

TEXAS COUNCIL ON FAMILY VIOLENCE

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The Texas Council on Family Violence is a membership association working to end domestic violence against women.

Hispanic Texans and Domestic Violence: A Statewide Study

Executive Summary

June 17, 2003



A Study Conducted for



**Texas Council on Family Violence
Austin, Texas
By Saurage Research, Inc.**

Sponsored by the Office of the Texas Attorney General

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Situation

In February 2003, the Texas Council on Family Violence (TCFV) and its marketing communications team headed by Vollmer Public Relations, Inc. released the results of a quantitative study on the prevalence, perceptions and awareness of domestic violence in Texas. The study indicated that a startling **74 percent** of all Texans report that they, a family member and/or a friend or coworker have experienced some form of domestic violence (physical, sexual or verbal) in their lifetime. The study was designed to meet the following objectives:

- Determine the prevalence of domestic violence in Texas;
- Measure the level of awareness of the services that are available to victims of domestic violence;
- Better understand perceptions and attitudes with respect to the issue of domestic violence and victims of domestic violence;
- Investigate the barriers to seeking assistance among victims of family domestic violence.

Prior to conducting the quantitative research, TCFV held 40 focus groups with survivors of domestic violence in order to better understand the needs for public awareness, domestic violence services, training and effective prevention and intervention strategies. Seven of these focus groups were conducted exclusively with Hispanic survivors.

Through these focus groups, TCFV confirmed that Hispanic victims of domestic violence face unique barriers that inhibit them from seeking the help they need. Common barriers cited by participants in the Hispanic focus groups were:

- **Isolation** – a common tactic employed by batterers, but for Hispanic victims, the feeling of isolation is often intensified by a language barrier, lack of support network in the United States, and/or lack of legal immigration status.
- **Fear and threats** – most often cited were threats that the abuser would report the victim to immigration services (INS) and that she would then be separated from her children or even lose them. In addition, Hispanic victims cite threats such as being told that no matter where they go, the abuser will find them. These threats often increase the victim's fear and add to their already existing feelings of hopelessness.
- **Shame** – family plays a central and important role in Hispanic culture and traditionally, Hispanic women are taught the value of keeping the family together at all costs. Participants cited a significant barrier to action due to the intense shame associated with breaking up the family unit, which is often enhanced by harsh criticisms from friends and families for taking such action. The intense fear of rejection from those people whose opinions they value most contributes to the decision not to seek assistance and to remain in an abusive relationship.
- **Lack of knowledge** – often cited was the lack of knowledge about available domestic violence services. Other barriers such as fear of being discovered by legal authorities and language or cultural isolation often keep Hispanic victims in the dark about the confidential support services available to them in their communities.

Hispanics are the most rapidly growing demographic group in the State of Texas. According to the U.S. Census Bureau in 2000, there are 6.7 million Hispanic or Latino persons in Texas, or 32 percent

of the state's 20.8 million residents. It has been projected that in the coming decades, Texas will emerge as a majority-minority state. According to the Texas Data Center at Texas A&M University (May 2000), by the year 2030, Hispanics will be the largest minority group in the state at 15.9 million or almost 46% of the state's projected total population.

In order to gain a better understanding of how domestic violence uniquely impacts the fast growing Hispanic community of Texas, TCFV included an over sampling of Hispanics in the statewide quantitative survey. The findings provided in this report offer a preliminary snapshot of the prevalence, perceptions and awareness among Hispanic Texans with regard to domestic violence.

Saurage Research, Inc. of Houston, Texas conducted the survey. The general survey population included a total of 1,200 respondents, which included an over sampling of 350 Hispanics, for telephone interviews from August 7 through August 24, 2002. Respondents were given a choice to conduct the interview in either English or Spanish, however they felt most comfortable. Approximately 25% of the Hispanic interviews were conducted in Spanish. For the purposes of this report, the term *general population* denotes aggregate responses from the total sample including Anglo, African American, Hispanic, Asian and other ethnicities. The survey has a 2.8 percent margin of error.

Prevalence of Domestic Violence and the Texas Hispanic Community

There are a number of ways the Texas Council on Family Violence’s statewide survey evaluated the prevalence of domestic abuse in Texas.

