

# National Asian Pacific Islander American Heritage Month

## History

National Asian Pacific Islander American Heritage Month began as Asian/Pacific American Heritage Week, first observed in 1979 under President Jimmy Carter, who noted the “enormous contributions to the sciences, arts, industry, government and commerce” made by Asian-Americans and Pacific Islanders. In 1990, President George H.W. Bush expanded the celebration to cover the whole month of May. May was chosen by the organizers in recognition of May 7, 1843, the date the first Japanese immigrants arrived in the United States, and in recognition of May 10, 1869, which marked the completion of the transcontinental railroad, which would not have been possible without the contributions of Chinese-Americans.

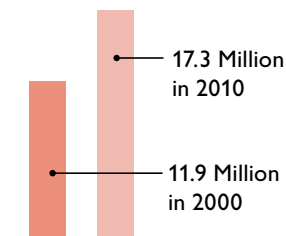
### Asian-Americans and Pacific Islanders in the U.S.

Asian-Americans and Pacific Islanders have a history in America that stretches back hundreds of years. The first record of Asians in North America dates to 1587, when Filipino sailors came to what is now California. The first Chinese people recorded in the United States were three sailors who came to Baltimore in 1785 as part of an interracial shipping crew.

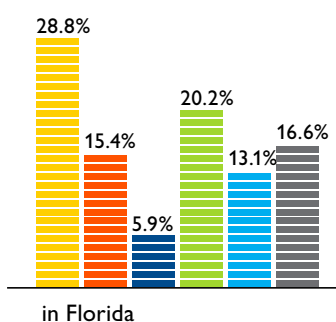
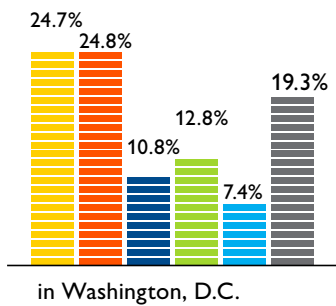
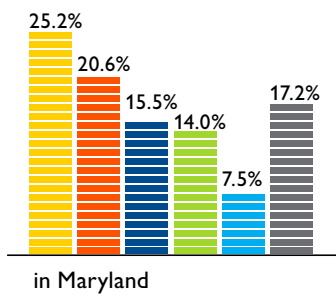
### U.S. Population: Asian Alone or in Combination with Other Races

Asian-Americans and Pacific Islanders are a diverse group, making up more than 50 ethnic groups and speaking more than 100 languages. Asian-Americans and Pacific Islanders in the United States increased by 45 percent between 2000 and 2010, making them one of the fastest growing minority groups in the country.

Asian and Pacific Islander population in the United States



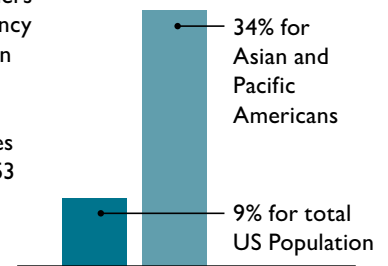
Asian and Pacific Islander population by ethnicity



### Rates of Limited English Proficiency

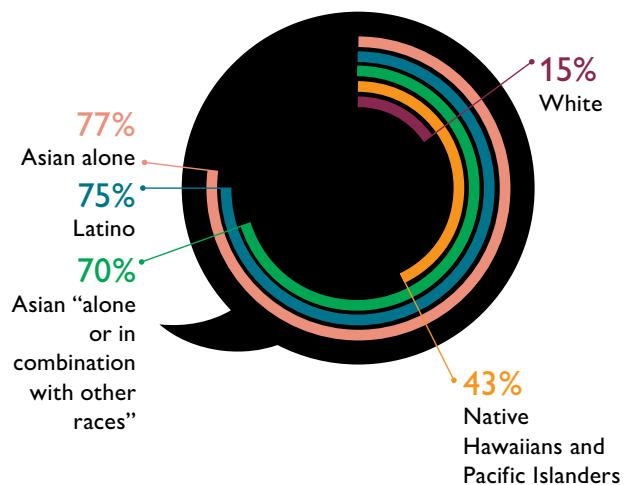
Roughly a third of Asian-Americans and Pacific Islanders have limited English proficiency (LEP), significantly more than the numbers for the U.S. population as a whole.

Not surprisingly, LEP rates differ by ethnic group, with 53 percent of Vietnamese and 2 percent of native Hawaiians considered LEP.



### Speak a Language Other than English at Home

Asian-Americans are more likely than any other minority groups to speak a language other than English at home.



