

Asian Indians in Hampton Roads



ASIAN INDIANS IN HAMPTON ROADS

How should we refer to the best-educated, most prosperous ethnic group in Hampton Roads? Should they be labeled “Indian Americans,” “Americans from India” or “Asian Indians”? We adopt Asian Indians because a majority of Asian Indians in Hampton Roads prefer that designation and it averts confusion with Native Americans in the United States, who historically have been known as Indians.

Asian Indians, who number almost 7,000 in Hampton Roads, are anything but an ordinary ethnic group. According to the American Community Survey, the mean household income of Asian Indians was \$86,130 in 2010, 65.9 percent higher than the U.S. average. Fully 69 percent of Asian Indians ages 25 or older had earned a bachelor’s degree or higher, while this was true for only 27.9 percent for the entire U.S. population.

More than 61 percent of the Asian Indians residing in Hampton Roads were born outside of the United States. When they entered this country, many already were well educated, or they came here to enroll in graduate and professional programs. Also, as we shall see, a majority of recent H1-B “specialty occupations” visa recipients coming into the U.S. have been Asian Indians. These are talented, ambitious individuals, and this talent and ambition have translated into conspicuous success throughout the country and here in Hampton Roads.

Background

In 2012, the Pew Research Center published a comprehensive study of Asian Americans, “the highest-income, best-educated and fastest-growing racial group in the United States” (“The Rise of Asian Americans,” 2012, www.pewsocialtrends.org/files/2013/04/Asian-Americans-new-full-report-04-2013.pdf). Based on U.S. Census data and an extensive telephone survey, the study paints a remarkable portrait of Asian American success. Its main findings include:

- Approximately 18 million Asian Americans now make up nearly 6 percent of the U.S. population. Fifty years ago, this group represented less than 1 percent of the U.S. population.
- Since 2009, Asians have surpassed Hispanics as the largest group of new immigrants to the U.S.
- Because 61 percent of recent Asian immigrants ages 25-64 possess a college degree, they are likely “the most highly educated cohort of immigrants in U.S. history.”
- The median income of Asian Americans in 2010 was \$66,000 – substantially higher than any other racial group, as well as the U.S. population at large.
- Survey findings indicate that Asian Americans are more satisfied than the general public with their lives overall (82 percent vs. 75 percent), their personal finances (51 percent vs. 35 percent) and the general direction of the country (43 percent vs. 21 percent).

The Pew study looked at U.S. residents (regardless of citizenship or immigration status) whose family origins could be traced to the original peoples of the Far East, Southeast Asia or the Indian subcontinent (see Table 1). Chinese Americans represent the largest Asian subgroup in the United States today, followed by those with family origins in the Philippines, India, Vietnam, South Korea and Japan. Among these six subgroups, Asian Indians stand out. The Pew study suggests (see Table 2) that Asian Indians have even higher incomes, are better educated and are faster growing than the Asian American population as

a whole. They are younger and more likely to be married with children. Asian Indians are not as concentrated in the American West as other Asian American subgroups; more than one-quarter live in Virginia and other Southern states.

Asian Indians are one of several fast-growing ethnic constituencies (see Graph 1) that have transformed Hampton Roads into a significantly more diverse region within the last decade. Among recent arrivals, Asian Indians are distinguished

by a degree of economic, political and cultural influence that vastly exceeds what might be expected from a predominantly new-arrival minority group.

