

# THE STATE OF

---



---

# CHINATOWN LOS ANGELES

---

Randy Mai & Bonnie Chen

Department of Urban Planning, Luskin School of Public Affairs, University of California, Los Angeles

May 2013

# The State of Los Angeles Chinatown

---

Asian American Studies M108/Urban Planning M122

May 2013



**Cover Design** by Bonnie Chen

## **Photo Credits:**

New Chinatown Main Plaza. Cover Photo by Bonnie Chen.

Los Angeles' Chinatown. Second cover photo by Neil Kremer, March 31, 2011.  
[www.flickr.com/photos/neilarmstrong2](http://www.flickr.com/photos/neilarmstrong2). Reproduced under Creative Commons.

# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

---

This report is the final product of a ten-week project developed in Professor Paul Ong's UCLA Urban Planning/Asian American Studies course on policy, planning and community. This project was conceptualized with the partnership of the Asian Pacific Policy and Planning Council (A3PCON), the UCLA Asian American Studies Department, the UCLA Asian American Studies Center, and the UCLA Department of Urban Planning. The success of this project is attributed to the dedicated efforts of Professor Paul Ong, Meg Malpaya Thornton, Melany Dela Cruz-Viesca, Silvia Jiménez, Jonathan Ong, Chhandra Pech, Alycia Cheng as well as other faculty/staff and students who put forth their time to assist us in completing this project. Thank you Professor Paul Ong for the advisement and guidance that has allowed us to complete this report. This project was also partially supported by the UCLA Center for the Study of Inequality.

The initial project was done in collaboration with seven other UCLA students. Randy Mai and Vivian Luong originally completed the socioeconomic status data and analysis section. Bonnie Chen, Wendy Choi, and Casey Claborn originally did the demographic and population data collection and analysis section. Annie Kao, Emily Lam, Pauline Luu, and Mitchell Nguyen originally did survey analysis. Randy Mai did the survey results analysis. Randy Mai and Bonnie Chen, whom also created the three Chinatown maps within the report, heavily revised the final product.

The Chinatown Community for Equitable Development (CCED) acted as our local community partner, allowing us to work with them and providing support for our project. We are grateful to our CCED liaison, Sophia Cheng for agreeing to work with us under such time constraints. We are also thankful to King Cheung, as well as other CCED members for training and guiding us through the surveying process.

## **Chinatown Community for Equitable Development (CCED)**

The Chinatown Community for Equitable Development (CCED) is a community organization formed in 2012 in response to Wal-Mart's controversial plans to move into the Chinatown community. CCED is comprised of community activists, residents, business owners, workers and youth who volunteer to "preserve Los Angeles Chinatown's integrity as an ethnic and cultural community." Since the Wal-Mart issue, CCED has expanded its scope of focus and created a survey in the hopes of understanding the needs and priorities of Chinatown residents. The goal of our partnership was to assist CCED in surveying, providing secondary information about Chinatown, and analyzing the results from the surveys we collected for this project.

Website: <http://www.ccedla.org>

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

---

INTRODUCTION.....	6
DEMOGRAPHIC TRENDS.....	8
SOCIOECONOMIC CHARACTERISTICS.....	10
HOUSING.....	14
COMMUNITY CONCERNS.....	18
CONCLUSION.....	22
REFERENCES.....	23
APPENDICES.....	24

# LIST OF FIGURES

---

Figure 1.	Geographic Location of Chinatown Los Angeles.....	6
Figure 2.	Asian Population Trends 1960-2010.....	8
Figure 3.	Demographics of Chinatown Los Angeles.....	9
Figure 4.	Education Attainment for Population 25 Years and Above.....	10
Figure 5.	Median Income by Household.....	11
Figure 6.	Percentage of Families Whose Income in the Past 12 Months is Below the Poverty Level.....	12
Figure 7.	Unemployment Status for Population 16 Years and Over.....	12
Figure 8.	Supplemental Security Income, Cash Public Assistance and Food Stamp/ SNAP.....	13
Figure 9.	Household Type - Asian Alone.....	14
Figure 10.	Rental Units Supply and Demand.....	15
Figure 11.	Gross Rent .....	16
Figure 12.	Housing .....	17
Figure 13.	Cross Tabulations of Survey Results.....	19
Figure 14.	Chinatown Population Map of Asian Alone.....	24
Figure 15.	List of Chinatown Census Tracts, 1960-2010.....	25
Figure 16.	Survey Routes within Chinatown .....	29

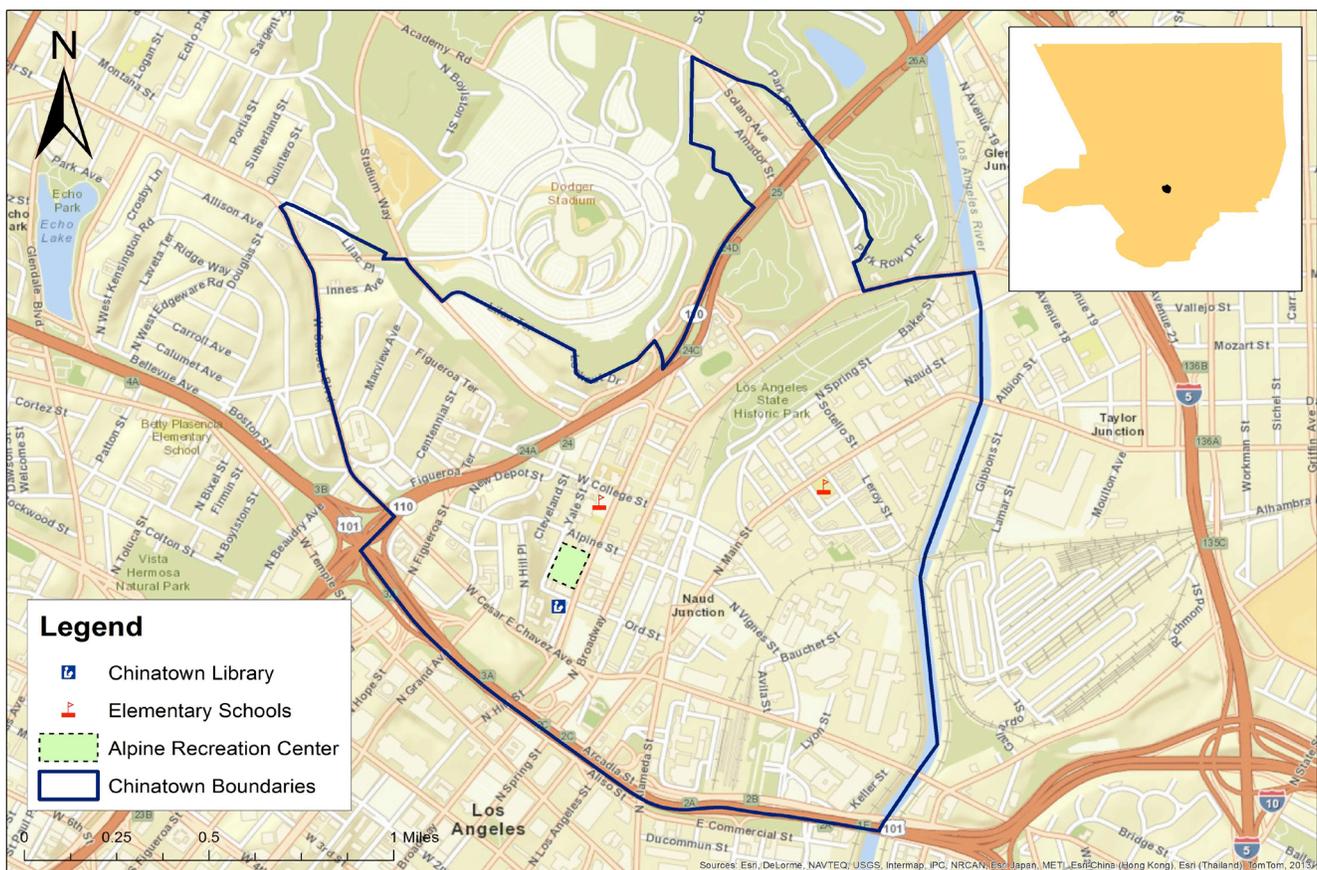
# INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this research is to add to the repertoire of information available about Chinatown, Los Angeles as an ethnic enclave. It examines secondary data and primary data to establish information about its economic base and create a profile of the Chinatown community. While working with a grassroots organization, the Chinatown Community Economic Development (CCED), our team conducted and collected surveys that supplement the secondary data from the Census. The first section provides secondary information on Chinatown regarding demographics, socioeconomic status, and housing demographics. The second section focuses on the survey results our team collected in partnership with CCED. Together, this research paper focuses on the intersection of research and community engagement to better assess the current state of Los Angeles Chinatown.

## HISTORY

The Los Angeles Chinatown that we see today is not the Chinatown that once was. Much of Los Angeles Chinatown's characteristics are due to Chinese, and more recently Southeast Asian, growth and history. In the early 20th century, Los Angeles Chinatown was considered a slum, "plagued by vice, moral decay, and poor sanitation" (Lin, 2008). Jan Lin, an Associate Professor of Sociology at Occidental College, recently

Figure 1. Geographic Location of Chinatown Los Angeles



Source: U.S. Census 2010, Topologically Integrated Geographic Encoding and Referencing/ Line Shapefile

---

published an article in the *Amerasia Journal* 34:3 that discusses Los Angeles Chinatown's shift in ethnic growth, tourism, art, and gentrification. His research contextualizes Chinatown's economic changes within national and global events. His methodology involves interviewing community residents, cultural preservation organizations, and beneficiaries of gentrification. Dr. Lin discusses that the recent emergence of gentrification starting in the 1990s in Chinatown is attributed to global attraction of investment and immigrant labor. Because Los Angeles is a global city, there have been many attempts by the Community Redevelopment Agency (CRA) and public officials to revitalize Chinatown. This also includes the globalization of Chinatown, bringing in transnational banks and business entities. The Gold Line Metro station, which was completed in 2003, is a classic example of "tangible benefits" of gentrification (Lin, 2008). The line brings business, entrepreneurs, economic growth, and tax revenue. Dr. Lin concludes by acknowledging that ethnic tourism, gentrification, and the ethnic growth machine are factors of Chinatown's recent developments, and may very well contribute to the disruption of the growing class difference. Dr. Lin's research focuses on the 1990s. Although there is a lack of current research on the project, there is still much needed research to be done.

