

August 4, 2010

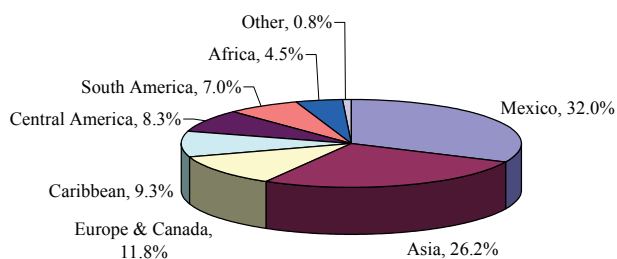
IMMIGRANTS IN THE U.S. LABOR FORCE: CBO Report Underscores Diverse Contributions of Foreign-Born Workers

A recent [report](#) from the Congressional Budget Office (CBO) underscores not only the diversity of the foreign-born labor force in the United States, but also the myriad roles that immigrant workers play in the U.S. economy.¹ The report, which analyzes data from the Current Population Survey, finds that 15.5 percent of the U.S. labor force was foreign-born in 2009, up slightly from 14.5 percent in 2004.² Moreover, **immigrant workers and their native-born counterparts differ significantly in terms of occupation and education, as well as where in the country they live.** As other, more detailed [analyses](#) have confirmed, this suggests that immigrants and natives are filling different niches in the U.S. labor market and are therefore not in direct competition with each other for most jobs.³

Nearly one-third of immigrant workers are from Mexico, and more than one-quarter from Asia.

- According to the CBO's analysis, nearly one-third (32.0 percent) of all foreign-born workers were from Mexico as of 2009, while more than one-quarter (26.2 percent) came from Asian countries {Figure 1}.⁴
- One-in-nine foreign-born workers (11.8 percent) were from Europe and Canada in 2009, while one-in-eleven (9.3 percent) came from the Caribbean {Figure 1}.⁵

Figure 1: Foreign-Born Labor Force by Place of Birth, 2009

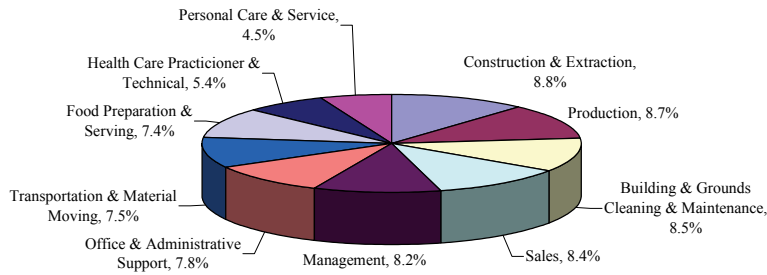


Source: Congressional Budget Office, *The Role of Immigrants in the U.S. Labor Market: An Update*, July 2010, Table 2.

Immigrant and native-born workers differ in their occupational profiles.

- The top occupation for foreign-born workers age 25-64 was construction and extraction in 2009, accounting for 8.8 percent of the total foreign-born labor force, followed by production occupations (8.7 percent); building and grounds cleaning and maintenance (8.5 percent); and sales (8.4 percent) {Figure 2}.⁶

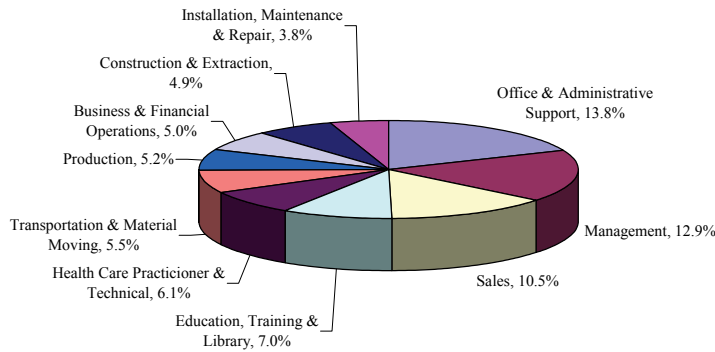
Figure 2: Top 10 Occupations of Foreign-Born Workers, Age 25-64, 2009



Source: Congressional Budget Office, *The Role of Immigrants in the U.S. Labor Market: An Update*, July 2010, Table 7.

