



## IMMIGRANT POPULATIONS

Immigrant individuals may feel trapped in an abusive relationship due to cultural expectations, language barriers, immigration laws, social isolation, and lack of financial resources (Futures Without Violence, n.d.). Some cultures expect that family duty comes before any concerns of personal safety and may condone corporal punishment within an intimate relationship. For some immigrant individuals, leaving a relationship is considered a personal failure and a betrayal of one's cultural heritage and they risk being ostracized within their community (Office of Women's Health, 2015). Both citizens and non-citizens who use violence against their partners frequently manipulate them by false or exaggerated threats to have the partner deported or separated from their children. Additionally, immigrant individuals may believe that the penalties and protections of the U.S. legal system do not apply to non-citizens (Orloff and Kaguyutan, 2002).

### **Definitions:**

**Immigrant:** any person who is foreign-born, regardless of current legal/citizenship status.

**Refugee:** person outside of their country who is unable or unwilling to return due to persecution or well-founded fear of persecution on account of race, religion, nationality, membership in a particular social group, or political opinion.

**Asylum seeker:** person who says they are a refugee, but whose claim has not yet been definitively evaluated.

### **Prevalence**

- Immigrant women may suffer higher rates of IPV than U.S. women citizens because they have less access to legal and social services than U.S. citizens (Futures Without Violence, n.d.).
- Violence towards immigrant women may increase after they have moved to the United States (Futures Without Violence, n.d.).
- A recent study in New York City found that 51% of homicide victims killed by an intimate partner were foreign-born (Futures Without Violence, n.d.).

### **Effects**

- Higher rates of depression, anxiety, somatization and posttraumatic stress disorder (Stewart, Gagnon, Merry, Dennis, 2011)
- Immigrant women may be less likely to utilize preventative medicine, including vaccinations.
- Reproductive health concerns include delays in receiving prenatal care, higher rates of miscarriage, as well as higher rates of postpartum pain, increased bleeding, and lower likelihood of using birth control after delivery. (Stewart, et.al., 2011).

### **Interventions**

- Family members, especially children, should never be used as interpreters—an interpreter phone service or certified translator should be used. Assessment and intervention should be completed confidentially.
- Providers should consider culturally sensitive and culturally specific resources and service providers when making referrals for immigrant individuals experiencing IPV. Legal immigration service providers should also be considered an important referral option (Dutton, Orloff, Hass, 2000).
- Providers should strive to create adequate time during the visit to complete an evaluation in a compassionate and culturally appropriate manner. (U.S. DHHS, 2012).



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### Resources

#### **Adelante Familia (House of Ruth Maryland)**

<http://www.hruth.org/get-help/adelante-familia/>  
24-hour Hotline: 410-889-RUTH (7884)  
Línea en Español: (410) 889-7884 (Oprima 8)  
Help is available in every language.

#### **African Immigrant and Refugee Foundation (AIRF)**

[www.airfound.org](http://www.airfound.org)  
Phone: 301-593-0241

#### **ASHA for Women (Asian Women's Self Help Association)**

[www.ashaforwomen.org](http://www.ashaforwomen.org)  
Helpline: 1-888-417-2742

#### **CASA Multicultural Center**

[www.wearecasa.org](http://www.wearecasa.org)  
Phone: 301.431.4185

#### **Esperanza Center (Catholic Charities of Baltimore)**

[www.catholiccharities-md.org/immigrants](http://www.catholiccharities-md.org/immigrants)  
Phone: 410-547-5490

#### **Foreign-Born Information and Referral Network, Inc. (FIRN)**

[www.firnonline.org](http://www.firnonline.org)

### References

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- National Latina Network. (n.d.). Learn more, facts and statistics, prevalence and occurrence. Retrieve from: [www.nationallatinanetwork.org/learn-more/facts-and-statistics/prevalence-and-occurrence](http://www.nationallatinanetwork.org/learn-more/facts-and-statistics/prevalence-and-occurrence)
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- Office of Women's Health. (2015). Violence against immigrant and refugee women. Retrieve from [www.womenshealth.gov/violence-against-women/types-of-violence/violence-against-immigrant-refugee-women.html#pubs](http://www.womenshealth.gov/violence-against-women/types-of-violence/violence-against-immigrant-refugee-women.html#pubs)
- Orloff, L. and Kaguyutan, J.V. (2002). Offering a helping hand: Legal protections for battered immigrant women: A history of legislative responses. *Jour of Gender, Social Policy, and the Law*, 10(1), 95-183.
- Stewart, D., Gagnon, A., Merry, L.A., Dennis, C. (2011). Risk factors and health profiles of recent migrant women who experienced violence associated with pregnancy. *Jour of Women's Health*, 21(10), 1100-1106.
- U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. (2012). Guidelines and discussion of the history and physical examination. Retrieve from [www.cdc.gov/immigrantrefugeehealth/pdf/guidelines-history-physical.pdf](http://www.cdc.gov/immigrantrefugeehealth/pdf/guidelines-history-physical.pdf)

#### **Tahirih Justice Center**

[www.tahirih.org](http://www.tahirih.org)

#### **Women's Law Center of Maryland**

[www.wlcmd.org](http://www.wlcmd.org)  
Phone: 410-321-8761  
*Multi-Ethnic Domestic Violence Project (MEDOVI)*  
*If you are foreign-born victim of domestic violence, sexual assault, intimate partner violence, or human trafficking, and need an attorney to help you obtain legal immigration status, please call 410-396-3294 or email [admin@wlcmd.org](mailto:admin@wlcmd.org)*

#### **Office on Women's Health, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services**

Phone: 800-994-9662  
[www.womenshealth.gov/violence-against-women/types-of-violence/violence-against-immigrant-refugee-women.html](http://www.womenshealth.gov/violence-against-women/types-of-violence/violence-against-immigrant-refugee-women.html)

#### **Center for Relationship Abuse Awareness**

[www.stoprelationshipabuse.org/immigrant-women/](http://www.stoprelationshipabuse.org/immigrant-women/)  
*PLEASE NOTE: the Center is an educational and informational resource and not a service provider or hotline.*