

## The Economic and Fiscal Impacts of Mass Deportation: What's at Risk in Utah

### Key Findings

- There are 304,000 immigrants in Utah, including 175,000 who are non-citizens, and among those, an estimated 110,000 who are undocumented.<sup>1</sup>
- In 2022, people who are undocumented paid \$235,100,000 in Utah state and local taxes.<sup>2</sup> If ten percent of people who are undocumented are deported, it would result in a loss of \$23,510,000 per year in state and local tax revenues.
- **Immigrants, including those without documentation, are an important part of Utah's economy. Detention and deportation of these workers would dramatically decrease affordability and availability of important goods and services.**
  - **Farming:** Over half of all crop workers in the United States are immigrants, and the vast majority of these immigrants are either undocumented or seasonal H-2A workers.<sup>3</sup>
  - **Restaurants:** Nationwide, 7 percent of people working in the leisure and hospitality industry are undocumented.<sup>4</sup> In Utah, immigrants in general, both documented and undocumented, make up 26 percent of the 24,000 cooks in the state, and many are likely at risk of deportation.<sup>5</sup>
  - **Personal, home and office:** Nationwide, 11 percent of janitors, 18 percent of landscaping workers, 13 percent of nail technicians, and 16 percent of dry cleaning and laundry workers are undocumented. These workers, though often underrecognized, are part of our everyday lives. In Utah, there are 6,000 janitors who are immigrants (both documented and undocumented), 4,000 landscaping workers, 2,000 nail technicians, and 5,000 maids and housekeepers.
  - **Construction:** Nationally, 13 percent of all construction workers are undocumented. There are an estimated 24,000 immigrants who work in the construction in Utah.

The Trump Administration has already begun an unprecedented intensity of enforcement actions aimed at removing immigrants from their communities, their workplace, and often from their families. In many cases this may result in deportations, in many others it may mean indefinite incarceration in detention centers. The new administration is also promising to radically reduce the number of new immigrants allowed into the country, and to strip some immigrants of status and work authorization they currently hold.

The immigrants most vulnerable are those who are undocumented. But the impact does not end there.

People who have temporary visas may see them terminated or unrenewed. People with temporary protected status, asylum seekers, DACA recipients, and many others are also in a precarious position.

There are far-reaching social and humanitarian implications of this type of enforcement regime. But there is also an economic risk that can be quantified.

### **Immigrants are a vital part of the Utah economy.**

- There are 304,000 immigrants in Utah, including 175,000 who are non-citizens, and among those an estimated 110,000 who are undocumented.<sup>6</sup>
- Non-citizens include green card holders, as well as a number of people who are at risk of deportation or removal of immigration status, including those who are undocumented, people eligible for Temporary Protected Status, DACA recipients, H1-B and H2-A visa holders, asylum seekers, and others.

### **Deporting immigrants will come at a significant fiscal cost to Utah state and local governments.**

- In 2022, people who are undocumented paid an estimated \$235,100,000 in state and local taxes in Utah.<sup>7</sup>
- Deporting 110,000 people who are undocumented from Utah State poses enormous logistical challenges, not to mention opposition based on legal and human rights issues. If, for the sake of argument, one out of ten people who are undocumented were deported or put into detention camps, that would result in a loss of \$23,510,000 per year in state and local tax revenue. This is approximately the cost of Utah's First Time Home Buyer Program.<sup>8</sup>
- These projected impacts underestimate the actual loss, since they do not include calculation of the disruption to businesses and communities of conducting raids and other actions, the impacts to family members who lose a breadwinner, or the costs to the foster care system for children who wind up without parents in the United States.
- There may be some offsetting savings in state and local expenditures, but these are likely to be small since recent immigrants and people who are undocumented are excluded from many public benefits. At the same time, there will be new costs to state and local governments associated with deportation and detention.
- A better approach would be to make it possible for people who are undocumented to gain legal status. That approach would increase Utah and local tax revenues by \$57,400,000.<sup>9</sup>

### **Rescinding status and restricting immigration will further hurt the Utah economy.**

Utah also stands to lose a lot as the Trump Administration begins to follow through on threats to remove the temporary status of immigrants who have it today, to radically change the treatment of asylum seekers, and to shut down refugee resettlement.

