

California's Rising Hate Crimes Amongst Asian Americans During COVID-19

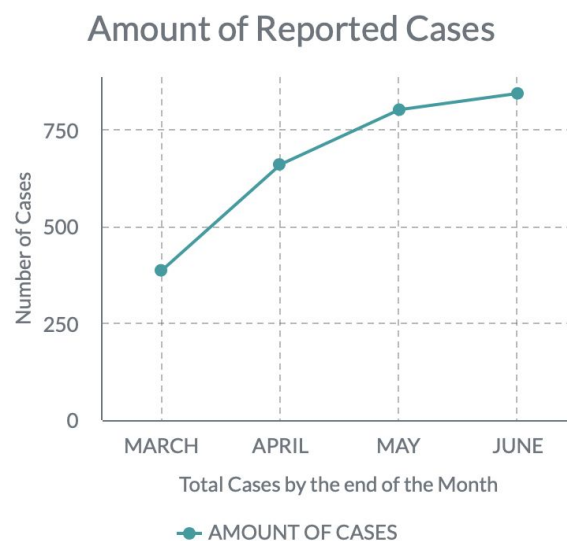
Anthony Quach & Annie Wei

Since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, Asian Americans continue to be the target of unjust hatred, scrutiny, and discrimination and the number of hate crimes towards them continues to rise. These acts of discrimination and scrutiny include physical assault, shunning, verbal harassment and even getting coughed and spat on.

Derogatory remarks can come from anyone, even from the President of the United States, Donald Trump. Trump has referred to the coronavirus as the "Chinese virus" and "Kung flu," inciting more racial tension and further fueling the anti-Asian xenophobia.

"President Trump's remarks and insistence of using the term 'Chinese virus' creates the association that the virus is Chinese and that Chinese people have the virus," said Dr. Russell Jeung, a professor and the Chair of Asian American Studies at San Francisco State University. "People are making that implicit connection and blaming a natural virus as human-caused. The use of 'Kung Flu' minimizes the danger of the disease when it clearly threatens millions of Americans."

In the span of 14 weeks from March 19 to June 24, Stop AAPI Hate documented over 800 cases of anti-Asian American and Pacific islander hate crimes, harassment, discrimination and shunning in California. Stop AAPI Hate was created as a direct result of the COVID-19 pandemic and was formed by the Asian Pacific Planning and Policy Council (A3PCON), Chinese for Affirmative Action (CAA) and the Asian American Studies Department of San Francisco State University.

