



Keeping Families Together

Why All Americans Should Care About What Happens to Unauthorized Immigrants

By Silva Mathema

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The first month of the Trump presidency was punctuated by a series of anti-immigrant executive orders and implementation memos that resulted in chaos at airports around the world, immigration raids around the country, and a widespread fear among communities.¹ The Trump administration's actions and directives ostensibly target the 11 million unauthorized immigrants who live in the United States, but they will also harm millions of American citizens all across the country who live and work beside these immigrants every day.² A new analysis by University of Southern California's Center for the Study of Immigrant Integration, or CSII, and the Center for American Progress shows that millions of people, citizens or otherwise, live in mixed-status families with at least one unauthorized family member in the same household. Undeniably, there is no way to separate immigrants out from the U.S.-born population; there can be no us versus them.

The main findings of this brief are as follows:

- Nationwide, about 16.7 million people in the country have at least one unauthorized family member living with them in the same household.
- More than 8 million U.S. citizens, of which 1.2 million are naturalized citizens, have at least one unauthorized family member living with them.
- More than 5.9 million citizen children, U.S. born and naturalized, live with at least one family member who is unauthorized.
- California, Texas, and Nevada, are the top three states that will be most heavily affected by an anti-immigrant policy because they have the highest percent of U.S.-born population with at least one unauthorized family member living with them.
- But even states with smaller immigrant populations, such as Nebraska, Arkansas, and Kansas, will also be affected, because they have high percentages of naturalized citizens who have unauthorized family members living in the same household.

For this brief, CSII analyzed the 2010–2014 American Community Survey to estimate the number of family members of unauthorized immigrants based on the methodology from a 2015 CAP report.³ These estimates are by their nature conservative since they do not include an accounting of the number of family members who do not live in the same household.

Millions of people in America have at least one unauthorized family member

CSII’s analysis shows that 16.7 million people in the country have at least one unauthorized family member living with them in the same household. Moreover, a high share of these individuals—nearly 8.2 million people—are citizens or naturalized citizens. Of these U.S.-born and naturalized citizens who live with at least one unauthorized family member, 72 percent are children. Therefore, when a policy of enforcement and mass deportation targets the estimated 11 million unauthorized immigrants living in the United States, it also threatens the well-being of millions of citizens and their families, and erodes their trust in their community and the government.

TABLE 1
People with at least one unauthorized family member living in their household

	Population with at least one unauthorized family member in the same household		
	Child	Adult	Total
U.S.-born population	5,856,276	1,152,560	7,008,837
Naturalized immigrant population	61,352	1,099,004	1,160,356
Noncitizen immigrant population	226,713	2,351,765	2,578,479
Unauthorized immigrant population	1,036,169	4,950,445	5,986,613
Total population	7,180,510	9,553,774	16,734,285

Note: “Noncitizen immigrant population” excludes the unauthorized immigrant population. “Child” refers to people under 18 years of age. The total number of people with at least one unauthorized family member in their household may not add up to the sum of the “child” and “adult” population due to rounding.

Source: Center for the Study of Immigrant Integration analysis of Steven Ruggles and others, “Integrated Public Use Microdata Series, Version 6.0: American Community Survey, 2010–2014,” available at <https://usa.ipums.org/usa/> (last accessed March 2016).

The states with the most mixed-status households

In California, nearly 4.7 million people—12 percent of the state’s total population—live with an unauthorized family member. Among them, around 2 million, or 42 percent, are children younger than 18 years old. Child’s share of unauthorized family members is even higher—more than or close to 50 percent—in states like Wyoming, South Dakota, and Arizona. New York and New Jersey also have large immigrant populations and a high number of people who have an unauthorized family member living with them.⁴ Other less populated states, including Colorado, Nevada, and New Mexico, have a substantial percentage of people living with an unauthorized immigrant family member.

TABLE 2
Top 10 states where people live with at least one unauthorized family member in the same household

State	Total population	Population with at least one unauthorized family member living in the same household			
		Child	Adult	Total	Percent of total population
California	38,366,950	1,967,756	2,691,920	4,659,676	12%
Texas	26,196,298	1,232,061	1,437,072	2,669,133	10%
Nevada	2,776,601	112,025	142,375	254,400	9%
Arizona	6,579,027	226,793	239,254	466,047	7%
New Jersey	8,933,251	231,295	373,320	604,615	7%
Illinois	12,943,450	342,809	474,257	817,066	6%
New York	19,653,424	440,179	774,775	1,214,955	6%
New Mexico	2,088,118	55,340	59,991	115,331	6%
Colorado	5,210,274	130,958	145,631	276,589	5%
Washington	6,917,417	159,875	191,141	351,016	5%

Note: “Child” refers to people under 18 years of age.

Source: Center for the Study of Immigrant Integration analysis of Steven Ruggles and others, “Integrated Public Use Microdata Series, Version 6.0: American Community Survey, 2010–2014,” available at <https://usa.ipums.org/usa/> (last accessed March 2016).

Top states where the U.S.-born will be most affected

Looking at just the U.S.-born population, California still tops the list with more than 2 million U.S.-born citizens who live with at least one unauthorized family member. Similarly, 57 out of 1,000 U.S.-born persons in Texas and 52 out of 1,000 U.S.-born persons in Nevada live with an unauthorized family member in their household. As mentioned earlier, many of these U.S. citizens are children; the scope of the impact of anti-immigrant policies and actions therefore goes far beyond just the unauthorized immigrants it targets. For example, among the U.S. born people living with at least one unauthorized family member, 91 percent—or about 169,700 out of 187,000 people—are children in North Carolina, the highest among all states. This percentage is similarly high in other states such as Delaware, Wyoming, Nebraska and Tennessee.

