

Apprehensions by the U.S. Border Patrol: 2005–2010

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Apprehension statistics are one of the few indicators of illegal entry into or presence in the United States. This Office of Immigration Statistics Fact Sheet provides information on recent trends in U.S. Border Patrol apprehensions and the gender, age, country of nationality, and geographic location of persons apprehended between 2005 and 2010.¹

Data beginning in 2005 were obtained from the Enforcement Integrated Database (EID) of the Department of Homeland Security (DHS). For prior years, data were obtained from the Performance Analysis System (PAS) of DHS.

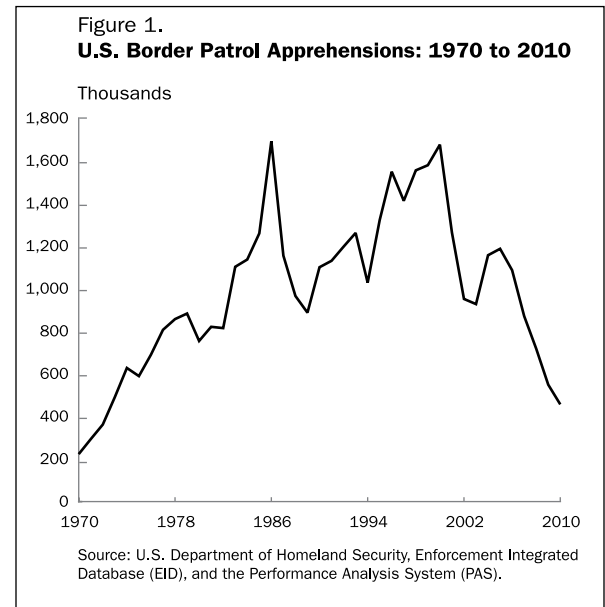
DEFINING BORDER APPREHENSIONS

Apprehension statistics measure the number of foreign nationals who are caught being in the United States illegally. Persons apprehended are subject to removal from the United States for violating the Immigration and Nationality Act. The vast majority of apprehensions, occurring at or near U.S. borders shortly after an illegal entry, are made by the Border Patrol of U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) of DHS. Apprehensions beyond U.S. borders, involving foreign nationals illegally present in the United States who may have entered without inspection (EWI) or entered legally but lost their legal status, are handled primarily by U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) of DHS.

Apprehension data collected by DHS represent events, not individuals. The total number of apprehensions during a specific period will be greater than the total number of unique individuals apprehended because some individuals will have been apprehended more than once. The relationship between the number of border apprehensions to either the number of attempted illegal entries or the number of successful illegal entries is unknown.

OVERALL TREND

The number of Border Patrol apprehensions declined 61 percent from 1,189,000 in 2005 to 463,000 in 2010 (see Figure 1). The decrease in apprehensions between



2005 and 2010 may be due to a number of factors including changes in U.S. economic conditions and border enforcement efforts. Border apprehensions in 2010 were at their lowest level since 1972. Apprehensions previously peaked at 1,676,000 in 2000. The all-time apprehension record was 1,693,000 in 1986 immediately preceding passage of the Immigration Reform and Control Act (IRCA), which allowed the legalization of several million unauthorized immigrants, established sanctions for employers who knowingly hired unauthorized immigrants, and provided for increased border enforcement.

¹ In this report, years refer to fiscal years (October 1 through September 30).



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Table 1.

U.S. Border Patrol Apprehensions by Border, Age, Gender and Leading Country of Nationality: Fiscal Years 2005 to 2010