#### GEOGRAPHIC LOCATION

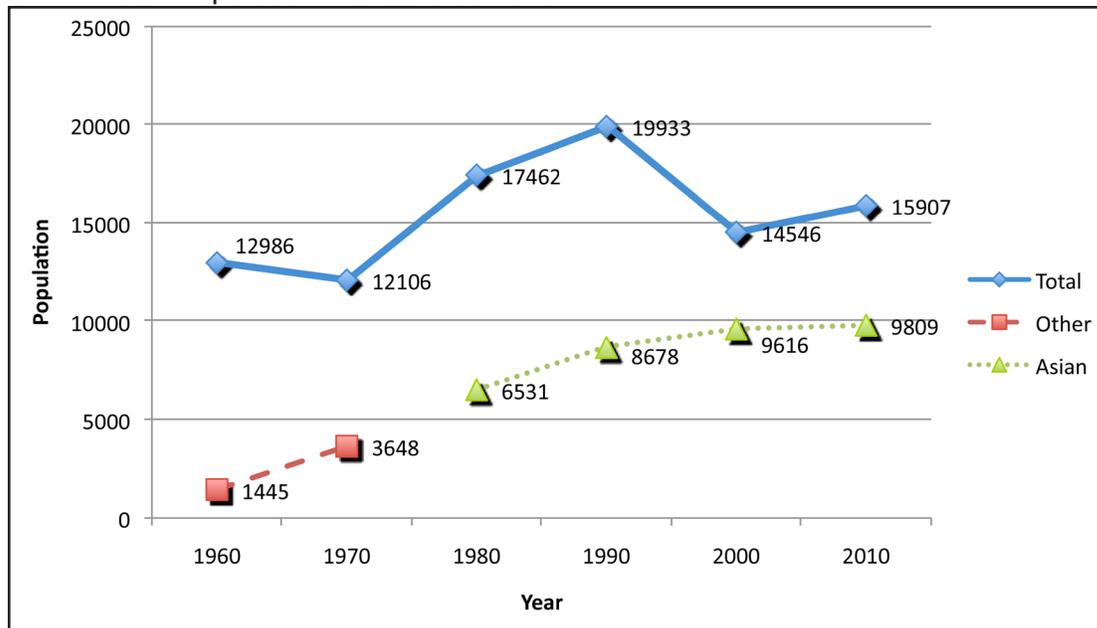
Chinatown is located in Central Los Angeles and within the vicinity of areas including Downtown, Lincoln Heights, and Echo Park. In the 1800s, it was called "Calle de los negros" and was located on what is now called Olvera Street (a street between Main Street and Alameda Street). With the removal of Calle de los negros in the beginning of 1900, Chinatown was displaced to what is now Union Station (bordered by East Cesar E. Chavez Avenue, Alameda Street and Arcadia Street). In the 1920s, Chinatown was moved to the area that was once Little Italy. Today, it is bounded by East Cesar E Chavez Avenue, Sunset Boulevard, Main Street, Alameda Street, Cottage Home Street and the 110 Pasadena Freeway (Figure 1). Dodgers Stadium and Elysian Park are on the outskirts of Chinatown.

Chinatown falls within the bounds of Los Angeles City Council District 1, California State Assembly District 45, California Senate District 21, and US Congressional District 34. Los Angeles Unified School District's Castelar Elementary School, the Los Angeles Public Library – Chinatown Branch, the Alpine Recreation Center, the Pacific Alliance Medical Center, and the Los Angeles Historic State park are some of the amenities available in Chinatown.

# DEMOGRAPHIC TRENDS

Chinatown's population increased steadily from the years 1960 to 2000 (Figure 3). A few reasons may be a result of the removal of immigration barriers as well as the economic opportunities that the city of Los Angeles had to offer during the early 1900s, when the United States was benefiting from industrialization. While the Asian population was growing from the 1960s, in 2000, the Asian population in Chinatown experiences a decrease.

Figure 2. Asian Population Trends 1960-2010

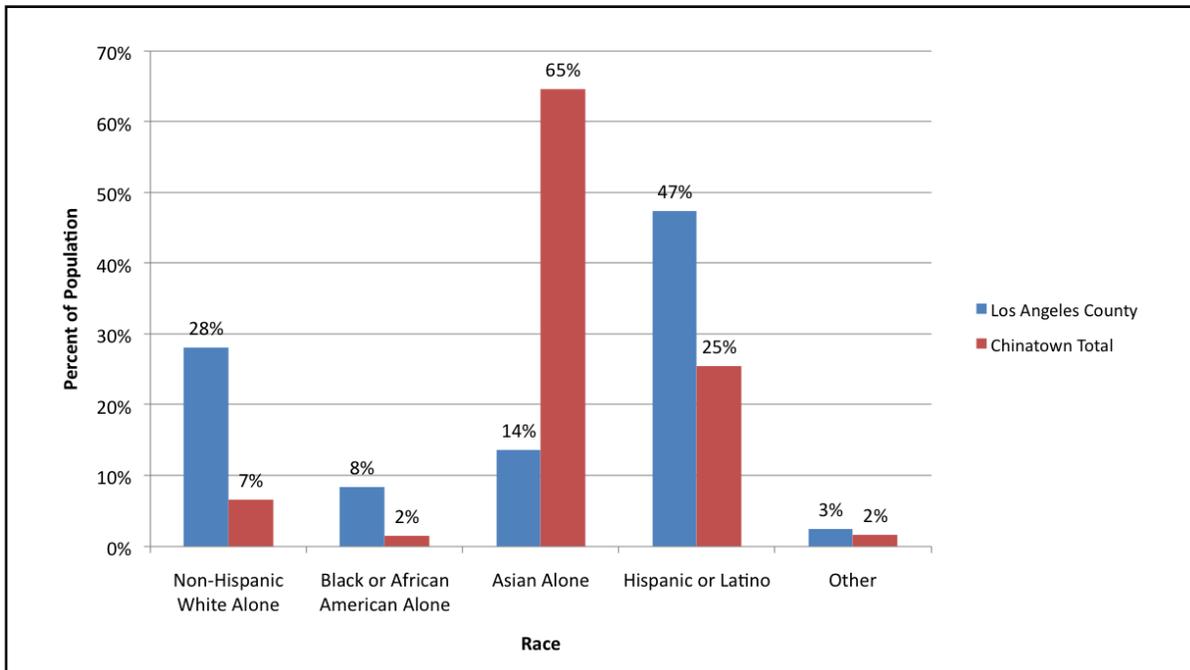


Source: 1960 to 2010 Decennial Census

In the 2010 Census, Chinatown's population was recorded at 15,907. The concentration of Asians in Chinatown (62%) is much higher than that of Los Angeles County's (14%) (Figure 3), signifying that Chinatown is an Asian enclave. While more than half the inhabitants of Chinatown are Asian, there is a considerable Latino population (25%), revealing that Chinatown has a large population of minorities. Furthermore, the small increase in Asians from the year 2000 to 2010 show that its demographics is not only diversifying, but also changing.

In terms of Chinatown's age distribution, less than a fourth of its population is under the age of 17 (17%). While the majority of the population is between the age of 18 and 64 (59%), almost a quarter of its population is elderly, or above the age of 65 (24%). In comparison, Los Angeles County's percentage of population under 17 years of age makes up a quarter of its population while those between the ages of 18 and 64, make up 64 percent of its total population. The elderly population of Chinatown is significantly higher when compared to Los Angeles County's (11%), indicating that there is a higher dependency ratio in Chinatown than the county. Moreover, the distribution of elderly men (25%) and women (23%) is comparable to each other despite the male population (44%) being smaller than the female population (56%).

Figure 3. Demographics of Chinatown Los Angeles



Source: 2011 5-Year American Community Survey

### LANGUAGE AND NATIVITY

The demographics of Chinatown are important in providing a better picture of the community. Understanding the characteristics of the community is important, especially where the majority of the population over 18 (83%) in Chinatown is immigrant (91%). In addition, over half of the population is naturalized U.S. citizens (64%), meaning they are eligible to receive government benefits including Social Security and Medicare. These services are especially important for the low-income elderly population, who face poorer health due to the costs of medical care (Rowland, et al., 1996).

Further impacting their access to health care and other services is language. Of the large immigrant population, a majority of them speak another language other than English (94%). Even more astonishing is that 89 percent of immigrants, who speak another language, speak English less than “very well”. The lack of English fluency can impact access to services as well as the quality of services they are able to obtain.

Perhaps one way non-fluent English speakers in Chinatown access services is through their children. Research shows that language usage amongst second-generation Americans varies depending on race. Only four-in-ten second-generation Asian Americans can speak their parents’ native tongue well compared to the eight-in-ten second-generation Latinos (Pew Research Center, 2013). Yet, in Chinatown, of those born in the U.S., a large majority speaks a language other than English (85%) and speaks English “very well” (78%). This may be due to the large immigrant population who are impacting their children’s heritage language obtainment as a result of their English fluencies.

