 percent of Asian and Pacific Islander male householder families with no spouse present had five or more members, not significantly different from the 4 percent of their non-Hispanic White counterparts.⁸

⁷The race of the householder was used to determine the race of the family or household. Data do not include families in group quarters.

⁸For Asians and Pacific Islanders, no statistical difference existed in the proportion of male householder, compared with female householder, families with no spouse present with five or more members.

Figure 2.
Size of Family by Family Type and Race: 1999
 (Percent distribution of families*)



*The percentages may not add to 100.0 percent because of rounding.
 Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Survey, March 1999.

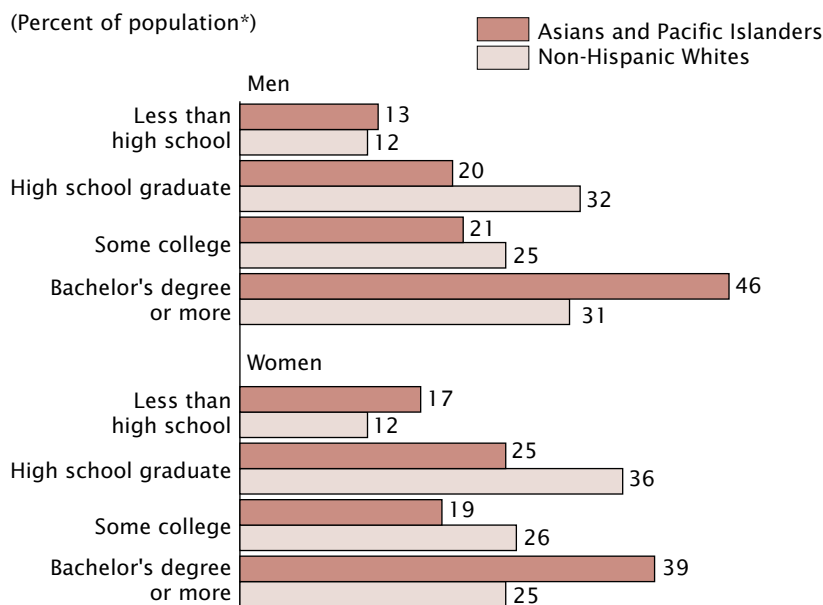
EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT

Among people 25 years and older, Asians and Pacific Islanders are more likely than non-Hispanic Whites to have earned a college degree, but they are also more likely than non-Hispanic Whites to have less than a ninth grade education.

In 1999, 6.6 million Asians and Pacific Islanders and 130.4 million non-Hispanic Whites were 25 years and older in the United States. Among this age group, Asians and Pacific Islanders were more likely than non-Hispanic Whites to have less than a ninth grade education (8 percent compared with 5 percent). At the same time, Asians and Pacific Islanders were more likely than non-Hispanic Whites to have a bachelor's degree or more (42 percent and 28 percent, respectively). A slightly lower proportion of Asians and Pacific Islanders (85 percent) than of non-Hispanic Whites (88 percent) had completed a high school education or more.

In 1999, a higher proportion of Asian and Pacific Islander men than of women had earned at least a bachelor's degree (46 percent and 39 percent, respectively, as shown in Figure 3). Similarly, a higher proportion of non-Hispanic White men than of women had earned at least a bachelor's degree (31 percent compared with 25 percent).

Figure 3.
Educational Attainment for People 25 Years and Older by Sex and Race: 1999
 (Percent of population*)



*The percentages may not add to 100.0 percent because of rounding.
 Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Survey, March 1999.

LABOR FORCE PARTICIPATION, UNEMPLOYMENT, AND OCCUPATION

Among Asians and Pacific Islanders, men are more likely than women to participate in the civilian labor force.

In 1999, 8.1 million Asians and Pacific Islanders and 152.7 million non-Hispanic Whites were 16 years and older. Among this age group, no statistical difference existed in the proportion participating in the civilian labor force for Asian and Pacific Islander and non-Hispanic White men (74 percent each) and women (60 percent each).⁹ Also, no statistical difference existed in the proportion unemployed for Asian and Pacific Islander and non-Hispanic White men (4 percent each) or in the proportion of women unemployed (4 percent and 3 percent, respectively).

Asians and Pacific Islanders are concentrated in managerial and professional specialty occupations.

