

Statistical Profile On Asian Indian Immigrants

Part 1 - Background

Immigration from India, like many countries, has a long history of fluctuation. Though the past three decades have seen large increases in the number of migrants to the United States, population influxes were minimal when immigration first began in the early 18th century.

Illustrated within Makesh Bagoria, Gambol et al. and Painter et al.'s investigative articles and accompanied by data from both the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) 2022 Yearbook and the Census Bureau's annual American Community Survey (ACS) is how increasing Asian Indian migration is at the nexus of immigration policy, U.S. labor market demand, and the growing need for high-skill labor to absorb technological innovation.

Bagoria (2009) divides immigration from India into four phases. The first phase, consisting of Hindu Missionary Swamis, students, and merchants occurred in the early 19th century. As these cases began, the first immigration policy instituted by the U.S. government was the Naturalization Law of 1790 in which Asian Indians were granted citizenship (Bagoria 897). However, Bagoria notes that increasing immigration from India brought the adoption of legal measures meant to limit the arrival of poor individuals (Bagoria 897). The resulting Immigration Act of 1917, often referred to as the equivalent of the Chinese Exclusion Act, was the first policy to officially ban immigration from India. Until 1946, this restriction of Indian immigrants continued. For those who did enter before the prohibitions and after, the majority were relatives of migrants who had already gained citizenship (Bagoria 899).

The second historical period of immigration occurred after India gained independence from Britain in 1947. The McCarran-Walter Act of 1952 increased the quota of approved Indian immigrants from 100 to 2,000. Another significant increase occurred following the passage of

the 1965 Immigration Act, one of the first to explicitly outline preference for high-skill immigrant professionals. As a result, Bagoria describes the composition of post-1965 immigrants from India as almost entirely highly educated, professional, and possessing high-human capital (Bagoria 901). Despite immigration plateaus during the 1970s, the fourth phase brought around the 1990 Immigration and Naturalization Act again favouring professional migrants and spurring consistent quota increases which continued into the 2000s (Bagoria 902).

Given the technological boom and the H1-B visa system beginning in the 1990s, Gambol et al.'s academic article "The Green Card Drag" describes the role this program played in Asian Indians representing the largest demographic of Asian Americans in the United States (Gambol et al. 977). The authors note how Asian Indians represent the largest portion of H1-B migrants since the visa program was introduced (Gambol et al. 978). Despite consistent population growth over the course of Bagoria's four phases, Gambol et al. highlights how the largest increases have been after 2000. The article highlights the importance played by late 1990s expansion to immigration quotas and the beginning of the H1-B program, which provides professional migrants the ability to work in the U.S. and also the potential for obtaining legal permanent residency (LPR) (Gambol et al. 979). As areas like Silicon Valley began to boom and demand high human capital workers to absorb new technological developments, Asian Indians were able to procure H1-B visas and relocate to the U.S.

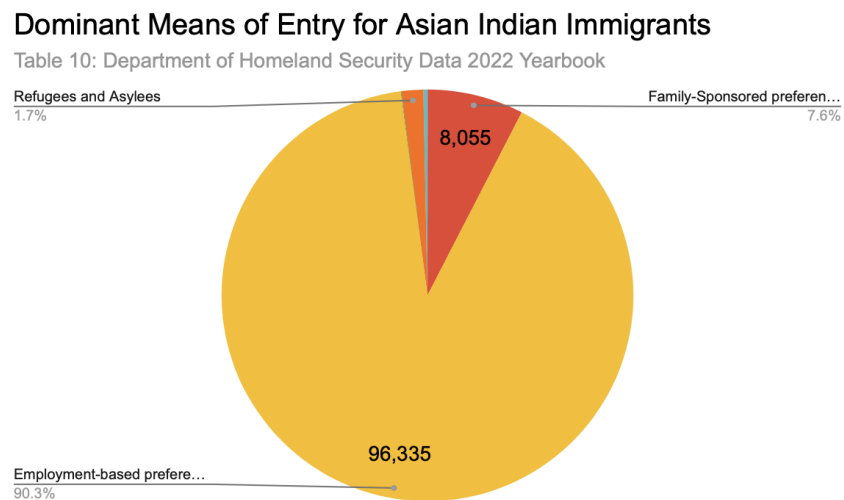
Another article by Painter et al. highlighted this same early 2000s spike in Asian Indian migration. Indicative of high allocation of H1-B visas, the piece notes that by 2003, Asian Indians represented the third largest group of LPRs (Painter et al. 208). The authors argue that influxes of high-skill labor often involve channeling, where immigrants with higher levels of education and human capital experience greater access to immigration, U.S. employment

opportunities, and industry mobility (Painter et al. 213). However, the finding that Asian Indians in larger industries may experience a decrease in wages, indicates a trend of slightly negative policy reception. Potential difficulty in upward mobility and procurement of LPR status is less suggestive of negative reception towards specifically Asian Indians and more indicative of the State's adverse policies towards immigrants as a whole (Valle May 12).

