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As Growth Stalls, Unauthorized Immigrant Population Becomes More Settled

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION
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About This Report

This report provides preliminary estimates of the size and duration of U.S. residence of the 2013 unauthorized immigrant population for the nation. It also includes 2012 and earlier estimates of the unauthorized immigrant population, its duration of U.S. residence, and number who live with U.S. citizen children. The estimates use the “residual method,” a widely accepted and well-developed technique based on official government data. The data come mainly from the American Community Survey and March Supplement to the Current Population Survey, conducted by the U.S. Census Bureau. For more detail, see the Methodology appendix.

This report is a collaborative effort based on the input and analysis of the following people on the staff of the Pew Research Center. Editorial guidance was provided by Mark Hugo Lopez, director of Hispanic research. This report was written by Jeffrey S. Passel, senior demographer; D’Vera Cohn, senior writer; Jens Manuel Krogstad, writer/editor; and Ana Gonzalez-Barrera, research associate. Gonzalez-Barrera also created the charts; number-checking was done by Anna Brown, research assistant. Eileen Patten, research analyst, assisted with formatting and production. Molly Rohal was the copy editor. Find related reports online at pewresearch.org/hispanic.

A Note on Terminology

“Foreign born” refers to an individual who is not a U.S. citizen at birth or who, in other words, is born outside the U.S., Puerto Rico or other U.S. territories and whose parents are not U.S. citizens. The terms “foreign born” and “immigrant” are used interchangeably. “U.S. born” refers to an individual who is a U.S. citizen at birth, including people born in the United States, Puerto Rico or other U.S. territories, as well as those born elsewhere to parents who are U.S. citizens. When referring to children of unauthorized immigrants, the terms “U.S. born” and “U.S. citizen” are used interchangeably; a small number of these children may be naturalized citizens.

The “legal immigrant” population is defined as people granted legal permanent residence; those granted asylum; people admitted as refugees; and people admitted under a set of specific authorized temporary statuses for longer-term residence and work. This group includes “naturalized citizens,” legal immigrants who have become U.S. citizens through naturalization; “legal permanent resident aliens” who have been granted permission to stay indefinitely in the U.S. as permanent residents, asylees or refugees; and “legal temporary migrants” who are allowed to live and, in some cases, work in the U.S. for specific periods of time (usually longer than one year).

“Unauthorized immigrants” are all foreign-born non-citizens residing in the country who are not “legal immigrants.” These definitions reflect standard and customary usage by the U.S. Department of Homeland Security and academic researchers. The vast majority of unauthorized immigrants entered the country without valid documents or arrived with valid visas but stayed past their visa expiration date or otherwise violated the terms of their admission. Some who entered as unauthorized immigrants or violated terms of admission have obtained work authorization by applying for adjustment to legal permanent status, obtaining Temporary Protected Status (TPS) or receiving Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) status. Data are very limited, but this “quasi-legal” group could account for as much as 10% of the unauthorized population. Many could also revert to unauthorized status.

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As Growth Stalls, Unauthorized Immigrant Population Becomes More Settled

BY Jeffrey S. Passel, D'Vera Cohn, Jens Manuel Krogstad AND Ana Gonzalez-Barrera

The number of unauthorized immigrants living in the United States has stabilized since the end of the Great Recession and shows no sign of rising, according to new Pew Research Center estimates. The marked slowdown in new arrivals means that those who remain are more likely to be long-term residents, and to live with their U.S.-born children.

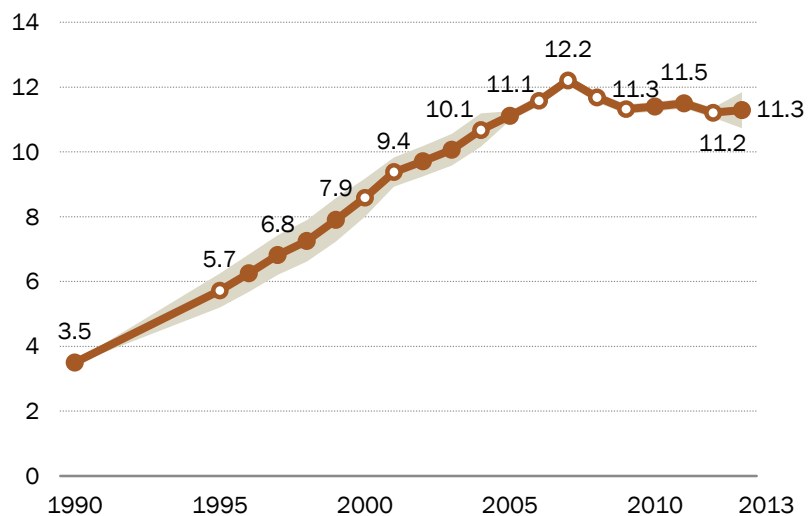
There were 11.3 million unauthorized immigrants living in the U.S. in March 2013, according to a preliminary Pew Research Center estimate, about the same as the 11.2 million in 2012 and unchanged since 2009. The population had risen briskly for decades before plunging during the Great Recession of 2007 to 2009.

As growth of this group has stalled, there has been a recent sharp rise in the median length of time that unauthorized immigrants have lived in the U.S. In 2013, according to a preliminary estimate, unauthorized immigrant adults had been in the U.S. for a median time of nearly 13 years—meaning that half had been in the country at least that long. A decade earlier, in 2003, the median for adults was less than eight years.

FIGURE 1

Growth in Unauthorized Immigration Has Levelled Off

In millions



Note: Shading surrounding line indicates low and high points of the estimated 90% confidence interval. White data markers indicate that the change from the previous estimate shown is statistically significant (for example, for 1995 change is significant from 1990). Data labels are for 1990, odd years from 1995-2011, 2012, 2013.

Source: Table A1, derived from Pew Research Center estimates based on residual methodology, applied to March Supplements of the Current Population Survey for 1995-2004 and 2013, and the American Community Survey for 2005-2012. Estimates for 1990 from [Warren and Warren \(2013\)](#). See Methodology.

