

Unleashing Power in New Ways: Immigration in the First Year of Trump 2.0

Having campaigned on and won re-election with immigration as a top issue, President Donald Trump has kept it at center stage in the first year of his second term. Immediately upon returning to office, the administration advanced sweeping changes to immigration policy, unprecedented in their breadth and reach. These changes have made the United States more hostile to unauthorized immigrants while also altering how the government treats immigration and immigrants of all legal statuses and the communities in which they live. The impacts on individuals, families, workplaces, and the nation's overall economic outlook and global standing will be felt for years ahead.

While some efforts have stalled or not yet met the White House's lofty goals, the administration has dramatically reshaped the machinery of government to target unauthorized immigrants in the country, deter unauthorized border arrivals, make the status of many legally resident immigrants more tenuous, and impose obstacles for lawful entry of large swaths of international travelers and would-be immigrants. These changes could set the course for reduced family, humanitarian, and employment-based immigration in the future, while also driving key aspects of U.S. foreign policy.

To accomplish the administration's mass deportation goal, Trump advisor Stephen Miller and other aides dismantled longstanding norms. The White House invoked archaic statutes, enlisted support from state and local law enforcement as well as federal agencies that historically had no immigration enforcement role, and pressured foreign governments to receive deportees. Perhaps most visibly, it militarized immigration

enforcement: Scenes of troops and masked federal agents roaming U.S. streets, lobbing tear gas and in some cases violently—and even fatally—subduing individuals, have garnered global attention and profoundly changed how many residents go about their daily lives. Among other changes, some U.S. citizens now feel compelled to carry identification with them at all times.

The administration has leaned heavily on executive action rather than seeking legislative change in Congress. As of January 7, Trump had signed 38 executive orders related to immigration, accounting for nearly 17 percent of the 225 total orders signed so far during his first year, which is more than the 220 executive orders signed during his entire first term. The administration also ushered in hundreds of other actions via presidential proclamations and policy guidance that have had profound impacts on immigration policy. The Migration Policy Institute (MPI) estimates that the Trump administration in the first year of its second term took more than 500 actions on immigration, surpassing the 472 actions over all four years of Trump's first term.

While some elements of the administration's approach mirror policies of the prior term, albeit at far greater scale and scope, the changes of the last year have been arguably more impactful than any during the first term. Administration officials appear to have learned from their first-term experience and have also benefited from a much more sympathetic Congress and Supreme Court. Indeed, Congress in July provided the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) with a staggering \$170 billion to upscale over Trump's second term what was already the world's largest detention and deportation machinery. And the Supreme Court has greenlit several high-profile actions, including revoking Temporary Protected Status (TPS) from about 600,000 Venezuelans, although it blocked the administration from deporting noncitizens without due process and did not allow deployment of the National Guard for immigration enforcement. Key questions on birthright citizenship and other immigration policies are

yet to be resolved.

The net change has been dizzying in its scope and speed. After the administration further shut down access to asylum, unauthorized arrivals at the U.S.-Mexico border plummeted to the lowest levels since the 1970s. This development has allowed the administration to shift its focus largely to unauthorized immigrants living in the United States, whom MPI estimates numbered 13.7 million as of mid-2023. U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) arrests have more than quadrupled since Trump took office, while average daily detention has doubled. On December 19, DHS said that 622,000 noncitizens had been deported since Trump took office, a high—but not historic—number. It is below the 778,000 repatriations carried out in the final full fiscal year of the Biden administration, and well short of the Trump team's pledge of 1 million deportations per year. The administration's deportation number likely includes noncitizens turned away at U.S. borders and at airports; limited release of immigration enforcement data means it is unclear who is being counted and how. While the administration claims 1.9 million people have "self-deported" during that same period, it has not provided any data, including on use of the CBP Home app, through which immigrants are offered a free flight and \$1,000 payment if they return to their origin country.

The hardline approach has extended to many lawfully present immigrants and those aspiring to come legally. The administration has stripped temporary legal protections from more than 1.5 million humanitarian parolees, nearly completely halted refugee resettlement, and severely restricted access to asylum. It has also erected obstacles and therefore slowed the granting of lawful permanent residence, temporary visas, and U.S. citizenship. International students and scholars have been targeted for expressing their political opinions, many newcomers face extensive vetting of their social media activity and medical history, and hefty new fees and visa bonds have caused some would-be immigrants and visitors

to rethink plans to come to the United States. Slower legal immigration will likely affect labor markets, local economies, and the broader economic outlook for years to come, with the Federal Reserve Bank of Dallas and the Congressional Budget Office already reporting negative effects and potential future implications.

This article reviews the changes to U.S. immigration policy during the first year of the second Trump term.

