

A GIRLS LEADERSHIP NATIONAL STUDY

WHY WE LEAD

Understanding and supporting the leadership of
Asian American, Native Hawaiian, and Pacific Islander
girls and gender-expansive youth



GIRLS
LEADERSHIP

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This report represents the contributions of all voices we heard from Asian American, Native Hawaiian, and Pacific Islander (AANHPI) girls and gender-expansive youth who completed the survey, talked with us through interviews, and submitted photos to share their stories reflecting their understanding of leadership, their identities, and the communities that shape them. To all the AANHPI girls and gender-expansive youth, thank you for your time, courage, and willingness to share. We hope you see yourself reflected in these pages.

The authors and architects of this study are grateful to the individuals and organizations that made this report possible: the Youth Research Council (YRC), the team that worked with the YRC: Irina Núñez, Dr. Kendra Carr, and Aminah Shah; our Community Partners; the Advisory Board; the Research Cabinet; and Sponsors.

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This study demonstrates the work done by the Youth Research Council, the 17-member research group of AANHPI young people that developed, researched, analyzed, and worked together with our Community Partners over two years, and contributed to the research design and portions of this report. Thank you for your insights, persistence, and leadership in this project.

The research design and report were led and authored by Evaluation Studio¹. A special thanks to Rayna Wang for co-authoring the literature review which informs parts of this report, and Tia Samn of Rosy Productions for the graphic design.

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¹ In January 2024, Evaluation Studio integrated with Alliance for Girls to expand on research opportunities.

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FOREWORD

Across our country, generation after generation of Asian American, Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander (AANHPI) girls and gender-expansive youth have grown up looking to pages, screens, and billboards for reflections of themselves. And generation after generation, we have been left disappointed, unable to find a mirror for the dimensionality we know ourselves to possess. As Cathy Park Hong writes in [Minor Feelings: An Asian American Reckoning](#): ‘For as long as I can remember, I have struggled to prove myself into existence.’ How do we etch out space for ourselves when we come of age in a world that insists on flattening our edges, silencing our voices, othering our humanity? Society insists on a one-size-fits-all caricature of us, but the truth is that to identify as an AANHPI girl is to sit at vital intersections of humanity. We are no monolith. We are expansive.

Asian Americans comprise the fastest growing racial group in our nation. We are also among the most diverse population on just about every metric. Studying these complexities is no easy feat, which is all the more reason why I am inspired by the AANHPI Youth Research Council’s pioneering work in this first-ever national study of AANHPI girls and gender-expansive youth. I hope you are as buoyed by their findings as I am.

As detailed in this report, our girls and gender-expansive youth are more ready than ever to step into leadership. All they need is for us—as educators, mentors, and advocates—to recognize and support all of the identities, backgrounds, and experiences that inform their particular strength and power.

There are so many facets to this group of future leaders; too many to sum up in one neat package. But amidst it all, one truth shines through: our Asian American, Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander girls and gender-expansive youth refuse to give into erasure. They insist on being seen, on being heard, on building a better, more inclusive world. May they lead the way for us all.

–Qian Julie Wang

LETTER FROM

GIRLS LEADERSHIP

Welcome to ‘Why We Lead’ the first national study of Asian American, Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander girls and gender-expansive youth.

‘Why We Lead’ is also Girls Leadership’s first youth-led study. Based on the feedback from Black and Latina girls from our study ‘Ready to Lead’ in 2020, who told us that any study about a specific demographic group, especially a marginalized group, needed to be led by that group, we decided to incorporate participatory action youth-led research. Or, as the disability rights movement says, ‘nothing about us without us.’ Our partners at Evaluation Studio were already deeply committed to this way of working. They taught us to see power dynamics at play in traditional research methods, and showed us how to approach this study with the values of intersectional feminism and justice at the foundation of every choice.

In this report you will find both rich quantitative and qualitative data. We are proud of how the sample of valid responses included here, from over 2,200 young AANHPI identifying youth, represents the rich diversity of experiences, perspectives, and values contained within the label AANHPI. Because of the outreach through 20 community-based partners, we were able to listen to voices that aren’t always heard, voices such as AANHPI queer youth, Central Asian youth, and AANHPI disabled youth. We were told early on that this study would move at the pace of trust. There are ecosystems of trust that fostered these findings, including the trust that these partner organizations work to build and sustain with AANHPI youth and their families every day.

One of the findings of this study is that leadership is cultivated in culture and lived experience. Because we spent the last two years building relationships with AANHPI leaders, youth and adults alike, we’ve experienced leadership traditions based on the value of community, of mutual care for one another, of support for each other’s shared success. The result of this experience is a truly collaborative achievement, which includes contributions from the youth researchers, the sponsors who believe the power of youth-led research, the adults who facilitated their process, the professional researchers who wove together the findings, the graphic designer who laid out the findings, and the communications team who are telling the story of this report—not to mention the countless people who will carry this work forward into schools, districts, and systems change.

We at Girls Leadership have been transformed by this process of learning what it means to lead in community. We invite you to read this report slowly, returning to the quotes and the visuals over time, so that you too can be changed by these findings. When you find yourself being cared for, or caring for others in a way that feels different for you, know that is the impact of the leadership of this Youth Research Council.



INTRODUCTION

There is minimal research exploring identity and leadership for girls and gender-expansive youth of color in the United States. Specifically, there is a need for in-depth and focused research on Asian American, Native Hawaiian, and Pacific Islander (AANHPI) girls and gender-expansive youths' leadership perspectives. This study is a first-of-its-kind national exploration of the experiences and relationship between identity, community, and leadership of AANHPI girls and gender-expansive youth in the United States, created from their own stories and definitions.²

This report provides community-based organizations, schools, policy-makers, and any entity or person that serves and works with AANHPI girls and gender-expansive youth a fuller picture of how these young people define leadership from their own point of view, including why they want to lead and the supports that work for them. Understanding the wide-ranging definitions and practices of leadership within the diverse communities of AANHPI youth, as well as the external leadership supports and existing barriers, will foster greater equity in the leadership development of all young people.

² For the purposes of this study, we define a girl as any female-identifying individual between the ages of 14 and 22, including cisgender girls, femmes, and transgender girls.



BACKGROUND

The term ‘glass ceiling’ has been used to describe the organizational and attitudinal barriers that stymie career advancement for women,³ and the term ‘bamboo ceiling’ has been used to refer to barriers that exclude AANHPI individuals from obtaining leadership opportunities.⁴

AANHPI women face a combination of systemic disadvantages due to both gender and race. The intersections of additional identities, such as ethnicity, immigration status, age, health, income, and sexual orientation, also shape AANHPI women’s experiences in the context of leadership.



What about AANHPI girls and gender-expansive youth?

To address this underrepresentation, leadership development for AANHPI women can and should begin early, starting with listening to why AANHPI girls and gender-expansive youth want to lead. To that end, this report makes recommendations for community-based organizations, schools, and policy-makers alike and calls for change.

Numerous studies on AANHPI identity and leadership development have demonstrated how positive youth identity formation and leadership development are supported by creating communities where AANHPI cultures are recognized and valued.⁵

Research is still needed to understand the experiences of AANHPI gender-expansive youth. Transgender and gender-expansive AANHPI youth report feeling unsafe and unprotected at school due to both anti-transgender and anti-AANHPI biases that peers, teachers, and staff may harbor.⁶ In fact, according to a report released by the Trevor Project in 2022, 40% of Asian American and Pacific Islander LGBTQ+ youth seriously considered suicide in the past year, showcasing the need to look at the mental health and well-being of this population further.⁷

³ Hyun, J. *Breaking the bamboo ceiling: Career strategies for Asians*. New York, NY: Harper Collins, 2005.

⁴ Human Rights Campaign Foundation, 2019 LGBTQ Asian and Pacific Islander Youth Report, Human Rights Campaign Foundation, 2019.

⁵ Song, A., & Hur, J. W. “Development of youth leadership through community-based participatory action research during the COVID-19 pandemic: A case study of Korean American adolescents.” *Journal of Adolescent Research*, 2022; Lin, J. L. L., Chan, M., Kwong, K., & Au, L. “Promoting positive youth development for Asian American youth in a Teen Resource Center: Key components, outcomes, and lessons learned.” *Children and Youth Services Review*, vol. 91, 2018, pp. 413–423; Ngo, B. “Naming their world in a culturally responsive space: Experiences of Hmong adolescents in an after-school theatre program.” *Journal of Adolescent Research*, vol. 32, no. 1, 2017, pp. 37–63; Halagao, P. E., & Kaomea, J. “On my honor: creating space for thinking and living Girl Scouts differently in (post)colonial Hawai‘i.” *Gender & Education*, vol. 30, no. 7, 2018, pp. 866–881.

⁶ Human Rights Campaign Foundation, 2019 LGBTQ Asian and Pacific Islander Youth Report, Human Rights Campaign Foundation, 2019.

⁷ The Trevor Project. ‘The Mental Health and Well-Being of Asian American and Pacific Islander (AAPI) LGBTQ Youth’, 2022.

ABOUT THE STUDY

The research questions in this study and the approaches to answering these questions were co-designed and executed by Girls Leadership, Evaluation Studio, and AANHPI girls and gender-expansive youth through the formation of the Youth Research Council (YRC).

To answer these questions, the first phase of the work began with a literature review and national survey of AANHPI girls and gender-expansive youth to develop an understanding of the relationships between ethnicity, generational immigration status, geography, and leadership. The survey is unique to other AANHPI-focused studies, as responses have been generated through partnerships with AANHPI communities (see more about Community Partnerships below).

Based on these survey findings, the YRC delved deeper into these research questions by listening to the stories and the lived experiences of AANHPI girls and gender-expansive youth. This approach engaged some of the hardest-to-reach and often overlooked groups within the AANHPI monolith, the catch-all AANHPI category. Commonly, the label ‘AANHPI’ or ‘AAPI’ erases the diversity and nuances of these populations, masking the challenges faced by a diverse set of identities.

This youth-led and community-based research design yielded samples of historically underrepresented groups in AANHPI research, such as Southeast Asians, queer-identifying youth, and disabled youth. This data set contains complex demographics, such as immigrant generation and adoption, which is not available from U.S. Census data. This unprecedented quantitative data was supplemented by qualitative approaches, including interviews with and narratives from AANHPI girls and gender-expansive youth to provide a deeper look at what leadership looks like in their communities.

This study also includes teachers’ perspectives to offer more comprehensive insight into the supports and challenges AANHPI girls and gender-expansive youth face in leadership development. Girls Leadership is deeply committed to partnering with the adults in the lives of girls and gender-expansive youth, and, in particular, of understanding the power of the relationships between teachers and students, especially as students of color are now the majority in the U.S., including the fast-growing group of AANHPI youth.

