

MISSISSIPPI



SHAD WHITE STATE AUDITOR

*How Illegal Immigration Hurts Mississippi
Taxpayers*

August 2024

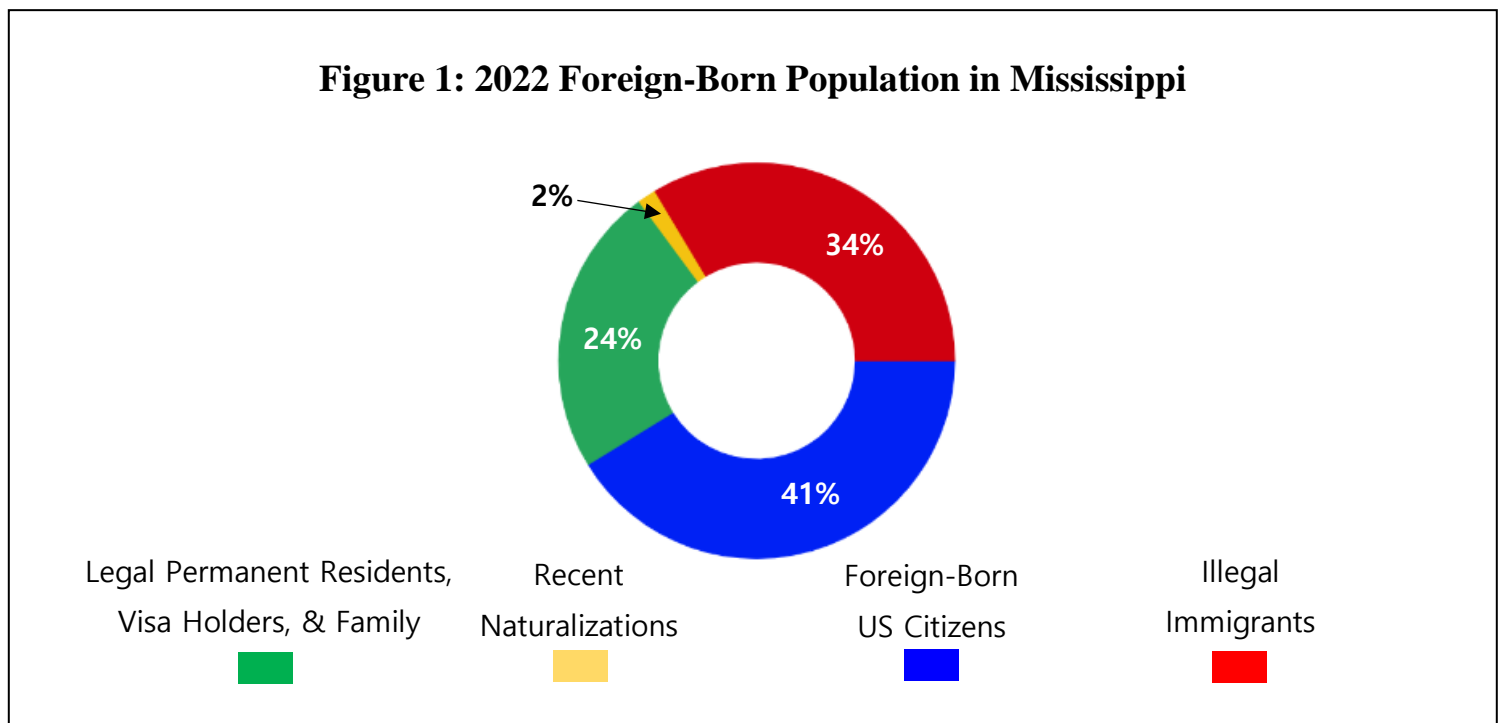
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Executive Summary

Illegal Immigration is a challenge all 50 states face. According to experts from Yale and MIT, 22.1 million illegal immigrants lived in the United States in 2016.¹ Experts acknowledge the number of illegal immigrants in the United States is expected to grow when 2023 and 2024 data becomes available.² As of 2022, researchers estimate that illegal immigrants make up 3.3% of the nation's population.³

Illegal immigration creates a financial burden for taxpayers across the country, but the cost of illegal immigration is not borne solely by the federal government.⁴ Taxpayers from each state—including Mississippi—must face the reality of increased spending as a result of crisis-level illegal immigration.⁵ By combining data from different federal agencies, **analysts from the State Auditor's office estimate at least 22,000 illegal immigrants currently live in Mississippi.**⁶ Figure 1 illustrates the breakdown of the foreign born population in Mississippi.



