



## **Domestic Violence Affects Families of All Racial, Ethnic, and Economic Backgrounds It is a Widespread and Destructive Problem in Latino Communities**

*While domestic violence is a crime whose victims are largely women and children, it is regarded as a substantial public health problem with multiple and serious consequences and costs for entire families and communities, regardless of ethnic, racial, or economic backgrounds.*

### **Domestic Violence in the General Population**

- ❑ Nearly 1 in 3 adult women experience physical assault by a partner during adulthood.<sup>1</sup> Nearly 5.3 million intimate partner victimizations occur each year among U.S. women ages 18 and older. This violence results in nearly 2 million injuries and 1,300 deaths.<sup>2</sup>
- ❑ Women, ages 16 to 24, and women in families with incomes below \$10,000 were more likely than other women to be victims of violence by an intimate,<sup>3</sup> and an American Journal of Public Health article states that severe spousal abuse is twice as likely to be committed by unemployed men as by those working full time.<sup>4</sup>
- ❑ Approximately 324,000 women each year are abused by their intimate partner during their pregnancy.<sup>5</sup> A 1999 study from John Hopkins, showed that abused women are more likely to give birth to low birth weight children, a risk factor for neonatal and infant deaths.<sup>6</sup>
- ❑ Violence against women by intimates is chronic in nature. Of the women raped by an intimate, 51.2% reported being victimized multiple times by the same partner. It is estimated that 1.5 million women in the U.S. are raped and/or physically assaulted by an intimate partner annually and that approximately 4.8 million intimate partner rapes and physical assaults are perpetrated against women every year in this country.<sup>7</sup>
- ❑ Domestic Violence is a major cause of family homelessness. A large percentage of all women and children living on the streets became homeless because of domestic violence.<sup>8</sup>
- ❑ Estimated direct medical and health care expenses from intimate partners rape, physical assault, and stalking exceed \$5.8 billion each year.<sup>9</sup> Businesses forfeit another \$100 million in lost wages, sick leave, absenteeism, and non-productivity—about 25% of workplace problems can be attributed to family violence.<sup>10</sup>

### ***Effects of Domestic Violence on Children***

- ❑ The overlap between domestic violence and child abuse is well documented. It is estimated that 40-60% of men who abuse women also abuse children.<sup>11</sup>
- ❑ In 2001, approximately 930,000 children were found to be victims of child maltreatment (physical abuse, sexual abuse, psychological maltreatment, neglect, and medical neglect). Of these 19% were physically

<sup>1</sup> American Psychological Association. (1996). Violence and the Family: Report of the American Psychological Association Presidential Task Force on Violence and the Family.

<sup>2</sup> Centers for Disease Control

<sup>3</sup> Rennison, C. M. & Welchans, S. (2000). Intimate Partner Violence, Special Report. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Justice, Bureau of Justice Statistics.

<sup>4</sup> Campbell, J., et.al. (2003). Risk Factors for Femicide in Abusive Relationships: Results From a Multisite Case Control Study. *American Journal of Public Health*, 93(7): 1089-1097.

<sup>5</sup> Gazmarian, J. A., Petersen, R., Spitz, A. M., Goodwin, M. M., Saltzman, L. E., & Marks, J. S. (2000). Violence and Reproductive Health: Current knowledge and future research directions. *Maternal and Child Health Journal*, 4(2): 79-84.

<sup>6</sup> Heise, L., Ellsberg, M. & Gottemoeller, M. (1999). Ending Violence Against Women. *Population Reports*, Series L (11). Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University School of Public Health, Population Information Program.

<sup>7</sup> Tjaden, P., & Thoennes, N. (2000). *Extent, Nature, and Consequences of Intimate Partner Violence: Findings from the National Violence Against Women Survey*. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Justice, Bureau of Justice Statistics, NCJ 181867.

<sup>8</sup> The United States Conference of Mayors. (1999). A Status Report on Hunger and Homelessness in American Cities. 94. See also, Zorza, J. (1991). Woman Battering: A Major Cause of Homelessness. *Clearinghouse Review*, 25(4):421.

<sup>9</sup> National Center for Injury Prevention and Control. (2003). *Costs of Intimate Partner Violence Against Women in the United States*. Atlanta (GA): Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

<sup>10</sup> Meyer, (1994). *Crime and Victimization Report*. National Victim Center.

