

Medill Solutions Journalism Hub Rapid Response Kit

THE FIRE NEXT TIME

*Operation Midway Blitz and How Community
Journalism Can Respond When Systems Collide*

As much as federal authorities tried to push fear-based headlines, factually wrong labels and false framing for undocumented residents during Operation Midway Blitz, Chicago-area media didn't fall for it. Turn-on-a-dime efforts by local journalists, and news and information outlets proved to be a case study in reaching the highest goals of community journalism. In Chicago, a sanctuary city, the federal immigration enforcement surge was overwhelmingly met with resistance in every community of interest from residents and immigrant- and refugee-serving organizations to local and state officials, and beyond.

The charge for news organizations was to not only bear witness and document this response: This mission positioned local media as a source to provide information to empower people, regardless of immigration status, to make informed civic decisions. Local journalism held institutions accountable and highlighted the diverse experiences of those affected by the enforcement action. Importantly, efforts to co-curate video, photo assets and intel with community members, provide fact-based resource guides, and Spanish-language translation services free of charge, serve as an evidence-based record of response-driven journalism that defines the solutions journalism framework.



Photo by Ash Lane
for The TRiiBE®

SOLUTIONS JOURNALISM IN ACTION

When U.S. Border Patrol agents deployed to Chicago in September, newsrooms put in motion this framework that covers responses to pressing systemic problems. These institutions and the people who power them embodied the four pillars of solutions journalism on behalf of local audiences impacted by the aggressive federal policing presence. Chicago-area journalists and storytellers comprehensively covered a RESPONSE; communicated EVIDENCE through qualitative and quantitative data showing the effectiveness of the response to enforcement actions; provided INSIGHTS showing meaningful takeaways from community reaction and proaction, and illuminated LIMITATIONS, the rigor of this framework, by examining shortcomings that might light the way forward.

Chicago is not alone, of course. The immigration enforcement activity reached cities including Los Angeles, Washington, D.C., Chicago, Memphis, and Charlotte, North Carolina, aka Operation Charlotte's Web, with the expectation these surges will re-emerge or continue. Beyond immigration, this exercise in federal policing might represent an unprecedented and controversial application of federal powers. Today it's immigration. Tomorrow, what other issue might fuel fear about government overreach and questionable legality?



Photo by Anthony Vazquez/
Chicago Sun-Times via AP

LEARNING FROM BEST PRACTICES

This Medill Solutions Journalism Hub Rapid Response Kit aims to codify what works when covering a systemic crisis the likes of this federal policing surge. Journalists and storytellers across the nation can learn from best practices cultivated by local reporters, photographers, social media managers, editors and producers during a time when they faithfully gave up their weekends and stayed vigilant while demonstrating what healthy collaboration between news outlets and community members looks like: Despite ongoing economic challenges and

technological disruptions faced by local media everywhere as documented and tracked by Medill Local News Initiative (LNI) research and others, Chicago witnessed coverage that was consistently urgent, authentic, contextual, proportional and complex while centering the experiences of people affected most. These are qualities, identified by Emory University Prof. Maria Len-Rios and University of Missouri Associate Dean Ernest Perry, which define excellence in journalism.

So, what can we learn about covering the fire next time?

NEWS, SAFETY AND TRUST: A SURVEY

Let's take a look at how audiences looked for and engaged with news and information from traditional media channels and alternative information networks, such as rapid-response groups, elected officials, and through tools such as Signal or WhatsApp during this period. The Medill Solutions Journalism Hub commissioned a survey about news, safety and trust to understand how Chicago communities used information during the 2025 immigration enforcement surge. The 25-question survey yielded 1,068 responses strictly inside Chicago city limits from Nov. 5-14, 2025. The following analysis, *News, Safety and Trust: Understanding How Chicago Communities Use Information During ICE Actions*, was authored by John Volk, Medill Local News Initiative research associate.

To achieve results better reflecting the Chicago community as a whole, we set quotas for 14 Chicago ZIP codes in the Brown Belt and beyond — Little Village, Pilsen, Brighton Park, Archer Heights, McKinley Park, New City, Belmont-Cragin and Hermosa) and South Shore, a predominately Black neighborhood that saw aggressive immigration activity. We caught a representative sample of Chicago as a whole. Even still, results overindex on Black and white respondents, and underrepresent the city's Latino population, something worth exploring in a time when targeted groups may be reluctant to engage, especially on an issue cloaked in rhetoric around ethnic identity and migration politics, media experts say.

