

Table S1*Search Strategy to Capture Relevant Records*

Source	Search terms
<i>EBSCOhost ERIC</i> <i>EBSCOhost PsycINFO</i> <i>PubMed</i> <i>Web of Science</i> <i>Scopus</i> <i>ProQuest Dissertations and Theses Global</i>	<pre>(prevalen* OR incidence OR rate* OR occurrence OR epidemiolog* OR pervasiveness) AND (depress* OR "mood disorder*" OR "affective disorder*" OR "common mental disorder*") AND ("college student*" OR "university student*" OR undergraduate* OR "medical student*" OR "dental student*" OR "nursing student*" OR postgraduate* OR "doctorate student*" OR "phd student*" OR "phd candidate*" OR "ph.d. student*" OR "master's student*" OR "masters student*" OR "graduate student*") AND ("meta-analy*" OR "meta analy" OR "quantitative synthesis" OR review)</pre>
<i>BMC Psychiatry</i> <i>The American Journal of Psychiatry</i> <i>Journal of Affective Disorders</i> <i>Journal of Psychopathology</i> <i>and Clinical Science</i> <i>Depression and Anxiety</i> <i>Google Scholar</i>	<pre>prevalence AND (depression OR "depressive symptoms") AND "university students" AND review</pre>

Table S2*Agreement Rate Between Coders for Titles and Abstracts, Full Texts, and Quality Assessment*

Criterion	Agreement Rates	
Stage 1 (Titles and Abstracts)	First Search	Second Search
(1) Records were written in English	94%	99%
(2) Records were systematic reviews or meta-analyses	92%	97%
(3) Records mentioned depression	88%	98%

Overall for Stage 1	92%	98%
Stage 2 (Full Texts)	First Search	Second Search
(1) Records were written in English	100%	98%
(2) Records were meta-analyses or quantitative systematic reviews	94%	97%
(3) Reviews assessed clinical depression and/or depressive symptoms with the relevant instruments	64%	83%
(4) Reviews stated an overall prevalence	79%	90%
(5) Reviews limited their samples to university students	88%	92%
Overall for Stage 2	87%	92%
Stage 3 (Quality Assessment)	First Search	Second Search
(1) Is the review question clearly and explicitly stated?	100%	100%
(2) Were the inclusion criteria appropriate for the review question?	97%	100%
(3) Was the search strategy appropriate?	97%	96%
(4) Were the sources and resources used to search for studies adequate?	87%	38%
(5) Were the criteria for appraising studies appropriate?	92%	62%
(6) Was critical appraisal conducted by two or more reviewers independently?	71%	58%
(7) Were there methods to minimize errors in data extraction?	100%	65%
(8) Were the methods used to combine studies appropriate?	97%	96%
(9) Was the likelihood of publication bias assessed	97%	92%
(10) Were recommendations for policy and/or practice supported by the reported data?	95%	77%
(11) Were the specific directives for new research appropriate?	89%	73%

Overall for Stage 3	93%	78%
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Table S3*Agreement Rate Between Coders for Data Extraction*

Variable	Agreement Rates	
	First Search	Second Search
Countries and regions covered	74%	77%
Type of the constituent samples	100%	88%
Total number of studies	92%	81%
Total sample size	84%	62%
Type of depression (i.e., clinically diagnosed depression or depressive symptoms)	100%	100%
Assessment tools used (i.e., clinician-administered or self-reported)	79%	65%
Overall depression prevalence	97%	100%
Statistical model used to synthesise the overall prevalence (i.e., random-effects model or fixed-effects model)	82%	100%
Details about subgroup analyses (if any):		
Assessment tool	82%	77%
Demographics	87%	81%
Geographic location	89%	92%
Education level	97%	85%
Field of study	89%	96%
Time period	95%	96%
Other factors/moderators affecting the prevalence of depression (if any)	100%	100%
Limitations	100%	100%
Overall	89%	88%

Zeng et al. (2019)	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	9
Zhao et al. (2024)	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	6
Zhou et al. (2024)	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	10
Zhu et al. (2021)	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	9

Note. Green = Yes; Red = No; Yellow = Unclear; Grey = Not applicable. Total score = Number of “Yes” as indicated in green.