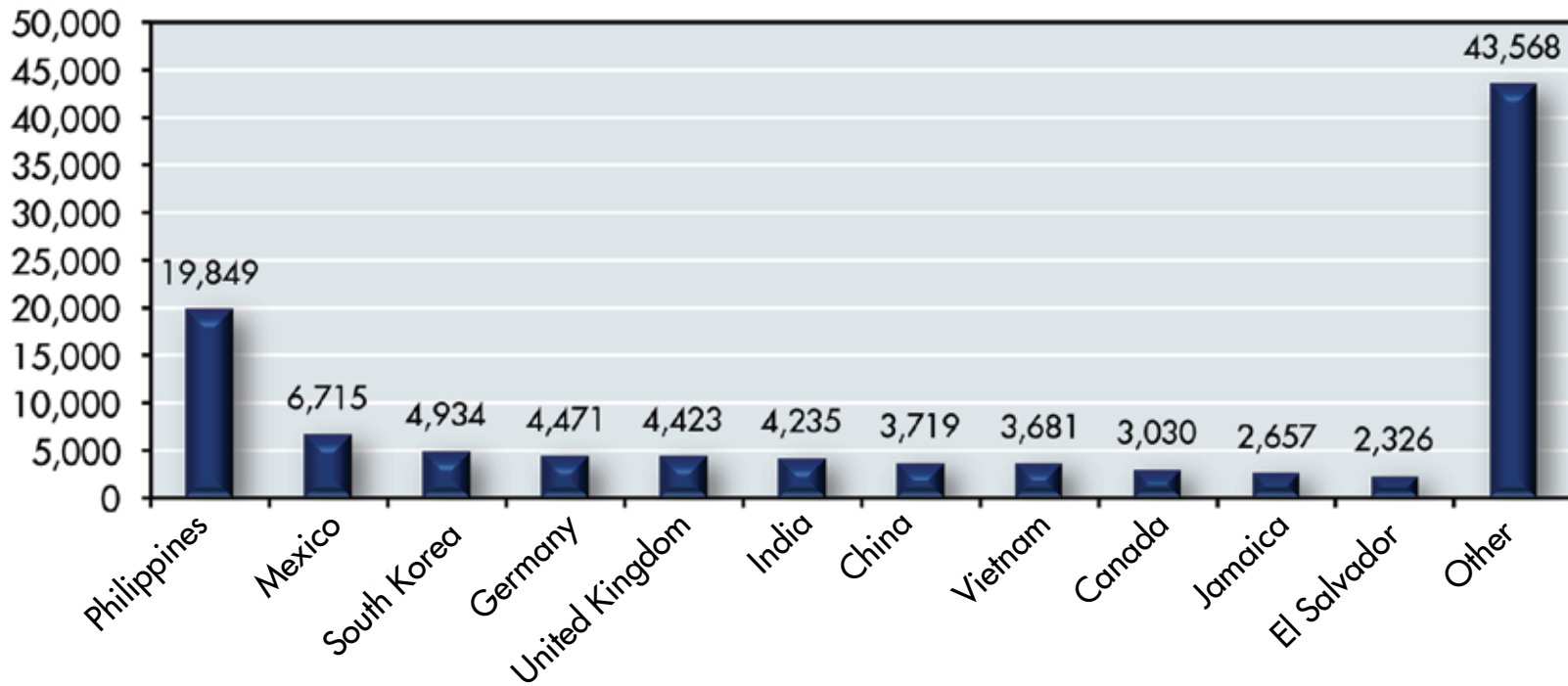
This chapter will explore the growth of Hampton Roads' Asian Indian community, as well as the common features and values that unite many of its members. We'll also provide a brief overview of the leading institutions that represent and serve our region's Asian Indian population.

Characteristic	All Americans	All Asians	Asian Indians
Foreign born	15.8%	74.1%	87.2%
Citizen	91.4%	69.6%	56.2%
Median age (in years)	45	41	37
Married	51.4%	59.0%	70.9%
Fertility (women aged 18-44)			
Had a birth in the last 12 months	7.1%	6.8%	8.4%
Of these, % unmarried	37.1%	14.6%	2.3%
College educated (ages 25+)	28.2%	49.0%	70.0%
Median annual personal earnings (full-time, year-round workers)	\$40,000	\$48,000	\$65,000
Median annual household income	\$49,800	\$66,000	\$88,000
Language			
Speaks English very well	90.4%	63.5%	76.2%
Speaks English less than very well	9.6%	36.5%	23.8%
Region of residence			
Northeast	18.3%	20.1%	31.1%
Midwest	21.6%	11.3%	16.8%
South	37.0%	21.5%	28.5%
West	23.0%	47.1%	23.5%

Source: Pew Research Center, "The Rise of Asian Americans," p. 44, at www.pewsocialtrends.org/files/2013/01/SDT_Rise_of_Asian_Americans.pdf

GRAPH 1

CHANGES IN THE NUMBER OF FOREIGN-BORN RESIDENTS OF HAMPTON ROADS BY ORIGIN BETWEEN 2000 AND 2011



Sources: 2007-2011 American Community Survey 5-year estimates, at <http://factfinder2.census.gov/>, and U.S. Census data (2000), at <http://factfinder.census.gov>

Asian Indian Immigration: A Brief History

The successes of the Asian Indian community are all the more remarkable given that before 1965, very few people of Asian Indian ancestry lived in Hampton Roads – or for that matter, anywhere else in the United States. The chief reason for this was a U.S. immigration policy that blatantly discriminated against Asians and other non-European groups.

A first, small cohort of Indian immigrants came to the United States in the early years of the 20th century. Beginning in 1907, around 6,400 migrants from the Indian subcontinent arrived on the U.S. West Coast. They were overwhelmingly young men from the Punjab region with little or no education. They came to earn money as agricultural laborers; most did not intend to settle permanently. In any case, this would have been difficult, as federal and state laws forbade Indian migrants from owning property, marrying white women or becoming naturalized U.S. citizens. The Immigration Law of 1917 stopped new arrivals from India altogether. Census data indicate that by 1940, only 2,405 Asian Indians remained in the U.S. “Their educational level,” writes historian Ronald Takaki, “was the lowest of all racial and ethnic groups reported in the census: the median number of school years completed by Asian Indians was only 3.7” (“Strangers from a Different Shore: A History of Asian Americans,” 1998, p. 314).

