



IMMIGRANTS IN WESTCHESTER COUNTY

A Presentation to the Westchester County Board of Legislators
 Policy Group on Hispanic and Immigration Affairs
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Immigrant Citizenship in Westchester County

	total population	foreign-born	percent of population that is foreign-born	foreign-born naturalized citizens	percent of foreign-born who are naturalized citizens	percent of all citizens who are foreign-born
Cortlandt town	41,677	6,040	14%	3,567	59%	9%
Eastchester town	33,401	6,900	21%	3,261	47%	11%
Greenburgh town	95,945	23,410	24%	11,519	49%	14%
Harrison town	28,817	5,427	19%	2,256	42%	9%
Mamaroneck town	29,500	6,241	21%	2,727	44%	10%
Mount Pleasant town	42,442	8,128	19%	3,662	45%	10%
Mount Vernon city	65,759	19,390	29%	8,636	45%	16%
New Rochelle city	72,585	21,767	30%	8,831	41%	15%
Ossining town	36,241	8,674	24%	3,643	42%	12%
Peekskill city	25,691	9,432	37%	2,696	29%	14%
Rye town	42,590	14,610	34%	4,287	29%	13%
Somers town	20,934	1,710	8%	1,081	63%	5%
White Plains city	52,802	16,685	32%	6,943	42%	16%
Yonkers city	195,817	55,141	28%	28,119	51%	17%
Yorktown town	37,262	5,257	14%	3,160	60%	9%
Other in Westchester County	127,578	19,796	16%	9,769	49%	8%
Westchester total	949,041	228,608	24%	104,157	46%	13%

Source: Fiscal Policy Institute analysis of ACS 2005 to 2007 combined file.

Immigrant Share of the Population in the Lower Hudson Valley

	Population 2000	Foreign Born 2000	Population 2005	Foreign Born 2005
Dutchess	280,150	8.4%	NA	10.1%
Orange County	341,367	8.4%	NA	10.3%
Putnam	95,745	8.8%	98,303	11%
Rockland	286,753	19.1%	285,088	20%
Westchester	923,459	22.2%	915,916	25%

Use of Social Services

MYTH: The nation spends billions of dollars on welfare for undocumented immigrants.

FACTS: Undocumented immigrants are not eligible to receive any "welfare" benefits and even legal immigrants are severely restricted in the benefits they can receive.

- As the Congressional Research Service points out in a 2007 report, undocumented immigrants, who comprise nearly one-third of all immigrants in the country, are not eligible to receive public "welfare" benefits-ever. Legal permanent residents (LPR's) must pay into the Social Security and Medicare systems for approximately 10 years before they are eligible to receive benefits when they retire. In most cases, LPR's can not receive SSI, which is available only to U.S. citizens, and are not eligible for means-tested public benefits until 5 years after receiving their green cards.
- A 2007 analysis of welfare data by researchers at the Urban Institute reveals that less than 1 percent of households headed by undocumented immigrants receive cash assistance for needy families, compared to 5 percent of households headed by native-born U.S. citizens.

A 2007 analysis of U.S. Census data by the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities makes clear that it is the U.S.-born, U.S.-citizen children of undocumented immigrants who are eligible for programs such as Medicaid and the State Children's Health Insurance Program (SCHIP). The analysis found that, between 1995 and 2005, the share of low-income, non-citizen immigrant children (either undocumented or legally present) who received Medicaid or SCHIP dropped from 36 percent to 30 percent. In comparison, there were increases in the Medicaid or SCHIP participation of low-income citizen children, whether they lived in immigrant-headed households or households headed by native-born citizens (rising from 45-47 percent in 1995 to 53-54 percent in 2005.)

Source:www.wecanstopthehate.org by National Council of La Raza

Immigrants and Healthcare

MYTH: The nation spends billions of dollars on providing healthcare for undocumented immigrants

FACT: A 2006 study by RAND Corp. researchers determined that undocumented immigrants, 3.2 percent of the population, account for only 1.5 percent of U.S. medical costs.

Generally, the only benefits federally required for undocumented immigrants are emergency medical care, subject to financial and category eligibility. The RAND study found that immigrants, both legal and illegal, use fewer medical services and less funding from public insurers than native-born residents. Some policymakers argue that providing health care for non elderly undocumented immigrants creates a public burden, but is this really so?

Working within Los Angeles County, which has the largest concentration of immigrants in the nation, RAND Corporation researchers analyzed information from the Los Angeles Family Neighborhood Survey, which interviewed families in 65 county neighborhoods during 2000 and 2001. Non elderly participants — those between 18 and 64 — were asked about their health status, whether they had health insurance, the type and amount of care used, and the type of immigrant they were. After deriving estimates for the county, researchers extrapolated the estimates to the national level.

Of the \$430 billion in national medical spending in 2000, native-born residents accounted for 87 percent of the population but for 91.5 percent of the spending. Foreign-born residents, who include undocumented immigrants, accounted for 13 percent of the population but for only 8.5 percent of the spending. Undocumented immigrants — 3.2 percent of the population — accounted for only about 1.5 percent of medical costs.

