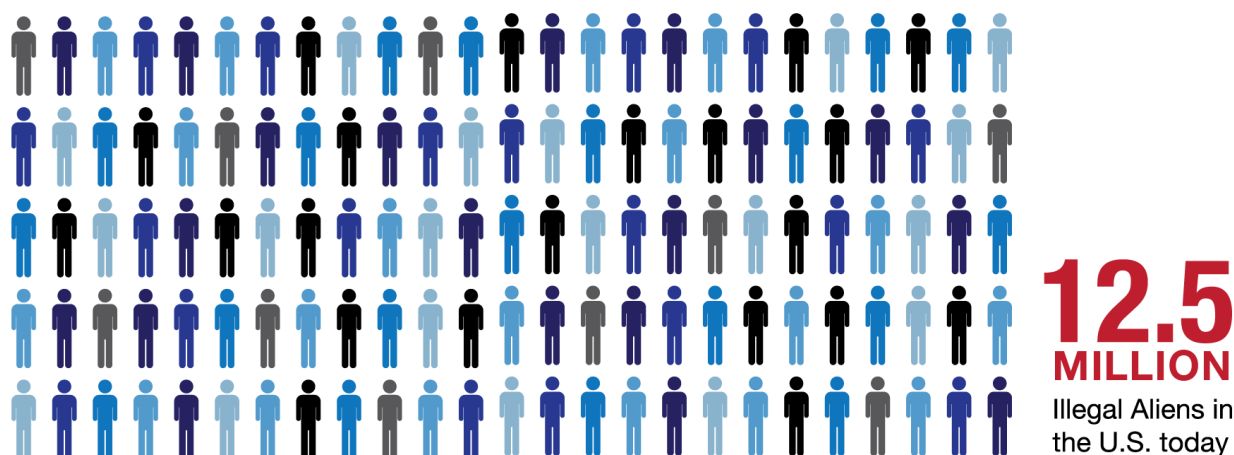




How Many Illegal Aliens Currently Live in the United States?

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As of 2017, FAIR estimates that there are approximately 12.5 million illegal aliens residing in the United States. This number is slightly higher than FAIR's previous estimate of 12 million in 2011.

The Difficulty in Estimating the Illegal Alien Population

Estimating the size and characteristics of the illegal alien population is an inexact science. Anyone claiming to have calculated a definitive number should be looked upon skeptically. There is no central database of illegal aliens. Furthermore, the Department of Homeland Security only counts those who enter and leave in a lawful manner. Those who evade immigration authorities or sneak across the border are not counted.

Most available sources used for estimating the total number of illegal aliens rely on migrants to self-report whether or not they hold lawful status. Illegal aliens have a strong motive to lie when asked about their immigration status. Many, understandably, feel that

disclosing their unlawful status will make them vulnerable to immigration officials. Therefore, the accuracy of these statistics is doubtful, at best. Data collected by the Census Bureau, for example, attempts to differentiate between citizens, illegal aliens and lawfully present immigrants. However, this information is, again, self-reported by survey respondents without an independent verification process. The Census Bureau does not require or ask for any kind of documentation to verify that their respondents are answering demographic questions honestly.

Another complication arises due to those who enter the United States lawfully, but subsequently become illegal aliens because they remained in the country beyond their authorized period of admission. Theoretically, the government should be capable of keeping count of those who enter the United States, but then overstay their visa. However, such a practice does not exist. Researchers unfamiliar with the U.S. immigration process often omit migrants who have lost their legal status when compiling their estimates, therefore causing an undercount of the illegal alien population.

Who is an 'Illegal Alien'?

FAIR defines an “illegal alien” as anyone who entered the United States without authorization, or anyone who unlawfully remains once their authorization has expired. It is important to define who is and is not an illegal alien because many organizations, for political reasons, attempt to undercount the number of illegal aliens currently living in the United States. This not only allows them to give the false impression that illegal immigration is a smaller problem than it actually is, but also to suggest that the fiscal impact on legally present and native tax payers is less than it is in reality.

How We Reached Our Estimate



FAIR’s estimates, while slightly larger, are similar to those produced by groups like Pew Research. However, Pew, and similar groups, classify the large influx of unaccompanied alien minors (UAMs), Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) and Temporary Protected Status (TPS) recipients as being in the United States “legally.” FAIR disagrees with this characterization. Recipients of TPS, DACA, etc. have not received “lawful immigration status.” Rather, the U.S. government recognizes that

these individuals are unlawfully present, yet declines to take immediate action against them due to administrative priorities. Accordingly, when calculating the illegal alien population, FAIR correctly includes adults and children without any immigration status, as well as individuals who have received temporary reprieves through TPS, DACA, etc.

