

An Addendum to Realidades Latinas:

A National Survey on the Impact of Immigration and Language Access on Latina Survivors

**National Latin@ Network for
Healthy Families and Communities
and
National Domestic Violence Hotline**

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Introduction

This report presents the findings from the 2013 survey conducted with Latina callers to the National Domestic Violence Hotline (the Hotline). The survey was conducted in partnership with Casa de Esperanza's National Latin@ Network (NLN) for Healthy Families and Communities. The survey was carried out over a period of six weeks from November-December 2013. As in the previous survey, which was conducted in 2012, respondents were callers to the Hotline who identified themselves as Latina survivors of domestic violence.¹ (For more detailed information about the survey, please see the previous report titled [Realidades Latinas: A National Survey on the Impact of Immigration and Language Access on Latina Survivors](#))

Results

Demographics

During the six weeks of the survey, the Hotline received calls from 552 callers who identified as women of Latin@/Hispanic origin; 47 percent of these callers spoke only Spanish. The majority of Hotline callers were between the ages of 25 and 35 years old: 18-24 (14.5 percent), 25-35 (46.8 percent), 36-46 (24.4 percent), 45-54 (11.6 percent), 55-64 (2.1 percent), 65 and over (.2 percent). The majority of the women called from California- 28.3%, and Texas- 25.4%, and with at least one call from almost every state.² Of the 552 Latina callers, 281 callers (51 percent) reported that they had sought services previously and 262 (48 percent) of the callers were seeking services for the first time.³

¹ This report only includes information of women who identified themselves as being of Latina/ Hispanic origin. There were a few calls from men who identified themselves also as Latino/Hispanic but they were excluded due to the small number of responses. The National Latin@ Network acknowledges that men can also be the primary survivors of domestic violence and that this is an issue that also deserves further investigation.

² Other states from which women of Latina/Hispanic origin called included: New York- 6.5 percent, Arizona- 4.0 percent, Massachusetts- 1.8 percent, North Carolina- 1.8 percent, and Florida- 6.9 percent. Although there was a call from each state, the numbers were not large enough to include here.

³ 1 percent of the response is missing.

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national
latin@
network
casa de esperanza

The National Domestic Violence
HOTLINE
1.800.799.SAFE (7233) • 1.800.787.3224 (TTY)

Casa de Esperanza has chosen to use "@" in place of the masculine "o" when referring to people or things that are either gender neutral or both masculine and feminine in makeup. This decision reflects our commitment to gender inclusion and recognizes the important contributions that both men and women make to our communities.

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“I’ve heard that when going to court, they don’t always help. And because I don’t speak English, I’m afraid that they will do things behind my back.”

Survey Responses on Language Access

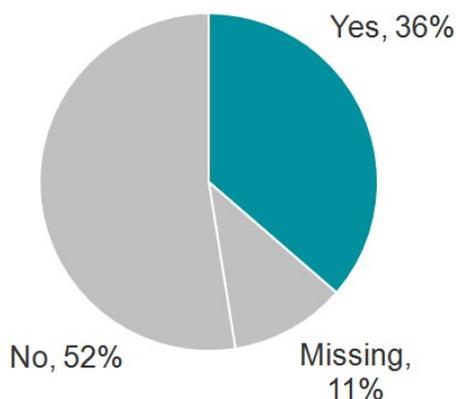
Following a short introduction to the survey, advocates proceeded to ask women who self-identified as Latina/Hispanic whether they had previously sought services related to domestic violence. If they had sought services, then advocates asked the following question:

Have you had problems using any services related to domestic violence (such as police, shelters, or courts) because the services were not provided in your language?

36 percent of the Spanish-speaking callers (who had also previously sought services; n=132) stated that they had encountered problems due to language access (See Figure 1).⁴

From the qualitative information provided by the callers regarding language access issues, we were able to identify the following problems, which are listed according to the frequencies with which they were mentioned:

Figure 1. Problems accessing services due to language barriers (Spanish-speaking callers).



