
State of Philanthropy among Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders

*Findings and recommendations to strengthen
visibility and impact*

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Building Democratic
Philanthropy

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders (AAPIs) have been an important part of the United States for over 170 years, and are the fastest-growing racial groups in the country today. AAPIs have made significant gains in political representation, from the halls of Congress to state and local offices. We have also seen important gains in understanding the demographic makeup and public opinion of Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders.

Yet, when it comes to philanthropy, AAPIs continue to be rendered invisible and marginal. This report—based on a summary of prior findings and insights from several data collections, including prior population surveys, content analysis of philanthropy news coverage, and surveys and interviews of leaders and staff in philanthropy—indicates that grantmaking to AAPIs remains a relatively low priority, and that AAPIs continue to face barriers when it comes to serving in leadership roles.

COVID-19 and the movement for Black lives and racial justice has provided challenges as well as opportunities for AAPI philanthropy. The spike in racial scapegoating and hate crimes drew more attention to, and concern about, AAPI communities amidst a growing recognition of the connections between anti-Black racism, white supremacy, xenophobia, and anti-Asian racism. In addition, the economic devastation of COVID-19 has harmed AAPI workers, families, and nonprofits alike. At the same time, philanthropic investments have not kept up with this spike in demand. Our research indicates that this gap is due to the dearth of AAPIs in leadership roles, gaps between funder priorities and their perception of AAPI community interests, and perceptions of AAPI communities as model minorities and as monolithic.

These findings suggest a multi-part call to action. First, inclusion is essential. Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders need to be rendered visible through timely, accurate, and detailed data on grantmaking and staff diversity, equity, and inclusion. The work of inclusion also needs to deepen within AAPI communities, with particular attention to Southeast Asian, Pacific Islander, Muslim American, South Asian, immigrant, refugee, and LGBTQI voices.

It is also essential to dramatically increase funding for AAPI communities. This includes greater philanthropic commitments by large foundations as well as by wealthy AAPIs. The last decade has seen promising investments in outreach on Census and the Affordable Care Act. Expanding investments in economic justice, educational equity, and immigrant rights will be important in the coming decade.

Finally, it is important to build intersectional power—from Census outreach and civic engagement, through power-building, narrative change and systems change. Importantly, this work needs to be engaged in solidarity with Black, Indigenous, and Latinx communities in order to build a country that is truly inclusive and equitable.

BACKGROUND

Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders (AAPIs) number over 23 million in the United States today, comprising over 7 percent of the resident population and among the country’s fastest growing racial groups. Indeed, AAPIs are already over 10 percent of the resident population in five states, 58 counties, and 20 metropolitan areas (AAPI Data, 2020). And they have made significant gains in representation, with 19 currently serving in the U.S. Congress, and with many more in the country’s state and local offices.

Mirroring these increases are significant gains in what we know about Asian American and Pacific Islander communities. The last decade has seen numerous surveys and policy reports that detail the public opinions, demographic realities, socioeconomic circumstances, and health conditions of AAPI communities from across the country. But more research is needed on the state of AAPI philanthropy. This need feels particularly urgent in 2020 given the health and economic devastation of COVID-19 as well as the scourges of anti-Black racism and nativism.

This report seeks to fill some of these gaps, to give an updated sense of the current state of AAPI philanthropy in advance of more research in the coming years from AAPIP and others. It summarizes findings from prior studies and shares insights from several original data collections, including two original surveys and follow-up interviews with leaders and staff in philanthropy, surveys of charitable giving among adult residents, and keyword content analysis of coverage in the *Chronicle of Philanthropy*.

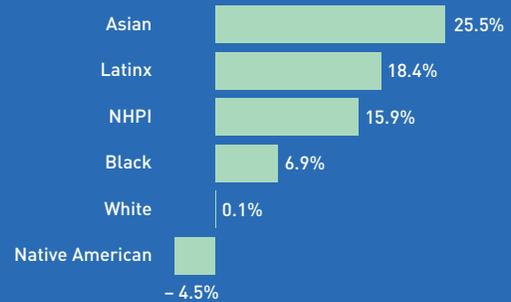
The findings here should be considered as suggestive, providing an initial understanding of key challenges and opportunities facing Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders in philanthropy. We expect further studies in the coming years to add greater detail and resolution to these findings and recommendations, and to continue charting a path towards strengthening AAPI philanthropy in service of our diverse communities.

GIVING TO ASIAN AMERICANS AND PACIFIC ISLANDERS

To what extent are mainstream philanthropic institutions serving the needs of Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders? There are different ways to answer this question. One long-standing method has been to examine the proportion of foundation giving that is specifically earmarked for AAPI communities. Indeed, the first report by Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders in Philanthropy (AAPIP) in 1992, *Invisible and In Need*, examined the proportion of foundation dollars to AAPI organizations from 1983 to 1990. The report found that, of the \$19 billion awarded by foundations during that eight-year period, only \$35 million, or 0.18 percent, was awarded to AAPI organizations.

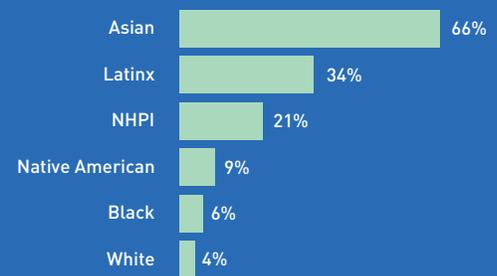
DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE

POPULATION GROWTH, 2010 TO 2018



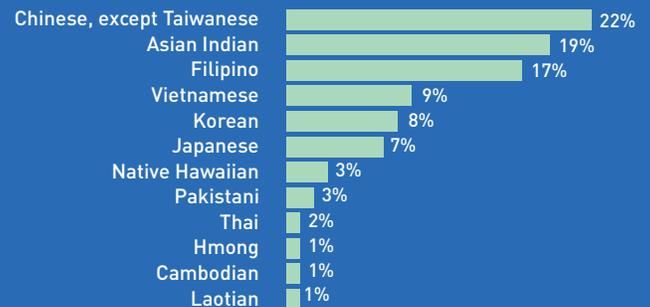
Source: AAPI Data analysis of Census and ACS Estimates

PROPORTION FOREIGN BORN



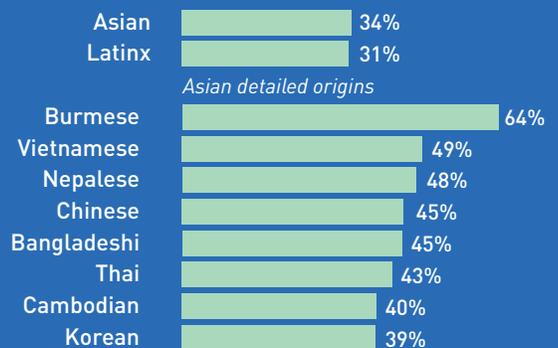
Source: 2018 American Community Survey

AAPI DETAILED ORIGINS (TOP 12)



Source: 2018 American Community Survey

LIMITED ENGLISH PROFICIENCY



Source: 2018 American Community Survey

More recent analyses of foundation giving to communities of color by the Philanthropic Initiative for Racial Equity (PRE, 2018) has found that giving to AAPIs and other communities of color remains low. PRE's infographic "What Does Philanthropy Need to Know to Prioritize Racial Justice?" found that, between 2005 and 2014, the proportion of foundation dollars focused on communities of color never exceeded 8.5 percent. And of this amount, the proportion specifically targeting Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders was minuscule. In 2014, for instance, only 0.26 percent of all foundation dollars specifically targeted AAPIs. This compared to 0.30 percent for Native Americans, and 1.06 percent and 1.25 percent for Latinx and Black communities, respectively.

