Deportation — often involving the breadwinner of a household — puts a drag on Oregon’s economy and destabilizes families. Deportation removes members of the community who boost Oregon’s economy as workers, consumers, and taxpayers. Key Oregon industries depend on undocumented workers to function. Deportation takes a toll on those industries and the rural counties that benefit from those sectors. For families, a deportation proceeding usually leads to the loss of wages, both in the short and long term. Regardless of the outcome, the process itself throws self-sustaining families into extreme economic hardship. The children in affected households bear the brunt of the harm.

Oregon can ameliorate the situation for immigrants facing deportation by providing them access to an attorney. Few individuals facing deportation have a lawyer representing them during the proceeding, making it likely the person will be wrongly removed. The Oregon legislature should establish Universal Representation, a policy that would ensure all immigrant Oregonians have the benefit of a lawyer in immigration court. Universal Representation protects the state’s economic interests as well as Oregon families and children.

Deportation undermines Oregon’s economy

Undocumented workers contribute to Oregon’s economy as workers, consumers, and taxpayers. By removing these members of the community, deportation undermines the state’s economy.

Oregon is able to be as productive as it is because of the labor of undocumented workers. The state’s 76,000 undocumented workers account for $4.8 billion of the state’s annual economic output — gross state product (GSP).¹ To put that in perspective, if all undocumented Oregon workers were removed, the state’s economic output would shrink by 2.4 percent.² For some industries, the role of undocumented workers is even more significant. Workers in the
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agriculture industry account for 18 percent of the sector’s economic output; in leisure and hospitality, they account for 8 percent; and in construction, wholesale and retail, nearly 4 percent each.³

Immigrant Oregonians contribute to the economy in other ways. The earnings of fully undocumented households and mixed-status households — the latter being those that include both undocumented and U.S. citizens or legally present individuals — add up to $6.1 billion annually, more than 4 percent of all Oregon income.⁴ As consumers, they purchase food, pay rent, have their cars fixed, and purchase other goods and services in the course of conducting their lives. These dollars circulate in local economies, helping sustain the businesses and jobs of other Oregonians. Undocumented Oregonians also contribute to the state’s economic health through the taxes they pay. Although they are excluded from many public services, they still pay about $81 million in state and local taxes each year.⁵

Deportation erodes the economic contribution of undocumented and mixed-status households. If the current backlog of about 9,000 deportation cases in Oregon is decided according to historic patterns — about half ending in removal — Oregon will miss out on substantial consumer spending. Specifically, Oregon will have about $130 million fewer dollars circulating in the economy through fewer purchases of goods and services.⁶

Deportation harms key Oregon industries and rural counties

Deportation can disrupt key Oregon industries that rely heavily on undocumented workers, particularly agriculture. Counties that depend on these industries, in turn, can suffer as well.

Oregon’s $4.5 billion agriculture industry could not function without workers who are currently undocumented. Nearly half of all farm labor in Oregon is carried out by 12,000 undocumented residents.⁷ More than 1,300 such workers were fighting deportation in 2021, fully 5 percent of the industry’s workforce.⁸ Growers have struggled with labor shortages in recent years and cannot afford to lose workers.⁹ Many undocumented farm workers have worked in the industry for years and their skilled labor cannot easily be replaced.¹⁰ The industry has a hard time attracting U.S.-born workers. As the owner of a tree nursery stated, “I’ve never had an American ask for work on my nursery.”¹¹

Because of the outsized role that undocumented workers play in the agriculture industry, rural parts of the state have a large stake in the fate of undocumented residents facing deportation. Rural economies are more reliant on agricultural activities than urban areas. Agriculture accounts for 72 percent of gross domestic product in Hood River County, 29 percent in Morrow

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County, 18 percent in Lake County, and 15 percent in Harney County. Businesses and local economies suffer when immigration enforcement efforts remove workers from fields, orchards, and vineyards.

