

Demographics: Low Skill Immigration¹

NUMBERS: Data released by the Census Bureau in August 2006, shows that the foreign-born population of the US increased by 4.9 million between 2000 and 2005, raising the total foreign-born population to 35.7 million, or 12.4 percent of the 288.4 million people in the country.

- The foreign-born population includes legal immigrants who come here on permanent and temporary visas for work, study, and family reunification, as well as an estimated 11.5 million undocumented immigrants who come for the same reasons but generally are precluded from obtaining visas by shortcomings in the U.S. immigration system.
- In 2003, the foreign born in the United States were 23 percent of production workers, 20 percent of service workers, and 12 percent of professionals

IMPACT: Immigrants have a net positive impact on the nation's economy, and on the employment and earnings of native workers

- As a recent study by the Pew Hispanic Center concludes: "Between 2000 and 2004, there was a positive correlation between the increase in the foreign born population and the employment of native-born workers in 27 states and the District of Columbia," which "accounted for 67% of all native-born workers and include all the major destination states for immigrants."
- 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 earnings of an immigrant worker rises the longer that the immigrant lives in the United States and as he or she naturalizes.

NECESSITY: Immigrant workers will likely account for between one-third and one-half of total U.S. labor-force growth through 2030.

- 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.

¹ *The Growth and Reach of Immigration: New Census Bureau Data Underscore Importance of Immigrants in the U.S. Labor Force*, by Rob Paral (http://www.aifl.org/ipc/policybrief/policybrief_2006_81606.shtml); *Essential Workers: Immigrants are a Needed Supplement to the Native-Born Labor Force*, by Rob Paral (http://www.aifl.org/ipc/policy_reports_2005_essentialworkers.asp).

- That immigrants come here to fill available jobs is clear: as of 2005, 94 percent of adult male undocumented immigrants and 86 percent of adult male legal immigrants were in the labor force.
- According to data from the 2000 U.S. Census, in the absence of recently arrived, noncitizen immigrant workers:
 - employment in about one-third of all U.S. job categories would have contracted during the 1990s, even if all unemployed U.S.-born workers with recent job experience in those categories had been re-employed.
 - thirteen occupational categories collectively would have been short more than 500,000 workers during the 1990s, and eleven job categories would have seen their workforce contract by more than 7 percent during the 1990s, even with re-employment of experienced natives.
 - even if native workers could readily have moved to any part of the country in which jobs were available during the 1990s, and even if they had been willing to accept any job offered, there would not have been nearly enough unemployed native-born workers to fill all available jobs