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The new estimates are based mainly on data from the U.S. Census Bureau’s American Community Survey and Current Population Survey, using the widely accepted “residual methodology” employed by the center for many years.¹ The estimates of the total population, as well as regarding the share of unauthorized immigrants with U.S. citizen children and length of residence in the U.S., update previously published estimates.²

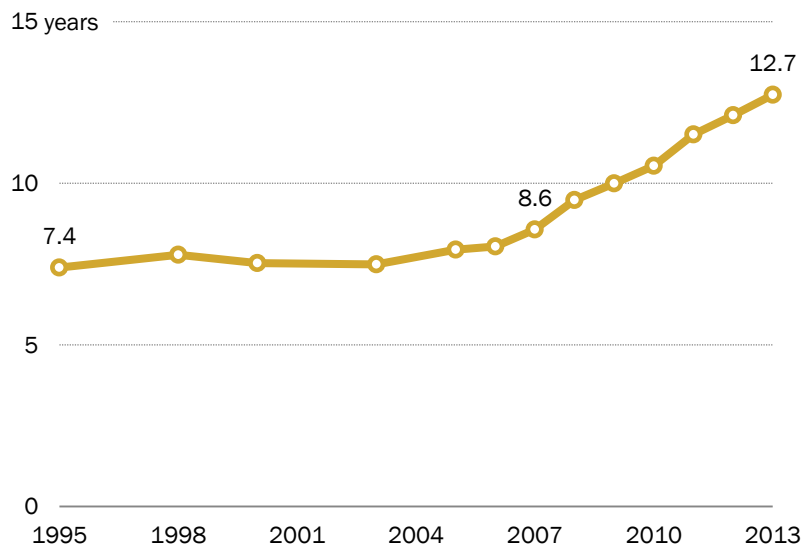
There is renewed interest in unauthorized immigrants who are long-time residents of the United States and have U.S.-born children because they are among those to whom President Obama reportedly is considering offering a temporary reprieve from deportation ([Los Angeles Times, 2014](#)). Obama reiterated in late August that he would prefer that Congress pass major legislation to overhaul the immigration system, but because Congress has not done so, he may take executive action on his own ([White House, 2014](#)).

Among the nation’s 10.4 million unauthorized adults, a shrinking share have been in the country for less than five years—15% in 2012, compared with 38% in 2000. A rising share have lived in the U.S. for a decade or more—62% in 2012, compared with 35% in 2000. About a fifth (21%) had been in the U.S. for two decades or more as of 2012.

FIGURE 2

As Unauthorized Immigrant Population Growth Has Slowed, Median Length of Residence Has Grown

Adult median duration of residence in U.S.



Note: 2013 figure is preliminary. Data labels are for 1995, 2007 and 2013.

Source: Table A1, derived from Pew Research Center estimates based on residual methodology, applied to March Supplements of the Current Population Survey for 1995-2003 and 2013, and the American Community Survey for 2005-2012. See Methodology.

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¹ For details about the methodology, see Methodology Appendix C.

² For previous estimates, see [Passel, Cohn and Gonzalez-Barrera, 2013](#), and [Taylor, Lopez, Passel and Motel, 2011](#).

As the unauthorized population has tilted more toward long-term residents, these immigrants are more likely to have children who are U.S. citizens because they were born in the U.S. Among unauthorized immigrants, the Pew Research Center estimates that in 2012, 4 million, or 38% of adults, lived with their U.S.-born children, either minors or adults. In 2000, 2.1 million, or 30% of unauthorized adults, did.³ About three-quarters of unauthorized parents residing with their U.S.-born children in 2012—3 million—had lived in the U.S. for 10 years or more.

Total Population and Trend

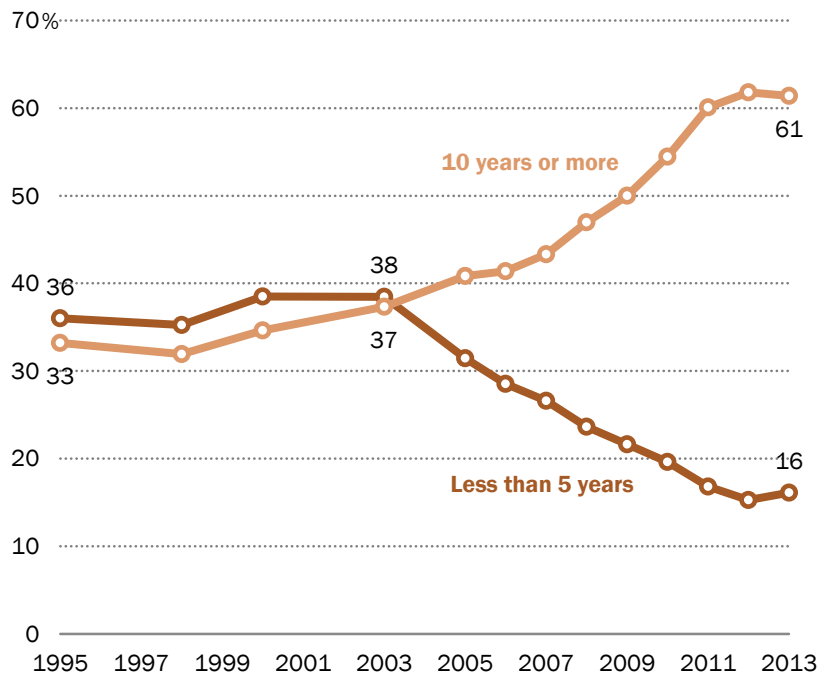
The new Pew Research Center estimate of 11.2 million unauthorized immigrants in the U.S. for

2012 replaces a previously published preliminary estimate of 11.7 million as of March 2012 ([Passel, Cohn and Gonzalez-Barrera, 2013](#)). The two estimates are not statistically different. The new estimate is considered more accurate because it is based on the American Community Survey, a larger dataset than the Current Population Survey that was the basis for the earlier preliminary estimate.⁴

FIGURE 3

Share of Long-Term Unauthorized Immigrants Surpasses Share of Short-Term Immigrants

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



Note: 2013 estimates are preliminary. Data labels are for 1995, 2003 and 2013.

