

Fact Sheet:

# Domestic Violence in Korean Diaspora\* in the United States

Fall 2025



## Community Snapshot

- About 1.8 million people in the U.S. identify as Korean (including Korean alone and multiethnic and multiracial Koreans).<sup>1</sup>
- Of Koreans ages 5 and above, 68% speak English proficiently.<sup>1</sup>
- More than half (56%) of the Korean population in the U.S. is foreign-born. Among this group, 82% have lived in the U.S. for 10+ years and 68% are naturalized U.S. citizens.<sup>1</sup>
- Of all the Koreans in the nation, 29% or 530,000 live in California. The other states with the top 5 largest Korean populations are New York (140,000), Texas (110,000), New Jersey (105,000) and Virginia (90,000).<sup>1</sup>

## Recent Statistics on Domestic Violence (DV)

### Prevalence and Forms of DV

- A 2012 study – using existing data from a 2006–2007 health survey with a representative sample of 592 Korean adult women residing in California – found that, in the past year, approximately 24% experienced psychological aggression, 15% sexual coercion, 2% physical assault, and 1% injury from a partner.<sup>2</sup>
- In the same study, among a subsample of 495 Korean women who had a partner in the past year, younger women (ages 18–39) were more likely to report psychological aggression (35%) and sexual coercion (20%) compared to older women (ages 55+), who were least likely to report these experiences (18% and 7%, respectively).<sup>2</sup>
- Among 173 Chinese, Korean, and Vietnamese American young adult women in Boston who were 1.5\* 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.<sup>3</sup>

\*The Korean diaspora refers to people of Korean descent. 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.

## Risk and Protective Factors

- A 2021 study of 83 Korean immigrant women receiving nonprofit services identified several risk and protective factors for DV. Risk factors included lower adherence to traditional gender norms, a college degree or higher education, immigrant life stresses, and longer U.S. residency, while protective factors included higher income and greater English fluency.<sup>4</sup>
- A 2018 study found that Korean immigrant women who frequently attended religious services reported higher rates of DV, unless their partners also attended frequently, in which case reported rates were lower.<sup>5</sup> Korean direct service providers note this may reflect underreporting among highly religious couples who are deeply involved in their faith communities.
- According to a 2019 cross-sectional study, Korean immigrants with a higher level of acculturative stress<sup>†</sup> and who are socially isolated are at increased risk of DV.<sup>6</sup>
- In a 2024 study of 38 Korean immigrants aged 18 and older, cultural factors such as Confucianist values like strict gender roles that emphasized men as leaders and women's self-sacrifice in deference to men were factors contributing to DV. The younger participants mentioned intergenerational transmission of DV as a major risk factor.<sup>7</sup>
- A 2017 study found that Korean immigrant women who experienced physical abuse when they were children are almost 6 times more likely to report experiencing DV as adults.<sup>8</sup>

## Mental and Physical Health Impacts

- In a 2018 study of Korean, Chinese, Vietnamese American women, about half (52.4%) of the participants reported experiencing at least one type of childhood physical and/or sexual abuse. Having experienced childhood abuse was significantly associated with experiencing at least one instance of suicidal ideation in their lifetime.<sup>3</sup>
- In that same study, those who reported experiencing physical or sexual DV were three times as likely to report having lifetime suicidal ideation/intent even after controlling for childhood experiences of abuse and other factors.<sup>3</sup>

## Help-Seeking and Barriers to Support

- Cultural barriers to seeking support included shame culture, treating DV as a private matter, and the emphasis on family unity. Shame culture includes the concept of saving face, or prioritizing family and community acceptance and presenting a positive appearance to avoid judgement instead of reporting DV.<sup>7,8</sup>

<sup>†</sup> Acculturative stress is defined as stress experienced in the process of adaptation to a host country influenced by language barriers, isolation, and discrimination (Kim, 2019).

- Other barriers to help-seeking included language barriers, financial challenges, lack of awareness of and accessibility to DV services locally, concerns over documentation and legal status, and a lack of social support.<sup>7</sup>
- A 2024 study of 38 Korean men and women found that language barriers were especially challenging for younger and older women, affecting both their job prospects and their ability to disclose experiences of DV in a new country.<sup>7</sup>

## Promising Practices and Recommendations

- A 2019 study conducted in the Southeast USA aimed to equip Korean faith leaders with knowledge and tools to identify, intervene, and prevent domestic violence in their local faith communities through an online curriculum. The online training significantly improved faith leader's knowledge of DV resources, and enhanced attitudes against DV.<sup>9</sup>
- The virtual training curriculum called "Religious Leaders for Healthy Families" aims to educate Korean American faith leaders about domestic violence and healthy relationships. According to a 2023 study, Korean American faith leaders significantly increased their knowledge and self-efficacy in DV prevention and intervention after six months.<sup>10</sup>
- Culturally sensitive community-based programs focused on lowering acculturative stress and growing social networks especially for recent immigrants.<sup>5</sup>

## Selected Translated Materials

- Lifetime Spiral of Gender Violence ([English](#); [Korean](#)) | API-GBV
- [English/Korean Legal Glossary](#) | Washington State Courts
- DV Resources for Korean & Korean Faith Communities ([Korean](#)) | National KACEDA
- 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](http://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](http://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
- [National KACEDA](#) [location tab](#) features list of agencies by US region

## 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](http://www.api-gbv.org) or email [info@api-gbv.org](mailto:info@api-gbv.org)

## References

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