

U.S. IMMIGRANT POPULATION IS AT A RECORD HIGH: ENDING *REMAIN IN MEXICO* IS ONLY MAKING IT WORSE!

An NPG Commentary by Edwin S. Rubenstein

Mega truth #1: U.S. fertility and population growth rates have declined steadily since the Great Recession of 2008-09.

Mega truth #2: For decades immigration has been the major driver of population growth in this country.

To the casual observer, these truths may imply that the immigrant population of the U.S. is shrinking.

Are you OK with that? If yes, you are **WRONG, WRONG, WRONG.**

An analysis of the Census Bureau's monthly Current Population Survey (CPS) shows that the foreign-born population (legal and illegal) in the U.S. hit 47 million in April 2022 – a record high in American history. While total U.S. population growth has slowed, the immigrant share is galloping ahead:

- Immigrants now account for 14.3% of the population – one in seven U.S. residents – the highest percentage in 112 years. As recently as 1990 they were one in 13 residents.
- In the first 16 months of the Biden Administration – January 2021 to April 2022 – the immigrant population rose by about 4.4%. This growth rate is more than double that of the U.S.-born population.
- Illegal immigrants are estimated to have accounted for two thirds of growth of the foreign-born population over that time – 1.35 million.
- Taking a longer view, since 2000 the total immigrant population has grown by 50%; it's doubled since 1990; tripled since 1980; and quadrupled since 1970.
- If present trends continue, the immigrant share of the population will reach 14.9% in September 2023, higher than at any time since the nation was founded in 1776.

This rapid growth is remarkable, because for the immigrant population to grow at all, it must exceed both emigration (immigrants leaving the U.S.) and immigrant deaths. By definition, all births to immigrants in the U.S. add only to the native-born population.

We are inundated with transitory factoids, like the number of illegal border crossers apprehended each month by the Border Patrol, or the number of new legal immigrants awarded Legal Permanent Resident status – and the path to citizenship that LPR entails. At the end of the day, it is the **total number of legal and illegal immigrants** living in the country that determines immigration's impact on American society.

Immigration, like the weather, is often seen as something important to our daily lives, but beyond the control of public policy. Anyone paying attention to the ebb and flow of illegal immigrants crossing the SW border in recent months should know better.

Case in point: the program known commonly as **Remain in Mexico**, and formally as the **Migration Protection Protocols (MPP)**.

The only way to deter illegal immigration is to deter the illegal immigrant. And given that border crossers come here to live and work indefinitely, the only way to deter them is to either detain them (as required by law) or to send them back across the border to await their removal hearings.

Detention space is woefully short of what is needed, so the latter – and perhaps more humane – option was chosen by the Trump administration, when it implemented MPP. From January 2019, when the program started, to the end of 2020, nearly 70,000 migrants were sent back to Mexico to await their court hearings.

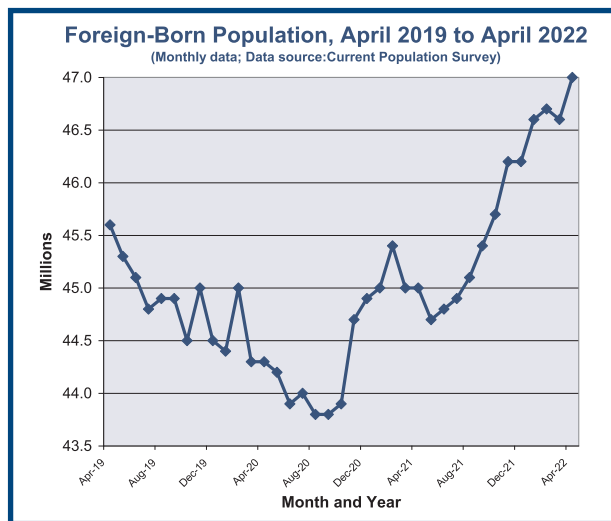
MPP remained the law of the land until June 30, 2022, when Chief Justice John Roberts, in a majority opinion, wrote that if Congress meant for the law to require asylum seekers to return to Mexico **“it would have not conveyed that intention through an unspoken inference in conflict with the unambiguous express term ‘may.’”**¹

Justice Alito countered that the Biden administration decided to “**simply release into the country untold numbers of aliens who are very likely to be removed if they show up for their removal proceedings.**” He added, “**This practice violated the clear terms of the law, but the Court looks the other way.**”²

We are not lawyers. But we know that the occupant of the oval office, no matter how inarticulate, can create lasting perceptions even before taking office. Biden’s campaign promises made clear that he would curtail border enforcement.

Even with **Remain in Mexico** and the emergency public health rule **Title 42** in place, more than 800,000 migrants have been released into the country (since President Biden took office) to wait out their immigration cases, which can take years.³ The administration’s suspension of nearly all workplace deportations and its refusal to take custody of non-citizens released from jails, have made illegal immigrants feel safer, reduced the emigration of those already here, and encouraged new illegal border crossers to turn themselves in to the nearest BP personnel.⁴

The dramatic growth of the foreign-born population since December 2020 is the direct result of those policy choices:



CONCLUSION

Understanding that the majority of population growth in the U.S. stems from immigration and the American-born children of recent immigrants, NPG must speak out on the gross lack of enforcement of immigration laws by the Biden administration. As a nation, we simply must be able to enforce immigration laws and stop playing games of interpretation with each change in the controlling political party. Our only chance to truly preserve our nation for future generations is to reach smaller, truly sustainable population levels; to get there, we must have realistic conversations about reducing immigration rates and ending the insane policy of “catch and release” which has become much too common.

NOTES

1. Camilo-Montoya Galvez, *Supreme Court says Biden can end “Remain in Mexico” rule for asylum seekers*, CBS News, June 20, 2022.
2. Ibid.
3. Adam Liptak, et al., *Justices Permit End to Trump’s Policy Holding Asylum Seekers in Mexico*, New York Times, July 1, 2022.
4. Steven A. Camarota and Karen Ziegler, *Foreign-born Population Hit Record 47 million in April 2022*, Center for Immigration Studies, June 1, 2022.



Edwin S. Rubenstein, president of ESR Research, is an experienced business researcher, financial analyst, and economics journalist. He has written extensively on federal tax policy, government waste, the Reagan legacy, and – most recently – on immigration. He is the author of two books: *The Right Data* (1994) and *From the Empire State to the Vampire State: New York in a Downward Transition* (with Herbert London, 1994). His essays on public policy have appeared in *The Wall Street Journal*, *The New York Times*, *Harvard Business Review*, *Investor’s Business Daily*, *Newsday*, and *National Review*. His TV appearances include *Firing Line*, *Bill Moyers*, *McNeil-Lehr*, *CNBC*, and *Debates-Debates*. Mr. Rubenstein has a B.A. from Johns Hopkins and a graduate degree in economics from Columbia University.

NOTE: The views expressed in this article are those of the author and do not necessarily represent the views of NPG, Inc.



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