



#I AM  
NOT A  
VIRUS

# The Re-emergence of Yellow Peril:

Beliefs in the  
**Asian health hazard**  
stereotype predict lower  
psychological well-being

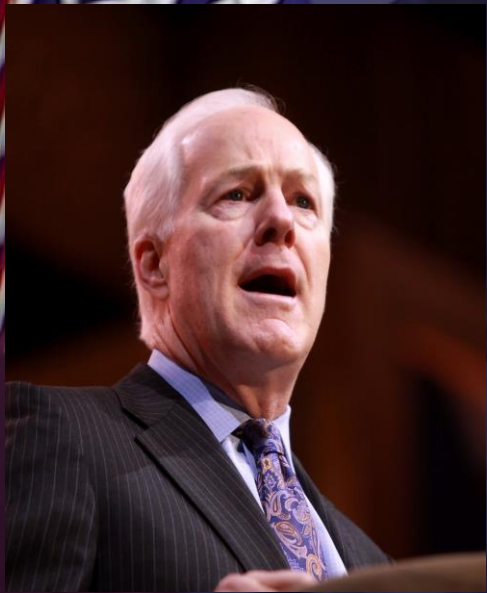
Ronda Lo  
York University



Chinese  
Virus

Kung Flu

China is to blame  
because they're the  
culture where people eat  
**bats** and **snakes** and **dogs**  
and things like that



