



Know  
Before  
You  
Go

## SOUTH KOREA

# A Guide to Keep You Safe Abroad

Provided by Sexual Assault Support and  
Help for Americans Abroad (SASHAA)

*Updated June 2017*



**SASHAA**  
Sexual Assault Support &  
Help for Americans Abroad

Let's be perfectly clear, the number one way to prevent sexual assault is to **not rape**. While the responsibility of ending sexual gender-based violence is on the perpetrators, this guide will offer general safety tips, country-specific information, and resources to help prevent and prepare travelers for the possibility of sexual assault abroad.

## GENERAL SAFETY TIPS:

1. Use the **buddy system** and travel with friends!
2. Be aware of **social and cultural norms**. For example, looking at someone in the eyes when you speak to them is perfectly normal in the U.S., but in another country that could signify you're interested in the person.
3. **Recognize controlling behavior** when entering a relationship. Most rape survivors recall feeling "uncomfortable" about some of their partner's behaviors such as degrading jokes/language or refusal to accept "no" as an answer, whether in a sexual context or otherwise.<sup>2</sup>
4. **Avoid secluded places** where you could be more vulnerable. Meet new people in public spaces and let a trusted friend know where you'll be beforehand.
5. **Trust your gut**. Many victims have a "bad feeling" right before an assault takes place.



## ALCOHOL AND DRUG AWARENESS:

- Always watch your drink being poured and carry it yourself, even to the bathroom.
- "Drug-facilitated sexual assault drugs," also referred to as club drugs or roofies may turn your drink slightly salty, bright blue, or cloudy. Effects such as distorted judgment, lost sense of time, sight, sound, identity, and consciousness can be felt within 15 minutes and may last up to 4 hours.<sup>3</sup>
- South Korea's legal drinking age is 19. Being 19 is defined, for the purposes of this legislation, as effective from January 1st of the 19th year after one's birth.<sup>4</sup>

## CULTURAL INFORMATION:

**Major Religions:** Christian 31.6% (Protestant 24.0%, Catholic 7.6%), Buddhist 24.2%, other or unknown 0.9%, none 43.3%.<sup>5</sup>

**Legal System:** The Republic of Korea (South Korea or ROK) is a constitutional democracy governed by a president and a unicameral legislature. There are disputes over what "freedom and democracy" means in Korea, but the constitution is considered a 'liberal democracy'.<sup>6</sup>

**Social/Cultural Norms:** Confucianism still serves as the standard of moral and social conduct for many Koreans. Relations between sovereign and subject, father and son, husband and wife, senior and junior, and friend and friend are still very much acknowledged and respected.<sup>7</sup>

**Gender Equality:** A 2015 survey by the World Economic Forum ranked South Korea 115th out of 142 countries in terms of gender equality.<sup>8</sup> As of recent, with the help of President Park Geun-hye, Korea's first female President, the Government and Ministry of Gender Equality and Family is working to address various forms of violence against women, including condemning sexual and domestic violence as "social evils" that threaten public safety.<sup>9</sup>



## Sexual Assault and the Law: South Korean Context

The Korean National Police Agency (KNP) defines sexual assault and rape as any kind of physical, verbal, or psychological violence that forces sexual relations against a victim's will. This includes rape, attempted criminal assault, sexual misconduct, sexual harassment, child assault, and spousal assault. Prosecutors can pursue a prosecution in sexual assault cases regardless of the victim's decision to file charges. The penalty for rape is at least three years in prison; if a weapon is used or more persons commit the rape, punishment ranges from a minimum of five years' imprisonment to life.<sup>10</sup>

### If You Experience Sexual Assault...

Don't blame yourself! **Sexual assault is never the fault of the victim.** You may be unsure of how to proceed, and that's okay. First, consider taking the following actions:

1. If you are in a safe place, **call someone you trust** to be with you. If you are not safe, call someone you trust to come and get you.
2. Do **self-collection of evidence**. Put all of the clothes you were wearing, bed sheets, and so on in a paper bag. If you have any injuries, **take pictures**. If there is semen present, collect what you can in a hotel glass or cup and put it in the paper bag.
3. **Call a SASHAA advocate** internationally toll free, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. They can help you through the ordeal, honoring your decisions. (See Resources)

### Medical Care and Reporting Sexual Assault in South Korea

A potential victim of a crime can get an examination free of charge after reporting the case to police. The Ministry of Gender Equality and Family runs 33 relief centers for victims of sexual, domestic and school violence. There are three types of centers: One-stop Support Centers for victims of sexual and school violence; the Sunflower Children Centers; and Sunflower Women & Children Centers. They are all located inside hospitals (see resources). The support includes medical services, counseling, recording of statements, and collection of evidence as necessary for investigations, legal assistance and referrals to non-governmental organizations. Since 2013, the government began making numerous amendments to outdated laws relating to sex crimes. With a focus on enforcement, Korean National Police (KNP) crime statistics show a sharp increase in reported incidents, specifically, reports of sexual assaults against foreigners have risen 40 percent since 2008.<sup>11</sup>

