

Trump migrant sweeps hit L.A. economy

A county report says 44% of businesses surveyed lost a large amount of revenue.

By SUHAUNA HUSSAIN

The first month of President Trump's immigration crackdown in Los Angeles put a dent in the area's economy, costing business owners millions in lost revenue and exponentially more in lost output from workers, according to a new county report.

The survey found that 82% of businesses reported negative impacts from the raids that began early last June and 44% reported losses of greater than half their normal revenue. More than two-thirds of respondents said they had changed operations, such as by reducing hours and delaying expansion plans. Some said they had to close temporarily or had difficulty obtaining supplies and services from usual vendors.

The report was prepared jointly with the L.A. County Department of Economic Opportunity; researchers from a nonprofit group called the Los Angeles County Economic Development Corp. conducted an online survey of hundreds of local businesses.

The survey is the latest evidence that the raids upended parts of the Los Angeles economy as some residents here illegally went underground and employers lost workers amid the arrests. It's clear the immigration action hit some areas and sectors of the economy harder than others. Some communities were largely unaffected. But in immigrant communities such as downtown L.A., Boyle Heights and Santa Ana, merchants have reported effects.

The report said some sectors, such as restaurants, construction and retail, would be particularly hard hit. But the authors said employers and employees found innovative ways to keep going.

"How these businesses are adapting, it's really a testament to their resilience," said Justin L. Adams, a senior economist with the Los Angeles County Economic Development Corp.

According to the report, released last week, undocumented workers contribute an estimated \$253.9 billion in [See [Economy](#), A12]



Photographs by MARCELO PÉREZ DEL CARPIO For The Times
AT TOP, the Bajo Grande Refinery on Lake Maracaibo was once among the globe's leading sources of oil. Above, a nearby mural critical of the United States.

Venezuela's oil patch a world away from boom

Broken pumps, rusted pipes, ghost towns mark once-vibrant hub. It will cost billions to restore.

By Mery Mogollón and Patrick J. McDonnell

CABIMAS, Venezuela — The pumps that brought prosperity from deep in the Earth's crust are now mostly rusted relics of a storied past.

The buildings that housed a prideful labor force are vandalized, colonized by squatters or boarded up.

The schools, clinics, the manicured golf course — onetime amenities from an industry awash in petrodollars — gone or overgrown with weeds.

"Our biggest problem is depression and anxiety," says Manuel Polanco, 74, a former petroleum engineer whose recollections of the good times only highlight a dystopian present. "We barely survive. We have just enough to feed ourselves, to get by."

This is the dismal tableau today in Venezuela's Maracaibo Basin, which, for

much of the last century, was one of the globe's leading sources of petroleum.

Since the U.S. attack last month and arrest of President Nicolás Maduro and his wife, President Trump has vowed to rebuild the country's moribund oil sector — while also providing resources and cash for the United States. East of Maracaibo lies the Orinoco Belt, home to the world's largest proven deposits, estimated at more than 300 billion barrels.

But a recent swing through the Maracaibo region in northwestern Venezuela dramatized the many obstacles. Greeting visitors is a dire panorama of nonfunctioning wells, battered pipelines and empty storage tanks, among other markers of decline.

The U.S. plans have generated considerable skepticism [See [Venezuela](#), A4]

Wasserman to sell agency amid Epstein fallout

It's a dramatic reversal for the mogul, who is staying on at L.A.'s Olympic committee.

By AUGUST BROWN AND MEG JAMES

Casey Wasserman, the embattled mogul who is the face of the Los Angeles 2028 Olympics, is preparing to sell his talent agency, a stunning fall for a leading figure in the world of sports and music.

In a memo to his staff Friday, Wasserman acknowledged his appearance in a recently released batch of documents related to the late sex trafficker Jeffrey Epstein and his companion and accomplice, Ghislaine Maxwell, had "become a distraction."

Wasserman wrote in his memo he was "heartbroken that my brief contact with them 23 years ago has caused you, this company, and its clients so much hardship over the past days and weeks."

Representatives for Wasserman did not immediately return requests for comment.

"I'm deeply sorry that my past personal mistakes have caused you so much discomfort," Wasserman wrote to his staff. "It's not fair to you, and it's not fair to the clients and partners we represent so vigorously and care so deeply about."

Wasserman's decision to unload the business he founded more than two decades ago represents a remarkable reversal for the mogul, who built up one of the most successful sports and music agencies in Hollywood.