- **Personal and Family**
 - Survey respondents were asked whether they or an immediate family member have experienced domestic abuse
- **Personal, Family, Friends and Co-workers**
 - In addition to themselves or immediate family members, respondents also were asked whether friends or co-workers have experienced domestic abuse

TCFV also evaluated Texans’ personal experience with domestic violence in two ways:

- The broad term, “domestic violence” refers to anyone who has experienced any of the following forms of abuse: physical abuse, such as hitting, choking or slapping; sexual abuse; threats made against themselves or their family; verbal abuse, including name-calling and public humiliation; and forced isolation from friends and family.
- For the purposes of this analysis, we are defining “severe abuse” as experiencing at least one of the following: physical abuse, sexual abuse or having a spouse or dating partner threaten you or your family.

Personal, Family, Friends, and Co-worker Prevalence

A person does not need to be abused to be personally affected by domestic violence. Anyone who has a friend or family member that has experienced abuse at the hand of someone claiming to love them, experiences pain, regret and loss over what their loved one has endured. According to the survey, **77 percent** of Hispanic Texans indicated that they, a family member and/or a friend or coworker have experienced some form of domestic violence (physical, sexual and/or verbal) in their lifetime, compared to 74 percent of the general population. This indicates that domestic violence impacts the Hispanic community much as it does the general population. In fact, the survey results indicate that as many as **5.2 million Hispanic Texans** are personally affected by the epidemic of domestic violence. If the current prevalence rates remain the same, by the year 2030, more than **12.2 million Hispanic Texans** could be personally affected by domestic violence.

Personal and Family Prevalence

Overall, **36 percent** of Hispanic Texans reported being *severely* abused in their lifetime. A review of all female survey respondents indicates that **two in five** Hispanic females – **39 percent** – reported experiencing *severe* abuse. In addition, **18 percent**, or almost **one in five** Hispanic females reported being forced to have sex against their will.

In addition, **64 percent** of Hispanic Texans indicated that they or a member of their family have experienced at least one form of domestic violence in their lifetime. Yet, a surprising **40 percent** or **two in five** Hispanic Texans who reported that either they themselves or their family members have experienced domestic violence took no action;

- **22 percent** contacted police;
- **11 percent** moved the victim out of reach of the abusive partner;
- **10 percent** spoke to the victim;
- **3 percent** spoke to the abuser.

Conclusions

Today in Texas, domestic violence programs annually serve approximately five percent of the state's victims, and last year, 18 percent of the adult victims requesting shelter in our state could not receive it due to a lack of space. More resources will be needed if we are to meet the incredible need for domestic violence services indicated in this study. But, in order to be successful in the long term, we must emphasize the value of preventing domestic violence and ending it where it exists. Building a Texas community that will not tolerate the epidemic of domestic violence is critical.

The prevalence of domestic violence can be reduced by significant public awareness activities that are not only culturally relevant but also target the unique barriers that victims face, including isolation, fear/threats and shame. In addition, Hispanic victims must be made aware of the domestic violence services available to them and the laws designed to protect them, especially when they are recent immigrants.

Hispanic focus group participants frequently indicated that they looked first to friends and family for help. Therefore, it is vital for friends and family members in the Hispanic community to know the warning signs and understand the lasting effects of domestic violence. In addition, Hispanic Texans are encouraged to get involved and become informed about the different services and programs available in their communities so that they may effectively intervene in domestic violence situations in their family and community.

Perceptions and Awareness of Domestic Violence in the Texas Hispanic Community

The statewide survey found that **18 percent**, or almost **one in five** Hispanic Texans, cite Hispanics as the ethnic group most likely to experience domestic violence. In addition, **81 percent** of Hispanic Texans hold the belief that domestic violence is a *serious* problem in Texas compared to 73 percent of the general population. These findings indicate that Hispanic Texans understand the gravity of domestic violence as a problem in Texas and in their community. Yet, **36 percent** of Hispanics demonstrate a belief that Hispanics are the ethnic group with the most difficulty leaving an abusive situation. In fact, nearly 1 in 4 of the general population believes that it is most difficult for Hispanics to leave an abusive relationship.

Sadly, only **63 percent** of Hispanic Texans indicated that they are aware that a national toll-free domestic violence hotline exists, yet **73 percent** indicate that they would be *very likely* to call a hotline if they were experiencing domestic violence. The study found that **78 percent** of Hispanic women indicate they would call a hotline. Hispanic Texans are the group *most likely* to report that they would use a hotline, if made aware of its existence.

Other study results found that 60 percent of Hispanic Texans believe that the victim assistance provided by the State of Texas is not enough and **86 percent** of Hispanic Texans report that they would vote for a candidate who helps domestic violence victims. They are the ethnic group *most likely* to indicate such.

