

# Impact of Enforcement Policies and Practices on Immigrant and Refugee Children

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Symposium: *Trauma in Immigrant Families*

UC Davis and California Health Care Foundation

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# Migrant children: Accumulation of trauma

1. Pre-migration trauma (gangs & violence)
2. In-transit trauma (*coyotes*, assaults, deprivation)
3. Post-migration trauma (*hieleras* & detention)

# Danny's pre-migration violence hits home

For details, visit  
[TED.com/zayas](https://www.ted.com/zayas)



# In-transit: Migrating through Mexico

- Who to trust? Constant danger
- *Coyotes*, criminals, and organized gangs
- Violence and death
- Victimization: Imprisonment, deprivation, intimidation, physical abuse, sexual assault, depravity

# Post-migration trauma: *hieleras* and detention



# Detention & Separation: A Policy Timeline

- 2014 to present
  - Detention in “Family Residential Centers”
- 2018 to present
  - Zero Tolerance & Family Separation
  - Threat of indefinite family detention
- January 2017-June 2020
  - 50 major executive orders, policies, court decisions
- Since COVID-19: 48 policy changes
  - Some temporary and necessary
  - Some reasonable but of indefinite duration
  - Some as pretext for dramatic immigration restrictions



# Detention and Separation

- Deprivation and threat
  - Determinants of detention trauma
- *Adverse Childhood Experiences*
  - Shape neural trajectories, brain development
  - Dysregulate children's stress response system
  - Impair psychological, social, emotional, academic, other functioning
- Detention
  - Adds parental distress, anxiety, depression
  - Disrupts family structures and interaction
  - Impedes sense of belonging
- Separation: Damages parent-child relationship

# A Closer Look of Policy Impact: Attachment

- Fundamental human bond between child and parent
- Secure attachment is best
  - Child shows confident, joyful reunion & interaction with parent after period of separation
  - Results in good emotional, behavioral, cognitive, and social outcomes



# Insecure Attachment Reactions

- Avoidant
  - Child expects rejection from parent on reunion
  - Avoids parent rather than seeking proximity to reduce chance of conflict or rejection again
- Ambivalent
  - Child uncertain of parent's response
  - Displays passive or angry resistant behavior When parent responds, child is ambivalent and not comforted by parent

# Case 1: Insecure-Avoidant

Boy reuniting  
with mother,  
separated for  
3 months

- Expects rejection
- Avoids caregiver

[To access video, see Part I recording at time stamp 01:01:06]

## Case 2: Insecure-Ambivalent

Boy in shelter with  
mother, after  
separation

- Uncertain of caregiver's affection
- Angry, resistant behavior

[To access video, see Part I recording at time stamp 01:03:22]

## Urgently need services

- Medical care
- Psychosocial assessment and diagnosis
  - Reactive Attachment Disorder (313.89)?
- Psychoeducational services for parents
- Parent-child interaction therapy
- Educational assessment and intervention
- Social integration in community

# Health and Social Needs of Immigrant Families Amid the Shifting Policy Environment

Samantha Artiga  
Director, Disparities Policy Project  
Associate Director, Program on Medicaid and the Uninsured  
Kaiser Family Foundation

for

Trauma-Informed Care and Services for Immigrant Families  
UC Davis Health  
July 28, 2020



Filling the need for trusted information on national health issues.

Figure 1

A broad range of policies are affecting immigrant families.

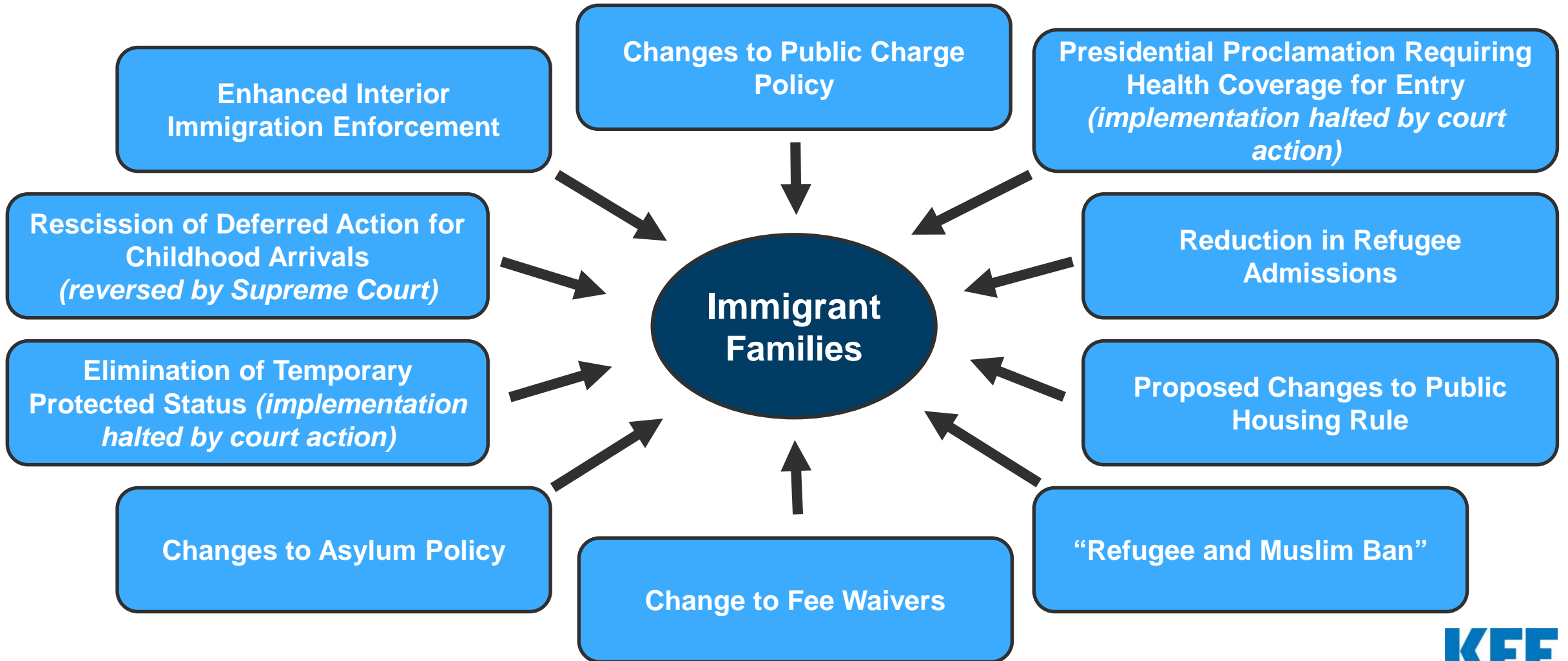
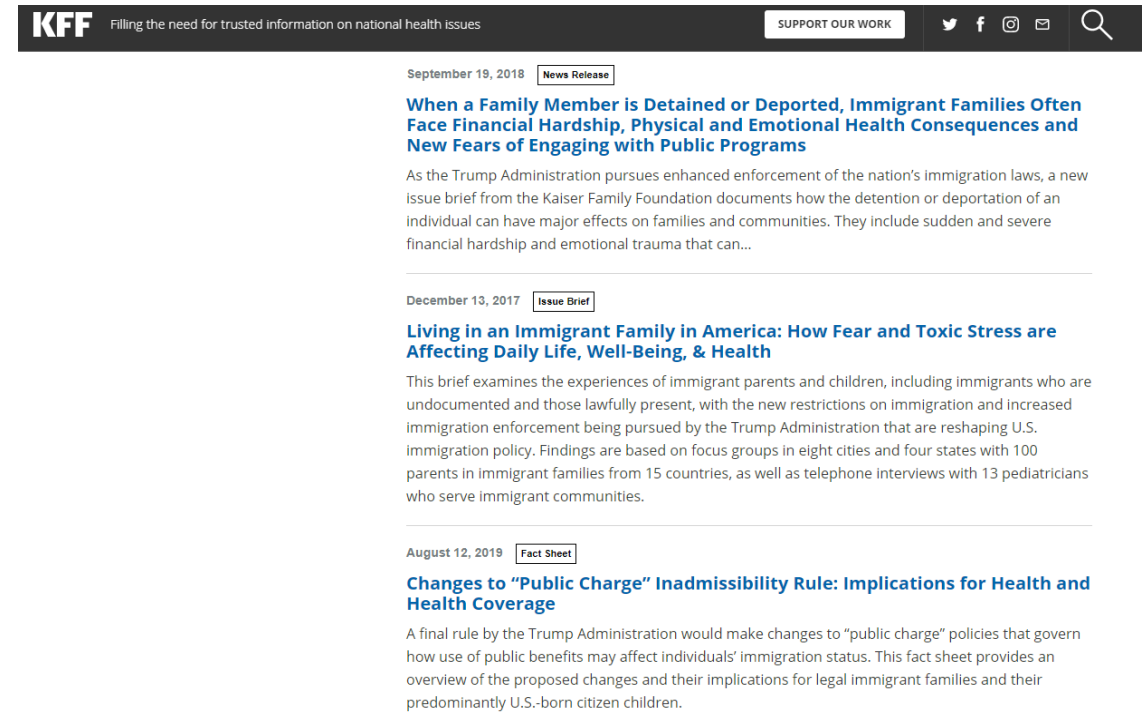


