



Combating Myths About Immigrants

America has a mixed history of both welcoming and having a lot of animosity towards immigrants, especially depending on where an immigrant is coming from, how they look, or what they have to offer. Therefore, there is a lot of misinformation and myths about immigrants and the immigration system. Below are quick answers to some common questions and myths about immigrants in the U.S.

Where are most immigrants coming from?

The largest group of immigrants living in the U.S. are from Mexico with around 10.7 million. However, there are [fewer Mexican immigrants today](#) than a decade ago. The other [top countries of origin](#) are India, China, Philippines, El Salvador, Vietnam, Cuba, Dominican Republic, Guatemala, and Korea.

Are more immigrants than ever coming to the U.S.?

According to the [1900 census](#), nearly 14% of the population were immigrants. The latest [census estimates](#) also show around 14% of the U.S. population are immigrants. The majority of immigrants are not [unauthorized](#).

What is the process of entry for immigrants?

There are multiple types of visas for those wanting to immigrate to the U.S., and each visa has their own set of eligibility requirements. The processing time varies by the type of visa, with family-based immigration often taking less time. The U.S. government considers each applicant on a case-by-case basis, so many find themselves years waiting for approval. These long wait times force many immigrants to look for undocumented methods of entry into the country so they have an opportunity for a better life.

What is the crime rate for immigrants?

Immigrants are not more likely to commit crimes than those born in the United States. According to research out of [Stanford University](#), immigrants are 30 percent less likely to be incarcerated than are U.S.-born individuals who are white. A study from the [Department of Justice](#) found that relative to undocumented immigrants, U.S.-born citizens are over 2 times more likely to be arrested for violent crimes, 2.5 times more likely to be arrested for drug crimes, and over 4 times more likely to be arrested for property crimes.

What is the frequency of drugs being seized from immigrants at the border?
While the number of drugs being seized at the border, particularly fentanyl, has increased since 2020, [cartels are hiring U.S. citizens](#) and authorized Mexican citizens to smuggle the drugs through ports of entry. Nearly 90% of fentanyl is being seized at official border crossings and [over half](#) of those seizures were being smuggled by U.S. citizens. Migrants are not recruited as drug mules because the cartel prefers experienced border crossers who won't be detained.

Do undocumented immigrants pay taxes?
Undocumented immigrants pay taxes like everyone else who lives and works in the U.S. They have federal and state tax withholdings from their paychecks and [ultimately pay billions](#) of dollars in taxes and social security contributions, which they cannot access. And immigrants, like the rest of us, pay sales tax on purchases they make while here in the US.

Do undocumented immigrants receive welfare and other government benefits?
Immigrants are categorized into [“qualified” and “not qualified”](#) for welfare and government benefits; undocumented immigrants are considered “not qualified” for these programs. However, some states have enacted health programs and other benefits regardless of a person's status.

Does immigration hurt the US economy?
In short, no. Many industries, including agriculture, heavily rely on immigrants (including undocumented immigrants). According to the [Penn Wharton Budget Model](#), immigration leads to more innovation, a better educated workforce, greater occupational specialization, better matching of skills with jobs, and higher overall economic productivity.

Are immigrants stealing jobs from US-born workers?
No, immigrants are not stealing jobs from native born workers. There is not a fixed number of jobs, and immigrants often create jobs as they form businesses here in the U.S. and spend their money on U.S. goods. According to “Streets of Gold” by Ran Abramitzky and Leah Boustan, there is also little evidence to support that immigration depresses wages for U.S. workers.

Take Action: Utilize the above myth busters to change the immigration conversation on social media and in your community.