

Proposed 2024 Mass Deportation Program Would Socially and Economically Devastate American Families

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Executive Summary

In 2017, the Center for Migration Studies (CMS) analyzed the effects of a mass deportation program for undocumented immigrants proposed by then-President Donald Trump (Warren & Kerwin 2017). With now-candidate Trump reintroducing a similar proposal as a key element of his platform, CMS has conducted a new analysis using the most recent available data: the 2022 American Community Survey microdata, released by the US Census Bureau (Ruggles et al. 2024). In this report, we highlight the devastation of mass deportation on both undocumented residents *and* their US citizen and legal noncitizen families and communities. We discuss individual, household, and family characteristics of the 10.9 million undocumented residents living in the US, and 4.7 million households with both undocumented residents and residents with permanent legal status (referred to henceforth as “mixed status” households). We investigate the economic effect of the deportation on US citizens and undocumented residents, as well as the negative fiscal impact on the broader economy should mass deportation be carried out.

Key findings of the updated analysis include:

- 5.8 million US households are home to at least one undocumented resident. Of those, 4.7 million households are home to undocumented residents *and* US citizens or others with legal

status. Therefore, mass deportation threatens to break up nearly 5 million American families.

- Over half of the US undocumented population is woven into American life, having been in the country for at least 10 years; their deportation would damage long-standing communities.
- Mass deportation would push nearly 10 million US citizens into economic hardship. Median household income for mixed-status households would drop from \$75,500 to \$39,000 (a drop of over 48 percent).
- 5.5 million US-born children live in households with at least one undocumented resident, including 1.8 million living in households with two undocumented parents.
- The monetary cost of paying to complete the upbringing of these US-born children in the event of mass deportation is estimated to be at least \$116.5 billion.
- Undocumented workers contribute an estimated \$96.7 billion in federal, state, and local taxes; their removal from the workforce would have a substantial impact on local economies.

This report is one of several CMS publications outlining the negative impacts of a mass deportation policy for undocumented immigrants. In 2017, we analyzed the social and economic impacts of mass deportation using Census Bureau data from 2014 (Warren & Kerwin 2017). Earlier in 2024, we [explored other immediate and](#)

[downstream impacts](#) of the Trump campaign’s proposed mass deportation policy, including the moral, legal, and public safety crisis caused by implementing a mass search-and-seizure operation across the nation.

Undocumented Residents in the United States

Using 2022 Census Bureau data, CMS has estimated a population of 10.9 million undocumented individuals (see Warren 2024). Over half (54 percent) of the population is long-term residents, having lived in the US for 10 or more years. As each person stays in the United States longer, their impact and ties to their community only strengthen, increasing the potential disruptions their removal supposes. In the following section, we further describe the undocumented population in the United States in 2022.

In the US, there are 5.8 million households with at least one undocumented resident, up from 5.3 million such households in 2014. 1.1 million households are exclusively composed of undocumented residents, which means that the vast majority (4.7 million) of “undocumented” households contain residents with a mix of legal statuses. Characteristics of mixed-status households are discussed in the following section.

Of the 9.9 million undocumented individuals 16 years and older, 7.6 million are members of the labor force—a labor force participation rate of 77.2 percent.¹ Using ACS data for the full population (16 years and older), the nationwide labor force participation rate in 2022 was 63.5 percent, indicating that undocumented immigrants in the US are more likely to be contributing to the labor force (and, therefore, paying taxes) than the nationwide average. Undocumented workers play a crucial role in filling both current and projected labor shortages

(Lisiecki 2024b). Fourteen percent of undocumented workers, or just over 1 million, are self-employed. Undocumented workers also play a vital role in staffing essential occupations, with 74 percent of undocumented workers working in essential roles, compared to 65 percent of the native-born labor force (Kerwin & Warren 2020).

2.3 million, or approximately one in five undocumented persons over 18, have college degrees, up from 1.3 million in 2014. Of these, 1.4 million undocumented college graduates have degrees in either engineering, business, communications, or social sciences. Of the total undocumented population, nearly 60 percent (6.3 million) speak English well or very well, or only speak English.

Of all undocumented residents, 81.3 percent have incomes at or above the 2022 poverty level. Additionally, median household income of all households with undocumented residents (including *both* mixed-status households and those with only undocumented residents) is \$71,300. This is \$3,500 less than the national median household income of \$74,800 derived from the ACS. The discrepancy in household incomes is much greater when looking at households composed exclusively of undocumented residents, where the median household income is \$53,200, or \$23,600 less than the national median household income.

Finally, 2.6 million undocumented residents, nearly a quarter of the overall population, had little agency in their immigration status, coming to the United States with family before the age of 15 years old. For more on programs related to legal status for childhood arrivals (including DACA), see Kerwin et al. (2022).

¹ An alternative labor force measure to unemployment rate, used here to indicate intention to work as well as ability to obtain employment. Labor force participation is defined as those who are employed plus those who are unemployed, divided by the total population over the age of 16.

Mixed Status Households

The following section focuses on mixed-status households in the United States. We define “mixed-status” as households with at least one undocumented resident and one resident with legal status (including native-born US citizens, naturalized US citizens, and permanent legal residents). By understanding more about this subset of the undocumented population, we begin to understand the wide-reaching impacts of mass deportation beyond the undocumented population and into broad swathes of American communities.

According to 2022 data, there are just over 7 million undocumented individuals living in households with US citizens. More broadly, 8.5 million undocumented residents are living in mixed status households, alongside either US citizens, other residents with legal status, or both. Forty eight percent of households with at least one undocumented resident (2.8 million households) are the home of at least one US-born child, with a total of 5.5 million US-born children residing in households with undocumented residents. This number, however, does not include any US-born dependents of undocumented parents who now live in other households with no undocumented persons.

Overall, there are 4.7 million mixed-status households (defined as a home with at least one undocumented resident and at least one citizen or legal noncitizen resident), compared to only 1.1 million households which house only undocumented residents. This includes 3.9 million households with both undocumented and US citizen residents, up from the previous version of this report (Warren & Kerwin 2017), which identified only 3.3 million such households. Of 4.7 million mixed-status households, nearly 4 million also include a US citizen. In addition, 726,000 undocumented immigrants are married to a US citizen, with 455,000 of that total residing in the country for at least ten years,

and thus qualifying for the Biden administration’s parole-in-place expansion announced in June 2024 (Lisiecki 2024a).

Conversely, 9.7 million US citizens (adults and children) live in households with undocumented residents. This number, up from 6.6 million such households in 2014, underscores the increased devastation renewed deportation proposals would inflict on US citizens.

Undocumented Residents in Mixed-Status and Undocumented-Only Households

In this section, we facilitate direct comparisons between two groups of undocumented immigrants: those who live in mixed-status households and those who live in undocumented-only households. As a reminder, there are 4.7 million mixed-status households and 1.1 million undocumented-only households, according to 2022 data.

First, undocumented residents who live in mixed households have lived in the United States longer than those in households containing only undocumented persons. Specifically, 57 percent of those in mixed households have lived in the US for 10 years or longer, compared to 41 percent of those in undocumented-only households.

Those in mixed households speak English slightly better than those not in mixed households. Almost 60 percent of undocumented people in mixed households speak English well or very well, or only speak English, compared to 58 percent of residents of undocumented-only households.

When comparing labor force participation, undocumented residents who live in mixed households are less likely to participate in the labor force (75.3 percent) than those in undocumented-only households (83.4 percent). Note that both groups display

significantly higher labor force participation than the nationwide average.

Mixed-status household undocumented residents are more likely to have health insurance. Specifically, 52 percent of undocumented residents who live in mixed households have health insurance coverage, compared with 49 percent of undocumented residents of undocumented-only households.

Household-level Impact of Mass Deportation

5.5 million US-born children under the age of 18 live in households with undocumented immigrants. A mass deportation program would leave these US-born children without one or more of the adults responsible for their care and upbringing. This is even more dire for the 1.8 million US-born children living with two undocumented parents. Assuming that $\frac{1}{3}$ of these children would remain in the US (a fairly conservative assumption), and that each child would have at least one parent or guardian remaining (again conservative, since we know that a significant percentage of these children have two undocumented parents), we apply the estimated cost of raising a child to age 18 (see Lino et al. 2017) and adjust for the average number of years of support needed² in order to reach age 18. A US mass deportation program for undocumented immigrants would therefore create over \$116.5 billion of childrearing expenses currently borne by members of the childrens’ households. See Table 1 for calculation details.

² This adjustment takes into account the varying ages of the US-born children. We compute the median age of US-born children who live in households with undocumented residents, 8.27 years. Therefore, the median child requires an additional 9.73 years of childrearing before reaching age 18. Therefore, 9.73 divided by 18.0 years = 54.1 percent.

Table 1. Estimated Loss of Financial Support for US-Born Children Due to Mass Deportation

1	5,542,800	US-born children in households with undocumented residents
2	54.1%	Adjustment for average number of years of support needed per child
3	\$ 233,610	Estimated cost of raising a child to age 18
4	50%	Percent of child support provided by undocumented residents
5	33.3%	Assumes one third of US-born children would remain in the US
6	\$ 116,549,634,770	Loss of financial support for US-born children if mass deportation

6 = 1x2x3x4x5

In addition, 1.3 million undocumented children live in households with other undocumented residents. Beyond the financial costs of raising US citizens left behind by mass deportations, such a program would add to an existing climate of fear. Fear is a known barrier in immigrants’ accessing vital public services (including education for US citizen children) and reporting public or workplace safety violations (Alulema & Paviion 2022).

In addition to the damage fear of mass deportation can have on the family unit, the 9.8 million US citizens living in households with undocumented individuals face economic consequences in the face of a mass deportation program. According to 2022 ACS data, the median income of mixed status households is \$75,500. To understand the economic contributions of the undocumented residents in mixed households, we computed the median household income subtracting the median income of undocumented members of mixed-status households. Without the contribution of undocumented household members, the median household income for mixed-status households would drop to \$39,000, a drop of over 48 percent, pushing millions of Americans closer or into poverty, and increasing the burden on public benefits and charitable institutions. These findings confirm that families must remain intact to ensure the security of these households and the 5.5 million US citizen children in them. In order to further support these American households, pathways to legal status for undocumented residents are imperative.

Broader National Implications

The impact of mass deportations would not only have impacts at the household and family level; the removal of the 10.9 million undocumented residents of the United States would have consequences for the entire nation. For instance, undocumented residents play a role in the US housing market. Nearly 1.5 million, or one in four, of households with at least one undocumented person have mortgages. Deportation would likely cause default on a significant percentage of those 1.5 million mortgages, threatening the US housing market with destabilization.

Additionally, undocumented people in the United States contribute large sums to the American economy. The total undocumented population accrued over \$375 billion in income in 2022. According to estimates from the Institute on Taxation and Economic Policy, undocumented immigrants paid \$96.7 billion in federal, state, and local taxes in 2022 (Davis et al. 2024). Thus, over 25% of undocumented immigrants' income goes towards taxes, public funds which would be lost in the case of mass deportations of undocumented residents of the United States.

The economic and fiscal costs of a mass deportation program detailed above include only costs that can be derived from the American Community Survey and related datasets. As such, they do not include the social and emotional impact of this policy on children and families. These costs can be assumed to be, at minimum, similar to the costs of the Trump administration's 2018 policy of family separation, a policy described by medical experts as one that "will lead to lifelong mental, emotional, and physical damage" (see Buchanan et al. 2021).

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