

Social Realities of Indian Americans: Results From the 2020 Indian American Attitudes Survey

Sumitra Badrinathan | Devesh Kapur | Jonathan Kay | Milan Vaishnav

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Summary

Indian Americans are the second-largest immigrant group in the United States. As the number of Indian-origin residents in the United States has swelled north of 4 million, the community's diversity too has grown.

Today, Indian Americans are a mosaic of recent arrivals and long-term residents. While the majority are immigrants, a rising share is born and raised in the United States. Many Indian immigrants might have brought with them identities rooted in their ancestral homeland, while others have eschewed them in favor of a nonhyphenated “American” identity. And despite the overall professional, educational, and financial success many Indian Americans enjoy, this has not inoculated them from the forces of discrimination, polarization, and contestation over questions of belonging and identity.

There is surprisingly little systematic data about the everyday social realities that Indian Americans experience. How do Indian Americans perceive their own ethnic identity? How do they respond to the dual impulses of assimilation and integration? And how might their self-conception influence the composition of their social networks?

These are not merely academic questions. As the profile of the Indian American community has grown, so too has its economic, political, and social influence. But how Indian Americans choose to deploy this influence remains an open question. To what extent do people of Indian origin encounter discriminatory behavior—on what grounds and by whom? As the United States witnesses a resurgence of violence and hate speech targeting Asian Americans, how might it affect Americans of Indian origin?

This study draws on a new source of empirical data to answer these and other questions. Its findings are based on a nationally representative online survey of 1,200 Indian American residents in the United States—the 2020 Indian American Attitudes Survey (IAAS)—conducted between September 1 and September 20, 2020, in partnership with the research and analytics firm YouGov. The survey, drawing on both citizens and non-citizens in the United States, was conducted online using YouGov's proprietary panel of 1.8 million Americans and has an overall margin of error of +/- 2.8 percent.

This study is the [third](#) in a series on the social, political, and foreign policy attitudes of Indian Americans. The major findings are briefly summarized below.

- **Indian Americans exhibit very high rates of marriage within their community.** While eight out of ten respondents have a spouse or partner of Indian origin, U.S.-born Indian Americans are four times more likely to have a spouse or partner who is of Indian origin but was born in the United States.
- **Religion plays a central role in the lives of Indian Americans but religious practice varies.** While nearly three-quarters of Indian Americans state that religion plays an important role in their lives, religious practice is less pronounced. Forty percent of respondents pray at least once a day and 27 percent attend religious services at least once a week.
- **Roughly half of all Hindu Indian Americans identify with a caste group.** Foreign-born respondents are significantly more likely than U.S.-born respondents to espouse a caste identity. The overwhelming majority of Hindus with a caste identity—more than eight in ten—self-identify as belonging to the category of General or upper caste.
- **“Indian American” itself is a contested identity.** While Indian American is a commonly used shorthand to describe people of Indian origin, it is not universally embraced. Only four in ten respondents believe that “Indian American” is the term that best captures their background.
- **Civic and political engagement varies considerably by one’s citizenship status.** Across nearly all metrics of civic and political participation, U.S.-born citizens report the highest levels of engagement, followed by foreign-born U.S. citizens, with non-citizens trailing behind.
- **Indian Americans’ social communities are heavily populated by other people of Indian origin.** Indian Americans—especially members of the first generation—tend to socialize with other Indian Americans. Internally, the social networks of Indian Americans are more homogenous in terms of religion than either Indian region (state) of origin or caste.
- **Polarization among Indian Americans reflects broader trends in American society.** While religious polarization is less pronounced at an individual level, partisan polarization—linked to political preferences both in India and the United States—is rife. However, this polarization is asymmetric: Democrats are much less comfortable having close friends who are Republicans than the converse. The same is true of Congress Party supporters vis-à-vis supporters of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP).

- **Indian Americans regularly encounter discrimination.** One in two Indian Americans reports being discriminated against in the past one year, with discrimination based on skin color identified as the most common form of bias. Somewhat surprisingly, Indian Americans born in the United States are much more likely to report being victims of discrimination than their foreign-born counterparts.
- **To some extent, divisions in India are being reproduced within the Indian American community.** While only a minority of respondents are concerned about the importation of political divisions from India to the United States, those who are identify religion, political leadership, and political parties in India as the most common factors.

Introduction

U.S. President Joe Biden remarked in a March 2021 phone call with Swati Mohan, an Indian-origin scientist charged with overseeing the highly anticipated landing of the Perseverance Mars rover for the National Aeronautics and Space Administration: “It’s amazing. Indian—of descent—Americans are taking over the country: you, my vice president [Kamala Harris, whose mother was born in India], my speechwriter, Vinay [Indian American Vinay Reddy]. . . . You guys are incredible.”¹

While some in the media interpreted Biden’s off-the-cuff remark as an unfortunate gaffe, others viewed it as affirmation of the growing influence of the Indian American diaspora. In the same exchange, Biden later added: “One of the reasons why we’re such an incredible country is we’re such a diverse country. We bring the best out of every single solitary culture in the world here in the United States of America, and we give people an opportunity to let their dreams run forward.”²

These sentiments are a far cry from those expressed by a special commission established by the U.S. Congress whose 1911 report declared that Hindus were “universally regarded as the least desirable race of immigrants thus far admitted to the United States.”³ More than a century later—from Silicon Valley CEOs to White House power brokers and influential members of Congress to leaders in fields like journalism, health, science, and engineering—the emergence of the Indian diaspora is a remarkable coming-of-age story.

U.S. Census data affirm that Indian Americans enjoy a standard of living that is roughly double that of the median American household, underpinned by substantially greater educational attainment—the share of Indian Americans with at least a bachelor’s degree is twice the national average.⁴ However, these aggregate figures mask severe inequalities within the community. Although overall levels of poverty are lower than the American average,⁵ there are concentrated pockets of deprivation, especially among the large number of unauthorized immigrants born in India and residing in the United States.⁶

Additionally, a narrow focus on demographics such as income, wealth, education, and professional success can obscure important (and sometimes uncomfortable) social truths. What are the social realities and lived experiences of Indian Americans? How does this group perceive itself, and how does it believe others perceive it? To what extent does the community exhibit signs of shared solidarity, and are there signs of division as the group grows in number and diversity? These are some questions this paper attempts to address.

While the social realities of Indian Americans are often glossed over, recent events have brought them to the fore. In 2020, California’s Department of Fair Employment and Housing filed a lawsuit against U.S.-based technology company Cisco Systems after an employee from one of India’s historically marginalized caste communities (“Dalits”) alleged that some of his upper caste Indian American colleagues discriminated against him on the basis of his caste identity.⁷ The suit, and subsequent media melee, triggered a wave of wrenching testimonials about the entrenched nature of caste—a marker of hierarchy and status associated with Hinduism (as well as other South Asian religions)—within the diaspora community in the United States.⁸

More recently, there has been a troubling surge in hate crimes targeting Asian Americans in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic. Although Indian Americans do not appear to be among the primary targets of this violence—as they were in the aftermath of the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks—the disquieting crime wave has cast a spotlight on the bigotry and violence many Asian immigrant populations experience in the United States.⁹

The official classification and self-identities of the Indian American community have posed a conundrum for more than a century, from “Hindoo” to “Asian” to “South Asian” to “Asian Indian” to “Indian American” to “American.” Indeed, even the use of the term “Indian American” is contested, as some members of the diaspora prefer the term “South Asian American,”¹⁰ which signifies solidarity with other groups hailing from the subcontinent. Still others reject hyphenation entirely, preferring to be known simply as “American.” For instance, former Louisiana governor Bobby Jindal declared in 2015, “I do not believe in hyphenated Americans. . . . My dad and mom told my brother and me that we came to America to be Americans. Not Indian-Americans, simply Americans.” Around the same time, Nina Davuluri (who was crowned Miss America 2014) remarked, “The fact that I am rooted in Indian culture helped me win [the] Miss America pageant.”¹¹

How then do we make sense of the heterogeneity encapsulated by the more than 4 million people of Indian origin in the United States, a group that is the second-fastest-growing immigrant community in the country?

This study utilizes a new source of empirical data to better understand the social realities of people of Indian origin residing in the United States. Its findings are based on a nationally representative online survey of 1,200 Indian American residents in the United States—the 2020 Indian American Attitudes Survey (IAAS)—conducted between September 1 and September 20, 2020, in partnership

with research and analytics firm YouGov. The survey, drawing on both citizens and non-citizens in the United States, was conducted online using YouGov’s proprietary panel of 1.8 million Americans and has an overall margin of error of +/- 2.8 percent.

Specifically, this study addresses seven questions concerning the social realities of Indian Americans:

1. What are the demographic characteristics of Indian Americans?
2. How do Indian Americans perceive their own ethnic identity and how much emphasis do they place on their “Indian-ness”?
3. To what degree do Indian Americans engage with American politics, their civic community, and Indian culture?
4. What do the social networks of Indian Americans look like?
5. Do religious differences and partisan politics exacerbate social distance between members of the Indian American community?
6. What are Indian Americans’ experiences with discrimination, and how do discriminatory practices manifest?
7. How do Indian Americans relate to the Indian American community writ large?

This study is the third in a series of empirical papers on the Indian American community. The [first](#), released in October 2020, explored the political attitudes and preferences of Indian Americans in advance of the November 2020 U.S. presidential election.¹² The [second](#), published in February 2021, explored how Indian Americans view changes underway in Indian politics.¹³

Survey Overview

Indian Americans are the second-largest immigrant group in the United States.¹⁴

According to data from the 2018 American Community Survey (ACS)—which is conducted by the U.S. Census Bureau—there are 4.2 million people of Indian origin residing in the United States. Although a large proportion are not U.S. citizens (38 percent), roughly 2.6 million are (1.4 million are naturalized citizens and 1.2 million were born in the United States).

The data for this study are based on an original online survey—the IAAS—of 1,200 Indian American U.S. residents conducted by YouGov between September 1 and September 20, 2020. The IAAS sample includes both citizens and non-U.S. citizens; the former category accounts for 77 percent of the survey respondents. Table 1 provides a demographic profile of the IAAS sample in comparison to the Indian American sample in the 2018 ACS.

TABLE 1
**Demographics of the Indian American Attitudes Survey (IAAS)
 and American Community Survey (ACS)**

	IAAS 2020	ACS 2018
Has U.S. citizenship	77%	62%
Median age (years)	35 years	34 years
Is married	65%	73%
Aged 25 years or older with a college degree	79%	76%
Median household annual income	\$80,000-\$99,000	\$120,000

SOURCE: Authors' analysis of data from the IAAS and ACS 2018.

YouGov recruited respondents from its proprietary panel comprising 1.8 million U.S. residents. Only adult respondents (ages eighteen and above) who identified as Indian American or a person of (Asian) Indian origin were able to participate in the survey. YouGov employs a sophisticated sample matching procedure to ensure that the respondent pool is representative of the Indian American community in the United States, using data from the ACS as a target sample frame. All the analyses in this study employ sampling weights to ensure representativeness.¹⁵

The overall margin of error for the IAAS is +/- 2.8 percent. This margin of error is calculated at the 95 percent confidence interval. Further methodological details can be found in Appendix A, along with a state-wise map of survey respondents.

The survey instrument contains 157 questions organized across six modules: basic demographics; immigration, citizenship, and family background; presidential campaigns and voting; U.S. politics and foreign policy; culture and social behavior; and Indian politics. Respondents were allowed to skip questions save for important demographic questions that determined the nature of other survey items. All attitudinal and perceptual measures and variables discussed in this paper are self-reported measures by respondents. For complete survey topline results, please visit Appendix B online.

Key Demographic Characteristics of Indian Americans

This section provides a snapshot of the Indian American population in the United States, as captured by the IAAS. It covers five broad areas: citizenship and residency status; educational attainment; marital status; Indian region of origin; and religion, religious practice, and caste identity.

Citizenship and Residency Status

As table 1 indicates, 77 percent of IAAS respondents are U.S. citizens, although there is significant variation within that category.¹⁶ Thirty-nine percent of all respondents immigrated to the United States and later became naturalized U.S. citizens. Thirty-three percent were born in the United States but with at least one parent who was born outside of the United States. Another 4 percent were born in the United States to parents also born in the United States. The remaining 23 percent of the sample consists of immigrants residing in the United States who do not hold U.S. citizenship.

Not surprisingly, of the non-U.S. citizen population, 88 percent of IAAS respondents claim Indian citizenship. But members of this group exhibit significant variation in terms of their visa status (see figure 1).

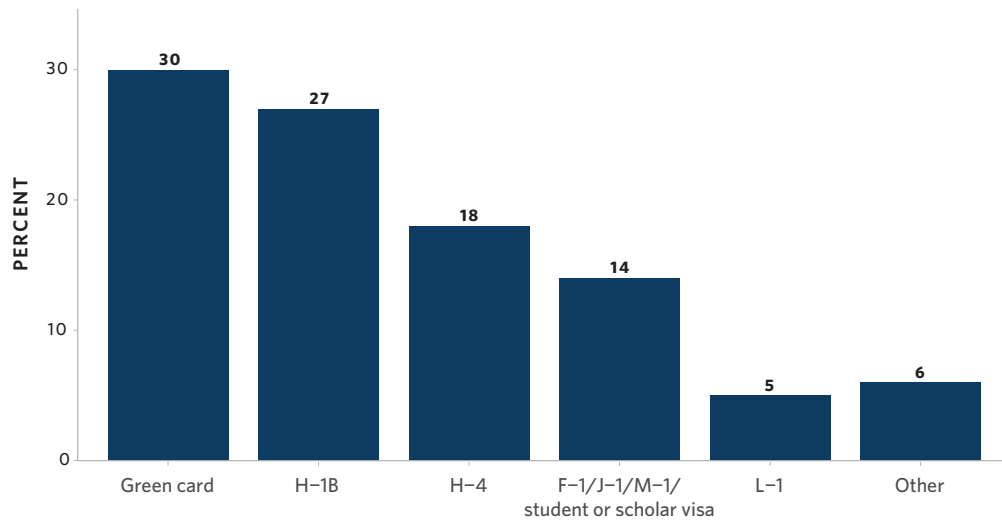
Thirty percent of non-citizen IAAS respondents possess a green card (or a permanent residency card), which places them on a pathway to gaining U.S. citizenship. Twenty-seven percent are H-1B visa holders, a visa status for high-skilled or specialty workers in the United States that has historically been dominated by the technology sector. On average, an H-1B visa holder reports living in the United States for eight years, although 36 percent of H-1B beneficiaries report spending more than a decade in the country (that is, they arrived before 2010). Eighteen percent of non-citizens reside in the United States on an H-4 visa, a category for immediate family members of H-1B visa holders. Fourteen percent of non-citizens are on F-1, J-1, or M-1 visas—categories of student or scholar visas—while another 5 percent hold an L-1 visa, a designation available to employees of an international company with offices in the United States. A small minority of non-citizen respondents—6 percent—claim some other visa status.

Of the non-citizen population residing in the United States, the survey finds that 80 percent of them would accept U.S. citizenship if offered—an important preference given that Indian law forbids dual citizenship.

For those respondents who immigrated to the United States, over half (60 percent) arrived in the year 2000 or after (see figure 2).¹⁷ Seventeen percent arrived in the 1990s, 13 percent immigrated in the 1980s, and just 10 percent arrived before the year 1980. There is a similar trend in

FIGURE 1
Visa Status of Non-Citizens

Are you currently on a green card or any type of visa?



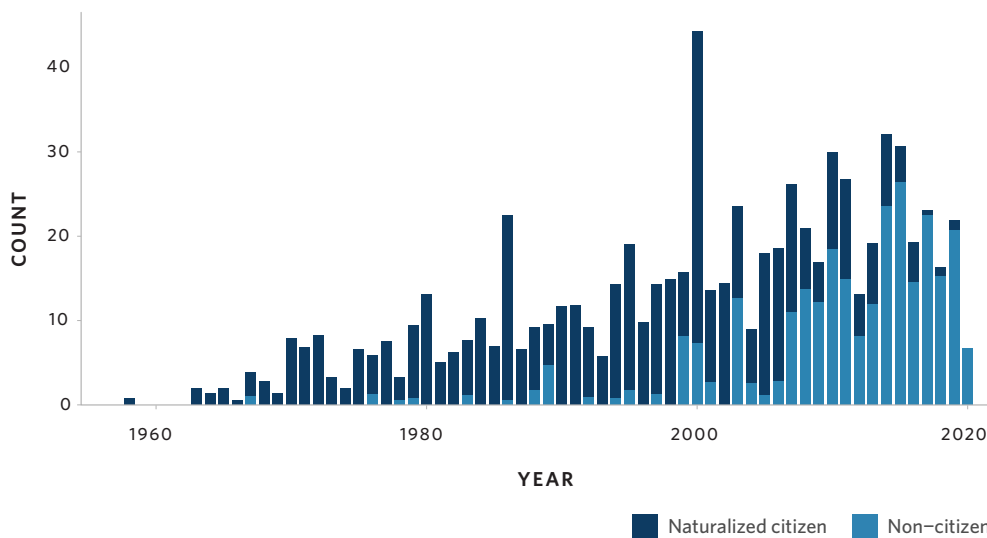
N = 264 U.S. adult residents

NOTE: Sample excludes U.S. citizens.

