

Patterns and Trends of Deportations to Mexico:  
The Unequal Distribution of Deportability

Maria Vignau Loria

A dissertation

submitted in partial fulfillment of the  
requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

University of Washington

2025

Reading Committee:

Sarah L. Quinn, Chair

Sara R. Curran

Jerald R. Herting

Program Authorized to Offer Degree:

Sociology

© Copyright 2025

Maria Vignau Loria

University of Washington

**Abstract**

Patterns and Trends of Deportations to Mexico:  
The Unequal Distribution of Deportability

Maria Vignau Loria

Chair of the Supervisory Committee:

Sarah L. Quinn

Department of Sociology

A growing body of research has examined how the local contexts, policy settings, and institutional dimensions of immigration enforcement in the United States influence the outcomes and rates of immigrants' apprehension, detention and removal. While scholars have argued that the risk of deportation is unevenly distributed among the immigrant population, much remains unknown about how that risk varies across demographic profiles and contextual features. In this dissertation, I study deportation risk through a demographic approach that centers the analysis on deportees' characteristics and their population-level composition. Specifically, I utilize data sources collected at different sides of an international border to answer the following questions: (1) Who is being deported from the United States? (2) How do the characteristics of those deported influence their susceptibility to deportation?, and (3) To what extent do changes in the characteristics of the immigrant population explain differences in deportation risk across immigration enforcement regimes? The findings of this study highlight the heterogeneity of the

Mexican deported population across time, geographies, and enforcement contexts; shed light on the discretionary application of immigration enforcement along racial and cultural lines; and disentangle the temporal and spatial variations in the population at risk of deportation from changes that result from the evolution of America's deportation machine.

# Table of Contents

Introduction.....	1
Chapter 1: The Shifting Profile of Mexican Deportees Across Time and Geographies, 2005-2019.....	11
Chapter 2: Selective Enforcement and the Uneven Distribution of Deportation Risk in the United States.....	44
Chapter 3: Decomposing Deportation Risk: Variations Across Immigration Enforcement Regimes, 2009-2019.....	76
Conclusion.....	112

## Acknowledgements

I want to begin by thanking the members of my committee for their unwavering support, advice, and understanding, not only during the development of this dissertation, but during my time in graduate school. Nathalie, Sara and Jerry; thank you for every word of encouragement, for your thoughtful feedback, your patience and kindness, and for believing in me and this work. Thank you, Sarah and Maria Elena, for being part of this dissertation journey. I owe an immense debt of gratitude to Stew Tolnay, the best example of scholarly greatness I know, and the person responsible for my becoming a demographer. I also want to thank Charlie Hirschman, for his mentorship during my early years of graduate school, and Kyle Crowder, for being a true advocate for graduate students in general and for me in particular. I am similarly grateful to other professors at UW that helped me navigate graduate school, including Steve Pfaff, Aimée Dechter, Peter Catron, and Angelina Godoy; I learned so much from all of you. Finally, I want to thank Fatema, Ulrika, Tess, and Susanna for their generosity in helping me with the many administrative issues I brought their way, always with kindness and patience.

To my friends in the sociology department: thank you for making this journey enjoyable, for the countless ideas we exchanged, and for inspiring me with your work. I feel lucky to have watched you grow as sociologists and scholars, and I am so proud of you all. Marco, thank you for the many miles we traveled together. Steve and Vic, thank you for sticking with me from the very beginning. Aryaa and Aasli, thank you for helping me find meaning in my work when I felt lost and discouraged. Michele, thank you for the many hours we spent working in coffee shops all over Seattle, and for the enthusiastic sociological discussions that accompanied our work sessions. Thiago, thank you for reminding me that we do this work because we want to help build a more equitable society. And thank you Erin, Chuck, Chris, Ihsan, Savannah, Courtney,

June, Kate, Xinguang, and Kivan, for everything I learned with you and from you through classes, work, TAing, and the comings and goings of graduate school life. Finally, thank you Tim, for being the best roommate I could have hoped for in Seattle.

To my Seattle friends that became my Seattle family: thank you for making sure I knew I was so much more than my PhD and my dissertation. Maru and Pancho, my Chilean sister and brother, thank you for filling my life in the PNW with laughter and joy. Rebe, thank you for all the dances and for exploring Seattle with me. Rox, my mirror and confidant, thank you for the adventures, the nights at Capitol Cider, and the intense conversations. Fran, thank you for the political debates and for imagining with me that “another world is possible”. Thank you, Gonzalo, for reminding me that we fight “one fight at a time”. Rodrigo, César, Aurelio, Cami, Benja, Teti, Tomás, Dani, Raúl, Felipe, Moi, and Luis, thank you for making my life in Seattle so much fun, for every concert, road trip, hike, party, and soccer game we shared. My years in Seattle would not have been the same if not for the Kegs on Legs soccer team (and our “tercer tiempo”) and the Cumbieros band; you all filled my life with music, adventures, and laughter. Thank you, Kelly and Carlos, for opening your home to me, and for being my safe space in the U.S. Thank you Kajal, for being an endless source of inspiration and strength. And thank you, Diego, for the history that brought us to the U.S. in the first place.

To my friends and family back home, thank you for being there for me every step of the way. Mom and dad, thank you for your endless love and encouragement, for nurturing my dreams, and being the fuel that allowed me to pursue them. Rodrigo and Ana, thank you for being my accomplices in life. Leonel and Tania, thank you for inspiring me with your courage and for being a refuge for me, even from afar. Sofía, Andrea, Majo, More, Carla, and Chino; thank you for reminding me that where I came from has always mattered. To my aunts, uncles,

and cousins who showed support and excitement throughout this journey: thank you. I feel incredibly fortunate to be part of such a loving and extraordinary family. And to my partner, Massimo; thank you for grounding me when I doubted myself, for pushing me when I needed it, and for your steadfast love and companionship through trips across the world and long days working at home.

Finally, this dissertation would not have been possible without the thousands of migrants who, after being removed from their homes and taken away from their dreams and aspirations, agreed to respond to a survey as they stepped off a bus or a plane. This study is for them.

I would like to acknowledge the institutions that partially funded my graduate studies, including the Center for Studies in Demography and Ecology at the University of Washington, the Center for Human Rights at the University of Washington, the International Max Planck Research School for Population, Health and Data Science, and the Fulbright Foreign Student Program.

## **Dedication**

For my mom, Silvia,  
and for my dad, Belisario.

## Introduction

“The freedom of movement remains the freedom of life itself,  
not merely the mundane necessity to make a living  
but the freedom to truly live.

Deportation, as a more or less judicial, more or less arbitrary, exercise of state power,  
is therefore an exquisitely concentrated abnegation of that freedom,  
one more usurpation by the state of the sovereign power  
of humanity itself.”

Nicholas De Genova  
The Deportation Regime

### The Deportation Power

Few issues in contemporary politics around the world carry as much weight, institutional complexity, or political controversy as deportations. The forced removal, or “violent dislocation”, of a person from the national territory constitutes one of the most heavy-handed tools of statecraft (De Genova 2014, Ellermann 2009). And yet, in practice, deportation unfolds as a bureaucratic, administrative procedure embedded within a broader system of migration control. This tension between the legal violence of the “border spectacle” and the “pervasive convention of routine” (De Genova 2002, 2016) makes deportation difficult to study empirically.

Deportation is functionally defined as “the expulsion of noncitizens by a state through the (threatened or actual) use of force” (Kanstroom 2012: 29). While its contemporary form has only been around since the latter half of the nineteenth century (De Genova 2018), political communities have systematically expelled individuals from within their borders for far longer. In a genealogical analysis of deportation, Walters (2002) argues that this is just one of many historical forms of expulsion exercised by the state power, such as exile, the expulsion of the poor, corporate expulsion (expulsion on the basis of group membership), transportation and

population transfer. What makes deportation different, Walters argues, is that the basis of this type of expulsion is nationality and state membership. As such, deportation is both a product of the modern state system, that is, the division of the world into territorial nation-states with sovereign power, and the modern system of citizenship, that is, deportation concerns individuals that are “rightful members” (legal citizens) and “rightless non-members” (non-citizens) of nation-states (Walters 2002:275, De Genova & Peutz 2010:7). Deportation is thus derived from the right of sovereign States to control their territories and borders.

Additionally, unlike other forms of expulsion, the legitimacy of deportation arises from its administrative nature as an instrument of immigration policy; its justification is rational, formal, institutional and legal; it is based on the observance of national and international laws (Walters 2002). Being thus embedded in States’ contemporary administration and bureaucratic practices, deportation might not seem so draconian, when it is in fact one of the most violent tools of coercive social regulation, very much echoing the banality of evil that Hannah Arendt (1963) glimpsed in the routine practice of bureaucratic logic and the biopower exercised through the sovereign machine of governmentality as explained by Mezzadra and Nielson (2013).

Beyond a definition of what deportation is, it is equally important to consider what deportation does. Kanstroom (2012) argues that it has two interrelated goals. The first one, *extended border control*, seeks to remove noncitizens that have entered the country “illegally”, both at the borders and in the interior of the country. The second one, *post-entry social control*, pursues the regulation of the conduct of noncitizens who entered and remain in the country “legally”, but who might engage in illicit actions and behaviors.

Deportation, however, is a tool that serves covert purposes that go well beyond the stated aims of government agencies or political actors in any given country. First, it is an essential

element in the production and reproduction of a global capitalist economic system that disciplines transnational labor mobility and controls the movement of the poor. Immigrants' "illegality" and "deportability" emerged as a response to the contradiction between the capital's need for cheap and precarious migrant labor and the unwanted and unwelcome presence of migrants themselves (De Genova 2002). "Deportable" workers become, in essence, an entirely disposable commodity that facilitates capital accumulation through its exploitation and oppression (Mezzandra and Nielson 2013, De Genova 2013). In the words of Golash-Boza (2015:4), "mass deportation [...] is critical to the sustainability of neoliberal economies".

Second, as much as it is an instrument for the enforcement of a "global class hierarchy" (Golash-Boza 2015), deportation enforces and perpetuates a "global racial hierarchy" around citizenship and belonging, in which the conditions of "illegality", "deportability" and, as such, the practice of deportation, are deeply racialized (Armenta 2017, Mezzandra and Nielson 2013). Mae Ngai argues that, in the case of the United States, immigration policy in general and deportation in particular, "are constitutive of Americans' understanding of national membership and citizenship, drawing lines of inclusion and exclusion that articulate a desired composition of the nation" (2004:5). In this way, in most countries in the Global North and even the Global South, the formulation, application, and enforcement of immigration laws and deportation policies have been key in the definition of nations' characters, as well as the delineation of who belongs to them and who does not.

Third, deportation is a tool for the policing and surveillance of bodies and territories in the name of security, both at the national level, with its ever increasing links to the criminal justice and prison systems, and at the international level, through the compulsory allocation of populations to their sovereign nations or, in some cases, third nations that will receive them

(Walters 2002). The practice of deportation thus challenges the liberal narrative of labor mobility that responds to the “self-regulating mechanisms of markets and populations” (Walters 2002:282); revealing instead its function as part of a global policing of populations.

Finally, deportation serves a fundamental purpose: the control and regulation of *all* migrant bodies through the removal of just a few. In other words, it disciplines an un-deported majority by the fear invested through the deportation of a small group (Casas-Cortes et al. 2015). In that sense, while some might argue that deportation is not effective as an immigration policy to “keep illegals out”, it is quite effective at keeping immigrant populations in fear, vulnerability and oppression. Migrants’ susceptibility to deportation successfully keeps migrants in a state of managed precarity, producing a legally vulnerable and socially subordinated population that can be easily exploited. In the words of Nicholas De Genova and Nathalie Peutz (2010:14), “deportation regimes are profoundly effective, and quite efficiently so, exactly insofar as the grim spectacle of deportation of even just a few, coupled with the enduring everyday deportability of countless others, produces and maintains migrant illegality as not merely an anomalous judicial status but also as a practical, materially consequential, and deeply interiorized mode of being –and of being put in place”.

### **An empirical study of deportation in the U.S.: a demographic and population-based approach**

A growing body of research has taken up the study of how different elements of the institutional dimensions and features of immigration enforcement in the United States affect and influence the outcomes, practices, and processes of immigrants’ apprehension, detention, and removal. These concerns include, for example, the expansion of policing and enforcement into

the interior of the country (Armenta 2017, Moinester 2018), the centrality of enforcement agents' exercise of discretionary authority (Asad 2019, Pedroza 2019), the enactment of certain local policies (Coleman and Kocher 2019), the importance of community contexts (Ryo and Peacock 2019), the use of particular technologies for immigration enforcement (Amuedo-Dorantes and Pozo 2019), and the deepening intersection of immigration enforcement and the criminal justice system at the federal, state and local levels (Meissner et al. 2013, Cantor et al. 2015, Moinester 2019).

These studies have greatly advanced our understanding of the workings and intricacies of the “formidable machinery” (Meissner et al. 2013) that is immigration enforcement. However, less is known about who is being deported from the United States. While scholars have stressed that the risk of deportation is unevenly distributed among the unauthorized immigrant population (Garip et al. 2019, De Genova 2010), there is much that is unknown about how that risk is distributed across demographic profiles, socioeconomic characteristics, and migration histories. An additional concern is how deportation risk varies, in turn, by institutional and contextual features such as the ones mentioned above, for instance, whether federal policies and priorities for deportation impact deportation risk and its components.

This dissertation advances our knowledge of how deportation risk varies across certain demographic, socioeconomic, and migration characteristics, and how structural and institutional contexts impact the risk of deportation from the U.S. I do so by analyzing the temporal variations and spatial patterns in the profile of Mexican deportees –consistently, the largest share of deportees by national origin– vis-à-vis the characteristics of the population at risk of deportation, that is, undocumented Mexican immigrants. This approach allows me to disentangle the temporal

and spatial variations in the population at risk of deportation from changes that result from the evolution of America's deportation machine. This project addresses the following specific aims:

**Chapter 1. The shifting profile of Mexican deportees across time and geographies.**

This chapter examines who is being deported from the United States. Drawing on data on deportees collected in Mexico from the Survey on Migration in the Northern Border (EMIF-Norte) from 2005 - 2019, this chapter provides a descriptive account of the individual characteristics, migration histories, and removal experiences of Mexican deportees, distinguishing between deportations carried out at the border and those executed in the interior of the country. The findings of this first chapter highlight the heterogeneity of the Mexican deported population across time, geographies, and enforcement contexts, which result from both the selective nature of deportation and the migration story from Mexico. Taken together, the descriptive findings of this analysis establish the empirical foundation of the dissertation by showing that deportation involves a diverse set of people and, additionally, that it produces and reproduces patterned social inequalities.

**2. Chapter 2. Selective Enforcement and the Uneven Distribution of Deportation**

**Risk.** This chapter investigates a fundamental theoretical question in the study of immigration enforcement: the uneven distribution of immigrants' deportability. In other words, it studies the unequal distribution of deportation risk among the deportable population. I begin by estimating the population at risk for deportation, operationalized as "likely undocumented Mexican immigrants", through the logical imputation method using microdata from the American Community Survey (ACS) (Hall et al. 2010). Next, combining the ACS data with the interior enforcement deportee estimates from the EMIF-Norte survey, I estimate deportation rates over time and across U.S. states. Finally, I investigate the unequal distribution of deportation risk by

modelling the probability of deportation as a function of key individual characteristics, while controlling for temporal and geographic variation. The analysis shows that the Mexican undocumented population is unequally susceptible to being deported: men, indigenous migrants, and less acculturated migrants are at higher risk of interior removal. These findings shed light on the discretionary application of immigration enforcement along gendered, racial and cultural lines.

**Chapter 3. Decomposing variations in deportation risk across immigration enforcement regimes.** This final chapter examines how deportation risk changed across three federal enforcement regimes characterized not only by the presidential administration in turn, but by how policies were directed and how priorities for deportation were defined at the federal level: generalized enforcement under president Barack Obama (2009 – 2012), prioritized enforcement under Obama’s second term (2013 – 2016), and generalized enforcement under president Donald Trump (2017 – 2019). Based on the EMIF-Norte and ACS data from the previous chapter, I first investigate whether deportation risk varied across immigration enforcement regimes. Then, I examine how much of that variation is explained by changes in the composition of the population at risk for deportation and how much remains unexplained by those observable characteristics and can thus be attributed to changes in enforcement behaviors (policies, priorities and discretion). The findings from these analyses reveal that federal enforcement directives impact how deportability is operationalized and, conditioned by the characteristics of the deportable population and the geographic contexts of enforcement, they shape deportation risk across the entire country.

Tracing who is deported from the U.S., how their personal characteristics make them more or less susceptible to deportation, and how deportation risk changes across enforcement

contexts not only advances our knowledge of immigration enforcement, but it gives us a deeper insight into deportation as a political process of inclusion/exclusion of “particular types” of immigrants (De Genova 2010), hinting at its potential as a tool of legal violence that targets specific immigrant communities (Menjívar and Abrego 2012) and an instrument of population control and regulation (Walters 2002).

## References

- Amuedo Dorantes, Catalina, and Susan Pozo. 2019. “The Aftermath of Tougher Immigration Enforcement: E-Verify and Perceptions of Discrimination Among Hispanic Citizens”. *American Behavioral Scientist* 63(9): 1276-1298.
- Arendt, Hannah. 1963. *Eichmann in Jerusalem: A Report on the Banality of Evil*. Penguin Classics.
- Armenta, Amanda. 2017. *Protect, Serve, and Deport: The Rise of Policing as Immigration Enforcement*. Oakland, California: University of California Press.
- Asad, Asad L. 2019. “Deportation Decisions: Judicial-Decision Making in an American Immigration Court”. *American Behavioral Scientist* 63(9): 1276-1298.
- Cantor, Guillermo, Mark Noferi, and Daniel Martínez. 2015. “Enforcement Overdrive: A Comprehensive Assessment of ICE’s Criminal Alien Program”. *American Immigration Council*. Available at: [https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract\\_id=2685372](https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=2685372)
- Casas-Cortes, M., Cobarrubias, S., De Genova, N., Garelli, G., Grappi, G., Heller, C., Hess, S., Kasperek, B., Mezzadra, S., Neilson, B., Peano, I., Pezzani, L., Pickles, J., Rahola, F., Riedner, L., Scheel, S., & Tazzioli, M. 2015. “New Keywords: Migration and Borders”. *Cultural Studies* 29(1), 55-87.
- Coleman, Matthew, and Ashton Kocher. 2019. “Rethinking the “Gold Standard” of Racial Profiling: §287(g), Secure Communities and Racially Discrepant Police Power”. *American Behavioral Scientist* 63(9): 1185-1220.
- De Genova, Nicholas. 2002. “Migrant “Illegality” and Deportability in Everyday Life”. *Annual Review of Anthropology* 31(1): 419-447.
- De Genova, Nicholas. 2010. “The deportation regime: sovereignty, space and the freedom of movement”. In: De Genova and Peutz (Eds.). *The Deportation Regime: sovereignty, Space and the Freedom of Movement*. Duke University Press.

- De Genova, N. 2013. "Spectacles of migrant 'illegality': the scene of exclusion, the obscene of inclusion". *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 36(7): 1180–1198.
- De Genova, Nicholas. 2014. "Deportation". In Bridget Anderson & Michael Keith (Eds.). *Migration: A COMPAS Anthology*. COMPAS.
- De Genova, Nicholas. 2016. "Detention, deportation and waiting: toward a theory of migrant detainability". *Global Detention Project*. Working Paper no. 18. Open Society Foundations.
- De Genova, Nicholas. 2018. "The deportation power". *Radical Philosophy* 203: 23-27.
- De Genova, Nicholas & Nathalie Peutz. 2010. "Introduction". In De Genova and Peutz. *The Deportation Regime: sovereignty, Space and the Freedom of Movement*. USA: Duke University Press
- Ellerman, Antje. 2009. *States Against Migrants. Deportation in Germany and the United States*. USA: Cambridge University Press.
- Garip, F., Gleeson, S., & Hall, M. 2019. "How the State Criminalizes Immigrants and to What Effect: A Multidisciplinary Account". *American Behavioral Scientist* 63(9): 1159-1171.
- Golash-Boza, Tanya. 2015. *Deported: Immigrant Policing, Disposable Labour, and Global Capitalism*. York University Press.
- Hall, Matthew, Emily Greenman and George Farkas. 2010. "Legal Status and Wage Disparities for Mexican Immigrants." *Social Forces* 89: 491-513.
- Kanstroom, Daniel. 2012. *Aftermath. Deportation Law and the New American Diaspora*. Oxford University Press.
- Meissner, Doris, Donald M. Kerwin, Muzaffar Chishti, and Claire Bergeron. 2013. *Immigration Enforcement in the United States: The Rise of a Formidable Machinery*. Washington D.C.: Migration Policy Institute
- Menjívar, Cecilia, and Leisy Abrego. 2012. "Legal Violence: Immigration Law and the Lives of Central American Immigrants." *American Journal of Sociology* 117(5): 1380 – 1421
- Mezzandra, Sandro and Brett Nielson. 2013. *Border as Method, or the multiplication of labor*. USA: Duke University Press
- Moinester, Margot. 2018. "Beyond the border and into the heartland: spatial patterning of U.S. immigration detention". *Demography* 55(3): 1147–1193

- Moinester, Margot. 2019. "A look to the interior: trends in U.S. immigration removals by criminal conviction type, gender, and region of origin, fiscal years 2003-2015". *American Behavioral Scientist* 63(9): 1276-1298.
- Ngai, Mae. 2004. *Impossible Subjects: Illegal Aliens and the Making of Modern America*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Pedroza, Juan Manuel. 2019. "Deportation discretion: Tiered Influence, Minority Threat, and 'Secure Communities' Deportations". *Policy Studies Journal* 47(3): 626-646.
- Ryo, E., & Peacock, I. 2019. Beyond the Walls: The Importance of Community Contexts in Immigration Detention. *American Behavioral Scientist* 63(9), 1250-1275.
- Walters, William. 2002. "Deportation, Expulsion, and the International Police of Aliens". *Citizenship Studies* 6(3): 265–292.

# The Shifting Profile of Mexican Deportees Across Time and Geographies, 2005 - 2019

## Introduction

For the past three decades, the United States has seen an unprecedented rise in the number of deportations of non-citizens, with the number of removals doubling compared to the pre- 9/11 era and increasing “more than sevenfold since the mid-1990s” (Dowling & Inda 2013: 15).

These growing numbers reflect the evolution of an increasingly complex “deportation machine”, which has spanned different presidential administrations, political ideologies, and national economic conditions (Goodman 2020). Additionally, while deportation has long been a core feature of immigration policy in the U.S., it has more recently become an increasingly politicized and high-profile tool of governance, marked by a shift toward more punitive and expansive removal strategies (Ellermann 2009).

With this context as background and oftentimes motivation, researchers, advocates, and practitioners have increasingly taken up the study of how different elements of the institutional dimensions and features of immigration enforcement affect and influence the practices, processes, and outcomes of apprehension, detention and removal, including its deepening links with the criminal justice system, the expansion of policing of immigrants into the interior of the country, the enactment of various local, state and federal policies, and the changing discretion exercised by on-the-ground agents (Amuedo-Dorantes and Pozo 2019, Asad 2019, Cantor et al. 2015, Cantor et al. 2019, Coleman and Kocher 2019, Meissner et al. 2013, Moinester 2018, Moinester 2024, Pedroza 2019).

However, less is known about who is being deported from the United States. This gap in our knowledge could be explained, in part, by limited data availability regarding deportees: most

of the data available through the main three sources of data in the U.S. –the Yearbook of Immigration Statistics, DHS’ reports on enforcement programs and ICE activity, and the records of local immigration ordinances– provide a very narrow picture of the characteristics and profile of deportees (Moinester 2018). Even data obtained through Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) requests by the Human Rights Watch and the Transactional Records Access Clearinghouse (TRAC) still provides a relatively limited picture of deportees’ characteristics and migration experiences, which only include immigrants’ gender, nationality and age, and focus instead on elements of their criminal profile and immigration status (Moinester 2019).

Using data on deportees collected in Mexico from the Survey on Migration in the Northern Border (EMIF-Norte), and in light of these concerns, this study maps the geographic and temporal variations in the profile of Mexican deportees from 2005 to 2019 across individual characteristics, migration backgrounds and deportation experiences. Specifically, I provide a rich descriptive analysis of the Mexican deported population across time, across U.S. geographies, and by different types of immigration enforcement strategies. The analysis stops in 2019 because the COVID-19 pandemic changed the patters of emigration from Mexico and immigration enforcement in the U.S., and EMIF data collection changed or outright stopped during the most severe months of the pandemic.

This study reveals particular temporal trends and spatial patterns that speak to both migration flows from Mexico and immigration enforcement strategies in the United States, highlighting above all that Mexican deportees are a very heterogenous population and their pre-migration characteristics, migration experiences, and deportation types vary greatly across time and U.S. geographies. Additionally, the findings of this study advance our understanding of

deportation by shedding light on the key differences in the characteristics of the population that is deported by being subjected to border enforcement vs. interior enforcement.

Quantitative scholarship on immigration enforcement has mostly focused on the institutional contexts and policy settings of deportation. By highlighting the characteristics and experiences of deportees themselves, this study provides a clearer picture of the population who is the target of this particularly draconian feature of immigration enforcement, including their intra-group differences and changes over time.

### **The United States: the evolution of a deportation Nation**

In the United States, the role of deportation might seem somewhat paradoxical. The country's birth and character have long been defined as a "nation of immigrants" (Hirschman 2005). However, not all immigrants have been included in this rather idealized mythology; since its inception, strict lines were drawn to delineate who belonged and who did not belong in the "nation of immigrants". Indeed, immigration policy in general, and deportation in particular, emerged as tools to guarantee that the composition of the nation would remain as desired (Ngai 2004).

A key question, then, is who is and has been the target of removals and returns in the U.S., both in "theory" and in "practice" or, using Ellermann's framework, in legislation and in implementation (2009: 27). In both cases, things have greatly changed over time.

While deportation today rests its legitimacy on its administrative and legal "neutral" nature, framed under the observance of national and international law, these were not always the guiding principles of the U.S. immigration system. During the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century the U.S. was explicit about which "types" of immigrants were considered desirable and which were

not to be allowed in or, if they were already within its borders, should be removed from the country<sup>1</sup>. Initially, immigration policy was the purvey of individual states, with no clear federal policy. That changed in the final decades of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. In particular, the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882 laid the ground for broad race-based restrictions on immigration (Armenta 2017), a turning point in U.S. immigration policy. This was followed by other U.S. federal restrictions on immigration that targeted specific groups of undesirable immigrants, such as the Gentlemen's Agreement with Japan in 1907, which was also based on racial exclusion. At the same time, federal actions sought to strengthen immigration enforcement and its administrative apparatus, such as the Immigration Act of 1891.

While expulsions of non-citizens were not uncommon in those years, it was not until the 1920s that deportation came to be a regular state practice with the enactment of the 1924 Johnson-Reed Immigration Act, which was the first comprehensive immigration restriction law. The significance of this law is twofold. First, it established national origin quotas, that is, numerical limits on immigration based on particular national origins, in order to preserve the “racial makeup of the country” (Armenta 2017: 22). In practice, this particular aspect of the law set up a global racial hierarchy of difference that favored some immigrants over others (Ngai 2004). Second, it articulated a new nation-state territoriality based on two key elements of immigration enforcement: border control and deportation policy. These elements would not only evolve and “specialize” over time, but their very existence articulated the threat –the everyday possibility– of deportation in a way that allowed for the construction of “illegality” as both a concept and lived experience (Ngai 2004).

---

<sup>1</sup> For example, in 1905, Roosevelt's annual message to Congress asked for immigration laws that would keep out “the insane, epileptic and pauper immigrants. Not merely the anarchist, but every man of anarchist tendencies, all violent and disorderly people, all people of bad character, the incompetent, the lazy, the vicious, and physically unfit, defective, or degenerate, should be kept out” (Calavita, 1984).

