

2021 Asian American Bullying Survey Report

In partnership with Act To Change, ADMERASIA, and NextShark



Foreword: Why this survey matters in today's context

As we write this report in the spring of 2021, we are acutely aware of the pain felt by the Asian American community where visible incidents of anti-Asian hate and violence have surged in major cities across the United States.

Progress on many of the issues faced by the Asian American community remain unresolved because of a lack of data and research, especially in teens and bullying. Data is a necessary component to support policymakers, community organizations, and allied stakeholders to make informed decisions on how to be a part of the solution. We hope to contribute to uplifting and empowering our Asian American communities through this work.

COVID-19 has accelerated the sense of urgency for this issue

3785+

incidents of verbal harassment, shunning, and physical assaults were reported from early March 2020 to February 2021.*

13%

of victims were AAPI youth (0 to 17 years old).*

48%

of cases had multiple perpetrators.^

60%

of the incidents involving AAPI youth involved being bullied by adults.^

41%

of the incidents involved youth-on-youth bullying.^

Executive Summary: Key Findings



The bullying of Asian American teens is astonishingly normalized. **80%** of Asian Americans have experienced bullying, in-person or online.



Surge of cyberbullying in 2020, exacerbated by COVID-19, fueled racism. **70%** of Asian Americans experienced or witnessed an increase in cyberbullying in 2020.



Asian Americans are significantly less likely to report bullying to an adult than non-Asian Americans, potentially due to cultural barriers and lack of trust in adults and schools. **38%** of Asian Americans told an adult about the bullying, compared to **63%** of non-Asian Americans.



Asian American teens, parents, caregivers, and educators, regardless of ethnicity, lack the necessary knowledge or tools to handle and fight the bullying. **About 1/3** of adults did not take action after learning someone was bullied.

The Context

What is Bullying?

Bullying is unwanted, aggressive behavior among school aged children that involves a real or perceived power imbalance. The behavior is repeated, or has the potential to be repeated, over time. This includes verbal, social, physical, and increasingly, cyberbullying.

Bullying can affect everyone including those who are bullied, those who bully, and those who witness bullying. Bullying is linked to mental health issues, substance use, and suicide.

- Depression and anxiety, increased feelings of sadness and loneliness, changes in sleep and eating patterns, and loss of interest in activities they used to enjoy – these issues may persist into adulthood
- Health complaints
- Decreased academic achievement—grades and standardized test scores—and school participation
- Students being bullied are more likely to miss, skip, or drop out of school



of students ages 12–18, regardless of race, experience bullying nationwide.



of students who reported being bullied at school indicated that they think the bullying would happen again.

Asian American students are bullied on a wide range of factors

Anecdotal evidence shows Asian American and Pacific Islander (AAPI) students at all educational levels experience bullying based on a number of factors, particularly:

- Limited English proficiency and speaking languages other than English
- National origin and immigration generation
- Religion and religious practices
- Cultural stereotypes
- Appearance
- Misperceptions and assumptions about AAPI groups
- Gender stereotypes and sexual orientation

Survey Findings

Methodology



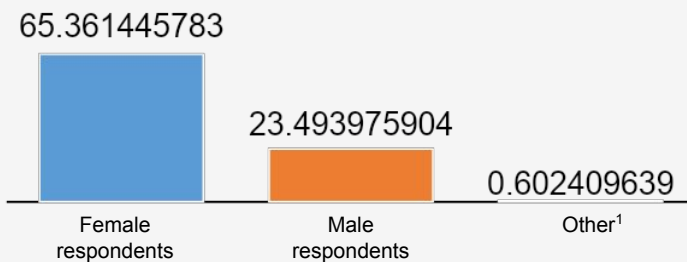
Purpose

Act To Change, ADMERASIA, and NextShark have partnered together to better understand how AAPI students are experiencing bullying, and have developed recommendations to help stop bullying.

