Colorado Lotus Project

A Statewide Look at the Strengths and Barriers Facing Colorado's Asian American and Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander Communities

About The Colorado Lotus Project

The Colorado Lotus Project is funded by the **Colorado Asian American and Pacific Islander (AAPI) Circle**. The Colorado AAPI Circle, in partnership with the Colorado Health Institute (CHI), created the project to uplift the unique voices and experiences of Asian American and Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander (AANHPI) people living in the state.

The Colorado Lotus Project involves a thorough analysis of data on AANHPI communities and delves into deeper insights, integrating first-person storytelling to underscore strengths and disparities within the community. This dual approach aims to call attention to an essential need for better data while fostering a nuanced understanding of the diverse experiences within these communities. The goal is to achieve a more equitable allocation of resources and to tear down the idea that AANHPI communities are one monolithic group.

About The Name

The lotus flower has a long, rich history across different AANHPI cultures, often spanning thousands of years. Naturally occurring in many countries in Asia, the lotus is the national flower for countries such as India and Vietnam and grows abundantly in Hawaii. The lotus grows upward from the mud and silt of a pond and creates a striking flower that is impossible to miss. In the same way the lotus flower is unforgettable, born out of the murkiest of conditions, the Colorado Lotus Project raises experiences of the overlooked but resilient AANHPI communities. Also drawing inspiration from the lotus, the project's name symbolizes the potential for growth, transformation, and resilience for Colorado's AANHPI communities, even in the face of barriers.

About The Cover

The 2024 Colorado Lotus Project report cover is designed by local artist **Nalye Lor**. The lotus flower is the representative icon for Colorado's AANHPI communities and is showcased in the image with the use of human hands as the flower petals themselves. These hands sprout from the water's deep, dark depths, a metaphor that the community possesses the same characteristics of this perennial plant. Silhouettes of the iconic Denver skyline, mountain ranges, forest, and plains represent the diversity of Colorado and the communities across the state where AANHPI people live.

About The Colorado AAPI Circle

The [Colorado Asian American and Pacific Islander Circle](#) (The Circle) was founded in late 2021. Our vision is authentic, visible, and interconnected Asian, Pacific Islander, and Desi communities. We do this by elevating our many communities and increasing resources, lifting voices, and growing our civic engagement.

Giving circles help democratize philanthropy, welcoming people of all giving levels to the power of giving. The Circle connects individuals who donate their money to pooled funds shared with other donors. We decide together which nonprofit organizations or community projects to support. Through the process, donors build strong connections and increase their engagement in the community.

About The Colorado Health Institute

The Colorado Health Institute is a nonprofit, mission-driven research and convening group advancing equity and well-being in our communities. CHI's team of analysts, program managers, data managers, and directors led the research, data disaggregation, focus groups, key informant interviews, project coordination, and development of this report. CHI is honored to have partnered with The Circle and AANPHI community leaders and members across Colorado in developing this report and is thankful for all the thought leadership, insights, and personal stories shared by everyone who participated in this effort.

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From the Colorado AAPI Circle

Picture a future where AANHPI and Black, Indigenous, and other communities of color don't need to show our worth to be valued and recognized. Where the inadequacy of resources is no longer a debate.

This is the future the Colorado AAPI Circle is working toward.

But the current reality is that for too long, AANHPI communities have been severely underfunded and overlooked.

The Colorado Lotus Project marks an inaugural step that is essential and long overdue to address this issue. This work takes a first-of-its kind, in-depth look at AANHPI communities in our beloved Centennial State.

Within this report are detailed data points and stories that break down the AANHPI category to understand the unique experiences of the people who are included in this descriptor across areas like health, housing, civic engagement, and many more.

By doing so, we break down the idea that AANHPI communities are a monolith, highlighting just how different the AANHPI diaspora in Colorado really is. We come from very different places and have very different experiences.

The most recent AANHPI migrants to Colorado, including those from Bhutan, Burma (now known as Myanmar), and Nepal, have different needs, such as language resources and access to health care. This differs from Colorado's more-established Korean population who report high rates of poor mental health, or the Bangladeshi community who report higher rates of housing cost burden.

From the beginning, our objective with the Colorado Lotus Project has been to identify where our AANHPI communities exist, what they need to thrive, and how our partners in government, philanthropy, and advocacy can support these efforts.

Data collection across various sectors, like health care and education, must be revamped to capture the nuances of identity more accurately, including race and ethnicity, gender identity, sexual orientation, and other identities and lived experiences. Service providers and funders must be equipped with this information to be equitable and culturally responsive. We need greater AANHPI representation and engagement to inform public discourse and to authentically raise the voices of those experiencing trauma, hardship, and barriers to living their best lives.

The unique and first-of-its-kind nature of the Colorado Lotus Project is a step forward for AANHPI advocacy efforts in Colorado and across the country. It is a call to recognize that AANHPI people have different experiences. But at the heart of this work is the recognition that Colorado is also a place for all. It is our hope that this work will serve as a blueprint for other populations in Colorado seeking their voice and representation; that it sends the unequivocal message that Colorado is everyone's home. No matter where you came from or how you got here, we love this place and will do anything to support your desire to call it home, too.

Signed,

Jin Alexander Tsuchiya
Co-Chair, Colorado AAPI Circle

Kristi Keolakai,
Co-Chair, Colorado AAPI Circle

Background on Creating the Colorado Lotus Project

The phrase Asian Americans and Native Hawaiians and Other Pacific Islanders (AANHPI) encompasses more than 50 distinct ethnic groups, includes more than 100 different languages, and represents 75 countries across East, Southeast, and South Asia and the Pacific Islands of Melanesia, Micronesia, and Polynesia. In Colorado, about 260,000 people trace their roots to these regions of Asia (alone or in combination with another race or ethnicity, including Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander).[1] Over 22,000 trace their roots to the Pacific Islands (alone or in combination with another race or ethnicity, including Asian).[1] Each has a unique history and culture. In the past few decades, AANHPI people have become the fastest growing racial or ethnic group in the United States, and by 2055, Asians could become its largest immigrant group.[2,3]

But in most U.S. data, this diversity is lost. People are lumped together as "Asian Americans" and "Native Hawaiians and Other Pacific Islanders" in one or two categories. As a result of this data practice, key social, economic, and health indicators often show that AANHPI communities are better off than other racial or ethnic groups. In reality, variations in the data are masked, hiding the full extent of the experiences of people included in these categories. For example, research shows that income inequality in the U.S. has been rising most rapidly among Asians. The gap between the highest earners and the lowest earners is also greater among Asians than for any other racial or ethnic group.[4]

Meanwhile, misconceptions – the model minority myth, healthy immigrant effect, and

For every $100 awarded by foundations for work in the U.S., only 20 cents are designated for AANHPI communities

perpetual foreigner stereotypes – continue to exclude and misrepresent the experiences of people who identify as AANHPI.[5] The model minority myth paints Asian Americans as a high-achieving, wealthy, and obedient group. While many may perceive this as a positive stereotype, it is detrimental to AANHPI communities and hides the existence of AANHPI people who struggle. Further, the myth denies the effects of racial inequality for all people of color in the U.S., creating a wedge between Asians and other people of color to uphold the narrative of white supremacy.

These are just some of the issues that can drive inequities for AANHPI communities across multiple systems, including philanthropy. In 2021, Asian Americans/Pacific Islanders in Philanthropy (AAPIP) found that for every $100 awarded by foundations for work in the U.S., only 20 cents is designated for AANHPI communities.[6]

To highlight these disparities and call attention to the need for improved data collection systems and more equitable allocation of resources, the Colorado AAPI Circle, in partnership with the Colorado Health Institute (CHI), created the Colorado Lotus Project.

A Brief History: Systemic Racism and AANHPI Communities

While some AANHPI people are newer to the U.S., others have been here since its beginning. Native Hawaiian and some Pacific Islander communities, such as the Samoan and Chamorro, trace their ancestral roots to land that is now a state or territory of the U.S. In 1848, when the U.S. only consisted of 30 states, the California gold rush brought Asian immigrants, especially Chinese people, to the West.

But throughout the history of the U.S., AANHPI communities have been subjected to systemic discrimination and disparities. The U.S. participated in the seizure and forced annexation of Pacific Islands, including the indigenous lands of Melanesians, Micronesians, and Polynesians. In 1890s, the U.S. government participated in the overthrow and illegal annexation of the Kingdom of Hawai'i, an act Congress apologized for 100 years later.[7] American Samoa and Guam remain U.S. territories. Under the Compacts of Free Association, communities from Micronesia, the Marshall Islands, and the Republic of Palau were granted access to social and health services as partial compensation for the loss of life, health, land, and resources due to U.S. nuclear weapons tests in these nations. However, a 1996 law inadvertently restricted these benefits and wasn't rectified until December 2020.[8]

Historically, race-based policies have sought to limit the rights and economic opportunities of Asian people and ban Asian immigration to the country.[9]

In 1942, after Pearl Harbor, a federal executive order led to the forced relocation and imprisonment of 120,000 Japanese Americans, with over 7,000 held at the Granada Relocation Center in Colorado, known as Camp Amache.[10,11]

An illustration depicting the 1880 riot in Denver's Chinatown. *Library of Congress*

Denver's current Lower Downtown neighborhood, known as LoDo, was once a thriving Chinatown until a pub brawl in 1880 escalated into a riot. Thousands of white Denverites attacked Chinese residents, resulting in destruction of homes and businesses, including the tragic death of Look Young, who was beaten to death and hung.[12]

Today, xenophobia continues to fuel AANHPI hate. The 2021 Atlanta spa shooting is just one example. Although the COVID-19 Hate Crimes Act aims to address anti-Asian violence, the underlying racism persists, requiring ongoing efforts to combat discrimination.[13]

Creating the Colorado Lotus Project

The lack of funding designated for AANHPI communities, as well as continuous calls for better data by community leaders, prompted the Colorado AAPI Circle to act.

These efforts began in 2021, when the Colorado AAPI Circle partnered with CHI to conduct a landscape analysis to better understand the extent to which detailed data and literature about Colorado's AANHPI communities exist. CHI found that very little data on AANHPI people are separated into racial and ethnic subgroups and that there is a lack of comprehensive literature that speaks to the needs of these communities. Further, community leaders said that the lack of available data prevents them from effectively advocating on behalf of the community, including working to reduce disparities and delivering culturally responsive services.

From this initial scan, the Colorado AAPI Circle and CHI partnered in 2023 to conduct a broader state-of-the-state analysis for Colorado's AANHPI communities. This work was inspired by efforts such as We the Resilient, a report on stories and data of California's American Indian/Alaska Native peoples, and AAPI Data's 2022 State of AANHPIs in California Report, among others. This effort became the Colorado Lotus Project.

Our Process

To ensure the Colorado Lotus Project was driven and led by community members, CHI and the Colorado AAPI Circle established an advisory group of 10 members working across different sectors. The members adopted a strategic framework to guide this work.

Strategic Framework

Vision

Equitable opportunity for all people in Colorado to reach their full potential and thrive.

Mission

Uplift the unique voices and experiences of AANHPIs living in Colorado with respect to health, education, income and economic opportunity, housing, civic engagement, and crime and justice by dismantling the perception of AANHPI communities as a monolith.

Goals

Short-Term

- Educate policymakers, service providers, advocates, philanthropic institutions, and other community partners with a statewide snapshot of the strengths and challenges experienced by AANHPI communities in Colorado.

Long-Term

- Use learnings to elevate and advance the needs of AANHPI communities in Colorado.

- Increase transparent, accurate, and accessible disaggregated data on Colorado's AANHPI communities. (See What is Data Disaggregation? for more information.)

- Increase equitable resource allocation to support Colorado's AANHPI communities.

Strategies

Break apart existing datasets to understand the makeup of Colorado's AANHPI communities, such as strengths of and challenges within these communities.

Use first-person storytelling to understand what is not being captured by existing data and to elevate what is being shown.

Determine what is needed – state-level policy changes, partnerships, something else – and make recommendations to improve data collection systems and transparency.

Values

To uphold the principles of authentic community engagement and ensure the work was driven by the community, CHI and its partners adopted the following shared values.

- **Foster Trust** – Establish relationships and work with members and leaders of AANHPI communities. Listen actively and deeply to uncover key community concerns and raise the voices of those rarely heard.

- **Work in Partnership With the Community** – Ensure members and leaders of AANHPI communities have voices throughout all phases of work. The goal is to work with the community, not for or on behalf of them.

- **Support Community-Led Solutions** – Include AANHPI communities in cocreating solutions to identified issues.

- **Convey Reliability and Accuracy** – Ensure transparency, accuracy, and reliability in the data and findings presented.

- **Be Responsive** – Meet AANHPI communities where they are. Respond to community needs and questions as they arise or shift.

CHI conducted a literature review and extensive data scan to source as much existing data as possible on AANHPI communities. In partnership with the advisory group and the Colorado AAPI Circle, CHI identified relevant key data metrics organized into seven domains. (See Domains for more.) These key data metrics were disaggregated – a technique to see beyond the Asian American and Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander labels to see what the data look like for different AANHPI identities, such as Chinese, Hmong, or Nepali. (See What is Data Disaggregation? for more information.)

Simultaneously, CHI conducted a philanthropic analysis to understand what foundation funding looks like for AANHPI people in Colorado. Finally, to supplement this rich information and to better understand lived experiences of the people reflected in the data, CHI conducted a multifaceted community engagement process.

This community engagement process included:

▶ **12 Key Informant Interviews**
CHI spoke with 12 community leaders and subject matter experts. These leaders also supported further community outreach and connections.

▶ **60 Comments Collected via a Thought Exchange**
CHI and its partners used a Thought Exchange – an online polling platform – to ask the broader AANHPI community to provide perspective on their strengths and challenges. In total, 107 people participated in the Thought Exchange, contributing 60 comments to the platform.

▶ **Six Focus Group Discussions**
CHI partnered with AANHPI community leaders to host and facilitate six focus group discussions to better understand nuanced,

lived experiences and to hear from people who are disproportionately impacted, historically excluded, or geographically underrepresented. Focus groups were organized by four AANHPI regional identities: East Asian, South Asian, Southeast Asian, and Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islanders. Two discussions were held by prioritized intersecting identities (determined in partnership with the Colorado AAPI Circle): youth and recent immigrants and refugees. Overall, 51 people joined these discussions.

▶ **Five Storytelling Profiles**
CHI partnered with two AANHPI writers to tell five stories that further elevate community voices and the people behind the data and highlight stories of strength and leadership.

See [Appendix A: Community Engagement](#) for the demographics of focus group and Thought Exchange participants.

The report synthesizes this information. It is organized into five sections, including **background** on creating the Colorado Lotus Project, a **philanthropic analysis** of foundation funding in Colorado's AANHPI communities, a summary of key findings on priority **domains** (seven subject areas: demographics, health, housing, income and economic opportunity, education, crime and justice, and democracy), **strengths** discussed by members and leaders across Colorado's AANHPI communities, and **recommendations** for policymakers, researchers, and data collection partners. Storytelling profiles are woven throughout these sections. Finally, the report concludes with overall themes of the AANHPI communities' strengths and overarching recommendations to improve data collection and transparency and to further uplift the community.
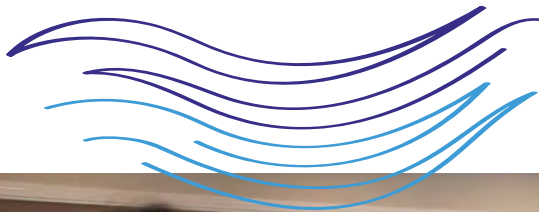
To explore all Thought Exchange responses, visit the [Colorado Lotus Project webpage](#)

Participants in an AANHPI youth focus group also received a lesson in weaving with yarn from Colorado Health Institute research analyst Emily Leung. *Brian Clark/CHI*

What is Data Disaggregation?

Systemic misrepresentation and erasure of diverse AANPHI communities leads to a lack of comprehensive and nuanced data, and that lack of understanding hinders the equitable allocation of resources.

When researchers combine people from such wide-ranging backgrounds and cultures into one or two data groups, they miss crucial trends. For example, while median income among Asian households is typically high compared with the average of all racial/ethnic groups, Asians experience high income inequality within their own community. The income gap between the highest-earning Asian households and the lowest-earning Asian households is wider than any other racial/ethnic group. In fact, the gap is also growing at the fastest pace.[4]

Separating data into subgroups – also known as data disaggregation – is therefore necessary to fully understand the experiences of people represented by the overarching racial or ethnic group.

There are ongoing efforts to support disaggregating AANHPI data nationwide. In January 2023, the White House released the National Strategy to Advance Equity, Justice, and Opportunity for Asian American, Native Hawaiian, and Pacific Islander Communities. The strategy created a subcommittee to focus on data disaggregation, with a priority to collect and report disaggregated data as a norm across the federal government.

In 2021, the state of New York passed Assembly Bill A6896A, which requires state agencies, boards, departments, and commissions to collect data specific to Asian and Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander groups. The advocacy work of the Invisible No More Campaign was critical to passing the law.

Community organizations have also focused on collecting and providing better data on AANHPI communities. AAPI Data routinely releases in-depth reports on the state of AANHPI people in California and the U.S. featuring disaggregated data. In November 2023, AAPI Data partnered with NORC at the University of Chicago to deliver regular polling insights on issues affecting AANHPI people.

These efforts are a fundamental step toward ensuring that community needs are met. Disaggregating data elevates people who are overlooked by typical racial/ethnic constructs and provides a better understanding of community needs, which in turn can facilitate more equitable resource allocation.

This report presents a foundational set of disaggregated data about Colorado's AANHPI communities.

Data Disaggregation and Data Safety

While data disaggregation can provide better information, there are risks to disaggregating data. For example, U.S. Census Bureau data has been historically used as a tool to target people of color.[14,15] In the 1940s, the Census Bureau assisted with the internment of Japanese Americans by providing detailed local information. Recently, advocacy groups opposed the Trump administration's attempts to add questions about U.S. citizenship to the census, with internal documents revealing their intention to manipulate electoral maps.[16]

In recognition of these risks, CHI established a minimum reporting standard to ensure that all quantitative data presented are not identifiable. See Appendix B: Data Disaggregation and Reportability Standards for more.

A Note on Identities in This Report

This report uses the term Asian American interchangeably with Asian; however, it's important to acknowledge that labels such as Asian or Asian American are embraced by some but often imposed on others.[17] Similarly, Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander is a panethnic label that may not resonate with people who wish to identify with a more specific term. People with multiethnic or multiracial backgrounds may also have unique ways of embracing their identity. Terminology used to describe identity, particularly with regards to race and ethnicity, varies among different groups, personal preferences, and contexts. Different terms resonate with different people.

The term AANHPI is also used in this report to refer to the Asian and Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander community as a whole. However, we recognize this term often fails to capture the vast and diverse people and experiences that are included in this term. Where possible, we reference specific subidentities, such as Vietnamese, Samoan, or Indian. We also recognize that there are subgroups within AANHPI identities. For example, people with ties to the country of Myanmar (formerly known as Burma) may identify as Burmese or as Rohingya, Karen, Karenni, Pa'O, among others. Unfortunately, at the time of this analysis of 2021 data from the U.S. Census Bureau and other sources, this level of detail is not available. Therefore, our data and findings are limited to what is included in these existing sources, which encompasses the identities listed at right. For example, U.S. Census Bureau data lists Burmese as opposed to other identities.

This report defines AANHPI communities as the following identities. In some instances, we refer to grouped AANHPI identities by region. These definitions are in alignment with existing sources.[18]

Asian and Asian Americans

- **East Asians:** people from China (including Hong Kong and Macau), Japan, Korea, Mongolia, Okinawa, and Taiwan.

- **South Asians:** people from Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, the Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka. Ethnic groups include Gujarati, Punjabi, Sindhi, Tamil, and others.

- **Southeast Asians:** people from the following countries and ethnic groups: Burma (now known as Myanmar), Cambodia (Cham, Khmer, Khmer Loeu), Hmong, Indonesia, Laos (Iu Mien, Khmu, Lao, Lao Loum, Tai Dam, Tai Leu, and others), Malaysia, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, and Vietnam (Montagnards, Khmer Kampuchea Krom, Vietnamese).

Native Hawaiians and Other Pacific Islanders

- **Native Hawaiians and Other Pacific Islanders:** people whose origins are connected to the original inhabitants of Melanesia, Micronesia, and Polynesia. Melanesia includes Fiji, Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands, and Vanuatu. Micronesia includes Chuuk, Guam (Guamanian or Chamorro), Kiribati, Kosrae, Mariana Islands, Marshall Islands, Palau, Pohnpei, Saipan, and Yap. Polynesia includes American Samoa, Hawaii, Samoa, Tahiti, Tokelau, and Tonga.

This report does not include all people with ties to the continent of Asia, for example West Asian and Central Asian identities – such as people from Afghanistan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Russia, Tajikistan, and others. We recognize these groups also face systemic barriers related to data disaggregation and their identities are not well-represented by current data structures. Future work is needed to explore the needs of people living in Colorado who trace their roots to these areas of Western and Central Asia.

Philanthropic Analysis

In 2021, Asian Americans/Pacific Islanders in Philanthropy (AAPIP) released the report [Seeking to Soar: Foundation Funding for Asian American and Pacific Islander Communities](). This report examined the state of philanthropic support for AANHPI communities in the U.S. AAPIP found that in 2018, only 0.2% of all U.S. grantmaking by foundations was designated for AANHPI communities. That's only 20 cents of every $100. Moreover, data showed that the percentage of overall foundation grantmaking explicitly for AANHPI communities has been decreasing since 2009.[6] To understand foundation funding in Colorado, CHI used the same methods in AAPIP's analysis of philanthropic funding on the national level to examine AANHPI foundation support statewide.

About the Data

Philanthropic funding can take many different forms and flow through many types of mechanisms, organizations, and communities. There is no standardized way of reporting philanthropic investments; therefore it is challenging to obtain a complete picture of how funding is dispersed in Colorado. In order to examine how foundations support AANHPI communities in the state, CHI used publicly available data from [Candid's Racial Equity Map]() and [Philanthropy Southwest's Dashboard](), which also draws from Candid's database. The data are compiled from direct reporting by grantmakers, Internal Revenue Service filings, and other public sources like websites and articles. Since the data are largely self-reported, they come with certain limitations. See [Appendix C: Philanthropic Data Analysis Limitations]() for more detail.

Foundation Funding for AANHPI Communities in Colorado Is Low

Between 2011 and 2018, foundation funding explicitly designated for AANHPI people in Colorado totaled $17 million.

- This includes 152 grants from 58 grantmakers across the country to 63 grant recipients in Colorado.

In 2018, $0.60 of every $100.00 awarded by foundations explicitly supported AANHPI communities in Colorado.

- This is higher than the national rate of $0.20 of every $100.00 awarded by foundations in 2018, yet is still under 1%.

Funding for AANHPI Communities Has Marginally Increased Over the Years

As shown in the funding trend line in Figure 1, Colorado's AANHPI communities have seen a slight increase in foundation funding since 2011. However, the overall funding level remains low.

Figure 1. Foundation Funding for Colorado's AANHPI Communities (2011-2018)
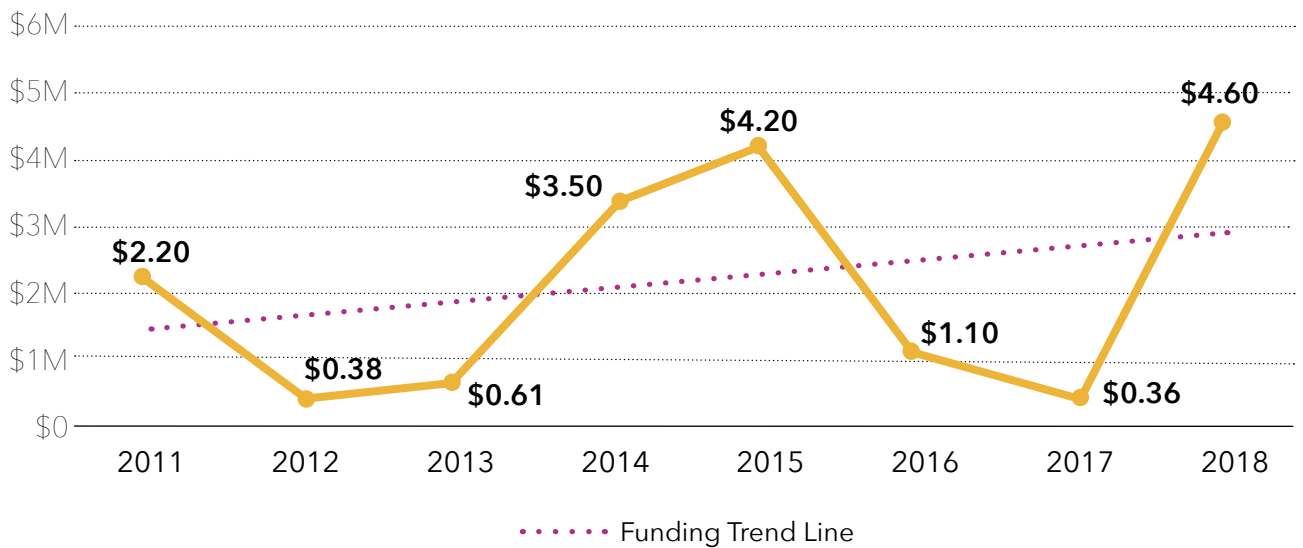
Source: Candid. Foundation Maps: Racial Equity. (2011-2018) Retrieved February 2024.

The Percent of Funding Designated for AANHPI Communities Has Been Low Over the Years

Data on foundation funding for Colorado's AANHPI communities as a percentage of overall foundation funding is limited. However as shown in Table 1, funding has stayed under 0.60% from 2016-2018.

Sources:
Candid. Foundation Maps: Racial Equity. (2016-2018) Retrieved February 2024.

Philanthropy Southwest. Southwest Regional Giving Dashboard. (2016-2018) Retrieved February 2024.

Table 1. Foundation Funding for Colorado's AANHPI Communities as a Percentage of Total Foundation Funding (2016-2018)

Year	Percentage
2016	0.16%
2017	0.05%
2018	0.60%

Five Funders Comprise Over 90% of Funding for Colorado's AANHPI Communities

Foundation funding for AANHPI communities is primarily supported by a small handful of funders. Notably, 91.6% of the funding for Colorado's AANHPI communities comes from foundations outside of Colorado. Figure 2 shows that the top five funders make up 93.6% of all foundation funding for Colorado's AANHPI communities.

Figure 2. Concentration of Foundation Funding for Colorado's AANHPI Communities (2011-2018)

- Top Funder **85.9%**
- Top 5 Funders **93.6%**
- Top 10 Funders **96.8%**
- All Funding for Colorado's AANHPI Communities
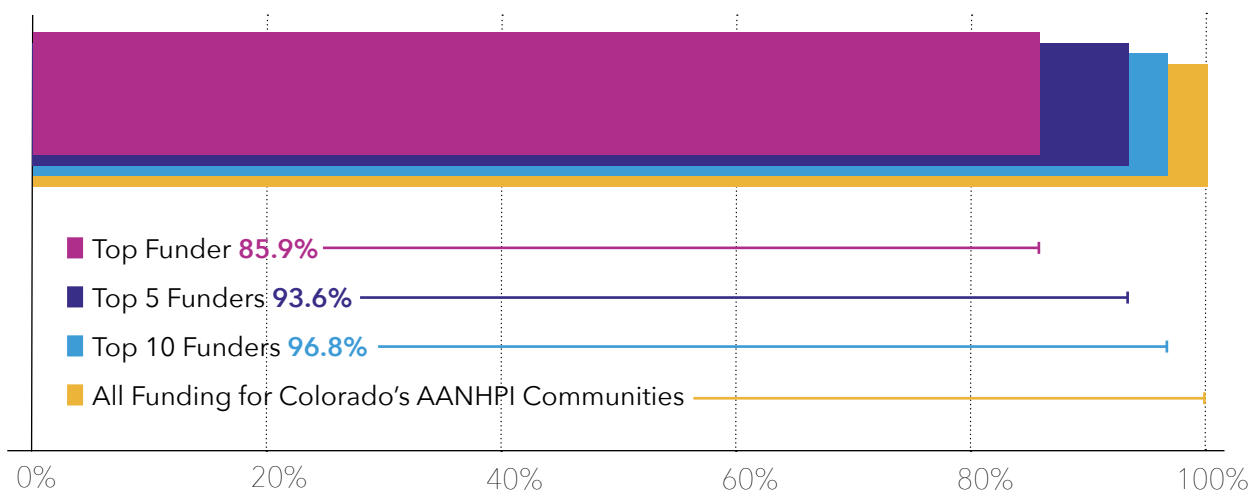
Source: Candid. Foundation Maps: Racial Equity. (2011-2018) Retrieved February 2024.

Top Issues Funded for AANHPI Communities in Colorado

Between 2011 and 2018, funding for Colorado's AANHPI communities primarily supported issues related to education, human rights, and health.

Figure 3. Top Issues Funded for Colorado's AANHPI Communities (2011-2018)

24.0%
of funding included
Education

15.7%
of funding included
Human Rights

12.8%
of funding included
Health
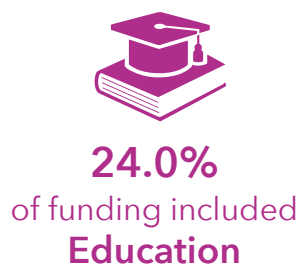
Note: Funding could go toward multiple areas, so categories are not mutually exclusive.

