

Rural Migration News

Blog 249

NOVEMBER 2021

Record Border Apprehensions

A record 1.66 million foreigners were apprehended just inside the US border with Mexico in FY21, including 608,000 Mexicans, 309,000 Hondurans, 279,000 Guatemalans, 96,000 Salvadorans, and 367,000 other foreigners such as Haitians, Venezuelans, Ecuadorans, Cubans, and Brazilians. Apprehensions include persons encountered between ports of entry and those detected at ports of entry using false documents or concealed in vehicles.

Between FY12 and FY20, apprehensions averaged 540,000 a year;

the FY21 total is three times this average. The previous record was 1.6 million apprehensions in FY00. About 400,000 foreigners were apprehended in FY20. US borders were closed in March 2020, and almost all foreigners who were apprehended were returned to Mexico under Title 42 of the Public Health Act.

Over 64 percent of those apprehended in FY21 were solo adults, 28 percent were adults with children, and eight percent were children under 18. Some 61 percent of all persons apprehended in FY21

were returned to Mexico under Title 42, including a quarter of the family units but none of the solo children. The Rio Grande Valley in southeastern Texas accounted for a third of FY21 apprehensions.

Many of the foreigners who were returned to Mexico tried to re-enter the US. In FY21, some 27 percent were recidivists, meaning they had been apprehended at least once before within the fiscal year.

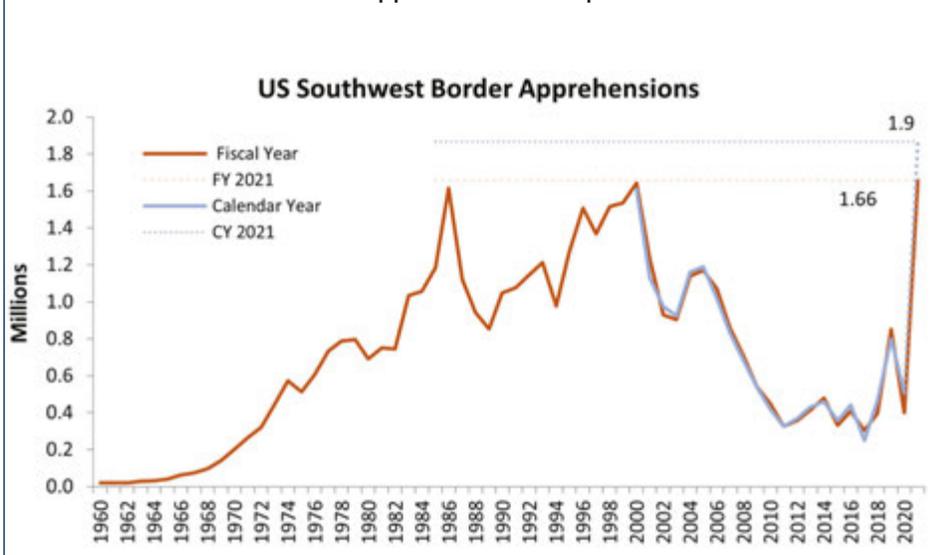
There were over 10 million vacant jobs in fall 2021 and eight million unemployed workers, prompting some to suggest that more apprehensions just inside the US border reflected an influx of workers that US employers want to hire. Comparisons of trends in job vacancies and apprehensions are only loosely correlated. Apprehensions and job vacancies fell during and after the 2008-09 recession, and appear to rise together only in 2021.

Asylum

Many of the foreigners apprehended just inside the US border with Mexico want asylum, so they seek out Border Patrol agents in order to apply for asylum. If they are not returned to Mexico immediately, USCIS asylum officers interview them to establish whether they have a “credible fear” of persecution in their country of citizenship. Those who pass a credible fear test are usually allowed into the US to apply for asylum.

