

New Research Reveals Racial Profiling Among Scientists of Chinese Descent and the Consequences for the U.S. Scientific Community

New York, NY and Tucson, AZ (October 28, 2021) -- Committee of 100, a non-profit membership organization of prominent Chinese Americans, and the University of Arizona, one of the leading research universities in the country, unveiled findings today from a joint research project that focused on race and ethnicity in science and research.

The white paper *“Racial Profiling Among Scientists of Chinese Descent and Consequences for the U.S. Scientific Community”* showcases the survey results and data which demonstrate a consistent pattern of racial profiling in science and research. Scientists of Chinese descent and of Asian descent report far greater racial profiling from the U.S. government, difficulty in obtaining research funds, professional challenges and setbacks, and fear and anxiety that they are surveilled by the U.S. government, compared to non-Asian scientists.

Committee of 100 and the University of Arizona administered a nationwide blind survey to scientists both of Chinese and non-Chinese descent including faculty, postdocs, graduate students at top U.S. colleges and universities over the Summer of 2021. The final sample consisted of 1,949 scientists across the country.

The survey data also shows that the China Initiative is producing a wave of fear among scientists of non-Chinese descent as well, where scientists have described cutting ties with their collaborators in China, no longer hiring Chinese postdocs, and limiting communications with scholars in China, even at the expense of their own research projects.

Scientists of Chinese descent indicate in the survey that they have purposely not pursued federal funding for projects for fear of increased scrutiny, compared to scientists of non-Chinese descent. This can lead to smaller teams, downsizing of projects, and working with reduced resources. Scientists of Chinese descent have also started to consider working in less hostile climates outside the U.S., which could affect talent retention. The enrollment of new international graduate students from China has already been declining.

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“What is clear from this research is that U.S. scientists and researchers of Chinese descent and non-Chinese descent experience the world and their work very differently because of racism, stereotypes, xenophobia, and government policies,” said Dr. Jenny J. Lee, Professor in the Center for the Study of Higher Education, College of Education, at the University of Arizona. “We thank the Committee of 100 for teaming with us at the University of Arizona to help shed light on a significant issue that directly impacts how research across the U.S. is conducted and advanced.”

“The U.S. is the global leader in scientific research, yet suspicions of scientists of Chinese descent in the U.S. have made progress and exchange more difficult,” said Zheng Yu Huang, President of Committee of 100. “Government policies have a direct correlation with and impact on advancements in life-saving innovation and technological breakthroughs. We need to move beyond the stereotypes of the perpetual foreigner and halt the xenophobia being directed at Chinese Americans and the entire AAPI community. We at Committee of 100 want to thank Dr. Jenny Lee and the University of Arizona for collaborating with us on important work that showcases the deleterious impact of racial profiling in science and research.”

Key data points pulled from the report:

- Overall, scientists of Chinese descent and non-Chinese descent both recognize the value of scientists of Chinese descent and support collaboration with China. 96.8% of scientists of Chinese descent and 93.6% of scientists of non-Chinese descent believe that scientists of Chinese descent make important contributions to research and teaching programs in the U.S.
- 42.2% of scientists of Chinese descent feel racially profiled by the U.S. government, while only 8.6% of scientists of non-Chinese descent feel so.
- 38.4% of scientists of Chinese descent experience more difficulty in obtaining funding for research projects in the U.S. as a result of their race/ethnicity/country of origin, compared to only 14.2% of scientists of non-Chinese descent.
- 50.7% of scientists of Chinese descent feel considerable fear and/or anxiety that they are being surveilled by the U.S. government, compared to only 11.7% of scientists of non-Chinese descent.
- 39.7% of scientists of Chinese descent believe the U.S. should be tougher on China to prevent the theft of intellectual property, while 74.8% of scientists of non-Chinese descent feel so.

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- Among those who had reported conducting research that involves China over the past 3 years, a higher percentage of the scientists of Chinese over non-Chinese descent reported limiting communication with collaborators in China (40.6% vs. 12.8%), deciding not to involve China in future projects (23.8% vs. 5.8%), and deciding not to work with collaborators in China in the future projects (23.2% vs. 9.7%).
- Among those whose research with China was prematurely suspended over the past three years, 78.5% of scientists of Chinese descent wanted to distance themselves from collaborators in China due to the China Initiative, compared to 27.3% of scientists of non-Chinese descent.
- Among non-U.S. citizen scientists in the sample, 42.1% of the scientists of Chinese descent indicate that the FBI investigations and/or the China Initiative affected their plans to stay in the U.S., while only 7.1% of the scientists of non-Chinese descent report so.

Dr. David Ho, Scientific Director, Aaron Diamond AIDS Research Center; Director, Wu Family China Center; Professor of Medicine and Microbiology & Immunology at Columbia University Vagelos College of Physicians and Surgeons; and Committee of 100 Member, stated about the research findings, “Scientific and educational exchanges are enormously beneficial to both U.S. and China. Full stop. Any unwarranted restriction or deterrent to open collaborations impedes scientific progress and technological development on both sides of the Pacific. Like so many other scientists, educators, and institutions of higher learning, I strongly urge our government to terminate the China Initiative. This initiative is deeply flawed not only because of its racist bent but also because it strangles the spirit of scientific research. For decades, American science and engineering have depended heavily on talent from abroad, including those from China. There is no doubt that the China Initiative is driving Chinese talent away from the U.S. and damaging our overall competitiveness.”

Quotes submitted by survey participants:

“Even though I do not work in a sensitive field nor do I deal with any privileged or proprietary information, I am increasingly hesitant to interact or collaborate with scientists from China for fear it may be misconstrued by overzealous authorities as a conflict of national interest.”
(Chinese American Associate Professor, Biophysics)

“I am less willing to pursue and be involved in research funded by federal or state government agencies as such research may attract special and unjustified scrutiny by the government authorities.” (Chinese Associate Professor, Environmental Science)

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“As a Chinese professor who is trained and has been working in the U.S. for nearly 20 years, these investigations and restrictions against Chinese scholars make me feel unwelcome and somewhat discriminated and I sometimes feel my Chinese identity may be the limiting factor for my career advancement in the U.S. In the past few years, I felt for the first time since I have been in the U.S. that Chinese scientists are not valued as much as before and politics is intervening academic freedom. This makes me seriously consider moving to China if the current trend continues or even worsens.” (Chinese Associate Professor, Chemistry)

“We don’t do anything wrong. Science has no borders. International collaborations should be encouraged. But under the DOJ China Initiative, who knows what will happen?” (Chinese American Professor, Mathematics)

To read the full research findings, visit <https://www.committee100.org/initiatives/racial-profiling-among-scientists-of-chinese-descent-and-consequences-for-the-us-scientific-community/>

About Committee of 100

Committee of 100 is a non-profit U.S. leadership organization of prominent Chinese Americans in business, government, academia, healthcare, and the arts focused on public policy engagement, civic engagement, and philanthropy. For over 30 years, Committee of 100 has served as a preeminent organization committed to the dual missions of promoting the full participation of Chinese Americans in all aspects of American life and constructive relations between the United States and Greater China. Visit <https://www.committee100.org/> or follow Committee of 100 on [LinkedIn](#), [Twitter](#) and [Facebook](#) for more information.

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