SOURCE: 2020 Indian American Attitudes Survey.

FIGURE 2
Indian American Immigrants' Year of Arrival, by Citizenship Status

In what year did you come to live in the United States?



N = 711 U.S. adult residents

NOTE: Sample excludes non-immigrants.

SOURCE: 2020 Indian American Attitudes Survey.

naturalization for those who immigrated and later took U.S. citizenship. Sixty-four percent of this subset of respondents were naturalized after the year 2000, while the remainder received U.S. citizenship before that.

The Government of India maintains an Overseas Citizenship of India (OCI) designation for persons of Indian origin residing abroad who do not hold Indian citizenship. OCI status effectively functions as a lifetime visa and also grants recipients the ability to live and work in India on a permanent basis. Forty-two percent of respondents who are not Indian citizens have taken advantage of the program.¹⁸

Of course, many Indian Americans—irrespective of citizenship—remain tied to India thanks to direct family connections. At the time of the survey, more than half (55 percent) of Indian Americans reported that they had an immediate family member (spouse, mother, father, brother, sister, son, or daughter) currently residing in India.

Educational Attainment

The survey also asks respondents about their educational attainment, which provides insight into the socioeconomic profile of Indians in America.

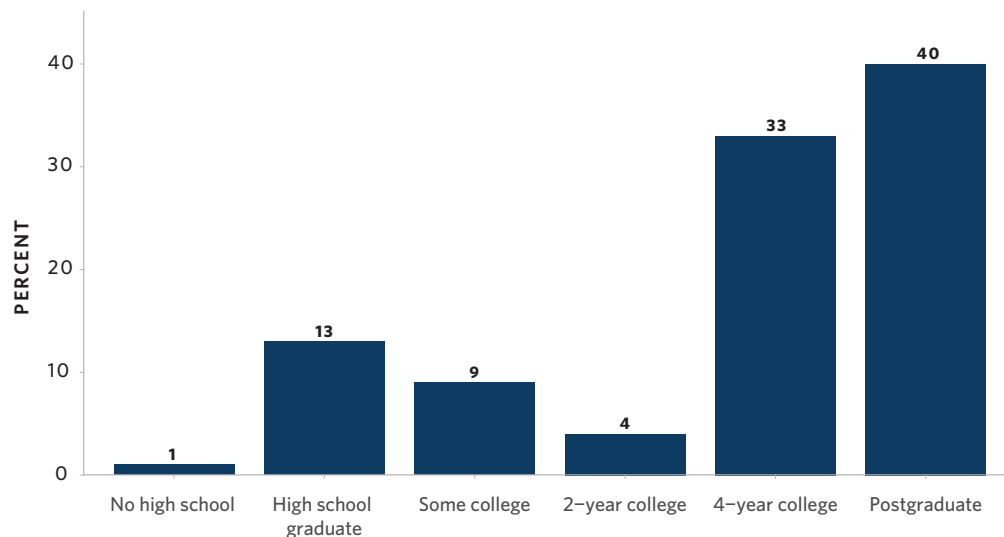
Overall, the Indian American population is highly educated compared to the U.S. average (see figure 3), as other studies have suggested.¹⁹ Nearly three-fourths have a college education—40 percent of respondents have completed a postgraduate education and another 33 percent have finished four years of undergraduate study. Four percent have completed at least a junior college (two-year program) education, while 9 percent have completed some college. Thirteen percent have a high school diploma and just 1 percent have not finished high school.

These numbers are actually a *lower* bound of Indian Americans' educational attainment. Many respondents are between the ages of eighteen and twenty-five and, thus, are plausibly in the middle of their educational training. If one restricts attention to respondents aged twenty-five and older, nearly 80 percent have either a college or postgraduate degree (compared to 73 percent in the overall sample).

In all, 52 percent of Indians in America completed their education in the United States. Of that segment that was educated abroad, 42 percent arrived in the United States with an undergraduate degree and another 38 percent had completed a graduate or professional degree before their arrival. Eleven percent finished high school elsewhere, while only 8 percent had less than a high school education. These data suggest that the vast majority of the Indian immigrant population in the United States were already highly educated prior to arriving in the country.

FIGURE 3
Educational Attainment

What is the highest level of education you have completed?



N = 1,200 U.S. adult residents

SOURCE: 2020 Indian American Attitudes Survey.

Marital Status

Indian Americans exhibit high rates of marriage and low rates of divorce. Data from the ACS show that the share of married couple households in the community is 50 percent greater than the U.S. average.²⁰ In the IAAS sample, 66 percent of respondents were married or in a domestic partnership.

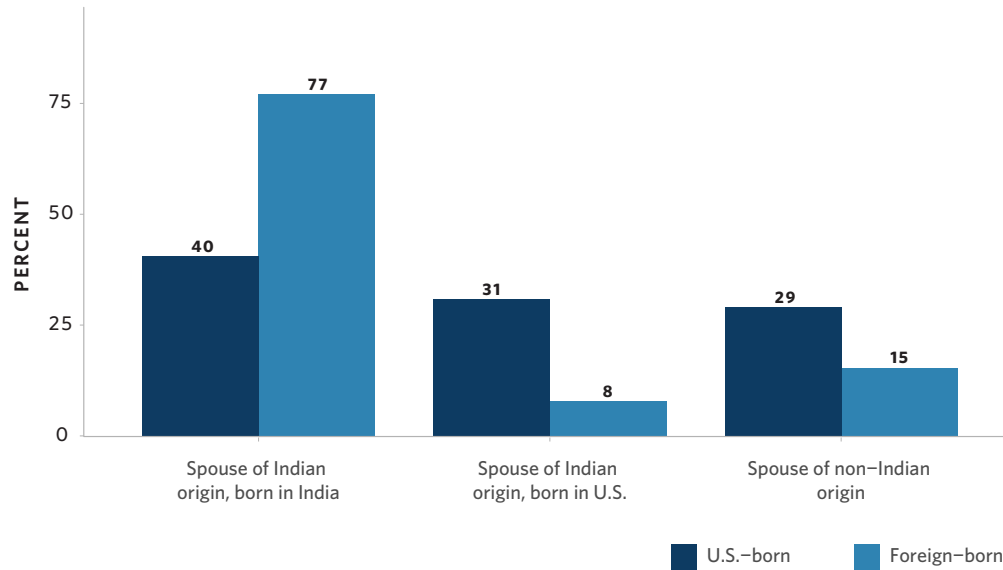
Existing research has found that among major Asian American communities, Indian Americans—both men and women—have the highest rate of endogamy (the custom of marrying within one’s community) in both the first and second generations, although there is a noticeable increase in marriage outside of the community among members of the second generation.²¹

IAAS data confirm this finding. Eight out of ten respondents say they have a spouse or partner of Indian origin (ranging from 85 percent of foreign-born respondents to 71 percent of U.S.-born respondents).

FIGURE 4

Origin of Spouse or Partner

Is your spouse or partner of Indian origin?



N = 728 U.S. adult residents

NOTE: Sample excludes respondents who were not married or in a domestic partnership and those who skipped the question(s).

SOURCE: 2020 Indian American Attitudes Survey.

The label “Indian origin” itself masks variation in terms of one’s place of birth. Figure 4 unpacks this further and looks at three categories of spouses or partners: Indian origin but born in India; Indian origin but born in the United States; and non-Indian origin. Responses are disaggregated by respondents’ place of birth.

As the figure demonstrates, foreign-born Indian Americans are significantly more likely to have a spouse or partner who is of Indian origin and born in India. Seventy-seven percent of foreign-born Indian Americans fall into this category, compared to just 40 percent of U.S.-born Indian Americans. However, when compared to their foreign-born counterparts, U.S.-born Indian Americans are four times as likely to report having a spouse or partner who is of Indian origin but born in the

United States (31 percent versus 8 percent). Finally, respondents born in the United States are also significantly more likely to report that they have a spouse or partner who is not of Indian origin: 29 percent of U.S.-born respondents compared to just 15 percent of foreign-born respondents.

Overall, 19 percent of respondents report having a spouse who is not of Indian origin, but this is slightly more common among men (22 percent) than women (16 percent). Interestingly, among foreign-born respondents, twice as many men (20 percent) have a spouse of non-Indian origin compared to women (10 percent), but the gap more than disappears among those born in the United States: while 27 percent of men have a spouse of non-Indian origin, this rises to 31 percent among women.

Region of Origin

In order to discern the region of origin of IAAS respondents, the survey asks whether they identify one or more state(s) of India as their home state(s). Sixty-four percent of respondents call a single state their home state, while 12 percent identify with multiple home states. Nearly one in four respondents reports no particular attachment to a state of origin.

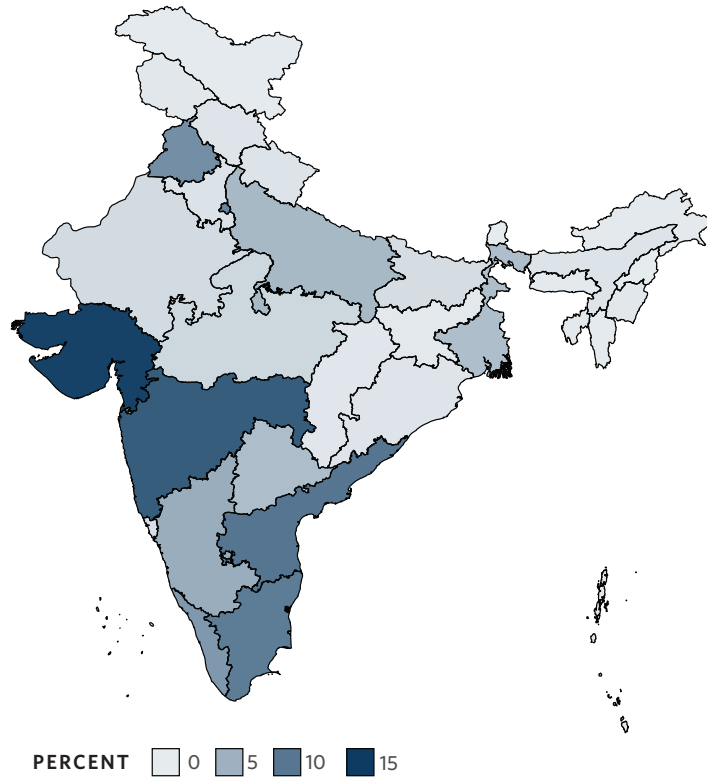
Figure 5 maps respondents' states of origin in India. In cases where the respondent identifies with multiple states, both states are counted as a home state. (Hence, the percentages do not add up to 100.) The western state of Gujarat emerges as the most common home state, with 14 percent of respondents calling it their home, followed by Maharashtra (12 percent), Andhra Pradesh (10 percent), and Tamil Nadu (9 percent). Other popular home states include Delhi (9 percent), Punjab (8 percent), and Kerala (7 percent).

Another way of examining respondents' regional connections in India is to look at their linguistic backgrounds. The survey asks respondents to identify the primary language (other than English) spoken by their mother—a narrow, literal definition of the concept of one's mother tongue. Table 2 presents results of the most common languages among respondents, restricting attention to languages identified by at least 2 percent of respondents. The ordering in table 2 roughly corresponds with the map shown on the next page.

FIGURE 5

Indian Americans' Home States

Which of these states in India would you call your home state(s)?



N = 918 U.S. adult residents

NOTE: Percentage indicates the proportion of respondents listing a given state as their home state. Sample excludes respondents who do not report a home state.

SOURCE: 2020 Indian American Attitudes Survey.

Overall, Hindi is the most common mother tongue (19 percent), followed by Gujarati (14 percent), English only (10 percent), and Telugu (10 percent)—the latter is the primary language of the southern states of Andhra Pradesh and Telangana.²² Eight percent of respondents report Tamil as their mother tongue, while 7 percent apiece report Punjabi or Bengali. Malayalam (6 percent), Urdu (5 percent), Marathi (4 percent), and Kannada (3 percent) round out the list. The balance (around 7 percent) consists of less frequently listed languages, ranging from Sindhi to Santali.

TABLE 2
Distribution of Respondents' "Mother Tongues"

Language	Percentage
Hindi	19%
Gujarati	14%
English only	10%
Telugu	10%
Tamil	9%
Punjabi	7%
Bengali	7%
Malayalam	6%
Urdu	5%
Marathi	4%
Kannada	3%
Other	7%

N = 1,200 U.S. adult results

NOTE: Languages spoken by fewer than two percent of respondents are classified as "Other."

SOURCE: 2020 Indian American Attitudes Survey.

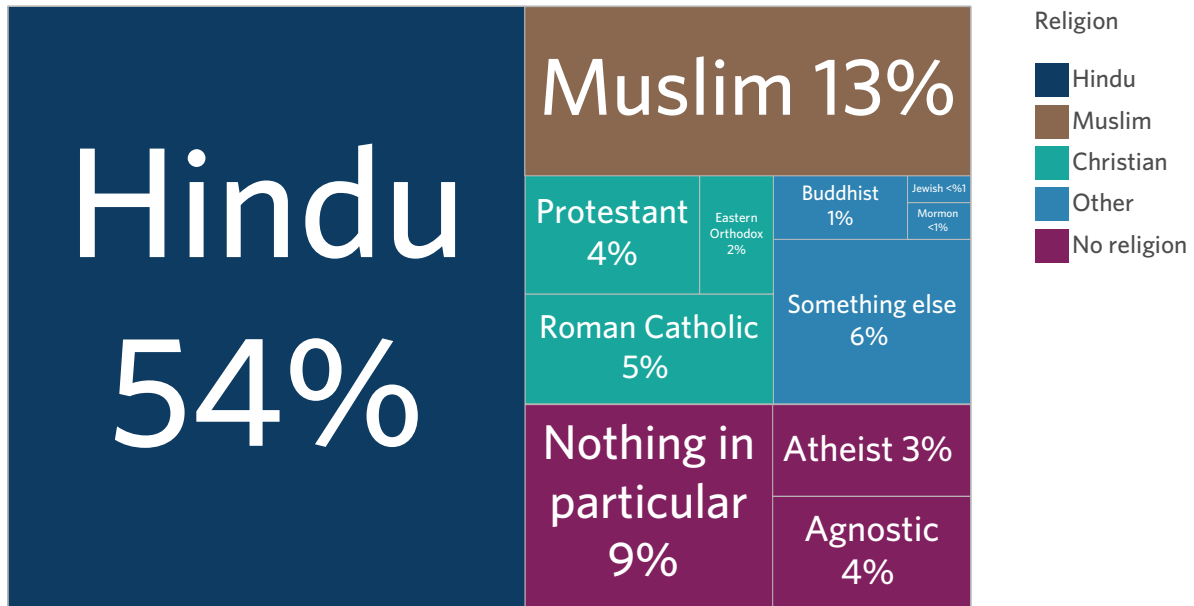
Religion, Religious Practice, and Caste

Religion

According to IAAS data, 54 percent of respondents report belonging to the Hindu faith (see figure 6). The next most common response—those claiming no religious affiliation (a category that includes agnostics and atheists)—accounts for 16 percent of the sample. Thirteen percent of respondents are Muslim, 11 percent are Christian, and another 7 percent belong to a variety of other faiths including Buddhism and Sikhism. In certain cases, these larger groupings consist of smaller denominations that have been aggregated upward.

FIGURE 6
Religious Identity

What is your present religion, if any?



N = 1,200 U.S. adult residents

NOTE: Size of boxes corresponds to proportion of respondents belonging to that category.

SOURCE: 2020 Indian American Attitudes Survey.

