



# Area Profile: Lower Manhattan

Asian American Federation of New York Census Information Center

## Introduction

This profile outlines characteristics and demographic trends in Lower Manhattan,<sup>1</sup> based on an analysis of 1990 and 2000 U.S. census data. Lower Manhattan is defined as the area of Manhattan south of Houston Street.

This document provides statistics on population growth, racial composition, immigration, citizenship, educational attainment, English language abilities, income, poverty, and housing. For context, Lower Manhattan's demographic patterns are compared with those of the general Manhattan population and, in some cases, New York City overall. In addition, references are made to Manhattan's Chinatown, which comprises more than half of Lower Manhattan's population and is one of the largest Asian American neighborhoods in New York City.

### Lower Manhattan Census Statistics At a Glance

| Population  |         |
|---|---------|
| 2000 Total Population   | 155,962 |
| 1990 Total Population   | 144,344 |
| Population Growth from 1990 to 2000                                     | 8%      |
| Immigration   |         |
| 2000 Total Foreign-Born Population                                      | 65,928  |
| Foreign-Born Percentage of General Population                           | 43%     |
| Educational Attainment (Adults 25 and Older)                            |         |
| Number of Adults Without a High School Diploma                          | 45,222  |
| Percentage of Adults Without a High School Diploma                      | 41%     |
| Number of Asian Adults Without a High School Diploma                    | 33,271  |
| Percentage of Asian Adults Without a High School Diploma                | 30%     |
| Limited English Proficiency (Speaks English "Not Well" or "Not at All") |         |
| Age 18-64   | 27,983  |
| 65 and Older  | 10,040  |
| Household Income  |         |
| Number of Households Earning Less Than \$20,000                         | 21,680  |
| Percentage of Households Earning Less Than \$20,000                     | 34%     |
| Number of Households Earning More Than \$100,000                        | 11,271  |
| Percentage of Households Earning More Than \$100,000                    | 18%     |
| Poverty   |         |
| Number of Individuals Living in Poverty                                 | 36,142  |
| Percentage of Total Population Living in Poverty                        | 24%     |
| Number of Elderly (Over the Age of 65) Living in Poverty                | 6,205   |
| Percent of Elderly Living in Poverty                                    | 29%     |
| Number of Children (Under 18) Living in Poverty                         | 8,391   |
| Percent of Children Living in Poverty                                   | 29%     |

Census information shows similarities and differences, with more of the latter, between the populations of Lower Manhattan and Manhattan overall. Among comparable traits in 2000, renters outnumbered homeowners, rent burdens were similar, and a majority of children attended public schools. On the other hand, as of the last census, Lower Manhattan had a different racial and ethnic mix, higher recent population growth, greater immigrant representation, and lower income, education and English skill levels than Manhattan as a whole.

## Population

From 1990 to 2000, the population in Lower Manhattan increased by 8 percent (from 144,334 to 155,962) – nearly three times the overall Manhattan growth rate of 3 percent during that time. Lower Manhattan's recent population expansion was concentrated in Battery Park City (at the southwestern tip of Lower Manhattan) and Chinatown (the central section of Lower Manhattan).

In 2000, nearly 10 percent of Manhattan's total population of 1,537,195 lived in Lower Manhattan.

Population trends in Lower Manhattan in the last decade varied across age groups. From 1990 to 2000, the number of children (under age 18) in the neighborhood decreased by 4 percent (1,198), from 29,100 to 27,902; the number of working-age adults (age 18 to 64) increased by 12 percent (11,473), from 94,642 to 106,115; and the elderly population (age 65 and older) rose by 7 percent (1,353), from 20,592 to 21,945.

The racial and ethnic composition of Lower Manhattan was very different from that of Manhattan as a whole in 2000. At 41 percent (63,620), Asians were the largest racial group in Lower Manhattan, followed by non-Hispanic whites (32 percent, or 49,288), Hispanics (19 percent, or 29,247), and blacks (6 percent, or 8,704). By contrast, Manhattan overall was composed of the following groups: non-Hispanic whites (46 percent), Hispanics (27 percent), blacks (15 percent) and Asians (9 percent).

## Immigration and Citizenship

Lower Manhattan in 2000 had a sizable immigrant population, much larger proportionally than in Manhattan overall and than in New York City as a whole. While the majority of Lower Manhattan residents (57 percent, or 88,935) were born in the United States, 43 percent (65,928) were foreign-born. Only 29 percent of all Manhattan residents and 36 percent of all New York City residents were foreign-born.

