

Anti-Asian Hate Crimes Rose 150% in Major U.S. Cities, Finds Study

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Hate crimes targeting Asian-Americans rose 150% in U.S.’s largest cities last year, even as overall hate crimes decreased, according to alarming new data released Tuesday.

There were 122 hate crimes targeting Asian-Americans in 16 of the U.S.’s most populous cities in 2020, according to a study of police records by the Center for the Study of Hate and Extremism at California State University, compared to 49 such crimes in those cities in 2019.

The first spike in anti-Asian hate crimes occurred in March and April, according to the study, “amidst a rise in COVID cases and negative stereotyping of Asians relating to the pandemic.”

New York City saw the biggest increase, recording 28 such hate crimes in 2020 compared to only three in 2019 — an 833% jump. Other cities with especially large upticks included Philadelphia and Cleveland, which both saw 200% increases; and Boston and Los Angeles, which both saw increases of over 110%.

These spikes, according to the study, occurred even as overall hate crimes in those cities fell 7%, a drop likely caused by coronavirus lockdown measures, which created “a lack of interaction at frequent gathering places like transit, commercial businesses, schools, events, and houses of worship.”

The study, [first reported by Voice of America](#), is seen as a [reliable predictor](#) of annual [FBI](#) hate crime statistics for the whole country, released every November.

Brian Levin, executive director at the hate and extremism center, told HuffPost he predicts the FBI data for 2020, once it is released this fall, will show a “century-high” number of hate crimes targeting Asian Americans.

“For our Asian-American friends and neighbors, this is similar to a post 9/11 time, similar to what we saw with Muslims and Arab-Americans,” Levin said, referring to the increase in hate crimes targeting those groups after the Sept. 11, 2001, terror attacks.

Rep. Grace Meng (D-N.Y.), whose district in Queens has [recently seen](#) anti-Asian hate crimes, told HuffPost that racist rhetoric and misinformation from public officials is to blame.

“We saw discriminatory rhetoric coming from President Trump and Members of Congress [including](#) from the highest-ranking Republican in the House,” Meng said in a statement Tuesday.

“Although Donald Trump is no longer in office, his past anti-Asian rhetoric and use of terms like ‘Chinese virus’ and ‘Kung-flu’ continues to threaten the safety of the Asian American community,” Meng said, adding that “so many Asian Americans” are currently “living in fear.”

For more than a year, [Asian Americans have faced a deluge of attacks](#) fueled by racist, nativist and xenophobic sentiments surrounding the COVID-19 pandemic. As president, Trump [exacerbated these attacks](#) by continually referring to the pandemic using racist terms and scapegoating China, where the virus was first detected, to downplay his shambolic response to the pandemic.

This hate and fearmongering is another chapter in a long history of racism, nativism and xenophobia against Asian Americans, beginning in the 19th century, when Asian immigrants were deemed “the yellow peril” and accused of being filthy disease carriers.

Throughout the pandemic, Asian-American and Pacific Islander advocacy groups and local governments have recorded [sharp upticks in anti-Asian racist attacks and harassment](#). Since last March, the group Stop AAPI Hate has [collected nearly 3,000 reports](#) from 47 states and the District of Columbia — everything from being verbally attacked or spat on to being physically assaulted or denied services. The number is likely an undercount because the incidents are self-reported.

In recent weeks, there has been a wave of high-profile incidents, including in [New York City](#) and the [San Francisco Bay Area](#), both with large and robust Asian American communities. Many of the attacks have involved older Asian Americans.

In one of his first acts as president, Joe Biden [condemned anti-Asian racism and pledged to take more action](#), and the Department of Justice has said it will devote more resources to investigating such incidents.

Meng, in her statement to HuffPost on Tuesday, said she also plans to reintroduce her COVID-19 Hate Crimes Act, which would require the DOJ to provide Congress with regular updates on the status of reported hate incidents tied to the pandemic.

Local law enforcement in places like New York and California have also started more concerted efforts since last year, though some Asian American advocacy groups have [expressed concern about law enforcement involvement](#).

Death of an elderly Thai immigrant after being shoved to the ground, slashing face of a Filipino-American in the face, and slapping of a Chinese woman and then set on fire are 3 of the main recent violent attacks on Asian-Americans. Violent attacks on Asian-Americans is part of a surge in abuse since the start of the pandemic a year ago.

