

Sexual Violence

in Communities of Color WOCN, Inc. FAQ Collection

The mission of the Women of Color Network (WOCN Inc.) is to eliminate violence against ALL women and their communities by centralizing the voices and promoting the leadership of women of color across the Sovereign Nations, the United States and U.S. Territories.

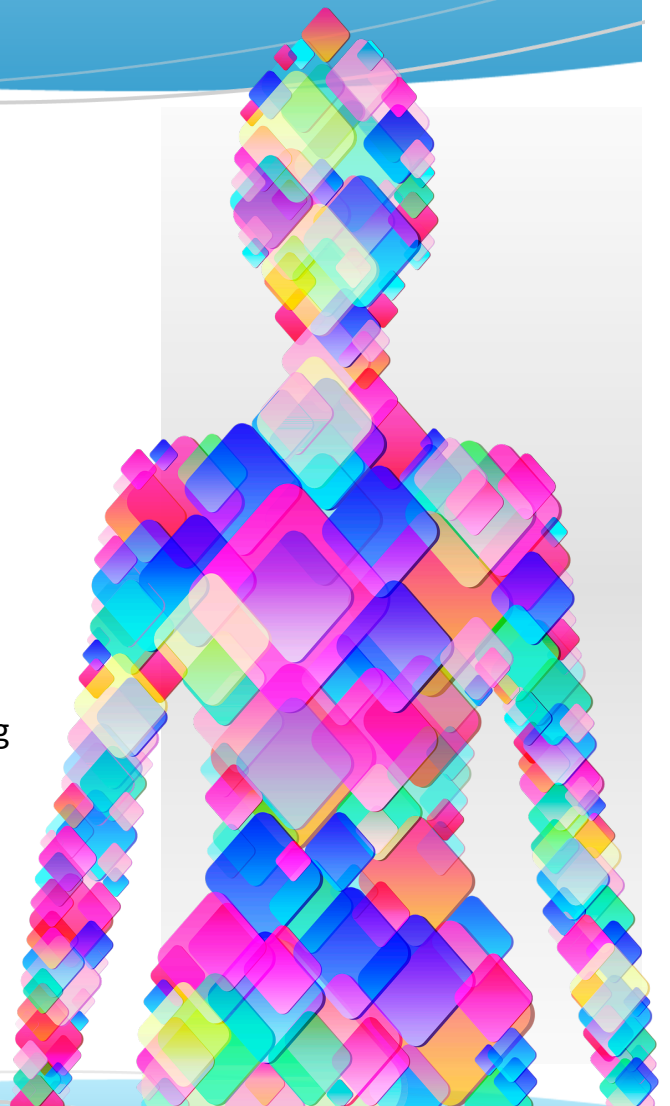
Sexual Violence in Communities of Color

Three Categories of Sexual Violence ¹

Rape including completed or attempted penetration when the perpetrator uses physical force or when the victim was drunk, high, drugged, or passed out and unable to consent.

Sexual coercion including when the perpetrator has sexual contact with the victim by telling lies, threatening to end the relationship or spread rumors, or using their authority or influence over the victim.

Unwanted sexual contact such as kissing or fondling or noncontact unwanted sexual experience, including being flashed or forced to view sexually explicit media.



The Women of Color Network, Inc.

Sexual Violence is not limited to just rape...

But also incest, molestation, or sexual harassment. The nature, extent and type of sexual violence against women varies and can include cyber assaults and stalking, Female Genital Mutilation (FGM), marital rape, and sex trafficking. Prevailing sexist and racist attitudes make women of color particularly vulnerable to sexual violence and access to support services difficult. In fact, multiracial women reported the highest rates of sexual violence in the NISVS (rape=32.3% and 64.1% of types of sexual violence). Women of color may also encounter a criminal justice system that has historically exercised disparate treatment between “European American perpetrators and perpetrators of color or between European American victims and victims of color”.²

Victims of sexual violence respond differently to their own experiences. Responses to sexual victimization exist on a spectrum and can range from denial, shame, substance abuse, anger, and forgiveness. For a woman of color, often her response is both an individual and cultural one. A woman of color may have to confront both her experience, and also other issues with respect to protecting her family (honor) or community, mistreatment by law enforcement, and conforming to cultural values and norms. A history of racism and oppression contributes to the challenges faced by women of color rape survivors.³

Additional issues encountered include:

- Difficulty discussing her victimization due to the highly personal nature of sexual violence
- Religious doctrine that may increase her feelings of alienation and shame
- Confusion about whether forced sex during marriage (marital rape) constitutes an act of sexual violence
- Myths about sexual violence and general discomfort reflected in overall society
- Trying to access support and help services that are not culturally and linguistically competent