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## Asian and Pacific American Innovators

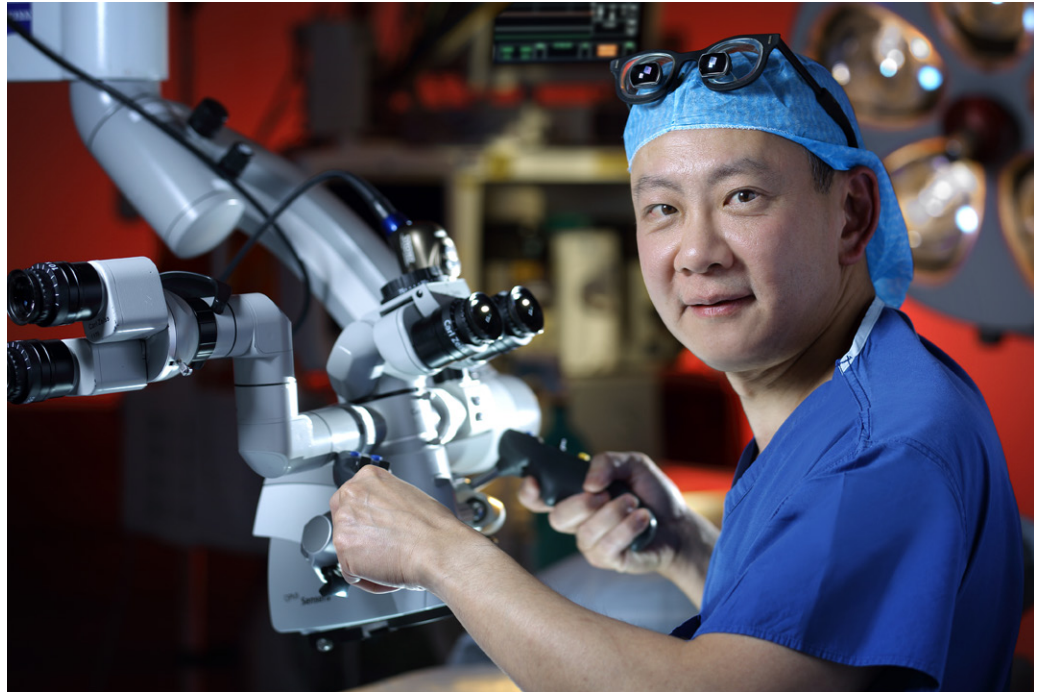
Asian-Americans and Pacific Islanders have made tremendous contributions to medical science and innovation.

**Dr. Anandi Gopal Joshi**, born in India, was the first Hindu and first Indian female doctor to receive a medical degree in the United States, graduating at 20 years old in 1886.

**Dr. Min Chueh Chang**, born in Taiyuan, China, helped develop the birth control pill and was a pioneer of in vitro fertilization who paved the way for the birth of “test-tube babies.”

**Dr. David Ho**, a Taiwanese-American physician, developed foundational research for the modern “cocktail” antiretroviral therapy, of which Dr. Ho was an early champion.

**Dr. Katherine Luzuriaga**, a Filipino-American physician and pediatric immunologist, who, in conjunction with Johns Hopkins virologist Deborah Persaud, was recognized for work leading to the “functional cure” of an HIV-positive infant.



### Improving Asian American Health

Cancer is the leading cause of death in Asian-Americans, unlike most demographic groups, with kidney cancer rates nearly three times and stomach cancer rates two times those found for non-Hispanic whites. The Asian American Cancer Program at the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health aims to reduce that disparity, using community-based participatory research to improve liver, breast and cervical cancer screening rates in the Asian community.

