



COUNTERING PREJUDICE:

HATE CRIMES &
DISCRIMINATION
AGAINST
SOUTH ASIAN
AMERICANS

JUNE 2024

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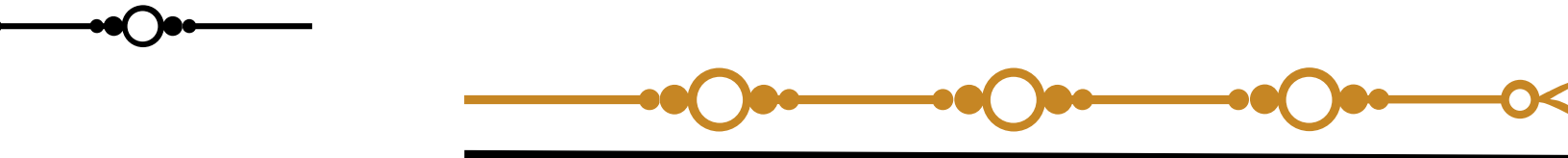
ABOUT SAAPRI

The South Asian American Policy & Research Institute (SAAPRI) is a non-profit, non-partisan organization established in 2001 with the mission to serve South Asian Americans by using research to formulate equitable and socially responsible policy recommendations.

SAAPRI Board Members include Dr. Ann Kalayil, Co-founder and Chair, Tejas Shah, Anita Banerji, Sandeep Nain and Ameya Pawar.

SAAPRI's work has included research and policy initiatives on civic engagement, hate crimes, access to health care, economic development, and immigration. Projects are designed to create dialogue and better understanding, drawing from SAAPRI's expertise in community-based research and collaborations with partner organizations, academic institutions, and community members. SAAPRI advances public policy by proposing data-driven objectives based on community outreach. SAAPRI voices the community's concerns to public officials at the local, state, and national levels; works strategically in cross-racial coalitions; hosts public forums; and participates in speaking engagements to various audiences, including media and government.

With work that began to combat the pervasive wave of discrimination and xenophobia directed at Muslims, Sikhs, and Hindus after the devastating attacks of 9/11, SAAPRI has led projects to combat anti-South Asian American discrimination and hate crimes. Our past work includes developing and helping pass anti-hate resolutions in the Illinois House and Chicago City Council as well as successfully advocating to the FBI to track hate crimes against Hindus, Sikhs, and Arabs in addition to the already existing categories of Christians, Jews, Muslims, and Atheists.



SAAPRI board member Anita Banerji serves on the State of Illinois' Discrimination and Hate Crimes Commission and SAAPRI's Executive Director Shobhana J. Verma served on the City of Chicago's Commission on Human Relations' Committee on Asian and Pacific Islander Hate Crimes. SAAPRI team members work with other government and community leaders to study and make recommendations to address the issue of hate crime against the whole Asian American Pacific Islander community and the South Asian American community in particular.

SAAPRI continues to seek resources to collect and provide the data, analysis, and community expertise necessary to improve the health, safety, and dignity of the South Asian American community. SAAPRI is exploring opportunities to work with AAPI affinity organizations to work towards building a collaborative, comprehensive model that focuses on prevention, protection, response, and tracking of hate crimes. Part of this process includes focusing on what is needed to create and strengthen a coordinated local response to hate crimes.

SAAPRI is also working within its interethnic, interracial and interfaith network to identify and combat hate in our communities. Working with past and new community leaders and partners, we are using our position as a trusted community organization to educate our communities and advocate for sustainable local policy.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This report would not be possible without the gracious time and space given to us by numerous community organizations and individuals in the Chicago metropolitan area. We thank them for the opportunity to come into their places of worship, service and community to distribute surveys, talk with audiences and hear the stories of the South Asian American community.

The authors extend their gratitude to the individuals and organizations that provided crucial background knowledge on hate crimes in Illinois and nationwide. Their work to identify and combat racism and discrimination greatly informed our own research and recommendations.

Thank you to the SAAPRI team, the SAAPRI Board, our funders, donors, and the rest of the SAAPRI family, including geographic information system and graphic design support from Karan Gowda and Francys Munoz.

We also thank Advancing Justice (AAJC) for collaborating with SAAPRI on anti-hate and racial justice work by providing significant support to strengthen SAAPRI's capacity to continue its research and policy advocacy work with and for the South Asian community.

Executive Summary

OVERVIEW

Anti-Asian, and specifically anti-South Asian, sentiment has surged in the U.S. following events like the 9/11 attacks and the COVID-19 pandemic, driven by misinformation and xenophobia. These events have highlighted structural issues of internalized racism, white supremacy, and religious discrimination, resulting in increased scrutiny and violence against South Asian communities. Despite the significant population of Asian Americans in Illinois, hate crimes are severely underreported due to a lack of comprehensive data and complicated reporting systems. SAAPRI's report analyzes hate crimes and discrimination against South Asians, focusing on Chicago, by evaluating 416 survey responses and examining historical and current hate crime trends. The report explores reasons for underreporting and offers recommendations to improve hate crime reporting practices. It also highlights the diversity within the South Asian community and the challenges in accurately representing this population in data collection efforts.

METHODOLOGY

The report is based on responses from 416 South Asians, primarily in Illinois, collected through a confidential online survey and an in-person questionnaire developed by Jordan Stalker, PhD, which were distributed from July 2021 to June 2023. The survey, disseminated via social media, newsletters, and in-person at community locations, explored experiences with hate crimes and discrimination, including incident details, law enforcement involvement, and targeted identity aspects. Demographic questions and opinions on hate crime resources were also included. While the survey reached a diverse group, its reliance on social media and referrals may limit its representativeness. Language barriers within the online platforms constrained online participation, demonstrating the value of broader language access and the importance of the follow-up interviews included in this report to better understand the impact of hate crimes on South Asians in the U.S.

DATA AND ANALYSIS

The survey revealed significant insights into hate crimes against this community. Notably, 24% of respondents experienced or witnessed hate crimes, with 38% of these incidents occurring since the onset of COVID-19, reflecting the rise in anti-Asian sentiment linked to the pandemic. Historical data also shows hate crimes against South Asians predate COVID-19, often tied to post-9/11 xenophobia. Public spaces, businesses, and places of transit were common sites for these incidents. The survey highlighted the particular vulnerability of South Asian women to hate crimes, underscoring the need for intersectional approaches to addressing hate. Lastly, respondents emphasized the importance of multilingual hate crime reporting resources and stronger state laws and community support programs to combat hate crimes.

Executive Summary

THE LACK OF SOUTH ASIAN HATE CRIME DATA

Currently, there is a major dearth of data on anti-South Asian hate crimes in the United States because of two main reasons: the ineffective hate crime data collection system and a weak relationship between the U.S. government and the communities which it serves. The primary challenge in addressing hate crimes against South Asian Americans is the lack of a unified and standardized system for collecting hate crime data across the U.S. Without a federal mandate for states and localities to report this data to the FBI, disparities and gaps in reporting persist. Additionally, many agencies lack training to identify, report, and respond to hate crimes, often leading to underreporting and misclassification. Furthermore, the absence of federal and disaggregated data specifically on South Asian Americans complicates comprehensive demographic analyses, hindering effective policy development and resource allocation to combat hate crimes.

Language and cultural barriers also significantly hinder the reporting of anti-South Asian hate crimes in the U.S. Limited English proficiency restricts access to essential resources like reporting forms, hotlines, and legal assistance. Cultural values that prioritize community over individual concerns lead to reluctance in reporting incidents for fear of bringing shame or burden. Concerns about retaliation, deportation, and distrust in law enforcement further deter reporting, especially among undocumented individuals. This mistrust stems from negative experiences and flawed policies over the past 15 years. Even those who haven't experienced injustice directly may feel apprehensive about speaking out due to strained relationships with government authorities. Additionally, the complexity and time-consuming nature of the legal process, along with unfamiliarity with hate crime laws, further discourage reporting. Consequently, underreporting hampers understanding of the issue's extent and results in inadequate resource allocation to affected South Asian communities.

NATIONAL HATE CRIME REPORTING INFRASTRUCTURE

The mass shooting at a Sikh temple in Oak Creek, Wisconsin, which resulted in six deaths and four injuries, prompted significant changes to hate crime laws in the U.S. Before this tragedy, the FBI's hate crime data collection form did not specifically account for attacks against Sikhs, Hindus, or Arabs. This omission hindered a comprehensive understanding of hate violence against South Asian, Muslim, Sikh, Hindu, Middle Eastern, and Arab communities, especially post-9/11. In response, numerous AAPI-focused civil rights organizations, including SAAPRI, advocated for policy changes, leading to a Senate Judiciary Committee hearing titled "Hate Crimes and the Threat of Domestic Extremism." This advocacy resulted in the FBI reintroducing Code 31 to UCR hate crime data collections in 2015, adding new bias motivation codes for anti-Sikh, anti-Hindu, and other religious bias categories. SAAPRI and other organizations continue to work with the FBI and DOJ to ensure these changes are effectively and culturally competently implemented.

Executive Summary

HATE CRIME REPORTING INFRASTRUCTURE IN ILLINOIS

Ultimately, there is a major need to examine Illinois' hate crime legislation, which targets offenses based on characteristics such as race, religion, gender, and more, and imposes stricter penalties for crimes in public spaces and religious premises. Despite these laws, challenges persist due to inefficiencies in the state's hate crime reporting system. Multiple reporting avenues and overlapping jurisdictions among law enforcement agencies create confusion for victims. Additionally, resources in South Asian languages are limited, with essential materials often unavailable in South Asian languages. This fragmentation and lack of centralized support hinder victims from accessing the necessary assistance.

SAAPRI's engagement with various government agencies revealed efforts to streamline hate crime reporting, yet a specific focus on the South Asian American community remains lacking. Underreporting persists due to mistrust of law enforcement, unawareness of available resources, and skepticism about reporting outcomes. The shortage of cultural competency training for police officers further exacerbates this issue. While recent funding aims to provide specialized training, there is no clear emphasis on the South Asian community. The Chicago Police Department, in particular, lacks guidelines for working with South Asian victims and officers fluent in South Asian languages. These gaps highlight the need for more inclusive and culturally sensitive approaches to support South Asian Americans in Illinois effectively.