The 1965 Hart-Cellar Act ended the national quota system, but brought forth new efforts to dramatically expand border enforcement. This new system led to a great increase in the size of the immigrant population and diversified its national origins. At the same time, legal pathways for labor migration weakened, and the undocumented population, particularly the Mexican one, started to grow dramatically (Massey and Pren 2012, De Genova 2004).

The 1971 “war on drugs” policies intersected with border control to effectively criminalize migration and slowly militarize the Mexico-U.S. border. The passage of IRCA in 1986, which criminalized the hiring of undocumented workers, continued these efforts by calling forth an unprecedented militarization of the border. Some of these efforts were executed through a series of border operations during the 1990s (e.g. “Operation Gatekeeper”, “Operation Blockade”). Moreover, IRCA made the deportation of criminal aliens a priority. Finally, the 1996 Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act (IIRIRA) made its explicit goal to counter the rapidly-growing undocumented population. This law further increased the list of crimes that would be considered “aggravated felonies” for immigration purposes, thus making many minor crimes a “deportable offense”. IIRIRA also expanded border control actions and resources. More importantly, this law further intertwined immigration and crime control by allowing a closer cooperation between civil and immigration authorities (Abrego et al. 2017). Through all these laws and policies, more people became eligible for deportation, and it was easier to find, apprehend, detain, and deport them.

The 2000s decade brought forth an expansion of immigration enforcement to the local level through programs like 287(g) Agreements and Secure Communities (Amuedo-Dorantes et al. 2019). The first program deputized local and state law enforcement officers to carry out immigration enforcement, while the second one mandated a vast program of data sharing

between local prisons and federal immigration enforcement. The Secure Communities program practically covered the entire U.S. by 2014 (Amuedo-Dorantes et al. 2019). The implications of these policy changes are multifold. Firstly, the majority of individuals detained and deported under the auspices of these programs were guilty of nonviolent crimes and misdemeanors, including repeat border crossing, visa overstays, and traffic violations. Secondly, studies argue that these policies allowed for greater opportunities for agent discretion and racial profiling (Donato and Rodriguez 2014, Coleman and Kocher 2019, Cantor et al. 2015).

Following allegations of racial profiling and discrimination, as well as record-breaking number of deportations (1.18 million people between 2009 and 2012), Obama ended Secure Communities and implemented ICE's "Priority Enforcement Program". Based on the idea of "prosecutorial discretion", this program intended to prioritize the apprehension, detention and removal of immigrants that were convicted of a serious crime and recent border crossers (Golazh-Boza 2018).

In January 2017, newly elected Donald Trump, who had run on an anti-immigrant and anti-Mexican campaign, reactivated local policies such as Secure Communities and made "all illegal aliens" a priority for deportation. It is not entirely clear whether and how the change in these priorities impacted the profiles of deportees (Amuedo Dorantes et al. 2019). A report by Cantor, Ryo and Humprey (2019: 3) shows that, during the first half of the Trump presidency, ICE encountered and arrested more women than during the last part of the Obama administration. Additionally, there was a sharp increase in the number of U.S. citizens encountered by ICE. Finally, over 85% of all removals both during the last part of the Obama administration and the first part of the Trump administration were individuals with no criminal convictions or non-violent convictions.

Throughout this history and the evolution of America's deportation and immigration enforcement systems, Mexican immigrants have been a central and consistent target, both in discourse and in practice. As Adam Goodman notes, "the history of deportation from the United States has been, for the most part, the history of removing Mexicans" (2020: 6).

### **At the Core of U.S. Deportations: Mexican Deportees**

Mexican immigrants have been, consistently, the largest share of deportees by national origin (DHS 2019, DHS 2022, Goodman 2020). Additionally, their importance in the deportation regime goes beyond their "bulk in numbers"; Mexican immigrants themselves, the politics of Mexican labor, and the emergence of the southern border were key in the legal production of "illegality" (Ngai 2004). De Genova (2004) further argues that "illegality" has been "historically rendered to be effectively inseparable from the Mexican migrant experience" (p. 176).

Inevitably, the history of the expulsion of Mexicans from the U.S. is intimately tied to the history of the Mexico-U.S. migration flow itself; a unique migration stream in terms of its particularly large volume and long duration (Jiménez and Fitzgerald 2007).

During the first thirty years of the twentieth century, there was increasing Mexican circulatory migration into the U.S. fueled by the labor shortages in the U.S. around World War I, the displacement and crisis caused by the 1910 Mexican Revolution, and the diminished numbers of Asian immigrants that followed American anti-immigration laws (Catron, Vignau Loría and Farr 2024). Mexican immigrants comprised a unique case during the emergence of restrictive immigration laws. Notably, Mexico was exempt from the immigration quota system established by the 1924 Act, mostly due to the importance of Mexicans as a source of cheap and temporary labor in the Southwest. However, the border witnessed the emergence of a form of policing that

reflected, sustained and fueled the racial construct of “Mexicanness”: the taxonomy of “voluntary return”, used by the Border Patrol to remove Mexicans, reinforced the construction of Mexican labor as a disposable commodity, with Mexicans gradually displacing Chinese immigrants as the prototypical image of the “illegal” immigrant (Gurman 2017, Ngai 2004).

After the 1929 economic crisis, Mexican migration to the U.S. greatly decreased. Furthermore, during the 1930s deportation policy became the object of legal reform to allow for administrative discretion in deportation cases<sup>2</sup>. While European and Canadian immigrants benefited from said discretion, Mexicans –undocumented and documented immigrants, as well as Mexican American citizens– were targeted for deportation as they never had before. Although there are no exact numbers, estimates of deported Mexicans go from more than a half million (Durand 2004) to one million individuals repatriated to Mexico (Balderrama 2006). In sum, it is estimated that deportations during the 1930-1940 decade “cut the Mexican population of the United States in half” (Massey 2007:123).

Later on, with the creation of the Bracero Program in 1942, a bi-national treaty for the “temporary importation of farmworkers from Mexico” (Massey 2007: 124), the circulatory and temporary element of Mexican emigration to the United States was reinforced and migration grew substantively for many years, continuing even after the program’s end in 1965. Despite the legal entrance of Mexican nationals as guest workers, they were still targeted by recurring immigration enforcement actions, such as “Operation Wetback” in 1954, which resulted in the removal of over one million immigrants, most of them Mexicans. Massey (2007) further

---

<sup>2</sup> Just as restriction and deportation “made” illegal aliens, administrative discretion “unmade” illegal aliens (Ngai 2004). It thus became possible to “unmake the illegality of Italian, Polish, and other European illegal immigrants through the power of administrative discretion” (Ngai 2004: 89).

characterizes Mexican immigration in the years between 1965 and 1986 as an undocumented period of “illegal” de-facto guest workers.

The passage of the Immigration Reform and Control Act (IRCA) in 1986, which as mentioned before, criminalized the hiring of undocumented workers and called forth an unprecedented militarization of the Mexico-U.S. border, changed the Mexican migration flow dramatically; Mexicans were not deterred from migrating to the U.S, but by raising the costs of return and recurring migration, the likelihood of them going back home decreased considerably (Massey et al. 2002). Mexican immigration was transformed from a circular movement of workers into a national population of settled dependents (Massey 2007), with much higher geographic diversity in settlement (Massey et al. 2002). Deportations during the 1990s and early 2000s reflected the nature of the policies that shaped immigration enforcement at the time, which were, for the most part, focused at the border. Thus, the majority of the Mexican immigrant deportations happened at the border, and enforcement in the interior was not a top priority (Goodman 2020).

The nature of the Mexico-U.S. migration flow changed again around the time of the 2008 U.S. recession. Empirical accounts documented a net migration rate close to zero in 2010, brought forth by a dramatic increase in return migration to Mexico, high numbers of removals and returns, and lower than ever prevalence of Mexican migration to the United States<sup>3</sup>. The deportation of Mexican nationals during the second half of the 2000s and the first half of the 2010s reflect immigration enforcement’s “move to the interior” (Moinester 2018, 2024), which

---

<sup>3</sup> Villarreal’s (2014) study on the decline in Mexican migration to the U.S. finds that the economic contraction in the U.S. explains most of the changes in the volume of the flow, particularly due to the lower labor demand for Mexican immigrants in key sectors of the U.S. (e.g. construction). He also found that increased border enforcement was associated to declines in emigration to the U.S., while economic conditions in Mexico and demographic changes like fertility decline had little effect. On the other hand, the study by Massey, Durand and Pren (2016) suggests that declines in the probability of undocumented migration to the U.S. after 2008 are not related to border enforcement, but almost entirely to the effects of the U.S. recession and changes in Mexican fertility and demography.

was achieved through the deepening intersection of immigration enforcement and the criminal justice system at the federal, state and local levels (Meissner et al. 2013, Cantor et al. 2015, Moinester 2019), a process known as crimmigration. Barack Obama, a president from the Democratic Party, became the *Deporter in Chief*, deporting “more people than the sum total of deportations carried out in the first one hundred years of U.S. deportations (1892 to 1992)” (Golash-Boza 2018: 37). While Obama changed the priorities for deportations before the end of his presidency, the stage was set. When Trump assumed the presidency, he only had to fall back into the existing enforcement policies and revitalize the antiimmigration discourse. Interestingly, during his first presidency, his deportation numbers did not come close to those of Obama (Capps et al. 2018, Chishti and Bush-Joseph 2024).

As is evident from this brief account, expulsions, removals and deportations from the U.S. to Mexico have always been part of this unique migration system. Interestingly, the Mexican’s share in the total number of deportations has decreased in recent years, but the new paradigm of deportation in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, with the expansion of the population legally constructed as “deportable” and the new methods of detection, apprehension, detention and removal (Moinester 2024), has overwhelmingly burdened Mexican immigrants. By exploring the characteristics of the Mexican population deported from the U.S. over time and across different states, this study illuminates the logic of the U.S. deportation system, both at the border and the interior, and illustrates broader themes on immigration control.

## **Interior and border immigration enforcement**

One final aspect that is key to the patterns and trends in the deportation of Mexican immigrants is the interplay between interior and border enforcement, and thus, interior and border removals or returns.

The United States' Department of Homeland Security makes a clear distinction between the work carried out in the country's interior as "the largest single area of responsibility for Immigration and Customs Enforcement" (DHS 2025) and the work at the border<sup>4</sup>, which is the purvey of the U.S. Customs and Border Protection. This distinction is not only strategic and practical in regards to government agencies and resources, but it speaks to different removal procedures related to the institutional and legal roots of immigration enforcement. In the interior of the country, "border crossers have several due process rights, whether or not they are legal residents" (Gurman, 2017: 372). Within the border region, immigrants are subjected to abuses in ways that, at least until recently, did not happen in the interior; they can be searched without warrants, their property can be seized, and their individual rights, in general, are "pared down to a bare minimum" (Gurman 2017:372). Importantly, at the border, informal and fast-track removal procedures are much more common (Kanstroom 2012). The figure of "expedited removal", a form of informal deportation, allows the government to expel people without ever having to stand trial or talk to a lawyer. Similarly, a "voluntary return" occurs when someone is coerced by an agent into "agreeing" to leave, and then physically removed within a set period of time without a hearing or an extended detention stay (Goodman 2020). What's more, these types of expulsions are different in the very language employed by the U.S. deportation system, naming interior deportations as "removals" and border ones as "returns".

---

<sup>4</sup> The border region of the U.S. is stated as any area within 100 miles of the U.S. border.

These distinctions are rooted in historical, legal, and sociological processes regarding the construction of the “subject of deportation”. During the first few decades of the twentieth century, administrative discretion and other statutory reforms provided relief to “deserving immigrants” with homes and families in the U.S. However, “walking (or wading) across the border emerged as the quintessential act of illegal immigration, the outermost point in a relativist order of illegal immigration” (Ngai, 2004:89). Of course, these two groups differed in more than just their “interior” or “border” presence; the first one was mostly Southern and Eastern European, and the second one was, symbolically and factually, mostly Mexican.

As we know, nowadays the Mexican immigrant population (and broadly, the non-white immigrant population) can be found across the entire U.S. territory, that is, both at the border and the interior of the country. Undocumented immigrants are apprehended and detained in Texas and New Mexico, as well as in Idaho and Illinois. According to Hannah Gurman (2017), the “racial logic of territorial border enforcement developed into a more elaborate logic in which existing ideas of Mexicanness were attached to emerging ideas about the elastic geography of the border” (p. 379). Following this argument, she believes that the division between border and interior enforcement in the U.S. deportation system as two distinct types and “spaces” of enforcement is not accurate in particular for Mexican immigrants, given that they are subjected to the same racial and territorial policing both at the interior and at the border.

A key question emerges from these different arguments, on whether we should expect to see that immigrants apprehended, detained and deported at the border not only experience harsher detention and removal experiences, but are also more vulnerable in terms of resources and capital compared to those apprehended, detained and removed from the interior of the country. I now turn into the data and methods that will allow me to answer this question.

## **Data and Methods**

Data for Mexican deportees from 2005 to 2019 comes from the Survey on Migration in the Northern Border-Deportees or EMIF-Norte-Deportados (EN-D). This survey is administered by the Colegio de la Frontera Norte (COLEF), a Mexican public research institution, in collaboration with the National Population Council (CONAPO), the National Migration Institute (INM), the Foreign Ministry (SRE), and the Labor Ministry (STPS). The EN-D is part of a larger group of surveys that capture 7 different migration flows that reflect the diversity of spatial mobility in Mexico: internal migration to and from the northern border, international migration to and from the United States (including deportation), and international migration to and from Central America. Their goal is to estimate the volume of the migration flow at Mexico's borders and the characteristics of the migrants by employing a probabilistic sampling design that allows them to capture a random sample of their different target populations. In the case of the EN-D, the survey employs a two-stage sampling design to obtain a representative random sample of the Mexican population repatriated at the official reception points along the U.S.-Mexico border and the Mexico City airport (Schultheis and Ruiz Soto 2017). Survey investigators estimate that its frame captures between 90% and 95% of the flow (Sohn et al. 2023). The survey weights take into account that not all individuals have an equal probability of being selected and included in the survey, and adjust for this unequal probability. They include expansion factors to reflect the volume of migrants traveling through each sampling site during specific time periods.

The survey is administered as deportees re-enter Mexico at the official reception points. Its target population is Mexican nationals, ages 15 and older, residents of Mexico or the U.S., repatriated by the U.S. immigration authorities to the Mexican migration authorities.

Importantly, the survey includes both those who were deported and those who were subjected to

expedited removal. Finally, the EN-D survey captures individual characteristics, as well as information regarding U.S. migration and deportation experiences.

Individual files from 2005 to 2019 were homogenized in all key variables, including those that were used to identify interior removals from border enforcement.

*Variables of interest*

The variables necessary to identify interior and border enforcement include time spent in the U.S., which combines a numeric and categorical indicator of time, and physical place of apprehension.

Individual characteristics of interest and its operationalization are presented in Table 1.

<b>Table 1. Individual characteristics of Mexican deportees</b>			
	<b>Variable</b>	<b>Question in EMIF (translation)</b>	<b>Measurement</b>
Population of interest identification	Nationality	Where were you born?	Categorical: Country name
	Country of residence	Where do you currently live? (Mexico, U.S., Other)	Categorical: - Mexico - U.S. - Other
Year	Year deported	Survey Year	Categorical: Calendar Year
Interior vs border enforcement	Time in the U.S.	How long were you in the U.S. prior to deportation? - Categorical: days, weeks, months, years - Numerical: number of days/weeks/months/years	Numerical: Months in the U.S.
	Physical place of detention	Where were you detained? - Categorical: at work, at home, crossing the border (in the desert/mountain), on a highway	Categorical: - Work - Home - Crossing/desert/mountain - Highway
	Expedited removal (since 2014)	Were you subjected to expedited removal?	Dummy variable: Y/N
Individual characteristics	Age	How old are you?	Continuous: - Years of age at the time of the interview
	Gender	Sex (Male or Female)	Categorical - Man - Woman

	Marital status	Currently you are: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Single</li> <li>- Married</li> <li>- Widowed</li> <li>- Divorced</li> <li>- Separated</li> <li>- Union [unión libre]</li> </ul>	Categorical: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Single</li> <li>- Married (includes union)</li> <li>- Separated</li> <li>- Widowed</li> </ul>
	State of origin	Where were you born? (state, municipality and locality)	Categorical: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Birth state in Mexico</li> </ul>
	Urban/rural origin	EMIF classification for locality of birth Categorical: urban/rural	Categorical: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Urban</li> <li>- Rural</li> </ul>
	Indigenous ethnicity  1. Speaker of an indigenous language (2005-2019).  2 Indigenous self-identification (2015-2019).	2005- 2019 - Indigenous ethnicity measured as “speak an indigenous language” (as has been traditionally done in Mexico)  2015- 2019 – According to your history, culture and traditions, do you belong to an indigenous community or “peoples”?	Categorical: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Yes (speaks an indigenous language)</li> <li>- No (does not speak indigenous language)</li> </ul>
	Educational attainment	Highest grade of schooling: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- No schooling</li> <li>- Primary school</li> <li>- Middle school</li> <li>- High school</li> <li>- Technical school</li> <li>- College/Graduate</li> </ul>	Categorical: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Less than primary</li> <li>- Less than middle school</li> <li>- Less than high school</li> <li>- More than high school</li> </ul>
Migration characteristics	Documentation status	Documentation status while in the U.S. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- To cross</li> <li>- To work</li> </ul>	Dummy variables: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Crossed Docu/Undocu</li> <li>- Worked Docu/Undocu</li> </ul>
	Geography in the U.S.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- State of residence</li> <li>- County of residence</li> </ul>	Categorical <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- State of residence in the U.S.</li> </ul>
	English proficiency	Categorical variable: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Speaks English very well (muy bien)</li> <li>- Speaks English well (bien)</li> <li>- Speaks English more or less (regular)</li> <li>- Speaks English poorly (mal)</li> <li>- Does not speak English</li> </ul>	Dummy variable for English proficiency: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Yes (muy bien, bien, regular)</li> <li>- No (no, mal)</li> </ul>
	Time in the U.S.	Length of stay in the U.S.	Continuous: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Time measured in months</li> </ul>
	Networks in the U.S.	Do you have family or friends in the U.S.? (Yes/No)	Dummy variable for any networks in the U.S.: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Yes</li> </ul>

		Which members of your family live in the U.S.? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Spouse or partner</li> <li>- Sons/daughters</li> <li>- Parents</li> <li>- Siblings</li> <li>- Other</li> </ul> Did you leave underage sons or daughters in the U.S.?	- No
	Previous U.S. migration experience	Before this deportation experience had you ever been in the U.S. before? (Y/N)	Dummy variable: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Yes</li> <li>- No</li> </ul>
	Previous U.S. deportation experience	Before this deportation experience had you ever been deported from the U.S. before? (Y/N)	Dummy variable: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Yes</li> <li>- No</li> </ul>

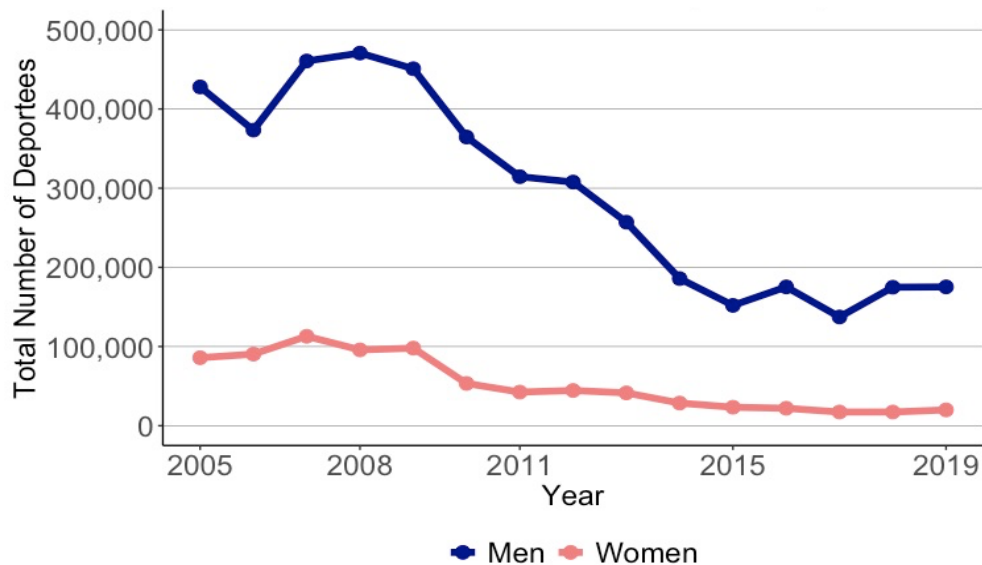
The initial sample consisted of 92,892 individuals across all years. After dropping non-Mexicans and those that said that they don't live neither in the U.S. nor in Mexico, the sample was reduced to 92,698 deportees. It was further reduced by filtering out all individuals younger than 18 years old, resulting in a final sample of 90,220 Mexican deportees repatriated between 2005 and 2019.

A key distinction in this analysis is the ability to distinguish the deportations that result from apprehensions at the border vs. those that take place in the interior of the country, in other words, border enforcement vs. interior enforcement. Notably, "it is not possible to simply use the agency involved in the apprehension to distinguish between interior and border apprehensions" (Moinester, 2019: 128). Thus, I follow Moinester's (2019) methodology to identify interior immigration enforcement and then adapt it to the data available in the EMIF survey. This inductive process results in a definition that is both temporal, geographic, and administrative, as it combines information on: the geographic location of detention, place of detention, time since arrival in U.S., and agency that performed the detention. I code as "interior enforcement" those deportees that (a) were present in the U.S. for more than 1 month before their removal, (b) were not detained "crossing" or "in the desert/mountain" (per EMIF definitions) and (c) were not

subjected to an expedited removal (data available since 2014). The rest of the sample is coded as “border enforcement”.

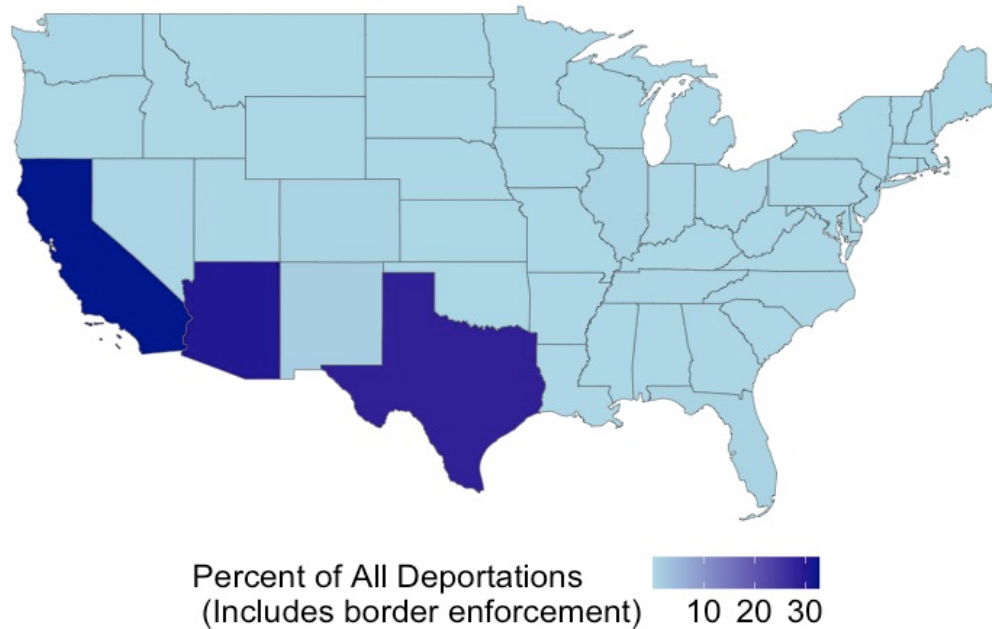
## Results

Figure 1 depicts the total number of Mexican deportees, both men and women, from 2005 to 2019. As shown in this figure, the number of deportees has been consistently higher for men compared to women, although that difference has decreased over time. The highest number of deportees per year can be found in the final years of the first decade of the 2000s (2007-2009), whereas numbers started to steadily decrease starting in 2009. We do see a flattening of the trend around 2015. Finally, we see a very slight increase in the last two years of the data (the Trump years), but numbers still do not reach pre-2014 levels.



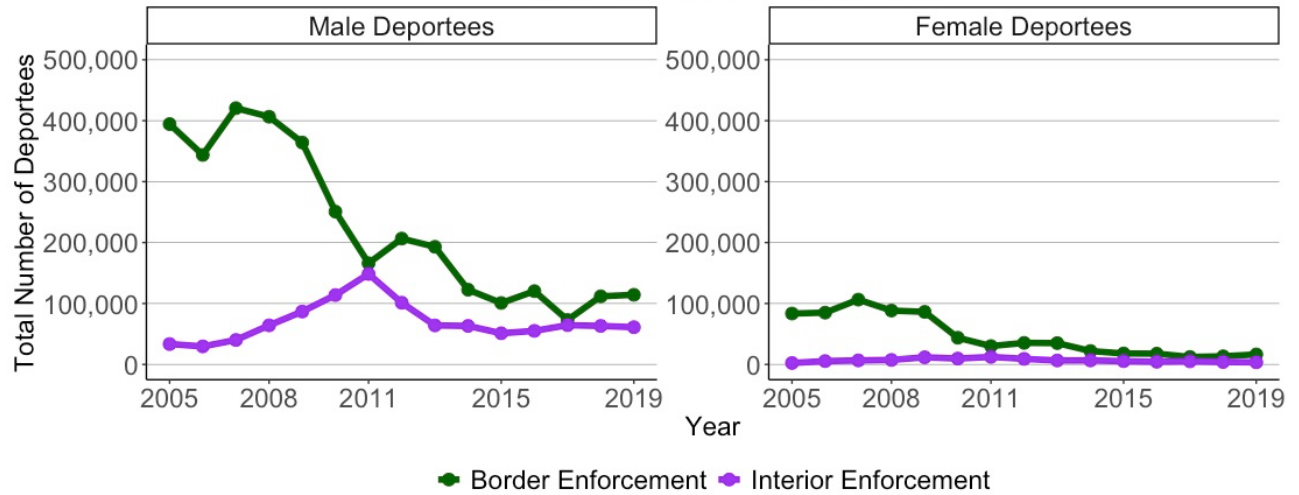
**Figure 1. Mexican men and women deported by year, 2005-2019.**  
Source: Own elaboration with EMIF-Norte-Deportados data.

According to Figure 2, most of the deportations and returns of Mexican migrants from 2005 to 2019 were carried out in three border states: Texas, California, and Arizona. These numbers include border enforcement deportations; in other words, people who were captured while crossing the border and returned within a few hours or days of crossing.



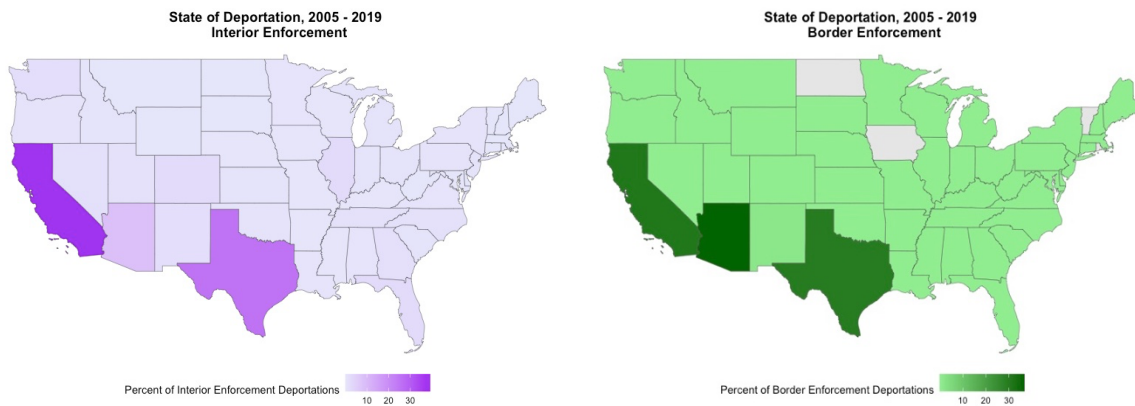
**Figure 2. State of deportation for Mexican men and women, 2005-2019.**  
Source: Own elaboration with EMIF-Norte-Deportados data.

