

INTIMATE PARTNER VIOLENCE UNDOCUMENTED & IMMIGRANT WOMEN

Intimate partner violence (IPV) impacts 1 in 3 women, but immigrant and undocumented women are particularly vulnerable to intimate partner violence as abusers often use their undocumented partner's immigration status as a means of control. The strength of this control tool is amplified under the Trump administration, as Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) agents continue to use the legal process to find and deport undocumented individuals. Though barriers faced by undocumented women when reporting domestic violence are not new, this increased culture of fear has made it more difficult and has worked to silence survivors of intimate partner violence. For undocumented survivors of IPV in the U.S., this backdrop of deportation fears leaves them with an impossible choice: report their abuse and risk deportation or continue to exist in an abusive relationship.



Undocumented Women & IPV

Being undocumented, adds another layer to the complicated, expensive, and emotional process of leaving a domestically abusive environment. Abusers often manipulate their partner's undocumented status as a form of intimate partner violence and coercive control by:

- Refusing to file immigration papers on the abused partner's behalf
- Threatening to withdraw the abused partner's immigration case.
- Withholding financial resources unless the undocumented partner continues to work with false documents.
- Threatening to call the Department of Homeland Security to have the undocumented partner deported.

The economic and social factors that can make it challenging to report IPV are amplified for undocumented women. These additional challenges prevent undocumented victims and survivors of IPV from filing for protective orders, calling the police, or following through with the legal process. **Undocumented victims of IPV have limited legal and direct service resources to meet their specific needs.**

The Big Picture

The statistics behind immigrant and undocumented women who are victims and survivors of Intimate Partner Violence (IPV) are staggering and underscore the barriers they face:

- **Abuse rates among immigrant women are as high as 49.8%**, this is almost three times the national average.
- At least 41% of surveyed Latinx individuals believe that the main reason undocumented survivors of IPV don't seek help is because they fear that their undocumented status will be uncovered or exploited in the legal process.
- **14% of participants reported experiencing problems in accessing IPV services due to immigration issues**, some reported they were denied IPV services for lack of proper identification.
- **65% of immigrant victims report some form of immigration related abuse.**
- Among abusive spouses who could have filed legal immigration papers for victims, 72.3% never file immigration papers and the 27.7% who did file had an average delay of 3.97 years.



Current Political Climate

Our current political climate only serves to heighten a culture in which undocumented women are vulnerable to IPV. **As a result, undocumented immigrant women are dropping their domestic violence charges to avoid deportation.** For example, Houston Police Chief Art Acevedo disclosed that the number of Latinx individuals reporting sexual assault in Houston is down 42.8% from 2016, and those reporting other violent crimes registered a 13% drop. This reflects a national trend in which undocumented women are not reporting acts of violence to avoid the chance of deportation.

In another incident, after a video circulated of ICE agents waiting to arrest an undocumented immigrant at a Denver courthouse, four undocumented immigrant women withdrew their domestic violence cases. These women stated that “they were not willing to proceed with the case for fear that they would be spotted in the courthouse and deported.” For undocumented victims of IPV, these fears are far from unfounded. In El Paso, Texas, an undocumented, transgender woman- Irvin Gonzalez- was detained at a courthouse and taken to a detention center. She had just been granted a protective order for domestic abuse. The El Paso Times reports that ICE officers acted on a tip from live-in boyfriend and alleged abuser who was detained by ICE earlier that week.

Resources For Undocumented & Immigrant Women

Domestic Violence and Immigration: Resources for All Immigrant Statuses

These resources are available for immigrants in abusive relationships to use in order to ensure that all people are able to leave their abusers and live free of violence.

Immigration Direct

A searchable online directory of over 940 free or low-cost nonprofit immigration legal services providers in all 50 states

The National Domestic Violence Hotline

Every day, The Hotline hears from women and men for whom the fear of deportation and the fear of being separated from their children is very real. Last year alone, the National Domestic Violence Hotline advocates answered more than 7,000 calls, chats and text messages from victims and survivors of domestic violence facing issues related to immigration.

SOURCES

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