

**Forum:** Human Rights Council

**Issue:** Measures to mitigate the racial discrimination stemming from COVID-19

**Student Officer:** Jihyun (Emma) Kim

**Position:** Deputy President of Human Rights Council

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## Introduction

The COVID-19 pandemic has not only resulted in stagnation in the economy and mental health problems but also created a strong anti-sentiment toward certain races, of which Asians are the main target. According to a recent survey from the Pew Research Centre, a non-profit organization intended to inform the public about urgent issues, about 40% of Black and Asian adults claim that since the start of the outbreak, people have behaved uncomfortably around them due to their race and ethnicity. A similar percentage of these adults also state concerns regarding how wearing a mask in public might lead to social stigmatization. In addition, approximately 39% of adults in the United States (US) note how the expression of anti-Asians sentiments or perspectives has become more frequent than before the outbreak.

As the level of hostility toward Asians has become more severe each year, there have been countless hate crimes toward Asians in places not limited to the US. Incidents of Asian hate crimes have incessantly been reported from the entire globe, including Italy, Russia, Brazil, and so on. Furthermore, research released by the New Zealand Human Rights Commission reported that 54% of Chinese respondents and 55% of Māori respondents had experienced racial discrimination since the outbreak started. According to police data in the United Kingdom (UK), hate crimes against Chinese, East, and Southeast Asians increased by 300 percent in the first quarter of 2020 compared to the same periods in 2018 and 2019.

The dispute over the origin of coronavirus is known to have started this anti-Asian sentiment. The first report of the virus was from Wuhan, China, according to the World Health Organization (WHO). Due to this reason, many nations, for example, the US government, have been accusing China of being the origin of COVID-19, and this has resulted in politicization. On the other hand, some believe that the virus was unknowingly introduced to China by people from other countries. While such dispute remains

contentious, it is extremely crucial to inform the public that striving for the eradication of the virus altogether is the priority.

## Definition of Key Terms

### Protected Characteristics

A protected characteristic is a personal characteristic that must not be used as a justification for any type of discrimination or prejudice. Common protected characteristics are race, sex, religion, age, cultural background, disability, and genetic information.

### Direct Discrimination

Direct discrimination is when a person is treated unequally due to their relation to a protected characteristic. The relation can be categorized into three main situations: when they possess a protected characteristic, when they are associated with someone who possesses a protected characteristic, and when they are assumed to possess a protected characteristic, in which the assumption might be incorrect. It can occur unintentionally, even though direct discrimination is usually the result of purposeful action.

### Indirect Discrimination

Indirect discrimination is when a ‘policy, criterion or practice’ (PCP) applied to everyone, in the same manner, has a greater negative impact on certain individuals with a shared protected characteristic than others. Although unusual, it sometimes occurs intentionally. More specifically speaking, the employer of a discriminatory PCP is often unable to justify it. For instance, if a company requires every employee to test out the taste of a new menu made of pork, and the employer cannot justify the rationale behind this requirement, then employees who believe in religions restricting the consumption of pork – for example, Muslim – may experience indirect discrimination.

### Harassment

Harassment generally refers to intimidation or force. In terms of racial harassment, it means all kinds of actions aimed to offend or intimidate a group of people or certain individuals with a protected characteristic. It includes bullying, intentional exclusion, gossip, nicknames, and improper questions and statements.

### Victimization

Victimization refers to the situations where a person is treated unequally because they have expressed their grievances to discrimination in such ways: helping a discrimination complaint, providing evidence in support of a discrimination complaint, and putting forward concerns against inequality or discrimination. For example, victimization occurs when one experiences discrimination in the workplace for supporting his or her colleague who is unequally treated due to racial differences.

## Background Information

### Anti-Asian sentiment

The long history of anti-Asian sentiment in the U.S. dates back to the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century; however, such sentiment has become severe since the COVID-19 outbreak started in the country.

