Mass Deportations Would Impoverish US Families and Create Immense Social Costs

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Executive Summary[1]

This paper provides a statistical portrait of the US undocumented population, with an emphasis on the social and economic condition of mixed-status households – that is, households that contain a US citizen and an undocumented resident. It is based primarily on data compiled by the Center for Migration Studies (CMS). Major findings include the following:

- There were 3.3 million mixed-status households in the United States in 2014.
- 6.6 million US-born citizens share 3 million households with undocumented residents (mostly their parents). Of these US-born citizens, 5.7 million are children (under age 18).
- 2.9 million undocumented residents were 14 years old or younger when they were brought to the United States.
- Three-quarters of a million undocumented residents are self-employed, having created their own jobs and in the process, creating jobs for many others.
- A total of 1.3 million, or 13 percent of the undocumented over age 18, have college degrees.
- Of those with college degrees, two-thirds, or 855,000, have degrees in four fields: engineering, business, communications, and social sciences.
- Six million undocumented residents, or 55 percent of the total, speak English well, very well, or only English.
- The unemployment rate for the undocumented was 6.6 percent, the same as the national rate in January 2014.[2]
- Seventy-three percent had incomes at or above the poverty level.
- Sixty-two percent have lived in the United States for 10 years or more.
- Their median household income was $41,000, about $12,700 lower than the national figure of $53,700 in 2014 (US Census Bureau 2015).

1 This paper, originally published in January 2017, was revised in August 2017, to incorporate a change in the number of undocumented residents living in households with mortgages.

2 Source: National Conference of State Legislatures, National Monthly Employment Update (data from the Bureau of Labor Statistics). http://www.ncsl.org/research/labor-and-employment/national-employment-monthly-update.aspx.

Based on this profile, a massive deportation program can be expected to have the following major consequences:

- Removing undocumented residents from mixed-status households would reduce median household income from $41,300 to $22,000, a drop of $19,300, or 47 percent, which would plunge millions of US families into poverty.
- If just one-third of the US-born children of undocumented residents remained in the United States following a mass deportation program, which is a very low estimate, the cost of raising those children through their minority would total $118 billion.
- The nation's housing market would be jeopardized because a high percentage of the 1.2 million mortgages held by households with undocumented immigrants would be in peril.
- Gross domestic product (GDP) would be reduced by 1.4 percent in the first year, and cumulative GDP would be reduced by $4.7 trillion over 10 years.

CMS derived its population estimates for 2014 using a series of statistical procedures that involved the analysis of data collected by the US Census Bureau's American Community Survey (ACS). The privacy of all respondents in the survey is legally mandated, and, for the reasons listed in the Appendix, the identity of undocumented residents cannot be derived from the data. A detailed description of the methodology used to develop the estimates is available at the CMS website.[3]

Introduction

This paper provides a demographic analysis of the potential impact on US families and children of large-scale deportation of US undocumented residents. During his candidacy, President Trump vowed to deport all 11 million US undocumented residents. After the election, he seemed to moderate his position, pledging to deport two to three million undocumented criminals (a wildly exaggerated number), to complete 2,000 miles of walls and fencing along the US-Mexico border and, after the immigration situation "normalized," to determine what to do about the "terrific" and "great" people without status.

If President Trump no longer intends to try to deport all 11 million undocumented residents, it would be a positive development. A program to legalize a large percentage of the undocumented would make even more sense. Yet, Trump has never disavowed his earlier pledge to deport 11 million persons and, in a January 25 executive order, set exceedingly broad enforcement priorities and vowed to "[e]nsure the faithful execution of the immigration laws … against all removable aliens." In addition, he may yet rescind and certainly does not seem poised to extend the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program,[4] much less commit to a legalization program.

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3 Go to http://data.cmsny.org/about.html.

4 DACA is a quasi-legalization program established in June 2012 that provides a temporary reprieve from removal and employment authorization to certain undocumented residents who arrived as children. The

The paper details the characteristics of US undocumented residents, and how their removal would affect US families (primarily mixed-status families) and the children (both US citizen and undocumented) in these families. In addition, it summarizes the likely negative effects of a mass removal program on the housing market and on US gross domestic product (GDP).[5]

Undocumented Residents in 2014

As a result of the relatively low numbers of arrivals in recent years, the length of residence of the undocumented population continues to increase. In 2014, 62 percent had lived in the United States for 10 years or more, and that rate will continue to rise as long as arrivals remain at relatively low levels. Of course, longer residence leads to increasing ties with the US population, including increasing numbers of US-born children.

In this section, we begin with a description of the total undocumented population and then shift the focus to mixed-status households – that is, households with at least one US citizen and one undocumented resident. Mixed-status households are emphasized primarily because the possibility of deportation and its attendant social and economic disruptions can generate immense hardship for millions of US citizen residents who are entitled to a level of security and opportunity consistent with their rights as citizens.