Table S5

Characteristics and Methodological Details of Synthesised Records

Record Type	Author, Publication year	Type of review	Country, Region	Number of studies	Sample size	Participants demographics	Prevalence of depression, 95% CI	Assessment tools
Journal Article (Peer Reviewed)	Akhtar et al. (2020)	MA	20 countries (Africa, Asia-Pacific, Europe, Middle East, North America, South America)	37	76,608	University students	24.40% [19.20%, 30.50%]	BAPI NR, BDI, BSD, CES-D, DASS, DASS-21, HADS, HRSRS, PHQ-9, QIDS, USDI-NR, WHO-CIDI, ZDS-SF, Zung-SDS NR
Journal Article (Peer Reviewed)	Aljaber (2020)	SR	Saudi Arabia (Middle East)	18	8,839	Medical students	51.46%	AKUADS, BDI, BSI-18, DASS-21, HADS, MHI, PHQ-2, PHQ-9, Custom questionnaire

Journal Article (Peer Reviewed)	Almansoof et al. (2024)	MA	Saudi Arabia (Middle East)	11	5,748	Health science students	32.00% [25.00%, 40.00%]	AKUADS, BDI-II, HADS, ISSH, PHQ-10
Journal Article (Peer Reviewed)	Alzahrani et al. (2025)	MA	6 countries (Africa, Asia-Pacific, Europe, Middle East, North America)	6	823	Paramedic students	34.70% [23.40%, 48.10%]	BDI, BDI-II, CES-D, DASS, PHQ-9, K11
Journal Article (Peer Reviewed)	Anbesaw et al. (2023)	MA	Ethiopia (Africa)	10	5,207	University	28.13% [22.67%, 33.59%]	BDI-II, CESD, HADS, PHQ-10
Journal Article (Peer Reviewed)	Ayoubi et al. (2023)	MA	18 countries (Africa, Asia-Pacific, Europe, Middle East, North America, South America)	35	24,723	Medical students	49.00% [41.00%, 56.00%]	DASS-21, PHQ-10
Journal Article (Peer Reviewed)	Badillo-Sánchez et al. (2025)	MA	7 countries (Asia-Pacific, Europe, Middle East)	10	5,169	Nursing students	37.92% [20.20%, 57.49%]	DASS-21
Journal Article (Peer Reviewed)	Batra et al. (2021)	MA	7 countries (Asia-Pacific, Europe, Middle East, North America)	14	61,392	College students	31.20% [19.70%, 45.60%]	BDI-II, CES-D, DASS-21, DSRSC, PHQ-8, PHQ-9, SAQ

Journal Article (Peer Reviewed)	Carvalho et al. (2022)	MA	8 countries (Europe)	13	15,802	University students	63.00% [52.00%, 73.00%]	BDI, DASS-21, HADS, PHQ-8, PHQ-9
Journal Article (Peer Reviewed)	Chang et al (2021)	MA	7 countries (Asia-Pacific, Europe, North America)	12	135,018	College students	34.00% [27.00%, 41.00%]	BDI, CES-D, DASS, PHQ-9
Journal Article (Peer Reviewed)	Cui et al. (2022)	MA	Nigeria (Africa)	18	8,125	University students	26.00% [18.00%, 36.00%]	BDI, DASS, HADS, MINI, PHQ-9, Zung-SDS
Journal Article (Peer Reviewed)	Cuttilan et al. (2016)	SR	8 countries (Asia-Pacific, Middle East)	9	10,147	Medical students	11.00%	AKUADS, BDI, HADS, SCL-90, Zung-SDS, ZDS
Journal Article (Peer Reviewed)	Demenech et al. (2021)	MA	Brazil (South America)	40	32,839	Undergraduate students	28.51% [22.89%, 34.13%]	BDI, CES-D, DASS-21, HADS, MINI, PHQ-9, Self-report
Journal Article (Peer Reviewed)	Deng et al. (2021)	MA	20 countries (Africa, Asia-Pacific, Europe, Middle East, North America)	52	1,277,755	College students	34.00% [30.00%, 38.00%]	BDI-13, CES-D, DASS-21, DASS-21D, KADS-6, PHQ-8, PHQ-9, PROMIS-8D, PQEEPH, SCL-90 (depression domain), Zung-SDS, Custom questionnaire
Journal Article (Peer Reviewed)	Dessauvagie et al. (2022)	SR	6 countries (Asia-Pacific)	21	15,859	University students	29.40%	BDI, BM-DASS-21, CES-D, HADS, PHQ-9

