



## Commission on Human Rights

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### **NYC COMMISSION ON HUMAN RIGHTS ISSUES NEW REPORT DOCUMENTING MUSLIM, ARAB, SOUTH ASIAN, JEWISH, AND SIKH NEW YORKERS' EXPERIENCES OF BIAS HARASSMENT, DISCRIMINATION, AND ACTS OF HATE LEADING UP TO AND FOLLOWING 2016 PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION**

*Report, which summarizes survey responses from 3,100 Muslim, Arab, South Asian, Jewish, and Sikh New Yorkers, found 40 percent reported being verbally harassed, 9 percent physically assaulted, and nearly 20 percent discriminated against at work. Nearly 71 percent said they did not report the incident*

*As part of the report's recommendations to increase reporting and prevent bias incidents, Commission announces partnership with seven organizations serving the targeted communities citywide to pilot a community-based anti-discrimination referral network*

**NEW YORK**—The NYC Commission on Human Rights issued today a [new report](#) highlighting Muslim, Arab, South Asian, Jewish and Sikh (MASAJS) New Yorkers' experiences of bias harassment, discrimination, and acts of hate between July 2016 and late 2017, leading up to and following the 2016 presidential election. The report, which summarizes survey responses from over 3,100 MASAJS individuals across all five boroughs, found high rates of bias, discrimination, and acts of hate against these communities, the overwhelming majority of whom did not report the incidents.

“No one in New York City has permission to discriminate against or harass others because of who they are, where they pray, or what country they come from,” said **Chair and Commissioner of the NYC Commission on Human Rights, Carmelyn P. Malalis**. “The NYC Commission on Human Rights takes bias-motivated incidents very seriously and we are dedicated to combating them. We are also working hard to understand how the City can be a better resource to Muslim, Arab, South Asian, Jewish and Sikh New Yorkers who are far too often the targets of discrimination and harassment. The data from this survey is an invaluable tool that will help the Commission and other stakeholders better address and prevent these incidents and ensure that people know where to go to get help. We look forward to working with community- and faith-based organizations to implement these action steps, which will help create a better and safer New York City for us all.”

“No one should have to suffer harassment or discrimination. Our office works with the NYC Commission on Human Rights every day so that more New Yorkers, regardless of race, ethnicity, or religion, can confidentially report harassment they face and receive justice,” said **Bitta Mostofi, Commissioner of the Mayor's Office of Immigrant Affairs**. “The Commission's new report provides more evidence that harassers continue to offend in this toxic political climate, particularly for immigrant communities. We will redouble our efforts with our

sister agencies and community partners so that all New Yorkers know that the City has their back.”

“Discrimination, bias, harassment, and hate crimes have no place in New York City. The de Blasio administration is committed to protect and help communities all around the city, regardless of race, gender, ethnicity, religion or immigration status,” said **Commissioner of New York City’s Community Affairs Unit, Marco A. Carrión**. “The staff at the Community Affairs Unit will continue connecting diverse communities to city agencies to combat discrimination and other pressing issues affecting those communities citywide.”

The Commission launched the survey in 2017 amid heightened reports of bias-motivated incidents targeting MASAJIS communities to better understand the scope and frequency of such incidents, prevent future acts of bias, increase reporting to the Commission, and identify how the Commission and City can better serve these communities. Key recommendations include a community-based referral network, new bystander intervention and cultural competency trainings for City outreach employees, directing mental health services through ThriveNYC to affected communities, and increased community outreach and legal resources to ensure MASAJIS New Yorkers understand their rights. As part of the implementation of some of the report recommendations, the Commission is announcing today a partnership with seven community partners, including Jews for Racial and Economic Justice, Sauti Yetu Center, the Sikh Coalition, the New York Chapter of the Council on American-Islamic Relations, the Arab American Association of NY, the Arab American Family Support Center, and Chhaya CDC, to identify next steps in piloting the community-based referral network.

