

ASIAN INDIANS

HISTORY

India is home to 1.1 billion people, almost a third of whom are below the age of 15. There are numerous languages spoken in India, including Hindi, Telugu, Tamil, Gujarati, and English. There are also many religions represented in India, such as Hinduism, Islam, Christianity, and Buddhism.ⁱ

In 1790, as part of the early commerce between India and the U.S., the first Indian immigrant arrived in the United States as a maritime worker. During the 1920s, Indian immigrants in the U.S. were mainly agricultural workers. After World War II and the 1946 Indian Citizenship Bill, Indians were able to seek naturalization in the U.S. and their population in the U.S. began to grow. Today, the Asian Indian American population is the third largest Asian American ethnic group in the U.S. after Chinese Americans and Filipino Americans.ⁱⁱ

DEMOGRAPHICS

According to the 2000 U.S. Census, there are 1,678,765 Asian Indians living in the United States. Of these, 46.8% are female. In terms of education levels, 39.8% of Asian Indian Americans hold a Bachelor's degree or higher. In terms of economics, the median family income is \$70,708 and 9.4% of Asian Indian Americans are living below the poverty level.ⁱⁱⁱ

72.8% of Asian Indians in the U.S. speak a language other than English at home.

Asian Indian American populations are largest in California, New York, New Jersey, Texas, and Illinois.

State	Asian Indian Population in 2000 ^{iv}
California	314,819
New York	251,724
New Jersey	169,180
Texas	129,365
Illinois	124,723

HEALTH STATUS

Asian Indians are part of the larger subgroup of Asian Americans known as South Asians. In addition to Indians, South Asians include people from Pakistan, Bangladesh, Nepal, Burma, Sri Lanka, Afghanistan, Bhutan, and the Maldives.^v Being part of such a diverse group makes it difficult to find information specifically on Asian Indians.

HEART DISEASE

Asian Indians have high rates of coronary artery disease and it tends to occur at an earlier age in Asian Indians. Compared to whites, Asian Indians have 40% greater mortality rates from coronary artery disease. A possible risk factor for coronary artery disease in Asian Indians is having smaller coronary arteries, compared to whites.^{vi}

In the U.S., Asian Indian men are almost three times more likely to have a heart attack than the general U.S. population.^{vii}

Cigarette smoking is the biggest predictor of a first heart attack in Asian Indians.

VIOLENCE

South Asian women living in the United States are at a higher risk of intimate partner violence. In one study of South Asian women (in which the majority of the participants were Asian Indian women), 40.8% reported having been abused by their male partner. Of those who had been abused, 15.7% received injuries, some requiring medical attention. Some of the barriers to seeking help include social isolation, lack of community support, and lack of awareness of services.^{viii}

OVERWEIGHT/OBESITY

Compared to whites and blacks, Asian Indian Americans have a lower body mass index (BMI). However, U.S. born Indians are at greater risk of overweight/obesity than Indian immigrants. Among those who immigrated to the United States, the risk increases with longer stay in the U.S.^{ix}

MATERNAL AND CHILD HEALTH

Asian Indian women who have immigrated to the United States from India are more likely to give birth to low birth weight infants, compared to white women and women from other ethnic groups. Compared to white women, Asian Indian women breastfeed for a shorter period of time. Indian women are also more likely than white women to rely on family members for information on feeding instead of asking health professionals.^x

DRUG USE

Drug use is thought to be low in Asian Indians. However, as Asian Indian adolescents become more acculturated to the U.S., they may increase their drug and alcohol use, because of inter-generational conflict, feelings of failure, and lack of information about the consequences of drug use.^{xi}

RESOURCES

Additional information on Asian Indian Americans is available at the following websites:

- **Apna Ghar Domestic Violence Shelter**
<http://www.apnaghar.org>
- **Asian American Health**
<http://asianamericanhealth.nlm.nih.gov/index.html>
- **Asian and Pacific Islander American Health Forum**
<http://www.apiahf.org/>
- **Asian and Pacific Islander Institute on Domestic Violence**
<http://www.apiahf.org/apidvinstitute/default.htm>
- **Desi-Fitness.com**
<http://www.desi-fitness.com/index.htm>
- **Embassy of India**
<http://www.indianembassy.org/newsite/default.asp>
- **Maitri**
<http://www.maitri.org/>
- **Manavi**
<http://www.manavi.org/>
- **Medline Plus: Asian American Health**
<http://www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/asianamericanhealth.html>
- **Sakhi for South Asian Women**
<http://www.sakhi.com/>
- **SAWNET: The South Asian Women's Network**
<http://www.sawnet.org/>
- **South Asian Public Health Association**
<http://www.sapha.net/>
- **U.S. Census Bureau: American FactFinder: Asian Indian**
http://factfinder.census.gov/servlet/SAFFIteratedFacts?_event=&geo_id=01000US&geoContext=01000US&street=&county=&cityTown=&state=&zip=&lang=en&sse=on&ActiveGeoDiv=&useEV=&pctxt=fph&pgsl=010&submenuId=factsheet_2&ds_name=DEC_2000_SAFF&_ci_nbr=013&qtr_name=DEC_2000_SAFF_R1010®=DEC_2000_SAFF_R1010%3A013&keyword=&industry=

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- ^v Asian and Pacific Islander American Health Forum. Fact Sheet: South Asians. Retrieved from <http://www.apiahf.org/resources/pdf/South%20Asian%20Health%20Brief.pdf>
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