Immigration Myths Busted

Most immigrants are here illegally

Over 72% of immigrants are in the U.S. legally.

68% citizens or legal residents
28% legal temporary workers
4% undocumented

40.2 million immigrants in the U.S.

lirs.org/mythbuster

Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service
IMMIGRANTS DRAIN THE PUBLIC BENEFITS SYSTEM

Low-income people and naturalized citizens enroll in government programs at lower rates than US-born citizens, and face higher restrictions. Undocumented immigrants do not qualify for public benefits.

Sources: Cato Institute, Department of Health and Human Services, Department of Agriculture

Figures may not add up to 100% due to rounding.
MYTH

IMMIGRANTS ARE MORE LIKELY TO COMMIT CRIMES

Native-born citizens are imprisoned at higher rates than immigrants, contrary to popular stereotypes. Immigrants make up roughly 6 percent of the entire prison population.

Rates calculated using total federal and state prison populations and total population per group. Previous studies show more divisive rates but focus on the male population ages 18 to 39.

Source: Bureau of Justice Statistics, American Community Surveys (2005-11)
MYTH
UNDOCUMENTED IMMIGRANTS DON’T PAY TAXES

TOTAL U.S. UNDOCUMENTED POPULATION: 11.2 M
STATE AND LOCAL TAXES PAID, 2010: $10.6 B

10 STATES WITH LARGEST IMMIGRANTpopulations

Undocumented immigrants paid $10.6 billion in state and local taxes in 2010, according to estimates by the Institute on Taxation and Economic Policy. These include property taxes on owned or rental homes, and sales and excise taxes paid for goods and services. States with higher undocumented immigrant populations received more taxes.

Source: Institute on Taxation and Economic Policy (ITEP)
MYTH: MOST IMMIGRANTS COME FROM LATIN AMERICA

The largest population of immigrants in the US came from Mexico, but that population has decreased in recent years. The percentage of immigrants from Asia – particularly from China and India – now surpasses the percentage of immigrants from Latin America.

TOTAL FOREIGN-BORN POPULATION, 2012

- Latin America: 52.2%
- Asia: 29.2%
- Europe: 11.8%
- Africa: 2%
- Oceania: 0.6%

FOREIGN-BORN ENTERED 2010 OR LATER

- Latin America: 34.2%
- Asia: 44.3%
- Europe: 7.8%
- Africa: 1%
- Oceania: 2.6%

FOREIGN-BORN ENTERED 2000-09

- Latin America: 54.8%
- Asia: 29%
- Europe: 8%
- Africa: 1.4%
- Oceania: 0.7%

Figures may not add up to 100% due to rounding. Source: 2012 American Community Survey
IMMIGRANTS ARE LESS EDUCATED THAN NATIVE-BORN CITIZENS

Immigrants are less likely than native-born citizens to complete high school – 30.8 percent compared with 10.2 percent, respectively. However, immigrants are more likely than native-born citizens to have graduate or professional degrees.

**NATIVE-BORN POPULATION**

- Master's or Professional Degree: 10.8%
- Bachelor's Degree: 18.6%
- Some College or Associate Degree: 31.3%
- High School Diploma: 29.2%
- Less Than High School Diploma: 10.2%

**FOREIGN-BORN POPULATION**

- Master's or Professional Degree: 11.6%
- Bachelor's Degree: 16.4%
- Some College or Associate Degree: 19.1%
- High School Diploma: 22.2%
- Less Than High School Diploma: 30.8%

Figures may not add up to 100% due to rounding.

Sources: 2012 American Community Survey