

The Aliens | Refugees, Asylum Seekers and Migrants

Group Members:

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<https://www.canva.com/design/DAGisW5OxsM/tzICabIO0SKSdDtoaVecmw/edit>

Background: Immigration has played a significant role in shaping U.S. history, with policies evolving to control the flow of people into the country. Shifts in immigration policies particularly under different presidential administrations have influenced migration patterns. Restrictive policies, in particular, have pushed migrants toward increasingly dangerous routes, often resulting in higher fatalities. This study explores the correlation between immigration policies, migration trends, and migrant deaths, aiming to determine whether policy shifts have directly impacted migrant safety.

Hypothesis: *Changes in U.S. immigration policies, particularly under different presidential administrations, have influenced immigration trends and contributed to fluctuations in migrant deaths.*

Objectives: Analyze immigration trends over time | Examine the relationship between immigration policies and migrant deaths | Identify patterns across different U.S. presidential administrations.

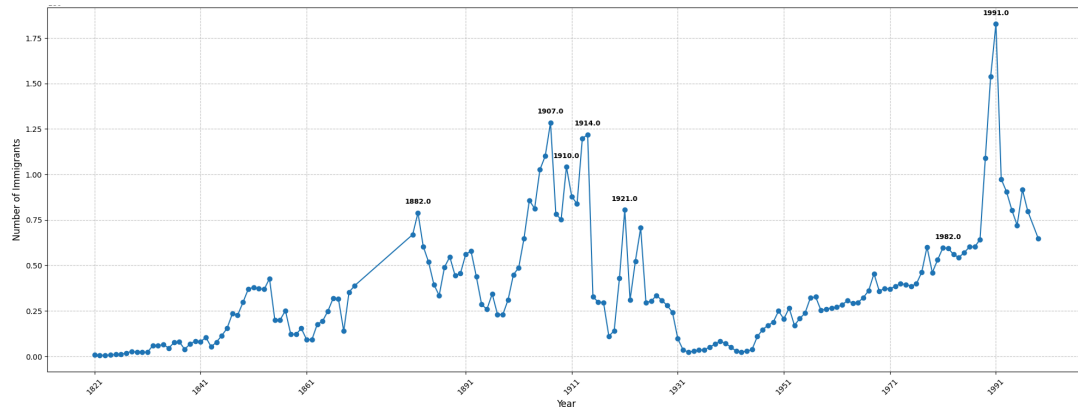
2. Sources & Methodology

1. **Immigration Data (1980–2021):** This dataset tracks various immigration metrics, including the number of lawful permanent resident statuses granted, refugee arrivals, noncitizen apprehensions, removals, and returns during fiscal years 1980–2021. This data will help track immigration trends and the effects of policy changes over time.
2. **Immigration Data (1990–2021):** Focuses specifically on the number of immigrants obtaining new resident status and the number of refugee arrivals from 1990 onward. This dataset will provide insights into modern immigration trends and allow for a direct comparison with policy shifts in more recent years.
3. **Migrant Deaths and Causes Dataset (2014–2019):** This dataset tracks the number of migrant deaths and their causes between 2014 and 2019, providing important context for the relationship between immigration policies and fatalities.
4. **U.S. Presidents Dataset (1821–2020):** This dataset includes information about U.S. presidents, such as their names, party affiliations, and terms in office. It will allow us to correlate changes in immigration policies with different administrations and explore the impact of political shifts on immigration and migrant safety.
5. **GDP Data (2008–2023):** The World Bank DataBank provides comprehensive GDP per capita data, categorized by global regions, allowing for comparisons of economic performance across different parts of the world. This data helps track long-term economic trends and regional disparities in income and development.

Steps Taken: Handled missing values | Renamed columns for consistency | Merged datasets for comprehensive analysis | Converted data types for analysis | Added missing names to the U.S. Presidents dataset | Merged datasets for comprehensive analysis.

Python Libraries: pandas, NumPy, Matplotlib, Seaborn

Visualization 1: Immigration Trends (1820–2021) Overlaid with Policy Changes and Peak Years

