



# The Economics of Immigration

Ogden League of Women Voters  
 Feb. 7, 2022  
 Doris Geide-Stevenson, PhD  
 Weber State University



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## National Economic Education Delegation

- **Vision**

- One day, the public discussion of policy issues will be grounded in an accurate perception of the underlying economic principles and data.

- **Mission**

- NEED unites the skills and knowledge of a vast network of professional economists to promote understanding of the economics of policy issues in the United States.

- **NEED Presentations**

- Are **nonpartisan** and intended to reflect the consensus of the economics profession.

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## Who Are We?

- **Honorary Board: 52 members**

- 2 Fed chairs: Janet Yellen, Ben Bernanke
- 6 chairs of the Council of Economic Advisers
  - o Furman (D), Rosen (R), Bernanke (R), Yellen (D), Tyson (D), Goolsbee (D)
- 3 Nobel prize winners
  - o Akerlof, Smith, Maskin

- **Delegates: 520+ members**

- At all levels of academia and some in government service
- All have a PhD in economics
- Crowdsource slide decks
- Give presentations

- **Global Partners: 45 PhD Economists**

- Aid in slide deck development



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## Credits and Disclaimer

- **This slide deck was authored by:**

- Anna Maria Mayda, Georgetown University
- Robert Gitter, Ohio Wesleyan University
- Roger White, Whittier College

- **This slide deck was reviewed by:**

- Kirk Doran, Notre Dame
- Ethan Lewis, Dartmouth College

- **Disclaimer**

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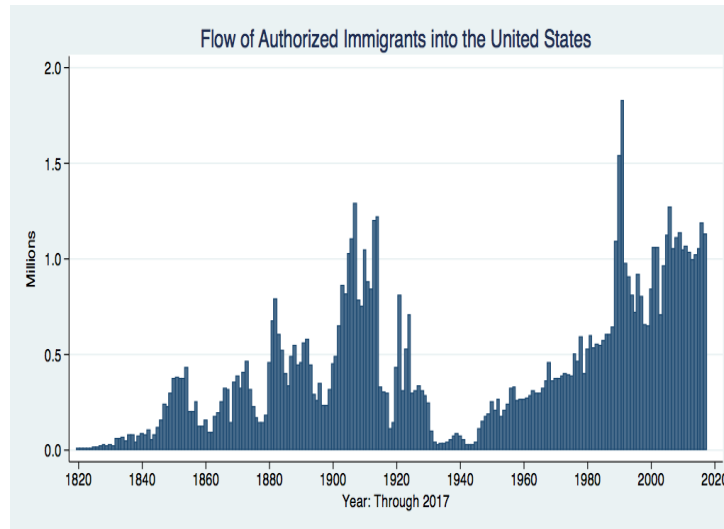
# Outline

- History/Data of immigration to the US
- Economics of immigration
- Immigration during the Covid-19 Pandemic



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# Historical Trends in Authorized Immigration

