

U.S. Nonimmigrant Admissions: 2018

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Nonimmigrants are foreign nationals granted temporary admission to the United States. The major purposes for which nonimmigrant admissions are authorized include temporary visits for business or pleasure, academic or vocational study, temporary employment, and to act as a representative of a foreign government or international organization, among others. The U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS) collects information regarding nonimmigrant admissions at ports of entry and from DHS Form I-94/I-94W arrival records. The 2018 U.S. Nonimmigrant Admissions Annual Flow Report, authored by the DHS Office of Immigration Statistics (OIS), presents workload information on total nonimmigrant admissions and detailed data gathered from Form I-94/I-94W arrival records on the number and characteristics of nonimmigrant admissions to the United States in 2018.^{1,2}

SUMMARY

During 2018, DHS granted a total of more than 186 million nonimmigrant admissions (up 2.8 percent from 2017) to the United States, according to DHS workload estimates (Figure 1).³ These admissions included about 105 million travelers for business and pleasure from Canada and Mexico (up 1.4 percent from 2017), who were exempted from filling out I-94/I-94W forms, and about 81 million nonimmigrants who were issued Form I-94/I-94W (up 4.7 percent from 2017)—the primary focus of this report.⁴ About 90 percent of I-94/I-94W admissions were temporary visitors for business and pleasure, 4.8 percent were temporary workers and their families, and 2.4 percent were students and their families. The leading countries of citizenship for I-94/I-94W admissions were Mexico (26 percent), Canada (17 percent), the United Kingdom (6.4 percent), Japan (4.7 percent), and the People’s Republic of China (China) (4.2 percent)—all virtually unchanged from 2017.

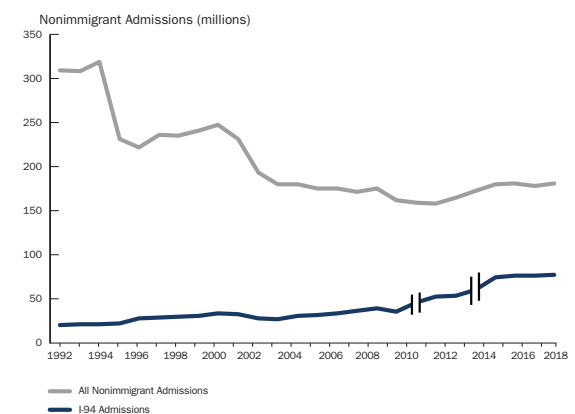
NONIMMIGRANT DEFINITION, PROCESS, AND REQUIREMENTS

Defining “Nonimmigrant”

Nonimmigrants are foreign nationals admitted temporarily to the United States within classes of admission defined in section 101(a)(15) of the Immigration and Nationality Act (INA).⁵ Examples of nonimmigrant classes of admission include foreign government officials, temporary visitors for business and pleasure, aliens in transit, treaty traders and investors, academic and vocational students, temporary workers, exchange visitors, athletes and entertainers, and

¹ In this report, years refer to fiscal years, which run from October 1 to September 30.
² Additional context may be found in the 2018 Yearbook of Immigration Statistics, available at <https://www.dhs.gov/immigration-statistics/yearbook/2018>, and other OIS reports.
³ DHS, U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP), Operations Management Reporting, FY 2018.
⁴ The I-94/I-94W data do not describe all nonimmigrant admissions because certain visitors are not required to fill out the I-94 form, including a large share of Mexican and Canadian business and tourist travelers, as discussed elsewhere in this report. Current DHS data systems limit this report to describing the I-94/I-94W populations, but OIS is working to describe characteristics of all nonimmigrant admissions in future reports.
⁵ Three nonimmigrant classes are authorized in sections other than INA § 101(a)(15). They include: 1) North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) nonimmigrants; 2) Nationals of the Freely Associated States admitted under the Compacts of Free Association between the United States and the Republic of the Marshall Islands, the Federated States of Micronesia, and Pala; and 3) The Agreement between the Government of the United States of America and the Government of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics Concerning Mutual Visits by Inhabitants of the Bering Straits Region.

Figure 1.
Nonimmigrant Admissions: Fiscal Years 1992 to 2018



Note: There are two major breaks in the I-94 data. Beginning in 2010, changes in the recording of admissions at the land ports increased I-94 admission counts. Beginning in 2013, I-94 automation at air and sea ports increased the number of admissions recorded in the I-94 data.

Source: U.S. Department of Homeland Security.



