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A Special Case of Asian Distribution Pattern

Wei Gu
South Dakota State University, wei.gu@sdstate.edu

A Special Case of Asian Distribution Pattern

By Wei Gu

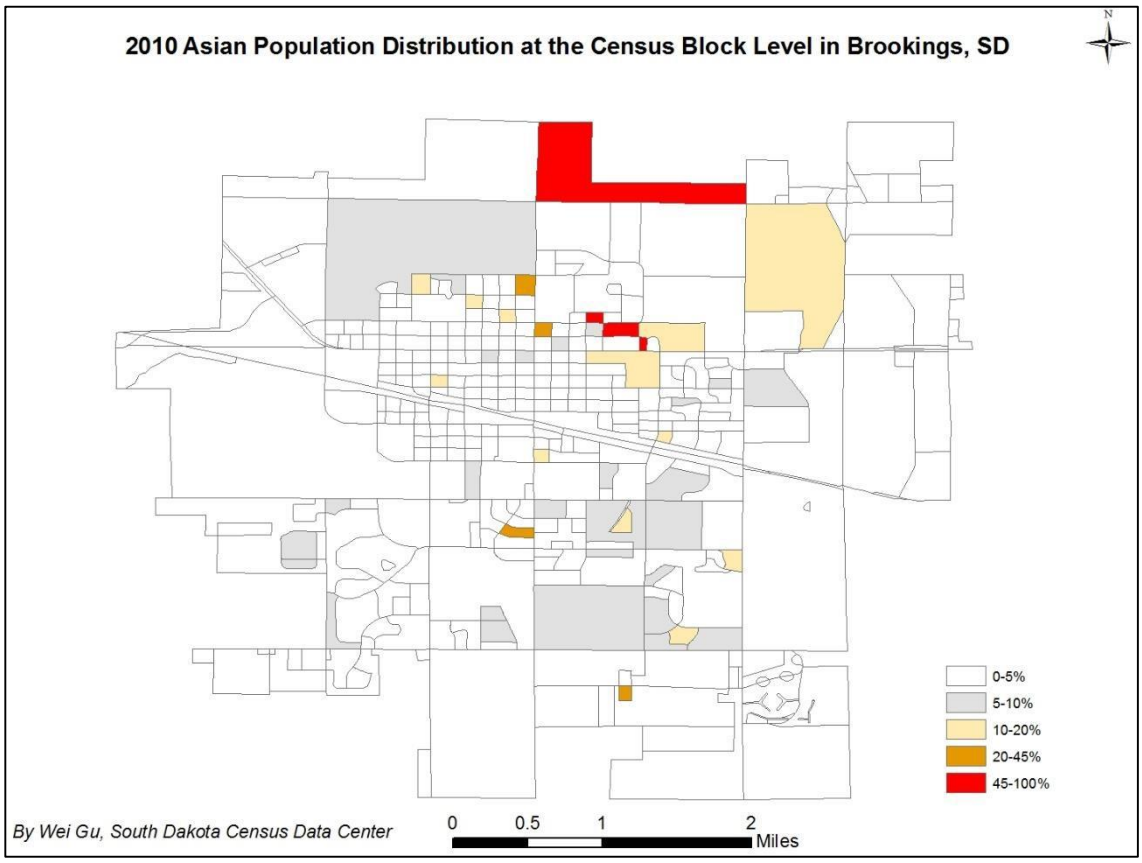
Introduction

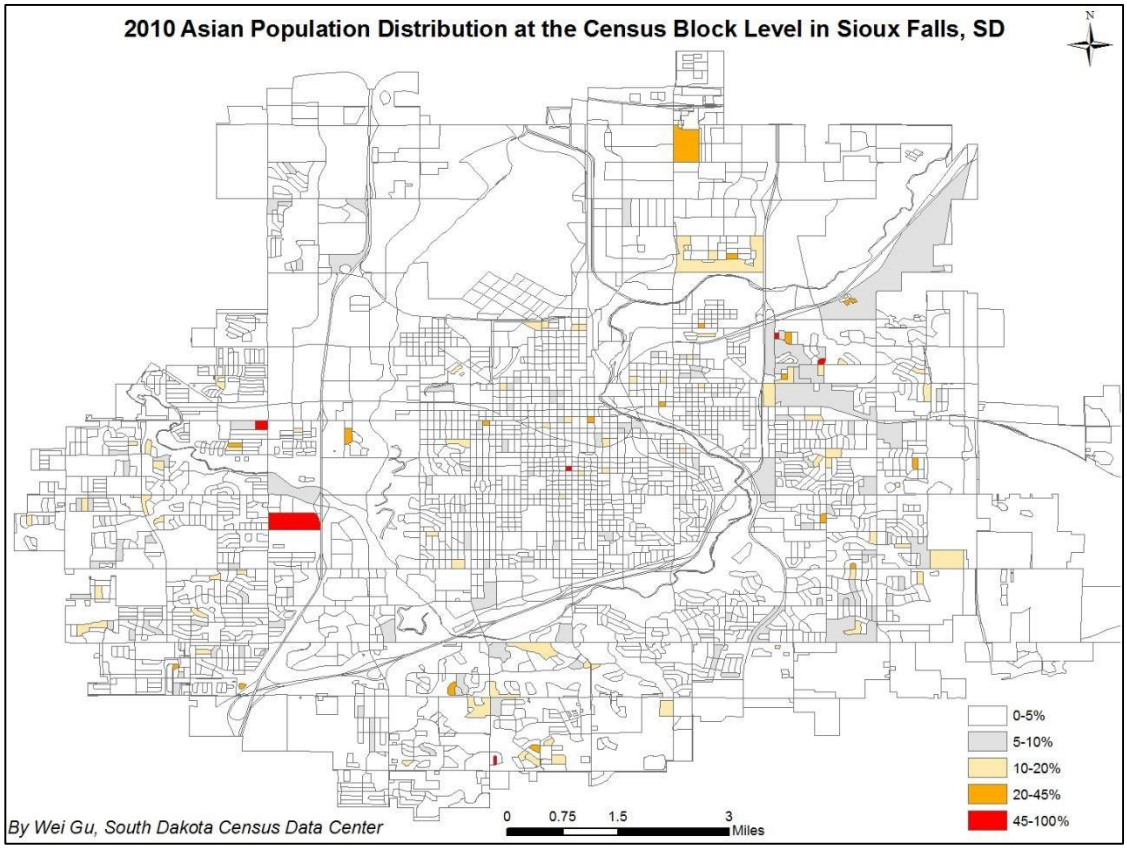
Nowadays, Asians, as a growing group in the US, show on average a relative high level of educational attainment. College towns with a disproportionately high share of Asian students are not unusual. So it will be interesting to compare Asians' geographic distribution in a college town to the patterns observed in a metropolitan city within proximity to the respective college town.