RECOMMENDATIONS

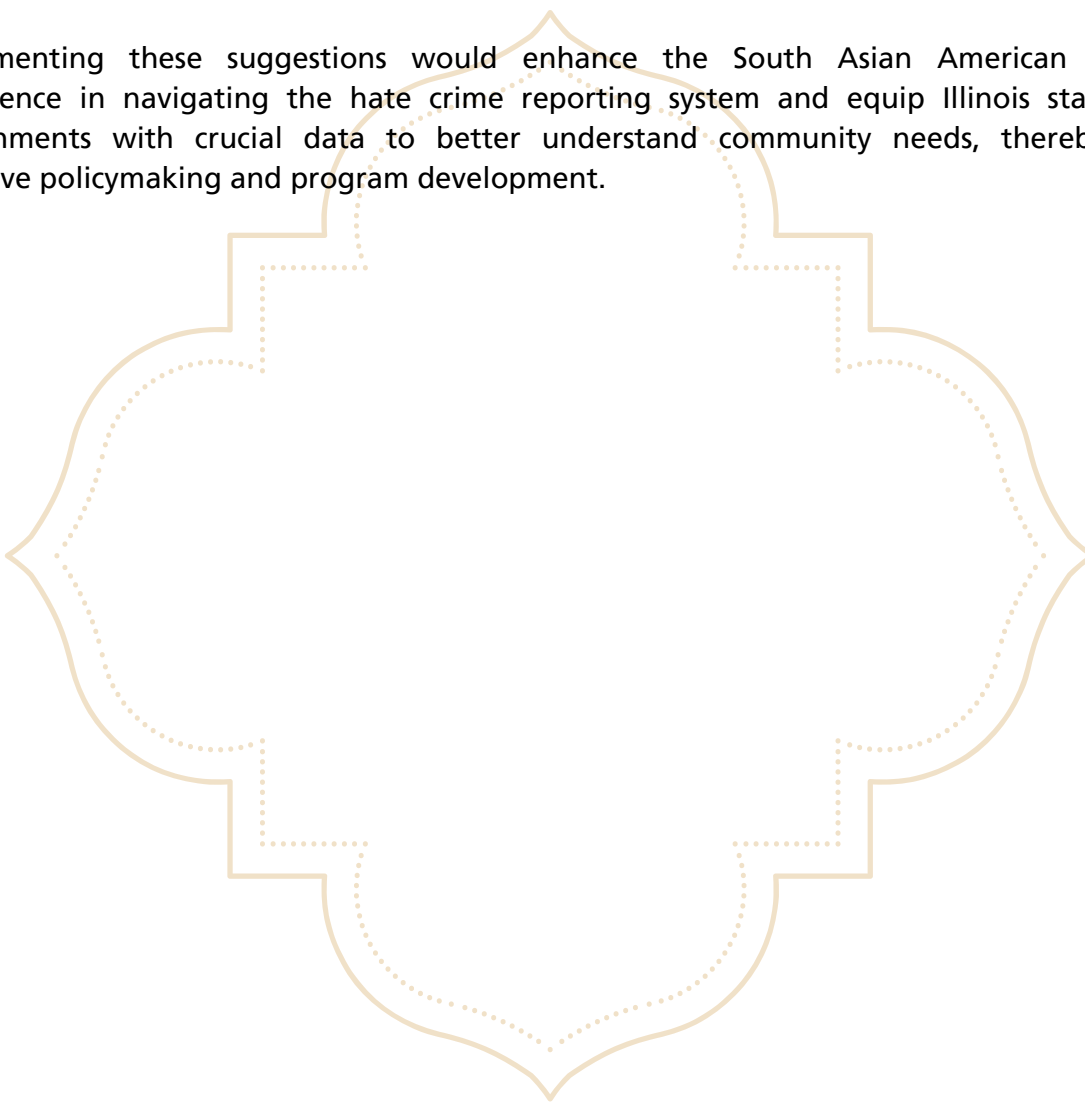
To improve the reporting of hate crimes by the South Asian American community in Illinois, law enforcement agencies should develop a comprehensive hate crimes education curriculum tailored for South Asians. This curriculum should explain what constitutes a hate crime, detail the reporting process, and provide information on where and how to report, what to expect, and how to track the report's progress. Additionally, a community toolkit with resources for victims of race- and gender-based violence, along with hate crime reporting resources like Illinois v Hate, must be accessible in South Asian languages, including Hindi, Urdu, Gujarati, and Punjabi. Law enforcement should also organize community meetings to encourage reporting, even for incidents of uncertain severity, and establish a fund to provide temporary financial assistance to hate crime victims, ensuring they feel supported when facing discrimination and hate crimes.

Fostering a stronger connection between the South Asian American community and law enforcement is also vital and requires enhancing police diversity, improving data transparency, and implementing cultural competency training. Law enforcement agencies should focus on recruiting officers of South Asian descent and establish partnerships with community and faith-based organizations to build trust and facilitate hate crime reporting. Enhanced transparency through accurate and disaggregated hate crime data collection is crucial, with regular town halls to report data specific to the South Asian community.

Executive Summary

Cultural competency training for officers should include understanding South Asian cultural and religious practices, using appropriate language, and employing translation tools, ensuring effective responses to hate crimes and bias-related incidents. These efforts, supported by the Illinois Attorney General's Office, will help bridge the trust gap and better serve the South Asian American community.

Implementing these suggestions would enhance the South Asian American community's confidence in navigating the hate crime reporting system and equip Illinois state and local governments with crucial data to better understand community needs, thereby informing effective policymaking and program development.



Introduction

Anti-Asian, and specifically anti-South Asian sentiment is not a new phenomenon. Measurable upticks in hate crimes can be traced to two major events in the past two decades. First, the terrorist attacks on the United States on September 11, 2001 and second, the global pandemic brought on by the COVID-19 viral outbreak that began in March 2020. In the aftermath of the 9/11 terrorist attacks, Arabs and Muslims in the country, and those perceived to be Arab or Muslim, such as Sikhs and South Asians, became victims of a severe wave of backlash violence. Attacks on people of South Asian origin after 9/11 are the results of xenophobia, targeted harassment, misinformation and mistaken identity. Vigilantes,² in their fear of further attacks and desire to find and punish those they felt responsible for the loss of life, looked to target those who looked like the men they were told were responsible. At the root of these crimes and incidents are the structural issues of internalized racism, white supremacy, and religious discrimination. The threat of these crimes puts additional scrutiny on South Asian immigrant and ethnic communities.

In a similar way, the anti-Asian hate that was experienced after the COVID-19 outbreak was the result of misinformation and a culture seeking justice through misplaced vigilantism. The onset of the COVID-19 pandemic amplified racism and xenophobia, leading to an increase in hate crimes perpetrated against Asian and Asian American communities across the United States.

Amidst this concerning trend, there is a worrisome lack of comprehensive data on bias-motivated crimes against South Asian Americans in the wake of the pandemic. The sensitive and private nature of hate crimes, coupled with a complicated system of reporting and documenting those crimes, has led to an underreporting of both violent and nonviolent crimes that threaten the physical and mental health of the over 19 million people of Asian descent living in the United States.

Between 2012 and 2020, there were only 18 hate crimes reported in Chicago that involved a bias against Asians. For comparison, the United States Department of Justice said that there were 13,377 hate crimes reported in the U.S. in 2022 alone. Given the size of the Asian American population in Illinois, roughly 875,000 according to the 2020 U. S. Census, and the range of behaviors that count as a hate crime, SAAPRI wanted to determine what accounts for this apparent severe underreport and undercount.

¹ South Asian Americans Leading Together, "Under Suspicion, Under Attack Xenophobic Political Rhetoric and Hate Violence against South Asian, Muslim, Sikh, Hindu, Middle Eastern, and Arab Communities in the United States" (South Asian Americans Leading Together, 2014), https://saalt.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/09/SAALT_report_full_links.pdf.

² South Asian Americans Leading Together.

³ Movement Advancement Project, "Policy Spotlight: Hate Crime Laws," 2021, <https://www.lgbtmap.org/file/2021-report-hate-crime-laws.pdf>.

⁴ "Chicago Has Few Reports of Anti-Asian Attacks, but There Are Efforts to Boost Reporting, Awareness," Chicago Sun-Times, March 26, 2021, <https://chicago.suntimes.com/politics/2021/3/26/22340749/asian-american-hate-crimes-in-hecho-atlanta>.

⁵ "Illinois - Census Bureau Profile," accessed May 27, 2024, <https://data.census.gov/profile/Illinois?g=040XX00US17>.

Introduction

To do this, we analyzed hate crimes and discrimination on the South Asian community in the United States, largely focusing our inquiry on the city of Chicago.

In this report, we provide historical background on hate crimes against South Asians in the country, evaluate over 400 survey responses, elaborate the reasons for a lack of cohesive data collection, establish why South Asian hate crimes go unreported or under-reported, communicate the existing hate crime reporting practices in the state of Illinois, and offer a set of recommendations for law enforcement agencies to improve hate crime reporting.

For our purposes, we rely on the **FBI's definition of hate crime: A criminal offense against a person or property motivated in whole or in part by an offender's bias against a race, religion, disability, sexual orientation, ethnicity, gender, or gender identity.**⁶

Hate crimes, because of their physical and emotional toll, require special attention and action to acknowledge, address and prevent. What sets them apart is not the offense itself, but the underlying animosity based on factors like race, ethnicity, religion, gender, or sexual orientation. While these acts often target individuals, they stem from a deeper resentment towards entire communities defined by shared characteristics, sometimes exacerbated by governmental policies. This is especially important in the South Asian community and is why our attention lies here.

For the purposes of this report, the "South Asian community" encompasses individuals tracing their ancestry to Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, the Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka, characterized by significant diversity in nationality, ethnicity, religion, and language.⁷ According to the 2010 U.S. Census, there were 3.5 million South Asians in the USA, which increased to 5.6 million by 2019, representing approximately 25% of the Asian American population, itself comprising 22 million people or roughly 6.8% of the U.S. population.⁸ Projections suggest that by 2055, Asian Americans will become the largest immigrant group in the U.S., with Asian Indians constituting the second largest subgroup.⁹ However, it's crucial to recognize that many South Asians are often underrepresented in Census data, especially those outside the Indian community. Factors contributing to this undercount include the need for non-Indian individuals to specify their ethnicity, concerns among certain populations, such as the undocumented, about participating in government surveys, and language barriers.¹⁰

⁶ "The FBI Encourages the Public to Report Hate Crimes," Press Release, Federal Bureau of Investigation, accessed May 27, 2024, <https://www.fbi.gov/news/press-releases/the-fbi-encourages-the-public-to-report-hate-crimes>.

⁷ "In Our Own Words: Narratives of South Asian New Yorkers Affected by Racial and Religious Profiling," accessed May 27, 2024, <https://saalt.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/09/In-Our-Own-Words-Narratives-of-South-Asian-New-Yorkers-Affected-by-Racial-and-Religious-Profiling.pdf>.

⁸ SAAPRI Report, "Making Data Count: South Asian Americans in the 2020 Census"

⁹ Budiman and Ruiz.

¹⁰ "In Our Own Words: Narratives of South Asian New Yorkers Affected by Racial and Religious Profiling."

Methodology

The data in this report reflects responses from a national sample of 416 South Asians, located primarily in the state of Illinois. This sample was obtained using a confidential online survey, distributed online through Qualtrics because of COVID-19 pandemic restrictions. The data was then analyzed to find emerging trends.

ONLINE SURVEY

From July 2021 to June 2023, Dr. Jordan Stalker created and ran a confidential online survey regarding South Asians and their experiences with hate crimes and hate crime reporting in the state of Illinois. The survey focused on whether respondents experienced a hate crime or discrimination, and if so, the details of the incident including but not limited to the type of hate crime, whether law enforcement was involved, and the parts of their identity that they felt was targeted. It also covered demographic questions and general opinions on hate crime resources, law, and policy. The survey was distributed through social media, such as Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, LinkedIn, and MailChimp newsletters, as well as through personal referrals, in-person at places of worship, community centers, and other local public spaces in the state of Illinois. SAAPRI staff and volunteers in charge of distributing the survey often helped translate the survey to reach bilingual residents in-person. In total, there were 416 respondents who were geographically dispersed around the nation.

