

U.S. International Migration & Undocumented Population Estimates (2015–2025)

Net International Migration vs. Gross Arrivals

Estimates vary depending on whether researchers count:

- **Net international migration** — people entering the United States minus people leaving
- **Total gross arrivals** — everyone who entered regardless of later departure status

For the last 10 years, the most commonly used demographic measure is **net international migration**.

Approximate Total Net International Migration to the U.S. (2015–2025)

Using estimates from the U.S. Census Bureau, United Nations demographic models, and migration researchers, the United States likely experienced roughly:

12–16 million net international migrants

during the 2015–2025 period.

This means:

approximately 12–16 million more people entered the United States than left it over that decade.

Why Estimates Differ

Migration estimates vary because of differences in methodology and classification, including:

- Census methodology revisions
- Inclusion of temporary migrants
- Asylum applicants
- Visa overstays
- Emigration estimates

- Undocumented migration estimates

The U.S. Census Bureau revised several migration methodologies after COVID-19 because earlier models undercounted migration increases during 2022–2024.

Approximate Annual Pattern

Very rough annual estimates suggest:

- **2015–2019:** approximately 1–1.8 million net migrants annually
- **2020:** major COVID-19 collapse in migration
- **2021:** rebound begins
- **2022–2024:** unusually high migration surge years
- **2025:** moderation and decline following policy changes and increased emigration

Broader Demographic Context

For scale:

- Approximate U.S. population (mid-2020s): **~342 million**
- Foreign-born population: **50+ million**
- Foreign-born share of population: **~15%** (near historical highs)

Over the last decade, immigration accounted for a substantial share of total U.S. population growth.

Estimated Undocumented Population in the U.S.

Estimates regarding undocumented or unauthorized immigration are inherently uncertain because they rely on:

- Census modeling
- Survey sampling
- Visa overstay data
- Border encounter estimates
- Demographic analysis

Most major research organizations estimate:

- **~10.5–11 million** undocumented immigrants in the mid-2010s
- Rising to roughly **11–13 million+** by 2024–2025 depending on methodology

Frequently cited research organizations include:

- [Pew Research Center](#)
- [Center for Migration Studies](#)
- [Migration Policy Institute](#)
- [U.S. Census Bureau](#)

Estimated Unauthorized Share of 2015–2025 Migration

For the estimated **12–16 million net international migrants** during 2015–2025:

Researchers generally estimate that:

- roughly **3–5 million** of that net increase may have involved unauthorized or undocumented status at entry or through visa overstay
- though estimates vary substantially depending on how asylum cases and parole programs are classified

Rough Estimated Share

- **~25%–35% undocumented or unauthorized**
- **~65%–75% legal or authorized categories**

These are broad demographic estimates rather than exact counts.

Important Nuance Regarding “Undocumented”

The term “undocumented” includes multiple categories, including:

- Illegal border crossings
- Visa overstays
- Failed asylum claimants who remained
- Individuals awaiting immigration hearings
- Temporary protected status expirations

- Some parole entrants after status expiration

Many undocumented immigrants originally entered the United States legally and later fell out of status.

Border Encounters vs. Permanent Settlement

One major point of public confusion is that:

- Border encounters are **not the same thing** as permanent undocumented settlement
- Many encounters involve repeat crossings, removals, asylum processing, or temporary release

As a result, annual border encounter figures can appear extremely large without translating directly into equivalent long-term population growth.

Approximate Share of Total U.S. Population

As of the mid-2020s:

- Total U.S. population: **~340+ million**
- Estimated undocumented population: **~11–13 million**

This suggests undocumented immigrants represent approximately:

~3%–4% of the total U.S. population

By comparison, the total foreign-born population overall is approximately:

~15% of the U.S. population