

ASIAN AMERICAN
Imagery Toolkit

INCLUSIVE VISUAL STORYTELLING

gettyimages® × 
ADMERA ASIA

CHANGE THE IMAGES, CHANGE PERCEPTIONS, **CHANGE LIVES.**

Asian American & Pacific Islanders (AAPI) are the fastest growing demographic in the U.S. Through waves of immigration, political reform, economic and artistic contributions, and leadership across industries, they are an integral part of America's past, present, and future. Yet, there is still an ocean of untold stories about the AAPI community, stories that are denied entry into the chronicles of American culture.

Whether by **misrepresentation or underrepresentation**, the images that capture AAPI experiences are falling short of communicating these rich and diverse stories. In fact, **35% of media representations of AAPI people portray at least one stereotype.** AAPI people are frequently treated as unassimilable afterthoughts in American visual storytelling — and the violence against AAPI communities is undergirded by this narrative scarcity.

Getty Images and ADMERASIA have come together to inspire brands, agencies, and creatives to make **inclusive visual choices** by fueling the creation and circulation of imagery which is all at once powerful, reflective, and genuine in its depictions of the entire Asian American spectrum.*

Authentic visual storytelling not only helps brands connect with Asian American audiences, but also **changes the way people of Asian descent are seen** in American culture. We see these guidelines as a starting point in the mission to expand and deepen Asian American narratives.

*Acknowledging the diversity within the AAPI community, these guidelines will attend to Asian Americans in visual storytelling, as Pacific Islander communities have their own experiences and cultural nuances which deserve distinct attention.

CHANGE THE IMAGE, CHANGE PERCEPTIONS.

ASIAN AMERICAN REPRESENTATION IS **MORE IMPORTANT THAN EVER**

An **insidious stereotype** has emerged since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, blaming Asian Americans, directly and indirectly, for the spread of the virus. This accusation has fueled Asian **hate attacks**, which have increased in volume and severity since 2020.

10,900

Incidents of anti-Asian hate were reported to Stop AAPI Hate between March 2020 and December 2021

45%

Of Asian American adults have experienced an offensive or violent incident related to their ethnic/racial identity since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic

“

As picture editors, we need to apply what we know about the history of xenophobia and public health into our editorial decisions when it comes to stories about coronavirus.

”

– Kainaz Amaria, visual editor, Vox, 2020

CHANGE THE IMAGE, CHANGE PERCEPTIONS.

STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

Images capture more than a moment in time — they tell a story. Getty Images and ADMERASIA are dedicated to **connecting brands, agencies, and creatives to Asian American stories.**



Visuals impact the way we see ourselves—and the world around us. When inclusiveness and diversity are considered in imagery, authentic representation is created that can change perceptions, shift mindsets, and help create lasting connections between brands and consumers. We believe in the power of imagery.

Getty Images is the world's foremost visual experts—capturing, creating and preserving content to elevate visual communications everywhere. By identifying cultural shifts, spearheading trends and powering the creative economy, we fuel visual storytelling worldwide.

Getty Images, iStock, and Unsplash help businesses of all types and sizes connect and engage with their audiences in an increasingly digital and visual world.

When **ADMERASIA** opened its doors over 25 years ago, its Asian American founders, young, bright-eyed, and full of potential, had one mutual aspiration: to connect mainstream media to Asian Americans. They were pioneers in a landscape of exclusion, often told their mission was futile.

Flash forward to today, **ADMERASIA** services a multitude of Fortune 500 companies interested in connecting with Asian Americans. We've stayed true to our calling, telling authentic stories that come from a deep-rooted connection to our identities.

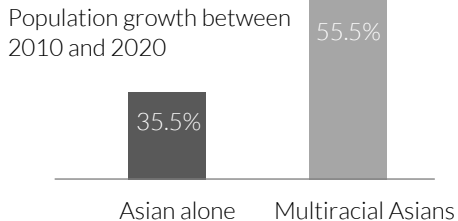
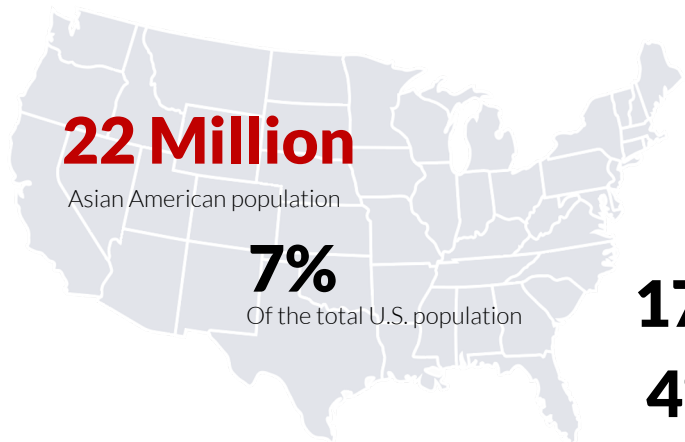
Yet, despite the work of agencies and brands dedicated to furthering the cause, and despite Asian America's essential role in America's story, we continue to be underrepresented across the media landscape, perpetuating the disconnect between brands and the Asian American community. It can be felt in every flat, uninspired ad, every poor, unthoughtful choice.