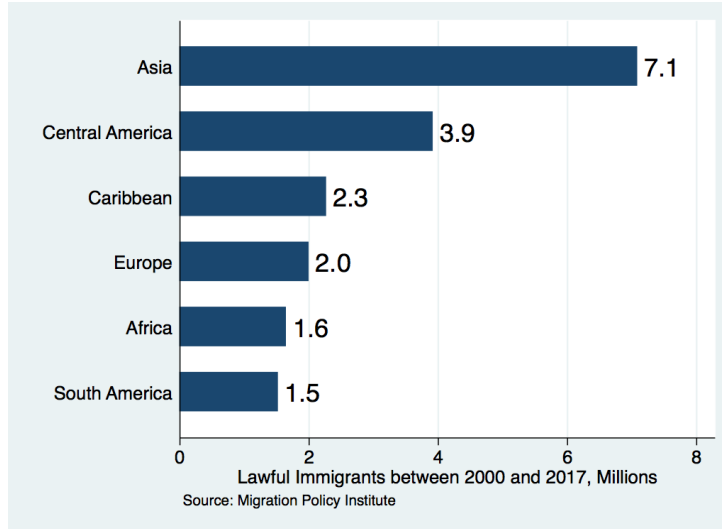


<https://www.libertyellisfoundation.org/immigration-timeline>

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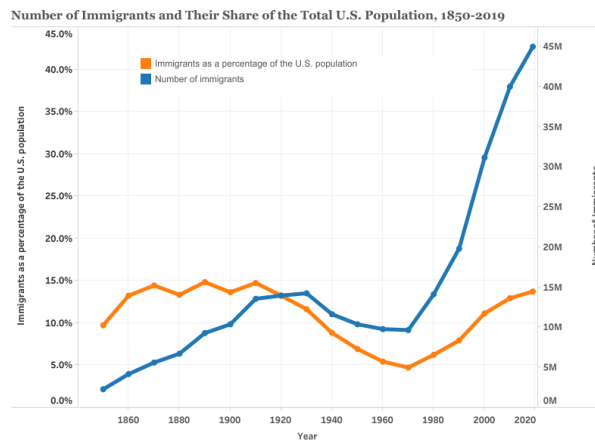
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## Authorized Immigration by Region



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## Number of Immigrants and their Share of the U.S. Population, 1850-2019

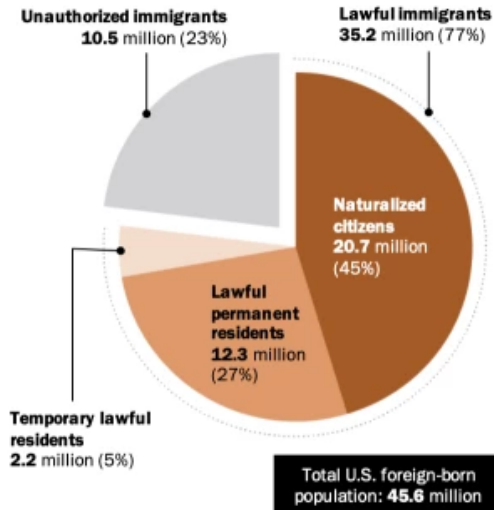


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# Immigrant Population in 2017

Foreign-born population estimates, 2017

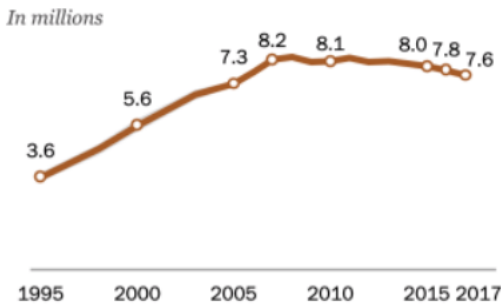
Categories of the total number of immigrants in the United States.



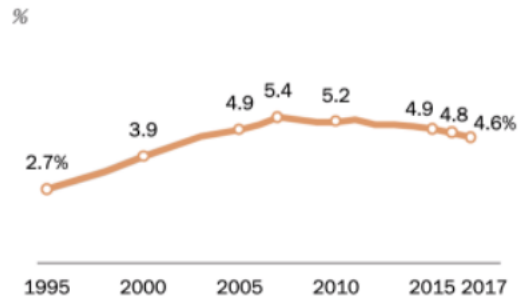
<https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2019/07/12/how-pew-research-center-counts-unauthorized-immigrants-in-us/>

# U.S. Unauthorized Immigration: Labor Force

### Number of unauthorized immigrants in U.S. workforce ticks down



### Unauthorized immigrants decline as a share of the U.S. labor force

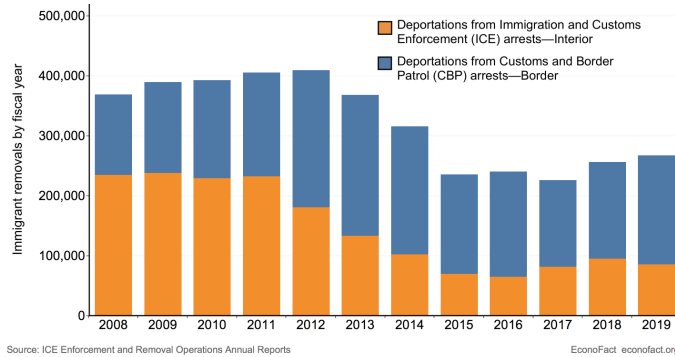


Pew Research Center, 5 facts about illegal immigration in the U.S., June 12, 2019

