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## 9. ESTIMATES OF UNAUTHORIZED IMMIGRANTS

*This section presents estimates of the unauthorized immigrant population residing in the United States in January 2000, by state of residence and country of origin.*

More detailed information about these estimates is available on the Department of Homeland Security website, Immigration Statistics page at: <http://www.immigration.gov/graphics/shared/aboutus/statistics/Illegals.htm>

*Unauthorized immigrants refer to foreign-born persons who entered the United States without inspection, or who violated the terms of a temporary admission and who have not acquired lawful permanent resident status or gained temporary protection against removal by applying for an immigration benefit.* The following foreign-born persons are not considered to be unauthorized residents in these estimates: refugees; asylees; parolees; and aliens who are allowed to remain and work in the United States under various legislative provisions or court rulings.

In general, the definition of the unauthorized resident population corresponds to the U.S. census definition of usual residence (where a person spends more nights during a year than any other place) and the United Nations definition of immigrants (residents in a country for more than one year). Although the estimates refer predominantly to residents, temporary unauthorized migrants are included in these estimates if they were enumerated in the 2000 Census.

### Background

This is the third in a series of detailed national estimates developed by the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) (see previous *Yearbooks*). The estimates rely primarily on data from two sources: 1) annual INS statistics (immigrants admitted, deportable aliens removed, and nonimmigrant residents admitted); and 2) data for the foreign-born population from the 2000 Census. Questions on country of birth, citizenship, and year of immigration were asked on the “long form,” which was used to collect detailed information from approximately one-sixth of the total U.S. population in the 2000 Census. Census data are

the most complete and reliable data available for the foreign-born population because of the national scope of the data collection, the large sample size, and the extensive preparation and follow-up activities involved in conducting the decennial census.

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***An estimated 7 million  
unauthorized immigrants  
were residing in the  
United States in January 2000.***

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### Estimated total unauthorized population

(Table Q)

The estimated total unauthorized resident population was estimated to be about 7.0 million in January 2000, twice the size of the population of 3.5 million in January 1990.<sup>1</sup> Average annual population growth in the 1990s was estimated to be 350,000, about 75,000 higher than INS’ previous estimate. The estimated 7 million unauthorized immigrants living in the United States in 2000 constituted 2.5 percent of the total U.S. population of just over 281 million.

The previous INS estimate distinguished between the share of the unauthorized resident population that enters the United States by crossing the border without inspection

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<sup>1</sup> The estimated population of 3.5 million as of January 1990 is lower than might be expected because nearly 2.7 million unauthorized residents left the unauthorized immigrant population as the result of the Immigration Reform and Control Act (IRCA) of 1986.

**Table Q**  
**Estimates of the Unauthorized Resident Population in the Top 15**  
**Countries of Origin and States of Residence: January 1990 and 2000**  
(thousands)

Country of origin	Population		State of residence	Population	
	2000	1990		2000	1990
<b>All countries .....</b>	<b>7,000</b>	<b>3,500</b>	<b>All states .....</b>	<b>7,000</b>	<b>3,500</b>
Mexico .....	4,808	2,040	California .....	2,209	1,476
El Salvador .....	189	298	Texas .....	1,041	438
Guatemala .....	144	118	New York .....	489	357
Colombia .....	141	51	Illinois .....	432	194
Honduras <sup>1</sup> .....	138	42	Florida .....	337	239
China .....	115	70	Arizona .....	283	88
Ecuador .....	108	37	Georgia .....	228	34
Dominican Republic .....	91	46	New Jersey .....	221	95
Philippines .....	85	70	North Carolina .....	206	26
Brazil .....	77	20	Colorado .....	144	31
Haiti .....	76	67	Washington .....	136	39
India .....	70	28	Virginia .....	103	48
Peru .....	61	27	Nevada .....	101	27
Korea .....	55	24	Oregon .....	90	26
Canada .....	47	25	Massachusetts .....	87	53
Other .....	795	537	Other .....	892	328

<sup>1</sup> The estimate for 2000 includes 105,000 Hondurans who were granted temporary protected status in December 1998.