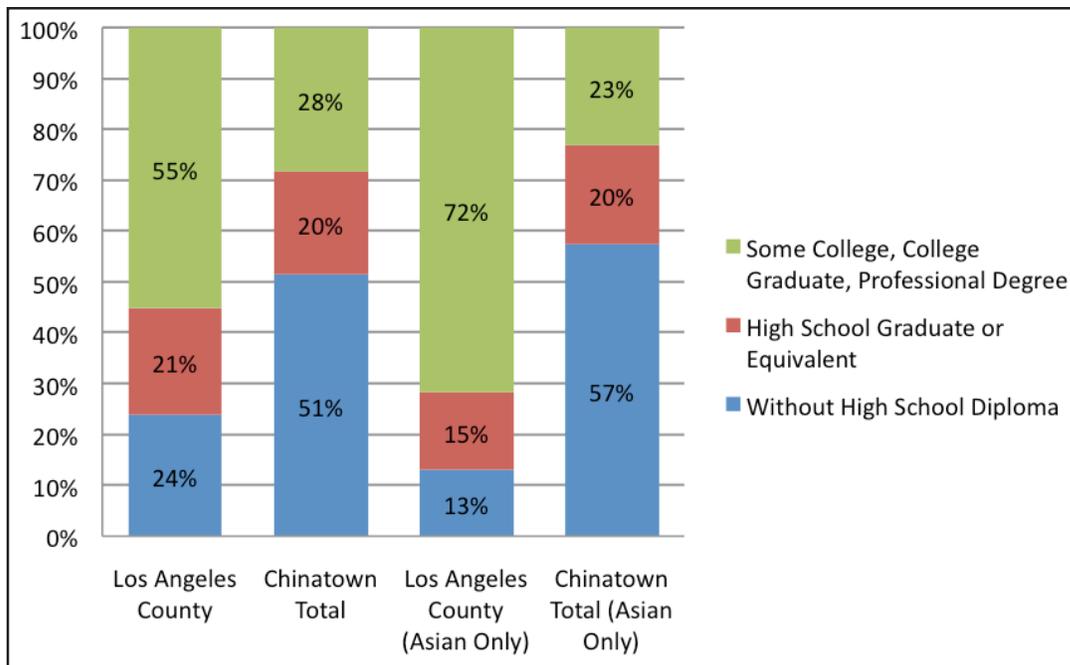
# SOCIOECONOMIC CHARACTERISTICS

From the demographic, language and nativity data, it is visible that a large percentage of its population is first-generation Americans or immigrants who face language barriers. These language barriers not only pose obstacles for accessing certain services such as healthcare, but also job opportunities. This is especially so if one of the main requirements for a majority of jobs is English proficiency.

With less accessibility to economic opportunities, some may resort to seeking temporary jobs or work “under-the-table”. One important characteristic about Chinatown is that it is a Concentrated Poverty Neighborhood (CPN) that is adjacent to Downtown Los Angeles. The effects of being in a Concentrated Poverty Neighborhood are that the residents are living in a “severely diminished living environment” and a reduced quality of life (Matsunaga, 7). Furthermore, residents have trouble finding housing that can provide for a safe place to be at, have reduced mobility for commuting to jobs or meeting the household needs, have lower levels of skill and education among working-age adults, and in addition, lower levels of educational achievement among children. The socioeconomic status of the Chinatown community reflects many of the problems discussed in Matsunaga’s report.

This section compares the education attainment levels of the Chinatown community, the employment and unemployment rates, the income levels of the community, the amount of public assistance that this community gets, and the labor force to that of Los Angeles County. Some sections compare the Asian population in Chinatown to that of Los Angeles County, revealing the stark differences in income and standard of living. The data collected reveals that Chinatown is a low-income community where the majority of residents are immigrants who not only face language barriers but also have a low level of education attainment.

Figure 4. Education Attainment for Population 25 Years and Above



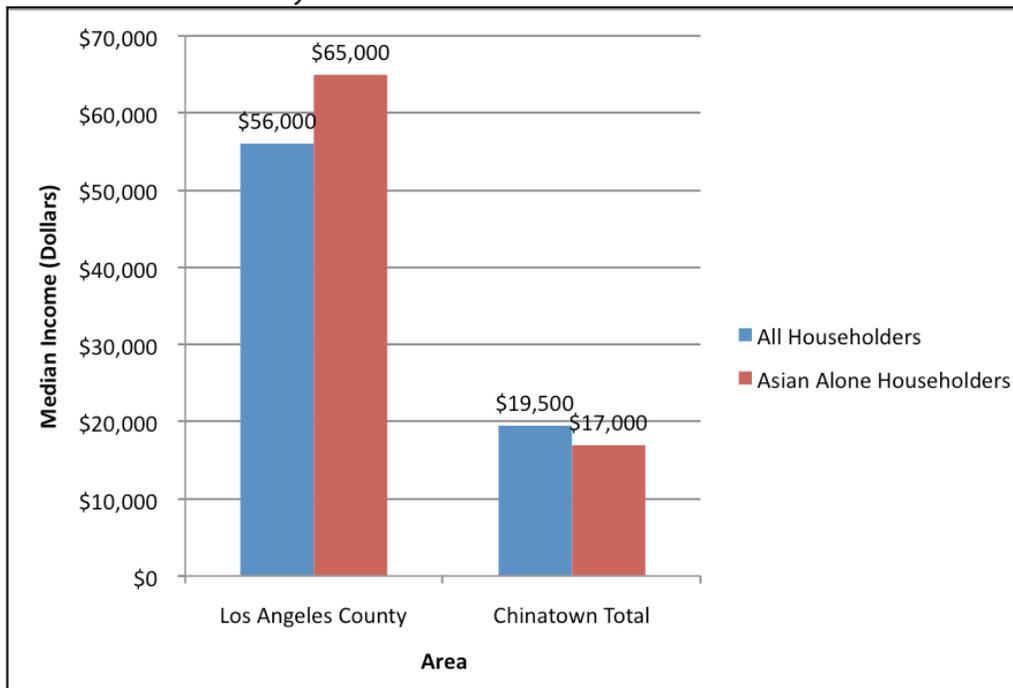
Source: 2011 5-Year American Community Survey

---

## MEDIAN INCOME

The median income measures middle income as reported for Los Angeles County and Chinatown. According to Figure 5, the median income for Los Angeles County is approximately \$56,000 as compared to \$19,500 in Chinatown. This shows a distinct disparity between geographic regions within Los Angeles County. Although Los Angeles County accounts for a proportionately larger household population and Chinatown accounts for a smaller household population, the median income explains the lack of access to affordable housing, food, and necessities. Asian householders also show a growing gap between the areas; the median income for Asian householders in Los Angeles County is approximately \$65,000 while the median income for Asian householders in Los Angeles Chinatown is just merely \$17,000. This disparity may also be explained by the age distribution of Los Angeles Chinatown, where almost a quarter of the population is retired.

Figure 5. Median Income by Household

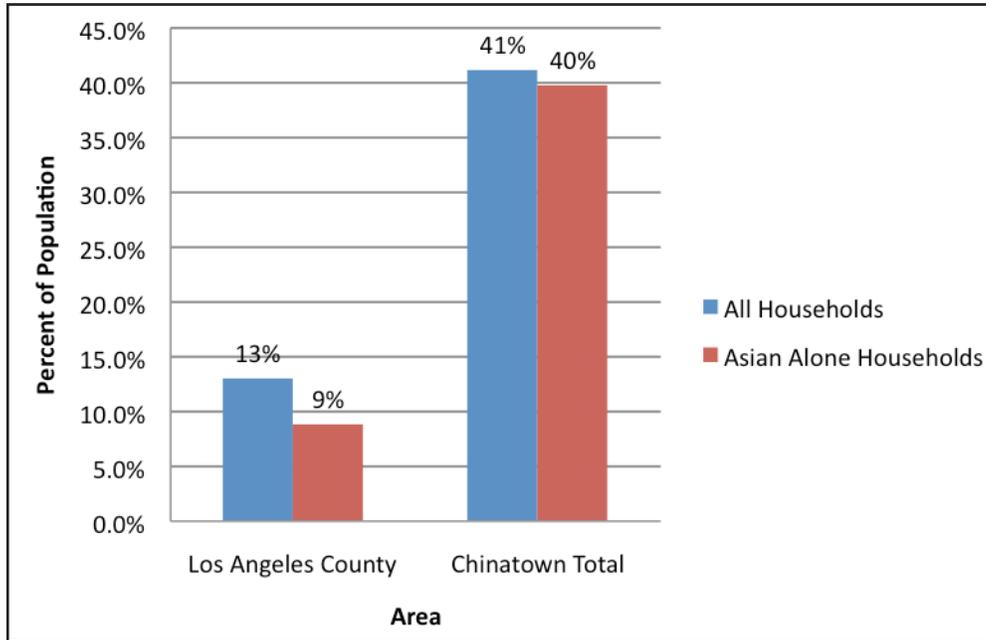


Source: 2011 5-year American Community Survey

## POVERTY LEVELS

The poverty level is measured on a yearly basis. According to the Figure 6, the percent of families living under the poverty line in Chinatown is more than three times that of Los Angeles County (41.1% and 13% respectively). This number is alarming, considering almost half of Chinatown families are living under the poverty line. Moreover, the median income and poverty levels reveal the community's inaccessibility to economic opportunities that may be attributed to low educational attainment and language barriers.

