ASIAN AMERICANS AND PACIFIC ISLANDERS

Editor’s Note: Diversity Best Practices defines Asian Americans as those living in the United States who have origins in Far East, Southeast Asian or Indian subcontinent countries, such as Cambodia, China, India, Japan, Korea, Malaysia, Pakistan, the Philippine Islands, Thailand, and Vietnam. Pacific Islander is used to describe U.S. residents who have origins in Hawaii, Guam, Fiji, Northern Mariana Island, Palau, Samoa, Tahiti, and Tonga.

Demographics

• As of July 2013, the Asian population had grown to 19.4 million, with a growth rate of 2.9 percent over 2012. (U.S. Census Bureau)

• The Asian alone population made up 5.3 percent of the overall U.S. population in 2013; while Pacific Islanders made up 0.2 percent. (U.S. Census Bureau)

• The Asian population is projected to be the second fastest-growing group, with an increase of 128 percent projected for the Asian alone population and an increase of 143 percent projected for the Asian alone or in combination population. (U.S. Census Bureau)

• In 2014, the Asian alone group accounted for 5.4 percent of the total population. This group is projected to see its share of the total nearly double, accounting for 9.3 percent of the total population in 2060. (U.S. Census Bureau)

• The Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander population is projected to increase 63 percent for this race group alone and 101 percent when the group is considered alone or in combination with other races. (U.S. Census Bureau)

• The Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander population (either alone or in combination with other races) is projected to represent less than 1 percent of the nation’s total population in both 2014 and 2060. (U.S. Census Bureau)

• Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders represent more than 30 countries and ethnic groups that speak more than 100 different languages. (One World Nations Online)
more than 30 countries and ethnic groups that speak more than 100 different languages. (One World Nations Online)

• Fully 74 percent of Asian adults in 2012 were foreign born and international migration accounted for about 61 percent of the total change in the Asian American population from 2012 to 2013. (Pew Research Center)

• Asian American growth is expanding beyond the traditional hubs of the West Coast and New York City; however, the overall population continues to congregate in urban, metropolitan areas. (Nielsen Asian American Consumer Report)

• Several counties across 12 states experienced an Asian American population increase of more than 200 percent over the last decade, while all states except Hawaii experienced 33 percent or more growth. (Nielsen Asian American Consumer Report)

Household

• Asian Americans are more likely than all American adults to be married (59 percent vs. 51 percent). (Pew Research Center)

• Asian American children are more likely than all U.S. children to be raised in a household with two married parents (80 percent vs. 63 percent). (Pew Research Center)

• Some 28 percent of Asian American children live with at least two adult generations under the same roof, twice the share of Whites and slightly more than the share of Blacks and Hispanics who live in such households. (Pew Research Center)

• Slightly more than 58 percent of Asian Americas own their own home. (Pew Research Center)

• Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders have larger households than the national average, with an average of 3.02 for Asian Americans and 3.63 for Pacific Islanders. The national average is 2.58 persons. (Center for American Progress)

• Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders are more likely to provide caregiving for older family members at home and the vast majority believes that caring for parents is expected of them, more than any other racial or ethnic group. (AARP)

• In 2013, 16 percent of Asian or Pacific Islander children (557,000) were living in single-parent homes, compared to 67 percent of Black children, 42 percent of Latino children and 25 percent of White children. (Annie E. Casey Foundation)
Married-couple households made up 81 percent of the family households that an Asian householder maintained and 80 percent that a White, non-Hispanic householder maintained. (U.S. Census Bureau)

