

Low Wage Worker Myth & Facts

Myth: Foreign low wage workers depress the wages of U.S. workers.

Fact: Immigrants don't have a negative impact on the majority of native born workers, and often exact a positive impact.

- The primary reason that immigrants don't have a negative impact on the majority of native-born workers is that they aren't competing for the same jobs.
- The U.S. population is growing older and better educated, while the U.S. economy continues to create a large number of low skill jobs that favor younger workers with little formal education. As a result, immigrants increasingly are filling jobs at the less-skilled end of the occupational spectrum for which relatively few native-born workers are available.
- Even among workers with the same level of formal education, the foreign-born tend to be employed in different occupations than U.S. natives. Less-educated foreign-born workers, for instance, are found mostly in agricultural and personal service jobs, while less-educated natives are found mostly in manufacturing and mining.
- Immigration raised the average wage of the native-born worker by 1.1 percent during the 1990s. Among native-born workers with a high-school diploma or more education, wages increased between 0.8 percent and 1.5 percent.
- Since workers with different levels of education perform different tasks and fill different roles in production, the majority of native-born workers (those with intermediate educational levels) experience benefits, more than competition, from foreign-born workers concentrated in high and low educational groups.

Published On: **Tue, Jan 01, 2008** | [Download File](#) [1]

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