Figure 2

# KFF has examined impacts for families and communities through ongoing work.

- Focus groups and interviews with families
- Discussions and interviews with service providers across sectors (health, legal, and education) and local officials
- Analysis of implications of changes to public charge rule for enrollment in Medicaid/CHIP and use of health care services



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September 19, 2018 **News Release**

**When a Family Member is Detained or Deported, Immigrant Families Often Face Financial Hardship, Physical and Emotional Health Consequences and New Fears of Engaging with Public Programs**

As the Trump Administration pursues enhanced enforcement of the nation's immigration laws, a new issue brief from the Kaiser Family Foundation documents how the detention or deportation of an individual can have major effects on families and communities. They include sudden and severe financial hardship and emotional trauma that can...

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December 13, 2017 **Issue Brief**

**Living in an Immigrant Family in America: How Fear and Toxic Stress are Affecting Daily Life, Well-Being, & Health**

This brief examines the experiences of immigrant parents and children, including immigrants who are undocumented and those lawfully present, with the new restrictions on immigration and increased immigration enforcement being pursued by the Trump Administration that are reshaping U.S. immigration policy. Findings are based on focus groups in eight cities and four states with 100 parents in immigrant families from 15 countries, as well as telephone interviews with 13 pediatricians who serve immigrant communities.

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August 12, 2019 **Fact Sheet**

**Changes to "Public Charge" Inadmissibility Rule: Implications for Health and Health Coverage**

A final rule by the Trump Administration would make changes to "public charge" policies that govern how use of public benefits may affect individuals' immigration status. This fact sheet provides an overview of the proposed changes and their implications for legal immigrant families and their predominantly U.S.-born citizen children.

Figure 3

The shifting policy environment has had wide ranging impacts across families and communities.

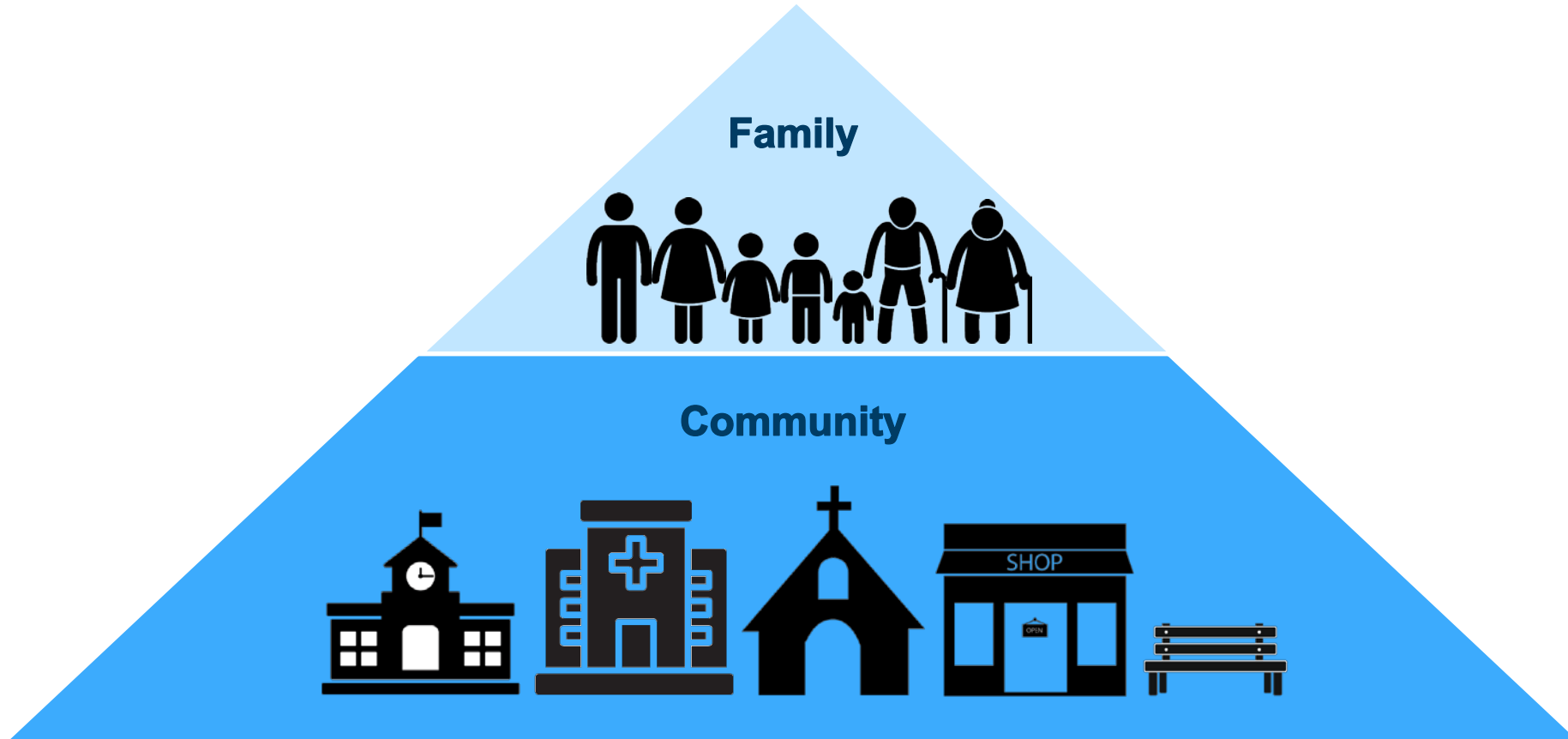




Figure 4

# Growing fears and uncertainty are negatively affecting the health and well-being of families.

- Leading to changes in daily life and routines
- Increased mental health needs, including anxiety and depression
- Enhanced economic pressures, including difficulty affording food and other basic needs
- Provider concerns about long-term consequences on health and unrealized potential among youth
- Fears and feelings of uncertainty extend to those with lawful status

“We feel that in any moment a new rule could be issued leading to expelling us and sending us back.” Arabic-speaking Parent, Anaheim, CA

“Before, there were many kids in the parks... but now... the kids spend more time inside these days, because we are afraid of being deported.” Parent, Boston, MA

“I mean these kids are always fearful, always thinking their parents are going to be deported, constantly in trauma.” Legal Services Provider, San Diego, CA