LIMITATIONS

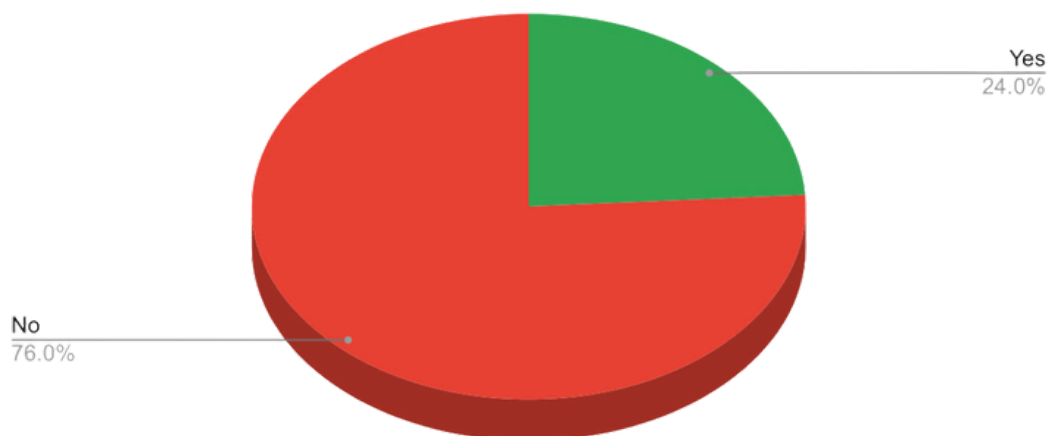
Since the survey was distributed primarily through social media and snowball referrals, the sample may not be representative of the totality of South Asians in the United States. Additional respondents and follow-up interviews would add to a more robust understanding of how South Asians in the country are being impacted by hate crimes and discrimination.

Additionally, our lack of forms in different South Asian languages may have limited the amount of responses to those with English language proficiency or with access to an interpreter. Although SAAPRI did offer some translation services, increased availability of interpreters or the creation of language access resources could have widened our demographic scope, leading to more conclusive and targeted data.

Data and Analysis

THE NUMBERS

Have you been the victim of a hate crime?

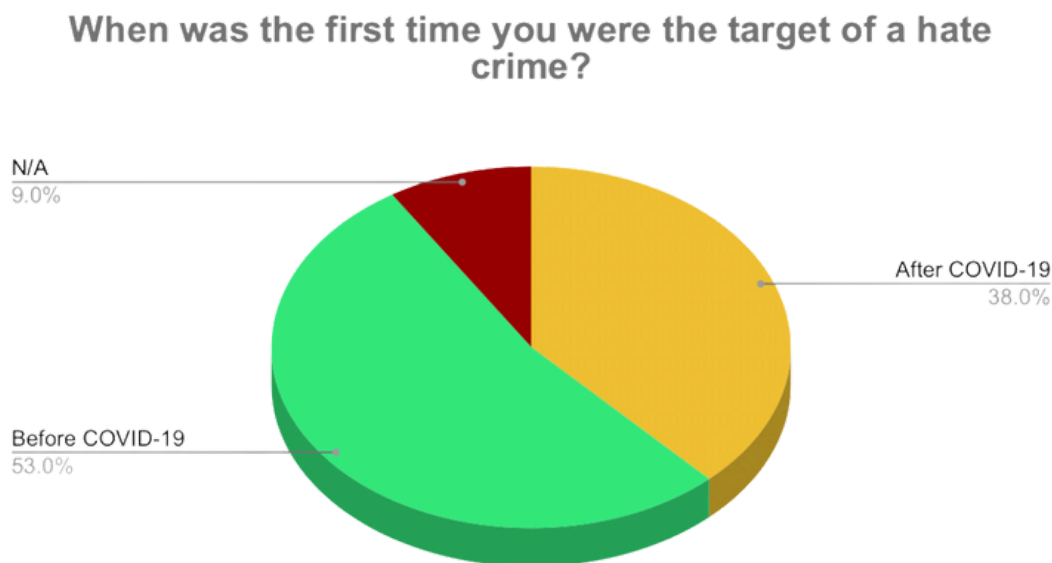


A map of this data transposed across the city of Chicago and neighboring areas can be found in the Appendix.

One hundred (24%) of the respondents have been a victim of a hate crime or witness to a hate crime. This finding supports the prevalence of hate crimes targeted toward the South Asian community and suggests the importance of bystander and ally training in cases of harassment and abuse.

Data and Analysis

THE NUMBERS



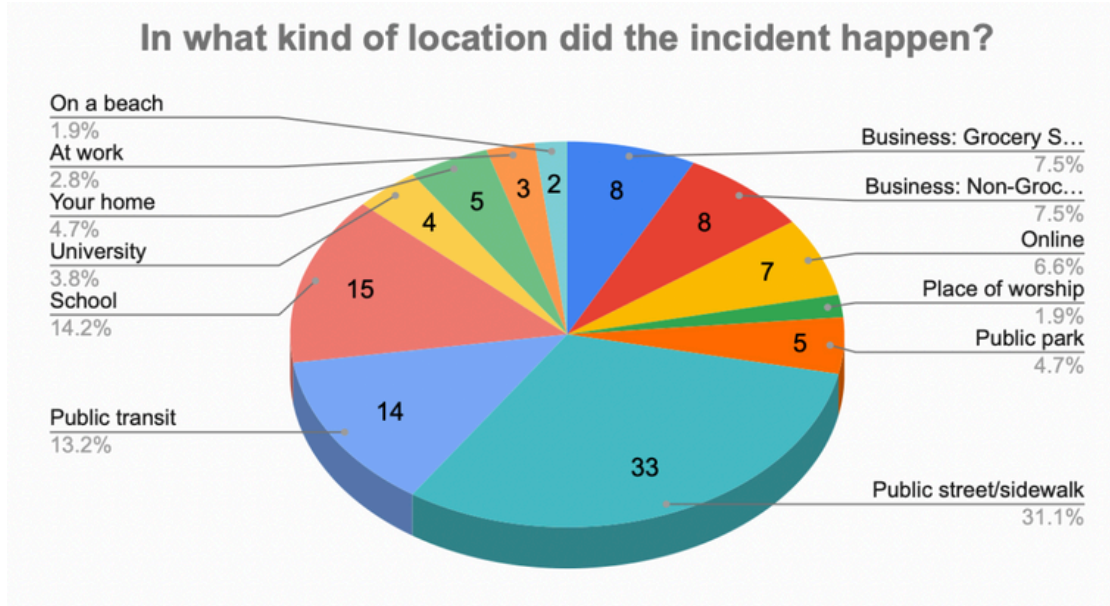
A map of this data transposed across the city of Chicago and neighboring areas can be found in the Appendix.

Thirty-eight percent (38%) of the respondents who have been a victim of a hate crime or witness to a hate crime said that their first experience as a victim of or witness to a hate crime was since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. This matches with the increase in anti-Asian hate following the COVID-19 pandemic and the political rhetoric around the virus, often referred to as the “Chinese virus.”

Additionally, fifty-three percent (53%) of the respondents who have been a victim of a hate crime or witness to a hate crime said their first experience as a victim of or witness to a hate crime was before the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. This shows that the South Asian community has had a long history of dealing with hate on the basis of their identity. Many of those respondents said that they had experienced hate crimes at least since before the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, which resulted in widespread ethnic misidentification and xenophobia.

Data and Analysis

THE NUMBERS



Public spaces, which are supposed to be for everyone, were the sites of most of the hate crimes and hate incidents. Public streets, public transit, and schools and public streets were among the top places where such an incident had occurred. This aligns with the idea that anti-Asian hate crimes are part of the larger epidemic of bullying that has always taken place in school.¹¹

"A co-passenger in the same train car as me and my friend kept repeating how he "smelled onions and curry." We felt unsafe traveling alone for a long time." - Female, Bangladeshi-Pakistani (18-34)

"I was returning from work on a city bus and a co-passenger first asked if I worked downtown. When I said yes, he started making comments about how Indians have flooded America and taken all the tech jobs. I was also jokingly told to go drive my Mercedes and leave the bus for people who needed it more." - Male, Indian (18-34)

"I am a High School student and an athlete. I have been called names and mocked by saying I should quit sports and "fly planes" instead. I was also informed by my friends that another high school student often makes references to my Hindu religion and makes fun of me in my absence." - Indian (Under 18)

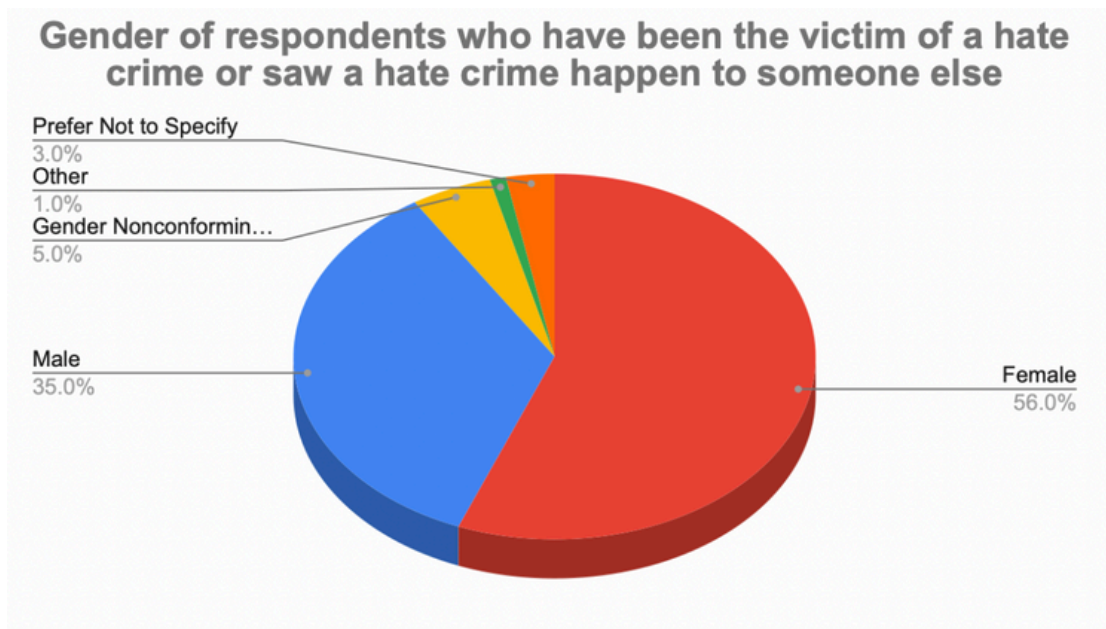
¹¹ "Asian American Bullying Survey Report," Act To Change (blog), accessed May 27, 2024, <https://acttochange.org/bullyingreport/>.