At risk include an estimated 7,000 active DACA recipients in Utah.<sup>10</sup>

Also at risk are the renewal or new visas for temporary “guest worker” visas such as H-1B, intended for highly skilled workers, and H-2A visas for seasonal agricultural workers. These are programs that are ripe for improvement, since they can be exploitative to workers and, unlike other immigration categories, have been shown to have adverse impacts on other workers. Simply eliminating these workers, however, without creating better options will be a significant challenge for employers. In 2024 1,025 H2-A employees were approved to work in Utah, the majority of which were to fill Farming, Fishing, and Forestry Occupations.<sup>11</sup>

### Where the Utah's Economy and Daily Life Are Most at Risk

A regime of mass deportation and restriction poses widespread and unpredictable threats of the Utah economy.

- **A loss of large numbers of workers from the Utah labor force would mean an increase in the cost of living** for Utahns who will pay more for restaurants, child care, home health aides, construction, and more. Costs will go up not only because immigrants are often underpaid, but more fundamentally because there will be an under-supply of workers.
- **A labor supply shortage will force businesses to shrink.** As much as they can, businesses would adjust by hiring new workers. But, the labor force is already constrained. The relatively low unemployment rate was 3.1 percent in March 2025.<sup>12</sup> Employers are already straining to find employees; eliminating large numbers of workers from the labor force will not help.
- **Deporting undocumented workers would result in a predictable decline in the number of jobs for U.S.-born workers**, according to a leading journal article on the subject.<sup>13</sup> Contrary to popular belief, deporting immigrants reduces the number of jobs for other workers. Reasons include: declining purchasing power for immigrants that reduces local demand; decline in the number of complementary workers—fewer cooks and dishwashers means fewer waiters, fewer construction laborers means fewer construction managers; and declining care workers means lower labor force participation for young parents. In Utah, if all 110,000 immigrants who are undocumented were deported, it would result in a job loss of 10,000 U.S.-born workers, and if 11,000 were deported, it would result in a job loss of 1,000 U.S.-born workers.

Some areas of the Utah economy that are particularly at risk include:

**Farming.** Over half of all crop workers in the United States are immigrants, and the vast majority of the immigrants are either undocumented or seasonal H-2A workers,<sup>14</sup> both categories of immigrants that have been threatened by the incoming administration. Pay and working conditions are in dire need of improvement for farm workers. But the likely result of deporting current immigrants and restricting new immigration is not an improvement of working conditions, but a decline in farming. Farms in Utah are a source of fresh milk, top-quality apples, and vegetables and other produce enjoyed around the state and sold for export. Farms are also important to the economic and social vitality of

rural communities, enhance the local landscape, and are part of a growing agritourism industry. Eliminating immigrants from farm work would be nearly unimaginable, and reducing the number of immigrant workers by even five or ten percent would have dramatic negative consequences.

**Restaurants.** Immigrants play a big role in America's restaurants: in the "front of the house" jobs serving diners, in the "back of the house" jobs in the kitchen, and in so many cases as restaurant owners. Overall, in the United States, immigrants who are undocumented make up 7 percent of all workers in the leisure and hospitality industry. Undocumented immigrants play a particularly big role in restaurants. There are 275,000 cooks who are undocumented (12 percent of the total), an additional 60,000 chefs/head cooks (12 percent of the total), and 45,000 dishwashers (13 percent of the total).<sup>15</sup>

In Utah, 6,000 cooks are immigrants (including both those who are documented and undocumented), 26 percent of the total, 1,000 immigrant chefs/head cooks (30 percent of the total), and 1,000 dishwashers who are immigrants (24 percent of the total). While some other workers could step into these jobs, there are not enough workers who are currently unemployed to meet this demand, and the predictable result of an outflow of workers is shrinkage of other jobs that rely on these workers. We do not have state-level data to show how many of these immigrant workers in each job category are undocumented and are, therefore, most immediately at risk.

**Personal, home, and office:** In the United States, immigrants who are at risk of deportation are playing an important, if often not so visible, role in a range of occupations that touch our everyday life. There are 275,000 janitors (11 percent of the total) who are undocumented, 230,000 landscaping workers (18 percent of the total), 35,000 nail technicians (13 percent), 20,000 dry cleaning and laundry workers (16 percent), and 325,000 maids and housekeepers working in homes as well as hotels and other workplaces (24 percent of the total).

