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# Preface

**In many ways**, this report is long overdue. Asian Americans have long been part of American life and embody the full range of achievement. They are founders and CEOs of major corporations, entertainers and champion athletes, scientists and physicians, decorated military leaders and dedicated first responders, celebrated artists and iconic designers. And they are everyday contributors to our society—people who cook our food, take care of our loved ones, and continue to help build our country.

In this report, we use the tools of data and analysis to advance the dialogue about Asian American workers. Despite their impressive accomplishments, Asian Americans remain largely overlooked and misunderstood in the US workplace and society, especially when it comes to subpopulations that have poor economic outcomes. As with other ethnic groups, Asian Americans are too often viewed as a monolith—a homogeneous population—rather than as a tapestry of cultures and experiences. This view, which includes the stereotype of Asian Americans as so-called model minorities who achieve above-average levels of socioeconomic success, is frequently oversimplified and a distortion of the true picture. It is important for corporate

America to gain a more detailed understanding of Asian Americans.

This issue also comes with some urgency. Over the past two and a half years, Asian Americans have been subject to increasing violence: one in six Asian American adults reported experiencing a hate crime or hate incident in 2021, up from one in eight just a year earlier.<sup>1</sup> Acknowledging the challenges facing the Asian American community—individually and as a whole—is the first step to ensuring this community, and thus America, is able to fulfill its potential.

Our report uses research to underscore the need for more—and more expansive—studies and conversations about Asian Americans. The challenges they face in the workplace are too rarely recognized. By illuminating the experiences of Asian American workers, we can pinpoint some specific challenges and opportunities that few companies have recognized. But we don't claim to have all the answers for how to create an optimal environment for Asian American workers.

There will always be nuances to discover, and this report represents an early effort to dismantle some generalizations that do not serve Asian Americans or their workplaces. We hope the conversation continues and expands.

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<sup>1</sup> *Data Bits*, "A year after Atlanta: As we honor the victims we ask: How much has anti-Asian hate changed?," blog entry by Jennifer Lee and Karthick Ramakrishnan, AAPI Data, March 16, 2022.



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# Introduction

The Asian American population in the United States numbers nearly 20 million and is growing quickly<sup>2</sup>: it doubled in the past 20 years and is projected to double again in the next 40 years (Exhibit 1). This trajectory alone would make Asian Americans a force to be reckoned with and a priority for companies. Asian Americans are currently 6 percent of both the entire population and the employed workers in the United States.

These aggregate statistics obscure a huge amount of variation in the Asian American population, which includes three main subgroups—East Asians, Southeast Asians, and South Asians—each of which encompasses great diversity. A number of factors, most prominently immigration, have shaped the population’s composition and its geographic concentration in a handful of US cities. Asian Americans tend to live and work in geographies with large populations

and have higher levels of representation in major metropolitan areas.

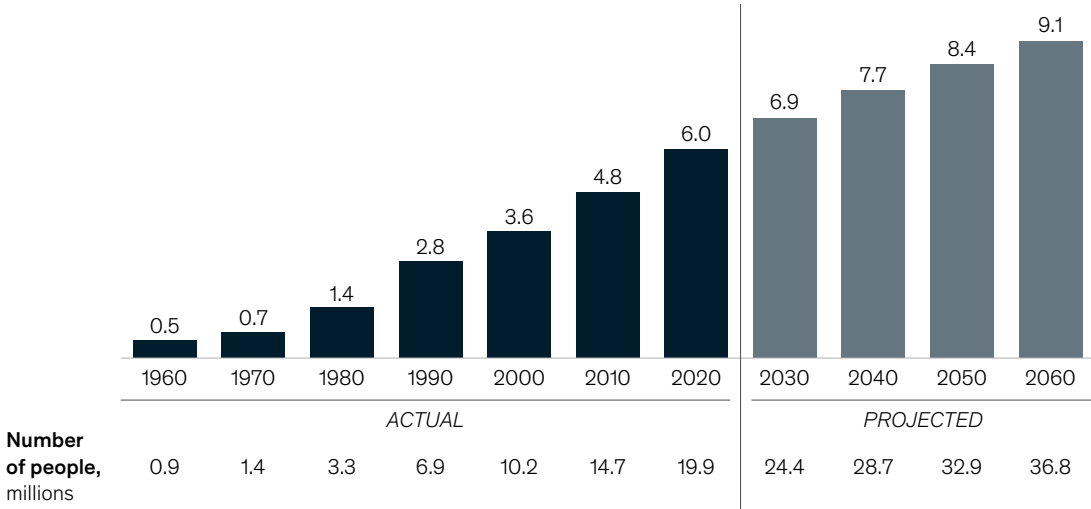
These and other factors lead to diverse economic outcomes for Asian Americans. The disparity can be striking: while Asian Americans are overrepresented in high-wage occupations relative to their proportion of the US population, more than four million (one in five) live on less than 200 percent of the federal poverty level. Some Asian Americans experience high levels of upward economic mobility, while others remain stuck at the bottom of the economic ladder. This diversity of economic outcomes is both a unique attribute of Asian Americans and a challenge.

This pattern persists in the experiences of Asian Americans in the workplace. While often perceived as professionally successful, they continue to face barriers to advancement and often find their employers’ inclusion efforts ineffective. These

Exhibit 1

**The Asian American population is projected to almost double in the next 40 years, rising from about 6 percent of the overall US population to more than 9 percent.**

**Historical and projected Asian American population in the United States**  
% of total population



Source: US Census Bureau historical census statistics on population totals by race from 1790 to 1990; US Census Bureau, 2017 National Population Projection Tables: Main Series—includes populations categorized as Asian (1960–90) or Asian alone (2000–20) and does not include populations categorized as Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander or two or more races

<sup>2</sup> Nicholas Jones et al., “2020 Census illuminates racial and ethnic composition of the country,” US Census Bureau, August 12, 2021.

challenges are pervasive, particularly for people with intersectional identities: our research shows that gender, immigration status, and ethnicity all play a role in creating obstacles to pay parity and equitable representation and advancement.

In this report, we explore these topics in detail (see sidebar “Methodology and definitions”).

Drawing on these insights, we then outline ways in which corporate leaders can better support Asian American workers. Understanding the varied and widespread challenges that Asian Americans face in corporate America is the first step to implementing more effective solutions. Let’s begin.

## Methodology and definitions

Throughout this report, we draw heavily from a few key sources of data:

1. The US Bureau of Labor Statistics’ (BLS) 2019 Occupational Employment and Wage Statistics data sets, which measure payroll-based employment and wages for nonfarm establishments<sup>1</sup>
2. The US Census Bureau’s American Community Survey, 2019 and 2020
3. McKinsey’s Race in the Workplace study (2021 and 2022) and McKinsey and LeanIn.org’s Women in the Workplace study (2021), which draw from aggregate HR data and employee survey responses from companies across the United States
4. Data compiled by Opportunity Insights, including detailed tax return data, combined with data from the American Community Survey and the US Census Bureau on economic mobility
5. Qualitative interviews with Asian American workers on their workplace experience, conducted from April to June 2022

This report uses the BLS definition of employment status.<sup>2</sup> Although we primarily use 2019 data for our analysis, we acknowledge the COVID-19 pandemic has had a significant effect on the economy and the labor market.

In this report, we use the term “Asian American” to represent people of Asian descent who live and work in the United States. Several terms specific to Asian American are defined as follows:

1. Asian American: people who are East Asian, Southeast Asian, or South Asian (see definitions below); for the purposes of this analysis, this data set does not include Asian Americans who are ethnically Hispanic or identify as more than one race
2. East Asian: people who are ethnically Chinese, Japanese, Korean, or Mongolian
3. South Asian: people who are ethnically Bangladeshi, Bhutanese, Indian, Nepalese, Pakistani, or Sri Lankan
4. Southeast Asian: people who are ethnically Burmese, Cambodian, Filipino, Hmong, Indonesian, Laotian, Malaysian, Thai, or Vietnamese
5. Other Asian: people who are Asian American who are categorized as “Other Asian” in the American Community Survey data or are of more than one Asian ethnicity

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<sup>1</sup> “Occupational employment and wage statistics,” US Bureau of Labor Statistics, May 2021.

<sup>2</sup> “Labor force statistics from the Current Population Survey,” US Bureau of Labor Statistics, October 21, 2021.



## Methodology and definitions (continued)

The stages of immigration and naturalization also come with specialized vocabulary:

1. US-born: US citizens born in the United States
2. Foreign-born resident: people who were born outside the US and who are either permanent residents or naturalized US citizens
3. Foreign-born visa holder: other documented immigrants who are not permanent residents



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# 01



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## A fast-growing, diverse workforce



**Of the nearly 20 million Asian Americans** in the United States, about nine million (6.1 percent) are part of the nearly 150 million-person US workforce. Asian Americans' share of the overall US workforce is projected to increase; while the US population is forecast to expand just over 20 percent, from 330 million in 2020 to 400 million in 2060, the Asian American population is estimated to almost double in that period.<sup>3</sup> Immigration will have an outsize influence on the growth and composition of the Asian American population and its subgroups.

These numbers—and this report—do not include Native Hawaiians and Pacific Islanders, who have distinct histories and challenges (see sidebar “Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islanders by the numbers”).

## **Immigration has shaped the changing Asian American population**

The Asian American population has always been diverse, and the impact of immigration means that the population's composition is fluid. Asian Americans have consistently been about a quarter of immigrants into the United States every year since the mid-1990s.<sup>4</sup> This influx of immigrants contradicts a common misconception of Asian Americans as a homogeneous group (see sidebar “The so-called monolith”).

Three major subgroups make up the Asian American workforce, each with its own ethnic and cultural diversity (Exhibit 2): East Asians (who account for 35 percent of Asian American workers), Southeast Asians (also 35 percent), and South Asians (27 percent).

## **Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islanders by the numbers**

This report does not discuss the Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander (NHPI) population in depth. NHPIs are often combined with the Asian American population because many have origins in Asia. However, NHPIs differ substantially from the Asian American population in their history and current experience. Such factors contribute to different socioeconomic outcomes that merit a separate discussion.<sup>1</sup>

- The US NHPI population was about 700,000 in 2020.<sup>2</sup>
- It is projected to grow approximately 40 percent by 2060.<sup>3</sup>
- There are about 240,000 NHPI workers, about 0.2 percent of the total US workforce.
- Fifty-seven percent of NHPI workers (about 140,000) live in three states: California (29 percent), Hawaii (19 percent), and Washington (9 percent).
- Sixty-nine percent of NHPI workers are US-born, 13 percent are foreign-born permanent residents and naturalized citizens, and 18 percent are foreign-born visa holders.
- Ten percent of NHPIs have less than a high school education, 35 percent are high school graduates, 38 percent have completed some college or an associate degree, and 17 percent have a bachelor's degree or higher.
- Two-thirds of NHPI workers make less than \$50,000 a year, and 26 percent make less than \$30,000.
- Sixteen percent of the NHPI population lives in poverty, higher than the US average of 12 percent.

<sup>1</sup> Unless noted otherwise, information provided is from Moody's Analytics; the US Bureau of Labor Statistics Occupational Employment Statistics, 2019; and the US Census Bureau American Community Survey, 2019.

<sup>2</sup> US Census Bureau 2020 Census, revised March 3, 2022.

<sup>3</sup> NHPI statistics are from 2017 National Population Projections Tables: Main Series, US Census Bureau, revised October 8, 2021.

<sup>3</sup> David M. Armstrong, Lauren Medina, and Jonathan Vespa, “Demographic turning points for the United States: Population projections for 2020 to 2060,” *Current Population Reports*, US Census Bureau, February 2020.

