

Pew Report Sheds Little Light on Birthright Citizenship

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Washington D.C. - Over the last several weeks, a handful of elected officials have re-ignited a call for the repeal of birthright citizenship. Claiming that countless unauthorized and temporary immigrants are coming to the United States solely to give birth, some are suggesting changing the Fourteenth Amendment of the U.S. Constitution, thereby forcing the U.S. government to individually determine the citizenship of every single child born in the country.

A [new report](#) [1] from the Pew Hispanic Center is intended to provide data on the numbers of children born to unauthorized immigrants each year. However, the report offers no real clarity on the question of birthright citizenship. Limitations in the Census data upon which the report is based make it impossible to determine how many children are born into families in which both parents are unauthorized or temporarily in the United States. As a result, the report is only able estimate that 340,000 of the 4.3 million children born in the United States in 2008 had **at least one** unauthorized parent. In other words, this figure includes families in which one parent is unauthorized and the other a U.S. citizen or legal immigrant, so we still have no idea how many children would be affected by a change to the Fourteenth Amendment. If anything, the Pew report highlights how complicated this issue is given that so many unauthorized immigrants live in "mixed status" families that also include U.S. citizens and legal immigrants.

In sum, the new Pew report does not add anything to the current "debate" over birthright citizenship. It only makes it clearer that unauthorized immigrants are integrated into American families. Ultimately, when discussing birthright citizenship, it is not about the numbers. The rhetoric surrounding the proposed repeal of birthright citizenship is divisive and runs counter to American values. Furthermore, repealing birthright citizenship would be expensive and impractical, and it would impact every single American. Most importantly, it is not a solution to the broken immigration system. Rather, it is simply a distraction that keeps us from addressing the real issues at stake.

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For more information contact Wendy Sefsaf at wsefsaf@immcouncil.org [2] or 202-507-7524.

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