



Genocide Watch
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Genocide Watch Special Report: Asian American and Pacific Islander Communities in the United States

Summary

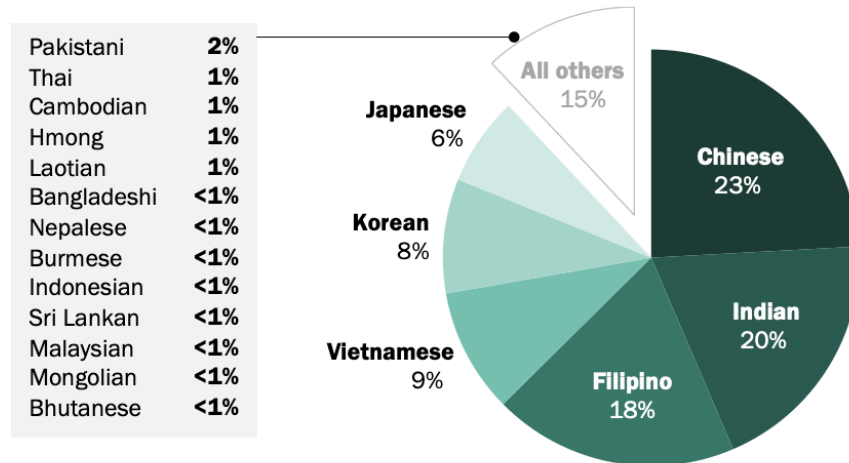
This special report explores the recent increase in discrimination, harassment, and hate crimes perpetrated against Asian American and Pacific Islander (AAPI) communities in the United States. While anti-AAPI sentiments, discrimination, harassment, and hate crimes have scarred the United States since the late [19th century](#), the previous year and a half (2019-2021) has witnessed a surge in reported incidents, due largely to Donald Trump's hateful rhetoric surrounding the Covid-19 pandemic. In this report, Genocide Watch seeks to shed light on the underdiscussed and underreported oppression of AAPI communities in the United States.

Demography

Asian American and Pacific Islanders comprise the fastest-growing ethnic group in the U.S., with [20 million Asian Americans](#) tracing their roots to East Asia, Southeast Asia, and the Indian subcontinent. Six of the [largest Asian groups](#) account for 85% of the Asian population in the U.S. (see Figure 1). While AAPI communities are often classified monolithically, there are major differences between them in [income, education, and other key demographics](#). Ignoring differences between different AAPI identities and their needs is both dehumanizing and detrimental to effective policymaking.

Figure 1: AAPI Demographics in the U.S. (Pew Research Center)

% of the U.S. Asian population that is ___, 2019



Note: "Chinese" includes those identifying as Taiwanese. "All others" includes the category "Other Asian, not specified." Figures may not add up to 100% due to rounding.
Source: For 2019, Pew Research Center analysis of 2019 American Community Survey 1-year estimates (Census Data). For 2000 and 2010, population estimates from U.S. Census Bureau, "The Asian Population: 2010" Census Brief, Table 6.

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Historical Treatment of AAPI Communities in the U.S.

U.S. colonialism in the Philippines and war in Southeast Asia fostered an American imagining of Asia as a region to "dominate." This attitude also resulted in the fetishization of Asian women. American GIs in Asia, particularly during the Vietnam War and Korean War, exploited Asian women in the [sex industry](#). They contributed to a male mentality that Asian women's bodies exist solely for white male pleasure.