Data and Analysis

THE NUMBERS

Additionally, 16 of the respondents who had been a victim of a hate crime or witness to one did so at a place of business. This connects to the findings of a separate SAAPRI investigation into the structural inequities faced by immigrant business owners, particularly Indian business owners, who SAAPRI interviewed and have been targets of hate crimes in major cities for decades. Specifically, South Asian business owners in the city of Chicago have brought attention to how their businesses—such as convenience stores, restaurants, and gas stations—are systematically targeted by arbitrary municipal code violations and subsequent enforcement, policing, and various other city bureaucratic apparatus.

"It started off with verbal comments which I ignored but when the comments continued, I made eye contact with the customer and tried to react. That is when I was hit by a bag they were holding and asked to go back to where I came from. I don't remember the exact words but the comments made me feel I did not belong here." - Female, Indian (35-54)



Data and Analysis

Fifty-six percent (56%) of the respondents who have been a victim of a hate crime or saw it happen to someone else are female. This observation resonates with the reality that Asian American and Pacific Islander (AAPI) women and girls are particularly vulnerable to hate and discrimination within the AAPI community. AAPI women and girls are notably more likely to report these incidents of hate compared to AAPI men, with a rate 2.2 times higher.¹²

"In the instance where I called the police, I was confronted by a man who thought I had cut him off in the parking lot of the post office who called me a dirty wetback and a sand ****. He then followed me back to my car yelling more obscenities"- Female, Indian (18-34)

Furthermore, a 2022 study conducted by the National Asian Pacific American Women's Forum (NAPAWF) revealed that nearly three-quarters (74 percent) of Asian American, Native Hawaiian, and Pacific Islander (AANHPI) women reported encountering racism and/or discrimination in the past year, while 40 percent reported experiencing sexual harassment.¹³

The prevalence of hate violence against women underscores the urgent need to grasp how intersecting identities, or intersectionality, shape experiences of hate. This is especially pertinent as Asian women demonstrate greater mistrust in the criminal justice system, harbor heightened fears of retaliation, and express reduced confidence in receiving justice if they were to report an incident. Consequently, Asian women are significantly less likely to report a hate incident to law enforcement compared to Asian men.¹⁴ The amalgamation of factors such as gender, religion, attire, skin color, accent, and age all contribute to how women are perceived and subsequently targeted in their daily lives in the United States.

In assessing the general attitudes of respondents, a majority of those we asked believed making hate crime reporting resources available in languages other than English would improve the hate crime reporting process. These same respondents also believed the state of Illinois should pass specific laws against hate crimes, engage in crime reduction programs to prevent and respond to hate crimes, and invest in a strong civil rights infrastructure at the local level that funds community-based groups that are generally first responders to incidents of hate.

¹² Stop AAPI Hate, "The Rising Tide of Violence and Discrimination Against Asian American and Pacific Islander Women and Girls," Stop AAPI Hate, May 20, 2021, <https://stopaapihate.org/2021/05/20/aapi-women-and-girls-report/>.

¹³ "The State of Safety for Asian American, Native Hawaiian, and Pacific Islander Women," NAPAWF, accessed May 27, 2024, <https://napawf.org/resources/state-of-safety/>.

¹⁴ Jennifer Lee and Karthick Ramakrishnan, "A Year After Atlanta," AAPI Data, March 16, 2022, <https://aapidata.com/year-after-atlanta/>.

Timeline

HATE CRIMES AGAINST SOUTH ASIAN AMERICANS IN THE UNITED STATES

Dating back to the early 20th century, South Asian immigrants have experienced anti-South Asian hate in the United States. There were many examples of extremism against South Asian groups like the labor-related violence against Sikhs and Punjabis in the Pacific Northwest in the early 1900s. For example, in 1907, riots instigated by white laborers erupted in Bellingham, Washington, with the aim of assaulting and forcibly removing South Asian immigrant laborers, who were predominantly employed in lumber mills, from the city.¹⁵ During this time, South Asians were also making the shift to West Coast states like California; however, they were subject to discriminatory laws like the Asian Exclusion Act of 1917, which prevented many of them from immigrating to the U.S.¹⁶ Later on, there was the rise of the “Jersey City Dotbusters,” a Hinduphobic hate group in New Jersey and New York that attacked and threatened South Asians in the 1980s and 1990s.¹⁷ Although the violence appeared to target the Hindu community, particularly those who commonly wear the bindi, it is believed that the actions of the Dotbusters were racially motivated, targeting South Asian immigrants.¹⁸

"A man screamed from his car "Go back to where you came from" and spit while I was walking down the street in Lincoln Park, Chicago just after 9/11/01" - Female, Indian (35-54)

Entering the 21st century, the terrorist attacks on the United States on September 11, 2001 caused massive backlash directed towards Americans perceived to be of Middle Eastern descent, including South Asians. During the initial week following the terrorist attack, from September 12 to September 17, newspapers and other media outlets in major U.S. cities documented 645 bias incidents targeting individuals perceived to be of Middle Eastern heritage.¹⁹ South Asians were implicated in 81 (13%) of these reported incidents, with Sikhs comprising over half of the total incidents involving South Asians.

Sikhs, identifiable by their turbans, also faced a disproportionate level of targeting, likely due to the mistaken belief among many Americans that turban-wearing men are Arab or Muslim, making them more susceptible to hate crimes.²⁰

¹⁵ “Bellingham: Home - Seattle Civil Rights and Labor History Project,” accessed May 27, 2024, https://depts.washington.edu/civilr/bham_intro.htm.

¹⁶ MADEO, “Feb. 5, 1917 | Immigration Act of 1917 Bans Asians, Non-White People from Entering U.S.,” accessed May 17, 2024, <https://calendar.eji.org/racial-injustice/feb/05>.

¹⁷ Ricardo Kaulesar, “How Indians in Jersey City Fought Back against the Terror of ‘Dotbusters’ in the 1980s,” North Jersey Media Group, accessed May 27, 2024, <https://www.northjersey.com/story/news/new-jersey/2022/01/26/indians-jersey-city-nj-attacks-1980-s/6397092001/>.

¹⁸ Monisha Bajaj, Ameena Ghaffar-Kucher, and Karishma Desai, “In the Face of Xenophobia: Lessons to Address Bullying of South Asian American Youth,” 2013, <https://saalt.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/06/InTheFaceOfXenophobia-Final-11.4.2013.pdf>.

¹⁹ South Asian Americans Leading Together, “American Backlash: Terrorists Bring War Home in More Ways Than One,” 2001, <https://saalt.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/09/American-Backlash-Terrorist-Bring-War-Home-in-More-Ways-Than-One.pdf>.

²⁰ “We Are Not the Enemy,” Human Rights Watch, November 14, 2002, <https://www.hrw.org/report/2002/11/14/we-are-not-enemy/hate-crimes-against-arabs-muslimsand-those-perceived-be-arab-or>.

Timeline

"Many incidents in middle school of using vulgar language to belittle me for my religious head covering, incidents which sometimes escalated to physical violence. More recently in June 2021 I was refused entry at a bar while all of the rest of my friends were allowed in." - Male, Multiple Ethnicities (18-34)

Despite public condemnation of these incidents by government officials, including President George W. Bush, the detention of approximately 1,200 individuals, predominantly of Middle Eastern and South Asian descent, under anti-terrorism measures by the U.S. government reinforced the public perception that Arab and Muslim communities were generally viewed with suspicion and associated with the "new enemy" in the U.S. war against terrorism.

"The same week that Trump was elected in 2016, I was riding the bus on my way back to home. I was on the phone talking with my mom on Gujarati. As soon as I hung up the phone, I heard someone behind me yelling, "Go back to your country you Muslim bitch. Your people are ruining America." - Female, Indian, (18-34)

In the years following 9/11, Muslim, Arab, and South Asian communities in the United States have continued to face a wave of anti-immigrant rhetoric, bigotry, and violence.²¹ From the USA PATRIOT Act of 2001 to the Muslim Ban of 2017, the federal government has continued to enact policies that allow the legal racial profiling of South Asians, Muslims, Sikhs, Hindus, Middle Easterners, Arabs, and others who fit the imagined profile of what a terrorist looked like.²² Since then, hate crimes have continued and intensified, being encouraged by people at the highest levels of government who are entrusted with protecting the people.

In addition, despite their ethnic diversity, Asian American Pacific Islanders are often misjudged as a monolithic group with identical histories, concerns and circumstances. Consequently, acts of anti-Asian sentiment, while targeting specific ethnic groups within the Asian American Pacific Islander community (such as Indian, Filipino, or Korean), fail to differentiate between these groups, turning any member of any AAPI community into a potential victim.

"I am a young adult going to community college outside of Chicago. We were studying about health disparities and a classmate of mine kept joking about how Indians have so many health problems because of our diet. They ignored my ideas about genetics and kept blaming it on Indian food, unhealthy cooking styles and unhygienic Indian restaurants that are spreading illnesses in the US. They said if we cannot eat American food, we should go back to our native country and live there." - Indian (18-34)

²¹ "Underreported Under Threat: Hate Crime in the United States and the Targeting of Arab Americans," Arab American Institute, July 31, 2018, <https://www.aaiusa.org/library/under-reported-under-threat>.

²² "PATRIOT Act," Electronic Frontier Foundation, accessed May 27, 2024, <https://www.eff.org/issues/patriot-act>.

Timeline

This is evident in the prevalence of hate violence perpetuated through false stereotypes, including labeling individuals as "terrorists" or "perpetual foreigners," resulting in higher rates of racial slurs (36% among South Asians compared to 23% among whites) and harassment (22% among South Asians compared to 16% among whites) nationally. Nearly half of South Asians in the U.S. also reported experiencing microaggressions (45% compared to 19% among whites).²³

For South Asians, hate violence often manifests through assumptions of uniformity (e.g., treating all South Asians as identical), suspicion of terrorism (e.g., heightened scrutiny and suspicion), objectification (e.g., focusing on physical appearance and attire), assumptions of inferiority (e.g., in employment and housing opportunities), and microinvalidations, leading to experiences such as discriminatory searches while traveling and being told to "go back to your country."²⁴

The pervasive model minority stereotype further obscures public understanding of this cycle of violence. Moreover, it hinders marginalized South Asian Americans from accessing essential support, especially in light of escalating xenophobic political discourse and hate violence.²⁵

Even as our communities continue to be one of the fastest growing demographics in the United States, we face the brunt of post-9/11 era suspicion, surveillance, deportations, and hate violence in states like Illinois. For example, in 2012, a mass shooting left six people dead, and four others injured at a Sikh temple in Oak Creek, Wisconsin.²⁶ The shooter, like many other mass shooters, had ties to white supremacist groups which specifically target the Sikh community. **Today, while anti-Asian hate continues to grow year after year since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, anti-South Asian hate stands alongside as a major problem within our country and communities.**

²³ Caitlin L. McMurtry et al., "Discrimination in the United States: Experiences of Asian Americans," *Health Services Research* 54, no. 2 (2019): 1419–30, <https://doi.org/10.1111/1475-6773.13225>.

