



Formerly Family Violence Prevention Fund

The Facts on Immigrant Women and Domestic Violence

Like all women, immigrant women are at high risk for domestic violence, but due to their immigration status, they may face a more difficult time escaping abuse. Immigrant women often feel trapped in abusive relationships because of immigration laws, language barriers, social isolation, and lack of financial resources.ⁱ Despite recent federal legislation that has opened new and safe routes to immigration status for some immigrant women who are victims of domestic violence, abuse is still a significant problem for immigrant women, as it is for all women in the United States.

- A recent study in New York City found that 51 percent of intimate partner homicide victims were foreign-born, while 45 percent were born in the United States.ⁱⁱ
- Forty-eight percent of Latinas in one study reported that their partner's violence against them had increased since they immigrated to the United States.ⁱⁱⁱ
- A survey of immigrant Korean women found that 60 percent had been battered by their husbands.^{iv}
- Married immigrant women experience higher levels of physical and sexual abuse than unmarried immigrant women, 59.5 percent compared to 49.8 percent, respectively.^v
- Abusers often use their partners' immigration status as a tool of control.^{vi} In such situations, it is common for a batterer to exert control over his partner's immigration status in order to force her to remain in the relationship.^{vii}
- Immigrant women often suffer higher rates of battering than U.S. citizens because they may come from cultures that accept domestic violence or because they have less access to legal and social services than U.S. citizens. Additionally, immigrant batterers and victims may believe that the penalties and protections of the U.S. legal system do not apply to them.^{viii}
- Battered immigrant women who attempt to flee may not have access to bilingual shelters, financial assistance, or food. It is also unlikely that they will have the assistance of a certified interpreter in court, when reporting complaints to the police or a 911 operator, or even in acquiring information about their rights and the legal system.^{ix}

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- ⁱ Orloff, Leslye and Rachael Little. 1999. "Somewhere to Turn: Making Domestic Violence Services Accessible to Battered Immigrant Women." *A 'How To' Manual for Battered Women's Advocates and Service Providers*. Ayuda Inc.
- ⁱⁱ Femicide in New York City: 1995-2002. New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene, October 2004. <http://www.ci.nyc.ny.us/html/doh/html/public/press04/pr145-1022.html>
- ⁱⁱⁱ Dutton, Mary; Leslye Orloff, and Giselle Aguilar Hass. 2000. "Characteristics of Help-Seeking Behaviors, Resources, and Services Needs of Battered Immigrant Latinas: Legal and Policy Implications." *Georgetown Journal on Poverty Law and Policy*. 7(2).
- ^{iv} Tjaden, Patricia and Nancy Thoennes. 2000. *Extent, Nature and Consequences of Violence Against Women: Findings from the National Violence Against Women Survey*. The National Institute of Justice and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Retrieved January 9, 2004. <http://www.ncjrs.org/pdffiles1/nij/183781.pdf>.
- ^v Dutton, Mary; Leslye Orloff, and Giselle Aguilar Hass. 2000. "Characteristics of Help-Seeking Behaviors, Resources, and Services Needs of Battered Immigrant Latinas: Legal and Policy Implications." *Georgetown Journal on Poverty Law and Policy*. 7(2).
- ^{vi} Dutton, Mary; Leslye Orloff, and Giselle Aguilar Hass. 2000. "Characteristics of Help-Seeking Behaviors, Resources, and Services Needs of Battered Immigrant Latinas: Legal and Policy Implications." *Georgetown Journal on Poverty Law and Policy*. 7(2).
- ^{vii} Orloff, Leslye and Janice V. Kaguyutan. 2002. "Offering a Helping Hand: Legal Protections for Battered Immigrant Women: A History of Legislative Responses." *Journal of Gender, Social Policy, and the Law*. 10(1): 95-183.
- ^{viii} Orloff et al., 1995. "With No Place to Turn: Improving Advocacy for Battered Immigrant Women." *Family Law Quarterly*. 29(2):313.
- ^{ix} Orloff et al., 1995. "With No Place to Turn: Improving Advocacy for Battered Immigrant Women." *Family Law Quarterly*. 29(2):313.

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