A DEMOGRAPHIC SNAPSHOT OF SOUTH ASIANS IN THE UNITED STATES
July 2012 Update

Between 2000 and 2010, the South Asian American population became the fastest growing major ethnic group in the United States and has emerged in new areas of the country. This factsheet, based primarily on Census 2010 data, provides a national snapshot of the community. We encourage community leaders, government entities, policymakers, and the media to use this data to better understand South Asian Americans and help inform their engagement with this community.
Note: *This factsheet is updated from a previous version released in February 2012. It is being issued in light of subsequently released data from the U.S. Census Bureau on the Bhutanese, Maldivian, and Nepali communities as well as on the voting-age population.*

Who are South Asians?

The South Asian community in the United States includes individuals who trace their ancestry to Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, the Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka. The community also includes members of the South Asian diaspora – past generations of South Asians who originally settled in other parts of the world, including Africa, Canada, the Caribbean, Europe, the Middle East, and other parts of Asia and the Pacific Islands.

Fast facts about the South Asian American population

Below are some key facts about the national population in the United States from Census 2010 data:

- ❖ **Over 3.4 million South Asians live in the United States.**[i]
- ❖ Indians comprise the largest segment of the South Asian community, making up over 80% of the total population, followed by Pakistanis, Bangladeshis, Nepalis, Sri Lankans, Bhutanese, and Maldivians. [See Table 1]
- ❖ It is estimated that at least 66,000 Indo-Caribbeans live in the United States.[ii]

Within the South Asian community, various populations experienced unprecedented growth between 2000 and 2010.
- ❖ Comparing Census data from both 2000 and 2010, **the South Asian community as a whole grew 81% over the decade.**
- ❖ The Bhutanese community experienced the most significant growth, jumping at least 8,255%.[iii]
- ❖ After the Bhutanese community, the next fastest growing South Asian group were Nepalis followed by Maldivians, Bangladeshis, Pakistanis, Sri Lankans, and Indians. [See Table 1]
- ❖ The Indo-Caribbean population increased an estimated 23%.[iv]

Note: While the data in this factsheet provides a baseline understanding of the community, various South Asian populations are often undercounted or overcounted in the Census. This is due to various factors, including non-Indian individuals needing to write-in their ethnicity on Census forms[v] and fear among certain populations to participate in government surveys. As with all demographic resources, this factsheet should be coupled with data from community-based research to provide a comprehensive understanding of the community.

Table 1: Changes in South Asian American Population, 2000 to 2010

	Single Ethnicity Reported			Single and Multiple Ethnicities Reported		
	2000	*2010*	*Percent Change*	*2000*	*2010*	*Percent Change*
Bangladeshi	41,280	128,792	212%	57,412	147,300	157%
Bhutanese	183	15,290	8,255%	212	19,439	9,069%
Indian	1,678,765	2,843,391	69%	1,899,599	3,183,063	68%
Maldivian	27	98	263%	51	127	149%
Nepali	7,858	51,907	561%	9,399	59,490	533%
Pakistani	153,533	363,699	137%	204,309	409,163	100%
Sri Lankan	20,145	38,596	92%	24,587	45,381	85%
TOTAL SOUTH ASIANS	**1,901,791**	**3,441,773**	**81%**			

How does the South Asian American population compare to other ethnic groups?

South Asians are the fastest growing population, among all major ethnic groups, in the country.

- ❖ The growth rate for the South Asian population greatly exceeds that of the Asian American population as a whole (43%), as well as that of the Hispanic American population (43%), and non-Hispanic whites (1.2%).[vi]

South Asians make up one of the largest Asian American ethnic groups in the country.

- ❖ Indians and Pakistanis are the third and seventh largest Asian American ethnic groups, respectively
- ❖ Bangladeshis, Nepalis, Sri Lankans, and Bhutanese each rank among the top twenty Asian American ethnic groups.

Where is the highest concentration of South Asian Americans in the country?

States that have historically had significant South Asian populations continued to do so in 2010.

