

The Bottom Line: What You Need To Know About Undocumented Immigrants in America¹

In 2016 (the most recent complete figures), America was home to about 10.7 million undocumented immigrants, down from a peak of 12.2 million in 2007. They live in 5.2 million households, about one in every 23 U.S. households. For contrast, 34.4 million documented immigrants live in the U.S., including naturalized citizens and those holding visas.

Among undocumented immigrants arriving in the last five years, most are likely² in the U.S. as a result of overstaying a legal visa, rather than entering the country without documents.

Two-thirds of adult undocumented immigrants have lived in the United States for more than 10 years.

43 percent of undocumented adult immigrants live in households with U.S.-born children. 5 million U.S.-born children have an unauthorized immigrant parent.

About half the undocumented immigrants in the U.S. pay income taxes. In 2015, the last year for which data are available, these taxes totaled \$23.6 billion.³

58 percent of undocumented immigrants are concentrated in six states: California, Texas, Florida, New York, New Jersey, and Illinois.

THE ALLEGED BORDER CRISIS

2007 was the last year with a significant influx of undocumented immigrants into the United States.⁴ Since 2012, some 400,000 undocumented immigrants have left the U.S. of their own accord.⁵

The number of immigrants caught crossing a U.S. land border (with Canada or Mexico) not at an official point of entry peaked in 2000 at about 1.7 million per year before declining sharply. In fiscal year 2017 (October 2016-September 2017), there were about 310,000 border apprehensions.⁶

Roughly half of the total undocumented immigrant population comes from Mexico.

However, 2013-2018 saw a marked shift, with those arriving from Mexico and the “Northern Triangle” (El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras) eclipsed by Asia and the rest of the world, 42 percent Latin/Central America to 58 percent everywhere else.

MAP AND PINS COURTESY OF VECTEEZY

1 Information from the Pew Research Center, <http://www.pewhispanic.org/2018/11/27/u-s-unauthorized-immigrant-total-dips-to-lowest-level-in-a-decade/>, unless otherwise noted.

2 These caveats are due to data issues that make precision difficult.

3 <https://www.vox.com/2018/4/13/17229018/undocumented-immigrants-pay-taxes>

4 <https://www.bloomberg.com/view/articles/2017-02-21/the-myth-of-the-u-s-immigration-crisis>

5 <https://www.bloomberg.com/opinion/articles/2017-02-21/the-myth-of-the-u-s-immigration-crisis>

6 Congressional Research Service, <https://fas.org/sgp/crs/homsec/R45020.pdf>, p. 15. The number of apprehensions only approximates the number of people trying to cross, as the same person may be caught and returned to the other side of the border several times.