



Why Immigration Matters to All Americans

Today's Immigrants are Diverse and a Part of America's Fabric

- As of 2008, there were 39 million foreign-born people living in the United States, about 13% of the U.S. population.ⁱ
- Of these 39 million immigrants, about 7 in 10 are naturalized citizens and lawfully residing non-citizens.ⁱⁱ There are approximately 11 million undocumented immigrants in the United States,ⁱⁱⁱ who make up 4% of the U.S. population and 5.4% of the workforce.^{iv}
- The top 10 countries that foreign-born people in the United States come from are, in descending order: Mexico, China, the Philippines, India, El Salvador and Vietnam, Korea, Cuba, Canada, and the Dominican Republic.^v
- A growing percentage of migrants to the United States are women, due in large part to U.S. industries filling labor shortages in traditionally female occupations, the growth of human trafficking and servile marriage, and the displacement of women and children by armed conflict.^{vi} For many women migrants, the primary way to get legal status is through joining their family members in the United States.^{vii}

im·mi·grant
(im`i-grənt):

n. Any person who leaves one country to settle permanently in another.

Immigrants Provide Significant Contributions to the United States

- People born in the United States gain an estimated \$37 billion a year from the participation of immigrants in the U.S. economy;^{viii} over their lifetimes, the average immigrant and her immediate descendants will contribute \$80,000 more in taxes than they will receive in benefits.^{ix}
- As of February 2008, more than 65,000 immigrants (noncitizens and naturalized citizens) were serving on active duty in the U.S. Armed Services—this made up about 5% of all active duty personnel.^x
- After immigration, each generation of children achieves greater levels of educational attainment; among first generation parents, 38% have not graduated from high school, compared to only 10% of their second-generation children.^{xi}

Immigrants to America Often Face Unfair Barriers and Discrimination

- There are more people who qualify for family-based visas than the limited number of visas available, so many close family members of U.S. citizens and legal permanent residents must wait 7 to 10 years before being granted a visa and coming to the United States.^{xii}
- Every year, thousands of immigrants are subject to “mandatory detention” with no right to a hearing before judge.^{xiii}

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- Immigrant workers are often preyed upon by their employers and suffer from wage theft, workplace discrimination, or workplace injuries, with little to no recourse under the law.^{xiv}

Legalization Would Bolster and Build the U.S. Economy

- \$1.5 trillion dollars could be added to the U.S. gross domestic product over 10 years by providing a process for undocumented immigrants to get legal status.^{xv}
- In the first three years of a legalization program, the higher earning power of legalized workers would increase tax revenues from \$4.5 to \$5.4 billion dollars.^{xvi}
- These new immigrants with legal status generate increased consumer spending—enough to support 750,000-900,000 new jobs in the United States.^{xvii}
- A legalization program would raise the “wage floor” for all workers—particularly in industries where large numbers of easily-exploited, low-wage, and undocumented immigrants currently work.^{xviii}

To learn more about the national effort for comprehensive immigration reform, visit
<http://reformimmigrationforamerica.org/>

ⁱ Henry J. Kaiser Family Foundation, *Immigrants’ Health Coverage and Health Reform: Key Questions and Answers 2* (2009), available at <http://www.kff.org/healthreform/upload/7982.pdf> (citing Capps, R., “Health-Care Access for US Immigrants,” National Center on Immigrant Integration Policy, Migration Policy Institute, presentation at Grantmakers in Health Conference, New Orleans, March 19, 2009).

ⁱⁱ *Id.* at 2 (citing Passel, J. and D. Cohn, Pew Hispanic Center, “A Portrait of Unauthorized Immigrants in the United States,” April 14, 2009).

ⁱⁱⁱ MICHAEL HOEFER, NANCY RYTINA & BRYAN C. BAKER, U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HOMELAND SECURITY, *ESTIMATES OF THE UNAUTHORIZED IMMIGRANT POPULATION RESIDING IN THE UNITED STATES: JANUARY 2009* (2010), available at http://www.dhs.gov/xlibrary/assets/statistics/publications/ois_ill_pe_2009.pdf.

^{iv} Henry J. Kaiser Family Foundation, *supra* fn i, at 2.

^v U.S. Census Bureau News, *Census Bureau Data Show Characteristics of the U.S. Foreign-Born Population*, Press Release (Feb. 19, 2009), available at http://www.census.gov/Press-Release/www/releases/archives/american_community_survey_acs/013308.html.

^{vi} Immigration Policy Center, *Immigrant Women in the United States: A Demographic Portrait 5-6* (2006), available at [http://immigration.server263.com/images/File/specialreport/Immigrant%20Women%20\(IPC%202006\).pdf](http://immigration.server263.com/images/File/specialreport/Immigrant%20Women%20(IPC%202006).pdf).

^{vii} *See id.*

^{viii} Drum Major Institute, *Fact Sheet: Immigrants’ Economic Contributions* (2009) (citing White House Council of Economic Advisors, *Immigration’s Economic Impact* (2007)), <http://www.drummajorinstitute.org/library/report.php?ID=104>.

^{ix} *Id.*

^x One America, *Immigrants in the Military—Fact Sheet* (2009), available at <http://www.weareoneamerica.org/immigrants-military-fact-sheet>.

^{xi} Public Policy Institute of California, *Just the Facts: Immigrants and Education* (2008), http://www.ppic.org/content/pubs/jtf/JTF_ImmigrantsEducationJTF.pdf.

^{xii} *See* Immigration Policy Center, *Family Immigration: Repairing Our Broken Immigration System* (2010), <http://www.immigrationpolicy.org/just-facts/family-immigration-repairing-our-broken-immigration-system>.

^{xiii} Amnesty International USA, *Jailed Without Justice: Immigration Detention in the USA* (2009), available at <http://www.amnestyusa.org/immigration-detention/immigrant-detention-report/page.do?id=1641033>.

^{xiv} Kate Thomas, “Wake-up Call: Abuse of Hispanic Workers Will Continue Without Immigration Reform” (April 21, 2009), <http://www.seiu.org/2009/04/wake-up-call-abuse-of-hispanics-workers-will-continue-without-immigration-reform.php>.

^{xv} Dr. Raul Hinojosa-Ojeda, Center for American Progress & Immigration Policy Center, *Raising the Floor for American Workers: The Economic Benefits of Comprehensive Immigration Reform 1* (2010), available at <http://immigrationpolicy.org/special-reports/raising-floor-american-workers>.

^{xvi} *Id.* at 13.

^{xvii} *Id.*

^{xviii} *Id.*

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