

Mass Migration and Human Trafficking

A Surreptitious Affair on the American Border

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Table of Contents

Pg. 3 – An Introduction

Pg. 4 – Illegal Immigration to America

Pg. 5 – Trafficking Operations

Pg. 9 – Challenges at the Border

Pg. 11 – Mass Migration

Pg. 14 – Security Threats

Pg. 17 – Reaching America

Pg. 19 – Conclusion

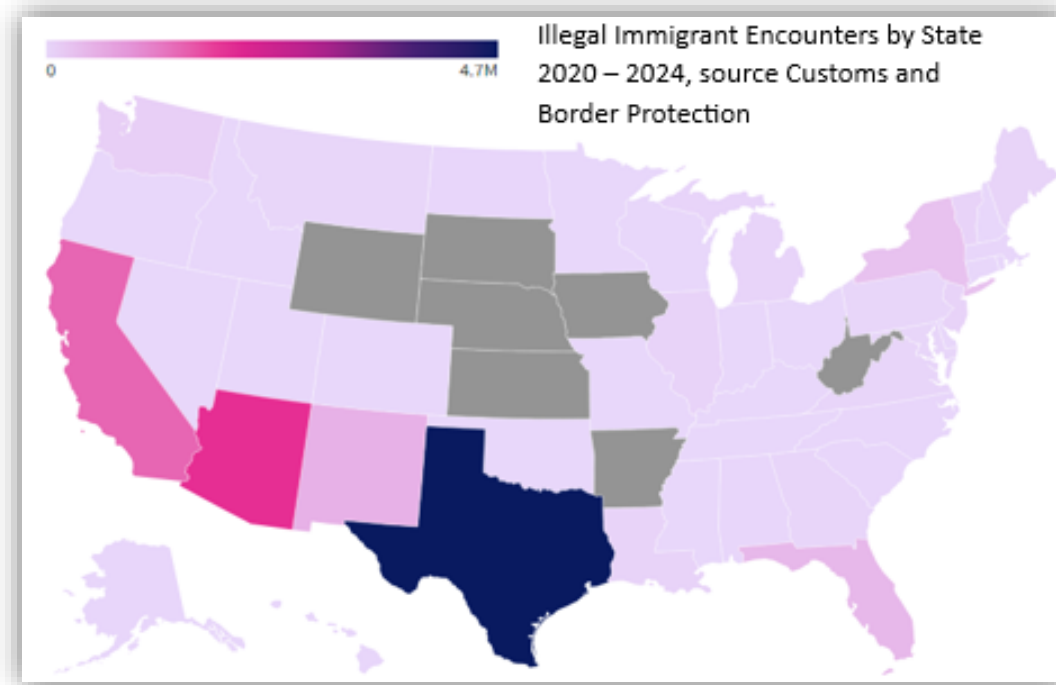
Pg. 20 – Citations

An Introduction

During the four years I worked on the Texas – Mexican Border, I was exposed to events and scenes that were somewhat unfathomable. Before being accepted to the program, my guess would have been that ~70% of the border was “Secure,” not really having a definition in mind at the time of what secure meant but patrolled or accounted for in some manner. It was surprising to see that it was more likely ~25% secure. For example, in large portions of the border, the nearest patrol station is several hours away at highway speeds. The remoteness and seemingly impassable terrain strain the capabilities and personnel of Law Enforcement Agencies tasked with patrolling the stretches of territory. The natural protections of the border such as the Rio Grande or the canyons and mountains along it at times work in favor of the “Coyotes” (a person working for the cartel or other trafficking organization). The Rio Grande is not very “Rio-ee” nor very “Grand-ee,” in most parts its either knee deep or a couple meters wide. The determination of these people to traffic and smuggle their goods into the US will not be stopped merely by geographic features, including Santa Elena Canyon (left), in which we have seen young men climbing the steep towering walls with narcotics on a strap over their foreheads. The extreme lengths and risks taken are not for some moral or ethical drive that one “must” deliver these drugs or humans for an ideological cause, it is for money... profit. That is what casts these men and women into lives of horror. This paper contains firsthand and researched information on the activities that go unnoticed or are overlooked at the border of the US and Mexico including weaponized migration by foreign governments and Cartels along with the horrors of Human and Narco-Trafficking.