In 2006 and 2007, the Office of the State Auditor issued reports on the cost of illegal immigration.⁷ This latest report breaks down the taxpayer cost of illegal immigration in Mississippi today. **Using conservative estimates, analysts estimate illegal immigration costs Mississippi taxpayers over \$100 million annually.** Spending on education, healthcare, and public safety drives this cost.

¹ See [report](#).

² See [report](#).

³ See [report](#).

⁴ See [report](#).

⁵ See [report](#).

⁶ See [Census Bureau](#) and [Office of Homeland Security Statistics](#) data.

⁷ See [2006](#) and [2007](#) reports.

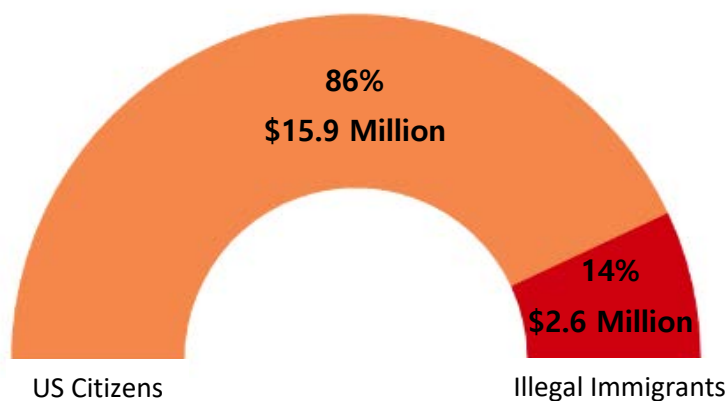
Education

The Mississippi Department of Education is prohibited from collecting citizenship information from K-12 students or their families.⁸ However, analysts used information collected by the University of Mississippi's Population Studies Center to project approximately 2,500 illegal immigrants attend K-12 public schools in Mississippi.⁹

In 2024, the Mississippi Legislature passed the new Mississippi Student Funding Formula (MSFF). This new funding formula allocates money to schools based on the number of students enrolled, with extra funding being allocated for certain students.¹⁰ Analysts used this number to calculate the amount of taxpayer money spent on educating illegal immigrants in Mississippi.

In addition to the standard amount of spending per student that would flow to illegal immigrant students, those students may be eligible for additional appropriations based on their knowledge of the English language. English Language Learners (ELL)—students who struggle with English proficiency—are allocated 15% more funding than the base student cost in the MSFF.¹¹ Analysts calculated that the formula allocates approximately \$18.5 million for the 18,500 ELL students statewide.¹² **Of that extra spending on ELL students, \$2.6 million would likely go toward educating illegal immigrants.**¹³ Figure 2 shows the cost of providing extra funding for illegal immigrant students as a portion of the extra funding for all ELL students.

Figure 2: ELL Funding for Citizens vs Illegal Immigrants



⁸ See [Plyler v. Doe](#).

⁹ See University of Mississippi Center for Population Studies [website](#).

¹⁰ See [HB 4130](#).

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² This data was provided by the Mississippi Department of Education.

¹³ This data was provided by the University of Mississippi's Center for Population Studies.

Low-income students are also eligible for extra state funding. Students who qualify as low-income are allocated 30% more funding than the base student cost in the MSFF.¹⁴ **Analysts project this additional education spending on illegal immigrants costs Mississippi taxpayers another \$5 million or more annually.**

In K-12 spending alone, in total, Mississippi taxpayers likely pay \$25 million to educate illegal immigrants each year. Importantly, this estimate does not include the cost to educate the US-citizen children born to illegal immigrants, which is difficult to estimate given the state's inability to collect citizenship data for students and their families.

Figure 3

MSFF Base Student Cost × Number of Illegal Immigrant Students

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$$\$6,695.34 \times 2,500 = \$17 \text{ Million}$$

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$$\$17 \text{ Million} + \text{ELL Student Supplement} + \text{Low Income Student Supplement} = \$25 \text{ Million}$$

Healthcare

The Emergency Medical Treatment and Active Labor Act (EMTALA) guarantees everyone in the United States is allowed emergency medical treatment. Uncompensated care costs—the cost of treating people without health insurance—for Mississippi's publicly owned hospitals was over \$318 million in 2022.¹⁵ When uncompensated care is provided by publicly owned hospitals, the losses incurred are passed directly to the taxpayers, in addition to contributing to higher health insurance premiums, increased wait times, etc.

