

VIRUS OF RACISM : Covid-19 & anti-Chinese prejudice in the UK & USA, one year on

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Binna Kandola and Kulraj Bains

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Registered office: Latimer House, Langford Business Park, Kidlington OX5 1GG

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Executive Summary

In 2020, we published research which identified an increase in anti-Chinese prejudice with the arrival of the coronavirus. The objective of this research was to identify whether the levels of anti-Chinese prejudice has changed during the last year.

There are two parts to this research. The first part was a survey, in which 418 people in the UK and 835 people in the U.S participated. The second part was a series of interviews conducted to provide more in-depth information. Interviews were carried out with 30 people from the UK and 30 people from the U.S.

United Kingdom (UK)

250 out of 418 (59.89%) of those who answered the survey said they had experienced an increase in discrimination in at least one of the three questions asked in the period from April 2020 to March 2021.

The total amount of people who had directly experienced an increase in racial discrimination inside and outside the workplace: 214 (51.22%).

Of those in work, 36.72% had witnessed and/or experienced discriminatory events at work in the last year (April 2020-March 2021).

27.65% had directly experienced an increase in racial discrimination from their colleagues in the last year (April 2020-March 2021).

21.96% had witnessed an increase in racial discrimination between their colleagues in the last year (April 2020-March 2021).

Out of 418 people surveyed, 184 (44.02%) said they had experienced an increase in racial discrimination outside the workplace in the last year (April 2020-March 2021).

When asked where these events had occurred, they happened most on the streets (42%), in shops (21%) and public transport (19%). They also occurred in schools, restaurants, online and sports & leisure facilities.

United States of America (USA)

465 out of 835 (55.71%) of those who answered the survey said they had experienced an increase in discrimination in at least one of the three questions asked.

The total amount of people who had directly experienced an increase in racial discrimination inside and outside the workplace: 412 (49.28%).

Of those in work 34.77% had witnessed and/or experienced discriminatory events at work in the last year (April 2020-March 2021).

31.56% had experienced an increase in racial discrimination from their colleagues in the last year (April 2020-March 2021).

29% had witnessed an increase in racial discrimination between their colleagues since the outbreak of COVID-19.

Out of 835 people surveyed, 371 (44.43%) said they had experienced an increase in racial discrimination outside the workplace in the last year (April 2020-March 2021).

When asked where these events had occurred, they happened most on the streets (41%), in shops (27%) and restaurants (14%). They also occurred in public transport, schools, online and sports & leisure facilities

One Year On

Discriminatory experiences for those of Chinese heritage in the workplace varied – people had been excluded from meetings, received increased workloads as well as being beaten up and spat at. Examples were also given of children being subjected to ridicule and exclusion by their peers - sometimes being encouraged to do so by their parents.

Experiences have now become more frequent and severe with many now saying they have become accustomed to the discrimination. Chinese-owned businesses, in particular restaurants and take-aways, had struggled with a number now closed due to them being unable to cope with continued fall in sales.

Specific dates and events which had sparked further increases in discrimination had been identified. In the UK, the Christmas bubble rule changing on the 19th of December had left those of Chinese heritage feeling scapegoated. In the U.S, there had been a spike in incidents following presidential campaigning, interviewees felt presidential rallies and election had re-surfaced racial tensions which had recently been ignited by the racist rhetoric led by Donald Trump and the republican party.

As well as little or no support from others who had witnessed incidents, those of Chinese heritage were shocked that their experiences were not seen as a priority from those who they reported their incidents to. This added to feelings of isolation as well as the continued general lack of concern towards anti-Chinese prejudice.

Few felt that mainstream media had a role to play in publicising the treatment that people of Chinese heritage are being subjected to, however, many felt that the media should no longer be criticised – rather a focus on the behaviour of individuals and society, as well as the lack of action taken by retrospective governments.

Those of Chinese heritage felt like nothing had been done by both the U.K and U.S government. Interviewees felt that their governments had continued to fail to understand the significance of the issue. Many felt drastic measures were not needed, rather an acknowledgment of the issue. A common suggestion had been for the issue to be raised by political leaders at 'coronavirus briefings' throughout the past year.

The brilliant work of support networks and reporting centres in both the UK and U.S should be highlighted. Those of Chinese heritage felt their racial experiences would have been much worse if it were not for such groups and networks being created.

The result of increased levels of discrimination throughout the last year has made those of Chinese heritage feel that they will never be truly accepted in society, with drastic life changes now being made. People are now looking at moving countries, jobs and relocating to be nearer their parents – this is due to an overriding fear that this discrimination will not only remain but worsen due to the inevitable impacts of the pandemic. There is a role for us all to be vigilant to the treatment of those of Chinese heritage and make clear the no tolerance of discriminatory behaviour.

1. Introduction

This research began in 2020 with a message that was sent to one of the authors via LinkedIn. The message, from a client, asked what could be done about the anti-Chinese prejudice that she was facing both in the workplace and in public places. This led to a phone call, which in turn led to research being carried out last year.

The objective of the original research was a simple one: to identify increases in anti-Chinese prejudice since the outbreak of the coronavirus. We found that there had been increases in anti-Chinese prejudice both inside and outside the workplace.

A year on, the objective of this research was to identify whether the levels of anti-Chinese prejudice has changed throughout the last year.

There are two parts to this research. The first part was a survey, in which 418 people in the UK and 835 people in the U.S participated. The second part was a series of interviews conducted to provide more in-depth information. Interviews were carried out with 30 people from the UK and 30 people from the U.S.

We are indebted to everyone who took the time to share their experiences with us, some of which were extremely sensitive and powerful.

We sincerely hope that this report will make all of us look again at the way that people of Chinese heritage are being treated in both the United Kingdom and the United States of America. It is apparent that this is a current issue but also an issue that will remain in the future.

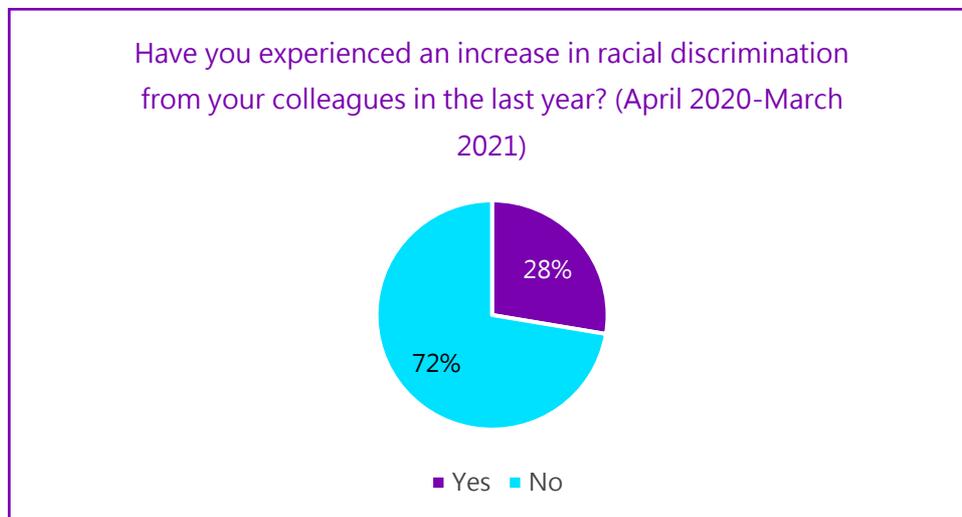
2.UK: Survey Results

In this section we look at the results from the United Kingdom.

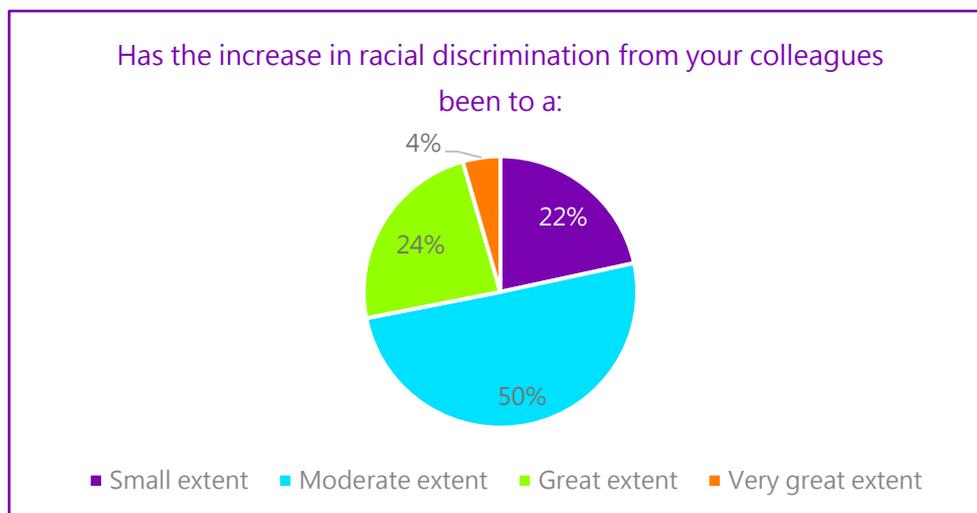
2.1 Workplace

*Out of the 418 people who completed the survey, 263 of them were in employment. (There were also 126 students and 29 people who were unemployed).

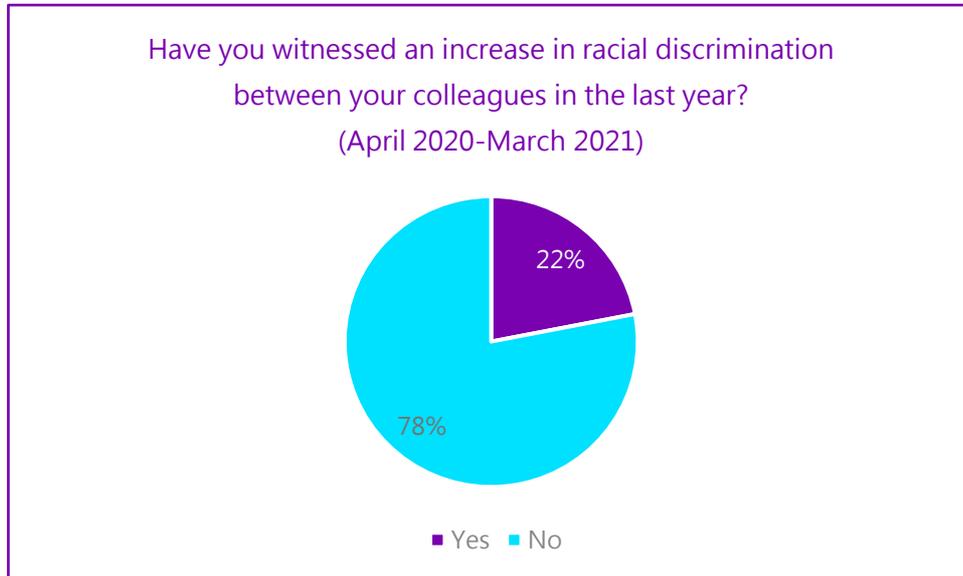
Of those in work, 73 (27.65%) said that they experienced an increase in racial discrimination from their colleagues in the last year. 190 working people (72.35%) said that they had not experienced this.



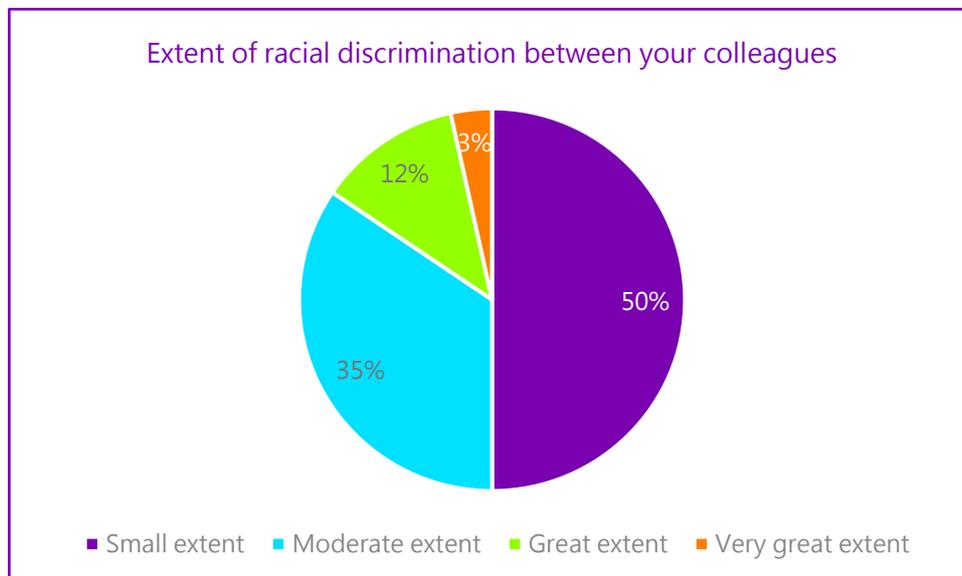
Of those who had experienced an increase in discrimination from their colleagues, 20% stated that it was to a 'small extent', 46.58% to a 'moderate extent', 21.92% to a 'great extent' and 4.11% to a 'very great extent'.



In addition to this, 58 people (21.96%) said they had witnessed an increase in racial discrimination between their colleagues since the outbreak of coronavirus.



Of those who had witnessed an increase in racial discrimination, 50% of people witnessed an increase to a 'small extent', 34.48% to a 'moderate extent', 12.07% to a 'great extent' and 3.45% to a 'very great extent'.



Below are some examples of what people have experienced in the workplace:

Differential treatment

- 'Taken off customer facing role in supermarket. Very sudden and not explained. Happened to both myself and friend of mine I work with who is also Chinese'.
- 'Lack of communication from team, used to be really close team and now they have isolated me'.
- 'I had been told to interact with customers less'.

Racist jokes/slurs

- 'Comments about whether my kids are safe or not at home, seen as jokes but are racist, difficult as manager finds funny also. Worried about career progression. Feel like people have a screen to hide behind now with remote working'.
- 'I know a lot is banter from colleagues but there is a limit especially when you ask them to stop but they persist'.
- ' "I wonder what number 19 is on the menu at the Chinese" '.
- 'Racial comments/jokes made about Chinese people eating bats for breakfast '.

Avoiding interaction

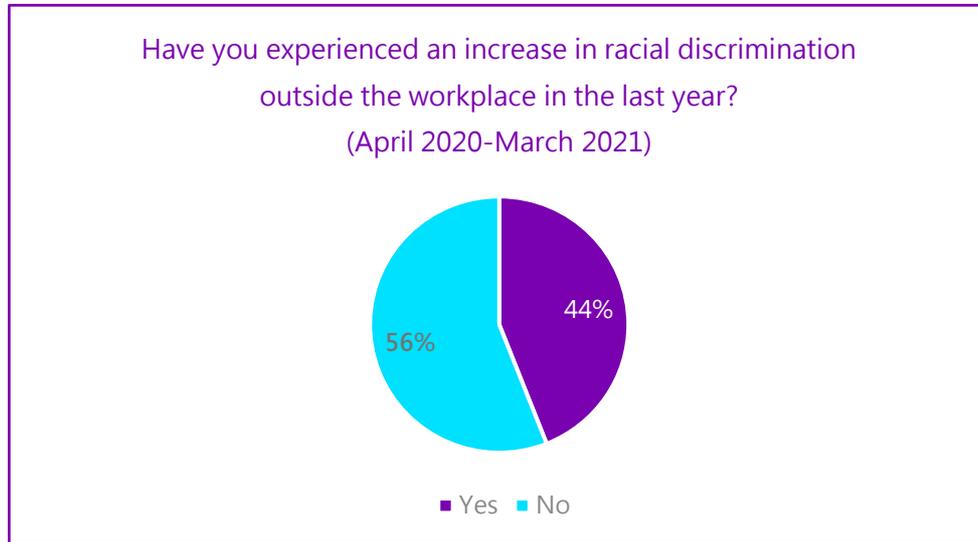
- 'I personally felt isolation from my team, their general attitude changed towards me, even how far away they walk from me, eat from me and even talk'.
- 'They would make small comments such as it's my fault for the 'Chinese virus' and many would avoid me at times, it was subtle, but I could feel their stares'.
- 'Students in my class kept a distance from me and always talking about the "China virus" '.