- Language barriers were experienced by Spanish-speakers who contacted law enforcement agencies, which included lack of Spanish speaking officers and interpreters, both at the time of calling and when officers responded at their home.
- There was limited access to Spanish-speaking advocates or interpreters at local shelters. For instance, Spanish-speaking advocates or interpreters were only available during specific times or days and not usually when the crisis was occurring.
- Demands for access to interpreters exceeded the available resources of most organizations that rely heavily on volunteers to interpret.
- There was a lack of Spanish-speaking staff or interpreters at many legal services offices contacted by survivors or advocates.
- There was a lack of Spanish-speaking court officials or interpreters available to help survivors who were seeking information for their cases.
- The abuser or a relative of the abuser who spoke English was able to give their version of the situation, whereas the Spanish-speaking survivor was not given a chance to speak.

⁴ The cases in which the call was dropped or the caller decided not to continue with the survey were eliminated. Advocates reported that they did not ask questions when it was evident that the caller was in crisis or getting out of a dangerous situation.

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Immigration

Following protocol used in the previous survey, advocates were asked to ascertain whether callers were foreign born. Many of the callers who responded to the survey identified themselves as being foreign-born. The current survey showed a slightly larger number of respondents who identified themselves as foreign born over the respondents in the 2012 survey (60 percent in 2013 and 58 percent in 2012).

The Latino community is not just a diverse community in terms of national origin; it is also a diverse community in terms of immigration status. Depending on an individual's immigration status, she or he may face different barriers to resources. Mixed status families are also common, in which there may be some family members who are naturalized or U.S. born citizens or legal residents and others who have unauthorized/undocumented status. To gain a sense of the impact that immigration issues have on services related to domestic violence, advocates asked the following question:

Due to immigration issues, have you had any problems using any services related to domestic violence (such as police, shelters, or courts)?

As shown in Figure 3, 21 percent of foreign-born callers reported that they had experienced problems in accessing services due to immigration issues.

For the callers who responded "yes" to confronting difficulties in accessing services due to immigration issues, the following themes emerged as the most relevant:

- Survivors expressed fear of accessing services or calling the police because of potential deportation.
- Concerns about causing the deportation of their partners who had used violence were cited as reasons why many callers had never reached out for help before.
- Abusers commonly threatened the victims or the victims' children with deportation as a way to manipulate them into dropping their complaints.

Figure 2. Foreign-born status of Latina/Hispanic Hotline callers.

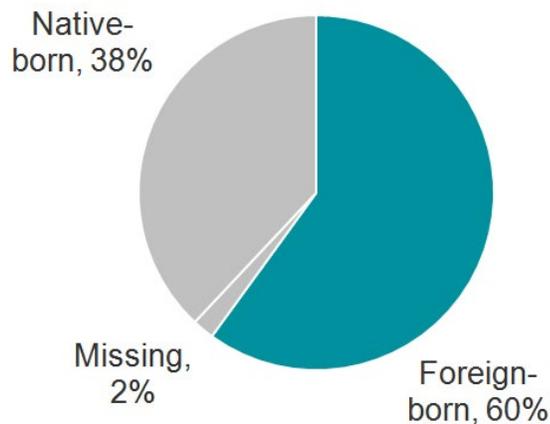
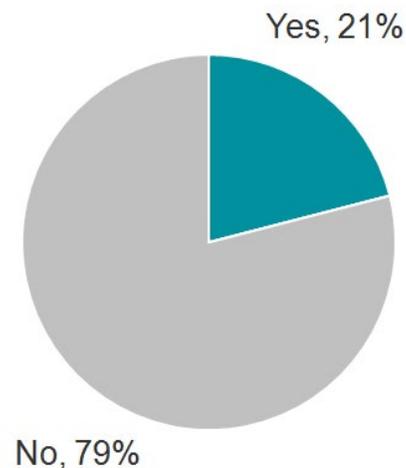


Figure 3. Problems accessing services due to immigration issues (Foreign-born respondents).



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“She was afraid to ask for help because she has the fear of getting deported. Victim stated that she had called the police to ask for help, however the Spanish was not good and at the end of the day the police never helped her.”

