

# The Asian and Pacific Islander Population in the United States: March 2002

Issued May 2003

## Population Characteristics

P20-540

This report presents data on the demographic, social, and economic characteristics of the Asian and Pacific Islander population in the United States, based on the Annual Demographic Supplement to the March 2002 Current Population Survey (CPS).<sup>1</sup> The topics covered are geographic distribution; age distribution; marital status; family type and family size; educational attainment; labor force participation, unemployment, and occupation; family income; and poverty status.<sup>2</sup> Data for these characteristics are compared with those of the non-Hispanic White population.<sup>3</sup>

### GEOGRAPHIC DISTRIBUTION

#### One-half of Asians and Pacific Islanders live in the West.<sup>4</sup>

In March 2002, 12.5 million Asians and Pacific Islanders lived in the United States, representing 4.4 percent of the civilian noninstitutionalized population. While one-half lived in the West (51 percent), 19 percent lived in the South, 12 percent

“Asian” refers to those having origins in any of the original peoples of the Far East, Southeast Asia, or the Indian subcontinent including, for example, Cambodia, China, India, Japan, Korea, Malaysia, Pakistan, the Philippine Islands, Thailand, and Vietnam. “Pacific Islander” refers to those having origins in any of the original peoples of Hawaii, Guam, Samoa, or other Pacific Islands. The Asian and Pacific Islander population is not a homogeneous group; rather, it comprises many groups who differ in language, culture, and length of residence in the United States. Some of the Asian groups, such as the Chinese and Japanese, have been in the United States for several generations. Others, such as the Hmong, Vietnamese, Laotians, and Cambodians, are comparatively recent immigrants. Relatively few of the Pacific Islanders are foreign born.

<sup>1</sup> The data in this report are from the Annual Demographic Supplement to the March 2002 Current Population Survey. The population represented (the population universe) is the civilian noninstitutionalized population of the United States. Members of the Armed Forces living off base or with their families on post are included if there is at least one civilian adult living in the household.

<sup>2</sup> Data on income and poverty in this report refer to the calendar year before the survey. For example, income information collected in March 2002 refers to calendar year 2001.

<sup>3</sup> Because Hispanics or Latinos may be of any race, data in this report for Asians and Pacific Islanders overlap slightly with data for Hispanics. Data for Asians and Pacific Islanders include Hispanic Asians and Pacific Islanders, who made up

approximately 2.4 percent of the Asian and Pacific Islander population.

<sup>4</sup> The four regions of the United States for which data are presented in this report are as follows: **Northeast:** Connecticut, Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, and Vermont; **Midwest:** Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, North Dakota, Ohio, South Dakota, and Wisconsin; **South:** Alabama, Arkansas, Delaware, District of Columbia, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maryland, Mississippi, North Carolina, Oklahoma, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, Virginia, and West Virginia; **West:** Alaska, Arizona, California, Colorado, Hawaii, Idaho, Montana, Nevada, New Mexico, Oregon, Utah, Washington, and Wyoming.

## Current Population Reports

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in the Midwest, and 19 percent in the Northeast (see Figure 1).<sup>5,6</sup> In comparison, 194.8 million (69 percent) of the United States population was non-Hispanic White and 19 percent lived in the West, 33 percent in the South, 27 percent in the Midwest, and 21 percent in the Northeast.