Figure 3 depicts the total number of Mexican deportees by type of immigration enforcement over time and by gender. The pattern for both men and women shows that while border enforcement deportations have decreased over time since the 2010 decade, interior enforcement deportations have increased, peaking in 2011 and representing around a third of all deportations since 2014. This is consistent with other studies that have found that interior enforcement deportations peaked during the first half of the Obama administration (Capps et al. 2018, Golash-Boza 2018).



**Figure 3. Mexican deportees by type of enforcement and gender, 2005-2019.**  
 Source: Own elaboration with EMIF-Norte-Deportados data.

Finally, Figure 4 shows the state of deportation by type of enforcement. Looking at the interior enforcement data, we see that California was the state with the highest share of interior enforcement deportations, followed closely by Texas and Arizona. Numbers were also high in other states in the interior, including Washington, Colorado and Illinois. On the other hand, the pooled data for border enforcement shows that the highest share of this type of deportation was done in Arizona, followed by California and Texas.



**Figure 4. State of deportation by type of enforcement, 2005-2019.**  
 Source: Own elaboration with EMIF-Norte-Deportados data.

I now turn to an examination of deportees' individual and migration characteristics, comparing those removed at the border with those removed from the interior over all 15 years of data (2005 – 2019). Results are presented in Tables 1 and 2. The final column of each table reports a test for whether these populations are statistically different.

There are two main takeaways from these tables. First, just like Mexican immigrants in the U.S. are a heterogeneous population, so are Mexican deportees. These intra-group differences stem from a combination of factors, which include being a diverse group upon emigration, having different migration and integration experiences upon arrival in the U.S., and having different experiences of detention and deportation.

<b>Variable</b>	<b>Border Enforcement</b>		<b>Interior Enforcement</b>		<b>Difference<sup>1</sup> (Border – Enforcement)</b>
	<b>Mean or %</b>	<b>SD</b>	<b>Mean or %</b>	<b>SD</b>	
<b>Age</b>	28.34	0.323	32.97	0.062	4.63***
<b>Gender</b>					***
<b>Men</b>	83.02		91.24		-8.22
<b>Women</b>	16.98		8.76		8.22
<b>Marital Status</b>					***
<b>Single</b>	43.05		35.96		7.09
<b>Married/Union</b>	52.23		55.28		-3.05
<b>Divorced</b>	4.13		7.98		-3.85
<b>Widowed</b>	0.55		0.76		-0.21
<b>Missing</b>	0.03		0.02		0.01
<b>Region of Origin</b>					***
<b>Traditional</b>	31.70		37.85		-6.15
<b>North</b>	17.25		20.26		-3.01
<b>Center</b>	19.43		18.14		1.29

<b>South/S.East</b>	31.56		23.55		8.01
<b>Missing</b>	0.05		0.2		-0.15
<b>Urban/rural origin</b>					<b>***</b>
<b>Rural</b>	48.47		35.93		12.54
<b>Urban</b>	48.36		58.51		-10.15
<b>Missing</b>	3.17		5.55		-2.38
<b>Indigenous Language</b>					<b>***</b>
<b>No</b>	92.06		95.01		-2.95
<b>Yes</b>	7.89		4.94		2.95
<b>Missing</b>	0.05		0.05		0
<b>Educational attainment</b>					<b>***</b>
<b>Less than primary</b>	3.44		2.79		0.65
<b>Primary</b>	30.80		29.09		1.71
<b>Middle School</b>	48.13		42.5		5.63
<b>High School</b>	16.13		22.78		-6.65
<b>More than High School</b>	1.45		2.68		-1.23
<b>Missing</b>	0.06		0.19		-0.13
<b>Literacy</b>					<b>***</b>
<b>No</b>	3.09		1.99		1.1
<b>Yes</b>	96.88		98		-1.12
<b>Missing</b>	0.04		0.01		0.03
<b>Total</b>	<b>78.18%</b>		<b>21.82%</b>		
<sup>1</sup> Continuous variables: t-test. Categorical variables: Pearson chi-square test ** p < 0.01 *** p < 0.001					

The second takeaway speaks to the difference in the characteristics of Mexican migrants who are deported through border vs. interior enforcement. At first glance, the evidence shows that these populations are very different in both their individual characteristics and their migration experiences. For instance, immigrants that were deported through interior enforcement

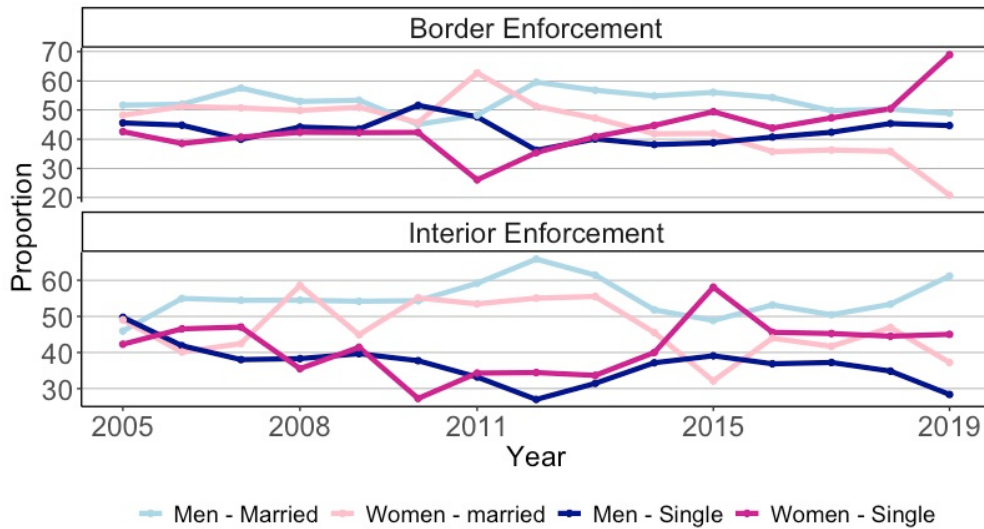
are more likely to have some English proficiency, networks within the U.S., and previous migration experience. They also have higher educational attainment, higher literacy rates and urban origins in Mexico. Interestingly, immigrants deported through border enforcement are more likely to be indigenous, and younger in average. All in all, a pattern emerges where immigrants with more resources are more likely to be deported through interior enforcement compared to border enforcement.

<b>Table 2. Migration characteristics of Mexican deportees, 2005-2019 (N=90,220)</b>					
<b>Variable</b>	<b>Border Enforcement</b>		<b>Interior Enforcement</b>		<b>Difference<sup>1</sup> (border-interior)</b>
	<b>Mean or %</b>	<b>SD</b>	<b>Mean or %</b>	<b>SD</b>	
<b>Time in the U.S. (months)</b>	1.63	0.223	89.03	2.623	-87.4****
<b>Place of detention</b>					***
<b>Work</b>	0.74		15.86		-15.12
<b>Home</b>	1.1		14.43		-13.33
<b>Road</b>	22.43		63.4		-40.97
<b>Crossing</b>	35.83		0		35.83
<b>Desert/Mountain</b>	32.67		0		32.67
<b>Other</b>	7.21		6.32		0.89
<b>English proficiency</b>					***
<b>No</b>	88.98		46.95		42.03
<b>Bad</b>	1.32		4.81		-3.49
<b>Regular</b>	6.89		26.3		-19.41
<b>Well/Very Well</b>	2.68		21.66		-18.98
<b>Missing</b>	0.12		0.27		-0.15
<b>Documentation status</b>					***
<b>Documented</b>	95.82		87.81		8.01

<b>Undocumented</b>	1.98		10.17		-8.19
<b>Missing</b>	2.20		2.01		0.19
<b>Networks</b>					<b>***</b>
<b>No</b>	55.33		16.66		38.67
<b>Yes</b>	40.52		81.8		-41.28
<b>Missing</b>	4.15		1.54		2.61
<b>Previous migration experience</b>					<b>***</b>
<b>No</b>	73.03		36.07		36.96
<b>Yes</b>	24.97		61.55		-36.58
<b>Missing</b>	2.01		1.98		0.03
<b>Previous deportation experience</b>					<b>***</b>
<b>No</b>	78.54		58.74		19.8
<b>Yes</b>	19.34		39.90		-20.56
<b>Missing</b>	2.11		1.36		0.75
<sup>1</sup> Continuous variables: t-test. Categorical variables: Pearson chi-square test					
** p < 0.01 *** p < 0.001					

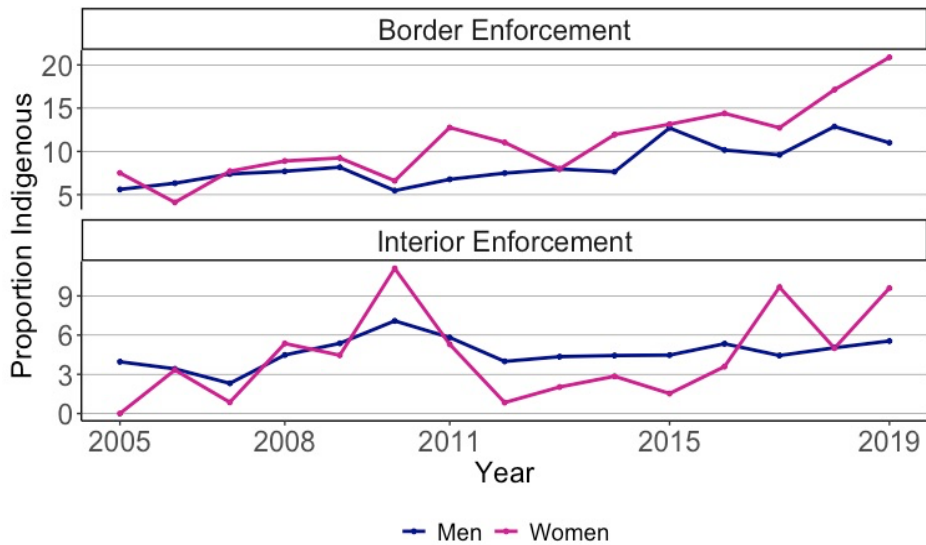
Tables 1 and 2 estimates are calculated with pooled data from the entire 15-year period. However, we could raise questions on whether these patterns presented variations across time; these years included four different presidential administrations in the U.S. and several changes in immigration policy and directives, both at federal and local levels (Pierce, Bolter and Selee 2018, Golash-Boza 2018, Chishti, Pierce and Bolter 2017). The figures below explore this question.

Figure 5 depicts the marital status profile of Mexican deportees by type of enforcement across the 15-year period. According to this figure, there was a general increase over time in both border and interior enforcement on the proportion of single women being deported. Interestingly, this is not the case for men subjected to interior enforcement, where the proportion of single men decreased over time and remained stable for border enforcement.



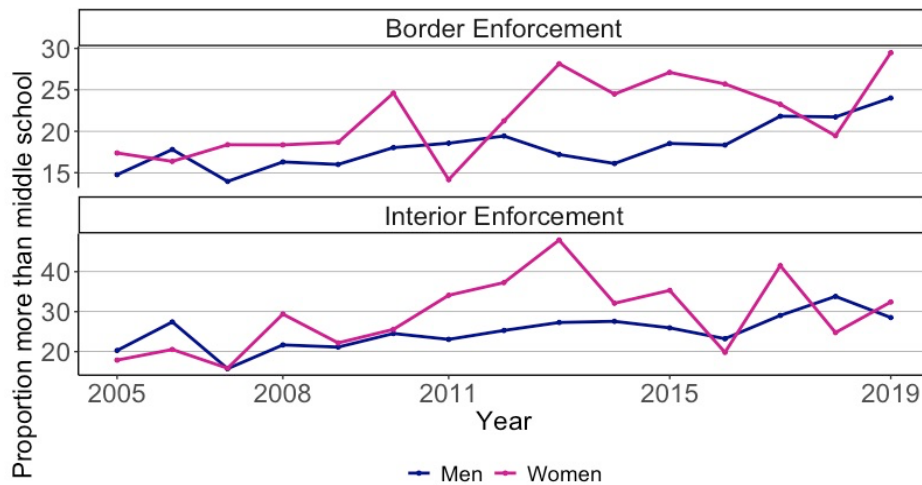
**Figure 5. Mexican deportees' marital status by gender and type of enforcement.**  
 Source: Own elaboration with EMIF-Norte-Deportados data.

Figure 6 depicts the indigenous status of Mexican deportees by gender and type of enforcement. The results are particularly interesting; the proportion of indigenous Mexican deportees increased for both men and women in border enforcement, and for women in interior enforcement. For men subjected to interior enforcement, the proportion remained relatively stable. As mentioned before, this could be the effect of increasing Mexican indigenous emigration, which might explain the rise in border enforcement indigeneity, and its much higher numbers compared to interior enforcement. As mentioned above, the indigenous population depicted here is identified by “indigenous language use”, rather than by self-identification. This is an important caveat, because indigenous self-identification grew substantively during this period (Flores, Vignau Loría & Martínez Casas 2023). However, this phenomenon would not explain these trends; on the contrary, speaking an indigenous language is a decreasing feature of the indigenous population, so these would be conservative estimates.



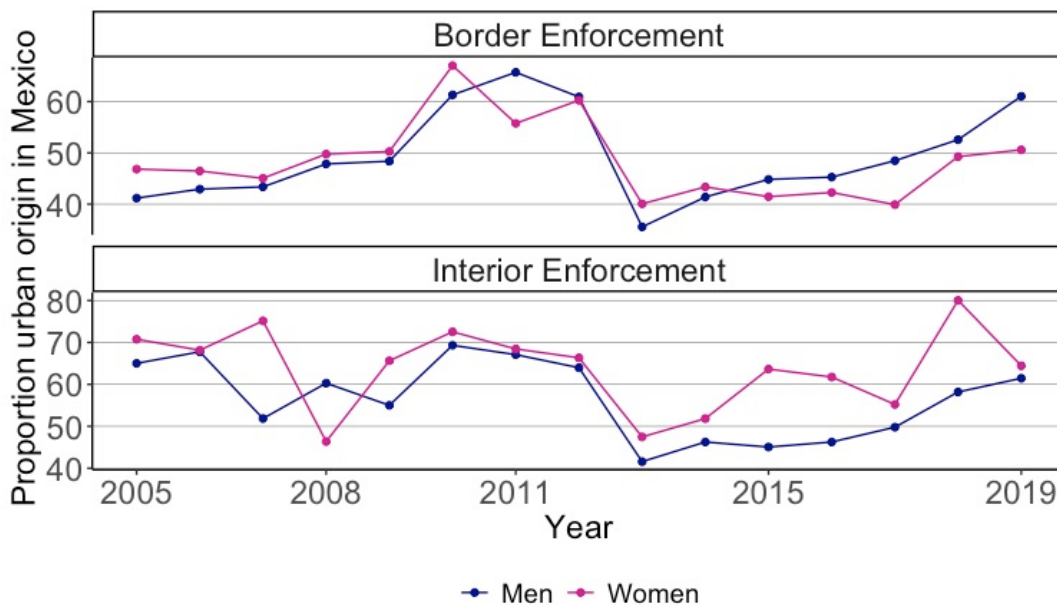
**Figure 6. Mexican deportees' indigenous status by gender and type of enforcement.**  
 Source: Own elaboration with EMIF-Norte-Deportados data.

The trends in the Mexican deportees' educational attainment profiles are shown in Figure 7. I find that the proportion of Mexican deportees with higher education increased over time, particularly for women. In other words, the United States deported more Mexicans with higher education over time. Whether this is a function of changes in the Mexican population entering and settling in the United States or a result of changes in immigration enforcement strategies in the U.S., is a question that cannot be answered with only this data.



**Figure 7. Mexican deportees' educational attainment by gender and type of enforcement.**  
 Source: Own elaboration with EMIF-Norte-Deportados data.

Finally, I explore deportees' urban/rural origin in Mexico by type of enforcement in Figure 8. While the proportion of urban-origin deportees has been consistently higher for those immigrants deported through interior enforcement, the proportion of deportees with urban-origins has also increased over time for those deported through border enforcement. Another finding stands out: for interior enforcement, the proportion of women with urban origins in Mexico is higher than that of the men.



**Figure 8. Mexican deportees' urban/rural origin by gender and type of enforcement.**  
 Source: Own elaboration with EMIF-Norte-Deportados data.

## Discussion and Conclusion

In an era in which the deportation of immigrants has become one of the central issues in U.S. politics, this study shifts the focus from the policies and institutions that enforce removal to the people who are deported by mapping the geographic and temporal variation in the profile of Mexican deportees from 2005 to 2019 across individual characteristics, migration backgrounds and deportation experiences.

Results highlight, above all, that Mexican deportees are a very heterogeneous population and their pre-migration characteristics, migration experiences, and deportation types vary greatly across time and U.S. geographies. This is not only an effect of the selective nature of deportation, but it reflects emigration patterns from Mexico and the demographic dynamics of the sending country. Just like the Mexican-born population in the U.S. is a diverse and stratified group, so are Mexican deportees. What's more, their intra-group social inequalities are further reproduced, in turn, by the deportation system.

The temporal analysis reveals how deportation patterns have shifted over time while retaining certain continuities. For instance, men remain the overwhelming majority of deportees, but the gender gap has narrowed over time, reflecting both broader changes in migration flows from Mexico and the reach of immigration enforcement across different groups. Interestingly, over time, women have come to represent the largest share of indigenous deportees, for both border and interior enforcement. On the other hand, the total number of deportations decreased since the peak years of the late 2000s, reflecting two phenomena that occurred at the same time: on the one hand, changes in U.S. immigration enforcement priorities and processes, and on the other, the evolution and transformation of migration flows from Mexico (Villarreal 2014, Massey, Durand and Pren 2016). These temporal dynamics underscore that deportation outcomes are the result of political, institutional, and demographic conditions on both sending and receiving countries.

Another key finding concerns the distinction between deportees subjected to border vs. interior enforcement. While deportations at the border still account for the majority of cases, their decline over the 2010s contrasts with the increase of interior removals. The latter reached their highest point around 2011 and have represented roughly a third of all deportations since

2014. This pattern has been observed by other deportation scholars (Moinester 2019, Golash-Boza 2018, Chishti, Pierce and Bolter 2017), who argue that the institutionalization and widespread presence of policies such as Secure Communities and 287(g) agreements between local law enforcement and federal immigration authorities made interior enforcement a key element of U.S. deportation policy during this period (Moinester 2024). This shift is important: it signals a change in enforcement practices from not only targeting recent arrivals and attempted crossings at the border, but to focusing on long-term residents inside the U.S., reaching into the lives of long-settled migrants and amplifying the disruptive effects of deportation on immigrant families and communities (Abrego and León 2025, Asad 2020, Cardoso et al. 2018, Valdivia 2021).

The differences between populations deported through border and interior enforcement further illuminate both the selective nature of deportation and the migration story from Mexico. Mexican immigrants in the U.S. are a heterogeneous population with its own intra-group stratification and inequalities (Alba, Jiménez & Marrow 2014), and that diversity is also present in the profiles of deportees. Border deportees are more likely to be young, indigenous, and from rural backgrounds, while interior deportees tend to have more education, higher literacy, urban origins, English proficiency, and established networks in the U.S. In sum, border deportees are a more vulnerable population compared to deportees from the interior. This is highly relevant in the context of the functioning of the “Deportation Machine” given that, while the gap is narrowing, the largest share of the deportations from the U.S. have historically taken place at the border and, up until recently, these expulsions were much more aggressive, abusive and legally precarious (Gurman 2017, Goodman 2020).

These findings also highlight the broader implications for Mexican society following the forced return of migrants (Masferrer 2021). Deportees who were apprehended at the border are likely to be younger and less integrated into U.S. communities, but they may also face more structural disadvantages upon return due to having less resources and capital. On the other hand, interior deportees are forced to go back with higher human capital and stronger transnational ties, but they have to grapple with reintegration following a rupture within their families and the abrupt and unplanned separation from their communities in the United States. In both cases, deportation reproduces vulnerabilities and shapes differentiated challenges for reintegration, labor market participation, and social belonging in Mexico (Jardón Hernández and Ronzón Hernández 2020, Mora and Ruiz Soto 2025).

Taken together, this study highlights how temporal trends and spatial patterns in the profile of Mexican deportees from the U.S. speak to both migration flows from Mexico and immigration enforcement strategies in the United States. A key challenge thus emerges to fully understand the changes in deportees' characteristics: to disentangle changes in the composition of the Mexican immigrant population (the population at risk of deportation) from the changes that result from the evolution of America's deportation practices.

## References

- Abrego, L., Coleman, M., Martínez, D. E., Menjivar, C., & Slack, J. 2017. "Making Immigrants into Criminals: Legal Processes of Criminalization in the Post-IIRIRA Era". *Journal on Migration and Human Security*, 5(3), 694-715.
- Abrego, Leisy and Lucia León. 2025. "Impacts of Immigration Policies on Families". *Annual Review of Sociology*. Vol. 51:401-422.
- Alba, Richard, Tomás Jiménez and Helen Marrow. 2014. "Mexican Americans as a paradigm for contemporary intra-group heterogeneity". *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 37(3), 446-466.

- Amuedo Dorantes, Catalina, and Susan Pozo. 2019. "The Aftermath of Tougher Immigration Enforcement: E-Verify and Perceptions of Discrimination Among Hispanic Citizens". *American Behavioral Scientist* 63(9): 1276-1298.
- Amuedo Dorantes, Catalina, Thitima Puttitanum and Ana P. Martinez-Donate. 2019. "Deporting 'Bad Hombres'? The Profile of Deportees under Widespread Versus Prioritized Enforcement". *International Migration Review* 53(2): 518-547.
- Armenta, Amanda. 2017. *Protect, Serve, and Deport: The Rise of Policing as Immigration Enforcement*. Oakland, California: University of California Press.
- Asad, Asad L. 2019. "Deportation Decisions: Judicial-Decision Making in an American Immigration Court". *American Behavioral Scientist* 63(9): 1276-1298
- Asad, Asad L. 2020. "Latinos' deportation fears by citizenship and legal status, 2007 to 2018". *PNAS* 117(16), 8836-8844.
- Balderrama, Francisco E. 2006. *Decade of Betrayal. Mexican repatriation in the 1930s*. University of New Mexico Press.
- Calavita, Kitty. 1984. *U.S. Immigration Law and the Control of Labor. 1820-1924*. Academic Press.
- Cantor, Guillermo, Mark L. Noferi and Daniel Martinez. 2015. "Enforcement Overdrive: A Comprehensive Assessment of ICE's Criminal Alien Program. *American Immigration Council*. Available at: [https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract\\_id=2685372](https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=2685372)
- Cantor, Guillermo, Emily Ryo and Reed Humprey. 2019. "Changing patterns of interior immigration enforcement in the United States, 2016-2018". *American Immigration Council*. Available at: <https://www.americanimmigrationcouncil.org/report/interior-immigration-enforcement-united-states-2016-2018/>
- Cardoso, Jodi Berger, Jennifer L. Scott, Monica Faulkner, Liza Barros Lane. 2018. "Parenting in the Context of Deportation Risk." *Journal of Marriage and Family* 80, 301- 316.
- Catron, Peter, María Vignau Loría, and Sarah Farr. 2024. "Contextual Boundaries: Skin Tone Stratification and Skill Transferability Among Mexicans in the Age of Mass Migration". *Demography* 61(5):1377-1402.
- Capps, Randy, Muzaffar Chishti, Julia Gelatt, Jessica Bolter, and Ariel G. Soto. 2018. "Revving Up the Deportation Machinery: Enforcement Under Trump and the Pushback". *Migration Policy Institute*. Available at: <https://www.migrationpolicy.org/research/revving-deportation-machinery-under-trump-and-pushback>

- Chishti, Muzaffar, Sarah Pierce and Jessica Bolter. 2017. “The Obama Record on Deportations: Deporter in Chief or Not?”. *Migration Policy Institute*. Available at: <https://www.migrationpolicy.org/article/obama-record-deportations-deporter-chief-or-not>
- Chishti, Muzaffar, and Kathleen Bush-Joseph. 2024. “Comparing the Biden and Trump Deportation Records”. *Migration Policy Institute*. Available at: <https://www.migrationpolicy.org/article/biden-deportation-record>
- Coleman, Matthew, and Kocher, A. 2019. Rethinking the “Gold Standard” of Racial Profiling: §287(g), Secure Communities and Racially Discrepant Police Power. *American Behavioral Scientist* 63(9), 1185-1220.
- De Genova, Nicholas. 2004. “The Legal Production of Mexican/Migrant ‘Illegality’”. *Latino Studies* 2:160–185.
- De Genova, Nicholas. 2016. “Detention, deportation and waiting: toward a theory of migrant detainability”. *Global Detention Project*. Working Paper no. 18. Open Society Foundations.
- Department of Homeland Security. 2019. “Table 39. Aliens removed or returned”. *2019 Yearbook of Immigration Statistics*. Washington D.C.: Office of Homeland Security Statistics. Available at: <https://ohss.dhs.gov/topics/immigration/yearbook/2019/table39>
- Department of Homeland Security. 2022. “Table 39. Noncitizen removals, returns and expulsions: Fiscal Years 1892 to 2022”. *2022 Yearbook of Immigration Statistics*. Washington D.C.: Office of Homeland Security Statistics. Available at: <https://ohss.dhs.gov/topics/immigration/yearbook/2022>
- Department of Homeland Security. 2025. “Immigration Enforcement”. Available at: <https://www.dhs.gov/topic/immigration-enforcement-overview>
- Donato, K. M., & Rodríguez, L. A. 2014. “Police Arrests in a Time of Uncertainty: The Impact of 287(g) on Arrests in a New Immigrant Gateway”. *American Behavioral Scientist* 58(13), 1696-1722.
- Dowling, Julie A. & Jonathan X. Inda. 2013. *Governing Immigration Through Crime. A reader*. Stanford University Press.
- Durand, Jorge. 2004. “Ensayo teórico sobre la emigración de retorno. El principio del rendimiento decreciente”. *Cuadernos Geográficos* 35, 103-116.
- Ellerman, Antje. 2009. *States Against Migrants. Deportation in Germany and the United States*. USA: Cambridge University Press.

