



Fact Sheet: The State of Asian American Women in the United States

By Marcus T. Smith

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Asian American women are a growing and influential constituency in the United States. Asian American women's share of the female population will grow from 5.14 percent in 2012 to 7.8 percent in 2050.¹ Asian American women are making significant strides in education, participation, health, and other areas, but there is a long way to go to fully close racial and ethnic disparities. New policies such as the Affordable Care Act, or ACA, and other proposed policies such as paid sick leave can greatly improve the lives of Asian American women and their families. For example, under the ACA, around 2.5 million Asian American women with private health insurance are currently receiving expanded preventive service coverage under the ACA.² Estimates suggest that 970,000 Asian American women will gain access to affordable or subsidized health insurance.³

This fact sheet provides a snapshot of statistics about health, education, entrepreneurship, economic security, and political leadership that should guide our choices to enact sensible policies to unleash the potential of this growing demographic and benefit our economy. Except for where noted, the following information reflects Asian American women in aggregate as a single group and, due to limited data, does not take often into account variations about Asian subcategories, such as Chinese-, Japanese-, and Korean-Americans, which often differ significantly.

Health

Many Asian American women lack health coverage and more than one in five Asian American women of child-bearing age—ages 15 to 44—is uninsured.⁴ And while Asian American women face significant health challenges, there have been a number of notable improvements.

- Fifty-nine percent of nail technicians were women of color in 2007, a large share of whom were Asian American women.⁵ These women are disproportionately at risk for exposure to harmful toxins and chemicals that have been linked to reproductive harm, such as infertility, miscarriages, and cancer.⁶

- Asian American women are twice as likely to die from pregnancy-related causes such as embolism and pregnancy-related hypertension.⁷
- In 2013, 37.6 percent of Asian American women over age 40 did not get routine mammograms, and 32 percent of adult Asian American women did not get routine Pap smears.⁸
- U.S.-born Asian American women had a higher lifetime rate of suicidal thoughts, at 15.9 percent, than that of the general U.S. population, at 13.5 percent.⁹
- Birth rates for Asian American women ages 15 to 19 decreased by 5 percent from 2011 to 2012.¹⁰

Educational attainment

Asian American women have achieved a higher level of educational attainment than other women and are often doing as well as their male counterparts.

- Asian American women surpassed white women in actual graduation rates in 2004, the last year for which data on Asian American women are available. College graduation rates for white women and Asian American women were 45.8 percent and 49.4 percent, respectively.¹¹
- Asian American women held 8.36 percent of bachelor's degrees held by women while only constituting 5.14 percent of the female population in 2013.¹²
- Asian American and white women earned an equal amount of science and engineering degrees as their male counterparts in 2010.¹³

Entrepreneurship

Asian American women are underrepresented among the Fortune 500 CEOs and board members. Business ownership among Asian American women entrepreneurs, however, has grown immensely over the past 15 years. There are 620,300 Asian American women-owned businesses in the United States. This reflects a tremendous 156 percent increase since 1997.¹⁴

- Asian American women own 6.7 percent of all women-owned firms across the country.¹⁵
- The states with the largest number of Asian American women-owned businesses are California at 193,300, New York at 68,700, and Texas at 51,800.¹⁶

- There are an estimated 620,300 Asian American women-owned businesses in the United States. This reflects a tremendous 83 percent increase since 2002 and a 156 percent increase since 1997.¹⁷
- Asian American women-owned firms across the country have estimated total receipts of \$105 billion. The total receipts of Asian American women-owned firms grew 181 percent since 1997.¹⁸
- A full 82.5 percent of Asian American women-owned firms are nonemployer firms, or firms with no employees, with average receipts of \$34,204.¹⁹
- Asian American women-owned firms have more paid employees compared to Latina and African American women-owned firms, employing an estimated 649,000 people across the country.²⁰

Economic security

Despite their high achievements in education, Asian American women make disproportionately less money than their male and non-Hispanic white counterparts. These disparities are leaving a growing portion of our population more vulnerable to poverty and its implications.

- The American Association of University Women found that Asian American women made 73 percent of their male counterparts' wages in 2012.²¹
- The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics reports that 22.3 percent of Asian American women worked in the service sector in 2012 compared to only 20 percent of white women.²²
- The health care industry is the largest employer of Asian American and Pacific Islander women.²³
- The share of Asian American women at or below minimum wage more than doubled from 2007 to 2012.²⁴
- The unemployment rate for Asian American women increased from 4.9 percent in 2008 to 8.5 percent in 2011.²⁵
- The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics report "A Profile of Working Poor, 2011" indicates that 5.38 percent of Asian American women in the labor force are "working poor."²⁶
- In 2011, 12.3 percent of Asian American women lived in poverty.²⁷

- The top industries for Asian American women-owned businesses include other services, at 25.5 percent of all Asian American women-owned businesses; health care and social assistance, at 13.9 percent; and professional, scientific, and technical services, at 13.3 percent.²⁸
- The average total unemployment rate for all Asian American women was 5.8 percent from 2008 to 2010 while non-Asian American women had an average rate of 7.4 percent. When we observe the ethnic diversity within the category of Asian American women, we find that some subgroups of Asian American women are doing far better than others. Asian-Indian women showed an unemployment rate of 7.3 percent; Chinese, 4.5 percent; Filipino, 5.6 percent; Japanese, 3.7 percent; Korean, 6.2 percent; Vietnamese, 5 percent; and all other Asian women's groups had an even higher unemployment rate at 7.6 percent.²⁹

Political leadership

While Asian American women have a rich history of leadership in their communities, they continue to be greatly underrepresented in positions of power in government.

- In the 113th Congress, seven members are Asian American women—six in the House of Representatives and one in the Senate.³⁰
- Of the 1,789 women serving nationwide in state legislatures, 32 are Asian American.³¹
- In America's 100 largest cities, there is only one Asian American woman mayor—Jean Quan from Oakland, California.³²

Endnotes

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- 4 March of Dimes, "Census Data on Uninsured Women and Children" (2009) available at http://www.marchofdimes.com/chapterassets/files/Uninsured_Highlights09.pdf.
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