Mexican Immigration to the U.S.: New Estimates, Trends and Characteristics

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Senior Demographer

Forging a New Path in North American Trade & Immigration
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Mexicans Decline to Less Than Half the U.S. Unauthorized Immigrant Population

For the first time, Mexican unauthorized immigrants no longer account for the majority of the 10.5 million living in the U.S. illegally.

- Interactive: Unauthorized Immigrant population trends
- Video: How we estimate the U.S. unauthorized immigrant population
Immigration today

- Mismatch between data and political rhetoric
- Unauthorized immigrant #s lowest since ‘04
  - Unauthorized immigrant numbers grew rapidly, 1990 to 2007
  - Dramatic declines for 2 years then slow drop
- Mexican mass migration has essentially stopped
  - Drop in unauthorized since ‘07 due entirely to Mexican reversal
- “New” unauthorized are mostly *visa overstayers*
  - Apprehensions of Mexicans are at a 50-year low
  - Deterrence seems to be working on Mexicans
- Low flow and origin shifts have consequences
  - Longer duration of residence & more families
  - Lawful immigration numbers remain unchanged
  - Key Labor force role for immigrants today & in the future
Mexican population in US grew slowly before ‘80; By 1970, “only” about ¾ million Mexicans in US

Mexican migrants in US (millions)

- Mexican-Born Population in the U.S. (000s)
- Percent Mexican of Foreign-Born Population

Acceleration from unauthorized immigration; Almost 17-fold increase to 12.8 million by 2007

Growth ceases & dramatically reverses, 2007-2010; Steady downward drift as returns to Mexico continue

Unauthorized immigrants reached 12+ million in ’07 — NET growth of 500,000 per year for 17 years

Source: Pew Research Center estimates based on residual methodology.
Sudden reversal after ‘07 — DROP of 500,000 per year for two years

Unauthorized immigrants (millions)

Shaded area represents 90% confidence interval

Source: Pew Research Center estimates based on residual methodology.
Stable for ‘09-’14, then real declines in ’15-’17; unauthorized immigrant #s drop to ’04 (!) level

Unauthorized immigrants (millions)

Shaded area represents 90% confidence interval

Source: Pew Research Center estimates based on residual methodology.
Unauthorized **Mexicans** peaked ’07, too; Dropped by 500,000 over next 2 years

Source: Pew Research Center estimates based on residual methodology.
Unlike total, Mexican declines continue — Down by 2 million (!) from peak

Source: Pew Research Center estimates based on residual methodology.
Unauthorized from countries other than Mexico show rapid increase to ’07; small increase since

Shaded/dotted areas represents 90% confidence interval

Source: Pew Research Center estimates based on residual methodology.
Mexicans decline to LESS THAN HALF of unauthorized immigrants for the 1st time ever

Unauthorized immigrants
(millions)

Mexico

Other countries

Source: Pew Research Center estimates based on residual methodology.
Mexico down 2 million since ‘07; Central America, Asia – UP; South America, Europe-Canada - DOWN; Others stable

Source: Pew Research Center estimates based on residual methodology.
Next 4 countries all up for 2007-2017; Then next 4 unchanged

Unauthorized immigrant population (thousands)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Population (thousands)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>El Salvador</td>
<td>750</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guatemala</td>
<td>600</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>India</td>
<td>525</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Honduras</td>
<td>400</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>China</td>
<td>375</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dom.Rep.</td>
<td>240</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brazil</td>
<td>160</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Philippines</td>
<td>160</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

About one-in-four U.S. immigrants are unauthorized

- Unauthorized immigrants: 10.4 million (23%)
- Naturalized citizens: 20.7 million (45%)
- Lawful immigrants: 35.2 million (77%)
  - Lawful permanent residents: 12.3 million (27%)
  - Temporary Lawful residents: 2.2 million (5%)

Total U.S. foreign-born Population: 45.6 million

Source: Pew Research Center based on augmented 2017 ACS.
Unauthorized immigrant population dominated by Mexico, Latin America

- Mexico: 4,950,000
- Central America: 1,900,000
- South America: 775,000
- Caribbean: 475,000
- Asia: 1,450,000
- Other regions: 900,000

Total: 10,500,000

Source: Pew Research Center based on augmented 2017 ACS.
Mexico is largest single source of legal immigrants, also

Legal immigrant population (millions)

- **Mexico (19%)**: 7.9
- **Other Latin America (24%)**: 6.5
- **Europe & Canada (16%)**: 5.5
- **MENA (5%)**: 1.6
- **Africa, Other (5%)**: 1.7
- **Asia—South & East (31%)**: 10.6

Total: 33.8 million

Source: Pew Research Center based on augmented 2017 ACS.
Legal admissions unchanged since ‘01 (exc. ‘03) “Green cards” exceed 1 million/yr routinely

Average Admissions, '01-'18 1,059,000

Lawful permanent immigrants admitted by fiscal year (thousands)

- All other
- Mexico

Source: DHS Yearbook of Immigration Statistics and supporting data.
Unauthorized immigrants and control of the Border
Implications of changing patterns