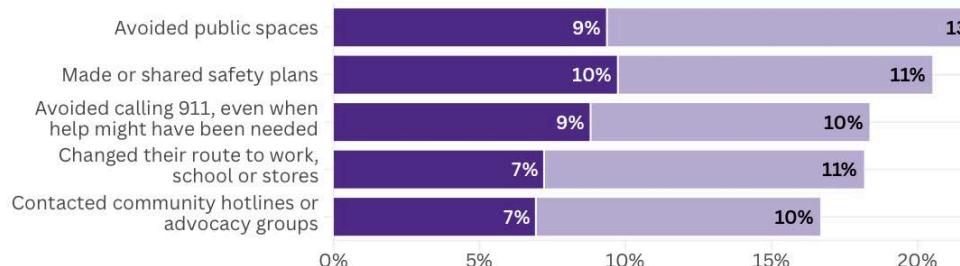
TOP-LINE TAKEAWAYS

- Fear of federal immigration agents may be influencing public safety decisions in Chicago, particularly among Latino residents and residents in 14 target ZIP codes hardest hit by the crackdown.
- To learn about local ICE presence, Chicagoans rely on the same news and information sources as they do for more typical local information.
- Social media and local TV are Chicagoans' preferred news and information sources. Other local professional journalism outlets like newspapers, radio stations and digital news sites ranked behind word of mouth but outperformed other institutions (government, cultural, religious, advocacy, etc.).
- Chicagoans are broadly trusting of a range of information sources, and they value alternative sources for both their perceived speed and accuracy.

Fear of federal immigration agents may be influencing public safety decisions in Chicago

Proportion of respondents who _____ in the past week based on the presence of ICE.

■ Always ■ Often



News, Safety and Trust: Understanding How Chicago Communities Use Information During ICE Actions survey report by John Volk, November 2025

PUBLIC SAFETY BEHAVIORS

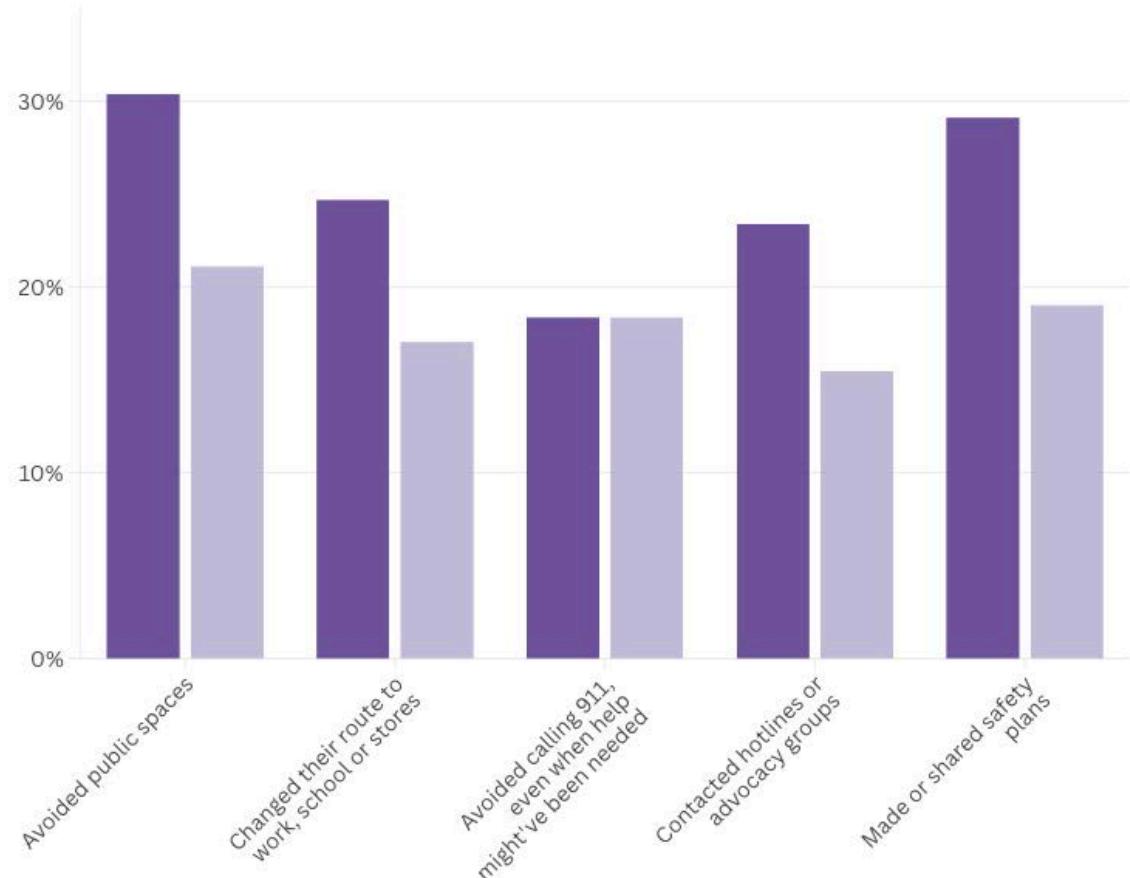
Respondents were asked five questions about how they kept themselves and their family safe in the current climate. While we can't say for certain without a past point of comparison, the responses across all five questions indicate fear of federal agents may be driving public safety decisions at an elevated rate. This is especially the case for Latino respondents and for respondents living in the 14 target ZIP codes.