A Focus on Deportations Above All Else

Groups of armed federal agents in tactical gear, often wearing face coverings and without identifying information, have fanned out across major cities to arrest unauthorized immigrants, in perhaps the defining image of the Trump administration's immigration enforcement agenda so far. Intensely driven by the goal of achieving 1 million deportations per year, immigration enforcement is the throughline in a seismic realignment of U.S. government priorities, resources, information sharing, and public relations. From the deployment of the National Guard and Marines to major U.S. cities, to the reprioritizing of FBI agents and manpower in other federal agencies for immigration enforcement, to the tapping of once off-limits sensitive government databases to track down noncitizens, the administration has blown through normative guardrails to make mass deportations a central element of government functions.

In some cases, the administration reprised first-term policies, including ending the use of priorities for enforcement, thus making all 13.7 million unauthorized immigrants a priority for removal, and terminating a policy barring ICE from arresting people at "sensitive locations" such as hospitals, schools, and religious institutions. ICE now also frequently carries out operations at immigration check-ins and courthouses, a break from previous practice. It also has leaned on new enforcement approaches such as seeking to exponentially expand expedited removal, the fast-track process that allows authorities to quickly deport noncitizens

without a court hearing (the policy is being litigated). And it expanded the number of noncitizens who can be subject to deportation by terminating “twilight” legal statuses such as humanitarian parole and TPS, which confer protection from deportation and provide access to work authorization (see Table 1)—statuses that ballooned under the Biden administration.

Table 1. Terminations of U.S. Twilight Legal Statuses, 2025*

Revoked Twilight Status	Number of Beneficiaries
Parole for Border Arrivals Using CBP One App	937,000
Cuban, Haitian, Nicaraguan, and Venezuelan (CHNV) Humanitarian Parole	532,000
Temporary Protected Status (TPS) for Nationals of:	
Afghanistan	8,000
Cameroon	5,000
Ethiopia	5,000
Haiti	353,000
Myanmar (also known as Burma)	4,000
Honduras	51,000
Nepal	7,000
Nicaragua	3,000
South Sudan	200
Syria	6,000
Venezuela (2021 designation)	268,000
Venezuela (2023 designation)	348,000

Notes: Litigation challenging the termination of several twilight statuses was ongoing as of this writing, therefore some beneficiaries may still hold the status. Some numbers may overlap, as some individuals hold multiple statuses. For instance, some humanitarian parolees may have obtained asylum, Temporary Protected Status (TPS), or lawful permanent residence. The table shows the number of parolees via the CBP One app

and through the Cuban, Haitian, Nicaraguan, and Venezuelan (CHNV) parole program through December 2024; the TPS beneficiary numbers are from March 31, 2025.

Sources: U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP), "CBP Releases December 2024 Monthly Update," press release, January 14, 2025, [available online](#); U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS), "Number of Form I-918 Petitions for U Nonimmigrant Status by Fiscal Year, Quarter, and Case Status Fiscal Years 2009-2025," updated October 2025, [available online](#); Jill H. Wilson, *Temporary Protected Status and Deferred Enforced Departure* (Washington, DC: Congressional Research Service, 2025), [available online](#).

One new feature of Trump 2.0 is the array of federal personnel drawn into the immigration realm, including from the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms, and Explosives (ATF); the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA); the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI); the Internal Revenue Service (IRS); and the U.S. Marshals Service. Many agencies have also been tasked with sharing data about U.S. residents that could be used for immigration enforcement (see more below).

And while every administration must contend with countries that either refuse to or are slow to accept the return of their citizens, this administration has secured agreements with more than 20 countries to accept third-country nationals. Only some partner countries, including Guatemala and Honduras, have signed safe third-country agreements ensuring deportees can apply for protection there; others may accept returnees but offer no protection options or act as a first stage whereby individuals are ultimately deported to their country of origin.

Congress Lends a Helping Hand

In reshaping the federal government towards a mass deportations agenda, Trump has exerted extraordinary executive authority and received backing from the Republican-controlled Congress. In the first week of

Trump's new term, Congress passed the Laken Riley Act, the first stand-alone immigration legislation in 19 years, to mandate detention without bond for noncitizens charged, arrested, or convicted of theft-related crimes. DHS reported that 17,500 individuals had been arrested and detained as of December 24, pursuant to the Laken Riley Act.

And on July 4, Trump signed the One Big Beautiful Bill Act, which provides \$170 billion in overall immigration enforcement spending over four years—five times the combined current annual budgets of ICE and U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP). The law provides \$45 billion to increase ICE detention capacity and \$46.6 billion for the construction of additional border barriers and accompanying surveillance systems. It also makes sweeping policy changes, including mandating new fees for applications filed with U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) and limiting access to federal benefits such as food assistance and health care, among many others.

The Result: More Interior Arrests, Detention, and Deportations

The administration's singular focus on arrests and deportations has resulted in shock and awe, but the results of its enforcement have remained uneven. ICE arrests increased to about 1,200 per day, the highest levels since the Obama administration; combined with arrests by CBP and other federal agents, more than 595,000 noncitizens had been arrested from January 20 to December 10. The number of immigrants detained by ICE grew from a daily average of 39,000 when Trump returned to office to nearly 70,000 as of January 7, 2026.