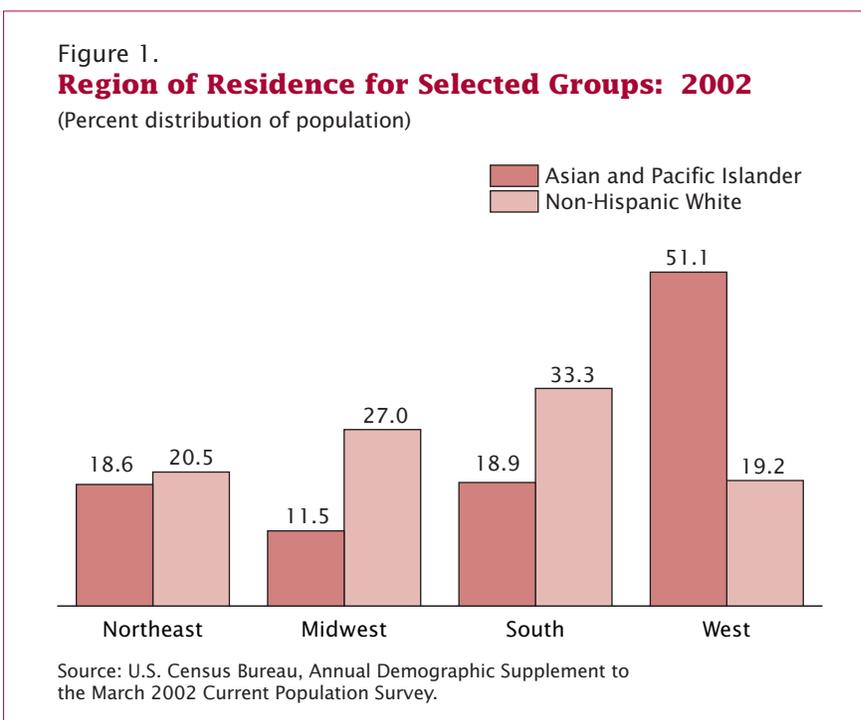
**Nearly all Asians and Pacific Islanders live in metropolitan areas.<sup>7</sup>**

Ninety-five percent of all Asians and Pacific Islanders lived in metropolitan areas, a much greater proportion than of non-Hispanic Whites (78 percent). Of the two populations, Asians and Pacific Islanders were twice as likely to live in central cities located in metropolitan areas (41 percent compared with 21 percent). However, among those living in metropolitan areas but not in central cities, Asians and Pacific Islanders were only 3 percentage points below non-Hispanic Whites (54 percent and 57 percent, respectively).

<sup>5</sup> The estimates in this report are based on responses from a sample of the population. As with all surveys, estimates may vary from the actual values because of sampling variation or other factors. All comparisons made in this report have undergone statistical testing and are significant at the 90-percent confidence level unless otherwise noted.

<sup>6</sup> The percentage of Asians and Pacific Islanders living in the South was not statistically different from the percentage living in the Northeast.

<sup>7</sup> The general concept of a metropolitan area (MA) is a large population nucleus with adjacent communities that have a high degree of economic and social integration with that nucleus. Some MAs are defined around two or more nuclei. The Office of Management and Budget (OMB), with technical assistance from the U.S. Census Bureau, published standards to define MAs for federal agencies. See the Office of Management and Budget, *Federal Register Notice*, Vol. 55, No. 62, March 30, 1990 and *OMB Bulletin*, No. 93-177, issued June 1993.



**AGE DISTRIBUTION**

**The Asian and Pacific Islander population is young.**

In 2002, Asians and Pacific Islanders were younger than non-Hispanic Whites. Twenty-six percent of Asians and Pacific Islanders were under 18, compared with 23 percent of non-Hispanic Whites; while 7 percent of Asians and Pacific Islanders were 65 and over, compared with 14 percent of non-Hispanic Whites.

**MARITAL STATUS**

**The proportion of Asians and Pacific Islanders who are divorced is one-half that for non-Hispanic Whites.**

Of the 9.8 million Asians and Pacific Islanders and 158.3 million non-Hispanic Whites 15 and older in 2002, 57 percent of each population was married,<sup>8</sup> but the

percentage of divorced Asians and Pacific Islanders was one-half that of non-Hispanic Whites (5 percent compared with 10 percent, respectively). Asians and Pacific Islanders were less likely than non-Hispanic Whites to be widowed (4 percent compared with 7 percent), but were more likely to have never married (33 percent compared to 25 percent, respectively).<sup>9</sup>

Marital status varied by sex for both the Asian and Pacific Islander and non-Hispanic White populations (see Table 1). Asian and Pacific Islander women were more likely than their male counterparts to be married, widowed, separated, or divorced. However, in the non-Hispanic White population, men were more likely to be married, but women were more likely to be divorced, separated, or widowed.

<sup>9</sup> No statistically significant difference existed between the proportions of Asians and Pacific Islanders who are divorced and widowed.

<sup>8</sup> Married includes those with a spouse present or a spouse absent.