- The top occupation for native-born workers age 25-64 was office and administrative support in 2009, accounting for 13.8 percent of the total native-born labor force, followed by management (12.9 percent); sales (10.5 percent); and education, training, and library occupations (7.0 percent) {Figure 3}.⁷

Figure 3: Top 10 Occupations of Native-Born Workers, Age 25-64, 2009

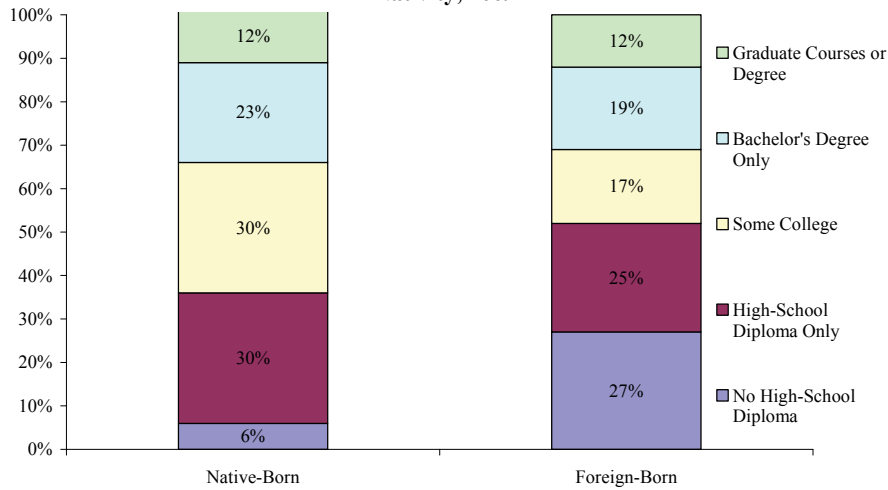


Source: Congressional Budget Office, *The Role of Immigrants in the U.S. Labor Market: An Update*, July 2010, Table 7.

Immigrant and native-born workers differ significantly in their educational profiles.

- 30 percent of native-born workers age 25+ had some college education short of a bachelor’s degree in 2009, compared to only 17 percent of foreign-born workers {Figure 4}.⁸
- More than one-quarter (27 percent) of foreign-born workers age 25+ lacked a high-school diploma in 2009, compared to only 6 percent of native-born workers {Figure 4}.⁹

Figure 4: Educational Attainment of U.S. Labor Force, Age 25+, by Nativity, 2009

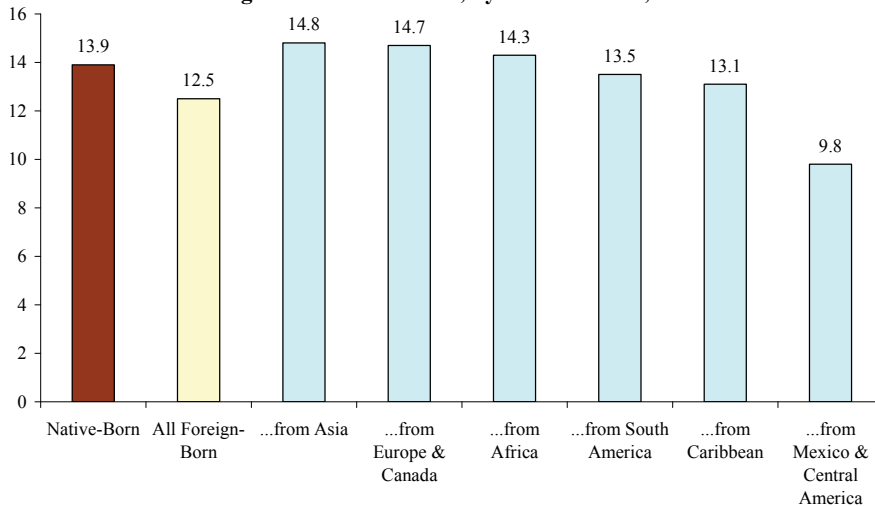


Source: Congressional Budget Office, *The Role of Immigrants in the U.S. Labor Market: An Update*, July 2010, Table 4.

