Introduction

Using data from the 2000 and 2010 U.S. censuses and 2006-2010 American Community Survey (ACS) Selected Population Tables, this profile outlines characteristics and trends among New York City’s Thai American population. It presents statistics on population size and changes, immigration, citizenship status, educational attainment, English ability, income, poverty, and housing. Comparisons with New York City’s general population are provided for context.

As the tenth largest Asian ethnic group in the city, Thai New Yorkers had, relative to all residents:

- higher percent of working-age adults,
- more schooling,
- lower English skills,
- higher median family income,
- and a higher poverty rate for working-age adults.

Population

From 2000 to 2010, the Thai population in New York City grew by 45 percent from 5,002 to 7,244 – exceeding the city’s overall 2 percent increase and the 30 percent growth of the city’s total Asian population. New York City was home to 62 percent of New York State’s Thai residents.

In New York City, in 2010, over half of Thai lived in Queens, followed by nearly one quarter in Manhattan and one eighth in Brooklyn (Figure 1).

In 2010, working-age adults (age 18 to 64) dominated New York City’s Thai population making up 80 percent of the community, compared with 66 percent of all city residents. Children (under 18 years of age) were only 13 percent of the city’s Thai population, compared with 22 percent of the city-wide population. Senior citizens (age 65 or older) constituted 8 percent of Thai New Yorkers, versus a city-wide proportion of 12 percent.

Immigration and Citizenship

About 69 percent of New York City’s Thai in 2010 were foreign-born, compared to 37 percent of immigrants among all city residents. Over one in three (35 percent) Thai immigrants in New York City came to the United States in 2000 or later, compared with the citywide rate of 27 percent. Of all the city’s foreign-born Thai residents, 44 percent were naturalized citizens, compared with 51 percent of all foreign-born New Yorkers.
Income
Thai New Yorkers had higher median family income than New York City residents and similar median household income and per capita income.4 The Thai median household income was $51,607 and per capita income was $29,393, compared with $50,285 and $30,498 respectively for the entire city population. Median family income of $86,447 for Thai was higher than $55,177 for city residents as a whole.

Poverty
The poverty rates for Thai residents in relation to the total New York City population were similar, overall and for seniors, but lower for children and higher for working age adults.5 Among all Thai in the city, 20.4 percent lived below the poverty line, compared with the general New York City poverty rate of 19.1 percent. Among children, 18.7 percent of Thai in New York City experienced poverty, compared with 28.1 percent of all residents. Also, 20.9 percent of working-age Thai adults lived in poverty, exceeding the citywide rate of 16.3 percent. The senior poverty rate was 18 percent for Thai and 18.2 percent for all elderly in the city.

Housing
Thai New Yorkers in 2010 had lower average household size than the general New York City population.

Education
Thai New Yorkers had more schooling than the city’s general population. Of the city’s 4,758 Thai adults, 13 percent had not graduated from high school, compared with 21 percent of adults city-wide.2 Also, only 5 percent of Thai adults in New York City had less than a ninth-grade education – about half of the 11 percent rate for all adult New Yorkers.

At the high end of the educational spectrum, the majority (76 percent) Thai adults in New York City had some form of post-secondary education, compared with slightly over half (53 percent) of all city adults. Over half (55 percent) of Thai adults in New York City had a bachelor’s degree or higher, compared with one-third (33 percent) of all city adults.

English Proficiency
New York City’s Thai residents had higher occurrences of Limited English Proficiency (LEP) than New Yorkers as a whole in 2010.3 Nearly half (46 percent) of the city’s total Thai population spoke English “well,” “not well” or “not at all” –double the 23 percent rate for New Yorkers overall (Figure 2). In terms of age, Thai children and working age adults were about twice as likely as their age group peers to be LEP.

Figure 1: Thai Population by Borough

Figure 2: Limited English Proficiency of Total Population and Thai
population (2.44 people versus 2.57 people). Thai households were as likely to be overcrowded as households in general, with 8 percent of households having more than one occupant per room in both cases.

Thai households were as likely to rent as households in general. In the city, 69 percent of Thai households were renters, same as the citywide rate.

Working-age Thai were more likely to be poor than all working age adults.

Footnotes

1 Data sources used in this brief were the Summary Files (SF) Two and Four of the 2000 and 2010 U.S. Censuses and 2006-2010 American Community Survey Selected Population Tables, and are for the Thai Alone or in Any Combination category, unless otherwise noted. 2010 Census provided population, household size and housing tenure statistics, and all other measurements in 2010 used 2006-2010 American Community Survey Selected Population Tables.

2 For educational attainment, adults were defined as people age 25 or older.

3 “Limited English Proficiency” refers to individuals who reported speaking English “well”, “not well”, or “not at all”.

4 Household income refers to the income of all occupants of a housing unit. Family income referred to the earnings of a group of two or more people (one of whom is the householder) related by birth, marriage, or adoption and residing together.

5 Families and individuals were classified as below the poverty line if their total family income or unrelated individual income over the last 12 months was less than the poverty threshold specified for the applicable family size, age of householder, and number of related children younger than 18 present for the year and month the data was collected. For these thresholds, please see http://www.census.gov/hhes/www/poverty/data/threshld/index.html.

Technical Notes

Race Categories
Beginning with the Census 2000, the Census Bureau collects data in which respondents were allowed to mark more than one race. For example, 2000 data include results for single-race as well as multiple-race responses. “Thai Alone” corresponds to the respondents who reported only Thai and no other race category. “Alone” should be considered the minimum population size in any analysis that uses Census Bureau data.

To be as inclusive as possible, this profile uses “Thai Alone or in Any Combination” numbers where possible. “Alone or in Any Combination” corresponds to the responses (not respondents) that included Thai, either alone or in any combination with other Asian groups or other race categories. If a respondent selected Thai and another racial group (e.g., Thai and black), that individual, while excluded from the “Thai Alone” count, was tallied in the “Alone or in Any Combination” count for Thai and the other racial group. Hence, some overlap in the “In Any Combination” numbers occurred. “Alone or in Any Combination” should be considered the maximum population size in any analysis that uses Census Bureau data.

American Community Survey
As part of the redesign of the decennial census, the Census Bureau implemented the American Community Survey (ACS) as the replacement for the Decennial Census Long Form. Instead of collecting Long Form data (demographic, housing, social, and economic information) once every ten years, the ACS supplies communities new local data every year. In order to obtain sufficiently large number of samples for small populations, the ACS makes use of the concept of period estimates. For Census tracts, five-year period estimates are updated annually starting in 2010. For communities with 20,000 or more people, annual three-year period estimates are released. Populations with 65,000 or more people receive annual single-year estimates.