To break it down, FAIR's total national illegal alien estimate includes the commonly accepted base number of just under 11.1 million adult illegal aliens (the commonly accepted base number for 2017)¹, approximately 350,000 TPS beneficiaries (mostly Central Americans) and roughly 800,000² DACA recipients.³ Programs like DACA and TPS draw illegal aliens out of the shadows who would otherwise likely hide their unlawful status. This understandably causes estimates to rise.

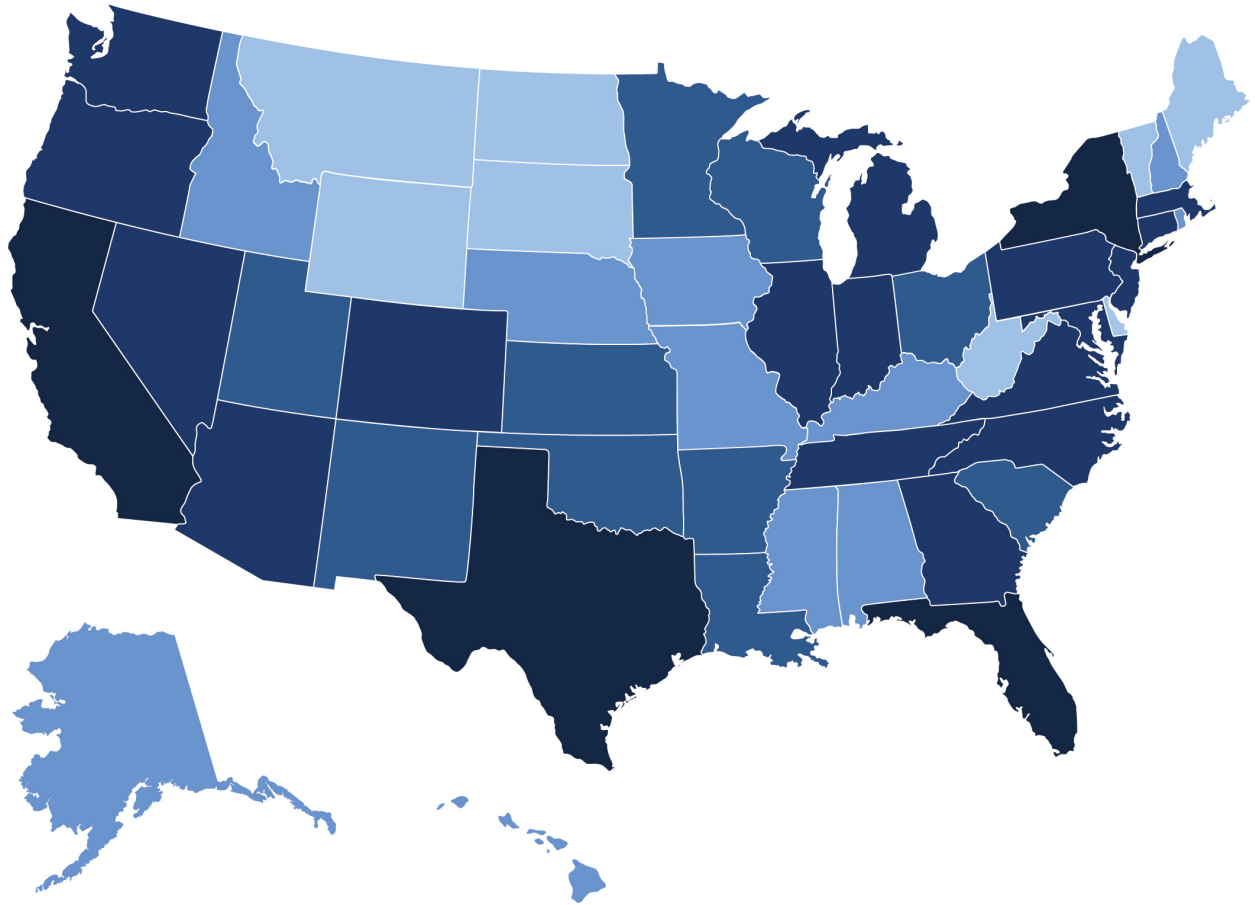
The total excludes an estimated 4.2 million American-born children of illegal aliens. These children of illegal aliens are, under the current interpretation of the 14th Amendment to the Constitution, U.S. citizens. While not counted as illegal aliens, they are a significant part of illegal immigration's fiscal impact on the U.S. taxpayer, as noted in FAIR's most recent fiscal cost study.⁴

Like other research organizations, we calculate the base population estimate by examining Census Bureau data, and the subset of households occupied by foreign-born people who are not naturalized citizens or legally present aliens. However, as noted already, Census Bureau estimates are likely to be low due the various incentives illegal aliens have to avoid disclosing their lack of status.

