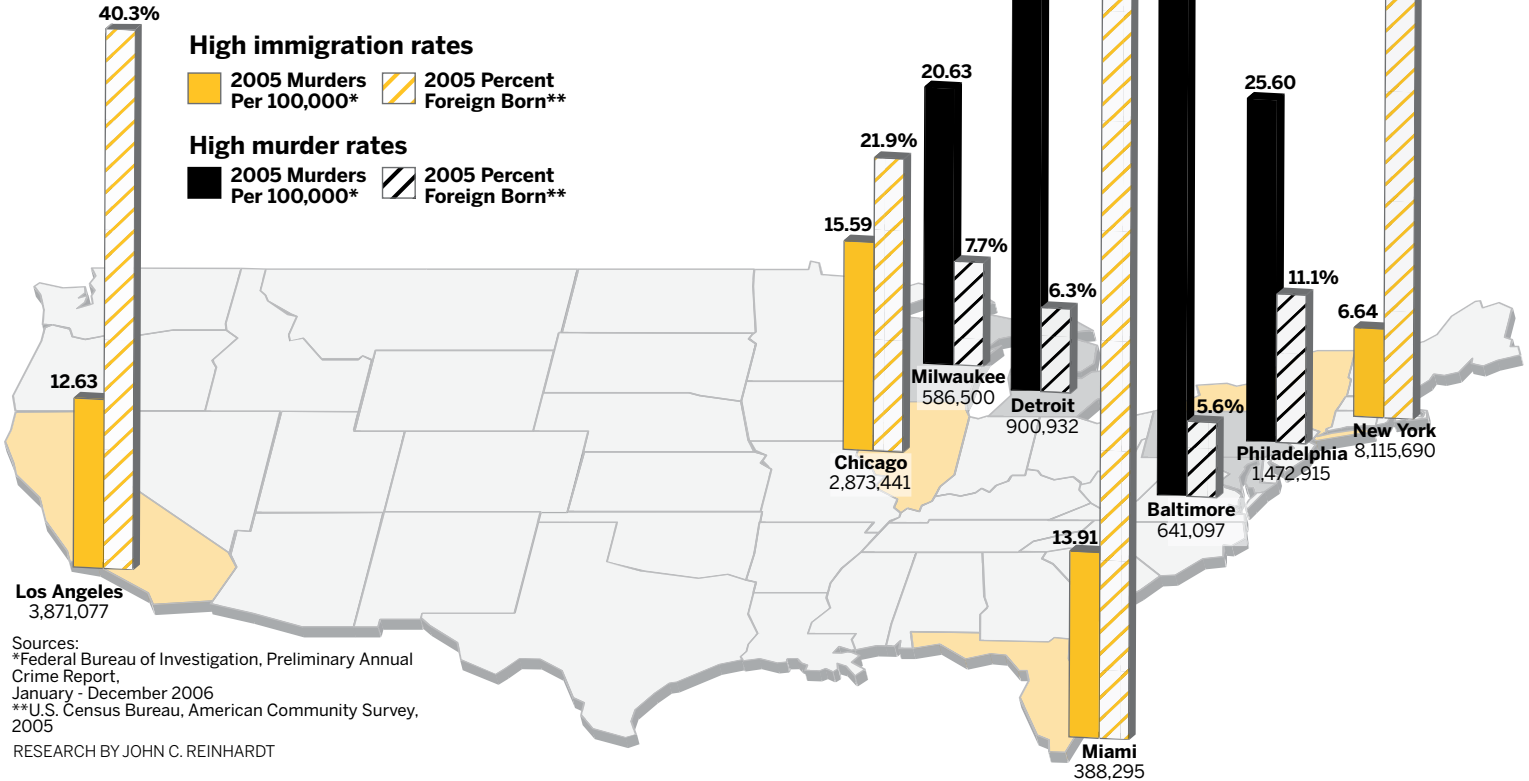


# Do Immigrants Affect Crime?

Several criminologists, including Lawrence Sherman, have suggested a strong correlation between high foreign-born populations and low crime rates.



attention [of Congress], even for the fifth largest city.” Gordon hopes that last fall’s change in Congress, as well as increasing public concern over the efficacy of the Iraq war, will renew focus on the plights of local cities.

While the substantial Homeland Security aid received by key border cities like Phoenix sometimes overlaps with domestic crime protection, as seen in the baby formula case, other cities have no equivalent federal assistance with their day-to-day needs. “Under President Clinton, we had the COPS program,” says Milwaukee Mayor Tom Barrett. “Under President Bush, that has since been decimated.” COPS had funded 55 officers for the city. According to Barrett, Homeland Security has also cut funding since it did not deem Milwaukee a high risk for terrorist activity. The small percentage of Homeland Security money still directed to the city has been earmarked for the Urban Area Security Initiative, which trains current public safety officers to respond to terrorism events.

Barrett, who served ten years in Congress, says part of the problem is that the administration is removed from the realities of urban cities. Only as mayor was Barrett himself close enough to understand the challenges the city faces. When its industrial period ended, this Rust Belt city did not transition smoothly into a service society; pockets of extreme poverty were created across the inner city. Entrenched gangs now plague the area where the manufacturing plants once operated.

Dennis Rosenbaum, director of the Center for Research in Law and Justice at the University of Illinois at Chicago, says the national focus on the Iraq war, in large part, diverted federal attention from urban crime. “In a few months of war, we spent more overseas than we did in ten years of providing federal support to law enforcement around the country,” he says. “We’ve been at war for a number of years, so what we are talking about is billions of

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dollars, which could make a substantial difference in inner cities.”

Rosenbaum acknowledges that there is no guarantee the government would spend money on cities if it didn’t spend it on Iraq. Part of the problem, he says, is our short attention span. Politicians vying for re-election find it hard to invest in programs that won’t produce results in a few years. They focus on the omnipresent threat of terrorism because it affects everybody, compared to the localized, entrenched reality of urban crime.

The biggest national shortcoming, many criminologists agree, is the government’s failure to invest in research. The National Institute of Science receives \$46.5 million to research public safety, compared to \$27.9 billion for health research.

Without research funding, criminologists can only hypothesize why crime has risen in specific cities and how to combat it. John Eck, a professor of criminal justice at the University of Cincinnati who specializes in analyzing crime patterns, says several theories have been floated to explain the sudden decrease and subsequent increase in crime in select cities. The