

## Immigrant Women, Work, and Violence Statistics

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### Immigrant Women Demographics:

- 13.1% of the U.S. population is foreign-born (over 41 million people).<sup>1</sup>
- The foreign-born population is mostly from Latin America and the Caribbean (51.9%) and Asia (29.5%).<sup>2</sup>
- 51.2% of the foreign-born population is female.<sup>3</sup>
- Approximately 5.1 million foreign-born women are undocumented.<sup>4</sup>
- 50% of the foreign-born US population either do not speak English at all, or do not speak the language well.<sup>5</sup>
- 21% of undocumented immigrants have been in the United States for 5 years or less.<sup>6</sup>

### Immigrant Women Workers

Most working immigrant women are employed in service provision industries such as office cleaning and maintenance, food and garment production, office support services, farm work, food preparation, and personal care services (e.g. home health care, child care, house cleaning). Many work for low wages, with little or no benefits.

- According to the National Agricultural Workers Survey (NAWS) published by the Department of Labor reports, approximately 21% of farmworkers are female.<sup>7</sup>
- The average personal income of female crop workers is \$11,250, compared to \$16,250 for male crop workers.<sup>8</sup>
- Of the 250,000 laborers employed in the 174 major U.S. chicken factories, at least half are Latino, and more than half are women.<sup>9</sup>

### **Percent of foreign-born and native-born men and women employed in**

<sup>1</sup> "U.S. Immigration Data Profile," *Migration Policy Institute*, 2013, accessed June 12, 2015, <http://www.migrationpolicy.org/data/state-profiles/state/demographics/US>.

<sup>2</sup> "U.S. Immigration Data Profile," <http://www.migrationpolicy.org/data/state-profiles/state/demographics/US>.

<sup>3</sup> "U.S. Immigration Data Profile," <http://www.migrationpolicy.org/data/state-profiles/state/demographics/US>.

<sup>4</sup> "Profile of the Unauthorized Population: United States," *Migration Policy Institute*, 2013, accessed June 12, 2015, <http://www.migrationpolicy.org/data/unauthorized-immigrant-population/state/US>.

<sup>5</sup> "Profile of the Unauthorized Population: United States," <http://www.migrationpolicy.org/data/unauthorized-immigrant-population/state/US>.

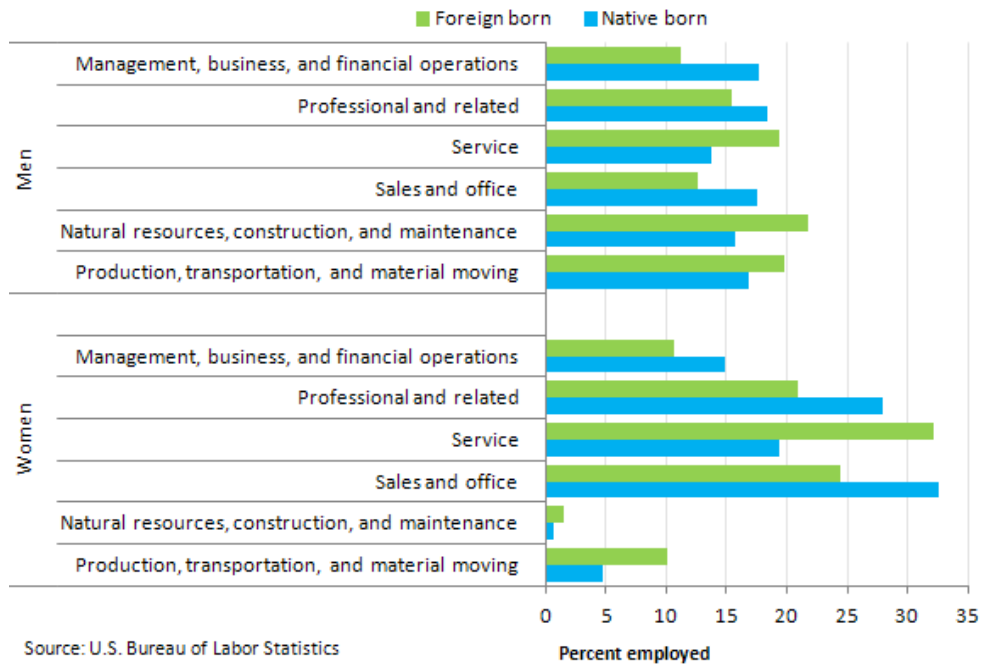
<sup>6</sup> "U.S. Immigration Data Profile," <http://www.migrationpolicy.org/data/state-profiles/state/demographics/US>.

