

# Large-Scale Immigration Enforcement and Its Consequences: The Impact of Operation Metro Surge

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## Introduction

Operation Metro Surge marked an unprecedented deployment of federal immigration enforcement agents in Minnesota, generating widespread concern about its social, economic, and institutional impacts. Concerns about civil rights and civil liberties violations during the course of enforcement actions, declining public trust in law enforcement, significant wage losses, and disruptions to public education and public health underscore the breadth of its consequences. This report draws on original survey data to document how these impacts were experienced across Minneapolis and St. Paul.

Between February 17, 2026 and March 6, 2026, the U.S. Immigration Policy Center (USIPC) at UC San Diego conducted two mixed-mode, probability-based surveys of residents aged 18 and older—one in Minneapolis and one in St. Paul. The Minneapolis sample included 728 respondents (margin of error  $\pm 3.6\%$ ), while the St. Paul sample included 662 respondents (margin of error  $\pm 3.8\%$ ). To ensure representativeness, respondent-level survey weights were constructed using iterative proportional fitting (“raking”) to adjust for observable differences in age, gender, race and ethnicity, and employment status.<sup>1</sup>

## Interactions with Federal Immigration Enforcement Agents

At its peak, between 3,000 to 4,000 federal immigration enforcement agents were deployed across Minnesota. The data indicates that Operation Metro Surge was not only large in scale, but it was also widely experienced by residents in Minneapolis and in St. Paul. Indeed, substantial shares of residents in both cities report having at least one interaction with federal immigration enforcement agents during Operation Metro Surge.

In Minneapolis, 28.3 percent of respondents said “yes” to having at least one interaction with federal immigration enforcement agents during Operation Metro Surge. In St. Paul, 19.2 percent of respondents said “yes” to having at least one interaction

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<sup>1</sup>In Minneapolis, the resulting weights were well-distributed (min = 0.39, max = 2.04) with limited variance inflation (design effect of 1.10), indicating minimal loss of precision due to weighting. In St. Paul, raking achieved exact convergence to target margins; however, the resulting weights exhibited moderate dispersion (min = 0.32, max = 3.20) and a design effect of 1.37, indicating some loss of precision due to unequal weighting. Post-stratification weights were thus trimmed at an upper bound of 2.5 and rescaled to maintain a mean of 1.

with federal immigration enforcement agents during Operation Metro Surge.

In Minneapolis, 63.9 percent of respondents who reported having at least one interaction with federal immigration enforcement agents during Operation Metro Surge said that they were asked about their race, ethnicity, or national origin; 55.6 percent said that they were asked if they speak English; 58.5 percent said that they were asked about their immigration or citizenship status; and 46.7 percent said that federal immigration enforcement agents did not believe they were lawful permanent residents or U.S. citizens despite showing them identification. In St. Paul, 42.8 percent of respondents who reported having at least one interaction with federal immigration enforcement agents during Operation Metro Surge said that they were asked about their race, ethnicity, or national origin; 32.8 percent said that they were asked if they speak English; 29.8 percent said that they were asked about their immigration or citizenship status; and 20.8 percent said that federal immigration enforcement agents did not believe they were lawful permanent residents or U.S. citizens despite showing them identification.

Moreover, despite being described as targeted immigration enforcement actions aimed at the “worst of the worst,”<sup>2</sup> the data suggest that federal immigration enforcement agents frequently engaged in broad, non-targeted stops of residents. In Minneapolis, among those who reported having at least one interaction with federal immigration enforcement agents during Operation Metro Surge, 43.9 percent said that they were randomly stopped on the street by federal immigration enforcement agents while walking and 54.0 percent said that they were randomly pulled over by federal immigration enforcement agents while driving. In St. Paul, among those who reported having at least one interaction with federal immigration enforcement agents during Operation Metro Surge, 36.5 percent said that they were randomly stopped on the street by federal immigration enforcement agents while walking and 30.3 percent said that they were randomly pulled over by federal immigration enforcement agents while driving.

