A Demographic Snapshot:

NYC'S ASIAN AND PACIFIC ISLANDER (API) IMMIGRANT POPULATION

The Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic has been accompanied by a dramatic increase in discrimination and violence against Asian and Pacific Islander (API) individuals in New York City and beyond. API residents of all ethnicities and national origins are facing a surge in hate crimes and bias-motivated incidents. API-owned small businesses are experiencing enhanced hardship due to the public's irrational COVID-19-related fear and stigma.

This challenge faced by API individuals is not a new phenomenon but a direct result of the long and persistent history of racism, violence, and anti-API scapegoating in the U.S., which includes some of the most discriminatory and restrictive immigration laws that aimed to bar their migration into the country, such as the Page Act and the Chinese Exclusion Act. Even the "model minority" myth, a stereotype of API individuals as industrious and rule-abiding people, perpetuates the misconception that API communities in the U.S. are monolithic. It also minimizes the impact of racism in shaping the political and economic hierarchy in this country.

In April 2020, the City launched the Taskforce on Racial Inclusion and Equity (TRIE) to address the outsized health disparities and economic devastation faced by racial minorities during the COVID-19 pandemic. TRIE has played a major role in ensuring that the City's COVID-19 response and recovery efforts, including vaccine distribution and outreach, effectively and equitably reach the neighborhoods that have endured the greatest economic and health burdens from the pandemic. As we aim to better address long-standing racial and economic disparities as part of the COVID-19 response and recovery efforts, it is important to understand demographic diversity within New York City's API communities — especially within API immigrant communities — and their unique needs.

This fact sheet describes key demographic and economic characteristics of API immigrants in NYC. (Immigrants and foreign-born are used interchangeably throughout this Brief.) The key findings include:

Demographic Diversity   API immigrants are one of the most diverse racial groups in the City. They represent more than 30 different ethnic groups and speak more than 50 languages.

Population Growth   API is the fastest growing racial group in NYC, mainly driven by the influx of immigrants.
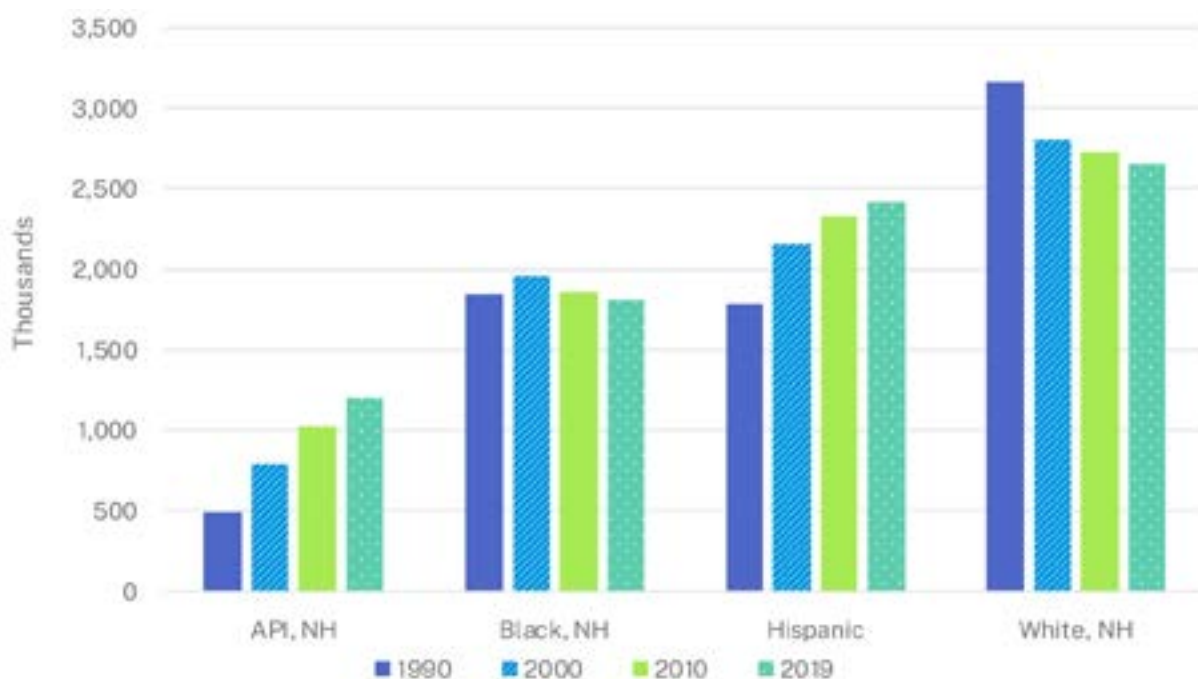
Settlement Pattern   More than half of API immigrants live in Queens (52 percent), much higher than the share of NYC immigrants overall (36 percent).

