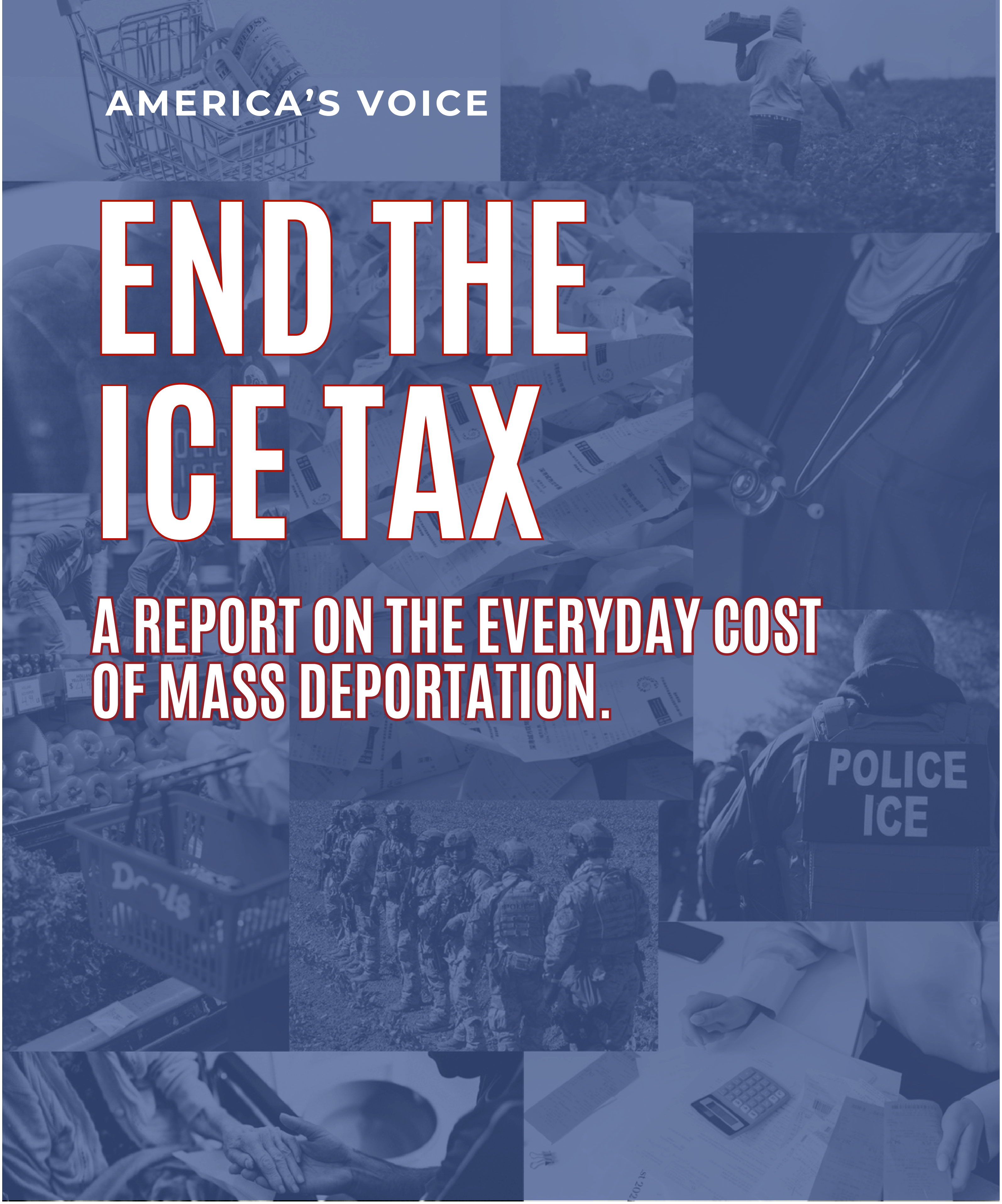


AMERICA'S VOICE

# END THE ICE TAX

## A REPORT ON THE EVERYDAY COST OF MASS DEPORTATION.

END THE ICE TAX

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

**Groceries cost too much. Daycare costs too much. Taking care of an aging parent, building a house – all of it costs more than it should. There are a lot of reasons for that. But one of them is a decision the government is making right now: its mass deportation agenda is contributing to an increase in prices and depressing economic activity. That decision isn't theoretical. It shows up at every kitchen table in the country, including the tables of families who've never thought twice about immigration.**

