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Coronavirus: Asian Americans across Bay Area, U.S. report 1,500 racist incidents in a month

 [Photo of Tatiana Sanchez](#)

[Tatiana Sanchez](#) April 29, 2020 Updated: April 29, 2020 7:25 p.m.

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 More than 1,500 Asian Americans across the U.S. reported discrimination related to COVID-19 in the past month, according to advocates who launched a reporting tool to track hate incidents against Asians. In this file photo, hundreds of people took to the streets on Feb. 29, 2020, to protest racism against the Chinese community during a march down Grant Avenue from Chinatown's Portsmouth Square to Union Square in San Francisco.

1 of 2 More than 1,500 Asian Americans across the U.S. reported discrimination related to COVID-19 in the past month, according to advocates who launched a reporting tool to track hate incidents against Asians. In this file photo, hundreds of people took to the streets on Feb. 29, 2020, to protest racism against the Chinese community during a march down Grant Avenue from Chinatown's Portsmouth Square to Union Square in San Francisco. Photo: Jessica Christian / The Chronicle

 Protesters walk through the Dragon Gate in S.F.'s Chinatown during a February protest coronavirus-fueled racism against Chinese Americans.

Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders across the United States reported more than 1,500 incidents of racism and discrimination related to COVID-19 in the past month, officials said Wednesday.

The Stop AAPI Hate Reporting Center found that an estimated 40% of the incidents, roughly 600, took place in California and close to half of those incidents were in the Bay Area. Officials who coordinated the project [documenting discrimination against Asian Americans](#) during the coronavirus pandemic say the results are likely just a small portion of the total incidents.

The incidents are being motivated by “a level of hate and a level of anger that’s very palpable, that’s pretty horrific and pretty traumatizing,” said Professor Russell Jeung, who compiled data on the incidents and is chairman of the Asian American Studies Department at San Francisco State University.

“We’re concerned that when we get out of shelter in place, that these incidents are going to rise.”

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The data come more than four weeks after a coalition of Asian American groups in California launched the reporting center, [a web page for victims of virus-related hate incidents](#). AAPI stands for Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders, an acronym used frequently to describe these groups.

The Asian Pacific Policy and Planning Council, Chinese for Affirmative Action and San Francisco State University’s Asian American Studies Department launched the initiative on March 19.

Asian Americans across the country reported an uptick in racist and xenophobic incidents after the first cases of coronavirus were reported in the U.S. Many Asian business owners also saw a drastic drop in clientele.

Amid the pandemic, which is believed to have started in Wuhan, China, some have referred to the new coronavirus as “the Chinese virus.” [President Trump has used the term](#) during news briefings and in tweets, despite evidence it has led to bigotry against Asian Americans and has been discouraged by the World Health Organization.

The coalition said it received reports from 45 states and Washington, D.C.

New York residents submitted the second-most reports of discrimination, with nearly 17% of cases, while an estimated 4% came from Illinois. Some people did not report their state of residence, Jeung said.

Verbal harassment accounted for about 70% of the reported incidents, physical assaults made up an estimated 10% and civil rights violations — such as workplace discrimination and being barred from businesses or transportation — tallied 8%, the group said. Another 6% of participants said they were spat or coughed upon.

Women were harassed two times more than men, the data showed.

Jeung said the most recent incidents occurred at private businesses as well as grocery stores, pharmacies and large retailers, given the current shelter-in-place orders.

More than 18% of the California incidents took place in San Francisco, the report found.

San Francisco resident Yuanyuan Zhu said she was walking to her gym on March 9 when a man shouted an expletive about China in her direction.

Zhu said she tried to keep her distance, but they both came to a stop at a crosswalk when the traffic light turned red. The man allegedly spat on her as they waited.

“I was panicked,” Zhu said during a news conference Wednesday. “At that time the traffic light turned (green). I walked faster and got into my gym.”

The coalition says it plans to work with state and local agencies to establish policies that would protect Asian Americans from discrimination.

Tatiana Sanchez is a San Francisco Chronicle staff writer. Email: tatiana.sanchez@sfchronicle.com Twitter: [@TatianaYSanchez](https://twitter.com/TatianaYSanchez)

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Tatiana Sanchez covers immigration and civil rights for The Chronicle. She got her start in journalism in the California desert, where she covered the marginalized immigrant communities of the eastern Coachella Valley for The Desert Sun. Previous stops also include the San Diego Union-Tribune and most recently, the Mercury News in San Jose. A Bay Area native, she received a master's in journalism from Columbia University and a bachelor's degree from Santa Clara University.

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