Characteristic	2010		2009		2008		2007*		2006*		2005*	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Border												
Total	463,382	100.0	556,032	100.0	723,840	100.0	876,803	100.0	1,089,096	100.0	1,189,031	100.0
Southwest	447,731	96.6	540,851	97.3	705,022	97.4	858,737	97.9	1,071,979	98.4	1,171,391	98.5
Coastal	8,220	1.8	8,374	1.5	10,895	1.5	11,687	1.3	10,521	1.0	10,291	0.9
Northern	7,431	1.6	6,807	1.2	7,923	1.1	6,379	0.7	6,596	0.6	7,349	0.6
Gender												
Total	463,382	100.0	556,032	100.0	723,840	100.0	876,803	100.0	1,089,096	100.0	1,189,031	100.0
Male	397,198	85.7	469,994	84.5	606,761	83.8	730,217	83.3	893,380	82.0	969,879	81.6
Female	66,173	14.3	86,023	15.5	117,061	16.2	146,574	16.7	195,699	18.0	219,123	18.4
Unknown	11	—	15	—	18	—	12	—	17	—	29	—
Age												
Total	463,382	100.0	556,032	100.0	723,840	100.0	876,803	100.0	1,089,096	100.0	1,189,031	100.0
17 years and under	31,291	6.8	40,461	7.3	59,578	8.2	77,778	8.9	101,778	9.3	114,222	9.6
18 to 24 years	148,969	32.1	182,740	32.9	257,409	35.6	325,901	37.2	403,320	37.0	442,755	37.2
25 to 34 years	173,763	37.5	205,173	36.9	255,261	35.3	301,002	34.3	377,401	34.7	411,743	34.6
35 to 44 years	82,236	17.7	95,922	17.3	112,941	15.6	127,285	14.5	151,422	13.9	162,069	13.6
45 to 54 years	22,981	5.0	26,668	4.8	32,003	4.4	36,661	4.2	45,001	4.1	47,158	4.0
55 years and over	4,125	0.9	5,029	0.9	6,235	0.9	7,384	0.8	9,093	0.8	9,569	0.8
Unknown	17	—	39	—	413	0.1	792	0.1	1,081	0.1	1,515	0.1
Country of Nationality												
Total	463,382	100.0	556,032	100.0	723,840	100.0	876,803	100.0	1,089,096	100.0	1,189,031	100.0
Mexico	404,365	87.3	503,379	90.5	661,773	91.4	808,773	92.2	981,069	90.1	1,023,888	86.1
Guatemala	18,406	4.0	15,575	2.8	16,395	2.3	17,337	2.0	19,925	1.8	22,594	1.9
El Salvador	13,723	3.0	11,693	2.1	12,684	1.8	14,114	1.6	41,391	3.8	39,309	3.3
Honduras	13,580	2.9	14,630	2.6	19,351	2.7	22,914	2.6	28,709	2.6	52,741	4.4
Ecuador	1,777	0.4	1,313	0.2	1,579	0.2	958	0.1	1,143	0.1	1,343	0.1
Dominican Republic	1,330	0.3	865	0.2	819	0.1	562	0.1	1,023	0.1	1,406	0.1
China, People's Republic	1,157	0.2	1,499	0.3	836	0.1	837	0.1	2,179	0.2	2,200	0.2
Nicaragua	909	0.2	975	0.2	1,467	0.2	1,646	0.2	2,736	0.3	3,921	0.3
Brazil	812	0.2	798	0.1	977	0.1	1,214	0.1	1,460	0.1	31,063	2.6
Cuba	712	0.2	910	0.2	3,351	0.5	4,295	0.5	4,021	0.4	3,263	0.3
Canada	690	0.1	490	0.1	610	0.1	554	0.1	876	0.1	1,020	0.1
All other countries, including unknown	5,921	1.3	3,905	0.7	3,998	0.6	3,599	0.4	4,564	0.4	6,283	0.5

*Data as of November–December 2008.

— Figure rounds to 0.0.

Source: U.S. Department of Homeland Security, Customs and Border Protection (CBP) Office of Border Patrol (OBP). CBP Border Patrol data for 2010 are current as of December 2010, 2009 are current as of December 2009, 2008 are current as of December 2008.

DEMOGRAPHICS

Ninety-seven percent of apprehensions by the Border Patrol in 2010 occurred at the southwest border (see Table 1). The distribution of apprehensions by border location was unchanged between 2005 and 2010. Nearly 86 percent of persons apprehended in 2010 were male, up from 82 percent in 2005. Persons aged 24 and under accounted for 39 percent of all apprehensions in 2010, down from 47 percent in 2005. Foreign nationals aged 25 to 44 accounted for 55 percent of apprehensions in 2010, up from 48 percent in 2005.

Mexican nationals accounted for 87 percent of all apprehensions in 2010, down from 92 percent in 2007 but up from 86 percent in 2005. The next leading countries of nationality were Honduras, El

Salvador, and Guatemala. Together, these four countries accounted for 98 percent of all Border Patrol apprehensions from 2005 to 2010. Between 2005 and 2008, the percentage of persons apprehended from Honduras, El Salvador, and Brazil declined substantially, reflecting the end of “catch and release,” the practice of apprehending non-Mexican illegal aliens and releasing them on their own recognizance pending a removal hearing.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

For more information about immigration and immigration statistics, visit the Department of Homeland Security web site at <http://www.dhs.gov/immigrationstatistics>.