Source: Candid. Foundation Maps: Racial Equity. (2011-2018) Retrieved February 2024.

Funding for AANHPI Communities Is Primarily Distributed in the Denver Metro Area

Information about where funding was distributed to AANHPI communities across Colorado is limited. Only about 50% of grants reported a location (either a city or county). Additionally, information about regranting is not available, so it is possible that these funds were granted to an organization in one location that could have used the funds for programs/services in other areas.

- As shown in Table 2, the top five counties where organizations received funding for AANHPI people were Denver, Adams, Arapahoe, El Paso, and Jefferson counties.

- Broken down by city, Table 3 shows the top five cities where organizations received funding for AANHPI people were Denver, Aurora, Littleton, Colorado Springs, and Greenwood Village.

- Notably, rural areas outside the Interstate 25 corridor are not represented, and this data gap presents opportunities for a more comprehensive understanding of funding disparities and needs throughout the state.

Table 2. Home Counties of Organizations That Received Foundation Funding to Support Colorado's AAHNPI Communities (2011-2018)

County	Percentage
Denver	82.2%
Adams	11.8%
Arapahoe	4.1%
El Paso	1.1%
Jefferson	0.4%
All Other Counties	0.4%

Note: Geographic data for grantees was limited. Only about 50% of grants designated for AANHPI communities had a county associated with the grant recipient.

Source: Candid. Foundation Maps: Racial Equity. (2011-2018) Retrieved February 2024.

Table 3. Home Cities of Organizations That Received Foundation Funding to Support Colorado's AAHNPI Communities (2011-2018)

City	Percentage
Denver	82.1%
Aurora	11.9%
Littleton	3.0%
Colorado Springs	1.1%
Greenwood Village	1.1%
All Other Cities	0.8%

Note: Geographic data for grantees was limited. Only about 50% of grants designated for AANHPI communities had a city associated with grant recipient.

Source: Candid. Foundation Maps: Racial Equity. (2011-2018) Retrieved February 2024.

Funding by Category

Most of the foundation funding for AANHPI communities in Colorado supported efforts for policy, advocacy, and systems reform. See Figure 4. Program support and general support for grantees were also widely funded categories.

Figure 4. Percentage of Foundation Funding for Colorado's AANHPI Communities by Category (2011-2018)

- Policy, advocacy, and system reform **37.6%**
- General support **24.1%**
- Program support **16.8%**
- Capacity building and technical assistance **10.2%**
- Network building and collaboration **8.6%**
- Research and evaluation **1.6%**
- Other **1.1%**
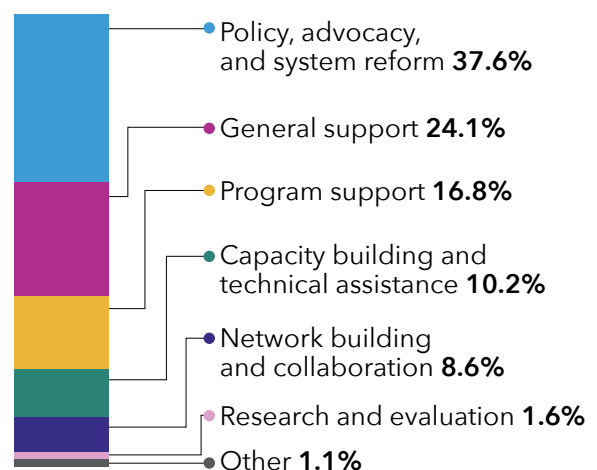
Source: Candid. Foundation Maps: Racial Equity. (2011-2018) Retrieved February 2024.

Stronger Philanthropic Support Is Needed for AANHPI Communities Statewide

The data presented demonstrate a need for a stronger philanthropic presence in Colorado's AANHPI communities, especially for those living beyond the Denver metro area. The overall funding level has remained low, and just a handful of funders support AANHPI communities.

This observation was echoed by community members, with one Thought Exchange participant stating, "We have a lack of [a] significant funder for our community. The lack of significant funding makes it hard for AANHPI community organizations to grow and increase their sophistication."

Funding must therefore be sustained and responsive to community needs, not driven by the topic of the moment. Philanthropic partners must also recognize the importance of technical assistance and data support in their funding strategies and consider long-term, multiyear grantmaking.

Notably, while the data in this analysis are limited to 2018, efforts have been made to increase foundation funding for AANHPI communities in more recent years, especially after the rise in anti-Asian hate due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Although data collection is not yet complete for years beyond 2018, Candid's database shows that since 2020, there have been at least four grants from Colorado foundations that are intended to serve Colorado's AANHPI community – three of which were over $100,000 and one that was over $1 million. Databases on some Colorado foundation websites show grantmaking that supports AANHPI-serving community organizations between 2020 and 2023.

Nationwide, in July 2021, Asian Americans Advancing Justice and Kaiser Permanente partnered to grant $3.6 million to 33 community-based organizations across the nation to "combat

> **"We have a lack of (a) significant funder for our community. The lack of significant funding makes it hard for AANHPI community organizations to grow and increase their sophistication."**
> *Thought Exchange participant*

the surge in violence against Asian Americans and to support the rights, health, and wellness of Asian American, Native Hawaiian, and Other Pacific Islander communities."[19] In 2023, AAPIP, in partnership with AAPI Data, surveyed AANHPI-serving organizations to see how they operated during the surge of demand for their services resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic. These organizations reported they were able to meet the needs of the community, bolstered by increased funding.[20]

These efforts reflect growth in partnerships between AANHPI communities and philanthropic investors. However, a lack of standardized information on philanthropic funding makes it difficult to measure exactly how much funding levels have changed in recent years. There is no standardized way to collect information from foundations and other funders on what communities their funding is intended for or, more crucially, is reaching. The data presented in this analysis is largely self-reported, but not all funders participate in the reporting process, making it difficult to get a clear picture of philanthropy for the community as a whole. A better strategy to collect information from philanthropic partners is needed to truly understand the extent to which this funding is reaching AANHPI communities.

Domains

Qualitative and quantitative data collected and analyzed for the Colorado Lotus Project are organized into seven domains. The domains were identified and prioritized in coordination with the Colorado AAPI Circle, the advisory group, and through careful iterative analysis and refinement from CHI. The following are high-level descriptions of each domain:

Demographics

The overall composition of AANHPI communities in Colorado and where they are living, including identity and representation.

Health

The state of health for AANHPI people in Colorado, including physical and mental health and access to care.

Housing

Access to affordable and high-quality housing.

Income and Economic Opportunity

Factors needed to thrive, such as income, livelihood, and entrepreneurship.

Education

Opportunities and access to culturally and linguistically responsive education and resources for AANHPI students in Colorado, including diversity of teachers and staff.

Crime and Justice

Topics such as representation in courts and legal systems and experiences with crime, racism, and policing.

Democracy

Opportunities or barriers to civic engagement and voting and representation among elected officials.

Each domain section includes guiding questions, key findings, and an overview of available data metrics, complemented by qualitative findings. Data availability is limited with respect to the domains, as well as identities captured in the data. Further, there is a lack of data that reflects the intersecting identities of AANHPI people, such as those who are older adults, youth, immigrants, refugees, asylum seekers, people with disabilities, and people who are LGBTQ+. Where applicable, related data or discussion are included. However, a clear gap in available information exists, indicating that more research and data are needed to better understand these nuanced experiences.

Five storytelling elements are woven throughout the domains to paint a fuller picture of the people and organizations in Colorado's AANHPI communities. Our process for collecting qualitative information involved conducting key informant interviews with a dozen leaders from AANHPI communities across Colorado and holding focus groups with community members. The interviews and focus groups followed a semi-structured format and explored barriers, strengths, and opportunities to improve the lives of AANHPI Coloradans across these domains. Each domain section concludes with opportunities for action, informed by qualitative and quantitative findings, to address identified barriers specific to the domain.

The Mid-Autumn Festival at the Far East Center in the Little Saigon Denver District featured activities for people of all ages.
Brian Clark/CHI

How to Navigate Charts in This Section

Navigating charts is essential to understanding the rich data presented in this report. Here is a quick guide to help you make sense of the information:

Diverse Data Sources: Since the data is derived from multiple sources, each source is included under the chart to promote transparency. Some data sources have more information than others. For example, AANHPI identities, availability of confidence intervals, and averages may differ across data sources. Be sure to also reference the chart title to see if data is Colorado-specific or national.

Colorado, Asian, and Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander Averages: Look out for distinct bars in graphs representing averages for the overall Colorado population, Asians, or Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islanders. These lines provide benchmarks for comparison.

Colorado
Asian
Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander
Indian
Laotian

76.4%
70.9%
70.5%
68.1%
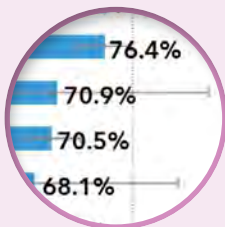
Confidence Intervals: To provide additional context on the data, 95% confidence intervals are included on graphs, where available. Confidence intervals are lines that show the degree of certainty of the data – there is 95% confidence that the true value lies between the range indicated by the interval.

Notes and Identities Not Included: As data are derived from multiple sources, racial and ethnic groups included vary across charts. Pay attention to the sources and notes included under each chart that highlight limitations or caveats in the data or the AANHPI identities that could not be included due to small sample sizes. This transparency ensures a comprehensive understanding of the data presented.

Demographics and Colorado Population

A fundamental step in understanding AANHPI people in Colorado, particularly for policymakers and service providers, is knowing what communities live here and where they live. This domain provides information on the various racial and ethnic AANHPI groups in the state, their languages, and recent patterns in migration and also discusses nuances related to demographics, such as identity and representation.

• **Guiding Questions:** What does the makeup of the AANHPI population in Colorado look like? What do we know about their racial and ethnic demographics in Colorado, including language, geography, and migration patterns? What are AANHPI Coloradans sharing about their lived experience?

Key Findings

- Colorado has a large and diverse AANHPI community living throughout the state.
- People from Bhutan, Burma (now known as Myanmar), and Nepal are the most recent immigrants from Asian countries.
- AANHPI people in Colorado feel invisible.

AANHPI Identities of People Living in Colorado

Colorado has a large and diverse AANHPI community living throughout the state.

Table 4 breaks down the number of AANHPI-identifying Coloradans. These figures include people who identify with multiple AANHPI identities. Chinese, Filipino, Indian, Korean, Vietnamese, and Japanese communities are among the most prominent Asian demographic groups in Colorado. Native Hawaiian, Chamorro, and Samoan are the largest self-identified Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander groups living in the state.

Overall, about 260,000 people in Colorado (4.5%) identify as Asian (either Asian alone or in combination with another race or ethnicity, including Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander). Over 22,000 people in Colorado (0.4%) identify as Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander (either alone or in combination with another race or ethnicity, including Asian).[1]

**Table 4.
AANHPI Identities of People Living in Colorado (2021)**

AANHPI Identity	Number of People*
Bangladeshi	565
Bhutanese	1,833
Burmese	4,095
Cambodian	3,624
Chamorro	3,987
Chinese	47,254
Fijian	489
Filipino	38,358
Hmong	4,068
Indian	35,926
Indonesian	2,857
Japanese	26,006
Korean	33,978
Laotian	2,876
Malaysian	458
Marshallese	185
Mongolian	1,332
Native Hawaiian	8,479
Nepalese	6,738
Okinawan	126
Pakistani	3,155
Samoan	2,877
Sri Lankan	972
Taiwanese	2,635
Thai	6,061
Tongan	602
Vietnamese	33,914

*Note: Includes people with multiple AANHPI identities

Source: U.S. Census Bureau. American Community Survey, 2021: ACS 5-Year Estimates. (2021)

Map 1 provides a visual representation of the AANHPI community across Colorado counties, spotlighting areas of higher concentrations.

AANHPI people in Colorado live throughout the metro Denver region and also in rural areas of the state. For example, Mineral, Hinsdale, and Crowley counties have a high percentage of AANHPI residents, and all are considered rural or even frontier. The highest concentrations of AANHPI people are in Broomfield, Arapahoe, and Douglas counties.

For an in-depth exploration of where AANHPI communities live in Colorado, use the interactive **AANHPI Community Mapping Tool** on the Colorado Lotus Project webpage. This tool allows you to view where AANHPI live within Colorado, by disaggregated identity, at the census-tract level.

Map 1. AANHPI People as a Percentage of Total County Population (2021)

Legend: 0.0% - 1.4% 1.5% - 2.8% 2.9% - 5.7% 5.8% - 8.3%
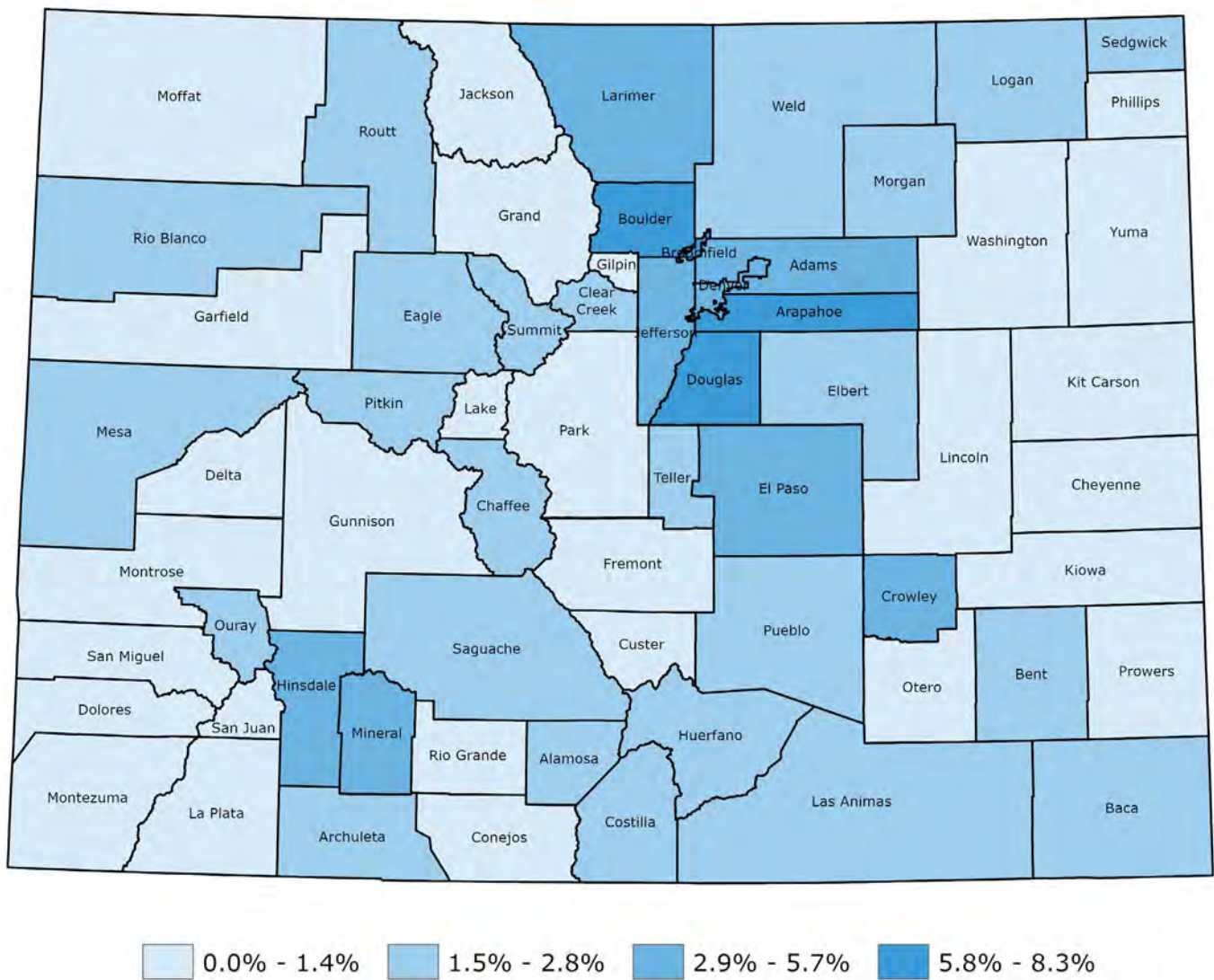
Source: U.S. Census Bureau. American Community Survey, 2021: ACS 5-Year Estimates. (2021)

AANHPI Languages in Colorado

Much like the diversity present in cultures, identities, races, and ethnicities in Colorado's AANHPI communities, languages spoken are wide-ranging. Across Colorado, about 126,000 people speak an Asian or Pacific Islander language.[1]

Table 5 breaks down the number of Coloradans who speak one of these languages at home. The richness of AANHPI languages spoken in Colorado requires equally rich support for language access. This means thoughtful and flexible translation and interpretation services that can not only accommodate many languages, but also regional and cultural variations in language and ways of speaking.

Recent Asian Migration Trends

People from Bhutan, Burma (now known as Myanmar), and Nepal are the most recent immigrants from Asian countries.

Migration has played a key role in shaping Colorado. Most people who live in Colorado today come from somewhere else, either a different state or country – and that has been true for nearly 200 years.[21] Many complex social and political factors drive inward migration of AANHPI people to the U.S. and Colorado, including economic opportunity and needs, U.S. immigration policy, wars in Asia, climate change, and patterns of race-based discrimination and xenophobia.[22] This complex dynamic continues today. For many AANHPI people, migration is a recent family experience.

As shown in Figure 5, most people from Bhutan, Burma (now known as Myanmar), and Nepal have been in the U.S. for 10 years or fewer. More than half of Pakistani, Bangladeshi, and Indian communities also immigrated within the last 10 years.[1] Note: a significant number of Asian people are unaccounted for in official census numbers. Knowing the exact population of people living without documentation is difficult; however based on estimates from 2015, more than 1.7 million Asian people are living without documentation in the U.S. They accounted for 15.7% of the national undocumented population in 2015.[23]

Table 5. AANHPI Languages Spoken at Home in Colorado (2021)

Language or Language Family*	Number of Language Speakers
Bengali	1,839
Chinese, including Mandarin Chinese, Min Nan Chinese (including Taiwanese), Yue Chinese (Cantonese)	23,735
Gujarati	1,500
Hindi	7,445
Hmong	2,574
Ilocano, Samoan, Hawaiian, or other Austronesian languages	5,279
Japanese	6,443
Khmer	2,160
Korean	13,302
Malayalam, Kannada, or other Dravidian languages	2,441
Nepali, Marathi, or other Indic languages	8,780
Other languages of Asia, including Burmese, Karen, Turkish, Uzbek	7,261
Punjabi	1,323
Tagalog, including Filipino	8,072
Tamil	3,385
Telugu	3,483
Thai, Lao, or other Tai-Kadai languages	3,861
Urdu	1,927
Vietnamese	21,143

*Note: Languages are listed as they are classified by the Census Bureau. Some languages are combined into "language families" by the census to preserve data privacy and ensure a large enough sample size to report the data.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau. American Community Survey, 2021: ACS 5-Year Estimates. (2021)

Figure 5. Percentage of Colorado's Foreign-Born Asian Populations (All Ages) Who Have Been in the U.S. 10 Years or Less (2021)

Population	Percentage
Bhutanese	89.0%
Burmese	74.9%
Nepalese	62.9%
Pakistani	52.1%
Bangladeshi	50.9%
Indian	50.8%
Thai	39.2%
Indonesian	35.1%
Chinese	35.0%
Malaysian	26.8%
Mongolian	24.8%
Japanese	22.9%
Vietnamese	20.9%
Taiwanese	20.8%
Filipino	20.4%
Cambodian	19.2%
Korean	14.3%
Hmong	5.9%
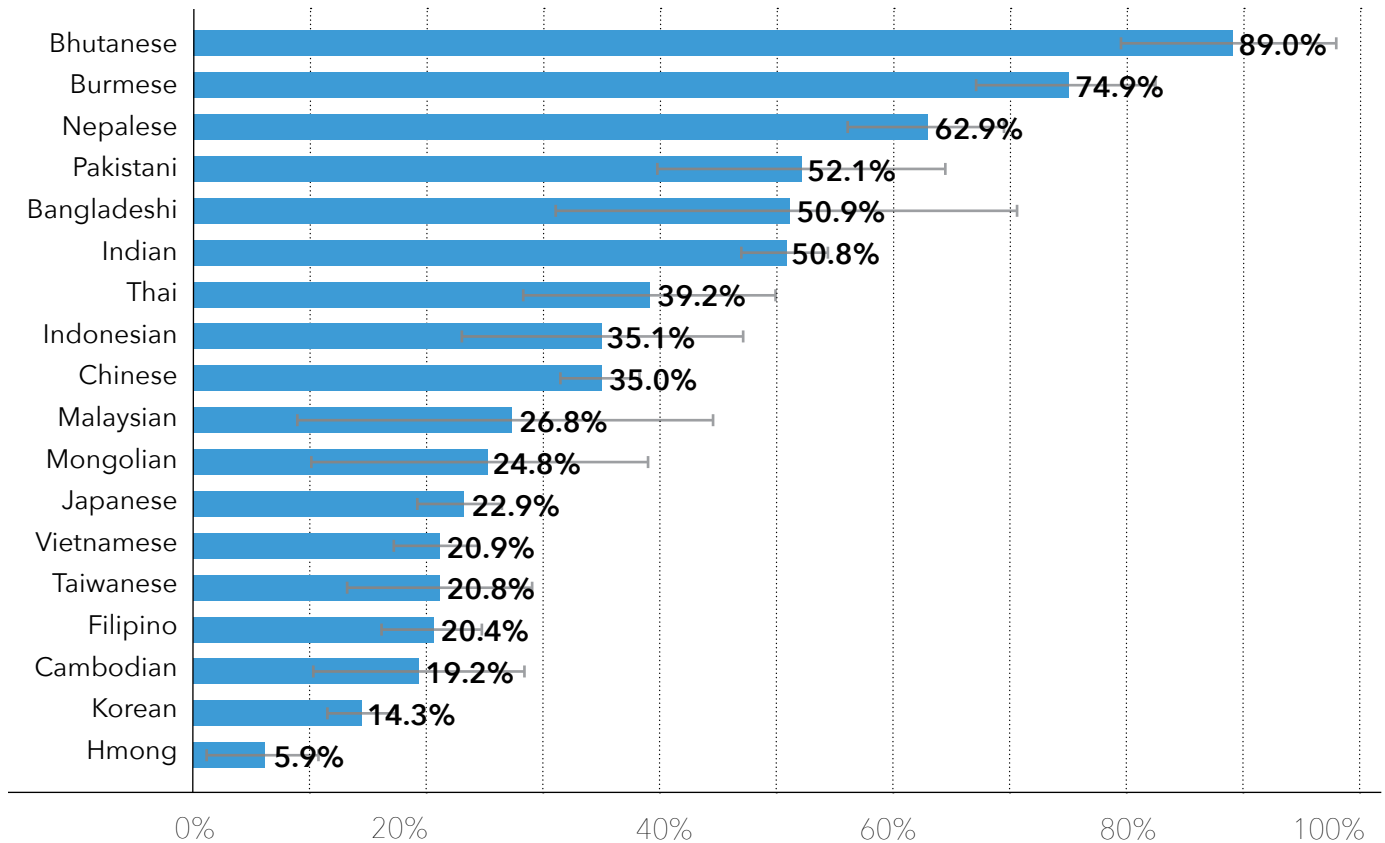
Identities not included due to small sample sizes: Laotian, Okinawan, Sri Lankan.

Note: Gray lines represent confidence intervals, which show the degree of certainty of the data. There is 95% confidence that the true value lies between the range indicated by the interval.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau. American Community Survey, 2021: ACS 5-Year Estimates. (2021)

Hearing from AANHPI Communities on Demographic Identity

AANHPI people in Colorado feel invisible.

In Colorado, AANHPI people feel invisible, wanting to be recognized beyond stereotypes. Importantly, this goes beyond AANHPI identities and should include other dimensions of identity such as age, gender, sexuality, and immigration status, among others. This poses opportunities for better understanding the multifaceted experiences of Colorado's AANHPI communities – and spotlights an opportunity to improve data collection and disaggregation. Better data means more people are being seen.

The following quotations are from our community focus groups and Thought Exchange exercise:

"Immigrants are more than just one dimension. We are several dimensions. [It's] not just who we are and where we are born. Nobody really asked us, 'Why [did] you [come] to this country?' People assume why you came here, and you're automatically placed as a second-class citizen. We feel invisible, not valued, or dismissed." *Participant in the Southeast Asian-identifying focus group*

"People know of our food and our cultural festivals but not of any social issues and challenges our community faces. We need people to know about social inequities so that they can work towards changing them and bringing justice."
Thought Exchange participant

"We're more than just our AAPI identities. If we're not supported as our full selves, sometimes being with our community is more harmful than helpful."
Thought Exchange participant

"[I'm] constantly struggling to be American enough while also being AAPI enough. Being a third-culture kid is exhausting and draining and always has been; I just want to feel welcomed, accepted, and comfortable around my peers here."
Thought Exchange participant

Opportunities For Action

Improve data collection and disaggregation for AANHPI communities in Colorado.

Colorado has significant opportunities to improve and address the current gaps in demographic data for AANHPI populations. By addressing these gaps, Colorado can pave the way for a more inclusive and accurate representation of AANHPI populations, better understand their unique needs and experiences, and ultimately, contribute to more targeted and effective policies and services. The following considerations can lead to more accurate and comprehensive data collection and disaggregation for AANHPI communities.

1. Enhance National, State, and Local Tools

- Collect and report data in more diverse ways, allowing users the flexibility to view disaggregated and aggregated data.

- Include multiple choices in race and ethnicity questions to avoid oversimplification, ensuring that people can identify with their specific groups.

- Include a self-reporting option to avoid obscuring the needs of people with multiple identities who may not find representation in predefined categories.

2. Acknowledge Intersecting Identities

- Improve data collection and information on intersecting identities, such as people who are refugees, immigrants, asylum seekers, youth, older adults, LGBTQ+, people with disabilities, and people experiencing homelessness, among others. Strengthen connections to these groups to gain a more profound understanding of their unique needs.

- Develop targeted data collection strategies that capture the nuances of the experiences and challenges faced by these communities.

3. Consider Risk, Privacy, and Data Security with Disaggregation

- Acknowledge the risks associated with data disaggregation, particularly at the local level. Implement procedures to ensure data anonymity and confidentiality.

A mural by local artist Nalye Lor depicts the history of Chinese and AANHPI immigrants to Colorado.
Brian Clark/CHI

Putting Denver's Forgotten Chinatown and the History of Colorado's AANHPI People in the Spotlight *By Gil Asakawa*

Few people know that Denver once hosted a thriving Chinatown, which was almost wiped out in an 1880 anti-Chinese race riot. But thanks to the efforts of a pan-Asian and Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander group of community leaders, more and more Coloradans are now aware of the ethnic enclave's history.

The mission of Colorado Asian Pacific United, or CAPU, is "to celebrate and preserve Asian Pacific American cultures and histories through education, allowing us to build stronger communities and allies while taking a step towards equitable empowerment, collaboration, and representation."

The group's first project was to celebrate Denver's Chinatown, which had been largely (but not completely) destroyed in an October 31, 1880 anti-Chinese race riot, when thousands of white people rampaged through the streets and alleyways of Lower Downtown, or LoDo, chasing out Chinese residents and damaging or burning their businesses.

The inspiration for the project came from a forgotten and unnoticed plaque on a brick wall catty-corner from Coors Field on 20th Street and just two blocks from Sakura Square, the heart of the city's Japanese community. The plaque was titled "Hop Alley/Chinese Riot of 1880."

The title and the text beneath it placed blame on the Chinese residents for the riot and used the demeaning name "Hop Alley" for the district, a reference to opium dens that were frequented by both Chinese and white people with addiction. It also named three white business owners who took in fleeing Chinese to protect them, which was great, but didn't name the one Chinese man, Look Young, who was beaten to death and hung from a lamp post.

CAPU began looking into how to get the plaque removed and a more accurate marker put in its place to correct the historical record.

The history of Denver's Chinatown began after the Transcontinental Railroad was completed in 1869. Thousands of Chinese immigrant laborers worked on that railroad and eventually made their way south from Wyoming to Denver's Union Station.

Chinatown developed as the Chinese settled a few blocks from the station and started businesses along Blake and Market streets and the alleys starting at 15th Street to 17th Street and beyond.

After the riot, the Chinese didn't just disappear. They returned to LoDo. Into the 1950s, there was a Chinese Masonic Temple on Market off 20th Street, and the American Chinese Association was near 20th Street on Larimer.

That's the history that CAPU wanted to bring to life and share. "Part of it was we wanted to talk about what else can we do," says Joie Ha, CAPU's Executive Director. "And it was the consensus amongst us that our histories, especially locally in Colorado, aren't very well known."

In just two years, CAPU's efforts to memorialize Chinatown have gone beyond updating an old plaque. Former Mayor Michael B. Hancock proclaimed October 31, 2020 as Denver Chinatown Commemoration Day. In April 2022, Mayor Hancock formally apologized for the anti-Chinese riot of 1880, including to descendants of original Chinatown families. And that August, the city officially oversaw the removal of the offensive plaque.