Wearing of Masks

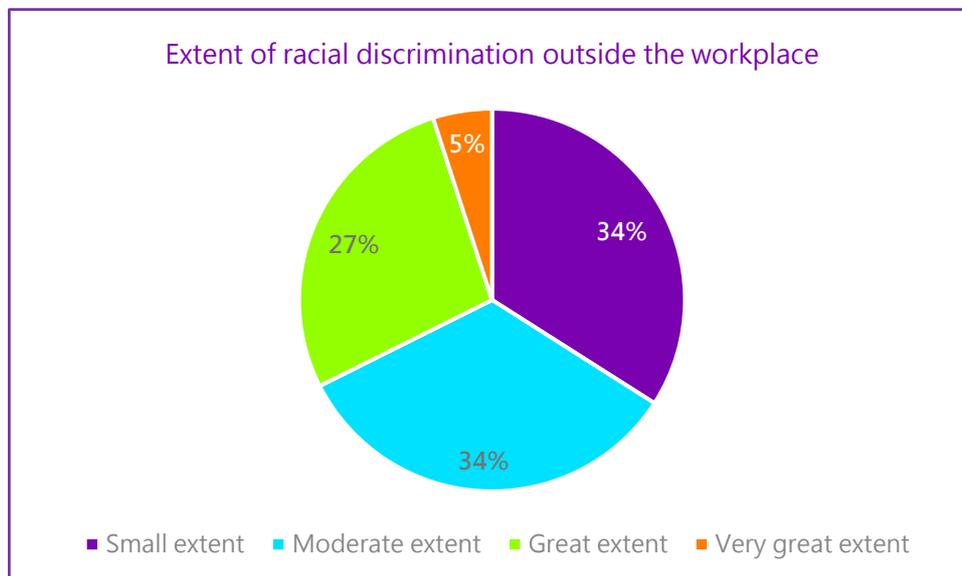
- 'Asking if I had corona because I wore a mask'.
- 'People judge me for wearing masks and take photos of me'.
- 'Colleagues saying my mask smells like soy sauce'.

2.2 Public Places

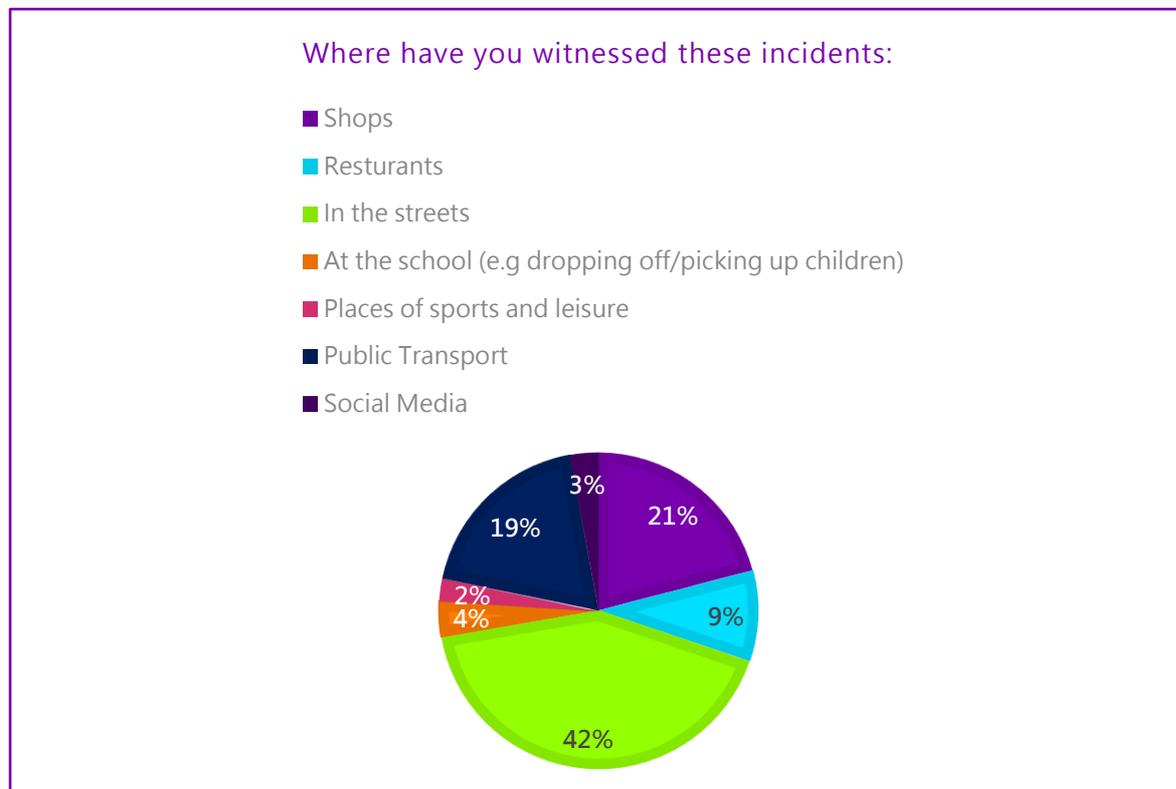
Out of 418 people surveyed, 184 (44.02%) said they had experienced an increase in racial discrimination outside the workplace since the outbreak of Coronavirus.



Those who had experienced an increase in discrimination reported the extent to which they had experienced it, 34.07% answered to a 'small extent', 33.52% of those experienced the increase to a 'moderate extent', 27.47% to a 'great extent' and 4.95% to a 'very great extent'.



When asked where these events had occurred, they happened most on the streets (42%), in shops (21%) and public transport (19%). However, they also occurred in schools, restaurants and sports and leisure facilities.



When asked to describe these incidents, they ranged from being stared at or people avoiding them through to being shouted at and physical attacks.

Below are some examples of what people have experienced in public places:

Discrimination with services

- 'We were told to leave an Indian restaurant for no apparent reason, there were only a handful of people in the restaurant so had not seemed overly busy. It was clear with their approach that they had not wanted us in the restaurant either because of their own beliefs or not wanting their customers (who are predominately white) to see us' .
- 'Someone passed me hand sanitizer in Tesco and laughed'.
- 'Told to wait to be served in supermarket, asking other people to come in front'.

Media

- 'Fake news, media, and hatred towards Chinese'.
- 'People are fuelled by racist media so are being openly more racist'.
- 'Dubious and unproven coverage of the origins of the virus'.
- 'Increasing hostile sentiment online'.

Avoiding interaction

- 'Strangers being unkind and visibly avoiding you despite already being socially distanced '.
- 'People look at me with suspicion and upon seeing me walk further away. People covered their faces when seeing me and started putting hand sanitizer on'.
- 'Mainly sniggering, but generally noticing that people keep unreasonable distances from me compared to others'.

Staring/Dirty looks/Glares

- 'Constant dirty looks from the public'.
- 'When people saw an Asian on the bus, they would avoid sitting next to them'.
- 'People say rude and offensive things on the street or give you stares when you're in a store'.
- 'Side looks, people crossing streets, glares, whispers and all-around unwelcoming atmospheres'.

Verbal abuse

- 'People shouting that I had ruined Christmas, this had happened on a number of occasions in a short period following the announcement'.
- ""You and your people should stick to making rice", all remarks made from afar though'.
- 'Shouting at me "go back home"'.

Physical abuse

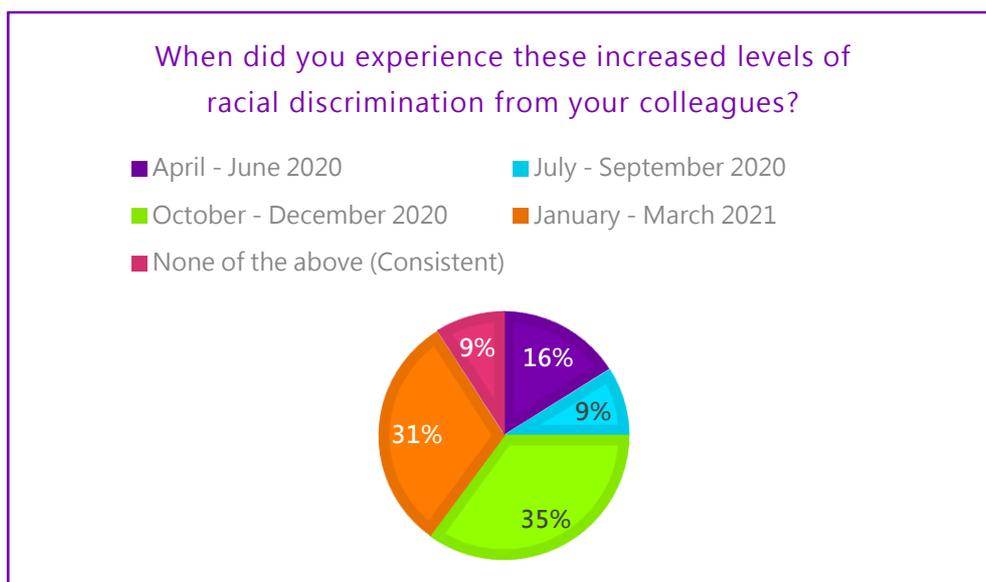
- 'People kick my shopping bag and show me the middle finger and say go back to China'.
- 'The person came and harassed me and attempted to grab the face mask I was wearing at the time. When I moved away, he shouted "coronavirus" behind me'.
- 'I had been on a walk with my daughter and as we were walking, we had rubbish thrown at us followed with "clean that up like Wuhan"'.

2.3 Time of year influencing the increase of discrimination

In this section we look to see if there was a particular time throughout the last year (April 2020 – March 2021) when people of Chinese heritage had experienced an increase in discrimination in the UK.

2.3.1 Workplace

Of the those who said that they experienced an increase in racial discrimination from their colleagues in the last year, 16% said they noticed the increased levels of discrimination were between April - June 2020, 9% between July – September 2020, 35% between October – December 2020 and 31% between January – March 2021 and 9% felt it was consistent throughout the year.



Of those who said that they witnessed an increase in racial discrimination between their colleagues in the last year, 13% said they noticed the increased levels of discrimination were between April - June 2020, 9% between July – September 2020, 28% between October – December 2020 and 41% between January – March 2021 and 9% felt it was consistent throughout the year.



For those who experienced an increase discrimination in the workplace it had been highest during October – December 2020 (35%), the following are a few examples as to why people felt there was an increase in discrimination inside the workplace at this time of year:

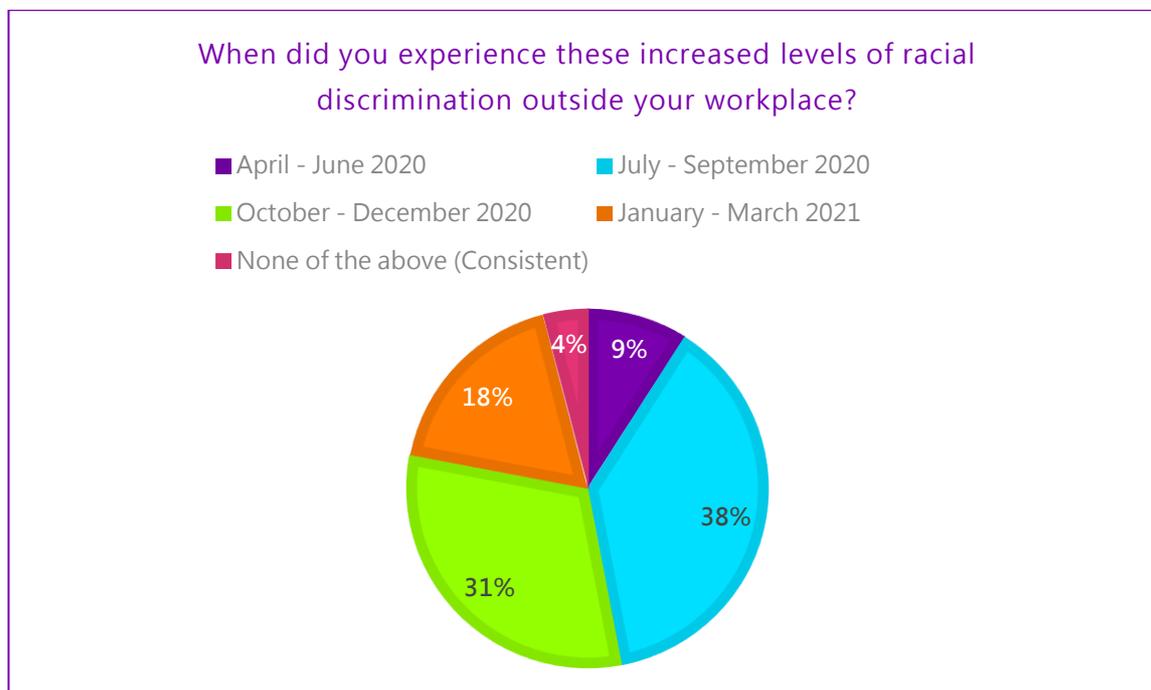
- 'Such a sudden change in attitudes to me after the announcement of the rule change for households mixing over Christmas'.
- 'Only experienced twice and it was the two days before we broke up for festive period'.
- 'The racism I experienced had seemed to be anger from the government changing their 'Christmas bubble' rule. One comment made was "they changed the rule because another one of them has been eating bat".'

For those who witnessed an increase discrimination in the workplace it had been highest during January – March 2021 (41%), the following are a few examples as to why people felt there was an increase in discrimination inside the workplace at this time of year:

- 'The first day back, I was told by a colleague that I need to sort my people out because I ruined his favourite time of year'.
- 'I could feel an anger towards me after coming back from Christmas, two different colleagues said that they enjoyed there Chinese Christmas thanks to me'.
- 'Only in the last few weeks a number of colleagues have started being normal again, I had stopped getting acknowledged by them, someone told me it was because a lot of people made Christmas plans that they had to cancel'.

2.3.2 Public Places

Out of those who said they had witnessed an increase in racial discrimination outside the workplace in the last year, 9% said they noticed the increased levels of discrimination were between April - June 2020, 38% between July – September 2020, 31% between October – December 2020 and 18% between January – March 2021 and 4% felt it was consistent throughout the year.