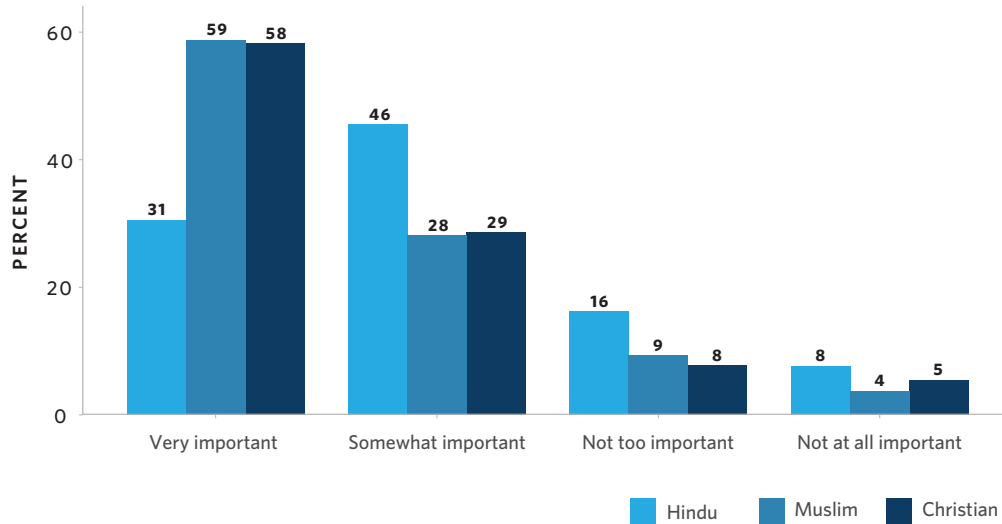
In addition to asking respondents about their religious identity, the survey also asks them about the role religion plays in their life. This emulates a standard set of survey questions that has long been asked by the Pew Research Center.²³

When asked how important religion is in their life, 72 percent of respondents reply that religion is either very important or somewhat important. This statistic is nearly identical to the average of the American population at large. According to a 2019 Pew survey, 70 percent of Americans said religion is very important or somewhat important in their lives.²⁴ Notably, responses to this question in the IAAS sample do not vary greatly by place of birth; respondents born in the United States are nearly as likely to report that religion is important to them as those born outside of the country.

There does appear to be some variation based on respondents' religious identity (see figure 7). Muslims and Christians are significantly more likely than Hindus to say that religion is very important to them—a gap of nearly 30 percentage points. Hindus, in turn, are much more likely than Christians or Muslims to state that religion is somewhat important, not too important, or not at all important in their lives.

FIGURE 7
Importance of Religion, by Religious Identity

How important is religion in your life?



N = 1,200 U.S. adult residents

NOTE: Figure excludes respondents who belong to other religious faiths or do not identify with any religion.

SOURCE: 2020 Indian American Attitudes Survey.

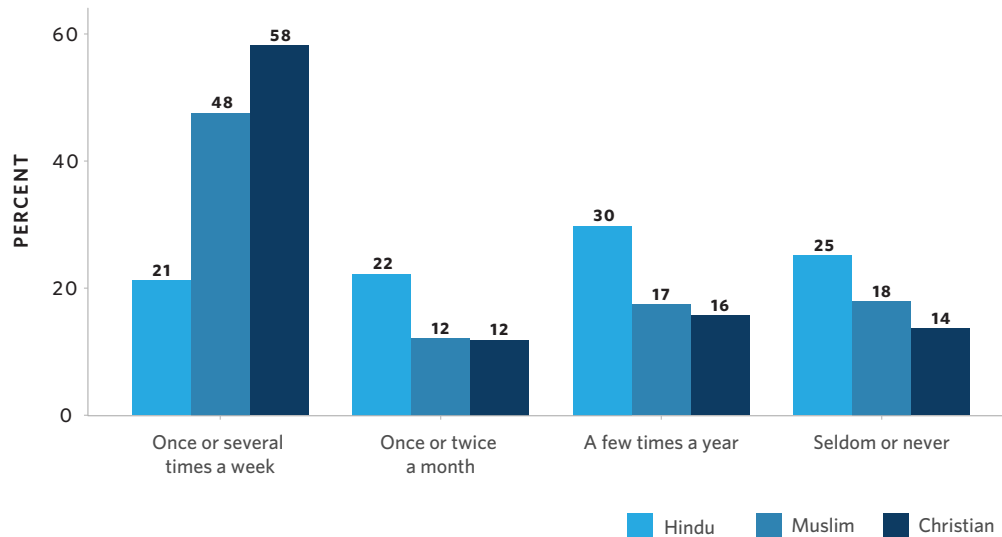
Religious Practice

In terms of attending religious services, there is also significant variation within the Indian American community. Twenty-seven percent of respondents report that they attend religious services (apart from weddings and funerals) once a week or more than once a week. This is identical to the share of all Americans who report attending services at least once a week, based on a 2020 Pew survey.²⁵ Forty percent, the modal category, of Indian Americans report attending religious services once or twice a month or just a few times a year. Another 31 percent report little or no participation in religious services, claiming they do so seldom or never.

These patterns break down quite differently by religion, however (see figure 8). Christians are the most observant group as far as attending religious services is concerned. Fifty-eight percent of Christians report attending church at least once or several times per week. Nearly half of all Muslims (48 percent) say they attend religious services regularly as well. This proportion declines dramatically for Hindus, with only 21 percent reporting regularly attending religious services. A majority of Hindus (52 percent) report attending religious services once or twice a month or just a few times a year, while another 25 percent report seldom or never attending religious services.

FIGURE 8
Attendance of Religious Services, by Religious Identity

Aside from weddings and funerals, how often do you attend religious services?



N = 1,200 U.S. adult residents

NOTE: Figure excludes respondents who belong to other religious faiths or do not identify with any religion.

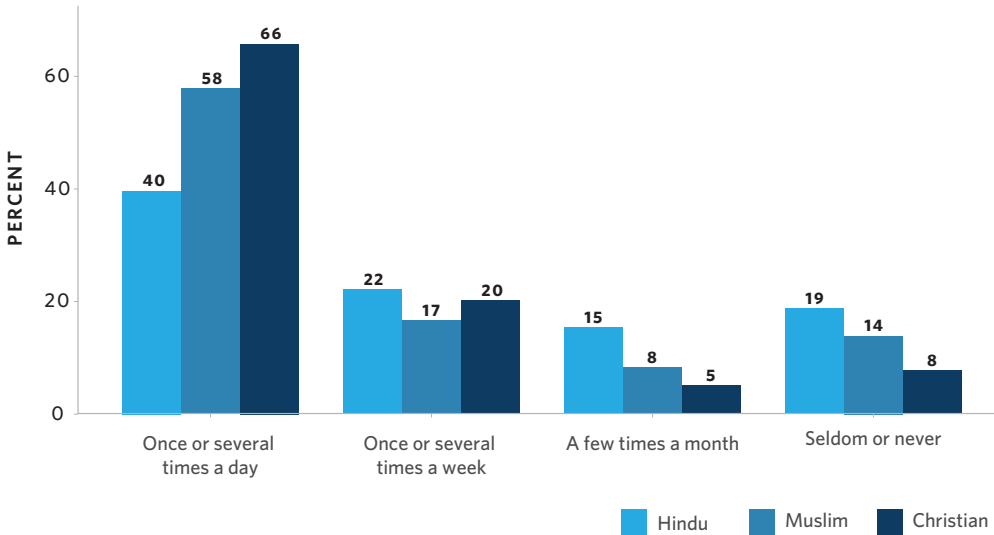
SOURCE: 2020 Indian American Attitudes Survey.

Apart from attending religious services, the survey asks respondents how frequently they pray (outside of the times they attend religious services). Forty percent of respondents report praying either several times a day or once a day—significantly more than the 27 percent of the sample that attends religious services at least once a week. The share of Indian Americans who pray either several times a day or once a day is slightly below the U.S. average (46 percent according to Pew survey data).²⁶ Another 20 percent of Indian Americans report taking part in prayer a few times a week or once a week, while 11 percent pray at least a few times a month. Twenty-four percent of Indian Americans report seldom or never praying.

Clear differences along religious lines are evident in the responses to the question on the frequency of prayer (see figure 9). Not only are Hindus less likely to report attending religious services, but they are also less likely to say that they pray. Forty percent of Hindus say they pray once or several times a day—substantially less than the 58 percent of Muslims or 66 percent of Christians who answer similarly. Hindus are also more likely than Muslims or Christians to state that they pray a few times a month, seldom, or never.²⁷

FIGURE 9
Frequency of Prayer, by Religious Identity

Outside of attending religious services, how often do you pray?



N = 1,200 U.S. adult residents

NOTE: Figure excludes respondents who belong to other religious faiths or do not identify with any religion.

SOURCE: 2020 Indian American Attitudes Survey.

Caste

Finally, the survey explores the issue of caste. Caste has long been a sensitive and controversial issue in discussions about the Indian American community. Media reports about caste discrimination in the technology hub of Silicon Valley—where a large number of Indian Americans are employed—and a heated controversy over whether caste should be a part of history textbooks in the state of California have brought the issue to the forefront once more.²⁸ A 2018 survey of 1,500 South Asian Americans found that many low-caste members of numerous diaspora communities had endured firsthand experience of caste discrimination. However, the study is not based on a representative sample, raising questions about the generalizability of its findings.²⁹

While caste is most commonly associated with Hinduism, caste hierarchies and caste self-identification are prevalent in most, if not all, of India’s major religions. For instance, the category Other Backward Classes (OBC) is common among Muslims, while Scheduled Castes or Dalits can also be found in Buddhist, Sikh, Christian, and Muslim communities. The survey’s initial question on whether respondents personally identify with a caste grouping is restricted to respondents who

identify with Hinduism (and make up slightly more than half of the IAAS sample), where caste categories are reasonably well-defined.³⁰ However, broader questions regarding the role that caste plays in social networks (discussed later) are asked of all respondents.

Forty-seven percent of Hindu respondents report identifying with a caste, which means the majority (53 percent) said that they do not personally identify with a caste group of any kind. However, there is marked variation by place of birth. Whereas 53 percent of foreign-born Hindu Indian Americans affiliate with a caste group, 34 percent of U.S.-born Hindu Indian Americans do the same. There is no variation at all based on duration of stay in the United States. Hindus who recently arrived in the United States are just as likely to identify with a caste group as those who have been here for a quarter-century or more.³¹

Overall, there are 632 respondents in the IAAS sample who belong to the Hindu faith but only 293 who report identifying with a caste group. Of this latter group, the overwhelming majority—83 percent—categorize themselves as General or upper caste. Sixteen percent identify as a member of OBC and 1 percent each identify as Adivasi/Scheduled Tribe (ST) or Dalit/Scheduled Caste (SC).

One should treat these findings with caution. First, as noted above, the data on caste identification is restricted to Hindu respondents. Therefore, the sample size from which these percentages is derived is small—just one-half of the overall IAAS sample. Second, given the presence of SCs among some non-Hindu religious groups, it is likely that the absolute number of SCs—if not the percentage—in the IAAS sample is higher. Finally, given the sensitive nature of caste identity, nonresponses in the survey could mask those who do not wish to disclose their caste affiliation even if they are aware of their family's caste identity.

Indian (and American) Identities

In order to be eligible to serve as a respondent for the IAAS, members of YouGov's panel must self-identify as a person of (Asian) Indian origin who resides in the United States. But self-identification as a person of Indian origin tells us little about the strength of a respondent's Indian identity. This section explores how Indian Americans view the subject of their own identity.

Importance of Being Indian

First, the survey asked respondents how important being Indian is to their identity. Overall, 41 percent of respondents rate it as very important and another 37 percent rate it as somewhat

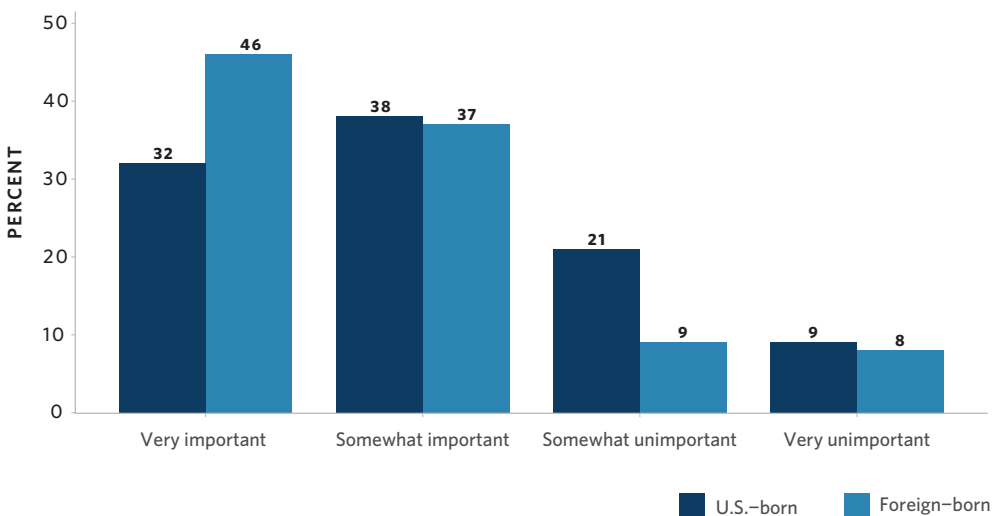
important. Taken together, more than three-quarters of Indian Americans place a high value on their “Indian-ness.” Around 22 percent state that their Indian identity is either somewhat or very unimportant.³²

One might expect, however, that the importance of a respondent’s Indian identity might vary by their place of birth. For instance, it is plausible that Indian Americans born in the United States would place less emphasis on their “Indian-ness” than their counterparts who immigrated. In fact, that is precisely what the data suggest (see figure 10).

Eighty-three percent of foreign-born Indian Americans claim being Indian is either very or somewhat important to their identity, compared to 70 percent of U.S.-born Indian Americans. The differences are most pronounced among those who say being Indian is very important to them. On the other end of the spectrum, 30 percent of Indian Americans born in the United States answer that being Indian is either somewhat or very unimportant to their identity—a response given by just 17 percent of foreign-born Indian Americans.

FIGURE 10
Importance of Being Indian, by Place of Birth

How important is being Indian to your identity?



N = 1,200 U.S. adult residents

SOURCE: 2020 Indian American Attitudes Survey.

There is some evidence to suggest that there are “vintage” effects: the longer a respondent has spent in the United States, the less emphasis they place on their Indian identity—perhaps a reflection of their gradual integration into their adopted homeland. However, the magnitude of the effect is modest. Fifty percent of respondents who have been in the United States for ten years or less say that being Indian is very important to their identity, compared to 42 percent for those who have been in the United States for more than twenty-five years. Indian Americans in this latter category are also more inclined to state that being Indian is somewhat or very unimportant to them.³³ Respondents who identify as Republicans are also significantly less likely to place importance on the “Indian-ness” of their identity compared to Democrats or independents.

Religious affiliation too correlates with one’s feelings toward their Indian identity. Eighty-eight percent of Hindus say being Indian is very or somewhat important to them, compared to 79 percent of Christians and 66 percent of Muslims. This is possibly a reflection of India’s current political climate. The February 2021 IAAS paper found that almost seven in ten Hindus approve of Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi’s performance, while just one in five Muslims feel the same.³⁴ However, without longitudinal data, it is unclear to what extent the religious divide reflects the specificities of the current context—in which Muslims in India feel especially marginalized and discriminated against—or is instead a product of longer-term trends.

Self-Identification

The variation in respondents’ feelings of “Indian-ness” begs the question of how Indian Americans navigate multiple identities linked both to their country of origin as well as their country of settlement.

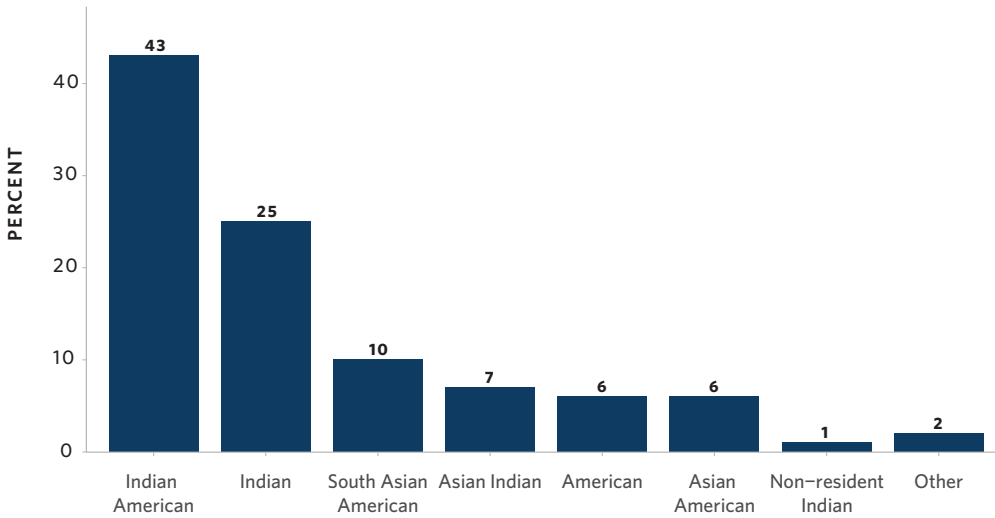
The IAAS asks respondents how they self-identify; after all, identities are liminal and individuals might identify with any number of identity categories. To probe this issue, the survey provides respondents with eight identity categories and asks them which of the following best describes their background. The results are displayed in figure 11.