# Immigrant Deportations

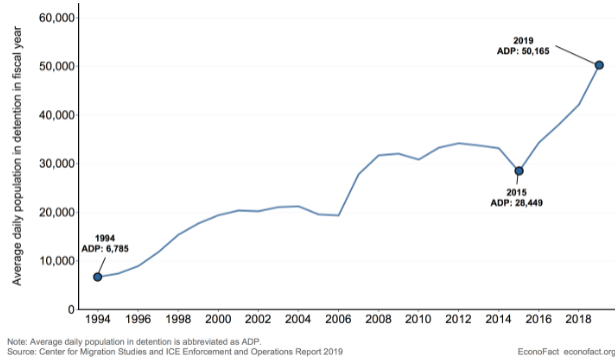
“Relative to the late Bush and early Obama eras, the Trump administration removed a modest number of immigrants from the nation’s interior.”

## ICE DEPORTATIONS STEMMING FROM INTERIOR ENFORCEMENT AND BORDER ARRESTS FISCAL YEARS 2008 TO 2019

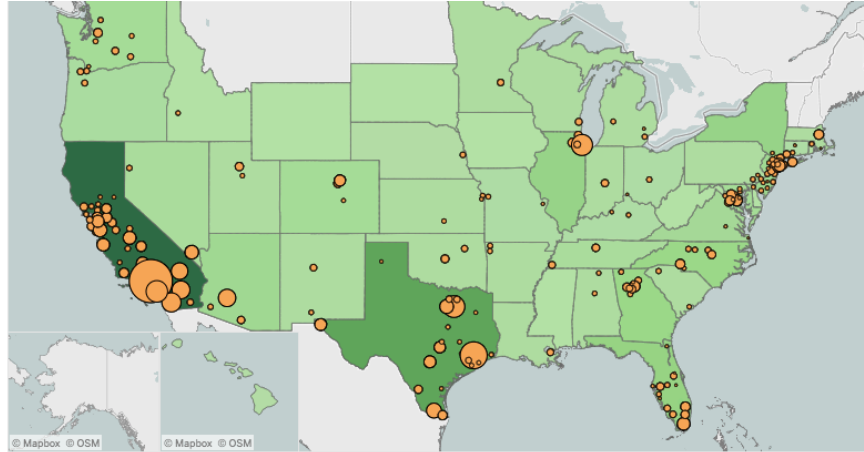


# Enforcement focused more on detention

## IMMIGRANTS HELD IN DETENTION DAILY AVERAGE, FISCAL YEARS 1994 TO 2019



## Unauthorized Immigration: 2012-2016



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<https://www.migrationpolicy.org/programs/data-hub/charts/unauthorized-immigrant-populations-country-and-region-top-state-and-county>

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## Why Do We Care? Economic Implications

- GDP
- Labor markets
- Government revenue and spending
- Crime



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## **GDP: How Does This Work?**

- **What determines the size of an economy?**
  - Technology/productivity
  - Physical capital
  - The number of workers
    - Immigration adds to the number of workers.
- **Number of immigrants in the labor force is high**
  - 28.2 million foreign-born persons ages 16+ in the labor force in 2018.
  - 17.4% of the total US workforce (little less than 5% unauthorized)
- **Evidence**
  - Immigrants added 11% to GDP (\$2 trillion) in 2016.



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## **Labor Market Implications: The Surplus**

- **The Surplus**
  - Immigration CAN make all native-born workers and capital more productive.
  - This increases incomes of the native born.
  - In other words, the economy might not just get bigger, it might become more productive as well!
  - This will, on average, increase the living standards of all native-born workers and owners of capital.



