



March 2022 Border Numbers Highest in Decades, No End in Sight

Background

Nearly three weeks into April and in the middle of a busy news cycle due to a mask mandate court ruling, the Biden administration quietly released the March 2022 border numbers on April 18. U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) revealed that there were 221,303 migrants encountered as they attempted to enter the United States illegally. This is the highest monthly total in over 20 years, bringing us to 1.2 million this fiscal year and 2.5 million total since President Biden took office.

Key Takeaways and Important Disclaimer

- There were 221,303 encounters along the southwest border in March, not only a 33 percent increase compared to last month, but close to surpassing the all-time monthly record.
- The last time the Border Patrol apprehended more migrants was in February and March 2000. The agency does not publish earlier data, and the figures from 2000 are likely the highest monthly figures since the Border Patrol was formed in 1924. This would make March 2022 the third-worst month of all time.
- 109,549 encounters, 50 percent of the total, were removed under Title 42, while the other half were processed and released into the country. When Title 42 ceases to exist in May, almost every migrant will be processed and released.
- March numbers reveal an unprecedented uptick in migrants who are not from Mexico or Central America's Northern Triangle. These numbers are sure to increase considering that many of the migrants are from countries we are unable to deport them to due to strained relationships with authoritarian governments.
- Monthly CBP numbers do not include those who got past authorities and are now unlawfully present and residing in American communities. There were over 400,000 "got aways" at the border last year, and career CBP officials say there have already been more than 300,000 in the past 6 months.

March 2022 Border Numbers

In total, there were 221,303 encounters along the southwest land border in March, a 33 percent increase compared to February. Of those, 28 percent involved individuals who had at least one prior encounter in the previous 12 months, compared to an average one-year re-encounter rate of 14 percent for FY2014-2019.

More than three-fourths (76 percent) of all southwest land border encounters were single adults, with 169,062 encounters in March, a 33 percent increase compared to February.

109,549 encounters, 50 percent of the total, were processed for expulsion under Title 42. 111,754 encounters were processed under Title 8.

101,539 encounters involving single adults (60 percent of all single adult encounters) were processed for expulsion under Title 42, with 67,523 processed under Title 8.

7,802 encounters involving family unit individuals (21 percent of all family unit individuals) were processed for expulsion under Title 42, with 30,016 processed under Title 8.

Encounters of unaccompanied children increased 18 percent, with 14,167 encounters in March compared with 11,984 in February. In March, the average number of unaccompanied children in CBP custody was 582 per day, compared with an average of 520 per day in February.

Encounters of family unit individuals increased by 42 percent from 26,721 in February to 37,818 in March—which is a 56 percent decrease from the peak of 86,631 in August 2021.

Total Encounters for FY22TD through March: 1,217,802

Countries of Origin

It is clear that this 22-year high in encounters was partly fueled by record arrivals of migrants from Cuba, Nicaragua, Colombia, and Ukraine.

The amount of Mexican migrants encountered by U.S. authorities while crossing the border illegally, the majority of whom are single adults, rose by 22% from February, increasing to 87,388. Illegal migrants from the Northern Triangle also increased, but on a smaller scale, rising to 21,355, 16,063 and 8,387, respectively.

What is most alarming, however, is the encountering of a historic number of migrants from countries beyond Mexico and the Northern Triangle, who made up nearly 40% of all border encounters in March.

Border officials processed 32,141 Cuban migrants, an all-time high that doubled February's tally and made Cuba the second largest source of illegal migration in March, only behind Mexico. Just over 16,000 Nicaraguans and 15,144 Colombians entered U.S. border custody last month — records for

both nationalities. The two countries were the fifth- and sixth-largest migrant sending countries last month, overtaking other Latin American nations like El Salvador and Venezuela.

The number of Ukrainians processed at the southern border also spiked in March to 3,274, a 1,103% jump from February, when 272 Ukrainians entered illegally. Ukraine became the ninth largest source of migrants to the U.S. border, surpassing some Western Hemisphere nations like Haiti and Brazil. This increase can be directly attributed to the fact that CBP officials have been directed to allow Ukrainians to enter the country on humanitarian grounds.

The sharp increase in illegal migration of those who are not from Mexico or Central America's Northern Triangle will pose even more challenges for the inept Biden administration, especially if Title 42 is lifted as planned.

The federal government is currently unable to carry out deportations to Cuba and Nicaragua due to strained relationships with those countries' authoritarian governments. That means nearly every migrant from those countries will be allowed to stay in the U.S. while their asylum cases are reviewed, a process that can take years.

One final alarming statistic: In March, 81% of U.S. apprehensions of migrants from Mexico and Central America's Northern Triangle along the southern border resulted in expulsions under Title 42, according to CBP data. Conversely, just 2% of the apprehensions of migrants from other countries led to expulsions.

The message is being heard loud and clear in countries outside of Mexico and the Northern Triangle: Cross the U.S. border illegally, make a frivolous asylum claim, and you will be released.