**We call it the ICE tax. It's the additional cost you pay when your government picks mass deportation over your wallet – higher prices at checkout, jobs that stall out because workers are gone, and Main Street businesses sitting quiet after a raid comes through.**

That is why we are calling on Congress and the Trump Administration to **End the ICE Tax** that is an increasing burden on our daily lives. The evidence is now measurable, and it points the same direction from four independent angles:

- **Prices are rising fastest in the categories that depend most on immigrant labor.** An analysis of federal price data finds that over the twelve months ending in June 2026, while core prices (excluding food and energy) rose 2.6 percent, immigrant-labor-intensive goods and services ran well above that: lettuce up 32.1 percent, canned fruit 7.9 percent, fresh citrus 6.3 percent, apples 7.1 percent, home health care 10.7 percent, landscaping 10.8 percent, and whole milk 9.0 percent.1
- **Construction is slowing, and new homes cost more, exactly where immigrant labor is most scarce.** The same analysis finds that the states and regions most reliant on immigrant construction workers are seeing employment declines, falling housing permits, and rising new-home prices, while less-reliant regions see growth.2
- **Immigration enforcement surges are costing jobs by the hundreds of thousands, including jobs held by American-born workers.** An analysis of payroll data across hundreds of U.S. cities found that the 2025 enforcement surge cost an estimated 668,000 jobs lost, with a conservative-to-upper-bound estimate of 51,000 to 297,000 of those jobs held by American-born workers.3
- **Where ICE goes, local economies contract for everyone.** A study from the Wharton School at the University of Pennsylvania matching thousands of ICE operations to real-time foot-traffic and spending data across millions of businesses finds that after enforcement moves into a metro area, consumer spending runs 6.2 percent below normal and foot traffic 2.7 percent below normal at the average business, week after week. The damage falls hardest on small independent businesses, shows no sign of fading, and holds regardless of a neighborhood's demographics.4

Put together: **mass deportation comes with a steep cost, and American households are footing the bill**: the citizen who owns the hardware store, the family priced out of a new house, the worker whose job site went quiet, the shopper who finds the shelves half-stocked. The pages that follow lay out how.

# PART I: THE PRICE ON OUR RECEIPTS

**Prices are rising across the board, but not evenly. An analysis of federal price data compared price increases in categories that depend heavily on immigrant labor against the overall rate, and found the immigrant-dependent categories running well ahead.1 The conclusion is hard to avoid: when workers are removed from the economy faster than they can be replaced, the pressure shows up in prices.**

**At the start of this administration, immigrants made up 19 percent of the entire U.S. workforce.5 Mass deportation, expanded enforcement, and new barriers to legal immigration have been cutting into that share ever since. The effects show up first, and most clearly, in the industries that depended on it most.**

**Over the twelve months ending in June 2026, prices overall (as measured by the Consumer Price Index) rose 3.5 percent, while core prices (all items less food and energy) rose 2.6 percent.6 A set of everyday necessities rose far faster.**

**32.1%**

RISE IN LETTUCE PRICES OVER THE PAST YEAR

### The groceries that depend on immigrant labor are rising fastest

Sixty-eight percent of America's crop farmworkers are immigrants: 42 percent unauthorized, 26 percent authorized.7 The fruits, vegetables, and dairy products most produced in the United States by these workers have seen price increases substantially above the 2.6 percent core inflation rate:

- **Lettuce is up 32.1 percent**, about 85 percent of it grown domestically.8
- **Apples are up 7.1 percent,** about 90 percent grown domestically.9
- **Fresh citrus is up 6.3 percent,** about 75 percent grown domestically.10
- **Canned fruit is up 7.9 percent and canned vegetables 3.5 percent,** roughly 60 percent and 90 percent of each, respectively, produced domestically.11

### The dairy aisle tells the same story

Over half of all dairy workers are also immigrants, and dairy products have seen their prices increase well above the core inflation rate as well.12 Fresh whole milk is up 9.0 percent and other fresh milk is up 5.5 percent, with 95 percent of each produced domestically.1

## The care you can't offshore is getting more expensive too

- **Landscaping and lawn care is up 10.8 percent.**14 Thirty-nine percent of the landscaping and groundskeeping workforce are immigrants — 24 percent undocumented, 15 percent authorized.15

- **Fear is keeping workers off the job, too.** Andrew Bray of the National Association of Landscape Professionals says legally authorized workers are too afraid to travel to job sites, and some have stopped showing up altogether — a pattern he calls "extremely detrimental to a business."16

None of this work can be sent offshore: no one mows a lawn or picks a head of lettuce from another country. And, the data suggest, when the workforce thins, the cost rises.