From being spat on and verbally harassed to incidents of physical assault, there have been

thousands of reported cases in recent months.

Advocates and activists say these are hate crimes, and often linked to rhetoric that blames Asian people for the spread of Covid-19.

The FBI warned at the start of the Covid outbreak in the U.S. that it expected a surge in hate crimes against those of Asian descent.

Late last year, the UN [issued a report](#) that detailed “an alarming level” of racially motivated violence and other hate incidents against Asian-Americans.

It is difficult to determine exact numbers for such crimes and instances of discrimination, as no organizations or governmental agencies have been tracking the issue long-term, and reporting standards can vary region to region.

The advocacy group Stop AAPI Hate said it received [more than 2,800 reports of hate incidents](#) directed at Asian Americans nationwide last year. The group set up its online self-reporting tool at the start of the pandemic.

Local law enforcement is taking notice too: the New York City hate crimes task force investigated 27 incidents in 2020, a nine-fold increase from the previous year. In Oakland, California, police have added patrols and set up a command post in Chinatown.

In recent weeks, celebrities and influencers have spoken out after several disturbing incidents went viral on social media.

Here are some of the recently reported attacks:

- An 84-year-old Thai immigrant in San Francisco, California, died last month after being violently shoved to the ground during his morning walk.
- In Oakland, California, a 91-year-old senior was shoved to the pavement from behind.
- An 89-year-old Chinese woman was slapped and set on fire by two people in Brooklyn, New York.
- A stranger on the New York subway slashed a 61-year-old Filipino American passenger’s face with a box cutter.
- Asian-American restaurant employees in New York City told the New York Times they now always go home early for fear of violence and harassment.
- An Asian-American butcher shop owner in Sacramento, California found a dead cat – likely intended for her – left in the store’s parking lot; police are investigating it as a hate crime.
- An Asian-American family celebrating a birthday at a restaurant in Carmel, California, was berated with racist slurs by a Trump-supporting tech executive.
- Several Asian-Americans homeowners say they have been abused with racial slurs and had rocks thrown at their houses.

Situation in California

Over six million Asian-Americans live in California, according to the latest population estimates, by far the most in any U.S. state. They make up more than 15% of residents in the state.

In Los Angeles County, hate crimes against Asian Americans are up 115%, CBS News reported.

There are more local efforts to combat the hate too.

In Orange County, neighbors stepped in to help out an Asian American family after a group of teenagers repeatedly targeted them for months with little police intervention. Neighbors now stand guard outside the family's home each night, [the Washington Post reported](#).

A March 2, 2021 report from California by KABC said:

Surveillance camera video shows vandals ringing the doorbell at the Ladera Ranch home of Haijun Si and his family in the middle of the night. Sometimes, the culprits pound on the door, throw rocks and shout out racial slurs. The family has been harassed for months.

"This harassment started almost immediately upon them moving here and the fact that it's so clearly tied to their race is deeply upsetting," said Olivia Fu, a Ladera Ranch resident.

Fu was among a large group of community members who held a cultural festival over the weekend to show unity and condemn hate and racism.

"We need to stand in solidarity with the Asian community," said one speaker at the event.

Small business owners in Orange County's nail salon industry joined local government and law enforcement leaders to stand against an increase in hate crimes against Asian-Americans and Pacific Islanders.

There's growing concern about a string of violent attacks on Asian Americans.

In New York, a [man was stabbed in the back in Chinatown Thursday night](#). A suspect is now in custody charged with a hate crime.

In another brutal incident, a Chinese woman was attacked outside a bakery.

"Sad, fearful, most of all outraged. This is 2021, it's unacceptable," said California Sen. Dave Min, who participated in the weekend community event.

With incidents of anti-Asian hate crimes on the rise during the pandemic, two SoCal congresswoman are introducing a measure to help protect the AAPI community.

In Los Angeles, authorities are investigating a [possible hate crime at a Buddhist temple in Little Tokyo](#). Vandals knocked over lanterns, shattered a window and set a fire in the entryway.

In Orange County, community volunteers have formed a neighborhood watch, sitting outside the Si family's home to keep vandals away.

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