Close to half (45 percent, or 29,843) of Lower Manhattan's immigrants arrived in the United States in the last 10 years, compared with 42 percent of all Manhattan immigrants. The majority of Lower Manhattan immigrants came from mainland China (63 percent, or 41,765). The next-largest sources of foreign-born residents of Lower Manhattan were the Dominican Republic (7 percent, or 4,632); Hong Kong (5 percent, or 3,033); Malaysia (2 percent, or 1,516); and the United Kingdom (1 percent, or 957).

## Educational Attainment

Lower Manhattan adults generally were less educated than their Manhattan counterparts. 2000 census data reveal disparities at both ends of the educational spectrum.

At the lower end of the scale, 41 percent (45,222) of Lower Manhattan's total adult population did not have a high school diploma<sup>2</sup> —almost twice the 21 percent rate for all Manhattan adults. Of Lower Manhattan's non-high school graduates, the majority (74 percent, or 33,271) had less than a ninth-grade education. In fact, those who had not completed ninth grade represented 30 percent of the total adult population of Lower Manhattan, compared with 13 percent of all Manhattan adults.

At the upper end of the educational continuum, 45 percent (50,497) of Lower Manhattan adults had obtained post-secondary education, compared with 65 percent of the general Manhattan adult population.

Most children in Lower Manhattan (82 percent, or 19,131) were enrolled in the public school system,<sup>3</sup> compared with 75 percent of children in all of Manhattan.

## English Language Abilities

Limited English Proficiency (LEP) was a major issue in Lower Manhattan in 2000.<sup>4</sup> This classification applied to more than one-fourth (27 percent, or 40,212) of Lower Manhattan's total adult population — more than twice the overall Manhattan LEP rate of 12 percent and about the same as that for New York City (26 percent).

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### 27 percent of Lower Manhattan's population spoke English "Not well" or "Not at all."

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When broken down by age group, 26 percent (27,983) of Lower Manhattan's working-age adults and 46 percent (10,040) of the area's elderly residents spoke English "not well" or "not at all." These figures compared with 11 percent of working-age adults and 18 percent for senior citizens in Manhattan overall.

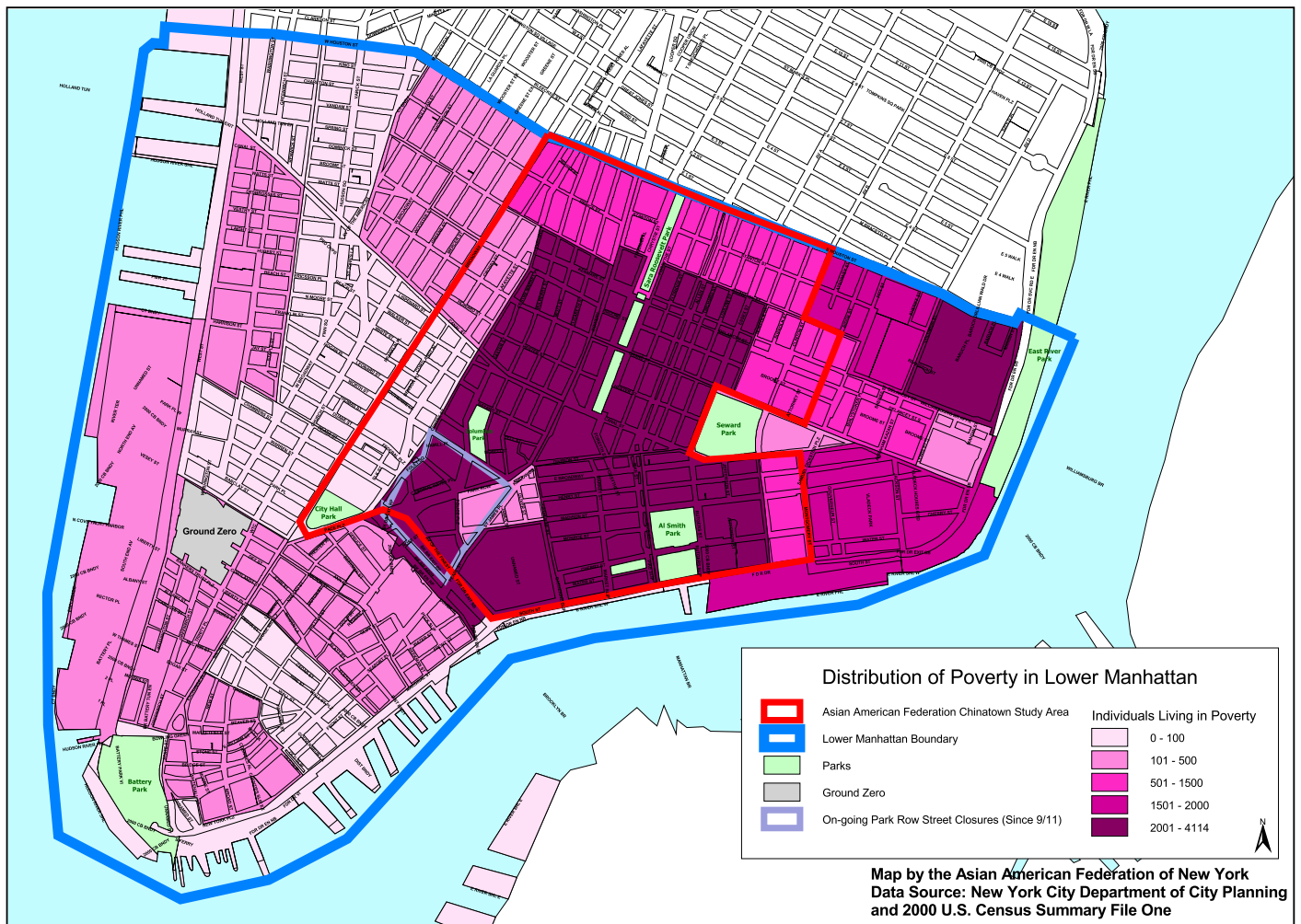
Speakers of Asian and Pacific Island languages<sup>5</sup> comprised the vast majority (83 percent, or 33,215) of the LEP population in Lower Manhattan, followed by Spanish speakers (15 percent, or 24,711).