Overview of respondent reported demographics

Total sample size: 332 responses

Gender breakdown by %



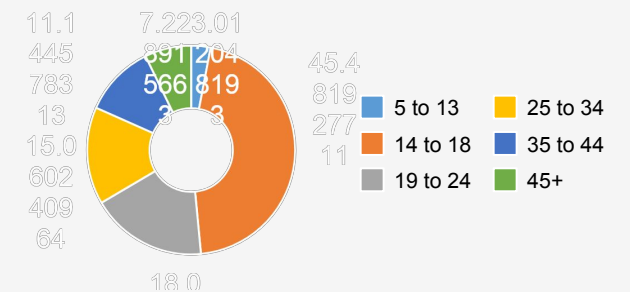
Ethnicity breakdown by %



Research Format

11 short questions covering demographics, identity, and bullying experiences were distributed on NextShark's platform Fall 2020. The survey results provide a snapshot of the Asian American bullying landscape. Due to the sample size, the survey did not capture the Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander experience.

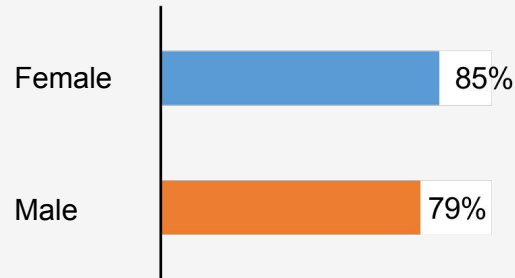
Age group breakdown by %



1. Other includes gender variant/non-conforming and prefer not to answer
Source: 2021 Asian American Bullying Survey Report in Partnership with Act To Change, ADMERASIA, and NextShark

80%+ of Asian American respondents experienced bullying

Over 80% of Asian American respondents experienced bullying



Asian American respondents shared a wide range of what they were bullied for, including their physical appearance, accent and cultural habits, cultural stereotypes, family financial status, and national origin

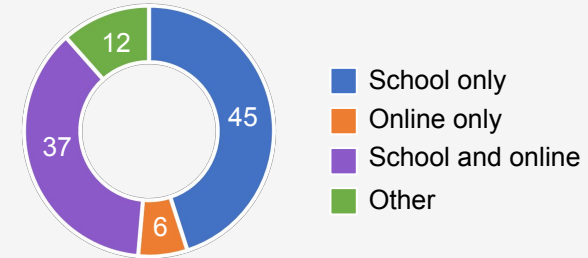
Emasulation faced by Asian male youth is an invisible topic that needs more discussion and prevention and intervention.

People find it amusing to mock Asian accents in front of me which I find very undermining and inappropriate. This guy tried to flirt with me by telling me that he liked dog meat. I hate being asked if I eat dog.

I was bullied for being adopted from China...and about my eyes.



Of those who are/have been bullied, about 40% are experiencing bullying both online and at school



Beyond schools and online, people are reporting experiencing bullying in public spaces such as malls, grocery stores, outdoors, airports which makes bullying pervasive across many areas.

It started in school and then it became online.

I see [cyberbullying] everywhere and it's terrible.

Trash was thrown at me in the school bus...because I was Filipino.

Quotes from survey respondents

Surge of cyberbullying in 2020 during the pandemic

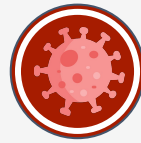
70% of Asian American respondents experienced or witnessed an increase in cyberbullying in 2020

Potential drivers



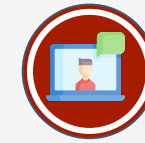
Stay-at-home orders and at-home schooling shifted youth interactions to nearly all online.

As of September 2020, 58% of American students are learning entirely online, while another 18% are receiving a combination of remote and in-person instruction¹.



The pandemic-era changes have had a significant toll on the mental health and well-being of many teens.

About half of parents say their teen has shown signs of a new or worsening mental health condition since the start of the pandemic².



