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The current social and political climate of hostility towards migrants: Mental health implications for US-citizens Latinxs

Little is known about how migration-related stressors (e.g., fear of deportation) impact the mental health of non-migrant Latinxs (e.g., US-citizens, US-born). This qualitative study aimed to elucidate and contextualize which and how migration-related stressors may influence US-citizen Latinxs' mental health, including substance misuse. In 2019, a community sample of 22 US-citizen Latinxs in Central Texas were recruited for an in-depth qualitative interview. Eligibility criteria included: being an adult, self-identify as Latinx, report a migration-related stressor, and report a mental health or substance use problem. Open-ended questions focused on the migrant experience, perceptions and impacts of immigration enforcement, and how these experiences related to their mental health. Using a migration as a social determinant framework as our analytic lens, analyses focused on identifying migration-related stressors at the structural- and social-level of environmental influence that were related to participants' mental health. At the structural-level, US-citizen Latinxs described fears of being detained or deported for being perceived as an undocumented migrant, intense feelings of being persecuted by immigration officials, emotional distress over the deportation of family and friends, and extreme worry over the potential deportation of a migrant family member. At the social-level, US-citizen Latinxs described emotional distress due to anti-immigration experiences, constant exposure to negative media related to detentions and deportations, and perceived inability to help immigrants affected by detentions and deportations. Findings highlight how migration-related stressors at the structural- and social-level of influence create systematic uncertainty by inducing fear into the daily lives of US-citizen Latinxs. Public health and policy implications are discussed.