## Household and Family Income

Household and family income patterns in Lower Manhattan varied from overall Manhattan patterns, with 2000 census data showing more low-income and fewer high-income households in Lower Manhattan than in the borough as a whole.<sup>6</sup>

Slightly more than one-third (34 percent, or 21,680) of Lower Manhattan households earned \$20,000 or less a year, compared with only one-fourth (25 percent) of all Manhattan households. At the other end of the income spectrum, 18 percent (11,271) of Lower Manhattan households earned more than \$100,000 a year, compared with 24 percent of all Manhattan households.

Family income patterns in Lower Manhattan coincided with household income characteristics. More than 30 percent (10,395) of Lower Manhattan families earned less than \$20,000 annually, compared with 24 percent of all Manhattan families. At the other end of the income scale, 19 percent (6,165) of Lower Manhattan families earned more than \$100,000, compared with 30 percent of all Manhattan families.



## Poverty

General and elderly poverty rates were higher in Lower Manhattan than in Manhattan overall, according to 2000 census data.<sup>7</sup>

Nearly one-fourth (24 percent, or 36,142) of all Lower Manhattanites lived below the poverty line, compared with an overall Manhattan poverty rate of one-fifth (20 percent). Most of those who live in poverty live in the Chinatown and Lower Eastside neighborhoods of Lower Manhattan.

One-third (8,391) of the children in Lower Manhattan lived in poverty, equal to the Manhattan child poverty rate. However, Lower Manhattan's poverty rate for senior citizens, at 29 percent (6,205), was significantly higher than Manhattan's overall elderly poverty rate of 19 percent.

## Housing

Housing patterns in Lower Manhattan corresponded with those of Manhattan overall in 2000. Of Lower Manhattan households, 83 percent were

rented and 17 percent were owned, compared with an 80 percent-20 percent renter-owner ratio for the borough at large.

## 55 percent of Lower Manhattan's residential population lives in Chinatown.

In terms of race, Asians comprised the largest group of renters in Lower Manhattan (41 percent or 57,990). The next-largest renter categories were non-Hispanic whites (24 percent, or 33,669); Hispanics (18 percent, or 25,265); Some Other Race<sup>8</sup> (8 percent, or 11,835); and blacks (5 percent, or 7,304).

Household turnover rates in Lower Manhattan over the last decade were relatively low and lower than for Manhattan overall, indicating residential stability. More than half (54 percent, or 34,467) of all households in Lower Manhattan were established from 1990 to March 2000, compared with 61 percent of Manhattan households. Moreover, 28 percent (17,993) of Lower Manhattan households in 2000



had remained in the same housing unit for 30 years or longer, compared with 25 percent of Manhattan households.