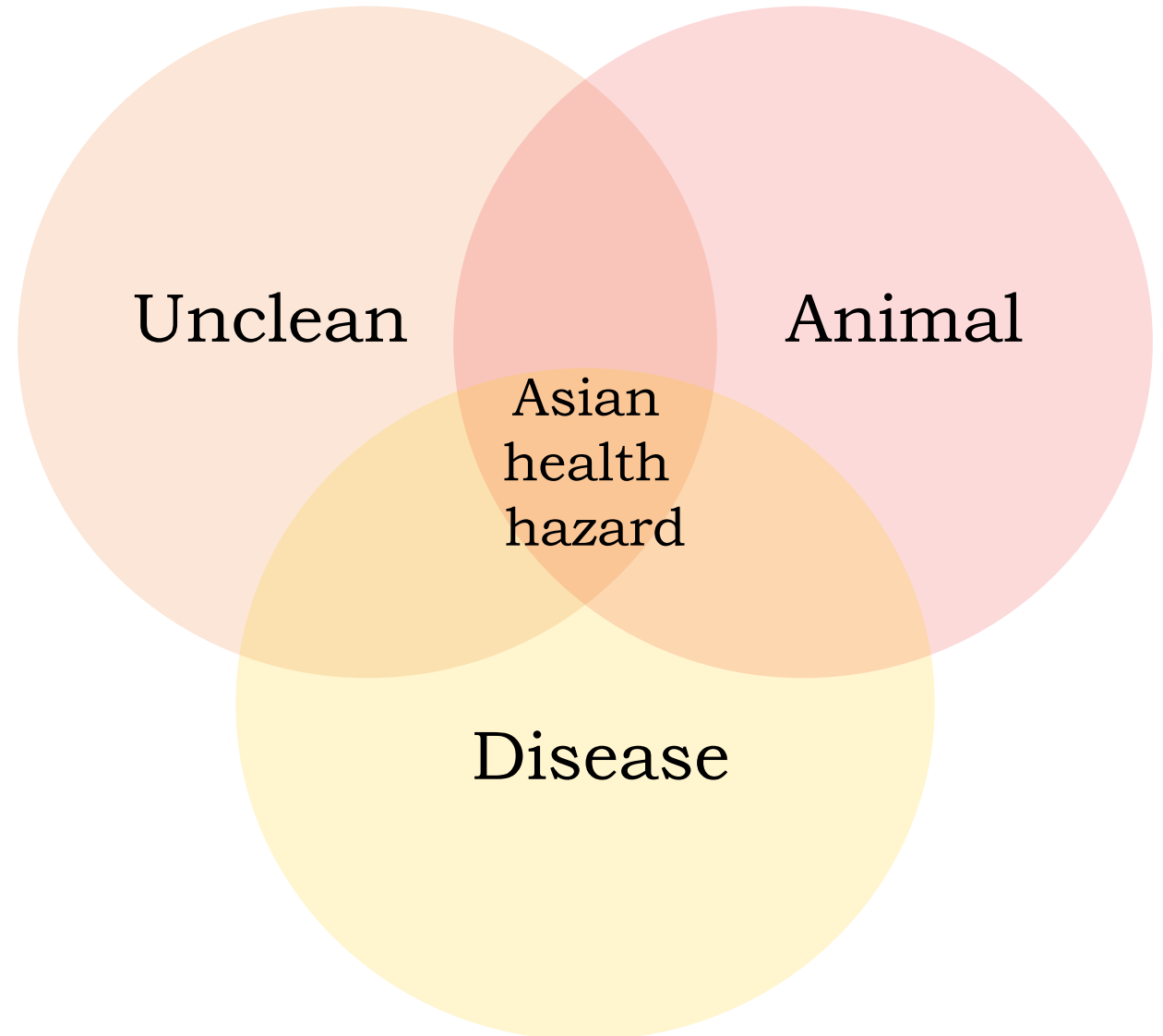


# Yellow Peril





On-point political cartoon  
of Asian health hazard themes:

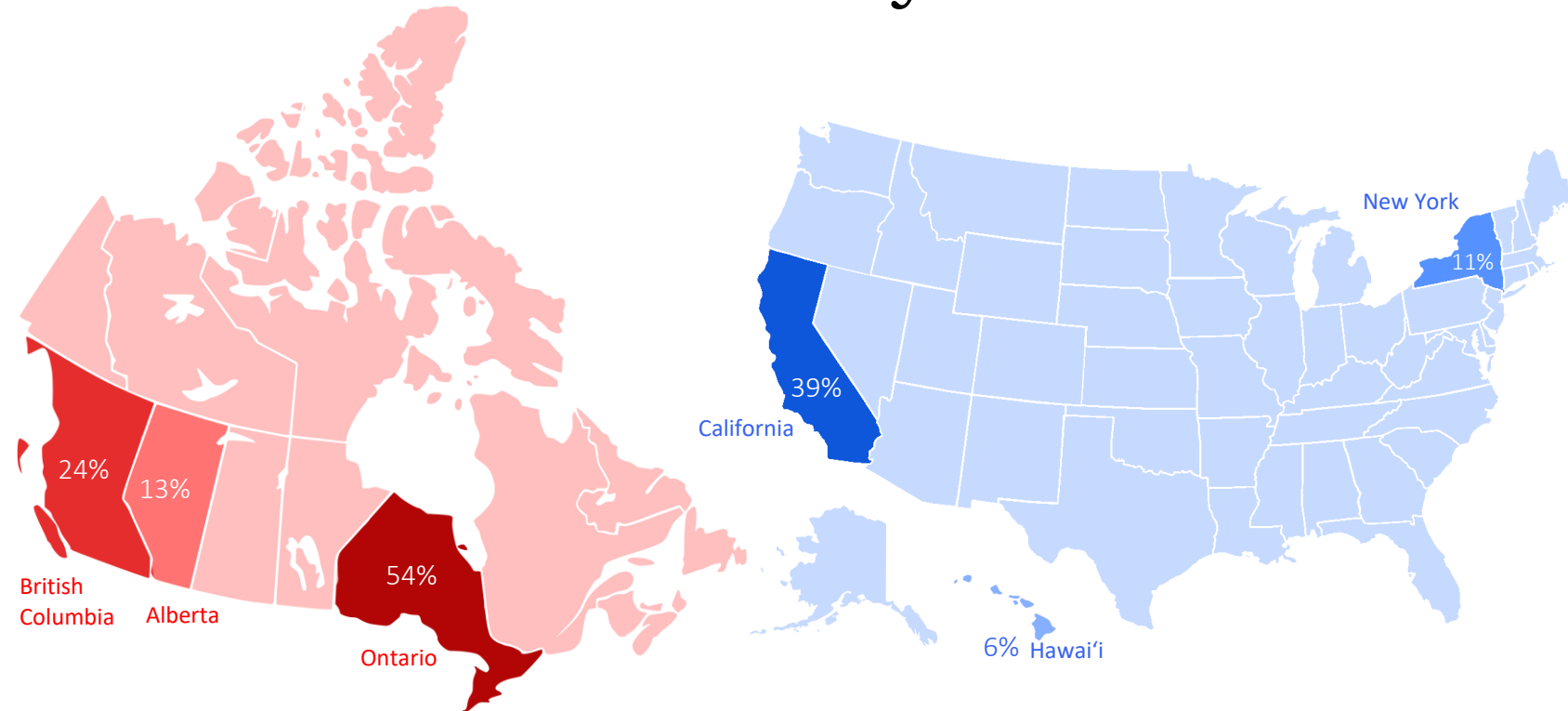