ADMERASIA continues to meet Asian America's demand for more inclusive, honest representation, to fill the void, and to start conversation that builds connection.

Who are
ASIAN AMERICANS?



Asian Americans are the fastest growing racial group in the U.S., but they are not a monolithic diaspora. Images need to depict the diversity of Asian American communities, acknowledging the nuances of Asian American identity.



\$1.3 Trillion
Asian American collective spending power projection for 2022

17% Of Asian Americans are multiracial

4% Of Asian American adults identify as LGBTQ+

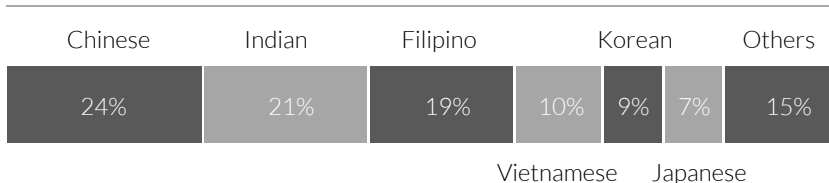
57% Of Asian Americans are foreign-born



27% Live in multi-generational households

20+
Ethnicities are represented under the Asian American umbrella

85%
Of the Asian American population is made up of six ethnicities



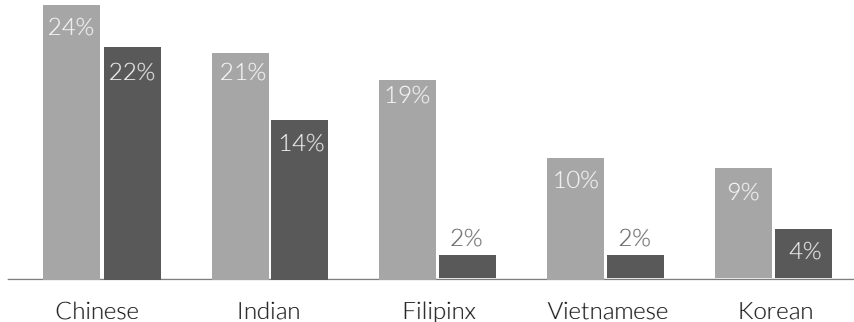
6+
Number of religions practiced by Asian Americans

WHO ARE ASIAN AMERICANS?

ASIAN AMERICAN ETHNIC GROUPS ARE **UNDERREPRESENTED** IN VISUALS

Although Asian Americans are seen in 12% of popular visuals – higher than the U.S.’s 7% population – many Asian American ethnic communities are **underrepresented** compared to their actual population.

■ % of Asian American population
■ % seen in visuals



Sources: ABC news

“

75% of group photos show Asians alongside other races and not among fellow Asians, **often the result of tokenism and inauthentic storytelling**

The way [AAPI] characters are pushed into the background of primarily white storylines is a reflection of the way Asians and Pacific Islanders are treated in America.”

– Pun Bandhu, Asian Performers Action Coalition

”

REPRESENTATION VS. REALITY

< 1%

Of visuals show **culturally-specific aspects of Asian American life**: ethnically specific foods, shopping in "ethnic" Asian grocery stores, cultural celebrations, people in traditional dress, homes with cultural objects, games/activities

< 1%

Of visuals feature Asians in relation to **American symbology**: voting, U.S. flag, BBQ, quintessential sports, rural/small town America, July 4

56%

Of Asian Americans say that their **race/ethnicity is central to their identity**

3%

Of **Department of Defense** civilian positions are filled by Asians

4.7%

Of the **U.S. military** are Asian, both domestic and foreign-born



WHO ARE ASIAN AMERICANS?

HOW VISUALS PERPETUATE STEREOTYPES

Two major stereotypes have dictated the depiction of Asians as the other in popular American media, and visuals have been central to building these stereotypes.

Model Minority

Successful / docile / submissive / unemotional / overachievers / unattractive / sexless / white-adjacent / never American enough

Visuals reinforce the “model minority” myth by showcasing Asian Americans predominantly as **workers** with little creative capacity, or as **tokens** within majority white spaces. Rather than celebrating identity and uniqueness in Asian American communities, visuals overwhelmingly highlight **sameness**.

“

In the popular imagination, Asian Americans are all high-achieving professionals. But in reality, this is the most economically divided group in the country, a tenuous alliance of people with roots from South Asia to East Asia to the Pacific Islands, from tech millionaires to service industry laborers.

