

Mapping Asian Health in Aotearoa New Zealand: A Scoping Review (2019-2024)

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BACKGROUND

- Asian migration to New Zealand began in the 19th century, with significant increases in recent decades
- Despite growing Asian immigration since the mid-1990s, underreporting of health issues remains a concern
- Increased interest in addressing health needs of Asian communities through research and advocacy in the last five years



AIM

To assess the breadth of Asian health research completed in Aotearoa over the last five years (2019 to 2024), with particular attention to research originating from the University of Auckland.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Between 2019 and 2024...

- What are the key trends and areas of research in Asian health conducted in Aotearoa New Zealand?
- What are the major health issues and disparities affecting Asian populations in Aotearoa as identified in research?
- What gaps in research still exist regarding the health of Asian populations in New Zealand, and what areas require further investigation?



METHODS

- University of Auckland Research Repository and Scopus were the primary databases
  - “Asia* AND health” and “New Zealand” as the key search terms

- Limited to research published between 2019 and 2024, within New Zealand

- Initial search results:
  - 113 potential documents from the University of Auckland Research Repository
  - 126 potential documents from Scopus

METHODS

- After screening titles and abstracts, 10 documents were selected from the University of Auckland Research Repository and 15 from Scopus; 25 studies in total

- Collected author details, document type, year, research aims, study design, key themes and findings, and document strengths and limitations for each selected document



STUDY RESULTS

IDENTIFICATION OF KEY THEMES

1. Geriatric Health: Three articles examined the mental health and well-being of older Asian immigrants (Cheung et al., 2019; Koh et al., 2023; Montayre et al., 2019).

- Strong community connections and social capital among migrants mitigate feelings of isolation
- Lack of translated materials for health information
- Difficulty articulating emotional distress due to linguistic barriers, stigma surrounding cognitive decline
- Filial piety shapes how older Asian migrants navigate family care expectations

STUDY RESULTS

IDENTIFICATION OF KEY THEMES

2. Mental Health: Five articles focused on mental health experiences of Asian populations in New Zealand, addressing screening tools, stigma, digital health, and suicide (Chen et al., 2024; Goh et al., 2021; Kim, 2022; Montayre et al., 2022; Shah et al., 2019).

- Stigma and shame limit access to mental health care
- Young male Asians face higher suicide rates in deprived areas; cultural pressures and immigration experience play a role
- Dismissal, invisibility, and discrimination hinder access for young Asians; trust in Western mental health services remains low





STUDY RESULTS

IDENTIFICATION OF KEY THEMES

3. Rainbow Health: Four articles focused on Rainbow/LGBTQIA+ health, with qualitative interviews discussing mental health, hopes, and healthcare system improvements (Adams & Neville, 2020; Koh et al., 2024; Tan et al., 2022; Tan et al., 2024).

- High levels of depressive symptoms, anxiety, and suicidal thoughts among Asian Rainbow youth
- Family and community support are critical for emotional wellbeing
- Need for culturally safe healthcare and inclusive support services

STUDY RESULTS

IDENTIFICATION OF KEY THEMES

4. Women's Health and Pregnancy: Four articles focused on health issues related to women, including pregnancy and breast cancer (de Graaff et al., 2023.a; de Graaff et al., 2023.b; Lao et al., 2019; Simon-Kumar et al., 2021).

- Asian women generally have better survival rates for breast cancer in NZ
- Higher risks of stillbirth and gestational diabetes for South Asian women
- Cultural factors and diet play a role in metabolic conditions during pregnancy and breast cancer survival
- Tailored healthcare interventions, culturally sensitive care, and understanding acculturation factors are key





STUDY RESULTS

IDENTIFICATION OF KEY THEMES

5. Youth Health: Three articles examined Asian youth in New Zealand, covering ages from childhood to 24 years old (Htut et al., 2020; Peiris-John et al., 2022; Ramalho et al., 2023).