“When you're worried every day that your parents are going to be taken away or that your family will be split up, that really is a form of toxic stress. ...we know that it's going to have long-term implications for heart disease, for health outcomes for these children in adulthood.” Pediatrician, MN

Figure 5

# Families are decreasing use of programs and services due to fears

- Families have a range of concerns about enrolling in programs and utilizing services
- Public charge and housing assistance policy changes have amplified fears
- Providers and families report families are disenrolling from and declining to enroll in programs, including Medicaid and CHIP
- Enrollment impacts extend to individuals and programs beyond those affected by policy changes, including citizen children
- Providers are concerned about health and economic impacts of decreased program use

“I used to get Medicaid and the food stamps, but as I wanted to get my legal status—they even say that if you ask for help from the government, you’ll be denied legal status.” Parent, Houston, TX

“In my case, when I got WIC some years ago, the situation was different, it wasn’t as intense as now. If I had to request WIC now, I wouldn’t do it.” Parent, San Diego

“...what we're seeing is a lot of women are very hesitant to now enroll in medical services. ...They're getting care here in the very last stages of their pregnancy and...the health of the mom and the child are impacted.” Health Provider, San Diego

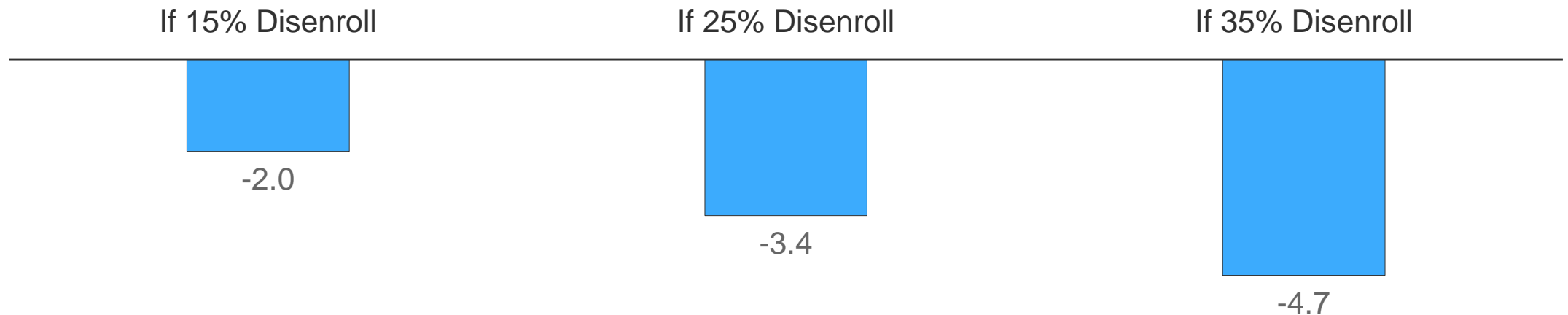
# Changes to public charge inadmissibility rule will likely result in decreased participation in Medicaid and other programs

- **Public Charge:** If officials determine someone is “likely to become a public charge,” they may deny a green card or entry into the U.S
- **Key Changes in New Rule**
  - Redefines public charge as someone who receives one or more public benefits for more than 12 months in the aggregate within any 36-month period (receipt of two benefits in one month counts as two months)
  - Broadens the programs that will be considered in public charge determinations to include previously excluded health, nutrition, and housing programs (Medicaid for non-pregnant adults, SNAP, and housing assistance)
  - Specifies certain characteristics that officials will consider as positive or negative factors in public charge determinations
- **Implications of New Rule**
  - Some individuals, particularly those who are lower income or who have health conditions, will face increased challenges to immigrating to the U.S. or obtaining a green card
  - Will likely lead to decreased participation in Medicaid and other public programs broadly among immigrant families and their children, beyond those directly affected by the rule

Figure 7

# 13.5 million Medicaid/CHIP enrollees are at risk for potential disenrollment as a result of the rule.

*Estimated Declines in Medicaid/CHIP Enrollment among Enrollees in a Household with a Noncitizen Under Different Disenrollment Scenarios, in Millions:*

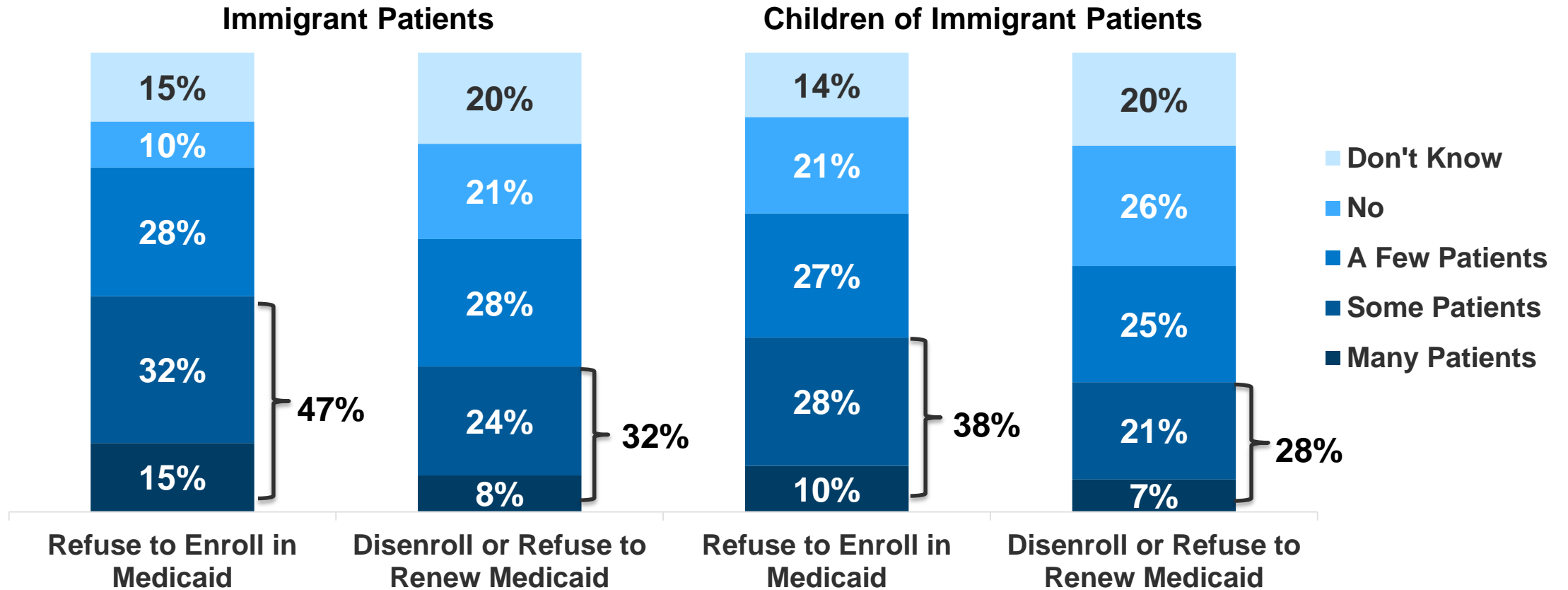


**Medicaid/CHIP Enrollees Who Are Noncitizens or in Households with a Noncitizen: 13.5 million**

Figure 8

# Health centers are reporting changes in Medicaid enrollment among immigrant patients and families.

Share of health centers reporting they have noticed the following among immigrant patients and their family members over the past year (2019):