Journal Article (Peer Reviewed)	Duica et al. (2025)	MA	Romania (Europe)	6	1,546	Medical and Dentistry students	19.99% [18.24%, 21.73%]	BDI, DASS-21, PHQ-9, Zung-SDS
Journal Article (Peer Reviewed)	Esan et al. (2019)	SR	Nigeria (Africa)	5	2,099	Medical students	33.50%	BDI-II, DASS (short-form), HADS, Other unspecified measures
Journal Article (Peer Reviewed)	Fentahun et al. (2024)	MA	Ethiopia (Africa)	12	5,534	University students	35.10% [29.60%, 40.60%]	BDI-II, CES-D, DASS-21, HADS, PHQ-10
Journal Article (Peer Reviewed)	Fernandes et al. (2023)	MA	15 countries (Africa, Asia-pacific, Europe, Middle East, North America, South America)	27	15,185	University students	27.00% [20.00%, 34.00%]	BDI, BDI-II, CES-D, DASS-21, HADS, MHI, PHQ-2, PHQ-9, Zung-SDS
Journal Article (Peer Reviewed)	Gabriel et al. (2025)	MA	11 countries (Africa, Asia-Pacific, Europe, Middle East, North America)	19	11,885	Engineering Students	42.60% [32.80%, 53.10%]	BDI-II, DASS, DASS-21, HADS, PHQ-9, USDI, Zung-SDS
Journal Article (Peer Reviewed)	Gambolò et al. (2025)	MA	Italy (Europe)	8	6,080	University students	46.00% [37.00%, 56.00%]	BDI, BDI-II, BDI-sf, HADS, QIDS-SR16
Journal Article (Peer Reviewed)	Gao et al. (2020)	MA	China (Asia-Pacific)	113	185,787	University students	28.40% [25.70%, 31.20%]	ADI, BDI, BDI-II, CES-D, CCSMHS, DASS-21, DSI, HAMD, PHQ-9, SCL-90, Zung-SDS, TDQ

Journal Article (Peer Reviewed)	Guo et al. (2021)	MA	10 countries (Asia-Pacific, Middle East, North America, South America)	37	26,579	Postgraduate students	34.00% [28.00%, 40.00%]	BDI, CES-D-R, CES-S, DASS-21, DASS, HADS, HAMD, ICD-10 (diagnostic criteria), K10, PHQ-2, PHQ-9, PRIME-MD, RDSI, SCL-90, Zung-SDS, Other uncertified measures
Journal Article (Peer Reviewed)	Heumann et al. (2024)	MA	Germany (Europe)	56	75,107	University students	21.10% [17.60%, 24.60%]	BDI,, BDI-II, CES-D, CES-D (short-form), DASS-21, DESC, GSDD, GSMD, HADS-D, M-BDI, MDI, PCL, PHQ-2, PHQ-8, PHQ-9
Journal Article (Peer Reviewed)	Ibrahim et al. (2013)	SR	11 countries (Asia-Pacific, Europe, Middle East, North America)	24	48,650	University students	30.60% [30.20%, 31.10%]	BDI, BDI-II, CES-D, DASS, M-BDI, MDI, MINI-RR, PHQ-9, ZDS, Zung-SDS
Journal Article (Peer Reviewed)	Jaafari et al. (2021)	MA	Iran (Middle East)	89	33,564	College students	48.00% [43.60%, 52.50%]	BDI, BDI-II, DASS-21, GHQ-28, SCL-90-R
Journal Article (Peer Reviewed)	Jia et al. (2022)	MA	16 countries (Asia-Pacific, Europe, Middle East, North America, South America)	31	29,036	Medical students	37.90% [30.70%, 45.40%]	BDI-II, CES-D, DASS-21, DASS, HADS, PHQ-9, Zung-SDS
Journal Article (Peer Reviewed)	Jiang et al. (2015)	MA	China (Asia-Pacific)	45	50,826	College students	30.39% [26.38%, 34.55%]	Zung-SDS