Table 1.  
**Marital Status by Sex for Selected Groups: 2002**

(Percent distribution of population)

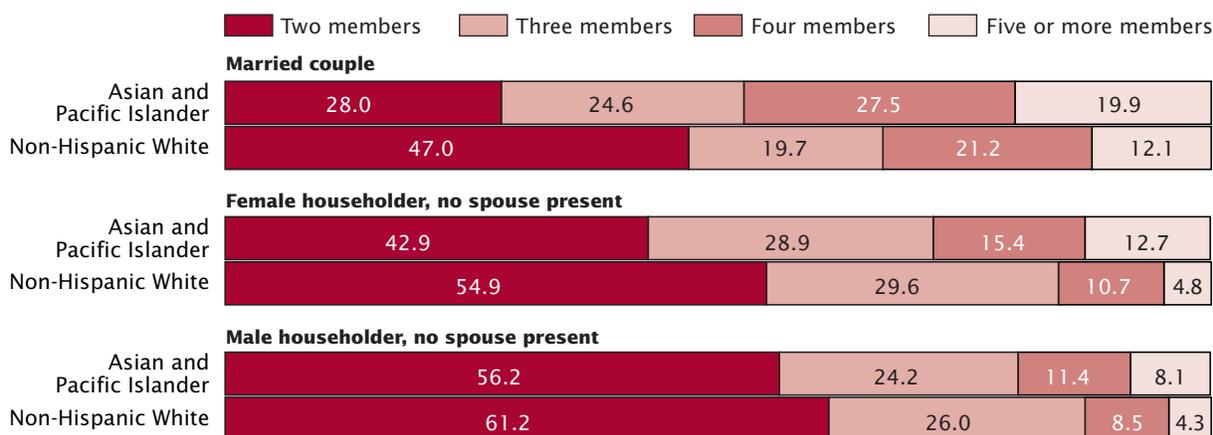
Marital status	Asian and Pacific Islander						Non-Hispanic White					
	Total	90-percent confidence interval (+/-)	Male	90-percent confidence interval (+/-)	Female	90-percent confidence interval (+/-)	Total	90-percent confidence interval (+/-)	Male	90-percent confidence interval (+/-)	Female	90-percent confidence interval (+/-)
Total . . . . .	100.0	-	100.0	-	100.0	-	100.0	-	100.0	-	100.0	-
Married, spouse present . . . . .	53.3	0.016	50.9	0.023	55.5	0.022	56.3	0.003	58.5	0.005	54.3	0.005
Married, spouse absent . . . . .	3.2	0.006	3.8	0.009	2.8	0.007	0.8	0.001	0.8	0.001	0.8	0.001
Widowed . . . . .	4.2	0.006	1.5	0.006	6.8	0.011	6.9	0.002	2.7	0.002	10.9	0.003
Divorced . . . . .	5.0	0.007	3.6	0.009	6.2	0.011	10.0	0.002	8.8	0.003	11.1	0.003
Separated . . . . .	1.4	0.004	0.9	0.004	1.8	0.006	1.5	0.001	1.3	0.001	1.6	0.001
Never married . . . . .	32.9	0.015	39.3	0.023	26.9	0.020	24.5	0.003	28.0	0.004	21.3	0.004

- Represents zero.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Annual Demographic Supplement to the March 2002 Current Population Survey.

Figure 2.  
**Family Type by Size for Selected Groups: 2002\***

(Percent distribution of families)



\*The race of the householder was used to determine the race of the family. Data do not include families in group quarters.  
 Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Annual Demographic Supplement to the March 2002 Current Population Survey.

## FAMILY TYPE<sup>10</sup> AND FAMILY SIZE

### The majority of Asian and Pacific Islander households are family households.

Asian and Pacific Islander households were more likely to be family

households than nonfamily households (73 percent compared with 27 percent) in 2002. The same was true for the non-Hispanic White population, but to a lesser degree (66 percent compared with 34 percent).

