

# UNSAFE, UNWELCOME, AND UNCERTAIN:

## What International Students are Telling Us

### Introduction

Stop AAPI Hate conducted an exploratory study to understand how the current political climate and Trump's policy shifts are shaping international students' sense of safety, well-being, and academic futures—and to identify what support they need from colleges and universities now. From the questionable revocation of student visas to sudden immigration policy changes, international students have continued to navigate incredibly complex challenges under the Trump administration. International students, [72% of whom are from Asia](#), are being discriminated against, surveilled, and shunned—with their contributions overshadowed by suspicion.

### Survey Results and Analysis

We surveyed 87 international students across 36 higher education institutions in the U.S. While the sample size of international students is modest—likely due to fear of repercussions for speaking out—the responses offer an important window into their experiences. Here are the topline findings, including first-hand accounts that illustrate the depth of students' concerns:

#### Student Experiences

- **Negative effects on health and wellbeing.** A vast majority of international students report a decreased sense of belonging (88%) and negative physical or mental health impacts (81%). These findings demonstrate the harmful impacts of living under constant uncertainty in a political environment where students' actions might jeopardize their immigration status and future.
- **Pervasive sense of fear and instability.** Just 4% report feeling "very" or "extremely safe," while 90% say they were fearful about their student visa status. Students' top concerns center on the risk of detention or deportation, increased surveillance and loss of freedom, and uncertainty of being unable to finish their studies or find work after graduation. In fact, a vast majority of students report changing or restricting their social media presence (86%) to avoid scrutiny.

**"WE DON'T BELONG HERE.**  
*That's my feeling ... America is  
no longer the land for dreams."*

*" ... I hate it when I have to delete my  
social media when I simply post  
things I believe in. I thought I had a  
voice by being in the US. I'M NOT  
BRAVE ENOUGH TO LOSE  
EVERYTHING I HAVE HERE  
AND BE DEPORTED."*

– Surveyed international students

- **Souring views on U.S. higher education.** When asked what advice they would offer to others considering studying in the United States, respondents discouraged other students from studying in the U.S. altogether due to the hostile environment.

***"DON'T COME!"***

***"Be ready to FACE YOUR WORST POSSIBLE FEARS."***

– Surveyed international students

## Student Needs

- **Basic resources are available to students, but they need more support.** Most international student respondents report that their colleges and universities provide at least some basic services, like mental health services (78%), guidance on visa policies (77%), and communication about their student status (67%). These form an important foundation, but the survey suggests students need more specialized support, like personalized academic advising and legal aid. Only 48% of international students reported receiving guidance on completing their academic studies, and just 38% said their institutions offered legal aid.
- **Gaps in access to and awareness of student services remain significant.** Across different services, 14% to 37% of students said they were unsure whether those supports even existed on their campuses. These findings suggest universities may need to ensure essential services are both available and clearly communicated, so students do not miss information or support that could help them navigate their situations.

## Recommendations

The survey findings paint a sobering picture: International students in the U.S. are living with constant fear, uncertainty, and alienation. They describe their experiences with words like “terrifying,” “unsafe,” “unstable,” and “suffocating.”

Students overwhelmingly call for colleges and universities to take **stronger, more proactive steps** to safeguard their education, safety, and rights. Specifically, students want to see their administrations take the following actions:

- Expand student services and well-being supports
- Communicate clearly and proactively about changing policies and student statuses
- Ensure academic continuity and flexibility
- Show public leadership and join with other universities to defend international students

**[Click or scan to read our full Data Brief on student experiences](#)**



## ABOUT STOP AAPI HATE

Stop AAPI Hate is a U.S.-based coalition dedicated to fighting racism and discrimination against Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders (AAs & PIs). We strive to advance the multiracial movement for equity and justice by raising awareness about anti-AAPI hate, working in solidarity with allied communities, and advocating for comprehensive solutions that tackle the root causes of race-based hate.

As the nation’s largest reporting center tracking anti-AAPI hate acts, our coalition publishes data and research to paint a vivid and nuanced picture of racism and other forms of bigotry as it is experienced by our communities. Leveraging our core strategies—Data & Research, Policy & Advocacy, Community Care, and Strategic Communications—we work to create a safer, more equitable future for all. For more information, visit [stopaapihate.org](https://stopaapihate.org).