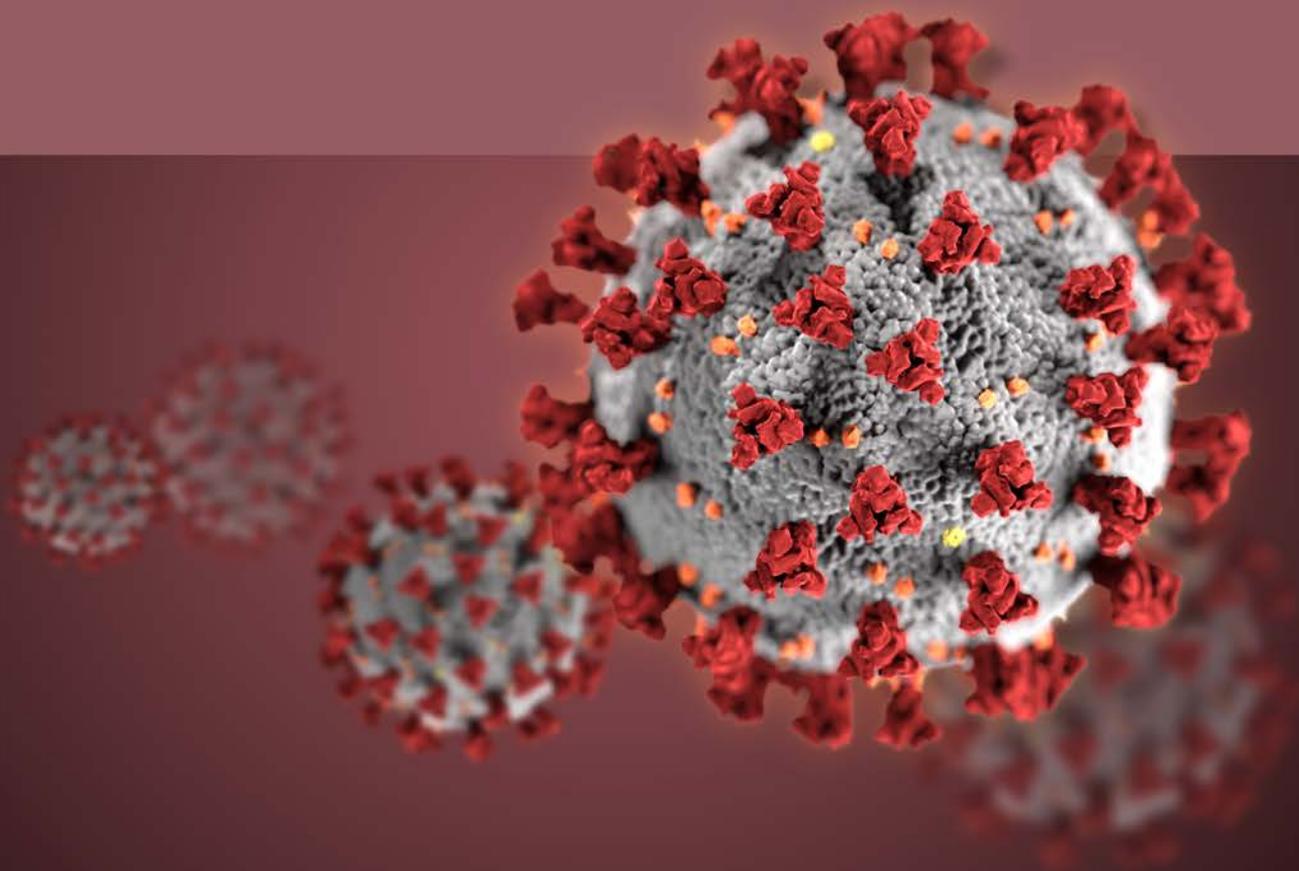


# Anti-Asian Hate Crime Events During the COVID-19 Pandemic



Research Center  
California Justice Information Services Division  
California Department of Justice





## Executive Summary

At the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic in the United States, mainstream media outlets reported an alarming increase in hate crimes specifically targeting individuals who identify as Asian. This increase was linked to anti-Asian rhetoric which blamed Asian communities for the spread of COVID-19 in the United States.<sup>1</sup>

This research brief report addresses anti-Asian hate crime events reported to the California Department of Justice (DOJ) since 2016, with a specific focus on hate crimes events committed in 2020.<sup>2</sup> As mandated by Penal Code (PC) section 13023, California law enforcement agencies (LEAs) are required to report information on hate crimes to the DOJ. In 2015, the DOJ expanded the race and ethnicity hate crime bias category for the California hate crime data collection system to include Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander. As a result of this expansion, LEAs report hate crimes motivated by a bias towards Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islanders separately from hate crimes motivated by a bias towards Asians. For hate crime data reporting purposes, Asian refers to a person having origins in any of the original peoples of the Far East, Southeast Asia, or the Indian subcontinent. Throughout this research brief report the term “anti-Asian hate crime events” or “anti-Asian hate crimes” refers to events classified by LEAs as motivated by an anti-Asian bias. This research brief report analyzes the data reported by LEAs according to the most serious criminal offense committed in each hate crime event. The data used for this report is also available on the DOJ’s OpenJustice Data Portal. The DOJ recognizes that hate crimes in the state are generally underreported and that the data presented in this report may not adequately reflect the actual number of hate crimes occurring in the state that were never reported to LEAs. This research brief report focuses solely on reported hate crimes which are criminal acts committed, in whole or in part, because of a victim’s actual or perceived disability, gender, nationality, race or ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation, or association with someone with one or more of these actual or perceived characteristics. Hate incidents which are actions or behavior motivated by hate such as name-calling or distribution of materials with hate messages in public places are not included. While these acts are harmful, they are legally protected by the First Amendment right to freedom of expression and do not rise to the level of a criminal offense under California law. However, it is important to note that these incidents have a traumatic impact on victims and communities at large. If a hate incident begins to threaten a person or property, it may become a hate crime.

Anti-Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander hate crime events reported to the DOJ have decreased since 2016. In 2019 and 2020, there were zero reports of anti-Native Hawaiian and other Pacific Islander hate crime events. However, we should caution that this finding does not mean that

---

<sup>1</sup> Ali Rogin and Amna Nawaz, “‘We Have Been Through This Before.’ Why Anti-Asian Hate Crimes are Rising Amid Coronavirus,” PBS, June 25, 2020, available at: <https://www.pbs.org/newshour/nation/we-have-been-through-this-before-why-anti-asian-hate-crimes-are-rising-amid-coronavirus>.

