

# Contextual Factors

## Facts on Intimate Partner Violence Among Latin@s

IPV happens within the context of a family's daily life, which is deeply affected by numerous factors, both personal and systemic, that impact and are impacted by IPV. Some of these have been documented in the literature.

- **Cultural values** must be identified and understood to develop effective IPV interventions<sup>19</sup>. Two values of particular importance in the occurrence and prevention of IPV in Latin@ communities are the importance of family (*familismo*) and strong gender role expectations.
  - » *Familismo* refers to the central place that the family has in most Latin@s' lives. Strong family roles point to the father as the primary breadwinner (although this role is rapidly changing due to economic realities) and to the mother as the person responsible for the well-being and cohesiveness of the family.<sup>22</sup>
  - » *Gender role expectations* change as Latin@ immigrants acculturate to their new environment. However, for many Latinas their role as mothers is still the most important aspect of their lives, a responsibility against which most of their decisions and actions are weighed. A study found that Latina survivors prioritized their children over themselves, protected them, and provided for them as best as they could.<sup>10</sup>
- **Religion** often plays a strong role in Latinas' decisions on how – or if – to address IPV.
  - » Religious beliefs may stop some Latinas from using services because they believe that the “sanctity of marriage” precludes their taking steps that could result in divorce or separation.
  - » Negative and/or uninformed reactions of religious leaders to disclosures of IPV often result in Latina survivors feeling responsible for making their marriage work regardless of the violence they are experiencing.<sup>20</sup>
- **Racial/ethnic conflicts** between Somali and Mexican communities in San Diego were identified as having an impact on IPV in the Latin@ community. This illustrates the role of apparently unrelated societal factors on the occurrence of IPV in Latin@ populations.<sup>19</sup>
- **Economic factors** (such as employment issues related to immigration status) were also identified by Latina survivors as important elements that affect IPV.<sup>19</sup>
- **Immigration** is, for many Latin@s, the most salient element of their lives. As a result, Latina survivors' decisions about IPV are deeply affected by their immigration status and the climate of their communities. As discussed in the Barriers to Services section, this contextual factor is a prime barrier to their ability to access resources.
- **Anti-immigrant environments** created by strict immigration enforcement policies and increased rates of deportation have impacted many Latin@ communities. For example, immigrant Latina women affected by IPV have reported experiencing increased rates of harassment, including reports of being followed by strangers, called derogatory words and discrimination at work.<sup>26</sup>
- In addition, in a focused survey conducted by the National Domestic Violence Hotline, 35% of Latina survivors reported an increased climate of fear due to the immigration enforcement environment.<sup>3</sup>