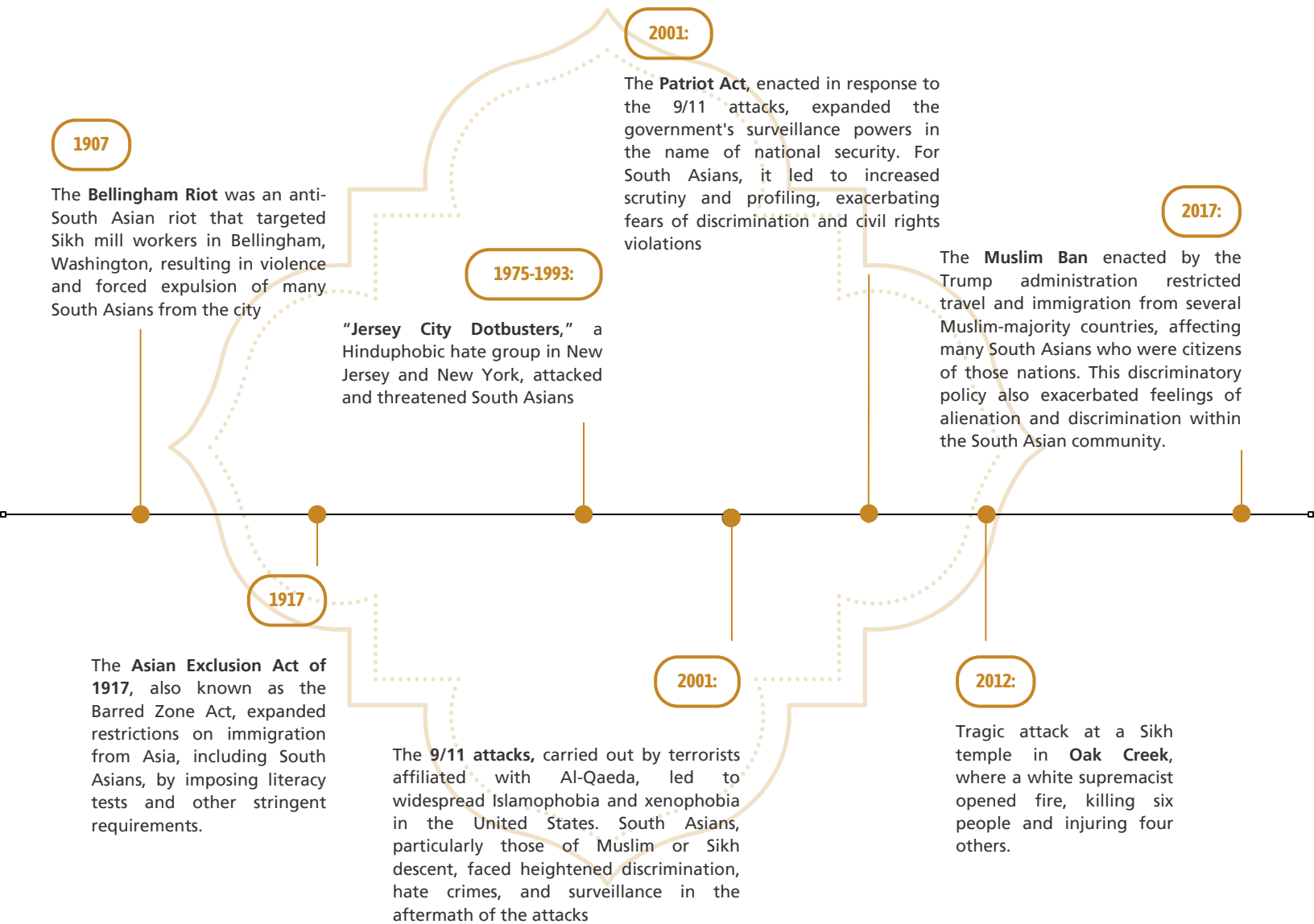
²⁴ Tracey Kumar, "'How Do You Know He's Not a Terrorist?': Examining Microaggressions against People of South Asian Descent," *Multicultural Education* 24, no. 1 (Fall 2016): 12–18.

²⁵ South Asian Americans Leading Together, "Power, Pain, Potential: South Asian Americans at the Forefront of Growth and Hate in the 2016 Election Cycle," 2017, https://saalt.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/01/SAALT_Power_rpt_final3_lorez.pdf.

²⁶ "For Sikh Community, 2012 Oak Creek Shooting Feels like a Warning That Wasn't Heeded - WPR," accessed May 27, 2024, <https://www.wpr.org/culture/sikh-community-2012-oak-creek-shooting-feels-warning-wasnt-heeded>.

Timeline

HATE CRIMES AGAINST SOUTH ASIAN AMERICANS IN THE UNITED STATES



Hate Incidents in the News

EXAMPLES OF HATE INCIDENTS COMMITTED WITH AN ADDED BIAS AGAINST SOUTH ASIAN COMMUNITIES IN THE UNITED STATES, 2021-24



(4/2021 – Brooklyn, NY) Sikh Hammer Attack
Victim: Suspect Said, 'You're Not My Brother.
You're Not the Same Skin. I Don't Like You'



(8/2022 – Dallas, TX) Texas woman arrested for hate crime against Indians in viral video



(4/2021 – Indianapolis, IN) FedEx facility shooting kills 8 in Indianapolis



(8/2022 – Fremont, CA) Man charged with hate crime after rant at California Taco Bell caught on video



(8/2022 – Queens, NY) Vandalism of second Gandhi statue in New York City prompts calls for hate crime charges



(1/2023 – Seattle, WA) Seattle Police Officer Who Struck and Killed Graduate Student From India Won't Face Felony Charges

Hate Incidents in the News

EXAMPLES OF HATE INCIDENTS COMMITTED WITH AN ADDED BIAS AGAINST SOUTH ASIAN COMMUNITIES IN THE UNITED STATES, 2021-24



(4/2023 – Minneapolis, MN) Suspect vandalizes St. Paul mosque weeks after two Minneapolis mosque fires



(12/2023 – Newark, CA) Hindu temple vandalized with anti-India, pro-Khalistan graffiti in US



(5/2023 – Saint Paul, MN) Arson attack on mosque in Minnesota



(1/2024 – Hayward, CA) Hindu temple in US California defaced with pro-Khalistani graffiti



(7/2023 – San Francisco, CA) Indian consulate in San Francisco set on fire by Khalistan supporters; US calls it criminal offense



(2/2024 – Chicago, IL) How an Indian student was brutally beaten in yet another attack in the US

Data Discrepancy

THE LACK OF SOUTH ASIAN AMERICAN HATE CRIME DATA

There is no consistently reliable or comprehensive repository of data on anti-South Asian hate crimes in the United States, much as there is for hate crime data in the country as a whole. Numerous hate crimes occur without ever being reported, meaning that the official FBI statistics represent only a small portion or the minimum estimate of the extensive violence happening nationwide.²⁷ This **discrepancy** is often referred to by advocates as the "**justice gap**," highlighting the significant disparity between the true scope of hate crimes experienced across the country and the limited number that are reported and addressed by the criminal justice system.

We can attribute this discrepancy to two reasons: the ineffective hate crime data collection system; and a weak relationship between the U.S. government and the communities it serves.

THE INEFFECTIVE HATE CRIME DATA COLLECTION SYSTEM

The first significant challenge stems from the absence of a unified and standardized system for collecting hate crime data across states and localities in the United States. **Unlike many other issues, there is no federal requirement for states or local governments to report hate crime data to the FBI, resulting in disparities and gaps in reporting.** With each state and local agency maintaining their own definitions, criteria, and reporting protocols, the task of compiling accurate and comprehensive national hate crime data is hindered. Consequently, only a small number of agencies across the country submit hate crime data to the FBI. Despite the existence of approximately 18,000 federal, state, county, and local law enforcement agencies in the United States, only 15,588 participated in the FBI's UCR Hate Crimes Statistics in 2019. Nationwide 2,172 agencies reported any hate crime incidents in the same year.

The second major challenge is that many agencies lack the training to identify, report and respond to hate crimes. **Many police departments hold misconceptions regarding the handling of hate crimes. Following 9/11, some officers chose not to categorize certain crimes as potential hate crimes, leading to a lack of further investigation into potential bias motives.** For instance, Kripa Ubadhyay, program coordinator for the Anti-Discrimination and Hate Crimes Program of the South Asian Network (SAN), highlighted a case involving two Bangladeshi Muslims who were subjected to a gunpoint robbery accompanied by ethnic slurs.²⁸

The responding officers initially classified the incident solely as a robbery, resulting in months passing without an investigation into possible bias motivations. It was only after SAN directly appealed to the Los Angeles County's bias crime investigator that the matter was recorded and examined as a potential hate crime.

²⁷ Movement Advancement Project, "Policy Spotlight: Hate Crime Laws."

²⁸ "We Are Not the Enemy."

Data Discrepancy

Even if a hate crime is reported to the police, local law enforcement agencies may not consistently or reliably collect or report those data to the FBI. There are multiple steps between a person experiencing a hate crime and that crime eventually being reported to the FBI. Each of these steps presents unique challenges to—and opportunities for bias in—data collection and reporting. Only 14 states have laws requiring that officers be trained to identify and investigate hate crimes.²⁹

The absence of federal and disaggregated data specifically focused on South Asian Americans, beyond Indian-Americans, creates substantial challenges in conducting realistic and comprehensive demographic analyses of our communities as a whole.³⁰ This **fragmented approach** to data collection **obstructs a holistic understanding of the prevalence of anti-South Asian hate crimes** and **impedes the development of effective prevention and response strategies** and the **formulation of effective national policies and resource allocation to combat hate crimes**.

THE SOUTH ASIAN EXPERIENCE

“Called sand n----- and terrorist after 9/11 walking with friend wearing hijab. We have to get change the culture and encourage our elders to talk about it and report it. My parents said racism is the price we pay to live here. That’s not okay.” - Female, Pakistani (35-54)

“When my friends and I were going outside for recess, a student came up to us and said “you can’t sit with guys but you can easily bomb a lot of people - makes sense”. And this wasn’t the first time either, this student would constantly belittle the South Asian students in the class for their accent, food, and culture yet no adult took any action. I did not take any action. I told my mother but because of her immigrant status, we didn’t want to exacerbate the issue. Additionally, it was difficult to take action in regards to asking teachers as they would usually side with white peers too.” - Female, Pakistani (18-34)

“I would often be talked to in a supposedly Indian accent, asked questions about my religion and why we worship an elephant god by a classmate of mine. I never liked it and even tried to communicate that but it did not matter. I told my parents but they did not want to report it to the school” - Male, Indian (18-34)

Within the South Asian American community, language and cultural barriers significantly restrict the reporting of anti-South Asian hate in the United States. South Asians with limited proficiency in English may encounter challenges in accessing essential resources, such as reporting forms, hotlines, legal assistance, or counseling services, thus hindering their ability to report instances of hate.³¹

²⁹ “Hate Crimes, Explained,” Southern Poverty Law Center, accessed May 27, 2024, <https://www.splcenter.org/hate-crimes-explained>.