<sup>4</sup> 2017 National Population Projections Tables: Main Series, US Census Bureau, revised October 8, 2021.

## The so-called monolith

Asian Americans are often spoken of as if they were a monolith—a single, uniform body. The Asian American population evolves over time: a mixture of residents with familial roots in Asia and US-born Asian Americans, the population is still growing and diversifying. For example, Indian Americans increased from 12 percent of the Asian American population in 1990 to 23 percent in 2020.<sup>1</sup>

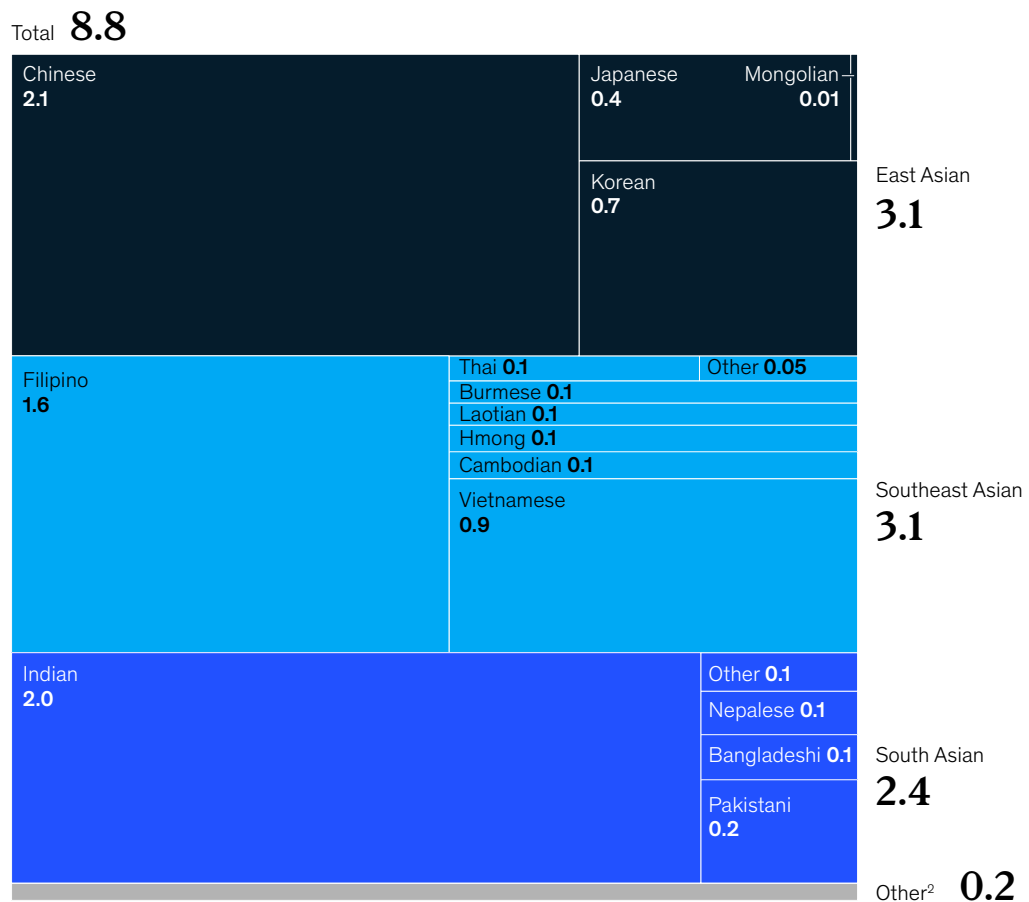
The implications of ever-shifting demographics for understanding Asian Americans are significant. A growing, ethnically mixed population defies a single characterization. Viewing Asian Americans as a uniform group and focusing on overall outcomes obscures the differing experiences and outcomes of subgroups. It's time to recognize this diversity within the Asian American population.

<sup>1</sup> US Census Bureau, 1990 US Census and 2020 US Census.

Exhibit 2

## The 8.8 million Asian American workers are split about evenly across three main ethnic subgroups.

Asian American workforce by ethnic group,<sup>1</sup> millions



Note: Figures may not sum, because of rounding.

<sup>1</sup>Does not include ~200,000 Asian Americans who also identify as Hispanic.

<sup>2</sup>People who identify as "other Asian" and people who have multiple Asian ethnic backgrounds.

Source: Moody's Analytics; US Bureau of Labor Statistics Occupational Employment Statistics, 2019; US Census Bureau American Community Survey, 2019



About three-quarters of Asian American workers are foreign-born.<sup>5</sup> As of 2019, 86 percent of South Asian workers were foreign-born, compared with just over 70 percent of East Asian and Southeast Asian workers (Exhibit 3).<sup>6</sup>

Historically, geopolitical events and government policies have shaped the composition of the Asian American workforce. Their immigration to the United States has historically included spikes in relation to significant economic and geopolitical events, such as the influx of Chinese workers during the Gold Rush, the building of the Transcontinental Railroad during the 19th

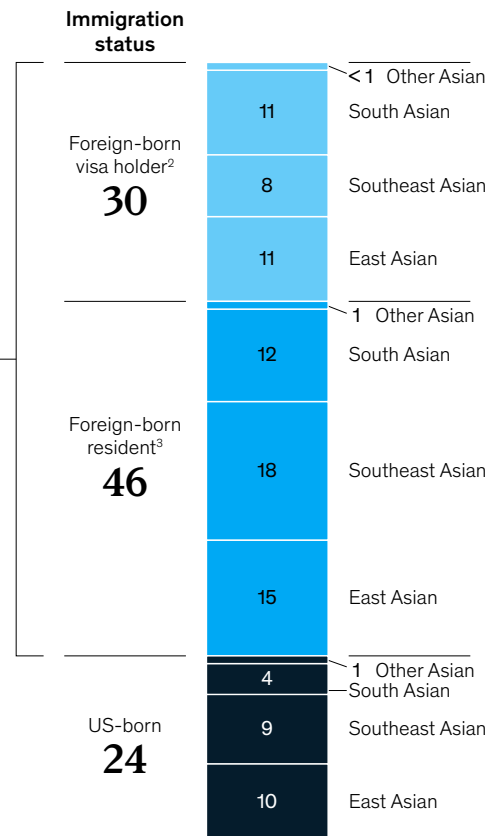
century, and the arrival of significant numbers of refugees after armed conflicts in Asia in the 20th century.<sup>7</sup> Over three decades following the Vietnam War and the Cambodian Civil War, more than 1.1 million Southeast Asian refugees settled in the United States.<sup>8</sup> Asian American immigration has also been shaped by government policies. For example, the Chinese Exclusion Act and similar laws significantly restricted the number of Chinese immigrants to the United States for more than eight decades. The passage of the Immigration Act of 1965 replaced exclusionary rules dating back to 1924, and an update in 1990

Exhibit 3

### More than three-quarters of Asian American workers in the United States are foreign-born.

**Asian American workforce by immigration status and census division,<sup>1</sup> % of total Asian American workers**

**76% of Asian American workers are foreign-born**



Note: Figures may not sum to 100%, because of rounding.

<sup>1</sup>Divisions are constructed according to the census definitions.

<sup>2</sup>Foreign-born permanent resident or naturalized-citizen workers.

<sup>3</sup>All other nonpermanent resident immigrant workers.

Source: Moody's Analytics; US Bureau of Labor Statistics Current Population Survey and Occupational Employment Statistics, 2019; US Census Bureau American Community Survey, 2019

<sup>5</sup> *Yearbook of immigration statistics 2020*, US Department of Homeland Security, updated July 14, 2022.

<sup>6</sup> Moody's Analytics; US Bureau of Labor Statistics Current Population Survey and Occupational Employment Statistics, 2019; US Census Bureau American Community Survey, 2019.

<sup>7</sup> Leslie Kennedy, "Building the Transcontinental Railroad: How 20,000 Chinese immigrants made it happen," *History*, April 28, 2022.

<sup>8</sup> *Southeast Asian American journeys: A national snapshot of our communities*, a joint report from Asian Americans Advancing Justice and Southeast Asia Resource Action Center, 2020.

set a flexible cap for family-based, employment-based, and diversity immigrant visas.<sup>9</sup>

The combination of US immigration policy and private-sector needs has had a lasting impact on the size and composition of the Asian American population. For example, H-1B visas are reserved for highly educated foreign workers in specialty fields. As of 2019, South Asians accounted for half of all holders of H-1B visas (Exhibit 4).

### Asian Americans gravitate to economically vital regions

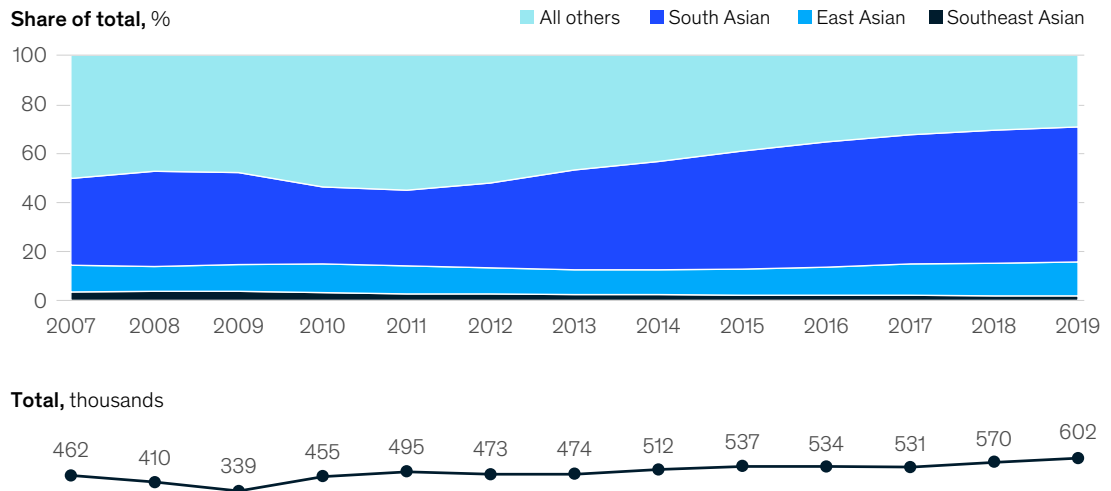
Asian Americans live in every region of the United States, but almost half reside in three states—

California, New York, and Texas—and are highly represented among the workforces in states in the West and the Northeast (Exhibit 5). In general, Asian Americans have settled in more densely populated geographies. Almost half of Asian American workers live in eight major metropolitan statistical areas (MSAs), and nearly one-third reside in New York, Los Angeles, San Francisco, and their surrounding areas (Exhibit 6).<sup>10</sup> These eight MSAs are also projected to have generally higher job growth than other cities.