Illegal Immigration to America

Many organizations, groups, and governments have released different messages surrounding the border subject. A common conversation in Texas is the border operations of the US and Texas law enforcement, most of the time constituents in the conversation spout messages filled with misinformation no matter the political side they are a part of. Narratives arguing the “number of individuals entering the nation isn’t as high as people say”, or “the border isn’t as dangerous as it’s made out to be.” It is always fascinating to hear individuals either for or against immigration repeat “canned phrases” they have read from social media or their friend groups. Shocking statements that generally bring accusations unto myself is that *I* did not understand the border included if I state that “a border wall wont work” or mentioning height of season crossings at the border reach “8 people per minute.” According to Department of Homeland Security (DHS) reports on encounters in December of 2023, 12,000 individuals were encountered per day, again those are only the encounters meaning apprehension or immediate expulsion, not the individuals that were never seen or detected. Since 2019, 9.8 million encounters have been reported, that is more than the population of 40 different states in the US. It is also estimated that approximately 15.5 million illegal immigrants currently reside in the US, the rate and size of this community is estimated to increase dramatically over the next few decades. This paper is not here to take a political stance on the illegal immigration (lawful definition under Department of Justice and legal Information Institute changed from) issue, it attempts to highlight truths on how it is used in the benefit of others and dangers it does pose to those seeking America and facts about the inefficient system that is in operation.



Trafficking Operations

Cartels, Drug Trafficking Organizations (DTO), Criminal Syndicates and others all operate North and South of the US/Mexico border, profit is name of their game. Smuggling and Trafficking of food, goods, drugs, and humans are their products. Slavery is alive today and estimates show that over 40 million people are in modern slavery around the world, be it labor or sexual slavery. Many end up there as a result of Human smuggling and trafficking, let us delineate the difference. Human Smuggling is defined as the transportation of people across an international border. For the US, smuggling does not involve coercion; the individual being smuggled has, more or less, chosen to make the journey. Human trafficking is the involuntary use of a person, usually by coercion to exploit the individual in some way, be it sexually or for labor purposes. In the US, it is about “exploitation” not “transportation,” you can be trafficked in your own home for example.

Trafficking generally happens to individuals who enter on a work visa that explicitly states that the holder of can work for that specific company, this allows for exploitation due to the fact that at any moment that company could fire the individual, report them, and have them deported. Individuals being exploited by sex traffickers sometimes entered this country voluntarily and were smuggled across the border under the guise that they would be given a proper job or family, or under the pretense they were going to stay with their “lover” they met. Once in the nation, they are either taken to brothels, or put into fraudulent job locations such as bars, massage parlors, and escort services that turn out to be sex trade sites. A common situation for individuals having spent all of their money getting to the border and do not have the funds to pay the cartels to be smuggled into the country. This scenario often leads to the illegal immigrants being offered a “deal” where they will work off what they owe the Cartel or Trafficker. On occasion if it’s a family, the women and children will be taken captive threatened to be killed if the man does not stay true to the deal and work off his debt. Interviewers talking with illegal immigrants have reported this type of story many times. Child sex exploitation is also apart of it, in 2022, Homeland Security released that 1,170 children were rescued through operations by Homeland Security Investigations and that nearly 4,500 individuals were arrested for crimes involving child sexual exploitation.

The Congressional Research Service admitted that though roughly 10,000 unaccompanied children are encountered at the border per month, it is unknown how many successfully are trafficked in the nation and become victims of sexual exploitation but there were over 17,200 reports of Child Sex Trafficking in 2022. The study also stated that demand and recruitment for the exploitation of children is rising, the use of emerging

communications technologies (Social Media Apps and Websites) has facilitated the demand for sex trafficking, as it allows for rapid secure communication from buyer to trafficker. In the US today there are approximately 16,000 children with the average age of 13 years old that are sex slaves in the US. In 2014, sexual exploitation was estimated to generate \$99 billion, the most recent assessment from the International Labor Organization revealed a 37% increase with profits now reaching \$170 billion dollars, around \$52 billion is estimated to be from the US alone. This in tandem with labor exploitation at ~\$76 billion, adds up to around \$245 billion dollars in illicit profits across the globe.

I have heard individuals, while living in Austin, Texas, inform me that using *sex trafficking* as an argument to secure the border isn't strong enough because "only a few" individuals are trafficked into the nation instead of smuggled (remember the definition variations). First point, a majority of people are considered as having been smuggled due to the definition, they have voluntarily entered, the end state for many of those smuggled is exploitation or being trafficked, secondly, I think we can probably agree that it matters to those 14 – 17 thousand individuals sexually trafficked each year. Organizations that traffic drugs successfully generally also traffic people. They have no moral or ethical drive to do their actions, it is based off profit. As demand increases so will the number of individuals trafficked and smuggled. As political tensions focus on the mere broad subject of immigration, individuals rarely take the time to understand the problem, otherwise there would be bipartisan action on the subject *if* people truly cared about the individual.

