

The Foreign Born From Asia: 2011

American Community Survey Briefs

By Thomas Gryn and Christine Gambino

Issued October 2012

ACSB/11-06

INTRODUCTION

During the last 50 years, the number of foreign born from Asia increased rapidly in the United States, from about 0.5 million in 1960 to 11.6 million in 2011.^{1,2,3} In 2011, the foreign born from Asia represented over one-fourth of the total foreign-born population in the nation. This brief discusses the size, place of birth, citizenship status, educational attainment, and geographic distribution of the foreign born from Asia in the United States. Data on the foreign-born population from Asia are presented at the national and state levels based on the 2011 American Community Survey (ACS).

FINDINGS

In 2011, there were 311.6 million people in the United States, including 40.4 million foreign born (13 percent of the total population). Over half (53 percent)

¹ This report refers to the foreign-born population born in Asia, not those who report their race as Asian.

² The term Asia includes countries in Eastern, South Central, South Eastern, and Western Asia. Eastern Asia includes China (including China, Hong Kong, Taiwan, Macau, and the Paracel Islands), Japan, Korea (including South Korea and North Korea), and Mongolia. South Central Asia includes Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Iran, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan. South Eastern Asia includes Brunei, Burma, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, Timor-Leste, and Vietnam. Western Asia includes Armenia, Azerbaijan, Bahrain, Cyprus, Georgia, Iraq, Israel, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Syria, Turkey, United Arab Emirates, and Yemen. Throughout the remainder of this report, the term Asia refers to all of these areas and also any responses classified as "Asia not elsewhere classified."

³ Gibson, Campbell and Kay Jung, 2006, "Historical Census Statistics on the Foreign-Born Population in the United States: 1850 to 2000," U.S. Census Bureau, Population Division Working Paper, Number 81, available on the Census Bureau's Web site at <www.census.gov/population/www/techpap.html>.

Defining Nativity Status: Who Is Foreign Born?

Nativity status refers to whether a person is native or foreign born. The native-born population includes anyone who was a U.S. citizen at birth. Respondents who were born in the United States, Puerto Rico, a U.S. Island Area (U.S. Virgin Islands, Guam, American Samoa, or the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands), or abroad of a U.S. citizen parent or parents, are defined as native born. The foreign-born population includes anyone who was not a U.S. citizen at birth, including those who have become U.S. citizens through naturalization.

of all foreign born were born in Latin America and the Caribbean (Table 1). Additionally, over one-fourth (29 percent) were born in Asia. The next largest world region-of-birth group, the foreign born from Europe, represented 12 percent of all foreign born—less than half the size of the foreign born from Asia. About 4 percent of the foreign born were born in Africa and 3 percent in other regions, including Oceania and Northern America.

The foreign-born population from Asia increased from 8.2 million in 2000 to 11.6 million in 2011. Of the 11.6 million foreign born from Asia, 34 percent were from South Eastern Asia, 32 percent from Eastern Asia, 26 percent from South Central Asia, and 8 percent from

Table 1.

Foreign-Born Population by Region of Birth: 2011(Numbers in thousands. Data based on sample. For information on confidentiality protection, sampling error, nonsampling error, and definitions, see www.census.gov/acs/www)

Region of birth	Number		Percent	
	Estimate	Margin of error (\pm) ¹	Estimate	Margin of error (\pm) ¹
Total	40,378	125	100.0	(X)
Africa	1,664	30	4.1	0.1
Asia ²	11,562	47	28.6	0.1
Eastern Asia	3,640	34	9.0	0.1
South Central Asia	3,010	35	7.5	0.1
South Eastern Asia	3,939	41	9.8	0.1
Western Asia	932	30	2.3	0.1
Europe	4,890	50	12.1	0.1
Latin America and the Caribbean	21,245	99	52.6	0.2
Other regions ³	1,016	20	2.5	—

— Rounds to zero.

(X) Not applicable.

