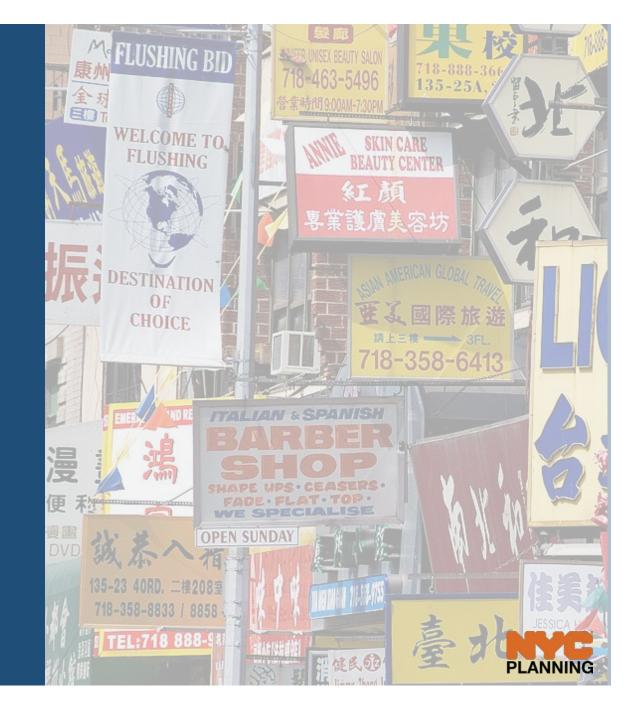# The Case for Greater Detailed Language Data in the ACS Summary File

Erica Maurer, Joel Alvarez, and Peter Lobo
NYC City Planning, Population Division
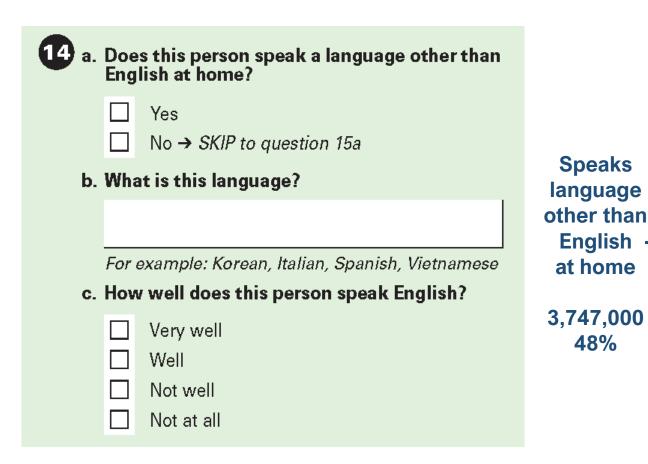**May 29, 2025**

Overview

- Identifying the Limited English Proficient (LEP) Population in New York City and Examples of How We Serve Them

- Selecting Poll Sites for Language Services for Korean Speakers When Tract-Level Data Are Available

- Selecting Poll Sites for Language Services When Tract-Level Data Are Unavailable

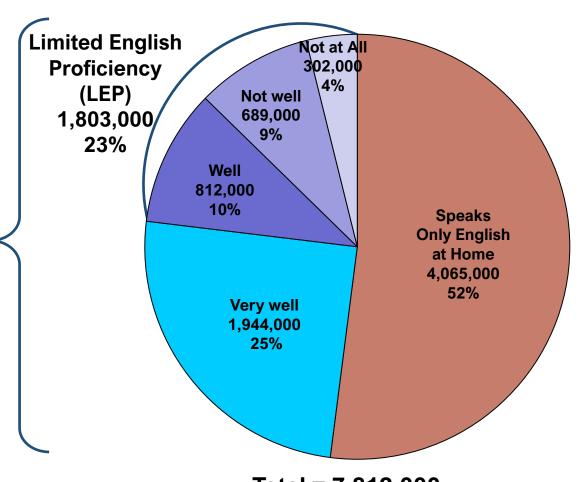- A Plea for Greater Detailed Language Data

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Identifying the Limited English Proficient (LEP) Population in New York City

