

## Migration

## “Come out of the shadows and get right with the law”

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- On 20 November, President Obama announced the executive actions he has decided to push through on migration. There are four underlying principles:
  - Reinforcement of the border and more speedy return of migrants to their home countries;
  - Extension of non-deportation orders to the high-skilled and graduates persons who arrived as minors in the U.S. (DREAMers<sup>1</sup>);
  - Focus on the search for migrants and deportations of those with criminal records and not on families;
  - Those who have underage children who were born or live in the U.S. can register to avoid deportation
- Around four million undocumented immigrants in the U.S. could benefit from this executive decree and avoid deportation; about half of these are Mexican migrants
- The presidential decree does not open the path for indefinite stay, nor for citizenship, subjects on which only the U.S. Congress can legislate, but where both chambers have Republican majorities

Midway through the year and in the absence of agreements in the United States Congress, President Obama announced that before the end of 2014 he would take executive action to deal with the migration issues in the country. However, legislators in his own party asked him to do so after the November elections, at which the Republicans retained their majority in the House of Representatives and won it in the Senate.

So it was that on Thursday, 20 November President Barack Obama announced the long-awaited measures on migration reform. These executive actions hinge on four key principles:

1. An increase in the budget, personal and technology made available to strengthen the border, in order to reduce unauthorized attempts to enter the United States, and to make the procedure of sending migrants back to their country of origin faster and more straightforward.
2. An expansion of the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program, which protects highly qualified and educated people who came into the US as minors and studied there (DREAMers) from being detained and deported unless they commit a criminal act. President Obama insisted that it benefits the country to provide opportunities for these highly qualified people to stay and create jobs in the country, instead of becoming competitors.

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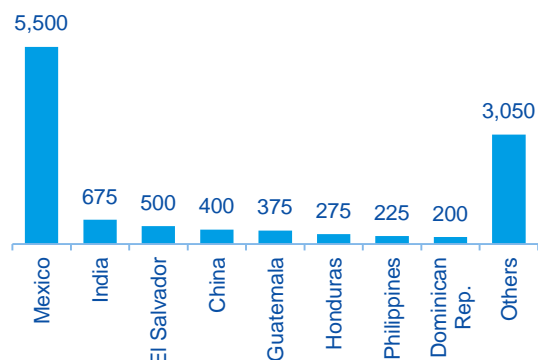
<sup>1</sup> Development, Relief and Education for Alien Minors Act, introduced by Senators Dick Durbin and Orrin Hatch in 2001 and eventually passed into law in 2010

3. Definition of strategies and actions to ensure that detentions and deportations focus on people who commit crimes. The intention is not to deport those who are working and contributing to the economy, even if they do not have papers.
4. Those with an underage child who is a U.S. citizen or has legal residence, and who has been living for five years or more in the United States, can register and request a temporary stay without fear of being deported. For this, they should pay the applicable fines and taxes and submit to a criminal background check. With this measure, President Obama seeks to avoid the family separations which occur when a father or mother with no papers is deported, while their children remain in the United States because they are citizens or legal residence there.

The President made it clear that these measures grant neither indefinite residency nor the possibility of citizenship to undocumented migrants, but offer the opportunity of not being deported or temporarily separated from the family, and of benefiting from migration reform in the future. Obama asked Congress to work together on a law to correct the problems in the current broken migration system in the United States.

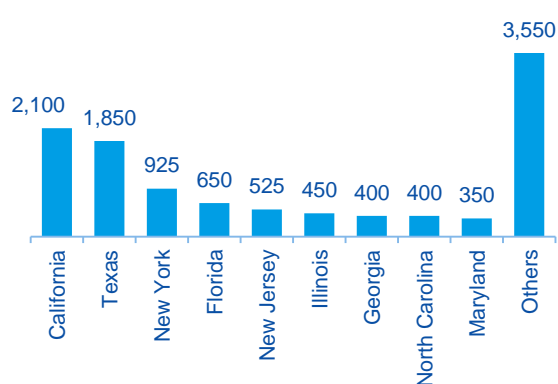
In line with Pew Research Center (PRC) estimates, around four million undocumented migrants could benefit from these executive actions, and of these around half are of Mexican origin. Other groups of migrants without residency who could benefit are, by numerical order, from India, El Salvador, China, Guatemala, Honduras, the Philippines and the Dominican Republic. The states with the highest number of undocumented migrants in 2014 were thought to be California, Texas and New York, and those are where most people could qualify for this measure.

Figure 1  
**Principal countries of origin of undocumented migrants in the US, 2014 ('000s)**



Source: BBVA Research estimates, with data from the Current Population Survey (CPS) and the Pew Research Center (PRC)

Figure 2  
**Main states of residence of undocumented migrants in the US, 2014 ('000s)**



Source: BBVA Research estimates, with data from the Current Population Survey (CPS) and the Pew Research Center (PRC)

**Disclaimer**

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