Approximately 50% of illegal immigrants have no health coverage.¹⁶ Further, 38% of illegal immigrants rely on emergency medical services for primary care.¹⁷ According to the Mississippi Department of Health, the average cost of an emergency room visit (no insurance/self-pay) is \$4,100.¹⁸ Using these figures, analysts projected a range for the annual taxpayer costs of uncompensated care provided to illegal immigrants in Mississippi. Figure 4 takes a percentage of the illegal immigrant population and shows the costs of

¹⁴ See [HB 4130](#).

¹⁵ See [Mississippi Hospital Association dashboard](#).

¹⁶ See [report](#).

¹⁷ See [report](#).

¹⁸ This data was provided by the Mississippi State Department of Health. Self-pay indicates a patient without health insurance or one who chooses to pay out of pocket.

emergency room visit(s). For example, if 50% of the illegal immigrant population (or all uninsured illegal immigrants) in Mississippi visit the ER only once in a year, taxpayers are responsible for picking up the \$45 million tab.

Figure 4		
Percent of Illegal Immigrant Population	Cost of One Emergency Room Visit	Cost of Three Emergency Room Visits
50%	\$45,119,000	\$135,356,000
38%	\$34,291,000	\$102,875,000
25%	\$22,460,000	\$67,681,000
10%	\$9,088,000	\$27,265,000

Notably, uninsured pregnant women have higher rates of emergency visits than women who have private insurance.¹⁹ EMTALA guarantees emergency health care for these women. This means taxpayers likely face an outsized cost for healthcare provided to pregnant illegal immigrants. Additionally, analysts estimate nearly 2% of all births in Mississippi are to illegal immigrants.²⁰ **These births to illegal immigrants likely cost Mississippi taxpayers over \$4 million each year.** Figure 5 shows this estimate.

Figure 5	
Births to Uninsured Illegal Immigrant (Estimated)	330
Average cost for birth (2020) ²¹	\$12,400
Estimated cost to taxpayers	\$4 Million

Children born to illegal immigrant parents are citizens of the United States and immediately eligible to apply for Medicaid. Given the incentive for hospitals to generate revenue for services provided, many of these children are likely enrolled in Mississippi's Medicaid program. Assuming a constant number of children born to illegal immigrants each year in Mississippi, taxpayers will spend up to \$28 million annually providing Medicaid services to the US-citizen children of illegal immigrants as these children grow up. **Combined, Mississippi taxpayers likely spend up to \$77 million on healthcare for illegal immigrants and their children each year.**

Public Safety

Federal immigration enforcement agencies, such as Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), should work in conjunction with state and local law enforcement to identify and detain illegal immigrants. This collaboration often requires local jurisdictions to hold illegal immigrant detainees in jail until they can be transferred to federal custody, which incurs substantial costs. There are an estimated 79 illegal immigrants

¹⁹ See [report](#).

²⁰ See Center for Immigration Studies [resource](#).

²¹ See [report](#).

currently detained under Mississippi Department of Correction custody.²² Mississippi taxpayers likely also pay to incarcerate illegal immigrants in local jails in cities and counties across the state. **Using available data, analysts project Mississippi taxpayers will spend at least \$1.7 million annually incarcerating illegal immigrants.**²³

This estimate does not include the cost of the extra burden law enforcement agencies face while policing Mississippi streets as a result of illegal immigration. It is difficult to estimate these costs due to a lack of available data. The presence of illegal immigrants can strain local law enforcement agencies, which may lack the resources to effectively manage the increased workload. Additionally, the need for specialized training for officers to handle immigration-related issues can divert resources away from other critical public safety needs.

Conclusion

Illegal Immigration is a problem costing Mississippi millions of dollars each year. The Mississippi Office of the State Auditor estimates the state spends over \$100 million to educate, incarcerate, and provide healthcare for illegal immigrants and their children. Due to the limited amount of reliable data, actual spending could be higher.

²² Data were provided by Mississippi Department of Corrections.

²³ Claim relies upon data provided by the Mississippi Department of Corrections.