¹ Data are based on a sample and are subject to sampling variability. A margin of error is a measure of an estimate's variability. The larger the margin of error is in relation to the size of the estimate, the less reliable the estimate. When added to and subtracted from the estimate, the margin of error forms the 90 percent confidence interval.

² Includes an estimated 41,000 persons whose region of birth was classified as "Asia not elsewhere classified" and are not included in the four Asian subregions.

³ "Other regions" includes Northern America, Oceania, and those born at sea.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2011 American Community Survey.

Table 2.

Foreign-Born Population From Asia by Country of Birth: 2011(Numbers in thousands. Data based on sample. For information on confidentiality protection, sampling error, nonsampling error, and definitions, see www.census.gov/acs/www)

Country of birth	Number		Percent	
	Estimate	Margin of error (\pm) ¹	Estimate	Margin of error (\pm) ¹
Total	11,562	47	100.0	(X)
Bangladesh	184	13	1.6	0.1
China ²	2,231	28	19.3	0.2
India	1,857	31	16.1	0.3
Iran	362	15	3.1	0.1
Japan	318	12	2.8	0.1
Korea ³	1,083	23	9.4	0.2
Pakistan	304	14	2.6	0.1
Philippines	1,814	35	15.7	0.3
Thailand	240	13	2.1	0.1
Vietnam	1,259	26	10.9	0.2
All other countries in Asia	1,910	34	16.5	0.3

(X) Not applicable.

¹ Data are based on a sample and are subject to sampling variability. A margin of error is a measure of an estimate's variability. The larger the margin of error is in relation to the size of the estimate, the less reliable the estimate. When added to and subtracted from the estimate, the margin of error forms the 90 percent confidence interval.

² China includes respondents who reported their country of birth as China, Hong Kong, Macau, Paracel Islands, or Taiwan.

³ Korea includes respondents who reported their country of birth as Korea, South Korea, or North Korea.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2011 American Community Survey.

Western Asia. There were five countries of birth with over 1 million people living in the United States: China, India, Korea, the Philippines, and Vietnam (Table 2). China accounted for 19 percent of the foreign born from Asia, while India and the Philippines each represented about 16 percent, Vietnam about 11 percent, and Korea 9 percent.

Four states had more than half a million foreign born from Asia: California (3.7 million), New York (1.2 million), Texas (778,000), and New Jersey (593,000) (Table 3). When combined, these four states represented over half (54 percent) of all foreign born from Asia. California alone represented almost one-third of the total foreign born from Asia.

Among states with foreign-born populations from Asia over 10,000, the proportions of foreign born from subregions of Asia differed widely. Half or more of the foreign born from Asia in Hawaii (66 percent), Nevada (61 percent), Louisiana (54 percent), and Minnesota (54 percent) were from South Eastern Asia (Table 3). The foreign born from South Central Asia represented 45 percent of the foreign born from Asia in Delaware, 43 percent in New Jersey, and 42 percent in Connecticut.⁴ In Michigan, 35 percent of Asian foreign born were from Western Asia. The foreign born from Eastern Asia accounted for 46 percent of the Asian foreign born in New York.

⁴ The percentages of foreign born from Asia who were from South Central Asia in Delaware, New Jersey, and Connecticut were not statistically different.

Table 3.

Percentage Distribution of the Foreign-Born Population From Asia by Region of Birth and State: 2011

(Numbers in thousands. Data based on sample. For information on confidentiality protection, sampling error, nonsampling error, and definitions, see www.census.gov/acs/www)