- More than half of respondents reported avoiding public spaces at some point in the last week because they had heard about ICE nearby. Nearly a quarter said they had done so "often" or "always."
 - The proportion of avoiding public spaces at any point in the last week due to the nearby presence of ICE:
 - Latino respondents: 64%
 - Respondents in the target ZIP codes: 56%
 - The proportion of avoiding public spaces "often" or "always" in the last week due to the nearby presence of ICE:
 - Latino respondents: 30%
 - Respondents in the target ZIP codes: 28%
- The responses for changing routes to work, school or stores, and making and sharing safety plans due to ICE presence also stood out. The proportion of respondents doing so at any point in the last week was around 45% for both questions.

Latino respondents are taking more drastic steps for their own safety during the ICE crackdown compared to non-Latino respondents

Proportion of respondents who _____ "often" or "always" in the past week based on the presence of ICE.

■ Latino (N=158) ■ Non-Latino (N=910)

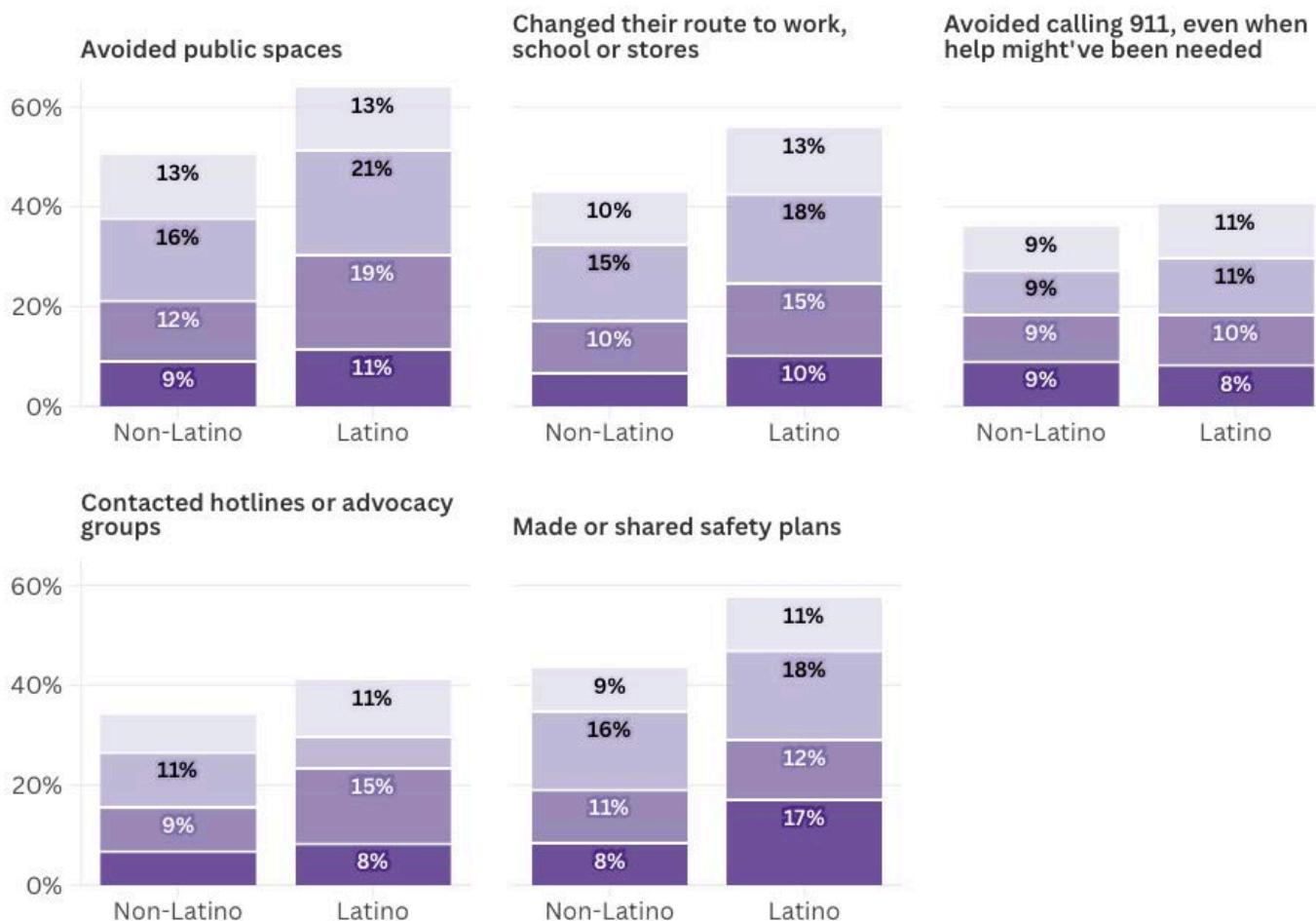


Source: *News, Safety and Trust: Understanding How Chicago Communities Use Information During ICE Actions* survey report by John Volk, November 2025

