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Examining the Rise in Asian-American Hate Crimes

Introduction

In the past year, hate crimes targeting Asian-Americans in the United States [have increased by nearly 150 percent](#). Many have linked this rise to charged rhetoric revolving around the CoronaVirus pandemic and its origins in Wuhan China. The use of terms like “Chinese virus” and “kung flu” have been used as derogatory ways to blame Asians for the virus. Asian-Americans in various communities are now becoming targets for hate crimes. Recently, many are trying to speak out against this and bring an end to the hate. Racism has surrounded these communities for years now, and it has gotten progressively worse since the start of Covid-19.

Question #1: In what ways have we seen an increase in Asian-American hate crimes over the past year?

In the past year Asian-Americans have increasingly become the victims of hate crimes across the country. From 2019 to 2020, hate crimes against Asian-Americans increased by 149%. Meanwhile, overall hate crimes *decreased* in the United States. Research from the University of California San Francisco suggests that anti-Asian tweets made by former President Trump may have contributed to the rise in hate crimes against Asian-Americans. The researchers find that the narrative of a “Chinese virus” by the President drew negative attention to many Asian-Americans. This comes on the heels of a decade’s worth of concern about rising Chinese economic power relative to the United States.

The pandemic resulted in the largest increase in serious incidents of online hate directed toward those of Asian descent. From the previous year, these specific hate crimes are up 11%. More specifically, 1 in 5 Asian-Americans said they were harassed online. Social media outlets have failed to combat this issue by removing disinformation and other harmful content. A recent shooting in Atlanta of six women of Asian descent suggests that disinformation can have catastrophic consequences. These issues are not limited to the United States. Places such as New Zealand, the U.K., and Australia have also seen a rise in hate crimes since the start of the pandemic.

Question #2: How is the rise in hate crimes affecting Asian-American communities?

New York City represents one of the largest communities of Asian-Americans in the United States. Asian-Americans compose roughly 14% of the population or 1.2 million people. [New York City has experienced a stiff rise in hate crime reports](#) against Asian-Americans since 2019. In 2020, New York City received reports of 23 more hate crimes, in contrast in 2019, the city received just 3 reports for the year. New York City has the most reported hate crimes in America. In the span of two days in March, over 5 hate crimes against Asian-Americans were reported after the shootings in Atlanta the previous week. According to the *New York Times*, two elderly men and three women were physically attacked, leaving at least one victim in critical condition.

Between March and December 2020, roughly 3,000 incidents of aggressions toward Asian-Americans have been reported to the Stop Asian American Pacific Islander (AAPI) Hate advocacy group. Within these reports, the harassment and aggression disproportionately affected the elderly and women. The rise in Asian-American hate crimes has greatly affected communities at the local and individual levels. [According to ABC News](#), the rise in Asian-American hate crimes could lead to a mental health crisis among these communities.

While we can see examples of hate crimes affecting Asian-Americans in large city communities, we can see it closer to home as well. Recently, in Cincinnati, Ohio a restaurant called, Tea 'n' Bowl received four phone calls placing a very large order for food. The person never paid and never picked up their order. The restaurant tried to trace the phone call, however, they were met with racial slurs, told they never placed an order and said, "they don't eat dogs."

The effects of explicit and implicit racism directed toward Asian communities are also felt in smaller communities located in Northwestern Ohio. Asian owned businesses employ many in the area, including many of Asian descent. Consequently, a sizable number of Asians reside in smaller communities. For instance, over 1,000 people in Findlay, Ohio identify as Asian and smaller pockets of Asians work for businesses in places like Ada (ATI), Leipsic (Pro-Tec), and Kenton (Sekisui Plastics).

A study published by Ethnic and Racial Studies found Asian-Americans who have experienced discrimination during the COVID-19 pandemic reported higher levels of anxiety and depression. A summary of 121 other studies regarding discrimination and the impacts of mental health, reported those who have experienced discrimination in their youth were more likely to experience chronic mental illnesses. Another study done by the Asian-American Federation, reports their community experiences the highest rates of depression and suicide, and are the least likely to seek help compared to other racial groups.

Question #3: What can be done to improve the current situation regarding Asian-American hate crimes in the United States?

With the rise of Asian-American hate crimes, many people are using social media platforms to help stop Asian hate. Asian-American celebrities like Gemma Chan, Daniel Dae Kim, and Olivia Munn have used their social media platforms to speak out against this problem. Within the past couple weeks, Asian-Americans have been standing up for themselves in hopes of bringing a stop to this issue. It is very important that additional communities stand with Asian-Americans to speak out as they work to alleviate this issue. Another way to prevent prejudice against Asian-Americans is to educate oneself and our communities at-large.

There are also [many other ways to help improve the current situation](#) by signing petitions or donating to nonprofit organizations that are working to protect Asian communities. Groups like [Stop Asian American Pacific Islander \(AAPI\) Hate](#) are trying to create a united front to mitigate anti-Asian hatred that has risen during the pandemic. It is crucial that we all become informed on this issue so that we can stand with Asian-American communities to prevent further hate crimes from happening.

Parting Thoughts:

The rising prejudice against Asian-Americans is alarming. Asian-Americans are an essential part of our country and should be treated with the same respect as all other American citizens. The COVID-19 pandemic has taken a toll upon the entire world. It should not serve as an excuse to use Asian-Americans as a scapegoat. Doing so has had pernicious consequences for these citizens.