(EWIs) from those who enter legally with a temporary visa and stay beyond the valid time limits (nonimmigrant overstays). In these estimates, roughly 2.3 million, or 33 percent, of the 7.0 million unauthorized immigrants residing in the United States in January 2000 were estimated to be nonimmigrant overstays. The comparable figure in the previous report was 41 percent as of October 1996.

#### **Estimated population by state of residence**

(Table Q)

About 4.5 million of the 7.0 million unauthorized residents lived in the five states with the largest unauthorized resident populations in January 2000—California, Texas, New York, Illinois, and Florida. The estimated number of unauthorized residents in California was about 2.2 million, or nearly 32 percent of the total in January 2000. Texas

became the second State, after California, to have more than 1 million unauthorized residents. The 15 states with the largest unauthorized resident populations in January 2000 are shown in Table Q.

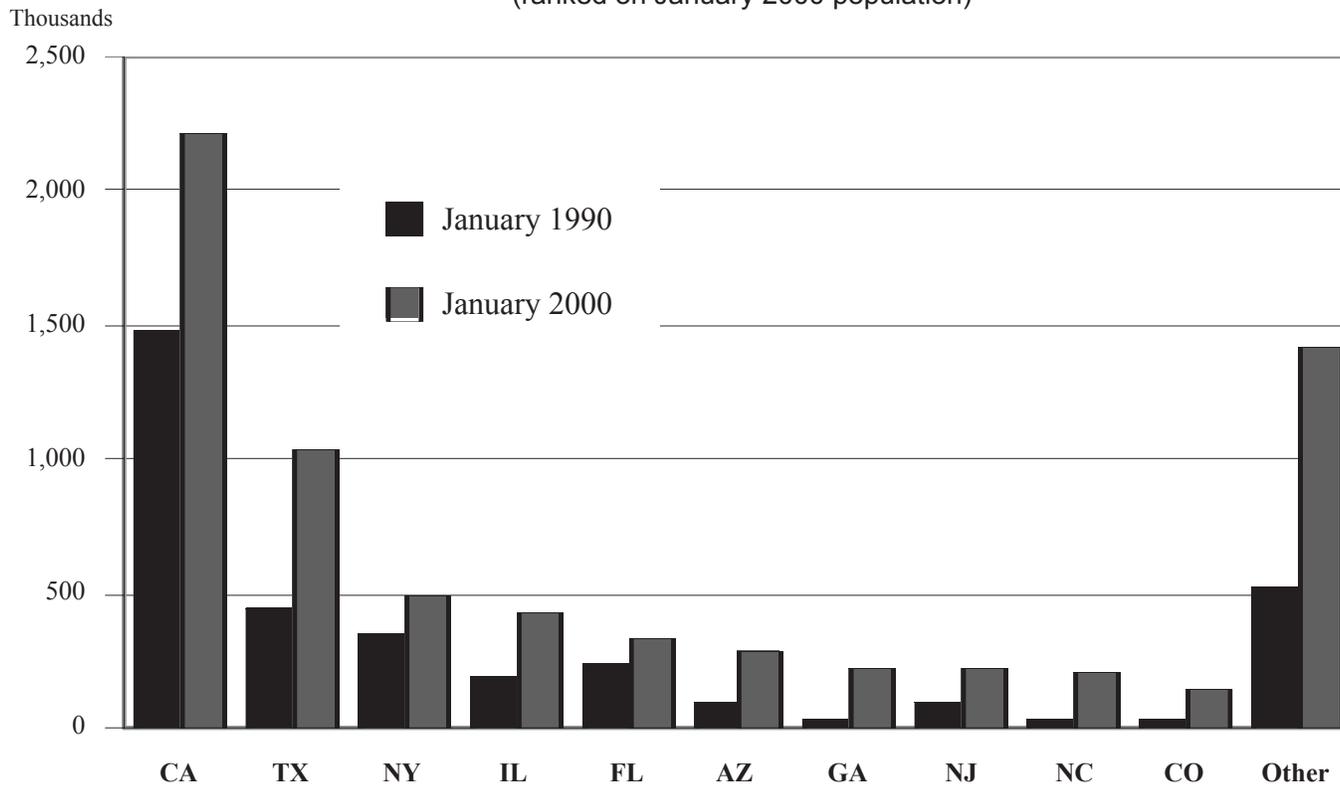
California and Texas had the largest numerical increases in the number of unauthorized residents in the 1990s. In addition to California and Texas, seven states—Illinois, Arizona, Georgia, North Carolina, New York, New Jersey, and Colorado—had increases of more than 100,000 in the number of unauthorized residents between 1990 and 2000. Chart N shows estimates of the population in 1990 and 2000 for the 10 states with the largest unauthorized resident populations in January 2000.

