

# *A Portrait of the Indian American Community*

An in-depth report based on the US Census

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The Indian American Center for Political Awareness (IACPA) is a national, professionally staffed organization dedicated to serving the Indian American community in the United States. Our mission is to increase political awareness in the Indian American community and encourage participation by the Indian American community in the American democratic process.

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## Introduction

This report is a portrait of the Indian American community. It looks at several different points to construct an overall picture of the Indian American community that will hopefully give a better picture as to the nature, the make up, the priorities and the needs of the community. This report concentrates on several topics: demographics, age, elderly, education, employment/income, and voter registration.

There are several areas where the Indian American community diverges from the general population that are important to note. These points are often held as a source of pride, such as the high educational attainment and the high median family income. However, there are several points that show areas of need within the community, and suggest several areas where public policy-makers and the Indian American community can work together to overcome.

For example, Indian Americans have a much lower than average Social Security usage than the general population. This could possibly point to a failure on the part of the Social Security Administration to suitably educate the Indian American community about the Social Security program, its benefits and its requirements. Whatever reason for the low participation in Social Security, the root causes should be thoroughly investigated by policy makers and addressed, especially given that many Indian Americans are approaching 65, and will soon be eligible for Social Security retirement funds.

Additionally, while Indian Americans have experienced high financial successes, there are still dramatic areas where Indian Americans live in poverty, such as Rhode Island, Puerto Rico, Washington, DC and New York State. Efforts to have public assistance programs in these states address the needs of the Indian American community could help alleviate these hardships.

The primary basis of this report is the 2000 US Census. The purpose of de-centennial national count is the establishment of the number of people living in the country in order to determine Congressional representation. In its count, the Census also takes in a variety of data on income, education, housing and so on. All of this data is available online at the Census department's website at [www.census.gov](http://www.census.gov). All data herein is either extrapolated from Census data unless specifically noted otherwise.

# Demographics

Table 1.  
Ten Largest Metropolitan Areas by Indian American Population

Metropolitan area	Metro Area Pop.	Indian American Pop.	IA Pop. % of Metro Area	% of National IA Pop.
New York	21,199,865	453,896	2.14	23.89
San Francisco	7,039,362	158,396	2.25	8.34
Chicago	9,157,540	125,208	1.37	6.59
Los Angeles	16,373,645	121,745	0.74	6.41
Washington	7,608,070	98,179	1.29	5.17
Houston	4,669,571	57,158	1.22	3.01
Philadelphia	6,188,463	57,124	0.92	3.01
Dallas/Ft. Worth	5,221,801	53,975	1.03	2.84
Detroit	5,456,428	49,879	0.91	2.63
Boston	5,819,100	48,188	0.83	2.54

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Census 2000 Sample File 2

**According to the 2000 U.S. Census,** there are just under 1.9 million people who reported themselves as Indian American. About 1.7 million people reported only Indian American, while an additional 200,000 reported Indian American combination with another race. The Indian American population roughly doubled between the 1990 Census and the 2000 Census.

In 1990, Indian Americans accounted for 11.8% of all Asian Americans. In 2000, this figure rose to 16%. Indian Americans are the third largest Asian American group, behind Chinese Americans and Filipino Americans. Indian Americans account for 0.68% of the total population in the United States. There are 2.7 million Chinese Americans, who make up 0.97% of the population. There are 2.4 million Filipino Americans who make up 0.84% of the population.

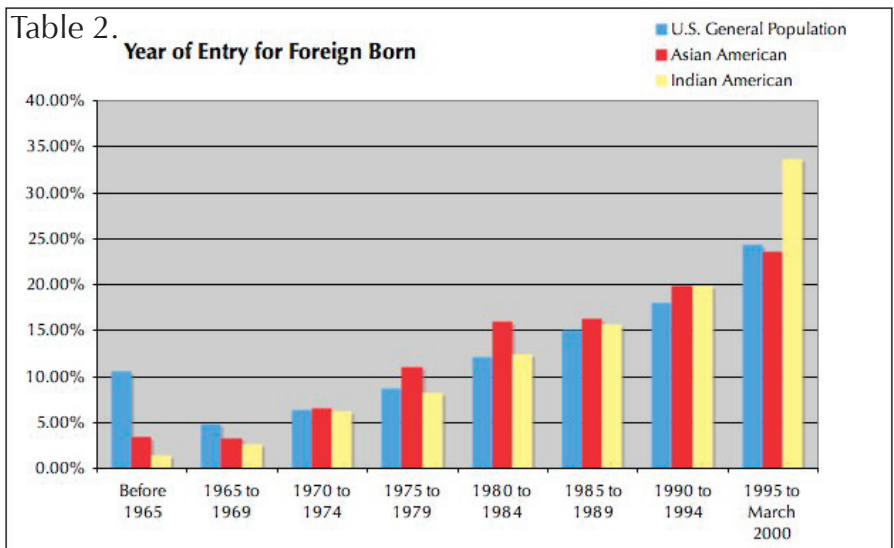
96.70% of the Indian American community lives in urban areas,

