

June 10, 2010

**NOT IN COMPETITION:
Data Underscores Differences Between Immigrant and Native-Born Workers**

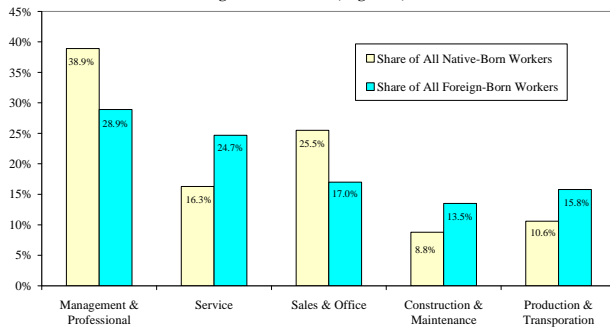
High levels of unemployment have led some to propagate the myth that every immigrant added to the U.S. labor force amounts to a job lost by a native-born worker, or that every job loss for a native-born worker is evidence that there is need for one less immigrant worker. In fact, this has been the rationale behind any number of harsh legislative proposals targeting immigrants. These kinds of proposals may be appealing politically, but they reflect dangerously simplistic assumptions about labor-force dynamics. Moreover, such proposals distract from the far more important goal of creating economic policies that generate growth and create jobs for workers across the U.S. labor market. As [data](#) from the 2009 Current Population Survey illustrates, most immigrant and native-born workers are *not* competing with each other in today's tight job markets.¹

The data demonstrates—as have other, more detailed [analyses](#)²—that most foreign-born workers differ from most native-born workers in terms of what occupations they work in, where in the country they live, and how much education they have. What this means in practical terms is that most native-born workers are not directly competing for jobs with immigrant workers because they are in different labor markets. In fact, even within the same company, immigrants and natives may not be in competition with each other due to differences in occupation, education, and location. A company may be laying off workers from a management staff dominated by the native-born, yet hiring workers for a production staff that is dominated by immigrants. In light of this simple fact, the claims heard in some quarters that immigrants must be stealing jobs from native-born Americans have little credibility.

Occupation

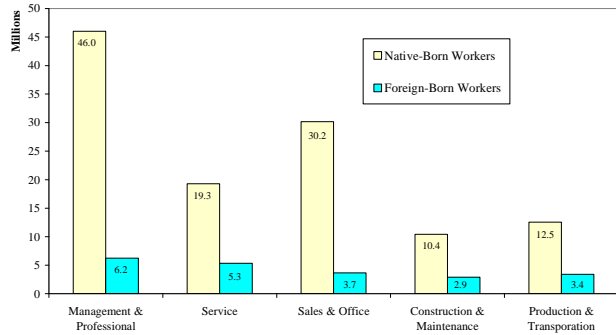
- One-quarter (24.7 percent, or 5.3 million) of employed foreign-born workers were in service occupations in 2009, compared to only one-sixth (16.3 percent, or 19.3 million) of employed native-born workers.
- Only one-sixth (17.0 percent, or 3.7 million) of employed foreign-born workers were in sales and office occupations in 2009, compared to one-quarter (25.5 percent, or 30.2 million) of employed native-born workers {Figures 1 and 2}.

Figure 1: Occupational Distribution of Employed Native-Born & Foreign-Born Workers, Age 16+, 2009



Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics, "News Release: Foreign-Born Workers: Labor Force Characteristics - 2009," March 19, 2010, Table 4.

Figure 2: Numbers of Employed Native-Born and Foreign-Born Workers, Age 16+, by Occupation, 2009

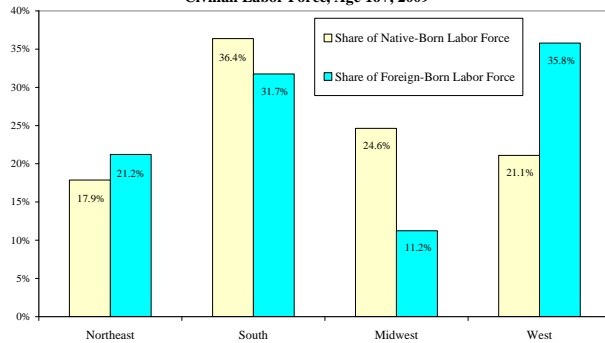


Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics, "News Release: Foreign-Born Workers: Labor Force Characteristics - 2009," March 19, 2010, Table 4.