Interestingly, while three-fourths of respondents identify with an “Indian” nomenclature, this masks exactly how that term is used. Only 43 percent of IAAS respondents believe that “Indian American” is the term that best captures their background. One-quarter of all respondents self-identify as “Indian” while 7 percent choose the term “Asian Indian.”

Ten percent of IAAS respondents identify as “South Asian American,” a term which refers to diaspora populations from countries across the region such as Bangladesh, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka. Six percent choose no hyphenation at all and identify only as “American” and another 6 percent classify themselves as “Asian American,” an identity category that includes a wide range of diaspora groups

FIGURE 11
Varieties of Self-Identification

Which of the following would you say best describes your background?

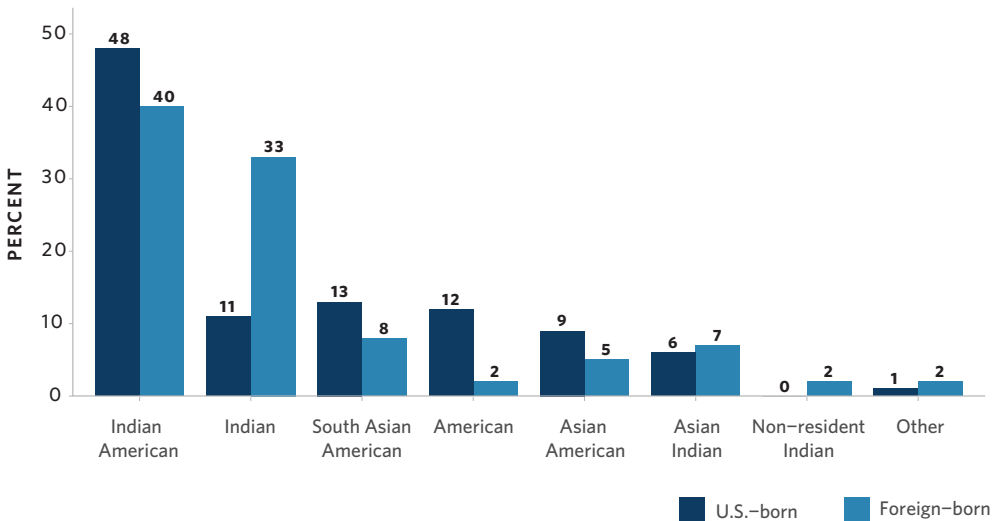


N = 1,200 U.S. adult residents

SOURCE: 2020 Indian American Attitudes Survey.

FIGURE 12
Varieties of Self-Identification, by Place of Birth

Which of the following would you say best describes your background?



N = 1,200 U.S. adult residents

SOURCE: 2020 Indian American Attitudes Survey.

from the Asian continent. Two percent of respondents identify as “Other,” indicating that none of the declared options satisfy them, while just 1 percent identify as “Non-resident Indian,” the official appellation used by the Government of India to refer to Indian passport holders living outside of India.

As one might expect, first-generation (foreign-born) and second-generation (U.S.-born) respondents approach this question differently (see figure 12). Indian Americans who are born in the United States are more likely to identify as Indian American (48 to 40 percent) and markedly less likely to identify as Indian (just 11 percent compared to 33 percent of foreign-born Indian Americans). Conversely, second-generation Indian Americans born in the United States are more likely to embrace the terms South Asian American, Asian American, and the nonhyphenated American.

Self-identification also varies by religion. While 86 percent of Hindus report identifying with some kind of “Indian” identity, 71 percent of Christians and 52 percent of Muslims do the same. Relative to Muslims, Christians and Hindus are equally likely to self-identify as “Indian American” (47 percent each versus 32 percent for Muslims), and Hindus are substantially more likely to self-identify as “Indian” (32 percent versus 17 percent for Christians and 12 percent for Muslims). On the other hand, Muslims are much more likely to self-identify as “South Asian” (27 percent compared to 7 percent of Christians and 5 percent of Hindus). Finally, Christians are more likely to self-identify as “American” without any hyphenation (9 percent versus 6 percent for Muslim and 4 percent for Hindus).

The length of one’s stay in the United States also plays an important role in shaping self-identification. Just 24 percent of Indian Americans who have lived in the United States between one and ten years identify as Indian American, compared to 41 percent of those who have been here for eleven to twenty-five years and 53 percent of those who have been here for more than twenty-five years. The reverse is true when it comes to identifying as “Indian”: the majority of Indian Americans who have lived in the United States between one and ten years (54 percent) feel most comfortable with this term, while that share declines to just 21 percent for those here for more than twenty-five years.

Navigating Multiple Identities

Although “Indian American” is a contested category, the survey attempts to understand how respondents perceive the push and pull between different aspects of their identity. For instance, do respondents feel more Indian than American, more American than Indian, equally Indian and American, or neither Indian nor American?

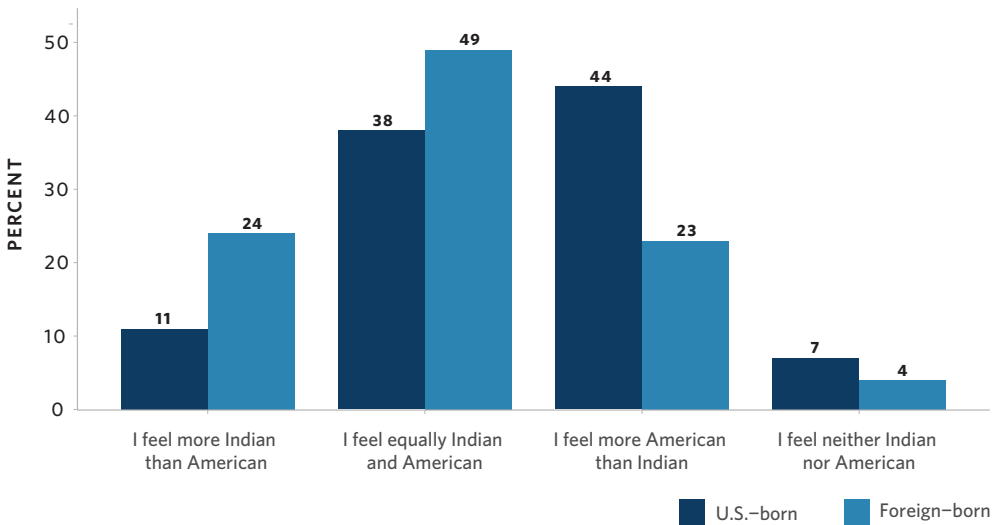
According to the data, the modal response of Indian Americans is that they weigh the two sides of their identity equally: 45 percent feel equally Indian and American. Thirty-one percent state that they feel more American than Indian and 19 percent state the converse—that they feel more Indian than American. A very small proportion, just 5 percent, state that they feel neither Indian nor American.

Predictably, responses vary by place of birth (see figure 13). Indeed, a plurality (44 percent) of Indian Americans born in the United States say that they feel more American than Indian (compared to 23 percent of foreign-born respondents). At the other end of the spectrum, 24 percent of foreign-born respondents feel more Indian than American, a sentiment shared by just 11 percent of their U.S.-born counterparts.

Interestingly, those born outside of the United States are most likely to say that they feel equally Indian and American—nearly one in two fall into this category (as do 38 percent of U.S.-born Indian Americans).³⁵ A slightly higher share of U.S.-born Indian Americans (7 percent) than foreign-born Indian Americans (4 percent) claim that they feel neither Indian nor American.

FIGURE 13
Weighing Indian and American Identities, by Place of Birth

Which of the following best describes your identity?



N = 1,200 U.S. adult residents

SOURCE: 2020 Indian American Attitudes Survey.

Social Capital and Social Networks

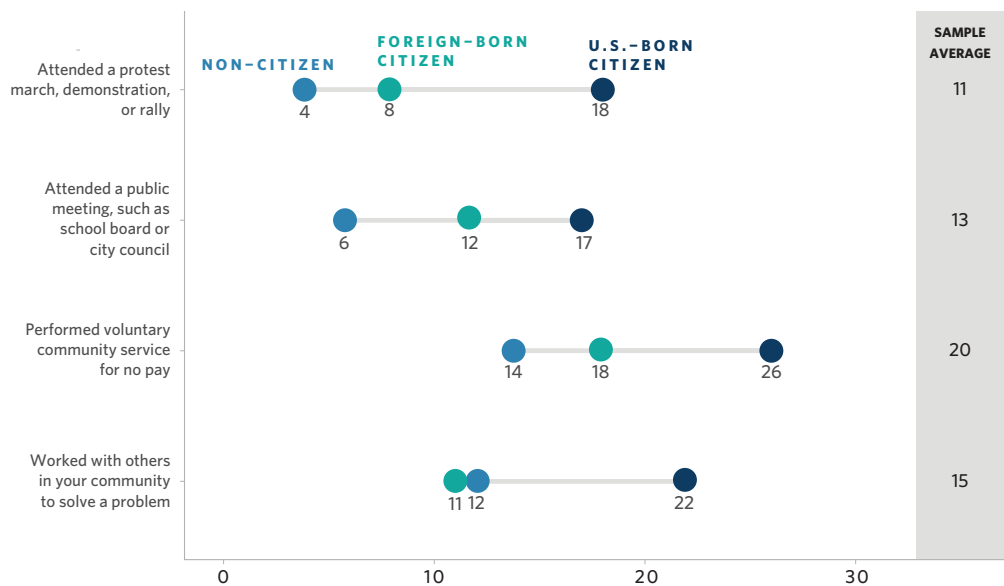
This section reviews two aspects of the social context within which Indian Americans operate. The first part looks at three types of engagement: civic, political, and cultural. The second part examines the social networks of Indians in America and how they vary by respondents' demographic characteristics.

Civic Engagement

The survey asks respondents whether—in the past one year—they participated in any of four common methods of civic engagement: working with others in their community to solve a problem; performing voluntary community service without pay; attending a public meeting, such as for a school board or city council; or attending a protest march, demonstration, or rally. The most common activity is performing community service, something 20 percent of respondents engaged in, followed by working with others in their community (15 percent), attending a public meeting (13 percent), and attending a protest or demonstration (11 percent).

FIGURE 14
Indian Americans' Civic Engagement, by Immigration Status

In the last twelve months, have you participated in any of the following activities?



N = 1,200 U.S. adult residents

SOURCE: 2020 Indian American Attitudes Survey.

Figure 14 disaggregates the results by place of birth and citizenship status. Respondents are classified as belonging to one of three categories: U.S.-born citizen, foreign-born citizen, and non-citizen. U.S.-born citizens report the highest levels of civic engagement, followed by foreign-born citizens and, in all categories save for one, non-citizens report the lowest levels of civic engagement.

A much higher share of U.S.-born citizens report attending a protest (18 percent) than either foreign-born citizens (8 percent) or non-citizens (4 percent). Seventeen percent of U.S.-born citizens report attending a public meeting, while 12 percent of foreign-born citizens and 6 percent of non-citizens report doing so. Community service is the most popular form of civic engagement for Indian Americans of all types. Twenty-six percent of U.S.-born citizens report taking part in voluntary service compared to 18 percent of foreign-born citizens and 14 percent of non-citizens.

The one slight deviation in the overall pattern of civic engagement is found in the final category—working with others in your community to solve a problem. Once more, U.S.-born citizens lead the pack with 22 percent of them reporting participation in this activity. However, non-citizens are about as likely as foreign-born citizens to engage in the resolution of community issues (12 percent versus 11 percent).

Political Engagement

The survey also queries respondents about whether they participated, over the past twelve months, in any of five political activities: volunteering or working on a political campaign; posting comments online about politics; discussing politics with friends and family; contributing money to a candidate, party, or campaign organization; or contacting their elected representative or another government official.

Nearly one in two respondents (45 percent) report discussing politics in the past year—by far the most common activity. Twenty-one percent report posting comments about political issues online. Contributing financially to campaigns (14 percent), contacting an elected representative or government official (12 percent), and volunteering on a political campaign (9 percent) are less popular activities.³⁶

As with civic engagement, U.S.-born citizens are the most engaged, followed by foreign-born citizens and non-citizens (see figure 15). This finding tracks with other studies of immigrant communities.³⁷

When it comes to discussing politics with family and friends, there are only small differences across citizenship status. Forty-seven percent of U.S.-born citizens report engaging in this activity, but 45 percent of foreign-born citizens and 41 percent of non-citizens did so as well. When it comes to online discussions of politics, 28 percent of U.S.-born citizens posted comments about political issues on an online forum, compared to 18 percent of foreign-born citizens and 14 percent of non-citizens.

On the matter of campaign finance, one-fifth of U.S.-born citizens report contributing to a political campaign, while just 13 percent of foreign citizens and 5 percent of non-citizens said they did so. The low rate of political giving for non-citizens is expected given that non-citizens are forbidden from making political donations unless they are permanent residents (that is, they possess a green card). Relatively few Indian Americans across the board report contacting an elected representative or other government official: 15 percent of U.S.-born citizens, 11 percent of foreign-born citizens, and 9 percent of non-citizens engaged in this class of activities. Finally, volunteering or working on a political campaign appears to be the least common form of political engagement. Unsurprisingly, just 4 percent of non-citizens participated in this activity, while 8 percent of foreign-born citizens and 14 percent of U.S.-born citizens reported working on a campaign.

It is worth pointing out that nearly one-third (32 percent) of respondents report not engaging in any of the civic or political activities listed on the survey. However, non-citizens and foreign-born citizens report nonparticipation at roughly twice the rate of U.S.-born citizens: 47 and 41 percent, respectively, compared to 22 percent of U.S.-born citizens.

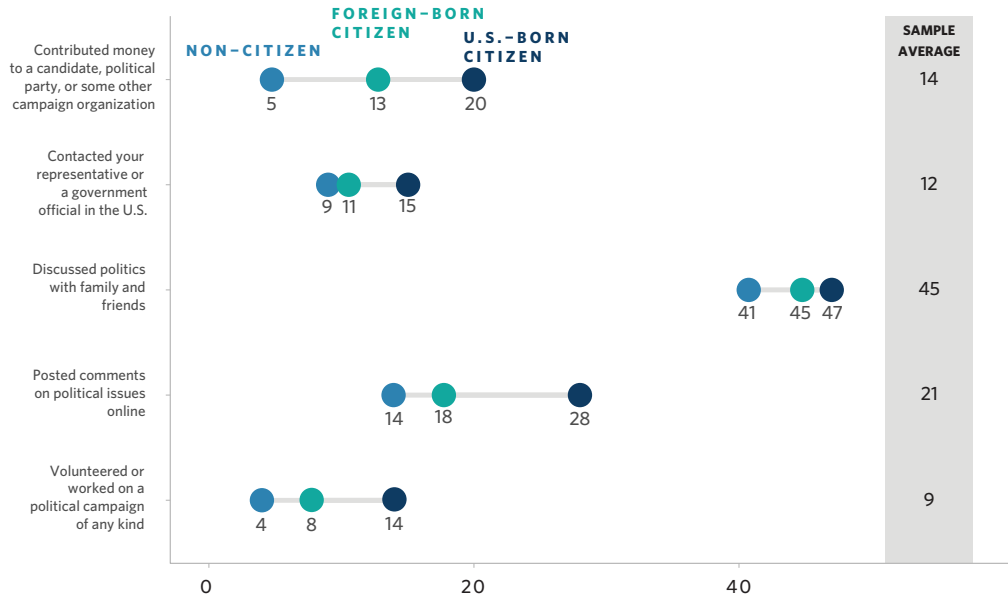
Cultural Engagement

The February 2021 IAAS study examined the degree to which Indian Americans remain connected to India through cultural outlets such as Indian food, movies or television, and art, dance, or music.³⁸ This paper looks at one additional aspect of cultural engagement: participation in select holidays regularly celebrated in India.

The survey asks respondents whether they participate in a set of holidays, some associated with India and others that are either associated with the United States or are more global in nature. Interestingly, among IAAS respondents, Diwali emerges as the most celebrated holiday—63 percent of respondents report that they celebrate the Indian festival of lights (see figure 16). U.S. Independence Day (July 4) ranks second (57 percent), followed by Christmas (54 percent). Given

FIGURE 15
Indian Americans' Political Engagement, by Immigration Status

In the last twelve months, have you participated in any of the following activities?

