Understanding Asian American Chicago

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Neighborhood Life and Social Attitudes

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❖ Summary ❖

- Attitudes of Asian Americans living in the Chicago area with regard to governmental and public policy priorities tend to be similar to those of non-Asian Americans. Non-Asian Americans did tend to be more supportive than non-Asian Americans of public expenditures on parks and recreation (54 percent compared to 45 percent) and the environment (59 percent compared to 50 percent).

- Asian Americans were more supportive of spending tax money for arts and cultural organizations than were members of other groups (46 percent compared to 35 percent).

- Asian Americans living in Chicago were slightly more likely than Asian Americans living in the suburbs to support tax expenditures in areas such as health and the environment, and were far more supportive of government financing of public transportation.

- Asian Americans on average were less likely than non-Asian Americans to believe that local government wastes too much money (74 percent to 84 percent), but also were more likely to believe that government spent too much on the poor (38 percent to 23 percent).

- Asian Americans are almost unanimous (99 percent) in naming safety as an important consideration when they moved to their current neighborhood. Proximity to family, friends, and jobs as well as the quality of the public schools were also important considerations.

- Asian Americans who live in Chicago were far more likely than people in the suburbs to feel that in the past five years their neighborhood had deteriorated (21 percent to 6 percent).

- Suburbanites were almost twice as likely to feel that their neighborhood was a good investment (85 percent compared to 47 percent).

- Asian Americans living in the suburbs were far less concerned about levels of crime, gang activities, or transients and neighborhood change than were Asian Americans living in Chicago.

❖ Introduction ❖

The following research brief provides an overview of how Asian Americans in the Chicago metropolitan area feel about their neighborhoods and how they feel about significant issues of public policy. Attitudes considered include:

- ❖ Tax policy and public expenditures
- ❖ Neighborhood values
- ❖ Perceptions of crime

The data used in this report are drawn from an annual survey of residents of the six-county Chicago area by the Metro Chicago Information Center conducted during the 1990s. The survey consists of a random sample of approximately 3,000 households per year. Over the decade, 689 Asian American households were surveyed as part of that sample. The race or ethnicity of the household was that identified by the individual responding to the survey.

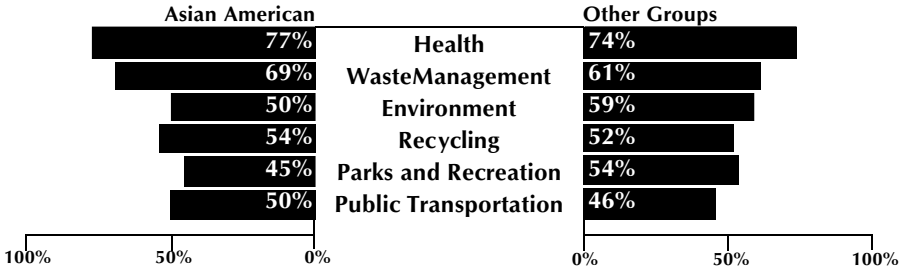
The Asian American data used here contain some biases attributable to the survey being conducted in English or Spanish. Households with no English or Spanish speakers would be unrepresented or underrepresented in the survey. However, many of the survey questions are directed at the entire household and if one adult member of the household spoke English or Spanish, then that household could have participated in the survey. Nevertheless, for this report we have attempted to present only data that would be relatively unbiased by the lack of non-English speakers in the sample. United States Census data contains a similar bias in that non-English speaking Asians are far more susceptible to not being counted.

There is wide variation in the number of Asian Americans who responded to any particular survey question. This is because some questions were asked every year of the survey during the 1990s, but others were not. Additionally, not every survey respondent answered every question. In no case is a survey question reported if it had fewer than 50 responses. Most questions used in this analysis had more than 100 Asian American responses. Each table contains a listing of the years in which a survey question was asked and the number of Asian survey respondents in that year. In instances where subgroups are created within the general category of Asian Americans — such as those above or below 30 years of age — then the number of responses generally falls below 100. As a general rule, the margin of error of findings for non-Asians is about plus or minus 3 percent. Findings for Asian Americans as a group have a margin of error of about plus or minus 6 percent, and subgroups a margin of error of about plus or minus 8 percent for a 95 percent level of certainty.

