

THE TRUTH ABOUT IMMIGRANTS

People have many misconceptions about immigrants in America. Below are the facts about immigrants and immigration in America today.

Undocumented immigrants would legalize their status if they had the option.

The vast majority of those in the country without proper immigration status do not have a way to obtain legal status, as the current immigration system does not provide a means for everyone. There are visa routes for certain qualifying immigrants, but this does not help everyone, especially those fleeing gangs or severe violence in their home countries. Even though United States Citizenship and Immigration Services started offering in-country refugee processing for areas facing hardship, wait times for these programs remain very lengthy and as of 2015 no one has received permission to come to the U.S., yet. Many individuals facing extreme poverty and violence, threats from organized crime syndicates, harmful regime activities, etc. cannot risk harm to themselves or their families while waiting months to even get in line for other programs, if any, available to them.

Even immigrants *with* status don't necessarily have a path to citizenship.

Individuals granted temporary immigration relief by the U.S. government do not always have security in their status. For example, individuals granted Temporary Protected Status (TPS) due to unsafe conditions in their home countries or the incapability of their home countries to readmit their nationals safely have no path to citizenship. There are many other immigrants with status who have no path to citizenship including recipients of Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) and temporary workers.

<http://www.uscis.gov/humanitarian/temporary-protected-status>

Immigrants are contributing members of society and give a big boost to our economy.

The 2014 purchasing power of South Carolina's Latinos totaled \$5.1 billion—an increase of 1,285% since 1990. Asian buying power totaled \$2.9 billion—an increase of 839% since 1990. <http://www.terry.uga.edu/about/centers-institutes/seliq/publications>.

In their piece on New Americans in South Carolina, the American Immigration Council states that as of 2013, immigrants had paid more than \$205,405,000 in taxes in South Carolina alone. In fact, \$33 million in state and local taxes was paid by unauthorized immigrants alone in 2013. The AIC also states that in 2013, the businesses of immigrants had sales and receipts of \$4.6 billion and immigrants accounted for \$7.1 billion in consumer purchasing power in South Carolina.

Immigrant business owners in South Carolina founded such companies as Dominion Tar and Chemical Company (DOMTAR), which employs 8,700 people and brings in over \$5.6 billion in annual revenues to South Carolina.

Foreign affiliated businesses in S.C. have created more than 163,000 jobs, and operated more than 1,200 locations for manufacturing, distribution, service, and retail. Examples of foreign-owned companies with significant operations in South Carolina include Michelin, BMW, FUJIFILM, AG, BAE Systems, BASF, Samsung, Siemens, and GlaxoSmithKline.

South Carolina's 9,552 Asian-owned businesses had sales and receipts of over \$4 billion and employed 27,459 people in 2012. In 2012, the state's 10,332 Latino-owned businesses had sales and receipts of \$1.8 billion and employed 10,465 people. <https://www.census.gov/econ/sbo/getdata.html>

South Carolina's 6,253 **foreign students contributed \$171.8 million** to the state's economy in tuition, fees, and living expenses for the 2014-2015 academic

year. http://www.nafsa.org/File/econvalue2016_natl.pdf

If immigrants were granted administrative relief the contributions would be even higher.

As of 2014, South Carolina's eligible population for Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) and Deferred Action for Parental Accountability (DAPA) is approximately 40,000. If all receive administrative relief the state will see an increase of gross state product earnings of about \$ 1,508,000,000. The number of new jobs created is expected to be 190. <http://ampr.gs/1MWjTiD>

The reasons for the gains from DACA and DAPA are because immigrants with work permits can obtain better jobs that match their skill sets and feel more comfortable enforcing labor rights against unscrupulous employers. More income for immigrants will have a ripple effect, as they can spend more on goods and services and education, thus increasing revenues for the state and other residents. <http://ampr.gs/1MWjTiD>

Immigrants – even undocumented immigrants – pay taxes.

