

The 2025 State of Safety for Asian American and Pacific Islander Women and Gender Expansive Individuals in the U.S.



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How the Current Political Climate Impacts AAPI Safety

The Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) data from 2024 show that while anti-Asian hate crimes have decreased from their 2022 peak, they remain nearly three times higher than pre-pandemic levels, underscoring the persistence of racialized violence against Asian American and Pacific Islander (AAPI) communities and the urgent need to enact protective policies that safeguard their democracy, foster their sense of belonging, and improve their public health.

Several intersecting forces compound the threats faced by our communities: the rollback of Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility (DEIA) initiatives, intensified immigration enforcement that frames immigrants as threats, and increasing political polarization that often scapegoats marginalized communities, especially transgender individuals and immigrants, for broader social and economic issues.

AAPI women experience these challenges through a dangerous convergence of racism, xenophobia, and misogyny, with gender expansive AAPI individuals facing the additional barrier of transphobia. Gender-based stereotypes and the hypersexualization of AAPI women, combined with rising anti-immigrant sentiment and anti-trans rhetoric, further increase their vulnerability to violence. Collectively, these dynamics endanger not only the physical safety of AAPI

communities but also their mental health, economic security, and sense of belonging—threatening the very conditions needed to thrive.

To protect the safety of AAPI communities, policies must extend beyond reactive measures and address the structural inequities that enable hate and exclusion. AAPI communities must be affirmed as integral parts of our nation's civic and cultural fabric, protecting their ability to live and work in safety.

Recent Anti-AAPI Hate Crimes and Incidents

These incidents are not isolated acts of prejudice; they reflect a broader, systemic pattern of risk that continues to endanger AAPI communities nationwide. FBI data and news stories reveal that anti-AAPI hate manifests through both overt violence and through subtler acts of intimidation and exclusion.

- In Colorado, a TV reporter was followed for nearly 40 miles and physically assaulted after being asked if he was a U.S. citizen.¹
- In New York, two people dining at a Chinese restaurant were violently attacked by a woman shouting racial slurs, including, "Go back to your country."²
- In California, a 71-year-old man was pursued by a vehicle, subjected to anti-Asian slurs, and struck by the driver.³
- An Arizona state lawmaker used social media to call for physical violence against Congresswoman Pramila Jayapal.⁴

The harassment of Congresswoman Jayapal reflects how public-facing AAPI women are uniquely targeted at the nexus of racism, misogyny, and political backlash, illustrating a broader pattern of gendered racial violence in public life. These incidents underscore that hate continues to manifest both through individual aggression and institutionalized hostility, reinforcing a climate of fear and marginalization.

2024 FBI Hate Crime Data Highlights

- 2024 marked the **third-highest** number of reported hate crimes targeting Asian Americans since national data collection began.⁶
- **53%** of AAPI adults reported experiencing some hate due to their race, ethnicity, or nationality.⁷
- Among those, **25%** said gender played a role, and **15%** cited immigration status.⁸
- **77%** did not report their experiences, even when incidents may have met the criteria for hate crime or civil rights violation.⁹

Why the Data Doesn't Tell the Full Story

Accurate, disaggregated data are essential to translate findings into effective policy. Yet current hate crime data is incomplete and often misleading:

- **Underreporting:** Language barriers, distrust of law enforcement, and fear of immigration consequences continue to suppress reporting within immigrant communities.
- **Restrictive Definitions:** The FBI's narrow definition of a "hate crime"—limited to offenses motivated by bias against race, religion, disability, sexual orientation, ethnicity, gender, or gender identity—excludes many bias-motivated acts that cause harm but do not meet the legal threshold for prosecution.
- **Data Aggregation:** Collapsing Asian identities into a single category obscures the diverse realities of subgroups—such as Southeast Asians, South Asians, East Asians—resulting in policies that fail to address their specific needs.
 - For example, Sikhs remain the third most targeted group based on religion-related hate crimes.⁵ As an ethnoreligious community from the Punjab region of India, their experiences underscore how current race and ethnicity classifications contribute to the erasure of South Asian communities.
 - Data on Pacific Islanders are often collapsed into a single "Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander" category. Disaggregating this data into the distinct Pacific Islander subgroups would offer deeper insight into the unique experiences and needs of each community.