The Commission also launched an [ad campaign](#) this week on social media and in 15 ethnic media outlets serving these communities highlighting the high percentage of surveyed individuals who did not report incidents and encouraging people to report incidents to the Commission. As part of this campaign, the Commission will also publish a [fact sheet](#) in 12 languages based on key stats from the report and a poster for service centers of community-based organizations to inform affected communities about their rights and encourage reporting to the Commission.

**71%**  
OF PEOPLE IN SOME NYC COMMUNITIES  
DON'T REPORT DISCRIMINATION.\*

\*Based on a 2018 survey report

NYC.gov/HumanRights

**NYC** Commission on Human Rights

The infographic features a yellow background with the statistic '71%' in large black font. Below it, the text reads 'OF PEOPLE IN SOME NYC COMMUNITIES DON'T REPORT DISCRIMINATION.\*'. At the bottom left, a small note says '\*Based on a 2018 survey report'. At the bottom center, the URL 'NYC.gov/HumanRights' is displayed. At the bottom right, the 'NYC Commission on Human Rights' logo is shown. The infographic is surrounded by seven portraits of diverse individuals: a woman in a black hijab, a man with a mustache, a man in a red turban, a woman with a blue top, a man with a beard and white headband, and a woman in a patterned headscarf.

The Commission initiated the survey project following year-long conversations and roundtables with community organizations about the targeting of their communities and as a result of increased reports to the Commission from MASAJIS community groups and bias incidents reported in the media, including the murder of an imam in Queens, an increase in anti-Semitic graffiti and harassment citywide, and multiple physical assaults against Sikhs, Muslims, and other New Yorkers in religious clothing. Over the last two years, the Commission increased investigations into claims of discrimination and harassment based on religion, national origin, race, and immigration status by nearly 30 percent, but as the survey confirmed, these incidents are still vastly underreported.

The survey was designed and implemented following 15 focus groups and input from over 150 community groups, faith leaders, City agencies, and elected officials and conducted in nine languages (English, French, Bengali, Punjabi, Arabic, Russian, Hindi, Urdu, and Yiddish) over a three-month period (October – December 2017) in all five boroughs. The survey was made available to participants in print and online, including in mobile-friendly format. A version of the survey is available [here](#).

## **KEY FINDINGS:**

Today's report found alarming levels of bias harassment, discrimination, and physical assaults against MASAJIS communities leading up to and following the 2016 presidential election with low levels of reporting.

- Nearly two in five (38.7 percent) survey respondents reported experiencing verbal harassment, one in ten (8.8 percent) reported being the victim of physical assault, and nearly one in six (16.6 percent) said they experienced some form of racial, religious, or ethnic discrimination-related problem in their employment in either a current job or while seeking a job.
- One in four (27 percent) Muslim Arab women who wear a hijab reported being intentionally pushed or shoved on a subway platform.
- Sikh New Yorkers under the age of 35 have nearly twice the chance of experiencing verbal harassment than other survey respondents.
- 80 percent of Jewish survey respondents said they were “very” or “somewhat” bothered by anti-Semitic vandalism or property damage.
- One in five (19 percent) South Asian survey respondents said they had experienced employment discrimination.
- Overall, nearly 71 percent of survey respondents said they did not report bias incidents to a community-based organization, a faith-based organization, the Commission, or the NYPD, citing concerns their reports would not be taken seriously, fear of retaliation, and because previous reporting did not result in action.

