

The District of Columbia's Asian Americans

**A POPULATION
GROWING OUT
OF
INVISIBILITY**



THE DISTRICT'S ASIAN AMERICANS: A Population Growing Out of Invisibility

By Neel Saxena and Tim Ng

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Government of the District of Columbia
Vincent C. Gray, Mayor



Mayor's Office on Asian & Pacific Islander Affairs
Soohyun "Julie" Koo, Director

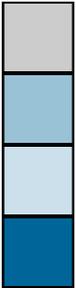


Asian American: Americans of Asian descent. The U.S. Census Bureau definition of Asians as "Asian" refers to a person having origins in any of the original peoples of the Far East, Southeast Asia, or the Indian subcontinent, including, for example, Cambodia, China, India, Indonesia, Japan, Korea, Malaysia, Pakistan, the Philippine Islands, Thailand, and Vietnam.



ABOUT





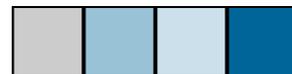
Organization of the report

The report uses data from a variety of sources with a major focus on data from the American Community Survey estimates and Decennial Survey. The first section will provide general population data on the Asian American community in the District of Columbia. Subsequent sections will focus on subject areas and use local data extrapolated from a variety of reports and sources to highlight issues affecting the Asian American population. In subject areas where there is a void in data, national data is highlighted. The purpose of including national data in these sections is to provide policy makers a starting point to become educated about the needs of the Asian American community. Each section will begin with a summary of the section entitled, “Key Findings”. Finally, the report will identify where additional data is needed and the main issues policy makers in the District should continue to address.

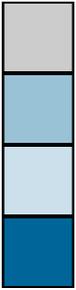
For the purposes of this report, “Asian American” is defined as the community of District residents claiming heritage from the following countries: Bangladesh, Bhutan, Burma, Cambodia, China, India, Indonesia, Japan, Laos, Malaysia, Mongolia, Nepal, Pakistan, Philippines, Singapore, South Korea, Thailand, and Vietnam. The report acknowledges the common culture and traditions, and shared struggles of these communities, as well as the unique characteristics and differences among them. While Arab Americans, Middle Eastern Americans, and Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander Americans have been intermittently grouped with the “Asian American” category, this report will not address the experiences of these communities in the District.

Data Sources and Limitations

This report provides information based on Census data and other publicly available data sources. The main limitation of this report is that it relies solely on secondary data. This is an issue because some of the data is not current and, depending on the data source, may have varied reliability. However, we sought to provide the most accurate data available.



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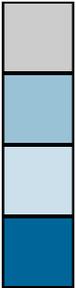


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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY





Asian Americans in the District of Columbia first came in the 1850s when the Chinese immigrants began moving to the downtown area around what is now Federal Triangle. Since then, the Asian American population has continued to grow at the fastest rate of any racial/ethnic group in the city according to U.S. Census Bureau's data. In 2010, Asian Americans made up 3.5% of the District's population.

This report aims to present an up-to-date, informed summary of issues currently facing the Asian American community in the District of Columbia. The report seeks to bring the community out from the margins where Asian Americans have been interchangeably categorized as the "model minority," and, instead, highlight the many layers of diversity within the community.

This report shows the lack of available information on the topics of: crime, education, health, housing, and workforce. A wider perspective on the community will best suit the goals of the District government, and therefore, the primary recommendation of this report is to broaden data collection on Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders in all areas of interest.

Certain gaps in knowledge indicate the need for present action. For example, the growing hepatitis B epidemic and lack of culturally sensitive resources for students at all educational levels. Other systemic issues in discrimination, representation, and accessibility will take more diligent and long-term collaborative efforts to address. Smaller-scale and focused effort, combined with large-scale cooperation, is needed to resolve the issues highlighted within the report and bring together the communities within the District of Columbia.

The Office on Asian and Pacific Islander Affairs is committed to working with District Agencies to provide data on the Asian American and Pacific Islander population and to develop plans and strategies to improve access to data on the District's Asian American and Pacific Islander population.



INTRODUCTION





Asian Americans in the District of Columbia first came in the 1850s when the Chinese immigrants began moving to the downtown area around what is now Federal Triangle. Since then, the Asian American population has continued to grow at the fastest rate of any racial/ethnic group in the city according to U.S. Census Bureau's data. In 2010, Asian Americans made up 3.5% of the District's population.

This report aims to present an up-to-date, informed summary of issues currently facing the Asian American community in the District of Columbia. The report seeks to bring the community out from the margins where Asian Americans have been interchangeably categorized as the "model minority," and, instead, highlight the many layers of diversity within the community. The report will make visible the status and current struggles within the community in order to advance a more inclusive approach in general discussions of policy in gauging its impact on the Asian American community.

By highlighting the Asian American community, the report will elucidate one of the intersections of policy and race. The challenge presented by race is not unique to the Asian American community, and informs all aspects of policy analysis. Asian Americans share common ground with other communities in issues of class and poverty, language access, cultural competence, national origin, and identity discrimination. This report will examine the areas of health, employment, crime, education, poverty, housing, and civic participation through these perspectives within the Asian American community.

The information and conclusions presented in this report avoid gaps in data about Asian Americans, utilize national data to infer patterns within the District, and discard unreliable data due to small sampling sizes. The findings should be taken alongside a call to action for expanded efforts to disaggregate data by race and ethnicity in a reliable, comprehensive, and critical manner. However, qualitatively, the data can be taken into consideration in observation of larger trends, and used to ground current and future policy development.



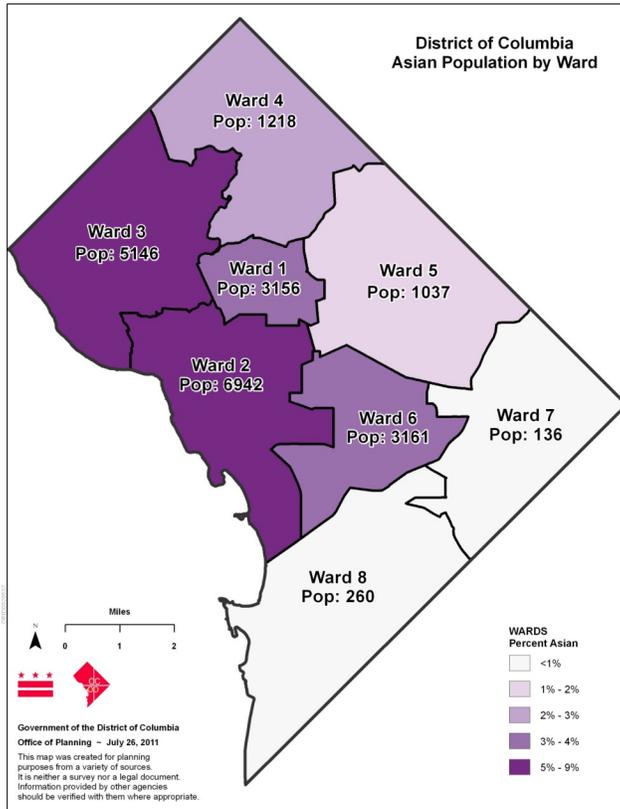
POPULATION & DEMOGRAPHICS



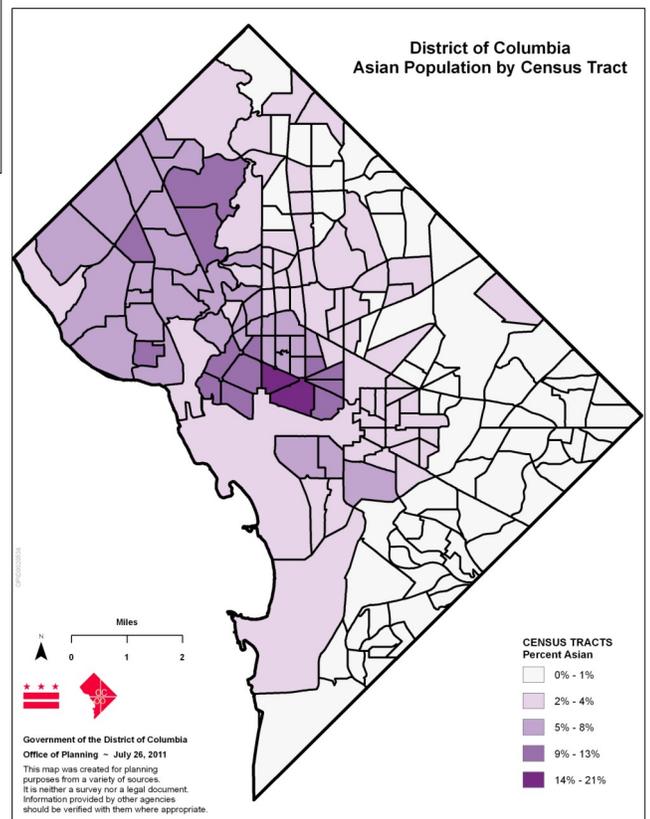


Population and Demographics

The 2010 United States Census data indicates the Asian population grew 38.6% between 2000 and 2010, in the District of Columbia. The total population rose to 21,056 equaling 3.5% of the entire population and making it the fastest growing community. The District's total Asian American and Pacific Islander (AAPI) populations grew 37.5% from 2000 to 2010, totaling 21,358 equaling 3.6% of the city's entire population.