#### LGBTQ VICTIM CONCERNS



LGBTQ awareness is steadily increasing in South Korea, particularly in Seoul. LGBTQ-oriented clubs, festivals and NGOs are growing with support, but continue to keep a low profile because same-sex relationships are not widely accepted and societal discrimination still exists, especially in rural areas. The ROK National Human Rights Commission Act prohibits discrimination against individuals on the basis of sexual orientation, but there are **no laws** that specify punishments. Consensual same-sex activity is not criminalized, however, same-sex activity between military service members is punishable under the Military's Penal Code.<sup>12,13</sup>

#### POST EXPOSURE PROPHYLAXIS, EMERGENCY CONTRACEPTION, AND ABORTION

##### Q. Are post exposure prophylaxis and emergency contraception available?

**A:** Misoprostol (registered as Cytotec, Also-ben, Misel, Sintec, Gastotec, Cystol, Gastec, Cirotec, Gistol, and Misoplus) are available at pharmacies with a prescription and IPPF-affiliated systems.<sup>14</sup>

##### Q: Is abortion legal in South Korea?

**A:** The Criminal Code strictly prohibits abortion, except if the pregnant woman or her spouse suffers from a mental, physical, or communicable disease, or if the pregnancy results from rape, incest, or jeopardizes the mother's health. In all other circumstances, a pregnant woman inducing her own miscarriage or any person performing an abortion is subject to a fine or one year in prison. If you are pregnant and have the means to travel, it is advisable to seek abortions elsewhere, such as in mainland China or Hong Kong.<sup>14</sup>



## Resources

### SASHAA

#### SASHAA International Crisis Line:

To call our confidential, toll-free, International Crisis Line first dial the country specific AT&T access code for **South Korea (ONSE: 00-369-11, Korea Telecom: 00-729-11, U.S. Military Base Korea Telecom: 550-HOME, Dacom: 00-309-11, U.S. Military Base Dacom: 550-2USA)**. Then, at the prompt, enter our phone number: **866-USWOMEN (866-879-6636)**.

#### Crisis Email:

To reach a SASHAA advocate, you can email us at [crisis@866uswomen.org](mailto:crisis@866uswomen.org). All crisis emails will be responded to within 24 hours. However, if you need to get in touch with us immediately, please call the international toll-free crisis line.

#### Live Chat:

SASHAA online chat services are available 24/7 at our website <https://sashaa.org>.

### COUNSELING CENTERS

#### Seoul National University Sexual Assault Prevention

Building #73, 1F, 1 Gwanak-ro, Gwanak-gu, 08826  
Tel: 02-880-5073  
Email: [helpyou@snu.ac.kr](mailto:helpyou@snu.ac.kr)

#### International Family Counseling Center

Rm 1003, Bdg 103, Yongsan  
Park Tower, 24, Yongsan 5 Ga, Yongsan Gu, Seoul  
Tel: 02-790-5910 / Email: [engcounsel@naver.com](mailto:engcounsel@naver.com)  
\*Approved provider for US Military Service Members

#### Seoul Sunflower Center, Relief Center

Tel: 02-3672-0365 or 02-3672-1117  
Website: [www.help0365.or.kr](http://www.help0365.or.kr) (numerous locations)

### US EMBASSIES/CONSULATES

#### U.S. Embassy Seoul

188 Sejong-daero, Jongno-gu, Seoul, 110-710  
Tel: +(82) (2) 397-4114 (within Korea, dial 02-397-4114)  
Emergency After-Hours: +(82) (0) (2) 397-4114

### EMERGENCY HOTLINES

#### Foreign Women's Emergency Call

Tel: 1577-1366, sexual assault ext. 117  
Website: <http://www.safe182.go.kr>

#### The Korea Sexual Violence Relief Center

Tel: 02-338-5801, 5802

#### Women on Web

Website: <https://www.womenonweb.org/>

### HOSPITALS AND CLINICS

#### Seoul National University Hospital

28 Yeongeon-dong, Jongno-gu, Seoul,  
Tel: 82-2-2072-2890 Emergency: Tel. : 82-2-1339  
Email: [international@snuh.org](mailto:international@snuh.org)

#### Hosan Hospital

617-5 Shinsa-dong, Gangnam-gu, Seoul  
Tel: 546-3674

#### Mirae Wha Heenang (Future and Hope) Clinic

532-7 Shinsa-dong, Gangnam-gu, Seoul  
Tel: 3446-0011

#### Donga Hospital

3-1Ga, Dongdaeshin-Dong, Seo-gu, Busan 602-714,  
Tel: 051-240-5300~2, Emergency: 051-240-2320

### COMMUNITY HEALTH CENTERS

#### Planned Parenthood Federation of Korea (PPFK)

Youngdeungpo-gu dangsan-dong, 6ga 121-146  
Tel: +82(2) 467 8201, (2)2634 8211

#### Korean Family Planning & Maternal Child Health Association of DPRK (KFP&MCHA)

Waesong-dong, Central District, Pyongyang City  
Tel: +850 (2) 3217 626, (2) 3217 6926

### POLICE

#### Korean National Police Agency (KNPA)

Dial **182** (police call center) for the address and phone number of an Assistance Center for foreigners in your area.

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