

Small Community, Big Contributions, Boundless Horizons

Indiaspora Impact Report Summary



Art by Jeena Raghavan

The Indian Diaspora in the USA

Recognizing Impact and Celebrating Contributions

The Indian-American Dream

Have you heard the story of the Indian father who spent an entire year's salary to buy his son a ticket to the United States? This was the first time his son was going to be traveling on board a flight. His destination? Stanford University in California – to pursue a master's degree in Material Science and Engineering. Three decades on from his first flight, he is the CEO of one of the five largest companies today and a technology pioneer. The journey from Indian immigrant student to CEO can perhaps only be described as audacious.

Or you may have heard the story of the astronaut who completed the longest spacewalk ever recorded by a woman? Or the dedicated doctor in rural Pennsylvania who has delivered more than 8,000 babies to date? The common thread here is that these are all stories about Indian-American journeys.

These varied journeys exemplify the grit, talent, and ambition that the Indian-American community showcases consistently. Despite making up only 1.5% of the country's population, they have contributed significantly to the fabric of everyday life in the U.S., making its economy, culture, and society richer.

Two pivotal democracies of the world, the United States – often dubbed the oldest – and India,

the largest, share a multifaceted relationship. At the heart of this dynamic are the Indian Americans, who significantly enhance these ties and contribute to the economic and cultural landscapes of the U.S. Whether in technology, healthcare, education, public policy, or myriad other fields, these individuals embody the spirit of innovation and community engagement. Their staunch commitment to shared values of democracy, economic collaboration, and cultural diversity has enabled Indian Americans to have a profound impact on both nations. By embracing these shared values, Indian Americans have not only succeeded within the U.S. but have also unlocked the potential of countless others around them. In doing so, they serve as pivotal contributors to a partnership that is shaping a future marked by inclusive growth and mutual respect.

The story of Indian Americans is about motivated immigrants and their children seeking the American dream. It is the story of leaders and innovators, groundbreakers, and trailblazers- people on the frontlines of healthcare, education, philanthropy, science, and culture who have added many a colorful thread to the vibrant tapestry of American society.

However, this community is not without its share of challenges. Around 6% of Indian Americans are below the poverty line as of 2020, and an estimated 14% were undocumented in 2021.





With a community that is **5.1 million strong**, making up **1.5% of the US population**, Indian Americans are woven into the fabric of everyday life in the U.S., contributing richly to its economy, culture, and society. The Indian American diaspora includes **2.8 million first-generation immigrants** (including students) and **2.3 million that claim Indian ancestry**. Around **70%** of Indian Americans are citizens and **60%** are between **18-64 years** of age.



Between 1975 and 2019, the share of U.S. patents with co-inventors of Indian origin grew by **5x**.

The community needs to be more proactive about tackling these issues head-on in the years and decades to come.

This is a study that is a quantified catalog of the achievements of the Indian diaspora today coupled with narratives that showcase some of their inspiring profiles. The diaspora represents a dynamic network of 5.1 million people, including 2.8 million first-generation immigrants, who bridge continents with their rich cultural heritage, innovate industries, and enhance the communities they live in with their perspectives. The intent of this report is to take a step back to assess and acknowledge the contributions of Indian Americans to the US, as well as build on this platform to inform what more can be done as a community going forward. We hope this will continue to inspire coming generations take this remarkable story forward with a renewed sense of purpose.

Unpacking the Contributions of the Diaspora

Indian Americans are a diverse community, reflecting the varied geographies, ethnicities, and cultures of India, and of its global reach. While many studies focus on economic metrics like wealth and remittances, a more holistic view covering contributions in the sciences, academia, philanthropy, culture, government, public service, and global policy paints a fuller picture.

The diaspora is coming into its own, significantly enhancing the economic competitiveness, bringing the best and the brightest to various industries worldwide. Indian American doctors, medical professionals, and tech workers are providing numbers and skills to the US workforce at a time

when the scarcity of skilled talent in those fields is very pronounced. Indian Americans improve the society through hard skills such as innovation, economic growth and through hard work, resilience, and adaptability. This ability to navigate and diverse cultural landscapes while also serving as a bridge between communities is an inspiring model for global integration and unity.

The Indian diaspora's **economic impact** in the U.S. is impressive, from leading the largest enterprises and founding new companies, to employing millions of people across all states. This financial influence shows the determination of individuals who overcame challenges to make meaningful contributions to their new home.

