



Illegal Immigration Found to Have Economic, Social Benefits

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October 30, 2019

A **recent Gallup poll** found that a record high percentage of Americans believe that illegal immigration is the biggest problem facing the country right now.

But while there's no doubt that a massive, unregulated inflow of undocumented immigrants can have unintended consequences that ripple out across society, a **recent study by Clever Real Estate** suggests that the negative effects of illegal immigration may be more a matter of perception than of reality.

The Surprising Connection Between Immigrants and Crime

When you look at the big picture, there doesn't seem to be much direct connection between immigration and crime. Between 2007 and 2016, the total immigrant population grew from 12.5% of the total U.S. population, to 15%. Over that same period, crime and unemployed plummeted, and the economy has grown at a steady pace.

General overviews like this can sometimes be deceiving, but the study found no link between immigrants, legal or illegal, and the crime rate even when it zoomed way in. Regression analyses of 146 U.S. metro areas found there was no correlation between the presence of immigrants, legal or illegal, and the rate of violent crime or property crime; in fact, if you exclude immigration-related charges, undocumented immigrants and U.S. citizens commit crimes at the same rate.

And when there were correlations, they were positive ones. Increases in the population of authorized immigrants were associated with big drops in the murder rate, and much lower rates of larceny and theft. And the presence of unauthorized immigrants was connected to declines in rape. The bottom line? The presence of immigrants seems to be connected to less crime, not more.

Three Case Studies

Let's look at three real life examples of what happens when a city's unauthorized immigrant population decreases. After all, correlation isn't necessarily causation. But if increases in the immigrant population has positive effects, subtracting those immigrants should have measurably negative effects?

Between 2007 and 2016, the cities of El Paso, Texas, Phoenix, Arizona, and Los Angeles all saw significant decreases in their populations of illegal immigrants. In El Paso, unauthorized

immigrants dropped by -2%, in L.A. they dropped by -30%, and in Phoenix they dropped by a whopping -50%.

If the presence of immigrants was connected to crime, then the crime rates in these cities would have fallen faster than the national rate over that period. But the study found the opposite: crime in all three cities decreased much slower than the national rate. That's not all: in L.A., rapes increased by 72% over the period when the undocumented immigrant population decreased by nearly a third, and in Phoenix, rapes when up by 63% as the immigrant population was halved.

Could the presence of immigrants actually *lower* the crime rate? It's not as far-fetched as it might sound; research from **the right-leaning Cato Institute** found that immigrants are less likely to commit crimes than native citizens.

The Public Assistance Issue

Many people who are against immigration cite the possibility that immigrants will use more public assistance than native citizens, which would act as dead weight on the economy. The study looked at this issue, and found no real cause for concern.

An analysis of public assistance statistics found that non-citizens receive slightly more public assistance than native or naturalized citizens, but native citizens receive slightly more supplemental security income than non-citizens or naturalized citizens.

To put it simply, native U.S. citizens and unauthorized residents receive similar average levels of government assistance.

Immigration Buys Home Values

Immigrants seem to have positive effects on the economy as well. A regression analysis, controlling for population and cost of living, found that illegal immigration leads to a measurable increase in home prices. How much of an increase? For every seven additional undocumented immigrants per 1,000 residents, average home prices go up by one dollar.

Break it down and that comes to \$0.14 per immigrant. That may not sound like much, but if we look at a metro area with a median home value of \$100,000, the addition of 100,000 immigrants will drive that number up 9%, or \$9,000, over and above unrelated market appreciation. That's a big chunk of change that'll go into your pocket **when you sell**.

Some of this can be attributed to simple supply and demand. More people in an area means more demand, which translates to higher prices. But immigration affects the economy in other ways. Foreign-born citizens are far less likely to be unemployed than native citizens, and have higher median incomes than native citizens or immigrant residents. They're also much more likely to be entrepreneurs, which means they're in a position to create more jobs.

A study by the New American Economy Research Fund suggest that immigrants have added almost \$4 trillion in housing wealth alone to the U.S. economy. Not only has their presence helped revive flagging rural economies, but even in urban areas where they're less than welcome, dispersed native residents fleeing the new arrivals end up **driving up home values** in their new neighborhoods. It might be little comfort to the people who feel displaced, but hey - a rising tide lifts all our boats.

The bottom line is this: when immigrants arrive, both legal and illegal, crime falls, and home values rise. That means it's not just good manners to welcome new arrivals — it's also good economic sense.