

EXCLUSIVE Schools BUCKLE under migrant strain: Last year's 146,000 child arrivals jacked up costs by \$2 billion: classes spilled into hallways and teachers struggled with non-English speakers

By James Reinl, Social Affairs Correspondent, For Dailymail.Com 13:48 EST 01 Mar 2024 , updated 16:07 EST 01 Mar 2024



- **California, New York, Arizona, and Texas saw costs spike by nearly \$750 million**
- **'Unchecked illegal immigration is felt acutely in public schools,' says expert**
- **READ MORE: [Eric Adams calls for an END to sanctuary cities in stark U-turn](#)**

Public schools are buckling under the strain of unchecked migration, with last year's 146,000 child arrivals alone jacking up education costs by more than \$2 billion nationwide, researchers warn.

Lindsey Burke and others at the conservative Heritage Foundation say the arrival of children — some unaccompanied, others with families — are straining school systems in the states where they end up.

Research on this topic is mixed. Some scholars have found that immigration actually raises educational success for native-born kids, and some teachers say foreign arrivals sprinkle diversity into classes.

But think tank experts Burke and Lora Ries say the migrant surge is harmful right now, pointing to a New York school closing so that migrants could sleep there, and packed [Texas](#) classrooms spilling into hallways.



US Customs and Border Protection says it encountered 145,474 children in the 2023 financial year



A New York City decision to shutter a Brooklyn school to accommodate migrants sparked an angry backlash in January

'Unchecked illegal immigration is having an impact on families across the country, and is being felt acutely by children in public schools,' Burke and Ries told DailyMail.com in an email.

'Children had already been [shut out of their schools during the pandemic ...](#) now, children in places like New York find themselves once again turned away at the school door, forced into emergency online learning.'

US Customs and Border Protection says it [encountered 145,474 children in the 2023 financial year — including both those who crossed the southern border alone, and those with adult relatives or friends.](#)

At an average national education \$16,345 cost per student, that adds up to more than \$2 billion per year, the researchers warned.

In four key states — [California](#), New York, [Arizona](#), and Texas — the cost

of educating only the unaccompanied children who were sent to sponsors in those states tallied up to nearly \$750 million, they said.

For California, the 11,121 unaccompanied child arrivals in 2023 added some \$189 million to schooling costs.

In New York, the 8,477 minors amounted to \$240 million; the 16,394 to Texas cost \$228 million; and Arizona's 861 cost taxpayers an extra \$10 million.



New York Mayor Eric Adams visited with asylum seekers taking shelter at James Madison High School, in Brooklyn



Mom Kimberly Carchipulla (center), a recent arrival from Ecuador, takes her five-year-old son Damien Salinas for his first day of school in New York City, in September 2023

But costs alone did not reveal the full toll on America's public schools, the researchers said.

Some schools have [kicked out students to turn classrooms and gyms into shelters for migrant influxes to such cities as New York.](#)



Think tank expert Lindsey Burke says kids are being shut out of school again

An angry backlash erupted at a Brooklyn high school last month after city officials housed 500 migrant families in an auditorium there overnight because of heavy rains and fierce winds at a shelter site.

Classes were held online for one day.

Earlier in the crisis, teachers at two Austin Independent School District schools in Texas taught classes in hallways and conference rooms to make space for some 400 new migrant students, mostly from Central America.

Similar problems have affected schools far apart as Illinois, Colorado, and [Massachusetts](#).

Denver Public Schools has enrolled 1,900 newcomer students since October, leaving Colorado's largest school district short of more than \$20 million, officials announced this week.

Burke also warned about teachers scrambling to teach classes of students who cannot speak English — a point that former president Donald Trump has made on the campaign trail.



New York's City Hall referred to the illegal migrants at James Madison as 'guests' and called it a temporary stay



People protest against the use of public-school gymnasiums being used to house asylum seekers, in Brooklyn

'We have classrooms in schools which are loaded up with people that don't speak a word of English,' Trump said in a podcast late last year.

'The schools, they have no idea what to do about it. It's a very sick situation.'

Trump, the Republican front-runner, calls for the mass deportation of irregular migrants, including children, in his campaign to unseat President Joe Biden, a [Democrat](#), in November.



Heritage Foundation expert Lora Ries wants the southern border secured

They both took their message to the US-Mexico border on Thursday to address what is for many the key 2024 election issue — one that hurts Biden, even as he blames Trump for scuppering a border security deal in [Congress](#).

The number of migrants has [surged under Biden, with a record 10,000 arrests for illegal crossings at the border each day for several days in December](#).