The rapid growth rate in the AAPI population was followed by an increasing White population growth at 31.4%, and Hispanic population at 21.8%. Nationally the AAPI population grew by 43% from 2000 to 2010



Source: Census 2010

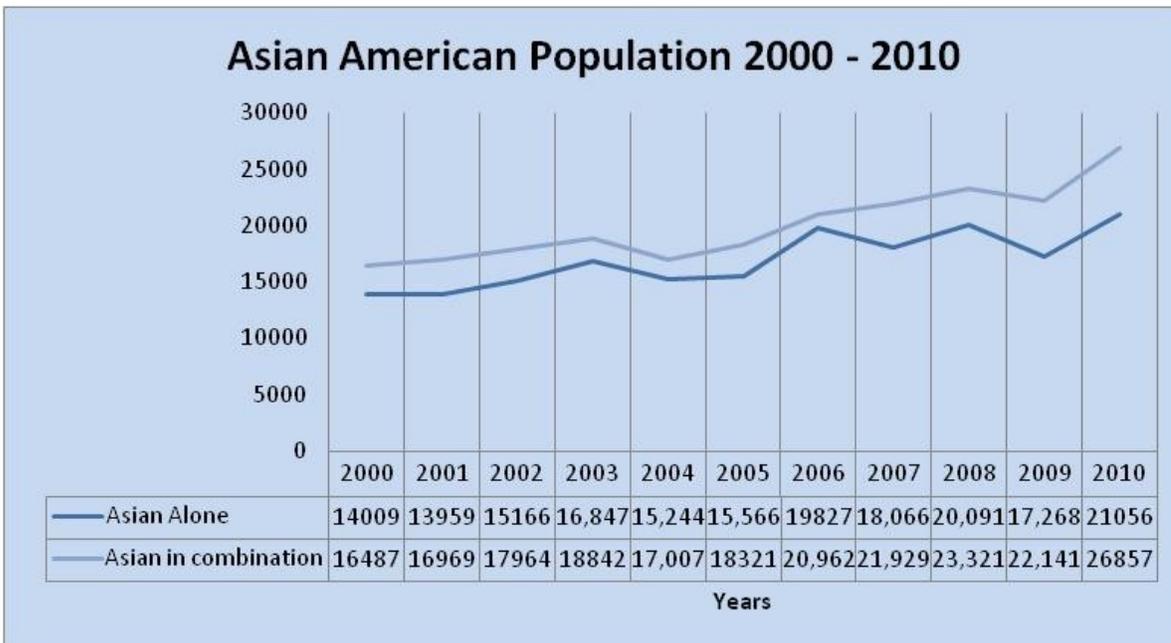
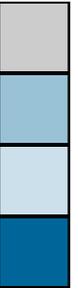
totaling 15,214,265 making it the fastest-growing national population

Most of the District's Asian American residents live in Ward 2 (6,942) followed by Ward 3 (5,146), Ward 6 (3,161), Ward 1 (3,156), Ward 4 (1,218), Ward 5 (1,037), Ward 8 (260), and Ward 7 (136). Asian American residents made up 9% of Ward 2 and 7% of Ward 3. The percentage of the District's Asian Americans living in Ward 6 nearly doubled over 10 years from 2.5% in 2000 to 4.2% in 2010.

Source: Census 2010

There were increases in the percentage of Asian Americans living in six out of the eight wards with Ward 7 and Ward 8 experiencing modest decreases. The steady growth of the Asian American population in the District has been a national trend and in 2010 both the overall Asian American and individual Asian ethnic populations saw an increase.

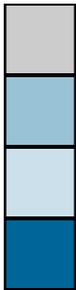
The Asian American population is very diverse, its members come from many different countries, and speak hundreds of language and dialects. This variation does not only occur in the Asian American



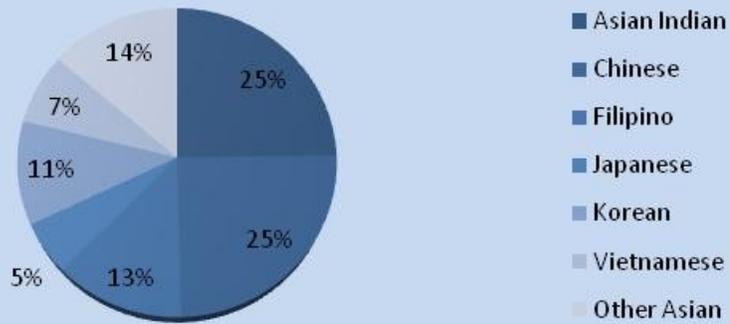
Source: American Community Survey & Census 2010

community as a

whole, but also within ethnic groups. One of the best examples of this diversity is the District's Chinese population speak two different Chinese languages – Cantonese and Mandarin, even though they can draw their language family histories back to the same country. In 2010 the largest ethnic groups were the Chinese, Indian, Filipino and Korean. The Other Asian category had a significant number of individuals.



Asian American Ethnic Group Population in 2010

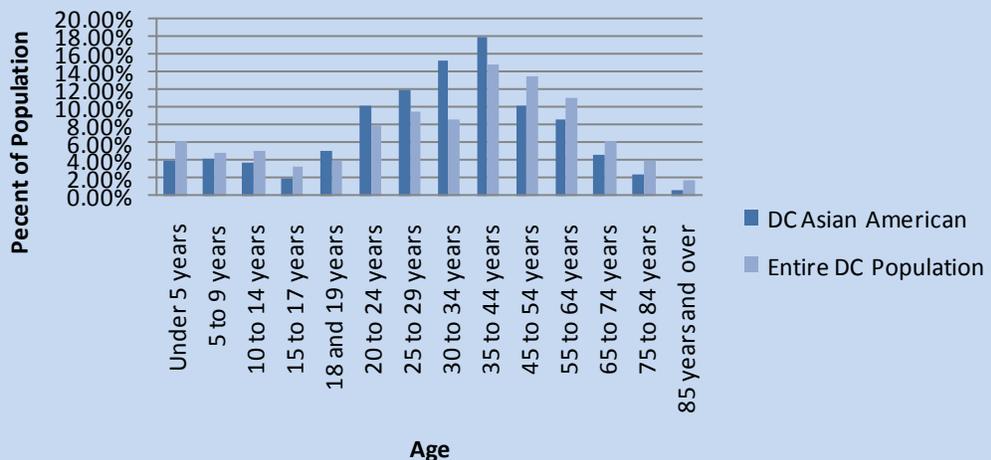


Source: Census 2012

The percentage of District Asian Americans in the labor force in 2009 was 70% compared to 64.1% of the entire District's population in the labor force. Most Asian Americans in the labor force

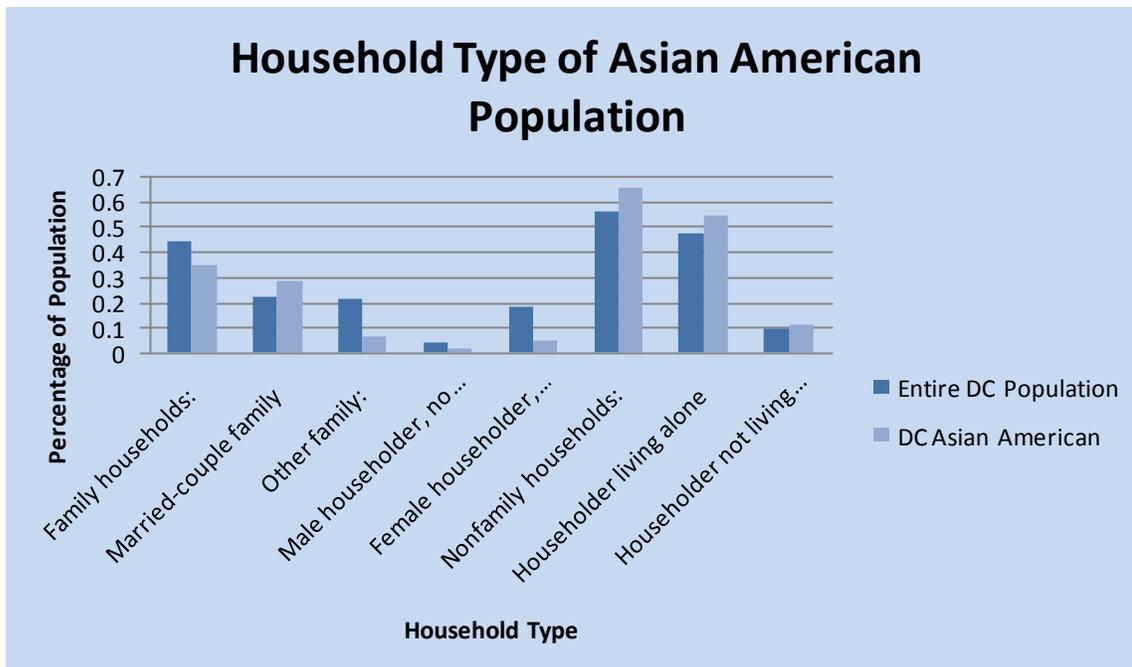
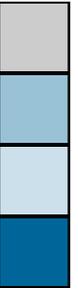
had an occupation in management, professional, and related occupations, as did most of the entire District's population. Most of the Asian American population are middle aged with most of the population being between the ages of 35 and 44.