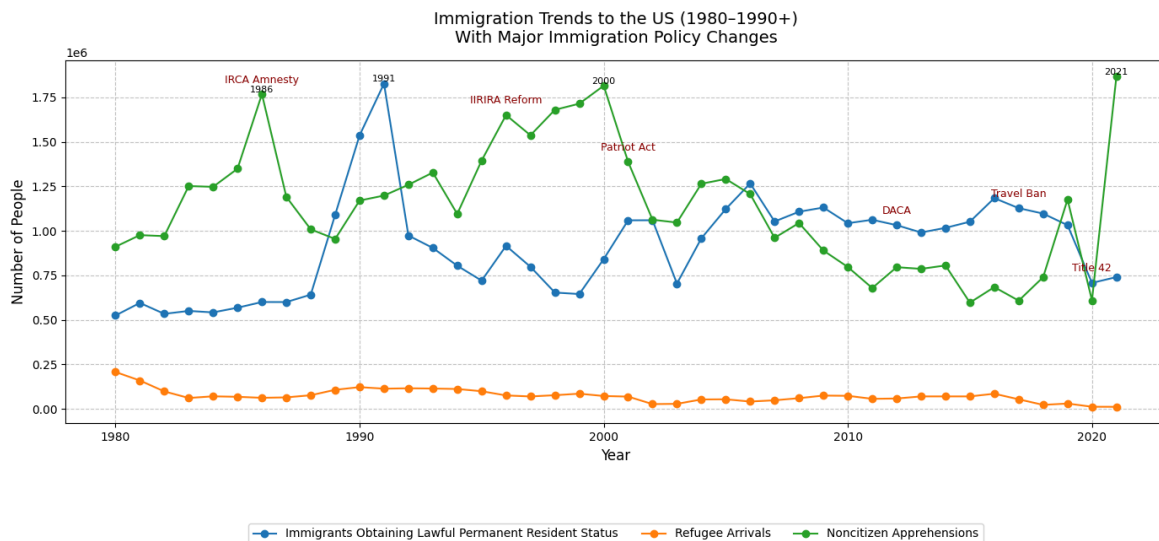


Findings:

- **1907 Peak:** The peak in 1907 coincides with the early 20th-century wave of European immigration, especially due to industrialization and the established structured immigration channels.
 - **Immigration policy:** Immigration Act of 1907: Expanded the list of excluded individuals (people with physical or mental disabilities, those deemed “immoral,” anarchists, polygamists). Increased the head tax (an entry fee immigrants had to pay).
- **1921 Peak:** The 1921 peak reflects a period of large-scale European migration, though this was quickly followed by the implementation of the Emergency Quota Act of 1921, which severely limited immigration, especially from Southern and Eastern Europe.
 - **Immigration policy:** Emergency Quota Act. It was the first law to establish numerical quotas based on nationality meaning that a cap was set on how many immigrants are allowed to enter.
- **1991 Peak:** The early 1990s saw a peak in immigration, driven by the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965, which abolished national-origin quotas, leading to increased immigration, particularly from Asia and Latin America. This surge was also influenced by the end of the Cold War and better economic conditions.
 - **Immigration policy:** Immigration Act of 1990 by George Bush. Increased legal immigration and introduced diversity visas but unauthorized migration continued to rise, prompting more attention to border enforcement in the 1990s.

Key Insight: These peaks in immigration were often followed by periods of policy restrictions, such as the Quota Acts and later legislation, impacting the number of legal immigrants entering the U.S.

Visualization 2: Immigrants Obtaining Lawful Status Trends in the U.S. (1980–2020)

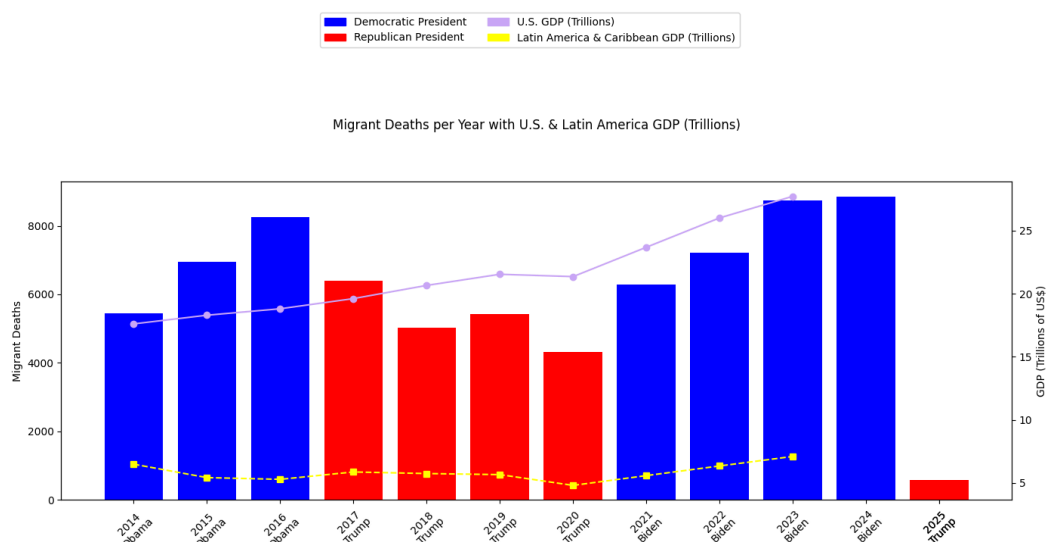


Findings:

- **1980s–1990s:** The 1990s saw a significant increase in immigration and an increase in immigrants acquiring lawful status, reflecting the effects of the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965 and the Immigration Reform and Control Act of 1986. Immigration surged, particularly from Latin America and Asia, due to less restrictions and the end of the Cold War.
- **2000s–2010s:** Immigrants acquiring lawful status fluctuated in the 2000s and 2010s, with noticeable dips around the 2008 financial crisis and after introducing more restrictive policies under the Bush and Obama administrations.
- **2020:** Immigration and legalization this year sharply dropped due to the COVID-19 pandemic and to Trump's stricter border enforcement policies.

Key Insight: The 1980s–1990s experienced rapid increases in immigration due to more lenient policies, while the 2000s–2010s saw a mix of policy shifts resulting in more unpredictable immigration flows, with noticeable impacts due to economic downturns and political changes.

Visualization 3: Total Migrant Deaths per Year with U.S. & Latin America GDP (Trillions) (Colored by Presidential Political Party)

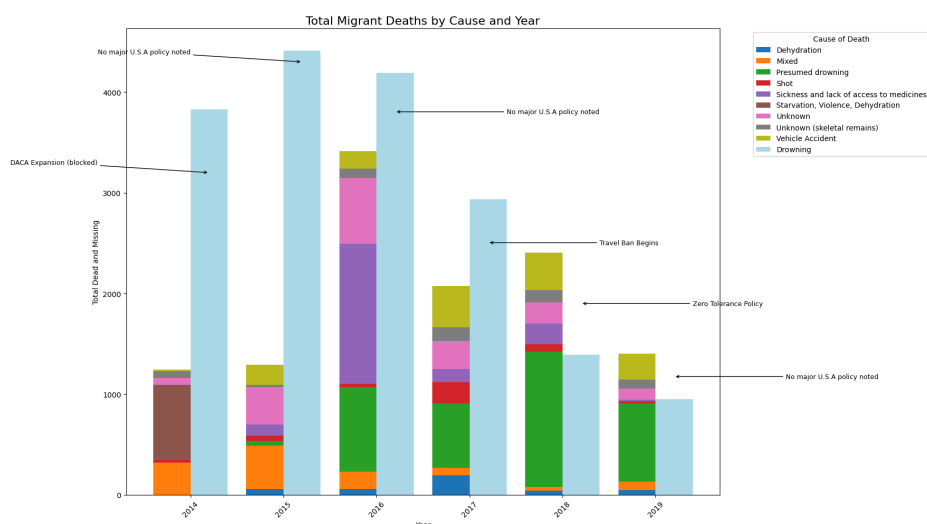


Findings:

- **Obama and Trump Administration Trends:** Under Obama, the enforcement-focused approach led to a steady number of deaths, though some areas saw more fatalities due to the introduction of border enforcement programs. Under Trump, the number of deaths decreased significantly, particularly as restrictions tightened and migrants took more dangerous routes to avoid detection.
- **Political Party and Death Trends:** The dataset indicates a clear correlation between the political party of the president and the number of deaths, with more restrictive policies (often associated with Republican administrations) correlating with lower migrant fatalities. During the Trump administration, deaths began to lower due to the enforcement-heavy approach.
- **GDP Comparisons:** The U.S. GDP steadily increased across all administrations, with a sharp rise post-2020. While Latin America & Caribbean's GDP remained relatively flat, with only a slight increase by 2023. The growing economic gap between the U.S. and Latin America may have contributed to increased migration pressure, particularly during 2021–2024.

Key Insight: There is a clear correlation between stricter immigration policies under certain presidential administrations and a decrease in migrant deaths. Republican presidencies, associated with more restrictive border policies, correspond with lower death tolls, particularly in the more recent decades. Adding GDP data shows that economic disparity between the U.S. and Latin America remained wide, potentially fueling migration regardless of political leadership. Overall, migrant deaths are influenced by a combination of U.S. immigration policies, political leadership, and regional economic inequality, not just party affiliation alone.

Visualization 4: Total Migrant Deaths by Cause and Year



Findings: This visualization provides a breakdown of migrant deaths by their specific causes (e.g., heat exhaustion, drowning, violence), helping to pinpoint trends in the reasons behind migrant fatalities over time. In 2016, immigration-related deaths due to sickness could be linked

to multiple factors, including poor conditions in detention centers, inadequate healthcare access, and harsh migration routes. While most migration-related deaths are due to drowning, exposure, or violence, illness can also be a contributing factor, particularly in migrant detention centers or during long journeys.