A mural depicting the history of the Chinese and AANHPI immigrants to Colorado now sits on the 19th Street side of a Denver fire station on Lawrence, along with three specially designed historical markers throughout LoDo that explain the Chinatown history. Unfortunately, in December 2023, one of the markers was torn from its base and stolen. Another mural commemorating Colorado's AANHPI history

"Chinatown was our launching board, I guess you can say. But we want to tell the stories and histories of our community at large, not just the Chinatown story."

Joie Ha, executive director,
Colorado Asian Pacific United

is on the Auraria campus. CAPU also helped Denver's Office of Storytelling to produce a powerful 50-minute documentary, "Reclaiming Denver's Chinatown." The film is available on YouTube and has been shown theatrically.

"Chinatown was our launching board, I guess you can say. But we want to tell the stories and histories of our community at large, not just the Chinatown story," Ha says.

While CAPU plans to activate the alleyway where the original Chinatown was located (between 15th and 16th streets and Blake and Wazee) this fall, with performances and artwork, efforts are also being made to elevate the history of AANHPI people writ large. CAPU is also working to create teaching materials for schools, to collect oral histories about the Little Saigon business district along South Federal Boulevard, and to record the stories of the area's Asian adoptees. Long-term, there are plans to build a museum to house artifacts and archive the stories of all the AANHPI communities in the state.

"Not a lot of people remember that Asian Americans have been here for generations," adds Ha. "We have been vital to building this country. Our influence in the United States is strong, but it often goes unrecognized. However, I think recently, with the rise in anti-Asian hate, it was clear that racism against Asian Americans, Native Hawaiians, and Pacific Islanders has been something that is ongoing and continual. The erasure of our histories is an act of racism, and I think that when we are able to know our histories, then we are able to prevent them from happening again."

Health

Having a better understanding of the physical and mental health of AANHPI communities is crucial for several reasons. It can provide nuanced trends in health outcomes across different groups of people, allowing for service providers and policy makers to develop targeted, culturally relevant interventions that address the specific needs of each population. It can also reveal gaps in the network of health care in Colorado, allowing for data-driven decisions about investments in care infrastructure. This domain details the physical health, mental health, and access to care of AANHPI communities in Colorado.

• **Guiding Questions:** What is the state of physical health for AANHPI people in Colorado? Of mental health? What are barriers to accessing health services?

Key Findings

- AANHPI communities report fair or poor general health status at rates comparable to or lower than the overall state average, but this varies by specific identity.

- Rates of poor mental health are at an all-time high across Colorado. Korean adults and AANHPI high school students report high rates of poor mental health.

- Colorado has a lack of culturally and linguistically responsive providers to meet the needs of AANHPI communities, and access to care and insurance vary greatly by community.

Physical Health of AANHPI Communities

AANHPI communities report fair or poor general health status at rates comparable to or lower than the overall state average, but this varies by specific identity.

In Colorado, disaggregated data on physical health metrics such as chronic diseases and general health status are limited. Figure 6 shows the percentage of people reporting fair or poor general health, but due to the way data are collected, the ability to separate it into various identities is limited. In this instance, available data show that self-reported fair or poor general health status is similar to or better than the Colorado average for many AANHPI identities. The percentage of AANHPI people experiencing fair or poor general health ranges from 3.7% to 13.8% for various identities in Colorado, compared with the state average of 13.2%.[24]

This limited data may not show the full story given the inability to break apart data into more than seven identities. For example, worldwide, South Asians account for 60% of all heart disease cases, even though – at 2 billion people – they make up only a quarter of the planet's population.[25] A 2018 study for the American Heart Association found South Asian Americans are more likely to die of coronary heart disease than other Asian Americans and non-Hispanic white Americans.[26] Researchers are advocating for more resources to fully understand why, but issues like the inability to separate data from conventional classifications, hinder research.

Community members pointed to access to healthy foods as a challenge.

> **"There's no place to get fresh vegetables [from my culture.] I go to Target and I'm wondering, 'What kind of vegetables are these?' It's hard to eat fresh here."** *Participant in the recent immigrant and refugee focus group*

A bright spot related to youth physical health is the availability of school-based health centers – medical clinics that offer health care to children and youth, either in a school or on school grounds. This was emphasized by a community member at a focus group:

> **"At my high school, we had Denver Health Centers. You would get parent consent and you can get check-ups, make your own appointments, etc. without needing a parent there. That was helpful for a lot of students, especially if parents are busy – working, taking care of siblings, etc."**
> *Participant in the youth focus group*

Mental Health of AANHPI Communities

Rates of poor mental health are at an all-time high across Colorado.[27] Korean adults and AANHPI high school students report high rates of poor mental health.

National data indicate that rates of mental health issues among Asian people are generally lower compared with white people. However, this finding may be a result of underdiagnosis and underreporting.[28] These issues mask variations in mental health among different AANHPI groups. Many underdiagnoses can happen when mental health symptoms are talked about in a different way, such as describing physical symptoms such as heart palpitations or a poor appetite.[29] Even when diagnosed with a mental health issue, Asian people are less likely to use mental health services compared with other racial and ethnic groups, which may be due to stigma as well as systemic barriers to care such as language access.[30] In 2021, only 25% of Asian adults with a mental illness reported receiving mental health services compared with 52% of white adults with a mental illness.[28]

Further, national data show rising rates of death by suicide among AANHPI youth ages 12-17. In 2020, suicides were the leading cause of death among AANHPI children ages 10-14 and the second leading cause among those ages 15-35. Rates of death by suicide more than doubled among AANHPI youth ages 12-17 from 2010 to 2020 (increasing from 2.2 to 5.0 deaths per 100,000 population).[28]

In Colorado, the ability to separate self-reported mental health status among AANHPI identities is limited. However, data show that 22.2% of Korean people in Colorado report mental health distress, defined as 14 or more poor mental health days in the last month. See Figure 6. By comparison, 12.4% of people in Colorado report mental health distress. Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islanders also report mental health distress at a higher rate than the state average, at 14.0%.[24]

Data from the Healthy Kids Colorado Survey in Figure 7 show that South Asian high school students report about the same percentage as the state average for poor mental health (feeling so sad or hopeless almost every day for two weeks or more in a row that they stopped doing some usual activities) at 38.9% and 39.6%, respectively.[31] For multiracial students, the rate is slightly higher at 43.0%. Rates of poor mental health are lower for East and Southeast Asians and Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander students. South Asians, East and Southeast Asians, and multiracial students all reported higher percentages of self-reported attempted suicide in the last year compared with the state average.

It's important to note that these groups are not disaggregated, so it is difficult to understand any subcultural nuances within each group, and the multiracial category can include multiple identities outside of AANHPI.

Figure 6. Percentage of People 18 and Older in Colorado Reporting Fair or Poor General Health and Mental Health Distress, by AANHPI Identity (2017-2021)

Colorado: 13.2%, 12.4%
Asian: 5.6%, 8.2%
Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander: 11.4%, 14.0%
Korean: 13.8%, 22.2% (33.3%)
Chinese: 4.8%, 11.4%
Vietnamese: 4.2%, 7.9%
Filipino: 12.7%, 6.0%
Japanese: 3.9%, 5.0%
Indian: 3.7%, 1.6%

● ● ● ● Fair or Poor General Health
● ● ● ● Mental Health Distress (14 or more poor mental health days in the last month)
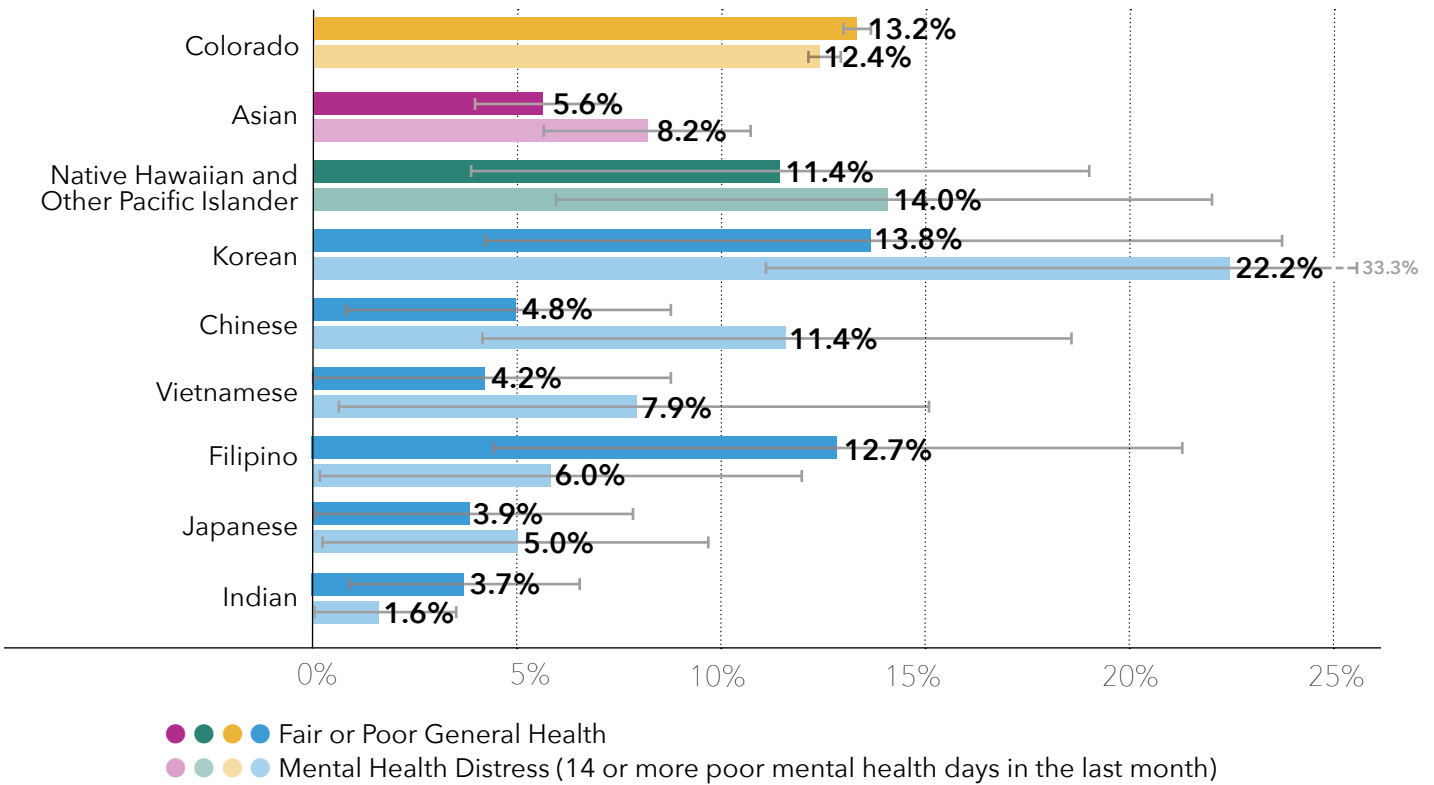
Note: Native Hawaiian, Guamanian, Chamorro, Samoan, and Other Pacific Islander are available categories in this data source but have been included in one group of "Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander" due to small sample sizes. AANHPI identities beyond this are unavailable due to the way data are collected. Gray lines represent confidence intervals, which show the degree of certainty of the data. There is 95% confidence that the true value lies between the range indicated by the interval.

Source: Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment. Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System, 2017-2021.

Figure 7. Percentage of Colorado High School Students Reporting They Experienced Mental Health Issues or Attempted Suicide, by Regional AANHPI Identity (2021)
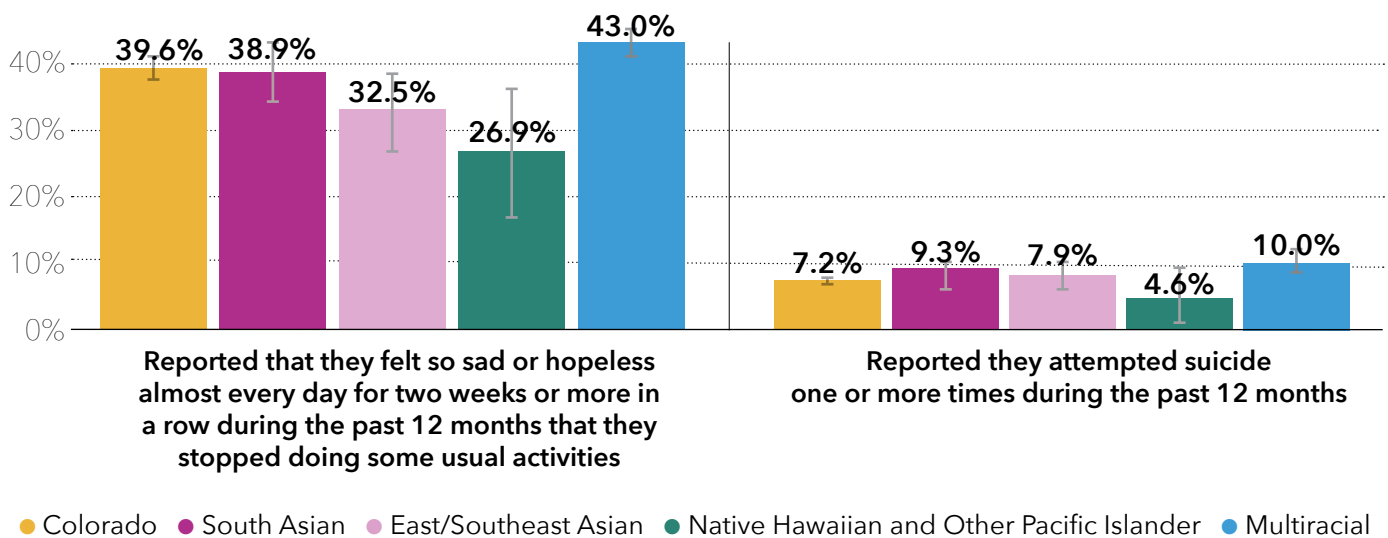
Reported that they felt so sad or hopeless almost every day for two weeks or more in a row during the past 12 months that they stopped doing some usual activities: 39.6%, 38.9%, 32.5%, 26.9%, 43.0%

Reported they attempted suicide one or more times during the past 12 months: 7.2%, 9.3%, 7.9%, 4.6%, 10.0%

● Colorado ● South Asian ● East/Southeast Asian ● Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander ● Multiracial

Note: Due to the way data are collected, Asian as an overall category is not reportable, and East and Southeast Asian cannot be separated. Gray lines represent confidence intervals, which show the degree of certainty of the data. There is 95% confidence that the true value lies between the range indicated by the interval.

Source: Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment. Healthy Kids Colorado Survey, 2021

In 2021, the City and County of Denver's Office of Immigrant and Refugee Affairs conducted listening sessions with multiple racial/ethnic groups, including for AANHPI identities. They found that a lack of access to mental health support was a barrier in all communities represented.[32] This finding is one of many community members and leaders emphasized. In focus groups and key informant interviews, people raised the issue of mental health while acknowledging that cultural stigma around mental health exists in AANHPI communities.

> **"Mental health isn't something Asian households really talk about very much. Being first generation, my family had different experiences and traumas. Mental health is something I've struggled with my entire life. I didn't even know what anxiety was until college. I always thought I was weird because I felt this way."** *Participant in the Southeast Asian-identifying focus group*

For AANHPI people with intersecting identities, such as being LGBTQ+, these issues may be especially challenging.

> **"I have seen a gap within the queer Asian community [with] mental health… It's not that it isn't valued; it is seen as a little taboo, but I think as younger generations grow older, they know that mental health really does matter."** *Key informant*

Community members also raised substance use as an issue, but accurate and reliable data on this issue, especially specific to AANHPI communities, are lacking.

Dancers perform during the Mid-Autumn Festival at the Far East Center in the Little Saigon Denver District. *Brian Clark/CHI*

From left, Chris Wanifuchi, former Executive Director of the Asian Pacific Development Center (APDC); the late Steve Hogan, former Aurora Mayor; and Rudy Lie, a founder of APDC, cut the ribbon to open the APDC building in 2013. In 2023, the Center merged with Aurora Mental Health and Recovery to form the Cultural Development & Wellness Center.
Courtesy of Harry Budisidharta

After 40+ years, Asian Pacific Development Center Continues to Provide Critical Services to Immigrants and Refugees *By Gil Asakawa*

For more than four decades, the Asian Pacific Development Center, or APDC, has been serving the Denver area's diverse Asian community with mental health and other health and social services. Over the years, the nonprofit organization's focus shifted specifically to serving immigrants and refugees from across the world, providing critical services to support education, health, and social needs.

APDC was founded in 1980 to offer mental health services to the Asian community, which like many communities of color, is culturally resistant to openly discussing mental health issues. Over time and with the increasing arrival of immigrants from Asian countries, the organization added services such as English language and job-hunting classes.

Many who use APDC's services describe the organization as their second home. "We become a family fast," said a participant in a focus group conducted at APDC by the Colorado Health Institute. In addition to speaking highly of the Center's staff and teachers, students said they could rely on APDC for support in different areas, including

citizenship applications, victim assistance, and legal services. But behavioral health services — the core of APDC's founding — are unique. "Mental health in Asia is unheard of. There's stigma … even if you seek help, people don't want to talk about it in English. APDC has Vietnamese and Mandarin-speaking therapists. These services and providers make people feel more comfortable," said one participant.

But as of January 2024, APDC's website and Facebook presence has been shuttered and the APDC.org website redirects to Aurora Mental Health and Recovery's Cultural Development and Wellness Center (CDWC).

The change may seem sudden to some, but the evolution has been inevitable — and a long time coming.

"We're calling it an integration because APDC merged with Aurora Mental Health and Recovery back in 2012," explains Harry Budisidharta, Executive Director of APDC since 2017 and now legal counsel and compliance officer of Aurora Mental Health and Recovery (AMHR). "APDC has been a subsidiary of AMHR since then. That's a detail that not a lot of people know about, even though it's not a secret."

"The staff remains the same. All of the services remain the same. None of the services change. The program still is all the same. But now, we are combining not just APDC programs, but also other programs within AMHR that serve refugees and immigrants."

Because of the integration, the multicultural and multilingual staff of 60 at what used to be APDC has grown to nearly 100 people dedicated to helping immigrants and refugees.

And while APDC has been serving immigrants and refugees from across the world, including many of the world's conflict zones, for several

Volunteers tend to the community garden located behind Aurora Mental Health and Recovery's Cultural Development and Wellness Center.
Courtesy of Harry Budisidharta

years, the full integration into CWDC helps APDC expand its reach.

"There has been an ongoing discussion within [our staff and board] about the name APDC [having] a rich history and legacy, but [also creating] a misconception," Budisidharta said. "Sadly, it sometimes deters people from seeking our services. I still remember when we did the COVID vaccine, we had somebody from one of the Pacific Islander nations that came to us and says, 'I know you guys were here. But I didn't think that you were serving people like me. I thought you only serve Asians.'"

APDC has worked with communities in a broader sense for years. The organization provided testimony that led to the passing of Colorado's hate crime law, and Budisidharta drafted the language for the legislation to establish Lunar New Year as an observed holiday in the state starting this year.

The organization has had a lasting impact on Denver's Asian communities and beyond. Whether under its old name or its new identity, CDWC is poised to continue its crucial, critically important work to welcome immigrants and refugees.

Access to Care for AANHPI Communities

Colorado has a lack of culturally and linguistically responsive providers to meet the needs of AANHPI communities, and access to care and insurance vary greatly by community.

Cultural and Linguistic Responsivity

Across the health care system, there is a lack of culturally and linguistically responsive providers to serve AANHPI communities. Community members spoke of struggles with finding providers who understand or speak their languages.

"Mental health is still a challenging issue, especially for communities of color. The resources provided by the state are not diverse. All therapists are white. It's not as inclusive as it could be." *Participant in the youth focus group*

"Even being fluent in navigating the health system, it has been really difficult getting mental health supports for my young son. We are often booked a month out at a time to see a counselor. I think we need more mental health professionals that serve youth in the health sector. There are improvements in schools." *Participant in the East Asian-identifying focus group*

"I don't think there's a large enough network of Asian American doctors, particularly in mental health, who can speak to our experiences. I feel strongly that we need more Asian clinicians that the community can feel are trustworthy." *Participant in the East Asian-identifying focus group*

"[I] had to find a doctor who knew about AAPI communities — he needed to understand how we eat, and why we eat, etc. [For example, my doctor] doesn't lecture me about coconuts. He isn't forcing me to eat zucchini; he's referencing vegetables I can get at the Asian grocery store. He doesn't lecture me on eating the right vegetables." *Participant in the Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander-identifying focus group*

"I had to interpret for my parents when they would go to the doctor. There's a lack of accommodation for Asian families. There's also a lack of research and understanding of what Asian populations need." *Participant in the East Asian-identifying focus group*

One bright spot noted by community members was services provided by Aurora Mental Health and Recovery's Cultural Development and Wellness Center (formerly known as the Asian Pacific Development Center).

"Mental health in Asia is unheard of. There's stigma. Asian Pacific Development Center (APDC) is special in that regard [because they provide services]. I've never even thought of seeking mental health care [before.] But APDC provides Vietnamese and Mandarin therapists. There is so much stigma around mental health that even if you do seek help, people don't know how, and they don't want to talk about it in English. But APDC having these services and providers makes people feel more comfortable." *Participant in the recent immigrant and refugee focus group*

Interpretation and translation services are now widely available across the medical system, and while some participants noted positive experiences with interpretation and translation, others described difficulties.

"Whenever my mom has an appointment, one of the children has to go with her, even though the hospital provides a translator. Sometimes the translator is hard to hear over the phone." *Participant in the recent immigrant and refugee focus group*

"Sometimes the translator does not understand Burmese. They get mad at me, and we go back and forth. It's frustrating." *Participant in the recent immigrant and refugee focus group*

"Sometimes the interpretation is not good, and they don't give you the right language. If you ask them to try again, they get frustrated." *Participant in the recent immigrant and refugee focus group*

Insurance Coverage

National 2021 data from the [Kaiser Family Foundation](#) shows that among those age 64 and younger, 6% of Asian people and 11% of Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander people are uninsured compared with 7% of white people.[28] However, there is a wide variation in coverage by AANHPI identity. For example, uninsured rates are as high as 28% for Mongolian people and 24% for Marshallese people, overall. Citizenship status also makes a big difference. Comparing communities based on citizenship status, the uninsured rate more than doubles for Mongolian and Marshallese people who are not citizens compared with those who are.[28] In Colorado, there are also differences in insurance rates by AANHPI identity. Figure 8 shows that five AANHPI identities – Cambodian, Burmese, Indonesian, Mongolian, and Nepalese – have insured rates lower than the Colorado average.[1]

Difficulties navigating the health care system, especially with insurance benefits, may be an issue for many people.

> **"People are losing their Medicaid. We experienced this in my own household. We found out when we resubmitted a Medicaid application for my mom, and we couldn't get it."** *Key informant*

> **"My parents have a very difficult time navigating the technology needed to remain enrolled in benefits. If they miss a thing they have to do on the computer, then they have to go in person to rectify it."** *Participant in the East Asian-identifying focus group*

Figure 8. Percentage of People in Colorado (All Ages) with Health Insurance, by AANHPI Identity (2021)
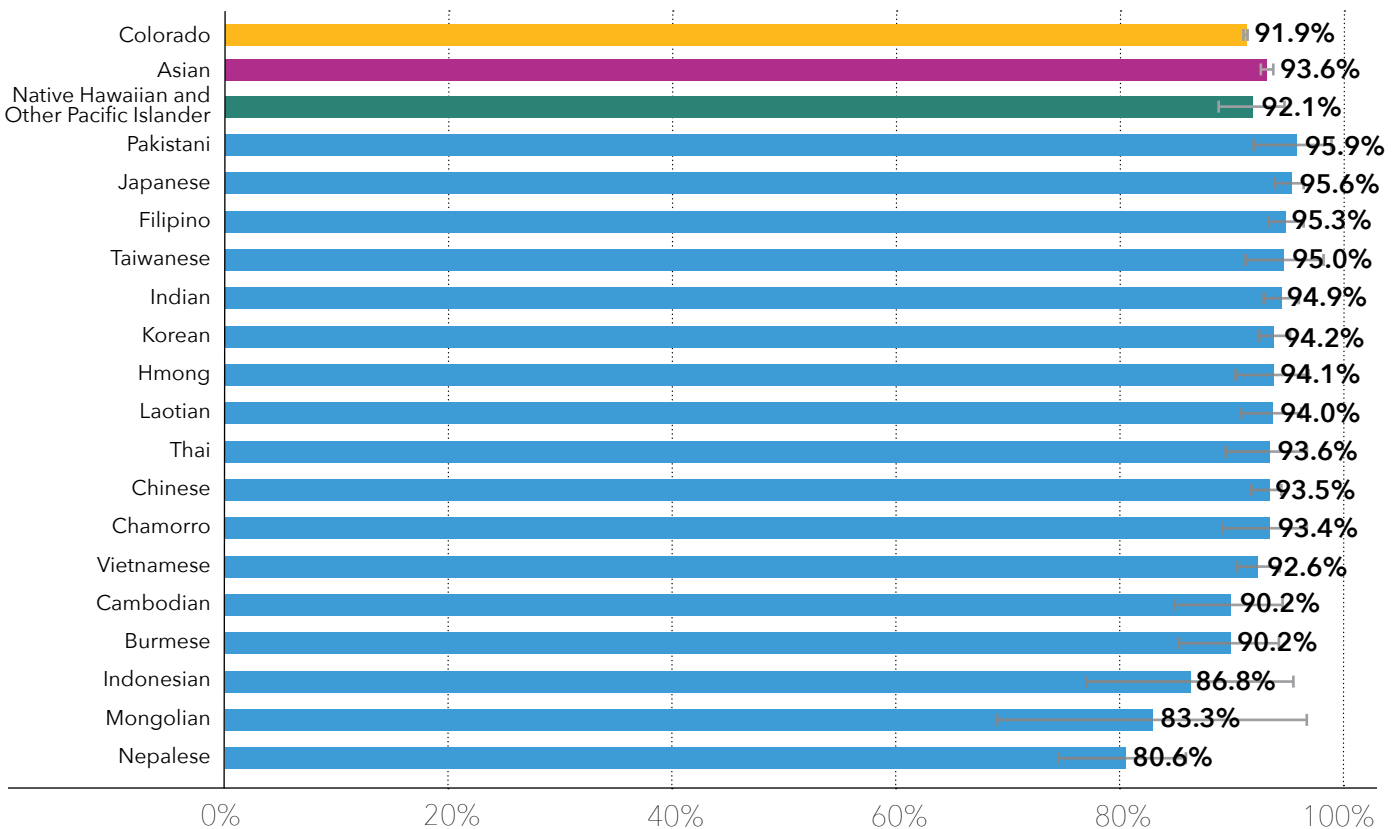
Identity	Percentage
Colorado	91.9%
Asian	93.6%
Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander	92.1%
Pakistani	95.9%
Japanese	95.6%
Filipino	95.3%
Taiwanese	95.0%
Indian	94.9%
Korean	94.2%
Hmong	94.1%
Laotian	94.0%
Thai	93.6%
Chinese	93.5%
Chamorro	93.4%
Vietnamese	92.6%
Cambodian	90.2%
Burmese	90.2%
Indonesian	86.8%
Mongolian	83.3%
Nepalese	80.6%

Identities not included due to small sample sizes: Bangladeshi, Bhutanese, Fijian, Guamanian, Hawaiian, Malaysian, Marshallese, Okinawan, Samoan, Sri Lankan, Tongan.

Note: Gray lines represent confidence intervals, which show the degree of certainty of the data. There is 95% confidence that the true value lies between the range indicated by the interval.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau. American Community Survey, 2021: ACS 5-Year Estimates. (2021)

A sign at the Far East Center in Denver welcomes visitors in many languages. *Brian Clark/CHI*

Opportunities For Action

Increase access to culturally responsive care and insurance for AANHPI communities.

To address the growing need for culturally responsive care and insurance accessibility for AANHPI communities, significant opportunities for improvement emerge. The following considerations can lead to better access to health and mental health care. Addressing language barriers, diverse identities, and workforce representation can help pave the way for a health care system that better meets the unique needs of AANHPI people.

1. Improve Behavioral Health Workforce Diversity and Cultural Responsiveness

- Require culturally responsive care training for health care providers and staff. Ensure these trainings include how to provide care for different AANHPI communities and encourage providers to speak in plain, simple language, which can support effective interpretation.

- Establish opportunities for students of color who are interested in behavioral health careers to connect with therapists of color and other health care professionals.

- Create a pipeline for students of color, through state or institutional initiatives, that gives them practical experience through internships or shadowing. This approach can serve as a valuable pathway to diversify the behavioral health workforce, addressing the need for culturally competent care.

2. Increase Access to Reliable Translators and Interpreters

- Increase access to translators and interpreters who are not only accurate and reliable but also proficient in the right dialect. Translators and interpreters should convey information in plain language, avoiding the use of sophisticated language that may hinder understanding.

- Evaluate translation and interpretation resources regularly to ensure high-quality services.

3. Promote Health Care Enrollment and Services in Culturally Responsive Ways

- Encourage state and health access organizations to provide information about insurance options in multiple languages. These languages should reflect the identities and languages in their service areas.

