

Pacific Islander Profile Series:

Tonga Community



Culture

The Kingdom of Tonga, also called the Friendly Islands, is located in the southwestern Pacific Ocean. Of the approximate 170 islands that make up Tonga, only about 36 are inhabited. 'Anga fakatonga' or the 'Tongan way' is an important part of Tongan identity and encompasses Tongan values, practices, beliefs, and behaviors. Oral traditions are significant and still highly practiced in many Tongan villages, including proverbs, religious epics, genealogies poetry, fables, and myths passed down through generations.

Health

On January 15, 2022, an undersea volcanic eruption triggered a massive tsunami in Tonga. This natural disaster caused an 18.5% decline in Tonga's gross domestic product (GDP). Tonga's Prime Minister, Hu'akavemeiliku Siaosi Sovaleni, stated that, on top of the financial burden and the public health threat of COVID-19, the mental health recovery from this natural disaster will take time. Tongan culture has embodied a unique understanding of mental health. For example, there are 4 ways in which Tongans understand mental distress: *fa'unga* (reality), *hu'unga* (directionality), *ta'anga* (temporality), and *tu'unga* (positionality).



Center for Asian Health Equity (CAHE)

Spotlights

Community Partner

National Tongan American Society



The National Tongan American Society (NTAS) is a community-based organization in Salt Lake City, Utah. Created in 1994, NTAS is one of the longest running non-profit organizations to advocate and empower Tongan Americans and other Pacific Islanders. Their mission is to "Strengthen the Pacific Islander family by promoting health, education, cultural preservation, and civic engagement." They seek to encourage the Tongan "ofa faka-kāinga" (extended-family love and care) that crosses ethnicity, national origins, gender, and religious boundaries.

NTAS is currently a partner in the Asian Engagement & Recruitment Core (ARC) under our All of Us Research Program.

CAHE Staff

Stacie Ko serves as the Community Outreach Specialist on the Chronic and Infectious Diseases team. She collaboratively develops, implements, and evaluates evidence-based prevention/disease management programs and outreach materials centered around diabetes, hepatitis, cardiovascular diseases, and COVID-19 for racial and ethnic communities in Chicago, and manages social media. Her parents were born in the Philippines and she was born and raised in Chicago. In her free time, Stacie enjoys exploring nature, traveling, jewelry making, spending time with loved ones, and enjoying Filipino dessert.

