

Illegal immigrants and temporary visitors give birth to 9% of U.S. babies

At right: A woman from CASA, Maryland, holds her 9-month-old baby as she joins others in support of birthright citizenship outside of the Supreme Court in Washington on Thursday, May 15, 2025.

Washington Times, By [Stephen Dinan](#), Thursday, April 23, 2026



What to know

- Nearly 1 in 10 U.S. newborns in 2023 had mothers without permanent status.
- About 260,000 newborns would be denied citizenship under Trump's order.
- Supreme Court is considering the legality of Trump's executive order.

Nearly 1 in 10 newborns in the [U.S.](#) in 2023 were delivered by mothers who were either in the country illegally or on a temporary visitor's pass.

The vast majority of those, some 260,000, would have been denied recognition of American citizenship under [President Trump's](#) order restricting birthright citizenship, according to the [Pew Research Center](#), which crunched the numbers.

They were born to families where neither the mother nor father had permanent status in the U.S., meaning either citizenship or a green card.

Most of the time, in some 245,000 cases, the mothers were illegal immigrants. In the other 15,000 cases, the mothers had some temporary visitors' status.

In about 60,000 other cases, the mother lacked permanent status, but the father did, meaning the child would have been eligible even under Mr. Trump's policy.

Looking more broadly, Pew said more than 4 million babies born in the [U.S.](#) from 2006 to 2023 would not have qualified for citizenship under Mr. Trump's vision.

The numbers highlight the stakes for the [Supreme Court](#) as the justices ponder the legality and constitutionality of Mr. Trump's executive order, announced on Inauguration Day.

Steven A. Camarota, a demographer at the Center for Immigration Studies who has conducted his own research on the situation, said many people tend to view illegal immigrants as either beneficial workers or detrimental criminals.

The birth numbers show the reality is more complicated, he said. Illegal immigrants are often part of families at the lower end of the income scale, and they end up costing tens of billions of dollars in education and welfare payments each year.

“You can’t ignore that,” he said. “That’s the reality here. If you tolerate widespread illegal immigration, you’re going to have enormous impacts on your taxpayers, your schools, your politics. Everything is going to be reshaped.”

At the same time, he said, unwinding automatic birthright citizenship could be tricky. The [U.S.](#) doesn’t have the administrative structures in place to verify a mother’s status at the time of birth.

That was one of the issues that arose during oral arguments at the [Supreme Court](#) in March when the justices took up the case.

Justice Amy Coney Barrett said [U.S.](#) Solicitor General John Sauer’s vision relied on intent to make a home, which she said can be tough to discern.

“Are we bringing pregnant women in for depositions?” Justice Ketanji Brown Jackson asked.

Other nations handle it differently, though. Most of America’s peers in Europe do not grant automatic citizenship at the same level as the [U.S.](#)

The [Supreme Court](#) is expected to rule by the end of its term in June.

All told, Pew estimated that 320,000 babies were born in 2023 to mothers in the [U.S.](#) without firm, permanent legal status. That works out to about 9% of the 3.6 million total births that year.

Looking at illegal immigrant mothers specifically, the total was 300,000.

That was down from a peak of 380,000 in 2006. The numbers dipped after that year, falling to just 215,000 around the start of this decade, before climbing back up as illegal immigration surged.

Mr. Camarota said the births generally track the size of the illegal immigrant population, though with the caveat that fertility rates have fallen. That means that even though the number of illegal immigrants is at an all-time high, the rate of births to them is not.

These mothers have diverse experiences.

Among the illegal immigrants, the vast majority came to work or live with family. A much smaller number were illegal immigrants who came specifically to give birth. Experts say that number is difficult to pin down, though border hospital workers say it happens with some frequency.

Among the legal temporary visitors, some women are in the [U.S.](#) on guest-worker visas or have followed spouses who are in the country as guest workers, and others are students. Pew estimated there were 20,000 such births in 2023.

Then there are women who take part in “birth tourism,” scheduling a tourism visa so they can be in the [U.S.](#) to give birth and secure American citizenship for their baby. Pew estimated there were about 9,000 of those cases in 2023.

Senior officials at the Department of Homeland Security have told The Washington Times that coming to the U.S. specifically for the purpose of giving birth is a legal gray area.

Pregnant women are not banned from entering with a visa, but consular officers have been instructed to deny tourism visas if they think the main reason for the travel is to obtain birthright citizenship for their newborn. Likewise, border officers can use discretion to deny entry if they believe birth tourism is the primary reason for a visit.