

The Rising Tide of Violence and Discrimination Against Asian American and Pacific Islander Women and Girls

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**STOP
AAPI
HATE**



I. Introduction

Asian American and Pacific Islander (AAPI) women and girls are prime targets of hate and discrimination against the AAPI community. The recent shootings across several Atlanta spas that claimed the lives of eight people, including six Asian American women, came on the heels of a staggering increase in hate incidents targeting the AAPI community. Hate incidents, which include both hate crimes and incidents of violence or discrimination, against AAPIs rose sharply over the past year, with over 6,600 reports collected by Stop AAPI Hate between March 2020 and March 2021 [1]. In particular, AAPI women and girls report these hate incidents 2.2 times as often as AAPI men; and AAPI non-binary people have also reported experiencing heightened incidents of hate.

We applaud the Biden Administration for re-establishing and expanding the White House Initiative on Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders (WHIAAPI), and for the proposed actions to respond to anti-Asian violence, xenophobia, and bias [2]. Aligned with the goals of the WHIAAPI advocating for “research to understand, address, and end bias, discrimination, and xenophobia,” this report aims to provide nuanced information about AAPI women’s experiences of racism and discrimination amidst the COVID-19 pandemic.

II. AAPI Women’s Experiences Prior To the Pandemic

AAPI women’s experiences are influenced by the historical contexts of U.S. interactions with Asia and the Pacific regions, U.S. immigration policies, and the stereotypes of AAPI women stem from the aforementioned. AAPI women are continuously fetishized, exoticized, and objectified through hyper-sexualization, and this affects the racialized, gendered, and sexualized violence AAPI women have experienced, historically and now [3].

Even prior to the pandemic, AAPI women were experiencing a great deal of violence and discrimination at the intersection of race/ethnicity, gender, immigration status, and socioeconomic class, among many other factors. According to the Asian Pacific Institute on Gender-Based Violence, more than one in five AAPI women experience some form of contact sexual violence (23%) and non-contact unwanted sexual experiences (21%) during their lifetime [4]. Furthermore, AAPI women experience discrimination in multiple domains, including unequal pay, where AAPI women, on average, make 85 cents for every dollar made by non-Hispanic/Latinx men [5]. These experiences of violence and discrimination differ by multiple factors including AAPI women’s ethnicity.

AAPI women have continued to experience substantial discrimination since the onset of the pandemic. AAPI women make up a disproportionate share of both the front-line and low-wage workforces, and they experienced the highest rates of long-term unemployment as a result of the pandemic [6-8].

III. AAPI Women’s Experiences of Hate Incidents During the Pandemic

To take an in-depth look at AAPI women’s experiences of violence and discrimination, we draw from two data sources: (1) Asian American women’s reports of hate incidents from Stop AAPI Hate (SAH) between March 2020 and March 2021 (n = 3,943), and (2) Pacific Islander women’s responses from the landmark nationally representative survey of AAPI women conducted by the National Asian Pacific American Women’s Forum (NAPAWF) in conjunction with The Harris Poll conducted in February 2021 (n = 415).¹ Overall, Asian American women reported these hate incidents 2.2 times as often as Asian American men and Pacific Islander women also reported alarmingly high rates of racism and discrimination. We further disaggregate AAPI women’s experiences by different subgroups.² The numbers in the report only reflect the hate incidents that were reported to SAH; the true proportion of women experiencing hate incidents is likely to be much higher since many of these incidents are never reported [9].

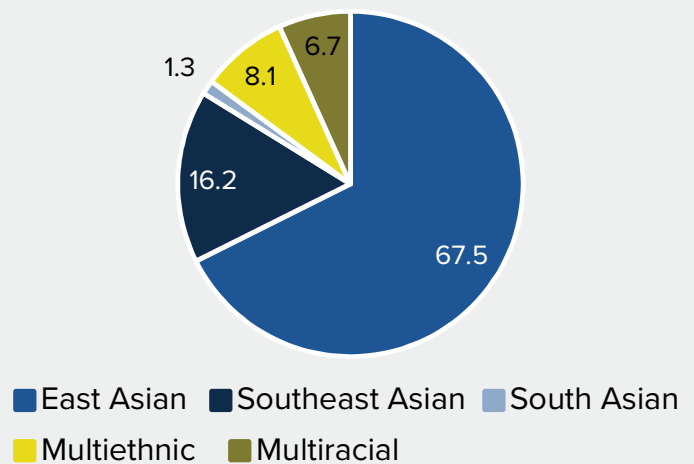
Experiences of Violence and Discrimination Among Asian American Women

An in-depth look at disaggregated data on hate incidents experienced by Asian American women and collected by SAH reveals important subgroup similarities and differences among Asian American women in the types of hate incident they experience, the sites where hate is experienced, and the perceived reasons for the hate incident.