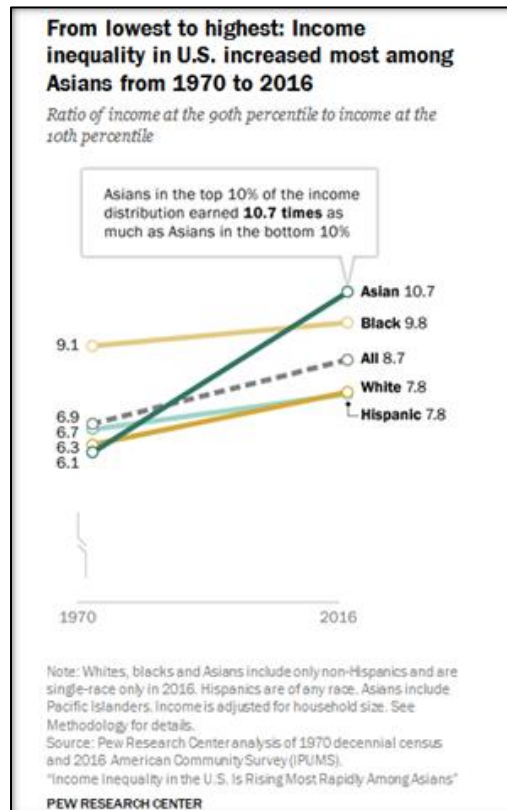
Discriminatory tropes against AAPI communities fit primarily into two categories: the "[model minority](#)" trope, which characterizes AAPI immigrants as ideal, submissive, and economically successful, and the "[yellow peril](#)" trope, which characterizes AAPI immigrants as dangerous, unclean, and unfit for western society.

The "model minority" trope hinges on the false perception that most "Asians" are wealthy top earners, with children who are superior students and who gain admission into top universities, depriving white students of equal opportunities. The reality starkly contradicts this stereotype, with rising [income inequality](#) between the top 10% of Asian-Americans and the bottom 10%. (See Figure 2.) In fact, most Asian-Americans have fewer economic and political opportunities than white Americans.

Figure 2: Income Inequality Among Asians in the U.S. (Pew Research Center)



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AAPI women experience an added layer of discrimination resulting from historical and persistent toxic [fetishization, hyper-sexualization, and exoticization](#). Asian women are popularly characterized as submissive and servile. This fantasy about AAPI women makes them more vulnerable to violence, as evidenced by the March 2021 [murders](#) at several Atlanta-area spas.

Despite the [inseparability](#) of sexism and racism, this intersectionality is seldom discussed or even noted in reports of violence against AAPI women.

Codified racism against AAPI communities has been evident in U.S. legislation since the 19th century. The [1875 Page Act](#), effectively prohibited Chinese women from entering the U.S. The [1882 Chinese Exclusion Act](#) barred all Chinese immigrants from entering the U.S. These laws followed popular reaction against the influx of thousands of Chinese laborers hired to build the American railroads.

During World War II, 120,000 Japanese Americans were [interned](#) from 1942–1945. Their internment was even upheld by the U.S. Supreme Court in [Korematsu v. U.S.](#), the court's most racist decision since [Dred Scott v. Sandford](#) and [Plessy v. Ferguson](#).



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More recently, proposed legislation has demonstrated the persistent institutionalized racism against AAPI communities. For example, in June 2020, certain members of the U.S. Senate introduced the "[Secure Campus Act of 2020](#)", which, if it were enacted, would prohibit Chinese nationals from obtaining visas to the U.S. for graduate or postgraduate STEM programs. In September 2020, President Trump signed the Newspeak named "[Executive Order on Combating Race and Sex Stereotyping](#)," prohibiting the federal government and its contractors from hosting racial sensitivity training workshops.

Precursors to Recent Violence and Discrimination

A catalyst for recent anti-AAPI violence and discrimination has been the inflammatory, racist rhetoric spewed forth by former President Donald Trump and many of his supporters in relation to the Covid-19 pandemic. Trump and his supporters continuously referred to the coronavirus as the "[China virus](#)" or "[Kung-flu](#)," epithets that falsely and recklessly attributed blame for the pandemic to Asian countries and communities.

