

Barriers to Services

Facts on Intimate Partner Violence Among Latin@s

While the number of studies examining intimate partner violence (IPV) in Latin@ populations is growing, research on this issue continues to be limited in quality and breadth. We have compiled what we believe are the most current data on this topic and summarized it below.

In light of recent immigration enforcement policies, the apprehension to call the police due to the fear of deportation has become more salient for many Latina survivors.

- Immigrant Latinas may fear deportation while seeking help from social services.⁶
- In a recent study, immigrant Latina survivors reported a decrease in the likelihood of calling the police due to heightened immigration enforcement policies and increased fear of deportation.²⁶
- Latina survivors report that immigration status is often used as a control mechanism to ensure that they do not leave the abusive situation.¹⁹
- Immigration status is a common and powerful control mechanism used by partners of immigrant women to force them to stay in a relationship.⁶
- The strength of this control tool is amplified by the current realities of heightened deportation and immigration enforcement.²⁶
- A survey of over 500 foreign-born Latina women found that 14% of participants reported experiencing problems in accessing IPV services due to immigration issues, some reporting they were denied IPV services for lack of proper identification.³
- Threatening Latina survivors to take away their children if they leave their partners was an especially powerful strategy used by men against undocumented, non-English speaking women.¹⁰

In addition to immigration, studies have found that language and cultural differences act as significant barriers to Latina survivors' ability to access services.

- There is little awareness of IPV services and options among Latina survivors.³²
 - » Women report a lack of knowledge about available resources in the community as a common barrier to services.¹⁷
 - » Less than 3 in 10 Latinas had heard of IPV protective orders. Not many knew about local domestic violence agencies.¹⁶
- Lack of culturally and linguistically appropriate services is also a barrier for many Latina survivors, as it is for women from many other racial/ethnic groups.
 - » A study found that 1 in 3 shelters did not have any Spanish-speaking staff.
 - » Only half of the participating shelters offer child-related services.
 - » Additionally, many of the problems stemming from diverse cultural values were not respected and went unresolved.¹²

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Future studies exploring IPV among Latin@ populations must address two general areas:

Methodology

- Future national studies need to include sufficiently large Latin@ samples that permit teasing apart the relevant differences and commonalities of Latin@ subgroups.
- Many of the scales and methods used currently may not be appropriate for capturing information that accurately reflects the experiences of Latin@ populations. The relevance and appropriateness of current measures and methods should be explored and new ones developed as needed.
- The direct voices of diverse Latin@ populations need to be incorporated into research to explore in greater depth the context in which violence occurs.

Resilience, Current Realities, & Prevention

- In order to recognize the resilience of Latin@s, studies of physical and mental health outcomes of Latin@s should also incorporate a focus on the strength and protective factors of this population.
- In the light of the current immigration enforcement policies that are impacting thousands of Latin@s across the United States, it is critical that future research continue to document the various unintended consequences of such policies on Latina survivors and their children.
- Because IPV is a worldwide public health issue of epidemic proportions, prevention strategies that are developed within culturally specific and relevant frameworks will ultimately be required. This is particularly important in the case of Latin@ populations, given their increasing presence and prominence throughout the United States.