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RAD Diaspora Profile

Prepared for the Rockefeller Foundation-Aspen Institute Diaspora Program (RAD)

The Bangladeshi Diaspora in the United States

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BANGLADESHI DIASPORA

Summary

Approximately 270,000 Bangladeshi immigrants and their children (the first and second generations) live in the United States, accounting for a small share of the total U.S. foreign-born population: 0.5 percent. About half of all Bangladeshi immigrants arrived in the United States during or after 2000 (52 percent), meaning that this is a relatively recently settled population. Nevertheless, a majority of Bangladeshi immigrants have become U.S. citizens. Bangladeshi immigrants in the United States have a median age of 39, and the vast majority of the population is working age (84 percent). The children of Bangladeshi immigrants (the second generation) have a median age of 9, and only 20 percent are working age. Seventy-nine percent of those in the second generation have both a mother and father who were born in Bangladesh—the second highest proportion with both parents born in the country of origin out of the 15 groups studied in the Rockefeller Foundation-Aspen Institute Diaspora Program (RAD) analysis (after India).[1]

The Bangladeshi diaspora population is better educated than the general U.S population and has a higher household income level. Diaspora members are more likely to have bachelor's degrees than the U.S. population overall, and they are more than twice as likely to hold advanced degrees. Bangladeshi diaspora households have a median income of $54,000, or $4,000 above the median for all U.S. households, and Bangladeshi households are overrepresented in the top 10 percent of the U.S. household income distribution. In general, employment indicators among members of the Bangladeshi diaspora closely resemble those of the general U.S. population, with both groups having similar rates of labor force participation, employment, and share in managerial or professional occupations. However, Bangladeshi immigrant women are significantly less likely to participate in the labor force than U.S. women overall (39 percent versus 58 percent); with a young, and relatively small second-generation population, it is too soon to determine whether this trend will continue in the second generation.

The highest numbers of Bangladeshi immigrants in the United States reside in the state of New York. California, Texas, New Jersey, Michigan, and Florida are also popular places for Bangladeshi settlement. Among metropolitan areas, the Bangladeshi immigrant population is most heavily concentrated in New York City and its surrounding communities. The Washing-

1 All Rights Reserved. © 2014 Migration Policy Institute. Information for reproducing excerpts from this report can be found at www.migrationpolicy.org/about/copyright-policy. The RAD Diaspora Profile series covers U.S.-based Bangladeshi, Colombian, Egyptian, Ethiopian, Filipino, Ghanaian, Haitian, Indian, Kenyan, Mexican, Moroccan, Nigerian, Pakistani, Salvadoran, and Vietnamese diaspora populations.

ton, DC; Detroit; and Los Angeles metropolitan areas are also significant Bangladeshi immigrant population centers. In no area, however, does the concentration of Bangladeshi immigrants rise to even 0.5 percent of the metropolitan population.

Bangladeshi diaspora organizations in the United States are abundant and well-funded, especially considering the small size of the Bangladeshi diaspora population. However, many of these organizations are not exclusively led by immigrants from Bangladesh and their families; often they represent the broader Bengali ethno-linguistic diaspora, originating from a region that comprises the country of Bangladesh as well as the Indian state of West Bengal and parts of the states of Tripura and Assam. Bangladeshi and Bengali diaspora groups have been established throughout the United States, but especially in the states of California, New York, Texas, and Florida. The core mission of many of the 56 Bangladeshi/Bengali diaspora organizations identified for the RAD analysis is either to promote Bengali language and culture or aid the Bengal region's development, particularly in terms of promoting children's educational access. Although none of the organizations studied for the RAD analysis reported annual revenues above $1 million in their most recent tax filings, the vast majority of them were registered with charitable, nonprofit status with the U.S. government, and raised tens of thousands of dollars per year, indicating a generally high degree of professionalism among their leaders. Five of the organizations in the RAD analysis had annual revenues above $200,000: the North American Bangladeshi Islamic Community, SpaandanB, the Bengali Association of Greater Chicago, the American Institute of Bangladesh Studies, and the Volunteers Association for Bangladesh. Other notable groups include the Federation of Bangladeshi Associations in America and the American Association of Bangladeshi Engineers and Architects, both of which are national umbrella organizations. Bangladeshi /Bengali organizations volunteer to host the North American Bengali Conference, which draws thousands of participants from across the country to an annual, multiday forum, currently in its 34th year.

