



## THE FACTS ON LATINOS AND DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

Hispanics and Latinos face many barriers when trying to get free from domestic violence. It is important to remember, however, that there is great diversity among Latinos. This diversity may account for some of the contradictory research results regarding the prevalence and incidence of domestic violence among Latinos. In fact, some of the research summarized below shows that factors such as acculturation and where a person is born affect their risk of domestic violence. However, more often Latinos are treated as a homogenous group, which complicates the interpretation of the results.

The terms *Hispanic* and *Latino* are often used interchangeably. When reporting the results of a particular study, we use the same term as the researcher.

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### **Incidence and Prevalence of Domestic Violence:**

- According to the 2010 U.S. Census, the Hispanic population grew by 43% and now accounts for 16% of the total population, whereas in 2000 Hispanics accounted for 13%. Hispanics are the largest minority group in the United States.<sup>1</sup> The number of Hispanics is projected to grow to 28.6% by 2060.<sup>2</sup>
- The National Violence Against Women Survey found that 21% of Latinas report experiencing physical assault at some point during their lives, and 7.9% reported having experienced an intimate partner rape.<sup>3</sup>
- Also according to the National Violence Against Women Survey, Hispanic and non-Hispanic women report similar rates of physical assault and stalking.<sup>3</sup>
- Between 0.7% and 20% of Latinas report having been abused during the previous year<sup>4</sup>, with 23.4% reporting experiencing some form of intimate partner violence at some point in their lives.<sup>5</sup>

### **Acculturation and Domestic Violence:**

- Higher acculturation is associated with increased incidents of intimate partner violence.<sup>6</sup>
- US-born Mexican-Americans and Puerto Ricans have been found to have higher rates of intimate partner violence than those that are born outside the United States.<sup>7</sup>
- Evidence supporting a link between certain cultural beliefs associated with some Hispanic cultures and increased rates of domestic violence is mixed. Also, although there is some evidence for protective factors in religiosity and social support, there is also evidence that these variables can be associated with increased risk.<sup>4</sup>

### **Help-Seeking Behaviors:**

- Ethnic minority women engage in less help-seeking behavior, other than police contact, than White women.<sup>5</sup>
- Latina women underutilize formal helping resources because of language barriers, cultural barriers and differences, and fear and distrust.<sup>8</sup>
- Latina women face obstacles to receiving help such as fear of deportation, social isolation, misinformation and lack of knowledge about legal rights, lack of knowledge about law enforcement capabilities and structure, language differences, and limited knowledge of the availability of social services to help.<sup>9</sup>

**Hispanic/Latino Sub-Groups:**

- Associations between ethnic and cultural variables and the risk of domestic violence among Hispanic subgroups are difficult to determine as Hispanics are frequently treated as a homogeneous group.<sup>7</sup>
- Depression and psychological distress are strongly associated with intimate partner violence. Ethnic minority individuals who live in poor neighborhoods may experience multiple risk factors for depression, including unemployment, poverty, frequent changes of residence, and multiple stressful life events.<sup>10</sup>
- Differences in rates of intimate partner violence between Latinos and non-Latinos have a tendency to disappear when factors such as age, urbanicity, alcohol consumption, proclivity to be impulsive, and family history of violence are controlled for in the research design.<sup>4</sup>
- About 6% of Latina women are abused during pregnancy.<sup>11</sup>
- Abused Mexican-American women who report higher levels of spirituality also report higher levels of resilience in coping with intimate partner violence.<sup>12</sup>

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