Figure 6. Percentage of Families Whose Income in the Past 12 Months is Below the Poverty Level

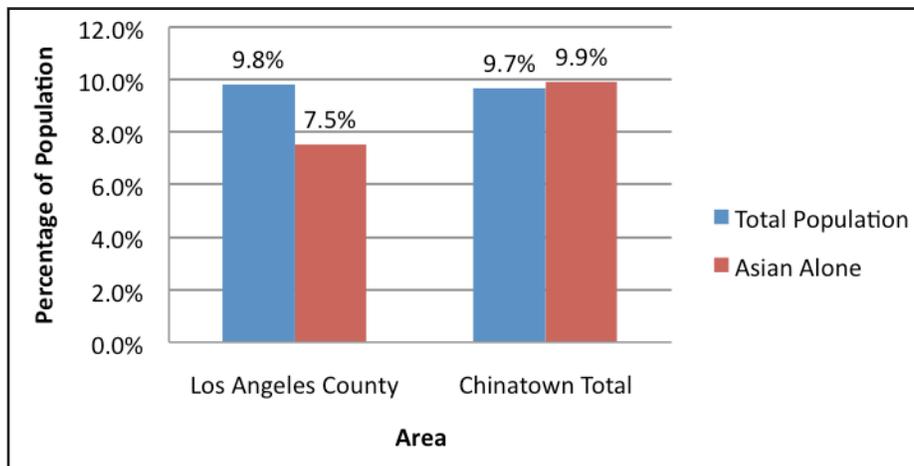


Source: 2007-2001 5-Year American Community Survey

### LABOR FORCE

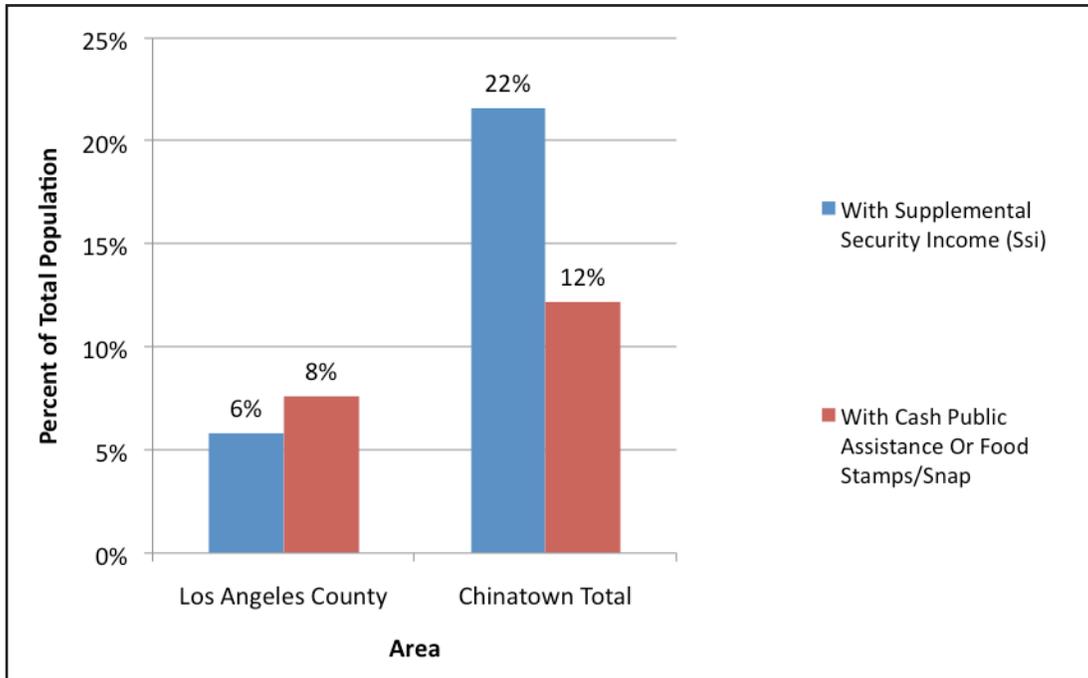
Approximately half of Chinatown (53%) is in the labor force as compared to 65% in Los Angeles County. According to the Figure 7, Chinatown's unemployment rate (9.5%) is surprisingly close to Los Angeles County's unemployment rate of 9.8 percent. The unemployment rate is the number of unemployed as a percent of those in the labor force. Part of the reason why Chinatown's unemployment rate may be due to the substantial elderly population. Furthermore, a good portion of the labor force might be engaged in the

Figure 7. Unemployment Status for Population 16 Years and Over



Source: 2007-2001 5-Year American Community Survey

Figure 8. Supplemental Security Income, Cash Public Assistance and Food Stamp/SNAP



Source: 2007-2001 5-Year American Community Survey

informal economy or working temporary jobs. It is also important to note that those who are unemployed for over six months are not counted in the labor force, which may mean that the actual unemployment rate in Chinatown is higher than reported.

#### SOCIAL SECURITY INCOME (SSI), CASH PUBLIC ASSISTANCE, AND FOOD STAMPS/SNAP

There is a significantly small proportion of Los Angeles County that uses the Social Security's Supplemental Security Income (SSI). SSI, Cash Public Assistance, and Food Stamps/SNAP are ways that residents in Chinatown supplement their low incomes. The federal government awards recipients with cash benefits, which residents can use for food, housing, and other basic needs. It is important to note that for Chinatown, Figure 8 shows that 22 percent of the population use SSI, which is about four times higher than Los Angeles County (6%). According to Figure 8, households' living in Chinatown with cash public assistance income is 12 percent. This proportion is about four percentage points higher than the Los Angeles County (8%). A proportion of households in Chinatown rely on food stamps to get by, revealing again the extent in which an income gap exists between Asian residents in Chinatown and Asian residents in Los Angeles County.

# HOUSING

The United States National Housing Act of 1937 created a public housing program that would serve the housing needs of low-income families. The program defined family eligibility into the public housing program by setting income limits, where “a tenant’s income could not exceed five to six times the rent” (Schwartz 2008). Income limits were replaced by maximum rents where rents could not exceed 20 percent of family income. By 1968, the rent threshold was established at 25 percent of family income. In 1981, housing costs exceeding 30 percent of family income became the rule of thumb for acknowledging a housing affordability problem. This rule of thumb still stands today and is also referred to as the “housing-cost burden”.

In 1980, the Los Angeles City Council adopted the Chinatown Redevelopment Project that was administered by the Community Redevelopment Agency of Los Angeles (CRA/LA). The goal was to “eliminate blight, stimulate the development of affordable housing and maintain the area’s prominence as the focal point of commerce and culture for the Chinese population of Southern California (CRA/LA 2005).” With the assistance of the CRA/LA, seven housing projects and the rehabilitation of 246 dwelling units were completed. Since 2011, the CRA/LA has been succeeded by the Designated Local Authority (DLA), which will continue administering the Chinatown Development Project.

While affordable housing units exist in Chinatown, the data collected exposes the reality that more than half the population in Chinatown faces a housing affordability problem. Housing is one of the most important expenditures that people make, yet the type of housing people choose is often restricted to their purchasing power. Moreover, housing choices for minorities can reveal issues of social stratification and impact other factors in their lives including educational attainment, healthcare, and social status. Research shows that the quality of life for minorities is dependent on family background and economic resources, household conditions (ownership, crowding, and quality) and educational attainment (Conley 2001).

## HOUSING CHARACTERISTICS AND TRENDS

In Chinatown, the average household size of an owner-occupied unit and renter-occupied unit is three people. About 60 percent of Asian households (Figure 9) are family households, and of that, single householders make up 25 percent. Of the 40 percent non-family Asian households, 83 percent are householders

Figure 9. Household Type - Asian Alone

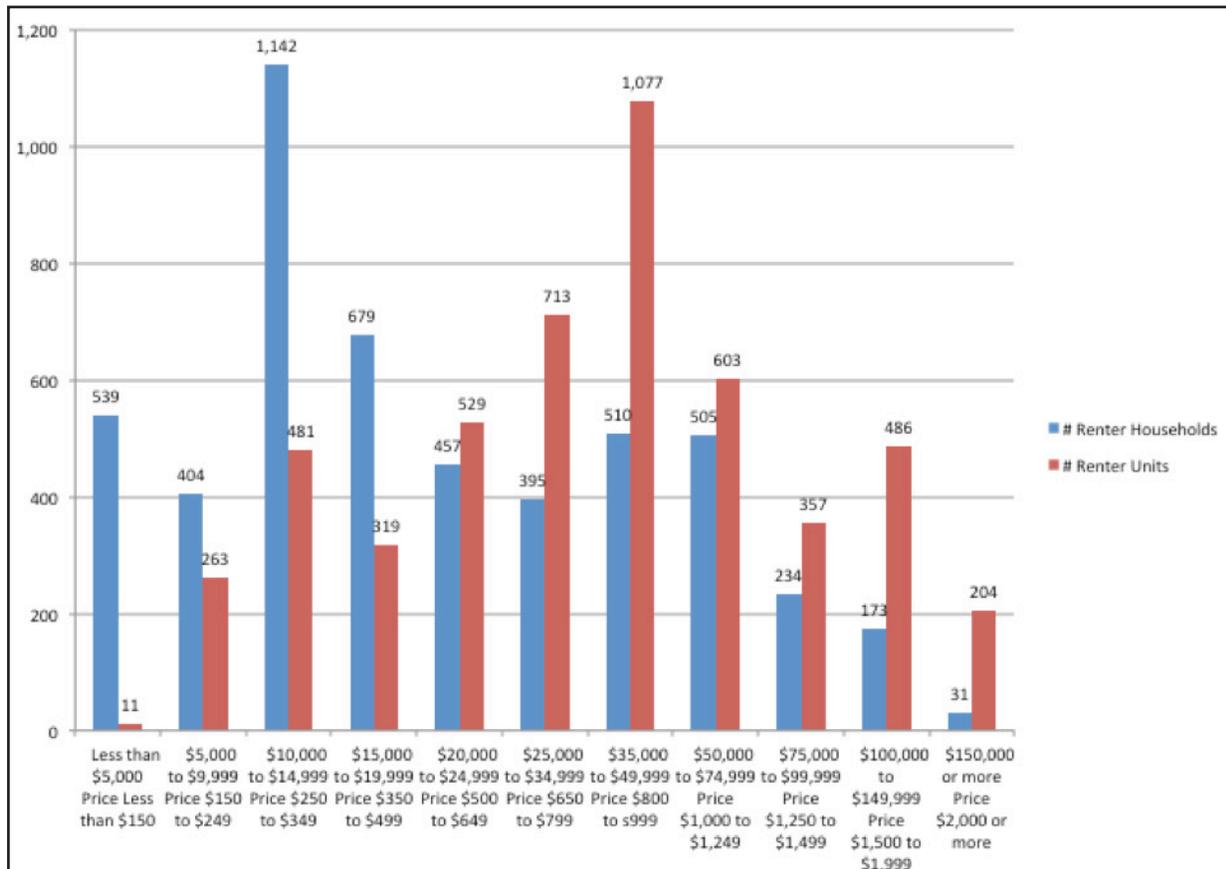
Family households:	60%
Married-couple family	75%
Other family:	25%
Male householder, no wife present	25%
Female householder, no husband present	75%
Nonfamily households:	40%
Householder living alone	83%
Householder not living alone	17%

Source: 2007-2001 5-Year American Community Survey

living alone. In Chinatown, the average household size of an owner-occupied unit and renter-occupied unit is three people. About 60 percent of Asian households are family households, and of that, single householders make up 25 percent. Of the 40 percent non-family Asian households, 83 percent are householders living alone. These numbers may indicate that there is a portion of the elderly population living alone. Furthermore, the low educational levels and language barriers may have a heavier financial impact on family households headed by one householder.

