

Help Seeking

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Low rates of reporting and self-help seeking among Latinas experiencing IPV may create the illusion that IPV services are not needed by this population. However, understanding the specifics of help seeking behavior among Latinas can create a more cohesive picture.

- Latinas are less likely to seek formal services for IPV as compared to survivors from other ethnic/racial groups^[25].
- Both U.S.-born and immigrant Latinas report seeking access to shelters less than women from other ethnic/racial groups^[26].
- However, formal help-seeking has been found to reduce depression in Latina survivors^[27].
- Like many survivors, Latinas prefer to tell family members^[28], female friends, or neighbors about IPV (i.e. utilize informal resources for help)^[29, 30]. This is especially true for undocumented Latinas who were more likely to seek out informal support for IPV as compared to Latinas with resident or citizen status^[31]. However, for both groups, formal help-seeking was more likely when experiencing severe physical abuse.
- Nearly half of Latinas in one study did not report abuse to authorities^[32]. Reasons for underreporting may include fear and lack of confidence in the police^[33], shame, guilt, loyalty and/or fear of partners^[34], fear of deportation^[35], and previous experience with childhood victimization^[30].
- Low-aculturated Latinas (both abused and non-abused) are less likely to seek and use formal social services than their more acculturated counterparts^[6, 25, 29].
- Non-immigrant Latina survivors contact formal services for IPV resources more often than immigrant Latinas^[26].

Casa de Esperanza has chosen to use "@" in place of the masculine "o" when referring to people or things that are either gender neutral or both masculine and feminine in make-up. This decision reflects our commitment to gender inclusion and recognizes the important contributions that both men and women make to our communities.

- Perception of IPV as only being physical abuse also influences help-seeking practice^[36]. Having children is consistently related to increased help seeking for all forms of help^[37], for Latinas.
- Among Latinas receiving shelter for IPV^[38], undocumented Latinas were less likely to know what an order of protection was as compared to Latinas with resident or citizen status (59% vs. 84%). However, undocumented Latinas were more likely than Latinas with resident or citizen status (57% vs. 22%) to believe that their partner would abide by an order of protection if provided.

Commentary: Latina survivors' help-seeking behaviors are closely tied to their level of acculturation and other cultural factors. More recent immigrant Latinas are usually unaware of the laws, options, and possibilities regarding their experience of abuse. Latina survivors who have been in the United States for a longer period of time or were born in this country have had the opportunity to learn about resources and are more likely to use them. However, *where* they seek help varies from other ethnic/racial groups. Latina survivors are more likely to depend on family members and friends, rather than health care workers, clergy, and police^[39].