

OHSS Estimate of Unauthorized Spouses of U.S. Citizens: Assumptions

The OHSS estimate of the total unauthorized population as of Jan 1, 2022 is explained in detail in the public-facing Unauthorized Immigrant Population Estimate.¹

To generate Table 2, “Estimates of the Unauthorized Immigrant Population on Jan. 1, 2022, Who Were Married to a USC”:

- OHSS used its published estimate of the unauthorized population to generate assumptions about the total unauthorized population by citizenship and time in the United States:

	Total	10+ years	8+ years	5+ years
Overall	10,990,000	9,340,000	9,880,000	10,630,000
Mexico	4,810,000	4,320,000	4,420,000	4,550,000
NCA	2,020,000	1,210,000	1,310,000	1,570,000
Other W. Hem	1,970,000	1,290,000	1,410,000	1,630,000
Eastern Hem.	2,180,000	1,850,000	1,960,000	2,110,000

- OHSS applied estimates of the breakout between entries without inspection (EWIs) and overstayers (OS) by citizenship:

	Low EWI Estimates		High EWI Estimates	
	EWI %	OS%	EWI %	OS%
Mexico	55%	45%	75%	25%
NCA	70%	30%	90%	10%
Other W. Hem	40%	60%	60%	40%
Eastern Hem.	2%	98%	10%	90%

- OHSS estimated rates of marriage to U.S. citizens by citizenship and EWI vs OS status:

	Low Marriage Estimates		High Marriage Estimates	
	EWI %	OS%	EWI %	OS%
Mexico	8%	0%	14%	5%
NCA	8%	0%	12%	5%
Other W. Hem	8%	0%	12%	5%
Eastern Hem.	8%	0%	12%	5%

- OHSS multiplied high and low assumptions for EWI vs overstayer and marriage rates by the total unauthorized population to generate high- and low-end estimates of numbers of spouses married to U.S. citizens by citizenship and EWI status (table 2). The high estimate of 12% for most countries comes from MPI’s estimate of 12% of unauthorized immigrants being married to

¹ U.S. Dep’t of Homeland Security, Office of Homeland Security Statistics (OHSS), *Estimates of the Unauthorized Immigrant Population Residing in the United States* (May 7, 2024), <https://www.dhs.gov/ohss/topics/immigration/population-estimates/unauthorized-resident>.

USC.² OHSS treats MPI's estimate as the high-end of our modeling range because more highly assimilated immigrants (such as those married to a USC) are likely to be overrepresented in the American Community Survey (which is the basis for MPI's estimate) relative to less highly assimilated immigrants. OHSS further assumed that Mexican nationals are married at slightly higher rates than nationals of other countries because unauthorized immigrants from Mexico from 10 or more years ago were more likely to have arrived as single adults (as opposed to single parents with young, minor children) than unauthorized immigrants from other countries.

- OHSS used the mid-point of high- and low- end assumptions to generate Table 3 (point estimates for the population estimated in Table 2).
- OHSS made assumptions about average the number of U.S. citizen and undocumented children per marriage based on a weighted average of fertility rates in migrants' countries of citizenship during the period of their migration to the United States. Based on UN fertility data for Mexico³ (which was similar to other source countries during the period under consideration), OHSS assumed a total of 2.3 children per marriage. OHSS further assumes that about 95 percent of children of mixed status marriages are born in the U.S. (i.e., are the birth children of the mixed-status couple) and that about 5 percent enter with the unauthorized spouse (i.e., are the stepchildren of the U.S. citizen spouse).⁴ This yields an estimate of 2.2 U.S. citizen children and 0.1 unauthorized immigrant children per family. OHSS multiplied these child-per-family rates by the number of mixed status families to generate the top two rows of Table 4. The bottom row of table 4 also adds in the U.S. citizen spouses to generate the total number of U.S. citizens in mixed-status families.
- OHSS used detailed estimates of the total unauthorized population by year of entry (based on Census ACS data and the residual methodology as described in its published unauthorized population estimate) to calculate average years since entry/average years of presence for the total unauthorized population and the population that has been present at least 10 years (Table 5).

² Migration Policy Institute, *Profile of the Unauthorized Population: United States*, <https://www.migrationpolicy.org/data/unauthorized-immigrant-population/state/US> (last visited June 17, 2024).