Foreign-born residents use less funding from public insurers (such as Medicare and Medicaid) and pay more out-of-pocket costs for health care than do native-born residents — a pattern that is even more pronounced for undocumented immigrants.

The lower medical spending is driven by lower utilization of services. Utilization data from Los Angeles County show that many foreign-born residents had almost no contact with the formal health care system. For example, whereas only about a tenth of native-born residents had never had a checkup, that fraction jumped to a quarter for foreign-born residents and to a third for undocumented immigrants. Moreover, because Los Angeles County is known as an immigrant-friendly location for services, the estimates for the nation may be lower for undocumented immigrant service use and, thus, may be lower for medical costs.

A number of reasons account for the lower utilization, but one key reason is that immigrants — especially the undocumented — appear to be healthier than native-born residents.

Source: Dana P. Goldman, James P. Smith, and Neeraj Sood, "Immigrants and the Cost of Medical Care," Health Affairs, Vol. 25, No. 6, November/December 2006, pp. 1700-1711.

Wages

MYTH: Immigrant workers suppress the wages of American workers.

FACTS: The overwhelming majority of economists agree that immigrants increase the economic productivity and thus the wages of natives.

- A 2006 study by University of California, Davis, economist Giovanni Peri found that because immigrant workers generally "complement"-rather than substitute for-native workers in terms of their education and skills, immigration tends to increase the productivity, and therefore the wages, of natives.
- As a result of this "complementarity," the White House Council of Economic Advisers concluded in a 2007 report that roughly 90 percent of native-born workers experience wage gains from immigration, which total between \$30 billion and \$80 billion per year.

Source: *wecanstopthehate.org* by National Council of La Raza

Day Laborers in Westchester and Putnam do not work below minimum wage. Average wage for a laborer is \$ 10/hour. [Various day labor hiring sites.]

Culture and Integration

MYTH: "For English, press one"

FACT: Immigrants and their children assimilate into U.S. culture.

For example, although 72% of first-generation born Latino immigrants use Spanish as their predominant language, only 7% of the second generation are Spanish dominant (Source: Pew Hispanic Center/Kaiser Family Foundation) as quoted in the report "Immigration's Economic Impact" 2007 by the White House Council of Economic Advisers.

From *The Journal News*:

New immigrants aren't learning English, union officials and activists told a congressional panel. They send all their earnings home and refuse to become Americans.

"They depreciate property and drive other people out," said Frank Hawley, a union president. "They do not become citizens; they do not become interested except as to the amount of money they earn."

The year was 1909. The new arrivals were coming by steamship from Italy, Russia, Greece, Austria-Hungary and elsewhere in Eastern Europe. At the time, there were no caps on immigration from Europe, and the numbers of people coming through Ellis Island had reached their peak. The main restriction was a ban on Chinese laborers. The Chinese, it was thought, could never assimilate.

March 26, 2006, "Lessons from the past - Congress takes a fresh look at `most bizarre body of law" by Leah Rae and Marcela Rojas, *The Journal News*, at <http://immigration.lohudblogs.com/2008/07/08/immigration-field-is-popular-with-law-students/>.

Taxes

MYTH: Immigrants don't pay taxes

FACT: Immigrants do pay taxes and support our Treasury

1. Social Security and Payroll Taxes: The Social Security Administration has concluded that undocumented immigrants "account for a major portion" of the billions of dollars paid into the Social Security system under names of social security numbers that don't match SSA records, payments from which immigrants cannot benefit while undocumented. As of October 5th [2006], the reported earnings on which these payments are based-which are tracked through the SSA's Earnings Suspense File (ESF) totaled \$520 Billion. (*Testimony of Patrick P. O'Carroll, Jr., Inspector General of the SSA before US Senate Committee on Finance, March 14th 2006.*) *Immigration Policy Center: Undocumented Immigrants as Taxpayers*

Many undocumented workers have payroll taxes (Social Security and Medicare) withheld by their employers, even though undocumented workers will not receive any benefits from these programs. Indeed, in 2003, the government collected an estimated \$7 billion in Social Security taxes, or approximately one percent of overall revenue, from 7.5 million workers and their employers in which the Social Security numbers did not match the taxpayer identification number. The IRS assumes that most of these mismatches are the result of tax filings by undocumented workers.

2. Sales Tax: Undocumented Immigrants pay sales tax when they shop, just like all New Yorkers.

3. Property Tax: Whether they rent or own homes, undocumented immigrants pay property tax. Homeowners pay the tax directly, but renters pay property taxes indirectly, since landlords set rent rates that allow them to pay taxes on their rental units.

4. Income Tax: Income tax is the significant tax undocumented immigrants sometimes may not pay, since they are not authorized to be earning money in the United States.

