

Gender Differences *in* Experiences of Violence, Exposure to Firearms, *and* Discrimination *among* Asian Californians: What the data do and do not tell us

A collaboration between the Center on Gender Equity and Health at UC San Diego (GEH UCSD) in partnership with AAPI Equity Alliance, Chinese for Affirmative Action, and the Asian Pacific Institute on Gender-Based Violence



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

I. What are we doing?

Thanks to funding from AAPI Data, the Center on Gender Equity and Health at UC San Diego is working in partnership with AAPI Equity Alliance, Chinese for Affirmative Action, and the Asian Pacific Institute on Gender-Based Violence to create an enhanced representative survey on Asian Californian experiences of physical violence, firearm exposure, sexual violence and harassment, and racial/ethnic discrimination. Using these findings, we will explore recommendations on the need for additional and inclusive data, to support the health and safety of Asian Californians.

II. What do we already know?

Approximately one in six Californians is of Asian heritage; this reflects a 25% growth in Asian Californians in the past decade [1]. Unfortunately, under the pandemic, Asian Californians have experienced an increase in discrimination and violence [2]. Using data from our 2022 survey on violence and discrimination, we know that one in three Asian Californians report some form of physical violence, two in five report some form of sexual violence, one in twenty report some form of gun violence, and one in five have experienced system-level discrimination (e.g., being denied a loan or unfairly fired from a job).

III. What do we not know?

Asian communities in California are extremely diverse, and we don't have subpopulation data. This means we don't know which communities of Asian Californians are most affected by violence and discrimination, what types of violence they are experiencing most often in the past year, who is perpetrating the violence, or how

violence is influencing Asian Californians' health and finances. We do not have more detail on gender-based violence beyond sexual violence; for women, there is a greater need to capture information on intimate partner violence (IPV). We also lack information on the setting and situations in which the violence occurs, which makes it a challenge to understand how we can prevent it.

IV. What are we going to find out?

The 2023 edition of the California Violence Experiences Across the Lifespan (CalVEX) Survey, will recruit an oversample of ~600 Asian Californians (including 100 each of Chinese, Vietnamese, and South Asian [Bangladeshi, Bhutanese, Indian, Maldivians, Nepali, Pakistani, Sri Lankan] respondents¹) to explore within Asian community differences in experiences of racial/ethnic discrimination, violence, mental health, and financial distress. We will explore location and perpetrator of violence, and experiences of IPV, sexual harassment, and gun violence/ownership and associations with psychological and financial distress.

V. What will we do with the new information?

With the 2023 data, we hope to inform policy regarding sub-populations of Asian Californians. These data will identify those most affected by violence, offer pathways to education and prevention policies, support Californian community organizations to take up evidence into programming, and support statewide political advocacy to improve funding directed at solutions to prevent violence and support survivors of violence within Asian communities across the state.

¹Chinese and Vietnamese sub-populations were selected as they are the first and second largest populations of Asian Californians, respectively. South Asian communities were selected based on strong collaborations with Californians South Asian community organizations.

I.

What is the objective of this brief?

The overall objective of this policy brief is to outline our plan to collect state representative data on experiences of violence among Asian Californians. Below we share what we already know about experiences of violence and discrimination among Asian Californians, what we do not know, what our new study will help us find out, and the policy implications of our study. Using these findings, we will offer recommendations on data priorities, inclusive of Asian heritage sub-population data, to support the health and safety of Asian Californians.

Why are we doing this study?

Research indicates that blaming of immigrants, and in particular Chinese immigrants, for the COVID-19 pandemic is a primary cause of elevated discriminatory abuses of Asian Americans [3-5]. Discriminatory abuses against Asian Californians may be more likely for those perceived as less “American” and are more likely to occur in public spaces, while family and partner violence occur at home, often perpetrated by men against women and children for non-adherence to expected family and cultural norms [6-11]. These findings highlight the stark gender differences we see in experiences of violence, but we have little data from adult Asian Americans on the range of physical violence and sexual violence and harassment experienced

Risk of violence in Asian American communities may be further exacerbated by the growing presence of firearms among Asian Americans [12]. The past few years have indicated an elevation in firearm ownership among Asian Americans [13], and concerns regarding violence and firearms among Asian Californians has gained even greater attention in 2023 due to mass violence

incidents involving Asian heritage shooters and victims, including the attack on Lunar New Year in Monterey Park, California [14].

