
RECENT FILIPINO IMMIGRATION TO THE UNITED STATES: A PROFILE



EAST-WEST CENTER
EAST-WEST POPULATION INSTITUTE

THE IMMIGRATION PROJECT

This booklet is one result of an ongoing study of immigration to the United States being conducted at the East-West Population Institute, East-West Center, Honolulu, Hawaii. The goal of the project is to gather information obtainable in no other way on immigration from the two countries in Asia that send the most immigrants to the United States: the Republic of Korea and the Philippines. Information on immigrants before their 1986 departures from Korea and the Philippines was collected during face-to-face interviews conducted by researchers from Hanyang University in Seoul, Korea, and from the University of the Philippines in Manila. The research team from Korea was headed by Dr. In-Sook Park, while the team from the Philippines was led by Dr. Benjamin Cariño. Data on immigrant experiences after arrival in the United States were collected through mail surveys and telephone interviews by researchers at the East-West Population Institute, headed by Dr. James T. Fawcett and Dr. Robert W. Gardner.

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This booklet is the product of the efforts of many people. Most important, of course, are the kind and patient people, 1986 immigrants from the Philippines, who have given of their time and opened their lives to us so that we could learn more about the immigration experience. Also important to the booklet's completion have been Dina Nadala, Melay Patron, and Lynna SyCip, research interns and assistants at the East-West Population Institute. The staff of the United States Embassy in Manila was extremely helpful in arranging and facilitating the first stage of the study. Generous funding has been provided by the Sloan Foundation and the East-West Population Institute, East-West Center.

SUMMARY This report provides a brief statistical profile of Filipino immigration to the United States, with a special focus on those who arrived in 1986. The statistics show that Filipino immigrants are quite a diverse group, coming from different backgrounds in the Philippines and making their living in the United States through a variety of occupations. There were a few who had faced obstacles in finding suitable employment, but on the whole, most were doing quite well economically after two years in the United States. A new survey planned for 1991 will give a better picture of the social and economic adaptation of the 1986 immigrants after they have been in the United States for five years.

The statistics presented in this report are mostly drawn from other reports that contain more detail and are somewhat more technical in nature. These are included in the suggested readings on Filipino-Americans and Asian Americans at the end of this report for those who want to gain a deeper knowledge about this important segment of American society.

Filipino immigration to the United States began at the turn of the century—about 1903—and has gone through three main historical phases. First, Filipinos were recruited to work in Hawaii and California. About 150,000 Filipinos came to the United States in this way, mostly between 1907 and 1930. More than half went to Hawaii. The flow of these early immigrants was facilitated by a U.S. law that, until 1935, allowed Filipinos to move to the United States freely as U.S. nationals.

When the Philippines was granted commonwealth status in 1935, Filipino immigration to the United States was virtually halted. It was not until after the Philippines had been granted its independence in 1946 that the number of Filipino immigrants rose substantially, beginning the second phase of immigration which lasted until 1965. The number of Filipino immigrants, however, did not exceed 4,000 in any given year. Between 1946 and 1965, over 34,000 Filipinos came to the United States.

By far the largest group—over 800,000—has arrived since 1965, when the U.S. immigration law was changed to eliminate discrimination based on country of origin (*Figure 1*). Initially, a high proportion of the Filipinos entering under the new law were admitted on the basis of their job skills. More recently, however, the great

Figure 1

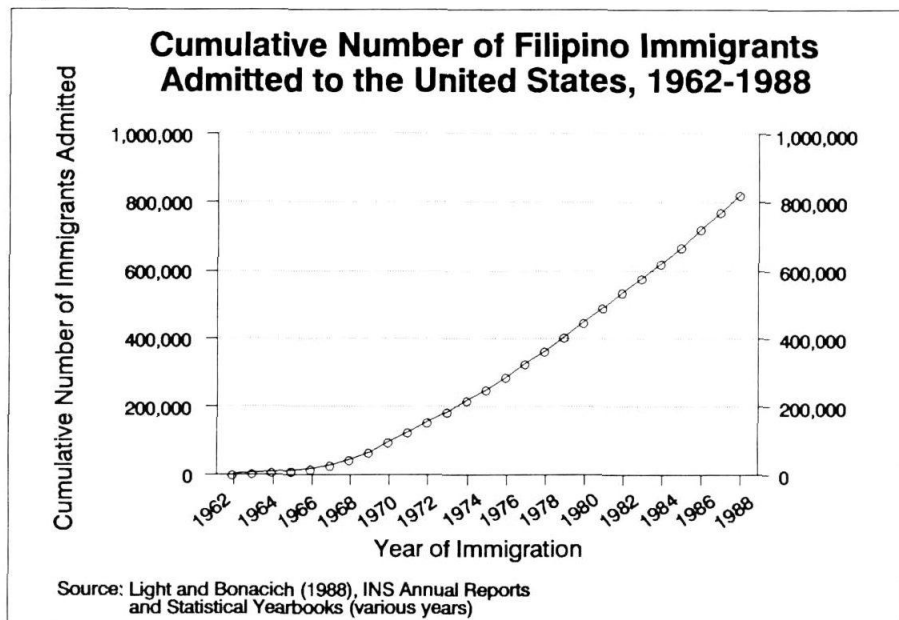
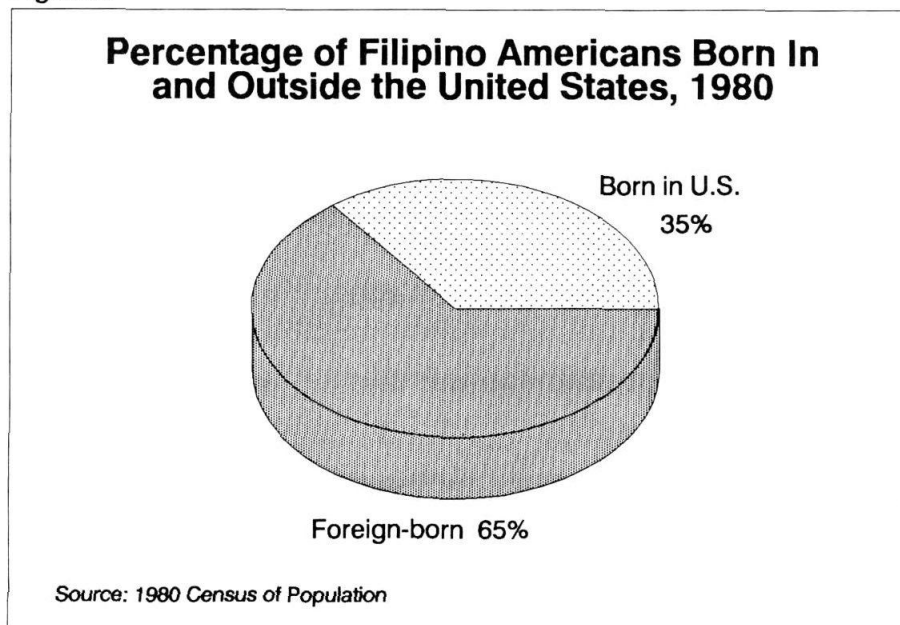


Figure 2



majority have been admitted based on petitions from family members already living in the United States.

This report focuses on immigrants who entered the United States during one recent year—1986—and provides a portrait of that group. The findings are drawn primarily from surveys that were carried out by the University of the Philippines in Manila and by the East–West Center in the United States.

The Filipino-American population is made up of both immigrants from the Philippines and ethnic Filipinos who were born in the United States. The 1980 census indicated that 65 percent of Filipino-Americans were immigrants, whereas 35 percent had been born in the United States (*Figure 2*). This shows that immigration has been responsible for the recent rapid growth in this population. In the 1970 census, 336,000 Filipino-Americans were counted, but the number rose rapidly to 781,000 in 1980, and it is estimated that there will be over 1.4 million Filipino-Americans counted in the 1990 census (*Figure 3*).