CEOs of Indian origin head **16 Fortune 500 companies**, including **Satya Nadella** of Microsoft and **Reshma Kewalramani** of Vertex Pharmaceuticals. These leaders collectively employ 2.7 million Americans and generate nearly \$1 trillion in revenue. Along with leading major corporations, the economic impact of Indian Americans goes beyond big business. They have a significant presence in the startup world, **co-founding 72 out of 648 U.S. unicorns** operating in 2024. These companies, like Cambridge Mobile Telematics and Solugen, employ over 55,000 people and are valued at \$195 billion. The entrepreneurial spirit extends to **small businesses** across the country. Indian Americans own about **60% of all U.S. hotels**, a testament to their profound impact on the hospitality industry.

The Indian diaspora's contribution to the U.S. tax base is notable. Although they make up only 1.5%

of the population, it is estimated that they pay about **5-6% of all income taxes** (approximately \$250-300B). Furthermore, their professions indirectly create 11-12 million American jobs, showcasing their broader economic influence.

Research, innovation, and academia in the U.S. have provided a platform for the Indian diaspora to contribute significantly. Between 1975 and 2019, the **share of U.S. patents with Indian origin innovators** jumped from around **2% to 10%**. In 2023, research groups with scientists of Indian origin claimed about 11% of all NIH grants and contributed to 13% of scientific publications. Take **Navin Varadarajan**, a trailblazer in immunotherapy whose work is bringing new hope to cancer patients. Or **Subra Suresh**, the former director of the National Science Foundation, whose patents in biomedical devices have revolutionized healthcare globally.

Around **22,000 faculty members of Indian origin** are teaching at U.S. colleges and universities, making up about 2.6% of all full-time faculty. There are some standout leaders among them, like **Dr. Neeli Bendapudi**, Penn State's president, the first woman and person of color to hold that position, and Arun Majumdar, the first Dean of Stanford's Doerr School of Sustainability. **35 out of the top 50 colleges in the U.S.** (70%) have an Indian American in a **leadership** position fulfilling various roles of Deans, Chancellors, and Provosts, across disciplines.

Indian Americans have significantly contributed to the **cultural landscape** of the United States

across various domains such as festivals, cuisine, wellness, film, music, and fashion. Indian festivals like **Diwali** and **Holi** are now widely celebrated in the U.S., featuring vibrant parades, music, dance, and food. Diwali is now celebrated with an official state holiday in Pennsylvania and in New York City!

In the culinary world, celebrated chefs like **Maneet Chauhan** and Michelin-starred **Vikas Khanna, Srijith Gopinathan** have brought Indian flavors to mainstream American dining. **Roni Mazumdar's** successful restaurants in New York City including Adda, Dhamaka, and Semma, showcase authentic and innovative Indian dishes.

Wellness practices with Indian roots, like those promoted by **Deepak Chopra**, who popularized Ayurvedic practices and holistic health, have become significant trends in American culture. Yoga and Ayurveda, with roots in India, are now staples in American wellness practices. Since **Swami Vivekananda** introduced yoga to America, it has become a favorite health ritual and exercise – by 2023, about **10% of Americans** were practicing yoga, with roughly **36,000 yoga studios** across the country.

Bollywood's influence continues to grow with stars like **Priyanka Chopra Jonas** making successful transitions to Hollywood, and young talents like Mean Girls' star **Avantika Vandanapu** are gaining fame. In fashion, traditional elements such as **henna, bindis, and lehengas**



There are over **6,000 Indian restaurants** in the country, making up about **1% of all dining spots**. Plus, **3% of Michelin Guide USA restaurants—39 in total—serve Indian cuisine**. More and more Americans are discovering that there is more to Indian cuisine than chicken tikka masala!



Writer, producer, and actor, **Mindy Kaling**, has created and starred in shows like "The Mindy Project" and "Never Have I Ever," bringing **Indian-American narratives** to mainstream television



Tech billionaire **Romesh Wadhvani**, who signed the Bill Gates and Warren Buffett Giving Pledge in 2012, says he's committed to hand over 80% of his wealth to his **Wadhvani Foundation** out of an "obligation to give back." The Foundation's mission is to accelerate job growth and provide training for entrepreneurs to improve economic outlook in emerging economies

Kamala Harris, the first woman of Indian descent to be elected Vice President of the United States, exemplifies the political achievements of the Indian diaspora

Surgeon General **Vivek Murthy**, the nation's top public health official, has been a leading voice in addressing the opioid crisis and mental health issues in the U.S. Known for his compassionate approach, Dr. Murthy has emphasized the importance of emotional well-being and community support in fostering public health

are becoming mainstream, with lehengas available at high-end retailers like Nordstrom. Designers **Falguni** and **Shane Peacock** showcase their glamorous designs worn by celebrities at the New York Fashion Week. In literature, authors like **Jhumpa Lahiri** and **Abraham Verghese** have had a profound impact with their explorations of the Indian-American experience.