In recent years, however, there has been an increasing trend towards undocumented immigrants filing tax returns using what are known as Individual Taxpayer Identification Numbers (ITINs). Nationally, the IRS has estimated that of the approximately 130 million individual tax returns filed each year, about six million are filed by undocumented workers. In New York, the use of ITINs doubled between 2000 and 2003, from 44,000 to 91,000 according to an unpublished 2006 report compiled by the Internal Revenue Service from data by the Neighborhood Economic Development Advocacy Project.

Immigrants & Crime

Myth: Immigrants are responsible for a rise in crime in our towns and cities.

Fact: Overall crime has decreased while the immigrant population has increased.

While the foreign born population in Dutchess, Orange, Rockland, Putnam and Westchester has increased in the last decade, the past 10 years has seen a steady decline in New York State crime rate. Overall the rate of index crimes per 100,000 resident population has declined 37% since 1997; the rate of violent crimes (murder, rape, robbery and aggravated assault) and property crimes (burglary, larceny, and motor vehicle theft) also fell 37%. While New York State's crime rate has decreased greatly over the past 10 years, New York has also reported a significant reduction in the actual number of crimes reported. Since 1997, the number of major crimes reported has fallen every year to the lowest levels recorded since statewide reporting began nearly 40 years ago. In 2006, there were 233,830 fewer crimes reported than in 1997, while the population of the state has increased by over one million since 1997. *Source: NY State Division of Criminal Justice.*

http://criminaljustice.state.ny.us/pio/annualreport/2006_finalrelease.pdf

Myth: Foreign-born men are more likely to be incarcerated.

Fact: The incarceration rate of the U.S. born is four times the rate of the foreign born.

In as much as conventional theories of crime and incarceration predict higher rates for young adult males from ethnic minority groups with lower educational attainment — characteristics which describe a much greater proportion of the foreign-born population than of the native born — it follows that immigrants would be expected to have higher incarceration rates than natives. And immigrant Mexican men — who comprise fully a third of all immigrant men between 18 and 39, and who have the lowest levels of education — would be expected to have the highest rates.

Data from the 5 percent Public Use Microsample (PUMS) of the 2000 census were used to measure the institutionalization rates of immigrants

and natives, focusing on males 18 to 39, most of whom are in correctional facilities. Of the 45.2 million males age 18 to 39, three percent were in federal or state prisons or local jails at the time of the 2000 census — a total of over 1.3 million, in line with official prison statistics at that time.

Surprisingly, at least from the vantage of conventional wisdom, the data show the above hypotheses to be unfounded. **In fact, the incarceration rate of the US born (3.51 percent) was four times the rate of the foreign born (0.86 percent)** [emphasis added.] The 1.71 percent rate for non-Hispanic white natives, and 13 times less than the 11.6 percent incarceration rate for native black men...

The advantage for immigrants vis-à-vis natives applies to every ethnic group without exception. Almost all of the Asian immigrant groups have lower incarceration rates than the Latin American groups (the exception involves foreign-born Laotians and Cambodians, whose rate of 0.92 percent is still well below that for non-Hispanic white natives).

Tellingly, among the foreign born, the highest incarceration rate by far (4.5 percent) was observed among island-born Puerto Ricans, who are not immigrants as such since they are US citizens by birth and can travel to the mainland as natives. If the island-born Puerto Ricans were excluded from the foreign-born totals, the national incarceration rate for the foreign born would drop to 0.68 percent.

Of particular interest is the finding that the lowest incarceration rates among Latin American immigrants are seen for the least educated groups: Salvadorans and Guatemalans (0.52 percent), and Mexicans (0.70 percent). These are precisely the groups most stigmatized as "illegals" in the public perception and outcry about immigration.

"Debunking the Myth of Immigrant Criminality: Imprisonment Among First- and Second-Generation Young Men." By Rubén G. Rumbaut, Roberto G. Gonzales, Golnaz Komaie, and Charlie V. Morgan, University of California, Irvine, Migration Policy Institute
<http://www.migrationinformation.org/Feature/display.cfm?ID=403>

Myth: Being here illegally is a crime.

Fact: Being illegally present in the U.S. has always been a civil, not criminal, violation.

"Being illegally present in the U.S. has always been a civil, not criminal, violation of the INA, [the Immigration and Nationality Act] and subsequent deportation and associated administrative processes are civil proceedings." *The Congressional Research Service (CRS), in an Apr. 6, 2006 report entitled "Immigration Enforcement Within the United States."*

In Sept. 2007, former presidential candidate Rudy Giuliani was a guest on *The Glenn Beck Program*. After defending his policy affording New York City sanctuary status in the Iowa debate just a few hours previous, ex-Mayor Rudy Giuliani came out and told Americans that when a foreign national enters the country illegally, "It's not a crime."

In the interview with CNN Headline News and radio talk-show host Glenn Beck, Giuliani explained: "I was U.S. attorney in the Southern district of New York," he said. "So believe me, I know this. In fact, when you throw an immigrant out of the country, it's not a criminal proceeding. It's a civil proceeding."

"I know that's very hard for people to understand, but it's not a federal crime," Giuliani insisted.

http://voices.washingtonpost.com/44/2007/09/07/post_66.html.