❖ Priorities for Public Policy ❖

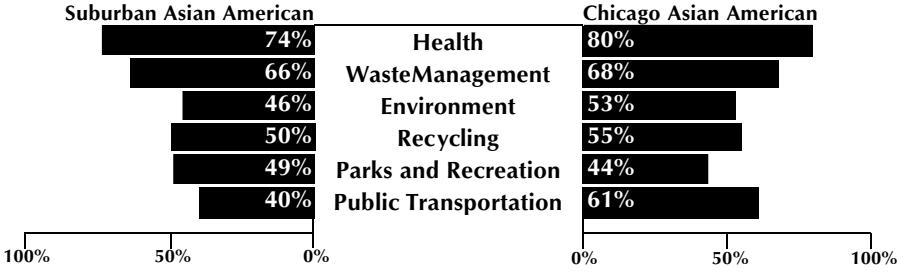
Asian American attitudes toward social policy are similar to those of non-Asian Americans on most matters reviewed. Asian Americans were less likely to favor spending on the environment, and on parks and recreation (Figure 1). Asian Americans living in Chicago and in the suburbs expressed similar views on these issues. The one major exception was the clear priority of Chicago residents for expenditures on public transportation (Figure 2).

Figure 1 ❖ Very Important to Spend State/Local Taxes On:



Question asked in 1991 and 1997. Asian American N = 142.

Figure 2 ❖ Very Important to Spend State/Local Taxes On:

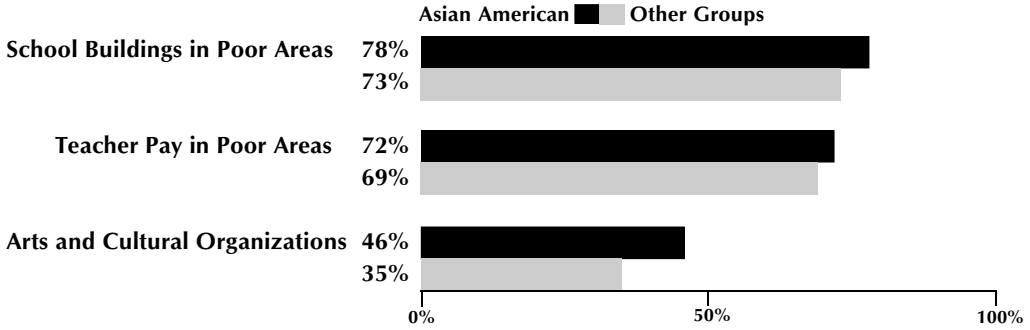


Question asked in 1991 and 1997. Asian American N = 142.

Asian Americans were more likely then non-Asian Americans to favor spending on arts and cultural organizations, and were slightly more likely to favor higher taxes and spending for education in poor neighborhoods (Figure 3).

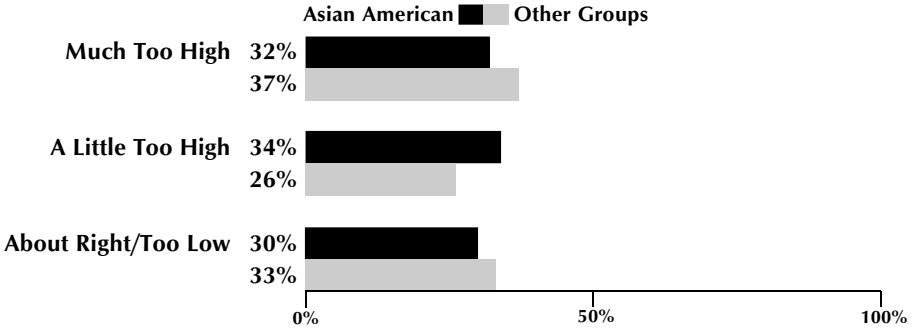
Asian Americans were less likely than non-Asian Americans to think that taxes were too high (Figure 4) and that the government wastes too much money (Figure 5). Asian Americans were, however, less likely to think that state and local government spend too much money on the poor.