On one of our reconnaissance operations in the Rio Grande Valley, I'll leave exact names and places out, we were operating with the intention to discover drug trafficking

store houses and in executing our duties we discovered humans being smuggled into one of the buildings. Reporting it up through the chain, we documented the event and continued our mission, our job was not interdiction but detection. Discussing the event with LEOs at a later date, the raids discovered girls who had been locked in rooms and drugged. They were raped and beaten while kept drugged in captivity. This is not an uncommon story; women pay their way into the country believing they have made it and trusting these individuals to honor their agreement and then are led away and locked up to be abused by the traffickers they've paid or others they were sold off too. The stories sound unbelievable but happen all too frequently, there are plenty of interviews of women rescued out there.

"I looked for girls who were willing to travel and [who were] running away from something or someone." – A child sex trafficking coordinator

Challenges at the Border

Security and Law Enforcement Agencies at the border are generally understaffed and underfunded. Adding to that the issue of Narcoterrorism where the DTOs are able to influence local politics and law enforcement entities through intimidation, extortion, and violence. Many agents, officers, and even those in the courts, are expected to be above reproach, steadfast and stalwart on the view of executing justice. Unfortunately for many (thousands), the immense profits to be made from working with the Cartel or threat of them murdering your family break the will of some individuals. A study in 2016 by DHS



DHS 2023 study on CBP Corruption

revealed that ~\$10 million in bribes had been paid out from 2006-2016. Another interesting result came from 2018, weaknesses in manning and capabilities further ailed the border security agencies patrolling and enforcement let alone actual detention and processing centers. In order to recruit more individuals, Customs and

Border Patrol (CBP) had to lower standards to reach a target goal of 8000 new officers. In 2020 it was reported by DHS that up to 10% of the ~60,000 workers were actively or had formerly engaged in what's called "mission compromising corruption." This is defined as sharing intelligence with the cartels, smuggling of weapons and humans along with harboring or dereliction of duty for DTO operational benefit. Lowering standards creates a rift between high and low performers which taxes the cohesion of an already fragile force,

and a weaker agent (in will and character) leads to a more susceptible individual increasing ease of coercion. Though there is no study directly linking lowered standards to a higher corruption rate, the AUG 2023 assessment from DHS is down to .25% of the staff estimated at mission compromising corruption.

Overpopulated detention centers, camps, and even a converted Walmart act as staging areas for those waiting to be prosecuted or deported. If they are not kept in camps or detained, an individual is given a "Notice to Appear" in court at a determined date, sometimes up to 10 years later, and released into the country or are released into the country after being told to apply within one year. Hundreds of thousands of individuals per year are released on this. From March 21 to January 23, 800,000 illegal immigrants were released into the country with only 200,000 being issued court dates. It is apparent that the system is under strain and not capable of handling the volume of individuals being put into it. The 2023 Inspector General Report highlighted the increasing use of temporary stop-gap initiatives have agents overworked and areas unsecure. This leads to a personal observation of how a wall would not work. First point, the border has rugged steep terrain in some areas and cannot be completely walled off, but more importantly, manning of it. Any wall that's already existing on the border if left unattended has been and will be breached. Other challenges of late have been the conflicting State and Federal Policies. Texas is currently being sued by the US Department of Justice for Texas Senate Bill 4 which makes it a crime in Texas to illegally enter the state through the border, which is interesting as there is already a federal law (8 U.S. Code § 1325 - Improper entry by alien) that makes this a crime. The political conflict between Republican and Democratic parties on the issue have also been taking a toll on Texans and the illegal immigrants. The Border needs more

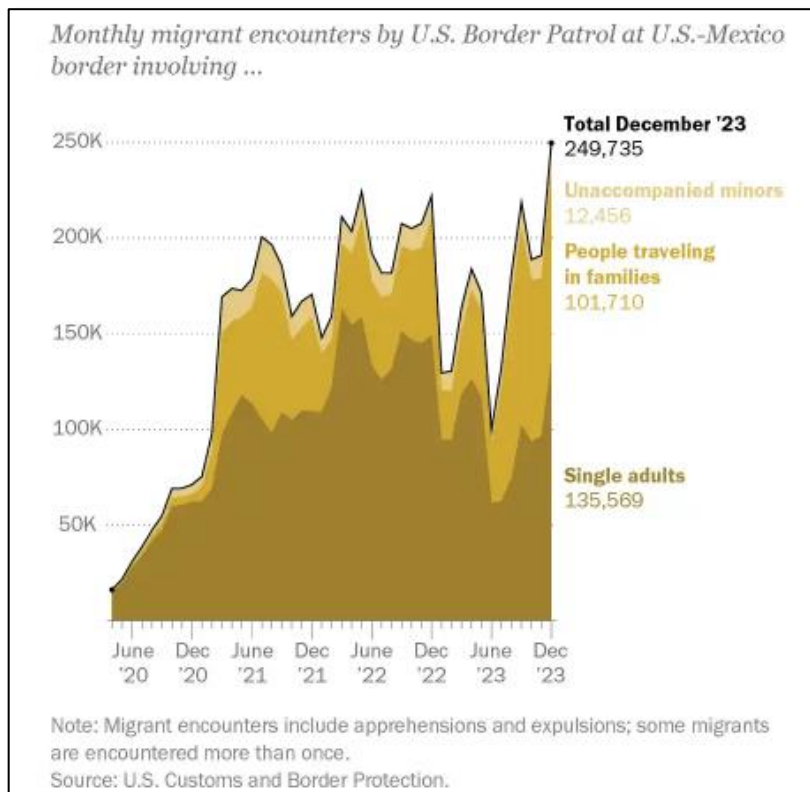
resources, that is a fact; manpower, aerial surveillance and reconnaissance, and a revamped immigration system to better track the individuals. If any of you reading have worked for the government, you know that lobbying for more funds is difficult.

