



TRUMP ERA ANTI-IMMIGRANT STATEMENTS, HEALTH CARE ACCESS, AND SENSE OF SAFETY

ARTICLE DETAILS

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Title: Impact of Anti-Immigrant Rhetoric on Latinx Families' Perceptions of Child Safety and Health Care Access

WHY WAS THIS RESEARCH DONE?

The 2016 Presidential election and harsh immigration policies throughout the Trump administration exacerbated anti-immigrant rhetoric. Researchers examined the effects of anti-immigrant statements made by the U.S. President on parents' sense of safety in the U.S. and decisions to seek medical care for their children.

WHAT DID THE STUDY INVOLVE?

In 2018-2020, parents were surveyed at two emergency departments and one pediatric clinic in California. The 449 parent participants included 138 undocumented Latinx families, 150 Latinx U.S. citizen/resident families, and 158 non-Latinx U.S. families. Parents responded to questions about their perceptions of safety seeking care, their awareness of anti-immigrant statements (ex: building a wall, denying services), and their level of worry or fear related to anti-immigrant statements.

WHAT ARE THE MAIN TAKEAWAYS?

Most parents reported hearing anti-immigrant statements by President Trump, with higher percentages of undocumented (95%) and Latinx parents (88%) reporting awareness compared to non-Latinx parents (78%). Most parents believed that the government would follow through on these proposals. Among undocumented families, 85% did not believe that health care providers would treat non-citizens differently or report them to immigration officials. Undocumented parents were more likely to report some level of fear related to seeking medical care for their child compared to other parents. Two factors significantly increased parents level of worry. Those with limited English proficiency were 2.4 times more likely, and those with a non-citizen/resident family member were 3.9 times more likely to report worry or feeling unsafe.



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WHAT ARE THE STUDY'S CONCLUSIONS OR IMPLICATIONS?

Anti-immigrant rhetoric and policy actions increase fear among Latinx immigrant parents, which negatively impacts children's access to and use of health care. These effects are particularly pronounced for children in undocumented families. These findings suggest that state-level policies can help reassure parents' that health care providers do not treat patients differently based on immigration status; however, providers should be aware that families experience ongoing worries and fears about their safety.

RELEVANCE TO CIMH

Most of the children in the undocumented families in the study were U.S. citizens, which reflects national trends. Universal health care programs, like All Kids in Illinois, provide important protections for all children regardless of status. However, this study demonstrates that anti-immigrant statements and threats of policy actions continue to undermine community safety and access to needed care. One limitation of the study is that the parents surveyed were already accessing medical care. We might expect higher levels of fear if surveys were conducted in a non-medical setting.

FOR MORE ON THIS RESEARCH

This study was conducted by researchers at the University of California San Francisco Latinx Center for Excellence through an academic and research training grant for Latinx and other underrepresented medical students (see [PROF-PATH](#)). Find the full article in the Public Health in Emergency Medicine journal [here](#).

The primary author, [Elodia Caballero](#), is the child of Honduran immigrants and currently completing her studies at Harvard University. [Dr. Robert Rodriguez](#) is Emergency Medicine faculty at medical schools in California and Texas and focuses on Latinx immigrant health care access, barriers to care, and the impact of political rhetoric on feelings of safety.

Thanks to Dr. Rodriguez for sharing these open access studies with CIMH: [Rodriguez et al., 2019](#); [Rodriguez et al., 2021](#); and [Ornelas et al., 2021](#).