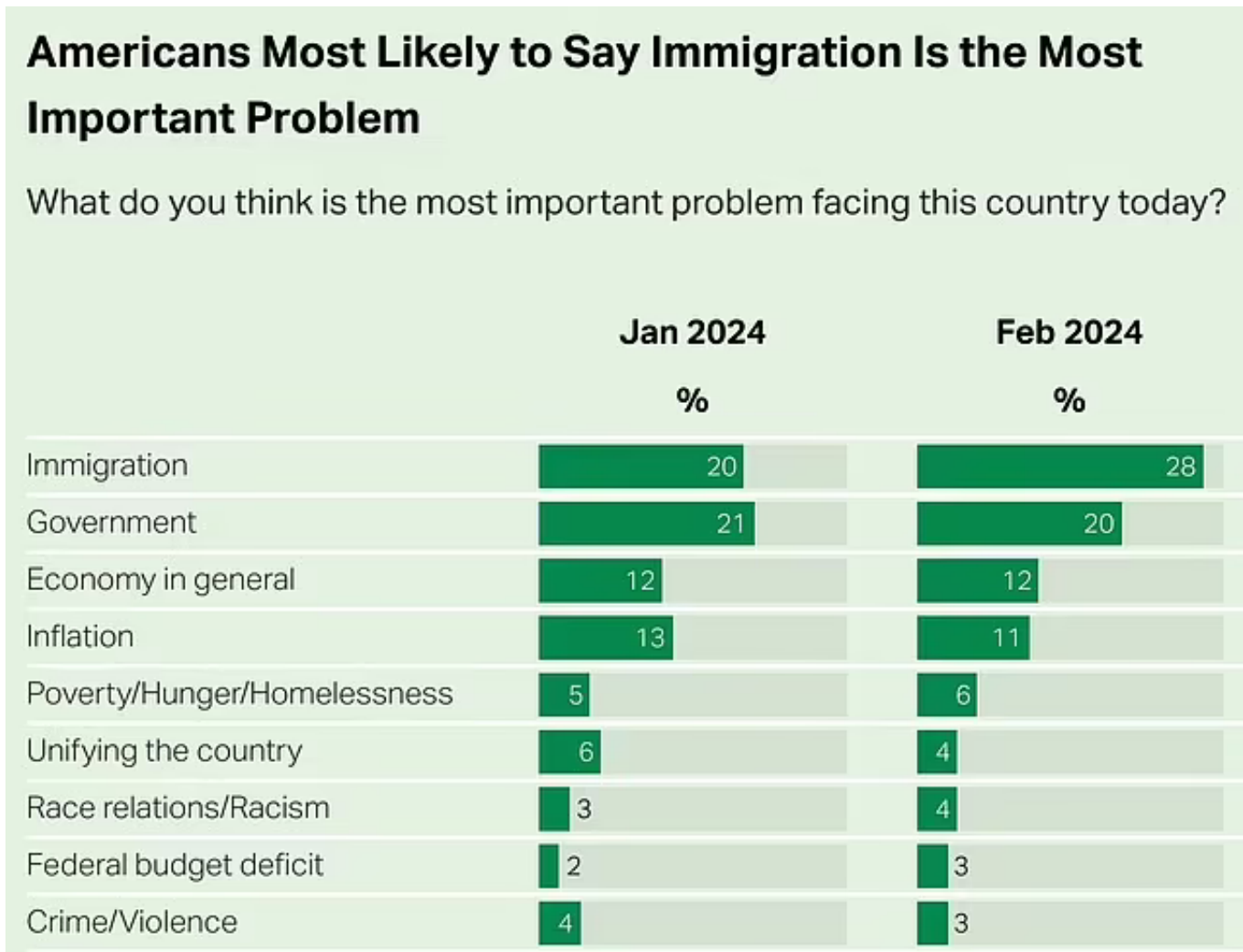
For researchers Burke and Ries, the US school crisis is down to 'an administration unwilling to enforce the basic rule of law and secure America's borders.'

Still, there may be more space in classrooms to accommodate newcomers than is clear at first.

Public schools lost students in pandemic-era lockdowns, and many have not returned to class as parents opt for private education or

homeschooling.

A study from 2022 found that America's public schools had lost some 1.2 million students in the previous two years.



The share of voters who rank immigration as America's top concern has shot up in recent weeks, Gallup polling shows

Also, immigrants might not be as bad for schools as the study suggests.

A 2012 paper from the National Bureau of Economic Research found that a slight rise in immigration to an area increased the chances of native kids finishing school by 0.3 percent.



Monmouth pollster Patrick Murray warns of Biden's migrant 'weakness'

'Contrary to the popular notion that immigrants may have a negative impact on the public education experience of native-born children, the net effect of immigrant children in schools is positive,' said the report.

Fears about unchecked immigration have surged to become the top issue for voters, and most Americans for the first time want walls [built across the southern border](#), new surveys reveal.

Polls released this week show that voters are getting more worried about migrant flows across the US-Mexico frontier, hurting [Biden's](#) chances in November's election.