Guided by the voices and experiences of AANHPI girls and gender-expansive youth, Girls Leadership conducted a multifaceted study exploring the following research topics:

How ethnicity and culture impact AANHPI girls’ definition of leadership, leadership identity, and skill development

How the definition of leadership is impacted by the intersections of one’s identity

How teachers perceive supports and barriers to leadership for AANHPI girls

How systems and institutions support or serve as barriers to leadership for AANHPI girls

GETTING TO KNOW THE RESEARCHERS

One of the core beliefs supporting this research is that Asian American, Native Hawaiian, and Pacific Islander (AANHPI) girls and gender-expansive youth are the best people to express and investigate their leadership development. The Youth Research Council (YRC) is a group of 17 AANHPI youth selected from more than 500 applicants who wanted to use the power of their voice for their communities. The members' heritages include East Asian, South Asian, Pacific Islander, and multiracial identities. They come from suburban, rural, and urban communities across the U.S. and are passionate about telling their stories—and helping others do the same.

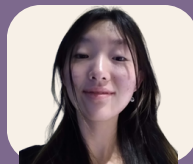
The YRC embarked on a study to understand how AANHPI girls and gender-expansive youth define leadership, what leadership means to them, and what factors support or hinder their development as leaders. They conducted qualitative research, data analysis, and co-developed solutions with Community Partners and other stakeholders based on their findings.



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Evaluation Studio worked alongside Girls Leadership and in collaboration with the YRC to oversee the various research activities of this project, including guiding and facilitating research design, data collection, data analyses, and meaning-making sessions with the community. The findings of this two-year study have been compiled into this report, which is authored by Evaluation Studio.

Girls Leadership is a national educational nonprofit teaching girls to exercise the power of their voice through programs grounded in social-emotional learning. They provide professional development training for educators, guidance counselors, sports coaches, family service providers and nonprofit youth-development professionals. Girls Leadership centers gender and racial equity in their work to address the internal and external barriers to leadership development.

After two years of dedicated work, the team produced this first-ever national study of AANHPI girls and gender-expansive youth, based on results from more than 2,200 youth participants and 500 teachers.



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Asian Americans, Native Hawaiians, and Pacific Islanders (AANHPI) are the fastest-growing ethnic group in the U.S., making up 7.7% of the total U.S. population.⁸ Yet, no national study existed on the experiences of AANHPI girls and gender-expansive youth. To address this, Girls Leadership asked Evaluation Studio to partner on a groundbreaking, youth-led national study exploring AANHPI girls' and gender-expansive youths' leadership identities and their supports and barriers to leadership development.⁹

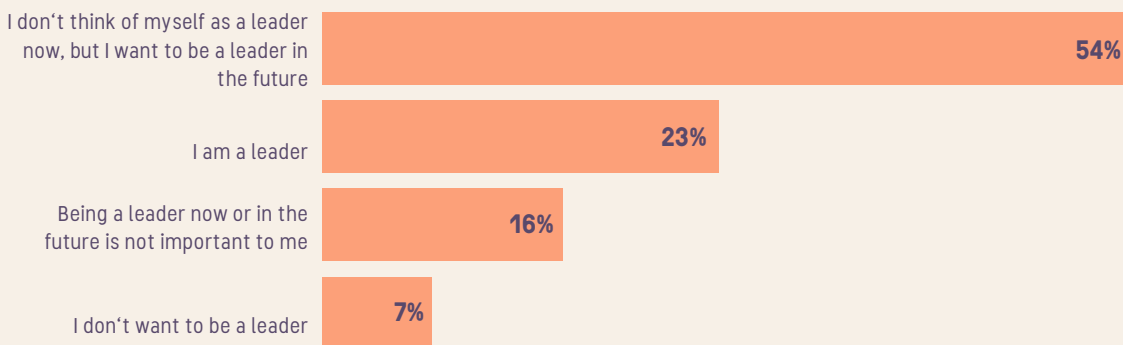
The findings in this study were generated by the work of the Youth Research Council (YRC), including a national survey of 2,275 girls and gender-expansive youth; 30 youth interviews, photovoice submissions; meaning-making sessions with over 30 AANHPI-serving community-based organizations nationwide; and a national survey of over 500 teachers. This report shares the findings, analysis, and meaning-making around all components of this study to equip those who support the leadership of AANHPI girls and gender-expansive youth with a nuanced understanding of their motivations and needs.

KEY FINDINGS

AANHPI girls and gender-expansive youth are leading or aspire to lead.

More than 3 in 4 AANHPI girls and gender-expansive survey participants are leading or plan to be a leader in the future (77%).

Youth Perspectives on Their Leadership Status



Source: AANHPI Girls Lead Survey, n=2,275.

⁸ Budinan, A. and Neil G. Ruiz, Pew Research Center. 'Key facts about Asian Americans, a diverse and growing population,' April 29, 2021. <https://www.pewresearch.org/short-reads/2021/04/29/key-facts-about-asian-americans/>

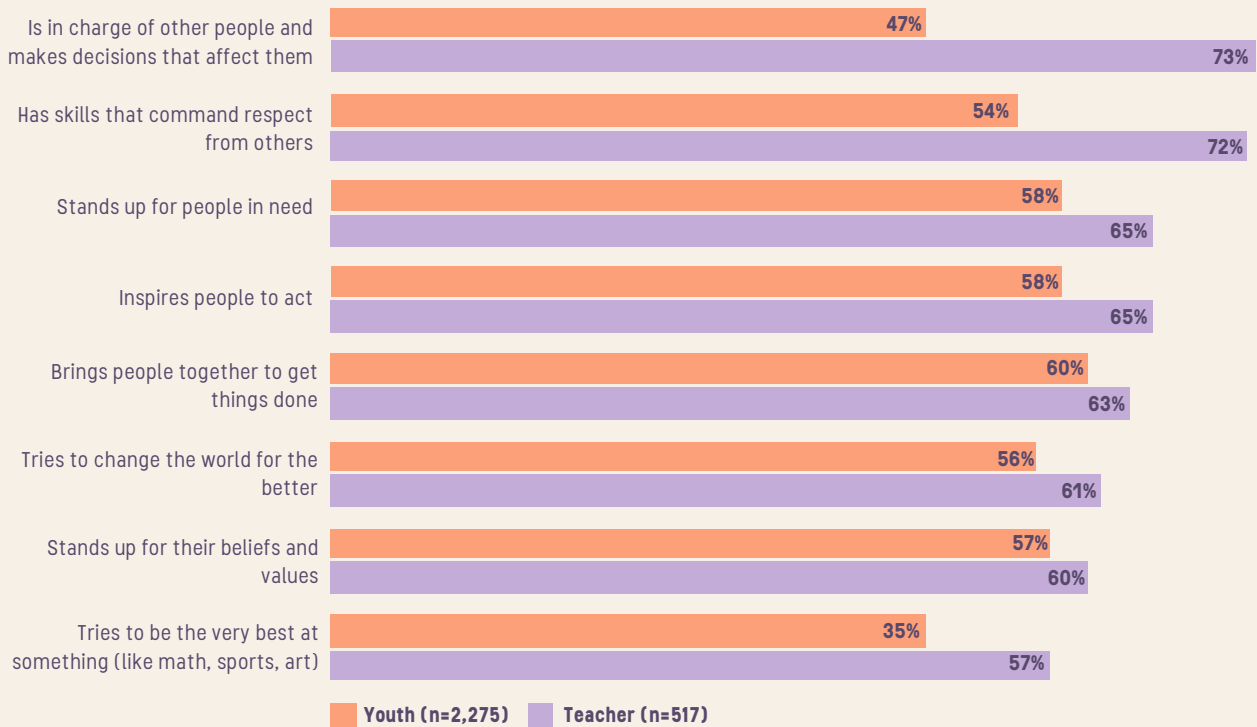
⁹ As defined by Girls Leadership in the Glossary: 'Leadership is defined as making others and situations better as a result of your presence, and making that impact last in your absence. We practice this at interpersonal, intrapersonal, and societal levels.'

Culture and lived experiences shape the definitions of leadership.

AANHPI girls and gender-expansive youth and teachers agreed on the importance of a leader being ‘someone who brings people together to get things done’ (60% and 63%, respectively). The biggest discrepancy between students’ and teachers’ perspectives in defining a leader is as someone who ‘is in charge of other people and makes decisions that affect them’ (agreed upon by 47% of youth and 73% of teachers).

Leadership Definition

A leader is someone who...



Note: This is the percentage of those who agree / strongly agree.
Source: 2023 AANHPI Teachers’ Survey and AANHPI Girls Lead Survey.

Generational immigration status impacts the safety of AANHPI youth.

Ninety percent of 1st-generation AANHPI girls and gender-expansive youth state they experience negative bias, the highest reported amongst generations. In comparison, 64% of 3rd-generation AANHPI girls and gender-expansive youth feel similarly (the lowest reported amongst generations).

Negative Bias By Generational Immigration Status

Have you ever encountered negative bias or unfair treatment because of your race or ethnicity?



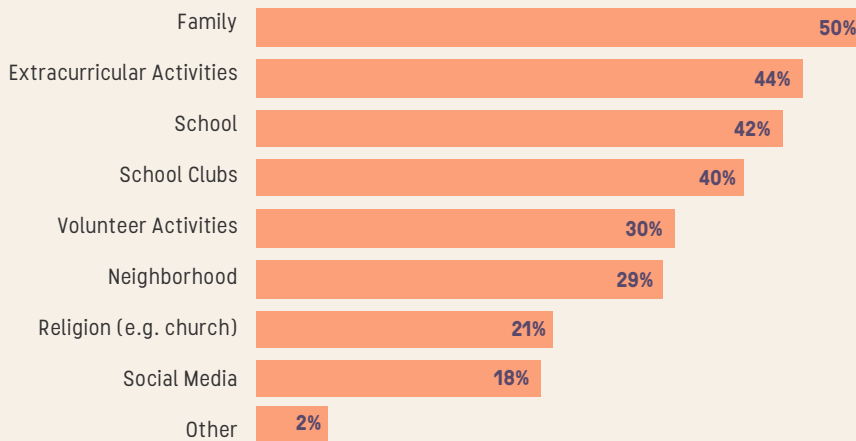
Note: Percent agreement that they have encountered negative bias or unfair treatment because of their race or ethnicity
Source: AANHPI Girls Lead Survey, n=2,050.

School is a source of community, as well as a place of discrimination.

Schools are a major source of community for AANHPI girls and gender-expansive youth, but also where they experience bias and prejudice. 42% of AANHPI girls and gender-expansive youth consider school as their community; at the same time, 38% report bias in school from a peer, and 29% report bias from a teacher or school administrators.

Definition of Community

When you think of community, which of these count as community for you?