<sup>7</sup> "The National Agricultural Workers Survey," *United States Department of Labor*, updated January 11, 2010, accessed June 12, 2015, <http://www.doleta.gov/agworker/report9/chapter2.cfm>.

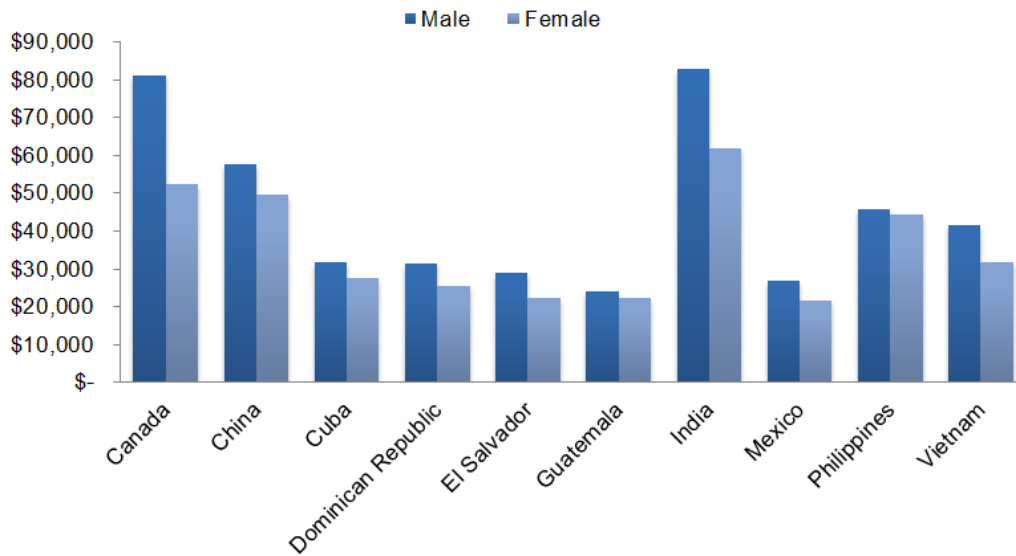
<sup>8</sup> Analysis of public access data from the National Agricultural Workers Survey for FY 2004-2006, *Office of Policy Development and Research, Employment and Training Administration, United States Department of Labor*.

<sup>9</sup> "Injustice on Our Plates: Immigrant Women in the U.S. Food Industry," *Southern Poverty Law Center*, November 2010, accessed June 12, 2015, <http://www.splcenter.org/get-informed/publications/injustice-on-our-plates#.UXgvP8r4VBk>.

each occupational group, 2011<sup>10</sup>



Median Earnings of Foreign-Born Men and Women from Select Countries of Origin, 2012<sup>11</sup>