- Flores, René D., María Vignau Loría, & Regina Martínez Casas. 2023. "Transitory versus Durable Boundary Crossing: What Explains the Indigenous Population Boom in Mexico?". *American Journal of Sociology* 129(1): 123-161.
- Golazh-Boza, Tanya. 2018. "President Obama's Legacy as "Deporter in Chief". In: Kretsedemas, Philip and David Brotherton (Eds.). *Immigration Policy in the Age of Punishment. Detention, Deportation and Border Control*. Columbia University Press.
- Goodman, Adam. 2020. *The Deportation Machine: America's Long History of Expelling Immigrants*. Princeton University Press.
- Gurman, Hannah. 2017. "A Collapsing Division: Border and Interior Enforcement in the U.S. Deportation System". *American Quarterly* 69(2): 371-395.
- Hirschman, Charles. 2005. "Immigration and the American Century". *Demography* 42(4): 595-620.
- Jardón Hernández, Ana Elizabeth, & Ronzón Hernández, Zoraida. 2020. "The art of coming home. Labor reintegration experiences of deported migrants from United States". *Estudios fronterizos*, 21, e058
- Jiménez, Tomás David Fitzgerald. 2007. "Mexican Assimilation: A Temporal and Spatial Reorientation". *Du Bois Review* 4(2), 337-354.
- Kanstroom, Daniel. 2012. *Aftermath. Deportation Law and the New American Diaspora*. Oxford University Press.
- Masferrer, Claudia. 2021. *Atlas of Return Migration from the United States to Mexico*. El Colegio de México.
- Massey, Douglas. 2007. *Categorically Unequal: The American Stratification System*. Russel Sage Foundation.
- Massey, Douglas S., and Karen A. Pren. 2012. "Unintended Consequences of U.S. Immigration Policy: Explaining the Post-1965 Surge from Latin America." *Population and Development Review*
- Massey, Durand, and Pren, Karen A. 2016. "Why Border Enforcement Backfired." *American Journal of Sociology* 121(5): 1557-1600.
- Massey, Douglas S., Jorge Durand, and Nolan Malone. 2002 *Beyond Smoke and Mirrors: Mexican Migration in an Era of Economic Integration*. New York: Russell Sage.
- Meissner, Doris, Donald M. Kerwin, Muzaffar Chishti, and Claire Bergeron. 2013. *Immigration Enforcement in the United States: The Rise of a Formidable Machinery*. Washington D.C.: Migration Policy Institute

- Moinester, Margot. 2018. "Beyond the border and into the heartland: spatial patterning of U.S. immigration detention". *Demography* 55(3): 1147–1193.
- Moinester, Margot. 2019. "A look to the interior: trends in U.S. immigration removals by criminal conviction type, gender, and region of origin, fiscal years 2003-2015". *American Behavioral Scientist* 63(9): 1276-1298.
- Moinester, Margot. 2024. "The Control Boom: U.S. Interior Immigration Enforcement, 1971-2010". *American Journal of Sociology* 129(5): 1447-1492.
- Mora, María Jesús and Ariel Ruiz Soto. 2025. "The forgotten Side of Deportation: The Cost of Ignoring Returnees' Reintegration Challenges". *Migration Policy Institute*. Available at: <https://www.migrationpolicy.org/news/reintegration-forgotten-side-deportation>
- Ngai, Mae. 2004. *Impossible Subjects: Illegal Aliens and the Making of Modern America*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Pedroza, Juan Manuel. 2019. "Deportation discretion: Tiered Influence, Minority Threat, and 'Secure Communities' Deportations". *Policy Studies Journal* 47(3): 626-646.
- Pierce, Sarah, Jessica Bolter and Andrew Selee. 2018. "Trump's First Year on Immigration Policy: Rhetoric vs Reality". *Migration Policy Institute*. Available at: <https://www.migrationpolicy.org/research/trump-first-year-immigration-policy-rhetoric-vs-reality>
- Schultheis, Ryan and Ariel G. Ruiz Soto. 2017. "A revolving door no more? A statistical profile of Mexicans Repatriated from the United States". *Migration Policy Institute*. Available at: <https://www.migrationpolicy.org/sites/default/files/publications/RevolvingDoor-Mexico-FINAL.pdf>
- Sohn H, Pebley AR, Landrian Gonzalez A, Goldman N. 2023. "Deportations and departures: Undocumented Mexican immigrants' return migration during three presidential administrations". *PNAS* 120(9):e2212184120.
- Valdivia C. 2021. "'I became a mom overnight': how parental detentions and deportations impact young adults' roles and educational experiences". *Harv. Educ. Rev.* 91:62–82
- Villareal, Andres. 2014. "Explaining the Decline in Mexico-U.S. Migration: The Effect of the Great Recession". *Demography* 51(6):2203-28.

# Selective Enforcement and the Uneven Distribution of Deportation Risk in the United States

## Introduction

The United States, a country that consistently reaffirms its heritage as a “nation of immigrants”, has witnessed an unprecedented rise in the number of deportations of non-citizens over the past three decades. This surge reflects not only evolving migration patterns to the U.S., but profound changes in the immigration enforcement machinery (Meissner et al 2013), both of which have moved to the center of the national political debate. One of the most consequential of these changes, as noted by immigration scholars and immigrant advocates alike, has been the expansion of enforcement into the interior of the country (Moinester 2018, 2024).

Most studies that have looked into this shift to the interior have focused on the institutional and policy dimensions of interior immigration enforcement, shedding light on the growing entanglement of immigration and criminal law (Menjívar et al. 2018), the coordination between immigration and criminal justice agencies (Moinester 2019), and the role of law, discourse, and institutional practices in producing deportable “illegal” subjects (De Genova 2016, Menjívar and Kanstroom 2013). What remains less understood is how these socio-historically produced institutional and policy dimensions interact with the specific characteristics of international migrants at a given place and time: who is more likely to be at risk of removal, and how those risks reflect both the diverse composition of the immigrant population and the varied enforcement strategies and processes.

In that vein, this study engages with a fundamental theoretical question in the study of immigration enforcement: what Nicholas De Genova calls the “uneven distribution of ‘deportability’” (De Genova 2002). In other words, this research explores the unequal

distribution of deportation risk across non-citizens, and specifically, across a highly social and economic heterogeneous Mexican undocumented immigration population.

Mexican immigrants have consistently comprised the largest share of the undocumented population in the United States (Passel and Cohn 2019) and they have also consistently made up the largest share of deportees by national origin (Goodman 2020, DHS 2019, 2022).

Additionally, they are politically and culturally portrayed as the prototypical “illegal immigrant” (Flores and Schachter 2018, De Genova 2004). However, Mexican immigrants are far from a homogenous group (Alba, Jiménez and Marrow 2014). They have high levels of intra-group variation in terms of education attainment, class positions, levels of acculturation, racial and ethnic identities, etc. Recognizing this heterogeneity is crucial for understanding how the enforcement of seemingly neutral laws can reproduce inequalities when applied to an immigrant group that is internally stratified and unevenly vulnerable.

This study builds on the descriptive patterns examined in Chapter 1 to test whether the risk of deportation is unevenly distributed across the Mexican immigrant population. To address this question, I put together two different data sources: the Survey on Migration in the Northern Border (EMIF-Norte), from which I obtain data on the profile of deportees, and the American Community Survey (ACS) Integrated Public Use Microdata Series (IPUMS), which I use to estimate the Mexican undocumented population through the logical imputation method. By linking deportee profiles to estimates of the at-risk population, I am able to estimate the association between immigrants’ individual characteristics and their likelihood of being deported from the U.S.

This study reveals that the susceptibility to deportation from the interior of the country is not evenly distributed across the Mexican undocumented immigration population: men,

indigenous migrants and less acculturated migrants are at higher risk for removal. This pattern holds when the temporal and spatial variation of enforcement is accounted for. Taken together, these findings suggest that there is a discretionary application of immigration enforcement along gender, racial and cultural lines, even within the same national-origin population.

By empirically investigating the unequal distribution of deportation risk within the Mexican immigrant population, this study shows that interior deportations follow broader patterns of racialization and target the most vulnerable immigrants in terms of incorporation experiences. As such, this study shows how deportation is not “just” the administrative and uniform application of immigration law, but a political process of inclusion/exclusion of “particular types” of immigrants (De Genova 2010), as well as a tool of legal and symbolic violence targeting specific immigrant communities (Menjívar and Abrego 2012).

### **Deportability and deportation risk**

Immigration scholars argue that the susceptibility to deportation is a “universal quality of being a non-citizen” (De Genova 2016: 2). In other words, all migrants are deportable. At the same time, not all immigrants are deported, or “subjected to deportation to the same degree” (De Genova 2016). There is, therefore, an unequal distribution of non-citizens’ deportability or risk of deportation.

This feature of immigration enforcement might sound surprising under the assumption of a neutral application of the law. However, as mentioned by Arjen Ellerman “when faced with the legislation and implementation of [...] coercive policies, state actors in diverse political contexts arrive at different choices regarding whom to target for regulation” (Ellerman 2009: 5). One of the key implications of this principle when applied to immigration policy is that States possess

discretion regarding the admittance and residence of aliens. In other words, the grounds of expulsion “are determined by each state, by their own criteria” (Walters 2002: 277). It is precisely this discretion, involving multiple distinct actors and occurring at many different administrative levels of implementation (Asad 2019), which allows for divergent deportation outcomes across time and even across geographies within a country. In other words, this discretion, coupled with the diversity of non-citizens’ “degrees of precarity” (De Genova 2016) allows for the emergence of differences in immigrants’ vulnerability to deportation, or deportability, within a particular deportation regime.

Another key element of migrants’ uneven deportability is that “illegality” is not a fixed feature within a given State’s immigration regime, but a sociopolitical and historical construct that assumes particular “configurations” in response to shifting levels of mobility across international borders, the growing diversity of international migrants, and the socioeconomic and political changes in sending societies (De Genova 2002: 424). In other words, the social construction of “illegality” is shaped through the characteristics of a distinct undocumented population and particular versions of immigration law, bringing forth specific varieties and priorities of immigration enforcement, which target different individuals and justify particular actions, at specific times and places (De Genova 2002). These elements are expressed in legal and political discourses built around ideas and categories of social desirability, which envision deserving and undeserving immigrants and so, just and unjust deportations (Ngai 2004).

The rationale and application of selective enforcement for removal are not at all new. Other forms of expulsion that preceded deportation were based precisely on explicitly targeting people based on specific individual or collective characteristics: the expulsion of the poor, transportation based upon political/ideological leanings or civil crimes, or expulsion due to

membership to a particular religion, ethnicity or group (Walters 2002). For instance, immigration enforcement in the United States at the end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth century was explicit about which “types” of immigrants were wanted and which ones were to be the target for removal on the basis of personal qualities or group membership (Ngai 2004, Calavita 1984).

For the most part, it has been half a century that most liberal and democratic states in general, and the U.S. in particular, do not formally target immigrants for removal based on specific individual characteristics, class profiles, or collective religious or ethno-racial identities. Instead, as a form of juridical and individualized exclusion (De Genova 2010), deportation rests its legitimacy on its administrative and legal “neutral” nature, concerned with the observance of national and international law. Its rationality and priorities, when stated explicitly, are concerned with the targeting of criminality, not with collective membership, nor individual characteristics. Additionally, for the past thirty years in the U.S., various actors and branches of the U.S. government involved in the system of immigration enforcement have articulated and endorsed a wide range of official goals for the deportation system, which include matters of national security, crime control, foreign policy, public health, or labor market regulation (Kanstroom 2012). None of these aims include removing a particular group of people. Yet.

However, “on matters of immigration control, the gap between the law and its implementation is colossal” (Ellerman 2009: 9), as is the gap between the discourse and execution of discretion and selective enforcement. What can account for this gap? I will briefly mention four frameworks or approaches that have put forth explanations for this discretionary application of immigration enforcement.

The first approach lies on what scholars have called “racialized immigration enforcement”. As mentioned by Armenta (2017:83), “all modern nation-states are ‘racial states’ that use immigration controls, laws, bureaucracy and government technology to promote racial hierarchies around citizenship and belonging”. In this sense, the exclusion and non-belonging inherent in the existence of “legal” and “illegal” statuses go well beyond the lack of formal citizenship; rather, they are part of the racism constituent of all structures of society. Immigration enforcement becomes a “form of racial governance”, sustained by naturalizing and colorblind justifications (Armenta 2017), where the targets are not just “any bodies”, but “physically and culturally distinct bodies” (Dowling and Inda 2013:18). In the U.S. in particular, there is ample evidence of racial profiling on immigration enforcement (Armenta 2017, Aranda and Vaquera 2015), as well as racially discrepant practices (Coleman and Kocher 2019), particularly towards Latinx migrants from Mexico and Central America, which exposes the application of discretion in racialized and racializing ways (Walia 2021). De Genova (2002), for instance, argues that “Mexicanness” emerged as a fundamental condition that makes up an entirely racialized configuration of “illegality”. It must be said, however, that these processes are not exclusive to the U.S., but are just as constitutive of European countries’ immigration enforcement structures and actions (Schwarz 2016, PICUM 2024).

A second approach lies in selective enforcement towards immigrants of a particular “class”, understood both as the connections between individual attributes and material life conditions, and as the processes and dynamics that result from the conflict inherent in global capitalism (Wright 2015). The deportation regime works as a tool in the production of disposable labor by targeting those working-class individuals that are excluded and differentiated in society by their class identities and positions, in other words, their place in the system of class

oppression and exploitation (De Genova 2013). These arguments are supported by evidence that deportations and removals have systematically targeted poor immigrants (Ngai 2004), those in particular occupational niches (Moinster 2018) or those that are defined by the state itself as “unskilled” (Iskander 2019).

A third approach relies on discretion and selection applied to particular migration profiles, in other words, “sorting and raking the lesser or greater “foreignness” of various migrant others” (De Genova 2010:18). While social membership, inclusion and belonging are certainly granted on the basis of racial and ethnic membership, difference is also constructed on the “foreignness of migrants” (De Genova 2013) or, using Angela García’s (2019) innovative conceptualization, “passing” as a legal migrant or as a citizen. In these contexts, certain migrant profiles and particular markers, such as language use, national origin, and class might typify de facto “foreigners” and “illegals”, regardless of legal status or actual citizenship (Flores and Schachter 2018). If indeed “some foreigners are more foreign than others”, we could expect that discretion in immigration enforcement would fall along different assimilation/integration and acculturation profiles.

A final approach is concerned with how local contexts explain sub-national variation in deportation outcomes, particularly as they pertain to the presence of immigration policies and programs that have deepened the links between the criminal justice system and immigration enforcement at the local level, such as 287(g) Agreements and Secure Communities (Amuedo-Dorantes et al. 2019, Coleman and Kocher 2019), local dynamics and norms around policing (Coleman 2012, Armenta 2017), and differences in the political, economic and sociocultural contexts in which local agencies implement immigration policy (Ellerman 2009, Moinster 2018, Ryo and Peacock 2019).

Finally, it must be said that these different approaches and frameworks are not mutually exclusive nor contradictory. Rather, targeted immigration enforcement on the basis of race/ethnicity, class and “foreignness” is produced mutually and simultaneously, and it interacts with the characteristics of local contexts in many ways. Thus, these different frameworks conceptualize distinct and interactive elements of the national and international systems of coercive policies and practices that ensure the uneven distribution of deportation risk across migrant populations.

### **Mexican immigrants’ risk of deportation**

Mexican immigrants have long occupied a central position in the U.S. deportation regime. They are not only the numerically dominant group among deportees (DHS 2019, Moinester 2019), but also the quintessential representation of the “illegal immigrant” in American political and cultural discourse (De Genova 2004). This is evident in the militarization of the southern border (Gurman 2017), the dynamics driving the expansion of interior enforcement (Moinester 2024), and the production of “illegality” itself, from its early historical configuration (Ngai 2004) to its present-day social construction (Flores and Schachter 2018). According to De Genova, “the sociopolitical category ‘illegal alien’ itself [...] has long served as a constitutive dimension of the racialized inscription of ‘Mexicans’ in the U.S.” (De Genova, 2002:433). Mexican immigrants have therefore carried the weight of enforcement, emerging both as the main targets of deportation and as the public face of immigration control.

These dynamics were reinforced by important shifts in immigration law and policy, particularly with the passage of the Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act (IIRIRA) of 1996. This legislation made its explicit goal to counter the rapidly growing

undocumented population, expanding the categories of offenses that could trigger deportation, limiting access to legal relief, and retroactively applying grounds of removal, thereby “expanding the population legally constructed as ‘deportable’” (Abrego et al. 2017, Moinester 2024). While formally broad in scope, these provisions overwhelmingly affected Mexican immigrants, who were the largest undocumented population and the most exposed to everyday policing and enforcement. At the same time, certain provisions of IIRIRA and new local level programs such as Secure Communities provided the legal and institutional framework for the expansion of the deportation infrastructure, streamlining cooperation between federal and local authorities, expanding detention capacity, and speeding up removal procedures by limiting judicial discretion and immigrants’ due process rights (Kanstroom 2012, Moinester 2024). All in all, these changes increased the number of people eligible for deportation –and so “widened the purview of deportability for immigrants” (De Genova 2016)– and refined the “formidable machinery” (Meissner et al. 2013) that made deportation possible at a more “efficient” and greater scale.

However, within the broad category of “Mexican immigrants,” there is substantial intra-group heterogeneity that complicates this uniform image. Mexican migrants, who have been called a “paradigm for contemporary intra-group heterogeneity” (Alba, Jimenez and Marrow 2014), vary across dimensions such as class profiles and identities, educational attainment, indigenous profiles, migration histories, and levels of incorporation/adaptation into U.S. society. These differences shape not only their life trajectories (as has been documented by numerous adaptation and assimilation studies) but also their encounters with immigration enforcement and the outcomes of those encounters. By treating Mexican immigrants as a homogenous group, we risk obscuring the mechanisms by which deportability is differentially produced, re-produced

and distributed. Examining intra-group variation thus provides a sharper lens on how the deportation regime operates and whose vulnerability is heightened within it.

### **Toward an Empirical Understanding of Deportability**

As mentioned before, the majority of the studies on immigration enforcement (encounters, apprehensions, detentions, and removals) have explored its institutional and policy characteristics, as well as their interaction with the contexts in which enforcement takes place. The study of the population subjected to enforcement has proved to be a much more difficult endeavor, given that the “secrecy and bureaucratic barriers that obstruct researchers’ access to governmental data [on immigration enforcement]” (Ryo 2019: 98) have severely limited quantitative research and “big picture” analyses of this population.

However, some recent studies have approached the topic at hand in ways that inform my analytic strategy. The first one, published in 2018 by Margot Moinester, is the first paper to my knowledge to estimate deportation rates at the state level. Using data from the Transactional Records Access Clearinghouse (TRAC) obtained through Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) requests, Moinester (2018) analyzes and geocodes the records of all noncitizens detained by ICE in 2008 and 2009, estimating state deportation rates “net of individual characteristics”. However, individual characteristics available through TRAC data consist only of place of origin, gender, and age, which hinders a more detailed analysis of discretion based on immigrants’ characteristics.

A second study, published in 2019 by Margot Moinester as well, utilizes ICE removal records from 2003 to 2015 on interior removals, also obtained through FOIA requests initiated by TRAC, to examine how the types of criminal convictions leading to removal from the U.S.

have changed over time. Similar to her previous study, she explores what individual-level data are available to her, that is, gender and place of origin, finding that there is a greater share of deported women that did not have criminal convictions as compared to men. Importantly for my research, her descriptive analysis shows that 94% of deportees are male, around 70% of them are Mexican and 75% are between 20 and 40 years of age.

Other empirical work has taken a closer look at deportees themselves. Amuedo-Dorantes et al. (2019) provide a particularly relevant example, using survey data on deportees collected in Mexico in 2014–2015 to analyze deportees’ criminal offense profiles under different enforcement priority regimes. While their study might appear to “select on the dependent variable,” their analysis offers important insights into how different enforcement strategies shape who ends up being deported. They show that widespread enforcement resulted in a higher propensity of deportees being arrested for minor offenses, while prioritized enforcement reduced the likelihood of minor offenses and shortened detention times. Another study by Pedroza (2022) argues that immigration enforcement in the United States is “fundamentally uneven”. Using data from the Center for Migration Studies and the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) he compares deportations across national-origin groups relative to their share of the undocumented population, finding that immigrants from Haiti and Central America are disproportionately targeted. Finally, Sohn et al. (2023) analyze deportation rates for Mexican undocumented migrants using EMIF-Norte data, focusing on variation by sex, age, education, and marital status. They find that deportees are overwhelmingly young, male, and with relatively low levels of education, and that these characteristics remain stable across presidential terms.

Taken together, these studies provide a first empirical foundation for understanding deportation risk, but they also highlight significant gaps. For instance, relying on TRAC or

administrative enforcement data limits the availability of individual-level information. Amuedo-Dorantes et al. (2019) take a significant step forward by using a rich and detailed dataset on deported Mexican immigrants collected in Mexico, which allows them to study variation in deportees' criminal profiles across policy regimes, but their focus remains exclusively on deportees and cannot speak directly to the broader question of deportation risk. Finally, Sohn et al. (2023) use a similar strategy to mine, but their data is not as rich or detailed, and their emphasis is much more on temporal change rather than on the compositional characteristics that impact deportation risk.

In the pages below I test two hypotheses on the uneven distribution of deportation risk among Mexican immigrants based on the discussion above. First, I hypothesize that indigenous Mexican immigrants are disproportionately vulnerable to deportation, reflecting the racialized dynamics of enforcement. Second, I anticipate that less acculturated Mexican immigrants—those with limited English proficiency and shorter residence in the United States—face a higher likelihood of deportation, illustrating how foreignness operates as a marker of exclusion. Together, these hypotheses connect broader theoretical claims about deportability to empirical measures of deportation risk.

## **Data**

This study employs two different data sources. The first one is the National Survey on Migration at the Northern Border, or *EMIF-Norte-Deportados* (EN-D). This survey is administered by the Colegio de la Frontera Norte (COLEF), a Mexican public research institution, in collaboration with the National Population Council (CONAPO), the National Migration Institute (INM), the Foreign Ministry (SRE), and the Labor Ministry (STPS). The EN-D is part of a larger group of

surveys that capture 7 different migration flows that reflect the diversity of spatial mobility in Mexico: internal migration to and from the northern border, international migration to and from the United States (including deportation), and international migration to and from Central America. Their goal is to estimate the volume of the migration flow at Mexico's borders and the characteristics of the migrants by employing a probabilistic sampling design that allows them to capture a random sample of their different target populations. In the case of the EN-D, the survey employs a two-stage sampling design to obtain a representative random sample of the Mexican population repatriated at the official reception points along the U.S.-Mexico border and the Mexico City airport (Schultheis and Ruiz Soto 2017). Survey investigators estimate that its frame captures between 90% and 95% of the flow (Sohn et al. 2023). The survey weights take into account that not all individuals have an equal probability of being selected and included in the survey, and adjust for this unequal probability. One of the key strengths of this survey is that it includes a detailed set of deportees' individual characteristics, including both pre-migration features and post-migration experiences. The survey is administered as deportees re-enter Mexico at the official reception points. Its target population is Mexican nationals, ages 15 and older, residents of Mexico or the U.S., repatriated by the U.S. immigration authorities to the Mexican migration authorities. Importantly, the survey includes both those who were deported and those who were subjected to expedited removal. Finally, the EN-D survey captures individual characteristics, as well as information regarding U.S. migration and deportation experiences. Individual files from 2005 to 2019 were homogenized in all key variables.

The deported population that is included in this analysis are the deportees subjected to interior immigration enforcement. This distinction follows Moinester's (2019) methodology to identify interior immigration enforcement, which is then adapted to the data available from the EMIF

survey. This inductive process results in a definition that is temporal, geographic, and administrative, as it combines information on: the geographic location of detention, place of detention, time since arrival in U.S., and agency that performed the detention. Thus, “interior enforcement” are those deportees that (1) were present in the U.S. for more than 1 month before their removal, (2) were not detained “crossing” or “in the desert/mountain” (per EMIF definitions) and (3) were not subjected to an expedited removal (data available since 2014).

The second dataset I employ in this study is the *American Community Survey* (ACS) *Integrated Public Use Microdata Series* (IPUMS) (Ruggles et al. 2024). I obtain state-level yearly microdata samples from 2005 to 2019 with the variables necessary to “impute” legal status on the Mexican-born population, and those that will later be used to characterize the Mexican undocumented population. The first ones include place of birth, citizenship status, year of arrival to the U.S., educational attainment, school enrollment, and occupation. The second ones include sex, age, marital status, language use, race, and state of residence in the U.S. Finally, I extracted person-weights for each individual, which were used to adjust estimates of population representation.

A central element of this research design is the harmonization of variables across both data sources. Because the EMIF-Norte-Deportados and the ACS differ in the measurement of certain individual characteristics, it was necessary to standardize the key variables to ensure comparability. This process involved aligning definitions and coding schemes so that variables drawn from each dataset could be analyzed jointly and consistently. The following table details the construction of the variables used in the analysis, alongside their original form in the EMIF and ACS microdata.

<b>Table 1. Construction of variables from EMIF and ACS data</b>		
<b>Variable</b>	<b>EMIF (translation)</b>	<b>ACS</b>
<b>Key independent variables</b>		
Indigenous Ethnicity: 0. Not-indigenous 1. Indigenous	Indigenous Ethnicity: measured as “speak an indigenous language”, as has been traditionally done in Mexico: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Indigenous: speaks an indigenous language</li> <li>- Not-indigenous: does not speak an indigenous language</li> </ul>	Indigenous Ethnicity: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Indigenous: speaks a language classified as: American Indian, other American Indian languages, south/central American Indian, Aztec/Nahuatl</li> <li>- Not-indigenous: does not speak an “American Indian” language</li> </ul>
English proficiency: 0. Does not speak English: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- EMIF: no, mal</li> <li>- ACS: no</li> </ul> 1. Speaks some English: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- EMIF: regular</li> <li>- ACS: not well</li> </ul> 2. Speaks good English: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- EMIF: bien, muy bien</li> <li>- ACS: well, very well, only English</li> </ul>	Categorical variable: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Speaks English very well (muy bien)</li> <li>- Speaks English well (bien)</li> <li>- Speaks English more or less (regular)</li> <li>- Speaks English poorly (mal)</li> <li>- Does not speak English</li> </ul>	Categorical variable: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Speaks only English</li> <li>- Speaks English very well</li> <li>- Speaks English well</li> <li>- Does not speak English well</li> <li>- Does not speak English</li> </ul>
Time in the U.S.	Length of stay in the U.S.	Years in the U.S.
<b>Controls</b>		
Age	Years of age [Numeric]	Years of age [Numeric]
Gender: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Men (0)</li> <li>- Women (1)</li> </ul>	Binary: Men (0) and Women (1)	Binary: Men (0) and Women (1)
Marital Status <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Single</li> <li>- Married/Union</li> <li>- Divorced/Separated</li> <li>- Widowed</li> <li>- Missing</li> </ul>	Categorical: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Single</li> <li>- Married/Union</li> <li>- Divorced/Separated</li> <li>- Widowed</li> <li>- Missing</li> </ul>	Categorical: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Married, spouse present</li> <li>- Married, spouse absent</li> <li>- Separated</li> <li>- Divorced</li> <li>- Widowed</li> <li>- Never married/single</li> <li>- Blank, missing</li> </ul>
Survey Year	Survey Year	Survey Year
State in the U.S.	State of residence	State [ICPRS code]

## Methods

### *1. Estimation of the Mexican undocumented population*

The analytic approach of the study of deportation risk is based on the identification of the population at risk of deportation, that is, undocumented Mexican immigrants.

However, legal status is not included in most surveys in the United States. On the one hand, this is explained by concerns regarding the accuracy and reliability of such questions, as well as a potential “chilling effect” that could be introduced in the surveys if those questions are included (Bachmeier, Van Hook and Bean 2014). On the other, some scholars have raised confidentiality and privacy concerns regarding information that could place an already vulnerable population in more danger (Carter-Pokras and Zambrana 2006).

While there are different approaches to estimating legal status, including the residual method (Warren & Warren 2013, Passel 2019) and the statistical imputation method (Bachmeier, Van Hook and Bean 2014), I use the logical imputation method (Hall et al. 2010, Borjas 2017) to identify those that are undocumented in the U.S. This approach consists on inferring individual’s legal status based on knowledge and evidence on the characteristics of the undocumented population in the United States and has been used by multiple researchers in the field in the study of particular population dynamics or phenomena regarding undocumented immigrants (Hall and Stringfield 2014, Amuedo Dorantes et al. 2019). This method is particularly well-suited to infer the legal status of the Mexican undocumented population (Amuedo Dorantes et al. 2019).

The logical imputation method starts with all adult (18+) Mexican immigrants and identifies respondents who met each of the following criteria:

- 1) They are noncitizens
- 2) They came to the U.S. after the passage of IRCA (post-1987)

- 3) They have no more than high-school education, given that a large majority (96%) of undocumented Mexicans are not college-educated (Hall and Stringfield 2014).
- 4) They are not currently enrolled in school (to prevent the inclusion of those on student visas).
- 5) They are not employed by a federal, state, or local government.

## 2. *Estimation of deportation rates*

Using the weighted data from EMIF and from the ACS, I estimate deportation rates for men and for women across years and U.S. states as follows:

Deportation rate per 100,000 undocumented:

$$\frac{\text{Population deported in x year}}{\text{Estimate for the undocumented population in x year}} \times 100,000$$

## 3. *Estimation of deportation risk*

For this analysis, I pool together the individual-level deportee data from EMIF and the individual-level “likely undocumented” data from the ACS. This data is put together with year-indicators. For example, EMIF data for 2015 (i.e. deportee interviews done during the four quarters of calendar year 2015) are pooled with the 2015 microdata from IPUMS (i.e. collected during calendar year 2015). As mentioned before, the deportees included in this analysis are the ones subjected to interior enforcement.