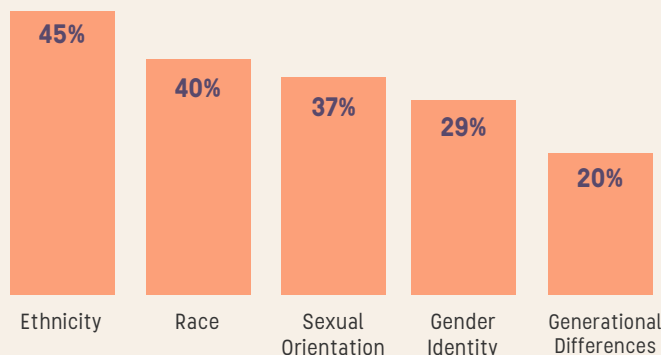
Note: Percentages might total more than 100% because respondents could select multiple responses.
Source: 2023 AANHPI Teachers' Survey, n=529.

Teachers play a pivotal role in supporting AANHPI leadership, yet discussions around identity factors remain insufficient.

While 68% of teachers report being aware of generational differences amongst AANHPI youth, only 1 in 5 teachers have discussed generational differences in their classrooms (20%).

Classroom Discussions on Identity

Which of the following facets of racial and cultural identities have you discussed in your classroom?



Note: Percentages might total more than 100% because respondents could select multiple responses.
Source: AANHPI Girls Lead Survey, n=2,275.

ACTIONABLE INSIGHTS

To create the conditions for AANHPI girls and gender-expansive youth to lead, all who support and work with them can use these findings to deepen their understanding, advocacy, and work.

- ✿ **Examine what generational immigrant status means for AANHPI girls and gender-expansive youth:** Understanding how generational status can impact youths' relationships with their families, community, others, and themselves is critical to understanding their identity.
- ✿ **Explore other aspects of identity for AANHPI girls and gender-expansive youth:** Because identity for AANHPI girls and gender-expansive youth is so multifaceted and influenced by multiple factors, including socioeconomic status, religion, language, education and more, further research is essential to examine the various influences on these youths' identities as they shape how they understand themselves and the world.
- ✿ **Expand how we understand leadership:** Integrate AANHPI narratives and role models into leadership programs, in both formal and informal ways. Ask yourself how you can challenge traditional notions of leadership, often rooted in individualism, by considering how leadership should be determined by the people the programs serve.
- ✿ **Design communities of belonging:** Secure the resources and the time to build communities of belonging that provide participants with emotional and physical safety to heal from experiences of discrimination and associated traumas. This includes creating communities informed and led by AANHPI girls and gender-expansive youth. These communities should be environments where confidence can be built over time.
- ✿ **Support mental health efforts for AANHPI girls and gender-expansive youth:** Stress is a primary barrier to leadership for AANHPI girls and gender-expansive youth. A deeper dive into the root causes of these stress factors is needed. Greater well-being will present opportunities to build confidence.
- ✿ **Raise awareness and share knowledge about the nuances of AANHPI girls and gender-expansive youths' experiences:** When advocating for AANHPI girls and gender-expansive youth, share their stories and raise awareness about the nuances of AANHPI communities. If possible, include ways for participants to continue these conversations in their own communities.
- ✿ **Create narrative and structural change to better represent AANHPI populations:** Expand national, local, and political narratives to better represent AANHPI populations. This includes improving research design, data collection, and analysis methods that reflect the nuances of specific AANHPI identity, while supporting pan-Asian solidarity. At the local level, this could include ensuring language service availability for AANHPI communities and implementing cultural competency training for educators so that they understand the needs of the AANHPI communities they serve.

BEYOND THE AANHPI MONOLITH:¹⁰ AANHPI GIRLS AND GENDER- EXPANSIVE YOUTH

¹⁰ This term refers to AANHPI often being seen as a single, homogenous group with uniform beliefs and experiences, oversimplifying the diverse identities and perspectives within over 50 distinct ethnic groups and over 100 languages.



RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

YOUTH SURVEY

As a starting point to understand AANHPI girls and gender-expansive youths' experiences in the United States, a national survey was distributed online for youth ages 14 to 22. The survey asked respondents several questions to understand several themes better:

- AANHPI girls and gender-expansive youths' lives, including where and how they live and their communities;
- AANHPI girls and gender-expansive youths' experiences with beginning to explore definitions of leadership; and
- AANHPI girls and gender-expansive youths' understanding of racial identities.

PHOTOVOICE AND INTERVIEWS

 **Note: This icon notes when YRC findings and analyses are presented**

The Youth Research Council used the youth survey data as a starting point to dive deeper into understanding the role of AANHPI communities in influencing and shaping AANHPI girls and gender-expansive youths' leadership development. The YRC selected the photovoice method, a qualitative research approach that uses participant-taken photos to elicit narratives, as well as interviews with AANHPI girls and gender-expansive youth in the U.S. about their ideas of community and leadership, to empower participants to tell their own stories and bring nuance and context to the survey data.

COLLABORATING WITH THE AANHPI COMMUNITY

A vital element of this project has been working with organizations and institutions serving AANHPI girls and gender-expansive youth in the United States. This support network of organizations allowed for broad outreach on various aspects of the project, including community networking and relationship building, solution building, and thought partnership.

WHO THEY ARE

The community partners for this project are 20 organizations and institutions across the United States, based mainly on the West Coast and East Coast. These organizations and institutions cover a wide range of areas, such as youth empowerment, community organizing, legal services, immigrant rights, civic engagement, education, arts, social justice, and more. These organizations are working towards a more inclusive, equitable, and empowered future for girls, gender-expansive youth, and all AANHPI communities.

Community Partner Locations

West Coast	8
East Coast	7
Nationwide	3
Midwest	2

COMMUNITY-BASED ORGANIZATIONS' ROLE EMBEDDED WITHIN THE AANHPI COMMUNITY

Having this community-based network of organizations and institutions already embedded in the community allowed the Youth Research Council to tap into existing relationships of trust within AANHPI communities, some of which are hard to reach and therefore underrepresented. This helped recruit participants and get broad representation of AANHPI girls and gender-expansive youth for the survey.

In addition, this network of community-based organizations and institutions brought on-the-ground insight and perspective to the data during community meetings with youth researchers, asking questions from additional perspectives and centering AANHPI girls and gender-expansive youth in thinking through the solutions to issues raised in these findings.

Furthermore, in this study's recommendations and calls to action, these community-based partners will be critical in disseminating and implementing the findings and solutions, which creates a greater impact on youth-centered research.



A CLOSER PERSPECTIVE OF OUR STUDY PARTICIPANTS

This section provides a snapshot of AANHPI girls and gender-expansive youth who responded to the survey. The sample of 2,275 youth represents the diversity of the AANHPI community in the United States, including historically underrepresented groups in AANHPI research. It captures generational information, sexuality, and other essential characteristics of these youth.

In addition, the demographics of the 32 AANHPI girls and gender-expansive youth who participated in interviews and PhotoVoice are detailed below to better situate the context of their stories and experiences.

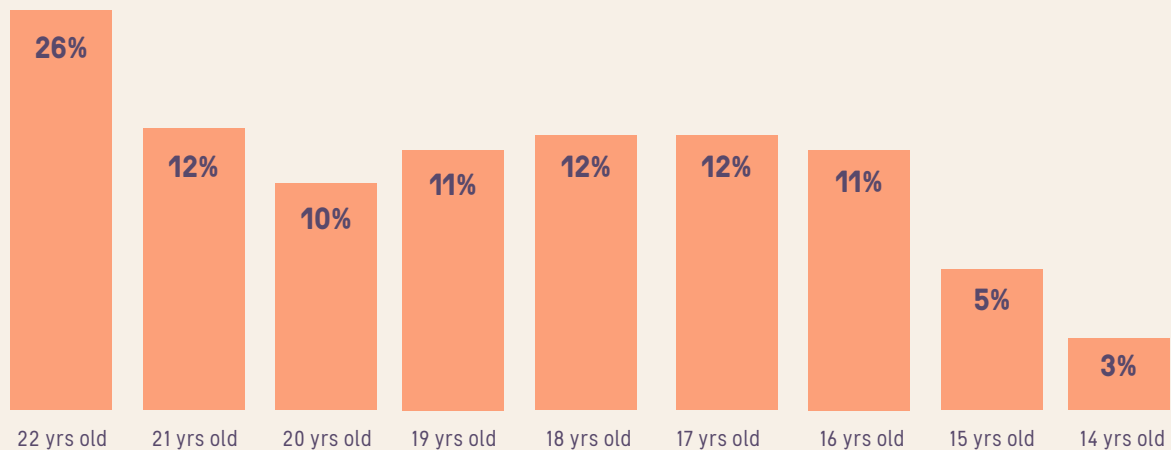
“

I ...identify as a Jain, which is my religion. But because of that, I identify as vegetarian, which is a very big part of who I am and what I do. I also identify as an older sister—that impacts a lot of who I am and how I act. And lastly, I think I identify very strongly as an immigrant because that also changes many of my experiences and how I see the world. – 18–22 years old, South Asian, 1st-generation girl/woman

”

SURVEY RESPONDENTS DEMOGRAPHICS

Age



Note: Percentages may not total 100 due to rounding.
 Source: AANHPI Girls Lead Survey, n=2,275.

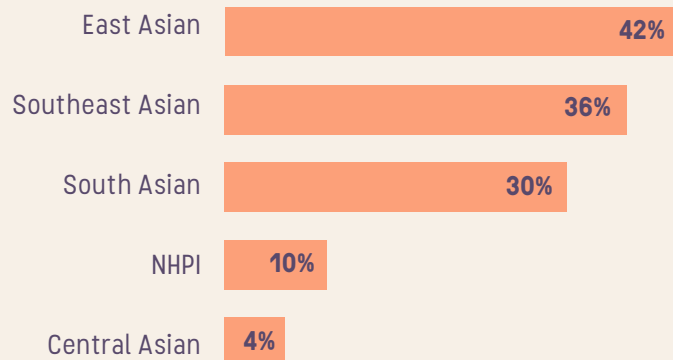
Ethnicity

CHINESE	28%
ASIAN INDIAN	17%
FILIPINO	14%
BANGLADESHI	9%
KOREAN	7%
HMONG	6%
BURMESE	6%
CAMBODIAN	6%
JAPANESE	5%
VIETNAMESE	5%
BHUTANESE	5%
NATIVE HAWAIIAN	4%
MALAYSIAN	3%
PAKISTANI	2%
THAI	2%
OTHER ASIAN	2%

Note: This table excludes ethnicities with a population of 1% or lower. The data in this report represents 44 different AANHPI ethnicities.

Source: AANHPI Girls Lead Survey, n=2,275.

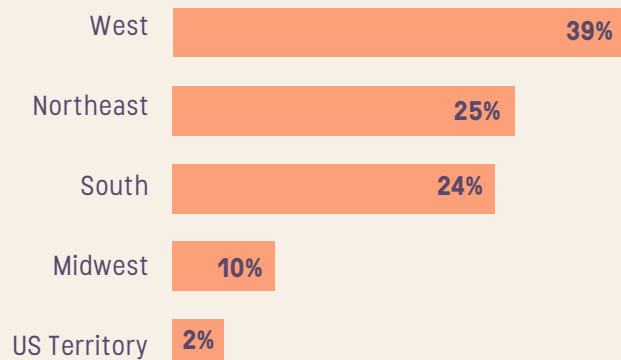
AANHPI Regional Ethnic Group



Note: Percentages might total over 100% because respondents could select multiple responses.

