6. Asian American Children in New York City

their families to access American systems and services. They may be asked to help their parents translate bills, or interpret at medical appointments and parent-teacher conferences. Parents and children experience role reversal, where parents rely on children from an early age to navigate the adult world. Children may be expected to make decisions for their family in English-only situations, such as selecting phone plans or making complex purchases.

The impact of language brokering is multifaceted. Asian youth express pride, a sense of purpose, and feelings of maturity in their ability to take care of their families. They have improved language skills with more sophisticated vocabulary due to having more opportunities to practice. However, these youth also experience feelings of stress and anxiety over making mistakes when they do not possess adequate vocabulary to interpret accurately. They sometimes also feel unsupported by their parents since they have taken on this adult role. The shift in power dynamic can create conflict in the family.

In many situations it is inappropriate to have a youth interpret for a parent, but it is done anyway. Asian youth have reported having to interpret complex medical diagnoses despite a lack of vocabulary and while under emotional stress, and have also reported having their parents sign school permission slips without explaining them.3

## Quick stats on Asian American children

In 2010, there were **229,587** **Asian children** **(individuals under 18 years of age) living in New York City**. While the number of children decreased among other racial groups, **between 2000 and 2010, the number of Asian children** **grew by 16%.** The number of **U.S.-born Asian children grew by 30**%, overwhelmingly accounting for the overall growth in the Asian child population. Meanwhile, the number of foreign-born Asian children fell by 23%.

**49% of New York City's Asian children live in Queens**. Asian children in Queens account for 25% of Queen's child population. Chinese and Indian children account for the majority of the Asian child population in Queens (33%, and 29% respectively). Queens is home to the largest populations of Bangladeshi, FIlipino, Indian, Korean, and Taiwanese children; and second-largest population of Chinese, Pakistani, and Vietnamese children.1, 2

## Asian youth as "language brokers"

Roughly **35% of Asian Pacific American children live in a "linguistically isolated household"**, where nobody above age 14 speaks English well. These children are often the first in their families to be exposed to English, usually through school. They become "language brokers" for their families, responsible for translating both language and culture to allow

## Child poverty

The **prevalence of poverty among New York City's Asian children is 21.9%:** higher than that of White (16.3%) but lower than that of Black (30.6%) and Hispanic (37.5%) counterparts. However, these statistics can be misleading because **poverty varies widely across Asian sub-groups** and it is necessary to disaggregate overall Asian numbers for a more accurate picture. While some Asian sub-groups such as Japanese and Filipino experience very low rates of child poverty (5.6% and 8.2%, respectively), rates of child poverty in other Asian sub-groups such as Bangladeshi and Pakistani are alarmingly high (41.5% and 33.2%, respectively).

Child poverty also varied by borough. Bronx's poverty rate for Asian children was 30%, compared to 27% in Brooklyn, 25% in Manhattan, 18% in Queens, and 14% in Staten Island.1

academic ability, and may be overlooked by educators, held to different standards in admissions, and made reluctant to ask for assistance.4

## Bullying and Bias-Based Harassment

A small 2012 survey of Asian students conducted in New York City by advocacy groups revealed that **50% of students experienced bias-based harassment in school**; higher than all other racial groups. Bullying took place in the classroom, on school grounds, and on the internet. In 2008, Chancellor's Regulation A-832 established protocol addressing bullying and bias-based harassment for New York City schools, but implementation of mandated prevention and follow up measures remains spotty.5

## Academic Achievement

**Asian children were overwhelmingly enrolled in New York City's public schools** at rates higher than whites and comparable to black and Hispanic children. The **dropout rate for Asian Americans age 16-24 was 18%**, higher than that of white Americans but lower than that of other racial groups. However, rates varied by Asian subgroup, from 0% for Japanese to 22% for Chinese students. Limited English-proficiency among school age Asian children varied by Asian sub-group, with Chinese (34%), Nepali (33%), and Vietnamese-speakers (32%) experiencing the highest rates and Hindi (14%) and Punjabi-speakers (15%) experiencing the lowest rates.1

In keeping with the **model minority stereotype**, **Asian American youth are erroneously perceived to overwhelmingly succeed in academia**. In reality, Asian Americans learn in a wide variety of schools with varying success. On the one hand, New York City's prestigious specialized high schools are famously majority Asian American (largely Chinese and Korean). However, these students represent a small minority of the city's Asian American students (less than 5%). Over one third of New York City's Asian/Pacific Islander general education graduates were considered not to be "college ready". Asian American children are incredibly diverse and come from a wide variety of backgrounds, from affluent children of educated professionals to undocumented immigrants living in poverty, and have varying needs. Students may need English Language Learner and bilingual education services. Students are also often subject to racial stereotyping that Asians have innate superior

"When 9/11 happened, they told me that this happened because of you."

**"A group of people called my friends and me 'chinks' and dropped garbage to show that we were lower class."**

**“When I was younger, they teased me because of my accent. I tried so hard to improve my English so that wouldn’t happen.”** 5

"I saw people touching this kid's turban and forcing him to take it off. Someone [also] beat up a kid with a turban and took a switch blade on him."6

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