

# Why The Hate: The Recent Rise Of Asian American Racism on Social Media

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## Introduction

Since COVID-19 was declared a global pandemic, Verbal harassment, physical assault, xenophobic violence, and racist discrimination against American people of Asian descent have increased more than ever in almost all the America's largest cities, including Los Angeles, one of the most multicultural cities in the world. The pandemic has fuelled long-existing anti-Asian racism, and Asian Americans, who do not have any connection with spreading the virus, have been suffering from being targeted and blamed for the pandemic. People expressed hatred and negative thoughts towards Asian American communities through social media as the pandemic limited in-person interaction and increased time spent on social media. Social media has become a disruptive weapon capable of triggering racist and discriminatory behaviour.

## Psychology behind the blaming of Asian Americans for Covid-19

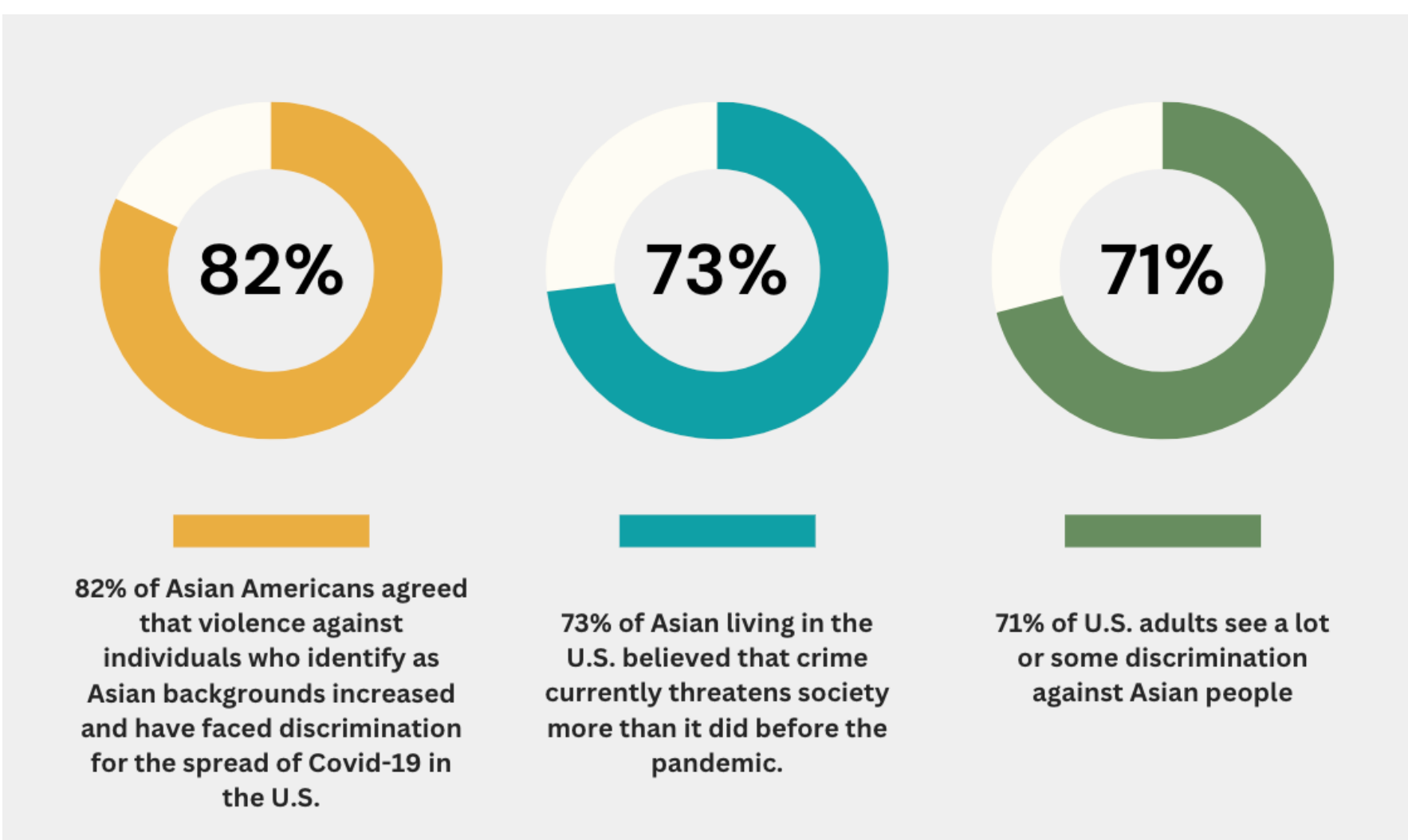
According to the research investigated by Hyunyi Cho and Wenbo Li at The Ohio State University, it was prejudice against Asian Americans that was most strongly linked to beliefs that Asians were responsible for the pandemic and most at risk for spreading it. They conducted a nationwide survey of about 850 American adults between May 11, and May 19, 2020.

