

PastE

Report: Undocumented Immigrants Don't Commit More Crime, Violent or Otherwise

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With a president who is always eager to demonize our nation's undocumented immigrants, and who built his campaign on the premise that many of them were dangerous criminals, this news needs to be shouted from the rooftops: A report from the Pew Research Center featured in the *New York Times* finds that there's no connection between undocumented immigrants and crime. From The Upshot.

The Pew Research Center recently released estimates of undocumented populations sorted by metro area, which The Marshall Project has compared with local crime rates published by the F.B.I. For the first time, there is an opportunity for a broader analysis of how unauthorized immigration might have affected crime rates since 2007...A large majority of the areas recorded decreases in both violent and property crime between 2007 and 2016, consistent with a quarter-century decline in crime across the United States. The analysis found that crime went down at similar rates regardless of whether the undocumented population rose or fell. Areas with more unauthorized migration appeared to have larger drops in crime, although the difference was small and uncertain.

The report was further broken down by crime types, including non-violent property crime, and in every case the solution was the same: A slight decrease, if anything, but never anything statistically significant.

It's a clever method of evaluation from Pew, using a "residual estimation method" that calculates undocumented immigrants—a group it is notoriously hard to analyze by data, since it's difficult by definition to know how many of them exist—by subtracting the number of legal immigrants from the number of "foreign-born" people found by the Census Bureau. It's not perfect, but it's as close as anyone can get, and it at least gives a proportionally accurate look at how many undocumented immigrants exist in each region or city. From there, a comparison with crime rates over time (from 2007 to 2016) provides the last bit of information needed to calculate relative increases or decreases in violent crime.

As the *Times* notes, this is not the first study to draw such a conclusion:

The results of the analysis resemble those of other studies on the relationship between undocumented immigration and crime. Last year, a report by the Cato Institute, a libertarian think tank, found that unauthorized immigrants in Texas committed fewer crimes than their native-born counterparts. A state-level analysis in *Criminology*, an academic journal, found that undocumented immigration did not increase violent crime and was in fact associated with slight

decreases in it. Another Cato study found that unauthorized immigrants are less likely to be incarcerated.

Economic hardship, unemployment, housing problems—those all lead to an increase in violent crime. The presence of undocumented immigrants does not, no matter what Donald Trump wants his supporters to believe.