What have we done already?

We analyzed 2022 data from the Asian heritage subsample participants (N=161) of the California Violence Experiences Across the Lifespan (CalVEX) Survey, a study on violence and discrimination with a state representative sample of Californian adults. Our team at the Center on Gender Equity and Health at the University of California San Diego (GEH UCSD) has been conducting this survey annually since 2020, in partnership with survey research team at NORC at the University of Chicago. CalVEX offers the most comprehensive assessment of gender-based violence of any state or national survey conducted in the U.S. and is the only state-representative survey in the U.S. that collects data on both violence and discrimination.

In this brief, we offer gender-stratified descriptive data on experiences of victimization from physical violence (inclusive of weapon use against them) as well as gun violence specifically. We also provide gender-stratified data on sexual violence, including verbal or cyber sexual harassment, physically aggressive or coercive sexual harassment, forced sex. See [Appendix Table 1](#) for detailed definitions offered for each of these forms of violence.

II.

What do we know from our existing data?

CalVEX 2022

CalVEX 2022 sampled 2,285 Adult Californians; 12% of the survey-weighted sample (N=161) was Asian.²

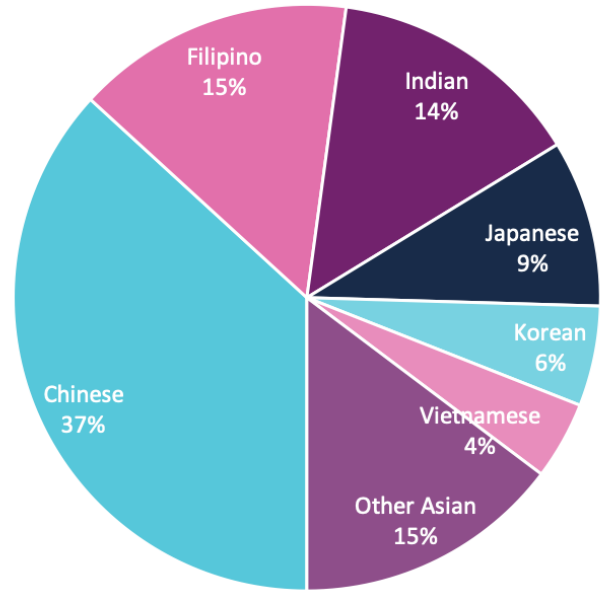
Physical Violence

One in three Asian Californians (33%) reported some form of physical violence experience in their lifetime.

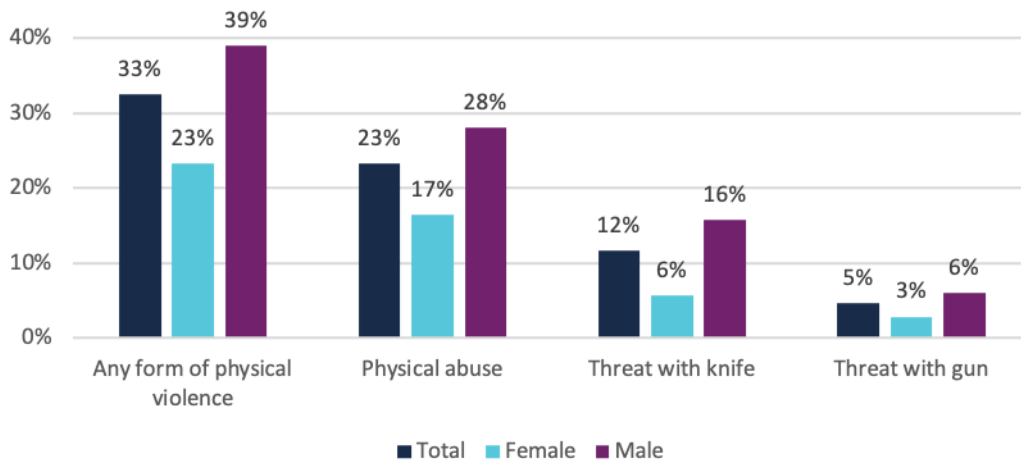
This includes physical abuse and weapon violence (knife or gun). Asian males were more likely to report a history of physical violence than Asian females (39% vs 23%).

