

Countering Myths on Immigration

Immigrants don't want to learn English — FALSE

The development of English language proficiency among non-English speaking immigrants today mirrors that of Nineteenth and early Twentieth century immigration, when masses of Italian, German, and Eastern European immigrants came to America. While first generation, non-English speaking immigrants predictably have lower rates of English proficiency than native speakers, 91% of second generation immigrants are fluent or near fluent English speakers. By the third generation, 97% speak English fluently or near fluently.

(Source: Shirin Hakimzadeh and D'Vera Cohn, "English Usage Among Hispanics in the United States," Pew Hispanic Forum, Dec. 6, 2007. <http://pewhispanic.org/reports/report.php?ReportID=82>; Janet Murguia and Cecilia Muñoz, "From Immigrant to Citizen," *The American Prospect* (Oct. 23, 2005), <http://www.prospect.org/cs/articles?articleId=10487>)

Immigrants Don't Pay Taxes — FALSE

Undocumented immigrants pay taxes. Between one half and three quarters of undocumented immigrants pay state and federal taxes. They also contribute to Medicare and provide as much as 7 billion dollars a year to the Social Security Fund. Further still, undocumented workers pay sales taxes where applicable and property taxes—directly if they own and indirectly if they rent.

(Source: Immigration Policy Center, "Undocumented Immigrants as Taxpayers," (November 2007), http://www.americanimmigrationcouncil.org/sites/default/files/docs/Undocumented%20as%20Taxpayer%2011-29-07_0.pdf; Eduardo Porter "Illegal Immigrants are Bolstering Social Security with Billions," *New York Times*, (April 5, 2005), <http://www.nytimes.com/2005/04/05/business/05immigration.html?ex=1270353600&en=78c87ac4641dc383&ei=5090&partner=kmarx>)

Immigrants Increase the Crime rate — FALSE

Research has shown that immigrant communities do not increase the crime rate and that immigrants commit fewer crimes than native born Americans. While the undocumented immigrant population doubled from 1994 to 2005, violent crime dropped by 34% and property crimes decreased by 32%. Furthermore, Harvard sociologist Robert Sampson has found that first generation immigrants are 45% less likely to commit violent crimes than Americanized, third generation immigrants.

(Source: Immigration Policy Center, "Immigrants and Crime: Are They Connected," December, 2007, <http://www.americanimmigrationcouncil.org/sites/default/files/docs/Crime%20Fact%20Check%2012-12-07.pdf>; Robert Sampson, "Open Doors Don't Invite Criminals," *The New York Times*, March 11, 2006, A15; Executive Office of the President: Council of Economic Advisors, "Immigration's Economic Impact," June 20, 2007, http://www.whitehouse.gov/cea/cea_immigration_062007.html)

Immigrants Take Jobs Away from Americans — FALSE

A study produced by the Pew Hispanic Center reveals that "Rapid increases in the foreign-born population at the state level are not associated with negative effects on the employment of native-born workers." In fact, given that the number of native born low wage earners is falling nationally, immigrants are playing an important role

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in offsetting that decline. The Urban Institute reports that between 2000 and 2005 the total number of low wage workers declined by approximately 1.8 million while the number of unskilled immigrant workers increased by 620,000, thus offsetting the total decline by about a third.

(Source: The Urban Institute, "Trends in the Low-Wage Immigrant Labor Force, 2000-2005," March, 2007, <http://www.urban.org/publications/411426.html>; Rakesh Kochhar, "Growth in the Foreign Born Workforce and Employment of the Native Born," Pew Hispanic Center, August 10, 2006, <http://pewhispanic.org/reports/report.phpReportID=69>)

Immigrants are a drain on the United States Economy — FALSE

The immigrant community is not a drain on the U.S. economy but, in fact, proves to be a net benefit. Research reported by both the CATO Institute and the President's Council of Economic Advisors reveals that the average immigrant pays a net 80,000 dollars more in taxes than they collect in government services. For immigrants with college degrees the net fiscal return is \$198,000. Furthermore, the American Farm Bureau asserts that without guest workers the U.S. economy would lose as much as \$9 billion a year in agricultural production and 20 percent of current production would go overseas.

(Source: CATO Institute, *CATO Handbook for Congress: Policy Recommendations for the 108th Congress*, <http://www.cato.org/pubs/handbook/hb108/hb108-63.pdf>; Executive Office of the President: Council of Economic Advisors, "Immigration's Economic Impact," June 20, 2007, http://www.whitehouse.gov/cea/cea_immigration_062007.html; Derrick Z. Jackson, "Undocumented Workers Contribute Plenty," *The Boston Globe*, April 12, 2006, http://www.boston.com/news/globe/editorial_opinion/oped/articles/2006/04/12/undocumented_workers_contribute_plenty/)

Undocumented immigrants are a Burden on the Healthcare System — FALSE

Federal, state and local governments spend approximately 1.1 billion dollars annually on healthcare costs for undocumented immigrants, aged 18-64, or approximately \$11 in taxes for each U.S. household. This compares to 88 billion dollars spent on all health care for non-elderly adults in the U.S. in 2000. Foreign born individuals tend to use fewer health care services because they are relatively healthier than their native born counterparts. For example, in Los Angeles County, "total medical spending on undocumented immigrants was \$887 million in 2000 – 6 percent of total costs, although undocumented immigrants comprise 12 percent of the region's residents."

(Source: The Rand Corporation, "RAND Study Shows Relatively Little Public Money Spent Providing Healthcare to Undocumented Immigrants," November 14, 2006, <http://www.rand.org/news/press.06/11.14.html>; Dana P. Goldman, James P. Smith and Neeraj Sood, "Immigrants and the Cost of Medical Care," *Health Affairs* 25, no. 6 (2006): 1700-1711)

Source: <http://www.justiceforimmigrants.org/myths.shtm>