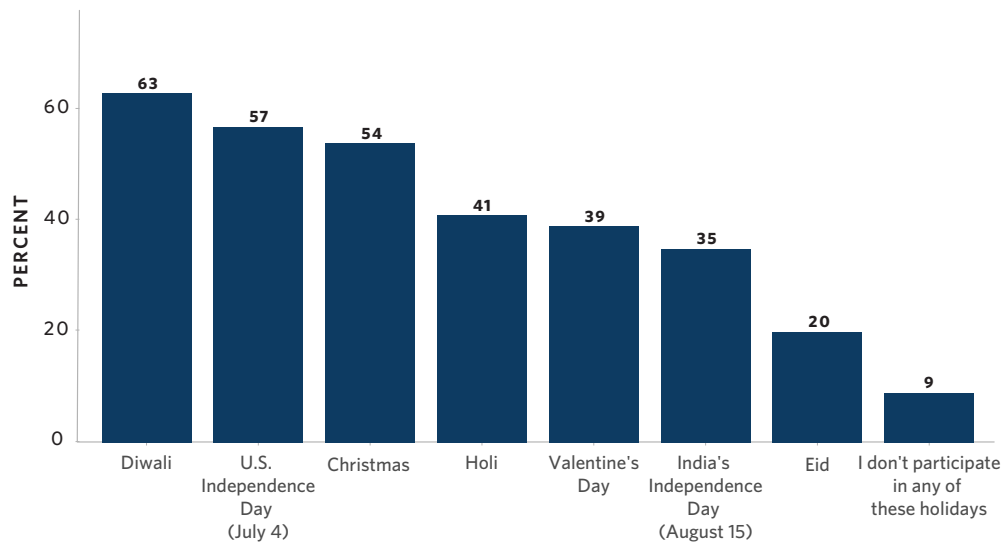


N = 1,200 U.S. adult residents

SOURCE: 2020 Indian American Attitudes Survey.

FIGURE 16
Celebration of Major Holidays

Do you participate in celebrations of any of the following?



N = 1,200 U.S. adult residents

SOURCE: 2020 Indian American Attitudes Survey.

the relatively small share of Christians in the Indian American community, this suggests that Christmas is celebrated more on cultural than religious grounds. Rounding out the list, 41 percent report celebrating Holi (the Indian festival of colors that traditionally marks the beginning of Spring), 39 percent celebrate Valentine’s Day, 35 percent mark Indian Independence Day (August 15), and 20 percent commemorate Eid. Fewer than one in ten respondents (9 percent) do not participate in any of these seven holidays.

Foreign-born Indian Americans are much more likely to commemorate Diwali, Holi, and Indian Independence Day than respondents born in the United States. The differences are especially stark for Diwali and Indian Independence Day, where the gap between the two groups is on the order of 20 percentage points. There is also important variation by one’s religious identity. Diwali and Holi are largely celebrated by Hindus, while very few non-Muslims commemorate Eid. Interestingly, more than half of all Hindu respondents (56 percent) celebrate Christmas compared to just one in five Muslim respondents.

Social Networks

This section reviews some basic characteristics of the social networks of Indian Americans. The objective of this inquiry is to assess to what extent Indian Americans associate with other Indian Americans relative to those from outside the community.

Social Circles

The IAAS asks respondents, “Which of the following best describes your personal group of friends?” Respondents choose from a list of five possible responses (not counting “don’t know”): that all, most, some, very few, or none of their friends are of Indian origin.

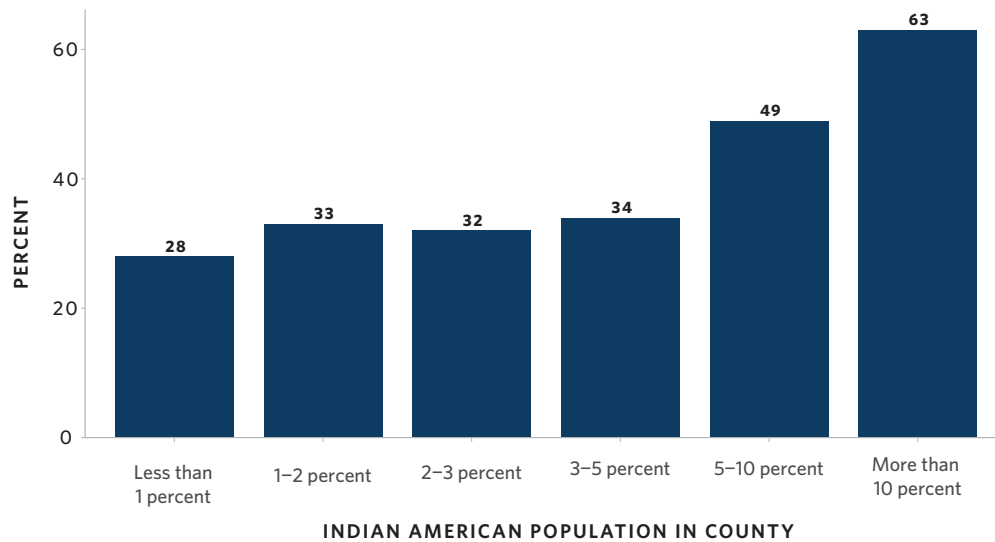
The modal response—selected by 38 percent of respondents—is that some of their friends are of Indian origin. Thirty-six percent report that either all or most of their friends are of Indian origin, while 21 percent report that very few or none of their friends are of Indian origin. Five percent responded “don’t know.” Overall, the distribution is skewed in favor of a social network populated with relatively more people of Indian origin.

Of course, the composition of one’s social networks is likely to be affected by their location. As the number and/or concentration of Indian Americans in a geography increases, one might expect that respondents’ social networks might become more insular. For instance, the social networks of an Indian American in Wyoming (where there are very few Indian Americans) will likely be dominated by non-Indian Americans. But in New Jersey, where there is a significant concentration of Indian Americans, Indian Americans are more likely to associate with their own.

FIGURE 17

Composition of Social Networks, by Respondent Location

Respondents reporting that most or all of their friends are of Indian origin



N = 928 U.S. adult residents

NOTE: Sample excludes respondents who skipped the question(s), those who did not indicate having any Indian friends, and those for whom county-level demographic data could not be ascertained.

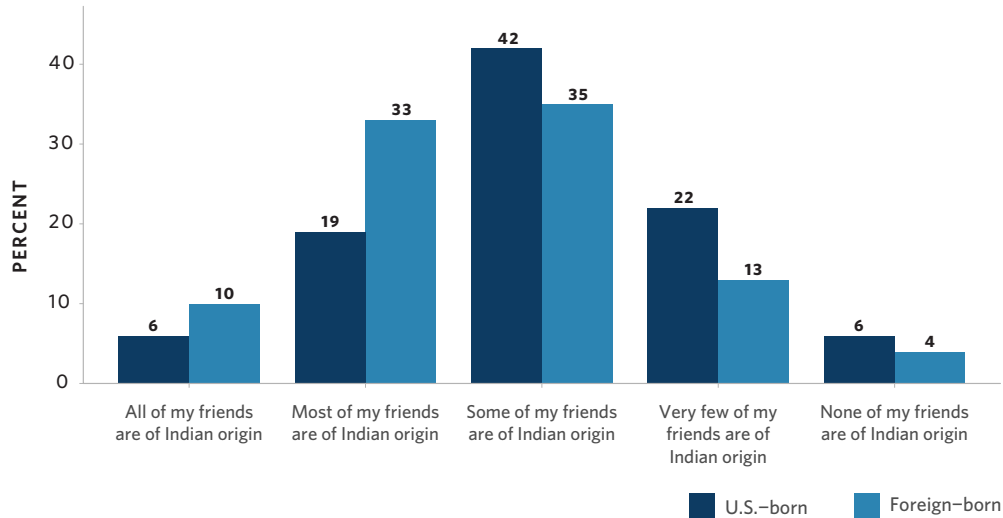
SOURCE: 2020 Indian American Attitudes Survey.

Indeed, the survey finds that in counties with more Indian American households, respondents are significantly more likely to say their social networks are dominated by fellow Indian Americans (see figure 17).³⁹ This effect appears to be roughly linear, although there is a steep rise once more than 5 percent of households in a county are Indian American.

As one might expect, the composition of respondents' social networks varies by their birthplace. As figure 18 shows, 43 percent of foreign-born Indian Americans have a social network dominated by Indian-origin friends, compared to 25 percent of respondents born in the United States (adding up the shares of those who say all or most of their friends are of Indian origin). U.S.-born Indian Americans, however, are more likely to report a social network with a limited number of Indians (stating very few or none of their friends are of Indian origin) or to take the middle ground—42 percent of them report that some of their friends are Indian origin, compared to 35 percent of foreign-born respondents.⁴⁰

FIGURE 18
Composition of Social Networks, by Place of Birth

Which of the following best describes your personal group of friends?



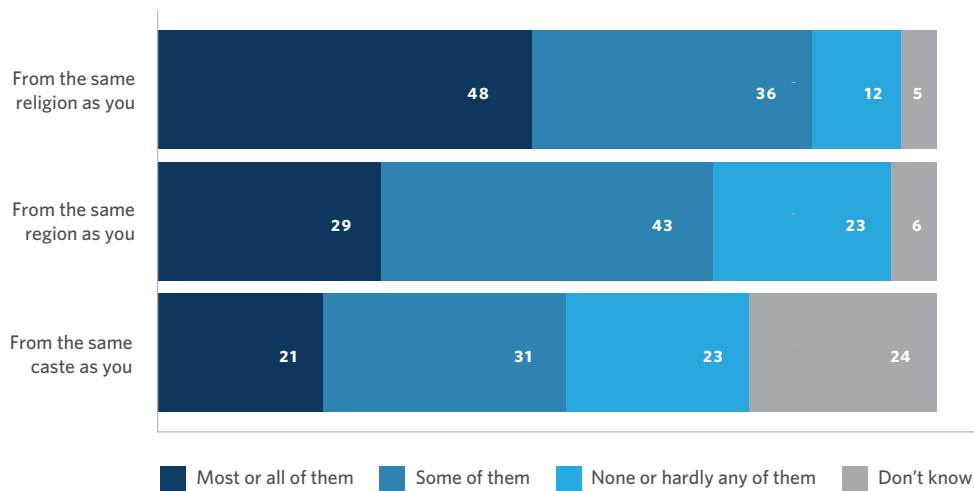
N = 1,200 U.S. adult residents

NOTE: Figure excludes respondents who selected “Don’t know.”

SOURCE: 2020 Indian American Attitudes Survey.

FIGURE 19
Composition of Social Networks: Religion, Region of Origin, and Caste

Amongst your Indian friends, how many are...



N = 1,088–1,091 U.S. adult residents

NOTE: Sample size varies by question. Sample excludes respondents who skipped the question(s) and those who did not indicate having any Indian friends. Figure excludes respondents who selected “Don’t know.”

SOURCE: 2020 Indian American Attitudes Survey.

Diversity in Indian American Networks

Homophily—the tendency of individuals to associate with people similar to themselves—is a strong determinant of social networks.⁴¹ But which dimension—religion, region of origin, or caste—drives one’s associations? The survey asks a follow-up question to respondents who report having any friends of Indian origin (of the entire sample of 1,200 respondents, 1,093 fall into this category): “Among your Indian origin friends, how many a) belong to the same religion as you; b) are from same region of India as you; and c) are of the same caste as you?” The purpose of this question is to investigate whether Indian-origin social networks are internally homogenous or heterogeneous.

Figure 19 displays the responses to this question, collapsing five response categories into three for ease of exposition. It appears that respondents’ social networks are more homogenous in terms of religion than either region or caste. Forty-eight percent of respondents report that most or all of their Indian friends share their religious faith, while another 36 percent report that some of their friends are coreligionists. Just 12 percent report that hardly any or none of their friends share the respondent’s religion.

In contrast, there is more variation on the dimensions of region and caste. Twenty-nine percent of respondents report that most or all of their friends are from the same region of India. Forty-three percent report that some are, while 23 percent say that hardly any or none are. The pattern is similar when it comes to caste, although nearly one-quarter of respondents claim they do not know what share of their friends belong to their caste group, suggesting that caste is a less salient category for a significant segment of IAAS respondents.

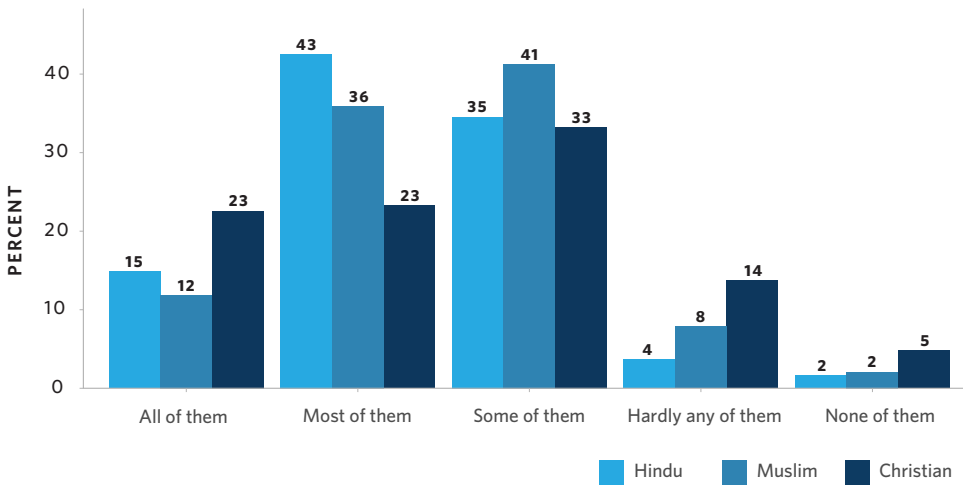
Given the relative religious homogeneity of Indian Americans’ social networks, figure 20 investigates whether there is variation by respondents’ religion, focusing on the three major religious groups in the Indian American community—Christian, Hindu, and Muslim. Several interesting patterns emerge from this breakdown.

First, Hindus are more likely to report that most or all of their Indian friends are also Hindus, underscoring a greater degree of religious homogeneity in their social networks. Fifty-eight percent of Hindus respond in this way, while 48 and 46 percent of Muslims and Christians, respectively, report that their networks are comprised of those of the same religion. Second, around one-third of Christians and Hindus and two-fifths of Muslims are situated in the middle, reporting that some of their Indian American networks are made up of friends of the same religion. Third, Christians are much more likely to report that hardly any or none of their Indian friends share their religion. Nearly one in five (19 percent) identify this way, compared to 10 percent of Muslims and only 6 percent of Hindus.

FIGURE 20

Religious Composition of Social Networks, by Religious Identity

Amongst your Indian friends, how many are of the same religion as you?



N = 1,091 U.S. adult residents

NOTE: Sample excludes respondents who skipped the question(s) and those who did not indicate having any Indian friends. Figure excludes respondents who selected “Don’t know.”

SOURCE: 2020 Indian American Attitudes Survey.

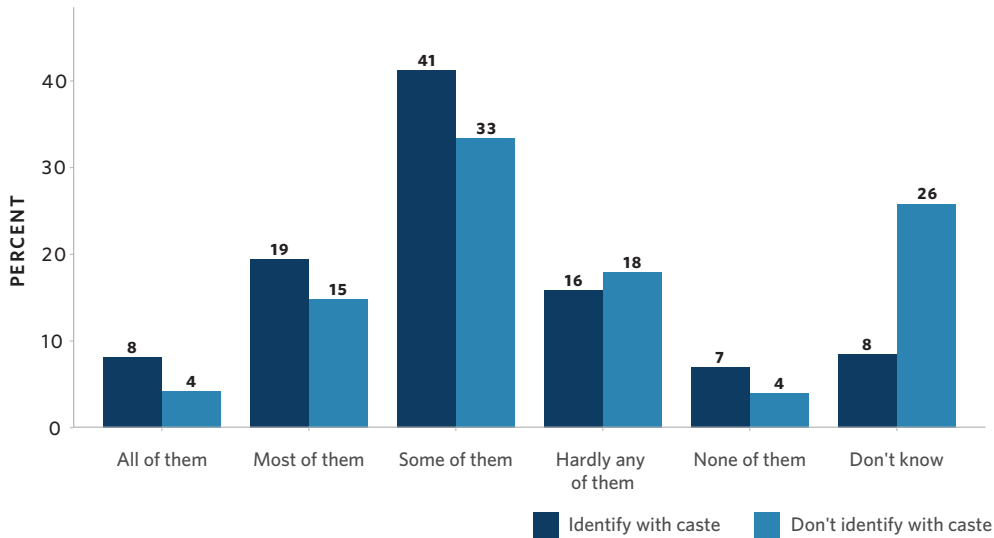
The smaller the size of a given group, the fewer opportunities individuals have of meeting someone from their same group. Conversely, the larger the size of a group, the greater the likelihood of meeting someone from that group. Given that there are many more Indian Americans who are Hindu in the IAAS sample—and the fact that nearly half of Christians and Muslims report that all or most of their friends share their religion—this means that both Christians and Muslims have substantially more religious homophily, relative to Hindus.