## KEY RECOMMENDATIONS:

The findings in this report are intended to guide the Commission, City agencies, community- and faith-based organizations, policy makers, elected officials, and city residents to better address and prevent bias harassment, discrimination, and acts of hate impacting MASAJIS communities and improve reporting so victims can get the justice they deserve. Recommendations include:

- The creation of a Commission-led pilot referral network of community- and faith-based organizations to include Jews for Racial and Economic Justice, Sauti Yetu Center for African Women, the Sikh Coalition, the New York Chapter of the Council on American-Islamic Relations, the Arab American Association of NY and the Arab American Family Support Center. Commission staff will work with organizations to educate individuals about their rights through literature distribution, explain how to file a complaint at the Commission, and will refer complaints to the Commission's Infoline at [718-722-3131](tel:718-722-3131).
- Plan and develop a bystander intervention training for City employees who work directly with the public on how to de-escalate bias incidents and what resources to offer those who have been involved in such incidents. The Commission is working with the Arab American Association of NY to learn about its experience building a bystander intervention training.
- Commission-run training for City outreach staff on issues confronting MASAJIS communities, protections available under the City Human Rights Law, and resources available at the Commission to further build trust with affected communities and ensure they understand their rights.
- Direct mental health resources through ThriveNYC to identify ways to support MASAJIS New Yorkers dealing with the impacts of the bias incidents.
- Focus outreach and legal resources on impacted communities in order to educate New Yorkers about their rights, and encourage vulnerable communities to report incidents to the Commission.

The NYC Commission on Human Rights is the City agency tasked with fighting discrimination and harassment by enforcing the NYC Human Rights Law, one of the strongest anti-discrimination and anti-harassment laws in the nation. The Commission has the authority to fine violators with civil penalties of up to \$250,000 for willful and malicious violations of the NYC Human Rights Law and can award unlimited compensatory damages to victims, including emotional distress damages and other benefits. The Commission can also order trainings on the NYC Human Rights Law, changes to policies, and other relief such as community service and mediated apologies.

If you believe you are the victim of discrimination or harassment under the NYC Human Rights Law, call the Commission's Infoline at [718-722-3131](tel:718-722-3131). Reports may also be filed anonymously and reported on the [Commission's website](#). For more information as well as a [fact sheet](#) on the report, visiting the Commission's webpage [here](#).

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"We applaud the Commission's work to shed light on the rampant rise of discrimination and acts of hate against New Yorkers, and the dire need to report such behavior in Trump's America," said **Commissioner and Executive Director of the New York Immigration Coalition, Steven Choi**. "In our New York, people of all races, religions, and nationalities deserve the utmost respect and with the Commission's recommendations we will be one step closer to enforcing those values."

"As a Jewish New Yorker who grew up in Brooklyn, I know firsthand that anti-Semitism, xenophobia, and bias still unfortunately exist in our great city," said **Commissioner and board member of the Jewish Community Relations Council of New York, Jonathan Greenspun**. "Through its report, the NYC Commission on Human Rights is calling upon all of us to live up to the promise that discrimination is not welcome here. This report is an invaluable tool for the Commission and community groups to focus outreach to vulnerable communities that are impacted by bias and hate and help us live in safer, hate-free New York."

"It is very important that we, New Yorkers, stand together as one to prevent discrimination, bias harassment, and any violent act against any human being based on their race, physical appearance, or religious beliefs," said **Commissioner and former president of the Sikh Cultural Society, Gurdev Singh Kang**. "During these tough times, we must stand united and report such incidents without any hesitation or any fear. By working together, we will promote peace and unity within the community."

"I am so proud of the NYC Commission on Human Rights taking a strong and unequivocal stand denouncing the rise in hate in our city and in our country and actually outlining effective steps to respond," said **Commissioner and Rabbi Sharon Kleinbaum of Congregation Beit Simchat Torah**. "Thank you Commissioner Carmelyn Malalis and her whole staff team."

"There is no place in our diverse and vibrant city for the types of discrimination on the basis of religion, ethnicity or race that are documented in this report," said **Faiza Patel, Commissioner and Co-Director of the Liberty and National Security Program at the Brennan Center for Justice at NYU School of Law**. "We need to do better in ensuring that these incidents are reported and addressed. The NYC Human Rights Commission has taken the lead in highlighting these issues and will continue to serve as a leader in the fight against those who would harass or discriminate against New Yorkers."