Deportation proceedings can also disrupt other industries. The largest number of undocumented workers in Oregon — about 14,000 — serve in the accommodation and food services industry, performing jobs such as housekeepers and cooks. They comprise 7 percent of this sector’s workforce, without whom firms would have a harder time securing the workers needed to operate. Ten thousand undocumented workers support Oregon’s manufacturing sector, in roles that include food processing. Nine thousand such workers support the construction industry. Undocumented workers make up 5 percent and 6 percent of all employment in manufacturing and construction, respectively.

In sum, undocumented workers play a vital role in certain Oregon industries. Because these industries cannot so easily replace these workers, deportations undermine Oregon’s economy.

Employment of U.S.-born workers unaffected by immigration

The empirical research finds that immigration has little effect on the job opportunities of U.S.-born residents, including lower-wage workers. Differences in skills, language, and other characteristics make U.S.-born and immigrant workers poor substitutes for each other. Research also finds a similar effect on the wages of U.S.-born workers. Though there can be short-term dampening of wages for some groups, such as for people not completing high school and for the pre-existing immigrant population, those effects diminish with time, and may even turn positive. Immigrants tend to expand the economy where they live through their spending, inducing job growth among existing businesses. Immigrants also foster growth through entrepreneurship. As business owners, they are more likely to create jobs than the general population.

Deportation deepens Oregon’s labor crisis

Oregon already confronted a shortage of workers prior to the pandemic; the health crisis only magnified the problem. In 2018, Oregon’s private employers reported having trouble filling the majority of job vacancies, the primary reason being a lack of applicants. Among the occupations most difficult to fill were those common to undocumented workers, such as construction and farm labor. Businesses in rural areas of the state, such as Southwestern and Eastern Oregon, were having the hardest time filling vacancies. Since the easing of pandemic restrictions, Oregon’s small businesses have found it difficult to compete for workers in a very tight labor market.

The worker shortage is expected to worsen in Oregon in the years ahead. This is due to several structural developments in the labor market, including the retirement of baby boomers, a smaller share of working-age people in the workforce, and historically low birth rates. These trends are expected to continue to reduce the supply of available workers in the years ahead.

Deportation compounds the problem of an inadequate number of workers to power Oregon’s businesses. Without enough employees, firms in Oregon will continue to struggle to sustain
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their operations. The lack of workers serves as a drag on the economy, constraining the ability of businesses to grow.

Deportation inflicts economic hardship on thousands of Oregon families

Deportation proceedings often impact not just individuals, but also entire families. Immigrants facing deportation are often the main breadwinner of a family. Beyond the psychological toll, deportation proceedings also wreak financial havoc on families.

Immigration enforcement affects more people in Oregon than just the individuals facing deportation. Some 9,000 Oregonians are currently fighting removal in immigration court.22 Their family members add up to about 8,000 Oregonians — about 3,000 adults and 5,000 children — most of whom are U.S. citizens or legal residents.23

The deportation proceeding itself can be costly for families. Immigration cases typically involve multiple hearings and can take several years to resolve. This means the respondent and their family members shoulder costs of battling the case for an extended period of time. Prior to the pandemic, cases in Oregon were pending over 635 days, on average.24 Since the pandemic, wait times have increased significantly. Cases in 2021 averaged over 950 days to reach resolution.

What does a deportation case directly cost a household?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Average (households with an arrest)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Costs related to the arrest</td>
<td>$790</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Cost of recovering confiscated property; value of property not recovered)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Costs fighting the case</td>
<td>$7,110</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Money sent to detained person; spending to visit detained person; wages lost to visitation; bond money not recovered; income lost attending court and ICE meetings; attorney’s fees; government fees; ankle bracelet fees; lost wages due to detention)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Costs related to the deportation</td>
<td>$1,250</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Fees for voluntary departure; money sent to support deported person; money sent to return to the U.S.)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>$9,150</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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The direct costs associated with a deportation proceeding range from the cost of out-of-state travel to visit a family member in detention, bond money, interest paid to service bond debt, government fees, and the cost of hiring an attorney. Deportation proceedings can also mean the loss of earnings — wages lost by the immigrant or family members during detention or in attending legal proceedings. The added expenses and lost wages directly related to battling a deportation case total over $9,000 on average.