Homeland Security

Office of Immigration Statistics
 OFFICE OF STRATEGY, POLICY, AND PLANS

Box 1.

Nonimmigrant Admissions vs. Estimated Nonimmigrant Individuals vs. Nonimmigrant Visas Issued

This report covers admission events in 2018, not the number of individuals who entered the United States, nor the number of visas issued. Many nonimmigrants are admitted to the United States more than once in a year, and each entry is recorded separately and issued a new I-94/I-94W document at arrival. As a result, the count of admission events exceed the number of individuals arriving. For more information, see OIS Fact Sheet, *Nonimmigrant Admissions and Estimated Nonimmigrant Individuals: 2016*.⁶ Admission numbers also differ from the number of nonimmigrant visas issued by the U.S. Department of State (DOS) for the following reasons: (1) a citizen from a country participating in the U.S. Visa Waiver Program (VWP) may travel to the United States without a visa; (2) a visa recipient may be admitted to the United States more than once on each visa, as is the case with many nonimmigrants; and, (3) a visa recipient may decide not to travel or decide to travel during the following fiscal year (subject to the validity of the visa).

victims of certain crimes. Unlike individuals granted lawful permanent residence (LPR), or “green card” status, nonimmigrants are authorized to enter the country for specific purposes and limited periods of time. Nonimmigrants’ duration of stay and the scope of their lawful activities, such as employment, travel, and accompaniment by dependents, are governed by their respective classes of admission.

I-94 Nonimmigrants

The remainder of this report focuses exclusively on nonimmigrants who fill out paper and electronic Forms I-94/I-94W, which CBP collects from most classes of nonimmigrants arriving in the United States. Information collected from these I-94 records includes arrival and departure dates, port of entry (POE), class of admission, country of citizenship, state of destination, age, and sex. The I-94 data do not describe all nonimmigrant admissions because certain visitors are not required to fill out the I-94 form. Specific information regarding the I-94 form is located at the end of this report.

Process

Nonimmigrants traveling to the United States can apply for a visa through U.S. embassies or consulates, or they may apply under the VWP if they are a citizen of one of the 38 countries participating in that program.⁷ When arriving in the United States, nonimmigrants must show valid travel documents as part of the entry process. CBP officers at POEs conduct arrival inspections and determine who may enter using the same criteria for all foreign nationals visiting the United States.

Eligibility

To qualify for admission in a nonimmigrant status, a foreign national generally must:

1. establish that the visit will be temporary;
2. agree to depart at the end of the authorized stay;
3. possess a valid passport;
4. maintain a foreign residence (in most cases);

5. be admissible to the United States or have been granted a waiver for any grounds of inadmissibility; and

6. agree to abide by the terms and conditions of admission.

In general, nonimmigrants must acquire a visa or other form of authorization abroad prior to traveling to the United States, with the specific requirements determined by a foreign national’s country of citizenship and the conditions of their visit, as discussed below. Yet possession of a valid travel document does not guarantee admission. Rather, CBP officers at POEs make the final determination whether a nonimmigrant may enter the United States and the authorized duration of stay.

Document Requirements

Visa Required. Most classes of nonimmigrants are required to obtain a visa to enter the United States. In these cases, foreign nationals must fill out an *Online Nonimmigrant Visa Application*, Form DS-160, or a *Nonimmigrant Visa Application*, Form DS-156. In addition, applicants aged 14 to 79 years generally are required to visit a U.S. embassy or consulate and be interviewed by a consular official.

U.S. Visa Waiver Program. The VWP, administered by DHS in consultation with DOS, permits nationals of designated countries to travel to the United States as tourists or business travelers without a visa for periods not to exceed 90 days. Qualified nationals of VWP countries must be admissible to the United States and not have violated the terms of any previous admission under the VWP, possess a valid machine-readable passport, travel on an approved carrier and possess a round trip ticket if arriving by air or sea, and obtain travel authorization through the Electronic System for Travel Authorization (ESTA). VWP travelers also waive their right to contest an immigration officer’s determination of admissibility and their right to contest removal, other than on the basis of an application for asylum. Nationals of VWP countries traveling to the United States for a purpose other than tourism or business or whose stay will exceed 90 days must obtain a visa.⁸

Mexican Tourist and Business Admissions. Mexican citizens residing in Mexico who meet the requirements for a B1/B2 visa (temporary visitor for business or pleasure), who have a valid Mexican passport, and who demonstrate that they will return to

⁶ Available at <https://www.dhs.gov/immigration-statistics/factsheets>.