Location

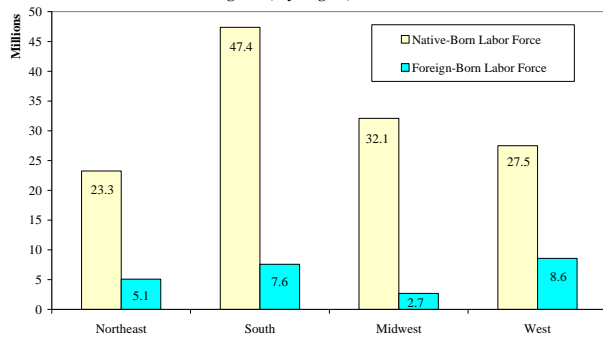
- More than one-third (35.8 percent, or 8.6 million) of the foreign-born labor force lived in the West in 2009, compared to only one-fifth (21.1%, or 27.5 million) of the native-born labor force.
- Only one-tenth (11.2 percent, or 2.7 million) of the foreign-born labor force lived in the Midwest in 2009, compared to one-quarter (24.6%, or 32.1 million) of the native-born labor force {Figures 3 and 4}.

Figure 3: Regional Distribution of Native-Born & Foreign-Born Civilian Labor Force, Age 16+, 2009



Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics, "News Release: Foreign-Born Workers: Labor Force Characteristics - 2009," March 19, 2010, Table 6.

Figure 4: Size of Native-Born & Foreign-Born Civilian Labor Force, Age 16+, by Region, 2009



Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics, "News Release: Foreign-Born Workers: Labor Force Characteristics - 2009," March 19, 2010, Table 6.

Education

- More than one-quarter (26.7 percent, or 5.9 million) of the foreign-born labor force had less than a high-school diploma in 2009, compared to only one-twentieth (5.7 percent, or 6.3 million) of the native-born labor force.
- Only one-sixth (17 percent, or 3.7 million) of the foreign-born labor force had some college education short of a bachelor's degree in 2009, compared to over one-quarter (29.8 percent, or 33.1 million) of the native-born labor force {Figures 5 and 6}.

Figure 5: Educational Distribution of Native-Born & Foreign-Born Civilian Labor Force, Age 25+, 2009

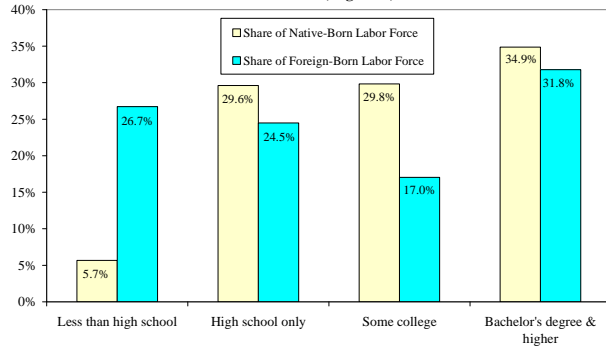
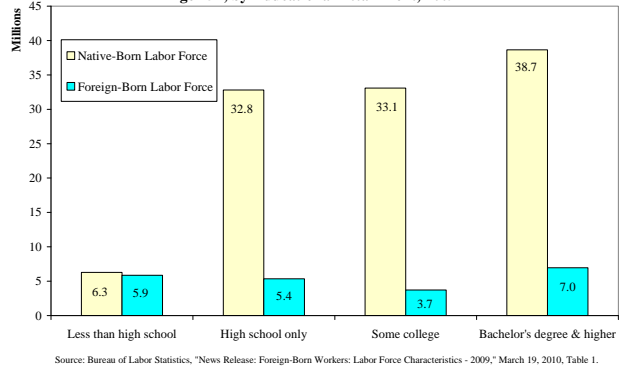


Figure 6: Size of Native-Born & Foreign-Born Civilian Labor Force, Age 25+, by Educational Attainment, 2009



Endnotes

¹ Bureau of Labor Statistics, "[News Release: Foreign-Born Workers: Labor Force Characteristics - 2009](#)," March 19, 2010.

² See Rob Paral & Associates, [Untying the Knot \(Part III of III\): The Disparity between Immigrant Workers and Unemployed Natives](#) (Washington, DC: Immigration Policy Center, American Immigration Law Foundation, August 2009).