

Five facts about illegal immigration in the U.S.

For the first time, the number of unauthorized immigrants living in the U.S. was lower in 2015 than it was at the end of the Great Recession in 2009. The origin countries of unauthorized immigrants also shifted during that time, with the number from Mexico declining and the number from other regions rising, according to the latest [Pew Research Center estimates](#).

Here are five facts about the unauthorized immigrant population in the U.S.

1 There were 11 million unauthorized immigrants in the U.S. in 2015, a small but **statistically significant decline from the Center's estimate of 11.3 million for 2009.**

The Center's preliminary estimate of the unauthorized immigrant population in 2016 is 11.3 million, which is statistically no different from the 2009 or 2015 estimates because it is based on a data source with a smaller sample size and larger margin of error. Unauthorized immigrants represented 3.4% of the total U.S. population in 2015. The number of unauthorized immigrants peaked in 2007 at 12.2 million, when this group was 4% of the U.S. population.

2 Mexicans may no longer be the majority of U.S. unauthorized immigrants.

They made up half of all unauthorized immigrants in 2016, according to the Center's [preliminary estimate](#), marking the first time in at least a decade that they did not account for a clear majority of this population. Their numbers (and share of the total) have been [declining in recent years](#): There were 5.6 million Mexican unauthorized immigrants living in the U.S. in 2015 and 2016, down from 6.4 million in 2009.

Meanwhile, the number of unauthorized immigrants from nations other than Mexico has grown since 2009, from 5 million that year to 5.4 million in 2015. Non-Mexicans numbered 5.7 million in the preliminary 2016 estimate, a total that was not statistically different from 2015.

From 2009 to 2015, the number of unauthorized immigrants from Asia and Central America rose. Increases in the number from other countries have mostly offset the decline in the number from Mexico (and a relatively small decrease in the number from South America).

3 **The U.S. civilian workforce includes 8 million unauthorized immigrants, accounting for 5% of those who were working or were unemployed and looking for work.** The 2014 number was unchanged from 2009 and down slightly from 8.2 million in 2007. The share of unauthorized immigrants in the civilian labor force was also down slightly from 2009 (5.2%) and 2007 (5.4%). Compared with their 5% share of the civilian workforce overall, unauthorized immigrants are overrepresented in farming and construction occupations (26% and 15%, respectively). **In all industries and occupations, though, they are outnumbered by U.S.-born workers.**

4 **Six states account for 59% of unauthorized immigrants: California, Texas, Florida, New York, New Jersey and Illinois.**

But individual states have experienced different trends. From 2009 to 2014, the unauthorized immigrant population decreased in seven states: Alabama, California, Georgia, Illinois, Kansas, Nevada and South Carolina. In all of them, the decline was due to a decrease in unauthorized immigrants from Mexico. In six states, the unauthorized immigrant population rose over the same time period: Louisiana, Massachusetts, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Virginia and Washington. In all of these but Louisiana, the increases were due to growth in unauthorized immigrant populations from nations other than Mexico. (In Louisiana, the overall increase was driven by an increase in Mexican unauthorized immigrants.)

5 **A rising share of unauthorized immigrants have lived in the U.S. for at least a decade.** About two-thirds (66%) of adults in 2014 had been in the U.S. **at least that long**, compared with 41% in 2005. A declining share of unauthorized immigrants have lived in the U.S. for less than five years – 14% of adults in 2014, compared with 31% in 2005. In 2014, unauthorized immigrant adults had lived in the U.S. for a median of 13.6 years, meaning that half had been in the country at least that long. Only 7% of Mexican unauthorized immigrants had been in the U.S. for less than five years in 2014, compared with 22% of those from all other countries.