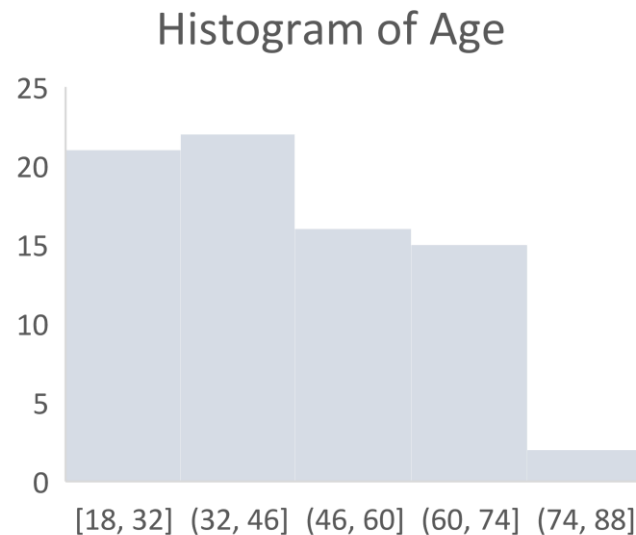
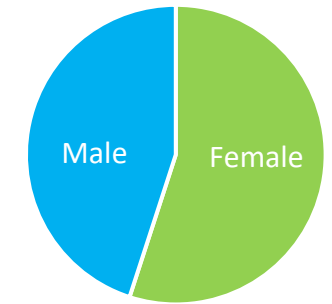
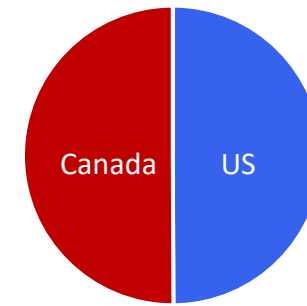