## Too consistent to be a coincidence

Prices move for many reasons — weather, fuel, and ordinary market shifts all matter, and the analysis of the above data is careful to say so.17 No single figure proves the case on its own. But category after category, the products and services that rely most on immigrant labor are the ones pulling away from the rest of the economy. That's a cost with a cause, not a coincidence.

# PART II: THE JOB SITE AND THE HOUSING MARKET

**The same crackdown that is raising grocery prices is also slowing down the one thing that could bring housing costs under control: building more homes.**

**Before this term's enforcement surge, immigrants made up 26 percent of the construction workforce, about half of them unauthorized.18 Since then, the pattern is stark and it runs by state and by region.**

### Construction jobs are disappearing fastest where immigrant labor is most relied on

Since the start of the administration's immigration enforcement surge, through June 2026, the five states with the highest immigrant share of their labor force — **California, Florida, Nevada, New Jersey, and New York** — together home to roughly half the nation's foreign-born population, saw construction employment **fall 1.3 percent**, while the rest of the country saw construction employment **grow 3.3 percent** over the same period.19

### Housing permits are falling hardest in the most immigrant-reliant regions

Building permits show the same pattern. Nationally, permits for single-family homes fell 9.5 percent from March 2025 to June 2026 (seasonally adjusted), but the decline was far sharper in the regions most reliant on immigrant labor:20

- **Northeast (23% foreign-born workforce):** –23.5 percent
- **West (25% foreign-born workforce):** –10.4 percent
- **South (19% foreign-born workforce):** –9.3 percent
- **Midwest (11% foreign-born workforce):** –1.6 percent

At the state level, where permit data can only be reliably compared annually, the same pattern holds: between June 2024 and June 2026, single-family homes authorized fell 9.2 percent in the five states with the highest immigrant share of their labor force, while the remaining states saw permits rise 3.0 percent.21

**$100K+**

ADDED TO A MEDIAN NEW HOME IN THE NORTHEAST

## New homes cost more where immigrant construction labor is scarcest

Between the first quarter of 2025 and the first quarter of 2026, the price of newly built homes rose sharply in the two regions most reliant on immigrant construction labor and changed little elsewhere:

- **Northeast (23% foreign-born construction workforce):** new-home prices up 15.4 percent[22]
- **West (25% foreign-born construction workforce):** new-home prices up 8.2 percent[22]
- **South and Midwest (combined 16% foreign-born construction workforce):** new-home prices essentially unchanged[22]

The same pattern shows up in the estimated construction value recorded on building permits. From June 2024 to June 2026, the average valuation for a new single-family home rose from $304,312 to $344,112, an increase of **13.1 percent**, in the five states with the highest share of immigrant workers. In the other states, the increase was just **2.0 percent**, from $309,815 to $316,093.[23]

## Texas shows the pattern isn't confined to the five hardest-hit states

Texas doesn't rank among the five states with the highest overall immigrant share of the labor force, but the same pattern in construction is playing out region by region. In Laredo, monthly ICE arrests rose from an average of 6 to 803 after operations began.[24] Across the Rio Grande Valley, ICE has arrested more than 9,100 people, nearly one-fifth of all such arrests statewide, and construction jobs there fell 5 percent in the third quarter of 2025, the region's largest quarterly drop on record.[25,26] "Business is down significantly," Ronnie Cavazos, board president of the South Texas Builders Association, said. "If we continue on this trajectory, we will see a lot of businesses fail."[27]

For families trying to buy a home, these impacts are felt directly: a 15.4 percent jump in new-home prices in the Northeast alone adds more than $100,000 to the cost of a median new home in that region.[28] We've seen this before. A separate study of the Secure Communities enforcement era found that immigration enforcement reduced construction employment for American-born workers and slowed homebuilding enough to push up new-home prices.[29] The 2025-2026 numbers look like the same mechanism at work again, at a larger scale.

