

Asian Americans comprise about 2 percent of the national population but earn about 2.6 percent of all bachelor's degrees, 2.7 percent of master's degrees, and 3.4 percent of doctoral degrees every year. Roughly a quarter of all doctorates in life sciences are awarded to Asian American students as are one-fifth of doctoral degrees in physical sciences. Asian Americans earn 18 percent of doctoral degrees in engineering and 12 percent of doctoral degrees in the social sciences.

Not all Asian Americans are all-around high achievers, of course. About one-quarter of the Asian American population are hampered by limited communication skills and can therefore only consider college or careers in science and technology.

Nationally, about 9 of 10 of Asian American high school graduates attend some form of postsecondary education. Some 42 percent of them attend two-year colleges, 42 percent attend public four-year institutions, and 16 percent enroll in private four-year colleges and universities.

The recent success of Asian Americans in gaining access to higher education is a concern to whites and other minority groups and has led some institutions—particularly highly selective colleges where Asian Americans comprise 6 to 20 percent of the enrollment—to consider limiting their numbers. It has also led to social tension on campuses.

Unofficial limits may already exist. Because a high percentage of Asian Americans apply to private institutions, their acceptance rates at private colleges are actually significantly lower than the acceptance rates of other groups. A 1986 study by Breland, Wilder, and Robertson on institutional selectivity found that in 1985, among 98 selective institutions, Asian Americans were somewhat more likely to be accepted to the most selective public institutions and less likely to be accepted to the most selective private institutions. Across all types of institutions, Asian Americans were less likely than average to be accepted by both private and public institutions, by about 6 percent in the case of public and 14 percent in private institutions.

Often, when English-proficient Asian Americans are rejected, it is on nonacademic, personal grounds or on the basis of planned major fields rather than on inadequate grades, high school rank, or test scores. Asian immigrants, particularly those whose English proficiency is limited, will be more likely to be turned down on the basis of their inability to communicate and because too many want to enroll in engineering or physical science programs. Competition for finite resources, laboratory space and equipment, and/or financial aid, have been cited by some faculty and admission officers as deterrents to Asian American acceptances.

## References

"Timeline: The Long, Hard Road to Educational Equality" by Sheppard Ranbom and Janice Lynch. (Educational Record, Fall 1987-Winter 1988)

"Double Jeopardy: Women of Color in Higher Education" by Deborah Carter, Carol Pearson, and Donna Shaulik (Educational Record, Fall 1987-Winter 1988)

"Asian Americans Fight the Myth of the super Student" by Jayjia Hsia (Educational Record, Fall 1987-Winter 1988)

"One-Third of a Nation" (American Council on Education, Education Comm. of the States)