# Research Questions

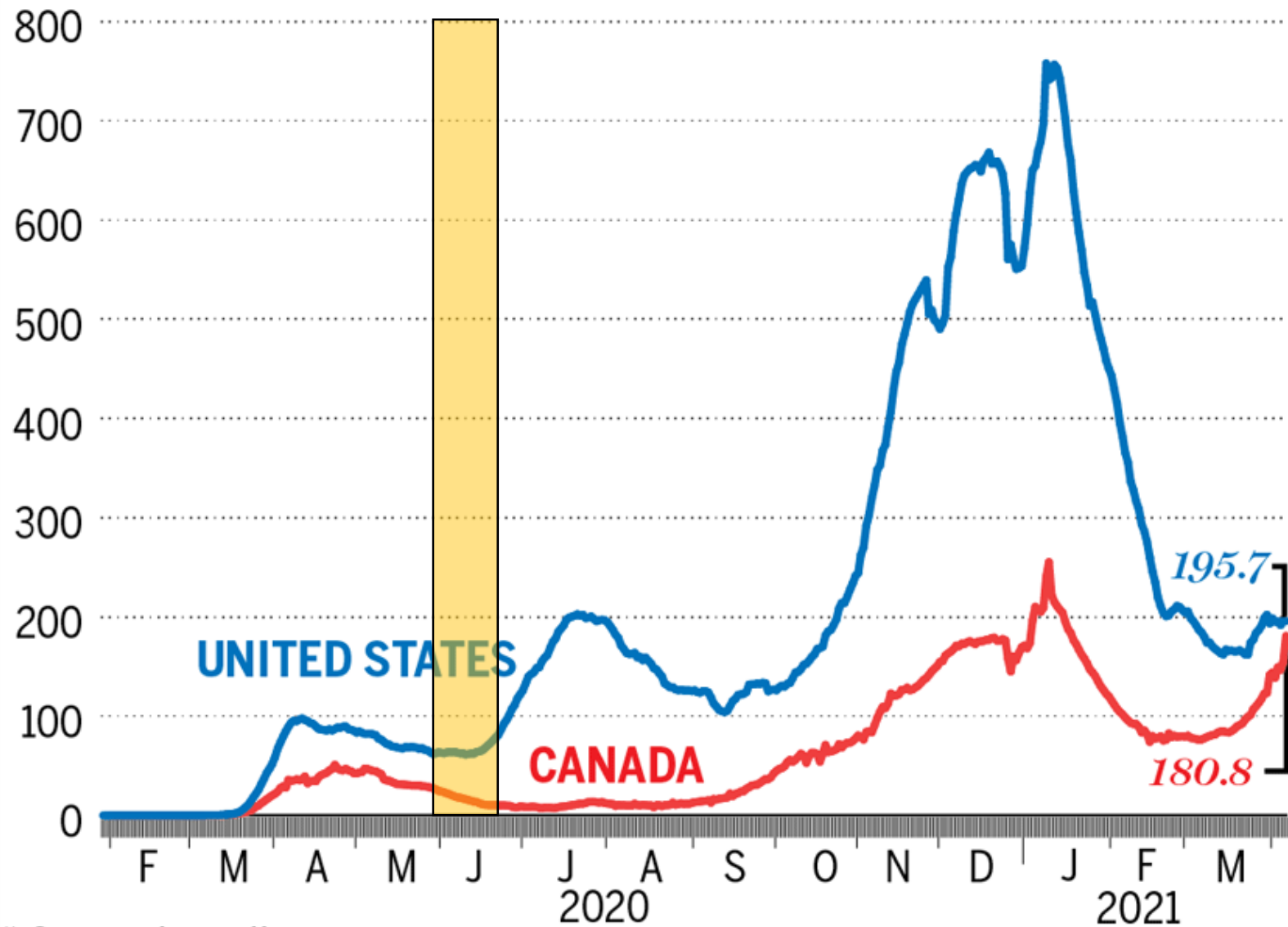
1. What do East/Southeast Asians in North America think? Do they believe society thinks of them as “health hazards”?
2. What are the psychological implications of belief in Asian health hazard perceptions?
3. Are there cultural differences between those from the United States vs. Canada?

# Participants

- Preregistered
- N = 703 East/Southeast Asians
- Qualtrics Panels: May 28<sup>th</sup> – June 25<sup>th</sup> 2020
- Born in US/Canada or arrived before 7 years



*Daily new confirmed cases per million people\**



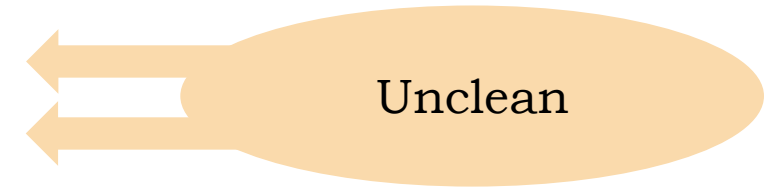
\* Seven-day rolling average  
SOURCE: OUR WORLD IN DATA

GIGI SUHANIC / NATIONAL POST

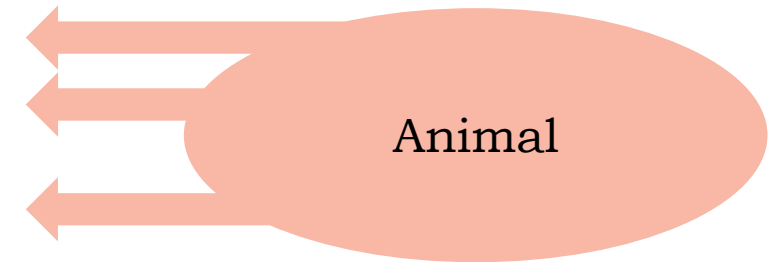
# Asian Health Hazard Stereotype Scale $\alpha = .94$

Many Americans/Canadians think that ...