### *Asian hate crimes*

As bigotry views toward Asians have increased tremendously throughout the world since the start of the pandemic, countless Asians, including Asian Americans, have appealed to stop all the discriminatory behaviors associated with COVID-19. Yet, the number of hate crimes toward Asians has rather been increasing. There was an increase of 300 percent in hate crimes toward East and Southeast Asians in the UK. The US has also reported a notable increase; California saw an increase of 177 percent. Australia is not an exception as well. The Australian Alliance received around 800 reports of COVID-19-related racism since 2020; 40% of the received cases were casual racist slurs and jokes and approximately 12% of those included physical intimidation. In the 16 largest cities in the US, according to research from the Center for the Study of Hate and Extremism at Cal State University San Bernardino, hate crimes toward Asians were up by 164% since 2020; in the first quarter of 2021, the number of anti-Asian violent acts collected from the nation's largest police jurisdictions were 95, creating a huge gap from that in the first quarter of 2020, which was 36 cases. To list some deaths of Asian Americans in which the perpetrators' intentions seemed to have stemmed from COVID-19, on May 5<sup>th</sup>, two Asian women were stabbed in Chinatown in San Francisco, and two months before that, two Asian women were attacked in Manhattan, followed by seven more deaths of Asians in New York City. Such remarkable increases in anti-Asian hate crimes in various countries since around 2020 tell that COVID-19 has surely fueled racial discrimination and its severeness reached beyond expectation.

### *Lack in reporting system*

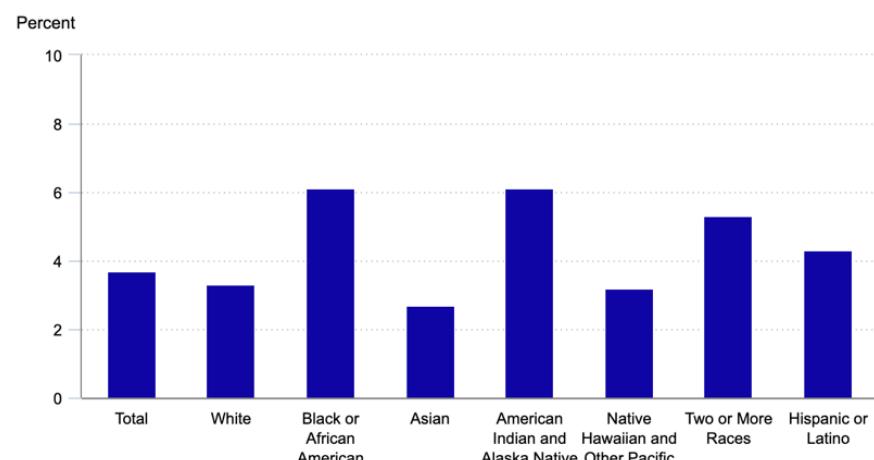
Accurate statistics regarding anti-Asian hate crimes are extremely essential to combat the current issue. However, there is no uniform database that collects anti-Asian discrimination, and what many reports are based on is a website called Stop AAPI Hate, which is based on self-reported incidents. There were around 4,632 anti-Asian hate crimes in the U.S. in 2020 and 6,273 cases in 2021, according to Stop AAPI Hate. Yet, lawmakers said the number is a small portion of the total. This tells that there should be an official, uniform website to accurately report the increase in hate crimes toward Asians since the start of the pandemic, which then could be useful when informing the public about its severity.

## Economic difficulties

### *Unemployment rate*

The unemployment rate of people of color seemed to have been negatively affected by the outbreak. The unemployment rate of Asians, according to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, was 2.7% before the pandemic, which was way lower than that of White (3.3%). However, after the pandemic, the rate had shown a surprising rise; it recorded 8.7% in 2020, while it had only increased to 7.3% for White. The unemployment rate of African Americans also skyrocketed from 6.1% to 11.4%. Furthermore, the unemployment rate not only for Asian and African Americans but also for other races and ethnicities had shown a striking upsurge in the same year, including the races and ethnicities whose rates had remained lower than that of White before COVID-19. This clearly exhibits a negative association between the emergence of the virus and the unemployment rates of people of color. Adding on, the unemployment problem has yielded several different problems: income decline, food insufficiency, and housing instability.