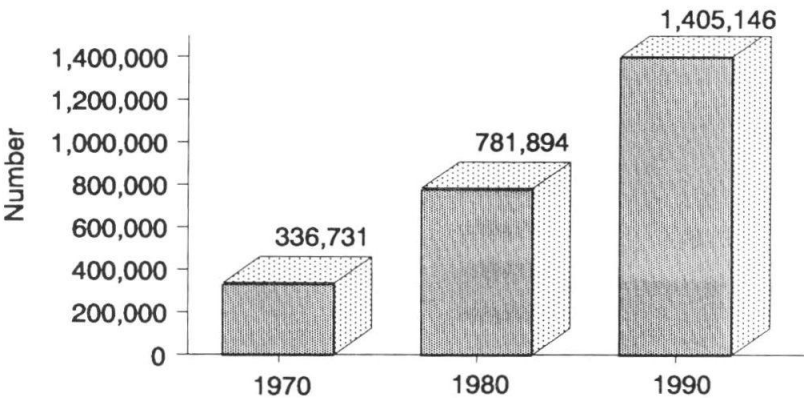
The most rapid growth in the Filipino-American population occurred during the period 1966–70 (*Figure 4*). Since then growth has continued, but at a slower pace, and, according to records kept by the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS), over 800,000 Filipinos have been legally admitted to the United States. In 1987, Filipinos were the second largest group of new immigrants, after Mexicans (*Figure 5*).

The current Filipino-American population contains slightly more females than males. For the last few decades, women have tended to constitute more than half of immigrants from the Philippines, a marked contrast to immigration during the early 1900s when female immigrants were a tiny minority (*Figure 6*). For example, of the estimated 102,000 Filipinos who came to Hawaii from 1907 to 1929, only 13 percent were women. The recent predominance of female immigrants reflects two things: the military presence of the United States in the Philippines (providing a context in which international marriages can occur between Filipino women and American men) and immigration policies that promote female immigration not only as part of the family but also as occupational immigrants.

Recent Filipino immigrants tend to be well educated (*Figure 7*). For example, the immigrant group contains a higher percentage of

Figure 3

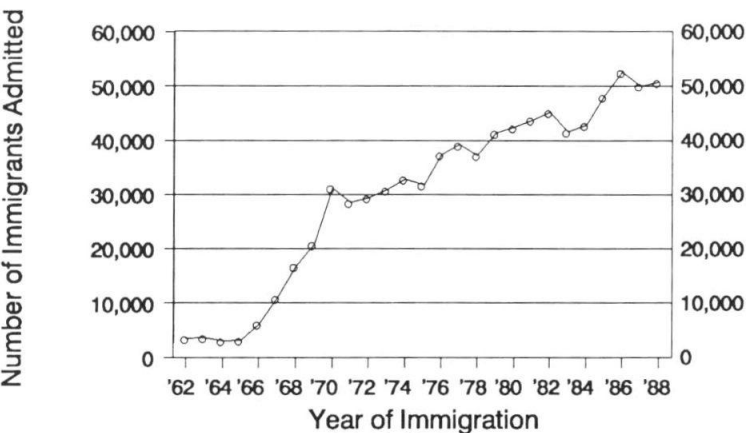
**Number of Filipinos in the United States:
1970, 1980, and 1990**



Source: Figure for 1990 is an estimate from Bouvier & Agresta (1987, p.292);
Figures for 1980, 1970: 1980 Census of Population

Figure 4

**Number of Filipino Immigrants Admitted
to the United States Each Year, 1962-1988**



Source: Light and Bonacich (1988), INS Annual Reports
and Statistical Yearbooks (various years)