Family size varied by family type. Asian and Pacific Islander families were larger than their non-Hispanic White counterparts: 18 percent of

Asian and Pacific Islander families had five or more members, compared with 11 percent of non-Hispanic White families. At the same time, 30 percent of Asians and Pacific Islanders lived in two-member families, compared with 47 percent of non-Hispanic Whites. Twenty percent of Asian and Pacific Islander married-couple families consisted of five or more members, while 13 percent of families

<sup>10</sup> The race of householder was used to determine the race of the family. Data do not include families in group quarters.

maintained by women with no spouse present, and 8 percent of Asian and Pacific Islander families maintained by men with no spouse present were that large (see Figure 2). In contrast, 12 percent of non-Hispanic White married-couple families, 5 percent of its families maintained by women with no spouse present, and 4 percent of the group's families maintained by men with no spouse present had five or more members.<sup>11</sup>

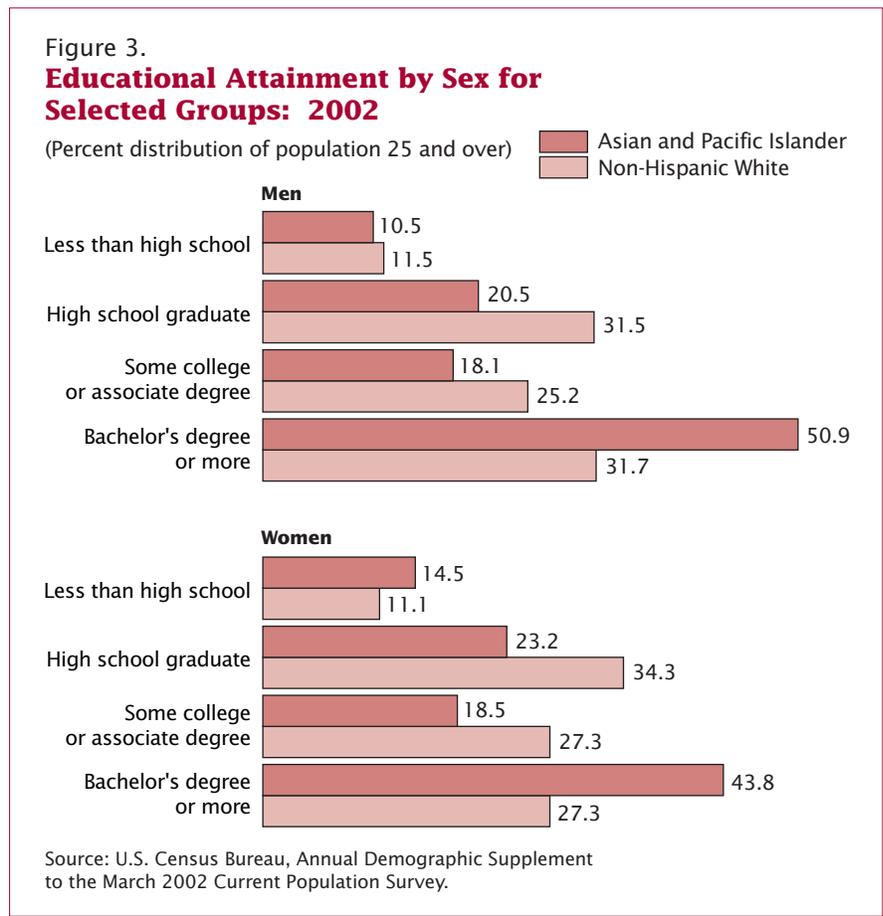
## EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT

**Asians and Pacific Islanders are more likely than non-Hispanic Whites to have earned at least a college degree, but are also more likely to have less than a ninth-grade education.**

In 2002, 87 percent of the 7.9 million Asians and Pacific Islanders and 89 percent of the 133.4 million non-Hispanic Whites aged 25 and older had earned at least a high school diploma.

A substantial difference existed in the levels of higher education attained by Asian and Pacific Islander and non-Hispanic White men and women, specifically among those earning at least a bachelor's degree (see Figure 3). Asian and Pacific Islander men were much more likely than non-Hispanic White men to have earned at least a bachelor's degree (51 percent compared with 32 percent, a difference of 19 percentage points). Similarly, Asian and Pacific Islander women were more likely than non-Hispanic White women to have earned at least a bachelor's

<sup>11</sup> No statistically significant difference existed between the proportions of non-Hispanic Whites families maintained by men or women with no spouse present with five or more members.



degree, (44 percent compared with 27 percent).