³⁰ Supriya Misra et al., “Health Implications of Racialized State Violence Against South Asians in the USA,” *Journal of Racial and Ethnic Health Disparities* 9, no. 1 (February 2022): 1–8, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s40615-021-01219-w>.

³¹ Stanford Law School, “Exploring Alternative Approaches to Hate Crimes,” Stanford Law School, accessed May 27, 2024, <https://law.stanford.edu/publications/exploring-alternative-approaches-to-hate-crimes/>.

Data Discrepancy

This limited access to resources is particularly prevalent in states where there is insufficient emphasis on documenting and prosecuting hate crimes. Moreover, in many cases, police departments lack officers fluent in Asian languages, even in metropolitan areas with substantial AAPI populations.³² South Asians often hail from cultures that prioritize collective values over individual concerns, leading to reluctance in reporting hate incidents for fear of bringing shame or burden to their families or community.

This hesitance is especially prevalent when incidents are perceived as less severe, with individuals often encouraged to overlook or handle them internally within the family. Additionally, some South Asians may hesitate to report hate incidents due to concerns about retaliation or repercussions from the perpetrator or law enforcement.³³ This apprehension is heightened for undocumented South Asians, who fear deportation, and others who lack trust in law enforcement due to previous experiences of harassment or discrimination. Such reluctance to report is not exclusive to South Asian communities but reflects a broader issue stemming from a profound lack of trust in law enforcement, shaped by flawed surveillance, national security, and racial profiling policies and practices over the past 15 years.³⁴

Even those in the community who haven't directly experienced injustice may feel apprehensive about speaking out. Some community members have expressed strained relationships and a loss of confidence in the government's ability to protect them when needed. Subsequently, some choose not to report incidents due to a belief that law enforcement would be unresponsive, inefficient, or even detrimental to the victim. Moreover, the perceived complexity and time-consuming nature of the legal process may further deter victims, especially if they are unfamiliar with hate crime laws or enforcement procedures. They might not recognize the bias motivation behind the crime or understand what constitutes a hate crime.³⁵

If the majority of hate crime victims do not seek assistance from authorities initially, the conventional legal framework fails to address the needs of most victims. Underreporting of hate crimes not only hampers the government's or public's ability to grasp the full extent of the issue but, more critically, it signifies that the principal recourse for addressing hate crimes falls short in addressing the majority of incidents. Consequently, essential resources are not allocated to the South Asian communities that require them.³⁶

³² "U.S. Commission on Civil Rights Releases Report: The Federal Response to Anti-Asian Racism in the United States," accessed May 27, 2024, <https://www.usccr.gov/news/2023/us-commission-civil-rights-releases-report-federal-response-anti-asian-racism-united>.

³³ Deepa Iyer, "Federal Civil Rights Engagement with Arab & Muslim American Communities Post-9/11," 2012, <https://saalt.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/09/SAALT-Statement-for-U.S.-Commission-on-Civil-Rights-December-2012.pdf>.

³⁴ South Asian Americans Leading Together, "Power, Pain, Potential: South Asian Americans at the Forefront of Growth and Hate in the 2016 Election Cycle."

³⁵ Stanford Law School, "Exploring Alternative Approaches to Hate Crimes."

³⁶ Stanford Law School.

Reporting Infrastructure

REVIEW OF HATE CRIME REPORTING INFRASTRUCTURE

The words and actions of government officials can foster an environment where hate crimes are not only tolerated but also encouraged. It is the duty of the government and its representatives to ensure the safety of our nation and its citizens by promoting the core values of diversity and equality that our country was built upon. The current era, characterized by a rise in both hate violence and awareness of racial justice, necessitates a reevaluation of our approach to hate crimes. Historically, hate crime laws have been the main legal mechanism for addressing crimes motivated by hate. These laws play a crucial role in recognizing the unique harm caused to both individual victims and the wider communities impacted by these crimes.³⁷ In light of this, SAAPRI assessed the current state of hate crime reporting on a national level and within Illinois, with a particular focus on the South Asian American community.

THE NATIONAL LANDSCAPE

Nationally, significant changes to hate crime laws were prompted by the mass shooting at a Sikh temple in Oak Creek, Wisconsin, which resulted in six dead and four others injured.³⁸ Before this tragic event, the FBI's hate crime data collection form did not specifically account for attacks against Sikhs, Hindus, or Arabs.³⁹ Given the numerous hate crimes targeting South Asian, Muslim, Sikh, Hindu, Middle Eastern, and Arab individuals, especially post-September 11, 2001, it became essential to include these specific categories to comprehensively understand and address the extent of hate violence against these communities. The absence of detailed data hindered a complete grasp of the frequency, underlying causes, and possible solutions for hate violence.

In the aftermath of this tragedy, numerous AAPI-focused civil rights organizations, including SAAPRI, advocated for policy changes to prevent future hate crimes by calling for a congressional hearing.⁴⁰ This joint effort among advocacy groups of various races and religions, along with members of Congress, led to a national hearing titled "Hate Crimes and the Threat of Domestic Extremism" in the Senate Judiciary Committee. This hearing amplified the voices of those affected and brought greater public and media attention to the issue of hate violence. As a result of these coordinated advocacy efforts, the FBI reintroduced Code 31 to UCR hate crime data collections in 2015, adding new bias motivation codes for anti-Sikh hate crimes, anti-Hindu hate crimes, and five other religious bias categories.⁴¹ Today, SAAPRI and other organizations continue to work with the FBI and the DOJ to ensure these changes are implemented effectively, meaningfully, and in a culturally competent manner.

³⁷ Movement Advancement Project, "Policy Spotlight: Hate Crime Laws."

³⁸ "For Sikh Community, 2012 Oak Creek Shooting Feels like a Warning That Wasn't Heeded - WPR."

³⁹ South Asian Americans Leading Together, "Under Suspicion, Under Attack Xenophobic Political Rhetoric and Hate Violence against South Asian, Muslim, Sikh, Hindu, Middle Eastern, and Arab Communities in the United States."

⁴⁰ South Asian American Policy & Research Institute, "Recommendations to Federal Bureau of Investigation Advisory Policy Board," 2012, <http://www.saapri.org/content/wp-content/uploads/2013/03/2012-12-15-SAAPRI-Statement-to-FBI-APB.pdf>.

⁴¹ "Underreported Under Threat."

Reporting Infrastructure

THE STATE OF ILLINOIS LANDSCAPE

In 2023, Chicago was among four major cities noted by the Center for the Study of Hate and Extremism at California State University for setting new records in hate crimes, with anti-Muslim hate crimes experiencing a staggering 300% surge compared to the previous year.⁴² These statistics underscore the importance of examining Illinois' existing hate crime legislation.

According to the Brennan Center for Justice, Illinois' hate crime legislation specifically outlines offenses rooted in the victim's perceived characteristics such as race, color, creed, religion, ancestry, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, physical or mental disability, or national origin.⁴³ Moreover, the law imposes stricter penalties if these crimes occur within religious premises, cemeteries, schools, public parks, ethnic or religious community centers, or public areas. Our Against Hate survey underscores the prevalence of incidents targeting South Asian Americans in these public spaces, which are covered under this law. Furthermore, the legislation categorizes institutional vandalism motivated by factors such as race, color, creed, religion, ancestry, gender, sexual orientation, physical or mental disability, or national origin as a felony. This includes intentional damage inflicted upon places of worship, burial sites, surrounding areas, and personal belongings therein. Our documentation of anti-South Asian hate crimes across the nation serves as evidence of these types of targeted offenses.

Illinois' hate crime legislation mandates comprehensive data collection on hate crimes, emphasizing the importance of accurate and consistent reporting to grasp the full extent of violence and discern evolving trends. Specifically, the state requires law enforcement agencies to submit monthly reports on hate crime incidents, while the Illinois State Police and Illinois Commission on Discrimination and Hate Crimes are tasked with issuing annual reports. This aligns with the obligation for law enforcement officers to promptly respond to, identify, and document all hate crimes, supported by the Illinois Law Enforcement Training Standards Board's responsibility to develop specialized training on hate crime recognition and response.⁴⁴ Presently, the efficacy of hate crime laws heavily relies on law enforcement's ability to respond to incidents, identify hate-motivated acts, gather data, and facilitate access to necessary support services for victims.

⁴² N'dea Yancey-Bragg, "Hate Crimes Reached Record Levels in 2023. Why 'a Perfect Storm' Could Push Them Higher," USA Today, accessed May 27, 2024, <https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/nation/2024/01/05/hate-crimes-hit-record-levels-in-2023-why-2024-could-be-even-worse/72118808007/>.

⁴³ "State Hate Crimes Statutes | Brennan Center for Justice," accessed May 27, 2024, <https://www.brennancenter.org/our-work/research-reports/state-hate-crimes-statutes>.

⁴⁴ Movement Advancement Project, "Policy Spotlight: Hate Crime Laws."

Reporting Infrastructure

Despite the various policies in place, the South Asian American community in Illinois still faces significant challenges due to inefficiencies in the state's hate crime reporting system. In particular, Illinois offers multiple avenues for reporting hate crimes, each associated with different law enforcement agencies that often have overlapping jurisdictions. These agencies include the Illinois Attorney General's office, Illinois State Police, local police departments, county sheriff's departments, and, in specific areas like Chicago, additional bodies such as the Commission on Human Relations and the Illinois Department of Human Rights.

Furthermore, a network of nongovernmental organizations, such as the Anti-Defamation League and Stop AAPI Hate, also receives hate crime reports directly from victims. As a result, victims in Illinois have multiple avenues to report hate crimes and bias incidents and to seek support, but these options are largely uncoordinated and can cause confusion. Without a centralized mechanism to inform them of available assistance, survivors often struggle to find the resources they need and may end up having to heal on their own due to a lack of awareness about existing support.⁴⁵

SAAPRI engaged with several government agencies to understand the existing hate crime reporting systems. Among those contacted, SAAPRI met with representatives from the FBI, the Cook County Commissioner's Office of District 14, the Cook County Commission on Human Rights, the Cook County State's Attorney's Office, and the Chicago Commission on Human Relations. While many of these departments were working on or had already implemented streamlined hate crime reporting mechanisms through community partnerships, events, and training sessions, they still lacked a specific focus on the South Asian American community. This oversight, coupled with factors that discourage South Asian Americans from reporting hate crimes—such as mistrust of law enforcement, lack of awareness about available resources, and skepticism about the outcomes of reporting—results in continued underreporting within this community.

There is a significant shortage of hate crime reporting resources available in South Asian languages. While the Office of the Illinois Attorney General, under Kwame Raoul, provides a hate crime complaint form with resources in Hindi and Urdu, as well as translation services for its civil rights hotline upon request, it does not cover Punjabi and Gujarati—languages critical to the South Asian American community in Illinois.⁴⁶

⁴⁵ Illinois Department of Human Rights, "Illinois Commission on Discrimination and Hate Crimes Annual Report 2022," 2023, https://cdhc.illinois.gov/content/dam/soi/en/web/cdhc/documents/CDHC_2022_Annual_Report%20-%20FINAL.pdf.

