

# Organizations Working with Latina Immigrants: Resources and Strategies for Change

Cynthia Hess, Jane Henrici, and Claudia Williams

## About This Report

This report presents findings from a two-year study exploring how nonprofit organizations and religious congregations strive to advance the rights, economic standing, and overall well-being of low-income Latina immigrants in Atlanta, GA; Phoenix, AZ; and Northern Virginia, a region within the Washington, DC, metropolitan area. It examines the challenges that service providers, clergy, and advocates in these areas see immigrant women grappling with on a daily basis, as well as the broad array of resources that “religious” and “secular” organizations offer to address these challenges. In documenting these resources, the report highlights the remarkable efforts of groups that strive to assist immigrant women in contexts often shaped by strong anti-immigrant sentiment and restrictive public policies. It also explores the gaps in resources that continue to remain despite these efforts and captures the views of organizational leaders on how programs and policies can be improved to support Latina immigrants.

Based on the research findings, the report makes recommendations for changes in policies and practices that would benefit immigrant women and their families. We hope these recommendations will be useful to advocates, clergy, service providers, policy-makers, and others who support the inclusion of immigrant women in communities and society. The project was funded by the Ford Foundation and Annie E. Casey Foundation.

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# Executive Summary

## *Organizations Working with Latina Immigrants: Resources and Strategies for Change*

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Over the last several decades, the immigrant population in the United States has experienced rapid growth, particularly among new immigrants from Latin America. This increase in migration has significantly altered the social and economic landscape of many local communities and the nation as a whole, leading to controversy and debate.

Within this context of tension and ambivalence, many organizations strive to address immigrants' needs and to transform the social and political context that hinders immigrants' integration into communities and society. Nonprofit organizations and religious congregations, in particular, play an active role in this process. National religious organizations representing a range of traditions have issued public statements urging policymakers to create an immigration system that welcomes immigrants and respects their rights and dignity. In addition, many nonprofit organizations and congregations are working closely with immigrants, providing services and in some cases advocating for immigrant rights.

Despite the important role that nonprofit organizations and congregations play in advancing immigrants' rights and well-being, few studies have examined the full variety of resources these groups offer immigrants. To help fill this gap, the Institute for Women's Policy Research (IWPR) conducted a two-year study that explored how nonprofits and congregations work with Latin American immigrants—the largest and most rapidly growing segment of the immigrant population in the United States—and especially with low-income immigrant women, whose interests and concerns are often marginalized in public policy debates and discussions.

IWPR's study explored the challenges many Latina immigrants face and the ways that nonprofit organizations and congregations strive to address them in three areas with rapidly growing immigrant populations: Atlanta, Georgia; Phoenix, Arizona; and Northern Virginia, a region within the Washington, District of Columbia (DC), metropolitan area. The study examined several sets of questions:

- What challenges do nonprofit organizations and congregations see Latina immigrants facing in the three areas of study? What resources—including programs, services, and advocacy—do organizations offer to respond to these challenges?
- How can public policies help or hinder the development of strategies, programs, and other forms of support that best serve Latina immigrants? How might these policies help to create either welcoming or exclusionary communities?
- What is the nature and scope of collaborative action among organizations that assist Latina immigrants and families? To what extent do groups in the study work with each other, and around what kinds of issues and concerns have they formed partnerships? What obstacles prevent the creation of effective collaborations?
- What changes in public policies, advocacy, and service provision would benefit Latina immigrants in Atlanta, Phoenix, and Northern Virginia?

IWPR researchers explored these questions by interviewing nearly 300 organizations in the research sites. A total of 460 interviews with these organizations, including 398 phone and 62 in-person interviews, were conducted in 2009–2010. To contextualize and supplement information gathered from the interviews, IWPR analyzed the social and economic circumstances of Latino/a immigrants using data from the 2000 U.S. Census and the 2008 American Community Survey.

The study finds that:

- Organizations working with Latina immigrants perceive that these women make valuable contributions to their communities. At the same time, organizational leaders report that Latina immigrants often face a range of challenges, including violence, poverty, limited English proficiency, poor working conditions, and inadequate access to transportation, health care, and affordable child care.
- Nonprofit organizations and congregations offer services and programs to help address these issues, although many of the groups are relatively small and struggle to meet the current needs.
- Congregations often assist immigrants on a largely informal basis. Though informal, this assistance constitutes a substantial portion of available resources.
- Although many groups advocate for immigrant rights at the local, state, or national levels, very few advocate specifically for the rights of immigrant women. Developing a stronger advocacy movement that focuses on immigrant women's concerns is essential to creating programs, services, and policies that improve the circumstances of immigrant women and their families.
- Although some congregations do not welcome immigrants, others struggle to form "communities of transformation" that incorporate new immigrants and facilitate cross-cultural relationships and understanding. These groups can provide an important resource for both immigrant and native-born members.
- Municipal, county, and state policies related to immigration have a profound effect on the ability nonprofit organizations and congregations to assist immigrant women and their families. These groups perceive a need not only for changes in local and state laws, but also for comprehensive immigration reform that would address the issues at the national level.
- Collaboration is an integral part of how organizations offer services to immigrant women and engage in advocacy to shape public policies. Yet many nonprofits and congregations feel they would benefit from efforts to strengthen and expand existing collaborations.

The report outlines these findings, focusing on the work of nonprofit organizations and congregations that assist low-income Latina immigrants. In exploring this work, the report examines the obstacles these groups face, especially those created by restrictive local and state policies. Some jurisdictions in the study have proposed or enacted policies and ordinances that target living arrangements common to immigrant families, discourage the presence of day laborers, limit the access of immigrants to certain public services, and forbid the use of languages other than English on public signs and in workplaces. Combined with intensified immigration enforcement in recent years, these policies create a context in which immigrants, especially those who are undocumented, are cast as unwanted and placed at risk.

The rise in anti-immigrant sentiment and proliferation of anti-immigrant policies points to the need for organizations to not only offer services that help immigrants, but also to strive to transform the social and political climate that contributes to the conditions that threaten immigrants' health, safety, and security. A strong advocacy movement that seeks to change local, state, and federal policies is essential to improving the circumstances of immigrant workers, families, and communities in the United States.

Within this advocacy work, the circumstances of immigrant women demands greater attention. Because immigrant women are part of families and communities and are often responsible for building social networks, the issues that affect them have an effect on others as well. Policy changes to assist immigrant women, therefore, are widely beneficial. They are also essential to developing a well-functioning immigration system. Any attempt to change the current system that does not take into account immigrant women's circumstances will remain incomplete and ineffective.

Based on the analysis of the circumstances of Latina immigrants in the research sites, the organizational resources available to meet immigrant women's needs, and the context in which these organizations must operate, the report concludes with the following recommendations for policy and practice.

## Recommendations from the Report

### Improve Immigrant Women's Access to Services

- Increase immigrant women's access to resources by structuring programs and services in ways that make it easier for them to attend.
- Develop and enhance training and education programs specifically for immigrant women.
- Increase support for adult-learner programs that build English language capacity.
- Increase support for community health centers that provide services to immigrant women and their families.
- Support efforts to educate both service providers and immigrant women about current rules and conditions of eligibility for public services.

### Secure Immigrant Women's Safety and Rights

- Increase supports for immigrant women who experience violence in the home or in the workplace.
- Continue to strengthen public policies that help immigrant women achieve safety from violence.
- Fund, and help train where needed, organizations to document and report racial profiling and to ensure that policies in place are not carried out in ways that violate immigrants' rights.
- Help immigrant women and their families understand the policies and procedures of immigration officials and educate them about their rights under the law.

### Enhance Civic Networks and Community Engagement

- Support efforts to strengthen local, national, and international partnerships among organizations that work with immigrant women and their families.
- Increase support for collective action to promote immigrant women's rights.
- Include immigrants as key players in efforts to advance immigrant rights.

### Expand Opportunities for Immigrant Women's Leadership and Civic Engagement

- Raise the visibility of immigrant women's concerns and interests in efforts to advance immigrant rights and resources at the local, state, and national levels.
- Ensure that immigrant women from the population served have opportunities to assume leadership positions within nonprofit organizations and religious congregations.
- Put protections in place to provide immigrant women with the safety they need to take on public leadership roles.
- Ensure that any immigration reform includes provisions to allocate adequate funding for programs that will help immigrant women achieve citizenship.

The report and its recommendations are intended as a resource for advocates, service providers, clergy, and others working to advance the rights and well-being of Latina immigrants and their families.



# I. Introduction

During the past several decades, the United States has experienced one of the largest waves of immigration in its history (Singer 2004). Since 1980, the immigrant population has increased by 24 million, from 14 to 38 million (Gibson and Lennon 2008; U.S. Department of Commerce 2008b).<sup>1</sup> At 12 percent, the share of this population has not quite reached the level of the early twentieth century, when it represented more than 15 percent of the total population (U.S. Department of Commerce 2008b).<sup>2</sup> Nonetheless, the rapid increase in migration to the United States has transformed the landscape of many American cities and towns (Rodríguez, Sáenz, and Menjívar 2008; Singer, Hardwick, and Brettell 2008).

This growth in the immigrant population has sparked controversy and debate. Although civil and immigrant rights groups emphasize that the United States is “a nation of immigrants,” many Americans feel ambivalent about the changes that immigration brings and are reluctant to support the full inclusion of immigrant newcomers (Hondagneu-Sotelo 2008).<sup>3</sup> This ambivalence—and sometimes hostility—is reflected in numerous local and state legislative initiatives designed to restrict both documented and undocumented immigrants’ access to various forms of support, as well as in the federal government’s decision to increase physical barriers at the border to discourage undocumented immigrants from entering the country (Hondagneu-Sotelo 2008).

Within this context of tension and ambivalence, many organizations strive to address immigrants’ needs and to change public policies that prevent immigrants’ integration into communities and society (de Leon, et al. 2009; Foley and Hoge 2007; Hondagneu-Sotelo 2008; Vásquez, Seales, and Marquardt 2008). Nonprofit organizations and religious congregations, in particular, play an active role in this work.<sup>4</sup> For example, many national religious organizations have issued statements urging policymakers to create an immigration system that offers “hospitality, service, and justice” to immigrants (National Conference of Catholic Bishops 2010), helps immigrants who “seek to support their families,” (Hindu American Foundation 2005), and removes “the unequal treatment to which undocumented persons are subjected” (American Friends Service Committee 2001).<sup>5</sup> In addition to such declarations—which come from groups representing many religious traditions—some congregations and nonprofit organizations are working on the ground with immigrants, providing an array of services and often advocating for immigrant rights (Hondagneu-Sotelo 2008).

Extensive media coverage has made the activism of religious leaders visible to the American public, but few studies have examined the full variety of resources that nonprofit organizations and congregations offer immigrants. To help fill this gap, the Institute for Women’s Policy Research (IWPR) conducted a two-year study of the relationship between these groups and immigrant communities. The study focused on groups that work with Latin American immigrants—the largest and most rapidly growing segment of the immigrant population in the United States—and especially with immigrant women, whose voices and concerns are often marginalized in public policy debates and discussions.

The project addressed several issues. First, it explored the challenges that many Latina immigrants, particularly those who are low-income, face and the resources—including programs, services, and advocacy—available to respond to these challenges. Second, the study analyzed how public policies can help or hinder the development of strategies, programs, and other forms of support that best serve Latina immigrants. How do county, state, and national level policies affect immigrant women and their access to resources that could improve their quality of life? How might these policies help to create either welcoming or exclusionary communities? Third, the project explored the nature and scope of collaborative action among organizations working to assist immigrant women and their families. To what extent do the groups in the study work with each other, and around what kinds of issues and concerns do they form partnerships?

What obstacles prevent effective collaborations from forming? Do the organizations themselves perceive that strengthening partnerships among groups in their region is feasible and might help to advance the rights and well-being of immigrant women and families?

IWPR explored these issues by interviewing nearly 300 organizations in three twenty-first century immigrant “gateways,” or areas with rapidly growing immigrant populations: Atlanta, Georgia; Phoenix, Arizona; and Northern Virginia, a region within the Washington, DC, metropolitan area.<sup>6</sup> The majority of the organizations studied have ties to religious institutions or bodies, although to develop a more complete picture of the resources available to Latina immigrants, IWPR also interviewed numerous nonprofits without such ties and a small subset of governmental organizations. A total of 460 interviews were conducted between 2009-2010, 398 by phone and 62 in person (for a more complete description of the study’s methodology, see Appendix A). To contextualize and supplement information gathered from the interviews, IWPR analyzed the social and economic circumstances of Latino/a immigrants in the research sites using data from the 2000 U.S. Census and the 2008 American Community Survey (ACS).

This report outlines its findings below, focusing on the work of groups that seek to help low-income immigrant *women*, especially Latinas. Many books, reports, and articles explore the challenges faced by immigrants as a whole, but far fewer specifically consider the circumstances of immigrant women in the United States. While immigrant women share many of the same barriers to economic advancement and social integration as their male counterparts, they also face certain vulnerabilities that affect them disproportionately. This report highlights these vulnerabilities, explores how organizations strive to address them, and offers concrete suggestions for change.

The pages that follow begin with a general discussion of immigrant women in the United States, focusing on recent trends in their migration and their social and economic circumstances. This discussion highlights some patterns that are both reinforced and further developed by the findings from IWPR’s research in Atlanta, Northern Virginia, and Phoenix. The report then takes a look at these three research sites, exploring the dynamics of recent Latino/a migration to these areas and the different ways each place has responded through legislative and other changes. This discussion of the broader social and policy landscape and analysis of U.S. Census data for each research site creates a context for IWPR’s analysis of interview data.

Based on this analysis, the report concludes with recommendations for policies and practices to help groups advance the rights, economic standing, and overall well-being of Latina immigrants. It recommends changes at the local and state levels as well as at the national level, where comprehensive immigration reform remains a topic of interest in political debates and discussions.

In keeping with the focus of the study, the recommendations consider changes to benefit immigrant women in particular, although these changes would also assist men, children, and families. Any attempt to reform the current immigration system must address the specific concerns of immigrant women to be fully effective. This report strives to highlight these concerns and their importance in shaping successful public policies. It is intended to be a useful resource for advocates, clergy, service providers, policymakers, and others working to advance the rights and well being of Latina immigrants and their families.

## II. Background: Immigrant Women in the United States

Female migration is a prominent feature of migration to the United States (Pearce 2006). While historically the majority of immigrants to the United States were men, women have made up a growing share of new legal immigrants to the country in recent years (Fry 2006). The number of female undocumented immigrants has also increased in recent years, although there continues to be more male than female undocumented immigrants (Passel 2006). A particularly large increase has occurred in the numbers of women migrating from Mexico. Between 1999 and 2004, 1.1 million Mexican-born women reported arriving in the United States, compared with 300,000 between 1975–1980 (Fry 2006).

Although many women migrate to the United States to join family members already here, studies show that women are not merely dependents who follow their husbands, fathers, and sons (Hondagneu-Sotelo 2003; Kelson and DeLaet 1999; Pedrazza 1991; Zlotnik 1995). They come to the U.S. for a variety of reasons and with a broad spectrum of goals: to further their education, to escape political turmoil, and to achieve greater social independence (Kelson and DeLaet 1999; Pearce 2006). A growing number of immigrant women also come to find work to support themselves and their families (Pearce 2006).

Recent studies paint a demographic picture of immigrant women in the United States as a remarkably diverse population. They come from all over the world, with the largest group from Mexico (26.7 percent), followed by the Philippines (5.2 percent), India (3.9 percent), China (3.8 percent), Vietnam (3.2 percent), Korea (3.1 percent), El Salvador (2.7 percent), and Cuba (2.6 percent; Batalova 2009). Immigrant women also hold varying levels of education, occupy a range of socio-economic positions, work in many different jobs, and participate in a variety of family arrangements (Batalova 2009; Pearce 2006). In their multiple roles as spouses, caregivers, students, professionals, volunteers, and workers, immigrant women make important contributions to local communities, the economy, and society.

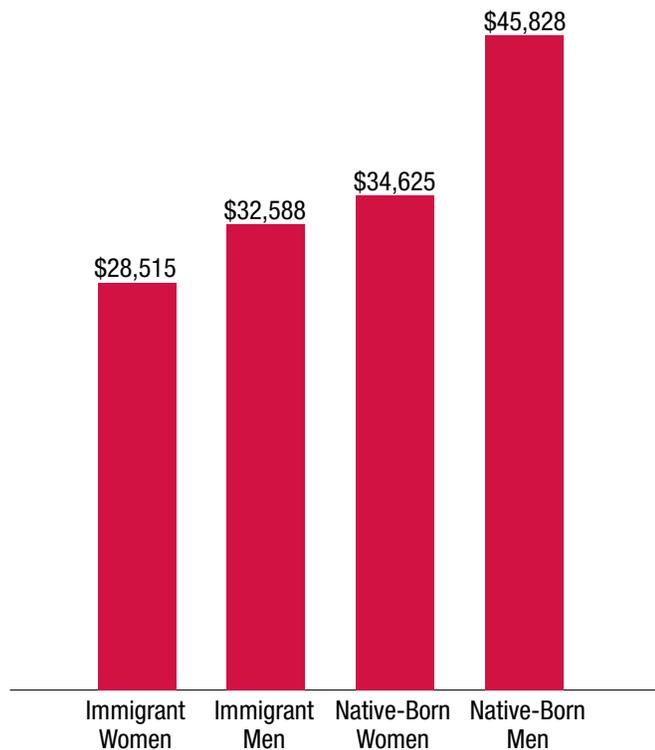
At the same time, immigrant women face vulnerabilities that can impede their full participation in social, economic, and political life. Some lack adequate access to health insurance or culturally appropriate health services; many health centers do not have bilingual staff or interpreters for their clients, making it difficult for women who do not speak English to effectively communicate with their health care providers (National Latina Institute for Reproductive Health 2005). Other immigrant women experience violence in their homes or workplaces; although violence crosses all boundaries of race, ethnicity, class, and nationality, immigrant women face multiple forms of oppression that make them especially vulnerable to violent harm (Raj and Silverman 2002). Immigrant women are also less likely than immigrant men to have a bachelor's or advanced degree, and 52 percent of immigrant women speak English less than very well (Batalova 2009). In addition, immigrant women are targets of public anti-immigrant sentiment and stereotyping. The media often cast immigrants as a drain on public resources, and women receive the largest share of the blame for this perceived burden, since they are associated in the public mind with both reproduction and the consumption of social services (Chang 2000).

Many immigrant women also face significant economic barriers. For example, they experience higher poverty rates than both their male counterparts and U.S.-born women (Batalova 2009). This is partly because immigrant women who work full-time make less than native-born women (\$28,515 per year compared with \$34,625), as well as immigrant and native-born men (\$32,558 and \$45,828 per year, respectively; Figure 1). Although some immigrant women work in the formal economy in jobs with adequate salaries and benefits, others are employed in the informal sector—often doing private paid domestic work—in positions that generally come without contracts and other protections to ensure workers' rights (Hondagneu-Sotelo 1998). Given the isolated contexts in which this work is done and its unregulated nature, women who

hold these jobs often receive substandard wages and lack the freedom to pursue employment opportunities with better pay and working conditions (Chang 2000; Hondagneu-Sotelo 1998; Marchevsky and Theoharis 2006).

These vulnerabilities mean that many immigrant women leave their homes in search of better economic opportunities and safety, yet find it difficult to achieve their goals once they arrive in the United States. The recent increase in the migration of women, combined with the stark economic and social realities that often shape their lives, suggests that more attention needs to be given to the multiple barriers that can prevent immigrant women’s full integration into economic, social, and political life. This report takes a step toward analyzing these

**Figure 1. Median Earnings for Year-Round, Full-Time Workers, 16 Years and Older, by Sex and Place of Birth, 2008**



Source: Institute for Women’s Policy Research analysis of 2008 Integrated Public Use Microdata Series (IPUMS) American Community Survey (ACS).

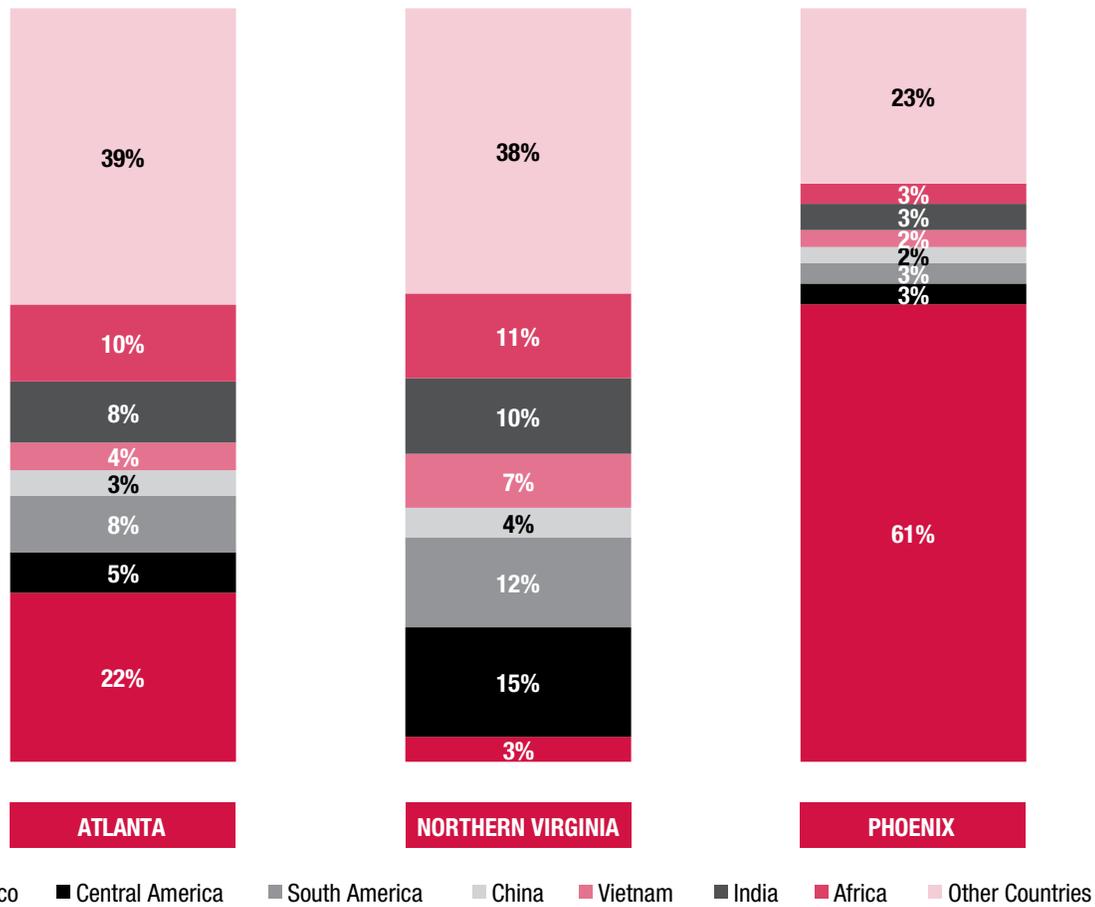
barriers by examining the circumstances of immigrant women, especially Latinas, as described by organizational leaders and representatives in Atlanta, Northern Virginia, and Phoenix. It also explores the resources available to address these barriers.

These three research sites were selected in part because immigrant women, especially Latinas, have in recent years migrated to them in large numbers. Between 2005 and 2008, the population of foreign-born Latinas increased substantially in all three areas, growing at a rate of 7 percent in Atlanta, 8 percent in Phoenix, and 10 percent in the Washington, DC, metropolitan statistical area, which includes Northern Virginia (U.S. Department of Commerce 2005; U.S. Department of Commerce 2008b).<sup>7</sup> Latina immigrants now constitute a significant portion of the foreign-born female population in each of these metropolitan areas, although the percentage varies widely by location, with the highest in Phoenix (67 percent), followed by Atlanta (35 percent) and Northern Virginia

(30 percent; Figure 2, Table 1).

The rapid growth in the Latino/a immigrant population in these areas has created a range of needs that nonprofit organizations and congregations struggle to meet. IWPR’s research reveals some commonalities in these needs and organizations’ responses to them across the research sites, as well as a few important differences. These differences may stem in part from the unique histories of immigration and the distinctive social and political contexts that give each area its own distinctive character, despite their similarities as twenty-first century immigrant gateways.

**Figure 2. Female Immigrants by Place of Birth and Research Site, 2008**



Notes: These data include immigrants of all ages.  
 Percentages may not add to 100 percent due to rounding.  
 Source: Institute for Women’s Policy Research analysis of 2008 IPUMS American Community Survey (ACS).

**Table 1. Immigrants by Place of Birth and Research Site, 2008**

	Atlanta		Northern Virginia		Phoenix	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
Mexico	119,988	69,775	8,707	8,777	232,650	189,917
Central America	32,949	16,707	52,479	38,499	12,469	8,602
South America	23,339	23,390	29,000	31,660	5,282	8,460
China	10,240	10,465	8,904	10,368	5,046	6,699
Vietnam	10,240	11,427	15,942	18,967	6,932	7,049
India	30,374	25,224	33,480	26,618	12,321	10,931
Africa	37,900	31,743	24,779	29,742	9,694	8,348
Other Countries	113,919	122,271	81,584	100,275	59,887	72,801
Total	378,949	311,002	254,875	264,906	344,281	312,807

Note: These data include immigrants of all ages.  
 Source: Institute for Women’s Policy Research analysis of 2008 IPUMS American Community Survey (ACS).



### III. Geographic and Policy Context: Twenty-First Century Immigrant Gateways

Since the 1990s, a marked shift has taken place in the settlement patterns of immigrants to the United States. This shift involves a transition from immigrants' concentration in traditional gateways, such as California, Illinois, New York, and Texas to new destinations located primarily in the Southeast and Midwest, including Arkansas, Georgia, Nebraska, and North Carolina (Kochhar, Suro, and Tafoya 2005; Singer 2009; Waters and Jiménez 2005; Vásquez, Seales, and Marquardt 2008; Zúñiga and Hernández-León 2005). While immigrant populations in well-established gateways such as Los Angeles, Miami, and New York remain the largest in absolute size, the growth rates in new destinations are more rapid. In many of these regions, the immigrant population has tripled or quadrupled during the last few decades, with most immigrants arriving from Latin America (Singer, Hardwick, and Brettell 2008).

This migration of immigrants to nontraditional destinations occurs in part because of developments in federal policymaking and changes in the U.S. economy. In 1986, the Immigration Reform and Control Act (IRCA) granted legal status to approximately 2.3 million undocumented immigrants, affording them greater freedom to move in search of better employment opportunities (Durand, Massey, and Capoferro 2005; Durand, Massey, and Parrado 1999). In addition, increased security on the border between California and Mexico in the 1990s funneled streams of Mexican migration to new points of entry along the Arizona border and, ultimately, to new destinations within the United States (Hing 2004; Vásquez, Seales, and Marquardt 2008). In the early 1990s, California also suffered a recession that led many immigrants to leave the state (Vásquez, Seales, and Marquardt 2008). At the same time, other regions of the country, especially the Midwest and Southeast, experienced substantial economic growth leading to increased job opportunities in industries that employ many immigrants, such as meat processing, construction, landscaping, hotel, and restaurants (Vásquez, Seales, and Marquardt 2008).

The new Latino/a presence has transformed these regions significantly (Singer, Hardwick, and Brettell 2008; Rodríguez, Sáenz, and Menjívar 2008). Researchers, policymakers, and others, however, debate exactly how. Some assert that immigrants enrich communities and positively affect local and state economies by supplementing the native-born workforce (Immigration Policy Center 2010a; Paral & Associates 2009). Others note that immigrants consume goods and services, expanding the economy in ways that increase—or at least do not decrease—the wages of native-born workers overall (Kochhar 2006; Shierholz 2010). Still others, however, take a different view. They maintain that the presence of new immigrants burdens local economies and communities by draining public resources and fostering job competition in the labor market that drives down wages for some U.S.-born workers (Borjas 2004; Camerota 2001). These divergent perspectives indicate that immigration remains a controversial issue; and Latinos/as are squarely at the center of the debate.

Religious groups and nonprofit organizations often function as important vehicles for serving and empowering immigrants in new destinations (Millard and Chapa 2004; Warner and Wittner 1998). For example, some churches provide resources such as legal guidance, financial assistance, and access to medical care and housing (Menjívar 2003). Others offer educational programs such as English language and citizenship classes (Kniss and Numrich 2007). In addition, religious congregations have practices, narratives, and symbols that can help immigrants negotiate the difficulties of resettlement and facilitate their collective mobilization (Foley and Hoge 2007; Williams, Steigenga, and Vásquez 2009). Some studies also suggest that congregations may enable the development of immigrants' public leadership skills, especially among women (Lorentzen and Mira 2005; Marquardt 2005).<sup>8</sup>

Nonprofit organizations and congregations that strive to help immigrants, however, often encounter resistance. Faced with the challenges of integrating recent immigrants socially and economically, many local governing bodies around the country have proposed (and in some cases passed) ordinances designed to “crack down” on immigrants and illegal immigration in particular. For example, in 2006 the city of Hazelton, Pennsylvania, passed the “Illegal Immigration Relief Act,” which imposed a fine on landlords who rent to “illegal” immigrants and denied business permits to corporations that hire “undocumented” immigrants (City of Hazelton 2006).<sup>9</sup> More recently, the town of Fremont, Nebraska, approved an ordinance requiring renters to apply for an occupancy license before renting an apartment or home—a process that entails a check of the applicant’s legal immigration status (City of Fremont 2010; Immigration Policy Center 2010b).

While the rapid growth in the Latino/a immigrant population and the introduction of new policies to address the issues raised represent common features of new destinations, each region has its own particular characteristics and history. IWPR’s study focuses on two new destinations, Atlanta and Northern Virginia, and one metropolitan area with a longer history of immigration that includes a migratory flow that has rapidly increased over the last 20 years (Phoenix). A brief description of these twenty-first century gateways will help to contextualize findings from the research with organizations working to advance the rights and well-being of Latina immigrants in the selected rapidly changing areas.

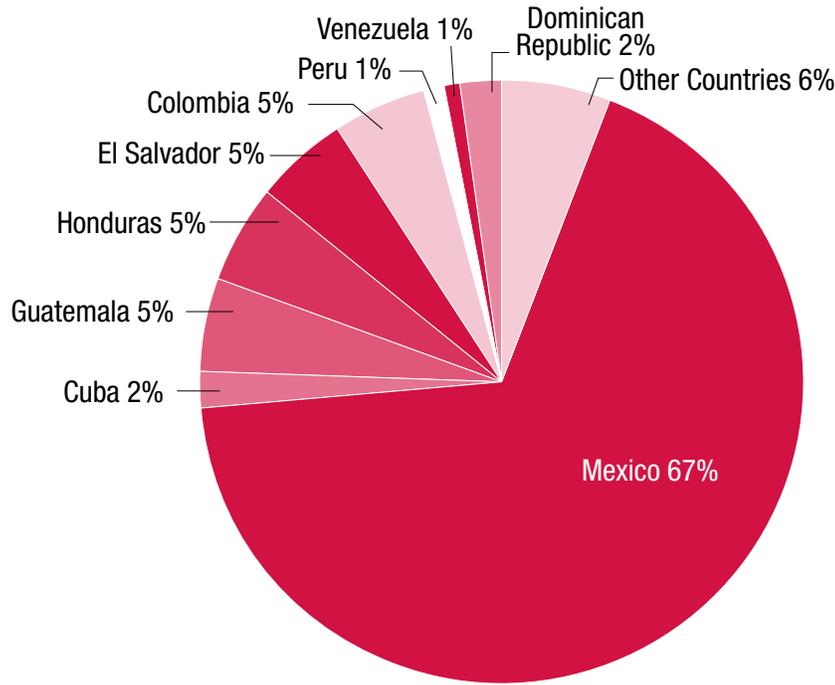
### Atlanta

A sprawling metropolitan area, Atlanta has dramatically changed during the last several decades from an area with a population primarily made up of native-born whites and blacks to one that is home to many foreign-born persons (Odem 2008; Rutheiser 1996). While new immigrants to the Atlanta metro area arrive from all over the world, the largest group comes from Latin America. As of 2008, 276,701 foreign-born Latinos/as lived in the greater Atlanta area, comprising 40 percent of Atlanta’s foreign-born population and 5.5 percent of its total population (U.S. Department of Commerce 2008a). Most Latino/a immigrants come from Mexico (67 percent), with the next largest groups from Colombia, El Salvador, Honduras, and Guatemala (5 percent each; Figure 3, Table 2).