For those who experienced an increase discrimination outside the workplace it had been highest during July – September 2020 (38%) the following are a few examples as to why people felt there was an increase in discrimination inside the workplace at this time of year:

- 'I had been out a lot more with the eat out to help scheme during August'.
- 'Definitely the governments eating out scheme, it had increased the interactions I had'.
- 'There were generally more people around than before in August'.
- 'My experiences have mostly been from drunk people in the street and there were more of them in august because restaurants were open'.

A similar level of increase had been experienced during October – December 2020 (31%) the following are a few examples as to why people felt there was an increase in discrimination inside the workplace at this time of year:

- 'The governments rule changing for households over Christmas – after a while I started to feel it was my fault'.
- 'Christmas, the change of rule for mixing over this time. I did not experience before or after this period'.
- 'My racial experiences have only been since the Christmas bubble changing announcement'.

2.4 Survey Results Comparison - One Year On

The table below compares the U.K survey results one year on from our research in 2020.

Question	2020 Survey	2021 Survey	Change
Experienced an increase in discrimination in at least one of the three questions asked.	(50.49%)	(59.89%)	+ (9.4%)
Experienced an increase in racial discrimination inside and outside the workplace in the last year (April 2020-March 2021)	(42.7%)	(51.22%)	+ (8.52%)
Working people who have witnessed and/or experienced discriminatory events at work in the last year (April 2020-March 2021)	(29.5%)	(36.72%)	+ (7.22%)
Working people who experienced an increase in racial discrimination from their colleagues in the last year (April 2020-March 2021)	(18.21%)	(27.65%)	+ (9.44%)
Working people who witnessed an increase in racial discrimination between their colleagues in the last year (April 2020-March 2021)	(20%)	(21.96%)	+ (1.96)
Experienced an increase in racial discrimination outside the workplace in the last year (April 2020-March 2021)	(36.5%)	(44.02%)	+ (7.52)

*2020 survey data collected during March 24th- April 1st - there were 412 people who participated.

*2021 survey data collected during March 17th- April 1st - there were 418 people who participated.

3.UK: Interviews

3.1 Background to the sample

Thirty people from the U.K were interviewed as part of the research. The majority (21) of our U.K sample were born and raised in the United Kingdom. Nine individuals were born outside the U.K, three of them in France, two in Thailand and three others in Australia, Switzerland, Germany and Japan.

All thirty UK interviews were carried out via video call. The interviews took place between 26th March and 8th April 2021.

The majority in the sample had been employed across a range of public sector, retail, and professional roles. Two interviewees worked in manufacturing along with three interviewees who were chefs working in the catering industry.

The British Chinese community is very dispersed throughout the country. The parents of all the British-Born Chinese (BBC) came to United Kingdom during the 1960's and 1970's with most of them starting their own businesses. The businesses varied from dry cleaners, takeaways, restaurants, and bakeries.

This sounds ridiculous but the acid attack my dad had experienced was the best thing that could have happened. With there being no shop there was no racism and we as a family were a lot happier. Yes, we had less income, but it got to the point where that didn't matter.

Throughout their education, all but two interviewees had been the only Chinese/east-Asian student. All the BBC had experienced racial discrimination at some point during their education – mocking their physical appearance, racist jokes, and being isolated from a group.

I walked into one of our communal common rooms at sixth form – as I walked in, all eight people left the room as soon as they had seen me. As walking past me, one of them squinted their eyes, whilst another walked by and said, "sorry soy sauce you smell a bit" .

All but two of the BBC parents who had businesses had experienced racism when growing up. Respondents had explained how the racism their parents experienced had a detrimental impact on their up-bringing due to the resentment they developed towards British people. Their parents would not allow them to take part in any after school activities such as sports as well as not being able to socialise with the few friends they had made. As a result, this led to further isolation and an unhappy childhood for the majority.

The racism experienced by the BBC parents who had businesses varied from verbal abuse and physical attacks; car windows smashed, racist graffiti ("go back to china"), name calling, rotten food chucked at houses/businesses. One interviewee told of an acid attack which led to one of the parents being hospitalised and permanent scarring.

Being widely dispersed meant that many families were often the only Chinese people within the communities that they lived and worked in. Several families had closed their businesses due to the racism, many opted for factory jobs - the interviewees parents had experienced less discrimination consequently.

All interviewees who experienced discriminatory behaviour in their childhood and adolescence, said that the behaviour was blatant and direct. Recent, subtle experiences had however been just as impactful, as one interviewee said "You think its subtle nature may not affect you as much, it certainly does. Regardless of it its nature, it makes you feel just as isolated".

Regardless of their discriminatory experiences, those of Chinese heritage felt that they had been through an "emotional rollercoaster" in the last year – recent incidents triggered traumatic memories from previous racial experiences, this is summarised by the quote below.

The incident which occurred in my previous job certainly made this year's experiences worse. It felt like I was going through it all again every time something happened this year.

Those who had not previously experienced discriminatory behaviour, had said they had been shocked by their recent experiences and for the first time questioned who they were and where they came from, "when you have never been racially discriminated it really takes you back. I have looked at myself and questioned myself in a way that I have never before. I have not been the same since."

3.2 Workplace

There were varying experiences across interviewees about anti-Chinese prejudice in the workplace. Many interviewees had experienced racism both in and outside the workplace. For those who had experienced in the workplace, they had described the racism outside the workplace as a “catalyst for a societal mood change” towards those of Chinese heritage.

As one interviewee said:

My experiences outside the workplace in public seemed to reflect what I was experiencing whilst at work. I had only previously experienced racial discrimination in public but there is no safe space now.

Those of Chinese heritage had become used to experiencing discrimination in some form outside their workplaces, however for several interviewees they had now started to face this discrimination at their places of work – one interviewee said “I had not experienced any behaviour like this before. I had not really known what to think. It was the first time I saw myself as a minority and looked at myself as a minority in this country.”

For many it had been a continuation from their experiences following the initial outbreak of COVID-19. However, throughout the last year their experiences had become more frequent. “The remarks were still direct, but they were now more often. Sometimes I am thankful for not being physically attacked, this interviewee had taken a week’s holiday at the end of January because the repetitive nature of her experiences.

I suppose I learnt to deal with it before but now it is just too much.

In the most cases, the subtle or direct nature of the discriminatory behaviour being experienced had remained but as previously mentioned the frequency had increased. An interviewee who has predominately remained working in an office said “the subtle racist behaviours I experience have remained; more blatant behaviour has not yet surfaced. However, the number of times I experience these subtle discriminatory behaviours have been increased. “. Those of Chinese heritage had started to become accustomed to the discrimination they were experiencing and how it was becoming a regular occurrence.

I have started to lose count if I am honest. It has become too much over the last year.

It had shocked those whose previous subtle experiences became more direct and blatant, as they felt their work environment and/or industry would have prevented this. Some interviewees felt that different industries and professions impacted the nature and frequency of prejudice behaviour, however, the majority felt that colleagues, managers, and organisations themselves should be held responsible. As one interviewee said "it does not matter what you do or where you work, discriminatory behaviour should exist. There is no excuse."

Interviewees felt that when managers did not take appropriate action, it would inevitably lead to more frequent discrimination and severe behaviours, the quote below summarises this.

The racist remarks made have been made on group calls where my manager has been present whilst everyone is laughing, surely it is there responsibility to act. Them laughing at the joke is a joke itself. If action is not taken with an incident where my manager is present, what hope is there?

There were several interviewees who previously felt that the corporate environment that they worked in would eradicate any discriminatory behaviour, however, this had not been the case as one interviewee working in London said, "I work for one of the top five accountancy firms, so working as a professional in a leading corporate organisation seems to make no difference."

Many had initially hoped that their colleagues would be proactive with the increase in discrimination towards those Chinese and east-Asian heritage. One interviewee in Edinburgh said, "colleagues need to take a bit of personal responsibility when they are witnessing inappropriate behaviour." There had been very few cases of colleagues reacting appropriately to prejudice behaviour with those of Chinese heritage feeling that the majority could not be empathic.

I can see it being difficult for a white person in England to be empathetic towards a minority as they just do not know what it feels like.

It must be noted that there had been instances where colleagues of other minorities who had also not reacted appropriately – it is not just white individuals. In these cases, those of Chinese heritage had been shocked – the quote below summarises this feeling.

There were one black and one Indian colleague on the call at the time. I am not saying that they had to say or do anything but I thought they could showed support and reached out after the incident.

3.2.1 Positive experiences in the workplace

What our company did was brilliant. It really did lay down the law. It is very simple and easy to do but had a huge impact of showing that there is no tolerance of racist behaviour. I feel it was vital to relate it to those of us from Chinese heritage because I feel we are the forgotten minority.

The quote above is representative of how a few interviewees felt. They had explained how their organisations took a firm stance against anti-Chinese prejudice behaviour.

No new procedures or measures were put in place, organisations had simply brought attention to their no tolerance policies. One interviewee said, "all they did was organise a fifteen-minute call with the whole business and remind them of the no tolerance policy that the business has for racist and discriminatory behaviour. In most cases, organisations had done this whilst highlighting the increase of racial discrimination towards those of Chinese heritage. Interviewees had been shocked at the effect that such small actions could have.

I have not had one bad experience since.

No interviewees had experienced racist behaviour once an organisation had made such announcements. The interviewees felt it could have been done sooner but were glad to have the voice of their organisation, which had made them feel safe and valued.

However, it must be noted that in most cases, there had been individuals of Chinese heritage in senior and influential roles in these organisations. It was felt that no action would have been taken if these individuals were not in these positions – showing that diversity is crucial throughout an organisation.

As one interviewee said:

I can guarantee that it would not have happened if one of our senior executives were not Chinese though. It really does show how important it is for organisations to be diverse as they possibly can.

The interviewees who had not experienced discriminatory behaviour in the workplace highlighted the importance that diversity and inclusion training had on their organisation. They felt it had led their colleagues to be able to work with a diverse range of colleagues, one interviewee said “what were most valuable were everyone understanding that we can have biases, but the importance being identifying and realising them. From there, they can be better understood and eradicated.”

However, it must be noted that interviewees felt that the positive effects of such diversity and inclusion had been because their organisations had taken the responsibility to ensure it were on a consistent basis. Those whose organisations did not ensure such training was delivered on a regular basis saw little or no effect.

We have had some unconscious bias twice over the last six years. I feel it needs to be consistent and reoccurring to see any changes.

3.2.2 Negative experiences in the workplace

The majority of interviewees in the UK had experienced anti-Chinese discrimination in the workplace throughout the last year.

The discriminatory behaviour varied due to the change in working environments in the past year, with the majority now working remotely and typically having more meetings than before the pandemic. However, there had still been several employees who were working in their normal working conditions. The nature of the discriminatory behaviour had been both subtle and deliberate; exclusion, avoidance, racial jokes as well as the majority highlighting a lack of support from both colleagues and managers.

Exclusion

There had been a number of actions and behaviours from colleagues that had led to those of Chinese heritage feeling excluded and isolated, but several interviewees had mentioned how they had not been invited to their online meetings on numerous occasions. At first, they thought it might just be an oversight. However, it was repeatedly happening, they realised that this was more systematic. Some interviewees had contacted the organisers to find out why they were not being invited to the meetings - interviewees explained how it became clear, following several follow up emails and no correspondence, that it was intentional.

The quote below summarises these experiences.

I just kept not getting invited to my Zoom meetings I needed to be on. When I would follow up with the relevant organisers, I would get no response. It had made it difficult as organisers are always more senior. I had really started to fall behind on my work consequently. Because of my lack of work, this led to my manager contacting me which is when the issue got resolved.

In two separate cases, interviewees had joined calls when their organisers of these meetings and work colleagues were joking about them not being invited to these meetings.

They were joking about the disruption they heard I was experiencing. As soon as they had seen me join, it went silent.

All who had experienced this, expressed how difficult it made their work due to missing out on necessary information that they required. This had resulted in increased workloads, missing of deadlines and disciplinaries for three individuals.

In all cases, interviewees had reached out to more senior individuals, with the issue resolved in most cases. However, for some, they found that their behaviour was excused, and the consequence continued with 'such issues being expected' due to the disruption that the pandemic has caused.

A concern had been that those of Chinese heritage had no longer worried about feeling isolated. This thought had been summarised by the quote below.

I honestly do not worry too much about feeling isolated from others, if I get my job done, I do not care, I am a hard worker and have always got my work done. That is what hurt most, being contacted about the lack of and quality of my work.

Such behaviours had been present across banking, technology, engineering, and sporting organisations – “the football world is a very derogatory world at the best of times so the lack of action and amusement at such racist behaviour is no surprise.”

Avoidance and shunning

It became familiar for those working alongside their colleagues to experience unnecessary distances and in some cases total avoidance.

Those of Chinese heritage had understood that safety precautions had been common throughout the last year, however, the incident of an NHS nurse outlined below summarises the excessive and deliberate nature taken.

I had been sat eating my lunch in a room we dedicated for staff during COVID. I had been the only one in there until three others arrived. As they walked in, one of them saw me, looked at me and said, "number 19, coronavirus, no thank you, we'll sit over here" then walked to the furthest corner of the room, tucking themselves uncomfortably in the corner and said, "it's uncomfortable but it's safe."

For those who had been working in offices, they had their desk spaces moved to different rooms, uncomfortably placed in the corner and in some cases on different floors. One incident at a recruitment consultant in Manchester is outlined below.

It had been the first day back after working remotely and we had to set up the offices to be COVID safe. I had arrived an hour or so late compared to the others. They had set their desks up so that they were all sat together, around a big square desk and set my desk up at the other side of the offices, about fifty metres away. I had asked why they had done this and whilst laughing said "we have to be covid secure don't we" .

Being ignored and not acknowledged

Those of Chinese heritage had experienced being persistently ignored and not acknowledged, this had been a constant reoccurring theme for those now working remotely.

As one interviewee said:

It feels like a 'speak when you are spoken to' environment at work now.

This ignorance and lack of acknowledgement had been shown by managers also. One interviewee had confronted her manager as a result, "after everyone delivers in our team, my manager usually asks questions and if not will at least acknowledge what has been said and says thank you. Whenever I delivered, she would just say 'next', it has happened throughout the year and I had enough of it coming into the new year, so I challenged her one week. Funnily enough, it does not happen anymore."

Several interviewees had initially felt that such ignorance would not impact them but it had started to impact them as the year went on, "I started to become really anxious before, during and after calls. I had even started avoiding and missing meetings because of how anxious I became." Another interviewee said "being constantly spoken over and ignored does take its toll. I feel worthless and like I do not exist."

"You can see people writing down what I am saying but there is no response back"

Expressing racist comments and views (indirectly and directly)

The majority of those who experienced racist comments and views had mentioned that they had typically taken a subtle nature but there had been direct remarks made also.

Interviewees had been concerned as they felt these encounters came from those who hold a strong prejudiced view and that their honest views were surfacing – those of Chinese heritage had not felt comfortable having colleagues which have such negative views against their race.

It is subtle but it is clear that they see us as inferior to them.

Below are two examples of subtle remarks made.

You can see why they used to wear masks before the pandemic, it is a bit of a different culture over there.

Most the Chinese I have been to do have a low hygiene rating, but it does taste good so cannot complain.

The majority of the racist comments had been subtle. However there were also direct encounters, “a colleague said that when she receives her Chinese takeaway, she puts it in the microwave to kill of any potential viruses. She said she only does this because all the chefs are Chinese, otherwise she would not”, another example were “I do not actually get on public transport if I see someone Chinese now, it is better to be safe than sorry”.