A personal story about aerial assets for the CBP was comical in a purely governmental sense. In a large section of the border there were only several hundred hours of flight time allotted per year. The air asset flight team stated that they were unable to get more hours because they had the lowest number of successful apprehension and interdiction operations. This area required a 2-hour drive at the fastest to the border at highway speeds. A flight goes up, scours the area, discovers traffickers, coordinates for ground support and then the aircraft would have to come off station, many times before a few ground patrols arrived at the locations. Vehicles arrive among the terrain of rolling hills, canyons, and deserts to the discovery of approximately 70+ sets of footprints in the night. Do 3-4 agents pursue 70+ individuals being escorted by armed coyotes into the night desert? I can answer you that they don't. Thus, flight hours are expended with no successful apprehension, leading to the chain of command being unwilling to give them more money and fuel. It's the curse of the US government, should you underperform, your funds will shrink every fiscal year. This leads to a feedback loop of deficient performance and continued reduction in funding.

Mass Migration

Intentional and unintentional migrations have changed landscapes and toppled empires for thousands of years. Flooding an area with a large population that may or may not want to assimilate into the newly arrived society causes many problems for the host

nation, if they hold human life in a high regard. Mass migration can alter geography, politics, and culture as a whole, let's take an example from the US. 2003, In a tiny town named Eldorado TX, a large group of individuals from the Fundamentalists of Latter-Day Saints (FLDS) move into town. Over 500 individuals move to a ranch North of town named Yearning for Zion (YFZ), though 500 may not sound like many, that was a 33% increase in population for the town. This group came at the orders of Warren Jeffs, the leader of the FLDS group in Arizona, who invested in the property building a giant church, dozens of large homes, hospitals, orchards, amphitheaters, schools, and more. This immense population increase with all persons of the same motivation were quickly able to take over the region. Their businesses became the leading in the area, town representatives, and county seats were rapidly taken over by the FLDS votes. They used their numbers and control of markets to shape the local region to their benefit. This is a watered-down version

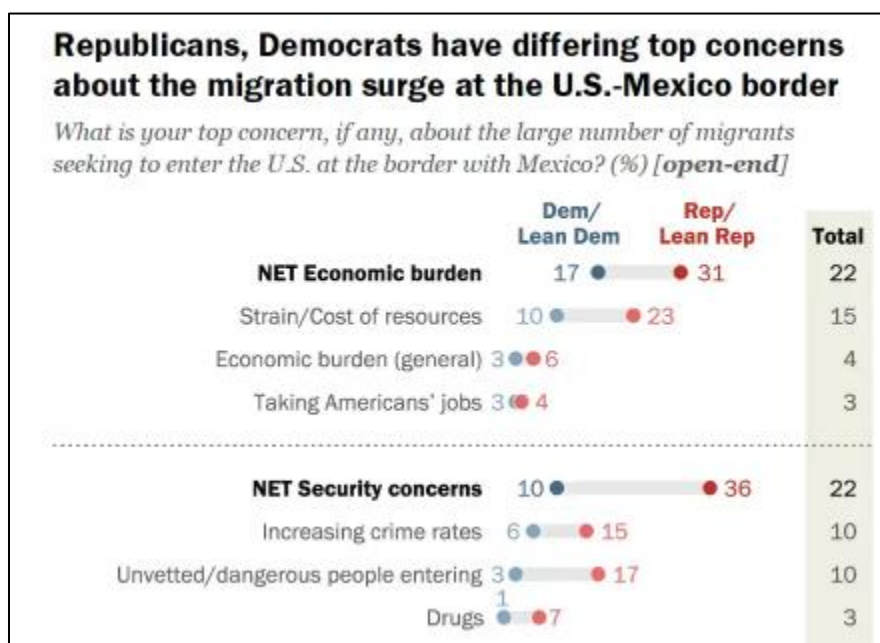


of the story, but I use it as an example of how mass migration works. This is obviously not a direct case for illegal immigration into the US, but if paired with Identification-less voting, there is a danger of individuals not intending to assimilate nor entertain the posterity of the nation when voting.