Population 5 Years and Over by English Proficiency
New York City, 2023

14 a. **Does this person speak a language other than English at home?**

☐ Yes

☐ No → *SKIP to question 15a*

b. **What is this language?**

For example: Korean, Italian, Spanish, Vietnamese

c. **How well does this person speak English?**

☐ Very well

☐ Well

☐ Not well

☐ Not at all

Speaks language other than English at home

3,747,000 48%

Limited English Proficiency (LEP) 1,803,000 23%

Not at All 302,000 4%

Not well 689,000 9%

Well 812,000 10%

Very well 1,944,000 25%

Speaks Only English at Home 4,065,000 52%

Total = 7,812,000

Examples of How We Serve the LEP Population in New York City

Outreach

Provision of Services

Language Access

Libraries

Assistance at Poll Sites

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Selecting Poll Sites for Language Services for Selected Asian Race Groups

Language Detail in the ACS Summary File and PUMS File

ACS Questionnaire Language Question

14 a. Does this person speak a language other than English at home?
  ☐ Yes
  ☐ No → *SKIP to question 15a*

b. What is this language?

[_____]

For example: Korean, Italian, Spanish, Vietnamese

c. How well does this person speak English?
  ☐ Very well
  ☐ Well
  ☐ Not well
  ☐ Not at all

ACS Summary (SF)

12 language/language families available at the tract level

Spanish
Chinese (incl. Mandarin, Cantonese)
Russian, Polish, or other Slavic languages
Korean
French, Haitian, or Cajun
Tagalog (incl. Filipino)
Arabic
German or other West Germanic languages
Vietnamese
Other Asian and Pacific Island languages
Other and unspecified languages
Other Indo-European languages

ACS Public Use Microdata (PUMS)

139 individual languages available at the PUMA level

Gujarati   **Malayalam**
Hindi   **Kannada**
Urdu   **Pashto, Afghan**
Punjabi   Italian
Bengali   Portuguese
Nepali   Greek
Marathi   Armenian
Sinhalese   Romanian
India nec   Swedish
Pakistan nec   Albanian
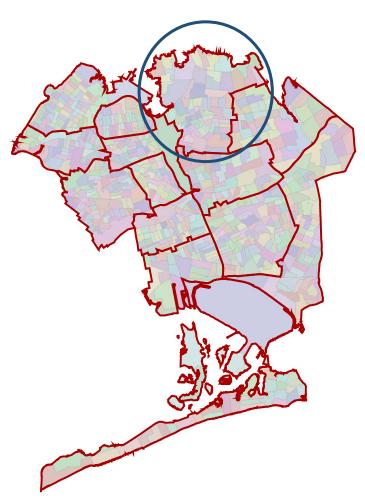**Telugu**   Lithuanian
Tamil   Persian, Iranian, Farsi

ACS Questionnaire Questions Used to Determine the U.S. Citizen Voting Age Limited English Proficiency Population (CVLEP) by Selected Asian Race

Calculate Percent of the Korean LEP Population who are CVLEP by PUMA

PUMA 4407

Korean speakers LEP 5+ of Korean race, citizens, 18+
Korean speakers LEP 5+

$$= \frac{5,786}{10,781}$$
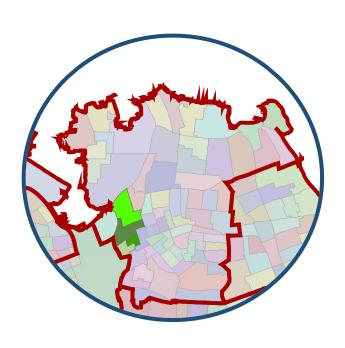
$$= .537$$

= *53.7% of Korean speakers LEP in PUMA 4407 are of Korean race, citizens, 18+ (CVLEP)*
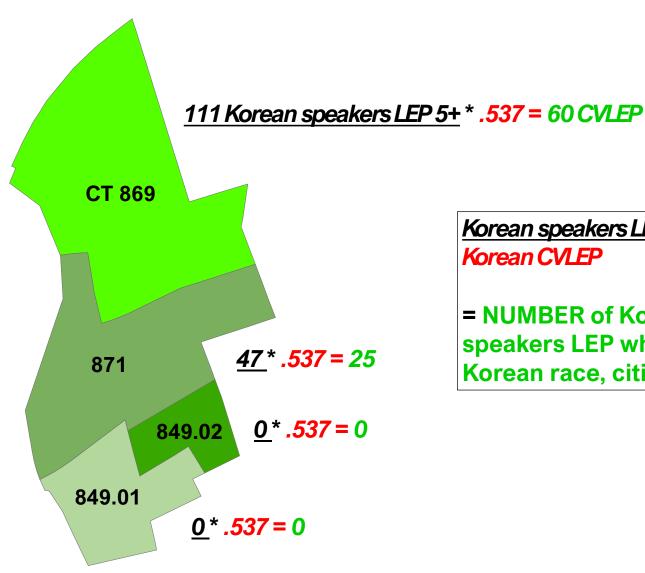
Apply PUMA Percentage to Tract Data Within the PUMA to Derive Korean CVLEP Population by Tract

