

Legalize Who?: A Portrait of the 11 Million Unauthorized Immigrants in the United States

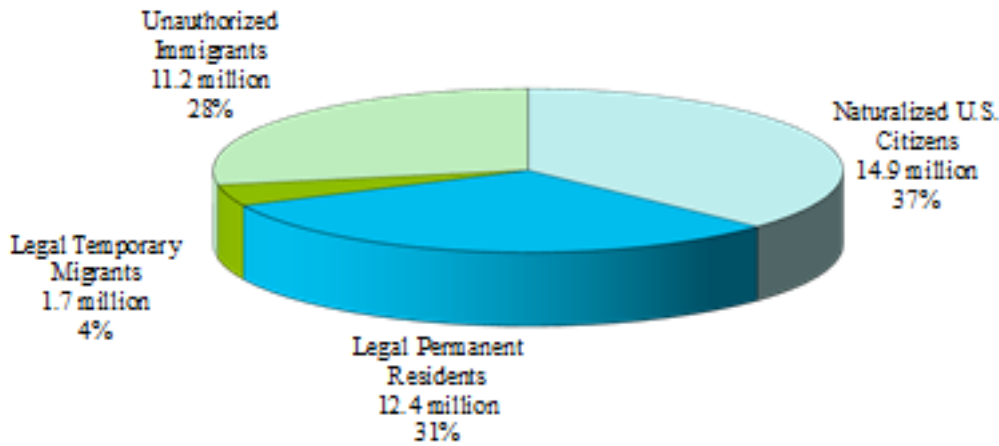
As the immigration debate heats up in Congress, the central question will be what to do about the [11 million](#) [1] unauthorized immigrants now living and working in the United States. The media often portrays this population as barely literate young men who pour over the southern border and live solitary lives, rather than providing a nuanced understanding of who the 11 million really are: adults and children, mothers and fathers, homeowners and churchgoers who are invested in their communities. This fact sheet attempts to provide a basic understanding of who the unauthorized are as people: where they live, where they're from, how long they have been here, and what family and community ties to the United States they have.

Data from the U.S. Census Bureau and other sources provide this very necessary social context to the immigration debate. And what the data reveal are that most of the unauthorized have been here for over a decade. While they are concentrated in California, Texas, Florida, and New York, there are sizeable unauthorized populations in other states across the country. Three-fifths of unauthorized immigrants come from Mexico, but significant numbers also come from Central America and the Philippines. Nearly half of all adult unauthorized immigrants have children under the age of 18, and roughly 4.5 million native-born U.S.-citizen children have at least one unauthorized immigrant parent. More than half of unauthorized immigrant adults have a high-school diploma or more education. Nearly half of longtime unauthorized households are homeowners. And approximately two-fifths of unauthorized immigrant adults attend religious services every week. In other words, most unauthorized immigrants are already integrating into U.S. society not only through their jobs, but through their families and communities as well.

The current unauthorized population accounts for over a quarter of the foreign-born in the United States.

- According to estimates by the Pew Hispanic Center, unauthorized immigrants comprised 28 percent of the foreign-born population in 2010.
- Naturalized U.S. citizens accounted for 37 percent of the foreign-born population, and Legal Permanent Residents were 31 percent {Figure 1}.

Figure 1: Foreign-Born Population by Legal Status, 2010

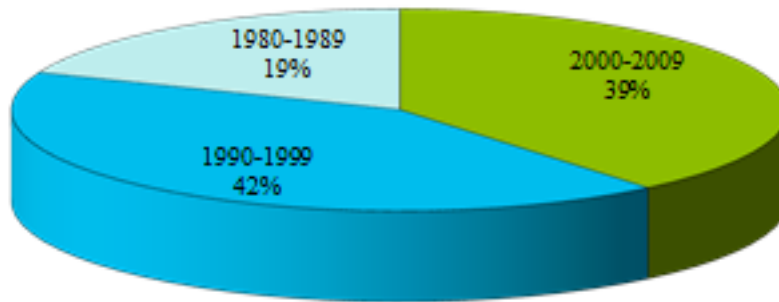


Source: Jeffrey S. Passel and D'Vera Cohn, *Unauthorized Immigrant Population: National and State Trends, 2010* (Washington, DC: Pew Hispanic Center, February 1, 2011), p. 10.

More than half of all unauthorized immigrants have been in the United States for more than a decade.

- According to estimates from the Department of Homeland Security (DHS), 42 percent of unauthorized immigrants in the United States as of 2010 had arrived in the United States during the 1990s, and another 19 percent during the 1980s.
- 39 percent of unauthorized immigrants had arrived in the United States between 2000 and 2009 {Figure 2}.

