Understanding Asian American Diversity & Growth

A Community Profile in Montgomery County, PA
Report Executive Summary

December 2025

This report explores the strengths, challenges, and identity of the Asian American population in Montgomery County, Pennsylvania. As the county becomes more racially diverse, County and local governments and stakeholders have a limited understanding of this complex population. Despite their significant contributions, their needs often go unnoticed.

Ganesh Festival Bharatiya Temple

In addition to improving understanding of the Asian American community, the project aimed to build community engagement, highlight local leadership, and provide a foundation for future initiatives.
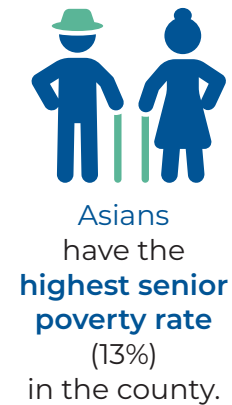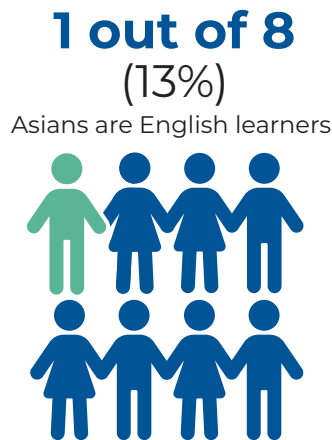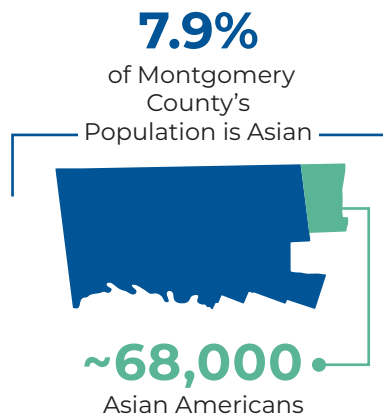
Commissioned by the Asian American Coalition for Health and Human Services, the project was funded by an award made possible by Montgomery County's allocation of the ARPA-SLFRF Program and the Montgomery County Recovery Office. It received fiscal and administrative support from Health Spark Foundation. Consultants Sojourner Consultingand Solutions International designed and carried out the study.
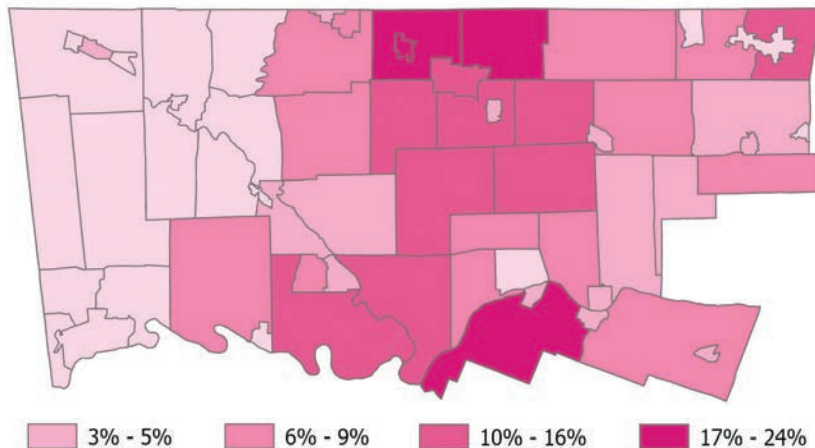
Methodology

After an initial phase to confirm project goals, the project team created a plan to collect data in ways which would also lay the groundwork for future action. A mixed-methods approach included the following activities:

Phase	Discovery: Assessing the Landscape (Mar to Nov 2023)	Data Collection I: Understanding Ethnic Identities (Dec to May 2024)	Data Collection II: Pan-Asian and Thematic Deep Dives (Jun to Oct 2024)
Data Sources	· Review of existing research; · (11) County and (10) community leader interviews identified common goals; · High-level demographic data (U.S. Census Bureau)	· Detailed demographic data (U.S. Census Bureau); · Community leaders hosted (12) ethnic-focused focus groups; · Participant surveys	· Community leaders hosted (6) thematic focus groups which included County resource education; · Participant surveys
Benefits of Approach	Confirmed project goals of improving population understanding for increased engagement and inclusion, and increased organizing capacity.	Building upon community connections, using local leaders, and sharing stories helped increase engagement and build capacity.	Blending education and discussion of initial findings in pan-Asian groups affirmed the data and provided a foundation for future action.

Quick Facts About Asian Americans in Montgomery County

7.9%
of Montgomery County's Population is Asian

~68,000
Asian Americans

1 out of 8
(13%)
Asians are English learners

Asians have the **highest senior poverty rate** (13%) in the county.

