

What we know about unauthorized immigrants living in the U.S.

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Note: A data release by the Census Bureau in December 2024 may affect estimates of the size of the unauthorized immigrant population in this blog post. [Read this box to learn more.](#)

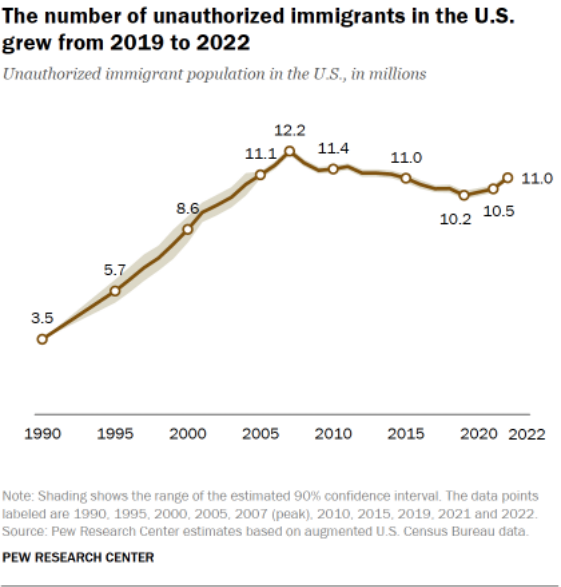
The unauthorized immigrant population in the United States grew to 11.0 million in 2022, according to new Pew Research Center estimates based on the 2022 American Community Survey, the most recent year available. The increase from 10.5 million in 2021 reversed a long-term downward trend from 2007 to 2019. This is the first sustained increase in the unauthorized immigrant population since the period from 2005 to 2007.

However, the number of unauthorized immigrants living in the U.S. in 2022 was still below the peak of 12.2 million in 2007.

How we did this 

Who are unauthorized immigrants? 

These new estimates do not reflect events since mid-2022. The U.S. unauthorized immigrant population has likely grown over the past two years, based on several alternative data sources. For example, encounters with migrants at U.S. borders [reached record levels throughout 2022-23](#), and the [number of applicants waiting for decisions on asylum claims](#) increased by about 1 million by the end of 2023.



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In addition, through December 2023, about 500,000 new immigrants were paroled into the country through two federal programs – the Cuban, Haitian, Nicaraguan and

Venezuelan ([CHNV](#)) program and Uniting for Ukraine ([U4U](#)). Groups like these have traditionally been considered part of the unauthorized immigrant population, but almost none of them appear in the 2022 estimates.

While these new arrivals probably increased the U.S. unauthorized immigrant population, it remains to be seen how much. New arrivals can’t simply be added to the existing estimate because some unauthorized immigrants leave the country every year, some die and some gain lawful status. (For details, read “What has happened with unauthorized migration since July 2022?”)

What has happened with unauthorized migration since July 2022?

Here are key findings about how the U.S. unauthorized immigrant population changed recently:

- **The number of unauthorized immigrants from Mexico dropped to 4.0 million in 2022 from a peak of 6.9 million in 2007.** Mexico [has long been](#), and remains, [the most common country of birth](#) for unauthorized immigrants.
- From 2019 to 2022, **the unauthorized immigrant population from nearly every region of the world grew.** The Caribbean, South America, Asia, Europe and sub-Saharan Africa all saw increases.
- **The unauthorized immigrant population grew in six states** from 2019 to 2022 – Florida, Maryland, Massachusetts, New Jersey, New York and Texas. Only California saw a decrease.
- **About 8.3 million U.S. workers in 2022 were unauthorized immigrants**, an increase from 7.4 million in 2019. The 2022 number is essentially the same as previous highs in 2008 and 2011.

Composition of the U.S. immigrant population

Immigrants made up 14.3% of the nation’s population in 2022. That share was slightly [higher than in the previous five years](#) but below the record high of 14.8% in 1890.

As of 2022, **unauthorized immigrants represented 3.3% of the total U.S. population and 23% of the foreign-born population.** These shares were lower than the peak values in 2007 but slightly higher than in 2019.

