

Contextual factors

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^[42]. Two values of particular importance in the occurrence and prevention of IPV in Latina communities are the importance of family (*familismo*) and strong gender role expectations.
 - ▶ *Familismo* refers to the central place that the family has in most Latinas' 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^[43, 65].
 - ▶ Gender role expectations change as Latina 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^[44, 76].
- **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^[80, 81].
 - ▶ 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^[45].
 - ▶ Findings indicate that religion is often a source of resilience among Latina survivors of violence^[53], however some research has found that using religion as a negative coping mechanism to escape life's stressors is associated with increased symptoms of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder^[46, 29].
- **Economic factors** (such as employment issues related to immigration status) were also identified by Latina survivors as important elements that affect IPV. In several studies examining the vulnerabilities of socioeconomic status in

Esperanza United 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.

relation to IPV, women who were unhindered by these factors showed improved mental and economic prosperity^[77, 61, 59].

- ▶ Research shows that the high rate of IPV in immigrant populations has more to do with socioeconomic marginalization than with culture. In several analyses, low socioeconomic status was a more common determinant of IPV than race and ethnicity^[67, 62]. Financial concerns and lack of formal schooling among Latinas have shown to be predominant barriers for seeking support and developing sustainable livelihoods^[78].
- ▶ In one study focusing on socioeconomic status of diverse sexual minority women, household income more than \$50,000 was associated with fewer reports of severe IPV compared with those reporting a household income of less than US \$10,000. Results also showed that Black and Latina sexual minority participants reported higher rates of severe IPV than white women^[62].
- ▶ Economic sabotage, such as when an abuser interferes with their partners work outside the home, has also been documented. One study reported abusive strategies such as on the job surveillance, on the job harassment, and work disruption tactics. However, they also found unique strategies experienced by Latinas, such as denying access to a driver's license, lying about childcare arrangements, and sending the partner to their country of origin temporarily^[24].
- **Immigration** is, for many Latins, 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^[29]. As is 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^[47]. Increased climate of fear due to the immigration enforcement environment was identified as a barrier to reporting or help-seeking by 78% of respondents in a national survey conducted by national domestic violence advocacy organizations^[48].
- **Acculturation** has been the focus of multiple studies investigating how the process of adapting to cultural norms in the US might relate to immigrant Latinas experiences of IPV. Studies find that



IPV is less prevalent among those with strong ties to traditional Latino cultural values and orientation^[49]. Similarly, increased orientation towards American non-Latin culture has been associated with poor mental health among Latina survivors^[46].

- **Sociocultural factors that include the intersection of immigration status and levels of acculturation** influence victimization rates and mental health outcomes of Latina women^[5].