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Master's Thesis of BRENDA LEE XIU HUI

# Foreign women's perception of social safety and fear of gender- based violence in South Korea

– Thesis on social safety and perception of  
safety –

한국의 사회안전에 대한 외국인 여성의 인식과 성에  
기반한 폭력에 대한 두려움

February 2023

Graduate School of Social Science  
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# **Foreign women's perception of social safety and fear of gender-based violence in South Korea**

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## **Abstract**

South Korea is known among both locals and foreigners to be a safe country, with little violent crimes and street crimes. However, in recent years, there is an increasing number of news reports and incidents of gender-based violence in South Korea. Similarly, foreign women have been sharing their experiences and perceptions of gender-based violence on social media. In this research, we examine how social constructivism perpetrated through gender norms, criminal justice systems and intersectionality affects the way foreign women perceive social safety and fear of gender-based violence in South Korea. We found that their identities as foreigners, social, language and political barriers have affected their perceptions of safety.

**Keyword :** gender-based violence, South Korea, perception of social safety, foreign women

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## Introduction

The study on the fear of crime is a significant indicator for social and political problems in society (Jackson, 2009). Due to the fear of crime, individuals develop a sense of anxiety and cautiousness, where they choose to limit their behaviors and take precautions to prevent potential victimization (Jennings et al., 2007; Brown, 2016). Some of these behaviors will affect traveling decisions, times and interactions with specific destinations that are deemed to have the potential to compromise personal safety. Although the perception of safety is divided into physical and psychological safety, studies have found that both factors are inseparable in the research perception of safety (Suojanen et al, 2019; Coppola and Silvestri, 2021).

According to the Women Peace and Security Index 2019/20 (Georgetown Institute for Women, Peace, and Security, 2019, p.2), South Korea is ranked 33rd among 167 countries with 63.9% of South Korean women reporting positive perceptions of community safety in their respective countries. Contrarily, another report by South Korea's Ministry of Gender Equality and Family (2021) shows that only about 28% of women over 13 years old in South Korea felt safe or relatively safe, around 8.5% lower than their male counterparts. Additionally, the report also showed an increase in the number of gender-based violence against women, such as sexual offenses and dating violence. With a total of 33,700 sex crimes against women reported in 2019, the numbers are about 1.7 times higher than in 2010 (Ministry of Gender Equality and Family, 2021).

While there is an increasing number of foreigners living in South Korea (Kim, 2022), the victimization of foreign women is also a problem that requires attention. However, there is little research and attention on the victimization, vulnerabilities and fear of crime experienced by foreign women living in South Korea (Lee, 2022). Most research focuses on domestic abuse among migrant women (Kim, 2010; Yang, 2011; Choi and Byoun, 2012), but little has been discussed about the victimization of the general foreign female population. As such, the main purpose of this research is to understand how different social and personal factors affect the way gender-based

violence and social safety is perceived by foreign women in South Korea. Ultimately, the study aims to bring about awareness to gender-based violence experienced by foreign women in South Korea and zoom in to the areas of limitations.

## **Background**

### **Fear of crime**

Fear of crime has led to the victimization perspective within a community, where it is affected by the level of occurrence as well as how common conversations about victimization are (Bennett, 1990). Hence, “fear” is a subjective and personal emotion and perception of risks or likelihood of becoming victimized (Zhang et al., 2021). There are a few factors that can lead to an increased fear of crime-- demographic differences, such as age, gender and ethnicity (Brown, 2016), as well as the actual or likeliness of victimization (Liska et al., 1988; Skogan, 1986). However, the correlation between fear and actual victimization have given rise to the risk-fear paradox, whereby individuals are more worried about victimization than the probability of experiencing it (Conklin, 1975).

The fear of crime before and after victimization is also dependent on the crime type and the perception of victims. It was found that burglary, fraud, and sex crime victimization increased the fear of crime, while falling victim to robbery did not lead to any significant impact (Johnson, 2006). Other studies also found that upon recovering from victimization, individuals reported a reduced fear of crime as they gained confidence in coping with a similar situation (Winkel, 1998).

Despite all the possible factors that can affect the fear of crime, studies have consistently found that females reported a higher fear of crime, particularly towards sexual assaults (Pain, 2000; Tjaden and Thoennes, 2006; Valentine, 1992; May et al., 2010; Brown, 2016; Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2010; Vilalta, 2012; Özacilar, 2013; Zhang et al., 2009). Most of their fear attributed to the fear of sexual violence and harassment (Yates and Ceccato, 2020). In a report by the Ministry of Gender Equality and Family in South Korea (2021), only 28% of women aged 13 and above felt safe in South Korea, about 8.5% lower than South Korean men.

## **Social constructivism of crime and gender**

Firstly, it is paramount to understand the definition of crime and social constructivism will lead to moral panic. Through social construction, behaviors are classified as crimes by individuals with power and authority, when they go against the collective norms and values of society or political segments. Similarly, moral panic is deemed as the societal reaction to a perceived threat, when they seem to have a higher occurrence or dissemination rate through mass media, the increase in experts' claims, the hostility and heinousness of the crime and finally, the fear of crime (Cohen 1972).

However, under the concept of social constructivism, not all violent acts are deemed as acts of crime, despite the physical and psychological harm it might cause. In South Korea, there are no independent laws focusing on violence against women, and laws that cover acts such as domestic violence, sexual assault and harassment are gender-neutral (OECD, 2019). Gender neutrality in laws provide extensive and inclusive protection for all genders. Especially for sexual assault and domestic violence cases, it was also found that gendered social norms have led to the suppression of fear levels among men (Sutton and Farrall, 2005). Nonetheless, the presence of gender-neutral laws does not rectify or solve gender-based violence.

## **Gender-based violence**

Based on the United Nations Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner (OHCHR) (2022), the purpose of framing gender-based violence against women as an exclusive human rights violation is an important conceptual shift as it recognizes that women are being exposed to violence deliberately due to an in-born vulnerability. For example, Proctor (2018) suggests that acts such as stalking can also take a gendered approach, whereby both genders can be stalked for different reasons. A study conducted by Lambert et al. (2013) also showed that both genders had different views about the motivation for stalking, and that women viewed stalking to be more harmful and pervasive, while men tended to blame victims for talking as they involved a stranger. In March 2021, South Korea implemented a few legislation changes to tackle stalking,

such as heavier punishments (Yonhap, 2021) and the implementation of the first anti-stalking law (Yonhap, 2021).

Although both men and women can fall victim to similar crime types, females are more likely to report a higher fear of gender-based crimes such as rape, and that the fear is caused by a disproportionate ratio of female to male sexual assault victims (Brown, 2016). As quoted from Warr (1984), the “fear of crime is fear of rape” (p.700) for most women, suggesting gender-based violence as the most feared crime amongst females. Based on the statistics by the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), it was found that males were more likely to be victims of violent crime types in developed nations, with the exception of gendered violence crimes (2020). Sexual crimes such as rape, sexual slavery, forced prostitution, pregnancy, sterilization, and other forms of sexual violence instigated by one’s gender are all considered gender-based crime (OECD, 2022).

However, gender-based violence covers a more extensive list. Under UN Women, gender-based violence (GBV) includes: (1) domestic violence, such as making a person financially dependent by withholding access to money, employment or education opportunities, psychological, emotional and sexual violence; (2) femicide; (3) sexual violence, such as sexual harassment, rape, correct rape with the intention to force victim into heterosexuality and rape culture; (4) human trafficking; (5) female genital mutilation; (6) child marriage; (7) online or digital violence, such as cyberbullying, non-consensual sexting, and doxing (UNWomen, 2022).

To focus on the psychological and emotional aspects of gender-based violence, other forms of common gender-based violence may also include verbal or indirect forms of harassment. According to the Council of Europe (2022), actions that involve unwanted verbal, non-verbal or physical conduct that is sexual in nature and has the purpose of violating another individual’s dignity can also be considered gender-based violence. Hence, acts such as sexual comments regarding one’s physical appearances, asking sexually provocative questions, repeatedly trying to date or pursue an uninterested individual, spreading sexual rumors, stalking someone and showing sexual gestures are

all gender-based violence (Council of Europe, 2022). Thus, the key concept of sexual harassment also connotes any forms of actions that are unwelcome, non-consensual, degrading and humiliating. In this study, we will focus on these psychological and emotional forms of gender-based violence that can be experienced on a daily basis.

As reported by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention based on the US population, over fifty percent of women and a third of men have experienced physical sexual violence during their lifetime (2022). 25% of women and 1 in 26 men experienced rape. Lastly, one in three women and one in nine men were sexually harassed in a public space (CDC, 2022). However, due to the sensitivity of gender-based violence, victimization is often underreported among both genders. While it is necessary to acknowledge male victimization, it is evident through statistics that women are more likely to be gender-based crime victims as compared to their male counterparts (Brown, 2016; Fanslow et al., 2010; Lanier and Maume, 2009), which can possibly lead to their higher fear of such crimes.

Due to the broadness of gender-based violence, this study focuses on experiences by foreign women in South Korea in public spaces, ranging from acts that lead to psychological discomfort to physical harm. Thus, actions that will cause emotional or physical victimization such as stalking, drugging, molestation, sexually explicit comments, and assault cases are further examined.

## **Safety**

Safety is important in the sustenance of communities and poor perceptions of safety can lead to negative effects on an individual's wellbeing (Allik and Kearns, 2017). While the reduction of violent conflict and threats will ensure a lower victimization, it does not equate to the presence of safety. For example, a reduction of street crimes but the lack of streetlights may not promote feelings of safety in an individual. Likewise, the presence of limited policies against gender-based violence or a lax criminal justice system may lead to a poor perception of safety despite the absence of violent gender-based crimes. Studies have also found that individuals feel more wary or reported a lower sense of social safety due to physical decay, such as dirty streets and rowdiness,

rather than actual crime (Wilson and Kelling, 1982; Skogan, 1986; Doran and Lees, 2005). In Zhang et al.'s (2021) study, participants were asked to rate different cities with the scales of “more dangerous than it looks”, “similar” and “safer than it looks”. It was found that unfamiliarity and the physical appearance of a physical setting will invoke different feelings of safety (Zhang et al., 2021). Meanwhile, such feelings of safety may not necessarily reflect actual crime rates. In reflection to the current study, the perceptions of safety and fear of gender-based crime will presumably differ among foreigners from different nationalities, as their experiences of safety and the country of comparison would vary.