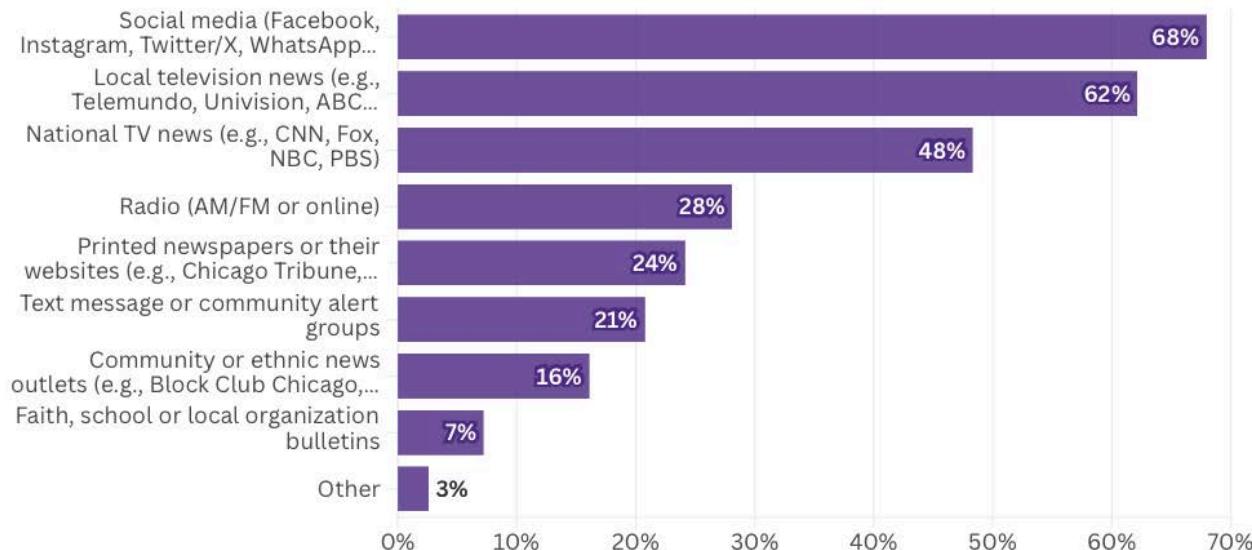
Latino respondents are taking more drastic steps for their own safety during the ICE crackdown compared to non-Latino respondents

Proportion of respondents who _____ in the past week based on the presence of ICE.

■ Always ■ Often ■ Sometimes ■ Rarely



Social media and local TV lead the way among Chicagoans' information sources



SOURCES OF ICE INFORMATION

Respondents were asked five questions related to how they find information about ICE activity in their neighborhoods and their perceptions of different outlets' ability to provide information on ICE activity. The first two questions focused on respondents' usage of information sources. The next three assessed respondents' perceptions of information sources.

I. USAGE Social media and local TV news were the favorites for information on ICE with each being used by around 60% of all respondents. This preference for social media and local TV stayed true across the previous breakdowns we've used (Latino vs. not and in the 14 target ZIP codes vs. not). Surprisingly, it also remained true across age groups, with social media and local TV being the top two sources for all age groups (except those older than 65, who use social media less). However, when forced to pick just one source of information about ICE activity, a generational divide emerges with younger respondents preferring social media and older respondents preferring local TV.

Other local professional journalism outlets like newspapers, radio stations and digital news sites ranked behind word of mouth but outperformed other institutions (government, cultural, religious, advocacy, etc.). They also ranked ahead of text message-based information sources.

This data suggests that respondents did not significantly alter their media consumption diet during this time of conflict. Rather, they appear to have turned to the same information sources they turn to regularly. Respondents used about 70% of their usual information sources when seeking information about ICE.

II. PERCEPTIONS

Respondents indicated broad trust in all the sources listed for their ability to deliver information on immigration enforcement. Every source received trust from over half of the sample. Leading the way was local TV news (85% trust), followed by national TV news, newspapers and websites, and community/ethnic outlets. Information sources deemed least trustworthy for information on ICE were word of mouth (33% distrust), encrypted messaging/text alerts (30%) and social media (29%).

Respondents did not exhibit a strong tension between speed and accuracy in their assessment of traditional vs. alternative sources when it came to information on ICE. In both cases, alternative sources earned a plurality of positive responses: 45% said alternative sources were faster than traditional outlets, and 38% said alternative sources were more accurate.

I. DEMOGRAPHICS

Geographic distribution of 1,068 responses largely mirrors that of the population. The Medill Solutions Journalism Hub set quotas to ensure adequate sampling from 14 ZIP codes hardest hit by the federal government's fall 2025 immigration crackdown in the city.

The racial breakdown of respondents is as follows. Note that proportions do not sum to 100% as no distinction was made in their calculation between race alone or race in combination with others. The sample is slightly over representative of the white and Black populations and slightly underrepresentative of the Latino population.