The increase of the population of states that had relatively few unauthorized residents in 1990 was a significant trend

## Chart N

### Estimates of the Unauthorized Immigrant Population in the Top 10 States of Residence: January 1990 and 2000

(ranked on January 2000 population)



in unauthorized population change for states in the 1990s. Three principal examples are Georgia, North Carolina, and Colorado. Each of these states had unauthorized resident populations in the 25,000 to 35,000 range in 1990. In January 2000, the estimated unauthorized resident population in Georgia was 228,000, North Carolina, 206,000, and Colorado, 144,000 (Table Q). Seven states that had 10,000 or fewer unauthorized residents in 1990 also had rapidly growing unauthorized resident populations (1990 population listed first): Alabama, 5,000 to 24,000; Arkansas, 5,000 to 27,000; Iowa, 5,000 to 24,000; Nebraska, 6,000 to 24,000; South Carolina, 7,000 to 36,000; Tennessee, 9,000 to 46,000; and Wisconsin, 10,000 to 41,000.

#### Estimated population by country of origin

(Table Q)

Table Q shows estimates of the unauthorized resident population in 1990 and 2000 from the 15 largest source countries. Mexico continued to be the leading source of

unauthorized immigration to the United States in the 1990s. The estimated unauthorized resident population from Mexico increased from about 2.0 million in 1990 to 4.8 million in January 2000. Mexico accounted for nearly 69 percent of the total unauthorized resident population in January 2000; the top fifteen countries of origin, including Mexico, accounted for 89 percent of the total.

The estimated unauthorized immigrant population from El Salvador dropped in the 1990s because many unauthorized residents from El Salvador were granted temporary protected status (TPS) early in the decade. In 1997, many long-term illegal residents from Cuba, Guatemala, Nicaragua, El Salvador, and the former Soviet Union were allowed to stay and work in the United States under provisions of the Nicaraguan Adjustment and Central American Relief Act (NACARA). Unauthorized residents from Central American and other countries were effectively shifted from unauthorized to lawfully resident by other legislative changes and judicial decisions in the latter part of the 1990s.

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Three South American countries—Colombia, Ecuador, and Brazil—had relatively large increases in estimated unauthorized residents in the United States from 1990 to 2000. The estimated unauthorized resident population from Colombia increased from 51,000 to 141,000 in the 1990s; Ecuador, from 37,000 to 108,000; and Brazil, from 20,000 to 77,000.

Three countries accounted for much of the growth of the unauthorized resident population from Asia in the 1990s. The estimated unauthorized resident population from China increased from 70,000 in 1990 to 115,000 in 2000. For India, the estimated population increased from 28,000 to 70,000 in the 1990s; for Korea, the estimated population grew from 24,000 in 1990 to 55,000 in January 2000.