Figure 3 ❖ Willing to Pay Extra State/Local Taxes For:



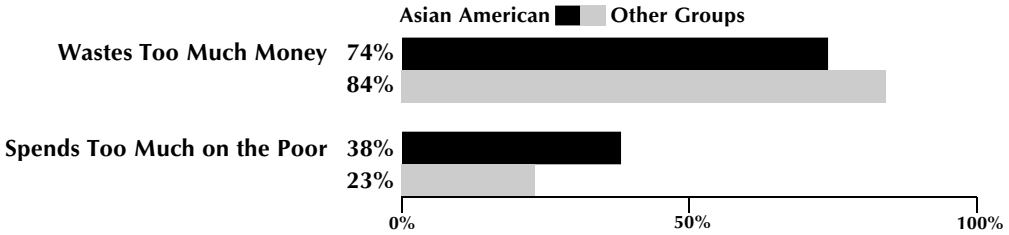
Question asked in 1992 and 1996. Asian American N = 116.

Figure 4 ❖ Respondent Thinks State and Local Taxes Are:



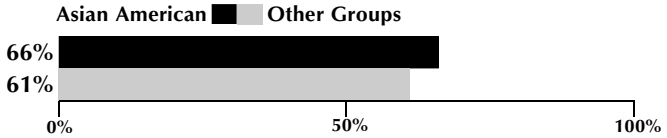
Question asked in 1991, '92, '96. Asian American N = 184.

Figure 5 ❖ State and Local Government:



Question asked in 1991 and 1996. Asian American N = 133.

Figure 6 ❖ Favors Affirmative Action Set-Asides

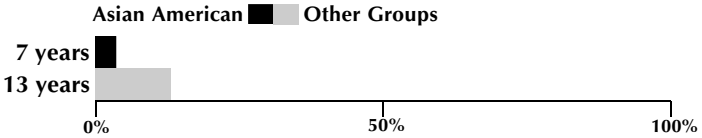


Question asked in 1991 and 1996. Asian American N = 133.

❖ Attitudes toward the Neighborhood ❖

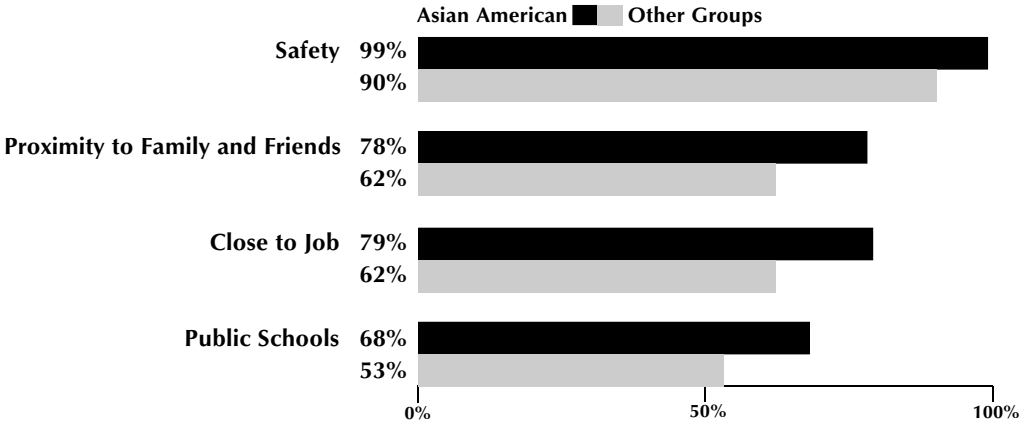
Asian Americans are, on average, newer to their neighborhoods than are non-Asian Americans (Figure 7). By far safety is the most important consideration for Asian Americans in choosing a neighborhoods. Almost all Asian American respondents listed this as an important consideration. Three-quarters of respondents also listed availability of family and friends and proximity to their employment (Figure 8).

Figure 7 ❖ Average Years in the Neighborhood



Question asked in 1991, '92, '93, '94, '95, '96, '97, '98, and '99.
Asian American N = 689.

