

A Review of the Declining Numbers of Visa Overstays in the U.S. from 2000 to 2009

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Introduction

This short paper draws from a recent report titled *Unauthorized Immigration to the United States: Annual Estimates and Components of Change, by State, 1990 to 2010* (Warren and Warren, 2013): <http://cmsny.org/2013/02/15/center-for-migration-studies-cms-releases-important-new-study-on-unauthorized-immigrants-in-the-united-states/>.

The earlier report found a decline in “arrivals” or “inflows” into the unauthorized population in every state except Mississippi (and Washington, D.C.) from 2000 to 2009. Table 1 presents estimates from that report of the number of unauthorized immigrants that moved to the United States and selected states from 2000 through 2009. The steep decline in arrivals, accompanied by gradually increasing numbers of departures² from the unauthorized immigrant population, led to zero population growth by the end of the decade.

Table 1. Estimated Arrivals of Unauthorized Immigrants, Selected States: 2000 to 2009

(In thousands) *The graphs on the following pages separate these arrivals into EWIs and overstays.*

Yr of entry	U.S.	CA	TX	FL	NY	IL	NJ	AZ	Other
Total,									
2000-2009	8,036	1,726	1,143	742	411	330	290	162	3,231
2000	1,389	277	182	132	101	69	59	30	539
2001	1,146	227	154	111	76	56	45	25	453
2002	906	188	122	90	54	42	31	19	361
2003	779	177	105	75	42	29	22	16	314
2004	813	197	118	71	35	26	25	16	325
2005	873	219	130	74	30	32	33	17	338
2006	749	190	113	58	25	27	29	12	294
2007	558	130	92	37	22	19	19	7	233
2008	439	77	73	39	18	17	14	8	193
2009	384	44	55	56	8	14	13	12	181
Percent change, 2000-2009	-72%	-84%	-70%	-58%	-92%	-79%	-77%	-60%	-66%

Source: Warren and Warren (2013), Appendix table 3.

While estimates of total arrivals are important for understanding overall trends, information about unauthorized immigrants’ mode of arrival can help to inform U.S. policy discussions on immigration enforcement, legalization of the unauthorized and reform of the legal immigration system. This paper examines the degree to which the drop in arrivals was due to a reduction in illegal entries or entries without inspection (EWIs), versus to reduced numbers that entered

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² Unauthorized immigrants can leave the population in four ways: voluntary emigration, removal by DHS, adjustment to lawful status, or death. Annual estimates for 1990 to 2009 are shown in Warren and Warren (2013).

legally on temporary visas and “overstayed” their permitted duration of admission.³ The trends in arrivals of EWIs and overstays set forth in this paper for the largest states provide significant new information about patterns of unauthorized immigration to the United States.

Overview of the methodology

As noted, the earlier report estimated the annual number of unauthorized immigrants that arrived in the United States in 1990 to 2009, by state of residence. *This* paper breaks down the estimated arrivals in the 2000 to 2009 period between EWIs and overstays. The estimates presented here focus on the 2000 to 2009 period because of significant interest by policymakers in recent trends and because data are available to make estimates for those years.

No direct information is available about either EWIs or overstays. However, the authors were able to estimate annual EWI arrivals in each state by: (1) estimating arrivals of unauthorized immigrants from Mexico, El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras⁴ using the data sources, methods, and assumptions described in Warren and Warren (2013); and, (2) adjusting the results so that they represent the *entire* EWI population (details in Appendix). The authors then estimated the number of overstays by subtracting EWI arrivals from total arrivals by state of residence. The trends by type of arrival shown in this paper are not very sensitive to alternative assumptions, particularly for larger states, and hardly at all for the national breakdown of EWIs and overstays.