- Asian students often report low family SES, affecting healthcare access; disconnection from family and bullying
- Asian students, particularly East and South Asians, are more likely to forgo healthcare due to perceived unfair treatment and family dynamics
- Health and well-being are shaped by intersecting identities such as ethnicity, SES, and social exclusion

STUDY RESULTS

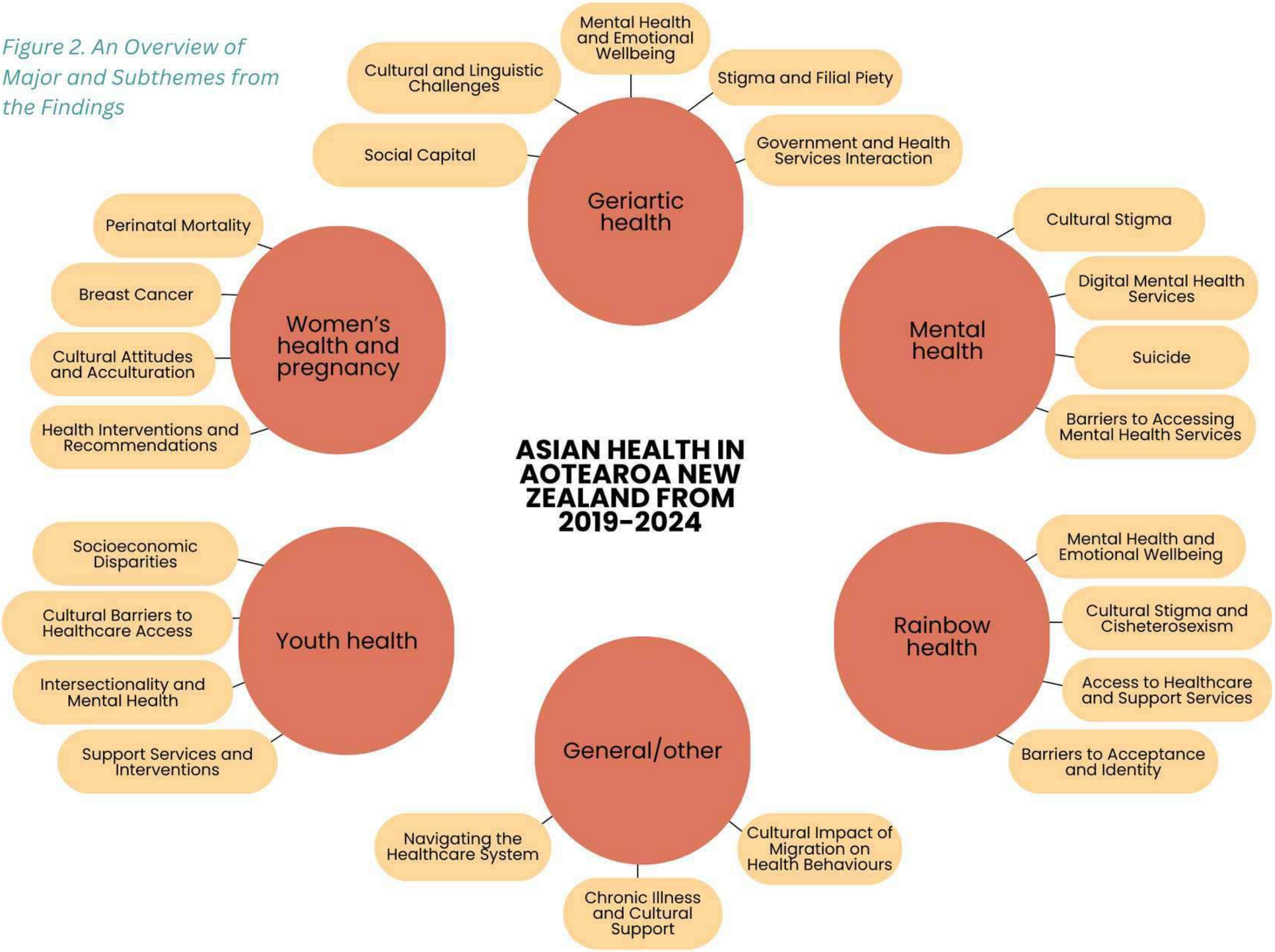
IDENTIFICATION OF KEY THEMES

6. General/Other: Five articles discussed varied health issues among Asian populations in New Zealand (Adams et al., 2022; Parackal, 2023; Xiang et al., 2023; Xie et al., 2022).