In Minneapolis, among those who reported having at least one interaction with federal immigration enforcement agents during Operation Metro Surge, 73.1 percent said that federal immigration enforcement agents did not show them an administrative or judicial warrant. Moreover, 22.7 percent said that federal immigration enforcement agents asked to enter their home, they said no, but they entered anyway. In St. Paul, among those who reported having at least one interaction with federal immigration enforcement agents during Operation Metro Surge, 90.9 percent said

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<sup>2</sup>For example, see U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS) press release entitled, “ICE Continues to Remove the Worst of the Worst for Minneapolis Streets as DHS Law Enforcement Marks 3,000 Arrests During Operation Metro Surge.”

that federal immigration enforcement agents did not show them an administrative or judicial warrant. Moreover, 12.9 percent said that federal immigration enforcement agents asked to enter their home, they said no, but they entered anyway.

The data also show that federal immigration enforcement agents conducted operations at or near previously protected “sensitive locations.” In Minneapolis, among those who reported having at least one interaction with federal immigration enforcement agents during Operation Metro Surge, 52.6 percent said that their interaction happened at or near a school, healthcare facility, childcare facility, courthouse, or place of worship. In St. Paul, among those who reported having at least one interaction with federal immigration enforcement agents during Operation Metro Surge, 51.9 percent said that their interaction happened at or near a school, healthcare facility, childcare facility, courthouse, or place of worship.

Finally, the data show concerning trends regarding being detained and the use of force by federal immigration enforcement agents. In Minneapolis, among those who reported having at least one interaction with federal immigration enforcement agents during Operation Metro Surge, 24.6 percent said that they were detained; 22.9 percent said that they were physically assaulted; 25.7 percent said that federal immigration enforcement agents used pepper spray, tear gas, or another chemical agent against them; 38.1 percent said that federal immigration enforcement agents already had their weapons drawn when they approached them; and 29.5 percent said that federal immigration enforcement agents drew their weapons on them during the course of our interaction. In St. Paul, among those who reported having at least one interaction with federal immigration enforcement agents during Operation Metro Surge, 11.6 percent said that they were detained; 13.9 percent said that they were physically assaulted; 17.7 percent said that federal immigration enforcement agents used pepper spray, tear gas, or another chemical agent against them; 27.9 percent said that federal immigration enforcement agents already had their weapons drawn when they approached them; and 28.2 percent said that federal immigration enforcement agents drew their weapons on them during the course of our interaction.

Table 1 summarizes the results.

## **Operation Metro Surge Undermined Public Trust in Law Enforcement**

The data also make clear that the conduct of federal immigration enforcement agents during Operation Metro Surge decreased public trust in law enforcement in both Minneapolis and St. Paul.

Table 1: Reported Interactions with Federal Immigration Enforcement Agents

<b>Survey Item</b>	<b>Minneapolis (%)</b>	<b>St. Paul (%)</b>
<i>At least one interaction</i>	<i>28.3</i>	<i>19.2</i>
Questioned Race, Ethnicity, or National Origin	63.9	42.8
Questioned Speaking English	55.6	32.8
Questioned Immigration or Citizenship	58.5	29.8
Distrusted Despite Showing ID	46.7	20.8
Randomly Stopped on Street	43.9	36.5
Random Stopped While Driving	54.0	30.3
Did Not Show Warrant	73.1	90.9
Entered Home Despite Refusing Entry	22.7	12.9
Sensitive Location	52.6	51.9
Were Detained	24.6	11.6
Physical Force Used Against Them	22.9	13.9
Chemical Agents Used Against Them	25.7	17.7
Weapons Drawn (Approach)	38.1	27.9
Weapons Drawn (During)	29.5	28.2

Respondents were asked whether they agreed or disagreed with the statement, “I generally have less trust in law enforcement now as a result of how Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) agents and Border Patrol (BP) agents have conducted federal immigration enforcement operations during Operation Metro Surge.” In Minneapolis, 57.1 percent “strongly agree” or “somewhat agree” with the statement. In St. Paul, 58.3 percent “strongly agree” or “somewhat agree” with the statement. These data make clear that majorities in both cities experienced an erosion of public trust in law enforcement as a result of Operation Metro Surge.

Respondents were also asked whether they agreed or disagreed with the statement, “I am less likely to seek help from law enforcement now as a result of how Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) agents and Border Patrol (BP) agents have conducted federal immigration enforcement operations during Operation Metro Surge.” In Minneapolis, 49.4 percent “strongly agree” or “somewhat agree” with the statement. In St. Paul, 46.1 percent “strongly agree” or “somewhat agree” with the statement. These results are particularly striking, as they suggest that Operation Metro Surge changed the help-seeking behaviors of a large percentage of residents in Minneapolis and in St. Paul.