More focused research on foundation funding for LGBTQ AAPI communities has been produced over the years by AAPIP and Funders for LGBTQ Issues, including a 2015 infographic, "Philanthropy OUTlook: LGBTQ Asian American and Pacific Islander Communities," which explored foundation funding for LGBTQ AAPI communities between 2004 and 2013 (Hom and Kan, 2015). It found that funding for LGBTQ AAPI communities hovered around \$1 million annually, never exceeding \$2 million in a calendar year and peaking at \$1.8 million in 2011. The analysis also noted that only five foundations were awarding \$100,000 or more to LGBTQ AAPI communities between 2012 and 2013.

An updated 2020 collaboration between AAPIP and Funders for LGBTQ Issues found that not much has changed in the intervening years. Over the last five years, while LGBTQ funding overall and funding for LGBTQ communities of color has increased, foundation funding for LGBTQ AAPI communities has stagnated and continues to hover around \$1 million. Between 2014 and 2018, foundation funding for LGBTQ AAPI communities never surpassed \$1.4 million dollars in a given year (Kan, 2020).

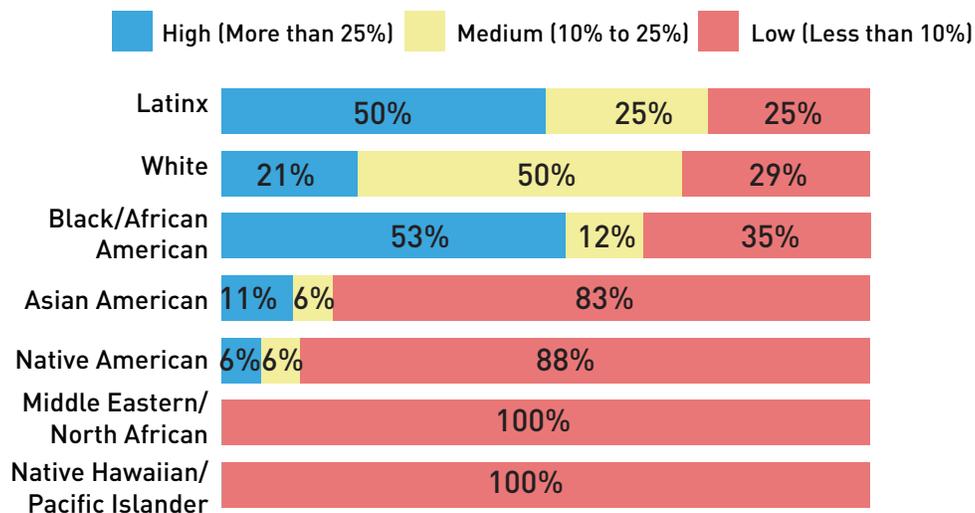
These findings are revealing in several respects, showing that giving to AAPI communities remains stuck at well below 1 percent, even though the AAPI resident population has increased from about 3 percent in 1990 to over 6 percent today. These disparities are also present in other communities of color.

However, quantitative analyses of grant data do little to reveal *why* giving to AAPIs might be disproportionately low. Is it a matter of program officers being unaware of the needs of particular AAPI communities? Or does the problem potentially lie elsewhere, with lack of awareness or lack of prioritization among the executive leadership or board leadership of mainstream foundations?

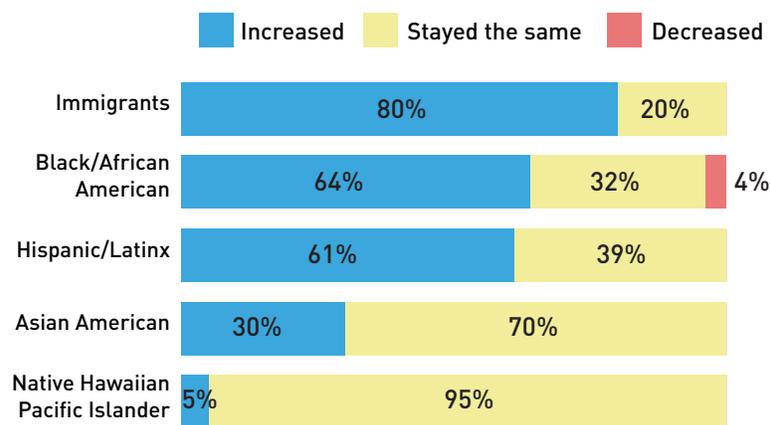
One way to dig deeper is to gauge perceptions about giving to AAPIs by professionals in philanthropy. AAPI Data, in partnership with AAPIP, conducted a survey of staff, executive leadership, and board leadership who are part of AAPIP's member list. The first wave was mailed in May 2020, and the second in August 2020. Out of 892 who were emailed the survey, 150 responded to the first wave and 65 responded to the second wave, for response rates of 17 percent and 7 percent, respectively. AAPI Data followed up to the May wave with interviews with 16 leaders, staff, and trustees in philanthropy, representing mainstream private foundations, smaller family foundations, AAPI-focused public foundations, and people in philanthropy-serving organizations.

Given the relatively low response rate of the August wave, the results should be interpreted with caution. At the same time, the open-ended responses of 65 professionals in philanthropy (combined with the 150 open-ended responses from the May wave) give us a broader spectrum of responses than a smaller group of in-depth interviews might reveal. Overall, 82 percent of survey respondents identified as Asian or Asian American, 2 percent as Pacific Islander, 13 percent

FIGURE 1: COMMUNITY PRIORITIES FOR GRANTMAKING FOUNDATIONS



Source: AAPI Data & AAPIP Philanthropy Survey, 2020

FIGURE 2: REPORTED CHANGE IN GRANTMAKING TO VARIOUS COMMUNITIES IN LAST 5 YEARS

Source: AAPI Data & AAPI Philanthropy Survey, 2020

as White, 6 percent as Black, and 3 percent as Hispanic/Latinx. More details about our survey respondents can be found in the Appendix.

In August 2020, we asked respondents, to indicate the extent to which various communities “are a priority or share of your grantmaking,” with options ranging from high (more than 25% of grantmaking) to medium (10% to 25%) to low (less than 10%, see Figure 1). Among our survey respondents, Native Hawaiians and Pacific Islanders (NHPI) and Middle Eastern and North African (MENA) populations ranked lowest, followed by Native Americans and Asian Americans. By contrast, Latinx, White and Black communities were among those most likely to receive more than 10% allocation of grantmaking dollars.

We also asked respondents if there had been any changes in their grantmaking (if at all) over the past five years for immigrants and select communities of color (Figure 2). Perhaps reflective of the various policy threats and challenges to immigrant rights and immigrant service provision, the vast majority indicated that grantmaking to immigrant communities had increased, with 50 percent indicating a significant increase and an additional 30 percent indicating a moderate increase. A majority of respondents also indicated increases in funding to Black and Latinx communities, while only 30 percent and 5 percent said the same about Asian American and NHPI communities, respectively.