Key Insight: Between 2014 and 2019, migrant deaths rose sharply due to increasingly dangerous routes especially by drowning, dehydration, and sickness. This trend aligns with stricter immigration policies, particularly under the Trump administration, including “*Remain in Mexico*,” asylum cuts, and increased border enforcement. These measures reduced legal pathways and pushed migrants into remote, unmonitored areas, leading to more fatalities. The data supports the hypothesis that changes in U.S. immigration policy influence migrant behavior and increase death rates.

Conclusion

The visualizations in this report illustrate how U.S. immigration policies, combined with global economic trends, shape migration flows and migrant death patterns. Through the integration of historical immigration data, policy timelines, migrant death records, and GDP metrics, the findings strongly support this hypothesis. Stricter immigration enforcement, particularly under Republican administrations, correlates with shifts in migration behavior; often resulting in reduced reported deaths but at the cost of pushing migrants toward more dangerous and isolated routes. Visualizations revealed that periods of heavy enforcement coincided with fewer border deaths but an increase in causes like dehydration, sickness, and deaths in remote areas, reflecting a redirection of risk rather than its elimination.

The U.S. and Latin America’s GDP supports and adds a layer of context to the analysis, highlighting how economic disparities also play a crucial role in driving migration pressure regardless of who is in office. Overall, the data demonstrates that while political leadership and immigration laws impact migrant safety, the root causes of migration poverty, violence, and inequality must be addressed to reduce the number of deaths effectively.

References

Project Article:

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Data Sources:

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Supplemental Sources:

1. Population Reference Bureau. (n.d.). *Trends in migration to the U.S.* Retrieved from <https://www.prb.org/resources/trends-in-migration-to-the-u-s/>
2. World Bank. (n.d.). *World development indicators*. Retrieved from <https://databank.worldbank.org/source/world-development-indicators#>

Period	Main Immigrant Groups	Key Events/Policies
1820-1880	Ireland, Germany, UK, Scandinavia, China	Irish Famine, Industrialization, Chinese Exclusion Act (1882)
1880-1920	Italy, Poland, Russia, Greece, Austria-Hungary	Ellis Island, Industrial Boom, Emergency Quota Act (1921)
1920-1965	Mexico, Canada, Germany, UK, Italy	Great Depression, Bracero Program, 1924 Quota Act
1965-2000	Mexico, China, Philippines, India, Vietnam	1965 Immigration Act, Refugee Act (1980)
2000-2025	México, China, India, El Salvador, Guatemala	DACA (2012), Travel Ban (2017), Title 42 (COVID-19)

Modern Trends (2025 & Beyond)

- Decline in Mexican immigration but an increase in Central America & Asia.
- More skilled immigration (especially from India & China for tech jobs).
- Growing African immigration, particularly from Nigeria & Ethiopia.
- More asylum seekers & refugees, especially from Latin America & war-torn countries.

Miguel Thinking out loud based on the paper:

Intro & #1visual (1:30 mins)

- General intro to the project and visual with immigration patterns

#1 visual (1 min)

- Immigrants Obtaining Lawful Status Trends in the U.S. (1980–2020)

#2 visual (1 min)

- Total Migrant Deaths by Cause and Year

#3 Visual & conclusion (1:30 min)

- Total Migrant Deaths per Year with U.S. & Latin America GDP (Trillions) (Colored by Presidential Political Party)

SCRIPT

SCRIPT FOR INTRO:

As outlined in our background and methodology, immigration has played a crucial role in shaping U.S. history. Our hypothesis is that **Changes in U.S. immigration policies, particularly under different presidential administrations, have influenced immigration trends and contributed to fluctuations in migrant deaths.**

To explore this, we used five datasets covering a range of indicators — **from arrivals to deaths along migration routes—paired with political policies over the years.** We combined this with historical context to look for cause-and-effect relationships between policy and migration data, thus aiming to approve or disapprove our hypothesis.

VISUAL #1

Now turning to our visualization, we're using a time-series line chart to illustrate immigration trends to the U.S. from 1820 to the early 2000s.

The x-axis shows the year, while the y-axis represents the number of immigrants. Key peaks are annotated directly on the graph to draw attention to significant moments. The chart clearly shows trends and helps us visually identify how policy shifts align with changes in migration volume. For example, we see a sharp increase around 1907, which aligns with early 20th-century European migration. Another spike appeared in 1921, right before the Emergency Quota Act. The 1991 peak follows the impact of the 1965 Immigration and Nationality Act, which removed quotas and opened new migration pathways. In 1929 there was a significant decrease due to the great depression and therefore stricter policies and deportations.

This visualization allows us to connect historical context with quantitative evidence, showing how immigration policies aren't just legal texts — they have immediate, visible impacts on population movement.