Age Distribution of District Asian American Population

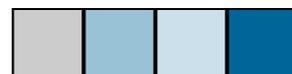


Source: American Community Survey

Among Asian American households, renting was more common; 57.4%, rented their housing. For District households, the rate of renters was 55.1%. The median value of rented housing among Asian households was \$1,336, while the median value for the District was \$998. The home ownership rate for Asian households was 42.6%, lower than the District's 44.9%. Most of the District's Asian population, like the District's entire population, live in Nonfamily households or Householders living alone.

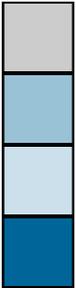


Source: American Community Survey



HEALTH





Key Findings

- Data for Asian American health unavailable or difficult to interpret due to “Other” racial category, which includes multiracial, American Indian, Alaskan Native, Pacific Islander, and Native Hawaiian
- Lower prevalence rates for risk factors such as hypertension, obesity, heart disease, and poor mental health, but higher rates for diabetes, smoking, and cancer
- Hepatitis endemic for Asian Americans largely unaddressed or unrecognized
- Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System (BRFSS) does not include residents with limited English proficiency

Healthcare in the District of Columbia is monitored by the DC Department of Health and provided through a network of facilities in the District’s wards. Current systems and proposed plans to improve the health of District residents should inquire into causes for disparities between Asian Americans and residents of all races in the District in order to devise workable and actionable solutions. For example, language proficiency differences among patients, providers, and interpreters can impede quality access to healthcare. Up-to-date and accurate data collection disaggregated along racial and ethnic categories for Asian Americans is needed to make informed decisions moving forward.

Leading Causes of Death

District of Columbia, 2007

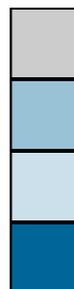
Heart	26.5%
Cancer	22.4%
Cerebrovascular (stroke)	3.9%
Accidents	3.9%
HIV/AIDS	3.6%
Diabetes	3.2%
Other	36.5%

United States, 2008

Cancer	26.74%
Heart	24.26%
Cerebrovascular (stroke)	8.20%
Accidents	4.92%
Diabetes	3.65%
Chronic Lower Respiratory	3.01%
Other	29.22%

Data: 2007 Mortality Report, Policy, Planning, and Epidemiology, DC Department of Health and Human Services, 2008

The DC Department of Health’s Center for Policy, Planning, and Epidemiology published a report on causes of death for residents of the District in 2007. That year, there were 5,168 recorded deaths, with heart and cancer-related deaths representing almost half of the total.¹ While racially disaggregated data is unavailable for the District, at the national level, the US Department of Health and Human Services reported 43,194 recorded deaths of Asian Americans and Pacific Islander, with cancer topping the list of causes.²



Prevalence of Risk Factors in District of Columbia Residents by Race, 2007

Disorder	Other	Total	Asian only
Diabetes	5.6%	8.1%	8.9%
Hypertension	16.1%	27.1%	19.5%
High blood cholesterol	30.9%	34.1%	29.2%
Heart disease	1.9%	2.7%	N/A
Stroke	3.5%	2.7%	2.6%
Physical inactivity	18.1%	21.3%	N/A
Obesity	10.3%	22.2%	9.4%
Smoking	22.1%	17.2%	9.2%

Data: Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance Survey 2007 Annual Report
 Summary Health Statistics for U.S. Adults, National Health Interview Survey, 2007

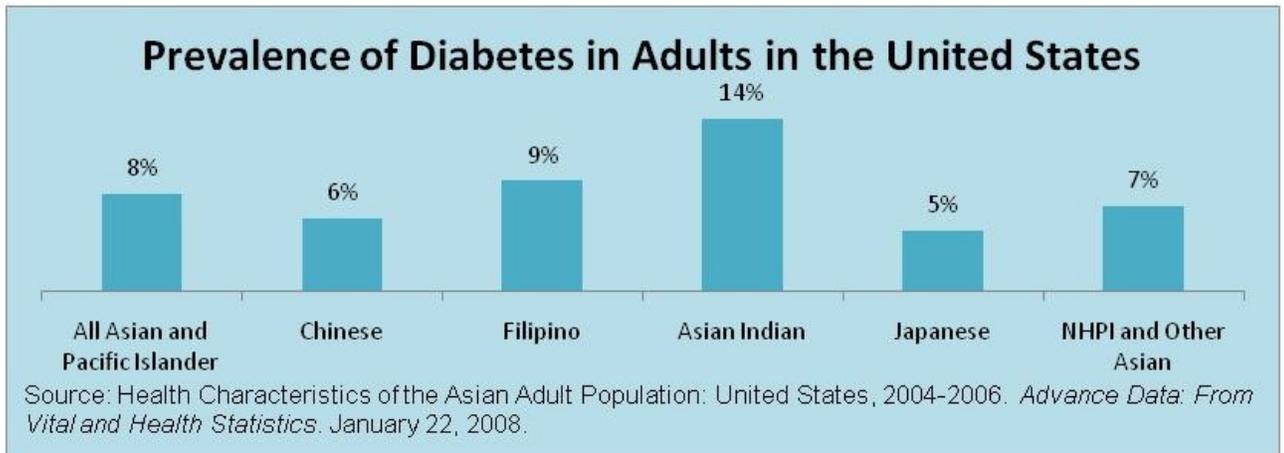
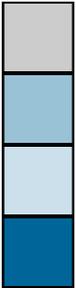
The shared risk factors among various health conditions, including cardiovascular disease, diabetes, and cancer, require precise reporting on their prevalence among District residents.³ Preventable deaths linked to tobacco use and physical inactivity and obesity amounted to about 30% of all deaths in the District, due, in part, to their links to heart and cancer-related deaths.⁴ Although the overall rates in the District are on par with national levels, disaggregation by racial lines reveals inconsistencies between residents of “Other” races in the District, residents of all races in the District, and mono-racial Asian Americans nationally. These differences demonstrate a need for improved data collection among Asian Americans in the District in order to make accurate conclusions and reasonable explanations to inform policy decisions with healthcare initiatives.

¹ Preventable Risk Factors Attributable to Preventable Causes of Death in the District of Columbia,

² Policy, Planning, and Epidemiology, DC Department of Health, 2007

³ Health, United States. US Department of Health and Human Services, 2008

⁴ District of Columbia Plan to Prevent and Control Cardiovascular Diseases, Diabetes, and Kidney Diseases, 2008-2013. District of Columbia Department of Health



The most reliable data available concerning health risk factors routinely attaches Asian American residents in the District onto the “other” racial category, which includes multiracial, American Indian, Alaskan Native, Pacific Islander, and Native Hawaiian residents. Unfortunately, such a categorization masks sizable differences in prevalence rates among Asian ethnic groups. For example, national data on diabetes prevalence disaggregated by ethnic identity reveals considerable differences within the category “All Asian and Pacific Islander”, a subcategory itself of “Other”.

Cancer

In the Cancer Control Plan 2005-2010, the DC Cancer Coalition outlined goals and objectives for reducing cancer incidence, increasing outreach, and providing effective services. The report identified distinct areas of concern that would affect the Asian American community, with cancer being the number one cause of death for the community. For example, basic interpretation suffers limitations due to complex medical terminology, cultural barriers prevent patients from seeking and receiving care, and the lack of culturally tailored outreach contribute to increased rates of cancer incidence and death. However, specific information about the District’s Asian American community was not available.⁵

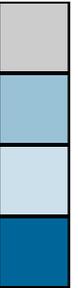
⁵ Facing the Challenge: DC Cancer Control Plan 2005-2010, DC Cancer Coalition

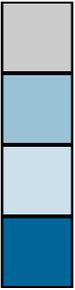
Hepatitis B

In addition to lung cancer and other cancer-related deaths resulting from the risk factors of tobacco use and physical inactivity and obesity, liver cancer disproportionately affects the Asian American community. Despite the low likelihood of chronic hepatitis B condition resulting from infection in adults (5%), the lack of education about testing and immunization, particularly among immigrants from hepatitis B-endemic countries in Asia as well as pregnant women (90% chance of progression to chronic illness in infants in the event of transmission from the mother) contributes to the Asian American representation of more than half of all cases of chronic hepatitis B nationally.⁶ The asymptomatic nature of the chronic condition makes detection nearly impossible without comprehensive screening or testing procedures. Despite the dearth in national funds, the DC Department of Health runs a specialized program to combat hepatitis in the District, publishes an annual HIV/AIDs, Hepatitis, Sexually Transmitted Diseases, and Tuberculosis Epidemiology Report, and collects data through a Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System program on acute hepatitis infections (usually as a result of sexual contact and substance abuse).