The Total Undocumented Population

Referring to the undocumented population with a single number – 11 million – raises the specter of a large, unknown, and frightening group of people who are sometimes referred to as living "in the shadows." However, the portrait becomes more familiar upon closer examination. For example, of the 5.3 million households with undocumented residents, 2.8 million, or 53 percent, are home to 5.7 million US-born children.[6]

Of the 7.6 million undocumented residents in the labor force, three-quarters of a million are self-employed, having created their own jobs and in the process creating jobs for many others. About 1.4 million undocumented persons carpool, three times the rate of native-born residents.

A total of 1.3 million, or 13 percent of those over age 18, have college degrees. Of those, two thirds, or 855,000, have degrees in four fields: engineering, business, communications, and social sciences. Of the 11 million undocumented residents, six million, or 55 percent, speak English well, very well, or only English. About 66 percent have access to the internet. By many of these measures, a sizeable proportion of the undocumented residents are indistinguishable from the general population.

DACA-eligible have extensive and longstanding ties to the United States (Kerwin and Warren 2016).

5 Gross domestic product (GDP) is the value of all finished goods and services produced in a specified period.

6 The figure of 6.6 million includes only the US-born (of any age) who lived in households with undocumented residents in 2014. US-born children of undocumented parents who have established separate households (that do not include undocumented residents) could not be estimated and so are not included in the 6.6 million figure.

Economically, undocumented residents were doing reasonably well in 2014:

- Their unemployment rate was 6.6 percent, the same as the national rate in January 2014.[7]
- Seventy-three percent had incomes at or above the poverty level.
- Median household income was $41,000, about $12,700 lower than the national figure of $53,700 in 2014 (US Census Bureau 2015).

Finally, it should be noted that 2.9 million, or 27 percent of this population, did not choose to be undocumented. They arrived with their parents when they were less than 15 years of age.

Mixed-status Households

The examination of mixed-status households allows us to measure some of the possible negative consequences for *US citizens* who live with the possibility that any day an undocumented resident in the household could be apprehended, detained, and deported. The fear of deportation looms largest, but there are other factors that can impact the well-being of US citizens in these households. For example, parents with undocumented status may be reluctant to attend meetings at their children's schools or to apply for benefits to which their children are legally entitled. Household income is likely to be reduced when undocumented residents do not seek better jobs or fail to petition for better wages and working conditions for fear of retaliatory firings.

Undocumented Residents Living in Households with US Citizens

The US undocumented population can be divided into two groups: (1) those who live in households with US citizens, and (2) those who do not. In 2014, there were a total of 5.3 million households with undocumented residents, and US citizens lived in just over 3.3 million of them. We examined the characteristics of both types of households. The percent for households *with* US citizens is listed first in the bullets below.

Undocumented residents who live in households with US citizens:

- have lived in the United States longer (69 percent vs. 50 percent for more than 10 years);
- speak English about equally well (54 percent vs. 56 percent speak English well, very well, or only English);
- are less likely to have attended college (23 percent vs. 35 percent);
- are more likely to have incomes below the poverty level (32 percent vs. 20 percent);
- have a slightly higher unemployment rate (6.8 percent vs. 6.3 percent); and
- are less likely to have health insurance coverage (38 percent vs. 42 percent).

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7 Source: National Conference of State Legislatures, National Monthly Employment Update (data from the Bureau of Labor Statistics). http://www.ncsl.org/research/labor-and-employment/national-employment-monthly-update.aspx.

It might be surprising that undocumented residents who share households with US citizens generally do less well economically than households without any US citizens. However, more of the former live in poverty, their unemployment rate is slightly higher, and they are less likely to have health insurance coverage. In 2014, about 5.7 million US-born children (under age 18) lived in households with undocumented residents, outnumbering the 1.1 million undocumented children in those households by a ratio of 5 to 1.

In addition to fear that their parents could be deported and the family divided, the 5.7 million US citizens living in households with undocumented residents face the possibility that their household's income could fall sharply if a parent or other worker in the household were deported. To determine the effects of that eventuality, we first compiled the median income of households with a mix of undocumented residents and US citizens. Then, we recomputed the median household income but omitted the income of undocumented residents. The median household income fell from $41,300 to $22,000, a drop of $19,300 or 47 percent, and below the 2016 federal poverty line of $24,300 for a family of four. Repeating the exercise but focusing on family units, median income fell from $36,000 to $18,000, a drop of 50 percent.

These findings underlie how important it is – to the security and well-being of 5.7 million US citizen children – that their families remain intact and that their parents be able to secure legal status.

US Citizens in Households with Undocumented Residents

The previous discussion described the characteristics of US undocumented residents and discussed the effects of their deportation on US citizen children and other household members. This section focuses exclusively on the US citizens themselves in households with at least one undocumented resident.

In 2014, a total of 6.6 million[8] US citizens were living in households with undocumented residents. Of those, about 5.7 million were under age 18, and 865,000 were age 18 and over. An unknown number of US-born children of undocumented residents are adults who do not live in households with their parents.

There are only a few characteristics that permit comparisons between the total undocumented population and the US citizens who live in households with undocumented residents. The percent or number for *US citizens* is listed first.