On the US/Mexico border, mass migration is used as a tool by the Cartels. There are many drug trafficking and smuggling corridors across the Southern border but there is only so much land. The increase in surveillance technology and budgets for border security have tightened the noose on those gaps. A technique to create opportunities by the Cartels is to funnel thousands of immigrants through one area of the border, creating a salient and overloading the Law Enforcement Agencies (LEA) in that area. This overload requires agencies to pull resources and manpower from across the border region, opening gaps in the border for drugs to be trafficked through. Thousands or tens of thousands at a time pour through the border, as this is being executed, teams of smugglers are darting into Texas wherever an opening appears. The cartels and coyotes get to make money off their “tools” they use to generate these opportunities. Individuals pay around \$2,000 if they are already in Mexico, and nearer to \$10,000 by the end of the journey if they are coming from farther South.

Once inside the nation, benefits and services given to illegal immigrants such as refundable tax credit programs, health care, supplemental security income, Women Infant Children funds, Housing, Supplemental Nutrition Assistance, Alien Assistance Program, and even in-state tuition for education cost the US around \$182 Billion per year according to the Federation for American Immigration Reform. In Texas, it is around \$10 Billion alone, and an estimated \$2.5 billion more for children born of illegal immigrants in Texas. These are generally the reasons why individuals are against illegal immigration, the cost imposition along with security concerns.

In sanctuary cities, expenses are higher with focusses of aid for these individuals. Distribution of financial aid in many of these states rarely reach the extent intended, lacking the true numbers of the illegal immigrants leads to improper estimates of aid required. Take New York for example, a city which passed a \$2.1 billion dollar state fund in 2023 to pay unemployment and stimulus checks to illegals for the year was depleted in less than three months. In order to truly help these individuals they would need to be accounted for, which would reveal the extent of the issues for sanctuary cities citizens paying for it all.



Security Threats

The border is a national security threat, no matter where the political spectrum you fall on, it must be viewed as a threat. Adversaries of the US exploit this weakness funneling individuals and narcotics to the citizens of this nation. The National Safety Council 2022 and Center for Disease Control 2024 study indicates an 800% increase in drug overdoses since 1999 reaching 107,000 deaths per year. This paper does not endeavor to look at the

drug crisis in America, but I would suggest looking into national adversaries, especially China, and their involvement in narcotic smuggling into the US making them ~\$4 billion per year. In a recent security hearing for the US, the House Committee on Homeland Security, the Federal Bureau of Investigations (FBI) Director and National Counter Terrorism Center Director (NCTC) confirmed the threat that 1.8 million individuals labeled “Known Got-Aways” pose along with the increasing number of individuals apprehended on the southern border that were on the terrorism watch list. In the other category “Unknown Got-Aways” it is estimated at approximately 500,000 more on top of the known. Since 2021, 294 individuals have been apprehended that were on the terror watchlist. Previously in this paper we discussed the challenges and weaknesses befalling the border security agencies and while obviously not every person that crosses the border is a terrorist or malign actor, one must assume that those types are infiltrating the nation both legally and illegally.

Through a lens of increased criminal activity, if we remove the inherent crime of the illegal crossing of an international border itself, the DHS in 2018 reported that illegal immigrants accounted for ~20% of offenders sentenced for felonies of Class A misdemeanors. This is a relatively old study at this point as today there are still swaths of unknown metrics inside of the United States as to the criminal rates of illegal immigrants. This is due to the fact of sanctuary states (11 of the 50 in the US) have cities with policies at times completely prohibiting the release of criminal actions perpetrated by illegal immigrants, or the retention of legal status information. These policies establish a rule for their law enforcement entities that working with the federal government on deporting illegal immigrants is “voluntary.” This may be a reason many studies are able to report that illegal immigrants conduct a low or high amounts of crime, as there is no accurate set of

data. Federal law enforcement entities state that when law enforcement fails to report crimes and release serious criminal offenders back into the streets, it poses a serious risk to public safety.