... East Asians tend to have unsanitary food practices  
... the foods East Asians prepare are often unsafe to eat



... most East Asians will eat just about any animal  
... East Asians have no issues eating exotic animals  
... dangerous diseases have often come from East Asians eating exotic animals



... East Asians are mostly to blame for the international spreading of several diseases  
... East Asians have a history of spreading disease internationally  
... East Asians should be considered a high-risk group to their society because they bring over diseases





# Outcomes and Covariates

Satisfaction with  
Life Scale – 3 items  
( $\alpha = .91$ )

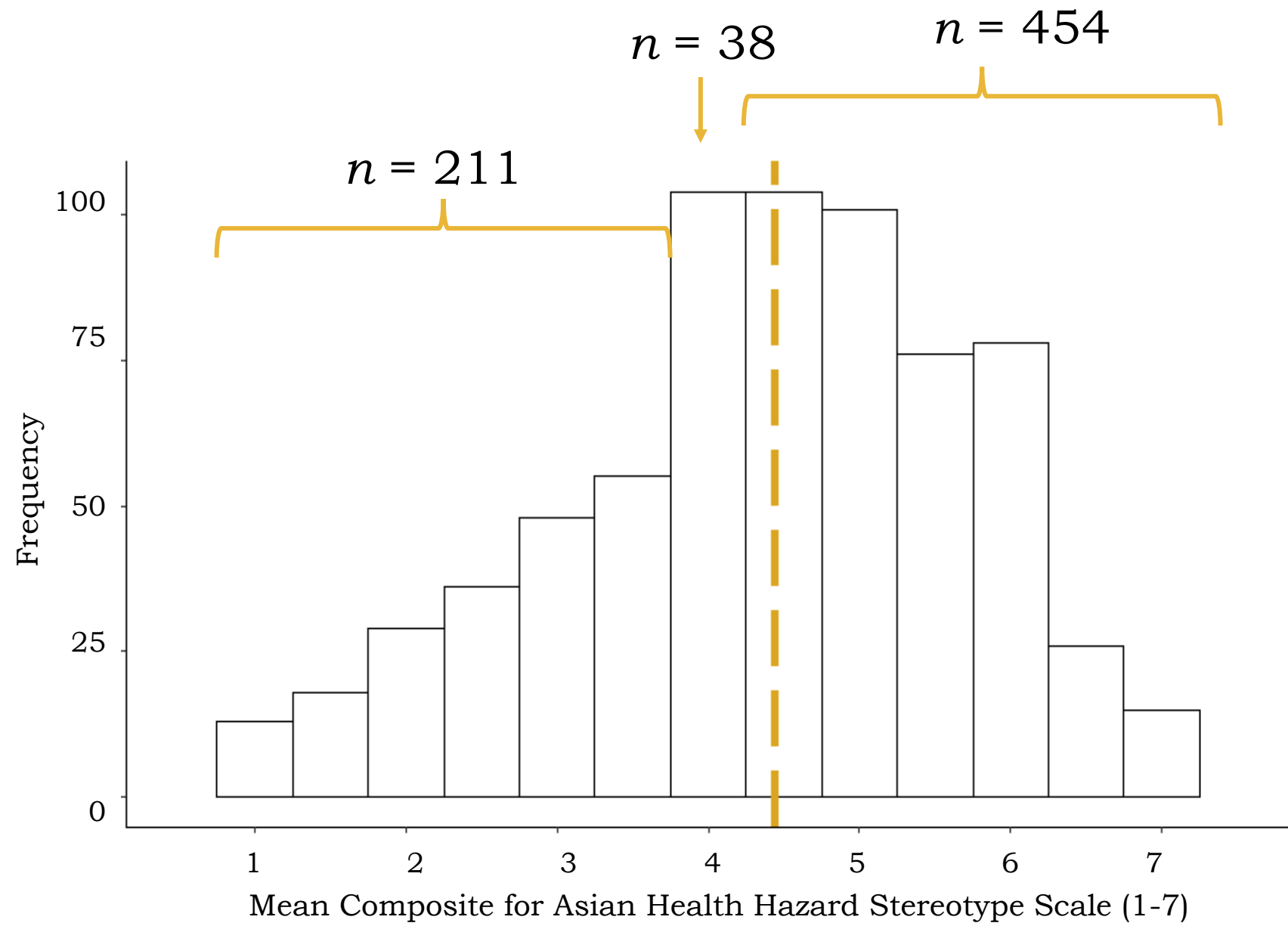
Brief Symptoms  
Inventory–18  
( $\alpha = .95$ )

