



## Washington Post Gives Trump Four More Pinocchios

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The Washington Post took another stab this week at the president's claim that illegal immigrants bring crime.

The Post assessed claims by Trump in 2015 and awarded him four Pinocchios – meaning it ranks the statement as absolutely false. It used the same techniques in 2018 to award the president four Pinocchios.

The 2015 assessment begins, “Data on immigrants and crime are incomplete, but a range of studies show there is no evidence immigrants commit more crimes than native-born Americans.”

This has nothing to do with the president's claim, which dealt with people who sneak into the country illegally. The crime rate among this group is 100 percent since they are in the country from having broken immigration laws. But their crime rates also exceed those of the native population.

The 2018 assessment says, “As we found in 2015, it is all but impossible to determine whether Trump's statement is accurate concerning either legal or undocumented immigrants.”

States house 90 percent of U.S. prisoners, the Post claims, and they “generally do not track how many of their prisoners are undocumented immigrants. But most states do report their total number of noncitizen prisoners every year to the Justice Department, without breaking down their legal status.”

The Post then tells us immigrants make up 13.5 percent of the overall population but only 4 percent of state prisoners, 21 percent of federal prisoners (after, for some reason, immigration offenses are excluded) and are 6 percent of combined federal and state prisoners.

Again, the point President Trump made is about illegal immigrants, and numbers from the U.S. Sentencing Commission, which the Post supplied in 2015 but omitted this year, back him up.

The 2015 report said that in 2013, 38.6 percent of those in federal prisons – which tend to involve more serious crimes – were illegal immigrants. About 17 percent of those offenders were involved in drug cases, which is the main reason Trump has given for wanting to close the border.

The argument is not so much that Trump's claims are false as it is that they can't be proven true and that, “as always, the burden of proof rests with the speaker.”

The problem is that states and localities don't track citizenship status as thoroughly as they could and that the data supplied by pro-immigration groups, such as the Cato Institute, relies on prisoners self-reporting their legal status and thus probably don't accurately reflect the truth.

But John Lott, president of the Crime Prevention Research Center, has assembled such data. He looked at every prisoner who entered the Arizona penal system from January 1985 to June 2017 and did determine how many of those prisoners were illegal immigrants.

He found illegal immigrants were at least 142 percent more likely to be convicted of a crime than other Arizonans. They tended to commit more serious crimes, serve lengthier sentences and be classified as dangerous more frequently, and they were 45 percent more likely to be members of gangs than U.S. citizens in the system.

“If undocumented immigrants committed crime nationally as they do in Arizona, in 2016, they would have been responsible for over 1,000 more murders, 5,200 rapes, 8,900 robberies, 25,300 aggravated assaults and 26,900 burglaries,” Lott’s report found.

The Post applied the same “majority rules” principle it applies to climate science in reaching its conclusion.

“Almost all the independent research on this question – do immigrants bring more crime? – contradicted Trump in 2015 and continues to do so today as we look at newer studies,” the Post wrote. “One report based on Arizona reaches a different conclusion: that undocumented immigrants do commit crimes at higher rates than U.S. citizens or illegal immigrants. But it’s not scientific to extrapolate Arizona’s figures to form nationwide conclusions.”

What it doesn’t admit is that almost all of that independent research was based on what the researchers – and the Post authors themselves – admitted was incomplete data, compromised by their inability to get to the bottom of which prisoners were illegal immigrants and which weren’t.

Lott comes along, solves that problem and delivers some unpopular conclusions. And the Post’s argument is that you can’t extrapolate from a border state in the crosshairs of this battle.