

# Domestic Violence, Sexual Violence, and Human Trafficking in Native Hawaiian Communities

February 2020

## 1. Domestic Violence

The Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System (BRFSS) is a random telephone health and health risks survey of adult men and women across all 50 states. A synthesis of 2018 BRFSS data for the state of Hawai'i suggested that more Native Hawaiian women experience intimate partner violence (IPV) than non-Hawaiian women, beginning early in their lives:

- ◆ 20.6% of Native Hawaiian women between 18 to 29 years old report experiencing IPV, compared to 13.3% of non-Hawaiian women of the same age range.
- ◆ 19.6% of Native Hawaiian women between 30 to 44 years old report experiencing IPV, compared to 13.3% of non-Hawaiian women of the same age range
- ◆ 21.0% of Native Hawaiian women between 45 and 59 years old report experiencing IPV, compared to 12.60% of non-Hawaiian women

Haumea: Transforming the Health of Native Hawaiian Women and Empowering Wahine Well-Being. Honolulu, HI: Office of Hawaiian Affairs; 2018.

The Pregnancy Risk Assessment Monitoring System (PRAMS) annually assesses roughly 1200-1500 women in Hawai'i who had recently given birth on a range of health indicators, including experience with abuse. For the years 2012-2015, PRAMS data found:

- ◆ 5.3% of Native Hawaiian recent mothers reported experiencing physical intimate partner violence twelve months before or during the current pregnancy, compared to 3.6% of Filipino mothers, 2.5% of Japanese mothers, 2.5% of Other Pacific Islander mothers, and 5.8% of mothers of other races.

Hawaii Pregnancy Risk Assessment Monitoring System (PRAMS): State of Hawaii PRAMS Report 2009-2015. Honolulu, HI: Hawaii State Department of Health, Family Health Services Division; 2019.

Based on interviews and a focus group involving ten Native Hawaiian women residing in a predominantly Native Hawaiian community:

- ◆ Intimate partner violence is seen as a "family matter" kept within the immediate family.
- ◆ Most women found it difficult to disclose violence to a health provider unless there was a trusting relationship with the provider.
- ◆ The perception that both abuse and strategies to address it "start at home" was prevalent, and family can serve as both a source of risk and of protection.

- ◆ Participants expressed that formal systems of Western care providers such as shelters and support groups alone are not enough to address the historical trauma of colonization.

Oneha MF, Magnussen L, & Shoultz J. The Voices of Native Hawaiian Women: Perceptions, Responses and Needs Regarding Intimate Partner Violence. *California Journal of Health Promotion*. 2010; 8(1): 72-81.

## 2. Dating and Sexual Violence Among Native Hawaiian Youth

The Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS) monitors health risk behaviors in surveys of public high school and middle school students in Hawai'i. In 2015 and 2017, the YRBS found:

- ◆ 17.5% of Native Hawaiian middle schoolers reported they had been physically abused by someone they were dating or going out with in the past 12 months, compared to 21.6% of Japanese, 20.1% of other Pacific Islander, 17.5% of Caucasian, and 15.4% of Filipino respondents.
- ◆ 3.8% of Native Hawaiian middle schoolers reported that they had ever been physically forced to have sexual intercourse when they didn't want to, compared to 5.1% of Black, 5.0% of other Pacific Islander, 3.0% of Filipino, 1.9% of Japanese, 1.8% of Caucasian, and 1.7% of other Asian middle schoolers.
- ◆ 9.8% of Native Hawaiian high schoolers reported that they had been physically abused by someone they were dating or going out with in the past 12 months, compared to 10.5% of Filipino, 9.5% of Caucasian, 8.0% of other Pacific Islander, 7.9% of other Asian, and 5.4% of Japanese high schoolers.
- ◆ 13.9% of Native Hawaiian high schoolers reported that they had been forced to do sexual things by someone they were dating or going out with in the past 12 months, compared to 15.3% of Filipino, 10.3% of other Pacific Islander, 7.7% of Japanese, and 6.8% of Caucasian high schoolers
- ◆ 9.7% of Native Hawaiian high schoolers reported that they had ever been physically forced to have sexual intercourse when they did not want to, compared to 11.1% of Black, 8.9% of other Pacific Islander, 8.0% of Filipino, 7.6% of other Asian, 7.5% of Caucasian, and 5.9% of Japanese high schoolers.

Youth Risk Behavior Survey data for the years 2015 and 2017. Data retrieved January 2020 from the *Build Your Own Report* tool available at [http://ibis.hhdw.org/ibisph-view/query/selection/yrbs/\\_YRBSselection.html](http://ibis.hhdw.org/ibisph-view/query/selection/yrbs/_YRBSselection.html)

A 2017 online climate survey across all 10 University of Hawai'i (UH) statewide campuses and UH community colleges collected responses from 1,507 Native Hawaiian or Part Native Hawaiian students:

- ◆ 8.1% of Native Hawaiian students reported experiencing sexual harassment since being enrolled at UH, compared to 12.8% of Caucasian, 9.2% of Japanese, and 6.1% of Filipino students.
- ◆ 9.5% of Native Hawaiian students reported experiencing stalking since being enrolled at UH, compared to 11.0% of Japanese, 9.3% of Caucasian, and 8.0% of Filipino students.
- ◆ 20.4% of Native Hawaiian students reported experiencing dating and domestic violence since being enrolled at UH, compared to 18.4% of Caucasian, 18.1% of Japanese, and 16.8% of Filipino students.