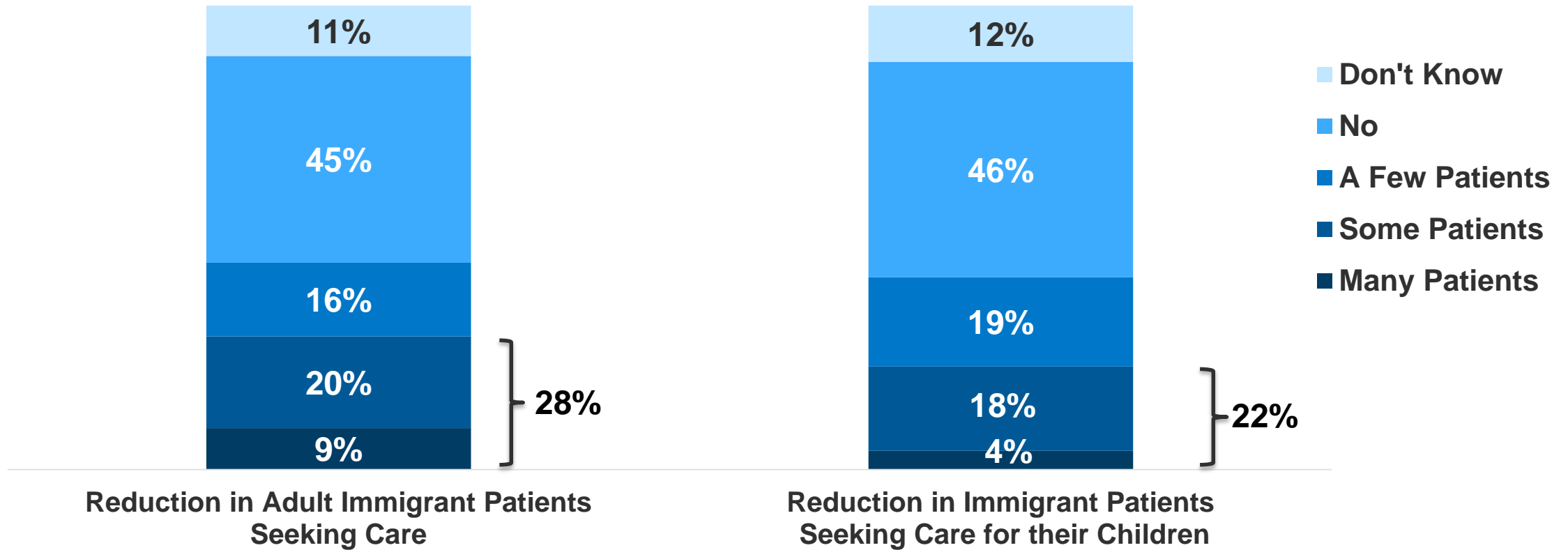


Note: Totals may not sum due to rounding. Health centers reporting Not Applicable excluded.  
Source: 2019 Kaiser Family Foundation/George Washington University Survey of Community Health Centers

Figure 9

# Health centers are reporting changes in health care use among immigrant patients and families.

*Share of health centers reporting they have noticed over the past year (2019):*



Note: Totals may not sum due to rounding. Health centers reporting Not Applicable excluded.

Source: 2019 Kaiser Family Foundation/George Washington University Survey of Community Health Centers

# Families are facing major gaps in services and care with few trusted resources available.

- A growing number of families are facing major difficulty affording basic needs, like food and housing
- Despite significant mental health needs, many families are not receiving counseling or other mental health services
- Access to affordable legal help is very limited, leaving families without representation or going into significant debt paying private attorneys
- Families trust some resources, but capacity among those trusted resources is limited
  - Teachers and schools can serve as an important link to services
  - Churches, faith-based groups, and community organizations play an important role
  - Some families worry about sharing information with their health care provider or school
  - Many families continue to rely on ethnic media as a key source of information

# Providers are facing growing pressures and are responding to increased needs by enhancing cross-sector relationships and supports.

- Growing pressures on service providers and local communities, including secondary trauma and burnout among staff
- More complexity and uncertainty associated with providing services, especially legal support
- Providers have responded to growing needs by:
  - ❖ Strengthening existing and developing new partnerships across sectors
  - ❖ Expanding mental health capacity in other sectors
  - ❖ Increasing services and supports in schools
  - ❖ Utilizing trusted individuals and organizations to connect with families
- State and local leadership and policies underpin the community response

“It's a lot of just having to be in crisis mode and reactionary mode that is really not sustainable. Unhealthy for the people affected, unhealthy for the staff...”

Community-based Organization

“I do think that if it wasn't for building this cross-sector, multi-disciplinary, multi-agency network...we wouldn't have been able to do some of the good things that we've been able to do.”

Legal Services Provider

“The other component that we are working with...is really building out mental health services and supports to our schools. ...how do we provide trainings to teachers to identify depression, identify anxiety and how do we react and what resources do we have in place?”

Educator



# Providers point to continued integration and coordination of services and filling gaps in services as future priorities

- Making cross-sector relationships sustainable over time
- Increasing supply of mental health and legal services providers
- Meeting growing demands on non-profits and local governments
- Maintaining access to health care as families disenroll from Medicaid and other programs
- Continuing to educate and inform about policy changes
- Recognizing the role of state and local leaders and philanthropy
- Fostering leadership development within the affected communities and building on the strengths and resiliency of immigrant families

“...funding for legal services is critical. Building up the...army of immigration attorneys. ...it's a most complex area of the law, and it's changing by the minute.” Legal Services Provider, San Diego

“...it was all nonprofits and the two community clinics --- responded right away [to meet the needs of migrant families] and they put their mobile units there and provided healthcare consistently. They did it without any funding.” Health Provider, San Diego

“...we've mobilized our informal food safety net, so when a family says they're not as interested in CalFresh, I'll move on to talking about our food bank...So really trying to talk about making it...two lanes instead of one...” Health Provider, Bay Area

# Final Takeaways

- Shifting policy and political environment is leading to increased fears and uncertainty that have wide-ranging negative effects on families
  - ❖ Stress, anxiety, depression, and trauma
  - ❖ Increased financial challenges
  - ❖ Reluctance to access assistance or services
- Communities have responded to growing family needs and challenges in many ways that center on cross-sector coordination and enhancing services and supports
- Key priorities providers have identified for the future include
  - ❖ Continued strengthening of cross-sector relationships
  - ❖ Addressing gaps in services, particularly mental health and legal services
  - ❖ Ongoing need for trusted information and education about policy changes
  - ❖ State and local leaders and philanthropy helping to frame public discussion and supporting efforts
  - ❖ Building on strength and resiliency of communities