Hence, reducing risk factors and a provision of adequate safety are all crucial in increasing the feelings of safety.

## **Factors leading to the fear of gender-based violence**

### **Gender norms**

In relation to social constructivism, the disproportionate fear of crime between men and women is caused by the differences in gender norms, rooted in patriarchal power structures (Meyer and Post, 2006). Within patriarchal societies, where traditional concepts of masculinity and femininity are maintained, it was argued that the fear of crime is feminine (Madriz, 1997; Stanko, 1989). Women's fear of crime is also intensified within the patriarchal power structures, where the notion that personal victimization could lead to sexual assault (Karakus, McGarrell and Basibuyuk, 2010; Ozacilar, 2013; Pryor and Hughes, 2013). Girls are taught from a young age to behave in traditionally feminine ways and ‘unwomanly’ behaviors will lead to blame if she is victimized by a man (MacKinnon, 1982). Such behavior also plays to the ideology of good victims especially for gender-based violence, where the woman was victimized by a stranger as she appeared in the right place at the wrong time (Ricciardelli et al., (2020). The interaction with spaces will be discussed further in the next section.



## **Interaction with spaces**

Public spaces are defined as places that are open and accessible to everyone, while private spheres such as residential areas are inaccessible to the public (Walzer, 1986). In patriarchal societies, women were identified with private spaces due to their traditional social role as a homemaker, while men were attributed to public spaces as breadwinners (Guney, 2013). With the social conceptualization of interaction with spaces, men's access to public spaces may not be purposeful but not met with much rigidity, while women, who are deemed to remain in the private domain as homemakers can be seen as condemnable when interacting in public spheres (Srivastava, 2012, p.25).

Although the segregation between genders have changed along with time, it is suggested that females, especially intersectionalised females continue to suffer from spatial constraints due to the perception of masculinized public space (Siwach, 2020). Hence, public spaces are perceived as the stage for the performances of gender identities, and the interactions will shape ideas about masculinity and femininity (Mehta and Bondi, 1999). In a study conducted by Guney (2013), the perceptions of safety among women were affiliated to the type of men they interact with in the public setting. It was found that the presence of females makes men feel more masculine by contrast and women's fear in public spaces were explained by men to be the byproduct of their physical inferiority to men (Day, 2001). However, as Brownmiller opposes, women's perceived vulnerability in public spaces due to their slightly weaker physical attributes do not make them significantly weaker (1984, p.32). That being said, the stereotypes of weakness and strength may have also led to women's perception of weakness, which eventually heightens the fear of crime. Non-evolutionary explanations such as subjective indicators of physical and psychological vulnerability (e.g., physical strength, confidence in defending oneself from the aggressor), biased measurements of victimization (e.g., women were being represented as weaker even if victimization rates of certain crimes are lower), and power control theory, where females were socialized to be more fearful are reasons that can increase in the fear of crime (Fetchenhauer and Buunk, 2015).

In modern societies such as South Korea, women are not subjected to extensive physical limitations to public spaces. However, with all the discussed reasons, women were found more likely to limit social interactions, reduce alcohol consumption, interactions with men and refrain from outdoor activities at night due to the fear of victimization (McKibben et al., 2011). In a few research studies, it was shown that women are more likely to report feeling unsafe, especially when going out alone, especially at night and in dark areas with the absence of other people (Day, 2010; Gallup, 2012; Young et al., 2022; Cao and Kang, 2019). In the study by Young et al. (2022) on the perception of safety in South Korea, women were found to perceive a higher sense of fear for violence and sex-related crimes in woody areas as compared to open retail settings with sufficient brightness and people, despite having more suspicious patrons. The study also found that a strong sense of territoriality and security towards a familiar location can reduce perceived fear even if it was dark and quiet (Young et al., 2022). Hence, when the study was conducted on the employees of an office building, they reported a higher safety even during the night. This coincides with other studies, where familiar areas such as friendly neighborhoods or areas that promote healthy activities that involve a balance in age and gender will promote a higher sense of security (Cao and Kang, 2019).

Even so, some women are not offered safety in the private sphere through domestic violence. According to statistics provided by South Korean police and Korea Women's hotline, women accounted for 98% of 10,000 domestic reports (Kim, 2020). It is, however, also vital to note unreported cases and that a large number of male domestic victims may not have reported that abuse. According to a study in 2014 by the Korea Women's Hotline, nearly 90% of female respondents reported that they have been abused physically and emotionally by their romantic partners (Lee, 2015). Furthermore, a woman's perception of safety at home can be compromised and increase in her fear for gender-based violence when she is unable to receive help due to cultural narratives deeming domestic abuse as a private matter to be solved within the family unit (Srivastava, 2012). In other words, the presence of policies against gender-based violence may not increase the perception of safety due to social and cultural narratives on what should be criminalized.

## **Fear of crime among foreign females in South Korea**

As previously discussed, the fear of crime differs from individual to individual, based on multiple factors such as demographic differences. In this research, the fear of crime among foreign females will be discussed exclusively. South Korea is an extensively homogeneous society, where foreigners only account for 3.1% of the entire population in 2022 (Kim, 2022). Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, the foreign population was also only at 3.4% (Kim, 2022). The average age of foreigners living in South Korea is about 40 years old (Kim, 2021). Based on multiple research projects, immigrants, especially minorities, often reported higher fear of crime as compared to locals (Eitle and Taylor, 2008; Brown, 2016; Roh and Cho, 2014; Lee and Ulmer, 2000; Wu et al., 2017). One of the factors accounting for differences in immigrants' fear of crime is the extent of acculturation (Yun et al., 2010), in which cultural and psychological integration with the host country will reduce in fear of crime (Grubb and Bouffard, 2014; Yun et al., 2010). Acculturation may include the adaptation of social and cultural norms, as well as the understanding of languages.

## **Consistency in punishments**

The next factor that can affect the perception and fear of crime is the consistency of punishments. Although punishments serve as a deterrence for crimes to occur, the actual efficacy is affected by various factors, such as the certainty of punishment and situational action theory. Thus, it can be hypothesized that a lack of consistency in implementing punishments accordingly will lead to ineffective crime control and at the same time, affect one's perception of safety.

The consistency in punishments can also be understood through the situation action theory (SAT) where the possibility to carry out an action will be more likely if it is seen as an action alternative (Wikstrom, 2010, p.1001). Crime is situational, and requires an assessment to deem it as a right or wrong moral action (Felson, 2019 , p.653). Like the social constructivism of crime, if a crime is not regarded as wrong, individuals may see it as an alternative choice and will choose to commit the action out of habit (Felson, 2019, p.653). Even if an action is seen as an offense, the possibility to get away with a

committed crime due to the lack of habitual response will be seen as a “rational deliberation” (Wikstrom et al., 2012, p.29). Other factors that will affect SAT will also include systematic factors such as crime control in the neighborhood and the family dynamics the individual was raised in.

In relation to gender-based violence in South Korea, the recommended sentence for child sexual assault was raised to a maximum of 22 years and six months in prison. However, it was found that about half of the convicted sex offenders against children, as well as those who were disabled have avoided jail terms (Lee, 2022). Of the 560 child abusers, 67% of them had their sentences suspended, with the purpose to provide self-reflection and rehabilitation (Lee, 2022). However, the risk of recidivism remains high. Although severe punishments are in place, there is a lack of efficacy in implementation, which is evident in the lenient sentences. Based on the inconsistency of punishments and SAT, it can be posited that sex offenders in South Korea may commit offenses through ‘rational deliberation’, where their actions will not be met with heavy sentences.

## **Methodology**

The narratives of foreign women living in South Korea form the basis of this research and the way social safety and fear of gender-based violence are being perceived. Due to the broadness of gender-based violence, the questions asked revolved around experiences in public spaces, such as stalking, explicit comments and other forms of harassments which cause emotional and/or physical harm. While these acts can be perpetrated by close acquaintances, the research mainly focused on incidents involving strangers in day-to-day interactions. The qualitative research was conducted through open-ended questionnaires and zoom interviews in both English and Mandarin. The average length of interviews was about 30 minutes, with a range of 15 to 45 minutes.

## **Participants**

The participants were chosen from snowball sampling, with participants aged between 24 and 36. A total of 22 participants from 12 countries took part in the qualitative study (see Graph 1.0). Through the analysis, 1 participant has been removed due to the lack

of valid responses. The length of their stay in South Korea also ranged between 4 months and 7 years, and held different occupations (students, office workers, housewives, English teachers, and tourists). Each participant was then coded alphabetically to ensure their confidentiality.

## **Results**

The qualitative results were analyzed through the main themes of social constructivism and perceptions of safety. The responses were then coded into the most common themes found. Based on the analysis, a total of 6 themes were found: 1) perceptions of safety in South Korea, 2) Perceptions of criminal justice system and its effects on the feelings of safety, 3) Knowledge of organizations and laws, and its effects on the feelings of safety, 4) Perceptions of safety and intersectionality, 5) Perceptions of safety and the influence of media, and 6) Perception of safety and the influence of word-of-mouth.

### **1. Common Forms of Gender-Based Violence**

Based on the responses of the 21 participants analyzed, the most common gender-based violence mentioned and/or experienced ranged from mildly discomfort interactions to assault.

#### **Stalking**

One of the most common forms of gender-based violence mentioned was stalking, with 6 participants reporting personal or shared experiences of getting stalked. Participants also felt that perpetrators do not perceive their actions to be harmful. One of the participants explained that a manager at work talked about stalking openly at the workplace, suggesting that he did not see his actions as problematic or uncomfortable. A few participants also stated that they felt confused if they were overthinking or getting stalked.

