

Construction: Securing the Workforce Behind America's Growth

Overview

America's construction industry is in crisis. Rising demand for housing, infrastructure, and commercial projects is clashing with severe labor shortages that delay timelines, inflate costs, and threaten economic progress. Immigrant workers fill critical roles in this sector, but their future remains uncertain.

Key Facts

- Immigrants make up [nearly 30%](#) of the national construction workforce. In states like California and Texas, immigrant workers account for 40% or more of construction labor.
- The U.S. construction industry employs nearly 1.6 million undocumented immigrants, according to reports based on U.S. Census data and labor surveys.
- Immigrants are highly concentrated in construction trades essential for home building, [including](#):
 - Plasterers and stucco masons (61%)
 - Drywall and ceiling tile installers (61%)
 - Roofers (52%)
 - Painters (51%)
 - Carpet, floor, and tile installers (45%)
- Between 2018 and 2023, Texas alone posted more than [508,000](#) construction job openings.
- [Nearly 40%](#) of construction entrepreneurs in Texas are immigrants.
- Mass deportations would [increase housing construction costs](#), worsening the affordable housing crisis.
- There are not enough skilled construction workers to meet rising demand. The Associated Builders and Contractors (ABC) projects the industry will need [439,000 additional workers](#) in 2025 alone.
- Public support is strong:
 - 81% of general election voters
 - 93% of Republican primary voters support legal work permits for long-time immigrant workers.

The Real Issue: A Construction Industry on the Brink

Construction leaders across the country are struggling to staff job sites, meet deadlines, and stay competitive. Skilled immigrant workers—many of whom have been living and working in the U.S. for decades—are already keeping the industry running. Without legal pathways to protect and retain these workers, enforcement-only approaches risk dismantling the very workforce our economy depends on. The result will be stalled projects, lost contracts, and rising costs for American consumers.

Policy Recommendations

To protect the future of American construction, policymakers must:

- Establish legal work permits for long-time immigrant construction workers who pay taxes and pass rigorous background checks
- Ensure construction is explicitly included in any upcoming workforce visa reforms
- Pair border security with realistic, pro-business labor solutions that stabilize the construction sector

Bottom Line

America cannot build without builders. The immigrant workforce is already on the job—what's missing is the policy to keep them there. The choice is simple: secure the border and secure the workforce, or watch construction sites across the country grind to a halt and housing costs climb even higher.