2024 Project Lighthouse Update

Airbnb's Work to Fight Discrimination and Make Travel More Open to All

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Contents

About Airbnb

Airbnb was born in 2007 when two hosts welcomed three guests to their San Francisco home, and has since grown to over 5 million hosts who have welcomed over 2 billion guest arrivals in almost every country across the globe. Every day, hosts offer unique stays and experiences that make it possible for guests to connect with communities in a more authentic way.

A Message from Laura W. Murphy

In 2016, I began working with the team at Airbnb on a range of products and initiatives to fight discrimination and bias in the Airbnb community. Two years ago in a similar update, I praised Airbnb's tenacity and commitment to tackling these difficult issues.

Today, I am pleased to report that the company's commitment has only grown stronger. Airbnb understands that bias and discrimination can be an unfortunate reality in our society. By deploying its groundbreaking Project Lighthouse tool, the company has been able to gain insights and implement products, policies, and initiatives that have made measurable differences in creating more equitable experiences for all Airbnb users. As this update notes, the ability to book has improved for guests from all perceived racial groups and the largest disparity—between guests perceived to be Black and those perceived to be white—has narrowed significantly.

Through this work, Airbnb has presented a powerful example of how to design products and build a community that is more welcoming for everyone. It's the right thing to do and it's good for business.

As I continue to work with civil rights groups and other stakeholders, they tell me what I have observed firsthand—this is what ongoing commitment looks like. It involves fidelity and understanding from the highest levels of the company, dedicated staff, and the resources to experiment, iterate, and implement practices that create meaningful changes. In addition, Airbnb has developed longstanding and consistent relationships with civil rights groups and other stakeholders that have brought tremendous clarity to this work.

Of course, it is essential to work against the disparities that still exist, but I remain confident that the Airbnb team will continue to innovate and build on its longstanding work to make the Airbnb community more open, equitable, and accessible for everyone.

—Laura W. Murphy

Introduction

Airbnb got its start in 2007 as a way for our co-founders to make rent. Since then, we have grown to become a global community across 220+ countries and regions with over 5 million hosts. Every night, millions of people stay in an Airbnb, fostering cross-cultural connections and understanding, and we recently welcomed our two billionth guest arrival—with one billion of those taking place in just the last three years.

We're focused on making our platform better for everyone and have made 535 updates to our service over the last three years to redesign Airbnb for hosts and guests. Among these updates are changes informed by Project Lighthouse, a tool we use in the United States that was developed in partnership with leading civil rights and privacy organizations. Launched in 2020, Project Lighthouse helps us measure and uncover potential disparities in how users of different perceived races may experience our platform.

Discrimination and bias have no place on Airbnb and, starting with undergoing one of the first civil rights audits in 2016, we have taken a number of steps to fight discrimination and make travel more open to all. This includes implementing the Airbnb Community Commitment, changing when guest profile photos are displayed to hosts, and establishing a permanent team to provide anti-discrimination and equity guidance in collaboration with teams across the company. We regularly report on our progress by issuing updates regarding our work.

This update includes information about our data-driven approach to fighting discrimination, making it easier for everyone to book a listing, and details about some of the initiatives we have implemented that make Airbnb more open and accessible to everyone.

Data from Project Lighthouse shows that, thanks in part to changes we have implemented, the "booking success rate" has improved for guests from all perceived racial groups and the disparities between all perceived racial groups have been reduced, supporting more bookings for all. This is important progress and we remain committed to our work to make travel more open to all and help everyone be successful on Airbnb.

Part One: Improving the Booking Success Rate for Everyone

Two years ago we shared data from Project Lighthouse measuring the rate at which guests in the US from different perceived racial groups have their reservations confirmed after they click "Reserve." We call this the booking success rate.[1]

Our analysis found the following for US-based eligible guests:

- In 2021, guests from all perceived racial groups had booking success rates above 90 percent but the rate varied depending on a guest's perceived race.

- The widest disparity existed between guests perceived to be Black and guests perceived to be white.