Exhibit 4

**The share of Asians among H-1B visa holders has increased from about 50 percent to more than 70 percent, driven mostly by South Asians.**

#### Total H-1B visa holders by group



Source: Nonimmigrant Temporary Worker Admissions (I-94 Only) by Region and Country of Citizenship: Fiscal Year 2019, US Department of Homeland Security

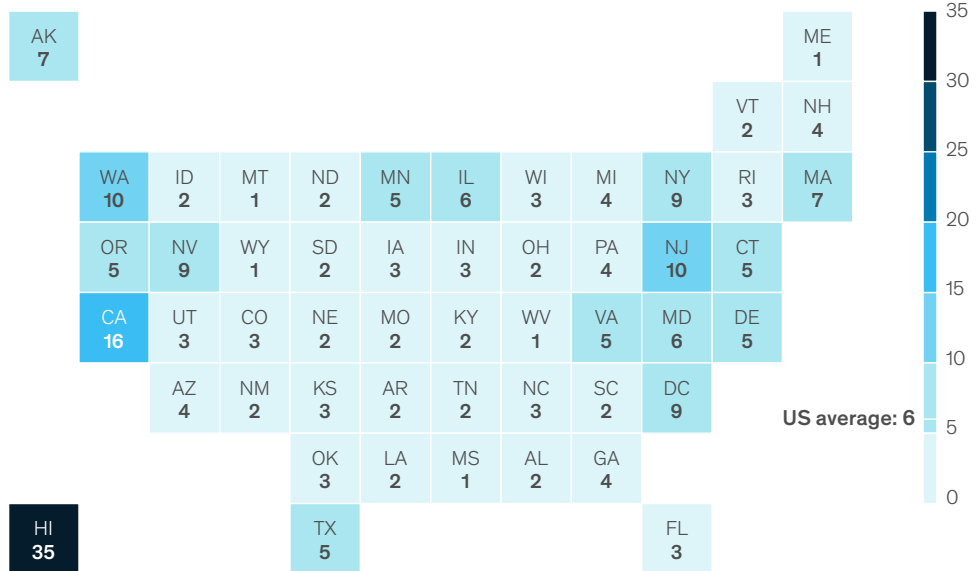
<sup>9</sup> "Chinese Exclusion Act (1892)," National Archives, February 17, 2022.

<sup>10</sup> Moody's Analytics; US Bureau of Labor Statistics Occupational Employment Statistics, 2019; US Census Bureau American Community Survey, 2019.

Exhibit 5

**Asian American workers are represented higher than the 6 percent US average in nine states, primarily on the West Coast and in the Northeast.**

**Asian American workforce by state, % of Asian American representation by state**

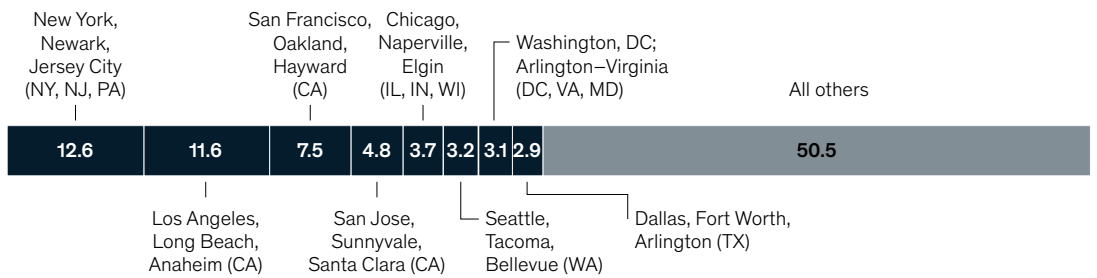


Source: Moody's Analytics; US Bureau of Labor Statistics Occupational Employment Statistics, 2019; US Census Bureau American Community Survey, 2019

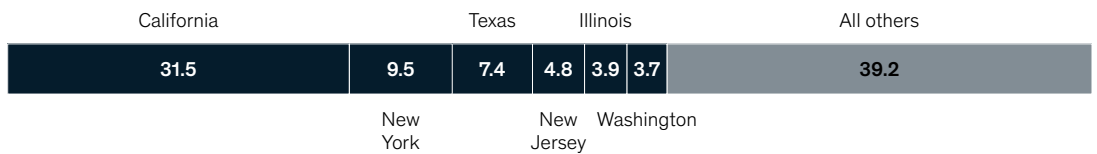
Exhibit 6

**Asian American workers are concentrated in high-population geographies, with half in eight metropolitan areas and 60 percent in six states.**

**Asian American workforce by metropolitan area, % of total Asian American workers**



**Asian American workforce by state, % of total Asian American workers**



Note: Figures may not sum to 100%, because of rounding.  
Source: Moody's Analytics; US Bureau of Labor Statistics Occupational Employment Statistics, 2019; US Census Bureau American Community Survey, 2019



# 02



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## Diverse economic outcomes

**Many factors**, including educational attainment and immigration status, have a tremendous impact on an individual's prospects for economic mobility and career advancement. In the aggregate, Asian Americans have high levels of educational attainment and rates of intergenerational upward economic mobility compared with the US population as a whole. But a look at the underlying distribution reveals a wide range of economic outcomes within the Asian American workforce, including high levels of representation in lower-income occupations. Our analysis also revealed pay disparities between Asian American workers and their White counterparts in the same occupations. This pattern is more prominent in some higher-paying occupations.

### Encouraging outcomes across key metrics

We examined the outcomes of Asian Americans across educational attainment, economic mobility, and representation in higher-income occupations. These factors are interdependent and contribute

to different experiences and prospects by subgroup. Elevated rates of educational achievement provide one explanation for the relatively increased levels of intergenerational economic mobility for Asian Americans and their representation in higher-income occupations.

### Educational attainment

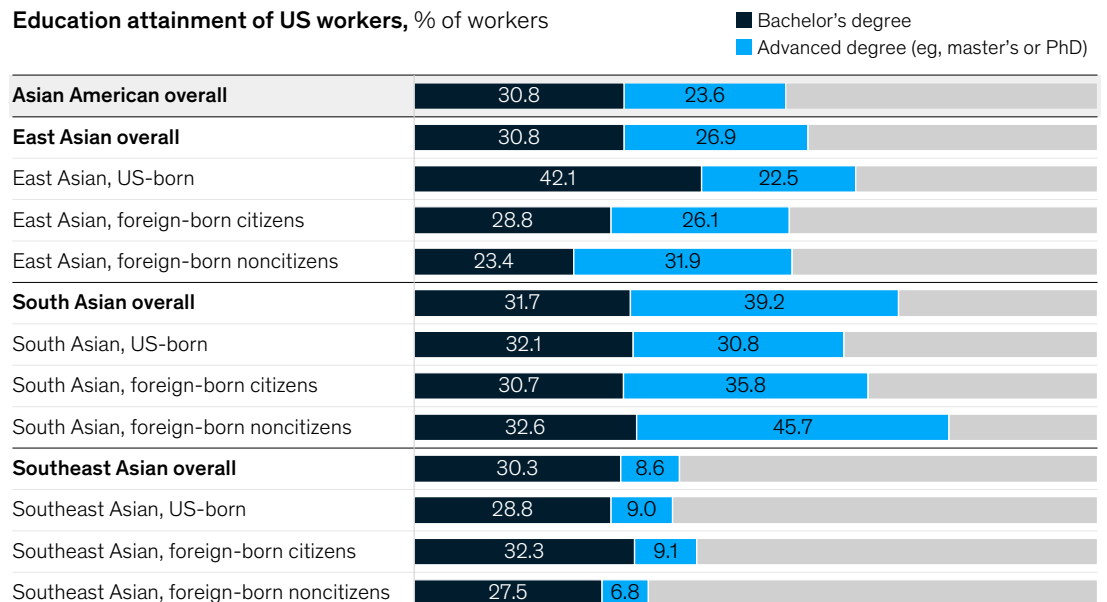
As a group, Asian American workers have impressive levels of educational attainment: about 54 percent have earned at least a bachelor's degree, compared with 32 percent of the overall US population (Exhibit 7). However, educational attainment varies greatly by subgroup, from South Asian foreign-born noncitizens at the high end (78 percent with a bachelor's or higher) to Southeast Asian foreign-born noncitizens at the low end (34 percent).

Overall, even the children of Asian American parents with lower levels of educational attainment reach high levels of scholastic achievement (Exhibit 8). Data from Opportunity Insights show that almost 45 percent of Asian

Exhibit 7

## More than half of Asian American workers have a bachelor's degree.

Education attainment of US workers, % of workers

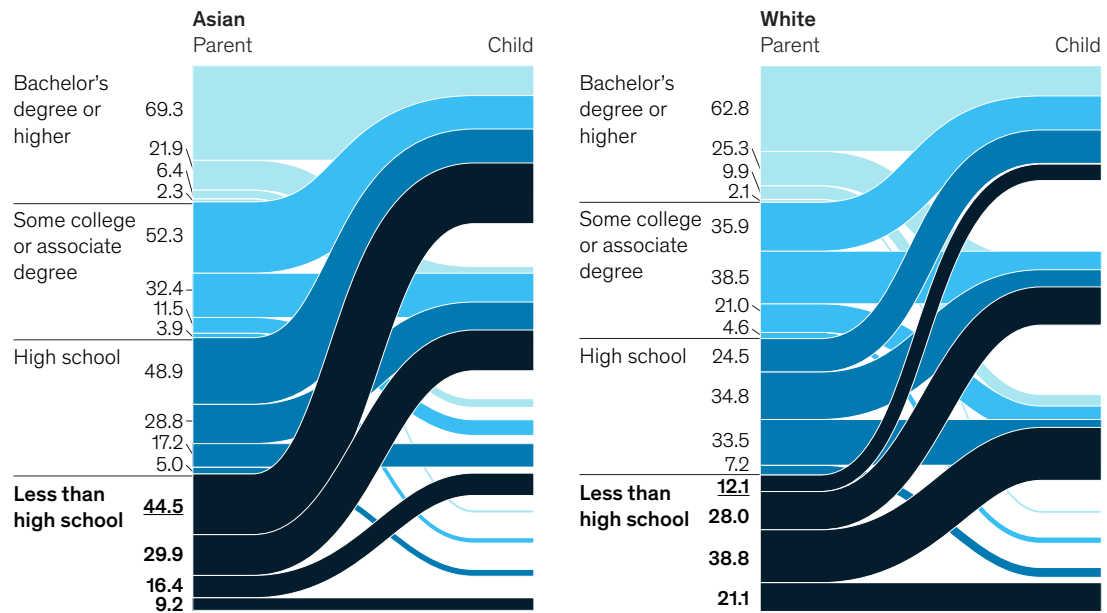


Source: Moody's Analytics; US Bureau of Labor Statistics occupational employment statistics, 2019; US Census Bureau American Community Survey, 2019

Exhibit 8

**Almost half of Asian children in the United States born to parents with less than a high school degree go on to earn at least a bachelor’s degree.**

**Adult children of parents by education attainment,<sup>1</sup> distribution by education attainment level, %**



Note: Figures may not sum to 100%, because of rounding.  
<sup>1</sup>How to read this exhibit: Each strand represents the education attainment of a child born to parents of a certain education level. For example, 44.5% of Asian children born to parents with less than a high school education go on to earn a Bachelor's degree or higher.  
 Source: Opportunity Insights, Intergenerational Transition Matrices of Educational Attainment by Race and Gender data set

American children born to parents with less than a high school education earn at least a bachelor's degree, compared with 12 percent of their White peers. These kinds of educational outcomes can contribute significantly to upward economic mobility.

**Economic mobility**

Overall, Asian Americans have high rates of intergenerational upward economic mobility. Significantly, one out of four Asian children born to families in the bottom quintile of household incomes joins the top quintile as an adult—more than twice the rate of their White counterparts. Nearly two-thirds of Asian Americans raised in families in the bottom quintile move into the middle quintile or higher (Exhibit 9).

Immigration is a significant factor in Asian American intergenerational mobility. Eighteen percent of Asian American children of US-born

mothers in the lowest income quintile move into the highest income quintile as an adult, lower than the 27 percent overall for Asian Americans but higher than the 11 percent of White peers.<sup>11</sup> Consider Asian Americans who came to the United States as refugees. Although they might have arrived with significant education and work experience, many of those individuals had to start over from the bottom of the career and income ladder, which magnifies intergenerational gains in economic mobility. The interlocking determinants of Asian American economic mobility are not yet understood and warrant further study.