Worse, deportation proceedings can lead to a long-term loss of family income. This happens when the immigrant Oregonian is released from custody pending resolution but has trouble resuming employment. Many immigrants are reluctant to return to a former stable job, lacking work authorization and being concerned about jeopardizing their case. For their part, employers may be reticent to retain an undocumented worker with a pending case out of concern that the workplace becomes a target for immigration officials. Even when prevailing in the case, household earnings can take a long-term hit, because it can take time for the worker to regain the former level of earnings. The earnings of other family members also suffer when the case significantly disrupts their own employment in the course of helping to fight the case. Or they may be forced to assume caretaking roles formerly provided by a detained family member.

The drop in income families experience as a consequence of an immigration case is often severe. Studies have found that household income plummets long-term by a third to more than half, regardless of the outcome of the case. Applying these findings, an Oregon family with a member in a deportation proceeding experiences a long-term drop in annual income from about $43,000 — the median for households with an undocumented family member — to about $25,000. This means the household goes from being largely self-supporting to experiencing severe economic hardship.

A deportation case permanently upends family finances

Median Oregon household income before and after conclusion of a deportation case

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Prior to arrest</th>
<th>After case concludes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>$43,000</td>
<td>$25,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Cases include both those that are decided for deportation and those for remaining in residence.

Source: OCPP analysis of Migration Policy Institute data, 2021 dollars.
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All told, removal proceedings create deep hardship for affected households — households already eking out a living on low wages. Families report having trouble paying bills and affording food, with some going hungry. Many have trouble keeping stable housing. Renters who may already have been living in cramped quarters are forced to live in even more overcrowded conditions or become homeless. For some homeowners, an immigration case and subsequent deportation means losing the home to foreclosure — sacrificing wealth and the prospect of future stability.

Deportation takes a financial and emotional toll on children

Children often bear the brunt of deportation. More than 85,000 Oregon children — one in 10 of all Oregon children — live in a household with an undocumented person. Ninety-three percent are legally-residing; most are U.S. citizens. The harm of a deportation charge reverberates throughout a family, often hitting children hardest.

The deportation of a parent deprives a child of financial support in a household likely already living on the edge. An Oregon child who loses a parent to deportation also endures the cumulative loss of about $56,000 in financial support throughout their childhood years. (See Methodology section). In Oregon, more than 5,300 children live in a family with a pending immigration case. Approximately, three-quarters of them are U.S. citizens. The majority of the children will experience the deportation of a parent or other adult family member, based on past patterns of court decisions. All told, deportation will reduce the aggregate amount of financial support available to 3,500 Oregon children in households with cases expected to end in deportation by an estimated $196 million. (See Methodology section). These costs will either shift to community and public institutions or constitute unmet material needs of the children, compounding the trauma they experience.

Children with a parent fighting charges or ultimately deported also suffer emotional harm. When a parent is arrested, children typically experience extreme anxiety, depression, and anger. Research shows that the deportation of a parent or threat of deportation undermines a child’s cognitive and psychosocial development.

Deportation proceedings against a family member also make it hard for children to do well in school. Experts find that children in households that experience a deportation or live under the cloud of removal have lower academic achievement and are less likely to attend college. Older children in disrupted households may abandon their academic plans out of a need to generate income or to take care of younger family members in the absence of a caretaking adult.
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9,000 Oregonians are in deportation proceedings. They, along with 8,000 family members face extreme economic hardship. This includes 5,000 children who endure emotional trauma and loss of financial support.

Source: OCPP analysis of data from Geoffrey Boyce, Earlham College; and Migration Policy Institute.

In sum, about 5,000 Oregon children are living with the stress of deportation. They are part of households that include 9,000 immigrant Oregonians currently fighting removal. These children are bearing the immediate and long-term economic, emotional, developmental, and educational harm of deportation. For some of them, these challenges are compounded by the fact that both parents and other family members are facing immigration charges or have been deported, or that they themselves have also been arrested.

Oregon can ameliorate the harm of deportation by ensuring legal representation

By establishing Universal Representation — a policy that requires Oregonians facing deportation to have access to an attorney — Oregon would support the economy, foster the vitality of key industries, and protect investments in its people, including thousands of children who represent the state’s future. Access to an attorney is one of the hallmarks of fair legal process — a standard absent in immigration court. Noncitizens are not provided with appointed counsel in deportation proceedings. Most fight their case without a legal representative, even though the government always has an immigration attorney arguing for deportation.

