

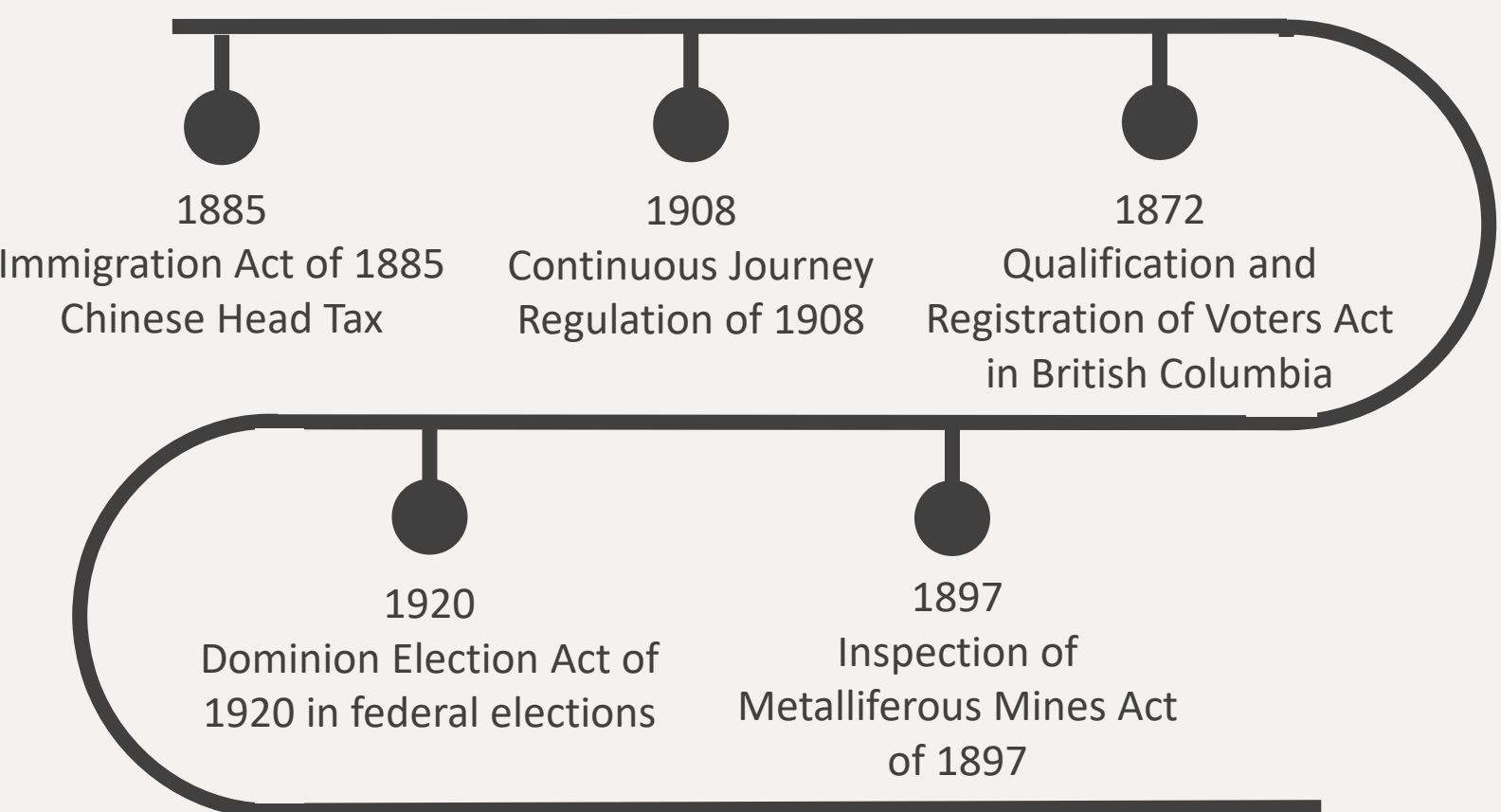
Addressing Anti-Asian Racism in Canada: Impact on Mental Health and Access to Support

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INTRODUCTION

- Despite Asians' significant contributions to Canada's development since the 1700s, they have faced **persistent racism** and discrimination throughout history.



