COMMUNITY DATA SPOTLIGHT
COALITION FOR ASIAN AMERICAN FAMILIES AND CHILDREN

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TOPICS Housing, Redistricting

ABOUT

The Coalition for Asian American Children and Families (CACF) serves Asian American communities throughout the state of New York. CACF's member organizations offer a range of social services, including youth programs, senior care, domestic violence survivor support, English classes for immigrants, and small business training. The coalition advocates for equity and opportunity for Asian Americans in the areas of education, health and data disaggregation.

DATA NEEDS

An area of significant concern for CACF is the insufficiency of data on Indo-Caribbean populations among New Yorkers at the state, city and county levels. A considerable proportion of New York City's growing Indo-Caribbean population hails from or claims ancestry from Guyana, Trinidad and Tobago, and other Caribbean countries. In 2022, the New York City's Mayor's Office of Immigrant Affairs (MOIA) found that Guyana and Jamaica are among the top five countries of origin for new immigrants, with the fastest-growing group coming from Guyana. Despite these statistics, Indo-Caribbean New Yorkers are perpetually invisible — New York's forms and surveys do not include a specific designation for Indo-Caribbean, and the U.S. Census Bureau categorizes Caribbean nationalities as *Black/African American* (such as Jamaican or Trinidadian) or *some other race* (such as Guyanese). Indo-Caribbeans often select "Other" as a result.

Awardees of the CACF co-administered Communities of Color Nonprofit Stabilization Fund (CCNSF) pose after a recent training. (Photo credit: CACF)

Through its work with community-based organizations in southeastern Queens, CACF has found that Indo-Caribbean communities in New York continually encounter barriers to necessary and equitable funding and resources from New York City and state agencies. The lack of data on Indo-Caribbeans further marginalizes this fast-growing community. Examples include:

- **Falling through the social safety net.** During the past 50 years, the significant influx of Indo-Caribbean families immigrating to Queens has escaped the attention of the housing authority, evidenced by the lack of data on Indo-Caribbeans at either the local or state level. Indo-Caribbean immigrants who come to the country are unable to access good-quality housing (as Chhaya's BASE Campaign[1] has documented), are unhoused, or live in overcrowded housing conditions. They are fearful for the safety of their families and they are unfamiliar with the processes to access public benefits. This problem affects many immigrant communities. When public agencies fail to collect community-specific data at intake, community-based organizations spend years trying to make the case that the communities exist, are growing rapidly, and have acute and urgent needs. Public systems need to be better positioned

CACF's Co-Executive Directors Anita Gundanna (left) and Vanessa Leung rally for a fair and equitable New York City Budget on the steps of City Hall in May 2024. (Photo credit: Radhika Chalasani)

to anticipate needs and react accordingly rather than placing the burden of proof on nonprofit organizations.

- **Diminished political voice.** The redistricting process, which occurs every 10 years, relies on community counts from the Decennial Census. Redistricting processes in the southeast Queens neighborhoods of Richmond Hill and South Ozone Park recurrently divide fast-growing South Asian and Indo-Caribbean populations into three or more districts, diminishing their political power and voice as ethnic communities. That is true as well for the latest redistricting, through which the potential power of the area's South Asian and Indo-Caribbean communities once again has been diminished, in order to protect political incumbents that have consistently failed to meaningfully recognize and respond to their needs.

Data collection processes must capture more complexity. The interplay of nationality and ethnic heritage have important implications that marginalize Indo-Caribbean families. To understand how to best advocate for the Indo-Caribbean community, social services and government agencies need data on age, gender, immigration patterns, socioeconomic status, utilization of public benefits, housing situation, occupation and educational outcomes resulting from supportive advocacy at every level.

CACF has identified an urgent demand for the Census Bureau, Housing and Urban Development, Health and Human Services, and other federal agencies to recognize and prioritize data collection regarding Indo-Caribbean populations. Likewise, New York State and New York City agencies must acknowledge and incorporate Indo-Caribbeans in their administrative and survey data so that they can proactively respond to the needs of this fast-growing community within their jurisdictions.

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1 https://chhayacdc.org/campaigns/base-campaign/

Front cover top photo: *For nearly 40 years, CACF has brought together advocates and community-based organizations across New York City to advocate for AAPI families. (Photo: Radhika Chalasani)*

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CACF
Coalition For Asian American Children+Families

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