Beliefs about Domestic Violence

Only 63 percent of Hispanic Texans recall recent communications concerning domestic violence compared to almost 74 percent of the general population. Although **72 percent** define domestic violence as hitting, slapping or pushing and they were *more likely* than the general population to cite name-calling, shouting/cursing and unwanted sex as definitions of domestic violence, **Only 52 percent** were able to provide more than one definition of domestic violence and Hispanics were the group *least likely* to be able to do so. In addition, survey results indicate that Hispanic Texans demonstrate misunderstandings regarding the facts about domestic violence, for example:

- **72 percent** of Hispanics agree that a person can choose to stop abusing; yet compared to 25 percent of the general population, **50 percent** believe domestic violence is caused by circumstances beyond the batterers control;
- **61 percent** of Hispanics agree that victims that do not leave an abusive relationship share some of the blame for the abuse compared to 49 percent of the general population. By combining the responses for “agree” and “don’t know” a surprising **81 percent** of Hispanic Texans indicate a willingness to blame the victim for the abuse they suffer. In addition, although **82 percent** of Hispanics believe that it is never appropriate to stay in an abusive relationship, **46 percent** acknowledge that leaving an abusive relationship can be more dangerous than staying;

- **83 percent** of Hispanics agree that a husband who abuses his wife is more likely to also abuse his children, yet only **47 percent** indicate a belief that domestic violence passes from generation to generation;

These results indicate that Hispanic Texans, like the general population, have both a limited definition of domestic violence and have a willingness to blame victims for the abuse they suffer. Lack of access to accurate information about domestic violence, combined with currently held misperceptions, gives rise to potentially conflicting messages Hispanic Texans may be communicating to victims of abuse in their community.

There are many reasons why victims of domestic violence do not obtain help, even after years of suffering. One of the most prevalent and critical of these barriers is that victims don't trust that others will believe their stories of abuse and that they will be blamed for the crime. As indicated in the Hispanic focus groups, Hispanic victims face additional barriers such as fear and threats of being turned in to immigration authorities, language and cultural isolation, lack of access to valuable information and the fear of criticism from friends and family members.

One national study revealed that half of the homicides of female spouses and partners were committed by men after the victim had separated from the batterer (*Barbara Hart, April 1992*). Domestic violence shelters with security cameras, locked doors, bars on the windows, and confidential locations exist because of the very real danger faced by someone leaving an abusive relationship. Women often fail to leave an abusive relationship because of fear – fear for their lives, fear for the safety of their children, fear of homelessness. This does not even begin to address the many reasons why leaving an abusive relationship is not always the best solution for a victim. Often the batterer is a parent and any decision to take children away from one of their parents is difficult. Finally, these are relationships that were initiated because of two people believing that they loved one another. Often a victim of abuse has not stopped loving his or her partner.

In reality, leaving does not always mean safety at all. We want to believe it is that simple – that driving away is the reasonable thing to do. We want to blame the victim when she does not take action, yet by doing so we can actually cause the victim to lose self-esteem, to fear admitting their abuse to the only people in their lives who might help them, and to fear reporting the abuse to the authorities. By blaming the victim, we often prevent him/her from finding safety.

The limited definition and considerable misperceptions of domestic violence coupled with the fact that Hispanics are the group *least likely* to have heard communications regarding domestic violence indicates the need for greater visibility of this issue in the Texas Hispanic community. Increased media coverage to educate and dispel many of the myths and misperceptions as well as an open and honest dialogue in local communities, including town hall discussions and community programming that includes interviews with domestic violence experts, are needed to help Hispanic Texans become more informed about domestic violence and overcome potentially harmful misunderstandings.

Personal Influence

On a more promising note, **88 percent** of Hispanics believe that they can have a *personal* influence on the domestic violence problem. Hispanic Texans believe they can make a difference and are *more likely* to hold this belief than the general population. The notion that Hispanic Texans can make a difference will likely occur in their local communities. In Hispanic focus groups, when participants were asked what, in their opinion, was the most “ideal” form of help for victims of domestic violence, they overwhelmingly cited a community of family and friends that would not only listen, but also offer solutions to their dilemma. They noted as well the importance of a community that will call police when they suspect abuse is taking place and open their arms and doors to the victims that so desperately need their help.