Stop AAPI Hate conducted an [analysis](#) of 1,227 tweets about Asian Americans in the eight months preceding the 2020 election and reported that 10% included anti-Asian language (See Figures 3 and 4.) All of these tweets came from Republican politicians. Only half included language related to the pandemic, highlighting the more widespread nature of anti-Asian rhetoric. Trump, whose racist tweets were retweeted 1,213,700 times and liked 4,276,200 times, was the greatest propagator of this hate speech. The [content](#) of the Tweets ranged from directly blaming China for the pandemic to criticizing China for human rights abuses or U.S. trade dependence on China.

Figure 3: Donald Trump Tweet from March 2020 (Stop AAPI Hate)

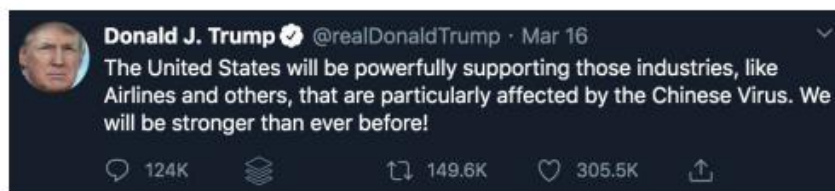


Figure 4: 2020 Political Candidates and Stigmatizing Tweets (Stop AAPI Hate)



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Candidate	Party & State	Number of tweets using stigmatizing rhetoric	Total number of retweets	Total number of likes
Donald Trump	Incumbent Republican President	24	1,213,700	4,276,200
Tom Cotton	Incumbent Republican senator from Arkansas	61	93,187	204,763
Bill Hagerty	Republican Senate candidate from Tennessee	41	1,407	3,389
Cory Gardner	Incumbent Republican senator from Colorado	3	2,230	2,982
Jason Lewis	Republican Senate candidate from Minnesota	5	293	811
Lauren Witzke	Republican Senate candidate from Delaware	1	10	23
Roger Marshall	Republican Senate candidate from Kansas	1	1	5

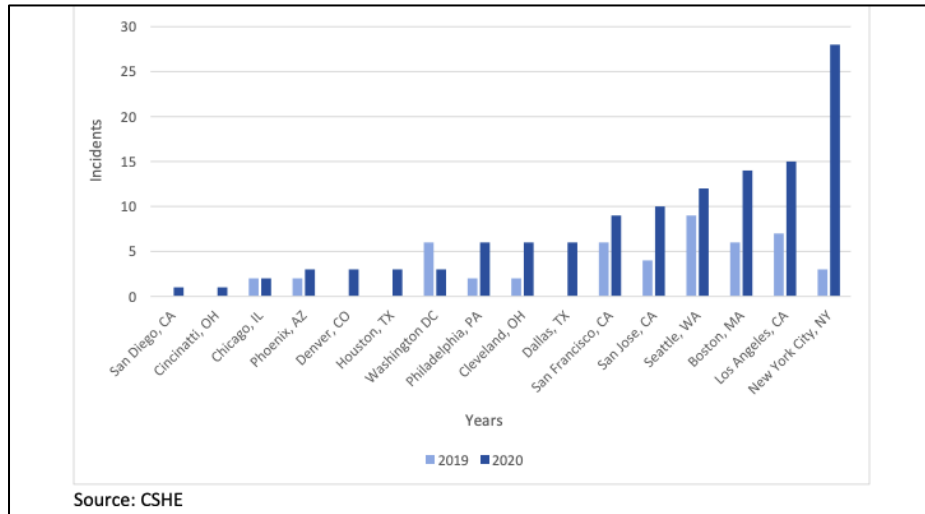
Escalation of Discrimination and Violence: 2020-2021

In 2020, anti-Asian hate crimes [increased by 149%](#), despite a 7% decrease in overall hate crimes against other minority communities (see Figure 5). Stop AAPI Hate, which runs the Stop AAPI Hate Reporting Center, reported [3,795](#) hate incidents between March 19, 2020 and February 28, 2021. (This does not account for the true number of incidents; only reported incidents.) Incidents occurred in all 50 states and the District of Columbia. The largest number of cases occurred in [California and New York](#), accounting for 44.6% and 13.6%, respectively. Most of the [incidents](#) occurred at businesses (35.4%), followed by public streets (25.3%), parks (9.8%), and online (10.8%).