Figure 2: Unauthorized Population by Decade of Arrival, 2010

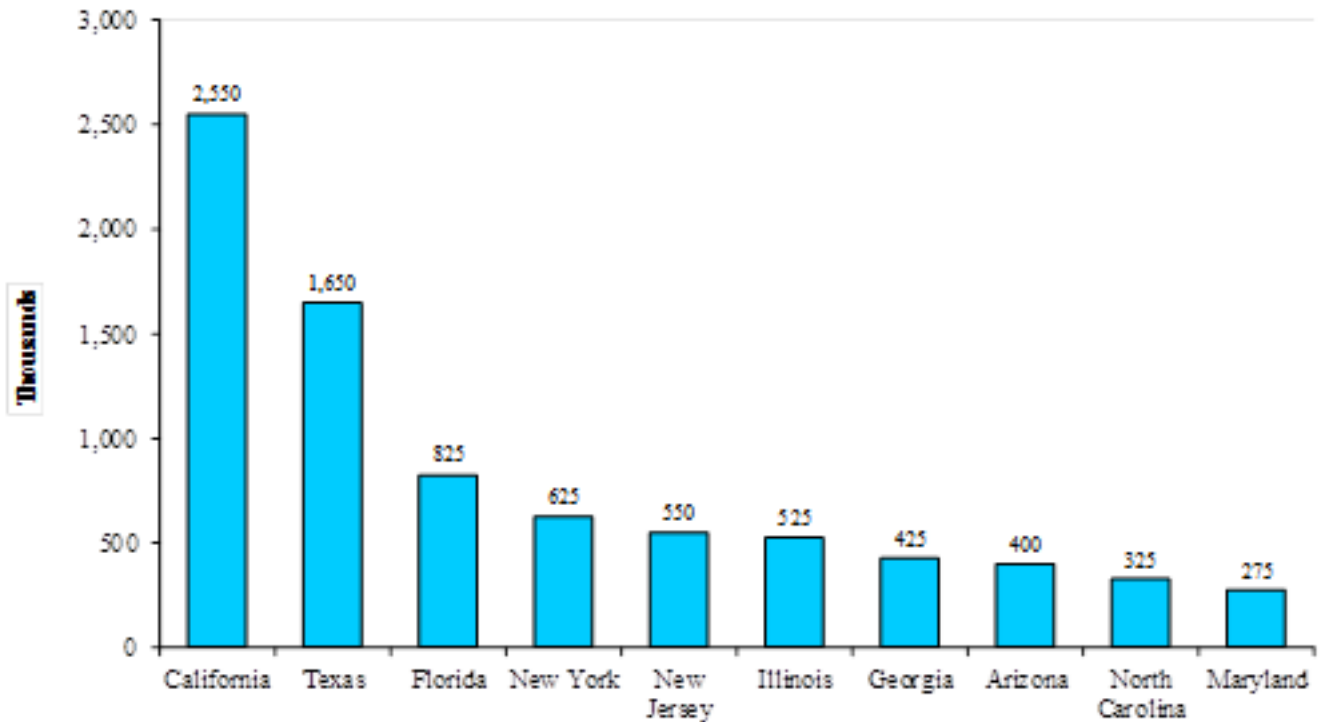


Source: Michael Hofer, Nancy Rytina, and Bryan C. Baker, *Estimates of the Unauthorized Immigrant Population Residing in the United States: January 2010* (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Homeland Security, Office of Immigration Statistics, February 2011), p. 3.

Half of the current unauthorized population lives in four states: California, Texas, Florida, and New York.

- According to Pew estimates, California was home to 2.6 million unauthorized immigrants in 2010, followed by Texas (1.7 million), Florida (825,000), and New York (625,000).
- Other states with large unauthorized populations included Illinois, Georgia, Arizona, North Carolina, and Maryland {Figure 3}.

Figure 3: Ten States with Largest Unauthorized Populations, 2010

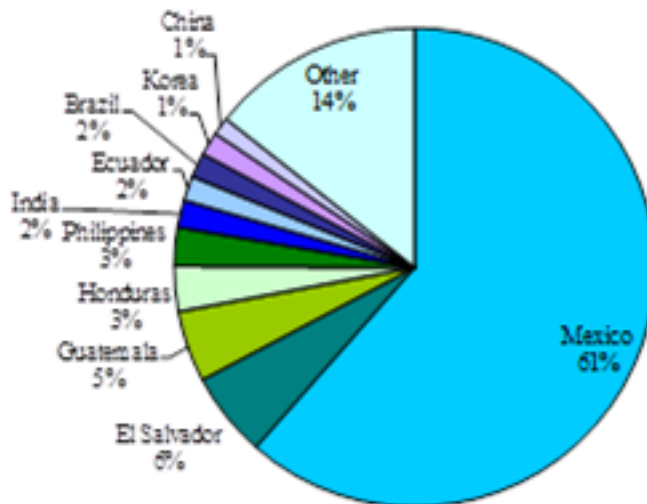


Source: Jeffrey S. Passel and D'Vera Cohn, *Unauthorized Immigrant Population: National and State Trends, 2010* (Washington, DC: Pew Hispanic Center, February 1, 2011), p. 14.