Figure 5

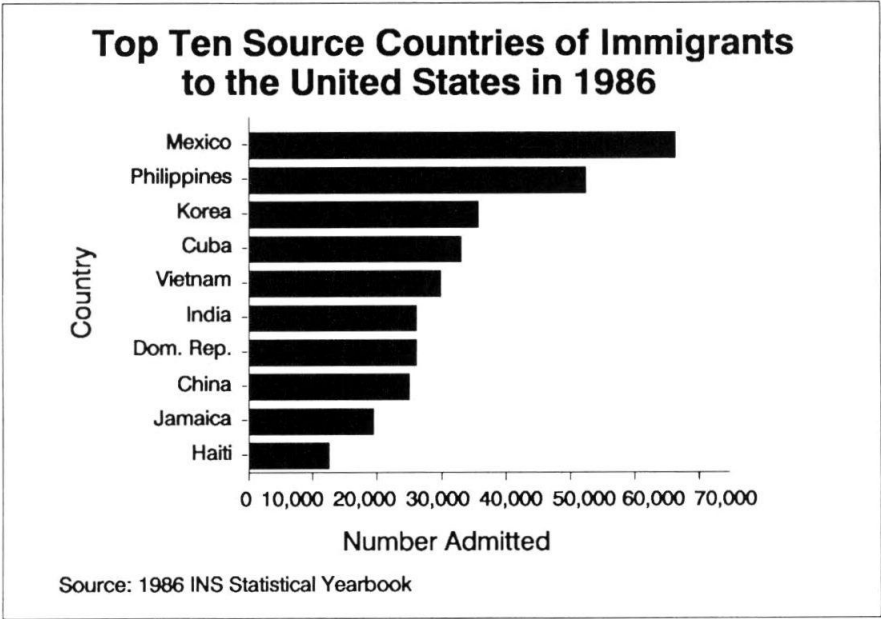


Figure 6

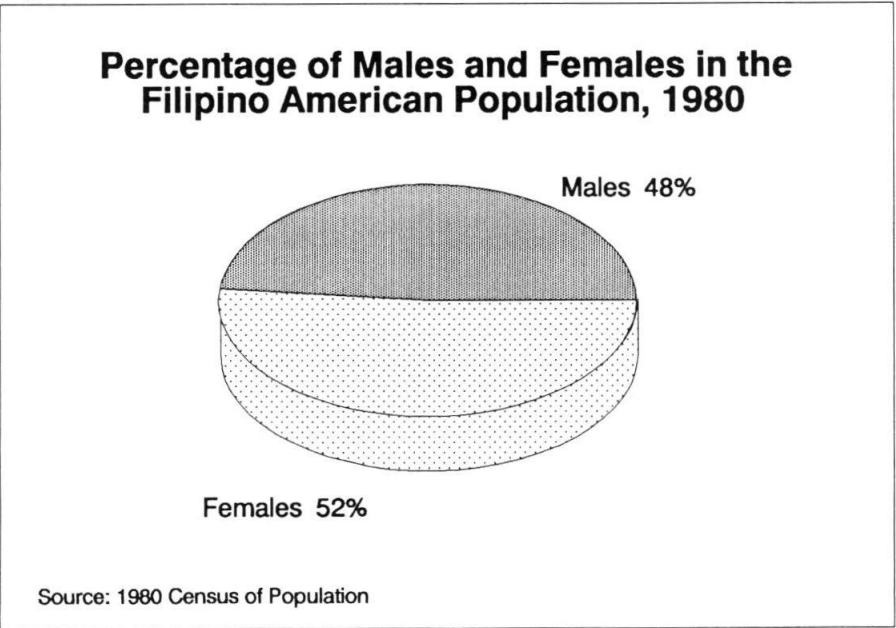


Figure 7

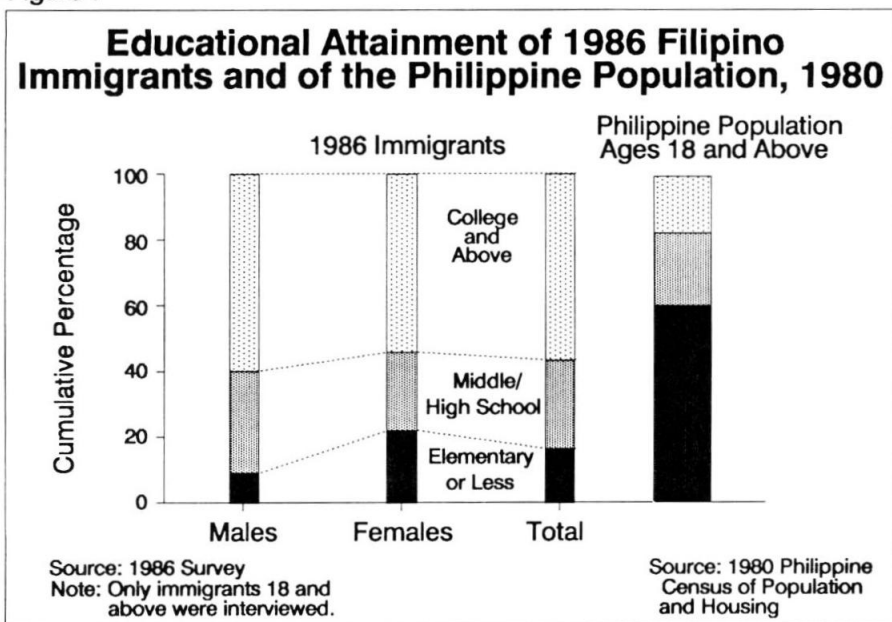
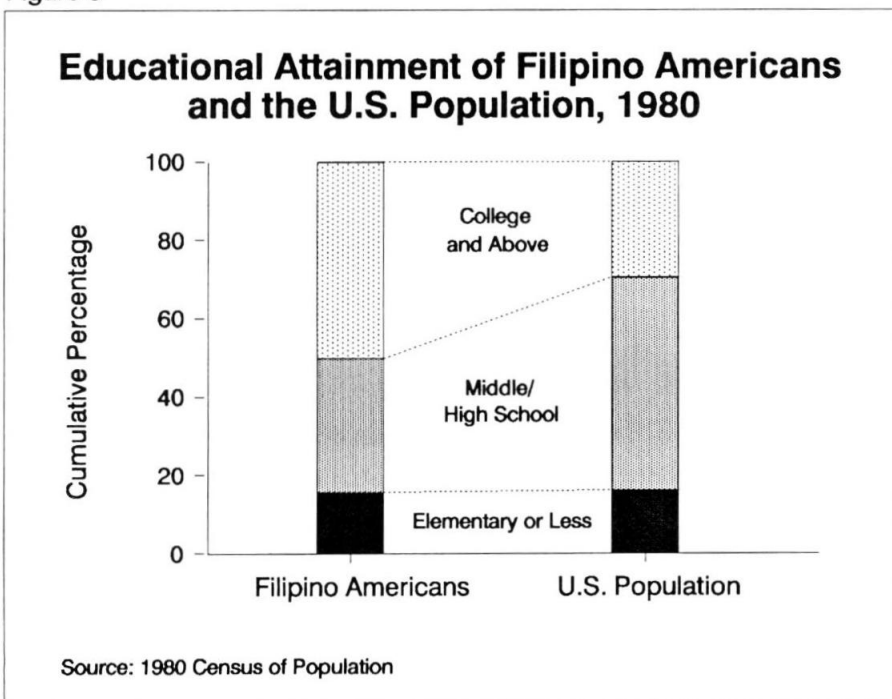


Figure 8



college-educated persons than does the whole population of the Philippines, and Filipinos in the United States are ahead of the total U.S. population in educational attainment (*Figure 8*). The proportion of males and females who have a college education are almost equal, also indicating the general importance that is placed upon getting an education.

When asked why they intended to go to a particular place in the United States, the great majority of Filipino immigrants cited family connections as the reason (*Figure 9*). Often, the immigrants went to places where their "petitioners" lived. The particular family relationships mentioned most by the 1986 immigrants as influencing their choice of destination were parents, followed by spouses or fiance(e)s, children, unspecified family members, and siblings (*Figure 10*). The 1980 census showed that California was by far the most popular place for Filipinos to live, followed by Hawaii, Illinois, and New York (*Figure 11*). The 1986 survey showed a very similar pattern for where new immigrants expected to live (*Figure 12*).

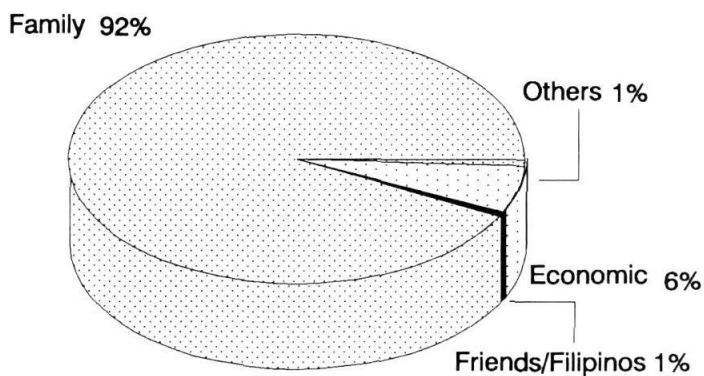
When new Filipino immigrants were asked about their reasons for immigrating to the United States, family factors were most often mentioned, but work and other relationship factors (e.g., the presence of other non-immediate relatives, friends) were also important (*Figure 13*). A somewhat different picture of motivations emerged in response to a question about what things new immigrants were "looking forward to the most" in the United States. The economic benefits of being in the United States and a better and happy life were mentioned most frequently, with seeing and being with friends and relatives, financial stability, and owning property also mentioned often as things to look forward to when moving to the United States (*Figure 14*).

After about two years in the United States, fewer women than men were working (60.1 percent versus 81.9 percent), but an even smaller proportion of women (37.8 percent) had worked in the Philippines before departure, so many women experienced a major change in their daily lives upon immigrating to the United States (*Figures 15 and 16*).

Almost all of the Filipino immigrants held salaried jobs. Most of them tended to work for Caucasians (71 percent) and only a small proportion (12 percent) worked for other Filipinos (*Figure 17*).

Figure 9

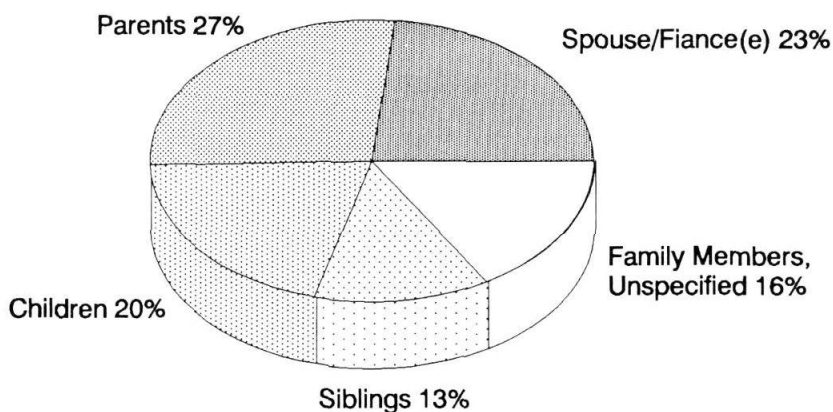
Reasons Given by 1986 Filipino Immigrants for Choosing Intended U.S. Destination



