



The Biggest Lies About Immigrants and Crime You'll Hear in 2018

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Sometimes, it seems like there is no downside to politicians lying. For starters, the media has a hard time calling out falsehoods, and it takes a small miracle for The New York Times to even put the word “lie” in print. (It sounds so *harsh*, you see.)

Of course, it helps liars when talking heads on TV start playing with a false statement. As cable news pundits debate whether someone meant an outrageous statement “seriously,” “literally,” or both, a savvy politician will just tell another lie. Then the cycle starts all over again.

Welcome to America in 2018. In this environment, when you have lies flowing from the White House and fake news filling your Facebook feed, you'll hear some whoppers — especially on topics like immigration and welfare. The next time someone on TV or your local diner spouts off about immigration, it'll help to have the facts at your disposal.

Here are the biggest lies about immigrants and crime you're going to hear this year.

1. ‘Crime has skyrocketed with more immigrants in America.’

Actually, the opposite happened. Looking at FBI data compiled by Pew Research, crime dropped by more than half as the U.S. immigrant population doubled over the past two-and-a-half decades.

In 1990, during the first Bush Administration, the violent crime rate was 730 offenses per 100,000 residents. At that point, 19.8 million immigrants lived in America.

By 2014, when the immigrant population had swelled to 42.2 million, the violent crime rate stood at 362 offenses per 100,000 people.

2. ‘Illegal immigrants represent a clear danger to Americans.’

The number of undocumented immigrants more than tripled between 1990 (3.5 million) and 2014 (11 million). Meanwhile, crime in America reached historic lows, with the trend still continuing downward.

Comparing legal and illegal immigrants to native-born Americans, it's clear who you should fear more. Data compiled by the Cato Institute showed the rate of violent crime by legal immigrants

(0.47%) and illegal immigrants (0.85%) sitting much lower than that of American-born citizens (1.53%).

3. ‘Most terrorists are foreign-born.’

We can thank the president for this one. In January 2018, Trump tweeted that “3 in 4 individuals convicted of terrorism-related charges are foreign-born.”

As Lawfare pointed out, Trump’s numbers included terrorists who were brought to the U.S. (through extradition) and don’t include folks who shot up their community. If a machine-gun attack in your hometown isn’t terror, then we don’t know what that word means.

Bottom line: Foreign-born terrorists accounted for 18-21% of terrorism convictions in the past decades.

4. ‘Just being here illegally means you’re a criminal.’

Being in the country illegally is not a crime, and the U.S. Supreme Court said so (much to the bafflement of Fox’s Tucker Carlson). There are criminal violations and there are civil violations.

Someone who crossed the border illegally did commit a crime and thus could be labeled a criminal. However, undocumented immigrants who stayed in the country after their visa expired are committing a civil violation — the type of thing Donald Trump does before settling a lawsuit.

5. ‘Immigrants are brutally killing U.S. border agents.’

Fox News doesn’t have much of a reputation for truth-telling these days, but this lie went above and beyond the typical “Tucker” segment. The incident in question ended with the death of a U.S. border patrol agent in November 2017.

After Trump heard about it, he said the agent had been “brutally beaten.” However, the agent’s partner, who called for help that night, said he thought they “hit a culvert” (i.e., a storm drain).

In January, a Fox headline claimed the agent was “ambushed by illegal immigrants, bashed with rocks.” Yet after federal agents at 37 field offices investigated, they found no evidence of a homicide.

Fox never retracted the story, and it remained up on the site (along with lots of angry comments) as of mid-February. When you have Fox on the job, America’s enemies don’t have to work too hard spreading fake news.

6. ‘Illegal immigrants flood the jails of sanctuary states.’

The states of California, New York, Texas, and Florida have the highest number of undocumented immigrants in the country. However, you don’t see the same share of the population represented in jails.

A 2016 report by The Texas Tribune illustrated this point. With 1.7 million undocumented immigrants living in the state, the group makes up 6.3% of the population. However, they only account for 4.6% of the Texas prison population. American citizens overperform here.

7. ‘Illegals keep getting deported for vicious crimes.’

It’s true criminals have been a priority among those being deported in recent years. President Obama made it a priority for law enforcement back in 2014.

However, according to data collected by Center for American Progress, about half of those deported didn’t commit any serious crime — or any crime as we usually define it. Some 47% of those with a history of convictions only had traffic violations and immigration offenses (i.e., being in the country) on their record.

8. ‘Taxpayers pay for immigrants’ defense in court.’

The U.S. Constitution does not guarantee representation for immigrants facing deportation. If someone can’t afford a lawyer, they must represent themselves.

Many U.S. cities have attempted to change this situation by allocating funds for pro-bono legal help. However, the programs are limited and do not apply to federal detentions prior to deportation.

9. ‘Deporting illegals fast helps reduce crime.’

Since the numbers show immigrants (both documented and undocumented) committing crimes at lower rates than native-born Americans, putting resources into deportations won’t reduce crime in the community.

In fact, most law enforcement agents say the opposite happens. When people fear deportation, they are less likely to report crimes to police, thus allowing criminals to go unpunished.

Intimidation in immigrant communities guarantees one thing: Criminals get away with more crimes.

10. ‘Illegals are cheating America out of taxes.’

If immigrants don’t have papers, employers take taxes out of their earnings and file them to the IRS as part of payroll. Therefore, immigrants pay taxes before they have a chance to do otherwise. This process takes place whether they get paid in cash or checks.

Over the years, the Social Security and Medicare taxes really add up — payments to Social Security alone top \$13 billion a year — but most workers never see those payments in retirement. Instead, they fund the current generation of senior citizens receiving monthly checks.