

Immigration 1

Immigrants' Recent Effects on Government Budgets: 1994–2023

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“Rather than treating them as the cause of America’s fiscal struggles, we should consider immigrants part of the solution.”



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RESEARCH HIGHLIGHTS FEATURED CHART

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The immigration–crime link

Nearly two centuries of data show that immigrants commit fewer crimes than US-born citizens.

By **Tyler Smith**









MOBY DICK
OR, THE WHALE
HERMAN MELVILLE

MOBY DICK

OR, THE WHALE



HERMAN MELVILLE







“Communists”



“Black People”





The Cato Institute, a conservative think tank, recently published a report on the economic effects of immigration in the United States. Their focus was on whether immigrants are “freeloading”, receiving more money from government benefits than what they pay in taxes.

Their conclusion was the opposite. For the 30-year time period 1994 to 2023, immigrants paid taxes of \$10.6 trillion more than they received in government benefits. Including interest on the debt, immigrants saved us a total of \$14.5 trillion. Without their taxes, our national debt would be 205% of Gross Domestic Product, which could easily have been a debt crisis.

Even low-skilled immigrants are “fiscally positive”, that is, they pay more in taxes than the value of benefits they receive. The authors concluded, “Rather than treating them as the cause of America’s fiscal struggles, we should consider immigrants part of the solution.”

Other people are concerned about crime. Numerous studies, such as this one by the American Economic Association, show us that immigrants commit fewer crimes than US-born citizens.

My impression of criminals is that first of all, they are lazy at heart. Too lazy to work for a living, so they steal. Too lazy to develop good social relationships, so they use violence on people.

Any demographic group may include some number of criminals, but people who show more initiative are less likely to commit crimes. One example is education; more education corresponds to less crime.

It also takes a lot of initiative to move to another country, learn a new language, and adapt to new customs. If somebody wants to commit crimes, there are always opportunities at home.

So why do we hear so many negative things about immigrants? I think it is human nature to look for scapegoats for the problems of life. That was the theme of the classic novel Moby Dick, which describes all sorts of misfortunes that sailors encounter. Captain Ahab blamed all of these on one particular whale. Of course, real life is more complicated. The problems of the world are not caused by one individual creature, or by one demographic group.

Obviously we don't have room for all the poor people of the world, and it takes time to assimilate new workers. So we need regulations on immigration. But we don't need to blame immigrants for all our problems.

When I was growing up, the scapegoats were Communists and black people. Today it's immigrants. Next year it may be some other group. I think all of this is a terrible idea. If we still need a target for our anger, how about using the Covid virus as a scapegoat? People are valuable to our economy, and we should respect all of them.