Source: 1986 Survey

Figure 10

Type of Family Affiliation Cited as a Reason for Choosing Destination



Source: 1986 Survey

Figure 11

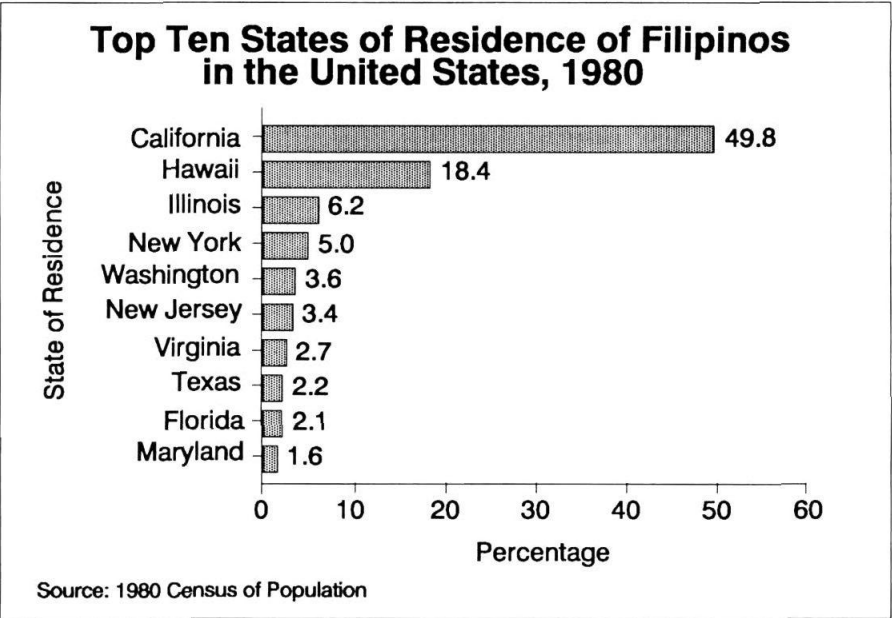


Figure 12

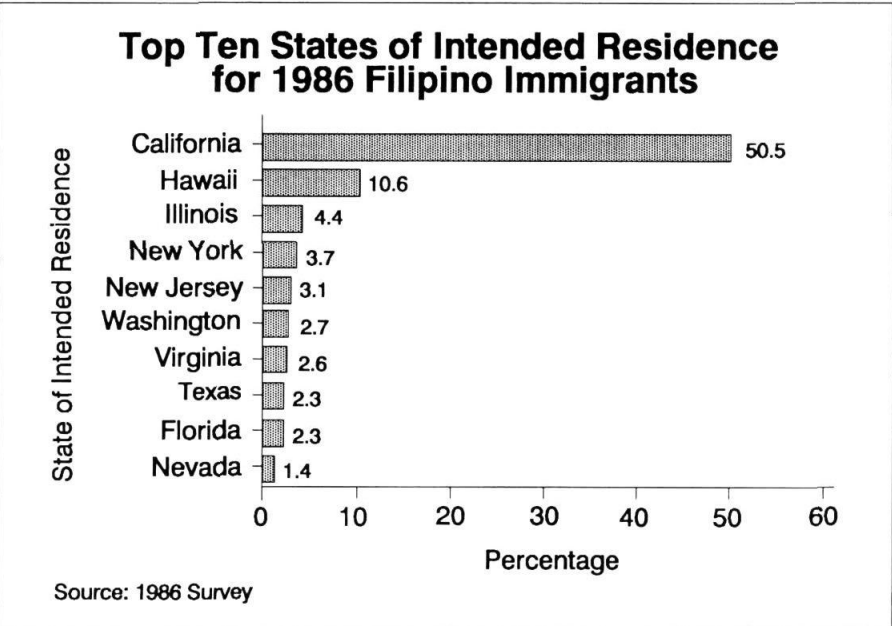
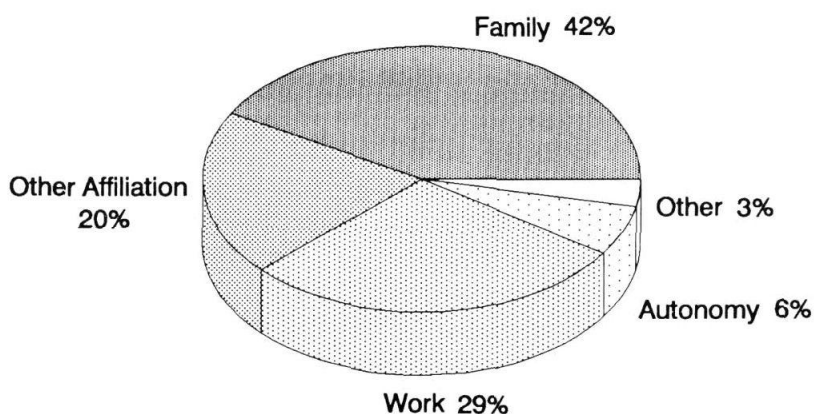


Figure 13

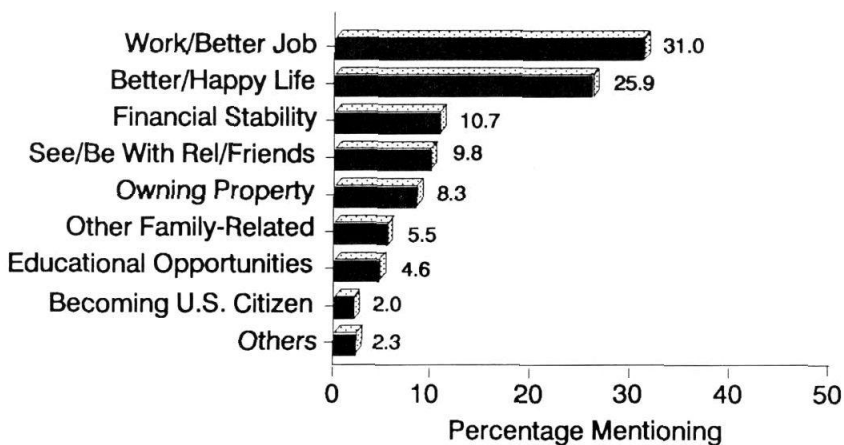
Why 1986 Filipino Immigrants Wanted to Move to the United States



Source: 1986 Survey

Figure 14

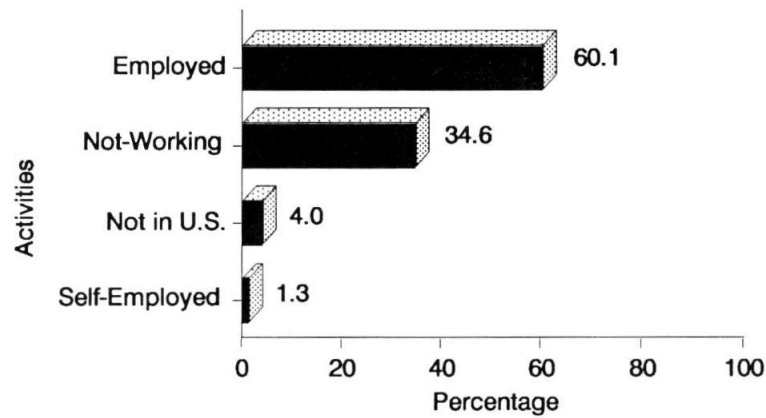
Things That 1986 Filipino Immigrants Were Looking Forward to About the United States