- As would be expected, the US citizens speak excellent English: 95 percent speak English well, very well, or only English, compared to 55 percent of all undocumented residents.
- Most of the US citizens have health insurance coverage (87 percent vs. 39 percent).
- The median income of the households with US citizens is just slightly lower than the median for the total undocumented population ($40,000 vs. $41,000).

8 The figure of 6.6 million exceeds the 5.7 million number cited elsewhere because it includes nearly a million *adult* US citizens who live in households with undocumented residents. In some cases, it might include US citizens who live in these households but are unrelated to the undocumented residents.

- Removing the undocumented residents from these households would reduce median household income from $40,000 to $20,000, a reduction of 50 percent.

As shown in Table 1, removing the undocumented residents from these households, and thus reducing median income by 50 percent, could reduce the amount of financial support available to their US-born children remaining in the United States by a total of $118 billion.

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

1	5,735,000	US-born children in households with undocumented residents
2	52.9%	Adjustment for average number of years of support needed per child[8]
3	$233,610	Estimated cost of raising a child to age 18 (Lino 2017)
4	50%	Percent of child support provided by undocumented residents[9]
5	33.3%	Assumes one-third of US-born children would remain in the US
6	$118,003,500,000	Loss of financial support for US-born children if mass deportation

6=1x2x3x4x5

Broader National Implications

The consequences of mass deportation would not be limited to legal household members and the US-born children of undocumented residents. There would be nationwide repercussions. For example, the adverse effects would likely spill over into the entire US housing market – about 1.2 million, or 23 percent, of the 5.3 million households that have undocumented residents have mortgages.[10] In a recent study of the relationship between deportations and foreclosures, Rugh and Hall (2016) found that "unauthorized status leads to a chain of events from deportation, lost household income, foreclosure, and ultimately, lost wealth." Their analysis is the first to propose and detect the effect of immigrant deportations on Latino foreclosures. The primary findings were that "deportations exacerbate rates of foreclosure among Latinos by removing income earners from owner-occupied households" and "local immigration enforcement plays an important role in understanding why Latinos experienced foreclosures most often."

Mass deportation would have a major negative effect on the national economy. Edwards and Ortega (2016) used CMS estimates of the US undocumented resident population, along with other data, to project the nationwide impact of a mass deportation program. They concluded that a "policy of mass deportation would immediately reduce the nation's

9 This adjustment takes into account the varying ages of the US-born children. First, we computed the median age of the children who live in households with undocumented residents, which was 8.0 years. That means that, *on average*, 9.0 years of additional childrearing would be needed for each child. Item 2 in Table 1 was computed as follows: 9.0 divided by 17.0 years = 52.9 percent.
9 This assumes that half of the financial support of US-born children of undocumented residents is being provided by undocumented residents and the rest by legal residents. This is a conservative estimate that has the effect of reducing the final estimate.
10 In the 3.3 million mixed-status households, about 900,000, or about 26 percent, of the mortgages would be at risk.

GDP by 1.4 percent, and ultimately by 2.6 percent, and reduce cumulative GDP over 10 years by $4.7 trillion."

Conclusions and Recommendation

This report demonstrates that the social and economic status of millions of US citizens would be substantially jeopardized by a massive deportation program. Deportation of undocumented residents in mixed-status households would decrease household income by about 50 percent. In addition, if just one-third of the US-born children remained in the United States after their parents were deported, the total financial burden of raising the children would be $118 billion. Mass deportation would also result in high default rates for the 1.2 million mortgages held by households with undocumented immigrants and, as a result, would undermine the US housing market. In addition, according to one study, the nation's GDP would be reduced by an estimated $4.7 trillion over 10 years.

Authors Rugh and Hall (2016) conclude their study of the effects of deportations on the housing market on a cautionary note which is consistent with the analysis set forth in this paper:

> As the country prepares for the possibility of increased enforcement and mass deportations, the lessons learned from this analysis take on new meaning and have increased relevance. Policymakers and advocates would be wise to consider the wide-reaching repercussions of enforcement for individuals, families, and communities, both in the short and long terms.

In these circumstances, the paper's overarching policy recommendation is to keep mixed-status US families intact, whether through executive action or, far better, a legalization program for their undocumented members.

Appendix

The identity of individual undocumented residents cannot be derived from the CMS data for the following reasons:

- The US Census Bureau is required by law to take steps to make sure no individual can be identified in survey data: It removes all identifying personal information and other statistical operations – income capping, data switching, etc. – before releasing the data.
- The survey covers only one out of every hundred people.
- The legally resident foreign-born population outnumbers undocumented residents in every state and the District of Columbia, making it extremely unlikely that individuals or groups of undocumented residents can be distinguished from other foreign-born residents or foreign visitors. In the 10 states with the lowest numbers of undocumented residents, more than 90 percent of the foreign-born population consists of legal residents, and no community has *only* undocumented residents.

- The CMS estimates are restricted to areas with population sizes of 100,000 or more. In a population that large, individuals or small groups of undocumented residents will be indistinguishable from all other residents, including legal foreign-born residents and foreign visitors.
- The CMS estimates are no longer publicly available below the state level.

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