



## Developing the Best Tool to Record Workers' Experiences

### **Construction Working Conditions in Texas: Survey Instrument Development and Pilot Project**

*The Workers Defense Project. Austin, Texas. May 2013.  
CPWR Report of the same name published May 2013.*

#### **Overview**

Workers Defense Project conducted a pilot study of the construction industry in Austin in order to develop a survey instrument for a statewide study of working conditions in Texas. The pilot study, begun in March 2012 and completed in August 2012, delivered findings that were used to improve the statewide study survey instrument, determine interview questions and fine-tune overall study methodology. Using this new survey instrument, the researchers conducted their statewide survey and published the results in January 2013 in the document, *Build a Better Texas: Construction Working Conditions in the Lone Star State*. Researchers were able to use the same dataset to generate a second report, *Build a Better Nation: A Case for Comprehensive Immigration Reform*, which was released February of 2013. The later report examines working conditions through the lens of immigration, as 50% of the Texas construction workforce was found to be undocumented.

#### **For more information, contact:**

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#### **See full report:**

<http://bit.ly/J2Cyh5df>

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#### **Key Findings**

- Numerous employment violations occurred regularly on Texas construction sites. One in five workers statewide had experienced wage theft.
- 41% of the workforce was estimated to be misclassified as independent contractors or paid in cash with no taxes deducted.
- One in five construction workers surveyed had been seriously injured on the job.
- Nearly every construction site that surveyors visited had multiple safety violations, as documented on the Site Observation Checklists they completed at each worksite.
- Interviews with industry leaders revealed that the poor working conditions experienced by workers also negatively impact honest businesses, which are unable to compete in the current environment of lax enforcement of employment laws.

#### OUTCOMES:

- The survey instrument collected best practice recommendations from industry leaders and policy recommendations to improve working conditions and reward honest business practices. These recommendations are included in the report, "Build a Better Texas."
- The "Build a Better Texas" report is available at <http://www.workersdefense.org/build-a-better-texas-report/>



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