I estimate a series of logistic regressions where the dependent variable is measured as 0 or 1 (a binary outcome) depending on whether the individual was removed or not: all individuals that

come from the EMIF data have a “1” on the “deported” outcome and all individuals that come from the ACS data have a “0” on the deported outcome. This is a similar methodology as the one used by Sohn et al. (2023); they also use EMIF-Norte data to build the “deportee” denominator, and they use the Current Population Survey’s Annual Social and Economic Supplement for estimated counts of the undocumented population living in the United States.

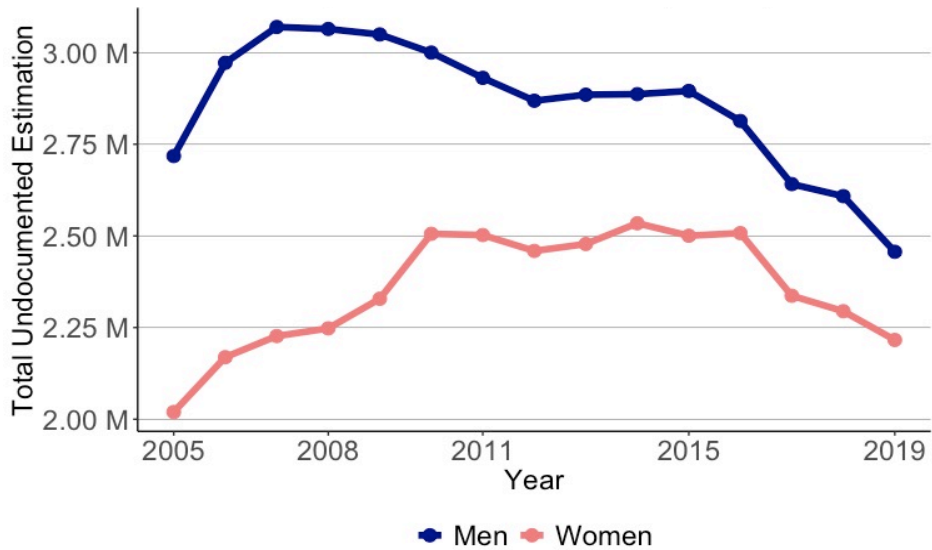
The key independent variables and their homogenization from the EMIF and ACS measurement are described above. I test the effect of indigenous status, English proficiency, and time in the U.S. on the likelihood of being deported from the country, adding age, gender and marital status as essential demographic controls, as well year and state in the U.S. indicators as key temporal and geographic controls.

Given a dichotomous dependent variable, I estimate logistic regression models. The specification of the models are as follows: Model 1 includes individual pre-migration characteristics and controls, Model 2 adds key independent variables, and Model 3 adds year fixed-effects and state-dummies.

## **Results**

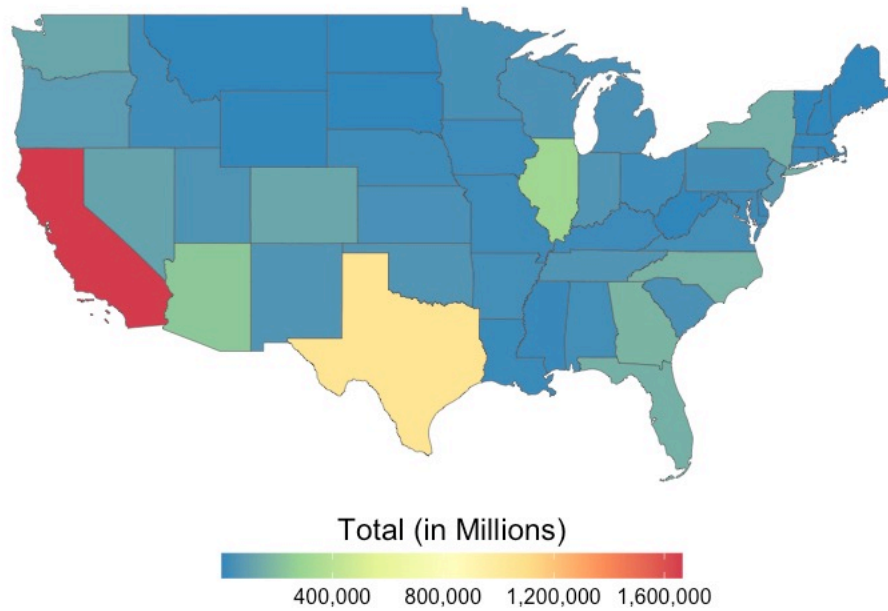
I begin with the results of the estimation for likely undocumented immigrants that draws on the ACS data. Figure 1 shows the estimated number of likely undocumented Mexican immigrants in the United States between 2005 and 2019, disaggregated by sex. As mentioned before, estimates are based on the logical imputation method applied to the American Community Survey microdata. The overall pattern shows that the size of the undocumented Mexican population declined gradually after the late 2000s, consistent with previous studies that identify decreasing numbers of undocumented immigrants present in the U.S. following the 2008 economic crisis

(Passel and Cohn 2019). The decline is more pronounced among men, who consistently represent a larger share of the undocumented population throughout the period. This gendered pattern might reflect both shifts in U.S. labor demand in traditional male occupations (such as construction) and the enforcement context that disproportionately affects male immigrants.



**Figure 1. Likely Undocumented Mexican Immigrants, 2005-2019, by Sex.**  
 Source: Own elaboration with ACS data

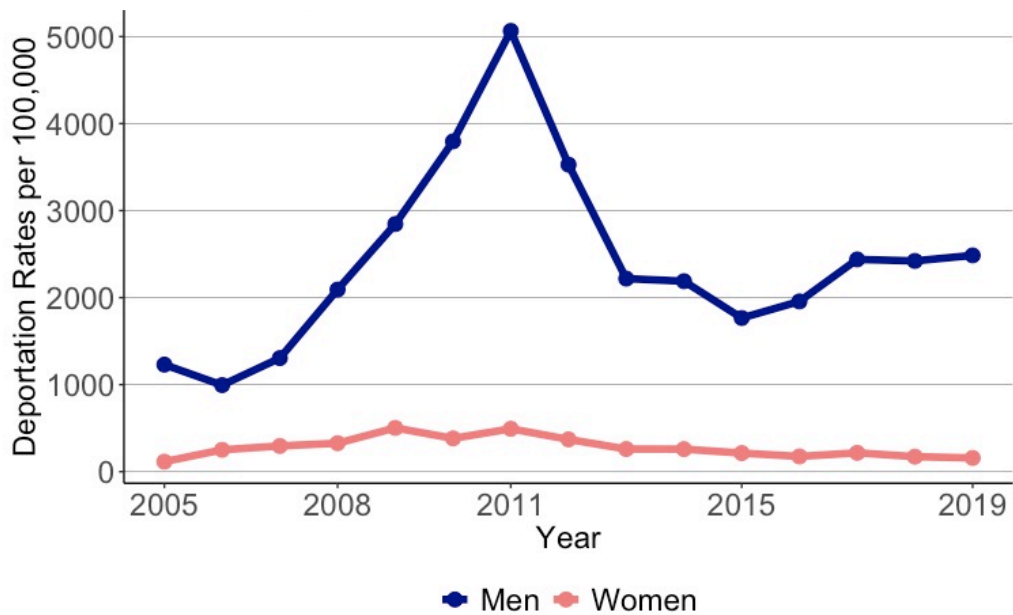
Figure 2 shows the geographic distribution of likely undocumented Mexican immigrants averaged across all years. The largest concentrations are observed in traditional destination states such as California, Texas, and Arizona, followed by newer settlement states in the South and Midwest. This spatial pattern underscores the enduring centrality of long-established destinations in the U.S., while also reflecting the diversification of Mexican settlement since the 1990s (Zúñiga and Hernández-León 2005).



**Figure 2. Geographic distribution of likely Undocumented Mexican Immigrants, Averaged Across 2005-2019.**

Source: Own elaboration with ACS data

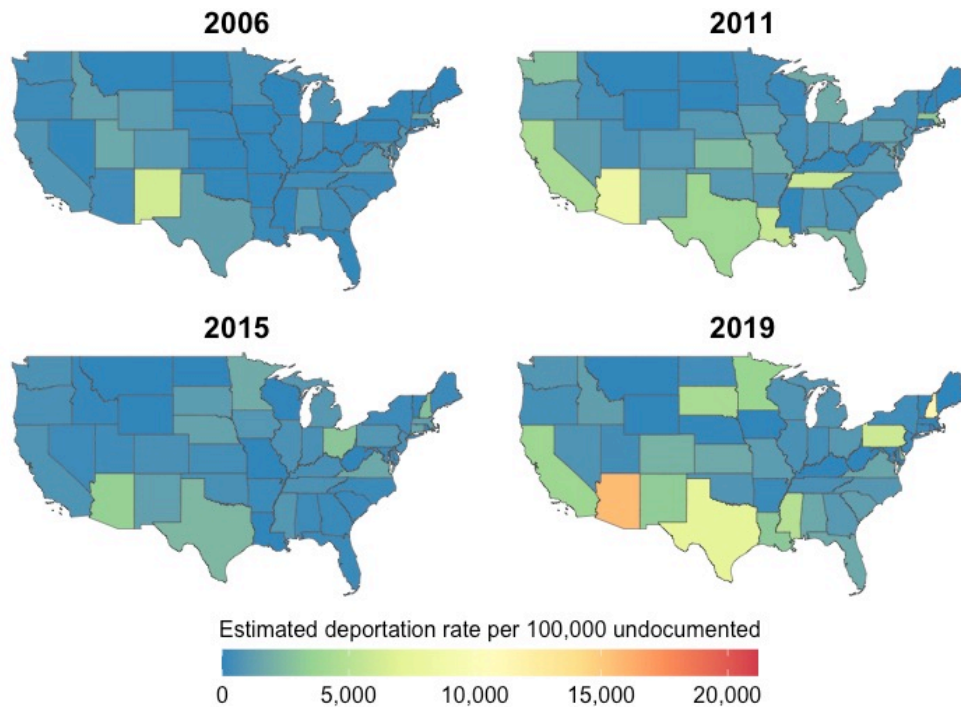
I now turn to the deportation rates, which put together the interior enforcement deportee data from EMIF and the likely undocumented immigrant estimations from the ACS. Figure 3 depicts the temporal variation in deportation rates for men and women between 2005 and 2019. The overall pattern reveals a dramatic surge in men’s deportation rates between 2008 (the start of “Secure Communities”) and 2011 (just prior to Obama’s change in ICE’s federal priorities), followed by a steep decline and relative stabilization after 2014. A slight increase during 2017-2019 can be observed for the Trump years compared to the second Obama period. Women’s deportations rates remain consistently low across the entire period, fluctuating only slightly around 500 deportations per 100,000. These gendered trajectories mirror the broader trends in immigration enforcement, in which male migrants have been disproportionately targeted.



**Figure 3. Deportation Rates Per 100,000 Likely Undocumented Immigrants, 2005-2019.**  
 Source: Own elaboration with ACS and EMIF-Norte-Deportados data

Finally, Figure 4 presents state-level estimated deportation rates per 100,000 likely undocumented Mexican immigrants for selected years: 2006 (during the Bush administration), 2011 (the height of Obama’s deportation period), 2015 (the lowest deportation rate since 2007), and 2019 (the third year under the Trump administration). In 2006, deportations were relatively low nationwide, with isolated pockets of higher intensity in a few border states such as New Mexico or Texas, or interior states such as Colorado and Utah. By 2011, the height of interior enforcement under the Obama administration, deportation rates had surged noticeably, particularly across the South and parts of West, reflecting the consolidation of Secure Communities and the expansion of 287(g) cooperation agreements between criminal justice and immigration authorities in the interior of the country. In 2015, two and a half years after Obama directed a shift in deportation priorities at the federal level (Amuedo Dorantes et al. 2019), most states display relatively moderate rates. By 2019, however, new concentrations emerge, most

notably in Texas and Arizona at the border, and interior states such as South Dakota, Pennsylvania, Minnesota and Mississippi. The persistence of high rates in certain states, even after overall declines post-2011, points to the local entrenchment of enforcement infrastructures and their uneven impact on Mexican immigrant communities. Overall, these maps suggest that interior enforcement has been both spatially uneven and historically contingent, responding to national policy shifts and subnational enforcement dynamics, as well as the changing composition of the undocumented immigrant population across time and space. This finding echoes Margot Moinester’s study of immigration detention, which revealed spatial patterning and substantial geographic variation in detention outcomes in 2008 and 2009 (Moinester 2018).



**Figure 4. Estimated deportation rates per 100,000 likely undocumented immigrants across selected years.**  
Source: Own elaboration with ACS and EMIF-Norte-Deportados data

### *Modeling deportation risk*

To better understand how certain individual characteristics are associated with deportation, I estimated a series of logistic regression models using the pooled EMIF (interior enforcement) and ACS (likely undocumented) data described above. Coefficients are expressed in log-odds, with standard errors in parentheses. As mentioned above, Model (1) includes baseline demographic characteristics, Model (2) adds key predictors related to individual characteristics and incorporation experiences, and Model (3) includes year and state fixed effects to account for temporal and geographic variation. Both age and time in the U.S. are modeled using quadratic terms to capture potential non-linear relationships with deportation risk, that is, to account for the possibility that the likelihood of deportation does not increase or decrease at a constant rate.

Results reveal several interesting patterns. Gender emerges as one of the key predictors of deportation, with women having substantially lower odds of being deported compared to men in all model specifications. This is consistent with previous research on the gendered selectivity of enforcement actions (Moinester 2019). Indigenous immigrants have much higher odds of being deported, suggesting that indigenous ethnicity has a strong association with the probability of being deported and providing evidence of the racialized nature of immigration enforcement (Armenta 2017). The effects of the acculturation variables is also interesting. The relationship between time in the U.S. and the likelihood of deportation, a key indicator of acculturation, follows a U-shaped pattern. Immigrants that have been in the U.S. for longer have lower odds of deportation compared to those that have been in the U.S. for a short amount of time. In other words, immigrants that recently arrived, and thus, are less acculturated, are more likely to be deported. However, at longer durations, the risk of deportation increases. The effect of English language proficiency on the probability of deportation is strong and significant; immigrants that

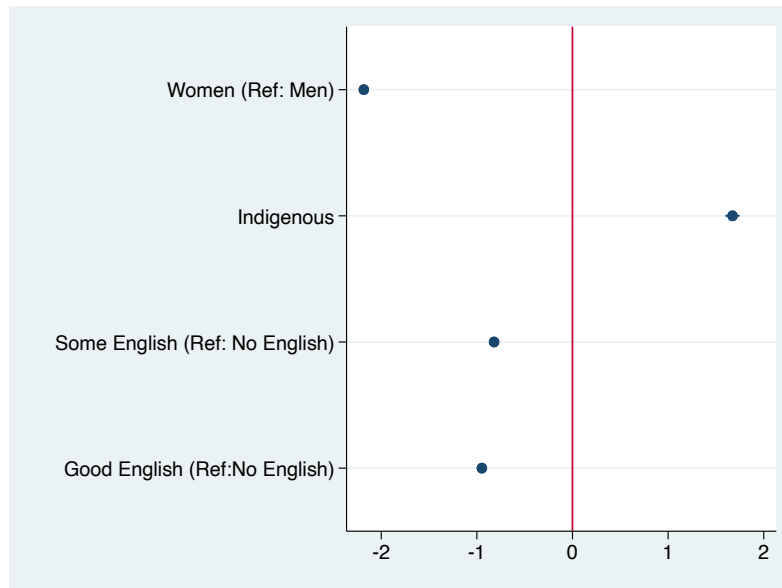
report some English language proficiency have much lower odds of deportation compared to those who report that they don't speak English. This effect is stronger in magnitude for those who report good English proficiency, compared to those with no English language ability. This pattern illustrates how foreignness operates as a marker of exclusion and suggests that less acculturated immigrants are indeed at higher risk of being deported.

Regarding the demographic controls. Older migrants are more likely to be deported, although this relationship decreases at older ages. The results of marital status are small, but interestingly, married, divorced and widowed immigrants have higher odds of deportation compared to single immigrants. Finally, the inclusion of year- and state- fixed effects accounts for unobserved differences in deportation risk across time and geographies and the results from the third model specification suggest that the relationships between deportation and individual characteristics persist after accounting for temporal and spatial variations in enforcement intensity.

<b>Table 1. Logistic regression predicting deportation (standard errors) N=570,514</b>			
	Model (1)	Model (2)	Model (3)
Age	0.013** (0.004)	0.149*** (0.005)	0.127*** (0.005)
Age-Squared	-0.006*** (0.000)	-0.002*** (0.000)	-0.002** (0.000)
Gender ("Men" reference)	-2.16*** (0.024)	-2.18*** (0.025)	-2.194*** (0.025)
Married ( "Single" ref)			
Married	0.183*** (0.016)	0.221*** (0.017)	0.245*** (0.018)
Divorced	0.467*** (0.029)	0.536*** (0.032)	0.565*** (0.033)

Widowed	0.352*** (0.095)	0.222* (0.099)	0.339** (0.229)
Indigenous (“No” ref)		1.67*** (0.039)	1.67*** (0.042)
Time in the U.S.		-0.230*** (0.004)	-0.255*** (0.003)
Time in the U.S.-squared		0.005*** (0.000)	0.005*** (0.000)
English ( “No” ref)			
Some English		-0.82*** (0.018)	-0.75*** (0.018)
Good English		-0.947*** (0.021)	-0.918*** (0.021)
Year fixed-effects			Y
State fixed-effects			Y
+ $p < 0.1$ , * $p < 0.05$ , ** $p < 0.01$ , *** $p < 0.001$ Coefficients from “missing” categories suppressed			

Figure 5 visualizes the key coefficients from the final model, highlighting the magnitude and direction of the effect of key individual characteristics on the probability of deportation. The plot sheds light on the gendered, racialized and linguistic dimensions of deportation risk, stressing that deportation is not only shaped by the immigration enforcement features of particular geographic contexts and at specific times, but also by the individual characteristics of migrants themselves.



**Figure 5. Coefficient plot of log-odds of deportation by selected individual-level characteristics.**

## Discussion and Conclusion

Scholars argue that “deportability”, or the risk of deportation, is not evenly distributed across the non-citizen population (De Genova 2002). While scholars and advocates have provided ample evidence on selective and discretionary immigration enforcement (Garip et al. 2019, Coleman and Kocher 2019), there is still a gap in our knowledge regarding how these processes play out at the population level in the United States. This paper examined the unequal distribution of deportation risk across the Mexican immigrant population, claiming that the examination of intra-group inequalities within a highly heterogeneous national-origin population (Alba, Jimenez and Marrow 2014) would reveal some of the mechanisms by which deportability is differentially produced, re-produced and distributed.

Pooling together data from the EMIF-Norte survey on Mexican deportees, and estimates on the likely undocumented population derived from the ACS from 2005 to 2019, I estimated

deportation rates across time and U.S. geographies, and modeled the probability of deportation as a function of key individual characteristics.

The findings of the descriptive analysis of deportation rates reveal that these surged dramatically for men during the first years of Obama's presidency (2009 - 2011). This was followed by a notable decline and period of relative stability through Obama's second term. The Trump administration saw a renewed uptick in deportation rates, but not a return to the peak intensity of the early Obama years. The geographic analysis revealed that there was a spatial diversification to the rise of deportation rates; while in 2005 deportation rates were high in a few states along the U.S. southern border, by 2019 deportation rates had increased in most states in the U.S., moving away from the border with Mexico to the north and the east of the country. This finding is consistent with Moinester's description of the considerable state heterogeneity in immigration detention rates as well as the geographic stratification of detention outcomes (Moinester 2018). At the same time, some states like Arizona exhibit persistently high deportation rates across the entire period of study, suggesting a relative entrenchment and institutional inertia to immigration enforcement processes and practices in certain local contexts.

The regression analysis revealed that deportation risk is unequally distributed among the Mexican undocumented population: men, indigenous migrants, and less acculturated migrants are at higher risk of interior removal, even after accounting for temporal and geographic variation in enforcement contexts. These findings suggest there is a selective and discretionary application of immigration enforcement along gendered, racial and acculturation lines. It also provides evidence that enforcement practices amplify the persistent inequities and "degrees of precarity" (De Genova 2016) that stratify the immigrant population in the U.S. by disproportionately targeting racialized and linguistically marginalized migrants.

De Genova argues that, in the case of deportation, “the inequalities generated by the law’s apparently uniform application among asymmetrically constituted migrations [...] tend to be naturalized” (De Genova 2002: 424). Ultimately, this study highlights how deportation, while seemingly neutral in its justification and legislation, is far from neutral in its implementation and effects (Kanstroom 2012). By arbitrarily targeting “physically and culturally distinct bodies” (Dowling and Inda 2013:18), the system of immigration enforcement exposes its biased and racialized nature.

## References

- Abrego, L., Coleman, M., Martínez, D. E., Menjívar, C., & Slack, J. 2017. “Making Immigrants into Criminals: Legal Processes of Criminalization in the Post-IIRIRA Era”. *Journal on Migration and Human Security*, 5(3), 694-715.
- Alba, Richard, Tomás Jiménez and Helen Marrow. 2014. “Mexican Americans as a paradigm for contemporary intra-group heterogeneity”. *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 37(3), 446-466.
- Amuedo Dorantes, Catalina, Thitima Puttitanum and Ana P. Martinez-Donate. 2019. “Deporting ‘Bad Hombres’? The Profile of Deportees under Widespread Versus Prioritized Enforcement”. *International Migration Review* 53(2): 518-547.
- Aranda, E., & Vaquera, E. 2015. “Racism, the Immigration Enforcement Regime, and the Implications for Racial Inequality in the Lives of Undocumented Young Adults”. *Sociology of Race and Ethnicity*, 1(1), 88-104.
- Armenta, Amanda. 2017. *Protect, Serve, and Deport: The Rise of Policing as Immigration Enforcement*. Oakland, California: University of California Press.
- Asad, Asad L. 2019. “Deportation Decisions: Judicial-Decision Making in an American Immigration Court”. *American Behavioral Scientist* 63(9): 1276-1298.
- Bachmeier, James D., Jennifer Van Hook, and Frank D. Bean. 2014. “Can We Measure Immigrants’ Legal Status? Lessons from Two U.S. Surveys.” *International Migration Review* 48(2):538-566.
- Borjas, George. 2017. “The labor supply of undocumented immigrants”. *Journal of Labour Economics* 46: 1-13.

- Calavita, Kitty. 1984. *U.S. Immigration Law and the Control of Labor. 1820-1924*. Academic Press.
- Carter-Pokras, Olivia and Ruth Enid Zambrana. 2006. "Collection of legal status information: caution!" *American Journal of Public Health* 96(3): 399
- Coleman, Matthew. 2012. "From Border Policing to Internal Immigration Control in the United States". In: Thomas M. Wilson & Hastings Donnan (Eds.). *A Companion to Border Studies*. Blackwell Publishing
- Coleman, Matthew, and Kocher, Ashton. 2019. "Rethinking the "Gold Standard" of Racial Profiling: §287(g), Secure Communities and Racially Discrepant Police Power". *American Behavioral Scientist*, 63(9), 1185-1220.
- De Genova, Nicholas. 2002. "Migrant "Illegality" and Deportability in Everyday Life". *Annual Review of Anthropology* 31(1), 419-447.
- De Genova, Nicholas. 2004. "The Legal Production of Mexican/Migrant "Illegality"". *Latino Studies* 2:160–185.
- De Genova, Nicholas. 2010. "The deportation regime: sovereignty, space and the freedom of movement". In: De Genova and Peutz. *The Deportation Regime: sovereignty, Space and the Freedom of Movement*. USA: Duke University Press
- De Genova, Nicholas. 2013. "Spectacles of migrant 'illegality': the scene of exclusion, the obscene of inclusion". *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 36(7): 1180–1198.
- De Genova, Nicholas. 2014. "Deportation". In Bridget Anderson & Michael Keith (Eds.). *Migration: A COMPAS Anthology*. COMPAS.
- De Genova, Nicholas. 2016. "Detention, deportation and waiting: toward a theory of migrant detainability". *Global Detention Project*. Working Paper no. 18. Open Society Foundations.
- De Genova, Nicholas. 2018. "The deportation power". *Radical Philosophy* 203: 23-27.
- Department of Homeland Security. 2019. "Table 39. Aliens removed or returned". *2019 Yearbook of Immigration Statistics*. Washington D.C.: Office of Homeland Security Statistics. Available at: <https://ohss.dhs.gov/topics/immigration/yearbook/2019/table39>
- Department of Homeland Security. 2022. "Table 39. Noncitizen removals, returns and expulsions: Fiscal Years 1892 to 2022". *2022 Yearbook of Immigration Statistics*. Washington D.C.: Office of Homeland Security Statistics. Available at: <https://ohss.dhs.gov/topics/immigration/yearbook/2022>

- Dowling, Julie A. & Jonathan X. Inda. 2013. *Governing Immigration Through Crime. A reader.* Stanford University Press
- Ellerman, Antje. 2009. *States Against Migrants. Deportation in Germany and the United States.* USA: Cambridge University Press
- Flores, R. D., & Schachter, A. 2018. “Who are the “Illegals”? The Social Construction of Illegality in the United States”. *American Sociological Review*, 83(5): 839-868.
- García, Angela. 2019. “Chapter 3: Stay or Go? The Settlement Effects of Restrictive Subnational Laws”. In Angela García. *Legal Passing.* University of California Press.
- Garip, F., Gleeson, S., & Hall, M. 2019. “How the State Criminalizes Immigrants and to What Effect: A Multidisciplinary Account”. *American Behavioral Scientist*, 63(9), 1159-1171.
- Goodman, Adam. 2020. *The Deportation Machine: America’s Long History of Expelling Immigrants.* Princeton University Press
- Gurman, Hannah. 2017. “A Collapsing Division: Border and Interior Enforcement in the U.S. Deportation System”. *American Quarterly* 69(2), pp. 371-395.
- Hall, Matthew, Emily Greenman and George Farkas. 2010. “Legal Status and Wage Disparities for Mexican Immigrants.” *Social Forces* 89: 491-513.
- Hall, Matthew and Jonathan Stringfield. 2014. “Undocumented migration and the residential segregation of Mexicans in new destinations”. *Social Science Research* 47, 61-78.
- Iskander, N. N. 2019. “On Detention and Skill: Reflections on Immigrant Incarceration, Bodying Practices, and the Definition of Skill”. *American Behavioral Scientist*, 63(9), 1370-1388.
- Kanstroom, Daniel. 2012. *Aftermath. Deportation Law and the New American Diaspora.* Oxford University Press.
- Meissner, Doris, Donald M. Kerwin, Muzaffar Chishti, and Claire Bergeron. 2013. *Immigration Enforcement in the United States: The Rise of a Formidable Machinery.* Washington D.C.: Migration Policy Institute
- Menjívar, Cecilia, and Leisy Abrego. 2012. “Legal Violence: Immigration Law and the Lives of Central American Immigrants.” *American Journal of Sociology* 117(5): 1380 – 1421.
- Menjívar, Cecilia and Daniel Kanstroom. 2013. *Constructing Immigrant Illegality. Critiques, Experiences and Responses.* Cambridge University Press
- Menjívar C., Gómez Cervantes A., Alvord D. 2018. “The expansion of “cimmigration,” mass detention, and deportation”. *Sociology Compass* 12:e12573.

