

Hypervisibility and Invisibility: Anti-Asian Racism in Germany

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Asian Voices Europe

ASIAN VOICES EUROPE

- ★ Our initial actions were
 - to call for a centralized **hotline** at the national/EU level
 - to provide **community-building** and peer-to-peer **psycho-social support** during lockdown
- ★ Started in March 2020 with an *ad hoc* survey documenting hate crimes during the Covid-19 pandemic.
- included in the report of *Corona en discriminatiemeldingen in Nederland*
- ★ Our main goal is to **facilitate communication and dialogue on the subject of anti-Asian racism (AAR)** as well as to promote cultural diversity in Europe.

Questions:

- ★ What are the forms and expressions of contemporary racism in Germany, particularly as experienced by Asian diaspora?
- ★ How does the recognition of racism often meet resistance or denial in public discourse?
- ★ How can diasporic movement and their allies mobilize to combat racism and foster public awareness?

The Roadmap

① Overview

② AAR

③ Institutional Neglects

④ Outlook

A long (but less documented) history of anti-Asian racism in Germany

*Anti-Asian racism (AAR) existed in Germany before COVID-19; among the worst outbreaks of anti-Asian violence since 1945 have been the **racist riots** in Hoyerswerda in 1991 and in the Lichtenhagen district of Rostock in 1992. [...] A particular feature of AAR is that it also operates with the “**model immigrant**” myth who are often played off against other groups in racist discourse. [...] **Little is known** as yet about the extent to which Asian [diaspora] are **subject to structural racism**, as there are scarcely any relevant studies.*

(Federal Government Commissioner for Anti-Racism 2023: 39)

- ★ AAR was **not even officially recognized as a distinct category** of racism by Germany until November 2023 (European Commission 2020a,b, Asian Voices Europe 2024, European Commission 2024, Suda and Köhler 2024).

AVE Survey II - When Asian Voices Echo



(Asian Voices Europe 2024)

- ★ 855 out of 1,275 responses (consented and validated-all reside in Europe)
- ★ data collection: 14. June - 6. August 2021
- ★ via online survey in 10 different languages
- ★ the first Europe-wide survey of AAR
- ★ to identify perception of racism, lived experiences of racial discrimination and impact of the pandemic of Asian living in Europe
- ★ mix-method approach; on-probability convenience sampling/snowballing/double coder strategy

AVE Survey II - When Asian Voices Echo

- ★ The **demographic** of the respondents:

| Gender | Frequency | Percent% |
|-------------------|------------|--------------|
| Women | 689 | 80.6% |
| Men | 139 | 16.3% |
| NBGD [†] | 25 | 3.1% |

[†] Non binary Gender Diverse

| Country of residence | Frequency | Percent% |
|------------------------|------------|--------------|
| The Netherlands | 259 | 30.3% |
| Germany | 194 | 22.7% |
| France | 122 | 14.3% |
| United Kingdom | 113 | 13.2% |
| Others [‡] | 167 | 19.5% |

[‡] scattered in EU with lower response rates

| Age | Frequency | Percent% |
|--------------|------------|--------------|
| Under 19 | 33 | 3.9% |
| 20-29 | 441 | 51.6% |
| 30-39 | 261 | 30.5% |
| 40-49 | 81 | 9.5% |
| 50-59 | 26 | 3.0% |
| Over 60 | 12 | 1.4% |

| Racial Identity | Frequency | Percent% |
|------------------------------|------------|---------------|
| East Asian | 599 | 70.06% |
| South-East Asian | 168 | 19.65% |
| Interracial & others | 37 | 3.91% |
| Southern Asian | 28 | 3.27% |
| Western/Central Asian/Others | 23 | 3.12% |

Experience of Discrimination by Asian Diaspora

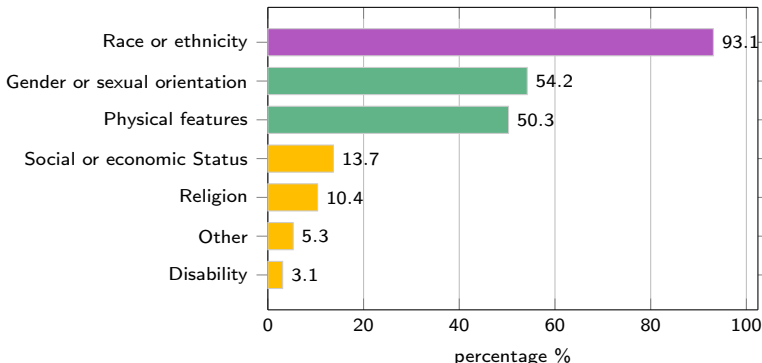


Figure 1: What type of discrimination have you ever been discriminated?

* This figures (92.2%) surpasses figures from studies of Asian Americans, where 79.68% have reported personal experiences of discrimination based on their race or ethnicity in the context of the US (Borja and Gibson 2021), serving as a reference point.