³Source: World Population Prospects: The 2022 Revision | United Nations Population Division, *Total fertility rate (live births per woman)*, <https://data.un.org/Data.aspx?q=mexico&d=PopDiv&f=variableID%3a54%3bcrID%3a484> (last visited June 17, 2024).

⁴ The estimate of 5% is the midpoint of the OHSS estimated range of 0 to 10 percent, which was based on the rarity 10 or more years ago of unauthorized immigrants arriving with young, minor children. The phenomenon was so rare that CBP only began tracking them in 2012, at which time they were only 3% of all SWB encounters.

Table 1: Estimated Unauthorized Immigrant Population as of Jan. 1, 2022

Total	10,990,000
Mexico	4,810,000
N. Central America	2,020,000
Other W. Hemisphere	1,970,000
E. Hemisphere	2,180,000

Table 2: Estimates of the Unauthorized Immigrant Population on Jan. 1, 2022, Who Were Married to a USC, by Number of Years in the United States, Country, and Method of Entry, (low and high estimates)

	>10 years		>8 years		>5 years		Total	
	low	high	low	high	low	high	low	high
<u>EWIs only</u>								
Total	300,000	700,000	320,000	730,000	340,000	790,000	390,000	890,000
Mexico	190,000	450,000	190,000	460,000	200,000	480,000	210,000	510,000
N. Central America	70,000	130,000	70,000	140,000	90,000	170,000	110,000	220,000
Other W. Hemisphere	40,000	90,000	50,000	100,000	50,000	120,000	60,000	140,000
E. Hemisphere	0	20,000	0	20,000	0	30,000	0	30,000
<u>Overstayers only</u>								
Total	0	170,000	0	180,000	0	190,000	0	210,000
Mexico	0	50,000	0	60,000	0	60,000	0	60,000
N. Central America	0	10,000	0	10,000	0	10,000	0	10,000
Other W. Hemisphere	0	30,000	0	30,000	0	30,000	0	40,000
E. Hemisphere	0	80,000	0	90,000	0	90,000	0	100,000
<u>Total</u>								
Total	300,000	870,000	320,000	910,000	340,000	980,000	390,000	1,100,000
Mexico	190,000	510,000	190,000	520,000	200,000	540,000	210,000	570,000
N. Central America	70,000	140,000	70,000	150,000	90,000	180,000	110,000	230,000
Other W. Hemisphere	40,000	120,000	50,000	130,000	50,000	150,000	60,000	180,000
E. Hemisphere	0	110,000	0	110,000	0	120,000	0	120,000

Table 3: Estimates of the Unauthorized Immigrant Population on Jan. 1, 2022, Who Were Married to a USC, by Number of Years in the United States, Country, and Method of Entry, (point estimates)

	> 10 years	> 8 years	> 5 years	Total
<u>EWIs only</u>				
Total	500,000	525,000	565,000	640,000
Mexico	320,000	325,000	340,000	360,000
N. Central America	100,000	105,000	130,000	165,000
Other W. Hemisphere	65,000	75,000	85,000	100,000
E. Hemisphere	10,000	10,000	15,000	15,000
<u>Overstayers only</u>				
Total	85,000	90,000	95,000	105,000
Mexico	25,000	30,000	30,000	30,000
N. Central America	5,000	5,000	5,000	5,000
Other W. Hemisphere	15,000	15,000	15,000	20,000
E. Hemisphere	40,000	45,000	45,000	50,000
<u>Total</u>				
Total	585,000	615,000	660,000	745,000
Mexico	350,000	355,000	370,000	390,000
N. Central America	105,000	110,000	135,000	170,000
Other W. Hemisphere	80,000	90,000	100,000	120,000
E. Hemisphere	55,000	55,000	60,000	60,000

Table 4: Estimates of USC Family Members Residing with Unauthorized Noncitizens

	<u>>10 years</u>		<u>Total</u>	
	EWI	Total	EWI	Total
# of USC children	1,100,000	1,290,000	1,410,000	1,640,000
# of undoc children	50,000	60,000	60,000	70,000
total # of USCs in mixed-status families	1,650,000	1,940,000	2,050,000	2,390,000

Table 5: Noncitizen Spouses' Average Length of Presence in the United States

All	> 10 years
20 years	23 years