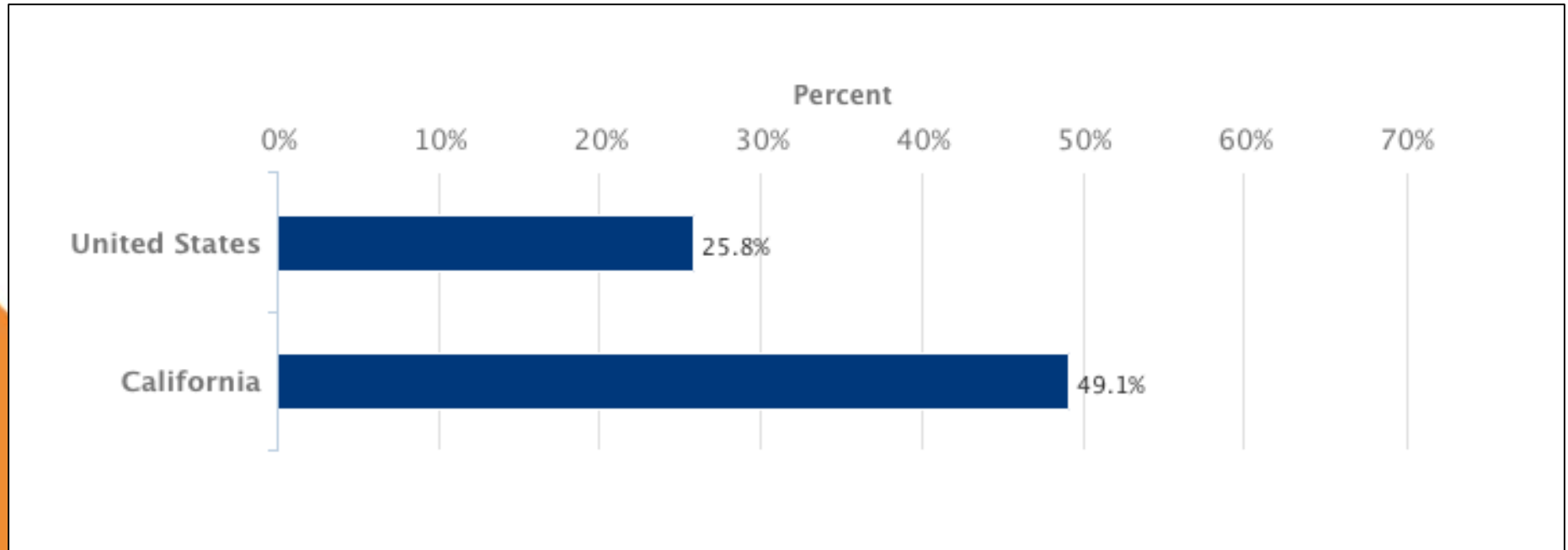
# Healthy Mind, Healthy Future: Supporting Children in Immigrant Families

Mayra E Alvarez MHA  
President



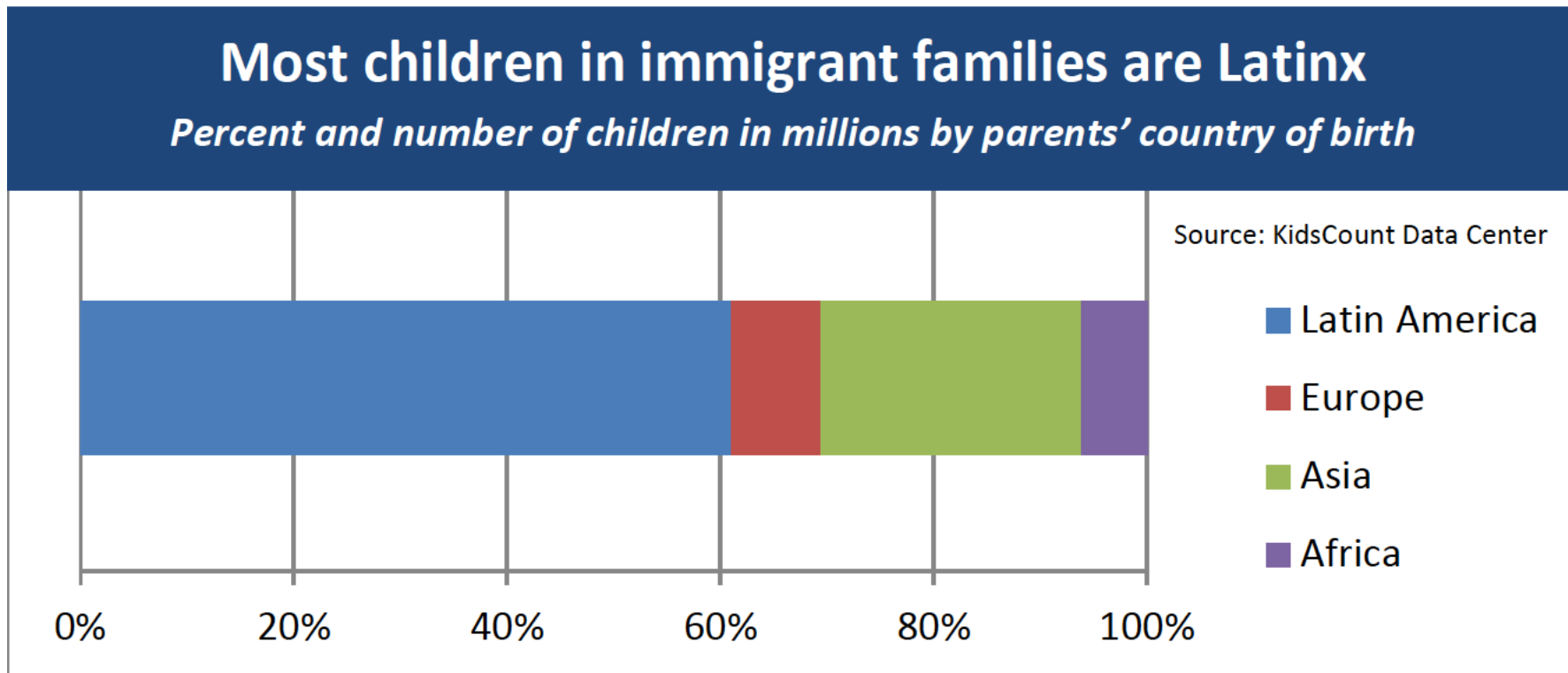
**Trauma-Informed Care and Services for Immigrant Families:  
A three-part symposium**  
**Part I: Trauma in Immigrant Families: Public Charge, DACA,  
and COVID-19**  
UC Davis Health  
July 28, 2020

# Children in Immigrant Families



Source: Kidsdata.org (Lucile Packard Foundation for Children's Health)

# Children in Immigrant Families: Parents' Country of Birth



# Federal Actions: Impact on Immigrant Families

- Multiple Anti-Immigration Executive Orders
- Attacks on Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) Program & Temporary Protected Status (TPS)
- Shift in enforcement priorities
- Family separation
- Changes to “Public Charge”



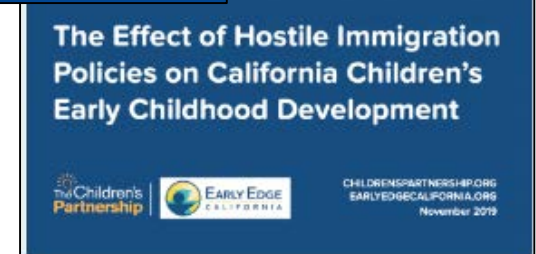
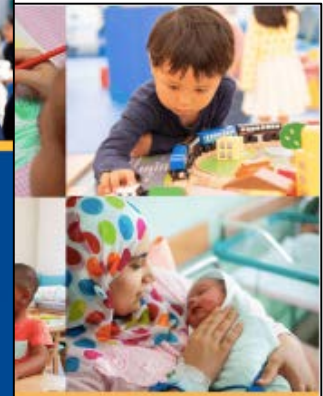
# State Response: California



- Attorney General Xavier Becerra Lawsuits
- State Legislation
  - SB 54 (De Leon): California Values Act
  - AB 699 (O'Donnell): Educational equity: immigration
  - 2019 Mental Health dollars for Immigrant and Refugee communities
  - Disaster Relief Assistance for Immigrants
- State Budget
  - Maintains coverage for Health4All Kids - >200,000 undocumented children enrolled
  - Expansion to undocumented young adults

# Healthy Mind, Healthy Future

- Fall 2017 : Provider Survey
- Fall 2017: Parent and Youth Focus Groups
- Fall/Spring 2018: Family Survey
- Winter/Spring 2018: Key Informant Interviews
- Fall 2019: Focus Groups on Public Charge & Analysis
- Ongoing: Policy and Action Agenda





# California Data: Provider Perspective

## \*Among Children in Immigrant Families, Health Care Providers Reported:

90%

Increase in anxiety and fear due to detention and deportation



70%

Increase in depressive symptoms including: sadness, sleeplessness, loss or gain of appetite, and loss of interest in daily activities.



