

U.S. Unauthorized Immigration Flows Are Down Sharply Since Mid-Decade

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Washington, DC – The annual inflow of unauthorized immigrants to the United States was nearly two-thirds smaller in the March 2007 to March 2009 period than it had been from March 2000 to March 2005, according to new estimates by the Pew Hispanic Center, a project of the Pew Research Center.

This sharp decline has contributed to an overall reduction of 8% in the number of unauthorized immigrants currently living in the U.S.-to 11.1 million in March 2009 from a peak of 12 million in March 2007, according to the estimates. The decrease represents the first significant reversal in the growth of this population over the past two decades.

These new Pew Hispanic Center estimates rely on data mainly from the Census Bureau's Current Population Survey and decennial census. The unauthorized immigrant population is estimated using the widely accepted residual method, in which a demographic estimate of the legal foreign-born population is subtracted from the total foreign-born population. The difference provides the basis for estimating the size and characteristics of the unauthorized immigrant population.

The Pew Hispanic Center's analysis also finds that the most marked decline in the population of unauthorized immigrants has been among those who come from Latin American countries other than Mexico. From 2007 to 2009, the size of this group from the Caribbean, Central America and South America decreased 22%.

The recent decrease in the unauthorized population has been especially notable along the nation's Southeast coast and in its Mountain West, according to the new estimates. The number of unauthorized immigrants in Florida, Nevada and Virginia shrank from 2008 to 2009. Other states may have had declines, but they fell within the margin of error for these estimates.

Not counting Florida and Virginia, the unauthorized immigrant population also declined in the area encompassing the rest of the South Atlantic division that extends between Delaware and Georgia. In addition to the decline in Nevada, three other Mountain states-Arizona, Colorado and Utah-experienced a decrease in their combined unauthorized immigrant population from 2008 to 2009.

The report, "[U.S. Unauthorized Immigration Flows Are Down Sharply Since Mid-Decade](#)," authored by Jeffrey Passel, Senior Demographer, Pew Hispanic Center, and D'Vera Cohn, Senior Writer, Pew Research Center, is available at the Pew Hispanic Center's website, www.pewhispanic.org.

The [Pew Hispanic Center](#), a project of the [Pew Research Center](#), is a nonpartisan, non-advocacy research organization based in Washington, D.C. and is funded by [The Pew Charitable Trusts](#).

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