- The **COVID-19 pandemic** amplified anti-Asian racism, with police-reported hate crimes against Asians increasing by 301% between 2019 and 2020.
- Anti-Asian racism profoundly **affects** the mental health of Asian Canadians and creates significant barriers to accessing formal services.
- This study explores **the lived experiences of Asian Canadians facing anti-Asian racism** between 2017 and 2022, aiming to foster a more inclusive and supportive environment for Asian settlers.

METHODOLOGY

- Approach:** Community-based action research to explore lived experiences and identify actionable strategies for social work practice.
- Data Collection:** Conducted online surveys and virtual interviews (individual and focus groups). Surveys were available in multiple languages, and interpreters were provided for interviews as needed.
- Data Analysis:** Qualitative data were analyzed using NVivo software and applied thematic analysis.
- Participants:**

	Survey respondents		Interview respondents	
	N	%	N	%
Total	513	100	32	100
Gender				
Female	305	59.5	23	71.9
Male	199	38.8	8	25
Non-binary	9	1.8	1	3.1
Sexual orientation				
Heterosexual	497	96.9	29	90.6
LGBTQ+	16	3.1	3	9.4
Place of birth				
Canada	147	28.3	7	21.9
Outside of Canada	367	71.7	25	78.1
Immigration categories				
Economic immigrant	111	30.3	4	16
Family-sponsored immigrant	100	27.3	13	52
Refugee	11	3.0	2	8
International student	94	25.6	6	24
Temporary worker	23	6.3	-	-
Other	28	7.6	-	-
Home Language				
English	207	40.4	12	37.5
French	7	1.4	-	-
Other	299	58.3	20	62.5

Table: Sociodemographic overview of participants

FINDINGS

Mental Health Impact of Anti-Asian Racism

- Physiological responses**

"I felt my heart like it was going to come out, you know when you're very scared."

"We were definitely very shocked, and we kind of like just stood there looking at each other, my friend and I, for a second."

- Emotional and psychological effects**

"A lady yelled at me in a grocery store, 'Go, just stay away! Go away, go away!' Then she pushed me with her cart. It's kind of a blur after that. I dropped my basket and just walked out of the store."

"Apart from being wary of people on the street, I definitely notice when I'm the only person of colour in a room."

- Intergenerational impact**

"My grandfather, despite his intelligence, was denied opportunities to vote or pursue professions. Discovering this history made the racism I face now even more painful."

Barriers to Access Support Services

- Lack of culturally responsive services**

"I used to discuss this (racism) with my counsellor in high school. She was Caucasian, but she didn't really understand what I was trying to say. She didn't recognize that kind of behaviour and thought it was normal."

- Accessibility and affordability**

"It's extremely difficult to find support in rural areas when you're a minority."

- Lack of awareness of services and stigma**

"I wasn't really aware that there are resources available. It always seemed like reaching out to a therapist or services was something only done on TV and in movies, and only for people who were absolutely traumatized and going through life-changing events."

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RECOMMENDATIONS

- Implement Training Programs**
 - Leaders & Professionals: Provide training on identifying and addressing anti-Asian racism.
 - Mental Health Providers: Focus on cultural sensitivity to avoid retraumatization.
- Develop Community-Based Programs**
 - Create local programs to raise awareness and offer safe spaces for Asian Canadians.
 - Collaborate with community leaders to ensure cultural relevance.
- Enhance Online-Based Services**
 - Expand virtual mental health services for nationwide accessibility.
 - Introduce anonymous reporting platforms to ensure safety and inclusivity.
- Provide Culturally Responsive Care**
 - Increase recruitment of Asian mental health professionals.
 - Offer multilingual resources to improve service accessibility.
- Affordable and Free Services**
 - Adopt flexible payment or free counselling models for mental health services to reduce financial barriers.
- Support Data-Driven Policies**
 - Fund research on anti-Asian racism's impact to create evidence-based interventions.

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- Alberta Association of Immigrant Serving Agencies
- Asian Heritage Society of New Brunswick
- Canadian Mental Health Association
- Catholic Crosscultural Services / Toronto East Quadrant Local Immigration Partnership
- Centre for Newcomers Calgary
- Multicultural Association of Fredericton
- Ottawa Chinese Community Services Centre
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