“I was so shocked to hear from one of my managers about how he followed a lady because he liked her perfume. I felt insecure about what he told everyone in the company. It felt like he didn’t know it was wrong. He even used the wording ‘followed her’.” (Participant P)

“There seemed to be a lot of stalking cases. My friend was stalked, and she had to run into a convenience store. When she called (me) for help, I too, noticed the guy...However it is difficult to actually report someone. Are they stalking me or just a coincidence? Even if the police believe you, there is nothing much they can do.” (Participant L)

### **Feeling uncomfortable/getting harassed by drunk people in public**

5 participants also shared about their experiences of getting harassed or feeling uncomfortable due to drunk people in public. Participant L mentioned in her interview that she felt uncomfortable as there were a lot of drunk older men in the subway stations that might have harassed her. She too wondered if their actions were just coincidental, intentional, or cultural differences. Participant N also shared seeing drunk people on the streets made her feel unsafe as it was not a common experience back in her home country. While she did not mention about getting harassed, the sight of drunk people on the streets made her uncomfortable, suggesting that prior experiences do affect the participants’ feelings of safety.

“Hongkong is safer. There are a lot of cases on media and drunk people on the streets in Korea.” When Participant N was asked if she felt that her experiences were different as a foreign woman, she replied, “Not that much. But when I saw some drunk people at the beginning, I felt very anxious....the atmosphere and environment were different. It’s tidier in Hongkong and there’s familiarity.” (Participant N).

### **Foreigner targeted sexualized comments**

Participants also shared that they have received unsolicited comments based on their status as foreigners. Participant D from Canada shared incidents where she got called a ‘Russian Prostitute’ on the streets by older local men as she had blonde hair and was

‘obviously foreign’. Another participant also shared her experience receiving and getting asked provocative and uncomfortable questions.

“I ate with a classmate recently and he asked me a lot of questions that made me feel very uncomfortable. He asked me if I was into one-night stands and it feels like it's because we are overseas, we can act irresponsibly and not face the consequences. In Korea, Koreans tend to be mindful of their reputation if you are working together, but not so if you are here temporarily.... They still have the desire to have sexual relations and will keep prompting such questions.” (Participant M)

### **Assault and drugging cases**

For more serious cases of gender-based violence, a total of 4 drugging cases and 3 assault cases were shared during the interviews. While these incidents can happen anywhere, some of the most common areas where participants experienced victimization were in drinking areas, such as Itaewon and Hongdae. Participants talked about the social pressure of drinking and how many foreigners may be complacent about the presence of drugs in Korea.

“There's the common thinking among foreigners that Korea doesn't have drugs, but date rape drugs are still just as much of a concern. There's also a heavier social pressure to accept drinks and drink more which can lead to being more vulnerable.” (Participant D)

“I have heard so many experiences of girls and even some guy friends who get drugged. I was drugged in Korea as well and that has never happened to me in other countries, I've lived in. And also, many of these cases are not handled properly.” (Participant C)

“Korea is much safer than other countries. Compared to the United States it is much safer, however I realized that there are a lot of negative stigmas with foreign females. A lot of my friends suffer from assault and fear legal actions or blackmail from photos, videos, or text messages being circulated.” (Participant H)

## **2. Perceptions of safety in South Korea**

Based on the qualitative analysis, the perceptions of safety in South Korea and home country varied among the participants which falls into three different categories, with comparisons between South Korea and their home countries. However, most participants do indicate that South Korea is a safe country, while the extent of safety vary.

### **2.1 South Korea feels safer for both general safety and safety towards gender-based violence.**

Of all 21 participants analysed, 4 participants felt that South Korea feels much safer for both general safety and safety when it comes to gender-based violence. Participant F and G from the USA mentioned that it is much safer in South Korea, despite some minor inconveniences and the inevitable need to be vigilant.

“For the most part, I feel very safe In South Korea. Of course, I have had encounters with men that were very annoying and uncomfortable, but I have not been in a situation where I have feared for my safety.” (Participant G).

Participant K from China also responded that when she first entered college in South Korea, she was given a talk about the different ways to prevent victimization. She has not met any victims thus far, and the news reports showed that the locals care a lot about gender-based violence.

### **2.2 South Korea feels safer for general safety but not safety towards gender-based violence.**

The next common response found was that South Korea feels much safer for general safety, but participants still felt unsafe as a woman tackling gender-based violence. Of 21 participants, 7 felt that South Korea feels safer in terms of general safety as compared to their home country, but they still felt unsafe dealing with gender-based violence. Participant T who was an exchange student from Belgium mentioned in her



interview that although overall safety in Korea is great, gender-based violence is poorly handled.

“The overall safety in Korea is great. There are things I can do there (in Korea) which I am very reluctant to do in my home country unless absolutely necessary, such as walking by myself at night and taking the subway late at night.... It (gender-based violence) is poorly handled (in South Korea). It seems like the authorities are not taking it seriously, there’s not enough prevention and crimes are not punished rightfully.”  
(Participant T)

Participant R, a tourist from Chile who had lived in Korea for a year said that she used to think Korea was safer, but she was being groped by a man on the streets and he continued walking away like nothing had happened. While she still feels that South Korea is safer than her home country, she felt that safety for gender-based violence was a different issue as she still felt fearful getting molested on the streets, getting stalked or getting psychologically abused by her partner.

### **2.3 South Korea feels more unsafe for general safety and safety towards gender-based violence.**

Lastly, 7 of 21 participants indicated that South Korea felt more unsafe for both general safety and gender-based violence. The responses mostly came from China, Taiwan, Hongkong, and Singapore, in which participants felt that their home countries’ safety is better. Participant N from China who grew up in Hongkong mentioned that the drunk people and drug problems in Korea made her feel unsafe, and she had experienced groping situations that never happened to her in Hongkong. Similarly, participant C from Singapore also mentioned about drugging issues in Korea, where her male and female friends, as well as herself were drugged.

“(Korea) is comparatively safe, but Hongkong is safer. There are a lot of cases on media, and drunk people on the streets in Korea. It was also shown on the news that there’s drug problems in Korea. I was accidentally touched recently in my private area when a man came too close to me on a rather broad street. I felt confused if it’s on

purpose or accident. I had to consciously avoid such situations here, which never happened in China or Hongkong” (Participant N).

“.....I have heard so many experiences of girls and even some guy friends who got drugged. I was drugged in Korea as well and that has never happened to me in other countries I’ve lived in.” (Participant C).

Based on the analysis, the perceptions of safety in South Korea are mostly affected by the personal experiences and comparisons between the participants’ home countries. Although many participants do have positive views of safety in South Korea, the differences in responses were ultimately affected by their previous experiences at home.

## **2.4 Within Group Comparisons**

Based on the analysis, a pattern was observed among the participant’s nationalities. The two clearest comparisons will be that between the United States, Belgium as well as Canada, and Singapore and Hongkong.

All participants from The United States viewed their home country to be unsafe and that GBV is not taken seriously. However, 3 of 5 participants mentioned the higher transparency and presence of the organizations for victim assistance in home country, suggesting that: 1) participants in the United States feel more unsafe at home due to overall safety, and 2) the knowledge organizations and transparency in conversations about GBV has also affected their perceptions of safety. A similar observation was also made for participant in Belgium and Canada, where participants were also largely aware of organizations and policies in their countries. With extensive knowledge about GBV, it can be suggested that inadequacies are more apparent and widely discussed, as compared to individuals with little knowledge about them.

In comparison to participants from Singapore and Hongkong, all 4 participants from both countries viewed their home country to be safer for both general safety and gender-based violence. Additionally, all participants have responded with clear awareness about organizations, education, talks, and counselling given to GBV victims. From the

responses, it is analyzed that: 1) participants who report a higher perception of safety and awareness of organizations in their home countries will have more negative perceptions of South Korea, if one or both areas fall short.

From the analysis between the two different categories, it can be concluded that perceptions of safety and awareness affect participants in respective ways. Hence, should a country be perceived to be safe but participants lack awareness of organizations, the perception of safety will be moderate. On the other hand, should a country fall short in both perceived safety and a lack of organizations for GBV, the overall perception of safety will be poorer.

### **3. Perceptions of criminal justice system and its effects on the feelings of safety towards gender-based violence**

The perceptions of the criminal justice system and its attitude towards gender-based violence has also affected the participants' feelings of safety. Based on the analysis, the perceptions varied from positive views about South Korea's criminal justice system when handling gender-based violence to negative views, such as negligence or incompetency. Among the 21 participants, 3 of them mentioned that they had no experiences or are unsure about the way gender-based violence cases were handled in Korea. 1 of the participants felt that it is handled adequately with no further explanations and 3 other participants did not answer the question. The remaining 14 participants responded that gender-based violence is poorly handled by the criminal justice system in Korea.

#### **3.1 Not taken seriously**

Of the 14 participants who indicated that the criminal justice system in Korea does not handle gender-based violence appropriately, 4 of them mentioned that cases were not taken seriously. 3 of the participants gave specific examples about stalking, where they felt that reporting the situation to the police will not help with the situation. Participant M

shared that her Korean friend was stalked in high school and despite getting a restraining order, the stalking persisted.

“In Korea, there seems to be a lot of stalking issues. I’ve a Korean friend who was stalked when she was in high school. Although she filed a restraining order, nothing much could be done. She was still followed secretly by the perpetrator. It’s only until the guy moved to another city that it stopped, and she felt very helpless” (Participant M)

### **3.2 Weak punishments**

3 of the 14 participants indicated that the punishments for gender-based violence in South Korea are too weak. Participant K said in her interview that although she thinks Korea is safe and a lot has been done to ensure the safety of its people, victims may feel that the punishments are too weak. Additionally, she also mentioned that such weak punishments may not be effective for deterrence from such crimes. Similarly, Participant C felt that the authorities in Korea are trying, but punishments for gender-based violence are too lenient.

“I think they (South Korea’s criminal justice system) are trying, but it’s very poorly managed. with Nth room and some well-known sexual assault cases, people are getting more and more aware of it. I just don’t like that the punishments seem so lenient, it makes people angry.” (Participant C).

Although 7 of the participants did not make any comments about the criminal justice system and its effects on the perception of safety, responses such as ‘unsure’ or ‘normal’ may also indicate some level of safety, whereby participants did not experience severe gender-based violence that required reporting. On the other hand, it may also indicate a lack of trust or knowledge about the reporting such cases to the authorities.