⁴⁶ "Hate Crimes," accessed May 27, 2024, <https://illinoisattorneygeneral.gov/rights-of-the-people/civil-rights/hate-crimes/#>.

Reporting Infrastructure

The Illinois Department of Human Rights and the Illinois Commission on Discrimination and Hate Crimes offer Illinois v Hate, a non-emergency hate incident reporting helpline and online portal, but the only languages offered are English and Spanish.⁴⁷ In Cook County, which includes Chicago, the Cook County Sheriff's Office provides a tip form and discrimination hotline with translation services in South Asian languages upon request.⁴⁸ However, the Chicago Commission on Human Relations only provides hate crime brochures in Spanish, Chinese, Arabic, and Polish.⁴⁹ Overall, resources in South Asian languages are often not readily available and require victims to take the initiative to seek out appropriate language support through various, often confusing government channels.

There is a significant lack of cultural competency training specifically tailored to South Asian populations for police officers in Illinois. The FBI Criminal Justice Information Services Division's Uniform Crime Reporting program manual includes a few pages on identifying anti-Hindu, anti-South-Asian, and anti-Sikh hate crimes, as well as on working with victims of these incidents.⁵⁰ However, although recent funding has been approved for the Illinois Attorney General's Office to provide specialized, culturally competent training to law enforcement officers and prosecuting attorneys, developed in consultation with community-based organizations and civil rights groups, there is no clear emphasis on material specifically focused on the South Asian community.⁵¹ Additionally, the Chicago Police Department lacks explicit guidelines in its hate crime policy for working with South Asian victims.⁵² Coupled with the officers' lack of fluency in South Asian languages, Illinois law enforcement currently lacks the necessary training and support to foster a culture of inclusion and sensitivity towards the South Asian communities they serve.

⁴⁷ "FAQ for Illinois v Hate," accessed May 27, 2024, <https://cdhc.illinois.gov/report-hate/faq-illinois-v-hate.html>.

⁴⁸ "Hate Crime Tip Form," Cook County Sheriff's Office, July 8, 2021, <https://www.cookcountysheriffil.gov/hate-crime-tip-form/>.

⁴⁹ "Hate Crime Victim Assistance," accessed May 27, 2024, https://www.chicago.gov/content/city/en/depts/cchr/supp_info/assistance_for_hatecrimevictims.html.

⁵⁰ "Hate Crimes | Hate Crime Data Collection Guidelines and Training Manual (Version 3.0) | United States Department of Justice," September 13, 2018, <https://www.justice.gov/hatecrimes/resource/hate-crime-data-collection-guidelines-and-training-manual-version-30>.

⁵¹ "IL Attorney General's Hate Crimes Law Enforcement and Prosecutors Training | Bureau of Justice Assistance," accessed May 27, 2024, <https://bja.ojp.gov/funding/awards/15pbja-22-gg-01562-hate>.

⁵² Chicago Police Department, "Hate Crimes and Related Incidents Motivated by Bias or Hate," accessed May 27, 2024, https://home.chicagopolice.org/wp-content/uploads/DRAFT-G04-06_Hate-Crimes.pdf.

Recommendations And Conclusion

EDUCATE THE SOUTH ASIAN AMERICAN COMMUNITY, PROVIDE REPORTING RESOURCES IN SOUTH ASIAN LANGUAGES, AND COORDINATE SUPPORTIVE SERVICES

Improving access to public safety information is crucial for ensuring that the South Asian American community in Illinois feels comfortable reporting hate crimes. To achieve this, law enforcement agencies should develop a comprehensive hate crimes education curriculum specifically for South Asians.⁵³ This curriculum should explain what constitutes a hate crime, detail the reporting process, and provide information on where to report a hate crime (such as websites, locations, and phone numbers), what to expect when making a report, how the report will be used, and how to track any actions taken regarding the report.⁵⁴ Additionally, there is a need for a community toolkit with resources for victims of both race- and gender-based violence. Both the curriculum and toolkit, as well as other hate crime reporting resources like Illinois v Hate, must be accessible in South Asian languages, including Hindi, Urdu, Gujarati, and Punjabi.

Law enforcement should actively organize community meetings and disseminate information encouraging victims to report incidents, even if they are unsure if it qualifies as a hate crime, uncertain of its severity, or find the reporting process inconvenient. Moreover, the establishment of a fund to offer temporary financial assistance to hate crime victims would greatly contribute to making South Asian individuals feel supported when facing discrimination and hate crimes.

BUILD A STRONG RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SOUTH ASIAN AMERICAN COMMUNITY AND LAW ENFORCEMENT

Fostering a stronger connection between the South Asian American community and law enforcement requires a three-pronged approach.

There should be a concerted effort to **enhance the representation of police officers to better reflect the racial and ethnic diversity of the communities they serve**, including a specific focus on recruiting officers of South Asian descent. Building relationships with law enforcement is more effective when officers patrol districts and communities to which they belong or feel connected. For instance, in cities like Chicago, this could involve community liaison officers collaborating with community-based and faith-based organizations, which can serve as accessible locations for reporting hate crimes and engaging with South Asian constituents.⁵⁵ Such partnerships have the potential to bridge the trust gap and enable law enforcement to gain a deeper understanding of the perspectives and needs of the South Asian American community.

⁵³ "We Are Not the Enemy."

⁵⁴ Asian American Bar Association of New York, "Endless Tide: The Continuing Struggle to Overcome Anti-Asian Hate in New York," May 31, 2022, https://cdn.ymaws.com/www.aabany.org/resource/resmgr/aavtf/Endless_Tide_Report_2022_FIN.pdf.

⁵⁵ South Asian Americans Leading Together, "From Macacas to Turban Toppers: The Rise in Xenophobic and Racist Rhetoric in American Political Discourse," 2010, https://saalt.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/09/From-Macacas-to-Turban-Toppers-Report.small_.pdf.

Recommendations And Conclusion

There is a crucial need for **enhanced transparency within law enforcement, particularly regarding the reporting and dissemination of hate crime data affecting vulnerable communities** like South Asian Americans. Currently, data disaggregation is lacking in the FBI Criminal Justice Information Services Division's Uniform Crime Reporting program, particularly in its "Anti-Asian" bias category.⁵⁶ Despite the immense diversity within Asian American and Pacific Islander communities, public data seldom provides breakdowns by specific ethnic subgroups and languages.⁵⁷ Accurate and disaggregated data collection is vital to identifying disparities within the South Asian American community and directing resources where they are most needed. Additionally, regular quarterly town halls can promote transparency by reporting on hate crime-related data pertaining to the South Asian American community.

It is **imperative that law enforcement officers undergo cultural competency training to deepen their understanding of cultural and religious practices, fostering trust and rapport with the South Asian American community**.⁵⁸ This training curriculum should incorporate community-specific language for accurately identifying, collecting, and reporting South Asian hate crime data, ensuring appropriate responses to hate crimes and bias-related incidents. This entails thorough reviews of existing training materials and the establishment of robust review mechanisms to tailor future training to the needs of the South Asian American community. Additionally, soliciting community input on policing policies can enhance transparency with the South Asian community.⁵⁹ Part of that standardized training should familiarize law enforcement agencies with language translation tools and develop language assistance services, which would significantly enhance their ability to respond effectively to hate crimes. These improvements could be integrated into the training programs offered by the Illinois Attorney General's Office as mentioned earlier.

In summary, **implementing these suggestions would increase the South Asian American community's confidence in navigating the hate crime reporting system and provide Illinois state and local governments with vital data to better understand community needs, thereby informing policymaking and program development.**

⁵⁶ "Hate Crime Statistics," Folder, Federal Bureau of Investigation, accessed May 27, 2024, <https://www.fbi.gov/how-we-can-help-you/more-fbi-services-and-information/ucr/hate-crime>.

⁵⁷ Stop AAPI Hate, "The Rising Tide of Violence and Discrimination Against Asian American and Pacific Islander Women and Girls."

⁵⁸ "In Our Own Words: Narratives of South Asian New Yorkers Affected by Racial and Religious Profiling."

⁵⁹ Asian American Bar Association of New York, "Endless Tide: The Continuing Struggle to Overcome Anti-Asian Hate in New York."

Appendix A.

Examples of Hate Incidents Committed with an Added Bias Against South Asian Communities in the United States, 2021-24

Date	(City, State)	Description	Legal Hate Crime
1/21	Davis, CA	Mahatma Gandhi statue, located in Central Park, was broken and ripped from the base after having been sawed off at the ankles and half its face severed	
4/21	Brooklyn, NY	32-year-old Sikh man bashed in the head with a hammer in the lobby of Brooklyn Hotel after being spat in his face, suffering internal bleeding. He believes he was targeted because of his turban.	
4/21	Indianapolis, IN	Eight people, including four Sikhs, were victims in a shooting at a FedEx ground facility widely known for employing a high concentration of Punjabi and Sikh workers.	
2/22	Manhattan, NY	Mahatma Gandhi statue, located in Union Square, was vandalized and defaced	
8/22	Queens, NY	Mahatma Gandhi statue at the Shri Tulsi Mandir, a Hindu temple, toppled over, arm cracked, and hand broken into pieces	

Appendix A.

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Date	(City, State)	Description	Legal Hate Crime
1/21	Davis, CA	Mahatma Gandhi statue, located in Central Park, was broken and ripped from the base after having been sawed off at the ankles and half its face severed	
4/21	Brooklyn, NY	32-year-old Sikh man bashed in the head with a hammer in the lobby of Brooklyn Hotel after being spat in his face, suffering internal bleeding. He believes he was targeted because of his turban.	
4/21	Indianapolis, IN	Eight people, including four Sikhs, were victims in a shooting at a FedEx ground facility widely known for employing a high concentration of Punjabi and Sikh workers.	
2/22	Manhattan, NY	Mahatma Gandhi statue, located in Union Square, was vandalized and defaced	
8/22	Queens, NY	Mahatma Gandhi statue at the Shri Tulsi Mandir, a Hindu temple, toppled over, arm cracked, and hand broken into pieces	

Appendix A.

Examples of Hate Incidents Committed with an Added Bias Against South Asian Communities in the Unites States, 2021-24

Date	(City, State)	Description	Legal Hate Crime
08/22	Queens, NY	Five individuals pushed over the Mahatma Gandhi statue at the Shri Tulsi Mandir again before taking turns whacking it with a sledgehammer. The words "Kutta Dog" were also graffitied on the statue's back. The term appears to refer to an aggressive breed of canine that is believed to have originated in Pakistan.	
08/22	Dallas, TX	Four Indian women were hit and shouted racial abuses at, including telling them to "go back to India." The assailant also said "Go back to India, we don't want you here," and "I hate you fucking Indians."	✓
08/22	Fremon, CA	South Asian man shouted at a Taco Bell, including telling him to "pick up [his] bean burrito and leave." Additionally, the assailant said, "You're a vegetarian, right? You don't eat beef. You should eat beef. You Indians should eat beef." The assailant also spat on the man and called Hindus "disgusting"	✓

Appendix A.