Still, overall deportations remained well below the stated goal of 1 million per year and even below the number during Joe Biden's final year as president. However, limited data releases by the Trump administration make it difficult to compare the records. In December, ICE stated DHS had "removed" 622,000 noncitizens under Trump, whereas the Biden administration carried out 778,000 total repatriations in fiscal year (FY)

2024, including noncitizens denied entry at airports and U.S. borders. It appears that DHS's count includes both removals from within U.S. communities and returns of individuals who crossed the border without authorization. Unlike in prior administrations, DHS has not publicly broken down the number of removals and returns under Trump or detailed the number of unauthorized immigrants allowed to leave voluntarily through use of the CBP Home app or otherwise. The Biden administration's high overall deportations included a sizeable number of returns of border arrivals.

The Trump administration regularly claims to be targeting the "worst of the worst," but the vast majority of those arrested by ICE have no criminal conviction. As of January 7, just 26 percent of those in ICE detention had a criminal conviction, while 26 percent had a pending criminal charge and 48 percent had an immigration-related charge.

The Digital Dragnet Has Expanded

While a show of force in U.S. communities across the country appears to be an important goal in achieving mass deportations, the administration's under-the-radar effort to amass a wide swath of data for ICE's use may prove to be equally impactful. ICE already had vast access to data from law enforcement, including other components of DHS, the FBI, and local sheriffs. Now, the administration has cast an even wider net, collecting data from agencies never previously used for immigration enforcement, including information about tax and Social Security records, Medicaid usage, and veterans' benefits. ICE is also one of the top purchasers of data from private data brokers, including credit card and air travel records.

In addition to widening the web of data collection, ICE has expanded its contract with the software firm Palantir to build a mega database called ImmigrationOS to identify removable noncitizens, track "self-deportations," and coordinate detention and removal. To build this database, Palantir planned to use data from multiple government agencies

and “other external sources.” It is unclear if ImmigrationOS had been operationalized as of this writing.

In the meantime, DHS has sought other ways to leverage data and technology. ICE has committed \$280 million in contracts to hire private investigators and bounty hunters to confirm potential noncitizen targets’ addresses, workplaces, and general movement patterns. Field agents have been equipped with tools that allow near-instant information on a person’s legal status, including facial recognition, iris scanners, and license plate readers, which have been reportedly used on noncitizens and U.S. citizens alike.

Some information-collection infrastructure predated this administration, but it is growing with the general rapid-fire advances in artificial intelligence (AI). The mechanisms for oversight, however, have not kept pace, raising concerns about privacy, racial profiling, and due process. Similarly, serious questions remain about how data will be stored, what protections will guard databases from hackers, the treatment of sensitive information about U.S. citizens, and the guardrails against deployment of these tools against U.S. citizens. If masked agents lacking identifying information have become a critical component of the Trump administration’s enforcement efforts, these changes further arm them with more information and less oversight on using it.

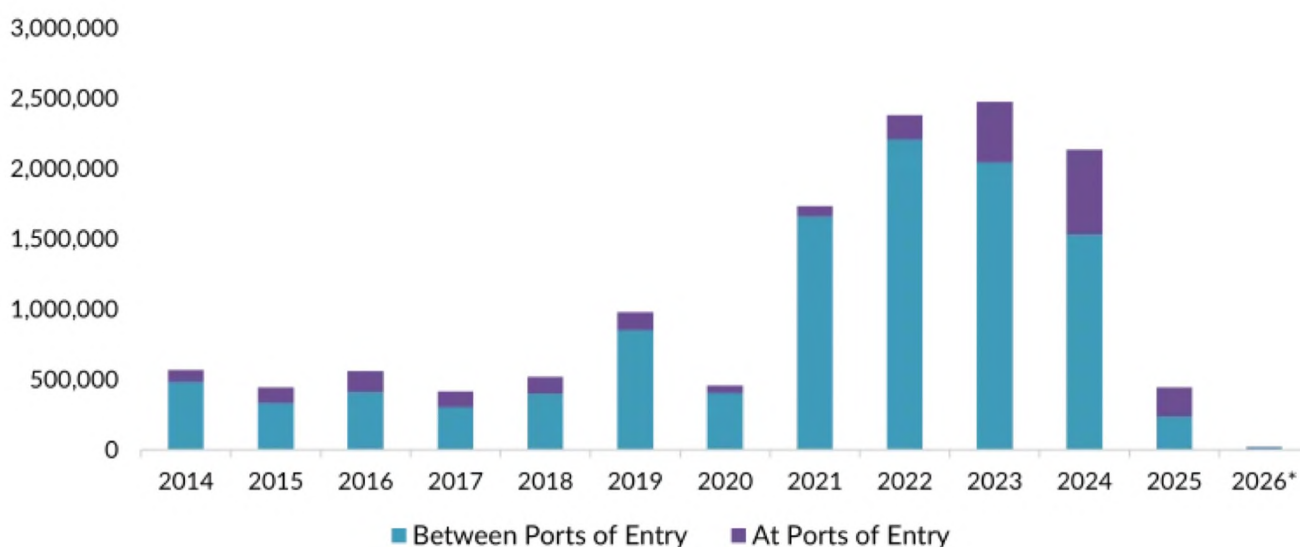
Militarizing a Remarkably Quiet U.S.-Mexico Border

