

2025 New Zealand Asian Well-being & Mental Health Report

- A Cross-Sectional Survey

Introduction

Since 2020, Asian Family Services (AFS) has led national studies investigating the mental health and well-being of Asian communities in Aotearoa New Zealand. These efforts were initiated in response to growing concerns about the underrepresentation of Asian populations in mental health research and service design, despite their status as one of the fastest-growing demographic groups in the country. The 2020 and 2021 surveys revealed substantial mental health disparities, including elevated levels of psychological distress, significant stigma associated with mental illness, low rates of service utilisation, and widespread experiences of discrimination. These findings also underscored persistent cultural and structural barriers to help-seeking, as well as a limited alignment between mainstream mental health services and the complex, culturally nuanced needs of Asian individuals.

The results of these initial studies informed a range of targeted interventions within AFS, including the implementation of culturally and linguistically tailored counselling services, language-specific helplines, and community outreach programmes. Beyond service delivery, these data have contributed to broader public policy discussions and have been referenced in the development of government strategies related to mental health and migrant well-being.

Building on this empirical foundation, the 2025 New Zealand Asian Well-being and Mental Health Survey was designed to further expand the evidence base, focusing on disaggregated, subgroup-specific data. Funded by the Ethnic Communities Development Fund, this survey aims to enhance the granularity and policy relevance of mental health research in Asian populations. Key areas of investigation include:

- **Subjective well-being indicators, including life satisfaction**, worthwhileness of life, perceived public safety, and sense of belonging, measured using validated instruments aligned with OECD standards;
- **Mental health outcomes across ethnic subgroups**, disaggregated by age, gender, and migrants' ethnic background;
- **Perceived discrimination**, particularly that which is rooted in race/ethnicity, language, and immigration status;
- **School-based bullying experiences among Asian youth**, in response to concerns raised by the Ministry of Education regarding the impact of bullying on educational and psychological outcomes;
- **Help-seeking behaviour**, including structural barriers to accessing mental health services and levels of demanded services.

The 2025 survey targets a sample size of over 1,000 respondents and integrates updated psychometric tools, including the CES-D-10 (Centre for Epidemiologic Studies Depression Scale), to support both cross-sectional and longitudinal analysis. This methodological continuity enables the tracking of temporal changes in mental health outcomes while allowing for the exploration of emergent issues such as intergenerational tensions, youth vulnerability, and the intersectionality of cultural identity and well-being.

The anticipated outcomes of this research include:

- The provision of robust, disaggregated data to **support evidence-based service planning and delivery** within AFS;
- The **generation of empirical evidence to inform advocacy efforts for culturally responsive and equitably resourced mental health services**;
- The **development of policy recommendations relevant to multiple government stakeholders**, including the Ministry for Ethnic communities, Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Education, the New Zealand Police, and the Office of the Children's Commissioner, and the integration of Asian perspectives into national initiatives concerning suicide prevention, youth mental health, and anti-discrimination strategies.

This report presents the findings of the 2025 survey, aiming to advance both public understanding and practical responses to the mental health needs of New Zealand's Asian communities. It reflects AFS's continued commitment to research-driven, culturally competent, and equity-focused mental health systems.