Anti-Asian xenophobia and discrimination fueled by COVID-19 rhetoric increased hate against Asian Americans, including online.

Online hate against Asian Americans has increased by 900% since the coronavirus outbreak began³.

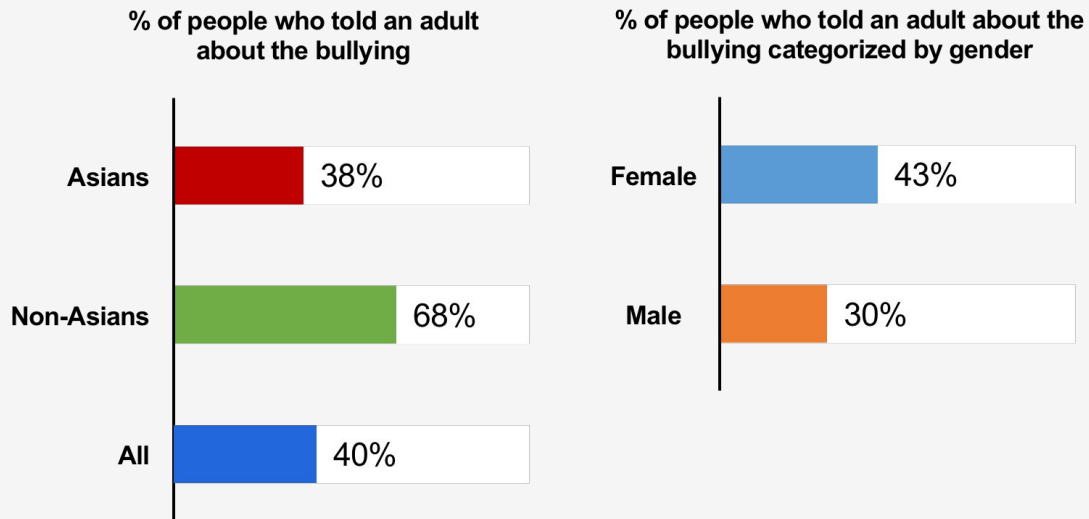
1. With most U.S. students still learning online, parents say they want better virtual instruction, Chalkbeat.org, 2020

2. Pandemic has harmed mental health of teens, WebMD, 2021

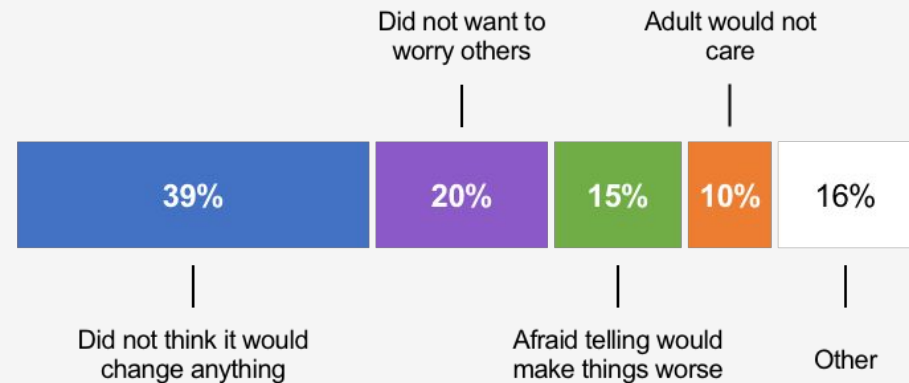
3. Cyberbullying against Asian people skyrockets 900% in wake of pandemic, digital trend, 2020

Of those bullied, Asian Americans are less likely to report the bullying to adults than non-Asian Americans

38% of Asian Americans bullied told an adult about the bullying, compared to 63% of non-Asian Americans; Of those bullied, Asian American females are more likely to report bullying to an adult than Asian American males



Of those who did not tell an adult, about 40% of them believed doing so would not make a difference



