Local Snapshots: Asian American Case Studies

Case studies allow us to examine the quality of the decennial census count for the Asian American community at a more detailed scale. Asian Americans comprise just over 7% of the population of the United States, but they are not distributed evenly geographically. We selected four locations with sizable or distinctive Asian American communities. Our first case study, Los Angeles County, California has one of the largest populations of Asian Americans in the United States. Second, King County, Washington has seen rapid growth of the Asian American population. Our third case study, Houston, is distinctive not only for its growth, but also given the large Vietnamese and Asian Indian populations. Finally, we examine the five counties that make up New York City (NYC). We chose NYC given the long history of Asian Americans in the city and the significant Bangladeshi concentration here.

Common Findings: Census Coverage and Self-Response

Throughout the report we discuss how the recent net overcounts for the Asian American population do not mean that the Asian American population was overcounted everywhere. Our case studies reinforce this conclusion. In some of our local snapshots we find undercounts for the Asian American community, while in others we find overcounts. These coverage errors changed over time—in fact, before 2000 the Asian American population was undercounted. Put another way, in one decennial census an area may have experienced a net overcount, while in another they experienced a net undercount.

Below, we outline the key findings and avenues for future research across all of our case studies before analyzing each case study individually.

Key Findings

At the national level, the census appears to have overcounted Asian Americans. States with large Asian American populations—including California and New York—were especially likely to have overcounts. *But Asian Americans were not overcounted everywhere*. For example, our case studies show undercounts for both Los Angeles County and King County, Washington (for the Asian Alone population only in 2020).

Future research should focus on improving our understanding of these coverage issues by attending to which data source is causing the error, as well as why it is occurring.

Impact of Age on Census Accuracy

Comparing our case studies to the national average reveals where specific age groups don't follow national patterns.

The Asian American Alone population experienced a noticeable national undercount of young children ages 0–4 (Alone or in Combination did not experience a national undercount for these ages). All our case studies also show an undercount of young children for the Asian Alone population, and most of the case studies show an undercount for young children for the Asian Alone or in Combination population. This shows how persistent the undercount of young children is.

We also find that for older children and young adults (ages 10–29), there is a larger average overcount than in any other age group. This is the case in nearly all of our case studies, and holds for both the Alone and the Alone or in Combination population. Adults (ages 30–64) are closest to net zero coverage error on average. Again, these findings generally hold for our case studies, with some interesting exceptions. King County in Washington and some of NYC's counties show interesting patterns for some ages within this span. Ages 65 and above have net undercounts on average. Some of our case studies follow this pattern, while others do not.

More research is needed to better understand these age patterns. Are there differences based on how much is spent on outreach? Is outreach more effective when it's done by members of the impacted group, and does the timing of the outreach matter? Perhaps there are differences in the subgroups that make up each of these age cohorts in these different geographic locations. Additional research is needed to answer these questions.

Self-Response: Impact of Contextual Variables

Contextual variables—including citizenship status, housing tenure, and English language ability—are thought to impact self-response rates. Self-response provides valuable insight into where people are, and are not, responding to the census. Researchers have hypothesized that self-response rates correlate with overall census accuracy even though self-response rates are not technically a direct measure of decennial census accuracy.⁹⁷

Our case studies are limited in what we can say about the relationship between census quality and self-response generally. Places like Los Angeles County, which had lower response rates in areas with larger Asian American populations, experienced an undercount in 2020. King County, Washington also experienced an undercount in 2020 despite having higher self-response rates (both overall and in areas with larger Asian American populations) than the national average. Places like New York City, which had many areas of low self-response rates, experienced overcounts in 2020. In sum, some of our case studies suggest a relationship between self-response rates and census quality, while others do not.

Regardless of any correlation, self-response is important because it is the highest quality response type—thus, knowing self-response rates is a critical first step in planning on how to best improve self-response in our communities. We find some evidence of the potential impact of citizenship status, housing tenure, and English language ability on self-response, but none are supported all the time.

In general, census tracts with large, non-citizen Asian American populations tend to experience lower self-response than other census tracts.