*111 Korean speakers LEP 5+ * .537 = 60 CVLEP*

CT 869

*Korean speakers LEP 5+ ***
Korean CVLEP

= NUMBER of Korean speakers LEP who are of Korean race, citizens, 18+

*47 * .537 = 25*

871

849.02

*0 * .537 = 0*

849.01

*0 * .537 = 0*

53.7% Korean speakers LEP 5+ in PUMA 4407 are of Korean race, citizens, 18+

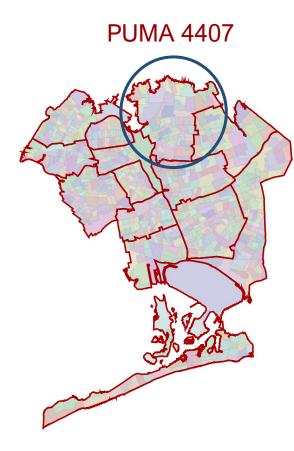# Aggregate Korean CVLEP Population by Poll-site Area

Korean speakers LEP 5+ who are of Korean race, citizens, 18+ data in **Poll site portions** aggregated to each Poll site areas.

Q0040: 26 Korean CVLEP

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Actual and Modeled Korean CVLEP Population for PUMA 4407

PUMA 4407

Actual

Korean speakers LEP 5+ of Korean race, citizens, 18+
Korean speakers LEP 5+

$$= \frac{5{,}786}{10{,}781}$$

$$= .537$$

= *53.7% of Korean speakers LEP in PUMA 4407 are Korean CVLEP*

Modeled

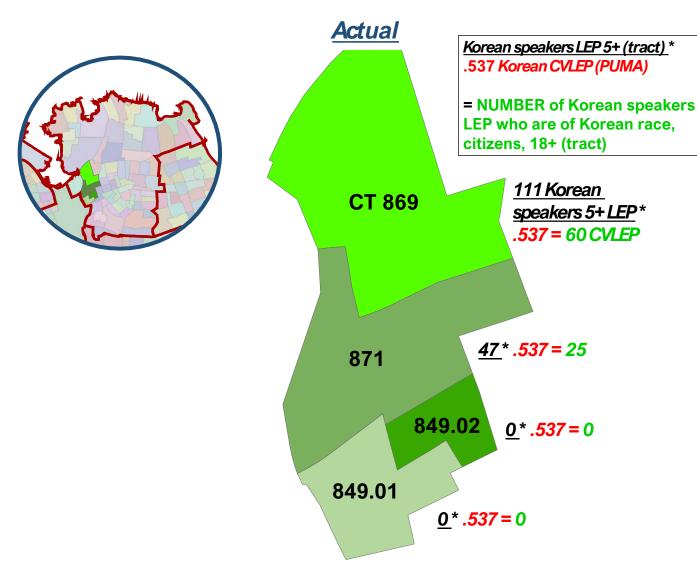**Korean LEP 5+ of Korean race, citizens, 18+**
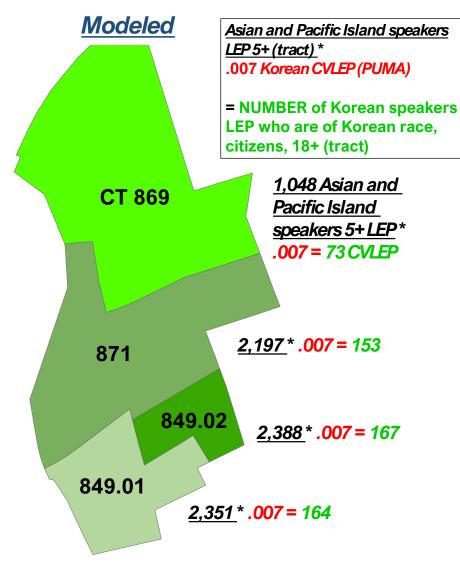**Asian and Pacific Island speakers LEP 5+**