**Education**

- Asians have the highest proportion of college graduates of any race or ethnic group in the country and this compares with 28 percent for all Americans age 25 and older. (U.S. Census Bureau)
- Forty-nine percent of Asian Americans have a bachelor’s degree, 86.1 percent have a high school degree or more and 13.9 percent have less than a high school education. (Pew Research Center)
- Fifty percent the Asian alone population age 25 and older have a bachelor’s degree or higher level of education. This compared with 28.5 percent for all Americans 25 and older. (U.S. Census Bureau)
- More than 14 percent (14.5 percent) of Native Hawaiians and Other Pacific Islanders alone age 25 and older had a bachelor’s degree or higher in 2011. This compared with 28.5 percent for the total population. (U.S. Census Bureau)
- About 85 percent of Native Hawaiians and Other Pacific Islanders alone age 25 and older had at least a high school diploma in 2011. This compared with 85.9 percent of the total population. (U.S. Census Bureau)
- About 4 percent of Native Hawaiians and Other Pacific Islanders alone age 25 and older had obtained a graduate or professional degree in 2011. This compared with 10.6 percent for the total population this age. (U.S. Census Bureau)
- Slightly more than 21 percent of Asians age 25 and older have an advanced degree (e.g., master’s, Ph.D., M.D., or J.D.), compared to 10 percent for all Americans age 25 and older. (U.S. Census Bureau)

**Workplace**

**Labor Force**

- About 48 percent of civilian employed single-race Asians age 16 and older work in management, business, science, and arts occupations such as financial managers, engineers, teachers, and registered nurses. (U.S. Census Bureau)
- Slightly more than 17 percent of civilian employed single-race Asians age 16 and older work in service occupations; 21.1 percent in sales and office occupations; 9.6 percent in production, transportation, and material mov-
ing occupations; and 3.3 percent in natural resources, construction, and maintenance occupations. (U.S. Census Bureau)

• About 7.4 million Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders work in the United States, making up 5.3 percent of the total U.S. workforce. About 7.1 million of these workers are Asian Americans; about 300,000 are Pacific Islanders. (Center for Economic and Policy Research)

• Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders work across a wide range of industries. For women, health care industries are the largest employers. The largest single industry for men is restaurants. (Center for Economic and Policy Research)

• Earnings inequality is higher for Asian American and Pacific Islander workers than it is for workers from other racial and ethnic groups. The ratio of a high-paid to a low-paid Asian American or Pacific Islander worker is about 6-to-1, compared to about 5-to-1 for Whites, Blacks, and Latinos. (Center for Economic and Policy Research)

• The Asian American and Pacific Islander workforce is almost 20 times larger today than it was in 1960. (Center for Economic and Policy Research)

• Even after factoring in the substantial growth in the rest of the U.S. workforce, the share of Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders in the total workforce has increased about tenfold in the last five decades – from about one-half of one percent of all U.S. workers in 1960 to more than 5 percent today. (Center for Economic and Policy Research)

• While Asian Americans represent roughly 5 percent of the U.S. population, only 1.5 percent of Fortune 500 CEOs are Asian. There are nine Asian American CEOs in the Fortune 500. (Center for Work-Life Policy)

• Asian Americans represent only 1 percent of corporate board members, and around 2 percent of college presidents. (Center for Work-Life Policy)

Income

• Among the race groups, Asian Americans households had the highest median income in 2013 ($67,065). In contrast, the median income for non-Hispanic White households was $58,270, for Black Households $34,598, and for Hispanic households $40,963. (U.S. Census Bureau)

• Median annual personal income for full-time, year-round Asian American workers is $48,000. (Pew Research Center)

• Median household income for Pacific Islanders was $55,000. (Center for American Progress)

• Asian households’ last annual increase in median income was in 1999. (U.S. Census Bureau)
• For Asians, the 2013 poverty rate was 10.5 percent, which represented 1.8 million people in poverty. (U.S. Census Bureau)

• From 2007 to 2011, the number of Asian poor increased by more than half a million, representing an increase of 38 percent (a 37 percent increase for Asian Americans in poverty and a 60 percent increase for Pacific Islanders in poverty). The general poverty population grew by 27 percent. (National Coalition for Asian Pacific American Community Development)

Employment/Unemployment

• In 2011, 50.1 percent of the Asian American unemployed were unemployed long term, up from 48.7 percent in 2010. In both of these years, the Asian American share slightly exceeded the African American share. (Economic Policy Institute)

• The Asian American labor force is the most highly educated labor force by race, yet Asian Americans’ long-term unemployment share remains very high. (Economic Policy Institute)

