

# Myths and Realities of Immigration

## Myth #1: Immigrants don't pay taxes and only come here to take welfare

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### Facts

- Immigrants pay taxes, in the form of income, property -directly if they own and indirectly if they rent- sales, and taxes at the federal and state level. Between one half and three quarters of undocumented immigrants pay state and federal taxes.<sup>1</sup>
- Studies find that immigrants pay between \$90 and \$140 billion a year in federal, state, and local taxes. Undocumented immigrants pay taxes which are documented by Social Security Administrations "suspense file" which are taxes that cannot be traced to a workers name or social security number. They also contribute to Medicare and provide as much as 7 billion dollars a year to the Social Security Fund.<sup>2</sup>
- Immigrants most often come the US to work and reunite with their families.<sup>3</sup>
- Immigrant's labor force participation is significantly high than native born and immigrant workers make up a larger share of the US labor force (12.4%) than they do the US population (11.5%).<sup>4</sup>
- Ratio between immigrant uses of public benefits versus the amount they pay is favorable to the US. In one estimate, immigrants earn about \$240 billion a year, pay about \$90 billion a year in taxes, and use about \$5 billion in public benefits. Immigrants pay about \$20 to \$30 billion more in taxes than the amount of government services they use.<sup>5</sup>

## Myth #2: Immigrants take jobs and opportunities away from Americans and drain the U.S. economy

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### Facts

- 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.
- 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.
- In Texas taking undocumented workers out of Texas economy would result in loss of \$220 billion to economy and 1.1 million jobs.- *2008 Perryman Report*
- During the 1990's, half of all new workers were foreign born, filling gaps left by native born workers. Immigrants fill jobs in key sectors, start their own businesses, and contribute to a thriving economy.<sup>6</sup>
- As Alan Greenspan points out, 70% of immigrants arrive in prime working age. That means we haven't spent a penny on their education yet they are transplanted into our workforce and will contribute to \$500 billion toward our social security system over the next 20 years.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Justice For Immigrants [http://www.immigrationforum.org/about/articles/tax\\_study.htm](http://www.immigrationforum.org/about/articles/tax_study.htm)

<sup>2</sup> Justice For Immigrants [http://www.immigrationforum.org/about/articles/tax\\_study.htm](http://www.immigrationforum.org/about/articles/tax_study.htm)

<sup>3</sup> Justice for Immigrants "Questioning Immigration Policy \_\_Can We Afford to Open Our Arms?Friends Committee on National Legislation Document #G-606-DOM, January 25, 1996. <http://www.fas.org/pub/gen/fcnl/immigra.html>

<sup>4</sup> Justice for Immigrants "Questioning Immigration Policy \_\_Can We Afford to Open Our Arms?Friends Committee on National Legislation Document #G-606-DOM, January 25, 1996. <http://www.fas.org/pub/gen/fcnl/immigra.html>

<sup>5</sup> Justice for Immigrants "Questioning Immigration Policy \_\_Can We Afford to Open Our Arms?Friends Committee on National Legislation Document #G-606-DOM, January 25, 1996. <http://www.fas.org/pub/gen/fcnl/immigra.html>

<sup>6</sup> Andrew Sum, Mykhailo Trubskyy, Ishwar Khatiwada, et al., Immigrant Workers in the New England Labor Market: Implications for Workforce Development Policy, Center for Labor Market Studies, Northeastern University, Boston, Prepared for the New England Regional Office, the Employment and Training Administration, and the U.S. Department of Labor, Boston Massachusetts, October 2002.

<http://www.nupr.neu.edu/1102/immigration.PDF#search=>

'center%20for%20labor%20market%20studies%20at%20Northeastern%20University%20studies')

### **Myth #3: Immigrants don't want to learn English or become Americans**

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#### **Facts**

- Within 10 years of arrival, 75% of immigrants speak English well
- Demand for English classes at the adult level far exceeds supply.
- 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.<sup>8</sup>
- The number of immigrants naturalizing spiked sharply after the enactment of the immigration and welfare reform laws in 1996 and the terrorist attacks in 2001.
- Refer to educational attainment chart (Kleinberg, Figure 6)

### **Myth #4: Weak US border enforcement has led to high undocumented immigration**

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#### **Facts**

- From 1986 to 1998, the border patrol budget increased six fold and the numbers of agents stationed on our southwest border doubled to 8500. The border patrol toughened enforcement strategies by heavily patrolling typical urban entry points and pushing migrants into dangerous desert areas in hopes of deterring crossings. Instead, undocumented immigrant population doubled in that time frame to 8 million.<sup>9</sup>

### **Myth #5: As more immigrants move in crime rates go up**

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#### **Facts**

- Nadler: total crime rates actually fall as the number of immigrations ascends. The federal bureau of investigation ran a report on total crime rates in the top 19 high immigrant states versus the other 32 states. This report showed that those 19 states with high immigrant populations reduced their crime rate by 13.6% between 1999 and 2006, whereas the 32 other states only reduced by 7.1%. This proves that higher immigrant populations do not cause higher crime rates.
- Similarly, violent crime versus non-violent crime shows great differences between those states with high immigrant populations versus those without. Those 19 states with high immigrant populations fell 15% of violent crime and 13.4% of non-violent crime. The 32 other states violent crime rates only fell by 1.2% and non-violent crime by 7.8%. Crime rates are going down all across the United States, but at significantly higher levels in High Immigrant Population states.<sup>10</sup>
- JFI: Furthermore, Harvard sociologist Robert Sampson has found that first generation immigrants are 45% less likely to commit violent crimes than Americanized, third generation immigrants.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Andrew Sum, Mykhailo Trubskyy, Ishwar Khatiwada, et al., *Immigrant Workers in the New England Labor Market: Implications for Workforce Development Policy*, Center for Labor Market Studies, Northeastern University, Boston, Prepared for the New England Regional Office, the Employment and Training Administration, and the U.S. Department of Labor, Boston Massachusetts, October 2002.

<http://www.nupr.neu.edu/1102/immigration.PDF#search=center%20for%20labor%20market%20studies%20at%20Northeastern%20University%20studies>

<sup>8</sup> Americans Immigration Lawyers Association "Myths and Facts in the Immigration Debate" 8/14/03.

<sup>9</sup> Justice for Immigrants 2008 [http://www.ncjrs.gov/ondcoppubs/publications/enforce/border/intro\\_3.html](http://www.ncjrs.gov/ondcoppubs/publications/enforce/border/intro_3.html)

<sup>10</sup> Source Immigration and the Wealth of States. Richard Nadler. Americas Majority Foundation

<sup>11</sup> Source: Immigration Policy Center, "Immigrants and Crime: Are They Connected," December, 2007,

<http://www.aifl.org/ipc/factchecks/CrimeFactCheck10-16-07.pdf>; Robert Sampson, "Open Doors Don't Invite Criminals," *The New York Times*, March 1, 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](http://www.whitehouse.gov/cea/cea_immigration_062007.html)