



Education level of Asian American workers obscures true employment picture, new EPI analysis finds

Asian Americans with bachelor's and advanced degrees experience higher unemployment rates than their white counterparts, but Asian American high school dropouts have a much lower unemployment rate than similarly-situated white Americans, a new Economic Policy Institute report finds. In the study, [*Hidden Disadvantage: Asian American Unemployment and the Great Recession*](#), EPI researcher Algernon Austin analyzes Asian American unemployment nationwide and in California, Hawaii, New Jersey, New York and Texas.

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CONTACT
Karen Conner
or
Eve Turow
202-775-8810
news@epi.org

The overall unemployment rate for Asian Americans 25-years-and-older was roughly the same as that for whites in the fourth quarter of 2009. However, the share of workers who hold bachelor's degrees and advanced degrees is higher among Asian Americans than among white Americans, by 10.4 and 10.6 percentage points, respectively. The unemployment rate among Asian Americans with bachelor's degrees is 2.5 percentage points higher than that of whites, and the unemployment rate among Asian Americans with advanced degrees is 1.6 percentage points higher than that of whites.

Among less-educated workers, the opposite story emerges. A relatively high percentage of Asian American workers—7.3 percent—did not complete high school, compared to 4.5 percent of white workers. However, the unemployment rate for Asian Americans who did not complete high school is 8.8 percent nationwide, much lower than the unemployment rate for white high school dropouts, 14.3 percent.

Overall, if Asian Americans had the same unemployment rate by education level as whites, the Asian American unemployment rate would have been almost a percentage point lower in 2009 than it actually was.

Asian Americans, like all Americans, have been deeply affected by the recession. Asian Americans in New Jersey, for example, have experienced a 5.4 percentage point increase in unemployment between the fourth quarter of 2007 (before the recession began) and the last quarter of 2009, and Asian Americans in California have experienced a 6.0 percentage point increase in the same time period. The Asian American unemployment rate in California—home to a third of the nation's Asian Americans—reached the double digits, 10.2 percent, in 2009.

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