

NEWS ACCOUNTS OF COVID-19 DISCRIMINATION 2/9-3/7/20

A Report for A3PCON and CAA

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report reviews 216 news articles related to the Covid-19 virus, xenophobia, and discrimination found on the America's News database over a four-week period (Feb. 9 through March 7, 2020).¹

- Coronavirus discrimination news increased by 50% from 93 articles in week 1 to 140 stories in week 4.
- 471 cases related to xenophobia or discrimination were reported (16 cases/day)
- 292 new, separate cases of xenophobia or discrimination were identified (10 cases/day)

Trends

- Government and health officials, as well as Asian Americans themselves, made news in speaking out against the continued, high rates of coronavirus discrimination. By week 4, 29% of news articles reported these anti-racism efforts.
- Chinese and Asian American businesses reported large decreases in business (18%) as customers feared catching coronavirus in these establishments and their ethnic enclaves.
- Asian Americans of all ethnicities, including Southeast Asians and East Asians, faced shunning, harassment, and assaults (12%). This pattern reflects *the racial profiling of Asian Americans as the Yellow Peril to be feared or threats to the West.*

Policy Recommendations

- Elevate the issue of coronavirus discrimination: elected and government officials must proactively advocate for anti-racism efforts by both CA state agencies and local Asian Americans communities.
- Support the establishment of a statewide Stop AAPI Hate Center, which would systematically gather data on coronavirus discrimination. By monitoring trends, this center and the government can strategically address where and what types of discrimination take place.
- Tag Center for Disease Control messaging onto CA agencies' public information: "Do not show prejudice to people of Asian descent, because of fear of this new virus. Do not assume that someone of Asian descent is more likely to have 2019-nCoV."

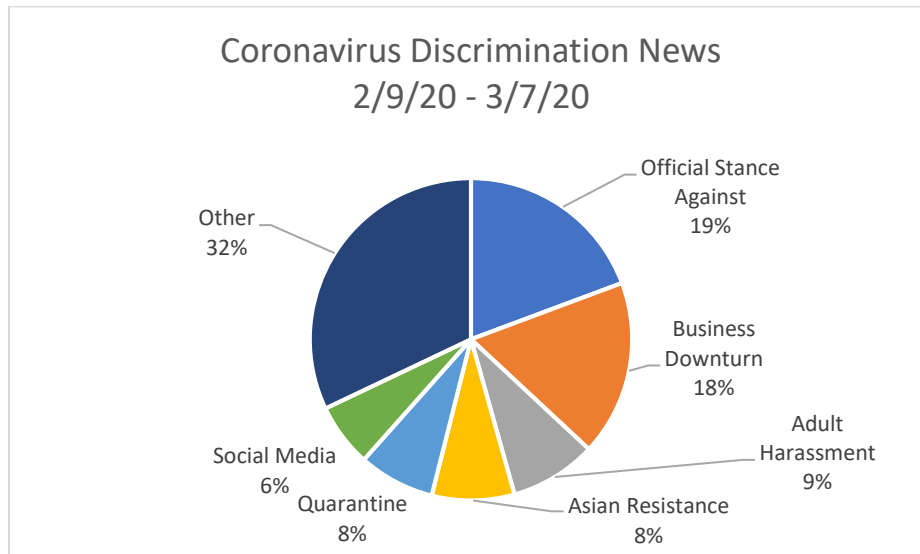
¹ News articles reprinted in other newspapers were not counted. For each article, we identified the author's examples of xenophobia, and whether these examples were newly reported or previously published.

TYPES OF CORONAVIRUS DISCRIMINATION NEWS ACCOUNTS

Of the four broad types of coronavirus discrimination news accounts, stands against discrimination received the most coverage, followed by discrimination against the broader Asian American community: avoidance of businesses, ethnic enclaves, and community events.