What might account for the lower priority of grantmaking towards Asian American and NHPI communities? Part of the explanation is likely due to population size; AAPI share of the U.S. population (6.1 percent) is about half as large as the Black population share (13.4 percent) and about one third the size of the Latinx population (18.5 percent).

Another potential factor could be the perceived disconnect between funder priorities and what they perceive to be priorities among AAPI communities. We asked respondents about priority issues for their foundation, as well

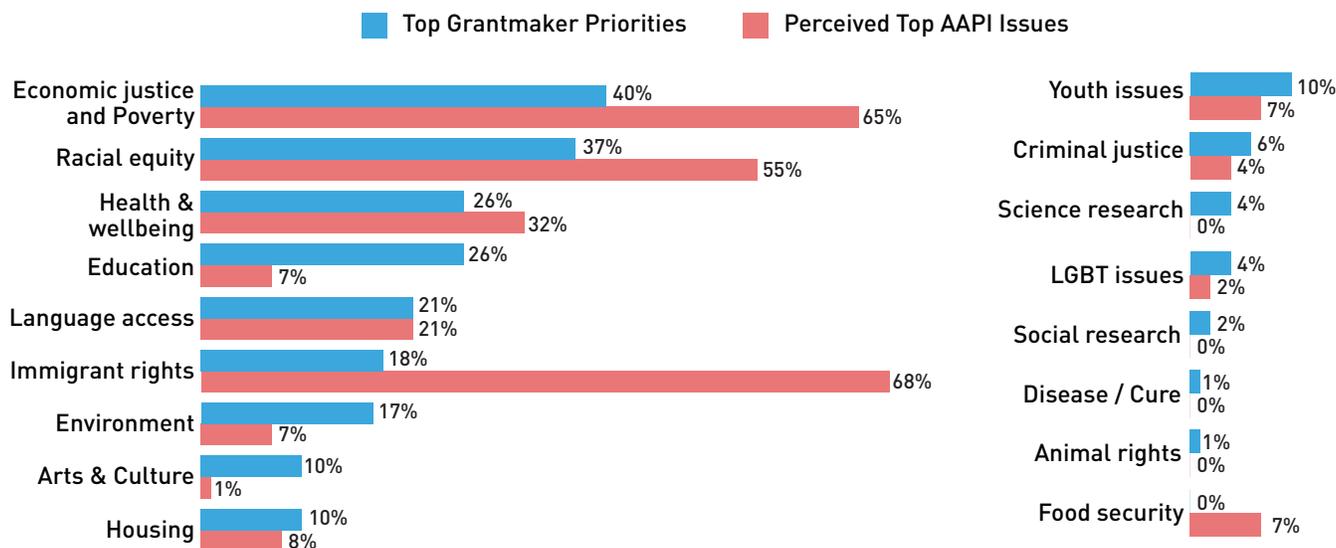
as what they perceived to be the top issues facing AAPI communities. As we can see in Figure 3 (page 8), economic justice and racial equity scored high on both measures: top grantmaking priorities were generally aligned with what they perceived to be AAPI community priorities. However, a much smaller group of funders ranked immigrant rights as a high priority, but they perceived the issue to be a high priority for AAPIs.

Another significant mismatch was on the environment: funders were more likely to list the issue as an important priority for them, when compared to how they perceived the issue as a priority for AAPI communities. As findings from the National Asian American Survey and AAPI Data have consistently shown, AAPIs tend to score much higher than the U.S. average on support for environmental protection. Funder perception does not seem to match this public opinion reality, however, pointing to ways for funder education and AAPI community mobilization on environmental issues to make a significant difference.

Our open-ended survey responses revealed a few other possible reasons for the comparatively low priority given to AAPI communities. Many noted the persistence of the model minority myth that precluded many funders from accurately assessing the needs and problems facing AAPI communities. Following are some of the many quotes that reference the model minority myth as a barrier to greater investment.

“AAPIs are often the overlooked and almost invisible population, and model minority myth is still strong and pervasive, both within and outside of philanthropy.” - Senior program officer, local foundation

“Asian Americans are considered model minorities until we are not considered useful, I don’t feel that the current field of philanthropy is structured in a way to meaningfully empower Asian-Americans.” - Non-program staff, local foundation

FIGURE 3: GRANTMAKER PRIORITIES VS. PERCEPTION OF AAPI PRIORITIES

Source: AAPI Data & AAPI Philanthropy Survey, 2020

Related to the model minority myth was the perceived tendency in philanthropy to view the community as monolithic. This has meant not only overlooking AAPIs in general, but also failing to invest in particular, highly impacted communities such as Pacific Islanders, Southeast Asians, and other refugee populations.

“Are there ways to facilitate discussion so that certain voices/identities are not spoken over? More visibility for the needs of Southeast Asians, particularly refugees and recent immigrants, and Pacific Islanders. The wider public still has a “model minority” framework for the entire AAPI community, and it does a gross disservice to these specific communities.” - Staff, philanthropy-serving organization

“... people need to understand that AAPIs are not a monolith—there is a lot of diversity and socioeconomic disparities within the AAPI community. When people think “Asian,” they think “East Asian” — they don’t think about all the brown Asians who are chronically and systemically under-resourced and under-researched.” - Senior staff, philanthropy-serving organization

Some respondents also noted that AAPIs in philanthropy could do more to help educate their colleagues and institutions about the need to invest in AAPI communities.

“Often Asian people in philanthropy or these organizations also fall into the trap of not lifting our communities... that continues to just perpetuate the misleading idea that Asian Americans don’t experience racism and poverty.” - Non-program staff, multi-state foundation

However, there was also a recognition that many AAPIs in philanthropy were not in decision-making roles on

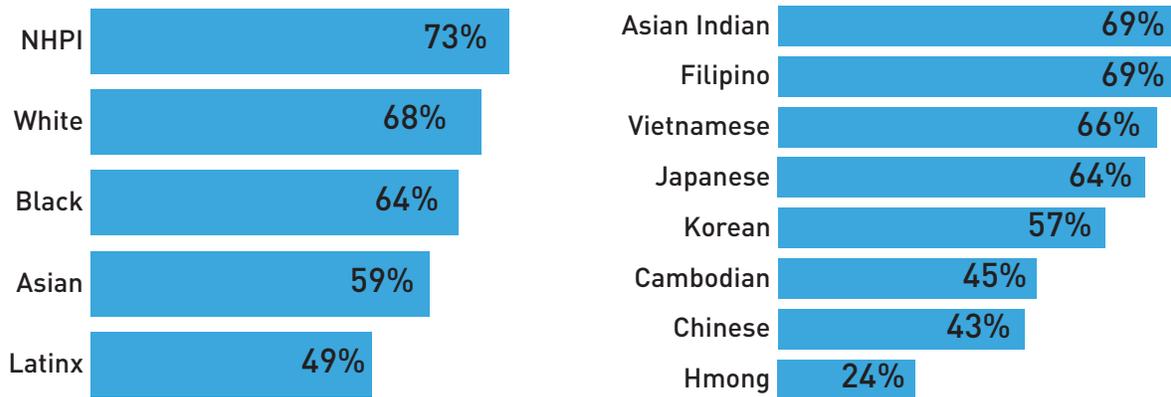
grants, either because they were in non-program related departments within the foundation, or because they did not have adequate representation in executive leadership or board leadership to make good on their commitments to AAPI communities. As the same survey respondent put it bluntly:

“The only thing that will move us to action (rather than just talking about it) is if there’s turnover of senior white staff. It takes too long to cater to their white fragility.” - Non-program staff, multi-state foundation

GIVING BY ASIAN AMERICANS AND PACIFIC ISLANDERS

In addition to increasing grantmaking to AAPI communities by large foundations, our survey responses and interviews also emphasized the importance of growing philanthropy from within the community. We interviewed CEOs of AAPI-serving community foundations and they reported a steady increase of family foundations as well as AAPIs opening donor-advised funds with a focus on AAPI communities. Still, there is plenty of room to grow AAPI charitable giving given the sizable and growing population of wealthy Asian Americans, and particularly those first-generation immigrants who are of retirement age (Weller and Thompson, 2016). As one survey respondent noted:

“How do we build solidarity between higher net worth Asian Americans and lower-income Asian Americans? How do we get them to see the issues that are happening in the Asian American community beyond hate crimes or microaggressions? How do we get them to look at issues of labor, immigration, etc.?” - Non-program staff, local foundation

FIGURE 4: CHARITABLE GIVING BY RACE/ETHNICITY, 2016

Source: National Asian American Survey, 2016

“There’s a concentration of wealth in the AAPI communities... like in the tech industry, there’s I see a strong population of AAPI executives that could be tapped into more.” — Program officer, national foundation

In addition to the perceptions and judgments of AAPIs in philanthropy, survey data also indicates significant room for improvement when it comes to increasing charitable contributions among Asian Americans. For instance, the 2016 National Asian American Survey found that giving to a religious or charitable cause was lower among Asian Americans than among non-Hispanic Whites and Black people. By contrast, charitable giving among Native Hawaiians and Pacific Islanders was among the highest. Part of this disparity is likely due to the fact that Asian Americans have lower rates of religious attendance than other racial groups, and are less likely to have the same kind of congregation model of volunteerism and charitable giving found among many Protestant groups (Ecklund and Park, 2007). Asian Americans might also be less likely to be recruited into philanthropy than high net-worth individuals in other groups. Regardless of the reason, there is a pressing need and opportunity to deepen and broaden philanthropic activity within AAPI communities.

EXPERIENCES OF AAPIS IN PHILANTHROPY

In our survey, we asked respondents “How promising are your career prospects within your organization?” Overall, about one quarter of our AAPI respondents indicated that they considered their career prospects within the organization to be extremely promising (9%) or very promising (18%), while 40 percent consider it moderately promising (Figure 5, page 10). Important differences emerge, however, when examining the geographic scope of the foundation. AAPIs working in local and regional foundations were much less likely to report that their career prospects within the organization were highly promising, when com-

pared to those working in state foundations and national foundations.

Much of these gaps are attributable to the size of the foundation; indeed, when we controlled for the foundation’s reported annual payout, we found no statistically significant relationship between the foundation’s geographic scope and the career prospects of AAPIs in the foundation. At the same time, the diversity of the foundation within each of these geographic scopes also matters. AAPIs working in local and regional foundations that are diverse perceive better career prospects than those working in less diverse foundations. Importantly, the diversity of the foundation is a statistically significant predictor of AAPI career prospects even after controlling for geographic scope and annual foundation giving.

Survey respondents provided several suggestions in the open-ended remarks on how to improve diversity, equity, and inclusion with respect to AAPIs. These included paying more attention to growing the pipeline, providing greater mentoring opportunities that connect junior staff and senior staff within professional associations like AAPIP, and to pay particular attention to recruiting and supporting Southeast Asians and Pacific Islanders in philanthropy.

“[We need to] have AAPI leaders be more deliberate about raising their profiles within philanthropy and serving as visible role models for communities and pipelines.” — Philanthropic advisor, international scope

“East Asian American folks in philanthropy have made significant progress in our careers in some areas, and less so in other areas—the “bamboo ceiling” is still an issue. The Pacific Islander members of our community however, as well as Southeast Asian Americans, still lag behind in positional power in this field. I think there should be Pacific-Islander and Southeast Asian-American specific programs to assist the needs of folks from these particular AAPI communities.” — Staff, philanthropy-serving organization

HISTORY OF AAPI COMMUNITIES

Many Chinese immigrants first arrived in the United States in the mid-nineteenth century as part of the Gold Rush. After the Gold Rush, Chinese immigrants were often recruited to build the transcontinental railroad, in addition to other infrastructure projects in much of the American West. Overlapping with Chinese immigration and following the expansion of U.S. presence in the Pacific, thousands of Japanese and Korean migrants came to the United States in search of employment. Many Japanese migrants worked as contract laborers on sugar plantations in Hawaii, and later waves arrived to the West Coast and found employment in commercial agriculture. Korean immigrants also began to arrive in significant numbers in the early 1900s, with many settling in Southern California.

The construction of rail lines throughout British India in the early 1900s made steamboat travel more accessible, thus facilitating some early migration from South Asia to the United States. Many Indian immigrants, the vast majority of whom were Sikh, settled on the West Coast and worked in agriculture. This period also saw the migration of Filipino workers, many of whom were recruited to work in agriculture in Hawaii and California after the United States imposed colonial rule over the Philippines.

Despite their significant contributions to American society, Asian immigrants often encountered racial hostility. Soon after the Gold Rush, California passed laws limiting the legal rights of Chinese in the state, including having to pay a foreign miner's tax and limiting the right of Chinese to serve as witnesses in court trials. Anti-Chinese sentiment grew even stronger after construction of the transcontinental railroad, as California passed a major constitutional revision in 1879 barring Chinese immigrants from all public employment. Soon, the United States began passing anti-Asian exclusion laws, starting with the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882 and subsequent expansions that created an Asiatic Barred Zone by 1917, and a ban on Japanese immigration in 1924. In addition to exclusionary laws on immigration, Asian immigrants were barred from naturalization and many states in the American West passed so-called "alien land laws" that made non-citizens ineligible from owning property.

The Philippines remained a U.S. colony in the 1920s, and Filipinos were the only Asians allowed into the United States. The U.S. moved to exclude Filipinos as well after passing a law in 1934 establishing a process for independence to the Philippines, and reclassifying Filipinos as immigrants with a maximum quota of 50 allowed into the United States every year. It was not until World War II that the United States would reopen immigration from Asia, moving from outright bans to minuscule quotas before finally lifting all quotas in 1965. Long after U.S. colonization of the Philippines ended, the legacy of American colonization and the continued presence of U.S. military bases has

influenced continued Filipino immigration to the U.S. To fill a shortage of labor, the American healthcare industry has been heavily recruiting nurses and other medical practitioners from the Philippines since the 1960s.

It was only after China became America's ally in World War II that Congress finally repealed the Chinese Exclusion Act in 1943 and allowed Chinese immigrants to naturalize. Similar laws allowing for naturalization of Indian and Filipino immigrants passed in 1946, and the ban on all Asian naturalization was lifted by the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1952. Still, annual migration from Asia was still limited to 100 immigrants per country.