Issues in increased prevalence among Asian Americans, particularly new immigrants and the foreign-born, are compounded by limited-English proficiency, cultural access, and health literacy. The Cancer Control Plan supports improvement of services generally in these areas, but identifies no specific recommendations for the Asian American community. In addition, while Asian Americans constitute an astounding 6.5% of chronic hepatitis B cases, with many more likely in the “Unknown” racial category (60.5% of cases), Asian Americans are not identified specifically as an at-risk group for acute or chronic hepatitis B in the Epidemiology report.

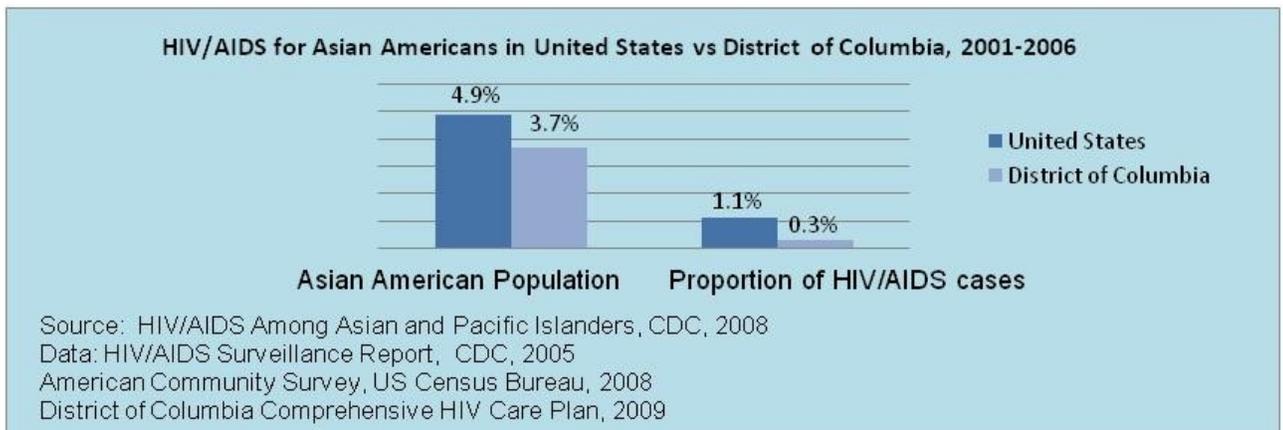
⁶ Colvin, H. M. & Mitchell, A. E. 2010. Hepatitis and Liver Cancer: A National Strategy for Prevention and Control of Hepatitis B and C. Institute of Medicine.





HIV/AIDS

The Epidemiology Report explores the problem of HIV/AIDS, which ranks a close fifth of leading causes of death in the District. Available data indicates that the prevalence of HIV or AIDS in Asian Americans is generally lower compared to other racial groups. Although the percentage of the Asian American population within the District is roughly half that of the national percentage, the representation of Asian Americans in HIV/AIDS cases in the District is considerably less than half, and no explanation for this disparity can be found.

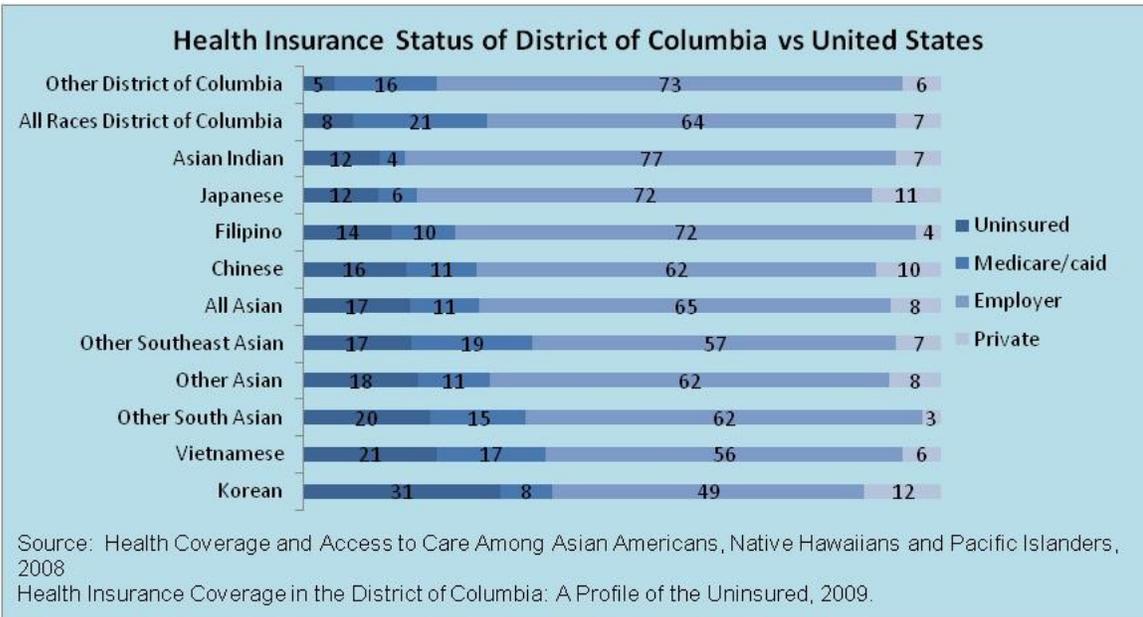
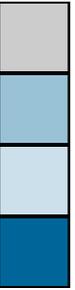


Mental Health

In the District of Columbia, only 0.3% of cases handled by the Department of Mental Health involve clients that identify as Asian. Nationally, Asian Americans have the lowest incident of serious psychological distress and rates of suicide among racial groups and below the national average. However, studies demonstrate that particular Asian American subgroups, particularly young Asian women, have higher rates of suicide, and Southeast Asian refugees experience higher rates of post-traumatic stress disorder. Persistence of cultural and linguistic barriers among immigrant groups and between generations can prevent adequate seeking and receiving of necessary mental health services.