# Part III: The Price of Care

**Home health care is one of the clearest examples of the ICE tax, and one of the most consequential, because the need for these workers is only going to grow.**

**10.7%**

RISE IN HOME HEALTH CARE PRICES OVER THE PAST YEAR

### Prices are already rising, and the care workforce is deeply immigrant-dependent

Of the home health care workforce, 39.8 percent are immigrants – more than 220,000 workers.30 As with the other immigrant-dependent industries examined in this report, prices have exceeded overall inflation: home health care service prices are up 10.7 percent over the last year.31

### The need for these workers is about to grow sharply, just as the labor supply shrinks

The number of Americans over the age of 65 is expected to rise by nearly 40 million more people by 2060.32 As the population ages and lives longer, demand for home health care will only grow. The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics projects that home health care support occupations will be among the fastest-growing jobs in the country: 17 percent growth between 2024 and 2034, more than five times the 3 percent growth rate projected for all occupations combined.33

### Immigrant home health aides are concentrated in specific states, and rural areas are already in crisis

Immigrant workers are an especially critical part of the home health care workforce in several states. As of 2021, New York had the highest share of immigrant home health aides in the country, at 74 percent, followed by Florida (60 percent), Maryland (55 percent), and New Jersey (54 percent).34

Rural areas are already experiencing severe shortages of home health care workers. The national average is 258 home health care workers per 100,000 people, but 20 states have less than half that average in their non-metro areas, including Washington (28 per 100,000) and Connecticut – two of the states where immigrants also make up an outsized share of the rural workforce.35, 36

### The workforce this industry depends on is exactly the workforce this administration is removing

Immigrants in the home health care sector hold a range of legal statuses: naturalized citizens, legal permanent residents, recipients of Temporary Protected Status (TPS) and Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA), and undocumented workers. Since the administration took office, immigration arrests have more than quadrupled and deportations have increased, alongside numerous policies designed to reduce the number of immigrants in the country and restrict new legal arrivals.37

In June 2026, the Supreme Court, in a 6-3 decision, allowed the administration to end Temporary Protected Status for approximately 359,000 Haitians and Syrians who had been living and working legally in the United States. The decision could ultimately lead to the deportation of 1.3 million immigrants from 17 countries who currently hold TPS. Of these, more than 18,000 are home health care workers, including 10,000 Haitians.38

# PART IV: THE EMPTY STOREFRONT

**Where the ICE tax is impossible to miss: on a street that has gone quiet.**

**A study from the Wharton School at the University of Pennsylvania matched 5,388 geocoded ICE operations to real-time foot-traffic and card-spending data across 5.4 million American businesses, then measured what happened to local economic activity after enforcement arrived.39 Two independent studies, one measuring formal employment across hundreds of U.S. cities and one focused specifically on Los Angeles County's Latino-owned small businesses, arrive at the same conclusion through entirely different data. The findings are stark, and so are the streets they describe.**

## When ICE moves in, spending and foot traffic drop sharply for everyone

After ICE enforcement moves into a metro area, the Wharton study finds that consumer spending runs 6.2 percent below normal and foot traffic 2.7 percent below normal at the average business, week after week.40 Extended across the economy, that means roughly 8.1 billion fewer customer visits and $3 to $14 billion in foregone spending in a single year.41 The decline holds regardless of a neighborhood's demographics. A frightened community is a poorer one, and fear does not check anyone's immigration status.42

**668,000**

JOBS LOST IN THE 2025
ENFORCEMENT SURGE

## An independent study puts a jobs number on the damage: 668,000

A separate analysis of payroll data covering nearly every formal employer in the country compared employment in 86 U.S. cities that experienced a sharp surge in ICE enforcement in the first half of 2025 against 255 cities that didn't. The two groups of cities were on closely aligned employment paths before enforcement began; they diverged sharply afterward. Employment in surge cities fell an average of 0.73 percent below what it would otherwise have been, widening to 1.48 percent in cities six months past their enforcement surge.43 Extrapolated across the surge cities, that's an estimated **668,000 jobs lost**, of which **51,000 to 297,000 would have been held by American-born workers**.44 Job losses far exceeded the number of people ICE actually arrested: each arrest is associated with 13 jobs lost overall.45

Construction was hit especially hard, losing jobs at nearly three times the rate of overall employment, roughly 102,000 construction jobs across the 86 surge cities.46 But the damage wasn't confined to industries with large immigrant workforces. Arts and entertainment, a sector with very few immigrant workers, also contracted sharply, evidence that fear and reduced local spending, not just direct worker removal, are driving the losses.47

In Omaha, Nebraska, ICE arrested about 70 workers at a single meatpacking plant; in the weeks that followed, many of the remaining staff stayed home, and the plant's output fell by nearly 70 percent.48