<sup>11</sup> American Psychological Association. (1996). Violence and the Family: Report of the American Psychological Association Presidential Task Force on Violence and the Family. Washington, D.C.: American Psychological Association. P. 80.

abused; 10% sexually abused; and 7% psychologically maltreated. The rest suffered neglect or medical neglect. Approximately 1,300 died of abuse or neglect in 2001.<sup>12</sup>

- ❑ Half of all children victims were White; 25% African American; 15% Hispanic; 2% American Indian/Alaska Natives; and 1% Asian/Pacific Islanders. Fifty-two percent were female and 48% were male.
- ❑ Children who witness their parents using violence against each other and who regularly receive excessive punishment are at increased risk of being involved in an abusive relationship as an adult.<sup>13</sup>
- ❑ Children who witness or experience violence in the home may suffer poor health, low self-esteem, are at high risk of alcohol and drug use, sexual acting out, running away from home, and suicide.<sup>14</sup> Infants and toddlers show excessive irritability, immature behavior, sleep disturbances, emotional distress, fear of being alone, and regression in toileting and language.

### **Effects of Domestic Violence on Youth**

- ❑ Approximately one in five female high school students reports being physically and/or sexually abused by a dating partner.<sup>15</sup> One study found that 30% of young women, (between the ages of 15-19) murdered each year, are killed by their boyfriends or husbands.<sup>16</sup>
- ❑ Eight percent of high school age girls said “yes” when asked if “a boyfriend or date has ever forced sex against your will.”<sup>17</sup>
- ❑ Ninety-four percent of incarcerated adult males were raised as either victims or witnesses to violence in the home.<sup>18</sup>

### **Domestic Violence in Latino Communities**

- ❑ The rates of domestic violence seem to be consistent across racial and ethnic groups.<sup>19</sup>
- ❑ Accurate statistics regarding domestic violence in Latino communities are difficult to obtain due to present day data collection methods and strategies. National studies have produced conflicting results regarding the prevalence of domestic violence in Latino populations. Whereas the second Family Violence Survey,<sup>20</sup> found higher levels of partner abuse in Latinos than in white populations (23% vs. 15%), two other national studies<sup>21</sup> found no difference between Latino and white participants.
- ❑ According to a survey by the University of South Carolina College of Nursing, 70 percent of 300 Hispanic women surveyed, reported they were victims of domestic violence. Of these, 43% reported multiple episodes of abuse during that time.<sup>22</sup>
- ❑ What may be of more interest and relevance to researchers, practitioners, and service providers than comparisons between Latino and other ethnic groups are the differences that have been found within Latino populations. In a national study, the highest rates of wife assault among Latino respondents were reported for Puerto Ricans, followed by Mexicans, and then Cubans. U.S. born Puerto Rican and Mexican men were at highest risk for using violence against their partners.<sup>23</sup>
- ❑ Smaller studies with Latinas suggest rates similar to those of the general population. A survey conducted by the Immigrant Women’s Task Force of the Northern California Coalition for Immigrant Rights revealed that

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<sup>12</sup> U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Children’s Bureau, National Child Abuse and Neglect Data System, 2001.

<sup>13</sup> “Intergenerational Transmission of Partner Violence: A 20-Year Prospective Study,” Miriam K. Ehrensaft and Patricia Cohen, Columbia University College of Physicians and Surgeons and New York State Psychiatric Institute, Jocelyn Brown, Columbia University College of Physicians and Surgeons, Elizabeth Smailes, Henian Chen, and Jeffrey G. Johnson, Columbia University College of Physicians and Surgeons and New York State Psychiatric Institute; *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology*, Vol. 71, No. 4.

<sup>14</sup> Jaffe, P. G. (1990). Children of Battered Women. *Developmental Clinical Psychology and Psychiatry*, 21.

<sup>15</sup> Silverman, J. G., Raj, A., Mucci, L. A., & Hathaway, J. E. (2001). Dating Violence Against Adolescent Girls and Associated Substance Abuse, Unhealthy Weight Control, Sexual Risk Behavior, Pregnancy, and Suicidality. *Journal of the American Medical Association*, 286(5).

<sup>16</sup> Teen Relationship Abuse Fact Sheet, City of New York, March 1998.