**Economic diversity within the Asian American population**

Although Asians Americans as a group experience poverty rates in line with the White population, data for specific Asian American subgroups reveal significant pockets of poverty (Exhibit 10).

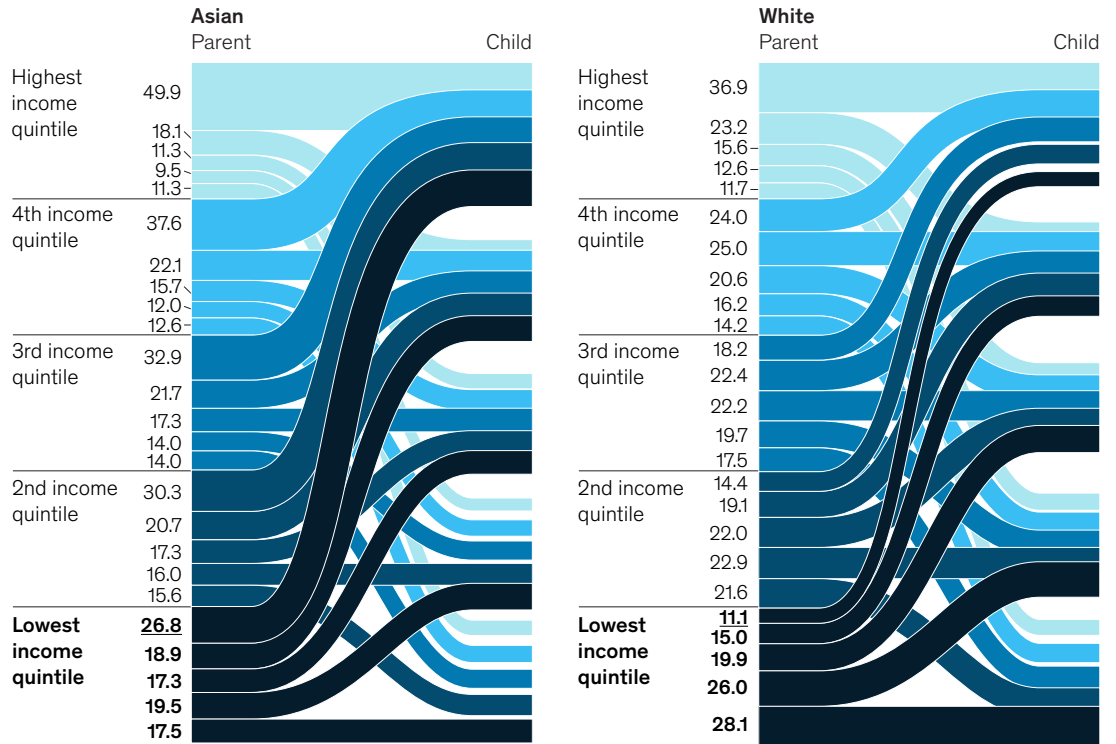
<sup>11</sup> National Child and Parent Income Transition Matrices by Race and Gender for Children with Mothers Born in the U.S., Opportunity Insights, March 2018.



Exhibit 9

**One in four Asian American children born to parents in the lowest income quintile ends up in the highest quintile as an adult.**

**Adult children of parents by income quintile,<sup>1</sup> distribution by income, %**



Note: Figures may not sum to 100%, because of rounding.  
<sup>1</sup>How to read this exhibit: Each strand represents the outcome of a child born to parents of a certain income quintile of the national distribution. For example, 26.8% of Asian children born to parents in the lowest income quintile of the national distribution go on to be in the highest income quintile as adults.  
 Source: National Child and Parent Income Transition Matrices by Race and Gender, Opportunity Insights

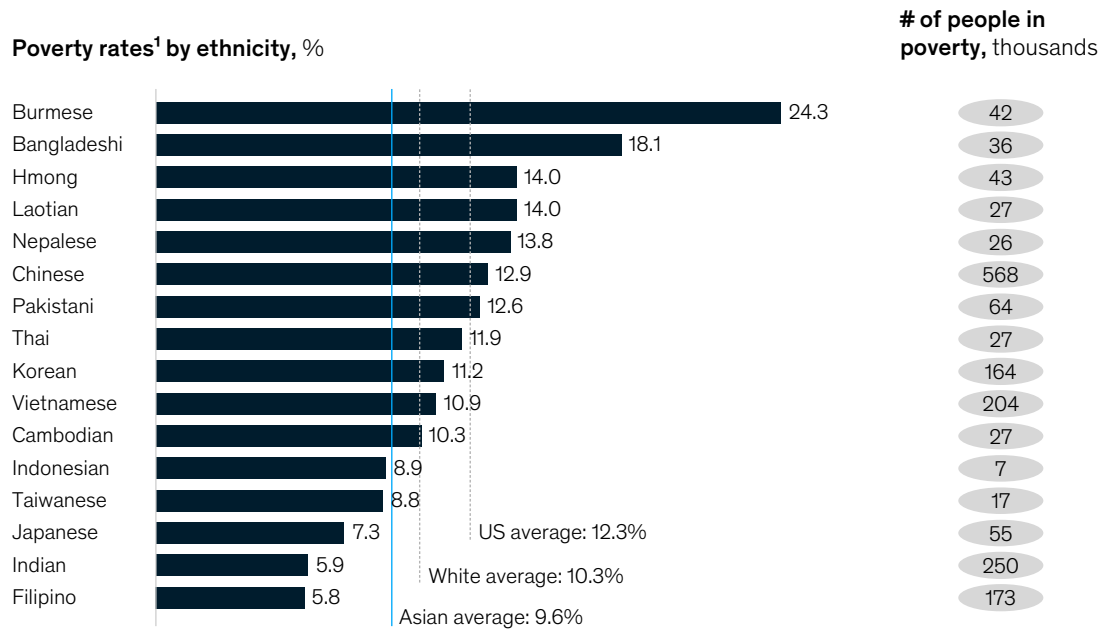


© Billy Hustace/Getty Images



Exhibit 10

**Poverty rates vary greatly among Asian American ethnicities.**



<sup>1</sup>Poverty is defined here as the % of people below the US Census Bureau's poverty threshold. Source: US Census Bureau American Community Survey, 2019, 1-year estimates of selected population profiles

Chinese, Hmong, Laotians, Nepalese, and Pakistanis have higher poverty rates than the US average of 12 percent. In fact, Chinese Americans account for almost one-third of all Asian Americans living in poverty.<sup>12</sup> In all, 4.1 million Asian Americans live on less than 200 percent of the federal poverty level.<sup>13</sup>

Beyond poverty, incomes vary greatly by ethnicity and gender within the Asian American population, ranging from more than 2:1 from the highest median wages to the lowest across ethnicity to more than 3:1 when disaggregated by gender (Exhibit 11). The Pew Research Center has identified Asian Americans as having the highest income inequality among major US racial and ethnic groups.<sup>14</sup>

**A high concentration of Asian Americans in lower-wage occupations**

Asian American workers are overrepresented in low-paying occupations such as manicurists and

skin care specialists, cooks, and sewing-machine operators. The overrepresentation of Asian Americans in low-wage occupations puts them at greater financial risk from economic disruption. After the first wave of the COVID-19 pandemic, for example, unemployment rates for Asian American workers tripled from 3 percent in May 2019 to 9 percent in May 2020.<sup>15</sup>

At the same time, Asian American workers (primarily foreign-born South Asian and East Asian workers) are also overrepresented in higher-wage technical fields such as software development and computer programming (Exhibit 12). Their US-born Asian counterparts are disproportionately represented in the medical profession.

**Immigration and income**

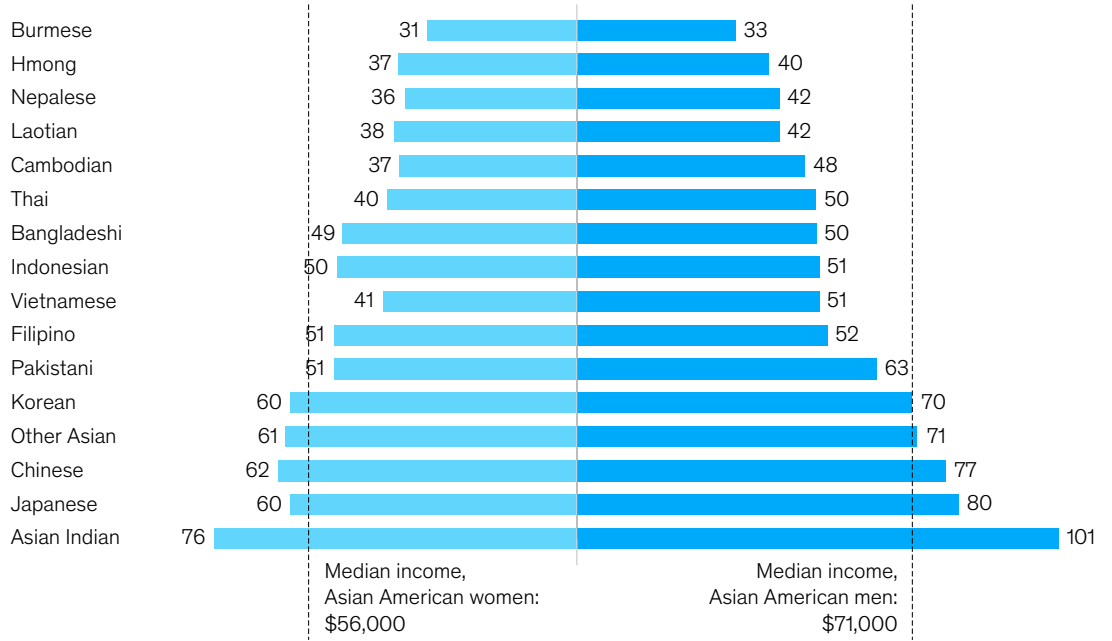
Immigration status is a significant factor in the economic outcomes of Asian Americans and contributes to income differences by gender and within lower-income groups. The inequality

<sup>12</sup> American Community Survey 2019, US Census Bureau, accessed August 11, 2022.  
<sup>13</sup> Defined in the Department of Health and Human Services' poverty guidelines as the basis for eligibility for some federal assistance programs.  
<sup>14</sup> Anthony Cilluffo and Rakesh Kochhar, "Income inequality in the U.S. is rising most rapidly among Asians," Pew Research Center, July 12, 2018.  
<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

Exhibit 11

**Worker income varies greatly across Asian American ethnic groups.**

**Median income by Asian ethnic group and gender, \$ thousands**



Source: Moody's Analytics; US Bureau of Labor Statistics occupational employment statistics, 2019; US Census Bureau American Community Survey, 2019

