



Date: Tuesday, February 6, 2024

To: Members of the Press

From: New York Working Families Party, Make the Road New York

Re: How Immigrants Make Communities Safer

Recent incidents involving asylum seekers and the NYPD have triggered a wave of fear mongering about immigrants and crime, using the same xenophobic playbook we've seen countless times from Donald Trump and others before.

While these scare tactics may grab headlines, **the evidence is clear: there is no connection between immigration and crime.** In fact, higher rates of immigration make cities and neighborhoods safer, as do sanctuary city laws that stop ICE from eroding a community's trust in police and other municipal agencies.

There is No Correlation Between Immigration and Higher Crime Rates

One myth that has been pushed repeatedly: higher rates of immigration lead to higher rates of crime. It couldn't be farther from the truth.

In fact, studies have consistently found **first-generation immigrants are imprisoned at far lower rates than people born in the United States.** A [2023 Stanford study](#) found immigrants are 30% less likely to be incarcerated than white U.S.-born individuals, and 60% lower than Americans as a whole. Another [2020 Princeton Study](#) found that **undocumented immigrants have the lowest felony arrest rates** across all major types of crime, including violent, property, and drug crimes.

These figures have stayed steady for more than a century: The Stanford study found that **first-generation immigrants have been less likely to be imprisoned than U.S.-born Americans since 1880**, when the first major waves of immigration to this country began.

Crime Rates Drop When Immigrants Move Into a Neighborhood

Not only do immigrants commit fewer crimes than U.S. born Americans - they actually make our neighborhoods safer.

Nine out of 10 cities that received the most refugees relative to the size of their total population have experienced a decrease in their violent crime rates and property crime rate, according to a

recent study. **One [2017 study](#) of New York cities with the highest refugee rates found that violent and property crime rates dropped in nine out of the 10 cities with the highest rates relative to their population.** A [2020 Northwestern study](#) also showed **regions with higher rates of immigration also experienced higher gains in per-capita income** relative to cities with lower rates of immigration, largely explained by higher rates of entrepreneurship among immigrants.

Sanctuary City Laws Make Cities Safer

Finally, while some have suggested New York should remove its sanctuary status, such a step would actually make our city and state far less safe. So-called “sanctuary city” policies prevent local police officers and other municipal employees from being deputized as agents of ICE - i.e. from arresting people solely for being undocumented or from holding people they suspect of being undocumented so ICE can pick them up. **Letting local police act as immigration agents breaks down the trust with communities and makes it harder to investigate crimes**, because witnesses and victims are less likely to come forward to testify if they fear being deported. If any contact with the police could end with a deportation, it’s understandable that immigrants would avoid it.

It’s no surprise that communities with sanctuary city policies experience lower rates of crime - in fact, a [2017 study](#) found that **sanctuary counties saw 35.5 fewer crimes per 10,000 people than those that did**. Both Republicans and Democrats know this is true - that’s why laws limiting New York’s relationship with ICE were passed both Mayor Bloomberg and Mayor de Blasio.

Asylum Seekers Haven’t Changed the Rates of Crime in New York

The academic literature on immigrants and public safety is borne out by the facts on the ground. Crime rates continue to drop in New York City: murders, burglaries, and felonies are lower this year than in 2023, according to [NYPD reports](#), and the rate of petty crimes and grand larcenies has remained virtually unchanged.

Conclusion

Immigrants have played a central role in New York for centuries and have enriched the social, economic, cultural fabric of communities. The influx of new arrivals we’re seeing today [isn’t unprecedented](#). We’ve seen similar waves in the past, and families have had to weather similar efforts to spread misinformation and fear.

Through it all, New York has been a leader in ensuring that all New Yorkers, no matter their immigration status, feel safe in our city. In late 2014, NYC led the way in [limiting ICE’s ability to collaborate with local law enforcement](#) in the face of escalating tactics from the federal government that resulted in deportation and detention. In the advent of the Trump administration, the Muslim ban and increased threats from the Department of Homeland Security, City Hall unequivocally declared that New York City was a sanctuary city, ensuring that ICE would not enter the grounds of city property. Later, New York State expanded benefits to

undocumented communities, guaranteeing a path to education and driver's licenses to New Yorkers, regardless of immigration status.

Time and time again, New York has led in making sure more rights and more justice mean more safety for everyone. The abrupt U-turn in public policy has its roots in xenophobia, creating more chaos, not more solutions. New arrivals are coming to the United States from many different countries, experiences, and backgrounds, but they come to this country in pursuit of better opportunities for their children and families. Rather than using isolated incidents to push a false narrative, we have to look at the facts and be clear that immigration doesn't hurt public safety - in fact, it makes our communities safer.