



## **Illegal Immigration is More Complicated than Building a Wall**

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November is coming up, so remember not to talk about illegal immigration at your Thanksgiving dinner. You might very well make someone angry, no matter which side you choose.

But if you do make a grave mistake and end up participating in a discussion about illegal immigration, you may as well know a few important facts about the situation. “You got served, Uncle Ronnie,” you will be saying, as you quote this article and then drop a turkey leg like you’re dropping a mic.

First, how many people are coming here, exactly? According to the Pew Research Center, 11.4 million illegal immigrants were in the United States in 2014, or 3.5 percent of the population. The number had been steadily growing until 2007, where it peaked.

But what about the migrant crisis that began in 2014, which saw an influx of Latin Americans, notably unaccompanied children from places like Guatemala and El Salvador? As of 2015, the magnitude of immigration has been steadily decreasing, says the Pew Research Center.

All of this talk about immigration raises an important question. How are they even getting here? The first way is called “entry without inspection.” There is this image in people’s minds of a Mexican putting on his backpack, hiking through treacherous terrain, and sneaking into America. Of course, this can also be done by boat, from many countries.

What is also surprisingly common is when someone gets a visa, comes to the United States, and simply overstays that visa. According to Politifact.com, this accounts for at least 40 percent of illegal immigration into the United States. A report from the Department of Homeland Security says that of the 45 million visitors to the US in 2015 whose visas expired, roughly 400,000 were still here in 2016. Over 90 thousand of these are thought to be from Canada.

Should we be afraid of these people? Let's investigate.

It is worth noting that much of this crime took place around the southern border of the United States, but immigrants actually tend to commit less crime overall.

Studies from the University of Massachusetts-Boston, the CATO institute and the American Immigration Council have found that immigrants are less likely overall to commit crimes than the general population. However, statistically, their offspring will commit more crimes.

The tricky thing about all of this is that the very nature of undocumented immigration makes it difficult to gather reliable statistics. Knowing the behaviors of immigrants is one thing, but it's harder to study people if they aren't even on the record.

Finally, the economy. Are illegal immigrants taking our jobs? The answer is: maybe, if you have aspirations to be an unskilled laborer.

A study by the conservative Center for Immigration Studies suggests that most of the new jobs being created are going to non-native-born Americans while native-born job numbers linger around pre-recession levels. However, this "non-native" distinction groups legal and illegal immigrants into the same category.

Also, keep in mind that legal immigrants tend to be more skilled than their illegal counterparts, so immigration in general makes all job markets more competitive.

I think securing the border is important. But knowing the truth is important, too. Illegal immigration is a complex topic that requires much research to understand. Even this article provides only a small glimpse at the nuances of the issue. As always, personally researching the subtleties of a subject is the best way to fully understand and develop a meaningful opinion, especially if it means a better discussion with Uncle Ronnie at Thanksgiving.