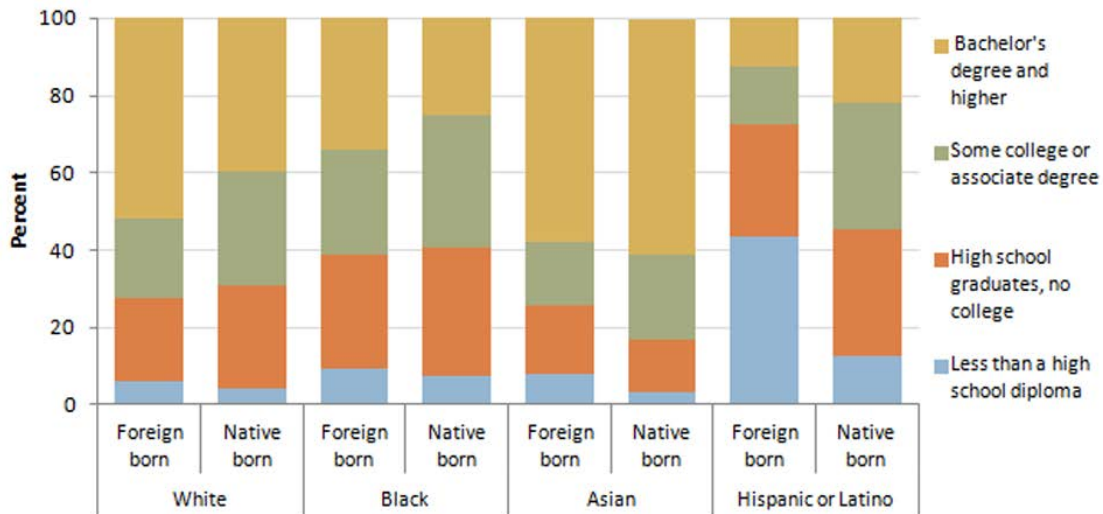


Percent distribution of the foreign born and the native born in the U.S. labor force 25 years

<sup>10</sup>“Education and Occupations of the Foreign Born in 2011,” *Bureau of Labor Statistics*, June 6, 2012, accessed June 12, 2015, [http://www.bls.gov/opub/ted/2012/ted\\_20120606.htm](http://www.bls.gov/opub/ted/2012/ted_20120606.htm).

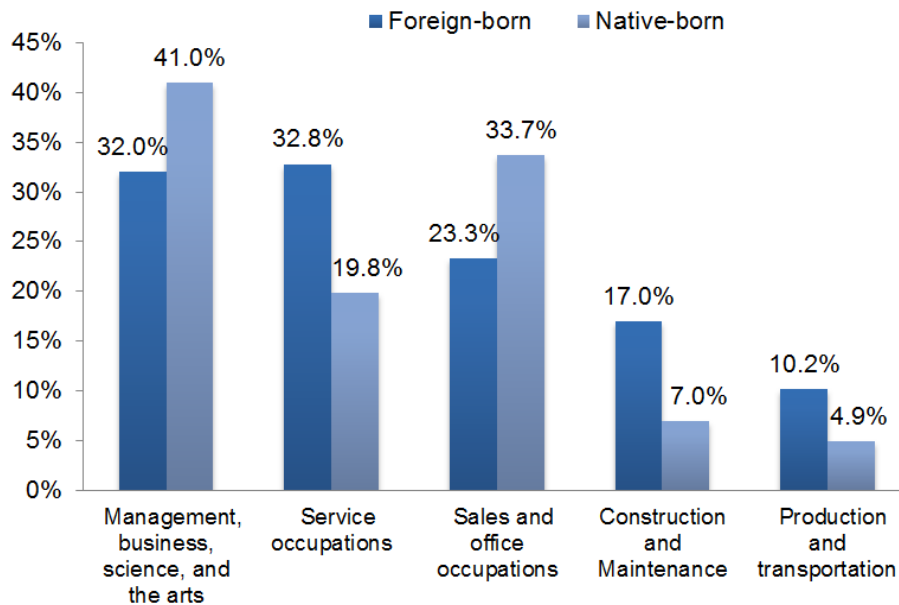
<sup>11</sup>“Immigrant Women in the United States: A Portrait of Demographic Diversity,” *Immigration Policy Center, American Immigration Council*, September 10, 2014, accessed June 12, 2015, <http://www.immigrationpolicy.org/just-facts/immigrant-women-united-states-portrait-demographic-diversity>.

and over by race, Hispanic or Latino ethnicity, and educational attainment, 2012 averages<sup>12</sup>



Note: Data for Whites, Blacks, and Asians do not include persons identified as Hispanics or Latinos.  
Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics.

