

Rising hate crimes against Asian Americans



The spa shootings in Atlanta this March that killed eight people —six of them women of Asian descent — were just the latest attacks against Asian Americans in the U.S.¹ In just the first two months of 2021:²

- An 84-year-old man was fatally attacked in San Francisco.
- A 91-year-old man was shoved to the ground in Oakland.
- A 61-year-old man was cut in the face in New York.

If just a single incident had occurred, one might think it isolated. But given the rapid rise in anti-Asian American harassment, these incidents are clearly part of a much bigger problem.

In March 2020, the FBI noted a surge of hate incidents against Asian Americans. It warned that incidents “likely will surge across the United States, due to the spread of coronavirus disease ... endangering Asian American communities.”³ Along with violent attacks, victims have been shunned, coughed or spat upon, and verbally harassed with racial slurs.⁴

- 32% of Americans say they’ve seen someone blame Asian people for COVID-19.⁵
- Reported hate crimes in New York City against people of Asian descent rose 833 percent in 2020 compared to 2019.¹
- Nearly 3,800 attacks against Asian-Americans and Pacific Islanders have been reported to Stop AAPI Hate.¹ While most have happened in New York and California, reports in the first month of the campaign alone came in from 45 states.⁴
- 68% of incidents were reported by women.¹

Be an ally

When incidents like these happen, you might feel a range of emotions including sadness, frustration or possibly fear. You may even feel helpless, wondering what you can do to stop them. Here are some ways to show support.

Know your history. Bias against Asian Americans has deep roots. For example, the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882 banned immigration of Chinese laborers for 10 years. And Executive Order 9066 placed Japanese Americans in camps during World War II. Some experts think what's happening today is an extension of that history.^{6,7}

Support businesses owned by Asian Americans. Early in the pandemic, some people encouraged others to avoid these restaurants, stores and other businesses. One easy step for combating that prejudice is to support Asian American business owners.

Beware of your microaggressions. These slights, snubs or insults suggest someone doesn't belong or invalidates their experiences. For example, telling a coworker of Thai descent that they speak "good English" sends the message that they are not a "true" American.

Speak up. When you hear someone making misinformed or racist comments, let them know you don't approve. Just be sure to tell them why it offends you. Don't dehumanize others by assuming you speak for them.⁸

Show your support when harassment happens. If you witness someone being harassed, assess the situation and determine if it's safe to get involved. You may want to ignore the attacker and calmly talk with the victim about an unrelated topic. The goal is to show support and be a distraction. This can de-escalate a situation.⁹ If it's OK with the victim, film the attack.⁹

Encourage people to report hate crimes. If you know a person who has experienced a verbal or physical racially motivated attack, encourage them to report the incident. Keep in mind that they may be hesitant to report it because they're embarrassed, feel ashamed or think others won't care. One place to report it is stopaapihate.org. Stop AAPI Hate collects data on attacks on Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders. It's sponsored by the Asian Pacific Policy & Planning Council, Chinese for Affirmative Action and San Francisco State University's Asian-American studies department.

While the pandemic has been a time of stress for us all, we can come together. Support those around you — now and when the pandemic is over — and help create a world where acceptance and kindness are louder than hate.

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