Immigrant workers from Asia, Europe, Canada, and Africa are the most educated.

- On average, native-born workers had 13.9 years of education in 2009, compared to 12.5 years for foreign-born workers as a whole {Figure 5}.¹⁰
- Asian immigrant workers had the most years of education (14.8), followed by European and Canadian immigrants (14.7 years), African immigrants (14.3 years), and South American immigrants (13.5) {Figure 5}.¹¹

Figure 5: Average Years of Education Completed, Native-Born & Foreign-Born Labor Force, by Place of Birth, 2009

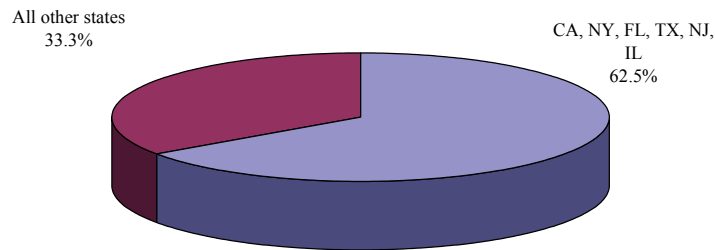


Source: Congressional Budget Office, *The Role of Immigrants in the U.S. Labor Market: An Update*, July 2010, Table 2.

Most immigrant and native-born workers live in different states.

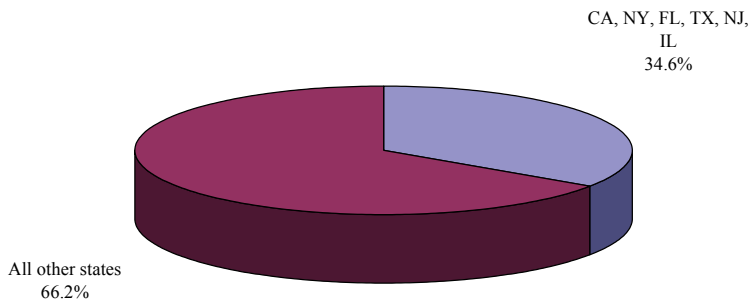
- 62.5% of foreign-born workers lived in only six states in 2009: California, New York, Florida, Texas, New Jersey, and Illinois {Figure 6}. In comparison, only 34.6 percent of native-born workers lived in those states {Figure 7}.¹²

Figure 6: Geographic Distribution of Foreign-Born Labor Force, 2009



Source: Congressional Budget Office, *The Role of Immigrants in the U.S. Labor Market: An Update*, July 2010, Table 3.

Figure 7: Geographic Distribution of Native-Born Labor Force, 2009



Source: Congressional Budget Office, *The Role of Immigrants in the U.S. Labor Market: An Update*, July 2010, Table 3.

Endnotes

¹ Congressional Budget Office, [*The Role of Immigrants in the U.S. Labor Market: An Update*](#), July 2010.

² Ibid., p. 1.

³ Rob Paral & Associates, [*Untying the Knot \(Parts I, II & III\)*](#) (Washington, DC: Immigration Policy Center, American Immigration Law Foundation, 2009).

⁴ Congressional Budget Office, [*The Role of Immigrants in the U.S. Labor Market: An Update*](#), July 2010, Table 2.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Ibid, Table 7.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Ibid., Table 4.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Ibid., Table 2.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Ibid., Table 3.