



Immigration Enforcement and the Mental Health of Latino High School Students

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Executive Summary

Adolescence is a critical period of life in which young people develop their social, cultural, and political identities, and become more aware of how society's structures and institutions can affect them and their families. Many Latino¹ youth worry about the arrest and deportation of a relative, fellow student, or friend. Those who were born outside the United States and lack legal immigration status may also be at risk of deportation themselves. These fears are linked to mental-health conditions and hold potential consequences for a young person's school engagement, academic achievement, and future labor market outcomes.

Examining the effects of immigration enforcement on the mental health of Latino youth—who represent roughly one-quarter of high school students nationwide, and the fastest-growing student population—is particularly critical at a time when the tone of public debate around immigration has substantially changed. The Trump administration has fundamentally altered the public discourse, casting immigration as a threat to the nation's security and economic well-being rather than as an asset.

Increased enforcement, along with other immigration policy changes and highly charged rhetoric, have generated fear in immigrant communities across the country.

A central element of the administration's immigration policies has been stepped-up arrests and deportations from within the country by U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), which is effectively targeting a broader range of unauthorized immigrants than the prior administration. While the pace of ICE arrests has exceeded that of the late Obama years, total removals still lag peaks in the Obama and Bush administrations. One reason for these somewhat lower numbers has been resistance on the part of some state and local governments to cooperating with ICE in the arrest, detention, and removal of at least some unauthorized immigrants. The impacts of enforcement have fallen most heavily on Latinos, with noncitizens from Mexico, El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras comprising more than 90 percent of those deported during fiscal year (FY) 2019.

Increased enforcement, along with other immigration policy changes and highly charged rhetoric, have generated fear in immigrant communities across the country: fear that extends beyond the unauthorized immigrant population to immigrant families with U.S.-born children and to legal immigrants. Among those likely to feel the effects are the approximately one-fifth of Latino youth (ages 12 to 17) who live in mixed-status families with at least one unauthorized immigrant parent, as well as the one in ten who are themselves unauthorized.

Research has documented concerns among Latinos, regardless of immigration status, about life in America. In national surveys conducted in 2017 and 2018, a majority of Latinos reported that life had become more difficult and that they or someone they know could be deported. Almost 40 percent said they had

¹ This report uses the term "Latino" to describe the population of students involved in this study; it uses the related term "Hispanic" when describing the findings of other, comparable studies that use that term. Some academic studies also use the term "Latinx" or "Latino/a" to denote this population.

experienced discrimination. Further, the share reporting fear of deportation has risen significantly since 2015 and 2016, the last years of the Obama administration.

Study Approach and Key Findings

This report examines links between immigration enforcement, related fears, and the mental health of Latino youth. It presents the findings of a survey of Latino students at five high schools in Harris County, Texas, and six high schools in four Rhode Island cities, conducted during the 2018–19 school year.² The survey explored students' fears of and exposure to immigration enforcement, as well as other stressors such as trauma, discrimination, and economic hardship; personal strengths such as resilience, spirituality, and family support; symptoms of anxiety, depression, and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD); and substance use. The survey was supplemented by interviews with education professionals and key community stakeholders.

The study sites offer contrasting immigration-enforcement contexts. Harris County, Texas, had the most ICE arrests of any county nationwide in FY 2018, and Texas law bars local law enforcement agencies from refusing to cooperate with ICE in identifying and holding noncitizens for deportation. Rhode Island has a relatively low level of ICE activity and has restricted local law enforcement cooperation with the federal agency. Further, all schools involved in the study represent a range of educational contexts including traditional public high schools, schools with alternative programming for recently arrived immigrants, and charter schools. Still, they share important characteristics: all but one school were majority-Latino and located in low-income neighborhoods.

Key findings from this research include:

- ▶ **A majority of the sampled students (59 percent) feared that someone close to them would be arrested and deported; 56 percent knew someone who had been deported.** Students in Harris County were more likely than those in Rhode Island to fear that someone close to them would be deported (67 percent versus 52 percent), a result that is consistent with higher levels of enforcement activity in Harris County. Nonetheless, finding such high levels of concern in Rhode Island, where ICE cooperation is restricted, suggests that deportation fears among youth may be common regardless of the level of ICE enforcement.
- ▶ **One-third of the sample reported they were afraid that they would be deported themselves.**³ This fear was expressed by about half of foreign-born students and 12 percent of U.S.-born students. The fact that some U.S.-born students report this fear indicates that enforcement affects the well-being of U.S.-citizen children living in mixed-status families.
- ▶ **Almost one-third of Latino students (30 percent) reported changing their behavior as a result of deportation fears.** Examples included avoiding driving, going to the doctor, attending religious services, or participating in afterschool activities; taking a different route to school; and staying

² Schools and districts are not identified below the geographic levels of Harris County, TX, and Rhode Island in order to protect the confidentiality of respondents.

³ Students who participated in this study were not asked their or their family members' immigration statuses; this was done to encourage students to feel comfortable answering the survey truthfully and to protect their privacy.

at home more often. These behavior changes were reported equally by immigrant and U.S.-born students.

- ▶ **Nearly one-quarter of students in the sample (23 percent) worried that they or someone close to them could be detained or deported as a result of enrolling in a government program.** A high school counselor noted that several students refused to apply for scholarships because they were afraid to put their families' information on the applications. Immigrant parents in a focus group conducted by a community-based organization said they were afraid to sign up their children for anything the government provided for free, such as school lunches or community college. These fears may be related to the revised public-charge rule, which makes it more difficult for immigrants who enroll in certain public-benefit programs to get green cards.
- ▶ **U.S.-born Latino students reported experiencing more traumatic events over their lifetimes than Latino immigrant students (8.1 events versus 6.9, respectively).** Although Central American migrants face well-documented trauma in their home countries and en route to the United States, U.S.-born youth have longer exposure to high levels of crime in the low-income, generally urban communities included in the study. Common forms of trauma students reported were having someone close die, witnessing assault, or being assaulted—at 73 percent, 72 percent, and 42 percent, respectively.
- ▶ **The students in this study scored lower on scales of educational, peer, and institutional discrimination than Latino populations in other studies.** Educators suggested that the discrimination students encountered at school was more likely to be related to language, national origin, or recency of arrival than to race or ethnicity. In the assessment, 24 percent of students reported being discriminated against because people assumed their English was poor. All but one of the schools had large Latino student majorities, and this homogeneity may have insulated them from racial/ethnic discrimination.
- ▶ **Students in the study frequently experienced additional stress due to work, family obligations, or economic hardship.** One-quarter of the sample worked, and 36 percent reported taking care of a family member for an average of 12 hours per week. One-quarter of the sample reported difficulty paying for transportation, and more than 10 percent had trouble affording other necessities such as rent, food, and utilities.
- ▶ **More than half of the students reported symptoms of mental-health conditions such as anxiety, PTSD, or depression at levels high enough to warrant treatment.** Two-thirds of the sample met the clinical threshold for anxiety, 58 percent met the threshold for PTSD, and 55 percent met it for depression. Earlier studies of similar student populations—including Latino students and those from more diverse racial/ethnic backgrounds—generally scored much lower on these mental-health indices. Increased media coverage of anti-immigration rhetoric and enforcement policies, along with more perceived discrimination in Latino communities, may have exacerbated the mental health of Latino youth in recent years. Students were as likely to report symptoms of mental-health conditions in Rhode Island as in Harris County, despite higher levels of enforcement fear in the latter. This result suggests that state and local policies that limit ICE cooperation, such as those in Rhode Island, may not

entirely shield youth from the mental-health consequences associated with fear that someone they know could be detained and deported. It may also owe to the fact that other stressors—traumatic experiences, economic hardship, and discrimination—were roughly equally present in Harris County and Rhode Island.

- ▶ **Students who feared immigration enforcement most acutely—and who changed their behaviors as a result—had the worst mental-health outcomes.** In regression models controlling for additional stressors such as discrimination, trauma exposure, and economic hardship, the relationship between general enforcement fear and mental health weakened. However, these additional stressors did not weaken the relationship between behavior change due to enforcement fear and two mental health conditions: depression and PTSD.
- ▶ **Students reported high levels of personal strengths—resilience, spirituality, family support, and school engagement—that may help counterbalance the stressors they experience.** For example, 90 percent reported they were determined to meet personal goals; 87 percent agreed that spiritual beliefs were important to them; and 84 percent said family members supported them in difficult times. In terms of school engagement, Latino youth who were immigrants exhibited more cognitive and behavioral engagement (e.g., completing homework and attending and behaving well in class), while U.S.-born Latino youth showed higher levels of relational engagement (e.g., feeling they could count on teachers and peers to help them with homework and personal problems).

Many educators described adopting policies and strategies to make their schools safe havens in which students' fears of enforcement, experiences of discrimination, and mental-health needs could be addressed. These strategies included limiting immigration officers' access to student records; creating opportunities for students to work towards school, district, and community change; making educators and other school staff available to talk with students about immigration-related fears; changing disciplinary practices to reduce the likelihood of arrest and potential detention; and developing partnerships with local health and mental-health providers to bring their services on campus.

These educators expressed a desire to do more to support their Latino students' mental health, while also acknowledging substantial barriers such as funding, staffing, and other resource constraints that kept them from doing so. Schools are under considerable pressure to help their students meet rising academic achievement requirements, but they have not received commensurate increases in funding. And as one teacher put it, "Teaching is about teaching the whole student," and "A whole lot of work needs to happen to help them persist" through high school and perhaps on to college.

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Given the well-documented link between mental health and student outcomes, supporting Latino students' mental health at a time when many are experiencing heightened uncertainty and fear is an essential component of efforts to promote these students' school engagement and academic achievement. In the

current social and political environment, the stakes are high for Latino youth and for the society in which they will grow into adulthood, join the workforce, raise families, and take part in civic life.

1 Introduction

Many Latino students worry about the arrest and deportation of a relative, fellow student, or friend. If they were born outside the United States and lack legal immigration status, Latino youth may also be at risk of deportation themselves. In 2016, 22 percent of Latino youth ages 12 to 17 lived in mixed-status families with an unauthorized immigrant parent, and 9 percent were unauthorized themselves.⁴ While the unauthorized are the most likely to experience deportation, under limited circumstances lawfully present noncitizens can also be detained and placed in deportation proceedings.⁵

The number of Latino children ages 17 and under grew by more than 50 percent between 2000 and 2018—from 12.2 million to 18.6 million.

Fears of deportation have heightened in recent years as U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) arrests and deportations of noncitizens from within the United States have risen more than 40 percent since President Trump took office in 2017. Deportations, however, remain short of the peaks recorded in 2010-11.⁶ At the

same time, the tone of public discourse around immigration has shifted, becoming more highly charged and divisive.

This study explores how fear of immigration enforcement is related to the mental health of young Latinos, the fastest-growing group of high school students nationwide. In fall 2016, 25 percent of U.S. public-school students in grades 9 through 12 were Latino, up from 14 percent in 2000.⁷ More broadly, the number of Latino children ages 17 and under grew by more than 50 percent between 2000 and 2018—from 12.2 million to 18.6 million—and increased as a share of all U.S. children from 17 percent to 25 percent.⁸

The study's focus on Latinos also owes to the group's importance to the country's future and to immigration-enforcement debates. Latinos are the only major racial/ethnic group expected to grow substantially over the next decade. And as the non-Latino population ages and its labor force participation

4 Migration Policy Institute (MPI) analysis of data from the U.S. Census Bureau's American Community Survey (ACS), pooled for 2012–16, and from the 2008 Survey of Income and Program Participation (SIPP), with legal status assignments by Jennifer Van Hook of The Pennsylvania State University and James D. Bachmeier of Temple University.

5 Legal permanent residents (LPRs) and other lawfully present noncitizens can be deported if they have been convicted of an aggravated felony—generally a felony or serious misdemeanor that carries a sentence of a year or more. See Randy Capps et al., *Revving Up the Deportation Machinery: Enforcement under Trump and the Pushback* (Washington, DC: MPI, 2018), 25.

6 U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) arrested 110,000 noncitizens in fiscal year (FY) 2016, the last full year of the Obama administration. During FY 2018, the first full year of the Trump administration, arrests increased 45 percent to 159,000, though they declined marginally to 143,000 in FY 2019. By contrast, ICE arrests exceeded 300,000 annually during FY 2010 and FY 2011 during President Obama's first term. Deportations of individuals arrested by ICE inside the United States show a similar pattern. See ICE, *Fiscal Year 2018 ICE Enforcement and Removal Operations Report* (Washington, DC: ICE, 2019); ICE, *U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement Fiscal Year 2019 Enforcement and Removal Operations Report* (Washington, DC: ICE, 2020); Capps et al., *Revving Up the Deportation Machinery*.

7 National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), "Table 203.60: Enrollment and Percentage Distribution of Enrollment in Public Elementary and Secondary Schools, By Race/Ethnicity and Level of Education: Fall 1999 through Fall 2028," *Digest of Education Statistics: 2018*, accessed January 24, 2020.

8 MPI analysis of data from the 2000 U.S. Census of Population and Housing and the 2018 ACS.

declines, projections suggest that by 2025 half of new U.S. workers will be Latinos.⁹ Latinos are also the racial/ethnic group most likely to be affected by immigration enforcement: in FY 2019, 91 percent of all ICE removals were nationals of Mexico, El Salvador, Guatemala, or Honduras.¹⁰

The study also focuses on adolescence, a critical period in human development when young people define their social, cultural, and political identities,¹¹ and when they begin to understand more fully how society's structures and institutions can affect them and their families.¹² Just like other youth, Latinos may experience economic hardship, discrimination, trauma, and other stressors that lead to mental-health conditions persisting into adulthood.¹³ Adolescence is thus a crucial period for study because addressing mental-health conditions at this stage may help reduce health disparities and promote well-being and productivity in later life.¹⁴

A. *Immigration Enforcement and the Current Policy Environment*

While arrests of unauthorized immigrants were higher during some years of the Bush and Obama administrations, the Trump administration has set a different tone for immigration enforcement. In June 2017, Trump's first ICE Director, Thomas Homan, issued a warning: "If you're in this country illegally, and you committed a crime by entering this country, you should be uncomfortable. You should look over your shoulder."¹⁵

The administration's immigration policy changes have encompassed far more than enforcement. Among other things, the president moved to end the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program that grants work authorization to young unauthorized immigrants who came to the country as children. His administration has also separated asylum-seeking families at the border and issued a "public-charge" rule that could prevent immigrants who have used or might use certain public benefits such as food stamps and Medicaid from receiving green cards. The sheer number of immigration policy changes and the stop-start nature of their implementation—with some policies enjoined by courts or blocked by Congress—are having far-reaching effects on immigrant families.¹⁶ Some public- and mental-health researchers have become concerned that, even apart from the direct effects of immigration-related policies, the uncertainty around

9 Congressional Hispanic Caucus Institute (CHCI) and Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM), *The Changing U.S.*

Workforce: The Growing Hispanic Demographic and the Workplace (Washington, DC and Alexandria, VA: CHCI and SHRM, 2016), 8.

10 In FY 2019, noncitizens born in these four countries accounted for 243,000 out of 267,000 ICE removals. See ICE, *U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement Fiscal Year 2019 Enforcement and Removal Operations Report*.

11 Roberto G. Gonzales, Carola Suárez-Orozco, and Maria Cecilia Dedios-Sanguinetti, "No Place to Belong: Contextualizing Concepts of Mental Health among Undocumented Immigrant Youth in the United States," *American Behavioral Scientist* 57, no. 8 (2013): 1174–99.

12 Laura Wray-Lake et al., "Being a Latinx Adolescent under a Trump Presidency: Analysis of Latinx Youth's Reactions to Immigration Politics," *Children and Youth Services Review* 87 (April 2018): 192–204.

13 Vikram Patel, Alan J. Flisher, Sarah Hetrick, and Patrick McGorry, "Mental Health of Young People: A Global Public-Health Challenge," *The Lancet* 369, no. 9569 (2007): 1302–13.

14 Patel, Flisher, Hetrick, and McGorry, "Mental Health of Young People."

15 Maria Sacchetti, "ICE Chief Tells Lawmakers Agency Needs Much More Money for Immigration Arrests," *Washington Post*, June 13, 2017.

16 For a review of policies implemented during the first three and a half years of the Trump administration, see Sarah Pierce and Jessica Bolter, *Dismantling and Reconstructing the U.S. Immigration System: A Catalog of Changes under the Trump Presidency* (Washington, DC: MPI, 2020).

them is itself causing stress, threatening the health of immigrant families, and deterring some from seeking health care and other services.¹⁷

Recent immigration policy changes and the accompanying rhetoric have been reported widely in the media and received significant public attention. A review of articles in major U.S. newspapers that were recirculated on social media found that the large increase in coverage of immigration-related issues since the 2016 election was associated with an increase in derogatory and dehumanizing language about immigrants—sometimes by government officials, sometimes by commentators, and sometimes by members of the public.¹⁸ The same study also found that terms such as “illegal,” “invasion,” and “criminal alien” have been used more frequently, and that the research, opinions, and policy proposals of organizations favoring restrictions on immigration have been cited more often and more authoritatively than before the election.

One result is deepening concern about immigration policy, rhetoric, and discrimination within the Latino population. In 2018, 54 percent of Latinos nationwide reported life had become more difficult in recent years, while 49 percent said they had serious concerns about their place in the United States. Forty-seven percent said their situation was getting worse, up from 15 percent in 2013,¹⁹ and 38 percent reported being discriminated against during the past year.²⁰ More than half (55 percent) said they worried “some” or “a lot” that they, a family member, or a close friend could be deported, up from 47 percent just before Trump’s inauguration in 2017.²¹ Fear of deportation and experiences with discrimination are well documented among immigrants with a variety of legal statuses. For example, such fears were prevalent among U.S. citizens, legal permanent residents (LPRs), and Temporary Protected Status (TPS) holders in a recent focus group of Central American parents living in the Washington, DC, area.²²

The research consistently documents that fear of enforcement, experiences with discrimination, and anxiety about their place in the country are rising among Latinos nationwide, even among U.S. citizens and legal residents. These deepening concerns may be substantially affecting the mental health of Latinos, foreign and U.S. born alike.

B. Associations between Immigration Enforcement and Mental Health

A growing body of research is shedding light on how immigration enforcement can affect mental health, especially among children and youth. A study of children with parents detained in ICE worksite operations

17 Breanne L. Grace, Rajeev Bais, and Benjamin J. Roth, “The Violence of Uncertainty — Undermining Immigrant and Refugee Health,” *New England Journal of Medicine* 379, no. 10 (2018), 904–5.

18 Emily B. Ndulue, *The Language of Immigration Reporting: Normalizing vs. Watchdogging in a Nativist Age* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Center for Civic Media and Define America, 2019).

19 Mark Hugo Lopez, Ana Gonzalez-Barrera, and Jens Manuel Krogstad, *More Latinos Have Serious Concerns about their Place in America under Trump: 1. Latinos Have Become More Pessimistic about their Place in America* (Washington, DC: Pew Research Center, 2018).

20 Mark Hugo Lopez, Ana Gonzalez-Barrera, and Jens Manuel Krogstad, *More Latinos Have Serious Concerns about their Place in America under Trump: 2. Latinos and Discrimination* (Washington, DC: Pew Research Center, 2018).

21 Mark Hugo Lopez, Ana Gonzalez-Barrera, and Jens Manuel Krogstad, *More Latinos Have Serious Concerns about Their Place in America under Trump: 4. Views of Immigration Policy* (Washington, DC: Pew Research Center, 2018).

22 Kathleen Roche et al., “Worry, Behavior Change, and Daily Adversity: How US Latino/a Parents Experience Contemporary Immigration Actions and News,” *Journal of Family Issues* (published online January 6, 2020).

conducted between 2005 and 2008 found elevated levels of behavioral problems and widespread economic insecurity.²³ Similarly, in a sample of Mexican immigrant households, fear of parental deportation was found to generate anxiety and uncertainty about the future, with children who had a parent detained or deported showing more severe emotional problems.²⁴ More specific mental-health problems such as post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and depression have been identified among U.S.-born Latino children following the detention and deportation of a parent.²⁵

Research has found that youth who are not themselves likely to be the target of immigration enforcement may still experience mental-health symptoms as a result of enforcement fears. In a 2016 study, children in mixed-status families where at least one parent was an unauthorized immigrant exhibited higher levels of anxiety compared with children of legal-immigrant or U.S.-citizen parents.²⁶ Similarly, a 2015 study of U.S.-born children with unauthorized immigrant parents from Mexico found elevated levels of anxiety and depression when compared with other children.²⁷

Research has found that youth who are not themselves likely to be the target of immigration enforcement may still experience mental-health symptoms as a result of enforcement fears.

Adolescents who are themselves unauthorized immigrants may face unique challenges. High stress levels have been reported among immigrant youth who become aware of their unauthorized status during high school. And many unauthorized immigrant youth face difficulties during the transition to adulthood due to their lack of work authorization, limited access to reduced tuition and scholarships, inability to obtain a driver's license in some states, and limited options for mental-health counseling.²⁸

Studies undertaken since the Trump administration began suggest that immigration policies, rhetoric, and discrimination are having profound effects on the mental health of immigrant and Latino students. In a 2017 survey of more than 730 schools across the country, 90 percent of administrators reported emotional and behavioral problems among immigrant students; two-thirds reported that students not at risk of deportation expressed concern about their peers who faced these risks.²⁹ Focus groups with parents and interviews with pediatricians have also shown that the current immigration enforcement climate

23 Ajay Chaudry et al., *Facing Our Future: Children in the Aftermath of Immigration Enforcement* (Washington, DC: Urban Institute, 2010).

24 Joanna Dreby, "The Burden of Deportation on Children in Mexican Immigrant Families," *Journal of Marriage and Family* 74, no. 4 (2012): 829–45.

25 Lisseth Rojas-Flores, Mari L. Clements, J. Hwang Koo, and Judy London, "Trauma and Psychological Distress in Latino Citizen Children Following Parental Detention and Deportation," *Psychological Trauma: Theory, Research, Practice, and Policy* 9, no. 3 (2017): 352–61.

26 Kalina M. Brabeck and Erin Sibley, "Immigrant Parent Legal Status, Parent-Child Relationships, and Child Social Emotional Wellbeing: A Middle Childhood Perspective," *Journal of Child and Family Studies* 25, no. 4 (2016): 1155–67; Gonzales, Suárez-Orozco, and Dedios-Sanguinetti, "No Place to Belong."

27 Luis H. Zayas, Sergio Aguilar-Gaxiola, Hyunwoo Yoon, and Guillermina Natera Rey, "The Distress of Citizen-Children with Detained and Deported Parents," *Journal of Child and Family Studies* 24, no. 11 (2015): 3213–23.

28 Roberto G. Gonzales, "Learning to Be Illegal: Undocumented Youth and Shifting Legal Contexts in the Transition to Adulthood," *American Sociological Review* 76, no. 4 (2011): 602–19; Roberto G. Gonzales, *Lives in Limbo: Undocumented and Coming of Age in America* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2016).