### Anti-Asian Crimes increased 339% in 2021

The findings suggested that stereotypical racial beliefs that people already had about Asian Americans were powerful in predicting stigmatization. The higher levels of distrust of Asian Americans was another factor blaming Asian Americans for Covid-19.

## Racism and discrimination towards Asian Americans

The Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) released a report outlining that hate crimes targeting Asians rose 77% in 2020 while the overall hate crime declined. However, the actual number of racist incidents is likely to be much higher than the number of reported cases. Ipsos (2021) conducted a Hard Truth Civil Rights & Social Justice poll to understand the perspectives of the public on the attacks against the Asian community. The sample consists of 1,875 Black, Hispanic, Asian, and Pacific Islander Americans ages 18 and over in the United States.



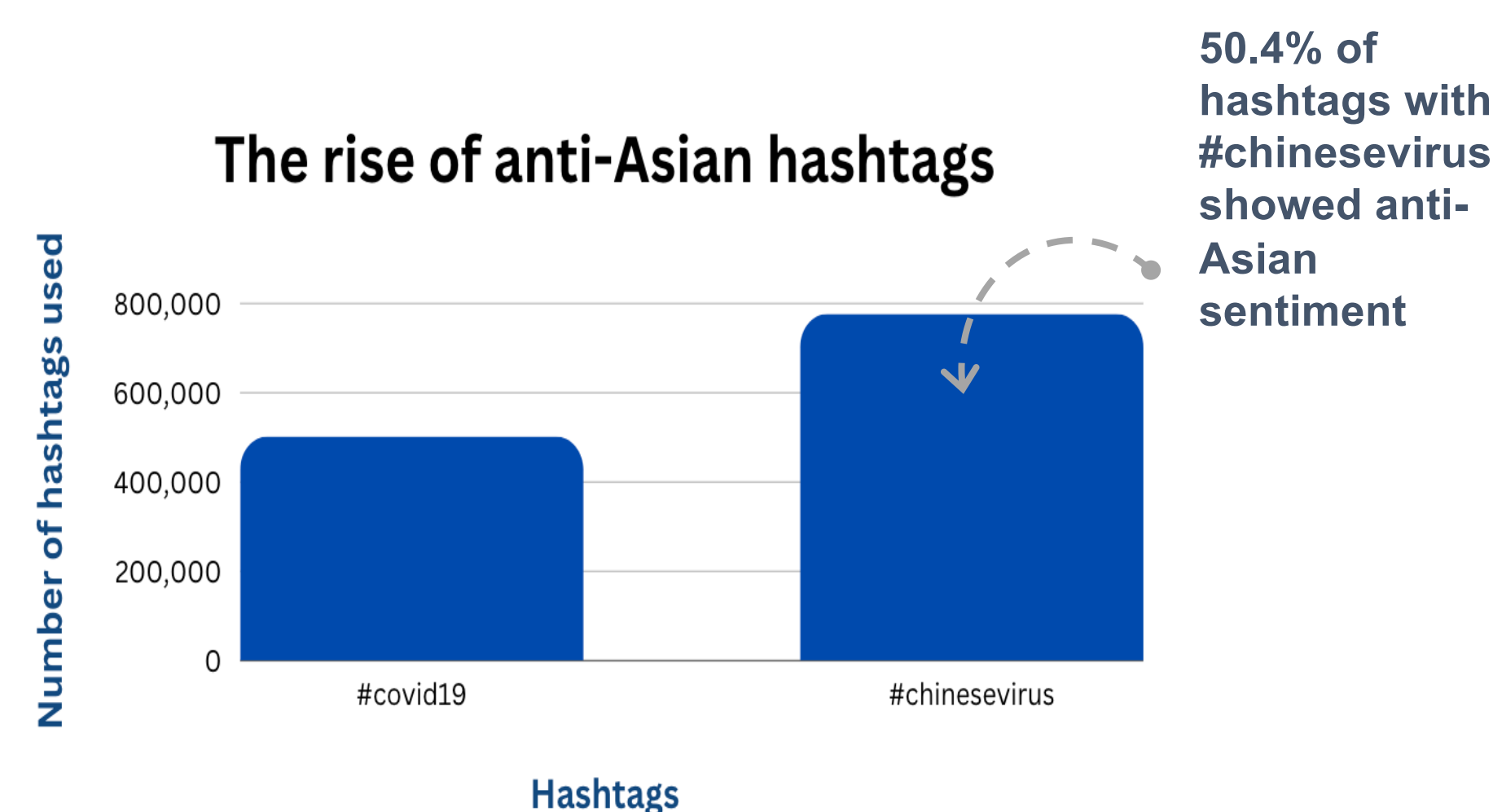
According to the national poll, the majority of Asian Americans believe that Donald Trump's "Chinese virus" tweet and existing racism against Asian Americans are the two significant reasons for the rise in Anti-Asian attacks during the COVID-19 pandemic.