Of the 3,943 Asian American women who reported their experiences to SAH; 67.6 percent were by East Asians, 16.2 percent were by Southeast Asians, 8.1 percent were by Multiethnic Asian women, 6.7 percent were by Multiracial Asian women,³ and 1.3 percent were by South Asians (Figure 1). Overall, East Asian women were the most likely to report having experienced any form of violence or discrimination, followed by Southeast Asian, Multiracial/Multiethnic Asian, and South Asian women, respectively.

The most frequently reported type of hate incident experienced by all Asian American women was verbal harassment and/or name calling (51.4%) (Figure 2).⁴ For East Asian, Southeast

Figure 1: Hate Incidents Reported by Asian American Women, by Subgroups (n = 3,943)



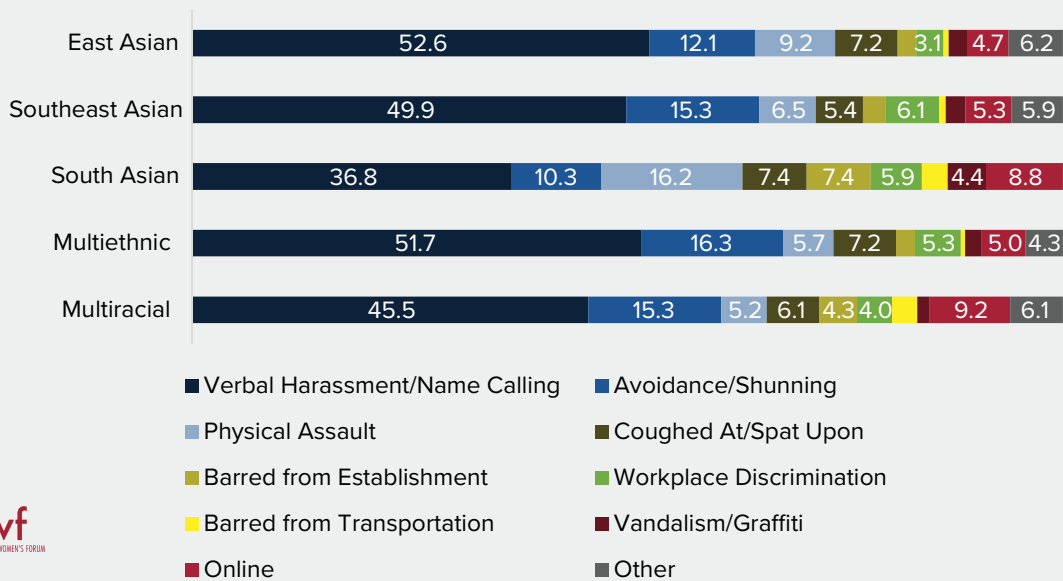
1 This survey was conducted by The Harris Poll on behalf of NAPAWF. The study interviewed over 3,537 adult AAPI women in the United States on a fully representative sample, allowing for a deep and disaggregated analysis of key demographics characteristics. Respondents either self-identified as Asian American and/or Pacific Islander (AAPI) or of any ethnicity/national origin recognized in the Asian and “Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander” race categories by the U.S. Census Bureau. Interviews were conducted both online and via telephone from February 1 to March 2, 2021, and respondents were given the option to complete the survey in English, Mandarin, Korean, or Vietnamese. More information about the survey can be found here: napawf.org/s/NAPAWF-Survey-Deck-041321.pdf

2 Categorization into different ethnic groups was based on Asian Pacific Institute’s classification. Asian Pacific Institute on Gender-Based Violence, “Census Data and API Identities”. <https://www.api-gbv.org/resources/census-data-api-identities/>.

3 “Multiethnic” Asian women refer to women who reported more than one Asian ethnicity (e.g., Chinese and Indian); and “Multiracial” Asian women refer to women who reported at least one Asian ethnicity and one non-Asian race (e.g., Chinese and White).