29 Patricia Gándara and Jongyeon Ee, *U.S. Immigration Enforcement Policy and Its Impact on Teaching and Learning in the Nation's Schools* (working paper, University of California Los Angeles, The Civil Rights Project, Los Angeles, February 28, 2018).

is generating high levels of fear and uncertainty in unauthorized immigrant families. Combined with increasing experiences of discrimination and bullying, this climate is negatively affecting the health and well-being of some children in these families.³⁰ More than half of a 2018 sample of Latino adolescents voiced concerns about racism linked to changes in immigration policies and rhetoric since the 2016 election. Half the sample in this study also expressed fear and anxiety about policy and rhetorical changes and reported avoiding public spaces or making other changes to their routines.³¹ A 2019 study of seventh graders found that those who had witnessed a family member's deportation had higher risks of depression, as did students who thought or knew that both of their parents were unauthorized immigrants.³²

C. *Other Mental-Health Stressors*

Aside from fears linked to recent immigration policy changes, many young Latino immigrants face other critical mental-health challenges.³³ They may have been exposed to violence and other forms of trauma or experienced economic hardship and discrimination.³⁴ For example, traumatic experiences before or while migrating to the United States have been documented among Central American youth who arrived in the country as unaccompanied children.³⁵ Foreign-born Latino youth are also exposed to the stresses associated with navigating between U.S. culture and the values and experiences of their home culture.³⁶

Latino youth experience other stressors including economic hardship. In 2017, one in four Latino children nationwide lived in poverty,³⁷ and nearly one in three U.S. children living in poverty had at least one immigrant parent.³⁸ Decades of research have demonstrated the link between poverty and the mental, emotional, and behavioral health of children and youth.³⁹

Further, Latino students may face discrimination from peers, school staff, and other adults. Discrimination and marginalization, along with related increases in anxiety, have been documented among the U.S.-born

30 Samantha Artiga and Petri Ubri, "Living in an Immigrant Family in America: How Fear and Toxic Stress are Affecting Daily Life, Well-Being, & Health" (issue brief, Kaiser Family Foundation, Menlo Park, CA, December 13, 2017).

31 Wray-Lake et al., "Being a Latinx Adolescent under a Trump Presidency"

32 Zachary Giano et al., "Immigration-Related Arrest, Parental Documentation Status, and Depressive Symptoms among Early Adolescent Latinos," *Cultural Diversity and Ethnic Minority Psychology* (August 2019).

33 The Latino youth in immigrant families involved in the research project included both youth who are themselves immigrants and those born in the United States to immigrant parents.

34 Selcuk R. Sirin et al., "Understanding the Role of Social Support in Trajectories of Mental Health Symptoms for Immigrant Adolescents," *Journal of Applied Developmental Psychology* 32, no. 5 (2013): 199–207.

35 Jodi Berger Cardoso et al., "Challenges to Integration for Unaccompanied Children in the Post-Release U.S. Context: A Call for Research," *Journal of Ethnic and Minority Studies* 45, no. 2 (2018): 1–20; Andres J. Pumariega and Eugenio Roth, "Leaving No Children or Families Outside: The Challenges of Immigration," *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry* 80, no. 4 (2010): 505–15.

36 Jeremy T. Goldbach, Jodi Berger Cardoso, Richard Cervantes, and Lei Duan, "The Relation between Stress and Alcohol Use among Hispanic Adolescents," *Psychology of Addictive Behaviors* 29, no. 4 (2015): 960–68; Richard Cervantes, Jodi Berger Cardoso, and Jeremy T. Goldbach, "Examining Differences in Culturally Based Stress among Clinical and Nonclinical Hispanic Adolescents," *Cultural Diversity and Ethnic Minority Psychology* 21, no. 3 (2015): 458–67.

37 In 2017, 25 percent of Hispanic children lived below the federal poverty threshold. See Child Trends Databank, "Children in Poverty," updated 2019.

38 In 2017, 32 percent of children in families with incomes below twice the federal poverty threshold had at least one immigrant parent (8.8 out of 27.4 million children). See Jie Zong, Jeanne Batalova, and Micayla Burrows, "Frequently Requested Statistics on Immigrants and Immigration in the United States," *Migration Information Source*, March 14, 2019.

39 Hirokazu Yoshikawa, J. Lawrence Aber, and William R. Beardslee, "The Effects of Poverty on the Mental, Emotional, and Behavioral Health of Children and Youth: Implications for Prevention," *American Psychologist* 67, no. 4 (2012): 272–84.

children of Latino unauthorized immigrant parents.⁴⁰ And as immigration policies have become more restrictive, Latinos have reported experiencing more discrimination, with consequences for their health and well-being.⁴¹ Discrimination, in turn, can enhance the risk of depression, PTSD, and self-harm, while also leading to risks for reduced academic performance.⁴² These symptoms, when untreated, can lead to suicide attempts, and Latino youth have higher rates of suicidal ideation and attempts than their non-Latino counterparts.⁴³ Studies have also shown a close association between depressive symptoms in Latino high school students and discrimination from teachers and students.⁴⁴ However, there is limited research documenting how immigration enforcement and discrimination, when combined, are associated with the mental health of Latino youth.

As immigration policies have become more restrictive, Latinos have reported experiencing more discrimination.

This broad range of mental-health challenges and adverse experiences can have a significant impact on students' school engagement and educational outcomes. For example, research based on a 2010–11 national survey documented strong correlations among students' exposure to adverse experiences, mental health, and academic achievement.⁴⁵ A randomized controlled trial of anxiety treatments highlighted seven specific types of academic difficulties that were prevalent among students with anxiety disorders.⁴⁶ In another nationwide survey, depression, anxiety, and alcohol or drug use were associated with lower odds of graduating from high school and going to college.⁴⁷ Mental-health challenges can put young people at an increased risk of academic failure and dropping out, some even before they reach high school.⁴⁸ Given the strong linkages between mental health and school achievement, the identification of stress, anxiety, and other mental-health problems during adolescence can help families, educators, and other community members see that children receive the support they need to prevent the onset of mental-health disorders, as well as the long-term economic disadvantages related to low educational attainment.

40 Jodi Berger Cardoso et al., "General and Ethnic-Biased Bullying among Latino Students: Exploring Risks of Depression, Suicidal Ideation and Substance Use," *Journal of Immigrant and Minority Health* 20, no. 4 (2018): 816–22.

41 Joanna Almeida et al., "The Association Between Anti-Immigrant Policies and Perceived Discrimination among Latinos in the US: A Multilevel Analysis," *SSM Population Health* 2 (2016): 897–903.

42 Kalina M. Brabeck, Erin Sibley, and M. Bryton Lykes, "Authorized and Unauthorized Immigrant Parents: The Impact of Legal Vulnerability on Family Contexts," *Hispanic Journal of Behavioral Sciences* 38, no. 1 (2016): 3–30.

43 Carolyn Garcia et al., "Family and Racial Factors Associated with Suicide and Emotional Distress among Latino Students," *Journal of School Health* 78, no. 9 (2008): 487–95; Amelie G. Raierz, Kipling J. Gallion, Rosalie Aguilar, and Erin Surette Dembeck, *Mental Health and Latino Kids: A Research Review* (Princeton, NJ: Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, 2017).

44 William D. Lopez, Alana LeBrón, Louis F. Graham, and Andrew Grogan-Kaylor, "Discrimination and Depressive Symptoms among Latina/o Adolescents of Immigrant Parents," *International Quarterly of Community Health Education* 36, no. 2 (2016): 131–40.

45 Michelle V. Porche, Darcé M. Costello, and Myra Rosen-Reynoso, "Adverse Family Experiences, Child Mental Health, and Educational Outcomes for a National Sample of Students," *School Mental Health* 8 (March 2016): 44–60.

46 In this study, parents reported that adolescents with severe anxiety had more difficulty than other students completing assignments, concentrating on work, doing homework, getting good grades, giving oral reports, taking exams, and writing in class. See Jennifer E. Nail et al., "Academic Impairment and Impact of Treatments among Youth with Anxiety Disorders," *Child & Youth Care Forum* 44, no. 3 (2015): 327–42.

47 Ramin Mojtabai et al., "Long-Term Effects of Mental Disorders on Educational Attainment in the National Comorbidity Survey Ten-Year Follow-Up," *Social Psychiatry & Psychiatric Epidemiology* 50, no. 10 (2015): 1577–91.

48 Cintia V. Quiroga, Michel Janosz, Sherri Bisset, and Alexandre J.S. Morin, "Early Adolescent Depression Symptoms and School Dropout: Mediating Processes Involving Self-Reported Academic Competence and Achievement," *Journal of Educational Psychology* 105, no. 2 (2013): 552–60.

D. Study Methodology

This report examines the relationship between fears of immigration enforcement and other stressors on the one hand and the mental health and school engagement of Latino students on the other. It draws its findings from a study conducted by researchers from the Migration Policy Institute (MPI), University of Houston (UH), and Rhode Island College (RIC) during the 2018–19 school year. This study had two components: (1) self-reported assessments completed by 306 Latino students in 11 high schools; and (2) semistructured interviews with 38 education professionals in eight of these schools and with 27 community experts including advocates, community organizers, mental-health and other service providers, and local elected officials. (For more details on the study methods, see the appendices.)

The students who took the assessments ranged in age from 14 to 25 years old, with 71 percent of the sample under age 18. Among the 29 percent of participating students who were age 18 or older, most were immigrants who recently arrived in the United States and attended schools with flexible schedules and curricula. Girls comprised 58 percent of the sample. Fifty-three percent of the Latino students were foreign born, and 80 percent had parents born in Mexico, El Salvador, Guatemala, or Honduras. To encourage students to feel comfortable answering the survey truthfully, and to protect their safety and confidentiality, they were not asked about their immigration status or that of their family members.⁴⁹ The assessments were conducted in English and Spanish, and 41 percent of the participating students reported not speaking English well.

The education and community expert interviews focused on how schools and nearby immigrant communities have been affected by increases in enforcement and other recent immigration policy changes, and how students have reacted to these changes. The interviews also explored how schools and community organizations that partner with schools have responded to Latino students' mental-health and school engagement needs.

The two sites chosen for the study—Harris County, Texas, and four cities in Rhode Island—offer contrasting immigration enforcement environments.

E. Study Sites

The two sites chosen for the study—Harris County, Texas, and four cities in Rhode Island—offer contrasting immigration enforcement environments. Harris County, which includes Houston and surrounding areas, had more ICE arrests than any other U.S. county in 2017 and 2018.⁵⁰ ICE also has a major office and several large detention facilities in Harris County. Since 2017, Texas legislation has required local authorities to cooperate

⁴⁹ This decision was made in agreement with school districts and the University of Houston's Institutional Review Board. For similar reasons, geographic locations are not described beyond "Harris County" and "Rhode Island."

⁵⁰ Harris County has the second largest unauthorized immigrant population of any county in the country after Los Angeles County, but Los Angeles County had far fewer arrests, mostly due to state legislation limiting cooperation between local law enforcement agencies and ICE. See Transactional Resource Clearinghouse (TRAC), "Immigration and Customs Enforcement Arrests: ICE Data through May 2018," accessed September 25, 2019.

with ICE in enforcement activities.⁵¹ In contrast, Rhode Island’s governor issued an executive order in 2014 that has limited law enforcement cooperation with ICE.⁵² Rhode Island has had fewer ICE arrests than almost any other state, numbering just a few hundred in 2017 and 2018.⁵³ Greater exposure to ICE arrests in the community should, theoretically, mean greater fear of enforcement in Harris County than in Rhode Island.

The schools chosen for the study were similar in important ways. In both sites, student assessments and educator interviews were conducted at traditional public high schools, newcomer programs, and charter schools.⁵⁴ All but one of the schools had majority low-income, Latino student populations. For example, in the Harris County public high schools, three-quarters or more of the students were Latino and more than 80 percent were low income.⁵⁵ In Rhode Island, Latinos made up more than 55 percent of students in two schools, and across all the study schools, more than three-quarters of students were low income.⁵⁶ More broadly, Latino children and youth are a growing population in both states. Between 2000 and 2018, the Latino share of children ages 17 and under in Texas rose from 40 percent to 50 percent, while in Rhode Island it rose from 14 percent to 26 percent, tracking the national pattern.⁵⁷

F. Key Research Questions

This report is organized around the study’s central research questions. The sections that follow describe findings related to:

- ▶ **Fear of immigration enforcement and other stressors.** How much do Latino youth fear that they, their family members, or their friends will be deported? How many have experienced the deportation of someone they know? How much exposure do they report to additional stressors such as discrimination, economic hardship, and traumatic experiences?
- ▶ **Mental health.** What is the prevalence of symptoms of mental-health conditions—anxiety, depression, and PTSD—as well as substance abuse among Latino youth?

51 Senate Bill 4 (SB 4), enacted in May 2017, makes it a misdemeanor crime for state or local officials to fail to respond to ICE inquiries about immigrants in their custody, or to fail to hold them for an additional two days on immigration charges if requested. The bill also authorizes state and local police officers to question the immigration status of anyone they arrest. The bills does not, however, apply to school districts or school police officers. See State of Texas, *An Act Relating to the Enforcement by Campus Police Departments and Certain Local Governmental Entities of State and Federal Laws Governing Immigration and to Related Duties and Liability of Certain Persons in the Criminal Justice System; Providing a Civil Penalty; Creating a Criminal Offense*, Senate Bill 4, 85th regular session, enacted May 25, 2017.

52 In 2014, then Governor Lincoln Chafee issued an executive order prohibiting the Rhode Island Department of Corrections from holding immigrants for an additional two days on immigration charges unless such requests are accompanied by a judicial warrant. Rhode Island does not have local jails; all inmates are held at state facilities. See Rhode Island Office of the Governor, “Governor Chafee Requires Executive Agencies in Rhode Island to Adopt Immigration Detainer Policy” (press release, August 14, 2014).

53 From October 2017 through May 2018, there were 187 ICE arrests in Rhode Island, the sixth fewest of any state after Alaska, Vermont, Montana, Maine, and North Dakota. See TRAC, “Immigration and Customs Enforcement Arrests.”

54 More details about the characteristics of the study schools are not provided in order to protect the confidentiality of respondents and comply with Institutional Review Board (IRB) requirements.

55 Texas Education Agency, “2017–18 Texas Academic Performance Report,” accessed September 25, 2019.

56 Rhode Island Department of Education, “Report Card,” accessed September 25, 2019.

57 MPI analysis of data from the 2000 U.S. Census of Population and Housing and the 2018 ACS.

- ▶ **Youth strengths.** What strengths do Latino students display in terms of personal resilience (e.g., work ethic and ability to overcome challenges), spirituality, support from family members, and school engagement?
- ▶ **Relationships among immigration enforcement, mental health, resilience, and school engagement.** How are students' mental health and personal strengths related to their fear of immigration enforcement and exposure to it? How are they related to other stressors such as discrimination, traumatic experiences, and economic hardship? Which stressors appear to have the strongest relationships with mental health and school engagement outcomes?
- ▶ **School and community responses.** How are schools with large Latino populations and their surrounding communities responding to the challenges presented by immigration enforcement and related student fears? What are some of the policy and structural challenges schools face in supporting the socioemotional health of Latino students?

2 Fear of and Exposure to Immigration Enforcement

The Latino youth in this study reported high levels of fear of and exposure to immigration enforcement, particularly in Harris County, where ICE enforcement activity was higher, and particularly among foreign-born students, some of whom could be unauthorized and therefore at risk for deportation themselves.⁵⁸ Most expressed worries that a family member or friend could be detained or deported, and most also knew someone who had been deported. Nearly one-third were so worried about deportation that they had changed their daily routines, including by avoiding driving a car or going to afterschool activities or religious services. The group of students with the more severe enforcement fears—those that affected their routine behaviors—were at the greatest risk of experiencing mental-health problems.

A. *Worries about Deportation and Knowing Someone Who Had Been Deported*

Deportation exposure and concerns were common across the students surveyed. Fifty-nine percent of the Latino students in the sample reported that they almost always or always worried that a family member or friend might be detained or deported (see Figure 1).⁵⁹ A similar share—56 percent—said they knew someone who had been deported from the United States (see Figure 2). For those with a family member who had been deported, it was less often a parent than another relative (see Figure 3).

Latino students in Harris County were significantly more likely than those in Rhode Island to fear that someone they know would be deported and to know someone who had been deported.⁶⁰ In both sites,

58 Among foreign-born participants in this study, 74 percent were born in Mexico, El Salvador, Guatemala, or Honduras. Nationwide, 91 percent of immigrants removed by ICE in FY 2019 were born in one of these four countries. See ICE, *U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement Fiscal Year 2019 Enforcement and Removal Operations Report*.

59 This was slightly higher than that share reported in a 2018 survey of the Latino nationwide population (55 percent). See Lopez, Gonzalez-Barrera, and Krogstad, *More Latinos Have Serious Concerns about Their Place in America under Trump*.

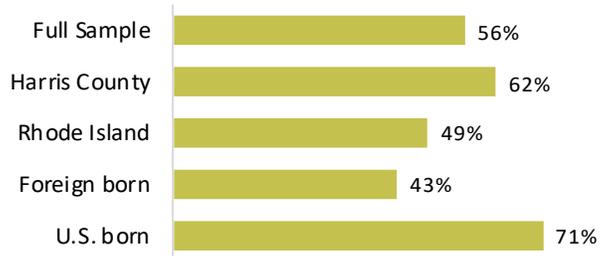
60 Throughout this report, associations between variables are significant if they fall within a 95 percent confidence interval ($p < 0.05$), meaning there is only a 5 percent probability that the associations occurred by chance alone.

FIGURE 1
Share of Latino Students Who Almost Always or Always Worried about Detention or Deportation of a Family Member or Friend, by Study Site and Nativity, 2018–19



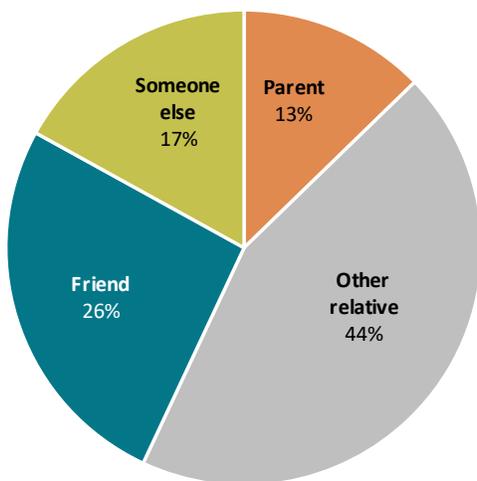
Notes: Differences in worries about detention or deportation are significant for students by site and by nativity, at the $p < 0.05$ level. The response rate for this question was 93 percent (285 out of 306). All but one student responded to the question on nativity. Source: Migration Policy Institute (MPI), University of Houston (UH), and Rhode Island College (RIC) survey of Latino high school students in Harris County, TX, and Rhode Island during the 2018–19 school year.

FIGURE 2
Share of Latino Students Who Knew Someone Who Had Been Deported, by Study Site and Nativity, 2018–19



Notes: Differences in knowing someone who had been deported from the United States are significant for students by site and by nativity, at the $p < 0.05$ level. The response rate for this question was 98 percent (300 out of 306). All but one student responded to the question on nativity. Source: MPI, UH, and RIC survey of Latino high school students in Harris County, TX, and Rhode Island, 2018–19 school year.

FIGURE 3
Deportees’ Relationship to Latino Students Who Knew Someone Who Had Been Deported, 2018–19



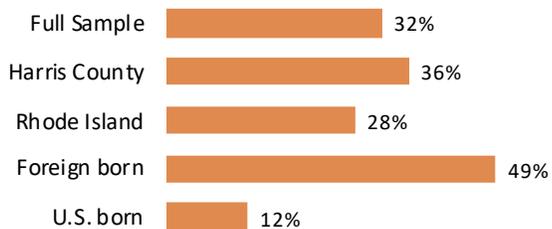
Notes: Fifty-six percent of students who responded to the question about knowing someone who had been deported from the United States said they did (167 out of 300); among these students, 99 percent (165) reported their relationship to the deported person. In cases where students reported knowing more than one deported person, a parent was prioritized over another relative, a relative over a friend, and a friend over someone else. Source: MPI, UH, and RIC survey of Latino high school students in Harris County, TX, and Rhode Island, 2018–19 school year.

immigrants were more likely than their native-born peers to worry that a friend or a family member would be deported, but they were less likely to know a deportee; many foreign-born students were recent arrivals, and their more limited time spent in the United States lowered their odds of knowing someone who had been deported.⁶¹ Female students were slightly more likely than male students to say that they were worried about detention or deportation of someone close to them and to know someone who was deported, but these differences were not statistically significant (not shown in figures).

About one-third of students in the sample said they almost always or always worried about their own detention or deportation, and almost all of these students were themselves immigrants (see Figure 4). Nonetheless, 12 percent of students who were born in the United States, and who were therefore U.S. citizens, also reported this worry, even though their U.S. citizenship means that they cannot be legally deported.

⁶¹ U.S.-born students in the sample were also more likely to have parents from Mexico, El Salvador, Guatemala, or Honduras than immigrant students (87 percent versus 74 percent).

FIGURE 4
Share of Latino Students Who Almost Always or Always Worried about Their Own Detention or Deportation, by Study Site and Nativity, 2018–19



Notes: Differences in worries about being deported are significant for students by nativity at the $p < 0.05$ level, but not by study site. The response rate for this question was 95 percent (291 out of 306). All but one student responded to the question on nativity.

Source: MPI, UH, and RIC survey of Latino high school students in Harris County, TX, and Rhode Island, 2018–19 school year.

The differences in levels of concern about immigration enforcement between students in Harris County, Texas, and those in Rhode Island were consistent with differing perceptions about the intensity of ICE activity that emerged from semistructured interviews. Educators and community respondents described much higher levels of immigration enforcement in Harris County compared to Rhode Island. Among the cases they described were the 2017 ICE arrest of an entire family of three adults and five children at their home due to a 17-year-old boy's alleged gang activity. After the arrest, the family separated, with the adults leaving voluntarily for Guatemala, the 17-year-old being deported, and the other children staying in the United States as unaccompanied minors in the custody of the U.S. Office of Refugee Resettlement. In

another case, a student's father was picked up while driving and deported to Honduras within a few days; he was very sick and later died because he could not get treatment for his illness in Honduras.

There were also reports of ICE arrests in Rhode Island, but respondents there consistently emphasized that they were rare due to the governor's executive order barring state and local police cooperation with ICE. A community respondent there described sightings of ICE officers in immigrant communities early in the Trump administration, particularly at popular restaurants, but said that these sightings had become less frequent by the time of the study team's visit in Spring 2019. Two educators reported that their schools had not heard anything about local ICE enforcement action within the past year, and a community respondent expressed the view that ICE did not have the staff in Rhode Island to knock on people's doors or take custody of people with minor traffic violations.