Immigration Status

13 percent of all API immigrants in NYC are undocumented, slightly lower than the share of NYC immigrants overall (16 percent).

Essential Workers

Two-thirds of API immigrants are essential workers compared to 57 percent of White immigrants. Bangladeshi immigrants have the highest share (82 percent) followed by Pakistani immigrants (75 percent).

Average Earnings

Japanese workers have the highest average earnings ($87,500) compared to the Nepalese, the group with the lowest earnings ($36,000). Overall, average earnings for API immigrants are higher than for all NYC immigrants ($54,600 compared to $51,200).

Poverty Rate

API and Hispanic immigrants have the highest poverty rates of all immigrant groups (24 percent). Among the API immigrants, Bangladeshi and Pakistani immigrants have the highest poverty rates (32 percent and 29 percent) compared to Filipino (12 percent) and Japanese (14 percent) immigrants.

Home Ownership

API immigrants are more likely to live in homes that are owned (45 percent compared to immigrants Citywide (34 percent).

API Is the Fastest Growing Racial Group in NYC, Driven by Immigration

Since 1990, the number of API residents in NYC (including both immigrants and non-immigrants) more than doubled, from 490,000 in 1990 to 1.2 million in 2019. In that same time period, their share of the City's total population also doubled from 7.0 percent to 14.3 percent. The population of Hispanic also grew (36 percent increase) while the number of White and Black have both declined steadily between 1990 and 2019. (Figure 1)
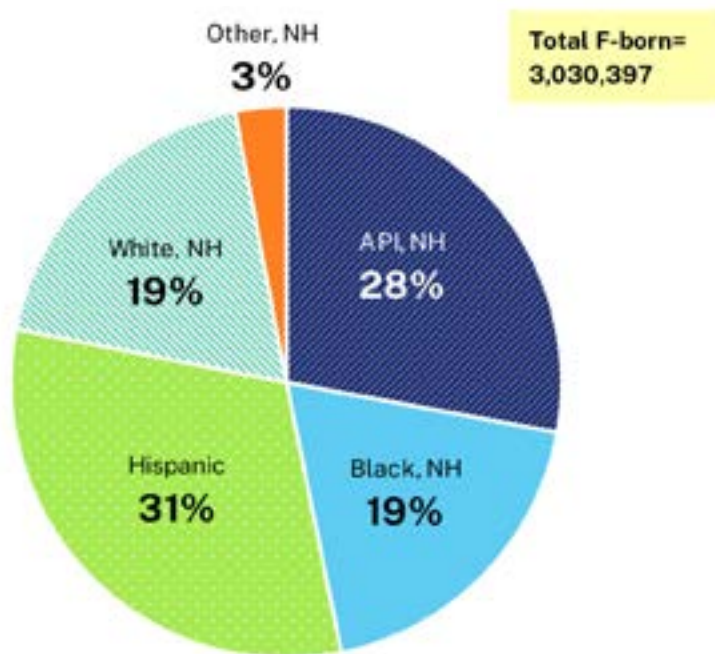
Figure 1
Total Population by Race and Hispanic Origin - NYC, 1990 to 2019

Sources: 1990 Census of Population Characteristics, New York; 2000 and 2010 Decennial Census PL 94-171, NYC Dept of City Planning and 2019 American Community Survey 1-Year Public Use Microdata Sample

Based on an analysis of the 2019 ACS data (the latest data available), there are 845,000 API immigrants in New York City. They account for 28 percent of the total 3 million immigrants living in the City. The 948,000 Hispanic immigrants in New York City comprise 31 percent, while Black and White immigrants each account for 19 percent of the foreign-born population in New York City, 574,000 and 572,000 respectively. (Figure 2)
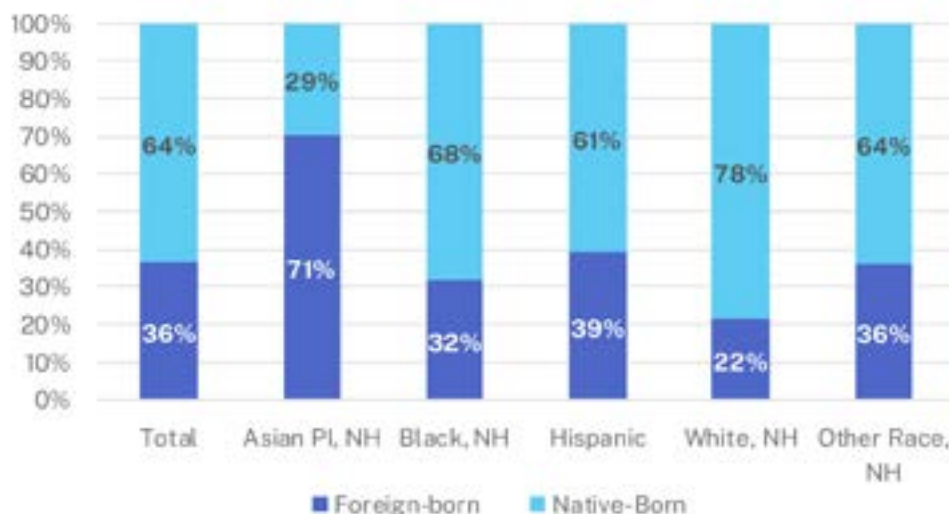
Figure 2
Foreign-born by Race and Hispanic Origin - NYC, 2019

