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## NUMBER OF ILLEGAL IMMIGRANTS IN U.S. HOLDS STEADY AT 11 MILLION

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The number of immigrants unlawfully in the U.S. has been steady at 11 million since the end of the Great Recession, while the undocumented Mexican population continues to shrink, according to a study released Tuesday.

The multiyear trend marks a reversal of the migratory tide that for decades provided workers for key sectors of the U.S. economy. It's a turning point that is affecting employers in agriculture and construction, which are reporting labor shortages as those businesses added jobs amid the economy's recovery.

The Pew Research Center, which analyzed census data, concluded that the leveling off of the illegal population since 2009 is a direct consequence of the decline in the number of Mexicans who are undocumented. The trend was offset only by a rise in undocumented immigrants from Central America, Asia and Africa.

Some immigrants from distant countries fly to the U.S., enter legally and overstay their visas.

Illegal immigration, a central issue in the presidential campaign, peaked at 12.2 million in 2007. It was 11.1 million in 2014, roughly the same as 11.3 million in 2009, according to the report.

In 2007, there were 6.9 million undocumented Mexicans in the U.S. In 2014, Mexicans still represented the majority of the nation's illegal immigrants, but their number had dropped to 5.8 million.

In the states where the overall undocumented population slipped in the past five years, including California, Georgia and Illinois, the decline in undocumented Mexicans was the main factor.

"We see a continued drop in the Mexican unauthorized immigrant population," said Jeff Passel, the center's senior demographer. "That's in contrast to the late '90s and early 2000s, when their number was growing very, very fast," at the rate of several hundred thousand each year.

Meanwhile, the number of undocumented immigrants from other parts of the world has grown by 325,000 since 2009, to 5.3 million in 2014. For example, illegal immigration from India reached 500,000 in 2014, up 130,000 in five years.

The Border Patrol reports an increase in the number of illegal entries by what it calls OTMs – people from places other than Mexico. Central Americans constitute the largest group

among them. Poverty and violence in El Salvador, Honduras and Guatemala continue to drive people north.

Phoenix Approves City Identification Card for Undocumented Immigrants, Others (Aug. 31)  
In Mexico, economic pressures that pushed people to seek a future in the U.S. have subsided. Chief among them is the advent of smaller families, which means fewer mouths to feed. Drug cartels operating on migratory routes, beefed-up border patrols and the steep price, often more than \$10,000, charged by human smugglers also discourage migration.

Immigrant workers who returned willingly or were deported to their home countries during the recession, or who have retired in recent years, aren't being replaced by new arrivals or young Americans.

Indeed, since 2007, there have been more Mexican immigrants leaving the U.S. for Mexico than coming here from there, said Mr. Passel, the researcher. Those departures have been both voluntary and involuntary. The Obama administration has deported hundreds of thousands of people each year, more than any other administration.

The Pew report said the recession reduced employment in construction and other sectors where Mexican immigrants overall are especially likely to work. But as the economy has recovered, those sectors have begun to feel the impact of the decline in Mexican workers. Agriculture, construction and service concerns across the country are reporting chronic labor shortages. Agriculture is one of the hardest hit.

The impact is being felt even in border states like California, which for years could count on a steady flow of migrant workers.

"I don't think there is a farming company in Ventura County that is not very short of labor," said Guillermo Magdaleno, a farm-labor contractor who supplies workers to citrus and avocado growers in Southern California.

A Northern California union that represents construction workers said many builders in the San Francisco Bay area are desperate.

"They need carpenters, electricians, plasterers, everything," said Josué Garcia, chief of the Santa Clara & San Benito Counties Building & Construction Trades Council.

Mr. Magdaleno said he began having trouble meeting demand for field workers about three years ago. His business has had to forfeit clients. Last year, one of his largest customers lost 80,000, 50-pound boxes of lemons due to a dearth of labor.

Radio stations and staffing agencies in the area advertise jobs heavily during the harvest but there is nary a taker among Americans, said Mr. Magdaleno. "I have been trying to recruit from everywhere, wherever I can find bodies," he said.

Last season, lemon pickers averaged \$20 an hour. "It's a good job but it's physically intensive," said the 63-year-old who started picking fruit when he was 12. "Your kids and my kids don't want to do it."