

Rural Migration News

Blog 232

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Unauthorized Migration to the U.S.

The number of unauthorized foreigners more than tripled between 1990 and 2007, increasing from 3.5 million to 12.2 million before declining during and after the 2008-09 recession to an estimated 10.5 million in 2017.

Most unauthorized foreigners in the US were born in Mexico. After the 2008-09 recession, a combination of improving conditions in Mexico and stepped up border enforcement discouraged illegal Mexico-US migration and encouraged some unauthorized Mexicans in the US to return to Mexico. Mexicans are still almost half of all unauthorized foreigners,

but Central Americans are approaching 20 percent of the unauthorized population.

By 2016, two thirds of the unauthorized foreigners had been in the US more than 10 years, compared with less than 40 percent before 2005. Over 80 percent of unauthorized Mexicans were in the US at least a decade in 2017.

Mexico

The scale and direction of Mexico-US migration has changed. Between 1995 and 2000, four Mexicans moved to the US for every

Mexican who moved from the US to Mexico. Between 2005 and 2014, net Mexico-US migration was negative, meaning that more Mexicans returned to Mexico than moved to the US (net flows include all migration, legal and unauthorized). Between 2014 and 2018, there has once again been more Mexico to US than US to Mexico migration.

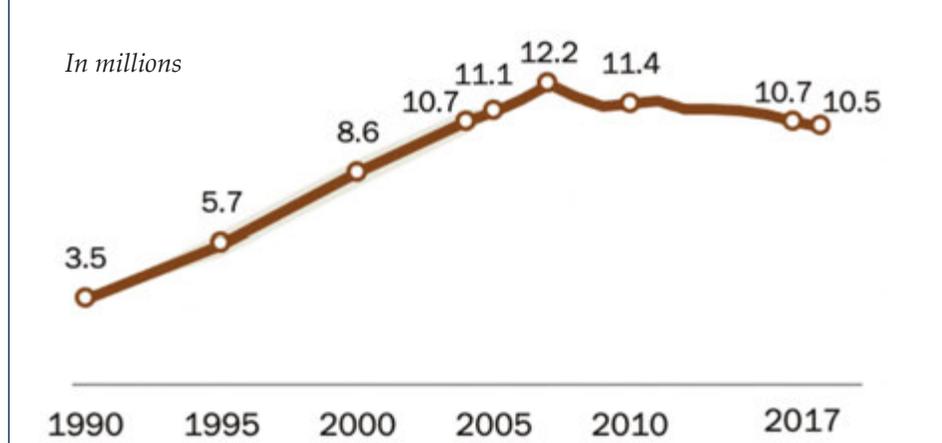
The number of Mexican-born US residents peaked at 12.8 million in 2007 and fell to 11.4 million in 2019.

Beginning in March 2020, the US government used Title 42 of the Public Health Act to return Mexicans and other foreigners who are apprehended just inside the Mexico-US border to Mexico. Some Mexicans who were returned to Mexico tried to re-enter, so that the number of Mexicans who were apprehended rose in 2020 and 2021 as recidivists were encountered; some were apprehended four or five times before eluding the Border Patrol and entering the US.

Unauthorized migration normally declines during the summer months when the deserts are too hot to cross. However, some 188,829 unauthorized foreigners were encountered just inside the Mexico-US border in June 2021, including 178,000 encountered by Border Patrol agents. A third were recidivists, often solo men, who were encountered at least once during the previous 12 months.