## Understanding the Data

The first step to estimate the unauthorized resident population was to use 2000 Census data to determine the total number of foreign-born who moved to the United States in the 1990s—13.5 million (includes a total of 860,000 estimated by the INS to have been missed in the 2000 Census).<sup>2</sup>

Next, the INS used data from its statistical systems to estimate how many of the 13.5 million were living here legally in 2000—8.0 million.

In its total legally resident population, the INS includes aliens admitted for lawful permanent residence, refugees, and long-term nonimmigrant residents. In addition, INS' legal population includes refugees, asylees, parolees, and aliens who are allowed to remain and work in the United States under various legislative provisions or court rulings.

The difference—5.5 million—is the number who moved to the U.S. in the 1990s and were living here illegally in 2000.

An additional 1.5 million were estimated to have entered before 1990 and were still living here illegally in 2000—thus, the total unauthorized resident population was 7.0 million in 2000.

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<sup>2</sup> The Census Bureau's revised preliminary estimate of net undercount for the total U.S. population in the 2000 Census was about 0.6 percent, or 1,700,000 (Source: U.S. Census Bureau, "Revised A.C.E. Estimates Memorandum Series PP-2," April 4, 2002).

Estimates were derived for the total population, each state of residence, and 75 countries of origin, for each year from 1990 to 2000.

The complete report, *Estimates of the Unauthorized Immigrant Population Residing in the United States: 1990 to 2000*, (available on the DHS website) provides further details of the estimation procedure.

## Limitations of Data

The 2000 Census data for the foreign-born population are based on a sample of the population, and therefore the estimates of the unauthorized resident population in January 2000 are subject to sampling variability. Also, the estimates for some components of the population, primarily the emigration rates, undercount rates, and the size of the resident nonimmigrant population, are subject to other kinds of error. Thus, relatively small differences should be disregarded, and the actual population numbers might be somewhat higher or lower than those shown.

Substantial net internal migration (moves from state to state) of lawful residents after admission could affect the accuracy of the estimates of unauthorized immigration for states. For example, if relatively more lawful residents (who arrived in the 1990s) moved out of California than moved into California in the 1990s, then INS' estimate of lawful residents in California in 2000 would be too high. Consequently, the unauthorized resident population in California would be underestimated.

The effects of net internal migration of lawful residents might be relatively small because: 1) the majority of lawful permanent residents are admitted on the basis of close kinship with U.S. relatives, possibly reducing the probability of subsequent out-of-state moves; and 2) a majority of the lawfully resident population already had a residence in the United States at the time they entered the INS data systems, for example by adjusting from temporary to permanent lawful residence.

The figures used here for the total foreign-born population that entered in 1990 to 1999 are relatively straightforward: they are 2000 Census counts of the foreign-born population, adjusted for estimated undercount. Estimating the lawfully resident population was considerably more complex. In addition to those admitted for lawful

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permanent residence and refugee arrivals, it was necessary to make reliable estimates for a number of difficult-to-estimate populations, including:

- ◆ nonimmigrant residents (temporary workers, students, *etc.*);
- ◆ unauthorized residents who have pending, and likely to be approved, applications for lawful permanent resident status in the INS processing backlog;
- ◆ asylees and parolees who have work authorization but have not adjusted to lawful permanent resident status; and
- ◆ aliens, mostly from Central American countries, who otherwise would be unauthorized residents but are allowed to remain and work in the United States under various legislative provisions or court rulings.

All of these groups have been included in the legally resident population used to derive the estimates shown here; the total for these groups is nearly 2.1 million. A total of 1.5 million of these were nonimmigrant residents, the first category listed above.

Despite these limitations, the high-quality sets of data used to construct these estimates—detailed data on the foreign-born population from the 2000 Census, along with the INS’ most reliable sets of data—make it likely that the estimates presented here more accurately reflect the actual unauthorized resident population than the relatively higher estimates that were reported following the release of the initial total population count in the 2000 census.