— Cathy Park Hong, *Minor Feelings*

Perpetual Foreigner

Exotic / lecherous / hypersexual / threatening / disloyal / uneducated / unassimilable / disease-carrying / never American enough

While the perpetual foreigner myth is still prevalent in racist rhetoric and violent hate crimes, contemporary popular visuals have been more effective in showing Asian Americans as part of American society. However, decades of damaging portrayals of Asians as unwanted outsiders still leaves room for improvement, particularly in discussions related to public health and citizenship.

“

Historically, in both popular and scientific discourse, contagious disease has often been linked, in a blanket way, to population groups thought to be ‘outsiders’.

— Merlin Chowkwanyun, Columbia University’s Mailman School of Public Health

Opportunities for
**VISUAL
INCLUSIVITY**





Media can counter visual stereotypes by using images that reflect real Asian American demographics, across intersections of identity, and through expanding the kinds of scenarios in which Asian Americans are shown.

The following pages offer **guidelines for visual storytelling** about Asian Americans across various aspects of their identities, passions, and lived experiences.

*The data used reflects a detailed look at visuals featuring people of Asian ethnicities in the most popular Getty Images content in the U.S.

The current visual landscape

- Chinese, Indian, Vietnamese, Korean, and Filipinx Americans are underrepresented as compared to the demographic makeup of Asian Americans
- Asian Americans are primarily seen as tokens within multiracial groups, not among other Asian Americans with shared identities and experiences

Why This Is a Problem

As Asian American populations continue to grow and evolve, so should their visual representation. Ignoring population demographics underscores the disconnect between the general American perspective and reality

Tokenism, the practice of superficially adding one Asian American to a white or multiracial group—or solely representing Asian American identity through skin color and facial features—is easily identified as inauthentic





OPPORTUNITIES FOR VISUAL INCLUSIVITY

How We Improve

Include Asian Americans from a **variety of ethnicities and nationalities**

Asian Americans are not a monolith — they are made up of more than 20 ethnic origins, all of which have nuanced cultural traditions.

Less than
25%
of group photos
show Asian
Americans
together

The current visual landscape

- **<1%** of visuals featuring Asians show **culturally-specific foods**
- **4%** of Asians are shown doing **creative hobbies**, and just 3% show Asians in gaming
- **1%** of Asians are seen playing **sports** and **<2%** are seen doing **outdoor activities**
- **2%** depict Asians in traditional clothing, cultural dress, or fashion forward looks
- **<1%** of visuals featuring Asians show **familial or cultural celebrations**

Why This is a Problem

Food matters: **50%** of Asian Americans connect to Asian culture through cooking or eating

Asians are more likely to be portrayed at work or studying which directly feeds into the model minority stereotype

Gaming is popular among Asian Americans — 14% more likely to own a gaming console

Asian Americans have found success in the fashion industry, and desire syncretic fashion choices that meld “traditional” dress with contemporary sensibility





OPPORTUNITIES FOR VISUAL INCLUSIVITY

How We Improve

Enrich the portrayal of Asian Americans with **passion points**

As diverse as the ethnic makeup of Asian America is, so are its interests, activities, habits, and values.

Even among
visuals of Asians,
Indians are seen
in just

17%
of yoga images

The current visual landscape

- Asian Americans are more than **10x** as likely to be shown in white collar/professional occupations than blue collar or service sector jobs
- **<1%** of visuals show Asians in leadership positions

Why This is a Problem

Asian Americans have the highest income inequality of all racial groups — the richest Asian Americans earn **10.7x** more than that of lowest income Asian Americans

Nearly **1 in 5** Asian Americans earns money in the gig economy

23% of Asians work in STEM fields





OPPORTUNITIES FOR VISUAL INCLUSIVITY

How We Improve

Highlight Asian Americans across **socioeconomic strata**

*The model minority myth overrepresents Asian Americans as high-achieving, wealthy, STEM-associated professionals, but this does not reflect the community's disparate socioeconomic reality, encompassing everything from **corporate leadership to the service sector to small business.***

Just **4.5%**
of visuals
featuring Asians
show them in small
business
settings

The current visual landscape

- Asians with larger bodies are seen in less than **1%** of top visuals, and Asian women are **60%** more like to be seen with larger bodies than men
- Asians with larger bodies are often depicted working out or unhappy with their weight
- Skin conditions such as eczema, acne, or vitiligo are rarely seen

Why This is a Problem

“ Particularly within plus-size, **the lack of Asian representation is noticeable and I believe it is due to the stereotype of Asian women being petite** and of course, if that’s the only Asians we see, this stereotype is perpetuated and the pressure of Asian women to conform to the beauty ideal is greater. ”

— Michelle Elman, Body Positivity Activist

Tattoos have a complicated history in Asia and reactions may vary across ethnicities and age groups, but self-expression through tattoos, jewelry, and hair and makeup is especially popular among younger Asian Americans





OPPORTUNITIES FOR VISUAL INCLUSIVITY

How We Improve

Reflect a variety of **body shapes** and **types** as well as **skin colors** and **skin conditions**

Asian Americans have diverse body types, but visuals rely heavily on the same narrow array of features: petite, thin, light- and clear-skinned.

