

# We, the Asian and Pacific Islander Americans



U.S. Department of Commerce  
BUREAU OF THE CENSUS

# We, the Asian and Pacific Islander Americans

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**We**, the Asians and Pacific Islanders are as diverse as the lands of our ancestors. Although we have been coming to the United States for more than a century, our numbers and diversity have grown more rapidly in recent years. We numbered more than 3.7 million in 1980, a considerable increase over the 1970 figure of 1.5 million. Our proportion of the total population doubled from 0.8 percent to 1.6 percent during this 10-year period. Immigration was one major factor accounting for this increase as large numbers of us came to the United States from China, India, Korea, the Philippines, and other Asian and Pacific Island areas following the adoption of the Immigration Act of 1965. Also, more than 400,000 Southeast Asian refugees came to America between 1975 and 1980 under the Refugee Resettlement Program.

In addition to immigration and natural increase, part of the growth of our numbers during the 1970's occurred because of changes in the census race definition to include more groups. More than 20 Asian and Pacific Islander population groups were identified in the 1980 census, compared with only five in the 1970 census.

The 1980 census counted 3,466,874 Asians. The largest groups ranked by size were:

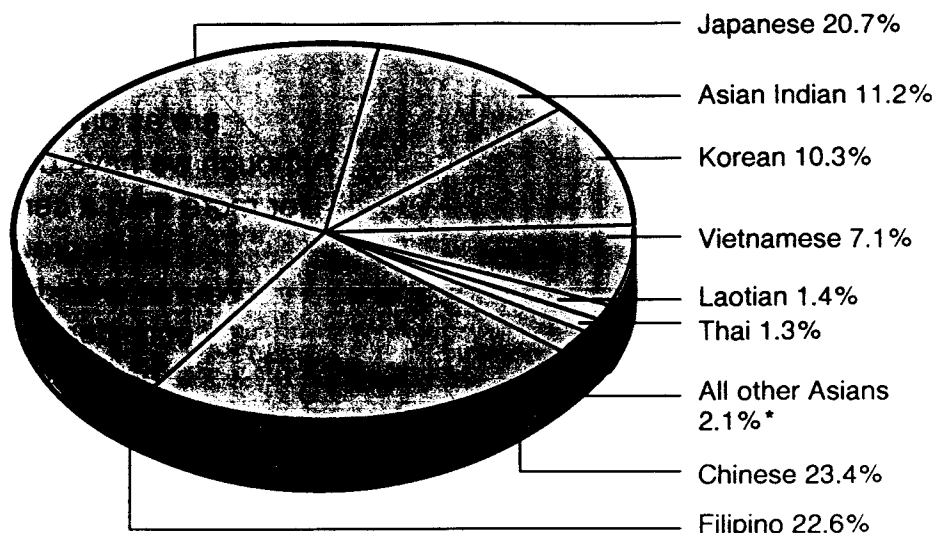
Group	Number
Chinese	812,178
Filipino	781,894
Japanese	716,331
Asian Indian	387,223
Korean	357,393
Vietnamese	245,025
Laotian	47,683
Thai	45,279
Cambodian (Kampuchean)	16,044
Pakistani	15,792
Indonesian	9,618
Hmong	5,204

The census also counted 259,566 Pacific Islanders. This group includes the Pacific Islands cultural groups of Polynesians, who had the largest population, followed by Micronesians and Melanesians. The following are their largest groups:

Group	Number
Polynesian	220,278
Hawaiian	172,346
Samoan	39,520
Tongan	6,226
Micronesian	35,508
Guamanian	30,695
Melanesian	3,311
Fijian	2,834

