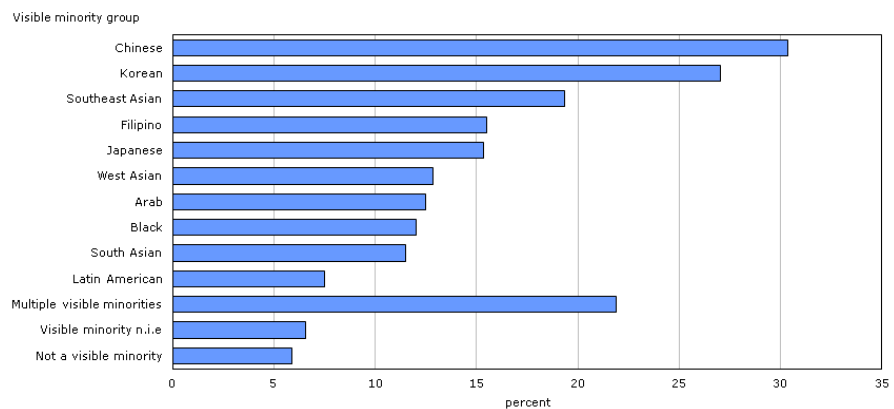


1 in 5 visible minorities in Canada experienced an increase of racially motivated hate crimes in their neighbourhoods since the COVID-19 outbreak, according to a study

Statistics Canada recently released a new study on the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. The study asked Canadians about their sense of safety during the pandemic. The data collected responses of 43,000 Canadians regarding their perception of safety.

According to the study, collected between May 12th to May 25th, 2020, 18% of visible minority Canadians perceived that there was an increase of harassment and attacks based on race, skin colour or ethnicity since the COVID-19 pandemic started. This percentage is three times more than the rest of the population (6%). Within the minority groups, Chinese, Korean and Southeast Asian populations showed the largest percentages: 30%, 28% and 19% respectively.

Chart 2
Perceived increase in harassment or attacks on the basis of race, ethnicity, or skin colour in neighbourhood since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, by visible minority group, Canada, 2020



n.i.e. not indicated elsewhere
Source: Statistics Canada, Crowdsourcing on perceptions of safety, May 12-25, 2020.

Source: statcan.gc.ca

Notably, the minority groups that had a high percentage of perceiving increase of racist attacks also were more likely to say that they felt unsafe walking in their neighbourhoods at night: Korean (43%), Filipino (38%) and Chinese (31%) were the top three.

The study shows how the COVID-19 has been impacting the Canadians and the data also suggests rise of anti-Asian, or anti-person-of-colour, trends since the pandemic.

Xenophobia towards Asians

On Feb 11th, 2020, the World Health Organization (WHO) named the respiratory infectious disease that originated from Wuhan, China, COVID-19. During the media briefing, the Director-General of WHO, Dr. Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus remarked on the guidelines they followed. "We had to find a name that did not refer to a geographical location, an animal, an individual or group of people." The director said the naming the disease was essential to prevent racial stigmatization. "... having a name matters to prevent the use of other names that can be inaccurate or stigmatizing."

Despite the WHO's attempt to prevent racial stigma arising from the virus, Asians have become the target of racial discrimination.

Avvy Go, the director of the Chinese and Southeast Asian Legal Clinic, remembered the discrimination Asian communities faced during the SARS outbreak in 2003 and has urged Canadians to not repeat to the same xenophobic behaviours during a press conference in January. "I certainly hope... that we do not have a repeat of SARS, not just the virus, but the virus of racism."

Many Asian-owned businesses reported suffering from drops in sales since the outbreak and Asians reported numerous racist harassments and attacks.

Wuhan Noodle 1950, suffered countless of racially motivated harassments since the pandemic due to their name. None of the staff had any relations to the origin of the virus Wuhan. They experienced numerous prank calls, verbal assaults, mockery, and a significant drop in sales.

Amy Go, the Interim President of the Chinese Canadian National Council for Social Justice, mentioned in an interview that the Asian-owned businesses in Chinatown in Toronto suffered from a 30%-50% drop in sales. The issue is that many of those businesses employ those with no financial stability.

According to a poll conducted by the Angus Reid Institute, half of the Chinese Canadian participants have reported being insulted or called racial slurs. 43% of the same group reported being threatened or intimidated. Over 500 Canadians of Chinese ethnicities have participated in the survey.

Verbal assaults aren't the only anti-Asian acts occurring since the outbreak. A 92 years old Asian man was thrown to the ground in an alleged racially motivated attack in British Columbia. An Asian woman was attacked by a cyclist who spat into her face in Alberta. The attack was caught on video and has gone viral on social media. A 15 years old Asian boy was verbally assaulted first and once he took a picture of the assaulter, the victim was pushed and tackled off his bike.