

## Issue Brief: Asian Americans and Disability

### **Description:**

This issue brief outlines the intersection of Asian Americans with disabilities as seen in their access to disability services.

### **Key Words:**

Language Barrier, Stigma, Culture, Immigration, Disability Services

### **Key Points:**

- Cultural stigmas within the Asian American population also impede disabled people from seeking services
- Undocumented Asian Americans fear deportation from disability services
- Asian Americans with disabilities face language barriers when accessing disability services
- Asian Americans with disabilities vary in their ability to access services

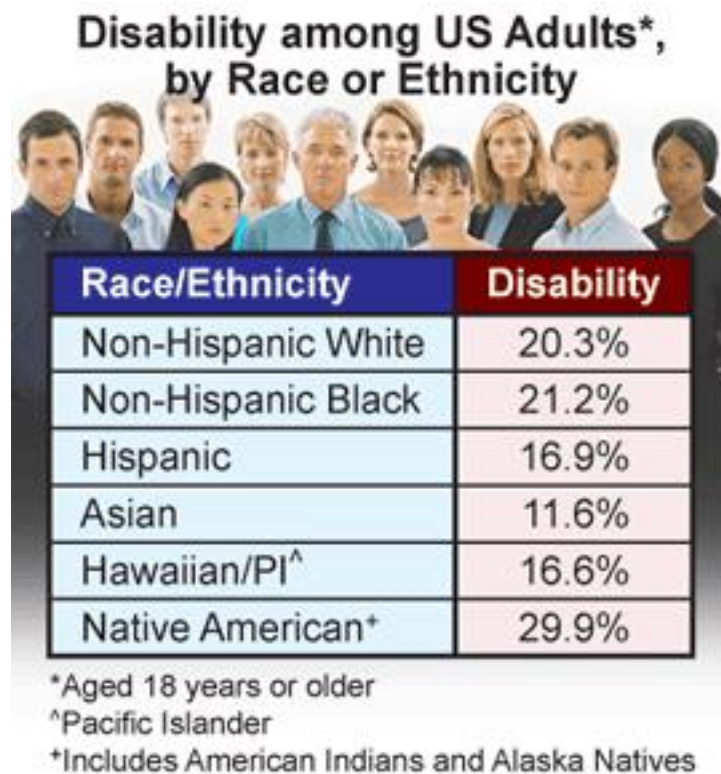
### **Issue Brief:**

One important factor to mention at the outset of this issue brief is that Asian Americans with disabilities are not one homogenous group. The range of issues that Asian Americans with disabilities face depend upon the individuals' backgrounds, which can be more immigrant based, or socialized within America. There are also various cultures within the Asian American population because of the many origins it encompasses, which is important because disability within the Asian American population is often explained through the intersection of culture and utilization of policies.

There are cultural stigmas embedded within the Asian culture that do not accept disabilities, which may impact the utilization of disability programs by Asian Americans. Religious, social, and cultural stigmas, in especially Chinese and Japanese cultures, emphasize keeping disabled people from public view because disability represents a negative reflection of a family, and disabled people are born in punishment of a family's past deeds.<sup>1</sup> Asian Americans with disabilities that face these pressures then do not seek assistance from disability services. In the table below see that Asian Americans have the smallest percentage of disabled people of all the races, so the stigmas and pressures within the race can impact disabled persons identifying themselves as disabled or from seeking assistance.

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<sup>1</sup>Wong, P. J. (2012). *Hurdling barriers labor and employment experiences of asian americans with disabilities*. (Order No. 3542052, University of California, Los Angeles). *ProQuest Dissertations and Theses*, , 214. Retrieved from <http://ezproxy.cul.columbia.edu/login?url=http://search.proquest.com/docview/1143222692?accountid=10226>. (1143222692). 2.



Source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention: Racial and Ethnic Differences in Self-Related Health Status among Adults With and Without Disabilities