The United States is the seventh most common destination country for Bangladesh-born emigrants and the fifth-largest source of remittances to the country. The diaspora in the United Sates transferred approximately $694 million in remittances to Bangladesh during 2012. India, Saudi Arabia, and Kuwait are home to the highest numbers of Bangladeshi emigrants, and the largest remittance flows to Bangladesh originate in India, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates. In 2012 Bangladesh's remittances totaled $14.1 billion and represented 12.2 percent of the country's $116.4 billion gross domestic product (GDP). After Haiti and El Salvador, Bangladesh is the third most remittance-dependent country in the RAD analysis, as defined by share of GDP.

Detailed Demographic and Socioeconomic Characteristics[2]

Analysis of data from 2009-13 reveals a Bangladeshi diaspora in the United States of about 270,000 individuals, counting immigrants born in Bangladesh and U.S.-born individuals with at least one parent who was born in Bangladesh.

2 Unless otherwise noted, estimates for the diaspora population and its characteristics are based on Migration Policy Institute (MPI) analysis of the U.S. Census Bureau's Current Population Surveys, using five years of pooled data (2009 through 2013) collected in March of each year. All Census Bureau data were accessed from Integrated Public Use Microdata Series (IPUMS), Steven Ruggles, J. Trent Alexander, Katie Genadek, Ronald Goeken, Matthew B. Schroeder, and Matthew Sobek, Integrated Public Use Microdata Series: Version 5.0 [Machine-readable database], Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 2010), http://usa.ipums.org/usa/.

First Generation (Bangladeshi immigrants in the United States)

- Approximately 185,000 immigrants from Bangladesh resided in the United States.
- Bangladeshi immigrants accounted for a small share of the U.S. foreign-born population overall—0.5 percent in 2012. The size of the Bangladesh-born population in the United States grew from a small base in recent decades; in 1980, only about 5,000 Bangladeshi immigrants lived in the United States.[3]
- Bangladeshi immigrants to the United States were less likely to arrive before 2000 than U.S. immigrants overall: 52 percent versus 64 percent.
- Bangladeshi immigrants were more likely to be U.S. citizens than the total U.S. foreign-born population: 51 percent versus 44 percent. Considering that about half of Bangladeshi immigrants arrived in the United States during or after 2000, their relatively high naturalization rate suggests that many in this population applied for U.S. citizenship shortly after becoming eligible.
- Eighty-four percent of first-generation Bangladeshi immigrants were working age (18 to 64). Ten percent were below age 18—among the highest proportion of the first generation to fall in this age category among the 15 groups in the RAD analysis. The median age of first-generation Bangladeshi immigrants in the United States was 39.

Second Generation (U.S. born with at least one Bangladesh-born parent)[4]

- The second-generation Bangladeshi diaspora population consisted of approximately 85,000 U.S.-born individuals with at least one Bangladesh-born parent.
- Seventy-nine percent of the children of Bangladeshi immigrants reported that both parents were born in Bangladesh, the highest proportion among the 15 populations studied in the RAD analysis, after India. Only 11 percent of the Bangladeshi second generation said that one parent was U.S.-born.
- The Bangladeshi second-generation population in the United States was young, with a median age of 9. Eighty percent of the second generation was below age 18, and 20 percent was working age (18 to 64).

Educational Attainment

- The Bangladeshi diaspora population was better educated than the general U.S population.
- Twenty-eight percent of Bangladeshi diaspora members age 25 and older had a bachelor's degree as their highest credential, compared to 20 percent of the U.S. population overall.
- Twenty-five percent of the Bangladeshi population age 25 and older held a master's degree, PhD, or an advanced professional degree versus 11 percent of the U.S. population as a whole.

3 These estimates are based on MPI analysis of the U.S. Census Bureau's 2012 American Community Survey (ACS) and the 1980 Census.

4 U.S. born is defined as born in the United States or born abroad to a U.S.-citizen parent.

Household Income

- Bangladeshi diaspora households had a slightly higher median annual income than U.S. households overall: $54,000 versus $50,000.
- Thirty-two percent of Bangladeshi diaspora households reported annual incomes above $90,000, the threshold for the top 25 percent of U.S. households.
- Fifteen percent of Bangladeshi diaspora households had annual incomes exceeding $140,000, the threshold for the top 10 percent of U.S. households.

