

Undocumented Immigrants in California

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➤ **California is home to more than two million undocumented immigrants.**

Undocumented (also known as illegal or unauthorized) immigrants are not directly identified in any representative national or state surveys. But the best estimates suggest that in 2014, the year of the most recent data available, California was home to between 2.35 and 2.6 million undocumented immigrants. Nearly a quarter of the nation's undocumented immigrants reside in California, where they constitute more than 6% of the state's population. Nationally, the undocumented population has stabilized at approximately 11 million, following a slight decline after 2007. A combination of increased enforcement, voluntary returns, and fewer new migrants has increased the average length of residence in the United States, with 66% of undocumented immigrants having lived here for 10 or more years.

➤ **Most undocumented immigrants are from Latin America.**

Nationwide, 78% of undocumented immigrants are from Latin America—a slight majority (52%) come from Mexico alone. Most of the others (13%) are from Asia, although Africa and Europe also account for hundreds of thousands of undocumented immigrants in the US. The Pew Research Center (PRC) estimates that as of 2014, 71% of California's undocumented population was Mexican-born.

➤ **Nearly one in ten California workers is an undocumented immigrant.**

California's labor force includes about 1.75 million undocumented immigrants, according to the PRC. This is the second-highest statewide concentration of undocumented workers (9.0%) in the US after Nevada (10.4%). Undocumented immigrants work disproportionately in agriculture, construction, and manufacturing.

➤ **Many undocumented immigrants live with family members who are citizens.**

More than 5 million children in the US have an undocumented parent, according to estimates from the Migration Policy Institute, and most of these children (79%) are US citizens. It is likely that 12.3% of California's K–12 school children have an undocumented parent, according to PRC estimates. Nationally, more than 750,000 young people have received deportation relief and work permits through a federal program called Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA), which confers legal status upon those who came to the US as undocumented children. More than 200,000 DACA recipients live in California, according to the US Citizenship and Immigration Services. The future of the DACA program is very much uncertain. President Trump has sent mixed signals, while some members of Congress have vowed to fight for the program.

➤ **Counties vary in their sanctuary policies for undocumented immigrants.**

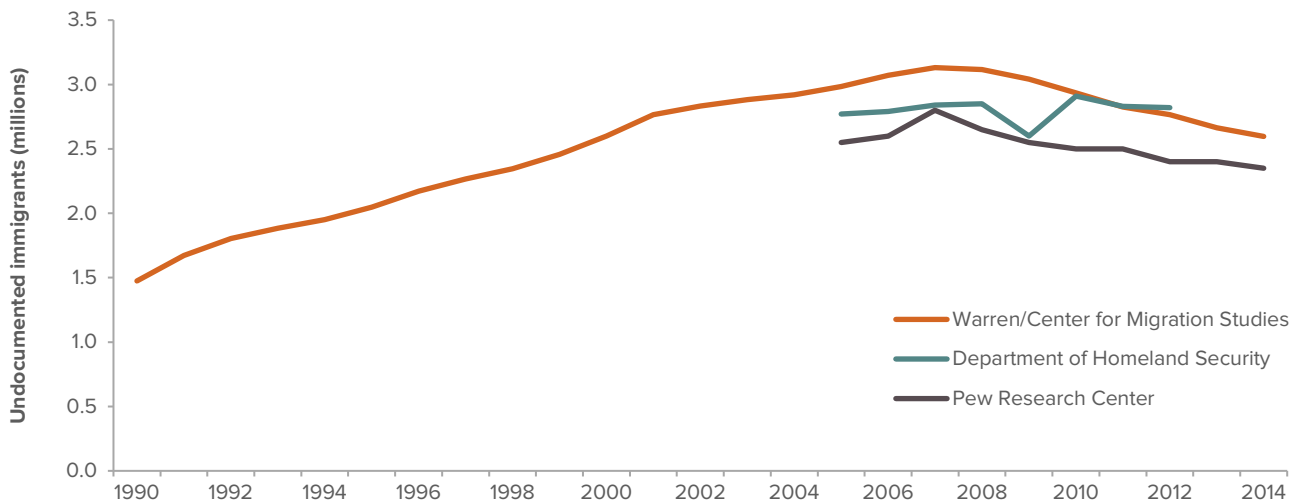
Some California city and county leaders have stated that they will provide sanctuary for undocumented immigrants—this refers to limiting local assistance to federal immigration enforcement. However, no sanctuary policy can universally prevent deportations. Further, county jails provide the FBI with fingerprints from all bookings, which the FBI then sends to Immigration and Customs Enforcement. Even if individual cities have a sanctuary policy, county law enforcement supersedes city policies if undocumented immigrants are placed in county jails.

➤ **A majority of Californians back a path to legal status.**

Since January 2016, the PPIC Statewide Survey has asked Californians four times whether “there should be a way for [undocumented immigrants] to stay in the country legally, if certain requirements are met.” Each time, 82% or more have supported this idea. In January 2017, 65% of adults favored the idea of “California state and local governments making their own policies and taking actions, separate from the federal government, to protect the legal rights of undocumented immigrants in California,” but support varied widely along party lines: 80% of Democrats, 27% of Republicans, and 59% of independents.



The undocumented population in California appears to be declining



Sources: Annual estimates of the undocumented population by Robert Warren, working alone or with the Center for Migration Studies, the Department of Homeland Security, and the Pew Research Center.

Populations of undocumented immigrants vary across counties

County or county groups	Undocumented immigrants (latest PPIC estimates, 2013)	County or county groups	Undocumented immigrants (latest PPIC estimates, 2013)	County or county groups	Undocumented immigrants (latest PPIC estimates, 2013)
Alameda	129,500	Madera	12,500	San Luis Obispo	9,000
Alpine, Amador, Calaveras, Inyo, Mariposa, Mono, Tuolumne	3,000	Marin	17,500	San Mateo	59,500
Butte	4,000	Merced	23,000	Santa Barbara	41,500
Colusa, Glenn, Tehama, Trinity	9,000	Monterey, San Benito	62,000	Santa Clara	183,500
Contra Costa	77,500	Napa	15,500	Santa Cruz	19,500
Del Norte, Lassen, Modoc, Plumas, Siskiyou	1,500	Nevada, Sierra	1,500	Shasta	1,500
El Dorado	3,000	Orange	247,500	Solano	24,000
Fresno	58,000	Placer	7,000	Sonoma	38,500
Humboldt	1,500	Riverside	124,000	Stanislaus	32,500
Imperial	15,000	Sacramento	56,500	Sutter, Yuba	9,000
Kern	58,500	San Bernardino	118,000	Tulare	36,500
Kings	10,500	San Diego	170,500	Ventura	69,000
Lake, Mendocino	7,000	San Francisco	35,000	Yolo	11,500
Los Angeles	814,000	San Joaquin	49,000	California	2,667,000

Sources: Authors' calculations using IRS tax data from the Brookings Institution, population data from the American Community Survey, and statewide undocumented population estimates from the Center for Migration Studies. These 2013 estimates are PPIC's most recent estimates. Estimates for the state by Center for Migration Studies suggest a slight decline from 2013 to 2014 (2.6%).

Sources: State-level estimates come from the Pew Research Center, Department of Homeland Security, Robert Warren, Center for Migration Studies, and Migration Policy Institute. County-level estimates are the authors' calculations using IRS tax data from the Brookings Institution, population data from the American Community Survey, and statewide undocumented population estimates from the Center for Migration Studies. Survey results are from the PPIC Statewide Survey.

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