

IMMIGRANT MEN'S RESEARCH PROJECT

SUMMARY OF RESULTS

Plain Language Version

The *Strengthening Families in Canada* project looked at how to prevent family violence. Four community-based agencies sponsored the project. These agencies developed the following programs:

- *Immigrant Women's Action Against Violence prevention* education program (Women's Project)
- *Spanish Speaking Youth Action Against Violence prevention* education program (Youth Project)
- *Immigrant Men's Research Project* on family violence prevention education (Men's Project)

Many of the women in the Women's Project stated that men should also be getting information about how to prevent violence. Therefore, this research project was done with immigrant and refugee men, about their ideas about preventing family violence.

This report is a summary of the Immigrant Men's Research Project.

The goal of the research project was to find answers to these questions:

- How do immigrant and refugee men understand family violence?
- What are the best ways for immigrant and refugee men to learn about preventing family violence?

We looked for answers through:

- A literature and program review. We searched for information that had been written about family violence. We also searched for information about other programs to prevent family violence.
- Focus groups with immigrant and refugee men. Immigrant and refugee men were asked to discuss questions about family violence. They were also asked to suggest the best ways to prevent family violence.

Literature and Program Review – Key Findings

This is the main information we found:

- Family violence happens everywhere in all cultures and all social classes.
- There are not many studies on family violence in immigrant and refugee communities in Canada.
- Many things make it very hard for immigrant women who experience family violence:
 - They may not speak English well
 - They may be alone
 - They may have very little money
 - They may not have immigrant papers
 - They may be afraid of the law
 - They may not understand Canadian values

- The main way that Canadian society has responded to family violence is by trying to stop family violence through the police and the courts. Community agencies have also given support to women who have been abused.
- Now many people are realizing that we should:
 - Spend more money on *preventing* family violence before it happens
 - Develop programs that help immigrant and refugee communities because these communities are growing
 - Educate men about family violence and work with men to help solve the problem

Immigrant Men's Focus Groups – Key Findings

We held focus groups and interviews with immigrant and refugee men. Sixty-five immigrant and refugee men took part. They talked about family violence and the best ways to prevent family violence. The project was successful because immigrant men were involved in every way. These are the main things that immigrant men said in the focus groups:

- Three important issues that men talked about are
 - Conflict between parents and children
 - The discipline of children
 - Conflict about changes to the role of men and women
- The men described many forms of family violence, including physical, sexual and emotional abuse
- Men felt there are many causes of family violence, including
 - economic stress
 - learning to live in a new culture
 - addictions to alcohol, drugs and gambling
 - miscommunication
 - the lack of information
 - expanded rights and freedoms
- Men stated that physical violence between spouses is always wrong. Some men said it was all right to discipline children by hitting them but others said that this was wrong.
- Men stated that family violence can cause physical and emotional harm. One of the biggest problems is that family violence can lead to the break up of the family.
- Immigrant and refugee men want more information about:
 - How to stop family violence
 - How to adapt to a new culture
 - Canadian law.
- Men felt that education about family violence should not be provided to immigrant men alone. Any program on preventing family violence should also include women and children.

Key Recommendations

Project partners should work together with community groups. They should develop programs to prevent family violence. These programs should address the ideas and needs of immigrant and refugee men.

Here are our recommendations:

1. Offer a series of workshops to help immigrant men prevent family violence. Include immigrant men, women and youth from different backgrounds. Hold separate classes for women, youth and men, but bring them together at the end.
2. Cover all aspects of family violence and focus on family issues. Include these topics:
 - Partner violence (for example, between husband and wife)
 - Child abuse
 - Disciplining children
 - Conflict between generations
3. Invite immigrant and refugee community members (including men) to play a big part in developing and presenting the workshops.
4. Offer individual sessions of the workshop series to community groups.
5. Offer a *Train the Trainer Domestic Violence Prevention Education* program to immigrants and refugees. This program would train community members on how to teach the workshops, in their community, to prevent family violence. Include these topics:
 - How to develop a program
 - How to design a workshop
 - Teaching skills
 - Issues covered in the workshop series
6. Try to strengthen the community through this work by
 - Building skills of community members
 - Working with community leaders
 - Providing jobs
7. Support the development of family violence programs led by ethno-cultural community groups.
8. Develop new partnerships and expand networks in working to prevent family violence.
9. Look for long-term funding to support family violence programs.
10. Make sure that education and publicity does not reinforce any negative stereotypes.
11. Make sure that funding is available to evaluate new programs.