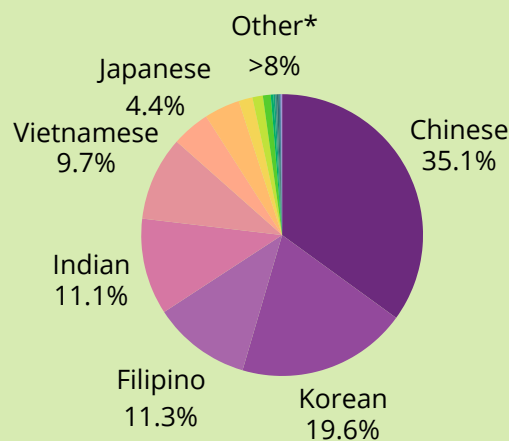




Study Updates

1461

ASPIRE participants completed their first survey



414

ASPIRE participants completed their second survey

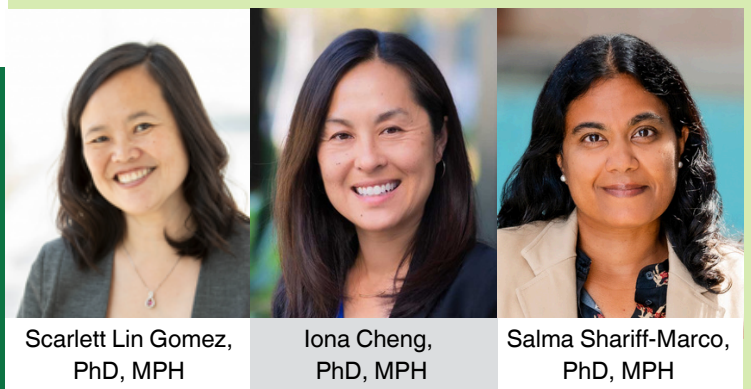
ASPIRE Study Participants
(as of 5/28/2026)

May is AAPI Heritage Month!

May is Asian American and Pacific Islander (AAPI) Heritage Month! It is a time to celebrate who we are, where we come from, and the strength of our communities. It is also a time to reflect on our health and the future we want for our families.

Research shows that cancer is the leading cause of death among Asian Americans overall. However, Asian Americans are not one group. Our communities include people from many countries, languages, and cultures, and cancer risk can look very different across these groups. Our team is working hard to better understand these differences and help our community prevent cancer.

We recently launched a YouTube channel to help people better understand the current research on Asian Americans and cancer. Check it out!



*Other groups include Cambodian, Bangladeshi, Thai, Hmong, Burmese, Indonesian, Pakistani, Sri Lankan, and Laotian

Staff Highlight: Dr. Scarlett Gomez

Why I Care About Cancer in Asian Americans

For Dr. Scarlett Gomez, work on the ASPIRE Cohort is deeply personal. “I am a first generation Taiwanese American. I immigrated from Taiwan to Washington state when I was 8 years old,” she shared, “I grew up in central and eastern Washington where there weren't many people who looked like me.”

Like many families, hers has been touched by cancer. “When my grandmother was diagnosed with gastrointestinal cancer, my family supported her through her treatment...but actually did not inform her of her own diagnosis. This is a common practice in our culture meant to protect our loved ones, but may be surprising to others.”

After moving to California and marrying a Filipino American, she became aware that “the cancer experience is really very different for different ethnic groups.” These moments sparked a lifelong commitment to understanding cancer in Asian American communities.

“Asian American” is often treated as a single category in medicine and research, But we know that the community is incredibly diverse. That diversity matters because cancer does not affect every Asian American community the same way.

Korean Americans experience much higher rates of stomach cancer.[1] Vietnamese American women continue to face disproportionately high cervical cancer rates. Southeast Asian communities experience elevated liver cancer rates.[2] And Chinese American women who have never smoked develop lung cancer at unexpectedly high rates.[3]



Yet many of the unique cancer risks affecting Asian Americans remain understudied and underfunded.

“We see ASPIRE as more than a research study,” she says. “It is really a national movement to ensure representation of every Asian American ethnic group in health research.”

Building that movement has not been easy. Dr. Gomez acknowledges that many communities have understandable concerns about research participation, privacy, language access, and trust.

This AAPI Heritage Month, Dr. Gomez hopes more people will see that representation in research is not only about statistics — it is about ensuring future generations are seen, heard, and protected.

References

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2. Gomez SL, et al. Cancer incidence trends among Asian American populations in the United States, 1990-2008. *J Natl Cancer Inst.* 2013;105(15):1096-110.
3. Gomez SL, et al. Elevated risk of lung cancer among Asian American women who have never smoked: an emerging cancer disparity. *J Natl Cancer Inst.* 2025 Jun 1;117(6):1104-1109.



Learn more about the
ASPIRE Cohort Study



<https://aspirecohort.ucsf.edu/>

Have any questions about the study?
Reach out!



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