

The Significance of Data Disaggregation in the Study of Boys and Men of Color:

Perspectives from the Asian American and Pacific Islander Student Population



ROBERT T. TERANISHI & BACH MAI DOLLY NGUYEN

Institute for Immigration, Globalization, and Education
University of California, Los Angeles



Introduction

The stratification of opportunities and disparate life-course outcomes for Black and Latino boys and men have been well documented in research literature.¹ There is a severe lack of awareness and information, however, about the extent to which these same issues are relevant for the Asian American and Pacific Islander (AAPI) community. Despite popular misconception, AAPIs represent a wide diversity of educational and life outcomes, and face challenges unique to their ethnic subgroups and community circumstances.² As such, this research brief focuses on the leading indicators for the mobility and life-course outcomes of AAPI boys and men, demonstrating how sweeping generalizations about this population overlook incidents of differential access to opportunities for educational success and upward mobility.

A key methodological consideration for an accurate rendering of disparate outcomes for AAPI boys and men is the use of data disaggregated at the level of ethnic subgroups. Accordingly, this brief reports on analysis of differences between men from various AAPI subgroups, as well as differences between men and women within AAPI subgroups. Particular attention is given to Southeast Asian and Pacific Islander boys and men, as these groups face greater barriers to access and mobility.³ Although some AAPI subgroups exhibit high levels of success across mobility and life indicators, this brief focuses on barriers that are too often underreported, overlooked, and misrepresented through empirical research, which renders some subgroups invisible. Disaggregated data reveal the need for greater inclusion of the AAPI community in order to address the social challenges facing all men of color.

High School Experiences and Completion	3
Access to and Success in Higher Education	4
College Affordability	5
Intergenerational Mobility	6
Employment	7
Violence, Victimization, and Incarceration	8
Physical and Mental Health	9

RISE for Boys and Men of Color is a field advancement effort funded by The Atlantic Philanthropies, W.K. Kellogg Foundation, Annie E. Casey Foundation, Marguerite Casey Foundation, and members of the Executives' Alliance to Expand Opportunities for Boys and Men of Color.

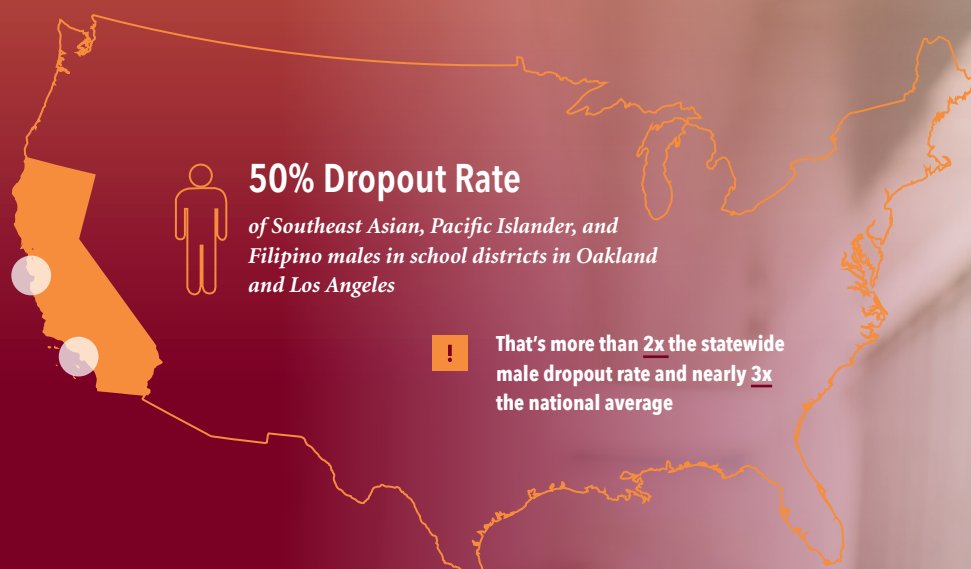
01.