Experience of Discrimination by Asian Diaspora

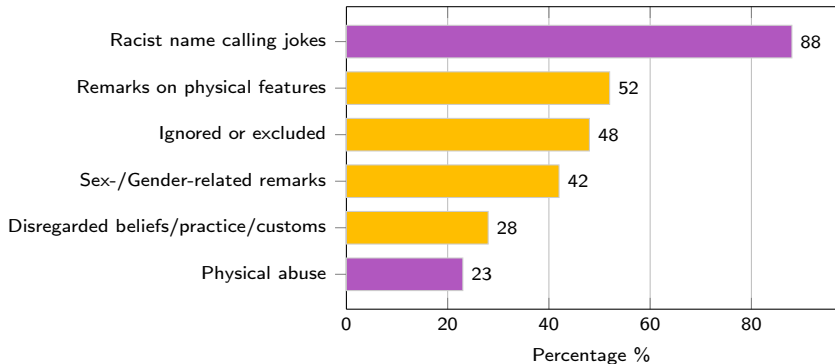


Figure 2: What kind of racial harassment have you experienced?

★ Reported AAR incidents most frequently occurred on the streets (71%), public transport (61%), but also in educational institutions (14%) and the work place (25%).

Physical assault

- (1) It was Christmas Eve in 2022, around 13:00 in the afternoon. I was walking my dog in a residential area in Duisburg. Suddenly, two men approached me. They looked straight at me and started shouting, calling me a **disgusting Chinese** and saying they would **kill every Chinese**. Before I could react, one of them **punched me in the face**. I stumbled, trying to protect my dog. My head and left eye were injured. I screamed for help, and some people nearby called the police. The two men ran away before the police arrived. They were never caught.
- 20s, man*
(Yonhap News 2022)

Kindergarten

- (2) When I told my daughter's kindergarten about racist remarks other children made toward her, they suggested we [find another school where there are more Asians](#). [...] On the street, people sometimes shout [Hey Corona](#) or [Ching chong](#) at us. My daughter doesn't yet understand what those words mean, but I worry for the day she does.
30s, women, Germany (Asian Voices Europe 2024)

Invalidation

- ★ Students reported racist comments from peers, differential treatment, biased expectations, or Ignoring or undervaluing participation.

(3) Irrespective of the pandemic, [even] before the pandemic, it was very annoying to be ridiculed in France for the gestures by [slanting] eyes or making [fun of] by people [who used to] be good friends. [...] When I got angry about [those] gestures, they [didn't] take it seriously, but I was teased again. *20s, man*
(Asian Voices Europe 2024: 35)

Migroaggression

- (4) [...] I am often underestimated or by university professors and other students ... and [if] you're Asian, they (whites) automatically assume you're bad at [speaking] in both English and Dutch, even though I am a dutch citizen [...] or assumed to be good at math but poor at communication.
- 20s, women*
(Asian Voices Europe 2024)

Frequency of Racial Discrimination and Harassment

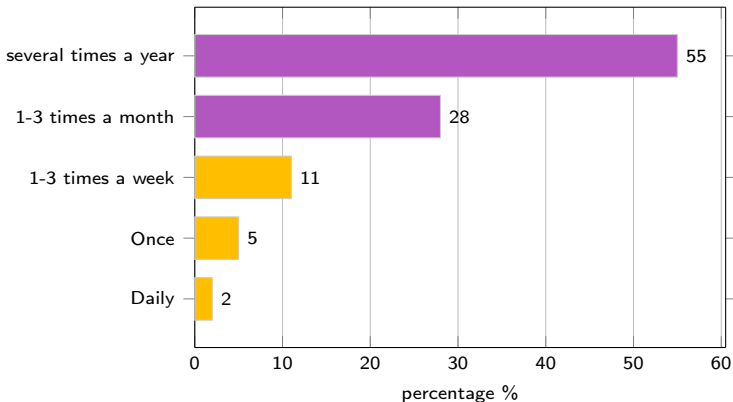
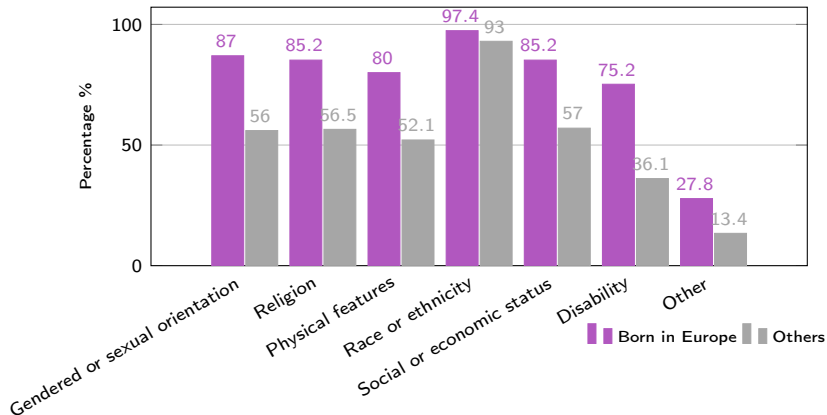


Figure 4: How many times/often have you been harassed?

