



# Do We Need A Border Wall?

By Pawel Styryna and Jennifer G. Hickey | May 2020

---

The idea of a barrier along the border of the United States and Mexico is not new. In fact, the mayor of Nogales, Mexico actually [ordered the construction](#) of a border fence between his city and Nogales, Arizona in 1918 as a means of regulating commerce. But, it was not until the 1990s that the U.S. government ordered the building of the first [14 miles](#) of what has become a matter of great political debate – the border wall.

Politics aside, a border wall, or fence, actually is a common-sense idea. Ask yourself – why do we lock our doors at night? We do so because an open door could be an invitation to a friendly neighbor or a potential threat. Michael Rubin of the American Enterprise Institute (AEI) [notes](#) that border walls and fences are “standard practice in other parts of the world,” including India, Hungary, Greece, and Spain. Why should our approach to securing our borders be any different?

Just like any household, the United States has a welcome mat out front, but it also expects people not to sneak in through the back door. As in the case of other nations, being able to govern our borders is central to maintaining our national sovereignty, securing our citizens, and regulating commerce and travel coming from outside its borders. So why have a border wall along the Southern but not the Northern border? It’s simple. You plug the bigger hole in the dam.

Historically, more than *90 percent* of border apprehensions occur along the U.S.-Mexico border. In [Fiscal Year 2019](#), the Border Patrol apprehended 860,000 illegal aliens nationwide, but 852,000 of those arrests occurred along the southwestern border, i.e. *99 percent!*

History also shows that illegal border crossings spike during warmer months, yet Congress has either done nothing to prevent the rush to the border or has obstructed multiple administrations’ attempts to do so. Congress has even ignored its own laws. More than a decade after Congress passed the Secure Fence Act of 2006, which ordered the construction of 700 miles of border fence, little progress has been made.

According to the United States Border Patrol [158 miles of the Border Wall System](#) have been completed as of April 10, 2020 and an additional 595 miles wall are under construction or in pre-construction.

Why should this be considered progress? Consider what is occurring along an insecure border.

It is along the southern border that [90 percent](#) of heroin makes its way into our communities. It is where the U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) made its [largest seizure of Fentanyl](#), the dangerous opioid claiming hundreds of thousands of lives every year. CBP Deputy

Commissioner Robert Perez knows his agents can do only so much and has [warned](#) that “the volume of drugs seized is a sober reminder that we are in the midst of a national security crisis on the Southwest Border.”

A porous border makes it easier for violent drug cartels and gangs, such as MS-13, to smuggle not only other illicit commodities into the country, but adults and children as well. Without a border barrier, people will gamble with their lives on a journey during which more than 30 percent of women are sexually assaulted and 70 percent of migrants experience some form of [violence](#).

A border fence also will prevent previously-deported criminals from simply [sneaking back](#) into the United States and committing more horrific crimes, which would save lives and lessen the backlog in immigration courts.

Beyond the hypothetical, real-world evidence shows the value of physical barriers.

Border Patrol officials have stated that the wall in the San Diego sector has [helped reduce](#) border apprehensions and the *Arizona Republic* and *USA Today* have reported that [illegal migrants](#) and [drug traffickers](#) avoid sections of the border with walls or fences. This means they have to make their way through ports of entry – in turn increasing the likelihood of detection.

Tucson Sector Chief Patrol Agent Roy Villareal, a 30-year veteran of the border patrol, [commented](#) during the 2018 border crisis that border fences do work.

“I was here in San Diego back in the late 80s, early 90s. We began putting up fencing in the mid-1990s, and it had a dramatic impact on the flow of illegal migration. I was in Arizona in 2004 when we began to put up fencing. The same thing unfolded there. As soon as we put in infrastructure and fencing – we add technology and agents – it has a dramatic impact on that flow of illicit migrants, illicit narcotics, and it brings control to the border,” he said.

Do, as opponents claim, the costs outweigh the benefits?

Construction [cost estimates](#) are usually within \$20-25 billion, although some [higher estimates](#) reach \$70 billion. But FAIR calculates the [annual cost burden of illegal immigration](#) has risen to *\$132 billion*. And it could further increase to *\$200 billion* by 2025. So, a border wall is actually a great return on our investment because it actually saves the U.S. taxpayer money in the long run.