*“The children are scared for their parents.”*

- Health Provider, California

## \*Among Parents:

70%

Increase in anxiety of taking children to school or recreational activities due to fear of immigrant enforcement activities.

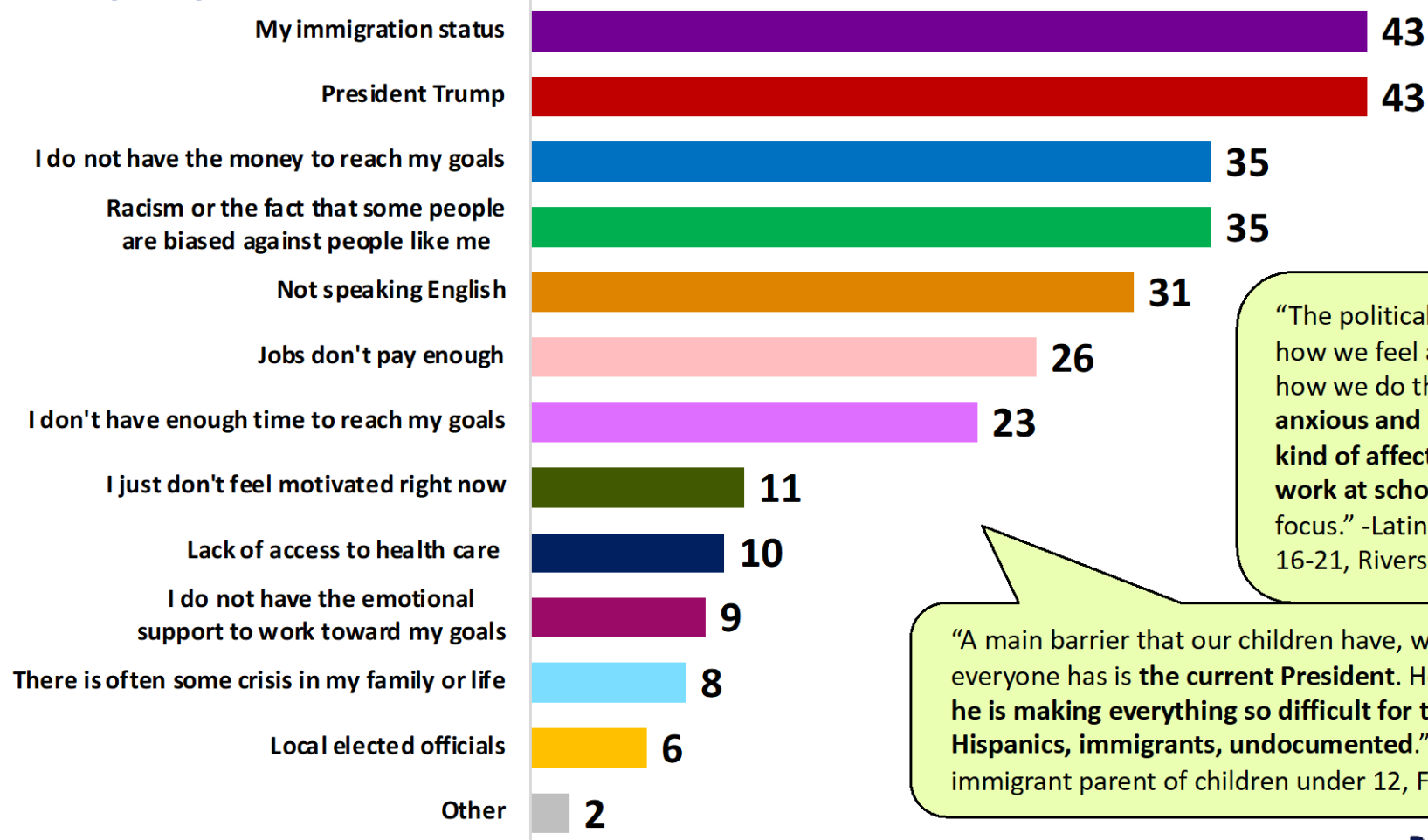


67%

Increase in concerns about enrollment in Medi-Cal, WIC, CalFresh and other public programs. While 40% expressed interest in opting out of these programs.



## Parent Survey: A plurality of parents say their immigration status and President Trump are the biggest barriers keeping them from meeting their personal goals. Money, racism, and language barriers fall into a second tier of obstacles.



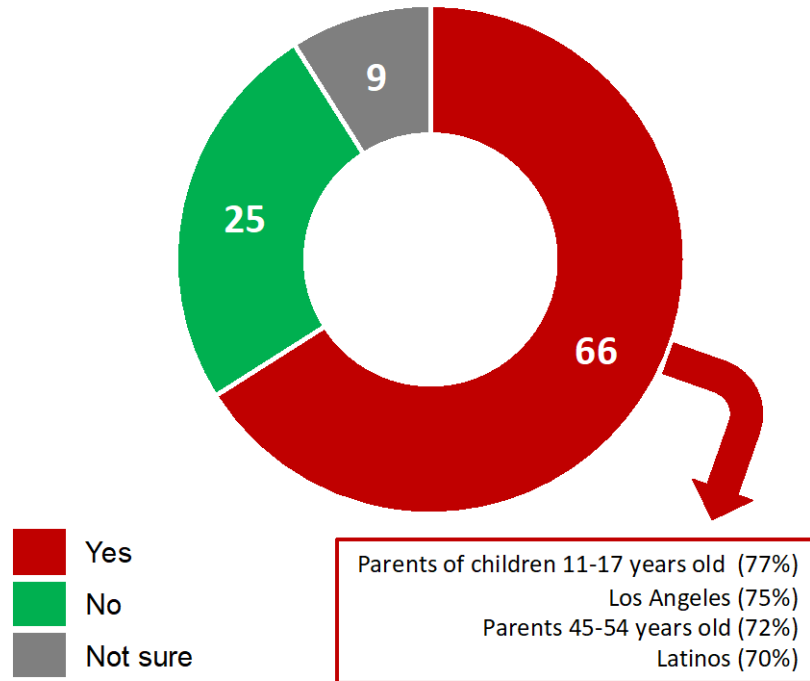
“The political climate. It affects how we feel and that affects how we do things. I get really anxious and kind of scared. It kind of affects how I do in my work at school. I lose my focus.” -Latino immigrant kids 16-21, Riverside

“A main barrier that our children have, well, everyone has is the current President. Honestly, he is making everything so difficult for the Hispanics, immigrants, undocumented.” -Latino immigrant parent of children under 12, Fresno

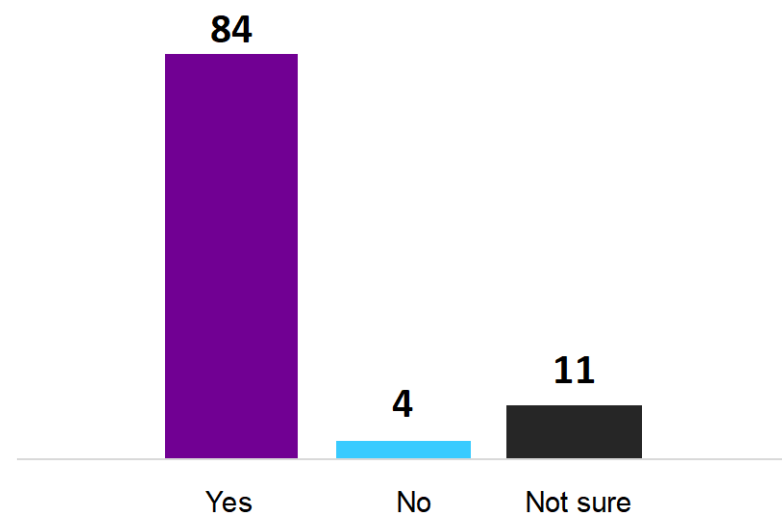
Thinking about the goals you have for yourself, what would you say are the biggest obstacles to meeting those goals?