In 1999, 5.2 million Asians and Pacific Islanders and 98.7 million non-Hispanic Whites 15 years and older were employed.¹⁰ A higher proportion of Asians and Pacific Islanders (37 percent) than of non-Hispanic Whites (33 percent) were concentrated in managerial and professional specialty occupations.¹¹ Among men, a slightly higher proportion of Asians and

⁹Civilian labor force and occupation data reflect characteristics of the civilian noninstitutionalized population for March 1999 and are not adjusted for seasonal changes. Data released by the Department of Labor's Bureau of Labor Statistics may not agree entirely with data shown in this report because of seasonal adjustment.

¹⁰The data on occupation are for the employed civilian population 15 years and older in their current occupation.

¹¹They include occupations such as managers, executives, administrators, physicians, nurses, lawyers, architects, engineers, scientists, and teachers.

Pacific Islanders than of non-Hispanic Whites worked in them (37 percent compared with 32 percent, see Figure 4), but no statistical difference existed among women (36 percent compared with 35 percent).

FAMILY INCOME¹²

While one-third of Asian and Pacific Islander families have incomes of \$75,000 or more, one-fifth have incomes of less than \$25,000.

About 33 percent of Asian and Pacific Islander families and

¹²Income is the sum of wages and salaries, net income from self-employment, and income other than earnings.

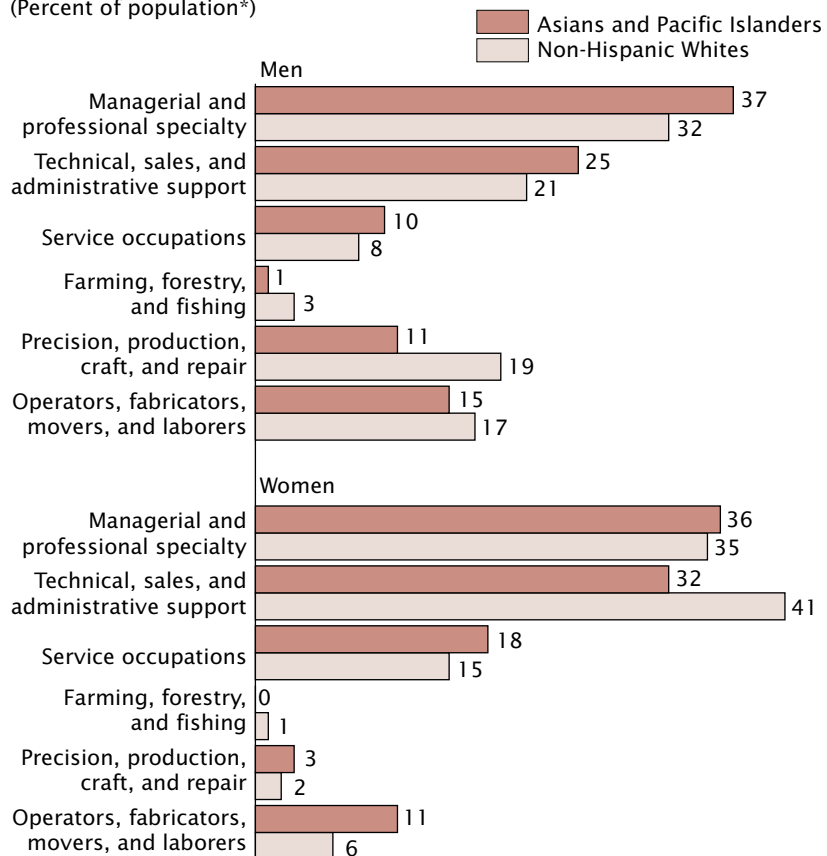
29 percent of non-Hispanic White families had incomes of \$75,000 or more in 1998.¹³ At the same time, 21 percent of Asian and Pacific Islander families had incomes under \$25,000, compared with 19 percent of non-Hispanic White families. Asian and Pacific Islander married-couple families were more likely than non-Hispanic White married-couple families to have incomes of \$75,000 or more (38 percent and 33 percent, respectively). About one in seven of both Asian and Pacific Islander married-couple families (16 percent) and

¹³Throughout the report, references to income and poverty status for families and individuals in 1999 are based on their income in calendar year 1998.

Figure 4.