- Find ways to leverage native speakers and people from AANHPI communities to support increasing insurance access and health care utilization. For example, setting up hotlines and training community navigators to answer questions about how to get insurance or access benefits.

Health Disparities Among Pacific Islanders in Colorado

By Melovy M. Melvin

Health care access is a critical aspect of well-being, yet Pacific Islanders in the Denver metro area face significant challenges in this regard. Pacific Islanders often encounter cultural barriers that hinder their access to health care services. Language differences and unfamiliarity with the local health care system can create communication challenges, making it difficult for people to seek and receive appropriate medical care.

The Denver metro area lacks sufficient health care infrastructure that meets the needs of many people of color, including Pacific Islanders. Vivian Metekan, a Micronesian native, faces health care challenges with her 7-year-old son, EJ, who has a disability. "It was hard at first because not only did I not understand or know the severity of my son's condition, but how was I going to be able to find out the right resources and appropriate care to help him?" She goes on to say that sometimes finding a translator can be hard. "Usually, if I get paired with a translator almost 90% of the time, it's over the phone and usually someone from out of the state of Colorado."

Health care providers may not always have the cultural competence needed to understand the health issues specific to Pacific Islanders. This lack of awareness can lead to misdiagnoses or inadequate treatment, exacerbating existing health disparities.

Community outreach programs that specifically target Pacific Islanders can help share information about available health services, preventive care, and resources. These programs can also address common health concerns within the community.

"Analyzing the needs of [Pacific Islanders in Colorado] can be challenging because there are numerous groups within the Asian American and Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander (AANHPI) designation, and they all have unique

Vivian and EJ

needs," wrote Gabi Johnson, Media Relations Manager of the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment (CDPHE) in an email interview. "For instance, Colorado's Asian population have relatively high vaccination rates, but that might not be true for everyone [who identifies as] AANHPI. However, because the overall vaccination rates are stable, other populations within that group might not get the focused resources they need. Foundations are beginning to examine the gap in philanthropic funding to AANHPI communities, including the recent development of [The Colorado AAPI Circle] housed in The Denver Foundation."

CDPHE has also worked closely with the Asian Pacific Development Center (now Aurora Mental Health and Recovery's Cultural Development and Wellness Center), which continues to provide a range of behavioral health services and support to AANHPI people.

While there are many barriers and inequities facing AANHPI communities in Colorado, there is also great momentum that should be built upon to address those challenges. The Colorado Lotus Project is an important step toward understanding disparities confronting AANHPI communities in Colorado and strengths in community.

Elevating the insights from this and other work in AANHPI communities will be instrumental in fostering equitable access to health care and advancing the well-being of AANHPI communities across the state.

Photo coutesy of Vivian Metekan

Housing

Access to safe, affordable housing lays the foundation for individual and community well-being. Studies have shown that housing affects physical and mental health, economic opportunity, and social cohesion, making it a critical lens for addressing both individual needs and broader societal challenges. This domain details housing opportunities for Colorado's AANHPI communities, including access to affordable housing, mortgages, and homeownership. It also includes details about the quality of housing available to AANHPI communities and the challenges refugees face in finding affordable and adequate housing.

• **Guiding Questions:** What do housing opportunities look like for AANHPI communities? Can communities access high-quality and affordable housing in the areas they want to live?

Key Findings

• In Colorado, AANHPI communities are experiencing housing cost burden (defined as spending more than 30% of monthly income on housing costs).

• Pakistani and Burmese people in Colorado are more likely to live in low-quality housing.

• Immigrants and refugees may be more impacted by housing affordability and quality.
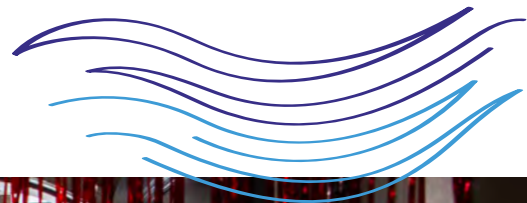
Members of the Guiding Mountain Dragon and Lion Dance Association prepare for a performace to celebrate Lunar New Year in a Denver neighborhood. *Brian Clark/CHI*

Housing Affordability

In Colorado, AANHPI communities are experiencing housing cost burden (defined as spending more than 30% of monthly income on housing costs).

In Colorado, 27.1% of Asian and 32.0% of Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander people experience housing cost burden, which is close to the Colorado average of 27.6%. However, breaking apart this data shows that most AANPHI identities are experiencing a much higher burden, with rates as high as 57.0% for Bangladeshi Coloradans.[1] See Figure 9.

Focus group members spoke of this burden too, pointing to the high cost of housing as a barrier.

> **"Housing in Colorado is far too expensive. We are 49th in the nation for teacher pay. I know educators who live three to four people per house, and it's not sustainable. I think the only reason why I got the house I live in is because the seller was Asian, and we connected. People were outbidding me, but I had a connection with the seller."** *Participant in the East Asian-identifying focus group*

> **"I have a job, but everything is more expensive after the pandemic. Housing, food, but your pay is not enough. Food costs doubled, but your salary doesn't double. Housing is the most expensive."** *Participant in the recent immigrant and refugee focus group*

Data from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) shows that in 2022 approximately 303,100 people who identify as Asian and 104,300 people who identify as Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander lived in public and assisted (subsidized) housing nationwide.[33]

Multigenerational Living

It is not uncommon in many AANHPI and non-western cultures to live in multigenerational households. Research shows that love and connection, quality of life, support and care, and family obligation are primary drivers of multigenerational living.[34] However, data from the Pew Research Center finds that financial issues are also a top reason why U.S. adults are living in multigenerational households.[35] The intersection of lack of affordable housing and multigenerational living was cited in CHI's focus groups.

> **"A lot of our communities are multigenerational households. We have me, my husband, our kids, and my husband's parents, too, because they can't really afford their own place."** *Participant in the Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander-identifying focus group*

> **"[My] grandma still has the house I grew up in. [It's our home base…] If I do fail [to pay rent], the worst-case scenario is I move in with my family."** *Participant in the Southeast Asian-identifying focus group*

CHI's analysis of ACS data shows a wide variety of AANHPI people who report living in a multigenerational home. See Figure 10. Burmese, Bhutanese, and Nepalese communities have the highest rates of multigenerational living at 94.3%, 93.4%, and 86.8%, respectively. This is compared with the Colorado average of 59.8%.[1]

These three communities are also among the most recent groups to have immigrated, which is in line with national findings that immigrant status is linked to the likelihood of multigenerational living. Nationwide, a higher share of foreign-born Americans (26%) than U.S.-born Americans (17%) live in a multigenerational family home.[35] Among adults living in multigenerational households, 23% indicated that it can be stressful, but over half indicated that it was convenient (58%) and rewarding (54%).[35] This sentiment reflects a strength – community and family relationships were a common theme in many of CHI's conversations. (See Strengths in Full Bloom for more.)

Figure 9. Percentage of People in Colorado (All Ages) Experiencing Housing Cost Burden, by AANHPI Identity (2021)
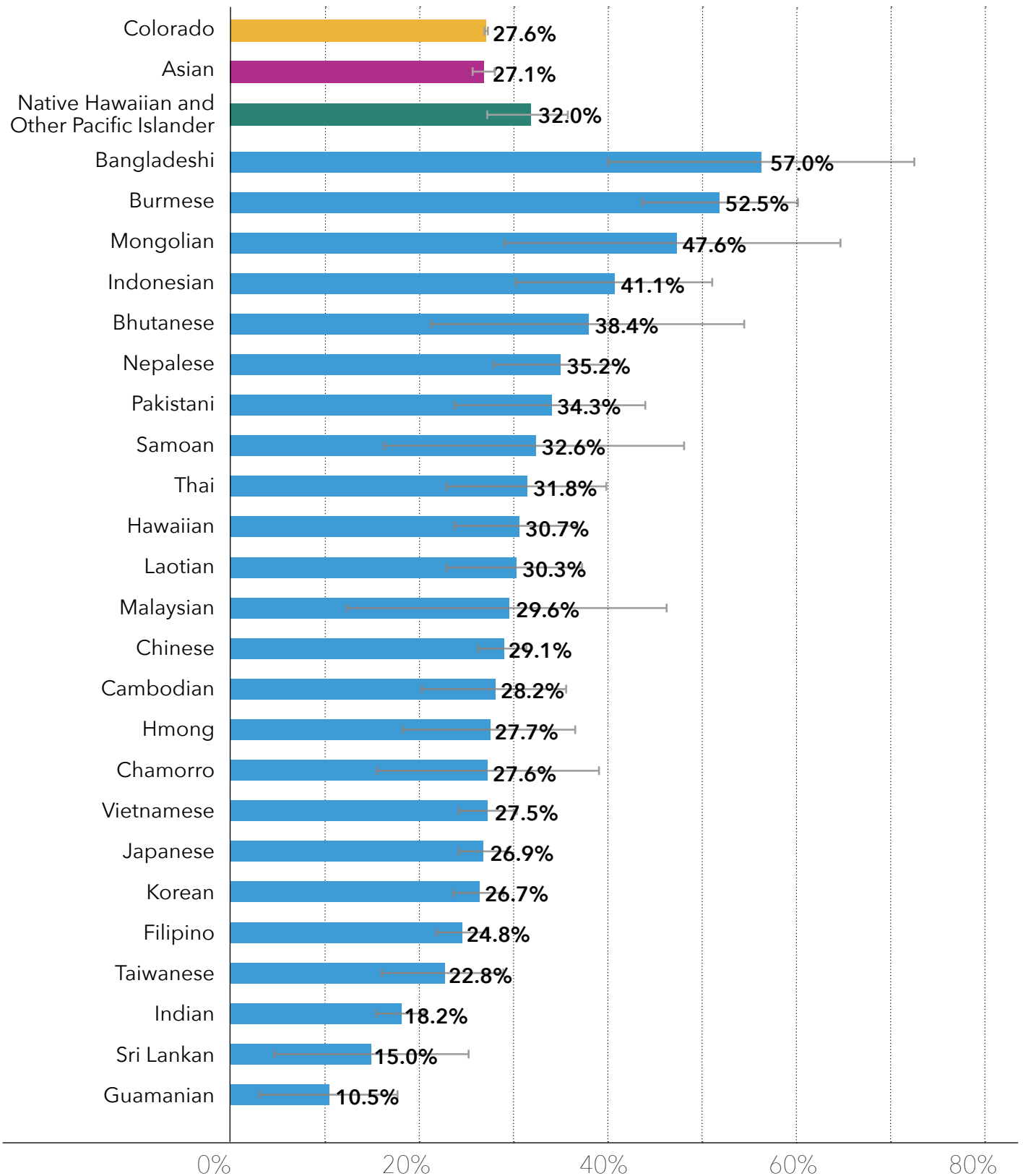
Identity	Percentage
Colorado	27.6%
Asian	27.1%
Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander	32.0%
Bangladeshi	57.0%
Burmese	52.5%
Mongolian	47.6%
Indonesian	41.1%
Bhutanese	38.4%
Nepalese	35.2%
Pakistani	34.3%
Samoan	32.6%
Thai	31.8%
Hawaiian	30.7%
Laotian	30.3%
Malaysian	29.6%
Chinese	29.1%
Cambodian	28.2%
Hmong	27.7%
Chamorro	27.6%
Vietnamese	27.5%
Japanese	26.9%
Korean	26.7%
Filipino	24.8%
Taiwanese	22.8%
Indian	18.2%
Sri Lankan	15.0%
Guamanian	10.5%

Identities not included due to small sample sizes: Fijian, Marshallese, Okinawan, Tongan.

Note: Housing cost burden is defined as spending more than 30% of monthly income on housing costs. This is a household-level metric in which all members of the household will have the same value, thus all ages are indicated. Gray lines represent confidence intervals, which show the degree of certainty of the data. There is 95% confidence that the true value lies between the range indicated by the interval.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau. American Community Survey, 2021: ACS 5-Year Estimates. (2021)

Figure 10. Percentage of People in Colorado (All Ages) Living in a Multigenerational Home, by AANHPI Identity (2021)
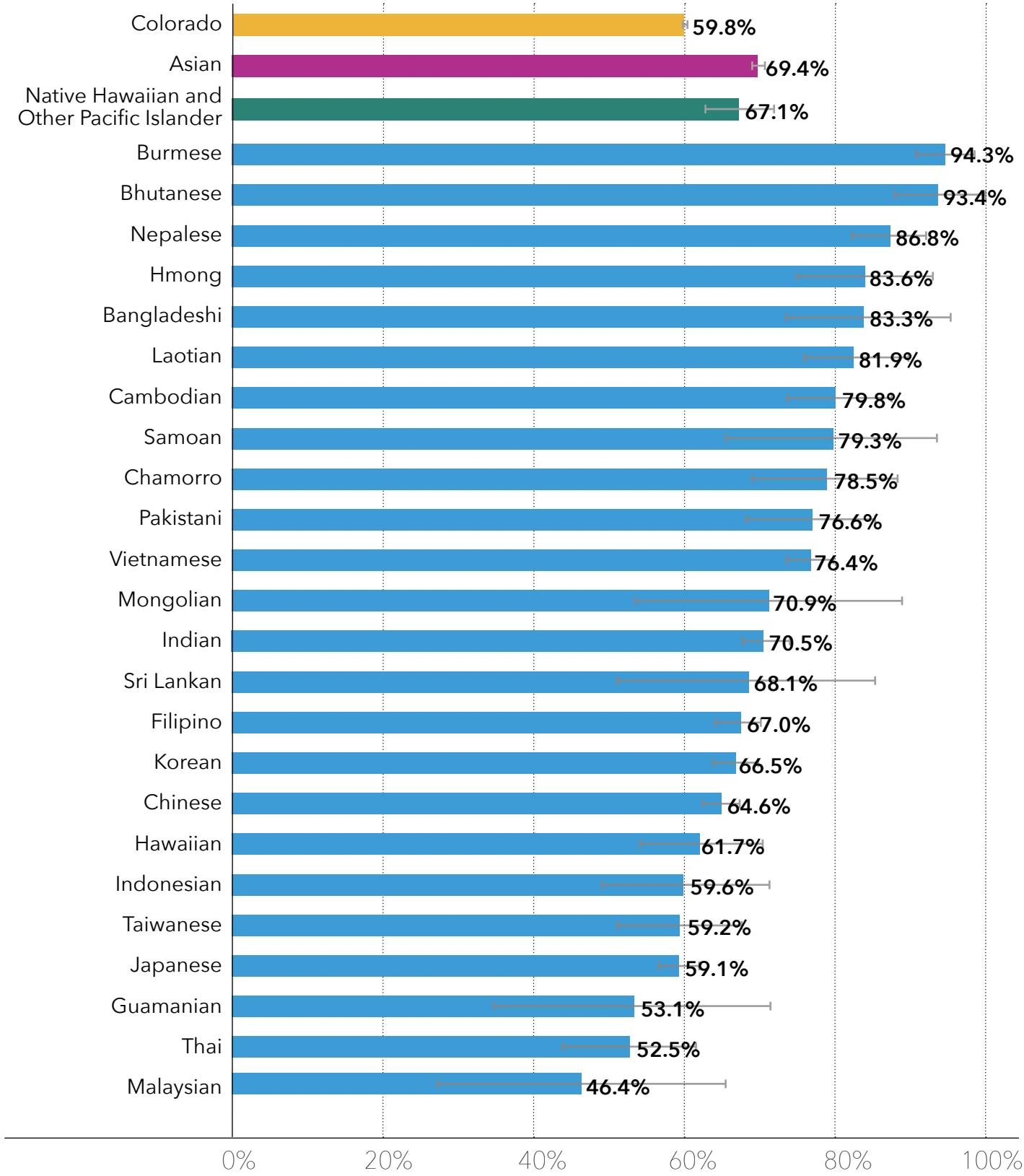
Identity	Percentage
Colorado	59.8%
Asian	69.4%
Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander	67.1%
Burmese	94.3%
Bhutanese	93.4%
Nepalese	86.8%
Hmong	83.6%
Bangladeshi	83.3%
Laotian	81.9%
Cambodian	79.8%
Samoan	79.3%
Chamorro	78.5%
Pakistani	76.6%
Vietnamese	76.4%
Mongolian	70.9%
Indian	70.5%
Sri Lankan	68.1%
Filipino	67.0%
Korean	66.5%
Chinese	64.6%
Hawaiian	61.7%
Indonesian	59.6%
Taiwanese	59.2%
Japanese	59.1%
Guamanian	53.1%
Thai	52.5%
Malaysian	46.4%

Identities not included due to small sample sizes: Fijian, Marshallese, Okinawan, Tongan.

Note: This is a household-level metric in which all members of the household will have the same value, thus all ages are indicated. Gray lines represent confidence intervals, which show the degree of certainty of the data. There is 95% confidence that the true value lies between the range indicated by the interval.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau. American Community Survey, 2021: ACS 5-Year Estimates. (2021)

Homeownership

One component of housing opportunity is ownership, an important piece of building generational wealth. Figure 11 shows wide variation among AANHPI identities, with rates of homeownership varying from 33.7% to 87.7%. Laotian and Hmong people report the highest rates of homeownership at 87.7% and 86.7% respectively, while South Asian groups like Pakistani and Bangladeshi people report 56.2% and 33.7% respectively, well below the Colorado average of 68.8%.[1]

Focus group members pointed to affordability as the primary barrier.

> **"We were able to buy our house 14 years ago. Real estate at the time was way more affordable than it is now. For us personally, not an issue, but for people coming now, there is a huge challenge in finding something you can accommodate your whole family in."** *Participant in the Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander-identifying focus group*

The Colorado Department of Local Affairs 2015-2019 State of Colorado Analysis of Impediments to Fair Housing Choice shows that Asians experience loan denial rates of about 16.3% compared with 14.4% of white Coloradans.[36] Data on Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander communities, as well as disaggregated data by AANHPI identities, are not available and may therefore be affecting housing ownership statistics.

Housing Quality

Pakistani and Burmese people in Colorado are more likely to live in low-quality housing.

While housing affordability and ownership is a barrier, community members also pointed to housing quality as an issue for AANHPI communities. This includes issues with the structure itself, as well as the areas where people are living.

> **"I've been purposeful in choosing places to live based on belonging. Beyond belonging, I've found there is a lot of crime that is causing us to want to move again. The place I'm at is affordable, but not all that great. Roaches, thefts, vandalism; it's just a very high crime area."** *Participant in the East Asian-identifying focus group*

The Census Bureau defines low-quality housing as a structure that is missing either complete plumbing, kitchen, or heating facilities. Data show that Pakistani people are 10 times as likely (5.1%) to live in low-quality housing as the Colorado average (0.5%) and Burmese people are 17 times as likely (8.5%).[1] See Figure 12. These groups are among those who have recently immigrated to the U.S. and therefore represent an important intersection to be considered when looking at housing affordability and quality (discussed in the next section). Income and economic opportunity may also be drivers for low-quality housing (see Domain 4: Income and Economic Opportunity).

An Important Intersection: Housing for Immigrants and Refugees

Immigrants and refugees may be more impacted by housing affordability and quality.

In CHI's focus group with recent immigrants and refugees, housing cost was a recurring theme. With regard to quality, many agreed that, as one participant put it, "coming from a 'third-world country,' the places here are relatively better. It's expensive, but it's still better than what we had." However, others noted difficulty obtaining housing and experiencing health issues caused by poor quality.

> **"There are so many economic challenges our community faces, but the biggest one is housing, specifically permanent supportive housing. It's really difficult for new immigrants."** *Participant in the South Asian-identifying focus group*

> **"Most [immigrants and refugees] are struggling with housing… [They're] going to the hospital for mold [which] the landlord won't fix, [but] they can't leave the house because it's too expensive to leave."** *Key informant*

Figure 11. Percentage of People in Colorado (All Ages) Who Own Their Home, by AANHPI Identity (2021)
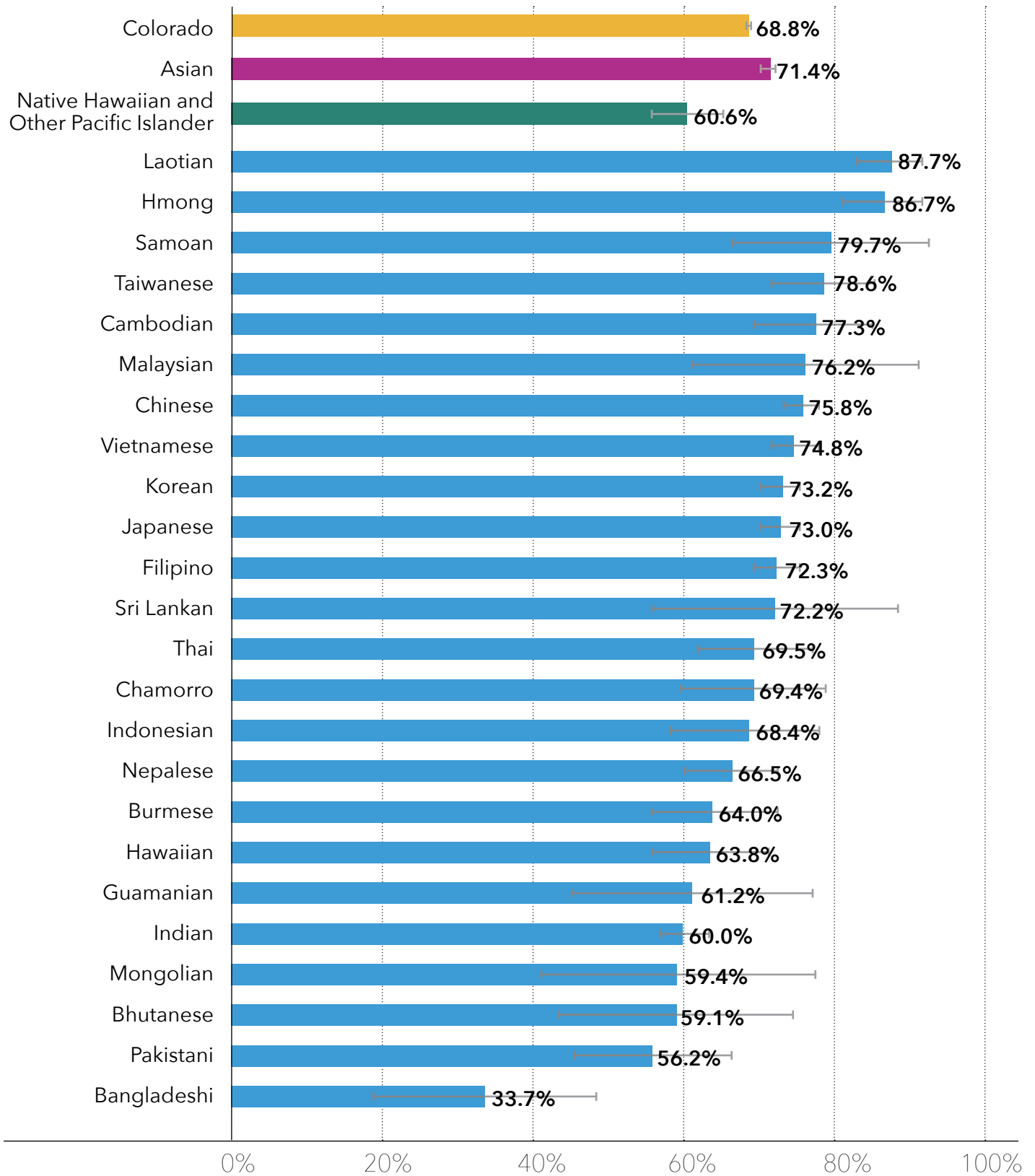
Identity	Percentage
Colorado	68.8%
Asian	71.4%
Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander	60.6%
Laotian	87.7%
Hmong	86.7%
Samoan	79.7%
Taiwanese	78.6%
Cambodian	77.3%
Malaysian	76.2%
Chinese	75.8%
Vietnamese	74.8%
Korean	73.2%
Japanese	73.0%
Filipino	72.3%
Sri Lankan	72.2%
Thai	69.5%
Chamorro	69.4%
Indonesian	68.4%
Nepalese	66.5%
Burmese	64.0%
Hawaiian	63.8%
Guamanian	61.2%
Indian	60.0%
Mongolian	59.4%
Bhutanese	59.1%
Pakistani	56.2%
Bangladeshi	33.7%

Identities not included due to small sample sizes: Fijian, Marshallese, Okinawan, Tongan.

Note: This is a household-level metric in which all members of the household will have the same value, thus all ages are indicated. Gray lines represent confidence intervals, which show the degree of certainty of the data. There is 95% confidence that the true value lies between the range indicated by the interval.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau. American Community Survey, 2021: ACS 5-Year Estimates. (2021)

Figure 12. Percentage of People in Colorado (All Ages) Who Live in Low-Quality Housing, by AANHPI Identity (2021)

Identity	Percentage
Colorado	0.5%
Asian	0.7%
Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander	1.2%
Burmese	8.5%
Pakistani	5.1%
Chinese	0.9%
Japanese	0.6%
Indian	0.6%
Vietnamese	0.4%
Hawaiian	0.2%
Korean	0.2%
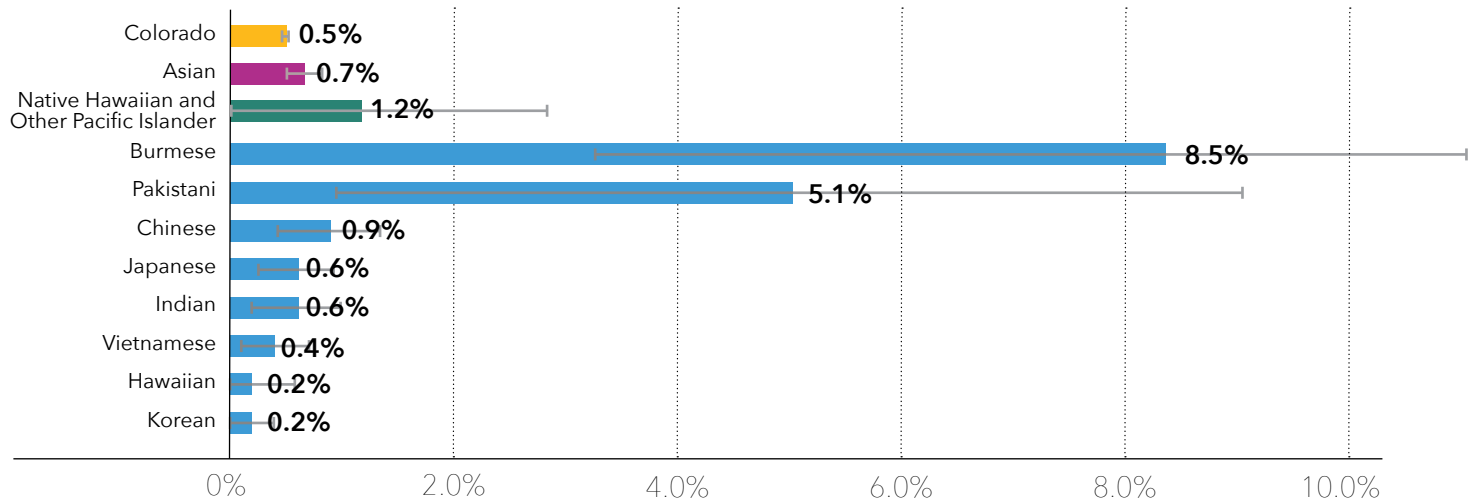
Identities not included due to small sample sizes: Bangladeshi, Bhutanese, Cambodian, Chamorro, Fijian, Filipino, Guamanian, Hmong, Indonesian, Laotian, Malaysian, Marshallese, Mongolian, Nepalese, Okinawan, Samoan, Sri Lankan, Taiwanese, Tongan.

Note: Low-quality housing is defined as a structure that is missing either complete plumbing, kitchen, or heating facilities. This is a household-level metric in which all members of the household will have the same value, thus all ages are indicated. Gray lines represent confidence intervals, which show the degree of certainty of the data. There is 95% confidence that the true value lies between the range indicated by the interval.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau. American Community Survey, 2021: ACS 5-Year Estimates. (2021)

Opportunities For Action

Increase affordability, ownership, and quality to address housing barriers faced by AANHPI communities.

To address housing challenges for AANHPI Coloradans, improvements must be made in affordability, ownership, and quality — targeting strategies toward immigrant and refugee populations and groups facing the biggest disparities (like some South Asian groups). Housing is a complex and multifaceted issue that extends far beyond AANHPI communities. However, by focusing on these considerations, Colorado can work toward creating a housing landscape that is more equitable, affordable, and conducive to the well-being of AANHPI people and that considers their unique circumstances and diverse needs.

1. Improve Affordability

- Explore innovative solutions for affordable housing, recognizing the housing cost burdens faced by AANHPI communities.

- Create housing policies that support the prevalence of multigenerational living within AANHPI cultures and accommodates these needs or preferences.

2. Address Homeownership Barriers

- Develop programs that provide financial assistance, education, and support for AANHPI people.

- Collaborate with lending institutions to collect better data on loan denial rates and ways to reduce these rates to ensure equitable access to mortgages for AANHPI communities.

3. Support Improved Housing Quality

- Implement initiatives to improve the quality of housing, addressing issues like structural deficiencies and inadequate facilities.

- Provide support and education to AANHPI communities on navigating housing challenges, including education on city inspections, tenant rights, tenant-landlord issues, reporting mechanisms, and follow-up procedures. Ensure these materials are provided in multiple languages.