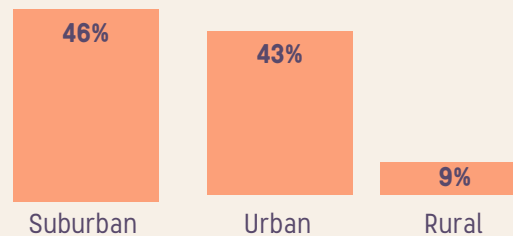
Source: AANHPI Girls Lead Survey, n=2,275.

U.S. Regions



Source: AANHPI Girls Lead Survey, n=2,275.

Community Type

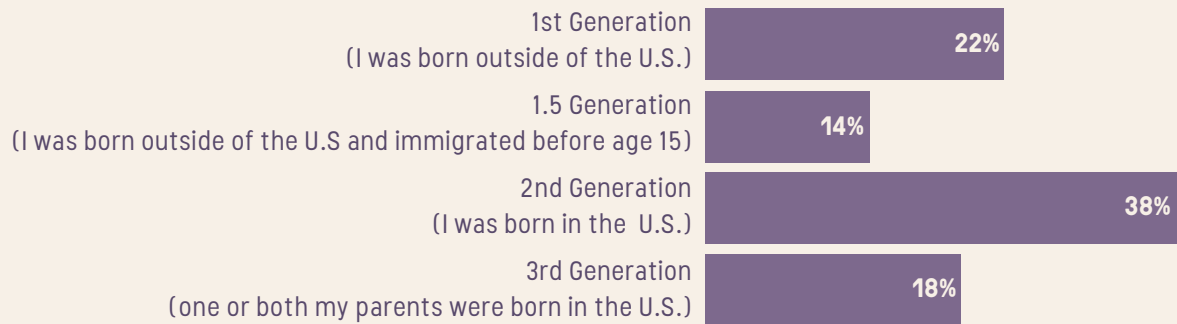


Note: This table excludes categories with 1% or lower.

Source: AANHPI Girls Lead Survey, n=2,275.

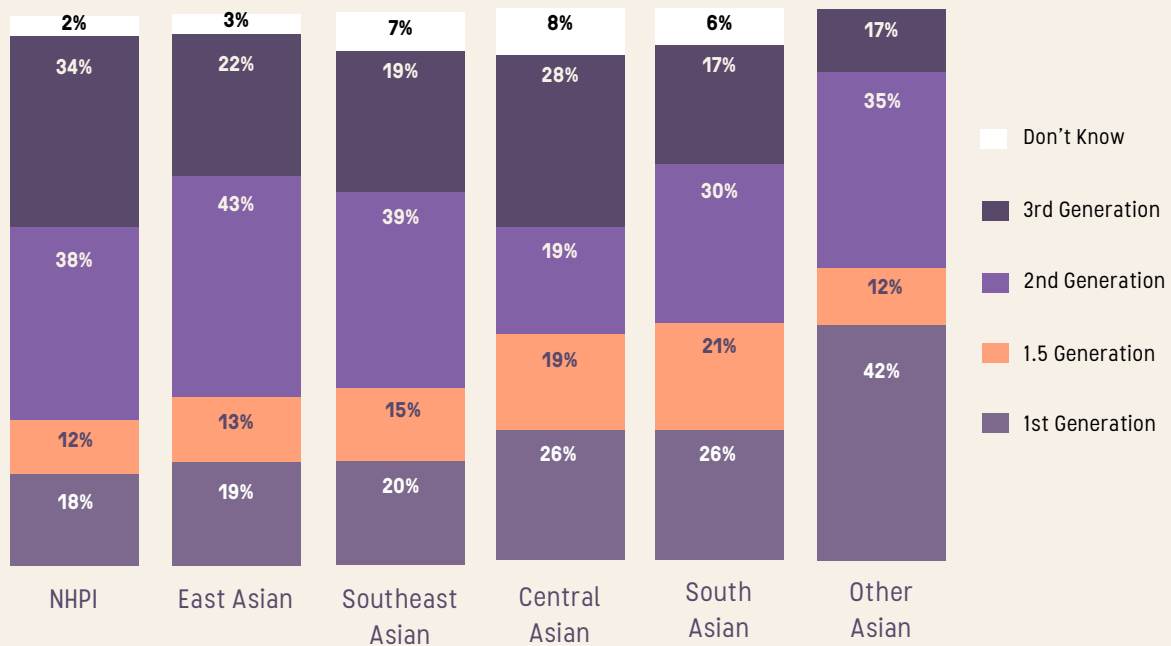
Generational Immigration Status ¹¹

What is your generational status?



Note: This table excludes those who did not know or did not respond.
Source: AANHPI Girls Lead Survey, n=2,275.

Generational Immigration Status By Ethnicity

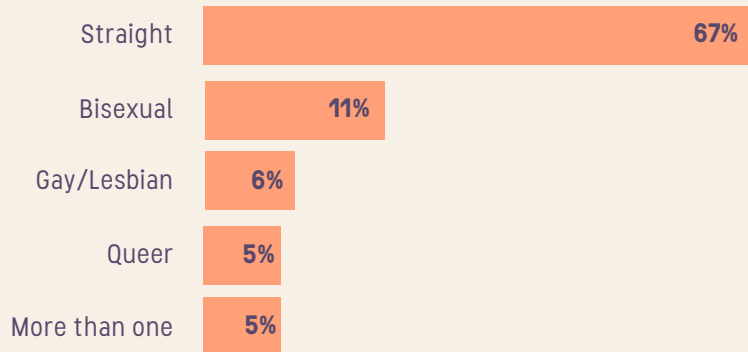


Source: AANHPI Girls Lead Survey, n=2,275.

¹¹ Generational Immigrant status refers to the position of an individual or a family within a particular generation’s immigration history. The terms “1st generation,” “2nd generation,” “3rd generation,” and so on are commonly used to describe this status. Breakdown of this term can be found in the Glossary

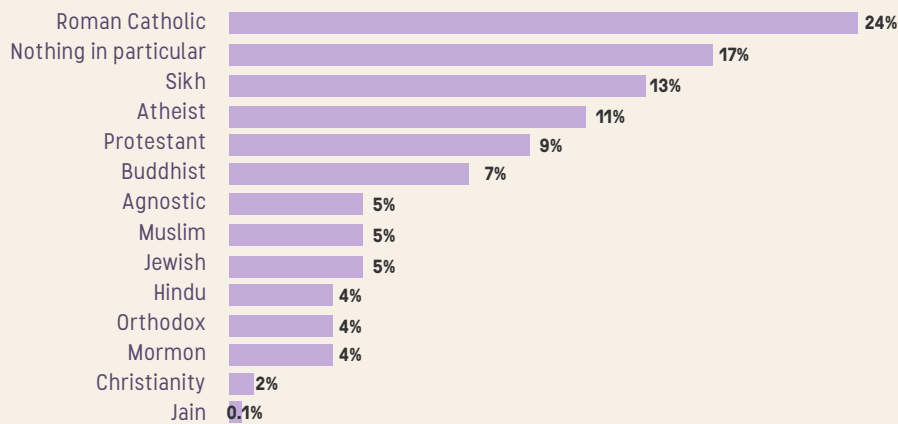
OTHER DEMOGRAPHICS VARIABLES OF INTEREST SURVEY RESPONDENTS

Sexual Orientation



Note: This table excludes those who preferred not to respond.
Source: AANHPI Girls Lead Survey, n=2,275.

Religion



Source: AANHPI Girls Lead Survey, n=2,275.

Other Important Demographics



¹² 2% of survey participants responded with 'other' as language; 2% did not respond to this question.

¹³ Disability here includes physical disability, deaf, hard of hearing, blind, intellectual and learning disability, mental disability, and psychological disability.

AANHPI GIRLS AND GENDER-EXPANSIVE YOUTH AND MENTAL HEALTH

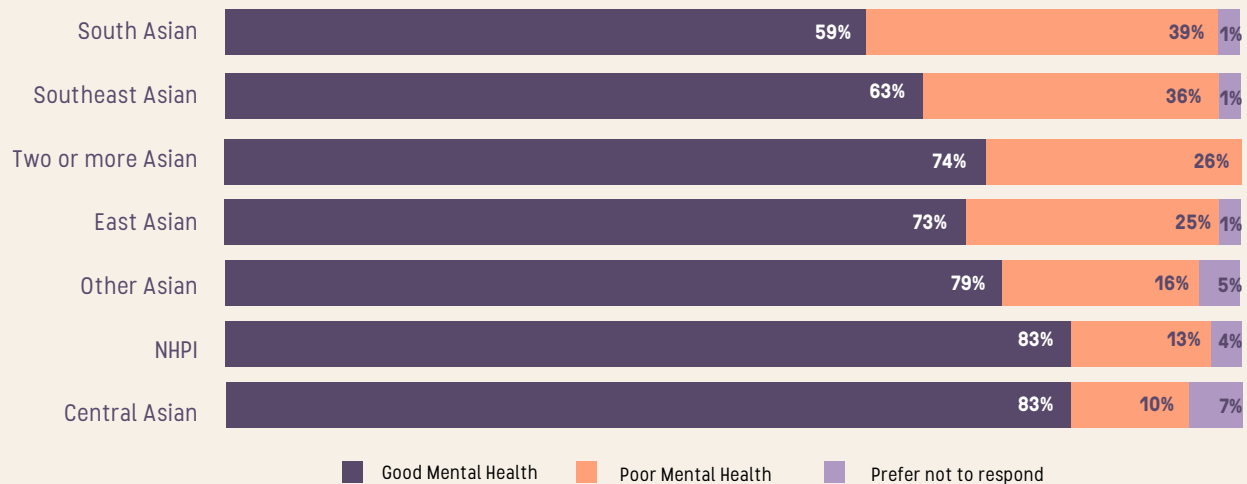
Recent data shows the disproportionate impact of the mental health crisis on AANHPI youth.

- Suicide was the leading cause of death nationwide for AANHPI young people ages 15–24 according to a 2022 report by the Center for American Progress.
- Mental Health America reports that 1 out of every 10 AANHPI young adults struggle with major depression.
- The Trevor Project found that 40% of AAPI LGBTQ youth seriously considered suicide in 2021, including 49% of Pacific Islander/Native Hawaiian youth, 47% of Korean youth, 41% of Filipino youth, 39% of Indian youth, 31% of Vietnamese youth, and 29% of Chinese youth.¹⁴
- At the same time, research finds that AANHPI students are the least likely to receive mental health care of all racial and ethnic groups, with roughly 80% of cases going untreated.¹⁵

Within this study, AANHPI girls and gender-expansive youth were asked about their mental well-being. While over 1 in 4 AANHPI girls and gender-expansive youth report having more bad days than good or poor mental health (27%), taking a closer look at this by disaggregating the data reveals more complexity.