Area	Total ¹		Eastern Asia		South Central Asia		South Eastern Asia		Western Asia	
	Number	Margin of error (±) ²	Percent	Margin of error (±) ²	Percent	Margin of error (±) ²	Percent	Margin of error (±) ²	Percent	Margin of error (±) ²
United States . . .	11,562	47	31.5	0.3	26.0	0.3	34.1	0.3	8.1	0.2
Alabama	43	2	33.5	3.6	24.3	4.4	37.3	5.3	4.8	1.9
Alaska	27	2	27.5	5.9	4.0	1.9	66.5	6.2	1.9	2.0
Arizona	155	7	27.2	3.3	23.5	2.9	35.7	3.2	13.2	2.7
Arkansas	27	2	26.0	7.2	22.6	7.1	43.3	8.2	7.5	3.8
California	3,735	26	32.1	0.6	18.7	0.5	42.1	0.5	6.9	0.3
Colorado	107	5	35.3	3.2	21.6	3.0	35.3	3.5	7.7	2.2
Connecticut	112	4	27.3	2.9	42.1	4.0	22.3	3.7	7.5	2.0
Delaware	23	1	34.8	7.1	44.8	7.5	16.9	4.9	2.9	2.0
District of Columbia . . .	16	2	36.4	7.4	22.4	6.1	25.8	7.5	15.3	4.7
Florida	370	13	20.6	1.6	27.0	2.2	38.7	2.2	13.3	2.2
Georgia	252	10	33.6	3.0	31.9	3.1	28.7	2.9	5.7	1.5
Hawaii	193	10	32.9	2.3	0.6	0.4	66.2	2.3	0.2	0.1
Idaho	19	2	40.7	11.1	35.1	11.9	20.6	7.7	2.7	2.3
Illinois	494	9	27.1	1.6	35.8	1.7	25.4	1.7	10.2	1.3
Indiana	90	5	36.4	3.4	30.9	3.2	24.2	2.9	7.7	2.8
Iowa	45	3	30.3	4.8	30.6	6.2	34.1	6.0	4.7	2.1
Kansas	60	4	23.9	3.6	24.7	4.4	40.6	4.4	10.2	4.7
Kentucky	46	3	31.7	5.2	31.9	6.1	26.6	5.1	8.8	3.5
Louisiana	56	3	19.4	3.6	18.4	3.7	53.6	4.7	8.2	3.1
Maine	11	1	29.2	7.6	17.0	8.2	44.0	8.5	9.9	6.1
Maryland	263	7	35.9	2.2	33.6	2.4	25.7	2.1	4.7	0.8
Massachusetts	288	7	38.2	2.2	23.5	1.9	27.3	1.9	10.7	1.4
Michigan	278	9	22.0	1.4	25.7	1.9	16.5	1.7	34.9	2.2
Minnesota	139	5	23.5	2.6	20.5	2.2	53.3	3.0	2.5	0.8
Mississippi	20	2	25.3	8.2	20.3	6.0	45.9	8.4	6.7	4.5
Missouri	88	4	29.7	3.0	32.7	3.7	26.8	3.2	10.3	2.7
Montana	(B)	(B)	(B)	(B)	(B)	(B)	(B)	(B)	(B)	(B)
Nebraska	31	3	22.4	4.3	20.2	6.6	48.6	6.2	8.8	4.1
Nevada	147	7	22.1	3.1	10.5	2.5	60.7	3.9	6.6	1.8
New Hampshire	26	2	25.9	5.5	38.5	6.5	26.5	7.7	9.1	4.1
New Jersey	593	8	29.4	1.4	43.0	1.6	20.1	1.2	7.1	0.6
New Mexico	21	2	34.0	6.9	28.1	7.0	33.4	7.6	4.4	2.6
New York	1,176	16	46.1	1.1	31.3	1.0	13.3	0.8	8.9	0.7
North Carolina	160	7	26.5	3.1	35.6	3.3	30.7	3.1	5.7	1.4
North Dakota	(B)	(B)	(B)	(B)	(B)	(B)	(B)	(B)	(B)	(B)
Ohio	175	7	32.2	2.8	33.1	2.6	20.5	2.6	12.5	1.8
Oklahoma	53	2	23.1	3.1	20.2	4.0	48.9	5.0	7.7	2.5
Oregon	111	5	38.9	3.8	17.9	2.6	36.2	3.6	6.4	2.7
Pennsylvania	283	6	32.2	1.7	32.0	2.0	28.6	2.0	6.5	1.0
Rhode Island	25	2	27.3	7.1	24.2	6.9	38.3	6.9	10.3	3.9
South Carolina	49	3	34.7	5.0	24.3	6.0	34.3	5.9	6.5	3.2
South Dakota	(B)	(B)	(B)	(B)	(B)	(B)	(B)	(B)	(B)	(B)
Tennessee	83	5	23.9	3.3	34.5	4.7	29.6	3.8	12.0	2.6
Texas	778	14	21.8	1.3	33.8	1.5	38.0	1.7	6.2	0.8
Utah	40	3	33.8	5.1	21.1	5.7	38.9	5.1	6.1	2.5
Vermont	(B)	(B)	(B)	(B)	(B)	(B)	(B)	(B)	(B)	(B)
Virginia	366	8	27.6	2.4	35.6	2.4	30.6	2.3	6.0	1.0
Washington	362	9	34.3	2.2	16.5	1.7	44.9	2.2	4.2	0.8
West Virginia	(B)	(B)	(B)	(B)	(B)	(B)	(B)	(B)	(B)	(B)
Wisconsin	87	4	24.4	3.1	26.0	3.7	43.1	4.0	6.3	2.1
Wyoming	(B)	(B)	(B)	(B)	(B)	(B)	(B)	(B)	(B)	(B)