In 1965, Congress lifted these restrictions on Asian migration, and immigration from Asia increased, which eventually brought millions of Asian immigrants to the United States. Many of these early-wave immigrants were skilled professionals and families from China, Korea, the Philippines, India, and Pakistan. The 1990 Immigration and Nationality Act further emphasized and prioritized the immigration of skilled professionals from Asia. The arrival of tech workers ballooned during the late 1990s during the "dot-com era" and in advance of the Y2K bug, which required companies to upgrade their computing and database systems. Most of these tech workers came from China and India, and migration from these two countries continued to remain strong after 2000. Indeed, starting in 2013, there were more immigrants coming from China and India than from Mexico. More generally, there has been more immigration to the United States from Asia than from Latin America since 2008.

Of course, not all of these post-1965 immigrants have been from the professional class, and some professionals had a difficult time finding work in the United States. For example, many Chinese women who were not fluent in English immigrated to the United States and worked in the garment industry.

Meanwhile, as American involvement in Southeast Asia came to a close in 1975, thousands of refugees fled Southeast Asia. Prior to 1975, around 130,000 refugees were admitted into the United States. The passage of the 1975 Indochina Migration and Refugee Assistance Act allowed for further admission of Vietnamese, Lao, Khmer, Hmong, and other Southeast Asian refugees and allocated assistance for them. From 1975 to 1980, almost 433,000 refugees from Vietnam, Cambodia, and Laos arrived and resettled in the United States, followed by an increase in refugees from Burma in the 1980s and early 1990s. Recent years have seen a significant slowdown in migration from Southeast Asia, with most immigrants arriving through family sponsorships.

Although some Pacific Islanders have immigrated to the U.S., many became a part of the United States through annexation during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The Hawaiian islands were an independent country until 1893, when the U.S. government backed a coup d'état that overthrew Queen Lili'uokalani. Hawaii was annexed in 1898 and later became the 50th U.S. state in 1959. Due to immigration onto the islands and emigration from the islands, Native Hawaiians now constitute a minority in Hawaii. Following World War II, the U.S. was appointed by the United Nations to oversee a trusteeship of a number of island nations. Three of these former Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands states —the Federated States of Micronesia, the Republic of Marshall Islands, and the Republic of Palau — are now in “free association” with the U.S. The Northern Mariana Islands, also a former Trust Territory, are governed today by the U.S. government as an unincorporated territory, along with the other Pacific territory of American Samoa.

It is important to note that, although most Pacific Islanders are U.S. citizens, those living in unincorporated territories are not afforded the same rights or representation as those living in either the state of Hawaii or the mainland states. For example, voters registered in Guam can only vote in local elections and cannot cast a ballot for a presidential candidate. In addition to limited rights and representation, unincorporated territories have histories of lengthy military occupation and very limited self-government.

Pacific Islanders are part of a long tradition of continued movement, whether between islands or to larger continents. Thus, Pacific Islanders have not only rich histories within their communities, but they have also helped shape much of the American West Coast through trade, exploration, and participation in early industries such as whaling.

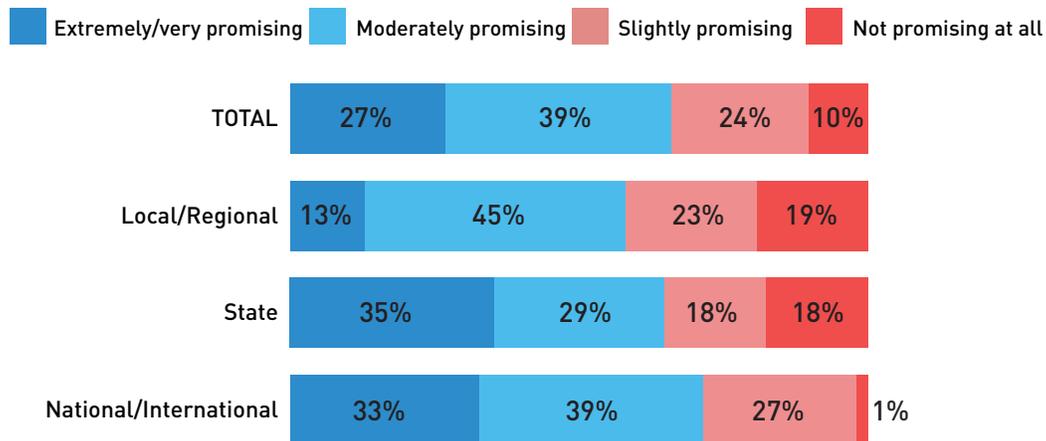
The geographic locations and lived experiences of Pacific Islanders are diverse as their populations. Pacific Islanders are most populous in California, where nearly 300,000 reside. There are about 70,000 Pacific Islanders living in Washington, and Texas is home to about 48,000 Pacific Islanders. Because of U.S. occupation and heavy militarization of the islands, many Pacific Islanders were and continue to be incorporated into the United States through military enlistment or other employment, and thousands of Pacific Islanders are stationed at U.S. military bases across the world.

HISTORY OF AAPIP

Asian Americans/Pacific Islanders in Philanthropy (AAPIP) was founded in 1990 as a direct response to address the lack of strategic investments in Asian American and Pacific Islander (AAPI) communities. Its mission is to expand and mobilize resources for AAPI communities in pursuit of a more just and equitable society. Since 1990, AAPIP's membership has grown from a handful of people trying to fill a table at a Council on Foundations conference to a large anchor affinity network whose members are growing in ranks within philanthropy. As a national organization with eleven chapters around the country, our dynamic membership includes more than 1,000 members representing more than 70 foundations and corporate grantmaking institutions as well as individuals from philanthropic support organizations, giving circles and many AAPI-serving nonprofit organizations throughout the United States.

Over the course of 30 years, AAPIP has been building democratic philanthropy through initiatives such as its Giving Circle Campaign with more than 50 grassroots giving circles across the country; its Civic Engagement Fund which was the first funder collaborative in the nation supporting Arab, Middle Eastern, Muslim and South Asian community-based organizations; and the National Gender & Equity Campaign which worked to increase the capacity of community organizations to take on a social justice agenda. A founding member of CHANGE Philanthropy, AAPIP is actively committed to advancing racial equity in philanthropy across the sector by working with organizational and collaborating partners focused on racial and gender equity.

As AAPIP celebrates its 30th anniversary, the work ahead goes beyond strategic investments for the AAPI community to addressing the struggles and opportunities for an inclusive democracy, and the place of AAPIs in the philanthropic and broader landscape, in partnership with other historically marginalized communities. AAPIP believes that inclusion is not (just) about fighting for the piece of the “pie” for AAPIs; it is a missing link that is needed for achieving racial equity overall. With more AAPIs, people of color, and LGBTQI people guiding the sector, AAPIP seeks to seize this new moment of opportunity and set course toward a nation that values and supports the full potential of humanity and the civic participation of all.

