

# Top 10 Facts: Immigration Trends



BIPARTISAN POLICY CENTER

**1** Current rhetoric around immigration would have the public believe that unauthorized immigration is continuing in large numbers and unabated, but there has not been major growth in the unauthorized population for many years. **There are approximately 11 million undocumented immigrants in the United States—down from a peak of 12.2 million in 2007 and holding steady.**

**2** The immigration debate is often seen as synonymous with Mexico, but the Mexican share of the foreign-born population has not seen much growth in two decades. **The Mexican share of foreign-born population in the United States has increased only 2 percent in the last 20 years (from 27 percent to 29 percent).**

**3** The share of unauthorized adults who have been here for less than five years has fallen to 14 percent. **Nearly 66 percent of unauthorized immigrants have lived in the United States for at least 10 years.**

**4** Mexico was once the dominant source of immigration to the United States but has since been overtaken by Asia. **Because of declining rates of new immigration from Mexico and increases in Asian migration, today there are more Asians than Mexicans living in the United States.**

**5** Mexico as a source of illegal immigration has declined as the Northern Triangle countries grow in importance. **Today, more migrants from Central America are apprehended at the southwestern border than Mexican migrants.**

**6** Illegal-immigration levels have fallen substantially and now are predominantly visa overstays, not southwest border crossings. **Visa overstays now outnumber unlawful border crossings as the main source of unauthorized immigration.**

**7** The drop in border apprehensions can be attributed to several factors, including increased border security and more Mexicans using legal visas. **Apprehensions at U.S. borders have precipitously declined from 1.4 million in FY1997 to between 300,000 and 500,000 per year since 2010.**

**8** The immigrant population is far better educated than it was during the 1990s. **The share of the foreign-born population holding a postgraduate degree has risen by nearly 70 percent, increasing from 7.6 percent in 1997 to 12.8 percent today.**

**9** More immigrants are arriving with high school diplomas and college degrees, enabling them to fill vital jobs in the U.S. economy. **Between 2011 and 2015, nearly half of all new immigrants were college graduates.**

**10** As a growing percentage of the U.S. workforce, immigrants are playing a greater role in the economy, especially as the native-born workforce is aging and shrinking. **17.3 percent of the U.S. labor force is made up of foreign-born workers (up from 11.3 percent in 1997).**

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*For more backgrounders and fact sheets on immigration topics please visit, [bipartisanpolicy.org/immigration](http://bipartisanpolicy.org/immigration)*