

The Impact of the Illegal Immigration Crisis

Following a decline in migrants crossing the border during the COVID-19 pandemic, illegal border crossings surged during the Biden Administration, with over 7.2 million migrants encountered between January 2021 and January 2024, not counting gotaways. In this issue, Operation Wildfire looks at some of the impacts of illegal immigration on the United States.

The Economic Cost¹

- Illegal immigrants are a net fiscal drain, meaning they receive more in government services than they pay in taxes. This result is not due to laziness or fraud. Illegal immigrants actually have high rates of work, and they do pay some taxes, including income and payroll taxes. The fundamental reason that illegal immigrants are a net drain is that they have a low average education level, which results in low average earnings and tax payments. It also means a large share qualify for welfare programs, often receiving benefits on behalf of their U.S.-born children. Like their less-educated and low-income U.S.-born counterparts, the tax payments of illegal immigrants do not come close to covering the cost they create.²
- The illegal immigrant population grew to 12.8 million by October 2023, up 2.6 million since January 2021, when the president took office. This is the net increase in the illegal population based on monthly Census Bureau data, not the number of new arrivals.
- Illegal immigrants have a negative fiscal impact – taxes paid minus benefits received – primarily because a large share have modest levels of education, resulting in relatively low average incomes and tax payments, along with significant use of means-tested programs and other government services.
- Illegal immigrants make extensive use of welfare. Based on government data, it is estimated that 59 percent of households headed by illegal immigrants use one or more major welfare programs, compared to 39 percent of households headed by the U.S.-born.
- Approximately \$42 billion in benefits, or about 4 percent of the total cost of the cash, Medicaid, food and housing programs is received by illegal immigrants.

The Human Cost³

- Crimes committed by illegal aliens have skyrocketed over the past two years in virtually every category, including homicide and manslaughter, robbery and theft, sexual offenses, and weapons and drug trafficking.
- In 2022 alone, U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) arrested 1,142 illegal aliens who were convicted of assault, battery or domestic violence; 1,614 who were convicted of driving under the influence; and 2,239 who were convicted of drug possession and trafficking.
- In total in 2022, CBP arrested 12,028 illegal aliens who had been convicted for various crimes.
- The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention report that over 71,000 lives were lost to fentanyl overdoses in 2021, with all of that fentanyl coming from south of the border.

From Day One in office, President Biden and Homeland Security Secretary Alejandro Mayorkas have all but eliminated border and interior immigration enforcement, doing away with 89 previously successful border policies with their first year in office, and dropping the number of illegal aliens detained from 11,000 to 3,000 per month, the lowest number since 1999.

As Secretary Mayorkas claims they have “operational control” of the border and Vice President Harris says the “border is secure,” there were over 6 million known illegal crossing encounters and “getaways” under the first two years of the Biden Administration’s watch.

¹ “Shocking Cost of the Illegal Immigration Crisis to Americans” 2/17/2023

² “The Cost of Illegal Immigration to Taxpayers, 1/11/2024

³ Ibid.

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The Cost to Public Education⁴

- Illegal immigration makes significant use of public education. Based on average costs per student, the estimated 4 million children of illegal immigrants in public schools created \$68.1 billion in costs in 2019. The vast majority of these children are U.S.-born.
- Public schools must navigate educating migrant children, regardless of immigration status, not to mention instruction and classroom struggles. There are currently no reliable counts of total enrollment in public schools of children who were brought to the United States illegally.

In addition to the significant financial burden imposed on state and local government to educate migrant children, there are also concerns of misuse of school property, classroom management and English proficiency. Each of these affect learning and academic performance.

- Misuse of School Property – The surge in illegal immigration has led to the improper use of school facilities. In New York, for instance, students were sent home from school and were compelled to switch to online learning to allow migrants to shelter in the school gymnasium.
- Classroom Management – School districts are forced to enroll a massive and sudden influx of migrant students into classrooms. At two Texas high schools, teachers were forced to instruct students in hallways and conference rooms to accommodate the 400+ migrant children who were recently enrolled.
- Limited English Proficiency – Unaccompanied children arriving in the United States typically do not speak English. This poses additional challenges for teachers, who must navigate classroom instruction and classroom management issues with children who may not understand content or instructions.

Increased Crime⁵

While the majority of illegal aliens seek a better life, the undeniable link between increasing illegal immigration and crime poses a significant threat to American communities. The Biden decision to grant mass parole for millions of aliens, allowing them to remain in the United States, amplifies the devastating effects of increased illegal immigration on our society.