## Social media amplifies racism in the United States

The Covid-19 pandemic affected the global use of social media, and ever since then, many began to rely on online digital platforms to seek information, engage in social interaction, and feel emotionally connected when physically apart. In 2021, Donald Trump called the coronavirus the 'Chinese virus' on Twitter.

The study (Reja, 2021) on the cause-and-effect relationship between Trump's tweets and the rise in hate crimes against Asians showed that his tweets influenced the public to express aggressive behaviour and triggered a massive increase in attacks on Asians. This research revealed that the role of social media during the covid pandemic is more than just a place of interaction but is an ultimate communication tool.

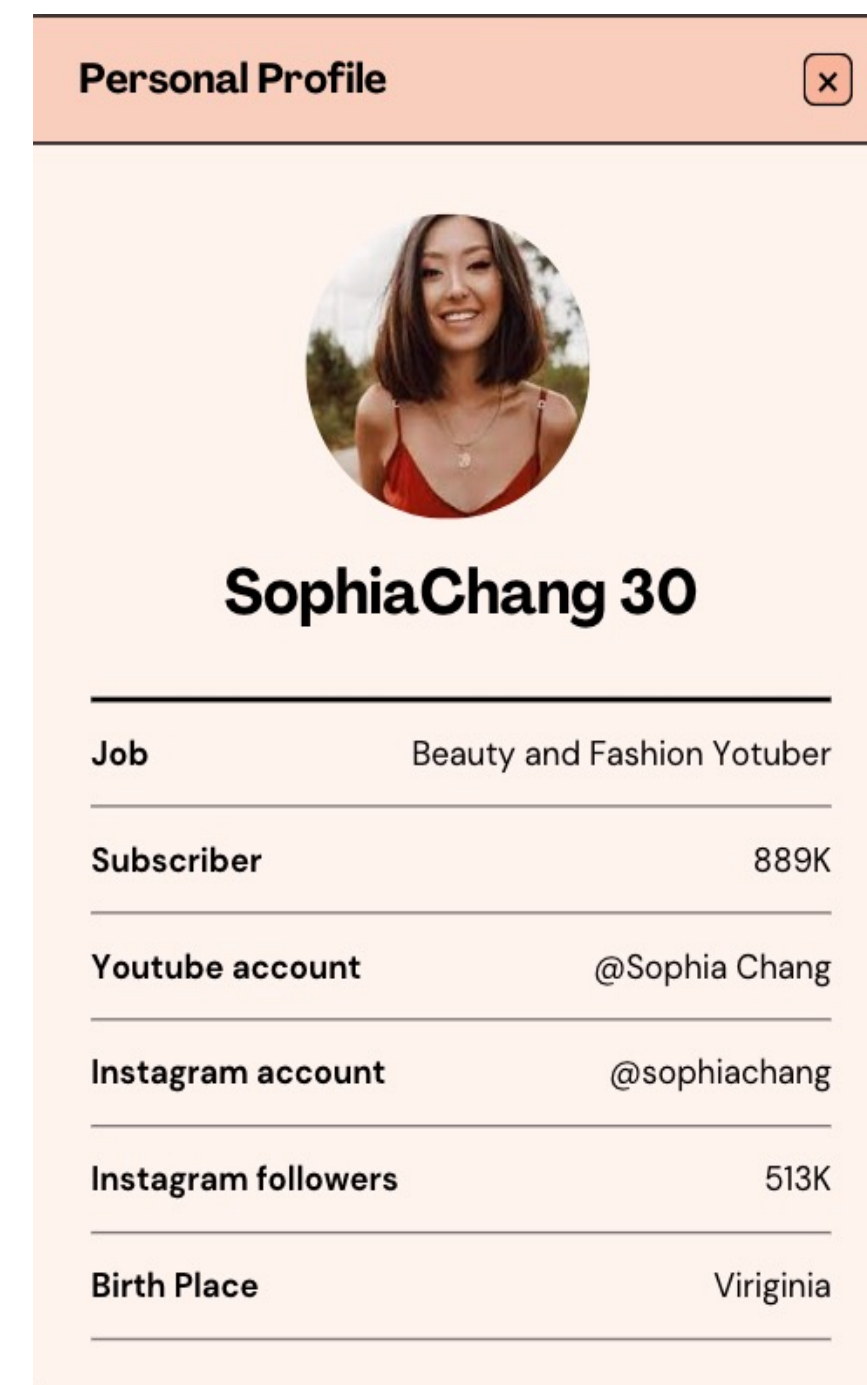
The study, published March 18, 2021, in the American Journal of Public Health, examined nearly 700,000 tweets containing nearly 1.3 million hashtags, the week before and after the president's tweet on March 16, 2020, to see whether his use of the term "Chinese virus" – an expression that public health experts warned against using – may have led others to use anti-Asian language on Twitter.



The results showed a large difference in anti-Asian sentiment between the kind of hashtags that appeared in tweets with #covid19 and those that appeared in tweets with #chinesevirus. About 20 percent of the nearly 500,000 hashtags with #covid19 showed anti-Asian sentiment, but anti-Asian bias was apparent in half of the more than 775,000 hashtags with #chinesevirus.

## Use of Instagram to reveal racism and share experiences with racist attacks

Sophia Chang, an Asian American YouTuber has about 850,000 followers, uploaded an Instagram post sharing an experience of a racist attack at a restaurant in California. She was told to go back to Wuhan, where the coronavirus was assumed to originate, and felt strongly disgusted and disrespected at the restaurant. Influencers were not the only ones who experienced such hate crimes. Justin Tsui, a Chinese American, was told to go back to his country and blamed for spreading illness. Abraham Choi, a Korean American, experienced a hateful attack at the station as a random man approached him and started spitting at him. Thus, these hate crimes do not simply attack influencers but target the whole people in the race.

