



# IMMIGRANT SURVIVORS OF ABUSE IN THE GREATER HOUSTON AREA

## AIS Research Study

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AIS is engaged in ongoing research and is releasing the below preliminary results of our 2023 study iteration.

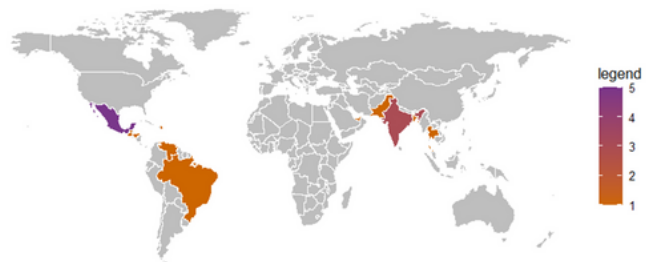
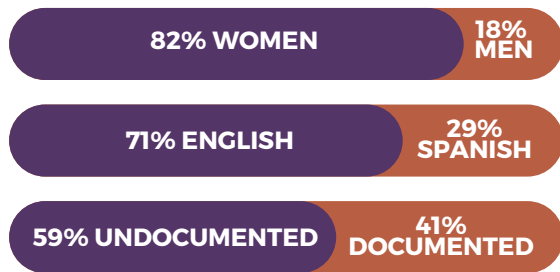
### OBJECTIVES

We seek to learn more about immigrant survivors' experiences with abuse as well as determine how interactions with police officers affect a survivor's willingness to access services.

**WHY?** Prior to this study, available data came from advocates and nonprofit organizations rather than from survivors. **We hope to empower survivors to tell us their stories and provide a more accurate and comprehensive overview of what abuse looks like and the likelihood of survivors seeking help.**

**WHO?** Participation in this study was completely voluntary. Potential participants received the study flyer and could choose whether to participate. Participants were often already connected to services, with 76% reporting having completed a consultation with a nonprofit organization regarding their immigration status prior to this study.

Participants resided in Greater Houston in the counties of Brazoria, Harris, Montgomery, and Waller. Participants were required to be 18 or older. Participants self-identified as immigrant survivors of abuse and completed the survey by phone in the location of their choosing.



### 1. ABUSE

We asked participants how they would define abuse. Some representative responses are included below:

#### ABUSE IS...

**“Not only physical abuse but verbal, emotional, and mental abuse. Constantly putting someone down without any meaning just to try to make someone feel bad about themselves.”**

**“Algo que no se puede medir hasta que uno lo vive.”**

**“Something that cannot be measured until one has lived through it.”**

**“Algo que no te deja ser feliz, no te deja tener voluntad propia, no te deja crecer como persona.”**

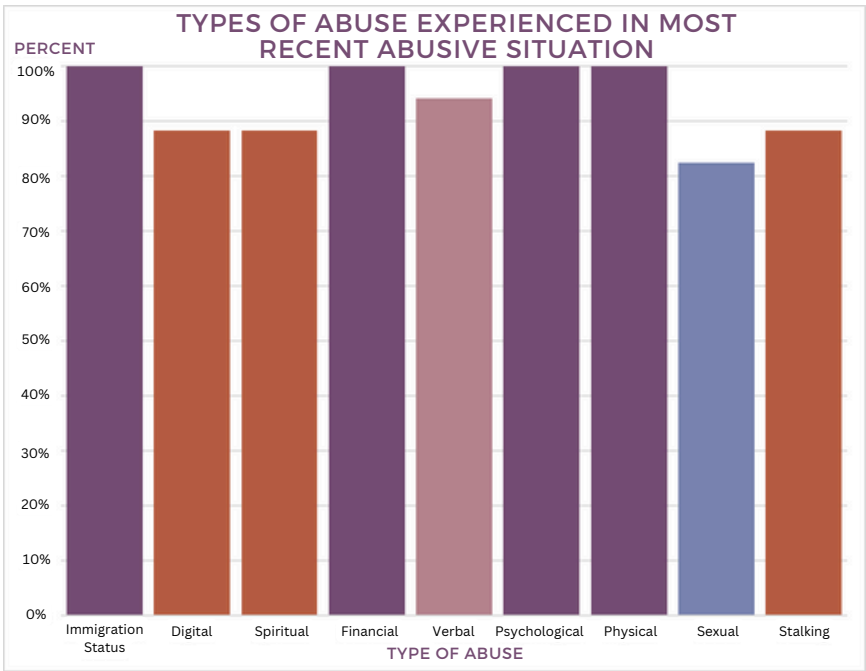
**“Something that does not let you be happy, does not let you have free will, does not let you grow as a person.”**

## 1. ABUSE (CONTINUED)

We asked participants to tell us about prior experiences of domestic violence as well as childhood experiences with physical and/or sexual abuse.



## ABUSE EXPERIENCED



### HOW IS IMMIGRATION STATUS USED TO ABUSE?

- 65% threatened with deportation
- 65% told the police would deport them
- 59% not included on mortgages, accounts, insurances, or other purchases because of their immigration status
- 47% had important documents, such as their passport, green card, or social security card, hidden or taken
- 41% reported their abuser's refusal to file immigration paperwork for them
- 18% told they would lose custody of their children due to their immigration status



# KEY FINDING

**Undocumented participants were nearly twice as likely to fear the police.** 50% of undocumented participants feared police, compared to 29% of documented participants.