Figure 5: Anti-Asian Hate Crime Incidents Reported to Police in Select US Cities 2019–2020 (CSHE)



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Verbal harassment (68.1%) and shunning (deliberate avoidance) (20.5%) of AAPI individuals account for most incidents. Following these categories, by prevalence, are physical assault (11.1%); civil rights violations, including workplace discrimination, refusal of service, and barring from transportation (8.5%); and online harassment (6.8%). See Table 1 for examples of reported incidents in each category utilized in the [Stop AAPI Hate report](#).

Table 1: Incident Examples by Type

Type of Incident	Reported Incident
Verbal Harassment	“This specific incident was in a NYC grocery store where a man started screaming at me and called me a ‘disgusting f*cking animal,’ told me to ‘get the f*ck out of the store,’ asked if I was crazy, and told me to ‘go back home’ and ‘get out of the f*cking country.’ He followed me around the store screaming at me and nobody did anything.”
Physical Assault	“My boyfriend and I were riding the metro into DC. When on the escalator in the transfer station, a man repeatedly punched my back and pushed past us. At the top, he circled back toward us, followed us, repeatedly shouted ‘Chinese b**ch’ at me, fake coughed at, and physically threatened



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	us. A few days later, we saw a news story about how the owner of Valley Brook Tea in DC was harassed and pepper sprayed by the same man, calling him 'Covid-19' repeatedly.”
Civil Rights Violations (refusal of service)	“I was shouted at and harassed by [business name] cashier, workers, as well as customers at the store to get out of the store. They said, 'You Chinese bring the virus here and you dare ask people to keep social distance guidelines.’”
Online Harassment	“I received a random email message from someone I don't know telling me to go back to China, blaming me for Chinese politics, calling Chinese 'heartless robots' and telling me America doesn't need me to be part of the workforce.”

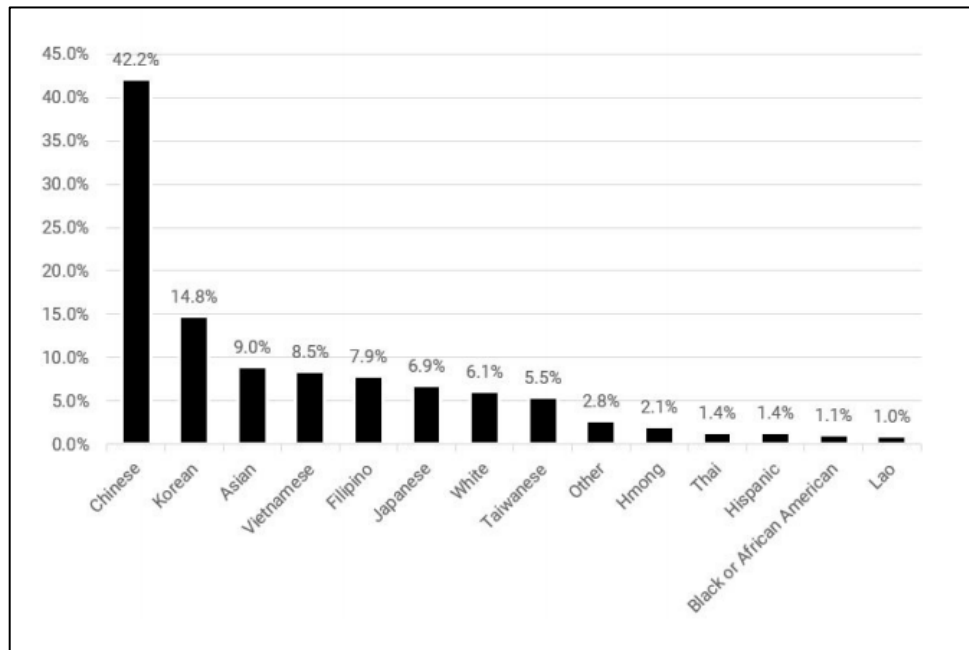
Demographic differences among targets of attacks vary depending on gender, ethnicity, and age. Between March 2020 and February 2021, Asian women reported [2.3 times](#) more hate incidents than men, often experiencing [street harassment and exposure to men's sexualized fantasies](#) about Asian women.

