The Impact of anti-Asian Discrimination on Asian American Mental Health

Alameda County Behavioral Health
May 31, 2023

Seeba Anam, MD, Associate Professor
Department of Psychiatry & Behavioral Neuroscience
Objectives

• Describe mental health inequities affecting Asian American communities

• Identify barriers to mental health treatment in Asian American communities

• Discuss strategies for culturally informed approaches to address and advocate for mental health
Disclosures

• I have no conflicts to disclose.
Asian population in U.S. nearly doubled between 2000 and 2019 and is projected to surpass 46 million by 2060

In thousands

Note: In 2000 and later, Asians include the mixed-race and mixed-group populations, regardless of Hispanic origin. Prior to 2000, decennial census forms only allowed one race category to be selected. Asians include Pacific Islanders in 1980 and earlier years. Population figures for 1870-1980 are rounded to the nearest 1,000, and for 2000-2060, they are rounded to the nearest 100,000.


PEW RESEARCH CENTER
5.4% of the U.S. population identifies as Asian American or Pacific Islander. Of those, over 13% had a diagnosable mental illness in the past year. That is over 2.2 million people, more than the number of dentists, postsecondary teachers and lawyers in the United States combined.

Sources:
Disparities in Mental Health in US

• Prevalence of mental health disorders in racial and ethnic minorities is similar to that of Caucasians in the US.
• Less likely to receive mental health services.
• Receive a poorer quality of mental health care.
• Less access to and availability of mental health services.
• Underrepresented in mental health research.
Asian Alone Population in the U.S. by Selected Groups (Period Estimates: 2016-2020)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Population</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Chinese, except Taiwanese</td>
<td>4,151,009</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian Indian</td>
<td>4,143,134</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Filipino</td>
<td>2,884,210</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vietnamese</td>
<td>1,852,906</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Korean</td>
<td>1,477,325</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Japanese</td>
<td>768,985</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Two or more Asian</td>
<td>532,135</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pakistani</td>
<td>500,159</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hmong</td>
<td>305,525</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cambodian</td>
<td>259,307</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thai</td>
<td>204,150</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taiwanese</td>
<td>194,263</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Laotian</td>
<td>192,929</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bangladeshi</td>
<td>185,177</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Asian, not specified</td>
<td>174,137</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Burmese</td>
<td>169,915</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nepalese</td>
<td>162,993</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indonesian</td>
<td>76,873</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Asian, specified</td>
<td>62,753</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sri Lankan</td>
<td>51,735</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bhutanese</td>
<td>26,534</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mongolian</td>
<td>21,199</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Malaysian</td>
<td>20,758</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Okinawan</td>
<td>3,526</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The impact of the “model minority” stereotype
Income Inequality among Asian Americans

Median household income varies widely among Asian origin groups in the U.S. ...

Median annual household income, 2019, by origin group

- Vietnamese: $70K
- Lao: $51K
- Nepalese: $55K
- Hmong: $56K
- Korean: $72K
- Japanese: $83K
- Chinese: $82K
- Filipino: $90K
- Burmese: $44K
- Indian: $119K

... as does the share who live in poverty

% among Asian Americans who live in poverty, 2019, by origin group

- Filipino: 7%
- Asian: 10%
- Pakistani: 15%
- Indian: 6%
- Japanese: 8%
- Korean: 11%
- Vietnamese: 12%
- Chinese: 13%
- Nepalese: 17%
- Bangladeshi: 19%
- Burmese: 25%
- Mongolian: 25%

Note: Figure for all Asians includes mixed-race and mixed-group populations, regardless of Hispanic origin. Bhutanese, Malaysian and Mongolian household income estimates not shown due to insufficient sample sizes. "Chinese" includes those identifying as Taiwanese. The household population excludes persons living in institutions, college dormitories and other group quarters. Households are classified by the race or detailed Asian group of the head. Incomes are not adjusted for household size. Poverty figures exclude children under age 15 not related to the householder and people living in institutional group quarters, college dormitories or military barracks. Due to the way in which the IPUMS assigns poverty values, these figures will differ from those that might be provided by the U.S. Census Bureau.


PEW RESEARCH CENTER
Asian Households Cite Fear of Going Out as Reason for Food Insufficiency During the Pandemic

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reason</th>
<th>Non-Hispanic White</th>
<th>Non-Hispanic Asian</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Couldn't afford to buy more food</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Couldn't get out to buy food</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Afraid to go or didn't want to go out to buy food</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Couldn't get groceries or meals delivered to me</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The stores didn't have the food I wanted</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Household Pulse Survey, Week 27.
Before COVID-19

"Model minority"

After COVID-19

"Chinese virus"
The New York Times

• Spit On, Yelled At, Attacked: Chinese-Americans Fear for Their Safety

• Coronavirus Racism Infected My High School

• “Are You Sick?” For Asian-Americans a Sneeze Brings Suspicion
Asian senior victims of hate say U.S. 'more physically dangerous' for community

“Anti-Asian hate and violence instilled a sense of fear and anxiety, especially among Asian American older adults in dense, urban areas,” according to a new report.
Asian American elders report significant stress, anxiety, and fear of physical assault.
• Anti-Asian hate crimes increased by 361%, South Asians, Pacific Islanders, and Southeast Asians higher rates than East Asians in 2021

• AAPI individuals who are also female, non-binary, LGBTQIA+, and/or elderly experience hate incidents that target them for more than one of their identities at once.

