



Domestic violence homicide prevention in Latin@ communities

Testimonials from Latin@ survivors
and advocates

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Report highlights

Intimate partner homicide (IPH) is a social issue that disproportionately affects Latinas in the United States. To grow knowledge on the issue and inform culturally specific prevention efforts, Esperanza United conducted listening sessions and key informant interviews in partnership with nine community-based Latin@ organizations throughout the United States, including Puerto Rico. This report provides a snapshot of testimonials from survivors and advocates in support of the shared goal of preventing IPH in Latin@ communities. In the listening sessions, we gathered perspectives from key informants, including survivors, community practitioners, organizational leaders, police, and educators. Survivors identified and discussed risk factors and warning signs for IPH including past violence, homicide threats, and separation. Individual trauma response and structural barriers may prevent Latina survivors from disclosing or seeking support for intimate partner violence (IPV). Our informants identified and discussed barriers to help-seeking including the inaccessibility of the criminal justice system and lack of culturally and linguistically sensitive services. Emerging themes highlight the need for culturally specific IPH prevention and inform recommendations for community outreach, training, and systems-level advocacy.



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Testimonials from Latin@ survivors and advocates

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Esperanza United has chosen to use “@” in place of the masculine “o” when referring to people or groups that are gender neutral or both masculine and feminine. This decision reflects our commitment to gender inclusion and recognizes the important contributions that women, men, and gender-nonconforming people make to our communities.



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Content warning

This report includes descriptions of interpersonal violence, including intimate partner abuse and homicide. Details and circumstances surrounding intimate partner homicides are included.

Background

From 2021-2022, Esperanza United partnered with organizations across the United States to grow culturally specific knowledge on how intimate partner violence (IPV) can lead to intimate partner homicide (IPH). We invited organizations from our national Latin@ network that includes domestic violence (DV), sexual assault (SA), and community-based advocates, programs, and organizations. In total, nine organizations from eight states and Puerto Rico supported the recruitment of local survivors and advocates for virtual listening sessions and key informant interviews. Partnering organizations are displayed in Table 1.

Table 1. Domestic violence homicide prevention initiative: Partnering organizations

Organization	State/Territory	Brief organizational description
Comunidad Estrella	National organization	Culturally specific organization supporting national advocacy in support of the transgender Latin@ community
The Latina Center	California	Culturally specific organization providing leadership development, parenting classes, and family violence services
Nuevo Sendero	Florida	A nonprofit providing culturally specific Latin@ DV and SA programs and services
YWCA of Northeastern Massachusetts	Massachusetts	A social change agency providing culturally responsive DV, SA, and housing services
Violence Intervention Program (VIP)	New York	Culturally specific Latin@ organization providing IPV and family violence programming
Mujeres Unidas y Activas (MUA)	California	Grassroot culturally specific organization providing support groups, parenting classes, and DV and SA peer counseling
Mujeres Latinas Unidas	Minnesota	A culturally specific organization committed to supporting local entrepreneurship and community development
Esperanza United	Minnesota	In addition to national work, local, culturally specific DV and family advocacy including a shelter, hotline, and community outreach
Taller Salud	Puerto Rico	Culturally specific organization providing DV, community health, and sexual health services and programs



We conducted separate listening sessions for each organization with IPV survivors and local community practitioners and advocates. These partnerships reflected our organizational commitment to be inclusive and representative of Indigenous and Transgender Latin@ communities. To reach Latin@ Indigenous community, Esperanza United partnered with Mujeres Unidas y Activas (MUA) a grassroots organization based in California focusing on promoting personal transformation and building community for social and economic justice. To reach the Latin@ transgender community, Esperanza United partnered with Comunidad Estrella, a culturally specific organization with a growing national network of transgender advocates. We conducted key informant interviews with advocates from each partnering organization. A coordinator from each partnering organization assisted with recruitment of participants. Survivors, practitioners, and key informants were invited to participate in listening sessions and/or interviews if they identified as Latin@, were 18 years of age or older, and not in acute crisis.

Once coordinators identified participants, participants completed a consent form and an eligibility intake form. The coordinator selected a time and date for the listening session to take place with the eligible participants. We hosted all listening sessions on Zoom for approximately two hours. Local program coordinators were present for listening sessions and available to connect participants to resources in the community, as needed. We invited a total of 112 survivors and advocates to participate in listening sessions.

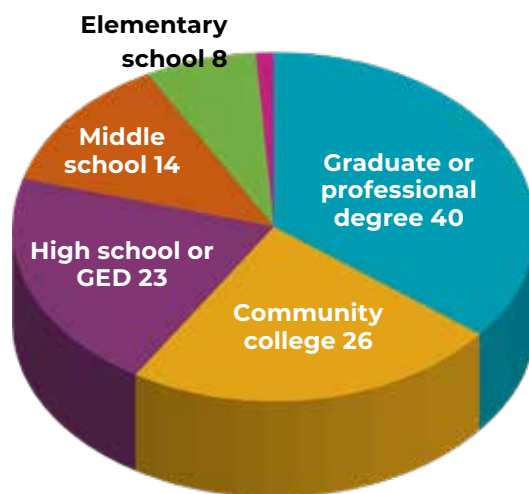


Listening session and participant interviews

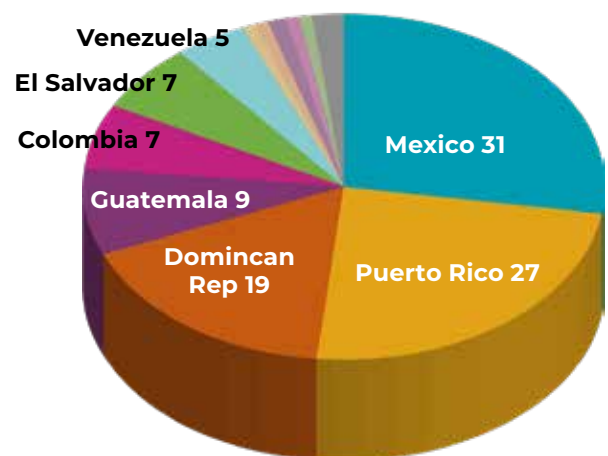
Esperanza United held nine listening sessions with survivors and six with advocates. We also conducted two to three key informant interviews with each partnering organization. Program coordinators recommended key informants, which included program staff, directors, program coordinators, police, family and child advocates, service providers, and a college professor. In total, 43 survivors and 35 advocates attended listening sessions. Thirteen advocates completed a key informant interview, and of these, two also participated in a listening session. Participants ranged in age from 21 to 70 years. The average age of the participants was 42 years old. Most participants that reported gender identity identified as women, with nine identifying as transgender and one identifying as gender non-conforming.

Listening session and key informant interview participants reported having a range of educational levels: graduate or professional degree (40), community college (26), high school or a GED equivalent (23), middle school (14), and elementary school (8). One participant was unsure of their level of education. When asked about country of origin, most participants identified as Mexican or Mexican American (31) followed by Puerto Rican (27), Dominican (19), Guatemalan (9), Colombian (7), Salvadorian (7), Venezuelan (5), Bolivian (1), Cuban (1), Ecuadorian (1), Spanish (1), Nicaraguan, or (1) of multiple origins (2).

EDUCATION LEVEL



COUNTRY OF ORIGIN



Findings

The table below presents the overarching risk and contextual factors for IPH we identified from listening sessions and key informant interviews with Latin@ survivors and advocates.

Table 2. Summary of warning signs and barriers discussed by Latin@ survivors and advocates

Warning signs among partners that use violence	Warning signs among Latin@ victims and survivors	Help-seeking barriers and context
• History of physical violence and homicidal threats • Social power and collaborators in abuse	• Difficulty disclosing threats to safety • Fear and conviction • Separating or leaving abusive partners	• Inaccessible criminal justice system • Inequitable resources • Immigrant identity • Lack of culturally sensitive services • Gender role beliefs and expectations • Family concerns



Testimonials from Latin@ survivors and advocates

History of violence and homicide threats

A history of violence and/or escalation of violence was an important indicator of increased risk of IPH for Latin@ victims. Concern for IPH was also tied to highly coercive and controlling behaviors, including stalking. Key informants also described controlling behaviors as limiting access to money, phones, transportation, or keeping partners in the home. One advocate described abuse as controlling access to basic needs:

“ We’re not trained to check to see if the electricity has been shut off. We’re not trained to check to see if the gas was shut off. And in this case, you know, this perpetrator turned off the gas and he turned off the electricity. So, there was food in the fridge she could not cook, you know, the microwave didn’t work... he locked them in this, like, you know, they were pretty much locked in that house for lack of better words...There was running water, but there was no food that they can cook.”