World War II was an important turning point in the history of Asian Indians in the U.S. Overt racism gradually became less frequent in American society and the nation’s immigration policy changed to reflect this. U.S. lawmakers sought to acknowledge Asian Indians’ contribution to the Allied war effort, and to show support for the newly independent Indian democracy. Asian Indians gained naturalization rights, and a new immigration quota allowed as many as 12,000 Asian Indians to enter the U.S. between 1947 and 1965.

However, the key watershed was the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965. This legislation eliminated existing immigration restrictions based on national origin, replacing them with a tiered preference system based on the principle of “family reunification” and the needs of U.S. employers. Scientists, engineers



and other professionals, particularly those with skills to support emerging high-tech industries, were among those who benefited most from the new immigration policy. These highly skilled professionals, and their families, came to define the new wave of Asian Indian immigration that commenced in the final third of the 20th century.

Asian Indians quickly became and have remained one of the country’s fastest-growing immigrant groups: “The number of new Asian Indian immigrants skyrocketed from 467 in 1965 to 8,795 in 1970. Between 1971 and 1980, 164,134 Asian Indians were admitted, followed by another 250,786 between 1981 and 1990” (Roli Varma, “Harbingers of Global Change: India’s Techno-Immigrants in the United States,” 2006, p. 21).

Asian Indians were well positioned to benefit from the post-1965 change in immigration policy for a number of reasons, including English language proficiency (a legacy of British colonial rule) as well as a strong cultural emphasis on math and science achievement. The educational, economic and professional opportunities offered by the United States have been highly attractive to Asian Indian émigrés. Many Asian Indians (particularly young men) came to pursue graduate study in the U.S., later converting their temporary

status into permanent residency and bringing along spouses, children and other family members.

The H-1B visa program, which was introduced in 1990, has brought more Indians to American workplaces in the past quarter century. H-1B visas allow highly skilled foreign workers in “specialty occupations” to live and work in the U.S., with an employer’s sponsorship, for up to six years. The great majority of all H-1B visas are issued in the IT sector; most often they go to citizens of India. Of the nearly 130,000 H-1B visas issued in 2011, more than half (72,438) went to workers of Indian nationality (see Table 2). Several of the IT companies that consistently sponsor the most workers on H-1B visas – including Infosys, Wipro and Tata Consultancy Services – are themselves based in India.

Today, more than 3 million people of Asian Indian ancestry live in the United States, comprising approximately 1 percent of the entire U.S. population.

TABLE 2

H-1B VISAS ISSUED, UNITED STATES, FY 2011

India	72,438
China - mainland	10,849
United Kingdom	3,660
South Korea	3,501
Mexico	2,647
Philippines	2,369
France	2,069
Japan	2,054
China - Taiwan	1,705
Germany	1,627
Other	26,215
TOTAL	129,134

Source: Pew Research Center, “The Rise of Asian Americans,” p. 27, at: www.pewsocialtrends.org/files/2013/01/SDT_Rise_of_Asian_Americans.pdf

Who Are Hampton Roads’ Asian Indians?

Hampton Roads is home to a substantial Asian Indian community – close to 7,000 people, according to Pew and U.S. Census figures. The greatest number (2,274) live in Virginia Beach, while Williamsburg and York County boast the highest proportion (just over 1 percent) of Asian Indians in their populations, possibly due to the influence of the College of William & Mary and NASA Langley Research Center, and the hotel industry (see Table 3). A review of Graph 1 reveals that among Hampton Roads’ foreign-born population, India is the sixth-most influential place of origin, behind the Philippines, Mexico, South Korea, Germany and the United Kingdom. U.S. Census figures suggest that the Asian Indian-born population of Hampton Roads has more than doubled in the past decade – the fastest rate of growth among all Asian subgroups in our region.

The Asian Indian community of Hampton Roads is the third largest in the Commonwealth of Virginia, behind Northern Virginia and the Richmond metropolitan area. (By a wide margin, the highest concentration of Asian Indians – 47,544 – live in Fairfax County.) Census figures show that Virginia residents of Asian Indian descent are younger and more likely to live in a married-couple household with children than Virginia’s population at large.

Nearly 78 percent of Virginia’s Asian Indians over the age of 25 possess a bachelor’s degree or higher, compared to nearly 34 percent of the general population in the same age group. Table 4 discloses that more than half (52.5 percent) of Virginia’s Asian Indian households earn \$100,000 or more per year, compared to 27.6 percent of all Virginia households. Graph 2 illustrates these income differences as well as the impressive educational attainment of Asian Indians in the Commonwealth.