More research is needed to better understand how self-response impacts overall census quality for the Asian American population, which also requires the Census Bureau to begin providing measures of self-response by race. Additional research can help show the extent to which self-response impacts overall census quality, and if it does so differentially by race, ethnicity, age, or sex. Moreover, while housing tenure and English language ability do seem to have some impact on self-response, more data are needed to better define the relationship between these factors and self-response.⁹⁸ Experts should study what other contextual variables impact self-response rates.

In order to undertake this research, more geographically granular measures of census quality are sorely needed.⁹⁹ For instance, being able to examine how self-response correlates with net coverage error at the county or city level can tell us a lot more than the state or national levels. Lastly, researchers should study why factors such as housing tenure, citizenship, and English language ability impact self-response and whether other variables may also affect self-response rates in Asian American communities.

Los Angeles County, California

LOS ANGELES COUNTY ASIAN POPULATION

	Asian Alone	Asian Alone or in Combination
2000	12.3% (1,173,799)	13.2% (1,258,275)
2010	14.2% (1,393,578)	15.6% (1,535,944)
2020	14.9% (1,489,041)	16.4% (1,639,661)

TOP 10 ASIAN SUBGROUPS

Alone or in Combination 2020



Asian Americans make up approximately 15% of the 10 million people who live in the incredibly diverse and geographically large Los Angeles County¹⁰⁰—where the percentage in the county is more than double the percentage of the Asian American population in the United States overall.¹⁰¹ The graphics below provide data on Los Angeles County, comparing Los Angeles's Asian American community to the rest of the nation.

Based on PA, Los Angeles County had a potential overcount in 2010, but then flipped to a potential undercount in 2020 for the Asian Alone population.

Coverage		Asian Alone	Asian Alone or in Combination
	Population Estimates	1,285,291	1,285,291
2000*	Census Population	1,207,397	1,311,755
	Net Coverage (%)	6.3% undercount	2.0% overcount
	Population Estimates	1,327,782	1,433,295
2010	Census Population	1,393,578	1,311,755
	Net Coverage (%)	4.8% overcount	6.9% overcount
	Population Estimates	1,495,320	1,630,180
2020	Census Population	1,489,041	1,639,661
	Net Coverage (%)	0.4% undercount	0.6% overcount

HOUSING TENURE AND ENGLISH LANGUAGE ABILITY

Asian Alone 2020		Los Angeles County	California	United States
	Homeowners	54%	60%	60%
	Renters	46%	40%	40%
Nativo Porp	Overall	35%	38%	35%
	LEP** (ages 5+)	7%	7%	7%
	Overall	65%	62%	65%
Eoroign Born	LEP** (ages 5+)	53%	47%	43%
Foreigh Born	Naturalized Citizen	66%	65%	59%
	Non-Citizen	34%	35%	41%

**LEP (Limited English Proficiency): those who speak English "less than very well"

*For the data from 2000, the estimated population numbers come from the 1990 population estimates—before the census offered the option to select multiple races. For the first time in 2000, the census allowed respondents to select multiple races. Therefore, while we cannot differentiate between Alone and Alone or in Combination for the Population Estimates, we can make that differentiation for the census population.

Source: ACS 2020

• The undercount of young children is higher for the Asian American Alone group in Los Angeles County than in the United States as a whole. While national data shows a slight overcount for young children in the Asian American Alone or in Combination group, there is an undercount of them in Los Angeles County.

- The error of closure is very close to zero in Los Angeles County for ages 30–34, while a significant Asian American overcount occurs for the same group for the United States as a whole.
- The undercount of the older population in Los Angeles County is smaller than it is in the country as a whole.



Response Rate by County Tract

Source: Authors' calculations using United States Census Bureau decennial census and postcensal population estimates data for 2010.

SELF-RESPONSE RATES

- Areas with relatively large Asian American populations in the 2020 Census had relatively high response rates. This measure reveals why the Asian American count should be relatively good in Los Angeles County.
- When a tract has an Asian American population of 50% or more, we consistently see self-response rates over 50%, with most near 75%.

Response Rate by Census Tract



Source: United States Census Bureau, Tract Level Response Rates, 2020. Note: Census tracts in white indicate no self response data reported.

CITIZENSHIP

 Some evidence suggests that citizenship status may have impacted response rates.
Census tracts with a lower level of response among the Asian American population tended to have more noncitizens.