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## Labor Market Implications: Complicated

- **Depends on the type of immigrant: Skills/education**
  - Similar to native-born population? - Immigration surplus?
  - Low-skilled? - increases immigration surplus
  - Highly skilled? – increases immigration surplus
  
- **In the long-run: Brings capital market implications**
  - Expansion of capital stock through increased investments in equipment etc. (scale effects)



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## Labor Market Implications: General Principles

- **Short run**
  - Harm likely to native-born workers who are similar to immigrants.
    - o Hard to show with careful data analysis – usually negligible effects.
  - Benefit likely for other workers and owners of capital.
  
- **Long run**
  - **Expanded opportunities** may restore wages of harmed native-born workers.
  - **Lower prices** in some areas will restore purchasing-power of harmed workers and others.
  - Inflows of other types of labor and capital may **return the economy to its pre-immigration wage structure and production patterns, but may also increase overall productivity.**
  
- **Note: Repeated short run shocks can make the medium and long run look like the short run.**



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## Consensus among Economists

- 97% of economists agree or agree with provisos that immigration generally has a net positive economic effect for the US economy.
- 64% of economists disagree with the statement that easing restrictions on immigration will depress the average wage rate in the US.

Geide-Stevenson, LaParraPerez, (2021)



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## Labor Market Implications: Evidence of Surplus

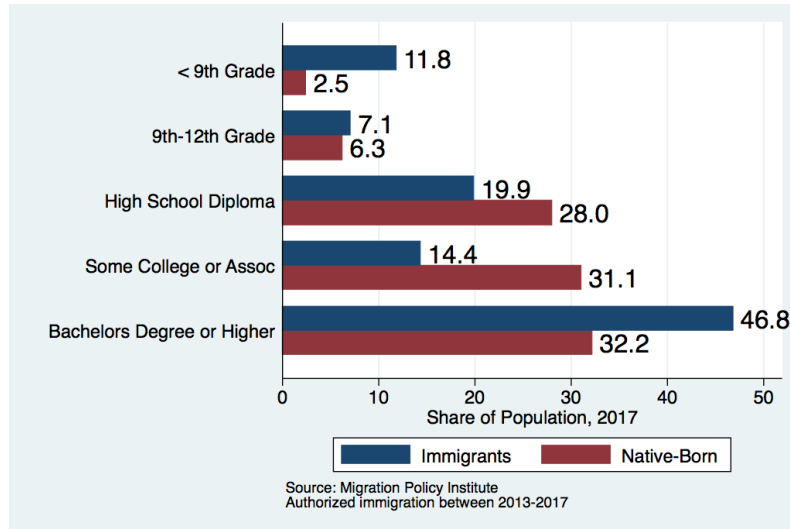
Type of Immigrants	Surplus: % of GDP	
	Short Run	Long Run
No Skill Bias	0.24 to 0.50	0.02 to 0.03
Low skilled	0.45 to 0.90	0.42 to 0.77
Highly skilled	0.75 to 1.35	0.16 to 0.31



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Source: Borjas (2014a).

