

# Native Hawaiians At-Risk of Intimate Partner Violence During COVID-19

ISSUE BRIEF: COVID-19 AND INTIMATE PARTNER VIOLENCE IN NATIVE HAWAIIAN COMMUNITIES

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BY OFFICE OF HAWAIIAN AFFAIRS, LILI'UOKALANI TRUST & KAMEHAMEHA SCHOOLS

In collaboration with the Domestic Violence Action Center

## PURPOSE

The purpose of this issue brief is to understand the vulnerabilities and potential impact of the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) public health crisis on Native Hawaiians experiencing or at-risk of intimate partner violence.

## CONTEXT

According to the Secretary General of the United Nations, one consequence of the COVID-19 pandemic, and proceeding stay-at-home mandates, is a global increase in incidents of domestic and intimate partner violence.<sup>1</sup> Further, the Hawai'i Department of Human Services warns that when domestic violence survivors are forced to stay in the home or in close proximity to their abuser more frequently, an abuser may take advantage of the already stressful situation to exert control over their victim.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Intimate partner violence includes physical, sexual, and emotional abuse and controlling behaviors by an intimate partner, while the term domestic violence may also encompass child or elder abuse. World Health Organization. (2012). Understanding and Addressing Violence Against Women. Available at [https://apps.who.int/iris/bitstream/handle/10665/77432/WHO\\_RHR\\_12.36\\_eng.pdf;jsessionid=1B9B6F438FF4236949DBCA480F003C4F?sequence=1](https://apps.who.int/iris/bitstream/handle/10665/77432/WHO_RHR_12.36_eng.pdf;jsessionid=1B9B6F438FF4236949DBCA480F003C4F?sequence=1)

<sup>2</sup> State of Hawai'i, Department of Human Services. Social Services. (March 2020). Important Update Amid the COVID-19 Crisis. Available at <https://humanservices.hawaii.gov/ssd/domestic-violence-resources/>

**DISCLAIMER:** The data presented have been vetted for accuracy; however, there is no warranty that it is error-free. The data itself does not represent or confer any legal rights of any kind. Please use suggested citation and report discrepancies to the OHA Systems Office at [carlah@oha.org](mailto:carlah@oha.org).

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## FINDINGS

### Incidences of intimate partner violence are surging in Hawai'i during the COVID-19 pandemic.

- The increase in intimate partner violence during the COVID-19 national health and subsequent economic crisis is affecting many Hawai'i residents.
- The Domestic Violence Action Center's (DVAC) Helpline, which serves Hawai'i, reports a **46%** increase in contacts during the COVID-19 crisis, from late March to October 2, 2020. During the same time period, DVAC's provision of legal information to domestic violence survivors increased by **22%** and safety planning services decreased by **38%**.<sup>3</sup>
- Also, during this period, DVAC's Ho'oikaika 'Ohana program provided the following services for Native Hawaiian domestic violence survivors:
  - 843 contacts
  - 540 Native Hawaiian children services
  - 12 court accompaniments
  - 71 safety plans
  - 167 referrals to other service providers
  - 91 legal information packets
  - 493 domestic violence educational information

These figures from the Hawaiian culture-based program represent only a fraction of all Native Hawaiians receiving services for challenges related to domestic violence during the pandemic.

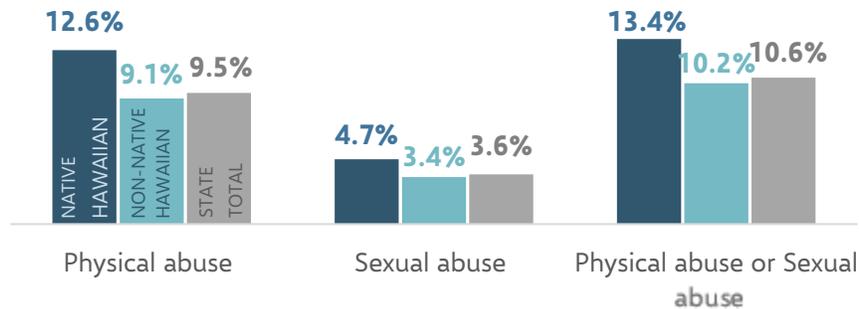
### Native Hawaiians experience high rates of intimate partner violence.