- Moinester, Margot. 2018. "Beyond the border and into the heartland: spatial patterning of U.S. immigration detention". *Demography* 55(3): 1147–1193
- Moinester, Margot. 2019. "A look to the interior: trends in U.S. immigration removals by criminal conviction type, gender, and region of origin, fiscal years 2003-2015". *American Behavioral Scientist* 63(9): 1276-1298.
- Moinester, Margot. 2024. "The Control Boom: U.S. Interior Immigration Enforcement, 1971-2010". *American Journal of Sociology* 129(5): 1447-1492.
- Ngai, Mae. 2004. *Impossible Subjects: Illegal Aliens and the Making of Modern America*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Passel, Jeffrey S. 2019. "How Pew Research Center Counted U.S. Unauthorized Immigrants in 2019". *Pew Research Center*. Available at: <https://www.pewresearch.org/short-reads/2019/07/12/how-pew-research-center-counts-unauthorized-immigrants-in-us/>
- Passel, Jeffrey and D’Vera Cohn 2019. "Mexicans decline to less than half the U.S. unauthorized immigrant population for the first time". *Pew Research Center*. Available at: <https://www.pewresearch.org/short-reads/2019/06/12/us-unauthorized-immigrant-population-2017/>
- Pedroza, Juan Manuel. 2022. "Uneven Migration Enforcement". *Contexts* 21(2), 60-63
- PICUM, Platform for International Cooperation on Undocumented Migrants. 2024. "Exclusion by Design: Unveiling Unequal Treatment and Racial Inequalities in Migration Policies". Available at: <https://picum.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/08/Exclusion-by-design.pdf>
- Ruggles, Steven, Sarah Flood, Matthew Sobek, Daniel Backman, Grace Cooper, Julia A. Rivera Drew, Stephanie Richards, Renae Rodgers, Jonathan Schroeder, and Kari C.W. Williams. 2024. *IPUMS USA: Version 16.0 [dataset]*. Minneapolis, MN: IPUMS. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.18128/D010.V16.0>
- Ryo, Emily. 2019. "Understanding Immigration Detention: Causes, Conditions, and Consequences." *Annual Review of Law and Social Science* 15: 97-115.
- Ryo, Emily, and Peacock, I. 2019. "Beyond the Walls: The Importance of Community Contexts in Immigration Detention". *American Behavioral Scientist* 63(9), 1250-1275
- Schultheis, Ryan and Ariel G. Ruiz Soto. 2017. "A revolving door no more? A statistical profile of Mexicans Repatriated from the United States". *Migration Policy Institute*. Available at: <https://www.migrationpolicy.org/sites/default/files/publications/RevolvingDoor-Mexico-FINAL.pdf>

- Schwarz, Inga. 2016. "Racializing Freedom of Movement in Europe. Experiences of Racial Profiling at European Borders and Beyond". *Movements. Journal for Critical Migration and Border Regime Studies* 2(1): 253-265
- Sohn H, Pebley AR, Landrian Gonzalez A, Goldman N. 2023. "Deportations and departures: Undocumented Mexican immigrants' return migration during three presidential administrations". *PNAS* 120(9):e2212184120.
- Waila, Harsha. 2021. *Border and Rule. Global Migration, Capitalism, and the Rise of Racist Nationalism*. Haymarket Books.
- Walters, William. 2002. "Deportation, Expulsion, and the International Police of Aliens". *Citizenship Studies* 6(3): 265–292.
- Warren, Robert, and John Robert Warren. 2013. "Unauthorized Immigration to the United States: Annual Estimates and Components of Change, by State, 1990 to 2010." *International Migration Review* 47(2):296-329
- Wright, Erik Olin. 2015. *Understanding Class*. Verso
- Zúñiga, Víctor and Hernández-León, Rubén. 2005. *New Destinations: Mexican Immigration in the United States*. Russel Sage Foundation.

# **Decomposing Deportation Risk: Variations Across Immigration Enforcement Regimes, 2009-2019**

## **Introduction**

The number of deportations in the U.S. has risen dramatically over the past two decades, averaging around 367,000 annual removals between 2009 and 2019 (DHS 2019). This growth has been accompanied by an unprecedented expansion in the capacities, resources, and reach of immigration enforcement, transforming it into a complex and cross-governmental system with far-reaching abilities to track, apprehend, detain, and deport non-citizens both at the border and at the interior of the country (Meissner et al 2013). This expansion, often linked to the post-9/11 restructuring of immigration control around national security priorities (Chishti and Bergeron 2011), has transcended partisan divides, with policies becoming more restrictive overall and immigration being generally criminalized irrespective of the occupant of the White House. And still, immigration enforcement “starts with the vast federal structures that vet and screen individuals for ‘deportability’” (Garip, Gleeson and Hall 2019).

Scholars have argued that deportability, or non-citizen’s risk of deportation, is unequally distributed across the immigrant population (De Genova 2016). These variations in deportation risk reflect both the selective and discretionary nature of enforcement with regards to particular immigrants being targeted for removal on the basis on their individual characteristics, as well as the structural, policy, and political contexts in which enforcement occurs. As discussed in Chapter 2, individual characteristics such as gender, indigeneity and acculturation shape migrants’ differential exposure to deportation. However, deportation risk also varies across broader political and institutional contexts: for instance, the implementation of policies that deepen the links

between criminal and immigration enforcement (Amuedo-Dorantes et al. 2019, Coleman and Kocher 2019), the diffusion of changing norms around policing (Coleman 2012, Armenta 2017), or the adoption of surveillance and data technologies to enforcement actions (Amuedo-Dorantes and Pozo 2019, Martinez-Aranda 2020). While many of these actions are applied by local and state-governments, federal policy sets institutional foundations for immigration enforcement actions and the overarching tone and priorities for removal. Yet, we know relatively little about how deportation risk varies across distinct federal immigration enforcement regimes.

Building on the previous chapter's analysis of the variations in deportation risk across individual characteristics, this study addresses that gap by examining changes in undocumented Mexican immigrants' deportation risk across three different enforcement regimes, each characterized not only by the presidential administration, but by how policies were directed and priorities for deportation were defined at the federal level: generalized enforcement under Barack Obama (2009 – 2012), prioritized enforcement under Barack Obama (2013 – 2016), and generalized enforcement under Donald Trump (2017 – 2019). Specifically, I aim to answer two research questions. First, how did deportation risk vary across immigration enforcement regimes? And second, how much of that variation is explained by changes in the composition of the undocumented population? I use EMIF-Norte data on deported Mexican migrants and estimates of the likely undocumented Mexican population calculated from the American Community Survey to decompose changes in deportation risk across immigration enforcement regimes, with the goal of understanding whether variations are primarily explained by changes in the composition of the undocumented population, or whether they can be attributed to shifts in the practices and processes of enforcement related to the policy, political and institutional contexts of the different enforcement regimes.

The findings of this study reveal clear variations in deportation risk across enforcement periods: deportation risk declined sharply between Obama’s first and second terms, then rose again under Trump. The decomposition analysis reveals that part of the difference in the likelihood of deportation between the two Obama periods stems from compositional changes in the undocumented population. However, a substantial share of the difference between the two Obama periods and most of the difference between the second Obama period and Trump’s regime cannot be explained by observable individual characteristics or state-level variation, suggesting that federal enforcement priorities, policy dynamics, and the national political context played a decisive role in shaping the likelihood of being deported from the U.S.

In a time in which the government of the United States in particular, and the governments and leaders of the Global North in general, continuously weaponize anti-immigrant political platforms centered around the removal of immigrants, a clearer picture of the weight of federal discourse, policy and actions, beyond the structural forces that shape immigrant’s social positions and their “susceptibility to deportation” (De Genova 2014), is crucial to deepen our understanding of how the state apparatus and its coercive power can be mobilized to systematically target non-citizens for deportation.

### **Immigration control from 2009 to 2019: Obama, Trump, and changes in enforcement priorities**

The structures, laws and institutions that make deportation in the U.S. possible are a relatively recent historical development (Garip, Gleeson and Hall 2019). This process began with the Johnson-Reed Immigration Act in 1924, the first federal comprehensive immigration restriction law, which articulated a new nation-state territoriality based on two key elements of immigration

enforcement: border control (through the creation of the Border Patrol) and deportation policy (Ngai 2004). Major federal immigration reforms in 1965 (the Hart-Celler Act) and 1986 (the Immigration Reform and Control Act), while ending the national quota system and enacting a regularization program for some undocumented immigrants, respectively, brought forth new efforts to dramatically expand border enforcement, criminalize and militarize the Mexico-U.S. border, and prioritize the removal of “illegal aliens”. Finally, the 1996 Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act (IIRIRA), the most important law in the advancement of the criminalization of immigration (Abrego et al. 2017), made its explicit goal to counter the rapidly-growing undocumented population. This law brought immigration and crime control closer together by increasing penalties on immigrants who had violated U.S. law in some way, as well as expanding border control actions and resources, curtailing judicial discretion, and institutionalizing fast-track removal procedures (Abrego et al. 2017). Overall, these federal laws and policies expanded the grounds of deportability (in other words, more people became eligible for deportation) and provided the foundation to build the infrastructure to make it easier to find, apprehend, and deport non-citizens.

While no comprehensive federal immigration reform bill has been enacted since 1996, despite multiple attempts to pass one over the past 30 years (Stevenson 2024, Munnell 2020), subsequent administrations inherited and expanded this “formidable deportation machinery” (Meissner et al. 2013). In particular, two initiatives that “delegated the federal authority to carry out immigration enforcement tasks to local and state police personnel” (Amuedo-Dorantes et al. 2019) had an undeniable impact on the rising number of deportations: 287(g) agreements, which were part of the IIRIRA provisions and had spread out across the U.S. by 2007, and the Secure Communities program, which came into being in 2008 (Coleman and Kocher 2019). Both

programs put immigrants in the path to removal following contact with any state and local police: 287(g) agreements allow local officers to determine the status of immigrants who have not had any contact with immigration agents, while Secure Communities flags immigrants whose fingerprints or information is in an immigration database (Kandel 2016, Amuedo-Dorantes et al. 2019). In addition to contributing directly to the dramatic rise in deportations, both programs have been identified as relying on racial profiling, racially discrepant police action and general discrimination practices around policing, apprehension and detention (Coleman and Kocher 2019, Cantor et al. 2015).

By the time Barack Obama took office in 2009, deportation had become a process backed by a vast enforcement bureaucracy. Apprehensions at the border decreased greatly compared to previous administrations, which in many ways was the result of “a sharp decrease in unauthorized inflows, in particular of Mexicans” (Chishti, Pierce and Bolter 2017)<sup>5</sup>. On the other hand, the number of deportations from the interior of the country reached record numbers by the first years of his administration, which led to Obama being labeled as “Deporter in Chief” by immigrant-rights groups and communities (Golash-Boza 2018, Hing 2018). As mentioned by Golash-Boza (2018), some people find it ironic that it is Obama, the son of an immigrant and a president from the Democratic party, who has deported the largest number of people from the interior of the United States to date<sup>6</sup>. However, as she points out, while he inherited the

---

<sup>5</sup> Villareal’s (2014) study on the decline in Mexican migration to the U.S. finds that the economic contraction in the U.S. explains most of the changes in the volume of the Mexican migration flow, particularly due to the lower labor demand for Mexican immigrants in key sectors of the U.S. (e.g. construction). Increased border enforcement was also related to declines in emigration to the U.S., while economic conditions in Mexico and demographic changes like fertility decline had little effect. On the other hand, the study by Massey, Durand and Pren (2016) suggests that declines in the probability of undocumented migration to the U.S. after 2008 are not related to border enforcement, but almost entirely to the effects of the U.S. recession and changes in Mexican fertility and demography.

<sup>6</sup> Estimates of interior removals during the Obama period lie around 2.7 million people deported: far more than any previous administrations (American Immigration Council 2017, Golash-Boza 2018). The bulk of the numbers during the Clinton and Bush years came from border apprehensions (Chishti, Pierce and Bolter 2017).

immigration enforcement system from Republican president George Bush, it was during Clinton's administration in 1996 that the bill that allowed for the dramatic rise in deportations and the growth of the enforcement apparatus was signed in the first place (Golash-Boza 2018). Thus, the first four years under president Obama were marked by rising numbers of interior immigration detention and removals, which were not only driven by the widespread presence of the 287(g) agreements and Secure Communities programs discussed above, but by discretion related-factors such as the political context and the increased state's apprehension and detention capacity (Moinester 2018, 2024). Additionally, Obama heavily increased the budget destined for immigration enforcement, which "came to be 24 percent higher than funding allocated to all other principal federal criminal law enforcement agencies combined" (Chishti, Pierce and Bolter 2017). All in all, between 2009 and 2012, there were about one million immigrant apprehensions and close to 400,000 interior deportations of non-citizens per year (Amuedo-Dorantes et al. 2019), an unprecedented number by all accounts.

The "Deporter in Chief" faced backlash due to deportations' adverse impact on the lives of immigrants left behind across several outcomes (Abrego and León 2025, Valdivia 2021, Brabeck & Xu 2010), negative "spill over" effects to other undocumented and documented immigrant communities, and communities of color more generally (Hagan, Rodriguez and Castro 2011, Roche, Vaquera, White, & Rivera, 2018, Asad 2020), and mounting allegations of racial profiling and discrimination in immigration enforcement (Coleman and Kocher 2019).

In this context, June 2010 marked the beginnings of a conversation towards having Immigration and Customs Enforcement's (ICE) agents perform a more focused enforcement, and

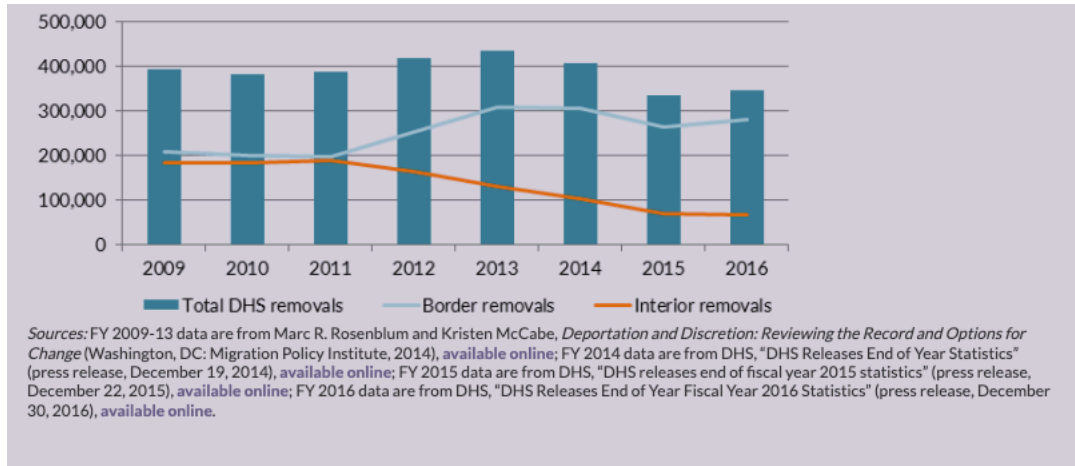
in 2011 ICE “outlined the use of prosecutorial discretion to advance enforcement priorities”<sup>7</sup> (Amuedo-Dorantes et al. 2019: 520). Subsequently, in June 2012, ICE officers were “instructed not to place undocumented immigrants in removal proceedings or pursue a deportation order if they were considered ‘low priority’” (Amuedo-Dorantes et al. 2019:521)<sup>8</sup>. These efforts crystallized in the 2014 Priority Enforcement Program (PEP), which redefined deportation priorities around individuals with criminal convictions and recent border crossers (Chishti, Pierce and Bolter 2017). Furthermore, due to mounting pressures, the Obama administration scaled back 287(g) agreements in 2012, and shelved Secure Communities in 2014 (Coleman and Kocher 2014).

As a consequence of these changes in policy and shifts in priorities, there was a marked difference in the type of removals by apprehension location during Obama’s second administration: while border removals increased due to the focus on recent border crossers, interior deportations decreased and concentrated on immigrants with criminal records (Scher 2025). These patterns are evident in *Migration Policy Institute’s* analysis of removal trends during Obama’s presidency (Figure 1). Amuedo-Dorantes et al.’s (2019) study of the criminal profile of deportees following the shift to prioritized enforcement similarly shows that there was a lower likelihood of deportees being arrested for a minor offense compared to the period of “widespread enforcement”.

---

<sup>7</sup> “Prosecutorial discretion applies to a broad range of enforcement decisions, including deciding whom to detain or to release on bond, supervision, personal recognizance, or other condition” (National Immigration Forum 2013, as cited in Amuedo-Dorantes et al. 2019).

<sup>8</sup> For the details on the priority groups, see the 2017 report from the Bipartisan Policy Center, available at <https://bipartisanpolicy.org/article/comparing-trump-and-obamas-deportation-priorities/>



**Figure 1. DHS removals by apprehension location. Fiscal years 2009-2016.**

Source: Chishti, Pierce and Bolter. 2017. "The Obama Record on Deportations: Deporter in Chief or Not?". *Migration Policy Institute*, Washington D.C.

All these changes would be reversed within a couple of years with the election of Donald Trump to the presidency. Running with an explicitly anti-immigrant agenda and a highly incendiary Mexican-phobic rhetoric and hate speech regarding the presence of “countless illegal immigrants” and the “pouring of ‘bad hombres’ into the U.S.”, Trump made sure to weaponize immigration enforcement as soon as he reached the White House in January 2017. Through a series of executive orders and new regulations for federal agencies, newly elected Donald Trump reactivated Secure Communities and made all unauthorized immigrants a priority for deportation, effectively ending the Priority Enforcement Program. His actions also included enhancing border security through the building of a wall along the Mexico-U.S. border (eventually unfinished and highly ineffective, but an important symbolic element of his platform), implementing a “zero tolerance policy” that separated families that arrived at the border (targeting mostly Central American migrants), punishing sanctuary cities, expanding the E-verify program, ending the Temporary Protected Status (TPS) and the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) programs, establishing an asylum ban and dramatically limiting refugee admissions (Verea 2020, Hogan 2024, Pierce, Bolter and Selee 2018).

These actions had a profound impact on the severity and hostility of immigration enforcement. Arrests and detentions in particular, increased greatly during the first year of the Trump administration. Removals increased as well compared to the final Obama years, although “the numbers remained far from the peak enforcement years” (Capps et al. 2018). What’s more, throughout Trump’s first administration, deportation totals never reached those recorded under Obama (Chishti and Bush-Joseph 2024, Scher 2025). Scher (2025) argues that Trump’s focus on more “sensationalistic policies” such as family separations, building a wall, enacting asylum bans and limiting refugee admissions were not effective at “racking up big numbers”. At the same time, their effects were far from trivial. In addition to the violence, cruelty and aggression that these policies embodied, a report by Cantor, Ryo and Humprey (2019) shows that, during the first half of the Trump presidency, ICE encountered and arrested more women than during the last part of the Obama administration. Additionally, there was a sharp increase in the number of U.S. citizens encountered by ICE. Finally, over 85% of all removals during the first part of the Trump administration were individuals with no criminal convictions or non-violent convictions, a finding shared by the Law Enforcement Immigration Task Force (2021).

Across these three enforcement regimes, generalized enforcement under Barack Obama (2009 – 2012), prioritized enforcement under Barack Obama (2013 – 2016), and generalized enforcement under Donald Trump (2017 – 2019), shifts in policies, priorities and rhetoric shaped who became deportable, under what conditions, and with what likelihood. The characteristics described above thus provide the institutional and political context for analyzing how deportation risk varied over these years.

## **Composition vs. behavior: Explaining variation in deportation risk**

As mentioned by Moinester (2018) on her study of spatial differences in immigration detention rates, there are two main explanations for variations in immigration enforcement outcomes: on the one hand, there are differences in the composition of the immigrant population, and on the other, there are differences in the behaviors of the actors involved in immigration enforcement. In other words, changes over time (or differences across space) in immigration enforcement outcomes are the product of both demographic shifts in the “deportable population” and shifts in institutional forces and practices that carry out those enforcement actions: who is available to be targeted for deportation and how enforcement agencies choose to act.

Composition effects thus refer to changes that result from differences in the characteristics of the population at risk, in this case, Mexican undocumented immigrants. This element is important because, as studied in Chapter 2, some immigrants possess characteristics that make them more susceptible to deportation, and those might vary across space or, in the case of the present study, across time. While this analysis encompasses only ten years (2009-2019), there were important changes in the Mexican immigrant population due to two major shifts in the nature of the Mexico-U.S. migration flow following the 2008 economic recession. First, a sharp decrease in Mexican emigration to the U.S. and second, a dramatic increase in return migration to Mexico (Villareal 2014, Massey, Durand and Pren 2016, Masferrer 2021). As such, the Mexican-born population in the U.S. not only sharply decreased in numbers during one decade<sup>9</sup> (Passel and Cohn 2019, Warren 2019), but it is possible that its characteristics also changed.

---

<sup>9</sup> According to estimates from the Pew Research Center in 2019 “the number of Mexican unauthorized immigrants in the United States declined so sharply over the past decade that they no longer are the majority of those living in the country illegally” (Passel and Cohn 2019).

Behavioral effects are typically represented by the “unexplained” part a decomposition framework, as opposed to the part of the difference that is explained by the compositional characteristics, or “endowment effect”. In the case of this analytical framework, the behavioral effects refer to the shifts in policy and enforcement priorities at the federal level, as well as any other elements of the political structure and climate that might affect immigration officers’ discretion when deciding whom to arrest, detain and deport (Moinester 2018). This is the discretion eloquently conceptualized by Arjen Ellerman when he argues that “when faced with the legislation and implementation of [...] coercive policies, state actors in diverse political contexts arrive at different choices regarding whom to target for regulation” (Ellerman 2009: 5). One of the key implications of this principle when applied to immigration policy is that the grounds and criteria for removal are determined by a State’s changing and evolving enforcement apparatus (Walters 2002). Those policies are then enacted within wide margins of discretion by multiple distinct actors at many different administrative levels of implementation (Asad 2019). In other words, these discretionary practices are shaped by federal policies and priorities and later mediated through political contexts, institutional incentives, and racialized narratives of criminality and belonging (Armenta 2017, Menjivar et al. 2018).

There is a final element that needs to be taken into account: the interaction between composition and behavior. In other words, it is not only that the characteristics of immigrants and the enforcement behaviors could change over time, but the way that those characteristics matter might change between one immigration enforcement regime and the other. Moinester (2018) exemplifies this interaction effect for spatial differences in detention rates by arguing that agents on the ground might exercise their discretion differently depending on the demographics of the immigrant population in a particular region. For instance, migrants might be at greater risk

of racial profiling in demographic contexts where they cannot blend in as easily. We can imagine that something similar could happen between enforcement regimes, particularly between the Obama and Trump periods. Trump's directive to deport all immigrants, irrespective of individual characteristics, could have an effect in the way that discretion is exercised (in this case, discretion mattering less than before).

Understanding changes in deportation risk over time, conceptualized here as three different "enforcement regimes", thus requires disentangling, or decomposing, these two fundamental dimensions of immigration control and the changing landscape of deportability: the composition of the deportable population and the behavior of enforcement actors and institutions. This analytic strategy parallels similar approaches in social sciences that decompose spatial or temporal differences into "endowment" and "behavioral" components (Blinder 1973; Oaxaca 1973). In migration studies, decomposition techniques have been used to analyze differences in outcomes such as income (Catron, Vignau-Loria and Farr 2023), health and mortality (Zheng and Yu 2025), and education (Galster et al. 2022). Yet their application to deportation processes remains rare. By estimating the share of deportation risk attributable to the observed characteristics of the immigrant population and the unobserved structural factors, this decomposition analysis provides a way to operationalize what theoretical and qualitative studies have long described: the selective and uneven application of coercive state power and legal violence over the non-citizen population (Abrego et al. 2017, Ellerman 2009).

## Data

This study employs two different data sources. The first one is the National Survey on Migration at the Northern Border, or *EMIF-Norte-Deportados* (EN-D). The EMIF survey is administered by the Colegio de la Frontera Norte (COLEF), a Mexican public research institution, in collaboration with the National Population Council (CONAPO), the National Migration Institute (INM), the Foreign Ministry (SRE), and the Labor Ministry (STPS). The EN-D is part of a larger group of surveys that capture 7 different migration flows that reflect the diversity of spatial mobility in Mexico: internal migration to and from the northern border, international migration to and from the United States (including deportation), and international migration to and from Central America. Their goal is to estimate the volume of the migration flow at Mexico's borders and the characteristics of the migrants by employing a probabilistic sampling design that allows them to capture a random sample of their different target populations. In the case of the EN-D, the survey employs a two-stage sampling design to obtain a representative random sample of the Mexican population repatriated at the official reception points along the U.S.-Mexico border and the Mexico City airport (Schultheis and Ruiz Soto 2017). Survey investigators estimate that its frame captures between 90% and 95% of the flow (Sohn et al. 2023). The survey weights take into account that not all individuals have an equal probability of being selected and included in the survey, and adjust for this unequal probability. One of the key strengths of this survey is that it includes a detailed set of deportees' individual characteristics, including both pre-migration features and post-migration experiences. The survey is administered as deportees re-enter Mexico at the official reception points. Its target population is Mexican nationals, ages 15 and older, residents of Mexico or the U.S., repatriated by the U.S. immigration authorities to the Mexican migration authorities. Importantly, the survey includes

both those who were deported and those who were subjected to expedited removal. Finally, the EN-D survey captures individual characteristics, as well as information regarding U.S. migration and deportation experiences. Individual files from 2009 to 2019 were homogenized in all key variables.

The deported population that is included in this analysis are the deportees subjected to interior immigration enforcement. This distinction follows Moinester's (2019) methodology to identify interior immigration enforcement and then adapt it to the data available from the EMIF survey. This inductive process results in a definition that is temporal, geographic, and administrative, as it combines information on: the geographic location of detention, place of detention, time since arrival in U.S., and agency that performed the detention. Thus, "interior enforcement" are those deportees that (1) were present in the U.S. for more than 1 month before their removal, (2) were not detained "crossing" or "in the desert/mountain" (per EMIF definitions) and (3) were not subjected to an expedited removal (data available since 2014).

The second dataset I employ in this study is the *American Community Survey* (ACS) *Integrated Public Use Microdata Series* (IPUMS) (Ruggles et al. 2024). I obtain State-level yearly microdata samples from 2009 to 2019 with the variables necessary to "impute" legal status on the Mexican-born population (following Hall et al's (2010) logical imputation method described in Chapter 2), and those that will later be used to characterize the Mexican undocumented population. The first ones include place of birth, citizenship status, year of arrival to the U.S., educational attainment, school enrollment, and occupation. The second ones include sex, age, marital status, language use, race, and state of residence in the U.S. Finally, I extracted person-weights for each individual, which were used to adjust estimates of population representation.

A central element of this research design is the harmonization of variables across both data sources. Because the EMIF-Norte and the ACS differ in the measurement of certain individual characteristics, it was necessary to standardize the key variables to ensure comparability. As described in more detail in Chapter 2, this process involved aligning definitions and coding schemes so that variables drawn from each dataset could be analyzed jointly and consistently.

Finally, the enforcement regimes were defined as (1) generalized enforcement under Barack Obama (2009 – 2012), (2) prioritized enforcement under Barack Obama (2013 – 2016), and (3) generalized enforcement under Donald Trump (2017 – 2019). The 2012/2013 cutoff for the two enforcement periods during the Obama administration was defined by both deductive and inductive rationales. On the former, and following the arguments in the section above, while ICE put forward conversations and outlines on “prosecutorial discretion” to advance enforcement priorities in 2010 and 2011, it was not until 2012 that ICE officers “were instructed not to place undocumented immigrants in removal proceedings or pursue a deportation order if they were considered ‘low priority’” (Amuedo-Dorantes et al. 2019:521). Similarly, 287(g) agreement programs, which have been identified as key drivers of the rise in interior deportations during the 2000s (Coleman and Kocher 2019) were scaled back in 2012. In their own analysis of the impact of “widespread vs prioritized enforcement” on the criminal profile of deportees, Amuedo-Dorantes et al. (2019) choose the same 2012/2013 cutoff, although their reasoning is for the most part related to the prioritization of criminal offender removals and not explicitly with changes in the local implementation of these federal directives. The inductive rationale is related to the observed changes in interior enforcement numbers and rates. Chishti, Pierce and Bolter’s (2017) report for the *Migration Policy Institute* shows a slight decline in interior deportations from 2011 to 2012, which is much more pronounced in 2013 and stabilizes by 2014 (see Figure 1). My estimates with

the EMIF data for Mexican deportees similarly show a decrease in interior enforcement deportations (as defined above and in Chapter 1) following 2011, which are stabilized by 2013. My estimates of deportation rates for likely undocumented Mexican immigrants, which combine EMIF and ACS data (see Chapter 2 for details on their calculation) similarly show a downward trend following 2011, which stabilizes for the rest of the Obama period (Figure 2). Finally, as discussed above, the generalized enforcement under Donald Trump period (2017 – 2019), marked both a change in the presidential administration and the federal policies, priorities and rhetoric. The analysis stops in 2019 because the COVID-19 pandemic changed the patterns of emigration from Mexico and immigration enforcement in the U.S., and data collection on deportees changed or outright stopped during the most severe months of the pandemic.

