

Immigration Facts 1: Myths

ONE: IMMIGRANTS ARE OVERRUNNING OUR COUNTRY AND MOST ARE HERE ILLEGALLY

More than 40 million people living in the US were born in another country, with just about every country in the world represented. Roughly half of them are naturalized citizens.

Immigrants today account for about 13.6% of the US population.

More than 60% of immigrants in the US have lived here for 15+ years, and 77% of immigrants are in the country legally.

Between $\frac{1}{3}$ and $\frac{1}{2}$ of undocumented immigrants have overstayed their visitor, student or work visas. This means they entered the US with lawful documentation and only later became undocumented.

TWO: IMMIGRANTS BRING CRIME AND VIOLENCE

Study after study has shown that immigrants are less likely than native-born citizens to commit crimes or to be incarcerated. There is a negative correlation between levels of immigration and crime rates.

THREE: IMMIGRANTS TAKE JOBS AND SERVICES AND DON'T PAY TAXES

Immigrants can help create new jobs because they often start their own businesses. They are twice as likely to start businesses as US-born citizens. States with large numbers of immigrants report lower unemployment rates for everyone.

Immigrants collectively pay between \$90 and \$140 billion each year in taxes, and a recent study found that undocumented immigrants alone pay roughly \$11.64 billion in taxes each year.

Everyone pays sales taxes on goods they purchase and property taxes on the homes they buy or rent. More than half of all undocumented immigrant households file income tax returns.

DEFINITIONS OF TERMS

Permanent residents have a green or alien card which authorizes them to live and work indefinitely in the US while retaining citizenship in another country. The card requires renewal every 10 years to confirm residency status.

Temporary residents are foreign nationals granted the right to remain in the US for a certain length of time with a visa or residency permit without full citizenship.

Unauthorized or undocumented immigrants lack sufficient paperwork to remain in the country.

Temporary Protected Status (TPS) allows nationals of certain countries that are confronting ongoing armed conflict, environmental disaster or extraordinary temporary conditions, to work in the US and not be deported. A TPS designation is made for 6, 12 or 18 months at a time and can be extended.

DACA (Deferred Action on Childhood Arrivals) is a program that shields undocumented children who arrived in the US as very young children from deportation. They are often referred to as "dreamers", which was the name of unsuccessful legislation that would have provided a pathway to citizenship for these 800,000 young people.

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FOUR: IMMIGRANTS COME TO THE US TO OBTAIN WELFARE AND OTHER BENEFITS

Many studies show that on average, immigrants pay more in taxes than they receive in benefits.

With very few exceptions (victims of human trafficking), undocumented immigrants are not eligible for Social Security, Medicaid, Medicare and food stamps.

Most lawful immigrants are not entitled to these benefits until they have been in the US for at least five years. This means that Social Security is often being deducted from immigrants' paychecks but they cannot access those benefits.

FIVE: IMMIGRANTS COME TO THE US TO HAVE BABIES HERE

Research consistently shows that the vast majority of immigrants — those with lawful status and those undocumented — come to the US for economic opportunities or to flee violence or poverty in their countries.

SIX: TERRORISTS ARE COMING ACROSS THE BORDER FROM MEXICO

State Department reports on terrorism have expressed more concern about Canada, which unlike Mexico, has been home to “violent extremists inspired by terrorist groups such as ISIS and al-Qaida and their affiliates and adherents,” as it said in 2017. When it comes to land crossings, Canada has more often been the source of terrorism suspects entering the U.S., though not in great numbers. By far the majority of people who arouse concern try to enter by air.

REFERENCES:

*Myths: 2019 Anti-Defamation League, www.adl.org;
Myth #6: AP Fact Check, January 8, 2019*

Definitions: Wikipedia; American Immigration Council: www.americanimmigrationcouncil.org; and Anti-Defamation League, www.adl.org

COMPILED BY THE WASHINGTON NATIONAL CATHEDRAL SANCTUARY MINISTRY

This ministry carries out the resolutions on immigration passed by the 79th General Convention of the Episcopal Church.

Dora Currea, Marty Dickinson and
Claudia Russell, **CO-CHAIRS**

The Rev. Canon Leonard L. Hamlin, Sr.
CATHEDRAL CANON MISSIONER

The Rev. Patrick L. Keyser
PRIEST ASSOCIATE

SANCTUARY MINISTRY MISSION STATEMENT:

We are a visible compassionate face and voice for immigrants and refugees who come to our country in search of safety for themselves and their families.

We are a loving spiritual sanctuary of support for those whose lives are threatened and upended because of their status in our country.

We are a people of faith who, through prayer and action, support isolated and powerless immigrants, letting them know that there are others who pray for them and have their interest at heart.

Contact: sanctuary@cathedralcongregation.org



3101 WISCONSIN AVE. NW • WASHINGTON, DC 20016
202.537.6200 • CATHEDRAL.ORG • @WNCATHEDRAL

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