

# SOL

STATISTICS ON LATINOS

BY LATINO POLICY FORUM



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## LATINOS Immigration

The sense of fear in immigrant communities, particularly among undocumented immigrants, continues to rise now that Donald Trump is president. Throughout his campaign and into his first weeks in office, Trump consistently uses xenophobic rhetoric, which has given rise to an anti-immigrant climate not seen in the United States in a very long time.

Public opinion polls demonstrate that a majority of Americans support maintaining the DACA program<sup>i</sup> and a path to legalization for undocumented immigrants . However, there is a persistent narrative that is pushed by the president and many political and social leaders that undocumented immigrants are a threat to our country and to public safety, despite evidence to the contrary.

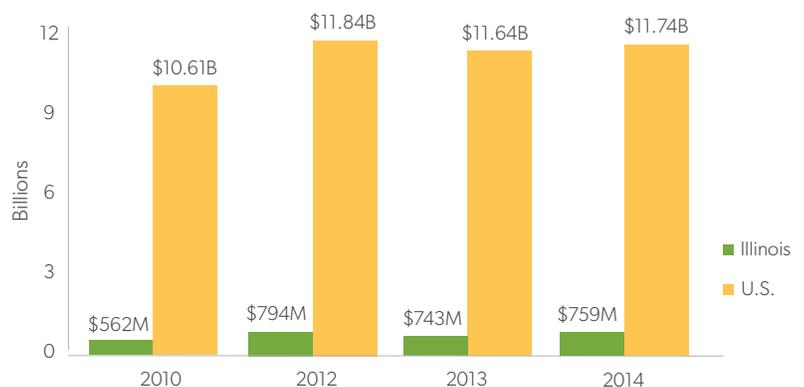
The misinformation and myths intended to stoke fear of immigrants, which often make their way into political talking points, can only be challenged with facts. The Latino Policy Forum will continue to set the record straight on the following issues to counter anti-immigrant propoganda that has emerged in the wake of the 2016 presidential election:

- 1. Undocumented immigrants contribute to the U.S. economy**
- 2. Apprehensions on the southwest border are at a 10-year low**
- 3. Low rates of incarceration among immigrants**
- 4. No evidence of voter fraud by undocumented immigrants in the last election**

### FACT: UNDOCUMENTED IMMIGRANTS CONTRIBUTED OVER \$11 BILLION IN STATE AND LOCAL TAXES AS OF 2014

Undocumented Immigrants' tax contributions are clearer than President Trump's given his ongoing refusal to make his tax returns available to the public. As of 2014, the Institute on Taxation and Economic Policy (ITEP) estimated that undocumented immigrants contributed more than \$11 billion nationally in state and local taxes and \$759 million in Illinois<sup>iii</sup> alone. ITEP calculates these totals using estimates on sales, excise, property tax and income tax.

