



Immigrants Are Less Likely To Commit Homicide, Sex Crimes, and Larceny Than Native-Born Americans

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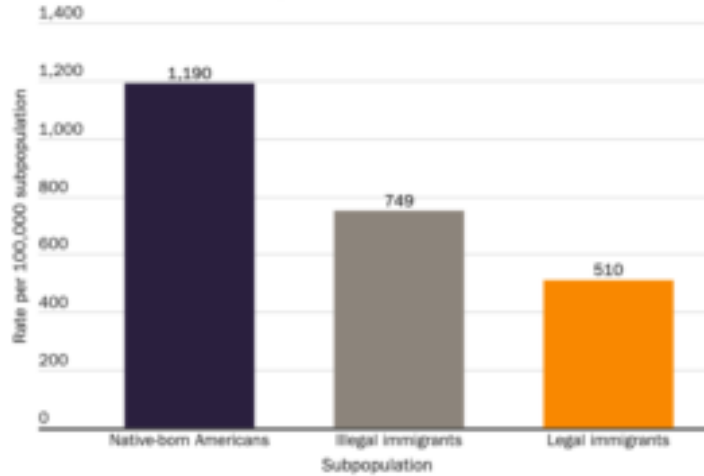
Nativist politicians love to draw a connection between crime and immigration. If we could just remove as many undocumented immigrants as possible, they promise, we'd see violent crime plunge. But that isn't what the data say. In fact, both legal and undocumented immigrants are significantly *less* likely to commit "just about every type of crime," including homicide, sexual offenses, and larceny, according to a new study by the Cato Institute.

It's the latest entry in a burgeoning collection of analyses that throw cold water on the notion that immigrants pollute communities with crime.

In the latest study, Alex Nowrasteh, Cato's director of immigration studies, combed through data from Texas, the lone state in the U.S. to note immigration status when recording arrests and convictions. In order to calculate the estimated undocumented immigrant population, Nowrasteh leveraged a methodology similar to—but more conservative than—the one used by the Department of Homeland Security, so his results might slightly *overstate* the conviction rate for the undocumented.

"Texas is an ideal state to study criminality by immigration status for multiple reasons," writes Nowrasteh. "It borders Mexico; it has the second-largest illegal immigrant population of any state; it is a politically conservative state governed by Republicans; it did not have jurisdictions in 2019 that limited its cooperation with federal immigration enforcement; and it has a reputation for severely and strictly enforcing its criminal laws."

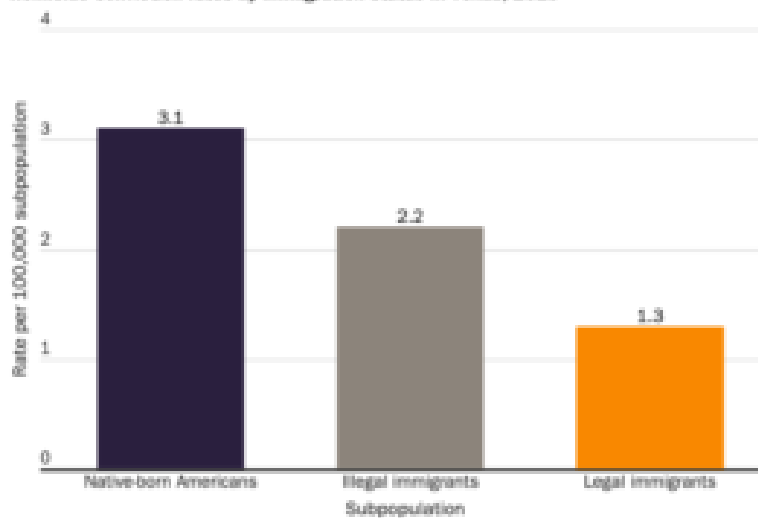
Figure 1
Criminal conviction rates by immigration status in Texas, 2019



Cato Institute

His results: "1,190 natives were convicted for every 100,000 natives, 749 illegal immigrants for every 100,000 illegal immigrants, and 510 legal immigrants for every 100,000 legal immigrants." Conviction rates were 57.2 percent lower for legal immigrants and 37.1 percent lower for undocumented immigrants, when compared to the native-born population.

Figure 2
Homicide conviction rates by immigration status in Texas, 2019



Cato Institute

The study also breaks the data down by crime. As Nowrasteh notes, murders committed by undocumented immigrants receive a great deal of media attention. According to the data from the Texas Department of Public Safety, legal immigrants are 57.1 percent less likely to commit homicide, while undocumented immigrants are 27.7 percent less likely.

What's more, legal immigrants are 53.3 percent less likely to have a conviction for sexual assault, commercial sex, or miscellaneous sexual offenses, while the undocumented are 16.1 percent less likely. On larceny, conviction rates are 68.7 percent lower for the former, 77.6 percent for the latter.

Convictions are one thing, but what about arrests? It's a similar story: The arrest rate for legal immigrants is 50.5 percent lower than for the native-born, while the undocumented rate sits 32.7 percent lower.

Meanwhile, 72 percent of Americans believe that immigrants come here not for government aid but for the opportunities, and 55 percent want a pathway to citizenship for the undocumented. In other words, current immigration policy reflects neither what citizens want nor what the data demand.