Having legal representation in immigration court is the most important factor determining the outcome of a case. In Oregon, two out of three cases in which the immigrant Oregonian lacks a lawyer results in deportation. Having a lawyer doubles the chance a person will prevail and remain in their place of employment, family, and community.

Having an attorney enables a person facing removal to overcome challenges in navigating the complex court process and understanding their legal options. An attorney can investigate charges; prepare citizenship claims; collect and present evidence of family, employment, and community ties; and prepare and present legal arguments. An attorney can locate witnesses and build a case for maintaining family unification or obtaining asylum. An attorney can be instrumental in helping the person obtain work authorization while the case is pending — often
critical for family stability — or securing it after a favorable outcome. In sum, an attorney can make sure the law in the complex area of immigration is followed.

Given the harm that deportation causes the state's economy, businesses, and families, Oregon would benefit from ensuring that all Oregonians in immigration court have the benefit of a lawyer. No one should face the threat of deportation alone. Oregon should establish Universal Representation, a policy that would make it so that every Oregonian in a deportation proceeding has access to a lawyer. This would give immigrant Oregonians — who are workers, parents, and members of communities across Oregon — a fairer chance to make their case for remaining at their job and in their home and community.

Conclusion

Deportation weakens the state’s economy and wreaks havoc on the lives of families. Undocumented workers contribute their labor, purchasing power, and taxes to the state’s economy. They play a vital role in the agriculture industry, which is particularly important to rural communities. The loss of wages that inevitably follows an immigration arrest weighs heavily on families already eking out a living. The children of these families, most of whom are U.S. citizens, suffer psychologically and financially from the deportation process against a parent.

Oregon can ameliorate the situation by ensuring all Oregonians facing deportation have the benefit of a lawyer. Legal representation ensures a fairer process, reducing the odds that the proceeding will end in wrongful removal. The Oregon legislature should establish Universal Representation, a policy that would protect the Oregon economy, vital industries, and working households together with the children growing up in them.

Methodology: Estimate of child support dollars lost due to deportation

A key step in determining the total loss of child support due to deportation is figuring out the total number of children involved. We estimated that in 2021, 3,498 children in Oregon will lose a parent or family member to deportation. We arrived at this figure as follows. There were 9,023 pending deportation cases in Oregon in 2021. Some households have multiple cases due to arrest of multiple members. We used data on the pattern of arrests in the same household reported by Geoffrey Alan Boyce, Earlham College, communicated to OCPP by email (11/23/21), based on his unique study of immigration enforcement activities in Pima County, Arizona. That study has strengths for evaluating the impacts of immigration arrests in Oregon in that Arizona and Oregon share key features such as similar undocumented household composition, patterns of marriage, and lack of mass workplace raids. Patterned on the Arizona findings, we estimated that 4,844 households in Oregon had at least one family member caught up in a deportation proceeding in 2021. (Our calculation assumes that every household with an immigration case includes an adult arrest; all households with an arrested child also includes at least one arrested adult). Of these households, we estimated that 3,487 include children. This is based on our analysis of national data on the composition of undocumented households (Pew Research Center), which found that 72 percent of such households contain children. We further estimated that 66 percent of Oregon households with pending cases will have someone deported, based on our analysis of past patterns of decisions in Oregon immigration cases and data on arrests per household from the Boyce (2020) study. Accordingly, of the 3,487
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households with children, 2,309 households are expected to lose an immigration case. Multiplying this number by the average number of non-deported children in undocumented households with children (1.51), based on our analysis of data from the Migration Policy Institute (MPI) and Pew data, we estimate that there are 3,498 non-arrested children in households that will lose a deportation case among the cases pending in 2021.