The housing data collected in Chinatown show that 94 percent of occupied housing is renter-occupied, which is a higher percentage of renters compared to the 52 percent in Los Angeles County. Only six percent are homeowners, which is significantly smaller than Los Angeles County's (48%). Additionally, of the percentage of owners and renters in Chinatown, 68 percent and 63 percent of the proportions are Asian, respectively. These rates are higher than Los Angeles County's Asian-alone statistics of tenure of occupied housing units (51% owners and 49% renters). In considering the demographics and social economic statuses of most Chinatown residents, it becomes increasingly clear that the majority of renters are vulnerable to rent increases. Furthermore, the lack of English proficiency amongst many of the residents may indicate that they are unaware of their rights. This is especially important in the city of Los Angeles, where there is rent control or rent stabilization.

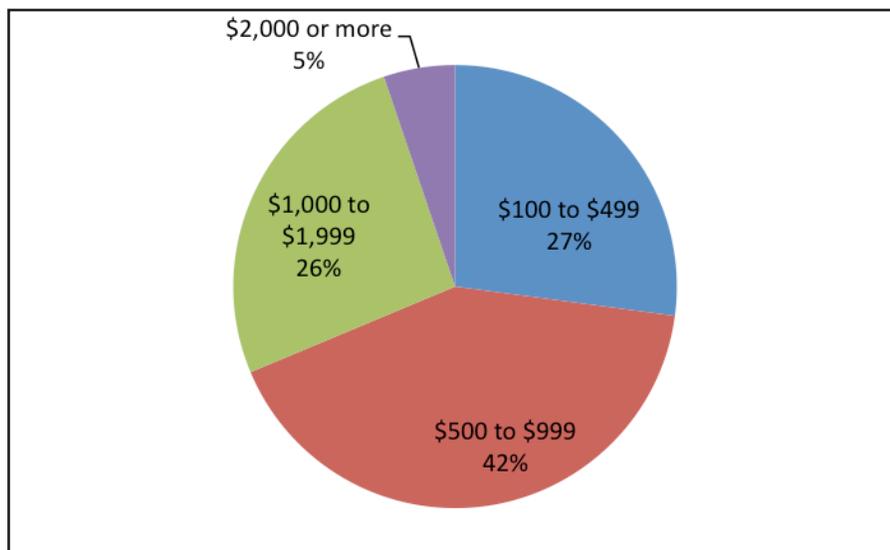
Figure 10. Rental Units Supply and Demand



Source: 2007-2001 5-Year American Community Survey

Access to housing is also an important indicator of housing affordability. Figure 9 uses the cost of renter units and the household income to show the supply and demand for renter units in Chinatown (Figure 10). When the number of renter households exceeds renter units, there is a shortage in renter units available. Conversely, where the number of renter units exceeds the number of renter households, there is a surplus in the supply of renter units. Figure 9 therefore shows that many residents making less than \$15,000 in household income have a scarce supply of renter units within their affordability range. If there is a renter unit scarcity, households making less than \$15,000 may be forced to live in poor quality renter units or increase their housing cost burden.

Figure 11. Gross Rent



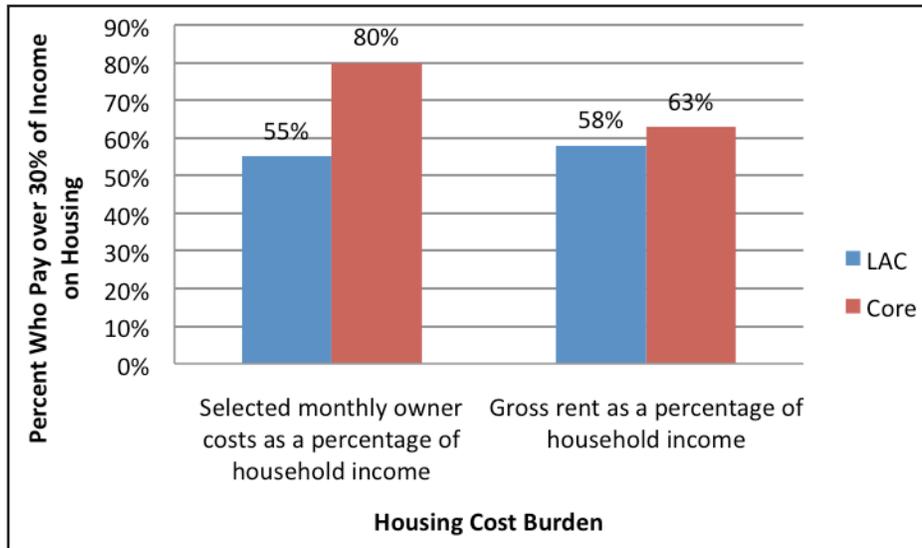
Source: 2007-2011 5-Year American Community Survey

Another indicator of a housing affordability problem for the community is comparing the gross rent to the Fair Market Rent. The Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) calculated that the final Fair Market Rent (FMR) for non-substandard housing during the fiscal year of 2007 (FY 2007) was \$1,016 for a one unit bedroom in the Los Angeles-Long Beach Metropolitan area. The FMR for the fiscal year of 2011 increased to \$1,173 for a one unit bedroom. Yet, 21 percent of Chinatown residents pay 100 to 499 dollars in gross rent, 46 percent pay between 500 dollars to 999 dollars, and 29 percent pay between 1000 and 1,999 dollars (Figure 11). These numbers reveal that a large portion of renters in Chinatown are paying under the HUD's calculated FMR and may be living in substandard housing.

Despite the fact that more than 50 percent of renters are paying under the 2011 FMR, Chinatown residents face a housing affordability problem. Out of the eight percent of homeowners, 80 percent face a housing affordability problem that is also significantly higher than Los Angeles County's 55 percent (Figure 12). Of the 91 percent renters in Chinatown, more than half (63%) face a housing affordability problem, which is not much higher than the overall Los Angeles County region (58%). These numbers suggest that a number of Chinatown residents paying under the FMR are finding ways to cut down housing costs, and a result,

they may be choosing to live in sub-standard housing that can lead them to live in overcrowded conditions. Sub-standard housing can impact one's quality of life, and further impact children's ability to concentrate and succeed in education (Conley 2001).

Figure 12. Housing Affordability



Source: 2007-2001 5-Year American Community Survey

# COMMUNITY CONCERNS

---

The total surveys collected are not representative of the Chinatown community because of the small sample size attained in the brief amount of time available. In working with the Chinatown Community for Equitable Development (CCED), the team was able to survey with a basic background on the Chinatown community. The goal of the survey was to provide a different image of Chinatown that was not available through the data collected from the American Community Survey.

The following survey results are only intended to provide a snapshot of the Chinatown community by revealing what members of the community feel is a top concern for them. While housing is an important issue in the community, many residents surveyed felt that jobs were their main priority. This might link back to the fact that access to housing is dependent on one's purchasing power. It further indicates that there are members of the community who are having difficulty securing a job which may be due to language barriers and educational attainment.

Their concerns on housing and employment is also relevant to new developments in Chinatown. These developments include the Jia Apartments, which will be a mixed-use complex set to open sometime in the year 2013. Such developments will impact the supply and demand of rental units, housing affordability and economic opportunities in the community.

The survey results also showed that public safety was a concern in the community. Yet the term public safety is quite broad in nature. One interesting point to note is that the issue of public safety changes through the different age groups, indicating they each have a different idea of safety. In Central Los Angeles community, gang violence may cause more concern for the youth than adults who might be more concerned with jobs and housing.