A National Library of Medicine study of US sanctuary cities and immigrant wellbeing interviewed dozens of individuals across different cities that were “Sanctuaries.” The paper looked at the differences between what was messaged by the city and the actualities of these places. Messages such as safety, inclusion, and wellbeing were broadcast but interviews with several dozen of illegal immigrants revealed that they still had difficulties finding safe employment. Interviewees said that the message these cities held created a false sense of security and once there, individuals were exposed to harmful employment practices with cities such as Chicago and San Francisco exploiting illegals. The illegal immigrant, though safe from deportation in these cities, still has zero labor rights, job protections, or benefits... you could hire these individuals for extremely cheap without any “baggage” of citizenry rights, and if they quit there are ample more to choose from. The sanctuary city unfortunately ensures continued cheap labor for businesses to profit from.

On reported criminals apprehended, the US Government reported the arrest of 15,267 criminal noncitizens (individuals who have been convicted of one or more crimes, whether in the United States or abroad) in 2023, with ~2.5K of those being violent or sexual in nature. 2024 to date has seen a reported 7,064 committed with over 800 of those being violent or sexual in nature. The report was updated MAR 22, 2024, at the time of these metrics which are arrests at the border or upon apprehension of entrance into the nation. Studies on exact crime rates, as discussed earlier, are difficult metrics are thrown off

as state, local, and federal regulations many times vary on when, how, and if a person's information is accurately accounted for. Metrics for some Texas studies such as CATO, PNAS, and CIS have understandably skewed results (See pg. 22 for graphs). Either showing lower results due to the variables on intake of criminals in Texas in which immigration and legalized status was not recorded or discovered until after in process, jail time, or upon release or higher results due to double counting statistics or criminals reported by DHS, CBP, or others government reports are very confusing and poorly executed. It doesn't matter the study if there were numbers or metrics skewed, it does not change or console a family or individual who is affected by illegal immigrant criminal actions.

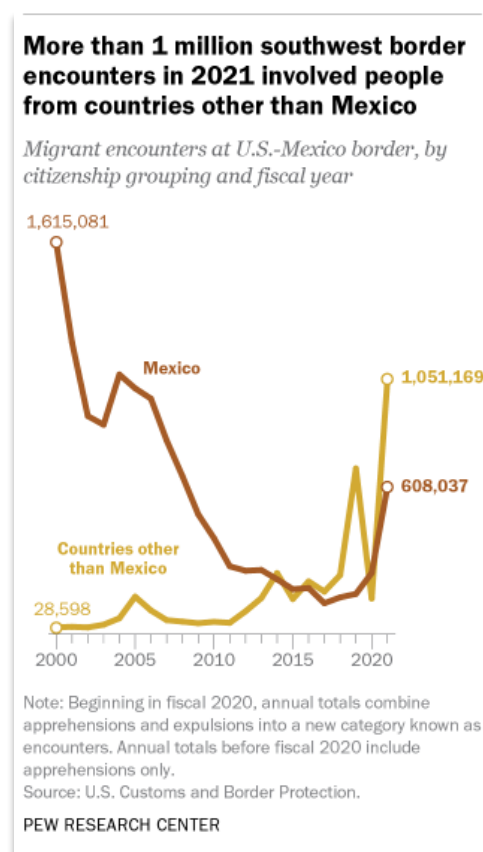
Reaching America

For illegal immigrants not coming from Mexico, it is an extremely arduous journey that threatens all those who take the path. Disease, robbery, rape, and assault await these individuals who are trying to escape insecurity, economic collapse, violence, and though a



controversial topic, climate change which usually affects someone's ability to make a living or provide for their family. The trip usually starts as flights to countries that do not require visas such as Ecuador, Colombia, or Peru and work their way to the southern part of Central America that connects to Colombia. This is the Darien Gap, one of the most dangerous places in

the world consisting of over 60 miles of roadless rainforest and swamps. Many attempt to bypass this section via air or sea transport but this comes with a heightened risk as these locations are patrolled much more heavily than the imposing land route to Panama. This is a 10 day or more journey through extreme temperatures exacerbated by high humidity causing dehydration, frequent landslides plague the area not to mention venomous animals and plants along with crocodiles. Another threat in the jungle are the remnants of the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) and Colombia's largest drug cartel the Gulf Clan. These groups rape, rob, kidnap, and extort these people along the path heading North to Panama. Low estimates put around 10 people per month die attempting to cross the gap. Once in Panama the authorities provide transportation to the migrants. The government does not have the means to deport or detain en masse, so they previously



ensured that migrants continue to move out of their country. As rights groups blamed Panama for the deaths of migrants and an agreement with the US to curb the thousands of individuals heading to the Southern Border, SEP 2023 saw Panama begin an ineffective initiative to halt migration through the gap. In Costa Rica, a UN group part of the “Preparedness and Response Plan for People in Transit” (now that’s a name) assist migrants through the country by providing food, aid, shelter, and transportation. This service provides a bus trip straight through Costa Rica to Nicaragua for \$30 USD. The reduction in crime saw

Honduras adopt a similar program of government and non-government organizations (NGO) assisted transport through the countries. The Mexican Commission for Refugee Aid (COMAR) facilitates and guides migrants through Mexico, bussing around 14-16 thousand a day to the US border. Cartels also transport migrants and as explained earlier in the paper, gather thousands in an area and send them across the border overloading US capabilities and creating gaps for fentanyl, marijuana, cocaine, or VIPs (high dollar clients) into the nation.

