



QUEER & API: ENGAGING WITH API COMMUNITIES

THE VIETNAMESE AMERICAN COMMUNITY

BASIC DEMOGRAPHICS

- ◆ Over 1.7 million Vietnamese Americans live in the United States, making up the country's 4th largest Asian American ethnic group.
- ◆ Between 2000 and 2010, the rate of growth of the Vietnamese American population was 42% compared to 10% for the total U.S. population.
- ◆ California has the largest population of Vietnamese in the U.S., with the largest number—over 425,000 living in Southern California.
- ◆ 64% of Vietnamese Americans are foreign-born.
- ◆ 3 out of 4 (73%) Vietnamese American immigrants are U.S. Citizens.
- ◆ 28% of Vietnamese Americans are under age 18, while the median age of the community is 34.

2.8% of Asian and Pacific Islander adults in the U.S identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender, numbering 324,300. API LGBTQ individuals live in areas with higher API populations, suggesting high numbers in California, New York, Virginia, Maryland, Texas, Illinois, and other API population centers.

OUR PURPOSE

BACKGROUND & METHODOLOGY

API Equality-LA, in partnership with Viet Rainbow of Orange County, API Equality-Northern California, and Asian Americans/Pacific Islanders in Philanthropy collected research on Asian and Pacific Islander communities (API) and views on same-sex marriage and lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer (LGBTQ) people.

These factsheets highlight key findings from a combination of one-on-one interviews, focus groups, surveys conducted in California's Chinese, Filipino, Korean and Vietnamese communities, and review of secondary sources. Research was conducted in each ethnic community in English and in the participants' primary languages: Mandarin, Tagalog, Korean and Vietnamese. Participants were of varying genders, age and education levels. This research was designed to explore views on same-sex marriage as well as values, attitudes, and feelings related to LGBTQ people.

Factsheets are for community members and LGBTQ advocates seeking to gain a better understanding of these communities, so they can better reach out and build understanding across difference among and within our communities.

MIGRATION AND GROWTH

The Vietnamese community has grown and established itself as one of the largest Asian American ethnic communities in the country. Vietnamese arrived in the U.S. in large numbers after the Vietnam War ended in 1975. This migration included refugees seeking stability after the turmoil of the war and during a period of continuing political violence throughout the region. Over one million refugees from Southeast Asia resettled in the U.S in the aftermath of the war. The experience of war and migration, political history and past violence have uniquely influenced this largely immigrant Vietnamese American community, presenting particular challenges for more recent immigrants with fewer resources.

The median income for Vietnamese households is just \$26,748, well below the national median of \$31,834. The poverty rate in the Vietnamese American community is 14%, 16% for seniors (age 65 and up). Inadequate housing, health care, and access to educational opportunities are prevalent problems. Vast numbers of Vietnamese Americans make up the immigrant workforce in low-wage industries.

Despite progress, Vietnamese Americans continue to face challenges in achieving social advancement and economic prosperity, suggesting opportunities for further political empowerment. Additionally, the traditional perception of the Vietnamese community as a monolithic conservative political base is changing, particularly among younger generations.



LANGUAGE BARRIERS

While 84% are bilingual and speak a language other than English, over half (51%) of Vietnamese Americans are considered Limited English Proficient. Fully one-third (35%) live in households that are considered linguistically-isolated, that is all individuals age 14 and over have limited English language skills. These data suggest language barriers for the community that can lead to cultural and political marginalization that can affect access to resources and civic engagement and community empowerment.

The need for resources and information in Vietnamese is essential to serve the community adequately. Additionally, the role of English-speaking bilingual and bi-cultural Vietnamese Americans as important conduits of information cannot be underestimated.

Older Vietnamese Americans, especially those who speak primarily Vietnamese and very little English, are especially reliant on Vietnamese language media (newspapers, radio and television) for information. They are also more likely to seek information from religious leaders or institutions.

Vietnamese Americans surveyed under the age of 30 turn more often to English-language television or movies, the internet, and school and teachers. These younger Vietnamese Americans are much less likely to look to religious leaders or other leaders in the community.

At all ages, Vietnamese Americans turn to friends, and sometimes to co-workers and family when seeking information. Close or trusted personal connections in general seem to be more influential than any specific media resources or even specific community leaders in general.

FAMILY, STABILITY AND SECURITY

Among the issues that are important to the Vietnamese community are:

- Family and Traditions
- Economic Stability and Security
- Education and Well-being for Children
- Immigration of Extended Family and Loved Ones
- Connections to Vietnam

While these priorities may vary by individual and based on age, migration background, educational attainment, religiosity, gender, and other differences, these are values that are prominent in the Vietnamese American community and culture.



In addition, spirituality, in particular Buddhism, plays an important role in shaping the views of the Vietnamese Americans. A 2012 Pew Research survey showed that Buddhists make up 43% of Vietnamese Americans; Catholics and Protestants are at 30% and 6%, respectively; while 20% identify as unaffiliated with any religion. The influence of Buddhism may be a factor in a pronounced sense of tolerance and neutrality in the community around values and beliefs.

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API EQUALITY-LA
Asians and Pacific Islanders for LGBT Equality

Founded in 2005, API Equality-LA is an LGBTQ rights and racial justice organization building grassroots community power and organizing for change in the Asian and Pacific Islander community. www.apiequalityla.org



VROC is a community-based organization founded by Vietnamese-Americans with a diverse prism of sexual orientations and gender identities. www.vietroc.org