Percentage of Foreign-Born and Native-Born Women by Occupation, 2012<sup>13</sup>



<sup>12</sup> Abraham T. Mosisa, "Foreign-born workers in the U.S. Labor Force," *U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics*, July 2013, accessed June 12, 2015, <http://www.bls.gov/spotlight/2013/foreign-born/home.htm>

<sup>13</sup> "Immigrant Women in the United States: A Portrait of Demographic Diversity," <http://www.immigrationpolicy.org/just-facts/immigrant-women-united-states-portrait-demographic-diversity>

## Risk of Abuse in the Workplace for Undocumented Workers

Undocumented immigrant women are among the most vulnerable workers in the U.S. and often fill the most physically and mentally challenging jobs in society. They are routinely abused, forced to work hours that are unpaid and subjected to other injustices. They typically earn minimum wage or less, and receive little or no benefits. Like other immigrant women, undocumented workers are subject to sexual abuse by employers or male co-workers and often do not feel they are able to take any legal action.<sup>14</sup> The strong fear of losing their only means of income combines with language barriers to severely limit the number of women willing to come forward to report abuse and turn to the civil and/or criminal justice systems for help.<sup>15</sup>

Undocumented female farmworkers in particular frequently face sexual abuse and harassment at work. The geographic isolation of farms, linguistic barriers, cultural isolation, poverty, need for work, and fear of being deported together are factors that make female farmworkers especially vulnerable to sexual assault and harassment.<sup>16</sup> Many farm supervisors and employers are male, and control whether the women can keep their jobs.<sup>17</sup> Most victims do not know that the abuse is illegal, and that they can receive protection from the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC), the U.S. Department of Labor, state labor enforcement agencies, and state and local police and prosecutors. This contributes to immigrant women often enduring sexual harassment as part of their job.<sup>18</sup>

- Of the 8.6 million low-wage immigrant workers, 3.4 million (40%) are undocumented.<sup>19</sup>
- 32% of all undocumented workers and 37% of low-wage workers are women.<sup>20</sup>
- It is estimated that half of all farmworkers are undocumented.<sup>21</sup>
- Every year, over 500,000 women work as hard laborers on farms.<sup>22</sup>

Immigrant women and girls are perceived to be more legally and socially vulnerable.<sup>23</sup> Studies have also shown that youth from underserved populations are more likely to be victims of violence including sexual assault.<sup>24</sup> Regardless of race, females who were victimized as children are twice as likely to be victimized again later in their adult life.<sup>25</sup> This applies to many types of

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<sup>14</sup> "Injustice on Our Plates: Immigrant Women in the U.S. Food Industry," *Southern Poverty Law Center*, 2010.

<sup>15</sup> "Cultivating Fear: The Vulnerability of Immigrant Farmworkers in the US to Sexual Violence and Sexual Harassment," *Human Rights Watch* (May 2012).

<sup>16</sup> "Fields of Peril: Child Labor in US Agriculture," *Human Rights Watch* (May 2010), 68.

<sup>17</sup> "Fields of Peril: Child Labor in US Agriculture," *Human Rights Watch* (May 2010), 69.

<sup>18</sup> William R. Tomayo, "Sexual Harassment in the Workplace: Getting Money for the Victims and Other Remedies under Federal Anti-Discrimination Laws," *National Network to End Violence Against Immigrant Women* (November 2005).

<sup>19</sup> Randy Capps, et al. "A Profile of the Low-Wage Immigrant Workplace," *Urban Institute: Immigration Studies Program* (November 2003), 5.

<sup>20</sup> Randy Capps, et al. "A Profile of the Low-Wage Immigrant Workplace," 6.

<sup>21</sup> "Fields of Peril: Child Labor in US Agriculture," *Human Rights Watch* (May 2010), 69.

<sup>22</sup> Rebecca Claren, "The Green Motel" *Ms. Magazine* (Summer 2005).

<sup>23</sup> Jessica Mindlin et al. "Dynamics of Sexual Assault and the Implications for Immigrant Women." *National Immigrant Women's Advocacy Project*.

<sup>24</sup> Julie L. Crouch, "Income, Race/Ethnicity, and Exposure to Violence in Youth: Results From the National Survey of Adolescents" 28(6) *Journal of Community Psychology* 625 (2000).