Source: Table A1, derived from Pew Research Center estimates based on residual methodology, applied to March Supplements of the Current Population Survey for 1995-2003 and 2013, and the American Community Survey for 2005-2012.

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³ The total with U.S.-born minor or adult children may well be higher, because this estimate does not count those not living with their sons or daughters.

⁴ For 2012, the public-use sample from the American Community Survey is a 1% sample of the U.S. population, or more than 3.1 million cases. The 2013 March Current Population Survey used for these estimates has a sample with 203,000 cases.

The nation's estimated unauthorized immigrant population had risen steadily since at least 1990, when it numbered 3.5 million. By 2007, it had more than tripled, to 12.2 million.

As the U.S. economy faltered and border enforcement tightened, however, arrivals plummeted, and some unauthorized immigrants, especially Mexicans, have returned home (Passel, Cohn and Gonzalez-Barrera, [2012](#) & [2013](#)). By 2009, the population fell to 11.3 million, and has changed little since.

Parents of U.S.-Born Children

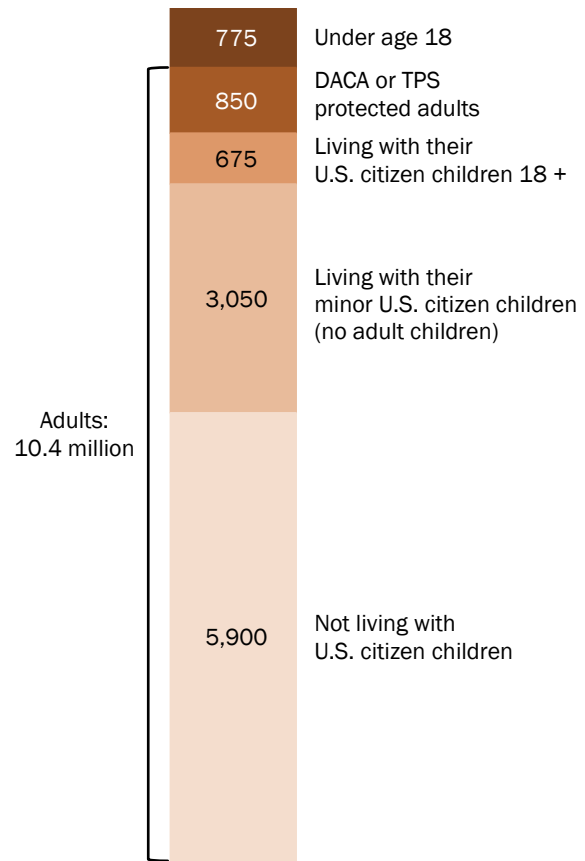
In 2012, there were 4 million unauthorized immigrant adults living with their U.S.-born children. Among those, 3.7 million do not have protection from deportation under Obama's Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program or under the Temporary Protected Status (TPS) program. As the accompanying chart shows, an estimated 675,000 unauthorized immigrants without deportation protection have U.S.-born children ages 18 or older; some of those parents also have younger children.⁵ The remainder, about 3 million, has only minor U.S.-born children.

As of 2012, all unauthorized immigrant parents of U.S.-born children had lived in the U.S. for a median 15 years, longer than the median 12 years for the entire unauthorized population. In 2000, the median was 11 years for these parents.

FIGURE 4

Unauthorized Immigrants, by Selected Categories, 2012

In thousands



Notes: Among those under 18, an estimated 120,000 are protected by Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) and 5,000 have Temporary Protected Status. Among DACA or TPS protected adults, an estimated 475,000 have DACA status and 400,000 have TPS. These numbers are rounded, so may not add to total.

Source: Table A2, derived from Pew Research Center estimates based on residual methodology, applied to 2012 American Community Survey.

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⁵ An estimated 275,000 only have U.S.-born children ages 18 and older.

There were 775,000 unauthorized children younger than age 18 in 2012. In 2005, at its peak, this group numbered more than 1.6 million. By contrast, the number of U.S.-born children younger than 18 has risen. In 2012, there were 4.5 million U.S.-born children younger than 18 living with at least one unauthorized parent. In 2000, there were less than half as many, less than 2.2 million.⁶

The number of unauthorized immigrant children has declined in recent years, for two reasons. Some unauthorized immigrant children have turned 18 and become adults with unauthorized status. In addition, the recent slowdown in unauthorized immigration overall has resulted in fewer new unauthorized children arriving.

Adults Without Deportation Relief

The overall 2012 figure for unauthorized immigrants includes about a million people who already have temporary relief from deportation through two separate administrative programs. About 575,000 unauthorized immigrants ages 16 to 30 who were brought to the country by their parents are shielded under Obama’s Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program ([U.S. Department of Homeland Security, 2014](#)). About 400,000 adults and 5,000 children, mainly Central Americans, have “Temporary Protected Status” based on conditions in their home countries that would make it difficult for them to return.

Among the 9.6 million unauthorized adults who do not have formal protection from deportation, 16% have lived in the U.S. for less than five years, 60% for at least 10 years, and 20% for 20 years or more, according to Pew Research Center’s estimates. The figures are similar to those for all unauthorized adults.

Unauthorized Relatives of Protected Immigrants

Some have suggested that Obama might expand the scope of the deferred action program that began in 2012, which gave a temporary reprieve and work permits to some unauthorized young adults who were brought to the U.S. by their parents before age 16. Among the possible beneficiaries would be parents or children of those who have received relief from deportation ([Washington Post, 2014](#)).

According to Pew Research Center estimates, about 450,000 unauthorized immigrants in the U.S. live with their unauthorized immigrant children who are protected from deportation under the deferred action program or who have Temporary Protected Status. Of these adults, more than half—about 230,000—also live with at least one of their U.S.-born children.