• *Growth through ‘07 and then decline* driven by *Mexican immigrants*
• Drop in “new arrivals” also driven by *Mexicans*
• Most unauthorized from places other than *Mexico & Central America* are *visa overstayers*
• The southern border is generally “secure”
  – Apprehensions of *Méxicans* are at a 50-year low
  – Central Americans (esp. families) are not trying to evade capture
  – Strong *deterrence* from (1) urban fencing; (2) Border Patrol build up; (3) technology; and (4) violence in northern Mexico
  – Evading capture is very difficult
  – Costly and risky to sneak into or re-enter the US
• *Unauthorized immigrants increasingly rooted in the US*
  – Time in the US has gone up markedly
  – Families with children
  – High labor force participation for men, low for women
Apprehensions of Mexicans in 2017-18
Lower still → lowest since 1968

Deportable Mexicans located (000s)

Source: Department of Homeland Security and INS, CBP apprehension statistics
Non-Mexican apprehensions exceed Mexicans, but total still low

Deportable aliens located (000s)

Source: Department of Homeland Security and INS, CBP apprehension statistics
Cross-border entries are the main source of unauthorized immigrants for Northern Triangle countries and Mexico; *Not overstays of legal visa arrivals*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Ratio of Border Apprehensions (CBP) to Estimated In-Country Overstays (DHS), Fiscal 2015-2017, Average</th>
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<tr>
<td>El Salvador</td>
<td>12.5</td>
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<td>Guatemala</td>
<td>10.2</td>
</tr>
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<td>Honduras</td>
<td>9.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mexico</td>
<td>3.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Central America Countries</td>
<td>10.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Countries</td>
<td>3.8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Apprehensions for other countries (even others in Central America) pale in comparison to *visa overstays*

Ratio of border apprehensions (CBP) to estimated in-country overstays (DHS), fiscal 2015-2017, average

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<td>Canada</td>
<td>0.002</td>
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<tr>
<td>Other Countries</td>
<td>0.04</td>
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Drop in “New Arrivals” especially large for Mexico (-75%) versus others (-1% overall)

Unauthorized immigrants (000s)

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<th>Country</th>
<th>Annual Arrivals (avg.) 2012-17</th>
<th>Annual Arrivals (avg.) 2002-07</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No.</td>
<td>Share</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mexico</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Northern Triangle</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asia</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>23%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other countries</td>
<td>170</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>425</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
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Source: Pew Research Center based on augmented 2017 & 2007 ACS.
New unauthorized immigrants in 2017 are NOT illegal entrants(#) but likely overstays(*)

Other regions* (Europe, MENA, Africa)
- 18%

Mexico #
- 20%

Central America #
- 18%

Asia*
- 23%

Caribbean*
- 13%

South America*
- 8%

Approximate Overstays (*)
62%
260,000/year

Annual Average 425,000

Source: Pew Research Center based on augmented 2017 ACS
Immigrant families & children
Increasing % of unauthorized immigrant adults in the US for many years

Share of unauthorized Immigrant adults

More than 10 years in US

5 years or less in US


Unauthorized Mexican immigrant adults have been here even longer

Share of unauthorized Immigrant adults

More than 10 years in US

5 years or less in US

“Typical” Mexican unauthorized immigrant came in the 20th century, not the 21st.

Median years in U.S. for unauthorized Mexican Immigrant adults

Immigrants, especially unauthorized, more likely to be couples with children

- U.S. Native Households: 18%
- Legal Immigrant Households: 32%
- Unauthorized Immigrant Households: 43%

Source: Pew Research Center based on augmented 2016 ACS
Immigrants & the workforce
Immigrant men work more than natives; Women work less

Percent in labor force, 2017

- Adult Men (18-64)
  - Unauthorized Immigrants: 91%
  - Lawful Immigrants: 85%
  - U.S. Born: 79%

- Adult Women (18-64)
  - Unauthorized Immigrants: 61%
  - Lawful Immigrants: 67%
  - U.S. Born: 73%

Source: Pew Research Center based on augmented 2017 ACS
Unauthorized immigrant workforce trending down; Under 8 million — lowest since 2005

Unauthorized immigrant workers (millions)

1995 1997 1999 2001 2003 2005 2007 2009 2011 2013 2015 2017

Source: Pew Research Center estimates based on residual methodology.
Unauthorized immigrant share of workforce — Continues to down to lowest share since 2003

Unauthorized immigrant worker share of civilian labor force (percent)

2.7%  3.9%  4.7%  5.4%  5.2%  5.0%  4.8%  4.6%

Shaded area represents 90% confidence interval

Source: Pew Research Center estimates based on residual methodology.
Natives and US-born children of current immigrants have driven growth in working ages

Working-age population, ages 25-64 (millions)

- Actual
- Projected

- US born with immigrant parents (2nd generation)
- Immigrants (1st generation)
- US born with US-born parents (3rd+ generations)

Next 20 years, **ALL** growth comes from **NEW** immigrants and US-born children of current immigrants

Without FUTURE immigrants, working-age population would **decrease** by 2035

There’s a lot more in the reports!
Thank you! Questions?
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