Chart 4. Unemployment rates by race and Hispanic or Latino ethnicity, 2019 annual averages

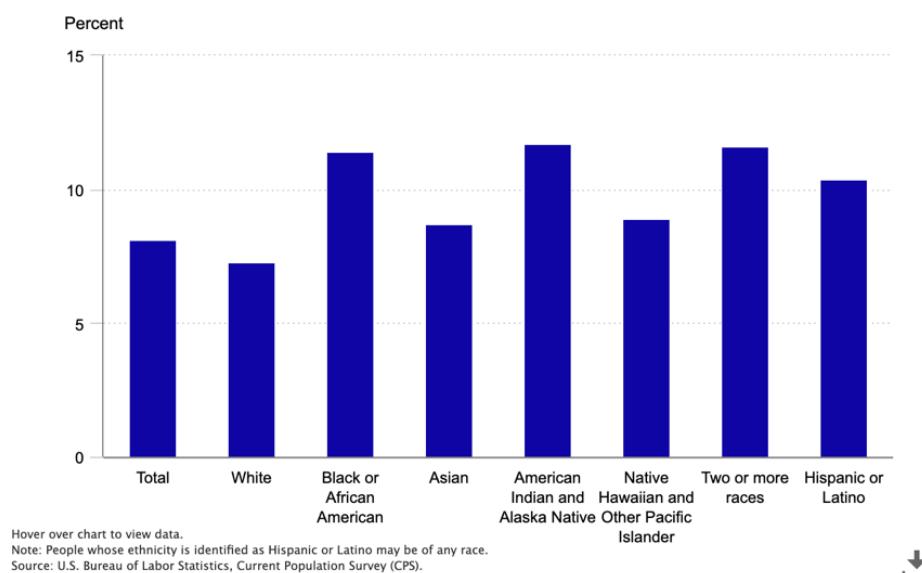


Hover over chart to view data.

Note: People whose ethnicity is identified as Hispanic or Latino may be of any race.  
Data may not sum to 100 percent because of rounding.

Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Current Population Survey (CPS).



**Caption #1: Graph of unemployment rates based on race and ethnicity in 2019****Chart 4. Unemployment rates by race and Hispanic or Latino ethnicity, 2020 annual averages****Caption #2: Graph of unemployment rates based on race and ethnicity in 2020**

### *Income decline*

The number of non-White households is more likely than their white counterparts to face “a detrimental decline in income” due to the pandemic. According to the Centre for American Progress (CAP), Asian American, Black, and Hispanic or Latino households – 49%, 54%, and 63% respectively – have experienced such circumstances, whereas 43% of their white counterparts have experienced so.

### *Food insufficiency*

The issue of food insufficiency among people of color has long existed; however, it has been boosted by the pandemic. According to data from Census Bureau, from May 28<sup>th</sup> to June 2<sup>nd</sup> in 2020, Black and Hispanic or Latino households were two times as likely as their white counterparts to report that they occasionally lack food to eat. 22% of Black and 17% of Hispanic or Latino reported that they sometimes or often did not have enough to eat while only 7% of White households reported the same problem.

### *Housing instability*

Housing instability in minority communities has also been caused by the current crisis. Only 9% of White households missed or deferred the last mortgage payment, whereas the percentage of Hispanic or Latino, Black, and Asian households were much higher – 17%, 20%, and 17% respectively. In addition, 45% of Black or Hispanic or Latino households showed almost no

confidence in their ability to pay next month's rent on time, according to data collected from May 28 to June 2 in 2020 by CAP.

### Homeowners and renters of color are struggling to meet payments

Percentage of households that deferred or did not make last month's rent or mortgage payment and percentage of households with no or slight confidence in ability to pay next payment on time, by race



Note: Analysis of homeowners is restricted to households with mortgages. Households with slight/no confidence in ability to pay next month's payment on time include those that plan to defer payments.