## **4. Knowledge of organizations and laws, and its effects on the feelings of safety**

The perception of safety was also found to be affected by the knowledge of organizations and laws for gender-based violence. The analysis has shown that

participants are generally more aware of the organizations present in their countries that can help gender-based violence victims. Of 21 participants, 9 participants mentioned the existence of organizations and laws in their home countries. While participants indicated the lack of adequate legal support, the knowledge of organizations provided victims with venues to seek help. Participant C from Singapore talked about the existing education provided in schools about sexual harassment, as well as the training given to police officers and departments dedicated to gender-based violence cases. Participants from the USA also mentioned about organizations such as “Planned Parenthood” that help victims. Participant S from Turkey also shared about an organization called “Purple Roof Women’s Shelter” in her country.

“In the USA, GBV is not handled seriously, but there are organizations like ‘Planned Parenthood’ to assist victims.” (Participant A, USA).

“Adequate job of handling the aftereffects a victim may suffer from, but don’t do a great job with legal action towards perpetrator(s). Healthcare options are available at clinics or hospitals. Law enforcement is a fruitless or lengthy and tiring process. It is often traumatic for the victims.” (Participant D, Canada)

Some participants however, also responded in the study that South Korea’s willingness to broadcast GBV cases also provided a sense of knowledge and increase in perceived safety. Participants mentioned hidden cameras as well as the case of ‘Nth Room’, and how they helped with gaining social awareness.

“I like the way that Korea has made such issues known in society. In restaurants, they inform the ladies restroom about the hidden cameras, so we can feel a little safer. They also share cases and information instead of hiding it and revealing the process. I am not sure if filming the documentary about Nth room is good, but at least we know about it. I hope that it can prevent other girls from making the same mistakes.” (Participant P)

“I think they are trying but it's very poorly managed. But with Nth room and some well-known sexual assault cases, people are getting more and more awareness of it.”  
(Participant C)

Despite so, participants are generally unaware of any information or organizations in South Korea that focuses on gender-based violence. Aside from participant K who said that she was given information when she first entered college, other participants do not have any knowledge about where to seek help. Participant P even mentioned that she did not know of any international support, except for the information provided during the survey session for this research.

“I don't think information about organizations have been shared fully, and I am not really aware of any international support sessions, except for the ones I saw in this survey. Otherwise, I haven't really heard of any of them.” (Participant K)

## **5. Perceptions of safety and intersectionality**

Through the analysis, intersectionality played a huge role in affecting the perceptions of safety among foreigners. Intersectionality was found to be mediated by a few factors, such as identity as foreigners, physical appearance, language barriers and gender.

### **5.1 Identity as foreigners**

Many participants have experienced some differences due to their identity as foreigners. 7 participants mentioned that they have been discriminated or sexualized as foreigners. Participant A from the US, for example, talked about how cultural differences and misconceptions have often led to vulnerable situations.

“...Often time South Korean citizens are given an extremely carefree image of most western countries.... This creates an unsafe environment where a south Korean person thinks that being open-minded means that all foreigners are unbothered and

even sometimes accepting of behaviors that fall into the borders of gender-based violence. There are tons of things that a south Korean citizen will do to a foreigner under the pretense of them either not realizing or knowingly taking advantage of a foreigner's ignorance that they would never think of doing to another south Korean.” (Participant A)

Other participants also mentioned that some locals may assume that foreigners are seen as ‘easier’ or more vulnerable targets of gender-based violence. For example, participant M from China shared her experiences about how her classmate asked a lot of sexually driven questions which made her uncomfortable. She also felt that many locals or foreigners living in South Korea may assume that foreigners are more willing to act irresponsibly without any consequences

Citizenship status was another factor that was raised during the interviews. Participant H explained that she felt less protected as a foreigner as one wrong word against the wrong person and her visa can be jeopardized. She is also worried about fighting back as she can get deported for fighting with natives. Another participant also mentioned a tip she heard from the foreign community where foreigners should avoid any physical confrontations with locals because the police will likely side with the citizens or just let the issue slide.

## **5.2 Physical Appearances**

While all the participants were foreigners, it was found that the extent of differences in physical appearances affected their experiences and perceptions of safety. Participants from East Asia or those who share similar physical characteristics to locals in South Korea reported less instances where their status has affected their physical safety. Participant O, a Singaporean Chinese explained in her interview about the differences in attitude when people assume that she is a local.

“When they think I am Korean, they will have more physical distance and respect. But sometimes, if they know I am a foreigner, some of them see me as someone easier.” (Participant O)

On the other hand, Participant D from Canada, mentioned that she was harassed specially because she is a white foreigner.

“I've had men harass me specifically because I am a foreigner. I've had a woman in the street hit the back of my head for no reason. Old men have harassed me thinking I'm a 'Russian prostitute' simply because I'm a white foreigner.” (Participant D)

### **5.3 Language barriers**

One of the most common factors that increased the fear of crime was because of language barriers. 8 participants mentioned that language barriers have affected their perceptions of safety, and that having more resources in English or other languages will help them feel safer. Participant B from the USA shared her experience with the police while she reported a crime, where the professional translators appointed to her case could not speak in English.

“I have a personal experience with the police, and they were very unhelpful. I requested a translator but the translator they provided couldn't speak English, so I just did all the interactions in Korean. Additionally, the police were slow to investigate my case and it took at very long time for medical results to be returned.” (Participant B)

Participant P also observed that there is a lack of information in other languages, which will deter foreigners from reporting crimes, or they might just have a lack of awareness about where to seek help. She pointed out that the information about organizations or helplines that were on the Korean pages were often not fully translated on the English websites.

## **6. Perceptions of safety and the influence of media**

Through the analysis, participants have shown that the perceptions of safety towards gender-based violence is also largely influenced by media reports in three ways.



## **6.1 Over sensationalizing gender-based violence**

Firstly, the prevalence of news reports on gender-based violence in South Korea have led to participants questioning if their perceptions of safety is affected by the media. A participant questioned if Korea is truly as unsafe for women as it is portrayed through the increasing number of news reports.

“I think China is a little safer than Korea, but I also wonder if Korea is sensationalizing these cases and making them more serious? Because of how often it has been broadcasted, it makes me wonder if it’s actually that common or serious.”  
(Participant M)

## **6.2 News reports increases awareness**

The prevalence of news reports was found to have positive influences on participants’ views of the way South Korea handles gender-based violence, which ultimately increases their feelings of safety. Participant P indicated that Korea has made gender-based violence known to the public through the dissemination of news and documentaries about infamous cases.

“I like the way Korea has made such issues known in society... they share cases and information instead of hiding it. For example, they shared the information about cases like Nth room and revealed the process. I am not sure if it’s good filming the documentary, but at least we know about it.” (Participant P)

## **6.3 Media and assumptions of South Korea**

Three other participants have also mentioned about the way media have influenced the assumptions foreigners have of South Korea, as well as the way locals view foreigners. Participant A and C raised the point about how foreigners are given an overly positive view of South Korea due to media and entertainment.

“I think a lot of foreigners come to Korea under the impression that it is very safe. I think it is, but because of k-pop and k-dramas, I think there’s some romanticism about

it (Korea). That's where it gets a little trickier as compared to the US, where people are outwardly aware of the dangers." (Participant C)

Participant M also addressed an issue where some Korean men are aware of the romanticism due to the popularity of Korean culture and felt that foreigners may be more willing to engage in any sexual relations with them.

"In Korea, Koreans tend to be mindful of their reputation, especially if you are working together. However, they will have the desire to have sexual relations and will keep prompting such questions. They (some Korean men) seemed as though you should be thankful that you're chosen by them because of Korean media and popularity of Korean culture." (Participant M)

Based on the responses, it can be assumed that media has influenced the cultural and social power locals have over foreigners.

## **7. Perception of safety and the influence of word-of-mouth**

Finally, the perception of safety is found to be affected by the word of mouth and discussions among the foreigner community in South Korea. Through the analysis, it was found that 10 of 21 participants were sharing stories that they have heard from their friends or foreign online communities on gender-based violence occurring in South Korea. Many of these information included the way foreign victims should respond to victimization, or possible interactions with the authorities. The most common cases included assault and the nonchalant behaviors of police officers, as well as experiences getting stalked.

Participant P shared an experience where her boss at work shared with his subordinates about stalking a girl on the street.

"I was so shocked hearing from one of the managers (at work) about how he followed a lady because he likes her perfume. I feel insecure because he told everyone

in a company as if it was nothing. He used the wording “followed her”. For me, that is a little too much.” (Participant P)

Other participants also talked about how foreign communities were advised not to instigate or pursue any charges when getting victimized as it may put them in a disadvantageous situation.

“Yes, I’ve heard stories where the woman was highly encouraged not to press charges, or the police helped less if they didn’t speak the language (Korean).” (Participant E)

Throughout the interviews, participants who shared personal stories or stories they heard from others have shown a more negative attitude towards the feelings of safety in Korea. On the other hand, participant K, who did not experience or met any gender-based violence victims had significantly positive feelings of safety. While participant K mentioned the presence of English operated helplines that can help foreigners, other participants have also indicated that the services provided thus far were inadequate.

Hence, although some of the participants have not experienced any form of gender-based violence personally, the stories and word-of-mouth have affected their perceptions of safety. Similarly, these experiences and hear-says will affect the knowledge, as well as the way gender-based violence has been handled in South Korea.

## **Discussion**

The present study investigated how foreign women in South Korea perceive social safety and fear of gender-based violence in South Korea. In comparing their experiences back in their home country and Korea, it was found that participants who reported lower levels of safety in their home country have more positive perceptions of safety in South Korea. On the other hand, participants who reported a positive perception of overall safety in their home country reported lower perceptions of social safety and higher fear of gender-based violence in South Korea. The study has shown

how social constructs and other factors have affected the perceptions of safety among foreign women.

### **Social Constructivism of Gender-based Violence as Crime**

The constructivism of crime is evident through the way participants perceived general safety to be unequal to their safety of gender-based violence. Despite better gun control and better safety towards monetary crimes such as burglary and robbery, it was analyzed that issues such as stalking, drugging, groping and receiving sexualized comments continued to persist, with little help from the police. Additionally, participants also expressed that nonviolent acts such as stalking are often ignored or mishandled, despite the possibility of aggravation into more severe forms of physical harm. The analysis depicts the way crime may be perceived, where physical acts of violence or accountable losses (eg. monetary loss through burglary and robbery) are perceived as criminal acts more often than GBV.