- ❖ The five states with the largest South Asian populations are **California, New York, New Jersey, Texas, and Illinois.**
- ❖ Metropolitan areas with the largest South Asian populations are **New York City, Chicago, Washington DC, Los Angeles, and San Francisco-Oakland.**
- ❖ Over the past ten years, the Washington DC metropolitan area overtook the Los Angeles metropolitan area as the area with the third largest South Asian population.

Various South Asian groups have also gravitated to different metropolitan areas in the country. [See Table 2]

- ❖ Significant numbers of Bhutanese community members have settled in the South, particularly in Dallas, Atlanta, and Houston.
- ❖ The Detroit and Philadelphia metropolitan areas appear in the top five locations for the Bangladeshi community.

Table 2: Top 5 U.S. Metropolitan Areas for Selected South Asian Groups, 2010
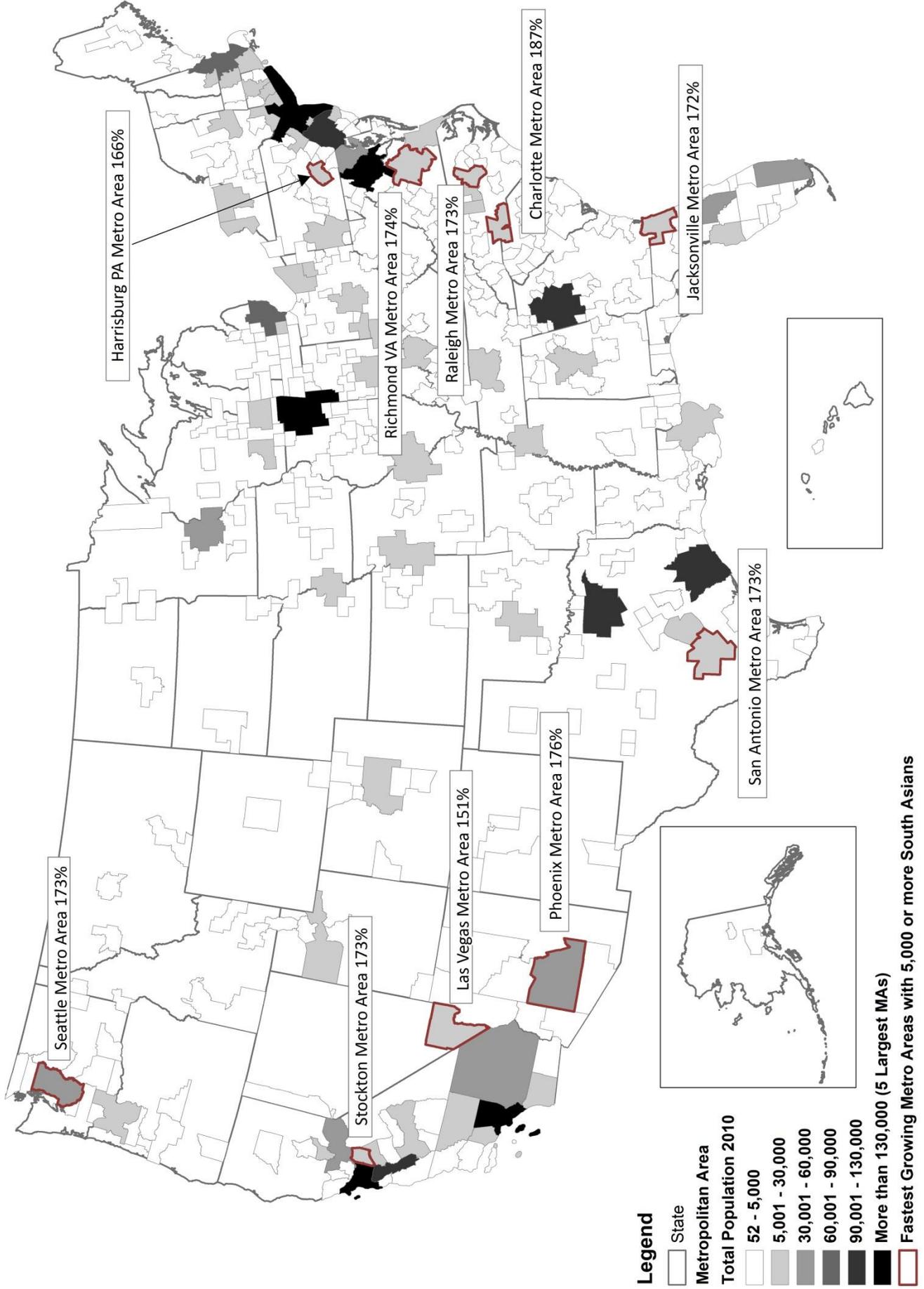
Bangladeshi	Bhutanese	Indian	Nepali	Pakistani	Sri Lankan
1. New York	1. Dallas	1. New York	1. New York	1. New York	1. New York
2. Washington DC	2. Atlanta	2. Chicago	2. Washington DC	2. Houston	2. Los Angeles
3. Detroit	3. Houston	3. Washington DC	3. Dallas	3. Chicago	3. Washington DC
4. Los Angeles	4. Seattle	4. Los Angeles	4. Boston	4. Washington DC	4. San Francisco
5. Philadelphia	5. Phoenix	5. San Francisco	5. San Francisco	5. Dallas	5. Dallas