$$= \frac{5{,}786}{82{,}925}$$

$$= .0698$$

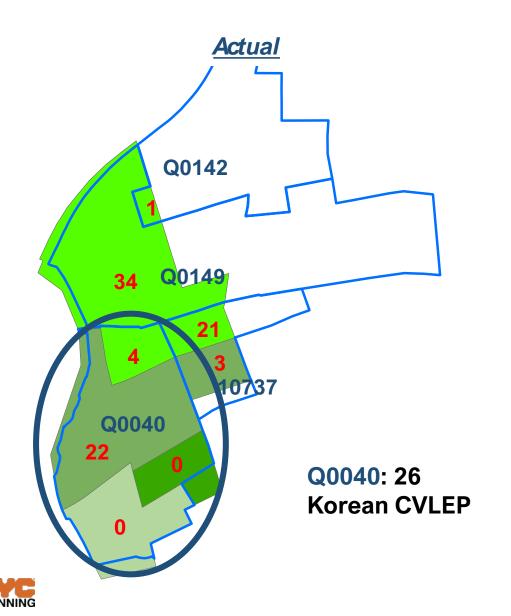= *7% of Asian and Pacific Island language speakers LEP in PUMA 4407 are Korean CVLEP*

Actual and Modeled Korean CVLEP Population for Select Census Tracts in PUMA 4407

Actual

Modeled

Korean speakers LEP 5+ (tract) *
.537 Korean CVLEP (PUMA)

= **NUMBER of Korean speakers LEP who are of Korean race, citizens, 18+ (tract)**

Asian and Pacific Island speakers LEP 5+ (tract) *
.007 Korean CVLEP (PUMA)

= **NUMBER of Korean speakers LEP who are of Korean race, citizens, 18+ (tract)**

CT 869

CT 869

111 Korean speakers 5+ LEP *
.537 = 60 CVLEP

1,048 Asian and Pacific Island speakers 5+ LEP *
.007 = 73 CVLEP

871

871

47 * *.537 = 25*

2,197 * *.007 = 153*

849.02

849.02

0 * *.537 = 0*

2,388 * *.007 = 167*

849.01

849.01

0 * *.537 = 0*

2,351 * *.007 = 164*

NYC PLANNING

Actual and Modeled Korean CVLEP by Selected Poll Site

Actual

Q0142

1

Q0149

34

21

4

3

10737

Q0040

22

0

0

Q0040: 26
Korean CVLEP

Modeled

Q0142

1

Q0149

42

25

5

18

10737

Q0040

136

126

162

Q0040: 428
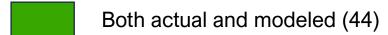**Korean CVLEP**

Initial Selection of Poll Sites That Meet a CVLEP Threshold of 50 Based on Actual and Modeled Korean CVLEP Populations
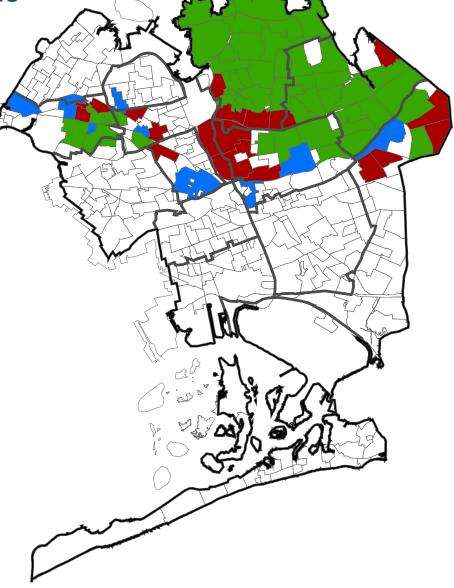
Initial Selection of Poll Sites in Queens

- 🟩 Both actual and modeled (44)
- 🟦 Actual only (12)
- 🟥 Modeled only (18)

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The Need for Detailed Language Data in a Polyglot City

Thank you!

Erica Maurer
emaurer@planning.nyc.gov