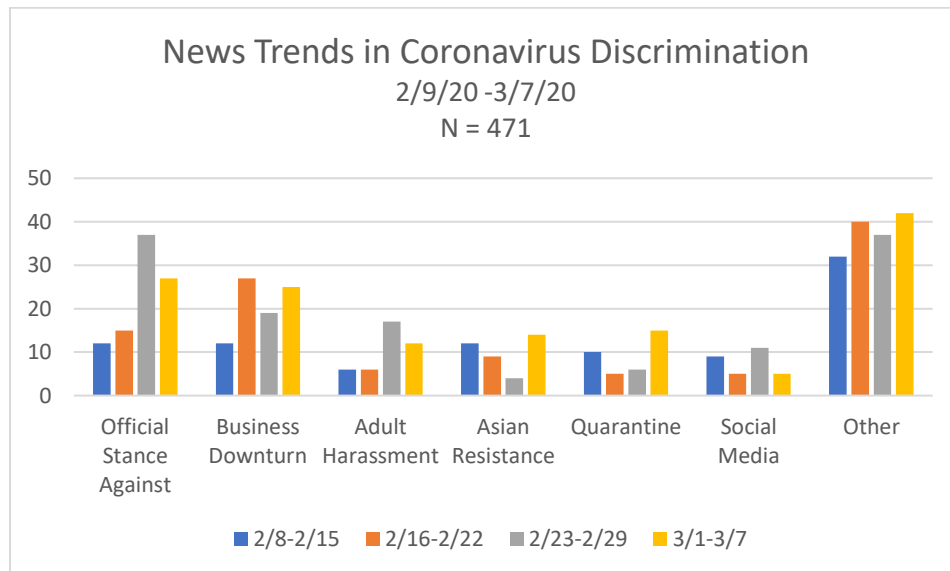
Type of News Account	%	%
Stands Against Discrimination		27%
Official Stance Against Discrimination	19%	
Asian American Resistance to Racism	8%	
Discrimination Against Asian American Community		23%
Business Downturn	18%	
Event Cancellation	5%	
Media/Stereotypes		
Social Media	6%	16%
Media Framing	4%	
Fear of Face Masks	4%	
Food Exotification	2%	
Discrimination Against Asian American Individuals		17%
Adult Harassment	9%	
Transportation	5%	
Child Bullying	3%	
Barred from Establishments	3%	
Policies/Politics		14%
Quarantine policies	8%	
Travel Bans	3%	
Politician/Leader's Xenophobic Statement	3%	

Overall, the top stories covered by news media were official stances against discrimination (19%); business downturns (18%) and adult harassment (9%).



TRENDS IN CORONAVIRUS NEWS ACCOUNTS

Over time, news media covered more stories about officials and Asian American community leaders taking stances against the disturbing incidents of coronavirus discrimination. Coverage of Chinatowns and Chinese businesses remained high, whereas reports about xenophobic media and stereotypes declined



TYPES OF NEWS ACCOUNTS RELATED TO CORONAVIRUS DISCRIMINATION

Stands Against Discrimination (27%)

These articles quoted government or health officials decrying xenophobia. They made comments similar to the Center for Disease Control's statement, "Do not show prejudice to people of Asian descent, because of fear of this new virus. Do not assume that someone of Asian descent is more likely to have 2019-nCoV." News media also covered Asian American communities rallying to support their ethnic businesses and to denounce racism.

Officials Stand Against Covid-19 Racism (19% of news accounts)

['Are you sick?' For Asian Americans, a sneeze brings suspicion](#)

Julie Bosman, Farah Stockman and Thomas Fuller, February 16, 2020

"Ethnicity does not influence transmission of the novel coronavirus," Jeanne Ayers, a Wisconsin health officer, said last week after announcing that a resident in Madison, the capital, had contracted the state's first case of coronavirus.

[UN Asks World to Fight Virus-Spawmed Discrimination](#)

Reuters, February 27, 2020

United Nations human rights guardian Michelle Bachelet urged the global community on Thursday to show solidarity with people of ethnic Asian origin subject to discrimination amid an outbreak of a novel coronavirus that started in China.