The increase in Atlanta’s foreign-born population has been matched by an expansion of its native-born population. Between 1980 and 2005, the overall number of people living in the Atlanta metro area grew from 2.3 million to 4.8 million, with native-born whites and blacks accounting for most of this growth (Odem 2008). Like many other new destinations, Atlanta experienced a rapid increase in its population partly due to economic expansion in the 1990s, which created new job opportunities not only in professional and high-tech employment, but also in low-wage positions (Odem 2008). Due in part to these increased opportunities for employment, the Atlanta area became a common settlement location for Latin American immigrants, many of whom filled a range of largely low-wage jobs (Odem 2008).

The job possibilities in the Atlanta area have led many immigrants to settle outside the urban core, a settlement pattern typical of new destinations, which tend to have a decentralized structure and offer numerous employment opportunities in surrounding suburbs (Singer, Hardwick, and Brettell 2008). Historically, the Atlanta area has remained fairly segregated, with predominantly white neighborhoods in the north and black neighborhoods in the south (Odem 2008). For the most part, Latino/a immigrants are settling close to the highways and interstate in areas north of the city, which experienced the most economic growth in the 1980s and 1990s (Odem 2008). Immigrants concentrate in several counties, including Gwinnett, Fulton, Cobb, and Dekalb (see Map 1).<sup>10</sup>

**Figure 3. Countries of Origin of Latino/a Immigrants in Atlanta, 2008**



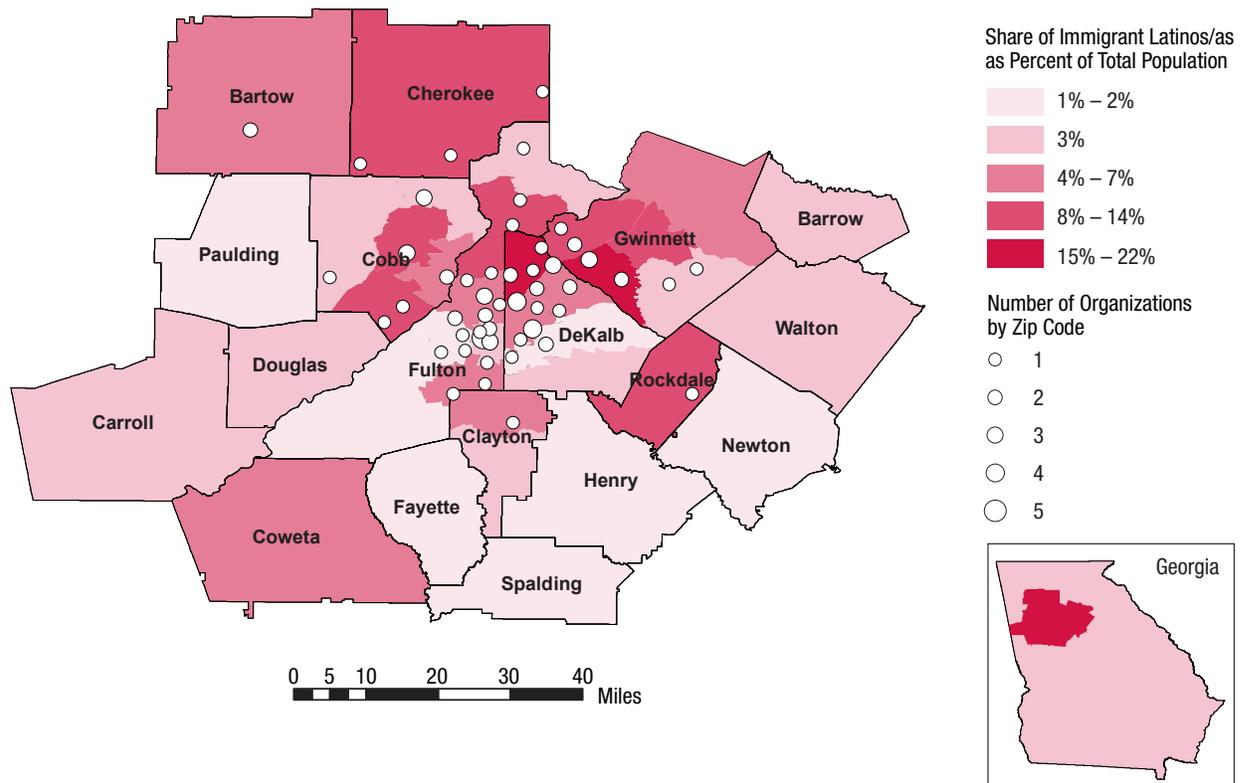
Notes: These data include Latino/a immigrants of all ages.  
 Percentages may not add to 100 percent due to rounding.  
 Source: Institute for Women's Policy Research analysis of 2008 IPUMS American Community Survey (ACS).

**Table 2. Countries of Origin of Latino/a Immigrants in Atlanta, 2008**

	Total		Male		Female	
	No.	Percent	No.	Percent	No.	Percent
Mexico	185,995	67%	118,064	69%	67,931	65%
Cuba	6,662	2%	3,804	2%	2,858	3%
Guatemala	13,923	5%	10,834	6%		
Honduras	15,192	5%	9,627	6%	5,565	4%
El Salvador	14,659	5%	9,945	6%	4,714	5%
Colombia	12,521	5%	6,100	4%	6,421	6%
Peru	3,897	1%				
Venezuela	3,901	1%				
Dominican Republic	5,800	2%				
Other Countries	14,151	6%				
<b>Total</b>	<b>276,701</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>171,891</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>104,810</b>	<b>100%</b>

Notes: Blank cells indicate insufficient sample size to reliably estimate these figures.  
 These data include Latino/a immigrants of all ages.  
 Percentages may not add to 100 percent due to rounding.  
 Source: Institute for Women's Policy Research analysis of 2008 IPUMS American Community Survey (ACS).

**Map 1. Advocacy and Service Providers by Latino/a Immigrant Population, Atlanta Area, by County**



Source: Institute for Women's Policy Research analysis of 2008 IPUMS American Community Survey (ACS) and of data from 2009-2010 IWPR interviews.

As the immigrant population increased, many localities in the Atlanta area implemented policies and programs to address the challenges created by the influx of immigrants. These initiatives reflect divergent responses to immigration. On the one hand, in some communities steps were taken to incorporate immigrants. These initiatives include English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) programs in public schools that aim to help students whose native language is not English by combining English language instruction with classes in disciplines such as math, science, or social studies (Odem 2008). Some school districts in the Atlanta area have also established international welcome centers that provide various forms of assistance for new immigrant students (Odem 2008).

Other policies, however, are more restrictive. In 2006, Cherokee County's Board of Commissioners passed legislation designed to discourage landlords from renting to undocumented immigrants and make English the county's official language (Quinn and Feagans 2006). Some city councils in the Atlanta area also passed ordinances that prevent day laborers from gathering on private property to solicit work and others from hiring them (City of Marietta 1999; City of Duluth 1999; City of Roswell 2008). In addition, sheriffs' offices in Cobb and Gwinnett counties and the Georgia Department of Public Safety in Atlanta chose to participate in the federal 287(g) program, which authorizes certain local and state law enforcement officials to enforce federal immigration laws (U.S. Department of Homeland Security 2010).

As the passage of such restrictive policies indicates, the Atlanta area's changing demographic landscape has created tension and controversy. These tensions were reflected in April 2006, when more than 50,000 individuals protested in Atlanta as part of a series of nationwide demonstrations to urge the U.S. Congress to reform the immigration system (Associated Press 2006; Odem 2008; Vásquez, Seales, and Marquardt 2008). Publicly supported and coordinated by religious groups, unions, and civil rights groups, the protests provided a forum for Latinos/as around the country to express their dissatisfaction with a bill proposed in the U.S. House of Representatives that would have increased penalties against undocumented immigrants and those who seek to help them (Manzano, Ramírez, and Rim 2007). In Atlanta, marchers opposed not only certain aspects of federal immigration policies but also a bill in Georgia's state legislature that would eventually pass, Senate Bill 529 (Odem 2008). This bill denied undocumented immigrants in Georgia access to public benefits and authorized state and local police to enforce federal immigration laws (Georgia General Assembly 2006; Odem 2008).

The tensions that the Atlanta area has experienced over its changing demographics are not unique to the region, but rather reflective of responses to immigration that often emerge in new destinations, where the rapid population shift alters the social and economic landscape in ways that can unsettle long-term residents and create challenges for public schools, health centers, and other institutions (Singer, Hardwick, and Brettell 2008; Singer, Wilson, and DeRenzi 2009). Just as immigration has become a divisive issue in the Atlanta area during the last 20 years, it has sparked considerable controversy in other new destinations, including Northern Virginia.

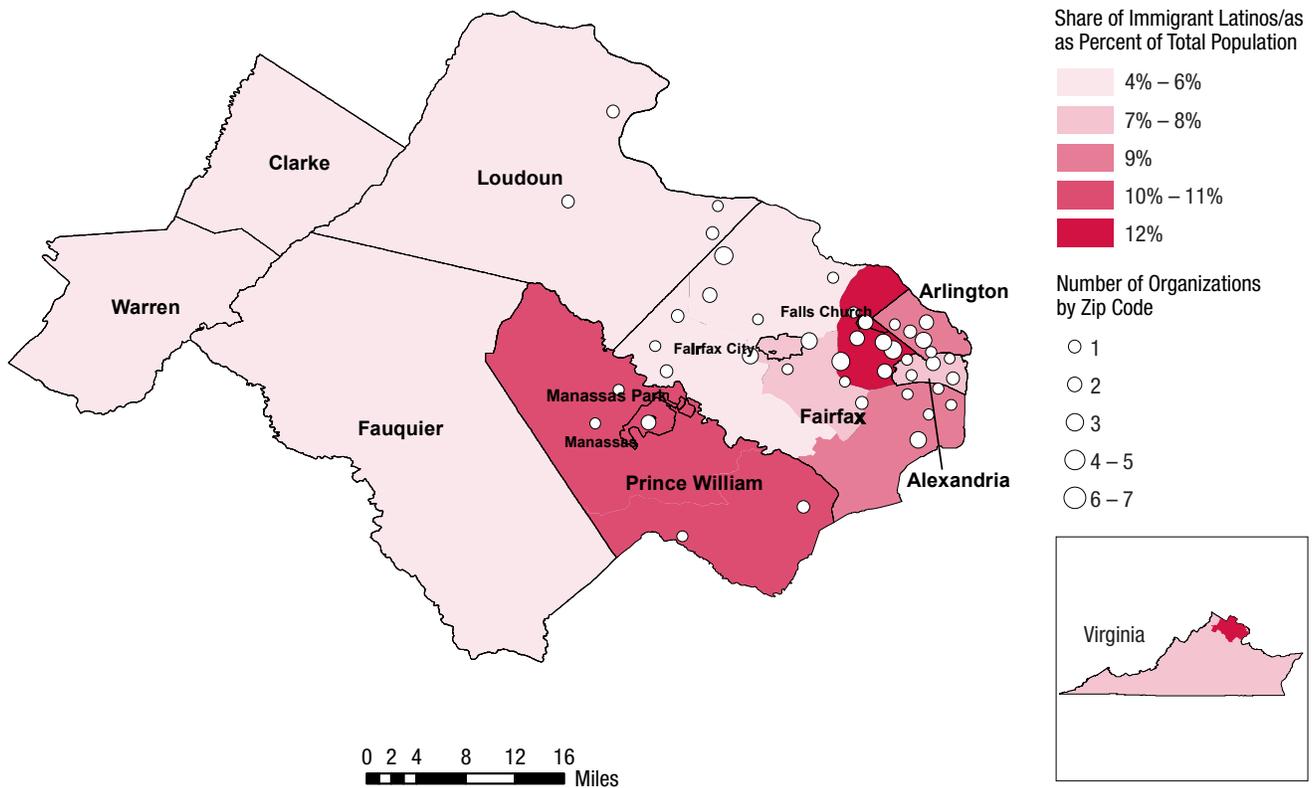
### **Northern Virginia**

Situated to the south and west of Washington, DC, Northern Virginia (NOVA) represents the most densely populated and affluent region in the state of Virginia (U.S. Department of Commerce 2008b). It consists of a cluster of counties and independent cities, although the exact boundaries of the region are defined in different ways. One definition includes four counties (Arlington, Fairfax, Loudoun, and Prince William) and five cities (Alexandria, Fairfax, Falls Church, Manassas, and Manassas Park) that lie within the Washington, DC, metropolitan statistical area, which also includes some local jurisdictions in Maryland, the District of Columbia, and West Virginia.<sup>11</sup> For analytical purposes, this report uses a broader definition of NOVA that includes three additional counties within the Washington, DC, metropolitan statistical area: Clarke, Fauquier, and Warren (see Map 2).

Like Atlanta, NOVA (and the broader Washington region) experienced an economic boom in the 1990s and early 2000s that spurred substantial population growth among both the native- and foreign-born populations. As of 2008, 519,781 foreign-born persons (23 percent of the total population) lived in NOVA, compared with 206,865 foreign-born individuals (12 percent of the overall population) in 1990 (U.S. Department of Commerce 2008a; U.S. Department of Commerce 1990).<sup>12</sup> Immigrants made up 23 percent of NOVA's total population in 2008, slightly higher than the Washington metropolitan statistical area as a whole (20 percent; U.S. Department of Commerce 2008a).

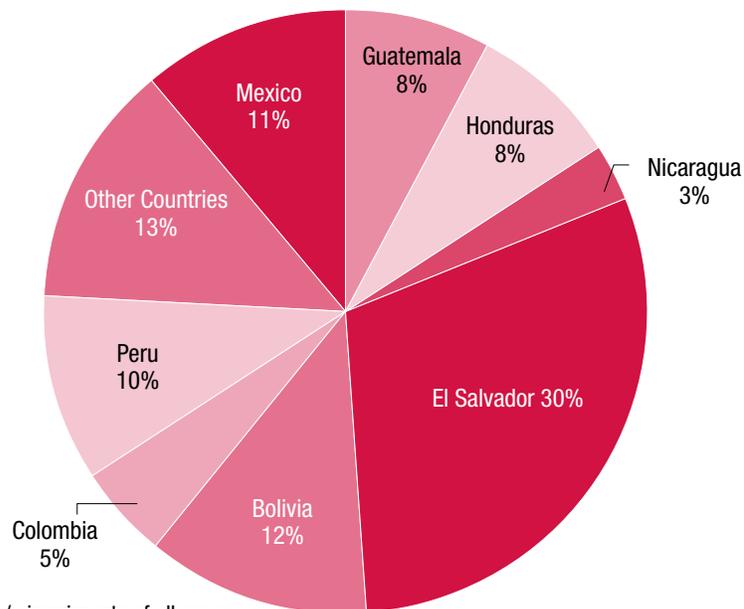
The immigrant population in Northern Virginia is racially and ethnically very diverse. In contrast to the United States as a whole, where an estimated 53 percent of the foreign-born population comes from Latin America and the Caribbean<sup>13</sup> (the majority from Mexico), NOVA does not have a dominant immigrant group (U.S. Department of Commerce 2008a). Immigrants come to the region from all over the world, including Central America (18 percent), South America (12 percent), India (12 percent), Africa (11 percent), Korea (7 percent), and Vietnam (7 percent). Among Latin American immigrants, the largest groups arrive from El Salvador (30 percent), Bolivia (12 percent), Mexico (11 percent), Peru (10 percent), and Guatemala and Honduras (8 percent each; Figure 4, Table 3).

**Map 2. Advocacy and Service Providers by Latino/a Immigrant Population, Northern Virginia, by County**



Source: Institute for Women’s Policy Research analysis of 2008 IPUMS American Community Survey (ACS) and of data from 2009-2010 IWPR interviews.

**Figure 4. Countries of Origin of Latino/a Immigrants in Northern Virginia, 2008**



Notes: These data include Latino/a immigrants of all ages.

Percentages may not add to 100 percent due to rounding.

Source: Institute for Women’s Policy Research analysis of 2008 IPUMS American Community Survey (ACS).

**Table 3. Countries of Origin of Latino/a Immigrants in Northern Virginia, 2008**

	Total		Male		Female	
	No.	Percent	No.	Percent	No.	Percent
Mexico	18,969	11%	10,303	11%	8,666	11%
Guatemala	14,385	8%	9,592	10%	4,793	6%
Honduras	14,288	8%	8,019	9%	6,269	8%
Nicaragua	5,678	3%				
El Salvador	51,393	30%	27,920	30%	23,473	30%
Bolivia	19,897	12%	9,888	11%	10,009	13%
Colombia	7,790	5%			4,482	6%
Peru	17,845	10%	9,236	10%	8,609	11%
Other Countries	22,052	13%				
Total	172,297	100%	93,719	100%	78,578	100%

Notes: Blank cells indicate insufficient sample size to reliably estimate these figures.

These data include Latino/a immigrants of all ages.

Percentages may not add to 100 percent due to rounding.

Source: Institute for Women's Policy Research analysis of 2008 IPUMS American Community Survey (ACS).

Within the last 10 years, three counties in Northern Virginia—Fairfax, Loudoun, and Prince William—have experienced rapid demographic change stemming from immigration, whereas other NOVA jurisdictions (Arlington and Alexandria) have experienced almost no growth in their foreign-born populations (de Leon et al. 2009; U.S. Department of Commerce 2008a; U.S. Department of Commerce 2000). Due to affordable housing prices and ample job opportunities in industries such as retail, construction, and food services, many immigrants have settled farther from Washington, DC, in what some researchers call the region's "outer" counties (de Leon et al. 2009; Singer, Wilson, and DeRenzis 2009). The presence of new immigrants has transformed these areas. In Prince William County, the foreign-born population grew from 11 percent of the county's total population in 2000 to 20 percent in 2008. During the same period, the foreign-born population grew from 11 percent to 19 percent in Loudoun County (U.S. Department of Commerce 2000; U.S. Department of Commerce 2008a). In Fairfax County the foreign-born population increased from 11 percent in 2000 to 28 percent in 2008 (U.S. Department of Commerce 2000; U.S. Department of Commerce 2008b). This substantial growth has significantly changed the social and economic landscape of these three counties in a short period of time.

Like many other places with rapidly growing immigrant populations, some localities in NOVA have responded by introducing restrictive policies aimed at undocumented immigrants. Police departments or sheriff's offices within Loudoun County, Manassas City (an independent city situated within Prince William County), the town of Herndon (within Fairfax County), and Prince William County have all implemented 287(g) agreements that grant certain law enforcement officials the authority to enforce federal immigration laws (U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement 2010). Moreover, Herndon made national news in 2005 when the town became embroiled in controversy over the establishment of a local center for day laborers. Two local organizations were created to oppose the center (Singer, Wilson, and DeRenzis 2009). National anti-immigrant groups also targeted it with threats and protests (Leahy 2006; Thomas 2005).<sup>14</sup> Very quickly, residents voted out of office the mayor and council members who had approved the use of public funds for the center's opening (Migration Policy Institute 2007; Price and Singer 2008; Pritchard 2008). The new elected officials shut it down, a move that local day laborers and their supporters publicly protested (Barakat 2007).

In 2007 Prince William County also received national attention when its Board of County Supervisors introduced the first of several resolutions designed to address the issue of illegal immigration to the county. The resolution required County staff to deny certain social services to undocumented immigrants and declared that police must inquire into the immigration status of those who have been detained, including at traffic stops, if there was “probable cause” to suspect they may be undocumented (Guterbock et al. 2009).<sup>15</sup> The resolution in Prince William County subsequently underwent revisions that scaled back its harsh rhetoric, yet the strong anti-immigrant sentiment conveyed in its original form made a powerful impression (Guterbock et al. 2009; Singer, Wilson, and DeRenzi 2009). This impression reached far beyond the local area. According to one respondent in IWPR’s study, the legislation passed in Prince William County—and the support it received from many residents in the area—led the county to become known in El Salvador as *el condado maldito* (the damned county).

The controversy over immigration in Prince William, Herndon, and Loudoun counties and the restrictive policies passed in these areas contrast with what has taken place in other NOVA jurisdictions. In general, Arlington and Alexandria have a reputation as more “immigrant friendly.” Following the resolutions passed in Prince William County in 2007, Arlington’s county board crafted its own resolution that welcomed all immigrants regardless of their immigration status and called for the enactment of state and federal policies that would “promote the integration of immigrants into society in a way that provides procedures for employment and access to services for which they are eligible” (Arlington County Board 2009). The City of Alexandria also adopted a resolution stating that immigrants make Alexandria and the United States “stronger and more economically successful” and that “it is not the role of state or local governments to assume federal responsibility for immigration law” (City of Alexandria 2007).

The markedly different immigration-related policies that have passed in the various NOVA jurisdictions illustrate the controversial nature of immigration. In the Northern Virginia jurisdictions that have experienced the most tension, the debate has centered largely on the issue of legal status. While the numbers of undocumented immigrants in any given area are difficult to determine, one study estimates that approximately 300,000 undocumented immigrants live in the state of Virginia (compared with 475,000 in Georgia and 500,000 in Arizona; Passel and Cohn 2009). The legislative actions of Prince William and Loudoun counties serve as examples of how, in the absence of a reform of the immigration system at the national level, the issue of illegal immigration is often addressed by local and state legislative bodies. While the struggles in particular NOVA jurisdictions have received national attention, the media most recently have focused on the state in which IWPR’s third research site is located: Arizona. Within this state, Phoenix—the capital and largest city—often stands at the center of this news for the responses of its residents and public officials to the area’s experience with immigration.

## Phoenix

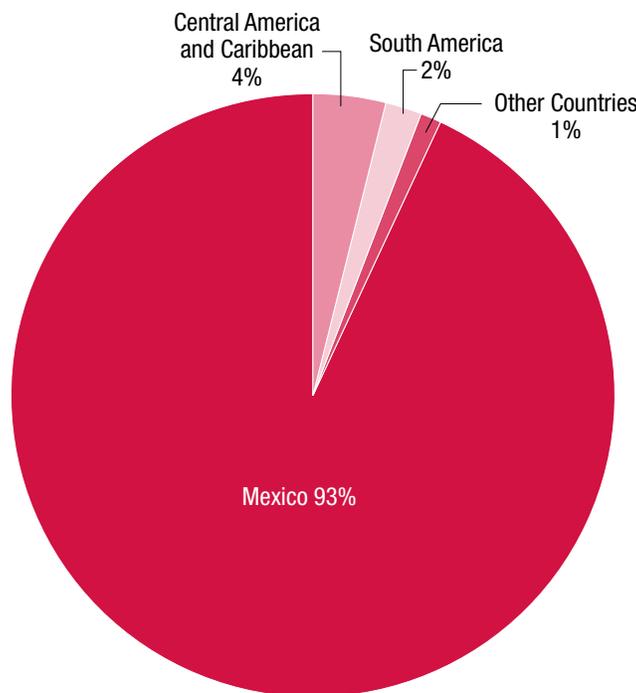
One of the most rapidly growing metropolitan areas in the nation, Phoenix has a long history as a place that is home to Latin American individuals and families (Oberle and Li 2008). Unlike in Atlanta, where the presence of Latinos/as represents a relatively new phenomenon, Latin Americans have lived in the Phoenix area since the early years of its history (Luckingham 1994). In the 1870s, the foreign-born population in the state of Arizona, composed largely of Mexicans, made up 60 percent of the total population (U.S. Department of Commerce 1870). This percentage declined significantly in the following years. For most of the twentieth century, Mexicans continued to represent the area’s largest minority group in Arizona but constituted a much smaller share of the population (Luckingham 1994).

Despite the fact that Latin American residents have lived in Phoenix for many years, the city has not always been a major immigrant gateway. In the 1990s, however, the immigrant population in the Phoenix-Mesa metropolitan area grew dramatically, from 161,830 in 1990

to 457,483 in 2000, making the area a leading gateway heading into the twenty-first century (Singer 2004). As of 2008, the population of foreign-born Latinos/as remained at 454,362, representing approximately 12 percent of the total population (U.S. Department of Commerce 2008a). Sixty-nine percent of the foreign-born population in Phoenix comes from Latin America and the Caribbean (U.S. Department of Commerce 2008a). Most individuals from this population (93 percent) are from Mexico; the rest come primarily from Central America and the Caribbean (4 percent) and South America (2 percent; Figure 5, Table 4). Guatemalans and Salvadorans represent the second and third largest foreign-born Latino/a groups in the Phoenix area at 1.4 and .9 percent, respectively (U.S. Department of Commerce 2008a).

As in Atlanta and NOVA, the increase in Phoenix’s immigrant population has been accompanied by substantial growth in the area’s overall population. In 1990, approximately 2.1 million people lived in the Phoenix area; by 2000, this number had reached nearly 3.1 million (U.S. Department of Commerce 1990; U.S. Department of Commerce 2000). This rapid population increase stemmed not only from economic growth that created new job opportunities, but also from the increased militarization of the Texas and California borders. In the early 1990s, the federal government launched a series of enforcement operations that increased physical barriers in places where migrants traditionally had entered the United States (Hing 2004; Massey, Durand, and Malone 2003; Zúñiga and Hernández-León 2005). Instead of deterring migrants from coming to the country, however, these initiatives pushed many individuals to cross by way of new points along the Arizona border, often traveling through treacherous desert terrain in the process (Hing 2004).

**Figure 5. Countries of Origin of Latino/a Immigrants in Phoenix, 2008**



Notes: These data include Latino/a immigrants of all ages.

Percentages may not add to 100 percent due to rounding.

Source: Institute for Women’s Policy Research analysis of 2008 IPUMS American Community Survey (ACS).

**Table 4. Countries of Origin of Latino/a Immigrants in Phoenix, 2008**

	Total		Male		Female	
	No.	Percent	No.	Percent	No.	Percent
Mexico	421,183	93%	232,661	93%	188,522	92%
Central America and Caribbean	18,174	4%				
South America	9,087	2%				
Other Countries	4,543	1%				
Total	454,362	100%	249,238	100%	205,124	100%

Notes: Blank cells indicate insufficient sample size to reliably estimate these figures.

These data include Latino/a immigrants of all ages.

Percentages may not add to 100 percent due to rounding.

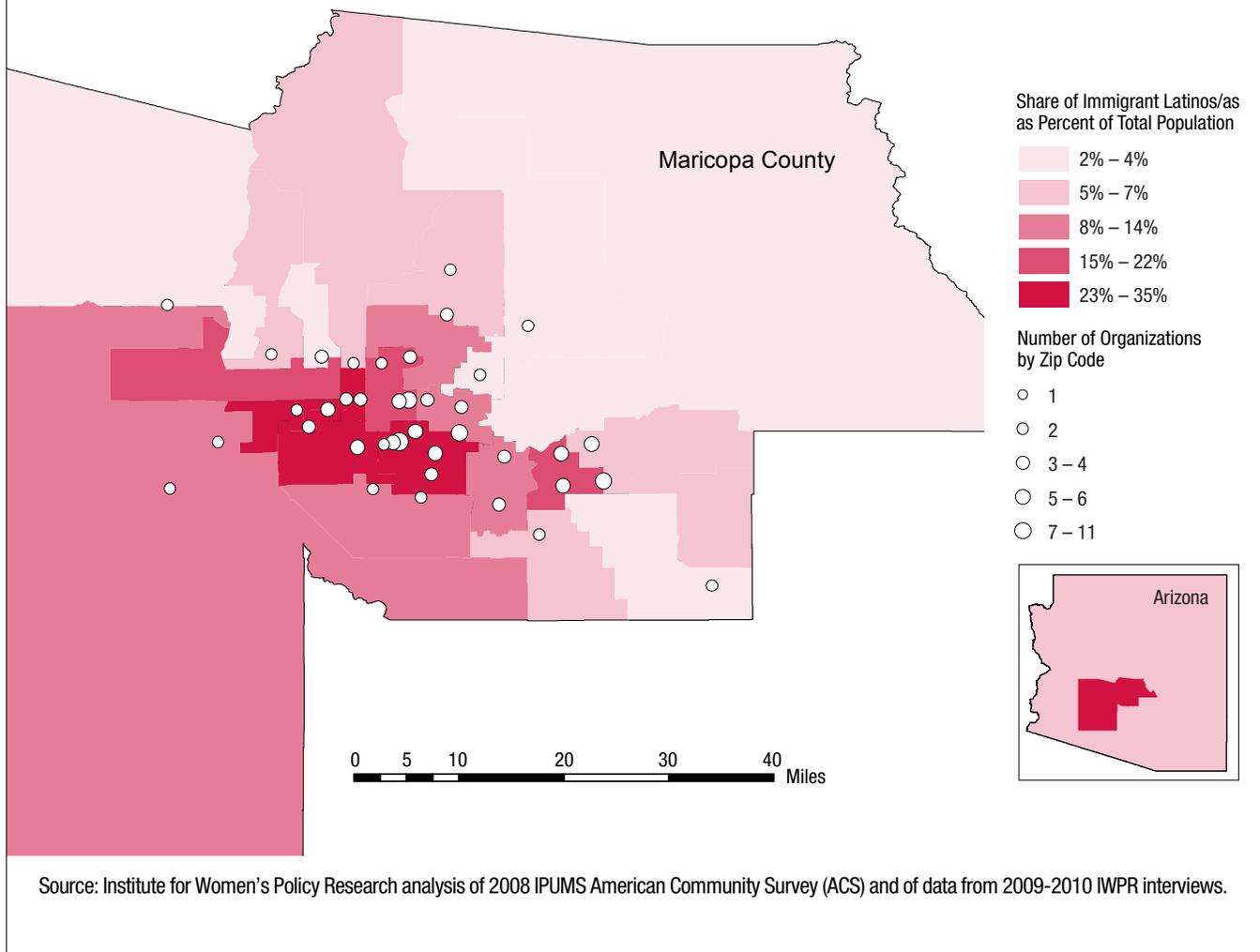
Source: Institute for Women’s Policy Research analysis of 2008 IPUMS American Community Survey (ACS).

Immigrants who come to the greater Phoenix area have diverse settlement patterns. Some arrive in Arizona directly from their countries of origin and stay in Phoenix, whereas others come to Phoenix after living in another state. Still other immigrants live in Phoenix temporarily before moving to another destination (Menjívar and Bejarano 2004). In general, Latin American immigrants in the greater Phoenix area live scattered throughout the region rather than forming distinct ethnic neighborhoods (Menjívar and Bejarano 2004). Researchers suggest that this dispersed pattern of settlement stems in part from the Phoenix metro area’s structure, which lacks a central core that clearly divides “urban” from “suburban.” Many areas in the city have a suburban feel, with low-density neighborhoods and affordable housing (Oberle and Li 2008; Skop and Menjívar 2001).