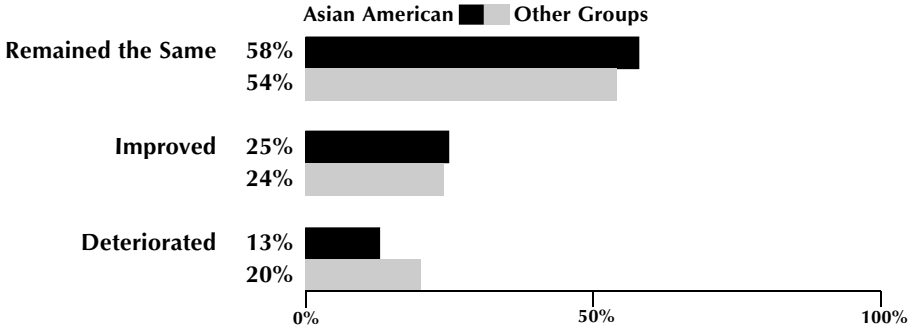
Figure 8 ❖ Important Considerations in Choosing Current Neighborhood



Question asked in 1992 and 1996. Asian American N = 116.

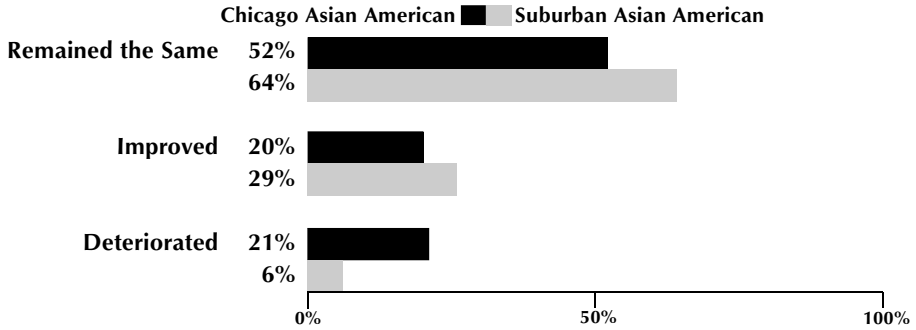
Asian Americans feel better about their neighborhoods than non-Asian Americans. Asian Americans were much less likely than non-Asian Americans to feel that their neighborhood had deteriorated during the past five years (Figure 9). Asian Americans experience significant differences between city and suburbs. Suburbanites are much more likely to feel that their neighborhoods have remained the same or improved during the past five years (Figure 10). Suburbanites were almost twice as likely (85 percent compared to 47 percent) to feel that their neighborhood was a good investment.

Figure 9 ❖ Level of Neighborhood Change in the Past Five Years



Question asked in 1991 and 1996. Asian American N = 133.

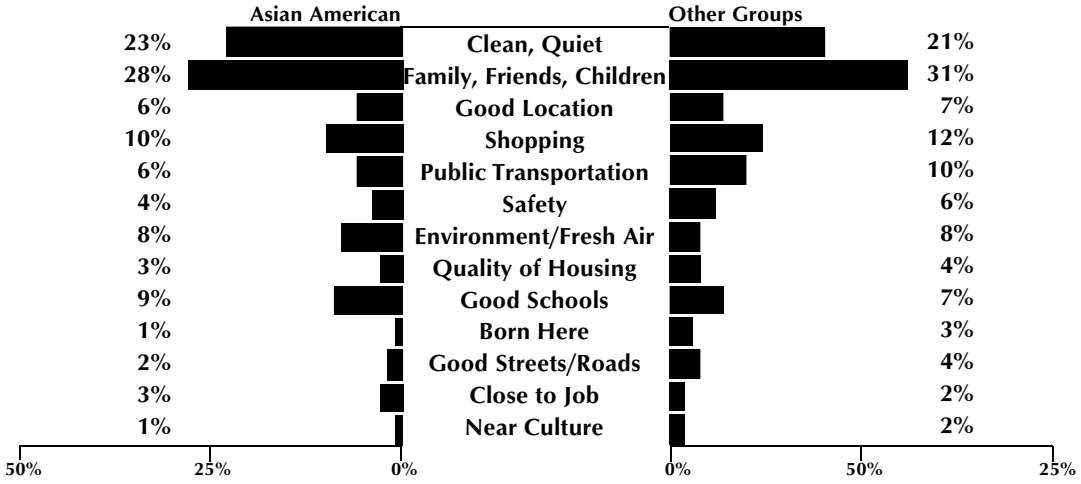
Figure 10 ❖ Level of Neighborhood Change in the Past Five Years



Question asked in 1991 and 1996. Asian American N = 133.

