

Did you know...

Asian American and Pacific Islander Communities (AA/PIs) **Mental Health Facts**

- There is very little research about mental health issues in these populations.
- Overall prevalence rates of diagnosable mental illnesses among AA/PIs are similar to those of the Caucasian population.
- Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders have the lowest rates of utilization of mental health services among ethnic populations.ⁱ
- AA/PIs show higher levels of depressive symptoms than whites. South Asian refugees reported the highest rates among Asian groups.ⁱⁱ
- The Chinese American Psychiatric Epidemiologic Study (CAPES study) found a lifetime prevalence rate of about 7% (lifetime) and a 3% rate over one year.
- The National Comorbidity Study (NCS) reported even higher rates of major depression among Chinese Americans (17% for lifetime and 10% current).ⁱⁱⁱ
- The word depression does not exist in certain Asian languages (E.g. Chinese).
- The suicide rates for Filipino (3.5%), Chinese (8.3%), and Japanese (9.1%) Americans are substantially lower than the suicide rate of white Americans (12.8%).^{iv}
- Among elderly women of all ethnic or racial groups, Asians have the highest suicide rate.^v
- According to mental health care providers: Asian American women ages 15-24 have a higher rate of suicide than Whites, Blacks, and Hispanics in that age group.^{vi}
- The Commonwealth Fund Survey of the Health of Adolescent Girls, reported that Asian American adolescent girls had the highest rates of depressive symptoms of all

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racial/ethnic and gender groups.^{vii}

- Southeast Asians suffer from particularly high rates of depression and post-traumatic stress disorder and exhibit more than twice the need for outpatient mental health services than the general Asian population.^{viii}
- Suicide rates are higher than the national average for some groups of Asian Americans.
- The suicide rate among Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders in California is similar to that of the total population.^{ix}
- Many Southeast Asian refugees are at risk for post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) associated with trauma experienced before and after immigration to the U.S.
 - One study found that 70% of Southeast Asian refugees receiving mental health care met diagnostic criteria for PTSD.
 - In a study of Cambodian adolescents who survived Pol Pot's concentration camps, nearly half experienced PTSD and 41% suffered from depression 10 years after leaving Cambodia.^x
- Approximately 70 AAPI providers are available for every 100,000 AA/PIs in the U.S., compared to 173 per 100,000 whites.^{xi}
- AA/PIs appear to have the extremely low utilization of mental health services relative to other U.S. populations.
 - In the CAPES study, only 17% of those experiencing problems sought care.^{xii}
 - A national study concluded that Asian Americans were one quarter as likely as whites to seek mental health services and half as likely as Latinos and African Americans.^{xiii}

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ⁱⁱ Mental Health: Culture, Race, Ethnicity Supplement to Mental Health: Report of the Surgeon General.

ⁱⁱⁱ Breaking the Silence. A Study of Depression Among Asian American Women. National Asian Women's Health Organization, 2001.

^{iv} Mental Health: Culture, Race, Ethnicity Supplement to Mental Health: Report of the Surgeon General.

^v The Surgeon General's Call to Action to Prevent Suicide, 1999.

^{vi} *Monthly Vital Statistics Report*. Center for Disease Control and Prevention/National Center for Health Statistics; Vol. 46, No. 1. August 17, 1997

^{vii} Louis Harris and Associates, Inc., 1997.

^{viii} Karen L. Koh, MPH and Margaret W. Leung, MPH. Asian Pacific Psychological Services, 431 30th Street, Suite 6A, Oakland, CA 94609

^{ix} The Surgeon General's Call to Action to Prevent Suicide, 1999.

^x Mental Health: Culture, Race, Ethnicity Supplement to Mental Health: Report of the Surgeon General.

^{xi} Mental Health: Culture, Race, Ethnicity Supplement to Mental Health: Report of the Surgeon General.

^{xii} Mental Health: Culture, Race, Ethnicity Supplement to Mental Health: Report of the Surgeon General.

^{xiii} Snowden, LR. African American service use for mental health problems. *Journal of Community Psychology*.