Employment

- Members of the U.S.-based Bangladeshi diaspora age 16 and older were about as likely as individuals in the general U.S. population to participate in the labor force: 61 percent versus 64 percent.
- Bangladeshi immigrant women were significantly less likely to participate in the labor force than U.S. women overall: 39 percent versus 58 percent.
- The employment rate among those in the labor force was nearly the same for the Bangladeshi diaspora population as the general U.S. population: 93 percent versus 91 percent.
- Thirty-one percent of both the Bangladeshi diaspora and the general U.S. population were in a professional or managerial occupation.[5] These occupations include specialized fields (e.g. engineering, science, law, or education) as well as administrative and managerial jobs (e.g. finance or human resources).

Geographic Distribution[6]

- Immigrants from Bangladesh in the United States are scattered across a number of states, with the largest population in New York State (about 75,000). California, Texas, New Jersey, Michigan, and Florida each had approximately 10,000 Bangladesh-born residents.
- The New York City metropolitan area had an estimated population of 75,000 Bangladeshi immigrants, making it the largest population center for Bangladesh-born people in the United States. The metropolitan areas of Washington, DC; Detroit; and Los Angeles each had about 10,000 Bangladesh-born residents. The highest concentration of Bangladeshi immigrants was in the New York area, but they made up only 0.4 percent of the total population of the metropolitan area.

5 Persons reporting a professional or managerial occupation out of all persons reporting an occupation. The Current Population Survey (CPS) questionnaire asks respondents to list their occupation based on primary employment.

6 Analysis based on the U.S. Census Bureau's 2008-12 ACS. Note that geographic distribution is only analyzed for the immigrant population. Second-generation Bangladeshi diaspora members are not included in this section due to data limitations.

Remittance Volume[7]

- In 2012, remittances to Bangladesh were valued at $14.1 billion, representing 12.2 percent of the country's $116.4 billion GDP. After Haiti and El Salvador, Bangladesh was the third most remittance-dependent country in the 15-country RAD analysis, as defined by share of GDP.
- The United States had the seventh-largest emigrant population from Bangladesh worldwide. The Bangladeshi diaspora in the United States transferred $694 million in remittances to Bangladesh in 2012, the fifth-largest source of Bangladesh's remittances.
- India was home to the largest number of Bangladesh-born immigrants of any country in the world. The second and third most common destinations were Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates, respectively.
- Bangladeshi migrants in India were Bangladesh's principle source of remittances followed by Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, and the United Kingdom.

7 Remittance data are taken from World Bank Prospects Group tables for annual remittance inflows and outflows (October 2013 update) and the 2012 Bilateral Remittance Matrix (both available here: http://go.worldbank.org/092X1CHHD0). GDP estimates are from World Bank World Development Indicators data. Population estimates are from the United Nations Population Division mid-2013 matrix of total migrant stock by origin and destination.

Tables, Maps, and Graphs

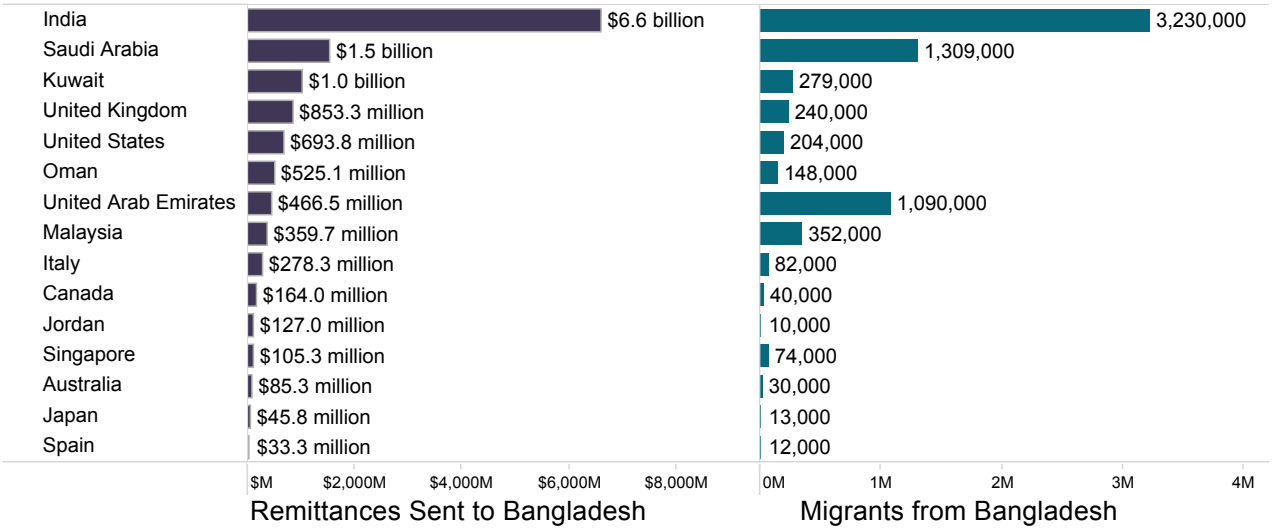
Characteristics of the Bangladeshi Diaspora in the United States, 2013-09