Which metropolitan areas experienced the largest growth of South Asian Americans?

Beyond the areas that historically have large South Asian populations, the **community has experienced the greatest growth outside of these "traditional" metropolitan areas.** [See Map]

- ❖ **The South Asian population grew the most in Charlotte, NC**, increasing 187% over the past ten years. This was followed by Phoenix; Richmond, VA; Raleigh, NC, San Antonio, Seattle, and Stockton, CA; Jacksonville, FL; Harrisburg, PA; and Las Vegas.
- ❖ Among the ten fastest growing South Asian metropolitan areas, only the Seattle and Phoenix metropolitan areas had more than 30,000 South Asians in 2010, while the smallest of the top 10 fastest growing metropolitan areas was the Harrisburg, PA metropolitan area with close to 6,500 South Asians. The remaining metropolitan areas had between 10,000 and 25,000 South Asians.

Total Population of all Six South Asian Groups by Metropolitan Area

Harrisburg PA Metro Area 166%

Charlotte Metro Area 187%

Jacksonville Metro Area 172%

Richmond VA Metro Area 174%

Raleigh Metro Area 173%

San Antonio Metro Area 173%

Seattle Metro Area 173%

Stockton Metro Area 173%

Las Vegas Metro Area 151%

Phoenix Metro Area 176%

Legend

State

Metropolitan Area

Total Population 2010

- 52 - 5,000
- 5,001 - 30,000
- 30,001 - 60,000
- 60,001 - 90,000
- 90,001 - 130,000
- More than 130,000 (5 Largest MAs)
- Fastest Growing Metro Areas with 5,000 or more South Asians

How many South Asian Americans are eligible to vote?

With the 2012 elections underway, there has been an increase in the number of South Asians of voting age in the United States since 2000. [See Table 3]

❖ **South Asians are becoming an increasingly powerful segment of the American electorate** – with U.S. citizens of voting age increasing between 99% and 471% since 2000.[vii]

❖ The population of non-U.S. citizens of voting age has also increased since 2000. While not currently eligible to vote, this population includes green card holders who may become U.S. citizens in the future and will add to the growing electorate.

Table 3: Changes in Population of South Asian Americans of Voting Age, 2000 to 2010[viii]

	U.S. Citizens			Non-U.S. Citizens		
	2000	*2010*	*Percent Change*	*2000*	*2010*	*Percent Change*
Bangladeshi	8,527	48,692	471%	19,249	42,174	119%
Bhutanese	N/A	678		N/A	10,551	
Indian	576,784	1,150,296	99%	660,714	1,001,411	52%
Nepali	N/A	6,557		N/A	34,367	
Pakistani	52,755	160,921	205%	58,356	92,597	59%
Sri Lankan	5,944	14,424	143%	8,468	16,146	91%

How can stakeholders use this data?