4 Women can report multiple responses for questions about types, sites, and reasons for hate incidents; thus, the total sums exceed 3,943 reports.

Figure 2: Types of Hate Incidents by Asian American Women, by Subgroups (n = 5,098 types) [In Percentage]



Asian, and Multiracial/Multiethnic Asian women, avoidance and/or shunning was the second most common form of hate incident. South Asian women experienced the highest rate of physical assault with over 16.2 percent of all incidents involving physical assaults (compared to 9.2 percent for East Asian women and 6.5 percent for Southeast Asian women).

Public streets and/or sidewalks (28.3%) and places of business (28.0%) were the more frequently reported sites of hate incidents for all

Asian American women, with some differences among different Asian American subgroups (Figure 3). For East Asian and Multiethnic Asian women, public streets and/or sidewalks were the most common sites of hate incidents, whereas for Southeast Asian, South Asian, and Multiracial Asian women, places of business were the most common sites of hate incidents.

For all Asian American women, race (50.1%), ethnicity (29.5%), and gender (9.1%) were the most frequently reported reasons for experiencing hate

Figure 3: Sites of Hate Incidents by Asian American Women, by Subgroups (n = 4,349 sites) [In Percentage]

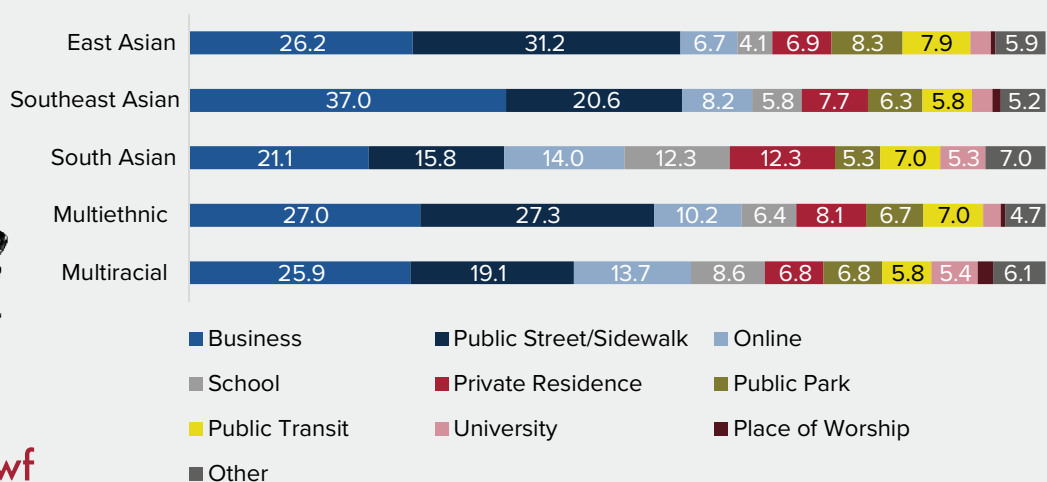
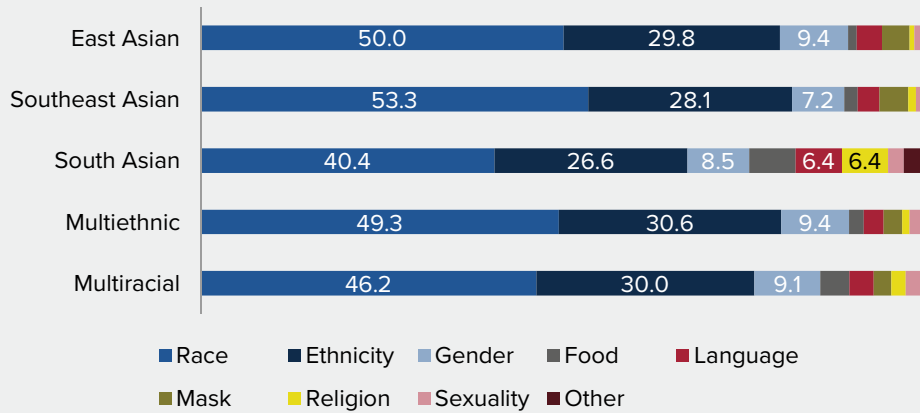


