



NAM Poll Uncovers Precarious Health Conditions of Undocumented

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SAN FRANCISCO – Three-fourths of undocumented immigrants from Latin American countries say they are living without health insurance, according to a recent national survey conducted by Bendixen and Associates and commissioned by New America Media.

It was one of several quality-of-life questions asked at a time when this population is at the center of a political firestorm over immigration. The poll, which focuses primarily on undocumented immigrants' perspectives on the immigration reform bill being debated in the Senate, also points to the precarious situation of many undocumented immigrants when it comes to health care.

The survey found that 23 percent of undocumented immigrants said they try to cure themselves without medical assistance when they fall sick. Three percent of them said they return to their home country, while two percent said they find other ways of dealing with their health problems.

Nearly half of those interviewed said they go to a clinic or a doctor when they fall sick, while 24 percent of them go to the emergency room at a hospital.

The new poll surveyed 1,600 undocumented Latin American immigrants in Spanish -- 70 percent of them from Mexico and the rest from Central America, South America and the Dominican Republic.

Of the 12 million undocumented immigrants currently living in the United States, 10 million are from Latin American countries.

Sandra Hernandez of The San Francisco Foundation, one of a number of foundations

that funded the poll, said the poll has important implications for immigrants' health. "For those of us working in the health care disparity field, information like this is invaluable," Hernandez said. "If immigration reform can regularize their status, their access to health care will expand and that will benefit all of us."

The other organizations that funded the poll include the Ford Foundation, the Carnegie Corporation, The James Irvine Foundation, The John S. and James L. Knight Foundation, Open Society Institute, the California Endowment and The California Wellness Foundation.