<sup>2</sup> California PC section 422.55 defines hate crimes as a criminal act committed in whole or in part because of a victim’s actual or perceived disability, gender, nationality, race or ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation, or association with someone with one or more of these actual or perceived characteristics.

Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander people were not targeted in attacks, but that there were no reported hate crime events where it was found that the offender was motivated by an animosity towards Pacific Islanders in 2019 and 2020. Because of the increase in anti-Asian hate crime events reported to the DOJ in 2020 along with no reports of hate crimes motivated by bias towards Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander in 2019 and 2020, this report presents information on anti-Asian hate crime events reported to the DOJ in the previous five years.

An analysis of hate crime events motivated by an anti-Asian bias reported to the DOJ in the last five years (2016 through 2020) found that:

- The number of reported anti-Asian hate crime events in California has increased since 2016
  - The number of reported anti-Asian hate crime events increased by 107% in 2020, from 43 in 2019 to 89 in 2020.
  - The highest number of anti-Asian hate crime events reported to the DOJ occurred in March and April 2020 as California declared a state of emergency to help prevent the spread of COVID-19.
- Overall, the most common kind of anti-Asian hate crime reported across years 2016 and 2020 was violent crime, with a 125% increase from 32 in 2019 to 72 in 2020.
  - Simple assault and intimidation were the most common type of violent crimes reported to the DOJ across the five-year span.
- The number of reported anti-Asian property hate crime events (arson, burglary, destruction, damage, vandalism) increased by 55% in 2020; from 11 in 2019 to 17 in 2020.
  - For years 2016 to 2020, property damage was the most common type of property crimes reported to the DOJ.
- Taking into consideration data reported to the DOJ since 2016:
  - Anti-Asian hate crime events commonly targeted individuals as opposed to organizations or businesses, with the majority of individuals targeted being adults over the age of 18.
  - The highest number of persons victimized in anti-Asian hate crime events were reported to the DOJ in 2020. A total of 101 individuals were targeted in attacks reported in 2020, representing an increase of 102% from 2019 where 50 people were reported as victims in hate crime events.
  - In 2020, individuals were victimized in 18 different California counties. Of those counties, San Luis Obispo County had the highest rate of victimization per 10,000 Asian residents (the share of the population most vulnerable to anti-Asian hate crime events). Alameda County had the lowest victimization rate per 10,000 residents.

## Introduction

Shortly after the United States was placed under stay-at-home orders due to the COVID-19 pandemic, media reports signaled an alarming increase in hate incidents and hate crimes targeting Asian communities (specifically, ethnic groups with origins in East Asia, Southeast Asia, or the Indian subcontinent).<sup>3,4,5</sup> In March 2020, the Stop AAPI Hate Reporting Center began to formally record and publish reports on hate incidents and hate crimes committed against Asians and Pacific Islanders to document the increase in attacks.<sup>6,7</sup> The rise in bias-motivated attacks against Asians during the height of the COVID-19 pandemic is part of a long history of similar attacks against members of Asian communities dating back to the nineteenth century.

## Literature Review

Recent academic journal articles have highlighted how attacks against Asians during the COVID-19 pandemic are a part of a long history of discrimination against Asian communities in the United States. Asian Americans are often stereotyped as perpetual foreigners, anti-American, and carriers of infectious disease. These stereotypes in turn have fueled racist beliefs that Asians are responsible for introducing COVID-19 to the United States.<sup>8,9,10</sup> In addition, commonly-held stereotypes of Asian Americans often ignore the ethnic diversity that exists within these racial and ethnic groups. Perpetrators of anti-Asian violence may see all as foreign and threatening regardless of whether “...the person is from China, of Chinese origin, or simply looks Asian...,” making all Asian people vulnerable to hate crimes.<sup>11</sup>

---

<sup>3</sup> Esther Yoon-Ji Kang, “Asian Americans Feel the Bite of Prejudice During the COVID-19 Pandemic,” NPR, March 31, 2020, available at: <https://www.npr.org/local/309/2020/03/31/824397216/asian-americans-feel-the-bite-of-prejudice-during-the-c-o-v-i-d-19-pandemic>.

<sup>4</sup> Ali Rogin and Amna Nawaz, “‘We Have Been Through This Before.’ Why Anti-Asian Hate Crimes are Rising Amid Coronavirus,” PBS, June 25, 2020, available at: <https://www.pbs.org/newshour/nation/we-have-been-through-this-before-why-anti-asian-hate-crimes-are-rising-amid-coronavirus>. Rogin and Nawaz, “‘We Have Been Through This Before.’”

<sup>5</sup> Definitions for Asian follow definitions provided on the U.S. Census Bureau website: <https://www.census.gov/topics/population/race/about.html>.

<sup>6</sup> Asian Pacific Policy & Planning Council, “Asian American Pacific Islander (AAPI) Civil Rights Organizations Establishes Stop AAPI Hate Reporting Center,” A3PCON, March 19, 2020, available at: <http://www.asianpacificpolicyandplanningcouncil.org/asian-american-pacific-islander-aapi-civil-rights-organizations-establishes-stop-aapi-hate-reporting-center/>.

<sup>7</sup> Kara Takasaki, “Stop AAPI Hate Reporting Center: A Model of Collective Leadership and Community Advocacy,” *Journal of Asian American Studies*, Volume 23, Number 3, 2020, pp. 341-342.

<sup>8</sup> Hannah Tessler, Meera Choi, and Grace Kao, “The Anxiety of Being Asian American: Hate Crimes and Negative Biases During the COVID-19 Pandemic,” *American Journal of Criminal Justice*, 45: 636-646, 2020.

<sup>9</sup> Angela R. Gover, Shannon B. Harper, and Lynn Langton, “Anti-Asian Hate Crime during the COVID-19 Pandemic: Exploring the Reproduction of Inequality,” *American Journal of Criminal Justice*, 45, 2020, p. 651.

<sup>10</sup> Yao Li and Harvey L. Nicholson Jr., “When ‘Model Minorities’ Become ‘Yellow Peril’ – Othering and the Racialization of Asian Americans in the COVID-19 Pandemic,” *Sociology Compass*, 2021:1-13, 2021.