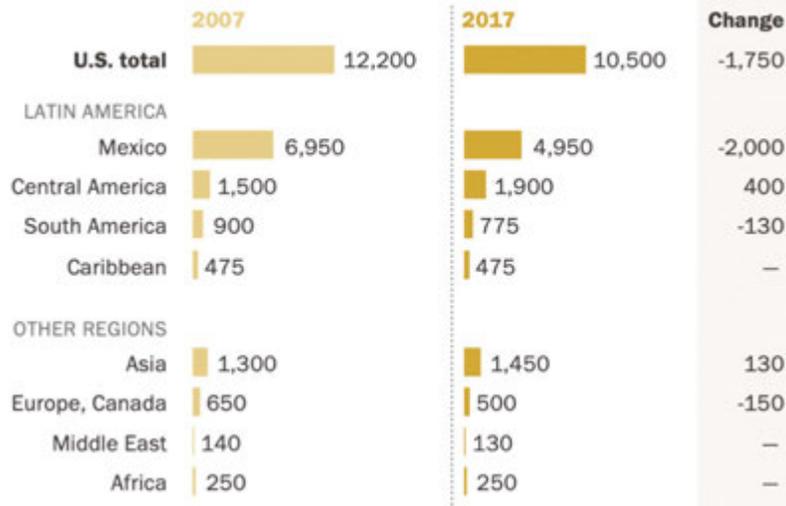
There were 1.1 million encounters during the first nine months of FY21, putting the US on track to match or exceed the 1.6 million apprehensions in FY00.

**The Number of Unauthorized Foreigners in the United States
Peaked at 12.2 Million in 2007**



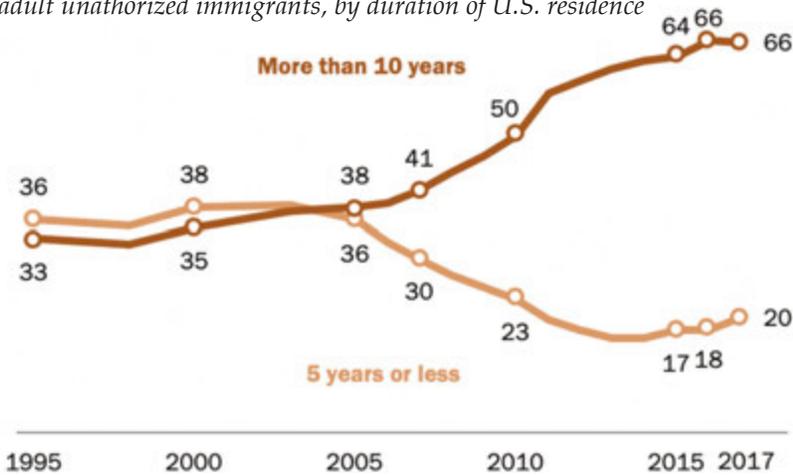
Mexicans Were Half of the Unauthorized and Central Americans 20 Percent in 2017

In thousands



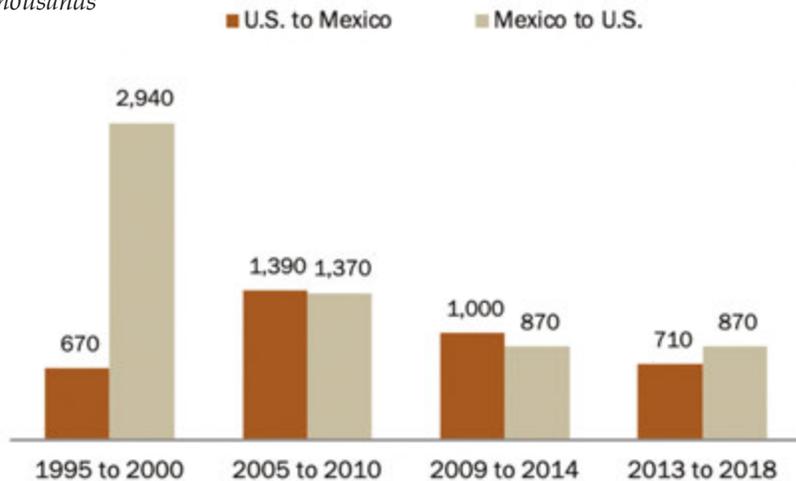
Two-Thirds of Unauthorized Foreigners Were in the United States at Least 10 Years in 2016