⁷ A full list of VWP countries and requirements is available at <https://www.dhs.gov/visa-waiver-program-requirements>.

⁸ See <https://www.dhs.gov/visa-waiver-program> for additional details on the VWP.

Table 1.

Nonimmigrant Admissions (I-94/I-94W only) by Class of Admission: Fiscal Years 2016 to 2018

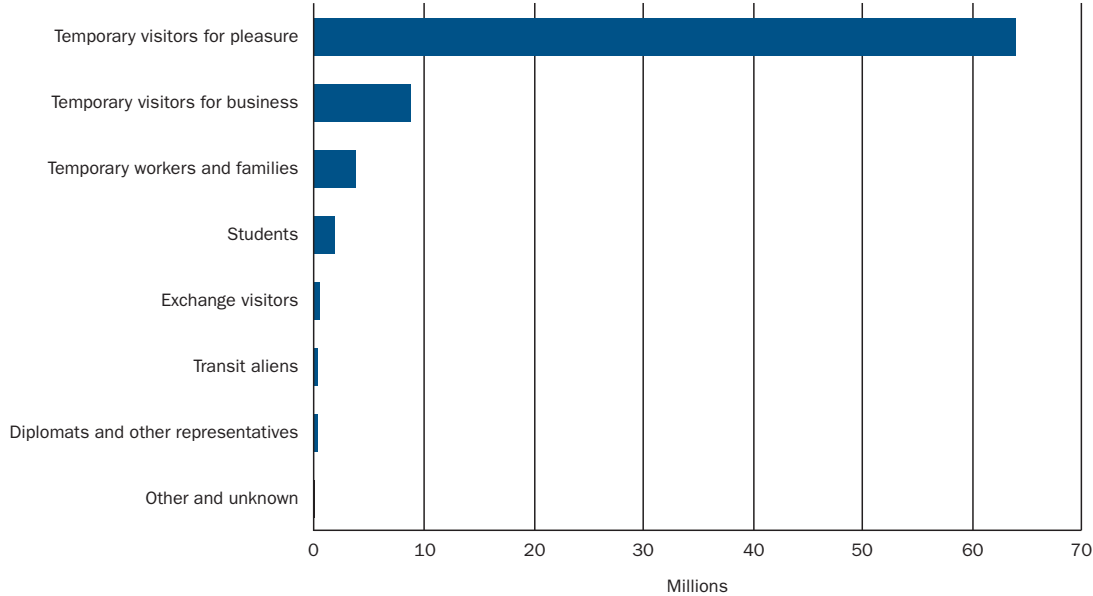
Class of admission	2016		2017		2018	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Total	77,112,073	100.0	77,643,267	100.0	81,279,692	100.0
Temporary workers and families	3,937,765	5.1	3,969,276	5.1	3,919,567	4.8
Temporary workers and trainees	2,445,854	3.2	2,447,014	3.2	2,378,940	2.9
Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands (CNMI)-only transitional workers (CW1)	7,830	-	8,154	-	4,743	-
Workers in specialty occupations (H1B)	542,621	0.7	531,280	0.7	570,368	0.7
Chile and Singapore Free Trade Agreement aliens (H1B1)	275	-	452	-	581	-
Registered nurses participating in the Nursing Relief for Disadvantaged Areas (H1C)	8	-	97	-	66	-
Agricultural workers (H2A)	352,462	0.5	412,820	0.5	298,228	0.4
Nonagricultural workers and returning H2B workers (H2B, H2R)	120,854	0.2	124,330	0.2	120,360	0.1
Trainees (H3)	2,802	-	2,637	-	2,334	-
Workers with extraordinary ability or achievement and their assistants (O1, O2)	131,032	0.2	142,175	0.2	154,405	0.2
Internationally recognized athletes or entertainers (P1)	99,262	0.1	103,097	0.1	105,856	0.1
Artists or entertainers in reciprocal exchange or culturally unique programs (P2, P3)	26,529	-	28,123	-	30,658	-
Workers in international cultural exchange programs (Q1)	3,086	-	3,406	-	3,443	-
Workers in religious occupations (R1)	14,282	-	14,359	-	14,672	-
North American Free Trade Agreement professional workers (TN)	817,517	1.1	741,899	1.0	731,496	0.9
Spouses and children of temporary workers and trainees (CW2, H4, O3, P4, R2, TD)	327,294	0.4	334,185	0.4	341,730	0.4
Intracompany transferees	965,228	1.3	976,508	1.3	993,288	1.2
Intracompany transferees (L1)	680,621	0.9	687,096	0.9	703,102	0.9
Spouses and children of intracompany transferees (L2)	284,607	0.4	289,412	0.4	290,186	0.4
Treaty traders and investors and spouses and children (E1 to E3)	478,278	0.6	496,936	0.6	503,199	0.6
Representatives of foreign media and spouses and children (I1)	48,405	0.1	48,818	0.1	44,140	0.1
Students and families	1,991,940	2.6	1,940,171	2.5	1,957,852	2.4
Academic students (F1)	1,892,644	2.5	1,845,739	2.4	1,862,828	2.3
Vocational students (M1)	19,006	-	19,129	-	18,838	-
Spouses and children of academic and vocational students (F2, M2)	80,290	0.1	75,303	0.1	76,186	0.1
Exchange visitors	585,504	0.8	594,185	0.8	611,373	0.8
Exchange visitors (J1)	513,905	0.7	523,864	0.7	537,705	0.7
