

**March 2021**

# **Experiences of Chinese, East and South-East Asian Communities during the COVID-19 pandemic in Scotland**

## **Summary**

Research conducted by The Scottish Alliance of Regional Equality Councils (SAREC)  
and its partner organisations:

Central Scotland Regional Equality Council (CSREC).  
Edinburgh and Lothians Regional Equality Council (ELREC).  
Grampian Regional Equality Council (GREC).  
West of Scotland Regional Equality Council (WSREC).

For more information on how to tackle discrimination and advance equality you can visit:

CSREC (Falkirk, Stirling and the surrounding areas): [www.csrec.org.uk](http://www.csrec.org.uk)

ELREC (Edinburgh and the surrounding areas): [www.elrec.org.uk](http://www.elrec.org.uk)

GREC (Aberdeen and the surrounding areas): [www.grec.co.uk](http://www.grec.co.uk)

WSREC (Glasgow and the surrounding areas): [www.wsrec.co.uk](http://www.wsrec.co.uk)

You can also visit: [sareonline.wordpress.com](http://sareonline.wordpress.com)



**AWARDS  
FOR ALL  
SCOTLAND**



## 1- Background

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The Scottish Alliance of Regional Equality Councils (SAREC) carried out this research project to better understand the experiences of Chinese, East and South-East Asian communities in Scotland during the COVID-19 pandemic and lockdown. The focus on this range of communities is due to the fact that reports of abuse affecting Chinese people being blamed for the pandemic also extend to others who are perceived as Chinese.

The project was funded by the National Lottery (Awards for All) and included the use of a survey and focus group with questions related to experiences of prejudice and hate crime, awareness of support services in the context of the pandemic and hopes and concerns for the future. The research was designed with the goal of informing policy makers and other organisations on actions required to better support Chinese, East and South-East Asian communities in Scotland.

The survey was conducted between the beginning of November and mid-December 2020 through an online form, telephonically and distributed as a printed version in relevant workplaces with the support of SAREC's four constituent Regional Equality Councils across Scotland. The survey was translated into both traditional and simplified Chinese characters. The information available from this survey was complemented by feedback from three focus groups organised with community members in Glasgow during November.

218 people took part in the survey. 65% of the participants were women, 34% men and only one participant stated they were non-binary. Respondents included people from all ages with 4% aged between 16-19 years old, 17% between 20-29, 16.5% between 30-39, 24% between 40-49 years old, 16% between 50-59, 9% between 60-69, and 13% aged over 70 years old.

Most of the participants stated a Chinese ethnic background (82%), while 5.5% declared a Filipino ethnicity, 2% a Hong Kong-Chinese ethnicity, 2% a Malaysian-Chinese ethnicity, 1% a Thai origin, and 6% other Asian or mixed origin

## 2- Main findings

The analysis of the survey and focus groups data identified 10 main findings on the experiences of Chinese, East and South-East Asian communities in Scotland during the COVID-19 pandemic. These can be summarised as follows:

1. Most participants described a negative experience during the COVID-19 pandemic and lockdown. The main themes expressed were related to the daily activities that people were unable to do and the harmful impact on their mental health and on their jobs or source of income.
2. The majority of participants were unaware or unsure of where to find support or advice to help cope with the pandemic and their concerns moving forward. Two thirds (67%) were either unaware or unsure about the support available from charities and councils and similarly, most participants (55%) were either unaware or unsure of where to turn

to for help regarding specific areas of concern thinking of the future. Language was mentioned as a barrier related to awareness of, and access to, support services, especially for the elderly population.

3. One sixth of participants (16%) stated they feel the pandemic has been worse for Chinese, East and South-East Asian communities, many of them attributing this to more prejudice directed at them and being blamed after the initial outbreak of the virus in China.
4. Up to one third (33%) of the participants potentially experienced episodes of prejudice or hate crime during the pandemic and several mentioned more than one incident. An even higher percentage of people (42%) reported to know of other members of their community experiencing prejudice or hate crime, while over two thirds (69%) heard or read racist remarks towards their community during the pandemic.
5. The type of prejudice and hate crime incidents described by those affected consisted mainly of verbal abuse, followed by microaggressions such as hostile looks or avoidant behaviour and physical abuse declared by a smaller number of participants. Incidents affected members of all age groups.
6. The incidence of episodes of prejudice and discrimination that was reported to authorities or organisations was very low. Only 6 incidents were reported out of 71 potential cases.
7. Younger age groups heard or read racist remarks towards Chinese, East and South-East Asian communities much more often than those over 30 years old. 42% of those aged between 16 and 29 years old mentioned they heard or read racist remarks on a weekly basis or more often, while only 10% aged over 30 years old reported this frequency, which can be partly explained by the time younger people tend to spend online.
8. Almost half of participants (46%) stated to feel less safe since the pandemic started, with a higher percentage of younger (58%) and elderly (50%) people feeling slightly more unsafe compared to other age groups.
9. Reasons for feeling less safe than before the pandemic touched on incidents related to prejudice or racism online and offline, economic uncertainties, the possibility of falling ill with COVID-19 and international tensions with China.
10. The topic that concerned most people thinking of the future was primarily health, followed by employment, income and poverty, prejudice and hate crime, education and housing.

### **3 - Recommendations**

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Based on the findings of this research we are presenting a set of recommended actions for policy makers and organisations to take into consideration to better address the challenges that Chinese, East and South-East Asian communities are facing in Scotland:

1. Key actors, such as Police Scotland, educational organisations, councils, and charities must provide clearly communicated and accessible information to encourage members of Chinese, East and South-East Asian communities to come forward and report episodes of hate crime or prejudice affecting them.
2. Ensure that key actors, such as Police Scotland, educational organisations, councils, and charities are prepared to receive reports of hate crime and prejudice incidents, addressing them appropriately.
3. Set out initiatives or campaigns to proactively inform Chinese, East and South-East Asian communities of the provision available to address the consequences of the pandemic, with a special focus on the support concerning hate crime and prejudice, ensuring the collaboration of all key actors. Consideration should also be given to projects that assess community capacity (e.g. existing groups, networks etc.) and where appropriate, how the building of capacity could be supported.
4. Chinese, East and South-East Asian community members and representatives must be actively involved in the co-design of national and local initiatives and services addressing the consequences of the pandemic on their community, including hate crime and prejudice. This will ensure they are suitable and able to tackle current obstacles (such as language barrier or the model minority stereotype) to access support.
5. Increase public resources and funding available to support victims of prejudice and hate crime throughout Scotland.