

# Disaggregating Asian American young adult mental health: Trends in psychological distress and suicidality



Ritika Rastogi<sup>1</sup>, Yutian Li<sup>1,2</sup>, Anjeli Macaranas<sup>3</sup>, Abdelrahman Ibrahim<sup>4</sup>, Justin A. Chen<sup>5</sup>, Courtney Stevens<sup>1,6</sup>, Cindy H. Liu<sup>1,3,7</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Department of Pediatrics, Brigham and Women's Hospital; <sup>2</sup>Harvard University; <sup>3</sup>Harvard Medical School; <sup>4</sup>Department of Psychiatry & Behavioral Sciences, Duke University School of Medicine; <sup>5</sup>Department of Psychiatry, Weill Cornell Medicine/NewYork-Presbyterian; <sup>6</sup>Department of Psychology, Willamette University; <sup>7</sup>Department of Psychiatry, Brigham and Women's Hospital

## INTRODUCTION

- Asian Americans (AA) are highly culturally diverse, with heritage from Eastern (e.g., China, Korea), Southeastern (e.g., Vietnam, Laos), and Southern (e.g., India, Nepal) Asia<sup>1</sup>
- Stereotypes paint AA as a "model minority" who surpass White Americans on various metrics *including population health*<sup>2</sup>
- Despite misconceptions, research demonstrates striking disparities in physical health outcomes (e.g., cardiometabolic health in South Asians, gastrointestinal cancers in East Asians) relative to Whites.<sup>3,4</sup>

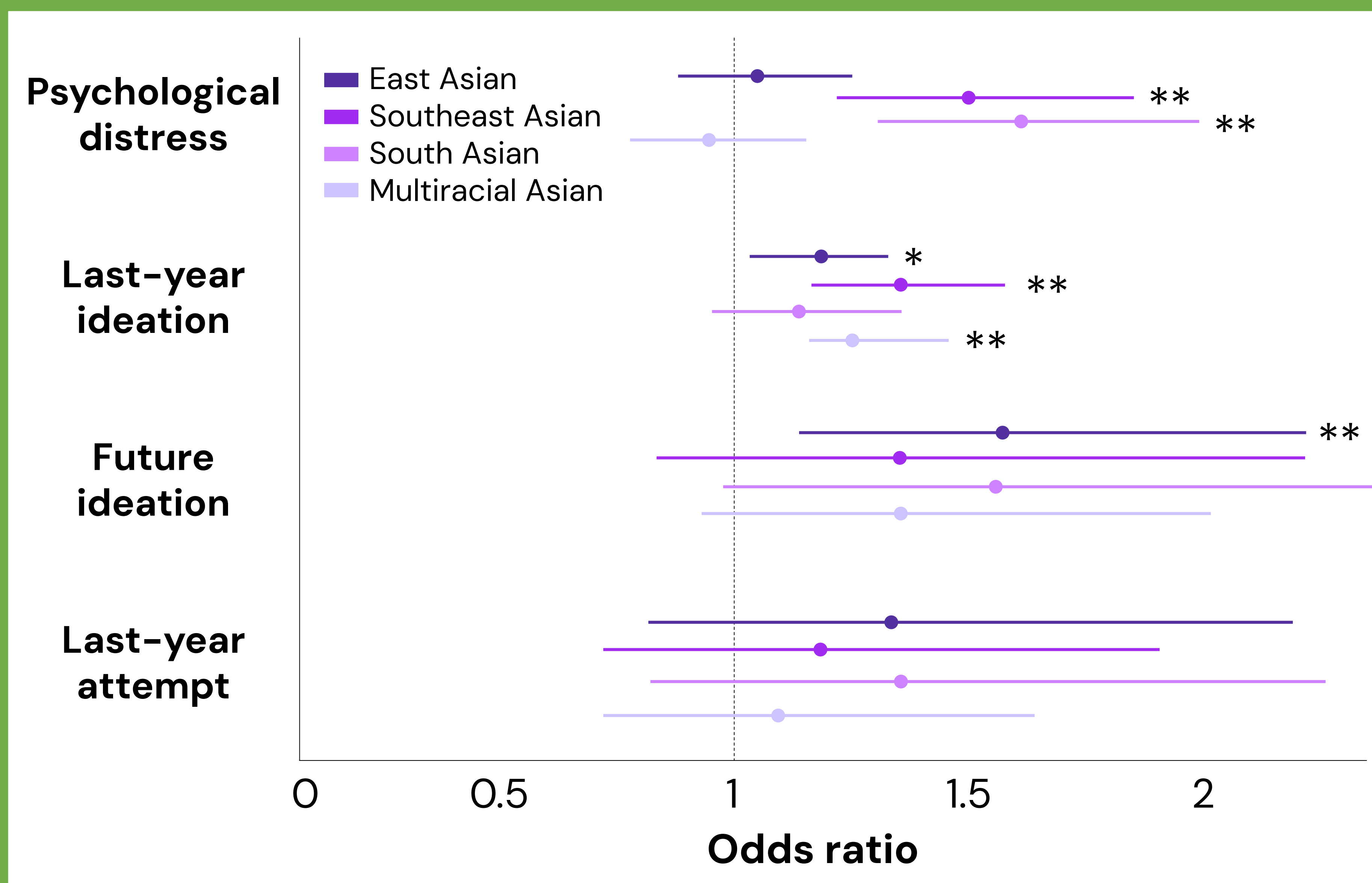
**The physical health disparities highlight the need to disaggregate Asian American mental health and explore ethnic subgroup differences.**

## METHODS

- **Participants:** 36,901 college undergraduates<sup>5</sup> (65% women; Mage=20.31, SDage=1.94)
- **Outcomes:** psychological distress (K6),<sup>6</sup> suicidality (last-year ideation, future-oriented ideation, last-year attempts)<sup>7</sup>
- **Data Analysis:** multilevel binary logistic regressions performed in Mplus ( $\alpha=.01$ )

## Relative to White young adults...

- East and Multiracial Asians showed elevated risk for suicidal ideation
- South Asians showed elevated risk for psychological distress
- Southeast Asians show elevated risk on both outcomes



Note: \*\* $p < .001$ , \* $p < .01$

## RESULTS (CONT)

- Within-race logistic regressions showed no significant differences between East Asians and the other AA ethnic subgroups, with the exception of psychological distress:
  - ORSoutheast Asian = 1.44 [1.17, 1.79]\*\*
  - ORSouth Asian = 1.48 [1.13, 1.94]\*\*

## DISCUSSION

- AA young adults demonstrate increased risk for poor mental health relative to White counterparts
- **Opportunities for future research:**
  - What structural and sociocultural determinants may underlie the observed disparities in mental health risk?
  - Do Multiracial Asian young adults with & without White ancestry differ in risk?

## REFERENCES

<sup>1</sup>Pew Research Center, 2023; <sup>2</sup>Kim et al., 2021, *Amer. Psychol.*; <sup>3</sup>Volgman et al., 2018, *Cardiology*; <sup>4</sup>Choi et al., 2018, *Gastrointest. Endosc.*; <sup>5</sup>Lederer & Hoban, 2022, *JACH*; <sup>6</sup>Kessler et al., 2002, *Psychol. Med.*; <sup>7</sup>Osman et al., 2001, *ASMNT*.

Funding: NIH 1R01 MH129360-01

✉ [rsrastogi@bwh.harvard.edu](mailto:rsrastogi@bwh.harvard.edu)  
 LinkedIn: /rsrastogi