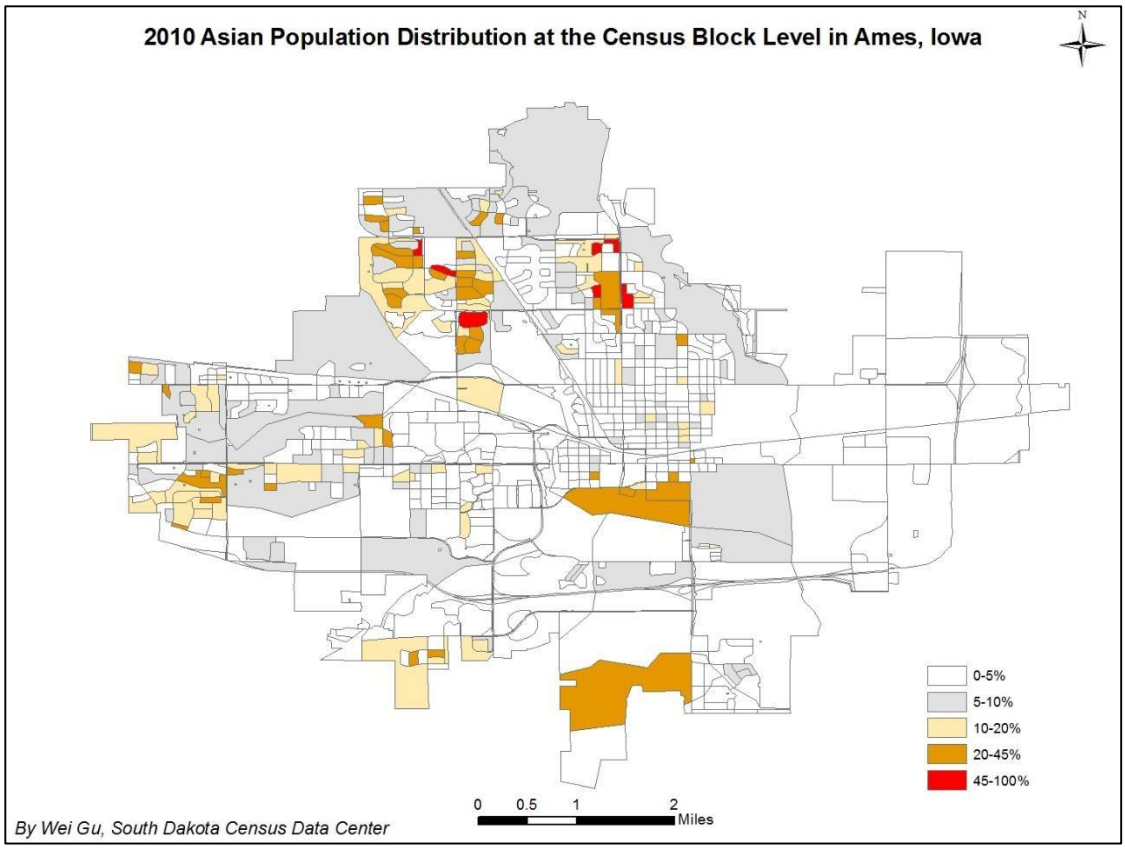
Asian's Geographic Distribution in Selected Places

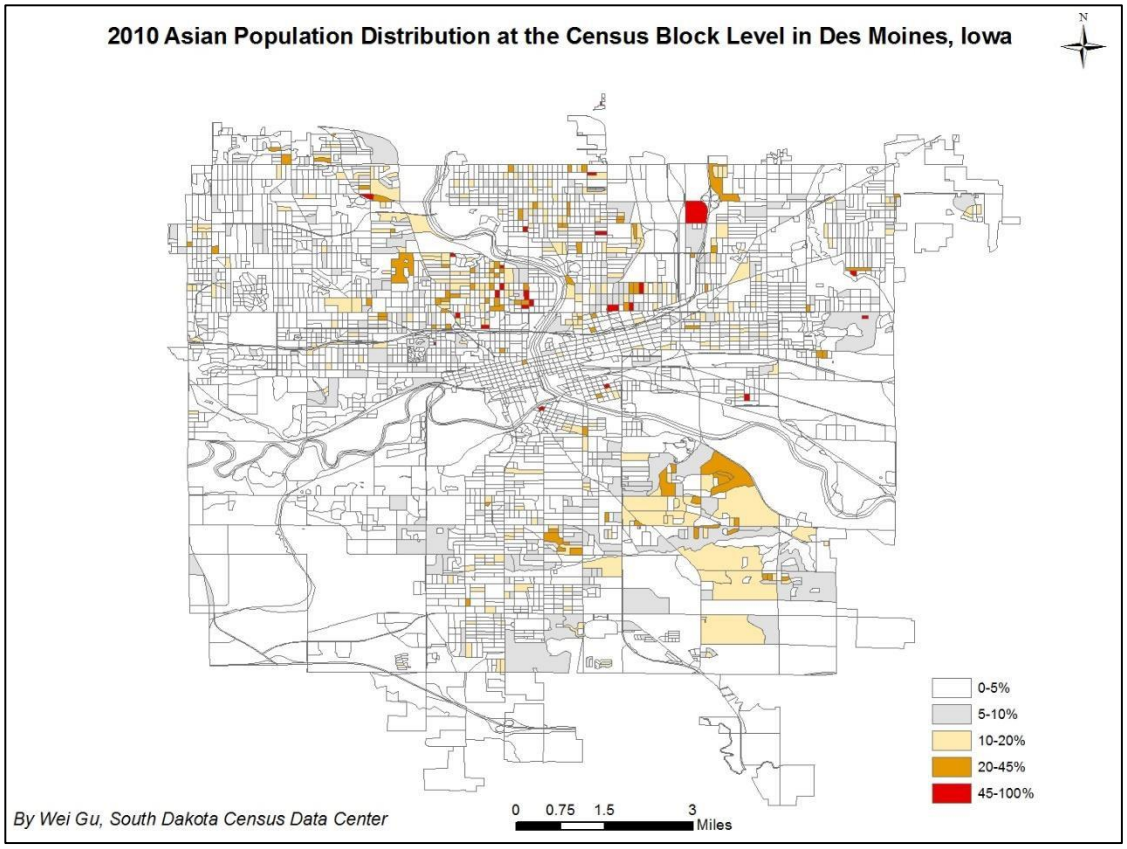
I choose to compare Brookings to Sioux Falls in South Dakota and Ames to Des Moines in Iowa. Each pair is a comparison of a college town and a nearby metropolitan city. I first create one map for each place, which shows the share of Asian population in occupied housing units at the Census Block level. Blocks shaded in red are neighborhoods with Asian population greater than 45 percent of the total population. Areas shaded in darker brown also have higher proportions of Asians: less than 45 percent but greater than 20 percent. Blocks colored in red and darker brown in the maps have obvious Asian concentrations followed by blocks with 10-20 percent Asians (yellow shade), 5-10 percent Asians (grey shade), and 0-5 percent Asians (white).

Generally, Asians concentrate near campus areas in the two college towns and Des Moines. In addition, most of the blocks with an extremely high proportion (above 45%) are found near campus areas. For example, in Brookings, where South Dakota State University locates, the area on 8th Street shaded in red is the neighborhood of graduate family housing. In Des Moines, a metropolitan city in Iowa, areas with high proportions are found in the north where there are three universities (Drake University, Grand View University, and Des Moines Area Community College Urban Campus). In addition, Asian neighborhoods can be found in southern and south-eastern parts of the city, where the Southgate Shopping Center and Jackson Elementary School are located. But in Sioux Falls, there are hardly any concentrations of blocks with high proportions of Asian populations. These selected cases show that in places where there are colleges and universities, the observed Asian neighborhoods near campus areas may be the concentrations of students. To support this proposition, I will examine some characteristics of Asian populations in these four places, which include population pyramids, college and graduate school enrollment, home ownership, and means of transportation. Data are extracted from the 2010-2014 5 year American community Survey estimates.


2010 Asian Population Distribution at the Census Block Level in Brookings, SD
N
0-5%
5-10%
10-20%
20-45%
45-100%
By Wei Gu, South Dakota Census Data Center
0 0.5 1 2
Miles


2010 Asian Population Distribution at the Census Block Level in Sioux Falls, SD
N
0-5%
5-10%
10-20%
20-45%
45-100%
By Wei Gu, South Dakota Census Data Center
0 0.75 1.5 3
Miles


2010 Asian Population Distribution at the Census Block Level in Ames, Iowa
N
0-5%
5-10%
10-20%
20-45%
45-100%
0 0.5 1 2
Miles
By Wei Gu, South Dakota Census Data Center

