

National Foundation for American Policy

August 1, 2017

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New Research: More Than 7,000 Immigrant Deaths at the Southwest Border in the Past 20 Years

Lack of Legal Work Visas Remains Root Cause of Border Deaths

Arlington, Va. – Over the past 20 years, more than 7,000 men, women and children have died along the Southwest border, according to a new report from the National Foundation for American Policy (NFAP), an Arlington, Va.-based policy research group.

The report, “7,000 Deaths and Counting,” is available at www.nfap.com.

“The root cause of the deaths is the lack of legal avenues to work,” said NFAP Executive Director Stuart Anderson, former head of policy at the Immigration and Naturalization Service under President George W. Bush. “Thousands of people would be alive today if we had allowed people to legally fill lower-skilled jobs, rather than put people at the mercy of human smuggling operations.”

Table 1
Immigrant Deaths at the Border: 1998-2017

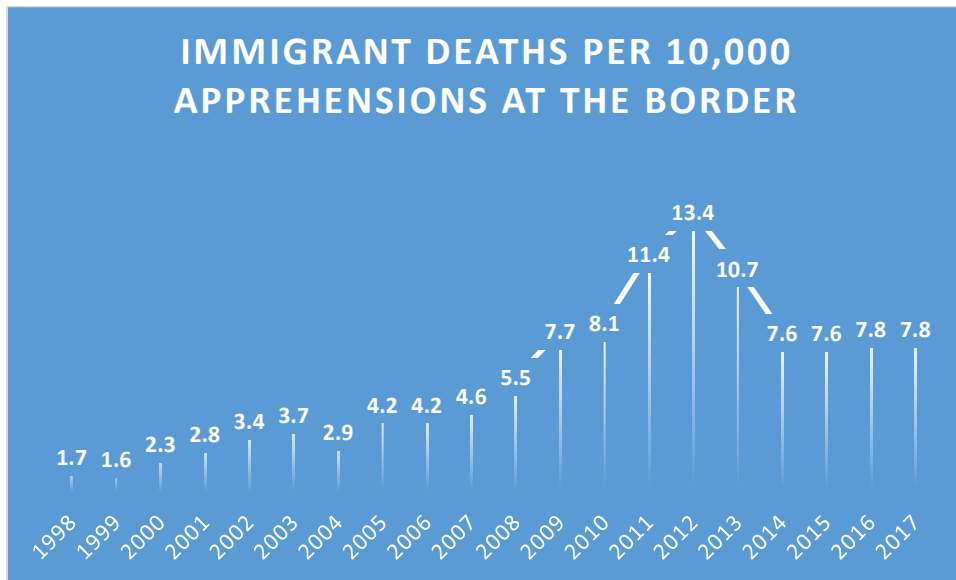
Fiscal Year	Immigrant Deaths
1998	263
1999	249
2000	380
2001	340
2002	320
2003	338
2004	328
2005	492
2006	454
2007	398
2008	385
2009	420
2010	365
2011	375
2012	471
2013	451
2014	313
2015	251
2016	322
2017	212*
TOTAL	7,127

Source: U.S. Border Patrol. *FY 2017 figures through July 24, 2017.

Between 1998 and 2017, there have been 7,127 deaths in Southwest border areas, according to the U.S. Border Patrol. As of July 24, 2017, 212 people have died along the border in FY 2017. In FY 2016, 322 people died. The deaths have continued even as apprehensions and attempts to cross illegally have diminished. There have been 7.8 immigrant deaths per 10,000 apprehensions in FY 2017, similar to the rate in FY 2014, 2015 and 2016. This is lower than the 13.3 immigrant deaths per 10,000 apprehensions in FY 2013. However, when compared to FY 1999, the evidence suggests an immigrant attempting to cross illegally into the United States today is 5 times more likely to die in the attempt than 18 years ago.

For many years, increased enforcement has pushed unauthorized crossings into more dangerous areas. Only rescues by U.S. Border Patrol agents have prevented the number of deaths from being far higher. The report concludes, "If Congress adopted reforms to allow the legal entry of foreign-born workers in sufficient numbers, then the tragedy of immigrant deaths at the border would largely disappear and illegal entry to the United States would be greatly reduced."

Figure 1



Source: U.S. Border Patrol, National Foundation for American Policy.

About the National Foundation for American Policy

Established in the Fall 2003, the National Foundation for American Policy (NFAP) is a 501(c)(3) non-profit, non-partisan public policy research organization based in Arlington, Virginia focusing on trade, immigration and related issues. The Advisory Board members include Columbia University economist Jagdish Bhagwati, Ohio University economist Richard Vedder, former U.S. Senator and Energy Secretary Spencer Abraham and former INS Commissioner James W. Ziglar. Over the past 24 months, NFAP's research has been written about in the *Wall Street Journal*, the *New York Times*, the *Washington Post*, and other major media outlets. The organization's reports can be found at www.nfap.com. Twitter: [@NFAPResearch](https://twitter.com/NFAPResearch)

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