which is significantly higher than 79% for the general public. 64.41% of the population lives in ten metropolitan cities (see Table 1.), however, there are Indian Americans spread out throughout the nation. (see Table 3.)

27.07% of all Indian Americans were born in the United States. Another 29.04% have become naturalized citizens. This totals 56.11% of all Indian Americans who are United States citizens, in other words, there are 1.07

million United States citizens who are Indian Americans.

One third of all foreign born Indian Americans arrived in the United States between 1995 and March 2000 (the time of the Census). This follows a trend of recent immigration into the United States. Compared to general, and overall Asian, immigration trends, Indian Americans tend to be more recent immigrants. (see Table 2.)



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Census 2000 Sample File 2

Table 3.

## Indian American Population by Region and State

(including Washington, DC and Puerto Rico)

	Total	Asian Indians	% of State Pop.	% of IA Pop.	Rank
United States	281,421,906	1,899,599	0.68%	100.00%	N/A
Northeast Region	53,594,378	625,089	1.17%	32.91%	N/A
Midwest Region	64,392,776	323,802	0.50%	17.05%	N/A
South Region	100,236,820	498,197	0.50%	26.23%	N/A
West Region	63,197,932	452,511	0.72%	23.82%	N/A
Alabama	4,447,100	8,186	0.18%	0.43%	30
Alaska	626,932	981	0.16%	0.05%	48
Arizona	5,130,632	17,042	0.33%	0.90%	18
Arkansas	2,673,400	3,820	0.14%	0.20%	37
California	33,871,648	360,392	1.06%	18.97%	1
Colorado	4,301,261	13,809	0.32%	0.73%	23
Connecticut	3,405,565	26,654	0.78%	1.40%	16
Delaware	783,600	5,691	0.73%	0.30%	34
District of Columbia	572,059	3,507	0.61%	0.18%	42
Florida	15,982,378	84,527	0.53%	4.45%	6
Georgia	8,186,453	50,734	0.62%	2.67%	11
Hawaii	1,211,537	3,145	0.26%	0.17%	44
Idaho	1,293,953	1,560	0.12%	0.08%	45
Illinois	12,419,293	133,978	1.08%	7.05%	5
Indiana	6,080,485	16,683	0.27%	0.88%	19
Iowa	2,926,324	6,358	0.22%	0.33%	33
Kansas	2,688,418	9,230	0.34%	0.49%	29
Kentucky	4,041,769	7,876	0.19%	0.41%	31
Louisiana	4,468,976	9,835	0.22%	0.52%	27
Maine	1,274,923	1,303	0.10%	0.07%	46
Maryland	5,296,486	55,245	1.04%	2.91%	9
Massachusetts	6,349,097	48,588	0.77%	2.56%	12
Michigan	9,938,444	60,236	0.61%	3.17%	8
Minnesota	4,919,479	19,963	0.41%	1.05%	17
Mississippi	2,844,658	4,609	0.16%	0.24%	35
Missouri	5,595,211	14,028	0.25%	0.74%	22
Montana	902,195	531	0.06%	0.03%	51
Nebraska	1,711,263	3,753	0.22%	0.20%	40
Nevada	1,998,257	6,756	0.34%	0.36%	32
New Hampshire	1,235,786	4,258	0.34%	0.22%	36
New Jersey	8,414,350	180,957	2.15%	9.53%	3
New Mexico	1,819,046	3,802	0.21%	0.20%	38
New York	18,976,457	296,056	1.56%	15.59%	2
North Carolina	8,049,313	29,283	0.36%	1.54%	14
North Dakota	642,200	927	0.14%	0.05%	49
Ohio	11,353,140	43,119	0.38%	2.27%	13
Oklahoma	3,450,654	9,940	0.29%	0.52%	26
Oregon	3,421,399	11,650	0.34%	0.61%	25
Pennsylvania	12,281,054	62,616	0.51%	3.30%	7
Rhode Island	1,048,319	3,593	0.34%	0.19%	41
South Carolina	4,012,012	9,578	0.24%	0.50%	28
South Dakota	754,844	727	0.01%	0.04%	50
Tennessee	5,689,283	14,548	0.26%	0.77%	21
Texas	20,851,820	142,689	0.68%	7.51%	4
Utah	2,233,169	3,800	0.17%	0.20%	39
Vermont	608,827	1,064	0.17%	0.06%	47
Virginia	7,078,515	54,781	0.77%	2.88%	10
Washington	5,894,121	28,614	0.49%	1.51%	15
West Virginia	1,808,344	3,348	0.19%	0.18%	43
Wisconsin	5,363,675	14,800	0.28%	0.78%	20
Wyoming	493,782	429	0.09%	0.02%	52
Puerto Rico	3,808,610	12,369	0.32%	0.65%	24

