

San Francisco Housing Crisis for Filipinx Elderly

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Contemporary Filipinx immigration waves in the United States can begin as early as 1899 during the United States annexation of the Philippines (Batalova & Gallardo, 2020). By the 1920s, forty Filipinx merchant marines purchased land in the South Park neighborhood in San Francisco, CA (SOMA PILIPINAS, 2018a). This neighborhood would become SOMA Pilipinas, San Francisco's officially recognized Filipinx Cultural Heritage District (SOMA PILIPINAS, 2018a). For Filipinx Elderly, ages 65 years and older, living in the City of San Francisco, the most prevalent public health issue is the lack of affordable housing from San Francisco's high cost of living.

The Nature and Extent of the Housing Crisis

The Priority Population

San Francisco has a large population of Filipinx elders living in the city. Persons 65 years and older make up almost 15% of the city's total population (United States Census Bureau, 2019a). People 65 years and older make up a quarter of the Filipinx American population nationwide (Batalova & Gallardo, 2020). Filipinx has the highest proportion of recent immigration status since half of the national population identifies as immigrants (Rosas et al., 2015). 250,000 Filipinx nationwide are World War II veterans (Nadal, 2020, p. 6). About one-third of San Francisco veterans are born outside of the United States; this includes Filipinx veterans (United States Census Bureau, 2019a).

Asian Americans are a prevalent population among the homeless, living without a home, in the city. They make up almost one-third of the homeless population (Petry et al., 2019). Since 3% of Asian Americans youth experience homelessness, they are less likely to experience homelessness compared to the elderly and veterans (Petry et al., 2019, p. 35). Because 6% of

Asian American veterans and elderly experience homelessness, they are most likely to experience homelessness among the city's Asian American population (Petry et al., 2019, p. 40).

In contrast to Filipinx communities around the world, Filipinx in San Francisco has participated in solidarity events like the Third World Liberation Movement strikes and protests to protect the International Hotel (SOMA PILIPINAS, 2018a). These events demonstrate how San Francisco is a symbol of social justice and cultural perseverance for Filipinx Americans.

Location

The San Francisco Bay Area has one of the most expensive housing markets in the United States of America. The median value of a home in San José, CA is \$763,000; this is significantly higher than the United States national median value of \$204,900 (United States Census Bureau, 2019b). These numbers demonstrate the high costs of living in neighborhooding areas near San Francisco. The median value of a San Francisco home is \$1,009,500 (United States Census Bureau, 2019a). Since San Francisco's housing costs are significantly more expensive than the national median value of a home, this indicates the magnitude and severity of the housing crisis in the city because almost 60% of its residents choose to rent (Portacolone & Halpern, 2016).

Health Problem

SOMA Pilipinas was one of the most affordable areas to rent in apartment units in San Francisco. In the 1960s, Filipinx paid fifty dollars to rent a private room in San Francisco's International Hotel for a month (Tagle, 2017). Yet, SOMA Pilipinas and neighboring areas lost four thousand affordable units for low-income populations. (Tagle, 2017). As population density increases, the median value of a home has grown by more than 70% since 2012 (Jackson, 2016).

Since home value has significantly increased in the last few years, Filipinx elderly cannot afford to purchase a home. Almost 60% of San Francisco homeless indicate they cannot afford rent (Portacolone & Halpern, 2016). 34% of Asians experience homelessness (Petry et al., 2019, p. 16). These are significantly high compared to the 5% of homeless Asians nationwide (Petry et al., 2019, p. 16). Since almost half of the Filipinx elderly are food insecure, this demonstrates how housing makes up a large portion of their income (Jih et al., 2018). These factors lead to a housing crisis because of the lack of government outreach for the population.

Factors Contributing to the Housing Crisis

Systemic and Environmental Factors

Filipinx elderly are unaware of the eligible government programs they can use. In San Francisco, less than 10% of the occupants in senior housing are Asians (Portacolone & Halpern, 2016). These emphasize how there is minimal government outreach to assist Filipinx immigrants (Jih et al., 2018, p. 5). Furthermore, the city government has minimum rent regulation with Proposition 13. This policy limits property taxes on homeowners (Portacolone & Halpern, 2016). Yet, this allows landlords to fluctuate rent prices and increase rent for low-income Filipinx elders.

The priority population experiences uncertainty when they pay for rent. The annual average cost for a single older renter to afford housing and other living essentials in San Francisco is about \$31,000 (City and County of San Francisco Human Services Agency, 2020). Almost 75% of San Francisco Filipinx elderly reported a household income of less than \$30,000 a year (Jih et al., 2018). These demonstrate how the priority population earns less than the minimum annual income to afford housing and other living essentials.

Individual Factors

Filipinx is less likely to obtain a high-paying job because of the lack of formal education and language barriers. About 70% of Filipinx elderly earn an education less than or equivalent to a high school diploma (Jih et al., 2018). Although almost all of the priority population speak Tagalog at home, about half of them speak limited English proficiency (Jih et al., 2018). Since Filipinx elders have difficulty communicating with others, this increases their loneliness and self-isolation.

The Impact of the Housing Crisis

Quality of Life

The housing crisis impacts Filipinx elders' quality of life. In the short-term, about 75% of Filipinx elderly reported moderate levels of anxiety; more than 65% of Filipinx reported dissatisfaction with their lives (Taghiabadi et al., 2017). Factors that impact the priority population's mental health include ill health, loss of independence, loneliness, and feeling worthlessness (Taghiabadi et al., 2017). As they become less visible in community involvement, elders accept they cannot contribute to the community as the elderly previously did when they were younger (Portacolone & Halpern, 2016). Almost 60% of Filipinx elderly live alone (Jih et al., 2018). These lead to social isolation because they lose their physical independence and become a burden to their local community.

Medical Coverage

Filipinx elderly do not qualify for Medicare because it does not cover long-term care for Americans 65 years or older (Portacolone & Halpern, 2016). This policy impacts their emotional health because of the anxiety associated with financial insecurity (Taghiabadi et al., 2017). Since they cannot get Medicare coverage, this impacts the population's financial ability to maintain

their physical health and possibly decrease their life expectancy of almost 84 years old (Wu et al., 2019).

Comorbidities

Filipinx elderly have the highest rate of diabetes among Asian Americans; about 30% of the population report at least one diabetic complication (Karter et al., 2015). Long-term effects of a single room unit include relying on food distribution services for vegetables and fruit to manage their preexisting conditions (Jih et al., 2018). With the lack of a full kitchen, the priority population lacks the equipment needed to make healthy meals at home.

Promising Approaches for Improved Results

SOMA Pilipinas is the cultural area for Filipinx elders. Significant organizations or community assets for the priority population include South of Market Community Action Network (SOMCAN), Pilipino Senior Resource Center (PSRC), and Bill Sorro Housing Program (SOMA PILIPINAS, 2018b). The organizations demonstrate strengths in Filipinx cultural values like spirituality, family, upward social mobility, and social relationships (Domingo et al., 2018). Government assets for the population include food stamps, WIC services, and County Adult Assistance programs (Petry et al., 2019). A gold standard for the housing crisis is the 1977 social advocacy protests to protect the International Hotel's affordable housing units in San Francisco (SOMA PILIPINAS, 2018b).

Conclusion

Filipinx have lived in San Francisco since the 1920s (SOMA PILIPINAS, 2018a). The housing crisis in the city is a result of increasing housing prices and a lack of affordable housing. Despite the high cost of living, Filipinx elders, 65 years or older, can find solutions in social justice advocacy and policy changes to fix the housing crisis.

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