High School Experiences and Completion

The inverse of high school completion—dropping out of high school—represents one of the key barriers to advancing through the educational pipeline for Black and Latino male students. In the aggregate, AAPIs display high rates of high school completion, although there are significant gender and ethnic disparities for particular AAPI subgroups—an educational reality that aligns with their Black and Latino male peers. Specifically, results indicate that some AAPI subgroups are experiencing a high school dropout rate that is among the highest in the nation for any student subpopulation:

- In some school districts in California, such as those in Oakland and Los Angeles where large concentrations of AAPIs reside, Southeast Asian, Pacific Islander, and Filipino males have a 50% dropout rate, which is more than twice the statewide male dropout rate and nearly three times the national average.⁵
See below.
- Differences in high school completion between men and women within the same AAPI subgroups demonstrate vast disparities: the high school completion rates for Hmong, Laotian, Samoan, Tongan, and Guamanian males are all lower than their female counterparts. The dropout rate for Guamanian males, for example, is 2.5 times greater than Guamanian females.⁶
- Studies focusing on the experiences of particular ethnic subgroups, such as Cambodian Americans, find that stereotypes related to their “gangster” image, as opposed to the “model minority girls” label, has a negative effect on their academic performance in and integration into high school.⁷

School Districts in California with Large Concentrations of AAPIs

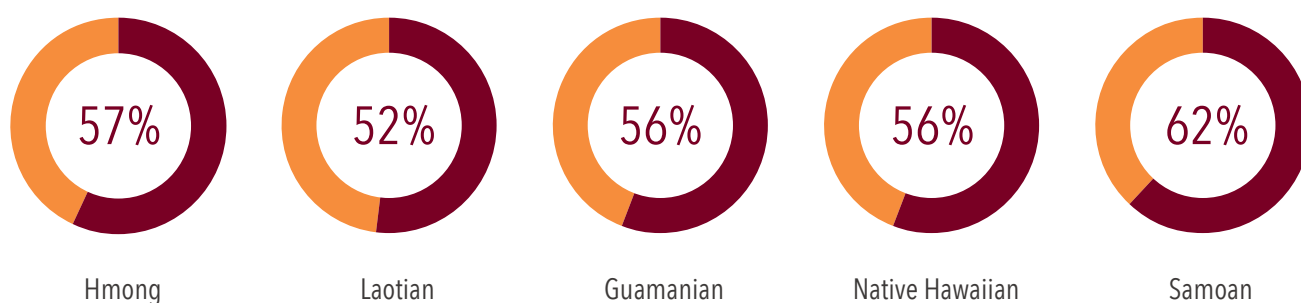


Access to and Success in Higher Education

The perception of a high degree of access and success in higher education represents one of the greatest misconceptions about AAPI students. Moreover, the stereotype about universal and unparalleled academic achievement fuels the notion that all AAPIs experience high rates of success.⁸ However, higher education is another area in which significant disparities exist for AAPI boys and men, which is true for degree attainment across ethnic subgroups, as well as between men and women within the same ethnic subgroup.⁸

- Certain AAPI ethnic subgroups experience much lower rates of college attendance than other subgroups. Native Hawaiian males who graduated from high school, for example, are half as likely as AAPIs in the aggregate to attend college. The college-going rate for Native Hawaiian male high school graduates (49%) is also much lower than their female counterparts (69%).⁹
- More than half of all Hmong (57%), Laotian (52%), Guamanian (56%), Native Hawaiian (56%), and Samoan (62%) men leave college without earning a degree.¹⁰
See below.
- In California, Nevada, and Hawai'i, three states with large concentrations of AAPI students, 50 to 60% of AAPI men attend community colleges, where fewer than 15% earn an associate's degree or transfer to a four-year institution.¹¹
- There are notable differences in degree attainment rates for men and women within the same AAPI subgroups who attend college. Cambodian and Tongan male college students, for example, are twice as likely to earn an associate's degree as their highest level of education as compared to their female counterparts, who are more likely to have a bachelor's degree as their highest level of education.¹²
- Studies on AAPI men in college find that the intersection between racial climate and the pressure from media to reproduce masculinity serves as an added barrier to their academic experiences and outcomes.¹³

Percentage of Men Who Leave College Without Earning A Degree





03.