FIGURE 5: CAREER PROSPECTS WITHIN ORGANIZATION , BY TYPE OF FOUNDATION

Source: AAPI Data & AAPIP Philanthropy Survey, 2020

COVERAGE OF AAPIS IN PHILANTHROPY

To what extent are Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders visible in news coverage of philanthropy? One way to answer this question is to examine the frequency of mentions of AAPI communities in the Chronicle of Philanthropy, a monthly magazine founded in 1988. Our analysis consisted of keyword searches for terms such as “Asian,” “Asian American,” and “Pacific Islander,” and the removal of duplicate stories that mention both Asians and Pacific Islanders. In a similar manner, we searched for articles mentioning Hispanic, Latino, and/or Latinx communities and those mentioning Black and African American communities. In order to get an estimate of the share of all articles, we searched for those that mention philanthropy, charitable, and giving, and remove duplicate stories that mention two or more of those terms (it is not possible to get a count of all articles on the Chronicle’s website.)

Our analysis reveals that about 4 percent of all stories on philanthropy in the Chronicle mentioned Asian Americans or Pacific Islanders, when compared to 5 percent for Latinx communities and 13% for Black communities. Notably, the Chronicle’s coverage of communities of color have increased in recent years and, for AAPIs, seems to be roughly in proportion to their population share in the most recent year of coverage.

CONTEXT OF COVID-19

Our surveys and interviews were compiled in the midst of a global pandemic which has touched off a massive economic crisis alongside a spike in hate crimes against Asian Americans and a reckoning of systemic anti-Black racism. When asked about grantmaking in the midst of COVID-19, many respondents in the May 2020 survey expressed the need to pay more serious attention to hate crimes and violence against AAPIs. Some raised concerns about AAPI invisibility in the context of COVID, while others connected

anti-Asian racism and anti-Black racism even before the murder of George Floyd.

“COVID has made me realize more starkly how invisible we [Asian Americans] are to the world and our allies have been largely silent in the face of the recent hate crimes. COVID funds focused on racial equity are primarily focused on Black and brown communities.”
- Non-program staff, national foundation

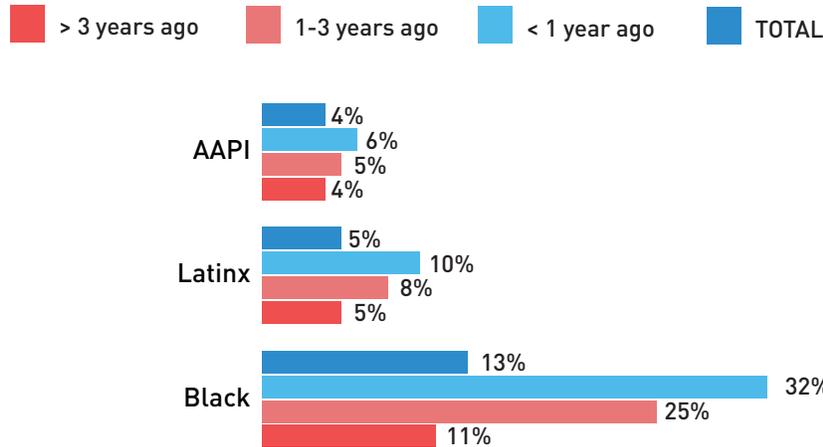
“I think there is an opportunity in this moment, on this agenda, to connect AAPI social justice leaders with AAPIs in arts and culture, entertainment, journalism, and academia. The opportunity comes from the shared outrage about anti-Asian racism that has been surging. And the need, in doing this, to have a clear understanding of anti-Black and other forms of racism and prejudice sparked by COVID.” - CEO, national foundation

Several responses put COVID-19 within the larger context of structural racism, xenophobia, and linked fates with other communities of color. The following is a lengthy response from a grantmaker that touched on these various points.

“Frankly, as an older first generation Asian immigrant, I have experienced/witnessed the waxing and waning of overt racism and discrimination, depending on economic and international crisis and challenges of the moment... Until more within the AAPI communities recognize themselves as part of a historical struggle to address the structural racism baked into our society, our reactions will be episodic and less effective in creating the longer term change needed to create a more just society for all citizens, regardless of race and immigration status.” - CEO, local foundation

In addition, respondents noted the struggles of AAPI non-profits, and the need to consider increasing the payout from foundation endowments.

FIGURE 6: COVERAGE IN THE CHRONICLE OF PHILANTHROPY



Source: AAPI Data & AAPI Philanthropy Survey, 2020

“Our foundation has [one of the] largest endowments in the state and with AAPI communities in dire pain during this crisis, we will not dip into the endowment. I feel ashamed when I’m asked by my AAPI community why we are hoarding our money.” - Non-program staff, community foundation

ANTI-BLACK RACISM AND RACIAL JUSTICE

Expressions of solidarity with efforts to fight anti-Black racism were stronger and more frequent among respondents in our August survey.

“The close timing of Covid-19 and the deaths of George Floyd and others has brought systemic racism to the forefront -- this has provided an opportunity to also address priorities in not only Black communities but also those of the AAPI, Latinx and Indigenous communities.” - Staff, corporate giving

“We need more coordination around shared fate. BLM can/should help combat anti-AAPI racism and discrimination, but AAPI philanthropy needs to be stronger in showing solidarity with Black-led movement work. There is much work for the AAPI community to do here, and to combat the anti-Black racism that exists in our community.” - Senior program officer, national foundation

“There was a brief window where anti-Asian violence and scapegoating rose and philanthropy paid attention, but the focus has shifted to solely Black and brown populations. I think that is OK. I do think that until there is more solidarity and mutual understanding of need/barriers among people of color and an intersectional lens, AAPIs will not get the resources and attention they need using a TRUE equity lens.” - Executive, regional foundation

ORGANIZING AGENDA TO STRENGTHEN AAPI PHILANTHROPY

Our survey data and interviews with leadership and staff in AAPI philanthropy also suggest several elements of an organizing agenda to strengthen AAPI philanthropy. These range from internal work that foundations need to accomplish, from improving HR and data collection practices, to changes in grantmaking and coalition building.

INTERNAL WORK WITHIN FOUNDATIONS

1. Build a staff roster that is reflective of priority communities.

General research in philanthropy has shown that having staff that understand the needs of the communities can help ensure that grantmaking is equitable, efficient, and effective. This means that when it comes to personnel, foundations should be open to hiring those without traditional education or work experiences.

“There’s such an emphasis on your education, on your direct work experience, when I think being able to accept others that have transferable skills and experiences into these roles of philanthropy... The Master’s or PhD’s aren’t necessary. The work experience and life experience are good qualifications, too.” — Program officer, national foundation

Respondents also noted the pressing need to increase the ranks of Southeast Asians and Pacific Islanders in philanthropy.

“East Asian American folks in philanthropy have made significant progress in our careers in some areas, and less so in other areas--the “bamboo ceiling” is still an issue. The Pacific Islander members of our community however, as well as Southeast Asian Americans, still lag behind in positional power in this field. I think there should be Pacific-Islander and Southeast Asian-Ameri-

can specific programs to assist the needs from folks these particular AAPI communities.” — Staff, philanthropy-serving organization

The work of inclusion is also critically important in places where AAPI populations are growing the fastest, including the U.S. South and in many Midwestern states. For example, a senior staff member in a philanthropy-serving organization expressed dismay with the lack of any AAPI representation in large foundations in the American South.

