

Toronto

Anti-Asian hate crimes in Toronto continued to rise in 2021, new police data shows

Jews most targeted based on religion, Black community most targeted based on race, report says

[Sara Jabakhanji](#) · CBC News · Posted: Apr 26, 2022 7:02 PM EDT | Last Updated: April 26, 2022



A young boy holds a sign during a rally in March of last year opposing discrimination against Asian communities and to mourn the victims of the Atlanta shootings. (Darryl Dyck/The Canadian Press)

New data from Toronto police shows a continued spike in anti-Asian hate crimes more than two years into the COVID-19 pandemic — but one advocate says the numbers are "not at all surprising."

The city saw another year of increases in hate-motivated verbal threats, physical assaults and vandalism against the Asian, Black, Jewish and Muslim communities, according to a report released Monday by the Toronto Police Service.

A total of 257 hate-motivated occurrences were reported to police in 2021, marking a 22 per cent jump from the 210 reported in 2020.

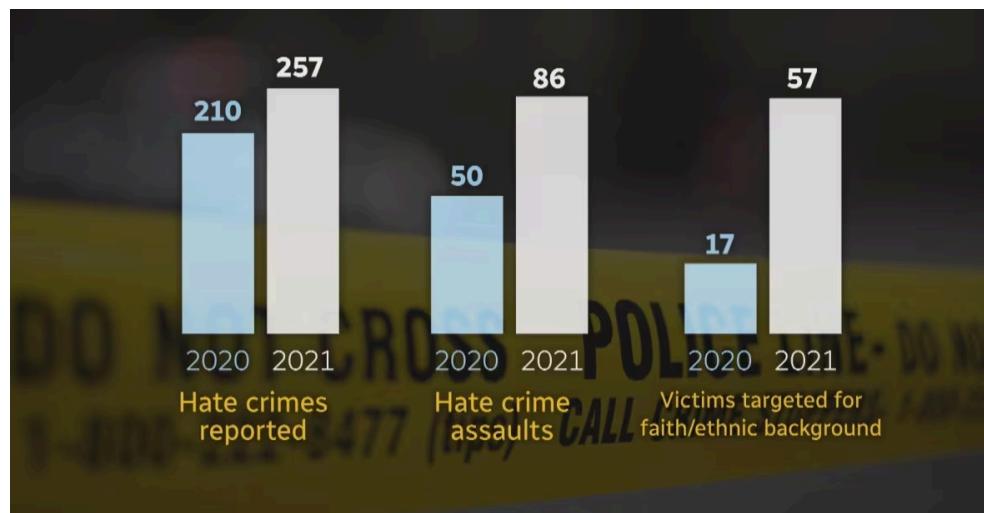
"The reporting done by the police actually suggests that there is still underreporting with respect to this issue," said Ryan Chan, the project lead for online hate and social media with the Chinese Canadian National Council for Social Justice.

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(CBC)

Hate-motivated acts are described as being ethnic or national in nature when victims are targeted based on their perceived cultural traditions or on their perceived country of origin, according to the police report.

The report says the most common motivation overall for reported hate crimes in 2021 was religious identity, ethnic or national origin and race.

The three most commonly reported hate-motivated criminal offences were mischief to property, assault, and uttering threats, according to the report, which is to be presented to the Toronto Police Service Board on May 6.

East, Southeast Asian communities most victimized

The data shows the East and Southeast Asian communities were the most victimized group in the ethnic or national origin category.

Those groups were victimized in 41 of the 57 occurrences in which nationality or ethnicity were the motivating factor — an increase from seven per cent in 2020 to 16 per cent in 2021.

"In 2021, the global coronavirus health crisis and geopolitical events are believed to be key contributing factors to the increase in hate crime reporting," the report reads.

In four hate-motivated attacks, the suspects had put the "blame on China for the COVID-19 pandemic," police say.

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People are pictured here walking through Toronto's Chinatown neighbourhood in March of 2021. According to the police hate-crimes report released Monday, the East and Southeast Asian communities were the most victimized group in 2021. (Evan Mitsui/CBC)

The report says the "notable" increase in anti-Asian hate crimes seen in March of 2021 appeared to coincide with a mass shooting in an Atlanta massage parlour that left six Asian women and two men dead.

In all the incidents logged, police said victims were either punched, pushed, or spat on by the suspects and were subject to derogatory comments.

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Jews, Muslims most targeted religious groups

The report says the Jewish and Muslim communities were the most targeted religious groups in 2021 — 59 per cent of the total hate crimes reported were antisemitic mischief-related offences.

In 56 of the 75 hate occurrences involving religion, the victims were Jewish, according to the report, while in 14 of the 75 hate crime occurrences, the victims were Muslim.

More than half — 42 of the 75 hate crimes — where religion was the motivating factor, involved mischief to property offences, including graffiti and damage to property.

The report also noted that underreporting continues to present a challenge to investigating and preventing hate-motivated offences in various communities.

The Black community was the most frequently victimized group when it came to hate

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Thousands attend a vigil for a family of four killed in an attack Prime Minister Justin Trudeau called an 'act of terrorism,' during a speech at the London Muslim Mosque in June of 2021. (Evan Mitsui/CBC)

Toronto lawyer Tanya Walker says convicting an individual for a hate crime is challenging and that could be partly why people hesitate to report an attack.

"People might be reluctant to come forward because of the repercussions ... maybe more hate or having to deal with tension if it's in a workplace," Walker said.

In court, the burden of proof is on the victim and the Crown to prove that an attack was in fact motivated by hate.

"Motive plays a part in a hate crime and you have to demonstrate a motive beyond a reasonable doubt," Walker said.

"And that's very difficult to prove what's in someone else's mind."

Walker says the onus should instead be on the accused to demonstrate why the act wasn't motivated by hate.

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Chan says he isn't shocked by the rise in anti-Asian hate crimes.

"Of course it's very, very disturbing but unfortunately, it is not at all surprising." he said.

Last month, a report by the Chinese Canadian National Council Toronto Chapter and a

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Violent attacks continued to trend upward, according to the survey, with a 42 per cent increase in Asians reporting people coughing or spitting on them.

"So it seems that a lot of the racism is [still] tied to COVID-19," Chan said.

"But I don't want it to seem like that is the extent of it. Anti-Asian hate actually goes very, very deep. This is just the latest rendition of it."

With files from CBC Radio's Metro Morning and Ali Chiasson

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