



Criminal Conviction Rates in Texas in 2016

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Cato Institute recently issued the following announcement.

Cato published my recent Immigration Research and Policy Brief that relied on Texas state criminal data to compare the conviction rates of native-born Americans, legal immigrants, and illegal immigrants. That Texas state data was of such high quality that I was even able to compare conviction rates by the type of crime. The result was that in 2015 the criminal conviction and arrest rates for illegal immigrants were below that of native-born Americans for virtually all crimes including homicide, sexual assault, and larceny. This is just further evidence that illegal immigrants are less crime-prone than native-born Americans. I had to limit my Brief to focus on convictions only in 2015, although I also had the Texas conviction data for 2016, because there were no estimates of the illegal immigrant population statewide for the latter year.

Since Cato published my brief in February, the estimable Center for Migration Studies published an update of the estimated number of illegal immigrants in Texas for 2016. The following graphs and numbers are the conviction rates for native-born Americans, legal immigrants, and illegal immigrants in the state of Texas in 2016. The conviction rate is the number of convictions per group (native, legal immigrants, and illegal immigrants) divided by the number of Texas residents in each group multiplied by 100,000. The final multiplication step produces the conviction rate per 100,000 residents in each subpopulation, which is how criminologists and the governments portray incarceration, crime, and conviction rates. This is the best way to portray relative crime rates as it controls the different size of the subpopulations.

The criminal conviction rate for native-born Americans in Texas was 2,116 per 100,000 natives in 2016 (Figure 1). The native-born criminal conviction rate was thus 2.4 times as high as the criminal conviction rate for illegal immigrants in that year and 7.2 times as high as that of legal immigrants.

The homicide conviction rate for native-born American in Texas in 2016 was 4.1 per 100,000 natives in 2016, about 2.4 times as great as the 1.8 per 100,000 conviction rate for illegal immigrants and 5.7 times as great as the 0.7 per 100,000 conviction rate for legal immigrants (Figure 2). The homicide conviction rate in 2016 in Texas is quite a bit different from the 2015 findings where it was only 25 percent higher for natives than for illegal immigrants.

The sexual assault conviction rates for illegal immigrants is also below that of natives but only by 16 percent while the sexual assault conviction rate for legal immigrants is 87 percent below that of natives (Figure 3). The larceny conviction rate for native-born Americans is 6.1 times as high as that for illegal immigrants and 12.5 times as high as that for legal immigrants (Figure 4).

The 2016 criminal conviction rates in Texas are similar to that of 2015 with one major exception: The illegal immigrant homicide conviction rate is far lower. There were 31 convictions against illegal immigrants for homicide in Texas in 2016 but 51 in 2015. Illegal and legal immigrants had lower homicide, sexual assault, larceny, and overall criminal conviction rates relative to native-born Americans in 2016.

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