The perception of gender-based violence as crime can thus be affected by traditional views of men and women interaction through the lenses of gender hierarchies (Ma et al., 2021; Seoul Solution, 2015). The idea of dominance and subordination in gender roles have also been found to affect the roles in sexual relations, and that women who fall victim to gender-based violence are being blamed for being 'sexually provocative' or invited the attack (Seoul Solution, 2015; Henderson, 1992; Michele and Brown, 2011).

Additionally, Michele and Brown (2011) also noted that the severity of gender-based violence is often judged based on the severity of physical injuries, even though the primary injuries are psychological. The advice given to victims to avoid resistance to minimize physical injuries by the police may eventually act against the investigation process, when injuries must be obvious to be substantial (Michele and Brow, 2011, p.83). Thus, other forms of gender-based violence that do not lead to physical injuries such as stalking, groping or sexualized comments are hardly criminalized. As such, with the requirement of physical evidence, alongside gender norms and the way gender is perceived in sexual relations in a patriarchal nation, gender-based violence may often not be seen as a crime, regardless of the psychological harm.

## **Social construction of criminalizing gender-based violence and inconsistency in punishments**

In relation to the social construction of crime, the results also reflected the inadequacy of the criminal justice systems when dealing with gender-based violence, such as inconsistency in punishments and poor police responses. In turn, inadequacy in the criminal justice system was found to cause a higher fear of crime among the participants.

Views that gender-based violence has been taken too lightly in Korea was found to be a long-standing issue. For example, anti-stalking laws were only enacted in South Korea in October 2021, after 22 years of activism efforts (Lee, 2022). With the new laws, stalkers can now be sentenced to a maximum of 3 years in prison. Before that, stalking was only considered a minor offense with offenders getting fined less than 100,000won (Lee, 2022). The reason for such light punishments also reflected cultural norms, where stalking was perceived as a form of courtship, and not harm (Lee, 2022).

Even when punishments are severe, the inconsistency in punishments also reduces the deterrence of crimes. As mentioned in an earlier section in the paper, South Korea has increased the severity of punishments for gender-based violence and sex crimes against minors but less than 30% of criminals were charged. Such inconsistency was also found to cause an increased fear of gender-based violence, as reflected in the analysis. Kleiman's quoted an assumption in his book that 'When brute force fails, you're not using enough' (2009, p.1). However, it was found that such a prescription in crime control policy does not work, in which heavier punishments and more prisons do not provide deterrence. Rather, scholars have argued that the certainty of punishment should be emphasized (Pogarskey and Piquero, 2003, p.95). Durlauf and Nagin (2011) also noted long prison terms does not reduce recidivism, and that deterrence-oriented interventions by the police will be more effective in reducing crime rates. Through the deterrence theory, it is posited that the certainty of punishment using focused deterrence interventions, such as hiring more officers will lead to better crime control.

Ultimately, higher deterrence rates will lead to a reduction in lower crime rates and reduce the fear of crime (Balkin, 1979).

### **Gender and the Criminal Justice System**

The inconsistencies or inadequacies in punishments for gender-based violence can also be mitigated by the gender hierarchies, stereotypes, and differences. Although the professionalism and objectivism of authority figures should not be judged based on gender, studies have shown that having a more diverse leadership or authority panel allows issues faced by the intersectionalized or minorities to be recognized. Based on the Ruiz's (2019) conference with the UNDOC, female judges help enhance the legitimacy of courts, signaling a more just and accessible criminal justice system. Additionally, female judges also improve in the impartiality of justice and decision-making processes, by providing a comprehensive, empathetic perspective for individuals (Ruiz, 2019). For example, female judges have made paramount decisions in the reform of criminal justice systems, particularly towards gender-based crimes such as rape, sexual violence and forced marriage (Castillejos-Aragon, 2021). Although there is an increasing number of female judges in the world, the percentage is still lower than their male counter parts. Despite the growing participation of women in the criminal justice system, they often do not rise the ranks in within the legal profession (Ganguli et al., 2020).

As of 2020, 31.4% of judges in South Korea were females, with 32% of them being prosecutors, and 27.8% being lawyers (Statista, 2022). While the percentages have risen by at least 10% in the last decade (Statista, 2022), 32% is still lower percentage, which may ultimately affect the way gender-based crimes were handled by the criminal justice system. The male-dominated judiciary was found to be lenient towards male sex-crime offenders and cause more emotional damage to victims, as iterated previously in the discussion on the leniency of gender-based crime offenders. For example, in 2019, Judge Oh Deok-Sik was heavily criticized for the ruling and delivery of verdict in the courtroom for a revenge porn case involving Goo Ha-ra, a 28-year-old singer who took her life, and her ex-boyfriend (Lee, 2019). The perpetrator was sentenced to an 18-month prison term for assault and other charges but acquitted for the dissemination of

nonconsensual explicit footage of Goo (Lee, 2019). Not only so, Oh viewed the sex clip in question and delivered personal and explicit details of the couple's sexual relations in court during the acquisition of the offender (Lee, 2019). Although revenge pornography and voyeurism laws have since been taken more seriously, the inconsistencies in punishments and insensitivity in dealing with gender-based violence cases continue to persist. Seo, the head of the Korea Cyber Sexual Violence Response Center (KCSVRC) also mentioned that victims of sexual violence often lose their cases as they did not resist with enough force, reiterating the idea of a true victim (Lee, 2019). Additionally, Seo explained that with most senior judges in Korea being men, the lack of gender sensitivity and close to zero probability of being sexually exploited will ultimately create a conservative culture even for female judges during the rulings of gender crimes (Lee, 2019). As such, the ruling of gender-based violence as a crime will ultimately be affected by gender roles and norms within the criminal justice system.

### **Social constructivism of crime through the effects of media**

Based on the analysis, the perception of crime and fear of gender-based violence is also affected by the effects of media, where participants are positively or negatively impacted. Research has found that media representations of crime often substitute direct experiences through the substitution hypothesis (Chiricos et al., 1997), and has a stronger effect when the media representations have a similar demographic as the view (Callanan, 2012; Callanan and Rosenberger, 2015). Hence, increasing media reports on gender-based violence in South Korea can affect the perceptions audiences have about social safety and their fear of victimization, regardless of actual victimization statistics.

Additionally, participants have also raised the issue of 'romanticism' and 'misconceptions' of over security in South Korea among foreigners, leading to complacency or increased vulnerability. In recent years, the perception of safety and global reputation of a country can also be constructed through media and soft power (Mirshahi, 2021). Soft power, achieved through the influence of contemporary culture, can be projected through global media platforms. In recent years, South Korea's media

has had an extensive influence over its country's global image, through successful TV series, music, Netflix events, movies, and other forms of media (Merican, 2021). While media content portraying violence continues to exist in South Korea, majority of its content, such as kpop and dramas have portrayed a favorable image of the country. In a survey conducted by Korean Foundation for International Cultural Exchange (KOFICE) (2020), more than half of its global participants had positive changes in their perception of Korea, with more than 80% of those in India and Vietnam having improved perceptions of the country. Other National surveys and reports have found that the global population have a better distinction between South Korea and North Korea through exposure to media content (Mirshahi, 2021). Additionally, the exportation South Korean cultural content has also led to generalized stereotypes of the two Koreas, with a distinct dichotomy between the "good" South, and "bad" North, where South Korea is perceived as 'virtuous', 'good' and 'wealthy', while North Korea was deemed 'malnourished', 'impoverished' and 'bad' (Foster-Carter, 2018; Son, 2018, p. 671). Evidently, the increasing popularity of South Korean cultural content is proven to be a critical and effective way of constructing the image of the country positively, and arguably affecting the perceptions of safety. While it remains true that South Korea is fairly safer than many other countries, stereotypes and generalizations can also provide a distorted or overly positive image as compared to the actual level of safety.

### **Foreign Identities and Citizenship differences**

From the analysis, it was found that participants do feel a difference in protection and attitudes for their victimization. Some expressed inadequacy in the crime reporting process, as well as receiving preconceived perceptions of being more open-minded as a foreigner. Such experiences have impacted the fear of GBV and perceptions of social safety.

Hence, alongside women's heightened fear in crime, the intersection of being a foreign minority and a female can increase in the fear of crime. In a study conducted by Yates and Ceccato (2020), it was found that women who were foreigners of a country reported the highest fear of crime. Their perceptions were attributed to the fact that they lived by



themselves, were victims and were older than the rest of the population. Additionally, in a review conducted by Roh and Cho (2014), it was found that although the proportion of actual crime rates committed and experienced by foreigners were lower than perceived fear of crime, female foreigners continue to fear crime more than males.

Citizenship status may also affect foreigner's perception and fear of crime in general. As mentioned in one of the interviews, foreigners are concerned about their visa status and the fear of deportation, even if they are being victimized. Fear caused by citizenship status has been supported by research, where the differences in immigration status often affects the benefits under prevailing laws, with the naturalization process yielding positive benefits (Bloemraad, 2018). For example, obtaining citizenship will provide access to more employment opportunities, the right to vote and other forms of social support which can reduce the risk of victimization (Aptekar, 2016; Policastro and Daigle, 2019).

### **Perception of foreign women**

Most importantly, the results from the analysis show that the perceptions of foreign women among the locals have led to an increase in vulnerabilities for victimization, which ultimately increased the fear of gender-based violence. Participant A, as mentioned in research, described how foreign women were stereotyped as 'open-minded', which has the connotations of over sexualization. The results thus coincide with how the fear of gender-based violence is a subjective experience affected by demographic and differences, such as ethnicity, personal experiences and political-social attributes (Pain, 2001; Ceccato, 2017; Pain and Smith, 2008; Alexander and Pain, 2012).