	Bangladeshi Diaspora in the United States*	Total U.S. Population
Household Income		
Median household income	$54,000	$50,000
Average household size	3.8	2.5
Share of households with high incomes ($90,000+)	32%	25%
Share of households with very high incomes ($140,000+)	15%	10%
Employment		
Total population age 16 and older	195,000	239,386,000
Share in the labor force	61%	64%
... that was employed	93%	91%
... that was in a professional occupation	31%	31%
Educational Attainment **		
Total population age 25 and older	157,000	201,925,000
... with less than high school education	12%	13%
... with high school or some college education	35%	57%
... with a bachelor's degree	28%	20%
... with an advanced degree	25%	11%
Population Characteristics by Generation		
First- and Second-Generation Immigrant Population	277,000	73,140,000
First-generation immigrant population***	187,000	38,468,000
... that was working age (18-64)	84%	81%
... that entered the United States before 2000	52%	64%
... naturalized as United States citizens	51%	44%
Second-generation population****	90,000	34,672,000
... that was under age 18	80%	46%
... that was working age (18-64)	20%	43%
... with only one parent from Bangladesh	21%	

* defined as all first and second generation
** highest level reported
*** all individuals who report Bangladesh as their place of birth, excluding U.S. births abroad
**** all individuals who report having at least one parent born in Bangladesh

Note: Estimates are based on Migration Policy Institute analysis of U.S. Census Bureau Current Population Survey pooled 2009-13 data.
Source: All Census Bureau data were accessed from Integrated Public Use Microdata Series (IPUMS), Steven Ruggles, J. Trent Alexander, Katie Genadek, Ronald Goeken, Matthew B. Schroeder, and Matthew Sobek, Integrated Public Use Microdata Series: Version 5.0 [Machine-readable database], Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 2010), http://usa.ipums.org/usa/.