Amy Ruth's (left) journey from Thailand highlights many of the successes and struggles of immigrants striving to build lives in the U.S.
Courtesy of Amy Ruth

Amy Ruth: Navigating Challenges, Building Community – Exploring the Immigrant Experience in Colorado *By Melovy M. Melvin*

Colorado has experienced a surge of migrant arrivals in recent years. In 2023 alone, for example, many have traveled from Venezuela. The migrant groups relocating here come from all different backgrounds, influenced by their own experiences, such as the urgency to flee conflict, persecution, climate change, or large-scale human rights violations in their home countries. As we observe the current influx of Venezuelan migrants, we witness firsthand the challenges and triumphs people encounter as they navigate the complexities of immigration and strive to settle into their new home. Amy Ruth's own transformative journey, from a Thai refugee to a community navigator, makes her someone who knows too well of those same challenges and triumphs.

Amy's journey from Thailand, which began seven years ago, offers a portrait of the struggles and successes of immigrant groups striving to build lives in the U.S., specifically in the Aurora and Denver metro area. She recounts the hurdles she encountered upon arrival, including overcoming language barriers and navigating the nuances of accessing health care and benefits. Experiences like Amy's emphasize the importance of tailored support systems, such as community resources and special case managers, to facilitate the integration process and ensure equitable access to essential services. Amy's experience sheds light on broader issues faced by immigrant communities.

Amid efforts to recover from the pandemic, Amy found a meaningful role at the East Colfax Community Collective (ECCC), offering her a chance to contribute to and engage with the community, particularly migrants. However, the lasting impact of the pandemic brought forth additional obstacles, notably in health care access for her family. "The pandemic was extremely hard for us, especially for my mom who wasn't able to apply for Medicaid because of income requirements despite me being the only one working at the time. It was one thing to try to access health services, but for people like my mom, who just moved to Colorado, trying to go through the application process was very difficult," Amy says.

She notes that a lack of access to health care services and challenges applying for and understanding insurance were common themes for many migrants she encountered, especially for Asian American and Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander (AANHPI) people. She experienced the threat of losing Medicaid due to delays in the application process, revealing systemic flaws affecting vulnerable households.

Another prominent issue she highlights is the housing crisis faced by AANHPI and other immigrant groups in metro Denver. Escalating rents, sometimes increasing by $300 annually, forced families into overcrowded living situations, with multiple individuals sharing a two-bedroom apartment.

Among the barriers faced by the AANHPI community, language and education also emerged as significant challenges. "The AANHPI community alone has so many unique dialects and languages and sometimes that can be overwhelming and [often overlooked.]" Amy describes a time when she tried to assist her mother in translating a document a case worker had given her, but that it was in the wrong dialect of the Thai language that her mother speaks. Limited educational opportunities prior to immigration have also hindered access to jobs requiring English proficiency, leaving many individuals stuck in low-wage positions.

> "Many people have the freedom to voice their concerns and advocate for themselves. Instead, they often are afraid and hide or try to downplay their struggles, believing they are powerless to affect change, especially because of where they migrated from or how their journey was when arriving here, but that's not true ... every voice has power."
>
> Amy Ruth

Amy urges decision-makers to move beyond assumptions and actively engage with the community to truly understand their needs. To address these issues, Amy stresses the necessity of action over mere promises. Building trust, she argues, requires tangible changes that the community can witness. In terms of successful partnerships, she highlighted the positive impact of collaborating with organizations such as ECCC, where she worked, or the Asian Pacific Development Center (now Aurora Mental Health and Recovery's Cultural Development and Wellness Center) and local food banks. It's partnerships like these that can provide migrants real, vital support, offering assistance with food, mental health services, and program enrollments.

Amy sees opportunities for both individuals and state leaders. "Many people have the freedom to voice their concerns and advocate for themselves. Instead, they often are afraid and hide or try to downplay their struggles, believing they are powerless to affect change, especially because of where they migrated from or how their journey was when arriving here, but that's not true … every voice has power. And it would be more helpful if the community and the state worked together to help all of them. So, I would encourage people to speak up [because collective voices have the power to create meaningful change]."

Income and Economic Opportunity

Assessing income and economic opportunity reveals the distribution of resources, wealth, and economic mobility within a community. It exposes potential inequalities and biases that prevent certain groups from accessing opportunities for advancement in the job market and accumulating generational wealth. By recognizing barriers and promoting access, decision-makers can empower people to build secure lives, drive shared prosperity, and navigate the evolving economic landscape. This domain speaks to opportunities to thrive. It includes income, employment, and business ownership.

• **Guiding Questions:** What do income and economic opportunities in Colorado look like for AANHPI communities? What is the state of entrepreneurship and other functions of business development?

Key Findings

- A variety of AANHPI people in Colorado report having incomes at or below 200% of the federal poverty level (FPL). In 2023, the 200% FPL for a single-person household was $29,160.

- A lack of recognition of foreign degrees, limited access to education, and language barriers are among the economic challenges many immigrants and refugees face in Colorado.

- Across the U.S., nearly 3 million Asian-owned businesses employ almost 5 million workers.[37] Entrepreneurship is an important aspect of income and economic opportunity for many AANHPI people in Colorado. Support for business owners is limited, however.

Vendors prepare food at the Mid-Autumn Festival at the Far East Center in the Little Saigon Denver District.
Brian Clark/CHI

Income

A variety of AANHPI people in Colorado report having incomes at or below 200% of the FPL. In 2023, the 200% FPL for a single-person household was $29,160.

The percentage of people with incomes at or below 200% FPL varies across AANHPI identities. See Figure 13. More than half of these identities are experiencing rates that are higher than the rate for Asians overall (21.1%), showing nuanced experiences when the data is separated beyond just one or two categories. This disparity is highest for Burmese Coloradans with over half (52.3%) reporting earning incomes below 200% FPL.[1]

Figure 13. Percentage of People in Colorado (All Ages) Earning Incomes at or Below 200% of the Federal Poverty Level, by AANHPI Identity (2021)
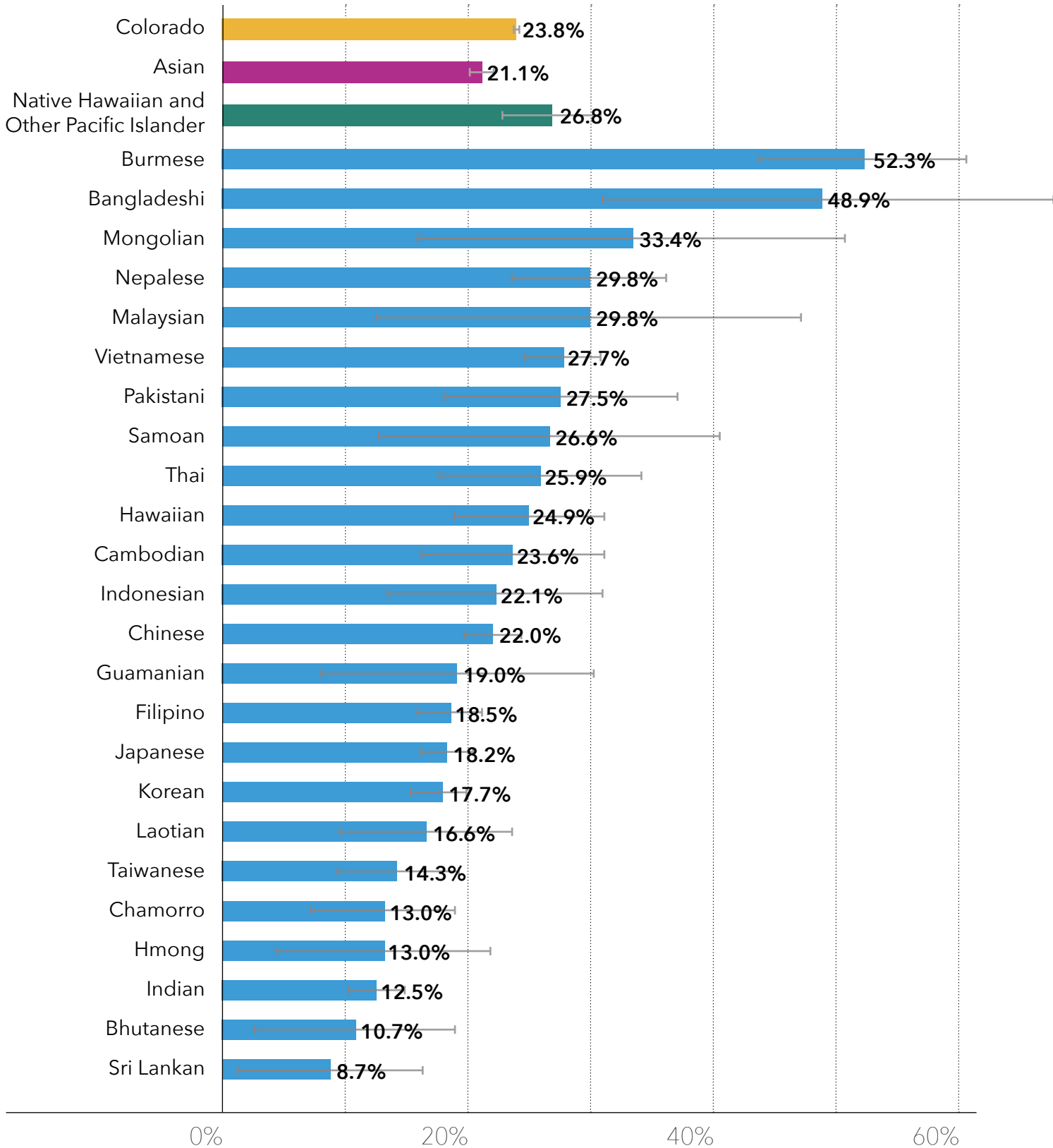
Identity	Percentage
Colorado	23.8%
Asian	21.1%
Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander	26.8%
Burmese	52.3%
Bangladeshi	48.9%
Mongolian	33.4%
Nepalese	29.8%
Malaysian	29.8%
Vietnamese	27.7%
Pakistani	27.5%
Samoan	26.6%
Thai	25.9%
Hawaiian	24.9%
Cambodian	23.6%
Indonesian	22.1%
Chinese	22.0%
Guamanian	19.0%
Filipino	18.5%
Japanese	18.2%
Korean	17.7%
Laotian	16.6%
Taiwanese	14.3%
Chamorro	13.0%
Hmong	13.0%
Indian	12.5%
Bhutanese	10.7%
Sri Lankan	8.7%

Identities not included due to small sample sizes: Fijian, Marshallese, Okinawan, Tongan.

Note: This is a household-level metric in which all members of the household will have the same value, thus all ages are indicated. Gray lines represent confidence intervals, which show the degree of certainty of the data. There is 95% confidence that the true value lies between the range indicated by the interval.
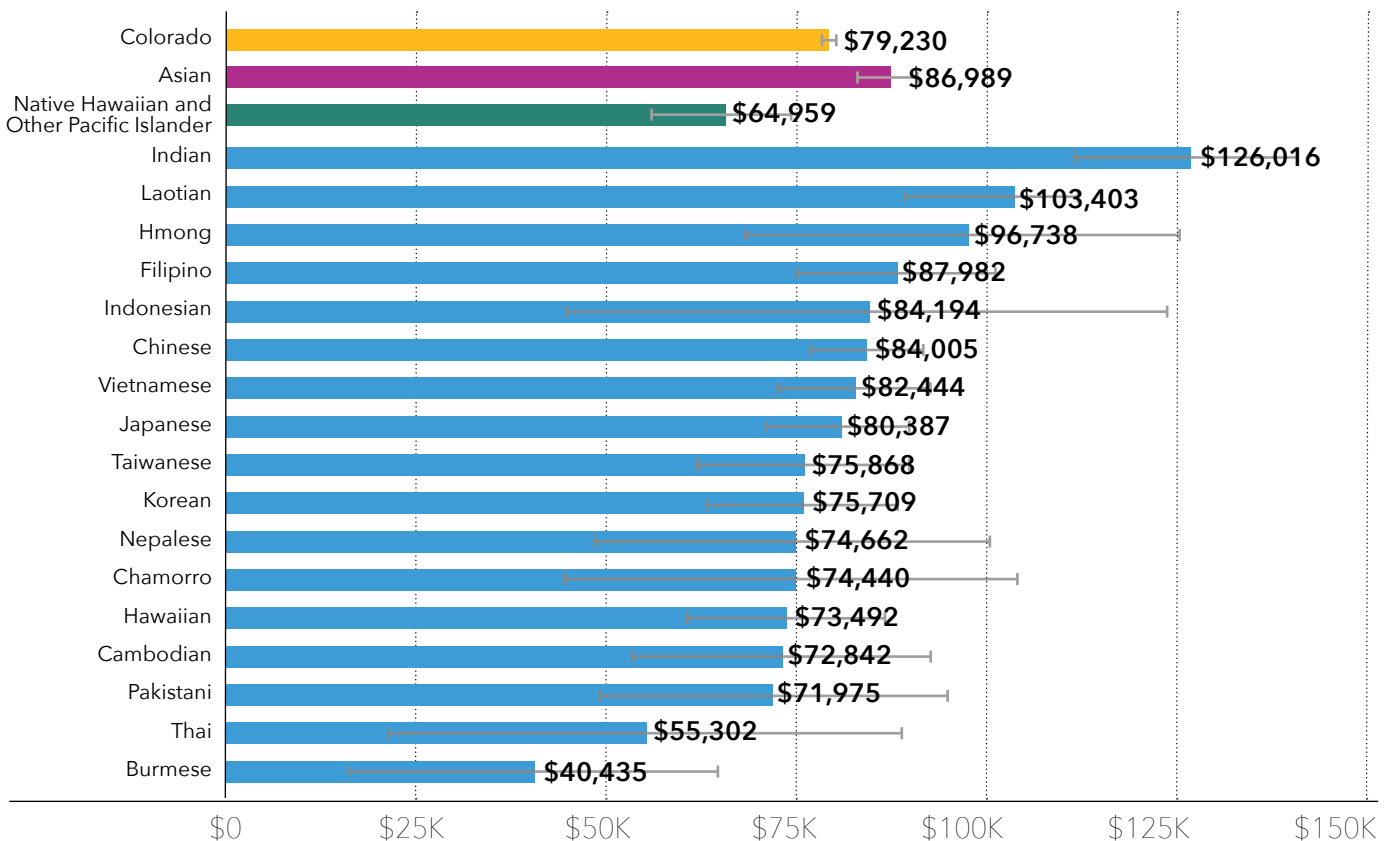
Source: U.S. Census Bureau. American Community Survey, 2021: ACS 5-Year Estimates. (2021)

Median household income also shows variation across AANHPI identities. Figure 14 shows that the median household income for Burmese people in Colorado is $40,435, less than half of the median household income earned by Asians overall ($86,989.)[1]

Research shows that the most rapidly rising income inequality in the U.S. has been among Asians. Additionally the gap between the highest earners and the lowest earners is greater for Asians than for any other racial/ethnic group.[4] This gap is even greater for some AANHPI-identifying women. For example, while data show that Taiwanese women make $1.08 for every $1.00 that white, non-Latino men make, Nepalese and Bangladeshi women make only $0.48.[38]

Other socioeconomic measures, such as employment (discussed in the following section) and educational attainment (discussed in Domain 5: Education) may contribute to these variations. Research also finds that differences can be driven by types of citizenship and visa status. For example, those entering the U.S. with work visas likely have higher median household incomes compared with those that entered as refugees. Many Burmese people immigrated to the U.S. as refugees fleeing war in their home country, which could contribute toward their lower household incomes. On the other hand, higher-earning groups such as Taiwanese people and Asian Indian people usually immigrate through work visas.[28] Without this richness of data, the variations across people's unique experiences within AANHPI communities are missed.

Figure 14. Median Household Income of People in Colorado (All Ages), by AANHPI Identity (2021)

Identity	Median Household Income
Colorado	$79,230
Asian	$86,989
Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander	$64,959
Indian	$126,016
Laotian	$103,403
Hmong	$96,738
Filipino	$87,982
Indonesian	$84,194
Chinese	$84,005
Vietnamese	$82,444
Japanese	$80,387
Taiwanese	$75,868
Korean	$75,709
Nepalese	$74,662
Chamorro	$74,440
Hawaiian	$73,492
Cambodian	$72,842
Pakistani	$71,975
Thai	$55,302
Burmese	$40,435

Identities not included due to small sample sizes: Bangladeshi, Bhutanese, Fijian, Guamanian, Malaysian, Marshallese, Mongolian, Okinawan, Samoan, Sri Lankan, Tongan.

Note: This is a household-level metric in which all members of the household will have the same value, thus all ages are indicated. Gray lines represent confidence intervals, which show the degree of certainty of the data. There is 95% confidence that the true value lies between the range indicated by the interval.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau. American Community Survey, 2021: ACS 5-Year Estimates. (2021)

Employment

A lack of recognition of foreign degrees, limited access to education, and language barriers are among the economic challenges many immigrants and refugees face in Colorado.
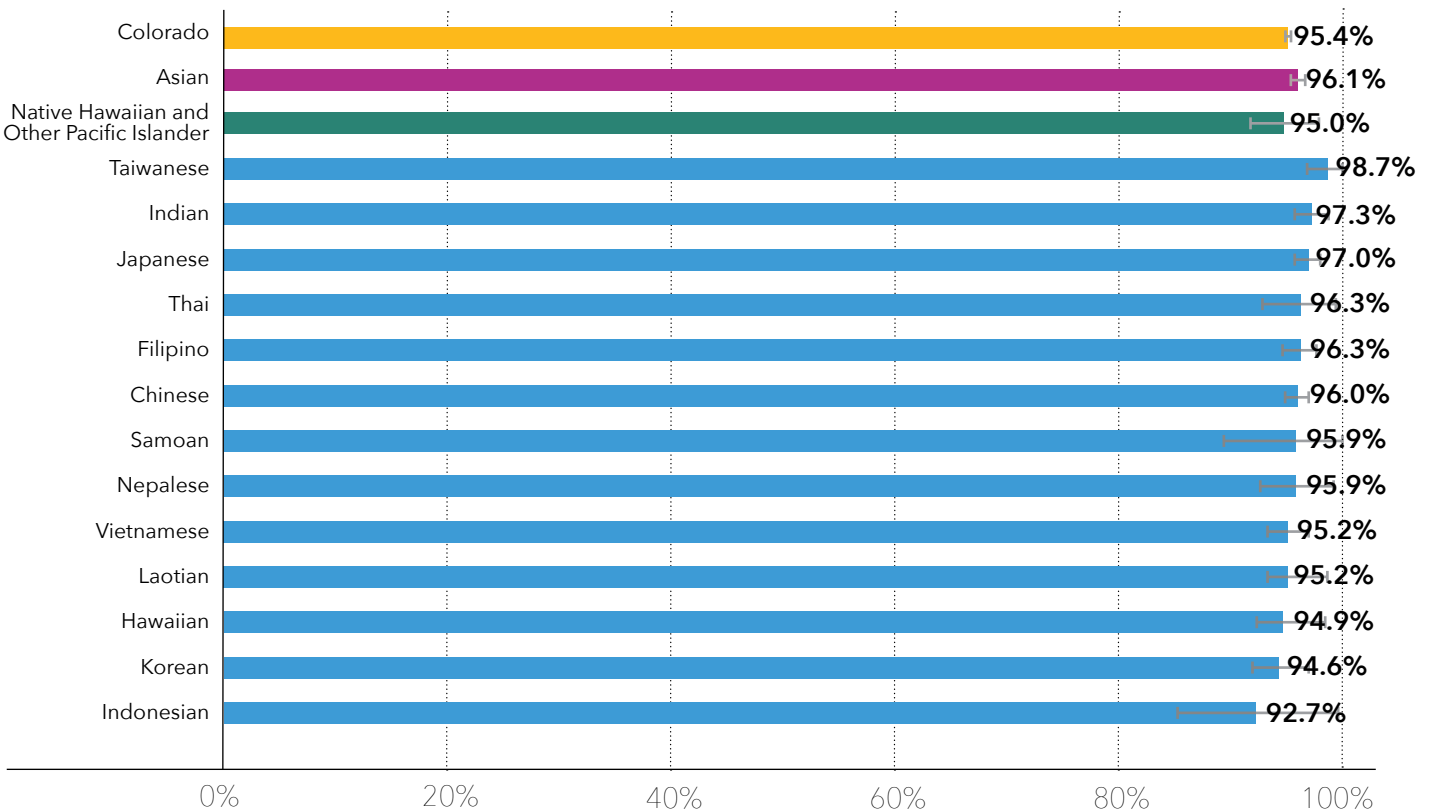
Figure 15 shows little deviation between the employment rate among AANHPI identities and the Colorado average of 95.4%.[1] However, many identities are not shown in this figure due to small sample sizes.

While rates of employment are relatively aligned with the Colorado average, this data does not illustrate the struggles of people who are employed nor the role their job plays in their ability to thrive.

"Things are not affordable. Employers have a lot of power and make people feel like they are replaceable. There have been a lot of layoffs recently. I was recently laid off. I am on government unemployment, which I am grateful for, but it's really not much. For people who were making less than I was, their unemployment is probably way lower." *Participant in the East Asian-identifying focus group*

"I have a master's degree and work full time, and I still have to do another job to get what my family needs." *Participant in the East Asian-identifying focus group*

Figure 15. Percentage of People in Colorado 16 and Older in the Labor Force, by AANHPI Identity (2021)

Identity	Percentage
Colorado	95.4%
Asian	96.1%
Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander	95.0%
Taiwanese	98.7%
Indian	97.3%
Japanese	97.0%
Thai	96.3%
Filipino	96.3%
Chinese	96.0%
Samoan	95.9%
Nepalese	95.9%
Vietnamese	95.2%
Laotian	95.2%
Hawaiian	94.9%
Korean	94.6%
Indonesian	92.7%

Identities not included due to small sample sizes: Bangladeshi, Bhutanese, Burmese, Cambodian, Fijian, Guamanian, Hmong, Malaysian, Marshallese, Mongolian, Okinawan, Pakistani, Sri Lankan, Tongan.

Note: Gray lines represent confidence intervals, which show the degree of certainty of the data. There is 95% confidence that the true value lies between the range indicated by the interval.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau. American Community Survey, 2021: ACS 5-Year Estimates. (2021)

Research shows that AANHPI women make up 2.9% of the overall workforce but represent 3.8% of frontline workers. During the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, Asian women disproportionately experienced pandemic-related job loss and health risk due to exposure to the virus.[39]

Community leaders and focus group members said immigrants and refugees experience two key challenges. The first is that employers in the U.S. may not accept or recognize certain certifications or degrees earned in another country, making it difficult for those with training to find a suitable job. The second is that immigrants and refugees who did not have educational opportunities before coming to the U.S. face education and language barriers. For example, jobs that require a high level of English proficiency may be unobtainable to those who would otherwise be qualified.

> **"Certifications or degrees [immigrants or refugees] get at home are not transferable. [There are] former doctors who were practicing in their country, but when they immigrate over to the states, those credentials aren't accepted. [We are not honoring] the work and education immigrants have brought in."** *Participant in the East Asian-identifying focus group*

> **"My parents make enough, but it's not the job they want. They work in a restaurant, and it's a way to talk and connect with others, but they don't have the communication skills to find other jobs that require more English-speaking [but are higher paying]."** *Participant in the youth focus group*

> **"If you don't know English it can be hard to find a job. When I tried to talk to customers, it was very hard. Switching to Uber was easier."** *Participant in the recent immigrant and refugee focus group*

Racial and gender discrimination can also hinder opportunity and growth in the workplace.[38] Research shows that Asian Americans are the least likely to be promoted to management positions, with even fewer Asian women promoted to these roles.[40]

The model minority myth plays a role in this disparity. This stereotype suggests that success in the Asian community is due to a strong work ethic, family values, and an emphasis on education but overlooks the challenges Asians and other people of color face. The myth also hyper-visualizes Asians as good workers, but not necessarily good leaders.[40] Research by McKinsey and Company finds "advancement sputters as Asian Americans move up the corporate ladder, where high levels of representation at the entry level do not translate to high levels in senior management positions. The share of Asian Americans decreases with greater seniority, and so does their share of promotions."[41]

The perpetual foreigner stereotype also portrays Asian Americans as outsiders and may contribute to lower rates of professional advancement. Asian Americans report lower levels of inclusion and support, such as mentorship and coaching.[41]

Differences in cultural upbringing and historical workplace dynamics can also create friction. Focus group members described having to advocate for themselves in a way that felt more "politicized" than expected.

> **"I have a 'white' name, and when I show up to [an] interview, I can tell they are just doing the interview as a courtesy. No one has explicitly said that I looked different than expected [but the] conversation on the phone [is] totally different from the experience in person."** *Participant in the Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander-identifying focus group*

> **"It's becoming more and more apparent to me that it's highly valued to be outspoken in order to get those raises and promotions."** *Participant in the Southeast Asian-identifying focus group*

Entrepreneurship

Across the U.S., nearly 3 million Asian-owned businesses employ almost 5 million workers.[37] Entrepreneurship is an important aspect of income and economic opportunity for many AANHPI people in Colorado. Support for business owners is limited, however.

Entrepreneurship is an important component of income and economic opportunity for AANHPI communities, but language barriers and a lack of banking relationships have limited AANHPI entrepreneurs' access to loans and capital.[42]

> **"There's this generational wealth, which isn't just finances; it's also education/experience. Our challenge starting a business wasn't that it was difficult, but we didn't have the generational wealth to understand how to do it. In general, things like that are set up with the perception that we are all starting from the same starting line."**
> *Participant in the Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander-identifying focus group*

A community leader CHI spoke with said that language barriers impact both entrepreneurship and those entering the workforce. Employers and funders prioritize "perfect English" over the individual or opportunity. Oftentimes, large business sponsors and funders also fail to meet people where they are, despite trying to engage with the community.

> **"Online applications for jobs [or grants] will get written off because of their spelling. [In face-to-face meetings people get] hung up on [an applicant's] accent or grammar."**
> *Key informant*

> **"If you want the community to trust what you are doing, you have to show your face. You have to go to events. Come and introduce yourself personally. Culturally, that is the best way to increase trust and communication… Go to their community events. Don't set up a fancy reception with ethnic food and expect people to come in the middle of the day during the week."**
> *Key informant*

Community leaders also said that opportunities don't always trickle down to AANHPI communities. Complex and inconsistent processes across agencies and government entities create confusion as different state and local departments may have different priorities or processes.

> **"All these opportunities for state contracts, low-cost loans, [and other] information is siloed within the state and city governments. [One] city government is great with economic development but [it's not the same for others.] There are so many different ones. It is hard for Asian business owners, but sometimes they don't see the point. Why bother? It doesn't work in all places."**
> *Key informant*
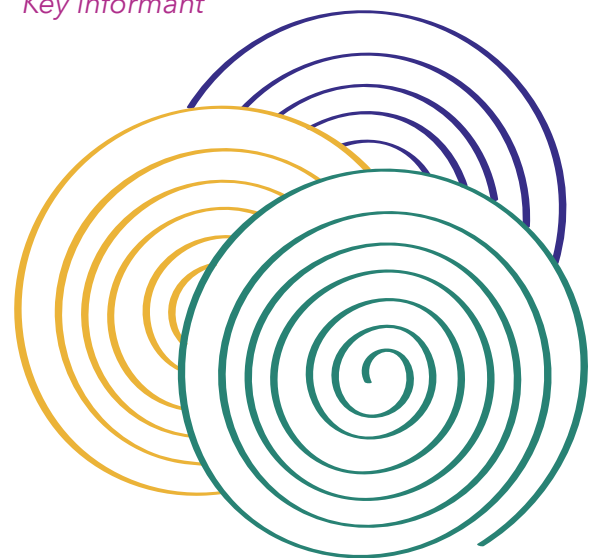
Opportunities For Action

Increase access to culturally responsive education and networking, address employment and entrepreneurship challenges, and collect better employment data on AANHPI workers.

To enhance income and economic opportunities for AANHPI communities, Colorado must develop a comprehensive approach to address income disparities, employment challenges, and to provide much-needed support for entrepreneurs. Some approaches to consider include:

1. Increase Access to Education and Networking and Address Employment Challenges

- Increase access to English language learning opportunities by providing classes or diverse language support in workplaces to foster inclusivity.

- Translate and share job postings and opportunities in multiple languages, especially for positions that do not require high English proficiency.

- Establish community hubs to facilitate networking, mentorship, and pathways for AANHPI people to connect with opportunities.

- Establish policies and programs that bridge gaps between foreign qualifications and U.S. job market requirements, recognizing that many immigrants and refugees face barriers due to potentially nontransferable certifications and degrees. This is especially relevant for high-need workforce areas such as the clinical and nonclinical health care workforce.

- Promote implementation of diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging (DEIB) training programs in workplaces to enhance cultural competency among leadership and team members.

- Establish DEIB best practices for hiring. Examples include understanding the diversity that exists in the organization, using inclusive language that emphasizes transferable skills and experience in job descriptions and does not deter qualified non-native English speakers and mitigates biases.

- Implement meaningful and sustainable mentorship opportunities for AANHPI workers to support career advancement, especially at higher levels in the workplace.