Major findings

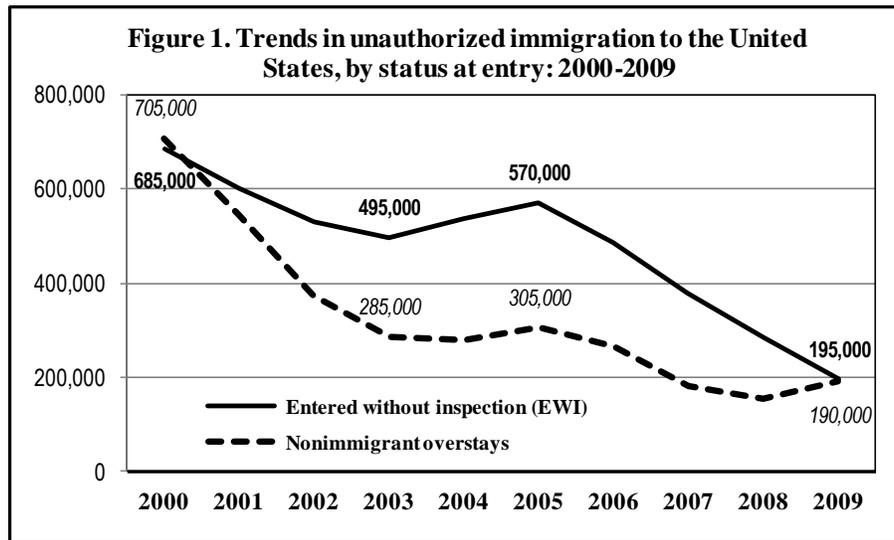
- The events of 9/11 and the subsequent increase in security-related measures dramatically reduced **overstays** in 2001-2004, and they remained at relatively lower levels after 2004;
- The drop in **overstays** in 2000-2004 in New York, New Jersey, and Connecticut *combined* was striking – in just four years, overstays dropped from 143,000 to 22,000;
- After 2005, **EWIs** dropped rapidly every year in nearly every state; in California, EWI arrivals fell by 77 percent, from 135,000 to 31,000 in 2005-2009.
- Over the decade, **overstays** dropped by 78 percent in the 15 states that had the most overstays in 2000; **EWIs** dropped by 74 percent in the 15 states that had the most EWIs in 2000.
- In 2000, 15 states received 10,000 or more **overstays**; in 2009, only Florida (44,000), Texas (16,000), and California (13,000) received 10,000 or more.

³ Overstays, or nonimmigrant overstays, are foreign-born persons such as tourists, temporary workers, students, and others that are admitted legally on a temporary basis but fail to depart or otherwise violate their terms of admission.

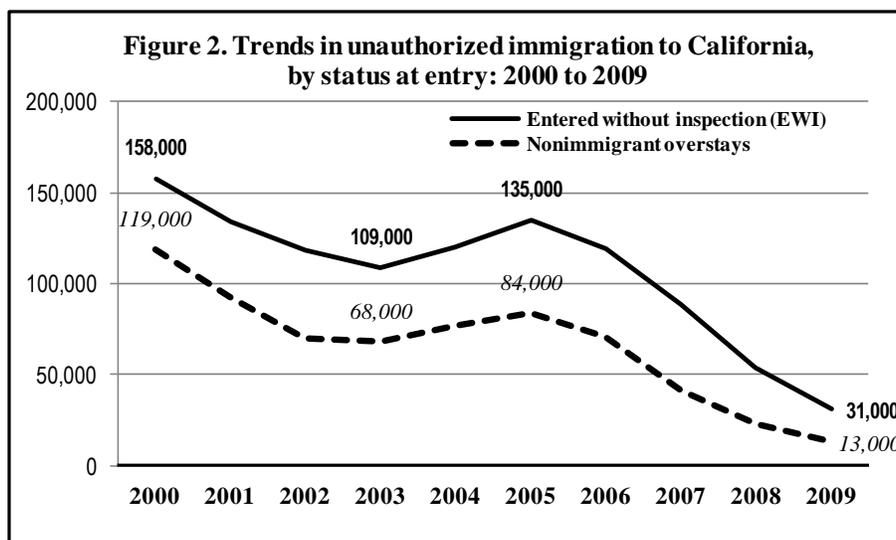
⁴ Estimates of unauthorized immigration from Mexico, El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras were chosen to represent EWIs based on two sets of data: (1) EWIs from these four countries were estimated to be 93 percent of the 2.94 million EWI population estimated in Warren (1997); and (2) From 2005 to 2009, 98 percent of all apprehensions by the U.S. Border Patrol were from these four countries, as reported by DHS in Sapp (2011).