<sup>11</sup> Tessler et al., “The Anxiety of Being Asian American,” p. 642.

Academic scholars have also demonstrated how politicians and mainstream media further perpetuated the notion that China, and by extension Chinese people, were responsible for the spread of COVID-19. While in office, former President Donald Trump and members of his administration often referred to COVID-19 as “Wuhan Virus,” “Chinese Virus,” or “kung flu.”<sup>12, 13, 14</sup> Mainstream news media often implicitly linked COVID-19 to China through mentioning COVID-19 alongside China or juxtaposing images of China next to articles about COVID-19.<sup>15, 16</sup> Early studies have suggested that mainstream media coverage and rhetoric used by public officials contributed to the stigmatization of Asian people during the pandemic.<sup>17, 18</sup>

---

<sup>12</sup> Li and Nicholson, “When ‘Model Minorities’ Become ‘Yellow Peril,’ p. 7.

<sup>13</sup> Gover et al., “Anti-Asian Hate Crime,” pp. 653-654.

<sup>14</sup> Tyler T. Reny and Matt A. Barreto, “Xenophobia in the Time of Pandemic: Othering, Anti-Asian Attitudes, and COVID-19,” *Politics, Groups, and Identities*, 2020.

<sup>15</sup> Li and Nicholson, “When ‘Model Minorities’ Become ‘Yellow Peril,’ p. 7.

<sup>16</sup> Reny and Barreto, “Xenophobia in the Time of Pandemic,” p. 3.

<sup>17</sup> Hyunyi Cho, Wenbo Li, Julie Cannon, Rachel Lopez, and Chi (Chuck) Song, “Testing Three Explanations for Stigmatization of People of Asian Descent During COVID-19: Maladaptive Coping, Biased Media Use, or Racial Prejudice?” *Ethnicity & Health*, Volume 26(1), 2021.

<sup>18</sup> Sean Darling-Hammond, Eli K. Michaels, Amani M. Allen, David H. Chase, Marilyn D. Thomas, Thu T. Nguyen, Mahasin M. Mujahid, and Rucker C. Johnson, “After ‘The China Virus’ Went Viral: Racially Charged Coronavirus Coverage and Trends in Bias Against Asian Americans,” *Health Education & Behavior*, Volume 47(6).

Throughout California's history, Asians have been subjected to structural racism and other forms of discrimination based on stereotypes where Asians are portrayed as un-American and spreaders of disease. During the California Gold Rush of the mid-1800s, Chinese residents were blamed for high unemployment among White laborers, low wages, and "invading" the United States.<sup>19</sup> The United States banned immigration and citizenship for Chinese laborers through the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882 as a result of persistent views initially formed during the height of the Gold Rush.<sup>20</sup> In January 1930, Monterey County enacted anti-Filipino resolutions that in part attempted to suppress the work opportunities and wages of Filipinos. Later in that same month White mobs attacked Filipinos in Watsonville, beating and killing a number of Filipino residents.<sup>21</sup> In 1876, San Francisco public health officials blamed residents of San Francisco's Chinatown for causing the smallpox epidemic.<sup>22</sup> In 1900, officials in San Francisco regulated the movement of people and food in and out of Chinatown under the assumption that Chinatown residents were responsible for the bubonic plague.<sup>23</sup> President Franklin D. Roosevelt reacted to the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor by interning Japanese Americans in concentration camps.<sup>24</sup> Two of these "relocation centers" were established to intern Japanese Americans in California.<sup>25</sup> Anti-Asian racism and discrimination that pervade today relies on tropes and stereotypes solidified in earlier time periods. Much of the anti-Asian sentiment and racism encouraged throughout the COVID-19 pandemic has its foundation in anti-Asian stereotypes that harken back to past state-sanctioned discrimination linking Asian communities to disease and foreign identity.

---

<sup>19</sup> Angela R. Gover, Shannon B. Harper, and Lynn Langton, "Anti-Asian Hate Crime During the COVID-19 Pandemic: Exploring the Reproduction of Inequality," *American Journal of Criminal Justice*, 45, 2020, p. 651.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>21</sup> Dominique Marangoni-Simonsen, "A Forgotten History: How the Asian American Workforce Cultivated Monterey County's Agricultural Industry, despite National Anti-Asian Rhetoric," *Hastings Environmental Law Journal*, Volume 27(1), 2021, p. 245.

<sup>22</sup> Grace S. Kim and Tanvi N. Shah, "When Perceptions are Fragile but also enduring: An Asian American Reflection on COVID-19," *Journal of Humanistic Psychology*, 60(5): 604-610, 2020.

<sup>23</sup> Tessler et al., "The Anxiety of Being Asian American," p. 640.

<sup>24</sup> Gover et al., "Anti-Asian Hate Crime During the COVID-19 Pandemic," p. 652.

<sup>25</sup> "Japanese-American Internment During World War II," National Archives, available at: <https://www.archives.gov/education/lessons/japanese-relocation>.

## Hate Crimes vs. Hate Incidents

According to California PC section 422.55, a hate crime is a criminal act committed, in whole or in part, because of a victim's actual or perceived disability, gender, nationality, race or ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation, or association with someone with one or more of these actual or perceived characteristics. A hate crime may be committed against a person, group, or property. PC section 13023 requires California LEAs to report hate crimes that occur within their jurisdiction to the DOJ.

**A hate crime is a criminal offense motivated by a victim's actual or perceived protected characteristics. In contrast, a hate incident is a noncriminal act motivated by prejudice.**

A hate incident is an action or behavior motivated by hate but legally protected by the First Amendment right to freedom of expression. Examples of hate incidents include:

- Name-calling
- Insults
- Distribution of materials with hate messages in public places
- Displaying hate material on your own property
- Posting hate material that does not result in property damage

While these acts are harmful, they do not rise to the level of a criminal offense under California law. However, if a hate incident begins to threaten a person or property, it may become a hate crime.

**Figure 1:** The California Attorney General website offers additional information and resources on hate crimes, including shareable graphics like the one above. Resources are available in 14 different languages.