Source: 1986 Survey

Figure 15

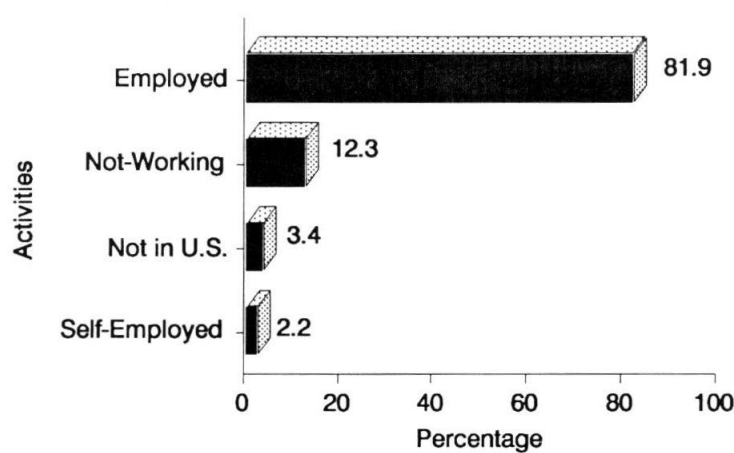
What Female Filipino Immigrants Were Doing Two Years After Their Arrival in the United States



Source: 1987-1988 Follow-up Survey

Figure 16

What Male Filipino Immigrants Were Doing Two Years After Their Arrival in the United States



Source: 1987-1988 Follow-up Survey

Figure 17

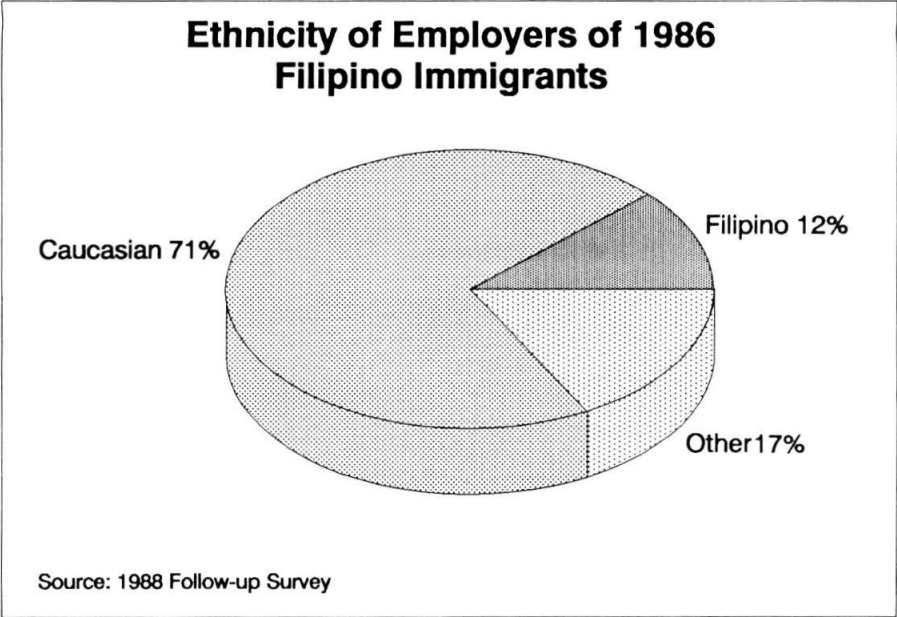
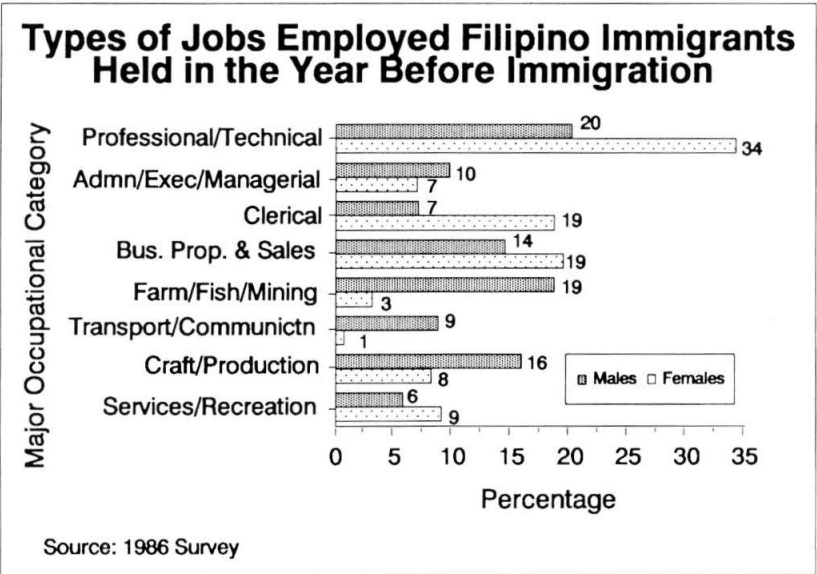


Figure 18



Filipino immigrants held a variety of jobs before they left the Philippines and most of them changed to a different type of job when they first started working in the United States. For example, the largest job categories for men in the Philippines involved professional and technical work, farming and fishing, crafts and production, and business proprietorships. For women, most of them were doing professional and technical, clerical, and business proprietorship work (*Figure 18*). In the United States, the most common first jobs for men were in the areas of services and recreation and crafts and production (such as working in a factory). For women, the majority were found in services and recreation, clerical, and crafts and production jobs (*Figure 19*). The situation had changed very little after the immigrants had been in the United States for two years, although a slightly greater percentage of men and women held professional and technical jobs (*Figure 20*).

The monthly income of immigrants two years after arrival varied widely, with women earning slightly more than men (*Figure 21*). The income of all Filipino-Americans compared quite favorably with earnings of other groups in America in 1980. For the groups shown, among men, Filipinos were third after whites and Asian and Pacific Islanders. Among women, Filipinos were the top earners (*Figure 22*).

Before departing, Filipinos did not generally expect to encounter any problems in the United States. For those that did, however, language difficulties were most often mentioned (*Figure 23*). After two years in the United States, the problems that the majority of Filipinos had actually experienced involved finding a suitable job and adjusting to life in the United States (*Figure 24*). Prior to departure, the majority of Filipino immigrants expected help in dealing with their problems from several sources: their relatives and friends in the United States, U.S. government agencies or their employer in the United States, U.S. church agencies, and U.S. government agencies (*Figure 25*). The great majority, however, expected the most helpful source of assistance to be from relatives in the United States (*Figure 26*).

Most Filipinos also did not expect to be discriminated against, although for those that did, they expected discrimination to occur in terms of getting a job, being looked down upon, or securing promotions (*Figures 27 and 28*). After two years in the United States,