## **Methods**

In order to explore the differences in deportation risk across immigration enforcement regimes, I estimate a series of logistic regression models pooling the individual-level Mexican interior deportee data from EMIF and the individual-level “likely undocumented Mexican immigrant” data from the ACS. The dependent variable is a binary indicator for deportation: all EMIF individuals are coded as “1”, whereas all ACS individuals are coded as “0”. This approach follows the logic used by Sohn et al. (2023), who similarly combine EMIF-Norte data with survey-based estimates of the undocumented population to construct a denominator and model deportation risk.

I estimate two sets of logistic models. The first set explores the differences in the likelihood of deportation between Obama’s generalized enforcement period (2009 – 2012) and Obama’s prioritized enforcement period (2013 – 2016). Model 1 includes only an enforcement

regime indicator; Model 2 adds individual-level characteristics (age, gender, marital status, indigeneity, English proficiency, and time in the United States); and Model 3 adds state-fixed effects to account for differences in local enforcement environments. The second set of models replicates this structure to explore the differences in the likelihood of deportation between Obama’s prioritized enforcement period (2013-2016) and Trump’s generalized enforcement period (2017-2019). Model 4 includes only the enforcement regime indicator; Model 5 adds all individual covariates mentioned above, and Model 6 adds state-fixed effects<sup>10</sup>.

In the final stage of this analysis I estimate two Blinder-Oaxaca decompositions that look deeper into (1) the difference in the likelihood of deportation between the Obama generalized enforcement period and the Obama prioritized enforcement period, and (2) the difference in the likelihood of deportation between the Obama prioritized enforcement period and the Trump generalized enforcement period (Blinder 1973; Oaxaca 1973; see also Kitagawa (1955) for the first presentation of methods for decomposing differences of two groups on the same outcome). As mentioned above, this analysis allows me to disentangle how much of the difference in deportation risk can be explained by group differences in Mexican likely undocumented immigrants’ observed characteristics between the two periods (the “endowment” effect) and how much of the difference remains unexplained by demographic shifts. The remaining “unexplained” portion is attributable to (a) unobserved individual characteristics, (2) unmeasured changes in social processes such as policies, deportation priorities, and agents’ discretion, and (3) the interaction between the observed changes in immigrant’s characteristics and enforcement behavior mentioned above; in other words, changes in the manner in which individual characteristics matter.

---

<sup>10</sup> In supplementary analysis, I explore the differences in the likelihood of deportation between Obama’s generalized enforcement and Trump’s generalized enforcement periods, through an analysis that follows the same structure: a first model that includes the enforcement regime indicator, a second model that adds the individual covariates, and a third model that adds state-fixed effects.

I include all the individual-level characteristics from the previous models as the covariates that capture the “endowment” effect. Because the size of the effects depend on which group’s coefficients are used as the benchmark to weigh the other group, my decomposition approach uses the coefficients from a pooled model over both groups as the reference coefficients (Jan 2008; Montenegro 2022; Neumark 1988). Finally, because decomposition results can vary by the omitted category among categorical variables, I follow recommended procedures of normalizing dummy variable effects (Yun 2005). These analyses were conducted using the *oaxaca* Stata command with the *logit* option (Jan 2008)<sup>11</sup>.

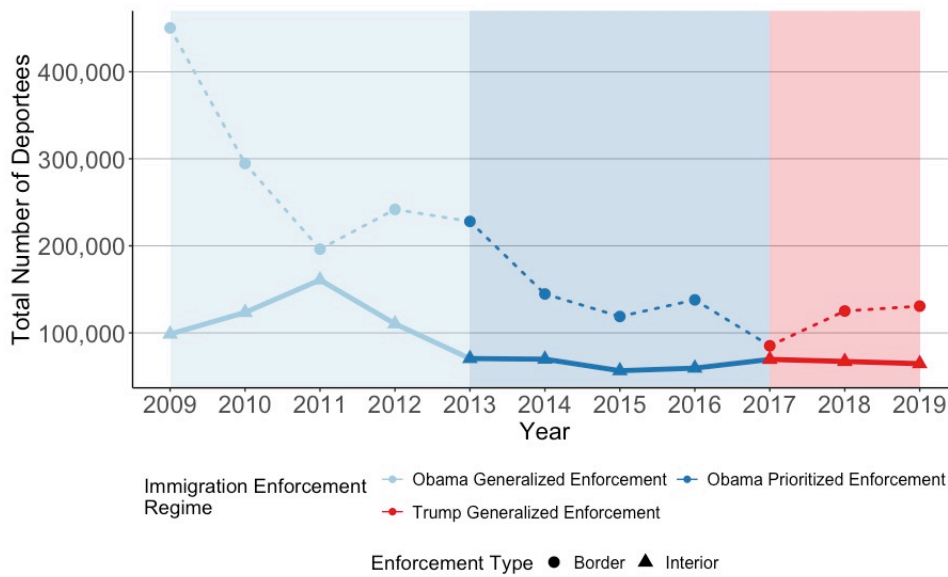
## **Results**

### *Descriptive analysis of temporal patterns*

I begin with two descriptive figures that explore the temporal patterns of removals from the U.S. Figure 1 shows the numbers of border and interior enforcement deportations of Mexican immigrants calculated with the EMIF data. Figure 2 depicts the interior deportation rates for likely undocumented Mexican immigrants, estimated with data on interior enforcement deportees from EMIF and likely undocumented immigrants from the ACS (see Chapters 1 and 2 for more details). These results provide a good context for the subsequent analyses.

---

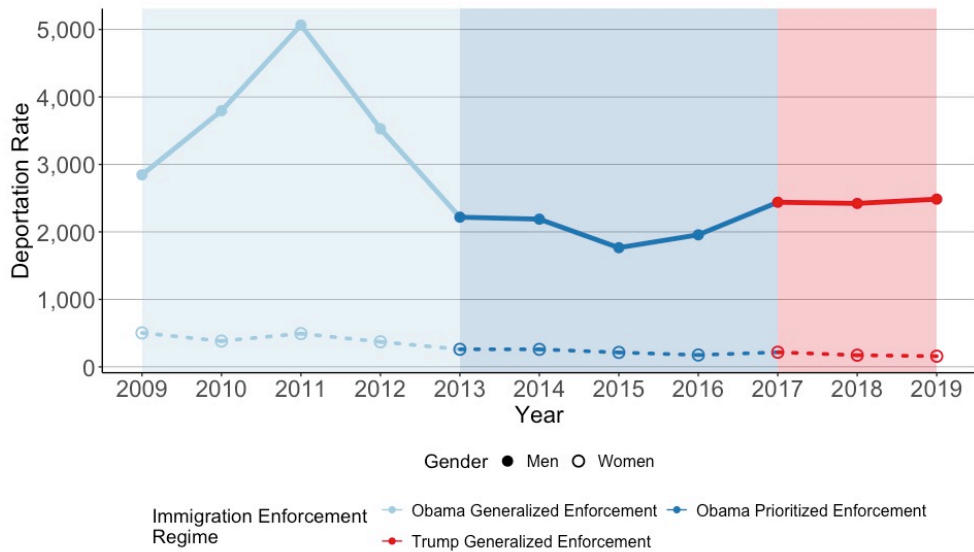
<sup>11</sup> Sensitivity analysis included running the analysis using Robert Fairlie’s (1999) approach for non-linear models based on the Blinder-Oaxaca decomposition. See <https://rfairlie.sites.luskin.ucla.edu/non-linear-decomposition-code/> for the application of the approach using the Stata “fairlie” command. Results were similar to the linear probability model decomposition, with the Fairlie decomposition estimates for the explained portion of the differences slightly lower.



**Figure 2. Mexican deportees by type of enforcement and immigration enforcement regime, 2009-2019.**

Source: Own elaboration with EMIF-Norte and ACS data

As shown in Figure 2, the number of interior deportations of Mexican immigrants increased steadily during the first years of the Obama administration, reaching a record high in 2011 of 160,800 men and women deportees. Deportation rates in Figure 3 show a similar pattern of steady growth until 2011. As mentioned before, these are the years in which 287(g) agreements and Secure Communities were being actively implemented across the United States. During 2012, the last year of the generalized enforcement period under Obama, we see the beginning of a decline in both interior enforcement deportations and deportation rates. The period of prioritized enforcement with Obama (2013-2016) shows a relative stabilization in the number of interior enforcement deportees and deportation rates. Finally, Figures 2 and 3 show that during the period of generalized enforcement under Trump (2017-2019) the number of interior enforcement deportations was relatively stable. However, there was a slight increase in deportation rates. These changes reflect both demographic shifts in the deportable population and, on the other hand, changes in policy, priorities, rhetoric and discretion.



**Figure 3. Deportation rates by gender and immigration enforcement regime per 100,000 Mexican likely undocumented immigrants, 2009-2019.**  
 Source: Own elaboration with EMIF-Norte and ACS data

*Differences in deportation risk across enforcement regimes*

Table 1 presents results from a set of logistic regression models from the pooled EMIF (interior enforcement) and ACS (likely undocumented) data described above, which estimate the likelihood of deportation under different enforcement regimes. The first three models explore the differences between the Obama’s generalized enforcement Obama (2009 – 2012) and Obama’s prioritized enforcement (2013 – 2016), and the other three models explore the differences between Obama’s prioritized enforcement (2013-2016) and Trump’s generalized enforcement (2017-2019). Coefficients are expressed in log-odds, with standard errors in parentheses.

<b>Table 1. Logistic regressions predicting deportation</b>						
	Obama generalized enforcement vs. Obama prioritized enforcement (2009-2016) (N=323,888)			Obama prioritized enforcement vs Trump generalized enforcement (2016-2019) (N=260,289)		
	Model 1 Enforcement Regime	Model 2 Individual Characteristics	Model 3 State Fixed-Effects	Model 4 Enforcement Regime	Model 5 Individual Characteristics	Model 6 State Fixed-Effects
	Regime reference: Obama generalized enforcement			Regime reference: Obama prioritized enforcement		
Enforcement Regime	-0.507*** (0.017)	-0.233*** (0.019)	-0.203*** (0.020)	0.033 + (0.022)	0.137*** (0.024)	0.154*** (0.025)
Age		0.129*** (0.006)	0.130*** (0.006)		0.113*** (0.008)	0.113*** (0.008)
Age-Squared		-0.002*** (0.000)	-0.002*** (0.000)		-0.002*** (0.000)	-0.002*** (0.000)
Gender (Ref: "Men")		-2.218*** (0.029)	-2.238*** (0.030)		-2.25*** (0.040)	-2.268*** (0.028)
Married ( Ref: "Single")						
Married		0.376*** (0.021)	0.333*** (0.022)		-0.049+ (0.027)	-0.019 (0.027)
Divorced		0.633*** (0.039)	0.627*** (0.040)		0.584*** (0.045)	0.508*** (0.046)
Widowed		0.272* (0.123)	0.325** (0.125)		0.146 (0.153)	0.1723 (0.153)
Indigenous (Ref: "No")		1.683*** (0.049)	1.746*** (0.052)		1.70*** (0.058)	1.789*** (0.060)
Time in the U.S.		-0.241*** (0.005)	-0.248*** (0.004)		-0.250*** (0.028)	-0.238*** (0.029)
Time in the U.S.- Squared		0.005*** (0.000)	0.004*** (0.000)		0.005*** (0.000)	0.005*** (0.000)
English (Ref: "No")						
Some English		-0.816*** (0.021)	-0.700*** (0.022)		-0.930*** (0.028)	-0.861*** (0.029)
Good English		-1.031*** (.024)	-0.878*** (0.025)		-1.111*** (0.030)	-1.044*** (0.031)
State fixed-effects			YES			YES
+ $p < 0.1$ , * $p < 0.05$ , ** $p < 0.01$ , *** $p < 0.001$ Coefficients from "missing" categories suppressed						

Results in Models 1–3 show a consistent and statistically significant decline in the likelihood of deportation during the Obama prioritized enforcement period compared to Obama’s generalized enforcement regime. During Obama’s prioritized enforcement period, the odds of deportation were approximately 40% lower ( $1 - e^{-0.507}$ ) compared to Obama’s first period,

without any controls. After adjusting for individual characteristics and state fixed effects, the odds of deportation go down to 18% lower ( $1 - e^{-0.203}$ ) for Obama's second period compared to his first period, which means that individual characteristics do account for some of that difference in deportation risk.

In contrast, the difference in the odds of deportation between Obama's prioritized enforcement and Trump's generalized enforcement is, in the unadjusted model, quite small and not statistically significant. However, once we add immigrants' individual characteristics and state fixed-effects, the odds of deportation increase in magnitude and become significant; the odds of being deported under Trump are 17% higher ( $1 - e^{0.154}$ ) compared to Obama's period of prioritized enforcement. This pattern suggests that compositional shifts in the underlying likely-undocumented population mask part of the difference between regimes in the raw specification. Once these compositional characteristics are held constant, the underlying enforcement shift under Trump becomes more visible<sup>12</sup>. The introduction of state fixed-effects further amplifies the log-odds estimate by controlling for geographic heterogeneity in removals<sup>13</sup>.

The effect of individual characteristics on the likelihood of deportation reveals similar patterns across all models where they are included. Gender emerges as one of the key predictors of deportation, with women having substantially lower odds of being deported compared to men. Indigenous immigrants have much higher odds of being deported, suggesting that indigeneity has

---

<sup>12</sup> The evidence suggests that the likely undocumented population during the Trump period had profiles with lower deportation risk, which made the unadjusted Obama-Trump difference look small and non-significant even if enforcement truly became harsher. Once I adjusted for these traits, the compositional shifts stopped absorbing part of the difference between enforcement regimes, and the effect "became visible".

<sup>13</sup> Supplementary analysis of the difference between Obama's generalized and Trump's generalized enforcement revealed a similar pattern. The unadjusted model suggests that the odds of deportation during Trump's period were 37% lower compared to Obama's regime of generalized enforcement. However, after adjusting for individual characteristics and fixed-effects, we see that the odds of deportation during the period of Trump's presidency were only 2% lower compared to Obama's generalized enforcement during 2009-2012.

a strong association with the probability of being deported and providing evidence of the racialized nature of immigration enforcement. Acculturation indicators reveal that more acculturated immigrants have a lower likelihood of being deported, evident in deportation's negative association with time spent in the U.S., although at a diminishing rate, as well as the lower odds of deportation for those with better English proficiency.

The next section further examines these shifts through a decomposition analysis to assess how changes in the Mexican undocumented population composition and shifts in enforcement actions each contributed to the observed trends.

#### *Decomposition of differences across enforcement regimes*

In the final piece of this analysis, I estimate two decompositions: (1) the difference in the likelihood of deportation between the Obama generalized enforcement period and the Obama prioritized enforcement period and (2) the difference in the likelihood of deportation between the Obama prioritized enforcement period and the Trump generalized enforcement period. Table 2 presents the two pooled decomposition models which, as described above, use the coefficients from a pooled regression. The coefficients here are different from those of the regression analysis, because these are not expressed in log-odds but as linear probability models. I present the disaggregated endowment effects for each of the endowment variables in Appendix Table 1.

Because deportation is a relatively rare outcome when taking into account the entire size of the population-at-risk (undocumented Mexican migrants), the coefficient for the probability of deportation is very small. The focus, however, is on how much of the difference in the likelihood of being deported from the U.S. is due to observable differences among Mexican immigrants' individual characteristics and how much of the difference is due to unexplained social process

(although the unexplained portion could also represent potential effects of differences in unobserved or unmeasurable individual characteristics).

<b>Table 2. Oaxaca-Blinder logit decomposition</b>			
<b>Explained and unexplained portions of the difference in the probability of deportation between interior enforcement regimes</b>			
	Probability of deportation	P> z	Standard Error
<b>1. Difference between Obama generalized enforcement and Obama prioritized enforcement</b>			
Obama – generalized	0.0584	0.000	.0005
Obama – prioritized	0.0357	0.000	.0004
Difference	0.0226	0.000	.0007
Explained	0.0112	0.000	.0003
<i>% of difference</i>	<i>49.55%</i>		
Unexplained	0.0115	0.000	.0006
<i>% of difference</i>	<i>50.45%</i>		
<b>2. Difference between Obama prioritized enforcement and Trump generalized enforcement</b>			
Obama – prioritized	0.0357	0.000	0.0004
Trump – generalized	0.0372	0.000	0.0006
Difference	-0.0015	0.034	0.0007
Explained	0.0002	0.369	0.0002
<i>% of difference</i>	<i>0%</i>		
Unexplained	-0.0017	0.015	0.0007
<i>% of difference</i>	<i>100%</i>		

As shown in the first panel of Table 2, almost half of the difference in the probability of being deported from the U.S. between the Obama generalized enforcement period (2009-2012) and the Obama prioritized enforcement period (2013-2016) is due to “endowment” effects, or changes in the characteristics of the deportable population. Interestingly, most of the contribution to the explained difference is found in the acculturation variables (time in the U.S. and English proficiency, see Appendix Table 1). As mentioned before, this period (2009-2016) saw important changes in the Mexican-born population in the U.S. The decomposition results suggest that about half of the decline in the likelihood of being deported between the two Obama immigration

enforcement regimes was due to the changes in the composition of the undocumented immigrant population. The other half was due to unobserved social processes: changes in policies, the shift in priorities, and the use of discretion.

The second panel of Table 2 presents the decomposition results for the difference in the probability of being deported from the U.S. during the Obama prioritized enforcement period (2013-2016) compared to the Trump generalized enforcement period (2017-2019). Results reveal an interesting finding. First, while the likelihood of being deported during the Trump period was higher compared to the second Obama period, the difference between these two periods is much smaller than for the two Obama periods. This is consistent with the descriptive evidence that finds similar deportation rates between these two periods. The decomposition, however, shows that the portion of the difference in the likelihood of deportation explained by the observed characteristics of the immigrant population in the model is not significant, in other words, its effect on the gap cannot be distinguished from zero. What's more, the negative sign for the "explained" portion of the gap is consistent with the regression results presented above; based on the covariates alone, the odds of deportation under Trump should be lower. Thus, the higher probability of deportation during Trump's generalized enforcement regime is explained not by the Xs (observable individual-level shifts), but instead could be attributed to unobserved individual-level characteristics, unmeasured social processes, such as shifts in policies, priorities and an incendiary rhetoric that influenced agents' discretion, and the interaction between the observed changes in immigrant's composition and shifts in enforcement behavior that resulted from those unmeasured social processes; in other words, changes in the manner in which discretion was applied to individual characteristics<sup>14</sup>.

---

<sup>14</sup> Similar to the regression analysis, I ran a supplementary decomposition that explores the difference between Obama's generalized enforcement period (2009-2012) and Trump's generalized enforcement period (2017-2019). In

## Discussion and Conclusion

Immigration enforcement in general, and deportations in particular, have become one of the most contested elements in American politics. Across the last five elections in the United States, immigration policy has sat at the center of national debates and, in the case of Donald Trump in particular, it shaped presidential campaigns and electoral narratives. Federal approaches to immigration are not only politically charged, but they are also institutionally complex, evident for example in how unattainable a comprehensive immigration bill has been for the past 30 years. Yet, the impact of federal policy on actual enforcement outcomes remains only partially understood.

In this study, I examine how deportation risk shifted across three federal immigration enforcement regimes. These regimes were defined not only by presidential administrations, but by distinct federal directives that shaped enforcement policies and priorities: Obama's generalized enforcement (2009-2012), characterized by a dramatic increase in the number of interior deportations and the widespread presence of 287(g) agreements and Secure Communities; Obama's prioritized enforcement (2013-2016), which scaled down on these two programs and prioritized removals of recent border crossers and persons with criminal convictions; and Trump's generalized enforcement (2017-2019), which reversed these narrower enforcement priorities, reinstated Secure Communities and some 287(g) programs, and generally pursued an explicitly anti-immigrant agenda (Verea 2020, Capps et al. 2018). Each period represented a distinct federal attempt to define who should be targeted for removal, and then delineated a

---

this case, I found that changes in the composition of the population accounted for 56% of the difference between regimes, whereas 44% remained unexplained by observable individual characteristics. This is revealing, because many of the policies and priorities were very similar between the two periods, suggesting that it was another element of immigration enforcement that could account for the difference between the two periods in the likelihood of deportation.

strategy and provided the tools to do. Understanding how those federal policy shifts translated into changes in deportation patterns and profiles thus sheds light on the extent to which federal directives actually constrain, guide, or fail to influence the coercive capacity of the state in practice.

I use EMIF-Norte data on deported Mexican migrants and estimates of the undocumented Mexican population calculated from the American Community Survey to examine how the deportation risk of Mexican undocumented immigrants varied across the immigration enforcement regimes mentioned above. The analytic strategy had three stages: a descriptive exploration of the patterns and trends of deportation numbers and rates across periods; logistic regressions models that estimated the association between each enforcement period and deportation risk; and a decomposition analysis that aimed to understand whether variations are primarily explained by changes in the composition of the undocumented population, or whether they can be partially attributed to the practices and processes of enforcement related to the policy, political and institutional contexts of the different enforcement regimes.

Consistent with the arguments and findings of other immigration enforcement scholars and immigrant right advocates (Golash-Boza 2018, Chishti, Pierce and Bolter 2017, Hing 2018, Capps et al. 2018), I found evidence that interior deportation rates for Mexican undocumented immigrants during the first years of Obama's presidency were the highest across the ten-year period, later dropping down and stabilizing during Obama's period of prioritized enforcement, before slightly increasing again during the Trump administration. After an examination of deportation risk through a series of logistic regressions, I found that the odds of deportation decreased significantly between the two Obama enforcement regimes, although part of that change was associated with the characteristics of the undocumented immigrant population. On

the other hand, there was an increase in the likelihood of being deported from the U.S. during the Trump administration compared to the Obama prioritized enforcement period, although that effect is only evident once individual characteristics are accounted for.

Finally, the decomposition analysis revealed that almost half of the change in the probability of being deported between the two Obama periods is explained by changes in the population-at-risk of deportation, that is, shifts in the characteristics of the Mexican undocumented immigrant population that are associated with their susceptibility to deportation. This finding is consistent with the changes observed in the Mexican-born population during this decade (Villareal 2014, Masferrer 202, Passel and Cohn 2019). The other half of the change in deportation risk, however, cannot be explained by the observable characteristics at hand, thus suggesting that the reforms and shifts in policy and priorities implemented by Obama halfway through his administration did have an impact on the outcomes of removal. In contrast, the decomposition analysis suggests that the change in deportation risk between the period of prioritized enforcement during Obama and the Trump administration is due to social processes that are not accounted for by the variables available in the model. This suggests that Trump's changes in policies and priorities that expanded the grounds of deportability and made it easier to arrest and detain the deportable population, together with the impact of his anti-immigrant and anti-Mexican discourse on the exercise of agents' discretion, is responsible for the increase in deportation risk.

These findings have important implications for our understanding of the weight and significance of federal directives, discourse and actions on immigration enforcement, which are of course conditioned by the undeniable importance of diverse local enforcement contexts (Asad 2019, Ryo and Peacock 2019), the structural and institutional inertia of the large and complex

deportation machinery in place (Golash-Boza 2018, Goodman 2020) and the demographic realities of the deportable population. Furthermore, this study contributes to the scholarship on the dynamic and historically contingent nature of the State's coercive power, shedding light on how the selective and discretionary application of immigration enforcement over the lives and bodies of the non-citizen population shifts in response to changing political contexts, economic conditions, and societal pressures and demands (Ellerman 2009, De Genova 2010).

## References

- Abrego, L., Coleman, M., Martínez, D. E., Menjívar, C., & Slack, J. 2017. "Making Immigrants into Criminals: Legal Processes of Criminalization in the Post-IIRIRA Era". *Journal on Migration and Human Security*, 5(3), 694-715.
- Abrego, Leisy and Lucia León. 2025. "Impacts of Immigration Policies on Families". *Annual Review of Sociology*. Vol. 51:401-422.
- American Immigration Council. 2017. "President Obama's Legacy on Immigration". *American Immigration Council*. Available at: <https://www.americanimmigrationcouncil.org/blog/president-obamas-legacy-immigration/>
- Amuedo Dorantes, Catalina and Susan Pozo. 2019. "The Aftermath of Tougher Immigration Enforcement: E-Verify and Perceptions of Discrimination Among Hispanic Citizens". *American Behavioral Scientist* 63(9): 1276-1298.
- Amuedo Dorantes, Catalina, Thitima Puttitanum and Ana P. Martinez-Donate. 2019. "Deporting 'Bad Hombres'? The Profile of Deportees under Widespread Versus Prioritized Enforcement". *International Migration Review* 53(2): 518-547.
- Armenta, Amanda. (2017). *Protect, Serve, and Deport: The Rise of Policing as Immigration Enforcement*. Oakland, California: University of California Press.
- Asad, Asad L. 2019. "Deportation Decisions: Judicial-Decision Making in an American Immigration Court". *American Behavioral Scientist* 63(9): 1276-1298.
- Asad, Asad L. 2020. "Latinos' deportation fears by citizenship and legal status, 2007 to 2018". *PNAS* 117 (16) 8836-8844.

