

Senate Agriculture Committee

HCR 3048

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FAIR study: 14.5 million illegal aliens are living in America at a net cost to taxpayers of nearly \$134 billion

Posted by: [Lizzy Murica](#) | [January 29, 2021](#)

According to a recent [study](#) by FAIR, or the Federation for American Immigration Reform, the estimated number of illegal aliens as of 2020 living in the United States is approximately 14.5 million, with a total cost to U.S. taxpayers now amounting to \$133.7 billion. FAIR describes itself on its [website](#) as a “non-partisan, public interest organization with a support base comprising nearly 50 private foundations and over 1.9 million diverse members and supporters.”

The website also states that FAIR’s mission is to:

“examine immigration trends and effects, to educate the American people on the impacts of sustained high-volume immigration, and to discern, put forward, and advocate immigration policies that will best serve American environmental, societal, and economic interests today and into the future.”

On December 31, 2020, FAIR authors Spencer Raley, Madison McQueen, and Jason Pena published a [study](#) entitled “*2020 Update: How Many Illegal Aliens Live in the United States?*”

In the study, the writers are careful to define “illegal alien” as:

“anyone who:

- **Entered the United States without authorization, or**
- **Anyone who unlawfully remained in the United States once their authorized time of stay expired.”**

The authors explain that such a definition is important because many entities make a “dishonest effort to portray [the illegal alien] population as smaller than it is in reality.”

They also assert that many entities and media outlets erroneously declare that “unaccompanied alien minors (UAMs), recipients of Deferred Action for Childhood

Arrivals (DACA), and/or those with Temporary Protected Status (TPS) [are] lawfully present in the United States.”

2020 figures in the study show that an estimated 14.5 million illegal aliens meeting that definition live within the United States, which represents a slight increase over the 2019 estimate of 14.3 million.

Fiscal burden has likewise expanded. The cost of at least \$133.7 billion through 2020 represents an increase of nearly \$2 billion over the past year.

Previous years have shown a more rapid increase in illegal alien population, accompanied by a corresponding increase in the financial cost.

For example, between 2013 and 2016, the illegal alien population rose from approximately 11.5 million to approximately 12.5 million. During the same time period, the fiscal burden increased from approximately \$113 billion to approximately \$116 billion.

Between 2016 and 2019, the estimated illegal alien population rose from 12.5 million to 14.3 million, and the total cost of illegal immigration increased from approximately \$116 billion to approximately \$133 billion.

The authors attribute the comparatively slower rise in illegal alien population between the 2019 and 2020 measurements to two primary causes.

First, the authors point to the effects of the coronavirus pandemic on illegal immigration. Stating that up to 60 percent of new illegal aliens are those who have overstayed visas, the authors point to President Trump’s “timely travel freeze” as an

action that prevented many from overstaying their visas during the time of the pandemic.

Also with regards to coronavirus, the authors note, the decreased availability of jobs in the United States during the time of COVID meant that border traffic slowed “significantly.” Second, the authors state that the implementation of Migrant Protection Protocols (MPP) decreased the influx of illegal aliens by requiring asylum applicants to remain in their country of origin during processing of their cases, rather than disappearing in the United States. The study authors do admit that their illegal immigration numbers are an estimate, noting:

“In truth, we do not know exactly how many people cross the border unlawfully and evade immigration authorities.

“We can only estimate these figures based on how many individuals U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) and Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) believe slip through their detection.”

The actual numbers could in fact be higher, as suggested by a [2018 study](#) by two Yale professors and an MIT instructor who were, ironically, seeking to prove that there were far fewer illegal aliens in the United States than previously thought.

Their findings instead indicated that in 2018, there were approximately 22.1 million illegal aliens living in the U.S. A more conservative estimate still was reported as high as [16.7 million](#).

The FAIR study authors also identified factors that continue to encourage illegal immigration into the United States.

States before their hearings They are:

– increasing sanctuary jurisdictions that disallow local law enforcement from cooperating with federal authorities.

– use of illegal labor by corporations.

– “An increasing number of states and jurisdictions offering social welfare programs and other benefits to illegal aliens, including in-state tuition, driver’s licenses, and even COVID-19 relief funds.”

– large backlogs in immigration courts.

– “The promise of a wide-sweeping amnesty from the incoming administration.”

. The authors then go on to point to Biden's other plans for immigration, saying:

“President-elect Joe Biden pledges to dramatically decrease immigration enforcement, remove methods of deterrence, and offer amnesty to millions of illegal aliens.

“Due to these promises, FAIR projects that the illegal alien population under a Biden administration will increase dramatically.”

Given the reported increases in fiscal burden that have accompanied increases in the illegal alien population over the past several years, it stands to reason that as the illegal alien population “increase[s] dramatically,” so will the financial burden to U.S. taxpayers under a Biden administration will increase dramatically.”

Thank You

Gordon Greenstein

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