College Affordability

College affordability is one of the most pressing challenges in higher education and is a growing challenge for low-income AAPI families.¹⁴ Data analysis of applicants to the Asian and Pacific Islander American Scholarship Fund (APIASF)—the nation’s largest scholarship provider for the AAPI community—reveals that differential access to financial aid resources likely contribute to gender disparities in educational access and attainment:

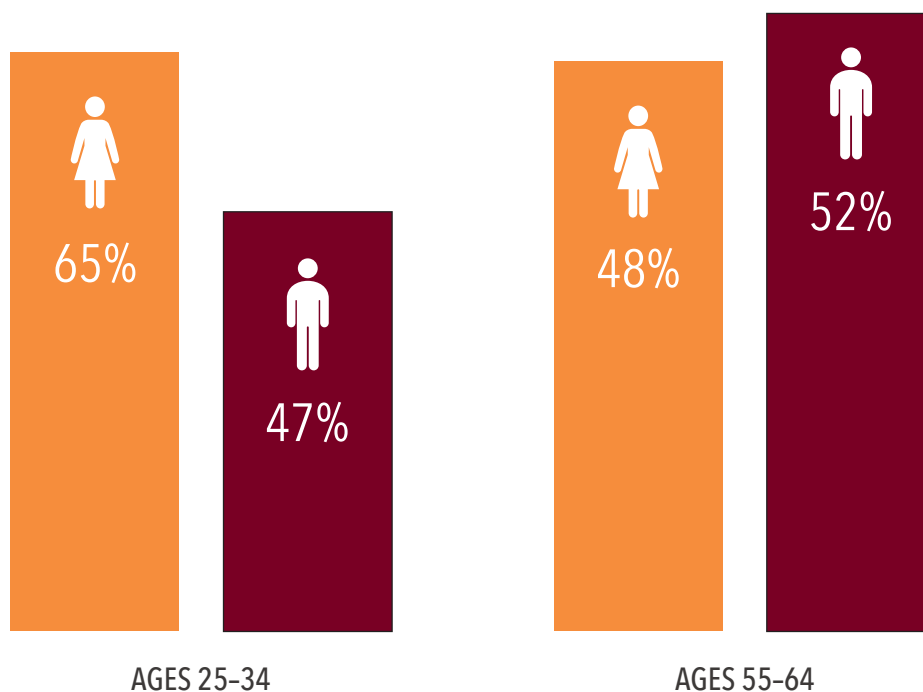
- Among the applications in 2013 for APIASF’s yearly scholarships, AAPI female applicants outnumbered male applicants two to one, representing 67% and 33%, respectively.¹⁵
- The same outcome, although more disparate, appears in the analysis of within group applicants. The following represent the male to female ratio of applications: Tongan (14% vs. 86%), Mien (18% vs. 82%), Thai (21% vs. 70%), and Hmong (25% vs. 75%).¹⁶

Intergenerational Mobility

Age-cohort analysis, which examines generations of younger adults to older adults within the same racial or ethnic group, is a method through which to gauge intergenerational changes in educational mobility. Through this approach, it is revealed that AAPI male subgroups are experiencing downward intergenerational mobility, which is counterintuitive to the American values of equal opportunity and upward mobility:

- Among Native Hawaiian high school graduates, women aged 25–34 have a higher college-going rate than women aged 55–64 (65% vs. 48%). The inverse reality is true for men aged 25–34 who have a lower college-going rate than men aged 55–64 (47% vs. 52%).¹⁷ *See below.*
- Among Filipino college attendees, the baccalaureate degree attainment rate is higher for women aged 25–34 (61%) than it is for women aged 55–64 (51%), while the baccalaureate degree attainment rate is lower for men aged 25–34 (50%) than it is for men aged 55–64 (58%).¹⁸

College-going Rate among Native Hawaiians by Gender and Age Cohort



05.