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Census 2000 Sample File 2

# Age

Table 4.  
Age Distribution

	US population				Indian American Population			
	Male	Female	Total	% of Pop	Male	Female	Total	% of Pop
Total:	138,053,563	143,368,343	281,421,906	100.00%	1,007,633	891,966	1,899,599	100.00%
0 - 15 years	32,919,334	31,353,445	64,272,779	22.84%	228,352	216,811	445,163	23.43%
16 - 25 years	19,919,590	18,989,436	38,909,026	13.83%	167,372	155,991	323,363	17.02%
26 - 35 years	20,480,251	20,183,052	40,663,303	14.45%	234,860	198,276	433,136	22.80%
36 - 45 years	22,333,292	22,640,577	44,973,869	15.98%	162,779	134,554	297,333	15.65%
46 - 55 years	17,732,974	18,454,118	36,187,092	12.86%	115,917	99,625	215,542	11.35%
56 - 65 years	11,209,148	12,244,847	23,453,995	8.33%	64,723	50,173	114,896	6.05%
66 - 75 years	8,048,488	9,964,228	18,012,716	6.40%	24,545	24,593	49,138	2.59%
76 - 85 years	4,428,362	7,011,371	11,439,733	4.07%	7,646	9,794	17,440	0.92%
86 - 95 years	935,049	2,335,201	3,270,250	1.16%	1,338	1,970	3,308	0.17%
over 95	47,075	192,068	239,143	0.09%	101	179	280	0.01%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Census 2000 Sample File 2

**The Indian American** community is relatively young. Nearly two-thirds of the Indian American community is 35 years old and younger. In the general population, only half of the population is 35 years old and younger.

The largest difference between the Indian American population and the general population comes in the 26-35 age group. Indian Americans have a considerably higher population percentage concentrated in this age group. The effect of this is to create lower than average concentrations in each succeeding age group, starting with 36-45 and becoming more pronounced as the age gets higher.

This fact is important due to the fact that, if this trend continues,

over the next three decades, Indian Americans will begin to require a larger than average percentage of advanced healthcare, social services, Social Security, and retirement facilities. While the Indian American population currently has fewer senior citizens when compared to the general population, this trend is about to change.

Starting with the next Census in 2010, the number of Indian Americans who are elderly will begin to reach a parity with the general population. If all trends remain the same, the number of Indian Americans who are elderly will reach parity by the year 2030 and begin to outpace the general population thereafter.

In the immediate future, Indian

Americans will see a large spike in the number of elderly in the community. Currently, there are only 70,166 people over the age of 65 in the community. However, there are 114,896 people in the age group immediately preceding retirement age.

When this pre-retirement age group matures, there will be an immediate need to begin consideration of elderly issues, such as Social Security, retirement funds and end of life healthcare. These are topics that are not currently discussed at length amongst the Indian American population.