**Caption #3: Graph of housing instability by race**

## Major Countries and Organizations Involved

### World Health Organization (WHO)

WHO, established in 1948, is an organization of the United Nations (UN) that links countries, partners, and individuals to advance health, ensure global security, and assist the most vulnerable communities for the sake of the highest level of health. WHO has been striving for treatment, prevention, coordination, etc.

### United States of America (USA)

Despite the fact that the number of Asian Americans in the USA amounts nearly to 20 million in 2020, there have been countless incidents of racial discrimination, especially toward Asians since the COVID-19 pandemic. New York saw a 223% increase in anti-Asian hate crimes in 2021, which is followed by a 140% increase in San Francisco and a 177% increase in California. In addition to the abrupt surge in anti-Asian violence, the unemployment rate of Asian Americans, as well as African Americans, has increased by a large amount of percentage, incompatible with the increase in that of White people in the USA. Furthermore, several American politicians used discriminatory words associated with China to name the virus, increasing anti-sentiment toward Chinese and Asians within its nation. The USA is also one of the countries that have claimed that the virus originated from China and was accused of introducing the virus to China by the Chinese government, leading to a political dispute.

### China

Breathing difficulties and fever stroke a group of people in Wuhan, Hubei province, China. Incipient disease control was unfortunately unsuccessful since there were many outbound journeys during the New Year Holiday, and therefore the virus has spread all over the globe. Since then, China has been accused of spreading the virus, and detestation toward Chinese has emerged in many countries. The Chinese government had also proposed many postulations regarding the origin, which led the issue of the origin to go beyond mere clarification. Thus, people of Chinese heritage have been undergoing severe racial discrimination and are even being socially stigmatized.

### South Korea

South Koreans have also experienced racial discrimination due to COVID-19. When the situation in China started to get relieved and the situation in South Korea started to get worsened at the beginning of 2020, a number of South Koreans reported to its own government that only Koreans were sent to different hotel rooms that were of worse quality than it was for people from other nations for quarantine. There were also some cases of Chinese police sticking labels on the doors of South Koreans' houses, indicating that they are Koreans as if they were pollutants. Adding on, as the racial discrimination towards Chinese expanded into Asians in general, many Korean Americans have experienced being called 'Chino' – a discriminatory name to call Chinese - even after introducing themselves as Koreans.

### France

The population of the Chinese community is the largest in France. However, since the pandemic, hostile views toward the Chinese have grown remarkably. According to the Pew Research Center study measuring perceptions of China abroad, 70% of respondents answered that they had negative views toward China in 2020. Adding on, 52% of respondents agreed that their views toward China had turned negative in the same year.

### United Kingdom (UK)

The UK is another country in Europe that also reacted with hostility toward China. The Foreign Secretary of the British Prime Minister had declared that their nation can no longer maintain its current relations with China. According to Pew Research Center, in 2020, 74% of British had a hostile view on China, whereas only 55% had answered so in 2019. In 2021, the rate declined to 63%; however, it is still considered as high.

## Timeline of Events

Date	Description of event
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December 21, 1965	International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination was held by UN General Assembly
November 27, 1978	Declaration on Race and Racial Prejudice was held by the General Conference of the UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
December, 2019	Unknown virus was detected in Wuhan, Hubei Province, China
January, 2020	WHO tentatively named the virus and disease as 2019-nCoV
February 11 <sup>th</sup> , 2020	WHO modified its name to COVID-19
2020-2022	Increased number of hate crimes toward people of color have been reported

## Relevant UN Treaties and Events

No resolution has been written by the UN that concentrates solely on racial discrimination stemming from the current pandemic.