Source: 2019 American Community Survey 1-Year Public Use Microdata Sample

API individuals in NYC are much more likely to be foreign-born than other racial groups. In 2019, there were 71 percent foreign-born API immigrants in the City compared to Hispanics (39 percent), Black (32 percent) and White (22 percent) immigrants. Overall, 36 percent of the City's population is foreign-born. (Figure 3)

Figure 3
Citizenship by Race and Hispanic Origin (%) - NYC, 2019

Source: 2019 American Community Survey 1-Year Public Use Microdata Sample

API Immigrants by Ethnic Group

The Chinese immigrant population, the largest API ethnic group, accounts for approximately one-half of the API immigrant population (418,000). API individuals who ethnically identify as Indians are the second largest group (152,000) comprising 18 percent. Korean (56,000), Filipino (54,000), and Bangladeshi (53,000) immigrants each comprise about 6 percent of the overall foreign-born total. Other API groups with the highest numbers of immigrants in New York City are, in the descending order, Pakistani, Japanese, Vietnamese, Taiwanese, and Nepalese. (Figure 4)

Overall, the number of API immigrants in New York City grew by 12 percent from 2010 to 2019. The fastest growing ethnic groups among API immigrants are from Bangladesh, Pakistan, and China. The Bangladeshi population almost doubled from 27,000 to 53,000 and the number of Pakistani immigrants increased from around 30,000 to 34,000 (14 percent increase). Chinese immigrants had the largest numerical gain (46,000), while the number of Korean immigrants declined by 15,000 or 22 percent between 2010 and 2019.