(B) Population born in Asia was less than 10,000.

¹ Includes an estimated 41,000 persons whose region of birth was classified as "Asia not elsewhere classified" and are not included in the four Asian subregions.

² Data are based on a sample and are subject to sampling variability. A margin of error is a measure of an estimate's variability. The larger the margin of error is in relation to the size of the estimate, the less reliable the estimate. When added to and subtracted from the estimate, the margin of error forms the 90 percent confidence interval.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2011 American Community Survey.

Table 4.

Foreign-Born Population From Asia by State, for Five Largest Countries of Birth: 2011

(Numbers in thousands. Data based on sample. For information on confidentiality protection, sampling error, nonsampling error, and definitions, see www.census.gov/acs/www)

Country of birth and state ¹	Number		Percent of total		Percent of country	
	Estimate	Margin of error (±) ²	Estimate	Margin of error (±) ²	Estimate	Margin of error (±) ²
Total	11,562	47	100.0	(X)	100.0	(X)
China ³	2,231	28	19.3	0.2	100.0	(X)
California	761	18	6.6	0.2	34.1	0.7
New York	410	11	3.5	0.1	18.4	0.5
Texas	108	8	0.9	0.1	4.8	0.3
New Jersey	92	7	0.8	0.1	4.1	0.3
Massachusetts	82	5	0.7	—	3.7	0.2
India	1,857	31	16.1	0.3	100.0	(X)
California	381	18	3.3	0.2	20.5	0.9
New Jersey	210	10	1.8	0.1	11.3	0.5
Texas	162	9	1.4	0.1	8.7	0.5
New York	145	9	1.3	0.1	7.8	0.5
Illinois	127	8	1.1	0.1	6.9	0.4
Philippines	1,814	35	15.7	0.3	100.0	(X)
California	812	18	7.0	0.2	44.8	0.8
Hawaii	112	9	1.0	0.1	6.2	0.5
New Jersey	87	7	0.7	0.1	4.8	0.4
Texas	86	9	0.7	0.1	4.8	0.5
Illinois	85	8	0.7	0.1	4.7	0.4
Vietnam	1,259	26	10.9	0.2	100.0	(X)
California	485	16	4.2	0.1	38.5	1.0
Texas	153	11	1.3	0.1	12.1	0.9
Washington	58	7	0.5	0.1	4.6	0.5
Florida	51	6	0.4	0.1	4.0	0.5
Virginia	43	5	0.4	—	3.4	0.4
Korea ⁴	1,083	23	9.4	0.2	100.0	(X)
California	334	13	2.9	0.1	30.9	0.9
New York	103	8	0.9	0.1	9.5	0.7
New Jersey	71	6	0.6	0.1	6.5	0.6
Virginia	58	7	0.5	0.1	5.4	0.7
Illinois	50	6	0.4	—	4.7	0.5

— Represents or rounds to zero.

