

Sexual Violence Against APIDA Women

FACT SHEET

Asian, Pacific Islander, and Desi (South Asian) American (APIDA) women come from many different cultures, languages, and communities. For generations, Asian women have been viewed through orientalism¹ - a way of understanding and portraying Asian cultures as exotic, foreign, inferior, and very different from Western cultures and perpetuating harmful stereotypes that paint Asian women as submissive, exotic, or sexually available.² These stereotypes were reinforced by the *Page Act of 1875* - a U.S. policy that sought to limit immigration from Asian countries. In enforcing this policy, U.S. immigration officials denied many Asian women entry to the country by falsely claiming that the women were suspected sex workers, setting a precedent of sexualization and misogyny toward APIDA women.³

Racism, misogyny, and xenophobia continue to shape the experiences of APIDA women today. These attitudes can appear in media, online spaces, workplaces, and everyday interactions, where APIDA women may be fetishized, objectified, or targeted because of both their race and gender.⁴ APIDA survivors may face language barriers, immigration concerns, fear of not being believed, pressure related to family or community reputation, or difficulty finding culturally responsive services as well. These barriers can make it harder for APIDA survivors to seek support or report experiences of sexual violence.⁵

Statistics⁶

- **About 1 in 6 (17.2%)** non-Hispanic Asian or Pacific Islander women reported experiencing completed or attempted rape in their lifetime.
- **Nearly 1 in 5 (18.0%)** non-Hispanic Asian or Pacific Islander women reported experiencing sexual coercion in their lifetime.
- **More than 2 in 5 (44.2%)** non-Hispanic Asian or Pacific Islander women reported experiencing unwanted sexual contact in their lifetime.
- **About 1 in 3 (34.4%)** non-Hispanic Asian or Pacific Islander women reported experiencing sexual harassment in a public place in their lifetime.
- **1 in 4** non-Hispanic Asian or Pacific Islander women **(27.2%)** reported experiencing contact sexual violence, physical violence, and/or stalking by an intimate partner in their lifetime.⁷
- **A 1 in 4** non-Hispanic Asian or Pacific Islander women **(24.2%)** reported experiencing stalking in their lifetime.⁸
- Sexual Harassment⁹
 - **38%** of Asian American Pacific Islander women reported experiencing sexual harassment in the previous 12 months.
 - **52%** of Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander women reported experiencing sexual harassment in the previous 12 months.
 - **40%** of South Asian (Desi) women reported experiencing sexual harassment in the previous 12 months.
 - **37%** of Southeast Asian women reported experiencing sexual harassment in the previous 12 months.
 - **35%** of East Asian women reported experiencing sexual harassment in the previous 12 months.

For survivor resources, please visit:

mcasa.org/survivors/culturally-responsive-services

¹ What Is Orientalism? (n.d.). AAPI History Museum. Retrieved July 27, 2026, from <https://aapihistorymuseum.org/what-is-orientalism/>

² Visibility, Voice, Vision: Asian American & Pacific Islander Reproductive Justice Agenda (2021). National Asian Pacific American Women's Forum. Retrieved July 27, 2026, from <https://www.napawf.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/08/Reproductive-Justice-Agenda.pdf>

³ Hilar, Katherine. "Chinese Women, Immigration, and the First U.S. Exclusion Law: The Page Act of 1875" (August 2, 2022). National Park Service. Retrieved July 27, 2026, from <https://www.nps.gov/safr/blogs/chinese-women-immigration-and-the-first-u-s-exclusion-law-the-page-act-of-1875.htm>

⁴ Lee, M., et al. "Intersectional Discrimination and Its Impact on Asian American Women's Mental Health: A Mixed-Methods Scoping Review" (2023). Frontiers in Public Health. Retrieved July 31, 2026, from <https://www.frontiersin.org/journals/public-health/articles/10.3389/fpubh.2023.993396/full>

⁵ Visibility, Voice, Vision: Asian American & Pacific Islander Reproductive Justice Agenda (2021). National Asian Pacific American Women's Forum. Retrieved July 27, 2026, from <https://www.napawf.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/08/Reproductive-Justice-Agenda.pdf>

⁶ Basile, Kathleen C., Sharon G. Smith, Marcie-jo Kresnow, Srijana Khatiwada, and Ruth W. Leemis. *The National Intimate Partner and Sexual Violence Survey: 2016/2017 Report on Sexual Violence* (June 2022). Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Retrieved July 27, 2026, from <https://stacks.cdc.gov/view/cdc/124625>

⁷ Leemis, Ruth W., Norah Friar, Srijana Khatiwada, May S. Chen, Marcie-jo Kresnow, Sharon G. Smith, Sharon Caslin, and Kathleen C. Basile. *The National Intimate Partner and Sexual Violence Survey: 2016/2017 Report on Intimate Partner Violence* (October 2022). National Center for Injury Prevention and Control, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Retrieved July 27, 2026, from <https://stacks.cdc.gov/view/cdc/124646>

⁸ Smith, Sharon G., Kathleen C. Basile, and Marcie-jo Kresnow. *The National Intimate Partner and Sexual Violence Survey: 2016/2017 Report on Stalking—Updated Release* (April 2022). National Center for Injury Prevention and Control, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Retrieved July 27, 2026, from <https://stacks.cdc.gov/view/cdc/124645>

⁹ Pillai, Drishti, and Alyssa Lindsey. *The State of Safety for Asian American and Pacific Islander Women in the U.S.* (March 2022). National Asian Pacific American Women's Forum. Retrieved July 27, 2026, from <https://napawf.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/07/napawf-state-of-safety-report.pdf>