Journal Article (Peer Reviewed)	Jin et al. (2022)	MA	China (Asia-Pacific)	21	39,780	Medical students	27.00% [21.00%, 33.00%]	BDI, CES-D, DASS-C21, PHQ-9, Zung-SDS
Journal Article (Peer Reviewed)	Kaur et al. (2024)	MA	India (Asia-Pacific)	30	11,737	Medical students	48.00% [41.00%, 55.00%]	ADSS, BDI, CES-D, DASS-21, DASS, HADS, HAM-D, PHQ-9, Zung-SDS
Journal Article (Peer Reviewed)	Khan et al. (2021)	MA	Pakistan (Asia-Pacific)	26	7,652	University students	42.66% [34.82%, 50.89%]	BDI, BDI-II, CES-D, DASS, DASS-21, Duke Health Profile, HAMD, HADS, PHQ-9, QIDS, Zung-SDS, Custom questionnaire
Journal Article (Peer Reviewed)	Lei et al. (2016)	MA	China (Asia-Pacific)	39	32,694	University students	23.80% [19.90%, 28.50%]	BDI, CES-D, PHQ-9C, DEQ, DSI, HAMD, SCL-90-R, Zung-SDS
Journal Article (Peer Reviewed)	Li et al. (2021)	MA	11 countries (Asia-Pacific, Europe, Middle East, North America)	18	63,317	College students	39.00% [27.00%, 51.00%]	DASS-21, PHQ-2, PHQ-9, Zung-SDS
Journal Article (Peer Reviewed)	Li et al. (2022)	MA	29 countries (Africa, Asia-Pacific, Arab States, Europe, Middle East, North America, South America)	59	105,264	College students	33.60% [29.30%, 37.80%]	BDI, CES-D, DASS, DASS-21, HADS, MINI, PHQ-4, PHQ-8, PHQ-9, USDI, ZDS, Zung-SDS

Journal Article (Peer Reviewed)	Lin et al. (2024)	MA	32 countries (Africa, Asia-pacific, Europe, Middle East, North America, South America)	97	35,828	Medical students	48.00% [43.00%, 52.00%]	BDI-II, DASS-21, HADS, PHQ-9, Zung-SDS
Journal Article (Peer Reviewed)	Lin et al. (2025)	MA	China (Asia-Pacific)	32	93,679	University students	34.70% [30.27%, 39.26%]	BDI, CES-D, DASS-21, PHQ-9, Zung-SDS
Journal Article (Peer Reviewed)	Luo et al. (2021)	MA	China (Asia-Pacific)	84	1,292,811	University students	26.00% [23.30%, 28.90%]	CES-D, DASS-21, PHQ-9, PQEEPH, SCL-90-R, Zung-SDS
Journal Article (Peer Reviewed)	Mao et al. (2019)	SR	China (Asia-Pacific)	15	30,511	Medical students	32.74%	BDI, CES-D, Zung-SDS
Journal Article (Peer Reviewed)	Mekonnen et al. (2024)	MA	10 countries (Africa)	31	14,823	Medical students	38.80% [29.55%, 48.05%]	BDI, DASS-21, HADS, SRQ-20, PHQ-10
Journal Article (Peer Reviewed)	Melo et al. (2025)	MA	Brazil (South America)	50	24,072	Medical students	36.30% [31.20%, 41.60%]	BDI, Other unspecified measures
Journal Article (Peer Reviewed)	Moradi et al. (2024)	MA	20 countries (Asia-pacific, Europe, Middle East, North America,	37	13,592	Dental students	38.00% [32.00%, 44.00%]	BDI, CES-D, DASS, GHQ, HAMD, PHQ-9, Zung-SDS

			South America)					
Journal Article (Peer Reviewed)	Mulyadi et al. (2021)	MA	6 countries (Asia-pacific, Europe, North America)	8	8,175	Nursing students	52.00% [40.00%, 63.00%]	BDI-II, DASS, DASS-21, PHQ-9
Journal Article (Peer Reviewed)	Muniz et al. (2021)	MA	18 countries (Asia-pacific, Europe, Middle East, North America, South America)	58	16,805	Dental students	29.35% [25.67%, 33.56%]	AKUADS, BDI, CES-D, DASS, GHQ-28, GADS, HADS, HAMD, HSC, KADS, MHI, PHQ-2, PHQ-9, SQ, Zung-SDS
Journal Article (Peer Reviewed)	Niazi et al. (2025)	MA	Pakistan (Asia-Pacific)	35	11,209	University	50.59% [43.01%, 58.15%]	AKUADS, BDI-I, BDI-II, CES-D, DASS, DASS-21, GADS, PHQ-10
Journal Article (Peer Reviewed)	Pacheco et al. (2017)	MA	Brazil (South America)	25	9,331	Medical students	30.60% [24.00%, 37.70%]	BDI, BDI-II, HADS
Journal Article (Peer Reviewed)	Peng et al. (2023)	MA	Unspecified countries (Africa, Asia-pacific, Europe, North America, South America)	116	126,044	Medical students	41.00% [37.00%, 45.00%]	BDI, BDI-II, DASS-21, HADS, PHQ-2, PHQ-8, PHQ-9, Zung-SDS