Part 2 - DHS Data

The impacts of immigration policy on trends in Asian Indian immigration are further exemplified by Department of Homeland Security (DHS) data.

Figure 1



The demand for high-skilled workers as a result of technological innovation within the domestic labor market can be seen in Figure 1, where 90.3 percent of cases enter by way of employment-based preferences. Historical trends of family initiated immigration can also be seen within the smaller 7.6 percent of Asian Indian immigrants. Given the high prevalence of

incoming cases who migrate due to employment, the dominance of Asian Indians compared to other Asian countries is also visualized within DHS statistics.

Figure 2

Principal Categories of Admitted Temporary Workers from India

Table 32, Department of Homeland Security 2022 Yearbook

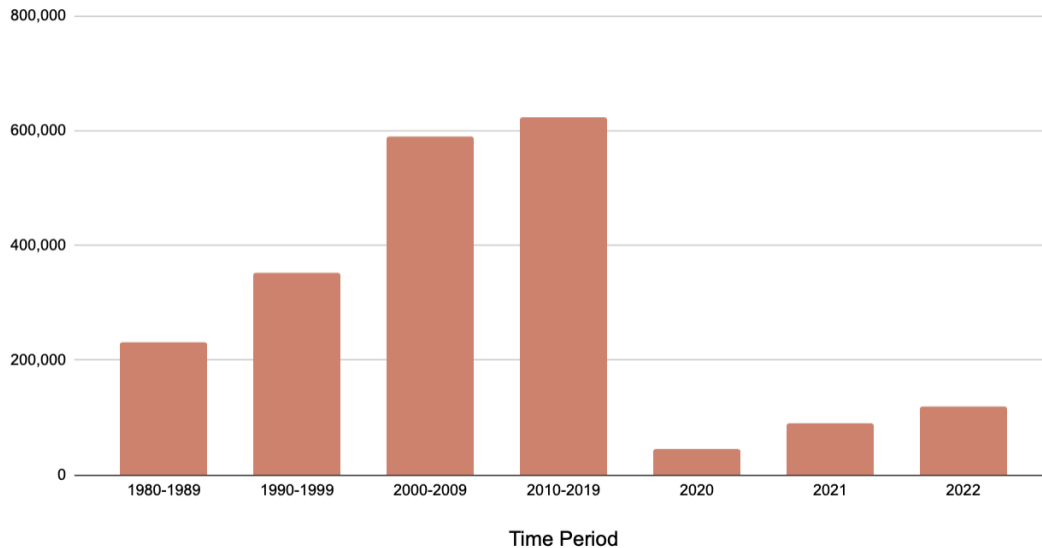


Given that the temporary worker category falls under the umbrella of the 96,335 Asian Indians (from Figure 1) migrating due to employment-based preferences, the high proportion of total Asian cases being from India illustrates the high human capital demands emphasized in the academic literature of Part 1. The prevalence of high human capital immigration is depicted in Figure 2 where the number of H1-B visa recipients from Asia (307,297) consists almost entirely of Asian Indians (269,998). With statistics for India's total temporary workers and families (467,666) also being a substantial portion of Asia's total (698,041), this immigrant profile has been statistically favored by the visa process as a result of specialized skills.

Along with the visa process allowing for high concentration of Asian Indian temporary workers (primarily H1-B recipients), cases gaining LPR status have simultaneously increased.

Figure 3**Immigrants from India Obtaining Legal Permanent Resident Status in the U.S.**

Table 2, Department of Homeland Security Data 2022 Yearbook



Although Figure 3 first appears to depict a sharp decline in Asian Indians who have gained LPR status, statistics for the decades preceding 2020 and the Covid-19 pandemic can be calculated by finding averages. Between 2010-2019, 623,919 cases gained LPR (an average of 62,392 per year). Despite 2020 statistics showing only 44,364 similar acquisitions, by 2021 the number had recovered to 90,967. Given the hierarchy of citizenship status, from naturalized U.S. citizen to undocumented, LPR (green card) is the second best option for immigrants hoping to eventually gain permanent residency (Valle May 12). The trend of increasing LPR recipients reflects a positive shift towards permanent American acceptance and utilization of the knowledge and human capital which Asian Indians carry in relocating.