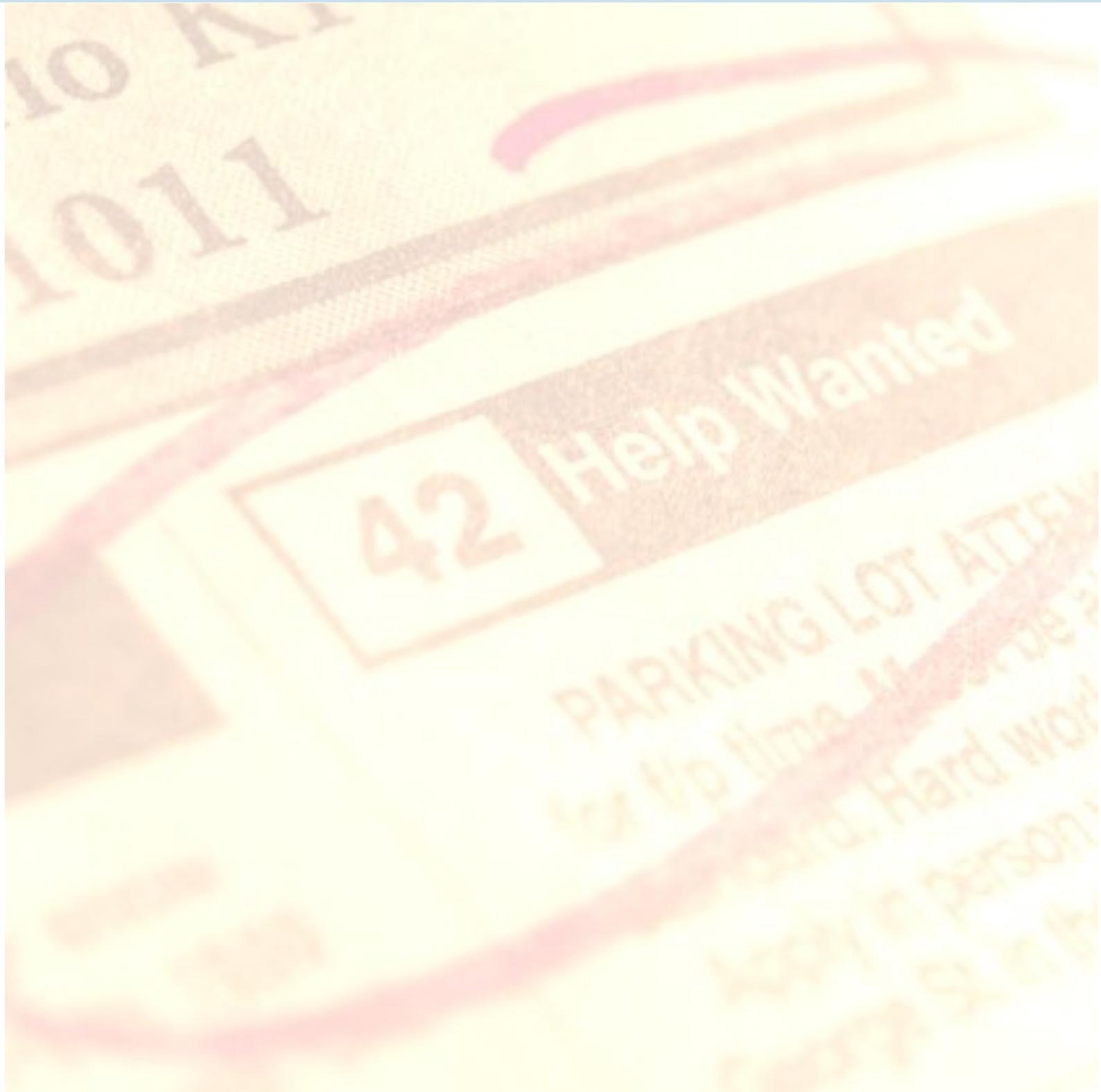
Health Coverage

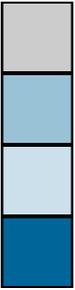
Reports published by the Urban Institute and the RAND Corporation point to correlations among insurance status, socioeconomic status, race, ward residence, and health outcomes for District residents. While District residents in general are less likely to be uninsured, many are covered only by the underfunded Alliance, DC’s Medicaid program. When national data for Asian Americans is divided by ethnic categories, disparities among the groups are revealed, while District data is difficult to interpret for Asian Americans due to their aggregation into the “Other” racial category.





EMPLOYMENT & CIVIC PARTICIPATION





Key Findings

- Asian Americans, mostly business owners or employed in fields requiring high levels of education, are also represented in technical and skilled labor
- Unemployed college-educated people are disproportionately Asian American
- Discrimination in workplace leads to lower diversity and opportunities for Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders.

Introduction

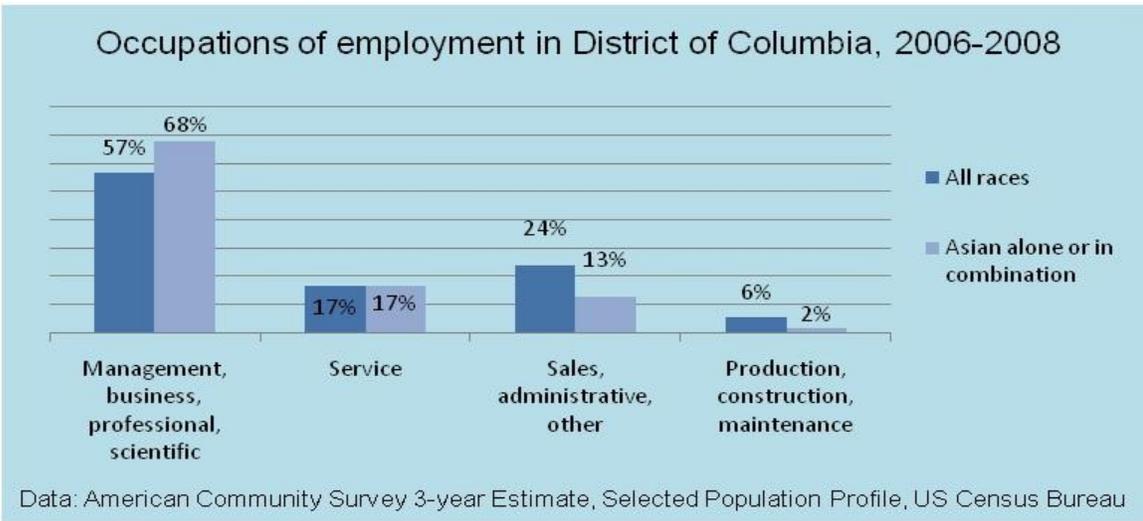
Of the 640,000 employees on payroll in 2009 in the District of Columbia, over two-thirds commute from Maryland or Virginia. Known for being a commuter city, the District is a hub for workplaces and offices, Asian Americans, often residing in the surrounding counties, come to the District to open businesses or become entrepreneurs, contributing to the multi-billion dollar economy. According to the American Community Survey, growth in the population of the District's Asian American community, by over 30% from



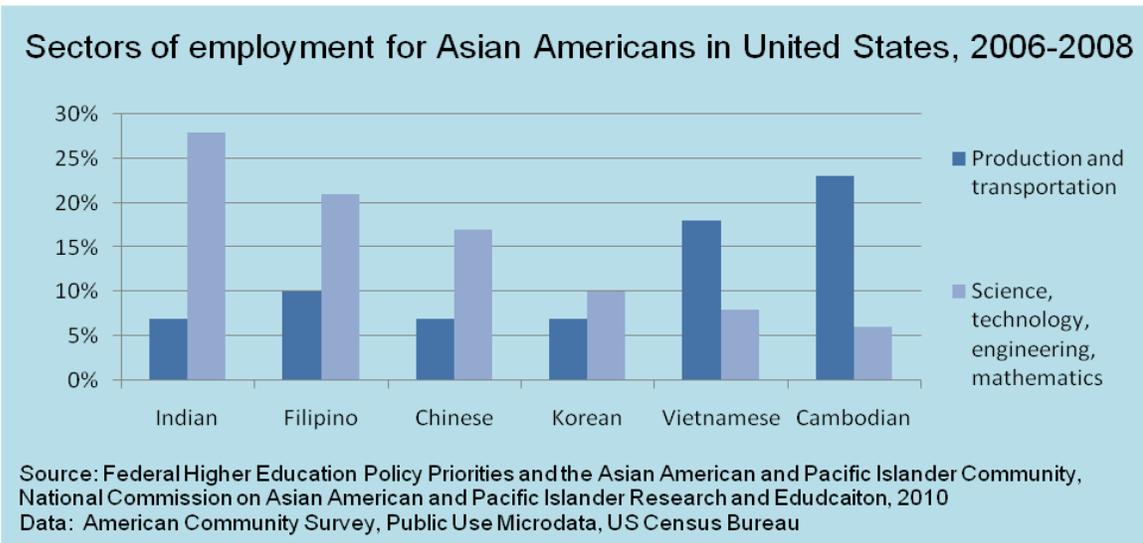
2002 to 2007, reflects enormous economic growth in the same time period.

Fields of Occupation

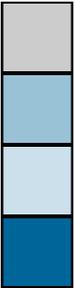
As a result of high levels of educational attainment of college and advanced degrees, and the location of large federal agencies and national headquarters, a disproportionate number of District residents



utilize their education in specialized white-collar careers rather than skilled blue-collar fields, and even more so for Asian American residents.¹ Though data disaggregated by ethnicity is unavailable for the District, national data for Asian Americans show trends in employment that reveal the result of educational disparities among immigrant, refugee, and limited-English proficient communities.



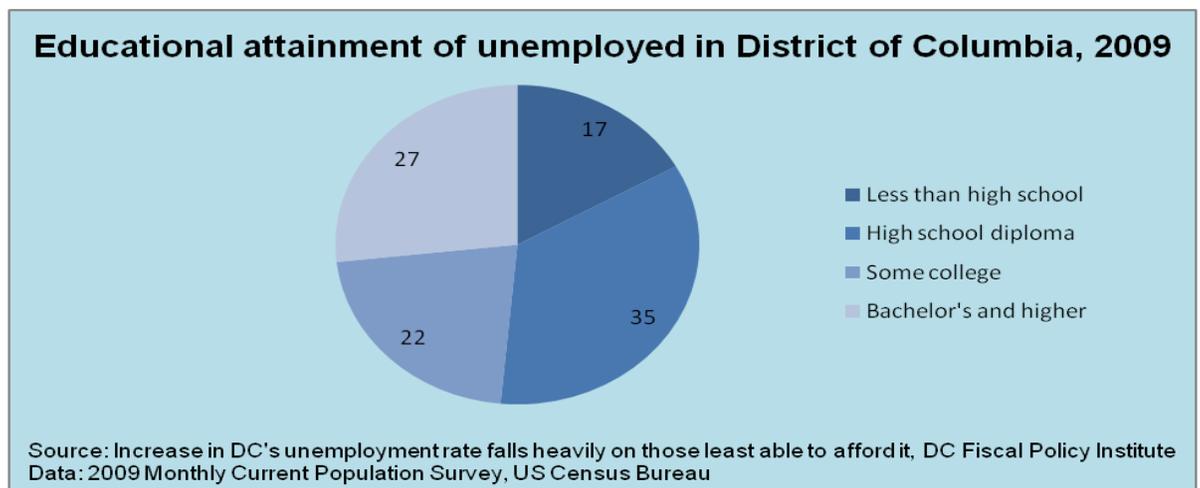
¹ Employment Projections by Industry & Occupation, Department of Employment Services, 2006



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Unemployment

Widespread unemployment struck the District of Columbia during the



economic downturn of 2008. Job seekers with high school diplomas or less made up most of the unemployed, but those with bachelor's degrees or higher levels of education suffered from disproportionately lower rates of unemployment – unemployment for District residents of all races was 10% during 2009, but only 8% for Asian Americans in the District.² Though racial data for unemployment by educational attainment is unavailable, Asian Americans make up a large portion of the highly educated population in the District, and likely saw comparatively higher unemployment rates.