Conclusion

This study provides a preliminary, yet valuable snapshot of the prevalence, perceptions and awareness of domestic violence in the Texas Hispanic community. The study indicates that most Hispanic Texans understand the gravity of the problem, but often lack access to the information they need for themselves or to help others to escape the potentially deadly cycle of abuse. In addition, this study has identified the misperceptions and lack of understanding about the impact of domestic violence among Hispanic Texans. On an encouraging note, the survey results indicate that Hispanic Texans believe that they *can* make a difference in the efforts to end domestic violence.

One Hispanic survivor stated:

"When you live with a person that is abusing you, you do not realize it because he tells you that he loves you. With talking [to others], you start to see that he is controlling you. With talking [to others] you start to tell how you have lived through the abuse."

This survivor emphasizes a key fact expressed by many of the Hispanic participants in the focus groups. Indicating that where they look first is to family and friends – their community – for the support and help they need. Respondents said they find the strength they need in the others around them. This presents an incredible and hopeful opportunity for members of the Hispanic community of Texas. By uniting and becoming better informed about the issue of domestic violence, the community at large becomes a formidable force for change. By working together Hispanic Texans can protect the dream of a better future and the safety and well being of families now and for generations to come.

This study is among the first in the country to evaluate the impact of domestic violence among Hispanics and more studies are needed. The State of Texas should continue to study the unique characteristics of this growing community and the community at large. Additional research is required to fully understand the impact of domestic violence and the differences that exist within the Hispanic community and between this community and the general population. In addition, further research that examines varying socioeconomic levels and their impact on the issue of domestic violence is needed to ensure that effective prevention and educational programs can be developed and implemented for Hispanic Texans as well as the Texas community at large. However, while vitally important, studies alone are not enough to end the cycle of domestic violence. They are the tools that will lead implementing effective public awareness and educational programs that will

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empower Texans of every race to break the silence of domestic violence, and make the call to family members, friends, co-workers, local shelters and hotlines that will help survivors seek safety and once again live full and productive lives.

Survey Methodology

In designing a quantitative study to define and clarify the major issues outlined in the previous chapter, it was determined that the Texas Council on Family Violence would need data from a stratified, representative sample of households. A quantitative telephone interview methodology was employed to gather data analyzed for this research effort. Respondents surveyed are representative of households located in the state of Texas. An over sample of Hispanic households was utilized in order to ensure that sufficient data (N=350) in this critical target market was attained.

Sample Design

Sample design was an important component of this phase of the research plan and was considered relative to cost and the acceptable rate of error. In this case, for the target completion sample size of N=1,200 in a worst-case scenario, a binomial response (50:50) to any question will yield a +/-2.8 percent rate of error at the 95 percent level of confidence, which is well within the acceptable range. As sample size decreases, rate of error increases.

A Table of Random Sampling Error Ranges is attached to this document as a tool to assist in reviewing results of this quantitative research phase.

Sample Frame

In order to obtain an appropriate random sample, Saurage Research, Inc. based all interview calls for the telephone portion of this study on a random digit dialing (RDD) sample generated from working telephone exchanges and blocks to ensure completely random selection, regardless of whether a telephone number was listed. The commercially-maintained sample was segmented by zip code and provided in the format of several replicates, or mini-samples, of the total sample. The research firm used a sample frame of 14,400 base telephone numbers to complete a target sample of N=1,200. This sample was ordered in five replicates of approximately 2,880 numbers each. Regardless of the number of replicates exhausted, results of completed observations reveal accurate and proportionate representation within each area per household demographics. Our telephone sampling requirements allow for four callbacks before permanently discarding one telephone number and selecting another for inclusion in the sample. This system allows us to decrease the bias, which occurs because some individuals are more likely to be home, more likely to respond to telephone questionnaires, more opinionated and so forth.

Interviewing procedures for this 10-minute survey (+/-2 minutes) were conducted on the dates of August 7 through August 24, 2002 during the evening hours of weekdays and on the weekend to eliminate bias toward unemployed members of households. A total of 27,227 attempts (including wrong numbers, busy signals, no answers and nonworking telephone numbers) were made to obtain 1,272 completions, providing a secondary incidence rate of 4.4 percent. A primary incidence rate of 12.0 percent was achieved by virtue of the 10,020 connections made (these include terminations, non-qualified respondents and refusals). A copy of the survey instrument used to interview Texas residents can be found in Appendix A.