⁶ These numbers do not reflect the recent surge in unaccompanied minors, which began in 2013.

A relatively small group of unauthorized immigrants, both children and adults, lives with parents who are protected from deportation under the deferred action program or who have Temporary Protected Status. According to the center's estimates, this group numbers about 50,000.

Policy and Public Opinion

Obama signaled in March that he would consider changes in immigration policy via executive action, under renewed criticism by immigrant advocates for a record number of deportations during his administration ([New York Times, 2014](#)). From 2009 to 2012, a record 400,000 immigrants were deported per year, an annual average higher than under the administration of his predecessor, George W. Bush ([Gonzalez-Barrera, 2014](#)).

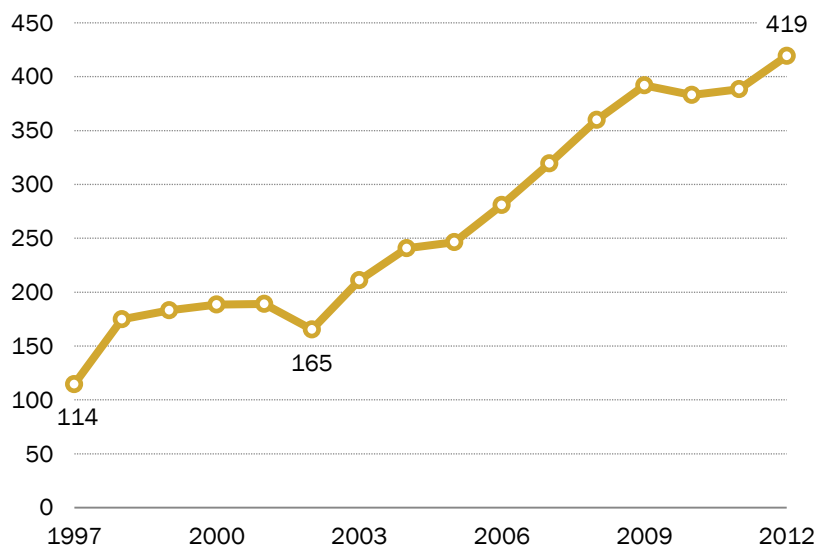
The president had said in June that he would pursue changes in immigration policy on his own by the end of summer after Congress failed to pass major legislation, but in late August he signaled that deadline might slip ([White House, 2014](#)).

The debate over immigration policy has been complicated by the recent arrival of thousands of unaccompanied children. During the first 11 months of the 2014 fiscal year (Oct. 1, 2013-Aug. 31, 2014), the number of unaccompanied children caught at the U.S.-Mexico border rose 88% compared with the same period in fiscal 2013 ([U.S. Customs and Border Patrol, 2014](#)).

FIGURE 5

Total Removals by U.S. Department of Homeland Security, 1997-2012

In thousands



Note: Years are fiscal years. Data labels are for 1997, 2002 and 2012.

Source: U.S. Department of Homeland Security, [Yearbook of Immigration Statistics: 2012](#)

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The Pew Research Center has not tested public opinion on the idea of broadened temporary relief from deportation for some categories of unauthorized immigrants. In a survey earlier this year, Americans were evenly divided over whether the growing number of deportations was a good thing or a bad thing, with 45% saying each ([Pew Research Center, 2014a](#)).

But in a new Pew Research Center survey, the share prioritizing tougher border security and law enforcement has risen since early in Obama's second term ([Pew Research Center, 2014c](#)). The national survey, conducted Aug. 20-24 among 1,501 adults, finds that 41% say that in dealing with unauthorized immigration, national policy should give equal priority to better border security and to creating a path to citizenship for unauthorized immigrants already in the U.S. A third (33%) say the priority should be on better border security and tougher law enforcement; 23% say that a path to citizenship should be the policy priority.

In a 2013 survey, the public was evenly split over whether national immigration policy should prioritize better border security or creating a path to citizenship (25% for each). Nearly half (47%) said both should have equal priority ([Pew Research Center, 2013](#)).

Most Americans still support a path to legal status for unauthorized immigrants. By 68% to 30%, the public in July backed offering unauthorized immigrants an opportunity to gain legal status (though not necessarily citizenship) if they meet certain requirements, though support has declined some since February, according to a recent Pew Research Center survey ([Pew Research Center, 2014b](#)).

Pew Research Center surveys have found that a strong majority of Hispanics and Asian Americans want to see immigration reform passed and support creating a pathway to citizenship for unauthorized immigrants. However, both Hispanics and Asian Americans believe it is more important for unauthorized immigrants to get relief from the threat of deportation ([Lopez, Taylor, Funk and Gonzalez-Barrera, 2013](#)).

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Appendix A: Additional Tables

TABLE A1

Unauthorized Immigrant Population, by Age and Duration of Residence in the U.S., and Their U.S.-Born Children, 1995-2013

Population figures in thousands, unless otherwise noted (see rounding notes below)

	Unauthorized Population			Unauthorized Population Ages 18 and Older			U.S.-Born Children of Unauthorized	
	Total	Ages 18 and older	Younger than 18	Median duration in the U.S. (in years)	Less than 5 years in the U.S. (%)	10 years or more in the U.S. (%)	Ages 18 and older	Younger than 18
2013	11,300	(x)	(x)	12.7	16	61	(x)	(x)
2012	11,200	10,400	775	12.1	15	62	675	4,500
2011	11,500	10,700	825	11.5	17	60	675	4,450
2010	11,400	10,400	950	10.5	20	54	575	4,350
2009	11,300	10,300	975	10.0	22	50	450	4,300
2008	11,700	10,600	1,100	9.5	24	47	375	4,150
2007	12,200	10,700	1,550	8.6	27	43	300	4,250
2006	11,600	10,100	1,500	8.0	29	41	220	3,800
2005	11,100	9,500	1,650	8.0	31	41	190	3,550
2003	10,100	8,650	1,400	7.5	38	37	180	2,900
2000	8,600	7,150	1,450	7.5	38	35	85	2,150
1998	7,250	5,950	1,300	7.8	35	32	40	1,750
1995	5,700	4,600	1,100	7.4	36	33	35	1,200

Note: Estimates for 2013 are preliminary. All numbers rounded independently. Percentages and medians computed from unrounded numbers. See methodology for rounding rules. The symbol '(x)' means not available.