– Key informant, NY

One survivor discussed control and intimidation through stalking as co-occurring:

“ During this time, I was very dependent on him, I had no money, he would give me only a little bit of money just to survive. But as soon as I saw where this was going, and I was talking to some friends and I was asking if they can help me find a job so I can buy food for the kids, so one of them helped me a lot and [I] started working a little. That’s when he started to become more and more violent when I started working. He was following me to work, he was getting all the money I would get from work.”

– Listening session participant, NY

Survivors and advocates described physical violence including physical beating, hair pulling, attempted drowning, choking, being hit with objects, stabbed, or burned. The following quote from participants illustrate the range of physical injuries Latin@s coping with IPV may endure as violence escalates:

“ Tenemos o hemos tenido sobrevivientes que hemos recibido puñaladas, hemos tenido sobrevivientes que, a

los golpes, son un nivel de golpes en la cabeza, en todo su cuerpo. Hay participantes que la golpiza recibida ha sido tan fuerte que no pueden ni subir a escalera... que las quema que cuando las queman con planchas con cigarrillo le le infligen heridas con, con cristales con botella."

We have or have had survivors who have been stabbed, we have had survivors with injuries to their head, their entire body. There are participants who have been beat so badly that they can't climb stairs...that are burned, burned with irons or cigarettes that have injuries inflicted with a bottle.

– Key informant, PR

Homicide threats and preparation

Homicide threats reported by survivors and advocates included verbal or electronic statements of homicide intent, threatening behaviors with weapons, homicide attempts, or preparation. Alcohol or substance use was mentioned several times in the context of homicidal actions or violence. Frequently reported behavioral threats included showing or pointing a gun at a survivor, holding a knife (or in some instances, a machete) up to a survivor, or verbally threatening or attempting to strangle survivors. Homicidal behaviors or attempts mentioned by a few participants included taking out a life insurance policy on the survivor or attempting to drown the partner. Examples of direct threats are illustrated by the following testimonials from advocates:

“

Es fácil identificar cuando alguien ha sido amenazado, amenazado por su agresor. Usualmente nos relatan qué tipo de tácticas han tenido las personas que ejercen, ejercen abuso en contra de ellas y algunas de las tácticas que usualmente tienen es el amenazarlas y decirles 'No sabes lo que te va a pasar o, o no vas a volver a ver a tus hijos.' Y tal vez son palabras que generalmente no causen ningún tipo de temor en algunas personas. Pero cuando estamos hablando de sobrevivientes que están pasando por violencia doméstica, el simple hecho de que te digan 'no vas a volver a ver a tus hijos,' no están diciendo que te los van a quitar o que se los van, que los van a alejar de ella, sino te están diciendo que te van a matar."

It is easy to identify when someone has been threatened by their perpetrator. Usually, they tell us the type of tactics to exert control over them and one of the tactics

is usually having them threatened and saying, 'you don't know what's going to happen to you or you are never going to see your kids again.' And maybe those words generally wouldn't cause any fear in the average person. But when we are talking about survivors who are dealing with domestic violence, the fact that they are saying 'you are never going to see your kids again,' they are not saying they are going to take them away, instead they are saying that they are going to kill you.

– Key informant, MN

“

Incluso le anunció un día antes que la iba a matar también. Y así lo hizo. La mató al otro día de lo que le habían, de que se lo había anunciado. ¿No? Le dijo, me recuerdo porque yo a la señora la conocí en ese tiempo. Y le dijo, 'avísales a tus hijos que si te encuentran muerta es porque yo te maté.' Con esas palabras me recuerdo bien, porque no lo puedo olvidar este. Y así fue. Al otro día la mató. Entonces ellos anuncian también lo que van a hacer.”

Actually, he announced it the day before that he was going to kill her. And he did it. He killed her after the day he had announced it. I remember because I knew her around that time. And he told her, 'Tell your kids that if they find you dead it's because I killed you.' With those words I remember well because I just can't forget it. And that's how it was. The next day he killed her. So yes, they announce what they are intending to do.

– Listening session participant, NY

Results from the key informant interviews and the listening sessions also demonstrated that homicide threats can extend to family members, including children, parents, and even pets of Latin@ survivors and IPH victims.

“

Decía que iba a matar, a nuestro hijo y que me iba a matar a mí de matar a él.”

He would say that he was going to kill me, our son, and that we were going to kill me and him.

– Listening session participant, FL

“

Han sido a lo largo del tiempo varios casos, amenazas con los familiares. Usualmente estas víctimas no tienen que [sic] la defendían acá. So la amenaza con los familiares

en su país. Me haces esto que me llamas la policía me metes en la cárcel me deportas. ¿Sabe lo que le pasa a tu papá, a tu mamá?”

There are situations where the client doesn't want to make a report...it's because these women are threatened. We have had a lot of cases where there are threats with their family members. Usually, these victims don't have anyone to help them here. So, they threaten them with family members in their own country. You call the police, you put me in jail or deport me, you know what's going to happen to your dad, to your mom?

– Key informant, CA

Social power and status

Several participants discussed social status and power as a factor among partners who use violence that can increase the likelihood of IPH. Social power over others can include social support like family and associates that collaborate in violence:

“

Sí, en mi caso, yo, o, yo pienso que sí, porque se llegó el sobrino de mi ex-esposo con una [sic] arma y me dio mucho miedo, este fue la situación más más difícil que tuve.”

Yes, in my case, I or I think that I went because my ex-husband's nephew came with a weapon and I was very scared, this was the most difficult situation that I had.

– Listening session participant, CA

In a few cases, participants mentioned the power of status from a professional role. Partners who use violence may also have family members or friends in positions of authority.

“

And he had his brother was a lieutenant in the in the in the, you know, law enforcement. So, he also had for, you know, people surveilling the area saying that there was this man that he was worried about that was going to hurt his family. And in that case, every time she looked out the window, she saw a cop car. She was like, oh no, oh no, he knows I'm leaving, I'm getting ready to leave.”

– Key informant, NY

It is also possible for a partner to gain power over the relationship by using violence and coercion with a trusted family member. In one case, a partner used a woman's relationship with her mother to influence and control her behavior. Ultimately, the violent partner killed the victim's mother also:



Hubo una sobreviviente, el agresor se puso en contacto con la mamá de ella, logró hacer que ella saliera del albergue y luego las asesinó a las dos. Estamos hablando de hace muchísimos años, cuando ella logró salir del albergue, asesinó a mamá y a y a la participante.”

There was a survivor, the attacker contacted her mother, he managed to make her leave the shelter and then murdered them both.

– Key informant, PR

Difficulty disclosing threats to safety

Providers, advocates, and survivors shared their knowledge of cases of completed homicides and high-risk cases. There are many reasons a woman may hesitate to share details about experiences of abuse. Among these, survivors and advocates touched on the following: fear, shame, trauma, having limited social support or being withdrawn from friends and family, unhelpful responses from formal support systems, economic or emotional dependence on abusers, and the concern that leaving will escalate the violence. For some survivors, this difficulty in reaching out for help or disclosing may be tied to the trauma of their lived experience and isolation from social supports, like family:



Si de mi parte yo si me sentía que estaba en peligro porque no sabía que decir, no podía hablar, no podía, no podía ni hablar por teléfono ni nada como eso fue así, verdad que no podía ni hablar con mi familia.”

Yes, for my part I did feel that I was in danger because I didn't know what to say, I couldn't talk, I couldn't, I couldn't even talk on the phone or anything like that, it was true that I couldn't even talk to my family.

