

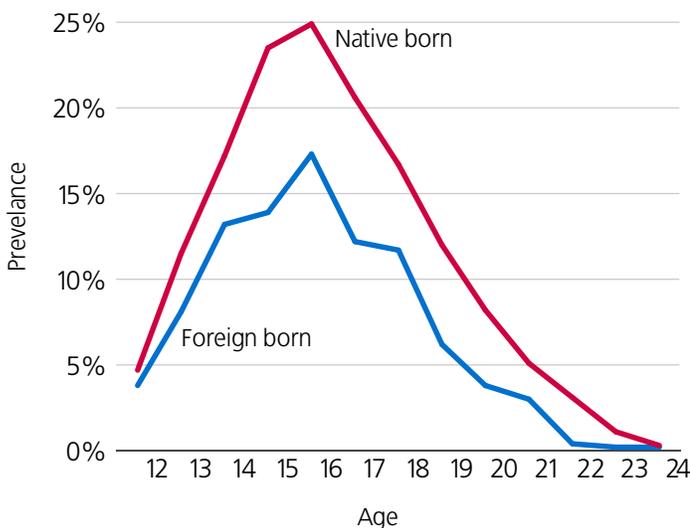
# Immigration and Public Safety Fact Sheet

Foreign-born residents of the United States commit crime less often than native-born citizens. Policies that further restrict immigration are therefore not effective crime-control strategies. *Immigration and Public Safety*, a survey of key research on immigration and crime, identifies four key findings that should inform policy debates.

## I. IMMIGRANTS—REGARDLESS OF LEGAL STATUS—COMMIT CRIMES AT LOWER RATES THAN NATIVE-BORN CITIZENS

Foreign-born individuals report lower rates of criminal offending than native-born citizens and they have less contact with the criminal justice system, as measured by arrest records.

### Reported Rates of Delinquent or Criminal Behavior in Previous Year



Note: "Native-born" includes only those with native-born parents. See full report for information on native-born children of foreign-born parents: <http://www.sentencingproject.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/Immigration-and-Public-Safety.pdf>  
Source: Bersani B. E. (2014). An Examination of First and Second Generation Immigrant Offending Trajectories. *Justice Quarterly* (31)2, 315–343.

## II. HIGHER LEVELS OF IMMIGRATION MAY HAVE CONTRIBUTED TO THE HISTORIC DROP IN CRIME RATES

The influx of immigrants in recent decades has coincided with a significant decline in reported crime rates, which may have been influenced by the growing immigrant population. Research has demonstrated that communities with larger immigrant populations have outpaced the public safety gains of their peers.

Immigrants help lower the crime rate in their neighborhoods because of their strong familial ties, their civic engagement, their heightened concerns about criminal-justice involvement, and the increased economic activity they generate in their communities.

## III. POLICE CHIEFS BELIEVE INTENSIFYING IMMIGRATION LAW ENFORCEMENT UNDERMINES PUBLIC SAFETY

Law enforcement leaders have explained that engaging police in immigration enforcement work would deter crime reporting and cooperation. To reduce crime, police in cities as different as Tulsa and Los Angeles have said they would rather work with immigrants instead of taking steps to deport them, including asking about citizenship status. That position has been endorsed by the Major Cities Chiefs Association and is also supported by a briefing memo from the International Association of Chiefs of Police.

#### **IV. IMMIGRANTS ARE UNDER-REPRESENTED IN THE U.S. PRISON POPULATION**

Non-citizens are slightly underrepresented among the 1.5 million people in U.S. prisons: they currently make up six percent of the U.S. prison population while comprising seven percent of the total U.S. population.

The increased use of imprisonment for immigration law violations is a major driver of the overrepresentation of non-citizens receiving *federal* sentences.

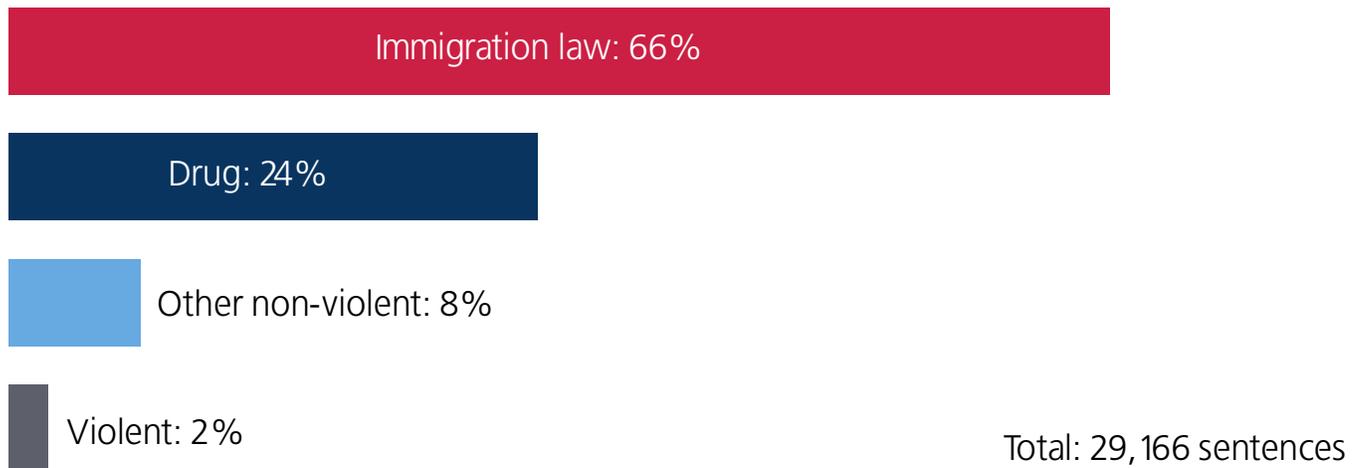
- Among the 189,000 people in federal prisons, 22% are non-citizens. Immigration law violations were the most serious offense for one-third of non-citizens serving federal prison sentences.
- While non-U.S. citizens received a substantial share (42%) of the 71,000 federal sentences

imposed in 2015, most of these sentences (66%) were for immigration law violations, as shown in the chart below.

Congressional proposals endorsed by the Trump administration would further increase penalties and create mandatory minimum sentences for illegal re-entry into the United States. If passed, the new sentences would significantly increase the number of non-citizens serving prison sentences for immigration offenses.

- The total number of federal immigration convictions has already **doubled** between 2000 and 2015, increasing from 11,403 to 20,757, during a period in which convictions for other crimes increased by just seven percent.

#### **Federal Criminal Sentences for Non-Citizens by Offense, 2015**



Note: Violent offenses were defined based on the United States Sentencing Commission’s Supplement to the 2015 Manual Guide: murder, manslaughter, assault, kidnapping/hostage taking, sex offense, robbery, arson, racketeering/extortion, and firearm offenses. Retrieved from <http://www.usc.gov/sites/default/files/pdf/guidelines-manual/2015/GLMSupplement.pdf>  
 Source: United States Sentencing Commission. 2015 Sourcebook of Federal Sentencing Statistics. Table 9: Citizenship of Offenders in Each Primary Offense Category. Retrieved from <http://www.usc.gov/sites/default/files/pdf/research-and-publications/annual-reports-and-sourcebooks/2015/Table09.pdf>