Journal Article (Peer Reviewed)	Puthran et al. (2016)	MA	29 countries (Asia Pacific, Europe, Middle East, North America, South America)	77	62,728	Medical students	28.00% [24.20%, 32.10%]	BDI, BDI-II, CES-D, DASS, EST-Q, GHQ-12, GHQ-28, HADS, HRSRS, MDI, PHQ-9, PRIME-MD, PROMIS, Zung-SDS, Self-report
Journal Article (Peer Reviewed)	Quesada-Puga et al. (2024)	MA	11 countries (Asia-Pacific, Europe, Middle East, North America)	11	4,479	Nursing students	32.00% [22.00%, 42.00%]	BDI, DASS, DASS-21, HADS, PHQ-9
Journal Article (Peer Reviewed)	Rotenstein et al. (2016)	MA	40 countries (Africa, Asia-Pacific, Europe, Middle East, North America, South America)	183	122,356	Medical students	27.20% [24.70%, 29.90%]	BDI, CES-D, DASS-21, GHQ, HADS-D, MMPI-D, Zung-SDS
Journal Article (Peer Reviewed)	Santabárbara et al. (2021a)	MA	8 countries (Arab states, Asia-Pacific, Middle East, South America)	11	6,576	Medical students	31.00% [23.00%, 40.00%]	BDI-II, CES-D, DASS-21, PHQ-9
Journal Article (Peer Reviewed)	Santabárbara et al. (2021b)	MA	8 countries (Arab states, Asia-Pacific, Middle East,	13	4,147	Dental students	37.00% [26.00%, 49.00%]	DASS-21, DASS, HADS, PHQ-9