Meanwhile, the *lawful* immigrant population grew steadily from 24.1 million in 2000 to 36.9 million in 2022. The growth was driven by a rapid increase in the number of naturalized citizens, from 10.7 million to 23.4 million. The number of lawful permanent residents dropped slightly, from 11.9 million to 11.5 million. As a result, in 2022, 49% of all immigrants in the country were naturalized U.S. citizens.

Who lives with unauthorized immigrants?

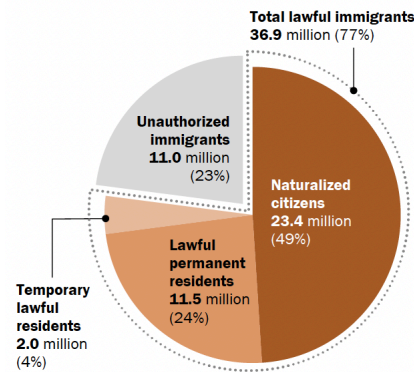
Unauthorized immigrants live in 6.3 million households that include more than 22 million people. These households represent 4.8% of the 130 million U.S. households.

Here are some facts about these households in 2022:

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Unauthorized immigrants were 23% of the U.S. foreign-born population in 2022

Foreign-born population estimates, 2022



Note: These figures differ from published U.S. Census Bureau totals because they are adjusted to account for population undercount. The unauthorized immigrant population includes those with temporary protection from deportation under Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) and Temporary Protected Status (TPS), as well as pending asylum claims.
Source: Pew Research Center estimates based on augmented U.S. Census Bureau data (IPUMS).

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- In 86% of these households, either the householder or their spouse is an unauthorized immigrant.
- Almost 70% of these households are considered “mixed status,” meaning that they also contain lawful immigrants or U.S.-born residents.
- In only about 5% of these households, the unauthorized immigrants are not related to the householder or spouse. In these cases, they are probably employees or roommates.

Of the 22 million people in households with an unauthorized immigrant, 11 million are U.S. born or lawful immigrants. They include:

- 1.3 million U.S.-born adults who are children of unauthorized immigrants. (We cannot estimate the total number of U.S.-born adult children of unauthorized immigrants because available data sources only identify those who still live with their unauthorized immigrant parents.)
- 1.4 million other U.S.-born adults and 3.0 million lawful immigrant adults.

About 4.4 million U.S.-born children under 18 live with an unauthorized immigrant parent. They account for about 84% of all minor children living with their unauthorized immigrant parent. Altogether, about 850,000 children under 18 are unauthorized immigrants in 2022.

The share of households that include an unauthorized immigrant varies across states. In Maine, Mississippi, Montana and West Virginia, fewer than 1% of households include an unauthorized immigrant. Nevada (9%) has the highest share, followed by California, New Jersey and Texas (8% each).

What countries do unauthorized immigrants come from?

The origin countries for unauthorized immigrants have changed since the population peaked in 2007. Here are some highlights of those changes:

Mexico

The 4.0 million unauthorized immigrants from Mexico living in the U.S. in 2022 was the lowest number since the 1990s. And in 2022, Mexico accounted for 37% of the nation’s unauthorized immigrants, by far the [smallest share on record](#).

The decrease in unauthorized immigrants from Mexico reflects several factors:

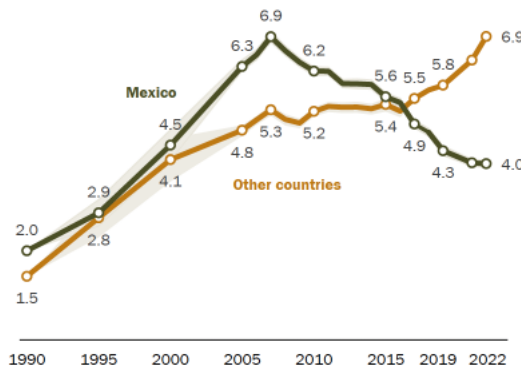
- A broader [decline in migration](#) from Mexico to the U.S.;
- Some Mexican immigrants returning to Mexico; and
- Expanded [opportunities for lawful immigration](#) from Mexico and other countries, especially for temporary agricultural workers.

