

# MODEL MINORITY MYTH OF HEALTH



The Model Minority Myth is a harmful and dangerous stereotype that presents **Asian Pacific Islanders (APIs)** as equally successful. API health data is often underreported, misreported, and/or aggregated which hides significant health disparities that exist within the API community. For example, APIs are often stereotyped as being “**slim**” or “**skinny**” even though many are at risk for obesity, type II diabetes, and other chronic diseases.

## CHINESE EXCLUSION ACT



### WHAT IS IT?

The United States actively opposed Chinese immigration for decades. The exclusion act paved the way for additional **anti-Asian immigration laws** which culminated in the passage of the **Immigration Act of 1924** (racist piece of legislation which established immigration quotas and specifically prevented immigration from Asia).

Until its repeal in 1943. The Chinese Exclusion Act was established in 1882. **Racism against Chinese people increase**, because they were often **hired as laborers due to their willingness to work for an unfair wage**.

National Archives. “Chinese Exclusion Act (1882),” September 8, 2021. <https://www.archives.gov/milestone-documents/chinese-exclusion-act>.

## THE HARM

A white sociologist created the **Model Minority Myth to compare Japanese Americans in the 1970s**. The narrative has targeted primarily Asian-American groups, pitting them against other ethnic minorities.

This narrative has instilled a mindset of self-stigmatization for many Asian-Americans. People of Asian descent often have lower BMIs which is standard for measuring obesity – a risk factor for chronic diseases such as diabetes. However, Asians often carry more **visceral than subcutaneous fat**, leading to lower interventions and consequently **less reported data**

1. <https://doi.org/10.1111/jftr.12342>  
2. <https://www.cdc.gov/diabetes/library/spotlights/diabetes-asian-americans.html>



## SUBGROUPS ARE LEFTOVER

The subgroups that are left out are such as, **Filipino, Asian Indian, Vietnamese, Cambodian, Hmong, Thai, Laotian**, and **Pacific Islanders (PIs)**. Smaller Asian ethnic groups include **Bhutanese, Malaysian, Nepalese, Indonesian, Bangladesh**, and **Burmese**. APIs have the highest median income of any ethnic or racial group, which supports the Model Minority Myth.

East Asians are one of the groups the myth most accurately reflects, which is another element that has contributed to its growth. Chinese, Korean, and Japanese Americans have come to dominate what people think of when they think of APIs.

1. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC7360176/>

# LACK OF GOVERNMENT ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

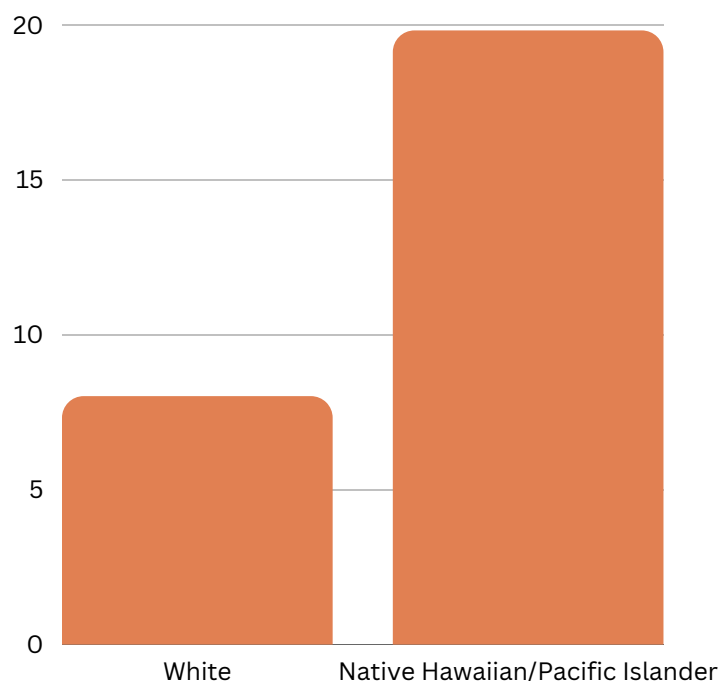
APIs are invisible and often excluded from conversations around health, food, and environment.

## HEALTH CONCERNS



- This leads to many Asian Americans living with undiagnosed type 2 diabetes.
- The population is the least likely to get screened and may not request it due to lack of awareness and education. This can lead to obesity and other chronic diseases.
- When addressing how the Model Minority Myth impacts PI, who are frequently left out of this narrative. PI's experience significant health disparities, including higher rates of obesity, diabetes, heart disease, and certain cancers compared to the general population.

According to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Office of Minority Health, the Native Hawaiians/Pacific Islanders were 2.5 times more likely than non-Hispanic whites to be diagnosed with diabetes in 2018.



"Diabetes and Native Hawaiians/Pacific Islanders - The Office of Minority Health." Accessed August 14, 2023. <https://minorityhealth.hhs.gov/omh/browse.aspx?lvl=4&lvlid=78>.

## MOVING FORWARD

APIs risks and needs are overlooked, and their communities are excluded from equity policies. It is critical to address the idea that APIs have few health issues and disparities by advocating for and educating the community about the need of being screened.

## ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

- Learning for Justice article, "What Is the Model Minority Myth?" written by Sarah-Soonling Blackburn
- Urban Institute article, "Invisibility is an unnatural disaster": Why funding the 2020 Census matters for Pacific Islanders" written by Charmaine Runes
- American Medical Association journal article, "How Should Clinicians Help Patients Navigate 'Model Minority' Demands?" written by Nellie Tran, PhD, Kevin Yabes, MS, and Arianne Miller, PhD
- "Unraveling the "Model Minority" Stereotype: Listening to Asian American Youth" written by Stacey J. Lee
- The Model Minority Myth lesson plan developed by The Asian American Education Project