# Elderly

While a significantly smaller portion of the Indian American population is over 65 years old, when compared to the general population, a significantly larger portion of the population lives with their grandchildren. 3.6% of the general population over 65 years old lives with their grandchildren. However, just over 6.6% of Indian Americans over 65 years old live with their grandchildren.

More significantly however is the number of Indian Americans who live with their grandchildren and are responsible for those children. Of all the people 65 and over in the general population who live with their grandchildren, 42% are the primary caregivers, while only 14% of the Indian Americans who live with their grandchildren are the primary caregivers.

Indian American households that receive Social Security incomes is far lower than the general population. In the general population, the 2000 Census finds that 25.66% of households receive Social Security. This figure is compared to just 5.72% of Indian American households.

While it is true that immigrant populations tend to have lower participation in programs such as Social Security, for various reasons, the Indian American community's rate is well below other groups. By comparison, 12.08% of all Asian American households receive Social Security

Table 5.  
Voter Registration and Turnout

	% of Citizens in the General Population		% of Citizens in the Indian American Population	
	Registered to Vote	Who Voted	Registered to Vote	Who Voted
1994	67.1%	48.3%	60.5%	48.4%
1996	70.9%	58.4%	65.6%	54.1%
1998	67.1%	45.3%	55.8%	32.3%
2000	69.5%	59.5%	57.3%	44.8%
2002	66.5%	46.2%	57.1%	37.8%

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

rity and 14.67% of all Hispanic American households receive Social Security.

Additionally, Indian Americans receive far less money from Social Security. They receive \$139.70 per month on average - compared to \$1,136.00 monthly in the general population.

These figures have broad implications due to the fact that it signifies that Indian American households are not fully availing themselves of Government services either due to lack of exposure to programs or other more serious reasons.

## Voter Registration

**According to the U.S. Census Bureau's** publication, *Current Population Survey*, in 2002, only 37.75% of Indian Americans who are United States citizens of voting age voted in the last election. 46.15% of the general population that was eligible to vote actually voted in 2002.

Census data since 1994 shows that Indian Americans have gen-

erally had a lower voter registration rate than the general population (see Table 5.). The general population averages between 66.5% and 70.9% of the eligible people registered to vote. By contrast, the Indian American population averages between 55.8% and 65.6% of eligible people registered to vote.

Additionally, the percentage of the Indian Americans population that votes is slightly lower than the general population. Since 1994, between 32.3% and 54.1% of the eligible Indian American population voted in each election. Likewise, since 1994, between 46.2% and 59.5% of the general population voted.

Although Indian Americans tend to have lower voter statistics than the general population, the Indian American population usually follows the oscillations of the general population. In years of a Presidential election (1996 & 2000), voter registration as well as turnout in the general population and in the Indian American community are higher.

# Education

**Indian Americans**, on average, have attained a higher level of education than the general population, according to the 2000 Census. Indian Americans are two and half times more likely to have a bachelor's degree than the general population (60.93% versus 24.4% respectively). (see Table 6.) Additionally, compared to the general population, Indian Americans are:

More than three and a half times more likely to have a professional degree.

About three and half times more likely to have a masters degree.

More than four and three quarters times more likely to hold a doctorate degree.

The Indian American community has a significantly higher enrollment rate in schools as well as education attainment. 15.18% of the Indian American population is enrolled in college or graduate school, whereas only 7.97 of the general population is enrolled. Of all Indian Americans who are between the ages of 18 to 24, over half (57.30%) attended college or graduate school at the time of the 2000 Census.

Additionally, Indian American children tend to start school earlier than children in the general population. Over 52% of all Indian American children three and four years old are enrolled

Table 6.  
Educational Attainment (25+)

	U.S. Pop.	Asian American	Indian American
No Schooling	1.44%	4.20%	2.23%
High School	80.40%	80.59%	85.39%
Bachelor's Degree	24.40%	42.71%	60.96%
Master's Degree	5.91%	10.25%	20.55%
Professional Degree	1.97%	3.79%	7.27%
Doctorate Degree	0.96%	2.69%	4.59%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Census 2000 Sample File 4

in school. This is compared to 49% in the general population. Indian American school enrollment does not approach parity with the general population until children reach early elementary school.

