

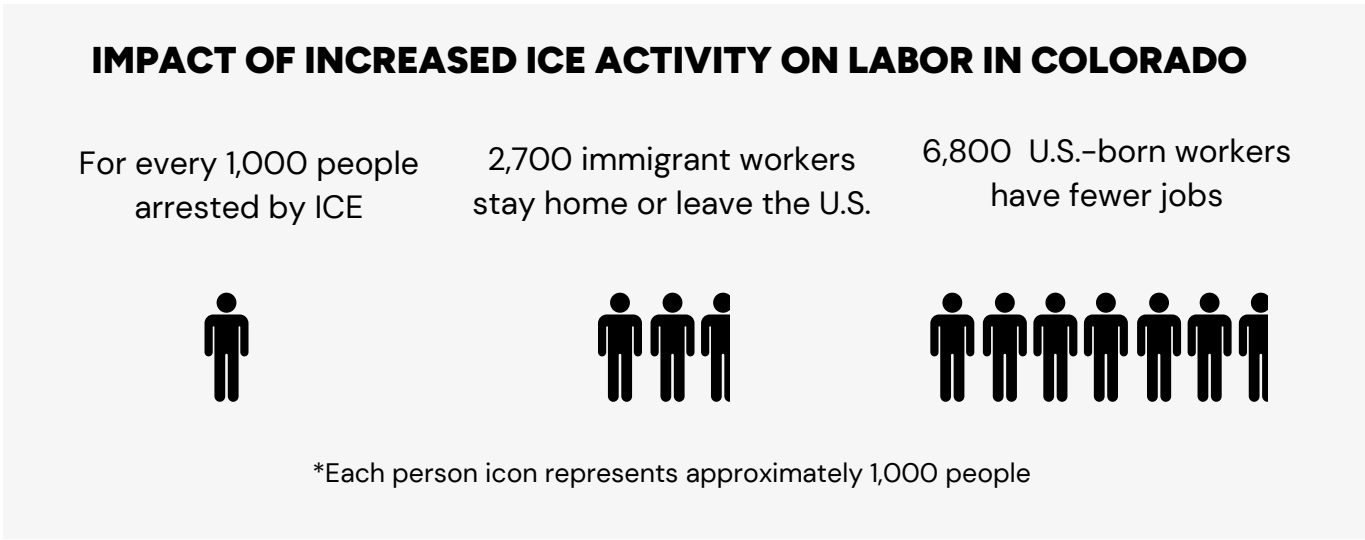
ICE’S IMPACT ON COLORADO WORKERS

Increased ICE activity has ripple effects on Colorado’s workforce and economy. Amendment 81 could lead to more ICE involvement in the state.

Across the country, immigrants of all backgrounds and statuses face dangerous challenges with more frequent and haphazard immigration enforcement in the second Trump administration. Heightened ICE activity carries less obvious spillover costs for Colorado’s economy, without clear evidence that it improves public safety or opens up jobs or higher wages for U.S. citizens.^{1,2} In fact, it leads to fewer jobs for citizens.

The consequences of more frequent and indiscriminate immigration enforcement under Trump’s second administration extend well beyond the families and communities directly affected. They reach into the labor force and broader economy.

Since January 2025, there has been a 240% increase in people detained nationally, only 30% of whom have been convicted of a crime.³ The data show that mass deportations create even more widespread harm than meets the eye, hurting residents regardless of immigration status. There are labor market spillover effects. For every ICE arrest that removes one person from the workforce, 16 more men stop working, including 7 immigrant men and 9 U.S.-born men. The data centers on men since more than 90% of those arrested by ICE have been male.⁴



If passed by voters, Amendment 81 would likely drive more job loss by requiring local law enforcement (including corrections officers and district attorney staff) to report people within 72 hours whose immigration status is unclear to the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) when they are charged with a violent crime, or any crime if they have a prior felony. The measure would override protections around sharing information and coordinating with federal immigration authorities, including when a person has not been convicted of a crime, creating concerns about the right to due process. The vague language of the measure makes it difficult to understand the exact extent of its impacts on families, communities, and our economy, but new research gives us a strong start.