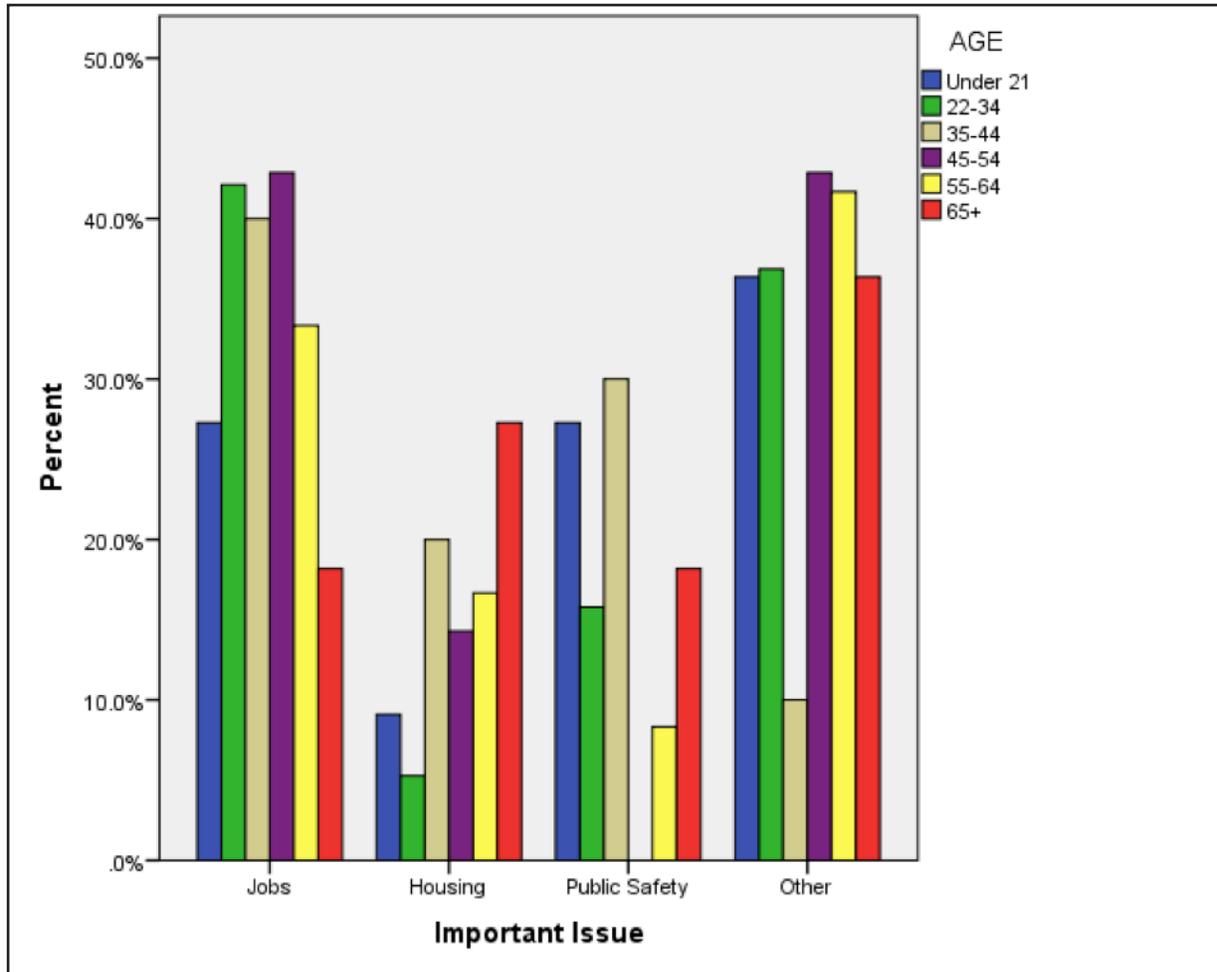
## TOP CONCERNS

### *Jobs*

Many residents surveyed reported that the issue of jobs and employment are one of the most deeply affected problems of the community. 26 out of 81 surveys (32%) of the study population listed jobs as a top concern, making it the most chosen concern of the sample size. The issue of employment in Chinatown is dramatic since only 53 percent of the population is in the labor force. Some of the variables that may affect residents' reaction to jobs being the top concern are age, education, physical health, family background, distance from home, and so forth. Furthermore many residents can be part of an informal labor force that is not represented in these reports.

When comparing the ages of respondents that marked jobs as top concern, the residents are evenly distributed between three age groups. Of this sample 43 percent of the group was in the 45-54 age range, 42 percent were in the 22-34 age range and 40 percent were in the 33-44 age range; showing almost equal variation in adult ages (Figure 13). These results suggest that each age group has barriers and challenges in attain job security. Even though there are numerous accounts in literature of older workers experiencing discrimination and replacement by younger workers, these results show us that even the younger generations of Chinatown feel the pressures of job security as well (Zhou). This could be attributed to a variety

Figure 13. Cross Tabulations of Survey Results



Source: Survey Results

of factors including educational attainment, language proficiency or etc. Thus, the barriers of employment opportunities in Chinatown may be widespread and indiscriminate of age.

Furthermore, another cross tabulation of the results showed that employment to be more of a concern for women than for men. Of all the men that answered the survey, 24 percent chose jobs as a top concern. Of all the women that answered the survey, 40 percent chose jobs as a top concern. Although women are generally considered secondary wage earners, it seems as though there is a high desire for the women of Chinatown to participate in the labor market given their response. Nevertheless, these residents, mostly immigrants with varying fluencies of English, must continue their traditional roles; creating pressure for them to juggle the workplace and home (Zhou). Thus, working immigrant women may be more disproportionately concentrated and stuck in low-ranking and low-wage occupations than male counterparts of equal education and skills.

---

Overall, the jobs concern presented in the survey could cover a wide range of problems. The labor market is a broad issue that could include a variety of problems including youth employment problems, the financial vulnerability of seniors and integration of women into labor markets. Further research or surveys may want to focus in on the concern of “jobs” and pinpoint the exact situations the residents are experiencing.

### *Public Safety*

According to the survey results, 29 percent of respondents ranked public safety as the most important concern. Figure 11 illustrates the relationships between age group and top concerns. Respondents between the ages of 35 and 44 have the highest response to public safety as their top concern/one of their top concerns, followed by ages 21 and under. The disproportionate amount of responses to public safety raise questions about what factors make respondents feel unsafe in Chinatown.

Furthermore, from 2011 to 2013, the LAPD crime rate results indicate that Central Los Angeles profile has much higher percentages of violent crime rates as compared to the citywide profile. In Central Los Angeles, there is a recent increase in crime rates from January 2013 to Feb 2013 – there is a 28 percent increase in violent crimes. Out of the 28 percent of violent crime rate, 7 percent increase in robbery, and 57 percent increase are aggravated assault. Compared to central LA area, the citywide has a 7 percent increase. Out of the 7 percent, only 4 percent are robbery cases and 9 percent are aggravated assault cases. This drastic difference may suggest that Chinatown has higher crime rate than LA County overall.

Survey results also revealed that gender had varying responses to public safety as a major concern. Male respondents were more concerned about public safety than woman. Out of 13 people who ranked public safety as the most important issue, 54 percent are males, 46 percent are females. Although, these percentages may not fully represent the whole Chinatown population, they are still important issues that require further research.

### *Housing*

Based on the surveys that were collected, 22 percent of respondents stated that housing was one of their major areas of concerns. Thus, housing ranked third amongst Chinatown survey participants. The Los Angeles Times published a profile on LA’s Chinatown community, and found that there was a mass number of residents renting their homes. The data was collected from the Los Angeles Department of City Planning in a 2000 Census. The results showed that 94 percent of households are renter occupied, while the remaining 6 percent are homeowners. The number of renters is staggeringly high in comparison to those who own a home. A recurring theme expressed by respondents was that rents increased every year and it continues to put a strain on their finances. According to the 2007-2011 American Community Survey, many inhabitants of Chinatown dedicate over 30 percent of their income to rent, which indicates they are facing a housing affordability problem. Thus, respondents’ responses were similar to the findings that a majority of Chinatown residents are facing a housing affordability problem.

At-a-glance, Chinatown appears to have housing that consists of a variation of apartment complexes and houses. A majority of respondents who chose housing as their top priority found that rent is expensive for them. However, nearly half of the residents pay a monthly rental cost between \$500 to \$999 for their hous-

---

ing, which is under the 2011 Fair Market Rent of \$1,016 for a one bedroom unit. Their response to rent prices is an important indicator of how their small purchasing power will affect their access to the supply of rental units. It further suggests that the Chinatown community continually faces rent increases and that residents may not know their rights. For example, the large immigrant community that faces language barriers may be more susceptible to rent increases that violate Los Angeles' Rent Stabilization Ordinance (where rent increases by landlords cannot exceed 4 percent of the fair market rent).

In addition to the cost of housing, the quality of the homes in Chinatown is also an issue. Many of the homes do not have a large lot, and some homes were located very close to their neighbors indicating a lack of privacy amongst each other. Lack of privacy and substandard housing conditions can impact the health of children and educational outcomes (Conley, 2011). Furthermore, many units were quite old which further compromises the integrity of the housing units. Substandard housing units can have a large impact on both mental and physical health, especially when one becomes exposed to toxic chemicals.

# CONCLUSION

---

Los Angeles Chinatown has changed since the 1930s, but it has remained an ethnic enclave for Asians. By establishing an economic base, what became obvious was the growing gap in inequality between Asians concentrated in Chinatown and those throughout Los Angeles County. This not only disproves the Asian model minority stereotype, but also reveals how important research is in helping communities similar to Chinatown move forward.

It was also very important to provide the residents of Chinatown a voice. While the surveys collected are not representative of the entire community, it does give a glimpse into what some of the issues members of the community face. Housing affordability, economic opportunities, and public safety are vital to fostering a community capable of moving up the income ladder. Furthermore, the issues Chinatown residents found important, were not well reflected in the American Community Survey (ACS). Moreover, the ACS data helps to provide a profile of the Chinatown community, but the voice of the community is what really supports the data.

Lastly, as new developments continue in Chinatown, the community will be faced with new challenges and opportunities alike. More research is necessary in understanding what the impact developments such as Wal-Mart will have on the Chinatown community. Especially in regards to the fact that Chinatown is not only an ethnic enclave, but also a low-income community with low educational attainment and language barriers. These characteristics make Chinatown residents more vulnerable to gentrification and social inequality.

# REFERENCES

---

“Chinatown.” Mapping L.A. N.p., n.d. Web. 21 Mar. 2013.

“Crime Mapping and COMPSTAT” Crime Mapping and COMPSTAT - Official Website of THE LOS ANGELES POLICE DEPARTMENT. N.p., n.d. Web. 21 Mar. 2013

“Second-Generation Americans: A Portrait of the Adult Children of Immigrants”. Pew Research Social & Demographic Trends. Pew Research Center. February 2013.