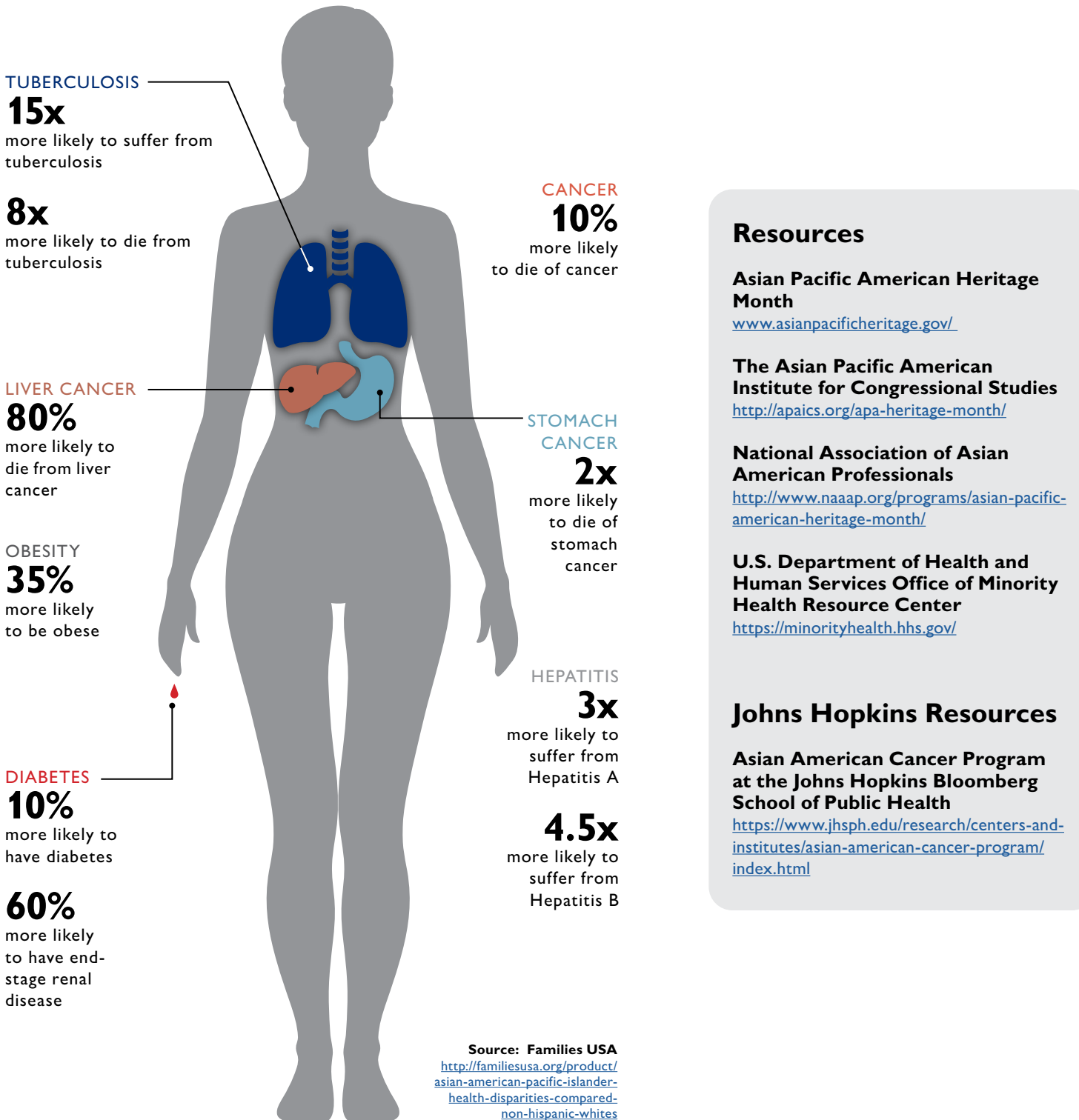
### Overcoming a History of Persecution

Throughout American history, Asian-Americans and Pacific Islanders have been both a highly desired and deeply debased immigrant group, responsible for some of the nation’s greatest achievements and the targets of the nation’s worst instincts. Victims of both individual and institutional prejudice, Asian-Americans have faced a long history of inequality and exclusion. The Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882 was the only piece of immigration legislation to ever exclude a group based upon their nationality. Similarly, the World War II internment of Japanese-Americans in 1942 represented the only time since the end of slavery that a portion of the population was imprisoned solely because of their ethnicity. The vast majority of the 117,000 people interned were American citizens, and 17,000 of them were children under the age of 10.

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## Health Disparities

Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders compared to Non-Hispanic Whites



Source: Families USA  
<http://familiesusa.org/product/asian-american-pacific-islander-health-disparities-compared-non-hispanic-whites>

### Resources

#### Asian Pacific American Heritage Month

[www.asianpacificheritage.gov/](http://www.asianpacificheritage.gov/)

#### The Asian Pacific American Institute for Congressional Studies

<http://apaics.org/apa-heritage-month/>

#### National Association of Asian American Professionals

<http://www.naaap.org/programs/asian-pacific-american-heritage-month/>

#### U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Office of Minority Health Resource Center

<https://minorityhealth.hhs.gov/>

### Johns Hopkins Resources

#### Asian American Cancer Program at the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health

<https://www.jhsph.edu/research/centers-and-institutes/asian-american-cancer-program/index.html>