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Immigration Curbs Hit Population

Census data show U. S. growth at its slowest since Covid; five states in the red

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The U.S. government's dramatic immigration restrictions have slowed population growth to the lowest levels since the Covid pandemic, new federal data show.

Immigrants have become a major source of growth as the broader population ages and the birthrate slows, but tougher border and deportation policies have brought numbers down. Tuesday's Census Bureau report offers one of the clearest signs that immigration policies started under former President Joe Biden and significantly ramped up by President Trump are reshaping the makeup of the U.S. and how it grows.

The U.S. population grew by just 1.8 million, or 0.5%, to reach 341.8 million in the year ended June 30, 2025, the new estimates show. That is down from 1% growth in the prior year and marks the slowest expansion since Covid-19 caused a surge in deaths and curbed border crossings.

Part of the issue remains a slowing birthrate in the U.S., something Republicans have flagged as a major concern. The Trump administration has encouraged Americans to have more children. While the number of births edged slightly higher to 3.6 million in the most recent year, it's not nearly enough to make up for the drop in immigrants. Deaths also increased slightly.

The figures also show five states lost population in the most recent year—Vermont, Hawaii, West Virginia, New Mexico and California—up from two the prior year.

The sharpest change in the data is a drop in net immigration, or the difference between people who moved to and from the U.S. The Census estimated 1.3 million net arrivals in the most recent measured year, down 54% from the prior 12 months, a time period when migrants were surging into the U.S. in historically high numbers.

The slowdown is likely to steepen further. The latest Census estimates include the second half of 2024, when migrants were still crossing the border in relatively large numbers.

Biden, who oversaw one of the biggest immigration waves in history between 2021 and 2024, tightened controls at the southern border late in his term. President Trump has launched a far more intense crackdown, all but stopping illegal border crossings and moving to increase deportations.

The migrant surge strained social services in parts of the country, driving up the homeless population and filling shelters and schools. But immigrants overall make outsize contributions to the economy through innovation and entrepreneurship, which increase productivity, said Jed Kolko, a senior fellow at the Peterson Institute for International Economics.

"If the population grows more slowly because we are restricting immigration, that has the potential to harm our economic growth long-term," said Kolko, who oversaw the Census Bureau as a Commerce Department undersecretary in the Biden administration.

Economists say the immigration drop contributed to the sharp slowdown in job creation last year by reducing the number of workers entering the labor force. The economy added 584,000 jobs in 2025, down from about 2 million the prior year, according to the Labor Department.

The U.S. last saw slower population growth during the Covid pandemic in the 12 months ending in mid-2021, when the population crept up just 0.2%. Covid-19 was linked to nearly a half-million deaths in that period, when it was among the top causes of death, federal data show.

Even in the worst years of the Great Depression, growth averaged 0.6%, according to Census estimates. In the decade before the pandemic, the population grew by an average of 0.7% a year.

Estimating immigration is tricky because it's hard to pin down how many people are in the U.S. illegally. The government doesn't systematically track who leaves the country, and it stopped regularly publishing deportation figures shortly after Trump took office last year. The Census Bureau said it updated its methods this year to better track people leaving for Mexico.

The report also showed recent patterns in domestic migration in sharper relief.

The South remained a magnet in the recent year, but its pull has diminished since the years immediately following the pandemic, the Census estimates showed. The region's population rose 0.9%, down from 1.4% growth in 2023. The Midwest's population rose 0.4%, the West grew 0.3%, and the Northeast grew 0.2%.

Among the states, California shifted to a slight loss in the most recent year after a big drop in immigration more than offset people it shed to other states. The domestic migration loss of 229,000 people was down slightly from the year before.

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