Asian Americans Resistance to Racism (6%)

[Fight the virus, not the people!' SF Chinese-American leaders protest xenophobia following COVID-19 outbreak](#)

Anser Hassan, *ABC News*, March 1, 2020

Chinese American leaders say there has been a big drop in business in San Francisco's Chinatown and for local Asian-American owned businesses, and a big increase in xenophobia following the COVID-19 outbreak. In response, hundreds marched through San Francisco's Chinatown

[Asian American lawmakers denounce 'rumors' and 'xenophobia' about coronavirus](#)

Nicholas Wu, *USA Today*, February 28, 2020

In a press conference outside the Capitol Friday morning, Asian American lawmakers called on their colleagues and the American public not to spread "xenophobia" or "rumors" in their response to the coronavirus outbreak.

Discrimination Against Asian American Community (23%)

Articles detailed instances of business decline in Chinese and Asian American establishments, particularly restaurants. While customers shunned Asian restaurants due to racism, they did not avoid Italian restaurants, even though Italy has the second highest rate of coronavirus.

Chinese Business Downturn (18%)

[Asian Businesses Suffering During Virus Fears](#)

Alexandra Olsen and Terry Tang, AP Press, February 18, 2020

In major U.S. cities, Asian American businesses are seeing a remarkable decline in customers as fear about the viral outbreak from China spreads. City and health officials are trying to stanch the financial bleeding through information campaigns and personal visits to shops and restaurants, emphasizing that, with just 15 cases diagnosed in the entire country, there is no reason to avoid them.

[Restaurants in LA's Koreatown reel amid coronavirus rumor](#)

Brian Melley, AP News, February 29, 2020

In a Koreatown restaurant known for its beef bone broth soup, the lunchtime crowd Friday was half its normal size. The reason was a virulent rumor about a customer with coronavirus.

Event Cancellation (5%)

[Shen Yun performances rescheduled due to coronavirus](#)

Sarah Brookbank, *Cincinnati Inquirer*, February 27, 2020

Discrimination Against Asian American Individuals (17%)

Discrimination against Asian American individuals took the form of shunning, harassment, and physical assaults. Transportation issues include confrontations on public transit or denial of service by taxis. Business establishments also denied service to Asian Americans because they were profiled as having the disease.

Adult Harassment (9%)

[What's spreading faster than coronavirus in the US? Racist assaults and ignorant attacks against Asians](#)

Holly Yan, Natasha Chen, Dushyant Naresh, *CNN*, February 21, 2020

On a Los Angeles subway, a man proclaims Chinese people are filthy and says “every disease has ever came from China.”

Rampant ignorance and misinformation about the novel coronavirus, experts say, has led to racist and xenophobic attacks against fellow Americans or anyone in the United States who looks Asian.

[Unhinged NYC train commuter sprays Asian man with deodorizer, fearing he has coronavirus](#)

Rocco Parascandola and Thomas Tracy, *New York Daily Post*, March 5, 2020

A man was caught on video spraying what looked like a fabric deodorizer at an Asian straphanger on a Brooklyn train amid coronavirus fears, and the incident is now being investigated as a possible hate crime, officials said Thursday.

Child Bullying (3%)

[Bullies attack Asian American teen at school, accusing him of having coronavirus](#)

Christina Capatides, *CBS News*, February 14, 2020

A 16-year-old boy in California's San Fernando Valley was physically attacked this week by bullies in his high school who accused him of having the coronavirus — simply because he is Asian American. It is just the latest episode in a spree of racist incidents linked to the global health emergency over the novel coronavirus, now named COVID-19.

[Asian students fear bullying in reaction to coronavirus](#)

Scott Travis, *South Florida Sun Sentinel*, February 29, 2020

Local school districts report no knowledge of kids being harassed as a result of the virus, but several South Florida parents have taken to social media to say their kids are being accused of carrying coronavirus, just because they're Asian.