Source: Pew Research Center estimates based on residual methods (see Methodology). Estimates for 2005-2012 based on American Community Survey data from Integrated Public Use Microdata Series (IPUMS). Estimates for 1995-2003 and 2013 based on March supplements to the Current Population Survey.

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TABLE A2

Unauthorized Immigrant Population, by Age, Status, Duration of Residence in the U.S. and Presence of Children, and Their U.S.-Born Children, 2012

Population figures in thousands, unless otherwise noted (see rounding notes below)

	TOTAL POPULATION	DURATION OF RESIDENCE IN THE U.S.					
		Less than 5 years		10 years or more		20 years or more	
		Population	%	Population	%	Population	%
Total unauthorized	11,200	1,850	17	6,650	59	2,200	20
<i>Unauthorized Adults</i>	10,400	1,600	15	6,450	62	2,200	21
with DACA approval	475	5	1	375	80	90	19
with TPS	400	15	4	375	94	170	43
without DACA or TPS	9,550	1,550	16	5,700	60	1,950	20
<i>Adults, without DACA or TPS</i>	9,550	1,550	16	5,700	60	1,950	20
With U.S.-born children	3,700	230	6	2,750	74	1,050	29
1+ child is 18 or older	675	20	3	625	92	500	75
Minor children only	3,050	210	7	2,150	71	550	18
No U.S.-born children	5,900	1,350	23	2,950	50	900	15
<i>Unauthorized Minors</i>	775	(x)	(x)	(x)	(x)	(x)	(x)
with DACA approval	120	(x)	(x)	(x)	(x)	(x)	(x)
with TPS	5	(x)	(x)	(x)	(x)	(x)	(x)
without DACA or TPS	650	(x)	(x)	(x)	(x)	(x)	(x)
<i>U.S.-born Children of Unauthorized</i>							
Younger than 18	4,500	(x)	(x)	(x)	(x)	(x)	(x)
18 and older	675	(x)	(x)	(x)	(x)	(x)	(x)

Note: Adults are ages 18 and older. All references to children include only those living with their unauthorized parent(s). "Unauthorized Minors" are younger than 18 and include some who are not living with parent(s). All numbers rounded independently. Percentages computed from unrounded numbers. See methodology for rounding rules. The symbol '(x)' means not available. DACA refers to Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals. TPS refers to Temporary Protected Status.

Source: Pew Research Center estimates based on residual methods (see Methodology) applied to 2012 American Community Survey data from Integrated Public Use Microdata Series (IPUMS)

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TABLE A3

Unauthorized Adults, by Status, Detailed Duration of Residence in the U.S. and Presence of Children, 2012

Population figures in thousands, unless otherwise noted (see rounding notes below)

	TOTAL POPULATION	ADULT POPULATION (18 and older)	ADULTS WITHOUT DACA OR TPS		
			Total	With U.S.-born children	Without U.S.-born children
Duration of U.S. Residence					
<i>Total population</i>	11,200	10,400	9,550	3,700	5,900
Less than 5 years	1,850	1,600	1,550	230	1,350
5-9 years	2,700	2,400	2,300	725	1,600
10-14 years	2,850	2,650	2,400	1,000	1,350
15-19 years	1,600	1,600	1,350	675	700
20 or more years	2,200	2,200	1,950	1,050	900
<i>Total percent</i>	100	100	100	100	100
Less than 5 years	17	15	16	6	23
5-9 years	24	23	24	19	27
10-14 years	25	25	25	28	23
15-19 years	14	15	14	18	12
20 or more years	20	21	20	29	15

Note: Adults with U.S.-born children only includes those whose children are living with them. "U.S.-born children" include those younger than 18 and those 18 and older. All numbers rounded independently. Percentages computed from unrounded numbers. See methodology for rounding rules. DACA refers to Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals. TPS refers to Temporary Protected Status.

Source: Pew Research Center estimates based on residual methods (see Methodology) applied to 2012 American Community Survey data from Integrated Public Use Microdata Series (IPUMS)

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TABLE A4

Unauthorized Adults, by Presence of U.S.-Born Children, 1995-2012

Population figures in thousands (see rounding notes below)

	UNAUTHORIZED ADULT POPULATION			
	Total	With only U.S.-born children younger than 18	With U.S.-born children ages 18 or older	Without U.S.-born children
2012	10,400	3,250	700	6,450
2011	10,700	3,300	725	6,650
2010	10,400	3,250	625	6,600
2009	10,300	3,200	500	6,600
2008	10,600	3,200	425	6,950
2007	10,700	3,250	325	7,050
2006	10,100	3,050	250	6,750
2005	9,500	3,050	230	6,200
2003	8,650	2,700	210	5,750
2000	7,150	2,050	100	5,000
1998	5,950	1,850	40	4,100
1995	4,600	1,350	50	3,200

Note: Adults with U.S.-born children only include those whose children are living with them. Parents living with U.S.-born children ages 18 or older may also have U.S.-born children younger than 18 in their household. All numbers rounded independently. See methodology for rounding rules.

Source: Pew Research Center estimates based on residual methods (see Methodology). Estimates for 2005-2012 based on American Community Survey data from Integrated Public Use Microdata Series (IPUMS). Estimates for 1995-2003 based on March supplements to the Current Population Survey.