Fewer than half (43%) of the sample had a bachelor's degree or higher, and a similar proportion had an annual household income under \$50,000. More than 98% of respondents completed the survey in English.

RACE

PROPORTION

WHITE	44.2%
BLACK/AFRICAN AMERICAN	41.8%
HISPANIC/LATINO	14.8%
ASIAN	3.3%
MULTIRACIAL (THIS WAS AN ANSWER OPTION, NOT COMPUTED SEPARATELY)	2.1%
NATIVE AMERICAN/ALASKAN NATIVE	2.2%
AFRICAN	0.6%
MIDDLE EASTERN/NORTH AFRICAN	0.4%
HAWAIIAN/PACIFIC ISLANDER	0.4%



Photo Credit: iStock

THE FOUR PILARS APPLIED

Using the Four Pillars of Solutions Journalism: Response, Evidence, Insight and Limitations, this Medill Solutions Hub Rapid Response Kit draws on best practices implemented by Chicago newsrooms to guide journalists and storytellers facing high community anxiety when systems collide.

I. TYPICAL NEWS AND INFORMATION CONSUMPTION

As with information sources on local ICE activity, the preferred information sources for local information in general were overwhelmingly social media (68%) and local TV news (62%). Other traditional professional local news sources lagged, including radio (28%), newspapers (24%) and digital/ethnic outlets (16%).

Respondents indicated a high degree of engagement in local news with more than half indicating they followed local news “always” or “most of the time.” Taking action on local news (discussing news with friends, etc.) was slightly less common with 39% reporting they did so “always” or “most of the time.”

Reading or watching news stories was the primary avenue for interacting with local news (70%), followed by sharing links with friends and family (47%). More active methods of engaging with local news were less common but still relevant: 17% indicated they attended community meetings after learning about them in local news, and 15% reported providing news to local outlets.

More than 90% of respondents said they prefer reading local news in English.



Photo by Candace Dane Chambers/
Chicago Sun-Times via AP

FEDERAL DEPLOYMENT IN CONTEXT

Since President Donald J. Trump's 2017 deployment of Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) and federal tactical agents to major cities, including Chicago, Los Angeles, Houston and Charlotte, coverage has moved beyond daily raid tracking to examine deeper systemic issues. In Chicago, Operation Midway Blitz led to traumatic clashes between agents and residents, including shootings, chemical weapon use and mass demonstrations. Federal courts and Illinois officials have repeatedly blocked White House attempts to deploy National Guard troops to support ICE operations, signaling intensifying legal and political pushback. What happened in Chicago has emerged as a blueprint for covering broader resistance to federal immigration enforcement throughout the country. While ensuring access to accurate information, examples of neighborhood mobilization and journalism innovation and collaboration emerged during this period that bears examination for best practices that can be replicated, scaled and resourced.



Photo by Anthony Vazquez/
Chicago Sun-Times via AP

PILLAR 1: RESPONSE — COMMUNITY-CENTERED COVERAGE

LOCAL INTERVENTIONS AND COMMUNITY SAFEGUARDS

Community journalism took center stage. Rather than investing in fear-based narratives, newsrooms covering ICE activity focused on how communities responded, not just what the government did. The relationship of news media to “official” sources evolved. Given the uncharacteristic framing of



this federal policing surge and people targeted by it, news media could no longer accept official federal communications as fact without further validation. Local organizations formed rapid-response networks and served as another source of trusted information for community members. These groups have documented ICE interactions, held know-your-rights training, and built safe routes for parents escorting children to school amid fear of arrests. Community organizations created innovative outreach through

whistle networks, for example, formed by community organizations like Pilsen's MigraWatch and Belmont-Cragin United's Whistlemania. Several outlets covered how the small-but-mighty whistle was deployed by neighbors newly empowered to alert others to ICE presence and provide additional resources.

Journalists can put the Response pillar into action by:

- Mapping these community-led interventions.
- Comparing local action models across cities like Los Angeles, Houston and Charlotte.
- Reporting on legal and civic innovations that balance advocacy and accountability.

Community media's approach demonstrates solutions journalism writ large. For journalists across the nation, future coverage invites an opportunity to double down on this approach by pivoting from crisis headlines to solutions-centered documentation of how social systems adapt when federal action disrupts community life.

IN PRACTICE: TIFFANY WALDEN, THE TRIIBE EDITOR IN CHIEF DESCRIBES HER TEAM'S APPROACH TO ICE REPORTING



1 Prioritizing community safety and alerts: The primary focus was on informing the everyday person about what was happening in their community, rather than repeating official statements or focusing on “fear headlines.” The core question guiding coverage was: “What would that person need?”

2 Creating a centralized sighting alert system: In collaboration with other outlets (like [Unraveled](#)), The TRiiBE set up a system to quickly post and verify ICE sightings throughout the city and surrounding areas, effectively creating an alert system on their website and social media.