Even in areas with larger AAPI populations, our respondents noted the continued lack of diversity and inclusion in mainstream philanthropy. As a CEO from the Bay Area noted in an interview, “There’s still a lot more that can be done because there are the rooms I’m in where it feels still feels very homogeneous, like predominantly Caucasian and older.”

2. Establish a regular auditing process, preferably through an independent entity, to identify gaps in diversity, equity, and inclusion.

Our interviews with staff and trustees in large foundations noted progress in the prioritization and collection of data to improve diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI). Some advocated going further, potentially engaging an independent entity to monitor progress on DEI, gather regular feedback from staff, and ensure timely implementation. Future data collections by CHANGE philanthropy and others may help accelerate progress on this work.

3. Open opportunities in leadership and decision-making roles.

While there are some AAPIs and other people of color in associate-level positions, recruiting and hiring diversely for all roles, especially programmatic roles, can help funders ensure that grants are being awarded in a more equitable way.

“We need to get serious about addressing the issue of AAPI under-representation at the highest echelon of power. For example, let’s set a target to have an exponential increase of 50% in the next 5 years of Asian Women as foundation CEOs and Board chairs. Then ask, what will it take to achieve this? What do we know now from the many decades of efforts in building the leadership pipeline?” - Executive in non-program role, state foundation

The work of diversification also needs to include having more AAPIs and other people of color on foundation boards, including family foundations.

“Since it is a family foundation and the family members are all currently White, it is good that they created “community trustee” slots and tend to bring in diversity through the community slots... The family

foundation that I am a Trustee with has done a great job of organizing community experience days/site visits with AAPI communities and community-based organizations as well as recognizing nonprofit AAPI leaders and organizations through grant support.” — Trustee, local foundation

4. Disaggregate staffing and sourcing data.

“From a particular project I worked on, involving collecting demographic data, I did research into how other organizations word their questions about race. It surprised me that, in so many instances, all AAPI communities are lumped into one check-box despite massive cultural, geographic, and experiential differences. It told me the sector is not doing a good enough job individualizing the members of these communities and we’re allowing ourselves to make a lot of generalizations based on those faulty data collection practices.” — Nonprofit advisor, national scope

STRENGTHENING GRANTMAKING

1. Provide multi-year funding and general operating support to drive innovation as well as growth.

Respondents to our surveys and interviews indicated that committing to multi-year funding is essential to helping startup as well as established organizations to grow and to adapt flexibly to crises as well as new opportunities. Getting nonprofits out of a starvation mindset can also promote greater risk-taking and innovation. Finally, several respondents noted that COVID-19 enabled their foundations to shift quickly towards general operating support, with some noting that this practice should become the norm.

“[I am a] steadfast proponent of multi-year, unrestricted, general operating support; I would advocate that all private funders move toward this practice across all of their grantmaking.” — Senior program manager, international foundation

2. Be explicit about social justice.

Being clear and public about commitments to social justice allows foundations to more easily align strategies and investments to their core values and approaches. This kind of explicitness also provides community members and staff with the opportunity to hold funders accountable. A commitment to social justice also entails centering the expertise of impacted communities.

A critical part of [equitable grantmaking] is to have the voices of those impacted at the table in a way that they have true influence and not just tokenism, and maybe even sharing power in decision-making.” — CEO, philanthropy-serving organization

3. Prioritize language access and underserved AAPI populations.

Allow submissions in non-traditional mediums, such as video clips, especially for underserved populations. Ensure program officers are trained to assess grant proposals that are submitted in such non-traditional mediums, whether by providing program officers training or intentionally hiring program officers who are already trained to do so.

“We know that there are a lot of organizations, refugee organizations like in the community, who maybe can’t hire a grant writer and maybe are not as eloquent in the way how program operators want to read this information. We also need to train our program officers to be able to accept proposals in different ways and learn what they’re trying to convey.” — Philanthropic advisor, state foundation

4. Recognize and support smaller nonprofits in addition to larger, more established organizations.

There is a significant generational shift underway in many AAPI-serving nonprofits, where founders and other long-time CEOs are heading towards retirement. Respondents noted the need to pay more attention to succession planning in long-established organizations.

“In our Pacific Islander communities, leaders noted that several nonprofits were strong at some point in time. But then the elders leading that work are retiring and there is no one who is ready to take up their place.” — Staff in evaluation, state foundation

In addition to supporting succession planning and the longevity of nonprofit capacity, other respondents noted the need to maintain a healthy ecosystem that also includes support for smaller nonprofits and startups.

“[We shouldn’t just] give to the largest AAPI organization but to many other smaller ones who are starting up and even more deserving of the grant funds.” — Trustee, local foundation

5. Increase funding for experimental work.

Increasing nonprofit impact and philanthropic impact entails taking well-calculated risks. Funding organizations to provide them with room to experiment is important, but funding nonprofits and projects that are explicitly dedicated to innovative and intersectional work is also key to encouraging this work, especially since more experimental work is often less likely to receive funding from more common sources.

“I think the narrative and culture transformation space is really important, and that there’s a lot of exciting, important work being done on AAPI narratives... There’s a really compelling younger generation of creative people from AAPI backgrounds—writers,

poets, performers, playwrights, comedians—there’s so much talent.” — CEO, national foundation

6. Develop and support AAPI-specific pooled funds.

Pooled funds emerged in some of our interviews as a viable strategy to quickly increase grantmaking in an issue area.

“When you don’t have knowledge, but you want your money to go to people who are working with the most vulnerable communities, on the most urgent issues, pooled funds... help donors to fulfill that desire or wish even when they don’t have the capacity or time to do it themselves. I also really value pooled funds because they create a community among the donors, so you can share information and learn from other people who share your desire to do this kind of grantmaking.” — CEO, national foundation

At the same time, others expressed caution about pooled funds and noted that they would need to be structured in the right manner, including creating ones specifically for AAPI communities and ensuring long-term commitments among participating grantmakers.

“There’s a very real concern about AAPI communities being “locked out” of pooled funds, since they typically go to larger nonprofits that are more well known and are better connected to mainstream funders... [AAPIs] may fall through the cracks unless the pooled funds are specifically designated for AAPI communities and the nonprofits that serve them” — Program manager, community foundation

“My biggest concern with pooled funds is that they are often unstable and short-term because the contributing foundations have shifting priorities. Much of what the pandemic has exposed or highlighted are systemic and structural problems, which require a more long-term approach.” — Staff, philanthropy-serving organization

7. Fund coalitional and intersectional work.

While networking among AAPIs in philanthropy is important, centering racial justice requires building relationships with other people of color working in philanthropy and in the nonprofit sector.

“Highlight and elevate AAPI groups that demonstrate a strong intersectional lens and can make the case about how an anti-racist analysis centered on anti-Black racism offers a path forward for all oppressed groups, including AAPI communities.” — Senior non-program staff, regional foundation

Supporting coalition work with other communities of color also entails fighting back against forces of exclusion within specific AAPI communities. There are small, emerging efforts in this space that require greater attention and support.

“There are many people who I talked to who are very concerned about that organized, kind of right-wing activity. I think I hear a lot from my Chinese and South Asian colleagues concerned about right-wing ideology that’s dangerous. There are some small projects that I think are important, that are trying to engage with that.”