- From January 2021 to June 2023, over 6.2 million illegal aliens were encountered at the nation's borders, and over 2 million of them were released into the nation's interior.
- In 2023 alone, CBP encountered thousands of illegal aliens with prior criminal convictions, including assault, rape and murder. The true extent of crimes committed by illegal aliens remains unknown because there are also over 1.5 million unaccounted for "getaways" since President Biden's term began.
- Soft on crime prosecutors and sanctuary cities are a deadly combination. As long as sanctuary cities shield criminal illegal aliens from deportation, the persistence of heinous crimes will endure.
- Illegal aliens with criminal histories and those who commit crimes within our borders pose a threat to the safety and security of American communities.
- Left-wing prosecutors allow criminals to walk free and recidivism rates to skyrocket.
- Cities with high crime rates, particularly sanctuary cities, witness the immediate impact of this situation. If left unaddressed, this issue will eventually affect all states.

The Cost to the Environment⁶

- It is estimated that each illegal alien leaves behind 6 to 8 pounds of trash on the U.S. side of the border.
- Backpacks, vehicles, plastics, clothing, human waste, medical supplies, food and chemicals have all been left at the southern border, posing a direct risk to wildlife, water reservoirs, vegetation and

⁴ "The Consequences of Unchecked Illegal Immigration on America's Public Schools"

⁵ "Increased Illegal Immigration Brings Increased Crime: Almost 2/3 of Federal Arrests Involve Noncitizens"

⁶ "Leftist Hypocrisy: Failing to Criticize Environmental Disaster of Biden's Open Border" 6/6/2023

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- protected lands. The Biden Administration's current immigration policies have effectively made the southern border an open landfill.
- The southern border region includes 693 miles of federal or tribal-owned land, some of which are designated as protected areas. These regions are vital to the preservation of our natural heritage.
- Illegal aliens who have been released into the U.S. since Biden took office add to the population and affect things such as vehicle emission rates and infrastructure stability. They also lead to more urban sprawl, which directly hinders farmlands and wildlife.
- The National Wildlife Federation states that the "rapid consumption of land could threaten the survival of nearly one out of every three imperiled species in the United States."
- The presence of increasing numbers of illegal border crossers has led to unauthorized settlements and wildfires, all of which disrupt these animals' habitats, leaving long-lasting effects on biodiversity.

The Cost to America's Health⁷

Legal immigrants are required to have medical screening to ensure they don't bring any contagious diseases into the United States. Illegal aliens are not screened, and many are carrying third world diseases that do not belong in the U.S. Many of these diseases are highly contagious and will infect citizens that come in contact with an infected illegal alien. This has already happened in restaurants, schools and police forces. If we screen legal aliens for contagious diseases, why are we allowing unscreened and contagious illegal aliens to roam the country?

- **Malaria** was eradicated in the 1940s but recently there were outbreaks in southern California, New Jersey, New York City and Houston. In addition, Malaria tainted blood has been discovered in the blood supply.
- **Dengue** was first recognized in the 1950s, affects most Asian countries and has become a leading cause of death among children in the infected areas. Unknown in the U.S., Dengue outbreaks have now occurred in the U.S.
- **Leprosy**, a scourge of Biblical days, is caused by a bacillus agent and is known as Hansen's Disease. In the 40 years prior to 2002, there were only 900 total cases of leprosy in the U.S. In the following three years there have been 9,000 cases and most were illegal aliens.
- **Hepatitis A-E** is a viral infection that primarily attacks the liver. In 2004, more than 650 people contracted Hepatitis A at a single Chi-Chi's Mexican restaurant in Pennsylvania. Four later died. Hepatitis B is one of the major diseases of mankind and is a serious global public health problem. It's estimated that 2 billion people are infected and about one million persons die each year.
- **Tuberculosis (TB)** kills approximately 2 million people each year. TB is a highly contagious disease spread through the air. The U.S. has one of the lowest rates of TB in the world. Mexico has ten times the rate of prevalence and many African countries along with Afghanistan, Cambodia, the Philippines and Indonesia have rates that are 100-150 times higher.
- **Chagas Disease**, endemic to South and Central America, is spread by infected triatomine bugs, known as the "kissing bugs," that bite people. Since this disease is basically unknown outside of the illegal alien community, most doctors won't recognize it, and the blood supply just started being screened for it.
- **HIV**. The number of illegal immigrants with HIV or AIDS is unknown, mostly because researchers rarely ask about immigration status.

According to Pew Research, 80% of Americans say the U.S. government is doing a bad job handling the migrant influx. To read the full article, visit <https://www.pewresearch.org/politics/2024/02/15/how-americans-view-the-situation-at-the-u-s-mexico-border-its-causes-and-consequences/>

⁷ "Illegal Immigrants: Bringing back the diseases that Americans refuse to bring back, 7/3/2014