

LATIN POST

Most Immigrant Households on Welfare, Study Claims

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A report from a group, which advocates for lower migration levels, this week claimed that more than half of the nation's immigrants receive some kind of government welfare, USA Today reported.

The document, published by the Center for Immigration Studies, suggests that about 51 percent of immigrant-led households receive Medicaid, food stamps, school lunches, housing assistance or other benefits. For native-led households, that figure only comes to 30 percent, the Washington-based group said.

According to the report, that gap is largely due to the estimated 11 million undocumented immigrants living in the United States.

"Illegal immigrants are overwhelmingly less-educated, so allowing them to stay in the country creates significant welfare costs," Steven Camarota, the study's author, summarized.

And "proposals to allow in more less-educated immigrants to fill low-wage jobs would create significant welfare costs," Camarota warned. Consequently, the researcher told USA Today, the United States needs to make its immigration system more "selective."

"This should not be understood as some kind of defect or moral failing on the part of immigrants," he noted. "Rather, what it represents is a system that allows a lot of less-educated immigrants to settle in the country, who then earn modest wages and are eligible for a very generous welfare system."

But both the liberal New Republic and the libertarian Cato Institute challenged Camarota's findings, noting, respectively, that "[undocumented] immigrants are contributing to a welfare system that many of them can't take advantage of" and that the author "omitted a lot of information that would make for a better comparison between immigrants and natives."

"The immigrant-headed household variable [Camarota] uses is ambiguous, poorly defined," Cato's Alex Nowrasteh judged. His report also fails to correct for income and omits the cash value of welfare benefits consumed by immigrant and native households, the critic added.

"If you are really concerned about immigrant welfare use, you should be in favor of reforming welfare, eliminating it, or building a wall around the welfare state," Nowrasteh argued.

Meanwhile, the New Republic noted that all immigrants contribute to the welfare system through their taxes, but many are ineligible for its benefits. A 1996 law, for example, stipulates that even

qualified immigrants had to spend five years in the country before they could apply for Medicaid, food stamps, or cash assistance for families with children, the magazine noted.