Survey Instrument Design

Designing a survey instrument is one of the more critical components in the marketing research process. Saurage Research conducts only highly customized questionnaire design, and does not subscribe to using template questionnaires. The survey instrument is designed uniquely, although it may include some very standard question areas. Questions presented to respondents must be clear, unambiguous, concise and relevant; the answers must be translatable into useful information. Questions must be asked in objective fashion in order to obtain responses which are truly representative. Once the project management team discussed critical issues that were to be handled within the research program, Saurage Research developed a questionnaire that met our strict survey design standards:

- **Comprehensive Issues Coverage**

All questions relevant to pertinent issues were addressed within the context of the research project. Proposed questions that gained irrelevant information were eliminated from the survey instrument while other concerns were challenged, often using multiple methodologies, in order to secure true perceptions as expressed by the sample population.

- **Objective Presentation of Questions**

Questions were presented objectively to avoid any bias. Bias is a factor that can alter the results, negatively affect key findings, and render any action taken as ineffective. A tremendous amount of effort was exerted during the questionnaire design phase to avoid any possibility of bias within the survey instrument.

- **Succinct Wording**

In order to maintain heightened interest by the survey respondent and to reduce the level of respondent fatigue, the questions on the survey instrument were specific so as to avoid confusing or misleading respondents. Each question was designed, pretested, and recomposed to assure a fluid and dynamic interaction with the respondent being interviewed.

- **Useful Response Results**

Information that is useful translates into effective marketing strategies and promotional planning. Although a question may be deemed critical by management for inclusion on a survey instrument, the answer may not be useful in providing direction for action. Therefore, we developed, pretested, and restructured questions so that resulting information might be of the type that can be assimilated into the client's plan of goals and objectives.

Data Collection Procedures

Saurage Research, Inc. utilized a professional, experienced CATI (Computer Assisted Telephone Interviewing) field service provider for the data collection associated with this project. Our data collection specifications are quite strict and disallow any unprofessional practices (*e.g.*, calling persons already known to the interviewer, using a less-than-courteous tone of voice, skipping questions, paraphrasing a respondent's answer). Verification procedures are 15 percent minimum; 100 percent proofing and editing is standard for all work conducted. Saurage Research supervised the field service provider to maintain optimal accuracy in all work completed. All interviewing staff were thoroughly trained on every aspect of the survey instruments before they began data collection. However, prior to data collection procedures, the telephone questionnaire was pretested ($n = 25$) and reviewed to avert problems with ambiguity and question confusion.

Data Verification

Following the completion of the CATI data collection process, highly structured coding and data verification procedures were used to ensure high-quality data. In addition, all variables and values were checked to verify that they were within appropriate ranges and that inappropriate multivariate outliers were corrected. Answers to opened-end questions were grouped according to their intrinsic relationship to one another. In this manner, response derivations that are usable were developed so that the amount of information available in the original large set of variables was retained in the smaller, more manageable number of factors. At this juncture, data were introduced into a customized client database, in

ASCII format, and were verified once again, using the SPSS system. A full statistical analysis followed, using SPSS. Unless instructed to permanently remove data from magnetic media, one verified, permanent copy of the raw data and execution program will be stored in our permanent archives upon completion of this research program.

Statistical Analysis of Data

Saurage Research, Inc. uses nonparametric as well as bivariate and multivariate statistical techniques in conducting data analyses for quantitative studies. Initially, we conducted rather standardized data analysis procedures by reviewing descriptive frequency counts and cross-tabulations of responses for variables of interest and perceptual significance. Responses based on Likert scales were analyzed through a mean average procedure that often provides more useful information than a multiple - category response. In some cases, the response options included in the Likert scales were collapsed into fewer groups for a

clearer and more concise analysis.

- Percentages and cross-tabulations were completed to understand individuals' perceptions based on ethnicity, relationship status, gender, annual household income, and religious affiliation.
- Another multivariate statistical method called cluster analysis was used to arrange similar questions or individuals into groups different from each other to maximize differences between groups.
- (heterogeneity) while minimizing differences within groups (homogeneity).

Bullets are used throughout this report to identify significant findings based on statistical tests. Upon reviewing statistically significant and substantively significant relationships that occur throughout the data, specifically targeted conclusions have been made to assist in understanding the results of analysis. If sub analysis is required after client review of initial research results, this will be generated in prompt fashion.

Statistical Notes

All descriptive information and analytical findings presented in this document reflect the use of nonparametric as well as bivariate and multivariate statistical techniques. However, to maintain real-world usability of these research findings, statistics are most often provided in terms of absolute number of responses, percentages and mean averages. Percentages may not add to 100 percent due to rounding or the acceptance of multiple responses. Also, some respondents did not answer all questions, usually because of questionnaire design and contingency patterns. Therefore, base numbers may differ among the various quantitative questions presented.

