



Poor Immigrants Use Government Benefits At Lower Rate Than Native-Born, Study Shows

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Anti-immigrant pundits may want to have a look at this.

A new study by the Cato Institute finds that low-income immigrants use less public benefits than their native-born counterparts, contradicting the claim often espoused by rightwing pundits that immigrants in general and Hispanics in particular drain government resources.

And that's not all. The study continues:

Moreover, when low-income non-citizens receive public benefits, the average value of benefits per recipient is almost always lower than for the native-born. For Medicaid, if there are 100 native-born adults, the annual cost of benefits would be about \$98,400, while for the same number of non-citizen adults the annual cost would be approximately \$57,200.

The Cato Institute based its study on an analysis of use of Medicaid SNAP, cash assistance programs, and the Supplemental Security Income program from the Census Bureau's March 2012 Current Population Survey.

The study's results are not surprising. Many immigrants are ineligible for government benefits, depending on their status.

The authors' conclusions differed from those of a recent study by the Center for Immigration Studies, an organization that opposes both legal and illegal immigration, which said that immigrant-headed households with children used more Medicaid and food assistance than households with kids headed by the native-born.

The Cato Institute study criticized the CIS for not adjusting for income and for focusing on households headed by immigrants rather than on the individuals' immigration status. Many households include both immigrants and native-born citizens.

The Cato Institute is a Washington-based think tank that advocates free markets.

Rightwing pundits like Ann Coulter, Rush Limbaugh and Bill O'Reilly have been known to characterize immigrants in general and Latinos in particular as government-dependent. In fact, Latinos use less than their fair share of government benefits. According to a study released this year by the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities:

Non-Hispanic whites accounted for 64 percent of the population in 2010 and received 69 percent of the entitlement benefits. In contrast, Hispanics made up 16 percent of the population but received 12 percent of the benefits, less than their proportionate share -- likely because they are a younger population and also because immigrants, including many legal immigrants, are ineligible for various benefits.