<sup>25</sup> Penelope K. Trickett, Jennie Knoll and Frank Putnam, "The Impact of Sexual Abuse on Female Development: Lessons from a Multigenerational, Longitudinal Research Study," *Development and Psychology* (Cambridge University Press, 2011); Carlos A. Cuevo, "Interpersonal Victimization Patterns and Psychopathology Among Latino Women:

victimization in addition to sexual assault.<sup>26</sup>

Immigrant women are less likely to report their experiences of abuse than U.S. born women.<sup>27</sup>

- Language barriers between victims and police officers significantly affect the outcome of victims' interactions with police and deter many immigrant and limited English proficient (LEP) women from reporting abuse.<sup>28</sup>
- One of the most significant factors affecting a woman's decision to report abuse is her immigration status.<sup>29</sup>

Many women face sexual abuse by employers or male co-workers but feel they cannot take action for various reasons, including fear of unemployment, fear of losing custody of their children, language barriers, lack of access to legal resources, or concerns about their immigration status and being deported.<sup>30</sup> Young women, women who are limited English proficient, and those who have been in the country for a short period of time, are most at risk for workplace based sexual assault.<sup>31</sup>

### Many Immigrant Workers May Also Have Experienced Sexual Abuse as Children

Documented patterns of childhood abuse and adult abuse in the general female population are prominent among immigrant and Latina women.<sup>32</sup> A study conducted among high school aged girls found immigrant girls are almost twice as likely as their non-immigrant peers to have experienced recurring incidents of sexual assault. This is true for immigrant girls and young women regardless of whether or not they are sexually active.<sup>33</sup> Research has consistently shown that childhood sexual abuse has a deleterious impact on the victim's physical and emotional growth and development and any children the victim may have are at increased risk for overall maldevelopment and child maltreatment.<sup>34</sup>

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Results From SALAS Study," 2(4) *American Pathological Association* 296 (2010); Carlos A. Cuevo, Chiara Sabina and Riva Millosi. "Interpersonal Victimization Among a National Sample of Latino Women." 18 *Violence Against Women* 377 (2012).

<sup>26</sup> Carlos A. Cuevo and Chiara Sabrina. "Final Report: Sexual Assault Among Latinas (SALAS) Study." *U.S. Department of Justice*. April 2010.

<sup>27</sup> Andrea Hazen, and Fernando I. Soriano, "Experience of Intimate Partner Violence Among U.S. Born, Immigrant and Migrant Latinas," *Latinas and Violence* (September 2005); Chiara Sabina, Carlos A. Cueva, and Jennifer L. Schally, "The Cultural Influences on Help-seeking Among a National Sample of Victimized Latino Women," 49 *American Journal of Community Psychology* 347 (2012).

<sup>28</sup> Nawal H. Ammar et al., "Calls to the Police and Police Response: A Case Study on Latina Immigrant Women in the USA" 7(4) *International Journal of Political Science and Management* 230 (2005).

<sup>29</sup> Nawal H. Ammar et al.

<sup>30</sup> "Injustice on Our Plates: Immigrant Women in the U.S. Food Industry," <http://www.splcenter.org/get-informed/publications/injustice-on-our-plates#.UXgvP8r4VBk>

<sup>31</sup> "Cultivating Fear: The Vulnerability of Immigrant Farmworkers in the US to Sexual Violence and Sexual Harassment," *Human Rights Watch* (May 2012).

<sup>32</sup> Carlos A. Cuevo and Chiara Sabrina, "Final Report: Sexual Assault Among Latinas (SALAS) Study," *U.S. Department of Justice*, April 2010.

<sup>33</sup> Decker, M., Raj, A. and Silverman, J., "Sexual Violence Against Adolescent Girls: Influences of Immigration and Acculturation," 13 *Violence Against Women* 498, 507 (2007).

<sup>34</sup> Penelope K. Trickett, Jennie Knoll and Frank Putnam. "The Impact of Sexual Abuse on Female Development: Lessons from a Multigenerational, Longitudinal Research Study". *Development and Psychology* (Cambridge University Press, 2011).