- Almost 90% of Central Asian girls and gender-expansive youth report having more good days than bad.
- Over one-third of South Asian girls and Southeast Asian girls and gender-expansive youth report having more bad days than good or poor mental health (39% and 36%, respectively).
- A quarter of girls and gender-expansive youth who identify as East Asian or as being two or more Asian ethnicities report more bad days than good days (25%).

Survey Respondents Mental Health by AANHPI Regional Ethnic Group



Source: AANHPI Girls Lead Survey, n=2,275.

Given the differences among responses from different ethnic groups, those supporting the mental health and well-being of AANHPI girls and gender-expansive youth through this national mental health crisis will need to ensure that culturally responsive practices include understanding diverse AANHPI ethnicities. A deeper look at mental health by ethnicity can help determine the kind of support that programs and systems can provide.

¹⁴ The Trevor Project, 'The Mental Health and Well-Being of Asian American and Pacific Islander (AAPI) LGBTQ Youth', 2022.

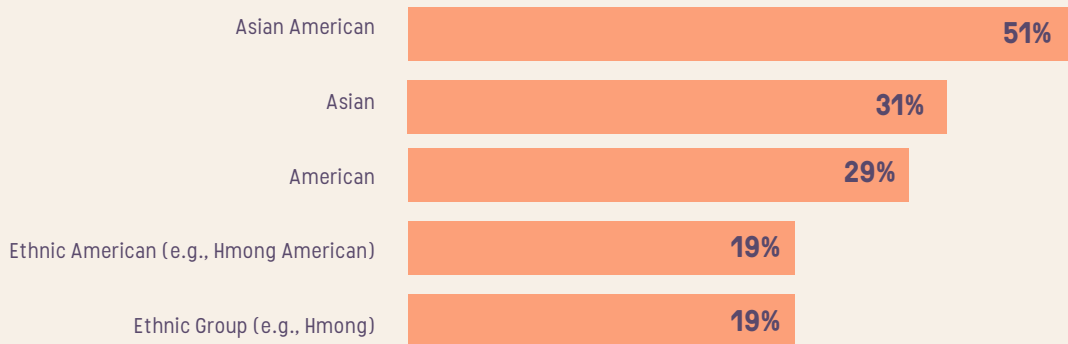
¹⁵ Lipson, S. K., et al., Journal of Adolescent Health, Vol. 63, No. 3, 2018.

AANHPI GIRLS AND GENDER-EXPANSIVE YOUTH AND THEIR IDENTITY

Most AANHPI girls and gender-expansive youth in the survey identified being AANHPI or American as important to their identity (94%). At the same time, AANHPI girls and gender-expansive youth vary in the ways they see themselves as AANHPI within the United States. While half of AANHPI girls and gender-expansive youth identify as Asian American (51%), almost a third identify as Asian (31%).

How AANHPI Girls and Gender-Expansive Youth Identify

People of Asian descent in the U.S. use different terms to describe themselves. In general, do you think of yourself as...



Note: Percentages might total over 100% because respondents could select multiple responses.
Source: AANHPI Girls Lead Survey, n=2,275.

Considering youths' generational immigrant status, the differences in self-identifying as American are stark. While over half of 1st-generation AANHPI girls and gender-expansive youth identify as American (52%), 14% of 1.5-generation, 24% 2nd-generation, and 31% of 3rd-generation AANHPI girls and gender-expansive youth identify as American. Further research is needed to understand 1st-generation identity development, assimilation, and the implications for leadership development among AANHPI girls and gender-expansive youth.

AANHPI Identity By Generational Immigrant Status

In general, do you think of yourself as...	1st generation	1.5 generation	2nd generation	3rd generation
Asian American	25%	49%	68%	60%
Ethnic group (e.g, Hmong)	11%	28%	19%	18%
Ethnic American (e.g, Hmong American)	7%	23%	23%	22%
Asian	15%	43%	39%	32%
American	52%	14%	24%	31%

Note: Percentages might total over 100% because respondents could select multiple responses.
Source: AANHPI Girls Lead Survey, n=2,175.

PHOTOVOICE AND INTERVIEW PARTICIPANTS

- ✿ When AANHPI girls and gender-expansive youth were asked to identify themselves in interviews and photovoice submissions, they chose various ways to do so. Some shared their ethnic background, generational immigrant status, gender, educational status, and regional location. Others noted their age, racial background, sexual orientation, religion, interests, and socioeconomic status.
- ✿ Participants also highlighted how these different aspects of their identity intersect to influence their experiences and identity: "I also am bisexual. I am out, so that curves my experience as a woman and a brown woman, and a young brown woman." Many participants discussed how different parts of their identities may stand out more to others than to themselves: "I identify as biracial.... I'll always put both, but I still feel like I've leaned in more to my Asian identity just because that feels more apparent in the way I'm perceived and just like, my identity."

Other relevant demographic information about the interview and photovoice participants include the following:

- Regionally, most participants came from the Eastern part of the U.S. (14). Ten came from the South, six from the West, and two from the Midwest.
- Most participants were from urban or suburban areas (19 and 12 participants, respectively). One respondent was from a rural area.
- Slightly more than half of the participants (17 participants) identified as 2nd-generation, while 14 are 1st/1.5-generation. One respondent identified as 3rd-generation.
- Twenty-seven participants identified as girls, while five identified as gender expansive.

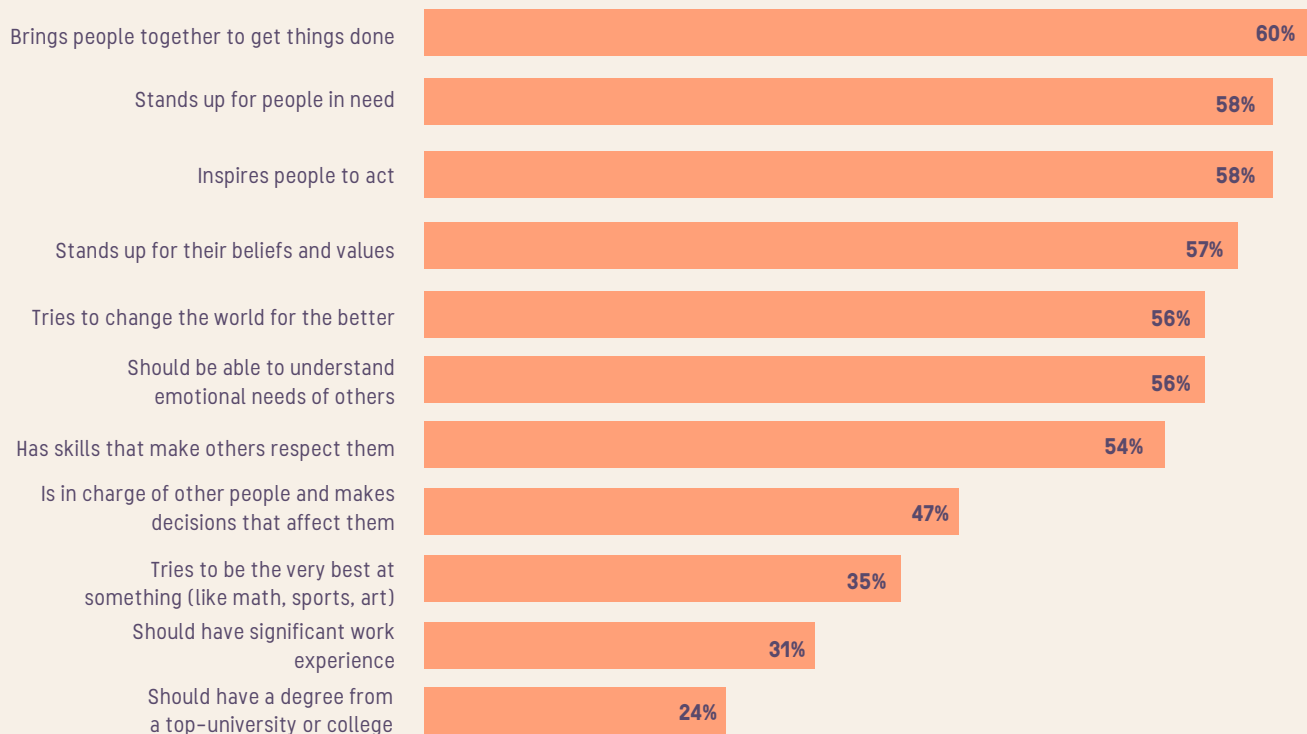
DEFINING LEADERS: THE SYMBIOTIC RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN COMMUNITY AND LEADERSHIP

According to the youth survey, more than 3 in 4 AANHPI girls and gender-expansive youth identify as leaders or aspire to leadership in the future (77%). Supporting leadership in the lives of AANHPI girls and gender-expansive youth necessitates understanding how it is defined in these communities, the core values of leadership, and what motivates AANHPI girls and gender-expansive youth to practice leadership.

AANHPI girls and gender-expansive youths' **definition of leadership is tied to their connection and relationship to others** (e.g., standing up for others and inspiring others). AANHPI girls and gender-expansive youth report viewing a leader as someone who connects and unites (60%), advocates (58%), and inspires people to act (58%).