Examples of Hate Incidents Committed with an Added Bias Against South Asian Communities in the United States, 2021-24

Date	(City, State)	Description	Legal Hate Crime
10/22	Santa Clara, CA	At least 14 South Asian women, almost always wearing a sari, bindi, or other types of ethnic attire, have been victims of a two-month spree where an assailant targeted South Asian women, tore necklaces off their necks, and sped away in a getaway car. In several cases, the women were injured.	✓
01/23	Seattle, WA	Indian graduate student struck and killed by Seattle police cruiser.	
04/23	Minneapolis, MN	Man started a fire in the bathroom of Masjid Omar Islamic Center. Bystanders put out the fire before it could cause serious damage.	✓
05/23	Saint Paul, MN	Man threw a chunk of concrete at the Oromo American Tawhid Islamic Center, causing an estimated \$10,000 in damages.	✓
07/23	San Francisco, CA	Indian consulate was broken into by pro-Khalistan supporters who raised pro-Khalistan slogans and installed Khalistani flags	

Appendix A.

Examples of Hate Incidents Committed with an Added Bias Against South Asian Communities in the United States, 2021-24

Date	(City, State)	Description	Legal Hate Crime
10/23	Queens, New York	A 19-year-old Sikh man attacked on a New York City bus. Assailant approached the victim by saying, "We don't wear that in this country, take that mask off!" before he punched him in the back of his head, his face, and his back multiple times. Assailant also tried removing the victim's turban. The assault left the victim with "a minor laceration and pain."	✓
10/23	Valparaiso, IN	An Indian graduate student was stabbed in the head at a public gym at Valparaiso University. Assailant said he found Pucha a "little weird" and a threat to him and that he "just reacted" upon it, giving him a wound so deep it reached his brain stem.	
10/23	Queens, NY	A 68-year-old Sikh man killed after bumping his car into another driver, and that driver went on rampage against him. "My father's skull was broken. Two front teeth were gone," his son said. Just one day after the attack, Singh succumbed to his injuries. His son is convinced his father's appearance as a turbaned Sikh was the reason for the brutality. "The guy was addressing my father with his costumes, with his turbans. There was no reason for someone to go in that intensity. My father was targeted."	✓

Appendix A.

Examples of Hate Incidents Committed with an Added Bias Against South Asian Communities in the Unites States, 2021-24			
Date	(City, State)	Description	Legal Hate Crime
12/23	Newark, CA	SMVS Shri Swaminarayan Mandir, a Hindu temple, was vandalized with anti-India and pro-Khalistan graffiti on its exterior walls	
01/24	Lithonia, GA	A 25-year-old Indian graduate student was bludgeoned to death in Georgia by a homeless man whom he was helping for several days. The assailant hit the victim on the head with a hammer over 50 times, causing "severe head trauma." His family suspects his killing to be a hate crime.	
01/24	Hayward, CA	SMVS Shri Swaminarayan Mandir, a Hindu temple, was vandalized with anti-India and pro-Khalistan graffiti on its exterior walls	
02/24	Chicago, IL	35-year-old Indian graduate student attacked by four masked assailants who snuck up and ganged up on him as he was on the way home from the grocery store. The assailants stole his mobile phone and left him with multiple bleeding injuries.	✓

Appendix A.

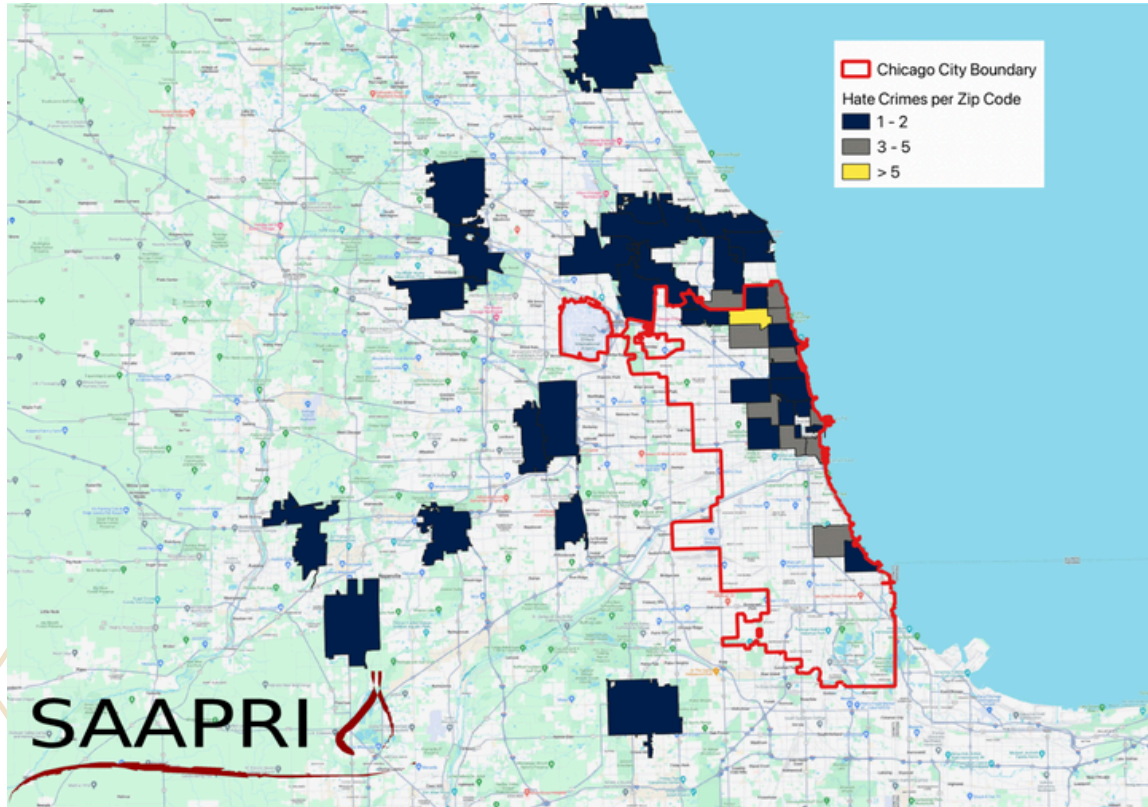
Examples of Hate Incidents Committed with an Added Bias Against South Asian Communities in the Unites States, 2021-24			
Date	(City, State)	Description	Legal Hate Crime
04/2024	Cleveland , OH	A 25-year-old graduate student was allegedly kidnapped and held for ransom before being killed. Victim's father received a mysterious phone call from an unidentified person claiming that his son had been kidnapped and demanding a ransom of \$1,200 to release him. The caller threatened to sell Arfath's kidneys if the amount was not paid immediately. Local Cleveland police launched a search for the victim and retrieved his body from Lake Erie. Consultants to the case believe that the victim was targeted because he was an international Indian student.	

Note: Incidents not categorized as “legal hate crimes” appear to meet the elements of the FBI's hate crime definition but were not pursued as hate crime charges by law enforcement agencies. Nonetheless, we chose to include these incidents in our data to offer a more comprehensive understanding of bias-motivated incidents, particularly those targeting our communities.

SAAPRI acknowledges its limited capacity to capture a complete record of all incidents with bias against South Asian communities in the U.S. Due to both the constraints of our research methodology and significant underreporting of hate crimes, the instances of hate-related incidents mentioned in this report should not be regarded as an exhaustive account of all hate violence directed at our communities during the specified period but rather as a representative sample.

Appendix B.

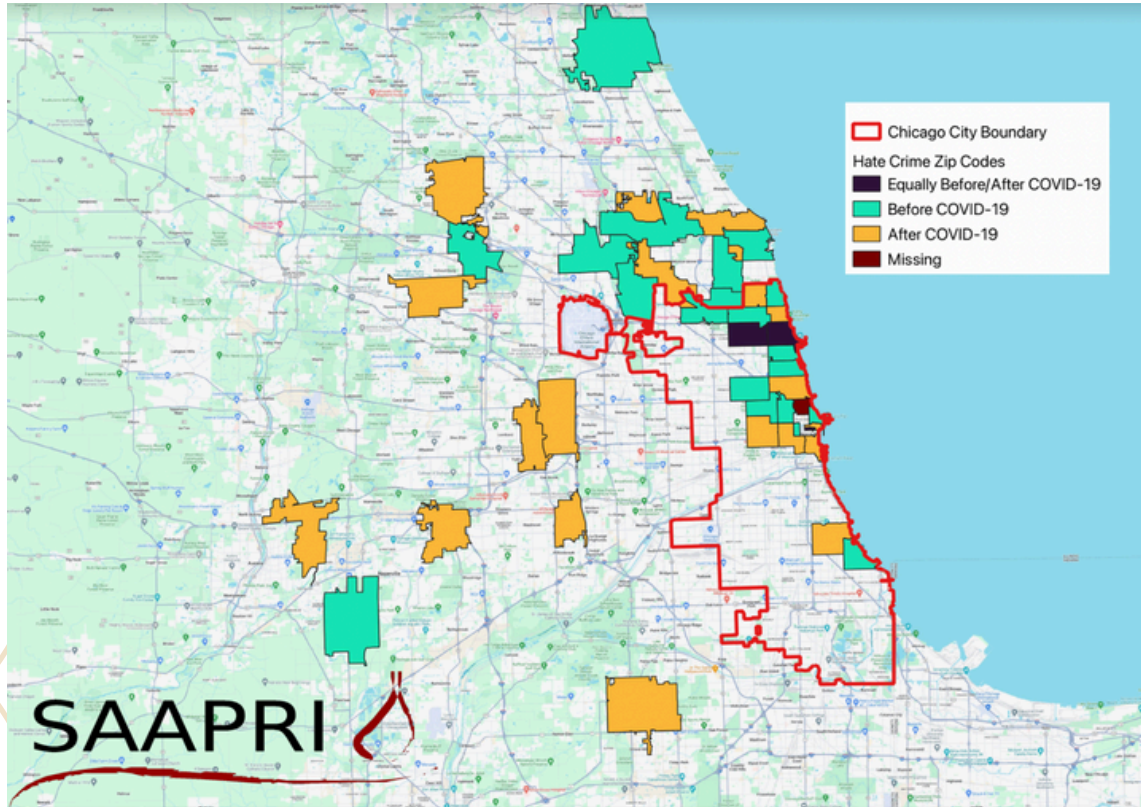
MAPS OF SURVEY DATA: HATE CRIME COUNTS BY ZIP CODE IN THE CHICAGO METROPOLITAN AREA



Note: Since SAAPRI primarily has focused on the Chicago metropolitan area and the majority of our responses are from Chicagoland, we subsetting the map view to focus on northern Chicago metropolitan area zip codes.

Appendix B.

MAPS OF SURVEY DATA: HATE CRIME COUNTS BY ZIP CODE IN THE CHICAGO METROPOLITAN AREA



Note: To visualize the time period when these hate crimes took place, we went through the data for each zip code that had multiple reported hate crimes to determine if most happened before or after COVID-19. For example, if a zip code had 3 hate crimes reported and 2 were after COVID-19, the zip code was determined as after COVID-19.

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