The Indian diaspora's philanthropic efforts show a strong commitment to giving back and making a difference in both the U.S. and India. The annual philanthropic contribution by the Indian diaspora estimated to be over \$1.5 billion which touches the lives of millions around the globe. **India Giving Day**, started by the **India Philanthropic Alliance** in 2023, continues to grow in number of donors and donations and serves as an avenue for Indian Americans to give to causes in India. Numerous organizations founded by the Indian diaspora within **India Philanthropy Alliance (IPA)** raise more than \$135 million annually in philanthropy donations and impact more than 70 million people.

What is remarkable is how the community often thinks about giving in parallel, supporting causes in India while also giving back to their local communities in the U.S. This dual approach reflects appreciation for the opportunities and support received in the U.S., motivating them to pay it forward. During crises and **natural disasters** like Hurricane Harvey that ravaged Houston and surrounding areas in 2017, Indian diaspora organizations raised over \$2 million for disaster recovery, fielded more than 1,000 volunteers every day, managed a 24-hour helpline and rescued hundreds of people from floodwaters. In addition to this they aided the rebuilding of communities in the

aftermath. During the **COVID-19 pandemic**, Indian Americans have stepped up, providing significant commitment to humanitarian efforts in both the U.S. and India. Notably, in the U.S. Gurudwaras all over the country took active roles in community support and service, including with free meal programs that were part of the broader Sikh principle of "Langar" or community kitchen which aims to offer free food to all, emphasizing equality and selfless service. These efforts were instrumental in providing relief and support to communities affected by the pandemic.

The Indian diaspora's impact on U.S. public service and government is more than just a footnote – from local governance to the big leagues, Indian Americans are stepping up and making their voices heard. They are making waves as senators, representatives, and mayors, establishing a strong presence in the political arena. In the past decade, more Indian Americans are getting involved, holding over 60 notable positions in the federal administration in 2013 and growing to more than **150 by 2023**, including **Vice President Kamala Harris**, making history as the first woman to hold that office. She's just one example of how Indian Americans are weaving themselves into the fabric of American society and governance. Beyond the White House, you'll find politicians of Indian descent making their mark on both sides of the aisle.

The Indian diaspora isn't just making waves in the U.S. – their influence is felt worldwide, especially in **global governance and policy**. Take the World Bank, for example. Indian experts there have been redefining developmental economics and shaping policy frameworks with impacts felt across the planet. The new World Bank President,

Ajay Banga, is one to watch, as he brings fresh perspectives to the table. Then there is the International Monetary Fund (IMF), where **Gita Gopinath** currently serves as the First Deputy Managing Director. During the pandemic, Gopinath played a crucial role in developing economic recovery strategies and spearheading vaccination efforts in low- and middle-income countries. These individual contributions, admittedly as part of teams with institutional influence, are making a real difference on a global scale.

In the tech world, for instance, Indian talent has been a driving force behind innovation in Silicon Valley. About one-third of tech employees in Silicon Valley are of Indian origin. On the flip side, U.S. companies continue to invest in India's technology sector. This back-and-forth has not only boosted the economies but has also led to job creation and technological leaps in both countries. Education is another area where this partnership shines. Around 270k Indian students from top academic institutes in India bringing their unique perspectives and academic prowess to American universities. Indian students comprise 25% of international students in the U.S. and 1.5% of the total student population, with approximately 60% enrolled in graduate studies. India is a net exporter of talent, and the U.S., as a land of opportunity, attracts the best from India's large, young, English-speaking, and skilled talent pool.

Indian Americans are shaping the tech world, saving lives in healthcare, nurturing young minds as educators, creating cultural wonders as artists, expanding knowledge as scholars, and unraveling the universe's

mysteries as scientists. They are a powerhouse of talent, resilience, and diversity that makes America richer. Whether you hear their stories through numbers or personal tales, you will see how much they have shaped the American story. However, the community's perseverance and accomplishments illustrate their vital role in the American society, driving progress and unity.

The universality of human connection – in being able to find a sense of belonging in every place and kinship with people around the world – has guided the Indian diaspora in the U.S. This spirit is reflected in the influence of the Indian diaspora in the U.S., which is both diverse and impactful, ranging from the fun and flavorful to the deeply formative. It is time to acknowledge the contributions of the Indian diaspora in the U.S., not merely in terms of numbers or economic statistics, but in the way they have woven their traditions, flavors, and passions into the very fabric of American life. We celebrate these achievements today, but looking ahead, we call on the Indian-American community to use this influence for continuous betterment of the societies we live in that sustain and enrich us.

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