Undocumented Immigrant Tax Contributions

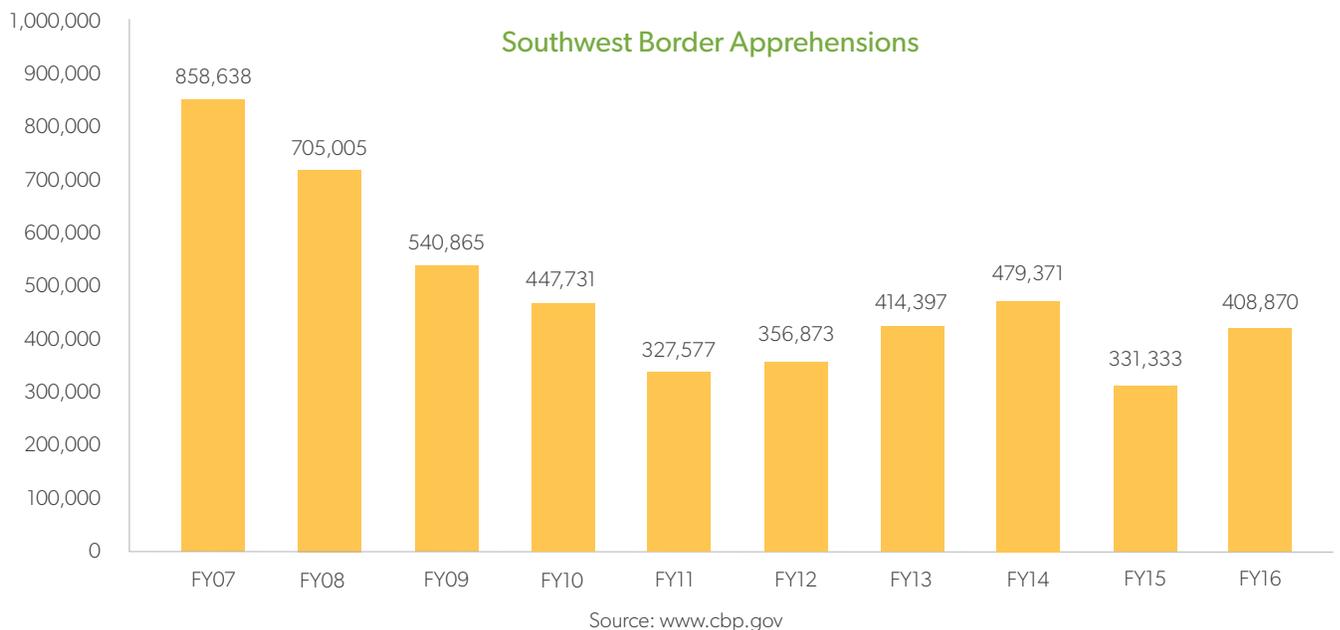


Source: www.itep.org

## FACT: BORDER APPREHENSIONS DECLINED BY HALF FROM A 10-YEAR HIGH IN 2007

To hear Donald Trump and other politicians speak, one would think immigrants are crossing the southern border freely and in record numbers. However, according to U.S. Customs and Border Patrol, southwestern border apprehensions of unauthorized immigrants declined by 52 percent from a ten-year high of 858,638 in 2007 to 408,870 in 2016. Estimates regarding the total number

of undocumented immigrants in the country during the same time period demonstrate the total peaked in 2007 at 12.2 million. Since 2009 the total has remained relatively unchanged at around 11.1 million<sup>iv</sup>. Apprehensions are down and the total number of undocumented in the country has remained relatively unchanged since 2009.

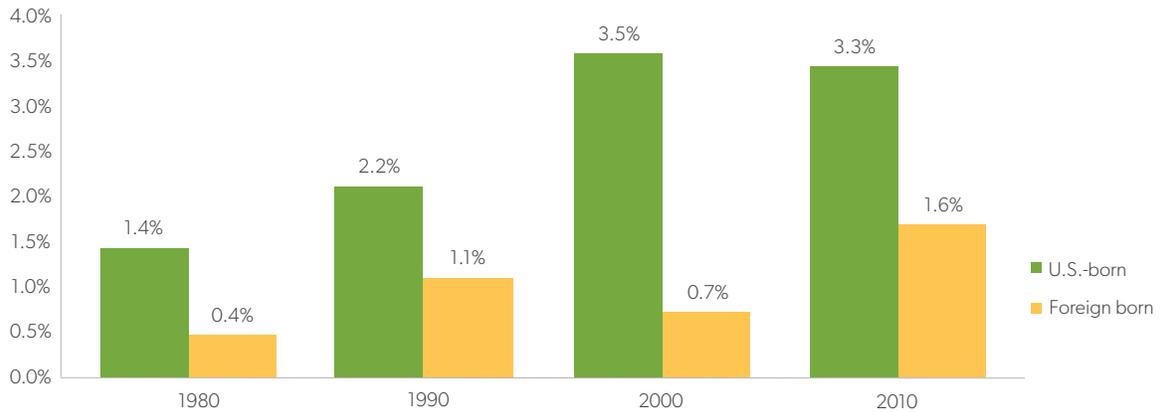


## FACT: THE RATE OF INCARCERATION AMONG IMMIGRANTS IS LOWER THAN THAT OF THE GENERAL POPULATION

The assertion that immigrants are more likely to commit crimes is not a new one – this is an accusation that generations of immigrants to the United States (and across the world) have had to continually counter. Currently, the term “criminal alien” continues to be used despite the fact this term is not a legally defined term in immigration law. According to the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) an ‘alien’ is defined as “any person not a citizen or national of the United States”<sup>v</sup> who resides in the U.S. This includes legal permanent residents, foreign nationals with a temporary visa, and unauthorized immigrants. The term ‘criminal alien’ is most often associated with

undocumented immigrants, which misrepresents them as being more likely to commit crimes. However, studies have shown that immigrants, including undocumented, are *less* likely to commit crimes<sup>vi</sup> when compared to the U.S.-born population. The American Immigration Council (AIC) highlighted 2010 data from the American Community Survey (ACS), which demonstrates approximately 1.6 percent of immigrant males age 18-39 are incarcerated, in comparison to 3.3 percent of U.S.-born males of the same age range<sup>vii</sup>. The AIC report also demonstrates a consistent pattern in incarceration rates dating back decades as noted by economists Kristin Butcher and Anne Morrison Piehl<sup>viii</sup>:

### U.S. Incarceration Rates of Men Age 18-39, by Nativity, 1980-2010



Source: Butcher, Kristin F. and Piehl, Anne M. (2007, July). *Why are Immigrants' Incarceration Rates so Low?* Cambridge, MA: National Bureau of Economic Research, Table 2; 2010 ACS.