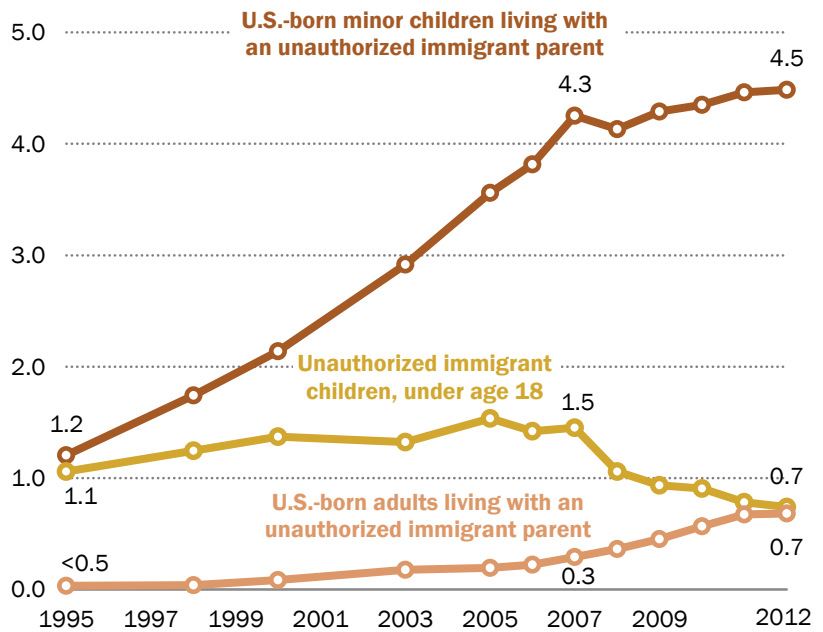
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Appendix B: Additional Charts

Figure B1

A Rise in U.S.-born Children of Unauthorized Immigrants, and Decline in Unauthorized Children

In millions



Note: Chart does not include an unknown number of children of unauthorized immigrants who do not live with their parent(s). Data labels are for 1995, 2007 and 2012.

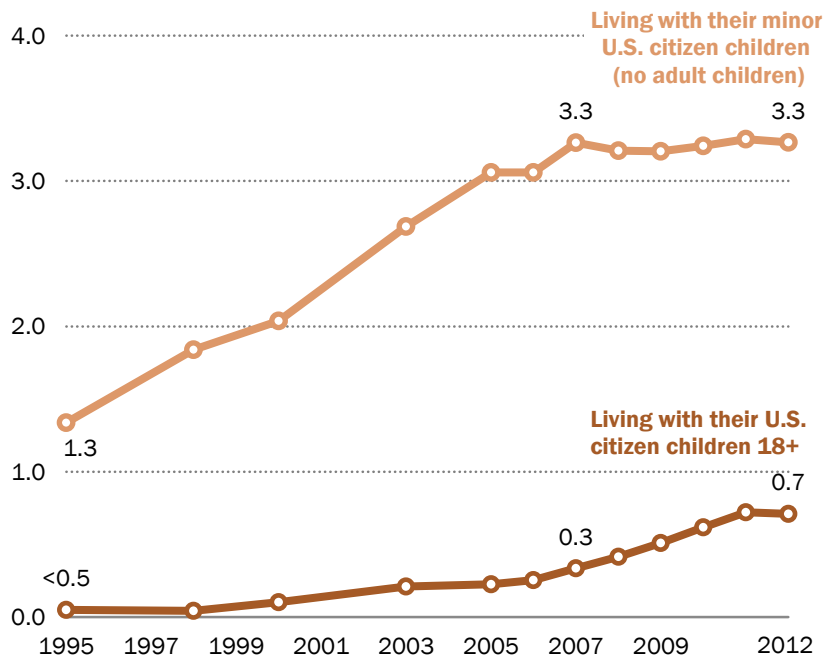
Source: Table A1, derived from Pew Research Center estimates based on residual methodology, applied to March Supplements of the Current Population Survey for 1995-2003, and the American Community Survey for 2005-2012

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Figure B2

A Growing Number of Unauthorized Immigrants Live with Their U.S. Citizen Children

In millions



Note: Chart does not include unauthorized-immigrant parents who do not live with their children. Data labels are for 1995, 2007 and 2012.

Source: Table A4, derived from Pew Research Center estimates based on residual methodology, applied to March Supplements of the Current Population Survey for 1995-2003, and the American Community Survey for 2005-2012

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Appendix C: Methodology

Overview

The estimates presented in this report for the unauthorized immigrant population are based on a residual estimation methodology that compares a demographic estimate of the number of immigrants residing legally in the country with the total number of immigrants as measured by a survey—either the American Community Survey (ACS) or the March Supplement to the Current Population Survey (CPS); the difference is assumed to be the number of unauthorized immigrants in the survey, a number that is later adjusted for omissions from the survey (see below). The basic estimate is:

$$\begin{array}{rcl} \text{Unauthorized} & & \text{Survey, Total} & & \text{Estimated Legal} \\ \text{Immigrants} & = & \text{Foreign Born} & - & \text{Immigrant Population} \\ \text{(U)} & & \text{(F)} & & \text{(L)} \end{array}$$

The legal resident immigrant population is estimated by applying demographic methods to counts of legal admissions covering the period from 1980 to 2012 obtained from the Department of Homeland Security’s Office of Immigration Statistics and its predecessor at the Immigration and Naturalization Service, with projections to 2013. The initial estimates are calculated separately for age-gender groups in six states (California, Florida, Illinois, New Jersey, New York and Texas) and the balance of the country; within these areas the estimates are further subdivided into immigrant populations from 35 countries or groups of countries by period of arrival in the United States. Variants of the residual method have been widely used and are generally accepted as the best current estimates ([Baker and Rytina, 2014](#); [Hoefer, Rytina and Baker, 2012](#); [Warren and Warren, 2013](#)). See also Passel, Cohn and Gonzalez-Barrera (2013), [Passel and Cohn \(2008\)](#) and [Passel \(2007\)](#) for more details. The overall population estimates presented in this report are the residual totals, adjusted for survey omissions for these six states and the balance of the country, subdivided for Mexican immigrants and other groups of immigrants (balance of Latin America, south and east Asia, rest of world) depending on sample size and state.