- Elimination of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia, and related intolerance: comprehensive implementation of and follow-up to the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action, 31 December 2020 (**A/RES/75/237**)
- Resolution proclaiming 21 March as the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (**A/RES/2142%20(XXI)**)
- Resolution proclaiming the Week of Solidarity with Peoples Struggling against Racism and Racial Discrimination (**A/RES/34/24**)
- International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, 21 December 1965
- UNESCO Global Forum Against Racism and Discrimination, 22 Marc 2021  
One of the objectives of the forum was to “present and consolidate the outcomes of the UNESCO anti-racism and anti-discrimination initiatives, with the view of intensifying the UNESCO-wide efforts among a larger network of partners, especially within the COVID-19 context”

## Previous Attempts to solve the Issue

## World Health Organization (WHO)

Countless authorities had called COVID-19 “Chinese virus” or “Kung Flu”, intending to accuse China of being the origin of the virus. Since racial discrimination seemed to have become more severe due to such names, in January 2020, WHO recommended all nations to use either 2019 Novel Coronavirus or 2019 Novel Coronavirus acute respiratory disease when referring to the virus in accordance with 2015 guidance and international guidelines against using geographical locations or groups of people in disease and virus names. A month later, WHO officially named the virus COVID-19; CO for corona, VI for virus, D for disease, and 19 for 2019.

## United Nations (UN)

The UN has created an International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, which is observed annually on 21 March. In the 2022 edition of the International Day, the main focus is the theme “VOICES FOR ACTION AGAINST RACISM”. The UN hopes that this message motivates people all over the world to raise their views against racism, assemble against all forms of racial discrimination, and create a space where those who speak out are safe. The secretary-general of the UN has also asked governments to “act now to strengthen our societies’ immunity against the virus of hate” on 8 May 2020.

## Campaigns

In NYC, where anti-Asian sentiment has significantly magnified recently, campaigns to combat the issue were held. A public awareness campaign called “I Still Believe in Our City” by multidisciplinary artist Amada Phingbodhipakkiya was translated into many different languages, promoting the importance of racial integration. There were also memorial ceremonies for several Asians who were the subjects of anti-Asian hate crimes. During the ceremonies, people made songs to commemorate those people in the middle of the city, which, at the same time, raised public awareness of the issue. In addition, on 20 March 2022, thousands of people held a protest against an increase in racism including Sinophobia and hostility toward the Chinese in cities all over Europe. Likewise, people in many countries have been demonstrating against racism, anti-Asian sentiment in particular.

## Possible Solutions

### Raising public awareness

At the beginning of the pandemic, many countries, mainly China and the US, accused each other of introducing the virus to the world. Considering that the racial discrimination stemming from COVID-19 is highly attributable to the dispute over the origin of the virus, education that informs the public that the

origin is not as crucial as collaboratively combating the current crisis is essential. Such education shall be provided in schools so that the future generations, who are responsible for the pandemic that seems to be never-ending, could be fully informed. This may lead to a decrease in hate crimes toward Asians in the next few decades. In order to further raise public awareness, such content should be introduced constantly to the public through each nation's media.

## Reporting System

Statistics on the number of anti-Asian hate crimes do not represent the reality. Along with Stop AAPI Hate, a nonprofit organization that keeps records of hate crimes and discriminatory treatments toward Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders in the U.S., there are a few reporting systems for victims of anti-Asian hate crimes. However, the majority of them are all based on self-reported incidents, meaning the statistics might not be able to reflect the severe circumstances victims have experienced. Therefore, it is significant to consider establishing an organization or a website that reports the number of anti-Asian hate crimes in a more reliable and effective way in order to apprehend the severity. This could also be accomplished by having a previously existing official organization create a such platform.

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## Appendix or Appendices

- I. More information about actions to eradicate racial discrimination taken by the UN  
<https://www.un.org/en/observances/decade-people-african-descent/actions-taken>

- II. History of racial discrimination and views of scholars and researchers toward the issue  
<https://news.harvard.edu/gazette/story/2021/03/a-long-history-of-bigotry-against-asian-americans/>
- III. Further reading about why Asian Americans do not report  
<https://abcnews.go.com/US/anti-asian-hate-incidents-unreported/story?id=76509072>