Leadership Definition

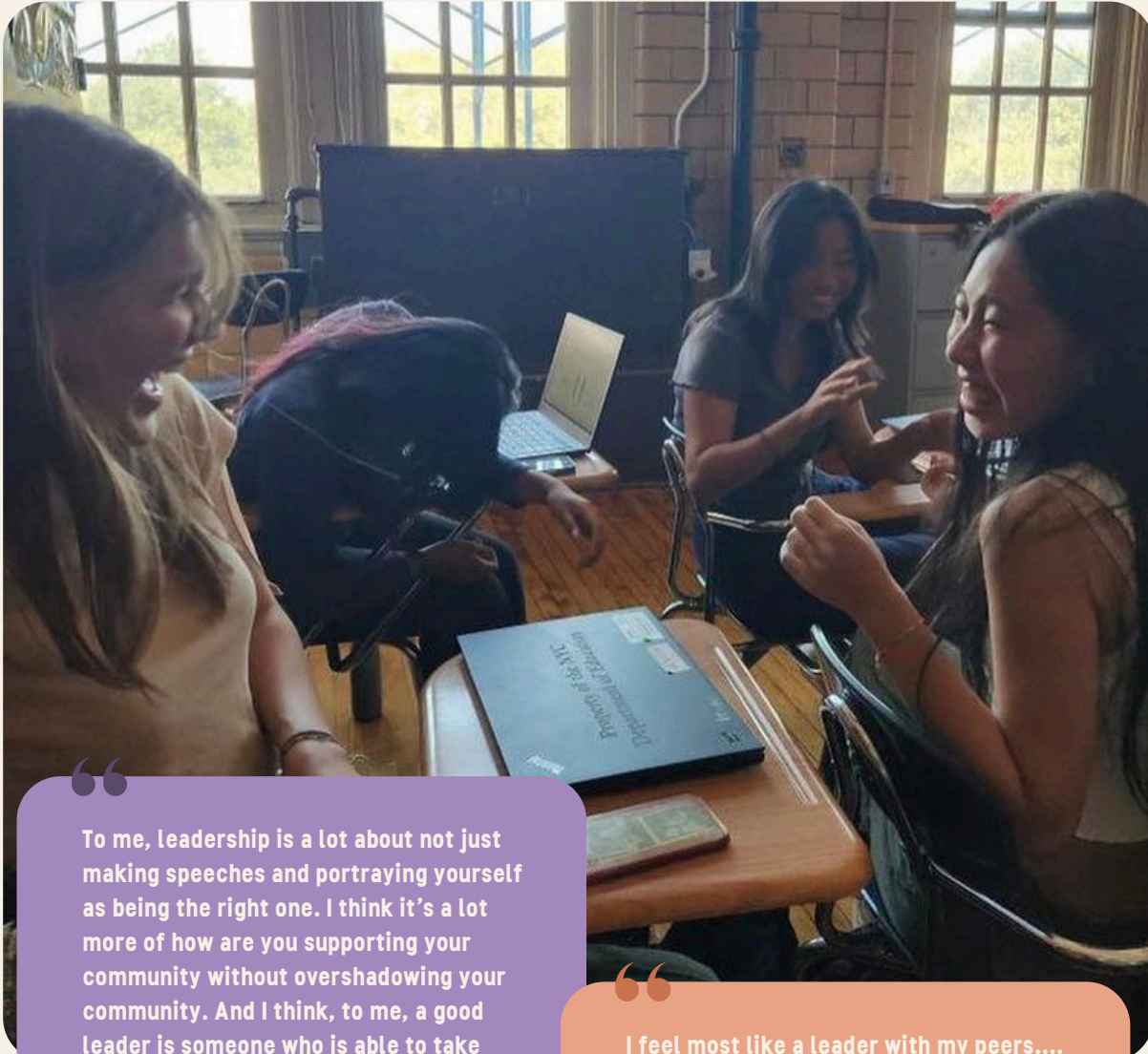
A leader is someone who...



Note: Percentages might total over 100% because respondents could select multiple responses.
Source: AANHPI Girls Lead Survey, n=2,275.

LEADERSHIP AS DEFINED AS TAKING INITIATIVE TO SUPPORT AND UPLIFT THE COMMUNITY

❁ The YRC conducted interviews and received photovoice submissions to explore further how AANHPI girls and gender-expansive youth understand leadership and the role of the community in leadership development. As these interview participants discuss, AANHPI girls and gender-expansive youths' aspirations and ambitions for leadership roles are not only connected to opportunities and success, but also to how leadership furthers their values and the interests and welfare of their communities.



“

To me, leadership is a lot about not just making speeches and portraying yourself as being the right one. I think it's a lot more of how are you supporting your community without overshadowing your community. And I think, to me, a good leader is someone who is able to take initiative for the group of people that they identify with without speaking for every single person in that group, without saying like, 'Oh, yeah, this is exactly what everyone feels.' So, I feel like that's the two aspects that are really important to me.

- 18-22 years old, South Asian, 1st-generation girl/woman

”

“

I feel most like a leader with my peers.... Whether it's collaborating on projects, guiding discussions, or sharing insights, I've noticed that my peers often look to me for direction. It's not about being the loudest voice but rather about fostering a positive and collaborative environment. This leadership role has taught me the importance of teamwork and the value of encouraging others.

- 14-17 years old, East Asian, 1st-generation girl/woman

”

DEFINING COMMUNITY: FAMILY, EXTRACURRICULAR ACTIVITIES AND SCHOOL

According to the youth survey, AANHPI girls and gender-expansive youth consider family, extracurricular activities, and school as their top three areas of community.

Definition of Community

When you think of community, which of these count as community for you?



Note: Percentages might total over 100% because respondents could select multiple responses.
Source: AANHPI Girls Lead Survey, n=2,275.

✿ Diving deeper, the YRC spoke more in-depth with AANHPI girls and gender-expansive youth about who they consider community, including school and family, and people they can relate to or have shared values within a particular neighborhood or region. The descriptions of their communities were multifaceted, but commonly point to community being supportive spaces where AANHPI girls and gender-expansive youth feel emotionally safe to explore and develop their multiple identities.



“ I feel most at home within communities of color at school. They’ve consistently been the ones who supported and motivated me to grow into a better version of myself while accepting me for who I am and the multiple identities I hold. ”
- 18-22 years old, Southeast Asian, 2nd-generation girl/woman

“ I kind of gravitate towards my family, because that’s who I felt the most close with, and where I felt most represented. So I would say my family has been a huge part of my identity, and the community that I feel most close to. ”
- 18-22 years old, East Asian, 2nd-generation girl/woman

✿ Participants also discussed the symbiotic relationship between community and leadership—specifically, how their community often motivated them to pursue leadership. More specifically, their communities were where they found and grew confident in their voices, and they wanted to create change within those communities. At the same time, participants also felt their communities’ expectation that they be change-makers and exercise the power of their voices. Some interviewees thought it was a responsibility they had to carry based on what they learned in school affinity groups, interest groups, or groups they were organizing with.

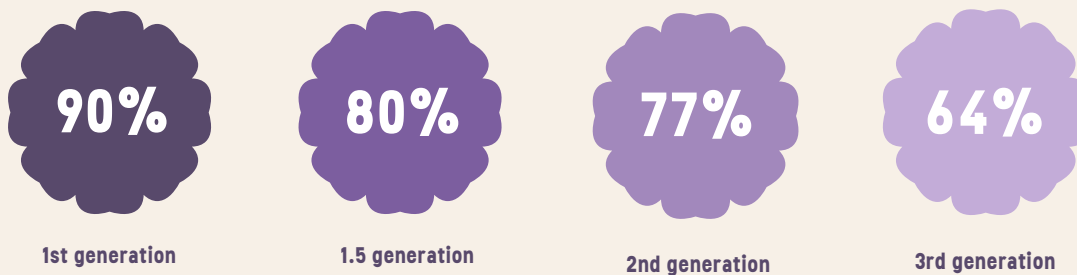
BARRIERS TO LEADERSHIP

Understanding the barriers to leadership for AANHPI girls and gender-expansive youth provides insight into the unique challenges these youth face.

According to survey responses, 71% of AANHPI girls and gender-expansive youth report witnessing racial bias towards students of color from teachers. When looking at respondents by generation, a consistent relationship exists between youths' experience of bias and their generational status. First-generation AANHPI girls and gender-expansive youth overwhelmingly state they experienced negative bias (90%), while 64% of 3rd-generation AANHPI girls and gender-expansive youth feel similarly.

Bias by Immigrant Generation

Have you ever encountered negative bias or unfair treatment because of your race or ethnicity?



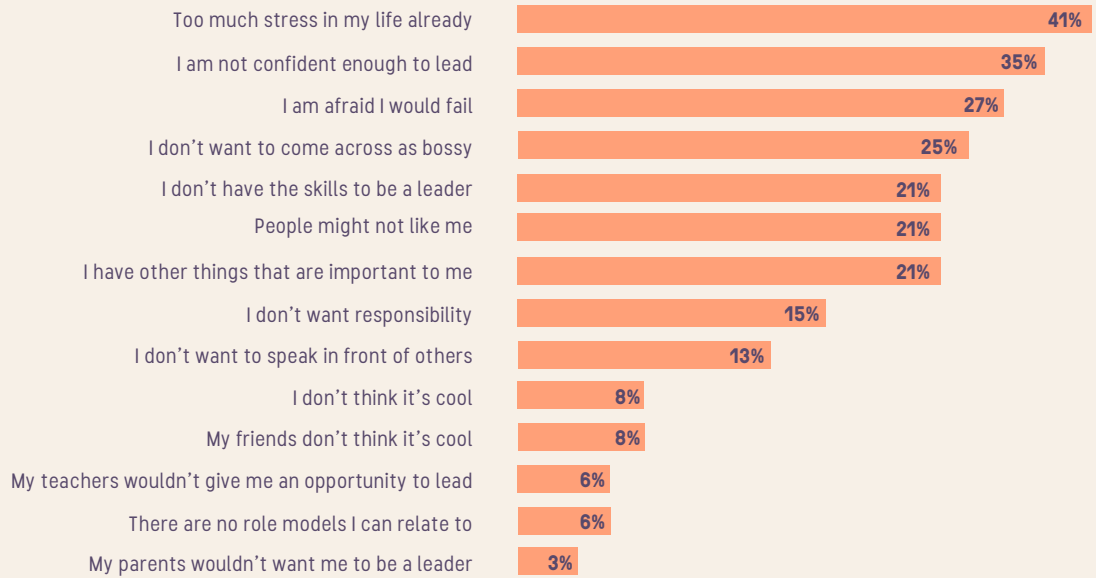
Source: AANHPI Girls Lead Survey, n=2,050.

BIAS, STRESS AND FAMILIAL EXPECTATIONS

According to youth survey respondents, the top reasons why AANHPI girls and gender-expansive youth do not pursue leadership include having too much stress in their lives already (41%), not feeling confident enough to lead (35%), and being afraid to fail (27%). Too much stress was the top response across all demographic categories of ethnicity, generation immigrant status, adoptee status, reported disabilities, and sexual orientation. Further exploration is needed to understand what particular stressors keep AANHPI girls and gender-expansive youth from wanting to be leaders, to get to the root cause of these stressors, and then to effectively develop ways to address these root causes.

Barriers to Leadership

Which of the following reasons best explain why you might NOT want to be a leader?



Note: Percentages might total over 100 % because respondents could select multiple responses.
Source: AANHPI Girls Lead Survey, n=2,275.

While school serves as one of the top three areas that are considered community for AANHPI girls and gender-expansive youth, it is also within the top three areas where they experience negative bias, either from a peer or from teachers or school administration.

Top Three Places AANHPI Girls and Gender-Expansive Youth Report Negative Bias

In which of the following social settings have you encountered bias or unfair treatment because of your race/ethnicity?

At school, from a classmate or peer	38%
At school, from teachers or school admin	29%
Online, on social media	26%

Note: Percentages might total over 100 % because respondents could select multiple responses.
Source: AANHPI Girls Lead Survey, n=2,275.



The YRC spoke with AANHPI girls and gender-expansive youth to further discuss the barriers they face in their own words:

Familial Obligations and Expectations



Yes, because of parents' needs and wants...we put their needs over us, because you feel the need to give back to them because of... how much they have done, especially as an immigrant. I think, sometimes, you do...For me, I do feel the need to put their needs over myself, and that hinders it because, sometimes, the leadership that I choose is not the ones that I want.