Figure 4: Reasons for Hate Incidents by Asian American Women, by Subgroups (n = 7,265 types) [In Percentage]

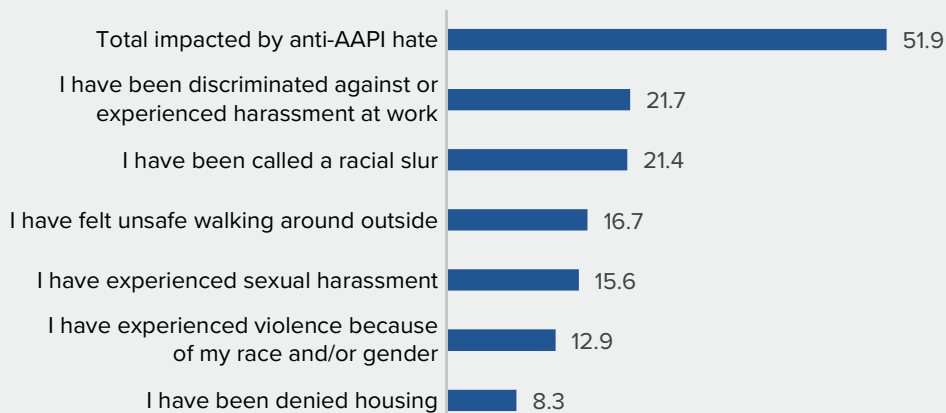


incidents (Figure 4) — reflecting women’s understanding and acknowledgement of intersectional experiences. In addition to the aforementioned reasons, East Asian and Southeast Asian women were more likely to report mask-wearing as a reason for experiencing hate incidents, whereas South Asian women were more likely to report their language and religion as being reasons for experiencing hate incidents. About 6.4 percent of South Asian women reported language as a reason for experiencing hate incidents (compared to 3.5% of East Asian women and 3.0% of Southeast Asian women). Similarly, about 6.4 percent of South Asian women reported religion as a reason for experiencing hate incidents (compared to 0.7% of East Asian women and 1.1% of Southeast Asian women).

Experiences of Racism and Discrimination Among Pacific Islander Women

Among the 415 Pacific Islander women from the NAPAWF national survey, 51.9 percent reported that anti-AAPI racism had affected their lives in 2020 and 2021. 21.7 percent reported facing discrimination or harassment at their workplace, 21.4 percent reported being called a racial slur, 16.7 percent reported feeling unsafe while walking outside, 15.6 percent reported experiencing sexual harassment, 12.9 percent reported experiencing violence due to their race and/or gender, and 8.3 percent reported that they were unfairly denied housing (Figure 5).

Figure 5: Lived Experiences of Pacific Islander Women (n = 415)



Stories from the Reported Hate Incidents Reported to SAH

Verbal Harassment

- I went to a store a block away from my building. On my way back, at a red light, a man in a car rolled down his window to scream at me, “China did this to us, to Americans, f*** you, f*** China, yeah I’m talking to you, b****” with slurs and acted as though he was going to get out of his car before he sped off. (Boston, MA)
- During my mom’s morning walk, she came across a man walking his dog. Immediately, he started to harass her by yelling and insulting her with the following statements: “Get out of here!” “You don’t belong in this neighborhood!” “You b****!” “You’re ugly!” He proceeded to mock her accent and also by impersonating an elderly person as she was walking away. Moreover, he stated, “The next time I see you, I’m going to run you over with my car!” (Gardena, CA)
- A group of men in a car slowed down next to me when I was walking back to my dorm from the grocery store, then started making racist and sexual remarks. “I like them chi*ky” and “This all happened because of bat-eaters, but I still love you long time!” I had to start running between buildings so they couldn’t follow me. (Brunswick, ME)
- I was with my two young children at [store name] to buy strawberries. I opened the container to check for mold when two men shouted that I was spreading COVID, getting everyone sick, called me a f*** b**** and said they should punch me. It scared my children and they said the men kept following us around the store. (Mount Kisco, NY)

Physical Assault

- I was standing in line buying food and a woman not wearing a mask told me to pay for her food. When I said no, I was punched and yelled at. I was called an Asian b***h!” I called the police but after 10 minutes I left because I felt unsafe. (Los Angeles, CA)