Source: United States Census Bureau, Decennial Census, Tract Level Response Rates (2020), and ACS (2016-2020).

King County, Washington

KING COUNTY ASIAN POPULATION

	Asian Alone	Asian Alone or in Combination
2000	11.0% (191,741)	12.6% (218,242)
2010	14.8% (286,648)	17.3% (333,338)
2020	20.0% (453,230)	23.3% (527,853)

TOP 10 ASIAN SUBGROUPS Alone or in Combination 2020



A relatively large Asian American community lives in King County—the largest county in Washington State that includes Seattle and several of its suburbs. According to the 2020 Census, Asian Americans are 23.3% of the population of the county—where more than 2,269,675 people (or 29.5% of Washington State's population) reside.

Because the Asian American community in King County is similar to the national Asian American community on most measures (including ethnicity, renter/owner proportions, and English language ability), we expect similar net coverage patterns to national averages. While there are some differences in the distribution of coverage by age, like the national average, King County showed an estimated overcount in both the 2010 and 2020 Censuses.

Based on PA, King County had a potential overcount in 2010, but then flipped to a potential undercount in 2020 for the Asian Alone Population.

Coverage		Asian Alone	Asian Alone or in Combination
	Population Estimates	189,340	189,340
2000*	Census Population	201,237	234,030
	Net Coverage (%)	6.1% overcount	21.1% overcount
	Population Estimates	276,018	312,682
2010	Census Population	286,648	333,338
	Net Coverage (%)	3.8% overcount	6.4% overcount
	Population Estimates	457,740	519,071
2020	Census Population	453,230	527,853
	Net Coverage (%)	1.0% undercount	1.7% overcount

HOUSING TENURE AND ENGLISH LANGUAGE ABILITY

Asian Alone 2020)	King County	Washington	United States
	Homeowners	58%	62%	60%
Housing rendre	Renters	42%	38%	40%
Native Born	Overall	33%	34%	35%
	LEP** (ages 5+)	6%	6%	7%
	Overall	67%	66%	65%
Foreign Born	LEP** (ages 5+)	40%	41%	43%
Foreign born	Naturalized Citizen	50%	54%	59%
	Non-Citizen	50%	46%	41%

**LEP (Limited English Proficiency): those who speak English "less than very well"

Source: ACS 2020

*For the data from 2000, the estimated population numbers come from the 1990 population estimates—before the census offered the option to select multiple races. For the first time in 2000, the census allowed respondents to select multiple races. Therefore, while we cannot differentiate between Alone and Alone or in Combination for the Population Estimates, we can make that differentiation for the census population.

King County and the United States as a whole have almost identical undercount rates for the young (ages 0-4) Asian American Alone population.
There is a significant overcount that is much larger than the national average for the young (ages 0-4) Asian Alone or in Combination population. One potential reason for this could include people reporting race differently between birth certificates and the decennial census.¹⁰² Specifically, they might only report one race (not Asian) on birth certificates while reporting multiple races (including Asian) on the decennial census. These children could be duplicates in the decennial census or miscounted for other reasons.



Source: Authors' calculations using United States Census Bureau decennial census and postcensal population estimates data for 2010.

SELF-RESPONSE RATES

- Few tracts overall have response rates below 50%.
- There is not a strong pattern between response rates and the percentage of a tract population that is Asian American. While some areas with a relatively large proportion of Asian Americans have very high response rates, others have low response rates relative to the King County average of 77%. There are relatively lower rates in the eastern part of King County, in southern King County, and up into downtown Seattle.

Response Rate by Census Tract



Source: United States Census Bureau, Tract Level Response Rates, 2020. Note: Census tracts in white indicate no self response data reported.

CITIZENSHIP

 Census tracts that have a higher proportion of Asian Americans and have a higher percentage of non-citizen Asian Americans tend to self-respond at lower rates than places with more Asian Americans that are citizens.



Source: United States Census Bureau, Decennial Census, Tract Level Response Rates (2020), and ACS (2016-2020).