Respondents in both sites reported cases in which the deportation of a parent or guardian caused economic hardship and created new responsibilities for Latino youth. For example, in Rhode Island the guardian of two boys ages 16 and 18—both unaccompanied child migrants—was arrested and deported, leaving the older boy in charge. He dropped out of school to support the 16-year-old. School staff found an attorney who obtained a court order for the 18-year-old to become his younger sibling's guardian, and the staff contacted the state child welfare department, which paid bills, provided food, and bought furniture for the boys. In Harris County, a high school senior with a full scholarship to an Ivy League college almost dropped out when his father was deported to Mexico. He wanted to work to support his family because his mother was at home taking care of a sibling with a disability. To keep him from dropping out, the school helped the family pay for rent and food. These stories mirror the findings of other studies of families affected by immigration enforcement, which have similarly shown economic hardship and increased youth responsibilities when a parent or guardian is arrested.⁶²

62 See for example, Chaudry et al., *Facing Our Future*.

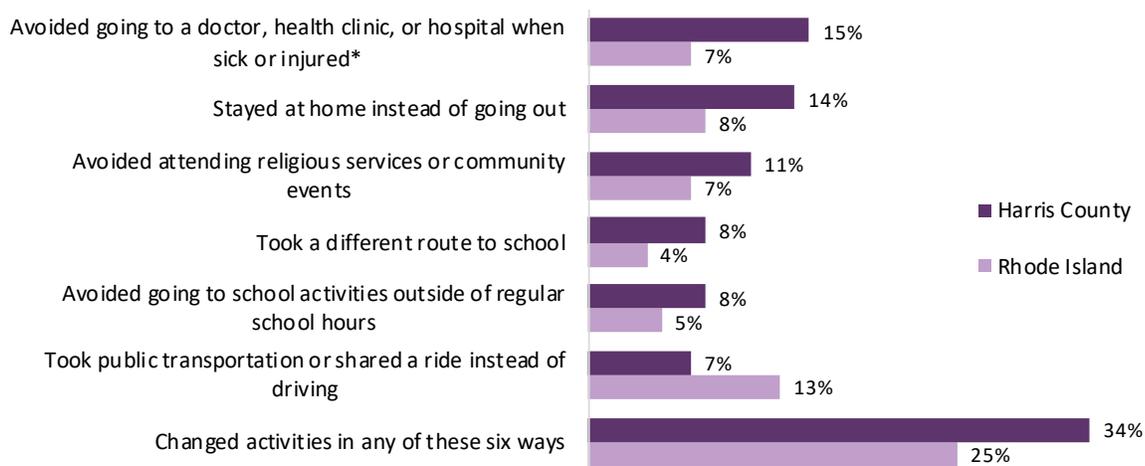
Fear of arrest and deportation of a family member can also cause Latino students to change their long-term plans. A social worker in one school helped students plan for possible parental deportation after they left for college by, for instance, finding a place to stay if they could not go home. An interviewee in Harris County also described a case in which a young woman’s parents stopped her from going off to college because she was the driver in the family, and they were afraid of being stopped by the police if they drove.⁶³

B. Behavior Changes Due to Fear of Deportation

Deportation fears led some Latino students in this study to change the way they went about their daily lives. Overall, 30 percent of students in the sample reported almost always or always changing their routines in at least one of six ways: staying home, taking a different route to school, avoiding driving, or refraining from going to afterschool programs, religious services, or health-care providers.

Students in Harris County were more likely than those in Rhode Island to report avoiding going to a doctor, health clinic, or hospital when sick or injured (see Figure 5), but otherwise there were no significant differences in the extent of behavior changes by site. Immigrant students were generally more likely than the U.S. born to change their behavior, especially driving and going to afterschool activities (see Figure 6). Still, 22 percent of U.S.-born Latino students reported one or more of these behavior changes due to immigration enforcement concerns.

FIGURE 5
Share of Latino Students Who Almost Always or Always Changed Their Behavior Due to Fear of Deportation, by Study Site, 2018–19



* Difference between students across the study sites was significant at the $p < 0.05$ level.

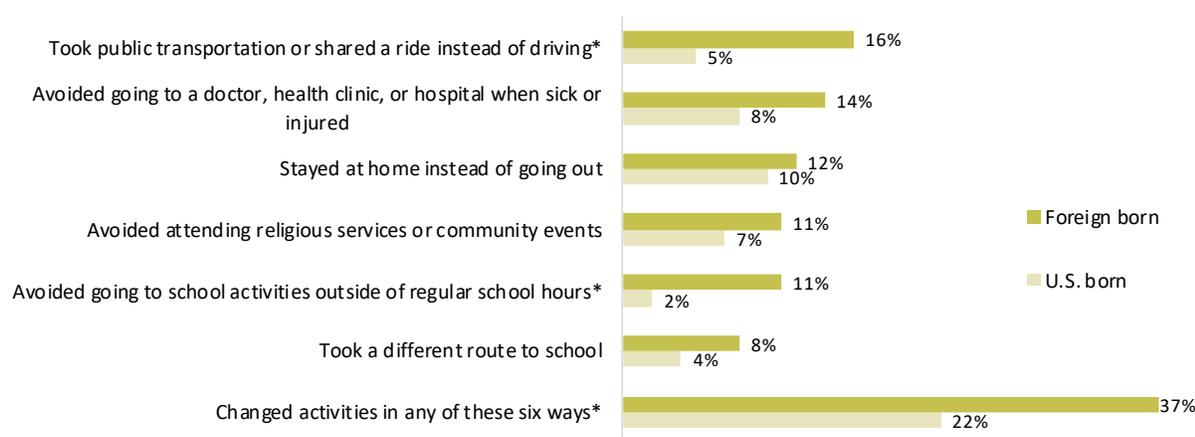
Notes: The response rate for these six questions ranged from 87 to 94 percent. Eighty-three percent (255 out of 306) answered all six questions.

Source: MPI, UH, and RIC survey of Latino high school students in Harris County, TX, and Rhode Island, 2018–19 school year.

63 It is likely that the young woman’s parents were unauthorized immigrants and therefore concerned about deportation, but this could not be determined because students who participated in the study were not asked about their or their family members’ immigration status.

FIGURE 6

Share of Latino Students Who Almost Always or Always Changed Their Behavior Due to Fear of Deportation, by Nativity, 2018–19



* Difference between foreign-born and U.S.-born students was significant at the $p < 0.05$ level.

Notes: The response rate for these seven questions ranged from 87 to 94 percent. Eighty-three percent (255 out of 306) answered all six questions. All but one student responded to the question on nativity.

Source: MPI, UH, and RIC survey of Latino high school students in Harris County, TX, and Rhode Island, 2018–19 school year.

C. Fear of Receiving Public Benefits and Interacting with Government Agencies

Some students also reported avoiding contact with government agencies due to fears about deportation. Among the recent policy changes that may contribute to such fears is the federal government's revised public-charge rule, which was published in October 2019 and, after legal challenges, upheld by the Supreme Court in January 2020.⁶⁴ This rule makes it more difficult for immigrants to become permanent residents (in other words, to get green cards) if they have used certain public benefits in the past or are deemed likely to use them in the future.⁶⁵ The complexity of the rule and uncertainty about when and how it would be implemented and whether other, related policies might follow may be engendering further fear of government agencies among immigrant communities.⁶⁶

Among the recent policy changes that may contribute to such fears is the federal government's revised public-charge rule.

Almost one-quarter of the Latino students in the sample worried that they or someone close to them could be detained or deported for enrolling in a government program such as the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, also known as food stamps (see Figure 7). Other studies have yielded similar results. In

64 Susannah Luthi, "Supreme Court Allows Trump to Enforce 'Public Charge' Immigration Rule," Politico, January 27, 2020.

65 USCIS, "Final Rule on Public Charge Ground of Inadmissibility," updated February 24 2020; Capps, Greenberg, Fix, and Zong, *Gauging the Impact of DHS' Proposed Public-Charge Rule on U.S. Immigration*.

66 There has been discussion of a potential future rule that might allow for the deportation of some permanent residents who use public benefits; such a rule has not been officially released for public comment. See U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS), "USCIS Announces Public Charge Rule Implementation Following Supreme Court Stay of Nationwide Injunctions" (press release, January 30, 2020).

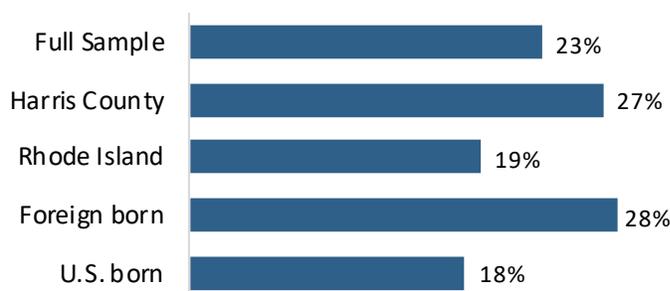
a December 2018 national survey of low-income immigrants, 21 percent reported withdrawing from a benefit program or not applying for one due to fear of being denied a green card under the public-charge rule.⁶⁷ While these questions are worded differently, they both demonstrate concerns about receiving benefits for fear of potential immigration consequences. In the present study's sample, worries about deportation following enrollment in a government program tracked the pattern for worries about deportation more generally: they were higher in Harris County than in Rhode Island, and higher among immigrant students than among their U.S.-born peers.

In semistructured interviews, community members described a range of programs and services that local Latino immigrant families avoided due to deportation fears. A counselor at one high school reported that several students refused to apply for scholarships because they were afraid to put their families' information on the applications. A respondent from a community-based organization held a focus group with immigrants and reported that some participants were "afraid of being put in some part of a system." He noted that they were "defensive about anything that is perceived as free," such as school lunches or community college, and that many were reluctant to sign up for programs or services that had income verification requirements.

3 Other Stressors for Latino Students

The Latino youth involved in this study faced many other stressors as well. They largely lived in low-income communities in both sites, and the Harris County communities experienced substantial gang activity and violence. Many had been separated from parents or other family members during the migration process, and some had lost loved ones. They also frequently worked long hours and/or provided care for family members. Many youth reported in the self-assessments that they received support from their families, but educators and community members noted in interviews that students often experienced conflict with their parents and that some were living separately from their parents. Discrimination based on race, ethnicity, language, or other factors was an additional stressor for many Latino youth in the study, though they reported lower levels of discrimination than similar populations in recent surveys.

FIGURE 7
Share of Latino Students Very Worried that Enrolling in a Government Program Could Put Them or Someone Close to Them at Risk of Deportation, by Study Site and Nativity, 2018–19



Notes: Differences in worries about enrolling in a government program are significant for students by site and by nativity, at the $p < 0.05$ level. The response rate for this question was 92 percent (281 out of 306). All but one student responded to the question on nativity.

Source: MPI, UH, and RIC survey of Latino high school students in Harris County, TX, and Rhode Island, 2018–19 school year.

⁶⁷ Hamutal Bernstein, Dulce Gonzalez, Michael Karpman, and Stephen Zuckerman, *One in Seven Adults in Immigrant Families Reported Avoiding Public Benefit Programs in 2018* (Washington, DC: Urban Institute, 2019).

A. Traumatic Experiences

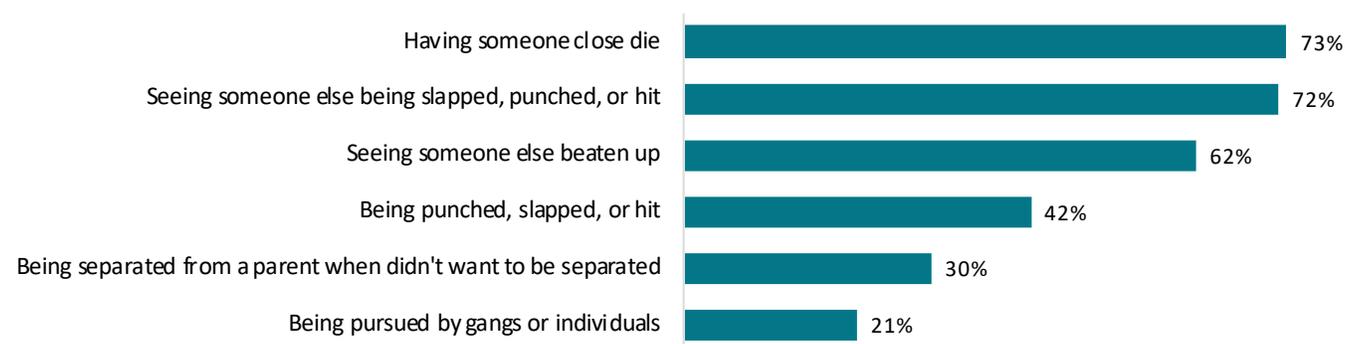
Aside from immigration enforcement, Latino students in the study experienced multiple types of trauma in their lifetimes. The average student reported experiencing 7.5 traumatic events, slightly below the 8.7 events experienced by students with PTSD symptoms in the clinical range referred for a school-based mental-health intervention trial in a Los Angeles-based study.⁶⁸

The most frequent types of trauma were grief and loss, witnessing or experiencing violence, being separated from family, and being pursued by gangs (see Figure 8). There were no significant differences in the number of traumatic events experienced by the male and female students in the group. However, students in Harris County, those born in the United States, and those with greater English skills reported more traumatic events than others (see Figure 9).

BOX 1 What Are Traumatic Experiences?

Traumatic experiences are events that are extremely upsetting, temporarily overwhelm an individual's internal strengths, and lead to lasting psychological symptoms. Examples including being the victim of violence, witnessing violence, and losing or being separated from family members and other loved ones.

FIGURE 8
Share of Latino Students Reporting Traumatic Events in their Lifetimes, 2018–19



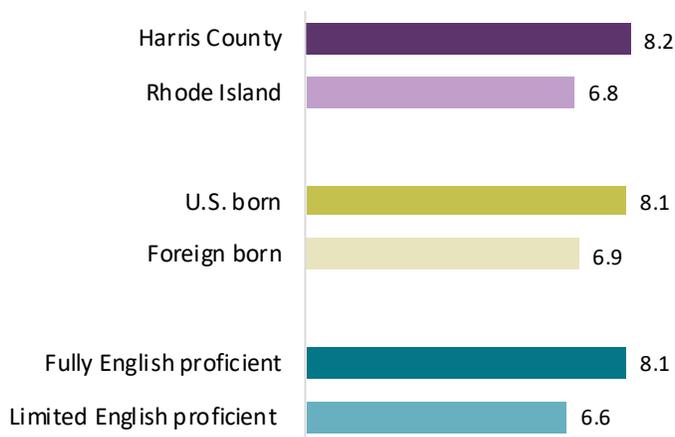
Notes: The response rate for these six questions ranged from 95 percent (291 out of 306) to more than 99 percent (305 out of 306).
Source: MPI, UH, and RIC survey of Latino high school students in Harris County, TX, and Rhode Island, 2018–19 school year.

Higher levels of trauma among U.S.-born Latino students may seem counter-intuitive, given the extensive literature on the violence experienced by many Mexican and Central American migrants in their home countries and during their journeys to the United States.⁶⁹ However, this finding is consistent with national survey data showing higher exposure to trauma and other “adverse childhood experiences” among U.S.-

68 These included any of 20 different types of trauma listed on a scale developed for mental-health interventions. See Bradley D. Stein et al., “A Mental Health Intervention for Schoolchildren Exposed to Violence: A Randomized Control Trial,” *Journal of the American Medical Association* 290, no. 5 (2003): 603–11.

69 See for example, Sean D. Cleary et al., “Immigrant Trauma and Mental Health Outcomes among Latino Youth,” *Journal of Immigrant and Minority Health* 20, no. 5 (2018): 1053–59.

FIGURE 9
Average Number of Lifetime Traumatic Events Reported by Latino Students, by Study Site, Nativity, and English Proficiency, 2018–19



Notes: All differences displayed in the figure are significant at the $p < 0.05$ level. Fully proficient students are those who reported speaking English at home or speaking another language at home and speaking English well or very well. Limited proficient students reported not speaking English or not speaking it very well. The response rate for all 20 questions in this scale was 76 percent (233 out of 306). All but one student responded to the question on nativity, and all students reported their English proficiency. Source: MPI, UH, and RIC survey of Latino high school students in Harris County, TX, and Rhode Island, 2018–19 school year.

during their journey, held by kidnappers in transit, injured while crossing the U.S.-Mexico border, and/or held by sex traffickers after arriving in the United States.

But despite the many examples of trauma experienced before and during migration, the results of the student assessments revealed greater levels of trauma exposure in the United States than outside it. This was especially the case in Harris County, where mental-health providers identified gang violence as the leading form of trauma faced by the students they serve. For example, a community health provider reported that at least one person had been killed in a certain neighborhood every month. One high school in the study had eight student funerals in five years due to gang killings, and another was in a neighborhood that had had six shootings since 2016.

born, low-income Latino children than among those born outside the country.⁷⁰ Similarly, students with stronger English skills are more likely to be U.S. born or have lived in the country for a longer period of time, and therefore are more likely to have been exposed to trauma in the United States than recently arrived foreign-born students.

Educators and community members offered additional descriptions of the traumatic experiences of local students, including trauma experienced by immigrant youth before and during their migration to the United States. A mental-health provider in Harris County reported that most students referred for treatment had witnessed or heard about the homicide of a close relative. For example, one student had witnessed the torture and murder of her cousin in El Salvador; whenever she thought of returning there, she started shaking and could not stop. Other students counseled by this provider had been separated from family members

Despite the many examples of trauma experienced before and during migration, the results of the student assessments revealed greater levels of trauma exposure in the United States than outside it.

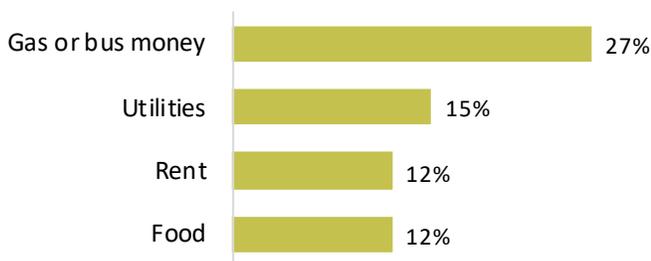
70 For example, an analysis of the 2011–12 National Survey of Children’s Health found that U.S.-born Latino children in low-income families had a significantly higher prevalence of exposure to two or more adverse childhood experiences than Latino immigrant children. The study also found that U.S.-born Latino children had higher exposure to adverse experiences than either non-Latino White or non-Latino Black children. See Hilda Loria and Margaret Caughy, “Prevalence of Adverse Childhood Experiences in Low-Income Latino Immigrant and Nonimmigrant Children,” *The Journal of Pediatrics* 192 (2018): 209–16.

Family dynamics were also described in interviews as an important factor. One teacher in a Harris County school described being separated from family as the greatest source of trauma for his students. Families' migration strategies may play a role here as, according to other studies, migrants from Mexico and Central America often travel to the United States in stages, with parents coming first followed by their children.⁷¹ When children stay in their home countries with grandparents or other relatives, they may develop strong attachments to those family members, at times stronger than those to their parents.⁷² Then, when they arrive in the United States, children may feel they do not know their parents, resent the move, and feel out of place. In addition, just like children in the wider U.S. population, both immigrant and U.S.-born Latino children can be affected by unstable family arrangements. Parents may remarry or find new partners, leading to additional stress for the child. Domestic violence may also occur in the home, or factors such as parental drug use may lead to family disintegration.

B. Economic Hardship

Economic hardship was a common source of stress for Latino students in both Harris County and Rhode Island, as all but one of the schools in the study serve low-income neighborhoods. When asked about economic hardship, between one-tenth and slightly more than one-quarter of the students reported that their families never or only sometimes had enough money to pay for necessities (see Figure 10). There were no significant

FIGURE 10
Share of Latino Students Reporting There Was Never or Only Sometimes Enough Money for Necessities, 2018–19



Notes: The response rate for these four questions ranged from 97 percent (296 out of 306) to 98 percent (299 out of 306).

Source: MPI, UH, and RIC survey of Latino high school students in Harris County, TX, and Rhode Island, 2018–19 school year.

differences in economic hardship between students living in Harris County versus Rhode Island, between the foreign and U.S. born, by gender, or by English language proficiency.

In both study sites, educators and other stakeholders described substantial economic hardship in their communities. One school in Rhode Island serves an immigrant gateway community with some of the lowest rents in the state. Many families there relied on public assistance, and some children were living in crowded housing, in shelters, or were homeless. One of the Harris County neighborhoods was described as a “food desert”⁷³ and as having limited access to health care and poor housing quality. Another neighborhood had

BOX 2 What Is Economic Hardship?

Economic hardship is the stress someone experiences when unable to meet basic needs. In this study, it was measured using questions about how often students' families had difficulty paying housing and utility bills, buying food, paying for gas, and meeting other basic needs.

71 Carola Suárez-Orozco, Hee Jin Bang, and Ha Yeon Kim, “I Felt Like My Heart Was Staying Behind: Psychological Implications of Family Separations and Reunifications for Immigrant Youth,” *Journal of Adolescent Research* 26, no. 2 (2011): 222–57; Carola Suárez-Orozco, Irina L.G. Todorova, and Josephine Louie, “Making Up for Lost Time: The Experience of Separation and Reunification among Immigrant Families,” *Family Process* 41, no. 4 (2002): 625–43.

72 Joanna Dreby, “Children and Power in Mexican Transnational Families,” *Journal of Marriage and Family* 69, no. 4 (2007): 1050–64.

73 The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) describes “food deserts” as neighborhoods, often in low-income areas, whose residents do not live near or have easy transport access to retailers that carry affordable, nutritious food. See, for example, Michele Ver Ploeg, “Access to Affordable, Nutritious Food Is Limited in ‘Food Deserts,’” USDA, March 1, 2010.

a substantial number of incarcerated parents and many families with unstable living arrangements; for example, some moved from apartment to apartment frequently to take advantage of rent specials offered for the first one or two months.

Many Latino youth living in low-income families had found jobs. One-quarter of students in this study reported working, with little variation in employment rates by gender, nativity, or study site. Ten percent of the sample agreed or strongly agreed that their job made it difficult for them to do well in school, and this rate was higher among foreign-born Latino youth than their U.S.-born peers (15 percent versus 4 percent). Immigrant students were more likely to work in part because so many (42 percent) were over age 17; these students were often their families' breadwinners.

Educators provided several examples of students who worked long enough hours to compromise their schooling. One teacher in Rhode Island expressed concern about a working student: "Last week he looked terrible. He told me he works at a job until 2:30 in the morning. He took a day off to sleep, and he looked better." Another student in Rhode Island reportedly worked from 3 p.m. to 11 p.m. or midnight every day, went straight to bed, and then came to school every morning. A third Rhode Island student, who supported himself and a younger sibling, worked 60 hours per week at a job in Boston, had to share a ride with five other workers to get there, and was at work until 3 a.m. most days.