A substantial difference existed at lower educational levels: Asians and Pacific Islanders were almost twice as likely to have less than a ninth-grade education (7 percent) than non-Hispanic Whites (4 percent). Although the percentages for men were statistically different, the numerical values were relatively close—5 percent compared with 4 percent. In contrast, the figures for women were very different: 10 percent of Asian and Pacific Islander women, compared with 4 percent of non-Hispanic White women.<sup>12</sup>

<sup>12</sup> There is a statistically significant difference between the unrounded proportions of non-Hispanic White men and women with less than a ninth-grade education.

## LABOR FORCE PARTICIPATION, UNEMPLOYMENT, AND OCCUPATION

**Among Asians and Pacific Islanders, men are more likely than women to participate in the civilian labor force.<sup>13</sup>**

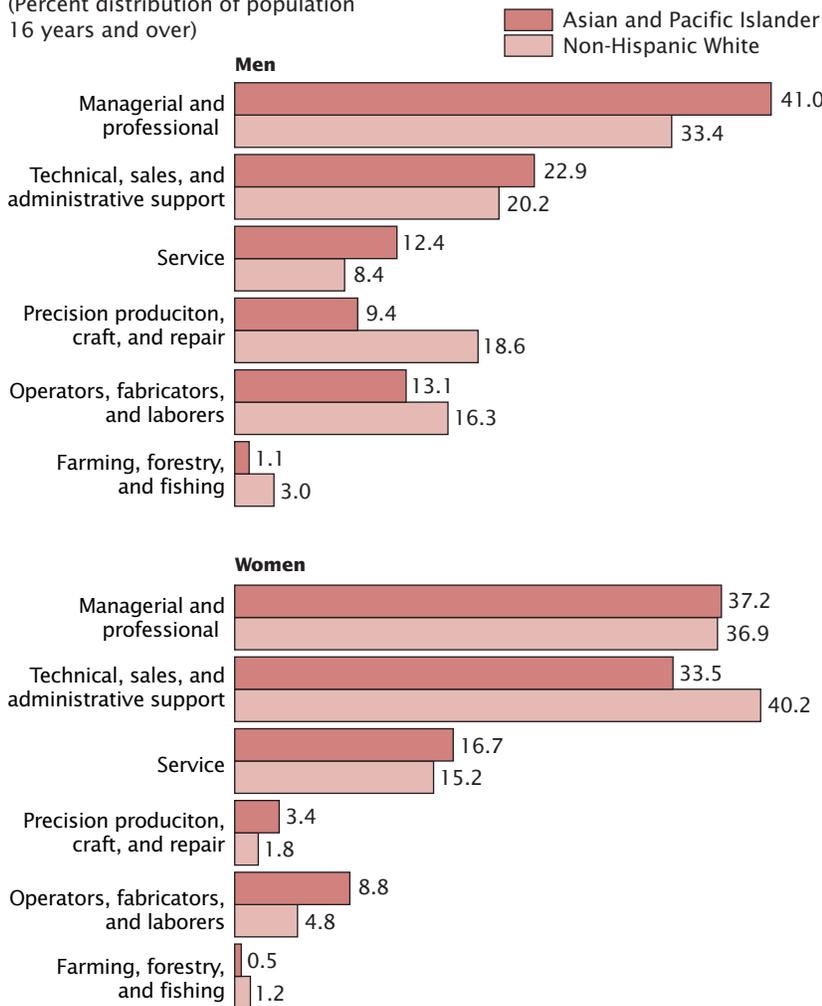
Similar proportions of Asians and Pacific Islanders and non-Hispanic Whites aged 16 and over were in the labor force (67 percent and 66 percent, respectively) in March 2002. In both populations, men

<sup>13</sup> Civilian labor force data in this report reflect characteristics of the civilian noninstitutionalized population aged 16 and older for March 2002 and are not adjusted for seasonal changes. Data released by the Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, may not agree entirely with data shown in this report because they are seasonally adjusted.

Figure 4.

