Asians in the St. Louis Region

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An Overview: Asians in the U.S.

The Asian-American population in the U.S. can be classified into those: 1) born in the U.S.; 2) who immigrated to the U.S.; and 3) who came to the U.S. as refugees.

Asians in the U.S. either have Asian ancestry or themselves emigrated from 48 countries in six regions of Asia. In 2014, 5.4% of the U.S. population self-identified as Asian.¹

Asians in the St. Louis Region

Missouri has a smaller Asian-American population than the U.S. as a whole, with only 1.9% of the total population identifying as Asian-American (see Figure 1).²

St. Louis County has a larger Asian population than either Missouri or St. Louis City, with 4.0% of its population identifying as Asian American in 2014.³ As can be seen in Figure 2, several townships in St. Louis County experienced a significant increase in their Asian-American population between 2000 and 2010.⁴ This group tends to reside in areas with top public schools, including the Parkway, Clayton, and Rockwood school districts in St. Louis County.⁵

St. Louis City and St. Charles County also have a larger Asian population than does the state of Missouri, yet surrounding more rural counties have much smaller populations of Asian-Americans (see Figure 1).⁶

Current Health and Access Challenges

Although many Asian-Americans are said to be doing well in terms of their health and socioeconomic status, certain subgroups have had trouble accessing appropriate healthcare. This includes new immigrants, refugees arriving from impoverished and war-torn regions of the world, and the elderly, especially those who came to the U.S. later in life.⁷ Common challenges for these Asian subgroups include:

- Language barriers
- Cultural attitudes and beliefs about health that differ from mainstream U.S. society, including preferences for alternative medicine

Figure 1. Asian-American population in the St. Louis region in 2014

Figure 2. The Asian-American population in St. Louis County townships in 2000 and 2010
Barriers to obtaining health insurance
Immigration status

Health conditions that are most challenging for Asian Americans in the U.S. include:

- Cancer, heart disease, and stroke, with advancing age being a major risk factor
- Breast and prostate cancer, which are the most commonly diagnosed cancers among Asian women and men, respectively
- Tuberculosis and stomach cancer, which are more common among Asians than among the general population

**Opportunities for Collaboration with Asian Populations in St. Louis**

Several well-established organizations are working to improve the health and quality of life of Asian-Americans in St. Louis and to increase the cultural understanding of St. Louis healthcare providers. These include the:

- Japan-America Society of St. Louis
- Organization of Chinese Americans St. Louis
- St. Louis Chinese Academy
- St. Louis Chinese Language School
- Thai Association of Greater St. Louis
- Taiwanese American Citizens League, St. Louis Chapter
- Midwest Chinese American Science & Technology Association
- Korean American Association of St. Louis
- St. Louis Modern Chinese School
- Filipino-American Association of Missouri
- Asian American Chamber of Commerce
- St. Louis Chinese Culture Center
- Asian American Saint Louis Network
- Taiwanese Association of America--St. Louis

These organizations offer linkage and referrals to healthcare providers and social service organizations, host events to promote cultural heritage, and provide advocacy for Asian-American groups in St. Louis. Furthermore, some schools in St. Louis teach the Mandarin Chinese language using an immersion curriculum.

**St. Louis Asian-American Community Research Needs**

Pressing research questions that would benefit from attention by researchers are:

- How effective are alternative medical approaches that are used by Asian-Americans in the treatment of cancer?
- Can the alternative cancer treatments used by some Asian-Americans be used in concert with conventional cancer treatments (e.g., chemotherapy and radiation therapy)?
- In what ways can healthcare and social service access be improved for Asian Americans living in the St. Louis region?

For more information or to schedule a consultation with the Center for Community-Engaged Research or the Community Advisory Board, please contact Hilary Broughton at hbrought@dom.wustl.edu or 314-362-7034.

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Ibid.

Ibid.