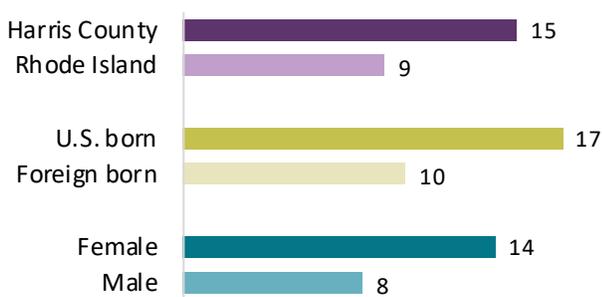
Some interviewees described cases of unauthorized immigrant students working in poor conditions. According to a social worker in Harris County, since the Trump administration began, students without legal status have been working longer hours, for lower pay, and with a higher risk of being exploited. Similarly, an educator there noted that some students held dangerous construction jobs, and that employers dumped them at hospitals—without insurance coverage—when they were injured on the job. Various reasons were

given for students' decision to take these jobs, including to support their U.S. families, send remittances to loved ones in their home countries, or pay smuggling fees for relatives to join them in the United States.

Many of the students in the study also said they had family-care obligations. Thirty-six percent reported taking care of a family member, and those who did said spent an average of 12 hours per week doing so. Students in Harris County spent more time taking care of family members than those in Rhode Island, with female and U.S.-born students reporting more time devoted to this task than male and immigrant students (see Figure 11).

Interview respondents described some key gender-based differences in students' work and

FIGURE 11
Average Hours Latino Students Spent Taking Care of Family Members, by Gender, Nativity, and Study Site, 2018–19*



* Data are for students who reported spending any time on this task. Notes: All differences displayed in the figure are significant at the $p < 0.05$ level. Across both sites, 110 students reported taking care of family members (36 percent of the total sample), and within this group, 100 percent provided information on how many hours they spent taking care of family members. All but one student responded to the question on gender, and all but one reported nativity. Source: MPI, UH, and RIC survey of Latino high school students in Harris County, TX, and Rhode Island, 2018–19 school year.

care roles. An educator said that male students—especially those who were immigrants—were under more pressure to work, and some displayed resentment over having to provide for their U.S.-based families and/or send money back home; they felt a “manly duty” to “work their butts off.” According to another educator, many of these boys reportedly thought of themselves as breadwinners, especially when their fathers were absent—a common occurrence among Latino immigrant families separated during migration.⁷⁴ Female students, on the other hand, were described in four interviews as frequently struggling to be independent due to home-country cultural norms, particularly the expectation to have children. In the United States, they were reportedly expected to become babysitters, taking care of children all day and engaging in domestic tasks such as cooking and cleaning, rather than enjoying free time with their friends. Community respondents noted that some girls had their own children or parented younger siblings or cousins.

C. *Discrimination*

As rhetoric around immigration has become more divisive and even inflammatory in some corners of public life, one might expect Latino students to report being frequent victims of discrimination. Prior research published in 2017 and 2018, after the start of the Trump administration, has documented how bullying and other forms of discrimination have negatively affected the physical and mental health of children in immigrant and Latino families.⁷⁵ Yet, the present study’s participants reported relatively low levels of discrimination in stark contrast to their high level of reports of immigration enforcement fears, trauma exposure, and economic hardship.

BOX 3 What Is Discrimination?

Discrimination is differential treatment due to a person’s real or perceived membership of a group (e.g., race, ethnicity, national origin, language, or immigration status). Students in this study were asked about their perceptions of discrimination from peers, teachers, and in the community.

Compared to youth from a variety of racial/ethnic backgrounds in other studies, this study’s participants reported less frequent encounters with discrimination such as police harassment, receiving poor service at a restaurant, or getting a lower grade than they felt they deserved. The average Latino student in the study scored 6.5 on a 15-question scale used to gauge experience with discrimination.⁷⁶ For comparison, Chinese American students in sixth to eighth grade had a score of 8.7 in a 2008 study that used the same scale.⁷⁷ The present study’s participants also scored lower on the scale’s subcomponents for education, peer, and institutional discrimination than a 2000 sample of high school students from diverse racial/ethnic backgrounds.⁷⁸ However, it should be noted that these comparison studies were conducted more than ten

74 Suárez-Orozco, Todorova, and Louie, “Making Up for Lost Time.”

75 Artiga and Ubri, “Living in an Immigrant Family in America”; Berger Cardoso et al., “General and Ethnic-Biased Bullying among Latino Students.”

76 Celia B. Fisher, Scyatta A. Wallace, and Rose E. Fenton, “Discrimination Distress during Adolescence,” *Journal of Youth and Adolescence* 29, no. 6 (2000): 679–95.

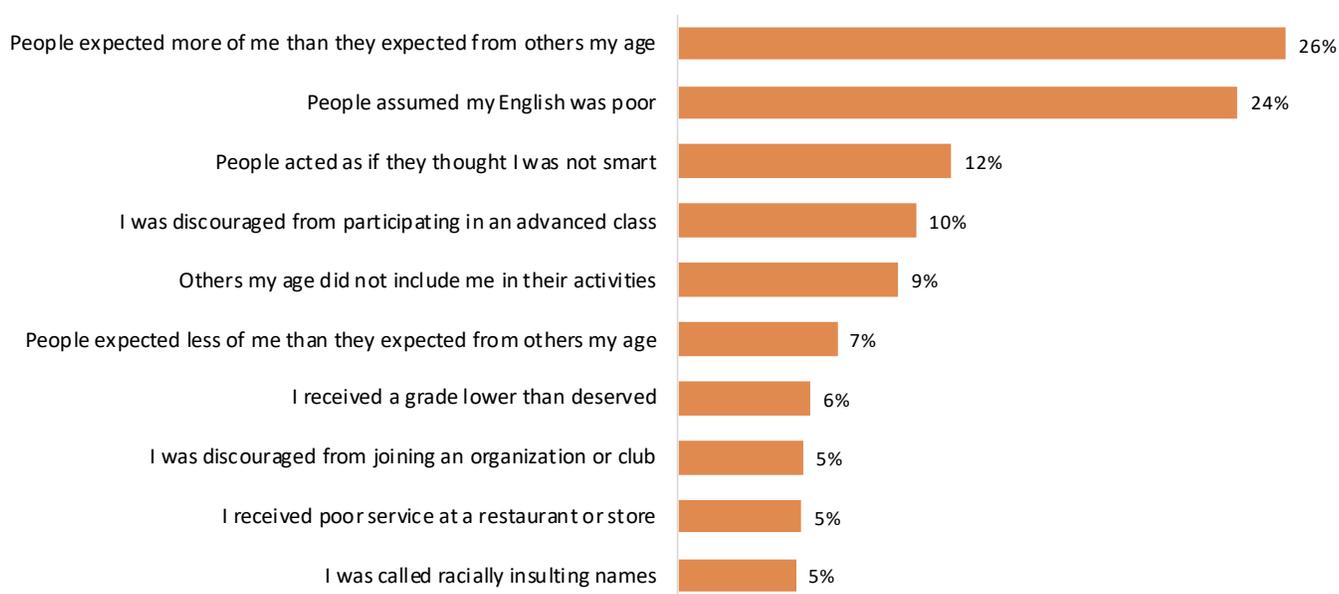
77 Jennifer M. Grossman and Belle Liang, “Discrimination Distress among Chinese American Adolescents,” *Journal of Youth and Adolescence* 37, no. 1 (2008): 1–11.

78 The Latino students in the study scored on average 2.9 for educational discrimination, 2.4 for peer discrimination, and 1.4 for institutional discrimination. By comparison, in a 2000 sample in a diverse, academically competitive urban high school, students across all races (Hispanic, Black, and White) scored an average of 4.5 on educational, 6.9 on peer, and 7.5 on institutional discrimination, with Hispanic students scoring 5.0, 5.3, and 10.5 on these scales, respectively. See Fisher, Wallace, and Fenton, “Discrimination Distress during Adolescence.”

years ago, well before the current wave of immigration policy changes and escalation of rhetoric against immigration and immigrants.

About one-quarter of the Latino students in this sample said people expected more of them than others their age, and a similar share reported that people assumed their English was poor (see Figure 12). These were the most common forms of discrimination they reported experiencing. By comparison, 2 percent said they had been harassed by a store clerk or security guard, and only 1 percent reported being harassed by the police (not shown in the figure). There were minimal differences in reported discrimination by study site, gender, or nativity, but students with limited English proficiency were significantly more likely to say people assumed their English was poor than those proficient in English (37 percent versus 16 percent).

FIGURE 12
Share of Latino Students Reporting Discrimination, 2018–19



Notes: The response rate for these questions ranged from 95 percent (291 out of 306) to 98 percent (301 out of 306).
Source: MPI, UH, and RIC survey of Latino high school students in Harris County, TX, and Rhode Island, 2018–19 school year.

All but one of the 11 schools in the study had predominantly Latino student bodies and were located in mostly Latino immigrant neighborhoods.⁷⁹ These schools and neighborhoods generally limited students' contact with peers from other major racial/ethnic groups, perhaps insulating them to some extent from discrimination. In the words of one community-based service provider, living in mostly Latino communities helped students develop a "sense of pride" because they do not feel "out of place." Homes are painted certain colors, and there are signs in Spanish making newcomer immigrants feel more welcome. According to a school principal, the students are "insulated because of where they live and go to school," and if they later go to colleges with mostly White student bodies, it can be a "huge surprise."

⁷⁹ Neighborhood residents were predominantly of Mexican or Central American origin in Harris County, TX, while in Rhode Island some neighborhoods had larger Latino populations of Colombian or Dominican origins.

Faculty and staff at all the study schools, however, were predominantly White not Latino. Differences in race/ethnicity and life experiences between teachers and their students were reportedly common. Two educators reported that other teachers had made anti-immigrant comments following Trump's election or criticized district spending on extra support for English Learners and recent immigrant students.

Some educators and other interviewees expressed concern about discrimination on the basis of language ability and use. One social worker reported that teachers sometimes "picked on" students because of their poor English skills. An educator described other teachers making jokes about students' accents or saying that they had to speak English to be "real Americans." In one school, most students with limited English proficiency refused to sit with other students at lunch, preferring to eat in the classroom with their English as a Second Language (ESL) teacher. In another school, a teacher noted that students from indigenous communities in Guatemala—who spoke neither English nor Spanish as their first language—were the most likely to segregate themselves at lunch and during other free periods.

Some educators and other interviewees expressed concern about discrimination on the basis of language ability and use.

Some Latino students also reportedly bullied each other based on national origin and immigration status. According to a community respondent in Harris County, some U.S.-born Latino students harassed recent arrivals for being unauthorized immigrants, telling them, "We came the right way. We had to follow the rules. [You are] not following the rules." In Rhode Island, there were reports of bullying, fights, and other incidents between students from Guatemala and those from Colombia and the Dominican Republic—the main source countries for more established immigrants in the state. In Harris County, there were reports of similar incidents between Mexican and Salvadoran students and between Guatemalan and Honduran students.

Though the Adolescent Discrimination Index used in this study's survey includes a question about discrimination based on perceived English ability, it may not fully capture other nuances of peer discrimination—for example, based on immigration status and national origin—within Latino youth populations.

4 Symptoms of Mental-Health Conditions and Substance Abuse

Exposure to immigration enforcement, traumatic experiences, economic hardship, and discrimination have the potential to harm Latino students' mental health and weaken their resilience and school engagement. In their self-assessments, the 306 students participating in the study responded to mental-health-related questions that covered symptoms associated with anxiety, PTSD, and depression, as well as substance use.

The students in this study reported more symptoms of anxiety, PTSD, or depression than those in other recent school-based studies of Latino and other youth. But they generally exhibited lower levels of substance use (of alcohol, cigarettes, or marijuana) than Latino youth in national surveys. Female students reported higher levels of anxiety, PTSD, or depression than did male students, and the U.S. born reported

higher substance use than their immigrant peers. Finally, even though exposure to enforcement and trauma was higher in Harris County than Rhode Island, there were no significant differences in mental health between students in the two study sites.

A. Anxiety

Latino students assessed during this study reported symptoms consistent with higher levels of anxiety than comparable populations in recent studies. Two-thirds of the students reported symptoms of anxiety in the clinical range, defined as scoring 25 or more points on a 40-question anxiety scale with a maximum score of 80.⁸⁰ By contrast, 39 percent of mostly White seventh grade students in rural Pennsylvania reported anxiety within the clinical range in a 2014 study.⁸¹

The students in this study had an average anxiety score of 31 on the scale, well above the average of 21 for a diverse sample of seventh graders in a 2014 survey at a suburban/urban middle school in the northeastern United States.⁸² A 2015 sample of U.S.-citizen children with unauthorized immigrant parents from Mexico had an average score of 16, and even children with deported parents reported a slightly lower level of anxiety than the current study's population (a score of 30 versus 31).⁸³ Notably, all of these studies were conducted before the start of Trump administration, and recent changes in immigration policy, enforcement activity, and rhetoric could be contributing to higher levels of anxiety among Latino youth than was experienced in prior years.

Within the study sample, female students were significantly more likely to report symptoms of anxiety than male students—a pattern like that of most of the other mental-health conditions assessed. Eighty percent of girls had anxiety in the clinical range, versus 46 percent of boys (see Figure 13). Yet, there were no major differences in self-reported stressors—exposure to enforcement, traumatic experiences, economic hardship, or discrimination—between the genders. Nonetheless, these findings are consistent with other research demonstrating higher levels of anxiety and other mental-health conditions among girls than boys.⁸⁴ There

BOX 4 What Is Anxiety?

Anxiety is the body's reaction to stress. It can be cognitive (e.g., fears or beliefs that the world is dangerous), affective (feeling nervous), or physiological (e.g., sweaty hands, rapid heartbeat, or other signs of panic). It may be generalized (i.e., excessive worry about everyday life events) or more specifically related to social environments, school environments and activities, or separation from someone close.

- 80 The study's mental-health assessments were based on self-reported answers to questions in a survey that was not conducted in a clinical setting; as such, they cannot be considered medical diagnoses. However, the assessments employed in the study have been tested on similar populations of high school students, with cutoffs interpreted to be suggestive of clinical levels of anxiety and other mental-health conditions. For a description of the Screen for Child Anxiety Related Emotional Disorders (SCARED) scale, see Boris Birmaher et al., "Psychometric Properties of the Screen for Child Anxiety Related Emotional Disorders (SCARED): A Replication Study," *Journal of the American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry* 38, no. 10 (1999): 1230–36.
- 81 Tammy Haley, Kathryn Puskar, and Lauren Terhorst, "Psychometric Properties of the Screen for Child Anxiety Related Emotional Disorders in a Rural High School Population," *Journal of Child and Adolescent Psychiatric Nursing* 24, no. 1 (2011): 23–32.
- 82 Hispanic students in this study scored an average of 24 on the SCARED. See Laura C. Skriner and Brian C. Chu, "Cross-Ethnic Measurement Invariance of the SCARED and CES-D in a Youth Sample," *Psychological Assessment* 26, no. 1 (2014): 332–37.
- 83 Zayas, Aguilar-Gaxiola, Yoon, and Rey, "The Distress of Citizen-Children with Detained and Deported Parents."
- 84 Emily C. Jenchura, Nancy A. Gonzalez, Jenny-Yun Tein, and Linda J. Leucken, "Gender and the Interplay of Source of Support and Peer Social Rejection on Internalizing Among Mexican American Youth," *Journal of Youth and Adolescence* 46, no. 4 (2017): 787–800.

were no significant differences in the prevalence of symptoms of anxiety between immigrant and U.S.-born students, or by national origin or study site.

The researchers did not ask education professionals or other interview respondents about anxiety or other mental-health conditions among the students they encounter. However, some respondents did volunteer examples. In one case, parents reportedly took a student back to Mexico after he was traumatized by his experiences at a U.S. high school. When the family returned to the United States and enrolled him in a school in Harris County, he suffered recurring anxiety attacks. The school's social worker set up a schedule of exposure therapy for him to attend the school for short periods until he became more comfortable there, after which he was able to attend regularly. As this example illustrates, some Latino students experience anxiety due to traumatic experiences in U.S. schools and communities, instead of or in addition to in their home countries, and schools can intervene to ameliorate it.

B. Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder

The students in the study displayed PTSD symptoms at a level comparable to students receiving therapy for trauma, and far above those observed in other studies of Latino student populations. More than half the sample was in the clinical range, defined as scoring 16 or more on a 17-question scale with a maximum score of 51.⁸⁵ The sample's average score was 20—about twice that of a sample of Latino students in seven Los Angeles middle schools (9.8), collected in 2009.⁸⁶ The students in the present study scored considerably higher than Latino high school immigrant adolescents (predominantly from Central America and Mexico) assessed at a southwestern U.S. high school in 2018 (a score of 20 versus 16).⁸⁷ And they scored roughly as high as a 2003 sample of Latino youth referred to a school-based mental-health program for traumatized students in Los Angeles (20 versus 19).⁸⁸

85 Edna B. Foa, Kelly M. Johnson, Norah C. Feeny, and Kimberli R. H. Treadwell, "The Child PTSD Symptom Scale (CPSS): A Preliminary Examination of Its Psychometric Properties," *Journal of Clinical Child and Adolescent Psychology* 30, no. 3 (2001): 376–84.

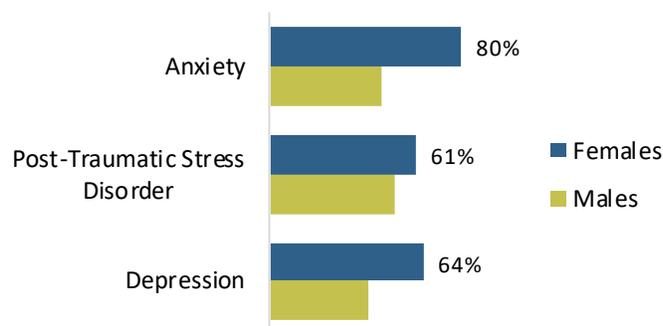
86 Sheryl Kataoka et al., "Violence Exposure and PTSD: The Role of English Language Fluency in Latino Youth," *Journal of Child and Family Studies* 18, no. 3 (2009): 334–41.

87 Amanda C. Venta and Alfonso Mercado, "Trauma Screening in Recently Immigrated Youth: Data from Two Spanish-Speaking Samples," *Journal of Family and Child Studies* 28, no. 1 (2019): 84–90.

88 Sheryl Kataoka et al., "A School-Based Mental Health Program for Traumatized Latino Immigrant Children," *Journal of the American Academy of Child & Adolescent Psychiatry* 42 no. 3 (2003): 311–18.

FIGURE 13

Share of Latino Students Reporting Symptoms Consistent with Clinical Anxiety, Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder, and Depression, by Gender, 2018–19



Notes: Differences between female and male students were statistically significant for all three mental-health scales, at $p < 0.05$. The response rate for the questions in these scales were: anxiety (89 percent, or 271 out of 306); PTSD (79 percent, or 243 out of 306); and depression (58 percent, or 176 out of 306). The depression questions had a low response rate, but students who did not answer all these questions did not score significantly higher or lower on the anxiety or PTSD scales. Because symptoms of mental-health conditions tend to be highly correlated, the absence of higher or lower anxiety or PTSD symptoms among the students who did and did not answer the depression questions suggests that nonresponse bias on the depression questions may be low. All but one student responded to the question on gender.

Source: MPI, UH, and RIC survey of Latino high school students in Harris County, TX, and Rhode Island, 2018–19 school year.

BOX 5**What is Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)?**

PTSD involves symptoms that arise in response to a traumatic event or events. PTSD symptoms can be intrusive (e.g., nightmares or flashbacks), related to avoidance (e.g., blocking thoughts or avoiding things that remind one of the trauma), or involve hypervigilance (e.g., feeling “on edge” and vigilant of danger in one’s environment). If severe enough, PTSD symptoms may interfere with daily functioning, including at work or in school.

The high frequency of PTSD symptoms among the Latino students in this study is likely related to the large number of traumatic events they have experienced (more than 7 on average). It may also be related to their immigration enforcement exposure.

As with anxiety, PTSD symptoms were more common among girls than boys in the sample. The average score for female students (21) was significantly higher than the score for boys (18). Other research has similarly documented higher symptoms of PTSD among girls than boys.⁸⁹ And like anxiety, PTSD did not significantly vary by students’ nativity, national origin, or study site.

In interviews, some educators and community members also described cases involving students they knew who were exposed to trauma and who subsequently presented mental-health symptoms. For example, one respondent reported counseling a Salvadoran girl who displayed PTSD symptoms after suffering several traumatic events, including as a four-year-old witnessing the murder of her grandmother, at age 17 being threatened by the murderer after his release from prison, and being raped by a smuggler while migrating through Guatemala.

C. Depression

Depression was also more common in the study sample than in comparable Latino student populations. Fifty-five percent of sampled students were in the clinical range on a 20-question depression scale with a maximum score of 60.⁹⁰ Their average score was 18, slightly higher than the score of 16 for Hispanic seventh grade students in the 2014 study at a northeastern suburban/urban middle school.⁹¹ In another 2014 study, Mexican-American adolescents—almost evenly split between immigrant youth and U.S.-born children of immigrants, as in the current study—scored 14 on the scale.⁹²

BOX 6**What Is Depression?**

Depression is a disorder that affects how a person thinks, feels, and behaves. Symptoms of depression include sadness, lack of motivation, difficulty concentrating, changes in sleep and appetite, inappropriate feelings of worthlessness or guilt, lack of enjoyment in things one used to enjoy, and thoughts of suicide.

89 This was a 2017 study of 200 Hispanic adolescents referred for behavior disorders and conflictual family relations. See Lourdes Mena Suarez-Morales, Victoria A. Maite Schlaudt, and Daniel A. Santisteban, “Trauma in Hispanic Youth with Psychiatric Symptoms: Investigating Gender and Family Effects,” *Psychological Trauma: Theory, Research, Practice, and Policy* 9, no. 3 (2017): 334–43.

90 Only 176 out of 306 students answered all the depression questions, for a response rate of 58 percent. Response rates for the total sample were much higher for anxiety (89 percent) and PTSD (79 percent). Researchers analyzed the missing cases on the depression questions, and they did not report significantly higher or lower anxiety or PTSD even though depression, PTSD, and anxiety were highly correlated with each other among the sample that answered all questions on all three scales. See Leonore Sawyer Radloff, “The CES-D Scale: A Self-Report Depression Scale for Research in the General Population,” *Applied Psychological Measurement* 1, no. 3 (1977): 385–401.

91 The mean score for the overall sample of White, Black, and Hispanic students in this study was 13. See Skriner and Chu, “Cross-Ethnic Measurement Invariance of the SCARED and CES-D.”

92 Gabriela Livas Stein and Antonio J. Polo, “Parent-Child Cultural Value Gaps and Depressive Symptoms among Mexican American Youth,” *Journal of Child and Family Studies* 23, no. 2 (2014): 189–99.

Depression scores did not differ significantly for U.S.-born versus immigrant youth, for older youth (who were more likely to be recent immigrants) than younger youth, for those with limited versus full English proficiency, or by study site. But as with anxiety and PTSD, girls in the study had a significantly higher rate of depression than boys, with an average score of 21 versus 15. Once again, this finding is in line with those of other recent studies that have shown higher rates of depression among Latino adolescent girls than boys.⁹³

Several community and school stakeholders mentioned observing a few examples of depression among Latino students. For example, one teacher reported seeing signs of depression such as sleeping in class, self-mutilation, and self-injury, especially among girls. Parents sometimes found that depressed children slept more but were otherwise well-behaved at home, even though they might have had difficulties in school. Three other teachers described allowing depressed students to go into the closet so that other students could not see them cry, creating a “cry corner,” and encouraging others student to put their arms around depressed students to comfort them.