“Chinatown Redevelopment Project”. Community Redevelopment Agency of Los Angeles, California. 2005. <<http://www.crala.org/internet-site/Projects/Chinatown/upload/chinatown.pdf>>  
<<http://www.socialsecurity.gov/history/pdf/RowlandandLyons.pdf>>

Haurin, Donald R. Herbert, Christopher E. Rosenthal, Stuart S. “Homeownership Gaps Among Low-Income and Minority Households”. *Cityscape*, Vol. 9, No. 2, Low-Income and Minority Homeownership (2007), pp.5-51. US Department of Housing and Urban Development. <<http://www.jstor.org/stable/20868618>>

Li, Shan. “Wal-Mart to open hiring office for Chinatown store.” *Los Angeles Times* (11 Oct 12).

Lin, Jan. “Los Angeles Chinatown: Tourism, Gentrification, and the Rise of an Ethnic Growth Machine”. *Amerasia Journal* 34.3 (2008): 110-125.

Lopez, Cesar. From Calle de los Negros to Nigger Alley to North Los Angeles Street to Place Erasure, Los Angeles 1855-1951. *Southern California Quarterly*, Vol. 94, No. 1 (Spring 2012), pp.25-90.

Matsuaga, Michael. “Concentrated Poverty in Los Angeles”. Economic Roundtable. February 2008.

Rowland, Diane. Lyons, Barbara. “Medicare, Medicaid, and the Elderly Poor”. *Health Care Financing Review*, Volume 18, No. 2. 1996.

Shwartz, Mary. Wilson, Ellen. Who can afford to live in a home? A look at data from the 2006 American Community Survey. US Census Bureau. 2008. <<http://www.census.gov/housing/census/publications/who-can-afford.pdf>>

Zhou, Min and Logan, John R., “Returns on Human Capital in Ethnic Enclaves: New York City’s Chinatown” *American Sociological Review*, Vol. 54, No. 5 (Oct., 1989), pp. 809-820



Figure 15. LIST OF CHINATOWN CENSUS TRACTS, 1960-2010

1960	1970	1980	1990	2000	2010
2061	2061	2061	2060	2071	2071.01
2071	2071	2071	2071	2060.1	2071.02
2072	2072	2072	2060.2	2060.2	2071.03
1977	1977	1977	1977	1977	2060.1
1971	1971	1971	1971		2060.2 1977

## Definitions

### *Social Economic Status*

Civilian labor force: in any given area measures the proportion of the population who: (1) are not in the armed forces, (2) are above the legal age of 16, and (3) are not institutions such as prisons, mental hospitals, or nursing homes.

Unemployment rate: is the percent of the labor force that is unemployed.

### *Nativity*

Native: "The native population includes people born in the United States, Puerto Rico, or the U.S. Islands (such as Guam). People who were born in a foreign country but have at least one American (U.S. citizen) parent also are included in this category. The native population includes anyone who was a U.S. citizen at birth" (American FactFinder Census Data Information).

Foreign born: "The foreign-born population includes all people who were not U.S. citizens at birth. Foreign-born people are those who indicated they were either a U.S. citizen by naturalization or they were not a citizen of the United States" (American FactFinder Census Data Information).

### *Housing Tenure*

Gross rent: the contract rent plus the estimated average monthly cost of utilities... if these are paid by the renter (or paid for the renter by someone else) (American FactFinder Census Data Information).

Fair Market Value: is the 40th percentile of gross rents for typical, non-substandard rental units occupied by recent movers in a local housing market.

### *GIS Mapping*

To develop these maps, we used the online research tool Social Explorer to obtain decennial Census data on population by race in the tracts encompassing Chinatown Los Angeles. Even though the

---

rough files containing our raw data required reformatting in order to be used by ArcGIS, we were able to join them to the ArcGIS tract delineations we established in the earlier stages of our research. This allowed us to provide a spatial analysis of Asian residents in Chinatown.

#### Data Analysis and Graphs: Strengths and Limitations

The Socioeconomic Status (SES) data draws from the 2011 5-Year American Community Survey (ACS) from American FactFinder. While the decennial census presents the official count of the entire population to Congress, the American Community Survey is conducted every year to ensure that a large enough sample size represents the population. The ACS also determines where almost \$400 billion federal and state funding go to. The ACS asks more in-depth questions. Although the ACS has increased the sampling size, there might be limitations that prohibit researchers to retrieve concise data. The estimates are averaged out for 5 years, which means there are statistical limitations.

Because the ACS is a sampling population, it is often published with confidence levels and margins of error. This means that if the survey were conducted again, the true value would fall in between the margins of error. This proves to be a challenge because the data does not necessarily add up to the correct proportions and/or numbers every time.

Another issue that our group had to work with is the percentages that are calculated by the ACS. Some variables did not have estimated numbers, so we had to change them into numbers. After which, we then added the core total values for that specific variable together and divide by the core total for all values to get a percent for the specific variable. The issue may come into play when we get values that are not in whole numbers.

---

## APPENDIX B

### Survey Method

Sophia Cheng of CCED created the survey used for analysis. It was a quickly drawn-up survey specifically designed for our project that took into account what data the American Community Survey was unable to collect. The survey length took into consideration the amount of time given for survey collection (within eight weeks) and aimed to minimize the time it would take for each participant to answer.

The survey began with simple questions that gave quick responses. These questions included where one were born and what ethnicity they were. The goal of these two questions was to obtain information about the ethnic populations and the countries of origins for Los Angeles Chinatown residents. The survey also asked the age range of the resident. The age brackets were simple groupings that Sophia found from other surveys.

As the survey progressed, participants were required to engage more with the questions by revealing much more personal aspects of their lives. These answers included their occupation and whether they were looking for work. The final question required the participant to think about their needs and priorities in the Chinatown community by asking them to number their concerns according to importance. In many cases, participants checked off concerns instead of numbering them. The issue ranking was difficult to analyze. A proportion of the surveyed residents did not have a 2nd top concern nor a 3rd top concern. This proved to be a challenge when ruling out biases from a small proportion of surveyors.

Before our group began surveying, we were briefly trained on how to instrument the surveys and approach residents. Each team member was paired to another depending on his or her language abilities. Chinese and Spanish translated surveys were used also used despite minor mistakes in translation. Survey routes were decided on a random basis and did not take into account the number of housing units or types of housing that existed on a particular street. The surveys were also spatially concentrated in the northeast portion of Chinatown, where a majority of Asian residents lived. The streets surveyed on the western part of Chinatown are where public housing programs exist.

Some other limitations are the lack of language translation. Because Los Angeles Chinatown consists of many ethnic populations, the survey instrument was only translated to Chinese and Spanish. With the time constraint, Sophia had limited resources and could only carry out these translations with minimal mistakes throughout the process. Sophia hopes that the survey serves as a catalyst for future surveys and work to be done in Los Angeles Chinatown.

### Survey Analysis

The questions designed from the survey did not particularly reference other survey methods. They

---

were written to capture information that was not provided by the American Community Survey. These pieces of information include what the priorities of residents are and whether they are looking for work or not. The goal of the survey was to also disaggregate Asian data collected from the American Community Survey. However, due to the survey limitations, we were unable to capture a very representative of the Chinatown community.

Furthermore, the age classification “Under 21” was also unable to provide us information on the number of survey participants that were minors. While the majority were adults, there were also instances when minors helped their parents fill out the survey. This may have been due to the language barriers we faced when asking the survey questions and especially in the cases where further translation was needed to clarify questions.

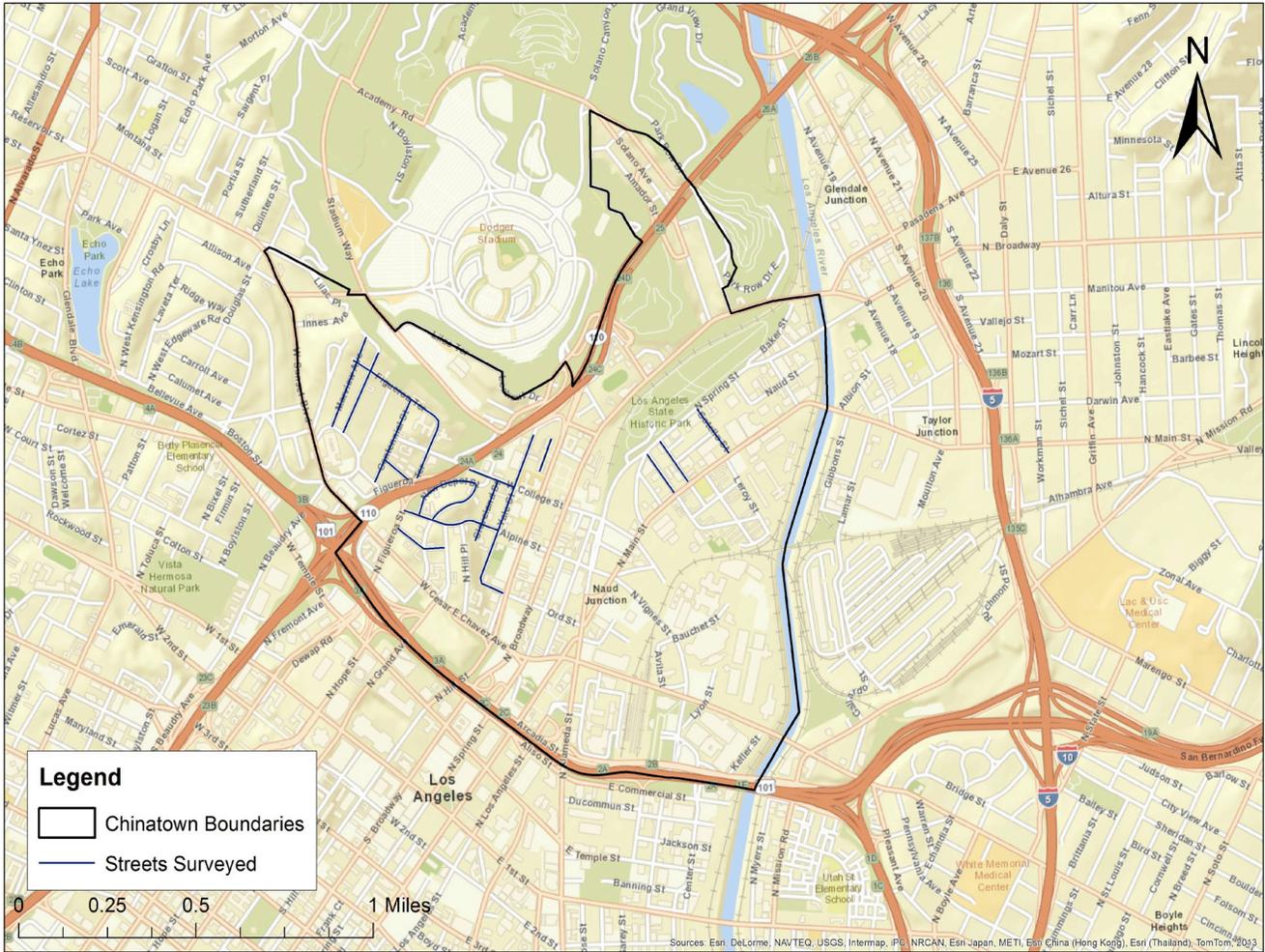
For completed surveys, the question of language was important in identifying what some of the languages were spoken. These languages were mostly Chinese dialects that came from the southern regions of China, including Toisanese, Chiu Chow and Cantonese. This type of data is not found in the American Community Survey and helped us understand more about where people were from.

