



AAIPP Bulletin

February 2026

Health Care: One Year of RFK, Jr.

As reported recently in [The Hill](#), Health and Human Services (HHS) Secretary Robert F. Kennedy Jr.'s first year in office has been marked by disruptions of decades of public health norms as well as heated opposition from major medical societies, lawmakers on Capitol Hill and his own family members, while drawing adulation from long time skeptics of mainstream health care. Below are some highlights:

- In the year he has been in office, the number of recommended childhood immunizations has shrunk, long-recommended vaccines have been delayed, and guidance for who can get certain shots has become limited.
- Kennedy has publicly denounced the idea that autism could be linked to genetics, insisting there must be an environmental trigger. He appointed 21 new members to the Interagency Autism Coordinating Committee (IACC) in January, several of whom have publicly questioned the consensus that vaccines do not cause autism.
- Kennedy unveiled updated Dietary Guidelines for Americans (DGA) for 2025-2030, an upside-down pyramid that placed an emphasis on whole foods. This emphasis on cutting back on ultra-processed food, cutting back on sugar, salt and eating more plant proteins has drawn some support from both his critics and supporters. The new guidelines, however, encouraged full-fat dairy consumption, a common source of saturated fats, and loosen previous guidance on limiting alcohol consumption.
- During Kennedy's tenure, the mainstream medical community has often diverged from the federal government, with major organizations such as the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP), the American Academy of Family Physicians, the American Medical Association (AMA), the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists, and the Society for Maternal-Fetal Medicine breaking away from newer guidance and recommendations.

The [January 2026 KFF Tracking Poll on Health Information and Trust](#) reveals that the public's trust in the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) remains at its lowest level since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic. Fewer than half (47%) of the public says they have a "great deal" or "fair amount" of trust in the CDC to provide reliable information about vaccines. Other findings include the following:

- Fewer than half (44%) of adults are confident in federal health agencies like the CDC and the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) to carry out some of their responsibilities, including making recommendations for children’s vaccines.
- Fewer than half of the public have at least “some” confidence in the agencies to ensure safety and effectiveness of vaccines approved for use in the U.S. (46%), make decisions based on science rather than the personal views of agency officials (38%), or act independently, without interference from outside interests (34%).
- A majority (55%) of the public continue to disapprove of Robert F. Kennedy Jr.’s job performance as Health and Human Services (HHS) Secretary and his handling of U.S. vaccine policy.

Meanwhile, recent KFF polling also points to [the high cost of health care](#) as the top financial worry for American adults and their families.

- Just under half of U.S. adults say it is difficult to afford health care costs, and about three in ten say they or a family member in their household had problems paying for health care in the past 12 months.
- About one-third (36%) of adults say that in the past 12 months they have skipped or postponed getting health care they needed because of the cost.
- About one in five adults (21%) say they have not filled a prescription because of the cost while a similar share (23%) say they have instead opted for over-the-counter alternatives.

Concerns about health care costs are also prevalent among Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders (AAPIs). According to an [AP-NORC/AAPI Data December 2025 survey](#), 60% of AAPIs are extremely or very concerned about their health care costs increasing, while about 4 in 10 are concerned about being unable to access health care when needed, pay for health care, or maintain health insurance.

Latest Population Estimates

According to the Census Bureau’s [2020-2024 ACS 5-Year Estimates](#) released last month, approximately 14.1 percent of United States residents in 2020-2024 were foreign-born. 52.1 percent of foreign-born were naturalized U.S. citizens and an estimated 67.9 percent entered the country before the year 2010. Foreign-born residents of the United States come from different parts of the world, with 50.7% coming from Latin America and 30.8% from Asia.

For people reporting one race alone, 61.0 percent were White; 12.2 percent were Black or African American; 6.0 percent were Asian; 0.2 percent were Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander (NHPI), 0.9 percent were American Indian and Alaska Native and 7.1 percent were Some Other Race.

In 2020-2024, 12.5 percent of people were in [poverty](#). An estimated 16.1 percent of children under 18 were below the poverty level, compared with 10.8 percent of people

65 years old and over. An estimated 11.6 percent of people 18 to 64 years were below the poverty level. *10 percent of Asians (race alone) and 16.8 percent of NHPIs (race alone) were in poverty.*

In 2020-2024, 12.1 percent of [households received SNAP](#) (the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program). 4 percent and 0.2 percent of these households were Asian alone and NHPI alone respectively. *9 percent of Asian-alone households and 21 percent of NHPI-alone households received SNAP.*

With respect to [employment status](#), 59.7 percent of the population 16 and over were employed in 2020-2024, and 36.5 percent were not currently in the labor force. The unemployment rate was 5.2 percent. *63.5 percent of Asians (race alone) and 59 percent of NHPIs (race alone) were employed. Their unemployment rates were 4.4 percent and 7.2 percent respectively.*