²State and Local Employment Tables, Bureau of Labor Statistics, US Department of Labor, 2009

Workplace Discrimination

Barriers to equality continue to persist despite strides in civil rights, equal employment, and diversity practices. Stereotyped as the “model minority,” Asian Americans are characterized as innately intelligent, obedient, and competent – forced to meet unreasonably high standards and expectations. In addition, perceptions of social ineptitude, foreignness, cultural exclusivity, language ability, and leadership styles may preclude workers from efficiently conducting work and collaborating with co-workers.

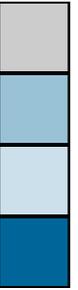
A poll administered in 2005 found that 31% of Asian Americans reported experiencing workplace discrimination versus 15% of the overall population, and 2-3% of discrimination complaints filed at the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission were by Asian Americans.³ Discrimination as a result of these stereotypes can detract from diversity and representation; for example, although 6.2% of employees at federal agencies are Asian American, they are only 2.3% of senior executives.⁴

Civic Participation

Asian Americans predominantly identify themselves as Democrats rather than Republicans, 32% to 14% respectively. These preferences however, vary amongst the different ethnic groups. Whereas Asian Indians and Japanese Americans most strongly identified themselves as Democrats and were supporters of Barack Obama in the 2008 presidential election, Vietnamese Americans most strongly identified themselves as Republicans, and were more likely to support John McCain in the 2008 presidential election.

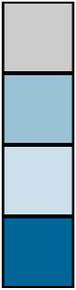
While Asian Americans may have their political affiliations, many are simply not eligible to vote; about 66 percent of Asian Americans are foreign born, according to APIA/Vote 2004. This barrier of naturalization, along with registration and turnout, are the three main reasons why Asian Americans seem to have apathy towards politics.

³ Asian American and Pacific Islander Workgroup Report, Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, 2008



HOUSING & POVERTY

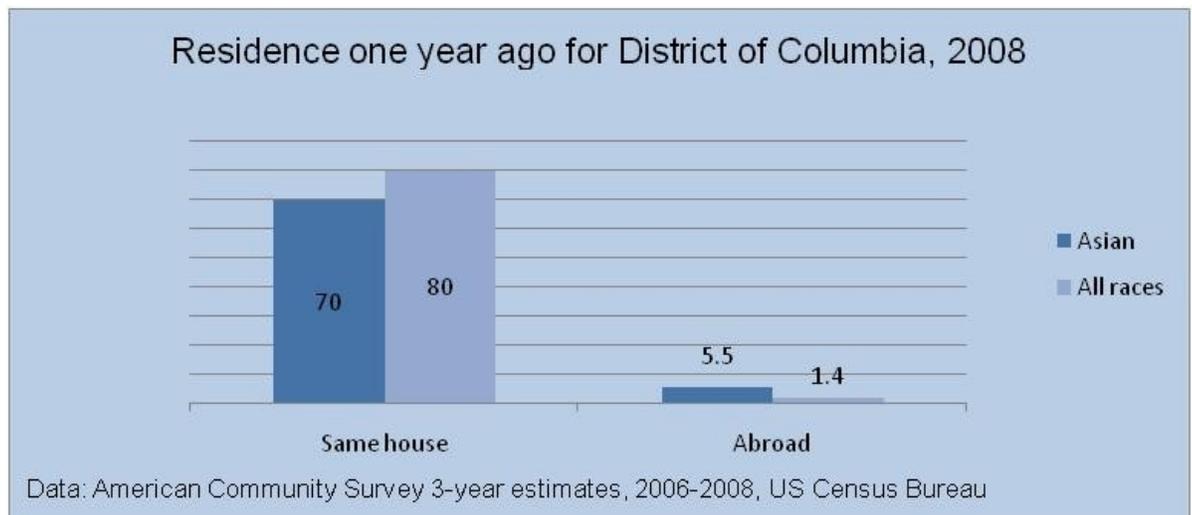




Key Findings

- Asian American face a lower rate of homeownership in the District, nearly half of the overall rate.
- The poverty rate for Asian Americans in the District is around ten percent despite common myths about the success of the entire community.

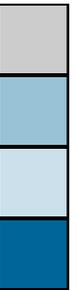
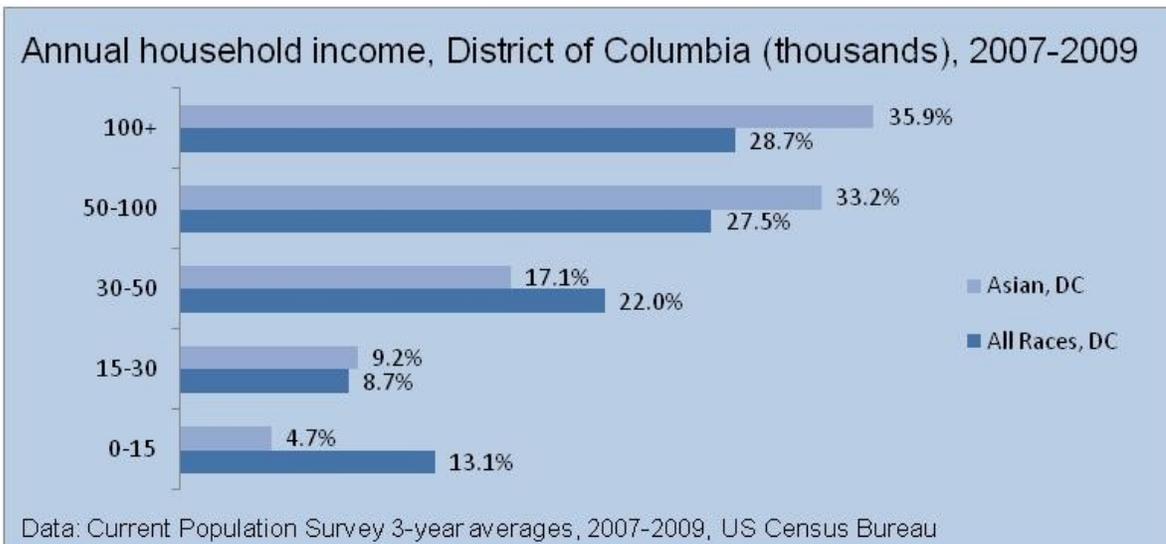
In the District of Columbia in 2000, over half of the residents rent for their living arrangements. Homeowners comprise the remaining 42%, but for Asian Americans, the rate of homeownership is only 25%. Following the collapse of the housing market in the mid-2000s and the economic downturn after 2008, concern about rising rates of foreclosures and mortgage defaults spread to the District. Though specific racially disaggregated data for Asian Americans could not be found, within the region, foreclosure rates were at 3% at the end of 2009, and 10% of mortgage payments were over a month late at the same time.



Available statistics for Asian Americans in the District seem to point towards a transitory experience. The average Asian American household size was 1.91, while it was 2.21 for the District as a whole. Lack of families and smaller households can enhance mobility, as they seek careers and live around the country and in the District. The data indicates that Asian Americans tend to have connections in foreign countries and across the country.

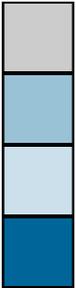
Poverty

Despite the high levels of educational attainment, presence of large scale employers, and development in the District, poverty continues to persist, especially in embattled downtown area. From 2007-2009, through the economic crisis, the poverty rate averaged 18% for the District of Columbia, and 10% for Asian Americans in DC. As the data indicates, Asian Americans enjoy fairly high income levels, though some still fall short of this aggregate income level. Unfortunately, reliable and updated data about welfare benefits for Asian Americans was not available for the same time period. However, data from the 2000 Census indicated that Asian Americans used fewer social services and received public assistance at lower rates compared to the general population.



SAFETY



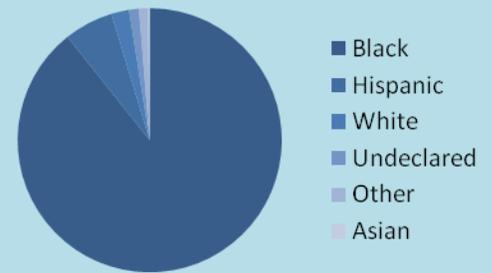


Key Findings

- Disaggregated statistics by racial and ethnic groups is needed to make adequate assessments of crime in the Asian American community
- Outreach and education efforts on domestic violence and hate crimes will increase rates of reporting and shift cultural perceptions
- Culturally sensitive and linguistically accessible drug recovery and rehabilitation services are needed at all levels

According to the District of Columbia’s Department of Corrections, Asian Americans make up 2% of the prison inmate population. Though positive statistics of violent crimes and felonies seem to point to Asian Americans as being “model” minorities, the community experiences domestic violence, substance abuse, and hate crimes unique from other demographic groups.

