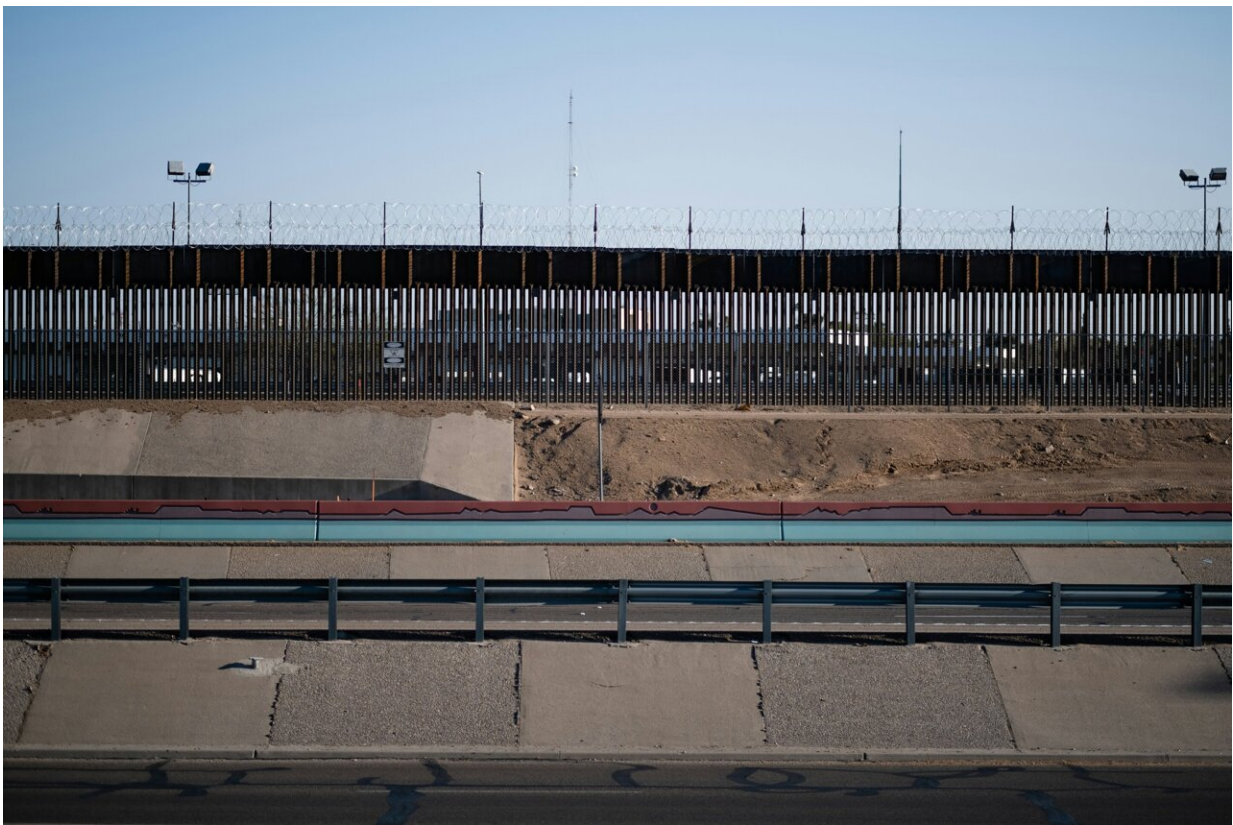


# How surge facilities affected the time to reunification for unaccompanied migrant children and their families

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Unaccompanied children entering the United States without adult legal guardians and legal status account for a growing share of U.S. Border

Patrol encounters along the southern border, with most fleeing extreme violence, poverty, and food insecurity. In response, emergency intake sites and influx care facilities (surge facilities) were used to promptly house unaccompanied children. A new analysis published in *Economic Inquiry* finds that the emergency shelters expedited the reunification of children with their families.

By analyzing data on unaccompanied minors encountered along the U.S. Southwest border by the U.S. Border Patrol and referred to the Office of Refugee Resettlement between January 2019 and June 2022, investigators found that children in surge facilities were 30% more likely to be reunified with family or sponsors than children placed in non-surge facilities. A counterfactual analysis suggested that the average time to reunification would have increased to almost 50 days without such facilities.

"Our research shows that adopting policies and procedures that ensure unaccompanied children (UC) are quickly reunited with their families is important, but it should also be accompanied by the necessary infrastructure to care for such a vulnerable group," said corresponding author Mary Lopez, Ph.D., of Occidental College. "It is also important to monitor UC once they are released to ensure that they are enrolled in school, receive proper health care access, and are not forced into employment."

**More information:** Managing migration crises: Evidence from surge facilities and unaccompanied minor children flows, *Economic Inquiry* (2024). [DOI: 10.1111/ecin.13243](https://doi.org/10.1111/ecin.13243)

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