2. Support AANHPI Entrepreneurs

- Develop initiatives to support AANHPI entrepreneurs, such as providing guidance on accessing state and local resources and how to establish banking relationships or no- or low-interest capital programs for AANHPI entrepreneurs.

- Create streamlined and accessible processes for AANHPI business owners to access information on state contracts, low-cost loans, and other opportunities. Ensure these processes – including review processes – are culturally responsive and that language access is not a barrier.

- Encourage funders and business partners to take DEIB trainings to better understand how to work alongside AANHPI and immigrant and refugee communities.

- Increase entrepreneurship sponsorship opportunities for AANHPI entrepreneurs. These opportunities can support business education and networking opportunities and resources for small business owners.

3. Collect More Granular Data on AANHPI Workers

- Advocate for the collection of more granular data about AANHPI workers to inform corporate leaders about the unique experiences and challenges faced at critical points in their careers.

- Encourage companies to address implicit bias in job interviews and evaluations to foster a more inclusive and equitable work environment.

Education

Education is a social determinant of health and is strongly associated with life expectancy, morbidity, and health behaviors. It is also a socioeconomic factor, playing a critical role in shaping opportunities, employment, and income. Understanding the opportunities for AANHPI communities helps policymakers and leaders address the gaps in resources for students, including youth, adults, and English language learners. This domain provides an overview of data around educational attainment for AANHPI communities and captures their experiences with the education system.

• **Guiding Questions:** What do opportunities, including educational attainment and access to culturally and linguistically appropriate resources, look like for AANHPI students? What gaps in access to higher education exist across different groups of AANHPIs? What barriers do AANHPI students face in receiving culturally competent education and resources? What does AANHPI representation look like among schoolteachers and staff?

Key Findings

• The model minority myth and the inability to separate data allow school systems to overlook K-12 AANHPI students who need support.

• AANHPI people have varied rates of high school completion and of continuing education after high school.

• Adult education classes and other resources are needed to support immigrants, refugees, and non-native English speakers in gaining skills and knowledge to be self-sufficient.

Experiences in the School System

The model minority myth and the inability to separate data allow school systems to overlook K-12 AANHPI students who need support.

Dynamics that shape student experiences in the school system include the model minority myth, belonging and safety, diversity, language access, and curriculum.

The Model Minority Myth and Education

The model minority myth perpetuates the idea that all Asians are academically high achieving, which can have detrimental impacts on student health and learning. For example, the Center for American Progress reports that Pacific Islander K-12 students experienced two different kinds of racism from educators steeped in this myth. They were either perceived as perfect students who then had their academic needs ignored, or they were perceived as exceptions to this rule and were placed into less challenging classes and discouraged from attending four-year colleges.[43]

Participants across focus groups said this echoed their experiences and that the stereotype continues to be perpetuated.

> **"Typical Asian stereotypes can be good in a way, but there's a negative impact for others. For example, people might think one person is very smart, but in reality, that person has an average, normal mindset. But assumptions are made about that person. It can make them feel better about themselves, but being told you're smart when you're not creates a strange feeling."**
> *Participant in the youth focus group*

Expectations from teachers, peers, and others that stem from the myth can create mental health issues for AANHPI students. A 2021 study from the Journal of Youth and Adolescence describes the myth as "dehumanizing as it punishes those who deviate from the stereotype and the narrow definition of success."[44]

Belonging and Safety

In CHI's youth focus group discussions, students spoke of their experiences with belonging or fitting in at school. Students noted that some schools have Asian affinity groups or clubs, where they tend to find more connection with students who look like them or have similar cultures or values. Overall, students said that they feel that they find ways to fit in the spaces around them.

> **"I'm involved in a lot of extracurriculars. There's not a lot of [AANHPI] representation in the student body. It's tricky to find people to identify with, but I wouldn't say I don't belong. I find a way to fit in and represent myself in those spaces."** *Participant in the youth focus group*
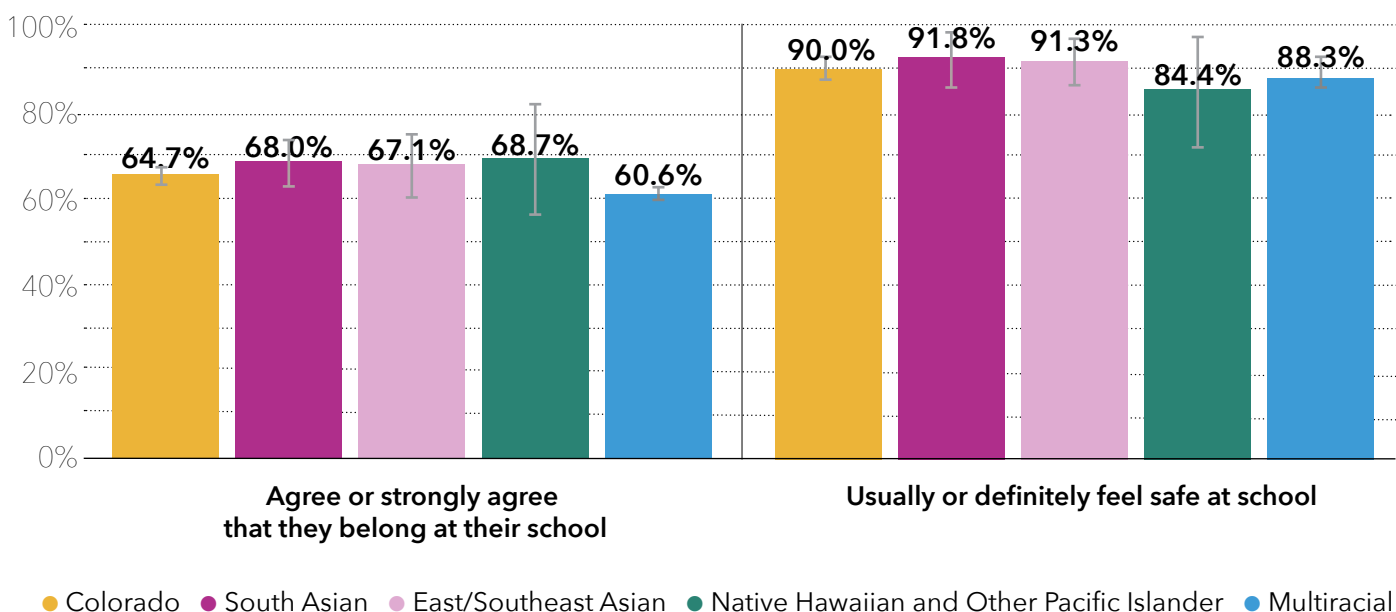
Data from the Healthy Kids Colorado Survey in Figure 16 shows similar rates of belonging and feeling safe at school across AANHPI-regional groupings and the Colorado average.[31]

Diversity, Language Access, and Curriculum

Diversity of staff and teachers, issues with language access, and a lack of AANHPI curriculum taught in schools also emerged as themes related to education in focus groups and key informant interviews.

Studies have shown that students of color benefit both academically and socially from having teachers of color.[45] In the 2023-2024 school year, 3.3% of Colorado students identified as Asian and 0.3% as Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander. Employment data show that 1.6% of Asian Coloradans and 1.8% of Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander Coloradans work as teachers. Across the state, 3.0% of Coloradans work as a K-12 teacher.[1] This data may reflect a gap in the diversity of AANHPI teachers in Colorado schools.

Figure 16. Percentage of Colorado High School Students Who Reported They Felt Safe or Belonged at School, by Regional AANHPI Identity (2021)

● Colorado ● South Asian ● East/Southeast Asian ● Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander ● Multiracial

Note: Due to the way data are collected, Asian as an overall category is not reportable, and East and Southeast Asian cannot be separated. Gray lines represent confidence intervals, which show the degree of certainty of the data. There is 95% confidence that the true value lies between the range indicated by the interval.

Source: Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment. Healthy Kids Colorado Survey, 2021

"There are not enough Asian teachers. I have, my entire career, been the only Asian. I joined an affinity group recently, and it really helped me fill a void I didn't realize I had." *Participant in the East Asian-identifying focus group*

"It would be helpful [for students] to see educators who look like them, and beyond the field of math and science. Being a teacher is a viable career." *Participant in the South Asian-identifying focus group*

"I became a teacher because I never felt represented growing up." *Participant in the Southeast Asian-identifying focus group*

Schools are also limited in their ability to provide resources in multiple languages. One focus group participant noted how this issue can be exacerbated for people with intersecting identities, such as those with a disability.

"There are many challenges with getting students with disabilities the care they need. Much of the information the school district disseminates is only in English or Spanish – other languages are not communicated. For families dealing with disability, this can really compound the problem because they have to deal with getting the information they need about disability and in their language." *Participant in the East Asian-identifying focus group*

Several focus group participants also discussed inclusion of AANHPI history and culture in curriculum. In 2019, Colorado legislators passed House Bill 19-1192 to establish a commission to make recommendations on a more inclusive and accurate history and civics curriculum. However, during the review process, the Social Studies Standards Review Committee omitted recommendations on Asian Americans in many instances, such as recognizing contributions during the Civil War, despite well-documented evidence of their involvement. Native Hawaiian history was not included at all despite the U.S.' long-standing history with Hawaii and the Pacific Islands.[46] Community leaders and organizations fought to address these exclusions. However, the Colorado Academic Standards for Social Studies, adopted in 2022, show some of these exclusions were maintained. For example, this question explicitly excludes Asian Americans: "What role did various and diverse social groups such as women, African Americans, and Indigenous Peoples play in the Civil War?"[47]

This oversight has raised concern about the inclusivity and even the accuracy of AANHPI representation in curriculum in Colorado.

"Both of my parents were interned, so for me this is personal … There is a teacher I know who brings students to Sakura Square, so we can talk about the internment of Japanese Americans, but that's not [included in] standard curriculum; it's just because she feels it's important. We need a more integrated curriculum. There needs to be more Asian American history more broadly across Colorado." *Participant in the East Asian-identifying focus group*

To note, Amache, the World War II internment camp, is mentioned in the Colorado Academic Standards for Social Studies as one major event that is used to explore the relationship between Colorado's history and events in U.S. history during the same era. However, the incarceration of Japanese Americans is a suggested example of – but not requirement in – discussing migration, immigration, and displacement with regard to the "complexity of events throughout U.S. history."[47]

Educational Attainment

AANHPI people have varied rates of high school completion and of continuing education after high school.

Lack of accurate data oftentimes fuels the model minority stereotype by further masking the needs of students who need academic support. For example, data from the National Center for Education Statistics show that while the aggregated high school dropout rate for all Asian people ages 16 to 24 is only 2%, the rate is 6% for Cambodian Americans, 9% for Nepalese Americans, and 20% for Burmese Americans.[48]

Looking at Colorado-specific data shows a similar story. Figure 17 shows that 95.1% of Asian Coloradans ages 25 and older have a high school education. This value is less than 90.0% for Nepalese, Vietnamese, Cambodian, and Burmese Coloradans.[1] As people from Burma (now known as Myanmar) are among the most recent Coloradans to have immigrated, this may reflect an even greater disparity for immigrants, refugees, and asylum seekers.

Another example of data gaps comes from a report from the Colorado Department of Higher Education. The report notes that 62.9% of Asian or Pacific Islander Coloradans earned a college degree or certificate and that this rate is much lower for other communities of color, therefore demonstrating an equity gap.[49] While this data reflects that AANHPI students are better off than other racial and ethnic groups, Figure 18 shows that among Asian identities, fewer than a third (29.8%) of Burmese people report continuing their education after high school. Among Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander identities, this rate is lowest among those who identify as Hawaiian (58.0%).[1]

Figure 17. Percentage of People 25 and Older in Colorado Who Have a High School Education, by AANHPI Identity (2021)
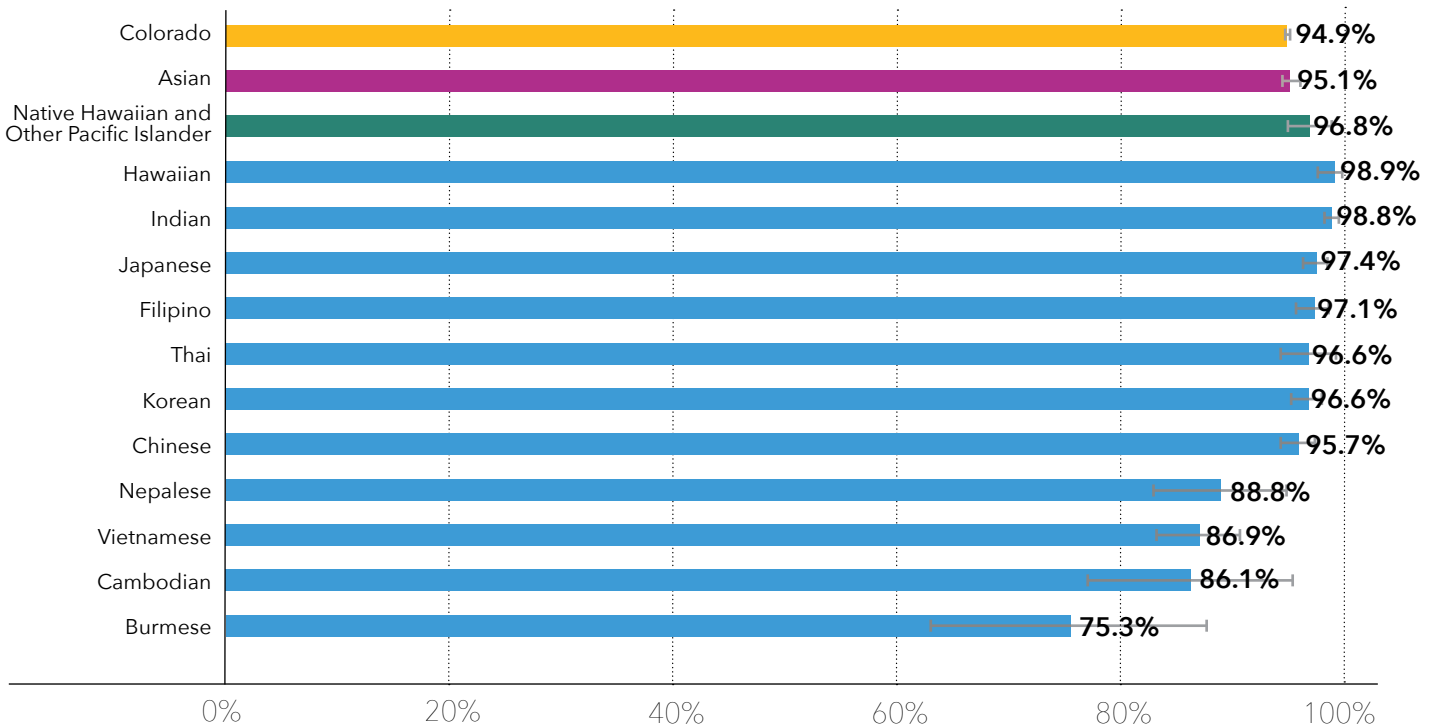
Identities not shown due to small sample sizes: Bangladeshi, Bhutanese, Chamorro, Fijian, Guamanian, Hmong, Indonesian, Laotian, Malaysian, Marshallese, Mongolian, Okinawan, Pakistani, Samoan, Sri Lankan, Taiwanese, Tongan.

Note: Gray lines represent confidence intervals, which show the degree of certainty of the data. There is 95% confidence that the true value lies between the range indicated by the interval.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau. American Community Survey, 2021: ACS 5-Year Estimates. (2021)

Figure 18. Percentage of People in Colorado 25 and Older Who Continued Education After High School, by AANHPI Identity (2021)

Identity	Percentage
Colorado	66.4%
Asian	72.6%
Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander	63.7%
Indian	91.0%
Taiwanese	87.1%
Pakistani	79.8%
Japanese	75.9%
Filipino	75.8%
Chinese	73.7%
Chamorro	73.6%
Korean	71.6%
Indonesian	67.4%
Thai	66.7%
Guamanian	60.1%
Vietnamese	59.5%
Hawaiian	58.0%
Nepalese	57.4%
Laotian	54.3%
Hmong	52.6%
Cambodian	46.3%
Burmese	29.8%
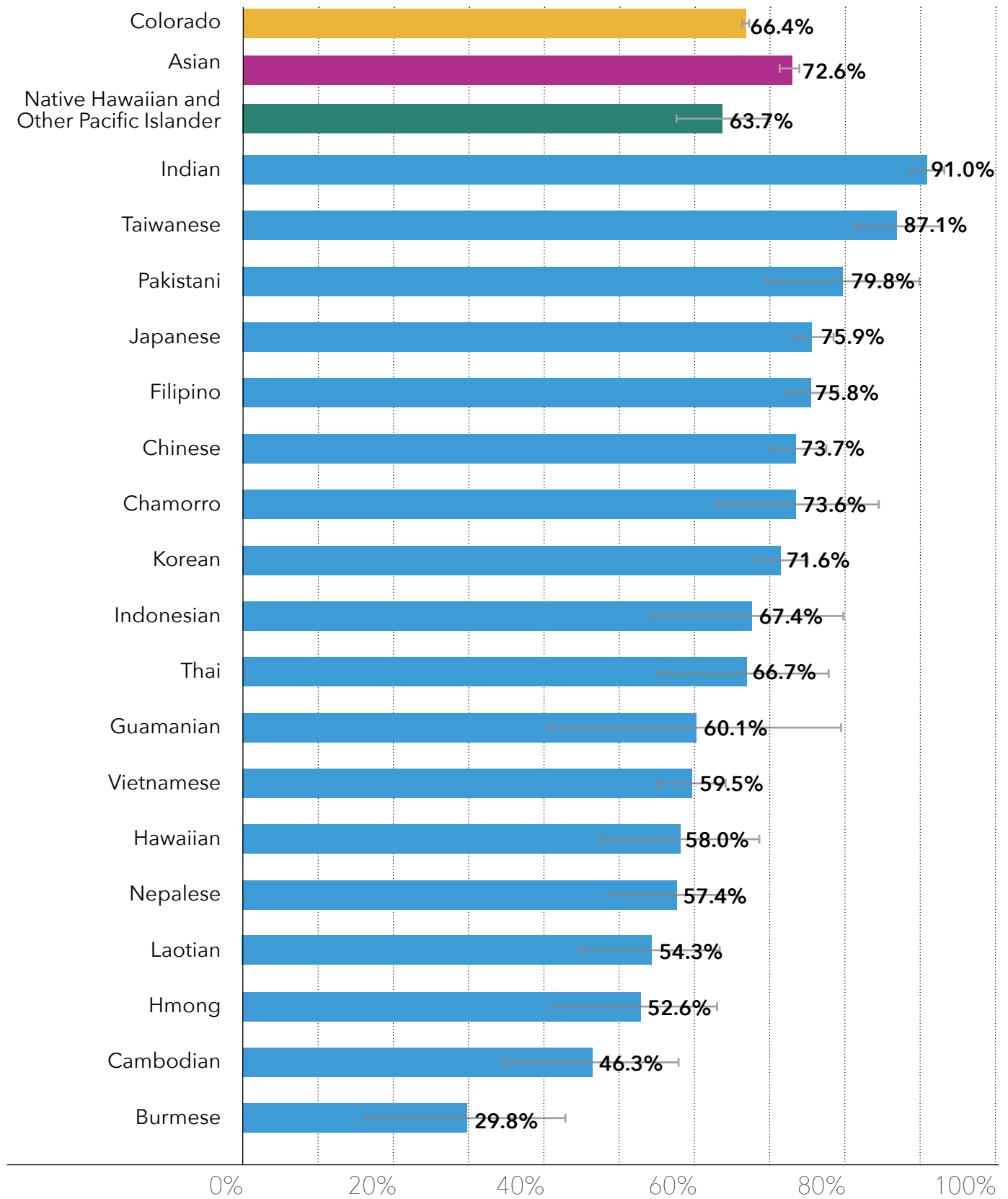
Identities not shown: Bangladeshi, Bhutanese, Fijian, Marshallese, Malaysian, Mongolian, Okinawan, Samoan, Sri Lankan, Tongan.

Note: Gray lines represent confidence intervals, which show the degree of certainty of the data. There is 95% confidence that the true value lies between the range indicated by the interval.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau. American Community Survey, 2021: ACS 5-Year Estimates. (2021)

While many AANHPI people choose to pursue other opportunities beyond higher education, focus group members noted that the high cost of tuition and lack of representation in these settings can be barriers to those wishing to continue their education.

> **"I did the [university] online system because I was raising two boys at the same time… I couldn't find anything for me as a scholarship as an adult. I had never really heard of anything that would support me as a woman of color or a 'woman of culture.'"** *Participant in the Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander-identifying focus group*

> **"The entire time I was [at my university], I never felt comfortable. There were no Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islanders and very few Asian Americans. There were very few people of color at all. I left without any friends or connection."** *Participant in the Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander-identifying focus group*

Data systems must collect and report data at more granular levels. Without this granularity, the experiences of people in AANHPI communities become invisible.

Resources Designed for Immigrants and Refugees

Adult education classes and other resources are needed to support immigrants, refugees, and non-native English speakers in gaining skills and knowledge to be self-sufficient.

In CHI's conversations, people spoke highly of the adult education classes, staff, and other resources provided by Aurora Mental Health and Recovery's Cultural Development and Wellness Center (CDW) (formerly Asian Pacific Development Center).

> **"The teachers are very nice, and everyone is family here… You can ask questions, and they seem happy when we ask questions."** *Participant in the recent immigrant and refugee focus group*

These programs and resources are critical for Colorado's immigrant and refugee communities as they support access to needed services such as health care. Programs and resources must also be available to those who live beyond the Denver metro area.

Participants discuss topics affecting their lives during an AANHPI youth focus group. *Brian Clark/CHI*

Opportunities For Action

Create a More Inclusive and Supportive Educational Environment for AANHPI Students in Colorado

To create an inclusive educational environment for AANHPI students, address the model minority myth, enhance data disaggregation, increase representation in curriculum, and recruit and retain more AANHPI teachers. Ensure immigrants and refugees have access to needed educational resources.

Asian Girls Ignite participants celebrating Lunar New Year. *Brian Clark/CHI*

1. Combat the Model Minority Myth

- Challenge and dispel the model minority myth through education programs, outreach, and messaging campaigns.

- Implement initiatives that celebrate different cultures and diversity within schools, creating an environment where students can authentically express their identities.

2. Improve Data Disaggregation for Targeted Educational Support

- Improve data collection and disaggregation in educational settings for more accurate and granular insights on the educational experiences of AANHPI subgroups.

- Use disaggregated data effectively to identify and address specific needs of AANHPI students, ensuring targeted support and tailored programs.

3. Increase AANHPI Representation in Curriculum; Recruit and Retain Teachers

- Incorporate AANHPI history and culture into K-12 curriculum to promote a more inclusive educational experience and rectify historical omissions.

- Recruit and retain AANHPI educators and school leaders to center their experiences and provide role models and mentors for students.

- Implement trainings to enhance cultural competency among teachers and staff, creating an environment where AANHPI students feel seen, valued, and supported.

4. Promote Student Mental Health

- Prioritize mental health support for Asian American and Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander students that recognizes and addresses the unique stressors they encounter.

- Integrate culturally responsive mental health resources within schools to ensure accessible and effective support for AANHPI students and families.

5. Ensure Immigrants, Refugees, and Asylum Seekers Have Access to Quality Education Resources

- Expand needed resources, such as those provided by CDWC and other organizations, and ensure they are reaching communities beyond the Denver metro area.

These are some steps that can pave the way for a more inclusive and equitable educational landscape in Colorado, ensuring that AANHPI students thrive in an environment that recognizes, supports, teaches about, and celebrates their diverse experiences and identities.

Crime and Justice

Crime and justice are vast topics that include experiences with hate crimes, violence, and racism, as well as broader experiences related to the justice and legal systems. Understanding issues related to this domain can help policymakers and people working in the justice and legal systems to better serve Colorado's AANHPI communities.

• **Guiding Questions:** What is the state of AANHPI representation in courts and other legal areas such as public defenders offices? To what extent are members of AANHPI communities disproportionately sentenced and prosecuted? What factors contribute to this? To what extent does underreporting occur when AANHPI people are victims of crimes?

Key Findings

• AANHPI high schoolers experience forms of racism and discrimination at higher rates than Colorado high schoolers overall.

• Limited access to interpreters, accurate and reliable data, and inconsistent language support in the legal system make navigating it more difficult for AANHPI defendants, often leading to disparities in sentencing.

• Lack of outreach, follow-up, and cultural responsiveness from local law enforcement has created mistrust for many in AANHPI communities.

Figure 19. Percentage of Colorado High School Students Reporting They Have Experienced Racism, by Regional AANHPI Identity (2021)
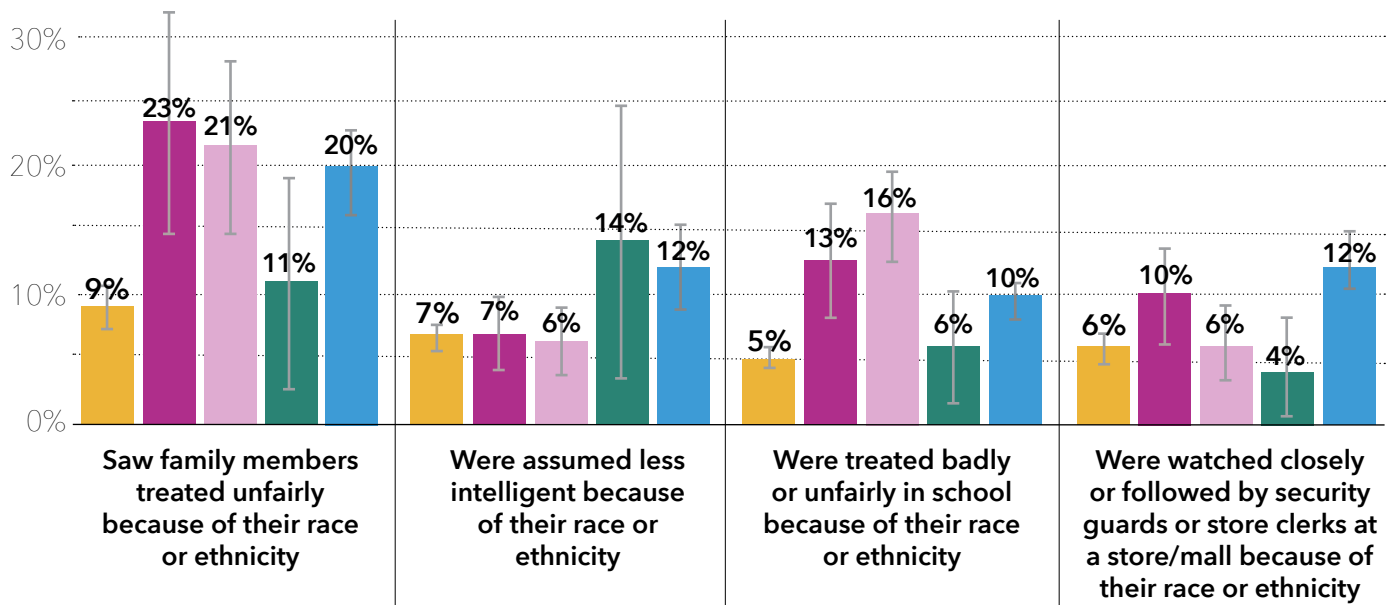
● Colorado ● South Asian ● East/Southeast Asian ● Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander ● Multiracial

Note: Due to the way data are collected, Asian as an overall category is not reportable, and East and Southeast Asian cannot be separated. Gray lines represent confidence intervals, which show the degree of certainty of the data. There is 95% confidence that the true value lies between the range indicated by the interval.

Source: Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment. Healthy Kids Colorado Survey, 2021

Hate Crimes, Violence, and Experiences with Racism

AANHPI high schoolers experience forms of racism and discrimination at higher rates than Colorado high schoolers overall.

As shown in Figure 19, South Asian and East and Southeast Asian high school students are twice as likely to report they saw family members treated unfairly due to race/ethnicity (about 23% of South Asian high school students and 21% of East and Southeast Asian students, compared with 9% of high school students in Colorado overall).[31] Similarly, these groups were also twice as likely to report they were treated badly or unfairly in school because of their race or ethnicity compared with the state average. Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander students also reported that they were assumed to be less intelligent because of their race or ethnicity at higher rates than Colorado average (14% and 7%, respectively).

Unfortunately, experiences with racism are common. And throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, rates of anti-Asian hate crimes and incidents skyrocketed, fueled by dangerous and racist rhetoric used to describe COVID-19. An analysis from The Marshall Project shows that from 2020 to 2021, Asian communities experienced a 167% increase in reported hate crimes.[50] Hates crimes are also associated with increases in poor mental health – with AANHPI adults who experienced hate crimes or incidents being at higher risk for anxiety.[51]

Coloradans reported a total of 23 anti-Asian and anti-Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander hate crimes between 2020-2022, according to the FBI's Crime Data Explorer.[52] See Table 6. Accurate hate crime data is limited, however.