Other reasons why people did not inform an adult:

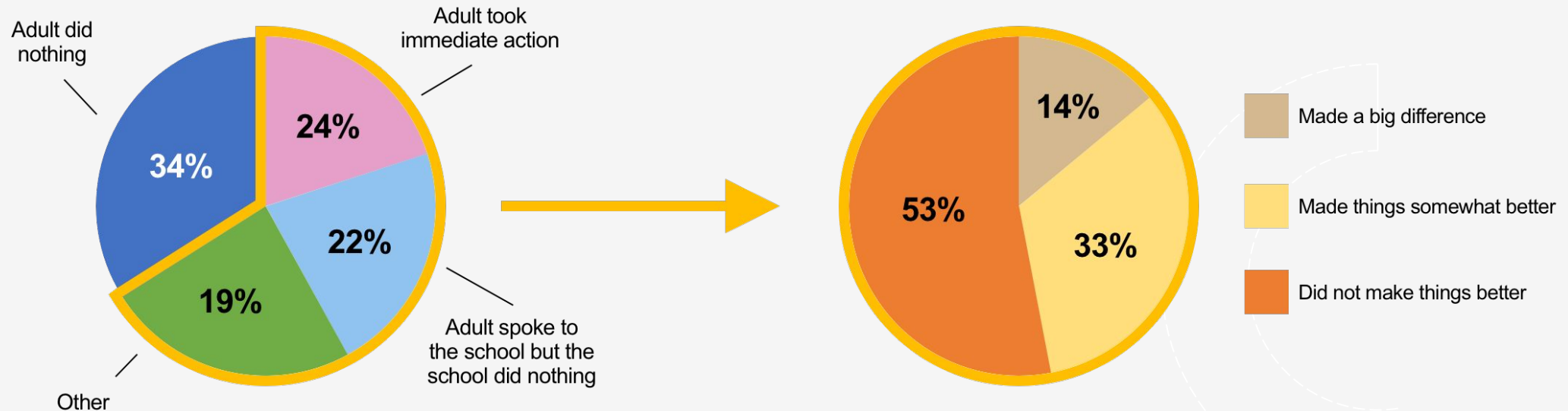
1. Did not know it was racism or discrimination
2. Shame about speaking out
3. Dealing with the emotions alone
4. Did not trust their parents or family members as trusted adults to handle the situation or to take it seriously

I've often seen comments that Asians have not been oppressed so it's valid for people to ridicule the Asian culture, or go as far as insinuating that violent crimes against Asians is justifiable.

Quote from survey respondent

Over half of the actions didn't make the situation better

Of those who reported to an adult, only 65% of the time the adult took action



...Not only did the school do nothing, but there was a lot of victim blaming, which turned into gaslighting, from the administration and teachers.

They discussed it once with the class & kind of swept it under the rug. When I was older in college, I had to start going to counseling to get help because of the things I went through.

Quotes from survey respondents

Recommendations

Contextualizing Our Recommendations

The key survey findings suggest that bullying and racism directed at Asian American youth are normalized in our society. This normalization imposes a vicious impact on the development of self-confidence and mental health for Asian American youth by weakening their willingness to report the case or seek help from adults and educators. Meanwhile, many parents of Asian American youth and school educators are not necessarily equipped with the knowledge needed to address the bullying cases or provide improvement solutions.

What's more, the surge of violence against Asian Americans during the pandemic further stokes fear and frustration among the Asian American community. In the wake of these disturbing incidents, helping Asian American youth navigate difficult conversations around race and racially motivated violence face new challenges.

It is time to address the issue through collective efforts from different entities in society. We call for help from corporate brands, policymakers and community organizations that have the right resources. Words of support are essential but not enough. Long-term commitments to back and help the Asian American community are needed – commitments that entail much more than celebrating the Asian Pacific American Heritage Month once a year.