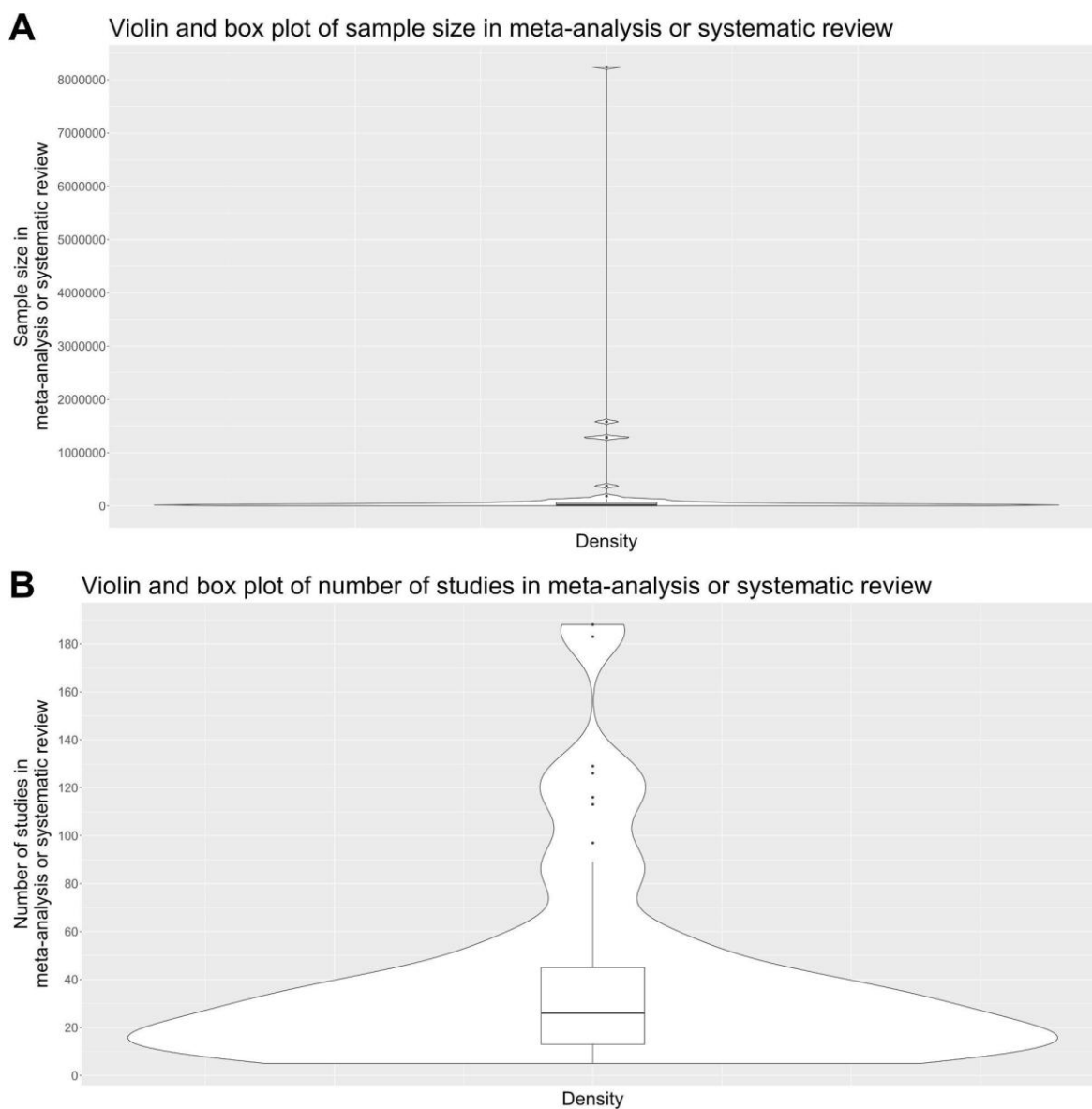
			South America)					
Journal Article (Peer Reviewed)	Sarokhani et al. (2013)	MA	9 countries (Arab states, Asia-Pacific, Europe, Middle East, North America, South America)	35	9,743	University students	33.00% [32.00%, 34.00%]	BDI, GHQ-28
Journal Article (Peer Reviewed)	Satinsky et al. (2021)	MA	5 countries (Asia-Pacific, Europe, North America)	16	23,469	Postgraduate students	24.00% [18.00%, 31.00%]	BDI, BSI, CES-D, CES-D-10, CES-D-R, DASS, DASS-21, DASS-28, DSM-V, GHQ-12, GHQ-28, IDAS-II, MASQ-SF, PHQ-2, PHQ-9
Journal Article (Peer Reviewed)	Sheldon et al. (2021)	MA	6 countries (Asia-Pacific, Europe, Middle East, North America)	8	13,790	University students	25.00% [17.00%, 35.00%]	BDI, BSI (depression domain), CES-D, CIDI-SC, DASS-21, PHQ-9
Journal Article (Peer Reviewed)	Wang et al. (2021)	MA	China, Other unspecified countries(Asia-Pacific)	19	83,699	College students	37.00% [32.00%, 42.00%]	CES-D, DASS-21, FCV-19S, PHQ-9, PSS-10
Journal Article (Peer Reviewed)	Wang et al. (2023)	MA	China (Asia-Pacific)	129	132,343	Medical students	29.00% [26.00%, 32.00%]	ADI, BDI, BDI-13, BDI-II, CES-D, DASS-21, DSI, HADS, HAMD, IDLS,

								IVR, PRIME-MD, SCL-90, YRBSS, Zung-SDS
Journal Article (Peer Reviewed)	Zatt et al. (2023)	MA	19 countries (Africa, Asia-pacific, Europe, Middle East, North America, South America)	34	18,030	Medical students	18.09% [14.11%, 22.07%]	BDI, CES-D, DASS, DASS-21, GHQ-12, HADS, KADS, PHQ-2, PHQ-9
Journal Article (Peer Reviewed)	Zeng et al. (2019)	MA	China (Asia-Pacific)	6	24,047	Medical students	29.00% [15.00%, 44.00%]	BDI, CES-D, PHQ-9, SCL-90, Zung-SDS
Journal Article (Peer Reviewed)	Zhao et al. (2024)	SR	China (Asia-Pacific)	19	8,238,954	Undergraduate students	21.21%	BDI-II, CES-D, CIDI 3.0, DASS-21, PHQ-9, SCL-90, STDS, Zung-SDS
Journal Article (Peer Reviewed)	Zhou et al. (2024)	MA	China (Asia-Pacific)	188	374,996	Undergraduate students	27.72% [25.79%, 29.79%]	BDI, CDI, CES-D, DSRSC, HAMD, KADS, PHQ, Zung-SDS
Journal Article (Peer Reviewed)	Zhu et al. (2021)	MA	35 countries (Africa, Arab states, Asia-Pacific, Europe, Middle East, North America, South America)	126	1,582,493	University students	30.60% [27.40%, 34.00%]	BDI-II, CES-D, DASS, DASS-12, DASS-18, DASS-21, GHQ-28, HADS, KADS-6, PHQ-4, PHQ-8, PHQ-9, PROMIS, WHO-5, Zung-SDS

