



CALIFORNIA WATCH

Founded by the Center for Investigative Reporting

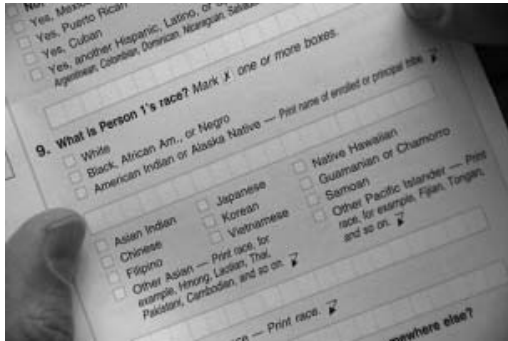
get alerts / react & act / inside the newsroom

Today's Keywords | January 11, 2012 : Savings from '3 strikes' reform? / Pot crackdown in Mendocino / Urban planning & health risks /

HEALTH & WELFARE | DAILY REPORT

Lawmaker wants state to count more ethnic groups

May 9, 2011 | Joanna Lin



Spot Us/Flickr

A lack of data on specific Asian, Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander ethnic groups is masking major health, socioeconomic and education disparities in California.

A bill by Assemblyman Mike Eng seeks to address those disparities by including more ethnic groups in state data. **AB 1088**, which passed last week in the Assembly business, professions and consumer protection committee, would require every state agency, board and commission to expand the number of ethnic groups it counts from 11 to 21, mirroring those reported by the U.S. Census Bureau. It also calls on four key state agencies to post the data online so they are

accountable and make information accessible.

California currently recognizes in its demographic data Chinese, Japanese, Filipino, Korean, Vietnamese, Asian Indian, Hawaiian, Guamanian (also known as Chamorro), Samoan, Laotian and Cambodian, with other ethnic groups listed as "other." AB 1088 would add Bangladeshi, Hmong, Indonesian, Malaysian, Pakistani, Sri Lankan, Taiwanese, Thai, Fijian and Tongan.

Together, these groups make up 13.4 percent of California's population, according to the 2010 U.S. census. The number of Asians alone has increased 31.5 percent since 2000, and Native Hawaiians and Pacific Islanders have grown 23.4 percent.

Asians, Native Hawaiians and Pacific Islanders are the largest minority population in four California counties – Alameda (27 percent), San Francisco (33.7 percent), San Mateo (26.2 percent) and Santa Clara (32.4 percent). According to the latest census figures, they are the majority population in 28 cities and census-designated places in the state.

Yet many state agencies do not count all – or any – Asian, Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander groups as currently required, said Eng, a Democrat from Monterey Park.

"We don't appear in the statistics," Eng said. "Without the numbers, we don't get the resources. ... It means we're not getting the services we need."

Recently, when Eng was voting on measure regarding juveniles sentenced as adults to life in prison without parole, he said he initially thought the issue did not affect Asian Americans in his community. But probation officers told him otherwise.

When Eng asked for information on Asian Americans in the correctional system, he was told that they, along with Native Americans, were listed only as "other," he said. He said his own subsequent research found that Asian Americans had among the highest rates of probation violations.

"Most people would never believe it," Eng said. "This is an example of where the myth of the model minority –

search

advertisement



Joanna Lin
Education Reporter
E-mail | Tel: 714-796-352
Bio

Schools are charge ensuring not only students' academ success but also, in many ways, the physical, emotional and overall we I'm interested in how California's pi schools are meeting these responsil they grapple with shrinking budget how they're serving their most vuln populations.

advertisement

EXPLORE FURTHER

that you'd have very few Asian Americans in prison – does not sync with the reality."

Such examples are why more than 50 organizations, representing a wide array of ethnic groups and causes, are supporting Eng's legislation.

"When you look at the data as an aggregate, it's going to be misleading. We're not all the same," said An Le, statewide network manager for the Asian Pacific American Legal Center, a sponsor of the bill. "We have different cultural issues, different historical push-pull factors that bring us to the U.S."

For example, while 7 percent of Japanese in California had less than a high school education in 2000, the same was true for two-thirds of the Hmong population, according to the center's analysis of census data. Several Southeast Asian and Pacific Islander groups had higher rates of poverty than the statewide average.