**In California, you may be a victim of a hate crime if a crime was committed against you because of your actual or perceived:**

- Race or ethnicity
- Nationality
- Religion
- Gender
- Sexual orientation
- Physical or mental disability
- Association with a person or group with one or more of these actual or perceived characteristics

*If you are the victim of a hate crime, please contact your local law enforcement agency.*  
For additional information, please visit [oag.ca.gov/HateCrimes](https://oag.ca.gov/HateCrimes)

## Underreporting

Victims of hate crimes often do not report their victimization to local LEAs, resulting in the underreporting of hate crimes.<sup>26</sup> This underreporting impacts the hate crime data received by the DOJ, resulting in an incomplete picture of the hate crimes committed within the state each year. It is important for victims of hate crimes to report their victimization to their local LEA (e.g., police station or sheriff's department).

Victims of hate crimes may not report the crime to a local LEA because there are barriers that prevent hate crime victims from reporting the crime to their local LEA. For Asian immigrants, limited English proficiency and the inability to report a hate crime in their primary language may prevent them from reporting their victimization.<sup>27,28</sup> A victim's distrust of law enforcement and a person's concern about immigration status may also discourage victims from reporting their criminal victimization to the police.<sup>29</sup>

Victims of hate crimes are strongly encouraged to contact their local LEA immediately. Victims should also:

- Get medical attention, if needed.
- Write down the exact words that were said and other facts.
- Save all evidence.
- If it is safe to do so, wait until a law enforcement officer arrives so that they can take photos of the evidence.
- Get the names and contact information of all other victims and witnesses.
- Try to get a description of the criminal or the vehicle.
- Call community organizations in your area for additional resources and assistance.

---

<sup>26</sup> Frank S. Pezzella, Matthew D. Fetzer, and Tyler Keller, "The Dark Figure of Hate Crime Underreporting," *American Behavioral Scientist*, 2019.

<sup>27</sup> Kara Takasaki, "Stop AAPI Hate Reporting Center: A Model of Collective Leadership and Community Advocacy," *Journal of Asian American Studies*, Volume 23, Number 3, 2020, p. 348.

<sup>28</sup> Yan Zhang, Lening Zhang, and Francis Benton, "Hate crimes against Asian Americans," *American Journal of Criminal Justice*, January 2021.

<sup>29</sup> Takasaki, "Stop AAPI Hate Reporting Center," p. 348.

A hate crime brochure and fact sheet detailing how to identify and report a hate crime are available in 25 languages Attorney General's website. Additional information and resources for victims can also be found on the Attorney General's website.

The California Department of Justice has tools and resources available to aid and assist local, state, and federal law enforcement authorities in the investigation of possible hate crimes, including the identification, arrest, prosecution, and conviction of the perpetrators of those crimes.

The California Attorney General offers the following information on how to identify and report hate crimes and the services available to victims of hate crimes.

### **Hate crime or hate incident?**

It is important to know the difference between a hate crime and a hate incident.

A hate crime is a crime against a person, group, or property motivated by the victim's real or perceived protected social group. Hate crimes can be prosecuted either as misdemeanors or felonies depending on the acts committed.

In California, you can be a victim of a hate crime if you have been targeted because of your actual or perceived:

- Race or ethnicity
- Nationality
- Religion
- Gender
- Sexual orientation
- Physical or mental disability, or
- Association with a person or group with one or more of these "actual" or "perceived" characteristics.

Please note, the above listed characteristics are examples, and other bases for actual or perceived protected social group characteristics exist.

If you witness a hate crime, you should report the crime to your local law enforcement agency.

A hate incident is an action or behavior motivated by hate but legally protected by the First Amendment right to freedom of expression. If a hate incident starts to threaten a person or property, it may become a hate crime.

*Examples of hate incidents include:*

- Name-calling
- Insults
- Displaying hate materials on your own property.
- Posting hate material that does not result in property damage.
- Distribution of materials with hate messages in public places.

### **How to spot a hate crime:**

**Signs that a crime was motivated by hate may include:**

- The offender chose the victim or property because they belonged to a protected group, like a certain religion or gender.
- The offender made written or verbal comments showing a prejudice.
- The crime happened on a date that is important for the victim's or offender's protected group.
- There is organized hate activity in the area.

**If you are a hate crime victim, you should:**

- Contact your local law enforcement agency right away.
- Get medical attention (if you need it).
- Write down the exact words that were said.
- Make notes about any other facts.
- Save all evidence (e.g., graffiti, egg shells, writing on victim's vehicle). If safe, wait until law enforcement arrives and takes photos.
- Get the names, addresses, phone numbers, and emails of other victims and witnesses.
- Try to get a description from any eyewitnesses of the criminal or the vehicle.
- Contact community organizations in your area that respond to hate crimes.

**What you and your community can do:**

- Speak out against hate and intolerance.
- Have community rallies to support victims.
- Offer support and help to victims.
- Ask public officials to speak out against hate crimes.
- Establish a human relations commission or hate crime network that includes law enforcement, local government, schools, religious organizations and community organizations. Ask them to respond to hate crimes immediately when they happen and to promote prevention and awareness.



**OAG.CA.GOV/HATECRIMES**

Figure 2: Hate crime brochures like the one above are available for download on the Attorney General's website in 14 different languages.

## Understanding the Data

This research brief report presents analysis of anti-Asian hate crime events reported to the California DOJ by local LEAs since 2016, with specific focus on comparisons between data reported in 2019 and 2020. The hate crime data set used for this analysis is available on the OpenJustice Data Portal.

Readers should keep in mind the important ways the data collected by the DOJ may differ from data collected and reported by other organizations and the mainstream media when reviewing the findings. First, the data reported to the DOJ only includes hate crimes, which are criminal offenses motivated by hate. The data collected by the DOJ and analyzed in this report does not include hate incidents, which are motivated by bias and other acts of discrimination. Second, hate crime events are reported according to the type of bias motivation that was committed in the hate crime event. In other words, if an offender commits a hate crime against a Pacific Islander person, but the LEA determines that this incident was motivated by a bias towards people of Asian descent based on the facts of the case, the crime will be reported as being motivated by anti-Asian bias. Third, for data reporting purposes, and in accordance to federal guidelines and definitions, Asian is defined as a person having origins in any of the original peoples of the Far East, Southeast Asia, or the Indian subcontinent. Fourth, data reviewed in this report reflects criminal offenses motivated by hate that were reported to a local LEA and subsequently reported to the DOJ by the responding LEA.