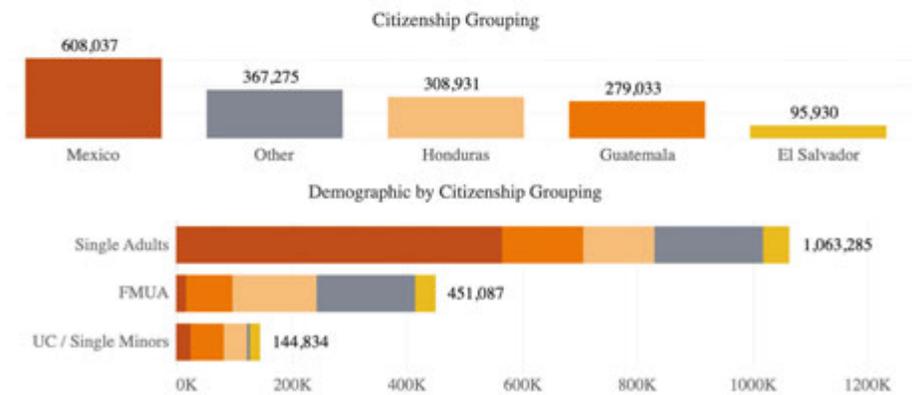
Immigration judges make decisions on asylum applications. However, these judges had a backlog of 1.5 million cases in October 2021, a month in which they completed 21,200 cases. There are almost 700,000 pending asylum cases, which means that asylum applicants may be able to work legally and to send their children to K-12 schools for several years while their asylum

The 1.66 Million FY21 Border Apprehensions Surpassed 1.6 Million in FY00



Mexicans and Solo Adults were the Largest Groups Apprehended in FY21

FY2021 USBP Southwest Land Border Encounters											
OCT	NOV	DEC	JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN	JUL	AUG	SEP
All 1,659,206			Title 8 618,986				Title 42 1,040,220				



Source: <https://www.cbp.gov/newsroom/stats/southwest-land-border-encounters-by-component>

A Quarter of Foreigners Apprehended in FY20 and FY21 were Recidivists

	FY 15	FY 16	FY 17	FY 18	FY 19	FY 20	FY 21
Recidivism ⁵	14%	12%	10%	11%	7%	26%	27%

Source: <https://www.cbp.gov/newsroom/stats/cbp-enforcement-statistics>

applications are pending. About 80 percent of asylum seekers are not recognized as refugees, but many rejected asylum seekers remain in the US.

In August 2021, DHS proposed that the asylum officers who make credible fear decisions at the border should also decide whether

the foreigner qualifies as a refugee in order to speed up the asylum process and remove foreigners not recognized as refugees. Asylum officers already make decisions on asylum applications from foreigners who are inside the US and make offensive or affirmative applications, meaning the foreigner is in the US on a student or tourist visa

and applies for refugee status. DHS proposed that asylum officers also decide defensive asylum cases at the border, where foreigners who are apprehended seek to avoid removal by arguing that they need asylum in the US.

Haitians

Some 30,000 Haitians arrived in Del Rio, TX in September 2021, including many who were living in Brazil and Chile. A 2010 earthquake in Haiti killed over 200,000 people, prompting Brazil to offer work permits to almost 100,000 Haitians and Chile to allow 70,000 Haitians to immigrate. Many of the Haitians who left Brazil and Chile for the US in summer 2021 said that they faced discrimination and wanted more opportunity in the US.

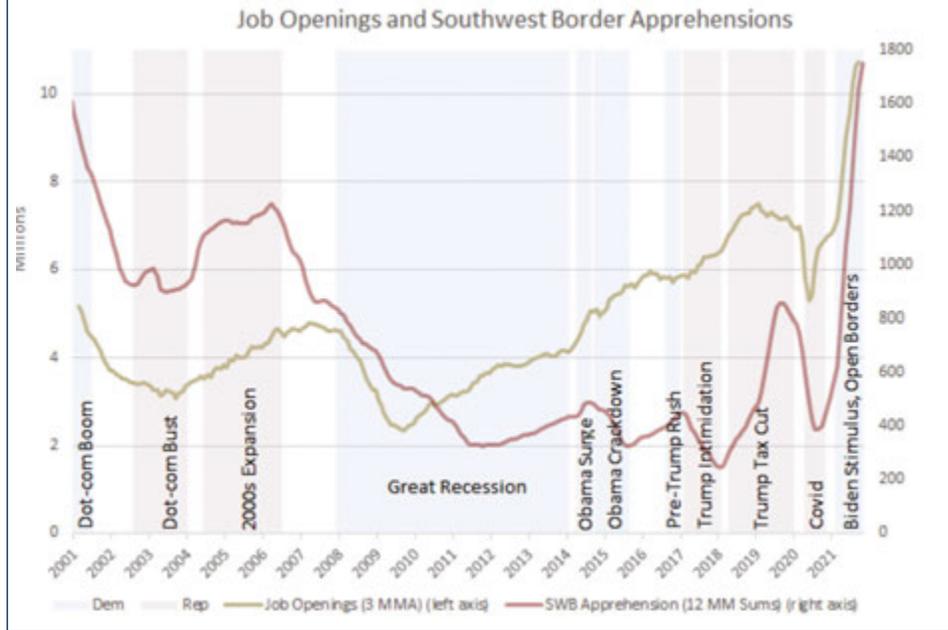
The Haitians camped under an international bridge across the Rio Grande River, and moved back and forth between Mexico and the US because the river has little water in summer. Photos of Border Patrol agents on horseback trying to prevent Haitians returning to the US drew widespread condemnation, including from President Biden.

