

A Tale of Diversity, Disparity, and Discrimination: The State of Racial Justice for Asian American Chicagoans is dedicated to all in Chicago who struggle daily to transform the hard realities of racial and ethnic inequalities in the service of more just futures.

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NOTE ON THE REPORT

At the Institute for Research on Race and Public Policy, one of our central aims is to increase our knowledge about the experiences and conditions of racial and ethnic groups nationally, but especially in the city of Chicago. In May of 2017, we published a report, *A Tale of Three Cities: The State of Racial Justice in Chicago*, which provided recent, comprehensive data on the different conditions of blacks, Latinxs, and whites in the city. In the report, we pursued the goal of bringing together information about racial and ethnic inequities across multiple indicators in one central place to make this information as accessible as possible. We did not include Asian American Chicagoans in this initial report. Having to rely upon secondary sources meant that data across many indicators was either unreliable or unavailable for Asian Americans in Chicago. Diversity within this still small but quickly growing group in the city also meant that a different kind of attention was needed to capture their experiences. We noted in that initial report that the absence of Asian American Chicagoans from *A Tale of Three Cities* was a major limitation. Here we are fulfilling our commitment to find high quality data on many important indicators of conditions for Asian Americans in Chicago today. This report still has gaps, as shortcomings in data availability remain. There are also clear drawbacks in focusing solely on quantitatively measured conditions of social life. Nevertheless, this report provides a far-reaching picture of the experiences and conditions Asian Americans face in Chicago.

As in our initial report, we want to explicitly acknowledge that we are building on decades of scholarship within the social sciences and ethnic studies that recognizes race and ethnicity to be categories of social life that fundamentally shape our identities, interactions, and experiences in the world. While race and ethnicity are social categories – they are not biological or permanent – they have played an important role in organizing social relations nationally and within the city of Chicago. Herein, we offer data and analysis on how Asian American Chicagoans are faring across multiple domains. In highlighting key themes and the intersections between them, we hope to encourage public officials, policy makers, philanthropists, advocates, organizers, direct service providers, and residents to work to address the disparities that adversely affect so many in our divided city and society.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Relatively little attention has been directed to documenting the experiences of racial discrimination and inequities for Asian Americans in Chicago. Not only does this group make up a much smaller share of the city's population than whites, blacks, and Latinxs, but stereotypes about Asian Americans as the "model minority" often frame this group as high-achievers unaffected by racial discrimination and inequity. The harmful and pernicious effects of discrimination against Asian Americans are therefore often overlooked. Even in cases where the challenges facing Asian Americans are recognized, little support is offered due to harmful presumptions that Asian Americans (even 2nd, 3rd, or 4th generation Americans of Asian origin) are not "truly" American, what scholars refer to as the "forever foreigner" stereotype. The data in this report illustrate the diverse and often divergent experiences of Asian Chicagoans who have to navigate the complexity and contradiction of model minority and forever foreigner stereotypes. Asian Americans are both imagined as hard working and high achieving, and at the same time are often treated as permanent outsiders. Complexity and contradiction are a defining feature of the Asian American experience.

In this report, we examine the state of racial justice for Asian Americans in Chicago. Our analysis revealed three primary findings:

First, the diversity of Asian Americans in Chicago is one defining characteristic of this group. Originating from over 15 different countries, Asian American ethnic groups in Chicago have vastly different economic and educational outcomes. As a result, many social indicators reported here have bimodal distributions with Asian American Chicagoans having widely ranging and divergent outcomes. For example, while some Asian American national origin groups have among the highest levels of college attainment in Chicago, others have the highest rate of individuals with less than a high school degree.

Second, the opportunities and life experiences of Asian American Chicagoans are greatly affected by racial inequity. Residential segregation between Asian Americans and other racial groups is high. Asian Americans also experience significant racial wage gaps and have higher unemployment and lower median household income than whites.

Third, our report shows that Asian Americans often must work harder to achieve the same benefits as whites. They are held to higher standards in loan applications, receive lower returns on their education, and are less likely to be found in management positions than similarly situated whites.

These themes are interwoven throughout the report, which contains four sections focusing on different social domains. Key findings are summarized below.