3 Identifying and Sharing Behavioral Patterns: The TRiiBE team focused on reporting on patterns of ICE activity (such as morning raids in the suburbs, moving into the city, targeting day laborers at Home Depot) to help the community know what to expect and look out for.

4 Validating community experience and rumors: The coverage helped verify people's observations (such as sirens or helicopters), confirming that what they saw was real and providing comfort by sharing information, even if incomplete.

5 Standardizing language and terminology: The team deliberately used the word “detained” instead of “arrest,” reflecting the reality that people were often picked up, driven around, and sometimes released or disappeared without being officially booked.

6 Fostering rapid, noncompetitive collaboration: Independent media saw themselves as part of the resistance, emphasizing collaboration over competition. They used private Signal chats to coordinate logistics, share information, and even rapidly push back and successfully lobby daily newsrooms to change problematic language in their reporting.

PILLAR 2: EVIDENCE —

VERIFYING EFFECTIVENESS OVER AMPLIFYING FEAR

MEASURING THE IMPACT OF RESPONSES

Recent evidence-based reporting has emphasized how journalists can verify effectiveness rather than amplify fear. Guidance from the University of Wisconsin's Center for Journalism Ethics urges reporters to base immigration enforcement reporting on [verifiable data points](#) (confirmed detentions, court filings, hotline usage) instead of unconfirmed online rumors. Factual rigor helps reduce misinformation and panic spirals.

The American public's views toward immigration are softening, according to the Chicago Council on Global Affairs. In 2024, half of Americans surveyed viewed "large numbers of immigrants and refugees coming into the United States as [a critical threat](#) to the country's vital interests." This year, just over one-third overall (36%) think so. This shift suggests that evidence-based reporting might inform ideas about migration and citizenship. Such coverage certainly can help shape a nuanced understanding about the history, goals and limits of the U.S. immigration process.

Every city has a unique character and set of values. In Chicago, two-thirds of residents disagree with ICE expansion and military deployments, according to a Hands Off Chicago survey. And clearly, some people in some places agree with this broad policing approach, though nationally, Americans are looking at these large-scale deportations skeptically and now support pathways to citizenship. The value of the Chicago way of reporting on responses emphasizes the inherent agency of local residents and centering their dignity. In doing so, evidence aligns with values that prioritize humanity and community-based solutions.

Recommended reporting practices include:

- Partnering with trusted community data groups and university verification labs.
- Building shared spreadsheets, Slack channels and secure(ish) channels like Signal and WhatsApp, to confirm ICE sightings.
- Designing dashboards that merge quantifiable incident data with firsthand community accounts.

IN PRACTICE: FACTS OVER FEAR AT BORDERLESS MAGAZINE WITH NISSA RHEE, BORDERLESS MAGAZINE CO-FOUNDER & EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



"Over the last year, fear and misinformation have spread through immigrant communities in Chicago and beyond. The fast-paced immigration policy changes, violent ICE raids and real concerns Chicagoans have about the rising costs of food have left our communities feeling overwhelmed and on high alert. In this atmosphere, an increasing number of Chicagoans are getting their news from social media rather than traditional journalism sources."

"This year, Borderless doubled down on our promise to give our readers facts, not fear. We sent our field canvassers out to share stories with people at food pantries, train stations, and community gatherings. We also greatly expanded our vertical video work to meet people where they are on TikTok and Instagram. Borderless empowers our readers with the information they need to make informed decisions for themselves. This information is critical now more than ever."

PILLAR 3: INSIGHT — FROM REACTION TO UNDERSTANDING

LEARNING FROM SYSTEMIC PATTERNS

Insight helps newsrooms turn reactive moments into structural understanding. For example, WTTW TV news coverage shows how ICE operations link to underlying issues of racial profiling, intergovernmental friction and broken trust in public safety systems.

News media are familiar with diminished confidence as it relates to our work. As we continue to position ourselves as credible sources of information on this issue and subsequent crises that may emerge during this White House tenure, we would do well to continue to excavate notions of trust in other institutions and civic expressions.

Journalistic insight emerges by asking:

- How do federal-local conflicts over ICE shape civic trust?
- What new collaborations (e.g., city-sanctioned “ICE-free zones”) are changing local governance culture?
- What do immigrant families’ coping strategies reveal about resilience under coercive federal policies?

Documenting these lessons builds a durable journalistic record that guides other cities, towns and villages facing similar crises.



CRIME & LAW

Chicago Advocates Concerned About Racial Profiling After Supreme Court's Ruling on Immigration Raids

Bridgette Adu-Wadier | September 29, 2025, 8:20 pm



IN PRACTICE: MEDILL PROF. AVA FRANCESCA BATTOCCHIO ON THE INVISIBLE INFRASTRUCTURE OF TRUST



SAFETY OVER OFFICIAL CREDIBILITY:

For immediate safety concerns, word of mouth (phone trees, texting, neighbors) is the primary information source. People prioritize making a swift decision (“better safe than sorry”), such as deciding whether to go out, based on immediate, though potentially unvalidated, neighbor reports of ICE sightings.

