

In the spring of 2018, America witnessed the implementation of what many observers denounced as an immoral and inhumane de facto family separation policy. The policy has resulted in nearly 3,000 children being forcibly separated from parents on the southern border and is currently under Congressional investigation. Unfortunately, these horrific happenings are the tip of a very large iceberg, with millions of American youth at risk of suffering a similar fate. UnidosUS' report [Beyond the Border: Family Separation in the Trump Era](#) examines the scope and composition of the rest of this iceberg and how enforcement policies are threatening to separate nearly six million American children from their family members. The report analyzes the long-term impacts on U.S. citizen children, in terms of their economic, health, education, and safety outlooks.

### Up to Six Million American Children at Risk.

Millions of U.S.-citizen children are at risk of being separated from their parents every day because of the policies put in place and enacted by the Trump administration. By some estimates, between 4.1 million and 5.7 million U.S.-citizen children live with an undocumented resident, and about 475,000 U.S.-citizen children could be impacted if their parents lose legal protections under the DACA and TPS programs. These American children stand to suffer the brunt of the impact of the Trump administration's aggressive immigration policies now and for years to come.

### The Sources of Risk to American Children.

Anti-immigrant policies are not new, but today's environment is different in a number of important ways. First, the convergence and interaction of a number of these policies—including the return of workplace raids, state level anti-immigrant laws and policies, and aggressive and arbitrary enforcement efforts lacking prioritization based on articulable public safety concerns—have resulted in an uptick of arrests, detentions and removals under this administration. Second, newly empowered anti-immigrant voices within the administration are attempting to restrict the nation's legal immigration system diminishing key avenues for family unity. Lastly, unlike any time before, we have an administration acting with political urgency to back up the intensity of its anti-immigrant rhetoric. Many of the historical precedents discussed at length in the report, when considered within this framework, portend very poorly for the future outcomes of millions of American youth today.

### Interior Enforcement Under Trump.

- Between FY2016 and FY2017, ICE interior removals of people without criminal convictions nearly tripled from 5,014 to 13,744, respectively. This trend appears to have continued into FY2018. While interior removals overall increased by 17% in FY2018, ICE's last report omitted data on how many had criminal convictions.
- In FY2018, ICE opened 6,848 worksite investigations compared to 1,691 in FY2017. It made 1,525 administrative worksite-related arrests compared to 172 the year before.
- Local law enforcement participation in the 287(g) program has grown by over 260% since the start of the Trump administration. States like Tennessee have enacted laws requiring localities to enter into 287(g) pacts.
- ICE detention capacity increased from an average daily population of 36,000 in FY2016 to nearly 47,000 in March 2019. UnidosUS expects this number to grow by the end of FY2019.

### The Specific Harms to American Children

Latino youth are the nation's future voters, parents, taxpayers and workers. Many of the youth at risk of being separated from family today are the same Latino youth that are critical to the long-term vitality of our nation.

- There are about 18.2 million Latino children under 18 in the United States—95% are U.S. citizens.
- In 2017, Latino children accounted for one-fourth of U.S. children under age 18.
- By 2050, they are projected to make up nearly one-third of the child population.

**Economic Deprivation.** Economic data suggest Latino households are more vulnerable to sudden financial emergencies and housing instability than other groups. Detention or deportation of a breadwinner or caregiver has been shown to exacerbate these vulnerabilities.

- Removing undocumented residents from mixed-status households slashes median income by a striking 47%.
- 1.2 million households secured by mortgages had at least one undocumented individual residing in it. Most deported immigrants said they had previously contributed to household mortgage payments.
- Housing instability is linked to profound negative behavioral and developmental impacts on youth.

**Educational Disruption.** Children of detained or deported parents are at higher risk of depression and anxiety, emotional problems, negative self-esteem, attention disorders, speech delay, and low school performance. The current immigration environment is contributing to high levels of absenteeism among students that are immigrants or U.S.-born children of immigrants.

- Two-thirds of educators say all of their students – regardless of immigration status – are indirectly affected by the current immigration environment.
- 287(g) cooperation was found to displace over 300,000 Latino students (mostly grades K-5) before 2012. Under the Trump administration, 287(g) cooperation has increased by 260%.
- Local cooperation with ICE—a Trump priority—is shown to reduce the number of Latino students at surrounding schools by nearly 10% within two years of a partnership being formalized.

**Reduced Access to Nutrition and Health.** Hostile immigration policies undermine the policy goals of anti-poverty programs like the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) and the Children’s Health Insurance Program (CHIP). Today, nearly 10 million Latino children access health coverage through Medicaid and CHIP, while more than 1.1 million households with an individual eligible for and enrolled in SNAP has a Latino child. Fear of personal information sharing is one significant concern leading fewer eligible people to participate.

- There is a demonstrable correlation between the activation of Secure Communities in 2008 and substantial declines in CHIP/SNAP participation among eligible Hispanic citizen households.
- Since the Affordable Care Act (ACA) was enacted, every 10% increase in ICE detainer requests made to cooperative localities is linked to a 2% reduction in ACA insurance enrollment by Latinos.
- The public charge rule could lead to disenrollment or the chilling of more than one million U.S. citizen children of noncitizen parents from taking up SNAP, and another 875,000 to two million from CHIP and Medicaid.

**Threats to Public Safety.** The Trump administration’s immigration policies are disrupting the safety of communities across the nation with significant Latino and immigrant populations. Numerous reports have documented that immigrants, and Latinos more generally, are reporting fewer crimes amid concerns that interacting with police or testifying in court could subject them or someone in their family to ICE enforcement. Such policies and their unintended side effects—i.e., Latinos and immigrants avoiding interaction with police, being reluctant to report crime, and feeling isolated—only serve to make immigrant and mixed-status families more vulnerable. In fact, Latinos are increasingly the targets of crimes.

## Conclusions and Recommendations

The trajectory of our immigration environment is threatening to handicap the futures of entire generation of American children. The nation is long overdue for comprehensive immigration reforms, but in their absence Americans of conscience who care about the well-being of U.S.-citizen children should decry the growing threats to those trapped within the rest of the proverbial iceberg—by challenging the merits of congressional appropriations increases for this administration’s indiscriminate deportation policies, demanding that Congress exercise its constitutional obligation to conduct meaningful oversight of DHS enforcement operations, and supporting local laws and ordinances that seek to mitigate indiscriminate ICE arrests under the current administration. Meanwhile, those charged with upholding immigration laws ought to be reminded that they have a responsibility and the authority to exercise discretion on how those laws are enforced. The lives of some of the most vulnerable members of our society are at stake—our children.