

Townhall

Newly Released Arizona Crime Data Just Shattered a Key Liberal Narrative on Immigration

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Liberal narratives don't die easily, but when they do the fall can often be hard and fast. Consider the "myth of the noble illegal immigrant," an insistence by a Left longing for more Democratic votes and an Establishment Right longing for more cheap labor that illegal immigrants are uber-law-abiding - indeed, are the most law-abiding among us, so law-abiding, in fact, that they could easily teach us Americans something about how to law abide, or something.

My [Townhall column](#) last month, entitled, "The 'Big Lie' Starts to Crumble as Feds Release Immigrant Crime Data," apparently caused an inkling of a stir among the good folks at the 'conservative' but pro-immigration (yeah, that's why 'conservative' is in quotes) Cato Institute. Their immigration policy analyst, Alex Nowrasteh, whom I quoted in the piece, was quick to [tweet](#), "Ignorant piece by [@SKMorefield](#) on the new federal incarceration/immigration report," and call me to task for supposedly not reading his research.

Except, I did read his research, and others, albeit in fairness to Nowrasteh not everything and not every word. I read the open-borders research enough, however, to quickly realize that one crucial thing was missing - actual demographic data on convicted criminals from individual states.

Oh there was data, if you want to call it that. In [one paper](#), Nowrasteh and his co-author, Michelangelo Landgrave, use the United States Census's American Community Survey "to estimate the nationwide incarceration rate for DREAMers for 2015." The authors call the data "high quality," notwithstanding the fact that the survey fails to ask "whether those individuals are or ever have been illegal immigrants."

The authors get around this minor inconvenience by using something called "residual statistical methodology," which amounts to, without getting all that technical about it, taking four shots of bourbon, closing your eyes, spinning around ten times, and tossing a dart at a wall full of numbers. OK, maybe I'm exaggerating just a bit, but let's put it this way - when the

“methodology” intentionally leaves out incarcerated immigrants who live in “a household where somebody received food stamps” based on the naive belief that illegal immigrants and those living with them never collect food stamps, it could quite possibly be a red flag big enough to sneak at least a mack truck full of illegal immigrants through.

And yes, I do realize the media mantra is that no illegal immigrant ever gets their hands on a single slice of bread at taxpayer expense, but among the numerous reasons why that’s a patent lie lies this little cryfest from the Washington Post earlier this year about immigrants withdrawing from SNAP programs nationwide for fear of being deported. Now, why would legal, uber-law-abiding immigrants fear being deported? Why indeed...

All of which boils down to this: If you’re going to do a study attempting to prove the general law-abidingness of illegal immigrants, wouldn’t you want data that compiles actual illegal immigrant crime rates? Considering the fact that legal immigrant crime is indeed low, any study using data that lumps legal and illegal immigrants together is bound to be skewed.

But how to prove it? That’s the question, right? We’re all familiar with the high profile cases, mainly thanks to President Trump, but Cato and others insist those are merely outliers of an otherwise, you know, uber-law-abiding population. The federal release last month was indeed a significant piece of data, but Nowrasteh and others are right when they say it’s a small sample size. Thus, the only place to go to satisfy all parties is to the actual state data, using actual compiled numbers, not guesstimates, from real record keepers.

When I pressed him during our Twitter exchange, Nowrasteh says he had previously “made a request for public records to the State of Texas DPS” and is “still waiting for another to be filled.” Further, he stated that Cato “has obtained data on convictions & arrests by immigration status & crime for Texas for multiple years.” One more records request answer, and “We’ll be publishing early in New Year.”

Good! I’m sure all of us eagerly await those results. However, it looks like economist and researcher John Lott has beaten Cato to the punch with a treasure trove of recently released data from another state - Arizona - from January 1985 to June 2017.

Thus begins the second devastating blow in as many months of the “myth of the noble illegal immigrant.” And folks, this one could very well destroy the whole rotten structure.

“Undocumented immigrants are at least 142% more likely to be convicted of crime than other Arizonans,” Lott concludes from the data.

While documented immigrants, or legal permanent residents, accounted for 3.9 percent of Arizona’s population in 2014, but only 1.5 percent of the prison population (which again shows why it’s inaccurate to lump documented and undocumented immigrants for any statistical purposes), undocumented immigrants account for 11.6 percent of first and second most serious offenses.

Further, undocumented immigrants in Arizona are consistently more likely to be convicted of murder, manslaughter, armed robbery, sexual assault of a minor, sexual assault, DUI or DWI,

and kidnapping, among other serious crimes. And undocumented immigrants are 163 percent more likely to commit first degree murder than are U.S. citizens in the state.

As far as sample sizes are concerned, this one will be hard to ignore. During the 33-year period from 1985 to 2017, undocumented immigrants made up almost 5 percent of Arizona's population, approximately 82 percent above the national average and 5th among all states.

But when it comes to this particular state, there are no "sample sizes" here, no "residual statistical methodologies" employed. Why? Because this study deals with "the entire universe of cases," or all 615,555 first and second most serious offenses processed by the Arizona Department of Corrections from January 1985 through June 2017.

And these are just the crimes that are reported. Given the common perception that undocumented immigrant criminals' most likely victims are other undocumented immigrants, and a significant percentage of those crimes go unreported, the numbers are likely far higher.

There's more, of course. It's definitely worth reading the whole thing. Watch for liberals and beltway 'conservatives' to attack Lott himself instead of highlighting the supposed errors in the research. When they do, it'll be the first sign that their edifice is crumbling around them, and the only way they think they can dig themselves out is by ad hominem attacks.

Lott writes, "If undocumented immigrants committed crime nationally as they do in Arizona, in 2016 they would have been responsible for over 1,000 more murders, 5,200 rapes, 8,900 robberies, 25,300 aggravated assaults, and 26,900 burglaries."

When will the carnage be enough for Americans to reject the lies they've been fed for so many years? Perhaps when they finally know the unfettered truth, and the "myth" is destroyed for good.