Results for the U.S. and selected states

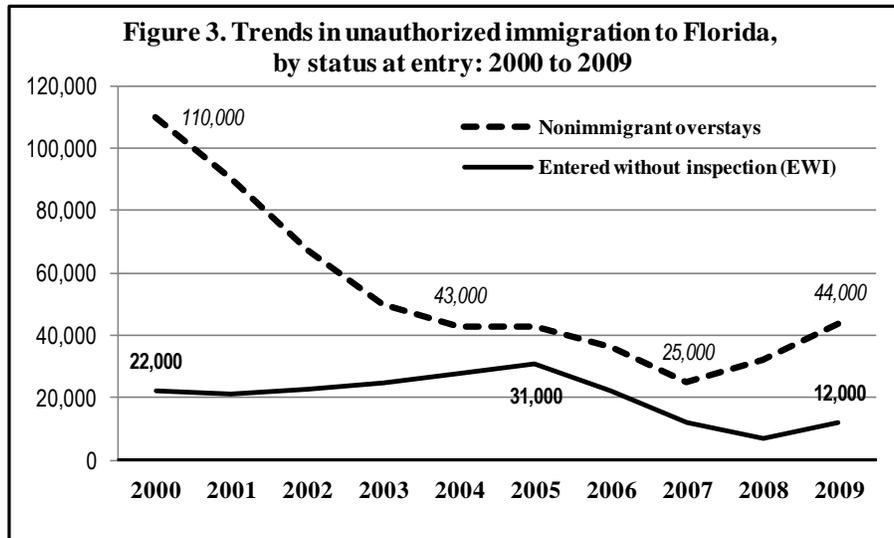
Total U.S. As figure 1 shows, total nonimmigrant overstays to the United States dropped from 705,000 to 190,000, or about 73%, over the decade. The largest drop in overstays was in the first few years after 9/11. EWIs also dropped in those years, increased by about 15% from 2003 to 2005, and then fell by two thirds from 2005 to 2009. Note that EWIs declined in *every year* after 2005, not just during the economic crisis in 2008 and 2009.



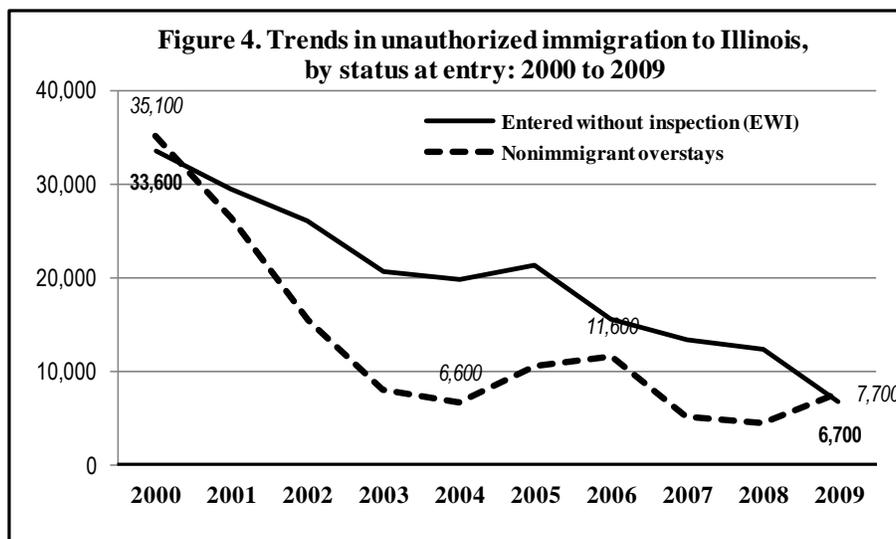
California had more EWIs than overstays throughout the decade (figure 2). The drop in the both overstays and EWIs arriving in California over this 10-year period is especially noteworthy – overstays fell by 89 percent and EWIs by 80 percent. Overstays and EWIs dropped sharply in 2000-2003, increased in 2004-2005, and fell by 85 percent and 77 percent, respectively, in 2005-2009.