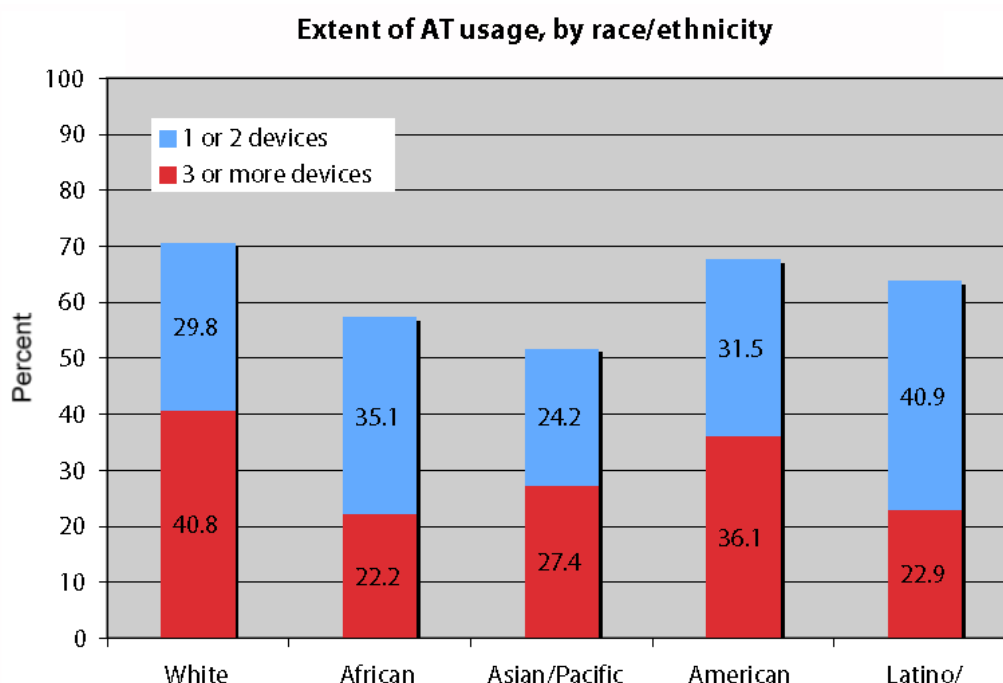
Also, the subset of undocumented disabled people within the Asian American population faces obstacles when acquiring disability services. This does not impact all Asian Americans, but immigration status impedes an individual's ability to seek disability services because he or she fears deportation or jeopardizing their immigration status.<sup>2</sup>

Once disabled Asian Americans do gain access to and participate in these disability services, they sometimes encounter difficulties optimizing the programs due to language barriers. This is not true for all groups of Asian Americans, but the families

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<sup>2</sup>Chen, R. K., Song-Jae, J., & Donnell, C. M. (2004). Enhancing the rehabilitation counseling process: Understanding the obstacles to asian americans' utilization of services. *Journal of Applied Rehabilitation Counseling*, 35(1), 29-35. Retrieved from <http://ezproxy.cul.columbia.edu/login?url=http://search.proquest.com/docview/216483033?accountid=10226.2>

with first generation members do sometimes encounter these language barriers. For example, Lin Zhan’s book on Asian Americans as a vulnerable population recounts a story of a young Vietnamese boy with Cerebral Palsy who could not take full advantage of disability programs because his parents did not know English well enough to claim their benefits.<sup>3</sup>The Vietnamese boy also faced more problems with the program itself, which was not tailored toward any language besides English.<sup>4</sup> This language barrier displays the fault within the U.S government, which provides programs for the disabled, but does not account for all the different types of disabled people.



Source: Community Research for Assistive Technology (AT): Assistive Technology Experiences of Californians with Disabilities

According to the U.S census, the Asian population has grown by 9.7 percent from 2000 to 2010, and even with this growing population the Asian alone population accounts

<sup>3</sup> Zhan, L. (2003). *Asian Americans: Vulnerable populations, model interventions, and clarifying agendas* . Sudbury: Jones and Bartlett Publishers, Inc. Retrieved from [http://books.google.com/books?id=SDymq2IqZBMC&pg=PA70&lpg=PA70&dq=asian american disability and employment&source=bl&ots=5F-T0yakhw&sig=9mhsPaMD-12FSuiImirR8FN6KnA&hl=en&sa=X&ei=Kq0OU6C2KsKIyAGr14HYDQ&ved=0CDcQ6AEwAzgK](http://books.google.com/books?id=SDymq2IqZBMC&pg=PA70&lpg=PA70&dq=asian+american+disability+and+employment&source=bl&ots=5F-T0yakhw&sig=9mhsPaMD-12FSuiImirR8FN6KnA&hl=en&sa=X&ei=Kq0OU6C2KsKIyAGr14HYDQ&ved=0CDcQ6AEwAzgK). 73.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

for the lowest rates of disability, after standardization for age. It is clear that there are ranges of issues that may impact Asian Americans identifying as disabled people, and their use of services for their disability. Looking further into the intersections of Asian Americans and disabilities will hopefully expose the prevalence of this marginalized group within the larger American society, and eradicate the obstacles they face.

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## General References:

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<http://www.census.gov/>

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<http://www.atnet.org/downloads/Tools%20for%20Living%20Assistive%20Technology%20Experiences%20of%20Californians%20with%20Disabilities.htm>

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<http://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/disabilityandhealth/datasets.html>