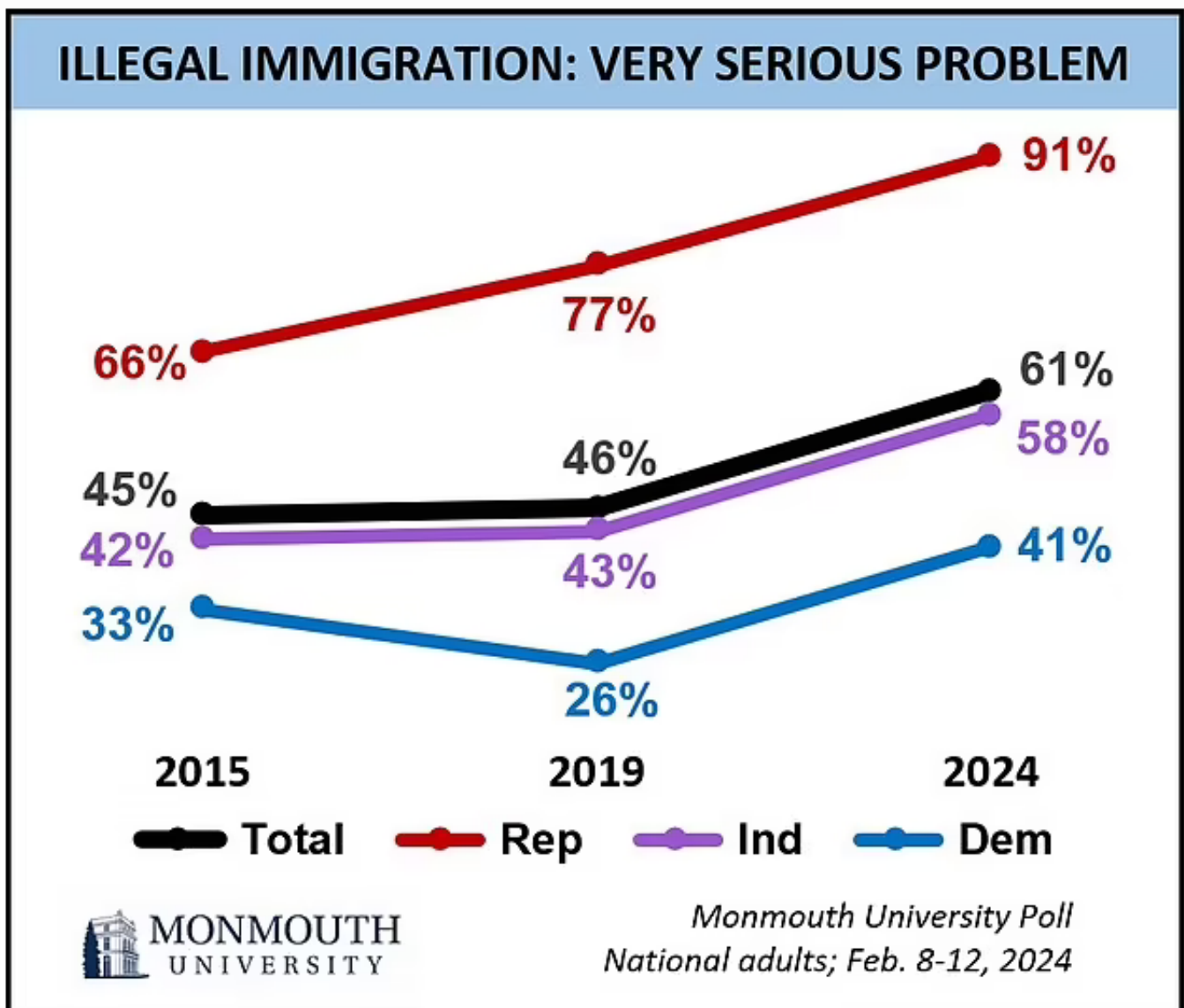
Pollster Patrick Murray said illegal immigration 'has taken center stage as a defining issue this presidential election year.'

Americans now say immigration is the top issue facing the nation — with 28 percent of voters [calling it the main concern, ahead of the state of the government and the economy.](#)

That's an eight percentage point jump from January.

It's also the first time voters were worried more about immigration than anything else since the 2019 — the last time there was a surge in migrants.

A Monmouth University Poll separately found that 53 percent of voters support building a wall across the southern frontier to deter migrants.



Pollsters found that Americans are taking people flows more seriously and increasingly want to see more wall

built along the border



Migrants who have been sent up to New York City from the southern border continue to arrive



© Adam Gray for DailyMail.com

Another 46 percent said they opposed building the wall.

That's the first time a majority of voters supported the proposal since the group started asking that question in 2015.

It's an even higher level of support than in September 2017, when Trump was president and building barriers among other anti-immigrant policies.

Back then, about a third of voters supported wall-building, while 60 percent were opposed.

Pollsters also [found that more than eight in ten Americans saw illegal immigration as a very serious or somewhat serious problem.](#)

That also reflected a sharp rise over the past decade.

Murray, the pollster, said Democratic voters were increasingly joining Republicans in expressing alarm about the border.

He called it 'Biden's weakest policy area, including among his fellow Democrats.'