**Occupation Distribution of the Employed Civilian Labor Force by Sex for Selected Groups: 2002**

(Percent distribution of population 16 years and over)



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Annual Demographic Supplement to the March 2002 Current Population Survey.

had higher labor force participation rates: 75 percent of men, compared with 59 percent of women for Asians and Pacific Islanders, and 73 percent of men, compared with 60 percent of women for non-Hispanic Whites.<sup>14</sup>

<sup>14</sup> There is no statistical difference in the proportions of Asian and Pacific Islander and non-Hispanic White men in the civilian labor force. Similarly, the percentages of women in these populations in the civilian labor force do not differ significantly.

**Similar proportions of Asians and Pacific Islanders and non-Hispanic Whites were unemployed.**

Of the 6.5 million Asians and Pacific Islanders in the civilian labor force, 6 percent were unemployed, compared with 5 percent of the 103 million non-Hispanic Whites, a difference that is not statistically significant. However, the difference between the proportions of non-Hispanic White unemployed men and women is significant:

6 percent and 4 percent, respectively. Among Asians and Pacific Islanders, no statistically significant difference existed between the 6 percent of men and 5 percent of women who were unemployed.<sup>15</sup>

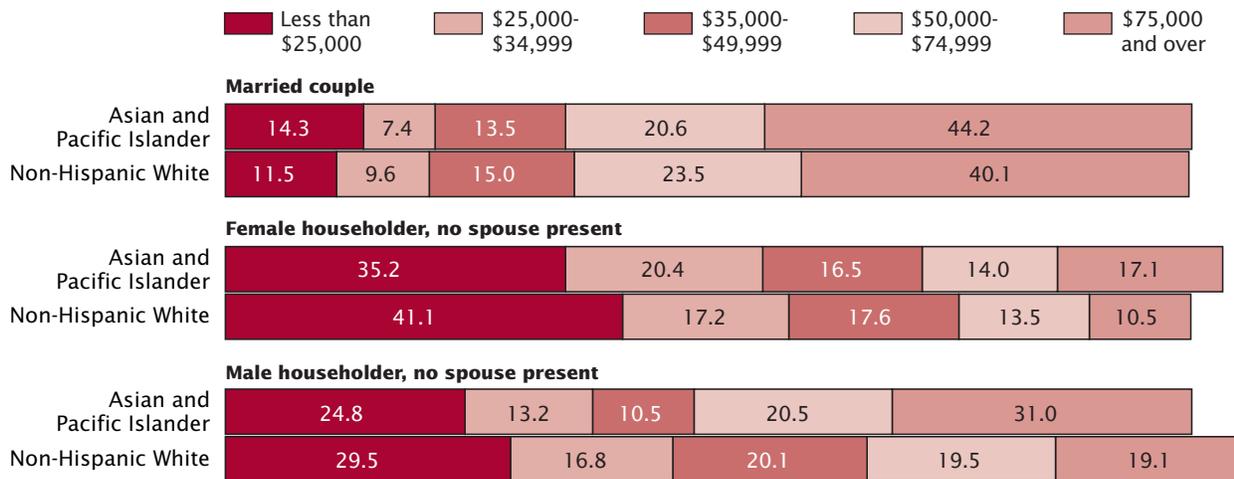
**Asians and Pacific Islanders are concentrated in managerial and professional specialty occupations.<sup>16</sup>**

In 2002, 6.1 million Asians and Pacific Islanders and 97.8 million non-Hispanic Whites aged 16 and older were employed. A higher proportion of Asians and Pacific Islanders than of non-Hispanic Whites were concentrated in managerial and professional specialty occupations. Among both groups, a large disparity existed between the proportions of men and women in technical, sales, and administrative support jobs; an 11 percentage point difference separated Asian and Pacific Islander men and women (23 percent and 34 percent, respectively), and a 20 percentage point difference separated non-Hispanic White men and women (20 percent and 40 percent, respectively). For those employed within the precision production, craft, and repair occupations, a smaller disparity existed between the sexes of the Asian and Pacific Islander population than between the sexes of the non-Hispanic White population. Nine percent of Asian and Pacific Islander men and 3 percent of the women (a 6 percentage point difference), and 19 percent of

<sup>15</sup> There is no statistically significant difference in the 6 percent of Asian and Pacific Islander and non-Hispanic White men unemployed. Also, the percentages of women unemployed in these populations do not differ significantly.

