The Working Lives and Struggles of Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders in California

Indian Americans

About the Survey
In November 2019, researchers from PRRI and AAPI Data released a landmark report on Asian American and Pacific Islander (AAPI) workers in California. The survey of 2,684 AAPI California residents explored experiences and perspectives of workers, many of whom are struggling with poverty.

Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders are the fastest-growing racial groups (and working-age population) in California and the nation. Between 2010 and 2017, most new immigrants (56%) to California came from Asia.

As with other racial and ethnic groups, the research tells the story of “two Californias” — one where some AAPI workers are financially stable and another in which AAPI workers report struggle significantly. This brief highlights key findings relevant to Indian American workers in California from the full report.

AAPI California Workers Struggling with Poverty Within Each Region
In California, the highest proportion of Indian American adults reside in the Bay Area (49%) and the Central Valley (17%).

Key Findings
Nearly FOUR IN 10 AAPI workers in California are struggling with poverty.

AAPI Workers Struggling with Poverty

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Race/Native Hawaiian &amp; Pacific Islander</th>
<th>38%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hmong</td>
<td>69%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Native Hawaiian &amp; Pacific Islander</td>
<td>53%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vietnamese</td>
<td>49%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cambodian</td>
<td>41%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chinese</td>
<td>38%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Filipino</td>
<td>36%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Japanese</td>
<td>34%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indian</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Korean</td>
<td>29%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Snapshot of Indian Americans in California
From the Census Bureau’s American Community Survey:

- Are foreign-born: 87%
- Are naturalized citizens: 44%
- Have limited English proficiency: 24%
- Hold a college or post-graduate degree (age 18+): 69%
- Identify as Democrats*: 65%
- Identify as Republicans*: 26%
- Identify as Independents*: 5%

*From the PRRI/AAPI survey
Economic Hardships and Concerns

Share of Indian American workers in California who experienced hardships in the past 12 months:

- 54% helped parents or in-laws financially
- 27% put off seeing a doctor or buying medicine
- 24% were not able to pay a monthly bill
- 23% reduced meals or cut back on food to save money
- 23% had difficulty paying rent or mortgage

Share of Indian American workers in California who are:

- worried that they or someone in their family will be unable to afford housing 51%
- worried that they or someone in their family will lose health insurance 49%
- worried that they or someone in their family will be deported 19%

Hardships on the Job

Share of Indian American workers in California who said they or someone in their household experienced the following in the past 12 months:

- Experienced racial discrimination or bias at work 27%
- Required to work overtime without pay 28%
- Paid less than minimum wage 11%

Views on the American Dream and Economic Mobility Among Indian Americans in California

- 65% still believe in the American Dream (if you work hard, you’ll get ahead), compared to 62% of all AAPI Californians
- 72% of struggling Indian American workers in California believe in the American Dream
- 33% believe it is harder to achieve the American Dream here than in other states
- 39% would encourage young people to leave their community for better opportunities
- 55% agree that hard work is not a guarantee of success, compared to 55% of all AAPI Californians

Views on the Economy, Employers, and Policymakers

Share of Indian American workers in California believe that:

- The U.S. economy unfairly favors the wealthy 75%
- Public officials do not care what they think 64%
- Employers generally see them as replaceable 56%
- It is important to organize so that employers do not take advantage of them 76%

For more data and survey methodology, please see the full report, in English, at: irvine.org/learning/aapi

Funders and Acknowledgements

Nakatomi & Associates developed this brief based on research conducted by PRRI (www.PRRI.org) and AAPI Data (www.aapidata.com).

The James Irvine Foundation provided funding for the research and briefs.