Though DHS data shows high acceptance of Asian Indian immigrants through the H1-B system, it's important to acknowledge the academic literature that highlights the existence of mobility issues between visa status and gaining LPR. Despite the high-skilled nature of this immigrant group, extended H1-B visas and success in gaining green card status require employer

involvement. This reliance can require Asian Indians to stay in lower paying occupations, less demanding of human capital (Gambol et al. 984). The decision to stay in less favorable employment is often made given that the transition to LPR provides greater mobility and access to high human capital employment opportunities (Gambol et al. 980). Figure 3's depiction of 120,121 Asian Indians gaining LPR in 2022 (an annual increase by approximately 30,000) reflects a promising increase for those who may be stuck in these sub-optimal occupations.

Part 3 - Census Bureau Data

Census Bureau data compiled from annual American Community Surveys depicts the long-term trends of variables within the U.S. Asian Indian immigrant population.

Table 1

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics for Variables of Interest (2010- 2024)

Year	2024	2021	2016	2010
Educational Attainment (%)				
High School or Higher	93.7	93	92.2	91
Bachelor's Degree or Higher	78.8	76.8	74.3	70.8
Employment Status (%)				
In Labor Force	72.7	70.8	68.3	69.8
Unemployed	3.2	3.3	2.9	5.5
Occupation (%)				
Management, Business, Science and Arts Occupation	75.7	75.1	71.3	66.3
Class of Worker (%)				
Private Wage and Salary Workers	87.2	87.1	87.8	85.9
Income and Poverty				
Median Family Income (\$)	194,613	157,427	121,964	100,520
Family Poverty Rate (%)	3.8	4.1	4.7	5.7

Source: American Community Surveys 1-Year Estimates [Selected Population Profile in the United States]

Retrieved from <https://data.census.gov/table/ACSSPP1Y2024.S0201?t=013:3782&y=2024&moe=true>

Table 1 reflects the relevance of high-skilled Asian Indian labor highlighted in Figures 1 and 2 from DHS data. Between 2010 and 2024, the proportion of cases who offer Bachelor's degrees or higher has stayed around 70 percent, indicative of consistent high knowledge contributions. Considering statistics in which only 48 percent of immigrant arrivals between 2018 and 2022 were college-educated, the high education of Asian Indian immigrants showcases

the American demand for the relevant and advanced skillsets. Table 1 also depicts how in 2024, the percentage of nationwide Asian Indians employed in Management, Business, Science and Arts occupations stood at 75.5 percent. Relative to other employment sectors, like service occupations, sales and office, etc., this high human capital occupation field has consistently retained the highest concentration of Asian Indians since 2010. Additionally, 87.2 percent of cases earned private wages and salaries in 2024. These statistics suggest the predominance of Asian Indian migrants in high human capital areas of the U.S. labor market. Consistent with these trends are Table 1's illustration of consistent increases in national labor force participation and median family income. Although labor force participation increased by only 2.9 percent between 2010 and 2024, the increase in median family income from 100,520 to 194,613 suggests positive trends in upward mobility. Figure 3 statistics for increasing cases successfully obtaining LPR status may be one explanation for this large increase in median family income.

Examining the variables of Asian Indians between two geographic locations with high demographic concentrations provides enriching data for a more comprehensive immigrant profile.

Table 2

Table 2: Descriptive Statistics for Asian Indians in California and New York

	California	New York
Educational Attainment (%)		
Bachelor's Degree or Higher	77	60.9
Employment Status (%)		
In Labor Force	73.3	66.9
Unemployed	3.7	3.6
Occupation (%)		
Management, Business, Science and Arts Occupations	75	59.1
By Male Civilian Employed	74.1	55.6
By Female Civilian Employed	76.4	63.4
Class of Worker (%)		
Private and Salary Wage	87	81.4
Income and Poverty		
Median Family Income (\$)	212,558	139,136
Family Poverty Rate (%)	3.9	7.3

Source: 2024 American Community Surveys 1-Year Estimates [Selected Population Profile in the United States]

Retrieved from <https://data.census.gov/table/ACSSPP1Y2024.S0201?t=013:3782&y=2024&moe=true>

Table 2 provides descriptive statistics for these cases in California and New York. Not included in the table is background data from the 2024 ACS showing the median age of Asian Indians in California being 36.2 years old compared with New York's 36.6. Though age is virtually the same by location, 65.6 percent of cases in California are married while 56.3 percent of those in New York are, suggesting that Asian Indian immigrants on the West Coast either have more economic means or stability in settling down.