- Bipartisan Policy Center. 2017. "Comparing Trump and Obama's Deportation Priorities". Available at: <https://bipartisanpolicy.org/article/comparing-trump-and-obamas-deportation-priorities/>
- Blinder, A. S. 1973. "Wage Discrimination: Reduced Form and Structural Estimates". *The Journal of Human Resources*, 8(4), 436-455. doi:10.2307/144855.
- Brabeck, Kalina and Qingwen Xu. 2010. "The Impact of Detention and Deportation on Latino Immigrant Children and Families: A Quantitative Exploration." *Hispanic Journal of Behavioral Sciences* 32(3):341-361.
- Cantor, Guillermo, Mark L. Noferi and Daniel Martinez. 2015. "Enforcement Overdrive: A Comprehensive Assessment of ICE's Criminal Alien Program". *American Immigration Council*. Available at: [https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract\\_id=2685372](https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=2685372)
- Cantor, Guillermo, Emily Ryo and Reed Humprey. 2019. "Changing patterns of interior immigration enforcement in the United States, 2016-2018". *American Immigration Council*. Available at: <https://www.americanimmigrationcouncil.org/report/interior-immigration-enforcement-united-states-2016-2018/>
- Capps, Randy, Muzaffar Chishti, Julia Gelatt, Jessica Bolter, and Ariel G. Soto. 2018. "Revving Up the Deportation Machinery: Enforcement Under Trump and the Pushback". *Migration Policy Institute*. Available at: <https://www.migrationpolicy.org/research/revving-deportation-machinery-under-trump-and-pushback>
- Catron, Peter, María Vignau Loría, and Sarah Farr. 2024. "Contextual Boundaries: Skin Tone Stratification and Skill Transferability Among Mexicans in the Age of Mass Migration". *Demography* 61 (5), pp. 1377-1402.
- Chishti, Muzaffar and Claire Bergeron. 2011. "Post-9/11 Policies Dramatically Alter the U.S. Immigration Landscape". *Migration Policy Institute*. Available at: <https://www.migrationpolicy.org/article/post-911-policies-dramatically-alter-us-immigration-landscape>
- Chishti, Muzaffar, Sarah Pierce and Jessica Bolter. 2017. "The Obama Record on Deportations: Deporter in Chief or Not?". *Migration Policy Institute*. Available at: <https://www.migrationpolicy.org/article/obama-record-deportations-deporter-chief-or-not>
- Chishti, Muzaffar and Kathleen Bush-Joseph. 2024. "Comparing the Biden and Trump Deportation Records". *Migration Policy Institute*. Available at: <https://www.migrationpolicy.org/article/biden-deportation-record>
- Coleman, Matthew. 2012. "From Border Policing to Internal Immigration Control in the United States". In: Thomas M. Wilson & Hastings Donnan (Eds.). *A Companion to Border Studies*. Blackwell Publishing

- Coleman, Matthew, and Kocher, Asthon. 2019. "Rethinking the "Gold Standard" of Racial Profiling: §287(g), Secure Communities and Racially Discrepant Police Power". *American Behavioral Scientist*, 63(9), 1185-1220
- De Genova, Nicholas. 2010. "The deportation regime: sovereignty, space and the freedom of movement". In: De Genova and Peutz. *The Deportation Regime: sovereignty, Space and the Freedom of Movement*. USA: Duke University Press
- De Genova, Nicholas. 2014. "Deportation". In Bridget Anderson & Michael Keith (Eds.). *Migration: A COMPAS Anthology*. COMPAS.
- De Genova, Nicholas. 2016. "Detention, deportation and waiting: toward a theory of migrant detainability". *Global Detention Project*. Working Paper no. 18. Open Society Foundations.
- Department of Homeland Security. 2019. "Table 39. Aliens removed or returned". *2019 Yearbook of Immigration Statistics*. Washington D.C.: Office of Homeland Security Statistics. Available at: <https://ohss.dhs.gov/topics/immigration/yearbook/2019/table39>
- Department of Homeland Security. 2022. "Table 39. Noncitizen removals, returns and expulsions: Fiscal Years 1892 to 2022". *2022 Yearbook of Immigration Statistics*. Washington D.C.: Office of Homeland Security Statistics. Available at: <https://ohss.dhs.gov/topics/immigration/yearbook/2022>
- Ellerman, Antje. 2009. *States Against Migrants. Deportation in Germany and the United States*. USA: Cambridge University Press
- Fairlie, Robert W. 1999. "The Absence of the African-American Owned Business: An Analysis of the Dynamics of Self-Employment". *Journal of Labor Economics*, 17(1): 80-108.
- Galster, G. C., Magnusson Turner, L., & Santiago, A. M. 2022. "Decomposing educational disparities between immigrants and natives in Oslo: how gender, parents, and place matter". *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, 50(4), 830–853.
- Garip, F., Gleeson, S., & Hall, M. 2019. "How the State Criminalizes Immigrants and to What Effect: A Multidisciplinary Account". *American Behavioral Scientist* 63(9): 1159-1171.
- Golazh-Boza, Tanya. 2018. "President Obama's Legacy as "Deporter in Chief". In: Kretsedemas, Philip and David Brotherton. *Immigration Policy in the Age of Punishment. Detention, Deportation and Border Control*. Columbia University Press
- Goodman, Adam. 2020. *The Deportation Machine: America's Long History of Expelling Immigrants*. Princeton University Press
- Hagan, J. M., Rodriguez, N., & Castro, B. 2011. "Social effects of mass deportations by the United States government, 2000–10". *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 34(8): 1374–139.1

- Hall, Matthew, Emily Greenman and George Farkas. 2010. "Legal Status and Wage Disparities for Mexican Immigrants." *Social Forces* 89: 491-513.
- Hing, Bill Ong. 2018. "Deporter-in-Chief: Obama v. Trump". *University of San Francisco Law Research Paper* No. 2019-03, Available at: [https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract\\_id=3254680](https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=3254680)
- Hogan, Megan. 2024. "Trump vs. Biden on immigration: A Side-By-Side Policy Comparison". *Peterson Institute for International Economics*. Available at: <https://www.piie.com/blogs/realtime-economics/2024/trump-vs-biden-immigration-side-side-policy-comparison>
- Jann, B. 2008. "The Blinder–Oaxaca Decomposition for Linear Regression Models". *The Stata Journal* 8(4): 453-479.
- Kandel, W.A. 2016. "Interior Immigration Enforcement: Criminal Alien Programs". *Congressional Research Service Report R44627*. Washington D.C: Congressional Research Service.
- Kitagawa, E. M. 1955. "Components of a Difference Between Two Rates". *Journal of the American Statistical Association* 50(272): 1168-1194.
- Law Enforcement Immigration Task Force. 2021. "Comparison of the Obama, Trump, and Biden Administration Immigration Enforcement Priorities". Available at: <https://leitf.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/Enforcement-Priorities-Memo.pdf>
- Martinez-Aranda, M. G. 2020. "Extended punishment: criminalising immigrants through surveillance technology". *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 48(1): 74–91
- Masferrer, Claudia. (2021). *Atlas of Return Migration from the United States to Mexico*. El Colegio de México.
- Massey, Durand, and Pren, Karen A. 2016. "Why Border Enforcement Backfired." *American Journal of Sociology* 121(5): 1557-1600.
- Meissner, Doris, Donald M. Kerwin, Muzaffar Chishti, and Claire Bergeron. 2013. *Immigration Enforcement in the United States: The Rise of a Formidable Machinery*. Washington D.C.: Migration Policy Institute
- Menjívar C, Gómez Cervantes A, Alvord D. 2018. "The expansion of "cimmigration," mass detention, and deportation". *Sociology Compass* 12:e12573.
- Moinester, Margot. 2018. "Beyond the border and into the heartland: spatial patterning of U.S. immigration detention". *Demography* 55(3): 1147–1193

- Moinester, Margot. 2019. "A look to the interior: trends in U.S. immigration removals by criminal conviction type, gender, and region of origin, fiscal years 2003-2015". *American Behavioral Scientist* 63(9): 1276-1298.
- Moinester, Margot. 2024. "The Control Boom: U.S. Interior Immigration Enforcement, 1971-2010". *American Journal of Sociology* 129(5): 1447-1492.
- Montenovo, L., Jiang, X., Lozano-Rojas, F., Schmutte, I., Simon, K., Weinberg, B. A., & Wing, C. 2022. "Determinants of Disparities in Early COVID-19 Job Losses". *Demography*, 59(3), 827-855.
- Munnell, Charles. 2020. "U.S. Immigration Policy: The Ghosts of Past, Present, and Future". In: Vereza, Monica (Ed.). *Anti-Immigrant Policies During the Trump Era*. Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México. Centro de Investigaciones Sobre América Del Norte
- Neumark, D., & McLennan, M. 1995. "Sex Discrimination and Women's Labor Market Outcomes". *The Journal of Human Resources* 30(4): 713-740.
- Ngai, Mae. 2004. *Impossible Subjects: Illegal Aliens and the Making of Modern America*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Oaxaca, R. 1973. "Male-Female Wage Differentials in Urban Labor Markets". *International Economic Review*, 14(3): 693-709.
- Passel, Jeffrey and D'Vera Cohn 2019. "Mexicans decline to less than half the U.S. unauthorized immigrant population for the first time". *Pew Research Center*. Available at: <https://www.pewresearch.org/short-reads/2019/06/12/us-unauthorized-immigrant-population-2017/>
- Pierce, Sarah, Jessica Bolter and Andrew Selee. 2018. "Trump's First Year on Immigration Policy: Rhetoric vs Reality". *Migration Policy Institute*. Available at: <https://www.migrationpolicy.org/research/trump-first-year-immigration-policy-rhetoric-vs-reality>
- Roche, Kathleen, Elizabeth Vaquera, Rebecca White and Maria Ivonne Rivera. 2018. "Impacts of immigration actions and news and the rising psychological distress of U.S. Latino parents raising adolescents". *Journal of Adolescent Health* 62(5): 525-531
- Ruggles, Steven, Sarah Flood, Matthew Sobek, Daniel Backman, Grace Cooper, Julia A. Rivera Drew, Stephanie Richards, Renae Rodgers, Jonathan Schroeder, and Kari C.W. Williams. 2024. *IPUMS USA: Version 16.0 [dataset]*. Minneapolis, MN: IPUMS. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.18128/D010.V16.0>
- Ryo, E., & Peacock, I. 2019. "Beyond the Walls: The Importance of Community Contexts in Immigration Detention". *American Behavioral Scientist*, 63(9), 1250-1275

- Scher, Bill. 2025. "Why Obama's Immigration Enforcement Was Better Than Trump's". *Washington Monthly*. Available at: <https://washingtonmonthly.com/2025/06/13/why-obamas-immigration-enforcement-policy-was-better-than-trumps/>
- Schultheis, Ryan and Ariel G. Ruiz Soto. 2017. "A revolving door no more? A statistical profile of Mexicans Repatriated from the United States". *Migration Policy Institute*. Available at: <https://www.migrationpolicy.org/sites/default/files/publications/RevolvingDoor-Mexico-FINAL.pdf>
- Sohn H, Pebley AR, Landrian Gonzalez A, Goldman N. 2023. "Deportations and departures: Undocumented Mexican immigrants' return migration during three presidential administrations". *PNAS* 120(9):e2212184120.
- Stevenson, Maryam T. 2024. "Explaining the Comprehensive Immigration Reform Stalemate in Congress", *Catholic University Law Review* 73(3)
- Valdivia C. 2021. "I became a mom overnight": how parental detentions and deportations impact young adults' roles and educational experiences. *Harv. Educ. Rev.* 91:62–82
- Verea, Mónica. 2020 "Trump's Anti-Immigrant, "Mexican-phobic" Rhetoric and Policies in His First Thirty Months as President". In: Verea, Monica (Ed.). *Anti-Immigrant Policies During the Trump Era*. Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México. Centro de Investigaciones Sobre América Del Norte.
- Villareal, Andres. 2014. "Explaining the Decline in Mexico-U.S. Migration: The Effect of the Great Recession". *Demography* 51(6):2203-28.
- Walters, William. 2002. "Deportation, Expulsion, and the International Police of Aliens". *Citizenship Studies* 6(3), 265–292.
- Warren, Robert. 2019. "US Undocumented Population Continued to Fall from 2016 to 2017 and Visa Overstays Significantly Exceeded Illegal Crossings for the Seventh Consecutive Year." *Journal on Migration and Human Security* 7(1): 19-22.
- Yun, M.-S. 2005. "A Simple Solution to the Identification Problem in Detailed Wage Decompositions". *Economic Inquiry*, 43(4): 766-772.
- Zheng, Hui and Wei-hsin Yu. 2025. "Paradox Between Immigrant Advantages in Morbidity and Mortality: Dynamic Patterns and Tentative Explanations". *Demography* 62 (2): 707–736.

## Appendix

<b>Appendix Table 1. Endowment effects from Oaxaca-Binder decomposition (pooled model)</b>			
	Probability of deportation	P> z	Standard Error
<b>1. Difference between Obama generalized enforcement and Obama prioritized enforcement</b>			
Obama – generalized	0.0584	0.000	.0005
Obama – prioritized	0.0357	0.000	.0004
Difference	0.0226	0.000	.0007
Explained	0.0112	0.000	.0003
<i>% of difference</i>	<i>49.55%</i>		
Unexplained	0.0115	0.000	.0006
<i>% of difference</i>	<i>50.45%</i>		
<b>Explained totals (disaggregation)</b>			
Age	-0.016	0.000	0.0007
Age-Squared	0.018	0.000	0.0007
Marital Status: Single	-0.0002	0.000	0.00003
Marital Status: Married	-0.00003	0.004	0.00001
Marital Status: Divorced	-0.0002	0.000	0.00002
Marital Status: Widowed	-.0000	0.419	0.00001
Gender: Men	0.0006	0.000	0.0001
Gender: Women	0.0006	0.000	0.0001
Indigenous: No	0.00001	0.592	0.00001
Indigenous: Yes	0.00001	0.592	0.00001
English: No English	0.0012	0.000	0.00005
English: Some English	-0.00011	0.000	0.00002
English: Good English	0.0009	0.000	0.0005
Time in the U.S.	0.043	0.000	0.0009
Time in the U.S.-Squared	-0.037	0.000	0.001
<b>2. Difference between Obama prioritized enforcement and Trump generalized enforcement</b>			
Obama – prioritized	0.0357	0.000	0.0004
Trump – generalized	0.0372	0.000	0.0006
Difference	-0.0015	0.034	0.0007
Explained	0.0002	0.369	0.0002
<i>% of difference</i>	<i>0%</i>		
Unexplained	-0.0017	0.015	0.0007
<i>% of difference</i>	<i>100%</i>		
<b>Explained totals (disaggregation)</b>			
Age	-0.0005	0.326	0.00058
Age-Squared	0.0007	0.327	0.00077
Marital Status: Single	-0.00001	0.334	0.00001
Marital Status: Married	0.000007	0.342	0.000001
Marital Status: Divorced	-0.000006	0.329	0.000001

Marital Status: Widowed	0.0000001	0.714	0.0000001
Gender: Men	0.000002	0.754	0.0000007
Gender: Women	0.000002	0.754	0.0000007
Indigenous: No	-0.000002	0.332	0.000002
Indigenous: Yes	-0.000002	0.332	0.000002
English: No English	0.00006	0.326	0.00006
English: Some English	-0.00001	0.319	0.00001
English: Good English	0.00005	0.325	0.00005
Time in the U.S.	0.0017112	0.323	0.0017302
Time in the U.S.-Squared	-0.0017788	0.32	0.0017888

## Conclusion

“Whole categories of people are simply treated as superfluous and, although their illegalized labour is plainly in great demand and truly desirable to many employers, their (racialized) bodies, their persons, their lives and the wider communities in which they participate are branded as “undesirable” and rendered virtual “waste”, human “garbage” to be simply disposed of.

It is in this sense, perhaps, that deportation has assumed a paradigmatic quality in our era of neoliberal global capitalism.”

Nicholas De Genova  
The Deportation Power

In this dissertation, I set out to study deportation through a demographic approach that centered the analysis on deportees’ characteristics and their population-level composition. Quantitative scholarship on immigration enforcement in the U.S. has mostly focused on the spatial contexts, policy settings and institutional dimensions of deportation. As mentioned before, this uneven focus is most likely due to limited data availability on deportees and the many restrictions around it. I utilize data sources collected at different sides of an international border to illuminate what is truly a cross-national process and answer the following questions: (1) who is being deported from the United States?, (2) how do the characteristics of those deported influence their susceptibility to deportation?, and (3) to what extent do the changing characteristics of the immigrant population explain the difference in deportation risk across immigration enforcement regimes?

This project applies classic demographic methods to an emerging research agenda in the intersection of immigration studies and political sociology. By developing a demographic approach to deportation, I show that it can be analyzed not only as a policy tool of governance or

as a lived experience, but as a measurable population phenomenon connected to the political and institutional structures that sustain immigration enforcement regimes, as well as the conditions of both receiving and sending societies that shape the lives of immigrants.

In the first chapter of this dissertation, I drew on data collected in Mexico from the Survey on Migration in the Northern Border (EMIF-Norte), to examine the geographic and temporal variation in the profile of Mexican deportees from 2005 to 2019 across individual characteristics and migration backgrounds, distinguishing between deportations carried out at the border and those executed in the interior of the country. A clear, albeit complex, picture emerged: Mexican deportees are a very heterogeneous population, with intra-group inequalities and differences. These have not remained static across time, but have changed to reflect both the variations in U.S. immigration enforcement processes, and the evolution of migration flows from Mexico. A crucial component of the story concerns the distinction between Mexican deportees subjected to border vs. interior enforcement. While deportations at the border still account for the majority of cases, their decline over the 2010s contrasts with the increase of interior removals, a finding that is consistent with the broader dynamics and profile of deportations during this period (Capps et al. 2018).

The differences between the populations deported through border and interior enforcement further illuminate both the selective nature of deportation and the migration story from Mexico. Border deportees are more likely to be young, indigenous, and from rural backgrounds, while interior deportees tend to have more education, higher literacy, English proficiency, and established networks in the U.S. This finding speaks directly to the functioning of the deportation machine: border expulsions have historically constituted the majority of deportations and scholars have documented how they rely on more aggressive and abusive

mechanisms of arrest and return (Goodman 2020, Gurman 2017). The evidence from this analysis thus supports the argument that it is the most socially and economically vulnerable migrants who are subjected to the most forceful and violent forms of expulsion.

In the second chapter, I investigated the association between Mexican immigrants' individual characteristics and migration features and their susceptibility or risk of being deported from the interior of the U.S. The key element of this analytical design is to identify the population at risk of deportation, that is, undocumented Mexican immigrants. I use Hall et al.'s (2010) logical imputation method to estimate the likely undocumented Mexican immigrant population with American Community Survey data from 2005 to 2019. By pooling together these estimates with the EMIF-Norte data on interior enforcement deportees, I calculate interior deportation rates across U.S. states and for the 15-year period. Deportation rates surged dramatically for men between 2008 and 2011, during the height of aggressive interior enforcement. This was followed by a notable decline and period of relative stability through Obama's second term. The Trump administration saw a renewed uptick in deportation rates, but not a return to the peak intensity of the early Obama years. This finding is very much in line with what immigration scholars have seen for all interior removals, and not just for the Mexican population (Capps et al. 2018, Chishti and Bush-Joseph 2024). On the other hand, the main takeaway from the geographic analysis is that there was a spatial diversification to the rise of deportation rates; while in 2005 deportation rates were high in a few states along the U.S. southern border, by 2019 deportation rates had increased in most states in the U.S., moving away from the border with Mexico to the north and the east of the country.

Finally, through a series of logistic regressions, I explored the association of key individual characteristics with the probability of deportation, while controlling for geographic

and temporal variation. The analysis revealed that deportation risk is unequally distributed among the Mexican undocumented population: men, indigenous migrants, and less acculturated migrants are at higher risk of interior removal. These findings suggest there is a selective and discretionary application of immigration enforcement along gendered, racial and acculturation lines. In other words, these findings underscore that deportation is not a “neutral”, legal, and formal mechanism of migration control applied uniformly to all non-citizens, but a process of coercive social regulation that arbitrarily targets particular kinds of migrants. Additionally, the deportation machine does not simply respond to the inequalities and hierarchies that shape life for immigrants in the United States, but it actively reproduces them through the strain placed on the families, friends and communities of those that are left behind in the U.S. Furthermore, the findings on indigeneity and acculturation show that the targets of deportation are not just “any bodies”, but “physically and culturally distinct bodies” (Dowling and Inda 2013:18). This evidence speaks directly to the theories that argue that immigration enforcement is racialized at every step of the process: discretion is applied in racialized and racializing ways (Waila 2021) through on-the-ground mechanisms such as racial profiling and “racially discrepant policing” (Coleman and Kocher 2019). It is thus that deportation enforces and perpetuates a racial hierarchy around citizenship and belonging (Armenta 2017).

The third and final chapter of the dissertation looked at the variation in the deportation risk of likely undocumented Mexican immigrants across what I call “immigration enforcement regimes”, which are not only characterized by the presidential administration in turn, but by how immigration policies were directed and how priorities for deportation were defined at the federal level: generalized enforcement under president Barack Obama (2009 – 2012), prioritized enforcement under Obama’s second term (2013 – 2016), and generalized enforcement under

president Donald Trump (2017 – 2019). Drawing on the EMIF-Norte and the ACS data employed in Chapter 2, I found that the odds of deportation during Obama’s generalized enforcement regime were higher compared to Obama’s regime of prioritized enforcement, following the redefinition of deportation priorities and the reevaluation of some of the most aggressive policy directives. On the other hand, I found that the odds of deportation increased during Trump’s administration compared to Obama’s prioritized enforcement, showing how Trump’s shifts in policy and changes in priorities, as well as the political context more generally, had an impact on the probability of being deported.

The decomposition analysis suggested that almost half of the change in the probability of being deported between the two enforcement regimes during Obama’s administration is explained by changes in the observable characteristics of the population-at-risk of deportation. In contrast, the difference in deportation risk between Obama’s prioritized enforcement and Trump’s regime is not explained by the composition of the population, but could be attributed to elements of the political and institutional context. Taken together, the decomposition highlights that while demographic change played a role (particularly in the transition between Obama’s generalized and prioritized enforcement regimes), these compositional shifts were not large nor consistent enough to account for the observed differences in deportation risk. Instead, a significant portion of the variation stems from changes in enforcement practices themselves. Federal directives around the enactment of local policies, the redefinition of priorities for deportation, and the broader political climate around immigration are the mechanisms that impacted how discretion was exercised on the ground, echoing Ellerman’s argument that when faced with the implementation of coercive policies “state actors in diverse political contexts arrive at different choices regarding whom to target for regulation” (Ellerman 2009:5).

Taken all together, the arguments and findings of this study have important implications for our understanding of deportation in the United States highlighting, above all, that it is not an administrative mechanism of formal policy shared equally among non-citizens, but a political tool of the State's coercive power that enables governments to take advantage of and reproduce the inequalities, precarities and vulnerabilities of migrants' lives and bodies. Throughout this research, deportation emerges as a process where the weight of federal directives and discourse on immigration enforcement is conditioned by the undeniable importance of local contexts in enforcement actions (Asad 2019, Ryo and Peacock 2019), the structural and institutional inertia of the large and complex deportation machinery in place (Golash-Boza 2018, Goodman 2020) and, as this project argues and contributes, the demographic characteristics of the deportable population.

At the same time, this work is not without limitations. First, it is constrained to a single national-origin population which, while heterogenous and internally stratified, does not capture the full range of disadvantages, vulnerabilities and forms of state violence experienced by other undocumented groups. Second, the analytical design narrows the population even further in Chapters 2 and 3 to include only Mexicans who are deported through interior enforcement, necessarily excluding the experiences of a large share of particularly vulnerable immigrants, as well as expulsions carried out through voluntary returns and expedited removals. Finally, while I explore state-level variation in deportation rates and adjust for the geographic differences in the probability of deportation, this study does not examine the mechanisms through which local contexts generate uneven immigration enforcement outcomes, which cannot be fully captured by state-level fixed effects alone. And yet, these limitations point towards a broader research agenda

for future work to examine the deportation experiences of other immigrant populations and their enforcement contexts, both in the United States and abroad.

As the United States enters a second Trump administration in 2025, the stakes seem to be higher and the use of selective and discretionary action no longer disguised by a mask of “neutrality” and “legality”. Trump has forcefully demanded that ICE and DHS increase the numbers of migrants detained and deported, actively recruited people to join ICE under the official banner “America has been invaded by criminals and predators. We need YOU to get them out” (Immigration and Customs Enforcement 2025), mandated raids in public spaces, schools and workplaces, massively increased the budget for ICE and turned it into a militarized force, expanded fast-track deportation powers, among other actions (Chishti and Bush-Joseph 2025, Chishti and Lecarte 2025). The violence and aggression with which these policies have been enacted has also dramatically risen during this period, with the number of migrant deaths under detention reaching an unprecedented number (National Public Radio 2025). This situation in the United States is an extreme national expression of a global approach to migration control, which runs the risk of being emulated in a dramatic escalation. All around, countries in the Global North and even in the Global South continue to fortify their borders, expand their detention regimes, and call for increasing deportations and removals. The ease with which enforcement seems to be expanding during Trump’s second administration should serve as a cautionary reminder of the enduring reach of the State’s coercive power, and of how quickly that reach can be recalibrated depending on who has power to redefine policy and politics.

And yet, the debate and, in its midst, the scholarly conversation, around deportation goes greatly beyond policy and elections, and it involves all countries across the globe. It touches on fundamental questions that will define what our societies will look like in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. It lays

bare the deeply racist logics and practices rooted in the discussion around citizenship, belonging and “deservingness”. It amplifies the visibility of the racism structurally embedded in the repressive state apparatus and its justification to deliver security through racialized policing and surveillance. It touches on the ethical dilemmas around law, justice, the legitimacy of legal violence, and “the limits of the socially coercive capacity of the liberal democratic state” (Ellerman 2009:5). It exposes the capitalist “irrepressible desire and demand” to have a legally vulnerable and thus readily exploitable workforce, disciplined through a susceptibility to deportation that ensures “their enthusiastic importation and subordinate incorporation” (De Genova 2010:38). It includes the voices of those who sustain and profit from the deportation machine, who have made millions of dollars off of the immigration enforcement apparatus, from private prison companies, government contractors and agencies, to agents on the ground (Goodman 2020). It also includes the voices of migrants and their allies all over the world who, in solidarity, organization, mobilization, and collective resistance, stand up to the deportation machine. And, in the end, it evokes the “terrifyingly normal” practice of routine bureaucracy; the “dehumanizing reduction of individuals into functionaries and mere cogs in the administrative machinery” (Hannah Arendt 1963, De Genova 2014).

## References

- Arendt, Hannah. 1963. *Eichmann in Jerusalem: A Report on the Banality of Evil*. Penguin Classics.
- Armenta, Amanda. 2017. *Protect, Serve, and Deport: The Rise of Policing as Immigration Enforcement*. University of California Press
- Asad, Asad L. 2019. “Deportation Decisions: Judicial-Decision Making in an American Immigration Court”. *American Behavioral Scientist* 63(9): 1276-1298

- Capps, Randy, Muzaffar Chishti, Julia Gelatt, Jessica Bolter, and Ariel G. Soto. 2018. "Revving Up the Deportation Machinery: Enforcement Under Trump and the Pushback". *Migration Policy Institute*. Available at: <https://www.migrationpolicy.org/research/revving-deportation-machinery-under-trump-and-pushback>
- Chishti, Muzaffar and Kathleen Bush-Joseph. 2024. "Comparing the Biden and Trump Deportation Records". *Migration Policy Institute*. Available at: <https://www.migrationpolicy.org/article/biden-deportation-record>
- Chishti, Muzaffar and Kathleen Bush-Joseph. 2025. "Trump's Administration Expansion of Fast-Track Deportation Powers Is Transforming Immigration Enforcement". *Migration Policy Institute*. Available at: <https://www.migrationpolicy.org/article/trump-expedited-removal?eType=EmailBlastContent&eId=158e727a-e085-4454-8736-0fd044d38500>
- Chishti, Muzaffar and Valerie Lecarte. 2025. "U.S. Immigration Detention Grows to Record Heights Under Trump Administration". *Migration Policy Institute*. Available at: <https://www.migrationpolicy.org/article/trump-immigrant-detention>
- Coleman, Matthew, and Kocher, Ashton. 2019. "Rethinking the "Gold Standard" of Racial Profiling: §287(g), Secure Communities and Racially Discrepant Police Power". *American Behavioral Scientist*, 63(9), 1185-1220.
- De Genova, Nicholas. 2010. "The deportation regime: sovereignty, space and the freedom of movement". In: De Genova and Peutz. *The Deportation Regime: sovereignty, Space and the Freedom of Movement*. USA: Duke University Press
- De Genova, Nicholas. 2014. "Deportation". In Bridget Anderson & Michael Keith (Eds.). *Migration: A COMPAS Anthology*. COMPAS.
- De Genova, Nicholas. 2018. "The deportation power". *Radical Philosophy* 203: 23-27.
- Dowling, Julie A. & Jonathan X. Inda. 2013. *Governing Immigration Through Crime. A reader*. Stanford University Press
- Ellerman, Antje. 2009. *States Against Migrants. Deportation in Germany and the United States*. Cambridge University Press
- Golazh-Boza, Tanya. 2018. "President Obama's Legacy as "Deporter in Chief". In: Kretsedemas, Philip and David Brotherton. *Immigration Policy in the Age of Punishment. Detention, Deportation and Border Control*. Columbia University Press
- Goodman, Adam. 2020. *The Deportation Machine: America's Long History of Expelling Immigrants*. Princeton University Press
- Gurman, Hannah. (2017). "A Collapsing Division: Border and Interior Enforcement in the U.S. Deportation System". *American Quarterly* 69(2): 371-395.

Hall, Matthew, Emily Greenman and George Farkas. 2010. "Legal Status and Wage Disparities for Mexican Immigrants." *Social Forces* 89: 491-513

Immigration and Customs Enforcement. 2025. <https://www.ice.gov/join>

National Public Radio. 2025. "It's the deadliest year for people in ICE custody in decades; next year could be worse". Available at: <https://www.npr.org/2025/10/23/nx-s1-5538090/ice-detention-custody-immigration-arrest-enforcement-dhs-trump>

Ryo, E., & Peacock, I. 2019. "Beyond the Walls: The Importance of Community Contexts in Immigration Detention". *American Behavioral Scientist*, 63(9): 1250-1275

Waila, Harsha. 2021. *Border and Rule. Global Migration, Capitalism, and the Rise of Racist Nationalism*. Haymarket Books.