

# Prevalence of Mental Health Concerns and Suicide Risk in West Virginia:

## Estimates from the Mountain State Assessment of Trends in Community Health (MATCH)

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### Introduction

Poor mental health is common in the United States (US) with an estimated one in five adults living with a mental illness in 2021.<sup>1</sup> Coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) and current societal factors have affected many people's mental health, prompting the American Psychological Association to declare a mental health crisis.<sup>2</sup> Poor mental health increases health and mortality-related risks, especially among rural populations.<sup>3</sup>

To better understand mental health in West Virginia (WV), a mostly rural state, Mountain State Assessment of Trends in Community Health (MATCH) asked questions regarding individuals' mental health.



### Methods

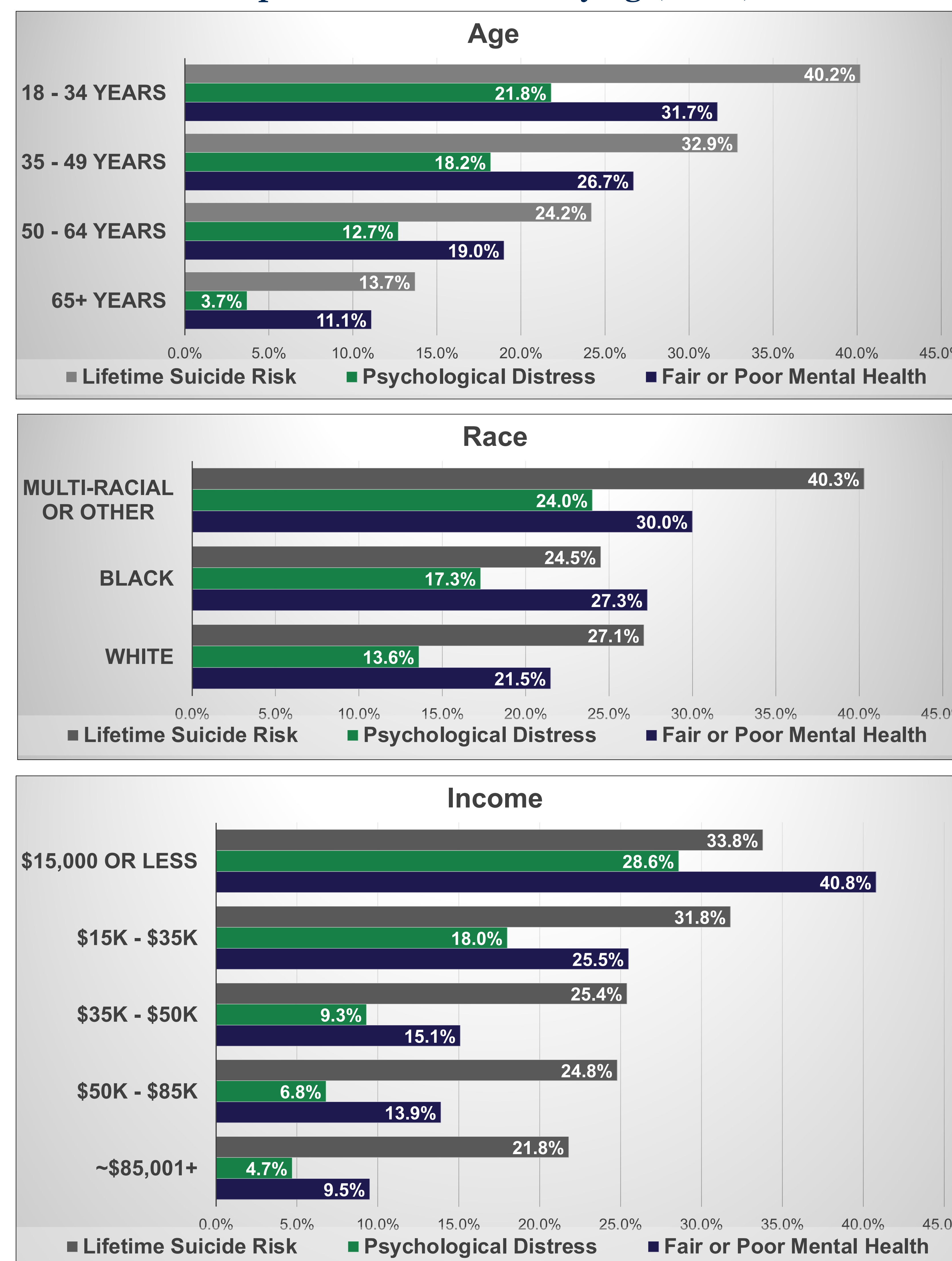
Established through a partnership between the West Virginia (WV) Department of Health and Human Resources (DHHR) and West Virginia University Health Affairs Institute, MATCH is a biennial, cross-sectional survey designed to collect state-, regional-, and county-level data on WV residents (ages 18 and over) living in non-group and non-institutionalized housing.

2021 MATCH (Inaugural year)

- Fielded Aug. 31, 2021 to Feb. 28, 2022
- Stratified random sample (n = 88,004)
- Data were collected via web, paper, and telephone
- Questions included:
  - Have you ever thought about or attempted to kill yourself?
  - In general, how would you rate your mental health?
  - In the past two weeks how often have you felt: nervous, hopeless, restless or fidgety, so depressed that nothing could cheer you up, worthless, or isolated from others? (six-item Kessler Psychological Distress Scale; score of 13 or higher considered serious psychological distress).<sup>4</sup>
- Prevalences were calculated using standard statistical software (SAS and R), weighted, and are representative of all West Virginians at the state-, regional-, and county-levels.

### Results

Prevalence of poor mental health by age, race, and income



Of WV adults:

- 27.5% reported suicide risk.
- 14.1% reported serious psychological distress in the past two weeks.
- 21.9% reported fair or poor mental health.

### Limitations

- Difficult to compare to national measures:
  - Use different facets of distress<sup>a</sup>
  - Use different scales<sup>b</sup>
  - NHIS found 3.7% US adults reported serious psychological distress in the past 30 days.<sup>5</sup>
  - Gallup found 19% of US adults had only fair or poor mental health.<sup>6</sup>

Access the Data Explorer by scanning this code or at [wvmatchsurvey.org/data](http://wvmatchsurvey.org/data)

### Conclusions

- Serious psychological distress and poor mental health are prevalent in WV.
- Prevalence of poor mental health was higher among:
  - Those with lower socioeconomic status.
  - Those who indicated multi-racial or other race.
  - Those who were younger.
- Findings from MATCH can help focus efforts to improve mental health.

### References

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Note: <sup>a</sup> The National Health Interview Survey Kessler Psychological Distress Scale varies from the MATCH. NHIS asks "so sad nothing could cheer you up" and MATCH asks, "so depressed that nothing could cheer you up." NHIS asks, "that everything was an effort" and MATCH asks, "isolated from others." <sup>b</sup> Gallup uses a four-item response for mental health rating and MATCH used a five-item response scale.