- Like other Indigenous and marginalized peoples, Native Hawaiians in the State of Hawai'i report relatively high rates of intimate partner violence when compared to non-Hawaiians and the total state population. It is important to note that limited access to culturally based medical and mental health care, increased economic stresses, experiences of historical trauma, denial of self-determination, and racialized structures of inequality linked to legacies of colonization, imperialism, and dispossession of land are important parts of the context in which these choices are made.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>3</sup> Correspondence from Domestic Violence Action Center. June 26, 2020. <https://domesticviolenceactioncenter.org/>. Figures represent services to all survivors of domestic violence, including both survivors of intimate partner violence and survivors of child abuse and neglect.

<sup>4</sup> Oneha, M., Magnussen, L., & Shoultz, J. (2010). The Voices of Native Hawaiian Women: Perceptions, Responses and Needs Regarding Intimate Partner Violence. *California Journal of Health Promotion*. 8(1): 72-81; available at <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3392177/>; and Asian Pacific Institute. (February 2020). Domestic Violence, Sexual Violence, and Human Trafficking in Native Hawaiian Communities Factsheet available at <https://s3.amazonaws.com/gbv-wp-uploads/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/22194925/DVFactSheet-Native-Hawaiians-Jan->

**Figure 1. Native Hawaiian adults experience intimate partner violence at greater rates than the rest of the population of Hawai'i, 2013<sup>5</sup>**



- In 2013, **12.6%** of Native Hawaiian adults report experiencing physical abuse by an intimate partner, compared to 9.1% of non-Hawaiian adults and 9.5% of the total State of Hawai'i adult population.
- **4.7%** of Native Hawaiian adults report experiencing sexual abuse by an intimate partner, compared to 3.4% of non-Hawaiian adults and 3.6% of the total State of Hawai'i adult population.
- **13.4%** of Native Hawaiian adults report experiencing physical or sexual abuse by an intimate partner, compared to 10.2% non-Hawaiian adults and 10.6% of the total State of Hawai'i adult population.
- Although rates of intimate partner violence are high among Native Hawaiians, when data are compared with other specific ethnicities, rates are higher among White/Caucasian and Pacific Islander ethnicities in Hawai'i.

**Native Hawaiians experiencing homelessness have higher rates of intimate partner violence than non-Hawaiian homeless individuals.**

- In 2019, **22%** of O'ahu's homeless Native Hawaiians report experiencing intimate partner violence compared to 18% of non-Hawaiians.
- Of the 22% of homeless Native Hawaiians who report intimate partner violence, 14% are unsheltered and 8% are sheltered. For the 18% of homeless non-Hawaiians, 11% are unsheltered and 7% are sheltered.<sup>6</sup>

2020.pdf. King, S. (2017). Colonial criminology: A survey of what it means and why it is important. *Sociology Compass*. 11:e12447. Available at <https://doi.org/10.1111/soc4.12447>

<sup>5</sup> Hawai'i Department of Health, Hawai'i Health Data Warehouse, 2013 Behavior Risk Factor Surveillance System (BRFSS) Report. This is the most recent data available. Questions on domestic violence were not included in surveys conducted between 2014 and 2018. Additionally, significance testing was not conducted for this analysis.

<sup>6</sup> Partners in Care, unpublished O'ahu 2019 Point-In-Time data sets.

## Native Hawaiians experience higher rates of intimate partner violence during pregnancy than non-Hawaiians.

- From 2013-2015, **5%** of Native Hawaiians report physical abuse in the 12 months before their pregnancy versus 2% of non-Hawaiians. During pregnancy, the percentages of Native Hawaiians and non-Hawaiians are 4% and 2%, respectively.<sup>7</sup>

## Native Hawaiians are over-represented among users of domestic violence services.

- In 2019, **25%** (460 of 1,857) of contacts from the Domestic Violence Action Center's Helpline are from Native Hawaiians.
- **27%** (69 of 260) of all Helpline contacts requesting advocacy services are Native Hawaiian. Of these, 78%(54 of 69) need housing services.
- **22%** (203 of 937) of domestic violence survivors filing for a Temporary Restraining Order (TRO) are Native Hawaiian.<sup>8</sup>
- Only **20%** of Hawai'i's population is Native Hawaiian, indicating that Native Hawaiians are over-represented in all reported data from the Domestic Violence Action Center's Helpline.

