

CHARTIS TOP READS

AANHPI Heritage Month: Navigating the complexities of mental health

Week of May 14 - May 20, 2023

| MAY 19, 2023

<https://www.chartis.com/insights/aanhpi-heritage-month-navigating-complexities-mental-health>

The Buzz This Week

May is the annual celebration of Asian American, Native Hawaiian, and Pacific Islander (AANHPI) Heritage Month in the United States, honoring the history, culture, and contributions of the AANHPI population. This year's theme is "Advancing Leaders Through Opportunity" and is Part 3 of a 4-year Advancing Leaders series for AANHPI Heritage Month. With more than 50 ethnic groups, AANHPI communities constitute approximately 7% of the U.S. population—and that percentage is rapidly growing.

May is also Mental Health Awareness Month, a month dedicated to raising awareness and reducing the stigma of mental health. The theme for Mental Health Awareness month is "More Than Enough"—a message of hope and inclusion, according to the National Alliance on Mental Health.

Numerous recent studies show that segments of the AANHPI communities face disparities in mental health access and outcomes. Even prior to the pandemic, serious mental illness among AANHPI people 18 to 25 years old nearly doubled from 2.9% in 2008 to 5.6% in 2018. AANHPI populations exhibit the lowest rate of mental health service utilization among all racial and ethnic minority groups at less than 9%, compared to over 18% of the U.S. population.

Nearly two-thirds of AANHPI people diagnosed with mental illness did not receive treatment, compared to just over half of the population as a whole. Data from The AAPI Data Project at UC Riverside and the UCLA Center for Health Policy Research (CHPR) from 2019 to 2021 shows that when AANHPI populations *do* seek help, there are access issues—1 in 4 AANHPI people experienced difficulty in accessing mental health services.

Since the pandemic, the rise in violence and anti-Asian crimes has also taken a toll on AANHPI mental health. According to Kaiser Family Foundation (KFF), the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) recorded a more than 75% increase in hate crimes in the U.S. against Asian people in the first year of the pandemic. 1

in 4 Asian Americans have responded that they have been a victim of a hate crime or incident in their lifetime. Additionally, [1 in 3 Asian community health center patients surveyed](#) in 2021 noted increased discrimination since the beginning of the pandemic.

Why It Matters

There are numerous barriers to overcoming AANHPI mental health disparities:

- **The AANHPI population is extremely diverse.** The AANHPI population consists of more than 50 disparate groups. Historically, data has been aggregated across all groups, making it harder to identify disparities in population subsets.
- **Language barriers limit access to resources.** The AANHPI community speaks more than 100 languages. Nearly one-third of the AANHPI population does not speak English fluently, leading to lack of awareness mental health services or barriers to accessing them.
- **Cultural factors prevent seeking professional resources.** In many AANHPI subgroups, discussing mental health or acknowledging mental health concerns is considered taboo. [Research shows](#) that AANHPI persons are more likely to utilize networks of family and friends than seek professional help.

Key suggestions to address mental health disparities in AANHPI communities include enhancing awareness of and accessibility to mental health programs, investing in culturally sensitive care and services, expanding language accessibility, and disaggregating data to identify disparities and promote health equity.

RELATED LINKS

Phys. Org:

Kaiser Family Foundation:

Mental Health America:

Editorial advisor: [Roger Ray, MD](#), Chief Physician Executive.

Chartis Top Reads

[View All](#)

Our services

[STRATEGIC TRANSFORMATION](#)

[PERFORMANCE TRANSFORMATION](#)

[DIGITAL & TECHNOLOGY TRANSFORMATION](#)

[CHARTIS CENTERS FOR AI & STRATEGIC INTELLIGENCE](#)

[PAYER TRANSFORMATION](#)

[STRATEGIC COMMUNICATIONS & CHANGE MANAGEMENT](#)

LEARN MORE ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Abigail Arnold

Associate Vice President of Research