Transportation (3%)

[Disturbing Video: Subway Rider Appears To Harass Asian Passenger Amid Coronavirus Fears](#)

CBS New York, March 5, 2020

A disturbing subway incident sparked by fear of the coronavirus was captured on video. A passenger can be seen picking up what looks like a cleaning bottle and spraying it in the direction of an Asian man.

Barred from Establishments (3%)

[Hmong men record alleged coronavirus discrimination at Indiana hotels](#)

Shawn Nottingham and Dave Alsup, *CNN*, February 14, 2020

Two Hmong men say they have been discriminated against out of fear of the novel coronavirus while looking for a hotel room in Indiana.

Media and Stereotypes (16%)

Articles reported how other news media employed xenophobic labels to the coronavirus or how social media joked made fun of Asians. They referred to two stereotypes particular to this disease: 1) Chinese eating habits and 2) Asians wearing face masked.

Social Media (6%)

[“Not surprised”: UMD students, faculty say xenophobic remarks increased amid coronavirus](#)

Lexi Gopin, The Diamondback, February 21, 2020

Jackie Liu, a sophomore biology and women’s studies major, serves as the Asian American Student Union’s vice president of community education. She said she was also “disappointed but not surprised” when she came across racist and xenophobic comments on a YouTube video called “Eating show: Chinese food, Chinese eating and collecting VOL48.” Many of the video’s comments suggest Chinese culture was the cause of the coronavirus.

[How love for an endangered animal inspired a new wave of coronavirus racism](#)

Dr. Jonathan Kolby, *NBC News*, February 15, 2020

Last week, rumors began circulating that endangered pangolins — also known as scaly anteaters — might have been the intermediate host that allowed the deadly new coronavirus disease COVID-19 to spread from bats to humans, based on unpublished research findings announced in a Chinese university press release. Although evidence was not provided, I witnessed a flood of social media posts celebrating the “revenge” of pangolins because Chinese traditional remedies can include pangolin body parts.

Media Framing (4%)

[Inside The Wall Street Journal, Tensions Rise Over ‘Sick Man’ China Headline](#)

Marc Tracy, *New York Times*, February 22, 2020

In all, 53 reporters and editors signed the letter. They criticized the newspaper’s response to the fallout from the headline, “China Is the Real Sick Man of Asia,” that went with a Feb. 3 opinion essay by Walter Russell Mead, a *Journal* columnist, on economic repercussions of the coronavirus outbreak.

Policies and Politics (14%)

Quarantines and school policies made headlines, as groups signed online petitions to cancel classes. A few Republicans repeated xenophobic conspiracy theories which also made the news.

Quarantines and School Policies (8%)

[US Policies Will Drive Suspected Coronavirus Patients Underground, Fueling An Epidemic](#)

Judy Stone, *Forbes*, March 3, 2020

First, there is xenophobia and scapegoating. This started the Muslim ban, then blocking entry of non-US citizens who have been to China or Iran. Now US citizen travelers to China are being placed on a 14-day quarantine. These policies will undoubtedly be expanded to other countries viewed as “high-risk”—currently including Italy, S. Korea, and Japan.

[Coronavirus on college campuses: Fight fear and racism along with the outbreak](#)

Stacy Torres and Xuemei Cao, *USA Today*, March 1, 2020

College campuses have proven ripe incubators for fear amid the spreading coronavirus outbreak, as shown by a series of insensitive, racist and discriminatory incidents. Students have donned face masks in classrooms, and an online petition to suspend classes at the University of California, Santa Barbara collected more than 1,100 signatures.

Politician’s Statements (3%)

[Senator Tom Cotton Repeats Fringe Theory of Coronavirus Origins](#)

Alexandra Stevenson, *New York Times*, February 17, 2020

Mr. Cotton later walked back the idea that the coronavirus was a Chinese bioweapon run amok. But it is the sort of tale that resonates with an expanding chorus of voices in Washington who see China as a growing Soviet-level threat to the United States, echoing the anti-Communist thinking of the Cold War era.