As the foreign-born population in the Phoenix area has grown in recent years, tensions and controversy surrounding issues of immigration—including border security, immigration policies, and the role of police in enforcing immigration laws—have come to a head. This controversy has led to the proliferation of anti-immigrant policies and legislation, giving Arizona a reputation as “ground zero” in the national immigration debate. In particular, Joe Arpaio, the sheriff of Maricopa County, in which the Phoenix metro area is located, has gained national notoriety for conducting indiscriminate raids or so-called “crime sweeps” in largely Latino/a neighborhoods (Markon and McCrummen 2010). Calling himself “America’s toughest sheriff” (Markon and McCrummen 2010), Arpaio leads an office that has, according to a July 2010 news report, initiated 26,146 forced departures from the country since 2007 (Wright 2010). This number represents approximately one-fourth of the national total of 115,841 immigrants deported by law enforcement agencies that participate, as does Arpaio’s office, in the federal 287(g) program that designates local and state officers to enforce immigration laws (Wright 2010).<sup>16</sup>

Other pieces of anti-immigrant legislation passed in Arizona have made national news in recent years. For example, in 2004 the Arizona legislature approved Proposition 200, which requires anyone registering to vote or apply for public benefits to provide proof of citizenship and makes it a misdemeanor for public officials to fail to report individuals whom they suspect are undocumented (Arizona State Legislature 2004). In April 2010, Arizona passed the controversial law SB 1070, which requires officials to investigate the immigration status of individuals they lawfully stop, detain, or arrest if there is reason to suspect these individuals are in the country illegally (Arizona State Legislature 2010a). While supporters of the law argue that it is necessary to decrease illegal immigration, opponents counter that it mandates racial profiling.<sup>17</sup> Less than a month after passing SB 1070, the state of Arizona approved another controversial piece of legislation, HB 2281. Often referred to as the “ethnic studies law,” HB 2281 prohibits courses in public schools that are designed mainly for students of a particular ethnic group or “advocate for ethnic solidarity” (Arizona State Legislature 2010b).

**Map 3. Advocacy and Service Providers by Latino/a Immigrant Population, Phoenix**



The many restrictive policies that Arizona legislators have proposed and passed, with considerable support from native-born residents both in Arizona and around the country, has placed the state squarely at the center of the national immigration debate, earning it a reputation as the nation’s “anti-immigrant laboratory” (Miller 2010). Not long after the governor of Arizona signed SB 1070 into law, legislators in more than 25 other states, including Georgia and Virginia, declared their intent to introduce similar legislation (Immigration Works USA 2010). Immigrant rights advocates around the nation are organizing to block this legislation and communicate the multiple ways in which they believe it violates the civil rights of immigrants and threatens immigrants’ safety and well-being.

During one year between 2009 and 2010, IWPR interviewed by phone and conducted in-person interviews with leaders and workers in a number of nonprofit organizations and congregations involved in the struggle to advance immigrants’ rights and well-being. These organizations represent a range of backgrounds and perspectives; they hold very different views of religion, politics, and other issues and concerns. Despite this diversity, the organizations in the study share a common goal: to change the social and political climate and to offer an array of resources that help meet the needs of immigrants who face barriers to economic security, safety, and good health.

The work of these organizations is shaped not only by the geographic and policy contexts in which it takes place, but also by the groups' perceptions of the particular needs and interests of immigrant women and their families. Leaders and staff members from these organizations often work closely with immigrant women, and this close connection gives them knowledge and insight about immigrant women's circumstances and concerns. Drawing on multiple telephone and in-person interviews as well as program observations, the next section explores how organizational leaders and staff members in the research sites describe the vulnerabilities and contributions of low-income Latina immigrants.

## IV. Common Challenges Faced by Latina Immigrants

IWPR's interview data and program observations reinforce and extend findings from recent literature on the circumstances of immigrant women in the United States. The organizations in the study identified several vulnerabilities faced by Latina immigrants that are commonly discussed in the general literature on women and immigration: economic hardship, violence in the home and workplace, lack of access to health care, and limited English language proficiency. These interviews, however, at times explored dimensions of the issues that are often overlooked. They also pointed to barriers that often receive less attention, such as limited access to transportation and child care.

The diversity among Latina immigrants means that not all experience these vulnerabilities or experience them in the same way. The organizations indicated, however, that many immigrant women who struggle with these obstacles are profoundly affected. Based on their work and relationships with Latina immigrants established over time (and, in some cases, their own experiences as immigrants), respondents shared with us their reflections on the causes and effects of the distinctive challenges that shape many immigrant women's lives. These reflections point to both the seriousness of these challenges and some possibilities for responding in ways that promote positive change.

### Limited Income and Poverty

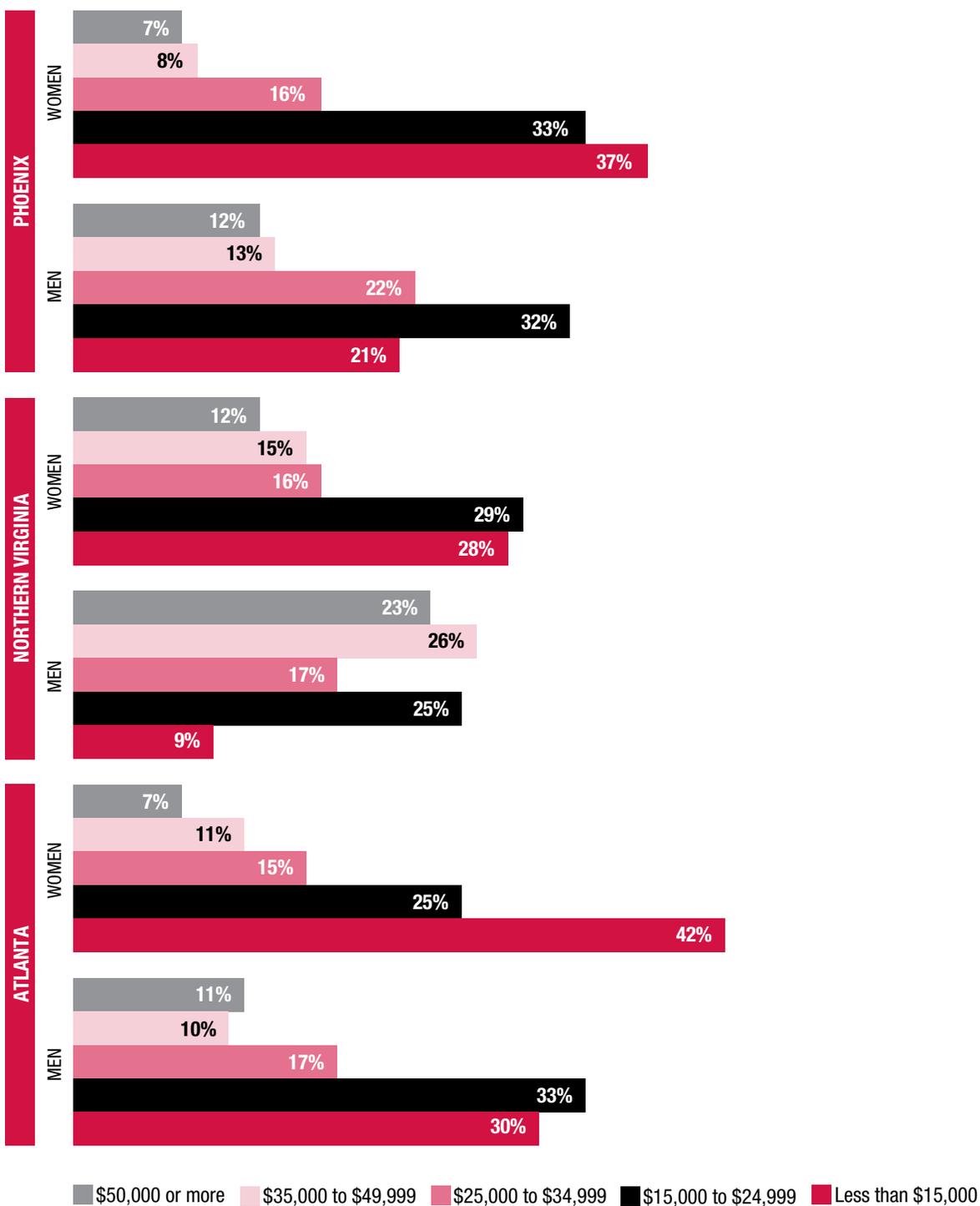
Respondents identified limited income as a significant obstacle faced by many of the Latina immigrants their organizations assist. A staff member at one nonprofit organization in Phoenix noted that “a lot of our immigrant families do live in pockets here in Phoenix, and those pockets, because they are by-and-large poverty-stricken, are exposed to a lot more risk factors.” Similarly, a respondent who works for a nonprofit organization in Atlanta observed that for her foreign-born Latina clients, “economics is a big issue because what we see is they don't even have two dollars to take the bus.” And a pastor in NOVA reported that many of his Latina congregants “are worried because they don't have enough money for anything, for the rent.”

Consistent with these statements, IWPR analysis of data from the 2008 ACS finds that in NOVA, 28 percent of Latina immigrants age 16 and older who are employed have incomes of less than \$15,000 per year (compared with 9 percent of Latino immigrants, 14 percent of U.S.-born women, and 9 percent of U.S.-born men). The percentage of Latina immigrants with incomes of less than \$15,000 per year is somewhat higher in Phoenix (37 percent, compared with 21 percent of Latino immigrants, 20 percent of U.S.-born women, and 13 percent of U.S. born men), and still higher in Atlanta (42 percent for Latina immigrants, compared with 30 percent of Latino immigrants, 20 percent of U.S.-born women, and 12 percent of U.S.-born men; Figure 6, Table 5).

Although the economic resources of Latina immigrants vary across the research sites, poverty is a significant challenge for this population in all three areas and in the U.S. as a whole. In NOVA, 15 percent of Latina immigrants live in poverty, and 20 percent have income levels commonly referred to as “near” poverty.<sup>18</sup> The percentages of Latina immigrants that live in poverty or are “near poor” in the other sites are higher: In Atlanta, 25 percent live below and 35 percent live near the poverty line; in Phoenix, 30 percent of Latina immigrants live in poverty and 35 percent are near poor (Figure 7).

Despite the relatively high percentages of foreign-born Latinas living in or near poverty, very few women in this demographic group in the research areas, regardless of citizenship status, receive public benefits such as cash assistance or food stamps. In fact, the federal policies that regulate cash assistance (Temporary Assistance for Needy Families, or TANF) and

**Figure 6. Total Income for Employed Latino/a Immigrants, 16 Years and Older, by Sex and Research Site, 2008**



Notes: Total income includes each respondent's total pre-tax personal income (including losses) from all sources for the past 12 months. Amounts are expressed in current dollars.

Percentages may not add to 100 percent due to rounding.

Source: Institute for Women's Policy Research analysis of 2008 IPUMS American Community Survey (ACS).

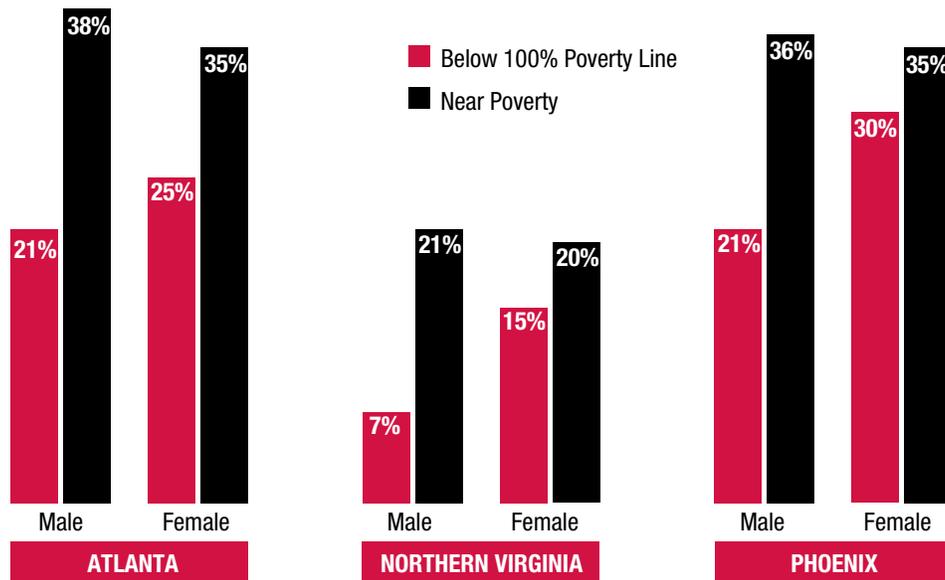
**Table 5. Total Income for the Employed Native-Born Population, 16 Years and Older, by Sex and Research Site, 2008**

Total Personal Income	Atlanta		Northern Virginia		Phoenix	
	All Native-Born Men	All Native-Born Women	All Native-Born Men	All Native-Born Women	All Native-Born Men	All Native-Born Women
Less than 15,000	12%	20%	9%	14%	13%	20%
\$15,000 to \$24,999	10%	15%	5%	10%	11%	15%
\$25,000 to \$34,999	13%	16%	5%	9%	14%	17%
\$35,000 to \$49,999	18%	19%	12%	15%	19%	22%
\$50,000 or more	47%	29%	69%	52%	43%	25%

Note: Percentages may not add to 100 percent due to rounding.

Source: Institute for Women’s Policy Research analysis of 2008 IPUMS American Community Survey (ACS).

**Figure 7. Poverty Status of Latino/a Immigrants by Research Site, 2008**



Notes: These data include Latino/a immigrants of all ages.

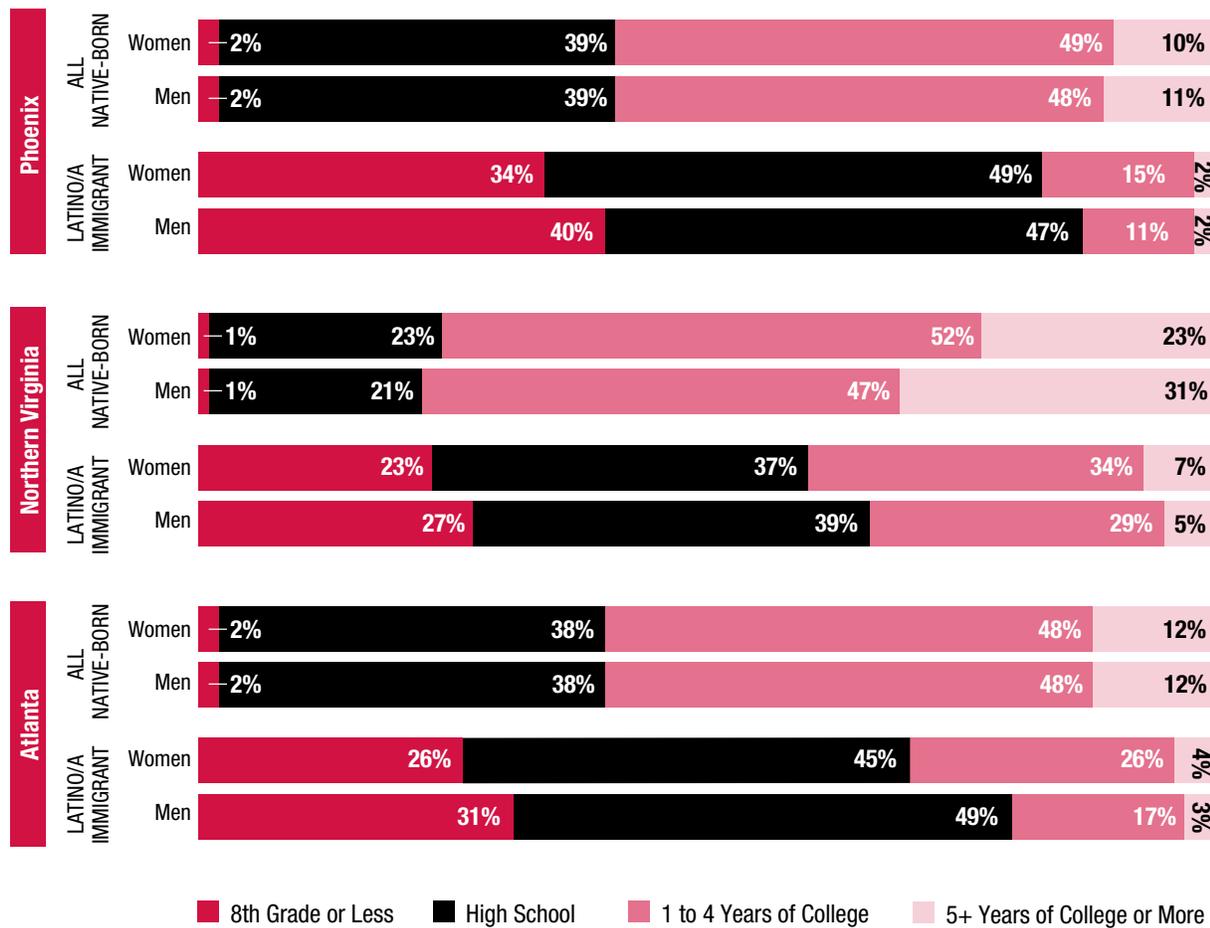
Percentages may not add to 100 percent due to rounding.

Source: Institute for Women’s Policy Research analysis of 2008 IPUMS American Community Survey (ACS).

aid for the low-income disabled and elderly through Supplemental Security Income, or SSI)<sup>19</sup> include restrictions that disqualify undocumented as well as some documented immigrants (National Immigration Law Center 2010). In Atlanta and Northern Virginia, no more than one percent of foreign-born Latinas receives income from either program (U.S. Department of Commerce 2008a). In Phoenix, the percentages are nearly the same. Less than one percent of foreign-born Latinas have income from SSI, and two percent receive cash assistance (U.S. Department of Commerce 2008a).

The limited economic resources of Latina immigrants may be due in part to relatively low levels of educational access and attainment. As Figure 8 shows, Latina immigrants age 25 and older in the research sites have slightly higher levels of educational attainment than their

**Figure 8. Educational Attainment of Latino/a Immigrants 25 Years and Older by Sex and Research Site, 2008**



Note: Percentages may not add to 100 percent due to rounding.

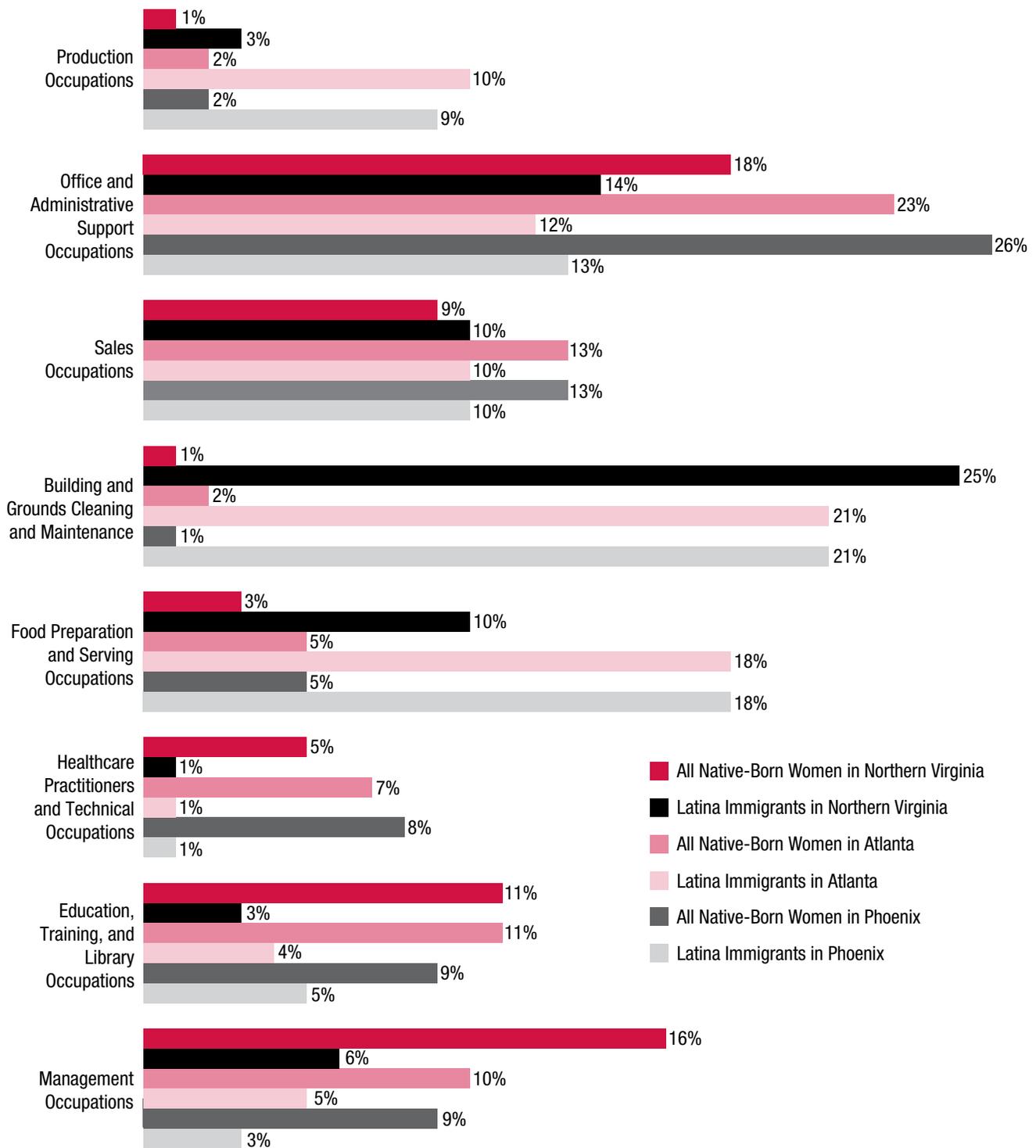
Source: Institute for Women’s Policy Research analysis of 2008 IPUMS American Community Survey (ACS).

male counterparts, but significantly lower levels than both native-born women and men. As several respondents pointed out, these generally low levels of education make it difficult for Latino/a immigrants to find jobs that provide wages adequate to support themselves and their families.

Latina immigrants who participate in the labor force remain concentrated in low-wage jobs. Across the research sites, the majority of employed Latina immigrants work in industries such as cleaning and maintenance, food preparation, and office and administrative support (Figure 9). These jobs often come with minimal pay and poor working conditions. As one union organizer in Phoenix observed, “The explosion of jobs here...was mostly in service jobs...Most immigrant women are in these service jobs don’t pay a living wage or a housing wage, that just pay the minimum wage, and often they have no benefits.”

At the same time, respondents indicated that although some Latina immigrants who participate in their group’s programs or services hold low-wage jobs, others struggle to find work at all, partly due to the economic recession. The pastor of a Pentecostal church in NOVA remarked of the immigrant women in his congregation: “Now they are unemployed, now most of them have lost their jobs, or maybe they are working but just for a few hours a week and that is causing a series of imbalances, obviously economic ones, but also emotional ones.”

**Figure 9. Occupations of Latina Immigrants and Native-Born Women, 16 Years and Older, by Research Site, 2008**



Notes: The selected occupations are based on occupational concentration for Latina immigrants and all native-born women. Building and grounds cleaning and maintenance, food preparation and serving occupations, office and administrative support occupations, and sales occupations are the top four occupations for Latina immigrants. For all native-born women, the top four occupations are office and administrative support occupations, sales occupations, management occupations, and education, training, and library occupations.

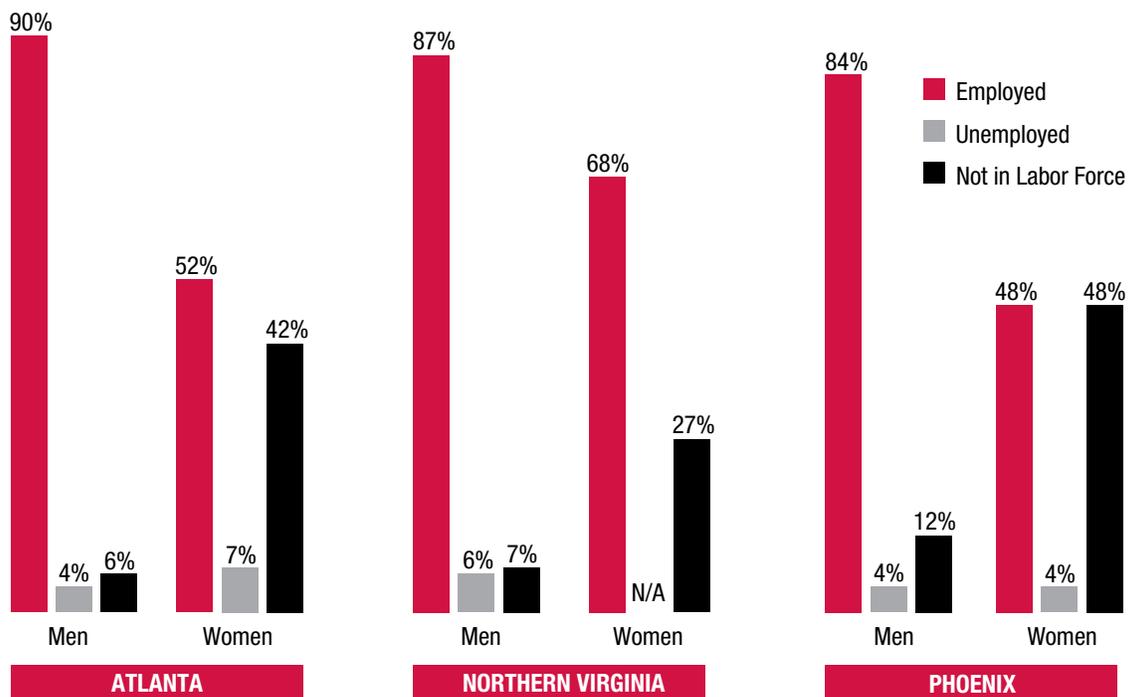
Percentages may not add to 100 percent due to rounding.

Source: Institute for Women’s Policy Research analysis of 2008 IPUMS American Community Survey (ACS).

An Episcopal priest in NOVA also reported that “a lot of people got laid off. One person who worked at the hotel whose got residency got her hours cut, cut back really badly. I mean, just about everybody.” Similarly, the director of a center that serves Latino/a families in Atlanta observed that “because of the whole anti-immigration sentiment coupled with the economic crisis, a lot of people lost their jobs. You know, if they’re in cleaning or construction. And... they’re coming to [our staff] and asking, ‘Where do you go for food? I don’t have money to pay electricity...’ they’re losing their homes, and on and on.”

Consistent with respondents’ remarks, survey data suggest that a substantial number of Latina immigrants are not employed outside the home. As Figure 10 shows, 27 percent of Latina immigrants in Northern Virginia, 42 percent in Atlanta, and 48 percent in Phoenix do not participate in the labor force (less than 7 percent in each area are unemployed but searching for work). Even though these data likely do not fully account for work performed in the informal economy, they point to the same reality that respondents in the study identified: A significant percentage of Latina immigrants are not working outside the home.<sup>20</sup>

**Figure 10. Employment Status Among Latino/a Immigrants, 16 Years and Older, by Research Site, 2008**



Notes: N/A indicates insufficient sample size to reliably estimate these figures.

Percentages may not add to 100 percent due to rounding.

Source: Institute for Women’s Policy Research analysis of 2008 IPUMS American Community Survey (ACS).

While some respondents explained this reality by pointing to the effects of the economic recession, others indicated that low-income immigrant women in the research sites often do not work because they have limited access to transportation and child care (several respondents also stated that their Latina clients and congregants do not work because they want to stay home with their children). Some individuals said that they know of Latina immigrants who are unemployed because they do not want to leave their homes, fearing the potential consequences of current immigration enforcement practices.

Most respondents commented on the economic circumstances of their foreign-born Latina clients and congregants, yet the views expressed were not unanimous. Many respondents expressed concern about the struggles low-income Latina immigrants face in finding jobs that provide benefits and an income sufficient to support themselves and their families. One respondent voiced a different viewpoint, however. Focusing on the presence of undocumented immigrants and the negative effect she believes their presence has on the economy, she criticized certain employers: “There are too many people out there giving jobs to people that have no documents.” Still other respondents described connections between economic problems and another challenge that some of their foreign-born Latina clients and church members encounter: violence in the home and/or workplace.

## **Violence**

Feeling safe in our communities, neighborhoods, and schools is integral to the well-being of women, men, and children. Without a sense of safety, the ability to thrive is significantly compromised. For some Latina immigrants in the three research sites, however, the threat or experience of violence is a daily reality. More than half of the 62 organizations interviewed in person indicated that violence is a serious problem for some of their Latina immigrant clients and church members. Little variation exists in responses across the three regions (14 organizations in Atlanta, 12 in Northern Virginia, and 10 in Phoenix identified violence as a serious challenge) or among the different types of groups interviewed (congregation or parish, religious nonprofit, “secular” nonprofit, and governmental agency).

Most organizations that spoke about violence focused on domestic violence, a pattern of behavior in which one person seeks to dominate, isolate, and control the other (Stark 2007). Thirteen organizations, however, reported that violence in the workplace also represents a serious challenge for some Latina immigrants in their area. Several respondents stated that the violence their female immigrant clients and church members encounter both in the home and workplace might involve physical, verbal, or emotional abuse. In some instances, it entails multiple forms of harm.

Study participants pointed to several factors that increase Latina immigrants’ vulnerability to violence and impede their access to resources that might help. First, the economic circumstances of many Latina immigrants can leave them without the means to support themselves (and, in some cases, their children), making it difficult for them to extricate themselves from violence at home and in the workplace. Respondents expressed concern that immigrant women who work in the informal economy are especially vulnerable to violence and may have few resources with which to address the harm. One individual, for example, spoke of a client who fought to retain her job after two co-workers sexually assaulted her and their supervisor, whom she told of the assault, threatened to fire her. The income from her work remained a vital source of support for her family.

In addition to economic security, respondents identified the issue of legal status as a second factor that can affect the ability of some immigrant women to extricate themselves from violent relationships and contexts. One individual said that some women who are legal immigrants but do not speak English well fear they will be unable to communicate their status to the police, making them reluctant to call for help. Consistent with other research findings, respondents also reported that the abusive partners of undocumented women often use the immigration status of these women as a tool of coercion, threatening them with deportation or undermining their efforts to gain lawful permanent residence (Villalón 2010). As a result, undocumented women may fear that contacting the police will prove unhelpful or even lead to their removal from the country (Orloff 2002; Orloff et al. 2003).

Respondents indicated that fear of police is not unfounded. One person in Atlanta spoke of an undocumented client who was asked by a 911 operator about her immigration status

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*“... perpetrators know that and they say things like, ‘No one wants you here, you know? Look around you, no one wants you here. So who are you going to tell?’”*

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*“People are terrified. Immigration reform has to happen because I think that if it doesn’t it’s just going to mean more violence against these women and fewer reports...”*

when she called for help to deal with a domestic violence situation. Another respondent in Atlanta remarked,

So many hateful things are being said about immigrants in the public...And so perpetrators know that and they say things like, “No one wants you here, you know? Look around you, no one wants you here. So who are you going to tell?” Or, “I’ll report you to immigration.” We’ve had clients who’ve been reported to immigration. We’ve had people who’ve been reported to the police. That just didn’t happen before, and immigration didn’t respond to a phone call like that. Now there’s a lot more resources for that to happen.

Respondents pointed out that the distrust of law enforcement officials is intensified by the immigration enforcement activities of local and state police, especially through programs such as 287(g). Created with the ostensible goal of facilitating the arrest of dangerous criminals, Section 287(g) of the Immigration and Nationality Act allows the federal government to enter into agreements with state and local law officials, authorizing designated officers to enforce federal immigration laws following a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) (U.S. Department of Homeland Security 2010). While supporters of the program argue that it helps law enforcement officers to remove foreign-born criminals who pose a threat to public safety, civil rights advocates and many service providers contend that it has led to racial profiling and has been used to target undocumented immigrants who have not committed serious crimes. This leads immigrant communities to distrust law enforcement officers, making it difficult for crime victims, especially undocumented women who experience abuse and harassment, to seek help. As one respondent remarked, “People are terrified. Immigration reform has to happen because I think that if it doesn’t it’s just going to mean more violence against these women and fewer reports...they just wouldn’t go to the police right now because we have 287(g).”