## 2. POLICE INTERACTIONS

We asked participants to describe how they felt about their experience with the police:

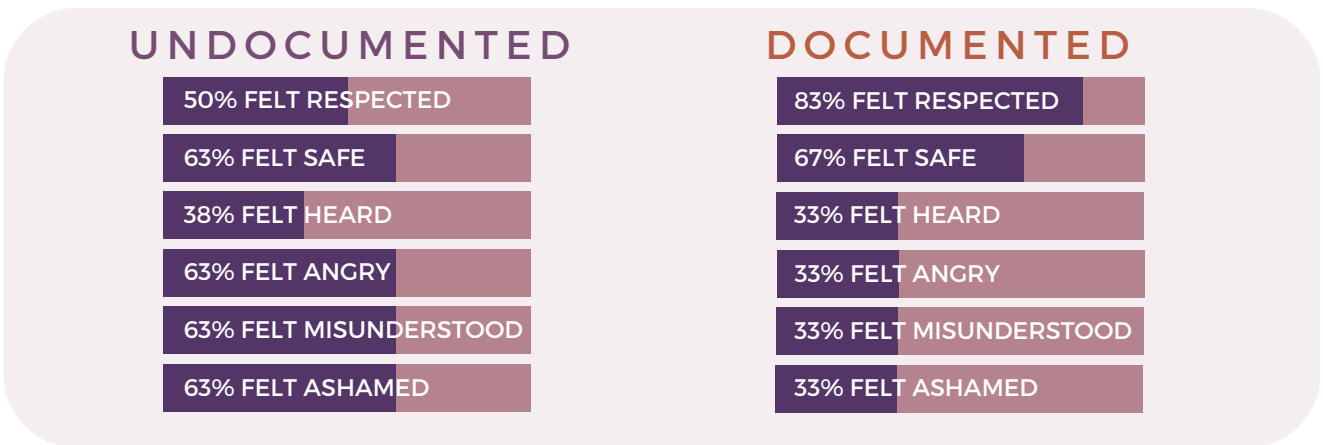
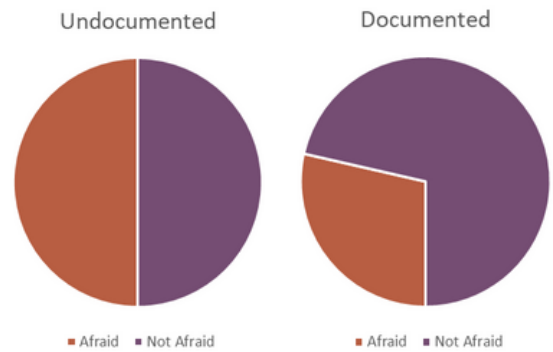
### FEAR OF POLICE

**“La policía está para ayudarte, no me espanto si viene una policía atrás de mí, no tengo por qué tener temor a la policía.”**

**“The police is there to help you, I do not get scared when I see police behind me, I do not have reasons to be scared of police.”**

**“Se me hace como soy ilegal que me paren o metan a la cárcel me van a deportar. Si no fuera indocumentada no creo que tendría ese miedo.”**

**“I feel like because I am illegal if I get stopped or placed in jail, I will get deported. If I were not undocumented I do not think I would be scared.”**



## MISINFORMATION & CONTACTING POLICE

**65% of abusers told participants that the police would deport them.**

**41% of participants reported not contacting the police after having been a victim of a crime in the United States.**

## RESOURCES

We also asked participants if the police provided resources to them. **50% reported being provided resources, 50% reported not being provided resources.** Those who reported being provided resources stated they were provided medical attention, shelter information, a case number, and/or phone contact numbers.

## 3. JUSTICE

We asked participants the following question:

### *What would justice look like to you?*

“La justicia sería que simplemente me escucharan y que por lo menos la confrontaran por lo que me hizo e investigaran por lo menos sería un avance, pero me parece que no es posible.”

“Justice would be if [the police] **simply listened to me** and at least confronted her about what she did to me and investigated. **At least it would be progress**, but it seems to me that it is not possible.”

*“Justice* to me is where everyone is free to live, breathe, feel, and be without any boundaries.”

“**Justice is not in my hands**, but I think it will come back to him because everyone has to deal with their actions. The best thing for me is to never see him again and never see anyone that he knows. **I just want peace.**”

**“I just want peace.”**

“To be honest, **I don't think there would be justice** to the crime that I have been through. I don't think so, I don't think no matter the years or time the person gets, it doesn't change anything. **You just learn to live with it.**”

“The police supported me when he kicked me out; they got me back in my home. **I thought that was good justice.** They told me it was my right to stay in the house and they did a very good justice.”



**AIS anticipates starting the next round of interviews in late summer 2024. For more information on this study, please contact us at [advocates@advocatesforsurvivors.org](mailto:advocates@advocatesforsurvivors.org). Sign up at the QR code for future AIS updates.**