TABLE 3

THE ASIAN AMERICAN POPULATION: HAMPTON ROADS, VIRGINIA AND THE U.S. (2010)

	Asian Indian	Chinese (except Taiwanese)	Filipino	Japanese	Korean	Vietnamese	Total Population	Total Asian Population	Asian Share of Population	Asian Indian Share of Population
Chesapeake	986	825	4,583	648	803	616	222,209	9,136	4.11%	0.44%
Currituck County (N.C.)	16	23	151	35	32	6	23,457	282	1.20%	0.07%
Franklin	13	18	24	6	14	21	8,582	102	1.19%	0.15%
Gloucester County	33	82	111	63	60	27	36,858	463	1.26%	0.09%
Hampton	332	437	1,267	369	496	888	137,436	4,490	3.27%	0.24%
Isle of Wight County	22	63	161	61	84	19	35,270	477	1.35%	0.06%
James City County	315	350	500	190	448	104	67,009	2,186	3.26%	0.47%
Mathews County	8	9	21	3	11	4	8,978	60	0.67%	0.09%
Newport News	569	616	2,194	614	1,608	672	180,719	7,438	4.12%	0.31%
Norfolk	963	1,163	6,326	488	580	528	242,803	10,999	4.53%	0.40%
Poquoson	46	71	59	37	92	15	12,150	346	2.85%	0.38%
Portsmouth	131	191	826	98	106	127	95,535	1,658	1.74%	0.14%
Southampton County	18	3	27	2	5	2	18,570	73	0.39%	0.10%
Suffolk	259	261	756	147	260	165	84,585	1,997	2.36%	0.31%
Surry County	12	4	9	4	4	0	7,058	40	0.57%	0.17%
Virginia Beach	2,274	2,842	22,092	1,609	1,802	2,097	437,994	34,647	7.91%	0.52%
Williamsburg	208	279	99	50	203	59	14,068	1,026	7.29%	1.48%
York County	658	663	716	323	1,206	272	65,464	4,286	6.55%	1.01%
Hampton Roads	6,863	7,900	39,922	4,747	7,814	5,622	1,698,745	79,706	4.69%	0.40%
Virginia	114,471	68,707	90,493	20,138	82,006	59,984	8,001,024	534,561	6.68%	1.43%
United States	3,183,063	3,794,673	3,416,840	1,304,286	1,706,822	1,737,433	308,745,538	17,941,286	5.81%	1.03%

Sources: Pew Research Center, at www.pewsocialtrends.org/asianamericans-maps, and American Fact Finder, at <http://factfinder2.census.gov>

TABLE 4

SELECTED SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC CHARACTERISTICS OF ASIAN INDIANS IN VIRGINIA (ALONE OR IN ANY COMBINATION)

Households by Type	Asian Indians	Total Population
Total households	34,428	2,974,481
Percent married-couple family	70.5%	51.1%
Percent male householder, no wife present, family	2.4%	4.1%
Percent female householder, no husband present, family	3.7%	12.0%
Percent nonfamily households	23.5%	32.8%
Percent households with one or more people under 18 years	47.7%	33.7%
Percent households with one or more people 65 years and over	10.3%	22.4%
Average household size	2.99	2.56
Educational Attainment		
Population 25 years and over	67,727	5,208,536
Percent high school graduate or higher	93.9%	86.1%
Percent bachelor's degree or higher	77.7%	33.8%
Place of Birth		
Total population	103,348	7,841,754
Percent foreign-born	69.1%	10.8%
Employment Status		
Civilian labor force	57,190	4,065,244
Percent unemployed	4.3%	5.9%
Industry		
Civilian employed population 16 years and over	54,730	3,824,131
Agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting, and mining	0.1%	1.1%
Construction	1.3%	7.5%
Manufacturing	3.0%	8.2%
Wholesale trade	0.9%	2.2%
Retail trade	9.3%	10.8%
Transportation and warehousing, and utilities	3.7%	4.2%
Information	4.9%	2.5%

TABLE 4

SELECTED SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC CHARACTERISTICS OF ASIAN INDIANS IN VIRGINIA (ALONE OR IN ANY COMBINATION)

Finance and insurance, and real estate and rental and leasing	10.5%	6.7%
Professional, scientific, and management, and administrative and waste management services	36.1%	14.2%
Educational services, and health care and social assistance	15.8%	20.3%
Arts, entertainment, and recreation, and accommodation and food services	6.5%	8.0%
Other services, except public administration	2.1%	5.2%
Public administration	5.8%	9.0%
Income and Benefits (In 2010 Inflation-Adjusted Dollars)		
Total households	34,428	2,974,481
Percent earning \$24,999 or less	6.8%	18.8%
Percent earning \$25,000 to \$49,999	9.3%	22.1%
Percent earning \$50,000 to \$74,999	15.3%	18.3%
Percent earning \$75,000 to \$99,999	16.2%	13.2%
Percent earning \$100,000 to \$149,999	26.1%	14.9%
Percent earning \$150,000 to \$199,999	12.2%	6.4%
Percent earning \$200,000 or more	14.2%	6.3%
Median household income	\$101,829	\$61,406
Source: 2006-2010 American Community Survey Selected Population Tables, at: http://factfinder2.census.gov/		