Despite the many challenges and vulnerabilities that Latina immigrants face in responding to violence in the home and at work, several respondents described a positive development. Some immigrant women they work with have benefited from policy changes over the past 20 years designed to help female immigrant victims of violence. Since the passage of the Violence against Women Act in 1994, legislators have sought to address the legal obstacles experienced by immigrant women who are domestic violence survivors by expanding their access to public benefits and creating several ways for these women to obtain access to legal immigrant status without the knowledge or cooperation of their spouses.<sup>21</sup> Several service providers explained, however, that delays in processing the applications for these legal protections can create hardships for some women; undocumented immigrants, for example, do not have work authorization or access to benefits while their applications are pending.

Respondents also pointed to several other ways in which many immigrant women continue to “fall through the cracks” of these provisions, for various reasons. Some are not familiar with the legal options available to them, and others may not write well enough to effectively communicate about their abusive circumstances. One respondent at an organization that assists immigrant women who are domestic violence survivors also observed that some women lack the documentation required to take advantage of available legal protections because authorities in their home country ignored the violence. She said,

[One of our clients] who just had her court hearing earlier this year; her husband was a policeman...and she did go to the police, she went to his supervisor, she tried to move to a shelter, but he always found her, you know, she had no protection. Obviously, documentation helps but sometimes they don’t have any because it would’ve been fruitless.

The social and economic vulnerabilities immigrant women face both in their home countries and in the United States are compounded in some instances by their disconnection from social networks that could serve as a resource for help. Several respondents observed that many of their female immigrant clients have left their friends and extended families behind in their home countries, forcing them to navigate the legal system or seek other forms of assistance in a place where they know few people and may not speak or understand English very

well. By contrast, their abusive partners may have stronger social networks, a better grasp of English language, and a clearer sense of how “the system” works.

The various factors discussed by respondents when addressing the issue of violence reveal, as one individual put it, the “multiple oppressions” that affect low-income Latina immigrants and render them vulnerable to violent harm. Often silenced by broad social and cultural forces, immigrant women who are abused may remain reluctant to speak of their experiences, making it all the more important for others around them to stay attentive to their circumstances and needs. One respondent who works for a secular nonprofit organization in Atlanta that assists immigrant women who are domestic violence survivors remarked,

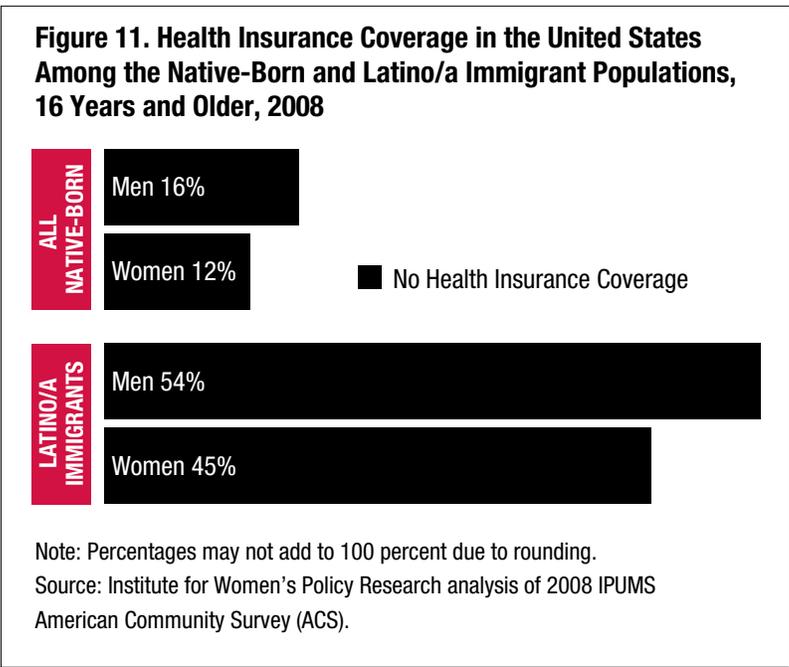
If you’re in a situation like that and you don’t have a car, you don’t have money and education, you’re not going to come to anybody and be like, “Hey, I’m in a domestic violence situation.” So you’ve got to be aware yourself because they’re ashamed of it, they’re embarrassed, they’re terrified of getting out, and sometimes staying can be the only way for them to survive.

### Lack of Access to Health Care

Affordable health care is essential to promoting good health and enabling individuals to live a secure and productive life. Study participants in the three research sites, however, indicated that adequate health care often remains elusive for lower income Latina immigrants. They identified three central issues that have a negative effect on the health outcomes of the immigrant women they work with: a lack of access to health insurance and basic care, the unavailability of culturally and linguistically appropriate health services, and the lack of a comprehensive framework that offers preventative care as well as services to address the specific health needs of immigrant women, including reproductive health.

As Figure 11 indicates, 45 percent of foreign-born Latinas and 54 percent of foreign-born Latinos in the United States do not have health insurance, compared with 12 percent of native-born women and 16 percent of native-born men.<sup>22</sup> Study participants identified several reasons why many Latinas lack access to health insurance and services. Often, immigrant women who work outside the home have jobs that do not provide benefits. Moreover, although some immigrant women and families are eligible for a range of free or subsidized health services, they may not know about these services or understand how to access them. Respondents also indicated that although some health clinics may provide excellent care, others are less reliable. Several leaders at a church in Atlanta indicated that some of their foreign-born Latina congregants were scammed by organizations purporting to offer health services. These challenges are compounded by policy changes that have made it more difficult for immigrants, both documented and undocumented, to access government-funded health services.

The lack of access to health insurance apparently leads many immigrants to go without health care. The pastor of a Presbyterian church in Atlanta said of her low-income immigrant congregants, “Mostly what they’ll do is use the emergency room in crisis situations, and the rest of the time we’re back to the 1800s where you just don’t have any medical care.... You drink tea and honey and hope for the best.” Other respondents indicated that some Latina im-



migrants they work with often are reluctant even to seek emergency health services, fearing that the costs of treatment may be too high or that the trip to the hospital may result in an investigation of their immigration status. One person in Phoenix described a situation in which an undocumented client refused to take her son to the hospital after he injured his head:

She just kept bandaging it and bandaging it and cleaning it and cleaning it because she was afraid to go. So this kid was at risk for infection, and it did get infected. [The cut] was pretty deep in the head, and she just said, “No, I can’t go. I won’t go.”

Without access to health insurance and basic care, many Latina immigrants remain unable to acquire information that could help them understand and make decisions about health issues. Respondents indicated that immigrant women often need information not just about specific health concerns but also about how to navigate the health care system, managing tasks such as signing up for insurance and filling out medical forms. One respondent in Phoenix pointed out that many low-income Latina immigrants he knows are employed in industries where they perform physically demanding work that can lead to injury. He observed that although immigrant women who are injured at work may be eligible for workers’ compensation, they often do not have the information needed to pursue claims against their employers.

In addition to the lack of access to health insurance and basic information, a shortage of culturally and linguistically appropriate services is another reason the health needs of many Latina immigrants go unmet. Research indicates that immigrants have more positive experiences with the health care system when services are delivered in their own language, but many medical centers do not have staff members that speak multiple languages (Flores 2006). Those interviewed for IWPR’s study indicate that the lack of culturally and linguistically appropriate health services is a significant deterrent and problem for immigrant women in their local areas who need or seek care, particularly for women who are victims of violence or dealing with reproductive health concerns.

Respondents reported that many of their Latina clients and church members who do not have health insurance or access to reliable, appropriate services turn for help to community health centers and local congregations or parishes, which sometimes offer health fairs or free services from a physician. Respondents explained, however, that although community health centers offer a range of services, relying on the occasional health fair or a physician in a church can leave immigrant women without a comprehensive framework for health services that includes preventative care or treatment for conditions that require attention from a medical specialist. The director of a nonprofit organization in Phoenix remarked, “You find out you have a lump in your breast and you get an early screening and you’re concerned, but now what? I mean, where are you going to find the resources to either get it treated or removed?”

The lack of access to affordable, comprehensive health care is a problem for many immigrant women. Without access to health care, many low-income immigrant women live with treatable illnesses and forego preventative care. This places their health and well-being at risk.

### **Limited Proficiency in English**

Limited proficiency in English is an additional challenge that many Latina immigrants face. According to IWPR analysis of data from the 2008 American Community Survey, a substantial percentage of Latina immigrants in the three research sites report having limited English proficiency, with some variation among these areas. In Northern Virginia, 41 percent of Latina immigrants have limited proficiency in English (compared with 35 percent of Latino immigrants). The percentages are higher in the other two areas: In Atlanta and Phoenix, 50 percent and 53 percent of Latina immigrants do not speak English well, respectively (compared with 51 and 55 percent of Latino immigrants; Figure 12).

According to staff and leaders in the organizations studied, many of their Latina clients and church members want to learn English, but face significant barriers that hinder their efforts

to do so. Some immigrant women work two or three jobs simply to make ends meet, or stay at home caring for their children while their spouse works, leaving little time for language classes. Others do not have cars or a safe, reliable means of transportation at night when most classes are held. In addition, many of the churches and nonprofit organizations in the research sites that offer English language classes reported that they do not, for various reasons, provide child care. This makes it especially hard for immigrant women, who are most often their children’s primary caregivers, to attend.

Some respondents in the study pointed to an additional factor that can compound Latina immigrants’ struggles to learn how to speak, read, and write in English: low literacy levels in their native language. Several organizational leaders observed that although Latina immigrants in general hold a range of literacy and education levels, some of the Latina immigrants with whom they work have been unable to learn English well because of their lack of basic literacy in any language.

Respondents reported that Latina immigrants who do not learn English often find that their limited proficiency in the language affects multiple dimensions of their lives. They may struggle more than others to secure jobs that pay adequate wages and offer benefits. Without proficiency in English, immigrant women may also have a hard time communicating about a range of critical matters, such as health care, their children’s education, and legal or financial issues.

In addition, two interviewees indicated that the limited English skills of some immigrant parents can create complicated dynamics within their families. The director of a nonprofit organization in Phoenix remarked,

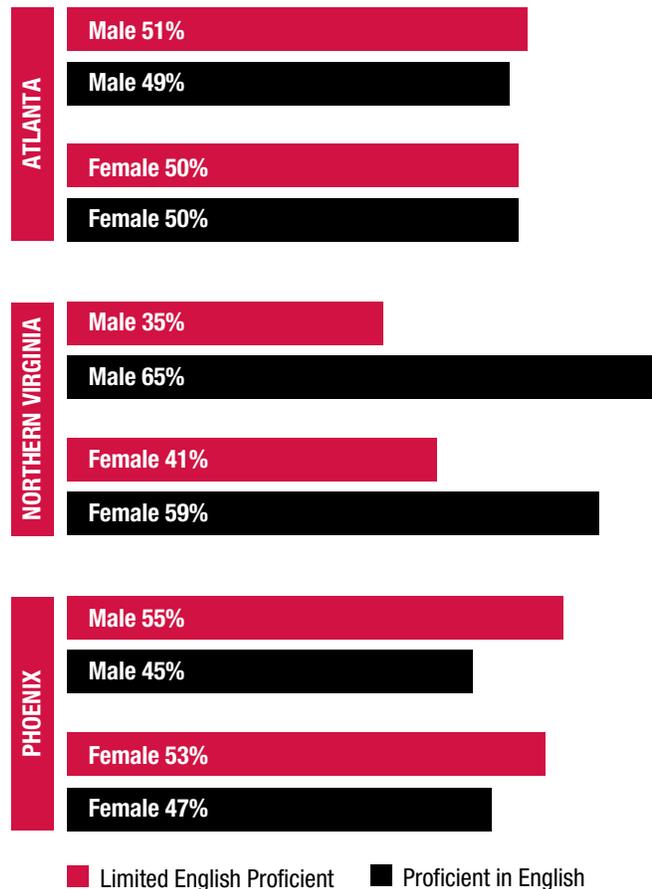
A really big thing is that often children are asked to be the interpreters for the family, and it shifts the power in the family. Now, the parents are supposed to be the ones in charge, not the kids, and because of that need for interpretation, it shifts that, and then the kids think they can do whatever they want. You know, that “Well, you can’t tell me what to do.” And so that causes huge issues in a family.

A Methodist minister in Atlanta echoed this claim:

When [immigrant parents] try to learn English and they want to practice it with their older kids, middle-school kids, or the last grades of elementary, the kids get a bit angry. “You don’t speak English well,” or “That’s not how it is said.” All these kinds of situations are difficult.

In addition, limited English proficiency reportedly leads to a sense of isolation for some immigrant women, as they struggle to communicate with colleagues, teachers, and others, often without the readily available support of family and friends who remain in their home country. This experience of isolation can be compounded by inadequate access to transportation.

**Figure 12. English Language Proficiency Among Latino/a Immigrants by Research Site, 2008**



Notes: The term “limited English proficient” refers to any person age five and older who reported speaking English “not at all” or “not well” on the American Community Survey questionnaire. Individuals who reported speaking only English or speaking English “very well” or “well” are considered proficient in English.

These data include Latino/a immigrants who are five years and older and speak a language other than English at home.

Percentages may not add to 100 percent due to rounding.

Source: Institute for Women’s Policy Research analysis of 2008 IPUMS American Community Survey (ACS).

## Inadequate Access to Transportation

Organizational leaders interviewed for the study reported that many immigrant women and families in the research sites—especially Atlanta and Phoenix—have inadequate access to transportation services, making it difficult for them to perform basic routines such as going to work, buying groceries, or attending classes and programs that may help improve their quality of life.

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*“The ones that used to drive... don’t drive anymore because they are afraid the police are going to stop them, going to take them to jail.”*

Study participants identified various reasons that transportation poses a problem for their clients and church members. First, some immigrant families do not have cars and depend on inadequate public transportation systems. Most immigrants in Atlanta, for example, live outside the urban core in areas not well-served by public transit. In Phoenix a similar problem exists, although respondents observed that the addition of a light rail has improved the mobility of local residents. At the same time, some respondents described the light rail as limited in scope and the bus system as “complicated,” “expensive,” and “unreliable.” As one person put it, “By and large, we’re not a city built on public transportation.” Another respondent pointed out an additional problem in Phoenix: The temperature can reach 120 degrees in the summer, making a walk to the bus stop or an extended wait for the bus a difficult ordeal.

Other interviewees indicated that for immigrants who have cars, transportation might pose less of a challenge, although barriers hindering their mobility remain. Some immigrants, especially those who are undocumented, are afraid to venture out in their cars, especially in jurisdictions with 287(g) agreements. From the respondents’ perspectives, the implementation of 287(g) has sharply increased the number of immigrants who are stopped by law enforcement officials while driving—often for minor infractions such as having a broken taillight—and questioned about their immigration status. One individual in the Atlanta area remarked that her undocumented clients often tell her they “have stopped driving because of their fear of being pulled over for a traffic violation and then deportation proceedings.” Another respondent said: “As soon as the 287(g) agreement hit and people started to get arrested for little things and deported, that was it, [immigrants] didn’t come out to anything. Number one they didn’t trust the police anymore.” A service provider in Atlanta noted that many of her immigrant Latina clients who are undocumented “cannot leave the house. The ones that used to drive...don’t drive anymore because they are afraid the police are going to stop them, going to take them to jail.”

A respondent in Phoenix said that immigration enforcement practices have reduced the mobility of documented as well as undocumented immigrants. She remarked,

Whether they are documented or not, it doesn’t matter. It’s just the fear of being put on the spot to ask for [their papers], because there have been a lot of real situations where immigrants, legal immigrants, are experiencing the same sort of consequences as illegal immigrants, and that provides a huge sense of fear. At one of our schools, when the first round of Sheriff Joe roundups occurred, 200 of our children in one day did not show up to school. I can tell you all 200 of those kids were not either legal or illegal. It was probably a fair combination of the two, but the fact was that their parents chose for them not to go to school.

Another factor identified by interviewees as affecting the mobility of some immigrants is the inaccessibility of driver’s licenses for those who are undocumented. Like most states, Arizona, Georgia, and Virginia have passed legislation that prohibits undocumented immigrants from obtaining licenses (National Immigration Law Center 2009). Several persons stated that the lack of a valid driver’s license, combined with immigration enforcement, has deterred some immigrants from venturing out in their cars except when necessary. One community organizer in Atlanta discussed the effect this reduced mobility has had on her work: “It’s very hard right now to work with Latinos who are struggling with immigration status because a lot of them don’t have mobility; they can’t drive because they’re scared.”

Respondents suggest that although the factors that diminish access to transportation have an effect on both men and women, they often affect women disproportionately. The director of one nonprofit organization in NOVA remarked, “Many folks don’t drive. Women tend to drive less than men.” Respondents observed that women are more likely to be at home during the day without a means of transportation while their husbands or partners go to work. One study participant in Atlanta indicated that this isolation has worsened since the economic recession began:

Now we have a worse problem because now the jobs here are not doing well, especially in construction, so the men have to go out to another [state to work]. So the women are at home 24/7. They don’t go shopping. They don’t go to any places. So [they call saying], “I am depressed.”

For immigrant women, then, limited resources for transportation can prove particularly problematic.

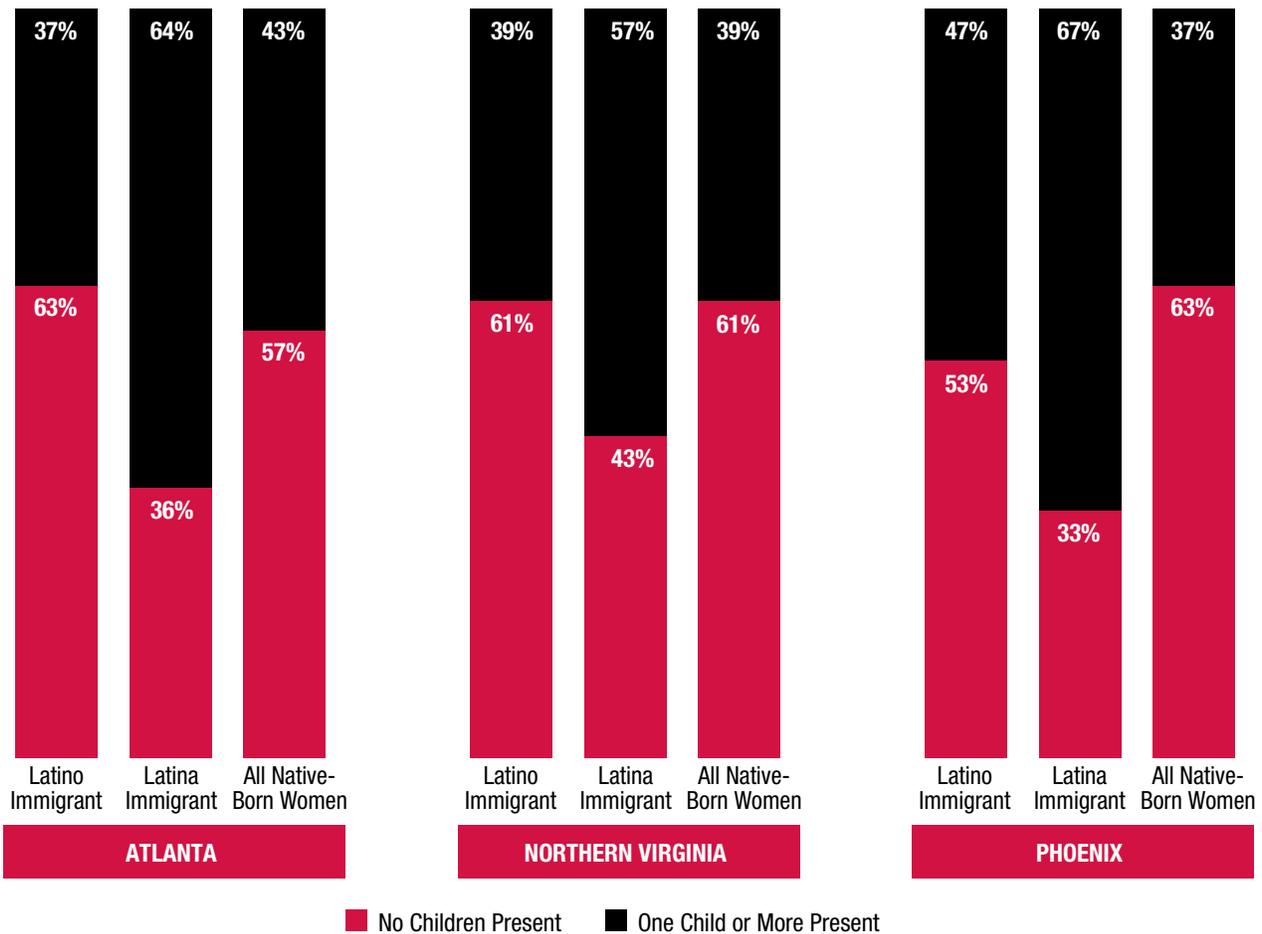
### **Lack of Affordable, Reliable Child Care**

Respondents described lack of access to affordable, reliable child care as another issue that particularly affects their Latina immigrant clients and church members, who are more likely than their male counterparts and native-born women to have children in their households. In Atlanta, 64 percent of foreign-born Latinas have children present in their household, which is significantly more than their male counterparts (37 percent) and native-born women (43 percent). Latina immigrants in Northern Virginia are also far more likely to have children in their household (57 percent) than Latino immigrants and native-born women (39 percent each). In Phoenix, the same pattern holds true: 67 percent of Latina immigrants have children in their household, compared with 47 percent of Latino immigrants and 37 percent of all native-born women (Figure 13). Interviewees often said that Latina immigrants typically bear the lion’s share of child care responsibilities even when a male spouse or partner is present, making affordable and reliable child care all the more important to immigrant women.

Several respondents observed that the lack of access to child care poses a significant problem for immigrant women who participate in the labor force. Women who work outside the home and have low-wage jobs find that the high cost of child care uses a large portion of their paycheck. As one respondent said, “Men probably have difficulty in finding a job but they do somehow survive. When it comes to women, it’s more difficult because if they find a job they will have to pay child care and then they’re not going to make any money.” Some participants indicated that their Latina clients and congregants deal with this dilemma by having a family member care for their children, but they also pointed out that many do not have an extended family network nearby to provide such support and care. One respondent reported that the lack of child care has forced some immigrant women in her area to keep their children safe by locking them in the basement for the day while they are at work.<sup>23</sup>

The lack of available child care can represent not only a barrier to women’s employment, but also an impediment to their participation in services that may improve their quality of life. A number of interviewees suggested that more immigrant women would use their organizations’ services if these groups were able to provide child care. Without this care, some women, especially those who are single parents or whose spouses work several jobs, find it difficult to attend English classes, job training programs, and other programs that might help them develop the skills necessary to acquire better-paying jobs and to navigate other aspects of life in the United States.

**Figure 13. Presence of Own Children in the Household Among the Native-Born and Latino/a Immigrant Populations, 18 Years and Older, 2008**



Notes: These data count the number of any individual's own children residing with him or her. Percentages may not add to 100 percent due to rounding.  
 Source: Institute for Women's Policy Research analysis of 2008 IPUMS American Community Survey (ACS).

### **Additional Barriers to Economic and Social Integration**

Although the challenges discussed above reflect issues commonly identified in the interviews, they were not the only difficulties described. Other barriers to immigrant women's economic and social incorporation that were mentioned include a lack of affordable housing, limited computer and other job-related skills, and discrimination.

One issue that surfaced especially frequently is intensified immigration enforcement. This issue underlies and exacerbates many of the other challenges that Latina immigrants and their families encounter. Although immigration enforcement practices can affect all immigrants, respondents indicated that they have the most severe consequences for those who are undocumented and thus face the greatest risk of detention and deportation.

#### **Immigration Raids**

When speaking about immigration enforcement, respondents described not only the implementation of 287(g) agreements but also raids and arrests that take place in neighborhoods, workplaces, homes, and other locations where Latino/a immigrants congregate. In recent years, immigration enforcement has intensified, increasing the number of immigrants arrested, detained, and deported. According to Department of Homeland Security statistics, approximately 393,000 immigrants were removed from the country in the fiscal year ending

in September 2009, compared with 359,000 in 2008 and 165,000 in 2002 (Department of Homeland Security 2009). Although the Obama administration has changed enforcement policy in ways that may mitigate some of the effects of enforcement practices on immigrants,<sup>24</sup> these practices nonetheless continue to instill fear in immigrant communities and have a significant effect on immigrants' economic and psychological security (Chaudry et al. 2010).

Respondents said that the manner in which immigrant enforcement has been carried out often terrorizes immigrants, diminishing their sense of safety and increasing their levels of anxiety and stress. For example, one pastor reported that armed police officers burst into the home of a Latino family in his congregation at 4:00 am, hooding and handcuffing those present. A different interviewee spoke of an incident in which police raided the baptism party of a Latino immigrant family in his area and used a taser on a grandfather and a pregnant woman who went to assist him. And one respondent observed that several years ago, in a jurisdiction with a reputation for welcoming immigrants, police conducted raids at a local grocery store in a largely Latino/a neighborhood.

Study participants also reported that arrests of undocumented immigrants have occurred at or near churches, which traditionally have been considered safe places. The pastor of a Pentecostal church in NOVA remarked,

A pastor, a friend of mine, a really close friend... [had] two police cars parked in front of his church on a Sunday morning to intimidate people. This has been worse, as I tell you, worse than you could imagine. Vans have been stopped—vans with the logo of the church and everything—have been stopped and people have been made to come out and they have been taken to prison. Those are the things that do not appear in the front pages of the newspapers, but they are realities.

Others shared similar stories. For example, a program director at a Methodist church in NOVA reported that “on leaving this church, the police stopped a family and asked for the documentation for all those in the car.” In Atlanta, a respondent said,

There's been a lot of racial profiling. For example, we would go to churches and try to hear about what's going on with them and they would say, “After mass, the police will sit outside of our church and wait for us to go home and then they'll pull us over. Or they'll watch what restaurants we go to after church and they'll go there.” So that's racial profiling obviously, and there's a lot of that going on... It's insane.

Respondents pointed out that such incidents leave immigrants feeling that no place is safe and few can be trusted.

### **Family Separation**

Immigration enforcement can be particularly devastating for immigrant women, who are often left behind to care for their families when their husbands and partners are detained. A respondent in Atlanta said,

Men are getting deported. And the women are left with the kids. Some of them, half of them [are] U.S.-born and half of them undocumented. And they're just in a terrible situation because the bread winner has been deported. The family is split up. They don't know what the hell to do. Somebody came in from North Carolina, a woman who sat down with us and said, “I am here because I have a group of [about 35 families in North Carolina].” The men were all deported. The women were all put on house arrest. The women couldn't work, so they said, “We want to go back to Guatemala, but we can't make the money to buy our ticket to go.”

Similarly, a respondent in Phoenix observed that raids and sweeps have had a devastating effect on many Latina immigrants she knows:

I mean they really are here just to have a better life for their kids. That's why it's hard. I do see both sides of the immigration issue but I also listen to these parents who say, “I just want my kids to have a better life than I had.” Ever since Sheriff Joe started doing some of the im-

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*“I mean they really are here just to have a better life for their kids. That's why it's hard. I do see both sides of the immigration issue but I also listen to these parents who say, ‘I just want my kids to have a better life than I had.’ ... These women are afraid to go out on the street.”*

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*“Shockingly, we have spoken with women who did not even know that the state was challenging their custody rights, until they received notification that the child had been adopted.”*

migration raids, he has made them fear for their lives and that’s really scary. These women are afraid to go out on the street. We would get calls every time a raid happens: “I’m afraid to send my kids, to walk my kids to the bus stop. Can you guys come and pick them up?” Because they’re afraid just like they’ve taken their husbands off the streets in this sweep. He comes in—it’s like they just take them and they’re gone. The women are afraid that they’re going to take them, and if they get taken away who’s going to take care of their kids?

Respondents said that raids and deportations also profoundly affect children, who fear their own removal or the removal of their parents. One pastor in NOVA remarked,

We used to pick children up to participate in choirs. Once, the driver was with the children and there was an accident. There were sirens and the children threw themselves to the floor. “The police have come, the police! They’re taking us to prison and we will be deported!” Children live with the fear of deportation. It’s very severe, it’s very severe.

A respondent in Phoenix spoke about a situation in which the father of a family was detained. She said,

[He was] gone for about eight months before [the family] could actually figure out when he was going to have his hearing. [The authorities] had taken his cell phone and thrown it away so they had no way to contact him. It was probably almost a month before [the family] knew where he was. It was quite a while. But the day he was taken from his job he was working for a landscape service. I went up...the kids [were] just crying, screaming, “Where’s my dad? Am I ever going to see my dad again?”

While some immigrant families separated by detention eventually reunite, either in the U.S. or in their home countries, others remain permanently separated. Two nonprofit organizations in Phoenix reported that some Latina immigrants who are parents have had their custody rights terminated after being held in detention for long periods of time. These reports are consistent with other research indicating that immigrant parents sometimes lose custody of their children because they do not know about or cannot attend family court proceedings while they are in detention, or because they are deported without being given the chance to make arrangements for their children’s care (Women’s Refugee Commission 2009a). One 2009 news release said that an increasing number of women in immigrant detention “simply do not know where their children were taken after they were apprehended and detained.” The authors of the release continue, “Shockingly, we have spoken with women who did not even know that the state was challenging their custody rights, until they received notification that the child had been adopted” (Women’s Refugee Commission 2009b).

While many respondents said that the separation of families has significantly affected immigrant communities, one individual observed that it can also affect the organizations working to help immigrants. She explained that the stress of working with traumatized immigrant families has taken its toll on her staff members:

I had to have a counselor come in and work with my staff because many of the parents that...my staff have been working with, the families [have been] broken up and the parents got picked up and here’s the kid at school. The kid ended up going to the aunt’s house or a friend’s house or somebody’s house.... We need to educate [the] kids, and then all of the sudden Daddy’s gone, Mommy’s gone, and the kid is basically alone. It has been very, very trying.

### **Lack of Trust**

For immigrant women, the trauma of being separated from their children, in some cases permanently, may be compounded by experiences of violence during or after their arrest. One respondent described a situation in which a Latina client was assaulted by her arresting officer, an experience that other research indicates is not uncommon. According to a recent report by Human Rights Watch, the assault and harassment of female immigrant detainees has emerged as a pattern in the U.S. detention system (2010). Other studies indicate that im-

migrant women in detention often lack access to basic medical care, telephones, legal materials, and other resources (Human Rights Watch 2009; Rabin 2009).

Incidents of violence, harassment, and mistreatment during immigration enforcement and in immigrant detention centers have led many immigrants to distrust law enforcement officials. Some individuals said that this lack of trust extends to other relationships as well, making it more difficult for nonprofit service organizations to effectively assist immigrant clients. The director of an organization in Atlanta remarked that although his staff members are bilingual, when working with Latina immigrants his employees still struggle to build trust. He said,

[They] still see that it takes a few days, sometimes a couple of weeks, to get the trust needed to get the information we need. We've had clients two weeks after admission say, "Well, here's my real phone number." Or if we had to call them and the number was disconnected...or the number didn't work and we saw them the next time, we ask them and [they say], "Oh yeah, that's not my number."

Despite this wariness many organizations in the study have succeeded in establishing high levels of trust with immigrant women and men. These relationships of trust often develop over time, as immigrant women participate in the life of a community (as in the case of many churches), or take part in programs or services (such as those offered by nonprofit organizations). Through these relationships, some of the organizational leaders and representatives have come to know their foreign-born Latina clients and congregants well, enabling them to see not only the multiple challenges immigrant women face but also their many contributions to communities and society.

## **The Contributions of Latina Immigrants**

Study participants noted the important work immigrant women do in the labor force, in their traditional roles as caregivers, as leaders of organizations, and as volunteers at local schools, churches, and other institutions. One respondent at a public school in Phoenix reported that most of the Latina immigrants whose children attend "do not work." She continued,

They volunteer here at the school, which is awesome. This summer when we wanted to paint our school we sent a little notice by word of mouth that we were looking [for help]. We were going to paint the school on these two weeks. Who could come down and help? I think we had one or two fathers but I bet we had ten mothers. This one watched the kids on this day so three more mothers could come and help. This one took the kids the next day and these three came and helped...even pulling weeds, the campus cleanup.... Things like that they're here.