Those of chinese heritage felt that the pandemic gave individuals with a prejudice an excuse, interviewees felt the disruption of the pandemic had given others a ‘gateway’and ‘free pass’, “it seems like peoples discriminatory behaviour and comments are justified because of the negative impacts has had on everyone”.

I feel like we have been used as a scapegoat.

Racist Jokes

The most common theme of prejudice behaviour in the workplace had been racist joke. Those of Chinese heritage had said these experiences had been there worst due to the amusement of others led to them feeling that they were being laughed at. In most cases, these racist jokes were shared in group settings involving five or more individuals.

One example of the racist jokes is below.

We do not need the Karate Kid; we need the bloody Wuhan Kid to get rid of this.

Those of Chinese heritage had felt helpless when managers and those in senior positions found the racist jokes amusing. Racist jokes were more frequently experienced when this were the case, "when my manager started laughing it almost became a daily occurrence".

As well as this, there had been several occasions when managers had made the racist jokes themselves, "I bet if you ask for number 19 at the Chinese you won't get a bat will you?", this had been said by national manager on a senior leader management call. Interviewees felt powerless and 'weak' when managers made the jokes, as one interviewee said, "you lose all hope if I am honest, what are you meant to do if your manger is making the jokes, and everyone is laughing along."

The racist jokes had also triggered the thought of "what else do they think about me and Chinese people?".

3.3 UK - Time of year influencing the Increase of discrimination

3.3.1 Workplace

Our interviews found that there had been further increases in discrimination during December 2020 – January 2021.

It should be noted that interviewees highlighted that there had been an increase in discrimination throughout the year but that they had felt “under siege” at this time of year.

December 2020 – January 2021

The one constant theme throughout our interviews, which reflected survey results had been people experiencing an increase in racial discrimination in the workplace during December 2020 – January 2021. Many referred to the announcement made on the 19th of December which saw the change in government guidelines for the ‘Christmas Bubble’, which saw the household mixing rule reduced during the festive period.

Many had shared experiences where they had been directly accused of ruining Christmas. Interviewees felt like a scapegoat and that anger and frustration were taken out on them, “well done, you lot ruined our year, we look forward to Christmas and you ruin that as well”, these types of remarks had been common “you might not celebrate Christmas, but we do, anything else you lot want to ruin?”

Those of Chinese heritage felt like they had received an immediate backlash following the announcement but also a resentment that continued into the new year, one interviewee said “I felt a sudden mood shift, not just before Christmas following the announcement but also coming into the new year, throughout January”.

One interviewee experienced discrimination the day after the government's announcement, “when are you fuckers going to stop ruining everything for us? One bat after another, just stop”. This remark had been made on a zoom meeting, the morning after the Downing Street announcement on the 19th of December.

He came on the call the next morning, squinted his eyes and in a Chinese voice said, "Merry Christmas from Wuhan, we can't have an English Christmas so we may as well have a Chinese one". He then started bashing chopsticks together.

3.3.2 Public Places

There were two periods throughout the year which an increase in racial discrimination had been noticed outside the workplace, this had been through August 2020 and during December 2020 - January 2021.

As with in the workplace, it should be noted that interviewees highlighted that there had been an increase in discrimination throughout the year but that they had felt that the discrimination were “uncontrollable” at during these two periods.

August 2020

Interviewees felt the increase in discrimination had been “inevitable” because of the increase of people in public throughout August, this had been due to the UK government's Eat Out to Help Out scheme. Incidents had typically taken a physical and malicious nature, with those of Chinese heritage feeling that people's frustration from restrictions and lockdowns were being taken out on them. Many of the incidents had happened in or near restaurants.

One of them threw a fork and the other threw a spoon.

They followed me out the restaurant and said 'don't come back, fuck off back home and eat some bats'.

December 2020 – January 2021

Experiences in the workplace and public had mirrored one and other, with the governments rule changing having a direct impact on those of Chinese heritage throughout the festive period and January 2021.

Incidents in public had typically been aggressive and physical, summarised by the two incidents below summarised experiences.

The car slowly pulled up next to me and said "bet you've eaten another bat haven't you, so because of you dirty fuckers I can't see anyone over Christmas"

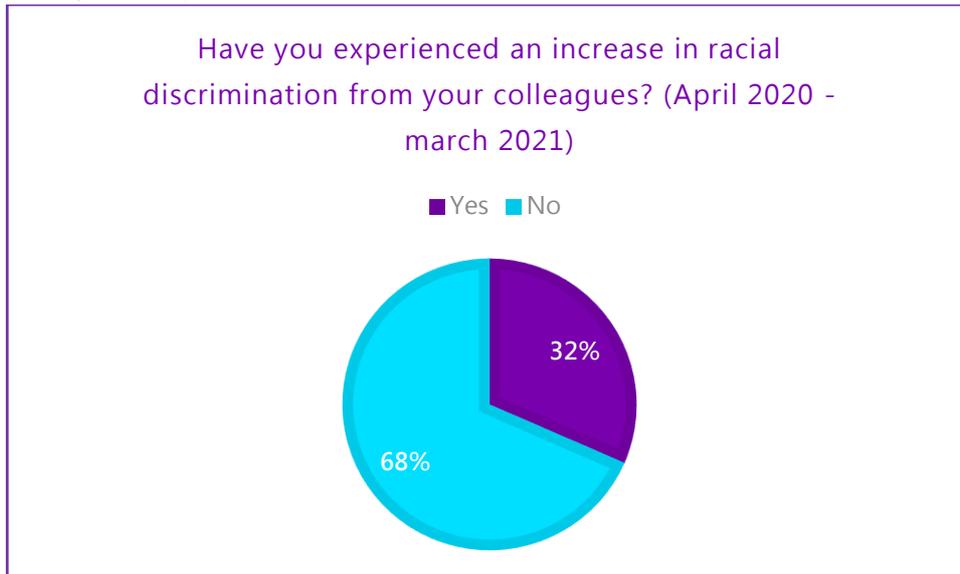
They came rushing up to me, knocked my shopping out my hand and said "have you not washed your hands again? Knew it, I knew that's why they've suddenly changed the rule you dirty bitch"

4.US: Survey Results

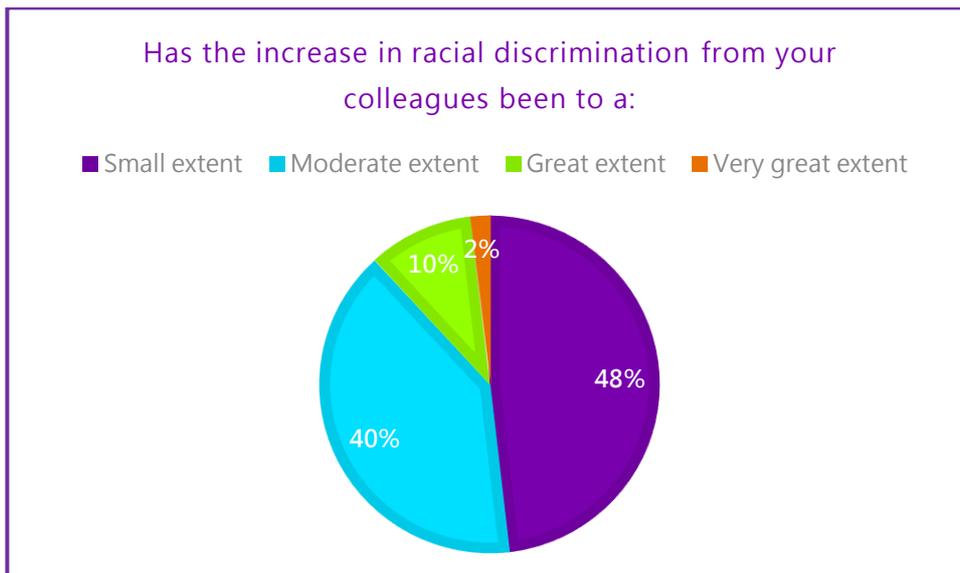
4.1 Workplace

*Out of the 835 people who completed the survey, 466 of them were in employment (there were also 301 students and 68 people were unemployed)

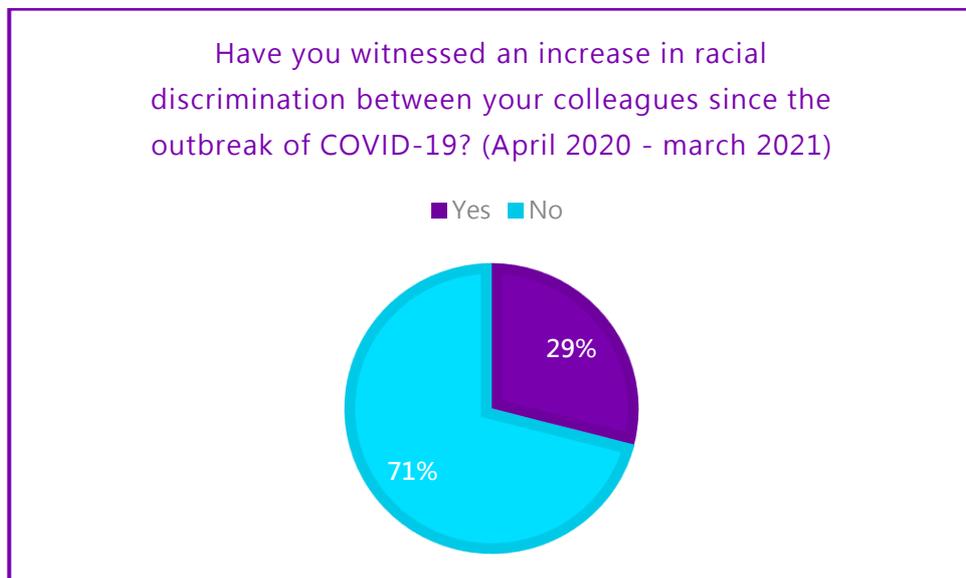
Of those in work, 147 (31.56%) said that they experienced an increase in racial discrimination from their colleagues during the last year.



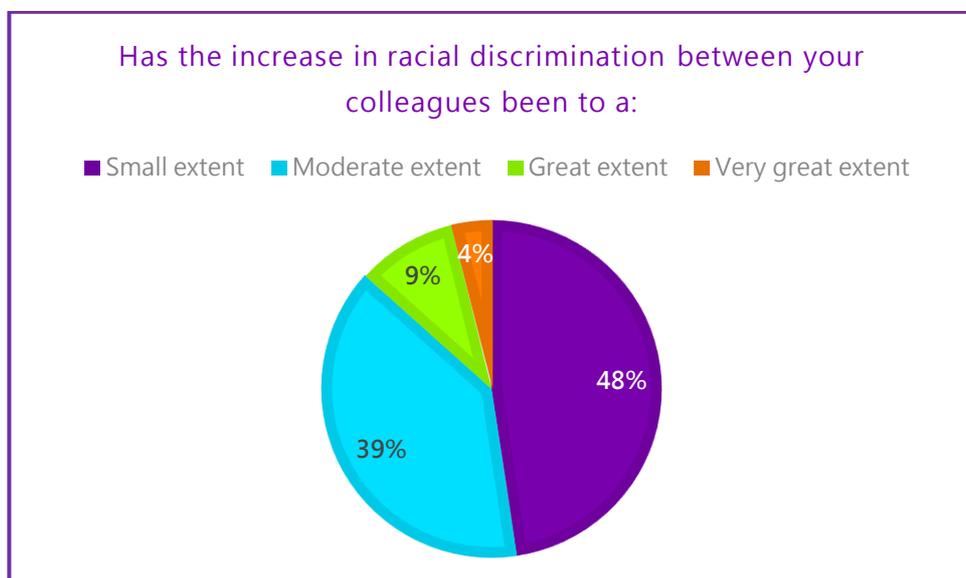
Of those who had experienced an increase in discrimination from their colleagues, 48.18% stated that it was to a 'small extent', 40% to a 'moderate extent', 10% to a 'great extent' and 1.82% to a 'very great extent'.



In addition to this, 135 people (29%) said they had witnessed an increase in racial discrimination between their colleagues since the outbreak of coronavirus.



Of those who had witnessed an increase in racial discrimination, 47.62% of people witnessed an increase to a 'small extent', 39.05% to a 'moderate extent', 9.52% to a 'great extent' and 3.81% to a 'very great extent'.



Below are some examples of what people have experienced in the workplace:

Workplace tasks

- 'Getting set unachievable workloads'.
- 'I was given harder tasks than everyone else on top of getting snarky remarks from the president of the facility'.
- 'Given ridiculous workloads and deadlines'.

Staring

- 'People also give me disgusted looks when I cough or sneeze'.
- 'There would be some uncomfortable silences when I entered the meeting and there would be some snide glances'.
- 'Whenever the topic of covid came up, they would look to me as if they expected me to say something because I'm Asian'.

Racial slurs

- 'Asians should go back to their country. Etc'.
- 'Looks, slurs, comments about how Asians created this mess'.
- 'I was called "Kung Flu, Coronavirus and that my people carry the virus"'.
'People joking in the hallways about Asians'.
- 'I have been called racial slurs by my colleagues such as chink, gook, etc several times when before I have been in good terms with them'.

Avoiding Interaction

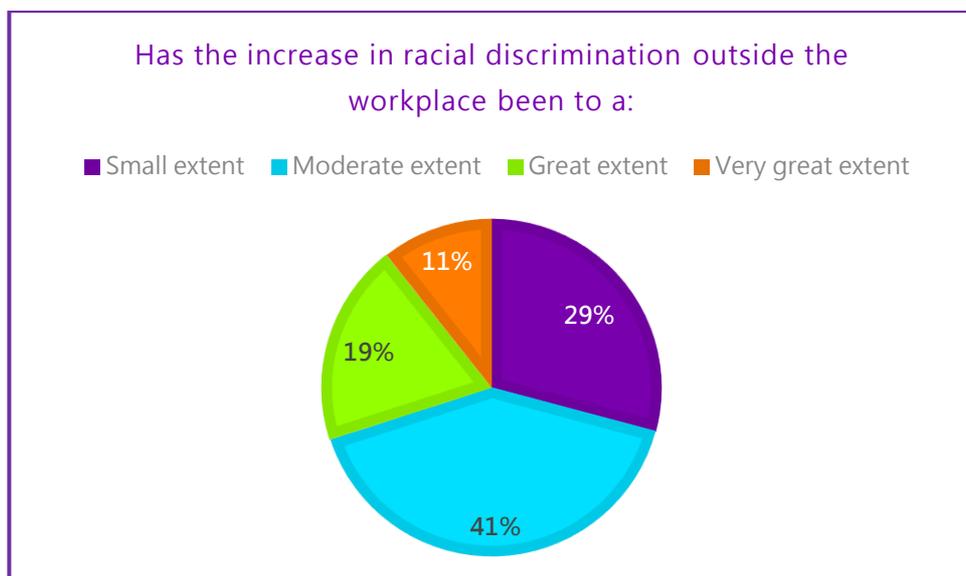
- 'Microaggressions, moving further away from me if we are in proximity but doesn't do this with other racial counterparts'.
- 'It's mostly just hyper awareness of it, cleaning things after touching them, not wanting to work near me and making small comments if I cough. Things like I need to exit the room, not just cover my mouth'.
- 'Blatant disregard when interacting with them but fine with others'.
- 'They did not want to eat with me'.