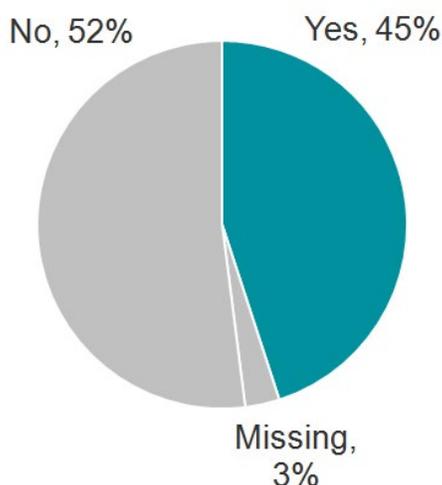
- Many callers lacked knowledge about their rights as immigrants and/or possible immigration relief as survivors.
- Survivors described issues related to concerns for their family, which included family intimidation done by the relatives of the perpetrator or the fear of retribution against the survivors’ family members due to immigration issues.

To better understand if the current immigration situation continues to impact Latino survivors with regard to accessing services, advocates asked callers:

Given the immigration situation, are you afraid of calling the police or going to court?

45 percent of the foreign-born callers expressed fear of calling and/or seeking help from the police or courts. Furthermore, 12 percent of US-born callers expressed fear of seeking help due to the current immigration situation. The responses from all of the participants support the data from the previous report that, regardless of immigration status, there is a significant sense of fear in the Latin@ community to seek help, with 1 in 3 callers of Latina/Hispanic origin and almost 1 in 2 of immigrant survivors reporting fear in accessing the services of the police or courts.

Figure 3. Fear due to the immigration situation (Foreign-born Latinas/Hispanics).



In particular, we are seeing a higher rate of fear than was documented the previous year. In the 2012 survey, 39 percent of foreign-born callers responded “yes”; in 2013, 45 percent of the foreign-born callers responded “yes” when asked whether they experienced fear.

Callers also reported issues or problems with access to services for other reasons, such as:

- Lack of knowledge of legal rights (e.g., lack of understanding of immigration remedies that might be available under the Violence Against Women Act -VAWA)
- Financial constraints
- Lack of education (illiteracy)
- Survivors, who identified themselves as both Latina/Hispanic origin and as US citizens, mentioned the lack of information or resources for their partners - such as intervention programs or support groups for their use of violence.

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Commentary

The results of this survey are similar to the results of the 2012 survey. However, it is important to note that this year's survey saw an increase in the percentage of Latina survivors who are afraid of seeking help because of immigration issues (45 percent of foreign born Latinas in the current survey compared to 39 percent of foreign born Latinas in the 2012 survey). There were also significant challenges regarding language access. Out of those Spanish-speaking callers who had sought services, 1 in 3 reported that they had encountered language access barriers.

In order to improve access to services for Latina survivors of domestic violence, it is important to ensure meaningful access to critical services regardless of immigration status or English proficiency. Failure to do so only sharpens the tools of an abuser to keep a survivor isolated from seeking help or accessing justice. For a complete list of policy and training recommendations aimed at increasing access to services and safety, please see the recommendations section of the 2013 report available here: [Realidades Latinas: A National Survey on the Impact of Immigration and Language Access on Latina Survivors](#).

"Sometimes I feel afraid of calling the police because they would send me back to Mexico and I wouldn't know what would happen to my babies."

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National Latin@ Network for Healthy Families and Communities

The National Latin@ Network, a project of Casa de Esperanza, is the national institute on domestic violence focusing on Latin@ communities. The National Latin@ Network provides training and consultations to practitioners and activists throughout the US, as well as in Latin America. The National Latin@ Network organizes national and regional events and engages in federal and state public policy advocacy, and conducts research on issues that affect Latin@s in the U.S. and abroad. For more information, visit us on the web at: www.nationallatinonetwork.org.

The National Domestic Violence Hotline

The Hotline was established in 1996 as a component of the Violence Against Women Act passed by Congress. The Hotline is a vital link to safety for victims of domestic violence and provides crisis intervention, safety planning, information, and referrals to victims of domestic violence, friends and families. NDVH is the only domestic violence hotline in the nation linking victims to more than 4,000 domestic violence programs and resources across the United States, Guam, Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands. Assistance is available in English and Spanish with access to more than 170 languages through interpreter services. The Hotline is also a resource for domestic violence advocates, government officials, law enforcement agencies and the general public. For more information, visit us on the web at: www.thehotline.org.

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