The Trump administration re-entered office with unauthorized arrivals at the U.S.-Mexico border already in significant decline, due to stepped-up enforcement by Mexican and U.S. authorities as well as the Biden administration’s blocking of access to asylum for most people crossing irregularly between official ports of entry. Sweeping actions in Trump’s first days built upon that trend, bringing border encounters to lows unseen since the 1970s, which have continued. Policies targeting the border include ending the CBP One app that allowed migrants to make an

appointment to screen for entry at official ports along the border, halt of all access to asylum by declaring a migrant “invasion,” and ending the humanitarian parole program for Cubans, Haitians, Nicaraguans, and Venezuelans (CHNV) that had drastically reduced large-scale irregular arrivals of those nationalities.

From February through November 2025, encounters of people crossing the Southwest border without authorization averaged just over 7,000 monthly, compared to 88,000 monthly over the same period the year prior (see Figure 1) and the record 250,000 irregular arrivals between ports of entry in December 2023. After stepped-up enforcement and more stringent asylum policies were put in place, average irregular arrivals dropped to 53,000 during the last six months of the Biden administration.

Figure 1. Migrant Encounters at the U.S.-Mexico Border, by Place of Entry, FY 2014-26*



* Data for fiscal year (FY) 2026 cover the first two months of the year: October and November 2025.

Sources: Department of Homeland Security (DHS), Office of Homeland Security Statistics (OHSS), “Immigration Enforcement and Legal Processes Monthly Tables,” updated January 16, 2025, [available online](#); CBP, “Nationwide Encounters,” updated December 16, 2025, [available](#)

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The Military as Border Guard

Despite the quiet, the administration entered uncharted territory by deploying the military for border enforcement, potentially redefining its traditional role. Approximately 7,000 troops were deployed to the Southwest border as of December 10, as part of a mission that has cost about \$1.3 billion.

Starting in New Mexico and expanding into Texas, Arizona, and California, the military has taken over vast areas of borderlands as National Defense Areas. Typically, the U.S. military is barred from civilian law enforcement, but the administration has sidestepped this prohibition by declaring a national emergency and creating these National Defense Areas. Anyone, including U.S. citizens, who enters a National Defense Area can be charged with criminal trespass in a military zone; migrants entering irregularly can also be charged with immigration violations. As of June, more than 1,400 migrants had been charged with trespassing; federal judges have thrown out many cases.

Unprecedented Federal Force in U.S. Communities

Away from the border, the military operations witnessed in cities including Los Angeles, Washington, DC, and Chicago stand out as among the most controversial raw assertions of federal authority over state and local governments. By deploying more than 4,000 National Guard troops to Los Angeles over the objection of California Governor Gavin Newsom in June and sending in 700 Marines, Trump launched what some viewed as a test case for federal control of Democrat-led cities he has long derided as crime-ridden.

Subsequent deployments showed shifting tactics and escalating tensions between red and blue states. Six Republican-led states answered Trump's

call to send their National Guards to Washington, DC, purportedly to assist with a crackdown on crime. It soon became clear that immigrants were a target of the push, comprising about 1,400 out of 3,550 arrests as of late September.

In Chicago, ICE and Border Patrol officers surged in with National Guard troops from Texas (whose deployment was quickly blocked by a federal court). Agents used tear gas, rubber bullets, and in one case even rappelled down to an apartment building rooftop from a helicopter to carry out immigration arrests. Amid lawsuits over the tactics and growing community resistance, Border Patrol officers left and in rapid succession turned their attention to Charlotte and then New Orleans, where they used noticeably less forceful methods. That pattern changed with operations in Minneapolis in January, with a U.S. citizen, Renee Nicole Good, dying after being shot by an ICE agent, and hours later, Border Patrol personnel engaging in confrontations with community members outside a local high school, including reportedly using pepper spray on students.

It is not clear how many people have been arrested in these operations, but the immediate effects on communities have been striking. In one example, more than 30,000 students were absent from school in the Charlotte area after the Border Patrol arrived in November. Minneapolis public schools canceled classes for two days and are offering the option of remote learning for a month. And economic activity plunged in Chicago's Little Village and other immigrant-dense neighborhoods, where shops and restaurants closed and customers stayed home fearing arrest. In December, the Supreme Court found in *Trump v. Illinois* that the president did not have authority to federalize the National Guard, and the administration subsequently withdrew troops from Chicago, Los Angeles, and Portland.