• While the Asian American unemployment rate was consistently lower than the White rate from 2007 through 2008, the Asian American rate sometimes equaled and even exceeded the White rate during some quarters in 2009, 2010, and 2011. In the final quarter of 2011, the Asian American unemployment rate exceeded the White rate by 0.5 percentage point. (Economic Policy Institute)

• Highly educated Asian Americans suffer from higher unemployment rates than similarly educated Whites. Specifically, Asian American workers with at least a bachelor’s degree are more likely to be unemployed than White workers with the same level of education — a fact that is particularly salient because 57.2 percent of the Asian American labor force falls into this category, compared with less than two-fifths (38.6 percent) of the White labor force. (Economic Policy Institute)

• Overall, Asian Americans with a college degree had an unemployment rate of 6.4 percent in 2011, while Whites with the same degree had an unemployment rate of 4.3 percent. (Economic Policy Institute)

• The unemployment rate of those with an advanced degree was 3.6 percent for Asian Americans, compared with 3.0 percent for Whites. (Economic Policy Institute)

• Of those with some college but less than a college degree, the unemployment rate was 7.3 percent, compared with a White rate of 6.7 percent. In contrast, Asian Americans with a high school education or less fared better than similarly educated White workers. (Economic Policy Institute)
• About 16.2 percent of Asian Americans are working part time, compared to 20.1 percent of Whites, 17.5 percent of Blacks, and 19.1 percent of Hispanics. (U.S. Department of Labor)

**Buying Power**

• Asian buying power rose to $770 billion in 2014, with 5.5 percent of the U.S. population claiming Asian ancestry. (Selig Center for Economic Growth).

• Asian buying power is expected to grow to $1 trillion in 2019. (Selig Center for Economic Growth).

• Asian American buying power is up 523 percent since 1990. (Nielsen)

• Asian consumers’ share of the nation’s total buying power was 6 percent in 2014, up from only 3.8 percent in 2000. (Selig Center for Economic Growth)

• Asian Americans have emerged as the most prolific and impulsive buyers in the nation. As a group, their spending power outpaces that of millennials — those in their 20s and early 30s. (Nielsen)

• Asian American households spent an average of $61,400 in 2012, nearly 20 percent higher than the general household ($51,400). (Nielsen)

• Asian American households on average earn more than general U.S. households and are more likely to have incomes of $100,000 or more. (Nielsen)

• In 2012, the average Asian American household outspent the general U.S. household in almost every major category, including housing ($20,800 vs. $16,900), transportation ($10,100 vs. $9,000), food ($8,000 vs. $6,600) and apparel ($2,400 vs. $1,700). (Nielsen)

• The Asian American family has a larger-than-average household and often has multiple generations living together. Asian-headed households were more likely to have two or more adult generations living in the home; this translates into more wage earners, pushing up the overall household income and purchasing power. (Nielsen)

• An estimated 77 percent of Asian Americans have made an Internet purchase in the past year, compared to 61 percent of the general population. They are also twice as likely to spend $2,500 or more per year on Internet shopping. (Nielsen)

**Industry Impact**

• In 2012, Asian American households spent 19 percent more than overall households, over-indexing in key categories including food, transportation, housing, clothing, and insurance. (Nielsen)

• Compared to the average shopper Asian Americans visit stores more frequently but spend about the same annually as non-Asians. (Nielsen)
• Asian Americans are interested in value purchases as they spend more dollars on deals compared to non-Asians. However, they will pay a premium for quality and brands. (Nielsen)

• Asian Americans make more trips than the general population to warehouse clubs, mass merchandisers, and drug stores. (Nielsen)

• Asian Americans are the leading segment of online shoppers. Seventy-seven percent of Asian Americans have made an Internet purchase in the past year, compared to 61 percent of the general population. (Nielsen)

• Asian American shoppers prefer Costco over Walmart, choose brand names over generics, and lead the nation as a demographic in online buying. (Nielsen)

• Thirty-five percent of Asian American shoppers identified as being a “swayable shopaholic.” (Nielsen)

• Thanks to their higher median income levels, Asian households spent nearly 10 percent more than the average U.S. household on homes, public transportation, education, pets and toys, and pensions and Social Security in 2010. They also spent more on food (groceries and dining out) and clothing. (Selig Center for Economic Growth).

