

ILLEGAL IMMIGRANTS

Hans Johnson

► California is home to more than two million illegal immigrants.

No representative national or state surveys provide an accurate direct count of illegal (or unauthorized) immigrants, but the best estimates suggest that California was home to about 2.6 million illegal immigrants in 2009. One-fourth of the nation's unauthorized immigrants reside in California (by contrast, the state's share of the nation's overall population is only about one-eighth). In both California and Texas, illegal immigrants constitute about 7% of the population, the highest concentration in the United States. Most immigrants in California (about 74%) are either naturalized citizens or have visas.

► The population of unauthorized immigrants in the U.S. has recently begun to decline ...

Between 1990 and 2007 the population of unauthorized immigrants more than tripled, from less than 4 million to about 12 million. After this period of rapid growth, the unauthorized population dropped to about 11 million in 2009, according to estimates by the Department of Homeland Security and the Pew Hispanic Center.

► ... and California's unauthorized population is in line with the national trend.

Recent estimates suggest that California's unauthorized immigrant population decreased by about 250,000 people between 2007 and 2009, a stark contrast from the growth earlier in the decade. Between 2008 and 2009, the unauthorized immigrant population decreased by about 9% in California, slightly higher than the approximate 7% decrease observed nationwide.

► Most unauthorized immigrants are from Latin America.

Nationwide, eight of every ten unauthorized immigrants are from Latin America— more than half (61%) are from Mexico alone. Most of the remainder are from Asia, though Europe and Canada account for hundreds of thousands of illegal immigrants in the United States.

► Illegal immigrants often live with relatives who are legal U.S. residents.

Men make up the majority of illegal immigrant adults (58%). Nearly half of illegal immigrants live with their spouses and children. Most of these children (73%) are U.S. citizens by birth. While about 5 million children in 2009 had at least one unauthorized parent, only 1.1 million children under age 18 were themselves illegal immigrants.

► About one in eleven workers in California is an unauthorized immigrant.

California's labor force includes about 1.8 million unauthorized immigrants; along with Nevada, Texas, and New Jersey, it has the highest concentration of unauthorized workers (9%). Among adults ages 18 to 64, male illegal immigrants (93%) are more likely than U.S.-born males (81%) to be in the labor force. Conversely, female illegal immigrants (58%) are less likely than U.S.-born females (72%) to be in the labor force.

► Most Californians favor some form of legalization.

According to a March 2010 PPIC survey, most Californians (70%) think illegal immigrants who have lived and worked in the United States *for at least two years* should be given a chance to keep their jobs and apply for legal status, while one-quarter (25%) of Californians believe these immigrants should be deported.

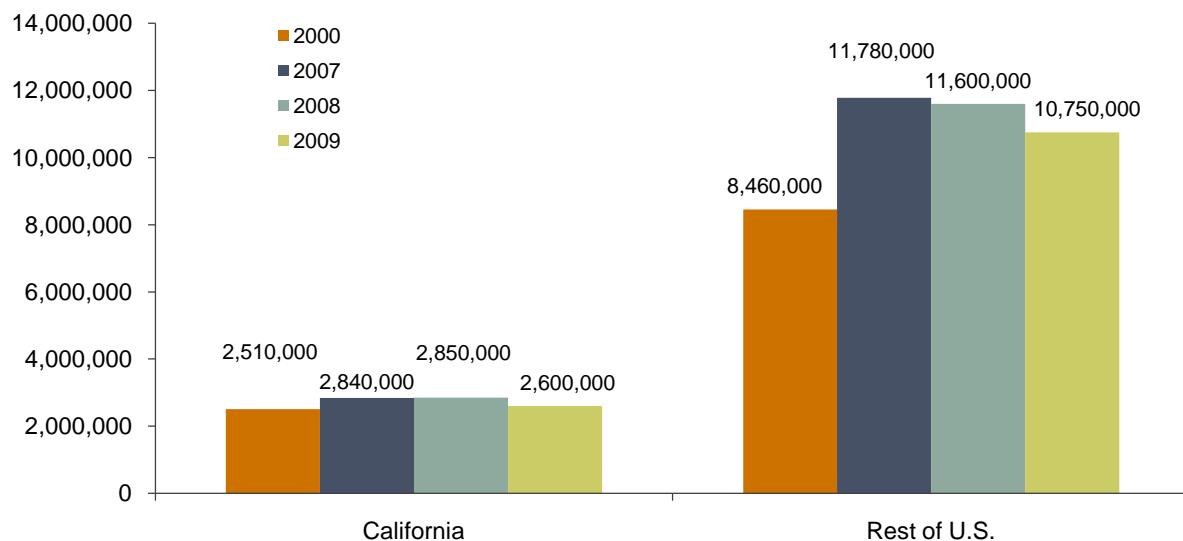


Unauthorized immigrants by state, 2009

	Number of unauthorized immigrants		Share of state's total population	
	Pew Hispanic Center	U.S. Department of Homeland Security	Pew Hispanic Center	U.S. Department of Homeland Security
California	2,550,000	2,600,000	6.9%	7.0%
Texas	1,600,000	1,680,000	6.5	6.8
Florida	675,000	720,000	3.6	3.9
New York	650,000	550,000	3.3	2.8
Illinois	525,000	554,000	4.1	4.3
New Jersey	475,000	360,000	5.5	4.1
Georgia	425,000	480,000	4.3	4.9
Arizona	375,000	460,000	5.7	7.0
North Carolina	275,000	370,000	2.9	3.9
Other states	3,550,000	2,976,000	2.2	1.9
All states	11,100,000	10,750,000	3.6	3.5

Sources: Pew Hispanic Center; U.S. Department of Homeland Security.

Unauthorized immigrant population in California and rest of U.S., 2000, 2007, 2008, and 2009



Source: U.S. Department of Homeland Security.

Sources: Pew Hispanic Center. Department of Homeland Security. U.S. Census Bureau. PPIC Statewide Survey, March 2010.

Note: The most credible estimates of unauthorized immigrants use a residual technique based on subtracting estimates of legal immigrants from estimates of all immigrants. Estimates produced by the Department of Homeland Security and the Pew Hispanic Center are in close agreement, but show some differences.

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