

Fact Sheet:

Sexual Violence in Asian, Asian American, Native Hawaiian, Pacific Islander (AANHPI), and Middle Eastern & North African (MENA) Communities

Summer 2026



Definition of Sexual Violence

Sexual violence is defined by the US Center for Disease Control and Prevention as “sexual activity when consent is not obtained or freely given. It impacts every community and affects both sexes and people of all sexual orientations and ages. Anyone can experience or perpetrate sexual violence. The perpetrator of sexual violence is usually someone the survivor knows. This can include a friend, current or former intimate partner, coworker, neighbor, or family member. Sexual violence can occur in person, online, or through technology. This includes posting or sharing sexual pictures of someone without their consent, or non-consensual sexting.”

[~CDC, About Sexual Violence Report, updated 2024](#)

The resource linked above lists detail the types of sexual violence that affect all people but disproportionately affect women and girls. See this [resource](#) updated in 2025 for specific types of sexual violence against Asian, Asian American, Native Hawaiian, Pacific Islander (AANHPI) and Middle Eastern and North African (MENA) women.

Recent Statistics on Sexual Violenceⁱ

Prevalence of Sexual Violence

- The 2016/2017 National Intimate Partner and Sexual Violence Survey (NISVS) shows sexual violence impacts both Asian/Pacific Islander women and men in the U.S., with women experiencing higher lifetime prevalence; see table below for annualized estimates.¹

ⁱ The 2023/2024 NISVS data have been released, but only partial data are currently available. As of today, race/ethnicity data have not been reported, and the release only summarizes sexual violence findings by sex without other demographic characteristics. Race/ethnicity data will likely be included in a longer report, and this factsheet will be updated once those data are available.

Victimization Type	Women		Men	
	Weighted %	Estimated # of Victims*	Weighted %	Estimated # of Victims*
Rape	17.2	1,201,000	--	--
Made to penetrate	--	--	8.4	510,000
Sexual coercion	18.0	1,258,000	7.6	464,000
Unwanted sexual contact	44.2	3,088,000	21.5	1,316,000
Sexual harassment in a public place	34.4	2,403,000	10.8	660,000
*Rounded to the nearest thousand. --Estimate is not reported.				

- 32.3% of Asian American women experienced sexual intimate partner violence (IPV), and sexual minority women experienced higher odds of all types of IPV. Survivors of lifetime sexual IPV were more likely to experience depression and/or anxiety.²
- The most frequently reported types of sexual abuse were childhood sexual assault (CSA), intimate partner violence, and sexual assault according to 27 Asian and Pacific Islander serving organizations in 2022 and 2023.³
 - The most frequent perpetrator relationship to API sexual assault survivors was a spouse (not forced marriage) (40% in 2022 and 30% in 2023). In 2022, other common perpetrators were a spouse (forced marriage), friend, stranger, blood relative, and extended family; in 2023, they were a stranger, extended family/in-laws, blood relative, and friend.³
- Asian or Pacific Islander women made up 6.7% of reported past-year sexual assault among undergraduate women, a lower proportion compared with other racial/ethnic groups.⁴
- 27.6% of South Asians in New York state reported assaults to authorities or received services, according to a study that anonymously surveyed 335 South Asian SA survivors ages 18 to 34.⁵
 - More than two thirds (65.1%) reported that at least one of their perpetrators were South Asian, and about a quarter (25.1%) of perpetrators were family members.⁵
 - Participants who were older, were a sexual minority, had a family member as the perpetrator, and experiences of depression were more likely to seek help.⁵

Child Sexual Abuse (CSA)

- 16.8% of Asian adults reported experiencing CSA, according to data from a sample of 1,894 Asian adults in the 2020 Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System survey.⁶
 - Of those reporting CSA, 11.8% were touched inappropriately by someone older, 7.2% were forced to touch someone, and 4% were forced to have sex with someone older than them.⁶
- South Asians who reported experiencing any relationship violence were likely to have also experienced CSA.⁷

