

# THE INDEPENDENT

## **US crime rates have decreased in areas of high immigration, reports show**

*Two studies from the Cato Institute and the Sentencing Project cast doubt on populist rhetoric*

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An increased number of immigrants in the US might have contributed to an historic drop in crime rates, according to a new study.

Research also shows that immigrants are less likely than US-born citizens to commit crimes and be imprisoned.

Both reports cast doubt on President Donald Trump's and his administration's populist rhetoric that immigrants and particularly undocumented immigrants are more likely to commit violent crimes.

In one executive order, he said he would publish a weekly list of "criminal actions committed by aliens".

His budget request includes a \$3 billion boost to the Department of Homeland Security, led by John Kelly, which would fund the proposed wall along the US-Mexican border and carry out the President's executive orders on immigration.

Undocumented immigrants in the US have risen from 3.5 million in 1990 to 11.1 million in 2014. Yet a report from criminal research and advocacy group the Sentencing Project suggested that rising immigration may have even contributed to "an historic drop in crime rates" in that time.

It found there were 730 violent crimes per 100,000 citizens 27 years ago, compared to 362 crimes per 100,000 citizens in 2014. The report “is not definitive in proving causation”, however. But it did conclude that “foreign-born residents of the United States commit crime less often than native-born citizens.”

These findings were backed up by a report from the libertarian Cato Institute, which looked at how many people were in prison by migratory status, ethnicity and gender, and found that “all immigrants are less likely to be incarcerated than natives relative to their shares of the population”.

Mr Trump has often pointed to a relatively small spike in crime over the past two years, despite crime having sunk lower over the past several decades, to justify his anti-immigrant stance.

Attorney General Jeff Sessions even claimed when he was sworn into office that crime was rising and it was “a dangerous, permanent trend”.

The Cato study found that there are about 2 million US-born citizens, 123,000 undocumented immigrants and 64,000 documented foreign citizens in US jails.

If natural-born citizens were incarcerated at the same rate as undocumented immigrants, there would be about 893,000 fewer US-born citizens in prison, it found.

Compared to rates of documented migrants in prison, there would be 1.4 million fewer US-born citizens in prison.

Yet Republicans and anti-immigrant campaigners point to a handful of high-profile examples to exploit people’s fears that “bad dudes”, as the President calls them, want to “cause harm” when they come to the US.

One common example is the murder of Kathryn Steinle, who authorities say was killed by a man who had been deported from the US to Mexico five times.

In an executive order signed by Mr Trump to invest more power in the police and reduce illegal immigration, he declared: “They [transnational criminal organisations] have been known to commit brutal murders, rapes, and other barbaric acts,” language which could demonise millions of people who seek a new life in the US.

It is not just the two reports mentioned above that found immigrants pose less threat than is widely presumed among Trump voters.

Additional research from the American Immigration Council discovered that immigrants in the US were significantly less likely than native-born citizens to be imprisoned.

In 2007, the National Bureau of Economic Research found that immigrants were five times less likely to be incarcerated than native-born US citizens, and the likelihood decreased even further between 1980 and 2000.

