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Cultures & immigration beat: Journal tracks Hmong progress

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A new study shows the Hmong-American population is maturing and making strides in several key areas. But many still struggle with poverty and disparities in health services.

The findings, published recently in a special issue of the Hmong Studies Journal, are based on an analysis of 2010 census data.

People of Hmong ancestry have been a part of American society since the first refugees arrived in the 1970s. They settled mainly in California, Minnesota and Wisconsin.

But for the first time, there are now Hmong people living in every state, according to the Hmong Studies Journal.

Other report findings:

- More than half of all Hmong-Americans were born in the United States.
- English is no longer a barrier for the majority of Hmong-Americans.
- The Hmong population in Minnesota, like in the nation, is starting to age compared with 1990 and 2000 data; but the Hmong median age in Minnesota is 19.7 years, well below the median age of the overall Minnesota population -- 37 years.
- More Hmong-Americans in Minnesota and nationally are attaining higher education. Educational gaps between Hmong-American women and men have been eliminated.
- The U.S. Hmong poverty rate has significantly improved in the past couple decades, decreasing from 64 percent in 1990 to 38 percent in 2000 and 25 percent in 2010.

Despite the progress, gaps in income and health services persist.

The poverty rate for Hmong-Minnesotans was 26 percent in 2010 -- more than three times as high as the 7 percent poverty rate for the entire state population.

The study also found that 11.9 percent of Hmong-Minnesotans had no health insurance coverage, compared with less than 9 percent of all Minnesotans. But nearly 40 percent of Hmong-Minnesotans had public health coverage, as opposed to 25 percent of all Minnesotans.

To read the issue, go to www.hmongstudiesjournal.org.

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