• Asian households spent less than average on alcoholic beverages, utilities, household operations, health care, vehicle purchases, personal care products and services, housekeeping supplies, and entertainment. (Selig Center for Economic Growth).

• Asian Americans prefer Japanese auto brands, with Toyota and Honda being the most popular. Among the Asian American subgroups, Asian Indians and Koreans have the highest purchase intention. (interTrend Communications)

• Nearly one-third of Asian Americans shop at department stores at least one to three times a week. (interTrend Communications)

• There are 2.7 persons per Asian household compared to 2.5 persons for the average household. Asians have only 1.5 vehicles per household compared to 2 vehicles for the average household. (Selig Center for Economic Growth).

• About 59.4 percent of Asians are homeowners compared to 66.6 percent for the total population or 71.6 percent for Whites. (Selig Center for Economic Growth).

• The median value of homes owned by Asians is $393,700, which is nearly double the median value reported for the typical U.S. homeowner ($197,600), and reflects the fact that Asians are much more likely to live in new homes in urban areas where home prices are relatively high. (Selig Center for Economic Growth).
Internet

- Asian Americans have the highest Internet usage of any ethnic group – 87 percent, compared to 67 percent for Latinos, 65 percent for Blacks, and 76 percent for Whites. (Pew Research Center)

- Among English-speaking Asian Americans, 80 percent have a broadband connection at home and 87 percent use the Internet. (Pew Research Center)

- Eighty-nine percent of Asian Internet users said they were “online yesterday,” while 87 percent said they were online “every day.” (Pew Research Center)

- Ninety percent of Asians have a cell phone, 74 percent have a laptop, and 77 percent have wireless connectivity. (Pew Research Center)

- Asian Americans are digital pioneers, adopting technology faster than any other segment. With higher rates of smartphone usage, online video consumption, and Internet connectivity, they are redefining the way they watch, listen, and interact. (Nielsen)

- Seventy percent of Asian American consumers use smartphones (the highest usage among any other groups) to browse daily news, interact with friends through mobile messaging apps, and even frequently make personal purchases through mobile applications. (Nielsen)

- Asian Americans (75.3 percent) are much more likely than non-Asian-Americans (67.4 percent) to bank online. (Nielsen)

Media

- In-language and culturally relevant media and services are key to reaching a broad segment of Asian Americans. Even those who primarily speak English outside their homes are tuning in to in-language media and consider their cultural heritage as an integral part of their identity. (Nielsen)

- Eighty-seven percent of Asian American adults are print magazine readers, reading an average of 10.4 issues per month, compared to 9.7 issues for all U.S adults. (MNI Targeted Media, Inc.)

- Twenty-six percent of Asians read the newspaper annually, compared to 36 percent of Whites, 32 percent of Blacks and 23 percent of Latinos. (Pew Research Center)

- Asian Americans spend 10 percent less time than average watching television, 18 percent less time than average reading magazines, and 55 percent less time than average listening to radio. (Multimedia Mentor)

- Asian Americans watch an average of 92.3 hours of television a month, compared to 218 hours for Blacks, 155.3 hours for Whites, and 123.2 for Latinos. (Nielsen)
• Asian Americans watch almost 10 hours of video on the Internet each month, about double the amount watched by non-Latino Whites. Asian Americans also watch more video on mobile devices than Whites, five hours and 12 minutes a month, compared to four hours and 51 minutes for Whites. (Nielsen)

• Seventy-seven percent of Asian Americans speak a language other than English at home. (Nielsen)

Marketing/Advertising

• Twenty-seven percent of Asian Americans feel that many ads targeted to them are offensive. (Association of National Advertisers)

• Asian Americans tend to prefer in-language advertising. Only 17 percent prefer English-only advertising with the majority preferring either in-language or bilingual advertisements. (interTrend Communications)

• Nearly three out of four Asian American adults read magazines, at an average of 8 magazines per month, similar to the general U.S. population. (Magazine Publishers of America)

• More than 120 magazines exist that target Asian Americans by their country of origin, including 20 Chinese, 45 Vietnamese, 16 Korean, 11 Filipino, 13 Indian, and 18 Japanese. (Magazine Publishers of America)

• Ranked by the number of Asian American adult readers, the top five magazine categories are news weeklies, general editorial, women’s, home service, and business/finance. (Magazine Publishers of America)

Holidays & Observances

Asian American and Pacific Islander Heritage Month
Takes place in May and is a celebration of the culture, traditions, and history of Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders in the United States.