Occupation of the Employed Civilian Population 15 Years and Older by Sex and Race: 1999

(Percent of population*)

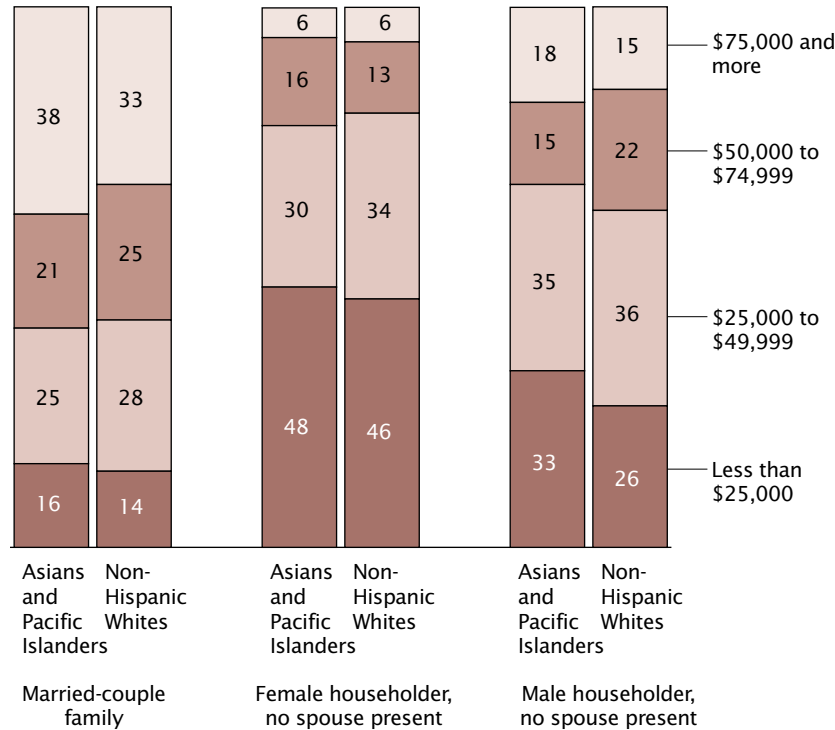


*The percentages may not add to 100.0 percent because of rounding. Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Survey, March 1999.

Figure 5.

Total Family Income by Family Type and Race: 1998

(Percent distribution of families*)



*The percentages may not add to 100.0 percent because of rounding.
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Survey, March 1999.

non-Hispanic White married-couple families (14 percent) had incomes of less than \$25,000 (see Figure 5). Among families maintained by men with no spouse present or by women with no spouse present, no statistical difference existed in the proportion of Asian and Pacific Islander families and non-Hispanic White families with incomes of \$75,000 or more or with incomes under \$25,000.

POVERTY STATUS

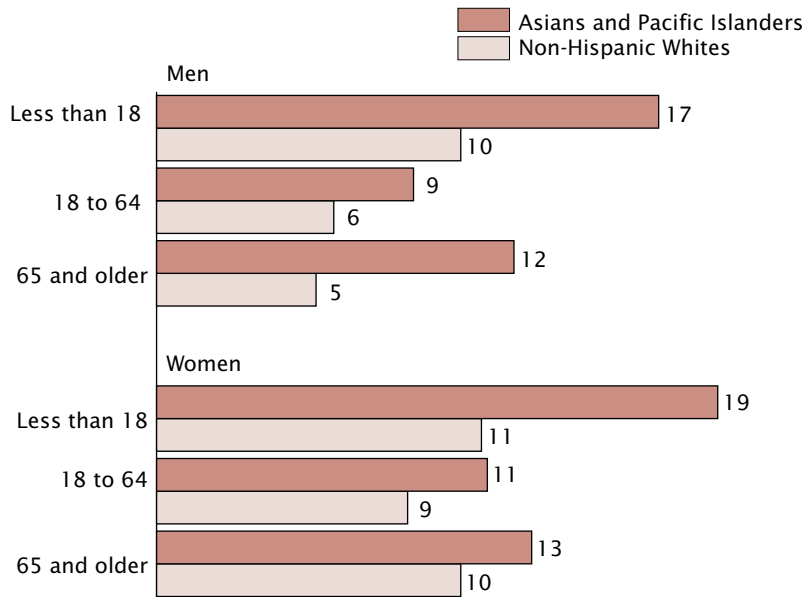
Asians and Pacific Islanders are more likely to be poor¹⁴ than non-Hispanic Whites.