(X) Not applicable.

¹ Countries of birth are shown for those countries with over 1 million foreign born living in the United States.

² Data are based on a sample and are subject to sampling variability. A margin of error is a measure of an estimate's variability. The larger the margin of error is in relation to the size of the estimate, the less reliable the estimate. When added to and subtracted from the estimate, the margin of error forms the 90 percent confidence interval.

³ China includes respondents who reported their country of birth as China, Hong Kong, Macau, Paracel Islands, or Taiwan.

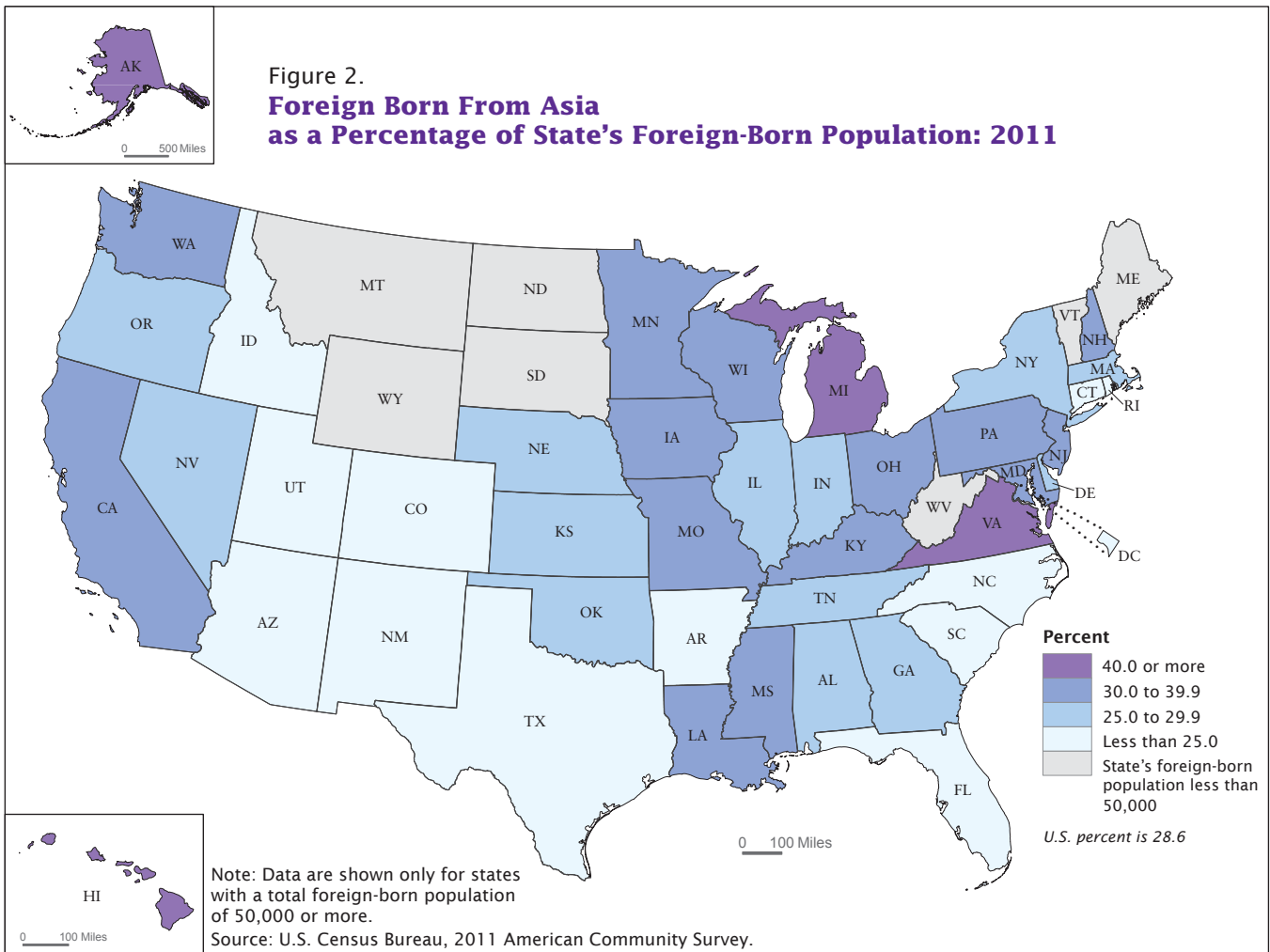
⁴ Korea includes respondents who reported their country of birth as Korea, South Korea, or North Korea.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2011 American Community Survey.

