

### **Project AWARE: Asian Women Advocating Respect and Empowerment**

In the United States, 1 out of every 4 women will experience some form of intimate partner violence (IPV). Within Asian/Pacific Islander (A/PI) communities, that likelihood increases dramatically. Approximately 41-61% of Asian women reported experiencing physical and/or sexual violence by an intimate partner during her lifetime. Asian women in abusive relationships face significant barriers to seeking help such as immigration status, language issues, lack of culturally competent services from mainstream providers, isolation, fear of authority (including police) and cultural barriers.

**Project AWARE** was a detailed needs assessment completed with Asian survivors of IPV who were either current or former clients of the Asian/Pacific Islander Domestic Violence Resource Project (DVRP). The assessment was conducted from October 2012 – October 2013. Twenty-nine women were surveyed and nine were interviewed in Washington, D.C., Maryland and Virginia. Participants were from the following countries of origin: China, India, Iraq, Japan, Pakistan, Philippines, Thailand, U.S. and Vietnam. A majority experienced 1–5 years of abuse, and 76.5% knew someone else (a friend, relative or mother) who was also in an abusive relationship. These women provided valuable information on their experiences of IPV, experiences with services, and barriers to service access.

This project was a collaborative effort between DVRP and Marymount University. In 2012, DVRP staff reached out to Marymount researchers to implement the research effort due to their research skills and specific research funding opportunities.

#### **Key Findings: Participants' Experiences of IPV**

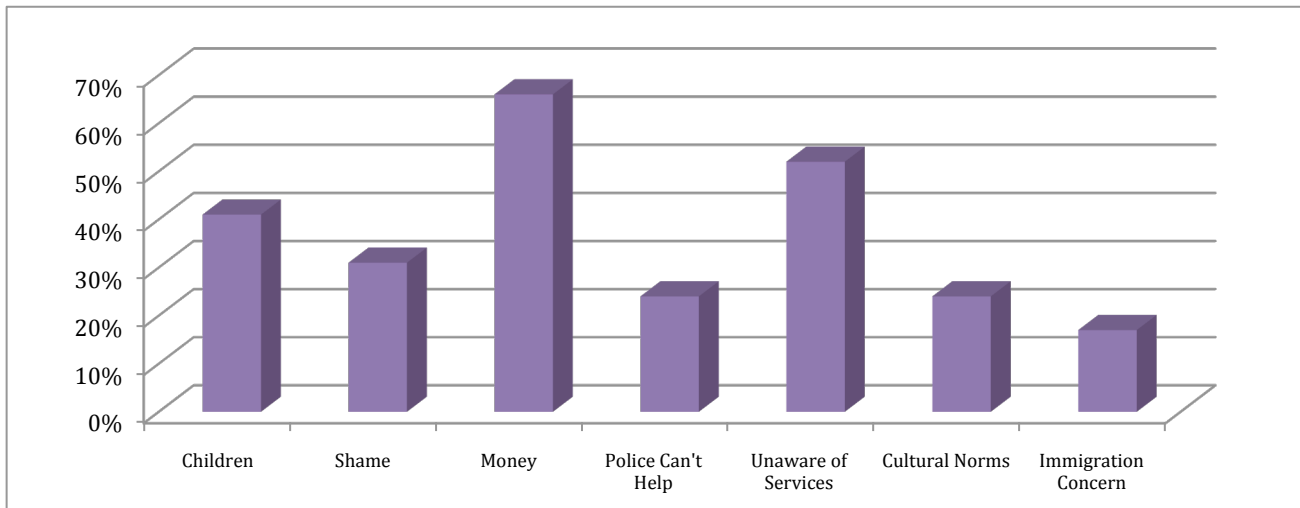
- Emotional and psychological abuse (not physical) were the leading forms of abuse.
- Nearly 1 in 5 women felt suicidal at some point.
- 75% of participants reported suffering from anxiety related to IPV, and 71% experienced depression.
- 72% of women reported having been sexually abused by their partners.
- Of the 20 participants who had children, half of these women reported that children were present during some, or many, of the abusive incidents.
- 72% of participants reported that they do not have their own family in the D.C. area.
- Over half of the participants believed that abuse by the woman's in-laws were a 'somewhat common' to 'very common' experience for Asian women. 35% of the participants stated that they knew of a woman who is being abused by her in-laws.

#### **Emotional and Psychological Abuse**

An overwhelming proportion of participants reported that they had suffered injuries to their sense of worth, sense of well being, and hope for the future. Three quarters of women reported anxiety, and nearly as many suffered from depression and self-esteem issues. A relatively substantial minority of participants reported that they had been suicidal. Only 3.4% reported not experiencing any psychological injury.

## **Reasons for Staying in Abusive Relationships**

(Participants could select more than one response.)



### **NEXT STEPS**

Overall, 75% of participants believed that improved services for Asian IPV survivors is necessary, including:

- **Shelter:** Provide shelter or transitional housing with Asian language-specific staff; day care programs; and various types of Asian food
- **Hotlines:** Staff emergency hotlines with Asian language speaking staff or use multilingual interpretation lines
- **Law Enforcement:** Conduct police trainings on IPV in Asian communities; provide police with translated materials on IPV to give Asian victims on emergency calls; coordinate translation services with law enforcement
- **Health:** Improve outreach efforts to educate American health care providers on IPV in the Asian community
- **Community Education:** Continue public awareness campaigns on IPV by targeting media outlets and Asian television and radio stations; social media and distribute literature on IPV in public places
- **Trainings:** Conduct workshops; raise awareness about IPV for men, women, youth and Asian community
- **Policy:** Bring the issue of IPV within Asian communities to the forefront of political agendas of Asian and non-Asian groups
- **Funding:** Provide funding to hire more Asian language interpreters (and have them trained on the cultural issues that abused Asian women face), to outreach into Asian communities about IPV, to increase counseling services for IPV survivors and their families and to conduct research on IPV within Asian communities

*The Project AWARE study and report were prepared by: Amy Van Arsdale, Ph.D. (Principal Investigator, Marymount University); Ysabelle Maramag & Cynthia Mejia (Research Assistants, Marymount University); Jessica Li (Executive Director, DVRP); and Amara Tek (former Program Coordinator, DVRP). DVRP's Advocates (Josh Woodard, Jade Liu, Haruka Nobukuni, Erika Kubo) assisted with participant recruitment, survey administration, translation, and making interview arrangements. Former DVRP Board member Olivia Nevitt also assisted with research design.*

DVRP is a non-profit organization whose mission is to address, prevent and end domestic violence and sexual assault in Asian/Pacific Islander communities while empowering survivors to rebuild their lives after abuse. DVRP provides case management services and facilitates community outreach and trainings to the A/PI community in the Washington, D.C. metropolitan area. In 2013, DVRP served 155 survivors. For a copy of the full report, please contact DVRP at [info@dvrp.org](mailto:info@dvrp.org) or (202) 833-2232.