

Myth #9

The events of September 11, 2001 clearly show that Canada is a "haven for terrorists," and allowing non-status immigrants to live in Canada poses a serious threat to our national security.

Reality

Although some politicians and media have made such statements, there is no evidence that non-status people are either a threat to national security or that Canada is a "haven for terrorists." In fact most of the alleged terrorists entered the United States legally.

Myth #10

To regularize the status of non-status immigrants and allow them to become permanent residents would mean that potential terrorists and criminals would become part of our society.

Reality

If Canada grants permanent resident status to non-status immigrants, each person will have to go through a security check. This also means that the great majority of non-status immigrants will finally be able to live as everyone else rather than living underground. As a result, enforcement resources could be better spent on focusing on the small number of individuals who pose a serious risk to our security.



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Myths and Realities About Non-Status Canadians

Myth #1

Non-status immigrants jump the queue.

Reality

Our current immigration point system is designed to ensure that those who qualify for immigration to Canada are either business people with large amounts of capital, professionals with a university education who speak English or French fluently, or family class immigrants. Most of the non-status immigrants are skilled or semi-skilled workers who do not qualify under our point system. There is no queue for them. The Toronto Star reported that under the new point system most people currently living in Canada would not qualify.

Myth #2

Our immigration system is very generous and we cannot afford to let any more people in.

Reality

Canada sets immigration targets because demographically we need immigrants to help sustain our country's economy. These targets are set at 1% of the total population, and we consistently fail to meet them.

Myth #3

Canada 's refugee policy takes care of everyone.

Reality

It is true that our immigration system allows for persons to make refugee claims. The definition of a Convention refugee is restricted to persons who face serious reprisals against their human rights because of their race, religion, nationality, and membership in a social group or political opinion. However, many of the people who come in as non-status are victims of growing global inequalities, extreme poverty and generalized violence in their country of origin, but do not qualify as Convention refugees. In addition, the system makes mistakes and many legitimate refugees do not get in. The refugee appeals process provided in the new immigration law, the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act (IRPA) has not been established, giving no recourse to refugees whose claims have been denied.

(See Multidisciplinary Analysis of the IRB Decision-Making Process, October 2000 François Crépeau, Patricia Foxen , France Houle, Cécile Rousseau).

Myth #4

Canada only needs the "best and the brightest" of immigrants.

Reality

Canada 's definition of what constitutes "best and brightest" focuses on post-secondary education, language and profession, excluding many highly skilled people. This focus on the so-called "best and brightest" also excludes skilled labourers and artisans. It is more and more apparent that Canada is in shortage of skilled labour in an increasing number of sectors. Finally, while our government talks about the need to restrict immigration to the "best and brightest," it continues to bring in domestic and agricultural workers on temporary work permits instead of granting them permanent resident status. The "best and brightest" that are accepted as immigrants find it virtually impossible to use their skills in the labour market and are relegated to low-paying jobs.

Myth #5

Non-status immigrants take away jobs.

Reality

There is a shortage of skilled or semi-skilled workers and trades people in many sectors of our economy. Industries such as manufacturing, construction, garment, childcare, cleaning, food and services, and many others rely heavily on non-status immigrants. Many non-status immigrants work in jobs that Canadians won't do and are exploited by employers.

Myth #6

Non-status immigrants don't pay taxes.

Reality

Non-status immigrants contribute to the economy by working, owning their own businesses, spending their money in Canada, and by paying taxes such as GST, PST, property tax, gas tax, and other taxes that are incorporated into prices of goods. Many also pay income tax as well, as long as they have a Social Insurance Number (SIN).

Myth #7

Non-status immigrants are on welfare and use our social services.

Reality

Even though non-status immigrants contribute to the economic and social fabric of this country, they do not have access to welfare or other social services including health care services. In fact, evidence shows that immigrants in general use health and social services less than their Canadian-born counterparts.

Myth #8

Non-status immigrants are criminals.

Reality

There is no evidence to suggest that non-status immigrants are more likely to commit criminal offences than any other group of Living without status, in fact makes you more vulnerable to crimes and also less likely to report crimes done to yourself or others.