- Came out from an Asian take out restaurant in New York and came across a guy in front of me. After one eye contact, he yelled out “f**king Asian b***h,” then he started attacking with his fist. He knocked me down on the floor and started kicking me. Thank God my husband came to my rescue and he ran away. (New York, NY)

Online

- I received 30+ comments from some account on Instagram attacking me using hateful, racist, and perverted language. A lot of the comments attacked me for being Asian, calling me “G**k” or likening me and other Asian people in my posts to coronavirus, e.g. “corona girl”, “achooooo”, which one of you can cough the furthest distance”, etc. a lot of the comments were also sexual, e.g. “flat boobs girl”, “white fetish assley”, etc. (Dublin, CA)
- Former friends have continuously harassed me by adding me to online chats, then calling me racist names like f**king chink b***h, and telling me and my family to go back to Hong Kong although I was born in the US. My father is Hmong and I am half Hmong and half white. (Blaine, MN)

Coughed/Spat Upon

- This lady spat in my direction and I literally walked in front of a car to avoid it and she was like “What the f*** you looking at you Chinese b**** wearing a f***ing mask bringing the coronavirus. (New York, NY)
- Man harassed elderly Chinese woman on the train, then started to harass me, spat at my feet, told me I brought the virus to the US, made sexual comments about my visible fear and anxiety. Followed and chased me off the train. (Chicago, IL)
- I was walking on the middle level of the subway station in NYC when out of nowhere, a maskless man approached me and got very close to me, spitting at me, making incoherent sounds that are supposed to sound like some Asian language (I presume), blaming me directly for the pandemic, and telling me to go back to China. (New York, NY)

Refusal of Service

- I was at an auto repair shop and the guy at the desk really didn't seem to want to help me. He kept making excuses for why they couldn't fix my car: telling me it would be too expensive for me to fix my tail light, telling me that it could take a really long time to order and get my taillight in stock. But as I was leaving, I heard one of the mechanics say to the guy at the desk, "Oh, I'm glad you got rid of her. I'm not working on a coronavirus car." (Dallas, TX)
- Refused entry onto transit train. Transit employee raised voice and said to me and another young Asian woman, "the Asian girls are the most ignorant bitches out of everyone" as he blocked the entrance to an open door to board the train. (New York, NY)

Workplace Discrimination

- I received a racist email at work from a colleague. The framing of the email implied I was "Socialist and Leftist" and a COVID-19 carrier — as indicated by a masked emoji included in the email. I reported this internally in my company to managers, and received no action in response. (San Francisco, CA)
- I was at work and a customer told me that Asians are awful and should all die. That the only thing good about us is our food. (Grand Junction, CO)
- I was at work and a customer said he would sue the place if he got sick. He proceeded to point at me and say "everything was my fault." (Taylors, SC)

cannot ignore hate incidents and discrimination targeting AAPI persons and communities, especially the disproportionate impact on AAPI women and girls, and we call for systemic changes to understand, address, and end these hate incidents and discrimination based on racism and xenophobia.

As the data and the first-hand accounts show, hate incident and discrimination against AAPI women — stemming from a long history of anti-AAPI sentiment and misogyny — are occurring every day on streets, at schools and businesses, and even in front of homes, whether the news decides to cover these incidents. Racism intertwined with misogyny has always been a part of the lives of AAPI women, and the pandemic merely laid bare what went unnoticed before. We

IV. Policy Recommendations

Confronting the violence and discrimination faced by AAPI women before and during the pandemic requires centering their unique needs and experiences and addressing the multiple and intersecting barriers and hardships they face, especially as a result of COVID-19. Meaningful solutions should challenge the systems and structures that permit racialized misogyny to go unchecked and unabated, often in full public view. We urge policymakers at the local, state, and federal levels to dedicate resources and enforce and enact the laws that are necessary to ensure AAPI women are free from racial and gender violence and oppression, and offer five recommendations to start with:

Culturally-Competent and Language Accessible Services

AAPIs face significant language and cultural barriers, due to the high percentage of immigrants. These barriers are higher in geographic areas with newer and rapidly growing AAPI populations, which may lack the social, political, or cultural infrastructure of states with longstanding AAPI populations [10]. This has profound implications for access to services and opportunities, such as in employment, housing, and health care.