- 18 - 22 years old, East Asian, 2nd-generation girl/woman



Gender Stereotypes



When I was growing up, [my mom and grandmother] never really encouraged working beyond the once-you-get-married timeframe.

- 18 - 22 years old, East Asian, 2nd-generation girl/woman



Racial/Ethnic Stereotypes



'I feel like a lot of people just have a stereotype of the role that Asian American people should play, which is sort of a right-hand man or someone who can provide for other people as opposed to a leader.'

- 14-18 years old, mixed AANHPI woman



Community Isolation



'When I'm home, I still feel a little bit of, 'Yes, this community is so strong,' but it's also so individual and it's so isolated in the sense of it isolates itself. And so, I think that's something where I've been hindered because I've only ever seen this community.... And so, I feel like until I came to college, that was something that was blocked in my vision.'

- 18-22 years old, East Asian, 2nd-generation girl/woman



Lack of Pan-Asian Solidarity



'I feel like at least where I have been, it's been very centered on us, this is our community, this is who we're representing. And so, I feel like that's hindered me in the sense of I haven't always been able to see every other group that also needs people representing it to me or for them.'

- 18-22 years old, South Asian, 1st-generation girl/woman



STRUCTURAL BARRIERS TO LEADERSHIP¹⁶



According to YRC findings, AANHPI girls and gender-expansive youth spoke about structural barriers, or external factors that impact AANHPI communities and complicate leadership opportunities. These include discrimination and the geographical and cultural separation between the country they live in and the country and culture their family knows. They also listed lack of or inadequate representation in the media, politics, and leadership positions as a structural issue that makes connecting to their cultural identity and uplifting their community more challenging.

‘There’s many times where I end up in a room where I look around and I’m surrounded by just White colleagues. So I feel like sometimes that makes it a little bit.... Again, that feeling of, **‘Oh, I don’t know if I should speak out. I don’t want to rock the boat too much** since I’m coming in here and don’t necessarily have the same lived experiences as everyone else.’ – 18–22 years old, Southeast Asian, 1st-generation girl/woman



The YRC also cite marginalization and discrimination as common themes throughout many participants’ experiences, which they reported contributed to a sense of oppression and demoralization. The model minority myth is a stereotype that portrays AANHPI as universally successful, hardworking, and academically gifted. This stereotype can create a feeling of invisibility, of not being seen as an individual with individual strengths and challenges. The common tendency to see AANHPI as a monolithic group masks the nuanced experiences that need closer attention. As one interviewee stated, ‘ Schools and institutions and higher powers, they tend to **overgeneralize our struggles and our experiences**, and tend to not pay attention.’ Because of these issues, participants reported feeling reduced to a single identity or stereotype.



Another structural barrier participants shared with the YRC stemmed from internal expectations and prejudices from their family and their family’s culture, such as patriarchal family structures and homophobia.

¹⁶ Structural barriers are obstacles that ‘collectively affect a group disproportionately and perpetuate or maintain stark disparities in outcomes.’ The YRC defined structural barriers as external factors, such as policies and practices that disadvantage AANHPI girls and gender-expansive youth.

HOW COMMUNITY SHAPES AND AFFIRMS LEADERSHIP



A photo of youth and elders practicing an intergenerational dance, through which youth and elders were able to come together despite challenges like communication.

- 14-17 year old, East Asian, 1.5-generation girl/woman

- ❁ AANHPI girls and gender-expansive youths practice and develop leadership in inclusive, supportive spaces they see as community. YRC interview participants stated that informal expressions of leadership, such as caretaking for a younger sibling, should be valued as equal to formal leadership, such as being the president of a school club.
- ❁ Many interviewees noted that role models within the community exemplify the passion and motivation they also want to practice. Role models also exemplify for participants that leadership is not an abstract concept, but something both aspirational and attainable.

“
And then, with [Southeast Asian-led organization]...it was a very empowering community, especially because the founder herself. she just really embodies this really strong passion. It made me feel like, 'Oh, this is something that's worth it to me and I do want to learn more about my history and my heritage and uncover this education that I didn't know that I wanted to uncover or didn't even know a lot of it existed.' I would say my experience with [this organization] has been very gratifying and it was very empowering.

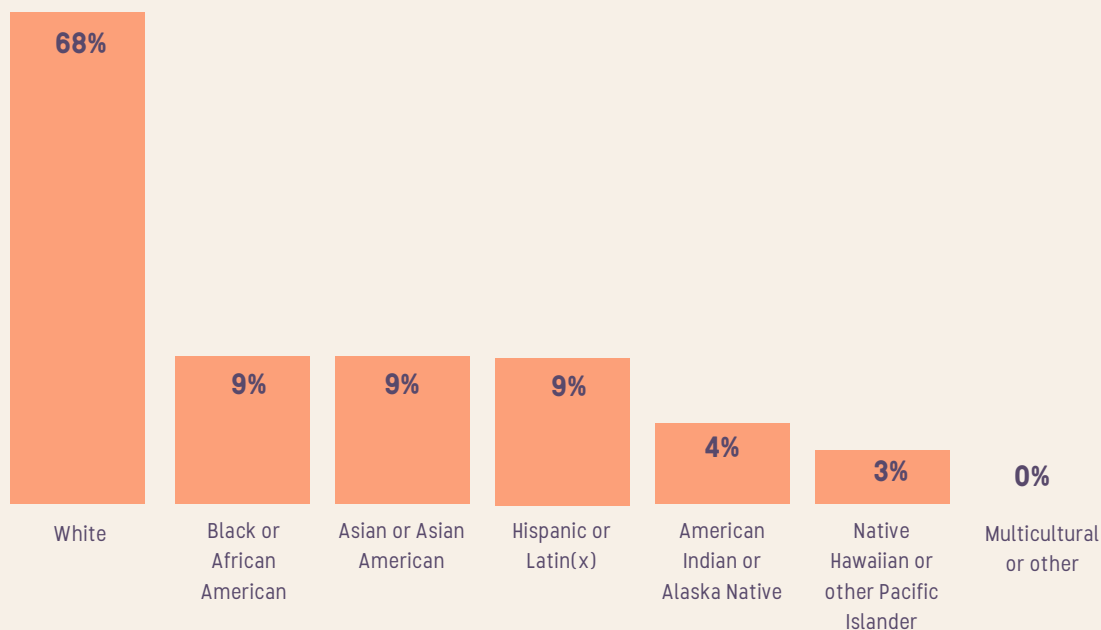
-18 - 22 years old, Southeast Asian, 1st generation girl/woman

- ❁ Numerous participants spoke about family support building their confidence. An interviewee discussed that her family and AANHPI community gave her “the tools for leadership that you can apply to other situations by making you feel confident in yourself and making you feel like, I don't know, just that you deserve to be in the room with these other people, which I think is a big part of getting into a leadership position.”
- ❁ Finally, interviewees discussed how the collective effort to overcome community challenges motivated them to pursue change. A participant shared their motivation when they thought about racism toward Asians during COVID-19: “I feel like it did give me some motivation like, 'Hey, these are the problems in the society that affect you' and therefore kind of want to change it more.”

**TEACHERS' PERSPECTIVES:
LEADERSHIP IN THE CLASSROOM**

From August to September 2023, teachers across the United States and U.S. territories were invited to participate in an online survey gauging their perspectives on leadership development for Asian American, Native Hawaiian, and Pacific Islander girls and gender-expansive youth. The two research goals of this teacher survey were to explore 1) how teachers perceive supports and barriers to leadership for AANHPI girls and gender-expansive youth, and 2) how systems and institutions support or serve as barriers to leadership for AANHPI girls and gender-expansive youth. Complete responses were collected from 529 teachers. The teachers' survey provides an adult and institutional perspective on AANHPI girls and gender-expansive youth leadership development to complement what youth say. It lends insight into better providing support within an adult-led/institutional context.

Survey Respondents by Race/Ethnicity



Source: AANHPI Girls Lead Teacher Survey, n=528.

More than two-thirds of teacher respondents identify as White (68%), which is slightly less than 80% of public school teachers nationally.¹⁷ Compared to U.S. teacher demographics, there is more representation from Asian or Asian American teacher survey respondents (9% in our study vs. 2% nationally) and Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander teachers (3% in our study vs. less than 1% nationally). Black teachers in our study are represented at the same rate nationally – 6%.

TEACHERS DEFINING LEADERSHIP

Most teachers focused on authority, decision-making, and commanding respect when defining leadership. However, while these authoritative features were the most selected, well over half of teachers also saw features like community and vision of being a change agent as being critical. Most youth and teachers agreed that "A leader is someone who brings people together to get things done" (60% and 63%, respectively). The biggest discrepancy between youths' and teachers' perspectives on what makes a leader was whether they agreed that a leader is someone who 'is in charge of other people and makes decisions that affect them' (47% of youth vs. 73% of teachers).

¹⁷ National Center for Education Statistics. Characteristics of Public School Teachers. Condition of Education. U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, 2023. <https://nces.ed.gov/programs/coe/indicator/clr>.

TEACHER-CITED BARRIERS TO LEADERSHIP

Forty-nine percent of educators agreed that the top barrier among the six key barriers AANHPI girls and gender-expansive youth face was the lack of faculty support. The top three barriers also include the lack of parental support (24%) and the lack of role models (10%). It is worth noting that only 3% of AANHPI girls and gender-expansive youth survey respondents cited lack of parental support as a barrier. As discussed by AANHPI girls and gender-expansive youth, familial expectations and family obligations serve as barriers to leadership, not the lack of family support.

When asked about additional barriers that students face in their school, the top three barriers teachers agreed with most were 1) racist beliefs about AANHPI students' leadership abilities, 2) sexist beliefs about girls/gender-expansive youths' leadership abilities, and 3) lack of confidence. Lack of confidence (27%) and the stigma of acting 'White' was the third-most selected reason teachers agreed with, which mirrors the 35% of youth who spoke about the lack of confidence as a main barrier to their ability to develop as leaders.

Top Additional Barriers to Leadership for AANHPI Girls and Gender-Expansive Youth, According to Teachers

Top barriers facing AANHPI girls/gender-expansive youth in schools	% of teachers
Lack of faculty support	49%
Lack of parental support	24%
Lack of adult role models of same race in leadership positions	10%

Note: Percentages might total over 100% because respondents could select multiple responses.

Source: 2023 AANHPI Teachers' Survey, n=483.