While beyond the scope of this research brief report, it is important to note that hate crime events motivated by a racial bias increased by 68% from 523 in 2019 to 878 in 2020. See the 2020 Hate Crimes in California publication for more information on the increase of hate crimes motivated by a racial bias in 2020.

## Anti-Asian Hate Crime Events Reported to the DOJ between 2016-2020

### Increase in Anti-Asian Hate Crime Events

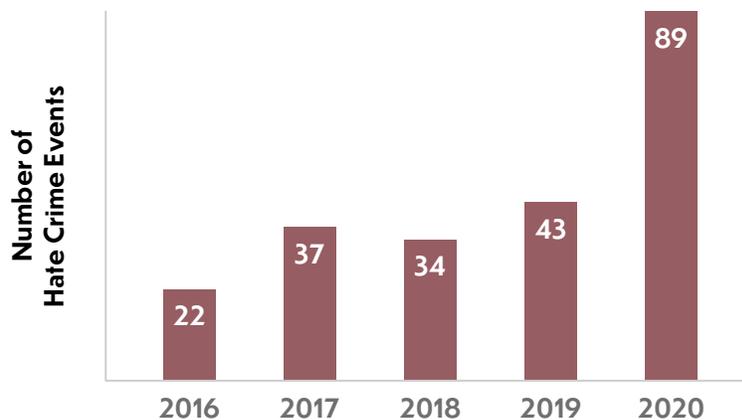
Overall, anti-Asian hate crime events have increased since 2016 (Figure 3). A total of 22 hate crimes were reported in 2016. In 2017, a total of 37 hate crimes were reported, representing a 68% increase from the previous year. While the number of anti-Asian hate crimes reported in 2018 decreased by 8% (34 reported events) from the number of hate crimes reported in 2017, the number of hate crimes reported in 2018 still represents a 55% increase from the number of hate crimes reported in 2016. In 2019, hate crime events increased 26% (43 reported events) from 2018.

In 2020 there were a total of 89 hate crime events in California targeting Asians, representing a 107% increase in hate crimes targeting Asians from 2019 (see Figure 3). This percent increase from the previous year marks the largest increase in anti-Asian hate crimes for a single year.

Figure 4: Anti-Asian hate crime events have increased, with the largest number of reports occurring in 2020

Taking into account all anti-Asian hate crime events reported to the DOJ between 2016 and 2019, the four-year average for anti-Asian hate crime events is 34. Comparing the events reported in 2020 to this four-year average, reports for 2020 represents a 162% increase in the average number of events reported for the previous four years.

Figure 3: Anti-Asian hate crime events have increased, with the largest number of reports occurring in 2020



## Anti-Asian Hate Crime Events by Month and Year of Occurrence

In 2020, on average the number of anti-Asian crime event reports were also higher month-to-month as compared to previous years (Table 1). In particular, the largest number of events occurred in March and April 2020, at the beginning of the emergency declaration and stay-at-home orders issued by Governor Newsom.<sup>30,31</sup> Studies have found that an increase in hate crimes and incidents targeting Asian people coincide with harmful rhetoric from national public officials connecting Asian people to COVID-19.<sup>32,33</sup>

**Table 1:** Number of anti-Asian hate crime events reported by month and year the incident occurred

Month Occurrence	Y				
	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
January	2	1	4	1	5
February	1	3	7	1	4
March	2	4	4	3	17
April	1	3	2	6	15
May	1	2	1	5	8
June	5	3	2	4	10
July	1	1	0	2	9
August	1	7	0	5	6
September	3	2	7	3	2
October	0	3	1	1	5
November	3	4	1	8	2
December	2	4	5	4	6

<sup>30</sup> “Governor Newsom Declares State of Emergency to Help State Prepare for Broader Spread of COVID-19,” Office of Governor Gavin Newsom, March 04, 2020, accessible at <https://www.gov.ca.gov/2020/03/04/governor-newsom-declares-state-of-emergency-to-help-state-prepare-for-broader-spread-of-covid-19/>.

<sup>31</sup> “Governor Gavin Newsom Issues Stay at Home Order,” Office of Governor Gavin Newsom, March 19, 2020, accessible at <https://www.gov.ca.gov/2020/03/19/governor-gavin-newsom-issues-stay-at-home-order/>.

<sup>32</sup> Reny and Barreto, “Xenophobia in the Time of Pandemic,” pp. 3-4.

<sup>33</sup> “The Return of ‘Yellow Peril’: Anti-AAPI Rhetoric and Policies Leading up to the 2020 Election,” Stop AAPI Hate, October 21, 2020, accessible at <https://stopaapihate.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/Stop-AAPI-Hate-Report-2020-Candidates-and-Anti-Asian-Rhetoric-201021.pdf>.

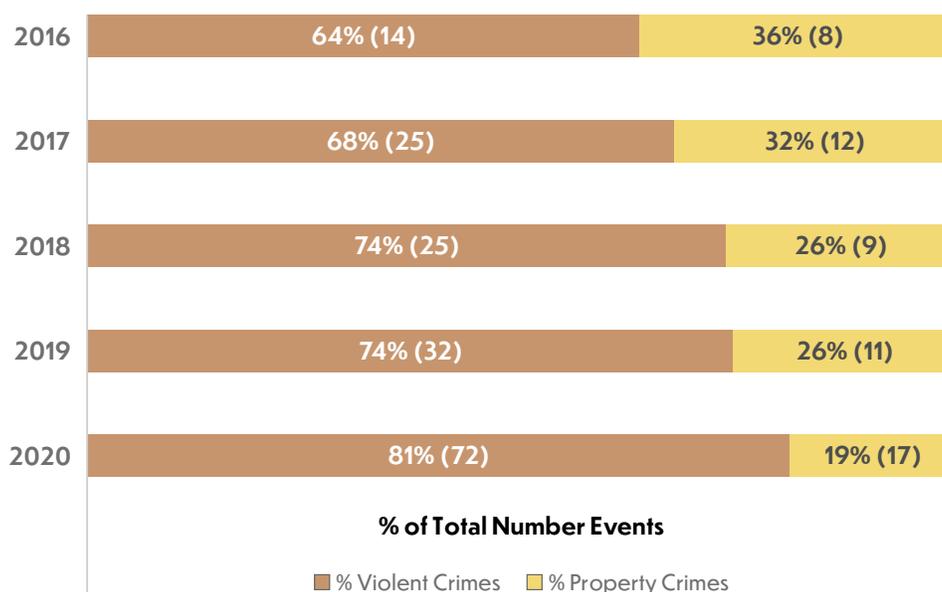
## Anti-Asian Hate Crime Events by Category of Criminal Offense Committed

Hate crimes may fall into two categories:

1. Violent crimes, also referred to as crimes against people. This category includes the offenses aggravated assault, intimidation, murder, rape, robbery, and simple assault.
2. Property crimes, also referred to as crimes against property. This category includes the offenses arson; burglary; destruction of property, property damage, or vandalism; larceny-theft; and motor vehicle theft.

