



Bryan White <zebrafactcheck@gmail.com>

Borderline ignorance results in mostly false fact check of DeSantis

1 message

Bryan White <zebrafactcheck@gmail.com>
To: truthometer@politifact.com

Fri, Oct 6, 2023 at 2:31 AM

Dear Truth-O-Meter,

Your fact check claiming "[Ron DeSantis exaggerates number of migrants in US illegally under President Joe Biden](#)" ignores critical facts that may give a different impression (yes, that's your definition of "Mostly False").

First, the fact check claims Gov. DeSantis conflated border apprehensions with the number of undocumented migrants who remained in the United States. The fact check offers no evidence confirming what figures DeSantis used to support his claim, so you're presenting conjecture as fact. Also, the claim ignores the fact that apprehension figures are routinely used as a proxy for illegal crossings. Leaving that fact out while accusing DeSantis of improperly conflating two numbers is careless to the point of dishonesty.

cover—a so-called spatial displacement effect (Rossmo *et al* 2008). Figure 1 shows that the number of illegal alien apprehensions (as a proxy for illegal crossings) has declined gradually since the late 1990s except for one sector—Rio Grande Valley. The number of border patrol agents has increased during the same time period

centuries, showing that U.S. recessions were associated with drastic declines in immigration flows, while relatively larger inflows occurred during recovery years.¹ Adding to this evidence, in Fig. 1 (top) we plot the number of apprehensions at the U.S.-Mexico border (which the existing literature uses as a proxy for attempted illegal crossings of unskilled labor into the U.S.) along with the GDP ratio between the U.S. and Mexico measured in purchasing power parity terms. The chart shows that periods in which the U.S. economy outperformed that of

succeed. Because they do proxy for crossing success rates, apprehensions continue to be an important supply determinant.

The United States (U.S.)-Mexico border extends 1980 miles from San Diego, California to Brownsville, Texas. Hundreds of thousands of undocumented immigrants enter the U.S. illegally every year, and many are apprehended. The number of apprehensions has long been considered a reasonable proxy for the number of illegal border crossings, but recent analyses have suggested that apprehensions are generated by a complex combination of enforcement intensity, number of undocumented immigrants, and migrant behavior (*e.g.*

NAPFA was able to reduce the migration pressure: are trade and migration substitutes like the policy-makers had assumed or are they complements? Using monthly data from 1968 until 2004, we estimate a distributed lag model with the number of apprehensions at the US-Mexican border as a proxy for illegal migration. The results indicate that increasing trade flows cause larger illegal migration from Mexico to the United States.

Would PolitiFact contact professional journals and argue that professionals used proxies that in reality represented a conflating of two different figures?

PolitiFact would be crazy to try, for PolitiFact would lose that credibility game.

The fact check not only failed to note the use of border apprehensions as a proxy for illegal entry, **it entirely failed to note that border apprehensions do not account for all illegal border crossings**. Again, that's carelessness to the point of deception. You, the fact checker, are publishing misinformation by failing to explain that illegal entry will consistently exceed apprehensions (by more than a little). That's exactly why professionals publishing in peer-reviewed journals get away with using border apprehensions as a proxy for illegal entry.

A reasonable fact check might argue that the traditional proxy isn't all that reliable, for a variety of reasons. But to completely omit the fact that migrants often cross into the United States without encountering the Border Patrol counts as journalistic malpractice.

Please do what is necessary to correct the fact check and avoid misleading the public, lest you damage our democracy.

Thanks for your attention to this matter.

--

Sincerely,

Bryan W. White
editor
zebrafactcheck.com