4.2 Public Places

Out of 835 people surveyed, 317 (44.43%) said they had experienced an increase in racial discrimination outside the workplace since the outbreak of Coronavirus.

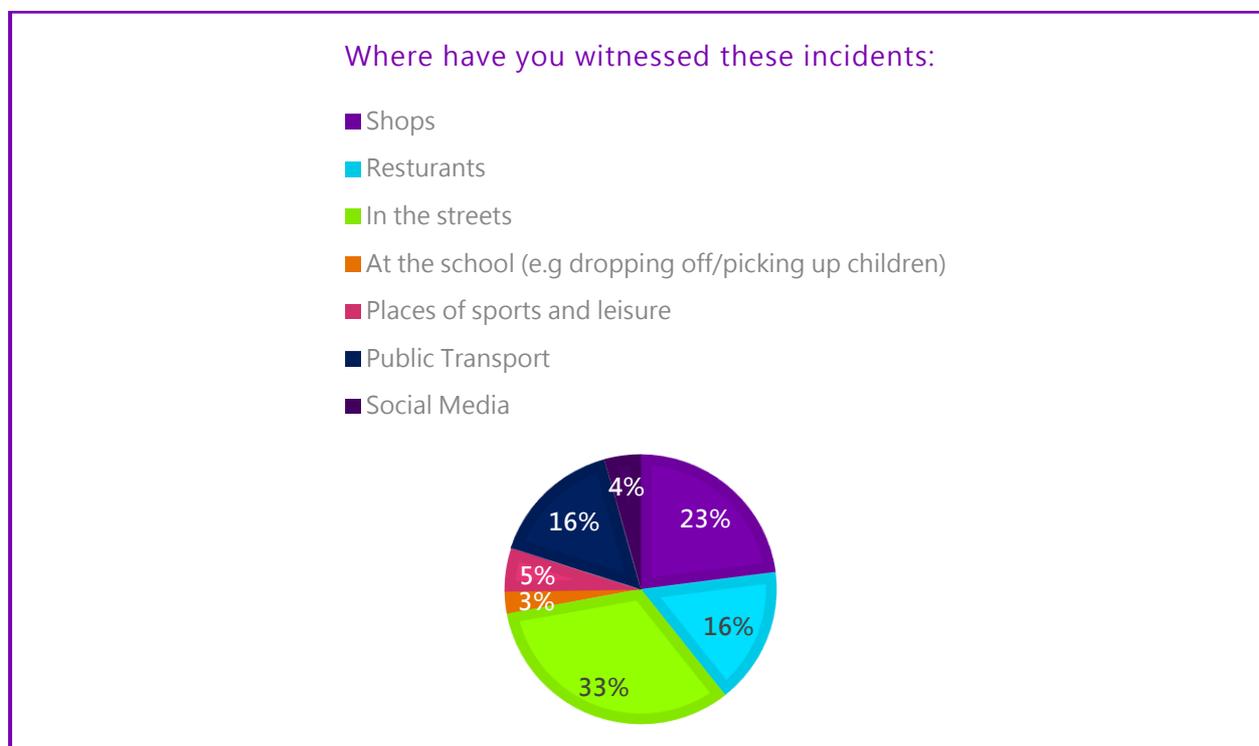


Those who had experienced an increase in discrimination reported the extent to which they had experienced it, 29.16% answered to a 'small extent', 40.87% of those experienced the increase to a 'moderate extent', 19.35% to a 'great extent' and 10.63% to a 'very great extent'.



When asked where these events had occurred, they happened most on the streets (41%), in shops (27%), restaurants (39.51) and restaurants (14%). However, they also occurred in public transport, schools and sports and leisure facilities.

All other responses were social media.



When asked to describe these incidents, they ranged from more subtle behaviours (such as others being stared at or people avoiding them) to more overtly racist acts (such as being shouted at, or physical attacks).

The following are a few examples of incidents the sample had experienced:

Avoiding interaction

- 'People refusing to interact with me'.
- 'People would avoid me or stay far away. Parents would tell their kids to stand closer to them'.
- 'A lot of people cross the street if they see me coming'.

Racist Coronavirus Jokes

- 'People making subtle comments in real life about "China virus"'.
'Been called kung flu and ching-chong by random people driving by'.
- 'Microaggressions, pointing at me and saying "Corona", etc.'

Discrimination with services

- 'Rude customer service people who were formerly nice'.
- 'I have had store associates avoid me when I tried asking questions and getting help with a purchase'.
- 'Pizzeria deliberately served specifically me slower than any other customer'.

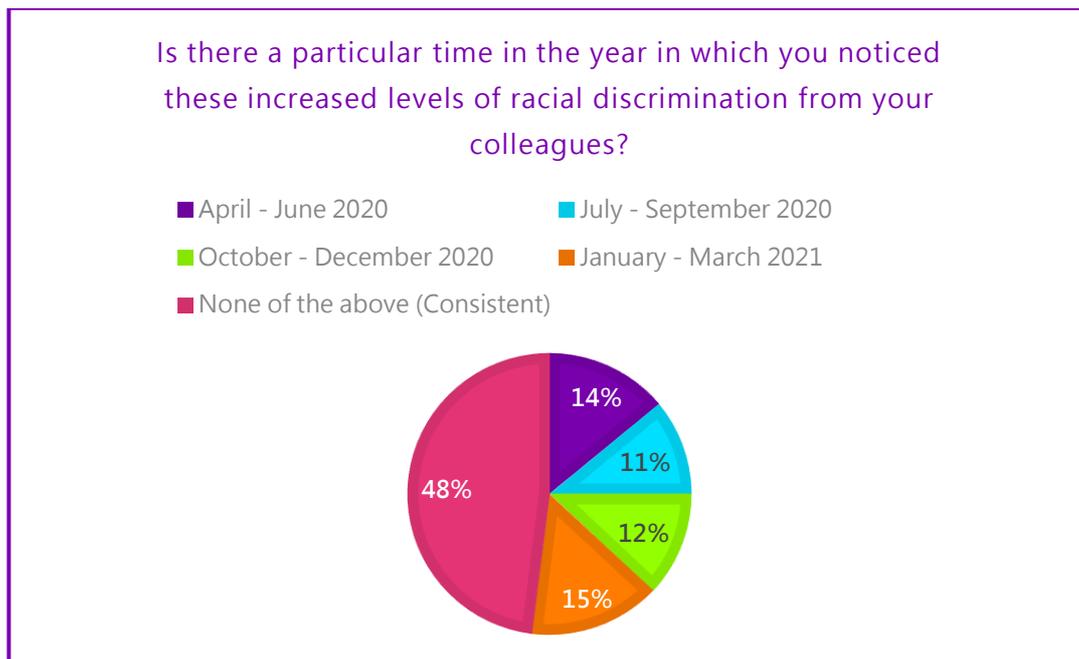
Physical abuse

- 'Me and my parents have been assaulted and harassed'.
- 'I and many people in my neighbourhood are getting attacked and assaulted by racists who target Asians and the elderly'.
- 'A friend of mine was attacked with a machete on the NYC subway but luckily, he was able to run away with just a cut on his arm'.
- 'Few of my friends got beat by strangers, they referred to them as chinks'.

4.3 U.S - Time of year influencing the Increase of discrimination

4.3.1 Workplace

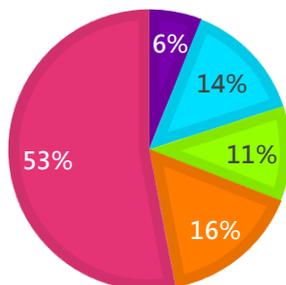
Of the those who said that they experienced an increase in racial discrimination from their colleagues in the last year, 14% said they noticed the increased levels of discrimination were between April - June 2020, 11% between July – September 2020, 12% between October – December 2020 and 15% between January – March 2021 and 48% felt it were Consistent throughout the year.



Of those who said that they witnessed an increase in racial discrimination between their colleagues in the last year, 6% said they noticed the increased levels of discrimination were between April - June 2020, 14% between July – September 2020, 11% between October – December 2020 and 16% between January – March 2021 and 53% felt it were Consistent throughout the year.

Is there a particular time in the year in which you noticed these increased levels of racial discrimination between your colleagues?

- April - June 2020
- July - September 2020
- October - December 2020
- January - March 2021
- None of the above (Consistent)



For those who experienced an increase discrimination in the workplace there had not been a particular time in the year which they had noticed an increase, rather that the increase had been consistent throughout the year (48%), the following are a few examples as to why people felt that the increase in discrimination had been consistent throughout the year:

- 'Trumps remarks – "China Virus, Kung Flu, Wuhan Virus"'.
- 'Donald Trump racist comments earlier in year and then presidential campaigning and rallies towards end of year, as well as President Biden being elected in January'.
- 'Trump incited people to hate east Asians which has led to racist violence'.
- 'Job losses throughout the year have led to a lot of anger and frustration. Donald Trump & Republicans actions have led people to act on their prejudice views, first with remarks and then campaigning/rallies'.
- 'Due to the anti-Asian rhetoric from the US government'.

For those who witnessed an increase discrimination in the workplace it had been highest during January – March 2021 (41%), the following are a few examples as to why people felt there was an increase in discrimination inside the workplace at this time of year:

- 'It had been present throughout 2020 with Trumps remarks in March, then campaigning later in the year, following this, coming into January, it felt like Bidens election had led racial tensions had reached a tipping point'.
- 'Increased racial tensions due to the election of President Biden'.
- 'Donald Trump supporters felt like they need to support his rhetoric against Asian Americans, this can be shown by the racist violence in the America over the past year. For me, I experienced throughout the year but after the storming of the capitol it has been worse'.
- 'Presidential campaigns and activity coming into the new year had escalated racial tensions, the election had further divided the country'.
- 'After the capitol were stormed, me and my east-Asian friends have had our worst experiences'.

4.3.2 Public Places

Those who said that they witnessed an increase in racial discrimination outside the workplace in the last year, 11% said they noticed the increased levels of discrimination were between April - June 2020, 4% between July – September 2020, 14% between October – December 2020 and 7% between January – March 2021 and 64% felt it were Consistent throughout the year.



For those who experienced an increase discrimination outside the workplace there had not been a particular time in the year which they had noticed an increase, rather that the increase had been Consistent throughout the year (64%), the following are a few examples as to why people felt that the increase in discrimination had been consistent throughout the year:

- 'Donald Trump comments led to racial tensions that have remained and divided the country'.
- 'Presential election and campaigns. The build up to them when they were happening and after them also. This country is divided, and it shows by how fearful minorities are in this US' 'Presidential campaigns'.
- 'Racial tensions that has been driven by republican party and Donald trump over the last few years'.
- 'People are acting on their prejudice views that they have had for many years, they are using the pandemic as an excuse to act on them'.

4.4 Survey Results Comparison – One Year On

The table below compares the U.S survey results one year on from our research in 2020.

Question	2020 Survey	2021 Survey	Change
Experienced an increase in discrimination in at least one of the three questions asked.	(41.85%)	(55.71%)	+ (13.86%)
Experienced an increase in racial discrimination inside and outside the workplace in the last year (April 2020-March 2021)	(36.02%)	(49.28%)	+ (13.26%)
Working people who have witnessed and/or experienced discriminatory events at work in the last year (April 2020-March 2021)	(26.1%)	(34.77%)	+ (8.67%)
Working people who experienced an increase in racial discrimination from their colleagues in the last year (April 2020-March 2021)	(17.49%)	(31.56%)	+ (14.07%)
Working people who witnessed an increase in racial discrimination between their colleagues in the last year (April 2020-March 2021)	(19.6%)	(29%)	+ (9.4%)
Experienced an increase in racial discrimination outside the workplace in the last year (April 2020-March 2021)	(31.16%)	(44.43%)	+ (13.27%)

*2020 survey data collected during April 15th - April 28th - there were 905 people who participated.

*2021 survey data collected during March 20th - April 1st - there were 835 people who participated.

5.U.S: Interviews

5.1 Background to the sample

For the research in the U.S, thirty people took part in the interviews – ten of which were from last years sample. Twenty-eight of our U.S sample were born and raised in the United States. Two individuals were born outside the United States in China, one from Suzhou and the other in Qingdao.

Twenty-one of the interviews were carried out via video call with nine conducted via phone. The interviews took place between 24th March and 10th April 2021.

Most of the sample were employed across finance and banking, healthcare, technology, and retail, along with several professional service roles. Three interviewees worked in manufacturing and construction.

The interviewees lived across several states in America; California, New York, Washington, Texas, San Jose, and Michigan.

The Asian American population is very urbanised with the majority living in highly populated metropolitan areas such as Los Angles, New York, San Francisco. There are also significant Chinese populations in western coastal cities such as California.

Many of our interviewees felt the coronavirus pandemic had “reignited existing prejudice” held from job losses caused from Chinese immigration at the beginning of the 19th century. Many Chinese immigrants came to work as miners, labourers on the transcontinental roads and the gold rush in California. The discrimination stemmed from industrial employers favouring cheap labour which resulted in job losses for white individuals.

I and we as Chinese individuals still feel the brunt from the job losses experienced because of the first waves of Chinese immigration.

Many of the interviewees felt the Model minority concept derived from the types of jobs that their great-grandparents and grandparents held in the early 19th century, “I feel this stereotype comes from the railroad, highway and miners’ jobs that were held by our elders when they first came to America”, “as a result, everyone says that we are doing well and should appreciate it”

The phrase “Yellow Peril” had been highlighted by many of the interviewees, some had used a similar phrase of “Yellow Fear”. The phrases are a racist colour metaphor which highlights east Asian as a threat to America but more specifically to the western world. The interviewees felt this concept had also been the basis for the racism that they have experienced in the last year.

Yellow fear is a phrase used by many in America. It is used casually and reinforces the idea of Chinese and east Asians being a problem.

When reflecting on their experiences of their childhood and early adulthood the interviewees experiences varied a great deal. The older of the interviewees had experienced vary blatant and direct racism throughout their life whereas younger interviewees felt that they had never experienced racism, of those who had, it had been very subtle and rare. For the younger that had not previously experienced racism, they had emphasised that they had begun to when entering the working world.

An older interviewee said, "I feel my generation have experienced the most discriminatory and racist behaviour because the people we went to high school with and now work with. I experienced racism at high school and now at work. The people we have always interacted with were likely directly impacted by the job losses when the industries looked towards Chinese immigrants because of the cheap labour". This contrasted to younger individuals, one interviewee said "Racism had not been something I had experienced throughout high school, college, or university but I certainly have in the three years that I have been working.

Several the interviewees shared that their children had also not experienced racism or any discriminatory behaviour until entering the workplace, emphasising that the prejudice towards those of Chinese heritage in America seems too typically be generational. One interviewee said "my children had not experienced any racism or felt any prejudice against them until they had started working full-time following their education. I feel racism in America is very much generational".

The interviewees parents held various roles in banking, technology, and manual labouring roles. The discriminatory and racist behaviour experienced by interviewees parents in the past had varied from employment discrimination, physical attacks, and verbal abuse.