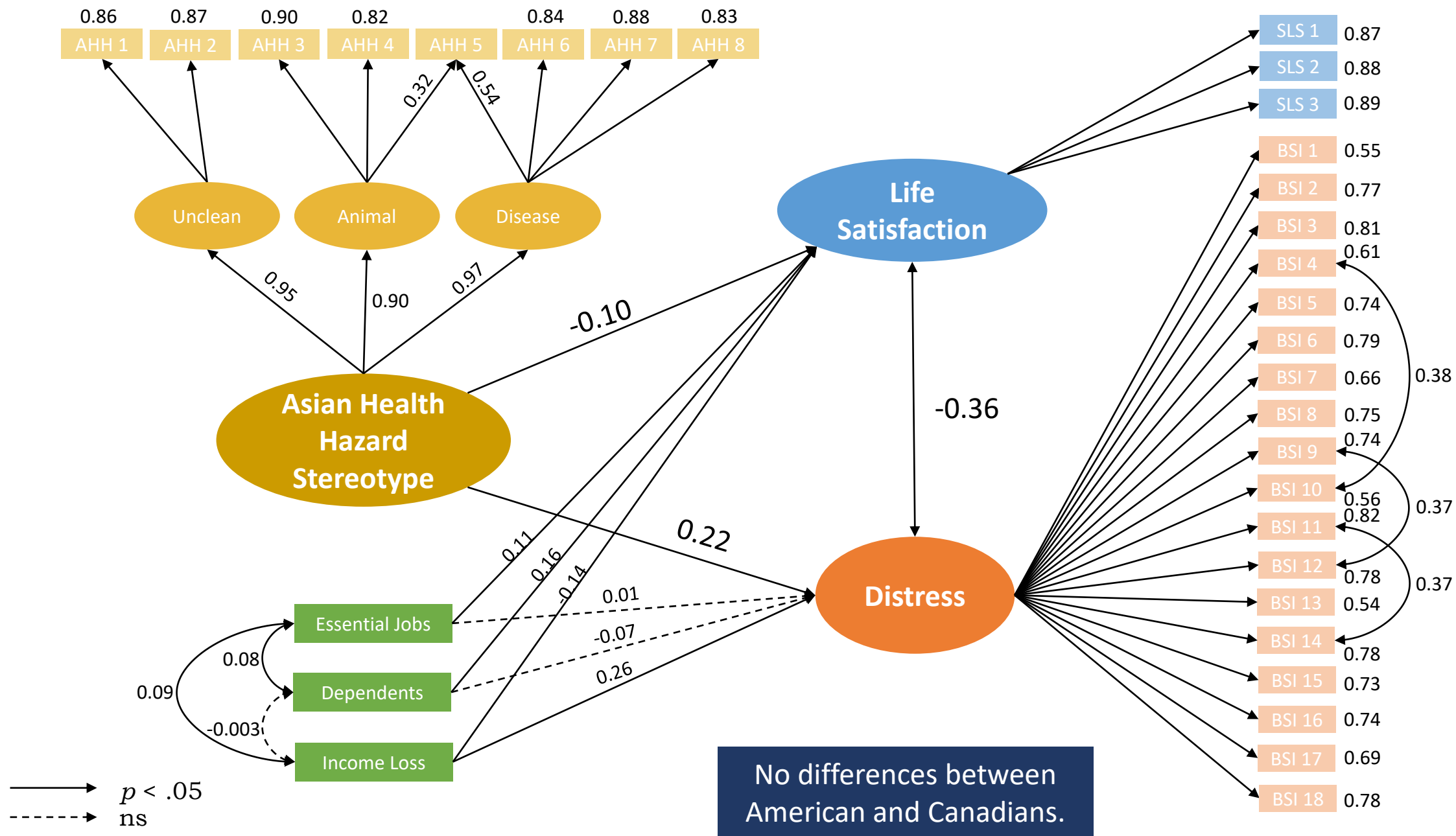
Essential job

Living with  
dependents

Income loss

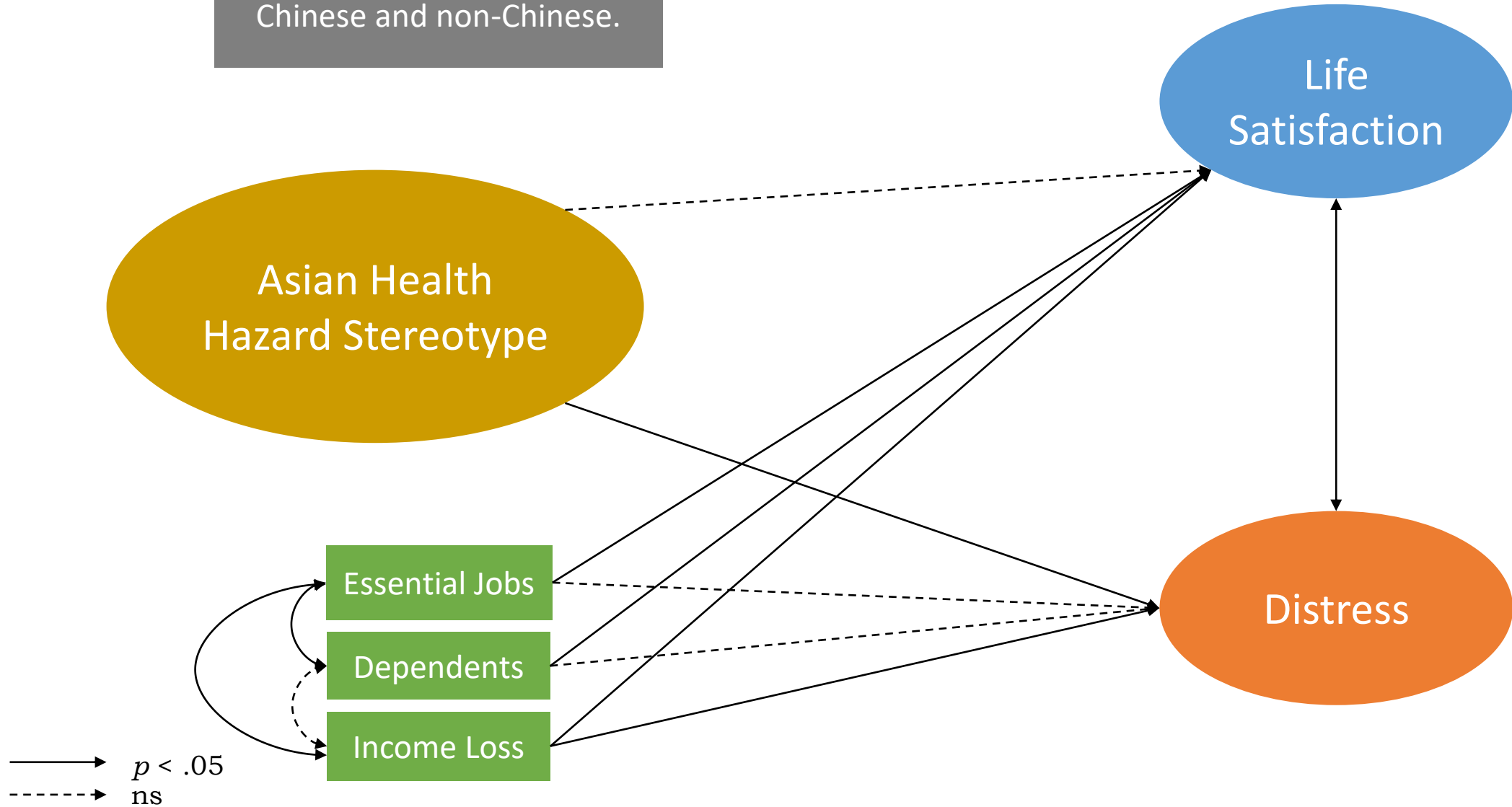
# Distribution of Asian Health Hazard Mean Composite Scores







No differences between  
Chinese and non-Chinese.



