

\*This updated version, originally released on March 12, 2026, includes corrections to some of the graph's reported data points.

# California parents of young children speak about immigration enforcement in their community

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Ever since the RAPID California Voices project started in 2022, we have been asking parents and caregivers of young children in California about their family's economic circumstances, well-being, use of child care, and more. This multi-year, statewide survey aims to understand the experiences of California families with children under age 6, lift up parent voices, and promote real-time data-informed policies and programs that support families.

In January 2025, the federal government announced its effort to implement the largest mass deportation operation in our country's history, and in the Summer of 2025, this was followed by a significant increase in immigration enforcement activities in California.



**Stanford**  
Center on Early Childhood

“My children and other family members are feeling unsafe due to immigration.”  
Parent in Yolo County

“These are scary times, especially when ICE [Immigration and Customs Enforcement] agents are in the area. It creates fear and tension in our community, even for families just trying to live peacefully.”  
Parent in Orange County

“My primary concern is the climate of fear impacting many kids and families in my community. Our community includes a large number of immigrant and mixed-status families, and many of my child’s classmates live with the daily anxiety of family separation. The recent presence and aggressive tactics of ICE in our area have significantly increased this fear. This isn’t just a home issue; this trauma and anxiety directly impact a child’s well-being, their ability to focus in school, and their family’s willingness to engage with the school community.”  
Parent in Los Angeles County

Amid this backdrop, this fact sheet presents insights from parents of children under age 6 who participated in RAPID-California surveys between September 2025 and December 2025, to document the experiences of California families as federal immigration enforcement activities increased in communities across the state.

In addition to analyzing data for the sample as a whole, we also look at differences across respondents’ immigration status. For this analysis, we define immigrants as those born outside the U.S. or born in the U.S. to parents born outside of the U.S.; we define non-immigrants as those born in the U.S. to parents also born in the U.S.

## More than two in five California parents of young children are noticing impacts of immigration enforcement activities in their community

We asked parents: “Have you noticed any impacts of immigration enforcement activities on young children and adults in your community?”

More than two in five California parents surveyed (41%) noticed impacts of immigration enforcement activities in their community. The data show that both California immigrant parents and California non-immigrant parents noticed impacts of immigration enforcement activities in their community. These rates were higher among immigrant parents (51%), but it is noteworthy that almost one-third of non-immigrant parents also reported noticing these impacts (29%).

“Leave immigrants alone. They aren’t the problem. Lower the cost of energy, food, rent, and healthcare so the average person can thrive. Helping our neighbors benefits all of us.”

Parent in San Diego County

In their written responses to open-ended questions, California parents described their experiences amid the increase of immigration enforcement activities in the state, as indicated by the quotes in this fact sheet.

## California parents of young children identify a variety of impacts of immigration enforcement in their community

“[My biggest concerns right now are] facing the overall increase in prices for the cost of living, facing immigration in our daily lives. The fear of being kidnapped due to the color of our skin.”

Parent in Tulare County

To understand the specific impacts of immigration enforcement activities, we gave California parents the following list and asked: “Which of the following impacts of immigration enforcement activities, if any, have you noticed in your community? Select all that apply:”

- Children showing signs of fear, stress, or anxiety
- Families being separated or disrupted
- Families facing job loss or financial difficulties
- Children missing child care or school, or struggling with learning and development
- Declining trust in institutions (e.g., schools, healthcare, law enforcement)
- Reduced sense of safety, unity, or belonging in the community

“The rising fear of deportations has made my community feel insecure.”

Parent in Santa Clara County

“Making sure we are safe in terms of immigration [is my biggest concern].”