For our data, we only analyzed the top three concerns from the options chosen from the first priority participants reported. Moreover, most respondents did not list their priorities from one being the highest and three being the lowest. Surveys that did not list priorities were deemed incomplete and not used for our analysis. Another important aspect about the priorities is that there were no subcategories for certain concerns such as housing, which was amongst the top issues amongst participants. Having a subcategory would have been further helpful in understanding what aspects of housing are particularly important for residents. Informal discussions mostly discussed the costs of renting but there is also the issue of housing quality, which would have helped paint a better picture of some of the housing problems in Chinatown.

### Survey Area

Each group that surveyed were given a “walk-record sheet” and requested to record their visits to housing units. The type of responses and number of homes surveyed would determine our rejection rate, however, many of these worksheets were improperly filled-out. Figure 16 outlines the different streets surveyed. The routes were chosen randomly without consideration to the number of housing units available on the street.

Figure 16. Survey Routes within Chinatown



Source: U.S. Census 2010, Topologically Integrated Geographic Encoding and Referencing/ Line Shapefile

The residential streets that we surveyed are listed as follows:

- |                   |                  |                   |
|-------------------|------------------|-------------------|
| Alpine Street     | Figueroa Street  | W. College Street |
| Bartlett Street   | Marview Ave      | W. Rondout Street |
| Bunker Hill Ave   | N. Beaudry Ave   | W. Elmyra Street  |
| Chung King Road   | New Depot Street | White Knoll Drive |
| Centennial Street | Ord Street       | Yale Street       |
| Cleveland Street  | W. Ann Street    |                   |

CHINATOWN COMMUNITY FOR EQUITABLE DEVELOPMENT  
COMMUNITY SURVEY FOR CITY COUNCIL DISTRICT #1



Thank you for completing this anonymous survey. We are gathering this information to understand community priorities in Chinatown and City Council District 1. CCED is an all-volunteer group of residents, students, teachers, and businesses united for a better Chinatown.

1. Where were you born? \_\_\_\_\_
2. What is your ethnicity? \_\_\_\_\_
3. What language do you speak? (check all that apply)
  - English
  - Spanish
  - Cantonese
  - Mandarin
  - Toisanese
  - Chiu Chow
  - Khmer
  - Vietnamese
  - Other \_\_\_\_\_
4. What is your gender? \_\_\_\_\_
5. What is your age?
  - Under 21
  - 22-34
  - 35-44
  - 45-54
  - 55-64
  - 65 and over
6. How long have you lived in Chinatown? \_\_\_\_\_
  - a. How long have you lived in your current home? \_\_\_\_\_
7. Do you work right now?  Yes  No  Looking for work
  - a. What is your job? \_\_\_\_\_
  - b. Where is your job? (city or neighborhood) \_\_\_\_\_
8. Please rank the **top THREE things** that concern you the most (please mark 1-3):
  - \_\_\_ Jobs
  - \_\_\_ Housing
  - \_\_\_ Healthcare
  - \_\_\_ Education
  - \_\_\_ Environment
  - \_\_\_ Transportation
  - \_\_\_ Public safety
  - \_\_\_ Other

華埠公平發展會 (CCED)  
第一市政區的社區調查



謝謝你幫助參與這個社區調查。這個調查是不記名的。我們進行這個調查是想了解唐人街居民關心的事項。CCED 是由居民，學生，教師及企業家為建設更好的華埠聯合組成的義工組織。

1. 你在哪裡出生\_\_\_\_\_

2. 你的種族是什麼? \_\_\_\_\_

3. 你說什麼語言? (請劃所有適當項目)

- |                               |                                   |
|-------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> 英語   | <input type="checkbox"/> 潮州話      |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 西班牙語 | <input type="checkbox"/> 高棉語      |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 國語   | <input type="checkbox"/> 越南語      |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 粵語   | <input type="checkbox"/> 其它 _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 台山話  |                                   |

4. 你的性別是什麼? \_\_\_\_\_

5. 你多大了?

- |                                |                                |
|--------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> 21 以下 | <input type="checkbox"/> 45-54 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 22-34 | <input type="checkbox"/> 55-64 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 35-44 | <input type="checkbox"/> 65 以上 |

6. 你住在華埠多久? \_\_\_\_\_

a. 你住在這個房子多久? \_\_\_\_\_

7. 你現在工作嗎?  是  否  在找工作

a. 你的工作是什麼? \_\_\_\_\_

b. 你在哪里工作? (城市或区) \_\_\_\_\_

8. 你認為哪些社區問題是最重要的? 請選擇三項, 用 1-3 排列:

- |                  |              |
|------------------|--------------|
| ___ 就業機會         | ___ 環境保護     |
| ___ 房屋問題 (如: 租金) | ___ 交通問題     |
| ___ 健保制度         | ___ 治安       |
| ___ 教育           | ___ 其它 _____ |

CHINATOWN PARA EL DESARROLLO JUSTO  
ENCUESTA PARA EL DISTRITO MUNICIPAL #1



Gracias por llenar esta encuesta anónima. Estamos haciendo esta encuesta para entender mejor las prioridades de la comunidad de Chinatown y el Distrito Municipal #1. "Chinatown Para el Desarrollo Justo" ("CCED" por sus siglas en inglés) es una organización comunitaria manejado por voluntarios. Somos residentes, estudiantes, maestros y empresas unidos con el fin de mejorar Chinatown.

1. ¿Dónde nació usted? \_\_\_\_\_
2. ¿Cuál es su origen étnico? \_\_\_\_\_
3. ¿Cuál idioma habla? (favor de marcar todos que aplican)
  - inglés
  - español
  - chino
  - camboyano
  - vietnamita
  - otro \_\_\_\_\_
4. ¿Cuál es su género? \_\_\_\_\_
5. ¿Cuántos años tiene?
  - Menos de 21 años
  - 22-34
  - 35-44
  - 45-54
  - 55-64
  - Más de 65 años
6. ¿Cuánto tiempo viviendo en Chinatown? \_\_\_\_\_
  - a. ¿Cuánto tiempo tiene viviendo en su vivienda actual? \_\_\_\_\_
7. ¿Tiene empleo?  Sí  No  Estoy buscando trabajo
  - a. ¿En qué trabaja? \_\_\_\_\_
  - b. ¿Dónde trabaja? (la ciudad o el área) \_\_\_\_\_
8. Favor de elegir **las tres cosas** que más preocupan a Ud. (marque 1-3 por prioridad):
  - \_\_\_ Acceso al trabajo
  - \_\_\_ La vivienda y el alquiler
  - \_\_\_ El seguro de salud
  - \_\_\_ La educación
  - \_\_\_ El medioambiente
  - \_\_\_ El transporte
  - \_\_\_ La seguridad pública
  - \_\_\_ Otro [Favor de explicar...]

## Data Analysis

In order to analyze the survey results, we used the IBM SPSS software. Some of the results are included in our research. To simplify the findings and eliminate biases from the small sample size, we combined and expanded some of the survey ranges in our data analysis. For example, we used frequencies of 10 years for “Years Lived in Chinatown” in our data analysis to balance the categories. All the survey data analysis that we conducted is shown below.

Years Lived in Chinatown Categories					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	0 to 10 years	49	60	62	62
	10.1 to 20 years	21	26	27	89
	20.1 to 30 years	4	5	5	94
	30.1 to 40 years	2	2	3	96
	More than 40 years	3	4	4	100
	Total	79	96	100	
Missing	System	3	4		
Total		82	100		

Years Lived in Current Unit Category					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	0 to 10 years	50	61	69	69
	10.1 to 20 years	18	22	25	93
	20.1 to 30 years	2	2	3	96
	30.1 to 40 years	1	1	1	97
	More than 40 years	2	2	3	100
	Total	73	89	100	
Missing	System	9	11		
Total		82	100		

Statistics		
Most Important Issue		
N	Valid	81
	Missing	0
Mode		1
Range		7
Minimum		1

---

Maximum		8
---------	--	---

Most Important Issue					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Jobs	26	32	32	32
	Housing	13	16	16	48
	Healthcare	8	10	10	58
	Education	6	7	7	65
	Environment	4	5	5	70
	Transportation	8	10	10	80
	Public Safety	14	17	17	98
	Other	2	3	3	100
	Total	81	100	100	

---