
The Contribution Of Undocumented Immigrants To The U.s. Economy

Do you ever wonder how undocumented immigrants contribute to the U.S. economy? Are they really only coming to this country to live off of government assistance? My husband entered this country as an undocumented immigrant from Mexico in 2005. He, like everyone else that immigrated, came looking for the “American Dream.” The day after his arrival he began working three jobs. One in the morning at a powder coating company and in the evening he worked at two restaurants. He was paid with company checks from each of the places he worked at. Just like everyone else he had federal, state, social security, and medicare tax deducted from his earnings. He didn’t know what any of that was. He was just happy that he was getting paid in American dollars. He often wondered where the money that was deducted went. Who was reaping from the benefits of his hard work and of all the other millions of undocumented workers go?

There are currently 10.5 to 12 million undocumented immigrants living in the shadows of the United States of America, according to the Department of Homeland Security. California, Florida, Georgia, Illinois, New York, New Jersey, and Texas have the highest number of undocumented immigrants. It is said by the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering and Medicine that undocumented immigrants pay an average of \$11.64 billion in state and local taxes a year. About 8% of their income goes to taxes and they will have contributed approximately \$80,000 more in taxes than government services used over their lifetime. Undocumented immigrants have contributed up to \$300 billion to the Social Security Trust Fund. If contributions from immigrants were to stop, then that would mean payout for social security would end by 2037. Imagine working hard everyday just to make ends meet for your family, yet your contributions are going towards someone else’s retirement. In 2010 alone, undocumented individuals paid \$13 billion into retirement accounts and only received \$1 billion in return.

When employers issue W-2 forms that have social security numbers that don’t match with anyone on record, the agency routes the paperwork to what’s called the Earnings Suspense File, where it sits until people can prove the wages were theirs, allowing them to one day collect retirement benefits. A large portion of those forms were filed by employers on behalf of some of the most unlikely funders of Social Security: undocumented immigrants. Undocumented workers are paying billions in taxes for retirement benefits they will likely never receive. In July of 1996, the ITIN (individual taxpayer identification number) was created by the Internal Revenue Services. It was for foreign nationals and other individuals who are not eligible for a social security number (SSN) and can pay taxes they are legally required to pay. According to the IRS,

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ITIN filers pay \$9 billion in payroll taxes annually.

The United States of America is a nation full of immigrants. Their journey and our success would simply not be possible without the generations of immigrants who have come to our country from every corner of the world. According to the Small Business Administration, immigrants are 30 percent more likely to start a business in the United States than non-immigrants, and 18 percent of all small business owners in the United States are immigrants. Immigrants own more than 60 percent of all gas stations, 58 percent of all dry cleaners, 53 percent of all grocery stores, 45 percent of all nail salons, and 38 percent of all restaurants.

The majority of the immigrants coming to the United States are coming during their prime working and reproductive years. As more and more Baby Boomers retire, immigrants will not only disproportionately work as their doctors, nurses, and home health aides, but immigrants and their children also will do the lion's share of the work in filling the enormous holes in the workforce that are left behind. If a path to citizenship were provided by legislation to the nearly 12 million immigrants there would be a large benefit to the U.S. economy. A new study from the University of Southern California states that undocumented immigrants in California alone would have earned \$29.6 billion last year if they had been legal. Imagine what it would do for the United States as a whole?

If a path to legal status was offered to the 11 million undocumented workers in the United States, and giving provisional visas to those who pass background checks, America would be able to increase its national security. They would then be able to open bank accounts, have social security numbers, and work in the legal market rather than the black market.

In conclusion, undocumented immigrants not only help build a more dynamic economy as stated above, but they also contribute their food, music, culture, and language to our society making it more rich and diverse country. Unfortunately, we judge the person by how they look and think they should all look a certain way, but why? Isn't America land of the free? Why should undocumented immigrants be referred to as "illegal aliens?" We need to stop putting labels on everyone and look at the facts instead. I personally love that we live in such a diverse world and that my children will learn from others and their cultures.

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