Respondents also described trauma and separation from loved ones as key triggers for depression. For example, a student in Harris County who was being counseled for depression had a deported mother who he had not seen in six months and wanted to leave the United States to join her. In another case, a girl who was a potential victim of child neglect developed major depression and made a plan to commit suicide, after which she was hospitalized.

D. Substance Use

In contrast to anxiety, PTSD, and depression, substance use was generally lower among the Latino students in this study than what research has shown for the overall population of U.S. youth. For example, the students in this sample were slightly less likely to have used alcohol, tobacco, or marijuana during the past month than Hispanic youth in a 2017 national survey conducted by the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), as shown in Table 1.⁹⁴ The results were more mixed when it came to lifetime use of more serious drugs; while the Latino youth in the present study were slightly less likely to have taken pain medication without a prescription, they were more likely to have used inhalants such as glue, spray paint, or other sprays.

BOX 7 What Is Substance Use?

Substance use refers to smoking, drinking, using illegal drugs, and misusing prescription drugs. This study asked students about their use of alcohol, tobacco, inhalants such as glue and spray paint, and unprescribed pain medication in the last 30 days and over their lifetimes.

There were only two significant differences in substance use between U.S.- and foreign-born Latino students in this study: the U.S.-born students were more likely to use marijuana and unprescribed pain medication than their immigrant peers. There were no significant differences in substance use by age, gender, or study

⁹³ For example, a study of 179 Latino adolescents found that girls had higher levels of depression than boys, but among the girls, stronger familial cultural values and obligations were protective against depression. See Alexandra M. Cupito, Gabriela L. Stein, and Laura M. Gonzalez, “Familial Cultural Values, Depressive Symptoms, School Belonging and Grades in Latino Adolescents: Does Gender Matter?” *Journal of Child and Family Studies* 24, no. 6 (2015): 1638–59.

⁹⁴ Substance use questions are the only mental-health measures employed in this study that could be benchmarked against national surveys. The other measures—anxiety, PTSD, and depression—are complex scales with sensitive questions that are not often included in large-scale surveys because they are generally administered in person by researchers or health professionals.

site, and substance abuse was not a common topic during conversations with educators and community respondents.

TABLE 1
Substance Use among Latino and Other Youth Populations

Substance	CDC National Study (2017)		MPI-UH-RIC Study (2018–19)		
	Share of All Youth	Share of Hispanic Youth	Share of All Latino Students	Share of U.S.-Born Latino Students	Share of Foreign-Born Latino Students
Alcohol (at least one drink in 30 days)	30%	31%	23%	26%	20%
Cigarettes (smoked at least once in past 30 days)	9%	7%	6%	4%	9%
Marijuana (smoked at least once in past 30 days)	20%	23%	10%	15%	6%
Nonprescribed pain medication (taken at least once ever)	14%	15%	13%	19%	8%
Inhalants (sniffed at least once ever)	7%	7%	12%	12%	11%

Notes: In the MPI-UH-RIC survey, the response rate for these five questions was 98 percent (ranging from 298 to 301 out of 306). All but one student responded to the question on nativity. Differences between the U.S.-born and foreign-born Latino students were statistically significant at $p < 0.05$ for the questions on marijuana and nonprescribed paid medication use.

Sources: MPI, UH, and RIC survey of Latino high school students in Harris County, TX, and Rhode Island, 2018–19 school year; U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), “Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance—United States, 2017,” *Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report* 67, no. 8 (June 15, 2018), 31–57.

5 Student Strengths

While Latino youth in the study frequently exhibited symptoms of mental-health conditions, they also showed strengths that may help offset the enforcement concerns and other stressors they experience. Among them were personal resilience and work ethic, religion and spirituality, support from family members, and engagement in school. These strengths offer a solid foundation for educators and community-based services providers to support students’ healthy socioemotional development and positive academic trajectories.

A. Personal Resilience

Latino youth in the sample showed high levels of personal resilience, generally being able to handle difficult situations, thinking positively, and being self-reliant and determined to meet goals. These students scored an average of 3.0 out of 4.0 on an 11-question personal resilience scale designed for Latino youth from immigrant backgrounds—almost as high as a group of

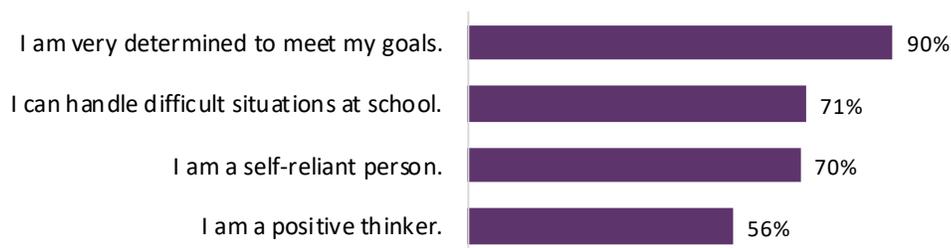
BOX 8 What Is Resilience?

Resilience refers to the strengths and resources that someone can use to cope with life’s challenges. This study assessed three types of resilience: (1) internal strengths (e.g., being self-reliant, a positive thinker, or a good problem-solver); (2) spirituality and religious service attendance; and (3) support from family members.

community colleges students in Los Angeles in a 2015 study (3.7).⁹⁵ There were no significant differences in personal resilience by gender or nativity.

FIGURE 14

Share of Latino Students Agreeing or Strongly Agreeing with Statements about Personal Resilience, 2018–19



Notes: The response rate for these four questions ranged from 97 percent (296 out of 303) to 99 percent (303 out of 306).
Source: MPI, UH, and RIC survey of Latino high school students in Harris County, TX, and Rhode Island, 2018–19 school year.

In the words of a teacher who works with recent immigrant youth, “I’m in awe of these students.” Coming to the United States from Guatemala, he said, “is like an Odyssean experience.” This teacher also noted that his students were unfazed by some challenges experienced within the United States, such as Hurricane Harvey, which put large neighborhoods in Harris County underwater in 2017, even when his own children received therapy to help them process their reactions to the hurricane. A social worker expressed concern, however, that despite appearing to be strong many of the immigrant students were “still in survival mode,” living day to day under enormous levels of stress.

Educators attributed different strengths among U.S.-born students. In the words of one counselor, the “ground they walk on is more stable” than the ground underfoot for many immigrant students because they have parents with more U.S. experience who can shield them from difficult economic, social, and emotional issues. As a result, the counselor described the U.S.-born students as more comfortable and trusting, less guarded and serious.

B. Religion and Spirituality

Religion is another important source of strength for many Latino students. Eighty-seven percent of those in this survey reported that spiritual beliefs were important to them, and 63 percent said they participated in organized religious activities. Immigrant students and students with limited English proficiency (who were more likely to be recent immigrants) reported higher levels of participation in religious activities than U.S.-born and fully English proficient students. Other studies have similarly documented the importance of spirituality for immigrants, particularly those who have undertaken difficult journeys to reach the United

⁹⁵ Carola Suárez-Orozco et al., “Undocumented Undergraduates on College Campuses: Understanding Their Challenges and Assets and What It Takes to Make an Undocufriendly Campus,” *Harvard Educational Review* 85, no. 3 (2015): 427–63.

States.⁹⁶ The educators interviewed for the study did not discuss the religious or spiritual beliefs of their Latino students, perhaps because personal beliefs can be a sensitive topic in U.S. public schools.

C. Support from Family Members

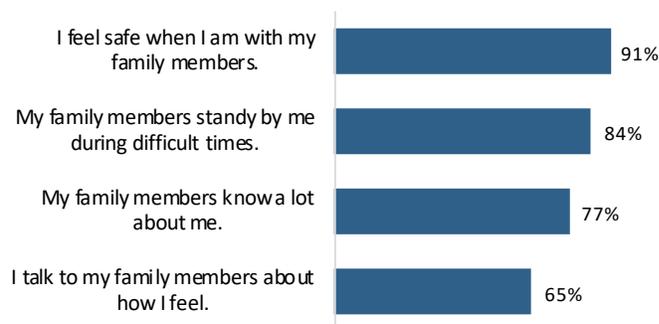
Despite the potential for migration-related family separation and reunification to strain relationships, most students in this study reported strong family support in terms of feeling safe, protected by, and able to talk to family members about their feelings. As with personal resilience, there were no significant differences by gender or nativity in the support students felt they had from their families.

In interviews, educators described family support as a key strength, particularly for their U.S.-born students. One counselor expressed the view that parents of U.S.-born students were often able to protect their children from the economic and social pressures that many immigrant students face alone. Well-integrated immigrant parents, the counselor continued, may have learned how to deal with sensitive political and social issues discretely, allowing them to shield their children from stressful events and situations.

Some respondents did provide examples in which students did not have the support of their parents, at times due to a lack of communication. For instance, a social worker at a community-based organization suggested that Latino family members often “put on a face” and do not express feelings openly with each other, resulting in situations where parents think their children are doing just fine, and vice versa. These were individual examples, however, and respondents did not describe them as representative of the family dynamics for most students.

Among students without strong family support—particularly immigrant youth without parents or other close family members in the United States—interviewees noted that many sought to build alternative social connections. In the words of one social worker, “They are forming their new family here with friends and classmates around them. They are looking for what they left in their country—their friends and extended family—and they are trying to recreate that in a way here.” This need for close personal relationships reportedly led some immigrant youth to churches, others to gang involvement.

FIGURE 15
Share of Latino Students Agreeing or Strongly Agreeing with Statements about Family Support, 2018–19



Note: The response rate for these four questions was 98 percent (ranging from 298 to 300 out of 306).

Source: MPI, UH, and RIC survey of Latino high school students in Harris County, TX, and Rhode Island, 2018–19 school year.

⁹⁶ See, for example, Jacqueline Hagan and Helen Rose Ebaugh, “Calling upon the Sacred: Migrants’ Use of Religion in the Migration Process,” *International Migration Review* 37, no. 4 (2003): 1145–62; Holly Straut Eppsteiner and Jacqueline Hagan, “Religion as Psychological, Spiritual, and Social Support in the Migration Undertaking,” in *Intersections of Religion and Migration, Religion and Global Migrations*, eds. Jennifer B. Saunders, Elena Fiddian-Qasmieh, and Susanna Snyder (New York: Palgrave, 2016).

D. School Engagement and Student Work Ethic

The Latino students in this study reported a relatively high level of school engagement. Many said they enjoyed learning, finished their homework, attended and paid attention in school, and felt able to find support from educators and peers at school. Their overall score on a 21-question engagement scale averaged 30 out of a maximum score of 42. For comparison, a 2008 sample of immigrant students of various origins (Central America, China, Dominican Republic, Haiti, and Mexico) living in the Boston and San Francisco areas scored 21.⁹⁷ Between the two sites in the present study, students scored slightly but significantly higher on school engagement in Rhode Island than in Harris County (30.4 versus 28.8). Girls scored slightly higher than boys (30.3 versus 28.7).

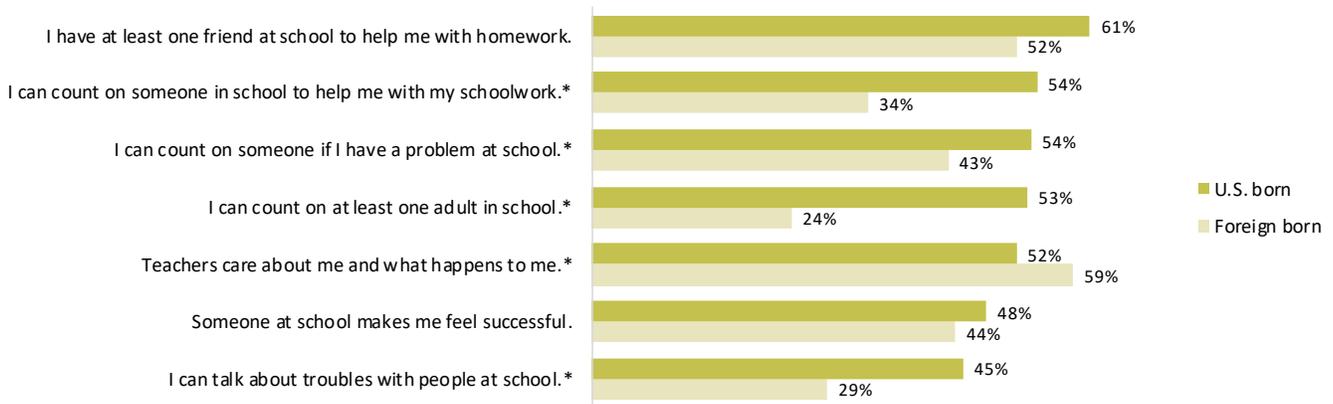
There were no significant differences between foreign- and U.S.-born students in terms of overall school engagement, but immigrant students scored higher on questions about cognitive and behavioral engagement (e.g., completing homework and attending and behaving well in class). U.S.-born students, on the other hand, scored higher on relational engagement questions about being able to count on teachers, peers, and others to help them with their homework and problems in school (see Figure 16). Students with limited English proficiency also had more limited relational engagement than those fluent in English (see Figure 17).

BOX 9 What Is School Engagement?

School engagement describes how students emotionally, behaviorally, and cognitively relate to their schools. It includes how they feel at school, how well they relate to educators, how much they engage in pro-academic behaviors (e.g., doing homework regularly), and whether they self-identify as learners.

FIGURE 16

Share of Latino Students for Whom Statements about Relational School Engagement Are Very True, by Nativity, 2018–19



* Denotes statistically significant difference in school engagement for U.S.-born versus foreign-born students, at $p < 0.05$.

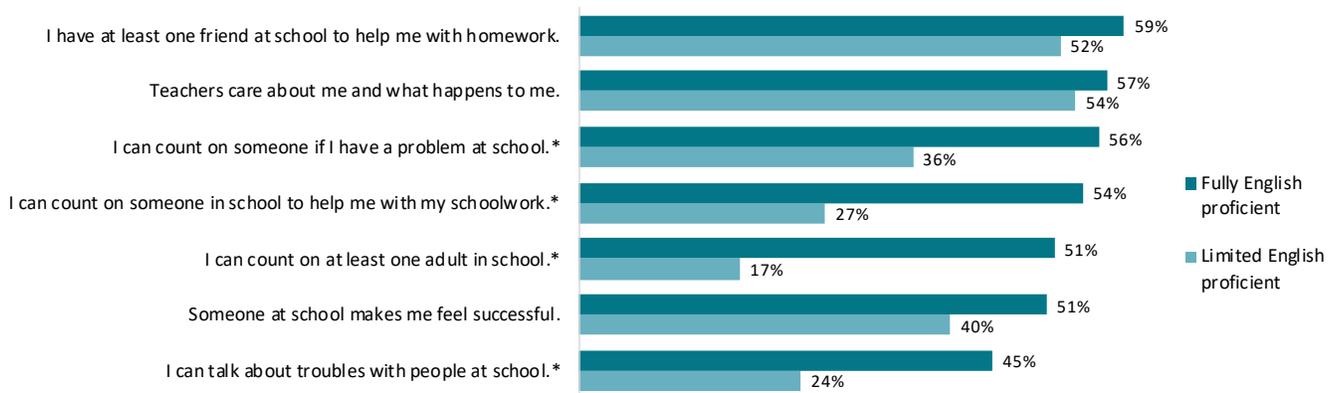
Notes: The response rate for these seven questions ranged from 97 percent (298 out of 306) to 99 percent (302 out of 306). All but one student responded to the question on nativity.

Source: MPI, UH, and RIC survey of Latino high school students in Harris County, TX, and Rhode Island, 2018–19 school year.

⁹⁷ Carola Suárez-Orozco et al., “Academic Trajectories of Newcomer Immigrant Youth,” *Developmental Psychology* 45, no. 3 (2010): 602–18.

FIGURE 17

Share of Latino Students for Whom Statements about Relational School Engagement are Very True, by English Proficiency, 2018–19



* Denotes statistically significant difference in school engagement for limited English proficient versus fully proficient students, at $p < 0.05$.

Notes: Fully proficient students are those who reported speaking English at home or speaking another language at home and speaking English well or very well. Limited proficient students reported not speaking English or not speaking it very well. The response rate for these seven questions ranged from 97 percent (298 out of 306) to 99 percent (302 out of 306). All students reported their English proficiency.

Source: MPI, UH, and RIC survey of Latino high school students in Harris County, TX, and Rhode Island, 2018–19 school year.

Several educators expressed the view that their immigrant students were more mature than U.S.-born students, which they attributed to having borne more responsibilities and had greater life experiences. One teacher described immigrant students as “old souls,” and another said they often asked why other students “behaved like kids” and fought or bullied each other so much. A third teacher described them as well-behaved, respectful, serious, and ready to learn—and less likely than other students to walk out of class or skip school. Students who are unauthorized immigrants had additional incentives not to misbehave; doing so could potentially lead to being arrested and placed in deportation proceedings.

Some educators reported difficulties gaining the trust of immigrant students. According to a social worker, some recent Guatemalan students were withdrawn and had difficulty socializing with students from other backgrounds. And a principal reported that some immigrant youth were “completely different students with different teachers”—they were well behaved if they believed the teacher wanted them in the classroom and cared about them, but they would “shut down” if they did not trust a teacher.

Several educators expressed the view that their immigrant students were more mature than U.S.-born students, which they attributed to having borne more responsibilities and had greater life experiences.

Despite having some reported difficulties trusting adults and students from other backgrounds, Central American immigrant students were also described as taking good care of each other. Two educators explained how they interpreted for students who spoke other languages, particularly Guatemalan indigenous languages. Two others said they work well in groups when teachers paired more experienced students with recent arrivals, such as when teachers assigned

immigrant students as “ambassadors” to guide new students through their first week in school. Three study respondents described immigrant students helping each other with necessities (e.g., giving fellow students gas money to drive home and sharing clothes and uniforms) and providing emotional support.

6 Relationships among Immigration Enforcement Fears, Mental Health, Resilience, and School Engagement

Mental health and mental illness are complex, shaped by many factors and in turn affecting lives in different ways from person to person. Latino students in this study reported relatively high levels of immigration enforcement fears and of mental-health symptoms. These fears and symptoms were closely linked: those who expressed more acute fears displayed more symptoms and also reported more limited personal resilience and school engagement. Other stressors such as discrimination, traumatic experiences, and economic hardship were also linked to mental health, resilience, and school engagement.

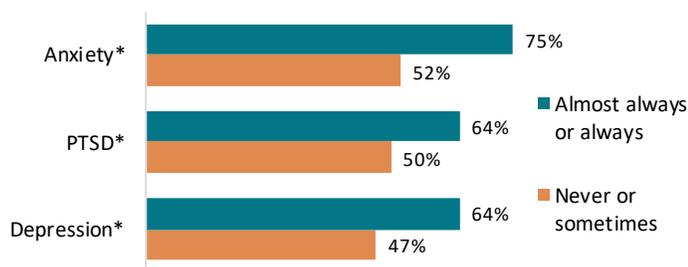
This section describes the statistical relationships among immigration enforcement fears, other stressors, mental health, and student strengths. (For more details on the nature of the statistical analysis, see Appendix G).

A. *The Association between Immigration Enforcement and Student Mental Health*

Some measures of immigration enforcement fear and exposure were more highly correlated with mental-health conditions than others. Those who almost always or always worried that family members or friends could be deported were more likely to show symptoms of anxiety, PTSD, or depression in the clinical range than those who sometimes or never worried about deportation (see Figure 18).

Students who knew someone who had been deported were more likely to exhibit symptoms of anxiety and PTSD, though not depression, than those who did not know a deportee (see Figure 19). Students who worried about being deported themselves, however, were no more likely than others to exhibit clinical levels of anxiety, PTSD, or depression.

FIGURE 18
Share of Latino Students Reporting Mental-Health Symptoms in the Clinical Range, by Frequency of Worries about Deportation of Family Members and Friends, 2018–19

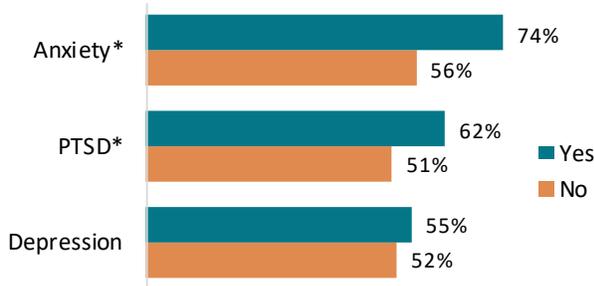


* Denotes statistically significant difference in mental health for different groups of students, at $p < 0.05$.

Notes: The combined response rate for answering the questions about anxiety and worries about deportation was 84 percent (258 out of 306). The rate for questions about PTSD and worries about deportation was 74 percent (225 out of 306). The rate for questions about depression and worries about deportation was 53 percent (163 out of 306).

Source: MPI, UH, and RIC survey of Latino high school students in Harris County, TX, and Rhode Island, 2018–19 school year.

FIGURE 19
Share of Latino Students Reporting Mental-Health Symptoms in the Clinical Range, by Whether They Knew Someone Who Had Been Deported, 2018–19

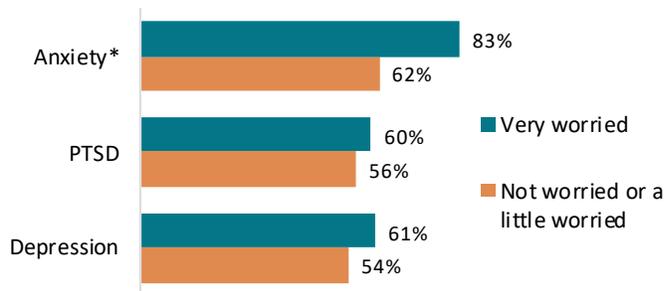


* Denotes statistically significant difference in mental health for different groups of students, at $p < 0.05$.

Notes: The combined response rate for answering the questions about anxiety and knowing someone who was deported was 88 percent (268 out of 306). The rate for questions about PTSD and knowing someone who was deported was 79 percent (241 out of 306). The rate for questions about depression and knowing someone deported was 57 percent (173 out of 306).

Source: MPI, UH, and RIC survey of Latino high school students in Harris County, TX, and Rhode Island, 2018–19 school year.

FIGURE 20
Share of Latino Students Reporting Mental-Health Symptoms in the Clinical Range, by Degree of Worry about Deportation of a Family Member or Friend Due to Enrollment in a Government Program, 2018–19



* Denotes statistically significant difference in mental health for different groups of students, at $p < 0.05$.

Notes: The combined response rate for answering the questions about anxiety and worries about enrolling in a government program was 82 percent (251 out of 306). The rate for questions about PTSD and worries about enrolling was 75 percent (229 out of 306). The rate for questions about depression and worries about enrolling was 55 percent (168 out of 306).

