

The Rise of Anti-Asian Racism During the COVID-19 Pandemic

What is the issue?

Since the COVID-19 virus was identified as originating in Wuhan, China, people have negatively targeted members of Asian ethnicities. In the last few months, anti-Asian violence and racist incidents have [increased across the globe](#). In Canada, the number of such incidents, especially in larger cities, has grown noticeably and can be attributed to COVID-19 fears and underlying, pervasive racism.

[Important ETFO Update #2: Responding to COVID-19](#) drew attention to the issue of anti-Asian discrimination as the pandemic further exposed existing social inequities.

It is important to consider the rise in anti-Asian bigotry from a historical perspective. Anti-Chinese and anti-Asian stereotypes in Canada date back well over 150 years. The term '[yellow peril, that masses of Chinese people](#)' came to the 'new world' to infect and infiltrate North American civilization has never left the western colonialist imagination. Today's racist attitudes are reminiscent of those held during the 1907 Vancouver Anti-Asian Riots, legitimized by the Chinese Exclusion Act of the early 1900s, as well as the Second World War internment of Japanese Canadians.

What are Challenges?

The Chinese Canadian National Council for Social Justice (CCNC-SJ) recently conducted a [poll to measure how anti-Asian bias](#) has grown across Canada. This poll surveyed people in Vancouver, Toronto and Montreal, capturing more frequent incidents of racism stemming from the pandemic.

The results of this survey revealed that:

One in five respondents felt unsafe sitting or standing next to an Asian or Chinese person on a bus without a mask, and one in four respondents answered they 'don't know' if it's safe.

10 per cent of respondents stated that they 'don't know' if all Chinese or Asian people carry COVID-19.

13 per cent said they are aware of incidents of racial bias because of COVID-19.

These types of statistics are indicative of rising racial biases that manifest themselves or are often present when a national or global crisis occurs.

Asian communities are currently being targeted more than others for the spread of COVID-19. One only has to look at social media posts to see echoes of 100 years of racist stereotyping that portrays Asians, specifically Chinese people as '[backward, disgusting, dirty with gross eating habits.](#)'

The recent [inflammatory tweets](#), posted by Canadian rock star Bryan Adams demonstrate the pervasiveness and rise of racist sentiment. Although Adams has since apologized, he has proven that even well-travelled celebrities and public figures are not immune to destructive assumptions and biases.

*Together We Can
Stop Racism*

What can we do?

We have experienced this type of scapegoating before with its devastating human and social consequences. Arabs and Muslims have shouldered the blame and scrutiny for the 9/11 attacks, Africans for Ebola, East Asians for SARS. The overt and covert attacks surfacing during COVID-19 are not only impacting Chinese communities more acutely, but these discriminatory behaviours also target people of Vietnamese, Laotian, Korean, Filipino and other Asian heritages. This scapegoating ignores cultural and geographic differences as well as differences of class, religion, and nationality.

In the last few weeks, many community organizations, as well as politicians, have articulated a stance against racism. These positions need to hold firm and continue in order to address the rise of xenophobia and anti-Asian hatred into the next few months and beyond this pandemic.

EDUCATE!

Learn the facts and check your biases. Asian identity does not equal COVID-19. Address the misconceptions on how this virus is being spread by visiting accurate resource sites and sharing information.

[Ontario Government on COVID-19](#)

[Stop COVID-19: GTA](#)

Educate students on COVID-19 and issues of race. The pandemic has become a racialized conversation. Engage students in it and help them to identify bigotry and racist language and actions.

[Teaching Tolerance: Speaking up against Racism around the new Coronavirus](#)

[Canada's History: Classroom Resources](#)

Visit the following ETFO provincial links that highlight resources to support inclusive curriculum implementation.

[Asian and South Asian Heritage Month](#)

[Addressing Islamophobia in the Workplace \(Canadian Labour Congress Resource\)](#)

ACT!

Act locally, nationally, and globally towards the fight against anti-Asian racism. Sign a petition, report an incident, support community efforts and initiatives.

[CTV News: Anti-racism Groups Call on Ottawa](#)

[ProjectProtech: Taking ActionChinese](#)
[Canadian National Council: COVID-19 Racism Incident Reporting](#)



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