

California's illegal immigrant population drops, still largest

By Dan Walters

dwalters@sacbee.com

California still has, by far, the nation's largest population of illegal immigrants, but it declined between 2009 and 2012, according to a [new report](#) by the Pew Research Center.

The overall number of illegal immigrants in the nation was virtually unchanged at 11.3 million in 2012, Pew said, but it increased in seven states while declining in California and 13 other states, largely due to a sharp drop in immigration from Mexico.

The estimated drop in California was fairly scant, down 50,000 to 2.45 million, about 6.4 percent of the state's overall population. However, Pew says illegal immigrants are 9.4 percent of California's labor force, second only to Nevada's 10.2 percent.

Those numbers give California a major stake in President Barack Obama's stated intention to legalize several million illegal immigrants by executive action because Congress has not enacted immigration reform.

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Call The Bee's Dan Walters, (916) 321-1195. Back columns, www.sacbee.com/walters. Follow him on Twitter

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