We also assessed experiences of violence within the past year – however, due to the small number of Asian respondents in past survey waves, and the suppression of cells with <10 respondents, we cannot draw conclusions about past year physical violence from the 2022 CalVEX results.

CalVEX 2022 Asian Respondents

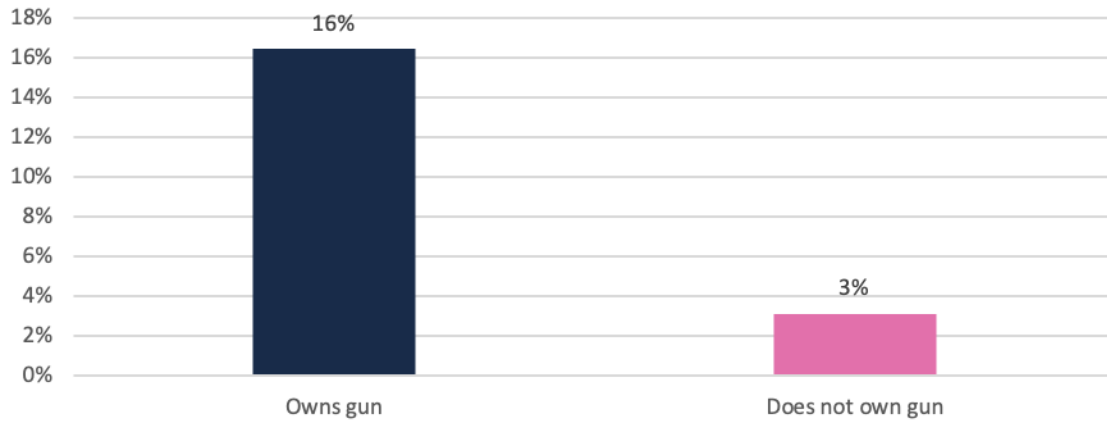


Lifetime Physical Violence Victimization, Asian Californians 2022



² Note three native Hawaiian and three Pacific Islander individuals also responded but are excluded from these analyses due to small numbers.

Gun violence victimization by gun ownership status, Asian Californians 2022



Gun Violence

One in twenty Asian Californians (5%) has been a victim of gun violence, with males twice as likely as females to report this victimization (6% vs. 3%).

Gun ownership increased among Asian Californians in the past 3 years, from 5% in 2020 to 8% in 2022. Notably, among Asian Californians, gun owners were significantly more likely than those who do not own guns to report having experienced gun violence (16% vs 3%).