"With that information, you can really target resources more appropriately – especially in this budget crisis – and really provide culturally competent services that address specific needs of that population," said Ellen Wu, executive director of the California Pan-Ethnic Health Network, a nonprofit that seeks to end health disparities. "This isn't just critical for the (Asian Pacific Islander) communities, but I think it's particularly highlighted in that population because there's such a wide range of diversity."

Whereas the majority of Latinos, for example, speak Spanish, Asians, Pacific Islanders and Native Hawaiians speak dozens of languages. Linguistic diversity presents challenges for meeting the needs of those with limited or no English proficiency, supporters said.

Even when language is not a barrier, health disparities persist.

In a letter supporting the bill, the American Cancer Society's California division said greater demographic data would help them understand disparities in cancer incidence, treatment and outcomes.

"Aggregating data for racial/ethnic groups often obscures the more meaningful differences among the populations," wrote S. Alecia Sanchez, the group's director of state legislative advocacy.

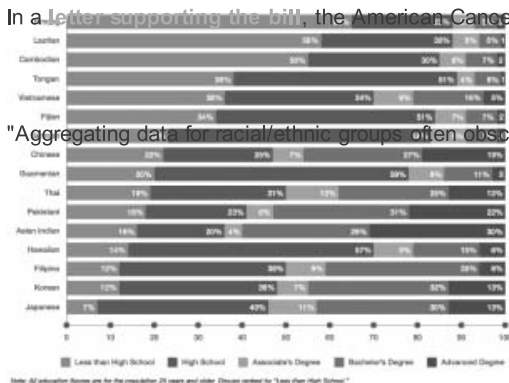
Places in California where Asians, Native Hawaiians and Pacific Islanders are the majority population, 2010

Cities and census designated places	Total population	Percentage ANHPI
Monterey Park city	60,269	67%
Walnut city	29,172	64%
Cupertino city	58,302	63%
Milpitas city	66,790	63%
Cerritos city	49,041	62%
Rosemead city	53,764	61%
San Gabriel city	39,718	61%
Rowland Heights CDP	48,993	60%
Arcadia city	56,364	59%
Daly City city	101,123	56%
Temple City city	35,558	56%
San Marino city	13,147	54%
Alhambra city	83,089	53%
Diamond Bar city	55,544	53%
Union City city	69,516	52%
Camino Tassajara CDP	2,197	51%
Fremont city	214,089	51%
East San Gabriel CDP	14,874	50%
South San Gabriel CDP	8,070	50%
La Palma city	15,568	48%
Midway City CDP	8,485	48%
Westminster city	89,701	48%
Foster City city	30,567	46%
Hercules city	24,060	46%
UC Davis CDP	5,786	42%
Broadmoor CDP	4,176	41%
Mountain House CDP	9,675	40%
South San Francisco	63,632	38%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau

Joanna Lin/California Watch

[Click image to enlarge.](#)



Asian Pacific American Legal Center

Educational attainment among California Asians and Pacific Islanders, according to the 2000 U.S. Census. [Click image to enlarge.](#)

Islander groups reported by the U.S. census. In addition, the state departments of health care services, public health, industrial relations, and fair employment and housing would be required to post online and update their data annually.

Bill supporters had pushed to mandate that more agencies publish demographic data online. But, after similar legislation in 2007, 2009 and 2010 failed for fiscal reasons, they limited the bill to four agencies that previously said the requirements posed low costs. The legislation is currently awaiting assignment in the Assembly appropriations committee.

"We're tired of having the money thing thrown in our face as a reason to say no," Eng said. Failing to identify and address disparities among different ethnic groups "costs us more money. Ignorance costs more money than knowledge."



NEWS POST
Racial minorities willing to spend cancer care



NEWS POST
Nearly 1 million Californians livin' 'food deserts'

RECENT POSTS

[Study: Bay Area's urban planning n address public health](#)

[FBI interviews Prime hospital patie inquiry widens](#)

[Federal justice officials accuse hos provider of Medicare fraud](#)

[In San Joaquin Valley, poor most a by environmental hazards](#)

[Judge stops Medi-Cal budget cuts; plans appeals](#)

POPULAR TAGS

attorney general Barry Bonds bu California Lost campaign final demographics earthqua education reform Election 2010 gov race immigration Jerry Bro lead marijuana Medi-Cal medica Whitman On Shaky Ground On Shaky Ground fol Prime Healthcare prisons public schools schol seismic safety steroids

advertisement