## Native Hawaiian university students experience high rates of dating and domestic violence.

- In 2019, **20.5%** of Native Hawaiian students report experiencing dating and domestic violence since being enrolled in the University of Hawai'i system (UH). Rates ranged from 15.9% among Filipino students to 23.7% for "Other" students.
- **6.0%** of Native Hawaiian students report experiencing nonconsensual sexual contact since being enrolled at UH. Rates ranged from 4.2% among Filipino students to 9.4% for Caucasian students.<sup>9</sup>

<sup>7</sup> Hawai'i Department of Health, Hawai'i Health Data Warehouse, Indicator-Based Information System for Public Health, Pregnancy Risk Assessment Monitoring System (PRAMS), 2013-2015. Available at <http://ibis.hhdw.org/ibisph-view/>

<sup>8</sup> The reported concentration of Native Hawaiian survivors has been steady at this level for several years. Source: Correspondence from Domestic Violence Action Center, <https://domesticviolenceactioncenter.org/>

<sup>9</sup> University of Hawai'i. (2019). Climate Survey on Sexual Harassment and Gender-based Violence. Available at <https://www.hawaii.edu/titleix/documents/10160/>

## Although Native Hawaiians experience higher rates of domestic violence, they are also underrepresented in domestic violence related homicide.

- A 2014 review of Hawai'i domestic violence fatalities, using data from 2000 to 2009, found that among domestic violence fatality cases, **11.1%** of fatality victims and **4.4%** of perpetrators are Native Hawaiian. In comparison, 28.8% of fatality victims are Filipino and 20.0% are White. Additionally, 22.2% of the perpetrators of domestic violence fatality related cases are Filipino, 17.8% are White, 17.8% are "Other" ethnicities and 17.8% are listed as "Multiple ethnicities."<sup>10</sup>

## CONCLUSION

Although the data reported above clearly show that Native Hawaiians experience high rates of domestic violence, we know that this form of violence is underreported and many community members who are harmed and suffering do not report or seek help. Native Hawaiians are likely to experience increased rates due to the stresses created by the COVID-19 pandemic and its severe consequences such as anxiety, depression, isolation and economic disadvantages which are common for potential victims.

It is inappropriate to infer that the higher incidence of intimate partner violence experienced by Native Hawaiians is attributable to intrinsic characteristics and/or cultural values and practices. Similar to other native peoples, the higher rates of violence cannot be divorced from oppressive external conditions such as colonialization, denial of self-determination, racialized systems and structures, and economic stress. Known risk factors for intimate partner violence include poverty, low social capital, weak community sanctions, income inequality, poor health factors, lack of educational opportunities, low socioeconomic status, and weak social policies and laws. These factors disproportionately affect Native Hawaiians. However, known cultural protective factors such as high friendship quality, social support, and community trust and cohesiveness are often reported at higher rates by Native Hawaiians and represent potential pathways to reduce both the overall rate and disproportionality in intimate partner violence among Native Hawaiians.<sup>11 12</sup>

<sup>10</sup> Pobutsky A, Brown M, Nakao L, & Reyes-Salvail F. Results from the Hawaii Domestic Violence Fatality Review, 2000-2009. *Journal of Injury and Violence*. 2014; 6(2): 79-90. This is the most recent publicly available report. It documented 45 incidents with a total of 62 victims in the 10 years studied.

<sup>11</sup> Risk and protective factors from Center for Disease Control and Prevention (2019) *Risk and Protective Factors for Perpetration* available at <https://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/intimatepartnerviolence/riskprotectivefactors.html>

<sup>12</sup> Unpublished data collected as part of the 2018 Native Hawaiian Wellbeing Study among others.

## ADDITIONAL RESOURCES:

### Resources

OHA Issue Brief. (2020) Native Hawaiians Over-Represented in COVID-19 At-Risk Populations. Available at [https://19of32x2yl33s8o4xza0gf14-wpengine.netdna-ssl.com/wp-content/uploads/Issue-Brief.-Covid-19\\_corrected.pdf](https://19of32x2yl33s8o4xza0gf14-wpengine.netdna-ssl.com/wp-content/uploads/Issue-Brief.-Covid-19_corrected.pdf)

If you, or someone you know, would like to know more about resources available to those experiencing intimate partner violence, available sources include the following:

- o Domestic Violence Action Center: Oahu Helpline at 808-531-3771, Toll-free Helpline at 1-800-690-6200, or text 605-956-5680
- o Women Helping Women (Maui): 808-579-9581
- o Child & Family Service Hawaii: 808-841-0822 (Oahu), 808-959-8864 (East Hawaii Island), 808-322-7233 (West Hawaii Island), 808-245-6362 (Kauai YWCA), or 808-567-6888 (Molokai)
- o National Domestic Violence Hotline: 1-800-799-7233

### Last Updated

October 12, 2020 | version 1.0

### Digital Brief

<https://sites.google.com/ksbe.edu/nh-covid19/intimate-partner-violence>

*This brief was produced through a collaboration by the Office of Hawaiian Affairs, Lili'uokalani Trust, and Kamehameha Schools' Strategy & Transformation Group.*