



# MENTAL HEALTH MATTERS

## Asian American and Pacific Islander Well-being

Asian American and Pacific Islander populations (AAPI) are an integral part of the American diaspora and represent a wide range of diversity. There are approximately 50 distinct ethnic groups speaking over 100 languages, with connections to Chinese, Indian, Japanese, Filipino, Vietnamese, Korean, Hawaiian, and other Asian and Pacific Islander ancestries.

Learn key facts about the mental health experiences within Asian American and Pacific Islander communities. Consider ways you can promote recovery and resilience through culturally relevant practices that meet the needs of diverse populations.

### FASTEST GROWING RACIAL GROUP

**20M+**

Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders are the fastest-growing racial group in the United States, comprising over 20 million people (Pew Research Center, 2021).

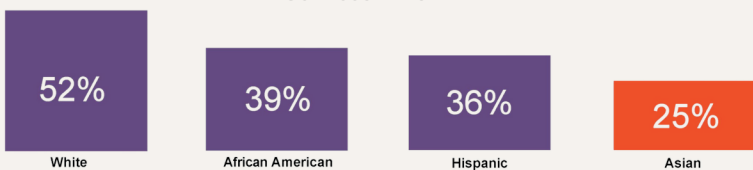
### REPORTED MENTAL ILLNESS

**16%**

Overall rates of mental illness are generally lower among Asian people compared to other racial groups, but this may reflect underdiagnosis and undertreatment among the population (KFF, 2023).

**Among people with mental illness, Asian people are less likely to utilize mental health services compared to other racial groups.** In 2021, among adults with any mental illness in the past year, only 25% of Asian adults reported receiving mental health services compared to 52% of White adults.

Share of Adults (Ages 18 and up) with Any Mental Illness Who Received Mental Health Services in 2021



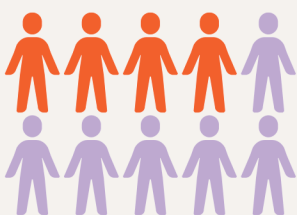
NOTE: Mental Illness aligns with DSM-IV criteria and is defined as having a diagnosable mental, behavioral, or emotional disorder, other than a developmental or substance use disorder. Mental health services includes receipt of inpatient or outpatient mental health services, prescription medication for a mental health issue, or virtual (e.g., telehealth) services in the past year. Persons of Hispanic origin may be of any race but are categorized as Hispanic for this analysis; other groups are non-Hispanic. Persons of more than one race are not included in the data. Additionally, data were unavailable for American Indian and Alaska Native and Native Hawaiian, and Other Pacific Islander people.

SOURCE: KFF analysis of SAMHSA, Center for Behavioral Health Statistics and Quality, National Survey on Drug Use and Health Data, 2021



SOURCE: National Alliance on Mental Health, 2023

*There are many systemic barriers to accessing mental health care and quality treatment for Asian Americans, which are exacerbated by stigma and a lack of culturally relevant and integrated care. These disparities can lead to worsened symptoms and poorer quality of life if treatment is unavailable or delayed."*



SOURCE: Asian American Psychological Association, 2021

Pandemic-related stressors compounded by the rise in anti-Asian racism have contributed to an unprecedented increase in mental health needs among Asian Americans.

More than half (53%) of Asian Americans reported that mental health has been a significant source of stress during COVID-19.

More than 4 in 10 Asian Americans reported current mental health symptoms, an alarmingly high figure considering historically low prevalence rates for mental health problems.



## Mental Health Matters: Awareness to Action Tips

The New England Mental Health Technology Transfer Center develops training and technical assistance resources to address the multiple levels of cultural responsiveness needed for optimal behavioral health treatment, recovery, and care.

Use our "Awareness to Action" tips to engage and support diverse communities in consistent and practical ways that ensure racial equity and advance cultural humility in behavioral health.

### Get Informed

Educate yourself about the unique mental health issues, beliefs, discrimination, and stigma faced by the AAPI community.

1

Gain insight and awareness through inquiry and dialogue that generates positive ideas and actionable next steps.

Establish policies and procedures to ensure cultural competence within the organization and among staff.

2

### Foster Inclusion

Provide cultural competence training to all behavioral health staff that addresses the needs of AAPI communities.

### Increase Representation

Strive for a diverse staff that includes members of the AAPI community, and reflects the unique needs of your population.

3

Employ diverse and culturally relevant recruitment and retention strategies.

Operationalize the plan to develop resources in multiple languages, if necessary, to meet the needs of your community.

4

### Implement Language Services

Implement language support services such as interpretation or translation as necessary. Ensure that health materials are in relevant languages.

### Offer Culturally Appropriate Services

Develop and offer treatments and services that take into account cultural differences, beliefs, practices, and stressors specific to AAPI communities.

5

Partner with mental health professionals and community members with deep understanding of AAPI cultures.

Develop an effective stakeholder relationship management strategy & focus on connection.

6

### Build Relationships

Conduct outreach in the local AAPI community to build relationships, increase visibility, and break down stigma around mental health and seeking help.

7

### Make Information Accessible

Ensure that information about available services are easily accessible and understandable.

Select the most appropriate and effective communication methods to promote engagement opportunities.

Partner with diverse agencies and organizations. Consider entities that have existing relationships with populations with which you want to connect.

8

### Collaborate

Collaborate with other healthcare providers, schools, and community organizations to ensure a holistic approach to supporting AAPI mental health.

9

### Involve Families

Given the importance of family in many AAPI cultures, involve family members in treatment plans when appropriate and with the patient's consent.

Create a culture of inclusivity that benefits those seeking care, as well as their family members and caregivers.

Develop a deliberate, defined process to ensure activities are responsive to community needs and improving mental health and well-being in AAPI populations.

10

### Evaluate and Improve

Evaluate what you're doing and seek feedback from AAPI clients, families, and staff. Make necessary adjustments to ensure continuous improvement.



### STAY CONNECTED

New England Mental Health Technology Transfer Center is funded by the Substance Abuse Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) and is part of the broader Mental Health Technology Transfer Center (MHTTC) Network.

[mhttcnetwork.org/centers/new-england-mhttc](http://mhttcnetwork.org/centers/new-england-mhttc)

To learn more about our intentional efforts to support the multitude of mental health experiences within underserved communities, contact us.