In general, Asian Americans are satisfied with their neighborhoods for the same reasons that other people are. They want them to be clean and quiet, near family and friends, and near shopping. Asian Americans were somewhat less concerned about access to public transportation (Figure 11). In general, Asian Americans had the same neighborhood dislikes as other people in the region (Figure 12). Asian Americans were somewhat more concerned about crime and safety, but were less likely to be bothered by gang activities.

Figure 11 ❖ Neighborhood Areas of Satisfaction



Question asked in 1991 and 1996. Asian American N = 133.

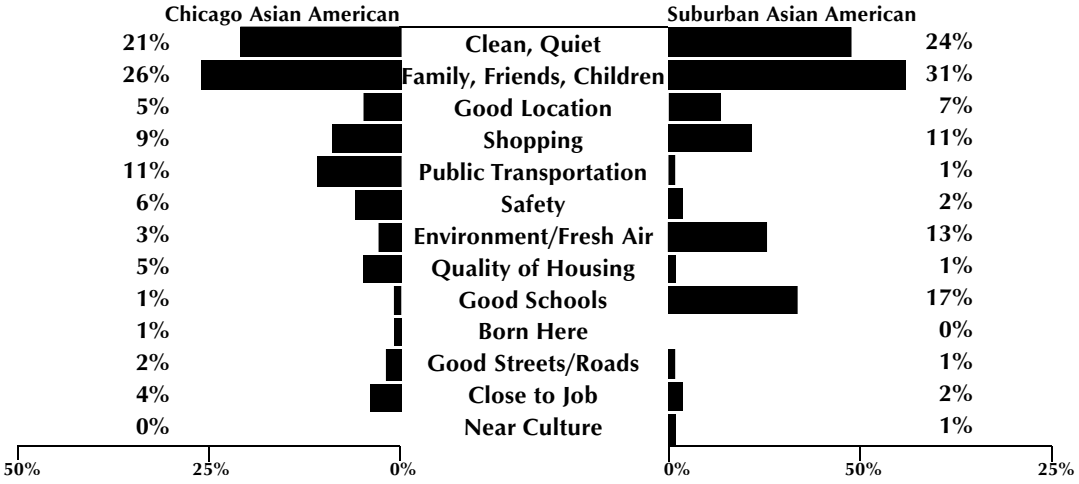
Figure 12 ❖ Neighborhood Dislikes

Question asked in 1991 and 1996. Asian American N = 133.

Asian Americans living in Chicago and in the suburbs agreed on many areas of satisfaction or dislike about their neighborhoods, but disagreed substantially around transportation, quality of schools, and crime (Figure 13).

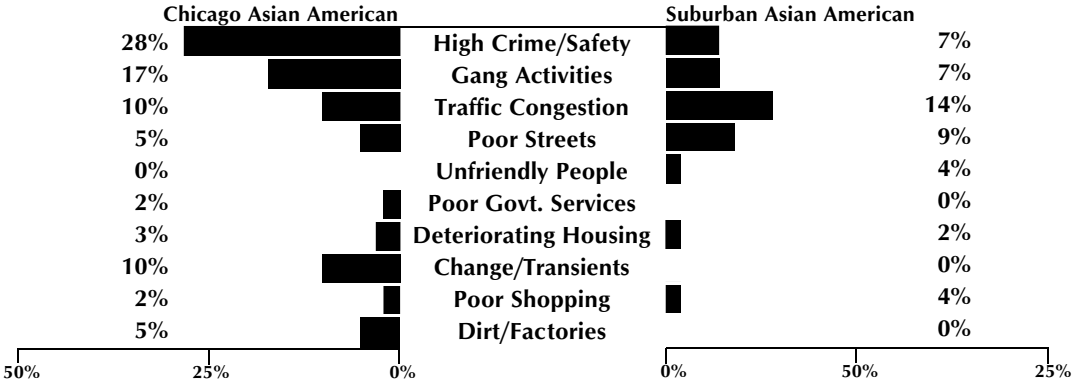
Asian Americans living in Chicago were substantially more likely than those living in the suburbs to be concerned over crime and safety, gang activities and transients or neighborhood change (Figure 14).