Three-fifths of unauthorized immigrants are from Mexico.

- According to DHS estimates, 60 percent of the unauthorized population was from Mexico as of 2010.
- The other top countries of origin were El Salvador (6 percent), Guatemala (5 percent), Honduras (3 percent), and the Philippines (3 percent) {Figure 4}.

Figure 4: Unauthorized Population by Country of Origin, 2010



Source: Michael Hoefel, Nancy Rytina, and Bryan C. Baker, *Estimates of the Unauthorized Immigrant Population Residing in the United States: January 2010* (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Homeland Security, Office of Immigration Statistics, February 2011), p. 4.

Nearly half of adult unauthorized immigrants live in households with children under the age of 18.

- According to Pew, 46 percent of unauthorized immigrant adults had minor children in 2010.
- In comparison, 38 percent of legal immigrants and 29 percent of U.S. natives had minor children {Figure 5}.

Figure 5: Share of Adults Who Are Parents of Minor Children, by Legal Status, 2010



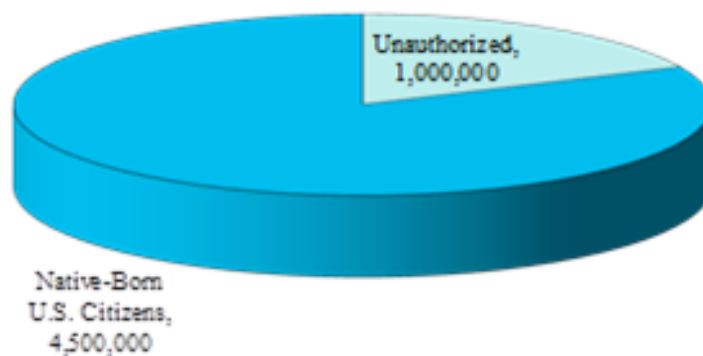
Source: Paul Taylor, et al., *Unauthorized Immigrants: Length of Residency, Patterns of Parenthood* (Washington, DC: Pew Hispanic Center, December 1, 2011), p. 5.

Roughly 4.5 million native-born U.S.-citizen children have at least one unauthorized parent.

- According to Pew estimates, unauthorized immigrants already in the United States had

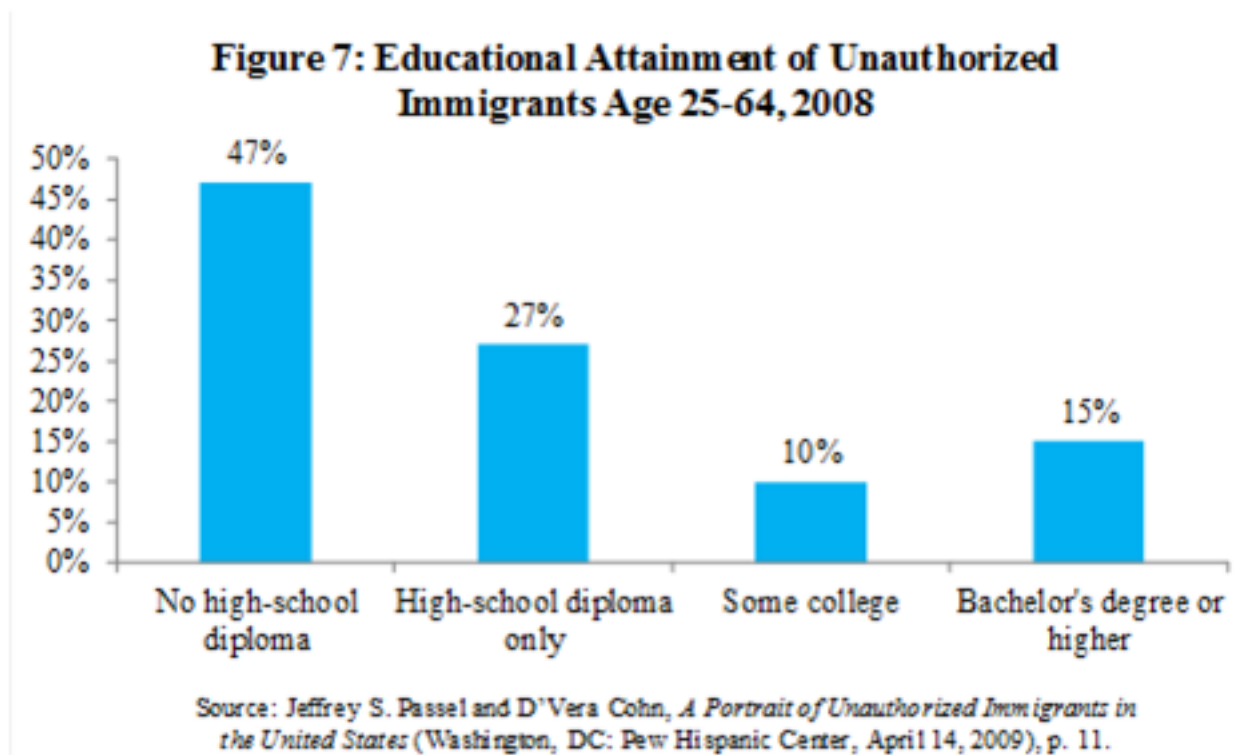
- approximately 5.5 million children in 2010.
- Roughly 1 million of those children were themselves unauthorized immigrants, while the remaining 4.5 million were native-born U.S. citizens {Figure 6}.
 - Pew estimates that, in 2008, over one-quarter (27%) of unauthorized immigrant adults had a high-school diploma only, while 10 percent had some college short of a bachelor’s degree and 15% had a bachelor’s degree or more.
 - Just under half of unauthorized immigrant adults lacked a high-school diploma {Figure 7}