The rest of the world

The total number of unauthorized immigrants in the U.S. from countries other than Mexico grew rapidly between 2019 and 2022, from 5.8 million to 6.9 million.

Mexicans have been a minority of unauthorized immigrants since 2017 but are by far the largest group

U.S. unauthorized immigrant population by country of birth, in millions



Note: Shading shows the range of the estimated 90% confidence interval. The data points marked are 1990, 1995, 2000, 2005, 2007, 2010, 2015, 2017 (crossover), 2019, 2021 and 2022.

Source: Pew Research Center estimates based on augmented U.S. Census Bureau data.

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The number of unauthorized immigrants from almost every world region increased. The largest increases were from the Caribbean (300,000) and Europe and Canada (275,000). One exception was Central America, which had led in growth until 2019 but saw no change after that.

After Mexico, the countries with the largest unauthorized immigrant populations in the U.S. in 2022 were:

- El Salvador (750,000)
- India (725,000)
- Guatemala (675,000)
- Honduras (525,000)

The Northern Triangle

Three Central American countries – El Salvador, Honduras and Guatemala – together represented 1.9 million unauthorized immigrants in the U.S. in 2022, or about 18% of the total. The unauthorized immigrant population from the Northern Triangle grew by about 50% between 2007 and 2019 but did not increase significantly after that.

Other origin countries

In 2022, Venezuela was the country of birth for 270,000 U.S. unauthorized immigrants. This population had seen particularly fast growth, from 55,000 in 2007 to 130,000 in 2017. It is poised to grow significantly in the future as [new methods of entry](#) to the U.S. are now available to Venezuelans.

Other countries with large numbers of unauthorized immigrants have also seen increases in recent years. Brazil, Canada, Colombia, Ecuador, India, and countries making up the former Soviet Union all experienced growth from 2019 to 2022.

However, other countries with significant unauthorized immigrant populations showed no change, notably China, the Dominican Republic and the Philippines.

Detailed table: [Unauthorized immigrant population by region and selected country of birth \(and margins of error\), 1990-2022](#) (Excel)

Which states do unauthorized immigrants call home?

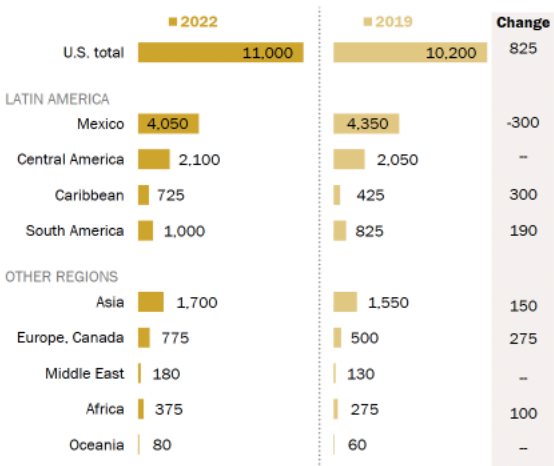
Most U.S. states' unauthorized immigrant populations stayed steady from 2019 to 2022. However, six states showed significant growth:

- Florida (+400,000)
- Texas (+85,000)
- New York (+70,000)
- New Jersey (+55,000)
- Massachusetts (+50,000)
- Maryland (+40,000)

California (-120,000) is the only state whose unauthorized immigrant population decreased.

The U.S. unauthorized immigrant populations from most world regions grew from 2019 to 2022

U.S. unauthorized immigrant population by region of birth, in thousands



Note: All numbers are rounded. The change column is calculated from unrounded totals. Only statistically significant changes based on 90% confidence intervals are shown; other measured changes are not statistically different from zero. Asia consists of South and East Asia. All Central Asian republics of the former Soviet Union are included in Europe. The Middle East consists of Southwest Asia and North Africa; Africa refers to sub-Saharan Africa. The U.S. total includes a residual (not shown) from other nations. Source: Pew Research Center estimates based on augmented U.S. Census Bureau data.