- Guests perceived to be Black were able to successfully book the stay of their choice 91.4 percent of the time, versus 94.1 percent for guests perceived to be white.
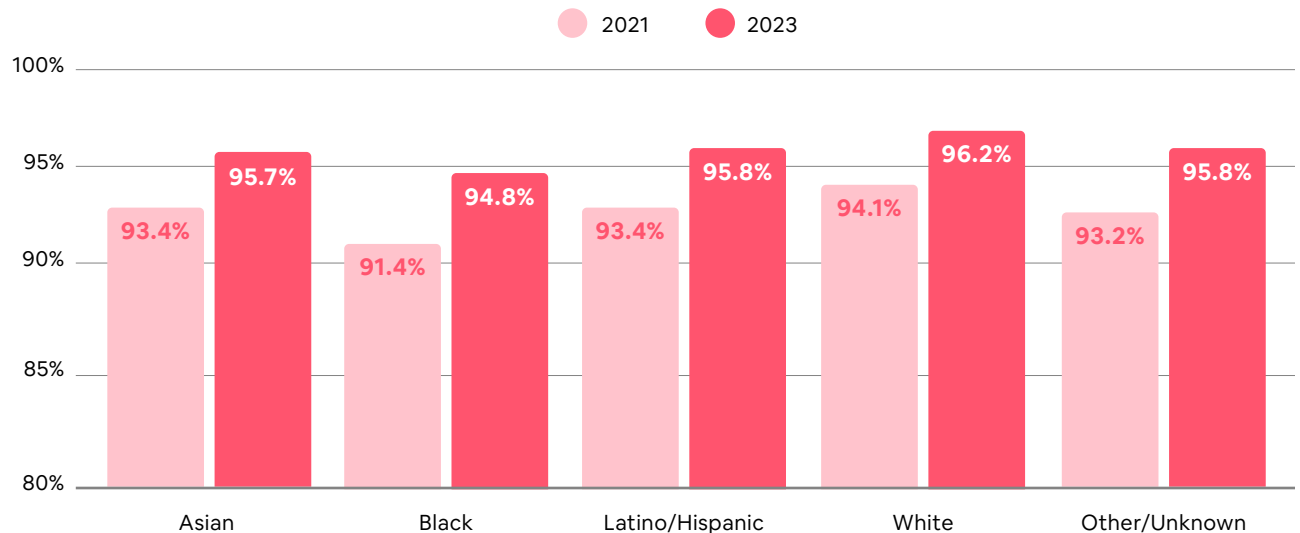
Since then, the booking success rate has improved for guests from all perceived racial groups:

- In 2023, all guests had a booking success rate above 94 percent, an increase for all groups since 2021.

- All groups now have a higher booking success rate than the highest rate in 2021 and disparities between all groups were meaningfully reduced.

- The largest disparity in 2021, between guests perceived to be Black and guests perceived to be white, was nearly cut in half—narrowing from 2.7 percentage points to 1.4 percentage points. In 2023, guests perceived to be Black were able to successfully book the stay of their choice 94.8 percent of the time, versus 96.2 percent for guests perceived to be white.

- We believe updates informed by Project Lighthouse have supported hundreds of thousands of bookings in the US over two years.

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[1] The booking success rate is the rate at which US-based eligible guests from different perceived racial backgrounds successfully book an Airbnb listing, and includes both reservations made through Instant Book and Request to Book.

Booking Success Rate Increasing for All Groups

Since 2021, the booking success rate has improved for guests from all perceived racial groups and disparities between all groups were meaningfully reduced.

The improvement in the booking success rate is the product of a number of factors, including initiatives we have implemented over the last 18 months, including but not limited to:

- **Making Instant Book accessible to more people.** Instant Book—a feature that allows guests to book a listing without requiring hosts to approve a reservation request—is an important tool that can help reduce potential discrimination in the booking process by supporting more objective bookings. Some hosts turn on settings that only allow Instant Book for guests that have 100 percent of their past stays reviewed as "host recommended." Recent changes that allow for a more holistic definition of a positive track record on Airbnb have helped increase the number of guests successfully booking reservations via Instant Book.

- **Helping hosts manage and accept more booking requests.** New steps that help hosts respond to booking requests in a timely manner also increased the booking success rate. These changes include making pending reservation requests more prominent for hosts. This decreased the number of reservation requests that previously went unanswered, effectively increasing the number of guests who successfully book a place to stay.