TABLE 3
Top 10 states with U.S.-born population living with at least one unauthorized family member in the same household

State	U.S.-born population	U.S.-born population with at least one unauthorized family member living in the same household			
		Child	Adult	Total	Per 1,000 U.S.-born citizens
California	27,758,102	1,658,456	382,555	2,041,011	74
Texas	21,795,060	1,030,906	211,464	1,242,370	57
Nevada	2,237,454	95,015	22,194	117,210	52
Arizona	5,677,352	191,125	41,116	232,241	41
Illinois	11,089,138	289,291	54,241	343,532	31
New Jersey	6,973,751	176,955	27,991	204,946	29
New Mexico	1,871,448	44,374	9,694	54,068	29
Colorado	4,689,633	109,427	18,155	127,582	27
New York	15,180,903	344,807	65,717	410,525	27
Washington	5,982,267	129,014	22,195	151,209	25

Note: "Child" refers to people under 18 years of age.

Source: Center for the Study of Immigrant Integration analysis of Steven Ruggles and others, "Integrated Public Use Microdata Series, Version 6.0: American Community Survey, 2010–2014," available at <https://usa.ipums.org/usa/> (last accessed March 2016).

Top states where naturalized citizens will be highly affected

The group of states whose naturalized citizens will be most affected are quite different. States such as Nebraska, Arkansas, and Kansas, which are generally not considered immigrant-heavy states, top the list of states with the highest percentages of naturalized citizens who live with at least one unauthorized family member in the same household. The different spread of states in this analysis shows that the effect of an anti-immigration policy is not just limited to bigger states, such as California and New York. Rather, the effect is more expansive and will also affect smaller states that may not have a high immigrant population.

TABLE 4
Top 10 states with naturalized immigrant population living with at least one unauthorized family member in the same household

State	Naturalized immigrant population	Naturalized immigrant population with at least one unauthorized family member living in the same household			
		Child	Adult	Total	Percent of naturalized immigrant population
Nebraska	43,189	509	4,264	4,773	11%
Arkansas	40,686	280	3,642	3,922	10%
Kansas	70,602	531	5,664	6,195	9%
Texas	1,443,580	6,645	119,534	126,179	9%
Idaho	33,576	90	2,825	2,915	9%
Hawaii	137,743	826	10,804	11,629	8%
Utah	85,477	639	6,440	7,078	8%
Nevada	232,730	958	17,584	18,542	8%
Oklahoma	69,060	230	4,877	5,107	7%
Colorado	195,445	1,207	12,916	14,123	7%

Note: "Child" refers to people under 18 years of age.

Source: Center for the Study of Immigrant Integration analysis of Steven Ruggles and others, "Integrated Public Use Microdata Series, Version 6.0: American Community Survey, 2010–2014," available at <https://usa.ipums.org/usa/> (last accessed March 2016).

The importance of family in immigration enforcement

Recent immigration raids have resulted in arrests of more than 600 immigrants in one week from across at least 11 states, from California to Indiana and Georgia to New York.⁵ This wide net has swept up people from all walks of life. A mother of two citizen children, Guadalupe García de Rayos, who had reported to the U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement, or ICE, every year since she was swept up in a raid by the notorious former Maricopa County, Arizona, Sheriff Joe Arpaio, was deported to Mexico and separated from her children.⁶ There are reports of people being arrested in their homes, outside schools, and outside churches.⁷ These are the real world consequences of the mass deportation plan currently being rolled out.

Deporting a family member, especially a parent, has serious detrimental impacts on children. In addition to the loss of a parent and the immeasurable security that comes with having a stable family, deportations often leave children in the foster care system.⁸ Fathers, in many immigrant families, are often the bread winners, and are more often detained or deported.⁹ Removals can therefore result in a large number of single mothers left behind to care and provide for the family. Research shows that, when their parents have been deported, children go through multiple negative experiences: They suffer from psychological trauma, especially when they witness a parent's arrest; their family is separated; and they are likely to experience housing insecurity and economic instability.¹⁰

The threat of deportation alone is enough to break apart communities and cause high levels of stress in families. Research shows that immigrants who fear deportation avoid public spaces and interaction with police officers.¹¹ In areas that see more immigration enforcement, unauthorized immigrants are fearful of driving, accessing much-needed health care, or even doing something as mundane as walking down the street. This erosion of trust makes the entire community vulnerable because people are fearful of reporting crimes, coming out as witnesses, or reporting domestic violence abuses.

Apart from the harm to families and communities, there is an undeniable economic argument for having sensible immigration policies. A 2016 CAP report found that removing 7 million unauthorized workers will result in a loss of \$4.7 trillion in gross domestic product, over a decade, and a loss of \$900 billion in federal government revenues over the same time period.¹² Individual states and industries will also suffer from losing unauthorized workers from their workforce.¹³ Additionally, removing unauthorized immigrants means the national and individual states will forgo \$11.74 billion each year in state and local taxes that unauthorized immigrants already pay into the systems through sales and excise, personal income, and property taxes.¹⁴

A focus on keeping families together—rather than a relentless focus on ramping up enforcement—would be a better, pragmatic solution to the issues facing immigration policy in the United States.

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Endnotes

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