• Asian Americans who have experienced racism have heightened symptoms of depression, anxiety, stress, and Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) symptoms

• AAPI students had greater odds of anxiety, depression, suicidality, and binge drinking

Saw 2021; Liu 2021; Hahm 2021; Zhao 2021
Asian Americans are experiencing unprecedented mental health concerns in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic and compounded by anti-Asian racism. Pre-pandemic, 10.2% of Americans experienced depression and 5.8% of Asian Americans experienced anxiety symptoms, the lowest of any racial/ethnic group. Our study of 3,736 Asian Americans found that 4 in 10 Asian Americans are experiencing current anxiety or depression symptoms.

Current Mental Health
49% of Asian Americans are currently experiencing anxiety or depression symptoms. Younger adults (18-24 years), individuals making less than $25,000 annually, US born, and Southeast and multilingual Asian Americans are most vulnerable to experiencing anxiety or depression.

Need for Services
62% of Asian Americans with current diagnosed mental health conditions need help accessing mental health services. Adults aged 18-44 years and individuals less comfortable speaking English need most help accessing care.

Mental Health-Related Stress
53% of Asian Americans say that mental health concerns are a significant source of stress. Mental health concerns were the highest second-highest source of stress across all Asian ethnic groups.

Asian Americans who faced anti-Asian discrimination are more than twice as likely to report current depression or anxiety symptoms than those who did not face discrimination (even after accounting for ethnicity, age, gender, income, and pre-existing mental health conditions).
BARRIERS TO SEEKING HELP

CULTURAL BELIEFS
Discussing mental health concerns is considered taboo in many Asian cultures. As a result, AAPI tend to dismiss, deny, or neglect their symptoms.

STIGMA
There is a negative stigma surrounding mental health issues.

AWARENESS
A lack of awareness of resources and services available.

LANGUAGE BARRIERS
Language barrier that causes difficulty accessing services.

Source: https://www.apa.org/pi/oma/resources/ethnicity-health/Asian-American/article-mental-health
• APA Action Paper
  • Anti-Asian American and Pacific Islanders (AAPI) Discrimination and Media Representation of AAPI Communities

• APA Corporate Communications and Public Affairs
  • Press kit to be disseminated on APA platform

• APA Annual Meeting Proposal
  • The role of advocacy to promote mental health in the face of rising anti-Asian discrimination
What is CHAMP?

The Coalition for Health Asian Minds Program (CHAMP) is a partnership between CAHE and the Community Based Organizations serving Asian communities that aims to raise awareness, reduce stigma, and improve access to culturally informed mental health services for Asian American families.
Recommendations for Advocacy

• Structural level:
  • National, state, and local reform to comprehensively change the policies and practices that perpetuate structural inequities

• Community level:
  • Models that center community and cultural values and practices.
  • Address structural factors such as limited numbers of CLAS providers

• Individual level:
  • Support economic, health, and mental health of most impacted AA
  • Direct funding to trusted stakeholders in the community

• Research, in partnership with communities of Asian Americans
Thank you!

Mental Health Resources For Asian and Pacific Islander Communities

- Asian American Psychological Association (AAPA)
- The Asian Mental Health Collective
- The National Asian American Pacific Islander Mental Health Association (NAAPIMHA)
- The South Asian Mental Health Initiative & Network (SAMHIN)
- National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI)
- Asian American Health Initiative (AAHI)
- National Queer Asian Pacific Islander Alliance (NQAPIA)
Resources

• Asian & Pacific Islander American Health Forum
• www.apiahf.org.
• Asian American Psychological Association www.aapaonline.org Association of Asian Pacific Community Health Organizations www.aapcho.org
• Center for the Pacific Asian Family www.cpaf.info
• Center for Multicultural Mental Health Research
• www.multiculturalmentalhealth.org
• National Asian Women’s Health Organization
• www.nawho.org
• National Asian American Pacific Islander Mental Health Association www.naapimha.org
• National Asian Pacific American Families Against Substance Abuse www.napafasa.org
• National Library of Medicine
• http://asianamericanhealth.nlm.nih.gov/behissues.html
• NIH, MedlinePlus - Asian-American Health
• www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/asianamericanhealth.html
• NICOS Chinese Health Coalition (San Francisco)
• www.nicoschc.org