Employment

Mirroring the narrative across AAPI subgroup disparities in education, differential patterns of employment also emerge when examining the unemployment rates of AAPI men. As evidenced by the research literature, there are particular subgroups—Southeast Asian and Pacific Islanders—who are more vulnerable to unemployment:

- Some Southeast Asian subgroups are experiencing unemployment rates among men that are more than double the unemployment rate of men in the general AAPI population (14% for Cambodian men, 12% for Hmong men, and 13% for Laotian men).¹⁹
- Pacific Islander adult males, as a whole, have an unemployment rate of 12%, with particularly high rates of unemployment among Samoan (17%) and Tongan (16%) men.²⁰
- The gaps in unemployment between AAPI males and females are greatest among Cambodian Americans, with an unemployment rate for men (14%) that is twice as high as women (7%).²¹
- A study on working-class Filipino men in Los Angeles finds that this population has unique employment experiences shaped by their immigrant identity—a testament to the need to fully examine the nuances of ethnicity and gender that play a role in employment and labor outcomes.²²

Unemployment Rates Among Southeast Asian Men



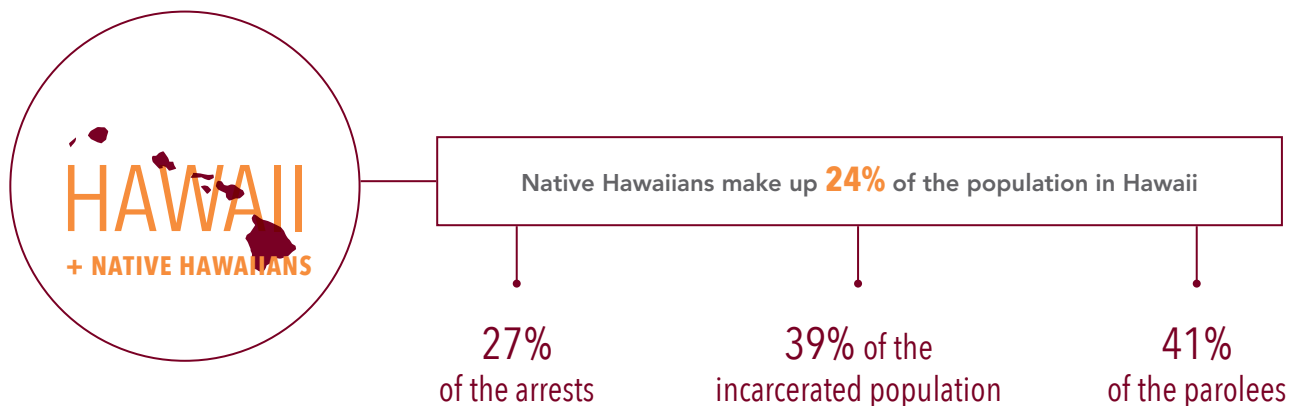
That's more than double the unemployment rate of men in the general AAPI population

Violence, Victimization, and Incarceration

Despite common misperceptions of their isolation from violence, victimization, and incarceration given their aggregated outcomes of “happiness,” AAPI males report high levels of violence and victimization, and particular ethnic subgroups are disproportionately likely to be incarcerated or involved in gangs:²³

- In a national survey conducted by the Center for Disease Control (CDC), Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander high school students had the highest rates of being bullied (25%) and threatened or injured on school property (11%).²⁴
- A survey conducted by the Sikh Coalition in the Bay Area found that 65% of Sikh—an ethnoreligious Indian subgroup—middle school boys have experienced some form of racial or religious bullying.²⁵
- Native Hawaiians make up 24% of the population in Hawaii, but 27% of the arrests, 39% of the incarcerated population, and 41% of the parolees.²⁶ *See below.*
- Native Hawaiians also receive longer prison sentences and are less likely to receive probation compared to other racial or ethnic groups.²⁷
- As a result of one of the largest increases in the rate of incarceration of any state, Native Hawaiians receiving sentences in Hawaii have a high rate of being incarcerated in out-of-state facilities (29%).²⁸
- Studies on Southeast Asian men—Cambodian and Vietnamese—find that schools can play a role in fueling negative gang-related stereotypes, and in some cases are “sites of inter-ethnic conflict and racialized tension,” which can lead to gang involvement, violence, and possible incarceration.²⁹

Native Hawaiians Population in Hawaii





07.