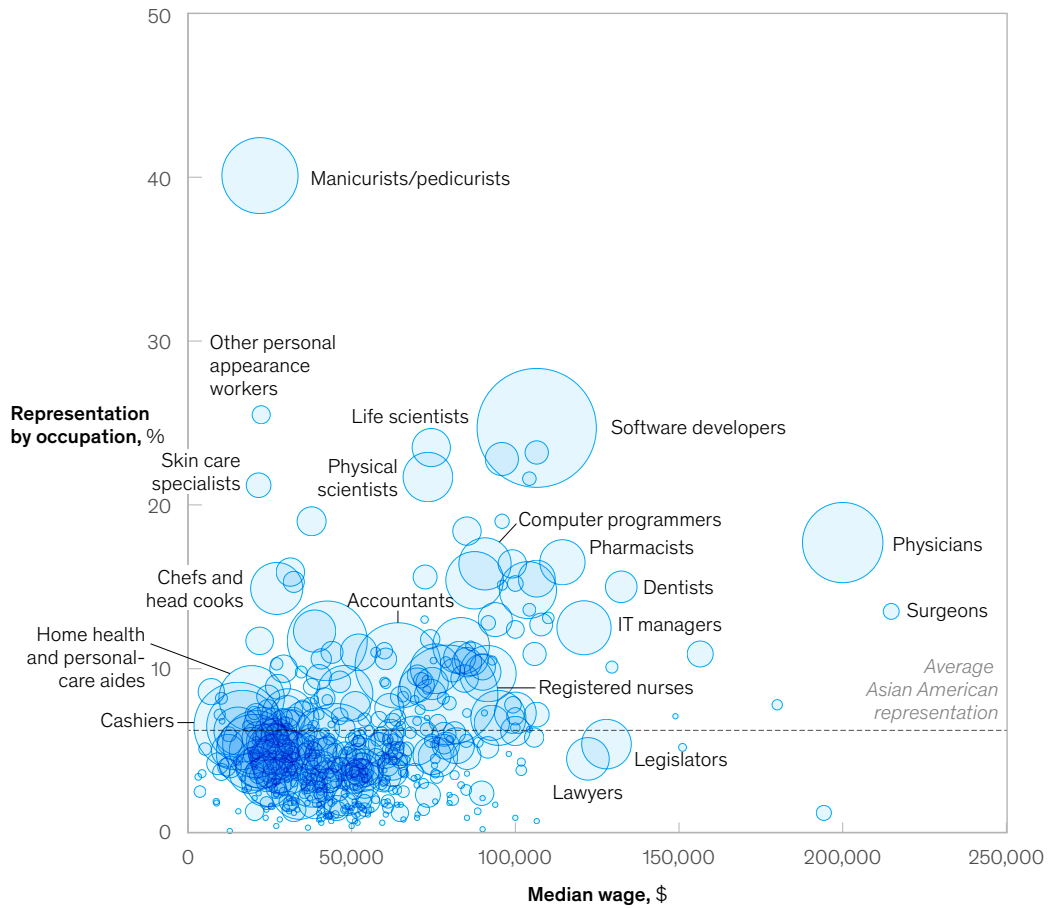


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**Both high- and low-earning occupations exhibit distinctly large populations of Asian American workers.**

**Representation and wages for Asian American workers in US labor force, by occupation**

○ Circle size = relative number of Asian American workers in occupation



Source: Moody's Analytics; US Bureau of Labor Statistics Occupational Employment Statistics, 2019; US Census Bureau American Community Survey, 2019

in economic outcomes is most pronounced for foreign-born Asian American workers who are not permanent residents (Exhibit 13). Within this group, 12 percent of South Asian men earn less than \$30,000 a year compared with 21 percent of South Asian women. Southeast Asian workers are much more likely than any other subgroup to earn less than \$30,000 per year. The differences narrow for foreign-born Asian American workers

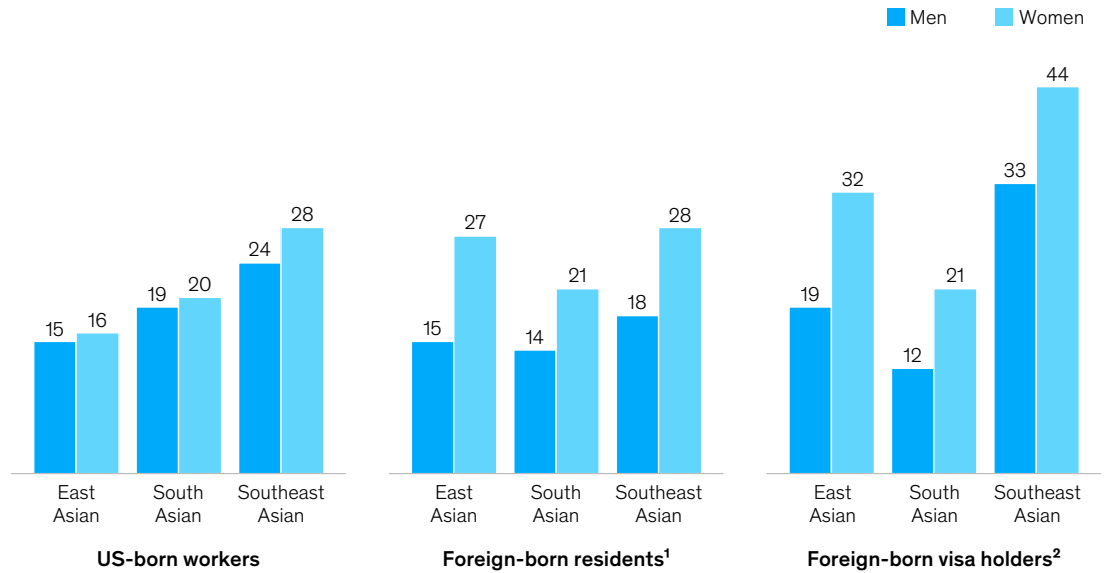
who are permanent residents or naturalized citizens, and even more for US-born Asian Americans. Still, the gaps persist and have far-reaching implications.

Although the Asian American population is extremely economically diverse, the perception of this group as the model minority persists (see sidebar "The model-minority myth").

Exhibit 13

**Gender income disparity is greater for foreign-born Asian American workers than for US-born Asian American workers.**

**Asian American workers with incomes below \$30,000 a year, % of workers**



<sup>1</sup>All other nonpermanent resident immigrant workers.

<sup>2</sup>Foreign-born permanent resident or naturalized-citizen workers.

Source: Moody's Analytics; US Bureau of Labor Statistics occupational employment statistics, 2019; US Census Bureau American Community Survey, 2019

**The model-minority myth**

The idea of Asian Americans as a “model minority” has existed for decades. For example, a 1966 article described Japanese Americans who had found socioeconomic success despite being marginalized.<sup>1</sup> Asian Americans are perceived as successful, and the term is used to contrast them with other people of color. When applied to Asian Americans, the concept also extends to often harmful stereotypes that relate to upbringing (such as the “tiger mom”), genetic myths (for example, a predisposition to strength in STEM disciplines), and weakness or lack of interest in skills such as assertiveness, communication, and leadership (for example, hardworking but too soft spoken), particularly for East Asians. The model-minority myth is rarely seen as problematic, and it is even viewed as benefiting Asian Americans.<sup>2</sup>

These ideas pit racial and ethnic groups against one another.<sup>3</sup> Although some Asian Americans have achieved favorable economic outcomes, the model-minority myth overlooks the experiences of many Asian Americans, caricatures a diverse spectrum of talent, obscures disparate outcomes among Asian Americans, and ignores many other determinants of those outcomes. In other words, a closer look at the data suggests that the model-minority concept, always divisive, is also faulty.

<sup>1</sup> William Petersen, “Success story, Japanese-American style,” *New York Times*, January 9, 1966.

<sup>2</sup> Ijeoma Oluo, *So You Want to Talk about Race*, first edition, New York, NY: Seal Press, 2018.

<sup>3</sup> “The model minority myth,” *The Practice*, November/December 2018, Volume 5, Issue 1.



## Even when Asian Americans are in high-wage jobs, they experience income gaps compared with their White peers

Asian Americans are overrepresented in high-wage occupations, with one in three earning more than \$75,000 a year, compared with one in six White workers. Over the past few decades, the emphasis on high-skilled immigrants—which increased the percentage of the foreign-born population with at least some college education from 17 percent in 1970 to 47 percent in 2010—has contributed to this distribution.<sup>16</sup> Almost three-quarters of Asian American workers are foreign-born, resulting in a high concentration of well-educated Asian Americans in lucrative occupations.

These workers tend to be overrepresented in high-paying occupations such as physicians and pharmacists. As a result, Asian Americans fill 14 percent of jobs in the occupations with a median wage of more than \$100,000,<sup>17</sup> more than twice their 6 percent share of the US workforce.

Despite their overrepresentation in high-paying professions, Asian Americans are paid less than their White counterparts in three-quarters of occupations with a median wage of more than \$100,000. On average, Asian Americans make \$0.93 for every dollar earned by their White colleagues (Exhibit 14). The earnings gap is correlated with the shortfall in Asian American representation at higher-paying manager levels. Our research in the next section suggests contributing factors include a lack of inclusion and advancement in the workplace.

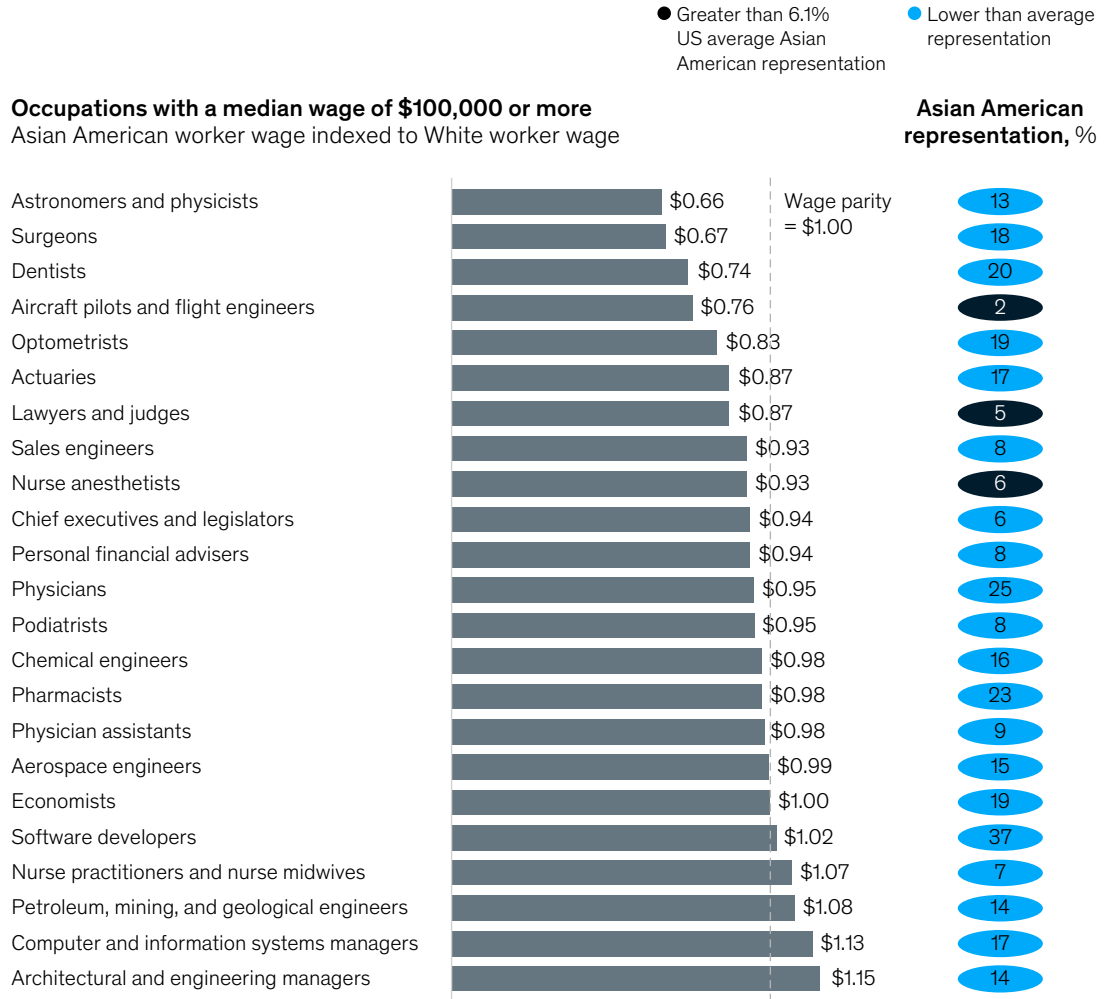
<sup>16</sup> Phillip Connor and Neil G. Ruiz, "Majority of U.S. public supports high-skilled immigration," Pew Research Center, January 22, 2019.