Figure 4
API Immigrants by Ethnic Group - NYC, 2010 and 2019

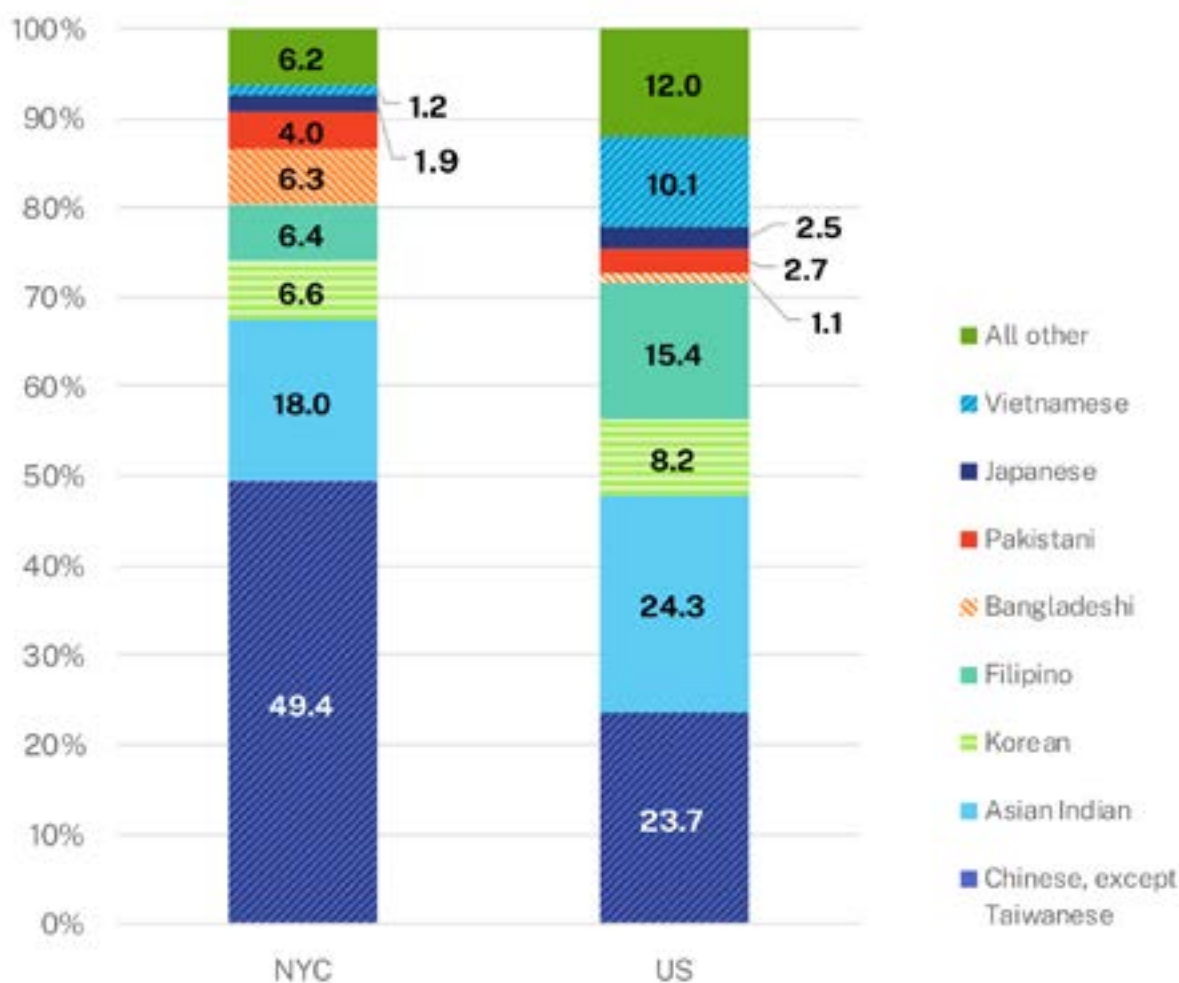| API Ethnicity	Number in 2010	Percent in 2010	Number in 2019	Percent in 2019	Number Change	Percent Change
Total, API	753,384	100.0	844,987	100.0	91,603	12.2
Chinese	371,758	49.3	417,654	49.4	45,896	12.3
Asian Indian	138,150	18.3	151,863	18.0	13,713	9.9
Korean	71,015	9.4	55,637	6.6	-15,378	-21.7
Filipino	52,710	7.0	54,295	6.4	1,585	3.0
Bangladeshi	27,372	3.6	53,291	6.3	25,919	94.7
Pakistani	29,788	4.0	34,037	4.0	4,249	14.3
Japanese	16,494	2.2	15,645	1.9	-849	-5.1
Vietnamese	9,310	1.2	10,238	1.2	928	10.0
Taiwanese	NA	NA	7,807	0.9	NA	NA
Nepalese	NA	NA	6,838	0.8	NA	NA
All Other	36,787	4.9	37,682	4.5	895	2.4

N/A indicates that data were not collected for these race groups in 2010.

Source: 2019 American Community Survey 1-Year Public Use Microdata Sample

Composition of API Immigrants in NYC is different than in the U.S. overall

Asian Indians, Filipinos, and Koreans together comprise 48 percent of the API immigrant population in the U.S. while they make up just 31 percent in the City. Chinese and Bangladeshis are much more likely to settle in NYC compared to elsewhere in the U.S. New York City's share of Chinese immigrants is more than double that for the U.S. overall (49 percent compared to 24 percent). Bangladeshi immigrants have a high propensity to settle in NYC; close to 40 percent of all Bangladeshis in the U.S. reside in the City (data not shown). (Figure 5)

Figure 5
Asian Foreign-born by Race Group (%) - NYC and US, 2019

Source: 2019 American Community Survey 1-Year Public Use Microdata Sample

Settlement Patterns of API Immigrants in NYC

52%
of API immigrants live in Queens

QUEENS
71% of Bangladeshi immigrants
64% of Korean immigrants
64% of Asian Indian immigrants
64% of Filipino immigrants
43% of Chinese immigrants

BROOKLYN
51% of Pakistani immigrants
35% of Chinese immigrants

MANHATTAN
50% of Japanese immigrants
18% of Chinese immigrants

Our analysis of the 2019 ACS data shows that more than half of API immigrants live in Queens (52 percent). Ethnic groups with the highest concentration in this borough are Bangladeshi (71 percent of Bangladeshis live in Queens) followed by Korean, Asian Indian, and Filipino (64 percent each).

The Chinese population is more dispersed throughout the City with 43 percent living in Queens, 35 percent in Brooklyn, and 18 percent in Manhattan. Flushing, Community District (CD) 7[1] is home to the largest number of Chinese immigrants in the City (70,000), more than double the number in Manhattan's Chinatown (32,000). There are also large concentrations in the south western neighborhoods of Brooklyn: Bensonhurst (45,000) and Sunset Park (28,000).