To halt the influx of Haitians, 8,500 were deported to Haiti on over 80 flights, prompting most of the others to return to Mexico. Some 8,000 Haitians were admitted to the US to apply for asylum, which they are unlikely to receive because they were “firmly resettled” in Brazil and Chile. If they do not receive asylum in the US, many of the Haitians want to return to Brazil or Chile rather than Haiti.

Americans are divided about how to respond to asylum seekers who enter the US from Mexico. An April 2021 Pew poll found that two-thirds of respondents disapproved of how the US government was handling asylum seeking at the border. Most

respondents want the government to add agents to police the border and to process children quickly. Almost half say that the US government should take steps to reduce the number of foreigners seeking asylum in the US.

U.S. Job Vacancies (Left Axis) are Loosely Correlated with Border Apprehensions (Right Axis)



Many Central Americans Seek out Border Patrol Agents to Apply for Asylum



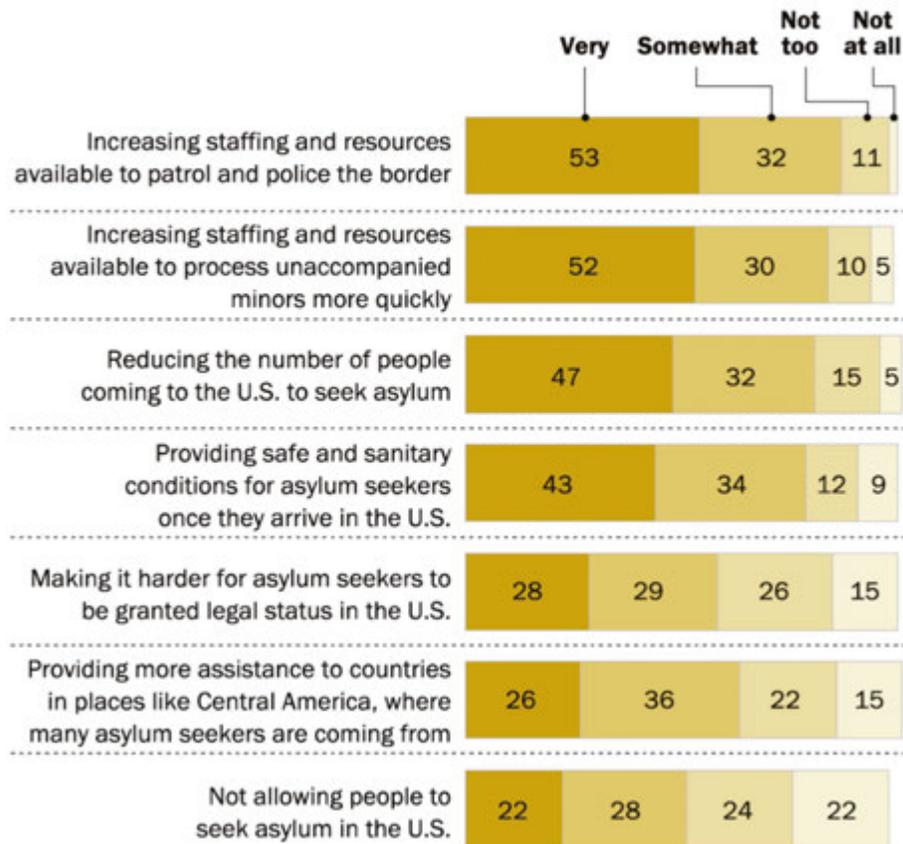
Border Patrol Agents Tried to Prevent Haitians From Returning to the U.S.



Source: <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-us-canada-58654351>

Public's priorities for U.S.-Mexico border: Boost staff, resources; reduce number of asylum seekers

% who say, thinking about the situation at the U.S. border with Mexico, each of the following are ___ important for the U.S.



Note: No answer responses not shown.

Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted April 5-11, 2021.

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