Physical and Mental Health

The correlation between racial and ethnic discrimination to physical and mental health has been studied, bringing attention to the negative implications of lifelong racialization.³⁰ AAPIs, however, have been overlooked with regard to their physical and mental well-being given the popular narrative of success and happiness. Examinations of AAPI men highlights that particular subgroups are, in fact, experiencing symptoms of poor physical and mental health:

- In a national survey conducted by the CDC, Asian American high school students reported the highest levels of feeling sad or hopeless (26%) and having seriously considered attempting suicide (17%).³¹
- In the same CDC survey of high school students, Native Hawaiians and Pacific Islanders were 50% more likely than Whites to be overweight (19%) or obese (21%), and had the highest rate of being diagnosed with asthma (27%).³³
- A study by the Rand Corporation found that nearly half of all Cambodian youth have symptoms of depression.³²
- Native Hawaiian, Pacific Islander, and Filipino young men experience higher blood pressure than other racial and ethnic subgroups.³⁴

Summary

As this research brief highlights, AAPI boys and men not only face disparities with regard to the opportunities for educational success and upward mobility, but they also experience the added barrier of being overlooked as students and communities worthy of attention and resources. For Southeast Asian and Pacific Islander boys and men, this presents a particularly burdensome challenge, as they are the most likely to experience high school dropout, downward intergenerational mobility, and unemployment, while simultaneously being the most likely to experience violence or incarceration and suffer from poor physical and mental health. As such, broad sweeping support for young men of color must be inclusive and responsive to the needs of marginalized and vulnerable AAPI subgroups. And while inclusiveness of the AAPI community is a good first step for supporting these boys and men, there also needs to be a targeted approach that addresses the unique challenges within the diverse ethnic communities, which includes opportunities to support organizations already doing important work for the population, such as Khmer Girls in Action and the Southeast Asia Resource Action Center (SEARAC).³⁵ In this way, practice and policy can be truly responsive to the most underserved and overlooked racial groups.



