

Immigrant Survivors Fear Reporting Violence

In May 2019, a coalition of national organizations gathered feedback from nearly six hundred advocates and attorneys from across the United States, learning that many immigrant victims of domestic and sexual violence are now too afraid to call the police or go to court to get help. The advocates report that survivors have an increased fear of deportation, retaliation by their abusers, and separation from their children.

Perpetrators often exploit their victims' lack of immigration status as a tactic of abuse, maintaining power and control by reinforcing fears of deportation. Recognizing this, Congress created important protections for immigrant survivors of domestic violence, sexual assault, and human trafficking in the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) and the Trafficking Victims Prevention Act (TVPA).

New policies are undermining these protections and creating a dangerous climate of fear. These policies include local law enforcement officers becoming involved in federal immigration enforcement, the elimination of reasonable deportation priorities, "zero tolerance" prosecution, family separation and detention, and narrowed pathways to asylum.

76.25%

of advocates report that immigrant survivors have concerns about contacting police

"SURVIVORS ARE AFRAID THAT THEY WILL BE REPORTED TO IMMIGRATION AND CUSTOMS ENFORCEMENT (ICE), AND BE REMOVED FROM THEIR CHILDREN. THIS HAS HAPPENED ON NUMEROUS OCCASSIONS IN OUR COMMUNITY AND CONTINUES TO HAPPEN."

"MANY VICTIMS ARE AFRAID THEY WILL BE DEPORTED WHEN THEY REPORT THEIR DOMESTIC ABUSE OR SEXUAL ASSAULT. THEY ... ARE FEARFUL THAT ANY **CONTACT WITH LAW ENFORCEMENT PUTS THEM IN A MORE DANGEROUS POSITION THAN STAYING SILENT.**"

"IMMIGRANT SURVIVORS NO LONGER WANT TO GO TO FAMILY COURT. THEY ARE TOO SCARED. THEY PUT UP WITH ABUSE AND THEY REFUSE TO GET CHILD SUPPORT BECAUSE THEY ARE SCARED THEY WILL BE REPORTED TO IMMIGRATION [AUTHORITIES]."

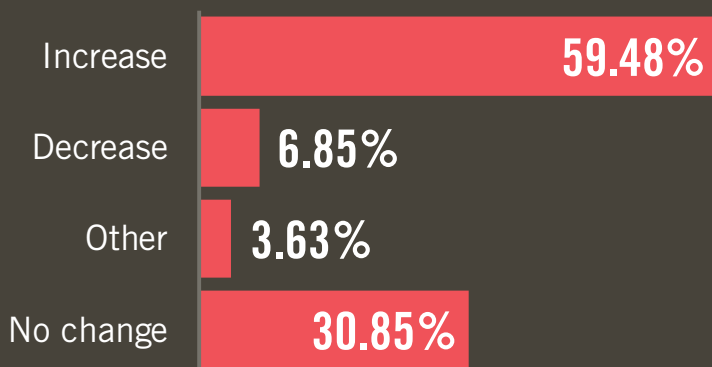
"VICTIMS ALSO BELIEVE THAT COURTS WILL AUTOMATICALLY SIDE WITH THE ABUSER REGARDLESS OF EVIDENCE OR VICTIM'S TESTIMONY, SOLELY BECAUSE THE ABUSER IS A U.S. CITIZEN. **IT IS DIFFICULT TO ASSURE VICTIMS THAT COURTS ARE MEANT TO BE FAIR AND LOOK THROUGH ALL INFORMATION, ESPECIALLY WHEN ... THE NEWS SOUNDS ANTI-IMMIGRANT.**"

3 OUT OF 4 ADVOCATES



report that immigrant survivors have concerns about going to court for a matter related to the abuser/offender

IS YOUR AGENCY OBSERVING A CHANGE IN THE NUMBER OF IMMIGRATION-RELATED QUESTIONS FROM SURVIVORS?



“IF THE MEDIA DISCUSSES CHANGES IN IMMIGRATION LAW, THE CALLS INCREASE.”

“THERE HAS BEEN AN INCREASE IN CONTACT BY IMMIGRANT SURVIVORS IN WANTING TO UNDERSTAND WHAT IS HAPPENING AROUND IMMIGRATION AND A DECREASE IN SURVIVORS WANTING TO ENGAGE WITH SYSTEMS.”

52%

of advocates worked with immigrant survivors who dropped civil or criminal cases because they were fearful to continue with their cases

“IMMIGRANT SURVIVORS FEEL THAT DUE TO THEIR LACK OF LEGAL STATUS, THE JUSTICE SYSTEM IS NOT LISTENING TO THEIR SIDE OF THE STORY COMPARED TO THE PERPETRATORS WHO MOST OF THE TIME ARE [U.S.] CITIZENS. IMMIGRANT SURVIVORS ALSO FEAR THAT THE JUDGE OR POLICE MAY LOOK AT THEM AS CRIMINALS AND NOT CAPABLE OF SUPPORTING THEIR KIDS JUST BECAUSE THEY LACK A LEGAL STATUS.”

“THE BIGGEST CONCERN WOMEN CLIENTS HAVE IS BEING SEPARATED FROM THEIR CHILDREN; THEY [WOULD] RATHER WITHDRAW THEIR COURT CASES OUT OF FEAR OF BEING ARRESTED AND THEN PLACED IN REMOVAL PROCEEDINGS.”



CONTACT INFORMATION

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