## Chinatown's Presence in Lower Manhattan

Home to more than half (55 percent, or 84,840) of Lower Manhattan residents, Chinatown was the largest neighborhood in Lower Manhattan in terms of population in 2000.

More than 60 percent (13,544) of Lower Manhattan households earning less than \$15,000 a year were in Chinatown. Out of these low-income households, 61 percent (6,528) were headed by Asian Americans.

As detailed in an Asian American Federation Census Information Center profile on Chinatown (at <http://www.aafny.org/cic/>), census data depict Chinatown as a largely Asian American immigrant neighborhood, characterized by lower income, education and English skill levels, as well as greater poverty and dependence on rental housing, than the overall New York City population.

## Footnotes

<sup>1</sup> All numbers are from the Summary Files (SF) One, Two, Three and Four of the U.S. census. However, please note that SF One and SF Two refer to information collected from a 100 percent U.S. population survey whereas SF Three and Four data represent a sample survey.

<sup>2</sup> For education tabulations, adults are defined as individuals age 25 and older.

<sup>3</sup> The school system is defined as a combination of kindergarten, grade school, middle school and high school.

<sup>4</sup> Limited English Proficiency is defined by census categories as speaking English “not well” or “not at all.”

<sup>5</sup> Due to how the Census Bureau groups languages, all South Asian languages are excluded in the Asian and Pacific Island language category.

<sup>6</sup> Household income refers to the income of all occupants of a housing unit. Family income refers to the earnings of a group of two or more people (one of whom is the householder) related by birth, marriage or adoption, and residing together.

<sup>7</sup> Families and individuals are classified as below the poverty line if their total family income or unrelated individual income was less than the poverty threshold specified for the applicable family size, age of householder, and number of related children under 18 present in 1999. For these thresholds, please see <http://www.census.gov/hhes/poverty/threshld/thresh99.html>.

<sup>8</sup> “Some Other Race” includes all responses not included in the “white,” “black or African American,” “American Indian or Alaska native,” “Asian,” and “Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander” race categories. Respondents providing such write-in entries as “multiracial,” “mixed,” “interracial,” or a Hispanic/Latino group (e.g., Mexican, Puerto Rican or Cuban) in the “Some Other Race” write-in space are included in this category.

## Technical Notes

### Race Categories

The 2000 census was the first decennial census in which respondents were allowed to mark more than one race. As a consequence, Census 2000 race information is far more complicated than such data from previous censuses. For example, 2000 data include results for single-race as well as multiple-race responses. “Asian Alone” corresponds to the respondents who reported exactly one Asian group and no other Asian group or race category. “Alone” should be considered the minimum population size in any analysis that uses Census 2000 data. “Alone or in Any Combination” corresponds to the responses (not respondents) that included the selected Asian group, either alone or in any combination with other Asian groups or other race categories. If a respondent selected more than one Asian group (e.g., Korean and Chinese), that individual was tallied in the total for each Asian group. Hence, some overlap in the “In Combination” numbers occurred. “Alone or in Any Combination” should be considered the maximum population size in any analysis that uses Census 2000 data.

The Census Bureau has advised that due to the changes in 2000, race information for 1990 and 2000 is not directly comparable. If a comparison must be made, the bureau recommends using a range from the “Asian Alone, One Group” total to the “Asian Alone or in Combination” tally. However, for some socioeconomic categories, such as those regarding education levels, citizenship status, income, housing, poverty and language abilities, the bureau only tabulated data for the “Asian Alone” population.

## About This Profile

This is one of a series of neighborhood and Asian American population profiles prepared by the Asian American Federation of New York Census Information Center (CIC) to increase understanding of the rapidly growing and diverse Asian American population in New York City.

The Asian American Federation of New York is a nonprofit leadership organization that works collaboratively to meet the critical needs of Asian Americans in the New York metropolitan area. The Federation strengthens community-based health and social services capacity by supporting its 35 member agencies and other grassroots organizations; amplifies the Asian American civic voice by defining, analyzing, and advocating for policies to address key community issues; and encourages strategic, high-impact philanthropy within the Asian American community by increasing opportunities for connecting time, talent and financial resources with pressing community needs.

Data citations from this profile should include the following acknowledgment: “Data derived from analysis by the Asian American Federation Census Information Center.”

## For More Information

For more information regarding this profile, please contact Andrew Yan, Data Manager, Asian American Federation of New York Census Information Center, at (212) 344-5878 x19 or [andrew@aafny.org](mailto:andrew@aafny.org), or visit [www.aafny.org/cic/](http://www.aafny.org/cic/).

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