GRAPH 2

COMPARING THE EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT AND INCOMES OF ASIAN INDIANS IN VIRGINIA TO ALL OTHER VIRGINIANS

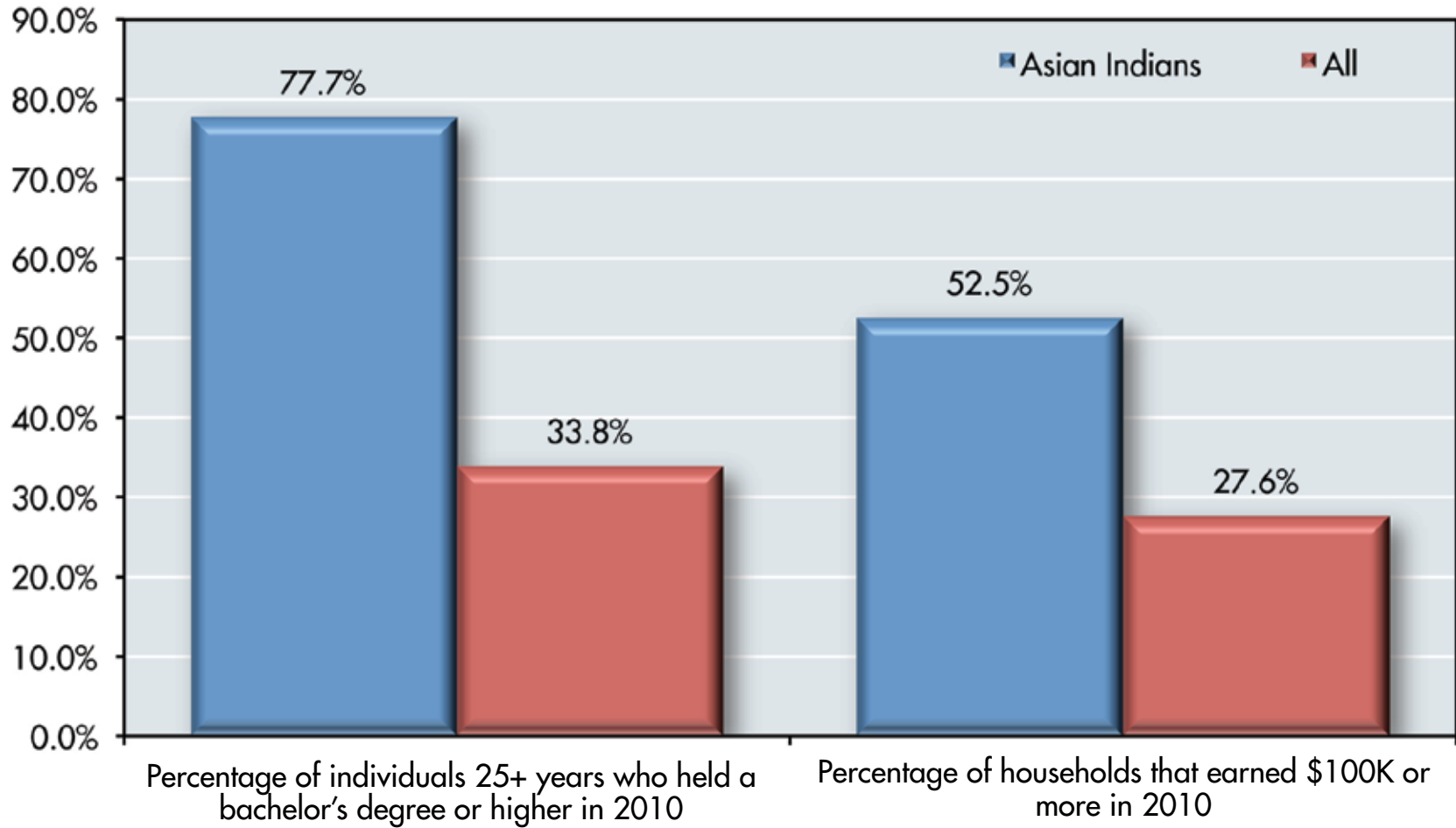


TABLE 5

VALUES AND ATTITUDES OF ASIAN INDIANS IN THE U.S. AND HAMPTON ROADS

	U.S. Total	U.S. Asians	U.S. Asian Indians	Hampton Roads Asian Indians
Percent saying they are satisfied with their lives today	75%	82%	84%	93%
Percent saying they are satisfied with the way things are going in this country today	21%	43%	47%	45%
Percent rating their personal financial situation as “excellent” or “good”	35%	51%	67%	82%
Percent saying “Most people who want to get ahead can make it if they’re willing to work hard”	58%	69%	75%	82%
Percent saying being a good parent is one of the most important things in their lives	50%	67%	78%	93%
Percent saying helping other people in need is one of the most important things in their lives	20%	28%	32%	32%
Percent saying they have personally experienced discrimination or been treated unfairly in the past 12 months because they are Asian/Asian Indian)	NA	19%	18%	23%
Percent saying they consider themselves a Republican in politics today	26%	18%	10%	14%
Percent saying they consider themselves a Democrat in politics today	32%	33%	44%	46%
Percent saying they consider themselves an independent in politics today	36%	34%	34%	21%
Sources: for U.S. data: Pew Research Center, “The Rise of Asian Americans,” at: www.pewsocialtrends.org/files/2013/01/SDT_Rise_of_Asian_Americans.pdf ; for Hampton Roads data: Informal online survey taken by 94 members of Hampton Roads’ Asian Indian community (April-May 2013)				

Census figures show that more than one-third (36.1 percent) of Virginia’s Asian Indians are employed in the professional and scientific services sector, followed by 15.8 percent in educational services and health care. Hampton Roads universities and medical centers employ many of the Asian Indians in our region; another influential contingent works in the engineering and IT fields. Asian Indians occupy yet another niche in our regional economy as small-business owners; they own or operate numerous restaurants, convenience stores and hotels across Hampton Roads. According to a recent estimate from the coordinators of Taste of India, an annual celebration held on the Old Dominion University campus, Indian Americans own at least 90 hotels and 60 small retail businesses locally.

The members of Hampton Roads’ Asian Indian community reflect the diversity of India itself, which consists of 28 different states and seven union territories. Hundreds of languages and dialects are spoken throughout India. Although Hindi and English are used countrywide, each state has its own set of officially

recognized languages. For Asian Indians in Hampton Roads, therefore, English is not merely the language of their adopted home country, but it is also a common language of understanding among other émigrés. While Hampton Roads’ Asian Indians hail from all regions of the subcontinent, an especially large number have family ties to the western state of Gujarat, and are native speakers of Gujarati. Any gathering of Asian Indians in Hampton Roads is likely to include families with common Gujarati surnames, such as Patel and Shah.

