



**Our History & Our Why** – Asian Family Services (AFS) has been providing support to our Asian communities in New Zealand since 1998, initially with a team of three practitioners providing telephone services for Asian people affected by gambling harm. In the nearly 30 years since our inception, with a team of almost 50 people, what drives us has remained the same: Asian New Zealanders deserve to live flourishing lives, and we believe mental wellbeing is a fundamental component. By providing mental health services that are culturally tailored, linguistically matched, evidence and lived experience informed, we have earned the trust of our communities to improve outcomes.

**Driving System Change** – We are also a voice for our communities in shaping the systems that impact their mental health and wellbeing. Through policy submissions, consultations, and advocacy, we work to embed Asian perspectives in national frameworks. Our input into the Mental Health Act reform, He Ara Awhina, Suicide Prevention Action Plan, Oranga Hinengaro System and Service Framework and many more, has consistently called for Asian people to be recognised as a priority group. We have also contributed to the Department of Internal Affairs' online gambling consultation, advocating for stronger protections. We take pride in that our voice is informed by the lived experience of our community members, facilitated through our lived experience advisory groups and Ethnic Advisory Group.

**Serving our Communities** – These strategic efforts enable the heart of our work: direct engagement with our communities through trusted, culturally responsive services. Our Asian Helpline is offered in 7 different languages. Our clinical and counselling support includes in-language therapy for gambling harm, mental health, and alcohol and other drug (AOD) challenges. We deliver child, youth, and parenting programmes like Kia Ora Ake and Incredible Years Parenting, tailored to Asian whānau. Our public health work has a big focus on minimising and preventing gambling harm. Its campaigns and community outreach also increases mental health literacy and destigmatises mental health conversations. Research initiatives, including national AOD surveys and our Integrated Tree Model, inform service design and deepen understanding of Asian wellbeing. We also strengthen early intervention and culturally safe pathways across the country, for example, develop suicide prevention training through e-learning for our community leaders and health professionals.

**Our Impact** – Each year, AFS responds to over 10,000 requests for support, reflecting the trust placed in us by our communities. More than 2,100 individuals experiencing gambling harm receive direct clinical and intervention services, benefiting from culturally safe, in-language care that is responsive to their needs. Our Kia Ora Ake programme delivered over 1,000 school-based sessions with 5-13 year olds in its first year. AFS' Public Health team engages with over 10,000 community members annually. These numbers go beyond just activity and output; it represents a long-term, transformative journey for AFS in supporting our communities to normalise conversations about mental health, encourage help-seeking behaviour across generations and age groups, and empowering Asian New Zealanders to access support that honours their identity, language, and lived experience.

## The Thriving at Crossroads Project

Thriving at Crossroads is a research initiative from Waipapa Taumata Rau (The University of Auckland) aimed to understand the lived experience of ethnic minority youth and the impact of these experiences on their wellbeing.

Our lives are impacted by multiple and shifting identities. For young people on the cusp of adulthood, understanding who they are and where they fit in is essential to their health and influences their future. Here in Aotearoa New Zealand, multiple faultlines shape how identity is experienced, including: ethnicity, culture and gender. Despite this richness of experience, ethnic minorities, defined here as Asian, Middle Eastern, Latin American or African, have remained under-studied and often left uncared. Within ethnic minorities, those identifying with an additional minority identity, such as gender diverse, disabled, or from financially constrained backgrounds, are even more likely to be rendered invisible.

Thriving at Crossroads aims to change this. We aim to be innovative, flexible and provocative while also grounding our work in the latest research.

Our research questions:

- How do we understand the needs of young people whose identities cross more than one faultline?
- How do we see them more clearly and engage them with services developed to fit their unique needs?

### Research team

Associate Professor Roshini Peiris-John (PI)  
Dr Rodrigo Ramalho (Co-PI)  
Dr Vartika Sharma  
Associate Professor Arier Lee  
Kristy Kang  
Dr Renee Liang  
Professor Rachel Simon-Kumar  
Professor Shanthi Ameratunga

### T@C youth with research team



### Acknowledgements

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