## Recent Immigrants Are Less and More Educated

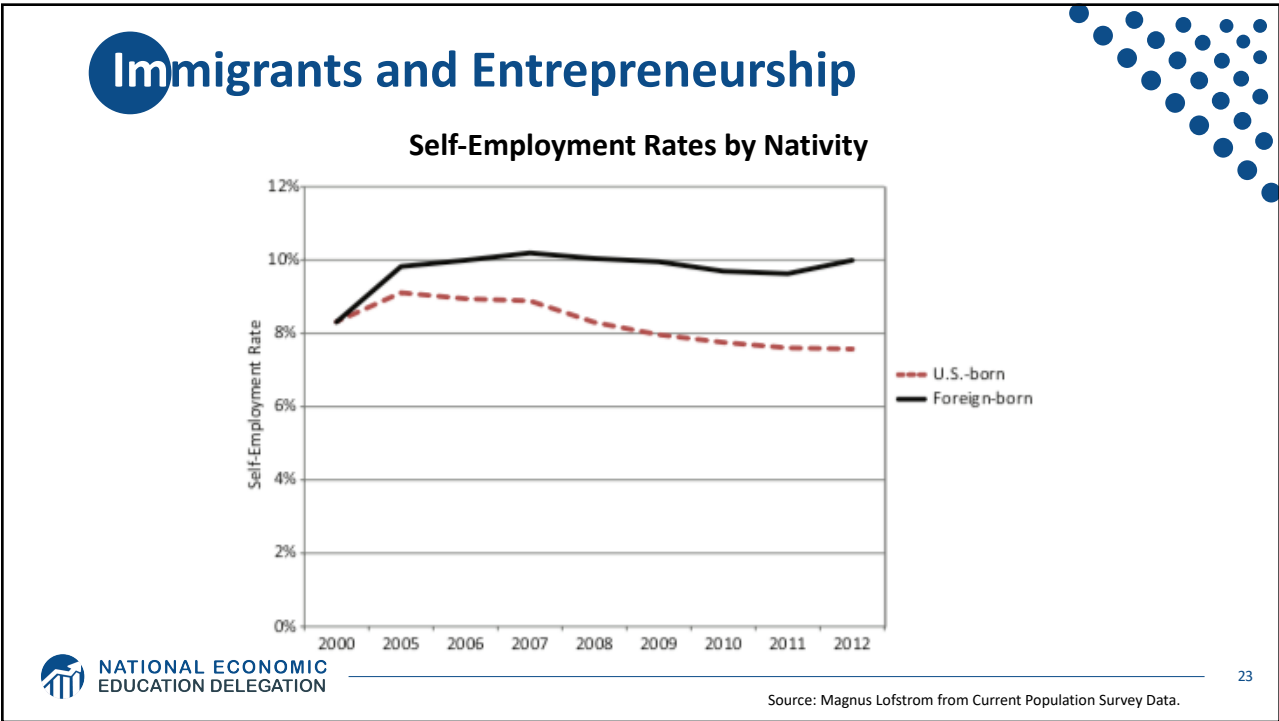


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## Skilled Immigrants and Innovation

- **1% increase in the share of the immigrant college graduate population**
  - 9-18% increase in patenting per capita
  - Increased immigration increases patenting by native-born population
  - Nonetheless, the effect is positive
- **In the 1990s**
  - Increased skilled immigration can account for one-third of increased patenting in that decade.
  - This translates into a 1.4-2.5% increase in GDP per capita by the end of the decade.

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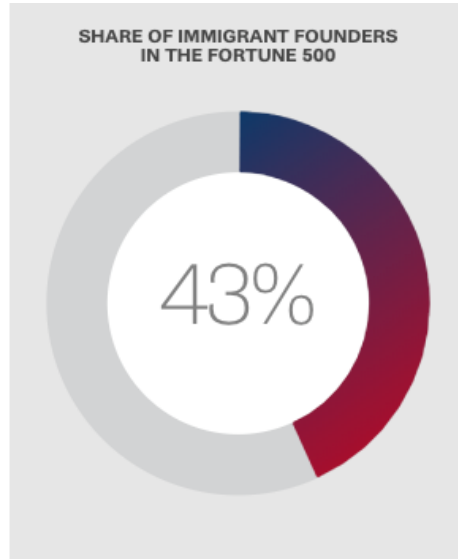


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# Fortune 500: First- and Second-Generation Founders



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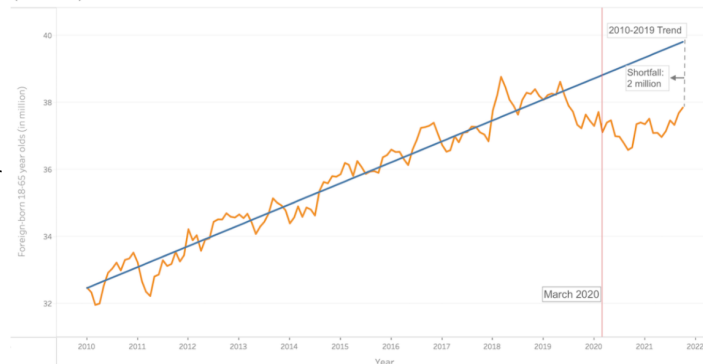
# Covid-19 and Immigration

Feb. 4: + 467,000 jobs  
 US unemployment rate: 4%  
 Utah unemployment rate: 1.9%

High number of unfilled jobs.