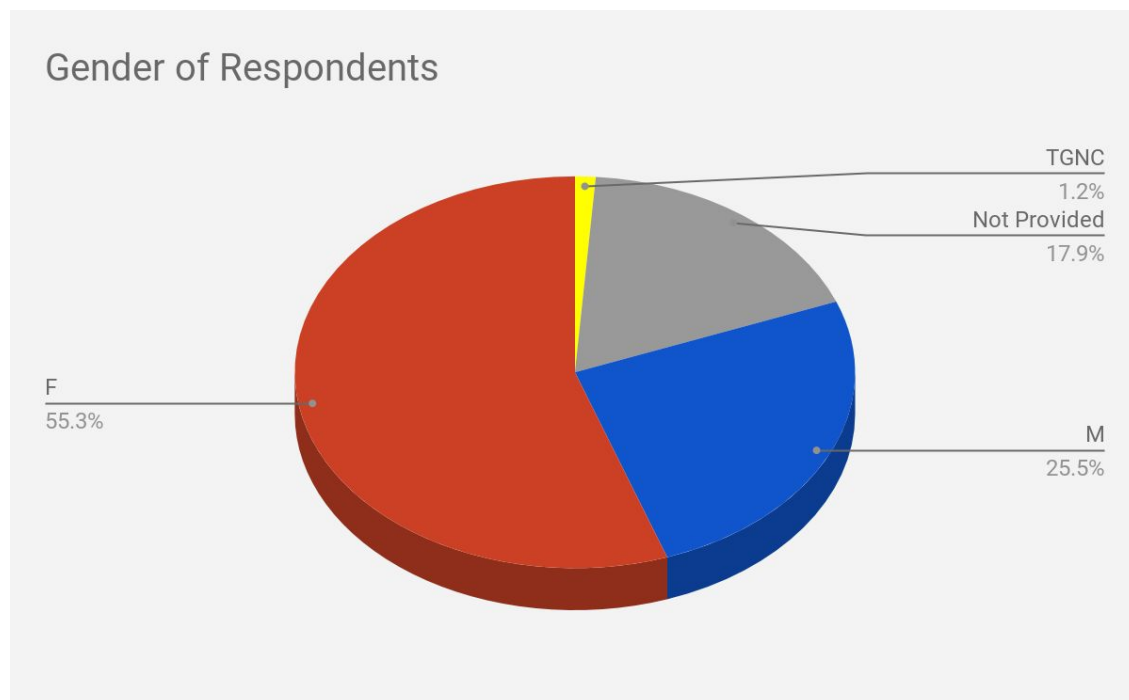


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“What stands out from the incident reports [is] how hate-filled and virulent the anger directed towards Asian Americans is,” said Dr. Jeung. “The spitting and coughing demonstrate how people are debasing and dehumanizing Asian Americans.”

While these are the numbers gathered by the researchers, the totality may be much larger due to the number of unreported cases throughout the COVID-19 pandemic.

A deeper dive into the reported incidents shows that 55.3% of the reported cases in California were from females, while 25.5% were male. Less than two percent identified as transgender and gender non-conforming (TGNC) and the rest did not provide a gender.