– Listening session participant, MA

Advocates and providers, and particularly first responders, can benefit from recognizing that a reserved, quiet presentation may be a warning sign for IPH, particularly if individuals at risk appear fearful or despondent, as one key informant noted:



Es más, la persona casi siempre es muy recluida, muy callada, tímida. Le da miedo de que hablar con cualquier persona, a pesar de que esté en un ambiente, en algún ambiente social, casi siempre es tímida, le da miedo de decir cualquier cosa.”

What's more, the person is almost always very reclusive, very quiet, shy. She is afraid that talking to anyone, even

though she is in an environment, in some social environment, she is almost always shy, she is afraid to say anything.

– Key informant, MN

“

Por ejemplo, hemos ido a lugares en que alguien llama, casi siempre, digamos, llaman los niños porque los papás están peleando, o algún niño coge el teléfono y llama al 911. La policía llega ahí llegamos y no hay moretones. Entonces hablamos con el sospechoso y hablamos con la víctima. Y el sospechoso dice ‘No, nada pasó, todo está bien.’ La víctima dice ‘no, está, está, todo está bien,’ pero se le nota de que está con miedo. Se le nota de que no puede hablar libremente, se le nota que está temblando o que está pasando cosas así.”

For example, we have gone to places where someone calls, almost always let's say the children call because the parents are fighting, or a child picks up the phone and calls 911. The police arrive there, we arrive, and there are no bruises. So, we talk to the suspect, and we talk to the victim. And the suspect says, 'no, nothing happened, everything is fine.' The victim says, 'no, everything is fine,' but shows that she is afraid. We notice that she can't speak freely, we notice that she is trembling or that things like that are happening.

– Key informant interview, MN

A hesitancy to disclose and seek formal support may be tied to the reality that seeking help can add to the stress or danger of a person's situation. **Providers noted Latin@ women actively evaluate their lives and may view their relationship as dangerous**, but worry about the unknowns or risks involved with leaving.

“

Las sobrevivientes constantemente están evaluando todo y no van a tomar un paso si sienten que las cosas se van a poner peor. Y las cosas significa si el abusador va a ser algo grave y muchas veces ellas viven bajo amenaza. Y esas amenazas no son en su imaginación, son reales Obviamente hay homicidio, pero pueden hacerle la vida un infierno. Muchas veces la cliente me ha dicho, ‘yo prefiero estar en la casa en la relación con esta persona, porque sé que a ellos es su forma de ser y yo puedo saber su próximo paso cuando él se pone ingenioso y esto. Pero cuando yo he salido de la relación no sé, no sé qué va a pasar.’”

Survivors are constantly evaluating everything, and they won't take a step if they feel things are going to get worse. And this means if the abuser is going to do something serious and many times they live under threat. And those threats are not in their imagination, they are real. If they leave, they can, obviously there's homicide, but they can make their life hell. Many times, the clients have told me 'I prefer to be at home in the relationship with this person, because I know his way of being and I can know his next step when he gets witty and this and that. But when I have left the relationship, I don't know, I don't know what will happen.'

– Listening session participant, NY

Fear and conviction

Participants across key informant interviews and listening sessions emphasized the importance of understanding that Latin@ survivors and homicide victims may have an emotional intelligence that signals their safety is threatened and this form of knowledge should be taken seriously by service providers and first responders as a risk factor for intimate partner homicide. Latin@ individuals experiencing partner violence may share their emotional state to formal and informal supports, even in cases where there is a lack of other details about the history of abuse. For instance, a listening session participant described the importance of believing Latin@ clients who believe their lives are in danger, while emphasizing the importance of validating fear:



I've also had clients that they said to me '(participant's name), he has never touched me, but he's said that he's going to kill me, and I believe him because I know how he is.' So, I understand that someone that doesn't work in the field can be like, oh, you need to give me more, 'what did he say? Does he have a weapon in the house that you are afraid of?' But the clients know the person using violence better than we do. So, when they do say that they are in fear of their lives, I think that we always believe them, even if they're not saying something very specific. We believe that they are in fear."

– Listening session participant, MA

Fear response varies by individual experience with trauma; thus, Latin@ individuals may also simply communicate a strong conviction or belief in a risk to their lives. Participants emphasized in interviews that Latin@s know best when their lives are in danger or at risk of intimate partner homicide:



A lot of the same red flags that comes along. But for me, it's that if you feel that he's going to kill you or she's going to kill you. I believe that I don't necessarily need a lot of signs to tell me. I think he's going to kill me. I completely take that as a face value."

– Key informant, MA



Yo reconozco cuando la persona está en una situación de peligrosidad, eso lo podemos reconocer de muchas formas. Primero, si la persona expresa abiertamente que está en una situación de peligrosidad."

I recognize when a person is in a dangerous situation, we can recognize it many ways. First, if the person expresses openly that they are in a dangerous situation.

– Key informant, PR

Separating or leaving partners who use violence

Survivors and advocates emphasized that leaving a relationship can be one of the most dangerous times for increased risk of IPH for Latin@ victims. A participant from the listening sessions, for example, explained that victims are at risk of homicide when they leave the relationship because the perpetrator has lost control over them:



Hay muchos eventos que pasan en casos de homicidio, de violencia doméstica, homicidio. Hay muchas cosas que pasan antes de que el abusador llegue a matar a la víctima. Y si uno, como nosotros somos entrenado, sabemos esas señales. Uno son como la 'red flags', la bandera roja. Salen rápidamente y te dejan saber. Aquí hay algo. Y cuando eso pasa en mi caso, cuando hablo con mi cliente y están pasando cosas ejemplo como, es, él, cuando las víctimas salen de una relación es cuando aumenta el peligro, es porque el abusador ahí pierde control. Está perdiendo control de la víctima y van a hacer lo que tengan que hacer, especialmente si están en un nivel de obsesión muy fuerte. Van a hacer lo que tengan que hacer para mantener ese control. Y si es llegar a matar a la víctima, eso es lo que van a hacer."

There are many events that happen in cases of homicide, domestic violence, homicide. There are things that happen before an abuser ends up killing the victim. Those of us who are trained know the signals. There are some red flags. They appear quickly and let you know that something is happening. In one of the cases I had, I

spoke with my client and there were certain things that were happening. For example, when a victim ends the relationship is when danger increases, and it's because the abuser has lost control. They are losing control of the victim and they are going to do whatever they need to get it back, especially if they are at a level where they are strongly obsessed. They are going to do whatever it takes to maintain that control. And if it takes killing the victim, that is what they will do.

– Listening session participant, NY

Participants shared similar views regarding the dangerousness of ending a relationship for Latin@ individuals coping with IPV across participants in the key informant interviews and listening sessions:



Pero ella, en un arretrato de él, le dijo que se iba. Le dijo que se iba a ir. Y que se iba a llevar a sus hijos y él, esa noche, mientras ella dormía, la mató.”

But she, in one of his furies, told him that she was going to leave. She told him she was going to leave him and take the children. That night, while she slept, he killed her.

– Key informant interview, MN

Survivors and advocates shared that Latin@ survivors often feel a need to put significant distance between themselves and their abusers. Participants discussed cases where women choose to leave the country or state to escape their ex-partners. One advocate noted the limitations of restraining orders and local resources:



In some of the most extreme cases, they think they know that a restraining order may not be enough. So sometimes they do take off. Can they leave their apartment behind, their belongings and sometimes to go to shelters even out of state? So, we help them go to other places because there is so much fear, they are willing to leave everything behind, everything that they know, because they truly believe that their life is in danger.”

– Listening session participant, MA

This was especially the case for Indigenous Latin@ survivors. Participants in the listening session revealed how fleeing their home country was a particularly dangerous time, but also an essential safety strategy to escape violence and potential homicide:

“

Cuando escuchamos que alguien está pensando, de nosotros, cuando, cuando quieren matarnos o cuando quieren hacer algo peligroso. Por eso es mejor que podemos salir, podemos ir en otro lugar para salvarnos.”

When we hear that someone is thinking about when they want to kill us or when they want to do something dangerous, that is why it's better to leave, to leave to somewhere else to save ourselves.

