

Fear and Silence:

2025 Insights from Advocates for Immigrant Survivors

In the spring of 2025, the Alliance for Immigrant Survivors (AIS) surveyed over 170 advocates and attorneys nationwide to better understand the current experiences, needs, and lived realities of immigrant survivors of domestic and sexual violence and human trafficking. The survey results make clear that immigrant survivors overwhelmingly fear that reaching out to police or appearing in court to address abuse could lead to deportation.

Abusive family members and perpetrators of crime are well aware of this fear and often take advantage of it. They use a person's lack of legal immigration status as a tool of power and control, threatening deportation to keep victims silent. As a result, Congress has enacted laws with bipartisan support to protect crime victims, such as the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) and the Trafficking Victims Protection Act (TVPA).

But today, new policies, protocols and guidance make it harder for survivors to get the help they need. This includes involving local law enforcement in federal immigration actions, and enforcing immigration laws at courthouses. These actions go against the purpose of laws meant to protect survivors. They give abusers more power, putting victims in danger, and making entire communities less safe.



75.6%

of advocates reported that immigrant survivors have concerns about contacting the police.

An advocate shared that one survivor was afraid to go to the hospital and report abuse to the police after she was assaulted. She waited two days after the incident and went to the hospital only after her immigration attorney assured her it was safe. She had a broken nose and orbital bone.

One advocate shared that seeing a trafficking victim with no criminal record detained by ICE is:



Absolutely making people too afraid to speak to the police, making advocates second-guess whether it's a safe thing to advise."

Immigrant survivors are also more concerned and fearful of police in general:



Most of the immigrant survivors that I currently work with are fearful to leave their homes, drive or be in public spaces as these are all ways that they could be picked up by ICE."

70.3%

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

Advocates report:

Survivors have been expressing concern about whether ICE will be in the courtroom.



An **abuser's ability to threaten to contact ICE** about an upcoming court hearing is a **powerful tool in their toolbelt of control** right now."



An immigrant survivor with pending asylum and U visa applications chose not to renew her restraining order because she does not want to risk that ICE agents will be at or near the courthouse. This survivor had previously renewed her protection order three times."



There has been a decrease in restraining order requests with survivors telling advocates they do not want to go to court."

50%

of advocates report that immigrant survivors who had concerns about contacting the police or going to court **ultimately chose not to** due to fear.

Immigrant Survivors worry about encountering immigration enforcement, the potential impact of law enforcement contact on their immigration status, not being understood or taken seriously due to language barriers, and have anxiety about facing their abuser in court without adequate protection or support.



One survivor we worked with did not call the police when her abuser stalked and assaulted her. She specifically **feared that her abuser would disclose her immigration status to the police as retaliation if she called them for help.**"



Fear of retaliation from their abusers, who often leverage threats of deportation, plays a significant role in an immigrant survivor's decision to remain silent. This fear-driven inaction leaves many trapped in unsafe situations."



79.7%

of advocates report an increase in immigration-related questions from survivors since November 2024.



There is an increase in inquiries about long-pending applications. Even Legal Permanent Residents and naturalized survivors are fearful of deportation and scared that they are at risk."



The [Alliance for Immigrant Survivors \(AIS\)](#) is a national network of advocates and allies dedicated to defending and advocating for policies that ensure immigrant survivors of domestic violence, sexual assault, trafficking, and other gender-based abuses have access to life-saving protections that all survivors of violence deserve.