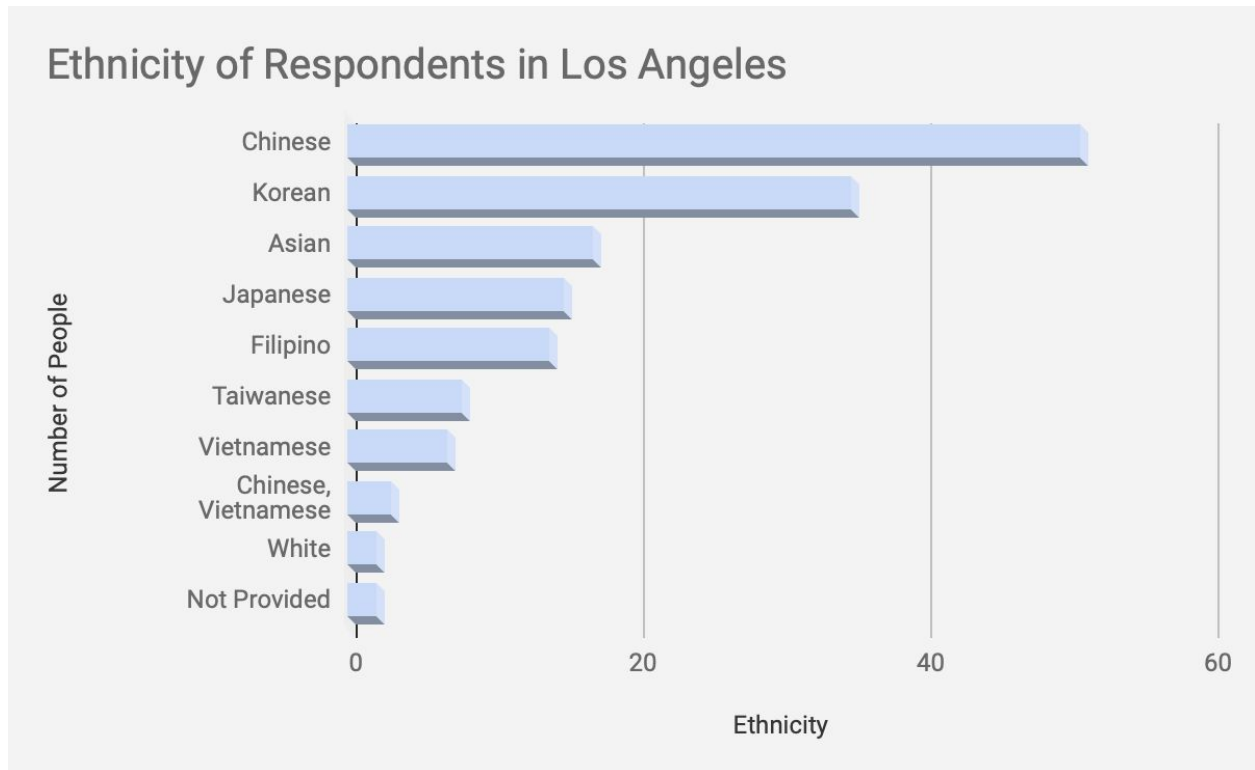


“When the staff saw my ID, she gave me a dirty look and immediately wore her mask and gloves,” said Yueh-Ting Wang, a Taiwanese student who was discriminated against by one of the staff in the Los Angeles DMV. Wang said the staff intentionally spoke loudly to her colleagues to emphasize Wang was an Asian and at the same time, wore the mask and gloves in front of him.

“I tried to explain to her that I’ve stayed in the United States for a long time and that all human beings including Asians have all been threatened by COVID-19 pandemic, so we always try our best to take precautions,” Wang said. He said he felt embarrassed but also irritated when he was insulted in a public place.

The counties with the largest number of reported cases are Los Angeles County (183) and San Francisco (182). The only other county with 100-plus cases is Alameda (105), which is approximately 55 miles to San Francisco.

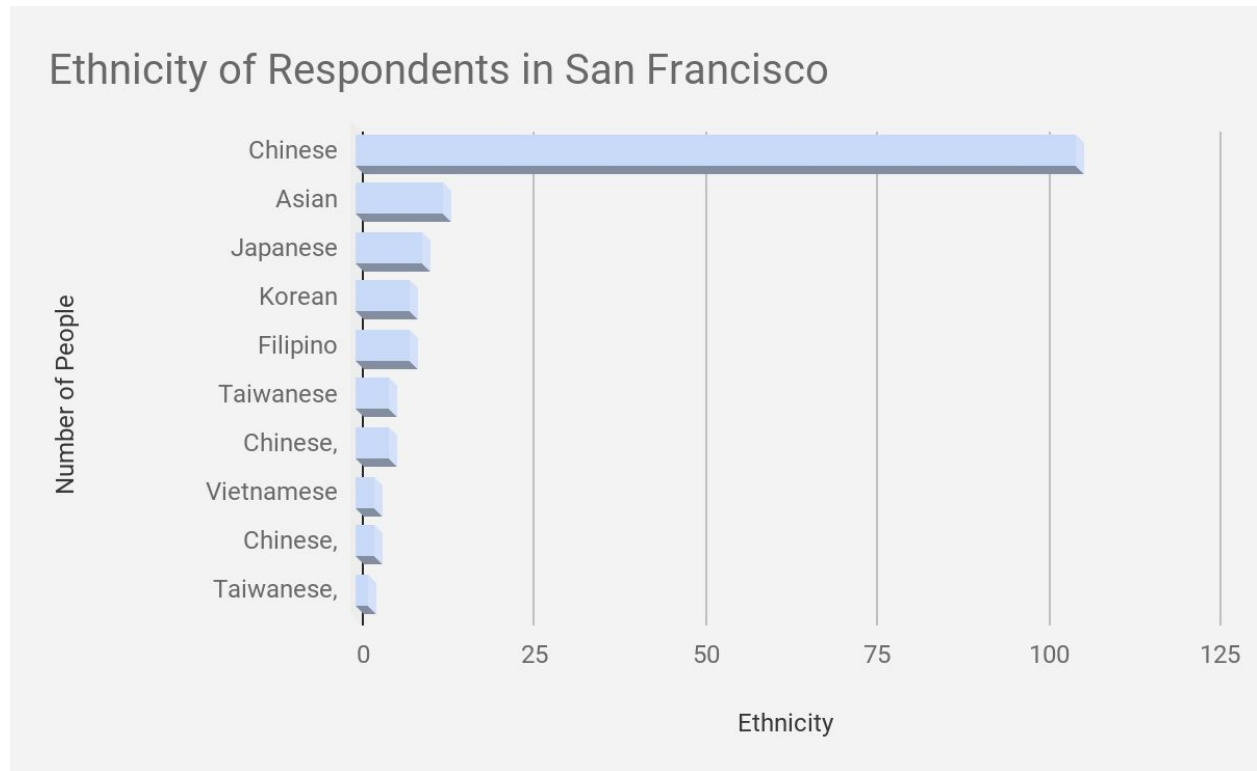
With more than 10 million people living in the County of Los Angeles in 2019 estimated by the United States Census Bureau, Asians account for 15.4% of the population with Chinese, Filipino, and Korean representing the largest proportion. According to the survey, among all the 183 discrimination cases reported in Los Angeles County, 51 people are Chinese (27.9%), 35 people are Korean (19.1%), 15 people are Japanese (8.2 %), 14 people are Filipino (7.7 %), and 8 people are Taiwanese (4.4%).