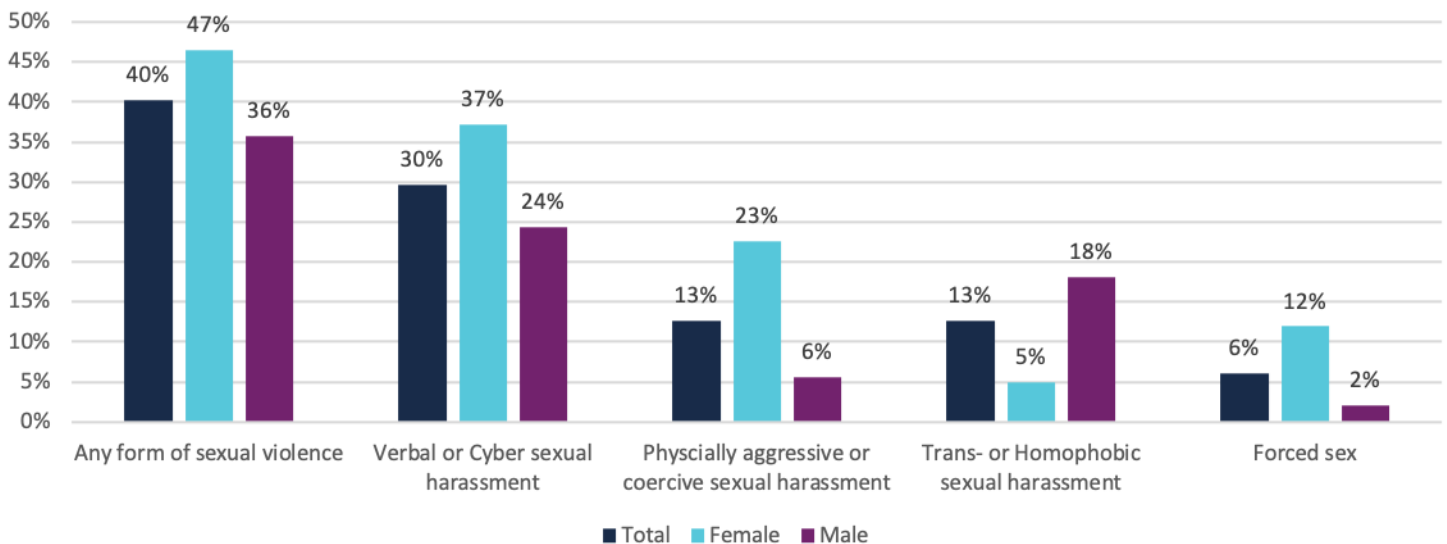
Norms and attitudes among Asian Californians are largely not supportive of gun ownership. Less than 5% report that people in their neighborhood have a gun in or around their home. Additionally, they are more than twice as likely to report that they do

not want a gun in or around their home than they are to report that they believe that having a gun in or around their home can help keep their family safe (65% vs 24%).

Sexual Violence

Two in five Asian Californians (40%) reported some form of sexual violence experience in their lifetime, mostly in the form of verbal or sexual harassment. Females were more likely than males to report all forms of sexual violence victimization, with 23% reporting physically aggressive or coercive sexual harassment and 12% reporting forced sex. Males were more likely than females to report trans- or homophobic harassment, with 18% of males reporting this form of abuse.

Lifetime Sexual Violence Victimization, Asian Californians 2022



Co-Occurrence of Physical and Sexual Violence

Asian Californians who experienced *physical* violence in their lifetime were almost twice as likely than those with no physical violence experience to also experience *sexual* violence (57% vs. 32%; $p < 0.05$). This relationship was very strong for males, who were 3x times more likely to have experienced sexual violence if they also experienced physical violence.

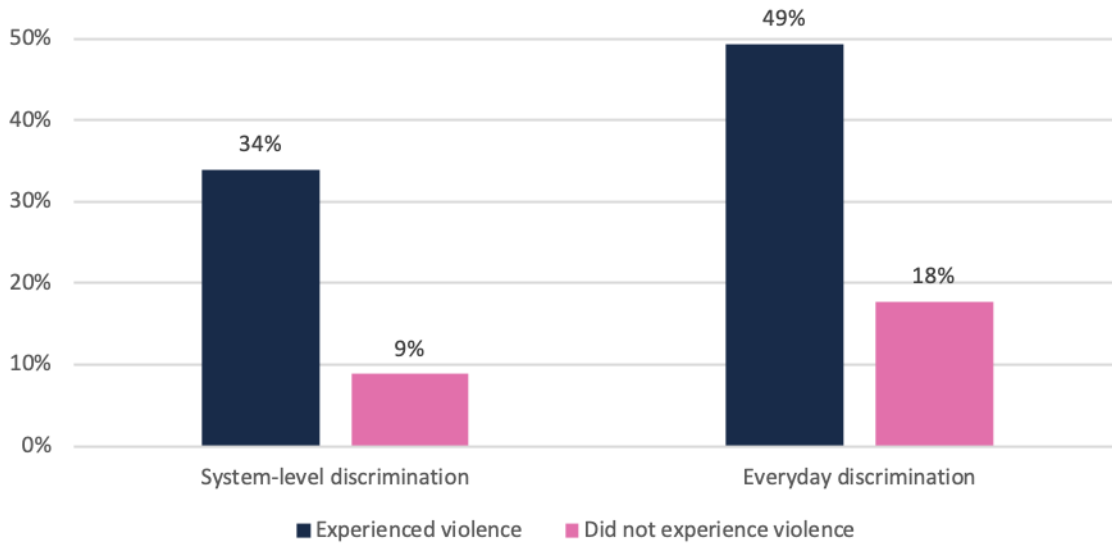
Discrimination and Co-Occurrence with Violence

One in five Asian Californians (22%) report a history of system-level discrimination (such

as being denied a loan or unfairly fired from a job)³[15], and one in three (34%) report experiencing everyday discrimination⁴ in a typical week (such as receiving poorer service in restaurants or being treated as though they are not intelligent) [16].

