



What Pulse Tells Us about the Experiences of Asian Americans and Pacific Islander Coloradans

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Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders (AAPI) make up around 4% of the folks who call Colorado home, and its a growing population. Our commitment to listening through Pulse: The Colorado Health Foundation Poll includes seeking out the priorities, concerns and hopes of our growing and diverse AAPI population.

The term “AAPI” is a broad one, encompassing people who identify as Chinese, Japanese, Korean and Vietnamese, as well as Filipino, Indian and South Asian. Each community under the AAPI umbrella possesses unique histories, beliefs, values and lived experiences. Each community contributes tremendously to Colorado – socially, culturally and economically. Far too often, the identities of these communities are excluded from the story of the state, leading to less research, resources and attention from decision-makers and others in power.

Pulse is one way to build a deeper understanding of AAPI Coloradans. Through Pulse, in August 2021, we interviewed 143 Coloradans who identified as Asian American or Pacific Islander. Thanks to the community partners who helped us spread the word about Pulse, we had the opportunity to interview more AAPI Coloradans, and achieve a larger and more diverse sample, than last year. While we would have liked to talk to even more AAPI adults, that number of interviews gives us confidence in sharing what we learned. Here’s a bit of what we heard:

The Impacts of the COVID-19 Pandemic

The rhetoric and misinformation surrounding the origins of the COVID-19 pandemic fueled an intensified wave of anti-Asian hate and violence across the country. Since the onset of COVID-19 in 2020, hate crimes against AAPIs have increased [nearly 150%](#), and [3,800 anti-Asian incidents](#) have been reported nationally. In 2021, a majority (51%) of Pulse's AAPI respondents considered racial bias and discrimination to be a very serious problem facing Colorado.

We simply cannot talk about COVID-19 without acknowledging this violence, and yet it is just one way AAPI Coloradans are impacted by the pandemic. Economically, many AAPI respondents are struggling. In the last year, more than a quarter (27%) have had their work hours and/or wages reduced, and 14% have been laid off. Looking ahead, 17% of AAPI Coloradans are worried about affording their rent or mortgage, and 18% are worried they will not be able to adequately feed their families.

AAPI Coloradans, and everyone in our state, will undoubtedly feel the financial impacts of the coronavirus pandemic for years to come. Almost seven in 10 (69%) AAPI Coloradans say harm to the economy caused by the coronavirus is a very serious problem, and they want state government to do something about it: 79% support increasing government spending on programs to stimulate jobs and economic growth.

Concerns about Health Care and Mental Well-Being

Over the past 18 months, as the COVID-19 pandemic has touched all of our lives, worries about health and well-being have become more prominent. For many AAPI Coloradans, accessing and affording quality health care is both a present challenge and a significant concern expected to continue in the next year.

In the last year, 37% of AAPI respondents postponed medical or dental care. One reason why may be cost: three in four (75%) AAPI Coloradans consider the cost of health care to be a very serious problem, and 34% are worried they, or someone in their household, will have to go without health insurance in the next year. In addition to concerns about affordability, many AAPI Coloradans are skeptical about whether our state's health care system will treat them fairly: 48% think they're more likely than White Coloradans to receive poor quality or inadequate health care.

Along with these concerns about the affordability and quality of care, a majority of AAPI Coloradans also report they have experienced challenges to their mental well-being, such as anxiety (63%) and excessive worrying (53%). Many have experienced difficulty focusing (49%), grief or loss (44%), depression (39%) and difficulty connecting with family and friends (35%). Meanwhile, only 34% of AAPI Coloradans who reported mental health strain in the last year talked with a health professional about it.

AAPI respondents want Colorado's state government to take action to improve access to affordable health care: 96% support changing regulations to make health insurance and medical expenses more affordable – higher than any other racial or ethnic group – and 87% support providing more state-funded mental health and substance use services.

The Model Minority Myth

Nationally, and in Colorado, Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders are harmed by the Model Minority Myth, a false narrative based on stereotypes that pit communities of color against one another. As [Sarah-Soonling Blackburn wrote](#): “This myth characterizes Asian Americans as a polite, law-abiding group who have achieved a higher level of success than the general population through some combination of innate talent and ‘pull-yourselfes-up-by-your-bootstraps’

immigrant striving.”

Evidence of the persistence of this myth emerged in 2021 Pulse data. We asked respondents of all racial and ethnic backgrounds if they thought Asian American Coloradans were more or less likely to experience unfair treatment compared to White Coloradans. What we learned is Coloradans are much less likely to believe Asian Americans face unfair treatment, compared to White Coloradans and other communities of color. However, AAPI respondents *do* perceive people like themselves are more likely to experience unfair treatment in police interactions and housing.

Race/Ethnicity

Compared to White Coloradans, do you think Asian American Coloradans are more likely or less likely to experience the following...

Be treated unfairly by police 30%

All Coloradans
 White American
 Black/African American
 Asian/Pacific Islander
 Hispanic/Latinx
 Native American
 Other

27% 33% 45% 36% 44% 37%

Be treated unfairly when seeking to rent or buy a home

30%	29%	30%	49%	35%	46%	36%
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The notion that Asian Americans are more privileged is prevalent across Coloradans of all ethnicities. The Model Minority Myth **does not** uplift AAPI Coloradans. In fact, the prevalence of this false narrative divides our communities and distracts us from the work needed to disrupt and challenge the ways in which AAPI folks are not treated fairly in our institutions and culture. The 2021 Pulse data is a reminder that dismantling structural racism starts with telling a more complete and accurate story of AAPI Coloradans’ lived experiences and perspectives.

Dig Deeper

These data from Pulse represent just a piece of what we heard when we asked Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders about their worries, experiences and priorities. There is far too little research conducted with AAPI Coloradans and too incomplete an understanding of these multi-faceted communities.

We invite you to use our [interactive Pulse dashboard](#) to dig deeper into the data and learn how AAPI respondents answered each and every question we asked.

TYPE

Blog

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