

# The Price of Delay

The Financial and Human Costs of Delayed Immigration Cases for Unaccompanied Alien Children in the U.S.

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## Introduction

**DEFINITION (UAC):** Unaccompanied Alien Children (UAC), are defined by the Homeland Security Act as “those under 18, with no legal immigration status and for whom there is no available parent or legal guardian in the U.S” (Ataiants et al., 2017)

**PROBLEM STATEMENT:** The average time it takes for UAC to complete the court process is 8.5 years. This creates a *financial deficit* as well as a *human welfare concern*.

**HYPOTHESIS:** The correlation between human welfare, financial expenses, and time, will reveal how potential policy development can benefit both UAC and the U.S. Immigration system. Decreasing case wait times will naturally reduce both fiscal strain and humanitarian harm, interrupting the cyclical pattern that perpetuates system instability.

## Impact on Homeland Security

- 1) Undermines Governmental Accountability
- 2) Diverts Resources
- 3) Increases Exposure to Secondary Threats for UAC

## Methodology

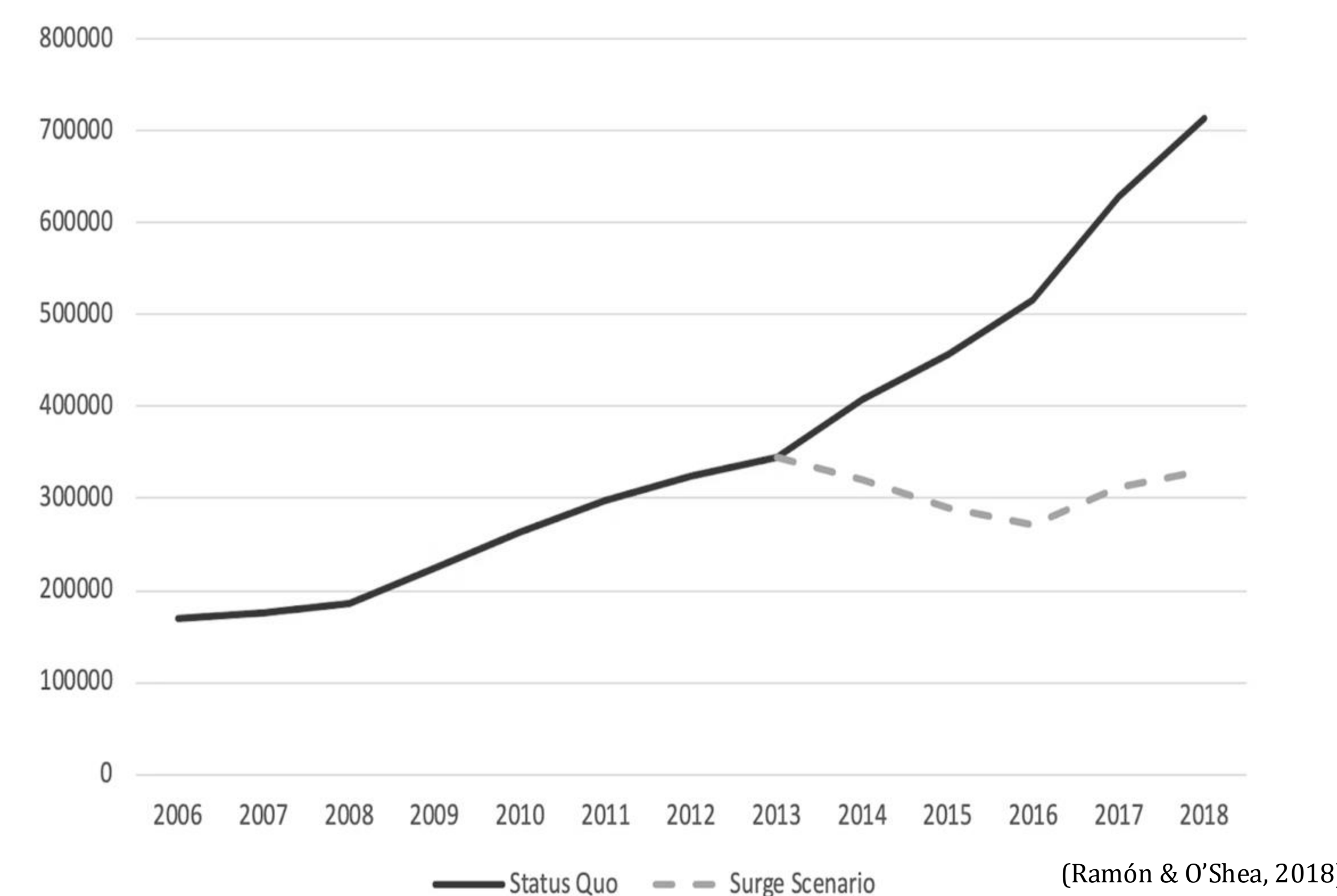
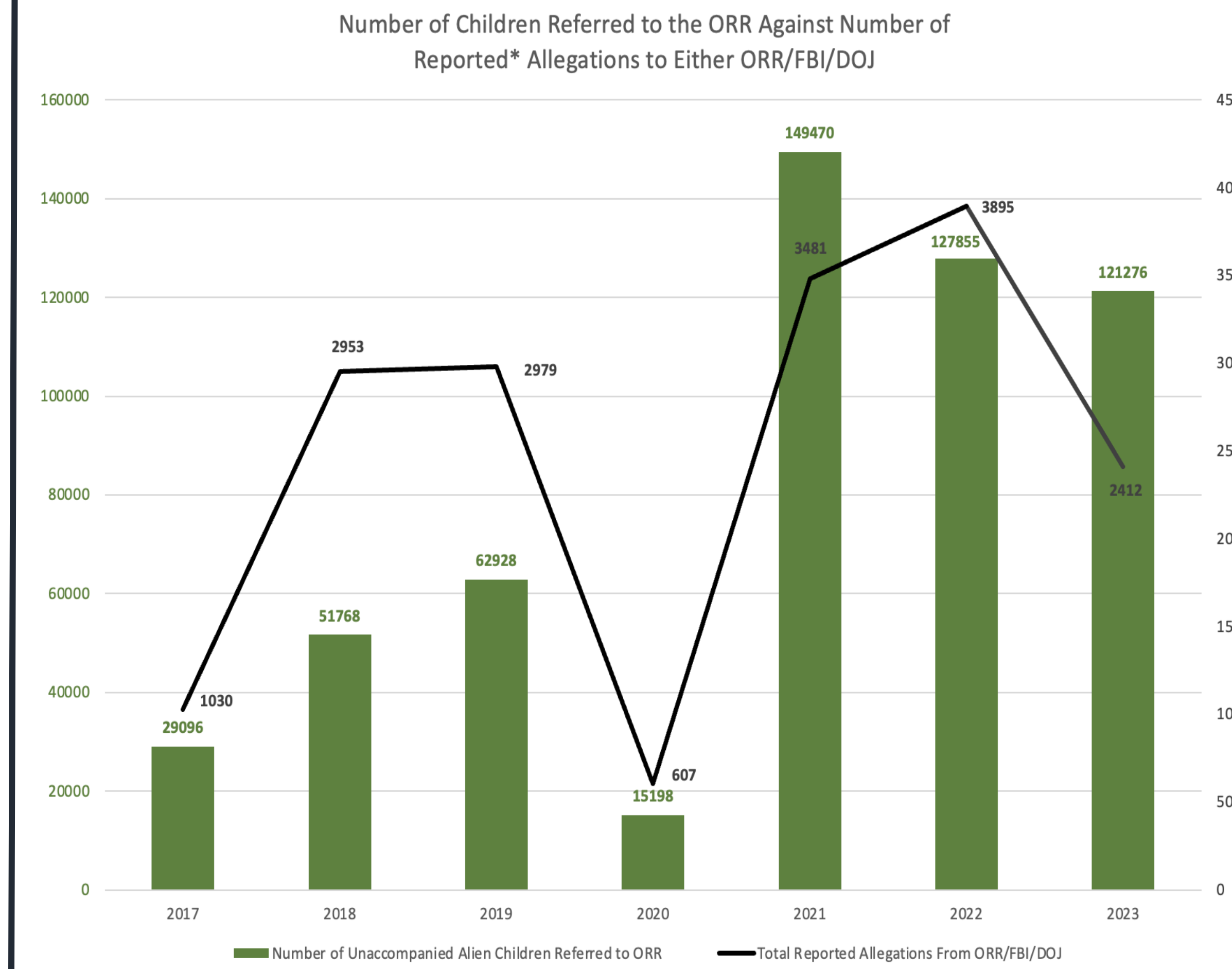
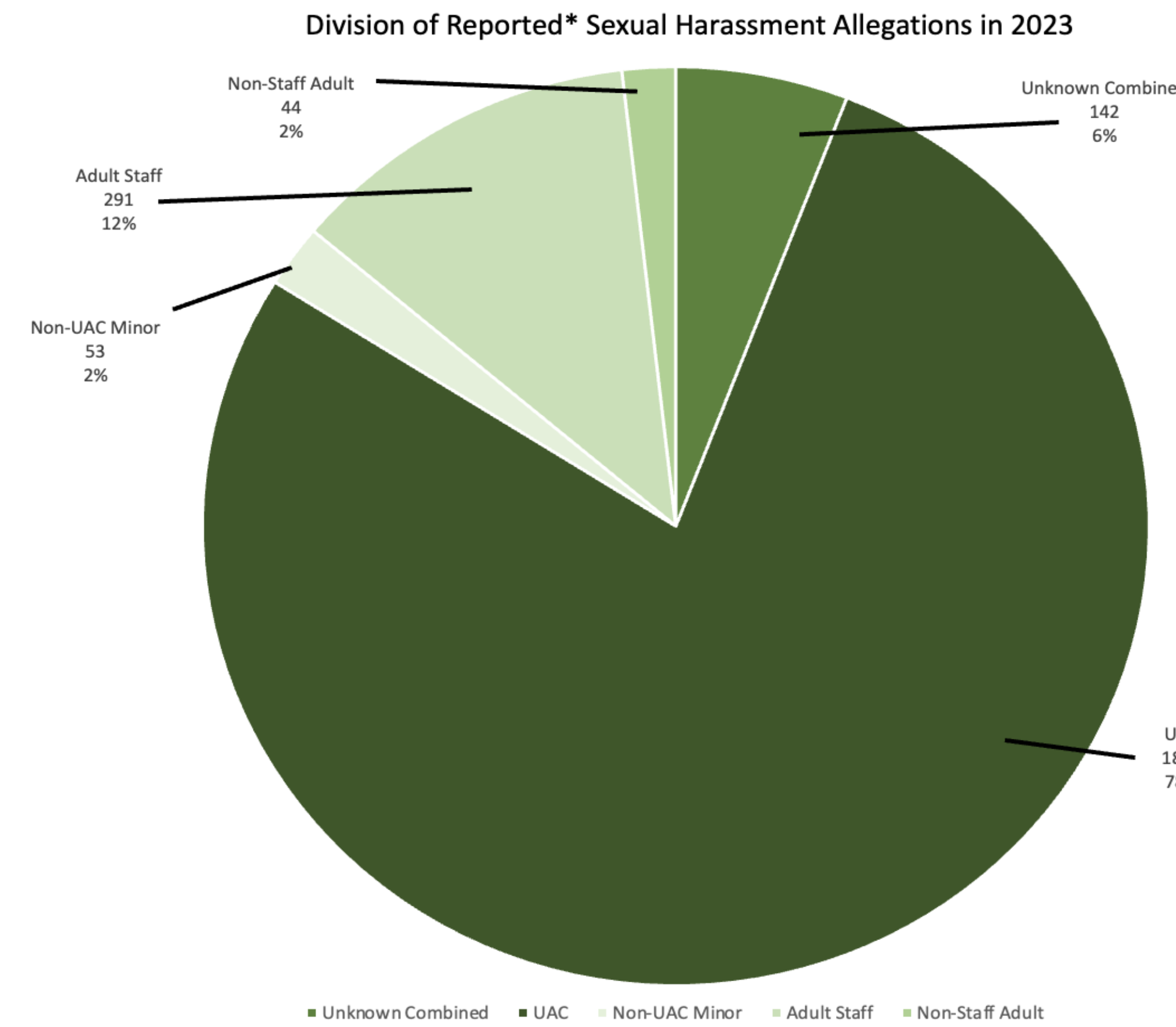
This project represents a *Cross-Sectional Non-Experimental Study*. Data includes quantitative statistics of time, as well as financial obligations. The Independent variable is represented by time, while the dependent variables are human welfare and costs.