Respondents also pointed out ways that immigrant women not only contribute to their communities but also advocate for themselves. For example, the director of a nonprofit organization reported that six immigrant women came to her after the county put up a roadblock that cut off their access to the English class they were taking. The roadblock forced them to walk through the woods, which felt unsafe. Their request for help allowed the respondent to help set up a class that met the women's needs.

Some respondents emphasized the leadership capacities of Latinas immigrants who participate in their programs or services. Some organizations offer leadership programs designed to develop these capacities. An IWPR researcher visited one leadership class for Latina immigrants in NOVA, in which the participants discussed the challenges they face in gaining confidence in their abilities as professionals, mothers, and wives. Several women indicated that while many women and men may find it difficult to develop such confidence, the challenges immigrant *women* face in doing so may be especially pronounced. The experience of migration, the lack of support networks in their new surroundings, and the anti-immigrant sentiment expressed in the media and by the general public can negatively affect their self-esteem.

Respondents also spoke about the leadership roles Latina immigrants have already assumed in their organizations. For example, one Catholic priest in Northern Virginia observed that the immigrant women in his church have generated many ideas for new programs and taken responsibility for their implementation. He said,

My experience here is if I say sure, then they just, whew! They organize, you know. You think we should have a radio program? Sure, why not? Okay. So now they have a radio program. Well, we're thinking of starting a Catholic bookstore. Sounds good. Whoosh! Catholic bookstore. It's a lot of initiative—I don't know how they pull it off.

Another Catholic priest in NOVA reported that the “Mommy and Me” program at his church, which provides English language instruction for Latina immigrants along with preschool for their children, is run by a Latina immigrant who has worked hard to structure the program in a way that suits the needs of the women it aims to serve. And an Episcopal priest in Atlanta observed that the Hispanic ministry at his church was started—and continues to be run—by two Latina immigrants who were part of the original congregation.

Respondents described a range of leadership positions that immigrant women hold within their organizations. These include roles as board members, teachers of classes, or coordinators of specific events or programs. Many churches mentioned that immigrant women serve as leaders in their communities, often through their work as readers during worship services, pastors, deacons or elders, and as lay persons who teach Christian education classes. In many cases, the leadership positions described by churches involved women performing work that fits within their traditional caretaking and domestic roles; for example, respondents commonly referred to opportunities for women, including immigrants, to lead children's programs or prepare food for community events.

Although the leadership opportunities for immigrant women that respondents described often entailed “behind the scenes” work, some groups had immigrant women in “front-line” leadership positions such as program directors or heads of the organizations. The women who occupied these positions, however, were generally not representative of the Latina immigrants who use the groups' services. They held higher levels of education, had more economic resources, and usually came from different countries than their Latina clients and church members. In Atlanta and Phoenix, for example, only two of the female organizational leaders interviewed were from Mexico, the country of origin for the majority of immigrant Latinas in these areas. Most leaders came from South or Central American countries such as Argentina, Bolivia, Chile, Colombia, El Salvador, Peru, or Venezuela, or from Puerto Rico or the Dominican Republic.

Respondents indicated that differences among Latina immigrants can be significant. While some study participants remarked that their fluency in Spanish helps them connect with immigrants from a range of countries, others spoke of ways that differences in their backgrounds or economic circumstances can hinder these connections. For instance, several respondents from Puerto Rico said that because they were born with U.S. citizenship, they feel unable to relate to the experiences of undocumented clients and congregants. One Irish Catholic priest also said in reference to a Latino colleague, “There's the cultural thing. He's not Mexican but he's Hispanic certainly, but he's not Mexican and they have different values. Someone who is well-educated also stands out, so there are always going to be differences and you just try to get past them.” Such distinctions reveal the complexity of the situation with immigrants on the ground, as multi-layered differences among them emerge.

At times, those interviewed explicitly acknowledged differences among immigrants with whom they work. For example, one Euro-American pastor who speaks fluent Spanish and leads two churches, one of which has Salvadoran and Guatemalan congregants and the other which has mostly Bolivian members, observed, “Culturally they're very different. [There's a] socioeconomic class difference. There's an educational difference. Besides, the cultural influences of the countries are very different. Their music is different. Their food is different. Their you-name-it is different.”

## V. Services for Latina Immigrants

Immigrant women can benefit from a range of resources. The next section analyzes the resources available to them in the three study sites and identifies resource gaps that continue to remain, despite the efforts of the organizations in the study and others like them. While some of the programs and services that organizations offer are designed for Latina immigrants, others are not exclusively for immigrant women but may assist other individuals as well.

Two hundred seventy-one of the 280 groups in the study offer services that benefit low-income Latina immigrants. This section explores how the nonprofit organizations and religious congregations that offer these services are responding to the challenges described in the previous section—limited income and poverty, violence, lack of access to health care, and limited English proficiency and availability of transportation and child care. It then considers the formation of partnerships and networks among service providers, the roles of religious groups in addressing immigrant women’s needs, and the challenges faced by these groups as well as by “secular” nonprofits.

### Economic Assistance

Nonprofit organizations and congregations address the challenges of limited income and poverty in multiple ways. Eighty-six of the 118 organizations that participated in in-depth telephone interviews help to meet the immediate needs of low-income immigrant women and their families by providing material goods such as clothes, food, school supplies, infant diapers, or household items. A smaller number of groups (58) offer cash assistance to help cover the costs of rent or other utilities, generally on an occasional basis and in emergency situations. A roughly equal number of groups provide these services in each of the research sites, with a larger share of congregations in all three areas offering these forms of assistance than religious or secular nonprofits.

In addition to responding to immediate material needs, some groups offer programs and services to improve immigrant women’s economic circumstances by helping them find jobs. Although 34 organizations interviewed offer this kind of assistance, many of these groups, especially congregations, provide the service informally, such as by posting a bulletin board with job listings or facilitating networking between congregation or parish members looking for employment and those seeking to hire. Other organizations offer formal programs to help immigrant women find and pursue promising job opportunities, often in the fields of health care or paid domestic work. Some nonprofit organizations and congregations also help immigrant women write resumes and cover letters, fill out online applications, and develop their interviewing skills.

A number of groups in each research site strive to help immigrant women acquire the skills to find jobs with better pay and working conditions. Some help immigrant women work toward this goal by offering General Education Development (GED) programs, courses to prepare immigrant women and men to take the citizenship test, and financial literacy or vocational classes. Other groups offer job or computer training to give immigrant women the skills needed to work in a range of occupations and fields, including health care, the environmental industry, personal care and service, and administrative and clerical positions. One nonprofit organization in NOVA provides training for Latina immigrants to work in residential construction, a field that traditionally has employed primarily men.

In discussing the availability of services to help transform the economic circumstances of Latina immigrants, respondents identified two important resource gaps. First, they pointed to a need for more education, including opportunities for immigrant women to improve their reading and writing skills, take English as a Second Language classes, complete GED and citizenship classes, and advance further in their formal schooling. (Respondents also spoke of

the need for other forms of education that are less directly connected to improving immigrant women's economic circumstances, including activities designed to help both foreign- and U.S.-born individuals learn about others' cultural values, specific pieces of legislation, parenting, the U.S. health-care system, financial literacy, and family planning.)

Second, study participants made it clear that job training is crucial for improving immigrant women's economic circumstances. But they also indicated that many organizations are too consumed with meeting pressing material needs to provide these services. One respondent in NOVA predicted that without job training, the circumstances of immigrant women (and men) are likely to remain the same. In his view, the groups in his area working to help immigrants "are basically just keeping them in the same place. I don't think it was our decision to do that, we all wanted to see them advance, but we are just scattered around the area, all of us are very small, and we don't have that many programmatic connections." Despite the efforts of his groups and others, then, the services to improve the economic circumstances of low-income Latina immigrants cannot fully address the current needs.

### **Violence Prevention and Intervention**

A number of organizations in the study provide resources for immigrant women who have experienced violence in their homes or workplaces. Of the 118 groups that participated in in-depth telephone interviews, more than half indicated that they help women report incidences of violence to the police, and some organizations provide counseling and housing assistance for immigrant victims of violence.

IWPR researchers interviewed several organizations in each research site whose central mission is to assist women who are survivors of domestic violence, including some groups that work specifically with immigrant women. These organizations offer a range of services and programs, such as shelter, counseling, safety planning, outreach and education about violence, and legal assistance. This assistance may involve litigation to help immigrant women access legal protections by filing for asylum or U-Visas, retain custody of their children, or achieve work authorization, a critical step for some immigrant women who want to leave their abusive partners but do not have the means to support themselves and their children.<sup>25</sup> Several groups also help immigrant women gain access to health services.

Respondents in Atlanta, NOVA, and Phoenix identified several gaps in resources for immigrant women who experience violence. Specifically, they remarked that although many shelters exist, some fail to offer resources that are culturally and linguistically appropriate. Others lack adequate space. One pastor in NOVA remarked, "A lot of shelters privilege women with children. But even still, they've all been full for the last year." In Phoenix, recent financial challenges have forced one shelter to close several of its apartments.

Respondents also pointed to a need for more legal assistance for immigrant women who are victims of violence. Organizations that provide legal services to Spanish-speaking women said these services continue to be in demand. According to one legal advocate in Phoenix,

There is a very high need for immigrant women to have legal advice, to have an attorney that can represent them. These women do not have a way to pay an attorney, they do not have a way to pay the filing fees or the court to fight for their children's custody... In this community, in this area of domestic violence, that's the most services in need, I think... We have been able to develop more resources for medical services and there are more clinics, more medical services for women that are low-income. But legal services are very difficult.

IWPR's research indicates that it is important to increase education and outreach around both domestic and workplace violence. Several respondents suggested that Latina immigrants need more information about laws that address violence against women and the legal protections that are available for both documented and undocumented women. Interview data also point to a need for more education and outreach among clergy and service providers about

possible legal protections for immigrant women who are victims of violence. Respondents were not always familiar with legal protections made possible by legislation such as the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) or the Victims of Trafficking and Violence Prevention Act, under which U-Visas were created.

Although there are multiple ways to improve services for Latina immigrant survivors of violence, these improvements may be of little use without changes to the social and political conditions that make immigrant women afraid to seek assistance. Study participants remarked that public debates casting Latino/a immigrants in a negative light and expanded immigration enforcement activities continue to hinder immigrant women's ability to take advantage of available services and protections. As long as policies and public discourse create a context in which many immigrant women feel unwelcome and afraid, then, issues of violence in their homes and workplaces may be inadequately addressed.

## **Health Services**

Of the 118 organizations that participated in in-depth telephone interviews, approximately half (57) reported offering some form of health service, with these groups distributed relatively evenly throughout the research sites. Although most groups provide the services themselves, some—especially churches—offer space for another clinician or group to administer health services to Latina immigrants and other individuals. Primary care represents the most common health service available, provided by 24 of the 57 organizations that offer health care. Some respondents indicated, however, that this care consists of an annual health fair rather than an ongoing service. Because health care is expensive to provide, many groups offer it only infrequently, or not at all.

Among groups that offer health care, a range of services are provided, often for free or on a sliding scale. The most common are lab services, including blood pressure screenings and flu shots (provided by 29 of the 118 groups interviewed in the three areas). Other services offered include OB/GYN (provided by 21 organizations), care for diabetes (15 organizations), HIV testing (14 organizations), dental care, prescription services, and pediatric care (11 organizations each), vision care (10 organizations), and STI testing (9 organizations). A few groups offer prenatal care, drug and alcohol abuse services, or weight management services (6 each), and emergency contraception (4). Two provide abortion services. A number of groups offer education about health care in general (74), family planning (often interpreted through the lens of church teachings and traditions) (40), reproductive health (34), and nutrition (17). Fifty-seven of the 118 groups provide general counseling, pastoral counseling, or counseling for victims of domestic violence and sexual assault.

Many respondents indicated that health services represent a critical gap for low-income Latina immigrants. They identified several areas of care that are especially in demand. First, some respondents pointed to a clear need for more drug and alcohol abuse services, in part because this abuse, in their view, represents a growing problem. One respondent in Phoenix from a nonprofit organization attributed this abuse partly to “the stressors of immigrating into a country.” She said,

That seems to be a recurring trend when we're working with women, whether it be the substance abuse of the husband and now there's domestic violence in the home; just the actual isolation of the women leads to some of the issues of violence in the home and substance abuse.

Respondents also identified mental health services as a critical need. Although many groups offer pastoral or general counseling, study participants pointed to a lack of more formal mental health services and education about mental health issues. They indicated that members of the Latino/a community, like individuals from other communities, often hesitate to seek mental health services due to cultural stigmas about mental illness. One respondent in Atlanta pointed to an additional complicating factor for some Latino/a immigrants:

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*“[T]hey’re afraid that the application for citizenship is going to be denied because they were in mental health treatment. And that’s a real shame because we have people that are walking out the door and need help.”*

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*“We have our partnering, our sponsoring of religious organizations... and the idea of family planning, and talking about sex and religion and all the things that go with that, when I’ve asked it’s been frowned upon. But I do think, in my opinion and having done this for 10 years, that is an area that needs to be talked about. And it’s not.”*

We’re losing clients who have documentation. We’re losing legal residents that don’t want to bring their documentation because I’m supposed to make a copy and put it in [their] chart. The naturalization exam has questions about... “behavior and moral turpitude” and [being a] “habitual drunkard,” those are the words they use. So they’re afraid that the application for citizenship is going to be denied because they were in mental health treatment. And that’s a real shame because we have people that are walking out the door and need help.

Respondents indicated that reproductive health services for Latina immigrants, especially prenatal care, are not nearly widely enough available. The limited number of organizations interviewed that offer comprehensive reproductive health services for immigrant women may be due in part to the study’s focus on religious groups and networks, many of which view certain reproductive health debates and decisions as taboo. One program manager at an interfaith nonprofit in NOVA explained that she would like to see her organization address the issue of family planning but has not received approval from the group’s leaders. She remarked,

We have our partnering, our sponsoring of religious organizations... and the idea of family planning, and talking about sex and religion and all the things that go with that, when I’ve asked it’s been frowned upon. But I do think, in my opinion and having done this for 10 years, that is an area that needs to be talked about. And it’s not.

Organizations pointed to several obstacles that prevent them from providing health services to Latina immigrants, including and especially a shortage of funding. In addition to the fact that health services are expensive to provide, one respondent said that it can cost more to offer these services—as well as others—to immigrant communities:

People expect that the same dollar amount it costs to serve someone from the dominant culture is what it costs to serve somebody of the immigrant population. And the truth is it doesn’t. If you have to translate everything twice, all the documents twice, if you have to attend medical meetings to help with translation—I mean, just even the time in services can be longer just because of the perceptions and the cultures and the norms of their country of origin, and there’s this expectation that the experience is the same, and it’s not.

### **English Language Instruction**

English classes were among the services most commonly offered by the organizations in the study. A total of 65 groups among the 118 who completed in-depth phone interviews reported offering formal English courses, with the largest number (26) in Northern Virginia, compared with 22 in Atlanta and 17 in Phoenix.<sup>26</sup> Thirty-four of 46 congregations offered classes, along with 21 of 46 nonprofit organizations, 8 of 23 religious nonprofits, and 2 of 3 government organizations. Some groups that did not offer English classes of their own reported that they sometimes refer immigrant women and men to other organizations that do provide English language instruction.

The organizations reported little variation among the types of classes offered. Most groups stated that they provide several different levels of instruction: beginner, intermediate, and/or advanced. A small minority said they offer courses in “vocational” English to help people learn terminology relevant to specific professions. A few groups offered “conversational” or “survival” English to help give individuals the tools they need to navigate the basic routines of daily life.

Most groups charge participants a small fee for English language courses, usually to cover the cost of the books. Some indicated that the fee operates on a sliding scale or is waived for individuals who cannot pay. A smaller number of organizations reported that their classes are free. Although respondents were not specifically asked to share their views about the groups’ policies concerning fees, several expressed concern that even a minimal fee may deter some people from taking the class. Others, however, stated that they believe requiring participants to pay the fee may lead some individuals to approach the class with a stronger sense of dedication.

Several groups in the study noted that for English classes to help Latina immigrants, they must be structured in a way that takes into account the complex contexts of immigrant women's lives. The pastor of one church in Atlanta explained that her church strives to help make it possible for immigrant women to attend classes by providing a service most other groups do not: transportation on the mornings when classes are held. The church owns a van and uses it to bring Latina immigrants to its space because, according to the pastor, the women want to learn English but "do not drive."

Some groups also provide child care during their classes so that immigrant women can attend. One Roman Catholic church has a program that combines English language instruction for Latina immigrants with preschool education for their children. The program meets in the mornings in a townhouse located in a neighborhood in which many recent Latino/a immigrants live. The first floor of the townhouse holds a small food pantry, and the classes for the women and children take place upstairs.

On the morning IWPR researchers visited the program, seven women and about the same number of children attended. Although the women initially seemed rather reserved during the class, they became animated when a researcher asked in Spanish about their experience of the class. They described the program as an enormous help—in fact, a "miracle," as one woman put it—precisely because it offered assistance for their children as well. They noted that many other English classes in the area did not provide any form of care or instruction for their children, making it difficult for the women to attend.

Despite the significant number of English classes offered in the three research sites and the efforts of some groups to structure them in ways that meet immigrant women's needs, respondents reported that language classes continue to represent a significant service gap. The current offerings do not meet the current demand. In addition, none of the organizations indicated that their group has the intent or capacity to increase their course offerings in the foreseeable future. And very few groups reported having the resources to combine English language instruction with basic literacy training.

This shortage of language classes and literacy training, combined with the apparent lack of resources to increase the availability of these services, may become especially problematic if comprehensive immigration reform (CIR) passes at the national level. CIR bills introduced in the U.S. House of Representatives and Senate make learning English a condition for undocumented immigrants to obtain citizenship.<sup>27</sup> If this legislation passed, then, the need and urgency for English classes would significantly increase, and the shortage of services to help people develop English language proficiency and basic literacy skills could make acquiring legal status quite difficult for some individuals.

## **Transportation**

Fewer than half (48 of 118) of the groups that participated in in-depth phone interviews reported offering assistance with transportation for Latina immigrants in their area. More groups in Atlanta and Phoenix identified a lack of access to transportation as a pressing issue for their clients and congregants or parishioners than in Northern Virginia. At the same time, a larger number of groups in NOVA indicated that they offer transportation services (16) than in Phoenix (where 12 groups offer these services, compared with 20 in Atlanta). In the three research sites overall, 25 of 46 congregations provide help with transportation, compared with 17 of 46 nonprofit organizations with no religious ties, 5 of 23 religious nonprofits, and 1 of 3 governmental organizations.

Transportation assistance is most often offered informally and occasionally. Several congregations indicated that their transportation help consists of their pastor or church members giving immigrant women and others rides to specific events or programs, such as worship services, English language classes, or doctor's appointments. In some instances, groups offer bus tickets to persons unable to drive or afford public transportation. A few

groups sometimes pay cab fare for immigrant women and men to attend key meetings, appointments, and events.

The informal transportation assistance that groups provide is insufficient to meet the needs of many immigrant women, especially those who work outside the home. Yet most groups do not have the resources to provide more extensive transportation services.

Some organizations, however, make creative efforts to provide transportation help with the resources they do have. For example, one school for homeless children that serves a high percentage of children from immigrant families accommodates the needs of families who tend to move frequently. A respondent from the school explained,

We had several calls this morning. Families moved over the weekend because it's the first of the month so you have a lot of transition. "We don't know where our bus stop will be." "We missed the bus this morning." We have two donated vans. Then we...pick up [the children] if the parents can't get them here and that's our commitment to them that it's important for [their children] to be in school every day. ...So it's not like calling in and saying, "My kids missed the bus" and you go, "Oh, well sorry." "Where are you living now or where are you staying?" Maybe they don't know where they're going to stay so they're at Grandma's or they're at a friend's house. We move our bus route or we put them on a van until we can get them on a route.

Respondents noted that the current political context and climate (especially in places with intensified immigration enforcement) contributes to the transportation gap because it discourages undocumented immigrant women from venturing out in public. Some immigrant women simply feel safer at home. This suggests that efforts to expand resources for transportation without accompanying changes in immigration enforcement practices could prove relatively ineffective.

## **Child Care**

Child care is a pressing need for immigrant women. Among the 118 groups that participated in in-depth telephone interviews, 51 groups reported offering child care, including 20 in Atlanta, compared with 18 in Phoenix and 13 in Northern Virginia.<sup>28</sup> A larger share of congregations reported offering child care than secular or religious nonprofits, but many of these communities only provide care during worship services or other events and programs. Only one in three groups that provide child care indicated that this care is full-time or offered on more than an occasional basis. Although many groups recognize child care as an important need their immigrant clients or church members face, it is a need they are not able to effectively meet.

Groups that offer child care often draw on their own limited resources to provide the service. Most groups reported that they cover the costs of the care through donations, fundraising efforts, or by finding volunteers to work as child care providers; a few charge their clients a small fee. One group that asked clients to pay a minimal fee for use of its child care service, however, found that the fee deterred some immigrant women from using the service. Realizing that the fee did not raise much revenue, the group suspended it. The number of children enrolled in the service quickly increased.

With few resources of their own, some groups in the study have found creative ways to offer child care to help immigrant women. For example, one domestic violence shelter for Spanish-speaking women reported that it does not have the funds to start a day care on its premises, but has established an informal service in which the women staying at the shelter help to care for each other's children. A respondent from the organization indicated that this informal care is an important source of assistance for women who need to have court dates or other appointments. She also pointed out that it remains insufficient for those who are employed and need full-time child care. The respondent also observed that it is often difficult

for immigrant women at the shelter to leave their children in the care of other women they have known for only a short time and that some feel more comfortable leaving their children in the hands of a professional caregiver.

The groups without child care named several reasons they do not offer this service. Some pointed to a lack of funding, whereas others spoke about logistical and legal complications. For example, one group was not permitted to provide child care due to the constraints imposed by their lease. Other groups expressed concern about potential liability issues involved in offering child care, or the difficulties involved in running background checks on child care providers or going through a licensing process. One pastor observed that her congregation has circumvented licensure by making sure that the hours of care offered remain below the number required for licensing. She remarked,

[This is] true of virtually everything that we do, we have to do everything under the wire. So the preschool is...not a long enough day to be licensed, so we can just be an all-church preschool that can serve anyone and do whatever we do. So everything has to be small-scale and quiet.

### **Other Programs, Services, and Activities**

In all three areas, organizations working with Latina immigrants offer a range of other activities and resources in addition to those described above, such as worship services and religious programs in Spanish, legal assistance with issues pertaining to immigration status, and life skills or parenting classes. Some groups also function as a kind of clearinghouse to help connect immigrants with other service providers in the area. Others offer seminars, workshops, or information designed to educate immigrants about their rights and how best to respond when stopped by the police or in situations involving violence in the home or workplace. Still others assist immigrants in locating family members in detention centers or help detainees retrieve cars, wallets, and other items that their families may need. And some groups work in various ways to promote cross-cultural interactions that build stronger connections between foreign- and native-born communities.

Many service providers show high levels of dedication to their work. Several reported that it is not uncommon for them to respond in the middle of the night to a client or congregant who needs help, and others work long hours to provide as much assistance as they can. Often, however, respondents expressed frustration at the limitations of their work. These limitations are not due to lack of effort on their part but to the difficulties involved in responding to the needs of immigrant families in a politically charged and resource-poor context.

### **Partnerships and Networks in the Provision of Services**

To strengthen their efforts to assist immigrant women and their families, a number of groups have formed networks and partnerships. The nature of these partnerships varies widely. They include establishing referral networks with other churches, nonprofits, or agencies; sharing physical space to provide services; or co-hosting occasional events such as health fairs.

A number of groups in NOVA, and fewer in Phoenix and Atlanta, reported that their organization has formed working collaborations that require more sustained interaction. Several respondents in NOVA said that their group belongs to a network of nonprofit organizations and churches that coordinate programs and services to ensure that resources provided are complementary rather than redundant. The network members meet monthly to “talk about what they did that month, the needs that they see that the community has...and they coordinate.” The leader of a nonprofit that participates in a different network in NOVA remarked, “The good thing...is that each nonprofit organization is dedicated to something different...we have a network...we all offer something different and we all understand the community needs our services.”

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*“We believe that God is incredibly hospitable to us and that we are called to give welcome and that’s just a central part of it, so there’s been a whole lot of common ground with Jews and Muslims and different denominations on that.”*

In addition to coordinating services, some nonprofit organizations and congregations in NOVA offer shared programs. These efforts include the initiatives of a cluster of churches that have developed a program for Latino/a immigrants to help meet basic material needs and provide job training, and a church and mosque that jointly offer citizenship classes. Several churches and nonprofits also lead workshops in conjunction with public schools, and in NOVA several churches together host a weekly lunch and worship service for day laborers. A handful of organizations in the study work with consulates to help immigrants access resources, to plan events, or to offer opportunities for foreign-born Latino/as in the United States to continue their education in Spanish.

Such collaborations were mentioned less frequently by respondents in Atlanta and Phoenix, many of whom spoke about the need for collaborative efforts rather than about actual partnerships currently operating. Some well-established partnerships do, however, exist in these areas. For example, a nonprofit organization in Phoenix has created a texting tree through which its leaders can quickly mobilize volunteers, attorneys, social workers, and religious leaders upon hearing of a raid. In Atlanta, one organization has worked extensively with local police to build trust between Latino/a immigrant communities and law enforcement officers, and another church and religious nonprofit have co-organized food banks, clothing drives, and after school programs.

Several pastors in Atlanta expressed disappointment in what they see as a lack of coordination among faith groups in the area in reaching out to immigrants and advocating for immigrant rights. While some congregations have not welcomed immigrants, others have made efforts to include immigrants but have not maximized the impact of these efforts by coordinating their services with those of other religious groups in the area. One pastor noted that she was surprised by this absence in coordination when she moved to Atlanta from another city, where she had been involved with faith communities that had developed strong networks and partnerships around issues of immigration and immigrant rights.

The strong anti-immigrant sentiment in Phoenix and Atlanta may make it relatively difficult to form alliances in those regions by creating a climate in which organizations working with immigrants struggle to build networks of trust. One respondent from an Atlanta nonprofit remarked,

We do have fly-by-night operations that try and take advantage of the [immigrant] community. So we’re very cautious as to who we partner with. There are medical clinics we partner with, there are hospitals we partner with, there are specific doctors that we partner with, and we’re very cautious...to make sure that we’re partnering with someone...that’s actually going to help our community.

Respondents in the three research sites identified two other factors that can make it difficult to develop collaborations. First, as one respondent put it, the organizations involved “are all competing for the same dollar.” Given the limited resources of many organizations, this competition can be a significant impediment to forming active partnerships.

Second, several respondents observed that differences in the cultures or convictions of organizations can hinder the formation of networks and partnerships. One respondent in Phoenix remarked,

Funders love collaborations right now. Everybody wants to fund collaborations. And there’s definitely lots of value to them, but I don’t think they’re the answer to everything. I think that there’s a lot of time spent trying to come up with a common culture between the two organizations...And as always, somebody wants to be the top dog, and the other collaborators may or may not want to go along with that.

A minister in Atlanta reported that her congregation faces a different challenge: finding coalitions that do not require them to compromise on issues of critical importance to them.

She said,

[This] is sometimes difficult for us around the abortion issue, around the gay rights issue. And I'm pretty hard line on that. I feel like we've done a lot of selling out on that so right now I don't want to be in alliances that are always making us put those two things aside, because I think they're pretty soon at a place where Latinas and other immigrants who feel like they don't have to align themselves with very conservative moral values could feel supported spiritually and religiously.

In describing the nature of the partnerships that have formed, many organizations indicated a need for better networks, but seemed overwhelmed by the complicated task of creating them. While some simply spoke about a desire for stronger organizational networks in general, others specified certain kinds of partnerships they would like to see form. In Phoenix, for example, the organizing director at a union pointed to the need for more groups to organize Latinas and to do so in a coordinated way: "The unions are just abysmal in this state at working together and at organizing, really committing themselves to organizing new constituencies of changing power." In Atlanta, an activist from an interfaith group suggested that the religious community develop stronger partnerships with labor unions. She said that although faith-based groups have already "learned a lot from the unions," increased collaboration among these groups could be beneficial. In her view, the unions in Atlanta are powerful and "have a lot of resources." She also said that "union people just have a skill that people of faith really need to learn from...getting people together and deciding things and just being ambitious...people of faith, we often want to...be meek and mild."

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*"[T]he church can be ... a place where [immigrants] can begin to access various services."*

## **The Roles of Religious Groups**

Many respondents indicated that the resources offered by religious groups represent a vital source of assistance for low-income immigrant women and their families. They observed that these groups, which represent various religious traditions, have helped to fill a void in new destination areas, which generally lack a civic infrastructure that can adequately meet the needs of recent immigrants. One pastor remarked of the religious community's outreach to immigrants,

It's just everybody is kind of in it together and you get over some of the news-making division stuff...I think all of the major world religions have some to-do about incredible hospitality. We believe that God is incredibly hospitable to us and that we are called to give welcome and that's just a central part of it, so there's been a whole lot of common ground with Jews and Muslims and different denominations on that.

While congregations provide various programs and services, they are better equipped to offer some services than others. For example, churches often provide material goods, a service that is relatively inexpensive to offer and fits well with the Christian theme of reaching out to those who are marginalized and in need. They also commonly offer English language instruction, drawing on the support of volunteers from their faith community or the local area.

Congregations are less likely, however, to offer the more expensive service of health care, especially if it entails reproductive services that conflict with certain traditional church teachings and doctrines. Many respondents from Roman Catholic organizations specified that their group's health services and education are offered within the parameters laid out by the church hierarchy. For example, when answering a question about whether their organization provides information about family planning, respondents often replied, "Yes, 'natural' family planning." However, some variation did exist. IWPR researchers visited a sex education class in Spanish on contraception offered by a Catholic group. A representative for the organization commented that it could provide this class because the group itself does not offer contraception. Instead, it simply provides education about how different approaches to birth control work and where to access them.

Although the forms of assistance offered by congregations may be limited in scope to some extent, interviewees expressed the view that the resources these communities offer may be vitally important to Latina immigrants, for several reasons. First, some immigrants may feel more comfortable seeking help from a faith community than from other organizations. An Episcopal priest in Phoenix said, “There are becoming fewer and fewer places where they can get things without having their status questioned, or risk getting deported or other problems...the church can be—the church in general—can be a place where they can begin to access various services.”

Similarly, a respondent from a nonprofit organization in NOVA that works with domestic violence victims remarked,

A lot of [people], because they're not eligible for a lot [of services], a lot of the churches help with rental assistance, help with food assistance, help with just support groups, and I think clients are more likely to go to church and get services. They're afraid to go to the Department of Social Services because of the effect they think it could potentially have on their immigration case, they're afraid to get deported because of going there, so I've realized that more and more, building relationships with more faith-based organizations and churches and mosques is really important to our clients.

Second, some immigrants may simply find churches to be a convenient meeting place. The director of a secular nonprofit in NOVA explained,

We've been most effective in educating the population and getting in contact through the churches. There's kind of this feeling of safety, you know? They've already been congregating there and it's not another meeting for them to go to. It's more effective going after mass to announce something as opposed to organizing a workshop at a community center when nobody's going to be there anyway, because they would have to make the effort to go.

Third, several service providers indicated that resources offered by faith communities may be especially important in assisting immigrants precisely because many immigrants themselves are religious. One respondent whose organization provides domestic violence services remarked,

With immigrant clients and I think particularly with Latina clients, we talk [about religion], we have to, that's what gives them faith to survive and to cope. It's just amazing, if I ask clients how are you dealing with [the] one year wait of not having work authorization? [They say] 'I have faith in God, I believe in God.' I've had more religious conversations here with my clients than I've had anywhere else.