Florida. Nonimmigrant overstays fell rapidly in Florida, from 110,000 to 43,000 in 2000-2004 (Figure 3). Overstays continued to drop, to 25,000 in 2007, and then increased to 44,000 in 2009.⁵ EWIs arriving in Florida declined by 61% from 2005 to 2009, falling from 31,000 to 12,000.

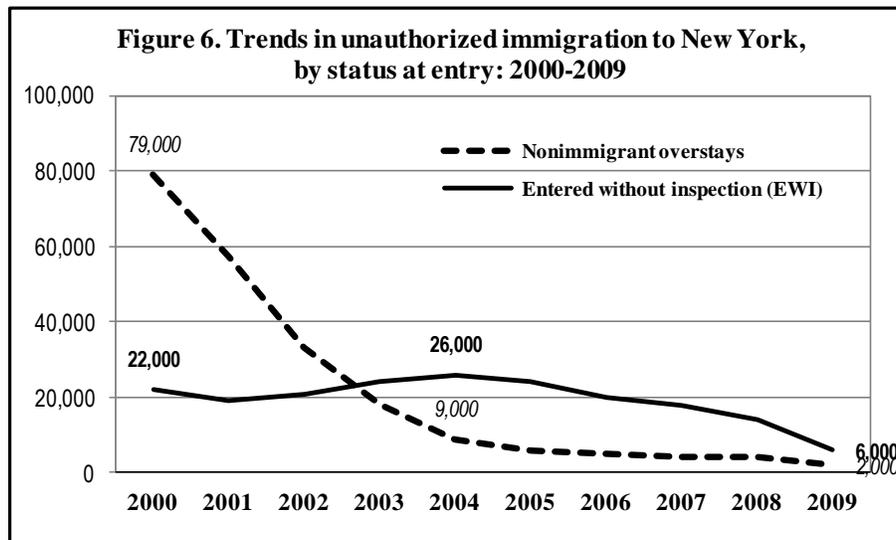
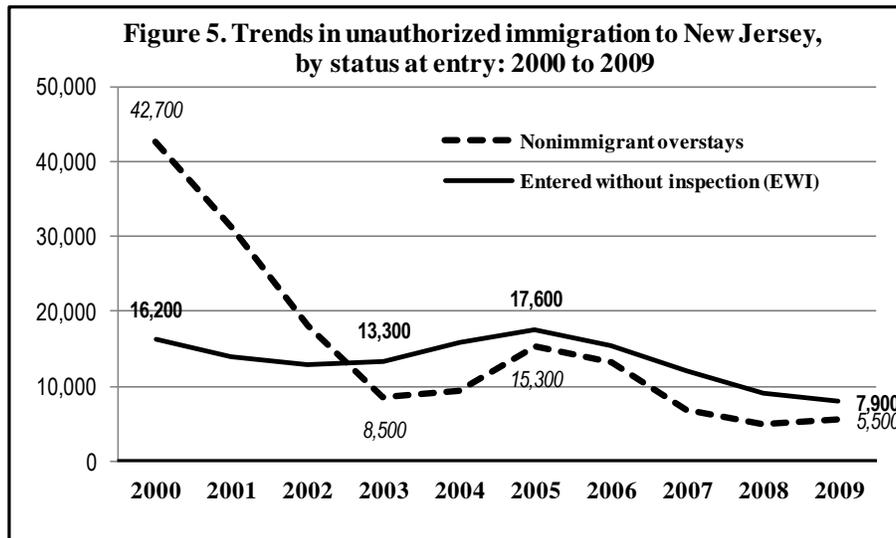


Illinois. As with the other large states, the number of overstays going to Illinois declined rapidly in the 2000 to 2004 period, falling from 35,000 in 2000 to only 7,000 in 2004 (Figure 4). Over the entire decade, the number of EWIs going to Illinois dropped from 34,000 to 7,000.