All people pay taxes through various means, this includes immigrants with and without legal status. Immigrants pay sales and excise taxes when purchasing goods and services and through property taxes, either as renters or homeowners. Immigrants with status can pay taxes to the IRS with their SSNs. Undocumented immigrants can pay taxes with an Individual Tax Identification Number (ITIN). Evidence indicates that at least 50% of immigrants do file incomes tax returns with ITINs. <http://bit.ly/1M7nZmh>

The Institute on Taxation and Economic Policy (ITEP) found that in 2012 undocumented immigrants paid an estimated \$11.84 billion in state and local taxes. S.C.'s share of that is \$69,254,000. <http://bit.ly/1M7nZmh>

Allowing these undocumented workers to work legally would mean an additional \$2.2 billion in tax contributions per year, according to ITEP. Even if only president Obama's executive action programs were put into place, the United States would see approximately \$845 million increase in taxpayer contributions per year, once fully implemented. <http://www.itep.org/pdf/undocumentedtaxes2015.pdf>

The vast majority of the income immigrants earn stays in the U.S. benefiting local communities.

According to the PEW Research Center for Hispanic trends, even though immigrants send money to their home countries, in 2013 immigrants spent \$306 billion in the U.S., benefiting our economy. <http://www.pewhispanic.org/2013/11/15/remittances-to-latin-america-recover-but-not-to-mexico/>

Removing immigrants without status from the state would cause an economic loss.

If all unauthorized immigrants were removed from South Carolina, **the state would lose \$1.8 billion in economic activity, \$782.9 million in gross state product, and approximately 12,059 jobs**, even accounting for adequate market adjustment time. <http://bit.ly/1GIqwNP>

Immigrants do not take jobs away from native-born workers.

In fact, the Manhattan Institute has noted that the U.S. economy increasingly requires foreign, low-skilled workers, in the fields of sanitation, housekeeping, stucco masonry and farmworkers. These are jobs that the U.S.-born workforce cannot fill, either due to becoming older, being better educated (91% of native born persons have at least a high school diploma), or due to unwillingness to take these jobs. http://www.manhattan-institute.org/html/ib_18.htm#.VjDptLerS70

Undocumented immigrants are not a drain on U.S. government programs and public benefits.

Federal law imposes restrictions on all immigrants' eligibility for public benefits. People without legal status are not eligible for state or federal public benefits, which includes, Social Security, Supplemental Security Income (SSI), and Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), health care (Medicaid and Medicare), and food stamps. The only benefits undocumented immigrants can receive are Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) and health care for some emergencies, but only in certain circumstances. Even most legal immigrants, with the exception of certain refugees and asylees and

victims of domestic violence and human trafficking, are ineligible for the majority of public funded programs for the first five years after they receive their green card. www.scijustice.org See also, <http://object.cato.org/sites/cato.org/files/pubs/pdf/edb17.pdf> and <http://kff.org/disparities-policy/issue-brief/five-basic-facts-on-immigrants-and-their/>

U.S. citizen children living with immigrant parents are eligible for some benefits, but they use them less often than children of U.S. born citizens. Studies that claim undocumented immigrants use welfare benefits are high rates usually are counting what U.S. born children use, not the parents themselves. The Cato Institute on Economic Development conducted a study in 2011 regarding immigrants and welfare programs. Their findings indicate that across the board U.S. born children of immigrant parents receive less benefits. <http://object.cato.org/sites/cato.org/files/pubs/pdf/edb17.pdf>

Health care costs are lower for immigrants than for U.S.-born individuals.

According to the Kaiser Commission, non-citizens are less likely to use the emergency room. In 2006, 20% of U.S. citizen adults and 22% of U.S. citizen children had visited the emergency room within the past year. In contrast, 13% of noncitizen adults and 12% of noncitizen children had utilized emergency room care. <http://kff.org/disparities-policy/issue-brief/five-basic-facts-on-immigrants-and-their/>

Immigrants are law-abiding and have a relatively low crime rate.