Legal and Financial Pressure on Sanctuary Jurisdictions, Lucrative Benefits for Cooperating Ones

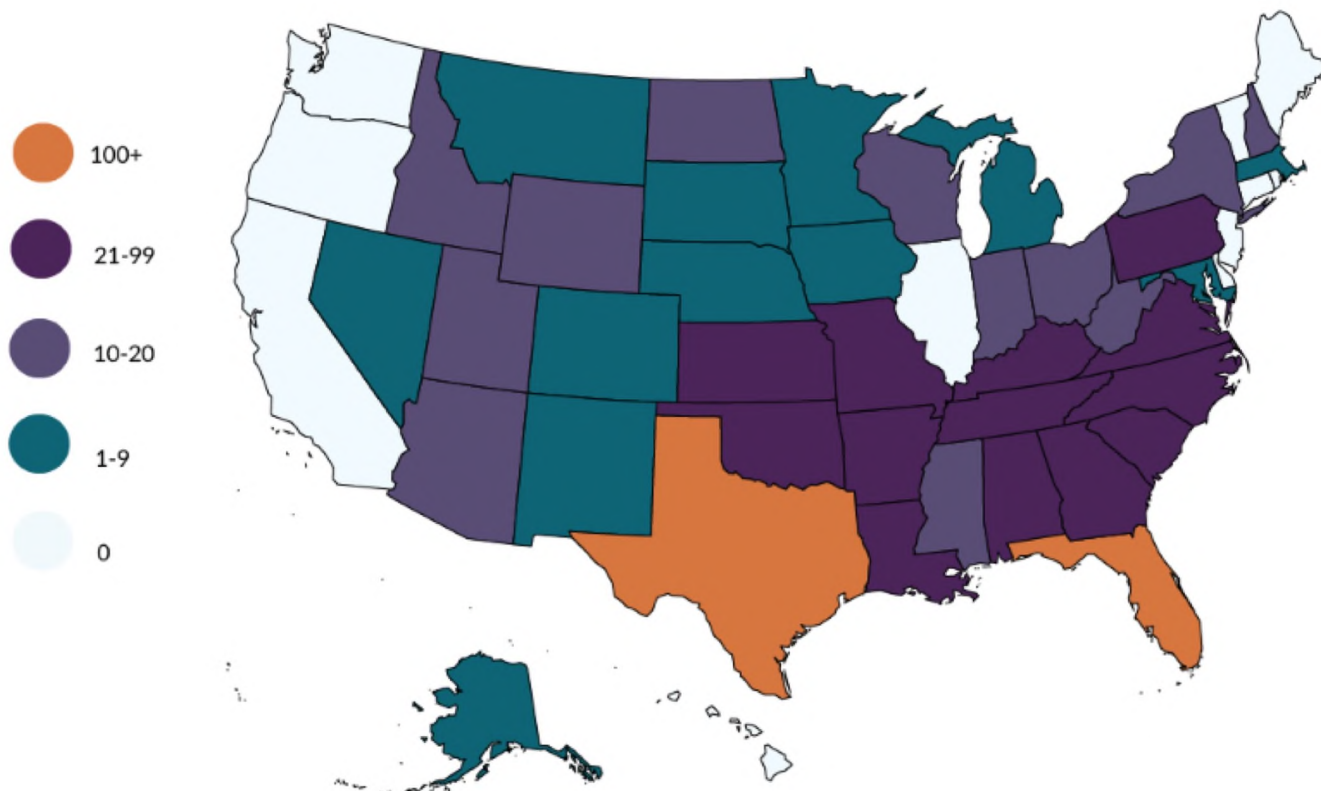
Many states and cities deemed “sanctuary” jurisdictions for their limits on cooperation with ICE have resisted the enforcement push. To bring them in line, the Justice Department filed a litany of lawsuits against policies limiting cooperation with DHS. A number of federal judges have rebuffed the administration’s claims, though litigation is ongoing in several cases.

The government also has withheld federal funds or conditioned funding on cooperation with DHS. For instance, the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) attempted to withhold \$2 billion in disaster relief aid from “sanctuary” jurisdictions, but a federal judge in September found the move unconstitutional.

Meanwhile, state and local authorities assisting immigration enforcement have benefited in political favor and funding. Several states, for instance, have rushed to offer detention space at alliteratively named facilities such as Florida’s Alligator Alcatraz and Nebraska’s Cornhusker Clink.

By early January, a record 1,313 state and local law enforcement agencies nationwide had signed 287(g) agreements to deputize their staff to assist with immigration functions. This is compared to 135 287(g) agreements signed at the end of FY 2024. As of September, more than 8,500 state and local officers had been trained to assist federal immigration enforcement under these agreements. To entice participation, ICE is offering to pay the salaries of officers assisting with immigration enforcement; in September, it awarded almost \$39 million to 287(g) partners in Florida. Notably, more than half of these agreements (718) are of the task force model, which allows officers to question and arrest noncitizens for immigration reasons in the course of normal police work. The model had been discontinued in 2012 following findings of racial profiling.