Asian Indians are primarily concentrated in neighborhoods of the southeastern Queens: Howard Beach (19,000), Richmond Hills (18,000), and Queens Village (13,000). And almost half of Korean immigrants live in Flushing and Bayside. Filipino immigrants are dispersed throughout the borough of Queens. Elmhurst, Briarwood, and Sunnyside are the top three neighborhoods for this group.
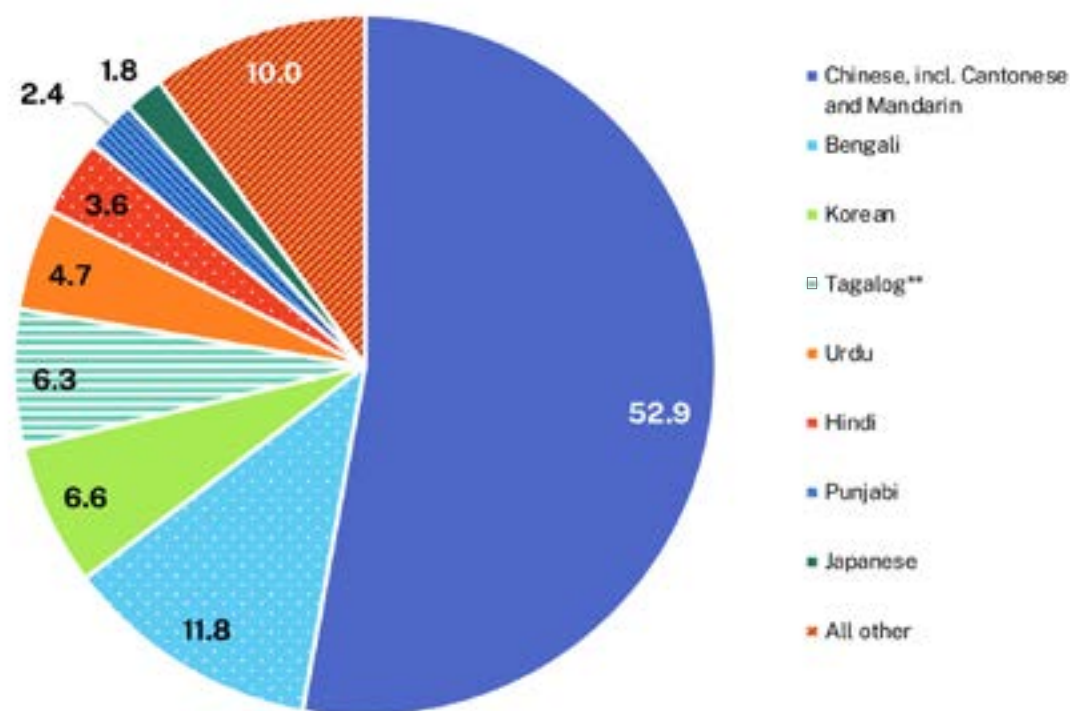
One-third of Bangladeshi immigrants live in southeastern Queens neighborhoods of Jamaica and Briarwood. Pakistani immigrants are more likely to settle in Brooklyn (51 percent) but they are disbursed throughout the City without noticeable neighborhood congregation. Half (50 percent) of all Japanese immigrants make their home in Manhattan.

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1   Community Districts and neighborhoods are used interchangeably in this analysis. For the detailed Community District neighborhood names and numbers go do : https://www1.nyc.gov/assets/planning/download/pdf/planning-level/nyc-population/census2010/puma_cd_map.pdf.

Languages Spoken

The diversity of languages spoken by API immigrants is remarkable. Those who speak Chinese, including Cantonese, Mandarin, and Min Nan Chinese, account for over half (53 percent) of all API immigrants who speak a language other than English at home. Immigrants who speak Bengali are the second largest group accounting for 87,200 (12 percent). And close to 50,000 immigrants each speak Korean and Tagalog (approximately 6 percent respectively). All together, API immigrants speak more than 50 languages. (Figure 6)

Figure 6
API Immigrants by Language Spoken* (%) - NYC, 2019

*For persons 5 and older who speak a language other than English at home
**Includes Filipino, Cebuano, Ilocano, and other Philiipine languages

Source: 2019 American Community Survey 1-Year Public Use Microdata Sample

Social and Demographic Characteristics of API Immigrants in NYC (See Appendix Tables)

- **Age.** The median age for API immigrants is 47 years, similar to the median age of all immigrants. Within the API population, however, there is a large difference in median age, with Nepalese immigrants being the youngest (35 years) and Filipinos being the oldest (50 years).