Asian Californians who experienced violence were more likely to experience discrimination. Those who experienced physical or sexual violence were nearly four times more likely to have experienced system-level discrimination (34% vs 9%), and more than twice as likely to experience everyday discrimination (49% vs 18%).

Experiences of discrimination by violence experience, Asian Californians 2022



³ System-level discrimination was measured using the 6-item Major Experiences of Discrimination Scale (Sternthal et al., 2011)

⁴ Everyday discrimination was measured using a modified five-item version of the Everyday Discrimination Scale (Williams et al, 1997)

What don't we know?

While prior years of data can start to demonstrate differential experiences of violence and discrimination of Asian Californians compared to white Californians, the limited sample of Asians in prior years limits our ability to explore within Asian experiences and past year experiences. Asian communities in California are extremely

How is our team contributing to improved data?

The 2023 version of CalVEX will include an oversample of 600 Asian Californians with 100 each of Chinese, Vietnamese, and South Asian respondents. These data will be available for analysis in Summer 2023. We are also adding additional detailed questions on IPV that include coercive control, emotional IPV, and financial IPV, which we have not asked about in prior versions of CalVEX. The oversample of sub-populations of Asian Californians will allow us to understand differences on experiences of violence within the Asian community. Additional details on locations of and perceived motivations behind violence will also be available in the 2023 CalVEX survey. We will also be able to make intersectional comparisons of violence and discrimination between Asian and non-Asian populations. This will include exploring the intersection of race, gender, and socio-economic status on experiences of violence, as well as exploring important associations between violence and key determinants of health and wellbeing. The 2023 CalVEX survey we will allow us to access important markers of resilience and support. This data will better enable our team to provide community partners, policy makers,

III.

diverse, and without subpopulation data we don't know which communities of Asian Californians are most affected by violence and discrimination, what types of violence they are experiencing most often in the past year, who is perpetrating the violence, where violence is taking place, or how violence is influencing Asian Californians' health and finances.

IV.

and advocates with key information about how emotional and social support may mediate the negative impacts of violence on health, insight on community support, and where additional efforts to foster community resilience are needed to help buffer the impacts of violence and discrimination.

What is still missing from these data?

Results from the 2023 CalVEX survey will better equip our team and community collaborators with new California-representative knowledge about experiences of violence and discrimination faced by Asian communities. The relatively small Hawaiian/Pacific Islander population in California limits our ability to oversample this population, thus these data will not be able to shine light on the unique experiences of Pacific Islanders in California. Future efforts should ensure greater representation of Pacific Islander communities. The data collected during the 2023 survey will be quantitative in nature, which limits our ability to explore why sub-populations are experiencing violence and what culturally-aware efforts can be made to prevent violence and support survivors. It is also important to fund qualitative and mixed-methods research to understand the nuanced and diverse experiences and efforts.

V.

What do we hope to do with these new data? What are the policy implications of this work?

Research on experiences of violence and discrimination require consistent funding and inclusion of the diverse populations of California to help guide evidence-based decision-making regarding funding for prevention and intervention activities. Results from the 2023 CalVEX survey will support community partners, policy makers, and academics with additional knowledge on experiences of violence and discrimination overall and by sub-populations of Asian Californians. Specifically, we will gain new knowledge on where experiences of violence are taking place. This can help to support policies to address discrimination and street harassment, such as the campaign proposed in California AB 2549 (Bonta, Muratsuchi, Weber). These data can further offer a pathway to education on and prevention of violence and harassment in California. Moreover, immigrant survivors of intimate partner violence need in-language services from law enforcement and service providers that are trained in culturally responsive and trauma-informed care. While the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) Reauthorization Act was passed in 2022, allowing some funding for culturally specific services, special care is needed to ensure full implementation of VAWA for immigrant survivors. Asian survivors need meaningful language access at all steps in the administrative and healthcare seeking process from seeking shelter to life-long mental and physical health care.