Finally, respondents were asked whether they agreed or disagreed with the statement, “I am less likely to obey the commands of law enforcement now as a result of

how Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) agents and Border Patrol (BP) agents have conducted federal immigration enforcement operations during Operation Metro Surge.” In Minneapolis, 31.1 percent “strongly agree” or “somewhat agree” with the statement. In St. Paul, 26.3 percent “strongly agree” or “somewhat agree” with the statement. These results are significant because they suggest a measurable decline in the perceived legitimacy of law enforcement, which not only has implications for compliance, but also officer safety, and the overall effectiveness of community policing.

Table 2: Impact of Operation Metro Surge on Trust and Behavior Toward Law Enforcement

<b>Survey Item</b>	<b>Minneapolis (%)</b>	<b>St. Paul (%)</b>
Less trust law enforcement	57.1	58.3
Less likely to seek help law enforcement	49.4	46.1
Less likely to obey commands law enforcement	31.1	26.3

## Impact on Work and Wages

There is growing evidence about the negative economic impact of Operation Metro Surge.<sup>3</sup>

Respondents were asked whether concerns about federal immigration enforcement caused them to miss work since the beginning of Operation Metro Surge. In Minneapolis, among those in the workforce, 35.7 percent said "yes" to missing work because of Operation Metro Surge. Workers in Minneapolis missed an average of 7.9 days of work. In St. Paul, among those in the workforce, 20.5 percent said "yes" to missing work because of Operation Metro Surge. Workers in St. Paul missed an average of 11.4 days of work.

In Minneapolis, 63.4 percent said they missed work because their workplace closed; 66.4 percent said they missed work because of concerns about their personal safety because of the increased presence of federal immigration enforcement agents; 34.5 percent said they missed work because their childcare provider was unable to show up because of the increased presence of federal immigration enforcement agents; and 28.7 percent said they missed work because their caregiver was unable to show up because of the increased presence of federal immigration enforcement

<sup>3</sup>For example, see surveys from the City of Minneapolis and from the City of St. Paul and forthcoming surveys from USIPC.

agents. In St. Paul, 48.2 percent said they missed work because their workplace closed; 65.7 percent said they missed work because of concerns about their personal safety because of the increased presence of federal immigration enforcement agent; 29.9 percent said they missed work because their childcare provider was unable to show up because of the increased presence of federal immigration enforcement agents; and 27.8 percent said they missed work because their caregiver was unable to show up because of the increased presence of federal immigration enforcement agents.

Using data on employment, occupation, wage data from the Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development, and missed days of work, it is possible to estimate the wage losses experienced by workers because of Operation Metro Surge.

In Minneapolis, the average hourly wage for workers employed full-time and who reported missing work because of Operation Metro Surge is \$48.22. These workers missed an average of 6.86 days of work. This means that full-time workers lost an average of \$2,315.48 in wages because of Operation Metro Surge. For the full-time workers in Minneapolis who missed work because of Operation Metro Surge, the total wage loss is estimated to be \$173.9 million. This likely underestimates average lost wages because a 35-hour work week is assumed. The average hourly wage for workers employed part-time and who reported missing work because of Operation Metro Surge is \$31.20. These workers missed an average of 9.88 days of work. This means that part-time workers lost an average of \$1,233.38 in wages because of Operation Metro Surge. For the part-time workers in Minneapolis who missed work because of Operation Metro Surge, the total wage loss is estimated to be \$15.3 million. These data suggest that workers in Minneapolis lost an estimated \$189.2 million in wages because of Operation Metro Surge.

In St. Paul, the average hourly wage for workers employed full-time and who reported missing work because of Operation Metro Surge is \$46.00. These workers missed an average of 6.29 days of work. This means that full-time workers lost an average of \$1,754.37 in wages because of Operation Metro Surge. For the full-time workers in St. Paul who missed work because of Operation Metro Surge, the total wage loss is estimated to be \$43.9 million. This likely underestimates average lost wages because a 35-hour work week is assumed. The average hourly wage for workers employed part-time and who reported missing work because of Operation Metro Surge is \$24.74. These workers missed an average of 12.99 days of work. This means that part-time workers lost an average of \$1,286.12 in wages because of Operation Metro Surge. For the part-time workers in St. Paul who missed work because of Operation Metro Surge, the total wage loss is estimated to be \$10.7 million. These data suggest that workers in St. Paul lost an estimated \$54.6 million in wages because of

Operation Metro Surge.

