

# Immigration Raids: A National Dataset

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## Overview

On August 19, 2019, US Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) raided seven Mississippi food-processing plants, in what *CNN* reported as “the largest single-state immigration enforcement operation in our nation’s history.” In an article [covering](#) this raid, “Their first day of school turned into a nightmare after record immigration raids,” *CNN* reporter Ray Sanchez described the following:

“When the [unprecedented immigration raids](#) were over, only the children remained. Some sobbed inconsolably. “Let my parents be free,” one girl cried. “I need my dad. He’s not a criminal.” Others clutched backpacks on a first day of school they would probably never forget....In all, some 680 undocumented immigrants were rounded up in six cities, leaving friends, neighbors and, in some instances, strangers to temporarily care for children who did not know whether they would see their parents again....A parking lot near a plant in Morton became an impromptu staging area for people waiting to hear from loved ones they had last seen when they left for work in the morning.”

Immigration law enforcement disproportionately impacts racialized minority communities. Raids like the one in Mississippi have been linked to worsening outcomes in Latinx and/or Latinx immigrant communities, including causing stress and/or chilling effects that can negatively impact mixed-immigration-status communities. However, ICE does not release detailed information on its operations, instead operating in relative obscurity and with relative impunity. This problematic context means that it is difficult to quantify the acute and aggregate harms of raids that, jointly with other types of mass enforcement, have resulted in millions of deportations over the past two decades.

Raids are not isolated incidents, but repeated events that impart legal violence<sup>1</sup> in immigrant communities under the guise of race-neutral policy, and with little oversight or accountability. Given this reality, we sought to build a national dataset of immigration raids which we and other stakeholders can use to examine the size, scope, and impacts of raids on various outcomes.

While existing research explores the impacts of single, large-scale raids, few studies have examined raids more comprehensively at the aggregate level, largely given lack of data on the location, frequency, and scope of raids. In this study, we are building what is, to our knowledge, the most comprehensive dataset on ICE raids from 2006-2020. This dataset can be used to analyze the impact of raids on various outcomes, including health, political participation, educational, and labor market outcomes, among others. Our hope is that this dataset can provide

additional evidence to policymakers and other stakeholders of the extensive impacts of ICE raids, and to inform harm-reduction strategies.

## Our approach & contribution

Immigration raids like those in Mississippi can cause deleterious outcomes in Latinx communities. Existing studies have linked single, large-scale immigration raids to increased levels of stress, lower self-rated health, and higher risk of low birthweight among infants born to Latinx birthing parents.<sup>2-4</sup> Raids have also been linked to negative effects on school-level achievement, significant increases in exclusionary disciplinary actions, and in diagnoses of substance use disorder, depression, self-harm, suicide attempts or ideation, and sexual abuse in the year following the raid, among children of immigrants.<sup>5-7</sup>

However, given the absence of a national database of raids, few studies examine raids more comprehensively. Only one existing study, by Robert Santillano and colleagues, analyzed a series of raids that took place across the country, from 2006-2008, on Head Start program participation among Latinx families.<sup>8</sup> Importantly, the study documented a 10% decline in Head Start enrollment among Latinos, following raids, which was likely caused by chilling effects rather than families moving away. The study relied on a list of 207 raids compiled by three immigrants' rights organizations (Centro Latino, Detention Watch Network, and Catholic Legal Immigration Network), which documented the raids "through a variety of sources, including Freedom of Information Act requests and news tracking." The dataset included the date and location of each raid. As the authors point out, "The strength of these data are that, nationwide, we know when and where a raid occurred. The primary limitation is that specifics of the raids, like number detained, were not collected in a standardized way." As noted, existing datasets do not contain consistent measures of the size or scope of the raids.

Our goal is to create a more comprehensive national dataset. The Santillano study provides a very useful starting point by publicly releasing its database of 207 counties that experienced ICE raids between 2006-2008. We build on the Santillano dataset in three key ways: 1) we include a fuller universe of raids during that time period; 2) we expand the time period through 2019; and 3) whenever possible, we account for the size of the raid.

To compile this information, we used several publicly available sources, such as NexisUni, ProQuest, AccessWorldNews, and PoliticoPro E&E. We also relied on several crowdsourced and community-based resources, including a map of immigration raids designed by artist Jenny Polak,<sup>9</sup> an archive of immigration news, "Immigration News Briefs," compiled by community activist Jane Guskin, various press releases from the ACLU and other immigrants' rights and civil rights organizations, ICE news releases, and more. We use all these sources to provide a verifiable and credible source for each raid and an indicator of the size of the raid (i.e. the number of people arrested). Sarah Rosenkranz, UC Berkeley Goldman School of Public Policy (GSPP)'s Research Librarian, provided expert support and feedback. Our database currently contains 2,476 raids.

UC Berkeley undergraduate students Mario Varo and Kimberly Lopez Jimenez were trained by Professor Caitlin Patler (Associate Professor of Public Policy, UC Berkeley GSPP) and GSPP's

librarian Sarah Rosenkranz to find information on raids, using the strategies detailed above. The students researched various sources, and then inputted the date of the raid, the county where the raid occurred, the county FIPS code, a summary of the event, the number of arrests/detained, a link to a verifiable source, and the source's publisher. Our research continues to finalize this database and then make it public. We hope that this work will shed additional light on the mass impacts of immigration raids.

## References

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