Harris County,

Texas

HARRIS COUNTY ASIAN POPULATION

	Asian Alone	Asian Alone or in Combination
2000	5.3% (181,356)	5.7% (194,941)
2010	6.4% (261,637)	7.0% (285,796)
2020	7.4% (348,281)	8.1% (382,276)

TOP 10 ASIAN SUBGROUPS

Alone or in Combination 2020



Harris County is noteworthy because the Asian American population has increased significantly in the county over the past 20 years. Made up of Houston, Texas and several of its suburbs, it is home to over 4.7 million people—just over 16% of the population of the state of Texas. Of these 4.7 million people, 7.4% are Asian American. The subgroups that make up the Asian American population differ from the national averages. The largest group in the Asian American community in Harris County is Vietnamese, followed by Asian Indian and then Chinese.¹⁰³

Based on PA, Harris County had a potential overcount in both the 2010 and 2020 Censuses.

Coverage		Asian Alone	Asian Alone or in Combination
	Population Estimates	200,590	200,590
2000*	Census Population	184,808	200,666
	Net Coverage (%)	8.2% undercount	0.04% overcount
	Population Estimates	241,117	264,882
2010	Census Population	261,637	285,796
	Net Coverage (%)	8.2% overcount	7.6% overcount
	Population Estimates	342,302	371,482
2020	Census Population	348,281	382,276
	Net Coverage (%)	1.7% overcount	2.9% overcount

HOUSING TENURE AND ENGLISH LANGUAGE ABILITY

Asian Alone 2020)	Harris County	Texas	United States
	Homeowners	62%	64%	60%
Housing renure	Renters	38%	36%	40%
	Overall	31%	32%	35%
	LEP** (ages 5+)	8%	7%	7%
	Overall	69%	68%	65%
Foreign Dorn	LEP** (ages 5+)	47%	40%	43%
Foreign Born	Naturalized Citizen	59%	55%	59%
	Non-Citizen	41%	45%	41%

**LEP (Limited English Proficiency): those who speak English "less than very well"

Source: ACS 2020

Source: ACS 2020

*For the data from 2000, the estimated population numbers come from the 1990 population estimates—before the census offered the option to select multiple races. For the first time in 2000, the census allowed respondents to select multiple races. Therefore, while we cannot differentiate between Alone and Alone or in Combination for the Population Estimates, we can make that differentiation for the census population.



 The estimated coverage error by age for the Asian Alone population in Harris County is similar to the national average.

• The estimated overcount is higher for the young adult population (ages 15–29), and the undercount for the oldest population (ages 85 and above) isn't quite as large.

For the Asian Alone or in Combination population, the pattern compared to the national average is similar for all groups except the youngest (ages 0-4). In Harris County there is an estimated undercount, compared to a slight overcount at the national level. This means that in the 2010 Census, fewer children were identified as Asian (Alone or in Combination) than in birth records.



Source: Authors' calculations using United States Census Bureau decennial census and postcensal population estimates data for 2010

SELF-RESPONSE RATES

- Areas with higher proportions of Asian Americans generally have higher response rates, with a few exceptions.
- Low and high response rates are not distributed evenly across the county.
- Many of the lower response rates are clustered around downtown, in part of northern Harris County, and sprinkled in a few areas in both the east and west.

Response Rate by Census Tract



Source: United States Census Bureau, Tract Level Response Rates, 2020. Note: Census tracts in white indicate no self response data reported

Non-Citizen Population

Asian Alone 2020

CITIZENSHIP

• There is a clear correlation between citizenship and response rates for Asian Americans in Harris County.





Source: United States Census Bureau, Decennial Census, Tract Level Response Rates (2020), and ACS (2016-2020)

New York City, **New York**

NEW YORK CITY ASIAN POPULATION

	Asian Alone	Asian Alone or in Combination
2000	10.5% (838,074)	11.1% (891,718)
2010	13.3% (1,086,296)	14.3% (1,167,545)
2020	16.1% (1,420,318)	17.4% (1,531,522)

TOP 10 ASIAN SUBGROUPS



sian Alo	ne 2020	New York City	United States			500/	(70)
	Home-	(==)		Foreign Born	LEP (ages 5+)	59%	43%
ousing	owners	43%	60%	l creign born	Naturalized Citizen	57%	59%
enure	Renters	57%	40%		Non-Citizen	43%	41%

Source: ACS 2020

the city. And while Bangladeshis are not in the top ten Asian subgroups in the United States, they are the fifth largest group in New York City signaling that this is one of the largest Bangladeshi concentrations in the U.S. The graphics below provide information on the boroughs and counties, the city as a whole, the state, and the nation. Since New York City is made up of five counties, there are more citizenship and English language ability data to analyze. Overall, Brooklyn, Manhattan, and Queens have the largest Asian American populations. Brooklyn and Manhattan have slightly more non-citizens than the national average, but Queens has a much larger share of the Asian American non-citizen population. Further, in all of the boroughs

> other than Manhattan, both the foreign-born and native-born populations are less likely to speak English very well (LEP) than the national average.