Figure 21 looks more closely at the caste composition of social networks among Hindus. Seventy-four percent of Hindu respondents who report *not* identifying with a caste nevertheless know enough to be able to identify the caste identities of their social networks. Only 26 percent of Hindus who do not identify with a caste respond to questions about the caste composition of their social networks by answering “don’t know.” This indicates that even though a large proportion of Hindu respondents say they do not identify with a caste, only a small fraction are unaware of the caste composition of their networks.

FIGURE 21

Caste Composition of Social Networks, by Caste Identification

Among your Indian friends, how many are from the same caste as you?



N = 600 U.S. adult residents

NOTE: Sample excludes non-Hindus, respondents who skipped the question(s), and those who did not indicate having any Indian friends.

SOURCE: 2020 Indian American Attitudes Survey.

What is also striking is how relatively small the differences are between respondents who identify with a caste versus those who do not. While the former report that a slightly higher share of their social network comprises people of the same caste, if one sets aside the “don’t know” responses, the relative differences between caste identifiers and non-identifiers is marginal. For instance, 27 percent of Hindu respondents who identify with a caste report that all or most of their Indian friends share their caste affiliation. Nineteen percent of those who do not identify with a caste group answer similarly. Respondents who acknowledge a caste identity are only slightly more likely to report that some of their social network is made up of people of the same caste (41 percent versus 33 percent for those without a caste identity).

Social Distance

The previous section demonstrated that, for many Indian Americans, shared religious affiliation is the most important characteristic of respondents' social networks. This could be the result of circumstance and context, or it could be the product of social distance—the relative distance that one feels toward members of an out-group (religious, ethnic, partisan, and so on) relative to members of one's own in-group.

Questions that measure social distance are often used to understand the salience of group identity and perceptions of group hierarchy, and as a basis of prediction of inter-group prejudice. The IAAS draws on a series of questions adapted from the political science literature in order to measure inter-group social distance in the Indian American community.⁴² Namely, the survey explores how Indian Americans feel about having close interactions with out-group members along two prominent cleavages: those who are of a different religion, or who carry a different partisan affiliation. The examination of partisanship, in turn, further distinguishes between partisan support in India and in the United States.⁴³

Religion

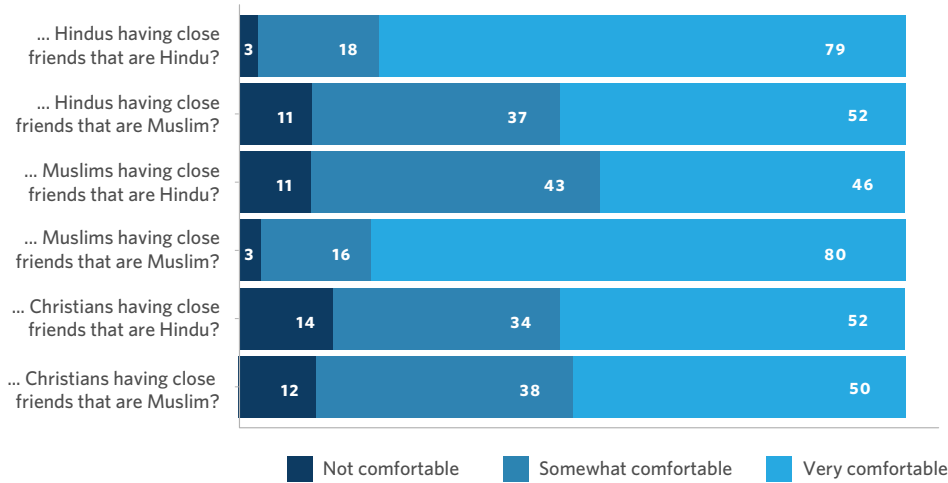
To measure interreligious social distance, the survey asks respondents how comfortable they would be having close friends that are Hindu or Muslim. Respondents can select from one of three responses: very comfortable, somewhat comfortable, or not comfortable. The results are shown in figure 22.

As one might expect, both Hindus and Muslims are overwhelmingly comfortable having close friends who share their faith: 97 percent of Hindu respondents report being very or somewhat comfortable having close Hindu friends, and 96 percent of Muslims report the same.

However, Hindus and Muslims exhibit less comfort when it comes to having close friends of the opposite faith. Overall, 89 percent of Hindus and Muslims apiece report they are very or somewhat comfortable having friends of the other faith. However, the major distinction has to do with the intensity of this feeling, exemplified by the sharp difference in the share of respondents who report being very comfortable with friends of the opposite faith: 52 percent of Hindus are very comfortable having close Muslim friends, while 46 percent of Muslims are very comfortable having close Hindu friends. There are, consequently, a large share of respondents who are only somewhat comfortable having close friends of the opposite faith. Christians, whose views are represented in the bottom two horizontal bars of figure 22, hold roughly similar attitudes toward both Hindus and Muslims.

FIGURE 22
Attitudes Toward Religious Groups

How comfortable are...



N = 931 U.S. adult residents

NOTE: Sample excludes respondents who skipped the question and those who did not indicate having any Indian friends. Figure excludes respondents who belong to other religious faiths or do not identify with any religion.

SOURCE: 2020 Indian American Attitudes Survey.

Partisan Support in the United States

Given the degree of partisan polarization present in U.S. politics, the survey examines how much this polarization is present within the Indian American community as well. The October 2020 IAAS study found that Indian Americans who identify as Democrats rate the Republican Party and former president Donald Trump very unfavorably.⁴⁴ Republicans, for their part, view the Democrats, current President Joe Biden, and Vice President Kamala Harris in equally unfavorable terms. However, whereas the earlier data looked at political leaders and organizations, this section reviews interpersonal attitudes. The data described below unambiguously reveal a high degree of polarization, although its structure is asymmetric.

The key takeaway is that Republicans are more comfortable having close friends who are Democrats than the converse (see figure 23). Fifty-four percent of Republicans say they are very comfortable having Democratic friends. Thirty-six percent say they are somewhat comfortable and 10 percent say they are not comfortable at all.

Democrats, however, are more strident in their views toward individuals from the other party. Just 27 percent say they are very comfortable having Republican friends—half the number of Republicans who feel that way toward Democrats. Fifty-one percent of Democrats say they are somewhat comfortable with Republican friends and 22 percent say they are not comfortable (more than twice the number of Republicans who felt that way about Democrats). The survey's findings are notable in this regard because previous research on polarization among the American general public has generally found that Republicans, not Democrats, possess greater antipathy toward members of the other party.⁴⁵

Indian Americans who have no allegiance to either major party hold slightly asymmetric views as well. They are more likely to say they are very comfortable having Democratic than Republican friends, and three times as many say they would not be comfortable having close Republican friends than close Democratic friends.

Partisan Support in India

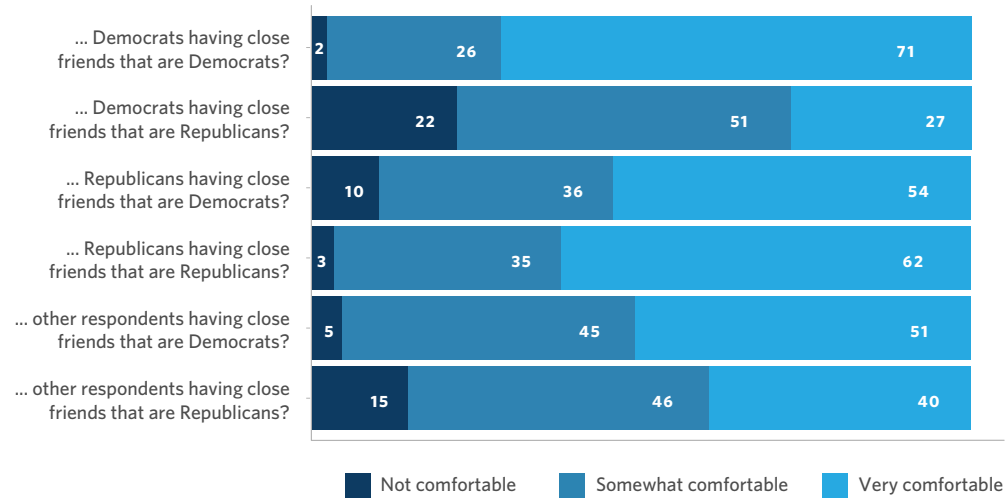
The February 2021 IAAS study found several indications that polarization in India had successfully metastasized in the Indian American community in the United States. Religious differences, in particular, have emerged as a salient divide both in India and among members of the diaspora. This paper explores a different cleavage—partisan affiliation in India—by examining how Indian Americans who favor the Congress or the BJP view supporters of the other party.

As with political parties in the American context, there is a certain degree of asymmetric polarization as far as supporters of the Congress and the BJP are concerned, although both groups are generally more hostile toward supporters of the opposing Indian party than is true in the analogous case of Republicans and Democrats (see figure 24).

Thirty percent of Congress supporters are not comfortable having close friends who support the BJP; this is double the share of BJP supporters who are uncomfortable having close friends who are Congress supporters. Thirty-seven percent of Congress supporters are somewhat comfortable having friends who support the BJP (identical to the share of BJP supporters who are somewhat comfortable having Congress friends), but just 23 percent say they are very comfortable having BJP supporters as friends (for BJP supporters, the analogous share is 35 percent).

FIGURE 23
Attitudes Toward American Political Parties

How comfortable are...

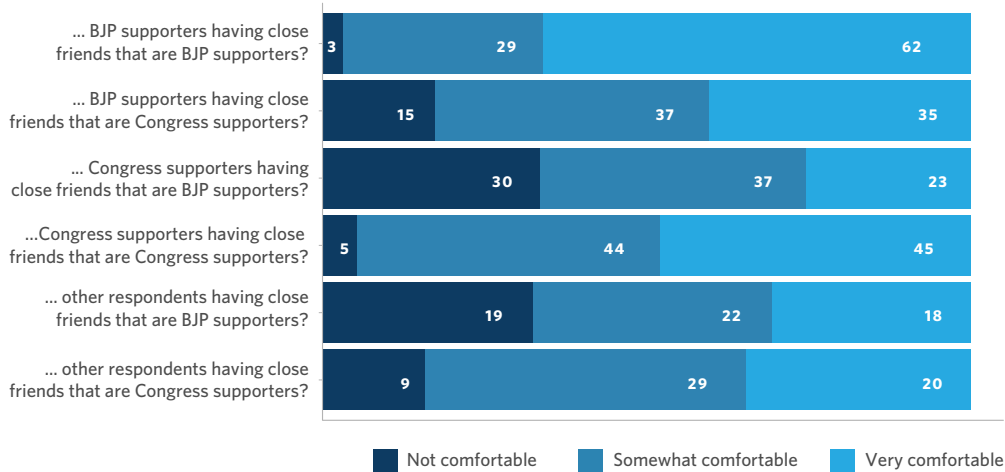


N = 1,200 U.S. adult residents

SOURCE: 2020 Indian American Attitudes Survey.

FIGURE 24
Attitudes Toward Indian Political Parties

How comfortable are...



N = 1,200 U.S. adult residents

NOTE: Figure excludes those who selected "Don't know."

SOURCE: 2020 Indian American Attitudes Survey.

Respondents who support neither the BJP nor the Congress—listed as “Other”—appear more favorably inclined toward the Congress. Nineteen percent of them are not comfortable having close friends associated with the BJP. Just 9 percent of them hold the same views vis-à-vis the Congress. This too mirrors the American political context, where supporters of smaller parties or those who are unaffiliated hold more favorable views toward Democrats.⁴⁶

These findings raise two questions worthy of further exploration: Why does political polarization among Indian Americans differ from that characterizing Americans at large? And to what extent are these differences being driven by political polarization in the country of origin (in this case, India)? Immigrants often import social norms from their home countries to their newly adopted homes. However, their political views in the latter might also be influenced by politics in their country of origin. These views, in turn, are further affected both by selection effects (who emigrates) and political dynamics in the country of settlement.

Discrimination

This section reviews respondents’ views on discrimination against Indian Americans. It explores this contentious subject in three ways. First, the survey asks respondents to consider how discrimination against Indian Americans compares to discrimination directed toward other minority communities in the United States. Second, the survey asks respondents about their own lived experience with discrimination. Finally, the survey examines the identity of the person(s) responsible for engaging in discriminatory behavior.

Perceptions of Discrimination

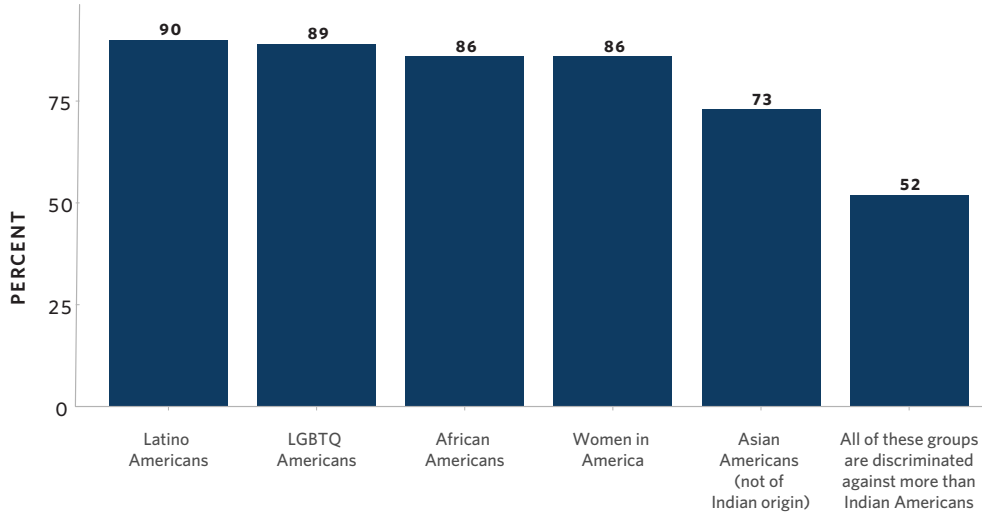
In the last few years, there has been much greater recognition of the discrimination faced by minority groups in the United States. For instance, a March 2020 Pew survey found that 79 percent of Americans agree that there is a lot or some discrimination against African Americans. Seventy-six percent believe there is a similar degree of discrimination against Hispanic people, while 71 percent say the same about discrimination against people of Asian origin.⁴⁷

The IAAS survey first asks respondents if they think discrimination against people of Indian origin is a major problem. Thirty-one percent respond that it is a major problem, 53 percent believe it is a minor problem, and a small minority (17 percent) believe it is not a problem at all.

FIGURE 25

Perceptions of Relative Discrimination

In your opinion, which of the following groups are discriminated against more than Indian Americans in the United States?



N = 1,200 U.S. adult residents

SOURCE: 2020 Indian American Attitudes Survey.

One way to understand the dynamics of discrimination at play is to place discrimination against Indian Americans in a comparative context. The survey asks respondents whether they believe other minorities experience a greater degree of discrimination relative to Indian Americans (see figure 25).

A narrow majority—52 percent—of respondents believe that people in the United States discriminate *more* against all of the other minority groups listed than they do against Indian Americans. That means just less than half of all respondents believe that Indian Americans face a *greater* degree of discrimination than at least one other minority group. Seventy-three percent of respondents believe that Asian Americans who are not of Indian origin face more discrimination than Indian Americans. Much larger shares believe that other minority groups face greater discrimination than Indian Americans, including Latino Americans (90 percent), LGBTQ Americans (89 percent), African Americans (86 percent), and women (86 percent).

Experience With Discrimination

In addition, the survey asks respondents whether, in the last twelve months, they have personally felt discriminated against. To broaden the aperture, the survey asks about discrimination along several dimensions beyond country of origin: skin color, gender, religion, and caste.

The data in figure 26 show that one in two Indian Americans reports being subject to some form of discrimination in the past year. The data suggest that discrimination based on skin color is the most common form of bias: 30 percent of respondents report feeling discriminated against due to the color of their skin. An equal percentage of respondents—18 percent apiece—report that they have been discriminated against due to their gender or religion.