  - The share of API immigrants who are 65 years and older is smaller than the share of White immigrants (18 percent compared 27 percent). Among API immigrants, Filipinos have the largest share of those 65 years and older (23 percent).

- **Sex.**[2] Six of the top 10 API immigrant ethnic groups reported more females than males. Filipinos have the highest percent of a population that reported as female (61 percent) and Pakistani immigrants have the smallest percent (43 percent). In general, the overall population of New York City skews female (52 percent) as does the foreign-born population (54 percent).

- **English Proficiency.** There is a wide ethnic group-based disparity among API immigrants with Limited English Proficiency (LEP), meaning that they self-identify as speaking English "less than very well." Filipino immigrants have the lowest share of reported LEP (27 percent) among API ethnic groups, while Chinese immigrants have the highest share of reported LEP (76 percent).

- **Educational Attainment.**[3] Japanese, Filipino, Taiwanese, and Korean immigrants have the highest levels of educational attainment; over half of these groups are college graduates. Within the Chinese ethnic group there is a wide divergence in educational attainment: 24 percent have less than a ninth grade education while almost an equal share (27 percent) have attained a college degree or higher.

- **Lack of Health Insurance Coverage.** Nepalese immigrants have the highest rate of uninsurance (17 percent), while Vietnamese immigrants are among the API ethnic groups with the lowest share (five percent) of the population that does not have health insurance. Among all immigrants in New York City, 13 percent do not have health insurance.

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2   The Census Bureau collects data only on a person's biological sex and not gender. Ambiguity of these two concepts interferes with accurately and consistently measuring what we intend to measure--the sex composition of the population. https://www.census.gov/topics/population/age-and-sex/about.html.

3   Educational attainment is for persons 25 years and older.

Employment Patterns of API Immigrants in NYC

Labor Force Participation

Almost three-quarters (74 percent) of Nepalese immigrants are in the labor force. This is considerably higher than the labor force participation rate for all API immigrants (63 percent) and overall immigrants (65 percent each).

Business Owners

11 percent of API immigrants are business owners, similar to the share for Hispanic immigrants. White immigrants have the highest share (14 percent) compared to Black immigrants (8 percent).

- The API ethnic groups with the highest shares of self-employed workers are Pakistani (25 percent), followed by Japanese, Nepalese, and Bangladeshi workers (16 percent each).

Number of Workers in Families[4]

One-third of API immigrants live in families with three or more workers. This percentage is roughly equivalent to Hispanic immigrants, but higher than White immigrants (17 percent). The share of persons in such families for all immigrants is 30 percent.

Occupations

Despite the common stereotype, a much smaller share of API immigrants work in the professional and managerial occupations[5] (36 percent) compared to White immigrants (51 percent). However, some API ethnic groups exceed White immigrants in terms of the share of workers in professional and managerial occupations: close to two-thirds of Taiwanese and Japanese immigrants work in these occupations.

- 35 percent of API workers are in service and sales occupations, nine percentage points higher than the share of White immigrants (26 percent). Bangladeshi (43 percent), Nepalese (43 percent), and Chinese (41 percent) immigrants are far more likely to work in these occupations compared to other API immigrants in the City.

- Pakistani, Nepalese, and Bangladeshi immigrants are more likely to work in the Production, Transportation, and Material Moving occupations (30 percent, 23 percent, and 22 percent respectively) compared to all immigrant workers (12 percent). In this occupation category, approximately 80 percent of immigrants from these three groups worked as taxi drivers and chauffeurs (data not shown).

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4   Workers in family refers to the number of persons in a family who worked for pay or profit during the last 12 months.
5   Accountants, Registered Nurses, Financial and other Managers, and Elementary and Middle School teachers are among the top occupations in for Managerial and Professional occupations category for API immigrants.

Essential Workers

Two-thirds of API immigrants are essential workers, as defined by the State of New York.[6] This share is higher than for the NYC native-born population (59 percent) and White immigrants (57 percent). As much as 82 percent of Bangladeshi immigrants have served as essential workers during the COVID-19 pandemic, ranking the top among API ethnic groups, followed by Pakistani immigrants (75 percent).

Average Earnings

Overall, the mean earnings of API immigrants are higher than the NYC average ($54,600 compared to $51,200). However, there is large disparity within the API ethnic groups: Japanese immigrant workers have the highest mean earnings ($87,500) compared to Nepalese immigrants who, on average, earn $36,000 per year.