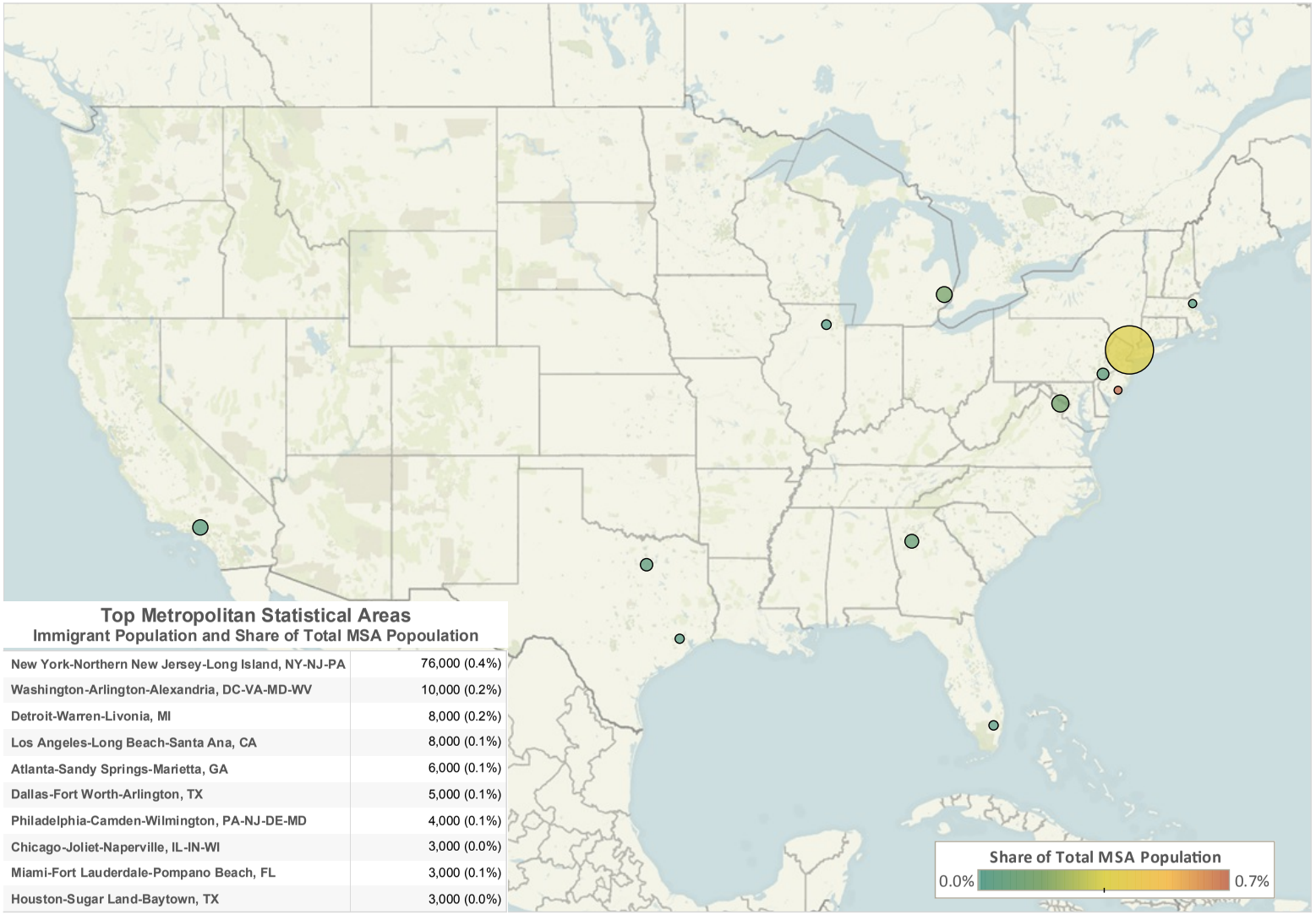
Remittance Inflows to Bangladesh by Sending Country and the Bangladeshi Emigrant Population, 2012



Source: Migration Policy Institute analysis of World Bank Prospects Group tables for annual remittance inflows and outflows (October 2013 update) and the 2012 Bilateral Remittance Matrix, the World Bank's World Development Indicators, and the United Nations Population Division's Matrix of Total Migrant Stock by Origin and Destination (mid-2013).

Immigrant Population from Bangladesh

Displayed by Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA)



Top Metropolitan Statistical Areas
Immigrant Population and Share of Total MSA Popoulation

New York-Northern New Jersey-Long Island, NY-NJ-PA	76,000 (0.4%)
Washington-Arlington-Alexandria, DC-VA-MD-WV	10,000 (0.2%)
Detroit-Warren-Livonia, MI	8,000 (0.2%)
Los Angeles-Long Beach-Santa Ana, CA	8,000 (0.1%)
Atlanta-Sandy Springs-Marietta, GA	6,000 (0.1%)
Dallas-Fort Worth-Arlington, TX	5,000 (0.1%)
Philadelphia-Camden-Wilmington, PA-NJ-DE-MD	4,000 (0.1%)
Chicago-Joliet-Naperville, IL-IN-WI	3,000 (0.0%)
Miami-Fort Lauderdale-Pompano Beach, FL	3,000 (0.1%)
Houston-Sugar Land-Baytown, TX	3,000 (0.0%)

Map based on Migration Policy Institute tabulations of U.S. Census Bureau 2008-2012 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates. Table B05006.

Source: MPI analysis of 2010-12 ACS, pooled.