Spouses and children of exchange visitors (J2)	71,599	0.1	70,321	0.1	73,668	0.1
Diplomats and other representatives	442,418	0.6	450,457	0.6	457,599	0.6
Ambassadors, public ministers, career diplomats, consular officers, other foreign government officials and their spouses, children, and attendants (A1 to A3)	225,000	0.3	224,661	0.3	229,562	0.3
Representatives to international organizations and their spouses, children, and attendants (G1 to G5)	164,432	0.2	170,512	0.2	174,272	0.2
North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) officials, spouses, and children (N1 to N7)	52,986	0.1	55,284	0.1	53,765	0.1
Temporary visitors for pleasure	61,029,117	79.1	61,600,219	79.3	64,819,854	79.7
Temporary visitors for pleasure (B2)	41,045,833	53.2	41,117,760	53.0	44,054,664	54.2
Visa Waiver Program - temporary visitors for pleasure (WT)	18,698,451	24.2	19,161,211	24.7	19,591,879	24.1
Guam-CNMI Visa Waiver Program - temporary visitors for pleasure to Guam or Northern Mariana Islands (GMT)	1,284,833	1.7	1,321,248	1.7	1,173,311	1.4
Temporary visitors for business	8,290,712	10.8	8,456,038	10.9	8,967,224	11.0
Temporary visitors for business (B1)	5,156,708	6.7	5,301,451	6.8	5,725,099	7.0
Visa Waiver Program - temporary visitors for business (WB)	3,129,890	4.1	3,152,656	4.1	3,239,672	4.0
Guam-CNMI Visa Waiver Program - temporary visitors for business to Guam or Northern Mariana Islands (GMB)	4,114	-	1,931	-	2,453	-
Transit aliens	635,087	0.8	498,272	0.6	453,723	0.6
Aliens in continuous and immediate transit through the United States (C1)	618,997	0.8	483,076	0.6	441,276	0.5
Aliens in transit to the United Nations (C2)	483	-	357	-	169	-
Foreign government officials, their spouses, children, and attendants in transit (C3)	15,607	-	14,839	-	12,278	-
Commuter Students	67,527	0.1	35,297	-	18,917	-
Canadian or Mexican national academic commuter students (F3)	67,527	0.1	35,297	-	18,917	-
Alien fiancé(e)s of U.S. citizens and children	44,390	0.1	40,878	0.1	29,077	-
Fiancé(e)s of U.S. citizens (K1)	38,672	0.1	35,546	-	25,072	-
Children of K1 (K2)	5,718	-	5,332	-	4,005	-
Alien spouses of U.S. citizens and children, immigrant visa pending	531	-	150	-	63	-
Spouses of U.S. citizens, visa pending (K3)	437	-	98	-	47	-
Children of U.S. citizens, visa pending (K4)	94	-	52	-	16	-
Alien spouses of U.S. permanent residents and children, immigrant visa pending	681	-	554	-	459	-
Spouses of permanent residents, visa pending (V1)	237	-	200	-	224	-
Children of permanent residents, visa pending (V2)	431	-	348	-	226	-
Dependents of V1 or V2, visa pending (V3)	13	-	6	-	9	-
Other	90	-	63	-	59	-
Unknown	86,311	0.1	57,707	0.1	43,925	0.1

- Represents zero or rounds to 0.0.

Source: U.S. Department of Homeland Security.

