

The Economic and Fiscal Impacts of Mass Deportation in Rhode Island

Immigrants are vital to Rhode Island's communities and economy, contributing to the workforce, tax base, and small business landscape.

“Immigrants are scared to come out and spend money.”

— Rhode Island Business Owner

174,000

IMMIGRANTS
LIVE IN
RHODE ISLAND

16%

OF RI'S GDP
POWERED BY
IMMIGRANT WORKERS

95M

TAXES PAID BY
UNDOCUMENTED
IMMIGRANTS

20%

OF RI BUSINESS
OWNERS
ARE IMMIGRANTS

Fuerza Laboral, a Central Falls-based nonprofit, conducted a survey of 100 businesses, many of which reported a decline in customers and ongoing difficulty hiring workers because of the fear of immigration enforcement.

Harsh Consequences

- Minor offenses (damaging a fire hydrant) can lead to deportation.
- Deportation can mean a permanent bar from the U.S.
- Protected political speech has been used as a basis for deportation.
- Families can be separated or forced to leave the country.

Many immigrant families live in mixed-status households with U.S. citizen children. When people are deported, many are forced to take their U.S. citizen children with them or leave them behind - effectively deporting U.S. Citizens or breaking up families.

Economic & Community Effects



Workforce

Deportations lead to **labor shortages**.



Care System

Direct care worker shortages **worsen outcomes for children, seniors, and people with disabilities**.



Local Economy

Businesses face **rising costs and reduced capacity** due to labor shortages.



Community Participation

Fear **discourages immigrants** from working, accessing services, and participating in community life.

Immigrants Commit Less Crime

Immigrants are 60% less likely to be incarcerated than U.S. born people.

Facts

- Immigrants commit crimes at lower rates than U.S. citizens.
- From February to August 2025, deportations of immigrants whose most serious conviction was a traffic violation tripled nationally.
- Research shows that as the share of immigrants grows, crime rates decline.

ICE Detention Data

- Detentions of immigrants without criminal charges increased by more than 800% between January and June 2025.
- Detentions of those with prior criminal charges increased by 91%.

Policy Recommendations

Policy Recommendations for the State of Rhode Island

- **Pass the 364 Day Misdemeanor Bill:** The 364 Day Misdemeanor Bill would protect Rhode Islanders from deportation for minor offenses by decreasing the maximum penalty for a misdemeanor from 365 to 364 days of incarceration. **Rep. Felix (H-7198); Sen. Acosta (S-2047).**
- **Pass the RI Federal Constitution Defense Act:** Protect Rhode Islanders by permitting them to sue federal officials who violate someone's federal constitutional rights in RI. **Rep. Potter (H-7202); Sen. Ciccone (S-2605).**
- **Pass the Protect Our Courts Act:** Protect Rhode Islanders attending court proceedings by requiring a judicial warrant to make a civil arrest. **Rep. Batista (H-7360); Sen. Kallman (S-2045).**

Recommendations for Cities and Towns in Rhode Island

- **Limit Compliance Without Judicial Warrants:** Absent a judicial warrant, Law Enforcement Agencies (LEAs) should not honor civil immigration detainers, share sensitive non-public information, or provide access to individuals in custody.
- **Ensure Due Process Protections:** Ensure individuals receive timely notice of immigration enforcement requests, are informed of their rights, and are not denied bail or treated differently solely on the basis of immigration status.
- **Prohibit Status-Based Policing:** LEAs should not stop, question, or detain individuals based solely on suspected immigration status, nor inquire about victims' or witnesses' status absent a legitimate investigative need.
- **Protect Student Information:** School districts should adopt clear policies on responding to immigration-agency requests, limiting cooperation to what is required by federal law.
- **Protect Sensitive Data:** Municipalities should prohibit the use of local resources to create or support federal registries based on protected characteristics, reinforcing civil rights and community trust.
- **Establish Legal Defense Funds:** Municipalities may create or contribute to legal defense funds that support nonprofit providers offering free immigration representation to low-income residents.