Among the civilian noninstitutionalized population in the United States in 2020-2024, 91.6 percent had [health insurance](#) coverage and 8.4 percent did not have health insurance coverage. *94.4 percent of Asians (race alone) and 88.5 percent of NHPIs (race alone). Asian alone and NHPI alone uninsured rates were 5.6 percent and 11.5 percent respectively.*

Recent Releases

[Interracial Cooperation in the United States](#)

The Brookings Institution (February 18, 2026)

The research team at Gallup and Brookings surveyed a nationally representative sample of approximately 5,000 U.S. adults, asking them extensive questions about their relationships at work, their friendships, their romantic relations, and their family ties, with a focus on how frequently these relationships involve people from other races. The team also used a hypothetical scenario to elicit respondents' potential racial preferences in a hiring decision. The survey also asked about various attitudes toward discrimination, and the importance given to race versus other characteristics when selecting friends and business partners.

This report analyzes only a subset of the complex, multifaceted data collected through this project as a way to introduce the data and inspire further research. The research provides insights into people's self-reported frequency and context of interracial cooperation across domains of life, how attitudes are associated with interracial exposure, and how interracial exposure affects well-being.

[Who is Paying for the 2025 U.S. Tariffs?](#)

Federal Reserve Bank of New York (February 12, 2026)

Over the course of 2025, the average tariff rate on U.S. imports increased from 2.6 to 13 percent. Using import data through November 2025, the Federal Reserve's analysis finds that nearly 90 percent of the tariffs' economic burden fell on U.S. firms and consumers.

[Prevalence and Trends in Cardiovascular Risk Factors Among Middle-Aged South Asian Adults Compared with Other Racial and Ethnic Groups in the United States: A Longitudinal Analysis of 2 Cohort Studies](#)

Journal of the American Heart Association (February 11, 2026)

This new research study published in JAHA finds that heart disease risk factors appeared at younger age among South Asian adults in the U.S. Both middle-aged South Asian men and women had higher rates of prediabetes, type 2 diabetes and high blood pressure compared to white, Chinese and Hispanic peers, and similar or slightly lower rates of high blood pressure compared to Black adults. This study is based on analysis of health data from two long-term studies that followed a diverse group of adults from different regions in the U.S.: the Mediators of Atherosclerosis in South Asians Living in America (MASALA) Study, and the Multi-Ethnic Study of Atherosclerosis (MESA).

[From Translations to Chatbots: AANHPI Community Perspective on the Impact and Governance of Artificial Intelligence](#)

Asian Americans Advancing Justice – AAJC (February 11, 2026)

Despite heavy representation of the Asian American, Native Hawaiian, and Pacific Islander (AANHPI) communities in the tech industry, disparities in language access, immigration status, income and more exclude the AANHPI members most vulnerable to algorithmic harms and bias. Findings from this qualitative research outline how members of the AANHPI community view and interact with artificial intelligence (AI), and what interventions are necessary to ensure that community needs are meaningfully represented in AI governance.

[Reduced immigration reduced population growth for the nation and most states](#)

The Brookings Institution (February 11, 2026)

Based on analysis of the Census Bureau’s newly released annual population estimates, this research examines not only how the recent immigration slowdown has lowered the nation’s overall population growth, but also how it has led to lower population growth or greater population declines in most states. This piece shows national and state demographic shifts over the period from July 2024 to June 2025, along with earlier years, and makes the case that lower immigration levels in the future will have negative impacts on demographic change in most parts of the country—even in states with now small immigrant populations.

[State of AANHPI Charitable Giving](#)

AAPI Data (February 10, 2026)

This report, based on the [latest survey data](#) from AAPI Data and Associated Press-NORC, provides an in-depth analysis of rates, patterns, and amounts of AANHPI giving in comparison to the U.S. average. The report also examines motivations for giving and highlights emerging trends in philanthropy such as the potential for mutual aid and the growing significance of crowdfunding and grassroots giving.

[AANHPI Homeownership and Wealth-Building Trajectories](#)

Urban Institute (January 27, 2026)

This report provides the first comprehensive, life-cycle trajectory analysis of wealth building anchored in homeownership for AANHPI households over the past two decades. Drawing on nationally representative longitudinal data, the study traces how wealth is accumulated, used, preserved, and transferred over the life course. These findings offer insights that can inform federal, state, and local policies to support wealth building and intergenerational mobility for AANHPI households and for households more broadly.

ABOUT AAIPP

The Asian American Institute for Public Policy (AAIPP) is a national, nonprofit, nonpartisan organization dedicated to advancing equality and full participation for Asian Americans. It works to amplify Asian American voice and thought leadership to address community concerns and to contribute pragmatic solutions to vital social, economic, and political issues in America. Through an inclusive perspective and a politically balanced approach, AAIPP seeks to promote reasoned dialogue and informed policy discourse that is guided by empirical research and critical analysis. www.aaipp.org
Contact: Cao K. O, President cao@aaipp.org