– Listening session participant, CA

“

Cuando yo decidí dejar a mi abusador, pensé muy bien en que ya mucho daño me ha hecho y dije, pero ¿qué voy a hacer?, ¿a dónde me voy a ir? Entonces tuve la decisión y la valentía de venirme para acá porque ya no quería volver a ver la cara de mi abusador y ya no quería saber nada de lo que ya, ya había pasado. Porque si una vez, dos veces, tres veces donde, ya, pues ya mi vida corría peligro. Donde casi me mata. Y decidí viajar acá, entonces. Es la decisión que yo hice para aislarme de la violencia.”

When I decided, when I decided to leave my abuser, I thought about how much damage he had already caused me, and I said, what am I going to do? Where will I go? Then I made the decision and got the courage to come here because I did not want to see the face of my abuser again and I wanted to forget everything that had happened. Because once, twice, really three times where my life was in danger. Where he almost kills me. So, I decided to come over here. That is the decision I made to isolate myself from the violence.

– Listening session participant, CA



Help-seeking barriers and context

Inaccessible criminal justice system

Survivors and advocates described barriers and systems that made it difficult for Latin@ individuals coping with IPV to seek direct services and make formal reports to the criminal justice system. An overlapping theme was the inaccessibility of the criminal justice system. An advocate from the key informant interviews, for instance, described how interacting with the criminal justice system puts a strain on time and mental resources:



No, no están organizados, te hacen perder el tiempo. Como te dije nuevamente, la persona va y empiezan a llenar un montón de papeles y un papel y un papel. Tienes que entender cuando estas personas están en este estado mental que te han dado. Tienes dolor físicamente, espiritualmente y mentalmente. Estás dolida. Tu cabeza no está para ese momento de llenar toda la acta de nacimiento y traen el seguro social y no, entonces no tengo un seguro social, no tengo un acta de nacimiento aquí el se quedó con eso, ah pero eso se necesita, o sea, te piden una serie de requisitos que son en ese momento. Mira, es como cuando una persona le da un heart attack, hay un window, hay una ventana para que esa persona tu la lleves al hospital y tomen acción rápidamente y no hayan consecuencias negativas. En el caso de una de una mujer que ha sido abusada físicamente, vamos a hablar del peor caso que es cuando son abusados sexualmente y físicamente ok y escapan. Tú crees que esa persona tiene la mente, la cabeza para decir ah, espérate, ¿déjame entrar a la gaveta y llevarme el pasaporte o déjame buscar? No, no tiene cabeza para eso. Entonces muchas veces estas instituciones lo que hacen es que te hacen perder el tiempo.”

They are not organized, they make you lose time. A person goes and they start to fill out a ton of paperwork, papers, and papers. You must understand that the mental state that people are in at this point. They are physically, mentally, and spiritually hurting. They are hurting. Their state of mind is not in that—to be filling out all these papers, to look for their birth certificate, social security card, or maybe they don't have their birth certificate or social security card with them because the perpetrator kept it, but they need it, they ask for all these prerequisites. It's like when someone has a heart

attack, right, there's a certain window of time to take that person to the hospital and act quickly so that there are no negative consequences. In the case of a woman who is being physically abused, let's say, worst case scenario, they are sexually and physically abused and they finally escape. OK. Do you think that this person has the state of mind and bandwidth to say, 'oh wait let me make sure I have my passport?' No, they do not have the mental capacity for that. So many times, these institutions all they do is make people lose time.

– Key informant, FL

Other key informants echoed the point:



In some cases, (services) might be co-located. In some places they're not, so they have to go to different places.”

– Key informant, NY



With the courts also is just a delay. Just the delay. If you're in an urban area, I can't speak for rural areas, what I could tell you that in urban areas, the courts just, you know, this is pre-pandemic, of course, where they're seeing one case after another. There is, just—it's just horrible what families have to go through because remember, they have to go to a court or criminal court about the domestic violence case. Then they have to go to a family court because they can't take the kids, because then they can be sued for taking the kids away... I mean, it's so many steps, it's so overwhelming.”

– Key informant, NY



Otra cosa es un sistema que sea más eficiente, porque muchas veces lo que vemos es que la gente se cansa. Y se cansa porque va, le cancelan la visita y un pleno para otro día. Y eso ocurre tres, cuatro o cinco veces hasta que la gente termina cansándose ya al final. Entonces, pues como dicen, ¿verdad? la justicia tardía no es justicia. ¿Sabe? Tenemos que hacer nuestros sistemas para que sean más ágiles, para responder a las necesidades en el momento que tienen las víctimas.”

Another thing is that the system needs to be more effective because many times what we see is that people get tired. And they get tired because they go, they cancel their visit or put it for another day. This happens three, four, five times until people get tired at the end. Like they

say, late justice isn't justice, right? You know? We need to make our system more agile to respond to the need of victims in the exact moment.

– Listening session participant, PR

Survivors and advocates expressed concern that Latina@ survivors are at risk of feeling revictimized and retraumatized by their criminal justice system experiences:

“

Lo mismo el approach que hacen y penosamente que son solo agentes de la policía los primeros que intervienen con una sobreviviente. De esa intervención depende que la sobreviviente llega a estos servicios o no, o depende la vida, de yo si voy a seguir con caso o no voy a seguir, en nuestra experiencia. De veras, honestamente, las sobrevivientes que llegan al servicio ya han pasado muchas de esa obediencia y tienen que seguir pulsando. Estamos hablando de más de 19 horas. A veces entre un proceso de una querella, entre un proceso de ir a un tribunal, entre esas, revictimización de tantas entrevistas sobre lo mismo. Así que es tedioso.”

It's the approach they take and sadly police are the first to intervene with a survivor. From that first intervention, if the survivor got to police, their life depends on it whether they are going to participate and continue or not in our experience. Honestly, survivors that reach that service have already been through a lot and have to keep waiting. We are talking about more than 19 hours. Sometimes between the process of a report and going to court is revictimizing because of all the multiple interviews. It is tedious.

– Key informant, PR

“

In New York, they created special courts. They had co-location of a judge that could oversee criminal justice with family court, and they had counselors there because sometimes you have to tell that story so many times again, every single time that you go it's almost like a PTSD moment. You have to keep bringing it up, bringing it up. Sometimes they don't want to say it in front of the kids, but they don't have anybody to leave their kids with, so they have to take the kid. It's so traumatic for everyone involved.”

– Key informant, NY

Findings from transgender Latin@ survivors reiterated similar sentiments about the criminal justice system. Participants described negative and revictimizing interactions with criminal justice system personnel including discrimination, misgendering, jokes, slurs, minimizing the abuse, and discounting reports of IPV:

“ Bien, en mi caso, cuando tuve un arresto este oh, también te tratan como hombre y de hecho hasta hacen bromas entre ellos ah sobre tu apariencia, sobre tu género, sobre todo a un policía que hasta dijo que nosotras las trans me dijo 'o ustedes las trans parecen tortugas. Se les mira la cabeza y la cola, pero nunca sabes qué son' y[sic]. So, también, ellos hacen juegos bastantes incómodos para nosotros.”

In my case, when I was arrested, they also treated me like a man and they actually made jokes amongst themselves on your appearance, on your gender. Especially one police officer said. 'You trans are like tortoises. You can see their head and tail, but never what they are.' So yeah, their jokes are uncomfortable for us.

– Transgender listening session participant

“ Todavía hay personas que todavía no entienden el sistema de cómo poder aceptar a las personas diferentes, porque no somos extraños, no somos extraterrestres, no, no tenemos sangre azul que ya muchos quisiéramos, pero tenemos. Nos corre sangre en las venas y somos seres humanos que lo único que queremos es aceptemos, nos no nos quieran porque no queremos.”

There are still people who do not understand the system of how to accept different people, because we are not strangers, we are not extraterrestrials, we don't have blue blood. We have the same blood in our veins, and we are humans and the only thing we want is to be accepted.

– Transgender listening session participant

Inequitable resources

Key informants described Latin@ survivors as underserved due to a general lack of resources and funding for local victim services providers. Key informant interviews underscored that it is difficult for Latin@ survivors and homicide victims to access the appropriate services simply because there are not enough resources to meet the needs of the community.