Black/African/African Americans

Stereotypes...

regarding Black/African/African American women's sexuality, including terms like "Black Jezebel", "promiscuous," and "exotic", perpetuates the notion that Black/African/African American women are willing participants in their own victimization. However, these myths only serve to demean, obstruct appropriate legal remedies, and minimize the seriousness of sexual violence perpetrated against Black/African/African American women.⁴



- According to the National Intimate Partner and Sexual Violence Survey 2011, 21.2% of Black women had been raped during their lifetime (estimated 3,084,000 victims)⁵
- According to the National Intimate Partner and Sexual Violence Survey 2011, 38.2% of Black women had experienced other forms of sexual violence (estimated 5,555,000 victims) 8.8% of Black women were raped by an intimate partner since age 18⁶
- 17.4% of Black experienced sexual violence other than rape by an intimate partner during their lifetime⁷

Because of the disproportionate number of Black/African/African American women incarcerated, there is an increased possibility she is or will be a victim of sexual violence in the form of inmate rape, sexual abuse, sexual extortion, and groping during body searches.⁸ According to the Bureau of Justice of Statistics, in 2010, black women were incarcerated at nearly 3 times the rate of white women (133 versus 47 per 100,000) and almost 2 times as likely as Hispanic women (77 versus 47 per 100,000).⁹ Black females were between 1.6 and 4.1 times more likely to be imprisoned than White females of any group.¹⁰

In general, Black/African/African American women make up nearly half of the nation's female prison population, with most serving sentences for nonviolent drug or property related offenses.¹¹ Statistics also show that more than three-quarters of all reported staff sexual misconduct involved women who were victimized by male correctional staff. Among former state prisoners, the rate of inmate-on-inmate sexual victimization was at least three times higher for females (13.7%) than males (4.2%). However, fear of retaliation, the lack of safe guards and formal procedures, and the inability to seek redress prevent many women from seeking help.¹²

In Asian & Pacific Islander communities...

(API), women may be subjected to sexual violence as a result of human trafficking, labor and sexual exploitation, forced marriages, and virginity examinations. API women who are forced into abusive relationships and dangerous work conditions are often unable to find protection and support because of a lack of culturally and linguistically competent programs and services.

- NISVS 31.9% of Asian or Pacific Islander women experienced other sexual violence¹³
- NISVS found that 6.8% of Asian/Pacific Islander women reported rape in their lifetime¹⁴
- API women tend to report lower rates of rape and other forms of sexual violence than do women and men from other minority backgrounds.¹⁵ This may be accounted for because traditional Asian values may discourage them from disclosing such victimization, even in confidential settings.¹⁶

Similar to other women of color, API women are subjected to derogatory and demeaning stereotypes. Myths that API women are “submissive”, “elusive”, and/or “sexually available” make API women vulnerable to pervasive sexual harassment in the workplace, religious institutions, in school, and by law enforcement.



Myths and stereotypes...

that all Hispanics/Latinas speak the same language or are in the U.S. illegally, preclude victim service providers and law enforcement from providing appropriate assistance, as well as deter victims from reporting their abuse or seeking help.

- According to the 2011 National Intimate Partner and Sexual Violence Survey, 13.6% of Hispanic women had been raped in their lifetime and 35.6% of Latinx/Hispanic women had experienced other types of sexual violence¹⁷
- According to the 2011 National Intimate Partner and Sexual Violence Survey, 6.2% of Hispanic women were raped by an intimate partner during their lifetime¹⁸
- NISVS found that there was no significant difference between sexual assault of Hispanic women and non-Hispanic women (Hispanic:21.2%, non-Hispanic: 22.1%). However, Hispanic women were more likely than non-Hispanic women to report that a current or former intimate partner raped them at some time in their lifetime¹⁹
- According to a U.S. study of violence between intimate partners, Latinas report rape at a 2.2% higher level than white women²⁰
- Approximately 7.9% of Latinas will be raped by a spouse, boyfriend or ex-boyfriend during their lifetime²¹
- NISVS found that 11.9% of Hispanic white women reported rape in their lifetime²²
- Married Hispanics/Latinas are less likely than other women to immediately define their experiences of forced sex as rape and terminate their relationships; some view sex as a martial obligation²³
- Similar to African American women, Hispanic/Latinas have higher rates of incarceration than European American women.²⁴
- Latinas are incarcerated nearly four times more than European American women.”²⁵

Therefore, incarceration for Hispanic/Latinas increases the likelihood that she is or will be a victim of sexual violence and decreases her chances she'll seek help and legal recourse. “In many Hispanic/Latino cultures a woman or girl who loses her virginity to rape, incest, or molestation is seen as a ‘damaged goods’”.²⁶ As a result, self-blame and fear of the stigma associated with sexual violence can be a strong deterrence for women and girls to seek help.