The Pew Research Center survey suggests that nationwide, Asian Indians lean toward the Democratic Party politically. Our own informal online survey, which was completed by 94 members of Hampton Roads’ Asian Indian community, returned similar results (see Table 5). Hampton Roads’ Asian Indians have been notably active in the political arena as financial donors. Indeed, one measure of this community’s substantial political and economic clout is the turnout of prominent elected officials at Hampton Roads’ largest Asian Indian gatherings. Senators Tim Kaine and Mark Warner both made formal appearances at Taste

of India in April 2013; Congressmen Scott Rigell and Bobby Scott attended India Fest, another area celebration, in September 2012.

The U.S. India Political Action Committee (USINPAC) is not explicitly partisan, but was established in 2002 to present a unified political voice among Asian Indians, and to “impact policies that concern the Indian-American community”(www.usinpac.com/home/aboutusinpac).

In addition to supporting Asian Indian political candidates, USINPAC has been most active in promoting U.S.-India relations as well as immigration and visa reforms. Nationwide, a growing number of second-generation Asian Indians have run successfully for office; Governors Nikki Haley of South Carolina and Bobby Jindal of Louisiana (both Republicans) are notable examples. This spring, Aneesh Chopra ran for lieutenant governor of Virginia as a Democrat. Although he was defeated in the primary election, he holds the distinction of being the Commonwealth’s first Asian Indian to seek statewide office.

Nearly all of the long-standing Asian Indian residents of Hampton Roads with whom we spoke commented on the remarkable growth of the region’s Indian community and community infrastructure within the past decades. Community leader Jagdish Singh recalled in a *Virginian-Pilot* article that when she and her husband moved to the area in 1967, there were “only three other Indian families in all of Hampton Roads” (Megan Hoyer, *The Virginian-Pilot*, Feb. 5, 2011).

Saileela Venkatesan told us about the shopping trips to the Washington, D.C., area that she and other families coordinated in the 1970s because there were no local stores that specialized in Indian groceries. Swagat Indian Spices and Specialties opened on Aragona Boulevard in Virginia Beach 25 years ago, and today numerous Indian and international grocery stores can be found throughout Hampton Roads. Nawab on Military Highway in Norfolk became the region’s first Indian restaurant in 1992. Owner Ashok Arora has since opened additional locations in Virginia Beach, Williamsburg and Newport News. Today, the Nawab restaurants are joined by many other establishments throughout the region that serve Indian cuisine.