The Central American Route is becoming more popular for illegal immigrants coming from across the world. For example, Chinese immigrants are one of the countries rapidly increasing in numbers using the Darien Gap. In an odd discovery via interviews on the border, social media has increased Chinese migration by over 15X from 2022 to 2023. *Runxue* meaning “Runology” is a term across TikTok, WeChat, and Facebook spreading information on how to apply for passports and even how to pack, fly, and navigate around the borders. These videos paint a delusion at times, posts show smiling and waving people, migrants jumping into streams, advertising an exciting trek and adventure. There is immense money to be made by many individuals along the entire route. Chinese migrants at times around \$30+ thousand to be smuggled into the US, while poorer individuals from Venezuela or others may only be paying \$5,000. The route will only grow as time goes on if nothing changes with the policies and economies around the world. Climate change and conflict will continue to have hundreds of thousands flee their homes to find refuge in America.

Conclusion

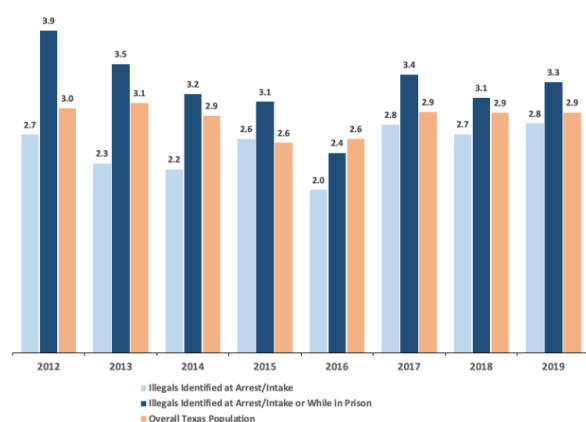
In the previous three years, unprecedented amounts of illicit drugs and people have flowed into the US. Current estimations have these goods generating a staggering \$1 billion per month for these trafficking organizations at the border. None of that includes the amount made on the entire journey of those taking the risk. It is a hard subject the open wound is salvation for so many genuine individuals and simultaneously a horror show for tens of thousands living the rest of their lives in captivity, being sexually abused or left for dead in a shipping container somewhere because the smugglers never came to open your box. This problem extends out to the harbors and Northern border as well, any entry point is used in a malicious way. The immigration system needs help regardless of the political side, there are incredible humans legally trying to enter into our nation that can benefit the world by living somewhere where they can prosper. As for the policies and weaknesses of the border, its offerings put millions in harm's way as they take the dangerous gamble to reach the border. This paper intends to bring reality and humanity to the subject as many solely spout off numbers attempting to justify whatever it is they believe. There are crimes happening by violent individuals who enter the country illegally, using a data set that their criminal rate is less than or equal to a US citizen does not matter if the individual is not present. As in, the extra crime caused by illegal immigrants would not be a metric if the individual was not in the nation. Crime does not stay the same solely because percentages state they have the same "per hundred thousand" metric. On the argument for Illegal Immigration, every one of you reading this benefit from their labor. Your produce would increase in prices, old studies even from the '90s predicted an approximate 12%+ increase in fresh produce prices and construction costs. A more recent studies show that ~50% of

the agricultural workforce is illegal immigrants and that same group represents about 20% for construction workers. Prices would increase for many items and activities you spend your money on. Is it moral or hypocritical to not want illegal immigration but also not want their benefits? Are you okay with illegal immigration as long as you know the benefits? Are you for illegal immigration even though it throws thousands of people into nightmarish lives? Are you against illegal immigration for crime rates or cost? Are you merely echoing phrases you've heard from your friend groups or political parties? None of what was discussed today even mentions the toll this takes on the innocents of Mexico. The Cartels thrive off the cashflow made from the US border. The inhumane inexplicable violence, the calm casualness of it, should make people think about the full chain of events that are tied with this issue, I hope that you study into this on your own and understand the true gravity of the situation from a humanitarian perspective, not a US Left or Right perspective. There are true monsters in and outside of the US making millions of dollars from the exploitation of these masses. Most forget the dark side of humanity, it is extremely present around the border, I promise you.