Based on information reported to the DOJ, **violent crimes were the most common type of hate crime committed against Asian people in all years** (Figure 4). Moreover, the share of violent crimes has steadily increased since 2016.

Figure 4: Number of anti-Asian hate crime events by the category of criminal offense committed



In 2020, violent crimes accounted for 81% (72 events) of all crime events (89 events) targeting Asians, the highest share of events reported within the last five years.

Table 2: Total number of anti-Asian violent hate crime events and percent change from the previous year

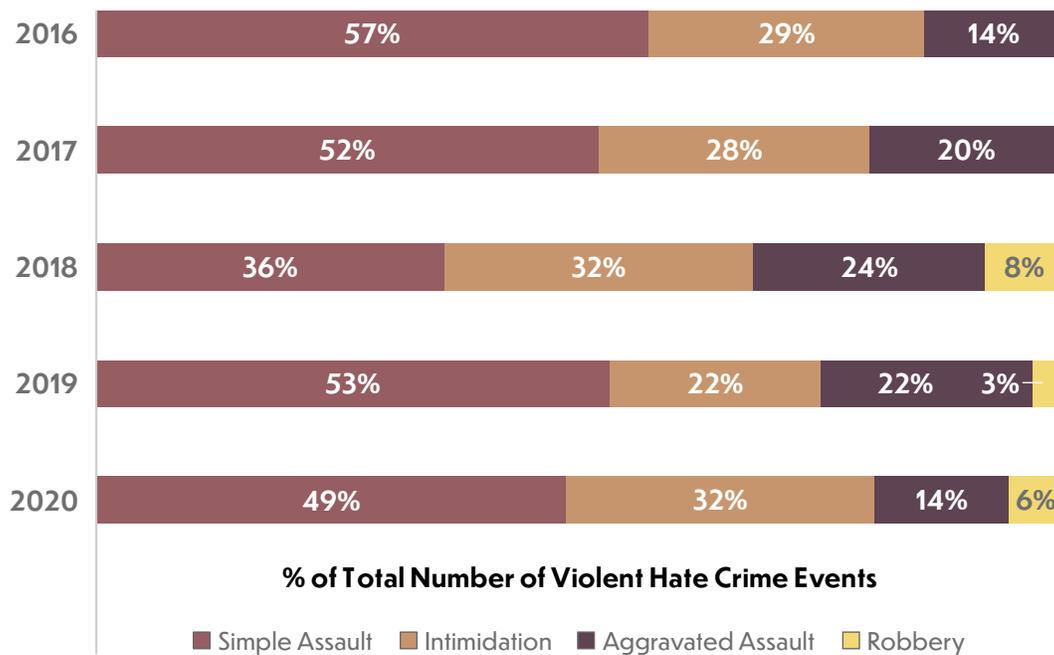
Year	Total Number of Anti-Asian Violent Hate Crime Events	% Change from Previous Year
2016	14	-
2017	25	79%
2018	25	0%
2019	32	28%
2020	72	125%

## Increase in Anti-Asian Violent Hate Crime Events

Compared to 2019, violent hate crime events increased by 125% in 2020 (Table 2). This increase represents a total of 40 more violent hate crime events than what was reported in 2019, and represent the largest increase in violent hate crimes reported since 2016. The second largest increase in violent anti-Asian hate crimes in a single year occurred in 2017, where there was a 79% increase in reports when compared to data for the previous year.

For reporting purposes, aggravated assault, intimidation, murder, rape, robbery, and simple assault are classified as violent crimes. Across all five years, **simple assault and intimidation were the most common types of crimes committed in anti-Asian hate crimes** (Figure 5).<sup>34</sup>

**Figure 5:** Percentage of anti-Asian violent criminal offenses by type of offense committed during the hate crime event

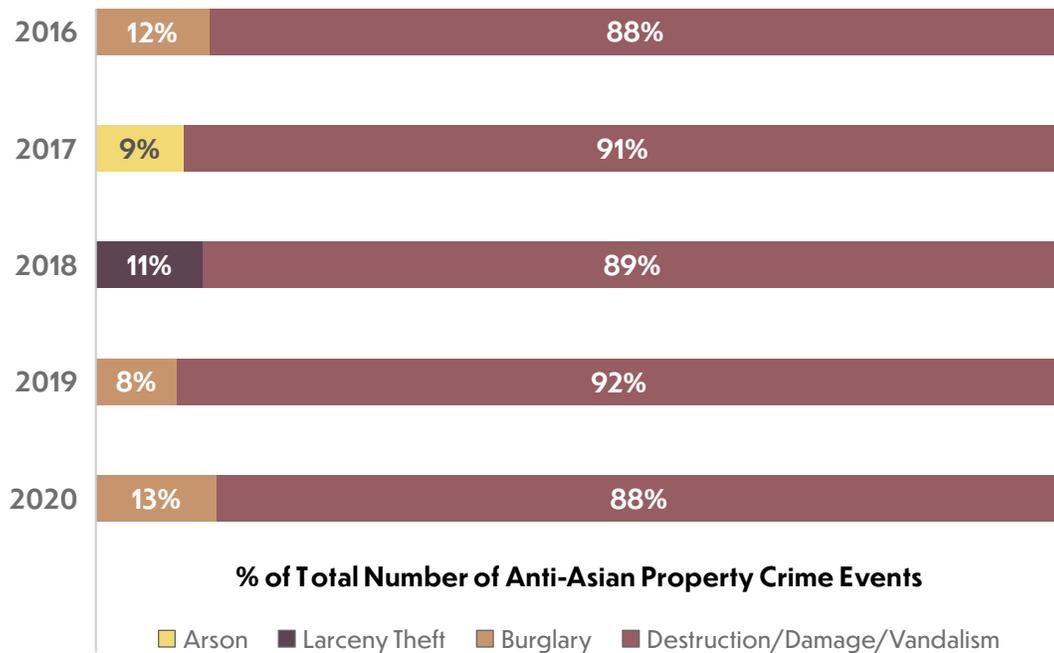


<sup>34</sup> Simple assault is defined as an assault and attempted assault where no weapon is used and which do not result in serious or aggravated injury to the victim. This is different from an aggravated assault, which is defined as an unlawful attack by one person upon another for the purpose of inflicting severe or aggravated bodily injury. This type of assault is accompanied by the use of a weapon or by means likely to produce death or great bodily harm.