All but six of the interviewees' parents had been born in the United States. One of the six parents' interviewees had owned a restaurant with the other five having manual labouring roles. It was only those at 'entry level' roles who had experienced racism, this had been the case across banking, technology, and manual roles. Discriminatory behaviour at entry-level roles had been reflective of several the interviewee's recent experiences.

I remember my dad coming home after a job interview when I was younger and saying that the organisation told him that that they had tried not to hire Chinese when possible because of the issues it caused inside their organisation.

Those who lived in areas with highly concentrated populations of Chinese individuals had felt that their racial experiences had been mitigated. Many of these individuals and their families had highlighted how unpleasant the last year had been, however, they felt the lasting effects would be minimal due to the constant support they had from other Chinese and east Asian families in their communities.

Without our tight knit community in San Francisco, I am not sure what we and I would have done.

5.2 U. S - Workplace

In the United States, there were mixed experiences about anti-Chinese prejudice in the workplace. For some of the workplace, this contrasted quite significantly with their experiences outside of work. For others, it was a continuation, albeit more subtle, often of what was occurring in society more generally.

It was also clear, however, from the interviews that people had experienced racism in the workplace before the coronavirus outbreak. However, what our survey reveals is that the underlying level of prejudice had increased significantly at work.

Interviewees who had moved to remote working felt fortunate to do so, they felt the less exposure they had with others, the better, "I could not think of anything worse than having to commute to the office and then be sat there in an office, I honestly would not feel safe doing this anymore. Before remote working, I lost count of the number of times I were physically shoved and had china virus yelled in my face." This feeling had been common throughout interviewees in the U.S, "I am happy to sit at home, get my work done and get the occasional derogatory remark or racist joke. Rather than having the fear of being physically attacked on the subway. The number of incidents I have experienced and witnessed is shocking".

Those who worked in manual roles and continued in their normal working conditions had "struggled" with the constant racism they are experienced. Interviewees who worked in manufacturing and construction had considered a change of industry, to allow them to work remotely and reduce the exposure they had to others.

The quotes below summarises how these in manufacturing and construction felt.

There is a lot of interaction with other work colleagues in the role and throughout the last year it has just been awful. I have verbal abuse and things thrown at me daily. I have already looked at office jobs, a lot of companies in the US are going to be working remotely now so I feel like a switch is likely for me.

I now take a taxi to the offices. It is not safe on public transport. I get racist remarks in the office but that does not faze me in the slightest after what I have gone through on the subway.

5.2.1 U. S - Positive experiences in the workplace

In some cases, colleagues of the interviewees had acted on the discriminatory behaviour as well as being very supportive. Interviewees felt this had been because of diversity and inclusion work within their organisations.

These colleagues reported the discriminatory behaviour which led to it being dealt with appropriately. Many of the interviewees felt if it were not for the diversity and inclusion training, those who had stepped up, would not have prior to the training.

As one interviewee said:

I feel the diversity and inclusion training has led to greater empathy but also the confidence to speak up.

It must be noted that in all positive cases, there had been a support shown during but also following incidents, one interviewees experience and positive reaction is outlined below.

I had experienced someone who spat at the screen. After spitting on his screen/camera he had said "you want to hear what everyone says about you and your lot ruining all our lives". The reaction of my colleagues was amazing, I had gone from feeling the worst I felt to feeling proud, it was so nice to be stood up for. I weirdly probably felt better after my incident, you could see how much everyone cared about me.

Following this incident, the interviewee had not left her flat due to the fear of being attacked, however the continued support from her colleagues had led to her re-building her confidence "I had received lovely messages from colleagues and others in the organisation which consequently led to me feeling safer and begin to leave my flat more again." When support was shown, those of Chinese heritage felt that their negative experiences were mitigated.

Interviewees were thankful to their organisations for investing in such training as the behaviour from their colleagues had allowed them to feel comfortable at work again, "I was so thankful for how my colleagues stood up for me, it really did make me feel empowered and proud to be Chinese, which had been taken away from me following my incident." It must be noted that those who had such a reaction from colleagues and managers had not again experienced any discrimination in the workplace.

I have not had any racial experiences since.

All interviewees emphasised how important they felt the support of their organisations and colleagues were. Those of Chinese heritage felt that the workplace was likely to be a catalyst for behaviour in public and felt that if discriminatory behaviour in the workplace was not dealt with appropriately it would inevitably lead to less accountability and more severe incidents in public - one interviewee said "if they can get away with it at work, just imagine what they are like in public. It is scary." Many felt that the behaviours outside the workplace could be difficult to control but their workplaces should be a safe environment where they do not feel threatened.

If these people's racist behaviour is not dealt with properly in the workplace, us Chinese will live in constant fear, as it will be worse outside the workplace, our workplaces should be safe environments at least.

5.2.2 U.S - Negative experiences in the workplace

Impact on promotions

Those of Chinese heritage experienced 'blocking' and 'withholding' of promotions.

Initially, interviewees felt such decisions had been made because of financial instability and uncertainty because of the pandemic.

However, further discussions had led to two interviewees understanding that their race had been the reason for why they had not received their promotion – their experiences are outlined below.

The organisation was worried about perception within the company and issues it may potentially cause internally. She said I would get the promotion but just not yet. It was a bittersweet as I had been told I would be getting the promotion I wanted but that I had to wait.

My senior said that the withholding of my promotion was coming from those most senior in the organisation. He had said their reasoning was due to the public nature that my promotion would have and how this may look, especially with the negative views currently held towards Chinese people in America.

In both cases, individuals were reluctant to make a formal complaint as they had been concerned about the impact it could have on their career progression within their companies.

It is bad but I do not want to rock the boat as it is likely to affect the role I am going after now but also future roles.

Several interviewees were unsure whether the decisions were racially driven or not. The majority felt that they would achieve their promotions following the pandemic or when society got back to some form of normality but were unsure. It must be noted that all these individuals had not been given a definitive answer as to why they had not been promoted but told were due to uncertain times.

The quote below summarises the justification given and how those of Chinese heritage felt.

Physical attacks

It may be racially driven, it may not. I am aware of cutbacks being made but this had not been used as a reason. There is also no recruitment or promotional freezes at the moment, this had made me question the decision. I had just been told it were difficult and unpredictable times and that that my promotion would be reviewed.

The location of the physical attacks experienced in the workplace had varied, some had taken place in the workplace itself, others had taken place outside the work environment, when colleagues had followed those of Chinese heritage.

The incidents ranged from food and drink being poured over and spat at individuals, as well as being physically beaten up.

The incident below summarises the incidents that took place inside the workplace.

Three different colleagues come and sat around my desk space in the office. One of them chucked my orange juice over me, got my sub, took a bite, and then spat it at me. Following this they all laughed, with one of the other two saying "How are we meant to achieve the American dream if you fuckers are here spreading your shit".

The majority of those who had been physically attacked had to take time off work due to them experiencing panic attacks or constant anxiety. One interviewee had to take two weeks off work, he had been kicked, punched and spat at in an elevator when leaving work, "I felt ambushed, it all happened so quickly. As we got to the ground floor, before the doors opened, one of them said "don't worry, no one can see, just like we can't go see the baseball, when will you dirty lot learn ". I had realised shortly after that my suit were ripped".

Incidents which involved work colleagues following those of Chinese heritage from the workplace had taken place in the streets or on the subway. The incident below took place on the streets of New York.

I was followed from work by four colleagues. They just laughed and continued to laugh whilst pushing me about between them. I had no control and could not do anything, it only lasted for about thirty seconds or so, but it felt like a lifetime. After they finished, they just walked on and laughed as if nothing had happened. I had a panic attack following all of this.

Increased workloads

Those of Chinese heritage have intentionally receive increased workload in the past year. This has resulted in longer hours being worked, stress related illnesses and disciplinaries.

Interviewees were aware that the working world had seen dramatic changes and workloads have consequently increased. However, interviewees had said that their workloads were incomparable to their colleagues.

My workload and deadlines were just unachievable. I remember speaking to a colleague on a project we were working on. He had said the workload and deadlines I were set would never be met. It felt like I was being set up to fail.

Those who received disciplinaries had also developed stress related illnesses. These individuals had described their experience throughout the past year as 'torture', having worked excessive hours which had only resulted in the constant missing of deadlines.

The two quotes below summarise the intentional nature that people of Chinese heritage have experienced regarding receiving an unachievable workload.

I had received a disciplinary because of not meeting deadlines but I had been working through the night most days of the week. This has been happening throughout the last year. Consequently, I have developed a stress-related illness which resulted in a loss of appetite and me losing over five stone.

In few cases, the workload had lowered. This was due to colleagues sharing their concerns with those senior or management. The majority felt helpless as they did not want to show that they were not capable, these individuals had looked at moving companies as they did not feel they could continue with their current workload.

The amount of work is not sustainable, and I cannot cope. If it continues, I will have to move. I do not want to flag it as I do not want my manager to think that I am not able.

All interviewees highlighted extreme feelings of frustration because such behaviours could be easily denied and difficult to prove as intentional discrimination, one interviewee said, "it is like modern day racism and discrimination, it is discrete but very disruptive".

Harassment

Harassment had been a common experience for those of Chinese heritage in the workplace.

The incidents had been very intimidating with interviewees feeling 'hounded' because of how repetitive it had become. Incidents varied from individuals being coughed on, having food thrown at them and hand sanitizer squirted on them.

There had been frequent use of hand sanitizer, masks, and wipes when interviewees were being confronted. The incident below summarises how those in the workplace had tried to make those of Chinese heritage feel dirty and unhygienic.

They kept coming to my work desk and squirting hand sanitizer all over me and my desk, this would happen repeatedly throughout the day. This happened for a couple of weeks until one day I cried and had a panic attack. As there were not many people in the office, they were like children in the playground with no teacher.

Many felt the acts of some had been contagious and led to others feeling it were acceptable, with such behaviour being normalised due to the lack of repercussion, "I was coughed off on repeatedly whenever I went to eat in the canteen. It was not just one occasion; it happened several times and by different people". The lack of consequence had been due to witnessing colleagues saying that they had not seen anything, one interviewee said, "There is not much hope when your colleagues say that they had not seen anything".

For some, these incidents had involved individuals who they previously had good relationships with and individuals who had previously stood up against and reported such discriminatory behaviour.

They sat at their office desks, leant back, and threw fortune cookies at me all day. Four of them purposely sat around me to try intimidating me. It only happened once but it had really hurt me as these were people I used to really like and get on with.

Exclusion

There had been number of incidents that have occurred for those working remotely, which led to individuals feeling isolated and bullied.

These two incidents below summarise how colleagues have led to those of Chinese heritage being excluded and feeling like outsiders and minorities.

I had a colleague who would repeatedly squint their eyes on a call whenever I spoke.

The first day we had started working remotely, one colleague brought chopsticks and banged them together and another made karate noises – they had done this whenever I spoke.

It must be noted that these discriminatory behaviours had been repetitive. Such behaviours had come from colleagues who those of Chinese heritage had previously experienced discriminatory behaviour from. The quote below summarises this feeling.

This racist behaviour had come from those who I have experienced subtle prejudice behaviours from in the past. It feels as if though coronavirus and the pandemic more specifically has given them a platform to express their prejudice views.

These behaviours had been experienced across different professions, a banking graduate had felt that people would go out their way to embarrass and make things difficult for her. She said "I felt like I were being hung out to dry. On team meetings I would be repeatedly asked very challenging questions. The questions were unnecessary and not relevant to the meeting. This had happened for three or four months. It felt like I was being bullied."

A number of the graduates asked why they were experiencing such behaviour, with many of them being told it were a "challenging environment" and that they might not be "cut out for it". In many cases, nothing had changed but for the few it had – it had been other more senior colleagues that noticed the unfair treatment, this is summarised in the quote below.

It needed someone senior to step up and they did. I was so thankful and relieved. I did not feel I could reach out to anyone; I was very new in the business and had not known anyone. I started to look at other jobs already due to how anxious and isolated I felt before and during just a morning routine call with my department.

5.3 U. S - Time of year influencing the Increase of discrimination

Consistent throughout last year (April 2020 – March 2021)

In both the workplace and in public, interviews followed a similar pattern to the survey results in showing that the increase of racial discrimination towards those of Chinese heritage had been consistent throughout the last year.

The interviews had highlighted that the those of Chinese heritage felt the republican party and more specifically Donald Trump had driven a racist rhetoric which had re-surfaced a pre-existing racial division in America. Interviewees felt the pandemic had exposed an “underlying resentment” which had been “reinforced” by this rhetoric, which has resulted in a “constant” and “non-stop” increase in discrimination.

One interviewee said, “Trump and the republicans have single handily divided America. They have racially divided the whole of America. There actions, remarks and behaviour encourage people to act on their prejudice views”.

Interviewees highlighted several instances where Donald Trump drove this racist rhetoric - most common had been him referring to COVID 19 as the ‘china virus’ and ‘kung flu’. Interviewees felt that people had underestimated the impact that these remarks had.

When he asked the Chinese journalist to ‘don’t ask me, ask china’ in response to her question, it was shocking and disgusting. People do not understand the influence and impact that his derogatory behaviour and remarks have not only here in the U.S but around the world.

June 2020 – September 2020

Many felt the racial tensions and divisions within America would remain for years to come but had been further “fuelled” by Donald Trump’s Presidential campaign throughout the later part of 2020.

Those of Chinese heritage felt Trump had “motivated” people to discriminate at his rallies. Interviewees had referred to several rallies between June 20th- September 22nd, with several interviewees labelling them “racist rallies”. One interviewee said, “it was like you knew when he had a rally because the derogatory and racist remarks would start casually being made on calls”.

January 2021 – February 2021

Some interviewees felt Trumps efforts to surround President Bidens election with controversy had again initiated people to act on their prejudice views and any frustrations that they had. These interviewees had experienced the most racism in January and February, following the storming of the United States Capitol in Washington, “it was like he and his army reached boiling point that day. The discrimination I have experienced since the 6th of January has been unimaginable”.

6. U.K & U.S Interviews

6.1 Public places

Many of the incidents that people of Chinese heritage have faced have occurred in public spaces – in the streets, in shops, on public transport, in bars and restaurants. They are also aware of incidents that have occurred within their local community, which have all added to an environment of greater threat, fear, and lack of security.

The incidents varied from excessive avoidance, verbal abuse, physical abuse, public humiliation, and individuals being spat at.

In the streets

A very common reaction that many people experienced is that of being avoided in public and treated with suspicion. This could be avoiding walking past a person of Chinese heritage or very obviously pulling up a scarf or jumper around the mouth. For some, there was initially a sense of disbelief that this could be happening. For example, one woman when out on walks had experienced people crossing the road when they had approached her. She said “at first I did not think much of it, but I noticed people were crossing straight back over once I had passed, you could tell people were doing it so soon after to make sure that I knew it were intentional. Such experiences had made those of Chinese heritage anxious to leave their homes with several interviewees, consequently, not exercising.

As one person, who had experienced something similar said:

It makes you feel like a walking disease.

Our interviewees reported being verbally abused on the streets. The verbal abuse had varied from passing remarks to being shouted at from cars. The verbal abuse had been frequent, but the encounters had become more aggressive as the year passed, one interviewee said, “you got used to the fuck off back to china comments, but people had started to raise their hands and get right up in your face”.

There had been aggressive encounters throughout the UK & US, the incident below had taken place in San Francisco.