“

Comentarios finales de que ojalá pudiéramos hacer algo para que no solamente queden una conversación, sino que se abran más recursos para las personas Latinas, porque desafortunadamente no las hay.”

My final comment is that I hope we can do something that goes beyond conversations, but to do something so we can get more resources for Latino people because unfortunately there are none.”

– Key informant, CA

“

Somos menos servidos y los recursos, no son bien dispersarlo [sic]”

We are underserved and the resources are not well disbursed.”

– Key informant, FL

“

Pero lo y lo que mencionaba también me parece que todavía seguimos teniendo brechas, por ejemplo, en los servicios como quedan distribuidas a través de toda la isla [Puerto Rico]. Y sí, hay áreas que uno puede observar que confrontan más dificultad que otras.”

In terms of what I was mentioning, we are still having gaps, for example, the way that services are distributed across the island [Puerto Rico]. And yes, there are areas we see have more difficulty than others.

– Key informant, PR

Listening session and interview participants identified housing as a specifically needing funding. They discussed the availability and quality of housing for survivors, particularly for women with children. A key informant described how a Latina client became homeless after being unable to access services, and another described an unbalanced distribution of funding for domestic violence shelters:

“

Hay gente también que se refugian en las calles. Increíblemente, pero se refugian en las calles. Me ha tocado ir a visitar a mamás mías que viven debajo del puente. Que están debajo de un puente y le dijo ‘Mi hija, ¿pero qué pasó contigo?’ Me dice ‘es que no me ayudará. Es que nadie me pudo ayudar. No me quedó otra más que vivir debajo de un puente, vivir en un carro prestado. No me quedó otra.’ Entonces ahí tenemos un grave problema que las autoridades y los servicios y los

centros de apoyo de ayuda, que no tenemos los recursos suficientes y necesarios.”

There are people who seek refuge on the streets. Incredible, but they find refuge on the streets. I have gone to visit clients who live under a bridge. They are under a bridge, and I ask, “Mija, what is going on with you?” She tells me, ‘No one can help. It’s because no one could help me. I do not have an alternative but to live under this bridge or live in a loaned car. I do not have an alternative’ Therefore, we have a serious problem with the authorities, the services, and support centers, that we don’t have sufficient and necessary resources.”

– Listening session participant, CA

“

El gobierno no quiere invertir dinero, hay fondos para dar, pero no los están utilizando. Los están utilizando de una manera muy amplia. No lo están especificando... Un ejemplo sex trafficking tiene hay muchas instituciones nonprofits que están comprando casas para usarlas halfway para mujeres que vienen, que son sacadas del human trafficking. Pero no lo están haciendo para violencia doméstica.”

The government does not want to invest money, there is funds to give, however they are not being utilized. They are used in a very wide capacity, not specified. One example is sex trafficking, there is various institutions that nonprofits are buying to use as halfway housing for victims exiting human trafficking. This is not happening for domestic violence.

– Key informant, FL

Victim service providers and advocates also saw evidence in the distribution of funds of discrimination against Latin@ families. Specifically, culturally specific Latin@ organizations may struggle to respond to an inequitable need for domestic violence services in Latin@ communities. One provider described their experience of systemic discrimination:

“

El grave problema que estamos enfrentando y la violencia doméstica, a pesar de que se han hecho estos esfuerzos en VOWA [sic] y que vemos que los sistemas aun entre comillas han cambiado, pero públicamente puedo decir que necesitamos hacer un mayor esfuerzo para que estas comunidades tengan acceso y que si es notorio

la discriminación de la repartición de los beneficios de otros anglosajones a nosotros los hispanos. Por eso existe (nombre de organización) para abogar por estos cambios, para que revisemos, conversemos con las autoridades y directores de estas agencias. Cuando una sobreviviente se encuentra en un refugio y llama a nuestra agencia, nosotros vamos a llamar a quienes le dan los fondos a ellos para que sean observados, independientemente a que escribimos unas cartas para que esto pueda cambiar. Si necesitamos seguir trabajando más para estos cambios y que las agencias que reparten estos fondos también lo hagan con criterio justo.”

The serious issues we are dealing with domestic violence, despite the progress of VAWA and small system changes, I can publicly say is that we need more efforts so that communities have access and yes, it is notoriously discriminatory how resources are distributed to other white (victim service providers) as compared to us Hispanics. That is why (this organization) exists, to advocate for change and converse with authorities and directors of other agencies. When a survivor is in need of shelter and calls our agency, we are the ones to provide funds so that they may be taken in, we also write letters so that this may change. We need to keep working towards these changes so that agencies who distribute these funds do so equitably.

– Key informant, FL

Immigrant identity

Listening session and interview participants also identified immigrant identity as a barrier to help-seeking behaviors for Latin@ affected by IPV. Indeed, the immigrant experience complicates help-seeking for Latin@ survivors and homicide victims in a multifaceted manner. A key informant, for instance, described how they recommend Latin@s coping with IPV in high-risk situations call the police, however, immigration status often produces fear of deportation. Multiple interviews from the key informants and the listening sessions echoed similar sentiments, where Latin@ immigrant individuals chose to not report to police due to fear of deportation and xenophobia. Instead, many choose to remain in a high-risk relationship:



Yo no llamé a la policía porque, bueno, mi condición de inmigrante me daba un poquito de temor.”

I did not call the police because of my condition of being an immigrant, I was fearful.

– Listening session participant, FL

“

Pero muchas personas, como lo habían mencionado, tienen temor de ir a la policía porque piensan que van a tener alguna situación con migra, con migración, si no tienen, si son, no tienen documentos legales. Entonces es mucho el temor que temen que tienen las personas por esta situación migratoria y por eso mismo no van allá o se van a las personas.”

Many people, like I mentioned, are scared to report to police because they think they will have an issue with ICE, with immigration if they do not have legal documents. The fear is so great for people with the immigration issues and that is why they do not leave.)

– Listening session participant, CA

Additionally, results from the key informant interviews and the listening sessions demonstrated that the immigrant identity creates barriers for Latin@ individuals. Testimonials reflect lack of knowledge surrounding laws and protections in the United States for IPV in migrant communities:

“

Tengo amistades que son inmigrantes y desconocen, ¿verdad? de las leyes que protegen a las víctimas de violencia doméstica.”

I have friends who are immigrants and they do not know, right? about the laws that protect victims of domestic violence.”

– Listening session participant, FL

“

Entonces lamentablemente ahorita hay mucha gente que está llegando de otros países y migrando Centroamérica más que nada, no conocen sus derechos, no conocen las reglas, no conocen nada y se encierran en en [sic] sus, en sus áreas.”

Unfortunately, there are many people who are coming from other countries and migrating from Central America, mostly, they do not know their rights, they don't know the rules, they don't know anyone, and they stay confined in their areas.

– Listening session participant, MN

Related, findings also demonstrate that partners can use immigrant identity to exert coercive control over Latin@ partners. This, in turn, inhibits victims from help-seeking. Listening session participants described the imbalance of power between a partner who is undocumented and a partner using violence with legal status and the ways partners use threats based on immigration status as a control tactic:



Yo también he escuchado casos así, en donde no llaman a la policía por su situación migratoria, porque no tienen acá los documentos y aunque viven violencia, temen ser deportada. Y más cuando el victimario les amenaza con eso, porque por lo general el victimario sí tiene un estatus legal acá. Entonces una de las formas de violencia es esa amenazarles con deportarlos. ¿Entonces no han acudido a la policía por ese mismo temor?”

I have also heard of cases where they don't call the police because of the immigration situation, because they don't have documentation and even though they live with violence, they are scared of being deported. More so when the perpetrator threatens them with that, because mostly the perpetrators tend to be the ones with legal status here. So that is one form of violence, the threat of deportation. That is why they do not report to police because of that same fear.