# Parent Survey: In the past year, immigrant parents have noticed a change in their children's behavior. Of those who have noticed a change, the majority believe this change is a result of what they have heard about immigration from President Trump.

Children acting differently since the presidential election



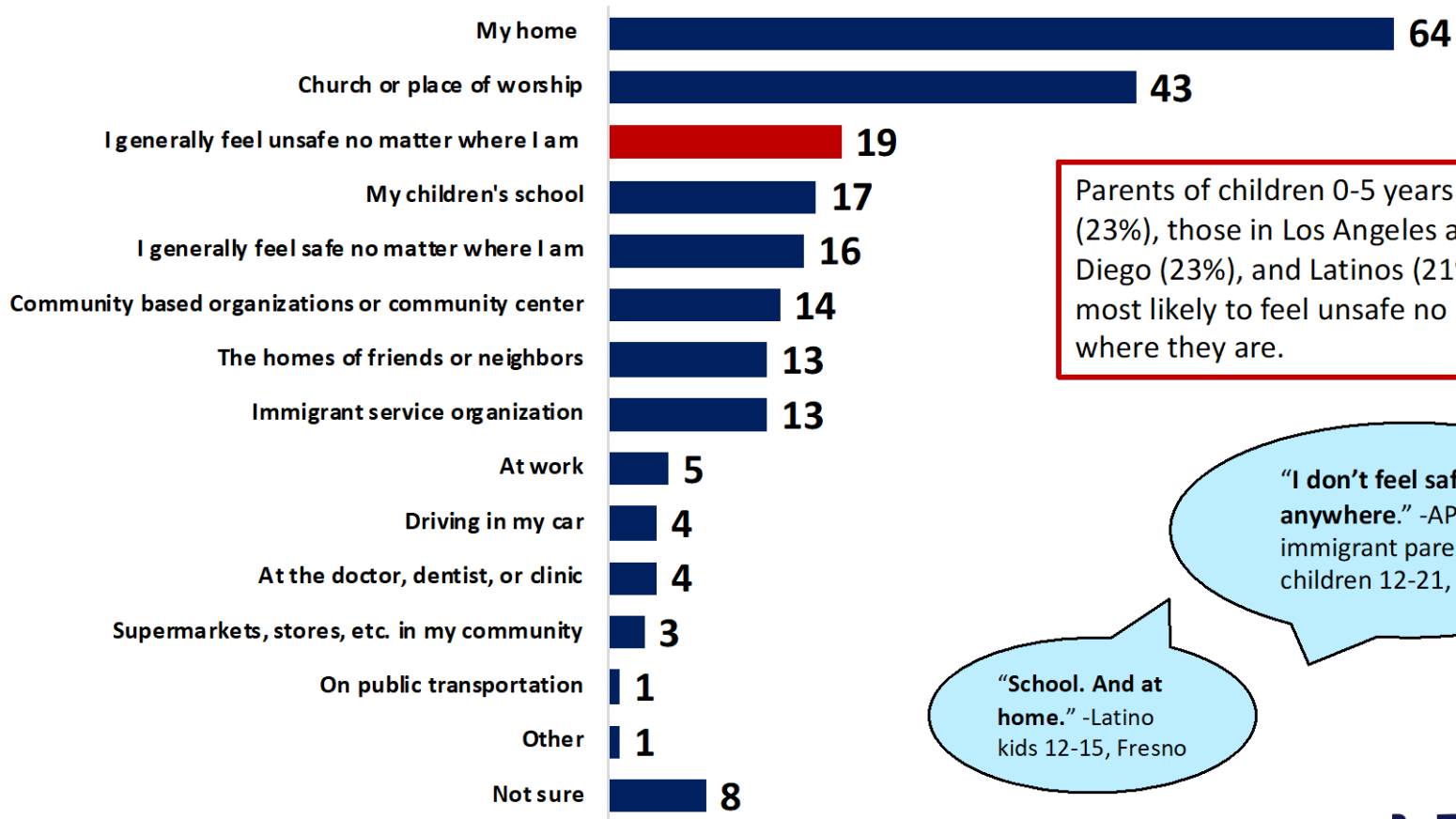
Change is a result of what they have heard about immigration from President Trump



**"My daughter...cries over anything. She says that her fear stems from something else but she hears the name Trump and she gets scared."** -Latino immigrant parent of children under 12, Fresno

Q1: In the past year, have you noticed your children acting differently since the last presidential election?  
 Q2: If you have noticed them acting differently, do you believe this change is a result of what they have heard about immigration from President Trump?

**Parent Survey: Immigrant parents feel most safe in their homes. Their church or place of worship also rises to the top as locations where they feel safe from immigration enforcement. However, nearly one-in-five report that they feel unsafe no matter where they are in the community.**



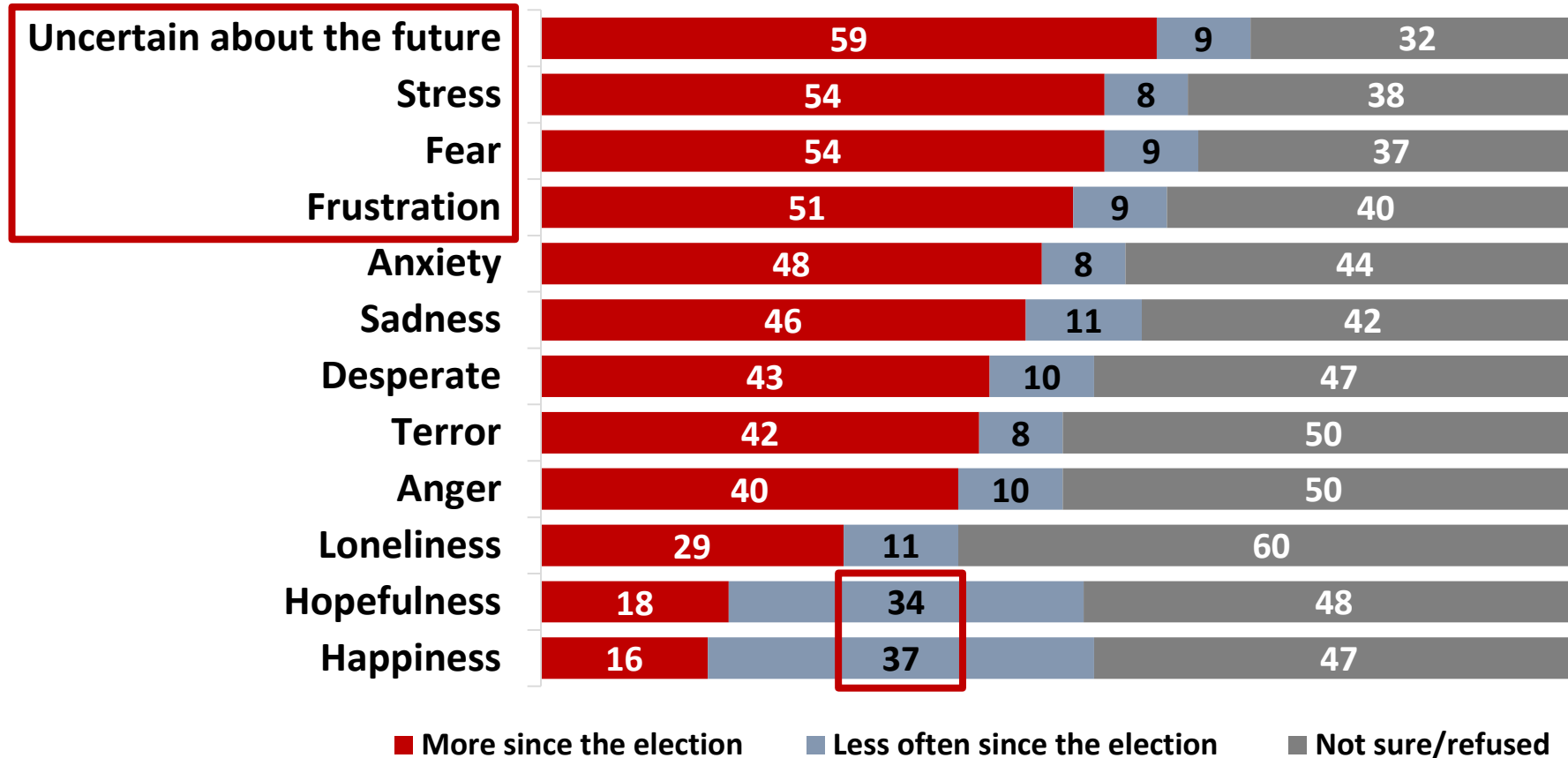
Parents of children 0-5 years old (23%), those in Los Angeles and San Diego (23%), and Latinos (21%) are most likely to feel unsafe no matter where they are.