Source: MPI, UH, and RIC survey of Latino high school students in Harris County, TX, and Rhode Island, 2018–19 school year.

Youth who were afraid that enrollment in a government program could put them or someone they knew at risk of deportation also had significantly more symptoms of anxiety (see Figure 20). And those who had changed their daily routines and behaviors due to deportation fears reported more symptoms of all three mental-health conditions (see Figure 21).

The students most likely to have anxiety symptoms in the clinical range were those afraid of enrolling in a government program (83 percent), while the students most likely to have PTSD and depression symptoms in the clinical range were those who frequently changed their behavior due to enforcement fears (72 percent for PTSD and 74 percent for depression). The correlation between avoidance of government programs and behavior changes, on the one hand, and symptoms of mental-health conditions on the other is stronger than the correlation between mental-health symptoms and simply fearing deportation of oneself, a friend, or a family member.

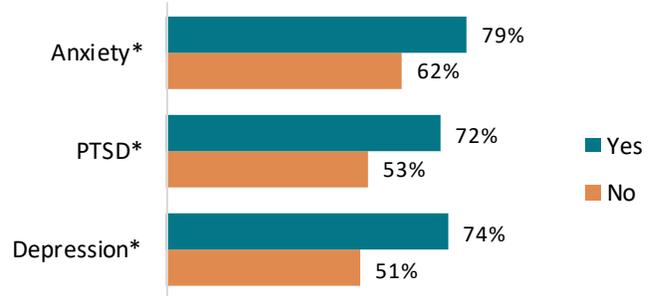
Thus, students who fear immigration enforcement most acutely—and who change their behaviors as a result—have worse mental health than those who fear enforcement but do not change their routines. Moreover, enforcement is not the only policy associated with poorer mental health, as fear about the consequences for receiving public benefits is also highly correlated with anxiety—a finding about the potential implications of the revised public-charge rule for Latino family well-being that has not yet been raised in the public debate. On the other hand, it is also possible that anxiety and other mental-health problems make students more fearful of enforcement,

the public-charge rule, and other threatening immigration policies.

Students who changed their behavior also exhibited lower levels of personal resilience and school engagement, while those with concerns about enrollment in government programs reported lower school engagement. Substance use was not significantly associated with any of the enforcement questions.

Table 2 summarizes correlations between all the immigration-enforcement and mental-health outcomes in the study except for substance use (in the table, higher numbers indicate stronger correlations). Behavior changes resulting from enforcement fears were significantly correlated with all five measures in the expected direction (positively with PTSD, depression, and anxiety; negatively with resilience and engagement) and showed the strongest correlations on most measures. Fear that a family member or friend would be deported was positively correlated with PTSD, depression, and anxiety, but it was also positively correlated with school engagement (i.e., students expressing such fears were more engaged), which is the opposite of the expected direction. Knowing someone who had been deported was correlated with three measures—all in the expected direction. Fear of accessing government programs was only correlated with anxiety. Worries about being deported oneself were not significantly correlated with any outcome.

FIGURE 21
Share of Latino Youth Reporting Mental-Health Symptoms in the Clinical Range, by Whether They Always or Almost Always Changed Behavior Due to Enforcement Fears, 2018–19



* Denotes statistically significant difference in mental health for different groups of students, at $p < 0.05$.

Notes: The combined response rate for answering the questions about anxiety and behavior changes was 76 percent (233 out of 306). The rate for questions about PTSD and behavior changes was 68 percent (207 out of 306). The rate for questions about depression and behavior changes was 50 percent (154 out of 306). The survey asked six questions related to behavioral changes as a result of deportation fears; if students answered that they “almost always” or “always” made any of these six changes, they were considered to have changed their behavior due to fear of deportation.

Source: MPI, UH, and RIC survey of Latino high school students in Harris County, TX, and Rhode Island, 2018–19 school year.

Behavior changes resulting from enforcement fears were significantly correlated with all five measures in the expected direction (positively with PTSD, depression, and anxiety; negatively with resilience and engagement).

TABLE 2
Correlations between Immigration Enforcement and Exposure Measures and Mental Health for Latino Students, 2018–19

	PTSD	Depression	Anxiety	Resilience	School Engagement
Always or almost always worried that family members or friends might be detained or deported	0.16*	0.17*	0.23*	0.03	0.15*
Always or almost always worried that oneself might be detained or deported	0.08	0.04	0.12	-0.00	0.12
Knows someone who has been deported	0.16*	0.02	0.21*	-0.16*	0.00
Very worried about deportation or detention of a family member or friend due to enrollment in a government program	0.10	0.06	0.26*	-0.08	0.02
Always or almost always changed behavior due to enforcement fears	0.20*	0.28*	0.16*	-0.17*	-0.18*

Note: The survey asked six questions related to behavioral changes as a result of deportation fears; if students answered that they “almost always” or “always” made any of these six changes, they were considered to have changed their behavior due to fear of deportation.

* Denotes statistically significant Pearson correlation coefficient between the scales, at $p < 0.05$.

Source: MPI, UH, and RIC survey of Latino high school students in Harris County, TX, and Rhode Island, 2018–19 school year.

B. Associations between Other Stressors and Student Mental Health

Other stressors were also significantly correlated with mental health, personal resilience, and school engagement, with discrimination having the highest correlations (see Table 3).⁹⁸ Discrimination was strongly negatively correlated with school engagement and resilience. Traumatic experiences and economic hardship had lower correlations with symptoms of mental-health conditions among students, but most of these correlations were also significant.

TABLE 3
Correlations between Other Stressors and Mental Health for Latino Students, 2018–19

	PTSD	Depression	Anxiety	Resilience	School Engagement
Discrimination	0.57*	0.49*	0.38*	- 0.19*	- 0.22*
Traumatic experiences	0.41*	0.30*	0.22*	- 0.10	- 0.22*
Economic hardship	0.21*	0.28*	0.14*	- 0.18*	- 0.13*

* Denotes statistically significant Pearson correlation coefficient between the scales, at $p < 0.05$.

Source: MPI, UH, and RIC survey of Latino high school students in Harris County, TX, and Rhode Island, 2018–19 school year.

⁹⁸ Discrimination also had a high correlation with some of the immigration enforcement variables. Students who almost always or always worried about a family member or friend being deported scored 7.4 on the discrimination scale, while those who never or only sometimes worried about deportation scored 5.6. Students who knew someone who had been deported scored 7.4 versus 5.5 for those who did not know a deportee. Students who almost always or always changed their behavior scored 8.8 versus 6.1 for those who never or only sometimes changed their behavior.

C. *The Importance of Enforcement Fear Relative to Other Mental-Health Stressors*

Like the correlation results shown earlier, regression models⁹⁹ indicate that students who changed their behaviors as a result of immigration-enforcement fears had worse mental-health outcomes than those who feared enforcement but did not change their routines. In these models, researchers added groups of variables—including demographic characteristics and the other stressors shown in Table 3—to determine which enforcement-fear measures had the strongest associations with Latino students' mental health. (See the appendices for a detailed description of this process and the results.) The models were only analyzed for combinations of enforcement-fear measures and mental-health outcomes that were significantly correlated as shown in Table 2.

In the regression models, the general enforcement-fear variables (worrying about the deportation of a family member or friend, worrying about being deported oneself, knowing someone who had been deported, or worrying about being deported as a result of enrolling in a government program) were weakly associated with student mental-health outcomes when compared with enforcement-driven behavior changes. Once the other stressors shown in Table 3 were included in the regression models, the relatively weak relationships between these general enforcement-related variables and mental-health outcomes became insignificant.

The relatively strong relationship between behavior changes and two mental-health outcomes, however, remained significant even when accounting for the other stressors. (In Table 4, cells marked with "X" denote a statistically significant association between variables in the final models analyzed for this report). Students who changed their behavior more often due to immigration fears had more symptoms of PTSD or depression, even when considering their demographic characteristics and other stressors such as traumatic experiences, economic hardship, and perceptions of discrimination.

Female students showed higher levels of PTSD, depression, or anxiety than their male peers, even when considering enforcement fears, discrimination, economic hardship, and traumatic experiences.

One of the most important findings is the strong relationship between discrimination and all outcomes except resilience. Among the stressors measured in the study, discrimination showed the strongest association with PTSD, depression, anxiety, and engagement. Economic hardship showed a stronger relationship with resilience.

Gender was also strongly correlated with certain outcomes. Female students showed higher levels of PTSD, depression, or anxiety than their male peers, even when considering enforcement fears, discrimination, economic hardship, and traumatic experiences. Models including interactions between gender and

⁹⁹ For this analysis, the researchers used ordinary least squares (OLS) regression, which is appropriate for dependent variables measured continuously in scales (e.g., mental health, engagement, and resilience) rather than as dichotomous "yes" or "no" outcomes. For a description of the OLS regression method, see Graeme D. Hutcheson, *The Multivariate Social Scientist* (London: SAGE Publications, 1999), Chapter 3.

behavior changes indicated a significant association for behavior changes with depression for both genders, but the association with PTSD was only significant for females. In other words, only female students who reported behavior changes due to immigration were more likely to experience PTSD, while both male and female students experiencing these changes exhibited higher levels of depression.

TABLE 4
Significant Associations between Latino Student Outcomes and Their Enforcement Fears, Other Stressors, and Demographic Factors, 2018–19

	PTSD	Depression	Anxiety	School Engagement	Resilience
Almost always or always changed behavior due to fear of deportation?		X			
Other stressors					
Discrimination	X	X	X	X	
Economic hardship					X
Traumatic experiences					
Demographic factors					
Female	X	X	X		
Foreign born					
Parent born in Mexico or Central America					
More than 17 years old					
Limited English proficient					
Employed					X
Taking care of a family member					
Gender and behavior-change interaction					
Female and almost always or always changed behavior due to fear of deportation	X				

Notes: “X” denotes that the association between variables was statistically significant at the $p < 0.05$ level in ordinary least squares regression models. The columns represent the student outcomes (dependent variables) while the rows represent all of the stressors potentially associated with the outcomes (independent variables). The survey asked six questions related to behavior changes as a result of deportation fears; if students answered that they “almost always” or “always” made any of these six changes, they were considered to have changed their behavior due to fear of deportation.

Source: MPI, UH, and RIC survey of Latino high school students in Harris County, TX, and Rhode Island, 2018–19 school year.

Taken together, these findings suggest that students who feared immigration enforcement most acutely—and who changed their behaviors as a result—had worse mental health. But stressors other than enforcement that are endemic to low-income Latino populations such as trauma, economic hardship, and discrimination were also significantly associated with students’ mental health. To be successful, strategies to support Latino students’ mental health should take these multiple stressors into consideration.

Some of the stressors analyzed in this study are broad, societal issues such as poverty and violence that can be difficult for schools to address. However, schools often can take steps to address discrimination and fear of immigration enforcement by creating an environment that makes students feel safe, valued, and able

to express their fears and anxieties. Establishing such an environment holds the potential to improve the mental health, school engagement, and academic performance of Latino students.

7 School and Community Responses to Latino Students' Mental-Health Needs

The schools involved in this study were in some ways quite different from one another: some were large, others small; some were traditional public schools while others were charter schools; and some had traditional daytime schedules while others had evening and weekend programs aimed at older students, including many recent immigrants. Other school characteristics were more widely shared: many were in low-income neighborhoods and had predominantly Latino student bodies. Across these environments, administrators, faculty, and staff involved in this study expressed a dedication to supporting their Latino students' mental health. Among the strategies they described for doing so were creating a welcoming environment, identifying caring adults to support students in the school setting, providing resources for counseling and therapy, amending school disciplinary policies, and conducting outreach to students' families.

A. *Establishing a Welcoming and Safe Environment*

High schools can be safe havens where unauthorized immigrant students feel free from the threat of arrest and deportation. ICE considers schools and other educational institutions to be “sensitive locations” where it does not make arrests or take other enforcement actions, and there have been no arrests directly by ICE officers on high school campuses in recent years.¹⁰⁰ Yet, once unauthorized immigrant students leave the campus, they become vulnerable to arrest and deportation, and recent statements by ICE leadership have stressed that unauthorized immigrants should be fearful of arrest at any time and in any place.¹⁰¹ Further, some disciplinary actions in schools can have enforcement consequences, as in a high-profile case in Harris County in which a student was arrested by police officers working for the school district and then transferred into ICE custody.¹⁰² More broadly, the study data suggest that students' fears of having a family member or friend deported, while not directly linked to their schools, are stressors that likely affect their mental health, engagement, and academic performance at school.

Given the deepening concern about immigration policy, rhetoric, and discrimination within Latino immigrant communities, some state and local officials have developed and publicized policies that are supportive of these communities. In Rhode Island, for example, authorities at all governmental levels—from the governor down to mayors, police chiefs, and superintendents—have expressed opposition to the Trump administration's immigration actions (from the travel ban to the failure to renew DACA) and

100 ICE, “FAQ on Sensitive Locations and Courthouse Arrests,” updated September 25, 2018.

101 Sacchetti, “ICE Chief Tells Lawmakers Agency Needs Much More Money for Immigration Arrests.”

102 Suzanne Gamboa, “In Houston, Outrage over a School Arrest That Landed a Student in Immigration Detention,” NBC News Latino, February 18, 2018; Alvaro Ortiz, “Undocumented Student Arrested after Incident at Local High School Might Request Asylum,” Houston Public Media, April 10, 2018.

pledged to limit cooperation with ICE.¹⁰³ In 2014, the governor signed an executive order severely limiting ICE cooperation.¹⁰⁴ In 2019, the mayor of Providence—who has Guatemalan immigrant parents—responded to Trump administration criticism of the city as a sanctuary by stating, “Providence is a welcoming, inclusive city that values the presence and contributions of folks from across the world. We are a stronger, more vibrant city when every resident feels safe and supported.”¹⁰⁵ The city’s public safety commissioner defended the sanctuary policy against criticism from the state legislature by saying, “We are municipal police officers. We don’t have the training or technical expertise in immigration law and so we should not be enforcing immigration law.”¹⁰⁶ Local government officials and community-based organizations held “Know Your Rights” sessions at Rhode Island high schools, which included discussion of strategies to protect immigrant families from ICE enforcement actions.¹⁰⁷ Thus, state and local leaders in Rhode Island gave educators and students clear signals that immigration enforcement would be limited in their communities.

The policy context is quite different in Texas, where the SB 4 law enacted in 2017 prohibits any government entity from limiting cooperation with ICE and any local official from openly opposing ICE enforcement.¹⁰⁸ Although large cities such as Houston have declared themselves “welcoming cities” and offered Know Your Rights sessions at schools and in the community,¹⁰⁹ SB 4 prevents mayors and other local leaders from enacting policies that actively oppose ICE activities. A task force comprised of Houston leaders from diverse constituencies requested that police avoid involvement in immigration enforcement and provide funding to defend those threatened with deportation, but the city has reportedly not adopted these recommendations.¹¹⁰ In 2020, after the field research for this project was completed, Harris County allocated \$500,000 to a legal defense fund for people facing deportation.¹¹¹

The schools the study team visited in Harris County, like those across the country, have policies not to ask students about their immigration status, to refuse record requests for students by immigration authorities, and to limit the access of law enforcement officers to campuses. Some of these policies are underpinned by federal statutes and rules (e.g., those guaranteeing all students the right to a free public education regardless of immigration status, and those prohibiting the sharing of personal information without students’ and families’ permission).¹¹² While the Harris County schools in the study had strong internal policies on these topics, they were not broadly publicized, leading to confusion and uncertainty among educators and local immigrant communities. For example, one community respondent reported that teachers on some campuses did not know what they could say about immigration issues and whether they

103 For instance, when signing a bill allowing Rhode Island driver’s licenses to be granted to Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) recipients, Governor Gina Raimondo criticized the Trump administration’s policy of family separation at the border and refused to send the state’s National Guard to assist in border enforcement. See Mark Reynolds, “Governor Signs Bill Giving Dreamers Right to Driver’s Licenses in R.I.,” *Providence Journal*, June 18, 2018. See also Rhode Island Office of the Governor, “Governor Chafee Requires Executive Agencies in Rhode Island to Adopt Immigration Detainer Policy.”

104 Office of the Governor, Rhode Island, “Governor Chafee Requires Executive Agencies in Rhode Island to Adopt Immigration Detainer Policy.”

105 Madeleine List, “Elorza to Trump: ‘Providence is a Welcoming, Inclusive City,’” *Providence Journal*, April 15, 2019.

106 Matt O’Brien, “Immigration Bill Could Thwart Providence Mayor’s Pledge,” Associated Press, January 20, 2017.

107 For examples of the types of issues discussed in “Know Your Rights” sessions and the materials distributed at them, see Immigrant Defense Project, “ICE Arrests: Know Your Rights Infographics,” accessed October 12, 2019.

108 See Texas Legislature, *An Act Relating to the Enforcement by Campus Police Departments*.

109 City of Houston, “Welcoming Houston,” accessed April 1, 2020.

110 See recommendations 5 and 6 in Welcoming Houston, *Task Force Recommendations* (Houston: Welcoming Houston, 2017).

111 Elizabeth Trovall, “Harris County Approves Plan for Deportation Defense Fund,” Houston Public Media, February 25, 2020.

112 Julie Sugarman, *Legal Protections for K-12 English Learner and Immigrant-Background Students* (Washington, DC: MPI, 2019).

should report unauthorized immigrant students, particularly when the principal was unsympathetic toward them.

Across the Harris County schools in this study, administrators made efforts to support immigrant students. Despite the pro-enforcement provisions of SB 4 and the anti-immigration political climate at the state level that led to its passage, campus and district administrators made public statements supporting individual immigrant students and held public meetings about immigration issues. Respondents reported that administrators at two of the study schools became involved in individual cases when students and/or their family members were arrested. In those cases, the administrators wrote letters to immigration judges asking to stay the students' deportation. According to interviewees, becoming involved in these deportation cases helped administrators establish that schools are safe, supportive environments for students from immigrant backgrounds.

The schools the research team visited also created opportunities for students to support their classmates, propose changes to campus and district policies, and become active in advocacy and politics at the local, state, and national levels. These opportunities built on student strengths documented in this study: personal resilience and a strong work ethic, cooperation and trust, and connections to trusted adults

The schools ... also created opportunities for students to support their classmates, propose changes to campus and district policies, and become active in advocacy and politics at the local, state, and national levels.

in schools and local communities. In one Harris County school, students served as "ambassadors" for newcomers, orienting them to school, interpreting for them, and helping them obtain uniforms and school supplies. Students at a Rhode Island school were trained and certified as interpreters for younger students at a nearby middle school. These initiatives provided service opportunities for students from immigrant backgrounds while also reportedly creating a welcoming environment for the students they served.

One of the schools in Rhode Island adopted UCLA's "Re-imagining Migration" model for youth participatory action research—a model that links students' personal immigration stories with school and government policies.¹¹³ The students surveyed each other about their migration experiences and perceptions, and recent immigrant students made a movie that told their migration stories. Another school developed a yearlong oral history course to connect newcomer students with the local community. The course involved pairing newcomer students with those who had more local experience and sending them into the community to photograph and interview leaders such as teachers, pastors, and business owners. The course helped recent immigrant students practice their English, expand their daily routines, and reduce their social isolation.

Educators in the study schools encouraged their students to advocate and organize to influence policies in their schools and local communities. At a school in Harris County, students attended events to discuss discipline policies and petitioned the school board to change school-transfer policies. At a school in Rhode Island, students conducted student and parent surveys and pressed for changes in the dress code and elective classes. Another Rhode Island school nominated students to the city's "youth cabinet," where they

113 University of California Los Angeles (UCLA) and Project Zero, "Re-imagining Migration," accessed October 15, 2019.

shared their experiences with the mayor and other officials. Other students at that school engaged in advocacy on immigration issues at the statehouse.

B. *Identifying Caring Adults*

Support from caring education professionals has been shown to mitigate the impact of stress on students' mental health.¹¹⁴ Students who are themselves or have relatives who are unauthorized immigrants have good reasons not to share information about the immigration status of family members. But doing so can help teachers and administrators understand a student's behavior, mental health, and school engagement, and assist them in meeting the student's needs and promoting academic achievement.

Educators stressed how important it is for students to have a caring adult in the school setting they can trust and who they believe "has their back." This caring adult—an unofficial "point person" students feel they can talk to—can be a teacher, counselor, social worker, or principal. In the words of one teacher, when students feel "safe, respected, and loved" it is much easier to engage them in school and talk to them about sensitive issues.

Hiring teachers from similar backgrounds as a school's students may foster closer ties and trust. Research has shown that teachers from similar demographic backgrounds may enhance students' motivation, personal effort, communication with teachers, perceptions that teachers care about them, and college aspirations.¹¹⁵ To improve student-teacher trust and communication, two schools in the study hired former students as faculty. But in other study schools, teachers from different ethnic backgrounds were also described as successful in earning students' trust. For instance, a non-Hispanic White teacher in the study traveled to the Guatemalan highlands regularly, where he taught summer classes and helped build schools. Through his travels, he learned Guatemalan indigenous languages and cultural expressions, which he used in class as greetings and affirmations of his students.

Educators stressed how important it is for students to have a caring adult in the school setting they can trust and who they believe "has their back."

Caring adults need not always be classroom teachers. In three of the high schools in the study, principals met with students individually and developed strong relationships with them. In another school, a counselor related to students using stories about his youth, having grown up poor in a neighborhood with struggling schools. He used these stories to build trust and empathy with students; once trust was established, he encouraged them to "open up" and discuss their fears with him individually at first, then in small groups of sympathetic students, and eventually during larger student assemblies.

¹¹⁴ Sirin et al., "Understanding the Role of Social Support."

¹¹⁵ Anna J. Egalite and Brian Kisida, "The Effects of Teacher Match on Students' Academic Perceptions and Attitudes," *Education Evaluation and Policy Analysis* 40, no. 1 (2017): 59–81; Damira S. Rasheed et al., "The Effect of Teacher–Child Race/Ethnicity Matching and Classroom Diversity on Children's Socioemotional and Academic Skills," *Child Development* (published online June 23, 2019).

Staff at the two smallest campuses included in the fieldwork expressed the view that they have advantages in building trusting relationships. A smaller setting makes it easier for staff to regularly engage with the same students and to monitor how they are doing. In one school, the principal, teachers, and a social worker discussed the educational and socioemotional needs of individual students at regular planning meetings, and then assigned the task of working closely with them to the staff or faculty member who is best able to communicate with them. Similarly, an educator at a third small school described the adults and students there as “like family” because they knew each other well and the students felt safe.

