

Women's Commission Releases **IMMIGRANT WOMEN'S ROUNDTABLE REPORT**

In February, the Cambridge Women's Commission released their new report on immigrant women. A first-of-its-kind for the City, the *Immigrant Women's Roundtable Report: A comprehensive look at immigrant women and their families living in Cambridge* offers community leaders, City departments, elected officials, agencies and others an essential first step looking at immigrant women and their families living in Cambridge today.

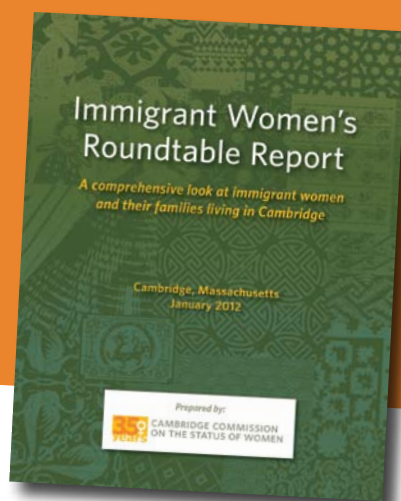
A survey of immigrant women living in Cambridge revealed the following facts:

- Nearly two-thirds of them have been in the United States for 10 years or less;
- Most moved here to create a better life for their children;
- 27 percent of children enrolled in Cambridge schools speak a language other than English at home;
- 40 percent reported having a household income of less than \$25,000 a year. Less than 10 percent reported having annual household income of more than \$50,000;
- 52 percent are aware of the existence of laws protecting women;
- More than 20 percent do not understand spoken English well and are not comfortable asking questions in English. Almost 50 percent have taken English classes in Cambridge.

To some extent the new report serves as a companion piece to the Commission's *Report on the Status of Women and Girls in Cambridge*.

Released in 2008, the status report enabled policymakers, program developers and others to understand the current picture of women and girls in key areas. Soon after its release, the Commission sponsored a Women's Data Workshop for community stakeholders and policy and program leaders to analyze and interpret the information.

While supporting the significance of the report, workshop participants noted that certain women's voices were not sufficiently represented in the data and expressed concern that immigrant women's influence has typically been neglected, especially in quantitative, city-wide statistics. The Commission agreed and set out to increase gender-based data collection for Cambridge's immigrant population. They began by forming the Immigrant Women's Roundtable. Composed of agencies, program providers and immigrant women, the Roundtable's mission seeks to improve the mechanisms to reach and serve marginalized communities in the city and to engage them not only as immigrants, but as women.



Recognizing that the absence of an accurate source of data concerning immigrant women living in Cambridge not only hinders their participation in, and use of, the programs and services that are available to them, but also conceals the gaps in service that exist, the Roundtable quickly developed the idea for the *Immigrant Women's Roundtable Report*. Using Census data, School Department data, as well as the nearly 200 surveys they collected in partnership with the Community Learning Center, the Roundtable is excited to bring this collection of data to the public. The report looks at demographics, immigration trends, family life and children, language skills, education, economics, health and safety, and Cambridge resources, and hopes to serve as a catalyst for more research and discussions around immigrant populations in Cambridge.

For more information or to download a PDF of the entire report, please visit www.cambridgewomenscommission.org or call 617-349-4697. ■



Photo: Community members gather to discuss Report data.