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The six states with the largest unauthorized immigrant populations in 2022 were:

- California (1.8 million)
- Texas (1.6 million)
- Florida (1.2 million)
- New York (650,000)
- New Jersey (475,000)
- Illinois (400,000)

These states have consistently had [the most unauthorized immigrants](#) since at least 1980.

However, in 2007, California had *1.2 million more* unauthorized immigrants than Texas. Today, with the declining number in California, it has only about 150,000 more. The unauthorized immigrant population has also become considerably less geographically concentrated over time. In 2022, the top six states were home to 56% of the nation’s unauthorized immigrants, down from 80% in 1990.

Detailed table: [Unauthorized immigrant population for states \(and margins of error\), 1990-2022](#) (Excel)

Detailed table: [Unauthorized immigrants and characteristics for states, 2022](#) (Excel)

Unauthorized immigrants in the labor force

The number of unauthorized immigrants in the U.S. workforce grew from 7.4 million in 2019 to 8.3 million in 2022. The 2022 number equals previous highs in 2008 and 2011.

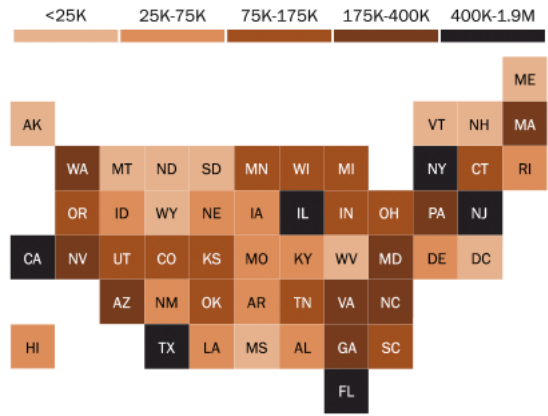
Unauthorized immigrants represent about 4.8% of the U.S. workforce in 2022. This was below the peak of 5.4% in 2007.

Since 2003, unauthorized immigrants have made up 4.4% to 5.4% of all U.S. workers, a relatively narrow range.

The share of the U.S. workforce made up by unauthorized immigrants is higher than their 3.3% share of the total U.S. population. That’s because the unauthorized immigrant population includes relatively few children or elderly adults, groups that tend not to be in the labor force.

Detailed table: [Unauthorized immigrants in the labor force for states, 2022](#) (Excel)

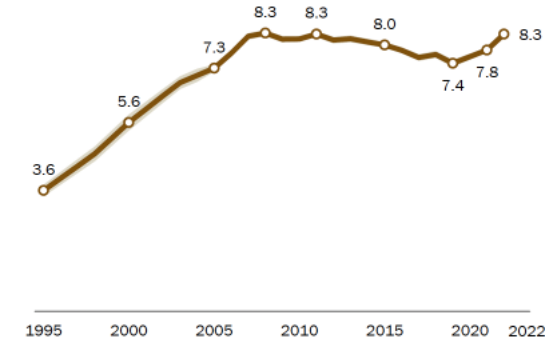
U.S. unauthorized immigrant population by state, 2022



Source: Pew Research Center estimates based on augmented U.S. Census Bureau data.
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The number of unauthorized immigrants in the U.S. workforce grew rapidly from 2019 to 2022

Unauthorized immigrants in the U.S. who are working or looking for work, in millions



Note: Shading shows the range of the estimated 90% confidence interval. The data points labeled are 1995, 2000, 2005, 2008 (peak), 2011, 2015, 2019, 2021 and 2022.
Source: Pew Research Center estimates based on augmented U.S. Census Bureau data.
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The share of unauthorized immigrants in the workforce varied across states in 2022. Nevada (9%), Texas (8%), Florida (8%), New Jersey (7%), California (7%) and Maryland (7%) had the highest shares, while fewer than 1% of workers in Maine, Montana, Vermont and West Virginia were unauthorized immigrants.

Note: This is an update of a post originally published Nov. 16, 2023.

Topics [Immigrant Populations](#), [Immigration Issues](#), [Unauthorized Immigration](#)

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