The potential that California cases may be more financially well off is reflected by Table 2 which shows human capital as being more greatly concentrated in California compared to New York. In 2024, 77 percent of Asian Indians in California had obtained Bachelor's degrees or higher, while 60.9 percent of those in New York had achieved the same. Though these figures trump the average percentage for immigrants in the U.S., this difference suggests that higher human capital cases settle on the West Coast. To further this line of reasoning, Table 2 also illustrates skewed employment status. While both states have low unemployment percentages (3.7 in California and 3.6 in New York), labor force participation was 73.3 percent in California and 66.9 percent in New York.

Perhaps most illustrative of geographic differences in human capital is within the Occupation variable. Table 2 illustrates 75 percent of profile cases in California being employed in Management, business, science and arts compared to 59.1 percent in New York. With percent by gender being approximately the same between locations, high-skill labor force participation again is skewed towards California. Despite this wedge within employment sectors, geographic differences in cases earning salaries was only 5.4 percent. While the median family income in New York is 139,136 compared to California's 212,558, this contrast is likely due to the existing differences in occupation. It is notable that Table 2 shows family poverty rates in New York

being 3.4 percent higher than in California. The skew towards California across all variables illustrated in Table 2 highlights how high-human capital cases are not only more likely to settle in California but also more inclined to start families there as well.

Table 3

Table 3: Place of Birth and Citizenship Status of Asian Indians in California and New York

	California	New York
Total Population	970,717	380,742
Native	304,527	132,959
Foreign-Born	666,190	247,783
Naturalized U.S. Citizen	327,763	168,897
Not a U.S. Citizen	338,427	78,886

Source: 2024 American Community Surveys 1-Year Estimates [Selected Population Profile in the United States]

Retrieved from <https://data.census.gov/table/ACSSPP1Y2024.S0201?t=013:3782&y=2024&moe=true>

While high-skilled Asian Indian immigrants are more inclined to settle in California, Table 3 highlights 2024 nativity statistics showing higher concentration of foreign-born naturalized U.S. citizens in New York. Calculating the percentages of population numbers reveals that while both states have a fairly equal distribution of native versus foreign-born cases (~31.3 native, ~68.6 foreign-born for California, ~34.9 native, ~65 for New York), citizenship status is skewed in favor of New York. Numbers from Table 3 calculate to reveal that while 49.1 percent of California cases (327,763/666,190) are foreign-born naturalized citizens, 68.1 (168,897/247,784) percent of those in New York are. This difference of approximately 19 percent highlights the New York foreign-born as experiencing a greater likelihood of citizenship acquisition. Given extensive academic literature surrounding the high rates of Asian Indian H1-B visa acquisition, Table 3 statistics for citizenship rates illustrate how LPR may be more easily accessible in New York than in California. The Table 2 data showing the lower human capital of

New York cases implies that these Asian Indians may engage in lower skill occupations that alternatively allow for greater channeling towards permanent residency.

Discussion

The high influx of Asian Indians into the United States represents a fusion of the cost and benefits analysis relevant to the migrant decision making process. With the high concentration of these immigration cases being those contributing high human capital, post 1965 Asian Indian immigration is better explained by economic theory than by social theory. Prior to the 1965 Immigration Act which explicitly prioritized migrants with greater knowledge attainment, relocation to the U.S. was more directly stimulated by family ties rather than by labor market demand (Bagoria 899). As the late 20th century brought the inauguration of the H1-B system, high-skilled immigrants from India ignited contemporary trends in which Asian Indians compose the majority of visa recipients from Asia. Although DHS data shows the high acceptance of Asian Indians through the H1-B program and growing LPR acquisition, census statistics showing skewed educational attainment, labor force composition, and citizenship status between New York and California cases reveal possible differences in state policy. Because gaining LPR and full citizenship can require staying employed in occupations which engage much lower human capital, this phenomenon is a result of immigration policy which requires employer involvement in transitioning closer to permanent legal status (Gambol et al. 980).

While the immigrant profile of Asian Indians reflects impressive concentrations within the H1-B visa system, LPR procurement, and the high-skill labor force, it's important to note that the national experiences for these immigrants differs depending on the region of habitation. Though statistics between New York and California imply differences by human capital level, social determinants are not taken into account within DHS and Census statistics. Given an

immigration policy system that differs by the Federal, State, and Local levels, data illustrating the predominantly high-skill profile of Asian immigrants may not adequately portray the level of “brain waste” occurring in other U.S. regions populated by Asian Indians (Valle May 21).

Ultimately, while ongoing immigration policy frameworks, technological innovation, and labor market demands have successfully positioned Asian Indian immigrants as a cornerstone of America’s high-skill population, regional differences and social realities suggest that this migration story is far from uniform. As the world becomes increasingly globalized, deeper systemic policy reforms will prove vital in ensuring that this high concentration of vast human capital is fully utilized.

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