Figure 2. 287(g) Agreements by State, 2026



Source: Andrew Thrasher, "Mapping 1,200 ICE Partnerships: A Visual Report on the 287(g) Agreement Program," Maxwell Commons, updated January 5, 2026, [available online](#).

This cooperation has been a significant driver of deportations. From Trump's inauguration on January 20, 2025 through mid-October, 52 percent of ICE arrests had taken place at jails, especially in cooperating states such as Texas and Florida.

Redefining Who Is Welcome and Who Belongs

In both word and deed, the Trump administration has posed profound questions about who is welcome in U.S. society today. The administration is seeking to restrict birthright citizenship, ending the 150-year-old guarantee that children born in the United States are, by law, American (the Supreme Court is scheduled to hear the case this year). Elsewhere, it has sought to bar immigrants from entry due to their political speech, all but halted refugee arrivals, and banned or restricted immigration from dozens of countries. And it is seeking to chip away at U.S. citizenship, with

Trump, Justice Department officials, and others pledging to aggressively denaturalize certain immigrants.

Many of these policy changes and proposals will surely slow the inflow of foreign-born workers, students, family members, and tourists. Actions against immigrants already in the United States have created a chilling effect even for many with legal status, including naturalized citizens.

While generally more restrictive, the administration's approach does not necessarily represent a uniform aversion to all immigration. Even as it has launched the most robust enforcement campaign in memory, banned or restricted immigration from 39 countries (mostly in Africa), and verbally attacked longstanding immigrant communities, the administration launched the Trump gold card, which promises a quick grant of legal residence to foreigners paying \$1 million. And Trump has spoken of wanting to increase immigration from places such as Denmark, Norway, South Africa, and Sweden, even as he has pledged to pause immigration from "third-world countries."

Rather than a blanket anti-immigration approach, the administration seems to be advancing a narrative that a limited number of immigrants are welcome so long as they accede to a particular ideological worldview, quickly conform to a specific view of American "culture," and make a demonstrable financial contribution.

More—and Different—Scrutiny for Legally Present Immigrants and New Arrivals

Much of this ideological pivot has run alongside the enforcement mission. USCIS is transforming from a benefits-granting agency into one focused on fraud detection and law enforcement. USCIS established a police force to target immigration violators and is arresting noncitizens at green-card and visa interviews, including U.S. citizens' spouses who overstayed a temporary visa.

The agency is also vetting for “anti-Americanism” in certain immigration benefits applications and asking naturalization applicants to affirmatively demonstrate their good moral character. It has made the citizenship test harder, reinstated intrusive neighborhood background checks for some applicants, and demanded a roughly 100-fold increase in annual denaturalization cases. It has also shortened the validity period of work authorization for asylum seekers and green-card applicants. Amid these changes, USCIS last year adjudicated fewer applications than in FY 2024, approving fewer and denying more. This inevitably will reduce the number of immigrants admitted in the United States, regardless of their qualifications.

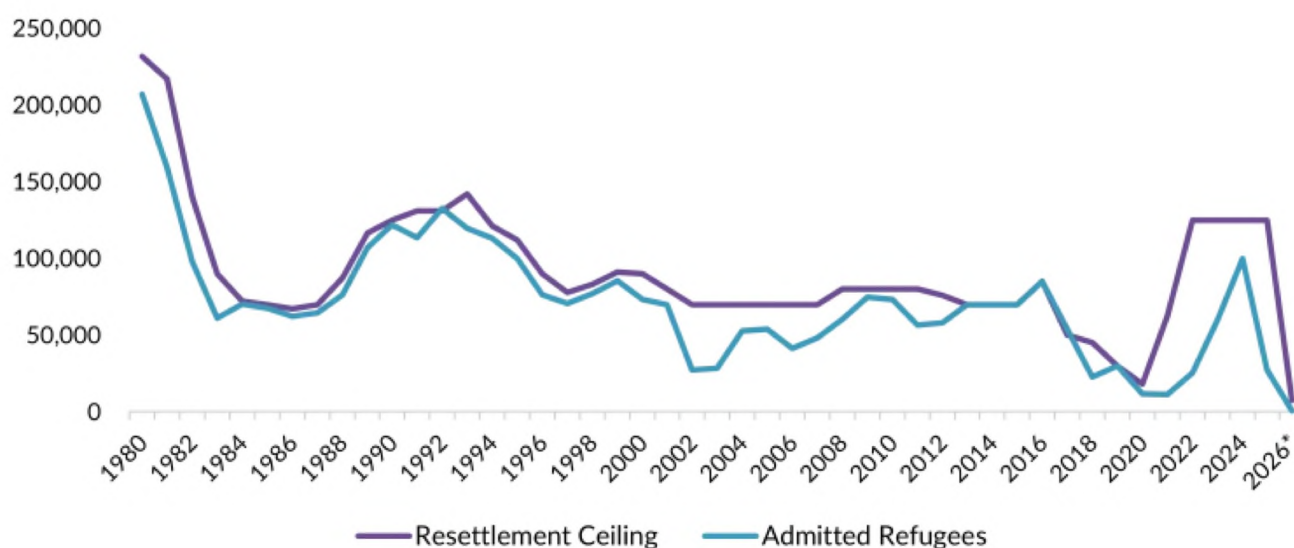
The administration has heightened social media vetting for a variety of visa applications, begun requiring in-person interviews for more temporary visa seekers, and issued visas for shorter durations for international students. New applicants for high-skilled H-1B visas are now subject to a \$100,000 fee, which will likely deter many employers from sponsoring individuals for such visas. In the spring, thousands of international students saw their visas revoked due to their political speech or past police encounters—even if they never faced charges—but most visas were eventually restored after litigation. Nevertheless, universities saw a 17 percent plunge in new foreign student enrollment in the fall.

