

BUSINESS INSIDER

Trump's brutal immigration crackdown is tearing families apart on the basis of 3 false premises

Pedro Nicolaci da Costa

June 27, 2018

In this photo provided by U.S. Customs and Border Protection, people who've been taken into custody related to cases of illegal entry into the United States, sit in one of the cages at a facility in McAllen, Texas, Sunday, June 17, 2018. Customs and Border Protection's Rio Grande Valley Sector via Associated Press

US President Donald Trump's policy of ripping children away from their parents as a deterrent to other immigrants has drawn widespread condemnation as an abhorrent violation of basic human rights, forcing the administration to partly reverse course.

But as thousands of families face the ongoing limbo, uncertainty and terror of not knowing when or if they will be reunified, it's worth examining some of the basic premises upon which Trump's restrictive anti-immigrant policies, including the Muslim ban upheld by the Supreme Court Tuesday, are based.

That's because many of them are either wrong-headed or downright false, starting with the most sweeping of Trump's statements: that there's some sort of surge in immigration that is creating a crisis at the border.

Trump's inflammatory rhetoric, including misleading allusions to gang members and drug traffickers, feeds on research showing that "people commonly exaggerate the size of minority populations"— even when presented with clear evidence to the contrary.

The figures actually show the opposite pattern as that touted by the Trump administration. Border crossings have been steady to lower in recent years despite some yearly and seasonal fluctuations. There is no immigration crisis, there is no border crisis.

Immigrants are less likely to commit crimes

A recent study in the journal *Criminology*, supporting other evidence, found "undocumented immigration does not increase violence."

"Rather than causing higher crime, increased undocumented immigration since 1990 is generally associated with lower rates of serious violence," the study found.

In Texas, recently the focal point of the immigration debate, the statistics bare this out. According to the libertarian CATO Institute, US-born Americans committed 885 of the 951 homicides reported in Texas in 2015, while undocumented immigrants were convicted of 51 homicides, and documented immigrants were convicted of 15 homicides.

Overall criminal conviction rates are similarly low, as the chart below shows. Critically, the rate of criminal convictions for illegal immigrants as a percentage of the illegal immigrant population is lower than for the native population.

But that has not stopped Trump and his surrogates from making repeated verbal associations between immigration and crime.

As for the gang associations, they are a clear fear-mongering tactic with little basis in reality. As MSNBC's Jacob Soboroff, who has been covering the crisis on the ground, put it: "180 of 187,000 people they caught are MS-13 members. I believe that's .1% of all the people apprehended. This whole thing was predicated by Donald Trump on the idea that people are fraudulently coming to the US. The math doesn't make any sense."

Trump's policies also deceptively conflate illegal immigration with asylum-seeking, a basic right under international law.

If anything, if there is to be a crisis, it may come from this stifling of immigration flows, which most economists say will be damaging to long-term US growth prospects. In particular, the push for reducing asylum-seeking and other forms of legal immigration stands directly against a purported growth goal of 3% or even 4% that the administration has promised.

That's the third lie perpetrated by Trump and his cohorts — that immigrants are a drag on the economy.

Tellingly, the Trump administration suppressed a study from its own Department of Health and Human Services that found refugees actually brought in \$63 billion more in government revenue than they cost over the last decade.