Figure 13 ❖ Neighborhood Areas of Satisfaction



Question asked in 1991 and 1996. Asian American N = 133.

Figure 14 ❖ Neighborhood Dislikes

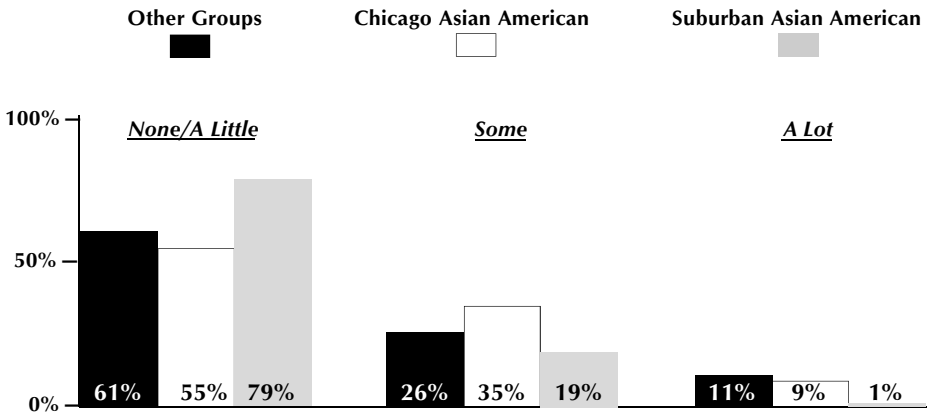


Question asked in 1991 and 1996. Asian American N = 133.

❖ Perceptions of Crime ❖

Whether an Asian American lived in the city or suburbs largely determined their perception of the amount of crime in their community (Figure 14). Seventy-nine percent of suburban Asian Americans said that their neighborhood had no crime or only a little, compared to just 55 percent of Asian Americans living in Chicago.

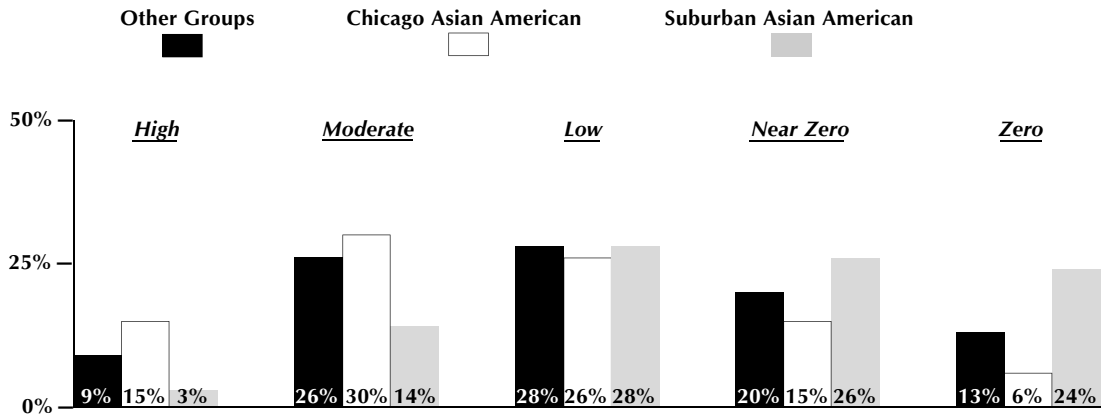
Figure 14 ❖ Amount of Neighborhood Crime



Question asked in 1992, '93, '95, and '96. Asian American N = 297.

Asian Americans living in Chicago also considered themselves a lot more likely to be a victim of violence than did Asian Americans living in the suburbs (Figure 15). Forty-five percent of Chicago Asian Americans considered chances of victimization to be high or moderate, compared to only 17 percent of those who lived in the surburbs.

Figure 15 ❖ Chances Respondent Will Be a Victim of Violence



Question asked in 1995 and 1996. Asian American N = 168.