Note. Meta-analysis = MR; Systematic Review = SR; ADI: Adolescent Depression Inventory; ADSS: Anxiety Depression Stress Scale; AKUADS: Aga Khan University Anxiety and Depression Scale; BDI/BDI-II/BDI-13/BDI-SF/M-BDI: 21-item Beck Depression Inventory and its revised, abbreviated or translated versions; BSD: Brief Screen for Depression; BSI/BSI-18: 53-item Brief Symptom Inventory and its abbreviated version; CCSMHS: Chinese College Student Mental Health Scale; CES-D/CES-D-R/CES-S/CES-D-10: 20-item Center for Epidemiological Studies Depression Scale and its revised or abbreviated versions; CIDI-SC/CIDI 3.0: Composite International Diagnostic Interview and its revised version; DASS/DASS-12/DASS-18/DASS-21/BM-DASS-21/DASS-21C/DASS-21D/DASS-28: 42-item Depression Anxiety Stress Scale and its revised, abbreviated or translated versions; DESC: Rasch-based Depression Screening; DEQ: Depressive Experiences Questionnaire; DSM-V: Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, Fifth Edition; DSI: Depression Status Inventory; DSRSC: Depression Self Rating Scale for Children; EST-Q: Emotional State Questionnaire; FCV-19S: Fear of COVID-19 Scale; GADS: Goldberg Anxiety and Depression Scale; GHQ/GHQ-12/GHQ-28: 60-item General Health Questionnaire and its abbreviated versions; GSDS: Gender Sensitive Depression Screening; GSMD: Gotland Scale for Male Depression; HADS/HADS-D: Hospital Anxiety and Depression Scale and its depression subscale; HAMD: Hamilton Depression Scale; HRSRS: Health-Related Self-Report Scale; HSC: Hopkins Symptom Checklist; ICD-10: International Classification of Diseases; IDAS-II: Inventory of Depression and Anxiety Symptoms–Second Version; IDLS: Intellectual Disability Literacy Scale; ISSH: Interdependent Stigma of Seeking Help Scale; IVR: Interactive Voice Response technology; K10/K11: Kessler Psychological Distress Scales; KADS/KADS-6: 11-item Kutcher Adolescent Depression Scale and its abbreviated version; MASQ-SF: Mood and Anxiety Symptom Questionnaire–Short Form; MDI: Major Depression Inventory; MHI/MHI-18: 38-item Mental Health Inventory and its abbreviated version; MINI/MINI-RR: Mini International Neuropsychiatric Interview; MMPI-D: Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory–Depression; PHQ-2/PHQ-4/PHQ-8/PHQ-9/PHQ-9C/PHQ-10: Patient Health Questionnaire and its derivatives or translated versions; PQEEPH: Psychological Questionnaires for Emergent Events of Public Health; PRIME-MD: Primary Care Evaluation of Mental Disorders; PROMIS-D/PROMIS-8D: Patient-Reported Outcomes Measurement Information System Depression Scale; PSS-10: Perceived Stress Scale; QIDS/QIDS-SR16: Quick Inventory of Depressive Symptomatology and its self-report version; RDSI: Reynolds Depression Inventory; SAQ: Stress Allied Queries; SCL-90/SCL-90-R: Symptom Checklist-90 and its revised version; SQ: Symptom Questionnaire; SRQ-20: Self Reporting Questionnaire; STDS: State Trait Depression Scale; TDQ, Taiwanese Depression Questionnaire; USDI/USDI-NR: University Student Depression Inventory; WHO-5: World Health Organization Well-being Index; WHO-CIDI: World Health Organization Composite International Diagnostic Interview; YRBSS: Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance System; ZDS/ZDS-SF: Zagazig Depression Scale and its abbreviated version; Zung-SDS/Zung-SDS NR: Zung Self-Rating Depression Scale. All the reviews were depressive symptoms except for Lei et al. (2016) which included both depressive symptoms and clinician-rated depression.

