



Myth: Immigrants burden the health care system and are a drain on social services

Fact:

- Foreign-born residents use less funding from public insurers (such as Medicare and Medicaid) and pay more out-of-pocket costs for health care than do U.S.-born residents—a pattern that is even more pronounced for undocumented immigrants.¹
- The vast majority of immigrants are not eligible to receive public benefits such as Medicaid, State Children’s Health Insurance Program (SCHIP), Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF), Supplemental Security Income (SSI), or food stamps for many years after their arrival in the United States, if ever.²
- An analysis of welfare data by researchers at the Urban Institute reveals that less than 1 percent of households headed by undocumented immigrants receive cash assistance for needy families, compared to 5 percent of households headed by U.S.-born U.S. citizens.³
- A 2007 study based on data from the 2003 California Health Interview Survey found that “undocumented Mexicans and other undocumented Latinos reported less use of health care services and poorer experiences with care compared with their U.S.-born counterparts.”⁴ A number of reasons account for the lower utilization, but one key reason is that immigrants—especially the undocumented—appear to be healthier than U.S.-born residents.⁵
- Ninety-six percent of undocumented men living in the U.S. are employed, which exceeds the labor force participation rate of legal immigrants and U.S. citizens by 15 percentage points. Many work two or more jobs.⁶

¹ Rand Corporation. http://www.rand.org/pubs/research_briefs/2006/RAND_RB9230.pdf

² Immigration Policy Center. <http://www.aif.org/ipc/factchecks/Economics07.pdf>

³ N.C. Aizenam, “Illegal Immigrants in Md. and Va. Out-Earn U.S. Peers, Study Says,” *Washington Post*, November 29, 2007, p. A10.

⁴ Alexander N. Ortega, *et al.*, “Health Care Access, Use of Services, and Experiences Among Undocumented Mexicans and Other Latinos,” *Archives of Internal Medicine* 167(21), November 26, 2007: 2354-2360.

⁵ Rand Corporation. http://www.rand.org/pubs/research_briefs/2006/RAND_RB9230.pdf

⁶ Passell, Jeffrey S., Randolph Capps, and Michael E. Fix, *Undocumented Immigrants: Facts and Figures*. Washington, DC: The Urban Institute, January 2004. Quoted from NCLR (2006). *Common Myths About Undocumented Immigrants*, <http://www.nclr.org/section/publications/>.