“I have heard from others around me that they think asians tend to have **unsanitary** practices”

“People making the assumption that just because I am ethnically Chinese, I must eat all sorts of **exotic animals like bats and snakes** (I don't). Even friends of mine have teased me that I must eat dogs (I don't), since *\*some\** people in China (not all!) **eat dogs and cats.**”

“I know you might not view this as anything but it feels like it to me. It's been a long time since I've experienced something like this but this moment felt like **yellow peril**”





Psychological well-being



Mental health symptoms

GTA

## Toronto seeing dramatic spike in anti-Asian hate crimes, new police data says

Police say the COVID-19 pandemic remains a "key" contributing factor to a jump in hate crimes that began in 2020.



By **Wendy Gillis** Staff Reporter  
Mon., April 25, 2022 | 4 min. read

Article was updated 2 days ago



JOIN THE CONVERSATION ( 21 )









Awareness of the Asian health hazard stereotype may have unique negative psychological effects on East/Southeast Asian Americans and Canadians.



# Thank you!



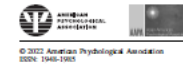
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U of Hawai'i  
at Mānoa

York U



Asian American Journal of Psychology

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## The Reemergence of Yellow Peril: Beliefs in the Asian Health Hazard Stereotype Predict Lower Psychological Well-Being

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The anti-Asian sentiment in Canada and the U.S. during the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic centers on perceptions of East and Southeast Asians as “health hazards”, due to their alleged animal-eating habits, unsanitary practices, and tendency to spread disease. In a preregistered study, we demonstrated that for East and Southeast Asians in Canada and the U.S., their belief that society holds the Asian health hazard stereotype was associated with higher distress and lower life satisfaction. No differences were observed between East and Southeast Asian Americans ( $n = 352$ ) and Canadians ( $n = 351$ ), as well as Chinese and non-Chinese participants. Importantly, these effects were robust to pandemic- and discrimination-related stressors. We also demonstrated that Asian health hazard and perpetual foreigner stereotypes were psychologically distinct. Overall, our findings highlight how perceptions of negative societal views, particularly those reminiscent of the Yellow Peril narrative, are uniquely associated with psychological well-being among East and Southeast Asian Americans and Canadians.

### What is the public significance of this article?

Racist rhetoric toward East and Southeast Asian Americans and Canadians during COVID-19 tends to center on three themes—unsanitary food practices, eating any kind of animal, and spreading diseases—that form an “Asian health hazard” stereotype. For East and Southeast Asians in Canada and the U.S., believing that their group is being perceived as “health hazards” is associated with lower psychological well-being.

**Keywords:** East Asian, Southeast Asian, Canada, stereotypes, health hazard

**Supplemental materials:** <https://doi.org/10.1037/aap0000291.supp>

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Our Open Science Framework page at [osf.io/6tppj](https://osf.io/6tppj) contains all the data, code, and materials for this study.

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The data are available at <https://osf.io/6tppj/>.

The experiment materials are available at <https://osf.io/6tppj/>.

The preregistered design is available at <https://osf.io/6tppj/>.

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In the early months of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) outbreak, widespread anti-Chinese sentiment erupted in Canada (Chan, 2020) and the U.S. (Kelley, 2020). Then-President Donald Trump infamously referred to COVID-19 as the “Chinese virus” and “kung flu” (Ikowitz, 2020). Defending Trump’s use of these phrases, Senator John Cornyn further stated that “China is to blame because they’re the culture where people eat bats and snakes and dogs and things like that” (Shen-Berrio, 2020). Such rhetoric could be found among hyperteople as well. Canadian singer Bryan Adams was noted for making aggressively racist comments (Dunham, 2020), and an analysis of Twitter data over the month of March 2020 found an increase in anti-Asian hashtags related to COVID-19 (Hewen et al., 2021).

These public remarks reflect an anti-Asian sentiment that has long existed in Canada and the U.S.: the Yellow Peril narrative. This narrative derides Asians as dangerous foreigners who pose an

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Hot off the press!  
Lo et al. (2022) at  
Asian American  
Journal of Psychology