Prison Inmates in District of Columbia, 2009

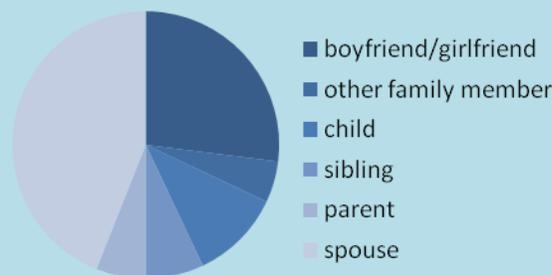


Source: Department of Corrections April 2010

Domestic Violence

Domestic violence in the Asian American and Pacific Islander community is marked by overwhelming silence: it is a topic seldom reported, and rarely discussed. Beyond physical repercussions, victims experience mental health problems ranging from post-traumatic stress disorder, depression, anxiety, and panic attacks.

Relation of Abuser to Victim in Domestic Violence Cases



Source: Southeast Asia Resource Action Center

The strong desire to save face and avoid shame or alienation is the biggest cultural difference that keeps domestic violence an issue within the Asian American and Pacific Islander

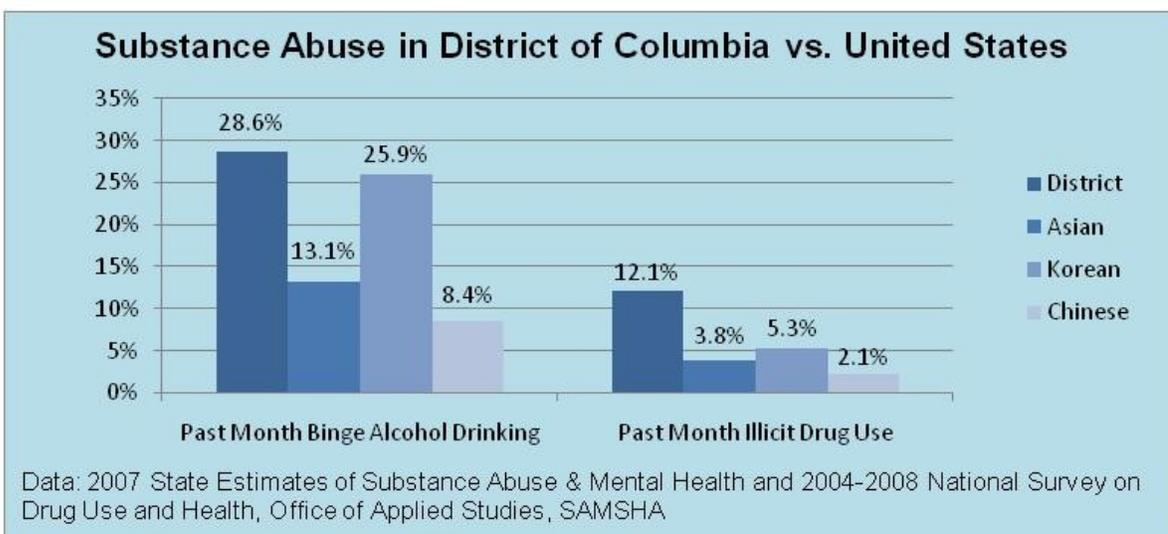
community.

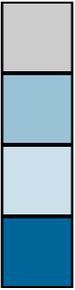
By characterizing domestic violence as private family matters that must be resolved internally, victims are confined from seeking outside help. Meanwhile, over two-thirds of incidents are committed by intimate partners or immediate family members.

Children who were physically abused by a caretaker are at higher risk of becoming an abusive adult or tolerating an abusive intimate partner. As negative behaviors and damaged individuals shape generations, it is important to find resolutions that may aid this problem in the Asian American community.

Substance Abuse

Substance abuse affects millions of Americans yearly. In the Asian American community, access to treatment and recovery programs are greatly limited due to linguistic and cultural barriers. National data indicates that Asian Americans in the aggregate have lower rates of substance abuse than District of Columbia residents. However, among ethnic subgroups, there is significant variation in both alcohol and illicit drug use. Recent data for Asian Americans in the District was unavailable.

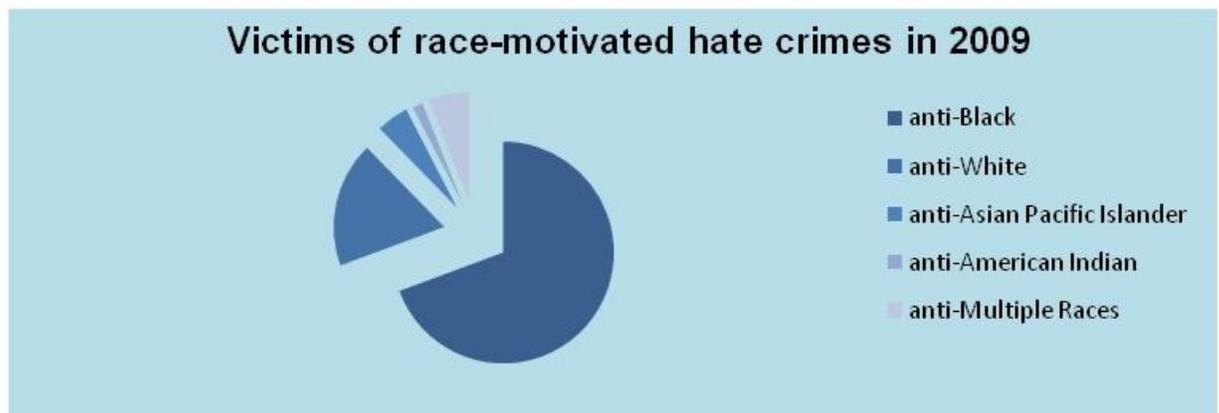




The data suggests that there is considerable variation between Asian subgroups in alcohol and drug use. When grouped together to an “Asian” subgroup, the percentage is an average between the different Asian ethnicities. However, once disaggregated data is made available, it is clear that even within the Asian groups, are large variations of substance abuse.

Hate and Discrimination

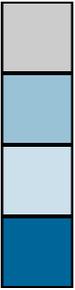
According to the Bureau of Justice Statistics, from 2006-2007, a disproportionate 41.4% of violent and property crimes were reported by non-white and non-black people. Racial disparities among victims and perpetrators of crime point to systemic inequalities among communities, including Asian Americans.



As defined by the DC Metropolitan Police Department, a hate crime is a “crime that is committed against a person because of prejudice or bias.” The victims are usually singled out because of their race, religion, sex, or sexual orientation. In 2007, there were 4,956 racially motivated hate crimes, according to the Federal Bureau of Investigation: 7 percent, or 233 victims, were of Asian Pacific Islander descent. Unfortunately, up to half of hate incidents may go unreported.

EDUCATION



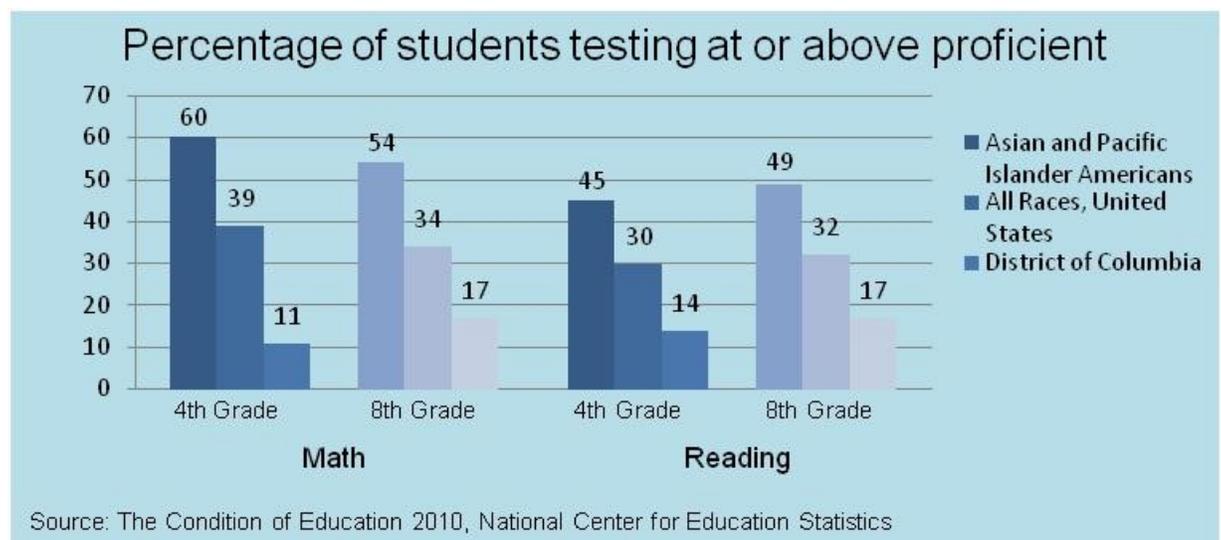


• Key Findings

- High educational attainment for Asian Americans a result of migration and not reflective of District's school system and institutions of higher education
- High performance among Asian Americans in certain indicators, but persistence of drop-outs and gaps in access to advanced education
- Disaggregated data and studies of Asian Americans largely unavailable