Gatan-sai (New Year)
A January 1 Japanese Shinto celebration of the new year (oshogatsu). This day is one of the most popular for shrine visits, and many pray for inner renewal, health, and prosperity.

Makar Sankranti
Falling on January 14, according to the lunar calendar, Makar Sankranti is one of the most auspicious days for Hindus, coinciding with the beginning of the sun's northward journey when it enters the sign of Capricorn.

Lantern Festival
This celebrates the end of the Chinese New Year season. In the Republic of China, people make elaborate lanterns to hang in temples and public parks and hold contests to choose the most beautiful one.
Maha Sivaratri (Shiva’s Night)
This Hindu festival honors Shiva, one of the most important deities in Hinduism.

Holi
This Hindu festival of colors celebrates the coming of spring throughout India and the new harvest of the winter crop.

Qing Ming (Tomb Sweeping Day)
On this Chinese public holiday people pay homage to their ancestors by visiting graves and leaving flowers and food.

Hanuman Jayanti
This Hindu holiday celebrates the birthday of Hanuman, a monkey god and devotee of Rama, a symbol of physical strength and perseverance.

Dragon Boat Festival
This public holiday, which features dragon boat races, honors Ch’ Yuan, China’s first major poet, who drowned himself in 278 B.C.E. to protest the injustice and corruption of his prince’s government.

Qixi Festival
This festival falls on the seventh day of the seventh lunar month on the Chinese calendar. Girls traditionally demonstrate their domestic arts on this day and make wishes for a good husband.

Krishna Janmashtami
This is one of the great Hindu night festivals. Worshippers fast and go to temples to see dance dramas enacting scenes from the life of Lord Krishna, one of the most popular Hindu deities.

Onam (Harvest Festival)
Celebrated in Kerala, India, this holiday is observed at the beginning of the month of Chingam, the first month of Malayalam Calendar.

Ganesh Chaturthi
Celebrated by Hindus around the world as the birthday of Lord Ganesha. It is observed during the Hindu month of Bhadra (mid-August to mid-September)

Mid-Autumn Moon Festival (Chung-ch’iu)
The Moon Festival dates back more than 3,000 years, to moon worshiping in the Shang Dynasty when ancient Chinese emperors worshipped the moon in the autumn to bring a plentiful harvest the next year.

Navaratri/ Saraswati Puja/ Dussehra
A Hindu festival honoring the divine mother, Shakti.
Diwali
One of the most important festivals of the year for Hindus, the celebration lasts for five days and combines a number of festivals to celebrate different gods and goddesses and events in their lives.

Bodhi Day (Rohatsu)
Marks the time when Prince Siddhartha Gautama, a spiritual teacher and founder of Buddhism, positioned himself under the Pipul tree and vowed to remain there until he attained supreme enlightenment.

Ka Molokai Makahiki Festival
Celebrated in January, this Hawaiian festival spans a four-month season of thanksgiving for the bountiful harvest.

Summary Overview with Diversity and Inclusion Practices
Asian Americans make more money and are better educated than any other racial group in the country, and their numbers also are growing faster than any other group. And, according to research from Pew Research Center, they tend to be more satisfied than the average American with their lives, finances, and the direction of the country. Asian Americans also place a higher value than other Americans on marriage, parenthood, working hard, and gaining success in their careers.

In popular media as well as scholarly research, Asian Americans are often referred to as the “model minority,” a group that is perceived to have achieved a higher degree of success than the general population. In the United States, the term was originally coined to describe Japanese Americans. But, it has evolved over time (and with improved cultural awareness and increasing influx of other Asian immigrant groups into the country) to become associated also with Jewish Americans and Asian Americans in general, specifically East Asians (Chinese, Japanese, and Korean) and South Asians (such as Bangladeshi, Indian, and Pakistani).

