



Written by [Peter Rykowski](#) on January 29, 2026

Study: U.S. Experienced Negative Net Migration for First Time in More Than 50 Years

According to a new study, the United States experienced negative net migration for the first time in at least 50 years, reflecting Donald Trump's efforts to restrict mass migration and increase deportations.

Brookings Institution Study

The [report](#), authored by Wendy Edelberg, Stan Veuger, and Tara Watson of the Brookings Institution, examines the various forms of migration into (e.g., green cards, refugees, and illegal migration) and out of (e.g., deportations and self-deportations) the United States. Explaining their findings, they write:



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Building on work released in late 2024 and mid-2025, we use available data combined with judgment to estimate a range of likely outcomes for net migration for the years 2025 and 2026. We conclude that net migration was likely close to zero or negative over calendar year 2025 for the first time in at least half a century. Specifically, we estimate that net migration was between -295,000 and -10,000 for the year. For 2026, we project net migration is likely to remain in negative territory.

Edelberg, Veuger, and Watson argue that because the One Big Beautiful Bill Act includes significant funding for immigration enforcement, the number of deportations and self-deportations will likely increase in 2026.

The authors also claim that “the slowdown [in migration] implies weaker employment, GDP, and consumer spending growth.” However, as *The New American* has [previously noted](#), claims that mass migration is economically necessary are unfounded.

DHS Estimates

The Brookings Institution's estimate of negative net migration may not be high enough. Last month, the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) issued a [press release](#) claiming that “more than 2.5 million illegal aliens” left the United States in 2025, including 605,000 deportations and 1.9 million self-deportations.

Commenting on the DHS's numbers, Andrew R. Arthur of the Center for Immigration Studies [writes](#):

Even with the sanctuary pushback and a largely hostile media nipping at its heels, DHS's claim of 605,000-plus deportations since January 20 doesn't sound that unlikely, particularly



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with the massive pool of unauthorized targets [Tom] Homan et al. have to choose from.

DHS also asserts in its press release that “1.9 million other illegal aliens have voluntarily self-deported since January 2025”.

The Center will soon release its latest figures on the recent drop in the unauthorized population, but a mid-November [analysis](#) by my colleague, Steve Camarota, estimated a decline in the foreign-born population (both legal and otherwise) of about 2.3 million between January and September, suggesting the 1.9 million self-deports by early December claimed by DHS is definitely in the ball park.

Regardless of the exact figures, it is clear the Trump administration’s [deportation](#) and [enforcement](#) efforts, [deterrence](#) of illegal migration, and [restrictions](#) on [legal immigration](#), combined together, are significantly reducing migration levels to the United States.

Congress Must Act

Although Trump has limited mass migration, he is largely relying on laws that give the president much leeway in how to interpret and enforce them — either because the laws are vaguely written, or because they explicitly delegate congressional power to the president in violation of [Article I, Section 1](#) of the U.S. Constitution.

In order to ensure that Trump’s actions against mass migration remain permanent, Congress must enact stronger immigration laws that prevent individuals from single-handedly directing national policy.

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