Less than
1%
of visuals feature
tattoos and
body piercings

The current visual landscape

- <1% of visuals include Asian American transgender adults
- Women are not only seen more often than men, but are **2x** as likely as men to be seen expressing care
- Women are more likely to be shown in service occupations than men
- Women are less likely to be seen demonstrating expertise than men

Why This is a Problem

71% of Asian American transgender adults have experienced everyday discrimination, more than 50% have experienced physical or verbal abuse, and **28%** have been fired from or denied a job

Asian American women continue to be locked out of executive leadership roles and still suffer from a gender pay gap of \$0.85 for every dollar





How We Improve

Display a spectrum of
gender identities
expressions

Gendered and racialized stereotypes do not accurately portray the expansive nature of gender identity and expression. Avoid reinforcing stereotypes based on gender.

Less than
1%
of visuals feature
transgender, non
binary, or
genderfluid Asian
Americans

The current visual landscape

- Romantic stories rarely picture Asian Americans: **9%** of visuals feature Asians exhibiting love, and **<5%** of Asians are seen in couples
- LGBTQ+ Asians are seen in **<1%** of visuals, and these tend to focus on limited scenarios, such as pride parades
- LGBTQ+ Asians are more likely to be depicted as young adults than as any other age group

Why This is a Problem

The model minority myth continues to perpetuate the perception that Asian Americans are cold, emotionless, and success-obsessed. ***However, marriage, familial and romantic relationships, and intimacy in Asian American communities are as diverse, heartfelt, and compassionate as their non-Asian counterparts***





OPPORTUNITIES FOR VISUAL INCLUSIVITY

How We Improve

Expand depictions of **sexual orientations** and **expressions of love**

Love is central to the human experience and showing Asian Americans in loving relationships debunks stereotypes about their emotional range or desirability.

Men are less likely to be shown expressing love than women

The current visual landscape

- Asians are included in **13%** of visuals representing people with disabilities, but are more frequently seen in the role of caretaker
- LGBTQ+ Asians with disabilities are not seen
- Young adults are more likely to be depicted with disabilities than older adults

Why This is a Problem

1 in 10 Asian Americans reported having a disability, yet disabled Asian Americans are underserved and receive lower-quality support and rehabilitation compared to other racial demographics

Asian Americans are 3x less likely to seek mental health help than white Americans





OPPORTUNITIES FOR VISUAL INCLUSIVITY

How We Improve

Include Asian Americans
with a range of **disabilities**

*More than a million Asian Americans with disabilities live and work within systems of love and support. **Show them both living independently and receiving care.***

Less than
2%
of visuals
feature Asians
with
disabilities

The current visual landscape

- Young adults are seen in nearly half of all images, while seniors are seen in just **11%**
- Nearly **4 in 10** visuals of older adults show them receiving healthcare, while just **6%** show them in workplaces—and **1%** show them in leadership positions

Why This is a Problem

More than a quarter of Asian Americans (27%) live in multigenerational households. This dynamic plays a significant role, from annual celebrations and milestones to daily interactions at home

42% of Asian Americans over the age of 55 participate in the labor force

54% of Asian American older adults say they are satisfied with their lives, compared with 80% of other races and ethnicities





OPPORTUNITIES FOR VISUAL INCLUSIVITY

How We Improve
Feature Asian Americans of
all ages in fulsome stories
and show **multigenerational**
families

*The
multigenerational
household is a
profound part of
Asian American
life, but teens and
older adults
continue to be
underrepresented
in visuals*

**Only 1.5% of
visuals show
multigenerational
families**

See More. Show More

Visuals impact our understanding of ourselves and the world around us. Authentic imagery is important to reflect the diversity of the world we live in and can drive change.

It has never been so important to build an inclusive narrative. Getty Images visual expertise can help build your story leveraging our insights, our inclusive content and our global network of photographers and videographers to reimagine your story and create a [library of content](#) unique to your brand. Please [visit](#) our Asian American Visual Storytelling interactive hub to see curated images, videos, and additional insights to help us all drive change.

As a full-service advertising agency with Asian DNA, ADMERASIA is committed to connect brands with Asian Americans through culture and amplify the community voice through creative and inclusive visual storytelling. Please [visit](#) our website for more Asian American audience insights and brand engagement case studies.