- Migration leads to shifts in health behaviours, including dietary changes and alcohol consumption patterns
- Language and cultural barriers still hinder Asian migrants' ability to navigate New Zealand’s healthcare system
- Family plays a central role in managing chronic illnesses, reliance on family numbers for healthcare
- Culturally sensitive and accessible healthcare services are critical for better health outcomes



Figure 2. An Overview of Major and Subthemes from the Findings



OVERARCHING THEMES

NAVIGATING THE HEALTHCARE SYSTEM

- Persistent difficulties in navigating New Zealand's healthcare system due to language and cultural barriers (Bhatia et al., 2024; Cheung et al., 2019; de Graaff et al., 2023a, 2023b; Koh et al., 2023; Lao et al., 2019; Montayre et al., 2019; Xiang et al., 2023; Xie et al., 2022)

- Family dynamics and financial challenges further complicate access to care (Peiris-John et al., 2022)

- Systemic failure to deliver culturally safe care that meets the needs of the Asian population

OVERARCHING THEMES

CULTURAL INFLUENCES ON HEALTH BEHAVIOURS

- Cultural behaviours such as filial piety, eating habits, and stigma around mental health and LGBTQ+ identity shape health decisions (Adams et al., 2022; Adams & Neville, 2020; Cheung et al., 2019; Htut et al., 2020; Kim, 2022; Koh et al., 2023; Parackal et al., 2023; Peiris-John et al., 2022; Tan et al., 2022)

- Acculturation trends observed, where Asian populations adopt 'Western' eating and drinking habits over time (Adams et al., 2022; Cheung et al., 2019; Htut et al., 2020)

OVERARCHING THEMES

CULTURAL INFLUENCES ON HEALTH BEHAVIOURS

- Healthcare providers and public health initiatives can better support Asian families by understanding cultural context and prioritising early intervention

OVERARCHING THEMES

TAILORED INTERVENTIONS AND SUPPORT SERVICES

- Consistent calls for tailored healthcare interventions that account for unique cultural and social factors affecting Asian health outcomes (de Graaff et al., 2023a; Lao et al., 2019; Ramalho et al., 2023; Xie et al., 2022)

- Individualised care plans and partnerships with the Asian community are crucial for addressing multiple intersectional identities and promoting health-seeking behaviours

STRENGTHS

Scoping Review Methodology

- Suited for broad and emerging research areas, allowing exploration of diverse studies
- Flexibility in study design selection enabled a comprehensive review of health issues affecting Asian populations in New Zealand

Categorisation by Health Conditions

- Aligns with broader public health reports
- Offers a clear structure for communicating findings to stakeholders like TANI
- Focus on specific health conditions facilitates translating research into actionable strategies for improving health outcomes

LIMITATIONS

Database Selection

- Reliance on only two databases (University of Auckland Research Repository and Scopus)
- Potential exclusion of relevant studies, especially grey literature or non-traditional academic sources

Regional Focus

- Many studies based on Auckland populations may not be generalisable to the rest of New Zealand

LIMITATIONS

Lack of Representation

- Limited diversity within the Asian populations studied, with a predominant focus on Chinese and Indian communities
- Smaller subgroups, such as Afghan or South African Indian populations, were minimally represented

Thematic Limitations

- The thematic analysis was restricted by the available studies, so certain health issues of potential importance may have been overlooked due to lack of research focus

IMPLICATIONS FOR PRACTICE



Need for systemic reform to ensure healthcare services are accessible and culturally responsive



Focus on addressing stigma, particularly around mental health and LGBTQ+ identities



Proactively counter harmful Asian stereotypes and narratives



Involve Asian communities in the co-design and implementation of health interventions

CONCLUSION

- Asian populations remain underrepresented in health research and public policy, despite making up 17% of New Zealand's population

- Asian communities face health disparities across multiple areas such as mental health, LGBTQ+ health, youth health, and geriatric care, highlighting a critical policy void



CONCLUSION

- The New Zealand healthcare system, primarily designed through Western-centric practices and worldviews, often alienates minority groups, resulting in barriers to healthcare access

- Addressing these disparities requires deliberate policy action and explicit engagement with Asian communities to ensure equitable health outcomes for all



THANK YOU FOR YOUR ATTENTION!