Underreporting is common due to mistrust of law enforcement, belief that reports won't be taken seriously, and language barriers. A survey from Hate Free Colorado found that three in 10 respondents said they were targeted with verbal harassment, property damage, and/or physical injury within the last five years. Of those who experienced a hate crime or bias-motivated incident, only 18% reported it to the police.[53] Poll data released in 2023 from AAPI Data and the Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research (AP-NORC) also found that about a third (34%) of AANHPI adults reported they experienced some sort of hate incident in the last year. These include verbal harassment (23%), being called racial slurs (22%), or threats of physical assault (11%).[51]

Classification of crimes and inconsistent data collection also pose challenges with this data. Nationwide, an estimated 75% of local law enforcement agencies participate in a centralized hate crime reporting program.[54] Of those that participate, nearly 90% report zero hate crimes every year, due to vague definitions of hate crimes and how states choose to categorize incidents. As a result, almost 90% of incidents that are reported don't rise to the level of prosecutable hate crimes.[55] The ones that do can still fall through the cracks if victims or prosecutors can't prove the crime was motivated by bias.[56]

Community leaders and advocates have stepped up to fill this gap in reporting. For example, Stop AAPI Hate works with local communities and government stakeholders to document the rise of anti-AAPI hate. Their data collects reports of hate acts – actions driven by bias that may or may not be criminal. According to their data, AANHPI Coloradans reported 118 hate acts between 2020-2022.[57]

Stop AAPI Hate shared with CHI anecdotes of the hate acts in Colorado that had been reported to them, (where permission had been given for them to be shared). Some examples include:

> **"I was at work and a customer told me that Asians are awful and should all die. That the only thing good about us is our food."**
> *Report to Stop AAPI Hate*

> **"I was pulling out of the parking lot at an Asian market, and a car did not yield behind me. They proceeded to wait until I backed out and the driver and passenger yells 'open your eyes' and 'go back to your own country you filthy Asian,' then spits on me."**
> *Report to Stop AAPI Hate*

Table 6. Number of Reported Anti-Asian and Anti-Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander Hate Crime Incidents in Colorado	2020	2021	2022
Number of Hate Crime Incidents (Anti-Asian and Anti-Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander Bias) **From FBI Crime Data**	7	15	11
Number of Hate Acts* Collected by Stop AAPI Hate	118		

*Note: Hate acts are defined as actions driven by bias that may or may not be criminal.

Sources: FBI Crime Data Explorer, 2020-2022 and Stop AAPI Hate, Reporting Center Data, 2020-2022

Experiences with the Justice and Legal Systems

Limited access to interpreters, accurate and reliable data, and inconsistent language support in the legal system make navigating it more difficult for AANHPI defendants, often leading to disparities in sentencing.

The invisibility of justice-involved people in the system and lack of diversity of AANHPI people working in the legal and justice systems is apparent to community members. For example, one expert described limited access to interpreters and language-specific programs within the legal system, along with the inconsistent use of interpreters during police encounters. This issue compounds the challenges for AANHPI defendants and creates unfair outcomes and disparities in sentencing.

> **"Not a lot of people can pay for an interpreter and an attorney. If we take a favorable plea agreement or judge-mandated deal, such as anger management classes, it's difficult for people to have access to these because these classes are in English only. Some jurisdictions will provide an interpreter for people to go to that class, but others don't."** *Key informant*

Within the broader justice and legal systems, there is also a lack of data on AANHPI people who are justice-involved.

For example, in 2022, the Loyola Chicago Center for Criminal Justice and the Colorado Action Lab at the University of Denver [partnered]

Only 6
of the 2,539 elected prosecutors in the U.S. are AANHPI

to work with prosecutors from across the U.S. to expand their data and analytical capacity, to explore options for capturing new information, and to establish a practice of using data to measure performance and engage with communities. The [data dashboards] and disparity analyses that were produced included little to no data on AANHPI people.

While smaller population sizes are one reason for a lack of data, AANHPI communities are largely underrepresented across the criminal justice system nationally. The [Urban Institute] reports that a quarter of state agencies do not include Asian as a race category in their criminal justice data.[58]

AANHPI people who work in the justice system are also invisible. For example, 2020 data from the [Reflective Democracy Campaign] estimates that nationwide, of 2,539 elected prosecutors, only six were AANHPI. Of the 3,035 sheriffs across the country, only two were AANHPI. That's 0.24% of elected prosecutors and .07% of county sheriffs.[59]

Lack of Outreach and Trust

Lack of outreach, follow-up, and cultural responsiveness from local law enforcement has created mistrust for many in AANHPI communities.

Community members also spoke about a lack of outreach, follow-up, and cultural responsiveness they've experienced from local law enforcement, which has created mistrust.

"There is a preconceived notion that Polynesians are 'big and strong', so there's a quick judgment to make sure [the police] are protecting themselves… they go overboard to protect themselves without understanding what's really going on." *Participant in the Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander-identifying focus group*

"[There was a lot of COVID-19-based xenophobia. At that time] my mom was visiting from Seoul, and she was assaulted by a white man. She was just standing in line [for] the bus. There's a video of it and everything. There was never a resolution to that incident… The police are there, but they aren't really there." *Participant in the East Asian-identifying focus group*

"There's a lack of resources and challenges with navigating the criminal justice system. [There's also an issue with] cultural sensitivity. The South Asian community [is not always seen] as a part of the Asian community, and a lot of assumptions are made about brown skin." *Participant in the South Asian-identifying focus group*

Opportunities For Action

Elevate equity in the justice and legal systems for AANHPI communities in Colorado.

To foster equity in the criminal justice system for AANHPI communities, consider addressing the limited access to interpreters, advocating for more accurate data collection, and working to improve outreach and trust-building initiatives between communities and law enforcement. The criminal justice system is complex and often difficult to navigate. These considerations could create a more trustworthy criminal justice system that genuinely serves the needs of AANHPI people and communities in Colorado.

1. Improve Navigation of the Justice and Legal Systems for AANHPI Communities

- Prioritize interpreter access in the justice and legal systems to ensure fairness for AANHPI defendants.

- Provide better access to language-specific programs and supports to address challenges faced by AANHPI people.

### 2. Improve Data Collection and Ensure Accuracy

- Implement comprehensive and reliable data collection and reporting within the justice system to better understand the experiences of justice-involved AANHPI people.

- Improve data collection and reporting consistency to accurately capture the experiences of AANHPI people within the justice and legal systems.

- Leverage partnerships with organizations like Action Against Hate, which offer language-accessible reporting hotlines and community toolkits to enhance reporting at the city level.

3. Build Trust Between Community and Law Enforcement With Better Outreach and Improved Diversity

- Expand or establish specialized units or teams within law enforcement agencies to engage with communities, sharing information on agency policies and procedures, as well as victim resources.

- Conduct information and education sessions for trusted community leaders, organizations, service providers, and nonprofits to connect to AANHPI communities.

- Establish training programs that allow law enforcement and recruits to connect and build trust with the communities they serve. For example, Denver Police Department's Before the Blue and Beyond the Badge is a new program that requires recruits to interact with the communities they will eventually serve, hearing lived experiences and gaining a level of understanding of cultures and communities before they police in the community. These programs should be regularly evaluated with input from community members.

- Make efforts to intentionally recruit and retain a diverse police workforce that reflects the community served.

Democracy
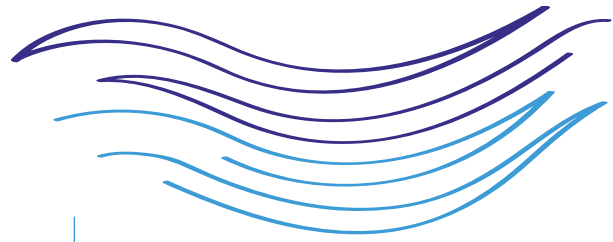
Democracy is a broad domain. For the purposes of this project, this section focuses on understanding the opportunities for or barriers to taking part in civic engagement, like voting or talking with legislators or city council members. It also addresses whether AANHPI people feel they are represented and understood by their elected officials. This information is critical to making sure AANHPI voices and experiences are included in civic engagement processes.

• **Guiding Questions:** What are current opportunities for civic engagement within AANHPI communities? What is the state of voting participation and turnout within AANHPI communities? What is the diversity of elected officials?

Key Findings

• Community organizations and political parties don't often reach out to and may not follow through with AANHPI communities, which is a barrier to civic engagement.

• Lack of in-language resources may be a barrier to voting.

• Colorado lacks AANHPI representation among its state and local leaders.

Figure 20. Percentage of People 18 and Older Who Voted in the November 2022 Elections, by AANHPI Identity (National)
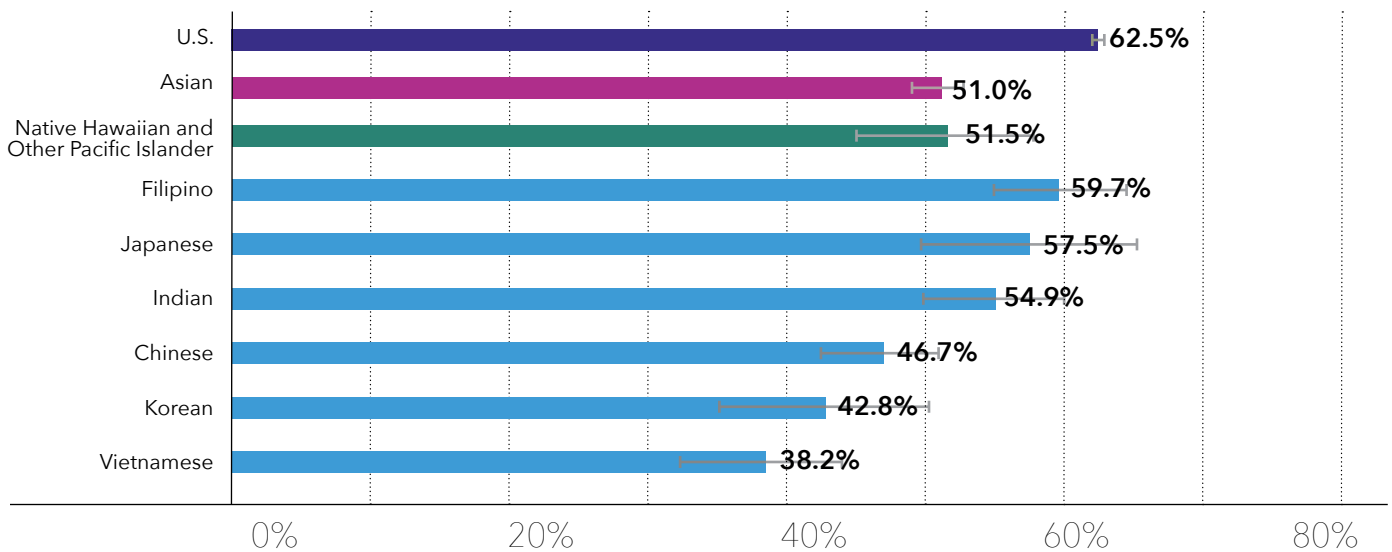
Note: The ability to separate data beyond Native Hawaii and or Other Pacific Islander population was not possible on the 2022 Current Population Survey Voter Supplement. Gray lines represent confidence intervals, which show the degree of certainty of the data. There is 95% confidence that the true value lies between the range indicated by the interval.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau. Current Population Survey Voter Supplement (2022)

Civic Engagement

Community organizations and political parties don't often reach out to and may not follow through with AANHPI communities, which is a barrier to civic engagement.

Colorado lacks data related to civic engagement. The data that exist are sparse and can't be disaggregated by different AANHPI identities in a meaningful way.

From 2010 to 2020, the number of eligible AANHPI voters in Colorado grew by 59%.[60] But nationally available data shows that about only half of eligible AANHPI voters participated in the November 2022 election. Figure 20 shows that 51.5% of Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islanders and 51.0% of Asians voted in the November 2022 election. Vietnamese and Korean communities had lower reported voting rates at 38.2% and 42.8%, respectively.[61]

Community members and leaders described the lack of outreach and engagement by community organizations and political parties as a possible barrier to voting and participating in civic engagement.

> **"There's no motivation [from the community] to engage due to the lack of representation… The relationship is so transactional. I see these leaders come in when they are running for elections, and then they never come back."** *Participant in the South Asian-identifying focus group*

> **"The biggest barrier is outreach. No one prioritizes [AANHPI communities] because they're not the majority. When campaigns are planned, they go and plan for the white majority."** *Key informant*

According to nationally available data, just over half (51%) of Asians report the Democratic or Republican party reached out to them in the past year. As shown in Figure 21, this number was even lower for Vietnamese and Chinese people (39% and 44%, respectively).[62]

Figure 22 shows that more than half of all Asians (54%) also reported that they were not contacted by community organizations at all with regard to voting and civic engagement.[62]

Language Access

Lack of in-language resources may be a barrier to voting.

A possible barrier to voting may be language resources. Overall, 9% of Asians nationally indicated that language had been a barrier in previous elections. However, Figure 23 shows this percentage was larger for people who are Vietnamese, Chinese, and Korean.[62]
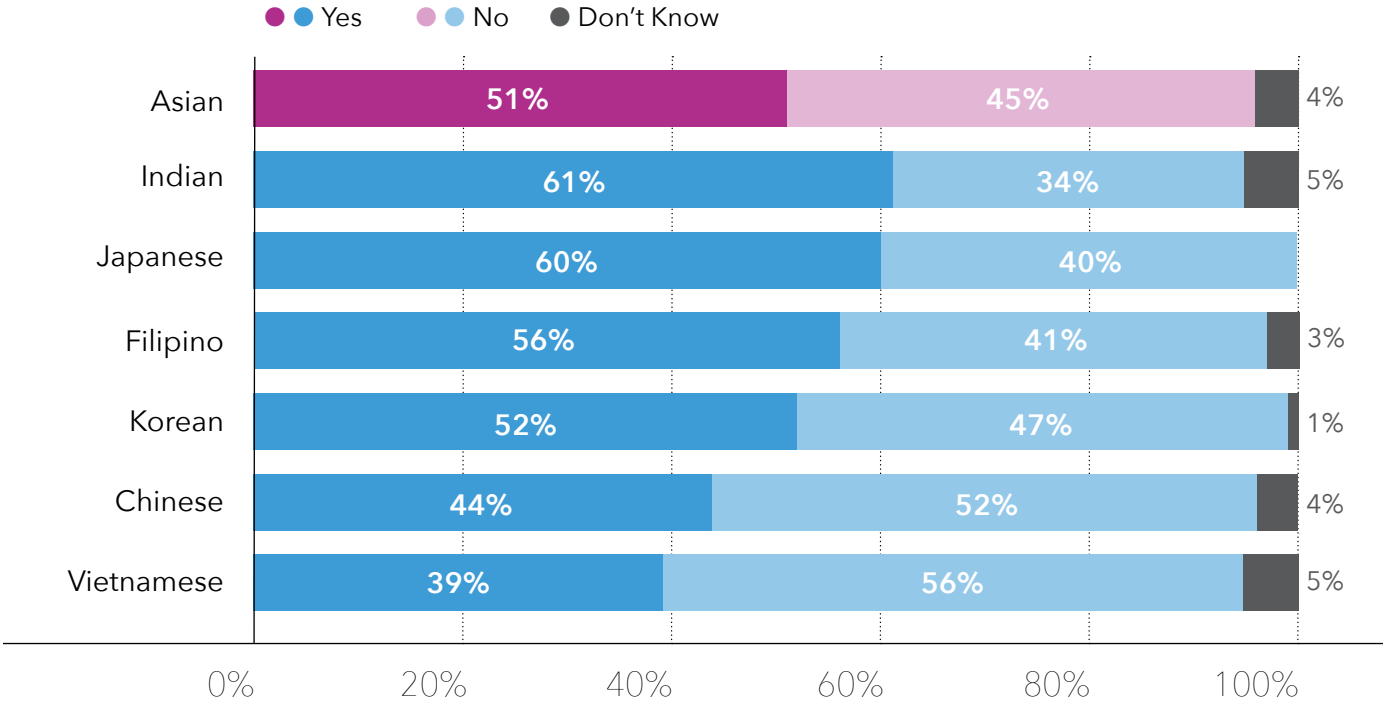
Figure 24 shows that of Asians who reported they spoke a language other than English at home, 42% said they would use in-language voting assistance if it was available. Over half of Vietnamese (53%) and Korean (51%) respondents said they would use in-language voting assistance.[62]

Language access was a recurring theme in CHI's conversations with community leaders and members.

> **"[When government officials] think of the AANHPI population, all they see is a small group of people. They assume language translation isn't needed or they will only translate [materials into] languages they have heard about. They're making decisions not based on experiences but based on what they heard. But they [also] don't really hear from the actual community – people don't feel like they are being heard even when they speak. They don't feel like they are being listened to."**
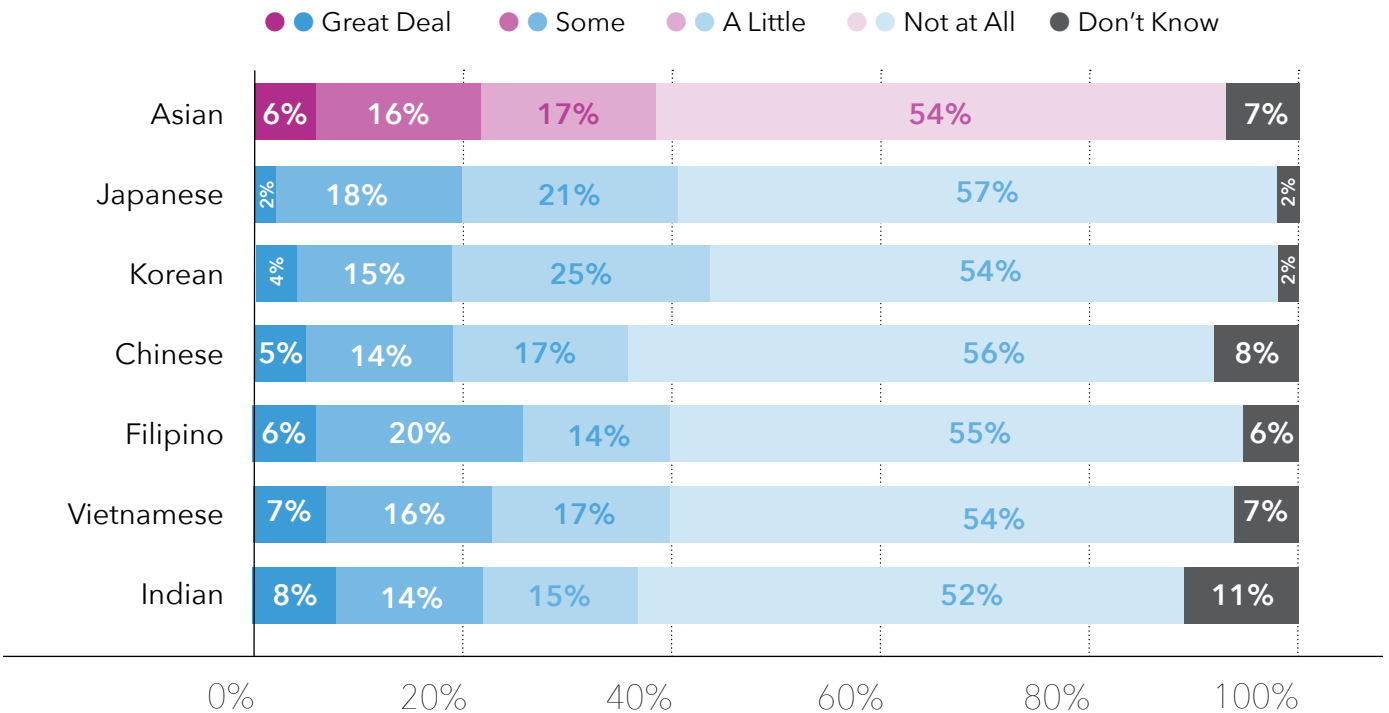> *Key informant*

Figure 21. Percentage of People 18 and Older Who Reported Being Contacted by the Democratic or Republican Party in 2022, by Asian Identity (National)

Legend: Yes | No | Don't Know

Group	Yes	No	Don't Know
Asian	51%	45%	4%
Indian	61%	34%	5%
Japanese	60%	40%	
Filipino	56%	41%	3%
Korean	52%	47%	1%
Chinese	44%	52%	4%
Vietnamese	39%	56%	5%

Note: Due to the way data are collected, Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islanders as an overall category is not available.

Source: Asian and Pacific Islander American Vote, 2022 Asian American Voter Survey.

Figure 22. Frequency in Which People 18 and Older Reported Being Contacted by a Community Organization in 2022, by Asian Identity (National)

Legend: Great Deal | Some | A Little | Not at All | Don't Know

Group	Great Deal	Some	A Little	Not at All	Don't Know
Asian	6%	16%	17%	54%	7%
Japanese	2%	18%	21%	57%	2%
Korean	4%	15%	25%	54%	2%
Chinese	5%	14%	17%	56%	8%
Filipino	6%	20%	14%	55%	6%
Vietnamese	7%	16%	17%	54%	7%
Indian	8%	14%	15%	52%	11%

Note: Due to the way data are collected, Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islanders as an overall category is not available.

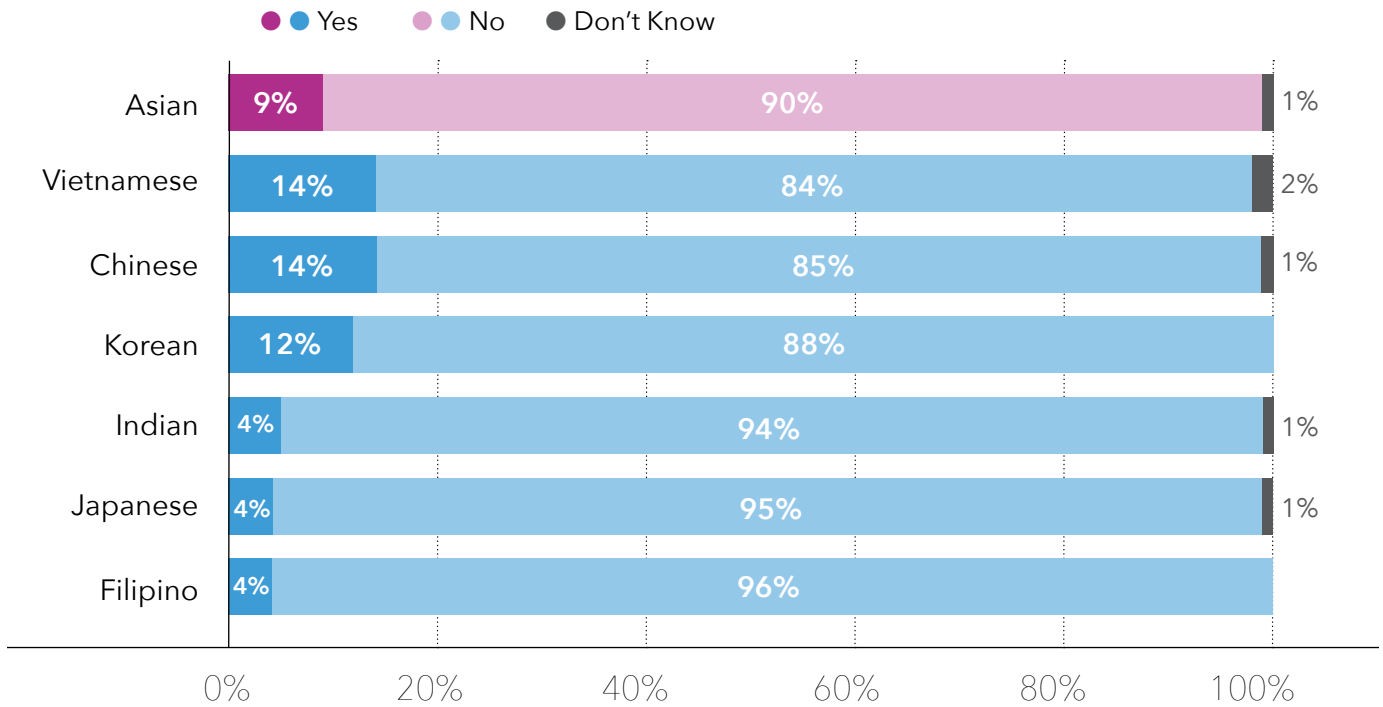Source: Asian and Pacific Islander American Vote, 2022 Asian American Voter Survey

Figure 23. Percentage of People 18 and Older Reporting Language Had Been a Barrier in Previous Elections, by Asian Identity (National, 2022)

● ● Yes   ● ● No   ● Don't Know

Identity	Yes	No	Don't Know
Asian	9%	90%	1%
Vietnamese	14%	84%	2%
Chinese	14%	85%	1%
Korean	12%	88%	
Indian	4%	94%	1%
Japanese	4%	95%	1%
Filipino	4%	96%	

Note: Due to the way data are collected, Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islanders as an overall category is not available.

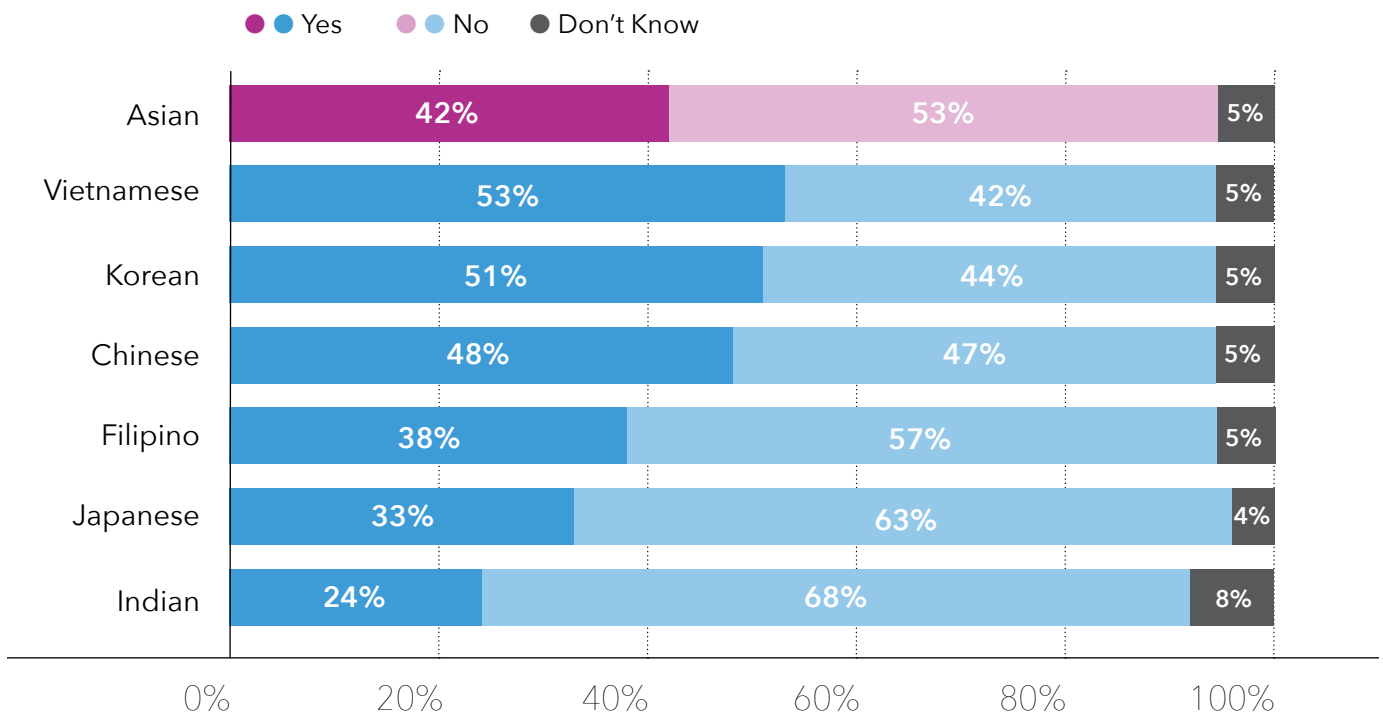Source: Asian and Pacific Islander American Vote, 2022 Asian American Voter Survey.

Figure 24. Percentage of People 18 and Older Reporting They Would Use In-Language Voting Assistance if it Was Provided, by Asian Identity (National, 2022)

● ● Yes   ● ● No   ● Don't Know

Identity	Yes	No	Don't Know
Asian	42%	53%	5%
Vietnamese	53%	42%	5%
Korean	51%	44%	5%
Chinese	48%	47%	5%
Filipino	38%	57%	5%
Japanese	33%	63%	4%
Indian	24%	68%	8%

Note: Due to the way data are collected, Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islanders as an overall category is not available.

Source: Asian and Pacific Islander American Vote, 2022 Asian American Voter Survey.

Navigating the Rich Tapestry of Colorado's South Asian Communities for Authentic Engagement *By Gil Asakawa*

India is the most populous country in the world. In 2023, India surpassed China with the largest population, almost 1.5 billion people. Geographically, the Indian subcontinent can cover the American Midwest.

So it might be surprising to learn that engaging the Indian – or South Asian, which includes neighboring countries such as Myanmar (Burma), Pakistan, Bangladesh, Nepal, and Bhutan – community can be challenging. There is a dizzying diversity of cultures, languages, cuisines, religions, and political histories within the region, and one can't assume that all South Asians will respond to the same messages to engage, whether it's for an arts performance or a social/political purpose. Outreach to South Asians must consider each ethnic or regional community's specific histories and culture.

Organizations like Mudra Dance Studio, which teaches the Kathak style of dance from northern India, knows this well and works to support all of India's cultures but specifically to educate the public about its authentic classical dance.