He is one of the first major figures in entertainment to be forced out over their Epstein associations after the release of a massive trove of documents in late January. U.S. Atty. Gen. Pam Bondi sparred with lawmakers last week over the Justice Department's handling of the records, which has become a major political issue for the Trump administration. The scandal has roiled Washington, with continuing demands that the Justice Department release all documents related to the Epstein case.

Following in the footsteps of his grandfather, Lew Wasserman — a Hollywood [See [Wasserman](#), A12]

Some call Raman's ambition 'betrayal'

L.A. council member's delayed run for mayor came as a 'surprise' to Bass and Democrats.

By DAVID ZAHNISER

Two years ago, Los Angeles Mayor Karen Bass went to Sherman Oaks to cut a quick campaign ad for a trusted ally: Councilmember Nithya Raman.

Standing next to Bass, Raman looked into the camera and praised the mayor's work on homelessness, saying she was "honored" to have her support.

"I couldn't be prouder to work alongside her," Raman said.

That video, recorded at a get-out-the-vote rally for Raman's reelection campaign, feels like a political lifetime ago. On Feb. 7, Raman launched a surprise bid to unseat Bass, saying the city is at a "breaking point" and no longer capable of providing basic services.

Raman's entry into the race, hours before the filing

deadline, shocked the city's political elite and infuriated the mayor's supporters. Some observers called it a betrayal of Shakespearean proportions.

Raman's name had appeared on a list of Bass endorsers just weeks earlier. Bass' support for Raman's 2024 reelection bid had helped the councilmember earn 50.7% of the vote and avoid a messy runoff.

"How can she treat a relationship like this, and dispose of it once it's served its purpose?" said Julio Espeiras, a Democratic Party activist who volunteered with Raman's 2024 campaign at Bass' request. "It's a breach of trust, a betrayal, and it's kind of hard for me to stomach at the moment."

In 2024, Bass — then at the peak of her popularity — was featured prominently in Raman's campaign mailers. She sent canvassers to knock on voters' doors. A speech Bass delivered at Raman's rally in Sherman Oaks was turned into a social media video with stirring background music.

[See [Mayor](#), A10]

Handling of Guthrie case draws scrutiny

Criticism of how the sheriff's department is conducting abduction investigation mounts.

By RICHARD WINTON AND HANNAH FRY

Nancy Guthrie had been missing less than three days when family members and reporters, and even an Amazon delivery worker, could be seen wandering onto her property, with drops of her blood still staining the front driveway.

It's been nearly two weeks since the 84-year-old mother of "Today" host Savannah Guthrie was abducted. With no suspects in custody as of Saturday, scrutiny is growing over how authorities have handled the case.

Some questions have focused on Pima County (Ariz.) Sheriff Chris Nanos and his department, which was the first to respond when Guthrie was reported missing from her Tucson home Feb. 1. Since then, Nanos has been the leading law enforcement communicator on the investigation, including after reports emerged of ransom notes demanding millions of dollars in cryptocurrency for Guthrie's return.

The global spotlight is now on him.

"I'm not used to everyone hanging on to my every word and then holding me accountable for what I say," Nanos said at a news conference early in the probe. "This is really, for me, pretty new."

Critics pointed out his department opened up the crime scene a day after [See [Guthrie](#), A9]

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'Life can change in an instant'

Bill Plaschke writes about Dodgers pitcher Alex Vesia's loss of his newborn. SPORTS, D1

It's a fiery Year of the Horse

A rare zodiac combo ushers in a Lunar New Year with an intense energy. WEEKEND, L6

Weather
Morning sprinkles. L.A. Basin: 66/52. **B8**

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MILAN-CORTINA OLYMPICS

The sliders of the Caribbean

It's even cooler runnings as island bobsledders continue to move up

By Kevin Baxter



AL BELLO Getty Images

SHANE PITTER pilots Jamaica's two-man bobsled during a training heat at the Cortina Sliding Centre.

CORTINA D'AMPEZZO, Italy — Axel Brown, the pilot of Trinidad and Tobago's bobsled team, came to the Milan-Cortina Winter Games with a simple goal.

"Just don't come last," he said. "We know that there is a 0% chance of us contending for medals. It doesn't matter if we have the absolute best day we've ever had."

"That's just the reality of it. It's not defeatist, it's not negative. It's just being realistic."

But it's also realistic to believe that Trinidad, just by being in the competition, is furthering something of a revolution in the Winter Olympics in general, and in bobsledding in particular.

When Jamaica made its debut in the event in 1988, it was so novel it inspired the 1993 Disney movie "Cool [See [Sliders](#), A6]