Figure 2.

Nonimmigrant Admissions (I-94/I-94W only) by Major Class of Admission: Fiscal Year 2018



Source: U.S. Department of Homeland Security.

Mexico upon completion of their stay may be eligible for a Border Crossing Card (BCC) or “laser visa.” The BCC is a machine-readable card that is valid for 10 years and contains fingerprint and other biometric data.⁹ Stand-alone BCC cards authorize travel for up to 30 days within the U.S.-Mexico border region,¹⁰ or BCCs may be used in combination with a Mexican passport as a regular B1/B2 visa for admission for up to 180 days anywhere in the United States. Mexican nationals also may apply for regular B1/B2 visas, which are affixed to their passports.

Canadian Tourist and Business Admissions. Temporary Canadian visitors for business or pleasure to the United States are required to possess a valid Canadian passport or other Western Hemisphere Travel Initiative-approved form of identification, but they generally are not required to obtain a visa or apply for travel authorization through ESTA.

TRENDS AND CHARACTERISTICS OF I-94/I-94W NONIMMIGRANT ADMISSIONS

Class of Admission¹¹

DHS granted a total of 81,279,692 I-94/I-94W nonimmigrant admissions in 2018, an increase of 4.7 percent from 2017 (Table 1 and Figure 2).¹² The largest major class of admission in 2018 remained temporary visitors for pleasure (tourists), which represented roughly 80 percent of I-94/I-94W admissions, essentially unchanged from the previous year. Tourists include entrants under the Tourist Visitor Visa (B-2), the Visa Waiver Program (WT), and the Guam-CNMI Visa Waiver Program (GMT).

Eleven percent of I-94/I-94W nonimmigrant admissions in 2018 were in the temporary visitors for business category, unchanged from 2017. Business visitors include entrants under the Business Visitor Visa (B1), the Visa Waiver Program (WB), and the Guam-CNMI Visa Waiver Program (GMB).

About five percent of admissions consisted of temporary workers and their families, unchanged from 2017. Leading classes of admission under the worker visa were TN (NAFTA) professional workers,¹³ L1 intracompany transferees,¹⁴ H1B temporary

¹¹ For more information and definitions of the various classes of admission mentioned in this report, please visit: <https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/us-visas/visa-information-resources/all-visa-categories.html>.

¹² For additional data on admissions, please see the 2018 Yearbook of Immigration Statistics. A full list of the classes of admission is also available at <https://www.dhs.gov/immigration-statistics/nonimmigrant/NonimmigrantCOA>.

¹³ TN class of admission allows qualified Canadian and Mexican citizens temporary entry into the United States for business activities at a professional level. These include accountants, engineers, lawyers, pharmacists, scientists, and teachers.

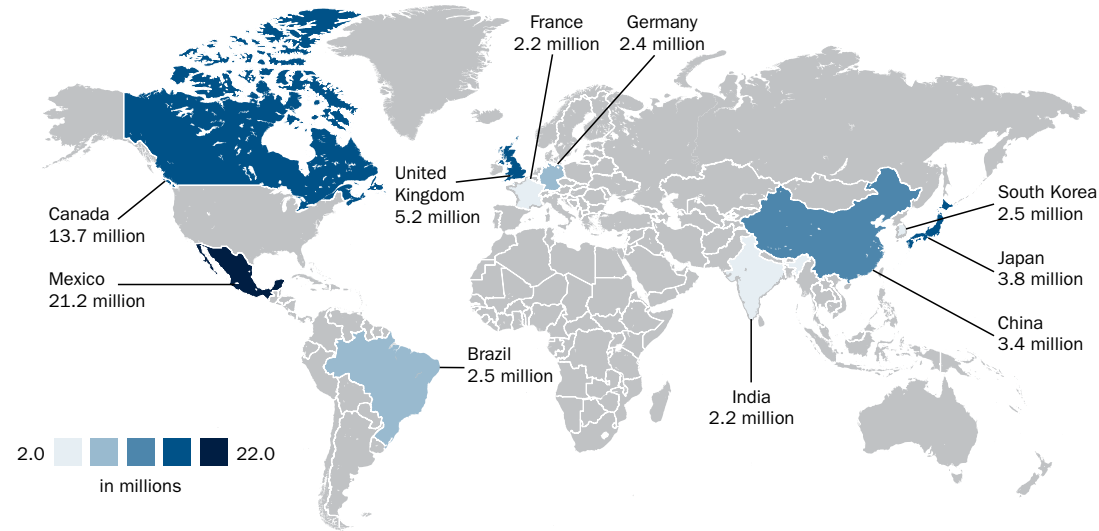
¹⁴ Intra-company transferees include executive, managerial, and specialized personnel entering to continue employment with an office of the same employer, its parent, branch, subsidiary, or affiliate thereof.