Employment is still 2.9 million lower than before the pandemic.

WORKING-AGE FOREIGN-BORN POPULATION (2010-2021)



Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, and Current Population Survey, U.S. Census Bureau

EconoFact econofact.org

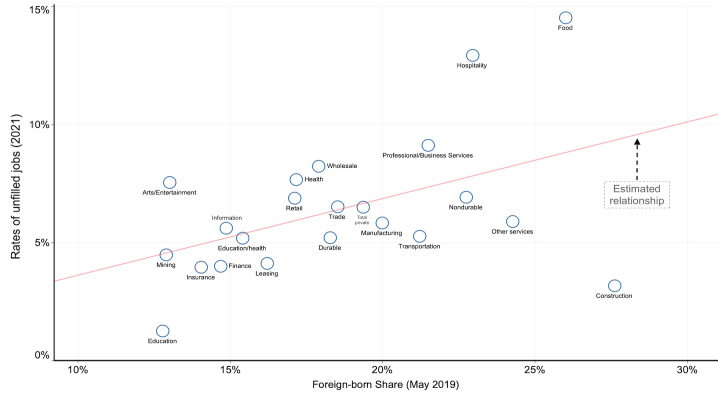
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# Where did all the workers go?

Significant correlation across industries between the reliance of foreign workers before the pandemic and the rate of unfilled jobs in 2021.

## FOREIGN-BORN WORKERS AND RATES OF UNFILLED JOBS

Correlation between the rate of unfilled jobs in 2021 and the share of foreign-born workers, by industry in 2019



Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, and Current Population Survey, U.S. Census Bureau EconoFact econofact.org

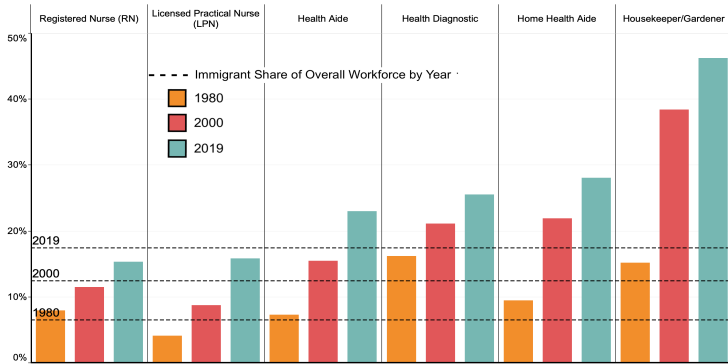
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# Immigrant Workers and Care for the Elderly

US born people aged 65 and older are less likely to live in an institutional setting if more less-educated immigrants are in the working population.

## GROWING SHARE OF FOREIGN-BORN WORKERS

In overall workforce and select occupations, 1980-2019



Source: 1980 and 2000 Census, 2019 American Community Survey. Note: The population represented consists of employed workers aged 16-64. Home health aides are a subset of health aides and are defined using a combination of the Census and ACS occupation and industry codes.

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## Government Revenues versus Expenditures

- **Basic Question:**

- What are the taxes (income, sales, and other) immigrants pay vs. government expenditures on public benefits and services they receive.

- **More complicated:**

- Immigrants also affect the fiscal equation for many native-born residents.
  - Indirectly through labor and capital markets.
  - Changes in wages and the return to capital.