While much research has been conducted on the sexualization of Asian women in Western nations, it can also be argued that sexual exoticism exists in South Korea with foreign women. Sexual exoticism focuses on the production of asymmetrical power relations and serves to identify the process of othering in sexual desires and fantasy (Schaper et al., 2018). Korea, as one of the few ethnically homogeneous nations in the world, has undergone transformations into a multiracial society. In 2006, President Roh

declared Korea as a multicultural state and eventually implemented the Multicultural Family Support Act to integrate migrants into Korean society (Han, 2007). However, foreigners, who only stand 4.3% of Korea's population, are seen as a minority. As such, representations of racial minorities as the 'exotic other' is common and instrumental in perpetration of racism and ethnocentrism historically, despite its focus in the West (Cha et al, 2016). Therefore, minorities in South Korea, such as foreigners are often perceived exotically, which can affect their day-to-day interactions through sexualized exoticism.

### **Conclusion and Future Research**

While this study has investigated the perceptions of social safety and fear of gender-based violence in South Korea, it is nonetheless limited to a subjective view of foreign women. Future research can investigate the comparison between South Korean women and foreign women, to understand the differences in perspectives and experiences. Additionally, a larger number of participants consisting of a wider range of nationalities, age groups and occupations can be considered in the future.

In conclusion, this research focuses on the perceptions of social safety and fear of gender-based crimes of foreign women living in South Korea. It was found that while most participants perceived South Korea to provide high levels of general social safety, many expressed a fear of gender-based crimes due to multiple factors which interacted with Korean cultural values, their foreign identities and gender. Perpetrators of gender-based violence are often deemed to be under punished due to the constructivism of crime and the difficulties in criminalization without physical injuries or loss. Additionally, despite the presence of organizations such as Danuri and Korea Women's Association United (KWAU) which provide support for foreign gender-based violence victims, participants were mostly unaware of these organizations. As such, one of the quick interventions will be to provide better education and awareness of support groups and organizations to foreigners. However, the improvement of gender-based violence and social safety will ultimately be a long grueling process which requires social-political interventions.

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## Appendix

Country of Origin	How do you think gender-based violence is being handled in your home country? Do you know of any organizations, perceptions, or ways where law enforcers handle such cases?	What do you think of the overall safety in South Korea, based on personal and shared experiences with other foreigners?	What are your opinions on the way gender-based violence is being handled in South Korea?	As a foreigner, do you think that your personal safety differs from that of a local in South Korea? How so?	Were there any instances where you felt that your status as a <u>foreign woman</u> in South Korea has affected your safety?	Were those experiences you mentioned different from those you have experienced back home?	What are some forms of improvement you wish to see in the policies and support for gender-based violence of foreign women in South Korea?
The United States of America  English Teacher, aged 25, 2.5 years in Korea  A	To my knowledge GBV is not being handled as seriously as it should be. There are many cases where both men and women go to law enforcement expecting protection and understanding but are met with ridicule and disinterest. There are some organizations like Planned Parenthood that assist victims of GBV and arm them with resources to get help.	A lot of foreigners that come to Korea have misconceptions about the country and its people. Nowhere in the world is a utopia and one always must be on their guard, especially in a foreign country where people are usually the most vulnerable. There are people that will take advantage of foreigners who have lowered their guard. It's despicable, but it happens.	Especially for foreigners, GBV is handled almost dismissively by law enforcement. Within my friend group alone, there are countless stories of GBV and the police's utter lack of response or them dragging their feet long enough for the perpetrator to get away.	Given the language and cultural barriers that exist, people are given a fogged glass view of foreign cultures. This occurs on both sides. Oftentimes, foreigners are given an overly positive view of South Korea and South Korean citizens are given an extremely carefree image of most western countries. This incorrect representation of both countries causes a disconnect in South Koreans' and foreigners' perceptions of acceptable	Much like I stated in my previous answer, there are often when the language barrier between two people can be so great that miscommunications happen. For example, even when both parties speak English or Korean, there have been cases where the definition of the phrase open-minded changes from mentally flexible to okay with everything no matter how despicable it is. This genuine miscommunication or blatant disregard for another person's	Because a decent percentage of the issues in South Korea happen around either a language barrier or a difference in culture, back in my country there is no such hurdle to get over. Most cases of GBV happen with the blatant and obvious disregard for another person's safety by one party. Oftentimes, in my home country these instances of GBV are almost purposeful in nature.	I would look forward to seeing improved education and punishments for crimes involving GBV, especially for foreigners. The perception that crimes perpetrated against foreigners are too much trouble to process in comparison to that person's projected time spent in Korea is something that I've seen happen far too often.

				<p>behavior and the reality of how a citizen from either country might behave. This creates an unsafe environment where a south Korean person thinks that being open-minded means that all foreigners are unbothered and even sometimes accepting of behaviors that fall into the borders of GBV. There're tons of things that a south Korean citizen will do to a foreigner under the pretense of them either not realizing or knowingly taking advantage of a foreigner's ignorance that they would never think of doing to another south Korean.</p>	<p>safety affects my view of South Korea as a foreign woman.</p>		
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<p>USA</p> <p>Student, aged 28, 2 years in Korea</p> <p>B</p>	<p>There are many nonprofit and community organizations in the US that support victims of gender-based violence. I am especially aware of organizations that support domestic violence survivors, people who have experienced sexual harassment at work, and students. I think perceptions of law enforcement are very mixed in the US (not specific to gender-based violence related issues), so I think some people would feel comfortable going to law enforcement whereas others would not.</p>	<p>In some ways, Korea is very safe compared to my home country (I'm not worried about burglary or theft). However, I think that Korea can be very unsafe for women, especially those who go to bars or clubs. I have heard of many incidents of people being drugged by strangers or people they know while out at clubs.</p>	<p>I don't know about overall, but I have a personal experience with the police, and they were very unhelpful. I requested a translator but the translator they provided couldn't speak English, so I just did all the interactions in Korean. Additionally, the police were slow to look into my case and it took a very long time for medical results to be returned.</p>	<p>Not sure, but I think my ability to navigate the system after an incident is quite different because of language challenges and discrimination from Korean people (police, healthcare workers, etc)</p>	<p>No</p>	<p>no</p>	<p>Better communication of resources, better translators available through police and hospital</p>
<p>Singapore</p> <p>Student, aged 26, 2 years in Korea</p> <p>C</p>	<p>I think it can be improved, but there are more and more education and talked given in schools for sexual harassment. I know that police officers are now being trained and there is also a department that focuses on handling such cases</p>	<p>I think a lot of foreigners come to Korea under the impression that it is very safe. I think it is, but because of kpop and kdramas, I think there's some romanticism about it, and that's where it gets a little trickier as compared to the US where</p>	<p>I think they are trying but it's very poorly managed. But with Nth room and some well-known sexual assault cases, people are getting more and more aware of it. I just don't like that the punishments seem so lenient, it makes people angry.</p>	<p>I think because of language barriers, a lot of police shun from such cases. It is also a well-known tip among foreigners who have lived here for a long time to avoid physical confrontation with locals, even if they instigated it. Because it's very likely that the police</p>	<p>Yes. I think that once they know you are a foreigner, they think you are easier. Guys will ask you about how you view sex, if you have had sex with a Korean man. They use language exchange as an excuse. It just feels like they are doing these things because it's easier for</p>	<p>Yes. It's different. But I don't really go out that often back at home. However, even when I get approached on the streets in Singapore, the men will accept the decline and leave you alone. However, I feel like the guys here will follow you and keep trying.</p>	<p>Definitely more and better help in translation. I do know that there are some places that can help with translation, but I think many people don't know about that. I think it's good for all foreigners, men and women to maybe have some handbook or information provided for them when they receive their visas. I think that will</p>

		people are outwardly aware of the dangers. I have heard so many experiences of girls and even some guy friends who get drugged. I was drugged in Korea as well and that has never happened to me in other countries, I've lived in. And, many of these cases are not handled properly. The police will spend such a long time that evidence like CCTV footages is no longer good for use.		will side with the local or just let it slide.	them to get away with it, or because they think you are open minded.	Once I was followed for about 10 minutes from a street into the subway. I find that very upsetting.	create a better sense of safety and protection. I think no matter how safe the country is, feeling alone and confused can be troubling and scary. Korea is very safe most of the time but being here without any information makes us feel very lost.
Canada  Student, aged 27, 3 years in Korea  D	I think we do an okay job of handling the after-effects a victim may suffer from but don't do a great job with legal action towards the perpetrator(s). I don't know specific organizations available, but I do know a lot is covered by our health care and options are available at clinics or hospitals. Whereas law	I think if you are careful and more aware of what to look for, it's not *terrible*. I usually feel safe enough to walk the streets at night whereas in my home country I never do since they aren't as busy or well-lit. I	I have heard of women in abusive relationships make it very clear to police what is happening the physical violence & abuse continues often ending in death because not enough action has happened to keep	There are Korean men who target foreigners specifically. I also think foreigners are often at a disadvantage because they may not have family or friends in Korea to turn to for help. You also must consider that as a	I've had men harass me specifically because I am a foreigner. I've had a woman in the street hit the back of my head for no reason. Old men have harassed me thinking I'm a 'Russian prostitute' simply because I'm a white	Yes. I don't get approached as often by strangers in my home country. Usually in my home country if you keep to yourself, people will leave you alone. You just have to be concerned of people on drugs,	I think the biggest ones would be to have more support for women who suffer from stalkers or abuse from within their relationships.