– Listening session participant, FL



Sí hubo algún momento en que me sentía amenazada, si a mí yo no quería hacer nada porque al igual como era, estaba recién llegada a este país. No sabía el sistema y como todo el mundo tenemos miedo de ir a la policía y que no está arrestada o que, o decir lo que estamos pasando y que después no nos crean. Sí, tuve ese miedo, pero al recibir la amenaza de quitarme a mi hijo, de que deportarme, hacer que me deporten.”

Yes, there was times when I felt threatened, I didn't want to do anything because of how it was, I was new to the country. I didn't know the system, and like everyone else, we are scared of going to the police and being arrested or something, or to tell them what is happening and not being believed. I had that fear, but when threatened to have my son taken away, to deport me, or make them deport me.

– Listening session participant, NY

Lack of culturally sensitive services

Our informants also identified lack of culturally sensitive services as a help-seeking barrier. Results from the key informant interviews and listening sessions identified that language access is one of the primary shortcomings related to a lack of culturally sensitive services for Latin@ community members that inhibits help-seeking:



La mala comunicación del idioma a la comunidad latina, eso lo afecta muchísimo, porque, pues muchas veces en lugar de decir, pues, tienen todavía miedo de lo que pueda pasar porque, pues, por falta de comunicación en el idioma.”

The poor communication in terms of language with the Latin@ community affects so much, many times instead of disclosing they are fearful of what could happen because of the lack of communication in the language.”

– Listening session participant, MN



Creo que mi respuesta es un poco repetitiva, pero siempre es como la barrera número uno es el lenguaje.”

I think my answer is a bit repetitive, but the number one barrier is always language.

– Listening session participant, MN

Participants from the key informant interviews and listening sessions described how a lack of Spanish interpreters and translators within the criminal justice system creates barriers for Latin@ community members to report victimization. This need was also observed in interactions with law enforcement and courts. The lack of language access makes participating in legal proceedings challenging or impossible:



Por ejemplo, la policía a veces no quiere llamar a un intérprete desde su teléfono porque les quitaron los teléfonos porque no había un budget. Entonces es muy difícil. Conseguir un intérprete cuando alguien llama a la policía y no hay intérprete y a veces usan a los hijos, cosa que intentamos educar a las familias a que no lo hagan. Es el deber del policía usar el intérprete entonces también en las cortes criminales.”

For example, the police sometimes do not want to call an interpreter from their own phones because their [work]



phones were taken away due to budget. So that makes it difficult. Finding an interpreter when they call the police and when there isn't one, sometimes they use the children, something that we try to educate families not to do. It is the police's job to use an interpreter and also in court.

– Listening session participant, MN

“

A veces no habla español y no le informa bien de cómo va el proceso. Si quiere, escribir una carta al juez, una declaración sobre el trauma que sufrió. A veces no saben eso y se enteran después. 'Oh, yo no sabía que tenía que escribir o que podía haber escrito una, una, nota a un juez diciéndole cómo ese hombre o cómo esa persona me hizo sufrir a mí.' Entonces es un poco difícil, pero se está trabajando entre muchas organizaciones para que estas cosas no ocurren [sic].”

Sometimes they don't speak Spanish and don't inform them well about how the process is going. Especially if they want to write a letter to the judge, a victim impact statement regarding the trauma suffered. Sometimes they don't even know that is an option. 'I didn't know that I had to write or could have written a letter to the judge telling them how that man or that person made me suffer.' Then, it is difficult, but some organizations are working so that this doesn't happen.

– Listening session participant, MN

Participants from the key informant interviews and listening sessions explained how a lack of Spanish interpreters and translators within the criminal justice system leads to victim-blaming attitudes from police officers. [Some police have even used language as an excuse to not write an official report:](#)

“

Bien triste porque a mucha gente ni siquiera llamó a la policía ... hasta la fecha siguen siendo víctimas de violencia y prefieren ya no hablar a la policía, porque saben que a veces el trato que la policía les va a dar es hasta más triste que que mejor así quieren dejarlo entonces y a no cae. Es muy difícil. Llegamos a acompañar a madres solteras con casos de de familiares a noca y el trato que nos dieron fue muy difícil. Aparte como dice (nombre), no tienen nada en español y es casi que le dicen a la gente pues es tu responsabilidad

porque estás en este país y tienes que hablar inglés. Y es la verdad. Sí, sí, ha sido muy triste, muy doloroso ver a la comunidad que cree que en ese aspecto no se sienten apoyado.”

It is really sad because people don't even call the police... to this day they are suffering from domestic violence and they prefer to not call police, because they know how police are going to treat them and it's even more sad that they remain in those relationships. It is very difficult. We will accompany single mothers with cases and the treatment given was very difficult. Like (participant name) said, they don't have anything in Spanish, and they tell people it is your responsibility because you are in this country, and you have to speak English. That is the truth. Yes, it is very sad, very painful to see that the community does not feel supported.

– Listening session participant, MN

“

En mi caso, cuando yo, a mí me dijeron que tenía que reportar, yo hice una llamada, pero ese reporte no está en la policía. Cuando yo intenté ir a buscar el reporte, y lo que notamos con otras tres familias es de que la policía a veces se le hace más fácil ... poner un intérprete, preferían decir que no encontraron alguien que hablaba español. Entonces nos sentimos discriminadas de esa situación porque pues, a mí no, hay la comunicación. Entonces en lo personal pienso que para. Para ellos fue más fácil decir o el idioma, pues su excusa perfecta. Y no hubo, no hubo y ni hicieron reporte.”

In my case, when they told me I had to report, I made a phone call, but that report does not exist with the police. When I tried to look for the report, what we found with three other families is that the police sometimes find it is easier... instead of getting an interpreter they prefer to say that they cannot find anyone that speaks Spanish. So, we feel discriminated against in this situation because, well, there is no communication. So personally, I think that for them it is easier to do that, a perfect excuse. And there was no report.

– Listening session participant, MN

A participant from a key informant interview further illustrates how language access is a barrier within victim service agencies. In these settings, a lack of Spanish speaking advocates is a separate issue affecting access to services:



Pero lastimosamente esos refugios no tienen advocates hispanos. A veces yo tengo que llamar y servirle de intérprete a la misma sobreviviente porque no hay, cuando se requiere de un refugio. Entonces ha sido un desastre que hemos vivido por muchos años."

But unfortunately, some agencies don't have Hispanic advocates. Sometimes, I have to call and serve as the interpreter for victims, when it [interpreters] is required at shelters. So, this has really been a disaster we have been living with for several years.

– Key informant, FL

Findings from key informant interviews revealed that victim service providers and survivors often pay themselves for Spanish translation services out of pocket—only further creating challenges in help-seeking:



El lenguaje es una situación que vemos que muchas veces. Por ejemplo, nosotros tenemos que buscar una intérprete para los casos de custodia o caso de problemas con las familias de violencia doméstica en las cortes. Las cuales ellas no tienen esos recursos. Y muchas veces tienen que pagar hasta 100 dólares por una hora en mínimo tres horas. Hemos estado abogando para que haya más asistencia de ayuda en las cortes, que haya más asistencia legal. Es una gran debilidad que tenemos en el sistema y que los organismos que se colocan estos fondos para las víctimas de violencia doméstica."

Language is one of the situations we see very often. For example, we have to find an interpreter for custody hearings or domestic violence cases in court. From which they do not have the resources. Many times, they have to pay up to \$100.00 dollars one hora, a minimum of three hours. We have been advocating for more assistance in the courts, more legal assistance. It is a big weakness in the system and that funds get allocated for victims of domestic violence.

– Key informant, FL

Findings demonstrated that while language is the primary shortcoming in terms of a lack of culturally sensitive services for Latin@ individuals, language access does not only include services in Spanish for Latin@ community members. Indeed, results from the key informant interviews and listening sessions identified the diversity of language needs for Latin@ survivors seeking

help. Participants described help-seeking barriers for Latin@ community members speaking Mam (an indigenous Mayan language), Q'eqchi, K'iche, and English in Puerto Rico. When adequate language services are available, our informants viewed them as a mechanism for increasing comfort with services and building connections outside the home:



Una vez, cuando yo estaba en Guatemala llamé a la policía pero no, casi no me hizo caso porque no sabía hablar español. No era fácil hacer.”