Me and my sister had someone pull their car over, open the boot which had a baseball bat in. They said “if you slanty eyed motherfuckers don't stop, you're going to get hurt”

An incident that took place in Sheffield city centre, involved an interviewee walking their dog when a car drove past and out the window they shouted "don't eat your fucking dog you chinky bitch", the car had slowed down and made a further comment of "if you lot stopped eating every fucking animal, we wouldn't be in this shit would we". The interviewee had said how terrified she felt as they thought they were going to be attacked when the car had slowed down.

Physical attacks experienced and or witnessed throughout the last year had led to an overriding fear for those of Chinese heritage being verbally abused. Sadly, despite aggressive encounters, interviewees had become grateful for only being verbally abused and that their incidents had not taken a more physical nature.

As one interviewee said:

You see what happened to the lecturer in Southampton, it could happen to any of us. You fear the worse. The fear of being attacked does constantly play on my mind. I can handle the racist remarks.

There were three instances of people being spat at in public, two in the street and the other in a Nando's restaurant. One incident involved a parent and his daughter walking back from school in St Albans. The interviewee and his daughter had been walking back home from school and as an individual passed, he asked "do you know the number of lives that your chinks have ruined?", shortly after the remark the individual spat at the interviewee. The incident happened very quickly with the individual making his comment, spitting, and walking on within a few seconds. The interviewee had been amazed at just how calm the individual was as he made his remark and spat. Following the shock of the incident, the interviewee had to explain to his five-year-old daughter what had happened – he had to tell his daughter that he had been accidentally sneezed on.

Another incident occurred in California, whilst an interviewee had been in her car on the roadside. The interviewee had been parked up preparing to take a call, the window had been down, and two young men walked past the car. One of the men looked back through the windscreen, came back to the car window, and asked "are you Chinese?" the interviewee replied "yes, why?", to which one of the men spat through the car window at the interviewee. Following the incident, the interviewee had continuously cried and was unable to take her phone call or drive her car. The interviewee mentioned that a woman had witnessed the incident but that she had instantly turned her head and quickly walked on, "it was so disheartening because she saw the whole incident, I saw her before the two men walked past the car, I was saddened because she did not even see how I was, forget about reporting it".

Public transport

Similar experiences occurred on public transport including avoiding those of Chinese heritage, taking extra precautions (for example, pulling up mask) as well as incidents involving people throwing food.

I walked onto a carriage at piccadilly circus, and the majority of the carriage had not had masks on – as soon as I they saw me enter the carriage, all of them pulled their masks up or reached into their pockets to put one on.

Interviewees shared extreme feelings of loneliness with many interviewees saying that they have never felt so low and unhappy, "I would always be the last person someone sits next to, on the underground and buses".

Interviewees had also experienced people moving away from them, keeping excessive distances and in some cases, people leaving altogether. Many interviewees felt like an outsider and alone, as well a sense of embarrassment, "people started laughing because of the amount of people who would come look at the spare seats next to me, look at me and then go to uncomfortably stand in the toilet area".

It should not be assumed that it is only white people who are perpetrators. One woman born in Japan who has lived much of her life in England had been teased and taunted by a group of black teenagers on the Washington metro, with them squinting their eyes and making karate noises.

There had been several incidents where food had been thrown on public transport. These incidents had been most common on busses in the UK and trains in the U.S. The incident outlined below took place in Edinburgh.

They were sat behind me and kept on chucking chips at the back of my head. I just felt so intimidated, I did not know what to do. I did not want to say anything as I feel it could have made it worse.

Following this incident, the two men throwing the food had laughed in the interviewees face when leaving the bus. A similar incident had taken place on the Metrorail in Los Angeles, "anything they didn't want to eat, they kept chucking at me, I just didn't know what to do as I thought if I said something it would aggravate them".

Other substances had been thrown at those of Chinese heritage. One incident on a bus involved an interviewee having blue tack thrown into their hair, they had not felt it and only realised when getting back home. The interviewee said that they felt it were likely racially motivated as he had seen two individuals laughing and pointing in his direction as he left the bus.

Those of Chinese heritage described their experiences on public transport as 'difficult' and constantly felt 'alienated', one interviewee said It has not been the elephant in the room in the past year, it has been the Chinese in the room.

Shops

People look at you, see that you are Chinese and hurry on, it happens all the time.

Going to the shops was another area where people of Chinese heritage found that they are likely to receive abuse, which had resulted in the majority now opting for online deliveries. Of those who had visited shops, there were unnecessary distances kept, avoidance and instances where people had been publicly humiliated. There had also been incidents which saw those of Chinese heritage being 'hit' with trollies.

An engineer who works and lives in the south west of England had been aggressively approached whilst shopping in Tesco "you shouldn't be buying any of that, it's for British people, not you foreigners that ruin everything for us". Following this remark, the interviewee had been hit with a trolley, "I could not believe it, she barged her trolley into me". Similar incidents had happened at an Aldi in Birmingham, a Walmart in San Jose and at a Kroger in Texas.

There had been several cases where people had made derogatory remarks and gestures towards those of Chinese heritage, this had led to them feeling 'exposed' and 'humiliated'. One incident had taken place in an ASDA in Manchester, with the discriminatory behaviour coming from an employee. The interviewee had been prevented from using the self-checkout area.

This incident is further outlined below.

I had been told to wait and for the people behind me to come. Over 10 people had passed me. It had all come clear to me when more people were heading to the self-checkout area and looking back in my direction and laughing. I had still been doubting what was happening but now more people were passing me as the que were getting bigger. People were laughing at me whilst walking past me, they were directly walking beside me and laughing. The sales assistant was laughing and pointing in my direction as she was calling other customers to the self-checkout area.

A squinty eyes gesture was made by one young couple and at this stage several people laughed, and it was then that I knew what we are happening.

In this incident, the employees' actions had initiated discrimination from customers. As a result of feeling publicly humiliated, the interviewee had run out of the store and had a panic attack in her car.

Restaurants/Takeaways

Incidents in restaurants and takeaways varied from offensive gestures, dirty looks, food being thrown as well as one individual being spat at.

Many of the incidents in the UK had happened in restaurants with the added dimension that people are typically having a drink throughout August, during the governments eat-out to help scheme. In the U.S, incidents had taken place at takeaways.

"Whilst we were eating, one of them said "hello" to get our attention. Following this, one of them squinted their eyes whilst another one stuck their middle finger up at us. We left immediately as my children looked terrified."

"I was out with a partner and we just feel so uncomfortable throughout the evening. People were not being subtle, they were constantly staring at us and giving us dirty looks. We did not go back out after that."

The most shocking incident in restaurants had been an interviewee being spat at a Nando's restaurant in Essex. The interviewee had gone to collect their cutlery and condiments from a communal station in the restaurant. The interviewee turned right to get some sauces, a man to his left spat on the back of his neck. After spitting, the man had said "your lot gave us your shit so I'll give you some of ours". Nobody had seen the incident, out the corner of his eye, the interviewee had seen the man look around before spitting. Following this, the interviewee had been in utter shock, went to collect his partner and left to go home.

I have never been spat at and I had to fight to hold my tears back.

I go to open the door to leave, I have tomato thrown at me.

For the interviewees who had such experiences in restaurants, it had been the last time that they had eaten out as they had not wanted to feel so uncomfortable and contrasted to how much safer and comfortable, they felt in their own homes.

Sadly, several interviewees in the UK said that they would have liked to have gone and eat out during August but felt they were "asking for trouble" as the "racist behaviour was inevitable due to people being back out".

6.2 Family and friends

Numerous examples were provided as to what the impact of the increase in prejudice against people of Chinese heritage had had on their family and friends.

The impact on family appeared to be particularly concerning. There had been several instances where interviewees children had been bullied at school. "My son comes back from school crying; I have never seen him so upset. He is constantly told that he is to blame for everything that is going wrong. A ten-year old child should not have to deal with that."

There had been instances where children had not wanted to go to school because of the racist behaviour they were experiencing, "my daughter came back from school saying she did not want to go in the next day because all of her class were squinting her eyes and laughing at her". These incidents were occurring throughout the UK and the US, one incident in Washington saw a child told during a sports class that "we do not want Chi on our team, he is Chinese, and he is not clean". Such behaviour was common throughout all ages and had varied from four-year-olds to sixteen-year-olds.

Whilst these are examples of children's behaviour towards one another, there were also examples of parents encouraging the children to avoid contact with children of Chinese heritage. "Another parent saw myself and my two children approaching the elementary gates, they held their child back and said, wait a second, they are coming. The volume of their comment along with their behaviour had been so extreme and excessive, she had really made a scene. I have never been so embarrassed".

Such incidents occurred throughout the UK also, one incident in Bedfordshire is outlined below.

He had seen me and the kids walking towards the school reception and as several other parents approached with their children, he shouted "stop, quick, everyone get your masks on". Whilst saying this he pointed at us.

Another common theme had been parents and their children making racist remarks on online classes that children were having throughout the past year, "oh look, it is coronavirus Jade, can she see us", "ask Oscar if we can use soy sauce as a vaccine". The consequence of the action of parents and their children have had a dramatic effect on families of Chinese heritage, "I can just about deal with it but when your children are constantly so upset it is so hard to see and deal with. The past year has been my hardest year. I really do hope this all stops".

Several families were in the process of moving their children to different schools because of the discrimination their children had experienced throughout the last year.

The parents of the interviewees have also been on the receiving end of abuse.

My dad had eggs thrown at him. They shouted "china town" after throwing them.

There had been several incidents like this. Another person told of an incident in San Francisco where her mother had tomatoes thrown at her as she was leaving a takeaway.

One interviewee said his dad had been aggressively confronted whilst on a walk in Ipswich, "they got right up in his face and asked, 'take your virus and your chicken balls back to Bangkok'".

There had been instances where family members cars had been spat at, "my uncle had his car spat at when parked near a bus stop, she had squinted her eyes and stuck her middle finger up at him", "My mum and dad have had their car spat at on several occasions now. They have been so scared to leave the house this last year".

The following incident had occurred at a B&Q in Reading, "my mum was hit with a trolley which left a bruise on her leg, after he did, he screamed 'chinky' in her face". This type of incident had been common, another interviewee said, "my dad has been shoved with a trolley so many times when he has been out shopping, it is followed by comments like 'go home', 'you should get online delivery'".

Another incident had seen an interviewees mother have her mask ripped of her face and told "it is too late for that". This incident happened whilst queuing outside a fruit and vegetable shop in Leicestershire. Following the incident, the interviewees mother had cried and went back to her car. This behaviour and remark had been made by an elderly, Indian-Asian woman in a quite village, which highlights that such behaviour is possible in any environment and at any time.

Friends and partners have also been affected. Several interviewees pointed out that it was not just them who had noticed the increase in verbal abuse towards people of Chinese heritage – their friends had noticed it and been subject to it too. The girlfriend of one interviewee and her friends had food and cigarette ends thrown at them when having a picnic in Hyde Park, they were told "we only like your food, not your viruses you idiots".

Behaviour and attitudes like these have impacted friendships. A group of friends of one interviewee, who are Spanish and not of Chinese heritage, had made remarks like "it is nothing personal, but your lot are dirty and do eat everything going, they should stop coming here for a while". Despite being childhood friends, the interviewee felt he could not be friends with people who held such views, "I cannot socialise with people who think in such a racist and derogatory way".

6.3 Community impact

A theme throughout our interviews had been individuals noticing the increase in racial discrimination with businesses in their community. The most common businesses impacted had been Chinese takeaways and restaurants, other business such as convenience stores and dry cleaners were also affected.

Chinese takeaways and restaurants had eggs thrown at their buildings, their delivery cars, and in some cases at their chefs. From the interviews, it was apparent that these incidents had been happening throughout the UK in London, Edinburgh, Cardiff, Manchester as well as Newcastle in the north east. These incidents were not isolated and were part of a pattern throughout the UK, but also in the US, with incidents being common in California, New York, San Jose, and Texas.

Those of Chinese heritage had been using businesses as they knew they would be going through difficult times. Interviewees had been in communication with the businesses in their community and highlighted that racially motivated incidents had been common throughout the past year in both the UK and US, however, UK businesses had noticed a further increase in August and December 2020.

Established and popular Chinese takeaways had experienced a significant loss of trade throughout the past year with several now having to close because of such a constant decline in business. An award-winning takeaway in Wales had closed September, "the takeaway was a roaring success, but the business closed. When I spoke to them, they said they was no return after such a drop in sales. The owner had said that they had racist signs like 'go back to china' left outside. This had been as well as eggs being thrown at their windows".

Another challenge that businesses had to face was people being disruptive. For example, there were several instances where people had ordered food and intentionally not collected it. This had then been followed with racist, verbal abuse.

The incident below took place at a takeaway in Bristol.

A regular customer they had known well for over 5 years ordered over a £100 worth of food, went to collect the food, arrived, and said something along the lines of "keep your food, keep your virus and go fuck yourselves – you've ruined my fucking Christmas"

6.4 Media

It is interesting to note that the mainstream media - TV stations, radio, newspapers, and social media had not received many criticisms.

Unjustified blame

We have got to stop blaming the media. People just need to not be racist and discriminate. It is that simple. And if and when they do, people need to act when they witness these ugly behaviours.

Interviewees felt that the lack of interest in anti-Chinese racism and media portrayal of people of Chinese heritage had not been an issue and that it should not be used as an “excuse” and “justify” the increase in racism, with this taking accountability away from individuals who discriminate. As one interviewee said, “you can’t put this on the media, it’s too casual and lazy to do so, we need to focus on the people who are behaving in such a way”.

Support groups and networks established

Despite a frustration that those in influencing positions and authority had ignored the racism throughout the past year, those of Chinese heritage had been thankful for the few support groups that had been created.

The use of these networks had varied. There were several cases where those of Chinese heritage had used and had been positively supported. For the majority, despite not using these networks, their existence had allowed them to feel “like someone cared”.

“It is amazing, I haven’t used the support network myself but just knowing that they are if I need them makes me feel so much stronger”.

The most common support group highlighted in the U.K had been the mental health charity Meridian Wellbeing who partnered with Chinese Association of Tower Hamlets to launch a project to tackle hate crime. The network provides; wellbeing and mental health support, advice and an advocacy service and liaising with government and organisations working to tackle hate crimes.

In the US, the Stop Asian Americans, and Pacific Islanders (AAPI) Hate network had been the most used network. Stop AAPI Hate is a reporting centre launched by three Asian advocacy groups: Asian Pacific Planning and Policy Council, Chinese for Affirmative Action, and the Asian American Studies Department of San Francisco State University. Their approach: to serve as the leading aggregator of anti-Asian and anti-Pacific Islander hate incidents, offer multilingual resources for impacted community members, provide technical assistance from rapid response to preventative measures, support community-based safety measures and restorative justice efforts, advocate for local, state, and national policies that reinforces human rights and civil rights protections.

“I am so grateful, having that support throughout the last year and knowing that people are trying to do something about this issue is encouraging, rather than feeling like it is you against the world”.

6.5 Government

Those of Chinese heritage shared felt their retrospective governments should have taken a lead role in tackling anti-Chinese racism.

Interviewees felt governmental procedures and announcements would have set a precedent and had a ripple effect throughout society, "if our government gave it attention and took action, all media outlets would be all over it. It is not the responsibility of the media; it is the responsibility of the government who govern and run the country".