Asian Residents Concentrated in the Center of the County

| 3% - 5% | 6% - 9% | 10% - 16% | 17% - 24% |

Identity & Strengths: Common Themes

1. Diverse, Young, and Growing

The Asian American population in Montgomery County is extremely diverse and includes at least 24 distinct ethnic groups. Indians, Chinese and Koreans make up nearly three-quarters of the population. Without disaggregating race-level data into ethnic groups, the successful outcomes of some groups can hide the needs of others. These groups may have concentrations of low-income people, English language learners, and refugees.

In addition, like Latino communities, Asian Americans have fewer older adults and more working-age adults and young people. Overall, Asians and other minority groups are driving growth in the county. Between 2010 and 2020, the Asian population grew by 31.9%.

2. A Developing Asian Identity

Many community members see the Asian identity as weak but growing in use. It's often used as a convenient label rather than something deeply personal, compared to stronger ethnic identities tied to traditions, languages, and social networks. Interviewees often observed that they lacked a sense of a broader Asian experience or social network. However, in recent years, there's been a growing sense of shared experiences, especially after the COVID-19 pandemic and shifts in the political environment.

3. Immigrant Experiences & Perspectives

Compared with other county residents, Asians are more likely to be born outside the U.S., making up about half of the county's foreign-born population. Over a third are naturalized U.S. citizens, reflecting length of residency. Interviews and focus groups highlighted diverse immigrant experiences which influence their perspectives of multiculturalism, democracy, and community.

4. Grassroots Networks Play Key Roles

Many Asian-led and Asian-serving groups organize social, cultural, and religious activities. These often start as immigrant networks or faith-based organizations. Faith-based organizations like mosques, temples, and churches also serve as cultural and social hubs. Some groups are aspiring to scale their efforts to carry out programs and projects. The Jaisohn Center, a local non-profit organization, has convened and provided technical support to Asian American leaders and organizations.

5. Strong Cultural & Religious Values & Traditions

Community members often highlighted strong cultural and religious values. These include a strong work ethic, emphasis on education, and moral behavior. Many participants also emphasized strong family values, respect for elders, and maintaining collective harmony of the family and community. Language traditions are seen as an important tool for cultural preservation. Over three-quarters (77%) of Asians in the county speak another language besides English.

Central Bucks Chinese American Association

Jaisohn Center

Vietnamese Assoc. For Aging in Philadelphia & Suburbs

Challenges: Common Themes

1. Feelings of Cultural Isolation

Many Asian American interviewees remarked feeling isolated and disconnected from mainstream society. A number of factors may contribute, including a car-dependent environment, lack of gathering opportunities outside of religious settings, a limited social understanding of Asian culture and history, and being members of small, minority groups.

2. Lack of Language Access Is a Barrier to Mobility and Success

Asian Americans are much more likely to be English language learners - almost one in eight Asian Americans (12%), compared to 2% of the county. Despite federal language access laws, county policies and practices vary, and many places do not offer accommodation. Also, because most of the county is car-dependent, English learners who are unable to obtain a driver's license may struggle with mobility issues and be dependent upon others for transportation.

3. Seniors Are Socially Isolated and Struggle to Access Support Outside the Home

Asian seniors have the highest poverty rates out of any racial group in the county, and nearly half are English language learners (43%). They struggle with accessing services, social isolation, and transportation. In addition, Asian seniors who are immigrants may not be eligible for Medicare and Medicaid. As a result, they often rely on family members. In many Asian cultures, children are expected to act as caretakers for aging parents. As a result, placing elderly in long-term care facilities can be strongly stigmatized.

4. Mental Health Is Culturally Stigmatized

Mental health is strongly stigmatized in many Asian cultures. As a result, mental health issues are often misunderstood. In addition, a strong emphasis on family or community may make it difficult for individuals to discuss mental health challenges as their issues may be seen as a poor reflection on their families. Asian youth talked about the pressure to succeed, balancing cultures, and family conflicts.

5. Desire to Build Asian Coalitions & Institutional Capacity

Many Asian Americans, especially those from smaller ethnic groups, feel they don't have a say in local policies. New leaders and grassroots groups lack training and project support. However, community leaders are starting to work together and share their knowledge. They need support to build a diverse coalition, navigate local policies, and strengthen their organizations.

Philippine Independence Day Celebration

To see the full report, please visit: **jaisohn.org/ advocacy-leadership/ asian-americans/reports**

For more information, contact **info@jaisohn.org**

Asian American Coalition for Health & Human Services

JAISOHN CENTER

Health Spark Foundation

Sojourner Consulting

Solutions International