The Pew survey findings indicate that 84 percent of Asian Indians nationwide are satisfied with their lives today; an impressive 93 percent of the participants

in our informal survey responded the same way (see Table 6). The first- and second-generation Asian Indians with whom we spoke seemed pleased overall with their lives in Hampton Roads. Many told us that they appreciated that the Asian Indian community here was vibrant and active, but not oppressively so. There is no one neighborhood or locality where an overwhelming number of Indians have chosen to live; the degree of assimilation with the rest of the population is high. Several people told us they appreciated the mild climate in Hampton Roads, compared to regions farther north. Others mentioned that Hampton Roads’ proximity to other East Coast Indian communities – particularly New York/New Jersey and the greater Washington, D.C., area – meant that close friends and family members were not far away.

Are Asian Indians subject to discrimination here in Hampton Roads? A minority (23 percent) of our online survey respondents indicated that they had personally experienced discrimination or been treated unfairly in the past 12 months because they were Indian or of Indian ancestry. Reflecting on this result, a younger member of the regional community stated, “Even though 23 percent say they have faced discrimination, I was surprised to see such a huge figure, since in my four years in Hampton Roads, I have never been a victim of discrimination. I have faced discrimination in New York and Chicago, but never in Hampton Roads.”

In person, a few members of the Asian Indian community in Hampton Roads suggested to us that a greater problem has been Indians discriminating among themselves – referring to the social, religious and ethnic distinctions that sometimes can create a sense of division in Asian Indian communities. Overall, however, there seems to be a broad consensus that the relatively small and geographically dispersed Asian Indian population in Hampton Roads, compared with those in larger urban areas, has tended to enhance cooperation among those whose families originally came from different backgrounds in India.

Institutions

Hampton Roads is home to several institutions that provide focal points for the Asian Indian community. These organizations work cooperatively with one another and have, in many cases, overlapping constituencies. They are distinguished by a generous commitment to charitable giving that has benefited scholarship funds and other worthy causes in our region and beyond. The groups' representatives emphasize that they welcome the participation of not just Asian Indians, but all members of the broader Hampton Roads community.

ASIAN INDIANS OF HAMPTON ROADS

The most long-standing of these organizations is Asian Indians of Hampton Roads (AIHR), which was established in the 1970s as Asian Indians of Tidewater. As summarized to us by AIHR President Mohit Gour, the organization's purpose is twofold: to provide support and a point of connection for the region's Asian Indians, and to raise awareness and promote India's cultural heritage throughout Hampton Roads. AIHR currently has around 70 formal members, exerting a broader influence through its sponsored events and participation in other community initiatives.

AIHR's signature event is the Republic Day commemoration, held in honor of the adoption of India's constitution on Jan. 26, 1950. This smaller-scale event, also in its 17th year, usually includes a panel discussion to address political and economic issues that concern India and U.S.-India relations. Nirupama Rao, the Indian ambassador to the United States, participated in the most recent Republic Day event at the Hindu Temple and Community Center in Chesapeake.

SITES OF RELIGIOUS GATHERING: THE HINDU TEMPLE AND COMMUNITY CENTER OF HAMPTON ROADS, THE BAPS SHREE SWAMINARAYAN MANDIR AND THE GURUDWARA SAHIB

Approximately 80 percent of the population of the Republic of India today are followers of Hinduism. Muslims comprise the next-largest religious group, followed by Christians, Sikhs, Buddhists, Jains, Zoroastrians and others. This

diversity has enriched the religious landscape of Hampton Roads, where Asian Indian followers of all these world religions now reside.

The Hindu Temple and Community Center of Hampton Roads, located on Dominion Boulevard in Chesapeake, is the largest religious gathering point for Asian Indians in our region. A first temple opened on the site in 1991; after an accidental fire three years later, the current facility was constructed and has been in use since 1997. The organization's website states that "the Hindu religion is not simply a religion of rituals, since it integrates culture and religion into our daily lives and our Temple Complex will provide a focal point for the religious as well as the cultural activities of our community" (Ram C. Dahiya, "A Brief History of the Hindu Temple of Hampton Roads," www.hindutemplehr.org/about-temple).

The temple is open every day for religious observances and a wide array of other group meetings and activities. The temple sponsors dance classes, a cricket club, a group for seniors known as Jeevan Sandhya Mandal and cultural classes for children. Yoga therapy classes each Sunday morning attract area residents who are not necessarily practicing Hindus. The celebration of major Hindu festivals like Diwali and Holi are well-attended highlights of the temple's calendar.

Another Hindu site of worship is the BAPS Shree Swaminarayan Mandir, located on Jefferson Avenue in Newport News. BAPS, short for Bochasanwasi Shri Akshar Purushottam Swaminarayan Sanstha, is a worldwide organization with roots in the Indian state of Gujarat.