She continued,

I have one client, a Latina woman, who was a victim of human trafficking and she just recently started going to church. It's just amazing the transformation in her stress level. Obviously, she's put it in God's hands, and it helps her cope with how difficult and how out of control this process is, how out of your hands it is. Because you have to basically pour your heart out into these applications and send it to someone, and then hear by mail what the decision is going to be for the rest of your life.

For some immigrant women, then, religious groups may provide forms of spiritual support that other organizations do not. One interviewee suggested that this support can assist service providers as well. She observed about her organization's staff who practice a particular faith:

[They] just have a way of looking at the world and processing information that is very traumatic but are able to deal with it and I think that goes with the spirituality part of it or being a faith-based organization...I do think there is a spiritual component to this work and I think...it gives you some inner strength to actually deal a lot with this trauma...I just think it makes it easier to do this type of work, otherwise it gets really hard and you burn out much quicker.

The interview data, however, also point to some limitations in the work of religious groups. Several respondents in Phoenix and Atlanta were disappointed that these groups have not done more. One study participant in Phoenix believed that the religious community does little to assist immigrant women and families, in contrast to the views of other respondents in the area. Several other individuals in Phoenix indicated that the Catholic Church as an institution has not offered as much support to recent immigrants as they would hope. As one director of a nonprofit group remarked, “Unfortunately, the Catholic church has not been as responsive as we would like it to be. That’s as an institution. There are individual [Catholic] churches that continue really being the source of support for many immigrants.”

While some respondents said that congregations and parishes often fail to do more for immigrants because they simply do not care to welcome immigrants, others indicated that a lack of resources also plays a role. One person commented that “churches can be pretty influential in providing assistance...[but] they can only do so much. They’ve got limited staff, too.” Others observed that these limited funds mean that the resources many churches offer are often given informally and led by individuals who may not have specific training or expertise in the particular issues they are asked to address. One person who works for a nonprofit organization, for example, was frustrated with the approach to addressing behavioral health issues that she often sees congregations take: “It is just challenging, because the response to behavioral health care needs can be very different from a church than from a behavioral healthcare organization. They’re not always in line.” Many pastors also indicated that congregations are not well equipped to address certain problems, such as domestic violence or mental health issues, on their own. As a result, they often refer individuals seeking help to other nonprofit organizations in the area with relevant expertise.

## **Challenges Faced by Organizations Providing Services**

The challenges facing organizations overlap with those that directly affect their Latina clients and congregants; any difficulties that prevent foreign-born Latinas from accessing resources or threaten their well-being also present problems for organizations seeking to assist immigrant women. In articulating the challenges that hinder their efforts to assist immigrants, organizational leaders and representatives focused on two issues: the lack of funding and the effects of certain public policies.

### **Working with Limited Resources**

When asked about the greatest challenges facing their organizations, those interviewed commonly replied with a laugh or sigh: “Funding.” Many congregations are supported largely by donations from individual members, and nonprofit organizations often rely on grants from private foundations to fund their programs—both sources of income that have been difficult to sustain during the economic recession. Organizations often reported that they have had to cut certain programs or services over the last year or two because their income has been reduced. Along with limited funding comes a second challenge that many groups face: a shortage of staff members. Many respondents indicated that to effectively implement their plans and work toward their goals they need to hire more help, especially from bilingual staff members, but do not have the funding to do so.

With limited resources, many of the groups, especially churches, offer services that are largely informal. Most organizations in the study are small and lack the capacity to implement large-scale programs. While these smaller-scale services cannot meet the current demands, they are nonetheless critically important. Some organizations have creatively combined their limited resources in ways that can provide significant help to immigrant women and families. For example, a staff member at a public school described an emergency housing program in which churches provide, on a rotating basis, lodging for children in an area that otherwise lacks a shelter:

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*“[T]he faith-based community has really stepped up where city government did not ... So we rely a lot on the individual churches.”*

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*“...the fear of being pulled over is huge right now and it’s affecting people’s accessibility to services.”*

Tonight [the children] may be at the Baptist church. Tomorrow night they’ll be at the Lutheran church...The next night they’ll be at this church. The next night they’ll be at that church...the faith-based community has really stepped up where city government did not...So we rely a lot on the individual churches.

### ***Municipal, County, and State Public Policies***

Municipal, county, and state public policies pose additional challenges to organizations in the study. Two kinds of policies emerged as especially powerful in complicating efforts to assist Latina immigrants: those determining access to government-funded services and those related to immigration enforcement.

In all the research sites, respondents spoke about local and state legislative initiatives that have made it increasingly difficult for some immigrants, especially those who are undocumented, to access certain public services (such as Proposition 200 in Phoenix, SB 529 in Atlanta, and Prince William’s resolution in NOVA). In their view, these policies have not only reduced the number of individuals who qualify for services but also created widespread confusion about eligibility. When conducting interviews, IWPR researchers witnessed this confusion; the same policies were often described by different service providers in different ways. One person indicated that a source of confusion lies in discrepancies between the guidelines of federally funded programs and states’ laws that may conflict with these guidelines. According to interviewees, this confusion has led some service providers—including a church in Atlanta—to ask immigrants for documentation of their legal status when in fact it is not required.

While significant confusion exists concerning policies pertaining to public benefits, a second policy affecting groups working with immigrants is clearer. The 287(g) immigration enforcement program has become well-known to both immigrant communities and service providers, especially in localities that participate in the program. News stories have described the effects of this policy on immigrants, but less has been said about its effects on organizations seeking to help immigrant families. Respondents noted that where implemented, the policy has significantly reduced the numbers of immigrants using their services. As one person put it, “Now immigrants have stopped driving because their fear of being pulled over for a traffic violation and then deportation proceedings...the fear of being pulled over is huge right now and it’s affecting people’s accessibility to services.” A staff member at a religious nonprofit in NOVA reported that her organization “did see a sharp drop-off” in the numbers of immigrants coming to its classes in a county that had recently implemented a 287(g) agreement.

As the implementation of 287(g) agreements and other restrictive local laws and ordinances indicates, policies that affect immigrants can vary widely from county to county and even from town to town. As several study participants reflected, this means that immigrant women’s access to services may depend in part on the locality in which they live. One respondent in NOVA remarked,

I had a client who was living in one county, was going to a clinic there, and then moved across the street. Like right across the street and went back to her same clinic and was told she couldn’t be seen because now she lived in a different county and there’s very few medical clinics in this county.

Due to such differences among county-level policies, some organizations have changed the locations of their programs and services. Several groups have moved their programs from a county with restrictive policies to a neighboring jurisdiction with more immigrant-friendly laws. One church in the study has moved as well.

The profound effect of public policies on the availability and locations of services for immigrant women reveals the need for strong immigrant rights advocacy. While expanding services may help immigrant women, the usefulness of this expansion may remain limited in a context where immigrant women do not feel secure enough to seek out available resources. Activism that aims to alter public discourse and sentiment around immigration as well as existing laws and policies is, therefore, crucial to improving immigrant women’s access to services.

## VI. Nonprofit Organizations, Congregations, and Immigrant Rights Advocacy

We focused back and inward and realized we're all immigrants, and so this is for all of us to discover who we are. —*An activist in Atlanta*

Whereas nearly all of the 280 groups in the study offer services for immigrants, a much smaller but significant number (120) engage in activism or advocacy for immigrant rights. Nine of the 280 groups focus solely on advocacy, and 111 groups both provide services and advocate for immigrant rights, although a majority of the 111 organizations focus primarily on providing services. The advocacy of these organizations takes many forms, including participating in rights, marches, demonstrations, prayer vigils, town meetings, hunger fasts, community-based organizing, and coalitions. Some organizations also write to politicians or meet with local, state, and national political representatives to share information about the effects of current policies on Latino/a immigrants. Although their advocacy takes different shapes, the groups involved in this work articulate a common goal: to change the social and political structures, policies, and practices that deny the rights of immigrant women and their families and hinder immigrants' incorporation into communities and society.

### Groups Involved

The groups that advocate are distributed throughout the three research sites, with more in NOVA reporting involvement (50 of 101 organizations interviewed) than in Atlanta (35 of 84 interviewed) and Phoenix (35 of 95 interviewed). In all the study areas, the groups involved in advocacy approach this work from many perspectives, including both “secular” and “religious.” Forty-two of the 120 groups involved in advocacy were secular. Seventy-eight organizations have ties to a religious institution or body, including 60 congregations and 18 religious nonprofit organizations. Of the 78 congregations and religious nonprofits, the largest numbers were Catholic and Methodist (14 each), followed by Pentecostal and Lutheran (8 each), Episcopal and interfaith (7 each), and Presbyterian (6). The 14 remaining religious groups were a mix of Baptist, evangelical, Jewish, Muslim, Quaker, and Unitarian organizations, as well as organizations that simply identified as Christian.

While analysis of the interview data indicates that a higher percentage of religious organizations in the study (48 percent) are involved in advocacy than organizations without religious ties (36 percent), 11 respondents from religious organizations reported that only their group's leader advocates for immigrant rights. In each research site, IWPR found only a small number of organizations that focuses primarily on advocacy or considers advocacy central to the mission and identity of the organization as a whole. Often, study participants indicated that their organizations would like to do more advocacy but do not have the time or resources. Consumed by the challenge of trying to meet the immediate needs of their clients or community members while fulfilling the daily tasks involved in keeping an organization running smoothly, many groups find that advocacy simply takes a back seat.

**Table 6. Proportion of Organizations Interviewed Involved in Advocacy**

	Atlanta			Northern Virginia			Phoenix		
	Total (N)	Advocating (N)	Percent Advocating	Total (N)	Advocating (N)	Percent Advocating	Total (N)	Advocating (N)	Percent Advocating
Secular	42	17	40%	31	12	39%	43	13	30%
Religious	42	18	43%	70	38	54%	52	22	42%
Catholic	10	4	40%	9	5	56%	12	5	42%
Protestant	19	9	47%	27	19	70%	13	7	54%
Other	13	5	38%	34	14	41%	27	10	37%

Source: Institute for Women's Policy Research data from 2009-2010 IWPR interviews.

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*“For the most part, people in the nonprofit world who are working with immigrants are going to support comprehensive immigration reform because it’s about helping families stay united, helping give people opportunities, helping the backlog to diminish, helping the fees to be reasonable.”*

## **Key Issues Addressed**

Despite the limitations of time and resources, some organizations engage in activism to advance immigrant rights, with a subset of these groups making this activism not just a peripheral dimension of their work but a priority. Those who get involved—on either a small or large scale—address a range of issues and concerns, most often at the local or state levels but sometimes at the national level as well.

### **Local and State Policies**

Organizations in the three research sites address a wide range of issues in their local- and state-level advocacy. They mobilize in opposition to 287(g) agreements, English-only ordinances, and ordinances designed to discourage day laborers from seeking work and others from hiring them. Many advocate for immigrant worker rights, increased access to health care and health benefits for immigrants, and the right of undocumented immigrants’ children to receive a public education. Some organizations protest raids and sweeps that target Latino/a communities, and one group has actively opposed state laws that would prohibit organizations that receive federal funds from serving undocumented immigrants. Several groups also work to change housing and employment policies that discriminate against Latinos/as.

Many of the groups in the study included community education within a description of their advocacy. This education can involve meeting with different audiences to raise awareness about the effect of current policies on immigrant families in their areas and in the nation as a whole. Many advocate for immigrant worker rights, increased access to health care and health benefits for immigrants, and the right of undocumented immigrants’ children to receive a public education. Others present information to policymakers on challenges and issues facing the Latino/a community, such as racial profiling and discrimination.

For example, one pastor recalled a conversation with a government official who admitted that “they intentionally lose your paperwork. If you’ve got a long name with Latin sounding letters, Mexican or Brazilian or anything, mm hm.” The pastor continued, “It floors me that government workers are the first ones to say it depends on what country you come from. And Brazil and Mexico are not at the top of the list.” The church members’ awareness of this problem has inspired them to become actively involved in educating other community members and political representatives about the complications faced by Latino/a immigrants who seek to gain legal residency or citizenship.

### **Policy at the National Level**

Organizations in the study address a narrower range of issues at the national level. A few groups advocate for the Development, Relief, and Education for Alien Minors (DREAM) Act, the proposed legislation (which did not pass the Senate in 2010) that would provide a path to legalization for some undocumented youth. Several others advocate for modifications to the Violence Against Women Act that could help immigrant women who are domestic violence survivors.

Still others advocate for comprehensive immigration reform (CIR). Convinced that only a whole-scale revision of the immigration system can adequately address the challenges brought about by increased migration to the United States, they actively promote CIR as a broader solution to address the issues at the national level. Although the organizations may differ in their views on the details of this legislation, they share a common understanding of its basic principles and the reasons it is needed.

In general, interviewees suggested that because local and state policies are often implemented in ways that violate the rights of both documented and undocumented immigrants, an overhaul of the immigration system at the federal level is essential to promoting justice for immigrants and advancing their well-being. This overhaul, in their view, would need to have several components, including border and interior immigration enforcement carried out in a

just and humane way, a path to citizenship for undocumented immigrants who satisfy certain criteria, provisions to ensure that immigrant families can stay together, and a well-functioning guest worker program that enables individuals to work in the United States temporarily.<sup>29</sup> As one study participant in Northern Virginia said,

For the most part, people in the nonprofit world who are working with immigrants are going to support comprehensive immigration reform because it's about helping families stay united, helping give people opportunities, helping the backlog to diminish, helping the fees to be reasonable. The sorts of things that typically nonprofit folk are in agreement about.

Respondents' support for an overhaul of the immigration system stems partly from their sense that the current system simply isn't working. In their view, this system not only fails to address what they see as the "humanitarian" crisis many immigrants face—for which, several interviewees suggested, the United States is partly responsible. One study participant in Phoenix said,

I think we ought to, as a nation, take responsibility that when things really got out of control was because of NAFTA, that the little guy used to be able to manage his little farm, and feed himself, and maybe have a few things to sell. Maybe they had a craft that they made some money. Well, you can't compete with Pilgrim Chicken. You know, you can't. That chicken's going to be cheaper. It might not be healthier, but it's still going to be cheaper. So then people stop buying from the little guy who used to have his little rancho over there, and that's that. And we had a lot to do with that.

Her colleague added,

I think it goes for any type of institutionalized racism across the board, is the fact that history is everything, and it is so easily forgotten at a policy level. It is so, "What's in my face right now?" And there is a whole history that people choose to look over, and I think that if we really took responsibility as to what the pieces in history we contributed to as a nation, and how that affected, I think that that would vastly differ how we chose to respond to immigration reform and humanitarian needs.

In discussing comprehensive immigration reform, interviewees often mentioned that they hoped it would address the exploitation of immigrants, and especially those who lack legal status. One individual in Atlanta described some examples of this exploitation:

There's a trailer park that we work with a little bit...the management was in cahoots with the car towing company...so the company would say..."Go to this house, their car's not right, you can tow it." They would tow it, then go to the office and split the money. And so this was these people's homes, this was their community and this is what's happening. And so, they would also turn in their rent and [the management] would say, "No, you didn't turn in your rent," so they'd have to move trailers and pay twice, and so it's like, you can just take advantage of the community because you can say, "Well, I know you're not legal, I know your secret, and I could tell on you..." So, there are a lot of things that happen because people have control, or they intimidate people with the status issue.

Another person remarked that in the absence of comprehensive immigration reform, undocumented immigrant women remain especially vulnerable to exploitation and violence. She said,

There was this radio ad for workers to come to this particular grove in Washington State... And it was just some random person who put this ad on the radio encouraging women to come apply for this job and...a woman went to apply for this job and she was raped. There was no one even associated with the company, but it was someone taking advantage of the fact that (a) he knew he could and (b) it was likely that no one would ever report what happened...these kinds of things will happen, I think, on a continuing basis if we don't change the law.

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*"...you can just take advantage of the community because you can say, 'Well, I know you're not legal, I know your secret, and I could tell on you...'"*

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*“Part of the problem is that in the past there’s been very little focus on what immigration reform means for women. Immigrant women haven’t been part of the discussion and what’s happening to immigrant women at work or in the community is not being discussed, either.”*

In the respondent’s view, such incidents make comprehensive immigration reform a human rights issue, as well as a civil rights and a women’s rights issue. She remarked, “Part of the problem is that in the past there’s been very little focus on what immigration reform means for women. Immigrant women haven’t been part of the discussion and what’s happening to immigrant women at work or in the community is not being discussed, either.”

In describing what they perceive as the urgent need for comprehensive immigration reform, respondents often conceded that the debate about it is complicated. Some said that they see both sides of the issue and realize that there are no easy solutions. One advocate also reported that in his work he sometimes sees division on the issue of comprehensive immigration reform within the Latino/a immigrant community itself, particularly concerning the matter of legalizing undocumented immigrants. He explained that “a lot of the most anti-undocumented immigrant people are recently legalized, people who became citizens or got their green cards legitimately, waiting 10 years or whatever. They write the harshest things. ‘If we waited, they should be waiting,’ and so forth.” Such division within the Latino/a immigrant community further reveals the complexity of the situation on the ground.

Interview data indicate that complications could arise not only in working out the details of comprehensive immigration reform legislation and securing its passage in Congress, but also in implementing its provisions if it did pass. Very few organizations articulated concrete plans for helping immigrants take advantage of the opportunities that a reform of the immigration system would make available to them. Given the limited resources of these groups, it seems likely that the additional demands placed on them by the passage of comprehensive immigration reform could create challenges that are difficult to meet without adequate funding (such as providing enough English classes for immigrants who need to improve their English language proficiency to pass a citizenship test, or ensuring that legal services are available to all those who seek to adjust their immigration status). Despite these potential challenges, the organizations in the study indicated their commitment to doing their best to help immigrants if comprehensive immigration reform does pass.

### **The Power (and Problems) of Coalitions**

Groups that advocate for immigrant rights often do so through coalitions. The extent of their involvement in coalitions, however, varies widely. While several organizations have started coalitions for immigrant rights or are leading them, a larger number reported that their organization participates in a coalition through its membership and attendance at an occasional meeting or rally. Study participants often observed that achieving policy changes at any level requires the collaboration of groups from diverse constituencies; coalitions represent one way to make this happen.

At the same time, however, respondents pointed out problems that their organizations face in working through coalitions. One individual in Atlanta who has formed several coalitions to address immigration issues at the local level observed that due to the limits of time and resources, these alliances have by necessity changed over the last few years:

It’s not a formal organization anymore, it’s like a SWAT team, that sort of thing. And the funny thing is, all the coalitions have become that because of what’s happening, because every organization has its own bylaws and has fundraising issues and so forth, you know, that’s full-time, more than full-time job. So to create another organization, the coalitions become cumbersome, they were just another organization that duplicated all the stuff... so I just found it better to make it more ad hoc in that way.

Another advocate in Atlanta expressed concern about the sustainability of immigrant rights coalitions at the state and national level. She realized their pivotal role in the struggle to effect policy change that will benefit Latino/a immigrants but also said, “You have to build an institution for it to last and to do something, so the institution can act as an entity...right now... these coalitions...I feel like they’re all going to fall apart, especially if we don’t get the reform.”

## Sources of Motivation

Although coalitions may be difficult to sustain, one factor that makes their formation possible is the common sources of motivation and goals that leaders from various organizations hold. Specifically, respondents identified three sources of motivation for their work.<sup>30</sup> First, many spoke of their experiences in witnessing—or personally confronting—injustice. The head of a nonprofit in Atlanta explained, “You know there are injustices going on or there are better ways to do things without hurting people, and I want to make sure people at least know or have that information.” Similarly, a Catholic priest in NOVA reported that he felt compelled to publicly support immigrants—from the pulpit as well as at town meetings and on radio shows—when they began moving into the surrounding county and long-time residents resisted their presence. And members of the church in Atlanta who have learned about the problem of “lost” paperwork have used their knowledge to help change the views of people around them. The pastor remarked,

We try to say it to everybody we know. And I know that is one of the things that our members do, because they know we’re a small little voice of Davids against Goliath, so they’re telling everybody they know these stories...so it used to be the polite dinner conversation that somebody would say, “Aw, those immigrants ought to go home,” they speak up and they say, “Do you really understand?”

A second source of motivation for respondents’ advocacy is the satisfaction that comes with seeing change within individuals and their communities. One organizer in Atlanta said,

I just love working. I love seeing that transformation...because it happened to me. I thought I was supposed to be small...I thought I was supposed to serve...I see that in other women, and I just love...to see that [change] happen for someone else, when they take charge of something, create something, become a public person, and not just a woman who sees something bad happen to her community, to be the one taking the lead and changing, it is really incredible to me.

In Phoenix, an activist also remarked,

I feel like in a place [such as] Arizona in particular, everybody wants to believe there’s going to be some trick, some electoral victory that’s going to turn the tide from red to blue or from anti-immigrant to pro-immigrant, and I just feel like it’s going to be one by one, personal transformation to do it. [There are] very few people that are actually willing to get down and really dig it out and do that. I’m working with like seven or eight in the state that really want to do this so our goal is to build that. I find that really exciting and inspiring.

Values or religious beliefs provide a third source of motivation for engaging in advocacy for immigrant rights. One interfaith nonprofit organization worker stated that she advocates for immigrant rights because she believes the laws affecting immigrants violate her fundamental conviction that “everyone is completely equal and that God loves us all equally.” The leader of secular nonprofit organization in Atlanta noted that he joined the immigrant rights movement after witnessing a rise in anti-immigrant sentiment that ran counter to the core values of both his religion (which holds that the “earth is one country”) and the United States. He explained,

I was sitting with my family at Christmas vacation watching TV, watching the news and saw the news flash that one of the counties here, Cherokee County, was attempting to pass an ordinance requiring proof of citizenship to rent an apartment or house in that county. And I asked everybody, “Did I hear that right? Is this America?”

For these respondents and for others, values and religious beliefs provide a source of motivation to participate in social action and a moral framework for understanding this action.

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## The Role of Religion

In addition to providing organizations with a sense of moral justification or calling to engage in activism in support of immigrants' rights, some respondents point to a second way in which religion informs their advocacy: It gives them a sense of hope that can sustain their action through challenging times. Several study participants noted that religion provides a sense that a higher power is in control of the world and things will work out in the end, even if it remains impossible at the present time to see exactly how. As one community organizer in Atlanta explained,

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*"We know for sure that this is right, it's not just a matter of whether it's practical to do, whether we know it's going to work...I think that what people of faith bring [to the struggle for immigrant rights] is absolutely necessary...it's always your faith that gives you the strength to do something that seems really, really impossible."*

I think it would never work if there were not the faith community involved because the way that we are able to keep going is that we believe in God, we believe in a higher power who has control over this. We know for sure that this is right, it's not just a matter of whether it's practical to do, whether we know it's going to work...I think that what people of faith bring [to the struggle for immigrant rights] is absolutely necessary...it's always your faith that gives you the strength to do something that seems really, really impossible. What we have to go against is absurd right now in Georgia, so we have to have faith in something bigger than ourselves.

Many respondents see the religious community as a crucial player in the struggle for immigrant rights, in part because they believe its support may strengthen the credibility of the cause. As one interviewee from an interfaith organization remarked,

We're outside of ICE all the time, we were on the front page of the Gwinnett Daily Post, making noise, not just in the Latina community but for everybody to see...and people just feel really fervently about it... I don't think it would feel that way if it wasn't a religious issue.

Similarly, a study participant from a secular nonprofit in NOVA observed,

For whatever reason the faith-based services carry more weight or credibility or something with the general public...this is actually one of the reasons that we do try to get more churches involved is because if it's a bunch of nonprofits, people are like, "Oh, it's a bunch of hippie liberals, who cares about them?" But the minute the churches get involved it adds a certain degree of weight or a humanitarian quality to it.

Although many respondents suggested that religion can serve as a key source of inspiration for advocacy, several other study participants expressed a different view. They indicated that the purposes of the church are spiritual, and the church should not engage in politics. Others, however, suggested that the very act of welcoming immigrants is itself political. As one pastor put it,

I wouldn't say that we would tell our church how to vote. And in sermons, I would never endorse a candidate. But because of how immigration is a political issue and how politicized the day laborers are in our town, the fact that we bring them here and welcome them, it can avoid some crossover conversation there. It seems like we support them, in some way or another, though I don't think that we get into how we would want to change laws.

For some respondents, political action can include not only directly engaging the government or shaping its laws, but also resisting the prevailing anti-immigrant sentiment by enacting a different response toward new immigrants.

## Challenges for Organizations Involved in Advocacy

Like service providers, groups engaged in advocacy face challenges that complicate their work. In addition to the lack of time and funds, organizations spoke about the difficulties created by the anti-immigrant movement. One person in Atlanta stated,

[W]hen it comes to immigration in Georgia, the reality is that the anti-immigrant force is not as large as they make it look, but they are much louder than the pro-immigrant movement. Much louder. So you'll have a march for immigration with 500 people and they may

get a comment on page three. And you'll have a march of 50 anti-immigrant people and they get the front page. They just have better connections and are louder right now.

The anti-immigrant sentiment in the research sites has helped to create situations in which Latino/a immigrants are often placed at risk and thereby discouraged from engaging in collective mobilization. Some respondents from Latino/a congregations mentioned that many of their church members do not advocate because they fear the possible consequences of becoming a visible presence in their communities, particularly in contexts where immigration enforcement activities have intensified. One activist in Atlanta said that simply getting immigrants to turn out for a meeting can represent a significant challenge, especially in jurisdictions that have implemented 287(g) agreements. She asked, "How do you fill up a room and have a meeting, a really good meeting, if people can't come?"

It is not only immigrants who may be at risk. Some activists, too, are exposed to threats and possible danger. One person in Phoenix reported that she has received death threats and routinely encounters local law enforcement authorities who try to intimidate her. She explained,

Because I've been a vocal opponent, I've had sheriffs' deputies parked outside my house. They do know where I live. When I show up at a worksite raid or a sweep that's taking place, some of the higher deputy chiefs or whatever, they'll call me by name on purpose to let me know, "I know who you are."

Similarly, an advocate in Atlanta said,

I have to be careful of who I hire... I'm watched, we've gotten death threats...we got a package delivered to our house with a picture of me hanging and a substance inside. We had to be evacuated and the guys came in the hazmat suits and all that. So that's why I say, it's not a joke.

In addition to facing opposition from the public and local authorities, some respondents reported that they receive little support from their own organizations. Several individuals from congregations observed that it can be difficult to convince their groups' members to actively participate in—or even verbally endorse—their advocacy for immigrant rights.

Often, individuals working to support immigrant rights struggle to "frame" the issues in a way that is persuasive to others. One worker with an interfaith nonprofit in Northern Virginia indicated that his organization approaches the issue from a human rights or humanitarian perspective, but "frankly that doesn't always work." He explained,

There are congregations that are more sympathetic to that, there are congregations that will embrace that philosophically but will not participate in a hands-on ministry. We get a lot of that, "Well, we support some service organizations, and they do outreach to the immigrant population." But when we ask the question, "Will you stand up with us in a meeting with the board of county supervisors, will you attend our event?" Then we get that, "Well, there's a Redskins game this afternoon." Well, yes there is, you know. Are we more concerned with whether the Redskins win or lose, or whether people are going hungry and unclothed?

## **Gaps in Advocacy for Immigrant Rights**

Despite the remarkable dedication of many immigrant rights advocates (some of whom persist even in the face of death threats and other risks), respondents identified four gaps that continue to remain in the movement to advance immigrant rights. The first is a lack of communication between advocacy organizations working on the ground and government officials that address immigration issues. One interviewee whose group gathers information about abuses of immigrants' rights to pass on to government officials explained that additional documentation and dissemination of this information is sorely needed. In her view, sustained efforts to document, collect, and report stories about violations of immigrants'

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rights can play a crucial role in convincing the federal government to make significant changes to current immigration policy.

A second gap in advocacy for immigrant rights lies in the somewhat limited nature of activism on the part of many congregations and parishes. Although religious leaders have been at the forefront of the national immigration debate and many religious groups have issued public statements in support of reforming the immigration system, respondents pointed out that a relatively small number of churches engage in advocacy for immigrant rights (apart from the actions of their leaders). In all three research sites, a number of congregations and parishes participate in religious coalitions that address issues related to immigration; in general, however, these groups are more likely to provide direct services to immigrants than to advocate for immigrant rights.

The reasons for the lack of involvement in advocacy on the part of many religious communities may vary according to the constitution of the church's membership. For churches whose members come from different backgrounds and often disagree on political issues, the controversial nature of the immigration debate can be polarizing, making it difficult to mobilize members around the issues at stake. According to respondents from congregations composed largely of Latino/a immigrants, however, their church members face a different set of challenges that can prevent their participation in advocacy. Some experience a sense of fear and isolation that prevents them from speaking out publicly on issues of immigration. Others work several jobs, leaving little time for civic or political action of any sort.

One minister from a politically active congregation of native-born individuals said that in theory, her church's members are interested in supporting immigrant rights, but in practice their time is consumed by activism on a range of other issues. Immigration is important to them, but it is not yet a priority. Although respondents often suggested that these reasons for political inaction are understandable, they also expressed disappointment that religious groups as a whole have not been more involved.

A staff member at a nonprofit organization in Atlanta pointed to a third gap in advocacy for immigrant rights: lack of attention to the specific challenges and circumstances of immigrant women. Only eight of the groups interviewed for IWPR's study advocate with a specific focus on the rights and needs of immigrant women. Five of the eight are nonprofit organizations that assist immigrant women survivors of domestic or sexual violence; as part of this work, these groups advocate for public policies that would increase the legal protections available to immigrant women who experience violence and improve immigrant women's access to these forms of relief. One church also engages in advocacy for the rights of immigrant women who experience violence and abuse. Another nonprofit organization pointed to its activism to improve resources for immigrant women's reproductive health and its participation in a national coalition for immigrant women's rights.

The lack of attention to the needs and concerns of immigrant women points to a significant omission in the immigrant rights movement. In their descriptions of the circumstances of Latina immigrants, respondents emphasized that immigrant women not only share many of the same challenges as their male counterparts but also encounter difficulties that are specific or more common to women, such as violence in the home and workplace and lack of access to child care and health services, especially for issues of reproductive health. There has also been little discussion of how women would be uniquely affected by policies and policy proposals such as 287(g), housing ordinances, and the DREAM Act.

Finally, study participants pointed to a fourth gap in advocacy for immigrant rights: a need for more organizing that specifically targets Latina immigrants. Although anti-immigrant sentiment among the public and intensified immigration enforcement may, to some extent, discourage the collective mobilization of immigrants, one respondent from a union in Phoenix observed that such mobilization is a key to achieving social and policy change.<sup>31</sup> In his view,

organizing Latino/a immigrants can help expand the base of political actors who advance immigrants' rights and well-being.

In the face of these challenges and gaps, many organizations involved in advocacy have achieved successes. For example, one study participant has started a project that mobilizes advocates to address sexual violence against women in the workplace. Another respondent's group has documented abuses against Latino/a immigrants committed by law enforcement officials in the area and given this information to federal authorities. This documentation, the respondent indicated, has helped to convince the U.S. Justice Department to investigate and restrict the actions of these officials.

Some congregations in the study are working with an emphasis on fostering cross-cultural relationships and understanding. Many churches that seek to bring together people from different cultures and traditions do so in a broader social and political climate that excludes immigrants (respondents pointed out that churches are not immune to this resistance and often do not welcome new immigrants). While churches may encounter difficulties in forming multiethnic communities, these communities can provide an important resource, particularly at a time when government-funded services are less accessible. Churches that include immigrant newcomers can provide social connections that may help serve as a gateway to other resources, facilitate immigrants' integration, and create a context in which both immigrant and native-born members learn new ideas and skills. The next section explores this type of resource, focusing on the experience of one church that has developed an innovative way of welcoming immigrants despite tensions in both the congregation and surrounding area.



