

For Immediate Release

**Wishful Thinking on Immigration and Crime
*CIS Report Attempts to Erase 100 Years of Data***

November 18, 2009

Washington D.C. - A new report from the restrictionist group Center for Immigration Studies (CIS), *Immigration and Crime: Assessing a Conflicted Issue*, attempts to overturn a century's worth of research which has demonstrated repeatedly that immigrants are less likely than the native-born to commit violent crimes or end up behind bars. The CIS report focuses much of its attention on questioning the accuracy of the 2000 Census data used in two studies in particular: [*The Myth of Immigrant Criminality and the Paradox of Assimilation*](#), published by the Immigration Policy Center (IPC) in 2007, and [*Crime, Corrections, and California: What Does Immigration Have to Do with It?*](#), published by the Public Policy Institute of California (PPIC) in 2008. However, CIS ignores not only the many other sources of data in these two studies, but the myriad studies from other researchers which have reached the same conclusion.

CIS's real agenda appears to be to promote the 287(g) and Secure Communities programs, which—while purporting to identify and capture “criminal aliens”—are actually identifying many individuals who are not criminals, or even immigrants. In fact, recent Secure Communities data shows over 4,000 U.S. citizens who received “hits” through the program. There are many problems with the data from both of these programs, which CIS cites extensively to make its case. Localities with 287(g)'s are a self-selected group, and their data is not representative of the entire country. The Government Accountability Office (GAO) testified in [March 2009](#) that 287(g) has been poorly managed, and that the data which participating agencies are to track and report to U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) has not been defined. As a result, there is no consistency in the reporting of data. Secure Communities is an even smaller program with a similarly problematic data and reporting system.

Leaving aside the technical (and highly debatable) claims which CIS makes about the accuracy of 2000 Census data, the fact remains that the evidence demonstrating relatively low rates of criminality and incarceration among immigrants comes from far more sources than just the decennial census. It also comes from the National Crime Victimization Survey (NCVS), the Immigration and Intergenerational Mobility in Metropolitan Los Angeles (IIMMLA) survey, the Children of Immigrants Longitudinal Study (CILS), the National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health (Add Health), and in-depth community-based studies in cities such as Chicago, San Diego, El Paso, and Miami.

Moreover, it is not simply the IPC and PPIC which have drawn upon these many sources of data in concluding that immigration is not associated with higher rates of crime or imprisonment. Consider the following three recent examples:

- Robert J. Sampson, Chair of the Sociology Department at Harvard University, writes in the Winter 2008 edition of the American Sociological Association's [*Contexts* magazine](#), that "immigration—even if illegal—is associated with lower crime rates in most disadvantaged urban neighborhoods." Sampson draws in particular on his years of fieldwork in 180 Chicago neighborhoods, as well as police records, to conclude that "first-generation immigrants (those born outside the United States) were 45 percent less likely to commit violence than third-generation Americans, adjusting for individual, family, and neighborhood background."
- Rubén G. Rumbaut, Professor of Sociology at the University of California, Irvine, and co-author of the IPC study which CIS attempts to debunk, describes the many sources of data which dispel the myth of immigrant criminality. Writing in an [April 2009 report](#) from the Police Foundation, Rumbaut observes that "both contemporary and historical studies, including official crime statistics and victimization surveys since the early 1990s, data from the last three decennial censuses, national and regional surveys in areas of immigrant concentration, and investigations carried out by major government commissions over the past century, have shown instead that immigration is associated with *lower* crime rates and *lower* incarceration rates."
- The July 6, 2009, edition of the conservative magazine *Reason* features an article entitled "[The El Paso Miracle](#)," which notes that "by conventional wisdom, El Paso, Texas should be one of the scariest cities in America" given its poverty, its large population of less-educated immigrants (many of whom are unauthorized), and its location just across the border from the "super-violent" Mexican city Ciudad Juarez. Yet El Paso "is one of the safest big cities in America." The article observes that this "may not be an anomaly at all. Many criminologists say El Paso isn't safe despite its high proportion of immigrants, it's safe *because* of them."

In other words, numerous researchers drawing upon numerous sources of data have reached the same conclusion that the U.S. Commission on Immigration Reform reached in its 1984 report—which also happens to be the conclusion reached by the Industrial Commission of 1901, the Dillingham Immigration Commission of 1911, and the Wickersham National Commission on Law Observance and Enforcement of 1931: that immigration is not associated with higher crime.

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