

BUILD THE WALL, HOW MUCH BY WHOM

The cost of a wall along the Mexican border is generally discussed as costing \$12.5 to \$25 billion, spread over two years. The \$25 billion number seems to be popular as a planning number, though often it is said to exclude some associated costs like land purchases and to not address fully the ongoing maintenance and operations budget after the wall is built. The twenty-five is the number used in the proposed "50 Votes for the Wall Act" (H.R.7073, 10/19/18). But one Congressional report said it would cost several times that (see below).

Text from [H.R.7073](#): *This bill establishes the Border Wall and Security Trust Fund for funds appropriated to construct a wall (including physical barriers and associated detection technology, roads, and lighting) along the international border between the United States and Mexico by January 19, 2021.*

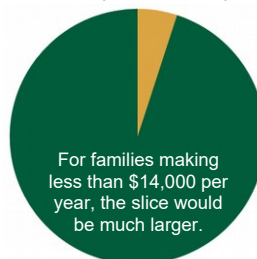
Author's Note: The current administration usually uses \$10 billion (\$5 billion per year for two years), and the Democratic staff of the Senate Homeland Security and Government Affairs Committee in 2017 said it could go as high as [\\$70 billion](#) plus land and legal costs. When reading about any of the many cost numbers one can readily find published online, it is important to ask what is included.

The often used \$25 billion cost would be about \$76 per person in America. For a family of four, that's \$304 (\$152 per year if split over the two-year build plan and everyone pays an equal share).

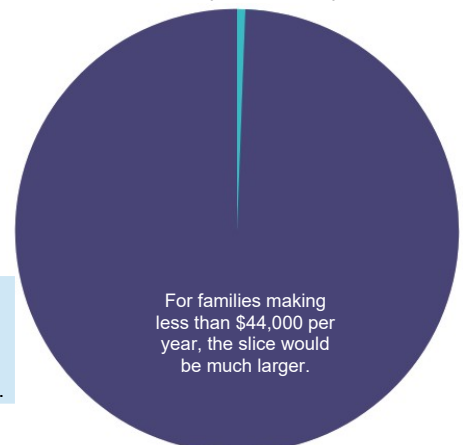
There is talk of having Mexico pay for the wall. Since Mexico's population is only 40% as many as the U.S. population, the cost per person there would be around \$190 each, since the total cost has to be spread among fewer persons. For a four-person family, that's \$760 (\$380 per year for two years).

It is important to note that in Mexico the average household net-adjusted disposable income per person is \$13,891 a year, while in the United States it is \$44,049, three times as much (data is from The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, the [OECD](#), based in Paris.) Using these two comparison numbers for households, 2.5 times more people in the U.S. than in Mexico and 3 times more income per household in the U.S. than in Mexico, one quick way to gauge the ability to pay for the wall is that it would be 7.5 times more expensive for Mexicans than for Americans ($2.5 \times 3 = 7.5$). Probably, it is worse than that, because at the low income levels in Mexico there is no extra in family budgets for anything.

MEXICO
5.5% of one year's family income



UNITED STATES
0.7% of one year's family income



Per the International Monetary Fund (IMF), using 2016 data, the U.S. is 13th in the list of richest countries in the world, and Mexico is 68th. Mexican families do not have extra disposable income or borrowing financial ability.

The cost of staffing the wall, maintaining the structure of it, replacing/updating equipment like cameras and software, and bringing on new improvements or adding better infrastructure ideas as time goes by, would be in the hundreds of millions of dollars per year, if not a billion. It is very hard to find a definitive statement of that amount, but general publicized comments seem to concur that the cost is substantial. Regardless of the exact amount, it builds up to a very serious number over time.



The U.S. Border Patrol reports that during the 2018 fiscal year there were [396,579](#) persons (107,212 family units - 2% from Mexico, and 50,036 unaccompanied children - 20% from Mexico) apprehended at the Mexican border. Some sources say 80% of those trying to gain illegal entry are apprehended. Others say it is only about or slightly below half. It is admitted that the number is unknown. Without hard data, we are left with saying there were 50,000 to 400,000 clandestine border crossing successes in FY 2018 .



If we assume a wall would stop all of them (100% effective), we can divide those numbers into \$25 billion. The calculation gives \$62,500 to \$500,000 as the answers. That amount, plus maintenance and operations expenses, is the cost per person of stopping illegals the first year. After that, the cost is based on whatever is the ongoing maintenance and operations costs annually. That's if all are captured. If only half, are caught, then the cost per person is double that, and the problem half that is still there needs a resolution by other non-wall means, at more cost. The annual ongoing costs seem thought to be at or above a billion, and the rate at which illegal attempts will continue is completely unknown, not even if it will be higher or lower. It is all nebulous, and the issues are many, with no complete list of them yet developed.



It remains then to discuss how these kinds of amounts of money will be returned in some real cash benefit way to the individual American taxpayer, and also to debate what else could be done for American citizens with alternative investments in projects not related to immigration. 🌈