<sup>17</sup> As measured by mean occupational wage.



Exhibit 14

**Asian American workers earn, on average, 93 cents for every dollar earned by their White counterparts in high-wage occupations.**



Source: US Census Bureau American Community Survey, 2019, 1-year estimates of selected population profiles

# 03



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## **Advancement and inclusion in the workplace**



**Asian American employees face many challenges** in moving up the career ladder. Their overall representation and share of promotions drop in senior corporate roles, a pattern that is magnified for Asian women. Further, Asian Americans report experiencing lower levels of inclusion, particularly in the dimensions of fairness and acceptance, compared with White employees. They are also less likely to perceive interventions such as sponsorship as effective in supporting career advancement compared with their peers. This sense of exclusion may be linked to the perception of Asians as perpetual foreigners—outsiders in their own workplaces. Understanding the experiences of Asian American employees—particularly subgroups that report more positive outcomes—can suggest a path forward.

### **‘Asians don’t count’: Obstacles to advancement**

A look at the high-level numbers in the talent pipeline might lead corporate leaders to believe no serious issues exist when it comes to Asian American employees and their advancement in the workplace. McKinsey and LeanIn.org’s Women in the Workplace study, which sampled representation data from more than 400 large companies in 2021,<sup>18</sup> found Asian Americans are represented at higher levels overall than in the US population, but their representation steadily declines from the entry level to higher levels of the corporate hierarchy.

Asian Americans at these companies account for more than 13 percent of entry-level employees (individual contributors such as analysts, software engineers, and

paralegals). But their representation declines at each management level: it drops to less than 8 percent in the C-suite, with an especially notable decline in the representation of Asian women. Asian American women are particularly underrepresented at the vice president, senior vice president, and C-suite executive levels—at 2.8, 2.5, and 1.8 percent, respectively (Exhibit 15).

This lack of C-suite representation is also reflected in the largest companies in the United States. Among the Fortune 500 companies in 2022, only 23 of the CEOs are Asian American, less than the expected 31 if the ranks were representative of Asian Americans’ share of the US workforce.

The drop in representation at more senior levels is the result of lower-than-expected promotions for Asian American employees. For example, they represent 12 percent of senior managers in our sample but account for just 10 percent of the promotions from senior manager to vice president. The lower rate of promotions for Asian Americans is even more pronounced at higher levels. Asian Americans account for almost 9 percent of senior vice presidents but just 5 percent of the C-suite. Asian American women make up less than 1 percent of promotions into the C-suite.

The advancement gaps show Asian American women are effectively penalized twice: for being a person of color and for being a woman. The share of promotions for Asian women is one for every two Asian men in the senior manager and vice president levels. That ratio drops to one for every six Asian men for promotions to the C-suite executive level.

<sup>18</sup> “Women in the Workplace 2021,” McKinsey and LeanIn.org, September 27, 2021.

**“ Just the other day, I heard one of the leaders tell me that Asians don’t count in diversity because they are already doing well. I told him to name an Asian person in a senior role, and he couldn’t. ”**

White man, 40s, senior leader



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“ I really don’t see anybody who looks like me or is like me and in a leadership position. If I do good work, it might be recognized, but that only goes so far. No one’s ever had a serious talk with me about getting promoted. I don’t really see that many role models who look like me in leadership positions. ”

East Asian man, late 20s, US-born, financial analyst

“ It’s been tough because people wonder whether an Asian woman would be successful as a sales director or a sales leader. The challenge I’m dealing with is unconscious bias. I work on my development, and I do everything I can. And yet still I’m being held back because of who I am. ”

Southeast Asian woman, 30s, US-born, retail manager



© Larry Williams & Associates/Getty Images

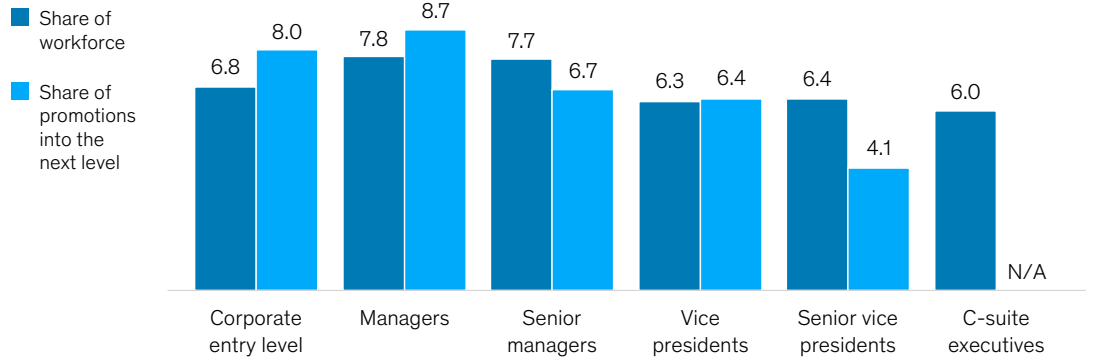
Exhibit 15

**Asian American employees drop in representation and promotions at senior levels; Asian women experience the greatest decrease.**

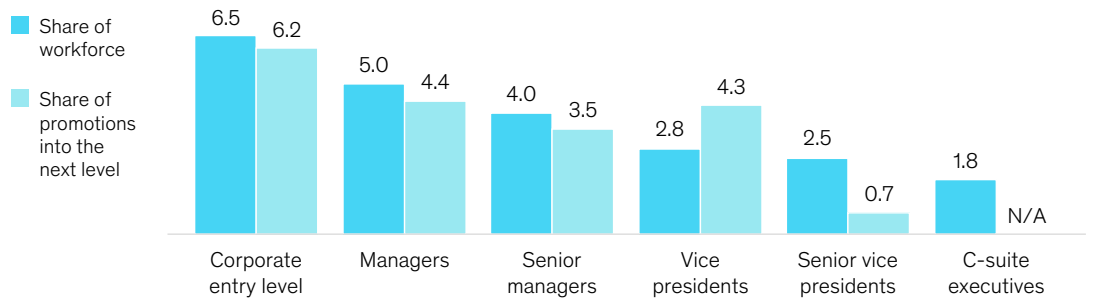
**Asian American employee representation**

% of employees by level; % of promotions by level into the next level<sup>1</sup>

**Asian men**



**Asian women**



<sup>1</sup>Assumes that all promotions are made into the level immediately above (eg, promotions in the manager level are for the senior manager level). Source: McKinsey and LeanIn.org Women in the Workplace study 2021; representation and promotion metrics calculated for end-of-year 2020 HR data from 423 companies across United States and Canada and averaged by industry and weighted by the composition of industries in the Fortune 500 in 2020

**Among the Fortune 500 companies in 2022, only 23 of the CEOs are Asian American, less than the expected 31 if the ranks were representative of Asian Americans' share of the US workforce.**



## **‘I’m just used to working a lot harder’: Lower feelings of inclusion and fairness**

Inclusion—the degree to which employees feel able to bring their full selves to work and make meaningful contributions—has a significant impact on metrics such as employee performance, retention, and job satisfaction.<sup>19</sup> Many Asian Americans, even those who were born in the United States, feel they are perceived in the workplace as perpetual foreigners—an indication of social exclusion. This context makes inclusion at work even more critical (see sidebar “Asian Americans as perpetual foreigners”).

In a McKinsey survey of about 25,000 US employees, 30 percent of Asian Americans respondents said their race will make it harder to achieve their career goals (compared with 21 percent of White respondents).<sup>20</sup> East Asian respondents, Asian American women, and foreign-born employees are more likely to hold this opinion. Conversely, South Asian respondents have a similar perception as their White

counterparts regarding their company’s actions to promote inclusion. Further data collection and analyses will be required to quantitatively assess how these differing perceptions are correlated with career advancement by subgroup. However, other data have shown a strong correlation between higher inclusion experience—particularly in dimensions of fairness—and perceptions of advancement support in general.<sup>21</sup>

### **Lower levels of inclusion**

To further our understanding of Asian American employees and their feelings of inclusion in the workplace, the 2021 Race in the Workplace Survey collected data on employee perceptions across multiple dimensions of inclusion. Our analysis finds Asian American respondents report lower overall perceptions of inclusion in their companies compared with their White counterparts. Asian American respondents diverged most markedly from the assessments of White employees regarding their company’s acceptance and fairness practices (Exhibit 16).

<sup>19</sup> *McKinsey Organization Blog*, “Inclusion doesn’t happen by accident: Measuring inclusion in a way that matters,” blog entry by Diana Ellsworth, Drew Goldstein, and Bill Schaninger, February 16, 2021.

<sup>20</sup> McKinsey surveyed US employees from 2020 to early 2021 about their workplace experiences of inclusion. The survey used McKinsey’s Inclusion Assessment to measure experiences of inclusion along six inclusion outcomes—acceptance, authenticity, belonging, camaraderie, fairness, and meaningful work—and 16 inclusion practices to capture how employees individually experience inclusion in the workplace and how they feel. Among the sample of 24,842 respondents, 2,178 self-identified as Asian American: 696 as East Asian, 933 as South Asian, and 549 as Southeast Asian. For more, see “Inclusion doesn’t happen by accident,” February 16, 2021.

<sup>21</sup> “Race in the workplace: The Black experience in the US private sector,” McKinsey, February 21, 2021.

“I don’t feel supported at all. I’m just used to working a lot harder.”

South Asian man, 40s, immigrated as a child, manufacturing HQ manager



## Asian Americans as perpetual foreigners

The United States is their home, but Asian Americans are often treated as permanent foreigners—even those who are US-born. Although three-quarters of Asian Americans are foreign-born, many of them have set down roots in the United States; almost half of all immigrants from Asia and the Pacific Islands have been here for more than 20 years.<sup>1</sup>

The dark side of the perpetual-foreigner stereotype has emerged during the COVID-19 pandemic with an escalation in the number of violent crimes committed against Asian Americans. These violent experiences, combined with both subtle and overt instances of social exclusion, make Asian Americans more likely to feel less included at work.