The data is clear. There is a very real economic cost to heightened ICE activity that Colorado cannot afford

EVIDENCE LINKING ICE ACTIVITY TO JOB LOSS

ICE enforcement did not increase evenly across the country in 2025. Some areas experienced large and sudden increases in arrests, while similar areas experienced much smaller increases. The uneven rollout gave researchers something close to a natural experiment.

According to new research by Chloe East and Elizabeth Cox at the University of Colorado, before Trump’s second administration, employment and earnings in the two groups of communities had been moving along similar paths.

Researchers could therefore compare what happened afterward: Did employment change differently in places where ICE activity surged than it did in places where enforcement increased much less? That difference is what allows the researchers to estimate the effect associated with increased ICE enforcement, rather than simply attributing every change in the labor market to immigration policy. In effect, the places with smaller increases provide a comparison for what likely would have happened in the higher-enforcement areas without the enforcement surge.

WHAT HEIGHTENED ICE ACTIVITY MEANS FOR COLORADO’S ECONOMY

In Colorado, arresting 1,000 immigrant workers could result in 10,500 fewer jobs overall: the 1,000 workers arrested, plus 2,700 jobs typically filled by immigrant men and 6,800 typically filled by U.S.-born men.⁵ Despite the federal administration’s stated goal of opening up more jobs with higher pay for citizens, mass deportations appear to do the opposite, leaving less work for U.S.-born men. Why? ICE activity during Trump’s second administration, along with other attacks on immigrants, has created an environment of fear and a chilling effect on employment.⁶ This means more immigrant men stay home (or leave the country) instead of buying groceries, going out to eat, building homes, harvesting food, or processing meat for, instance.

\$437M

in Taxes From Immigrant Workers Support Services all Coloradans Rely On⁷

Because there are fewer people spending locally and working in these roles, U.S.-born men have fewer work opportunities in their typical roles that do not substitute those of undocumented immigrant men, such as electricians, farm managers, and plant managers. (Citizens are not eagerly filling the jobs left behind, which tend to have lower pay and fewer protections.) One example is in the construction industry. When there are fewer laborers, fewer homes are built, which means fewer electricians, roofers, and drywallers are hired.⁸

\$26.2B

in Immigrant Household Income Helps Power Colorado’s Economy⁹

Sector	Share of CO Immigrant Workers	Colorado GDP in 2025 (In Millions)	Share of CO Economy
Construction	20%	\$33,075	5.7%
Agriculture, forestry, fishing, and hunting	14%	\$3,251	0.6%
Manufacturing	14%	\$29,710	5.1%
Transportation and warehousing	13%	\$20,350	3.5%
Other Services	13%	\$13,616	2.3%

Source: U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis Gross domestic product (GDP) by state 2025

The industries with the highest share of immigrant workers account for 17.2% of Colorado’s economy and about \$100 billion in gross domestic product (GDP). Economic costs compound as more workers are unemployed, increasing the need for public supports like Medicaid and food assistance when the state’s budget is already struggling amid federal budget cuts and a restrictive tax code. With a labor force of 3.18 million workers, losing 10,500 jobs would raise the unemployment rate in Colorado almost half a percent, from 4% to 4.4%, requiring more to be paid out from the unemployment insurance trust fund.¹⁰

The data is clear: There is a very real economic cost to heightened ICE activity that Colorado cannot afford, including cascading impacts to our labor force and budget, without results promised by the federal administration and its Colorado counterparts, like better jobs for citizens and improvements to public safety. Measures like Amendment 81 would inflate the economic and social costs, enabling more ICE activity to wreak havoc on Colorado families, including your next-door neighbors and the construction workers down the street, immigrant and nonimmigrant alike.

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