There was a time when I was in Guatemala, I called the police but no they didn't really listen to me because I did not know how to speak Spanish. It was not easy.”

– Key informant, MN



Por ejemplo, con el idioma, yo creo que es algo que no estamos viendo. Quizás ahora un poco más por todos los cambios que estamos viviendo en la isla. Este, que está viniendo más personas que, por ejemplo. Que en el caso nuestro que aquí se habla español, ¿verdad? Están viviendo viviendo más personas de Estados Unidos que hablan inglés, entonces no necesariamente van a tener ese acceso a que policía, etc. fiscales que todos ¿verdad? Hablen el idioma, se puedan comunicar, pues eso sí puede seguir siendo un problema. Así que si existen en términos del idioma, este, creo que también lo sabes.”

For example, with the language, I think it is something we do not see. Maybe a little bit more with all the changes happening in the island [Puerto Rico]. More people are coming, for instance. In our case we speak Spanish here, right? There are more people coming from the United States that speak English, so they may not necessarily have access to the police, so yes that can be a problem. So, there is also a language issue here.

–Listening session participant, PR

Testimonials on the lack of culturally sensitive services also revealed an absence of culturally competent victim services informed by Latin@ identity and culture. When services are not culturally competent, Latin@ survivors cannot be adequately supported. According to our research, **a culturally informed lens for Latin@-focused intervention includes cultural empathy, storytelling, and warmly greeting individuals in a familial manner:**

“

Te voy a ser honesto. Cuando las personas reciben asesoría o ayuda culturalmente con lo que ellas se sienten compatibles, es básico para que ellas puedan salir adelante. Porque en los shelters que hoy reciben, no tienen terapia, digamos, o sea, otros no tienen esa misma empatía cuando no son culturalmente entendidas. Es muy diferente, como lo puede ver un anglosajón, como lo puede ver una persona latina, porque sabe cómo es la cultura. Eso es bien importante, que las personas reciban esa ayuda, porque es como lo dijo (nombre), se sienten empoderadas, se sienten en familia, y los latinos somos mucho de familia. Hay personas que podemos hablar, hablar, hablar, hablar y otras personas que dices OK, ve al grano, dime lo que quieres. ¿Qué necesitas? Lo primero, lo que quiero escuchar. Y los latinos no, los latinos somos de contar historias, ¿no? Entonces por eso es importante que las personas que reciban esa ayuda, ese soporte de empatía con su cultura es muy, muy importante para que puedan salir adelante también.”

I am going to be honest. When people receive advocacy or culturally informed help that they feel compatible with, it is basically essential to move forward. There are shelters that don't have therapy, let's say, the same empathy to make them feel culturally understood. It is very different for white victims, the way a Latina victim interprets it, because of culture. It is especially important for them to receive this help like (name) said, to feel empowered, to feel like they are with family, us Latinos are very much family oriented. There are people who can talk, and talk, and talk, and talk and then they are greeted with okay, tell me what you want, tell me what you need? That is the first thing they hear. And Latinos, we like to tell stories, right? So that is why it is very important for people to receive help and support with cultural empathy, it is very important to help them move forward.

– Listening session participant, CA

“

Yo pienso que es súper importante y yo creo que esta pregunta tiene un propósito, me imagino y quiero decir que es tan importante como el contrato de personas que trabajan en el programa y el entrenamiento continuo que se les dé a las personas. Porque cuando encuentras a alguien de tu cultura, yo creo que hay algo mágico que

pasa, no es eso. Hay más conexión una y otra es que, que, se encuentra en la sensibilidad de cultura para esa persona individualmente. Entonces el impacto del [sic] mucho más grande cuando se provee de un servicio."

I think that it is super important, and I think this has a purpose, I imagine and want to say that it is so important for people contracted to work in programs and to be continuously trained. Because when you find someone of your culture, I think that something magical happens. There is more connection, and they find that individual culturally sensitivity. The impact is much greater when a service is provided.

– Listening session participant, CA

Culturally specific and gender-affirming services were also lacking for transgender Latin@ individuals coping with IPV. Participants in the listening sessions underscored the need for additional support and services for transgender Latin@ community members, who may experience discrimination regardless of whether they are accessing linguistically appropriate or Latin@-specific services. Participants described negative past experiences with rejection or lack of LGBTQ+ awareness. Transgender participants also highlighted a need for community outreach and increased awareness of gender-affirming services, particularly in the southern United States:

“

Bueno, lo que pasa en mi experiencia, yo sufrí de violencia hace muchos años. Estoy hablando como el 2008 y la policía no hizo nada. O sea, no me dijo ve a este lugar o algo así. No, simplemente me mandaron a Downtown. ¿Y qué iba a ser yo con tanta gente? Y yo no fui porque yo, eso es para, o sea, la gente, straight y todo eso. Entonces me dijeron, hey, aquí hay un centro acá y otro nada. O sea, no hay esa. No tenemos el conocimiento muchas de nosotras de que existen asociaciones que nos apoyen y menos en (estado). No es muy. Yo no las conozco (nombre de organización), que fue hace poquito que la conozco, que en uno 3 año yo creo, pero no realmente yo no sabía que me apoyo. Yo soy de San Francisco de Nueva York, si me entiendes de lugares que son gays más reconocidos, pero aquí no lo o. La verdad no creo que falta más difusión y no sé qué no sé difusión en línea o algo así. No sé falta porque todavía hay personas que no saben que hay asociaciones."

What happened in my experience, I suffered domestic violence many years ago. I am talking about 2008 and the police did nothing. They didn't refer me to go to a certain place or anything. They just sent me downtown. What was I supposed to do among so many people? I didn't go because those services were for straight people. So, then I was told about this organization. A lot of us do not have the knowledge that other organizations exist that support us, much less here in (state). It is more recent that I came to learn about (participating organization's name), it was a little bit ago, maybe one or three years ago I think, but I really didn't know about their support. I am from San Francisco, from New York, you know, places where the gay community is more recognized, but not here. I think there needs to be more awareness online or something. More is needed because there are people who don't know about these organizations.

– Transgender listening session participant

Gender role beliefs and expectations

Gender role beliefs and expectations encompassed within families can prevent survivors from seeking help. Beliefs are rooted in family systems, communities, and cultures. Notions about keeping the family together can also be passed down through families with histories of domestic or partner violence and prevent family and informal support systems from encouraging survivors coping with IPV to access formal support:



También le quiero traer luz, como a la otra parte de la moneda. Este, que es verdad, la cultura latina es verdad que es la familia, se queda junta, ¿verdad? Está el hombre, la mujer o mujer y marido, ¿verdad? Hay familias latinas que todavía no creen en el divorcio, ¿verdad? Y este, también está, en verdad, los efectos de trauma. Lo que es el síndrome de Stockholm. No sé si hay traducción, ¿verdad? Pero amar al abusador, que a veces nosotros crecemos en nuestros hogares así ¿verdad? Vemos violencia en nuestros hogares y aprendemos a seguir viviendo. Amamos a nuestras familias, aunque sean abusadores, ¿verdad? Entonces, ya siendo adulto, uno en su propio hogar, en su propio matrimonio, sigue repitiendo lo mismo, ¿verdad? Aunque esta persona me hace daño, lo amo y me voy a quedar aquí, ¿verdad?”

Another thing I want to bring to light is the other side of the coin. In Latin@ culture, the family stays together, right? The husband and wife, right? There are still Latin@ families that do not believe in divorce. And there is also the effects of trauma. That being Stockholm syndrome, I do not know how to translate that. We love our abuser that oftentimes we grow up with. We see violence in our homes and learn to keep living. We love our family despite being abusers, right? Now as adults, in our own homes, in our own marriages, the same thing happens right? Even though this person is harming me, I love them, and I am going to stay, right?

– Listening session participant, CA

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Pero día a día vienen mujeres de otros países y traen la mentalidad de que si te pega tu esposo es porque es tu esposo, y todas esas reglas tan absurdas, absurdas, que desgraciadamente se tiñen los países de Centroamérica y algunos lugares de México. Porque yo también vengo de un lugar donde el machismo es el número uno, ¿verdad?”