## Increase in Anti-Asian Property Hate Crime Events

The number of property crimes motivated by anti-Asian bias have increased since 2018 (Figure 6). The largest number of property crimes were reported in 2020, representing a 55% increase when compared to data for 2019 (Table 3). **Property damage was the most common kind of property crime committed against Asians** (Figure 6).<sup>35</sup>

**Figure 6:** Percentage of anti-Asian property criminal offenses by type of offense committed during the hate crime event



**Table 3:** Total number of anti-Asian property hate crime events and percent change from the previous year

Year	Total Number of Anti-Asian Property Hate Crime Events	% Change from Previous Year
2016	8	-
2017	12	50%
2018	9	-25%
2019	11	22%
2020	17	55%

<sup>35</sup> Property damage includes the crimes of property destruction, vandalism, and damage.

## Victim Characteristics

A hate crime may be committed against a person or property. The term victim may refer to a person, business or financial institution, government institution, religious organization, school, or some other entity. For each hate crime event reported to the DOJ, the victim type associated with the most serious criminal offense is recorded. **The majority of anti-Asian hate crime events reported to the DOJ targeted individuals** (Table 4).

**Table 4:** Number of anti-Asian hate crime events by the type of victim reported for the event

Year	Religious Organization	Government	Business	Person
2016	4.5% (1)	14% (3)	9% (2)	72% (16)
2017	-	-	8% (3)	92% (34)
2018	-	-	9% (3)	91% (31)
2019	-	2% (1)	14% (6)	84% (36)
2020	-	3% (3)	3% (3)	94% (83)

More than one person may be victimized in a single hate crime event. For data collection purposes, the total number of individuals victimized, along with the age of each victim, is recorded for every hate crime event reported to the DOJ.

**In 2020, LEAs reported the highest number of persons victimized in anti-Asian hate crime events to the DOJ** (Table 5). There were a total of 101 persons victimized in the 89 anti-Asian hate crime events reported in 2020. In 2019, a total of 50 persons were reported as victims for the 43 anti-Asian hate crime events reported to the DOJ. The number of victimized persons reported for 2020 represents a 102% increase from the total number reported in 2019.

**Table 5:** Total number of people victimized for anti-Asian hate crimes reported to the DOJ

Year	Total Number of Persons Victimized	% Change from Previous Year
2016	25	-
2017	45	80%
2018	34	-24%
2019	50	47%
2020	101	102%

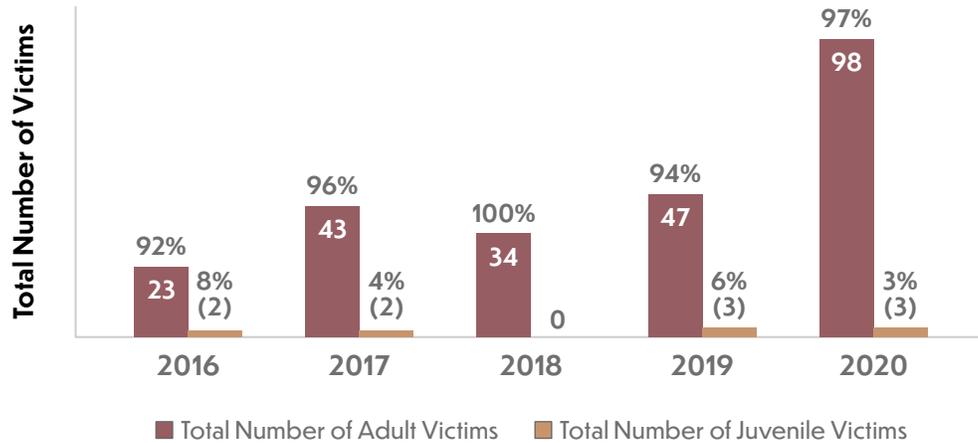
The majority of persons victimized in anti-Asian hate crime events were adults (Figure 7). In 2020, 97% (98 adults) of all persons targeted were adults.

Hate crime events involving adult victims commonly occurred at a residence or on a roadway, a finding similar to data for previous years (Table 6).

**Table 6:** Number of adult victims reported to the DOJ by location and year of the hate crime event

Location of Reported Crime	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	Total
Highway/Road/Alley/Street	5	10	7	21	28	71
Residence/Home/Driveway	11	7	5	9	26	58
Parking Lot/Garage	0	11	4	3	8	26
Restaurant	1	4	2	1	2	10
School-College/University	2	0	1	4	3	10
Air/Bus/Train Terminal	0	1	1	2	4	8
Park/Playground	0	1	0	1	6	8
Grocery/Supermarket	1	1	2	0	3	7
Other/Unknown	2	3	0	0	2	7
Service/Gas Station	1	1	1	1	2	6
Commercial/Office Building	0	1	0	0	4	5
Specialty Store (TV/Fur/etc.)	0	0	3	0	2	5
School-Elementary/Secondary	0	1	1	1	0	3
Bar/Night Club	0	1	0	2	0	3
Convenience Store	0	0	0	0	3	3
Shopping Mall	0	1	0	0	1	2
Drug Store/Doctor Office/Hospital	0	0	1	0	1	2
Hotel/Motel/etc.	0	0	2	0	0	2
Jail/Prison	0	0	0	2	0	2
Lake/Waterway/Beach	0	0	0	0	2	2
Community Center	0	0	1	0	0	1
Department/Discount Store	0	0	1	0	0	1
Field/Woods/Park	0	0	1	0	0	1
Government/Public Building	0	0	1	0	0	1
Bank/Savings and Loan	0	0	0	0	1	1
<b>Total Adult Victims / Year</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>43</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>47</b>	<b>98</b>	<b>245</b>

**Figure 7:** Total number of adults and juveniles victimized in anti-Asian hate crime events reported to the DOJ by year of event



There is no clear trend for where an anti-Asian hate crime event took place involving juvenile victims (Table 7). In 2020, three juveniles (3% of all victims) were victimized in anti-Asian hate crime events; two were attacked at a park or playground and the third was attacked at a school. These locations are a divergence from data reported in 2019, where juvenile victims were attacked at a residence or on a roadway.

