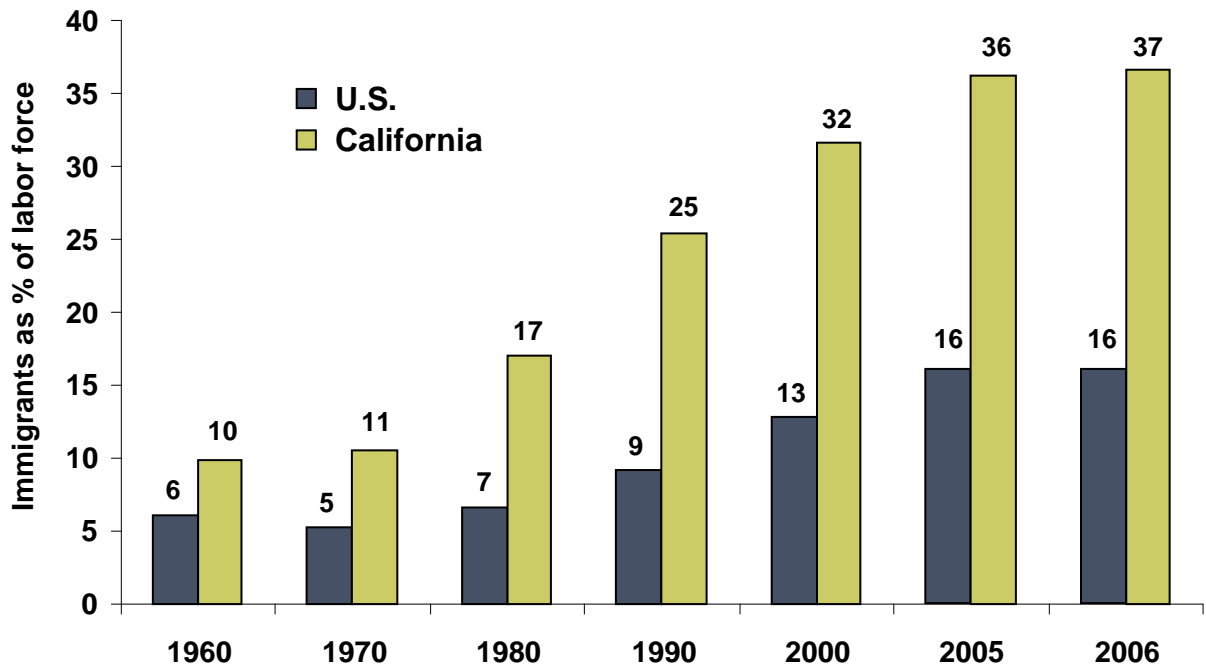


JUNE 2008

- **IMMIGRANTS CONSTITUTE A SIZEABLE AND GROWING SHARE OF THE LABOR FORCE.**
In 2006, immigrants accounted for 16% of the U.S. labor force, up from just over 5% in 1970. In California, immigrants accounted for nearly 37% of the labor force, up from 11% in 1970. Although day laborers are overwhelmingly likely to be immigrants, the day labor market constitutes a very small percentage of California's total workforce – only 0.2%.
- **IMMIGRANTS ARE LESS LIKELY TO BE UNEMPLOYED THAN NATIVE-BORN WORKERS.**
In 2006, 5.5% of [immigrants in California](#) reported being unemployed and seeking work at the time of the interview, compared to 5.9% of native-born workers. Among workers without a high school diploma, immigrants are *half* as likely to be unemployed as natives (7.7% vs. 16.1%). Immigrant men are less likely than native-born men to be out of the labor force (11% vs. 14%), but immigrant women are more likely than native-born women to be out of the labor force (38% vs. 27%).
- **MORE OF CALIFORNIA'S IMMIGRANTS WORK IN MANUFACTURING THAN IN ANY OTHER INDUSTRY.**
About 16% of immigrants work in the manufacturing industry, more than in any other major industry. However, immigrants are not a homogenous group. In 2006, 41% of [college-educated immigrants](#) worked in professional, educational, and health service industries, whereas 33% of immigrants without a high school diploma worked in construction and manufacturing.
- **ON AVERAGE, IMMIGRANTS EARN LESS THAN NATIVE-BORN WORKERS ...**
The hourly wage of immigrants is 14% lower than the hourly wage of American-born workers. In California, the wage gap is larger (26%). Compared to the U.S. overall, more of California's immigrants do not have a high school diploma, the group for which the wage gap is largest (24%). However, immigrants in California with a college degree have a much smaller wage gap (11%).
- **... BUT IMMIGRANTS' WAGES INCREASE MORE RAPIDLY.**
Economists generally find that the wages of immigrants grow faster over time, on average, than the wages of native-born workers, increasing as much as 9% faster than native-born wages over a ten year period. However, despite this growth, the wage rate of the average immigrant does not fully “catch up” to the wage rate of the average native-born worker.
- **IMMIGRANTS ARE UNLIKELY TO DRIVE DOWN THE WAGES OF MOST AMERICANS.**
Although debate remains, the vast majority of economic studies find zero or very small effects of immigration on the wages of the average American worker. A recent PPIC study estimates that in California, immigration between 1990 and 2004 caused a 4% real wage increase for the average native-born worker. Most agree that *low-wage* native-born workers face the most competition with immigrants because, on average, these populations have similar skill characteristics; yet most studies that focus on low-wage workers find zero or very small adverse wage effects due to immigration.
- **MOST AMERICANS BELIEVE IMMIGRANTS WORK IN JOBS THAT AMERICANS DO NOT WANT**
In a national poll in June 2007, 56% of respondents said that immigrants do not take jobs away from Americans but fill unwanted jobs. This is down from 68% in a March 2006 poll.



Immigrants in the Labor Force, 1960-2006



Immigrants in California Industries, 2006

Industry	Number (000s)		Percent		Ratio: Immigrant to Native
	Immigrant	Native	Immigrant	Native	
Manufacturing	875	867	16.0%	9.1%	100.9%
Education, Health, Social Services	721	1,856	13.2	19.5	38.8
Professional, Scientific	642	1,193	11.7	12.5	53.8
Entertainment, Accommodations, Food Services	564	643	10.3	6.8	87.7
Construction	563	751	10.3	7.9	75.0
Retail Trade	512	1,049	9.3	11.0	48.8
Other Services	377	424	6.9	4.4	89.0
Finance, Insurance, Real Estate	288	829	5.3	8.7	34.8
Wholesale Trade	250	355	4.6	3.7	70.3
Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing	228	83	4.2	0.9	274.2
Transportation and Warehousing	227	400	4.1	4.2	56.7
Information and Communications	105	370	1.9	3.9	28.4
Public Administration	104	541	1.9	5.7	19.1
Utilities	16	88	0.3	0.9	18.1
Active Duty Military	6	54	0.1	0.6	11.1
Mining	4	22	0.1	0.2	18.2
Total	5,479	9,525	100%	100%	57.5%

Sources: U.S. Census Bureau. *Los Angeles Times*/Bloomberg Poll. Pew Hispanic Center. Gonzalez, *Day Labor in the Golden State*, PPIC, 2007. Peri, *How Immigrants Affect California Employment and Wages*, PPIC, 2007.

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