## VII. Communities of Transformation?

Churches with the freedom that they enjoy in this country to speak their mind and do good things are in a very good position to be communities of transformation one way or another...I think that's what churches are all about, period, end of statement...but they're also not very good at it, and some of them are officially indifferent and hostile.  
—An Episcopal priest in Atlanta

I'm used to...Protestants who are very quiet talking about God. There are few things these Protestants can't control without a credit card and a phone...they don't have to rely on God very much because basically, a lot of things are fine. But I see people who are the poorest of our community who really do actively rely on God on a day-to-day basis. They wake up and don't have anything to eat, and someone will bring them food or they will come here for food or they'll get a job. But usually, they're just waiting. There's just this faith that something will come along... they pray at the top of their lungs, they sing because they really mean it... church is not this thing they have to do; it's the way they get along, the way they cope and the way they make sense of things. It's also very much part of their society. It's what they grew up doing. But it means more now because they don't know where their next meal is coming from; they don't feel like they're guaranteed another day.  
—A Presbyterian minister in Northern Virginia

There is such a nativist spirit in this state; the spirit of nativism is rising like never before... Unfortunately, it has also permeated the churches. —A Methodist minister in Phoenix

Many congregations (and a few nonprofit organizations) in the study not only provide services or advocate for immigrant rights, but also work to create a community that offers a transformative space. For some congregations, creating this space entails forming ethnic churches that can provide immigrants with a sense of belonging and psychological, spiritual, and material resources to resist the discrimination and hostility they encounter in their surroundings. Faced with the unsettling experience of being “strangers” in a new place, many immigrants prefer to participate in an ethnic church (Lorentzen 2003).

While some congregations in the study are ethnic churches, others are striving to form multiethnic communities that bring together immigrants and native-born members in ways that foster cross-cultural relationships. Respondents from multiethnic churches pointed to specific religious beliefs and themes that inspired their inclusion of immigrants, such as welcoming the stranger, love of the neighbor, and the kingdom of God. For some, these themes provide not merely the justification or inspiration to include immigrants, but also a sense of moral imperative to do so. Several individuals described experiencing a “calling” or sense of obligation to welcome immigrants that stems from reflection on their faith and communal identity. A Presbyterian pastor in Atlanta said, “The Old Testament really is about hospitality, but the New Testament is about the Kingdom of God for all nations coming together and sitting at the table.” She continued, “So it was really kind of claiming that inclusive embrace and understanding of who we're called to be.”

Study participants indicated that multiethnic religious communities can create a context that is broadly transformative. In these communities, the assumptions and perceptions of both immigrant and U.S.-born individuals can be radically altered as they share resources, exchange information, and learn from one another's languages, cultures, and traditions.

At the same time, churches that strive to form multiethnic communities often experience significant challenges and tensions. The next section explores some of these challenges, as well as the rewards that can come from a congregation's decision to welcome immigrants, by exploring the experience of one church that has developed an innovative program to welcome Latino/a immigrants. A brief description of the program's emergence, structure, and goals highlights both the difficulties and possibilities that churches may encounter as they are changed by the presence of new immigrants.

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*“Churches with the freedom that they enjoy in this country to speak their mind and do good things are in a very good position to be communities of transformation one way or another... I think that's what churches are all about, period, end of statement ...but they're also not very good at it, and some of them are officially indifferent and hostile.”*

## Case Study: One Community's Experience

IWPR researchers conducted an interview and participated in a program at a church in November 2009. It is a Protestant church that has much in common with many other organizations in the study. Its congregation consists primarily of European Americans, and its facility is located in a suburb. It has a traditional Protestant worship style and a service and mission program. As part of this program, church members offer English classes for speakers of other languages, help job seekers fill out applications online, and support other local nonprofits that provide housing, food, and other forms of assistance.

Like many other congregations in the study, this church has had conflict over its involvement with recent immigrants. The church's members hold a diversity of political views, and they have had passionate discussions about how to interact with the growing immigrant population in the area. These discussions have, at times, created tensions between those concerned about the presence of immigrants without legal status and those convinced that the church's priority is to "welcome the strangers" in its midst, regardless of how they have come to the United States.

Although immigration has been something of a lightning rod issue in the congregation, the church has managed to create a thriving program that involves volunteers from the congregation preparing a weekly lunch and worship service for as many as 150 immigrant day laborers. On the day IWPR researchers arrived, five members from the congregation and another person from a local church welcomed the researchers to the kitchen and assigned them the task of chopping fruit. Discussion ensued about topics ranging from hometowns to schools and children. While talking, and during the interview with the pastor later in the day, it became clear that the program had evolved, in part, because the congregation wanted to help fill a gap created when anti-immigration activists shut down a nearby center for day laborers.

By mid-morning most of the food preparations were complete, so the researchers joined a caravan of cars that drove a few miles from the church to an area where local day laborers gather. A number of men were waiting by the curb. When the researchers pulled up behind the other cars and said in Spanish that they were with the caravan and could give the men a ride, three men—one from Honduras and two from El Salvador—got in. The group drove back to the church, talking on the way.

By the time the caravan returned to the church, the volunteers had put the food on the tables, and both they and the day laborers sat down to eat. Before the main course, the pastor delivered a prayer in Spanish, which she'd learned while spending time in Guatemala. The 80 or so day laborers joined in the prayer, then talked while they ate. The group included only one woman who had come to eat that day, although women are encouraged to participate.

During the lunch, the woman shared a bit of her story in Spanish. She described the experience of crossing the desert from Chiapas, Mexico, during her first pregnancy. This journey included being caught and deported, then returning through the Arizona desert. On the second trip she and her husband had run out of food and water, and she had nearly suffered a miscarriage. The woman also talked about the trouble she has had finding work in the United States and the intense loneliness she has felt here, especially since she doesn't know anyone and is aware that her father is sick in Chiapas.

As the meal came to a close, the conversations gradually stopped, and the program moved to its last part. A handful of people left, but most stayed and listened as the pastor of the church delivered a short sermon in Spanish, followed by a prayer the group said together. A worship leader from a nearby church then led the group in singing accompanied by electronic music and slides with the lyrics in Spanish, projected on a screen in the front of the hall. While some of those attending the lunch stood silently, others sang and clapped their hands. The music concluded the program, and the volunteers cleared the table. They put the leftover

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*"There is such a nativist spirit in this state; the spirit of nativism is rising like never before... Unfortunately, it has also permeated the churches."*

food—including pork, rice, beans, tortillas, and fruit salad—at the back of the room so that those who wanted could fill plates to take home.

Both the English- and Spanish-speaking congregants then finished cleaning up the fellowship hall, and most of the people left. The men who had come for the lunch and worship service either left on foot or on bicycle; a few got rides in cars that had formed part of the caravan. The researchers drove the woman from Chiapas and her son to their apartment. She took along a plate of meat and beans for her husband and a bag of fruit salad for her son. She didn't take any of the leftover tortillas, which she said weren't like the ones she used to eat in her hometown in Mexico.

After dropping her off at her home, the researchers returned to the church for an interview with the pastor, eager to hear more about the program and the reasons for its success. One key factor that enabled the program to thrive is the remarkable spirit of trust that has developed between the day laborers and volunteers. This trust was evident in the way the day laborers immediately jumped into the researchers' car and in the decision of the woman from Chiapas to share her story of coming to the United States. It was also apparent in the volunteers' decision to welcome new immigrants into the church's physical space. The pastor attributes this mutual trust partly to the congregation's involvement in the controversial establishment of a local day laborer center several years ago, which was closed after national anti-immigration groups targeted it with protests and threats.

The fact that these relationships of trust have evolved, however, doesn't mean that the U.S.-born and immigrant participants in this church now function as a thoroughly integrated community. The pastor referred to the immigrants as the "Spanish-speaking congregation" and the others as "the white congregation," indicating that they still form distinct groups, and there are challenges involved in bringing them together.

Despite these challenges, the program continues to be successful, in part because it offers something for both the day laborers and the volunteers. For many of the immigrants, the program provides not only a meal, but also a welcome space for worship. The day laborers who left immediately after the lunch were likely not interested in the worship service, but many who remained were actively engaged. The pastor recalled the words of one church member who volunteered with the program for the first time: "If the members of this church were half as excited as they were to come to church, it would be a different story of faith in America."

While the immigrants involved in the program may gain a sense of community and belonging as well as a space for worship, the long-time members of the church who take part find that the program also has benefits for them. One of the volunteers in the kitchen who had come for the first time explained that she experienced a desire to serve others and believed the program offered an excellent opportunity for doing so. The weekly program thus provided her with a way to live out a central tenet of her religious tradition, which holds that doing for others is an integral part of faithful living.

At the same time, some of the volunteers who participate in the program have found that it leads them not only into a deeper connection with their religious tradition, but also into new ways of thinking about immigrants and the circumstances of migration. The pastor said that through their interaction with immigrants, some members of the church have come to see immigrant women and men as people with families who desire to make a better life for themselves and their children. For this church, then, the act of welcoming immigrants has affected both groups, causing the original congregation to renegotiate its collective identity while providing immigrants with a place for worship and sense of belonging.

## Communities of Transformation: The Challenges and Rewards

Like the pastor described above, other religious leaders spoke of the potential rewards and challenges of striving to become a “community of transformation.” On the one hand, they explained that such communities can provide important resources for all those involved. For immigrant women, men, and children, they can offer a welcoming context that counters the resistance often experienced in the local area—a context in which immigrants are viewed not as recipients of services or a burden on society but as vital members of the life of the community. For the congregation’s original members, the chance to come to know immigrants can present an opportunity to question and rethink some of their fundamental assumptions about their faith and community. Several respondents suggested that these changes for those involved can lead to stronger communities that more effectively address the needs of both immigrant and native-born members.

Yet the struggle to become a community of transformation is not one all faith communities embrace. A number of interviewees indicated that sharp tensions in their congregations or parishes have surfaced, mirroring and reinforcing the hostility toward immigrants often evident in local communities. These tensions are manifest in various ways: in the reluctance of original church members and new immigrants to interact regularly, in the decision of some members to attend a different church, and in the complaints expressed by English-speaking members that new immigrants often speak only Spanish. One pastor in Atlanta reported that “we’ve had hate mail in this congregation” from members of the community who resist including immigrants. A social worker in Atlanta who is active in a local church remarked, “Georgia is...not uniformly hostile to immigrants, but there’s just a large part of the population that’s hostile—and when they go to their churches, they’re [still] hostile.” And in Phoenix, a Methodist pastor observed that tensions have also surfaced in her church between new immigrants and Latino/a families that have lived in the United States for several generations.

In some instances, tensions arise not only between members of the community but also between the community’s members and leaders. The director of an interfaith nonprofit group that works to foster cross-cultural relationships reported that religious leaders often refuse to publicly support his organization’s work on immigration, telling him, “We love what you’re doing, we support you, but we can’t stand up and be counted because our congregation would have a fit.” A pastor in NOVA also pointed to the difficulties in addressing the issue of immigration with her congregation. She remarked,

I can talk about stories of radical welcome, but I have to be really careful with how I speak to a bunch of different people out there...a lot of times it’s anecdotal rather than ‘so therefore, you need to vote this way...’ And for some people, that line is razor thin. You have to be very careful what they will all of a sudden get flared up about and think that you’re advocating something, when you’re not. Just because their ears are primed to hear someone advocating a certain vote in political positions, when what you’re saying is here’s a story that blows my mind and this is what I think scripture is calling us to do in our lives.

A Methodist minister in Phoenix whose church includes both immigrant and native-born members described the negative reaction his visible support for immigrant rights has at times received from some congregants. He said,

I’m very vocal in my pulpit and I have upset several of my parishioners...They probably will say that I’m siding with the Democrats. And I said, “No, I’m not siding with anyone because I’m non-partisan, I’m not representing any political entity.” I’m just representing the gospel of Christ period. The gospel of justice calls me to the world to help the most vulnerable and that’s what I’m doing. But many of them will say, “Well, because some of the Democrats side with immigrants now you are representing them.” And I say, “No, no, no, this has nothing to do with politics. This is pure human rights, this is a humanitarian issue that we need to bring into perspective and do something about.”

As these statements indicate, there is often a discrepancy between the views of religious leaders working to include immigrants and the views of their community's members. Although the leaders of many religious traditions and denominations have issued public declarations supporting justice for immigrants and stood at the frontlines of the national struggle for comprehensive immigration reform, the "actual record" of many churches, as one respondent put it, lags behind.

Several pastors indicated that faith communities that successfully transition from communities that exclude immigrants to those that welcome them—and possibly even advocate with and for them—often find that this transition begins with encounters among immigrants and native-born individuals, in which both groups have opportunities to interact and come to a deeper understanding of the other's experiences, traditions, cultures, and goals. One pastor described how a long-time member of her congregation who had expressed ambivalence toward immigrants underwent a transformation after having taken part in a worship service and program with immigrant families. She explained that in a church meeting after the service, the man said, "I've never seen people that excited to come to their church." The pastor continued, "And the room was silent. Everybody was like, 'Huh.' And he sat down and then he came through the line the next Sunday and just gives me this huge hug. So something was changing there. And it was really powerful."

Although the transformation of individuals can help a community change from an exclusionary group to a welcoming one, respondents cautioned that this change can take years. Many pastors interviewed hoped their churches could eventually shift from having parallel communities (one of native-born members, the other of immigrant members) to creating an integrated worshipping community, but they conceded that their churches are not yet close to achieving this goal. Their efforts to move in this direction, however, are significant in light of the strong anti-immigrant sentiment that exists in the research sites and in the United States as a whole. As many respondents observed, there are few places that welcome new immigrants, so the efforts of some congregations and parishes to form inclusive communities represents an important resource that is often otherwise unavailable. These communities can help to fill the needs of both immigrant and native-born members, although like many other organizations, churches are often "stretched thin" and limited in what they can offer.



## VIII. Conclusion

Nonprofit organizations and congregations working with Latina immigrants in Atlanta, Northern Virginia, and Phoenix engage in many activities to assist immigrant women and their families. These activities strive to address issues affecting multiple dimensions of immigrant women's lives, including their economic security, health, safety, and social and civic incorporation. In many instances, the resources that groups offer are provided informally and occasionally. Yet they nonetheless constitute important sources of assistance that can help integrate and empower recent immigrants.

Religious groups, in particular, may continue to play a key role in integrating immigrant women, especially as government-funded services become less widely available and more difficult to access. For many immigrant women (and men), faith communities provide contexts in which they can give and receive social and spiritual support that helps them negotiate the challenges of resettlement. Given the importance of religion in the lives of many immigrants (Leonard et. al. 2005; Levitt 2007; Warner and Wittner 1998) and the role of religious groups as trusted points of access for recent immigrants, these communities may have a unique opportunity to welcome immigrant women and help facilitate their integration. As one respondent notes, they have a certain freedom to do so; unlike nonprofit organizations, congregations and parishes typically do not rely on grants from government agencies or private foundations to support their work and can therefore engage in whatever activities—service provision, activism, community-building—they find most meaningful and useful.

At the same time, this opportunity does not come without complications. Limited resources can make it difficult for churches (as well as nonprofit organizations) to pursue their plans and goals. Differing views among the members of religious congregations can lead to disagreement about what the group's plans and goals should be. More specifically, some churches indicate that their involvement with immigrants has led to internal tension and controversy, particularly when this involvement entails advocacy or creating multiethnic communities.

Yet the obstacles these organizations face go beyond the challenges of limited resources and divergent perspectives on immigration. Many find that their work is also hindered by negative public discourse around immigration as well as by the restrictive local and state policies often implemented in areas where immigration has become a contested issue. For example, policies and ordinances that target living arrangements common to Latino/a families, the presence of day laborers, the access of immigrants to certain public services, and the use of languages other than English on public signs and in workplaces indicate that new immigrants are not welcome. Combined with intensified immigration enforcement in many localities, these policies create a context and climate in which immigrants, particularly those who are undocumented, are cast as unwanted and placed at risk.

The rise in anti-immigrant sentiment and the proliferation of policies that make immigrants' lives dangerous suggest that an increase in services and programs will not fully address the challenges encountered by immigrant women. Expanding available services may help, but as a solution it will go only so far. If immigrant women (and men) must seek out resources in an unwelcoming and often hostile context, their access to forms of assistance will remain limited. A significant challenge for the organizations, then, is not only to increase the resources made available to immigrants, but also to actively work to transform the social and political climate that contributes to the very conditions that hinder the mobility of immigrants and threaten their health, safety, and economic security.

Given the profound effect of many local and state laws and ordinances on immigrants' lives, it is clear that activism needs to have as a central focus the transformation of local and state policies. At the same time, nonprofit organizations and congregations often point to the need to look beyond these policies to the national scene. Restrictive local and state policies

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*The limited attention given to the concerns and interests of immigrant women points to a significant gap in movements to change the social and economic circumstances of immigrants to the United States.*

are often initiated by jurisdictions trying to address immigration issues in the absence of immigration reform that would offer solutions at the national level. The policy debates and discussions happening nationwide reveal the need for change not only in the legislative initiatives of state governments and city councils, but in those of the federal government as well.

Organizations working on the ground with immigrant women and their families recognize the urgent need for change at the national as well as the local and state levels. They consistently point out that the current immigration system is not working and needs to be reworked in a comprehensive way. In endorsing an overhaul of the system, however, these organizations note the complexity of the issues such an overhaul would have to address and some potential complications involved in implementing the provisions of any reform. Despite these anticipated complications, many organizations continue to engage, to the extent possible, in efforts to advance a solution that will improve the circumstances of immigrants and the United States as a whole.

Advocacy work needs to place more emphasis on the concerns of immigrant women, which are often overlooked in policy debates and discussions. Groups that address these concerns may not only improve the circumstances of immigrant women, but also those of immigrant men and children. Since many of the issues that affect immigrant women also have an effect on others, policy changes that advance the rights and well-being of immigrant women are widely beneficial. Moreover, challenges that are largely distinctive to women nonetheless affect men, children, and entire families; one respondent reported that some of her male immigrant clients named as their greatest concern the violence that their mothers, wives, female friends, and daughters experience at work and at home.

Few groups in the research sites, however, engage in advocacy with a focus on the needs and concerns of immigrant women, and those that do generally concentrate on domestic violence—a critical issue, but only one among many that need to be addressed. In most policy discussions little is said not only about “women’s issues,” but also about the effects of specific policies and policy proposals (such as the DREAM Act, 287(g), and CIR) on immigrant women in particular. The limited attention given to the concerns and interests of immigrant women points to a significant gap in movements to change the social and economic circumstances of immigrants to the United States.

A strong advocacy movement that attends to the needs and concerns of immigrant women can change the way policymakers, the general public, and others think about issues of immigration and lead to public policies that benefit immigrant women as well as men and children. As key players in the immigrant rights movement, congregations and nonprofit organizations—both “religious” and “secular”—can play important roles in this change. Taking into account the need for change at the local, state, national levels, this report proposes the following recommendations for congregations, nonprofit organizations, grantmakers, and policymakers.

# Recommendations

## Improving Immigrant Women's Access to Services

1. *Increase immigrant women's access to resources by structuring programs and services in ways that make it easier for them to attend.* Nonprofit organizations and congregations can help immigrant women advance their economic status and increase their civic participation by creating programs and services that meet them “where they are.” In some instances, this may entail providing child care during classes or transportation to meetings and events, or holding programs at times that are convenient for women to attend. To understand the kinds of support that would best help immigrant women, groups can learn about what immigrant women say would help them by holding town hall meetings, forums, one-on-one conversations, and other events. Organizations may also get suggestions from immigrant women through email and other forms of electronic communication, so that women who do not have access to transportation can participate. Groups can use the information gathered through these events to shape, as much as possible, the kinds of programs and services offered.
2. *Develop and enhance training and education programs specifically for immigrant women.* Among the many resources that nonprofit organizations and congregations offer immigrant women, job training and education programs can be especially important. In particular, those with low incomes and levels of education may find that training and education enables them to transition from low-wage jobs to those that provide a solid income and benefits, adding to their own and their family's stability. With adequate financial support, groups may provide training and education programs that address the specific needs of many immigrant women—such as the need to learn English—and prepare them for work in variety of occupations, including those that have not traditionally employed large numbers of women. Organizations may also creatively capitalize on the skills immigrant women already have and encourage women to adapt these skills to their new context.
3. *Increase support for adult-learner programs that build English language capacity.* Limited English language proficiency represents one of the greatest challenges that many Latina immigrants face. Without becoming proficient in the English language, immigrant women cannot achieve economic success or easily manage important communications with teachers, doctors, employers, and others. Although many organizations provide opportunities for immigrants to receive English language instruction, these opportunities are still not widely enough available, and they are often structured in ways that do not fully address immigrant women's needs.  
  
Innovative programs that teach adults English language skills and combine this instruction with basic literacy and job training where necessary are critical to facilitating the incorporation of immigrant women. Increasing the number and quality of such integrated programs will become even more necessary if the U.S. Congress opens up the possibility for only undocumented immigrants who learn English to become United States citizens.
4. *Increase support for community health centers that provide services to immigrant women and their families.* Many immigrant women who lack health insurance rely on community health centers for help in addressing a wide range of medical concerns and conditions. While service providers and advocates realize that the quality of care offered by these centers can vary, they also observe that community health centers provide a vital source of support for immigrant women. In the short-term, increasing support for these centers will help immigrant women receive the quality care they need. In the long term, improving the quality of jobs held by immigrant women will be critical to increasing their access to health services. Many immigrant women hold jobs that do not come with health insurance or other benefits—a circumstance that needs to change for immigrant women and their families to thrive.

5. *Support efforts to educate both service providers and immigrant women about current rules and conditions of eligibility for public services.* Misunderstandings about the rules of eligibility for certain services represents a significant obstacle for low-income immigrant women seeking assistance for themselves or their family members. In some instances, the lack of understanding leads to the outright denial of services that should be rendered. In other situations, it discourages immigrant women from applying in the first place, particularly if they do not know what the application process consists of or whether they qualify for the services. With adequate funding, organizations can help eliminate this confusion by researching current eligibility rules and preparing pamphlets or fact sheets that explain the rules in an accessible way. This information can not only assist service providers but also empower immigrant women to make use of resources that are available to them and their family members.

### **Securing Immigrant Women's Safety and Rights**

1. *Increase supports for immigrant women who experience violence in the home or workplace.* Although U.S. Congress has taken steps to increase the legal protections available to immigrant women who are survivors of violent crimes, many female immigrants continue to face obstacles that can prevent them from establishing a safe environment for themselves and often their children. One significant obstacle is the shortage of legal services for those who seek to take advantage of the remedies made possible through the Violence Against Women Act. Funders can address this problem by increasing support for legal services to aid immigrant women crime victims, ensuring that this support remains not only widely available but also affordable for low-income immigrant women. At the same time, service providers, religious leaders, and advocates can continue to educate immigrant women about resources that exist and work to enhance forms of assistance that will help secure their safety and well-being as they seek to create a new life free from violence.
2. *Continue to strengthen public policies that help immigrant women achieve safety from violence.* While advocates often appreciate that legal protections are available to female victims of violence, they also observe that these protections do not fully address the needs of some women, particularly immigrant women who are undocumented. One problem that some advocates identify is the extended time it can take to process the applications of women seeking to take advantage of the protections offered by asylum law, the Victims of Violence and Trafficking Protection Act, and the Violence Against Women Act. During the waiting period, undocumented immigrant women do not have access to public services or work authorization. These restrictions can make it difficult for them to support themselves on their own. To address this problem, Congress should create a legal provision that allows undocumented women to work and receive vital supports as they move through the application process.
3. *Fund, and help train where needed, organizations to document and report racial profiling and to ensure that policies in place are not carried out in ways that violate immigrants' rights.* Given their close connections with immigrant women and their families, those who run or are actively involved with nonprofit organizations and congregations often have a keen sense of how the implementation of current laws and policies can affect immigrant women and their families. In particular, organizations in Atlanta, Northern Virginia, and Phoenix have seen the detrimental effects of immigration enforcement policies, especially when carried out in ways that profile immigrants or violate their rights. With adequate funding and information, organizations can work to address these problems by documenting incidents of racial profiling and rights violations, and relaying this information to government officials, courts, and the media. They can also strive to implement safeguards to ensure that existing laws and policies are enacted in ways that protect immigrants' dignity and rights.

4. *Help immigrant women and their families understand the policies and procedures of immigration officials and educate them about their rights under the law.* Organizations report that many immigrants, especially those who are undocumented, fear unexpected encounters with immigration officials and are often unsure how best to respond in the event they are questioned, stopped, or detained. Groups work to address this problem in various ways. Some provide legal services or know-your-rights training and materials to Latino/a immigrants, including pamphlets or brochures that explain (in Spanish and English) the rights immigrants have under the law and how they can contact advocates and service providers for assistance. Others help immigrant parents prepare legal documents that outline guardianship for their children in case the parents are detained or deported. In one instance, an organization worked to educate immigrants about the difference between the local sheriff's office (which participated in the 287(g) program) and the police department (which did not). With financial support, organizations can continue to increase such efforts, which help promote the well-being of immigrant families both in the immediate future and in the long term.

## **Enhancing Civic Networks and Community Engagement**

1. *Support efforts to strengthen local, national, and international partnerships among organizations that work with immigrant women and their families.* Although partnerships can be difficult to form and sustain, they represent an important way that concerned groups can pool their resources to better address the needs of immigrant women and communities. By strengthening existing networks and partnerships as well as developing new ones, organizations may expand their outreach and effectiveness in multiple ways. Among local organizations, partnerships can help facilitate the coordination and division of services as well as changes in local and state legislation. At the national level, partnerships can increase the visibility of immigrant women's perspectives and create a stronger advocacy movement that unites disparate groups. Partnerships that link local or national organizations to international groups also can connect immigrant women to their home countries and develop services that take into account the different backgrounds and experiences of immigrant women.

One way organizations can expand their networks is to develop partnerships not only with other groups that share a similar structure and goals, but also with groups that may represent different perspectives or work in different contexts, such as consulates, churches, temples, and labor unions. For some religious groups, this may involve partnering with secular organizations or with groups representing different religious traditions. For both nonprofit organizations and congregations, it may entail collaborating with consulates as well as with organizations in immigrants' countries of origin to develop training and educational programs for immigrant women and their families. Such efforts can help ensure the development of a strong, well-coordinated, and international movement that aims to assist immigrant women and change policies that prevent their social and economic integration.

2. *Increase support for collective action to promote immigrant women's rights.* Collectively mobilizing immigrants and groups working with them is essential to improving the circumstances of immigrant women and their families. Yet many groups focus only on providing direct services—sometimes informally and occasionally—and do not get involved in efforts to transform the larger social and political factors that exclude immigrant women, for various reasons. Churches often find the issue of immigration too divisive among their members. Other organizations express interest in advocacy, but lack the time, staff, and resources needed to participate. Consumed by the overwhelming task of meeting immediate needs, they simply do not have the time, staff, and money.

Without organizations' increased involvement in local (and national) efforts to advance immigrant rights, the restrictive policies that often pass in local jurisdictions will remain

unchanged. Foundations and other entities that want to enhance efforts to facilitate immigrant integration and civic participation should increase their support for organizations and coalitions working on the ground to advance immigrant women's rights and bring their concerns more fully into public debate.

3. *Include immigrants themselves as key players in efforts to advance immigrants' rights.* Although the current anti-immigrant climate in many areas around the country may place many immigrants at risk and discourage them from participating in movements for social and policy change, their involvement remains critical to the success of these movements. Immigrant women represent a potentially significant source of political power, yet IWPR's interview data indicate that immigrants are not always included in advocacy strategies and campaigns, at least not in a central way. While some advocacy coalitions and organizations are formed and led by immigrant women, others are composed largely of native-born individuals who advocate on behalf of immigrant communities. More outreach to immigrant women will allow their insights and experiences to better inform advocates' strategies, approaches, and goals.

### **Expanding Opportunities for Immigrant Women's Leadership and Civic Engagement**

1. *Raise the visibility of immigrant women's concerns and interests in efforts to advance immigrant rights and resources at the local, state, and national levels.* Because immigrant women not only experience many of the same challenges as their male counterparts but also face a distinctive set of vulnerabilities, their interests cannot be fully taken into account simply through a focus on immigrants in general or even immigrant families. To incorporate immigrant women's voices more fully into public debates and discussions, organizations can use different strategies, such as actively working to include immigrant women in movements for change, holding forums in which immigrant women are invited to share their stories, and encouraging immigrant women to take on leadership roles in various contexts.
2. *Ensure that immigrant women from the population served have opportunities to assume leadership positions within nonprofit organizations and congregations.* Providing leadership opportunities for immigrant women within organizations encourages the inclusion of immigrant women in communities and society. Immigrant women who hold leadership positions, however, often are not representative of the individuals their groups serve. Given the differences that exist among immigrant women of different national backgrounds, ethnicities, and socioeconomic statuses, it is important for organizations to have female immigrant leaders who share common backgrounds and experiences with foreign-born Latinas who participate in their programs and services. These commonalities may facilitate better communication and understanding within organizations as well as among organizational leaders and those who participate in their programs and advocacy.
3. *Put protections in place to provide immigrant women with the safety they need to take on public leadership roles.* Rising anti-immigrant sentiment, immigration enforcement activities, and violence in the home and workplace all contribute to a social context in which some immigrant women may fear serving in public leadership positions. Organizations that want to elevate the voices of immigrant women in public debates and encourage their participation as leaders should offer protections that will increase their comfort in taking on these roles. These protections could include conferring with legal services first about legal rights; helping undocumented immigrant women obtain their documents when possible; and, for those who already have documentation, making sure they are safely accompanied by others who remain aware of immigrants' legal obligations as well as rights during advocacy and other activities.

4. *Ensure that any immigration reform includes provisions to allocate adequate funding for programs that will help immigrant women achieve citizenship.* Because low-income immigrant women are disproportionately affected by certain challenges, including the lack of access to transportation and affordable child care, the provisions that a reform of the immigration system may create could be especially difficult for them to access. Funders should work to ensure that organizations have adequate support to offer programs and services designed to help low-income immigrant women take advantage of the path to citizenship that may become available to them. These services may include English language and citizenship classes with child care and other supports, legal aid to complete the application process and information sessions on the details of any new policies.



# Appendix A

## Methodology

IWPR's research on organizations working to advance the rights and well-being of immigrants used a mixed-methods approach involving both demographic and qualitative data collection and analysis. The research relied on multiple data sources, including three types of primary interview data, secondary statistical data, and data from program observations.

### *Demographic Data Analysis*

Using data from the 2008 American Community Survey Integrated Public Use Microdata Series (IPUMS) from the Minnesota Population Center, IWPR conducted demographic data analysis that examined the social and economic status of Latino/a immigrants in the Phoenix and Atlanta metropolitan areas and in Northern Virginia. Researchers analyzed selected indicators, such as countries of origin, length of time in the United States, marital status and age, income, poverty status, labor force participation and occupation, English language proficiency, citizenship status, educational attainment, and the number of children in immigrant Latino/a households (see Appendix B). The findings from these calculations at the metropolitan level were compared with findings using state level data (for Georgia, Arizona, and Virginia) and national data. Completing the three different levels of examination enabled researchers to highlight differences and similarities among the three research sites as well as among the states in which they are located and between each research site and the United States as a whole.

To define the three metropolitan areas that were the focus of the study, IWPR aggregated Public Use Micro Data Area variables (PUMAS), which are the smallest geographical unit available within the American Community Survey data. While PUMAS do not cross state lines, they do in some cases include more than one county. This means that IWPR's definitions of the Atlanta and Phoenix metro areas differs from the official definition of the Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSAs) created by the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) (the OMB does not provide an official definition of Northern Virginia). Specifically, whereas the Atlanta MSA has 28 counties, IWPR's definition includes 17 counties and their respective PUMAs: Barrow, Bartow, Carroll, Cherokee, Clayton, Cobb, Coweta, Dekalb, Douglas, Fayette, Fulton, Gwinnett, Henry, Newton, Paulding, Spalding, and Walton (see Map 1). IWPR's definition of Phoenix includes only Maricopa County and its PUMA codes, in contrast to the OMB's definition of the Phoenix-Mesa-Glendale MSA, which includes Maricopa and Pinal counties (see Map 3).