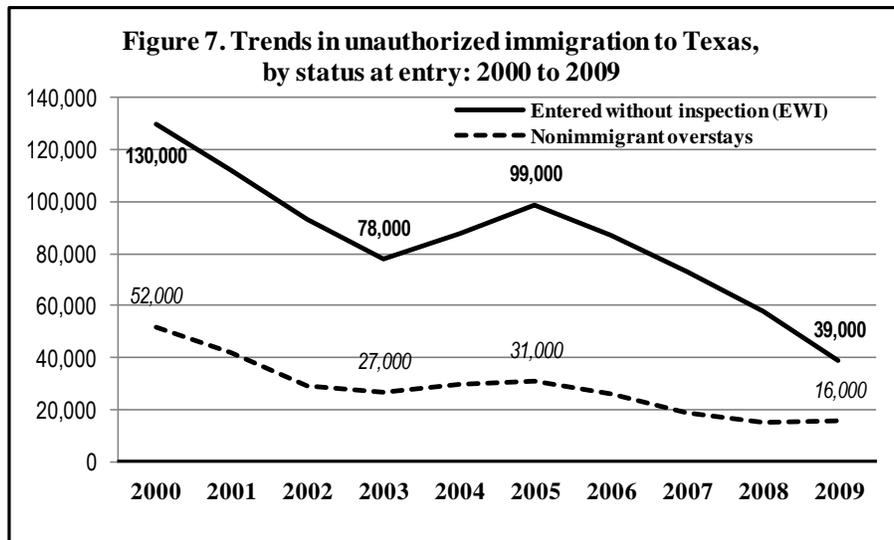


⁵ The apparent increases in overstays arriving in Florida in 2008 and 2009, shown in figure 3, are mostly the result of incomplete statistics used in Warren and Warren (2013) to estimate total arrivals to Florida in 2008 and 2009. That is, some recently arrived refugees and parolees (about 27,000 arrive in Florida each year) were incorrectly classified as unauthorized immigrants, as described in the paper, because the necessary data were not available to add them to the legally resident population. See Warren and Warren (2013).

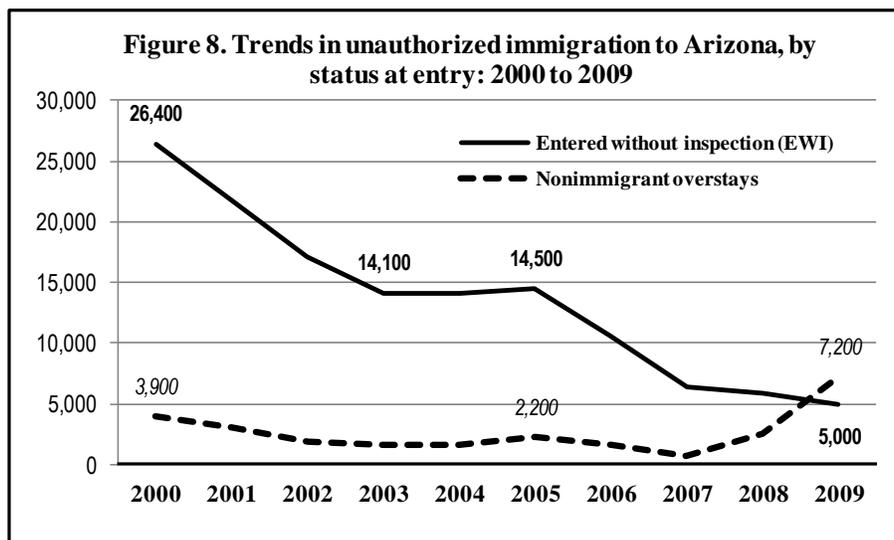
New Jersey and New York. Figures 5 and 6 below for New Jersey and New York show the dramatic decline in the number of overstays after 2000. It is doubtful that any event or set of events other than 9/11 could explain the approximately 75% drop in just three years in both states. Notice, also, that in both states the number of overstays remained at low levels after the big drop in 2000 to 2003. This has implications for current policy discussions: It is possible that the additional immigration-related security measures put in place after 9/11 have fundamentally reduced the level of nonimmigrant overstays to this country.