However, while Indian Americans have attained a high level of education, there are significant differences in attainment by gender. Indian American women generally do not attain the same high level of educational attainment as Indian American men.

Indian American women are more than twice as likely not to have any schooling. Additionally, Indian American women are

less likely than Indian American men to achieve all categories of degrees. (see Table 7.)

While there is a discrepancy between educational attainment of men and women in the general population, the differences between Indian American men and women are far larger. For instance, in the general population, men are only 3.78% more likely than women to attain a master's degree. However, in the Indian American community, that discrepancy jumps - Indian American men are 47.67% more likely than Indian American women to attain a master's degree.

Table 7.  
Educational Attainment (25+) by Gender

	Gen. Pop. Men	Gen. Pop. Women	IA Men	IA Women
No Schooling	1.47%	1.41%	1.44%	3.14%
High School	80.10%	80.67%	88.64%	81.60%
Bachelor's Degree	26.10%	22.85%	66.60%	54.32%
Master's Degree	6.03%	5.81%	24.16%	16.36%
Professional Degree	2.58%	1.44%	8.12%	6.29%
Doctorate Degree	1.38%	0.58%	6.38%	2.50%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Census 2000 Sample File 4

## Employment/Income/Poverty

It has widely been reported that the Indian American community is a very wealthy community with high median incomes\*. The 2000 Census bears this generalization out. The median household income for Indian American households is \$61,322.00. This is compared to a median household income of \$41,994.00 for the general population. This represents a 31.52% increase.

Additionally, the unemployment rate for the Indian American community is lower than the unemployment rate for the general population. As of the 2000 Census, the Indian American community had an unemployment rate of 1.75%. The unemployment rate in the general population was 1.93%.

However, a significant income gender gap exists. In the general population, the median earnings for men is 55.39% greater than that of women. In the Indian American population, the median earnings for men is 74.48% greater than that of women. This gender gap fluctuates in other similar communities, however, it is not as pronounced. For example, in the Chinese American community, the gap is 40.76%, 40.13% in the Hispanic community, and 60.60% in the White Community.

While median household income, as well as per capita income, in the Indian American community is higher than the norm, it should be noted that

there are significant pockets of poverty within the Indian American community. Fully 22 state, the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico (see Table 8. for top fifteen states) have a higher percentage of Indian Americans living in poverty than the general population.

Additionally, there are significant incidences where Indian American children live in poverty. Nationwide, 10.13% of Indian Americans under 17 years old and 23.04% of Indian Americans aged 18-24 live in poverty. Additionally, over two thirds of Indian American children in Puerto Rico live in poverty. One in five Indian American children in Louisiana lives in poverty. 17.59% of children in New York State live in poverty. Nearly one in ten Indian American children in California lives in poverty.

Given that there are demonstrated pockets of poverty within the community, it is interesting to note that Indian Americans received considerably less public assistance than the general population. Indian Americans receive a significantly lower share of public assistance than the general population. While

Table 8.  
States with Higher Indian American Poverty Rates Than the General Population

State	% of Pop. Living in Poverty		% increase of IA Pop over Gen Pop
	General Pop	IA Pop	
Rhode Island	11.94%	20.73%	173.65%
Montana	14.61	25.14	172.13
Wisconsin	8.66	14.05	162.19
Kansas	9.90	15.57	157.30
Nebraska	9.71	14.59	150.18
Hawaii	10.70	15.43	144.15
N Hampshire	6.55	8.28	126.50
S Carolina	14.11	17.52	124.18
Utah	9.40	10.78	114.67
Puerto Rico	48.24	55.19	114.40
S Dakota	13.18	15.06	114.27
Iowa	9.14	10.41	113.92
Minnesota	7.94	9.03	113.78
Maine	10.92	12.28	112.42
D.C.	20.22	22.65	112.04

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Census 2000 Sample File 4

the general population has only 19.38% more people in poverty than the Indian American population, it receives 176% more public assistance.

While statistics prove that the Indian American community is better off than the general public, statistics also show that the community is not so much wealthier as to warrant such a large fall off in public assistance. While the Census does not give reasons for statistics, some suggestions as to this trend could include a lack of knowledge about available program and a lack of desire on the part of the community to apply for public assistance.

\*Wall Street Journal August 17, 2004, A4