When considering the geographic distribution of the five largest country-of-birth groups from Asia, the largest proportion of each of these groups resided in California, ranging between 21 percent of the foreign born from India to 45 percent of the foreign born from the Philippines (Table 4). For two country of birth groups—China (18 percent) and Korea (10 percent)—New York was the second-largest state proportion. For Vietnam, the second-largest was Texas (12 percent), for India it was New Jersey (11 percent), and for the Philippines it was Hawaii (6 percent).

States with the highest percentage of their total population consisting of foreign born from Asia included Hawaii (14 percent), California (10 percent), New Jersey (7 percent), New York (6 percent), Washington (5 percent), and Nevada (5 percent) (Figure 1). Among states with at least 50,000 foreign born, Hawaii (79 percent), Alaska (52 percent), and Michigan (46 percent) had the highest percentage of Asian born in their foreign-born populations (Figure 2).

When compared with the foreign born from all other regions, the foreign born from Asia were more likely to have graduated from high school and to have a bachelor's degree or higher. In 2011, 83 percent of the foreign born from Asia aged 25 and older were high school graduates or higher, while 48 percent had received a bachelor's degree or higher (Table 5).



What Is the American Community Survey?

The American Community Survey (ACS) is a nationwide survey designed to provide communities with reliable and timely demographic, social, economic, and housing data for the nation, states, congressional districts, counties, places, and other localities every year. It has an annual sample size of about 3.3 million addresses across the United States and Puerto Rico and includes both housing units and group quarters (e.g., nursing facilities and prisons). The ACS is conducted in every county throughout the nation, and every municipio in Puerto Rico, where it is called the Puerto Rico Community Survey. Beginning in 2006, ACS data for 2005 were released for geographic areas with populations of 65,000 and greater. For information on the ACS sample design and other topics, visit www.census.gov/acs/www.

SOURCE AND ACCURACY

The data presented in this report are based on the ACS sample interviewed in 2011. The estimates based on this sample approximate the actual values and represent the entire household and group quarters population. Sampling error is the difference between an estimate based in a sample and the corresponding value that would be obtained if the estimate were based on the entire population (as from a census). Measures of the sampling errors are provided in the form of margins of error for estimates

Table 5.

Foreign-Born Population Aged 25 and Older by Region of Birth and Educational Attainment: 2011

(Numbers in thousands. Data based on sample. For information on confidentiality protection, sampling error, nonsampling error, and definitions, see www.census.gov/acs/www)

