

## FACT SHEET

# TRUMP'S MANDATORY REGISTRY EXPLAINED AND IN CONTEXT

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The Trump Administration recently announced a mandatory immigrant registration policy (Trump Registry), citing an obscure provision from our immigration laws. The policy requires undocumented immigrants to register with immigration authorities or else face civil and criminal penalties, including fines, jail time, and deportation. Coming amid the [broader context](#) of Trump's mass deportation agenda and request for unprecedented new funding for DHS, this policy raises serious concerns for communities and the country alike. This factsheet provides an overview of this policy, legal and historical context, and what it may mean for impacted individuals.

## WHAT IS THIS REGISTRATION REQUIREMENT?

President Trump issued an Executive Order on January 20, 2025, directing the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) to prioritize enforcement against individuals who fail to register with the government, as required under the [immigration laws](#). The order applies to all non-citizens over the age of 14 who have been in the U.S. for 30 days or more and have not yet been fingerprinted or registered. In addition, parents or guardians are responsible for ensuring that their children under the age of 14 are registered and that they re-register within 30 days of their 14th birthday. On February 25th, the Trump administration [announced a forthcoming new process](#) to further its goal of ensuring compliance with this requirement.

The administration has explicitly warned that non-compliance will trigger severe consequences, including civil penalties, criminal prosecution, incarceration, and deportation. Its Department of Justice, for instance, issued a [directive](#) on February 5th that directs each applicable division within the Department to pursue federal charges for failure to comply with this requirement. According to [press](#) reports, the administration is considering fines up to \$5,000 and sentences to up to six months in prison.

The proposed implementation represents a departure from previous applications of this law. The National Security Entry-Exit Registration System (NSEERS) of 2002 – implemented after the September 11th attacks – represents the most recent large-scale application of this law, which was primarily targeted at individuals from specific countries. The program faced widespread criticism for its [discriminatory impact](#) before being dismantled during the Obama Administration.

## WHO IS IMPACTED BY THE TRUMP REGISTRY?

This mandate applies to undocumented immigrants currently residing in the U.S. who have yet to formally register with and submit fingerprints to the government. The following categories of non-citizens are among those considered “registered” for purposes of our immigration laws:

- Green Card Holders & Applicants for Greencard from within the U.S.
- Those paroled into the U.S., even if now expired – e.g., CNHV process
- Nonimmigrant visa holders with admission documents – e.g., student visa, tourist visas
- Those placed into immigration proceedings – e.g., asylum seekers now in court
- Those who have been issued work permits – e.g., DACA & TPS holders

Those most impacted by this measure are those who entered the U.S. without inspection and remain in the country. By some estimates, this represents about [54% of the undocumented](#) population - or just shy of 6 million people. Importantly, research also shows that as a greater share of the current undocumented population is comprised of those who [overstay](#) their visas, the shrinking share of the undocumented who entered without inspection are also typically older and have lived in the U.S. for a long time.

### WHAT NATIONALITIES DOES THE TRUMP REGISTRY AFFECT THE MOST?

This measure targets individuals who entered the U.S. without inspection and remain in the country, a population estimated to be just under [6 million](#). DHS data shows that Mexico, Guatemala (750,000), El Salvador (710,000), and Honduras (560,000) account for the largest share of the undocumented population, with Mexico alone representing 4.8 million individuals. Due to their geographical proximity to the U.S., these countries likely also represent the largest share of those who entered without inspection, and therefore would be subject to this registration requirement.

It is important to note that, like other policies with implications for long-term residents, this policy will have a broad impact on the community. For example, it is estimated that [5.2 million American children](#) live with at least one undocumented parent. The intergenerational impacts of these types of policies stand to have significant repercussions for their futures and the health and vibrancy of the country as a whole.

### HOW IS THIS DIFFERENT FOR OTHER POLICIES WHERE IMMIGRANTS COME FORWARD?

The Trump Registry differs significantly from other immigration policies where immigrants present themselves to the government. With the outdated, but still valid, pathway to a [green card through registry](#) for long-term undocumented immigrants residing in the U.S. since a designated cut-off date (currently 1972), for instance, individuals earn a pathway to legal status and eventual citizenship. Moreover, the DHS's deferred action authority, as exemplified by the DACA policy for those brought to the U.S. as children in 2012, has provided protection from deportation and work authorization for those who request it. In contrast, the Trump Registry solely focuses on tracking and enforcement measures against undocumented immigrants, offering no protection from deportation, pathway to legal status, or work authorization.

POLICY	PURPOSE	WHO IT APPLIES TO	OUTCOME
Trump Registry	Tracking & enforcement of the undocumented	All unregistered undocumented immigrants, regardless of arrival date	<b>No protection;</b> <b>No Work Permit;</b> Potential for fines and deportation
<a href="#">Green Card Through Registry</a>	Pathway to permanent residency for long-term undocumented	Must have lived in the U.S. since a set cutoff date (currently 1972)	<b>Legal status</b> & path to citizenship
Deferred Action (e.g. DACA)	Protection from deportation & work authorization	Those DHS determine, on a case-by-case basis, warrant deferred enforcement typically due to compelling equities in the U.S. immigrants	<b>Protection from deportation &amp; Work Authorization</b>

## HOW DOES THIS FIT INTO THE BROADER TRUMP MASS DEPORTATION AGENDA?

The Trump administration has intensified its efforts to deport immigrants through a series of [escalating enforcement actions](#) and [policy](#) changes. DHS agents have received instructions to increase mass deportations, and the administration has warned that those who don't comply with the new registration mandate will face severe consequences. This mandate places millions of mixed-status families in a difficult position: they must choose between registering and becoming visible to enforcement authorities or remaining unregistered and risking harsher penalties.

Simultaneously, the administration has asked Congress for an unprecedented amount of money to implement policies like this one. In the coming weeks and months, Congress will [consider a request](#) for up to \$350 billion for deportations through a partisan reconciliation process. This funding would be used to operationalize Trump's [Day 1 Executive Orders](#), and it would come on top of the [nearly \\$30 billion](#) already allocated to CBP and ICE in FY 2024. If Congress approves this request, the consequences will be far-reaching: extreme enforcement capacity will have a significant impact on American families, businesses, and communities.

## WHAT'S NEXT?

The administration has [indicated](#) that it will soon announce a form and process for individuals to complete the registration requirement. This announcement is expected to include details on how individuals can fulfill their registration obligations. It is probable that a regulation will be issued concurrently with the announcement, providing a legal framework and additional details around the registration process. There may also be litigation that could slow the implementation of this process. We will continue to closely monitor any new developments as they occur to ensure that we are providing the most up-to-date information and guidance.