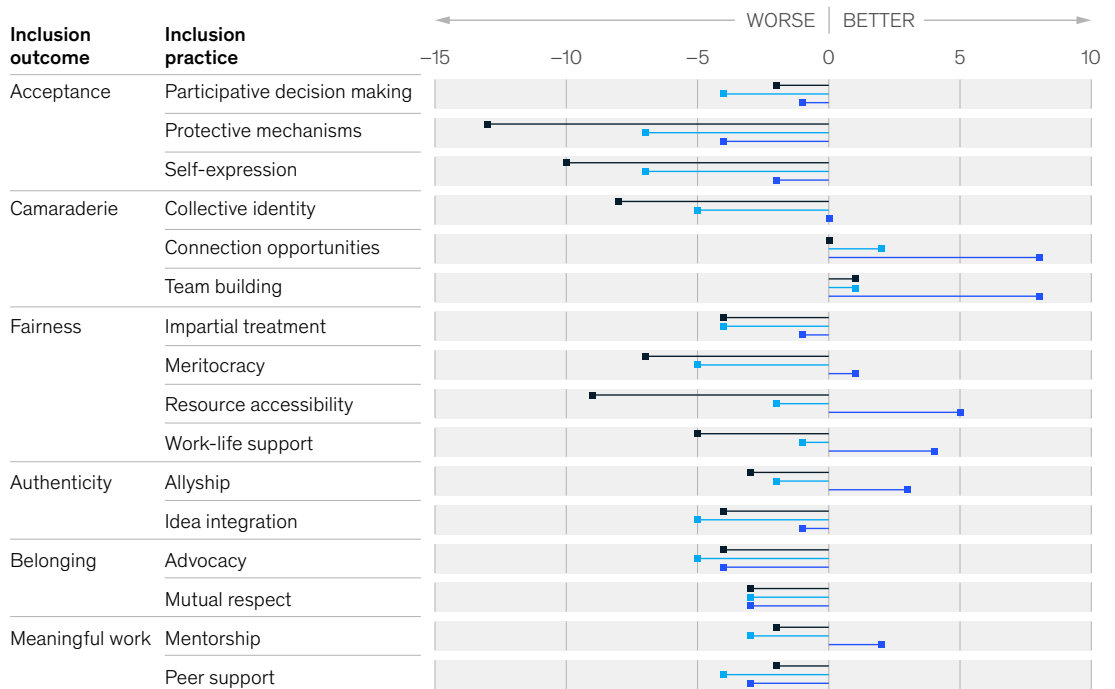
<sup>1</sup> "Combatting the AAPI perpetual foreigner stereotype," New American Economy Research Fund, May 20, 2021.

Exhibit 16

### Asian American employees, particularly East Asian and Southeast Asian, perceive lower inclusion than their White peers.

**Inclusion score gap, points (indexed, 0 = average score of White employees)<sup>1</sup>**

■ East Asian ■ Southeast Asian ■ South Asian



<sup>1</sup>Measures employees' perceptions of their companies on 6 outcomes that make up inclusion (acceptance, authenticity, belonging, camaraderie, fairness, and meaningful work) and how often they experience associated workplace behaviors based on listed inclusion practices (eg, self-expression or resource accessibility). Gap is the difference in identified population's inclusion score from inclusion score of all White respondents. Source: McKinsey Race in the Workplace study, 2021 (for East Asian, n = 696; for Southeast Asian, n = 549; for South Asian, n = 933; for White, n = 15,482)

## Creating a safe, supportive environment for all employees

Asian Americans are less likely than their White peers to feel that their companies allow them to be authentic.<sup>22</sup> These experiences make it difficult for them to bring their full selves to work. While Asian American employees overall have lower perceptions of acceptance than White employees, East Asian and Southeast Asian employees have an even larger inclusion gap when it comes to how their companies recognize different cultural traditions. These gaps are correlated with the perpetual foreigner perception—what should feel authentic ends up emphasizing feelings of being an outsider (Exhibit 17).

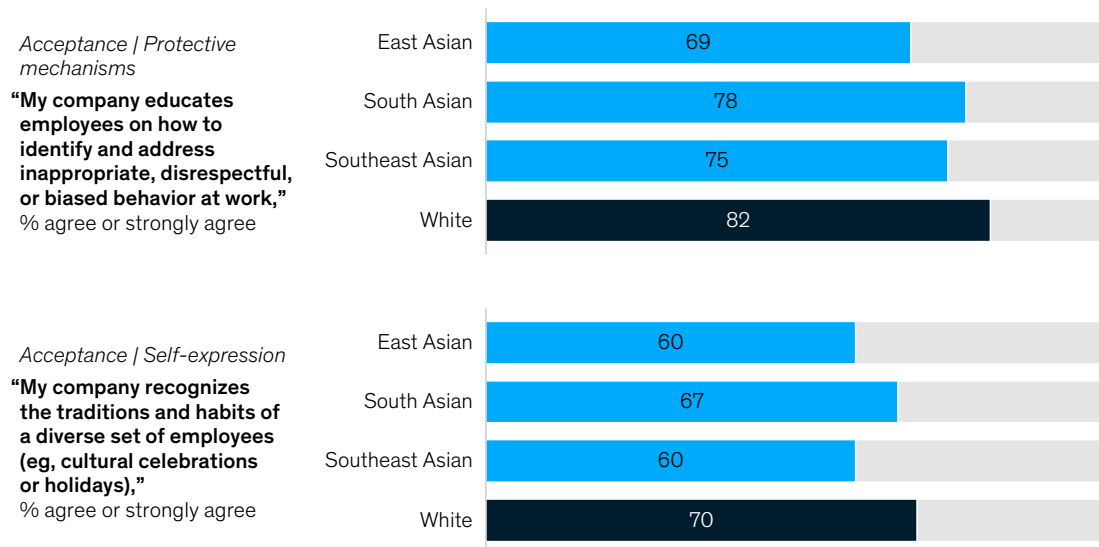
## A workplace that isn't a meritocracy

Compared with their White counterparts, Asian Americans also report their workplaces are less

fair and meritocratic<sup>23</sup>; they have worse access to resources and opportunities to advance (for example, relationships with senior leaders and coaching), and some employees perceive their companies' recognition and rewards are not based on objective processes. Similar to their feelings of acceptance, East Asian and Southeast Asian respondents feel the difference in fairness more acutely. When asked if their companies provide all employees with the mentorship and coaching to be successful, only 27 percent of East Asian employees and 32 percent of Southeast Asian employees agreed, compared with 44 percent of White employees. So even though employees in general often perceive low levels of fairness,<sup>24</sup> Asian Americans feel it even more. The implications for career advancement and motivation—not just the quality of workplace experience—are significant (Exhibit 18).

Exhibit 17

## Perceptions of authenticity are lower for Asian American employees, driven by lower scores for self-expression and protective mechanisms.



Source: McKinsey Race in the Workplace study, 2021 (for East Asian, n = 696; for Southeast Asian, n = 549; for South Asian, n = 933; for White, n = 15,482; selected survey questions from each inclusion practice)

<sup>22</sup> For the purposes of the survey, self-expression is defined as "creates a space for employees to express themselves in ways that are personally meaningful." Protective mechanisms is defined as "discourages inappropriate, disrespectful, or biased behaviors at work and provides employees a safe way to report such behaviors."

<sup>23</sup> For the purposes of the survey, meritocracy is defined as "creates objective and consistent processes for personnel decisions and merit-based rewards." Resource accessibility is defined as "provides all employees with equal access to information, opportunities, and relationships they need to be successful."

<sup>24</sup> "Race in the workplace," February 21, 2021.





© Westend61/Getty Images

**“ I am told that I’m one of the strongest junior team members and performers. But I haven’t been promoted as opposed to my peers, who are all primarily White. That doesn’t line up. ”**

South Asian woman, 20s, immigrated as an adult, financial analyst

**“ What is sometimes difficult is networking. I don’t feel like I have as good of a connection with others because of my own culture. ”**

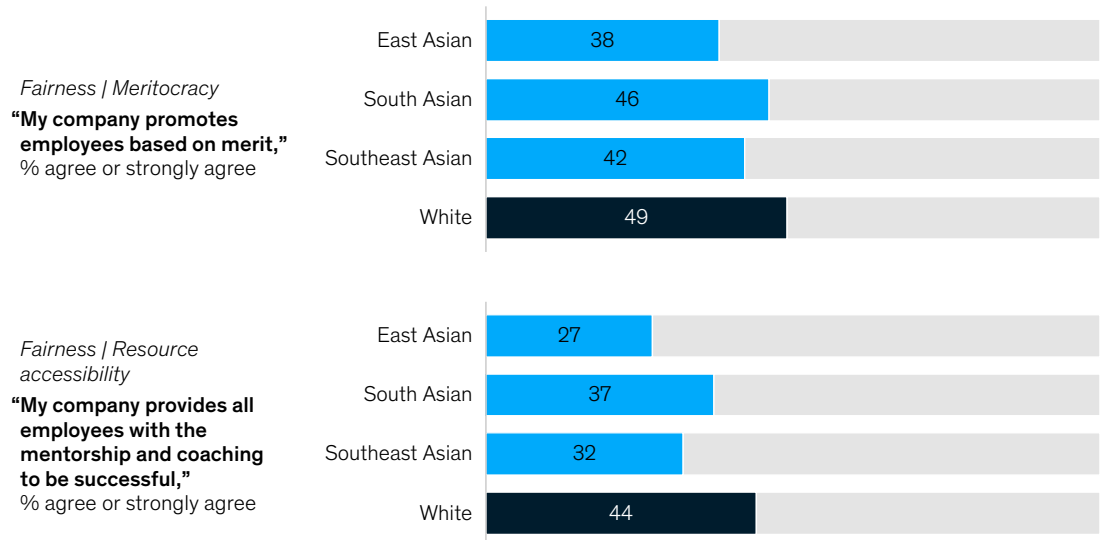
East Asian woman, 20s, immigrated as a child, administrative assistant

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**Perceptions of fairness are lower, especially for East Asian employees.**



Source: McKinsey Race in the Workplace study, 2021 (for East Asian, n = 696; for Southeast Asian, n = 549; for South Asian, n = 933; for White, n = 15,482; selected survey questions from each inclusion practice)

**Lower levels of inclusion at senior levels**

One promising sign is that frontline and corporate entry-level Asian American employees, on average, perceive the same or even greater levels of inclusion as their White peers. However, senior-level Asian American respondents—senior managers and VPs—report significantly lower feelings of inclusion, particularly when it comes to perceptions of fairness (for example, meritocracy and impartial treatment) than do their White peers. Like overall trends of perceived inclusion, these gaps at the more senior levels are amplified for East Asian and Southeast Asian employees.

**A lack of sponsorship for Asian American employees in senior roles**

Sponsors—organizational leaders who create opportunities and advocate for someone to grow and advance at their organization—are an important part of inclusion in the workplace and have proved effective in supporting advancement.<sup>25</sup> About half of Asian American

employees report having at least one sponsor, similar to the rate of White employees (Exhibit 19).

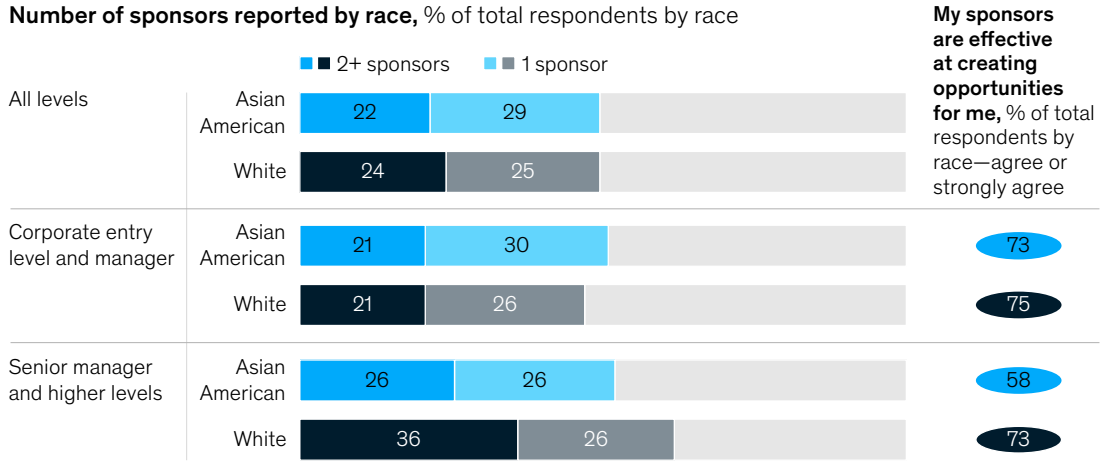
However, the story changes when we consider sponsorship by job level. For corporate entry-level employees and managers, 51 percent of Asian American employees reported having sponsors, four percentage points higher than White employees. But for senior managers and above, 52 percent of Asian American employees reported having sponsors, ten percentage points lower than White employees. This disparity manifests in the much higher percentage of senior White employees who report having two or more sponsors. This pattern suggests leadership support and advocacy are greater for White employees than Asian employees at more senior levels.