Being in the U.S. without legal status is not a crime, but instead a civil penalty; therefore, undocumented immigration status does not make someone a criminal. Many times immigrants who violate this civil penalty are held in federal jail. Deported immigrants who come back to the U.S. can be charged for unauthorized re-entry and are held in federal prisons for the offense. This can account for why some groups cite numbers from federal prisons as evidence immigrants commit more crimes. In a special report entitled “The Criminalization of Immigration in the United States” (available here: <http://bit.ly/1IMwZQ0>), Ewing, Martinez, and Rumbaut found that increased immigration does not correlate with increased crime, quite the opposite, in fact. These scholars found that between 1990 and 2013, the immigration population more than tripled, rising from 3.5 million to 11.2 million. During this time frame, Ewing, Martinez, and Rumbaut found that crime decreased by 48%, according to FBI data. (<http://1.usa.gov/1LitHEQ>). The same report stated the following regarding immigrants being less likely to be behind bars than native-born citizens:

“The 2010 Census data reveals that incarceration rates among the young, less educated Mexican, Salvadoran, and Guatemalan men who make up the bulk of the unauthorized population are significantly lower than the incarceration rate among native-born young men without a high-school diploma. In 2010, The Criminalization of Immigration in the United States report indicated less-educated native-born men age 18-39 had an incarceration rate of 10.7 percent—more than triple the 2.8 percent rate among foreign-born Mexican men, and five times greater than the 1.7 percent rate among foreign-born Salvadoran and Guatemalan men.”

Considering information from both sources, immigrants are less likely to be incarcerated than native-born individuals, and increased immigration does not, in fact, link to increased crime.

Immigrants do learn English.

No one can learn another language overnight. It takes time. The Migration Policy Institute (MPI) found that in 2013, around 41% of immigrants were considered Limited English Proficient (LEP). The demand for English classes at the adult level exceeds supply. Today’s immigrants understand that learning English is vital to full participation in society, and they are learning English just like immigrants of the past. The best way to help immigrants learn English is to enable them to work and interact with native speakers and to improve English as a Second Language programs in public schools and local communities.

<http://www.migrationpolicy.org/article/limited-english-proficient-population-united-states>

In South Carolina, **90% of US born children with immigrant parents** were considered “English proficient” as of 2011. <http://datatool.urban.org/charts/datatool/pages.cfm> (or) <http://urbn.is/1Q4nxv7>

Policies directed at immigrants quickly impact citizens.

In 2013, there were approximately 97,000 children in South Carolina who had at least one immigrant parent. Looking at the whole United States, there were upwards of 17 million children in that same year with at least one immigrant parent. Around 295,000 United States citizen babies were born to at least one undocumented parent in 2013. Because of this, adverse immigration policies affect not only the immigrant, but also the citizens living with the immigrant.

<http://www.migrationpolicy.org/programs/data-hub/charts/children-immigrant-families?width=1000&height=850&iframe=true>

<http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2015/09/11/number-of-babies-born-in-u-s-to-unauthorized-immigrants-declines/>

The percentage of foreign-born in America is not at an all-time high.

In fact, the percentage of the U.S. population that is foreign-born now is less than it was in the early 20th-century. <http://www.immigrationpolicy.org/high-school/top-10-myths-about-immigration>

The most important thing to remember about immigrants is that they are just the latest in a long history of immigration in America.

The immigrants of today, like those from our past, begin by settling in their own neighborhoods and building businesses for their fellow immigrants, but eventually integrate into the “Melting Pot” of America. “If we view history objectively, we remember that every new wave of immigrants has been met with suspicion and doubt and yet, ultimately, every past wave of immigrants has been vindicated and saluted.” <http://www.immigrationpolicy.org/high-school/top-10-myths-about-immigration>

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This brochure was published by the South Carolina Appleseed Legal Justice Center. South Carolina Appleseed Legal Justice Center is dedicated to advocacy for low-income people in South Carolina to effect systemic change by acting in and through the courts, legislature, administrative agencies, community and the media, and helping others do the same through education, training and co counseling.

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