

Have Undocumented Immigrants Killed 63,000 American Citizens Since 11 September 2001?

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The figure would mean undocumented immigrants, who account for roughly 3 percent of the population, would have to commit about one quarter of the nation's homicides.



CLAIM

Undocumented immigrants have killed 63,000 U.S. citizens since 9/11.

ORIGIN

On 22 June 2018, in the middle of a family separation crisis caused by the Trump administration's botched "zero tolerance" policy, United States President Donald Trump himself recycled a claim that undocumented immigrants committed an abnormally large number of homicides in the United States.

"Sixty-three thousand Americans since 9/11 have been killed by illegal aliens," the president [said](#). "This isn't a problem that's going away, it's getting bigger."

Not only is there no evidence for his claim, it would require a seemingly superhuman murder spree by the nation's roughly 11 million undocumented immigrants.

The event was held amid a cascade of public outcry against internment camps established by the government for undocumented children, which prompted the Trump administration to quickly [change](#) course and order undocumented families to be held together — while seeking the ability to do so indefinitely. But while the

president accused reporters of failing to cover this alleged rash of homicides, the numbers do not support this claim.

According to data provided for the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, there have been 260,743 homicides in the United States from 2002 through 2016 (the most recent year available.) It thus seems mathematically impossible that undocumented immigrants, who make up roughly [3 percent](#) of the population, would have committed just under a quarter of all homicides in the United States during that time period. The bogus figure appears to have originated in a May 2006 [post](#) by Republican Rep. Steve King of Iowa complaining about the “Day Without An Immigrant” campaign calling attention to the contributions of immigrants to U.S. community.

Without undocumented immigrants, he said, no one would smuggle drugs across the U.S.-Mexico border, and non-immigrants would be safer:

The lives of 12 U.S. citizens would be saved who otherwise die a violent death at the hands of murderous illegal aliens each day. Another 13 Americans would survive who are otherwise killed each day by uninsured drunk driving illegals. Our hospital emergency rooms would not be flooded with everything from gunshot wounds, to anchor babies, to imported diseases to hangnails, giving American citizens the day off from standing in line behind illegals. Eight American children would not suffer the horror as a victim of a sex crime.

A rate of 33 “deaths” per day for the roughly 4.5 years between the 9/11 attacks and the publication of King’s unsubstantiated claim would come out to 48,180 deaths in total, a rate that would far surpass the 63,000 number by 2018 — if it was legitimate.

Three years later, in 2009, King (who has a [history](#) of racist public statements) misrepresented a [report](#) from the Government Accountability Office, [claiming](#) that 25,064 undocumented immigrants had been arrested for homicides between 2004 and 2008. In fact, the statistic covered the time period between August 1955 and April 2010, a difference of nearly 51 years. The first, fraudulent timeframe would work out to about 17 arrests per day; the real timeframe works out to approximately 1.25 arrests of undocumented people for homicide per day, or 456 arrests per year.

If we multiply that figure by eighteen just to be generous (11 September 2001 to 22 June 2018), we get a final figure of about 8,218 arrests, as opposed to the faulty metric, which yields a total of around 112,790 homicide arrests in the same timeframe. (We will, for now, ignore the fact that arrests are not the same as convictions, and note that we did not factor in leap days.) So the numbers in the claim fall flat on both the amount of murders committed and the arrests and convictions made in those murders.

In March 2018 an Arizona woman, Mary Ann Mendoza, [reportedly](#) related to the president the claim that “63,000” United States citizens had been killed by

undocumented immigrants. Mendoza's son was killed in 2014 by an undocumented drunk driver.

Although the president has attempted to cast immigrants as criminals since he first announced his candidacy in June 2015, [various analyses](#) have already undermined the notion that people in the United States without documentation were more likely to commit crimes in general than those born in the country. One of those studies, published in February 2018 by the libertarian group Cato Institute, examined data on criminal convictions in Texas for 2015 and [found](#):

There were 951 total homicide convictions in Texas in 2015. Of those, native-born Americans were convicted of 885 homicides, illegal immigrants were convicted of 51 homicides, and legal immigrants were convicted of 15 homicides. The homicide conviction rate for native-born Americans was 3.88 per 100,000, 2.9 per 100,000 for illegal immigrants, and 0.51 per 100,000 for legal immigrants (Figure 2). In 2015, homicide conviction rates for illegal and legal immigrants were 25 percent and 87 percent below those of natives, respectively.

Illegal immigrants made up about 6.4 percent of the Texas population in 2015 but only accounted for 5.4 percent of all homicide convictions. Legal immigrants made up 10.4 percent of the Texas population but accounted for only 1.6 percent of homicide convictions. native-born Americans made up 83 percent of the Texas population but accounted for 93 percent of all homicide convictions.

Although the Trump administration has called immigration at the southern U.S. border a "crisis" that has a deleterious effect on public safety, unauthorized border crossings are currently the [lowest](#) they have been in decades and studies have consistently [disproved](#) links between immigration and crime. Further most of the families who crossed during enforcement of Trump's "zero tolerance" policy were charged with [misdemeanors](#).