- 25.2 % reported CSA; 13.8% reported abuse involving exposure; 21.5% reported abuse involving touching; 4.5% reported attempted sexual intercourse; and 3.5% reported forced sexual intercourse, according to one study from 2018.⁷
- Rates of Pacific Islander CSA cases were higher than CSA cases of white children in 12 states, and more research should analyze the needs of Pacific Islander communities specifically. Asian Americans were underreported for CSA across all 50 states, which could be due to lower rates or underreporting.⁸
 - This speaks to a need for greater cultural sensitivity for detecting cases, addressing stigma, as well as education for reporters and Child Protective Service workers to take reports seriously despite the model minority myth.⁸
- Adult Pacific Islander CSA survivors expressed that many delayed or avoided disclosing their experiences because they felt the need to protect family members from the associated shame and blame for the abuse in a collectivist culture.⁹

Help-Seeking and Services

- Internalized self-blame worsened by hearing myths about the causes of sexual violence, potentially jeopardizing their family's or their own immigration status, the model minority myth and perfectionism, and assimilation strategies while navigating multiple cultures in the United States were barriers to reporting sexual violence among Asian and Asian American college students.¹⁰
- Barriers to seeking SA and SV services included taboos against speaking about sex in Asian cultures and family systems, and a lack of culturally tailored services and prevention education programming.¹¹
- Asian college students preferred informal support such as peers compared to campus resources such as Title IX or mental health services. Survivors often weigh the costs and benefits when deciding if they should report experiences of sexual violence and sexual harm.¹¹
- Few studies focus on sexual IPV in Arab communities, most likely due to the stigma and lack of openness to discuss sexual relationships.¹²
- Silence and stigma against speaking about sex and sexual violence as a major barrier to coping and seeking support among 1.5 and second generation Indian American women who identified as survivors of sexual violence.¹³
- 1.5 and second generation Indian American survivors expressed experiences of guilt, self-blame, and shame, and relational challenges after realizing that their experiences of CSA or FGM were forms of sexual violence, with some participants seeking support from friends, family, or religious communities to cope.¹³

Promising Practices and Recommendations

- Most research studies on non-partner sexual violence in the AANHPI or MENA community did not report about individual ethnic groups. Most studies focused on programs addressing the needs of East Asians, with little to no evidence or data for NHPI communities. Future research should address these gaps in knowledge.¹⁴
- Multicultural or bicultural approach can be helpful for AANHPI clients dealing with sexual violence and harassment rather than prioritizing only traditional or Western values.¹⁵
- Indirect approaches may help decrease shame and stigma felt by Asian American survivors being asked to disclose their experiences. For example, services providers could share resources and recommendations by sharing examples of fabricated friends who experienced sexual assault and the ways they got support. For some Asian American survivors of sexual assault, individual counseling may be less intimidating than support groups.¹⁶
- Therapists should recognize the diversity within and between the cultural and immigration experiences of Asian communities, even within a region of origin. Also, therapists know that coping and healing may look more internal or may look different from what U.S. society may recommend, according to authors of a study that included both foreign-born and US-born Asian women.¹⁵
- In Arab communities, religious leaders can promote awareness of IPV and offer guidance to survivors and their families. Friends and family could also provide support. For example, one client discussed how a survivor brought her father to the local religious center to help her get divorced from an abusive spouse. In instances where family was not supportive, Arab American survivors felt more supported by friends.¹²

Selected Translated Materials

- Lifetime Spiral of Gender Violence ([English](#)) | API-GBV
- Creating a Safety Plan ([English](#)) | Peel Committee Against Woman Abuse
- 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)

- **Strong Hearts Native Helpline**

Live Chat: www.strongheartshelpline.org | Call: [1-844-762-8483](tel:1-844-762-8483)

Directories

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

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

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