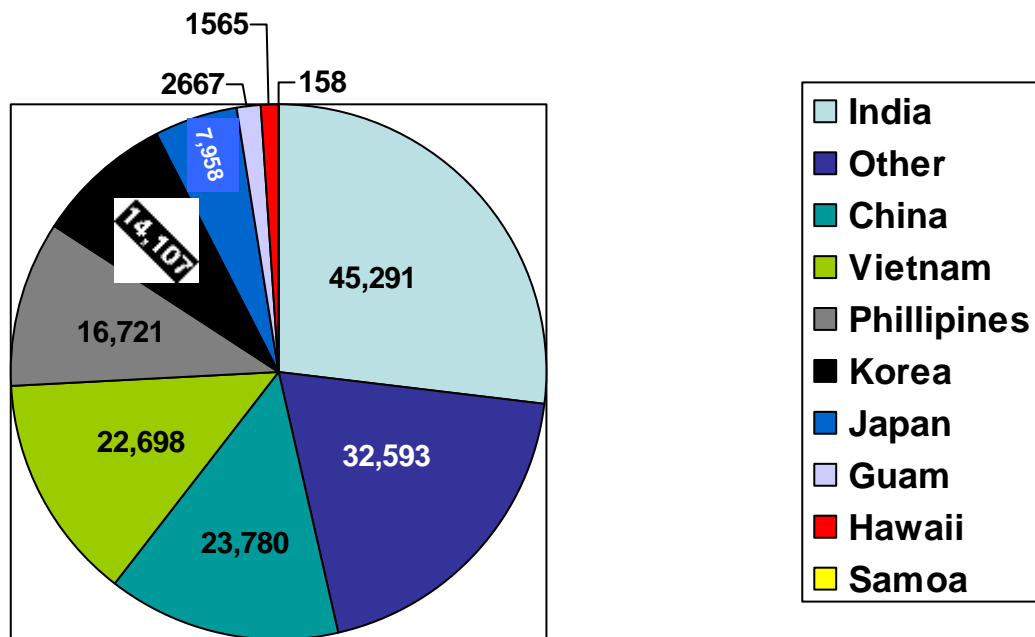


Asian American/Pacific Islanders Awareness Month

Asian American/Pacific Islanders Awareness is celebrated each May in recognition of two important milestones in Asian/Pacific-American history: the arrival in the United States of the first Japanese immigrants on May 7, 1843; and the contributions of Chinese workers to the building of the transcontinental railroad, completed on May 10, 1869.

The term “Asian American/Pacific Islanders” or AAPI applies to 43 ethnic groups, including 28 Asian groups and 15 Pacific Islander groups. According to the 2006 American Community Survey of the U.S. Census Bureau, Asian American/Pacific Islanders make up approximately 2% of the population of North Carolina.

Asian American/Pacific Islanders in NC 2006 American Community Survey



Asian family values are very different from those of Western families. In Western cultures, the nuclear family stresses the independence and autonomy of individual family members. In traditional Asian families, it is the family unit, not the individual, which is most valued. A person is seen as a product of many generations of family history. This view is reinforced by customs such as ancestor worship, family celebrations, funeral rites, and carefully kept genealogic records. An individual's actions reflect on their extended family and on their ancestors.

In traditional Asian families, marriages are arranged by parents or grandparents. The husband is the leader, provider and protector of the family. The wife is the mother and homemaker. A woman may have stronger emotional attachments for her children, than for her husband. Sons are often favored over daughters. In many extended families, children are cared for by many adults such as grandparents, aunts/uncles, and cousins. In families with many children, parents may delegate child care to the older children, particularly the eldest daughter. In old age, parents expect to be taken care of by their children.

There were Chinese residing in the United States as early as 1785. However, large scale immigration from China did not begin until the discovery of gold in California in 1848. The 1965 Immigration Act brought a large number of Chinese, Koreans, and Filipinos to the United States. Most Japanese migrated to Hawaii or the U.S. mainland before 1924. A large number of Southeast Asian refugees arrived in the United States after the end of the Vietnam War. A second wave of these refugees arrived following 1978. This group escaping persecution included Vietnamese, Chinese Vietnamese, Cambodians, Lao, Hmong, and Mien. Although data indicates that Asian Americans have the highest median family income (\$61,592) in North Carolina, many of the more recently arrived groups are living below the poverty level.