Given limited public data, it is not possible to assess the full impact of these changes on visa issuances. However, as one indication of the impact of these broader immigration shifts, travel by international visitors was projected to have declined by 6 percent compared to the prior year, according to the U.S. Travel Association.

On his first day in office, Trump suspended refugee resettlement, although the administration later resettled a small number of White South Africans. Only 506 refugees were resettled from February to October, 342 of them from South Africa, compared to just over 100,000 resettlements

in FY 2024. The ceiling for resettlement in FY 2026 was set at a record-low 7,500, and just 720 refugees were resettled from October through December 2025 (see Figure 3). The commensurate slashing of refugee funding has resulted in refugee-serving organizations across the country closing and leaving many refugees with little support. In June, the State Department reallocated \$250 million originally intended for resettled refugees to support DHS's self-deportation program.

Figure 3. U.S. Annual Refugee Resettlement Ceiling and Number of Resettlements, FY 1980-2026*



* Data for FY 2026 cover the first three months of the year.

Source: Migration Policy Institute (MPI), Migration Data Hub, "U.S. Annual Refugee Resettlement Ceilings and Number of Refugees Admitted, 1980-Present," accessed October 15, 2024, [available online](#).

Also in June, the administration blocked or restricted nationals of 19 countries from coming on certain temporary and permanent visas. Following the November shooting in Washington, DC of two National Guard members, allegedly by an Afghan immigrant, the administration paused all new visas for Afghans, including those who had assisted the U.S. government during years of war. It later extended the June travel ban to 20 additional countries and paused consideration of immigration

applications filed at USCIS for anyone from these 39 countries, at least temporarily preventing them from acquiring a green card, citizenship, work authorization, or other benefits. In some cases, individuals from banned or restricted countries were reportedly pulled from naturalization ceremonies. The administration also pledged to re-vet refugees who arrived under the Biden administration and paused all asylum decisions at USCIS.

Orchestrating Hardships to Encourage Self-Deportation

The administration has also encouraged immigrants without legal status to leave voluntarily by making their lives harder and facilitating departure, offering \$1,000 compensation and a free flight to their origin country for people who register with the CBP Home app. The administration has also sought to make life for immigrants in the United States harder by reducing immigrant families' access to federally funded public benefits and social programs, and by imposing steep fines for various immigration infractions.

Officials have attempted to add stringent immigration-status restrictions to many federally funded programs including Head Start and adult English courses, while also withholding, cutting, or eliminating funding for a range of programs that support immigrants and their children. Numerous actions not explicitly connected to immigration—including deep cuts to the federal workforce and rescinding longstanding policies related to language access and the education of English Learners in K-12 schools—have also called into question the future of the civil-rights legal framework that has long sought to guarantee equal access to government services and public education for individuals with limited proficiency in English.

Additionally, the administration has sought to alter 26 years of precedent in gauging whether someone is likely to become a “public charge,” thus blocking them from lawful permanent residence. During Trump’s first term, revisions to the public-charge rule led to widespread disenrollment in public-benefit programs for immigrants and their U.S.-born children out

of fear of future immigration consequences.

These moves, combined with high immigration enforcement, have chilled immigrant families' participation in public benefits programs. An estimated one in ten immigrant adults—including many with legal status—have stopped participating in government food, housing, or health-care assistance in the past year due to immigration-related concerns.

Legal Challenges: Divided Outcomes

Throughout his first year back in office, Trump has pushed legal boundaries, including by invoking the Alien Enemies Act, a wartime authority not used since World War II, to deport noncitizens to a notorious prison in El Salvador. These and other moves have been met with thousands of lawsuits—including more than 10,000 alone challenging immigrants' detention. In federal district courts, the administration appears to have overwhelmingly lost on major policy initiatives. For example, as of early January, 308 judges—including several appointed by Trump—had found unlawful ICE's expansion of mandatory immigration detention to millions of noncitizens who entered without authorization, compared to just 14 who upheld the policy.