Figure S1

Violin and Box Plots of Sample Sizes and Number of Studies in each Meta-Analysis or Systematic Review

**Table S6***Comparison of Depression Prevalence by Region*

Author, Year	Subgroups	Number of studies	Prevalence of Depression, 95%CI
Akhtar et al. (2020)	Africa	3	34.20% [14.60%, 61.20%]
	Asia	26	24.90% [18.50%, 32.60%]
	Europe	2	23.20% [7.20%, 54.10%]
	South America	5	15.70% [7.30%, 30.60%]
	Caribbean	1	39.00% [8.50%, 81.40%]

Ayoubi et al. (2023)	America	4	64.00% [53.00%, 74.00%]
	Eastern Mediterranean	10	72.00% [57.00%, 84.00%]
	Europe	2	59.00% [56.00%, 62.00%]
	South-East Asia	6	35.00% [23.00%, 48.00%]
	Western Pacific	12	25.00% [19.00%, 32.00%]
Batra et al. (2021)	Asia	10	27.30% [15.60%, 43.20%]
	Others (North America, Europe, and Middle East)	4	42.20% [19.30%, 69.10%]
Jia et al. (2022)	Africa	1	21.60% [20.00%, 23.30%]
	Asia	23	36.20% [27.60%, 45.30%]
	Europe	2	52.30% [22.90%, 80.80%]
	North America	2	39.30% [12.10%, 70.90%]
	South America	3	46.60% [29.10%, 64.50%]
Li et al. (2022)	Africa	2	30.00% [11.60%, 48.50%]
	Asia	26	37.00% [30.90%, 43.10%]
	Europe	5	35.90% [26.00%, 45.80%]
	North America	12	48.30% [37.40%, 59.20%]
	Australasia	1	17.50% [14.5%, 20.50%]
Lin et al. (2024)	Asia	56	41.70% [35.40%, 47.90%]
	Europe	8	39.90% [27.10%, 52.70%]
	Middle East	15	61.10% [50.30%, 71.90%]
	North and South America	17	56.50% [47.70%, 65.20%]
Peng et al. (2023)	Africa	6	66.00% [51.00%, 81.00%]
	Asia	36	49.00% [41.00%, 57.00%]
	East Asia	47	29.00% [24.00%, 33.00%]

	Europe	12	43.00% [31.00%, 54.00%]
	North America	6	41.00% [28.00%, 54.00%]
	South America	7	54.00% [40.00%, 68.00%]
Puthran et al. (2016)	Asia	19	30.10% [21.30%, 40.60%]
	Europe	13	20.00% [13.20%, 29.20%]
	Middle East	13	31.80% [26.30%, 37.90%]
	North America	19	30.30% [23.60%, 38.00%]
	South America	13	26.80% [21.60%, 32.70%]
Rotenstein et al. (2016)	Africa	6	46.30% [31.70%, 61.60%]
	Asia	51	29.10% [23.40%, 35.60%]
	Eurasia	10	31.50% [26.80%, 36.60%]
	Europe	26	16.90% [12.80%, 21.90%]
	Middle East	20	35.20% [28.50%, 42.70%]
	North America	49	26.70% [22.50%, 31.20%]
	Oceania	3	19.00% [10.80%, 31.40%]
	South America	18	26.60% [22.40%, 31.20%]
Santabarbara et al. (2021a)	Asia	7	25.00% [18.00%, 38.00%]
	Others (Europe, North America, and South America)	4	51.00% [40.00%, 62.00%]
Santabarbara et al. (2021b)	Asia	4	40.00% [27.00%, 53.00%]
	Others (Africa and South America)	4	29.00% [16.00%, 45.00%]
Zatt et al. (2023) ¹	Africa	2	23.57% [0.00%, 65.95%]
	Asia	11	24.96% [15.33%, 34.58%]

¹ Zatt et al. (2023) reported a negative lower limit in their 95% confidence interval for the Africa subgroup (−18.82%), likely due to substantial heterogeneity and the small number of studies included ($k = 2$). We truncated this lower limit to 0.00% as prevalence estimates are bound between 0.00% and 100.00%.

	Europe	7	12.21% [7.18%, 17.24%]
	Oceania	2	18.68% [3.72%, 33.64%]
	North America	6	23.57% [12.49%, 34.65%]
	South America	6	5.48% [3.13%, 7.82%]
	East Asia	39	16.80% [14.30%, 19.70%]
Zhu et al. (2021)	Europe	25	32.80% [27.70%, 38.30%]
	North America	13	40.90% [33.10%, 49.20%]

Figure S2

Comparison of Depression Prevalence Across Measurement Tools