## What Do We Know?

- **Immigrants who arrive while of working age:**

- Are, on average, net contributors.
- 21-year-old with a high school diploma: +\$126,000 over a lifetime
  - Though this value gradually declines with age at arrival.
  - Turns negative for arrivals of age 35+

- **Net contribution crucially depends on characteristics**

- Age distribution, family composition, health status, fertility patterns
- Temporary or permanent relocation
- Employment in the legal labor market
- Authorized or unauthorized



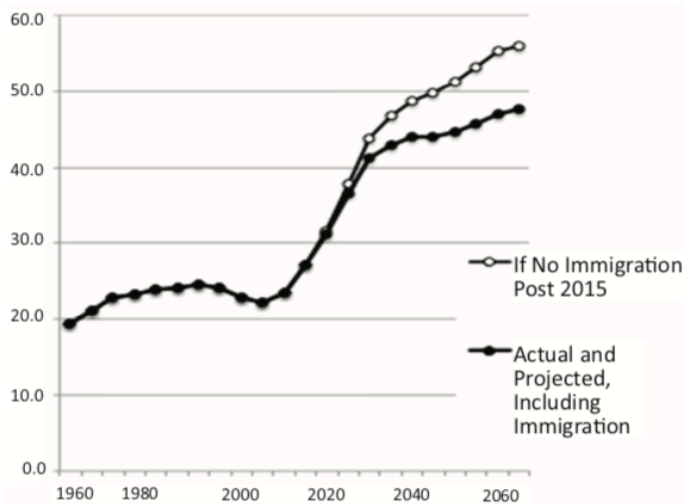
# Implications for Major Federal Programs

- Documented immigrants are less likely to use Social Security and Medicare.
- Unauthorized immigrants are ineligible.
  - They may pay into the system but cannot receive benefits.
- Medicaid: not available to legal residents for the first five years.
- Provide a source of revenue for an aging population.

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# Implications for Social Security

Population Age 65+ per 100 of Working Age (25-64)



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## Bottom Line/Consensus of Estimates

- **Federal level: fiscal impact is generally positive.**
- **State and local level: typically negative fiscal impact.**



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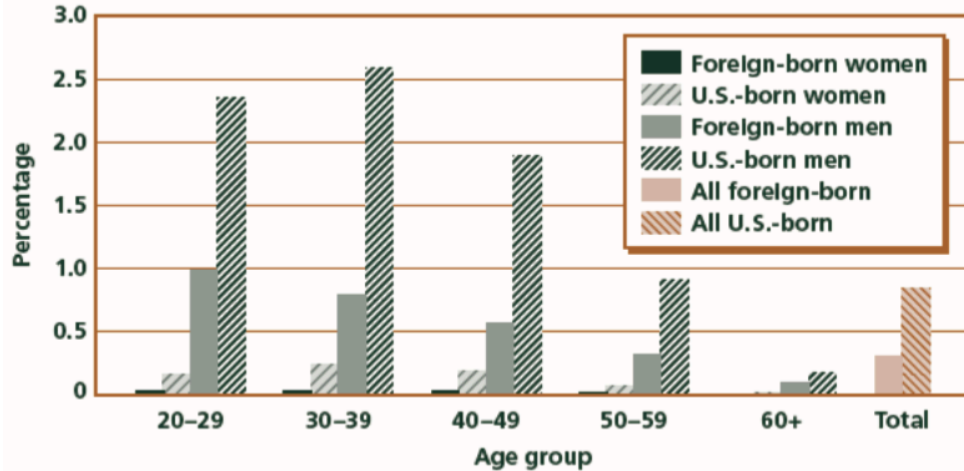
## Immigrants and Crime Rates

- **Conventional wisdom:**
  - Immigrants commit crimes more frequently than do native born residents.
  - Rising immigration leads to rising crime.
- **What do the data say?**
  - Rates of incarceration are lower for the foreign born than US born.
  - Neighborhoods with more immigrants have lower crime rates.
  - There is no evidence that deporting noncitizen immigrants affects crime rates.



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## Crime: Incarceration Rates in California



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## Summary

- Immigration should be thought of as increasing the population of the United States.
- This brings economic growth and opportunity, just as does increasing the native-born population.
- Including unauthorized immigrants, the supply of low-skilled workers is increased
  - This may lower the wages of low-skilled workers (temporarily)
  - But also increases labor force participation among highly skilled workers.

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**Thank you!**

# Any Questions?

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