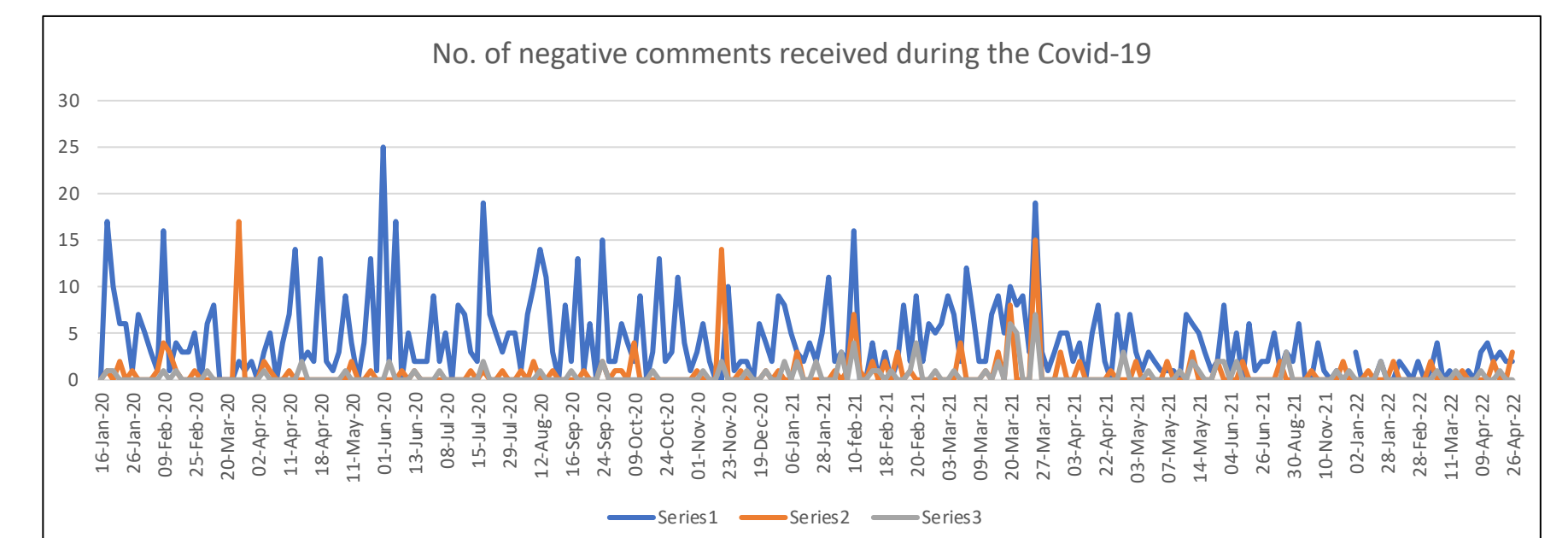


## Online hate and harassment of Asian American influencers/ celebrities

Anahi Viladrich, a professor at Queens College, published a paper in the American Journal of Public Health exploring the rise of anti-Asian language. As a result, he found that social media play a significant role in triggering and contributing to an increase in serious incidents of online hate and harassment during the Covid-19 pandemic.