Economic Characteristics of API Immigrants in NYC

Poverty Rate[7]

API and Hispanic immigrants have the highest poverty rates of all immigrant groups (24 percent). However, within the Asian ethnic groups, there is wide disparity. Bangladeshi and Pakistani immigrant have the highest poverty rates (32 percent and 29 percent) compared to those groups with the lowest poverty rate; Filipino (12 percent) and Japanese (14 percent).

- Immigrant New Yorkers who are 65 years and older have a higher poverty rate compared to the Citywide poverty rate for all immigrants regardless of age (26 percent compared to 21 percent). API and Hispanic immigrant seniors have the highest poverty rate (30 percent) while Black immigrants seniors have the lowest poverty rate (20 percent).

Median Household Income

Filipino immigrants have the highest median household income of all API immigrants ($104,200) which is also higher than median household income for White immigrants ($80,900). Bangladeshi immigrants' median household income was the lowest ($55,600). Median household income for all NYC immigrants is $66,100, slightly lower than that of all API immigrants ($69,500).

Home Ownership

API immigrants are much more likely to live in homes that they own (45 percent) than other immigrants (34 percent). However, there are some API immigrant groups—Nepalese, Japanese, Pakistani, Bangladeshi, and Korean—that have much smaller shares living in homes that they own; these groups range from Nepalese at 16 percent to Korean at 32 percent.

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6   Empire State Development (2020, October 23), *Guidance on Executive Order 202.6: Guidance for Determining Whether a Business Enterprise Is Subject to a Workforce Reduction under Recent Executive Orders*, https://esd.ny.gov/guidance-executive-order-2026

7   The NYCgov Poverty Measure differs from the official U.S. poverty measure by accounting for the higher cost of living in New York City. It also incorporates the value of programs intended to alleviate poverty such as the Supplemental Nutritional Assistance Program (SNAP) and the Earned Income Tax Credit. For more information see: https://www1.nyc.gov/assets/opportunity/pdf/20_poverty_measure_report.

Overcrowded Households[8]

Hispanic immigrants have the highest proportion living in overcrowded households (29 percent) followed by API immigrants (24 percent).

Bangladeshi and Pakistani immigrants are more than twice as likely to live in overcrowded housing (46 percent and 44 percent respectively) as the overall rate for NYC immigrants of 22 percent.

Immigration Status of API Immigrants in NYC

Average Years in the U.S

API immigrants in NYC are likely to have lived in the U.S. the shortest of all other racial groups, overall having lived in the U.S. for 19 years on average compared to 22 years for all immigrants. Nepalese immigrants are the most recent arrivals, having spent just 9 years on average in the U.S., followed by Bangladeshi (13 years) and Pakistani immigrants (15 years). Of all the API ethnic groups, Vietnamese have been in the U.S. the longest: an average of 23 years.

Immigration Status

13 percent of all API immigrants are undocumented, slightly lower than the share of NYC immigrants overall (16 percent). The API ethnic groups with the smallest share are Vietnamese and Japanese (5 percent each) while Nepalese and Korean immigrants have the highest share who are undocumented (22 percent and 17 percent respectively).

Naturalization Rates

The share of Asian immigrants who are naturalized is on par with the total foreign-born population (56 percent each). Vietnamese (74 percent) and Filipino (65 percent) immigrants have the highest share of their foreign-born population who have become U.S. citizens, whereas Japanese (15 percent) and Nepalese (29 percent) immigrants are the least likely to have naturalized. This could be because they are not eligible to obtain citizenship or because they chose not to do so.

Mixed-Status Households[9]

API individuals in NYC are more likely to live in mixed-status households (18 percent), compared to all New Yorkers (12 percent). Nepalese New Yorkers have the highest share living in mixed-status households (38 percent) followed by Bangladeshis (21 percent). The groups with the smallest share living in mixed-status households are Vietnamese (7 percent) and Japanese (8 percent).

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8 Overcrowded households are defined by HUD as one or more persons per room. https://www.huduser.gov/publications/pdf/measuring_overcrowding_in_hsg.pdf.

9 Mixed-status households are defined as households with at least one undocumented immigrant and one person with legal status.

Conclusion

Despite a long history of having been in the U.S. and increasing numbers and political influence today, API immigrants continue to experience a recurring dynamic of "othering," which underlies the increasing xenophobia and anti-API hate crimes during the COVID-19 pandemic. Promoting deeper understanding of API communities, including their diversity and complexity, must be part of the national strategy to address this systemic racism. For more information about the City's Stop Asian Hate campaign and toolkits to address anti-Asian bias, discrimination and hate, visit the New York City Commission on Human Rights webpage available at nyc.gov/stopasianhate.