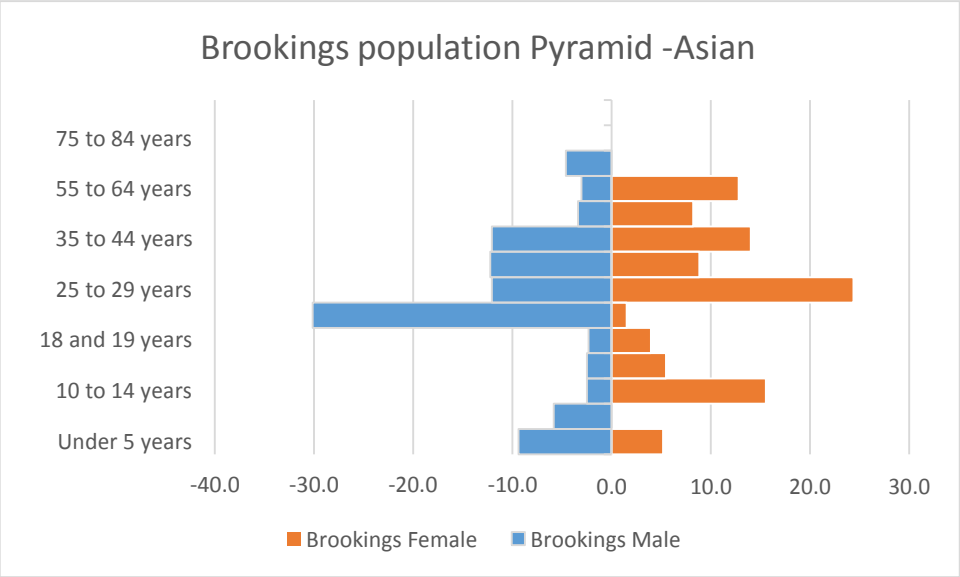

2010 Asian Population Distribution at the Census Block Level in Des Moines, Iowa
N
0-5%
5-10%
10-20%
20-45%
45-100%
0 0.75 1.5 3
Miles
By Wei Gu, South Dakota Census Data Center