Once the residual estimates have been produced, individual foreign-born respondents in the survey are assigned a specific status (one option being unauthorized immigrant) based on the individual’s demographic, social, economic, geographic and family characteristics. These status assignments are the basis for the characteristics reported here (including, for example, specific countries of birth, detailed state estimates, duration of residence and presence of children). A final step in the weighting-estimation process involves developing final state-level estimates that take into account trends over time in the estimates. For this report, additional status assignments

involving Temporary Protected Status (TPS) and Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) were done for the 2012 ACS only. Later reports will focus on more detailed information on the countries and regions of origin of the immigrants, estimates for all states and major metropolitan areas, and various demographic, social and economic characteristics of the unauthorized and legal immigrant populations.

Data Sources and Survey Weights

The American Community Survey is an ongoing survey conducted by the U.S. Census Bureau. The survey collects detailed information on a broad range of topics, including country of birth, year of immigration and citizenship—the information required for the residual estimates. The ACS has a continuous collection design with monthly samples of about 250,000; the nominal annual sample size was about 2.9 million households for 2005-2009 with about 1.9 million included in the final sample. The initial sample was expanded to almost 3.3 million addresses for 2011 and over 3.5 million for 2012; the final sample included more than 2.1 million address in 2011 and almost 2.4 million in 2012. (http://www.census.gov/acs/www/methodology/sample_size_data/index.php).

For this report, public use samples of individual survey records from the ACS are tabulated to provide the data used in the estimation process. The public use file is a representative 1% sample of the entire U.S. (including about 3 million individual records for each year 2005-2012) obtained from the Integrated Public Use Microdata Series or IPUMS ([Ruggles et al., 2010](#)). The ACS began full-scale operation in 2005 covering only the household population; since 2006 it has covered the entire U.S. population. ACS data are released by the Census Bureau in September for the previous year.

The other survey data source used for residual estimates comes from March Supplements to the Current Population Survey. The CPS is a monthly survey currently of about 55,000 households conducted jointly by the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics and the Census Bureau. Since 2001, the March supplement sample has been expanded to about 80,000 households; before then, the expanded March Supplement sample included about 50,000 households. The CPS universe covers the civilian noninstitutional population. The CPS was redesigned in 1994 and, for the first time, included the information required for the residual estimates (i.e., country of birth, date of immigration and citizenship). Some limitations of the initial March Supplement redesign of the CPS as implemented in 1994 preclude its use in making these estimates, so the first CPS-based estimates are for March 1995. CPS data are released by the Census Bureau in September for the previous March. The most recent March CPS data were for 2013.

Population figures from both the ACS and CPS are based on the Census Bureau's official population estimates for the nation, states and smaller areas through a weighting process that ensures the survey figures agree with pre-specified national population totals by age, sex, race and Hispanic origin. At the sub-national level, the two surveys differ in their target populations. The March CPS data agree with state-level totals by age, sex and race and are based on a process that imposes other conditions on weights for couples ([U.S. Census Bureau, 2006](#)). The ACS weights use estimates for much smaller geographic areas that are summed to state totals (http://www.census.gov/acs/www/methodology/methodology_main/ – especially Chapter 11).

The population estimates for the surveys are based on the latest available figures at the time the survey weights are estimated. This process produces the best estimates available at the time of the survey, but it does not guarantee that a time series produced across multiple surveys is consistent or accurate. Significant discontinuities can be introduced when the Census Bureau changes its population estimation methods, as it did several times early in the 2000s and in 2007 and 2008 ([Passel and Cohn, 2010](#)), or when the entire estimates series is recalibrated to take into account the results of a new census.

The estimates shown for unauthorized immigrants and the underlying survey data are derived from ACS IPUMS 1% samples for 2005-2012 and March CPS public use files for 1995-2013, which have been reweighted to take into account population estimates consistent with the 1990 Census, the 2000 Census, the 2010 Census and the most recent population estimates. The population estimates used to reweight the March 2011 CPS come from the Census Bureau's Vintage 2011 population estimates (<http://www.census.gov/popest/data/index.html>); they are consistent with the 2010 Census and the estimates used to weight the March 2012-2013 CPS. The population estimates used to reweight the CPS for March 2001 through March 2010 are the Census Bureau's intercensal population estimates for the 2000s (<http://www.census.gov/popest/data/intercensal/index.html>); these population estimates use demographic components of population change for 2000-2010 and are consistent with both the 2000 and 2010 censuses. Similarly, the population estimates used to reweight the CPS for March 1995 through March 2000 are the intercensal population estimates for the 1990s, which are consistent with the 1990 and 2000 censuses. The ACS data for 2010-2012 do not require reweighting as they are weighted to recent population estimates based on the 2010 Census. For the 2005-2009 ACS, the reweighting uses the same intercensal population estimates as used for the CPS.⁷ The reweighting methodology for both the ACS and CPS follows, to the extent possible, the methods used by the Census Bureau in producing the sample weights that equal the population

⁷ For the 2005, the ACS included only the household population; it did not cover the group quarters population. To make the data for the 2005 ACS comparable with 2006 and later, we augmented the ACS by adding records to represent the group quarter population by borrowing records from the 2006 ACS. (See Passel, Cohn and Gonzalez-Barrera 2013.)

totals. See Passel, Cohn and Gonzalez-Barrera 2013 for more details on weighting and adjustments for survey undercoverage.

Because of the much larger sample size in the ACS (3.1 million sample cases in 2012 including more than 350,000 foreign-born cases) than the March CPS (203,000 sample cases in 2013 with about 26,000 foreign-born), the ACS-based estimates should be considered more accurate than the CPS-based estimates. In this publication, we have replaced the previous [CPS-based estimate](#) for 2012 with the new ACS-based estimate. The CPS-based estimate for 2013 should be considered preliminary as it will be replaced with an ACS-based estimate when the 2013 ACS data become available.

