



STEWARDS OF OUR EARTH *All of God's Creation*

Social Justice Committee, Holy Cross Parish, Mt. Airy, August 25, 2024

Five Key Facts About Immigration, Refugees, and Asylum

Immigration continues to be a hot button issue, particularly in an election year. Thus, it is important to have the facts. Matt Schiavenza and Ayelet Parness in a July 19, 2024, article for HIAS present five relevant facts. The following have been adapted to fit the bulletin space. For the full text, [click here](#).

Fact One: Seeking Asylum is Legal.

The United States government defines asylum as a form of protection granted to foreign nationals or stateless individuals who face, or are at risk of facing, persecution on account of their race, religion, nationality, membership in a particular social group, or association with a particular political opinion. Asylum rights became enshrined into international law following the Second World War and were codified in U.S. law in 1980. People have a right to claim asylum in the U.S. regardless of how they entered the country.

Fact Two: Asylum Is Not Easy to Obtain.

Immigration opponents have portrayed the United States asylum system as a free-for-all, where every individual who approaches the border claims asylum and then enters the country freely. In fact, the asylum process is complex, tricky, and, for many applicants, one that does not result in acceptance. Asylum claims filed in immigration court face steep odds, especially for claimants — some 70% of the total number — who do not have legal representation. But even those who do obtain the services of an attorney enter a system with a daunting backlog.

Fact Three: Asylum Seekers and Refugees Help the Economy.

A common claim made by anti-immigrant politicians is that asylum seekers and refugees are a drain on the economy, namely by competing with native-born Americans for jobs and driving wages down. In fact, the opposite is true: A recent study from the Department of Health and Human Services found that between 2005 and 2019, asylees and refugees contributed a net \$124 billion to the U.S. economy — more than the GDP of the Dominican Republic.

Fact Four: Asylum Seekers and Immigrants Commit Fewer Crimes, Per Capita, Than Average.

One of the most consistent lines of rhetoric from anti-immigrant politicians is that refugee and asylum seekers are directly responsible for an increase in crime.... The facts do not support this. [For example], a 2020 study found that in Texas, a state that records the immigration status of everyone who is arrested, undocumented immigrants are significantly less likely to commit crimes.

Fact Five: Our Asylum System Is Broken. But That Doesn't Mean It Can't Be Fixed.

Immigration opponents often argue that measures to prevent people from entering, and to curtail access to asylum — such as construction of a border wall, or Title 42-style suspensions — are the only solution for tackling the rise of encounters at the U.S.-Mexico border. This is a false choice. People who are fleeing danger will not stop trying to save the lives of themselves and their families. Such policies... only increase a volatile and chaotic environment that denies the rights of asylum seekers and does nothing to provide security at the border.... More resources are needed at the border and at the local level to meet the needs of asylum seekers.

Comments on this column may be directed to the Social Justice Committee at socialjustice@holycrossphl.org.