LAYERED MEDIA ECOSYSTEM:

Information flows in a rhythm where different media fill different gaps: Social media/texting/word of mouth provide the quickest, most immediate alerts; local radio may offer daily updates, and newspapers/traditional news serve as a

later means of validation and follow-up to assess if the initial word-of-mouth information was accurate.

ROLE OF COMMUNITY CONNECTORS: In tight-knit, often marginalized communities, certain key people (e.g., long-term residents, landlords, neighborhood watch types) are seen as more trustworthy and play a crucial, informal “phone tree” role in circulating immediate safety information. These people often act as an “invisible infrastructure” until a crisis hits.

SELF-RELIANT FOR A REASON: Given that these are populations that have been historically marginalized and “left to their own,” reliance on community connectors and internal networks is expected, as they take care of their own rather than relying on external sources (news organizations) to do it.

PILLAR 4: LIMITATIONS —

TRANSPARENCY ABOUT WHAT DOESN'T WORK

ACKNOWLEDGING FAILURES AND ETHICAL BOUNDARIES

Limitations require transparency about what responses and interventions don't work — both in community responses and media efforts. Journalists have noted failures and challenges like limited translation infrastructure and inconsistent data verification across outlets.

Meanwhile, overworked reporters risk becoming worn down in the quest to verify and stay vigilant. Ethically speaking, newsrooms must admit their own constraints — limited staffing, safety risks, and of course, language barriers. Coverage that openly recognizes these limits builds credibility with immigrant and nonimmigrant audiences alike.

It also helps to surface coordinated solutions like the Press Forward-funded Immigration Hub, a multineWSroom reporting collaboration curated by Chicago Public Media. The initiative is designed to share resources, and scale the reach and impact of immigration enforcement coverage and its intersections. Housed at the Chicago Sun-Times, which has strong online domain authority for search that is beneficial to every participating organization, the Immigration Hub will optimize the best each outlet has to offer. It will leverage the unique brand of trust community-focused outlets have cultivated and use resources to scale the reach of information far beyond the efforts of a single local outlet.

EMERGING PUBLIC OPINION TRENDS

Polling data complicates partisan narratives. In Chicago, almost two-thirds of residents [oppose](#) ICE expansions or military deployments, a Hands Off Chicago survey shows. Nationally, most Americans now favor pathways to citizenship and view large-scale deportations skeptically, polls show. This indicates that media framing emphasizing local agency and evidence aligns with changing values favoring humane, community-based solutions.



OVERCOMING THE LIMITS OF THE ACCOUNTABILITY PURSUIT

When Block Club Chicago, Injustice Watch, Invisible Institute, Lumpen Radio, the Investigative Project on Race and Equity, Cicero Independiente, South Side Weekly, Borderless Magazine, the Chicago Reader and The TRiiBE formed a coalition to curate and share videos, the effort became a response to a fundamental limitation of existing governance and oversight systems: the inability of formal institutions to ensure the safety and rights of observers during federal law enforcement actions. By creating a system for audience members to upload and share videos, newsrooms are directly addressing the shortcoming of official records and the difficulty in obtaining evidence for accountability.

Residents may upload assets to tinyurl.com/chicagojournalists. They may ask questions about it at chicagojournalists@protonmail.com, which is encrypted to protect outsiders from accessing user data. Headquartered in Switzerland, ProtonMail is not subject to U.S. laws that might compel the handover of user data.

STRUCTURAL ANALYSIS: WHERE FORMAL SYSTEMS FAIL

JAIME DOMINGUEZ, A NORTHWESTERN UNIVERSITY POLITICAL SCIENTIST WHO CREATED THE CHICAGO DEMOCRACY PROJECT ONLINE POLITICAL DATABASE, ON TRUST AND PARTICIPATION GAPS

Untapped Potential in Spanish-language radio: While radio is a big conduit for information and could reach more people than television, Dominguez noted his surprise that Spanish-language radio in Chicago wasn't playing a bigger public service role, unlike in cities like Los Angeles where PSAs on immigration flood the airwaves.

Fear of Formal Actors: Due to the Trump administration's policy of "not distinguishing" between different legal statuses (undocumented, those with protective status, asylum seekers), a general fear exists. This causes Latinos to shy away from formal actors and official state processes.

