

KEY FINDINGS

2017 Advocate and Legal Service Survey Regarding Immigrant Survivors

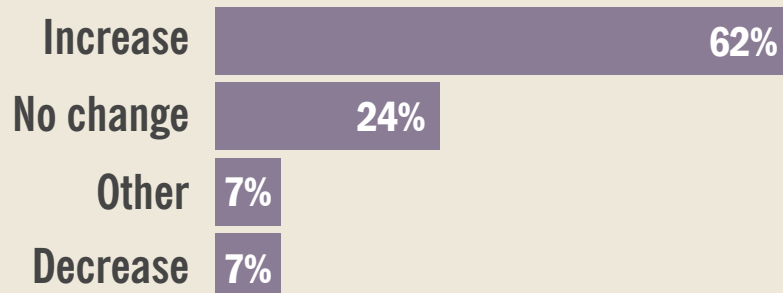
Congress created important protections for immigrant survivors of domestic violence, sexual assault, and human trafficking in the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) and Trafficking Victims Prevention Act (TVPA) in the express recognition that abusers often exploit a victim's lack of immigration status as a tactic of abuse. Current immigration enforcement policies, including executive orders that cast a much wider net for who is considered a priority for deportation and call for increased entanglement of local and state law enforcement in federal immigration enforcement efforts, have had a significant impact on immigrant survivors of domestic violence and sexual assault.

Many advocates are hearing from immigrant survivors that they have increased fear and concerns about reaching out for help. In some places, advocates are reporting a decrease in immigrant survivors contacting their agencies for assistance. Attorneys and advocates who work with survivors have reported that they are uncertain how to advise immigrant survivors about what will happen if they call the police or go to court.

To better understand these concerns, a coalition of national organizations sent out a survey to the field on April 12 – 25, 2017 asking for their feedback. In total, 715 advocates and attorneys from 46 states and the District of Columbia completed the survey.

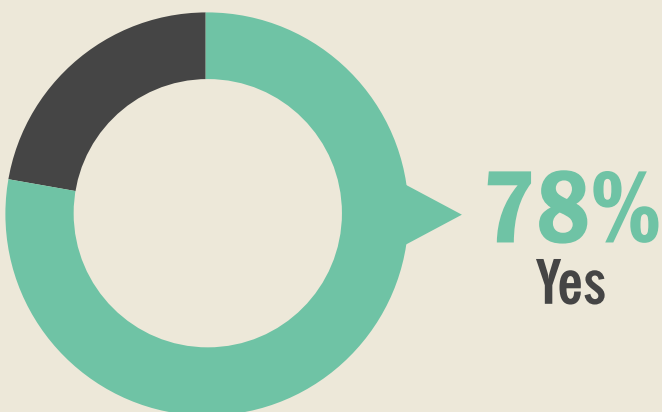
Is your agency observing a change in the number of immigration-related questions from survivors?

“SURVIVORS HAVE A LOT OF QUESTIONS ABOUT HOW THEY CAN SAFETY PLAN UNDER THE NEW ADMINISTRATION. . . . **SOME CLIENTS EVEN QUESTION WHETHER OR NOT THEY SHOULD SUBMIT THEIR PETITIONS TO IMMIGRATION.**”



Are immigrant survivors sharing with your agency that they have concerns about contacting police?

“SURVIVORS ARE CONCERNED THAT THEY WILL BE DETAINED IF THEY MAKE A POLICE REPORT OR CALL 911. **A 16-YEAR-OLD SURVIVOR ATTEMPTED SUICIDE** BECAUSE SHE WAS CONCERNED THAT HER OFFENDER WOULD REPORT HER AND HER FAMILY TO ICE.”



“CLIENTS ARE AFRAID OF CALLING THE POLICE BECAUSE THEY BELIEVE THAT THEY WILL BE DEPORTED IF THEY DO, **ESPECIALLY IF THEIR ABUSER IS A U.S. CITIZEN.** THEY THINK LAW ENFORCEMENT WILL LISTEN TO SOMEONE WHO IS A CITIZEN OF THIS COUNTRY MORE THAN TO AN UNDOCUMENTED PERSON.”

Survivors' Fear of Seeking Legal Remedies

3 OUT OF 4 ADVOCATES



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

“NEWS REPORTS OF VICTIMS BEING ARRESTED WHEN THEY SHOW UP FOR COURT DATES ARE CREATING VERY HIGH ANXIETY.”

“AFTER THE NEWS BROKE THAT A WOMAN WHO WAS FILING FOR AN ORDER OF PROTECTION AGAINST HER ABUSER WAS DEPORTED, **MANY OF MY CLIENTS BECAME CONCERNED THAT SOMETHING SIMILAR WOULD HAPPEN TO THEM.**”

“A RESIDENT OF THE SHELTER WAS NOT COMFORTABLE APPLYING FOR A TRO [TEMPORARY RESTRAINING ORDER] AGAINST HER ABUSER BECAUSE SHE WAS AFRAID HE WOULD CALL IMMIGRATION ON HER. **THIS IS REAL, AND NOW LEGITIMATE FEAR.**”

Human traffickers, perpetrators of sexual assault, including sexual abuse in the workplace, and domestic abusers prey on vulnerable immigrants, and often tell their victims that seeking assistance from the police or courts will result in survivors' deportation. Congress understood the importance of ensuring that immigrant victims know that they can reach out for help and that there are protections in place to help them access safety and justice. It is important to strengthen this commitment and ensure that policies do not drive victims and witnesses into the shadows and undermine their safety.

43%

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



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