MCASA
Maryland Coalition Against Sexual Assault

FACT SHEET

Sexual Violence Against Latina Women

Introduction

Latina women often face difficulties in reporting and receiving supportive care after experiencing sexual violence.[1] While Latina women report lower rates of victimization than other racial or ethnic groups in the U.S., it is important to understand the context of the cultural norms of Latina/o communities which contribute to deterring Latina women from reporting sexual assault.[2,3] Among Latina/o communities, family plays a significant role in individuals' behaviors and decision-making. Research on Latina/o communities indicates that topics such as sex, rape, and abuse are considered taboo and are rarely discussed.

Latina survivors also often face additional barriers in reporting sexual violence, including the limited availability of bilingual resources. Someone who speaks only Spanish, or has limited English proficiency, may have trouble finding sexual assault advocacy services to meet their needs. Fear of immigration-related consequences can also prevent Latina survivors from reporting sexual violence or accessing services, particularly if they are undocumented or have unstable citizenship status.[4] Understanding these challenges is critical to designing and delivering culturally-responsive services that respond to the unique needs of all survivors, including those from Latina/o communities.

National Statistics[5]

- **Over half** of Hispanic women in the U.S. have experienced sexual violence other than rape in their lifetime.
- **1 in 7** Latina women reported experiencing completed during their life, in comparison with **1 in 5** in other racial and ethnic groups.
- In a survey of 2,000 Latina women, approximately **17%** reported experiencing some form of unwanted sexual activity or coercion. **7%** of the whole sample reported experiencing this type of trauma as adults, and **12%** as children.
- **77%** of Latina women surveyed stated that sexual harassment was a major problem in the workplace.

Intimate Partner Violence (IPV)[6]

- **About 1 in 3** Latina women experience IPV during their lifetime.
- **37.5%** of Latina women living near the Mexico border have experienced IPV.
- **41%** of Latina mothers who were involved in child welfare and had children within the home reported experiencing IPV at some point in their life.
- **53.6%** of Latina women report at least one form of victimization (e.g., physical assault, sexual violence, stalking, threat victimization, and witnessing violence) during their lifetime.

Barriers to reporting

- Latina women have **lower rates** of sexual violence disclosure to community services than other ethnicity.
- Latino communities' **emphasis on rigid gender roles**, may **limit** Latinas' capability to identify sexual violence if they blame themselves.
- Cultural constructs like **familism** may **prevent Latinas from reporting sexual violence**, to protect their family from distress or judgement.[7]
- Anti-immigration policies and rhetoric can **decrease** the safety Latina women feel reporting sexual violence to law enforcement.[8]

For survivor resources, please visit:

mcasa.org/survivors/culturally-responsive-services

[1] Rousseau, D. *Rape Culture in Hispanic Communities* (April 2019). Danielle Rousseau, Boston University. Retrieved from https://sites.bu.edu/daniellerousseau/2019/04/25/rape-culture-in-hispanic-communities
[2] Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. *National Intimate Partner and Sexual Violence Survey: 2010 Summary Report* (2011). Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
[3] The Center at 909. *Hispanic and Latinx Communities* (2019). The Center at 909. Retrieved from https://www.thecenterat909.org/hispaniclatinx
[4] Zadnik, L., & Melendez, E. *Sexual Violence and the Impact on Latin@ Communities* (n.d.). Pennsylvania Coalition Against Rape. Retrieved October 14, 2026, from https://www.pcar.org/sites/default/files/resource-pdfs/supporting_latin_communities_fact_sheet.pdf
[5] The Maine Coalition Against Sexual Assault. *National Statistics* (2020). Maine Coalition Against Sexual Assault. Retrieved from https://www.mecasa.org/stats.html
[6] Esperanza United. *Latinas and Intimate Partner Violence: Evidence-Based Facts* (2021). Esperanza United. Retrieved from https://esperanzaunited.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/3.11.73-Factsheet_GeneralIPV2021-1.pdf
[7] Gold, S. N. *About Psychological Trauma: Theory, Research, Practice, and Policy* (2009). *Psychological Trauma: Theory, Research, Practice, and Policy, 1*(1), 1–2. https://doi.org/10.1037/a0015163
[8] Bevilacqua, K., Gemmill, A., Jackson, D., & Decker, M. *Do Anti-Immigration Rhetoric and Policy Impact Reporting of Intimate Partner Violence to Police Among Latina/e Survivors in the United States? A Comparative Interrupted Time Series Study* (2026). *Journal of Immigrant and Minority Health, 28*(3), 532–540. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10903-026-01877-0

Last edited: October 2026