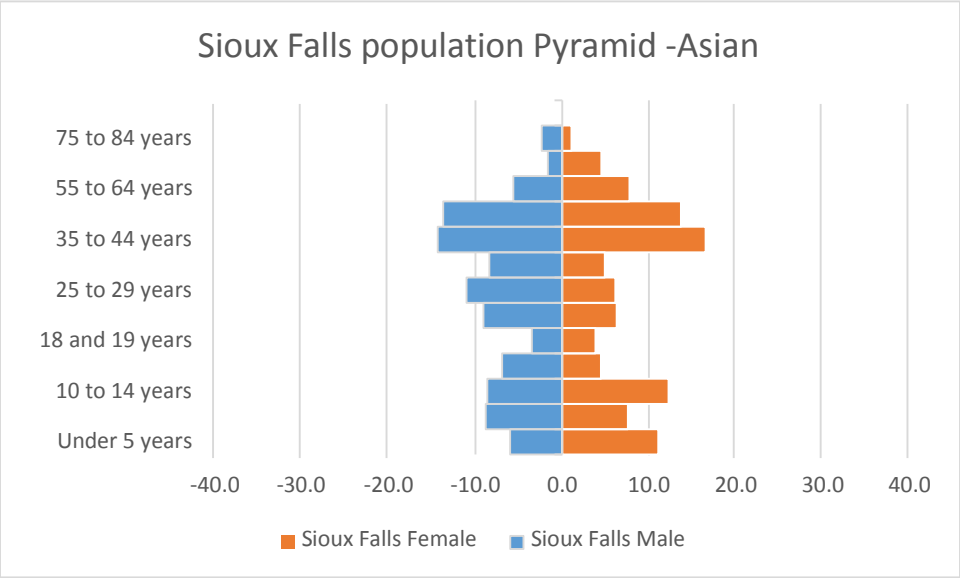
College and Graduate School Enrollment

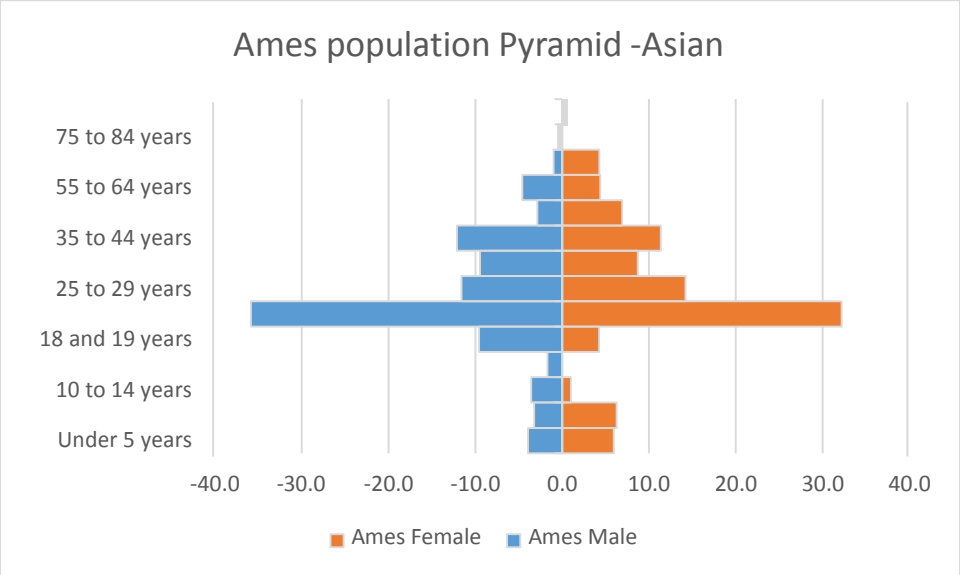
Brookings in South Dakota had higher proportion of college and graduate school enrollment than Sioux Falls. The proportion of Asians enrolled in college and graduate school was 43 percent in Brookings, which is far more than that of Sioux Falls - only 9 percent. Additionally, this proportion in Ames (57 percent) was also higher than Des Moines (12 percent).

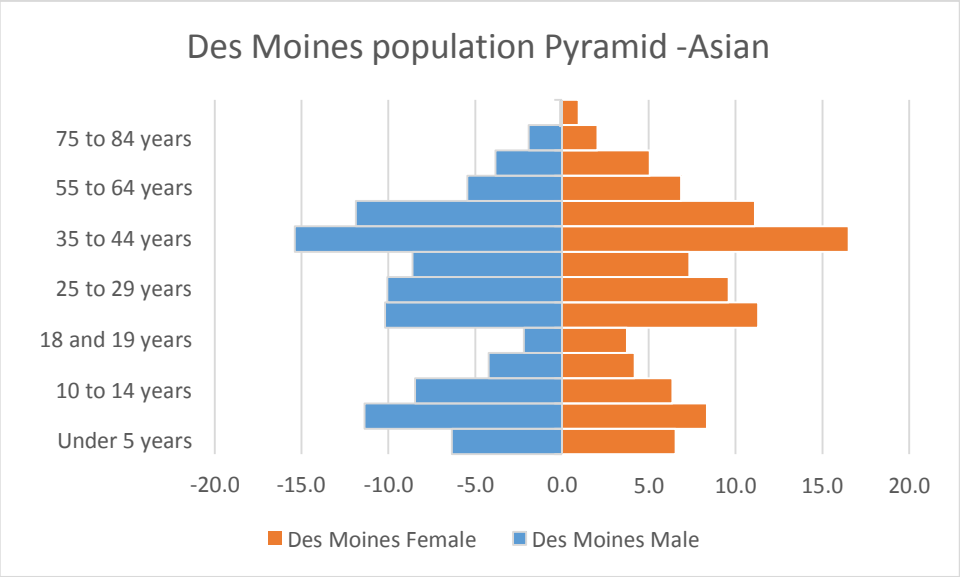
Population Pyramid

Population pyramids show that the majority age groups in college towns (Brookings and Ames) were from 20 to 34 years old. Usually, 20 to 34 years old is the age when people study for their college or graduate school degrees. Comparing to college towns, the population from 35 to 54 years old were the main age group in metropolitans (Sioux Falls and Des Moines). Also the kids (0 to 9 years old) proportion in metropolitans were slightly higher than the proportion in college towns, indicating that most Asian population in metropolitans were families rather than students.



