

VOICES UNHEARD:

Uncovering The Mental Health Impact of COVID-19 on Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander and Southeast Asian American Youth



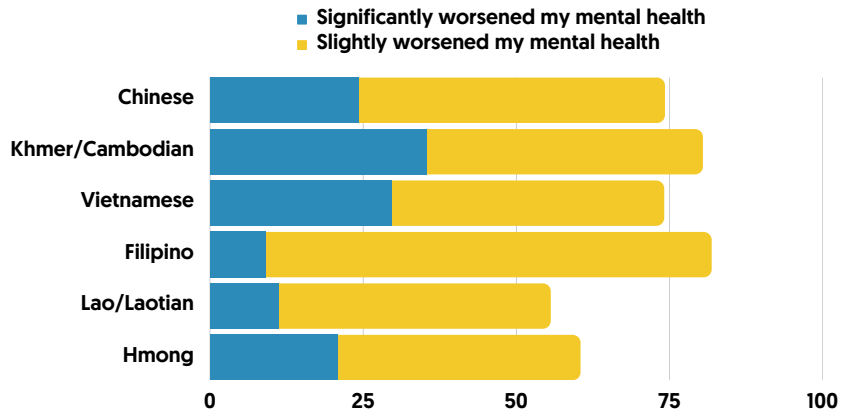
With the COVID-19 pandemic and rise of anti-Asian hate crimes, SEARAC and AAPI CHARGE conducted research to better understand the extent of these stressors on Native Hawaiian & Pacific Islander (NHPI) and Southeast Asian American (SEAA) youths in California. The report, *Voices Unheard* highlights key themes, findings, and experiences of more than 200 NHPI and SEAA respondents through surveys and focus groups regarding their mental health.

We explored and identified topics including the pandemic's impact on mental wellness, importance of culturally appropriate mental health support and access, and barriers to care. Our findings suggested that **NHPI and SEAA youth faced unique mental health challenges that stemmed from their racial and ethnic backgrounds, during COVID-19 and the rise of anti-Asian discrimination.**

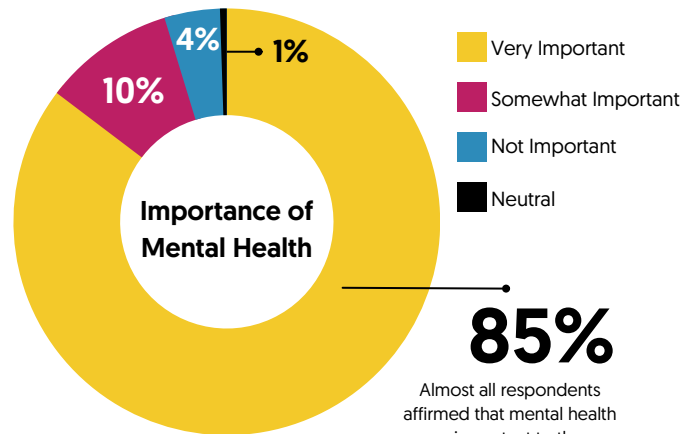
KEY THEMES

1. NHPI and SEAA youths viewed mental health and wellbeing as an important part of their lives.
2. NHPI and SEAA youths faced significant barriers to accessing mental health care at their schools and institutions.
3. The COVID-19 pandemic increased the need for mental health services for NHPI and SEAA youths.

COVID-19 IMPACT BY ETHNICITY



Over half of respondents from all SEAA ethnic groups indicated that COVID-10 worsened their mental health.



Almost all respondents affirmed that mental health was important to them.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- **Collect and disseminate disaggregated racial and ethnic data** specific to mental health, risk factors, school-based discrimination, bullying, and harassment.
- **Invest in culturally and linguistically appropriate** mental health resources in schools, institutions, and the community-at-large.
- **Build and sustain mentoring and mental health employment pipelines** through educational exposure and potential career pathways.
- **Amplify the voices of the youth, their families, and community leaders** to foster self-determination at the local, county and state levels.



YOUTH NHPI & SEAA PERSPECTIVES



“Mental health is very important. It is very good to take care of your mental health. You can go through life and it can be good, bad, however you feel, but if your mental health is not there, it’s going to be harder to just function. Having people available for you that can help you with your issues is a key component to at least trying to live a better life.”

Cambodian participant, SEAA focus groups



“I have accessed mental health services. It changed my life. Having that space to just be. If you want to be healthy, you have to be proactive even when it’s hard to exert the energy needed to seek help. [You have to give yourself] permission to seek help.”

Samoa participant, NHPI focus groups



“During the pandemic, trying to maintain school and wellbeing was way harder... It changed the whole dynamic of our lifestyle.”

Vietnamese participant, SEAA focus groups

Contributing factors to worsening youth mental health as a result of COVID-19:

Barriers in accessing mental health services *outside of institutions*:

