

Illegal Immigration and the Emerging Crisis in Northern States

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Introduction

Illegal immigration has long been a focal point of political debate in the United States, especially in southern border states like Texas, Arizona, New Mexico, and California. Historically, these states bore the brunt of the immigration crisis due to their proximity to Mexico. However, a dramatic shift has occurred in recent years. Northern states, including New York and Massachusetts, find themselves at the forefront of the migrant crisis, declaring states of emergency as they grapple with an influx of illegal immigrants. The shift from a border-centric immigration issue to a nationwide crisis underscores the need for comprehensive reform.

This paper explores the factors driving this change since President Biden took office, highlighting how illegal immigration has increasingly impacted northern states. Drawing on data and trends, we will also discuss ideas to address this crisis, including the importance of securing the border, reforming asylum laws, and eliminating sanctuary city policies.

1. The Changing Migration Landscape

States along America's southern border have long faced challenges related to border security, law enforcement, and the economic pressures of a growing migrant population. However, recent policy shifts and global crises have led to an increase in migrant flows into northern states as well. This change can be attributed to several factors, including federal policy decisions, the existence of sanctuary policies in many northern states, and the understandable frustration of border states about having their serious concerns and struggles battling this crisis be ignored for an increasingly long period of time.

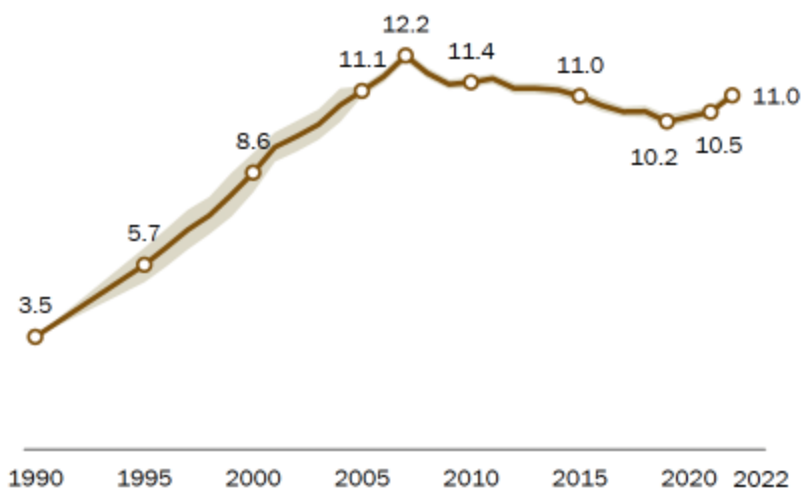
1.1 Federal Policy Shifts

Under the Trump administration, immigration policies were significantly tightened through initiatives like the "Remain in Mexico" policy and expanded deportations. These efforts discouraged many from coming and others from continuing into the interior of the country.

The Biden administration's immigration policies have significantly contributed to the increased migration seen across the U.S., including in northern states. The reversal of stricter Trump-era policies, such as "Remain in Mexico" and the expiration of Title 42 (a public health order used during the COVID-19 pandemic to curtail migration), has encouraged larger waves of illegal immigrants. The absence of stricter border controls has made the U.S. an attractive destination. With fewer barriers to entry, the number of illegal immigrants rose. The Pew Research Center graph below shows this rise clearly.

The number of unauthorized immigrants in the U.S. grew from 2019 to 2022

Unauthorized immigrant population in the U.S., in millions



Note: Shading shows the range of the estimated 90% confidence interval. The data points labeled are 1990, 1995, 2000, 2005, 2007 (peak), 2010, 2015, 2019, 2021 and 2022. Source: Pew Research Center estimates based on augmented U.S. Census Bureau data.

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Encounters with migrants at U.S. borders reached record levels in 2022-23. By the end of 2023, the number of applicants waiting for decisions on asylum claims increased by approximately 1 million. The sheer volume of cases awaiting resolution illustrates the overwhelming pressure on the system.

1.2 Sanctuary Policies and Their Drawbacks

The Biden Administration and Democrat leaders throughout the nation were not just silent on the issue – they encouraged it. Northern states such as New York, Massachusetts, and Illinois (at the time) were proud to pass even stronger sanctuary city laws and declare themselves a haven for any potential illegal immigrants. These actions and rhetoric further encouraged illegal migration into the U.S., which in turn exacerbated the crisis being faced by southern border states.

Border state leaders like Texas Governor Greg Abbott responded by bussing a fraction of the illegal immigrants to more northern states. The immigrants transported to liberal strongholds experienced more lax illegal immigration policies in these local jurisdictions.

The sanctuary city laws and accompanying rhetoric resulted in limited cooperation between local law enforcement and federal immigration authorities, creating a broader magnet for migration into those cities. Many illegal immigrants who were already in the country also migrated to these

northern destinations. The combination of these federal policy shifts, northern local incentives, and northern political rhetoric challenged these northern progressives to put their money where their mouth is. In doing so, they began to experience the crisis that their southern brethren have long suffered, as progressives mocked them for their alleged lack of compassion.

This trend is supported by a Pew Research report, which found that the unauthorized immigrant population grew in six states between 2019 and 2022: Florida, Maryland, Massachusetts, New Jersey, New York, and Texas. The increase in states like New York and Massachusetts aligns with the rise in sanctuary policies, which have made these areas attractive to migrants seeking protection from federal authorities.

2. The Migrant Crisis in Northern States

The once predominantly border-state issue of illegal immigration has now become a nationwide concern, with northern states increasingly affected by the rising number of illegal immigrants. As more and more sought sanctuary in these states, the strain on local resources has become overwhelming. States like New York and Massachusetts are feeling the pressure, prompting declarations of states of emergency.

2.1 New York's Struggle

New York has long been a beacon for immigrants, branding itself as a sanctuary city. However, the city and state have faced an unprecedented surge in migrants, many of whom are being sheltered in temporary housing or on the streets. By 2023, the crisis reached a tipping point, with Mayor Eric Adams declaring a state of emergency and demanding federal assistance. In June 2024, Democrat city council members introduced a bill to roll back the sanctuary laws touted and passed under the previous mayor. After several high-profile murders committed by illegal immigrants, Mayor Adams is now calling for all migrants "suspected" of major crimes to be turned over to federal immigration officials – a common sense idea employed in more rational communities, but a dramatic change in the progressive circles of New York City.

New York Governor Kathy Hochul also issued an executive order, stating that "with Title 42 set to expire, the circumstances on the ground are expected to change significantly." This was in direct conflict with the repeated statements out of the White House, which maintained that the expiration of Title 42 would not lead to a significant increase of illegal immigrants.

New York has been further strained by the arrival of migrants paroled into the U.S. through federal programs. In 2023, about 500,000 new immigrants were paroled into the country through the Cuban, Haitian, Nicaraguan, and Venezuelan (CHNV) program, as well as Uniting for Ukraine (U4U). While these groups are not considered unauthorized in traditional estimates, they place a significant burden on New York's resources. The state is now grappling with how to provide housing, healthcare, and education to thousands of new arrivals while maintaining social services for its existing residents.

2.2 Massachusetts' State of Emergency

Massachusetts has experienced similar challenges, particularly in Boston, which has seen a rapid rise in its migrant population. In August 2023, Governor Maura Healey declared a state of emergency, citing the overwhelming demand for shelter and public services. Massachusetts' emergency shelter system has reached capacity, and the influx of migrants has exceeded what the state has ever handled. Governor Healey expressed frustration with the Biden Administration, noting that "there is more than our state has ever served in our emergency assistance program."

This situation is a stark example of how northern states—many of which once championed progressive immigration policies—are now struggling under the weight of the migrant crisis.

2.3 The Crisis in Chicago

Chicago has also been heavily impacted by the migrant surge. Before leaving office in 2023, Chicago Mayor Lori Lightfoot declared a state of emergency in response to the influx of illegal immigrants arriving in the city. This declaration further highlights the extent to which cities far from the southern border are being affected. The strain on Chicago's resources is indicative of the broader national crisis, and other cities throughout the Midwest and Northeast are facing similar challenges.

3. Data Supporting the Crisis

Recent data points further illuminate the severity of the crisis:

- According to Pew Research, the unauthorized immigrant population rose in 2021, reversing a long-term downward trend that persisted from 2007 to 2019. This marks the first sustained increase in the unauthorized immigrant population since 2005-2007.
- Additionally, the population of unauthorized immigrants grew in six states between 2019 and 2022: Florida, Maryland, Massachusetts, New Jersey, New York, and Texas.
- Pew Research also notes that the surge in unauthorized immigrants has been particularly concentrated in states such as New York and Massachusetts, that these states typically do not see such a significant increase as well, and that this increase aligns with the rise in sanctuary policies.
- The House Budget Committee reported that there have been more than 8 million migrant encounters nationwide during Biden's presidency. This staggering number is reflected in the increased pressure not just on border states but on communities across the country, particularly those in the northern U.S.

These figures paint a clear picture: the migrant crisis has reached historic levels and is no longer limited to traditional border states. Northern states are struggling to accommodate this influx, and without meaningful reform, the problem is only set to worsen.

5. Conclusion

The surge of illegal immigration into northern states, once a problem limited to the southern border, now demands national attention. States like New York, Massachusetts, and Illinois have been overwhelmed by the migrant crisis, prompting states of emergency and exposing the weaknesses in current immigration policies.

In another [report](#) released by CURE, the rise of illegal immigration under President Biden, as well as conservative solutions and policies, are further analyzed. This includes the need for robust border security and reformed asylum laws. Without these changes, the crisis will continue to worsen, placing greater strain on public services, local economies, and national unity.