⁹ Mexican children under 15 years pay a reduced fee for a BCC. BCCs issued for the reduced fee expire on the child's 15th birthday unless the full fee is paid, in which case the child receives a BCC valid for the full 10 years. Visit <https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/us-visas/tourism-visit/border-crossing-card.html> for additional information on BCCs.

¹⁰ The current BCC border zone is within 25 miles of the border in California and Texas; within 55 miles of the border in New Mexico; and within 75 miles of the border in Arizona.

Figure 3.

Nonimmigrant Admissions (I-94/I-94W only) by Top 10 Countries of Citizenship: Fiscal Year 2018



Source: U.S. Department of Homeland Security.

workers in specialty occupations, and H2A temporary agricultural workers. Students and their families (F1, M1, F2, and M2 visas) represented 2.4 percent of I-94 admissions, essentially unchanged from 2017.

Country of Citizenship

The leading countries of citizenship for I-94/I-94W nonimmigrant admissions to the United States in 2018 were Mexico, Canada, the United Kingdom, Japan, and China, totaling 47 million or 58 percent of the overall total (Figure 3), up 5.6 percent from 2017. Overall, Mexicans and Canadians accounted for almost 35 million or 43 percent of the total I-94/I-94W admissions in 2018. Admissions from VWP countries totaled roughly 24 million, 30 percent of the total.

Ports of Entry

The 10 most transited POEs accounted for almost 38 million I-94/I-94W nonimmigrant admissions, slightly under 47 percent of the overall total in 2018 (Figure 4). About 32 percent of nonimmigrants were admitted through the top five POEs: New York (7.4 million), Miami (6.1 million), Los Angeles (5.5 million), Toronto¹⁵ (4.6 million), and San Francisco (2.7 million). Of the top ten POEs, San Ysidro, CA and Boston, MA saw the largest increases in admissions compared to 2017 at 19 and 14 percent, respectively. Admissions in Honolulu, HI decreased 1.7 percent.

¹⁵ Nonimmigrants admitted to the United States through Toronto are admitted via the CBP preclearance program, through which CBP officers conduct the same immigration, customs, and agriculture inspections of international air passengers that are normally performed on arrival in the United States before passenger departures. Preclearance operations currently take place at 15 foreign airports in six different countries, including Toronto and Vancouver in Canada.

Reported State of Destination¹⁶

The most frequent reported states of destination for I-94/I-94W nonimmigrant admissions in 2018 were California (15.5 million or 19 percent of the total), Florida (11.1 million or 14 percent), Texas (8.9 million or 11 percent), New York (8.8 million or 11 percent), and Hawaii (3.1 million or 3.8 percent) (Figure 5). These five states were the recorded destinations for over 58 percent of I-94/I-94W nonimmigrant admissions in 2018, up 1.6 percentage points from the previous year. Of the top 10 states, Texas and Arizona saw the largest increases over 2017 admissions at 19 and 17 percent, respectively.