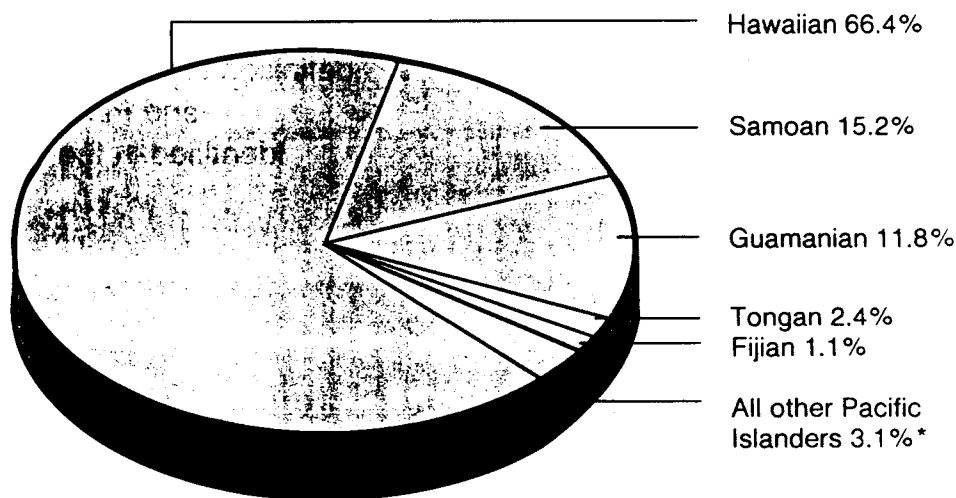
All Asian and Pacific Islander groups are important, making continuing contributions to the diversity of the United States. The tables at the end of this report show selected characteristics for all Asian groups with more than 5,000 persons and all Pacific Islander groups with more than 2,500 persons. The following discussion, however, will focus on only the largest Asian groups, (Chinese, Filipinos, Japanese, Asian Indians, Koreans, and Vietnamese) and the largest Pacific Islander groups (Hawaiians, Samoans, and Guamanians).

Figure 1. Distribution of the 3.5 Million Asians in the United States: 1980



\*The "All other Asians" includes groups such as Cambodian (Kampuchean), Pakistani, Indonesian, Hmong, Nepali, Bhutanese and persons reported as "Asian" or "Asiatic."

Figure 2. Distribution of the 260,000 Pacific Islanders in the United States: 1980



\*The "All other Pacific Islanders" includes groups such as Tahitian, Marshallese, Trukese, and persons reported as "Pacific Islander."

Many Asians and Pacific Islanders are recent immigrants. In 1980, 6 percent of the total U.S. population was born in foreign countries, compared with 59 percent of the Asians and Pacific Islanders. About 62 percent of the Asians were born in foreign countries, whereas relatively few (12 percent) of the Pacific Islanders were foreign born. And of course, Hawaiians are native to this land.

### Where We Live

Fifty-eight percent of the Asian and Pacific Islander population lived in the West in 1980, compared with 19 percent of the total population. Among the six largest Asian groups—Chinese, Japanese, Filipino, Asian Indian, Korean, and Vietnamese—the heaviest population concentrations were in the West for each group with the exception of the Asian Indian population who resided primarily in the Northeast. About 80 percent of the Japanese population lived in the West, compared with 19 percent of Asian Indians. The overwhelming majority of Pacific Islanders lived in the West.

Approximately 70 percent of Asians and Pacific Islanders lived in just five States — California, Hawaii, New York, Illinois, and Texas. The Asian population was concentrated in California, New York, and Hawaii but the concentration varied by detailed Asian groups. The overwhelming majority of Pacific Islanders resided in the States of Hawaii and California.

About 90 percent of the Asian and Pacific Islander population lived in urban areas in 1980, about equally divided between central cities and their suburbs. Over 45 percent lived in just five metropolitan areas in 1980—Los Angeles-Long Beach, San Francisco-Oakland, New York, Chicago, and Honolulu.