### *Qualitative Interviews*

The demographic analysis served to provide a context and supplement an extensive series of interviews with congregations and parishes, agencies, and other organizations working to assist Latina immigrants. During the course of one year between 2009 and 2010, researchers completed a total of 460 interviews, in both English and Spanish, with 280 groups in the three areas (84 of these groups were in Atlanta, 101 in Northern Virginia, and 95 in Phoenix). A total of 398 interviews were conducted by phone and 62 in person. Of the 460 interviews, 280 were preliminary phone interviews that lasted about 15 minutes and gathered basic information about the organization's resources and its advocacy for immigrant rights, where applicable. Based on findings from these initial interviews, researchers selected 118 organizations (39 in Atlanta, 39 in NOVA, 40 in Phoenix) for an in-depth phone interview that included more detailed questions about the groups' programs and services, their legal and/or political advocacy, and challenges they face in striving to assist immigrants. Respondents were also asked demographic questions about themselves (age, race, ethnicity, national origin, language skills) and the immigrants their organizations serve (countries of origin, average length of time in the United States, languages spoken).

With one exception, the 62 organizations interviewed in person were selected from among the 118 groups that completed in-depth phone interviews. These groups were distributed fairly equally throughout the research sites (21 in Atlanta, 18 in Northern Virginia, and 23 in Phoenix). To the extent possible, researchers chose to interview organizations that work specifically with Latin American immigrants, and especially with Latinas. The interviews focused on the respondent's background and experiences in working with immigrant women; their perceptions about challenges Latina immigrants face; their reflections on the services, programs, and advocacy of their organization; the general availability of resources in the area; and their suggestions for policy changes to benefit Latina immigrants and their families. The interviews lasted approximately one hour. They were digitally recorded, transcribed, and, if conducted in Spanish, translated into English.

Where possible, IWPR researchers also observed a program or service offered by the organizations. These observations included a program that involved putting together a lunch and worship service for day laborers, a "Mommy and Me" program that offers English language instruction for mothers and a preschool for their young children, a citizenship class, several English language classes, a nutrition seminar, a sex education class, and a financial literacy class for Latina immigrants. The observations enhanced the researchers' understanding of the organization's work by allowing them to see the programs in action and to speak with immigrant women. Interview data and field notes from the program observations were coded and analyzed using qualitative research software (NVIVO) to identify common themes and patterns (cross-indexed with the groups' locations and types) as well as to reflect unique perspectives.

### **Organizations Interviewed**

The interview sample for the study was developed in several ways. IWPR researchers worked with three immigration scholars who helped to identify nonprofit organizations and congregations working with Latina immigrants in Atlanta and Phoenix. In Northern Virginia, researchers worked through local contacts to find potential respondents. IWPR also contacted regional offices of the mainline Protestant denominations and the Catholic archdiocese in the three research sites for additional suggestions.

Researchers used a snowball method to identify additional study participants. At the end of each initial phone interview, the respondent was asked to suggest other organizations that might have an interest in the project. Researchers followed up on new leads by attempting to contact the suggested organizations to secure their consent for a phone interview. Although this reliance on word of mouth referrals means that the interview sample is not random and the research findings cannot be generalized to other locations, the relatively large number of organizations interviewed enables IWPR to present a reasonably comprehensive overview of the resources available in the three research sites.

The 280 organizations in the study represent a mix of groups with institutional ties to a religious tradition or body (164 organizations, or 59 percent) and those without such ties (116 organizations, or 41 percent). Numerous respondents from groups without an official religious affiliation remarked that their organization was started by congregations, works closely with faith communities, or is shaped by particular religious values or beliefs, even though the organization does not explicitly consider itself religious. Of the groups that have official ties to religious bodies or institutions, 109 are congregations or parishes and 55 are religious nonprofits. The remaining organizations in the study are comprised of "secular" nonprofits (111) and governmental organizations (5).

The organizations with a religious affiliation represent a variety of traditions and denominations. The largest number were Roman Catholic (31) or from mainline Protestant denominations (59), including Methodist (23), Presbyterian (15), Lutheran (11), Episcopal (8), Anglican

(1), and Disciples of Christ (1). IWPR also interviewed congregations that were Baptist (13), Pentecostal (10), Church of Jesus Christ of the Latter-Day Saints (3), Quaker (2), Church of the Nazarene (2), and Unitarian Universalist (1). Seventeen groups identified as Christian without specifying a denominational affiliation, and one church described their congregation as “independent.” Three organizations called themselves ecumenical. Thirteen groups were interfaith, and two described themselves as simply evangelical. Four organizations were Muslim, and three were Jewish.

The fact that the sample is heavily weighted toward Christian organizations is not surprising, especially given the religious affiliations of the Latino/a community in the United States. According to a study conducted by the Hispanic Churches in American Public Life, 93 percent of Latinos/as in the United States identify as Christian. Seventy of the 93 percent consider themselves Catholic and 23 percent describe themselves as Protestant. Only one percent of Latinos/as practice a world religion other than Christianity, and six percent express no religious preference (Espinosa, Elizondo, and Miranda 2003).

### ***Locations of the Organizations Interviewed***

Once the organizations were identified and the initial interviews were conducted, IWPR researchers combined data on the organizational locations with U.S. Census Bureau data to map the geographical locations of the organizations in relation to the density of the foreign-born Latino/a population in the research sites. This mapping reveals that in Atlanta and Phoenix the organizations interviewed are generally concentrated in or near areas with a relatively high density of Latino/a population (See Maps 1 and 3).

In NOVA, 86 of the 101 groups are located in the City of Alexandria, Arlington County, and Fairfax County, for the most part in areas where foreign-born Latinos/as represent approximately 1 in 10 residents (see Map 2). Only fifteen of the NOVA organizations interviewed provide resources in Prince William and Loudoun counties, which have experienced rapid growth in their immigrant populations since 2000. Since the groups in the study are not an exhaustive list of organizations, the smaller number located in Prince William does not necessarily mean that resources are largely unavailable there.

### ***Respondents Interviewed***

The demographic information collected from the 118 respondents who participated in preliminary and in-depth phone interviews indicates a limited degree of diversity among the interview sample. Fifty of the 118 respondents identified themselves as white (non-Hispanic), and 52 identified as Latino or Hispanic. Among the remaining study participants, five described themselves as African American or Black, five as multi-racial, and one as Asian. Five did not answer the question. Most respondents defined their nationality as American (96 of 118), with the remaining identifying as Mexican (4), Colombian (4), Venezuelan (2), Bolivian (2), Chilean (1), Guatemalan (1), Peruvian (1), Scottish (1), and Irish (1). Five respondents did not specify their nationality.

Respondents range in age, with the highest percentages between 46 and 55 years of age (30 percent) and 31 to 45 (28 percent). Twenty-four percent were between 56 and 70 years old, and 10 percent were younger than 31. A much smaller percentage (3) were over the age of 70. Seven respondents (6 percent) did not answer the question.<sup>32</sup>

Interviewees held various positions within their organizations. Of the 280 respondents to the study, 86 were pastors or religious leaders, and 85 were the directors of their organizations. Eighty-one were the heads of specific programs or departments within their organizations. The remaining 28 respondents included case managers, advocates, or counselors (14), board members (5), staff attorneys or paralegals (4), administrative staff (3), translator (1), and volunteer (1).

In their work as leaders within their organizations and as staff members interacting with Latina immigrants, respondents often indicated that fluency or proficiency in Spanish as well as English was integral to their jobs. Of the 118 respondents who participated in in-depth telephone interviews, 103 spoke English fluently, with the remaining 15 describing themselves as having some knowledge of English language. Eighty of the 118 respondents spoke Spanish fluently, and an additional 22 had some knowledge of Spanish (16 did not speak the language at all). Sixty-five respondents were bilingual, and 28 spoke one or more languages other than English or Spanish, with varying degrees of proficiency.

The choice to interview organizations' leaders and representatives rather than Latina immigrants who use the groups' resources informs the study in important ways. While respondents' ability to speak Spanish may help them connect with Latina immigrants and give them insight into the circumstances that shape immigrant women's lives, differences in ethnicity, nationality, and socioeconomic status also may hinder respondents' ability to relate to their Latina clients and congregants.

In addition, the perceptions about Latina immigrants' circumstances that organizational leaders and staff articulated may not necessarily coincide with the views that immigrant women themselves might express. The interview data reveal underlying assumptions about Latina immigrants held by service providers and advocates—assumptions that in some instances may be based on broad characterizations that do not reflect the diversity of immigrant women's backgrounds and experiences. While respondents' observations about immigrant women's lives are insightful and informative, they should not be taken as a definitive or exhaustive account.

# Appendix B

**Table 1. Latino/a Immigrants by Age and Sex in Atlanta, Georgia, and U.S., 2008**

	ATLANTA			GEORGIA			U.S.		
	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female
Less than 16 years	9%	9%	11%	10%	9%	11%	6%	6%	7%
16 to 19 years	3%	3%		4%	4%	4%	4%	4%	4%
20 to 24 years	9%	9%	9%	10%	11%	9%	8%	9%	8%
25 to 54 years	71%	73%	68%	69%	70%	67%	65%	67%	63%
55+	8%	7%	10%	7%	6%	9%	17%	14%	20%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

Notes: Blank cells indicate insufficient sample size to reliably estimate these figures.

Percentages may not add to 100 percent due to rounding.

Source: Institute for Women’s Policy Research analysis of 2008 IPUMS American Community Survey (ACS).

**Table 2. Latino/a Immigrants by Age and Sex in Northern Virginia, Virginia, and U.S., 2008**

	NORTHERN VIRGINIA			VIRGINIA			U.S.		
	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female
Less than 16 years	5%	6%	5%	5%	5%	5%	6%	6%	7%
16 to 19 years	3%	3%		4%	4%	4%	4%	4%	4%
20 to 24 years	8%	8%	7%	8%	9%	7%	8%	9%	8%
25 to 54 years	72%	74%	70%	71%	72%	70%	65%	67%	63%
55+	12%	9%	16%	11%	9%	14%	17%	14%	20%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

Notes: Blank cells indicate insufficient sample size to reliably estimate these figures.

Percentages may not add to 100 percent due to rounding.

Source: Institute for Women’s Policy Research analysis of 2008 IPUMS American Community Survey (ACS).

**Table 3. Latino/a Immigrants by Age and Sex in Phoenix, Arizona, and U.S., 2008**

	PHOENIX			ARIZONA			U.S.		
	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female
Less than 16 years	9%	8%	10%	8%	8%	8%	6%	6%	7%
16 to 19 years	4%	4%	4%	4%	4%	4%	4%	4%	4%
20 to 24 years	9%	10%	8%	8%	9%	7%	8%	9%	8%
25 to 54 years	68%	70%	66%	66%	68%	65%	65%	67%	63%
55+	10%	8%	12%	13%	11%	16%	17%	14%	20%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

Note: Percentages may not add to 100 percent due to rounding.

Source: Institute for Women’s Policy Research analysis of 2008 IPUMS American Community Survey (ACS).

**Table 4. Latino/a Immigrants by Sex and Race in Atlanta, Georgia, and U.S., 2008**

	ATLANTA			GEORGIA			U.S.		
	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female
White	48%	47%	48%	50%	50%	50%	61%	61%	62%
Black	2%			2%	2%		1%	1%	2%
Other	50%	50%	50%	48%	48%	47%	37%	38%	37%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

Notes: Blank cells indicate insufficient sample size to reliably estimate these figures.

These data include persons of all ages.

Percentages may not add to 100 percent due to rounding.

Source: Institute for Women's Policy Research analysis of 2008 IPUMS American Community Survey (ACS).

**Table 5. Latino/a Immigrants by Sex and Race in Northern Virginia, Virginia, and U.S., 2008**

	NORTHERN VIRGINIA			VIRGINIA			U.S.		
	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female
White	51%	49%	54%	56%	54%	58%	61%	61%	62%
Black							1%	1%	2%
Other	47%	50%	44%	43%	44%	40%	37%	38%	37%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

Notes: Blank cells indicate insufficient sample size to reliably estimate these figures.

These data include persons of all ages.

Percentages may not add to 100 percent due to rounding.

Source: Institute for Women's Policy Research analysis of 2008 IPUMS American Community Survey (ACS).

**Table 6. Latino/a Immigrants by Sex and Race in Phoenix, Arizona, and U.S., 2008**

	PHOENIX			ARIZONA			U.S.		
	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female
White	80%	81%	79%	77%	78%	77%	61%	61%	62%
Black							1%	1%	2%
Other	20%	19%	20%	22%	22%	23%	37%	38%	37%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

Notes: Blank cells indicate insufficient sample size to reliably estimate these figures.

These data include persons of all ages.

Percentages may not add to 100 percent due to rounding.

Source: Institute for Women's Policy Research analysis of 2008 IPUMS American Community Survey (ACS).

**Table 7. Latino/a Immigrants by Sex and Citizenship Status in Atlanta, Georgia, and U.S., 2008**

	ATLANTA			GEORGIA			U.S.		
	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female
Naturalized citizen	15%	14%	18%	16%	13%	19%	29%	26%	32%
Not a citizen	85%	86%	83%	85%	87%	81%	71%	75%	68%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

Notes: These data include persons of all ages.

Percentages may not add to 100 percent due to rounding.

Source: Institute for Women's Policy Research analysis of 2008 IPUMS American Community Survey (ACS).

**Table 8. Latino/a Immigrants by Sex and Citizenship Status in Northern Virginia, Virginia, and U.S., 2008**

	NORTHERN VIRGINIA			VIRGINIA			U.S.		
	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female
Naturalized citizen	30%	29%	31%	28%	26%	30%	29%	26%	32%
Not a citizen	70%	71%	70%	72%	74%	70%	71%	75%	68%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

Notes: These data include persons of all ages.

Percentages may not add to 100 percent due to rounding.

Source: Institute for Women's Policy Research analysis of 2008 IPUMS American Community Survey (ACS).

**Table 9. Latino/a Immigrants by Sex and Citizenship Status in Phoenix, Arizona, and U.S., 2008**

	PHOENIX			ARIZONA			U.S.		
	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female
Naturalized citizen	17%	15%	19%	21%	19%	24%	29%	26%	32%
Not a citizen	83%	85%	81%	79%	81%	76%	71%	75%	68%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

Notes: These data include persons of all ages.

Percentages may not add to 100 percent due to rounding.

Source: Institute for Women's Policy Research analysis of 2008 IPUMS American Community Survey (ACS).

**Table 10. Latino/a Immigrants by Sex and Years in the U.S., Intervalled for Atlanta, Georgia, and U.S., 2008**

	ATLANTA			GEORGIA			U.S.		
	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female
0-5 years	27%	30%	23%	27%	30%	23%	18%	19%	16%
6-10 years	33%	32%	34%	31%	30%	32%	22%	22%	21%
11-15 years	14%	13%	16%	15%	14%	17%	14%	14%	14%
16-20 years	11%	11%	12%	12%	12%	12%	14%	14%	15%
21+ years	14%	14%	16%	15%	14%	16%	33%	32%	34%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

Notes: These data include persons of all ages.

Percentages may not add to 100 percent due to rounding.

Source: Institute for Women's Policy Research analysis of 2008 IPUMS American Community Survey (ACS).

**Table 11. Latino/a Immigrants by Sex and Years in the U.S., Intervalled for Northern Virginia, Virginia, and U.S., 2008**

	NORTHERN VIRGINIA			VIRGINIA			U.S.		
	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female
0-5 years	20%	19%	21%	22%	23%	22%	18%	19%	16%
6-10 years	28%	29%	27%	28%	29%	26%	22%	22%	21%
11-15 years	14%	15%	13%	15%	15%	15%	14%	14%	14%
16-20 years	16%	16%	16%	14%	14%	14%	14%	14%	15%
21+ years	23%	22%	24%	21%	20%	24%	33%	32%	34%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

Notes: These data include persons of all ages.

Percentages may not add to 100 percent due to rounding.

Source: Institute for Women's Policy Research analysis of 2008 IPUMS American Community Survey (ACS).

**Table 12. Latino/a Immigrants by Sex and Years in the U.S., Intervalled for Phoenix, Arizona, and U.S., 2008**

	PHOENIX			ARIZONA			U.S.		
	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female
0-5 years	19%	24%	14%	19%	23%	14%	18%	19%	16%
6-10 years	28%	28%	28%	24%	24%	24%	22%	22%	21%
11-15 years	15%	13%	17%	14%	13%	16%	14%	14%	14%
16-20 years	15%	13%	17%	15%	14%	16%	14%	14%	15%
21+ years	24%	22%	25%	28%	27%	31%	33%	32%	34%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

Notes: These data include persons of all ages.

Percentages may not add to 100 percent due to rounding.

Source: Institute for Women's Policy Research analysis of 2008 IPUMS American Community Survey (ACS).

**Table 13. Latino/a Immigrant Households by Family Size, Atlanta, Georgia, and U.S., 2008**

	ATLANTA Percent	GEORGIA Percent	U.S. Percent
One family member	23%	22%	19%
2-4 members	53%	52%	56%
5-7 members	23%	23%	24%
8+			2%
Total	100%	100%	100%

Notes: Defined by head of household of any age.

Blank cells indicate insufficient sample size to reliably estimate these figures.

Percentages may not add to 100 percent due to rounding.

Source: Institute for Women's Policy Research analysis of 2008 IPUMS American Community Survey (ACS).

**Table 14. Latino/a Immigrant Households by Family Size, Northern Virginia, Virginia, and U.S., 2008**

	NORTHERN VIRGINIA	VIRGINIA	U.S.
One family member	24%	25%	19%
2-4 members	57%	57%	56%
5-7 members	16%	16%	24%
8+			2%
Total	100%	100%	100%

Notes: Defined by head of household of any age.

Blank cells indicate insufficient sample size to reliably estimate these figures.

Percentages may not add to 100 percent due to rounding.

Source: Institute for Women's Policy Research analysis of 2008 IPUMS American Community Survey (ACS).

**Table 15. Latino/a Immigrant Households by Family Size, Phoenix, Arizona, and U.S., 2008**

	PHOENIX	ARIZONA	U.S.
One family member	18%	19%	19%
2-4 members	48%	51%	56%
5-7 members	30%	27%	24%
8+	4%	3%	2%
Total	100%	100%	100%

Notes: Defined by head of household of any age.

Blank cells indicate insufficient sample size to reliably estimate these figures.

Percentages may not add to 100 percent due to rounding.

Source: Institute for Women's Policy Research analysis of 2008 IPUMS American Community Survey (ACS).

**Table 16. Total Income for Employed Persons 16 Years and Older by Sex and Place of Birth in Atlanta, Georgia, and U.S., 2008**

	ATLANTA				GEORGIA				UNITED STATES			
	All Native-Born		Immigrant Latino/a		All Native-Born		Immigrant Latino/a		All Native-Born		Immigrant Latino/a	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
Less than 15,000	12%	20%	30%	42%	14%	24%	28%	41%	14%	24%	20%	39%
\$15,000 to \$24,999	10%	15%	33%	25%	13%	19%	35%	29%	12%	18%	30%	30%
\$25,000 to \$34,999	13%	16%	17%	15%	15%	17%	19%	16%	14%	17%	19%	14%
\$35,000 to \$49,999	18%	19%	10%	11%	19%	17%	9%	9%	18%	18%	15%	10%
\$50,000 or more	47%	29%	11%	7%	39%	23%	9%	6%	42%	23%	14%	8%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

Note: Percentages may not add to 100 percent due to rounding.

Source: Institute for Women's Policy Research analysis of 2008 IPUMS American Community Survey (ACS).

**Table 17. Total Income for Employed Persons 16 Years and Older by Sex and Place of Birth in Northern Virginia, Virginia, and U.S., 2008**

	NORTHERN VIRGINIA				VIRGINIA				UNITED STATES			
	All Native-Born		Immigrant Latino/a		All Native-Born		Immigrant Latino/a		All Native-Born		Immigrant Latino/a	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
Less than 15,000	9%	14%	9%	28%	13%	22%	12%	29%	14%	24%	20%	39%
\$15,000 to \$24,999	5%	10%	25%	29%	11%	17%	28%	31%	12%	18%	30%	30%
\$25,000 to \$34,999	5%	9%	17%	16%	13%	16%	16%	15%	14%	17%	19%	14%
\$35,000 to \$49,999	12%	15%	26%	15%	18%	18%	22%	13%	18%	18%	15%	10%
\$50,000 or more	69%	52%	23%	12%	46%	27%	21%	12%	42%	23%	14%	8 %
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

Note: Percentages may not add to 100 percent due to rounding.

Source: Institute for Women's Policy Research analysis of 2008 IPUMS American Community Survey (ACS).

**Table 18. Total Income for Employed Persons 16 Years and Older by Sex and Place of Birth in Phoenix, Arizona, and U.S., 2008**

	PHOENIX				ARIZONA				UNITED STATES			
	All Native-Born		Immigrant Latino/a		All Native-Born		Immigrant Latino/a		All Native-Born		Immigrant Latino/a	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
Less than 15,000	13%	20%	21%	37%	14%	23%	21%	40%	14%	24%	20%	39%
\$15,000 to \$24,999	11%	15%	32%	33%	13%	18%	31%	32%	12%	18%	30%	30%
\$25,000 to \$34,999	14%	17%	22%	16%	14%	18%	21%	14%	14%	17%	19%	14%
\$35,000 to \$49,999	19%	22%	13%	8%	19%	20%	15%	8%	18%	18%	15%	10%
\$50,000 or more	43%	25%	12%	7%	40%	22%	12%	6%	42%	23%	14%	8 %
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

Note: Percentages may not add to 100 percent due to rounding.

Source: Institute for Women's Policy Research analysis of 2008 IPUMS American Community Survey (ACS).

## Endnotes

- <sup>1</sup> This report uses both *foreign-born* and *immigrant* to refer to individuals born outside the United States who were not U.S. citizens at birth. As Singer, Wilson, and DeRenzi (2009) observe, this includes legal permanent residents, naturalized citizens, refugees, asylum seekers, and migrants who temporarily stay in the United States. It also includes some undocumented immigrants, although this population is likely undercounted by Census survey data. The terms *native-born* and *U.S.-born* are used to refer to individuals born in the United States or abroad to American parents.
- <sup>2</sup> The highest share in the early 20<sup>th</sup> twentieth century was in 1910 (Source: Gibson and Lennon 2008).
- <sup>3</sup> Barbara Ellen Smith notes that some social justice organizations have attempted to use the claim that “we’re all a nation of immigrants” as a basis for building solidarity among African American and Latino activists. Yet this claim overlooks the fact that “forced migration through the slave trade hardly seemed an instance of migration, at least as commonly understood” (Smith 2006).
- <sup>4</sup> For the sake of simplicity, this report at times uses the relatively generic term *congregation* to refer to worshipping communities that represent various Christian traditions, although some traditions may be more comfortable with this term than others (see Michael Foley and Dean Hoge 2007).
- <sup>5</sup> Unity in the Community, a nonprofit organization in Northern Virginia, has collected many declarations on immigration from religious organizations and bodies into a single document called *Words of Compassion: Supportive Statements on Immigration Reform* (2009).
- <sup>6</sup> This report uses the word *organizations* as a collective term for all the kinds of groups interviewed for the study: congregations, religious nonprofits, secular nonprofits, and agencies.
- <sup>7</sup> Unless otherwise specified, the calculations in this report include immigrants of all ages.
- <sup>8</sup> Other research, however, indicates that these communities may vary in the extent that they cultivate such skills among new immigrants (Foley and Hoge 2007; Williams, Steigenga, and Vásquez 2009).
- <sup>9</sup> In July 2007 a federal judge in Pennsylvania struck down the ordinances, ruling that they interfered with federal law and violated the rights of employers, landlords, and undocumented immigrants (Preston 2007). The decision was appealed, but in September 2010 the 3<sup>rd</sup> U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals confirmed the decision and ruled that the town may not enforce the ordinances (King 2010).
- <sup>10</sup> In these counties, the places with the highest concentrations of Latino/a immigrants include a stretch along Buford Highway and I-85 in northern DeKalb County and southwestern Gwinnett County. They also include an area around Marietta, Georgia in Cobb County and an area along Highway 400 in northern Fulton County (Odem 2008).
- <sup>11</sup> For this definition of Northern Virginia, see the website of Virginia State Senator Jim Webb at <[http://webb.senate.gov/aboutvirginia/about\\_va\\_reg\\_offices.cfm](http://webb.senate.gov/aboutvirginia/about_va_reg_offices.cfm)>. For the official definition of the Washington, DC, metropolitan statistical area offered by the Office of Management and Budget (OMB), see <<http://www.whitehouse.gov/sites/default/files/omb/assets/omb/bulletins/fy2009/09-01.pdf>>.
- <sup>12</sup> The 1990 definition of Northern Virginia used in this report includes Culpeper, Frederick, Madison, Orange, Page, Rappahannock, Shenandoah, and Winchester counties, since the Public Use Microdata Areas (PUMAs) did not retain the same boundaries or PUMA codes between the 1990 and the 2000 U.S. Census. For more information, please see 1990 boundary files at <<http://usa.ipums.org/usa/volii/1990va.shtml>> and 2000 boundary files at <[http://usa.ipums.org/usa/volii/maps/va\\_puma5.pdf](http://usa.ipums.org/usa/volii/maps/va_puma5.pdf)>.
- <sup>13</sup> Latin America and the Caribbean includes Mexico, Central and South America, Cuba, and the West Indies.
- <sup>14</sup> See also Judicial Watch’s complaint against the center at <<http://www.judicialwatch.org/cases/herndon/Herndon%20Complaint.pdf>>.

- <sup>15</sup> In July 2007, Loudoun County officials passed a resolution that required the county's staff to study what services could be denied to undocumented immigrants and the legal conditions under which the county "can deny building permits, business licenses, or contracts to those companies that may not be in compliance with Federal immigration laws" (Loudoun Board of County Supervisors 2007).
- <sup>16</sup> See also the Associated Press report (2010), "Pre-Arizona Immigration Law, Arpaio Helped Deport 26G Illegals."
- <sup>17</sup> The U.S. Justice Department filed a suit on July 6, 2010 against the State of Arizona challenging the constitutionality of this law. In July 2010, a federal judge issued a ruling that barred the State from enforcing several key sections of the law, including the provision that required police officers to check the immigration status of individuals they have stopped, detained, or arrested (Chishti and Bergeron 2010; United States vs. State of Arizona 2010).
- <sup>18</sup> The term *foreign-born Latinas living below the federal poverty line* refers to all foreign-born Latinas age 18 and older with incomes at 100 percent or below the federal poverty threshold as calculated in the IPUMS version of the American Community Survey (ACS). Those who live *near poverty* include individuals with incomes between 100 and 200 percent of the federal poverty line as calculated in the IPUMS ACS.
- <sup>19</sup> Temporary Assistance for Needy Families provides cash assistance to qualifying households and contributes to the costs of programs considered to increase the economic security of families with dependent children. Supplemental Security Income is a federal income supplement designed to help aged, blind, or disabled people with low incomes. See <http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/ofa/tanf/about.html> and <http://www.ssa.gov/ssi/>.
- <sup>20</sup> The category of "employed" includes employers, self-employed persons, employees, and unpaid family workers. Unpaid family workers are individuals who regularly assist the family head in running a business or farm but receive no pay for this work. General housekeeping and chores not directly related to the running of a family business or farm do not count as unpaid family work.
- <sup>21</sup> Specifically, these issues were addressed in the Violence Against Women Act of 1994 and the Victims of Trafficking and Violence Protection Act of 2000. The latter piece of legislation included the Violence Against Women Act of 2000, under which the U-Visa program was created to help immigrant women who were victims of violent crimes obtain work eligibility if they were willing to assist government officials in the investigation and prosecution of the individual who perpetrated the crimes (Orloff 2002; Victims of Trafficking and Violence Protection Act of 2000).
- <sup>22</sup> Those with health insurance were covered by one of the following options at the time the American Community Survey data was collected: (1) employer-provided insurance; (2) privately purchased insurance; (3) Medicare; (4) Medicaid or other governmental insurance; (5) TRICARE or other military care, or (6) Veterans Administration-provided insurance. The Census Bureau does not consider respondents to have coverage if their only coverage is from Indian Health Services (IHS), since IHS policies are not always comprehensive.
- <sup>23</sup> None of the individuals IWPR interviewed spoke about the phenomenon of "transnational motherhood," in which immigrant women who come to work in the United States are forced to leave their children behind in their countries of origin and to develop new ways of parenting from a distance. Pierette Hondagneu-Sotelo and Ernestine Avila (1999) argue that this phenomenon is not uncommon, since the demands of the labor that Latina immigrants often perform in this country, especially as paid domestic workers, are often incompatible with caring for their own children on a daily basis. In their view, the transnational motherhood of immigrant women "continues a long historical legacy of people of color being incorporated into the United States through coercive systems of labor that do not recognize family rights." They conclude that affirming the right of immigrant women workers "to choose their own motherhood arrangements would be the beginning of truly just family and work policies, policies that address not only inequalities of gender but also inequalities of race, class, and citizenship status" (Hondagneu-Sotelo and Avila 1999).

- <sup>24</sup> As Ajay Chaudry et al. (2010) observe, since 2009 the Department of Homeland Security has focused on auditing employers and expanding E-Verify, an electronic system designed to confirm work authorization for potential employees. This focus represents a different approach to enforcement that may reduce some of the psychological trauma created by worksite raids and limit the number of families who become separated. However, the new approach may continue to lead to economic hardship for immigrants who lose their jobs as a result of audits and firings.
- <sup>25</sup> Created by the Victims of Trafficking and Violence Protection Act of 2000, the U-Visa gives noncitizen victims of certain crimes temporary legal status and work authorization in the United States (noncitizens who receive a U-Visa may stay in the United States for up to four years and may eventually apply to become permanent residents). Applicants must have suffered substantial physical or mental abuse from a criminal activity and be willing to assist government officials in the investigation of the crime. For more information, see <<http://www.dol.gov/opa/media/press/opa/opa20100312-fs.htm>>.
- <sup>26</sup> Fifty-two groups did not offer English language classes. One respondent did not say whether their organization provides English language classes, either because they were not asked the question or because they chose not to answer.
- <sup>27</sup> The Comprehensive Immigration Reform for America's Security and Prosperity Act was introduced in the U.S. House of Representatives in December 2009. The Comprehensive Immigration Reform Act of 2010 was introduced in the U.S. Senate in September 2010.
- <sup>28</sup> Sixty-six groups did not offer child care. One respondent to the study did not say whether their organization offers child care, either because they were not asked the question or because they chose not to answer.
- <sup>29</sup> One respondent described a well-functioning guest worker program as one that does not bind an employee to a particular employer. She remarked,
- There've been a lot of questions about guest workers and whether there's going to be some kind of guest worker component and what that means for victims. What that means for victims [now] is that when you're tied to an employer, you have even less of an incentive to ever talk about anything bad happening to you. And so that's obviously a very bad thing. So, I personally think that the guest worker program has to be reformed.
- <sup>30</sup> Service providers interviewed for the study identified similar sources of motivation for their work with immigrant women.
- <sup>31</sup> While respondents in this study often indicated that the lack of legal immigration status may deter some immigrants from engaging in collective action, other studies find that undocumented status does not necessarily discourage collective mobilization among immigrants (Delgado 1993; Milkman 2000).
- <sup>32</sup> Percentages do not add up to 100 percent due to rounding.



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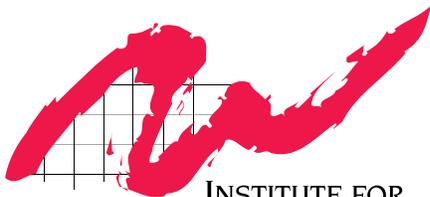
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