

Study finds suicide rates among Asian American or Pacific Islander youth sharply increased between 1999–2021

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An investigation, which examined 1,880 Asian American or Pacific Islander youth who died by suicide during their first two decades, found

that the suicide rate for males increased by 72%, and by 125% for females. Suicide rates among males peaked in 2019, and for females in 2020. Suicide is the leading cause of death for Asian American and Pacific Islander youth.

The results, utilizing the National Center for Health Statistics for Asian Americans or Pacific Islander youth ages 10–19 years who died by [suicide](#), were [published](#) in the July 25 issue of *JAMA Network Open*.

The study authors, Brian TaeHyuk, the Buehler Family Sesquicentennial Endowed Assistant Professor at BC's Lynch School of Education and Human Development; Seungbin Oh, an assistant professor in the Mental Health Counseling and Behavioral Medicine Program at Boston University; and Arielle H. Sheftall, an associate professor at the University of Rochester Medical Center's Department of Psychiatry, surmise that [economic hardship](#) during the Great Recession, and cyberbullying with the rise of social media platforms were possible co-contributing causes.

In the U.S., Asian American individuals are the fastest growing racial group, while Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander individuals are the third fastest rising.

The authors point to mental health struggles, particularly among Pacific Islander male family leaders during the 2007–2009 recession, that may have increased the suicide risk factor for young males. Simultaneously, online sexism and racism against Asian women proliferated, which may have increased the risk factor for females.

Lastly, intersectional discrimination—the compounding factors of race and gender—may have contributed to the greater increase in suicide rates among females over males.

In an accompanying commentary by Anthony L. Bui, M.D., of the Seattle Children's Research Institute, and UCLA's Anna S. Lau, the authors stress that despite the critical importance of preventing suicide among this growing population, the study of mental health among Asian American and Pacific Islander populations has been historically understudied and underfunded nationally.

"To curb the worsening youth [suicide rates](#), we need meaningful investments in research along the translational spectrum, intentional workforce development of clinicians to serve (this) community across youth sectors of care, improved surveillance, and culturally tailored, evidence- and community-based interventions to support Asian American and Pacific Islander youth mental health," they said.

More information: Anthony L. Bui et al, Suicide Rates Among Asian American and Pacific Islander Youths—A Cause for Alarm, *JAMA Network Open* (2024). [DOI: 10.1001/jamanetworkopen.2024.22694](https://doi.org/10.1001/jamanetworkopen.2024.22694)

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