

IMMIGRATION

Guess how much border crossing numbers plummeted after Biden put in a new policy

The White House is taking a victory lap.



President Joe Biden delivers remarks about immigration and border security at the Brownsville Station on Feb. 29, 2024, in Olmito, Texas. | Cheney Orr/Getty Images

By **MYAH WARD**

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The number of migrants illegally crossing the U.S.-Mexico border has plummeted 40 percent since President Joe Biden clamped down on asylum earlier this month, administration officials said Wednesday.

Daily crossings have fallen below 2,400. That's the lowest level since Jan. 17, 2021, right before the president took office. But encounters still remain too high for the president's newly implemented restrictions to be lifted: Migrants will continue to be barred from seeking asylum in between ports of entry until average border crossings have fallen below 1,500 for seven consecutive days.

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The White House used the drop to tout the president's new policy and its results, while once again pointing the finger at Republicans and Donald Trump

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for derailing legislative efforts to address the overwhelmed border.

The announcement of the new border crossing numbers comes ahead of Thursday night's presidential debate, where the two candidates are expected to spar on the issue of immigration, which ranks as a top concern for voters in the run-up to November.

The administration's efforts to highlight those numbers speak to how Biden and his team believe the new policy can prove effective in countering ongoing Republican attacks. Polls show that Americans believe the GOP will do a better job managing the issue of border security. But the Biden campaign has leaned heavily into the defense that he acted while his opponents dithered.

"President Biden will keep leading, including by taking action to secure our border and by calling on Congressional Republicans to do their jobs and pass the bipartisan border security bill," White House senior deputy press secretary Andrew Bates said in a memo Wednesday morning.

The president rolled out his new asylum restrictions in early June, partially closing down the border to migrants seeking asylum at the border. The new rule from the Homeland Security and Justice departments allowed the Biden administration to remove some migrants from the U.S. in a matter of hours or days. These migrants also face a five-year ban on reentering the country, as well as potential criminal prosecution.

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Since the president rolled out his executive actions, DHS said it had overseen more than 100 repatriation flights that returned more than 24,000 people to

more than 20 countries. The department said it has doubled the number of migrants removed directly from Border Patrol custody.

The administration also said the number of people released pending their court date after crossing the border — known as “catch and release” — has also decreased by 65 percent since the president’s announcement.

It’s unclear if the slowdown in crossings will continue in the weeks or months ahead. Outside groups have also sued to block the new measures, placing it in some legal peril.


The administration is crediting the new policy for the drop, but it is typical for encounters to drop following a major policy change, only to eventually tick back up again. Border crossings have also dropped in the weeks and months prior to Biden’s new policy, as Mexican officials increased enforcement on their side of the border.

“It’s a remarkable feat that our personnel have accomplished in just such a short period of time. It’s really important to remember though that the president’s executive action is being challenged in the court. We cannot fully, through executive action, resource the Department of Homeland Security like we need. And the Senate’s bipartisan legislation would have provided a fulsome and enduring relief that executive actions cannot,” DHS Secretary Alejandro Mayorkas said on MSNBC.

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