

Hmong Americans in the 2013 American Community Survey

By Mark E. Pfeifer, PhD, Hmong Studies Internet Resource Center, November 2014

The U.S. Census Bureau released new data for Hmong Americans in the fall of 2014. The figures included in the 2013 American Community Survey 1 year estimates involve estimates based on surveys distributed to only a subset of the U.S. population and are thus problematic in some respects in comparison to the decennial census that is intended to be distributed to all Americans but is also problematic when counting minority populations. Nevertheless, the recently released American Community Survey (ACS) data do present insights into population growth, demographics, education and socioeconomic progress of Hmong Americans. The data provided in this article are from the Selected Population Profiles for the “Hmong Alone Or in Any Combination” category in the ACS. The U.S. California and Minnesota Hmong profiles are also included in this brief analysis. Profiles of Hmong populations in other states are not sizable enough to be available in this most recent data release.

The new estimate of the U.S. Hmong population in the 2013 ACS data is 286,211 up from around 260,000 in the 2010 U.S. Census. The estimated California population now tops 100,000 and Minnesota is close to 80,000. The estimated U.S. Hmong median age continues to move upward to just over 22 years but this is still a decade and a half younger than the overall U.S. median of 37.5. The estimated average U.S. Hmong household size (5.09) while decreasing compared to previous decades is just under double that of the overall U.S. population (2.65).

An estimated 13.2% of Hmong Americans over 25 have earned a Bachelor’s Degree according to 2013 ACS data, compared to 18.4% of all Americans. However, an estimated 14.5% of Hmong Minnesotans have earned a Bachelor’s compared to 10.1% of Hmong Californians. An important shift has occurred in educational attainment by gender compared to previous U.S. census and ACS data releases. According to the new ACS estimates, 17.1% of U.S. Hmong women have earned a Bachelor’s compared to 15.4% of U.S. Hmong men. Just over 40% of U.S. Hmong are estimated to speak English “less than very well”, a not insignificant figure but decreased notably from earlier decades, demonstrating the impact of time and acculturation in the United States.

In terms of socioeconomic outcomes, the estimated median household income of U.S. Hmong in the 2013 ACS was \$51,056 compared to \$52,250 for all Americans. The per capita figure of \$12,407 for U.S. Hmong was however, much lower than that of the overall U.S. population (\$28,184). The estimated poverty rate for U.S. Hmong in 2013 was just over 24% compared to around 11% for the entire U.S. population. Across all major income variables, California Hmong do not seem as well off as Hmong in Minnesota or the U.S. Hmong population as a whole. Finally, the estimated homeownership rate of Hmong in Minnesota was just under 48% compared to around 44% among Hmong across the U.S., while the homeownership rate of Hmong in California was just below 30%. For more Hmong-related census data visit the census data page at the Hmong Studies Journal website at www.hmongstudiesjournal.org as well as the 2010 Census issue of the Hmong Studies Journal.

About the Author: Mark E. Pfeifer, PhD is Director of Programs and Development and Librarian at the Hmong Cultural Center in Saint Paul. He is also editor of the Hmong Studies Journal and a Lecturer in Anthropology and Social Sciences at SUNY-Polytechnic and Empire State College in New York. He is editor of *Diversity In Diaspora: Hmong Americans in the Twentieth Century* published by the University of Hawaii Press and *Hmong-Related Works: 1996: An Annotated Bibliography* published by Scarecrow Press.

2013 American Community Survey Profile for Hmong Americans

	U.S. Hmong	California Hmong	Minnesota Hmong
Population	286,211	101,096	77,575
Median Age	22.1 (37.5)	21.2 (35.7)	21.8 (37.7)
Average Household Size	5.09 (2.65)	5.52 (2.97)	5.06 (2.49)
Population Over 25 with a Bachelor's Degree	13.2 (18.4)	10.1 (19.5)	14.5 (22.4)
Population Over 25 with a Graduate or Professional Degree	3.1 (11.2)	3.4 (11.5)	2.4 (11.1)
Population Over 25 with a Bachelor's Degree or Higher	16.3 (29.6)	13.5 (31.0)	16.9 (33.5)
Male, Bachelor's Degree or Higher	15.4 (29.6)	10.9 (31.3)	15.9 (32.8)
Female, Bachelor's Degree or Higher	17.1 (29.7)	15.6 (30.8)	17.9 (34.2)
Speak English "Less Than Very Well"	40.5 (8.5)	44.9 (18.9)	41.8 (4.2)
Median Household Income	51,056 (52,250)	39,980 (60,190)	54,568 (75,112)
Median Per Capita Income	12,407 (28,184)	11,274 (29,513)	11,949 (31,358)
Poverty Rate (All Families)	24.2 (11.6)	35.1 (12.6)	23.8 (7.2)
Homeownership Rate	43.6 (63.5)	29.2 (53.8)	47.7 (71.6)

Data is from the 2013 American Community Survey 1 Year Estimates, "Hmong Alone or in Any Combination", figures for the overall U.S. population are provided in parentheses.