The statistics seem to support the moniker. Asian Americans do indeed appear to enjoy not only better income and higher levels of education, but also the advantages of a stable family structure and the resources to live in communities with lower crime rates.

Asian Americans are more likely than all American adults to be married (59 percent vs. 51 percent). In fact, married-couple households made up 81 percent of the family households that an Asian householder maintained and 80 percent that a White, non-Hispanic householder maintained. Asian American children are more likely than all U.S. children to be raised in a household with two married parents (80 percent vs. 63 percent).
More than 86 percent of Asian Americans are high school graduates. Asians have the highest proportion of college graduates of any race or ethnic group in the country; 49 percent of Asian Americans have a bachelor’s degree and 50 percent have a bachelor’s degree or higher, compared with 28.5 percent for all Americans. Just over 21 percent have an advanced degree such as a master’s, Ph.D., M.D., or J.D., compared to 10 percent for all Americans.

Among the race groups, Asian Americans households had the highest median income in 2013 ($67,065). In contrast, the median income for non-Hispanic White households was $58,270, for Black households $34,598 and for Hispanic households $40,963. Slightly more than 58 percent of Asian Americas own their own home.

Asian Americans also represent a powerful influence as consumers, using their discretionary income to fuel the economy. Asian American spending power outpaces that of millennials — those in their 20s and early 30s — and their buying power rose to $770 billion in 2014 and is expected to grow to $1 trillion by 2019. Asian American households spend an average of $61,400, nearly 20 percent higher than the general household ($51,400), over-indexing in key categories including food, transportation, housing, clothing, and insurance. They prefer Costco over Walmart, choose brand names over generics, and lead the nation as a demographic in online buying.

In many ways, Asian Americans have achieved “the American dream”: good education, good job, good income, good family, etc. Yet, in spite of all this seeming prosperity and stability these glowing statistics may mask a contradiction in the Asian American experience in the United States – contradiction that still keeps Asian Americans away from the perceived mainstream of popular culture.

For example, while statistics show that, as a whole, Asian American families have higher median incomes than White families, this is actually because, in most cases, the typical Asian American family has more members who are working than the typical White family. It’s not unusual for an Asian American family to have four, five, or more members working. 3 In fact Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders have larger households than the national average, with an average of 3.02 for Asian Americans and 3.63 for Pacific Islanders. The national average is 2.58 persons.

From 2007 to 2011, the number of Asian poor increased by more than half a million, representing an increase of 38 percent (a 37 percent increase for Asian Americans in poverty and a 60 percent increase for Pacific Islanders in poverty). The general U.S. poverty population grew by 27 percent over the same time period. (The only other racial or ethnic group with a larger percentage increase was Latinos at 42 percent.)
Earnings inequality is higher for Asian American and Pacific Islander workers than it is for workers from other racial and ethnic groups. The ratio of a high-paid to a low-paid Asian American and Pacific Islander worker is about 6-to-1, compared to about 5-to-1 for Whites, Blacks, and Hispanics.

Advanced education is not a guarantee of employment success for Asian workers, either. Generally, Asian American unemployment tracks slightly lower than that of White Americans, but highly educated Asian Americans suffer from higher unemployment rates than similarly educated Whites. Asian American workers with at least a bachelor’s degree are more likely to be unemployed than White workers with the same level of education — a fact that is particularly salient because 57.2 percent of the Asian American labor force falls into this category.

Companies are supportive of employee resource groups (ERGs) focused on helping Asian American employees find commonality and acceptance in the workplace. ERGs are sponsored by companies to improve employee engagement, relationships with existing and prospective customers and, ultimately, the company’s bottom line. Asian ERG members meet other employees and managers, exercise leadership skills, and experience their companies through their own eyes and unique experiences as well as others’ eyes and experiences.