We then estimated how much each child loses in financial support when a parent or family member is deported. In 2021 dollars, a household in the urban western United States with average income of $35,100 (the lowest-income group) will spend about $213,079 raising a child from birth until the child turns 18.51 National data shows that the average age of children in undocumented households is 8 years old.52 Thus, we assume that a household will spend about $119,035 raising a child from age 8 to 18 — a conservative assumption, since the cost of raising a child generally goes up with age. Research shows households lose 47 percent of their income because of a deportation.53 Thus, we estimate that the average Oregon child whose parent or other household adult is deportation will lose out on $55,946 in financial support until the child reaches the age of 18.

Multiplying this figure by the number of children expected to lose a parent or family member (3,498) to deportation results in a combined loss of about $196 million.

Endnotes


3 Ibid.

4 OCPP analysis of data based on 5-year American Community Survey data (2016-2019) provided to the author by the Institute on Taxation and Economic Policy, email communication, November 16, 2021.


6 OCPP analysis of data emailed from the Institute on Taxation and Economic Policy on November 16, 2021, and data on pending immigration cases from The Transactional Records Access Clearinghouse (TRAC), Syracuse University, available at https://trac.syr.edu/phptools/reports/reports.php?layer=immigration&report_type=tool.

7 Agriculture wage and salary employment excludes proprietors, who are unlikely to be undocumented. Forty-six percent of farm workers are undocumented. OCPP analysis of 2019 data on undocumented workers from the Migration Policy Institute and industry employment data from the Bureau of Economic Analysis.

8 OCPP estimate based on analysis of Oregon data from The Transactional Records Access Clearinghouse (TRAC) and the Bureau of Economic Analysis for 2019.
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13 Data from the Migration Policy Institute, available at https://www.migrationpolicy.org/data/unauthorized-immigrant-population/state/OR.

14 Ibid.


16 Ibid.

17 Ibid.


19 Ibid., The East Cascades region reported 73 percent of job openings were difficult to fill; Southwestern Oregon reported 68 percent were difficult to fill.


23 OCPP analysis based on information about the composition of households with an immigration arrest shared with the author by email by Geoffrey Alan Boyce, Earlham College, November 23, 2021; and demographic data of the Migration Policy Institute regarding Oregon’s undocumented population.

24 In the five-year period 2015-2019, immigration cases were waiting an average of 635 days before resolution. Op. Cit., The Transactional Records Access Clearinghouse (TRAC), “Immigration Court Backlog Tool,” Syracuse University.

25 Oregonians are typically detained in Tacoma, Washington, many hours drive from locations in Oregon.
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27 Author’s analysis of data contained in Geoffrey Alan Boyce, 2020. Ibid.


31 Op. Cit., Geoffrey Alan Boyce, 2010. Author email communication with Oregon Center for Public Policy on November 14, 2021 stated that household income dropped 33.5 percent after the resolution of a deportation case, whether or not the person was deported. Also, Ajay Chaudry (2010) found longer-term effects (more than six months after a parent was arrested) were that household income dropped 53 percent. Ajay Chaudry, et. Al., *Facing Our Future: Children in the Aftermath of Immigration Enforcement*, Urban Institute, February 2010, available at https://www.urban.org/research/publication/facing-our-future/view/full_report.

32 All figures represent incomes in 2021.

33 The poverty line for a family of 3.5 people — the average size of an undocumented household — was $24,275 in 2021. According to OCPP analysis of the United for ALICE index, a household of 3.5 people (two adults and 1.5 children) required $63,301 in 2021 to meet basic needs (includes taxes on income and a 10% contingency fund).


39 Seventy-eight percent of Oregon children in households with an undocumented person are U.S. citizens. OCPP analysis of Migration Policy Institute and Center for American Progress data.

40 OCPP analysis. See Methodology section.
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41 OCPP analysis of data from TRAC. Op. Cit., The Transactional Records Access Clearinghouse (TRAC), Syracuse University.


46 OCPP analysis. See Methodology section.

47 Approximately, 5,000 children are among the estimated 8,000 Oregonians living with 9,000 Oregonians facing removal. Most of the 8,000 family members are U.S. citizens or otherwise legally-residing. OCPP analysis of data from Geoffrey Alan Boyce (2020) and the Migration Policy Institute.


49 OCPP analysis of data from TRAC. Op. Cit. The Transactional Records Access Clearinghouse (TRAC), Syracuse University.


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