## Impact on Families and Students

Aggressive federal immigration enforcement, particularly at or near sensitive locations such as schools, can negatively impact families and students. Respondents were asked whether they are the parent or legal guardian of a child or children currently attending a public K-12 school. Among these respondents, we asked whether concerns about federal immigration enforcement efforts have caused them to keep their child or children at home, instead of sending them to school, since the beginning of Operation Metro Surge. We also asked about learning disruptions.

In Minneapolis, the majority of respondents with a child or children currently attending a public K-12 school, or 53.3 percent, said "yes" to keeping their child or children at home, instead of sending them to school, because of concerns related to Operation Metro Surge. In terms of whether the increased presence of federal immigration enforcement agents caused learning disruptions, the majority of respondents, or 56.8 percent, said "moderate" to "high" levels of disruptions in learning. In St. Paul, a near majority of respondents with a child or children currently attending a public K-12 school, or 45.1 percent, said "yes" to keeping their child or children at home, instead of sending them to school, because of concerns related to Operation Metro Surge. In terms of whether the increased presence of federal immigration enforcement agents caused learning disruptions, the majority of respondents, or 53.2 percent, said "moderate" to "high" levels of disruptions in learning.

## Public Health Implications of Operation Metro Surge

Operation Metro Surge also caused a series of negative public health implications.

For example, we asked respondents whether concerns about federal immigration enforcement caused them to miss a scheduled medical appointment. In Minneapolis, 44.8 percent did not have any scheduled medical appointments since the beginning of Operation Metro Surge. However, among those who did, 29.2 percent said "yes" to missing a scheduled medical appointment. In St. Paul, 45.9 percent did not have any scheduled medical appointments since the beginning of Operation Metro Surge. However, among those who did, 20.6 percent said "yes" to missing a scheduled medical appointment. Missed medical appointments carry a range of public health implications. For example, missed medical appointments can delay diagnosis or treatment, worsen chronic conditions, and reduce access to preventive care. Severe

health complications can also increase reliance on emergency services, which places additional strains on healthcare systems.

Moreover, we asked respondents whether concerns about federal immigration enforcement caused them to stay at home instead of going to urgent care or to the hospital to address a medical issue. In Minneapolis, 69.9 percent did not need to go to urgent care or to the hospital to address a medical issue since the beginning of Operation Metro Surge. However, among those who did, 39.9 percent said “yes” to staying at home instead of going to urgent care or to the hospital. In St. Paul, 72.2 percent did not need to go to urgent care or to the hospital to address a medical issue since the beginning of Operation Metro Surge. However, among those who did, 30.6 percent said “yes” to staying at home instead of going to urgent care or to the hospital. These results are particularly concerning, as delaying or forgoing care can worsen acute conditions and increase the risk of serious health complications. Moreover, delaying care often results in more severe and resource-intensive treatment later, which also places additional strains on healthcare systems.

Lastly, we asked respondents whether concerns about federal immigration enforcement caused them to miss a regularly scheduled vaccination. In Minneapolis, 61.4 percent did not have a regularly scheduled vaccination since the beginning of Operation Metro Surge. However, among those who did, 30.6 percent said “yes” to missing a regularly scheduled vaccination. In St. Paul, 67.6 percent did not have a regularly scheduled vaccination since the beginning of Operation Metro Surge. However, among those who did, 21.1 percent said “yes” to missing a regularly scheduled vaccination. The public health implications are clear, as missed vaccinations increase individual susceptibility to preventable diseases and can weaken herd immunity, thus raising the risk of community outbreaks.

The table below summarizes the results.

Table 3: Public Health Impacts of Operation Metro Surge

<b>Survey Item</b>	<b>Minneapolis (%)</b>	<b>St. Paul (%)</b>
Missed Medical Appointment	29.2	20.6
Avoided Urgent/Hospital Care	39.9	30.6
Missed Vaccination	30.6	21.1

Altogether, these data demonstrate that Operation Metro Surge disrupted access to routine care, urgent services, and preventive vaccinations, creating serious risks for both individual and public health.