## Limitations

The following were limitations of this research:

- Lack of Public Data: UAC are an extra-protected population, limiting data availability.
- Policy changes over the last five years make it difficult to identify consistent trends.

## Correlation Between Non-Profits and the Outcome of UAC



2021 Data from Washington Post	Quantity of Beds	Cost of Housing 1 UAC	Average Amount of Time Spent in Shelter	Cost for one UAC in Shelter for Average Amount of Time
Permanent Shelters	7700 Beds	\$290/Day	31 days	\$ 8,990.00
10 Emergency Shelters	16,000 Beds	\$775/Day	31 days	\$ 24,025.00

(Miroff N, 2021)

## Administrative Differences

### Trump Administration (2017-2021)

- Decline in human welfare
  - Initiation of the “Zero Tolerance Policy”
  - Reduction of Resettlement Offices
- Improved Economy
  - Rapid Review Process
  - Budget Reallocation

TRUMP ADMIN	2017	2018	2019	AVG
Number of Unaccompanied Alien Children Referred to ORR	29096	51768	62928	47931
Total Reported Allegations From ORR/FBI/DOJ	1030	2953	2979	2321

### Biden Administration (2021-2025)

- Improvements in Human Welfare
  - Family Reunification
  - Expansion of Legal Support Services
- Growing Economic Concerns
  - Rising Costs
  - Unprecedented Number of Immigration Cases

BIDEN ADMIN	2021	2022	2023	AVG
Number of Unaccompanied Alien Children Referred to ORR	149470	127855	121276	132867
Total Reported Allegations From ORR/FBI/DOJ	3481	3895	2412	3263

## Conclusive Benchmarks

### Establish a Taskforce to Prioritize Urgent UAC Cases

**Implementation Timeline:** Within 3 Months  
**Benchmark:** All pending UAC cases will be reviewed within the next 3 months and categorized based on urgency.

### Initiate Remote & Hybrid Court Hearings for UAC

**Implementation Timeline:** 6-12 Months  
**Benchmark:** At least 70% of cases will utilize online platforms which will decrease court timelines.

### Create a Transparent Dashboard for Tracking UAC Cases

**Implementation Timeline:** 1-3 Years  
**Benchmark:** Create a functional dashboard within 1 year. Follow trends and changes for the next 3 years.

### Hire Additional Immigration Judges through Educational Assistance Programs

**Implementation Timeline:** 1-5 Years  
**Benchmark:** Tighten the ratio between judges and those seeking to be represented in court by offering financial assistance with education.

### Create Child Specific Immigration Courts Focused on UAC

**Implementation Timeline:** 5+ Years  
**Benchmark:** Increasing availability of resources to UAC will decrease allegations of trauma.

## References

Ataiants, J., Cohen, C., Riley, A. H., Tellez Lieberman, J., Reidy, M. C., & Chilton, M. (2017). Unaccompanied Children at the United States Border, a Human Rights Crisis that can be Addressed with Policy Change. *Journal of Immigrant and Minority Health*, 20(4), 1000–1010. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10903-017-0577-5>

Miroff, N. (2021). Biden administration spending \$60 million per week to shelter unaccompanied minors: The Department of Health and Human Services has announced at least 10 temporary sites to shelter thousands of teens and children at convention centers, oil worker camps and military bases. *WP Company LLC d/b/a The Washington Post*.

Ramón, C., & O’Shea, T. (2018). *Why Hiring More Judges Would Reduce Immigration Court Backlogs* | Bipartisan Policy Center. <https://bipartisanpolicy.org/blog/why-hiring-more-judges-would-reduce-immigration-court-backlogs/>