"Arab-American Family Support Center remains a steadfast active ally of Muslim, Arab, South Asian, Jewish and Sikh communities," said **Rawaa Nancy Albilal, President and CEO of the Arab-American Family Support Center**. "As discrimination increases in visibility, the Arab-American Family Support Center will continue to deepen our commitment to MASAJIS communities through our diverse trauma informed services."

"CAIR-NY is proud to partner with the City Commission on Human Right for this groundbreaking study of harassment, discrimination, and hate crimes in New York City," said **CAIR-NY Legal Director, Albert Fox Cahn**. "By collaborating and leveraging the city's resources, we were able to reach many New Yorkers whose voices were never heard before. This data

paints a stark picture...the reality of anti-Muslim bias under President Trump. Not only have incidents jumped significantly (corroborating CAIR-NY's previous reports), but the majority of victims still do not report harassment, discrimination, and hate crimes. This data shows that much work remains to be done to make sure every victim in our city is able to be heard."

"Data on bias, bigotry and discriminatory backlash remains critical to the work we do to better combat and prevent hate in America," said **Sikh Coalition Legal Director, Amrith Kaur**. "As New York City deals with rising rates of bias-related crimes, we must work closely with the City to better protect Sikhs and other religious minorities."

"We at the Arab American Association of New York would like to thank the City Commission on Human Rights for conducting this imperative survey," said **Rama Issa-Ibrahim, Executive Director of the Arab American Association of New York**. "Its results have highlighted what we see at our community based organization on a day-to-day basis as we serve the Arab and Muslim immigrant communities in the heart of Bay Ridge in Brooklyn. We are unfortunately not surprised by the survey's findings, that our communities have experienced severe levels of discrimination in the last year alone. The targeting of our communities have been normalized by this federal administration alongside the blatant xenophobia, islamophobia, and anti-immigrant agenda perpetuated by Washington. It is no wonder that our communities fear trusting law enforcement and other government agencies in reporting ongoing hate-crimes. This great effort led by the Commission reinforces and highlights the work we must continue to do to create a safe and secure spaces for all immigrant communities across NYC."

The Commission's important report underlines once again that as long-targeted communities become more visible, their rights are threatened and their differences criminalized via federal policy to pit communities against each other along religious, cultural and racial lines," said **Suman Raghunathan, Executive Director for the South Asian Americans Leading Together (SAALT)**. "With one in five hate violence perpetrators explicitly referring to Trump, his campaign slogans, or one of his divisive policies as their inspiration, the Commission's findings echo our own. Both analyses underscore that Muslim, Arab, Sikh, and South Asian communities are increasingly targets of violence today. As white supremacists find themselves newly emboldened, and as this administration stirs a melting pot of division and bigotry, we remain committed to fighting not just for our communities, but for our core American values of inclusion and equity. 302 incidents of hate violence in one year don't lie. The results are in, hate violence is on the rise, and history will judge us on what we do from here on."

"As much as we all like to think of New York City as a liberal enclave, the fact remains that our city is not immune to hate crimes, Islamophobia, anti-Semitism, or xenophobia," said **Audrey Sasson, Executive Director of Jews For Racial and Economic Justice**. "Thanks to the NYC Commission on Human Rights, we now have the data to prove it. It's time to mobilize our communities to continue protecting and defending each other, and to create more Hate Free Zones where all people — Muslim, Arab, South Asian, Jewish, Sikh — can feel safe. As Jews, we know that we have a personal stake in keeping our city safe for all oppressed peoples. We will always have each other's backs no matter what."

"I commend the NYC Commission on Human Rights for validating in this report trends that those of us on the forefront of the work have been seeing for a long time now," said **Annetta**

**Secharran, Executive Director, Chhaya Community Development Corporation.** “Chhaya looks forward to working with the Commissioner and her team to ensure that our community feels safe in this city, and are able to report on discrimination and bias crimes.”