> The Asian American population has grown significantly in New York City throughout the last 20 years, and now makes up over 16% of the

> population of the largest and one of the most diverse cities in the United States.¹⁰⁴ In 2020, the city had over 8 million people spread throughout its five counties (boroughs): New York (Manhattan), Kings

> (Brooklyn), Bronx (Bronx), Richmond (Staten Island), and Queens (Queens). Chinese and Asian Indian are the largest Asian ethnicities in

> Based on PA, New York City had a potential overcount in both the 2010 and 2020 Censuses. This was the case in most of the five counties (or boroughs) that make up New York City as well (see the table below for exceptions).

	Coverage: New York City		Asian Alone	Asian Alone or in Combination
		Population Estimates	763,272	763,272
20	000*	Census Population	849,755	913,923
		Net Coverage (%)	10.7% overcount	18.0% overcount
		Population Estimates	1,042,963	1,109,827
2	2010	Census Population	1,086,296	1,167,545
		Net Coverage (%)	4.1% overcount	5.1% overcount
		Population Estimates	1,241,591	1,322,328
2	2020	Census Population	1,420,318	1,531,522
		Net Coverage (%)	13.4% overcount	14.7% overcount
Asia	n Alo	ne 2020		New York City United States

	Overall	30%	35%
Native Born	LEP (ages 5+)	12%	7%
	Overall	70%	65%
	LEP (ages 5+)	59%	43%
Foreign Born	Naturalized Citizen	57%	59%
	Non-Citizen	43%	41%

Source: ACS 2020

*For the data from 2000, the estimated population numbers come from the 1990 population estimates—before the census offered the option to select multiple races. For the first time in 2000, the census allowed respondents to select multiple races. Therefore, while we cannot differentiate between Alone and Alone or in Combination for the Population Estimates, we can make that differentiation for the census population.

County-Level Demographics

PA Analysis, Housing Tenure and English Language Ability

Asian Alone 2020	
zed Non- n Citizen	
43%	
zn	

Brooklyn

Population: 2,736,074

Asian Alone 2020		Hous	ing Home	owners Renters	Cove	rage: Kings County	Asian Alone	Asian Alone or in Combination
		Tenu	Jre 4	3% 57%		Population Estimates	160,917	160,917
			I	Overall LEP (ages 5+)		Census Population	199,289	215,724
		Native	Overall			Net Coverage (%)	21.3% overcount	29.1% overcount
		Bolli	33%	15%		Population Estimates	259,819	278,559
			' 		2010	Census Population	269,251	289,764
Foreign	Overall	LEP	Citizen	ed Non- Citizen		Net Coverage (%)	3.6% overcount	3.9% overcount
Born	67%	69%	59%	41%		Population Estimates	322,772	348,255
, ' 					2020	Census Population	378,683	419,208
				Source: ACS 2020		Net Coverage (%)	16.0% overcount	18.5% overcount

۶				Popula	Population: 1,694,25			
		Housi	Homeown	Homeowners Renters		ge: New York County	Asian Alone	Asian Alone or in Combination
		Tenu	re 24%	76%	Population Estimates		169,637	169,637
			Overall LE	P (ages 5+)	2000*	Census Population	151,033	162,381
		Native Born	34%	6%		Net Coverage (%)	11.6% undercount	4.4% undercount
Asian Alone 2020						Population Estimates	184,390	195,662
		LEP	Naturalized	Non-	2010	Census Population	184,345	203,376
Foreign	Overall	(ages 5+)	Citizen	Citizen		Net Coverage (%)	0.02% undercount	3.9% overcount
Born	66%	46%	50%	50%		Population Estimates	204,630	222,556
			Sc	ource: ACS 2020	2020	Census Population	222,265	250,582
						Net Coverage (%)	8.3% overcount	11.9% overcount

