



# A Culture Of Cruelty

## Women Migrants A Factsheet

### Who are these women?

Women make up over half the total migrants in America. Many women are coming to the United States to reunify with spouses or other family members. Some are coming to claim children who may have been left behind. Others are coming to escape abusive or dangerous situations in their home country. More and more women are sole supporters for their families are coming for economic opportunities.

### What are the risks they face trying to cross the Border?

The Binational Migration Institute at the University of Arizona has done research on recovered bodies in the Tucson area that show since the harsher border enforcement began in 1994, deaths have dramatically increased, and women are 2.7 times more likely to die than men.

They are more likely to be fatigued from their “double-burden” of domestic life, and some are traveling with children and run the risk of being left behind. Women often have extra horrors to encounter at the border including sexual harassment and rape.

Many women, escaping poverty or violence in their home, are victimized during their journey. They are at risk for being a victim of femicide, sexual assault, and are often more vulnerable because they are traveling with their children.

### What happens to them when they are apprehended?

With the exception of parents apprehended in large worksite enforcement operations, few parents benefit from time-of-apprehension protocols designed to minimize adverse consequences of detention and deportation on children.

If a woman re-enters the United States after being removed to come back for their children to bring them to the mother’s home country, they may be subject to criminal prosecution for the re-entry. They could face exorbitant fines or jail time.

It has been increasingly difficult for repatriated women to navigate the intersection between the child welfare system and the immigration system. Many women, upon removal from the U.S., have very little resources to help them regain custody of their children, especially in situations in which domestic violence was involved.

**Of 172 women recently interviewed by the Kino Border Initiative, “25 of the women experienced violence at the hands of coyotes or other individuals travelling with them to the United States. Of these 25 women, 21 experienced psychological abuse, 10 were physically abused and seven were sexually abused.”**

KBI, 2011

## What happens while they are detained?

Not only do women have a harder time finding an attorney to help them with their immigration case while detained, they do not have access to state court proceedings that may involve the custody of their children.

They may be pressured into signing a stipulated order of removal waiving their right to a hearing before an immigration judge.

## What happens when they are removed?

Family reunification is often compromised by the logistical challenges of deportation. In most cases, parents learn of their deportation date only shortly before their departure and this information is not shared outside of ICE.

Despite Memorandums of Understanding with the Mexican Consulate, women are being repatriated after dark.

Migrating women face additional risks crossing the U.S. Mexico border. They are subject to femicides, sexual assault, and are often more vulnerable because they are traveling with their children. In particular, murders of women in Ciudad Juarez have been especially targeted:

According to the Organization of American States's Inter-American Commission on Human Rights:

“The victims of these crimes have preponderantly been young women, between 12 and 22 years of age. Many were students, and most were maquiladora workers. A number were relative newcomers to Ciudad Juárez who had migrated from other areas of Mexico. The victims were generally reported missing by their families, with their bodies found days or months later abandoned in vacant lots, outlying areas or in the desert. In most of these cases there were signs of sexual violence, torment, torture or in some cases disfigurement...”

While all people are vulnerable to the dangers present in the border region, women are particularly vulnerable to the exploitative climate aimed at desperate migrants.

## Women and Border Patrol Abuse

*A recent survey released by the Kino Border Initiative's Nazareth House reports high levels of Border Patrol abuse of women:*

“**94** of the **172** women interviewed stated that they had experienced verbal, physical, and psychological abuse from U.S. Border Patrol agents. They described instances where the agents would insult them and use racial slurs. Some of the women described being dragged or hit by the agents and often denied medical attention.”

“**34** women reported being physically abused in detention. They also described the cells as being excessively cold and of being denied food and water.”

[www.kinoborderinitiative.org](http://www.kinoborderinitiative.org)

## For More Information on the abuses of women in Border Patrol custody:

To read the full report and accompanying materials,  
and to find out what you can do to get involved:  
check out the No More Deaths website at [www.nomoredeaths.org](http://www.nomoredeaths.org)  
or [www.cultureofcruelty.org](http://www.cultureofcruelty.org)