The Diversity of Asian Americans in Chicago

- Despite making up a minority of Chicago residents (6%), the Asian American population is sizable. Exceeding 160,000, it is enough to make up a small city itself.
- Chicago's Asian American population is the 7th largest among cities in the U.S. As a proportion of all residents, Chicago ranks 33rd.
- Chinese, Indians, and Filipinos are the largest Asian American ethnic groups in Chicago. In total, over 15 Asian American ethnic groups reside in the city.
- As a proportion of their population in 2000, Asian Americans are Chicago's fastest growing racial/ethnic group. Between 2000 and 2010, the population of Asian Americans in Chicago grew over 16%.
- Chinese Chicagoans have had the largest population growth among Asian Americans in Chicago, followed by Indians.
- Over two-thirds of Asian Americans in Chicago are foreign-born compared to 39% of Latinx, 14% of white, and 3% of black Chicagoans.
- Foreign-born Asian Americans in Chicago tend to come from a selective, highly-educated segment of the population within their country of origin.
- Thirty-seven percent of Asian Americans in Chicago speak English less than very well. The same proportion as for Latinx Chicagoans. For black and white Chicagoans, the numbers are 1% and 8% respectively.

Housing

- In general, Asian Americans in Chicago are concentrated in the city's Near Southwest side and the Far-North side. This has changed little since 1990 despite population growth.
- Asian Americans are highly segregated from whites, blacks, and Latinxs in Chicago. Even when residing in the same neighborhood, Asian American, white, black, and Latinx residents tend to live in different areas.
- Asian Americans are less likely than whites to be approved for a home loan as the ratio of loan value to annual income increases.
- Asian Americans are less likely than whites to have a home loan approved if the home they intend to purchase is located in a predominantly white census tract.
- Home loan approval rates are lower among Asian Americans earning between \$100,000 and \$250,000 a year compared to similarly positioned whites.

Education

- Asian American educational outcomes are distributed in a pattern that social scientists refer to as "bimodal." Highly represented at both the high and low ends of the distribution, Asian Americans have among the highest percentages both of college degree holders and those with less than a high school degree.
- Asian American ethnic groups vary tremendously in levels of educational attainment. The majority of Taiwanese, Indian, and Korean Chicago residents have a college degree. In contrast, less than half of Chicago's Chinese, Vietnamese, and Cambodian residents have a college degree.
- Asian Americans receive lower returns on their education. On average, Asian Americans with a college degree earn about \$10 an hour more than Asian Americans with less than a high school education. For whites, this return on education is \$15.

Economics

- Cambodian and Bangladeshi Chicagoans have some of the highest rates of unemployment and lowest median incomes in the city.
- The racial wage gap for Asian Americans is 7% – meaning that Asian Americans are paid 7% less than similarly situated whites. The racial wage gap is twice as large for Asian Americans without a college degree and for Asian American women.
- Asian Americans experience a greater wage penalty for not being proficient in English. Asian Americans in Chicago who speak English less than very well are paid 19% less than whites, 15% less than blacks, and 11% less than Latinxs with the same English language ability.
- The racial wage gap for Asian Americans is largest in the industries of transportation, wholesale trade, and retail, and smallest in the service sector.
- Looking more closely at specific Asian American ethnic groups, the racial wage gap exceeds 25% for Pakistani and Thai Chicagoans.
- Asian Americans are underrepresented in management positions compared to whites, and this is especially true for Asian American women and college degree holders.
- The gender wage gap for managers is higher for Asian Americans than for whites, blacks, and Latinxs. Asian American women earn 19% less than similarly situated Asian American men and 22% less than white men.

The diversity of Asian Americans in Chicago and their distribution at opposing ends of many social indicators challenges dominant narratives of Asian success that gloss over the fact that many Asian groups and individuals are among those who are facing the greatest challenges in the city. The prevalence of “model minority” mythologies also neglects how social biases and structural discrimination create barriers for all Asian groups, meaning that those who succeed need to work harder to achieve the same as white Chicagoans. The data presented in this report provide indisputable evidence that Asian Americans are negatively affected by racial inequities in Chicago. By identifying these problems and challenges, we aim to inform, motivate, and support ongoing efforts towards racial justice that improve the lives of all Chicagoans.