



U.S. Migration Myths and Facts

We are a nation of immigrants, except for those people who were already here and those who were brutally forced to come here. We were fleeing conditions at home and looking for a better life for ourselves and our families. All too often others tend to see today's immigrants differently. They may think that:

1. *Immigrants have fled their countries of origin because of crimes and they bring that violent criminal behavior with them.* However, the undocumented immigrants' offending rate is lower than U.S. born citizens. (National Institute of Justice)

2. *Immigrants aren't coming here to work and to contribute but to take public benefits.* In fact, undocumented workers and those with temporary visas are generally not eligible for public benefits. Even legal immigrants typically must wait at least five years to be eligible for public benefits. (National Immigration Law Center)

"Undocumented workers paid an estimated \$25.7 billion in Social Security taxes in 2022, according to a recent analysis from the Institute on Taxation and Economic Policy." "The Institute on Taxation and Economic Policy estimates that undocumented workers paid a total of \$96.7 billion in federal, state and local taxes in 2022, a third of which went toward the payroll taxes." (NYTimes, 1/13/2025) However, undocumented workers cannot receive Social Security benefits.

3. *If immigrants do work, they take others' American jobs and are therefore responsible for financial struggles.* In fact, many immigrants take very difficult jobs that often are essential: food, construction and service jobs. And employer wage theft is one of most common ways their earnings are stolen. National inequality, corporate structures, tax cuts for the wealthy and banking policies are some of the reasons for the current middle income financial squeeze, not low paying migrant jobs. Oregon's new legislation mandates overtime pay for seasonal workers, starting after 55 hours (1) changing to 48 hours starting in 2025 but their employers say they can't afford it. (OPB 1/9/2025)

4. *Immigrants are, by definition, all illegals.* However, no person is an illegal. Some immigrants may not have received their immigration documents yet not for lack of trying. Some immigrants are here with temporary legal status, usually to work where they are quite needed. Some skilled immigrant workers have H-1B visas when their skills are desperately needed.

5. *Undocumented Immigrants bring in drugs.* However, at the Canadian border: 80 per cent of the individuals caught with fentanyl during border crossings at ports of entry from 2019 to 2024 were U.S. citizens. (Cato Institute) Similarly, at the Mexico border: Illicit fentanyl is predominantly being smuggled by U.S. citizens and through ports of entry. (National Immigration Forum)

6. *US citizenship is easy to get.* Even H1B temporary visas are hard to get. Even those who can achieve Legal Permanent Residency wait a median average of 10.7 years if they are coming from Mexico to become naturalized.(US Citizenship and Immigration Services)

7. *Immigrants don't want to learn to speak English.* The application process for citizenship includes English and a civics tests. (Also USCIS)

8. *Dreamers don't contribute but get benefits.* Actually, DACA (Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals) provides work permits and protection from deportation to DACA enrollees. To enroll, a Dreamer must have come to the U.S. before their sixteenth birthday and have continuously lived in the U.S. since July 15, 2007. New applications were stopped in July 2021. There were 535,000 people with DACA status as of June 30, 2024. They must renew their status every two years. There are an estimated 1.2 million Dreamers that might be eligible today. (National Immigration Forum) Since the establishment of DACA in 2012, recipients have contributed an estimated \$140 billion to the U.S. economy and paid about \$40 billion in combined federal, payroll, state and local taxes even though DACA recipients are not eligible for some of these benefits. (Coalition for the American Dream) According to this source, ending DACA would “forfeit a Trillion Dollar Dream”.

9. *Immigrants are invading the southern border in unprecedented numbers.* Actually, the US immigration rate in January 2025 was the lowest since August 2020 due to a significant decrease in unlawful border crossings. (AI based on CPB numbers)