Figure 3. Percent Born in Foreign Countries: 1980

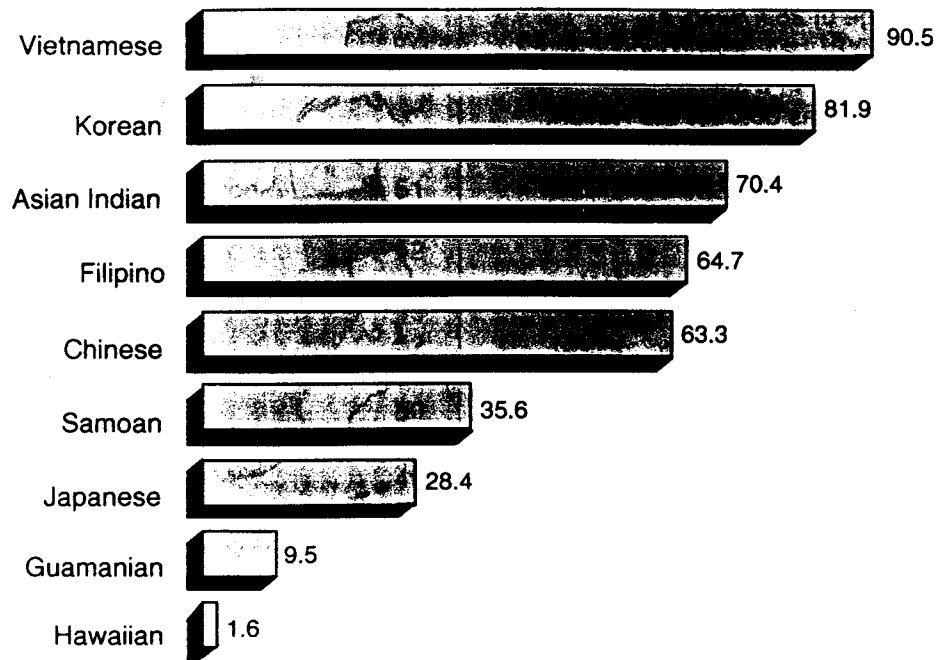


Table 1. Percent in Largest Percent of Asian and Pacific Islander Populations: 1980

	Total	California	Hawaii	New York	Illinois	Texas
Total U.S. population	100.0	10.4	0.4	7.8	5.0	6.3
Asians and Pacific Islanders	100.0	35.2	15.9	8.9	4.6	3.6
Chinese	100.0	40.1	6.9	18.1	3.6	3.3
Filipino	100.0	45.8	16.9	4.6	5.7	2.0
Japanese	100.0	37.5	33.5	3.5	2.6	1.7
Asian Indian	100.0	15.4	0.2	17.5	9.7	6.0
Korean	100.0	28.7	4.9	9.3	6.8	3.9
Vietnamese	100.0	34.8	1.4	2.4	2.6	11.3
Hawaiian	100.0	14.1	68.6	1.1	0.6	1.4
Samoan	100.0	45.8	36.3	0.4	0.2	1.0
Guamanian	100.0	55.4	5.3	3.3	1.2	4.0

## We are Young

Asians and Pacific Islanders had a median age of 28.4 years in 1980—that is, half were younger and half older than that figure. The median age was 30.0 for the Nation. Only 6 percent were 65 years and older compared with 11 percent for the total population.

In 1980, Japanese had the oldest median age of 33.5 years, partly because they were among the earliest immigrants. The Vietnamese, with their large proportion of recent immigrants and higher birth rates than most other groups, were the youngest Asians with a median age of 21.5 years. Pacific Islanders also had relatively young populations; Samoans were the youngest, with a median age of 19.2 years.

Fifty-one percent of the U.S. population was female as of the 1980 census. Among Asians, Koreans had the highest percentage of females at 58 percent and Vietnamese the lowest at 48 percent. For Pacific Islanders, Hawaiians had the highest percent of females at 51 percent while Guamanians and Samoans had 49 percent each.