Education in the District of Columbia at the elementary and secondary level is administered by a combination of public, charter, and private schooling. The District occupies a unique position compared to other states, with the highest concentration of graduates with bachelor's degrees, but a fair percentage of residents without high school diplomas – just 54.9% of the original freshmen class finished their secondary education in 2008.¹ The public school system draws a sizable 88% of its revenue from local funding and has one of the highest per-pupil spending at \$14,954 per year, though, compared to other urban areas rather than states, the District's figures are modest.²

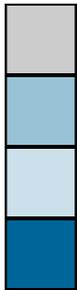
Elementary and Secondary Schooling



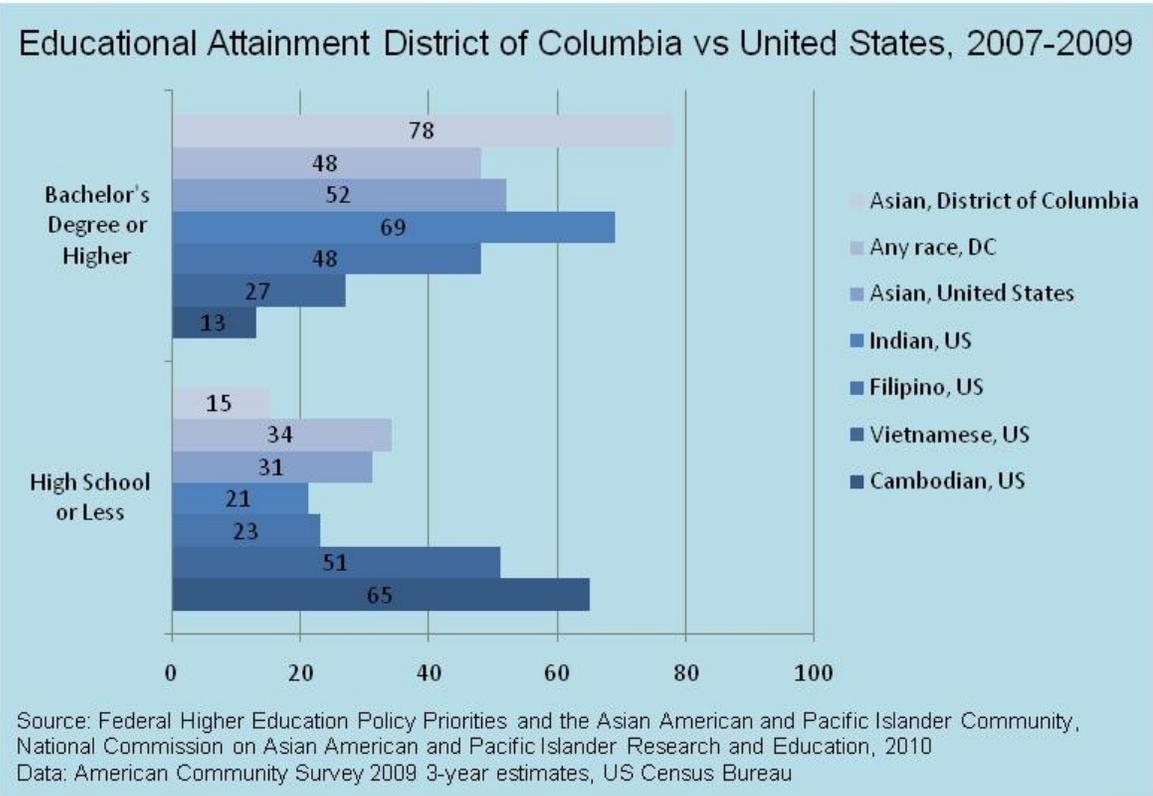
¹The Condition of Education 2010, National Center for Education Statistics, US Department of Education

²Public Education Finances, 2008, Governments Division, US Census Bureau, June 2010

Although Asian Americans represent 3-4% of the District’s population, they are only 1.5% of the elementary and secondary school student population. 6.5% of District public school students are English Language Learners, with Spanish, Amharic , Chinese, French, and Vietnamese topping the list of languages spoken at home.³ Language proficiency often affects academic performance; 16% of Asian American students across the country speak a language other than English at home and have limited English ability. For Korean Americans, that figure is closer to 20%, and for Filipino Americans, 10%.⁴ Nationally, Asian Americans in the aggregate out-perform any other demographic group; however, such subgroups by ethnicity, nativity, and language ability reveal large disparities.



Higher Education

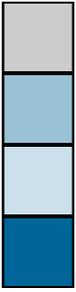


Nationally, Asian Americans have an above-average median 6-year graduation rate of 60%, and receive a modestly higher return on this education at a median \$46,000 annual income for graduates.⁵

³Linguistically and Culturally Diverse Student Enrollment, 2006-2007, DC Public Schools Academic Services

⁴Fact sheet for Asian alone or in any combination, 2000 Demographic Profiles, US Census Bureau

⁵The Condition of Education 2010, National Center for Education Statistics, US Department of Education



As the national data indicates, however, the benefits of this education are reaped by immigrants within the Filipino and Indian communities who received their degrees and training abroad, with predominantly refugee communities such as the Vietnamese and Hmong, occupying the lower educational bracket.

Asian Americans represent at least 5% of students seeking college degrees within the District of Columbia.⁶ However, most of the college-educated population in the District receives schooling elsewhere and migrate after graduation to the area: only 3.5% of enrolled students at the District's public university are Asian American.⁷

Discrimination

Asian American students are often the subject of racial discrimination in the classroom and on campus. The “model minority” stereotype of Asian Americans as naturally intelligent and exceptionally motivated establishes unreasonably high expectations from instructors and generates unfounded social divisions among students. The stereotype of the inassimilable, un-American, non-white, “perpetual foreigner” exacerbates racial tensions through feelings of hostility, xenophobia, and misunderstanding.

In the District public school system, Chinese language immersion is offered at several elementary and secondary schools to students of all backgrounds. As they often act as cultural brokers for immigrant parents, such programs work to cultivate a welcoming and culturally competent learning environment that is also conducive to high achievement for Asian American students. At the postsecondary level, relevant curriculum, multicultural centers, student services, mentorship programs, leadership development, and social groups tailored for Asian American students are needed for continued success. Diversity in staff representation makes students feel more comfortable and confident: a disproportionately high 11% of the postsecondary faculty but only 2-3% nationally of elementary and secondary school teachers are Asian American.⁸

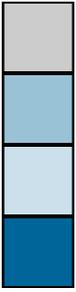
⁶ 2008 Data, Institutional Postsecondary Education Data System, US Department of Education

⁷ Ibid

⁸ Federal Higher Education Policy Priorities and the Asian American and Pacific Islander Community, National Commission on Asian American and Pacific Islander Research and Education, 2010

WHAT'S NEXT





The Asian American and Pacific Islander community, much like the other diverse communities in the District of Columbia, is marked by significant disparities and patterns that compel further inspection and investigation. While the community's varied achievements and successes are noteworthy and meaningful, the hidden struggles and continued shortfalls demand an equal amount of attention. This report shows the lack of available information on the topics of: crime, education, health, housing, and workforce. A wider perspective on the community will best suit the goals of the District government, and therefore, the primary recommendation of this report is to broaden data collection on Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders in all areas of interest.

The secondary recommendation of this report is to review the key findings within each section and devise action steps for the involved agencies and institutions. Certain gaps in knowledge indicate the need for present action. For example, the growing hepatitis B epidemic and lack of culturally sensitive resources for students at all educational levels. Other systemic issues in discrimination, representation, and accessibility will take more diligent and long-term collaborative efforts to address. Smaller-scale and focused effort, combined with large-scale cooperation, is needed to resolve the issues highlighted within the report and bring together the communities within the District of Columbia.

Finally, working with policy institutes and community organizations, the District government can begin to develop improved data on the Asian American and Pacific Islander population and improve service delivery and program development. The Office on Asian and Pacific Islander Affairs is committed to working with District Agencies to provide data on the Asian American and Pacific Islander population and to develop plans and strategies to improve access to data on the District's Asian American and Pacific Islander population.

Acknowledgements

For questions about this research, please contact Neel Saxena, Grant Manager and Program Coordinator, Office on Asian and Pacific Islander Affairs, 441 4th Street, NW #721N, Washington, DC 20001 or by email at neel.saxena@dc.gov. The research included in this paper could not have occurred without the contributions of Tim Ng, Dexter Chan, and Chut Vu.