Figure 19

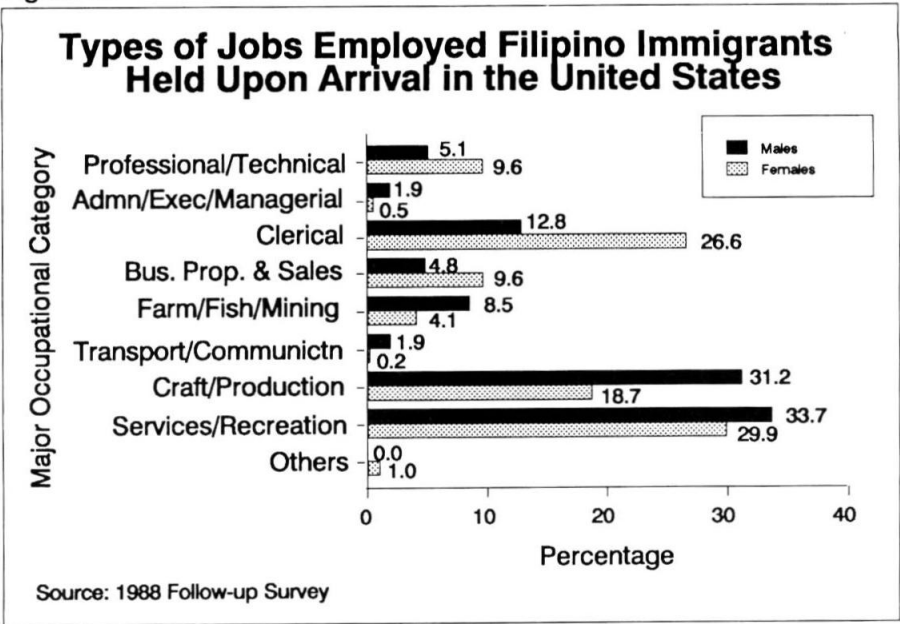


Figure 20

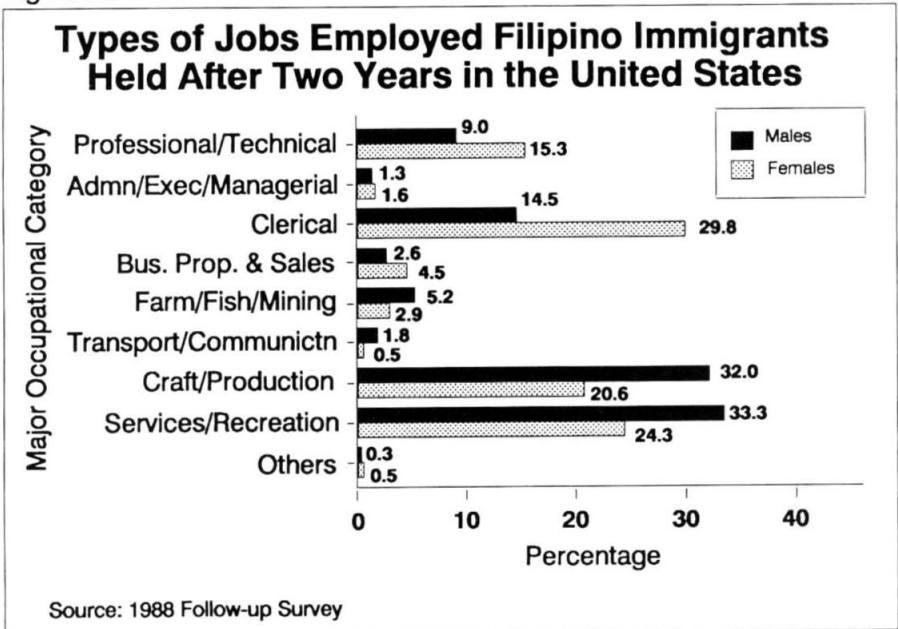


Figure 21

Monthly Income of 1986 Filipino Immigrants After Two Years in the United States

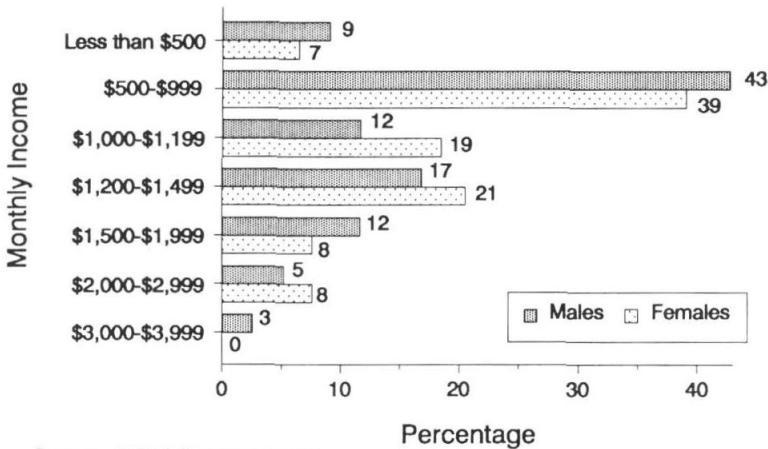


Figure 22

Annual Income of Filipino-Americans and Other Groups in the United States, 1980

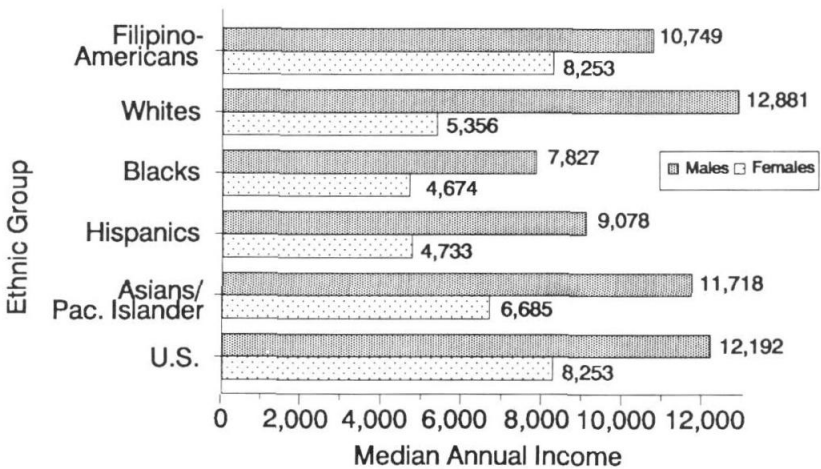


Figure 23

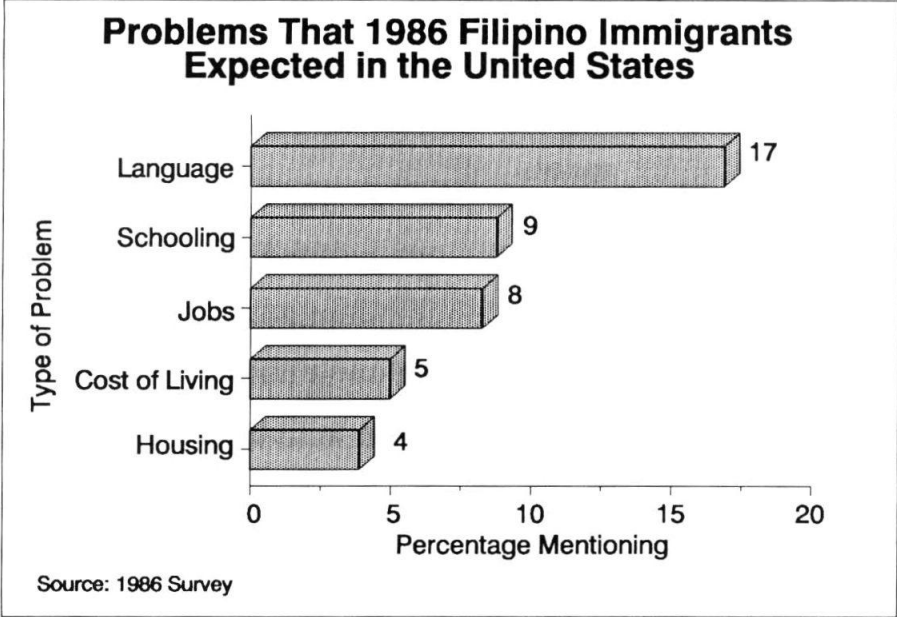


Figure 24

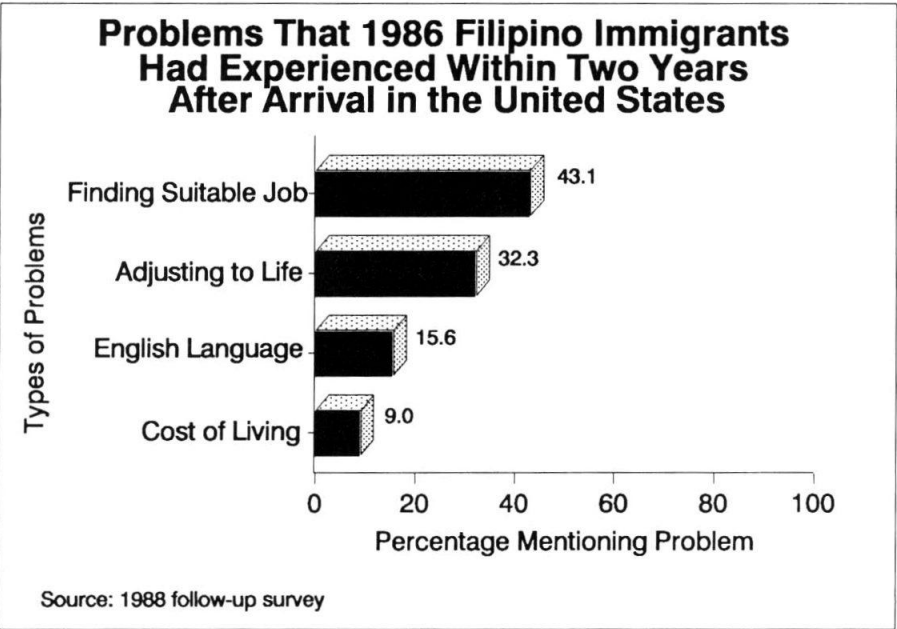


Figure 25

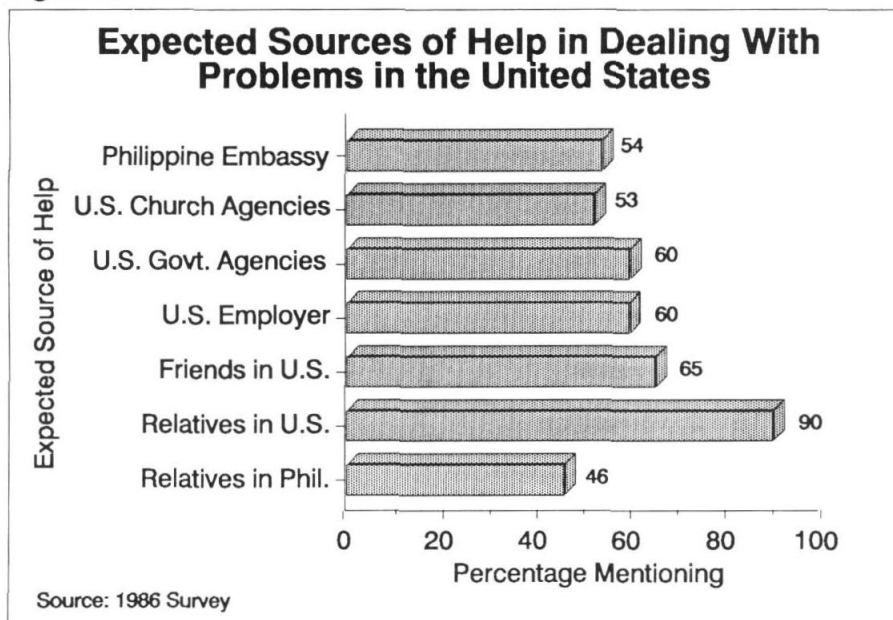


Figure 26

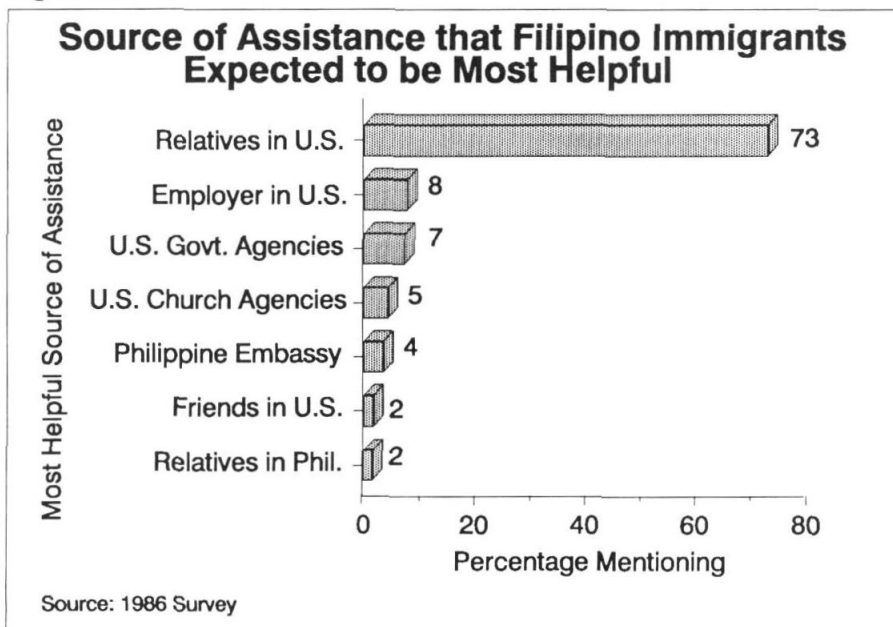
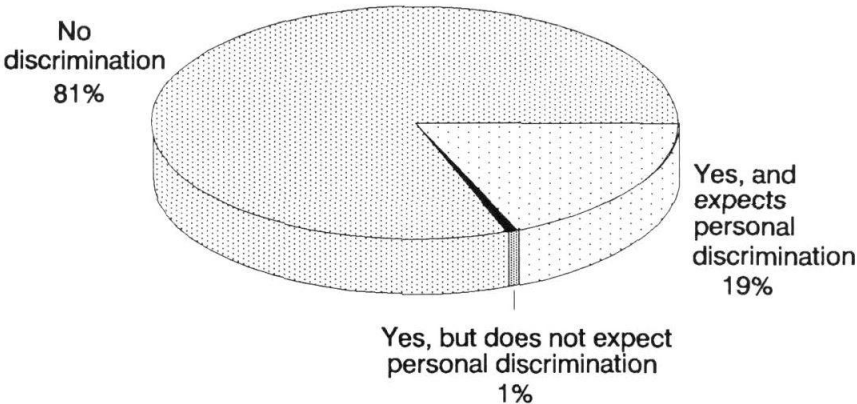


Figure 27

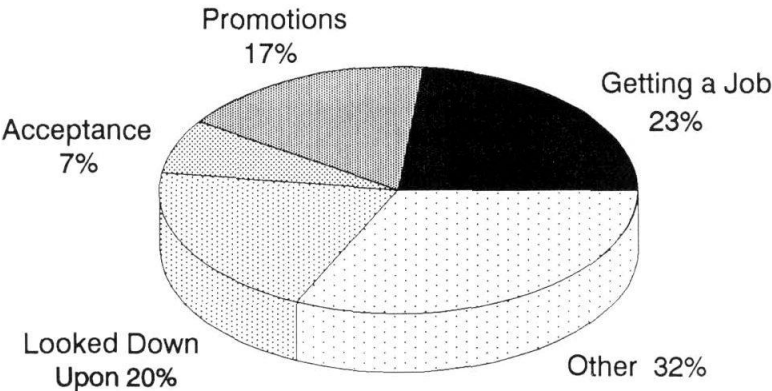
Whether 1986 Immigrants Believed Before Departure that Filipinos are Discriminated Against in the United States



Source: 1986 Survey

Figure 28

Type of Discrimination Expected



Source: 1986 Survey

very few Filipinos (16 percent) had actually personally experienced discrimination, although 37 percent still perceived that discrimination against Filipinos existed (*Figure 29*).

Most Filipino immigrants (84 percent) continued to practice mainly Filipino customs in their own homes in the United States. The remaining 15 percent chose to either practice mainly American customs (8 percent) or both Filipino and American customs (7 percent) (*Figure 30*). What they missed most about the Philippines were the relatives and friends who were still there.