Supporting intersectional work is important not only for building coalitions with other disenfranchised communities, but also to ensure that doubly-marginalized voices like LGBTQ+ AAPIs or undocumented AAPIs have the support they need to effectively advocate in multiple spaces. Several respondents noted the importance of supporting intersectional work involving LGBTQ+ communities.

Prioritizing undocumented AAPIs, however, got only one mention in all of our interviews and survey open-ended responses. With research showing that undocumented immigrants are a sizable and fast-growing segment of the Asian American population (Ramakrishnan and Shah, 2017), this is a potentially large blind spot in AAPI philanthropy that requires greater attention.

LOOKING TO THE NEXT GENERATION

1. Strengthen pipeline and mentoring programs.

Respondents expressed the value of having affinity groups like AAPIP providing networking opportunities and elevating the importance of supporting AAPI communities. A few mentioned that having more formal mentoring programs would strengthen this work.

“I feel like there’s potential for more formalized networks for mentorship [for AAPIs in philanthropy], like we have within the Latino community or African American community.” — Staff in evaluation role, state foundation

Several also noted that the next generation carries some of the greatest potential for intersectional work that is grounded in social justice, racial justice, and innovation. As one CEO noted, “It’s really important for older, or more experienced, people to be mentors, but there’s also a lot to learn from young people, so the learning goes both ways.”

2. Cultivate equity focus among a new generation of philanthropists.

Significant wealth is being generated or transferred into the hands of those who may have different opinions than their parents. Improving learning, mentoring and networking opportunities for the next generation of family foundation leaders can reap significant rewards.

“We’re all stronger together. If we can lend our name and our credibility behind different causes, then it will allow more people to be inspired, I think, especially the younger generation.” — Executive director (second generation), family foundation

CALL TO ACTION

These findings in this report suggest a multi-part call to action that involves both mainstream and AAPI philanthropy.

Be inclusive of AAPI communities

Too often, AAPI people and communities are rendered invisible. They find themselves left out of conversations, data collection efforts, research reports, and grantmaking. To this end, there is an opportunity for grantmakers to ensure AAPI communities are included in the conversation, that data about AAPI communities is collected and shared, and that AAPI people receive critical resources.

Among AAPI communities, there is an added opportunity and imperative to make sure the full spectrum of AAPI identity is included and given a seat at the table. While we speak of AAPI people as a group, they are not a monolith. There is both considerable diversity within the AAPI umbrella and considerable work to be done to make sure everyone under the AAPI umbrella is included in conversations and grantmaking. The paucity of Southeast Asian, Pacific Islander, Muslim American, and South Asian respondents in our survey are reflective of the concern expressed by many survey respondents of under-representation of these communities. As we ask philanthropy to do better, we too, as AAPI community members, commit ourselves to doing better and being fully inclusive.

Fund AAPI communities

Even though AAPI people are the fastest growing racial group in the United States they remain one of the lowest funded racial groups. The past decade has seen significant examples of major investments by particular foundations in specific projects and issue areas, and it is essential to expand and build on this work on a much bigger scale in the decade ahead.

For example, several large funders, including the Wallace H. Coulter Foundation, The California Endowment, and the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation invested in AAPI outreach for Affordable Care Act enrollment. AAPI non-profits have also benefited from significant public and private investments in 2020 Census outreach. It will be important to maintain commitments to these organizations for post-Census work in civic engagement and regional planning.

One promising area for greater investment is economic justice. For example, the James Irvine Foundation has declared its singular goal to be the advancement of workers struggling with poverty. It has followed through on that commitment by sponsoring in-language survey research that reveals the true extent of economic hardship among AAPIs in California (AAPI Data and PRRI, 2019). It will be important to ensure that program investments follow

through on the research, and that the many other state and national funders focusing on economic justice will increase their investments in AAPI communities that are struggling economically. Finally, other promising areas for greater investment in AAPIs include educational equity for Southeast Asian and Pacific Islander populations, addressing the needs of English-language learners, and ensuring greater investments to strengthen AAPI voices in the immigrant rights movement.

In addition to growing investments by large foundations, we need greater efforts to grow the ranks of AAPI donors, large and small. In addition to expanding the work of giving circles and new donor cultivation by community foundations, we need more efforts to leverage online giving such as the *Give In May* campaign by Asian Pacific Fund and AAPI Data and *Chalo Give* by Indiaspora.

Build intersectional and coalitional power

Finally, there is an opportunity in this moment to build a broadly progressive coalition of communities to advance racial and social justice. Investing in collaboration between AAPI nonprofits and other racial justice organizations, supporting narrative change work that challenges the model minority myth and reverses AAPI invisibilization, and underwriting civic engagement efforts that help AAPI people fully participate in our democracy—these all bolster our country’s collective effort to address the scourge of anti-Black racism and secure a more just future.

APPENDIX

Our surveys of leaders, staff, and trustees in philanthropy were conducted in two waves, between May 4 and May 22, 2020 and between August 19 and September 1, 2020. Out of 892 who were emailed the survey, 150 responded to the May wave and 65 responded to the August wave, for response rates of 17% and 7%, respectively. Overall, 82% of survey respondents identified as Asian or Asian American, 2% as Pacific Islander, 13% as White, 6% as Black, and 3% as Hispanic/Latinx. Among Asian Americans, 57% self-identified with an East Asian group, 24% with a Southeast Asian group, and 7% with a South Asian group.

By gender: 79% self-identified as female, 19% as male, and 2% as genderqueer or binary. 79% identified as heterosexual, 7% as transgender, 5% as gay, 3% as lesbian, 3% as bisexual, 2% as pansexual, and 1% as asexual. By age: 46% were under age 45, 45% were between age 45 and 65, and 9% were 65 or older. 34% identified as a first-generation college student.

In terms of organization, 33% worked in local or regional organizations, 16% at the state level, 35% in multi-state or national organizations, and 15% in international organizations. In addition, 49% worked in private or family foundations, 17% in community foundations, 6% in other public

foundations, 2% in corporate philanthropy, and the rest in advocacy, research, or other types of organizations. With respect to roles, 28% served as CEO or executive director, 12% as Senior VP or other executive, 13% as senior programming officers, 21% as program officers, 7% as senior managers in non-grantmaking roles, 7% as staff in non-grantmaking roles, 9% as trustees, and 1% each as advisors and program administrators.

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AAPI Data is a nationally recognized publisher of demographic data and policy research on Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders, with hundreds of news mentions in national and local outlets. Its reputation is built on data and research that is accurate, compelling, and timely. In addition to our news impact, we help community organizations, government agencies, and decisionmakers better understand key aspects of AAPI communities.



The Center for Social Innovation provides a credible research voice that spurs civic leadership and policy innovation. It also aims to integrate researchers, community organizations, and civic stakeholders in collaborative projects and long-term partnerships that boost collective impact. Importantly, the Center seeks to shift away from a “problem” narrative to an “opportunity” narrative for marginalized communities and localities.



AAPIP is a national membership organization dedicated to expanding and mobilizing philanthropic and community resources for underserved AAPI communities to build a more just and equitable society. Its core members include staff and trustees of foundations and other grantmaking entities as well as individual donors and philanthropy-serving professionals. In addition, AAPIP supports ten regional chapters that serve as centers for place-based advocacy, information sharing, leadership development and network building around AAPI issues and philanthropy

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