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# Six in 10 Chinese Canadians say they have adjusted routines to avoid racist run-ins during COVID-19

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VANCOUVER

PUBLISHED 3 HOURS AGO

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00:00 Voice 1x



A butcher works behind a plastic divider at a meat market and barbecue shop in Chinatown, in Vancouver, June 10, 2020.

DARRYL DYCK/THE CANADIAN PRESS

Six in 10 respondents to a survey of Canadians who identify as being of Chinese ethnicity say they have adjusted their routines to avoid run-ins or unpleasant encounters since the pandemic began.

Half the respondents say they have been called names or insulted because of the COVID-19 pandemic and 43 per cent say they have been threatened or intimidated.

The newly released survey by the Angus Reid Institute working with the University of Alberta is a rare look into the experiences of Canadians of Chinese ethnicity well into the pandemic - a period of time marked by assaults, graffiti and other forms of harassment targeting the community.

Community groups, individuals and some police departments have raised the alarm about harassment linked to the pandemic, but the executive director of the Angus Reid Institute, Shachi Kurl, says the goal of the survey was to try and generate some empirical data on the issue.

“What we hear from Canadians of Chinese descent and Chinese ethnicity is, this is a real lived experience for significant numbers of them,” Ms. Kurl said in an interview.

“[The survey] really speaks to the depth and breadth and scope and true saturation of this experience.”

The online survey, conducted between June 15 and 18, had a sample size of 516 people who self-identify as ethnically Chinese. The margin of error is plus-or-minus 4.3 percentage points 19 times out of 20. Ms. Kurl said that was a sufficient foundation for drawing conclusions because it was from one segment of society. She did not have a geographical breakdown available.

“This is basically a deep dive on one segment, a cross-section of Canadian society,” Ms. Kurl said.

Other findings in the research include 50 per cent of respondents saying they feared Asian children were going to be bullied, due to the pandemic, when they returned to school. Pollsters acknowledged that Canadians of East Asian descent more broadly have also experienced discrimination exacerbated by stereotypes about the pandemic.

Between 84 per cent and 88 per cent of respondents said they agreed with statements on Canada being an important part of their identity, loving Canada and what it stands for, feeling

a strong sense of belonging to Canada and their Chinese ethnicity being an important part of their identity.

But only 13 per cent said they think others in Canada view them as Canadian “all the time.”

Amy Go, national president for the Chinese Canadian National Council for Social Justice, said in an interview that the polls are helpful for drawing the attention of the public and, especially, policy makers to the issue in hopes it will motivate solutions.

Andy Yan, head of the City Program at Simon Fraser University, said he has been looking at polling on how Canadian people overall have experienced the pandemic, but had not been aware of any substantive polling, until now, done on their experiences with harassment.

“It’s a void in the data, but also a void in our data methodologies - how do we capture the experiences of particular communities and populations,” Mr. Yan said.

He said polling and research on numbers, statistics and stories give direction on how people are feeling, and whether cases are isolated or part of the experiences of the larger community.

Ms. Kurl said the sense of otherness experienced by Canadians of Chinese descent is causing harm. “This is happening in our house. What are we going to do to clean up our own house?”

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