Figure 4. Number of Asian and Pacific Islander Persons by State: 1980

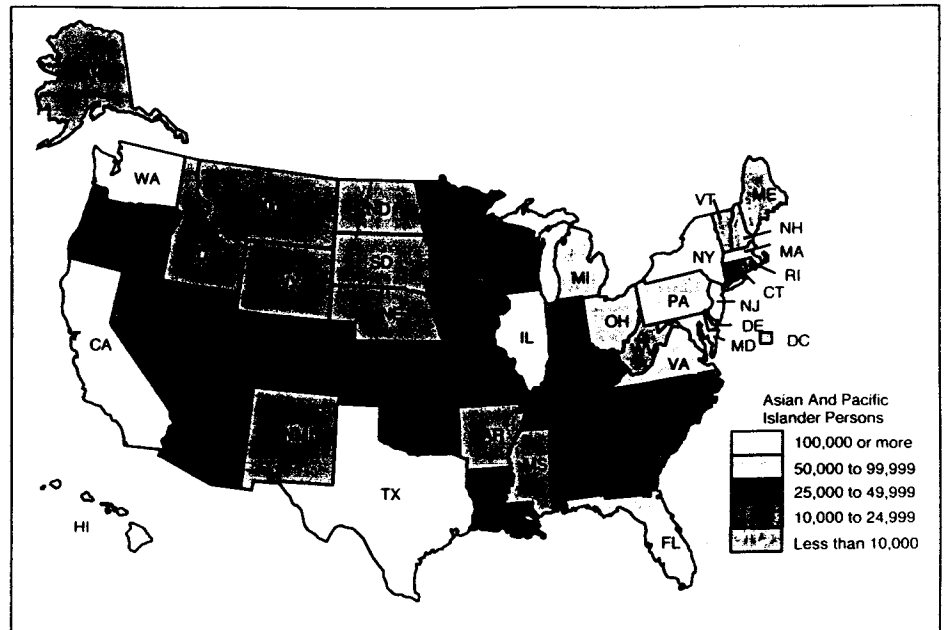


Figure 5. Median Age: 1980

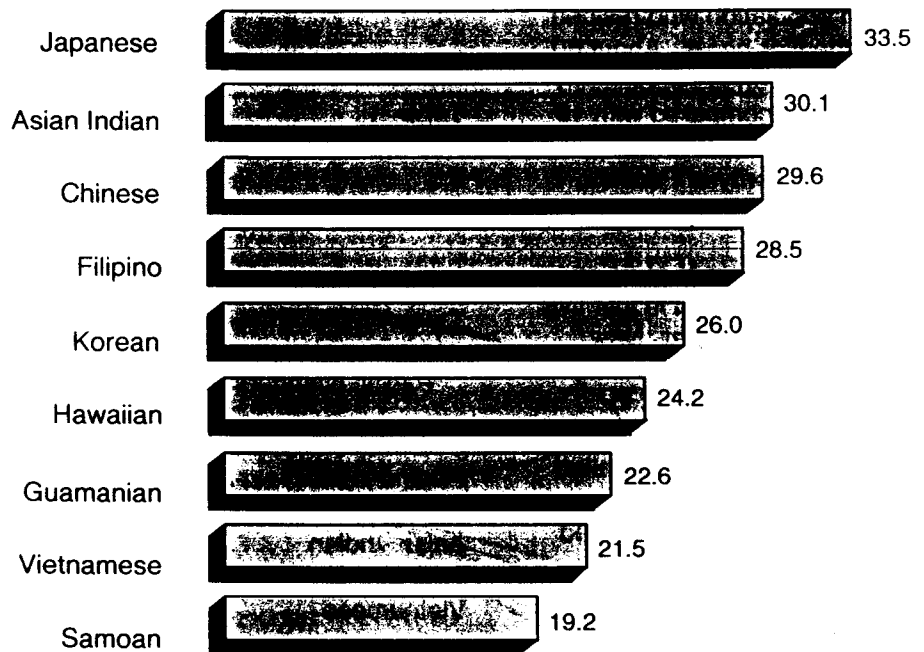


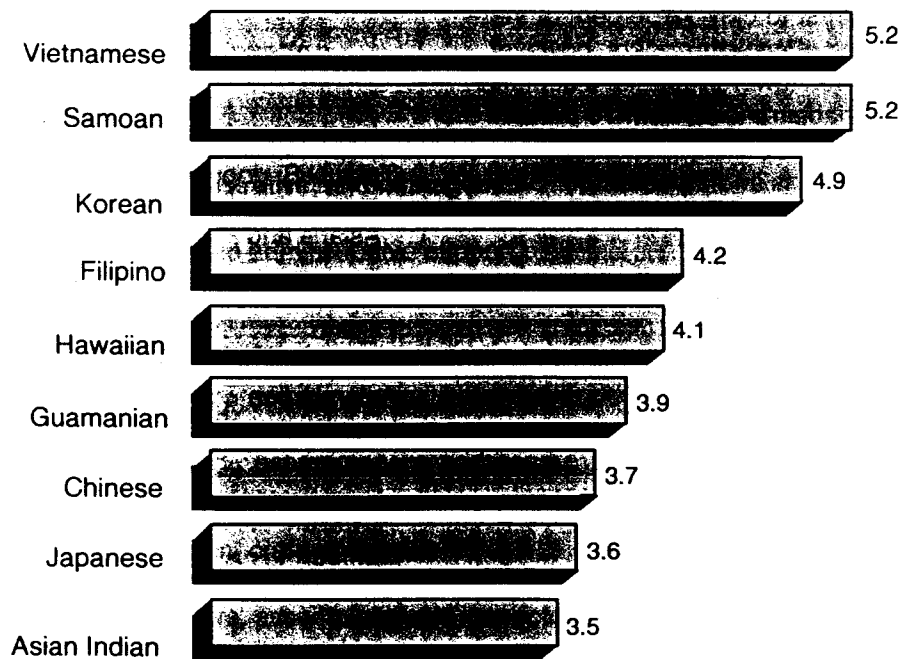
Table 2.

	Females	65 years and over	Married-couple families	Under 18, living with both parents
Total U.S. population .....	51	11	83	77
Asians and Pacific Islanders .	52	6	84	85
Chinese .....	49	7	87	88
Filipino .....	52	7	84	85
Japanese .....	54	7	84	87
Asian Indian .....	50	8	91	93
Korean .....	58	2	86	89
Vietnamese .....	48	2	73	74
Hawaiian .....	51	6	73	69
Samoan .....	49	2	78	69
Guamanian .....	49	2	80	75

The average family size for Asian and Pacific Islander families was 3.8 persons. This was larger than the average U.S. family at 3.3 persons. Asian and Pacific Islander families were larger partly because a higher percentage of their children under age 18 lived with both parents, compared with the general population--85 percent versus 77 percent. Also, more elders were part of Asian and Pacific Islander family households. For example, among Asians and Pacific Islanders aged 60 and over, 79 percent lived in families, compared with 69 percent nationally.

The proportion of Asian and Pacific Islander families maintained by a husband and wife was 84 percent, about the same as the national figure of 83 percent. Among Asians, the proportion varied from 91 percent of Asian Indian families to 73 percent for Vietnamese families. For Pacific Islanders, the range was from 80 percent for Guamanians and 78 percent for Samoans to 73 percent for Hawaiians.

Figure 6. Persons Per Family: 1980



Education is highly valued in Asian and Pacific Islander communities. In 1980, 75 percent of all Asians and Pacific Islanders aged 25 years and over were at least high school graduates; the national rate was 66 percent. Among Asian groups, the proportions who completed high school varied from 82 percent for Japanese to 62 percent for Vietnamese. Among Pacific Islanders, the range was from 68 percent for Hawaiians and Guamanians to 61 percent for Samoans.

Seventy-nine percent of Asian and Pacific Islander men were high school graduates, compared with 71 percent of women. All groups except Filipinos had larger proportions of their men than their women graduating from high school.