While any disparity is unacceptable, we are encouraged to see improvements in the booking success rate for all users. We are committed to building on this progress and will continue to use data to design products that make Airbnb more open to all.

Part Two: Ongoing Initiatives to Fight Discrimination and Make Travel More Open to All

Fighting discrimination and bias is a cross functional effort at Airbnb. Our dedicated Anti-Discrimination and Equity team works with teams across the company to ensure our products, policies, and initiatives help make Airbnb better for everyone.

Helping guests build a positive reputation on Airbnb

Airbnb is built on trust and we have made changes that make it easier for people to build a positive reputation in the Airbnb community, including:

- Making it easier for guests to add co-travelers with Airbnb accounts to their reservation, enabling these co-travelers to receive a review even if they did not book the stay. In 2022, we shared that our Lighthouse analysis found guests perceived to be Black or Latino/Hispanic had a lower presence of reviews than guests perceived to be white or Asian. Guests who have reviews are more likely to successfully book a listing than guests without reviews. Our improvements make it easier for more guests to receive a review.

- Updating profiles to foster more connections between the people who make up the global Airbnb community and build trust by giving hosts and guests the opportunity to share information such as their hobbies and interests and get to know each other better.

Supporting hosts and guests before, during, and after their stay

We want everyone who uses Airbnb to always feel welcome and respected. To help achieve this goal, we have implemented a series of changes, including:

- Supporting hosts and guests who go by a name other than their legal name. After confirming their legal name, hosts and guests can display their preferred name on their profiles.

- Improving the process for hosts or guests who report being identified by the incorrect pronouns in a review. If a host or guest expresses this concern, the pronoun is replaced with the user's preferred name.

Strengthening our policies and procedures

We always seek to refine our policies and implement initiatives that make Airbnb easier to use for everyone. Notable changes include:

- Refining the process by which hosts decline a reservation request. Hosts are asked to share more specific details about why they cannot accept a booking request and the updated process will help inform hosts about acceptable and unacceptable reasons

for rejecting a booking request. These changes make it easier for Airbnb to under-stand why requests are not approved so over time we can improve our systems and help more guests successfully book a listing that works for them.

- **Updating our Non-Discrimination Policy** to make the policy more effective and incor-porating new protections against caste discrimination.

- Implementing a series of changes to help enhance fairness when a host cancels an existing reservation, including policies that require hosts to share more information and evidence about why they are canceling a reservation and stricter penalties for hosts who cancel reservations in certain circumstances.

Sharing more information about economic empowerment opportunities available on Airbnb

Airbnb is an economic empowerment tool for millions of people around the world, and we continue to implement a range of initiatives to help more people from communities of color access the economic benefits of hosting on Airbnb. This includes:

- Expanding the **Airbnb Entrepreneurship Academy**, which introduces people from diverse and historically underrepresented communities to hosting on our platform in partnership with organizations including Hispanic Wealth Project, Brotherhood Crusade, and United Spinal Association.

- Ongoing participation in Operation HOPE's 1 Million Black Businesses (1MBB) initiative, which provides support and coaching for Black entrepreneurs to start, grow, or scale their businesses.

- Proactive outreach to communities of color including social media campaigns with influencers from the Latino and Black communities, and additional investments to reach Spanish-speaking hosts and guests.

Airbnb is constantly working to bring people together and foster connection and belong-ing. We will continue to measure the effectiveness of our work to build a more open and equitable community.

Conclusion

There is no finish line and our work is not done. As we continue to explore opportunities to make Airbnb more inclusive and address disparities in the booking success rate, we will continue to work closely with partners like Asian Americans Advancing Justice – AAJC, LULAC, NAACP, and National Action Network. The guidance and feedback we have received from our partners—along with our hosts and guests—will continue to be essential to the success of these efforts.

Airbnb is always evolving and growing. Over the last three years, Airbnb has made more than 535 updates—including over 100 this year alone—to support and grow our community. As this company-wide work continues, our permanent Anti-Discrimination and Equity team will remain deeply engaged with the engineers, designers, and data scientists who are building these upgrades, working with colleagues across the company to ensure our new tools make Airbnb even more equitable.

We are grateful to the countless individuals and organizations who have supported our work and we are committed to doing even more to create a community where everyone can feel welcome.