But every day we see women from other countries that have the mentality that if your husband hits you, it's because he is your husband, and all these rules are absurd, absurd, unfortunately people believe this in Central American countries and in some places in Mexico. I also come from a place where machismo is number one, right?

– Listening session participant, MN

Gender role beliefs can also impede communication about safety with community supports, including family. Shame and discomfort about IPV can leave survivors to cope on their own. One listening session participant described a case where a Latina woman's family was unaware of the violence:

“

De hecho, fue hace poco, dos años, pero bien extraño porque la persona se le dio ayuda anteriormente, pero quizás ella pasó todo este tipos [sic] de barreras que ella guardó en silencio todo lo que estaba pasando. Y cuando decidió salir de esta relación, ella, fue, ella, la mató. La persona fue hace dos años y ella estuvo en los programas de (nombre de organización). Se le ayudó con muchas cosas. Me imagino que lo deben de conocer, pero desafortunadamente cuando ella decidió, años después que había salido de acá, siguió en esa relación de abuso y cuando decidió dejarlo fue cuando la persona la mató y

se suicidó. Eso llega a pasar esto y cuando nos enteramos y se llamó a la mamá, la familia y todo, nadie sabía nada, nadie sabía que ella estaba pasando violencia doméstica porque ella nunca mencionó por lo mismo, por la misma cultura que tenemos. La familia latina permanece unida, no dice nada, no pasa nada y al final murió.”

Yes actually, a while ago, two years ago, but it was strange because that person had gotten help previously, but perhaps she was experiencing a host of barriers to get help and she kept everything to herself. When she decided to end the relationship, she was killed. This person was two years ago, and she was involved in programs at (participating organization's name). She received a lot of help. I imagine you all may know her, but unfortunately, when she decided, a year after leaving our program, she remained in the relationship and when she finally decided to leave him, is when that person killed her and committed suicide after. That happened and we found out and called her mom, her family and no one knew anything, no one knew that she was a victim of domestic violence, she never said anything because of the culture we have. The Latina family stays together, she didn't say anything, and she died.

– Listening session participant, MN

Concerns about family

Finally, our informants identified parenting concerns as a barrier to help-seeking. This was particularly true among mothers that do not have support in childcare or the financial ability to access safe shelter or housing for families. Overall, participants viewed support for parents affected by violence with children in the house as limited. Participants expressed that Section 8 housing was unsafe for children and that daycare needs prevent parents with children from seeking support for IPV. Parents with young children also may experience stress and strain on their parenting role:



Ahora mismo está muchacha, pues, tiene un bebé de tres meses, tiene la bebé de dos años y sus papás no la quieren recibir en Connecticut porque no tienen espacio para para los nenes. Y lamentablemente vemos que muchas veces no salen de la relación porque no sabe para dónde ir.”



Right now, this girl has a three-month-old baby, she has a two-year-old baby, and her parents don't want her to come to Connecticut because they don't have space for the children. And unfortunately, we see that many times people stay in the relationship because they have nowhere to go."

– Listening session participant, FL



Strengths in IPH prevention practice

Our informants characterized positive interactions with systems of advocacy and first responders as those with empathy, responsiveness, and protective measures, such as keeping survivors' new addresses private. They observed an interplay between descriptions of informal and formal sources of support, where trusted community members like friends and family often share critical information and encouragement to engage in services:

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La loba que tu tiene adentro que tu lleva por dentro. Eso te saca la fuerza, la valentía, o sea ya se te importa. O sea, te importa si el mundo se te viene encima, pero ahí sí, ahí. Cuando yo recibí esta amenaza porque yo pude dar ciertos pasos. De yo decir por lo que yo estaba pasando.”

The wolf you have inside that gives you strength, the bravery, nothing else matters. When he threatened me with (taking my son), I was able to take certain steps and say what I was going through.

– Listening session participant, NY

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Pero sí la policía me dio seguimiento, me llevó a la corte y sí, hasta la altura de juez que yo estoy. Yo no vi mi licencia—no dice mi dirección ni nada. Ellos me ayudaron con todo eso. Nada de qué cosa del estado me llega a la casa.”

But yes, the police followed up with me, they took me to court and yes, up to the level of the judge that I am. I did not see my license—it does not say my address or anything. They helped me with all of that. Nothing from the state comes to my house.

– Listening session participant, NY



Conclusion and recommendations

This report summarizes major risk factors for IPH and barriers to help seeking among Latin@ survivors of IPV, DV, and/or SA based on the perspectives of survivors, community-based practitioners, and other advocates connected to culturally responsive organizations. Testimonials on risk factors and barriers bring attention to broader issues of social inequity and the need for culturally responsive IPH prevention in Latin@ communities. Migrant, Indigenous, and Transgender identities intersect with Latin@ identity, contributing to unique histories of violence and barriers to support.

Esperanza United developed the following recommendations for prevention practice and IPV response based on the testimonials of advocates and survivors, as well as a literature review and review of state-level fatality reports (see our companion report, “A fatality review of Latin@ intimate partner homicides in the United States”).

Advocacy

- Supporting emotional expression, trust, psychoeducation, and validation of a range of trauma may be an essential first step for risk assessment. Building trust may take time and involve engaging survivor’s informal networks of trusted family, friends, and spiritual leaders, among others. Informal networks and connectors may act as bridges to formal services
- Community engagement and prevention outreach can help increase awareness about IPH and improve community and system response to IPV. Outreach should target a range of settings, including faith-based organizations, schools, and community-based youth and family organizations. Materials should be available in a range of materials, languages, and formats, such as social media public service announcements
- Immigration status is a multifaceted obstacle for Latin@ survivors due to fear of deportation surrounding their legal status and a lack of knowledge on protections afforded in the United States. Outreach with immigrant Latin@ communities should include up-to-date information on differences between local law enforcement agencies and U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement officers, along with information surrounding the rights of crime victims and protections granted to victims of gender-based violence under the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA), like VAWA self-petitions and U-Visas
- Educational programming and training efforts should be comprehensive and target culturally specific DV agencies and advocates, law enforcement, healthcare providers, and social service organizations. Training with first responders should include information on culturally responsive support, language access, and emphasize the importance of trust-building, safeguarding privacy, and follow-up

Systems-level advocacy

- Encouraging strong partnerships between local, culturally specific organizations and first responders can support culturally responsive screenings and processes for referrals. Advocates should adapt screening processes with consideration for local Latin@ community characteristics, gender-affirming language, and the IPH risk factors and help-seeking barriers presented in this report
- Findings also identified a lack of culturally sensitive and affirming services as help-seeking barriers for Latin@ survivors of IPV. As a result of language barriers, immigrant Latin@ survivors often experience discomfort and encumbered out of pocket costs for the use of translators and interpreters. It is critical for the criminal justice system and community service organizations to increase funding and revise organizational policies in support of language access, including increasing the number of personnel competent in various Latin@ languages including Spanish, Mam, Q'eqchi, and K'iche
- Oftentimes, Latin@ survivors experienced re-traumatization in attempts to access formal support. Survivor-centered and trauma-informed practices include treating victims with respect and dignity, ensuring the use of trauma-informed skills to build rapport and communicate with victims in a transparent way, and empowering victims with autonomy and a voice during the reporting process
- Cultural responsiveness should be reflected in organizational policies, programs, and strategy. In terms of local, state, and federal policies, funding for victim service agencies should prioritize resource allocation to culturally specific victim service providers that serve predominantly Latin@ communities across the country and in Puerto Rico.
- Culturally specific and DV organizations should conduct internal training and support programming that centers the experiences of transgender Latin@ victims of IPV. Findings underscored how this Latin@ community encounters challenges in help-seeking due to gender identity discrimination and a general lack of trans-specific services. Organizations may also seek additional funding to support transgender and gender non-conforming Latin@ community members
- Increased funding for culturally specific IPV response can support greater language access, the hiring and training of culturally and linguistically competent staff, new programming, and outreach. Funding should also support Latin@ survivors and their families directly. Flexible cash assistance can provide the autonomy to survivors to make decisions about housing and other basic needs for themselves and their children