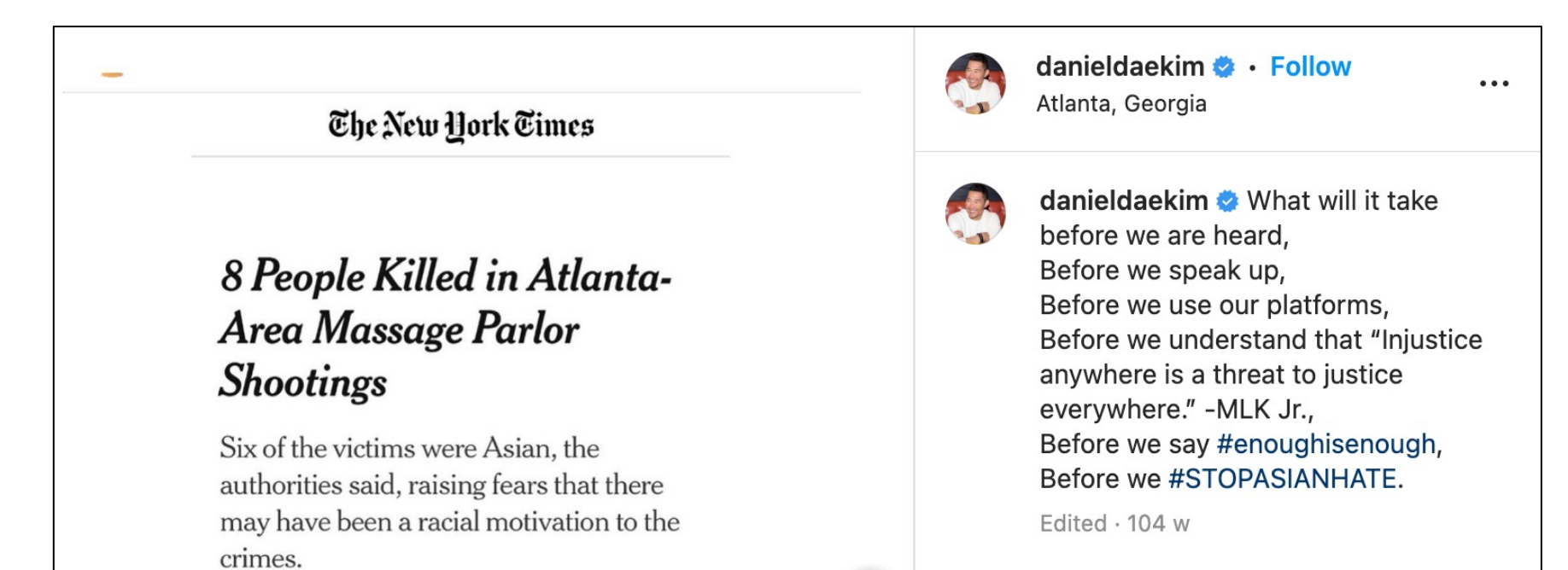
Influencers and celebrities with more than a million followers are being targeted the most as they are the ones who are generally known to the public and their identity sometimes represents certain ethnicity or race.

A new research finds that negative comments and harassment targeting Asian American influencers and celebrities, such as Olivia Munn, Daniel Dae Kim, and Sophia Chung, on Instagram increased during the pandemic.



## #StopAsianHate: Influencers/ celebrities take a stand

Asian American Influencers and celebrities spoke out and rebuilt societies using the hashtag #StopAsianHate on Instagram in response to the recent increased racist violence. Daniel Dae Kim, a Korean American actor, posted a video expressing condolence over a shooting at spas in the US state of Georgia, which killed eight people, many of them women of Asian descent. Michelle Lee, an Asian American beauty influencer, uploaded a video of herself speaking about the problem of senior Asian Americans randomly attacked in a public space and accused of spreading Coronavirus. She strongly advised people to fight against racial violence and help the Asian American and Pacific Islander (AAPI) communities by joining the hashtag movement and raising their voices to reduce racial gaps.



### A New coalition to protect the Asian American community

In the wake of increased Covid-related hate incidents targeting Asian Americans, many Instagram accounts were recently created for the benefit and safety of people, especially Asian descent. Reported hate crimes against Asians reached a peak during the pandemic. A spike in anti-Asian hate crimes incites the rise in the use of digital technology to share and prevent racist incidents against the Asian background community. NextShark (@nextshark), AsianFeed(@asianfeed), and StopAAPIHate(@stopaapihate) are the accounts newly created after the increase in hate crimes toward Asians during the Covid-19 pandemic. These accounts are in use to aggregate viral or trending Asian American news and bring awareness of the possible danger of hate attacks in the local areas.

## Conclusion

The Media shape people's perspectives on Asian Americans and induce people to have negative or stereotypical views about Asian communities. People absorb false news and distorted information about people of Asian descent from various social media platforms, with the number of hours spent on media increased than ever, they are more exposed to invalid content. However, the usage of social media has shifted from the network platform triggering the formation of hate crimes to the solutions to eliminate racial violence. People adopted new ways to fight against racism, using social media as an effective tool to reach out to the community for help and communicate to the outside world about the struggles and discrimination faced by Asian Americans. Regardless of colour or race, all lives deserve to be respected.



## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This work was supported by funding from the Undergraduate Research Opportunity Grants at the University of Utah Asia Campus awarded to Yun Yeong Choi