- ◆ 5.3% of Native Hawaiian students reported experiencing nonconsensual sexual contact since being enrolled at UH, compared to 8.5% of Caucasian, 5.2% of Japanese, and 3.3% of Filipino students.

Loui PM, Fisher BS, Martin SL, Feng T. Report on University of Hawai'i Student Campus Climate Survey on Sexual Harassment and Gender-Based Violence. Honolulu, HI: OmniTrak Group, Inc.; 2017.

In an online survey of 181,752 undergraduate, graduate, and professional students across 33 American universities on campus sexual assault and misconduct:

- ◆ Among native Hawaiians or Other Pacific Islanders (NHOPI), 9.8% of women reported experiencing penetration or sexual touching without voluntary agreement (rates of victimization for NHOPI men and TGQN\* students not reported).

\* Report authors use "TGQN" to refer to students who listed their gender identity as: transgender woman, transgender man, nonbinary/genderqueer, gender questioning, or gender not listed

Cantor D, Fisher B, Chibnall S, Harps S, & Townsend R. Report on the AAU Campus Climate Survey on Sexual Assault and Misconduct. Rockville, MA: Prepared by Westat for The Association of American Universities; 2019.

### 3. Human Trafficking

In interviews with 22 individuals in Hawai'i, of which 15 were female survivors of sex trafficking and 7 were parents, close family members, or guardians of a child who was a victim of sex trafficking:

- ◆ 77.3% of sex trafficking victims were Native Hawaiian.
- ◆ 72.2% of victims of all races/ethnicities were first trafficked by a family member and 16.6% by a drug dealer.

Roe-Sepowitz D & Jabola-Carolus K. Sex Trafficking in Hawai'i: The Stories of Survivors. Arizona State University, Office of Sex Trafficking Intervention Research and the Hawai'i State Commission on the Status of Women; 2019.

In a study of individuals (12+ years old) from five Hawaiian islands receiving services from a social services agency, 100 victims of sex trafficking were identified:

- ◆ 64% of victims identified as being all or some Native Hawaiian (11.3% were Native Hawaiian and 52.6% part Native Hawaiian).\*
- ◆ 25.8% of victims of all races/ethnicities were trafficked by a family member, 24.7% were trafficked by a friend, and 22.7% were trafficked by a boyfriend.
- ◆ Of the 23 victims who had been under 18 when they were sex trafficked, 13% were Hawaiian and 47.8% were part Native Hawaiian.

\* Given that full or part Native Hawaiians made up 46% of all 363 participants surveyed in the study, they are disproportionately overrepresented among sex trafficking victims

Roe-Sepowitz D & Jabola-Carolus K. Research Report: Sex Trafficking in Hawai'i: Part III. Sex Trafficking Experiences Across Hawai'i. Arizona State University, Office of Sex Trafficking Intervention Research; 2020.

## 4. Dynamics in Lesbian Relationships

In interviews with 24 Asian, Pacific Islander, and Native Hawaiian (APINH) lesbians who had experience with sexual or domestic violence in a woman-to-woman relationship, selected from Seattle, Chicago, New York City, and Hilo through targeted recruitment and snowball sampling:

- ◆ Respondents expressed that their small, tightknit communities can be sources of strength, as well as limit survivor's ability to leave abusive relationships (eg. when the abuser is more well liked).
- ◆ Participants expressed that the intimacy and fulfillment found in relationships where both partners were women *and* APINH (after previous relationships with only men or non-APINH women) could cause them to rationalize or tolerate higher levels of abuse.

Kanuha VK. "Relationships So Loving and So Hurtful": The Constructed Duality of Sexual and Racial/Ethnic Intimacy in the Context of Violence in Asian and Pacific Islander Lesbian and Queer Women's Relationships. *Violence Against Women*. 2013; 19(9): 1175-1196.

### Resource from the Asian Pacific Institute on Gender-Based Violence:

[Battered Mothers Involved with Child Protective Services: Learning from Immigrant, Refugee and Indigenous Women's Experiences \(2010\)](#): This report shares the voices of immigrant, refugee and indigenous women who are survivors of intimate partner abuse and who have been involved with child protective services, in order to inform and facilitate the development of policies, practices and interventions that will more effectively address the physical, emotional and spiritual health of individuals, families and communities.

For questions, information, publications, training requests and technical assistance:

[www.api-gbv.org](http://www.api-gbv.org) | 415-568-3315 | [info@api-gbv.org](mailto:info@api-gbv.org)



This publication was funded by Grant #90EVo430 from the Administration on Children, Youth and Families, Family and Youth Services Bureau, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. Its contents are solely the responsibility of the author(s) and do not represent the official views of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.