

Research chronicles location, nature of more than 1,000 anti-Asian hate incidents last year

May 18 2021

New research from the University of Michigan offers insights into the location, nature and perpetrators of anti-Asian hate incidents that occurred in the U.S. during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Virulent Hate Project, which is supported by U-M's Center for Social Solutions and Poverty Solutions initiative, reviewed 4,337 [news articles](#) from 2020 that addressed coronavirus-related, anti-Asian racism in the United States. From those articles, researchers identified 1,023 unique incidents of anti-Asian racism.

The COVID-19 pandemic, which originated in China, resurfaced long-held stereotypes about Asian Americans, and stigmatizing rhetoric led to increased anti-Asian hostility in 2020 that has continued in 2021, said Melissa Borja, lead researcher on the Virulent Hate Project and assistant professor in U-M's Asian/Pacific Islander American Studies Program.

Studying these hate incidents and making the data publicly accessible can contribute to a better understanding of anti-Asian racism, shape [public policy](#) and guide the activism of Asian American community organizations, she said. The Virulent Hate Project supports the work of Stop AAPI Hate and the Bridging Divides Initiative at Princeton University.

"We imagine this project as not just counting incidents of anti-Asian racism, but collecting hundreds of stories that can help shape the public conversation," Borja said. "In addition to tracking anti-Asian hate

incidents, it also is important to document the ways Asian American communities are resisting racism and advocating for anti-discrimination policies that will better protect them."

A new report from the project focuses on the nature of anti-Asian racism reported by the news media in 2020. Forthcoming reports will analyze Asian American anti-racism activism and news media coverage.

Key findings from the new report include:

- Of the 1,023 unique anti-Asian hate incidents analyzed, 66% (679 incidents) involved anti-Asian harassment and vandalism that targeted individuals or groups. Approximately 33% (344 incidents) involved stigmatizing and discriminatory statements, images, policies and proposals made by individuals or groups that reproduced anti-Asian stereotypes and harmed Asian Americans as a community.
- Anti-Asian harassment affected Asian Americans of all ages, ethnic groups and genders, although the harassment was not experienced evenly across demographic groups. Women were the victim in 65% of anti-Asian harassment incidents, and Chinese Americans experienced nearly 58% of the harassment incidents reported in the news.
- Available information suggests the perpetrators of anti-Asian hate incidents were predominantly male and disproportionately white. Among politicians who made stigmatizing statements and supported discriminatory policies and proposals, the primary perpetrators were white, male and affiliated with the Republican Party.
- Incidents of anti-Asian harassment were reported in the news in 40 states and the District of Columbia. The majority (67%) of anti-Asian [harassment](#) incidents occurred in businesses, streets and public transit.

- Anti-Asian hate incidents reported in the news peaked in March and April 2020, even as most Americans limited their visits to [public places](#) due to pandemic-related lockdown and shelter-in-place policies.

"We saw two main stereotypes driving anti-Asian hostility in 2020: first, the view of Asian Americans as 'perpetual foreigners,' and second, the belief that Asian people and Asian Americans are a 'yellow peril' that pose an epidemiological, cultural, economic, racial and national security threat to the United States," Borja said. "The fact that so many hate incidents took place in everyday public places has contributed to fear and anxiety among Asian Americans as they go about their daily lives."

More information: Anti-Asian Racism in 2020. [virulenthate.org/wp-content/up ... -In-2020-5.17.21.pdf](#)

Provided by University of Michigan

Citation: Research chronicles location, nature of more than 1,000 anti-Asian hate incidents last year (2021, May 18) retrieved 27 April 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2021-05-chronicles-nature-anti-asian-incidents-year.html>

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