At higher courts, though, the administration has seen far more success. The Supreme Court has repeatedly allowed controversial policies to proceed, including the termination of temporary protections for almost 1 million Venezuelans and Haitians. In orders through its emergency docket, the Supreme Court has largely affirmed the executive branch's authority and discretion on immigration enforcement. This general approach is in keeping with the high court's practice during previous administrations, but use of the emergency docket has increased considerably over the last year. And it is notable that ten of the 28 emergency requests decided by the Supreme Court in its 2024-25 term concerned immigration.

At the same time, the court has also affirmed noncitizens' rights to due

process and judicial review and put limits on Trump's deployment of the National Guard for immigration enforcement. And it has yet to weigh in on questions about significant issues such as birthright citizenship, which may lead to major rulings with implications well beyond immigration matters.

A Temporary Blip or Foundational Shift?

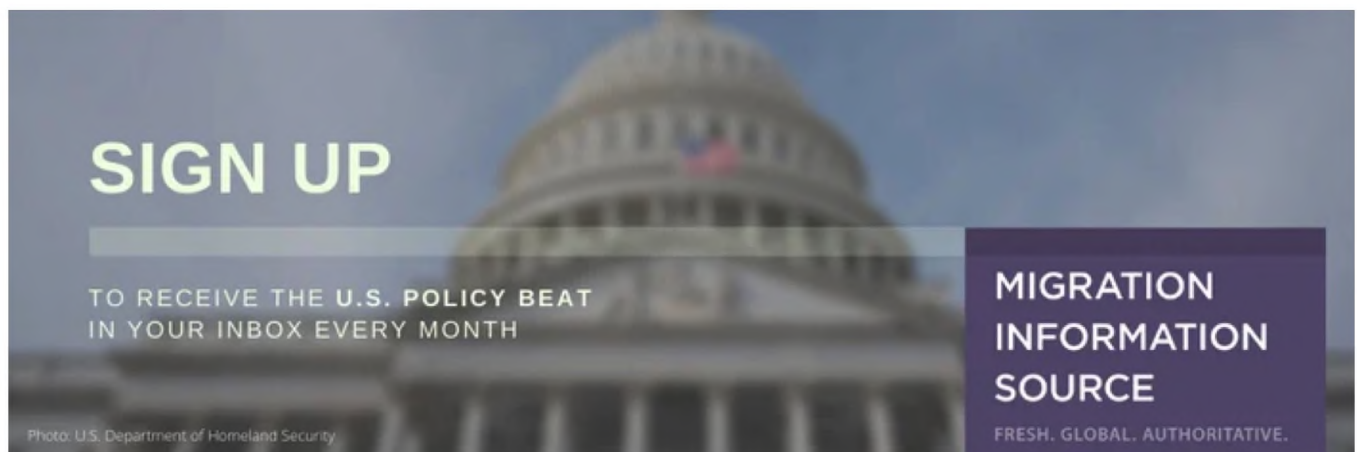
Far more than in prior administrations, including its first term, the Trump administration has recalibrated the U.S. government, diverting vast resources to its enforcement agenda. Its actions have pushed the boundaries of executive power by posing challenges to basic U.S. constitutional principles and impacted the normal functions of government institutions ranging from the federal courts to agencies including the IRS and the military.

At a time when the foreign-born share of the population has matched the all-time high set in 1890—14.8 percent as of 2024—the administration has posed new questions about which immigrants are welcome in the United States, threatening decades of progress integrating newcomers and harnessing the value of immigration for the country. In the process, the administration has challenged the very notion of what it means to be an American. It instead has used social media posts, videos, and memes to extol the idea of an earlier, less diverse America as an idyllic period.

The administration's actions have had a deep impact on families, communities, businesses, schools, and hospitals throughout the country. It remains to be seen whether the effects will be permanent. In the recent past, immigration policy has been driven largely through executive authority rather than acts of Congress, creating dramatic pendulum swings from one administration to the next. Many of the changes in Trump's first year in office, in 2017, had been undone by the time he returned eight years later. Much of the system's reshaping over the last year could potentially be similarly undone by a future president.

Resistance to the administration's immigration agenda is growing, with lower-level courts consistently at the forefront. Increasingly, many business, religious, and elected leaders—Democrats and Republicans alike—have spoken up against approaches they describe as indiscriminate and cruel. Public opinion has also begun to shift: While initially immigration stood as one of Trump's most popular policies, most polls now show that a majority disapproves of the administration's actions in this area.

What is undeniable is that the first year of Trump 2.0 has ushered in some of the most profound immigration policy changes in modern history, and the administration has three years ahead to deepen its impact. It remains to be seen if these changes will represent a temporary detour or a foundational shift in the country's future.



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