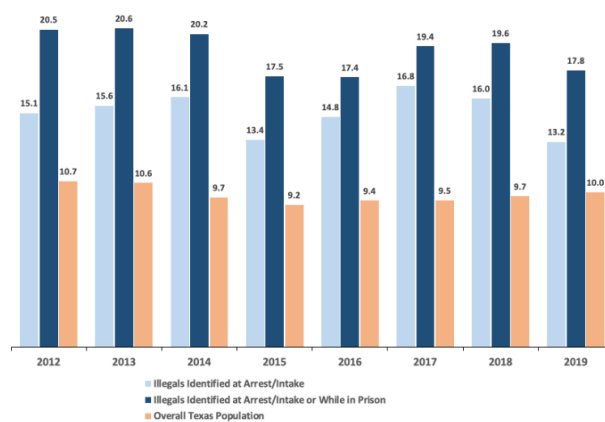
(Left) Video of Macias Castaneda, who worked for Nuevo Laredo en Vivo, beheaded by Los Zetas Cartel for reporting on their operations. She ran a tip line that would feed Mexican LEA and Military entities to interdict drug and human trafficking operations.

Figure 1. Homicide Convictions in Texas per 100K



Sources: Texas DPS (convictions), CMS (illegal population), and ACS (overall population).
 Note: Some illegals may remain unidentified, especially in more recent years.

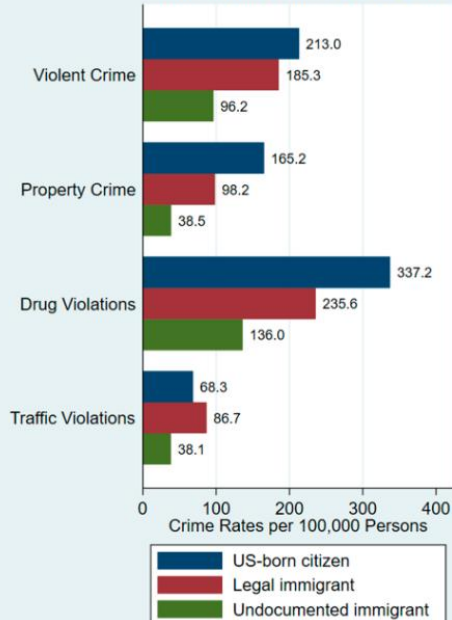
Figure 2. Sexual Assault Convictions in Texas per 100K



Sources: Texas DPS (convictions), CMS (illegal population), and ACS (overall population).
 Note: Some illegals may remain unidentified, especially in more recent years.

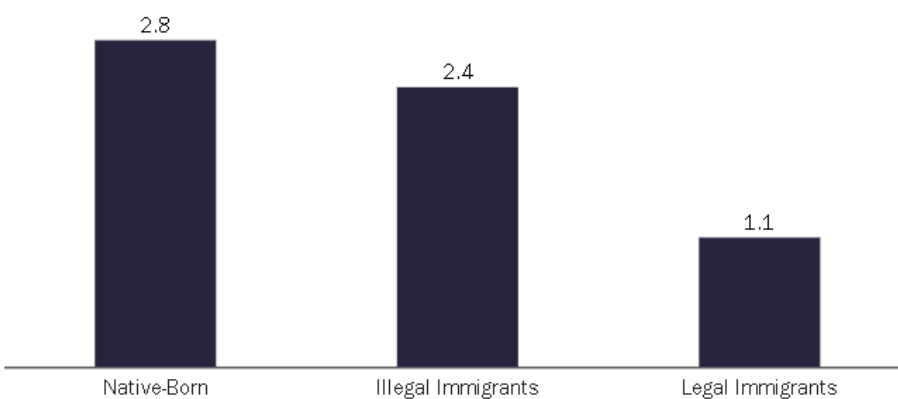
(Above) Center for Immigration Studies 2022 Study

Total Crime Rates 2012-2018



Source: Texas CCH. All crimes are felonies.
 Legal immigrants include naturalized citizens.

Texas homicide conviction rates by immigration status, per 100,000 residents in each subpopulation, 2015



Sources: Author's analysis of Texas Department of Public Safety data and the American Community Survey.

(Left) Cato Institute Crime rates (Right) Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences (PNAS) study.

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Index

CBP - Customs and Border Patrol
DHS - Department of Homeland Security
DTO - Drug Trafficking Organizations
FBI - Federal Bureau of Investigation
FLDS - Fundamentalists of Latter-Day Saints
LEA - Law Enforcement Agencies
LEOs - Law Enforcement Officers
NCTC - National Counter Terror Center
US - United States