Even more telling is the perception of sponsor effectiveness among more senior Asian American employees. Asian American employees at the corporate-entry and manager level report a similar level of effectiveness as their White counterparts regarding the impact of sponsors

<sup>25</sup> For more, see Alexis Krivkovich and Marie-Claude Nadeau, "The link between sponsorship and risk-taking for women in financial services," McKinsey, May 22, 2019.

Exhibit 19

**Sponsorship and perceptions of sponsor effectiveness diverge between Asian American employees and White employees at more senior levels.**



Note: Figures may not sum to 100%, because of rounding.  
 Source: McKinsey Race in the Workplace study, 2022 (for Asian American, n = 1,472; for White, n = 10,452)

in creating opportunity. But at more senior levels, Asian American employees' perception of sponsor effectiveness drops 14 percentage points, while the perception among their White peers drops just two percentage points.

The combination of the two dynamics—lower feelings of inclusion and lower sponsorship among Asian employees relative to White employees—correlates with the divergent rates of promotion for these groups at more senior levels of the organization.

**“ At a certain level publicly, my company wants to show that they promote and value leaders of color. But past a certain point, I think they still aren't totally there yet. ”**

East Asian woman, 30s, immigrated as a child, retail strategy director

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04



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# Supporting Asian Americans at work

**Asian Americans are projected** to make up a greater share of the workforce in the next 40 years, so it will be increasingly important for companies to support these workers. Our assessment of different groups within the Asian American population reveals significant disparities in workplace experience, career advancement, and economic outcomes.

Much work remains to be done to craft effective policies and programs. We don't have all the answers yet, but we hope that this report's analysis spurs constructive and creative action. To boost inclusion and equity for Asian American workers, employers can collect and analyze granular data, support Asian American workers at critical moments, address inclusion challenges, create effective sponsorship opportunities, and make Asian American issues part of corporate responsibility.

### **Collect more granular data about Asian American workers**

We have established the diversity of the Asian American population and its experiences within the workplace. Data are essential to help decision

makers understand the experiences, needs, and challenges of groups within this population.

Of course, many private employers in the United States have a legal obligation to submit workforce demographic data by race and ethnicity to the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission.<sup>26</sup> But these submissions aggregate all Asian American employees into one category,<sup>27</sup> and many employers do not take the extra step of collecting information on subgroups. Given the growing Asian American demographic, this more general category lacks detail about ethnicity that could inform diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) efforts to bridge the diverse experiences of Asian American workers.<sup>28</sup>

Employers, public statistics agencies, and researchers alike could consider collecting data that are disaggregated by ethnicity. The East Asian, Southeast Asian, and South Asian categories offer a basic starting point. Oversampling smaller populations may also help secure a large enough data set to produce accurate analysis. This approach can also be used to better understand and meet the needs of other underrepresented groups.

<sup>26</sup> "2021 EEO-1 Component 1 Data Collection," US Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, accessed August 23, 2022.

<sup>27</sup> Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander is a separate category.

<sup>28</sup> For research purposes, public statistical agencies and scholars could collect data that is disaggregated by ethnicity. Oversampling smaller populations could also help secure a large enough data set to produce accurate analysis.



**“When people look at us, they don't really see a leader. They see someone smart, good with numbers, but not someone who can lead a team.”**

East Asian man, 20s, US-born, financial services manager



## Support Asian American workers at critical moments

Granular data can help to inform corporate leaders about the experiences of Asian Americans at critical moments in their professional journeys, such as recruitment, evaluation, promotion, and the identification of mentors and sponsors. Cultural differences for Asian Americans—and within the Asian American community—have been linked to differences in advancement in the workplace.<sup>29</sup> To help address lower perceptions of fairness, companies should continue working to eliminate implicit bias (for example, traditional ideas of leadership qualities) from job interviews and evaluations.

## Address inclusion challenges for Asian American employees

Societal challenges are often carried into the workplace, and the harmful idea of Asian Americans as perpetual foreigners, even in their country, communities, and workplaces, can be quietly damaging. Our research across US companies uncovered disparate experiences within the Asian American employee population

as well; women and immigrants have generally worse workplace experiences, and East Asian and Southeast Asian employees view dimensions of workplace fairness much more negatively than South Asian employees do. Disaggregating workplace engagement surveys can reveal hidden problems.

Developing programs that educate employees on how to identify and address inappropriate or biased behavior could help to improve inclusion for Asian American workers, including guarding against bias in workplace conversations. Recognizing diverse traditions and habits, including cultural celebrations and holidays, can be one avenue to help Asian American employees feel comfortable bringing their whole authentic selves to work.

Another potential action to improve inclusion is establishing and supporting Asian American employee resource groups (ERGs). These groups can provide an open space for discussions about the challenges faced by specific ethnicities and intersectionalities (for example, gender and immigration background), while celebrating and educating leaders and colleagues about

<sup>29</sup> Jackson G. Lu, Michael W. Morris, and Richard E. Nisbett, "Why East Asians but not South Asians are underrepresented in leadership positions in the United States," *PNAS*, 2020, Volume 117, Number 9.

**“I do think that my cultural upbringing makes it more difficult to feel comfortable advocating for myself. It’s a confidence issue: I’m almost afraid that I’ll get fired.”**

South Asian woman, 30s, immigrated as a child, software engineer

© Erik Isakson/Getty Images



the individual cultures of Asian Americans. These groups can also help organizations collect, examine, and interpret data about Asian American employees, adding context to findings in areas such as representation and promotion rates.

### **Create effective sponsorship opportunities for Asian American workers**

Effective sponsorship is critical for career advancement, including providing pathways for employees who are either disinterested or considering leaving their jobs. Sponsorship, which for Asian American employees tends to decrease both in engagement and effectiveness at higher levels in corporate America, requires active advocacy. Companies with programs that assign sponsors to employees may find these connections to be less effective. Providing opportunities for employees to make informal connections that could turn into sponsorships or giving sponsors the tools to better advocate for their colleagues could lead to better outcomes for employees.

### **Address Asian American issues as part of corporate responsibility**

Public data show that even though Asian Americans experience poverty at similar rates as White Americans, the majority of Asian American ethnic groups are actually more likely than the US population to live in poverty. Yet because some aggregate statistics show Asian Americans achieving favorable economic outcomes overall, these groups can be neglected. Settling as refugees, for example, often means completely starting over in the new country, making these populations more economically vulnerable and fragile.

Many companies already have a presence in their communities and engage in outreach as part of environmental, social, and governance (ESG) efforts. As organizations evaluate how to address poverty and social inequities in their broader communities, they could ensure Asian Americans, including their unique needs and concerns, are part of the conversation to guide philanthropic and other efforts. Countering the escalating incidence of anti-Asian hate is another area in which corporations could contribute. Addressing



**“ When it comes to networking, there’s a lot of culture and kind of ‘old boys club’ type of ways of connecting, whether it’s golf or vacationing in the same spots. It’s just not as common for an immigrant, and it’s not as relatable. ”**

East Asian man, 30s, immigrated as a child, software developer

© yongyuan/Getty Images



Asian American issues as part of the corporate social responsibility agenda could not only mobilize Asian American employees to participate (thereby improving inclusion) but also educate workers about the Asian American population and its subgroups.

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Taking the proper steps to recognize, understand, and support Asian Americans employees doesn't require companies to start from square one. Many of the initiatives and platforms already exist,

but they need to be recalibrated to the needs of Asian Americans—both as a whole and for specific subgroups. The effort must begin with an acknowledgment of the opportunity to do better and a commitment to ensure Asian American employees feel more connected in the workplace.

This burgeoning segment of the US workforce, overlooked for too long, is poised to become an even greater asset. Companies must take actions now to unlock the full potential of Asian Americans.



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# Appendix



## Select mobility data from the Opportunity Insights data library

The following data are excerpted from the Opportunity Insights data library. Each number represents the outcome percentage of children born to parents of a certain income level or educational attainment. For example, 26.84 percent of Asian children born to parents in the lowest income quintile go on to the highest income quintile. Columns (that is, parents of the same outcome) sum to 100 percent.

### Income transition by race

Source: National Child and Parent Income Transition Matrices by Race and Gender, Opportunity Insights

Asian		Parent household income quintile				
		Lowest	Second	Third	Fourth	Highest
Child household income quintile	Highest	26.84%	30.33%	32.93%	37.64%	49.86%
	Fourth	18.90%	20.71%	21.72%	22.05%	18.08%
	Third	17.27%	17.33%	17.33%	15.73%	11.27%
	Second	19.52%	16.04%	14.00%	11.97%	9.47%
	Lowest	17.48%	15.60%	14.02%	12.61%	11.33%

White		Parent household income quintile				
		Lowest	Second	Third	Fourth	Highest
Child household income quintile	Highest	11.07%	14.38%	18.17%	24.00%	36.89%
	Fourth	15.01%	19.09%	22.43%	24.99%	23.22%
	Third	19.86%	22.03%	22.25%	20.62%	15.59%
	Second	25.99%	22.87%	19.66%	16.23%	12.58%
	Lowest	28.07%	21.63%	17.50%	14.16%	11.72%

### Income transition by race for children born to US-born mothers

Source: National Child and Parent Income Transition Matrices by Race and Gender for Children with Mothers Born in the U.S., Opportunity Insights

Asian		Parent household income quintile				
		Lowest	Second	Third	Fourth	Highest
Child household income quintile	Highest	18.06%	21.27%	23.66%	27.99%	39.90%
	Fourth	18.32%	19.83%	21.68%	23.22%	21.74%
	Third	19.11%	19.49%	20.79%	20.52%	14.94%
	Second	22.81%	20.30%	17.25%	14.34%	11.72%
	Lowest	21.69%	19.12%	16.62%	13.93%	11.70%

White		Parent household income quintile				
		Lowest	Second	Third	Fourth	Highest
Child household income quintile	Highest	10.40%	14.12%	17.97%	23.78%	36.82%
	Fourth	15.41%	19.93%	23.35%	25.82%	23.71%
	Third	20.75%	22.78%	22.83%	21.00%	15.75%
	Second	26.18%	22.67%	19.35%	15.98%	12.41%
	Lowest	27.27%	20.50%	16.50%	13.42%	11.31%

### Educational attainment transition by race

Source: Intergenerational Transition Matrices of Educational Attainment by Race and Gender, Opportunity Insights

Asian		Parent household income quartile			
		Less than high school	High school	Some college or associate's degree	Bachelor's degree or higher
Child educational attainment	Less than high school	44.51%	48.93%	52.25%	69.30%
	High school	29.89%	28.83%	32.35%	21.94%
	Some college or associate's degree	16.36%	17.21%	11.53%	6.42%
	Bachelor's degree or higher	9.24%	5.03%	3.86%	2.34%


White		Parent household income quartile			
		Less than high school	High school	Some college or associate's degree	Bachelor's degree or higher
Child educational attainment	Less than high school	12.09%	24.52%	35.91%	62.76%
	High school	27.99%	34.78%	38.53%	25.25%
	Some college or associate's degree	38.81%	33.47%	20.96%	9.88%
	Bachelor's degree or higher	21.12%	7.24%	4.61%	2.11%




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