In 1998, 1.4 million Asians and Pacific Islanders (about 13 percent) and 15.8 million non-Hispanic Whites (about 8 percent) were poor. For Asians and Pacific Islanders and non-Hispanic Whites, poverty varies by age group, but rates are usually higher for the former. About 18 percent of Asians and Pacific Islanders younger than 18 were poor, compared with 11 percent of non-Hispanic White children. Among Asians and Pacific Islanders age 18 to 64, 10 percent were poor, compared with 7 percent of their non-Hispanic White counterparts. Asians and Pacific Islanders 65 years and older had a higher poverty rate (12 percent) than non-Hispanic Whites in this age group (8 percent). Among men 65 years and older, Asians and Pacific Islanders were about twice as likely to be poor as non-Hispanic Whites (12 percent and 5 percent, respectively, as shown in Figure 6), but the proportion of women 65 years and older in poverty was not

Figure 6.

Poverty Rates by Age, Sex, and Race: 1998

(Percent of population)



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Survey, March 1999.

¹⁴In 1998, the poverty threshold for a family of four was \$16,660. Poverty statistics exclude unrelated individuals under 15 years. For more information, see Dalaker, Joseph, U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Reports, Series P60-207, *Poverty in the United States: 1998*, U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington, DC, 1999.

significantly different (13 percent and 10 percent, respectively).

In 1998, Asian and Pacific Islander families were about twice as likely as non-Hispanic White families to be in poverty (11 percent compared with 6 percent). Among married-couple families, 8 percent of Asian and Pacific Islander families and 4 percent of non-Hispanic White families were in poverty. In contrast, families maintained by women with no spouse present or men with no spouse present had poverty rates of 29 percent and 12 percent, respectively, for Asians and Pacific Islanders and 21 percent and 8 percent, respectively, for non-Hispanic Whites.¹⁵

SOURCE OF DATA

The estimates in this report come from data obtained in March 1999 from the Current Population Survey (CPS). The Census Bureau conducts the CPS every month, although this report uses only data from the March survey.

ACCURACY OF THE ESTIMATES

Statistics from surveys are subject to sampling and nonsampling error. All comparisons presented in this report have taken sampling error into account and meet the Census Bureau's standards for statistical significance. Nonsampling errors in surveys may be attributed to a variety of sources, such as how the survey was designed, how respondents interpret questions, how able and willing respondents are to provide correct answers, and how ac-

¹⁵Among families maintained by men with no spouse present, no statistical difference existed in the proportion in poverty for Asian and Pacific Islander families and non-Hispanic White families.

curately the answers are coded and classified.

The Census Bureau employs quality control procedures throughout the production process — including the overall design of surveys, the wording of questions, review of the work of interviewers and coders, and statistical review of reports.

The Current Population Survey employs ratio estimation, whereby sample estimates are adjusted to independent estimates of the national population by age, race, sex, and Hispanic origin. This weighting partially corrects for bias due to undercoverage, but how it affects different variables in the survey is not precisely known. Moreover, biases may also be present when people who are missed in the survey differ from those interviewed in ways other than the categories used in weighting (age, race, sex, and Hispanic origin). All of these considerations affect comparisons across different surveys or data sources.

For further information on statistical standards and the computation and use of standard errors, contact Demographic Statistical Methods Division on the Internet at: dsmd_s&a@census.gov.

MORE INFORMATION

Detailed tables with social and economic characteristics of Asians and Pacific Islanders, non-Hispanic Whites, and other races, and their families and households are available on the Internet (www.census.gov); search by clicking on "A" for "Asians and Pacific Islanders" under the "Subjects A-Z" heading on the Census Bureau home page.

To receive a paper copy of these tables, send your requests for "PPL-131, The Asian and Pacific Islander Population in the United States: March 1999" along with a check or money order in the amount of \$22.00 payable to Commerce-Census-88-00-9010, to U.S. Department of Commerce, U.S. Census Bureau, P.O. Box 277943, Atlanta, GA 30384-7943, or call our Statistical Information Office on 301-457-2422. A copy of these tabulations will be made available to any existing CPR-P20 subscriber without charge, provided that the request is made within 3 months of the issue date of this report by contacting our Statistical Information Office.

SUGGESTED CITATION

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USER COMMENTS

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