<sup>17</sup> The Commonwealth Fund Survey of the Health of Adolescent Girls. (1997). New York: The Commonwealth Fund.

<sup>18</sup> 2000 Pennsylvania prison study, cited by SAFENET, Erie, PA

<sup>19</sup> Bureau of Justice Statistics (1995). Violence Against Women: Estimates from the Redesigned Survey. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Justice, Bureau of Justice Statistics, NCJ-154348.

<sup>20</sup> Straus, M. A. & Smith, C. (1990). Violence in Hispanic families in the United States: Incidence rates and structural interpretations. In M. A. Straus & R. J. Gelles (Eds.). *Physical Violence in American Families: Risk Factors and Adaptations to violence in 8,145 families*. New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers, (pp. 341-367).

<sup>21</sup> Sorensen, S. B., & Telles, C. A. (1991). Self Reports of Spousal Violence in a Mexican-American and non-Hispanic White Population. *Violence and Victims*, 3:3-15.

<sup>22</sup> Associate Press, April 5, 2005, <http://www.myrtlebeachonline.com>

<sup>23</sup> Kaufman Kantor, J. L., & Aldarondo, E. (1994). Sociocultural Status and Incidence of Marital Violence in Hispanic Families. *Violence and Victims*, 9(3):207-222.

34% of Latinas surveyed had experienced domestic violence either in their country of origin, in the U.S. or in both.<sup>24</sup> A study with migrant farm worker women found that 25%-35% of patients at migrant health centers reported having experienced domestic violence within the previous 12 months.<sup>25</sup>

- ❑ Several factors, including discrimination and lack of bilingual/bicultural staff, have led to an under utilization of shelters and other domestic violence services by Latinas/os affected by domestic violence.<sup>26</sup> One study of undocumented immigrants found that for 64% of Latinas, a primary barrier to seeking help from social service agencies is the fear of deportation.<sup>27</sup>

### **Understanding Domestic Violence in Latino Communities**

- ❑ Domestic violence in Latino populations must be understood within the context in which it happens. A legacy of multiple oppressions (some of which began centuries ago) such as poverty, discrimination, racism, colonization, classism, homophobia, etc. makes it imperative that domestic violence not be viewed as a unidimensional phenomenon. This important social issue requires that research, policy, advocacy and services be approached with an understanding of the intersectionality of social forces that are at work in the occurrence of domestic abuse in Latino families and communities.
- ❑ In addition, cultural factors such as a strong orientation toward family and community must be central to interventions and programs that attempt to address the problem in a culturally competent, effective, and respectful manner. The most recent approaches to domestic violence research and intervention strategies in Latino and other racial/ethnic communities are beginning to shift their focus from the individual abused woman (or even the batterer or the couple) to the community problem that affects, and is affected by, many elements in the environment in which it occurs.
- ❑ Culturally specific batterer intervention programs for Latinos are being developed within the context of a comprehensive family intervention approach. These programs view domestic violence as a violation of human rights and a social malaise that is allowed to take place in many families. The interventions consider that, in a majority of cases, the abuse of men against women is a behavior that many males have learned at home and in a society in which violence is an accepted way of resolving differences.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> CIRRS (1990), cited in D. Jang, D. Lee, & R. Morello-Rosch. (1991). Domestic violence in the immigrant and refugee community: Responding to the needs of immigrant women. *Response*, 13(4), 2-7.

<sup>25</sup> Rodríguez, R. (1998). Clinical interventions with battered migrant farm worker women. In J. C. Campbell (Ed.), *Empowering Survivors of Abuse: Health Care for Battered Women and Their Children*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications. Pp. 271-279.

<sup>26</sup> Rivera, J. (1997-1998). Preliminary Report: Availability of Domestic Violence Services for Latina Survivors in New York State, *In the Public Interest*, 16(1).

<sup>27</sup> Anderson, M. J. (1993). A License to Abuse: the Impact of Conditional Status on Female Immigrants. *Yale Law Journal*, 102(6).

<sup>28</sup> Perilla, J. L. & Perez, F. (2002). A program for immigrant Latino men who batter within the context of a comprehensive family intervention. In E. Aldarondo & F. Mederos (Eds.) *Programs for Men Who Batter: Intervention and Prevention Strategies in a Diverse Society*, (pp. 11-1 – 11-31).