Regardless of their ability to speak English, victims and survivors of race and gender-based violence should have access to in-language, culturally competent, and holistic services. Investments are needed in trusted community partners to directly provide and help connect women to these services. The Biden Administration's commitment to allocate \$49.5 million from the American Rescue Plan toward community-based, culturally specific services and programs for survivors of domestic violence and sexual assault who face language and other barriers to services and safety [2], is a step in the right direction. This step must be matched by a long term, consistent commitment at all levels of government to fund these services in addition to mental health, immigration, and legal services.

Resources to local communities and community-based organizations

The pandemic has exacerbated existing structural inequalities harming the well-being of AAPI women and communities, from high rates of workplace harassment in low wage and socially isolated industries to compromised access to health care due to immigration restrictions and language barriers. The urgent needs of individuals are often met — if they are met at all — by local community-based organizations. In addition to being trusted messengers, these organizations act as “first responders” delivering services, distributing information, and bridging the gap between individuals and critical government programs administered by complex, often inaccessible bureaucracies.

After decades of underinvestment, federal, state, and local budgets should prioritize and support AAPI women and communities by centering equity in their annual budget cycles. In addition to funding culturally-competent and language-accessible services for victims and survivors, investments are needed in the health, infrastructure, safety, and development of AAPI neighborhoods, the families and businesses that sustain them, and the community-based organizations that serve them.

Data Disaggregation

AAPIs are an extremely diverse population: they comprise more than 50 ethnic subgroups and speak more than 100 languages and dialects [11]. Yet, publicly reported data on AAPIs are rarely disaggregated or inclusive. Instead, the “model minority” myth has cast a shadow over the AAPI community for decades, minimizing the effects of structural racism and sexism on women of color and erasing the unique struggles of a large and diverse AAPI population [12]. Accurate and disaggregated data collection is needed to identify key disparities within the AAPI community and allocate resources to those most in need.

Attention to Workplaces

Even before the pandemic, AAPI women comprised a disproportionately high share of the low-wage workforce, and immigrant AAPI women in particular were especially vulnerable to workplace sexual harassment and violence [4, 13]. Since the pandemic, over a fifth of the Pacific Islander women surveyed have reported facing discrimination or harassment at their workplace. Businesses, which include workplaces, are also the most common sites of violence or discrimination for Southeast Asian, South Asian, and multi-racial Asian women. Government agencies with the appropriate jurisdiction must enforce the civil rights and labor protections that prohibit workplace discrimination and harassment on the basis of race or gender. Government agencies should also provide educational resources in multiple languages and partner with trusted community-based organizations to ensure that AAPI women are aware of their rights.

Civil Rights Infrastructure

A majority of the reports submitted by AAPI women to SAH, and responses from PI women in the NAPAWF survey, are of hate incidents, rather than hate crimes, and a significant proportion of hate incidents against AAPI women take place in businesses, schools and universities, and public transit. Yet very few if any of these incidents result in any accountability, despite civil rights laws that protect against gender and race-based discrimination in public accommodations and other settings.

We strongly recommend that government agencies with jurisdiction over these laws engage in robust public education and outreach campaigns in multiple languages informing AAPI women of their rights and institutions of their obligations. Victims, witnesses, and offenders should know and understand that hate incidents may violate the law, just as they know and understand that hate crimes are illegal. Government agencies must also do more to identify, refer, investigate, and prosecute civil rights violations, including discrimination in the workplace, housing, schools and public accommodations, under existing law. Additionally, local civil law enforcement entities should report hate incidents to the U.S. Department of Justice so that the data may be analyzed and appropriate actions be taken.

The National Asian Pacific American Women's Forum (NAPAWF) is the only multi-issue, progressive, community organizing and policy advocacy organization for Asian American and Pacific Islander (AAPI) women and girls in the U.S. NAPAWF's mission is to build collective power so that all AAPI women and girls can have full agency over our lives, our families, and our communities.

Stop AAPI Hate is a national coalition addressing anti-Asian racism across the U.S. The coalition was founded by the Asian Pacific Policy and Planning Council (A3PCON), Chinese for Affirmative Action (CAA), and San Francisco State University's Asian American Studies Department. Between March 19, 2020 and March 31, 2021, Stop AAPI Hate has received 6,603 reported incidents of racism and discrimination targeting Asian Americans across the U.S. Visit stopaapihate.org.

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- [12] NAPAWF Agenda, p. 7.
- [13] NAPAWF Agenda, p. 33 and p. 41.