

# Asians are far more likely than Anglos to be college-educated

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Asians (about 60 percent) are much more likely to be college-educated than Anglos (under 40 percent), according to Rice University's Kinder Institute Houston Area Asian Survey, the first systematic look at the local Asian population based on three surveys conducted over a 16-year period. The findings were released today by Stephen Klineberg, Kinder Institute co-director and Rice sociologist, at an event hosted by the institute at the Asia Society Texas Center.

The surveys, conducted in 1995, 2002 and 2011 in conjunction with the annual Kinder Institute [Houston Area Survey](#), directed questions about demographics, [life experiences](#) and [societal issues](#) to all of Houston's varied Asian communities. The surveys explored the similarities and differences among the Houston area's four largest Asian communities: the Vietnamese, Indian/Pakistani, Chinese/Taiwanese and Filipino populations.

"Houston has become the single most ethnically diverse large [metropolitan region](#) in the United States, and the three Houston Area Asian Surveys provide a rare look at this rapidly growing population over time," Klineberg said. "Houston's Asian communities will play increasingly important roles in all aspects of our city's life as the 21st century unfolds."

## The rise of the second generation

The surveys found that growing proportions of Harris County's Asian adults are now the U.S.-born children of [Asian immigrants](#), and they are even better educated than their parents. In the 2011 survey, 31 percent of the Asian respondents were born in America, compared with only 10 percent in 1995, when the first Asian survey was conducted.

U.S.-born Asians are more likely than the Asian immigrants to be college-educated (58 percent of first-generation Asians and 61 percent in the second generation). In sharp contrast, only 37 percent of Harris County's U.S.-born Anglos have college degrees.

The American-born Asians are earning higher incomes than their first-generation counterparts: 42 percent of the U.S.-born Asians aged 25 and older are making \$75,000 or more per year, compared with 29 percent of first-generation immigrants.

U.S.-born Asians (91 percent) are also more likely than first-generation immigrants (79 percent) to have close personal friends who are Anglo, and 84 percent of U.S.-born Asians are more likely than first-generation immigrants (60 percent) to have close friends who are African-American. Moreover, 61 percent said they had been in a romantic relationship with someone who was non-Asian, compared with just 32 percent of the Asian immigrants.

## **The demographic revolution, education and earnings**

The 2010 U.S. Census counted 280,341 Asians in Harris County, accounting for 6.9 percent of a population numbering more than 4 million. The Vietnamese are the largest Asian community in Harris County, followed by the Indians, Chinese, Filipinos and Koreans.

"The 'model minority myth,' which purports to explain the success Asians have achieved in the United States, overlooks the upper-middle-

class backgrounds of so many Asian immigrants, as well as the many others who are far from prosperous," Klineberg said.

"The stereotype also diverts attention from continuing discrimination, and it lumps together people from 27 different countries, with different religious and cultural traditions, who came to America under contrasting circumstances, for divergent reasons and with vastly different resources," he said.

When asked what led them or their parents to come to this country, the Filipinos were most likely to say they immigrated for work opportunities, whereas the Chinese/Taiwanese and the Indian/Pakistani populations were more apt to say they came for education. In contrast, most of the Vietnamese (56 percent) said they immigrated because of war and politics or in search of freedom.

Despite levels of education that are much higher on average than those of Anglos, Asians generally have lower household incomes. Thirty-six percent of Anglos report household incomes of more than \$75,000, compared with only 28 percent of all Asians.

"Part of this difference may be due to being younger and having arrived as immigrants with educational credentials that may be difficult to transfer into a new society," Klineberg said. "Part of it also may reflect the impact of continuing discrimination that makes it harder for Asians to reach the top positions in the American economy."

## **Religion**

The Filipinos, who are overwhelmingly Catholic (75 percent), are more likely than other Asians to be strongly religious. Seventy-one percent report attending a religious service in the past 30 days, and 88 percent say that religion is very important in their lives. The Indians/Pakistanis

are generally either Hindu (37 percent) or Moslem (33 percent), and the Vietnamese either Catholic (35 percent) or Buddhist (45 percent).

At 35 percent, the Chinese/Taiwanese population is more likely than any of the other Asian communities to have no religious attachments; 59 percent report that they had not attended a religious service during the preceding month. Overall, 40 percent of all Asians in the Houston area have a non-Christian religious affiliation, and 18 percent report no religious preference.

## **Politics**

In 1995, the Vietnamese (60 percent) and Chinese/Taiwanese (60 percent) were predominantly Republican, whereas the Indians and Pakistanis were more likely to be Democrats (53 percent). In the years since then, support for the Republican Party has waned; only 40 percent of the Vietnamese and 37 percent of the Chinese/Taiwanese identified as Republican in the 2011 survey. "Anti-communism is less of an issue, while concerns about restrictive immigration policies, economic inequalities and perceived discrimination have increased," Klineberg said.

Asians share with Latinos and African-Americans strong support for government initiatives designed to strengthen the safety net and to moderate economic inequalities – issues on which Anglos differ sharply from the three other ethnic communities. This may help explain why, across the country, 60 percent of Anglos voted for the Republicans in the last election, whereas more than 70 percent of Asians and Latinos voted for the Democrats.

"The ability of Republicans to broaden their appeal to Asians and Latinos and of Democrats to boost turnout among these rapidly growing communities will determine the political positioning of Harris County

and the state of Texas in the years ahead," Klineberg said.

"Houston's Asian-Americans are largely middle-class professionals who are moving rapidly into leadership positions," Klineberg said. "Asians also are people of color, with friendship networks spanning all ethnic communities, and they are more committed than Anglos to strengthening government initiatives to expand opportunities and reduce the inequalities. They will be indispensable partners in the efforts to build a successful, inclusive, equitable and united multiethnic future for Houston and America in the years ahead."

Provided by Rice University

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