

Asian-Australians hit hard by the COVID-19 pandemic

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More than four in five Asian-Australians say they have experienced instances of discrimination during the COVID-19 pandemic, new analysis from The Australian National University (ANU) shows.

In a survey of more than 3,000 people, 84.5% of Asian-Australians reported at least one instance of [discrimination](#) between January and October 2020. This is compared to 82% in August 2019.

Study co-author, Professor Nicholas Biddle from the ANU Center for Social Research Methods, said discrimination against Asian-Australians dropped by 12.3% between January and April 2020.

"This was when lockdowns were in full force and there was less exposure to potential sources of discrimination," Professor Biddle said.

"But we then found an almost equal increase in instances of discrimination between April and October 2020, when lockdowns were easing. Our findings also show Australians are no more likely to think that people from a different ethnic background to the majority of the Australian population should be restricted from moving to Australia than they did prior to the pandemic. There has also been a slight decline in support for migration in general, but this does not appear to have been targeted towards particular ethnic groups."

Professor Biddle noted there was also good news from the study's findings, with the results showing social cohesion has improved during the COVID-19 pandemic.

"What is perhaps more interesting though is that Australians are more likely to think that Asian-Australians can be trusted, are fair, and are helpful than they are to think the same thing of Anglo-Australians," Professor Biddle said.

"Around 65% of the Australian population has high trust in Asian-Australians, compared to 55% who have high trust in Anglo-Australians."

The research was undertaken in collaboration with the ANU Center for Asian-Australian Leadership (CAAL).

"We know that sadly many Asian-Australians still face and experience discrimination every day," CAAL Director Mr Jieh-Yung Lo said.

"This survey shines an important light on the experiences of Asian-Australians, particularly in a very distinct moment in our history, as well as the work we must still all do to make sure our nation is free from discrimination. In our survey last year, around 15% of Australians identified as being Asian-Australian. The research shows that Asian-Australians play a pivotal role in the success of our society and nation. They have been a pillar of our society for generations. We must do better; we can do better."

The study also found experiences of Asian-Australians during the pandemic were worse compared to other groups.

"Asian-Australians are more likely to be anxious and worried due to COVID-19 than the rest of the Australian population," Professor Biddle said.

"The biggest difference though has been in terms of economics. The drop in hours worked for Asian-Australians between February and April 2020 (5.0 hours) was more than twice the drop for the rest of the Australian population (2.4 hours). Some of this gap has been regained since, but even in October 2020 Asian-Australians were working fewer hours than they had in February 2020, whereas the rest of the Australian population were back closer to their pre-COVID levels."

Mr Lo said: "Asian-Australians have fared worse during the COVID-19 period than the rest of the Australian [population](#), and there is an ongoing need to understand the source of this disparity, as well as the most

effective policy responses. In addition to anti-racism strategies, one of the most effective ways to combat discrimination is by increasing Asian-Australian representation in senior leadership positions across our public and private institutions. Having more Asian-Australians in leadership roles changes perceptions, breaks down stereotypes and instills greater trust and confidence across our society."

More information: The study forms part of the ANU Center for Social Research and Methods COVID-19 monitoring program and is available [online](#).

Provided by Australian National University

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