The 2015 AIC report also noted that between 1990 and 2013, the foreign-born population in the United States increased from 3.5 million to 11.2 million. However, during this same period of time violent crime and property crime both fell nationally by over 40 percent<sup>x</sup>. Violent crimes committed by undocumented immigrants often grab headlines and are portrayed as the norm, not the exception. With the creation of the Victims Of Immigration Crime Engagement (VOICE) office by the President, a new federal program has been created to ostensibly advocate for the families of victims and victims of crimes committed by undocumented immigrants. All families who have lost loved ones to crimes or been the victims of crime themselves, regardless of the immigration status of their attackers, should be supported as much as possible. However, establishing such an office within the federal government further serves to expand and deepen the perception that undocumented immigrants are violent and committing crimes at unprecedented rates that require equally unprecedented federal intervention.

In an interview<sup>xi</sup> with 60 Minutes on November 13, 2016 then President-Elect Trump stated that he planned to immediately deport 2-3 million undocumented immigrants who have “criminal records” and are “here illegally.” This figure of 2-3 million undocumented

immigrants with ‘criminal’ records is grossly exaggerated. It is *likely* based on a 2012 report from the United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) that stated, “Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) estimates that 1.9 million removable criminal aliens are in the United States today.”<sup>xii</sup> However, based on the federal government’s own definition of ‘alien’, this figure also includes legal permanent residents and foreign nationals with temporary visas who have committed crimes in the U.S.

Research conducted by the Migration Policy Institute reveals the estimated number of undocumented immigrants with criminal convictions is significantly smaller than the 2 million figure used by President Trump. Under the 2010 federal immigration enforcement guidelines<sup>xiii</sup>, approximately 820,000 undocumented immigrants were convicted of *any* type of crime (ranging from felonies to traffic crimes) and would have been prioritized for deportation. Under the 2014 federal immigration enforcement guidelines<sup>xiv</sup>, approximately 690,000 undocumented immigrants were convicted of felonies and/or serious misdemeanors and would have been prioritized for deportation – 2014 guidelines did not include traffic crimes as priorities for deportation.

## **FACT: THERE IS NO EVIDENCE TO SUPPORT THE CLAIMS OF WIDESPREAD VOTER FRAUD BY UNDOCUMENTED IMMIGRANTS IN THE 2016 PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION**

In the last weeks of the presidential election, then-candidate Trump publicly claimed that people were allowed to “pour into the country”<sup>xv</sup> to vote. This claim was part of a concerted effort by candidate Trump to cast doubt on the election results were he to lose. However, even after he won the presidential election, he continued to blame undocumented immigrants as the main reason why he lost the popular vote by nearly 3 million votes . To be clear: there is no evidence, relative to the number of ballots cast nationally, of undocumented immigrant voter fraud in the 2016 presidential election .



PHOTO: SHUTTERSTOCK

The 2016 presidential election cycle and the immigration platform of the Trump presidency is a reminder of our collective failure and unwillingness as a country to learn from our own history. Supporters of the 1917 Immigration Act, also known as the Asiatic Barred Zone Act, specifically singled out countries, ethnic populations and other ‘undesirables’ to be excluded from entry into the U.S. One hundred years later, it is disheartening that our nation is still grappling with the same us versus them narrative, which feeds the creation of equally shortsighted and nativist immigration policy based on fear of the ‘other.’

## SOURCES AND CITATIONS

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<sup>vii</sup>Ewing, W.A., Martinez, D.E., & Rumbaut, R.G. (2015). The Criminalization of Immigration in the United States. Washington, DC. American Immigration Council. Page 7, Figure 5. Retrieved from [https://www.americanimmigrationcouncil.org/sites/default/files/research/the\\_criminalization\\_of\\_immigration\\_in\\_the\\_united\\_states.pdf](https://www.americanimmigrationcouncil.org/sites/default/files/research/the_criminalization_of_immigration_in_the_united_states.pdf)

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## ABOUT SOL

SOL is a series of periodic policy briefs that combines data with insightful analysis from the Latino Policy Forum. The series will provide a unique snapshot of the growth, influence and challenges of the local Latino community, for use by community leaders, urban planners, elected officials, journalists, and anyone interested in building a shared future for all of Illinois.

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