## Small, locally owned businesses are hit twice as hard as chains

Independent, locally owned businesses see spending fall roughly twice as hard as national chains, nearly 11 percent, against about 5 percent at chain locations.49 Businesses with the thinnest margins and the least cushion absorb the heaviest blow – the corner store, the family restaurant, the neighborhood shop. And the money does not simply move online: the study found no shift to online shopping or delivery to make up the difference.50

A study of Latino-owned small businesses across Los Angeles County makes the same point from a different angle. Following a June 2025 enforcement surge, businesses near nine enforcement sites saw about 46,000 fewer customer visits and an estimated $3.16 million in lost revenue within just two weeks.51 Nearly a year later, 95 percent of surveyed entrepreneurs reported ongoing financial stress.52 A separate, independent analysis of consumer spending and mobility data found ICE enforcement was associated with a 20 to 25 percent decline in consumer spending in immigrant-heavy Los Angeles County retail neighborhoods, roughly $280 million in lost sales in a single month.53

## Florida shows how enforcement cooperation deepens the damage

Florida holds 31 percent of all 287(g) agreements nationwide, the highest share of any state, and Miami-Dade County has more pending deportation cases than any jurisdiction in the country, over 146,000 as of August 2025.54 A single six-day operation in May 2025 resulted in more than 1,100 arrests, the largest one-week, single-state immigration operation in ICE's history.55 In Orlando, advocates estimate some restaurants lost roughly 40 percent of their revenue as staff quit out of fear; in Homestead, nursery owners reported delayed deliveries and idled operations as workers stayed home.56

## Some sectors are hit especially hard

Non-essential consumer businesses see the steepest declines in foot traffic like hotels (−9.1 percent), personal care (−4.5 percent), and fitness (−3.6 percent), but everyday essentials aren't spared either: grocery stores see a 2.1 percent decline, gas stations a 1.9 percent decline, and pharmacies a 1.7 percent decline.57 On the spending side, home improvement businesses have seen an 11.0 percent decline, full-service restaurants a 7.5 percent decline, and fast food a 7.5 percent decline.58

### It's not just shoppers staying home. Workers stop showing up too.

Workplace-oriented locations – construction sites, factories, warehouses, transportation hubs, professional offices – see foot traffic fall nearly twice as much as consumer-facing businesses, 4.9 percent versus 2.5 percent, led by transportation (–5.6 percent) and construction (–5.3 percent).59 When workers stay home, out of fear or because a colleague was detained, less gets built, less gets moved, less gets earned – and that means less to spend at the businesses down the road. The supply shock and the demand shock feed each other.

### The damage doesn't fade and by some measures deepens

The Wharton study tracked the effect across more than a year of enforcement and found no sign of it wearing off; the decline in foot traffic actually deepened over successive months.60 That tracks a shift in enforcement itself, from occasional raids to a sustained, roving presence that keeps communities on edge month after month, with street arrests up roughly elevenfold in the first year of the new regime.61

# The ICE Tax

Prices for everyday necessities - food, in-home care, the roof over your head - are rising fastest precisely where immigrant labor is hardest to replace. Construction slows and new homes get pricier in exactly the states and regions most reliant on that labor. Hundreds of thousands of jobs disappear in the cities where enforcement hits hardest, including jobs held by American-born workers. And entire local economies contract when enforcement arrives: shoppers stay home, workers stop showing up, small businesses close, and the money does not come back. As costs rise, three other forces pull in the opposite direction: local income, employment, and activity all fall.

That is the ICE tax. It is not a line item anyone votes on or a rate anyone sets. It is the diffuse, compounding cost that lands on families when the government pours its resources into deporting workers instead of into bringing costs down: pricier groceries, a house that costs more to build, costlier care for aging parents, a shuttered bakery on the corner, a job site gone quiet. No one sent these families a bill. They are paying for it anyway.

And they are paying for it regardless of who they are. The evidence is consistent: the damage does not stop at immigrant households or immigrant neighborhoods. It reaches the citizen who owns the hardware store, the family priced out of the new subdivision, the worker whose paycheck shrank when the site emptied out, the shopper who finds the shelves half-stocked and the prices higher, and the American-born worker whose job disappeared along with a coworker who was never coming back. The costs of mass deportation do not check anyone's papers.

This is not the whole story of why costs are high, and the underlying research says as much. But the government is making a choice to fund a sweeping expansion of interior immigration enforcement, and that choice carries a steep price. American families are paying the ICE tax. And the only question left is the one America keeps asking: **at what cost?**

END THE ICE TAX

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