

#FactsMatter: Immigration Explained

No human being is illegal.



Phrases such as “illegal immigrant” and “illegal alien” replace complex legal circumstances with an assumption of guilt. They effectively criminalize the personhood of migrants, instead of describing the legality of their actions.



It is not a crime for an undocumented person to remain in the United States. “As a general rule, it is not a crime for a movable alien to remain in the United States.”

Source: [Justice Anthony Kennedy, Arizona v. United States, 2012](#)



It is a violation of federal immigration law to remain in the country without legal authorization, but this violation is punishable by civil penalties, not criminal.

Source: [U.S.C. § 1325 : US Code - Section 1325: Improper entry by alien](#)

Immigration is not one size fits all.



Most undocumented immigrants cannot simply “get legal” and “be a citizen” by filling out paperwork or paying a fee.

The right way to immigrate was at one time to simply show up. Processing at Ellis Island involved health inspections and naturalization.

- Many of our ancestors would not have qualified under today’s immigration laws.
- Many European immigrants benefited from “amnesty,” such as the 1929 Registry Act.

Source: [American Immigration Council](#)

A border wall would be an ineffective immigration restriction.



An estimated 40% of all undocumented immigrants were visa holders, which means they entered the country legally.

Source: [Pew Hispanic Research Center](#)

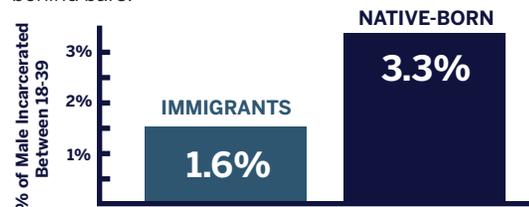


Asians are the fastest growing population of undocumented immigrants.

Source: [Migration Policy Institute](#)

Immigrants commit less crime than the native-born population.

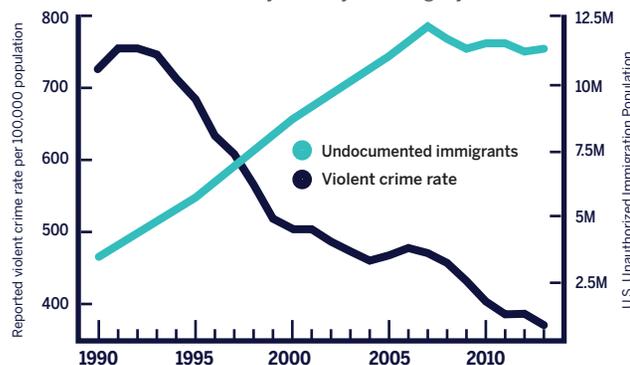
Immigrants are less likely than the native-born to be behind bars.



Source: [U.S. Census and American Community Survey](#)

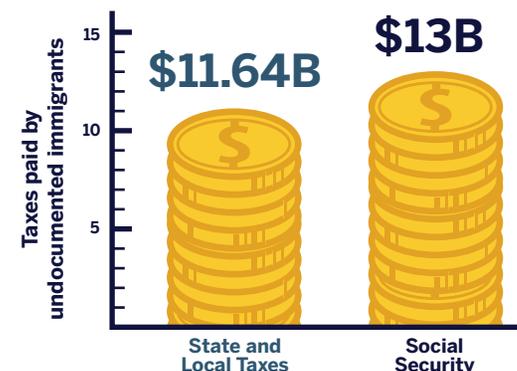
Higher immigration is associated with lower crime rates

- Between 1990 and 2013, the foreign-born share of the U.S. population increased from 7.9 percent to 13.1 percent and the number of unauthorized immigrants increased from 3.5 million to 11.2 million.
- During the same period, the violent crime rate declined 48 percent—which included falling rates of aggravated assault, robbery, rape, and murder. The property crime rate fell 41 percent, including declining rates of motor vehicle theft, larceny/robbery, and burglary.



Source: [Federal Bureau of Investigation](#)

Annually, undocumented immigrants pay an estimated \$11.64 billion in state and local taxes, and pay \$13 billion to Social Security.



Source: [Institute on Taxation and Economic Policy](#)
[Social Security Administration](#)

Immigrants start businesses and grow the economy.



Immigrants are more likely to start businesses than native-born Americans.

Source: [Kauffman Foundation](#)



Immigration has an overall positive impact on long-run economic growth in the U.S.

Source: [National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine](#)



If mass deportation were enacted, US GDP would drop by \$1.6 trillion.

Source: [American Action Forum](#)