

# Border crossings drastically decreased compared to last year, says Border Patrol

EL PASO, Texas (KFOX14) — The situation at the U.S. - Mexico border has changed drastically from the 'humanitarian crisis' it was a year ago, according to border patrol.

Border Patrol officials credit the change, in part, to the pandemic.

"It's a big drastic change. We're not seeing those high numbers that we were seeing last year when we had that humanitarian crisis. This year we're more back as as a normal," Border Patrol Agent George Gomez said.

According to U.S Customs and Border Protection data, in July 2019 agents apprehended over 11,500 people compared to 5,081 in July of 2020.

The agency also reports the number of unaccompanied children encountered is down 77 percent.

*It's very rare this year that we see an unaccompanied minor come across into, into the United States," Gomez said. "Nothing compared to what we saw last year.*

Gomez said the pandemic has changed the way border agents work and is a contributing factor in the decrease in border crossings.

"The process, because of the pandemic , it's more streamlined, if you will, because we're not having to take them into the stations. Everything is, like I said initially, done out here in the field. We have all the electronic capability where we can take their biographical information fingerprints, submit them. And as long as they're not showing any symptoms or they claim that they're not ill, they're immediately expelled back to Mexico," Gomez explained.

This process is known as Title 42. Some including the American Civil Liberties Union have called it unconstitutional.

Ruben Garcia is the director of the Annunciation house, a shelter in El Paso for migrants.

He said he is also seeing less migrants coming into the country.

“We’ve seen a really, a real dramatic decline in the number of refugees that have been entering the El Paso area, and the decline has been in part because of policies that have been implemented by the present administration,” Garcia said.

He said last year hundreds of refugees each day would come seeking shelter, now they see about 20 a week.

“The consequences of that are, of course, that we are seeing many, many, many, fewer refugees that are being released and that are coming to our houses of hospitality,” Garcia said.

According to Border Patrol, there has been an increase in border crossings during the summer months of 2020.

“Typically our summer months are on average, our apprehensions go up a little bit in the summer but that’s always, it’s always cyclical, so we expect to see that,” Gomez said. “It’s been progressively going up slightly, but nothing compared to what we saw last year.”

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