

Sexual Violence Against APIDA Women

Overview

The number of **Asian Pacific Islander Desi American (APIDA)** Women in the United States is the highest it has ever been. There are **25.8 million** Asian Americans living in the US, making up **7.7%** of the population.¹ APIDA women face a unique situation when it comes to sexual violence because of a long history of stereotypes that have fostered hyper-sexualization and fetishization. One policy that played a large role in how we view Asian women is the *Page Act of 1857*. The Page Act sought to limit immigration from Asian countries using three different reasons for banned immigration, with the third being the most infamous. Section 3 banned Asian women from coming into the US for “purposes of prostitution,” but US officials were given full discretion, leading to Asian women being turned away and setting a precedent of sexualization and misogyny towards the community.²

APIDA women have also been shown to be hyper-sexualized in movies, books, social media, and other aspects of society.³ In pornographic films, victims of rape are disproportionately portrayed by Asian women, again contributing to fetishization and sexual fantasies that can lead to danger in real life. The intersection of racism and misogyny that Asian American women face has created a harmful environment. The increase in racism and xenophobia towards Asian communities during the COVID-19 pandemic is also an important factor that has contributed to violence against Asian American women.

Statistics

- **44.2%** of APIDA women report experiencing unwanted sexual contact in their lifetime⁴
- **17%** of APIDA women report experiencing rape in their lifetime⁵
- **34.4%** of APIDA women report being sexually harassed in a public place in their lifetime⁶
- While there is no distinction of what crimes are reported under ‘hate crimes,’ Asian women report hate crimes **2.3 times more** often than their male counterparts⁷
- Victims of anti-Asian violence are **3x** more likely to be women, while perpetrators are more likely to be young men⁸
- In a survey from the National Asian Pacific American Women’s Forum (NAPAWF), **38%** of participants experienced sexual harassment from 2021-2022⁹
 - **52%** of those who reported were Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander
 - **40%** of those who reported were South Asian

¹ Hijar, K. (2022, August 2). *Chinese women, immigration, and the first U.S. Exclusion Law: The Page Act of 1875*. National Parks Service. <https://www.nps.gov/safr/blogs/chinese-women-immigration-and-the-first-u-s-exclusion-law-the-page-act-of-1875.htm>

² See citation 1.

³ Leong, K., & Kuo, K. (2023, July 26). *US has a long history of violence against Asian women*. The Conversation. <https://theconversation.com/us-has-a-long-history-of-violence-against-asian-women-157533>

⁴ The National Intimate Partner and Sexual Violence Survey: 2016/2017 Report on Sexual Violence (2022). <https://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/pdf/nisvs/nisvsReportonSexualViolence.pdf>

⁵ See citation 4.

⁶ See citation 4.

⁷ Leong, K., & Kuo, K. (2023, July 26). *US has a long history of violence against Asian women*. The Conversation. <https://theconversation.com/us-has-a-long-history-of-violence-against-asian-women-157533>

⁸ Lee, J., & Huang, T. (2022, March 9). *Re-imagining safety, belonging, and justice in the wake of anti-Asian violence*. Brookings. <https://www.brookings.edu/articles/re-imagining-safety-belonging-and-justice-in-the-wake-of-anti-asian-violence>

⁹ NAPAWF (2022), *The State of Safety for Asian American and Pacific Islander Women in the US*. <https://www.napawf.org/assets/download/napawf-state-of-safety-report.pdf>