In Utah, there are 6,000 janitors who are immigrants (documented and undocumented), 21 percent of the total. There are 4,000 landscaping workers who are immigrants (25 percent), 2,000 nail technicians<sup>16</sup> (54 percent), 300 laundry and dry cleaning workers (28 percent), and 5,000 maids and housekeepers who work in homes, hotels, and other locations (41 percent of the total).

**Construction.** Nationally, 1.4 million people who are undocumented work in the construction industry, making up 13 percent of the total.<sup>17</sup> Looking at detailed occupations across all industries, there are 475,000 construction laborers who are unauthorized (18 percent of the total), 240,000 carpenters (14 percent), 170,000 painters (20 percent), and 70,000 roofers (17 percent).

Removing thousands of workers from the labor force, many of them also union members, would increase the cost of construction, limiting the total construction feasible during a historical housing shortage.

In Utah again, we do not have detailed estimated of undocumented workers in particular, but there are 24,000 immigrants (both documented and undocumented) in the construction industry. Immigrants make up 18 percent of all workers in the construction industry in Utah.

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## Notes

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<sup>2</sup> Davis, et al. “Tax Payments by Undocumented Immigrants,” Institute on Taxation and Economic Policy, July 30, 2024. <https://itep.org/undocumented-immigrants-taxes-2024/>

<sup>3</sup> Gutiérrez-Li, Alejandro. “Feeding America: How Immigrants Sustain US Agriculture,” Baker Institute for Public Policy, July 19, 2024. <https://www.bakerinstitute.org/research/feeding-america-how-immigrants-sustain-us-agriculture>

<sup>4</sup> National estimates of the number of undocumented workers were provided to IRI by Jeff Passel of the Pew Research Center, and are based on an analysis of the 2022 American Community Survey, consistent with the analysis in “What We Know About Unauthorized Immigrants in the U.S.,” Pew Research Center, July 22, 2024..

<sup>5</sup> State-level data about of all immigrants, documented and undocumented, is from Immigration Research Initiative analysis of the 2022 American Community Survey 5-year data.

<sup>6</sup> For the number of immigrants, non-citizen immigrants, and estimate of immigrants who are undocumented, see the Immigration Research Initiative fact sheet, “50 States: Immigrants by Number and Share.” Number of immigrants and non-citizen immigrants are an IRI analysis of the 2023 ACS. Number of immigrants who are undocumented is estimated by the Pew Research Center based on the 2022 ACS. The fact sheet gives parallel estimates from the Center for Migration Studies (2022 ACS) and from the Migration Policy Institute (2019 5-year data).

<sup>7</sup> Davis, et al. “Tax Payments by Undocumented Immigrants,” Institute on Taxation and Economic Policy, July 30, 2024. <https://itep.org/undocumented-immigrants-taxes-2024/>

<sup>8</sup> Here’s Your Sine: Summary of the 2025 General Session Budget Actions | Budget | Utah Legislature <https://budget.utah.gov/heres-your-sine-summary-of-the-2025-general-session-budget-actions/>

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

<sup>10</sup> “Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) Data Tools,” Migration Policy Institute. <https://www.migrationpolicy.org/programs/data-hub/deferred-action-childhood-arrivals-daca-profiles>

<sup>11</sup> “H-2A Employer Data Hub,” U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services. <https://www.uscis.gov/tools/reports-and-studies/h-2a-employer-data-hub>

<sup>12</sup> U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Unemployment Rates for States, <https://www.bls.gov/web/laus/laumstrk.htm>

<sup>13</sup> East, et al. “The Labor Market Effects of Immigration Enforcement,” Journal of Labor Economics, vol 41, number 4. This work is summarized in an accessible fashion by Chloe N. East in “The Labor Market Impact of Deportations,” The Hamilton Project, Sept. 18, 2024. The study finds that for every 500,000 people deported, 44,000 U.S.-born people lose their jobs. We are rounding to the nearest thousand,

<sup>14</sup> Gutiérrez-Li, Alejandro. “Feeding America: How Immigrants Sustain US Agriculture,” Baker Institute for Public Policy, July 19, 2024. <https://www.bakerinstitute.org/research/feeding-america-how-immigrants-sustain-us-agriculture>

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<sup>16</sup> Nail technicians include manicurists and pedicurists.

<sup>17</sup> The occupation “painters” also includes paperhangers.