Community leaders, government entities, policymakers, and the media can use this data to better understand South Asian Americans and help inform their engagement with this rapidly growing community. Below are a few examples of how this data can be used:

- **Community-based organizations** can use this data as background for funding requests, media interviews, and advocacy with government entities.
- **Government agencies** at the federal, state, and local levels can use this data as the basis for engaging in further and targeted data collection and community outreach on various issues (such as health disparities, immigration trends, and public benefits).
- **Legislators** at the federal, state, and local levels can use this data to better understand where South Asian constituents reside in order to deepen engagement with the community and reflect their concerns in policymaking.
- **Media outlets** can use this data as background for stories covering the South Asian angle on various issues, including the elections, immigration, and civil rights.

About South Asian Americans Leading Together and the Asian American Federation

About SAALT

South Asian Americans Leading Together (SAALT) is a national nonpartisan non-profit organization whose mission is to elevate the voices and perspectives of South Asian individuals and organizations to build a more just and inclusive society. SAALT is also the coordinating entity of the National Coalition of South Asian Organizations (NCSO), a network of 41 organizations around the country the serve, organize, and advocate on behalf of the South Asian community in the United States. For more information about SAALT, visit www.saalt.org

About AAF

The Asian American Federation's (AAF) mission is to advance the civic voice and well-being of Asian Americans. AAF provides leadership and resources to address community needs, undertakes research to increase the knowledge of and to shape policies affecting the Asian American community, and invests in the human capital and infrastructure of community nonprofits to enable sustained community empowerment. For more information about AAF, visit http://www.aafederation.org/.

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[i] When discussing the South Asian community in aggregate, this factsheet uses the "single ethnicity" ("race alone" in Census Bureau terminology) response data to avoid double counting individuals; "single ethnicity" refers to persons who marked only one race. When discussing distinct populations within the South Asian community individually, this factsheet uses the more inclusive "single and multiple ethnicities" ("race alone or in combination" in Census Bureau terminology) data. Because the latter figure is a tally of responses, there may be an overlap of individuals who responded with more than one South Asian group; therefore, "single and multiple ethnicity" results should *not* be totaled across groups (i.e. "Total South Asians Alone or in Combination"). As with all data releases, this information should be used to provide a baseline for understanding the community, and should be coupled with data from community-based research to provide the most comprehensive understanding of the South Asian community.

[ii] These figures may not include population totals for South Asian diaspora populations in the United States, as the 2010 Census does not collect data on ancestry. The Indo-Caribbean population was estimated from the Public Use Microdata Sample (PUMS) for the 2000 Census long form and the 2005-2009 American Community Survey (ACS) by using multiracial data for the "Asian Indian" category and various Caribbean responses in the ancestry variables. Our analysis estimates that there were 53,386 Indo-Caribbeans in the United States in 2000 and an estimated 65,650 Indo-Caribbeans in the 2005-2009 ACS. These estimates do not address issue of misclassification of responses by the Census Bureau.

[iii] This population upsurge is likely due to sizable resettlement of Bhutanese refugees into the United States since 2008.

[iv] See note *ii* above.

[v] Census forms ask individuals to self-report their race/ethnicity. The only South Asian-specific option printed on the Census 2010 form that individuals could check off for the race/ethnicity was "Asian Indian." Individuals from Bangladesh, Bhutan, Nepal, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, and the diaspora found that their specific ethnicity was not specifically delineated on the form. Non-Indian South Asians had to choose between "Asian Indian" or writing in another ethnicity under the "Other Asian" category. Yet, many non-Indian South Asians may have automatically checked off "Asian Indian" upon seeing it as the only South Asian option printed on the form, leading to a likely overcount of the Indian population and undercount of other South Asian populations.

[vi] Figures calculated on a single race/ethnicity basis.

[vii] Going forward, the ACS will replace the decennial Census for citizenship data on our communities.

[viii] Figures calculated on a single race/ethnicity basis. Figures for 2010 calculated from combining population counts for 18 years and older from 2010 Census and ratio of U.S. Citizen to Non-U.S. Citizens from 2010 5-year American Community Survey Selected Population Tables; figures for 2000 calculated from 2000 Census Sample data.