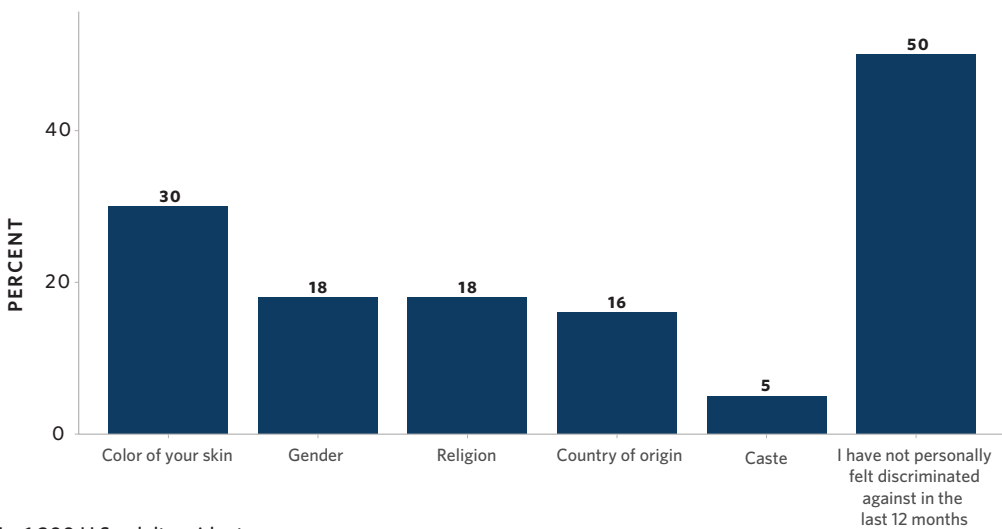
Muslims report the greatest degree of religious discrimination by far (39 percent), followed by Hindus (18 percent), Christians (15 percent), and believers of other faiths (9 percent). Sixteen percent of Indian Americans report being discriminated against by virtue of their Indian heritage. And, finally, 5 percent of all respondents report having encountered discrimination due to their caste identity.

When it comes to discrimination experienced by Indian Americans, a significantly larger share of foreign-born Indian Americans (59 percent) state that they have *not* been discriminated against on

FIGURE 26

Experience with Discrimination

In the last 12 months, have you personally felt discriminated against because of any of the following reasons?



N = 1,200 U.S. adult residents

SOURCE: 2020 Indian American Attitudes Survey.

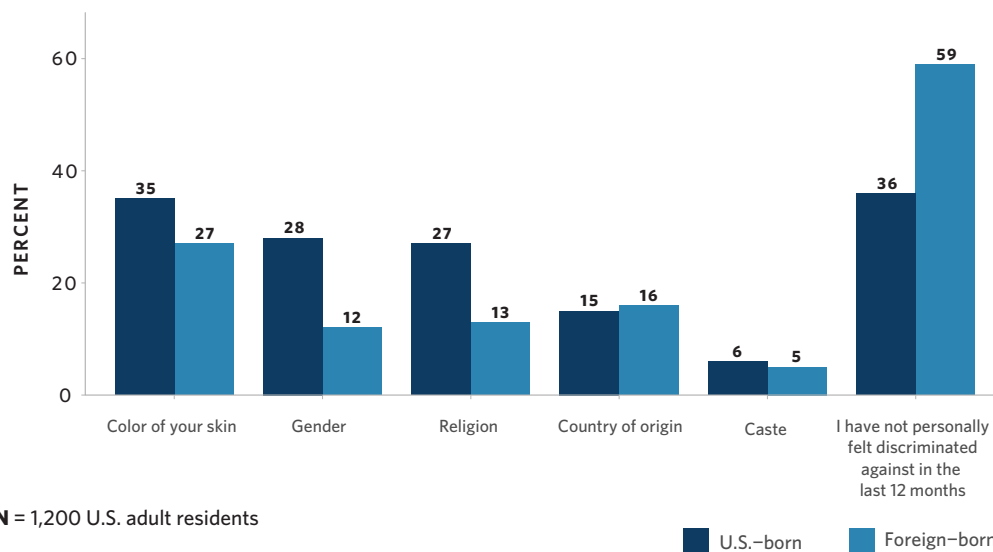
any grounds in the past year, compared to just 36 percent of U.S.-born Indian Americans (see figure 27).

Both U.S.- and foreign-born Indian Americans report significant discrimination based on skin color—35 percent and 27 percent, respectively. Interestingly, respondents born in the United States report twice as much discrimination along gender and religious lines than those born outside of the United States. Reported discrimination based on country of origin and caste is roughly similar for both groups (around 15–16 and 5–6 percent, respectively). The heightened levels of discrimination that U.S.-born respondents report compared to immigrants hold true across categories—whether skin color, gender, religion, or even caste. Although the latter difference in perceptions of caste discrimination is tiny, it is nonetheless interesting given the lower degree of caste consciousness among U.S.-born Indian Americans.

One might expect that foreign-born respondents might face greater discrimination given that they are more likely to bear obvious markers that tie them to India (such as accents or dress). However, the results point in the opposite direction. There are a host of plausible reasons why U.S.-born Indian Americans might report greater discrimination, including differences in social norms, greater awareness of discriminatory practices, or less fear of retaliation.⁴⁸

FIGURE 27
Experience with Discrimination, by Place of Birth

In the last 12 months, have you personally felt discriminated against because of any of the following reasons?



SOURCE: 2020 Indian American Attitudes Survey.

Discrimination by Whom?

If half of all Indian Americans report some form of discrimination, this begs the question: Who is discriminating against them? For respondents who experienced discrimination, the survey asks whether the perpetrators of discrimination were Indian, non-Indian, or both (see figure 28).

A few findings merit attention. First, respondents overwhelmingly blame non-Indians when it comes to discrimination on the basis of country of origin or skin color. In both instances, roughly three-quarters of perpetrators were identified as non-Indians. In about one-fifth of instances, both Indians and non-Indians were perceived to be jointly responsible.

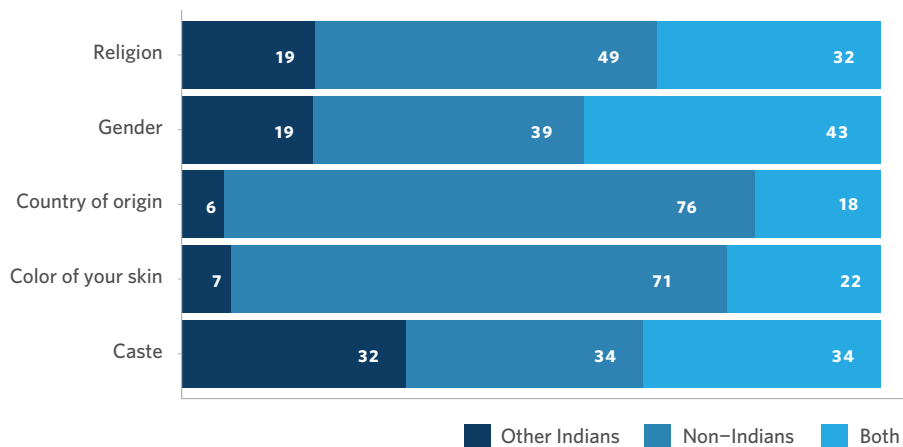
Second, while respondents suggest Indians hold somewhat greater responsibility for engaging in discriminatory practices along religion and gender lines, here too they point mainly to non-Indians or a combination of Indians and non-Indians as primary sources of discrimination.

Third, caste discrimination is a surprisingly equal opportunity offense. Responses are divided neatly into thirds when it comes to who is doing the discriminating: Indians, non-Indians, and people of both categories are almost equally to blame.⁴⁹

FIGURE 28

Sources of Discrimination

Who discriminated against you on the basis of your...



N = 1,200 U.S. adult residents

SOURCE: 2020 Indian American Attitudes Survey.

How might non-Indians discriminate against Indians on the basis of caste if caste is not a salient category for them? This is a genuine puzzle. One possibility is that the person or persons engaged in caste discrimination could be from another South Asian country, where caste might be a meaningful marker of status and hold greater salience.⁵⁰ Another possibility is that respondents interpret caste discrimination as a stand-in for other forms of discrimination—on the basis of skin color or country of origin, for example. Given that only 5 percent of IAAS respondents report being victims of caste discrimination, any subgroup analysis must be interpreted with due care given the small sample sizes involved.

Indian American Community

This final section examines how respondents relate to the Indian American community. It focuses on three issues: membership in Indian American organizations, divisions within the Indian American community (and the drivers of those divisions), and the role the Indian American community plays in U.S.-India relations.

Membership in Indian American Organizations

The survey asks respondents if they are a member of any Indian American organization or group, such as a cultural, regional, religious, caste, community, or school-based organization. Overall, one-third of respondents report membership in an Indian American organization. While this does not necessarily mean that two-thirds of Indian Americans are disconnected from their community, it does suggest that formal participation is somewhat limited. Forty percent of respondents born in the United States report being a member of an Indian American organization, compared to 29 percent of those born elsewhere.

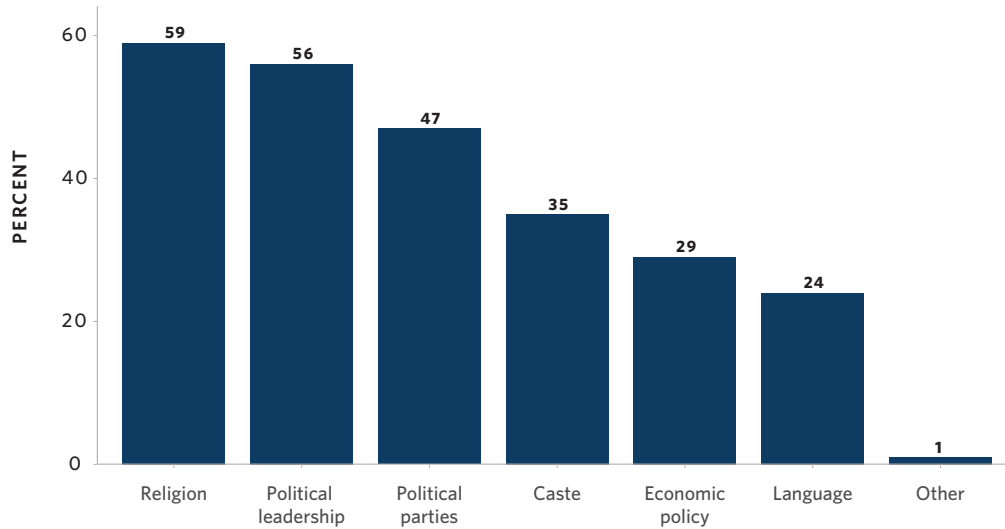
Divisions Within the Indian American Community

The survey further asks respondents to assess whether they believe that domestic politics in India might be creating or exacerbating divisions within the Indian American community. Responses are very divided. Twenty-eight percent respond in the affirmative—that political divisions in India are infecting dynamics within the Indian community in the United States. But this remains a minority view: 40 percent of Indian Americans do not believe that domestic politics are dividing the Indian diaspora in the United States. Fully one-third of respondents—a large proportion—do not express an opinion either way.

FIGURE 29

Drivers of Division in the Indian American Community

What features of India's domestic politics are most responsible for creating divisions in the Indian American community?



N = 344 U.S. adult residents

NOTE: Sample includes only respondents who indicated that domestic politics in India are dividing the Indian American community.

SOURCE: 2020 Indian American Attitudes Survey.

For the 28 percent of respondents who perceive that polarization in India is impacting the diaspora community, the survey asks what specific features of India's domestic politics are responsible (see figure 29). (Respondents can select multiple choices from a preselected menu of options, so the percentages in the figure do not add up to 100.)

As the figure demonstrates, religion leads the way—59 percent of Indian Americans believe it is responsible for creating internal divisions in the community. But religion only narrowly edges out the role of India's political leadership (56 percent) for the top spot, and political parties (47 percent) are not far behind. Rounding out the list are caste (35 percent), economic policy (29 percent), and language (24 percent). One percent of respondents point to some other factor.

To a certain extent, however, many of these factors are inseparable. For instance, for Indian Americans who skeptically view the rise of Hindu majoritarianism in India, it is unclear how they might apportion blame given that religion, leadership, and political parties are all deeply intertwined, especially in the current political scenario. Although Indian Americans born in the United States

assess India's present trajectory more critically than those born outside of the United States—a finding the February 2021 IAAS study established⁵¹—the latter are somewhat more likely to blame religion (62 percent versus 55 percent) as well as political leadership (61 percent versus 48 percent).

Role of the Indian American Community

Where does this leave the Indian American community and its role in promoting U.S.-India relations? After all, for more than two decades, the Indian diaspora in the United States has been a critical bridge-builder between the two countries.⁵² But with divisions in the community more apparent and increasingly linked to political disputes in India, we have suggested elsewhere that the diaspora's unity of purpose could suffer a setback.⁵³

As a final step, the survey asks respondents whether they agree or disagree with the following statement: "Overall, the Indian American community has a positive impact on U.S.-India relations." As of now, the community is quite bullish about the diaspora's achievements in this regard. Seventy percent state that they strongly or somewhat agree with the statement. A very small minority, around 10 percent, strongly or somewhat disagrees. Around 21 percent express no opinion either way. This suggests that the evidence of polarization, while real, should not be overinterpreted either.

Conclusion

More than half a century after the passage of the historic 1965 Immigration and Nationality Act, which allowed for a new wave of Indian migration to the United States, the Indian American community has come of age. Its rapidly growing size, economic success, and growing political visibility have given it greater salience in American life. In many ways, the community is often portrayed as the poster child of America's historic opening to new immigrants who—in ways big and small—have transformed the country.

But that same visibility also invites greater scrutiny, shedding light on tensions within the community. This paper argues that while there is much that binds the community, there are also nascent signs that these common bonds are being tested as religious cleavages, generational divides, and political polarization invite fragmentation. In that sense, the currents coursing their way through the Indian diaspora are perhaps reflective not only of broader developments in American society but also—and perhaps even to a greater extent—the turbulence afflicting India.

At the time of writing, India is reeling under a devastating resurgence of the coronavirus. Members of the Indian American community—both individually and collectively—are mobilizing in response. Motivated by their emotional ties to India, as well as their rights and responsibilities as American citizens, Indian Americans have pushed the U.S. government to mount a large-scale humanitarian response.⁵⁴

For Indian Americans, the past is not just a distant country. On the contrary, India continues to exist in the present as it influences the lives of the diaspora—even as its members chart a new path in their adopted home.

This study is the third in a series on the social, political, and foreign policy attitudes of Indian Americans. [Click here](#) for the second part of this series, an examination of how Indian Americans view Indian politics, and [click here](#) for the first part of the series, which explores how Indian Americans view U.S. politics.

Appendix A: Methodology

Respondents for this survey were recruited from an existing panel administered by YouGov. YouGov maintains a proprietary, double opt-in survey panel comprised of 1.8 million U.S. residents who have agreed to participate in YouGov’s surveys.

Online Panel Surveys

Online panels are not the same as traditional, probability-based surveys. However, thanks to the decline in response rates, the rise of the internet and smartphone penetration, and the evolution in statistical techniques, nonprobability panels—such as the one YouGov employs—have quickly become the norm in survey research.⁵⁵ For instance, the *Economist* partnered with YouGov to track political attitudes around the November 2020 U.S. presidential election using a customized panel.⁵⁶

Respondent Selection and Sampling Design

The data for this survey are based on a unique survey of 1,200 adults of Indian origin conducted between September 1 and September 20, 2020. To provide an accurate picture of the Indian American community as a whole, the full sample contains both U.S. citizens and non-U.S. citizens. Given the fact that the majority of younger Indian Americans below age twenty-seven are born in the United States while the opposite is true of those above age twenty-seven, YouGov oversampled younger Indian Americans between the ages of eighteen and twenty-seven to ensure that the study’s analyses can make inferences about generational differences within the Indian American community.

Sample Matching

To produce the final data set, respondents were matched to a sampling frame on gender, age, and education. The main sample was matched to a frame corresponding to all adult Indian Americans, and the oversample was matched to a frame corresponding to Indian Americans ages eighteen to twenty-seven. Both frames were constructed by stratified sampling from the full 2018 ACS one-year sample. Within strata, matches were selected by weighted sampling with replacements (using the person weights on the ACS public use file).

The matched cases were weighted to the sampling frames using propensity scores. The matched cases and the frames were combined, and a logistic regression was estimated for inclusion in the frames. The propensity score function included age, gender, years of education, and region. The propensity scores were grouped into deciles of the estimated propensity score in the frames and post-stratified according to these deciles.⁵⁷

Sampling weights were then post-stratified on 2016 presidential vote choice, as well as a three-way stratification of gender, age (four categories), and education (four categories), to produce the final weight.