Experience of Discrimination by Asian Diaspora

This suggests that those who have lived in Europe for a longer period of time are more likely to be exposed to situations of racism and discrimination.



Gendered Discriminatory Experiences

The AAR trends have **intersectional** faces: **Women & Non-binary and gender diverse (NBGD)** groups more often, severely experience racism and discrimination.

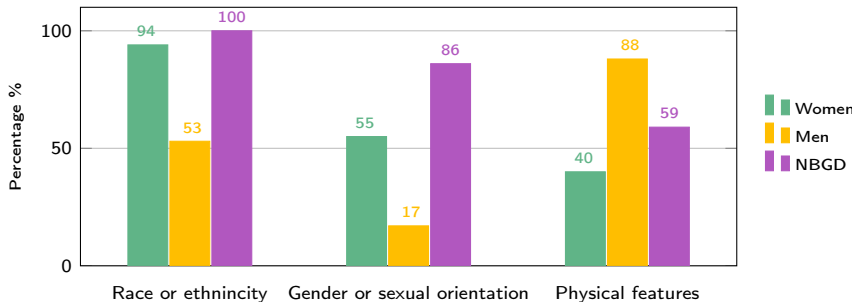


Figure 6: How do individuals across gender groups experience the top 3 forms of discrimination?

Racism in Universities

- ★ The Australian Human Rights Commission released its [Racism@UniStudy](#) in February 2026
- ★ More than 76,000 students and staff from 42 universities across the country participated in the Study.
- ★ The Study findings reveal particularly high rates of racism are experienced by students and staff from First Nations, African, Asian, Jewish, Māori, Middle Eastern, Muslim, Palestinian and Pasifika backgrounds.

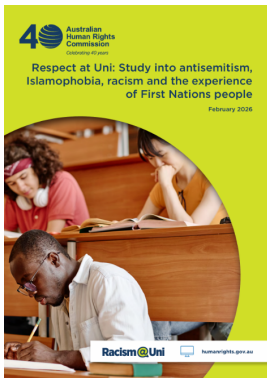


Figure 7: Australian Human Rights Commission's Racism@Uni Study

Australian Human Rights Commission

- ★ 70% of survey respondents report **experiencing indirect racism**, including hearing or seeing racist behaviour directed at their community
- ★ 15% of respondents report experiencing **direct interpersonal racism** at university
- ★ Jewish (religious) and Palestinian respondents report experiences of racism at rates over 90%
- ★ First Nations, Chinese, Jewish (secular), Middle Eastern and Northeast Asian respondents all report experiences of racism at rates over 80%
- ★ **only 6% of people** who experience direct racism make a **complaint to their university**, with many citing fear of consequences
- ★ Trust in university complaints systems is extremely low, with the 60-80% of staff and students who experience racism reporting **dissatisfaction with the process**.

Types of racism in universities

- ★ Verbal abuse & harassment
 - slurs, insults, mocking
 - e.g. Asian students: joked about the way my eyes are 'slanted' and that I smelled like noodles
- ★ Physical intimidation
 - threats, harassment, assaults
 - e.g. being pushed or followed
 - being targeted in political contexts (e.g. protests)
- ★ Classroom & institutional racism
 - lecturers not intervening
 - discriminatory comments by staff
 - biased, exclusive, or dismissive responses

Racism in Universities

Hochschulbüro für CHANCVIELFALT

Leibniz Universität Hannover

A TEAM

Gegen Diskriminierung vorgehen, nicht stillschweigend hinnehmen!

WAS?
Beratung von Studierenden für Studierende aller Fakultäten

WANN?
Wenn Du Diskriminierung erfahren hast, diese beobachtet hast oder einfach ins Gespräch darüber kommen möchtest.

DISKRIMINIERUNGSFORMEN:

- Antimuslimischer Rassismus
- Antischwarzer Rassismus
- Antisemitismus
- Sexismus
- Ableism
- Altersdiskriminierung
- Klassismus
- Lookism

WO?

📍 a_team_luh
✉ a-team@chancenvielfalt.uni-hannover.de
🌐 <https://www.chancenvielfalt.uni-hannover.de/de/diversity-management/projekt-a-team>

Komm lass quatschen

Figure 8: Flyer Büro für Chancenvielfalt

Open questions

Questions:

- ★ What would anti-Asian racism in German universities reveal that is currently obscured by the lack of systematic and disaggregated data collection?
- ★ What forms of racism remain invisible when categories like 'Asian' are not differentiated in systems?
- ★ What does exclusion concretely look like for racialized students—especially Asian students—across everyday interactions, and institutional structures in German universities?

Thank you!

We would like to express our deepest gratitude to all of the respondents for sharing their opinions and experiences with us, to all volunteers for their amazing works and to AVE supports for their support and solidarity.

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Your support helps us cover **small but essential costs** like mailbox, monthly maintenance for banking accounts, domain hosting, so we can stay **independent, sustainable, and community-driven**.

AVE club

Together, we are stronger. We need you.



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