



Immigrants & Safer Communities

There are many myths about the relationship between immigration and crime. These are the facts: not only are immigrants less likely to commit violent crimes, their arrival in neighborhoods have helped stabilize communities, contributed to their revitalization and led to lower crime rates and safer streets. This fact sheet—the ninth in our series on immigrants and the economy—details how and why. Access AS/COA's Get the Facts series at: www.as-coa.org/immigration-facts.

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Five Ways Immigrants Contribute to Safer Communities.



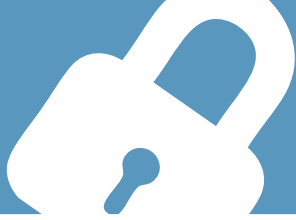
1 Immigrants have been instrumental in lowering crime rates nationwide.

- A 5 percent growth in the U.S. foreign-born population between 1990 and 2010—along with improvements in policing and the decline of crack cocaine use¹ — have led to a 45 percent decline in the violent crime rate nationwide.²
- Based on the rate of legalization under the 1986 Immigration Reform and Control Act (IRCA), if 1 million applicants to Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program received temporary legalization, the U.S. would experience a decrease of about 50,000 crimes per year.³
- From 1998 to 2005, the 19 states with the largest foreign-born populations—home to 83.8 percent of the country's total foreign-born population—saw a faster rate of decrease in both violent and non-violent crimes than the rest of the United States.⁴



2 America's metropolitan areas are made safer by immigration.

- According to a recent AS/COA report on immigration to New York City, a 1 percent increase in a precinct's immigrant population leads to an average of 966 fewer crimes committed annually. Collectively, this means that between 1990 and 2010, up to two-thirds of the drop in crime citywide can be attributed to immigration.⁵
- The murder rate in Boston dropped 61.8 percent between 1990 and 2012⁶ while the foreign-born population grew 45.9 percent between 1990 and 2010.⁷
- In New York City's Chinatown, officers now have 74 percent fewer crimes to investigate, despite the fact that Chinatown's population has grown by 70 percent since 1990.⁸



3 Border communities often have less crime than their home state.

- According to the FBI's Uniform Crime Reporting Statistics, the violent crime rate for Sunland Park, New Mexico—a border city just one mile from Ciudad Juarez, Mexico—was 13 times less than New Mexico's overall violent crime rate.⁹
- In 2013, *Congressional Quarterly* ranked El Paso, Texas and San Diego, California—both border cities less than 20 miles from the U.S.–Mexico border—as the two cities with more than 500,000 residents that boasted the lowest crime rates in the country. Of the 10 cities with the highest crime rates, not a single one is located along the southern border.¹⁰
- In 2012, Nogales, Arizona, a border community just one mile from Mexico, had less than half the murder rate of the state of Arizona.¹¹



4 Immigrants have low incarceration rates.

- Immigrants are 80 percent less likely to be incarcerated than U.S.-born individuals.¹²
- By 2011, U.S. citizens were sentenced for committing 48.4 percent of all violent offenses, property offenses, drug offenses, public-order offenses, and weapon offenses combined. Foreign-born offenders made up only 14.7 percent of those sentenced for the same crimes.¹³ (The remaining 36.9 percent of those sentenced for these offenses had unknown citizenship status.)



5 When immigrants move into declining neighborhoods, they revitalize the housing market and make the communities safer.

- According to a recent AS/COA report on immigration to New York City, immigrants have populated neighborhoods that would have otherwise seen high vacancy rates, abandoned housing, and limited economic opportunity, with seven of the nine precincts that received 30,000 or more new immigrants from 1990 to 2010 seeing crime rates drop more than the city average.¹⁴
- Between 1990 and 2007, Atlanta's population increased by 26 percent, due in part to the growth of the immigrant share of the labor force (11.9 percent growth). During the same period, the city's economy grew by 84 percent,¹⁵ while violent crime and property crime drastically decreased (by 50 percent and 39 percent, respectively).¹⁶

This fact sheet is a product of the AS/COA Immigration and Integration Initiative, which promotes positive dialogue around the economic contributions of immigrants across the United States. It was produced by **Leani García**, policy associate, in collaboration with **Kate Brick**, policy manager, **Richard André**, senior policy associate, and **Rebecca Bintrim**. For more information, visit AS/COA Online at: www.as-coa.org. For media inquiries or to speak with an expert on this topic, please contact **Adriana La Rotta** in our communications office at: alarotta@as-coa.org.