Namita Nariani, the founder of Mudra Dance, has showcased her troupe's talents regionally since 1993 and introduced Indian dance at the annual Colorado Dragon Boat Festival since the troupe's founding. She says in the early 1990s, "I was a major part of putting on all the different cultural shows and social gatherings for the Indian Association."

But that was when Denver's community was still small. These days, she acknowledges that there are many Indian organizations.

Having so many cultures from one country – or subcontinent – adds another layer of complexity. "Cultures and history and language and cuisine and all of that," Nariani says. "Once you realize that, you kind of start to understand why it's hard to corral everybody under the umbrella of, 'oh, we're Indian.'"

This sentiment resonates for Neal Walia, who's been involved with local politics and campaigns and understands firsthand that challenge of diversity in reaching out to South Asian voters.

He was born in Seattle to immigrant parents who emigrated to Canada before moving to the U.S. His family moved to Highlands Ranch when he was 11 and found that Colorado's South Asian community was much smaller and less diverse than Seattle's.

Even so, as an adult working in politics, he sees the need to be sensitive to ethnic diversities.

"How do you engage people who speak dozens of different languages and try to come up with a response that's adequate for everyone who's involved?" he asks. "It's a very diverse community, and so building trust within these communities is key. As an outsider, no one is really going to trust that

Neil Walia, center in black shirt, works to build trust when engaging with members of Colorado's diverse South Asian communities.
Coutesy of Neal Walia

you're in there for their interests, and I'll say even people of different faiths in our community sometimes don't trust each other."

India's colonial history and the trauma of the Partition, when the British split Pakistan off from India, add more layers of cultural complexity. "When you kick into the broader South Asian diaspora, what did the Partition do? What does the relationship between India and Pakistan look like? How has colonialism, institutionalized division, Indian, India, diaspora, what are the ramifications of all those? How does that impact Indian Americans here?"

The South Asian community may be the most complex of any AANHPI population within which to promote engagement. It takes awareness and sensitivity for historical and cultural context, and activists like Walia who are ready to do the work.

"There are a lot of different layers here that you have to figure out when you're trying to make a difference in the communities that we're serving. My education is eternal – I still learn things every single day," he says.

"How do you engage people who speak dozens of different languages and try to come up with a response that's adequate for everyone who's involved? It's a very diverse community, and so building trust within these communities is key."

Neal Walia

Representation by State and Local Leaders

Colorado lacks AANHPI representation among its state and local leaders.

AANHPI people are 6.1% of the U.S. population, but only 0.9% of elected leaders nationwide identify as AANHPI.[59,63] This makes AANHPI people the most underrepresented racial or ethnic group in politics.[63] Data from May 2020 show that Colorado has no AANHPI state legislators.[59]

0.9%
of elected leaders nationwide identify as AANHPI

"The people making and carrying out the political choices that affect AAPI communities don't reflect them. It is imperative that this change," said Premal Dharia, Executive Director of the Institute to End Mass Incarceration, Harvard Law School, as quoted by the Reflective Democracy Campaign.[59]

Looking at all levels of elected officials, the Asian Pacific American Institute for Congressional Studies' database shows Colorado has just two AANHPI elected officials as of 2024; a city mayor and a presiding municipal judge.[64] The institute acknowledges individuals are likely missing in its database. Even so, this lack of representation of AANHPI elected leaders resonates with community members who felt their elected officials did not understand the issues they face.

> **"Representation matters here. In politicians and in people who represent us. We have very few representatives in Colorado who are Asian."** *Participant in the East Asian-identifying focus group*

> **"[It is a challenge for] our voices to be heard and acknowledged. I have been trying to have my/our voice heard and acknowledged, but there are some electees that are not supporters of the AANHPI community and some [that] think only of their community."** *Participant in the East Asian-identifying focus group*

Opportunities For Action

Increase outreach and engagement and advocate for more representation of AANHPI communities among leadership.

To enhance democracy and civic engagement opportunities for AANHPI communities, Colorado must take a comprehensive approach to addressing the lack of representation among leadership, such as elected officials. Intentional outreach and education campaigns can also promote opportunities among AANHPI communities. These considerations can help drive more inclusion and participation in democratic processes and can ensure that the voices and experiences of AANHPI Coloradans are included in the civic engagement landscape.

1. Better Representation of AANHPI Leadership

- Advocate for AANHPI people in leadership roles at both the state and local levels, acknowledging the stark underrepresentation highlighted by the absence of AANHPI state legislators in Colorado and the limited number of AANHPI elected officials.

- Establish training programs that recruit AANHPI leaders and support them throughout the political and policymaking process.

2. Intentional Outreach from Leaders and Policymakers

- Proactively engage with AANHPI communities through intentional outreach efforts.

- Build meaningful and sustained relationships with organizations connected to these communities and address the identified barrier of sporadic engagement by political parties and community organizations.

3. Distribute Information and Educate Communities About Civic Engagement

- Implement initiatives to distribute information and educate AANHPI communities about civic engagement, fostering a deeper understanding of civic processes and encouraging more AANHPI people to actively participate. This includes addressing language barriers by providing in-language resources — especially in Vietnamese, Chinese, and Korean.

Strengths in Full Bloom

Separating data into AANHPI identities for each domain shows how communities may be impacted differently. But key strengths in Colorado's AANHPI communities were evident across CHI's conversations with community members and leaders. These fall into three themes: resilience and collaboration, showing up for others, and having rich cultures to share and celebrate.

Resilience and Collaboration:
Despite the systemic injustices and historical and ongoing mistreatment, Colorado's AANHPI communities come together to make changes.

While more can be done when it comes to advancing equity for Colorado's AANHPI communities – including working with other people of color and ensuring all voices are being included in these efforts – the following quotations show the progress communities are making and how they come together despite differences.

"We have a strong community that still works together despite our differences. We're only growing stronger and making ourselves known." *Participant in the Southeast Asian-identifying focus group*

"I thought about the strengths of being a smaller community, it can be tighter knit. In a small town, there is a small group of advocates that all know each other. It seems [like] we are all in it together. It isn't us versus them; you band together to utilize the power that you can." *Key informant*

"The biggest strength that I see is how close the community is… Because the populations are smaller in size compared to other major cities, it makes us tighter knit. If anything, because of the smaller community, it forces us to become more intentional about working together and pushing for needs and change. That isn't always the case in larger cities… All the good work that we see from our organizations isn't just focused on one ethnic identity, it encompasses a larger group. We have these shared needs and concerns; we show up stronger together… resources are still limited, but there is much more cooperation to work together to ask for pieces of the pie and ask for bigger pies… I love that, and this is the biggest strength." *Key informant*

"[AANHPI people] are allies to other racial groups and to each other. We are a community of color, too." *Thought Exchange participant*

"Even though there are lots of diverse ethnic communities, we do our work together really well. We weren't saying, 'Filipinos don't have to worry about this because we aren't being targeted.' No, we all banded together. We worked together through those difficult years. I think that our presence and visibility increased, especially in how our government elected officials saw us. The fact that we got Lunar New Year passed as a state holiday – that would have not happened pre-COVID. When we pushed that through, it was a combined effort of South Asian, Chinese, Japanese, Filipino, even countries that don't celebrate Lunar New Year. We worked together to push that through. That is a big strength that we have." *Key informant*

Members of the Guiding Mountain Dragon and Lion Dance Association gather together before a performace to celebrate Lunar New Year in Denver.
Brian Clark/CHI

Showing Up for Others:

A network of community and family speaks to how AANHPI people show up for others.

This sense of collective community mobilizes people to act, but also creates a sense of togetherness and belonging.

"Even if you aren't within our culture, we welcome you to be a part of our family. Come eat, take a plate home. We're automatically aunties, cousins. 'It takes a village,' – our communities really feel that deeply. We automatically look after everyone else… We create and share a feeling of home." *Participant in the Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander-identifying focus group*

"No matter how challenging issues are, our community still pushes through to make it work for their family. I am always so inspired by that." *Key informant*

"If you rally us together, we're loud and boisterous in our numbers… Once you 'see' someone [who represents you], we're coming. Culturally, we all have that in common – *ohana,* we come together." *Participant in the Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander-identifying focus group*

"[We have the strength of family.] And how important family is. Just as far as the collective strength of a family, [and] extended family, versus the Western thought that you can do things on your own… I have so many family members, non-blood family members. They are all a part of my family. That's a strength that we have that surprises people." *Key informant*

"We pray together, go to church together. We come together for the first birthdays. We have a strong sense of family." *Participant in the Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander-identifying focus group*

Colorado Lotus Project

Culture to Share and Celebrate:

Together, AANHPI communities encompass a rich tapestry of over 50 distinct ethnic groups, 100 languages, and 75 countries across East, Southeast, and South Asia, as well as the Pacific Islands of Melanesia, Micronesia, and Polynesia.

Steeped in history, AANHPI communities represent a vast group of people, each with unique stories and traditions. And community members are proud to share these, creating much-needed awareness and representation across Colorado.

> **"We are resilient and have grown as a community. We have developed new ways of sharing our cultures with others. Awareness is one of the first steps to social change."**
> *Thought Exchange participant*

> **"Our community is geared towards being self-employed, tapping into talents and creativity. A lot of people do plate lunch sales, crafts, leis, etc. We want to share our culture, and it's something you can't get here, so we find a way to make it happen."**
> *Participant in the Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander-identifying focus group*

> **"Colorado, as a state, recognizing Lunar New Year as a holiday [is a strength.] That's a step in the right direction to make our culture and our values more appreciated."**
> *Participant in the youth focus group*

> **"Being an Asian American, I am able to teach and educate other individuals about my culture. I am able to share and express some of my cultural values. This is important because there is a lack of Asian representation [where I live], especially South Asian culture. It is rewarding to be able to share."**
> *Thought Exchange participant*

> **"The Colorado [AANHPI] community brings an invaluable amount of diversity, culture, entrepreneurship, etc. to Colorado. I imagine a Colorado without the [AANHPI] community and think about all the people, workers, food, and sense of community that would be lost."**
> *Thought Exchange participant*

A vendor prepares food for a customer at the Mid-Autumn Festival at the Far East Center in the Little Saigon Denver District.
Brian Clark/CHI

Looking Ahead: Recommendations to Advance Equity for AANHPI Coloradans

Using a multifaceted approach, the Colorado Lotus Project's overarching goal is to educate policymakers, service providers, advocates, philanthropic institutions, and community partners about the nuanced strengths and challenges of AANHPI communities in Colorado. The Colorado Lotus Project is not just an analysis. It harmonizes data and first-person storytelling to challenge stereotypes and offer a more nuanced understanding of AANHPI communities. **AANHPI people are not a monolith.**

Based on the opportunities identified across seven domains, the following five recommendations emerge, addressing the diverse needs and challenges highlighted within each domain.

1. Enhance and Improve Data Disaggregation and Collection

Across systems and domains, there is a severe lack of data on AANHPI communities and their intersecting identities. Partners across sectors (health care, philanthropy, community organizations, and state and federal researchers) must establish systems capable of capturing accurate, timely, and granular data across demographics and geographies. National, state, and local tools must incorporate robust race and ethnicity questions to prevent oversimplification, enabling people to identify their true identities more accurately. Self-reporting options are essential for recognizing individuals not represented in predefined categories. These data allow for a better understanding of the people and experiences behind the data and support promoting equity for AANHPI communities.

To address these gaps, partners must actively engage with AANHPI communities, working together to tackle systemic issues in research

and data collection. In doing so, partners must include lived experiences and perspectives. The collection of comprehensive data, coupled with enhanced community engagement, can lay the groundwork for better analyses and a more profound understanding of AANHPI diversity, need, and allocation of resources.

2. Promote Meaningful Representation and Create Belonging

AANHPI communities need to feel respected, valued, and acknowledged, both in the workplace and their communities.

AANHPI representation in key sectors such as law enforcement, health care, democracy, and education is pivotal for creating environments that will allow people to feel seen and understood. Promoting opportunities for recruitment, retention, and advancement of AANHPI people in the workforce is foundational to creating welcoming and inclusive environments.

From left, Phương Smith, community liaison for Little Saigon Denver; Denver Mayor Mike Johnston; Denver Police Chief Ron Thomas; and Mimi Luong, owner of Truong An Gifts, pose for a picture at the Mid-Autumn Festival at the Far East Center in the Little Saigon Denver District. *Brian Clark/CHI*

Employers, community partners, and state and local leaders must also ensure that AANHPI people have the opportunity to not just be represented but to have decision-making authority. Partners must engage with AANHPI people who are leaders in the community and knowledgeable about the communities' needs. This includes understanding and acknowledging the diversity that exists in the community.

Celebrating diversity and uplifting AANHPI-owned businesses and spaces can also create belonging in communities.

> **"Culture is built through traditions, and when you associate those to a place then that sense of belonging develops. People need to trust in their belongingness that it will last and is not temporary."** *Key informant*

3. Authentically Engage and Build Trust with AANHPI Communities

Partners need to meet AANHPI communities where they are. They need to see where people live, understand the nuances of their cultures, and build a structure to encourage open, two-way communication. Trust that is built through meaningful engagement between institutions and AANHPI communities is fundamental to community well-being and for fostering positive community outcomes. This must be done across all domains.

Encourage leaders and policymakers to proactively engage with AANHPI communities through intentional outreach efforts and to build meaningful and sustained relationships with organizations connected to these communities. Distribute information and educate communities to empower active participation in civic engagement. Building trust and collaboration between the communities and institutions through open dialogue, acknowledging unique needs, and promoting mutual respect, can bring AANHPI voices into more decision-making processes.

4. Address Language and Cultural Barriers

Breaking down language and cultural barriers for AANHPI communities in Colorado is not just about facilitating communication; it's about dismantling obstacles that hinder thriving. Imagine a scenario where people can access health care, education, and legal support seamlessly because they can express their needs clearly. This isn't merely about linguistic convenience; it's about fostering a deeper connection that transcends communication gaps.

May 2024

By ensuring access to reliable translators and culturally relevant programs, we go beyond linguistic translation – we empower AANHPI community members to engage meaningfully with crucial services. It is an active exercise in inclusivity, recognizing the diversity of AANHPI communities and embracing them. Tailoring initiatives, programs, and services to address these unique cultural needs isn't just about representation; it's about creating an environment where people feel seen, heard, understood, and valued, and where AANHPI communities have their needs met. For example, having culturally tailored and appropriate food available at food pantries is a way that this can show up.

5. Target and Enhance Funding to AANHPI Communities Most in Need

To help AANHPI communities most in need, it's important to know how much funding they get each year. Tracking this annually is essential, and comparing this to what different AANHPI communities actually need, helps identify areas for improvement. The philanthropic analysis in this report is a first step in that direction,

and a deeper dive and recurring analysis is key to better understanding the need for and allocation of resources in different AANHPI communities.

Working closely with AANHPI-led organizations is also essential to ensure that funding efforts match the community's actual needs. It's important to understand the organizational landscape, especially beyond established groups, making room for new and emerging organizations. Prioritizing support for emerging and grassroots organizations is key, recognizing their potential and the challenges they face without enough financial backing.

It's also crucial to consider the diversity and cultural differences among AANHPI organizations to distribute resources fairly. Efforts should reach beyond the Denver metro area to help underserved communities statewide. Improving data collection and reporting, along with enhancing transparency in grant allocation, will help stakeholders understand the impact of funding and ensure its effective use. These strategies can strengthen philanthropic and other funding support for AANHPI communities statewide to help meet their diverse needs, while promoting sustainable growth and resilience.

Conclusion

Disaggregated data show that AANHPI communities are not a monolith. They are not a model minority. The number of AANHPI people across Colorado is sizable, and their experiences are diverse.

The 2024 Colorado Lotus Project report is a first-of-its-kind, in-depth look at these communities in Colorado. But more statewide research is needed. As a state, we need to continue to advocate and advance data collection systems to better understand trends in key metrics for AANHPI people. We also need to find ways to reach out and engage AANHPI people across the state and across identities. This includes AANHPI people who are living in rural areas, are older adults, are LGBTQ+, or are experiencing homelessness, among others.

Like the flower itself, the Colorado Lotus Project represents the potential for growth, transformation, and resilience for Colorado's AANHPI communities, even in the face of barriers.

Appendix A: Community Engagement

Language Access

CHI, the Colorado AAPI Circle, and the established advisory group reached out to AANHPI communities with digital flyers to invite community members to participate in focus groups and the Thought Exchange. Flyers were made available in the following languages: Burmese, English, Marshallese, Nepali, Simplified Chinese, Traditional Chinese, Urdu, and Vietnamese. These languages were determined by CHI and its partners based on an initial review of quantitative data to select communities that may be disproportionately impacted. CHI and its partners also considered the population size of AANHPI communities living in Colorado and included both larger groups, as well as smaller ones that may not always receive information in their languages. Interpretation and accommodation services were available for focus groups participants; however no participants indicated they needed an accommodation to participate.

Focus Groups

A total of 51 people participated in focus groups with CHI. CHI held six focus groups by regional AANHPI identity and two prioritized intersecting identities, which were determined in partnership with the Colorado AAPI Circle and advisory group members. These groups were East Asians, Native Hawaiians and Other Pacific Islanders, South Asians, Southeast Asians, recent immigrants and refugees (moved to the U.S. within the last 10 years), and youth. Participants were encouraged to sign up for the group they identified with most.

To support outreach for the recent immigrant and refugee group, CHI partnered with Aurora Mental Health and Recovery's Cultural Development and Wellness Center (formerly the Asian Pacific Development Center) to recruit AANHPI immigrants and refugees who participate in the center's English language learner classes. Any youth who were under the age of 18 were required to provide parent or guardian consent to participate. Focus groups were cofacilitated by AANHPI-identifying community leaders. The AANHPI-regional identity groups were held virtually while the recent immigrant and refugee and youth focus groups were held in person. CHI provided virtual focus group participants with a $60 gift card as a thank you for their time while in-person participants received an $80 gift card.

Participant Demographics

Overall, most focus group participants identified as Asian, specifically Chinese (29%), Korean (16%), and Vietnamese (12%). Only 12% of participants identified as Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander, specifically Native Hawaiian (6%), Marshallese (2%) and Guamanian or Chamorro (2%). A quarter of participants (25%) were 34-44 years old and 20% were under 18. About 45% of participants identified as female. Importantly, due to the way CHI recruited for the recent immigrant and refugee focus group, gender identity data were not collected for these participants. Most participants lived in Denver (33%) and Arapahoe counties (27%).

Due to the way CHI recruited for the recent immigrant and refugee focus group, data on other intersecting identities and lived experiences is also not available for these participants. Therefore, the percentage of participants with other intersecting identities and lived experiences, shown in Table 13, is of the remaining five focus groups conducted (n=39). While 59% indicated none of the above or skipped the question, 18% indicated they are a member of the LGBTQ+ community, 18% indicated they are first-generation immigrants, and 10% indicated they are a migrant family (moving from place-to-place within the U.S.)

Overall, these data reflect an opportunity to better reach out to and engage the AANHPI community in future research. Examples include those who live outside the Denver metro area, are older adults, or have other intersecting identities and lived experiences, such as those who live without stable housing or a reliable income.

Table 7. Focus Group Participants by Race/Ethnicity

Race/Ethnicity	Percent
American Indian or Alaska Native	0%
Asian	90%
Black or African American	0%
Hispanic/Latino	0%
Middle Eastern or North African	0%
Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander	12%
White	4%

Note: Participants could select all that apply.

Table 8. Focus Group Participants by Asian Identity

Asian Identity	Percent
Bangladeshi	0%
Burmese	6%
Cambodian	2%
Chinese	29%
Filipino	10%
Hmong	2%
Indian (India)	10%
Indonesian	2%
Japanese	8%
Korean	16%
Laotian	2%
Malaysian	0%
Pakistani	0%
Sri Lankan	0%
Taiwanese	2%
Thai	2%
Vietnamese	12%
Prefer not to say/Unknown	4%

Note: Participants could select all that apply.

Table 9. Focus Group Participants by Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander Identity

Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander Identity	Percent
Marshallese	2%
Native Hawaiian	6%
Guamanian or Chamorro	2%
Samoan	0%
Prefer not to say/Unknown	2%

Note: Participants could select all that apply.

Table 10. Focus Group Participants by Age

Age Groups	Percent
Under 18	20%
18-24	10%
25-34	14%
35-44	25%
45-54	16%
55-64	8%
65 or older	4%
Prefer not to say	4%

Table 11. Focus Group Participants by Gender Identity

Gender Identity	Percent
Female	45%
Male	27%
Gender nonconforming	4%
Not collected*	24%

*Note, due to the way CHI recruited for the recent immigrant and refugee focus group, gender identity data on participants was not collected.

Table 12. Focus Group Participants by County

County	Percent
Adams	10%
Arapahoe	27%
Broomfield	2%
Denver	33%
Jefferson	12%
Mesa	2%
Weld	2%
Prefer not to say	12%

Table 13. Focus Group Participants by Other Intersecting Identities and Lived Experiences

County	Percent*
Veteran or active-duty military	3%
Member of the LGBTQ+ community	18%
Member of a tribal community	0%
First-generation immigrant from another country	18%
Refugee from another country	3%
Migrant family (moving from place-to-place within the U.S.)	10%
Living without stable housing	5%
Living without stable, reliable income	3%
Living without stable access to food	3%
Person affected by trauma	5%
None of the above/Skipped	59%

*Note that due to the way CHI recruited for the recent immigrant and refugee focus group, data on other intersecting identities and lived experiences were not collected. Therefore, these percentages are of the remaining five focus groups conducted (n=39).

Thought Exchange

A total of 107 people participated anonymously in the Thought Exchange, sharing 60 comments in total and rating their agreement with the comments of others. Participants answered the question "What are the greatest strengths and most significant challenges we face as Colorado's Asian American and Pacific Islander (AAPI) community?" Respondents were asked to self-identify their race/ethnic background, age, and county of residence. Because information was collected anonymously, there is no way to verify the answers respondents gave about their identity. Participants did not receive an incentive for completing the Thought Exchange. The breakdown of the identities of the respondents shows that most of the respondents identified as Asian, were 25-34 years old, and lived in Denver County.

Table 14. Thought Exchange Participants by Race/Ethnicity

Race/Ethnicity	Percent
American Indian or Alaska Native	6%
Asian	61%
Black or African American	18%
Hispanic/Latino	3%
Middle Eastern or North African	0%
Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander	13%
White	7%
Other*	5%

Note: Participants could select all that apply.

*Participants could write in their own answers if they chose Other. Answers that participants wrote include Pakistani, Asian American, and South Asian.

Table 15. Thought Exchange Participants by Asian Identity

Asian Identity	Percent
Bangladeshi	5%
Burmese	1%
Cambodian	8%
Chinese	16%
Filipino	14%
Hmong	2%
Indian (India)	6%
Indonesian	3%
Japanese	9%
Korean	7%
Laotian	1%
Malaysian	3%
Pakistani	3%
Sri Lankan	3%
Taiwanese	4%
Thai	1%
Vietnamese	10%
Prefer not to say	2%
N/A – Do not identify as Asian	6%
Other*	4%

Note: Participants could select all that apply. Due to the way data are collected, participants may have selected "N/A – Do not identify as Asian" because they identify as Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander. Respondents who selected "N/A – Do not identify as Asian" and "N/A – Do not identify as NHPI" have been removed.

*Participants could write in their own answers if they chose Other. Answers that participants wrote include Nepali, Ryukyuan, Karen, and None.

Table 16. Thought Exchange Participants by Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander Identity

Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander Identity	Percent
Native Hawaiian	38%
Guamanian or Chamorro	4%
Samoan	5%
Don't know	1%
Prefer not to say	2%
N/A – Do not identify as NHPI	48%
Other*	1%

Note: Participants could select all that apply. Due to the way data are collected, participants may have selected "N/A – Do not identify as NHPI" because they identify as Asian. Respondents who selected "N/A – Do not identify as Asian" and "N/A – Do not identify as NHPI" have been removed.

*Participants could write in their own answers if they chose Other. Answers that participants wrote include Ryukyuan.

Table 17. Thought Exchange Participants by Age

Age Groups	Percent
Under 18	3%
18-24	26%
25-34	44%
35-44	21%
45-54	3%
55-64	0%
65 or older	2%

Table 18. Thought Exchange Participants by County

County	Percent
Adams	12%
Alamosa	3%
Arapahoe	7%
Archuleta	2%
Baca	1%
Bent	2%
Broomfield	3%
Cheyenne	1%
Clear Creek	2%
Crowley	1%
Delta	1%
Denver	21%
Douglas	3%
Elbert	2%
Fremont	2%
Garfield	1%
Gunnison	8%
Huerfano	1%
Jackson	2%
Jefferson	9%
Lake	1%
Mesa	3%
Mineral	1%
Phillips	1%
Pitkin	1%
San Miguel	1%
Washington	3%
Prefer not to say	3%

Note: All other counties were 0%, including Boulder, Chaffe, Conejos, Costilla, Custer, Dolores, Eagle, El Paso, Gilpin, Grand, Hinsdale, Kiowa, Kit Carson, La Plata, Larimer, Las Animas, Lincoln, Logan, Moffat, Montezuma, Montrose, Morgan, Otero, Ouray, Park, Powers, Pueblo, Rio Blanco, Rio Grande, Routt, Saguache, San Juan, Sedgwick, Summit, Teller, Weld, and Yuma.

Appendix B: Data Disaggregation and Reportability Standards

Data disaggregation helps researchers understand differences in outcomes among specific identities that exist in larger, aggregate racial or ethnic groups. These approaches can explain disparities or successes that exist among these groups that are normally hidden within these larger populations.

To address increased disaggregation and still provide information on reliability of estimates, figures and data in the report note where certain estimates may be less reliable due to high standard error for those estimates. However, CHI and the Colorado AAPI Circle feel it is important to still provide these estimates. This allows visibility of identities within the data while acknowledging there may be reliability issues of certain estimates.

To determine reliability, identities with fewer than 30 people included in the metric are excluded from analyses. For those estimates that are included, reliability calculations were used to determine if an estimate may contain variability using the residual standard error. The residual standard error is calculated by dividing the standard error of the estimate by the weighted frequency. If the standard error is 50% or more of the weighted estimate, then the estimate is flagged as "potential issues for reliability" for that specific identity. Identities that do not meet these criteria are noted in the given figures.
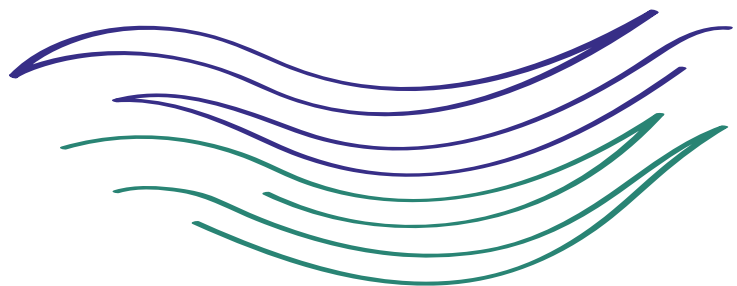
Appendix C:
Philanthropic Data Analysis Limitations

Sources

CHI used publicly available data from [Candid's Racial Equity Map](#) and [Philanthropy Southwest's Dashboard](#), which is also based on Candid's database. CHI accessed these resources May 2023-February 2024.

Available Data Years

The data used in this report are from 2011-2018, meaning that investments in philanthropy since the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020 and onward are not reflected. Data were limited to this date range based on guidance from Candid staff, who said that 2018 is the most recent year for which Candid has a critical mass of grant data to analyze recipients based on racial/ethnic groups in comparison to total grantmaking for those years. Because this data is based on self-reporting and IRS filings, there can be multiyear delays between when grants are issued and when they are captured in aggregate philanthropic funding databases. This highlights an overall need for more accurate, centralized, and timely reporting on investments by foundations.

What Counts as Funding for the AANHPI Community?

Because the data are largely self-reported, funders must explicitly report that their grants are intended for AANHPI communities for those dollars to be counted in this analysis. In many cases, funders reported that their investments benefited multiple communities. Therefore, much of the available data reflects funding amounts that are inclusive, but not exclusive to the AANHPI community. Because of the method of reporting, it is not possible to isolate which funds are only intended for the AANHPI community.

Not all funders participate in reporting to Candid's database, meaning that this data does not represent all philanthropic efforts. Therefore, other funding instances that directly or indirectly benefit AANHPI communities are not captured in this analysis. Additionally, information about regranting is not available, which may over- or undercount funds intended for the AANHPI community.
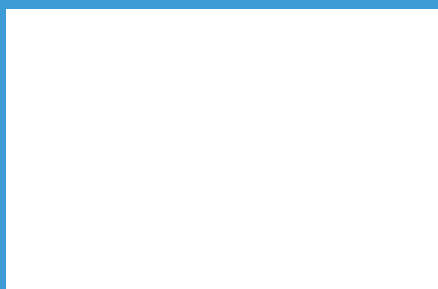
Geographic Information

Information about where grant funds reach in Colorado is limited. Of foundation funding for the AANHPI community, only about 50% of grants reported an associated location of the recipient. Additionally, information about regranting is not available, so it is possible that these funds were granted to an organization in one location that could have used the funds for programs/services in other areas. The analysis in this report shows that most funds for the AANHPI community were directed to organizations in metro Denver. Further exploration is needed to understand the extent to which funding is reaching AANHPI communities in other areas of Colorado.

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