“The driver asked where we came from and how long we’ve stayed in America. He was so nervous that we might just come back from China,” said Kenan Chen, a USC graduate student majoring in communication management. Chen shared her experience of being stared at by the Uber driver when she just got in the vehicle and mentioned that the driver asked her several questions before dropping her off at the destination.

The driver told Chen he was reluctant to pick her up in the beginning when he saw Chen and her friend are Asians. “There is nothing I can do about this,” Chen said. This incident happened in March when there was an uptick in discrimination against Asians in the United States and other countries.

In San Francisco, 36% of the population are Asians, which is more than 310,000 people. According to the survey, the county has the second most reported cases during this period of time. Chinese represents 57.7% of the cases, Japanese represents 5.5%, and Korean represents 4.4%.



“After the Airbnb host realized that I am Chinese when I contacted her and asked if I could check-in earlier, she asked me a lot of questions including my personal information, the reasons why I booked the Airbnb, and where exactly did I come from,” said Circe Chen.

Chen mentioned that she planned to visit her friend in San Francisco and contacted the owner before the trip. However, soon after realizing that Chen is Chinese, the owner changed her attitude and even canceled Chen’s booking without notifying and giving her any reasons. “I never faced this situation before, so I think it’s all about the COVID-19 pandemic,” said Chen.

With the coronavirus showing no signs of slowing down, feelings of fear and animosity towards the Asian American communities will not subside, and the number of hate crime cases may continue to rise as a result.

But despite what they have endured, there is hope for the Asian communities to learn and grow from these experiences. “Asian Americans will have a heightened consciousness of how they’re racialized and perceived as perpetual foreigners,” said Dr. Jeung. “This racial awareness will lead to the greater mobilization of the Asian American community.”

Methodology

We originally came in contact with Manjusha Kulkarni, the executive director of the Asian Pacific Policy and Planning Council, in hopes of obtaining the raw data for the amount of reported hate crimes in California as well as the data across the country. Unfortunately, due to confidentiality

issues, she was unable to give us the information, but she redirected us to one of the researchers in charge of the data, Dr. Russell Jeung, a professor and the Chair of Asian American Studies at San Francisco State University. According to Dr. Jeung, the data collection began at the start of the COVID-19 pandemic and covered 14 weeks (March 19 - June 24).

After obtaining the raw nationwide and state data, we decided to analyze the California data to see which counties had the highest number of reported cases. We realized that Los Angeles County and San Francisco County have the most reported cases, and according to the information released from the United States Census Bureau, these two counties also have the highest Asian American population in California. As we dove deeper into the numbers, we saw how women were targeted more often than men.

Lastly, we broke down the total number of by month and calculated the combined total (March - April, April - May, and May- June).