

All Employment Growth Since 2000 Went to Immigrants Number of U.S.-born not working grew by 17 million

By Steven A. Camarota and Karen Zeigler on June 27, 2014

<https://cis.org/All-Employment-Growth-2000-Went-Immigrants>

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Government data shows that since 2000, all of the net gain in the number of working-age (16 to 65) people holding a job has gone to immigrants (legal and illegal). This is remarkable given that native-born Americans accounted for two-thirds of the growth in the total working-age population. Though there has been some recovery from the Great Recession, there were still fewer working-age natives holding a job in the first quarter of 2014 than in 2000, while the number of immigrants with a job was 5.7 million above the 2000 level.

All of the net increase in employment went to immigrants in the last 14 years partly because, even before the Great Recession, immigrants were gaining a disproportionate share of jobs relative to their share of population growth. In addition, natives' losses were somewhat greater during the recession and immigrants have recovered more quickly from it. With 58 million working-age natives not working, the Schumer-Rubio bill (S.744) and similar House measures that would substantially increase the number of foreign workers allowed in the country seem out of touch with the realities of the U.S. labor market.

Three conclusions can be drawn from this analysis:

First, the long-term decline in the employment for natives across age and education levels is a clear indication that there is no general labor shortage, which is a primary justification for the large increases in immigration (skilled and unskilled) in the Schumer-Rubio bill and similar House proposals.

Second, the decline in work among the native-born over the last 14 years of high immigration is consistent with research showing that immigration reduces employment for natives.

Third, the trends since 2000 challenge the argument that immigration on balance increases job opportunities for natives. Over 17 million immigrants arrived in the country in the last 14 years, yet native employment has deteriorated significantly.