"School. And at home." -Latino kids 12-15, Fresno

"I don't feel safe anywhere." -API immigrant parent of children 12-21, Fresno

Where do you generally feel safe from immigration enforcement in your community?

**Family Survey: A majority of immigrant parents think their children are experiencing more uncertainty about the future, stress, fear, and frustration since the 2016 election. At least a third think their children are feeling less hopeful and happiness since the election.**



Now think about your children. Please indicate if you think they are feeling this emotion more often or less often since the election for President.

# Focus Groups: Immigrant families and their children feel unsafe and uneasy

“As a mother, I am worried. It keeps me up at night. Because of the president, Mr. Donald Trump, the kids are learning how to hate.”

Latino immigrant parent, Riverside

“It’s like hanging from a string that can be cut at any time.”

Latino young male (16-21), Riverside

“I mean right now I feel like I live in Third World country. You know like in a camp sometimes the guard comes and catches people and sends them back.”

API immigrant parent, Fresno

“I am scared that someone wants to remove me from my house... I may be at a store with my children and they arrest me, that is something that worries me.”

Latino immigrant parent, Fresno

# Potential Impact of Public Charge Regulations on Child Enrollment in Medicaid and SNAP

Chart 3: Number of children in immigrant families in California estimated to lose Medicaid/CHIP coverage due to changes to public charge

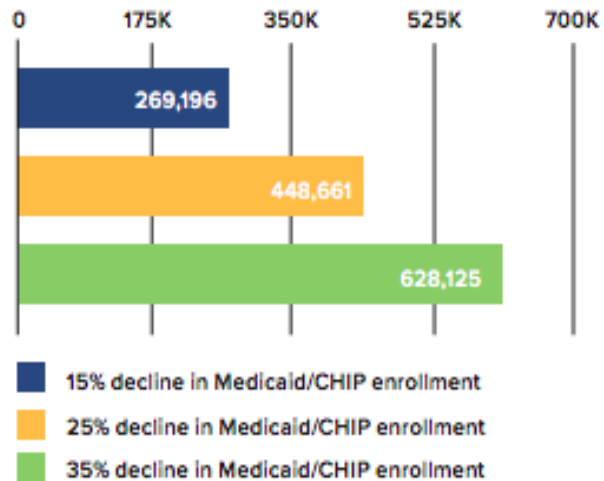
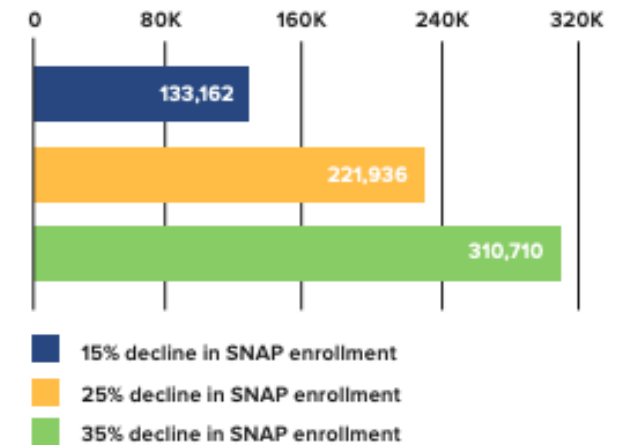


Chart 4: Number of children in immigrant families in California estimated to lose SNAP/food stamps due to changes to public charge



# Focus Groups: Public Charge and Immigrant Families



**The Children's Partnership**

Focus Group Quote on Public Charge

“It would affect us. We [would] need to decide between health, food, and housing...If we want to have healthy and productive children in this country, we have to work as a team. Helping whoever comes, giving them the tools to build their future.”

- Latina immigrant mother, Los Angeles

Source: TCP Public Charge Focus Groups, December 2018



**The Children's Partnership**

Focus Group Quote on Public Charge

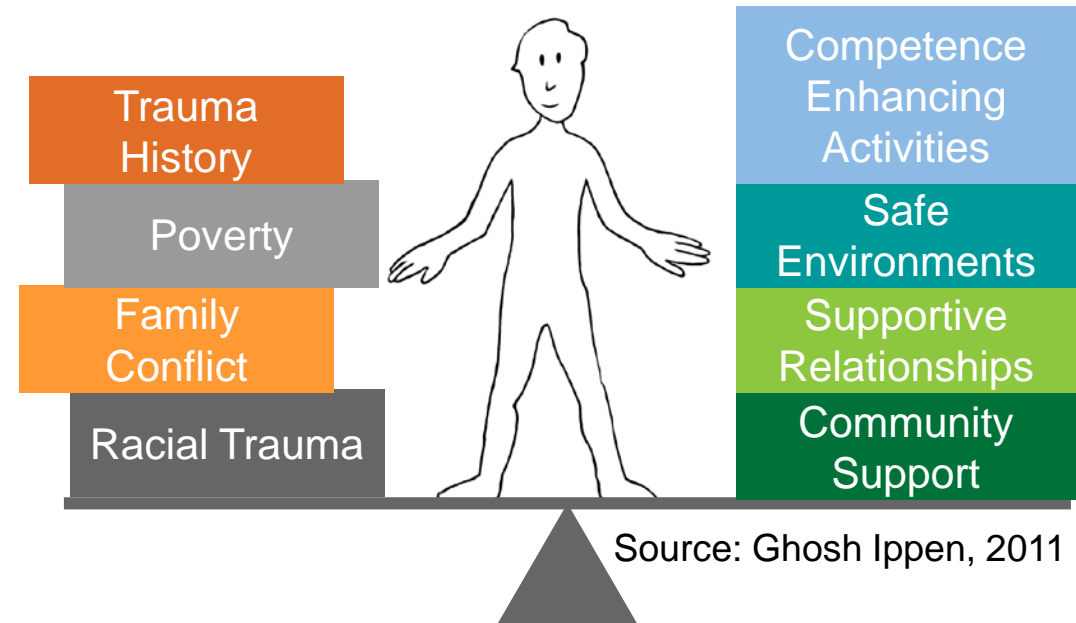
“It will harm my community and my family. Living in fear is not what we expect from this country.”

- Black immigrant mother, Los Angeles



# Supporting Child Wellbeing

- Strengthen **Community Safety** to Ensure Children, Youth, and Families Feel Secure and Supported in their Communities
- Invest in **Community-Based Approaches and a Community-Based Workforce** to Support Immigrant Families
- **Improve Access, Coordination, and Integration of Services** to Reduce Barriers for Immigrant Families
- **Build Capacity** of Providers, Educators, and Others Who Interact with Immigrant Families
- Educate and Engage Communities about Immigrant Rights and **Build Public Will** to Take Action



# Immigration Policy is a Children's Issue