**Table 7:** Number of juvenile victims reported to the DOJ by location and year of the hate crime event

Location of Reported Crime	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	Total Victims
Residence/Home/Driveway	2	0	0	1	0	3
Highway/Road/Alley/Street	0	0	0	2	0	2
Park/Playground	0	0	0	0	2	2
School-Elementary/Secondary	0	1	0	0	1	2
Other/Unknown	0	1	0	0	0	1
<b>Total Juvenile Victims/Year</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>10</b>

## Offender Characteristics

Data on hate crimes includes information on the known suspects alleged to have committed the criminal act. Known suspects include the suspects who have either been identified or accused of committing the hate crime as stated in the hate crime report to LEAs. Information on known suspects may include identity characteristics, however, in many cases, this information is unknown. It is also not unusual for the total number of suspects to be unknown. Moreover, there could be more than one suspect who committed a hate crime. Therefore, the number of known suspects may be greater than the total number of hate crime events. Throughout this research brief report, the terms *suspect* and *known suspect* are used interchangeably, with the term *suspect* assuming the same definition as *known suspect*.

The reported number of suspects alleged to have committed anti-Asian hate crime events has increased since 2016 (Table 8). In 2020, the number of suspects increased by 123% (87 suspects) when compared to data reported in 2019 (39 suspects). The majority of suspects involved in anti-Asian hate crime events were adults over the age of 18.

**Table 8:** Total number of known suspects reported in anti-Asian hate crime events by year of event occurrence

Year	Total Number of Adult Suspects	Total Number of Juvenile Suspects	Total	Total % Change From Previous Year
2016	21	0	21	-
2017	25	1	26	24%
2018	27	1	28	8%
2019	37	2	39	39%
2020	81	6	87	123%

### Rate of Hate Crime Victimization

Anti-Asian hate crime events vary across the state, with some counties reporting hate crime events and other counties reporting none. Given that the largest number of people were victimized in 2020, this section focuses on the rate of victimization for data reported to the DOJ in 2020 to take a closer look at the rate of victimization by county. The total Asian residential population in each county was used to generate a rate for every 10,000 Asian residents. The population of Asian residents was used to reflect the population most vulnerable to being victimized in an anti-Asian hate crime event. Rates were generated using population estimates prepared by the California Department of Finance.

In 2020, a total of 101 persons were reported to have been victimized in the 89 hate crime events reported to the DOJ. **These 101 persons were victimized in 18 different counties in California** (Table 9). In 2020, the highest hate crime victimization rate was recorded for San Luis Obispo County, where approximately two individuals out of about 9,000 Asian residents were attacked.

The lowest hate crime rate per capita was found in Alameda County for 2020. The hate crime victimization rates per 10,000 Asian residents is 0.05. The size of the Asian population in Alameda County is estimated to be 441,271 in 2020. If one million Asian people lived in the Alameda County in 2020, then five individuals would have been victimized in a hate crime.

**Table 9:** Anti-Asian hate crime victimization rate per 10,000 Asian residents for 2020

County	Estimated Population of Asian Residents in County, 2020	Total Number of Victims	Hate Crime Victimization Rate Per 10,000 Asian Residents in 2020
Alameda	441,271	2	0.05
Contra Costa	175,546	4	0.23
Fresno	98,179	1	0.10
Los Angeles	1,368,661	32	0.23
Marin	15,345	1	0.65
Monterey	23,691	1	0.42
Orange	580,384	6	0.10
Riverside	148,270	2	0.13
Sacramento	224,826	5	0.22
San Bernardino	136,203	3	0.22
San Diego	357,831	5	0.14
San Francisco	284,012	9	0.32
San Joaquin	109,822	1	0.09
San Luis Obispo*	8,891	2	2.25
San Mateo	195,838	7	0.36
Santa Clara	643,955	18	0.28
Santa Cruz	11,398	1	0.88
Solano	62,186	1	0.16

\*The residential population size is estimated to be smaller than 10,000 for Asian people

## Conclusion

A review of hate crime data reported to the DOJ by California's LEAs indicates that anti-Asian hate crimes increased in 2020 when compared to information reported to the DOJ in previous years. This increase further indicates that trends observed nationally are reflected in hate crime data reported to the DOJ.

Combatting hate crimes remains a priority for Attorney General Bonta and the DOJ. In order to reaffirm the DOJ's commitment to combatting hate crimes, Attorney General Bonta formed a new bureau, the Racial Justice Bureau, whose tasks will include working to address hate crimes.<sup>36</sup> In addition to this newly formed bureau, the DOJ continues to provide a number of resources to educate the public on hate crimes happening in California and resources to identify and report hate crimes to local LEAs:

- Hate crimes brochures available in 25 languages, shareable infographics available in 14 languages, and additional information on hate crimes can be found on the Attorney General's website.
- The annual *Hate Crime in California* report can be found on the OpenJustice publications webpage.
- Data dashboards visualizing hate crime statistics are available on the OpenJustice website under the *Data Exploration* tab.
- The law enforcement bulletin on hate crimes and prosecutor guidance is available on the Attorney General's website.

Crime victims, including victims of hate crimes, are granted important rights under the California Victims' Bill of Rights (Marsy's Law). These rights include receiving money to cover losses as a result of the crime, the right to tell the court how the crime impacted your life, receiving information about the criminal case, and getting orders from the court that may help you. Marsy's Cards outlining victim rights under California law are also available on the Attorney General's website in 23 languages.

Crime victims and their families may contact the DOJ's Victims' Services Unit at (877) 433-9069 or [VictimServices@doj.ca.gov](mailto:VictimServices@doj.ca.gov) to receive additional information on the resources available.

---

<sup>36</sup> "Attorney General Bonta Launches New Racial Justice Bureau, Announces Virtual Convening Against Hate Crime with Big City Mayors," State of California Department of Justice, May 11, 2021, accessible at <https://oag.ca.gov/news/press-releases/attorney-general-bonta-launches-new-racial-justice-bureau-announces-virtual>.