<sup>16</sup> They include occupations such as managers, executives, administrators, physicians, nurses, lawyers, architects, engineers, scientists, and teachers. These data are based on the respondent's current occupation.

Figure 5.  
**Family Type by Family Income for Selected Groups: 2001\***  
 (Percent distribution of families)



\*The race of the householder was used to determine the race of the family. Data do not include families in group quarters.  
 Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Annual Demographic Supplement to the March 2002 Current Population Survey.

non-Hispanic White men and 2 percent of women (a 17 percentage point difference) held jobs in this category (see Figure 4).

### FAMILY INCOME<sup>17</sup>

**While Asian and Pacific Islander families are more likely than non-Hispanic White families to have incomes of \$75,000 or more, they are also more likely to have incomes less than \$25,000.**

In 2001, 40 percent of all Asian and Pacific Islander families had incomes of \$75,000 or more, compared with 35 percent of non-Hispanic White families. However, 17 percent of Asian and Pacific Islander families had incomes of less than \$25,000, compared with 15 percent of non-Hispanic White families. Among married-couple families, 44 percent of Asians and Pacific Islanders had incomes of

\$75,000 or more, about 4 percentage points higher than their non-Hispanic White counterparts (see Figure 5).

Among both groups, families maintained by men with no spouse present had higher incomes than families maintained by women with no spouse present. For families maintained by men with no spouse present, 31 percent of Asian and Pacific Islander families of this type had incomes of \$75,000 or more, compared with 19 percent of non-Hispanic White families (a 12 percentage point difference). Among families maintained by women with no spouse present, 17 percent of Asian and Pacific Islander and 11 percent of non-Hispanic White families had incomes of \$75,000 or more.<sup>18</sup>

<sup>18</sup> The 12 percentage point difference in the Asian and Pacific Islander and non-Hispanic White families maintained by men with incomes of \$75,000 or more and the 6 percentage point difference in families maintained by women in these populations are not statistically different.

A large proportion of families in both groups that were maintained by women with no spouse present had incomes below \$25,000: 32 percent of Asian and Pacific Islander families, compared with 41 percent non-Hispanic White families. However, in both populations, 25 percent of families maintained by men with no spouse present had incomes below \$25,000.

### POVERTY STATUS<sup>19</sup>

**Asians and Pacific Islanders are more likely to live in poverty than non-Hispanic Whites.**

In 2001, 1.3 million Asians and Pacific Islanders (10 percent) and 15.3 million non-Hispanic Whites (8 percent) lived below the poverty

<sup>19</sup> In 2001, the poverty threshold for a family of four was \$18,267. Poverty statistics exclude unrelated individuals under 15. For more information, see Bernadette Proctor and Joseph Dalaker, U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Report, Series P60-219, *Poverty in the United States: March 2001*, U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington, DC. Poverty data refer to calendar year 2001.

Table 2.  
**Poverty Status by Age for Selected Groups: 2001**

(Percent distribution of population)

Selected age groups	Asian and Pacific Islander						Non-Hispanic White					
	Total	90-percent confidence interval (+/-)	Male	90-percent confidence interval (+/-)	Female	90-percent confidence interval (+/-)	Total	90-percent confidence interval (+/-)	Male	90-percent confidence interval (+/-)	Female	90-percent confidence interval (+/-)
Total . . . . .	10.2	0.005	10.1	0.007	10.4	0.007	7.8	0.001	6.9	0.002	8.8	0.002
Under 18 years . . . . .	11.5	0.010	11.5	0.014	11.4	0.015	9.5	0.003	9.6	0.004	9.5	0.004
18 to 64 years . . . . .	9.7	0.006	9.1	0.008	10.4	0.009	7.2	0.001	6.2	0.002	8.2	0.002
65 years and over . . . . .	10.2	0.019	13.8	0.032	7.4	0.021	8.1	0.003	5.2	0.004	10.2	0.004

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Annual Demographic Supplement to the March 2002 Current Population Survey.