Historical oppression...

and intergenerational trauma is a significant contribution on sexual assault statistics, service provision in conjunction with complicated jurisdictional issues.²⁷

- NISVS 27.5% of American Indian had been raped and 55% had experienced other forms of sexual violence²⁸
- More than one-quarter women (26.9) who identified as American Indian or as Alaskan Native reported rape victimization in their lifetime²⁹
- U.S. Department of Justice estimates that 1 of 3 Native American/Alaskan Indian (NA/AI) women will be raped or sexually assaulted in her lifetime, making the average annual rate of rape and sexual assault among American Indians 3.5 times higher than for all other races.³⁰
- The NISVS found that 34.1% of NA/AI women report rape in their lifetime³¹
- 92% of American Indian girls who have had sexual intercourse reported having been forced against their will to have sex³²
- 44% of Indian Health Service emergency rooms reported not having accessible protocol, or trained personnel in place for sexual assault.³³

A Native American/Alaskan Indian woman may have deep-rooted distrust of white agencies and help providers that stems from a history of social and personal oppression, making it more difficult for her to report her crime or seek help.³⁴ The fear of being ostracized by her family and Tribe, along with complicated jurisdictional issues, further obscure NA/AI women from reporting their victimization. Although the U.S. Department of Justice has general jurisdiction to prosecute felony crimes by or against Indians, such crimes are rarely prosecuted.³⁵

Moreover, Indian nations are limited in their capacity to exercise sovereign authority to prosecute and mandate appropriate sentences for sexual violent crimes against NA/AI women. The lack of jurisdictional protections for NA/AI women increases their vulnerability to sexual victimization (first time and repeated).

In addition, within Indian Country as sovereign nations, a lack of awareness of unique challenges of indigenous people, funding and resources results in NA/AI tribes failing to adequately address and provide services to survivors of sexual violence or hold perpetrators fully accountable with equality across all tribes.³⁶

The impacts...

of sexual violence impedes upon all communities including racial, ethnic, linguistic, economic, faiths, sexualities and genders. There are unique barriers and historical layers of oppression for marginalized populations. These populations include American Indian/Alaskan Villager/First Nations, Asian/Pacific Islander, Latinx/Hispanic, and Black/African/African American/West Indian/Caribbean communities, Middle Eastern and Immigrant and Refugee communities, and Deaf and Hard of Hearing, Disabilities, LGBTQ communities. Survivors of color and marginalized populations across intersections, a common thread of a lack of culturally specific services, education of mainstream aspiring allies, prevention education and lack of consistency in legal protection, and implementation. Each program participant, advocate, activist, public policy maker and those in leadership have an opportunity to become educated aspiring allies to others and eliminate the barriers that impede upon the safety of ALL women and families.



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<http://www.blackwomensblueprint.org>

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Institute of Domestic Violence in the African American Community (IDVAAC)
 290 Peters Hall
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 Phone: 612-624-5357 or 1-877-NIDVAAC
 Fax: 612-624-9201
 Email: info@idvaac.org
<http://www.dvinstitute.org>

Manavi
 National Organization Addressing Violence in South Asian Communities
 P.O. Box 3103 New Brunswick, NJ 08903
 Phone: (732) 435-1414
 Fax: (732) 435-1411
 E-mail: manavi@manavi.org
<http://www.manavi.org>

National Indigenous Women's Resource Center (Native American/Alaskan Villager)

515 Lane Deer Ave.

PO Box 99 Lane Deer, MT 59043

Phone: (406)477-3896 or (855)649-7299

<http://www.niwrc.org>

National Immigrant Women's Advocacy Project

P.O. Box 341455

West Bethesda, Maryland 20827

Phone: 202-274-4457

<http://www.niwap.org>

SCESA

The National Organization of Sister of Color Ending Sexual Assault

PO Box 625 Canton, CT 06019

Phone: 1-860-693-2031

<http://sisterslead.org>

The New York City Anti-Violence Project (LGBTQ)

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Phone: 212.714.1184 | TTY: 212.714.1134 | 24-hour Hotline: 212.714.1141

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<http://www.avp.org>

Northwest Network (LGBTQ)

P.O. Box 18436, Seattle, WA 98118

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Fax: (206) 325-2601

Email: info@nwnetwork.org

<http://nwnetwork.org>

Vera Institute (Disabilities)

1100 First St NE, Suite 950 Washington, DC 20002

Telephone" (202) 465-8900

Fax: (202) 408-1972

<http://www.vera.org>

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