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Who Are Asian American Millennials?: Asian Americans Leaving the Parental Home

By Phoebe Ho & Hyunjoon Park

A major milestone in the transition to adulthood is moving out of the parental home. Increasingly, however, young adults might remain in the parental home for a longer period of time or even move back after a some time away. Despite growing interest in the living arrangements of young adults, little work has paid attention to Asian Americans much less their considerable socioeconomic and cultural diversity. Using data from the Education Longitudinal Study of 2002 (ELS:2002), we examine the living arrangements of a diverse and nationally representative sample of young adults at ages 20 and 26, focusing on the extent to which family socioeconomic status and cultural orientations toward family account for differing racial and ethnic patterns of residential independence.

Figure 1. Differences in Family SES (Parental Education) and Familism (Importance of Living Close to Family)

Figure 1A. Parent has BA+

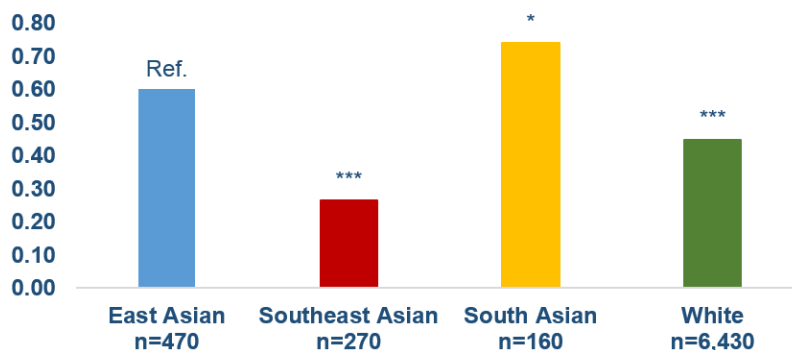
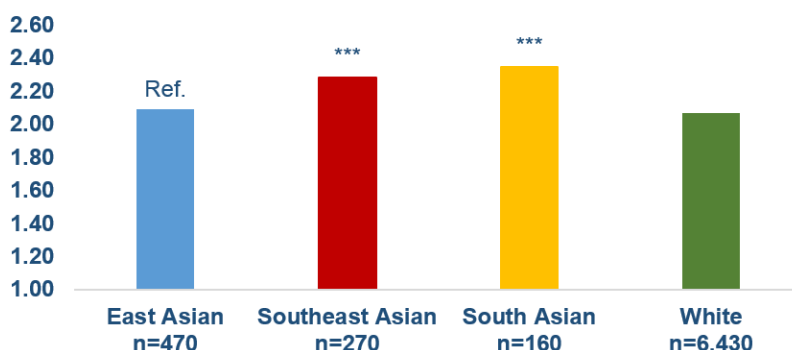


Figure 1B. Importance of Living Close to Family



Note: Ns rounded to nearest tens. Statistically significant differences compared to East Asians are denoted by: *** $p < 0.001$, ** $p < 0.01$, * $p < 0.05$.

Figure 1 shows the proportion of young adults with college-educated parents and the level of importance young adults attach to living close to family. Relative to East Asian young adults, a smaller share of Southeast Asian and White young adults and a larger share of South Asian young adults have college-educated parents (Figure 1A). Both Southeast Asian and South Asian young adults place greater importance on living close to family compared to East Asians, who are more comparable to Whites (Figure 1B).

We identify four patterns of leaving the parental home based on whether or not young adults were living with their parents at around age 20 and around age 26: 1) **Early Fliers** (not living with parents at age 20 nor at age 26), 2) **Stayers** (living with parents at age 20 and at age 26) 3) **Returns** (not living with parents at age 20 but living with parents at age 26), and 4) **Later Fliers** (living with parents at age 20 but not at age 26).

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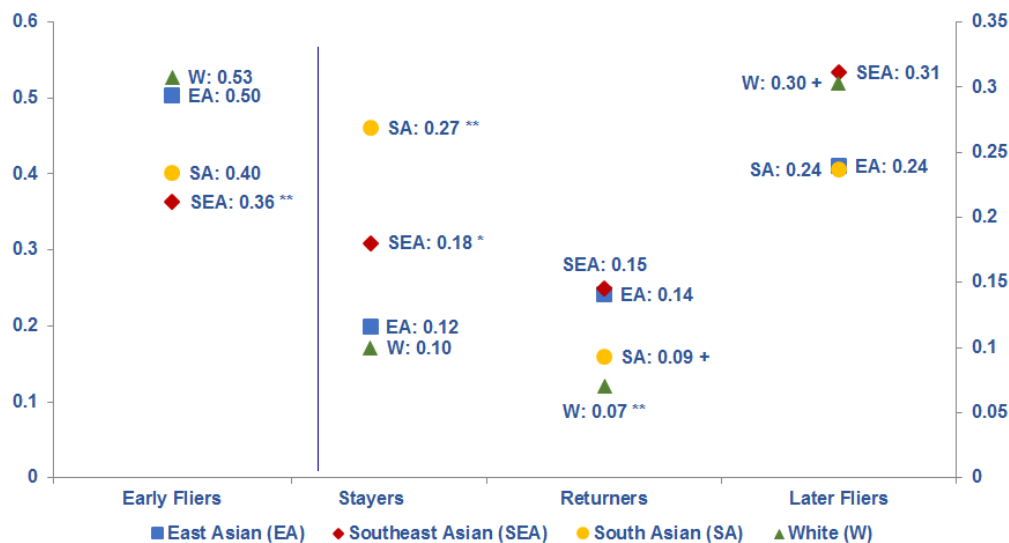
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Figure 2 shows predicted probabilities, estimated from multinomial logistic regression models, of being in each type of living arrangement. East Asian young adults have a predicted probability of being Early Fliers similar to that of Whites (0.50 and 0.53, respectively), and much higher than that for their Southeast Asian (0.36) and South Asian (0.40) peers. East Asian young adults are also similar to their White peers in their lower probability of being Stayers (0.12 and 0.10, respectively) compared to Southeast Asian (0.18) and South Asian (0.27) young adults. For predicted probabilities of being a Returner, East Asian and Southeast Asian young adults have similar probabilities (0.14 and 0.15, respectively) that are higher than those for South Asians (0.09) and Whites (0.07). There are no discernible differences among the Asian American groups with respect to the predicted probabilities of being Later Fliers.

Overall, we find significant ethnic heterogeneity among Asian Americans in factors related to residential independence, including family socioeconomic conditions and cultural orientations toward familism. Moreover, East Asians are more similar to their White peers than their Southeast Asian and South Asian peers in attaining residential independence. Results underscore the need for research on racial and ethnic differences in the transition to adulthood and the development of conceptual tools that do not rely on an assumption of a common experience among racial and ethnic minorities. In particular, the notion of a shared culture among Asian Americans deserves further systematic investigation with particular attention given to the interplay between culture and socioeconomic background and attainment.

Figure 2. Predicted Probabilities of Patterns of Living Arrangements



Note: Statistically significant differences compared to East Asians are denoted by: *** $p < 0.001$, ** $p < 0.01$, * $p < 0.05$, + $p < 0.10$.

This research brief features selected findings from:

- Ho, Phoebe, and Hyunjoon Park. 2019. "Young Adults' Patterns of Leaving the Parental Home: A Focus on Differences Among Asian Americans." *Journal of Marriage and Family* 81 (3): 696-712.