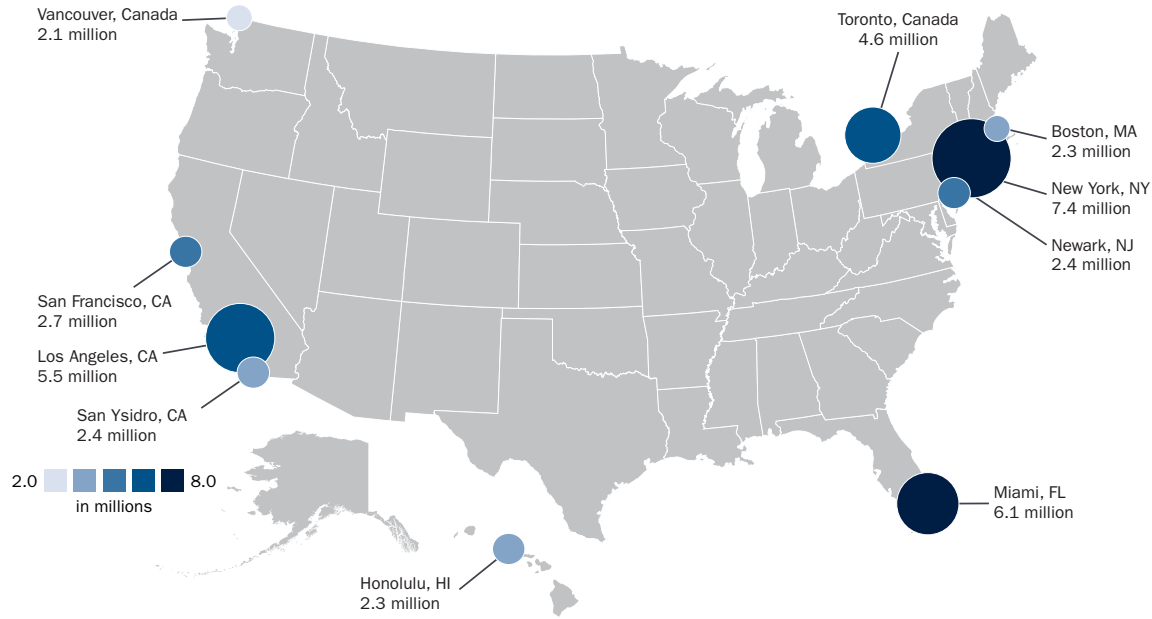
Age and Sex

In 2018, roughly 58 percent of I-94/I-94W admissions were individuals between the ages of 25 to 54, unchanged from 2017 (Figure 6). The number of nonimmigrant admissions in the 65 years and over age group increased 6.8 percent over 2017 (the largest increase of any age group). Over 48 percent of I-94/I-94W nonimmigrant admissions are female and nearly 52 percent are male.

¹⁶ The state of destination reported by arriving nonimmigrants may not be their final destination for various reasons, and also is not a required field on Form I-94/I-94W. Data in this section therefore should be interpreted with caution.

Figure 4.

Nonimmigrant Admissions (I-94/I-94W only) by Top 10 Ports of Entry: Fiscal Year 2018

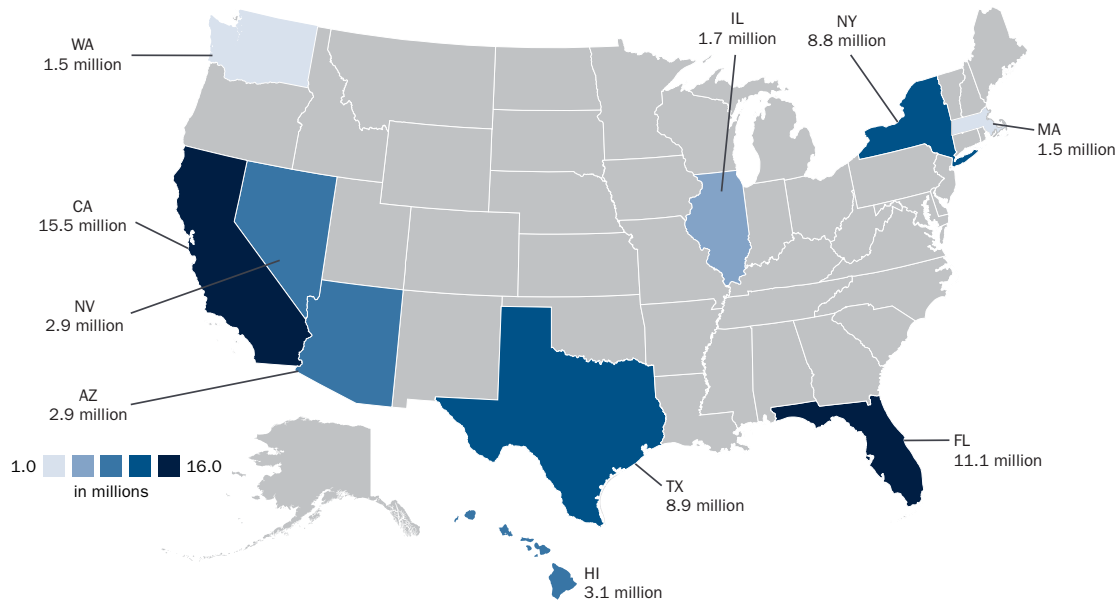


Note: Figure excludes most nonimmigrant admissions at land ports of entry because most Mexican and Canadian tourists and business visitors are exempted from I-94 requirements.

Source: U.S. Department of Homeland Security.

Figure 5.