In their self-assessments, Latino students suggested that their schools have had mixed success in connecting them with caring adults. A majority of students (56 percent) agreed that teachers care about them and what happens to them. However, a smaller share (38 percent) reported feeling like they could count on at least one adult in their school, while 36 percent said they felt they could talk about their troubles with people at school. Fewer immigrant students responded positively to these questions than their U.S.-born peers (as shown in Figure 16 above), which is in keeping with the lower levels of trust among immigrant students—particularly recent arrivals from Central America—reported by educators and other interview respondents.¹¹⁶

C. *Reforming Disciplinary Practices*

Disciplinary policies and practices can also affect the school environment and how students experience it. Using school resource officers (SROs), who are often essentially school police officers, to enforce discipline carries risks for unauthorized immigrant students, who can wind up in ICE custody if arrested. Using law enforcement officers may also alienate students more generally and make them less likely to engage with and trust other adults on the campus. As school shootings and other violent incidents have become more common, many districts have adopted “zero-tolerance” policies whereby minor infractions can result in arrest. Yet districts often lack strong guidelines about the roles of SROs, leading to confusion about when and how they should intervene, and increasing the risk of violent confrontations or arrests. Research has shown that such policies can create a “school-to-prison” pipeline for students of color, which for unauthorized immigrant students may then become a “school-to-deportation” pipeline.¹¹⁷

Some schools have adopted alternative approaches to increase students’ trust and avoid putting them at risk of deportation. They have chosen to use SROs and other officers less frequently, or to use them in ways that may be less intimidating. In some instances, administrators have overhauled school disciplinary procedures. For example, one school in Rhode Island implemented an alternative form of discipline known as “restorative justice.”¹¹⁸ Restorative justice is designed to moderate punishments for minor infractions, stop recidivism, and limit conflict before it escalates. Taken together, these strategies are intended to reduce the time students spend out of the classroom.

¹¹⁶ Sixty-seven percent of the foreign-born students in the sample were born in El Salvador, Guatemala or Honduras; 51 percent of the entire sample had a mother or father born in one of these countries.

¹¹⁷ Coshandra Dillard, “[The School-to-Deportation Pipeline](#),” *Teaching Tolerance* 60 (Fall 2018).

¹¹⁸ Akiva Liberman and Michael Katz, *Implementing Restorative Justice in Rhode Island Schools: First-Year Implementation of Case Conferencing* (Washington, DC: Urban Institute, 2017).

To be effective, restorative justice requires sustained effort and resources. According to a 2017 evaluation, the model requires that all participants (students, parents, and school personnel) be fully engaged and have a shared understanding of the goals of mediation.¹¹⁹ Educators at the school that implemented this model said that it also requires the cultivation among staff and faculty of a trauma-informed understanding of student behavior, as opposed to interpreting inappropriate behaviors as an individual personality deficit. They stressed that mediation should be done quickly before conflict escalates and to prevent students from missing substantial class time; timely mediation requires a team of dedicated specialists who can quickly convene the parties involved in the dispute. To meet these resource needs, the district in Rhode Island involved in this study hired four behavioral specialists across a high school, middle school, and elementary school when implementing its restorative justice strategy.

The 2017 evaluation also stressed the importance of having enough skilled facilitators and of developing relationships with the criminal justice system and community service providers.¹²⁰ To this end, the Rhode Island district implementing restorative justice also engaged the local police department. While the schools implemented restorative justice, the police department created a new community-policing unit and hired new SROs, training them on issues such as diversity, mental health, and trauma. The role of the SROs changed from assisting with discipline to building trust with students and making them comfortable around law enforcement authorities. At the time of the study team's visit, the resource officers (one of whom was bilingual in Spanish) were sitting with students at lunch, playing games with them during physical education classes, and greeting them at the beginning and end of the day alongside the principal and parent volunteers.

Overall, reforms to disciplinary practices have the potential to both proactively address potential conflicts while putting students at ease and minimizing their involvement with the criminal justice system—thereby lowering the risk of deportation for unauthorized immigrant students while also lowering potentially life-altering consequences for other students. In some contexts, schools may not have the resources needed to completely rework their disciplinary systems and hire new staff, but more limited reforms, such as adjusting and clarifying the role of SROs, may still be possible.

D. Providing Resources to Address Mental-Health Conditions

Fifty-seven percent of the Latino students in this study reported that they had talked to a psychologist, social worker, or counselor about mental-health problems at some point in their lives, but only 23 percent were doing so at the time of the survey. Roughly one-third of students reporting symptoms of depression in the clinical range were receiving counseling, as were slightly less than one-third of those reporting symptoms of anxiety or PTSD. These results indicate that most students with potentially severe mental-health conditions were not receiving support. Overall, girls were substantially more likely than boys to be receiving counseling (31 percent versus 12 percent).

The schools in this study had varying levels of staff and resources to address students' mental-health needs. All the Rhode Island schools—both traditional public and charter—had hired counselors and/or

¹¹⁹ Liberman and Katz, *Implementing Restorative Justice in Rhode Island Schools*.

¹²⁰ Liberman and Katz, *Implementing Restorative Justice in Rhode Island Schools*.

social workers, some of whom were bilingual. One Rhode Island district had also hired a team of six social workers to collaborate and work across schools, intervening in more intensive cases. A high school in the district had its own team of six as well: a social worker, three counselors, and two behavior specialists. The district encouraged teachers to bring students to the attention of the teams and allowed the teams to hold fundraisers for students with particularly acute needs, such as those who were homeless or needed an organ transplant. In addition, a local community-based organization helped train school staff in trauma-informed care and took referrals for counseling.

Educators also described how schools across the county successfully partnered with local hospitals, clinics, and universities to connect students with appropriate mental-health services.

All the educators interviewed in Harris County reported that their public schools did not have the resources to hire enough counselors or social workers. In one school, a counselor had a caseload approaching 400, and two community respondents reported caseloads as high as 700 and 1,000 in other schools. However, educators

also described how schools across the county successfully partnered with local hospitals, clinics, and universities to connect students with appropriate mental-health services. For example, a local hospital piloted a mobile therapy clinic in the schools; its two bilingual clinicians screened students for mental-health symptoms, conducted therapy sessions, referred those with intensive needs to the hospital, and trained teachers and administrators on the effects of trauma and grief. Other approaches included a hospital operating a school-based medical clinic that served students and their parents that employed video counseling;¹²¹ a graduate-student social worker offering counseling in eight low-income schools;¹²² and a pair of nationally renowned mental-health clinics offering free services to students with severe mental-health conditions.

Staff at some schools also helped students with other challenges, such as economic hardship, that could affect their mental health. For example, in some Harris County high schools, there were dedicated staff to assist students with basic needs such as food, clothing, school supplies, transportation, and health care.

As these study sites illustrate, a variety of approaches can be used to support students' mental health. In areas with rich community resources, such as Harris County, there may be a range of health, mental health, and immigration service providers and advocates, and dedicated school staff can be instrumental in linking students with these resources. At the same time, other schools may build in-house capacity, as was the case in Rhode Island, where schools generally had more staff on campus to provide counseling and mental-health support, requiring less frequent referrals to external services.

E. Conducting Outreach to Parents and Other Family Members

Most of the Latino students in the study reported feeling safe around and able to talk to family members (see Figure 15 above), making parents and other relatives important sources of student strength. At the

121 Center for Connected Health Policy, "About Telehealth," accessed October 12, 2019.

122 This graduate student provided counseling during the 2018–19 school year, when the research was conducted, and at that time it was not clear if she would continue to provide counseling during the following year.

same time, educators participating in the study described difficulties engaging parents in their children's education. Some parents worked long hours on irregular schedules and did not understand the U.S. education system or trust school staff. As a result, educators said that Latino parents seldom attended traditional parent-engagement activities such as parent-teacher conferences and coffees with the principal.

Some schools used leadership opportunities to engage parents. One school in Rhode Island hired a parent as a home-school liaison to welcome new students, help them fill out forms, explain school rules, interpret for them, and, if needed, accompany students and their parents in truancy court. The parent liaison also supervised three parent volunteers who greeted students every morning, called home when students were absent, and conducted home visits when there were multiple absences. The district had an immigrant parent on the school board and gave board members stipends so that low-income parents could afford to spend time away from their jobs.

The schools in Harris County involved parents in learning decisions through campus-level Language Proficiency Assessment Committees (LPACs). In accordance with Texas regulations, the LPAC parents helped make decisions about the designation of students as English Learners, teacher caseloads, and what testing accommodations students could be given.¹²³ Such committees did not exist in Rhode Island; the relative level of parent engagement in school decision-making between the sites was not assessed in this study.

Another strategy for engaging parents is to link them with community resources. One educator described how a school had increased attendance at monthly principal coffees by bringing in experts to provide tips on immigrant rights and how to communicate effectively with adolescents about sensitive topics such as social media use, drugs, sex, dating, anxiety, and depression. The school also helped parents sign up for health care through local clinics and hospitals. In another school, staff members responsible for linking students and their families to food, clothing, and other necessities helped parents find jobs and advocate for their children in the school.

While effectively engaging parents can be challenging, research has documented the links between greater parental involvement and higher academic achievement, school engagement, and similar outcomes for Latino students at all levels of schooling, from pre-kindergarten through college.¹²⁴ And given the strong relationships students in this study reported with family members, engaging parents is also an important opportunity to support the mental health and well-being of Latino youth more broadly.

F. A Balancing Act: Supporting Mental Health amid Policy and Resource Constraints

Many of the strategies described in this section for supporting the mental health and school engagement of Latino students require resources, staffing, and other forms of district support. Yet, finding these resources is often a challenge at a time when schools are facing significant funding constraints. All but one of the schools in this study had a predominantly low-income student body—meaning greater need

¹²³ Texas Education Agency, "Language Proficiency Assessment Committee Resources," accessed January 27, 2020.

¹²⁴ William H. Jeynes, "A Meta-Analysis: The Relationship between Parental Involvement and Latino Student Outcomes," *Education and Urban Society* 49, no. 1 (2017): 4–28.

for supplementary services for all students in these schools. In addition, enrollment of immigrant students partway through the school year is a challenge for schools nationwide because school funding is allocated at the beginning of the school year.¹²⁵

Administrators at the traditional public schools in this study also reported struggling with relatively low attendance, graduation rates, and test scores, placing them at risk of being identified as “in need of improvement.” Some principals at Harris County schools described the pressure they were under to improve academic outcomes to avoid such a designation—or in some cases, to emerge from one—leaving little funding for mental health, student leadership, parental engagement, and other forms of student support. Similarly, some of the Rhode Island schools had lost authority over their budgets, reportedly making it difficult for them to develop programs and hire staff to support students’ socioemotional needs. One of the Rhode Island schools was able to devote substantial resources to hiring counselors and behavior specialists to support its new restorative justice approach to discipline, but it had to sacrifice electives and afterschool activities.

Educators at some charter schools described a similar situation. Academic outcomes were the top spending priority, while funding for measures to support student socioemotional well-being were less certain, even though these schools generally reported having more resources and flexibility than the traditional public schools. Two of the charters visited were strongly focused on college preparation—with most of the counseling geared in this direction. While students in these two schools were generally accepted to college, educators said that they often struggled with the social and emotional skills needed to succeed there, particularly when transitioning from a majority Latino to majority White educational environment.

While the link between mental health and academic achievement has been well documented, schools often have limited resources available to support their students’ socioemotional well-being.

Education is the central mission of schools, and while the link between mental health and academic achievement has been well documented, schools often have limited resources available to support their students’ socioemotional well-being. The educators interviewed for the study were generally aware of the potential benefits of mental-health services for their Latino students but frustrated that their schools could not do more to provide greater support in a tough budgetary environment.

8 Conclusions

This study documents widespread fear of immigration enforcement and high levels of anxiety, depression, and PTSD symptoms across a sample of Latino high school students—levels that were high for youth born

¹²⁵ At that time of the study visit in May 2019, some of the study’s high schools were registering several Central American immigrant students every day. This was the same month that U.S. Border Patrol apprehensions reached a 12-year peak of 133,000, with many of these apprehensions including Central American children and adolescents. See U.S. Customs and Border Enforcement (CBP), “CBP Releases Fiscal Year 2019 Southwest Border Migration Stats: Agency Experiences Record Number of Apprehensions/Inadmissible Family Units” (press release, March 5, 2019); CBP, “Southwest Border Migration FY 2019,” updated November 14, 2019.

in the United States as well as those born outside the country. At the same time, students exhibited personal strengths in terms of resilience, spirituality, family support, and school engagement that may help mitigate trauma and other stressors.

Study participants reported higher prevalence of symptoms of mental-health conditions than youth in earlier studies—even studies of unauthorized immigrants that were conducted during previous administrations when enforcement levels were higher than they are now. Increased media coverage of anti-immigration rhetoric and enforcement policies, along with more perceived discrimination in Latino communities, may have exacerbated the mental health of Latino youth in recent years.

Enforcement-related fears and symptoms of mental-health conditions intersected in several notable ways. A majority of students said they feared deportation of a friend or family member, and most reported levels of anxiety, depression, or PTSD that were high enough to warrant a clinical diagnosis; students with deportation concerns also were more likely to score in the clinical range for mental-health conditions than other students in the study.

That said, immigration enforcement was just one of several stressors common among the Latino youth in this study. Other stressors endemic to low-income Latino populations such as economic hardship, traumatic experiences, and discrimination also had significant associations with students' mental health. The cumulative effects of enforcement fears and these other stressors likely contributed to the high prevalence of mental-health problems in the sample.

Further, stepped-up enforcement may not be the only policy factor related to poor mental health among Latino adolescents. Students who feared that receiving public benefits such as food stamps or Medicaid could lead to deportation or other negative immigration consequences exhibited more anxiety than other students. Their anxiety about asking the government for assistance may be related to the recently revised and widely publicized public-charge rule, which makes it more difficult for those using some forms of assistance to get a green card.

Fear of immigration enforcement and associated mental-health conditions are not only prevalent in localities where enforcement activity is high.

The degree of enforcement fear was strongly related to mental health, as students who feared enforcement most acutely—and who changed their behaviors as a result—had the worst mental health. The prevalence of PTSD and depressive symptoms was highest among the 30 percent of students who feared immigration enforcement enough to change how they went about their daily lives,

for instance by staying home more often or avoiding driving, afterschool programs, religious services, or community activities. Only those students who changed their daily routines exhibited more symptoms of PTSD or depression when controlling for the other stressors of trauma, hardship, and discrimination.

The results of this study suggest that fear of immigration enforcement and associated mental-health conditions are not only prevalent in localities where enforcement activity is high. While youth in Harris County were significantly more likely to report being afraid of immigration enforcement—most likely

due to the higher level of enforcement there—those in Rhode Island also reported high levels of fear and exposure to enforcement. Latino students in both sites reported high levels of anxiety, depression, or PTSD symptoms—with little difference in their prevalence between sites.

The study's assessments were collected at a single point in time, however, and therefore cannot establish that fear of enforcement or behavior changes caused mental-health deterioration. Longitudinal research that tracks students over time could fill this gap by assessing mental health after enforcement fears have been documented.

While response rates were robust for almost all measures in the study, only about half the students answered all the questions in the depression scale (though students who failed to answer the depression questions did not score significantly higher or lower on the anxiety or PTSD scales). Future research with a larger sample could probe more deeply the relationships among immigration enforcement, other stressors, and mental-health conditions—particularly depression.

Meanwhile, relatively high immigration from Central America in recent years has meant that many U.S. schools have populations of newcomer students with substantial economic hardship and extensive traumatic experiences.¹²⁶ Perhaps counterintuitively, the U.S.-born Latino students in this study had experienced even more trauma than their foreign-born peers.

While many of these issues are beyond schools' power to address, they can be safe havens that buffer Latino students from these stressors. The schools in the study took active steps to address their students' fears and anxieties. These steps were made somewhat easier by the fact that the schools had majority Latino student bodies, with many students having shared cultural and linguistic backgrounds, and by having generally supportive school leaders. Further research could explore the mental health of Latino students in schools where they are less concentrated and where they may encounter more discrimination and receive less support from education professionals.

The study highlighted several strategies that schools are using to support their Latino students—strategies that were mostly implemented in individual schools or classrooms rather than systemwide. All the schools had policies to protect the confidentiality of students, including those who are unauthorized immigrants, in keeping with federal laws and guidelines. In Harris County, where state legislation prevents local officials from openly opposing ICE's enforcement activities, the county funded deportation defense efforts, and school administrators provided letters of support for students or family members in deportation proceedings. In both locations, city and school district officials held Know Your Rights sessions about how to respond to enforcement activities. Such activities, while not representing systemic changes, helped generate welcoming environments for students from immigrant backgrounds.

Several schools in the study also created opportunities for Latino students to orient and interpret for other students, explore their personal experiences with immigration, and advocate for changes in school, district, city, and state policies. These opportunities built on students' resilience, work ethic, and personal

126 Jodi Berger Cardoso, "Running to Stand Still: Trauma Symptoms, Coping Strategies, and Substance Use Behaviors in Unaccompanied Migrant Youth," *Children and Youth Services Review* 92 (September 2018): 143–52.

experiences and facilitated their integration into local communities. One of the schools adopted UCLA's Reimaging Migration curriculum, but otherwise these opportunities were generated by individual educators or community-based organizations with which they partnered.

In an important systemic change, one of the districts in the study used a restorative justice model to reform its disciplinary policies. By decreasing use of punishment and reliance on school resource officers, the model improved the school climate while reducing the number of behavioral incidents and the risk of arrest and deportation for immigrant students. The model involves employing school social workers and thereby generates additional resources to address student mental health.

All the schools had adults on staff—be they teachers, administrators, counselors, social workers, or parent liaisons—who could intervene when students exhibit signs of distress or just need someone to talk to. However, the schools also lacked the resources to provide mental-health counseling on the scale needed. These resource constraints were particularly evident in Harris County, but schools there had developed partnerships with hospitals, community health centers, mental-health providers, and universities to fill gaps in counseling and social work.

The stakes are high for Latino youth in the current social and political climate, and for the society in which they will grow into adulthood, join the workforce, raise their own families, and take part in civic life.

The stakes are high for Latino youth in the current social and political climate, and for the society in which they will grow into adulthood, join the workforce, raise their own families, and take part in civic life. Latinos are about one-quarter of U.S. high school students, and they are expected to account for almost all U.S. labor force growth in the coming decades. Their mental health and school engagement will influence their future productivity and the future strength of the U.S. economy, as studies have shown young adults with severe mental-health conditions experience difficulties in the labor market later in life.¹²⁷

While schools' core mission is one of academic achievement and college or career readiness, students may face a wide range of challenges—from economic hardship to discrimination to fears that a loved one may be deported—that can take a toll on both their well-being and their ability meet learning goals. One counselor in the study shared the view that education should be about “teaching the whole student. ... A whole lot of work needs to happen to help them persist” through high school, and perhaps into higher education. At its heart, this approach entails identifying mental-health challenges and the wide range of strategies that can mitigate them.

¹²⁷ See, for example, a longitudinal study of adolescents in the Netherlands, showing those with consistently high levels of mental-health symptoms from ages 11 to 19 were less likely to be employed at age 19. See Karin Veldman et al., “Mental Health Trajectories from Childhood to Young Adulthood Affect the Educational and Employment Status of Young Adults: Results from the TRAILS Study,” *Journal of Epidemiology and Community Health* 69, no. 6 (2015): 588–93.

Appendices. Details of Study Methodology

This mixed-methods study was conducted during the 2018–19 school year. The quantitative component included self-assessments by 306 Latino students in 11 high schools. The qualitative component involved semistructured interviews with 38 education professionals in eight of these schools and with 27 community experts, including advocates, organizers, mental-health and other service providers, and local elected officials.

Appendix A. Study Site and School Selection

Both quantitative and qualitative research components were conducted in Harris County, Texas, and in four cities in Rhode Island. The sites were chosen primarily based on three factors: (1) high concentrations of Latino immigrants, (2) contrasting state and local immigration policy environments, and (3) the presence of districts and schools where the principal investigators for the study had established relationships that facilitated the research. To protect the confidentiality of respondents, the report and appendices do not provide further geographic detail about the districts and schools in the study.

The schools selected for the study have high concentrations of Latino students in immigrant families and varying educational formats. The 11 high schools in the study's quantitative component and the eight schools in the qualitative component include traditional public high schools, schools with special programs for newcomer immigrant students, and charter schools. This variety of educational formats allowed researchers to focus on different student populations: the newcomer schools have mostly immigrant students, many of whom are over age 17, while the charter schools had students in earlier grades and their Latino student populations were often predominantly U.S. born. Additionally, the differences in the schools' missions and the ways in which they are structured allowed researchers to explore a variety of strategies to support Latino students' mental health and school engagement.

Appendix B. The Latino Student Sample in the Quantitative Study

Slightly more than half the 306 students in the sample were female, and slightly less than half were born in the United States (see Table A-1). The students ranged in age from 14 to 25, with almost one-third over the age of 17. Older students were mostly recent immigrants, and many were from Guatemala. The assessments were conducted in English and Spanish, depending on which language the participants preferred, and about two-fifths of the students reported not speaking English well or not speaking it at all.

The sample was split evenly between the Harris County and Rhode Island sites, and student characteristics were similar in the two sites, except in terms of the nationality of their parents. In Harris County, almost all the students had at least one parent born in Mexico or Central America. In Rhode Island, nearly one-third had a parent born in another Latin American country, primarily Colombia or the Dominican Republic. Students were not asked about their U.S. citizenship or legal status, nor were they asked about the immigration status of their parents or other family members; this was done both to encourage students to feel comfortable answering the survey truthfully and to protect their privacy. The large share of the

sample with parents born in Mexico and Central America (with many students being born in these countries themselves) means it is likely that many have unauthorized immigrants in their families, given that in 2016 two-thirds of unauthorized immigrants in the United States were from this region¹²⁸ and that in FY 2019, 91 percent of those ICE deported were also from this region.¹²⁹

TABLE A-1
Characteristics of Latino Youth Sample, by Study Site, 2018–19

	Total Sample	Harris County, TX	Rhode Island
Total students in sample	306	152	154
Female	58%	55%	61%
Nonbinary gender	1%	1%	1%
Over age 17	29%	28%	31%
Born outside the United States	53%	51%	56%
Speaks English not well or not at all	41%	38%	44%
Has a parent born in Mexico, El Salvador, Guatemala, or Honduras*	80%	93%	68%

* The share of students with parents born in Mexico, El Salvador, Guatemala, or Honduras was the only characteristic which differed significantly across the study sites at the $p < 0.05$ level.

Note: Percentages were calculated from non-missing cases, not the total sample.

Source: Migration Policy Institute (MPI), University of Houston (UH), and Rhode Island College (RIC) survey of Latino high school students in Harris County, TX, and Rhode Island during the 2018–19 school year.

Appendix C. Student Recruitment, Human Subject Protections, and Data Collection

The researchers met with district-level administrators to identify schools with high concentrations of Latino and immigrant students for inclusion in the study. In the case of some of the charter schools, the researchers directly contacted school directors. After identifying the schools, the researchers met with school principals or directors to review the study, obtain permission to collect data, and design a strategy to recruit student participants. With administrator approval, the researchers worked with school staff such as English as a Second Language (ESL) directors, ESL teachers, and home-school liaisons to recruit students. Thus, the sample was obtained through networks of educators within districts and schools, not through random selection.

Data were collected between November 2018 and May 2019 under a collaborative agreement among Migration Policy Institute, University of Houston, and Rhode Island College. University of Houston was the Institutional Review Board (IRB) of record for both study sites. The researchers obtained IRB and district approval for data collection, and they followed established procedures to minimize risks and protect student confidentiality, including written informed consent from parents and written assent from the students.