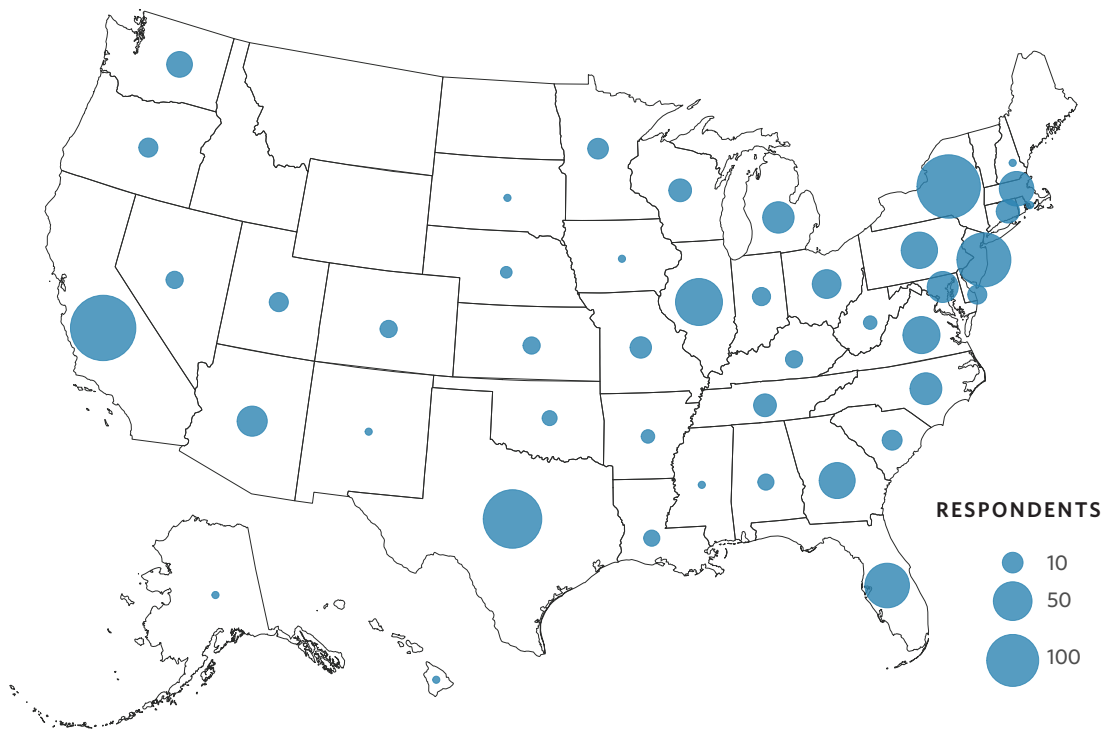
Data Analysis and Sources of Error

All of the analyses in this study were conducted using the statistical software R and employ sample weights to ensure representativeness.

The margin of error for the full sample of 1,200 respondents is +/- 2.8 percent. This margin of error is calculated at the 95 percent confidence interval.

Figure 30 provides the geographic distribution of survey respondents by state of residence.

FIGURE 30
Geographic Distribution of IAAS Respondents



NOTE: The size of the bubbles for each state corresponds to the sample size from that state.

SOURCE: 2020 Indian American Attitudes Survey.

Appendix B: Survey Topline

For complete survey topline results, please visit Appendix B online at http://carnegieendowment.org/files/Vaishnav_etal_IAASpt3_Appendix.pdf.

About the Authors

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While we are grateful to all of our collaborators, any errors found in this study are entirely the authors'.

Notes

- 1 “Remarks by President Biden in a Call to Congratulate the NASA JPL Perseverance Team on the Successful Mars Landing,” White House, March 4, 2021, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/speeches-remarks/2021/03/04/remarks-by-president-biden-in-a-call-to-congratulate-the-nasa-jpl-perseverance-team-on-the-successful-mars-landing/>.
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- 3 Immigration Commission, U.S. Senate, Reports of the Immigration Commission 349 (1911) cited in Sherally Munshi, “Immigration, Imperialism, and the Legacies of Indian Exclusion,” *Yale Journal of Law & Humanities* 28, no. 1 (2015): 51–104. At the time, most immigrants from what was then British India were in fact Sikhs, not Hindus.
- 4 Sanjoy Chakravorty, Devesh Kapur, and Nirvikar Singh, *The Other One Percent: Indians in America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2017).
- 5 Devesh Kapur and Jashan Bajwa, “A Study of Poverty in the Indian American Population,” Johns Hopkins-SAIS, October 2020, https://drive.google.com/file/d/1qCf6RE2L2FpvA6mny2Y_Xtof_zdJpFdC/view.
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- 7 The term “Dalit” refers to individuals who occupy the lowermost rungs of the traditional Hindu caste hierarchy. Formally, members of this group are referred to as “Scheduled Castes.” Saritha Rai, “How Big Tech Is Importing India’s Caste Legacy to Silicon Valley,” *Bloomberg*, March 11, 2021, <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/features/2021-03-11/how-big-tech-is-importing-india-s-caste-legacy-to-silicon-valley?sref=QmOxnLFz>.
- 8 See, *inter alia*, Thenmozhi Soundararajan, “A New Lawsuit Shines a Light on Caste Discrimination in the U.S. and Around the World,” *Washington Post*, July 13, 2020, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/2020/07/13/new-lawsuit-shines-light-caste-discrimination-us-around-world/>; and Yashica Dutt, “The Specter of Caste in Silicon Valley,” *New York Times*, July 14, 2020, <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/07/14/opinion/caste-cisco-indian-americans-discrimination.html>.
- 9 Nicole Hong and Jonah E. Bromwich, “Asian-Americans Are Being Attacked. Why Are Hate Crime Charges So Rare?,” *New York Times*, March 18, 2021, <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/03/18/nyregion/asian-hate-crimes.html>.
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- 11 Chakravorty, Kapur, and Singh, *The Other One Percent*, 178. Since 1980, the U.S. Census has categorized Indians as “Asian Indian,” a subset of the “Asian” racial category.
- 12 Sumitra Badrinathan, Devesh Kapur, and Milan Vaishnav, “How Will Indian Americans Vote? Results From the 2020 Indian American Attitudes Survey,” Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, October 14, 2020, <https://carnegieendowment.org/2020/10/14/how-will-indian-americans-vote-results-from-2020-indian-american-attitudes-survey-pub-82929>.
- 13 Sumitra Badrinathan, Devesh Kapur, and Milan Vaishnav, “How Do Indian Americans View India? Results From the 2020 Indian American Attitudes Survey,” Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, February 9, 2021, <https://carnegieendowment.org/2021/02/09/how-do-indian-americans-view-india-results-from-2020-indian-american-attitudes-survey-pub-83800>.

- 14 Mary Hanna and Jeanne Batalova, “Indian Immigrants in the United States,” Migration Policy Institute, October 16, 2020, <https://www.migrationpolicy.org/article/indian-immigrants-united-states-2019>.
- 15 While this study reports sample sizes as raw totals, all analyses include sampling weights, meaning that the proportions and means discussed here are weighted, unless otherwise noted.
- 16 Of those born outside of the United States, 80 percent were born in India. Another 6 percent were born in either Bangladesh or Pakistan. The remainder of the sample hails from a range of countries stretching from the United Kingdom to Trinidad & Tobago and Kenya.
- 17 This compares with 60 percent as per data from the 2018 ACS.
- 18 An additional 5 percent of respondents report not having an OCI card or being unsure of their OCI status.
- 19 Chakravorty, Kapur, and Singh, *The Other One Percent*, table 2.2 and figure 2.4.
- 20 According to the 2018 ACS, 73 percent of Asian Indian households are married-couple households compared to the national average of 48 percent.
- 21 Chakravorty, Kapur, and Singh, *The Other One Percent*, table 4.4 and figure 4.14.
- 22 There is no one-to-one correspondence between Hindi and an Indian state of origin since the language is spoken across a broad swath of states, especially but not exclusively in north and central India. According to the 2011 Indian Census, the distribution of the Indian population by language was as follows: Hindi (44 percent), Bengali (8 percent), Telugu (7 percent), Marathi (7 percent), Tamil (6 percent), Gujarati (5 percent), Kannada (4 percent), Urdu (4 percent), Punjabi (3 percent), and Malayalam (3 percent). Office of the Registrar General of India, “Language: Indian States and Union Territories (Table C-16),” Census of India 2011, Paper 1 (2018), https://censusindia.gov.in/2011Census/C-16_25062018_NEW.pdf.
- 23 “America’s Changing Religious Landscape,” Pew Research Center, May 12, 2015, <https://www.pewforum.org/2015/05/12/americas-changing-religious-landscape/>.
- 24 Christine Tamir, Aidan Connaughton, and Ariana Monique Salazar, “The Global God Divide,” Pew Research Center, July 20, 2020, <https://www.pewresearch.org/global/2020/07/20/the-global-god-divide/>.
- 25 “Measuring Religion in Pew Research Center’s American Trends Panel,” Pew Research Center, January 14, 2021, <https://www.pewforum.org/2021/01/14/measuring-religion-in-pew-research-centers-american-trends-panel/>.
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- 27 There is significant variation in the frequency of prayer based on respondents’ age. Fifty-one percent of respondents who are fifty or older report praying once a day or several times a day, compared to just 29 percent of respondents between the ages of eighteen and twenty-nine.
- 28 Dutt, “The Specter of Caste in Silicon Valley”; Jennifer Medina, “Debate Erupts in California Over Curriculum on India’s History,” *New York Times*, May 4, 2016, <https://www.nytimes.com/2016/05/06/us/debate-erupts-over-californias-india-history-curriculum.html>.
- 29 Maari Zwick-Maitreyi, Thenmozhi Soundararajan, Natasha Dar, Ralph F. Bheel, and Prathap Balakrishnan, *Caste in the United States: A Survey of Caste Among South Asian Americans* (Equality Labs, 2018). This study relied on a nonrepresentative snowball sampling method to recruit respondents. Furthermore, respondents who did not disclose a caste identity were dropped from the data set. Therefore, it is likely that the sample does not fully represent the South Asian American population and could skew in favor of those who have strong views about caste. While the existence of caste discrimination in India is incontrovertible, its precise extent and intensity in the United States can be contested.
- 30 For an overview of the debate over caste categories in Islam in South Asia, see Julien Levesque, “Debates on Muslim Caste in North India and Pakistan: From Colonial Ethnography to *Pasmanda* Mobilization,” Institut Francais de Pondichery and Centre de Sciences Humaines, June 1, 2020, <https://hal.archives->

ouvertes.fr/hal-02697381/document.

- 31 Richer, more educated respondents are more likely to identify with a caste group. Thirty-six percent of Hindus with a household income below \$50,000 identify with caste, but that share rises to 50 percent among households making between \$50,000–\$100,000 and 52 percent for those above \$100,000. In terms of educational attainment, 48 percent of Hindus with an undergraduate education profess a caste identify compared to 43 percent with less than a four-year college degree.
- 32 The latter figure might be even greater if there are those who consider their Indian identity to be so unimportant that they do not self-identify as a person of (Asian) Indian origin in the YouGov panel to begin with.
- 33 One might also expect variation based on a respondent's age. Further analysis shows that both age and duration of stay in the United States are important. Young people place less importance on being Indian, even after controlling for how long they have been in the United States. However, duration of stay remains significant.
- 34 Badrinathan, Kapur, and Vaishnav, "How Do Indian Americans View India?," 20–22.
- 35 While this might seem counterintuitive, this finding is explained by the fact that U.S.-born respondents are significantly more likely to identify as more American than Indian.
- 36 A November 2020 Pew survey of American voters found that 36 percent of respondents demonstrated support for a candidate on social media, one quarter contributed money to a political campaign, 10 percent said they attended a virtual political rally or online campaign event, and 6 percent attended an online campaign event. Andrew Daniller and Hannah Gilberstadt, "Key Findings About Voter Engagement in the 2020 Election," Pew Research Center, December 14, 2020, <https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2020/12/14/key-findings-about-voter-engagement-in-the-2020-election/>.
- 37 National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine, *The Integration of Immigrants into American Society* (Washington, DC: The National Academies Press, 2015).
- 38 Badrinathan, Kapur, and Vaishnav, "How Do Indian Americans View India?," 12–13.
- 39 This finding holds even if we use a binary measure of Indian American concentration, using a cut-off of two percent of a country's population; drop outlier counties with unusually high concentrations of Indian Americans; control for the total number of households in a county; and control for a respondent's place of birth.
- 40 Interestingly, the Indian-origin composition of social networks does not vary significantly by respondents' age.
- 41 Miller McPherson, Lynn Smith-Lovin, and James M. Cook, "Birds of a Feather: Homophily in Social Networks," *Annual Review of Sociology* 27 (2001): 415–444.
- 42 Shanto Iyengar, Gaurav Sood, and Yphtach Lelkes, "Affect, Not Ideology: A Social Identity Perspective on Polarization," *Public Opinion Quarterly* 76, no. 3 (2012): 405–431; Matthew Levendusky and Neil Malhotra, "Does Media Coverage of Partisan Polarization Affect Political Attitudes?," *Political Communication* 33, no. 2 (2016): 283–301.
- 43 The survey asks respondents how comfortable they would be having close friends from various backgrounds. The survey also asks respondents how comfortable they would be if a son/daughter married someone from a particular background. Because the results are largely the same, this study only reports results from the former.
- 44 Badrinathan, Kapur, and Vaishnav, "How Will Indian Americans Vote?," 16–17.
- 45 Carroll Doherty, "Which Party is More to Blame for Political Polarization? It Depends on the Measure," Pew Research Center, June 17, 2014, <https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2014/06/17/which-party->

- is-more-to-blame-for-political-polarization-it-depends-on-the-measure/.
- 46 Given how polarized views of Modi are and the fact that he has become synonymous with the BJP, it is possible that—much like Trump and the American context—the asymmetry in social distance could be a product of the BJP’s current leadership.
- 47 Andrew Daniller, “Majorities of Americans See At Least Some Discrimination Against Black, Hispanic and Asian People in the U.S.,” Pew Research Center, March 18, 2021, <https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2021/03/18/majorities-of-americans-see-at-least-some-discrimination-against-black-hispanic-and-asian-people-in-the-u-s/>.
- 48 Mellini Kantayya, “Hank Azaria Apologized for Playing Apu on ‘The Simpsons.’ I Accept,” *Washington Post*, April 22, 2021, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/2021/04/22/hank-azaria-apologized-playing-apu-i-accept-i-appreciate-it/>.
- 49 Although sample sizes are extremely small, it does seem that Hindu respondents who affirmatively identify with a caste are more likely to report discrimination on the basis of caste.
- 50 Surinder S. Jodhka and Ghanshyam Shah, “Comparative Contexts of Discrimination: Caste and Untouchability in South Asia,” *Economic and Political Weekly* 45, no. 48 (2010): 99–106.
- 51 Badrinathan, Kapur, and Vaishnav, “How Do Indian Americans View India?”
- 52 Arthur G. Rubinoff, “The Diaspora as a Factor in U.S.-India Relations,” *Asian Affairs: An American Review* 32, no. 3 (2005): 169–187.
- 53 Sumitra Badrinathan, Devesh Kapur, and Milan Vaishnav, “On India, A Fracture in the Diaspora,” *Hindustan Times*, February 10, 2021, <https://www.hindustantimes.com/opinion/on-india-a-fracture-in-the-diaspora-101612878777662.html>.
- 54 Devesh Kapur, “The Power of Indians Abroad,” *Foreign Policy*, May 13, 2021, <https://foreignpolicy.com/2021/05/13/the-power-of-indians-abroad/>.
- 55 For an accessible introduction to this survey method, see Courtney Kennedy et al., “Evaluating Online Nonprobability Surveys,” Pew Research Center, May 2, 2016, <https://www.pewresearch.org/methods/2016/05/02/evaluating-online-nonprobability-surveys/>. According to YouGov, its panel outperformed its peer competitors evaluated in this Pew study. See Doug Rivers, “Pew Research: YouGov Consistently Outperforms Competitors on Accuracy,” YouGov, May 13, 2016, <https://today.yougov.com/topics/finance/articles-reports/2016/05/13/pew-research-yougov>.
- 56 To find details on the Economist-YouGov collaboration or to compare some of the IAAS findings on Indian Americans with the American population more generally, visit <https://today.yougov.com/topics/economist/survey-results>.
- 57 For the methodological intuition behind this approach, see Douglas Rivers and Delia Bailey, “Inference From Matched Samples in the 2008 U.S. National Elections,” Proceedings of the Survey Research Methods Section of the American Statistical Association 2009, <http://www.asasrms.org/Proceedings/y2009/Files/303309.pdf>.



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