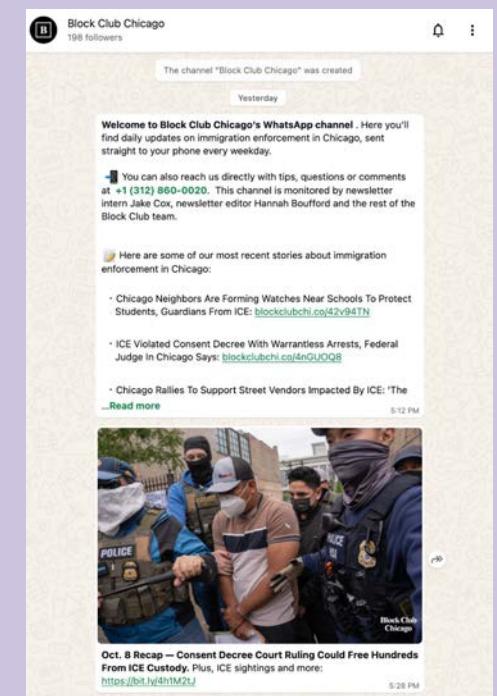
Significance of the Informal Arena: The informal arena is therefore paramount for participation, inclusion and mobilization across all Latino demographics. It acts as a unit to organize, message and advocate for the community, enabling participation even for those who cannot vote.



IN PRACTICE: DEEPENING COMMUNITY CONNECTION VIA WHATSAPP

Block Club Chicago launched a WhatsApp channel specifically targeting key Latino communities, such as Pilsen, Little Village and Back of the Yards. This investment addresses the survey finding that alternative information sources are valued for their speed and accuracy. The channel acknowledges the community's high reliance on private, encrypted messaging (like WhatsApp and Signal) for safety alerts.

This approach is an excellent example of a newsroom actively addressing the limitations identified in the survey (underrepresented Latino voices, reliance on nontraditional sources) by deploying resources directly into those communities via a trusted, nontraditional platform.



IN PRACTICE/ON PURPOSE: STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIPS AND VERIFICATION

Newsrooms met the moment by producing resource guides and know-your-rights info along with English and Spanish content. City Bureau offered to translate English-language content for other outlets free of charge. Other media organizations made the effort to provide Spanish-language versions of critical content.

Jen Sabella and the Block Club Chicago team are building credibility through formal documentation and partnership with trusted entities by actively assembling information (e.g., attending meetings, collecting published materials) from recognized, trusted immigrant- and refugee-serving organizations.

OPERATIONAL IDEAS FOR JOURNALISTS, EDITORS, FIELD REPORTERS AND PHOTOGRAPHERS:

- Pre-identify community leaders and build trusted messaging channels.
- Use verified reporting templates to confirm ICE incidents before publication.
- Integrate qualitative interviews showing coping mechanisms and resilience.
- File FOIAs proactively for detailed facility rosters, arrest justifications and complaint outcomes.

FOR EDITORS AND PRODUCERS:

- Establish an ICE verification desk shared among partner outlets.
- Direct staff to focus on measurable social responses rather than arrest/detainment counts.
- Support trauma-aware editorial processes for coverage involving children and schools.
- Localize impact data through partnerships with universities or civic data labs — tracking school or health metrics related to ICE operations.
- Develop open-access data collaboratives to share verified statistics, reducing duplication across newsrooms.

FOR AUDIENCE AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT TEAMS:

- Host listening sessions to surface audience fears and information gaps.
- Publish context guides explaining residents' rights and government authority.
- Use multilingual social media to circulate verified rapid-response data.

Letter From the Editor: Facts, Not Fear

Borderless empowers our readers with information to make the best decisions for themselves. This information is critical more now than ever.



Max Herman/Borderless Magazine

Borderless Editorial Director Mauricio Peña interviews Ald. Rossana Rodriguez-Sánchez (33rd) outside the Belmont Blue Line CTA station as an intergovernmental coalition gathered to defend communities against threats of deportation raids on Monday, Jan. 20, 2025.

BY MAURICIO PEÑA | FEBRUARY 6, 2025 | IMMIGRATION POLICY

Anti-immigrant rhetoric from the newly sworn-in President Donald J. Trump prompted Borderless Magazine to throw down the gauntlet on how they would serve their audience during his term and beyond. Crafted by Mauricio Peña, [Letter From the Editor: Facts, Not Fear](#) embodied the ethos of solutions journalism by vowing to offer information to help audience members make the best decisions, instead of falling into a reactive spiral, which turns people off from engaging with news.

THE CHICAGO WAY? CENTERING DIGNITY AND AGENCY

A photograph of a protest in Chicago. In the foreground, a Black man with glasses and a beard is shouting into a blue megaphone. He is wearing a dark jacket over a pink shirt. Behind him, a diverse crowd of people of various ages and ethnicities are holding up protest signs. One sign is clearly visible on the left with the words 'DROP ICE' and the numbers '1 2 3 6 9'. The background shows city buildings and trees, suggesting an urban setting.

IN CONCLUSION: Chicago's case illustrates a pivotal shift in how journalists everywhere must navigate the use of government force and community response. The cumulative lesson is clear: Effective coverage of the presence of ICE (and other federal agencies) depends on rigor, empathy and transparency. Applying the Four Pillars of Solutions Journalism allows reporters to craft stories that do not merely describe crises but help communities understand, evaluate and shape their own responses.

Photo by Matthew Rodier/NurPhoto via AP

Northwestern | MEDILL