Parent in San Diego County

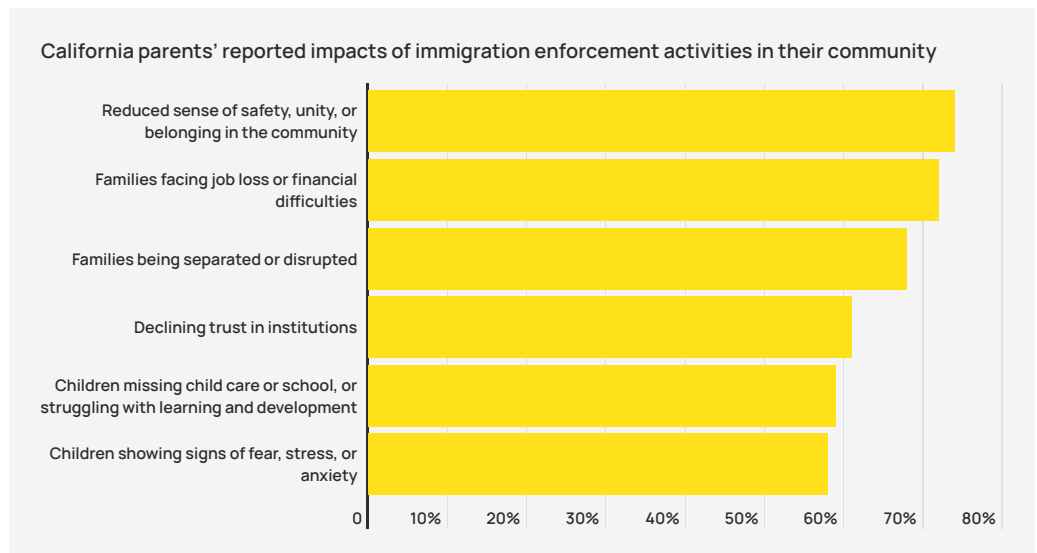
“Current immigration activities going on have instilled fear to go out to buy groceries, attend church, and other community events. Fear of being detained because of the color of our skin, afraid to speak our native language out in public.” Parent in Yuba County

Among the parents who noticed impacts of immigration enforcement activities in their community, three in four parents (74%) indicated concerns of reduced sense of safety, belonging, and unity in the community. Perhaps most noteworthy, these data were similar among immigrant parents (78%) and non-immigrant parents (68%).

In addition, about three in four parents (72%) reported facing job loss or financial difficulties as an impact of immigration enforcement activities; once again, these data were similar among immigrant parents (77%) and non-immigrant parents (62%).

“Immigration is a big one, I really don’t find fair what the president is doing. I understand this is your country, but many people come here to make a better life and they literally don’t have anything in their native country, like me, and it’s so strict that even people with a permit to work or in the process of getting their documents get affected. My own brother was denied his case just because, and basically he’s the only support I have here, so it’s not fair, and I’m just starting to feel like I can breathe with the work permit but I have to be careful everywhere I walk in, even going to the hospital feels scary.” Parent in Santa Clara County

Finally, more than two in three parents (68%) noted concerns about families being separated or disrupted as an impact of immigration enforcement activities; these data were also similar among immigrant parents (71%) and non-immigrant parents (62%).



“I’m afraid ICE might arrest me or my husband because of our race. If so, our children will be alone because we don’t have any relatives in the U.S.”

Parent in San Mateo County

## California parents of young children express concerns that immigration enforcement activities could affect their family’s child care

As part of understanding family experiences, we asked California parents: “Are you concerned that immigration enforcement activities in your community could affect your family’s participation in child care?”

More than two in three California parents surveyed (67%) were concerned that immigration enforcement activities could affect their family’s participation in child care. As with the other items we report on above, these data were similar among immigrant parents (71%) and non-immigrant parents (64%).

About one in ten California parents surveyed (9%) said their child missed at least one day of child care in the past month due to concerns about immigration enforcement in their community.

In their written responses to open-ended questions, both immigrant and non-immigrant California parents expressed worries during heightened immigration enforcement, citing concerns about family separation, fear for their safety and the safety of their children, and uncertainty that could lead to increased scrutiny from immigration officials, irrespective of one’s immigration status.

## Conclusion

Data collected by RAPID between September 2025 and December 2025 show that California parents across immigration status are observing the effects of immigration enforcement activities in their communities. The reports from both immigrant and non-immigrant parents regarding changes in child care due to these enforcement actions underscore the difficulties families encounter in fulfilling this essential need. These experiences negatively affect parents' well-being and undermine the healthy development of young children. RAPID will keep listening to California parents about their experiences of immigration enforcement and share actionable insights to inform policies and programs aimed at supporting California's children, families, and communities.

# About the RAPID State Surveys

The RAPID Survey Project is based in the Stanford Center on Early Childhood, under the direction of Philip Fisher, PhD, Director of the Center.

RAPID partners with cities, counties, and states to gather essential and ongoing information and caregiver voices, provide timely and relevant data to inform local policies and programs, and develop the capacity of local organizations to employ rapid-cycle survey methods and enhance the impact of their work on behalf of children, families and the child care workforce.

This set of analyses on RAPID-California data is based on responses collected between September 2025 and December 2025 from 1,265 California parents of children under age 6. These caregivers represent a range of voices: 35.4% are Black, 34.8% are Latinx, and 32.0% live below 200% of the federal poverty level. Proportions/percentages are calculated based on the item-level response rates, not out of the total sample size. Data are weighted to adjust the samples to match the known population.