In addition, 33 percent of Asians and Pacific Islanders were college graduates, compared with 16 percent of the total population. About half of Asian Indians had completed college in contrast to only 13 percent of Vietnamese. Pacific Islanders, however, had much lower proportions completing college, ranging from 10 percent for Hawaiians to 8 percent for Guamanians and 7 percent for Samoans.

Figure 7. High School Graduates by Ethnicity

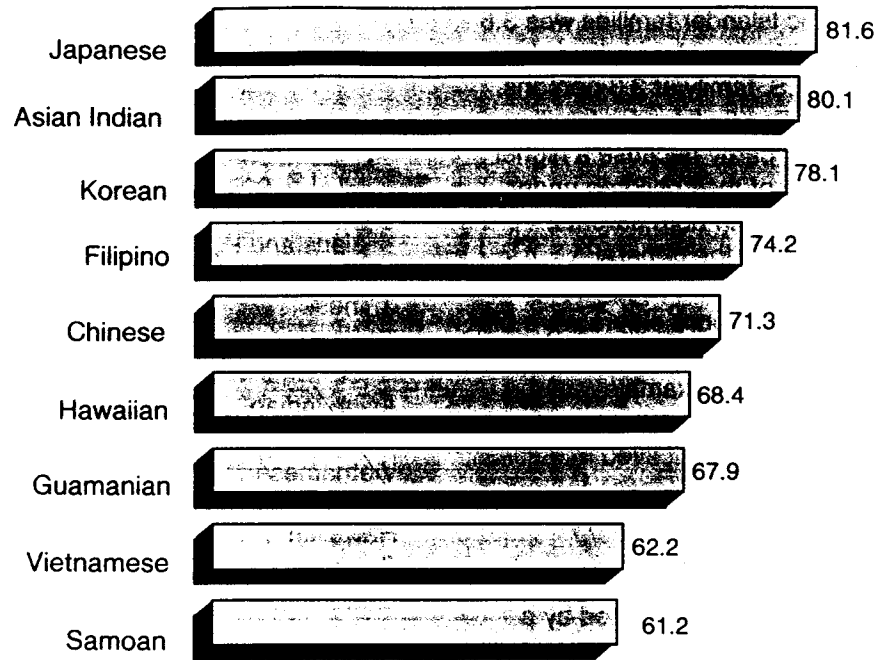


Table 3. High School and College Graduates by Ethnicity, 1980

	High School		College	
	Men	Women	Men	Women
Total U.S. population	67	66	20	13
Asians and Pacific Islanders	79	71	40	27
Chinese	75	67	44	30
Filipino	73	75	32	41
Japanese	84	80	35	20
Asian Indian	89	72	68	36
Korean	90	71	52	22
Vietnamese	71	54	18	8
Hawaiian	70	67	11	8
Samoan	66	57	10	5
Guamanian	71	65	9	7

Figure 8. Percent in Labor Force

The 1980 census showed that Asians and Pacific Islanders participated in the labor force in larger proportions than the total population, 67 percent as compared with 62 percent. Only Vietnamese and Samoans were below the national average.

Fifty-eight percent of Asian and Pacific Islander women were in the labor force, compared with about half of all women in the United States. More than 2 out of 3 Filipino women were in the labor force, the highest of any of the groups.

Asians and Pacific Islanders were more likely to be in a managerial and professional specialty and service occupations than the total population, but less likely to be in precision production or operators, fabricators, and laborers.

