fact check:

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QUICK FACTS

According to Define American, 63% of immigrants on TV are depicted as undocumented. In reality, only 24% of U.S. immigrants are undocumented.

The fastest-growing undocumented population in the U.S. comprises Asian immigrants.

The five pathways to citizenship (asylum, green card, marriage, military service, and U Visas) are not available to most undocumented immigrants.

Many countries have decades-long waitlists for applications to migrate to the U.S.

Immigrants are far less likely than the native-born population to commit crimes. Yet one-third of TV immigrant characters are linked to crime.

Undocumented immigrants pay billions into the Social Security Trust Fund (funds they’ll never have access to when they retire), federal income taxes (though they’re denied federal aid, benefits, and services), and state and local taxes.

Refugees who become U.S. citizens pay, on average, more in taxes than they receive in government benefits.

ICE is legally mandated to maintain tens of thousands of “active” detention beds every night. No other law enforcement agency has a similar mandatory minimum.

ONLINE REFERENCES & RESOURCES:

- Black Alliance for Just Immigration
- CATO Institute: “Immigration and Crime—What the Research Says”
- Color Of Change
- Define American and The Norman Lear Center: “Change the Narrative, Change the World”
- International Rescue Committee
- National Immigration Law Center
- Pew Research Center: “More Mexicans Leaving Than Coming to the U.S.”
- “Immigration”
- Southern Poverty Law Center: “Immigrant Justice”
- UndocuBlack Network

GLOSSARY

Asylum Seekers:
Those seeking refugee status to secure protection based on their religion, nationality, political affiliation, or particular social or ethnic group membership.

Deportation:
The forced removal of an individual from the U.S. because of unauthorized status, whether or not any criminal laws have been violated.

Immigrants:
Those who move to take permanent residence in a new country.

Internally Displaced Residents:
Those seeking refuge from a crisis in their own countries.

Latinx:
For context, remember that Spanish is a gendered language where singular nouns are declined male/masculine (Latino) or female/feminine (Latina); plural nouns use the masculine declension (Latinos) even when women outnumber men in a group. “Latinx” (LAT-uneks or luh-TEE-neks) is a gender-neutral or non-binary alternative to “Latino/Latina/Latin American” and is fast growing as the preferred identifier among U.S. Latin American communities.

Refugees:
Those forced to flee their home countries due to war, political persecution, natural disaster, famine, or poverty.

Visa:
An official document that indicates that the holder has permission to enter and stay in a requested country for a specified period of time.

For in-depth definitions of the above terms and definitions of additional terms (anchor baby, birthright citizenship, chain migration, Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA), mixed-status family, sanctuary city), please visit our Expanded Glossary.

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A list of the most up-to-date contact information for all of our partner organizations can be found on our website: WriteInclusion.org/factsheets