	<p>enforcement, in general towards gender-based violence, is either a fruitless or lengthy and tiring process that often times doesn't feel worth it to pursue unless it's a 'more serious' offense. Even then many victims who do come forward often go through more traumatic processes.</p>	<p>can go biking along the river at night with no issues or fear that a person on drugs will attack me. There's no fear of guns.</p> <p>But in situations where you may be drinking and socializing, it's easier for your safety to be at risk. There's the common thinking among foreigners that Korea doesn't have drugs, but date rape drugs are still just as much of a concern. There's also a heavier social pressure to accept drinks and drink more which can lead to being more vulnerable.</p> <p>There's also a much higher concern for stalking, in my opinion and experience. Many men will just</p>	<p>them safe. Stalking is also not taken seriously enough and usually ends in more gender-based violence. Recently, there was a woman working in the subway who ended up killed by her stalker.</p> <p>So, while I may feel safe in some regards, like a general safety of Korea, I think gender-based violence itself is very high and not handled well.</p>	<p>foreigner, unless your Korean is very good, you can't easily communicate with law enforcement and going through the process is likely more difficult.</p>	<p>foreigner. So yes.</p>	<p>drunk people, or anyone when walking at night.</p> <p>I also don't stand out as an 'obvious foreigner' in my country, whereas in Korea I absolutely do.</p>	
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		follow you outright, even during daylight. In Korea the biggest concern is someone following me and not leaving me alone.					
Belgium  Student and officer working, aged 31, 5 years in Korea  E	I think Belgium has better laws that will protect woman. E.g. consent law	Overall, South Korea feels a lot safer. You can leave your personal stuff unguarded, and it will not be taken by other people. However, in South Korea, men are more inclined to follow you around (dare I say stalking) as they don't perceive this as something illegal or even that it can make a person feel uncomfortable.	Korea does not have enough laws to protect woman. For example, if you invite a person over into your house and there is intercourse without consent it is not considered rape in Korea. This means any repair man can abuse this law.	Yes, I've heard stories where the woman was highly encouraged not to press charges or the police helped less if they didn't speak the language (Korean) or not well enough. However, there has been instances where being a foreigner helps to get out of situation as they don't want to deal with someone that does not speak their language.	I have so far not encountered this situation		I wish the law would help foreigners and locals equally no matter the language or nationality.
USA  Teacher, aged 28, 8 months in Korea  F	It's being handled poorly. Victims of sexual assault are often ignored or written off and are rarely able to get any justice for the crimes against them.	I think it's safer than my home country, but people should still be vigilant and proceed with caution in most social situations.	I think it could be handled much better. Often, victims of sexual violence or discrimination are unable to receive any kind of	Yes. I assume that anything that happens to me will always be perceived as my fault and I will never be believed if I were to	Yes.	Somewhat but not too different.	

			justice for what happened to them.	report anything. I think as a foreigner, I need to be twice as vigilant to protect my own physical and mental health.			
United States  Teacher, aged 23, 8 months in Korea  G	In my home country, gender-based violence is discussed more publicly. Because of this transparency, we are more aware of the violence and discrimination women face. As a result, I feel as though there are more resources in my home country for women who have been victimized by such violence. For example, there are many private organizations, community-based non-profit organizations, and university resources women can turn to where I'm from. But that being said, I think gender-based violence is not handled well whatsoever by government (i.e. law enforcement) agencies.	For the most part, I feel very safe in South Korea. Of course, I have had encounters with men that were very annoying and uncomfortable, but I have not been in a situation where I have feared for my safety.	Honestly, since I have not been a victim of gender-based violence here, I am not educated on the resources available. However, I am aware of the extreme patriarchal society in South Korea that does not always respect women nor women's experiences. Because of this, I would assume gender-based violence is not taken seriously when the victim is a woman, and the perpetrator is a man.	Yes. Since I am a foreigner, I draw more attention to myself - especially from men. In some situations, I believe my being a foreigner makes me more of an "easy target" for gender-based violence. Like I said, I haven't had any unsafe experiences here, but it is something that makes me more wary when I'm out alone at night or at a bar.	No.	Yes and no. In my home country men are more aggressive and purposefully ignorant. For example, if a man is making me feel uncomfortable here in South Korea, they are usually (not always) able to read the situation and leave me alone. At home, when a man senses I'm uncomfortable, they think it's more of a "game".	Again, I'm not super educated about existing (if any) resources! I would love to see more non-profit organizations or an anonymous hotline that offers support and assistance.

<p>United States of America</p> <p>Student, aged 26, 1 year in Korea</p> <p>H</p>	<p>I think that there is a lot of room for gender related assaults to be correctly addressed. Sexual Assault is not really seen as a real thing in American courts and are often dismissed regardless of valid evidence.</p>	<p>Korea is much safer than other countries. Compared to the United States it is much safer, however I realized that there are a lot of negative stigmas with foreign females. A lot of my friends suffer from assault and fear legal actions or blackmail from photos, videos, or text messages being circulated.</p>	<p>I think that South Korea doesn't care whatsoever. I had a friend who was SA and went through the horrors of getting a rape kit at the hospital where the nurses and doctors didn't believe her. When she filed the complaint, it was taken wrongly, and the police told her since she can't prove that she was sleeping when the SA took place it, it shows that this was consensual cause she is walking into the motel with the boy.</p>	<p>Absolutely. I am more scared of calling the police. One wrong word against the wrong person and my visa can be jeopardize. I am also worried about fighting back should that situation happen, as we can get deported for fighting with natives.</p>	<p>There are so many incidences. There was a time when I was out with my friends and a foreigner friend of mine suddenly disappeared, when I was able to find her, she was outside and a guy was trying to take her away somewhere. Thankfully, the owner of the establishment was my friend and helped me to stop the guy from taking my friend. I was so shocked I was not able to say anything.</p>	<p>My experiences back in the United States were far worse as I had bartenders give me roofied drinks. This incident happens way too often in the United States. In addition to learning personal defense, and buying weapons (taser) to protect myself especially against stalkers.</p>	<p>I hope that the police will hire more policeman and policewomen who are able to converse in a wide variety of languages. I do think that the use of a secured police translator is necessary to make sure words are correctly placed down.</p>
<p>China</p> <p>Student, 28, 5 years in Korea</p> <p>I</p>	<p>I will report it to the police in China</p>	<p>I think Korea is safer than China, as I can walk home without feeling too threatened or afraid</p>	<p>So-so. I think it can be improved, but I feel that GBV problems are sadly not treated the same way in many parts of the world.</p>	<p>Yes. When it is a foreigner, they seem to care less or brush off the issue.</p>	<p>Yes there are times where I feel that I am not as protected as a foreigner. Even though I can speak Korean very well, I am still a foreigner.</p>	<p>I'm not too sure.</p>	

China Teacher, aged 38, 12 years in Korea J	I am not too sure.	<p>I think it is worse than when I was back at home. Maybe it is the drinking culture in South Korea, or maybe because I am not with my family. But I feel that as a young person, there are times when I am expected to drink at restaurants, pubs and clubs when I don't really want to. Fights break out a lot at these places because of drunk people. Back at home, I feel that I have more choices to do other things with my friends.</p>	<p>I think it is not handled properly and should be taken more seriously. There are more news reports, and better policies. But it feels like very bad things must happen, like having victims who are killed by their stalkers for issues to be taken seriously.</p>	<p>I don't think there's a difference. Maybe because I am East Asian and with the mask, I look similar. I can also speak good Korean since I live there for a long time. But I am not sure if it will be different for other foreigners.</p>	<p>I don't think so.</p>	<p>They need to have better education in school.</p>	
China Officer worker, aged 31, 5 years in Korea K	<p>In China, if both parties are married, they think it is a private issue. But if the victim isn't a married woman, there will be more concerns. However, in general, China police do not focus on the problem, and they feel that such issues will be forgotten eventually.</p>	<p>It is very safe in Korea. When I first entered college here, they gave a talk on the different ways to prevent victimization. I haven't met any victims before and through the news, they</p>	<p>Korea is very safe, and they have done a lot to make sure of that. But maybe to the victim, they feel that the punishments are not strong enough cannot control perpetration</p>	<p>I have not met with anyone who were victims of GBV, but in terms of theft, the police in SK treat the cases very seriously.</p>	<p>There are helplines that are English operated, which allows foreigners to call in to seek help.</p>	<p>In China, there needs to be a lot of discussions before action will be taken. Same as Korea, and we don't know if the actions are taken despite policy implementation</p>	<p>I hope there's more language assistance. Because even with the hotline, a lot of foreigners face difficulties if they want to report the crimes on the spot.</p>

		seem to care a lot about gender-based violence.					
Taiwan  Student, aged 24, 1 year in Korea  L	In recent years, harassments and lawsuits are on the rise. But it is very difficult to have a successful lawsuit because it's difficult to get proof. There is no effective way in police handling such issues. There is an increase in stalking and discussions, but not much huge events.	There seem to be a lot of stalking cases. My friend was stalked, and she had to run into the convenience store. When she called for help, I too, noticed the guy. In the subway stations, there are a lot of drunk older men. We are not sure if some of their actions are intentional, like that if they're just taking the same route or it's just a cultural difference	They seem to have a lack of experience. However, if it receives attention, the policies, and the way they treat it is effective. However, it is difficult to actual report someone. Are they stalking me or just a coincidence ? Even if the police believe you, there's nothing much they can do.	I am not sure about the process. But I don't think it's easy to seek help as a foreigner. Even we call the police, we might have difficulties expressing ourselves. As foreign students, we live here maybe for a short period of time and we're not sure what are the ways that can help	I don't think there's much difference		I think there needs to be more support. I feel that the police or organizations are not very kind to foreigners. I feel that they need to be more friendly and kind to victims
Hongkong  Student, aged 26, 7 months in Korea  N	societies that can protect students, seek for help, counselling. Take them seriously	is comparatively safe, but Hongkong is safer. There are a lot of cases on media, and drunk people on the streets in Korea. It was also shown on the news that there's drug problems in	Normal, not too sure.	Could be different because we are still the minorities. If I meet some dangerous situation, lack of communication and understanding. Cannot find enough help. Language barrier.	Not so much. When I saw some drunk people at the beginning, I felt very anxious. Influenced by social media.	Atmosphere and the environment. Tidy in Hongkong. Familiarity.	support for females and gender equality. Nationality, but get more help for the foreign female.



