

Immigrant and Refugee Victims of Domestic Violence Homicide in Washington State

Washington State Domestic Violence Fatality Review

June 2011

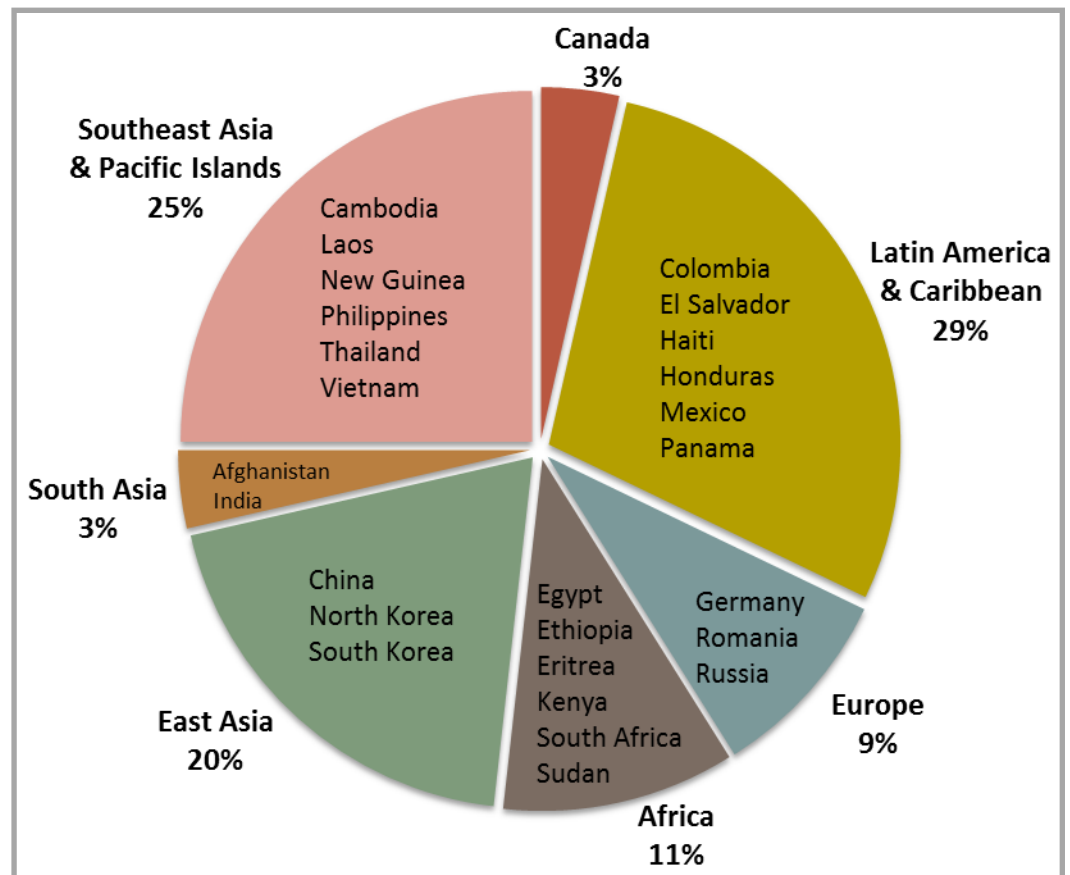
61 immigrant and refugee victims of domestic violence were killed by abusers in Washington State from 1997 through 2009.⁴

- 93% were female. 7% were male.
- Victims' age ranged from 16 to 61.
- 59% were married. 20% were divorced or separated.
- At least 34 victims had children living at home.
- At least 4 had been pregnant within a year of their death.
- 72% had graduated from high school. 18% had a 4-year college degree.
- 18% lived in a rural community (outside city limits).

19.7% of domestic violence homicide victims in Washington State were born outside the U.S.¹

12.1% of all people in Washington State were born outside the U.S.²

*Birth countries of immigrant & refugee domestic violence homicide victims in Washington State, 1997-2009*³



¹ Domestic violence victims killed by a partner in Washington 1997-2009.

² Based on U.S. Census estimates, 2005-2009.

³ Birth country data from Washington death certificates.

⁴ Information from Washington death certificates and Domestic Violence Fatality Review data.

In-depth homicide reviews showed that immigrant and refugee victims faced overwhelming barriers to safety

Lack of language access

Inadequate interpretation for victims who spoke limited English led to:

- Protection Orders denied after victims were unable to fully express their fears in court;
- victims unable to access critical information that was provided in English only;
- reliance on young children as interpreters;
- incomplete investigation of domestic violence crimes;
- & lack of criminal accountability for abusers because officers did not collect sufficient evidence.

Threat of deportation

Fear of deportation deterred victims from turning to police for help. Victims and their communities needed information about their legal rights & what to expect when they called law enforcement.

Isolation from community

Many immigrant and refugee victims could not find safety from the abuser without losing connection to their cultural community and extended family. In most communities, culturally relevant and language accessible domestic violence advocacy did not exist.

One victim moved from her home country to the U.S. to marry her husband. They lived with his family and worked in the family business. Escaping the abuse meant facing a whole new set of risks: losing her job, jeopardizing her immigration status, losing contact with her child, and retaliation from the abuser and his family.

What advocates can do

Advocate for language

access You can play a critical role in ensuring survivors get the language interpretation they need from systems including courts, law enforcement, and DSHS. A wide

Find more online at wscadv.org

- Up-to-date statewide fatality statistics & recommendations based on case reviews
- *Collective Voice* newsletter for advocates working with immigrant survivors
- *Caminando en Sus Zapatos* interactive community education tool
- “Inside Out: Strengthening Advocacy for Refugee, Immigrant & LEP Survivors”
- Model protocol on serving immigrant and refugee survivors

range of federal, state, and local agencies are legally obligated to reduce language barriers to provide *meaningful access* to services. Get more information about the law at www.lep.gov.

Does your organization have a language access plan? Check out our *Inside Out* Self Assessment Guide to get started.

Learn about legal options for immigrant survivors

Find information for survivors and domestic violence advocates from the NW

Immigrant Rights Project at nwirp.org. Reach out through refugee resettlement organizations, labor housing camps, schools, and religious congregations.

Support survivors' community connections

Ask who a survivor wants in her personal support network. Help her make a plan to reach out and talk about her needs with friends and family. Make connections with community leaders who can be models for supporting survivors.