

## **Executive Summary**

### **Estimates of the Unauthorized Immigrant Population Residing in the United States: 1990 to 2000 January 31, 2003**

#### **Summary**

The INS estimates that 7.0 million unauthorized immigrants resided in the United States in January 2000. The total population estimate is somewhat higher than INS' previous estimate. In its last set of estimates, INS estimated the population to be 5.0 million in October 1996; the new estimates produced a total of about 5.8 million for the same date. Estimated annual population growth was variable in the 1990s; on average, however, the population grew by about 350,000 per year from 1990 to 1999, about 75,000 higher than INS' previous annual estimate of 275,000 for the 1990s.

In addition to the total population, estimates were compiled for each State of residence and for 75 countries of origin. As expected, California is estimated to have the most unauthorized residents in January 2000, about 2.2 million, or 32 percent of the national total. The States with the largest numerical increases in unauthorized population in the 1990s were California, Texas, Illinois, Arizona, Georgia, and North Carolina.

Mexico is the largest source country for unauthorized immigration to the United States. The estimated unauthorized resident population from Mexico increased from about 2.0 million in 1990 to 4.8 million in January 2000. Mexico's share of the total unauthorized resident population increased from 58 percent in 1990 to 69 percent in 2000. In addition to Mexico, six countries had more than 100,000 unauthorized residents in the United States in January 2000 -- El Salvador, Guatemala, Colombia, Honduras, China, and Ecuador.

The new estimates are based primarily on the foreign-born population counted in the 2000 Census and annual INS statistics (immigrants admitted, deportable aliens removed, and nonimmigrant residents admitted).

#### **Comparison of these estimates with other estimates**

- *INS' previous estimates.* The main reason that the new total is higher than INS' previous estimates is that the 2000 Census counted relatively more illegal Mexican residents than the smaller sample surveys that INS used to make the earlier estimates for Mexico. The 2000 Census data are more complete and reliable because of the national scope of the data collection, the vastly larger sample size, and the extensive preparation and follow-up activities involved in conducting the decennial census.
- *Census Bureau.* In 2001 the Census Bureau issued a report on the residual foreign-born population as of April 2000, estimating that the population totaled 8.7 million. Their report uses different assumptions and includes 1.7 million quasi-legal migrants—aliens who maintain a bona fide (legal) migrant status in the United States.

## Overall approach and scope of the estimates

- The first step 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 INS to have been missed in the 2000 Census<sup>1</sup>).
- Next, 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, INS includes aliens admitted for lawful permanent residence (LPRs), refugees, and long-term nonimmigrant residents. In addition, INS' legal population includes refugees, asylees, and parolees who have work authorization but have not adjusted to LPR status; 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.
- 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*, is available on the INS website.

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<sup>1</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).