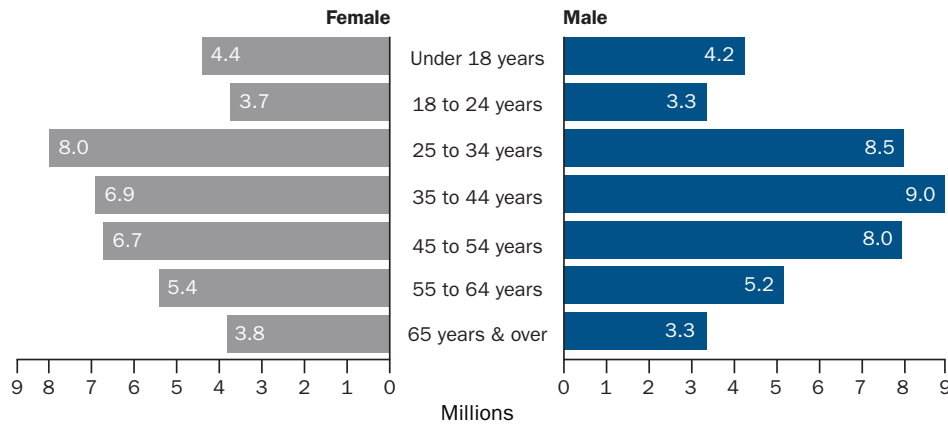
Nonimmigrant Admissions (I-94/I-94W only) by Top 10 States of Destination: Fiscal Year 2018



Source: U.S. Department of Homeland Security.

Figure 6.

Nonimmigrant Admissions (I-94/I-94W only) by Age Category and Sex: Fiscal Year 2018



Source: U.S. Department of Homeland Security.

THE I-94 FORM

Detailed nonimmigrant data in this report were obtained from CBP's TECS database, which maintains I-94 information.

In general, Canadians traveling to the United States on B1 tourist or B2 business visas are not required to complete the I-94 Form; Canadian nonimmigrants in all other visa classes are required to do so. Mexican tourists and business visitors traveling with a BCC or a Form I-872, *American Indian Card*, and remaining in the border zone generally are not required to complete an I-94, depending on the length of their visits.¹⁷ These exceptions are significant because Canadian and Mexican tourists and business visitors make up the vast majority of all nonimmigrant admissions.¹⁸

Readers should exercise caution when interpreting trends in I-94 admissions because I-94 policies have undergone important changes in recent years. Between 2005 and March 2010, DHS completed updates to computer systems at vehicular lanes and pedestrian crossings along the Northern and Southwest Borders to record land admissions that previously were excluded from I-94 data systems. Consequently, the ratio of I-94 admissions to all nonimmigrant admissions in 2010 and 2011 exceeded those in previous years. Beginning in April 2013, CBP automated the I-94 process for nonimmigrants admitted at air and sea ports. As part of this automation, CBP began generating electronic I-94s for short-term Canadian tourists and business travelers admitted at air and sea ports who had previously been exempted from the form—a

change resulting in additional increases in the I-94 data. (Canadian tourists and business travelers entering at land POEs are still largely excluded from the I-94 data.) CBP also implemented a new electronic ESTA system in 2009¹⁹ and a new I-94 data-collection system in 2013 through the Automated Passport Control and Global Entry trusted traveler programs. These updates have resulted in less complete recording of certain I-94 data elements including country of residence, sex, and state of destination, but also in more complete recording of country of citizenship.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Visit the OIS web page at <http://www.dhs.gov/immigration-statistics>.

¹⁷ Mexicans with BCCs may remain in the border zone for up to 30 days without obtaining an I-94; Mexicans entering with a passport and visa or a Form I-872, *American Indian Card*, may remain in the border zone for up to 72 hours without obtaining an I-94. Mexicans traveling beyond the border zone, those who will remain beyond the time periods indicated above, and those who seek entry for purposes other than as a temporary visitor for business or pleasure are required to obtain and complete an I-94.

¹⁸ In addition to the Mexican and Canadian exemptions from I-94 requirements, NATO officials (seeking N1-N5 nonimmigrant classification) also are not required to submit an I-94 but may do so to document their admissions. Members of the foreign military generally are not issued an I-94 when entering the United States under military orders.

¹⁹ Find the ESTA Implementation Timeline at <https://www.cbp.gov/travel/international-visitors/frequently-asked-questions-about-visa-waiver-program-wvp-and-electronic-system-travel>.