

How Does Immigration Enforcement Affect Workers?

New evidence from recent ICE activity shows that immigration enforcement reduces employment among both immigrants and U.S.-born workers.

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For every ICE arrest:

7 likely undocumented, immigrant men
STOP WORKING.



9 U.S.-born men
STOP WORKING.



WHY DOES THIS HAPPEN?



IMMIGRANT WORKERS

Arrests remove undocumented immigrant workers from the labor force. This also discourages others from working and participating in regular activities due to “chilling effects” or fear of encountering ICE. [1]



U.S.-BORN WORKERS

If immigrants and U.S.-born workers were substitutes, we would see that for each immigrant removed, a U.S.-born worker would take their place. Instead, the number of immigrant and U.S.-born workers rise and fall together.[2]



BUSINESSES

Immigrants are workers and consumers. Arrests or chilling effects can reduce local business activity and consumer spending. [3] Non-immigrants are also choosing to stay home to avoid ICE activity.[4][5]



HISTORICAL COMPARISON

2025 appears to be no different from two previous time periods of mass deportations, which both had **negative economic effects**. [1] [2]

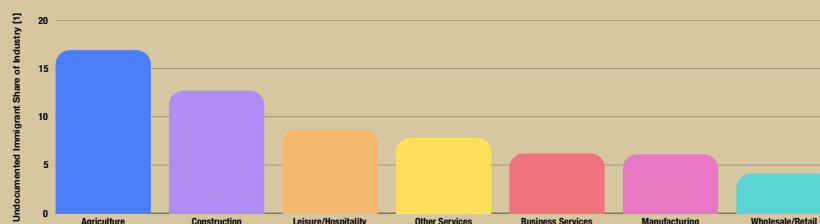
- Mexican Repatriation (1930s)
- Secure Communities (2008-2014)
- Recent ICE Enforcement Activity (2024-)



INDUSTRIES MOST AFFECTED

The data shows that the larger the share of immigrants employed, the more affected the industry is [8].

- For immigrant men, the largest employment reductions are in Construction.
- For U.S.-born men, the greatest employment reductions are in Leisure and Hospitality and Other Services.



Select References:

[1] East, C.N. and Velásquez, A., 2024. Unintended Consequences of Immigration Enforcement: Household Services and High-Educated Mothers' Work. *Journal of Human Resources*.

[2] Cox, Elizabeth and East, Chloe. 2026. "Labor Market Impacts of ICE Activity in Trump 2.0." NBER Working Paper 35129.

Full references and data sources available via QR code below.



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