According to the [2020-2021 Stop AAPI National Report](#), harassment, violence, and discrimination against Chinese individuals made up 42.2% of reported hate incidents, followed by Koreans (14.8%), Vietnamese (8.5%), and Filipinos (7.9%) (see Figure 6).

Figure 6: Ethnicity of Reporting Individuals (Stop AAPI Hate)



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The New York Times reported that AAPI individuals over [60-years old](#) were disproportionately targeted with physical violence.

Barriers to Understanding the Full Scope of the Problem

While these data demonstrate recent surges in anti-Asian hate, they suffer from several impediments to capturing the true scope of the problem. One impediment is [poor data collection](#) of hate crimes by law enforcement and subsequent lack of reporting to the FBI. Although the 1990 [Hate Crimes Statistics Act](#) requires law enforcement agencies to submit data on hate crimes to the FBI, more than 3,000 of the 18,000 agencies in the U.S. did not submit their statistics in 2019. Beyond this, law enforcement officers often do not receive adequate training in recognizing hate crimes, which results in under-reporting of hate crimes. For example, because attacks on Asian-run businesses are often coupled with other crimes, such as robbery or vandalism, law enforcement officers frequently categorize the crimes as crimes against property, glossing over hate-based motives and personal assaults against members of AAPI communities.

The existence of barriers for reporting hate incidents is another impediment to gathering accurate data. Systemic violence and discrimination perpetrated against AAPI communities by law enforcement officers themselves have created a longstanding distrust of law enforcement. [Language barriers and immigration status](#) also lead to reluctance to report hate incidents.



Finally, it can be a challenge for victims to [recognize](#) crimes committed against them as hate crimes. Victims often avoid asking themselves the difficult questions: Was a crime committed against them? Did bias or hatred motivate the crime?

Attacks often lack an overt anti-Asian hate symbol, equivalent to the swastika against Jews or the white hood or noose against Blacks. Lack of physical symbolization makes crimes against Asian Americans hard to recognize as racially motivated. Often verbal expressions of hatred are the only signs of hateful intent. This lack of recognition is exacerbated by the fact that anti-Asian hatred in America is rarely discussed or confronted.

Summary and Recommendations

While Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders in the United States have historically endured discrimination, harassment, and persecution, surges in violence in 2020-2021 underscore the magnitude of the AAPI communities' plight. Because of the prevalence of anti-Asian hate incidents, including verbal and online harassment, physical assault, civil rights violations, and, in the case of Atlanta, [a mass shooting](#) resulting in the deaths of eight individuals, Genocide Watch considers the situation in the United States to include **Stage 3 (Discrimination)**, **Stage 4 (Dehumanization)**, and **Stage 6 (Polarization)**.

Genocide Watch recommends:

- Law enforcement agencies and the FBI should utilize disaggregated data to document anti-Asian hate crimes more accurately than they do at present.
- U.S. policymakers should explicitly denounce hate crimes against AAPI communities.
- Federal, state, and local governments and NGOs should establish public messaging campaigns encouraging reporting of hate crimes and providing recommendations for bystander intervention when hate crimes are observed.
- Local community and church leaders should provide resources to the public and to congregations to make them conscious of discrimination against AAPI communities.
- Law enforcement officials should provide police with proper training to recognize racially motivated crimes and intersectional prejudices, such as sexism, ableism, ageism, and racism.
- Policymakers should [invest](#) in neighborhood resources for AAPI communities, and increase their access to education, housing, and public services.