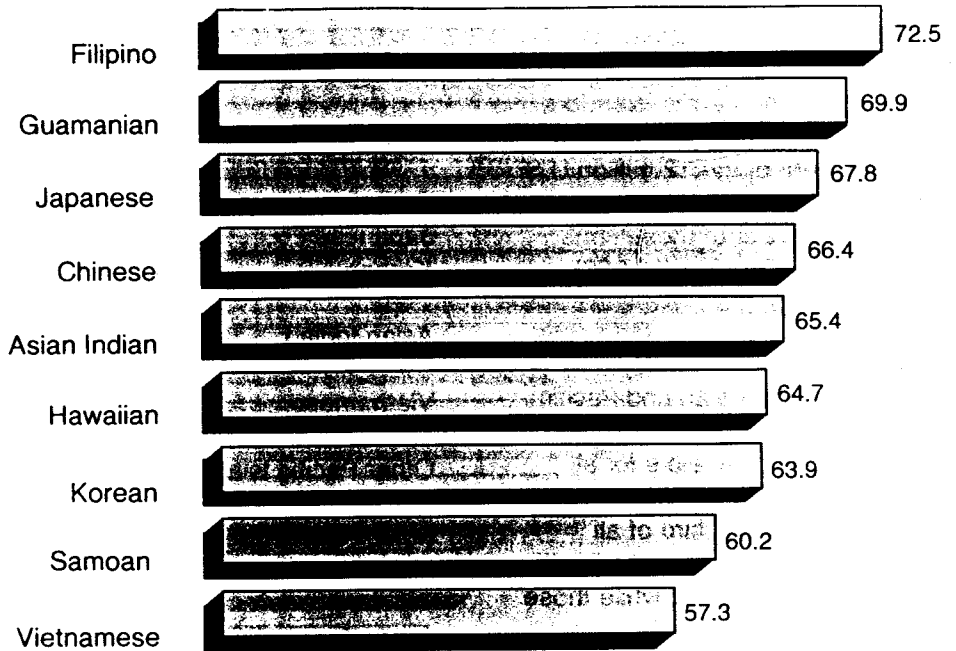


Table 4. Percent Employed by Occupational Group

Occupation	Asians and Pacific Islanders	Total Population
Total	100	100
Managerial and professional specialty	29	23
Executive, administrative, and managerial	11	10
Professional specialty	18	12
Technical, sales, and administrative support	31	30
Technicians and related support	6	3
Sales	8	10
Administrative support, including clerical	17	17
Service	16	13
Private household	1	1
Protective service	1	2
Other service	14	11
Farming, forestry, and fishing	2	3
Precision production, craft, and repair	8	13
Operators, fabricators, and laborers	14	18
Machine operators, assemblers, and inspectors	9	9
Transportation and material moving	2	4
Handlers, equipment cleaners, helpers, and laborers	3	4



Table 5.

	Businesses		Gross Receipts	
	Number	Percent	Dollars (In millions)	Percent
Asians and Pacific Islanders	204,211	100	\$15,731	100
Chinese	52,839	26	\$6,075	39
Japanese	49,039	24	\$2,731	17
Korean	31,769	16	\$2,677	17
Filipino	26,464	13	\$747	5
Asian Indian	25,539	13	\$1,661	11
Other Asian	8,977	4	\$1,105	7
Vietnamese	5,234	3	\$215	1
Hawaiian	3,305	2	\$86	1
Other Pacific Islander	1,045	1	\$434	3

Note: Percent distribution may not add to total because of rounding.

According to the 1982 Survey of Minority-Owned Business Enterprises, Asians and Pacific Islanders owned more than 200,000 firms or about 2 percent of the 12 million U.S. firms (excluding large corporations). The largest number of these firms were owned by Chinese (52,839), Japanese (49,039), and Koreans (31,769).

Gross receipts for Asian and Pacific Islander firms totaled \$16 billion or about 2 percent of receipts for all firms. Businesses owned by Chinese accounted for over a third of all gross receipts from Asian and Pacific Islander firms (\$6 billion), while those owned by Japanese and Koreans totaled \$3 billion each.

The vast majority of Asian and Pacific Islander companies were concentrated in service and retail trade industries, such as health and personal services, eating and drinking places, and food stores.

Ninety-two percent of the companies owned by Asians and Pacific Islanders were operated as individual proprietorships, while 6 percent were partnerships, and 2 percent were corporations. The comparable proportions for all businesses were 84 percent, 11 percent, and 5 percent, respectively.

Figure 9.

