Prevalence and incidence of violence and dynamics of violence against immigrant and refugee and their service needs.

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The ASPIRE (Analysing Safety and Place in Immigrant and Refugee Experience) Project team reviewed a large volume of national and international literature to identify and describe the current state of knowledge about:

- immigrant and refugee women’s experiences of intimate partner and family violence;
- similarities and differences in the experiences of immigrant and refugee women compared to non-immigrant survivors of violence;
- contexts and risk factors associated with violence against immigrant and refugee women;
- help-seeking strategies that are relevant to the contexts in which immigrant and refugee women experience family violence; and
- the factors that promote or inhibit immigrant and refugee women’s access to violence prevention and support services.

Over 300 publications of relevance were reviewed in detail, with 133 peer-reviewed publications and 28 documents from the ‘grey’ literature (policy documents, program evaluations etc.) included in the final thematic synthesis. Key findings include:

- the significant limitations to our understanding of prevalence of violence against immigrant and refugee women;
- that immigrant and refugee women report similar forms of violence to women from non-immigrant backgrounds, as well as additional forms of violence including forced marriage; multi-perpetrator violence; and the use of visa status as a form of control;
- immigration policies decrease women’s agency and increase vulnerability to violence, particularly where women depend on perpetrators for economic security and residency rights;
- women experience substantial barriers when trying to seek help for family violence. These include limited awareness of rights, Australian law, and services available; fear of police, immigration authorities, and of rejection by family and community; experiences of racism and religious prejudice from services; significant communication barriers; and a reluctance to reinforce negative stereotypes about their community; and
- that there is little evidence that mandatory arrest and pro-prosecution approaches are helpful for immigrant women, and may in fact deter them from seeking assistance in crisis situations.

Further detail can be found in the complete State of Knowledge paper on the ANROWS website.

More information over page
The ASPIRE Project has used findings from this comprehensive literature review to inform our research approach and tools. As of end January 2016, our multilingual team has interviewed 32 immigrant and refugee women who have experienced family violence; interviewed 38 key informants (from family violence, health, legal, and housing services and local government); and conducted 24 focus group discussions involving 176 people (141 women and 35 men) from diverse cultural communities. Our research has primarily been conducted in eight sites across Victoria and Tasmania, to increase our understanding of the experiences of women in inner city, outer metropolitan, and regional centres. Data collection is ongoing in early 2016 and will include a Photovoice project working with community leaders to identify opportunities for community-led responses to violence against immigrant and refugee women in different settings.