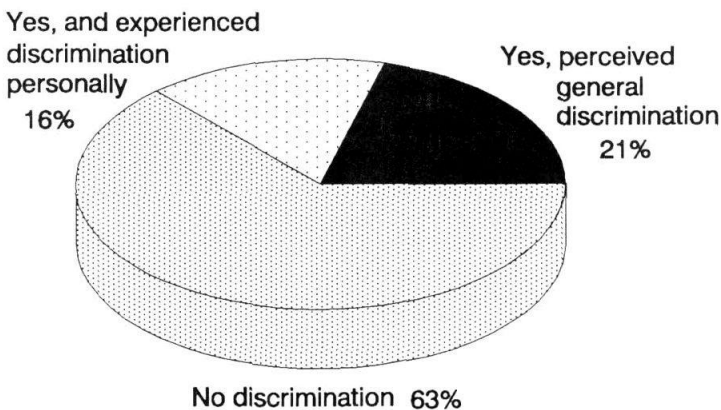
Before they left the Philippines, Filipino immigrants rated the Philippines higher than the United States in terms of its moral climate and the kindness of the people around them. The United States, on the other hand, was rated higher on a number of economic and job-related issues as well as on political conditions, educational opportunities, freedom from crime, and the variety of enjoyable things to do. They also perceived that they had a higher social status in the United States than in the Philippines (*Figure 31*).

After two years in the United States, Filipino immigrants felt that they worked harder, were better off financially, and were more optimistic about the future in the United States than they had been in the Philippines. On the other hand, they felt that their social status had been higher and that they had had more friends in the Philippines than in the United States (*Figure 32*).

This statistical profile has focused on 1986 Filipino immigrants and their experiences during their first few years in the United States. A survey planned for 1991 will give us a better picture of this diverse group of immigrants after they have been in the United States for five years.

Figure 29

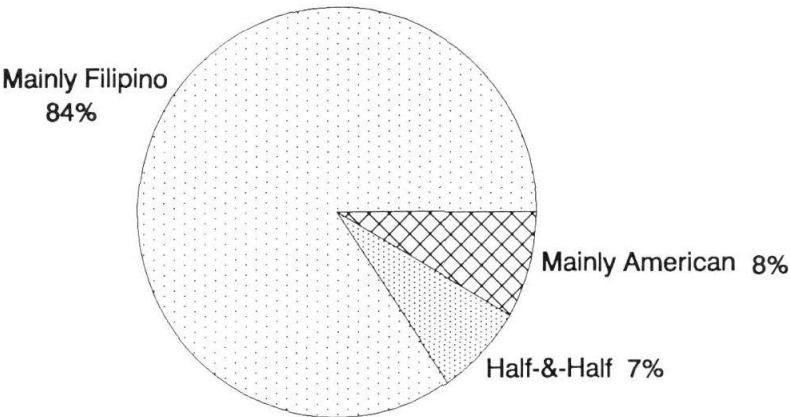
**Whether Immigrants Perceived Discrimination
After Two Years in the United States**



Source: 1988 Follow-up Survey

Figure 30

**Whether Filipino or American Customs are
Practiced in New Immigrants' Homes**



Source: 1988 follow-up survey

Figure 31

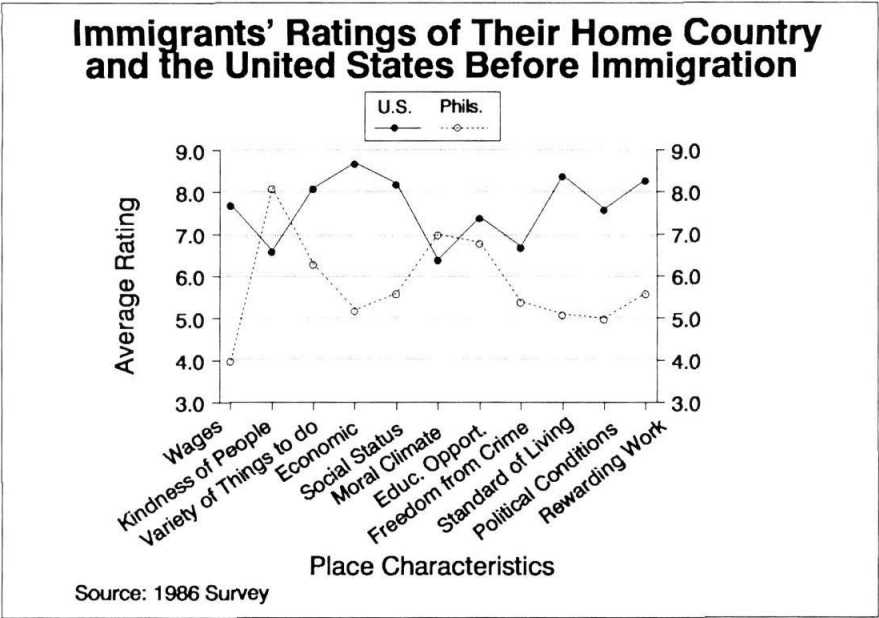
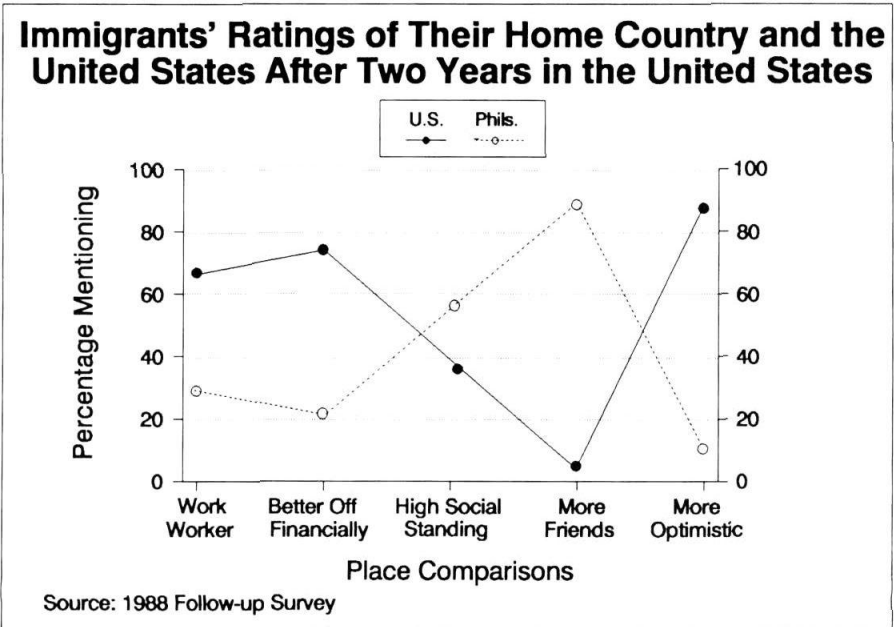


Figure 32



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Some 2,000 research fellows, graduate students, and professionals in business and government each year work with the Center's international staff on major Asia-Pacific issues relating to population, economic and trade policies, resources and the environment, culture and communication, and international relations. Since 1960, more than 27,000 men and women from the region have participated in the Center's cooperative programs.

Officially known as the Center for Cultural and Technical Interchange Between East and West, Inc., the Center is a public, nonprofit institution with an international board of governors. Principal funding comes from the United States Congress. Support also comes from more than 20 Asian and Pacific governments, as well as from private agencies and corporations.

THE EAST-WEST POPULATION INSTITUTE, established as a unit of the East-West Center in 1969, carries out multidisciplinary research, training, and related activities in the field of population, placing emphasis on economic, social, psychological, and environmental aspects of population problems in Asia, the Pacific, and the United States.