128 MPI Migration Data Hub, "Profile of the Unauthorized Population: United States," accessed January 27, 2020.

129 ICE, *U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement Fiscal Year 2019 Enforcement and Removal Operations Report*.

Researchers—including the co-principal investigators and their graduate student research assistants—met with groups of up to six students at a time to conduct the assessments. Students responded to the questions—in English or Spanish—on iPads, with researchers available to provide any necessary support or technical assistance. The assessments ranged in length from 45 to 120 minutes, with an average of 60 minutes. All students were given a \$30 gift card incentive to participate.

Appendix D. The Student Assessment Questionnaire

The student assessments included the types of questions listed below. All questions had been previously tested with Latino student populations in the United States, except for the questions about basic demographics and immigration enforcement. Most of the questions can be benchmarked against other studies of comparable populations, as described in the body of the report. For the full questionnaire in English and Spanish, please see: www.migrationpolicy.org/research/immigration-enforcement-mental-health-latino-students.

- ▶ **Demographics.** Seven questions covered age, grade, nativity (U.S. born or foreign born), birth country of parents, language spoken at home, English proficiency, and number of household members.
- ▶ **Immigration-enforcement-related stress.** Eleven questions covered topics such as fear of deportation of a friend or family member, fear of one’s own deportation, knowing someone who has been deported, and avoiding public benefits or changing one’s behavior due to fear of immigration enforcement. All but two of these questions were developed specifically for this study.¹³⁰
- ▶ **Home and work responsibilities.** Four questions asked about students’ employment, hours worked in a job and taking care of family members, and job interference with schoolwork.
- ▶ **Economic hardship.** Eight questions from the Keepin’ It REAL evaluation queried how often students’ families had enough money to pay for food, rent, utilities, clothing, transportation, and fun activities.¹³¹
- ▶ **Trauma exposure.** Twenty questions from a modified version of the Cognitive Behavioral Intervention for Trauma in Schools (CBITS) Life Events Checklist were used to calculate lifetime exposure to traumatic events such as being a victim of violence, witnessing violence, being separated involuntarily from a family member, and being recruited by a gang.¹³²
- ▶ **Discrimination.** Fifteen questions from the Adolescent Discrimination Index (ADDI) were used to ask about experiences of discrimination such as being wrongly disciplined, hassled by the police, called racially insulting names, or threatened.¹³³

130 Two of the questions were taken from nationwide Pew Research Center surveys of Latino populations. See Lopez, Gonzalez-Barrera, and Krogstad, *More Latinos Have Serious Concerns about Their Place in America under Trump*; Mark Hugo Lopez, Ana Gonzalez-Barrera, and Jens Manuel Krogstad, *Latino Support for Democrats Falls, but Democratic Advantage Remains: Chapter 5: Hispanics and Their Views of Immigration Reform* (Washington, DC: Pew Research Center, 2014).

131 Flavio F. Marsiglia et al., “Acculturation Status and Substance Use Prevention with Mexican and Mexican-American Youth,” *Journal of Social Work Practice in the Addictions* 5, no. 1–2 (2005): 85–111.

132 Lisa H. Jaycox et al., “Violence Exposure, Posttraumatic Stress Disorder, and Depressive Symptoms among Recent Immigrant Schoolchildren,” *Journal of American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry* 41, no. 9 (2002): 1104–10; Lisa H. Jaycox, Audra K. Langley, and Sharon A. Hoover, *Cognitive Behavior Intervention for Trauma in Schools (CBITS): Second Edition* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 2018).

133 Fisher, Wallace, and Fenton, “Discrimination Distress during Adolescence.”

- ▶ **Anxiety.** Forty questions from the Screen for Child Anxiety Related Disorders (SCARED) scale, including subscales, were used to assess generalized, separation, social, school, and somatic/panic forms of anxiety.¹³⁴
- ▶ **Depression.** Twenty questions were used from the Center for Epidemiological Studies of Depression (CES-D) scale, including subscales for somatic/depressed affect, positive affect, and interpersonal depression.¹³⁵
- ▶ **Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD).** Seventeen questions from the Child PTSD Symptoms Scale (CPSS) assessed symptoms in three subscales (re-experiencing symptoms, avoidance symptoms, and hyperarousal symptoms); seven questions assessed whether these symptoms impaired respondents' daily functioning.¹³⁶
- ▶ **Substance abuse.** Two questions were asked about substance abuse over the students' lifetimes and in the last 30 days for each of five substances (for a total of ten questions): alcohol; cigarettes; marijuana; glue, spray paint, and other inhalants; and unprescribed pain medication.¹³⁷
- ▶ **Resilience.** Nineteen questions were asked about personal resilience (i.e., inner strengths), spirituality, religious service attendance, and support from family members. The 11 questions on the personal resilience scale were obtained from the University of California Los Angeles (UCLA) UndocuScholars Study.¹³⁸ The spirituality and family-support questions were taken from the Child and Youth Resilience Measure.¹³⁹
- ▶ **School engagement.** Twenty-one questions from the UCLA Longitudinal Immigrant Student Adaptation (LISA) study measured three dimensions of school engagement: cognitive (i.e., enjoying learning and being engaged in curriculum); behavioral (attending class, paying attention, and completing homework); and relational (having peers, teachers, and other supportive people that students can connect with in school).¹⁴⁰
- ▶ **Mental-health treatment.** Two questions asked students whether they were currently or had ever talked to a psychologist, social worker, or counselor about their problems.

Appendix E. Interviews with Educators and Key Community Informants

In collaboration with researchers from the University of Houston and Rhode Island College, MPI researchers met with education professionals in eight of the 11 schools in Rhode Island and Harris County, Texas. At each school, researchers met with the principal or director, at least one teacher, and at least one social

134 Birmaher et al., "Psychometric Properties of the Screen for Child Anxiety Related Emotional Disorders (SCARED)."

135 Radloff, "The CES-D Scale."

136 Foa, Johnson, Feeny, and Treadwell, "The Child PTSD Symptom Scale (CPSS)."

137 Flavio F. Marsiglia et al., "Influences of School Latino Composition and Linguistic Acculturation on a Prevention Program for Youths," *Social Work Research* 32, no. 1 (2010): 6–19; Marsiglia et al., "Acculturation Status and Substance Use Prevention."

138 Suárez-Orozco et al., "Undocumented Undergraduates on College Campuses."

139 Michael Ungar and Linda Liebenberg, "The International Resilience Project: A Mixed-Methods Approach to the Study of Resilience across Cultures," in *Handbook for Working with Children and Youth: Pathways to Resilience across Cultures and Contexts*, ed. Michael Ungar (London: SAGE Publications, 2005).

140 Carola Suárez-Orozco, Allyson Pimentel, and Margary Martin, "The Significance of Relationships: Academic Engagement and Achievement among Newcomer Immigrant Youth," *Teachers College Record* 111, no. 3 (2009): 712–49.

worker or counselor. The number of educators participating varied among the schools, based on the size of the school and the availability of staff and faculty. Researchers also met with a variety of key informants in the community, including local elected officials, health- and mental-health-care providers, other community-based service providers, immigration attorneys, and activists and community organizers focusing on immigration and education issues.

Fifty-seven of the 65 interviews were conducted in person during these visits in May 2019, and the other eight were conducted over the phone in June. Interviews lasted between 45 and 90 minutes, with an average of about one hour. Like the students, the educators and community informants provided formal written consent and were given \$30 participation incentives. The research team obtained University of Houston IRB and school district approval for these interviews as well.

Appendix F. Educator and Community Key Informant Questionnaires

The researchers used semistructured questionnaires to guide the interviews. Separate guides were developed for district administrators, school administrators, teachers, counselors/social workers, and community key informants. Depending on the interviewee, the questionnaires addressed the following topics:

- 1 background and context on the district, school, and individual educator *OR*, for community key informants, background and context on the local immigrant community, the respondent, and the services or activities of the respondent's organization;
- 2 state and local politics and policies around cooperation with federal immigration authorities;
- 3 perceptions of mental health, resilience, and school engagement of Latino students;
- 4 perceptions of students' fears about immigration enforcement, traumatic experiences, economic hardship, and encounters with discrimination; and
- 5 school supports for student mental health and engagement, including:
 - policies regarding engagement with immigration and other law enforcement officials,
 - disciplinary policies,
 - recruitment and professional development of faculty and staff who work with Latino students,
 - counseling and social work services for these students, and
 - engagement and support for parents and other caregivers in Latino immigrant families.

Appendix G. Quantitative and Qualitative Data Analysis

The research team performed data cleaning and nonresponse analysis before analyzing the student assessments. Response rates for individual questions and all the scales described in the research report exceeded 75 percent, except for the CES-D scale for depression (58 percent, see Table A-2). The researchers evaluated nonresponse bias on the CES-D by examining its correlations with the other major outcome measures in the study. Students who did not complete the CES-D had slightly higher resilience than those who completed it, but otherwise there were no significant differences in values on the mental-health and engagement measures between students who did and did not respond to the CES-D. Students who did not respond to the CES-D were, however, significantly more likely to report fears of detention and deportation of friends and family members—and behavior changes due to such fears—than those who responded. Because students who were more fearful about immigration enforcement were less likely to respond to the depression questions, the results described in the study likely underestimate the strength of the associations between enforcement fear and depression.

TABLE A-2

Response Rates for Questions and Scales in the Student Assessments, 2018–19

Question/Scale	Number Responding	Response Rate
Demographic, employment, and family-care questions	At least 305	100%
Mental-health counseling access questions	At least 301	At least 98%
Substance use questions	At least 298	At least 97%
School engagement/LISA study scale	278	91%
Economic hardship/Keepin' It REAL scale	273	89%
Resilience/UndocuScholars and Child and Youth Resilience scales	At least 272	At least 89%
Anxiety/SCARED scale	271	89%
Discrimination/ADDI scale	268	88%
Immigration enforcement questions	At least 266	At least 86%
Trauma exposure/Life Events Checklist scale	233	76%
Depression/CES-D scale	176	58%

Source: MPI, UH, and RIC survey of Latino high school students in Harris County, TX, and Rhode Island, 2018–19 school year.

The researchers analyzed frequencies and means of all the scales and selected questions within them, as well as all the unscaled variables in the dataset (see Table A-3 for summary statistics of the enforcement-fear variables, other stressors, and mental-health outcomes included in the analysis). Next, the data were cross-tabulated to measure correlations of the mental-health, engagement, and resilience scales with the immigration enforcement variables and other stressors: economic hardship, traumatic experiences, and discrimination (see Tables 2 and 3 in the main text of the report).

TABLE A-3

Measures of Immigration-Enforcement Fear, Other Stressors, and Mental-Health Outcomes Included in the Regression Analysis, by Study Site, 2018–19

Measure	How Measured	Total Sample	Rhode Island	Harris County, TX	Significance Test by Site
Immigration-enforcement fear					
How often are you worried that family members or friends might be detained or deported?	% Almost always or always	59.3%	52.1%	66.9%	0.011*
How often are you worried that you might be detained or deported?	% Almost always or always	32.0%	28.1%	35.9%	0.155
Do you know someone who had been deported?	% Yes	55.7%	49.0%	62.4%	0.019*
Are you worried that you, a friend of yours or a member of your family will be at a greater risk of being detained or deported by enrolling in a government program like food stamps?	% Very worried	22.8%	18.6%	27.0%	0.009*
Any of the following six behavior changes due to fear?	% Almost always or always	29.8%	25.4%	33.8%	0.142
How often does fear of deportation make you avoid attending religious services or community events?	% Almost always or always	8.7%	6.9%	10.5%	0.287
How often does fear of deportation make you avoid going to school activities outside of regular school hours?	% Almost always or always	6.5%	5.1%	7.7%	0.379
How often does fear of deportation make you avoid going to a doctor, health clinic or hospital if sick or injured?	% Almost always or always	11.0%	6.8%	15.0%	0.031*
How often does fear of deportation make you take public transportation or share a ride instead of driving?	% Almost always or always	9.2%	13.4%	7.2%	0.093
How often does fear of deportation make you stay at home instead of going out?	% Almost always or always	11.1%	8.2%	14.0%	0.132
How often does fear of deportation make you take a different route to school?	% Almost always or always	6.0%	3.8%	8.2%	0.129
Other stressors					
Currently working?	% Yes	25.2%	26.0%	24.3%	0.742
Spending any hours taking care of a family member?	% Yes	35.9%	34.4%	37.5%	0.574
Discrimination scale	Mean (out of 45)	6.51	6.21	6.81	0.359
Economic hardship scale	Mean (out of 24)	16.80	17.20	16.37	0.178
Trauma exposure scale	Mean (out of 21)	7.48	6.79	8.21	0.007*

TABLE A-3 (cont.)

Measures of Immigration-Enforcement Fear, Other Stressors, and Mental-Health Outcomes Included in the Regression Analysis, by Study Site, 2018–19

Measure	How Measured	Total Sample	Rhode Island	Harris County, TX	Significance Test by Site
Mental-health outcomes					
Post-traumatic stress disorder scale	Mean (out of 51)	19.83	18.34	21.26	0.053
Depression scale	Mean (out of 60)	18.41	17.05	19.62	0.101
Anxiety scale	Mean (out of 80)	31.12	31.29	30.94	0.844
Resilience scale	Mean (out of 57)	39.04	40.04	38.00	0.078
School engagement scale	Mean (out of 42)	29.64	30.39	28.79	0.023*

* Differences in values between the sites are considered significant at the $p < 0.05$ level.

Note: Percentages were calculated from non-missing cases, not the total sample.

Source: MPI, UH, and RIC survey of Latino high school students in Harris County, TX, and Rhode Island, 2018–19 school year.

Ordinary least squares (OLS) regressions were used to analyze associations between the enforcement variables and other stressors with the mental health, resilience, and engagement scales. OLS was appropriate for these analyses given that the scales are continuous measures. These models were generated for those enforcement-fear measures that were significantly correlated with the outcome measures, as shown in Table 2 in the main text and Table A-4 below.

TABLE A-4

Ordinary Least Squares (OLS) Regression Models Analyzed for Relationships between Enforcement-Fear Measures and Student Mental-Health Outcomes, 2018-19

	PTSD	Depression	Anxiety	Resilience	School Engagement
Always or almost always worried that family members or friends might be detained or deported	X	X	X		X
Always or almost always worried that oneself might be detained or deported					
Knows someone who has been deported	X		X	X	
Very worried about deportation or detention of a family member or friend due to enrollment in a government program			X		
Always or almost always changed behavior due to enforcement fears	X	X	X	X	X

Note: The survey asked six questions related to behavioral changes as a result of deportation fears; if students answered that they “almost always” or “always” made any of these six changes, they were considered to have changed their behavior due to fear of deportation.

Source: MPI, UH, and RIC survey of Latino high school students in Harris County, TX, and Rhode Island, 2018–19 school year.

Each of the relationships shown in the table above was analyzed using a series of OLS regression models. Demographic variables and other stressors were added to the models in a series of steps as follows:

- 1 The enforcement-fear measure was included as the independent variable (e.g., behavior changes driven by enforcement fears), and the mental-health outcome as the dependent variable (e.g., PTSD).
- 2 Demographic characteristics (gender, age, English proficiency, whether the student was born in the United States, and whether the parent was born in Mexico, El Salvador, Guatemala, or Honduras) were added as independent variables.
- 3 Whether the student was working, whether he or she was taking care of a family member, and the economic hardship scale were added as independent variables.
- 4 The discrimination scale was added as an independent variable.
- 5 The trauma exposure scale was added as an independent variable.
- 6 The interaction between gender and each enforcement-fear measure was added.

This process of adding independent variables was continued until the association between the key enforcement-fear variable and the mental-health outcome was no longer statistically significant. The authors considered associations to be significant if they fell within a 95 percent confidence interval ($p < 0.05$), meaning there was only a 5 percent probability that the associations occurred by chance alone.¹⁴¹

Once all the controls for demographics and the other stressors (economic hardship, discrimination, and trauma exposure) were included in the fifth model, the only enforcement-fear measure that showed significant associations with any of the mental-health outcomes was the measure of enforcement-fear driven behavior changes. This measure was significantly associated with depression for both genders, and with PTSD but only for females (as indicated by a significant coefficient for the gender-behavior-change interaction term but not the behavior-change base term). Table A-5 shows coefficients and significance tests for the final models: model 6 for PTSD (in which the gender-behavior-change interaction was significant) and model 5 for depression, anxiety, school engagement, and resilience (in which the gender interaction was not significant and so was dropped from the models).

141 Hutcheson, *The Multivariate Social Scientist*.

TABLE A-5

Detailed Results of Final OLS Regression Models Analyzed for Relationships between Enforcement-Fear Measures and Student Mental-Health Outcomes, 2018-19***Dependent Variable: Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (R-squared of 0.496)***

Independent Variable	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		
	Beta	Standard Error	Beta	T-test	Significance
Constant	-8.380	9.424	N/A	-0.889	0.375
Almost always or always changed behavior due to fear of deportation	-1.207	2.729	-0.047	-0.442	0.659
Born outside the United States	-0.834	1.842	-0.037	-0.453	0.651
Parent born in Mexico, El Salvador, Guatemala, or Honduras	-0.026	1.746	-0.001	-0.015	0.988
Female	2.254	1.605	0.099	1.405	0.162
Age in years	1.124	0.526	0.148	2.138	0.034*
Speaks English not well or not at all	-2.012	1.913	-0.084	-1.051	0.295
Currently working	-3.989	1.708	-0.157	-2.336	0.021*
Currently taking care of a family member	0.387	1.537	0.017	0.252	0.801
Economic hardship scale	-0.117	0.137	-0.056	-0.857	0.393
Discrimination Scale	0.955	0.143	0.469	6.670	0.000*
Traumatic experiences scale	0.668	0.204	0.230	3.275	0.001*
Interaction: Female and almost always or always changed behavior due to fear of deportation	7.641	3.306	0.254	2.311	0.022*

Dependent Variable: Depression (R-squared of 0.483)

Independent Variable	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		
	Beta	Standard Error	Beta	T-test	Significance
Constant	18.767	10.572	N/A	1.775	0.079
Almost always or always changed behavior due to fear of deportation	7.081	2.123	0.270	3.335	0.001*
Born outside the United States	1.086	2.115	0.049	0.513	0.609
Parent born in Mexico, El Salvador, Guatemala, or Honduras	-2.416	2.092	-0.088	-1.155	0.251
Female	6.190	1.607	0.279	3.852	0.000*
Age in years	-0.363	0.593	-0.049	-0.612	0.542
Speaks English not well or not at all	-2.037	2.622	-0.078	-0.777	0.439
Currently working	-2.404	1.944	-0.098	-1.237	0.219
Currently taking care of a family member	0.998	1.676	0.046	0.595	0.553
Economic hardship scale	-0.290	0.165	-0.139	-1.759	0.081
Discrimination Scale	0.707	0.161	0.362	4.383	0.000*
Traumatic experiences scale	0.448	0.236	0.159	1.902	0.060

Dependent Variable: Anxiety (R-squared of 0.388)

Independent Variable	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		
	Beta	Standard Error	Beta	T-test	Significance
Constant	38.799	12.769	N/A	3.038	0.003*
Almost always or always changed behavior due to fear of deportation	2.180	2.303	0.065	0.947	0.345
Born outside the United States	-0.859	2.507	-0.029	-0.343	0.732
Parent born in Mexico, El Salvador, Guatemala, or Honduras?	5.954	2.402	0.167	2.478	0.014
Female	10.781	1.931	0.362	5.584	0.000*
Age in years	-1.559	0.718	-0.157	-2.173	0.031*
Speaks English not well or not at all	1.700	2.673	0.054	0.636	0.526
Currently working	-1.328	2.344	-0.040	-0.566	0.572
Currently taking care of a family member	0.750	2.095	0.025	0.358	0.721
Economic hardship scale	-0.046	0.183	-0.017	-0.252	0.802
Discrimination Scale	0.942	0.196	0.353	4.812	0.000*
Traumatic experiences scale	0.136	0.274	0.036	0.496	0.621

Dependent Variable: Resilience (R-squared of 0.175)

Independent Variable	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		
	Beta	Standard Error	Beta	T-test	Significance*
Constant	39.172	8.338		4.698	0.000*
Almost always or always changed behavior due to fear of deportation	-2.926	1.498	-0.157	-1.954	0.053
Born outside the United States	0.146	1.702	0.009	0.086	0.932
Parent born in Mexico, El Salvador, Guatemala, or Honduras	-3.105	1.642	-0.153	-1.890	0.061
Female	-0.874	1.294	-0.052	-0.675	0.501
Age in years	0.016	0.466	0.003	0.034	0.973
Speaks English not well or not at all	3.566	1.744	0.204	2.045	0.043*
Currently working	1.130	1.585	0.060	0.713	0.477
Currently taking care of a family member	0.370	1.368	0.022	0.271	0.787
Economic hardship scale	0.296	0.123	0.188	2.414	0.017*
Discrimination Scale	-0.278	0.126	-0.188	-2.217	0.028*
Traumatic experiences scale	-0.070	0.185	-0.032	-0.377	0.707

Dependent Variable: School Engagement (R-squared of 0.156)

Independent Variable	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		
	Beta	Standard Error	Beta	T-test	Significance*
Constant	26.868	6.148	N/A	4.370	0.000*
Almost always or always changed behavior due to fear of deportation	-1.921	1.116	-0.139	-1.722	0.087
Born outside the United States	-2.945	1.212	-0.244	-2.430	0.016*
Parent born in Mexico, El Salvador, Guatemala, or Honduras	-0.227	1.152	-0.016	-0.197	0.844
Female	1.514	0.938	0.123	1.615	0.108
Age in years	0.210	0.347	0.052	0.606	0.545
Speaks English not well or not at all	-0.455	1.269	-0.035	-0.359	0.720
Currently working	0.451	1.149	0.033	0.393	0.695
Currently taking care of a family member	1.601	0.993	0.128	1.613	0.109
Economic hardship scale	0.177	0.089	0.153	1.983	0.049*
Discrimination Scale	-0.171	0.092	-0.157	-1.869	0.063
Traumatic experiences scale	-0.143	0.132	-0.091	-1.086	0.279

* Coefficients are considered significant at the $p < 0.05$ level.

Note: The survey asked six questions related to behavioral changes as a result of deportation fears; if students answered that they “almost always” or “always” made any of these six changes, they were considered to have changed their behavior due to fear of deportation. The interaction term for gender * behavioral changes was only included in the final model for dependent variable (A) PTSD; it was not significant and therefore dropped in the final models for the other four dependent variables.

Source: MPI, UH, and RIC survey of Latino high school students in Harris County, TX, and Rhode Island, 2018–19 school year.

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Randy Capps, a demographer, is Director of Research for U.S. Programs at the Migration Policy Institute (MPI). His areas of expertise include immigration trends, the unauthorized population, immigrants in the U.S. labor force, the children of immigrants and their well-being, and immigrant health-care and public-benefits access and use. He also has examined the impact of the detention and deportation of immigrant parents on children.

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