Top Additional Barriers to Leadership

Barrier in schools	% of educators who agree
Racist beliefs about AANHPI students' leadership abilities	40%
Sexist beliefs about girls'/gender-expansive youths' leadership abilities	30%
Lack of confidence	27%
Stigma of 'acting white' or trying too hard	27%

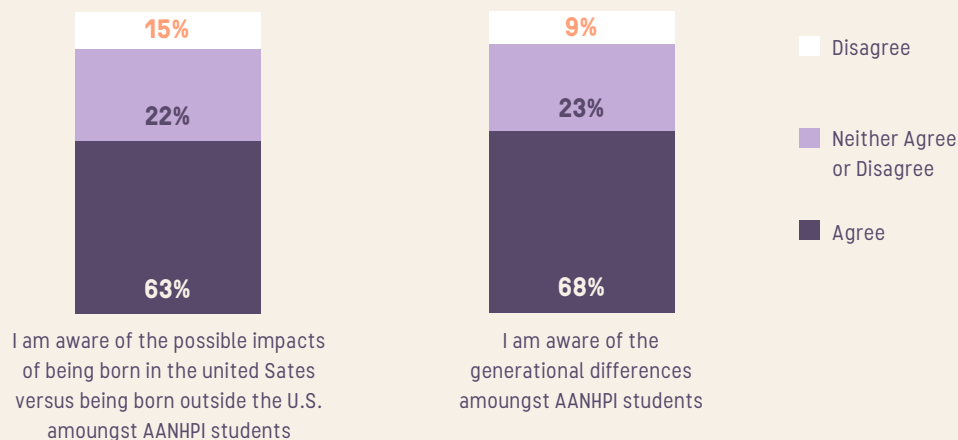
Note: Percentages might total over 100% because respondents could select multiple responses.
Source: 2023 AANHPI Teachers' Survey, n=529.

SCHOOL AS COMMUNITY AND THE ROLE OF TEACHERS IN LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

Recognizing school as an important area of community for most AANHPI girls and gender-expansive youth, the survey asked teachers' perspectives on the role that schools and teachers play as a site of community for youth. The findings reveal that most teachers see themselves as part of their students' community (68%); similarly, 65% consider school an important part of their students' community.

About two-thirds of teachers (63%) know the possible impacts of AANHPI students being born outside the United States and of differences in immigrant generation (68%). The potential implications for AANHPI students being born outside the U.S. would be an area for further exploration and research.

Educator Awareness of Generational Differences for AANHPI Students



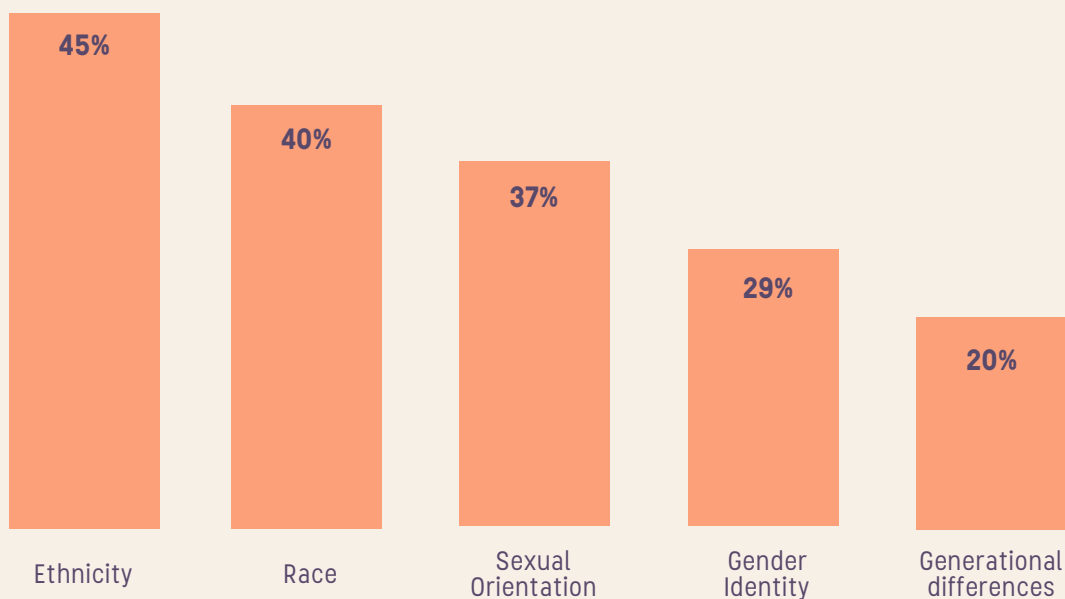
Source: 2023 AANHPI Teachers' Survey, n=521.

When translating this awareness into teaching about these aspects of identity, however, there seems to be a disconnect. Far fewer teachers are discussing characteristics of identity, such as race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, and generational differences. Fewer than half of teachers surveyed indicate that they talk about different facets of racial and cultural identity in their classroom, with ethnicity discussed the most (45% of teachers), followed by race (40%) and sexual orientation (37%). Gender identity (29%) and generational differences (20%) are the least discussed in the classroom.

Given teachers' high rates of awareness, further research would be needed to understand the barriers to talking about these important aspects of identity in the classroom. It is not clear from these quantitative results if it is lack of practice and confidence, or lack of permission in the midst of our current educational climate, in which discussions about gender, for example, may feel fraught.

Classroom Discussions on Identity

Which of the following facets of racial and cultural identities have you discussed in your classroom?



Source: 2023 AANHPI Teachers' Survey, n=529.

Teachers were asked about their role in and possible solutions to building confidence in AANHPI girls and gender-expansive youth, which is a top barrier to leadership according to girls and gender-expansive youth and their teachers. The three solutions they provided include:

- Creating and maintaining a safe, supportive, and inclusive environment for AANHPI girls and gender-expansive youth;
- Promoting and celebrating diversity and visibility for AANHPI girls and gender-expansive youth; and
- Providing opportunities for AANHPI girls and gender-expansive youth to build and develop leadership skills, such as respect, inclusion for others, and confidence.



CONCLUSION

Most AANHPI girls and gender-expansive youth see themselves as leaders or are aspiring to leadership. For this identity and aspiration to thrive, we must create the conditions for them to lead. These conditions include expanding our understanding of leadership as something rooted in culture and lived experience; learning and respecting what motivates leadership; acknowledging and addressing the internal and structural barriers they face; and leaning into the potential for school to be a source of community by addressing discrimination, especially by equipping adults with the skills and confidence to talk about all aspects of AANHPI identities, especially generational immigration status.

GLOSSARY

AANHPI: An abbreviated acronym for people who identify as Asian American, Native Hawaiian, and Pacific Islander, a population of more than 24 million people with roots in East Asia, Southeast Asia, the Indian subcontinent, Hawaii, Samoa, Guam, Fiji, Tonga, the Marshall Islands, the Northern Mariana Islands, and other Pacific islands.

AANHPI monolith: Refers to AANHPI individuals often being seen as part of a single, homogenous group with uniform beliefs and experiences, oversimplifying the diverse identities and perspectives within over 50 distinct ethnic groups and over 100 languages.

AANHPI Regional Ethnicity:¹⁸ This report refers to ethnic identities as AANHPI regional ethnicities as an aggregate measure of where people are from in Asia and the Pacific. The following groupings are used in this study to represent the specific ethnicities represented within these categories:

Central Asians: Afghan, Armenian, Azerbaijani, Georgians, Kazakh, Kyrgyz, Mongolian, Tajik, Turkmen, Uzbek.

East Asians: Chinese, Japanese, Korean, Okinawan, Taiwanese, Tibetan.

Native Hawaiians and Pacific Islanders (in the U.S. Jurisdictions and Territories): Carolinian, Chamorro, Chuukese, Fijian, Guamanian, Hawaiian, Kosraean, Marshallese, Native Hawaiian, Niuean, Palauan, Pohnpeian, Papua New Guinean, Samoan, Tokelauan, Tongan, Yapese.

Southeast Asians: Bruneian, Burmese, Cambodian, Filipino, Hmong, Indonesian, Laotian, Malaysian, Mien, Singaporean, Timorese, Thai, Vietnamese.

South Asians: Bangladeshi, Bhutanese, Indian, Maldivians, Nepali, Pakistani, Sri Lankan.

West Asians: This is a contested term, most people from the region do not self-identify as such. West Asia is typically referred to as the Middle East; and geographically includes the countries of Bahrain, Iran, Iraq, Israel, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Oman, Palestine, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Syria, Turkey (straddles Europe and Asia) United Arab Emirates, and Yemen.

Collectivism: A term associated with ideas of solidarity, collective action, cooperation, social responsibility, and the pursuit of the common good among people with shared interests, identities, or goals.

Gender-expansive youth: This term refers to individuals whose gender identity or expression goes beyond the traditional male-female binary. These individuals may identify as non-binary, genderqueer, genderfluid, agender, or any other identity that does not fit within the binary categories of male and female.

¹⁸ <https://www.api-gbv.org/resources/census-data-api-identities/>

Generational immigrant status: Refers to the position of an individual or a family within a particular generation's immigration history. The terms "1st generation," "2nd generation," and so on are commonly used to describe this status. Here's a breakdown of what each term typically means:

1st Generation: This term refers to individuals who were born in a foreign country and later immigrated to a new country. They are the first generation in their family to settle in the new country.

1.5 Generation: This term refers to individuals born outside of the new country who immigrated before age 15.

2nd Generation: Individuals who are born in a new country to immigrant parents are considered 2nd generation. They are often referred to as the children of immigrants.

3rd Generation: The 3rd generation includes individuals who are born to 2nd generation parents in the new country. They are the grandchildren of immigrants.

Girl: We define a girl as any female-identifying individual between the ages of 14 and 22, including cisgender girls, femmes, and transgender girls.

Intersectionality: A term coined by Kimberlé Crenshaw, intersectionality highlights the complexity of identity and the need to consider multiple dimensions of social inequality when examining issues such as discrimination, inequality, and social justice. It emphasizes the importance of recognizing and addressing overlapping systems of privilege and oppression to achieve more inclusive and equitable societies. For example, a Black woman may experience discrimination differently from a White woman or a Black man, as she faces intersecting forms of racism and sexism. Intersectionality offers a framework for investigating how multiple aspects of an individual's identity, such as age and gender, intersect and influence their experiences and challenges.¹⁹

Leadership: At Girls Leadership, leadership is defined as making others and situations better as a result of your presence, and making that impact last in your absence. We practice this at interpersonal, intrapersonal, and societal levels.

Photovoice: Photovoice is a participatory research and advocacy method that uses photography to document individuals' experiences and share their perspectives. For this project, the YRC provided cameras to participants, who then took photographs of their community and leadership ideas. Photovoice aims to give marginalized groups a voice, promote dialogue, and foster social and policy changes based on the insights gained from the visual narratives created by participants.

Structural barriers: According to the Urban Institute, 'Structural barriers are obstacles that collectively affect a group disproportionately and perpetuate or maintain stark disparities in outcomes'.²⁰ The YRC defined structural barriers as external factors, such as policies and practices that disadvantage AANHPI girls and youth.

¹⁹ Crenshaw, Kimberlé. 'Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence Against Women of Color' *Stanford Law Review* Vol. 43:6, 1991; Cole, Elizabeth. 'Intersectionality and Research in Psychology' in *American Psychologist*, 2009.

²⁰ Urban Institute, 'Structural Barriers to Racial Equity in Pittsburgh Expanding Economic Opportunity for African American Men and Boys', 2015.

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