For example, Fidelity’s Asian employee resource group provides a forum for support and mentoring of Asian employees through networking and professional development events. The group works closely with the company’s human resources team to recruit and retain Asian employees and ensure they have clear paths to advancement throughout the company. The group also provides valuable cultural insight and knowledge to the business to enable it to reach out to Asian customers in the U.S. and globally with sensitivity and inclusiveness.

The Allstate Asian American Network, or 3AN, is 775 members strong and, in fact, grew its membership by more than 25 percent in 2013 alone. Asians are among the fastest-growing employee segments at the company. The group focuses its efforts on developing leaders through professional development, networking, cultural awareness and knowledge sharing. Internally, 3AN works to advance Asian Americans at Allstate while collaborating externally with communities, customers, and organizations to be ambassadors for the Allstate brand.

3AN impacts business results through focus groups, translation services and other activities that help illuminate the Asian American agenda. The group hosts leadership events, such as the Ascend (Executive Insights Series) leadership training session for high-potential future leaders and the “Becoming Mainstream: American Culture and Advanced Communication Skills” series.

Turning to the marketplace, Asian Americans still struggle to be understood. Twenty-seven percent of Asian Americans feel that many ads targeted to them
are offensive, promoting stereotypes such as the Asian computer nerd, the immigrant “fresh off the boat,” or the inscrutable, mysterious Asian sage. In-language and culturally relevant and sensitive media and services are key to reaching a broad segment of Asian Americans and dispelling stereotypes. Even those who primarily speak English outside their homes are tuning in to in-language media and consider their cultural heritage as an integral part of their identity.

It’s important to recognize that there are deep layers and levels of difference between Asian ethnic groups. Asians are keenly aware of the differences between people of Chinese, Japanese, Korean, Filipino, Southeast Asian, and South Asian descent, which are reflected in many aspects of Asian culture in terms of dress, language, food, music, manners, and mores. However, messages and images of strong belief in family, frugality, and community are valued and widely embraced by this group.

Many companies are making efforts to be more culturally in tune with the Asian American consumer. For example, Toyota actively targets Asian Americans, having begun its Asian American marketing program in 2003. The program started with marketing for the Sienna mini-van, which is now the number one mini-van among Asian Americans. Toyota now directly markets the Camry, Corolla, Highlander, Prius, and Rav4 to Asians, proactively involving multicultural insights in the process of product research and creating messaging for marketing campaigns that will appeal to Asian American values and spending habits.

Southwest Airlines is the title sponsor of the 100-float Chinese New Year Festival and Parade in San Francisco. Southwest’s unique, fun-centered brand attributes are incorporated in the Lunar New Year outdoor campaign with clever, cheerful messaging tailored to the Chinese American community, which is emblazoned on street pole banners, bus shelters, and billboards. The sponsorship and messaging create close ties between Southwest and its Chinese American customers.

During Chinese Lunar New Year, Pacific Gas and Electric Company (PG&E) includes the Chinese character “Fu” (meaning fortune) on a form that offers a significant monthly discount on residents’ bills for qualifying households. The character is displayed upside down to symbolize “good luck arrives” because in Chinese the sound for the word “Dao” (upside down) is identical to the sound for “to arrive.”

Positive, culturally adept images of Asian Americans still remain few and far between in popular culture. So far, there has been no “Cosby Show” revolution for the Asian community. For example, the much-publicized but short-lived 1994 sitcom “All-American Girl” starring comedian Margaret Cho failed to get a foothold. The show, which was ground-breaking in the sense that it depicted a middle-class Korean American family, was criticized
for promoting negative stereotypes. Cho claimed she was pressured by the show’s producers to act “more Asian” and then criticized by them for not acting “Asian enough.”

But there are increasingly more positive images of Asian Americans, in roles that do not necessarily hinge on their Asian-ness, on shows like the remake of “Hawaii Five-O,” “The Mentalist,” and “The Mindy Project.”

A 2015 entry that’s getting a lot of buzz is ABC’s “Fresh off the Boat,” which focuses on a Chinese American family experiencing the culture shock of moving from Washington D.C. to Florida and opening a country-western-themed restaurant.

Endnotes

5 Allstate corporate website https://www.allstate.com/diversity/3an.aspx