Endnotes

- 1 Steven D. Levitt, "Understanding Why Crime Fell in the 1990s: Four Factors that Explain the Decline and Six that Do Not," *Journal of Economic Perspectives* 18 (1) (Winter 2004): 187. <http://pricetheory.uchicago.edu/levitt/Papers/LevittUnderstandingWhyCrime2004.pdf>
- 2 "From Anecdotes to Evidence: Setting the Record Straight on Immigrants and Crime," Immigration Policy Center, 2013. <http://www.immigrationpolicy.org/just-facts/anecdotes-evidence-setting-record-straight-immigrants-and-crime-0>
- 3 Scott Ross Baker, "Legalization of Undocumented Immigrants Can Reduce Crime," Stanford Institute for Economic Policy Research, 2012, p.3. http://siepr.stanford.edu/system/files/shared/pubs/papers/PB_sept_2012.pdf
- 4 Richard Nadler, "Immigration and the Wealth of States," Americas Majority Foundation, 2008, p. 53. <http://immigrationworksusa.org/uploaded/file/ImmigrationandWealth.pdf>
- 5 Jacob L. Vigdor, "Immigration and New York City: The Contributions of Foreign-Born Americans to New York's Renaissance, 1975-2013," Americas Society/Council of the Americas, 2014, p.10.
- 6 Richard Florida, "Thank Immigrants for Safe Cities," *New York Daily News*, 2013. <http://www.nydailynews.com/opinion/immigrants-safe-cities-article-1.1328639>
- 7 Alvaro Lima and Mark Melnik, "Boston by the Numbers: Foreign-Born," Boston Redevelopment Authority Research Division, 2012. <https://data.cityofboston.gov/dataset/Boston-by-the-Numbers-Foreign-Born/n9ks-chvj>
- 8 Jacob L. Vigdor, "Immigration and New York City: The Contributions of Foreign-Born Americans to New York's Renaissance, 1975-2013," Americas Society/Council of the Americas, 2014, p.13.
- 9 Analysis of FBI, Uniform Crime Reports, prepared by the National Archive of Criminal Justice Data. <http://www.fbi.gov/about-us/cjis/ucr/ucr> (Accessed March 27, 2014).
- 10 "City Crime Rankings 2013: Rankings by Population Categories," *Congressional Quarterly*, 2013. http://os.cqpress.com/citycrime/2012/CityCrime2013_CityCrimeRankingsFactSheet.pdf
- 11 Analysis of FBI, Uniform Crime Reports, prepared by the National Archive of Criminal Justice Data. <http://www.fbi.gov/about-us/cjis/ucr/ucr> (Accessed March 27, 2014).
- 12 Jacob L. Vigdor, "Immigration and New York City: The Contributions of Foreign-Born Americans to New York's Renaissance, 1975-2013," Americas Society/Council of the Americas, 2014, p.10.
- 13 Bureau of Justice Statistics, Federal Justice Statistics Program. <http://bjs.ojp.usdoj.gov/fjsrc/> (Accessed March 7, 2014).
- 14 Jacob L. Vigdor, "Immigration and New York City: The Contributions of Foreign-Born Americans to New York's Renaissance, 1975-2013," Americas Society/Council of the Americas, 2014, p.10.
- 15 "Immigrants and the Economy: Contribution of Immigrant Workers to the Country's 25 Largest Metropolitan Areas, with Detail on the Five Largest Metro Areas in the East," Fiscal Policy Institute, 2009, p.9. http://www.fiscalpolicy.org/ImmigrantsIn25MetroAreas_20091130.pdf
- 16 FBI Uniform Crime Reporting Statistics, Crime Reported by Atlanta Police Department, Georgia 1990-2007. <http://www.ucrdatatool.gov/Search/Crime/Local/RunCrimJurisbyJuris.cfm> (Accessed March 27, 2014).