Policy Recommendations

1. Fund Culturally-Competent, Language-Accessible Services

The federal government should sustain and expand investments in culturally specific, multilingual victim services and mental health programs to provide communities with the means to recover from traumatic hate incidents. Programs made by community members for community members foster belonging. Funding should flow directly to trusted community-based organizations that serve as first responders and connectors to healthcare, housing, and legal support.

2. Strengthen Local Infrastructure and Support for Community-Based Organizations

Congress and federal agencies should prioritize AAPI community infrastructure through consistent funding for safety, health, and workforce programs. Budgets at all levels must center equity and community trust, not temporary or crisis-based aid, to ensure long-term safety and economic security.

3. Strengthen Data Collection and Disaggregation

The FBI, Department of Justice, and Department of Health and Human Services should expand hate crime reporting to include disaggregated ethnicity and gender identity data, and issue updated guidance to ensure uniform standards across jurisdictions. Disaggregated data collection would make it possible to identify more nuanced patterns of risk and tailor specialized interventions—particularly for the gendered and sexualized forms of violence that disproportionately affect AAPI women and transgender communities. Without disaggregation, policy responses risk overlooking the full scope of harm and failing to ensure the safety and well-being of AAPI individuals.

4. Protect Immigrant Survivors and Promote Safe Reporting

Federal agencies should guarantee "safe reporting" policies that protect immigrant victims of hate and gender-based violence from immigration enforcement when seeking help. Expanding access to U and T visa protections—which allow survivors of certain crimes (U visas) or human trafficking (T visas) to stay in the U.S.

and access safety while cooperating with investigations—will help ensure that immigration status is never a barrier to protection or support.

5. Expand Funding Through Policy Vehicles

Expanding funding sources through established policies allows for a sustained mechanism to address the risk of hate incidents faced by AAPI communities. Congress should strengthen and uphold legislation such as the *Victims of Crime Act* (VOCA) and the *Violence Against Women Act* (VAWA) during reauthorization to ensure allocation of equitable resources to victims of crimes and violence. AAPI communities' safety can be achieved through funding VOCA's Crime Victims Fund and VAWA, which will similarly boost community-based victim services, multilingual outreach for culturally specific services, and trauma-informed care.

Looking Ahead

AAPI women and gender expansive individuals continue to face overlapping threats of racism, xenophobia, misogyny, and transphobia. These are not peripheral concerns; they are central to understanding the full scope of hate, safety, and belonging in the U.S. today.

The rollback of DEIA policies and the weaponization of fear around immigration and gender diversity do not merely foster hate; they institutionalize it. Policymakers must move beyond reactive measures to invest in the long-term infrastructure of inclusion and community safety that AAPI communities deserve. Accurate data, sustained community investment, and protections for immigrant survivors are vital to ensuring that every AAPI person can live, work, and belong without fear.

Endnotes

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3. Jas Kang, "Hate Crimes Against AAPI Community Rise in SoCal," *Spectrum News*, August 6, 2025, accessed October 9, 2025, <https://spectrumnews1.com/ca/southern-california/public-safety/2025/08/06/aapi-hate-crimes-southern-california>.
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5. U.S. Department of Justice, Federal Bureau of Investigation, Crime Data Explorer: Hate Crime Statistics, accessed October 16, 2025, <https://cde.ucr.cjis.gov/LATEST/webapp/#/pages/explorer/crime/hate-crime>
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7. Stop AAPI Hate, "The State of Anti-AA/PI Hate in 2024," Stop AAPI Hate, June 2, 2025, <https://stopaapihate.org/2025/06/02/state-of-hate-june25/>.
8. Ibid.
9. Ibid.

About NAPAWF

The National Asian Pacific American Women's Forum (NAPAWF) is the only multi-issue, progressive, community organizing and policy advocacy organization for Asian American and Pacific Islander (AAPI) women and girls in the U.S. NAPAWF's mission is to build collective power so that all AAPI women and girls can have full agency over our lives, our families, and our communities.



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