The center of Hampton Roads' Sikh community is Chesapeake's Gurudwara Sahib. The Gurudwara is sponsored by the Guru Nanak Foundation of Tidewater, named after the first Sikh prophet. The Gurudwara was constructed in 2006; before then, Sikh gatherings were held throughout the region in private homes or other temporary facilities. Community representative Surinder Dhillon estimates that Hampton Roads is now home to approximately 100 Sikh families, many of whom emigrated from India's Punjab region. The Gurudwara's regular Sunday services attract families from as far away as Williamsburg to the north, and Elizabeth City to the south. Universal equality and service to the community are among the doctrines emphasized in Sikhism. As such, Hampton

Roads' Sikhs have been active participants in regional interfaith initiatives and charitable causes that assist the less fortunate. Since 2011, the Guru Nanak Foundation has sponsored an annual "Fun for Everyone Day" with Indian cuisine and activities for all ages on the grounds of the Gurudwara.

AAP I – HAMPTON ROADS

Asian Indians are well represented in our region's medical community. The 2013 Taste of India program listed 146 physicians of Indian origin who practice medicine in Hampton Roads. Eighty-two are identified as current or recent active members of AAP I, the Association of American Physicians of Indian Origin. AAP I is a nationwide organization, founded in 1982, that provides a networking forum for its members "to excel in patient care, teaching and research and to pursue their aspirations in professional and community affairs" (<http://aapiusa.org/about/mission.aspx>). Both first- and second-generation Asian Indians are active in the Hampton Roads chapter; they represent a wide spectrum of medical specialties and regional backgrounds.

Since 2010, AAP I-HR has sponsored an annual charity gala at the Half Moone Cruise and Celebration Center in downtown Norfolk. The event was motivated by members' desire to give back to the Hampton Roads community. In 2011, outgoing chapter president Rajnish Dhawan told *The Virginian-Pilot* that "we all treat patients almost every day, and we see the underprivileged in the hospitals. ... The whole idea was: If we can collect funds, we can promote free clinics and help the untreated population" (Gary Ruegsegger, *The Virginian-Pilot*, Feb. 11, 2011). Current chapter president Pramod Malik reports that the galas have raised more than \$300,000 for area clinics and an Eastern Virginia Medical School scholarship over the past four years. (We've also heard that the galas are great fun to attend.)

TASTE OF INDIA

The largest single gathering of Asian Indians in our region is Taste of India, an annual celebration that has been held at Old Dominion University's Ted Constant Convocation Center each April since 2007. In that year, a group of local businesspeople, inspired by Richmond's long-standing Festival of India, committed the seed money to establish a similar tradition in Hampton Roads.



The intent was, as explained to us by event co-organizer Vinod Agarwal, to create a great show and provide the regional community with a "taste of India" without having to fly there. In this, Taste of India's organizers have certainly succeeded. The all-day festival features cuisine from area restaurants, shopping opportunities, children's activities and a full schedule of live entertainment, including Indian classical and Bollywood dance performances. A collegiate bhangra competition draws dancers from throughout Virginia and beyond. Around 7,500 people attended Taste of India 2013.

Proceeds from Taste of India have benefited free clinics and other nonprofit organizations in our region, including Children's Hospital of The King's Daughters, the Food Bank of Southeastern Virginia and the Old Dominion University Educational Foundation. This year, a \$5,000 Taste of India/AAP I Scholarship was awarded to Granby High School senior Anne Mugpayo.

Final Comments

Asian Indians in Hampton Roads are distinctive. They are well educated, earn higher-than-average incomes and increasingly wield a modicum of political clout because of their fundraising for political races. As already noted, for the first time, an Asian Indian, Aneesh Chopra from Northern Virginia, ran for a statewide office (lieutenant governor). Chopra was the Commonwealth's secretary of technology and subsequently was appointed as the United States' chief technology officer by President Barack Obama. By contrast, most other Asian American ethnic groups generally have eschewed political activity. Asian Indians, however, understand the corridors of power in the U.S. and now exercise considerable influence in matters political.

Asian Americans sometimes are referred to as the "model" ethnic group in this country. Asian Indians in turn sometimes are labeled the "model group of the model group." The impressive achievements of Asian Indians in Hampton Roads reflect what one member of the regional community aptly characterizes as the "tenacity, flexibility and peaceable nature of Indians, who have been able to adapt and thrive in a foreign country."

True, there is considerable self-selection involved in the representation of Asian Indians we see in Hampton Roads; they are not fully representative of their home country. Even so, their sparkling achievements in Hampton Roads can only be applauded. Their impressive accomplishments vastly exceed their numbers. We are fortunate to have them in our midst.