		<p>Korea. Accidentall y 'touched' you private area, come across to me. Not too narrow. Confused if it's on purpose or accident. Impression to avoid the situation better. Never happened in China or Hong Kong. Don't know about the laws and policies more dare to do actions.</p>					
<p>Singapor e</p> <p>Student, aged 27, 4 months in Korea</p> <p>O</p>	<p>In Singapore I think it's safe, public transport and posters about crime prevention. The police are doing a great job. But in term of organization, related to women. General public, I think we feel that it's safe, people are conservative. Female care about more. But if it's against males, they are more unaware. Pretty good awareness.</p>	<p>Safety in general isn't that bad, but of course coming from Singapore. I can just go out midnight. In Korea, it's less safe, how they view women. Guys will come up to you in Itaewon and Hongdae. When you look at the news, Korea don't really put sexual crimes serious. Sometimes when it happens, I feel worried and scared.</p>	<p>It's not a personal experience, but I heard stories that if you go to the police. If you report to the police, you won't really take it seriously. If someone says something back, solve it within yourself. But it's not a personal experience.</p>	<p>Big picture, foreigner or not. Difficult, communication barriers. Won't take it seriously. Foreigners seen as easier. You are just out to play. Vulnerable position</p>	<p>When they think I'm a Korean, they will have more distance. If they know I am a foreigner, they see me as someone easier.</p>	<p>I know where to reach out and how to protect. Don't share the information . Cannot really find where to reach out to. Which laws are protected and not widely available. You don't really know if you are being protected or not. Can't really know who to reach out to.</p>	<p>love to have organizations who focus on helping foreigners, provide information only in English. Platform that we can seek help and get information. More education</p>

		You don't feel protected.					
Kazakhstan  Office Worker, aged 28, 7 years in Korea  P	Unfortunately, can't really tell, they aren't really aware of the problems. they do not consider GBV as important that the government should spend time to improve on the laws and regulations. A lot of cases on SNS how young girls and ladies asking for help and sharing stories so people are aware that violence is happening and the gov should take actions to help these victims. Because we do not have any laws to protect women from bad experiences. Only way is to go public. We only have one organization that helps to share the stories, focus on GBV. As for as I know, there are some, while women happening, they also struggle with laws. Not official organization personal information that can cause some issues with the police. The founder was sued for revealing the aggressors' names to	I feel that since I came from K, I feel safer than in my own country. In general, more positive experience internal expression about the whole lifestyle in Korea for GBV. Of course, nothing can be perfect, so of course there are some issues I heard about my female friends. But in relation to my own country, it is much safer. I was so shocked hearing from one of my managers at work about how he followed a lady because he likes her perfume. I feel insecure about if he tells everyone in the company.		I like the way Korea has made such issues known in society. In restaurants, they inform the ladies restroom about the hidden cameras, so we can feel a little safer. And also they share cases and information instead of hiding it. For example, they shared the information about cases like Nth room and revealed the process. I am not sure if it's good filming the documentary, but at least we know about it. I hope that people will learn from their mistakes and how their emotions got hurt. Prevent other girls	As a foreigner, I honestly feel myself in a weak situation than other citizens. I think foreigners feel in another country but because most information is only in Korean. Foreigners have the lack of knowledge and lack of information about certain cases. They might not get the help and support when needed. And as a foreigner, maybe because of all these cultures, we take the cases in a more negative way than Koreans. I feel like we are comparing to other countries and to our own countries. Again, the issue is that	it's different in different ways. Basically, in K, we do not have any laws we cannot be protected even if we call the police. For foreign women here it's different, even if we call the police, I feel that they will not take my side because I am foreigner. But in Korea, they really prefer their nation and it's always the foreigners' fault. When you have parties are the bar and someone starts fighting and if it's a foreigner and Korean, but even if it's started by a Korean, it's always the foreigner's fault. I feel	starting from small actions like sharing information in the universities. Universities here have the most foreigners so young ladies coming here to study and staying here after their studies. If having more information at university levels and big companies, SMEs too. So, I think more information will be really helpful to letting all foreigners know that they can feel protected. They can have their rights in case these bad experiences happen so that they can explain and talk to someone. So, they can share the specific understanding like stalking. There should be common sense about what to have and what is not okay. only about Koreans. I don't think

	<p>everyone. But the law considers the whole situation that not official organization as it's too much information. They only consider the issue about the personal information. So many cases. Get into hospital with all the injuries, but the police cannot do anything. hopefully international organizations can help.</p>	<p>He used the wording 'followed her'. For me that is a little too much.</p>			<p>all information is only in Korean, we might not fully understand and understand the cases.</p>	<p>that it's not safe-safe here. If I were to see crimes, I will take immediate action but at the end of the day, I am not sure if I will be protected.</p>	<p>information about organizations have been shared fully on English websites, and lack some important information shared on the original Korean ones. I am also not really aware of any international support sessions, except for the ones I saw in this survey. Otherwise, I haven't really heard of any of them</p>
<p>Singapore</p> <p>Office worker, aged 28, 7 years in Korea</p> <p>Q</p>	<p>More people are becoming aware that this is an issue but it's still very much prevalent in society. Cybercrimes are become a lot more common. Recently, there was a group chat sharing pictures of women and girls, similar to that of "nth room". Acts of voyeurism, sexual assault on a minor, etc. are still happening often and are often met with a slap on the wrist by the law. Especially if the perpetrator claims that they have a "mental issue".</p>	<p>It is generally safe day-to-day, but most local and foreign friends share the same sentiment - that it's generally not safe enough for girls. I would say that Singapore is slightly safer than South Korea. A lot of people have warned me to be careful when going out at night (especially to a club) or prefer accompanying me when I'm going</p>	<p>It's not taken seriously enough. Those who commit such crimes rarely get the consequences they deserve, especially those who have done such things to minors.</p>	<p>It's not completely safe for foreigners, but I think it's less safe for a local woman. As a foreigner, sometimes local men tend to just leave you alone or not approach you.</p>	<p>Not personally, but I have heard that the police don't take sexual harassment reports from foreign women seriously, so nothing much is done.</p>	<p>Yes.</p>	<p>More political and social support for both local and foreign women, education on why victim-blaming is wrong, more education for everyone (students, police force, military personnel, general public etc.) on sexual harassment/assault etc. Personally I feel this sort of education has to start at a young age for anything to change, so that children will be aware from a young age how they can protect themselves and others.</p>

		<p>somewhere /going home late at night. Personally, if I'm going to a club, I'd prefer to go with a local male friend just in case.</p> <p>One incident that I can share is that I went with a group of female friends (both local and foreign) to a club that was well-known to be a "hunting" spot. We went there mostly for the music, but men seem to think you're fair game just because you're there.</p> <p>When people started dancing one of the guys there groped me inappropriately and my Korean friend told him off, but we left shortly after, and we felt it wasn't safe or fun for us anymore.</p>					
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CHILE  Tourist, aged 36, 1 year in Korea  R	I think in this matter is never enough, that I know there is no specific institution to protect and more important to avoid these things happening. When woman files protection for police against their partner they always fail to protect this woman and we ended up seeing on the news another death like is a normal thing. So, in my personal experience they are not doing enough.	I used to think it was safer, but just yesterday a guy grab my boobs and continue walking like nothing knowing that I couldn't do anything cause it was full of people and I got shock. South Korea is still way safer than my country, but when we are talking about gender based is difference, I still feel fear of getting molested on the street, stalked on my way back home or psychological abuse by partner.	I don't have knowledge about this, so can provide an opinion.	Not really, if I got to think all women around the world have been for very similar stuff, like abuse on street, subway, coworkers, family abuse, so many, and I think we all have been in one or more of these situations	Me no, but from other friends yeah, is like we don't have the same rights for being foreigners.	Some, In Korea I have suffer abuse on the street, stalkers and psychological abuse. In my country I have also suffer abuse on the street but abuse from family too, if I had to be specific, father & cousin (Who is now in jail because of this).	First of all, believe what we are saying, help in language and psychological help.
Turkey  Housewife, aged 30, 5 years in Korea  S	As I known, my home country still trying to handle well all gender-based violence I know the organization is called "Purple Roof Women's Shelter" in my home country.	It will be healthy and happy for everyone if they learn to live with and accept foreigners and Women.	I don't know	I think Korean the Police Officers helpful. They listen to you and tries to help.	Sometimes. As a Foreign woman you can easily hear actions that would not treat the women of their own country or words that they could not say to them.	Yes	I think the younger generation is handling it well. I wish there were programs for the elderly that show and educate that foreign women are also human and not harmful.

Belgium	<p>I think victim support is quite ok, there are both governmental and non-governmental organizations that deal with it and once in a while there will be awareness campaigns. There's no taboo in talking about gender-based violence in wider society, for example cases do get reported in the media and there are discussions about it on TV. But I think there's still a long way to go to prevent the violence from happening in the first place and there's not enough effort in that especially from law enforcers. The police will listen to you and cases will be opened, but the punishments are in my opinion too mild and there's still an issue of repeated offenders being given multiple chances to 're-integrate' into society.</p>	<p>The overall safety in Korea is great. There are things I can do there which I am very reluctant to do in my home country unless necessary, such as walking by myself at night and taking the subway/bus late at night. I feel if I ever get mugged or something that I could be helped adequately by the police. What I've mostly heard from other foreigners is that they feel relatively safe in Korea too, often much more than in their home countries.</p>	<p>It's poorly handled, it seems like the authorities are not taking it seriously, there's not enough prevention and crimes are not punished rightfully. I feel like it's part why I still needed to be very careful as a girl (especially when going out) even though my feeling of general safety is good. I was never assured the Korean justice system would have my back in case something gender-based did happen. And it seems harder as a foreigner. The laws can be very unfair, e.g. offenders can be protected by other laws such as defamation. It was/is very frustrating to hear cases of gender-based</p>	<p>I've witnessed that there's a difference between the personal safety of a local and a foreigner. Not necessarily in the extend/scope of the harassment/violence, but in that the offenders think that they can get more easily away in harassing a foreigner than a local. As an Asian foreigner sometimes passing as a local, I do believe I've been bothered less than I would have been as a more 'obvious' foreigner. I have seen it happen to other foreigner friends/acquaintances in Korea.</p>	<p>For crimes to be punished more seriously and no interference by other laws such as defamation. Victim support: mental support and guidance in reporting crimes coming from the government itself</p>
T	Student and office worker, aged 3, 2 years in Korea				

			violence in Korea not being treated fairly.				
Philippines  Sales Manager, aged 29, 5 years in Korea  U	I will report, but it takes forever for the cases to be investigated.	They are biased when it comes to foreigners. They tend to downplay it and not believe the foreigners' statements.	I think they give a lot of resources recently, but that does not mean that the resources are available and professional. We can message police officers now, which I think is an amazing tool. But it should not just end there. I heard that investigation processes are so slow.	Yes. Koreans would protect Koreans better	Yes	Yes	I think not just for foreign women, but local women need to be protected well too. There should be more investigations. So many cases on media seemed so serious because the police ignored the victims.