Status Assignments—Legal and Unauthorized Immigrants

Individual respondents are assigned a status as a legal or unauthorized immigrant based on the individual's demographic, social, economic and geographic characteristics so the resulting number of immigrants in various categories agrees with the totals from the residual estimates. The assignment procedure employs a variety of methods, assumptions and data sources.

First, all immigrants entering the U.S. before 1980 are assumed to be legal immigrants. Then, the data are corrected for known over-reporting of naturalized citizenship on the part of recently arrived immigrants (Passel et al. 1997) and all remaining naturalized citizens from countries other than Mexico and those in Central America are assigned as legal. Persons entering the U.S. as refugees are identified on the basis of country of birth and year of immigration to align with known admissions of refugees and asylees (persons granted asylum). Then, individuals holding certain kinds of temporary visas (including students, diplomats and “high-tech guest workers”) are identified in the survey and each is assigned a specific legal temporary migration status using information on country of birth, date of entry, occupation, education and certain family characteristics. Finally, some individuals are assigned as legal immigrants because they are in certain occupations (e.g., police officer, lawyer, military occupation, federal job) that require legal status or because they are receiving public benefits (e.g., welfare or food stamps) that are limited to legal immigrants. As result of these steps, the foreign-born population is divided between individuals with “definitely legal” status (including long-term residents, naturalized citizens, refugees and asylees, legal temporary migrants, and some legal permanent residents) and a group of “potentially unauthorized” migrants.

The number of potentially unauthorized migrants typically exceeds the estimated number of unauthorized migrants (from the residual estimates) by 15-35%. So, to have a result consistent with the residual estimate of legal and unauthorized immigrants, probabilistic methods are

employed to assign legal or unauthorized status to these potentially unauthorized individuals. This last step also involves a check to ensure that the legal statuses of family members are consistent; for example, all family members entering the country at the same time are assumed to have the same legal status. The entire process requires several iterations to produce estimates that agree with the demographically derived population totals. At the end, the final estimates agree with the residual estimates for the six individual states noted earlier and for the balance of the country; for Mexican-born and other legal and unauthorized immigrants in each area; and for children, working-age men and working-age women within each category. Finally, the survey weights for the foreign-born are adjusted upward so the tabulated figures agree with the analytic, demographic estimates of the total number of legal and unauthorized migrants developed in the very first step.

For this report, two additional status groups have been assigned to persons initially assigned as unauthorized immigrants: (1) DACA approval or persons approved under the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals criteria; and (2) Temporary Protected Status. Under the DACA standards, an unauthorized immigrant must meet a number of specific criteria (U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services, 2012 <http://www.uscis.gov/humanitarian/consideration-deferred-action-childhood-arrivals-daca>):

1. Arrived in the U.S. before age 16 and were under age 31 as of June 15, 2012;
2. Continuously resided in the U.S. Since June 15, 2007;
3. Physically present in the U.S. on June 15, 2012;
4. Enrolled in school, have a high school diploma or a GED or have been honorably discharged from the military or the Coast Guard at the time of application;
5. Not been convicted of a felony, a significant misdemeanor offense, or three or more other misdemeanors, and do not present a threat to national security or public safety.

Using information from the 2012 ACS on year of arrival in the U.S., educational attainment, and veteran status, we determine whether persons assigned as unauthorized immigrants meet criteria (1)-(4). If they do so, they are identified as potential DACA applications. From this pool, we selected enough ACS respondents to represent the 580,000 DACA requests received by DHS as of September 2013 and approximate their characteristics (e.g., age by country of origin, age by gender, age by marital status and state of residence). See the tables at <http://www.uscis.gov/sites/default/files/USCIS/Humanitarian/Deferred%20Action%20for%20Childhood%20Arrivals/USCIS-DACA-Characteristics-Data-2014-7-10.pdf>.

Temporary Protected Status (TPS) is primarily a function of an individual's country of birth and date of arrival. As of calendar 2013, approximately 420,000 persons had been granted TPS.⁸ We selected ACS respondents previously designated as unauthorized immigrants to represent the TPS

⁸ Table entitled, "Existing Grants of Temporary Protected Status" supplied by DHS.

population based on country of birth and year of arrival:

El Salvador	270,650	Arrived before 2001
Honduras	83,349	Arrived before 1999
Haiti	58,037	Arrived before 2011
Nicaragua	4,275	Arrived before 1999
Syria	2,475	Arrived before 2013
Sudan	514	Arrived before 2005
Somalia	378	Arrived before 2012

Other Methodological Issues

Rounding of Estimates. All state- and national-level estimates for unauthorized immigrant populations are presented as rounded numbers to avoid the appearance of unwarranted precision in the estimates. Estimates less than 100,000 are rounded to the nearest 5,000; estimates in the range of 100,000-250,000 to the nearest 10,000; estimates smaller than 1 million to the nearest 25,000; estimates of 1-10 million are rounded to the nearest 50,000; and estimates larger than that to the nearest 100,000. Unrounded numbers are used for statistical significance tests, in plotting charts and in computations of differences and percentages.

Duration of Residence. The reference date for the ACS is July 1 of the survey year (e.g., July 1, 2010 for the 2010 ACS). However, data are collected throughout the year and the date when individual information was collected is not available in the public use data. It is not possible to determine the exact duration of residence in the U.S. for each respondent, only the year of arrival in the U.S. In computing the distribution of duration of residence and the median duration of residence, we assumed that, on average, the ACS respondents arriving in a given year spent half of that year in the U.S. and, further, that respondents spent half of the survey year in the U.S. So, for example, in the 2012 ACS, the number of immigrants who had been in the U.S. for less than 10 years was estimated as those who reported arriving in 2003-2012 (which represents persons in the U.S. for less than 9.5 years) plus half of those arriving in 2002. The median duration of residence was computed from tabulations of immigrants by calendar year of arrival. For the CPS, period of immigration is reported in two-year intervals (e.g., immigrants arriving in 1998-1999); for computing distributions and medians, we assumed that the arrivals were evenly distributed across the period.