

The Pandemic has Caused Nearly Two Years of Collective Trauma. Many People are Near a Breaking Point.

January 19, 2022

An airplane passenger is accused of [attacking a flight attendant](#) and breaking bones in her face. Three New York City tourists [assaulted a restaurant host](#) who asked them for proof of vaccination against the coronavirus, prosecutors say. Eleven people were charged with misdemeanors after they allegedly [chanted “No more masks!”](#) and some moved to the front of the room during a Utah school board meeting.

Across the United States, an alarming number of people are lashing out in aggressive and often cruel ways in response to policies or behavior they dislike.

“I think people just feel this need to feel powerful, in charge and connected to someone again,” said Jennifer Jenkins, a school board member in Brevard County, Fla., who said she has faced harassment.

The Federal Aviation Administration has initiated over 1,000 [unruly-passenger investigations](#) this year, more than five times as many as in all of 2020. [Health](#) and [elections](#) officials have expressed fear for their safety amid public vitriol. As school board meetings have become cultural battlegrounds, Attorney General Merrick Garland [has asked the Justice Department to investigate](#) what he called a “disturbing spike” in threats against educators. Some American shoppers, long used to getting their way, [have unleashed their worst behavior](#) in recent months.

...