% of adult unauthorized immigrants, by duration of U.S. residence



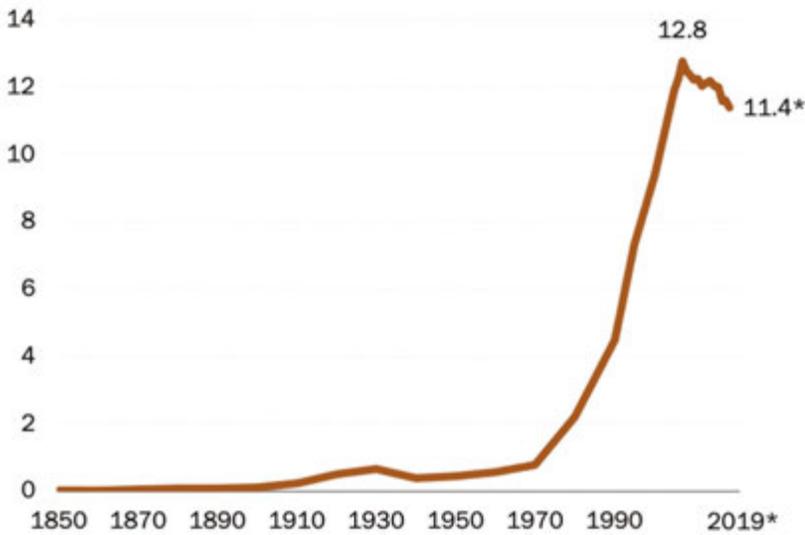
Net Mexico-to-U.S. Migration Rose in Recent Years

In thousands



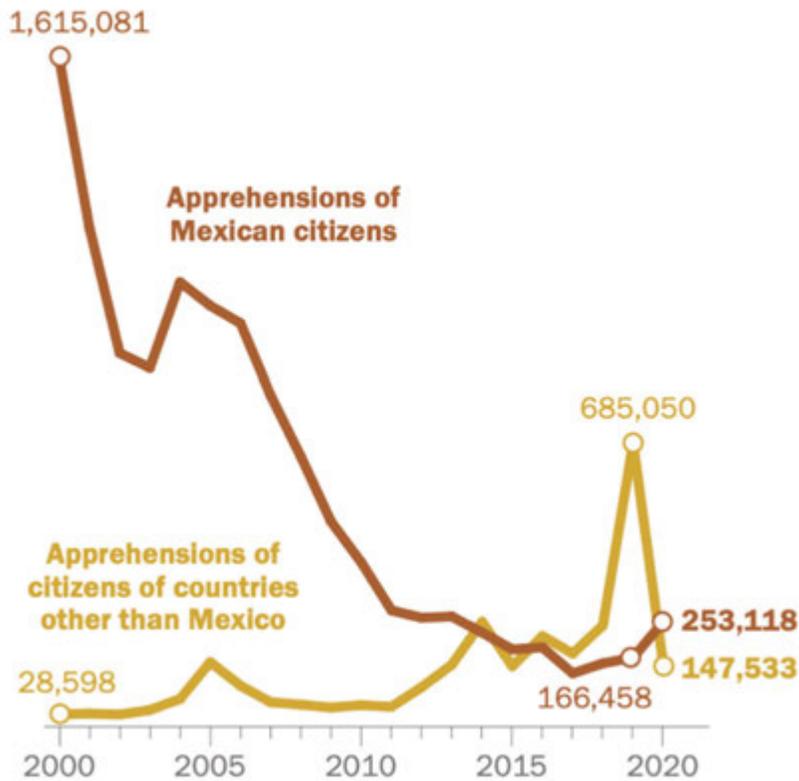
The Number of Mexican-Born U.S. Residents Fell More than 10% After 2007

In millions



Mexicans Were 63% of Southwest Border Apprehensions in 2020

Apprehensions at southwest border, by fiscal year and country of origin



Central Americans Detained by the Border Patrol in July 2021



References

Gonzalez-Barrera, Ana. 2021. Before COVID-19, more Mexicans came to the U.S. than left for Mexico for the first time in years. Pew. <https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2021/07/09/before-covid-19-more-mexicans-came-to-the-u-s-than-left-for-mexico-for-the-first-time-in-years/>

Hugo, Mark. 2021. Key facts about the changing U.S. unauthorized immigrant population. Pew. <https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2021/04/13/key-facts-about-the-changing-u-s-unauthorized-immigrant-population/>

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