Where Do Illegal Aliens Live in the United States

Unsurprisingly, illegal aliens tend to live near the United States' border with Mexico, and in states that offer incentives for breaking American immigration law. The ten states with the largest estimated illegal alien populations account for just under three-fourths (73.7%) of the national total.

The following chart includes FAIR's estimates of how many illegal aliens reside in each state, as well an estimate for the total number of illegal aliens and their children.



State	Total Number of Illegal Aliens in the United States	Total Number of Illegal Aliens and their Children
California	2,646,000	3,535,000
Texas	1,857,000	2,482,000
Florida	957,000	1,279,000
New York	872,700	1,166,000
New Jersey	563,000	752,000
Illinois	507,000	677,000
Georgia	422,000	564,000
North Carolina	394,000	527,000
Arizona	366,000	489,000
Virginia	338,000	451,000
Maryland	282,000	376,000
Washington	282,000	376,000
Nevada	237,000	316,000
Massachusetts	236,000	316,000
Colorado	225,000	301,000

Pennsylvania	203,000	271,000
Michigan	146,000	196,000
Oregon	146,000	196,000
Connecticut	135,000	181,000
Tennessee	135,000	181,000
Indiana	124,000	165,000
Minnesota	113,000	150,000
Utah	113,000	150,000
Oklahoma	107,000	143,000
Ohio	107,000	143,000
New Mexico	96,000	128,000
South Carolina	96,000	128,000
Wisconsin	90,000	120,000
Kansas	84,000	113,000
Arkansas	79,000	105,000
Louisiana	79,000	105,000
Alabama	73,000	98,000
Missouri	62,000	83,000
Kentucky	56,000	75,000
Hawaii	51,000	68,000
Idaho	51,000	68,000
Nebraska	51,000	68,000
Iowa	45,000	60,000
Rhode Island	34,000	45,000
Delaware	28,000	38,000
Washington DC	28,000	38,000
Mississippi	28,000	38,000
Alaska	11,000	15,000
New Hampshire	11,000	15,000
South Dakota	<6,000	<8,000
Wyoming	<6,000	<8,000
Maine	<6,000	<8,000
Montana	<6,000	<8,000
North Dakota	<6,000	<8,000
Vermont	<6,000	<8,000
West Virginia	<6,000	<8,000
	App. 12,500,000*	App. 16,700,000*

¹ Pew Research Center, Hispanic Trends, "Estimated Unauthorized Immigration Population Estimates," 2014,

² U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services, "Number of I-821D, Consideration of Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals by Fiscal Year, Quarter, Intake, Biometrics and Case Status: 2012-2017 (December 31)", https://www.uscis.gov/sites/default/files/USCIS/Resources/Reports%20and%20Studies/Immigration%20Forms%20Data/All%20Form%20Types/DACA/daca_performancedata_fy2017_qtr1.pdf

³ Some illegal aliens are temporarily protected against deportation. Most of them are in one of three programs; Temporary Protected Status (TPS), Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA), and Cubans who benefit from the “wet-foot-dry-foot executive policy. The first two programs, if allowed to expire would restore beneficiaries to illegal alien status and for that reason the beneficiaries are treated in this study as part of the illegal alien population. The Cuban illegal entrants, on the other hand, are provided permanent legal status under the Cuban Adjustment Act after one year in the country, and are not, therefore, included in our calculation of the illegal alien population, despite the fact that their illegal entry is indistinguishable from the entry of other illegal aliens, and certainly constitutes a negative fiscal impact at the federal and local level.

⁴ O'Brien, Raley, Martin, The Federation for American Immigration Reform, “The Fiscal Burden of Illegal Immigration on United States Taxpayers, 2017, <https://fairus.org/issue/publications-resources/fiscal-burden-illegal-immigration-united-states-taxpayers>