

Nearly 1 in 10 California workers is in country illegally, study finds

By **KATE LINTHICUM**

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A report released Wednesday by researchers at USC found that immigrants who are in California illegally make up nearly 10% of the state's workforce and contribute \$130 billion annually to its gross domestic product.

The study, which was conducted in conjunction with the California Immigrant Policy Center, was based on census data and other statistics, including data from the Department of Labor and the Department of Homeland Security. It looked at a variety of ways the estimated 2.6 million immigrants living in California without permission participate in state life.

FOR THE RECORD

Sept. 3, 4:20 p.m.: An earlier version of this post said Reshma Shamasunder, director of the California Immigrant Policy Center, called for an immigration overhaul bill that laid out a path to citizenship for immigrants. She called for President Obama to take executive actions to limit deportations.

Among the study's findings:

- › Immigrants who are in California illegally make up 38% of the agriculture industry and 14% of the construction industry statewide.
- › Half of the immigrants in the state illegally have been here for at least 10 years.
- › Roughly 58% do not have health insurance.
- › Nearly three in four live in households that include U.S. citizens.

USC sociology professor Manuel Pastor, who worked on the report, said it shows how integrated

immigrants are into daily life in California.

"It's a population deeply embedded in the labor market, neighborhoods and social fabric of the state," said Pastor, who is a co-director of USC's Center for the Study of Immigrant Integration.

Advocates for more inclusive immigration policy say the economic contributions of immigrants are another reason they should be allowed to stay.

"Every one of California's immigrants helps shape our state's economic and civic vitality," said Reshma Shamasunder, director of the California Immigrant Policy Center. She said President Obama should take immediate action to limit deportations and "honor these contributions and advance economic prosperity."

In recent months, as the likelihood of a comprehensive overhaul of the country's immigration laws has dimmed, Obama has said he will use his executive power to make changes in deportation policy.

But those who call for stricter enforcement of existing immigration laws say assessments of immigrants' share of the GDP does not account for the large cost governments incur in providing schools and other services to immigrants here without permission.

Steven Camarot, of the Center for Immigration Studies, which favors stricter restrictions on immigration, also said that bigger economies are not necessarily better.

"A bigger economy doesn't mean the people are richer," he said.

The USC study also looked at the impact of immigration on the Los Angeles economy.

It found that of the 4.4 million immigrants living in the greater Los Angeles region, 1.1 million are here without permission. Immigrants here illegally contributed \$57 billion of the region's GDP, the study found.

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