Results from our qualitative study of experiences of violence among migrants and refugees in California show that immigrant workers experience poor labor conditions, sexual and verbal harassment at work, and exploitative work environments. Reports of racial and religious discrimination at work and in school by Asians

and Muslims demonstrate the need for policy changes at the federal, state, and local level to train supervisors and school staff in responding to Islamophobia in accordance to the legal obligations under existing federal and state civil rights laws. Agencies tasked with enforcing civil rights laws, such as the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, U.S. Department of Education, Office for Civil Rights, and the California Civil Rights Department, can also improve outreach to Asian communities to provide information regarding prohibited discrimination and available complaint processes. Further, our qualitative work found accounts of asylum-seekers and undocumented survivors under-reporting their experiences of violence due to fear of deportation or retaliation. The U.S. Department of Homeland Security must enact policies to prevent asylum-seekers and undocumented survivors from punishment and deportation.

The community-based nature of this work is critical and will ensure that data from this project is directly taken up and incorporated into the ongoing efforts of community-based organizations that work directly with the Asian demographic in California. Given that our community collaborators are strong advocates who have important connections to policymakers, this work has the potential to engage legislators and philanthropists, and work to ensure key decision-makers better grasp/understand the lived and living experiences of Asian communities, so that they are better equipped to support them. Ultimately, through this project we call upon local, state, and national news media companies to recognize the importance of reporting on issues of xenophobia, to continue to shine a light on this concerning growth in violence against Asian Californians and end xenophobic violence.

APPENDIX TABLE 1. Definitions of Violence, as used in the CalVEX 2022 survey

Physical violence (PV)	Physical violence includes physical abuse and threat of use of a weapon. Physical abuse can include being hit, slapped, punched, shoved, choked, kicked, shaken or otherwise physically hurt. We asked this using a single question. We asked two additional questions on whether someone threatened them with or used a knife or gun against them- one question for each type of weapon.
Verbal sexual harassment	This can include someone whistling, leering or staring at you, or calling out to you in ways that make you feel disrespected or unsafe; someone talking about your body parts (such as your butt or breasts) inappropriately or offensively or saying sexually explicit comments or questions (“I want to do BLANK to you”); and someone repeatedly asking you for a date or your phone number when you’ve said no.
Homophobic or transphobic comments	This can include someone misgendering you or calling you a homophobic or transphobic slur, like “Fag,” “Dyke,” or “Tranny.”
Cyber sexual harassment	This can include someone electronically sending you or showing you sexual content without your permission, such as over e-mail, snapchat or Facebook or on their phone or computer. This can also include someone taking and/or sharing sexual pictures or videos of you without your permission.
Physically aggressive sexual harassment	This can include someone flashing or exposing their genitals to you without your permission. This can also include someone purposely touching you or brushing up against you in an unwelcome, sexual way.
Quid pro quo sexual harassment or coercion	This can include someone forcing or pressuring you to do a sexual act in exchange for something (such as a good grade, a promotion, a job, drugs, food, money, or something similar) or instead of something (like paying rent or a citation, etc.)
Forced sex	This can include someone forcing you to do a sexual act without your permission or explicit agreement (including while you are under the influence of alcohol or drugs).
Sexual violence (SV)	Sexual violence includes any of the above six forms of violence: verbal sexual harassment, homophobic or transphobic comments, cyber sexual harassment, physically aggressive sexual harassment, quid pro quo sexual harassment or coercion, or forced sex.
Intimate Partner Violence (IPV)	For those reporting victimization from any of the above acts of physical or sexual violence, we asked about the relationships with those who engaged in the above acts. For those reporting perpetration of any of the above acts of physical or sexual violence, we asked about the relationships with those against whom you committed these acts. Those responding that this individual was a sexual or relationship partner were categorized as IPV victims or perpetrators, correspondingly.

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