Texas. EWIs declined by 70% in Texas over the decade, falling from 130,000 in 2000 to 39,000 in 2009 (figure 7). Overstays dropped by almost half in 2000-2003, increased by 15% in 2003-2005, and then declined by almost 50% in 2005-2009.



Arizona. The number of EWIs arriving in Arizona fell from 26,000 to 14,000 in 2000-2003, remained constant at about 14,000 until 2005, and then dropped by two thirds, to just 5,000 in 2009 (figure 8). A few thousand overstays arrived in Arizona each year during the decade. From 2008 to 2009, estimated overstays increased by almost 5,000. Not enough information is available to explain the apparent increased in overstays in Arizona in 2009.⁶



⁶ The largest *increases* in foreign-born residents living in Arizona (in the 2010 ACS) were from three countries: Korea (2,000 more arrived in 2009 than in 2008); China (+1,600); and Canada (+1,100). Data are not available to determine whether these increases from 2008 to 2009 were the result of some or all of the following (a) internal migration; (b) an increase in lawful nonimmigrants; (c) overstays; or (d) random error. Also, see footnote 5.

Appendix: Estimation of EWIs and Overstays

Estimated unauthorized immigrants arriving in each state, from Warren and Warren (2013), were separated into overstays and EWIs in three steps. First, estimates of total arrivals were derived for four countries – Mexico, El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras – as described in detail in steps 1 to 4 below. Second, the estimates of unauthorized arrivals from those four countries were adjusted to represent *all* EWIs, as described in step 5 below. Third, estimates of annual overstays for each state were derived by subtracting EWI arrivals from total arrivals.

Estimating EWI arrivals

The primary steps in estimating EWI arrivals for each state for 2000 to 2009 were as follows.

1. The estimation procedure began with 2010 ACS data on foreign-born arrivals from Mexico, El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras, by state, for 2000 to 2009.
2. Next, we estimated the *counted* legally resident population from these four countries using DHS data on admissions of lawful permanent residents (LPRs). Adjustments were made: (a) to ensure that only those LPRs that entered in 2000-2009 were included; (b) to account for deaths and emigration from entry to 2010; and (c) to add lawful nonimmigrant residents, based partly on statistics shown in Baker (2012). In general these estimates were made following the procedures described in Warren and Warren (2013).
3. To estimate the number of unauthorized immigrants that arrived from these four countries in 2000-2009, we: (a) subtracted (2) from (1) to obtain the number counted in the 2010 ACS; and (b) adjusted the residual for undercount. The undercount rates were the ones used in Warren and Warren (2013).
4. Next, we “revived” each cohort from 2010 to its year of entry using ratios derived from data for California and Texas in tables equivalent to table 1 in Warren and Warren (2013). That is, the data for California and Texas (the largest EWI states) were combined, and ratios (column 16 divided by column 5) were computed. These ratios were used to “revive” each cohort from 2010 to its year of entry (see columns 5 and 16 in table 1 and the text in Warren and Warren (2013)).
5. Finally, the estimates derived thus far were adjusted to take account of the fact that: (a) a small percentage of EWIs come from countries other than the four listed above; and (b) some of the unauthorized immigrants from the four countries are overstays rather than EWIs.⁷ The adjustment factor is based on statistics on overstays and EWIs, by country of origin, from Warren (1997).⁸ Multiplying total unauthorized arrivals from Mexico, El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras by the adjustment factor of .9 produces estimates of EWIs for all countries.

⁷ In Warren (1997), 17% of all unauthorized immigrants from Mexico, El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras were estimated to be overstays. For reasons related to the provisions of the Immigration Reform and Control Act of 1986 (a relatively higher proportion of EWI than overstays were legalized), this percent was higher than it would have been in the 2000-2009 decade.

⁸ In Warren (1997), total unauthorized immigrants from Mexico, El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras were estimated to be 3,291,000. Total EWIs in that report were estimated to be 2,940,000. Multiplying total unauthorized immigrants from the four countries (3,291,000) by .89345 produces the estimate of 2,940,000 EWIs from all countries. The adjustment factor (.89345) was rounded to .9 for converting our estimates of total unauthorized immigrants from the four countries into estimates of EWIs that represent *all* countries.

References.

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