



## The Black Immigrant Survivor Experience with Intimate Partner Violence

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Intimate partner violence (IPV) for African immigrant women tends to increase upon arrival in the United States. Some factors impacting IPV for African immigrant women are adjustment and bicultural stress, non-citizen status, language barriers, economic insecurity, and lack of social support (Muruthi et al., 2022).

Due to migration patterns, Western countries are beginning to see an increase in African immigrants:

- More than half of Black immigrants (58%) arrived in the U.S. after 2000.
- Although the Caribbean remains the largest origin region of the U.S. Immigrant population, Africa accounts for the fastest growing Black immigrant group.
- Jamaica and Haiti are the top countries of origin for Black immigrants. These two countries accounted for 31% of the U.S. Black immigrant population in 2019. Nigeria and Ethiopia were the next most common birthplaces for Black African immigrants.
- The largest Black immigrant population of any metropolitan area is in New York City, numbering 1.1 million in 2019. The Miami metropolitan area has the second-largest population, followed by the Washington, D.C. area. Other top metropolitan areas for Black immigrants include Boston, Houston, Dallas, and Atlanta.

This diverse group of immigrants comprises people from a wide range of ethnic and educational backgrounds. While the number of African immigrants arriving in the U.S. continues to increase, there is little examination into their experiences with intimate partner violence or coping strategies (Akinsulure-Smith et al., 2013). Researchers must begin to investigate how IPV impacts the lives of African immigrant and refugee women. Survivors often report concerns brought about by the intersections of culture and patriarchy, as well as fear of losing financial support. The lack of emphasis in research on foreign born communities results from the racialized history of the United States in which immigrants are broadly categorized as Black or African American.

## **Barriers Faced by Black Immigrants Experiencing IPV**

- Many immigrant survivors have a history of trauma, especially when they arrive as refugees or asylum-seekers. Once in the U.S., immigrants may also experience racism, poverty, and language barriers that make access to services difficult. (API-GBV, 2021).
- Many immigrant survivors are afraid to contact the police or pursue legal action against their abusers due to the threat of deportation or policies that cause violence toward immigrant communities (Cutlip-Mason, 2020).
- Migrant and refugee women are at increased risk of experiencing intimate partner violence due to intersecting vulnerabilities. Many are separated from family, are unemployed, are economically dependent, and lack access to suitable support services (Wenham et al., 2022).
- African women have difficulty accessing services specific to their needs. The lack of culturally relevant services often results in the underestimation of IPV within these populations (Wenham et al, 2022).
- Immigrant women suffer higher rates of IPV compared to U.S. citizens because of the cultural silence around domestic violence and limited access to legal and social services.
- Language access remains a huge barrier for immigrant populations. Many immigrants who arrive in the U.S are not English proficient. Language barriers impact almost every aspect of their lives, especially in the following areas:
  - Employment
  - Housing
  - Healthcare
  - Education
  - Transportation
  - Victim services
  - Legal services
  - Food security

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