

Domestic Violence in the Chinese Diaspora in the United States

Fall 2025



Community Snapshot*

- Approximately 5.5 million people of Chinese ancestry reside in the U.S., making them the largest Asian ethnic subgroup.¹
- 35% of the nation's Chinese population lives in California; other states with large Chinese populations include New York (760,000), Texas (260,000), Washington (210,000), and Massachusetts (195,000).¹
- Over 50% of Chinese speakers in the U.S. report speaking English "less than very well," indicating potential language barriers in accessing services.¹
- A significant portion of Chinese American women is foreign-born, which may influence their experiences and reporting of domestic violence (DV).¹

Recent Statistics on Domestic Violence

Prevalence and Forms of DV

- In a 2020 online survey with 475 Chinese immigrant women in the U.S., nearly 30% had experienced physical or emotional abuse from a partner at some point in their lives, and approximately 21% said they experienced DV in the past year with 19% reporting emotional violence, 4% physical violence, and 3.2% sexual violence.²
- "Cold violence," the intentional withdrawal of all forms of communication and warmth by one partner toward the other, is a uniquely recognized form of domestic violence in Chinese cultural contexts. It was described as a common but often overlooked experience in interviews with 20 Chinese immigrant women who had experienced DV in the past year.³

*Community Snapshot data are based on Pew Research Center's analysis of the 2023 American Community Survey, in which Chinese Americans do not include those who identify as Taiwanese alone.

- Among 173 Chinese, Korean, and Vietnamese American young adult women in Boston who were 1.5^a or second-generation immigrants, nearly 64% reported psychological aggression, 40% experienced sexual coercion, and 15% experienced physical assault from a partner in the last six months.⁴
- Among Chinese older adults in the U.S., 15% have experienced elder abuse and 6.5% reported experiencing DV in their lifetime, according to a study of over 3,000 Chinese men and women aged 60+ in Chicago.⁵

Risk and Protective Factors

- Key risk factors for DV include childhood trauma, social isolation, immigration stress, traditional gender norms, and patriarchal beliefs, as identified in quantitative and qualitative studies of Chinese immigrant survivors.^{3,6}
- Legal and financial dependence, language barriers, and limited access to services significantly increased vulnerability to DV among Chinese immigrant women.^{3,7}
- A meaningful support network that survivors feel comfortable turning to for help can protect Chinese immigrant women from further victimization, with the perceived quality of support being more important than simply having a network.⁴
- Cultural expectations rooted in Confucian traditions such as the "three obediences" (to father, husband, and sons) and the "four virtues" (morality, proper speech, modest appearance, and diligent work) can pressure Chinese women to remain in abusive marriages, according to interviews with Chinese survivors.³

Mental and Physical Health Impacts

- Depression, anxiety, and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) are common mental health outcomes linked to DV among Chinese immigrant survivors, as reported in a mobile intervention study with 50 Chinese immigrant women.⁸
- Young adult 1.5 and second-generation Chinese, Korean, and Vietnamese American women who experienced DV are significantly more likely to report suicidal ideation/intent than those who have not experienced DV.⁴
- Emotional abuse and cold violence lead to lasting self-doubt and psychological harm, according to qualitative data from Chinese survivors.³
- DV significantly disrupts Chinese immigrant survivors' feelings of safety and trust in relationships.³

^a The 1.5 generation refers to individuals who were born outside of the United States and immigrated as children or adolescents before the age of 15 years.

Help-Seeking and Barriers to Support

- Shame, stigma, and fear of "losing face" were prominent reasons Chinese immigrant survivors did not seek help, based on interviews with survivors.⁹
- Culturally incongruent therapists, language, financial and transportation barriers, concerns about partner's reputation and legal status, as well as lacking knowledge about available services were identified as key obstacles in service access by Chinese immigrant women in the U.S.⁹
- Many Chinese immigrant survivors turned to informal supports like relatives, family, or religious groups to cope with DV rather than formal services.⁷
- Negative experiences with law enforcement and fear of immigration consequences also deterred help-seeking among Chinese immigrant survivors.^{3,9}

Promising Practices and Recommendations

- A mobile-based intervention (Self-Compassion, Health, and Empowerment; SHE), consisting of 7 weekly sessions, demonstrated promising potential in reducing DV and improving mental health outcomes among 50 Chinese immigrant survivors in a pilot randomized controlled trial.⁸
- Culturally grounded, community-based interventions outperformed mainstream services in improving outcomes for Chinese survivors.¹⁰
- Mental health approaches that integrate trauma-informed and culturally relevant care were recommended by Chinese immigrant survivors.³
- Public education and outreach campaigns can reduce stigma and encourage survivors to seek help.¹⁰

Selected Translated Materials

- Lifetime Spiral of Gender Violence ([English](#); [Simplified Chinese](#)) | API-GBV
- Creating a Safety Plan ([English](#); [Simplified Chinese](#)) | Peel Committee Against Woman Abuse
- [English/Chinese Legal Glossary](#) | Minnesota Judicial Center
- Materials on domestic violence in over 115 languages | [Hot Peach Pages](#)

Resources

Crisis Services

- **National Domestic Violence Hotline**

Provides 24/7 free and confidential support, including crisis intervention, DV education, safety planning, and referrals to local service providers. Assistance is available in English, Spanish, and 200+ other languages through interpreter services.

Live Chat: www.thehotline.org | *Call:* 1-800-799-SAFE (7233) | *Text:* START to 88788.

- **Love is Respect**

Offers 24/7 free and confidential support for teens, young adults, and their loved ones seeking help or information about healthy relationships and dating abuse.

Live Chat: www.loveisrespect.org | *Call:* 1-866-331-9474 | *Text:* LOVEIS to 22522

- **National Sexual Assault Hotline**

Provides victims of sexual assault with 27/7 access to free, confidential services.

Live Chat: <http://online.rainn.org> | *Call:* 1-800-656-HOPE (4673)

Directories

- [Directory of DV Programs Serving Asians, Native Hawaiians, and Pacific Islanders](#) | API-GBV
- [International List of Sexual & Domestic Violence Agencies](#) | Hot Peach Pages

About the Asian Pacific Institute on Gender-Based Violence

For questions, information, publications, training requests, and technical assistance related to domestic violence, sexual assault, dating violence, and/or stalking in Asian American, Native Hawaiian, and Pacific Islander (AANHPI) and Middle Eastern and North African (MENA) communities, visit www.api-gbv.org or email info@api-gbv.org

This publication was funded by Grant #90EV0526 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.

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