

Immigration Facts: Roleplay 1

- Irish immigrants, including the thousands who came to the U.S. to escape famine in the 1840s, were hated by many of the people who were already living in the U.S. They were ostracized and denied employment for being Catholic, and stereotyped as angry, illiterate, greedy alcoholics. (University of Virginia American Studies)
- Italian immigrants were once thought by some Americans to be so alien to American culture that they could never be assimilated. (Public Radio International.) After 11 Italian immigrants were lynched in New Orleans in 1891, the New York Times defended this mass murder:

These sneaking and cowardly Sicilians, the descendants of bandits and assassins, who have transported to this country the lawless passions, the cut-throat practices, and the oath-bound societies of their native country, are to us a pest without mitigation. Our own rattlesnakes are as good citizens as they... Lynch law was the only course open to the people of New Orleans to stay the issue of a new license to the Mafia to continue its bloody practices."
- In 2012, about 13 percent of the U.S. population were immigrants (that is, people born in another country). This percentage has increased over the past decade, but is less than it was in 1890, when 15 percent of the population was foreign born. (U.S. Census Bureau)
- Only about a quarter of immigrants in the U.S. are undocumented (meaning that they don't have the permission of the federal government to be here). The number of undocumented people has stayed fairly stable, and has declined somewhat since 2007. (Pew Research Center)
- U.S. immigrants come from all over the world. Currently, about 28% came from Mexico (over 11 million people). Other top countries for immigrants include China (2 million), India (2 million), Philippines (2 million), and over 1 million each from Vietnam, El Salvador, Cuba, and Korea. (U.S. Census Bureau)
- Asians recently surpassed Latinos as the fastest-growing group of new immigrants to the U.S. (Pew Research Center)
- Immigrants have a wide range of education levels. Nearly 70 percent have a high school diploma or higher. Nearly 12 percent have an advanced degree (Masters degree, doctorate, etc.) – which is higher than the percentage of native-born Americans with an advanced degree. ("Statistical Portrait of the Foreign-Born Population in the United States," 2012)
- Less than one in five immigrants live in poverty. More than half of immigrants in the U.S. are homeowners, compared to 65 percent of all Americans. ("Statistical Portrait of the Foreign-Born Population in the United States" and U.S. Census Bureau)
- The great majority of working age immigrants—including undocumented immigrants—work and pay taxes. Undocumented workers participate in the workforce more than the population at large. (Pew Research Center)

- Studies have consistently shown that documented immigrants use social programs such as Medicaid and Supplemental Security Income at similar rates to native households. (Center for American Progress)
- Undocumented workers pay billions of dollars in taxes annually – even though they are generally not able to receive the public services they are paying for with their taxes. (Institute on Taxation and Economic Policy)
- Immigrants are less likely to commit crimes or be incarcerated than native-born Americans. (Immigration Policy Center)

Immigration Facts: Roleplay 2

- Immigrants do not generally compete with native-born American workers for jobs. Instead, immigrants tend to complement skill sets of American workers, according to research by leading economists. (Center for American Progress)
- Some economists have estimated that the annual income of undocumented workers would be 15% higher within five years if they were granted legal status, and that raising their wages would lead to a significant increase in the earnings of all Americans. (Center for American Progress) However, such findings are disputed by those who support stricter immigration laws.
- The Congressional Budget Office estimated that allowing undocumented immigrants a pathway to citizenship would reduce the U.S. budget deficit by billions of dollars. This is because they would be earning more and so would pay more taxes, including the payroll taxes that support Social Security and other important benefits.
- The majority of undocumented immigrants are long-term residents of the United States. The median length of residence is 13 years. “Median” means that half were here less than 13 years, and half were here more than 13 years. (Pew Research Center)
- Nearly half of the undocumented population has children under 18, many of them born in the United States. (Pew Research Center)
- 3.8 million undocumented immigrants have children who are American citizens. (Pew Research Center)