

# COVID-19 and the Impact of Intimate Partner Violence in Latinx Communities



Latinx communities have been emotionally affected by the quarantine and isolation measures implemented during the COVID-19 pandemic. Increased stress and anxiety, job losses, school closings, disconnection from community resources and services, and a growth in intimate partner violence (IPV) have been observed. IPV refers to violence experienced by a partner, including spouses, ex-spouses, other intimate relationships [1, 2]. Statistics have shown that 1 in 4 women and 1 in 10 men in the United States have faced IPV in its different manifestations, including sexual violence, physical violence, and stalking at some point in their lives [3, 4]. In Latinx, these rates are similar. However, there are cultural factors that differentiate Latinx's IPV experiences.

## Staying home it's not always safe

Home is where people often experience physical, psychological, economic, and sexual abuse. During the COVID-19 pandemic, some regions observed an increase in hotline calls pointing to a spike risk of facing gender violence, child abuse, stress and family conflicts during lockdown [5].

## Considerations for Hispanics and Latinx Experiencing IPV

For Latinx and other immigrants, trauma associated with interpersonal violence can be compounded by immigration and acculturation issues. Clinicians should consider the following [6,7]:

- Cultural background can shape how women experience and respond to violence. For example, “Los trapos sucios se lavan en casa” a saying used by Hispanics and Latinx, may depict how culture can impact help-seeking behaviors.
- Latinas and other immigrant women may be harassed or abused in ways that are demeaning to their own culture.
- Experiences of threats regarding deportation in case of not having a passport, residence or work documentation (eg, visa).



- Having the abuser/perpetrator at home limits the possibilities to call and reach out for help, and perpetrators can exert control by hiding partner's and children's documents, such as visas, ID's, passports, or birth certificates.
- Help-seeking behaviors may be affected by feelings of shame and guilt, as well as stigma associated with mental health services.
- While providing telehealth services, clinicians should be cautious about asking questions about possible abuse because perpetrators may be listening, increasing the risk of further abuse. It is recommended to scan the room before starting a conversation about sensitive topics.

## Resources for Clinicians and Other Mental Health Service Providers

1. **The Family Preparedness Plan** is a document where families can list important medical and contact information, children's needs, and other documentation in case of an emergency due to COVID-19, hospitalization, caregiver's absence, detention, or deportation.  
[https://www.bmc.org/sites/default/files/Programs\\_\\_\\_Services/Programs\\_for\\_Adults/center-family-navigation-community-health-promotion/1-Family-Preparedness-Plan.pdf](https://www.bmc.org/sites/default/files/Programs___Services/Programs_for_Adults/center-family-navigation-community-health-promotion/1-Family-Preparedness-Plan.pdf)
2. **The National Latin@ Network for Healthy Families and Communities** is an organization that connects and supports Latinx families experiencing IPV. <https://www.nationallatinonetwork.org/learn-more>
3. **Informed Immigrant** is a website dedicated to increasing access to resources and knowledge for the undocumented immigrant community. <https://www.informedimmigrant.com/>
4. **National Domestic Violence Hotline (1-800-799-7233)** This organization provides 24-hour assistance to people experiencing IPV. <https://espanol.thehotline.org/>

### References

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6. American Psychiatry Association. (2019). Treating women who have experienced intimate partner violence. <https://www.psychiatry.org/psychiatrists/cultural-competency/education/intimate-partner-violence/women>
7. National Alliance on Mental Illness. (2020). COVID-19 resource and information guide. <https://www.nami.org/Support-Education/NAMI-HelpLine/COVID-19-Information-and-Resources/COVID-19-Resource-and-Information-Guide>