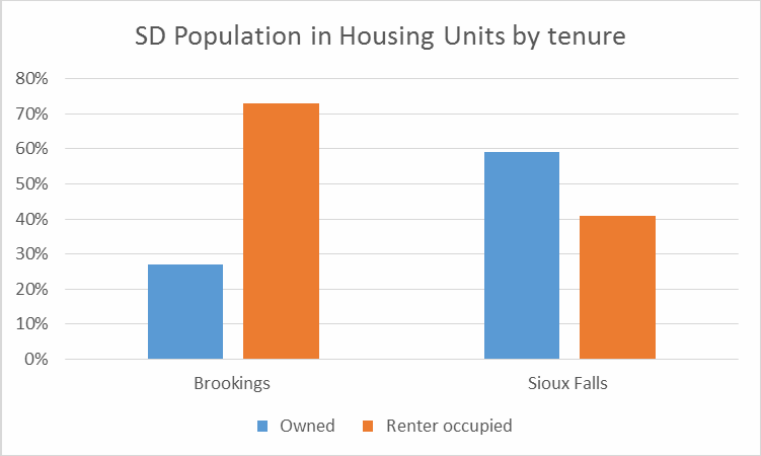

Sioux Falls population Pyramid -Asian
75 to 84 years
55 to 64 years
35 to 44 years
25 to 29 years
18 and 19 years
10 to 14 years
Under 5 years
-40.0
-30.0
-20.0
-10.0
0.0
10.0
20.0
30.0
40.0
Sioux Falls Female
Sioux Falls Male

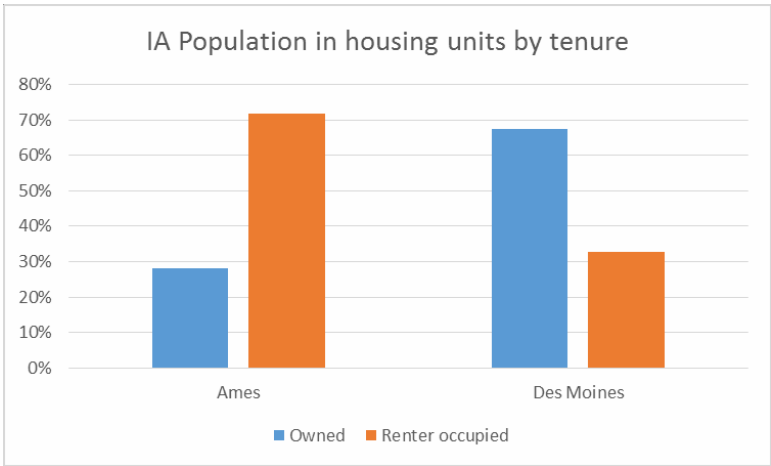

Ames population Pyramid -Asian
75 to 84 years
55 to 64 years
35 to 44 years
25 to 29 years
18 and 19 years
10 to 14 years
Under 5 years
-40.0
-30.0
-20.0
-10.0
0.0
10.0
20.0
30.0
40.0
Ames Female
Ames Male



Home Ownership

Graphs below show proportions of renter and owner occupied house units, respectively. There were higher proportions of the Asian population in renter occupied housing units in college towns than the metropolitan cities of the same state. Metropolitan cities had higher proportions of owner occupied housing units. The data indicate that Asian populations in the two metropolitan cities are more likely to be long-term settled families, while a majority of those in college towns were students, a group with low home ownership rates.





Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2010 Census Summary File1.

Means of Transportation

Considering the means of transportation, Brookings had higher proportions of Asians who chose walking as a mean of transportation to work (18 percent) than the 2 percent in Sioux Falls. Similarly, the percentage of Asians who walked to work in Ames was higher than that in Des Moines (13% VS. 3%).

Summary

In conclusion, Asians in college towns are different from their counterparts in metropolitan cities. They comprise a unique population structure and are more likely to choose walking as the means of transportation. Compared to Asians in metropolitan cities, they show higher college and graduate school enrollment but lower home ownership rates. And more importantly, they live around campus areas. It suggests that when studying the Asian distribution pattern in the U.S., college towns should be treated as a special case because the disproportionate distribution is fueled by a special segment of the Asian population.