

WE NEED INCREASED RESOURCES TO ENSURE LANGUAGE ACCESS FOR LEP RENTERS



Asian American renters are concentrated in the least affordable housing markets in the country.¹ For those with limited English proficiency (LEP), the challenge of navigating housing options, or remaining in stable housing, is incredibly difficult without adequate in-language, culturally responsive support.

For LEP individuals, the lack of adequate language support can serve as a substantial impediment to accessing and maintaining suitable housing. For instance, tenants struggle to comprehend the terms of their lease, or find themselves facing a subsidy termination hearing without access to an interpreter. Additionally, housing providers might discriminate against LEP applicants, and numerous providers lack policies that facilitate meaningful language access.

1. <https://nationalequityatlas.org/neighborhood-affordability-for-AAPI-renters/report#concentration>

RENTER RATES BY ASIAN AMERICAN ETHNIC SUB-GROUP

The chart below illustrates by Asian American ethnic sub-group the rates of the overall ethnic population who are renters as counted in the 2020 American Community Survey. There is a high correlation between populations with higher rates of tenancy and those populations with higher rates of limited English proficiency.

Demographic Group	Percent Tenant	Limited English Proficiency Tenant
Nepalese	65%	49%
Bangladeshi	55%	54%
Burmese	53%	79%
Hmong	48%	36%
Korean	48%	46%
Sri Lankan	46%	25%
Indonesian	46%	34%
Pakistani	45%	30%
Cambodian	44%	41%
Asian Indian	43%	17%
Thai	39%	48%
Filipino	37%	21%
Laotian	37%	38%
Chinese	37%	51%
Japanese	34%	37%
Vietnamese	33%	55%
Taiwanese	30%	28%

Source: 2020 American Community Survey

AA RENTERS THAT ARE BOTH LOW-INCOME AND LEP ARE MOST VULNERABLE

In 2020, National CAPACD released a report titled “Crisis to Impact: Reflecting on a Decade of Housing Counseling Services in Asian American and Pacific Islander Communities,” which is a compilation of invaluable insights and best practices gathered by National CAPACD staff and member organizations from their housing counseling network over the past decade. This report (utilizing 2013–17 5-year ACS PUMS data) highlighted a concerning trend, revealing that a significant proportion of severely cost-burdened tenants belong to limited English proficient (LEP) households. According to the report, a staggering 54% of severely cost-burdened Asian households within the 7-area study experience language barriers, while this figure is significantly lower at 9% for White households facing similar burdens.

The chart on the next page provides a more recent analysis of the 2020 ACS PUMS data of Asian American renters within select US cities with significant or growing Asian American populations, by level of English proficiency and household income.



ASIAN AMERICANS LIVING IN LOW-QUALITY HOUSING BY ETHNIC SUB-GROUP

City	AA Population	AA tenants	Low-income AA tenants	Low English Proficiency AA tenants	LI/LEP AA tenants	% of Total LI AA tenants in LQ hsg
Total	17,094,444	6,011,532	2,401,413	1,007,299	612,823	10.19%
Not in identifiable city (or size group)	13,384,869	4,166,803	1,568,367	598,614	342,332	8.22%
Akron, OH	9,299	5,595	3,083	1,993	1,155	20.64%
Boston, MA	58,652	40,077	24,913	10,963	8,710	21.73%
Buffalo, NY	14,304	8,207	6,543	2,138	1,932	23.54%
Chicago, IL	167,380	79,973	38,012	11,337	7,974	9.97%
Erie, PA	2,665	2,123	1,637	681	554	26.10%
Indianapolis, IN	30,793	14,304	8,079	3,279	2,552	17.84%
Jacksonville, FL	41,960	13,720	5,343	2,134	1,282	9.34%
Kansas City, KS	7,332	3,486	2,630	1,174	946	27.14%
Long Beach, CA	59,709	31,083	15,217	4,334	3,270	10.52%
Los Angeles, CA	428,257	243,431	99,345	46,296	28,996	11.91%
Lowell, MA	24,152	12,571	5,991	2,261	1,328	10.56%
Milwaukee, WI	22,301	11,186	6,871	3,491	2,038	18.22%
Minneapolis, MN	23,671	13,165	6,403	1,438	838	6.37%
New York, NY	1,150,081	620,853	301,623	184,611	122,051	19.66%
Oakland, CA	66,522	34,782	17,492	11,511	9,202	26.46%
Pasadena, CA	21,984	12,183	4,706	1,715	1,398	11.48%
Philadelphia, PA	106,037	39,175	20,081	9,291	6,215	15.86%
Phoenix, AZ	51,600	20,244	6,311	2,738	1,474	7.28%
Portland, OR	48,665	16,924	9,345	3,908	2,784	16.45%
Rochester, NY	5,204	3,354	2,375	1,170	1,051	31.34%
Saint Paul, MN	55,487	29,082	19,559	7,257	6,205	21.34%
San Francisco, CA	285,732	126,971	45,702	34,160	21,273	16.75%
Santa Ana, CA	37,866	15,357	8,018	5,237	3,684	23.99%
Seattle, WA	101,849	51,188	18,990	6,814	4,205	8.21%
Washington, DC	24,068	13,867	3,565	1,129	751	5.42%

Source: 2020 American Community Survey

It should come as no surprise that some of the cities that have long been major hubs for Asian American communities have significant populations of limited English proficient, low-income Asian American renters (eg - New York City - 122,000; Los Angeles, 28,000). However, in the last decade, certain cities such as Akron, Buffalo, Erie, and Rochester have seen a major influx of Burmese and Nepali refugees - many of whom are limited English proficient with low-incomes. While the total count of Asian American renters in these Rust Belt cities is not high when compared to other major metropolitan areas, the proportion of Asian American renters that are limited English proficient and low-income is much higher. This illustrates how necessary it is to invest in the capacity of community-based organizations in both major cities with high populations of low-income, limited English proficient Asian American renters, as well as in those areas where Asian refugee populations are resettling because of their relative affordability.



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We help people to apply for rent relief during the pandemic. But the process is so long. System is not friendly to Chinese speakers and seniors. Client who applied for rent relief in June-July, he just got it after four months. He keeps on borrowing money from friends. Landlord keeps harassing him. He cannot evict the tenant, but harasses tenant.”

- Wenyan Wang,
Coalition for A Better Chinese American Community

CALL TO ACTION



The failure to implement robust language access policies not only perpetuates inequalities, but also deprives LEP individuals and families of equal access to housing opportunities compared to their English-speaking counterparts. It is crucial that concrete measures be taken to rectify this disparity and ensure that language does not become a barrier to accessing fair and equitable housing for all. LEP individuals need assistance in the application process, and very little in-language information is made available to LEP individuals by landlords.

Recommendations include:

- Increase investment in community-based organizations that can provide in-language counseling and tenant education and outreach for renters.
- All Federal agencies with public-facing programming should require such programming to be available in multiple languages. At a minimum, all Federal programming should meet the Department of Health and Human Services standard where materials are translated whenever a program's constituent base has more than 1,000 speakers of a language or when such speakers make up more than 5% of the service population. Alternatively (i.e., whichever standard results in more languages translated), there should be translations for the top 10 languages spoken by LEP communities, with an additional 2 based upon regional data.
- Increase language access by requiring landlords for properties backed by Government Supported Enterprise (GSE) financing to provide translated documents and language assistance and/or providing financial assistance to landlords that do.