Those of Chinese heritage felt "obvious" and "straightforward" actions could have had a mitigating affect.

The government and Boris Johnson should have brought light to the issue. The countless number of briefings that they have had in the last year and not once have they acknowledged this issue. It is a joke if I am honest.

This feeling was similar throughout the U.S, as one interviewee said, "no political leader, party or person of significance has shone a light on such an alarming and concerning issue".

Those of Chinese heritage felt it is likely that they would receive "token gestures" from their governments and authorities, to show a response and interest. However, many felt that it is unlikely that anything of significance would be done.

Something will probably end up being done but I can guarantee that it will not tackle the root and cause of the issue.

6.6 Reactions of others

Interviewees also discussed the reactions of others who had either witnessed the incidents or those that they subsequently talked to about their experiences.

Not being seen as a priority

The biggest disappointment was expressed by those who felt their experiences had not been seen as a priority and being told that there were more concerning issues, failing to understand the impact the discrimination has had on those of Chinese heritage. "I know it isn't good, but do you not feel people are facing bigger issues at the moment?", this had been a typical response that those of Chinese heritage faced both in and outside the workplace.

It must be noted that this response had been common from not just white individuals but also other minorities. One interviewee had been verbally abused when out in public, she had been with her Indian brother-in-law. Following the incident, the interviewee cried, and her brother-in-law response had been "come on, it's not that bad, people are dying every day, it's only a comment".

This was echoed by the wife of another interviewee. "My wife's family is black; she and her family have experienced racism throughout their lives but when sharing my experiences with her she did not seem to understand the impact it had on me. It had been really confusing for me as she has always discussed how difficult various racist experiences have been for her".

In the workplace, the discrimination had been seen as a "slight inconvenience rather than a problem" that had needed to be dealt with. "It is not ideal but everyone at work is going through a lot, we have all just recently moved to remote working". These responses and comments had come from colleagues who interviewees felt were 'good friends' or previously 'very supportive'.

The responses from managers had followed a similar pattern. "It felt like, yeah okay, but I am busy and there is a lot going on" with another interviewee saying that they felt "neglected" by such a reaction. Interviewees highlighted that such responses had been "disheartening", as one interviewee said "it can be overlooked how daunting and how much courage it takes to go to your manager with an issue, even if it is fully justified. But when you basically get told it's not a real issue it leaves you feeling weak".

Lack of response

People were most concerned about the lack of response of other people who had witnessed the incidents that they experienced. This reinforced the feeling that anti-Chinese racism is ignored and even tolerated by people. It made them feel that when they challenged the perpetrators, they did not have the support of other people around them.

Everyone quickly turns their head when you look around to see who has seen. It happens all the time. They must either think it is okay or do not want to be involved but people need to take more responsibility.

For the few cases that had seen support and response, they had helped those of Chinese heritage to cope with the incidents they experienced. "When they stuck up for me it made me feel strong rather than upset and alone" this interviewee had two colleagues flag a racist remark that had been made on a zoom call. In this incident no senior leaders or management had no response to the remark. "Managers should be aware, but everyone needs to have the confidence to speak up when they think something is wrong, not to feel that if a manager has not said anything then anything cannot be wrong".

This had been echoed by a graduate who had reported racist jokes being made to an individual of Chinese heritage. "He had not only stopped him from making more jokes but also reported it, it had made me feel so empowered. However, I was annoyed because of the amount of people of varying seniority who had seen nothing wrong with the remarks".

There had also been cases where witnesses had found incidents funny. "Two individuals in the office witnessed but glanced up and then kept their heads down, one was actually laughing at one point". In these instances, interviewees described their experiences as more "intense" and the effects that followed "incurable", one interviewee said, "it was horrific and when you see other people laughing it feels like the whole world is against you".

From all incidents that happened outside the workplace in the UK and US, only two incidents had been reported to the police. The reason for why those of Chinese heritage had not reported their incident had been due to the reaction and lack of response from those who had witnessed, "they saw it all happen, looked at me after, raised their eyebrows and walked on as if nothing had happened".

All interviewees had said they would have reported discriminatory behaviour, both in and outside the workplace, if they had the support of those around them when the incidents occurred.

Lack of support

There was a general feeling that racial prejudice against the Chinese and people of Chinese heritage is generally ignored in the workplace. This sense that prejudice against Chinese people is not taken seriously has been felt more acutely throughout the last year. One of the interviewees told his manager what he had recently experienced. Her response was "can you not sort that between yourselves, come on".

On one occasion where an individual had been punched in the stomach at work, he chose not to talk about this with his colleagues, saying:

I did not talk to my colleagues about it because they have never understood any racist incidents I have previously spoken to them about.

Those of Chinese heritage felt like their struggles were not taken seriously and that "colour is the focus for organisations" when discussing racial discrimination, "I feel Chinese people are the forgotten minority, my company and everyone always focuses on skin colour".

As a result of lack of support, individuals felt they experiences would have long-term and lasting affects – those of Chinese heritage had felt "powerless" and a "significant loss of confidence". "I really did feel like I lost part of my identity after that interaction with my manager."

6.7 Impact on individuals

This section looks at the impact the incidents had on the individuals.

Fear

The biggest impact the racism has had on individuals is an “overriding” fear being developed. Those of Chinese heritage referred to feeling “terrified”, “threatened”, “scared”, “anxious”, “afraid”.

As a result of these emotions, people said that they were, “feeling targeted”, “wishing they did not exist”, “on high alert”, “wary”, “cautious” with one interviewee saying “I am always looking over my shoulder”.

People had referred to their fear being “constant”, as a result, many referred to the past year as being their most difficult.

This last year has been the worst year of my life. The fear and struggles alongside it have been non-stop.

Interviewees had not felt safe leaving their homes, many felt apprehensive at the thought of being in public, as one interviewee said, “I do not feel safe in public – the thought of going outside worries me”.

Many had been concerned that their racial experiences could escalate and that they would be physically attacked, “it can happen anywhere, at any time”. When reflecting on their experiences in the past year, some said that they had intentionally left their homes less, others had only realised in reflection, “I guess we naturally try to avoid danger”. Those who had previously exercised in public no longer do so, “I ordered a treadmill because I do not want to run in public anymore.”

Individuals felt that their experiences would have been much worse if it were not for remote working. Interviewees had felt a lot safer due to the lack of exposure, not only on the commute to work but also in the work environment itself “remote working has saved us”. However, despite feeling fortunate for remote working, many now said that their homes no longer felt like a “safe space”. Racial experiences had led to home working spaces feeling “invaded” and associated with “distress” and “difficulty”. Consequently, individuals felt “trapped” and that there was “no escape”.

Moving to a new country

For a significant number of individuals, their experiences throughout the past year had become “too much” and has led to them to consider moving to a new country. Those of Chinese heritage had noticed their mental health being impacted due to the “persistent” and “repetitive” occurrence of their experiences.

The racism I have experienced has taken over my life. I have looked at moving to New Zealand.

The majority had discussed moving to a country where there were a greater Chinese/east-Asian population “It is too much if I am honest, I do not think it will improve. My brother and I have looked at setting up a business in China where our grandparents still living”, another interviewee said “the last year has been dreadful for me. A different country and culture would be best for me. I am happy to settle and go live a nice, easy, peaceful life in somewhere like Thailand”.

Some felt that their views may sound like an overreaction, however, those of Chinese heritage felt that the prejudice towards them would not only remain but worsen, one individual referred to the pandemic being a “fuel” which has been added to a “pre-existing fire of resentment “. Individuals felt like a “scapegoat” and felt they would continue to be on the receiving end of any dissatisfaction, “there are difficult times ahead for us in America. We have been the worst economically impacted country and I feel we will be used to vent any frustration and anger that people have. It is my dream to live in New York, but I do not want to go on like this.”

Willing to take pay cut

All individuals who experienced some form of discrimination in the workplace had said that they would be willing to take pay cuts if it meant that they would not be racially discriminated. Individuals were willing to take different roles, move organisations and in some instances change industries.

Those of Chinese heritage had said that following their discriminatory experiences and difficulties that followed, that they had felt “contentment” and settling had been common.

“There is no chance that this racist behaviour will stop, absolutely no chance. I am looking at jobs in China.”

When proposed with a hypothetical situation, interviewees said that if they could they would “not hesitate” in seeing their salaries halved to ensure that they would not experience what they have throughout the last year. It had been concerning that those of Chinese heritage were willing to suddenly give up careers that they had worked towards for years.

Some had already changed jobs and taken pay cuts. One interviewee had moved to a different organisation because of their diverse workforce and no tolerance policy for discriminatory behaviour, “it is the best thing I did, you can see they have been trained on how to work with a diverse workforce”. Another interviewee had admitted that she had regretted moving roles due to the industry change and consequences it may have on future career progression. This individual had previously been a physiotherapist at a football club but had moved into recruitment consultancy. “I stopped enjoying what I did, and I just had to get out, I knew nothing would happen because of the environment in professional sports”.

I guess money and career progression is not everything. My happiness and well-being are my pain priority.

Relocating to live nearer parents

Due to concerns of their parents' safety and well-being, individuals have looked at relocating to be closer to their parents.

Those of Chinese heritage had felt that their parents were not sharing all their racial experiences but could notice that "things were not the same", an interviewee considering moving from California back to San Francisco said "I only know of the incidents because I have been on the phone when they have happened, he has not told me of any other incidents, but I find it hard to believe that all the incidents he has experienced have been whilst on the phone to me. I have noticed that he has been really sad at certain times in this past year and whenever I try talk about our people struggling, he tries to change the topic". An interviewee from the UK said "I have considered moving closer to my parents back in Leeds as I feel it will not be easy for them in coming years also. I get the impression that my dad hides things from me which is worrying and upsetting".

Because of such actions and thought process, individuals had become frustrated as they felt they were "giving in". However, they had felt "helpless" and that it was out of their control and they were being "forced" into such decisions, "you just have to do some things sometimes; it is what it is".

Interviewees had highlighted the impact of relocating would have on their lives "it is sad because we have built a life here in Surrey. I also do not want to move the kids whilst they are in school, but I fear for my parents".

Some had already moved back to live with or near their parents. These individuals had been able to relocate in short space of time due to the flexibility of remote working but had emphasised that they would not have relocated if it were not for the concern of their parents, "I would have preferred to stay and live in London", "ideally I would have stayed here in Texas but I feel it is best for us all if I move back home to Los Angeles".

Conclusions

One year on following our research following the initial coronavirus outbreak, there has been further increases in discrimination towards those of Chinese. In the survey that was carried out, over 27% of working people had experienced an increase in racism in the workplace and over 44% in public places.

The types of incidents that were recorded included being shunned and avoided; verbal abuse: physical abuse. What was perhaps most disappointing for the people in the survey and of those interviewed was the response of other people who had witnessed the incidents. Too often nobody did anything at all and on occasions seem to be supporting the perpetrators.

The impact of these incidents on the victims was multi-fold. The most common impact had been that people had constantly felt fearful, anxious and on edge. This has led to people of Chinese heritage being very careful about how often, when and where they go out.

It had been worrying to hear that those of Chinese heritage had no longer been shocked and surprised by what they were experiencing, they had become accustomed to the racist behaviour. Following the initial outbreak of coronavirus, despite discrimination being experienced, those of Chinese heritage had felt their work environments were safe and an escape from their experiences in public. However, for the majority, remote working had resulted in this safety to no longer exist with many now feeling fearful and anxious in their own homes.

People were also disappointed that their experiences and struggles were not seen as a priority from others who had witnessed the incident that had occurred to them. This led to increased feelings of isolation and that there is a lack of concern generally about anti-Chinese prejudice, with many feeling like the 'forgotten minority'.

Feeling scapegoated, those of Chinese heritage felt they are being used to vent anger and frustration. In the U.K, the governments rule changing on the 'Christmas bubble' had seen an instant backlash and a resentment that has continued. This contrasted to the US, who felt the republican party and more specifically Donald Trump had driven a racist rhetoric which had ignited a pre-existing racial division in America, this underlying resentment and racial tension had been reinforced by recent presidential campaigns.

People were disappointed that their governments have not reacted and used their power and influence, with the blame towards mainstream media for fuelling the grievance against Chinese people being unjustified – with accountability and responsibility needing to be held at the hand of perpetrators.

The constant isolation had inevitably led to those of Chinese heritage to question their identity and feel that they would never be accepted in society – both in the U.K and U.S, many now felt that they would only ever truly be accepted in countries with high east-Asian populations.

Recommendations

Interviewees were asked what actions they would like to see happen. It should be noted that some felt that there was so little interest in anti-Chinese prejudice that they could not see anybody willing to take any action.

Political Leaders

In both countries, people felt that political leaders could have used their platforms to spread awareness of a current issue - suggestion that 'coronavirus briefings' would have been an ideal setting. Concerningly, many thoughts that it would take several deaths and protests before any action were taken.

Organisational firm stance

Organisations must not only take a firm stance against discriminatory behaviour with no tolerance policies in place, but make sure that it is clearly communicated throughout their workforce. Discriminatory behaviour had become non-existent when organisations had scheduled mandatory 'No Tolerance' meetings. A further influencing factor had been highlighting the rise in discrimination in relation to those of Chinese heritage.

Ease of reporting discriminatory behaviour

Following incidents, people felt that the process of reporting racist behaviour had been 'draining' and 'time consuming'.

Organisations and authorities need to ensure that there are clear and easy processes in place. It was felt that such processes needed to be implemented and communicated in both the workplace and local communities. People had felt that reporting discriminatory behaviour should be encouraged by simplistic measures rather than processes that are perceived to be difficult.

Auditing review

Organisations that had regular diversity and inclusion training and work saw colleagues report behaviours and support individuals. Despite their experiences, these individuals had continued to feel safe in their work environments. However, it must be noted that this had only been the case for the organisations who had training work over a sustained period.

Employers of customer facing staff

Organisations need to make their employees aware of their responsibilities, not only to their customers but their colleagues also. Procedures must be put in place to ensure that employees understand how to react when a racially motivated incident happens.

For those working in public workplaces, such as shops and restaurants, they must be made aware of the impact their behaviour has on others. There had been several instances where people felt that the discriminatory behaviour had been 'instigated' by employees, from which other customers and the public conformed – many felt that such incidents would not have occurred if it were not for the employee's behaviour.

Publishing and sharing research to wider communities

Another way of raising people's awareness of the issues that the Chinese community faces is by publicising this research. It was hoped by some that this would change some people's perspective at least on their views and attitudes towards people of Chinese heritage.

A role for us all

Ultimately, we must all play our role in ensuring the safety and well-being of those of Chinese heritage in our communities. We are approaching a critical situation, where shockingly, there is likely to be further increases in the levels of anti-Chinese prejudice as lockdown restrictions are eased. There is an opportunity for all of us to play a part in helping our fellow citizens of Chinese heritage to feel safer – this is vital as many individuals no longer feeling safe in their own homes.

We can all remain vigilant and when we witness some of the ugly behaviours that have been described to us during this research, we should all be prepared to take action to support which, in turn, will lead to a suppression of the attitude on display.



Difference inspires business

	Latimer House Langford Business Park Kidlington OX5 1GG
	info@pearnkandola.com
	Pearnkandola.com
	+44 (0) 1865 399060