"I Still Believe in Our City" is a public awareness campaign and art series by multidisciplinary artist Amanda Phingbodhipakkiya, the NYC Commission on Human Rights, and the NYC Department of Cultural Affairs. The campaign was launched to combat anti-Asian bias, discrimination, and harassment connected to COVID-19. Visit nyc.gov/StopAsianHate for more information and resources.

"We Are More" is an art series that celebrates the resilience and range of Asian American and Pacific Islander communities. The series seeks to break down tired worn out cliches and stereotypes of Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders, and forge in its stead a brilliant, multidimensional identity that encompasses the resilience and range of the communities. Featuring dynamic visuals, bold typography, and human stories, "We Are More" is on view in Times Square in partnership with Times Square Arts, with subsequent installations appearing in Boston and other cities around the United States. Learn more and download all the images at morethan.art.

Data Notes and Methodology

Defining the API Population

The API population is defined in this brief using Census Bureau's self-reported data on race and ethnicity.[10] Persons who identify their ethnicity as Hispanic, can be of any race. In 2019 there were 1,196,102 New Yorkers who identified as non-Hispanic Asian or Pacific Islanders (API).[11] (Box 1.)

Asian immigrants can be defined in more than one way. One approach is to include all those who were born on the continent of Asia. This definition produces a population of 917,471 in NYC (77 percent of the API total). Note that using this definition includes some immigrants who do not identify their race as Asian.[12]

Another approach and the one used in this Brief, defines Asian immigrants using the race and citizenship variable. Foreign-born is defined using the citizenship variable and includes all individuals who are currently living in the U.S., but were born outside the 50 states and the U.S. territories.[13] Of the total API population in the U.S., 844,987 are foreign-born (71 percent). Note that this classification includes all foreign-born Asians regardless of their country of birth.[14]

Box 1.

Population	Number	Percent
Total API, nonhispanics	1,196,102	100.0

Defining Asian Immigrants	Number	Percent
Born on the Asian Continent	917,471	76.7
Asian Race	844,987	70.6

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10   The U.S. Census Bureau collects race data in accordance with guidelines provided by the U.S. Office of Management and Budget (OMB), and these data are based on self-identification. OMB requires that race data be collected for a minimum of five groups: White, Black, or African American, American Indian or Alaska Native, Asian, and Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander. Persons who identify their ethnicity as Hispanic, can be of any race. The racial categories included in the census questionnaire generally reflect a social definition of race recognized in this country and not an attempt to define race biologically, anthropologically, or genetically. In addition, it is recognized that the categories of the race item include racial and national origin or sociocultural groups. People may choose to report more than one race to indicate their racial mixture, such as American Indian" and "White." For more information see: https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/note/US/RHI625219

11   Non-hispanic Native Hawaiian and other Pacific Islanders (PI) account for about 1,000 or less than one percent of the total API, Non-hispanic population. Using "race alone", not accounting for Hispanic origin, there are 4,300 PI.

12   Approximately 50,000 immigrants born in Middle Eastern countries such as Israel, Yemen, Turkey, Iran, Syria, and Lebanon are included using continent of birth as the definition of API immigrant.

13   Persons born abroad of U.S. citizen parents are also excluded from this foreign-born definition.

14   There are a sizable number of Asian Indians (40,000) born in Guyana and Trinidad and Tobago who are included in the foreign-born population using race as the definition of API.

Data Sources

ACS 2019 1-year Public User Microdata (PUMS) files are used to produce all tables and charts in this Brief unless otherwise noted. To increase the sample size and therefore the reliability of detailed characteristics presented in the Appendix Tables, ACS 2015-2019 5-year PUMS were used. These data files have been augmented by NYC Mayor's Office for Economic Opportunity (NYC Opportunity) in order to create the NYCgov poverty rate as well as immigration legal status indicators. For more information on the methodology that creates the alternative poverty measure for NYC go to: https://www1.nyc.gov/assets/opportunity/pdf/20_poverty_measure_report.

The methodology used to created immigration legal status can be found here: https://www1.nyc.gov/assets/opportunity/pdf/immigrant-poverty-report-2017.pdf.

Data from this brief is based on the U.S. Census Bureau's American Community Survey, the largest annual household survey available. While this brief does not go into the over- and under-count rates of the data, many of NYC's API communities including the Burmese, Bhutanese, Nepali, Tibetan, and Thai New Yorkers, have raised concern about the accuracy of the group counts based on the ACS as applied to them and their specific risk of their financial, educational, language, and other hardships being invisible. The Mayor's Office of Immigrant Affairs is conscious of the unique needs of these API communities and are directly working with them to address and target the challenges they face. You can find more information about the historic undercount of Asian ethnic communities and how the census may differ from informal community counts here: https://censuscounts.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/Fact-Sheet-AA-NHPI-HTC.pdf.