Queens

Population: 2,405,464

Coverage: Queens County		Asian Alone	Asian Alone or in		l	. .		
			Combination	Housing	Homeowners	Renters	Asian	Alone 2020
	Population Estimates	352,004	352,004	Tenure	51%	49%		
2000*	Census Population	423,599	450,922					
	Net Coverage (%)	18.6% overcount	24.6% overcount	Native	Overall	LEP (ages :	5+)	
	Population Estimates	504,976	533,589	Born	28%	14%		
2010	Census Population	539,400	570,085		l			
	Net Coverage (%)	6.6% overcount	6.6% overcount	Foreign	Overall	LEP (ages 5+)	Naturalized Citizen	Non- Citizen
	Population Estimates	601,159	631,117	Born	72%	60%	57%	43%
2020	Census Population	687,936	719,333		1			
	Net Coverage (%)	13.5% overcout	13.1% overcount	Source: ACS	S 2020			

Staten Island

Population: 495,747

Asian Alone 2020		Hous	ing Hon	Homeowners Renters		Coverage: Richmond County		Asian Alone	Asian Alone or in Combination
		Tenu	ire	80%	20%		Population Estimates	29,797	29,797
Native Born						2000*	Census Population	26,288	28,529
		Native	Overall	Overall LEP (ages 5+)			Net Coverage (%)	12.5% undercount	4.4% undercount
		вотп	32% 12%			Population Estimates	36,606	39,856	
		LED	Natura	Naturalized Non		2010	Census Population	36,238	39,326
Foreign	Overall (a	(ages 5+)	Citizen Citizen		Net Coverage (%)	1.0% undercount	1.3% undercount		
Born	68%	54%	679	6	33%		Population Estimates	54,804	58,513
				Source	e: ACS 2020	2020	Census Population	59,280	63,309
							Net Coverage (%)	7.9% overcount	7.9% overcount

 All counties show an estimated undercount of young (ages 0–4) Asian American children (both for the Alone as well as the Alone or in Combination population). In the United States nationally, there is not an undercount among the Asian American Alone or in Combination population ages 0–4.

 For Richmond County (Staten Island), there is a much larger undercount for young children (ages 0–9) than for the rest of the boroughs or the United States as a whole. New York County (Manhattan) has a much larger estimated overcount for the young adult population than the other boroughs or the United States nationally.



Source: Authors' calculations using United States Census Bureau decennial census and postcensal population estimates data for 2010.



Asian Alone or in Combination Coverage by Age Group: 2010

Source: Authors' calculations using United States Census Bureau decennial census and postcensal population estimates data for 2010.

SELF-RESPONSE RATES

• The overall variability of response rates by tract is fairly high in New York City overall. Tracts with more Asian Americans also vary in their response rates.

• The relationship between the proportion of Asian Americans in a tract and selfresponse seems to be non-linear. That is, in tracts where 50–60% of the population is Asian American, the response rate tends to be very high. There are declines in self-response in tracts where more than 70% of the population is Asian American.

Response Rate by Census Tract: 2020



Source: United States Census Bureau, Tract Level Response Rates, 2020. Note: Census tracts in white indicate no self response data reported.

• Clusters of low self-response rates exist in each of the boroughs, and tend to cluster more in Queens, the Bronx, and Brooklyn.

CITIZENSHIP

- The Asian American non-citizen community is not evenly distributed throughout New York City.
- Some of the areas with relatively high non-citizen populations are also areas with relatively low self-response rates.
- There is evidence of citizenship impacting Asian American response rates. We can see that in tracts with lower response rates with Asian Americans that the

Non-Citizen Asian Alone Population By Census Tract: 2020 Bronx (Bronx County) Population with Citizenship 25% 75% 50% Manhattan (New York County Staten Island (Richmond County Queens (Queens County) Brooklyn (Kings County)

population tends to be a higher proportion of non-citizens.



Source: United States Census Bureau, Decennial Census, Tract Level Response Rates (2020), and ACS (2016-2020).

https://www.advancingjustice-aajc.org/publication/quality-decennial-census-asian-american-and-native-hawaiian-and-pacific-islander