Figure 6: Children of Unauthorized Immigrants, by Legal Status, 2010



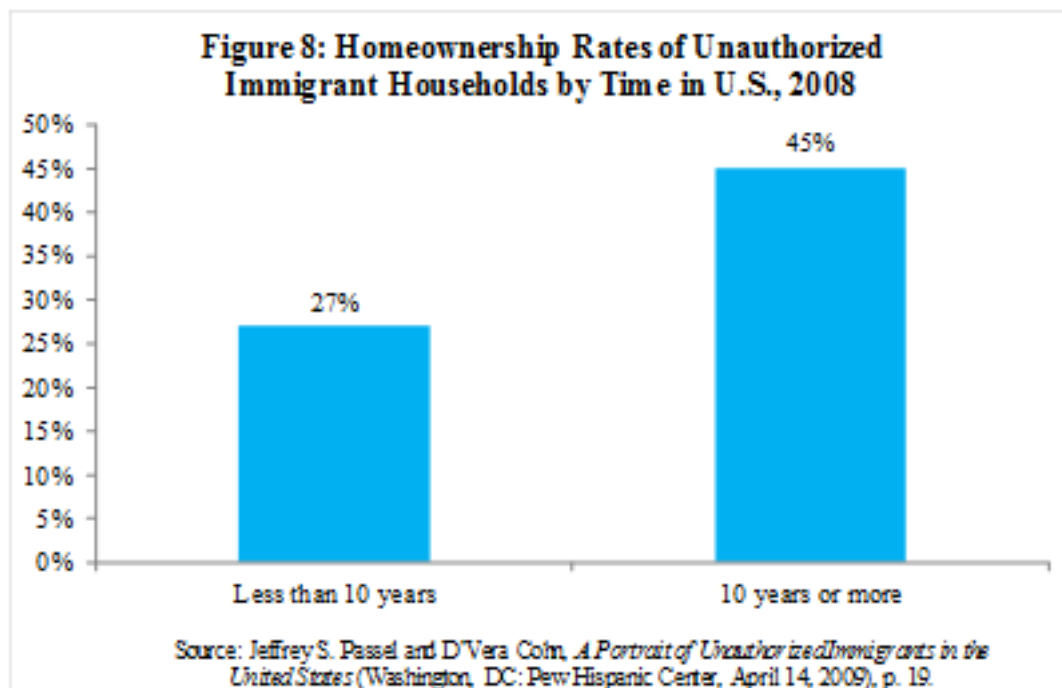
Source: Jeffrey S. Passol and D'Vera Cohn, *Unauthorized Immigrant Population: National and State Trends, 2010* (Washington, DC: Pew Hispanic Center, February 1, 2011), p. 13.

Over half of unauthorized immigrants age 25-64 have a high-school diploma or more education.



Nearly half of longtime unauthorized immigrant households are homeowners.

- According to Pew estimates, 45 percent of unauthorized immigrant households that had been in the United States for ten years or more were homeowners in 2008.
- Over one-quarter (27 percent) of unauthorized immigrant households that had been in the United States for less than ten years were homeowners {Figure 8}.



Approximately two-fifths of unauthorized immigrant adults attend religious services every week.

- Pew estimates that 39 percent of non-U.S. citizen/non-LPR Latino adults attended religious services at least once a week in 2010, while another 23 percent attended services once or twice per month.
- 15 percent attended a few times per year, while only 19 percent seldom or never attended

{Figure 9}.

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[2] http://www.americanimmigrationcouncil.org/sites/default/files/docs/legalize_who.pdf