Educational attainment	Total	Asia				All other regions ²	
		Total ¹	Eastern Asia	South Central Asia	South Eastern Asia		Western Asia
Number							
Total	34,383	9,908	3,057	2,579	3,474	764	24,475
Less than 9th grade	6,889	984	307	145	446	82	5,905
9th to 12th grade, no diploma	3,926	659	187	130	284	56	3,266
High school graduate (includes equivalency)	7,734	1,632	532	291	644	157	6,102
Some college, no degree	4,544	1,211	308	217	576	105	3,333
Associate's degree	1,907	630	189	111	274	54	1,277
Bachelor's degree	5,498	2,748	795	801	972	172	2,750
Graduate or professional degree	3,887	2,044	738	884	278	139	1,842
Percent high school graduate or higher	68.5	83.4	83.8	89.3	79.0	82.1	62.5
Percent bachelor's degree or higher	27.3	48.4	50.2	65.3	36.0	40.7	18.8
Margin of Error (±)³							
Total	98	40	31	28	36	24	90
Less than 9th grade	50	17	11	9	11	5	49
9th to 12th grade, no diploma	39	15	8	8	9	5	35
High school graduate (includes equivalency)	58	24	15	13	14	10	50
Some college, no degree	41	21	10	9	16	7	35
Associate's degree	24	15	8	6	12	5	20
Bachelor's degree	47	32	15	17	18	9	34
Graduate or professional degree	37	26	16	19	10	8	28
Percent high school graduate or higher	0.2	0.2	0.4	0.5	0.4	0.8	0.2
Percent bachelor's degree or higher	0.2	0.3	0.6	0.6	0.5	1.2	0.2

¹ Includes an estimated 41,000 persons whose region of birth was classified as "Asia not elsewhere classified" and are not included in the four Asian subregions.

² "All other regions" includes all non-Asian countries, including those in Africa, Europe, Latin America, North America, and Oceania.

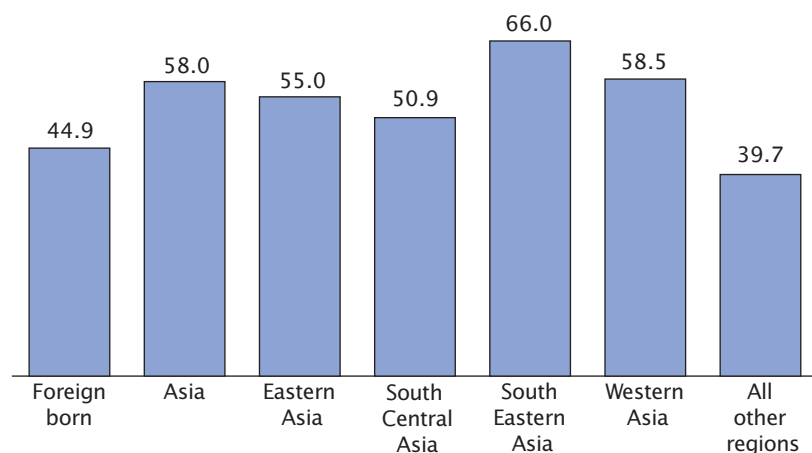
³ Data are based on a sample and are subject to sampling variability. A margin of error is a measure of an estimate's variability. The larger the margin of error is in relation to the size of the estimate, the less reliable the estimate. When added to and subtracted from the estimate, the margin of error forms the 90 percent confidence interval.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2011 American Community Survey.

Figure 3.

Percentage of the Foreign-Born Population Who Are Naturalized U.S. Citizens by Region of Birth: 2011

(Data based on sample. For information on confidentiality protection, sampling error, nonsampling error, and definitions, see www.census.gov/acs/www/)



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2011 American Community Survey.

included in this report. All comparative statements in this report have undergone statistical testing, and comparisons are significant at the 90 percent level unless otherwise noted. In addition to sampling error, nonsampling error may be introduced during any of the operations used to collect and process survey data such as editing, reviewing, or keying data from questionnaires. For more information on sampling and estimation methods, confidentiality protection, and sampling and nonsampling errors, please see the 2011 ACS Accuracy of the Data document located at www.census.gov/acs/www/Downloads/data_documentation/Accuracy_of_ACS_Accuracy_of_Data_2011.pdf.