Table 3.  
**Poverty Status of Families by Type for Selected Groups: 2001\***

(Percent distribution of population)

Family type	Asian and Pacific Islander	90-percent confidence interval (+/-)	Non-Hispanic White	90-percent confidence interval (+/-)
Total . . . . .	100.0	-	100.0	-
Married-couple . . . . .	6.6	0.006	3.3	0.002
Male householder, no spouse present . . . . .	9.1	0.039	10.3	0.011
Female householder, no spouse present . . . . .	14.6	0.032	19.0	0.009

-Represents zero.

\*The race of the householder was used to determine the race of the family. Data do not include families in group quarters.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Annual Demographic Supplement to the March 2002 Current Population Survey.

level. For each group, the highest proportions living in poverty were those younger than 18 years old (see Table 2).<sup>20</sup> There was no statistically significant difference in the proportion of Asian and Pacific Islander women and men living in poverty; however, non-Hispanic White women were more likely than their male counterparts to live in poverty.

Asian and Pacific Islander families maintained by women with no spouse present were more likely than both married-couple families and families maintained by men with no spouse present to live in poverty: 15 percent, 7 percent, and 9 percent, respectively (see Table 3).

<sup>20</sup> There is no statistical difference in the proportion of Asians and Pacific Islanders under 18 and those 65 and over living in poverty.

Similarly, non-Hispanic White families maintained by women with no spouse present were more likely than married-couple families and families maintained by men with no spouse present to live in poverty: 19 percent, 3 percent, and 10 percent, respectively.

### SOURCE OF DATA

The population represented (the population universe) in the Annual Demographic Supplement to the March 2002 Current Population Survey is the civilian noninstitutionalized population of the United States. Members of the Armed Forces living off post or with their families on post are included if there is at least one civilian adult living in the household. (Starting in 2001, the Annual Demographic Supplement includes some data

collected in February and April.) The institutionalized population, which is excluded from the population universe, is composed primarily of the population in correctional institutions and nursing homes (91 percent of the 4.1 million institutionalized population in Census 2000).

### ACCURACY OF THE ESTIMATES

Statistics from surveys are subject to sampling and nonsampling error. All comparisons presented in this report have taken sampling error into account and are significant at the 90-percent confidence level. This means the 90-percent confidence interval for the difference between the estimates being compared does not include zero. Nonsampling errors in surveys may

be attributed to a variety of sources, such as how the survey was designed, how respondents interpret questions, how able and willing respondents are to provide correct answers, and how accurately the answers are coded and classified. The Census Bureau employs quality control procedures throughout the production process including the overall design of surveys, the wording of questions, review of the work of interviewers and coders, and statistical review of reports to minimize these errors.

The Current Population Survey weighting procedure uses ratio estimation whereby sample estimates are adjusted to independent estimates of the national population by age, race, sex, and Hispanic origin. This weighting partially corrects for bias due to undercoverage, but biases may still be present when people who are missed by the survey differ from those interviewed in ways other than age, race, sex, and Hispanic origin. How this weighting procedure affects other variables in the survey is not precisely known. All of these considerations affect comparisons across different surveys or data sources.

For further information on statistical standards and the computation and use of standard errors, go to [www.bls.census.gov/cps/ads/2002/S&A\\_02.pdf](http://www.bls.census.gov/cps/ads/2002/S&A_02.pdf) or contact Thomas F. Moore of the Census Bureau's Demographic Statistical Methods Division on the Internet at [dsmd.source.and.accuracy@census.gov](mailto:dsmd.source.and.accuracy@census.gov).

### **MORE INFORMATION**

Detailed tables with social and economic characteristics of Asians and Pacific Islanders and other races, and their families and households are available on the Internet ([www.census.gov](http://www.census.gov)); search by clicking on "A" for "Asians and Pacific Islanders" under the "Subjects A-Z" heading on the Census Bureau's home page.

To receive a paper copy of these tables send your request for "PPL - 163, *The Asian and Pacific Islander Population in the United States: March 2002*" along with a check or money order in the amount of \$22.10 payable to Commerce-Census-88-00-9010, to the U.S. Department of Commerce, U.S. Census Bureau, P.O. Box 277943, Atlanta, GA 30384-7943, or call our Statistical Information Office on 301-763-2422. A copy of these tabulations will be made available to any existing CPR-P20 subscriber

without charge, provided that the request is made within 3 months of the issue date of this report by contacting our Statistical Information Office.

### **SUGGESTED CITATION**

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