Our Recommendations



AWARENESS: Educate the public about the prevalence, severity, and impact of anti-Asian bullying on students, and call for change. We must emphasize the harm that anti-Asian bullying has already caused and will continue to cause if left unchecked.



PROGRAMS: Develop programs that provide mental health and consultation services for bullied Asian American children who need help. Encouraging adults to talk about the issue with youth can help Asian American youth embrace their identities and develop mental health.

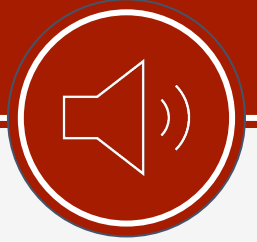


RESOURCES: Develop easily shareable and accessible resources/toolkits and school curriculums for Asian American children/teens, their caregivers and parents, and educators to better equip them to both prevent and respond to bullying.



DATA COLLECTION & DISAGGREGATION: It is vital that this report does not end here. We call on others to join us in continuing to gather more comprehensive data on bullying that further represents the vast diversity of experiences in the Asian and Pacific Islander American community.

Recommendation #1: Awareness



The Impact

To dismantle the normalization of the bullying against Asian American youth, an essential initial step is to raise awareness of the prevalence and severity of this issue among the American public.

Public service announcement (PSA) campaigns, especially with the endorsement of celebrities or influencers, are an effective way to drive awareness, initiate conversations, and showcase societal support towards the Asian American community.

Key Considerations

Almost four out of five (80%) of Asian Americans have experienced bullying in-person or online, yet there is little discussion or attention paid to the issue.

Schools have a responsibility to let their students see themselves reflected in curriculum and content. Asian American children need visible support from their teachers and administrators.

When invisibility is normalized, every act of visibility is more deeply necessary and can have a profound impact.

Recommendation #2: Resources



The Impact

Creating accessible, updated and helpful anti-bullying online resources and toolkits for youth, parents and educators is critical.

Key content should include but not be limited to the definition and the evolving forms of bullying in today's environment, prevention education, response and intervention guidelines, mental health resources, and helpful websites/organizations.

Key Considerations

With 70% of Asian Americans reporting experiencing or witnessing a surge in cyberbullying in 2020, the need for resources is urgently immediate.

The Asian American community is diverse and includes dozens of ethnicities, cultures, and languages. Partnership with and empowerment of local community-based organizations will be critical for ensuring resources are accessible by the populations they are intended to serve.

Recommendation #3: Programs



The Impact

It is important to create trauma-informed programs to help bullied Asian American youth heal, rebuild self-esteem, and avoid situations where they become bullies themselves or experience long-lasting psychological pain.

Another strategy is to develop and support allies. Intervention guidelines, particularly those crafted in partnership with schools and youth-serving organizations, for bystanders and non-Asian Americans can be created to educate and equip them to be vigilant and stand up when bullying incidents happen.

Key Considerations

Because only 38% of Asian Americans reported their bullying to an adult (vs. 63% of non-Asian Americans), programs need to be proactive and culturally responsive in making themselves accessible to Asian American children.

The most common reason given for youth not reporting their bullying to an adult was because they did not believe it would change anything. Perception is reality, and adults need further development and training on tangible ways to respond to bullying.

Recommendation #4: Data Collection and Tracking



The Impact

Our goal is to dismantle the normalization of bullying against Asian American youth, drive change and monitor the progress, and this survey is only the starting point. It is critical to continuously bring attention to this matter, update the resources to educate the stakeholders and public better, and create a safe and comfortable space for youth to share their experiences.

To track the changes in the community, surveys and studies need to be conducted on a regular basis.

Key Considerations

We believe in supporting all Asian Americans and allies across all areas of public policy to survey Asian American youth and collectively capture a more complete picture.

Especially because Asian and Pacific Islander American communities are incredibly diverse along multiple intersections, data must be disaggregated, rigorous, and regularly updated to best understand each community's needs.