Endnotes

- ¹ Horace R. Hall, *Mentoring Young Men of Color: Meeting the Needs of African American and Latino Students* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Education, 2006); Jerlando F. L. Jackson and James L. Moore III, "African American Males in Education: Endangered or Ignored?," *The Teachers College Record* 108, no. 2 (2006): 201–205; Pedro A. Noguera, *The Trouble with Black Boys: ...And Other Reflections on Race, Equity, and the Future of Public Education*, (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 2009); Ronald Roach, "Where Are the Black Men on Campus?," *Diverse Issues in Higher Education* 18, no. 6 (2001): 18; Victor B. Saenz and Luis Ponjuan, "The Vanishing Latino Male in Higher Education," *Journal of Hispanic Higher Education* 8, no. 1 (2008).
- ² National Commission on Asian American and Pacific Islander Research in Education, *iCount: A Data Quality Movement for Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders in Higher Education* (New York: CARE, 2013).
- ³ R. T. Teranishi and Bordoloi Pazich, L, "The Educational Crisis Facing Minority Males: Perspectives on Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders," in *The Educational Crisis Facing Young Men of Color* (New York: College Board, 2014).
- ⁴ Richard Fry, Hispanics, *High School Dropouts and the GED* (Washington, DC: Pew Hispanic Center, 2010); R. W. Rumberger, "High School Dropouts: A Review of Issues and Evidence," *Review of Educational Research* 57, no. 2 (1987): 101–21.
- ⁵ R. T. Teranishi, *Asians in the Ivory Tower: Dilemmas of Racial Inequality in American Higher Education* (New York: Teachers College Press, 2010).
- ⁶ *Ibid.*
- ⁷ Vichet Chhuon, "The Problematization of Cambodian Adolescent Boys in U.S. Schools: Beyond the Model Minority Stereotype of Asian American Youth," in *Inequality, Power and School Success: Case Studies on Racial Disparity and Opportunity in Education*, eds. Gilberto Q. Conchas, Michael A. Gottfried, and Briana M. Hinga (New York: Routledge, 2015).
- ⁸ Bob H. Suzuki, "Revisiting the Model Minority Stereotype: Implications for Student Affairs Practice and Higher Education," *New Directions for Student Services* 2002, no. 97 (2002): 21–32.
- ⁹ U.S. Census, American Community Survey (ACS), 3-Year sample (2010).
- ¹⁰ R. T. Teranishi, *Asians in the Ivory Tower: Dilemmas of Racial Inequality in American Higher Education* (New York: Teachers College Press, 2010).
- ¹¹ *Ibid.*
- ¹² See note 3 above.
- ¹³ Jachinson Chan, *Chinese American Masculinities: From Fu Manchu to Bruce Lee* (New York: Routledge, 2001); Peter Chua and Dune C. Fujino, "Negotiating New Asian-American Masculinities: Attitudes and Gender Expectations," *The Journal of Men's Studies* 7, no. 3 (1999): 391–413.
- ¹⁴ National Commission on Asian American and Pacific Islander Research in Education, *The Impact of Scholarships for Asian American and Pacific Islander Community College Students: Findings from an Experimental Design Study* (Los Angeles, CA: CARE Project, 2015).
- ¹⁵ Asian and Pacific Islander American Scholarship Fund Applicant Data, 2013.
- ¹⁶ *Ibid.*
- ¹⁷ U.S. Census, American Community Survey (ACS), 3-Year sample (2010).
- ¹⁸ *Ibid.*
- ¹⁹ Hye J. Rho et al., *Diversity and Change: Asian American and Pacific Islander Workers* (Washington, DC: Center for Economic and Policy Research, 2011).
- ²⁰ *Ibid.*
- ²¹ *Ibid.*
- ²² Linda España-Maram, *Creating Masculinity in Los Angeles's Little Manila: Working-Class Filipinos and Popular Culture in the United States* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2013).
- ²³ Pew Research Center, *The Rise of Asian Americans* (Washington, DC: Author, 2012).
- ²⁴ Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), *High School Youth Risk Behavior Survey* (Atlanta, GA: Author, 2013).
- ²⁵ The Sikh Coalition, *Sikh Coalition Bay Area Civil Rights Report* (Fremont, CA: Author, 2010).
- ²⁶ Office of Hawaiian Affairs (OHA), *The Disparate Treatment of Native Hawaiians in the Criminal Justice System* (Honolulu, HI: Author, 2010).
- ²⁷ *Ibid.*
- ²⁸ *Ibid.*
- ²⁹ Vichet Chhuon, "I'm Khmer and I'm Not a Gangster!": The Problematization of Cambodian Male Youth in US Schools," *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education* 27, no. 2 (2014): 233–50; K. D. Lam, "Racism, Schooling, and the Streets: A Critical Analysis of Vietnamese American Youth Gang Formation in Southern California," *Journal of Southeast Asian American Education and Advancement* 7, no. 1 (2015): 1.
- ³⁰ J. S. Jackson et al., "Racism and the Physical and Mental Health Status of African Americans: A Thirteen Year National Panel Study," *Ethnicity & Disease* 6, no. 1–2 (1995): 132–47; David R. Williams, "Race, Socioeconomic Status, and Health the Added Effects of Racism and Discrimination," *Annals of the New York Academy of Sciences* 896, no. 1 (1999): 173–88.
- ³¹ Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). *High School Youth Risk Behavior Survey* (Atlanta, GA: Author, 2013).
- ³² Grant N. Marshall et al., *Mental Health of Cambodian Refugees 2 Decades after Resettlement in the United States* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 2010).
- ³³ Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). *High School Youth Risk Behavior Survey* (Atlanta, GA: Author, 2013).
- ³⁴ *Ibid.*
- ³⁵ Khmer Girls in Action, accessed <date>, <http://kgalb.org/about/>; Southeast Asia Resource Action Center, accessed <date>, <http://www.searac.org/>.

RISE is a joint initiative co-led by Equal Measure and the
University of Southern California Race and Equity Center.

RISE for Boys and Men of Color

www.risebmoc.org