

IMMIGRATION TO THE U.S.: Facts, Fear, and Fiction

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A recent article in *Breitbart News* screamed an alarming headline: “Criminal Foreigners in Prison Cost \$1.4B Every Year.” The article goes on to further frighten us by adding that “In 2016, the legal and illegal immigrant population reached a record high of 44 million. By 2023, the Center for Immigration Studies estimates that the legal and illegal immigrant population of the U.S. will make up nearly 15 percent of the entire U.S. population.”¹

All of this sounds terrible, and is designed to create a frightening picture of the heavy costs of incarceration posed by immigrants to the U.S. – both legal and illegal. However, the article neglected to include another very important number, which would put these costs in context. That is the total amount that the U.S. spends on incarcerating criminals each year. According to a Brookings Institution Report, based on U.S. Census and Justice Department data, total local, state and federal spending on prisons was \$80 billion in 2010.² That means the spending on criminal foreigners was *only 1.8%* of total U.S. prison spending.

Moreover, the foreign-born population, both legal and illegal, was 13% of the total U.S. population in 2010.³ If immigrants went to prison at simply the same rate as U.S.-born Americans, you would expect that 13% of total prison costs would be spent on imprisoning immigrants. But it is nowhere near that – it is only 1.8%, or one-seventh of the expected percentage. To put this in other words, what America spends on imprisoning criminals is only one-seventh as much, per person, for immigrants, as it is for non-immigrants. Americans born in the U.S. cost the country seven times as much, per person, for prisons costs as do all legal and illegal immigrants.

That may be surprising, given that this data is being cited by a Breitbart article that is intended to scare people with the high costs of incarcerating immigrants. But the article, by omitting the key data on overall prison costs, creates an impression that is a total fiction; once you include the numbers for total prison spending and total population what we learn is that among the 40 million immigrants in the U.S. in 2010, we spent just \$1.42 billion on prisons, or \$35.50 per immigrant in the population. But for the native-born U.S. population, 269 million in 2010, we spent \$78.58 billion on prisons, or \$292.12 per native-born American. So it is the native population that is far more expensive in terms of prison costs per head of population, not immigrants. If we want to dramatically reduce what we spend on prisons per person in the United States, there is a clear lesson – we need more immigrants!

This result may seem startling, and counter-intuitive. But it is true. All the data shows that immigrants to the U.S., on average, commit far fewer crimes and spend far less time in prison than the U.S.-born population.⁴ Yet many opponents of immigration will dramatize one or two incidents of crimes by immigrants, neglecting the many, many more frequent violent crimes committed by the U.S.-born. Or they will falsely claim that immigrants are a major cause of crime, to manipulate fear, rather than be honest about the facts.

In regard to U.S. migration, which has become such an emotionally-charged issue in recent years, we will find that many beliefs are fictions. Those beliefs cause real fears, which is understandable. But they not only do a disservice to the immigrants who have and continue to build this country; they do a disservice to those who believe these fictions. For it leads them to support policies that are harmful to their own futures.

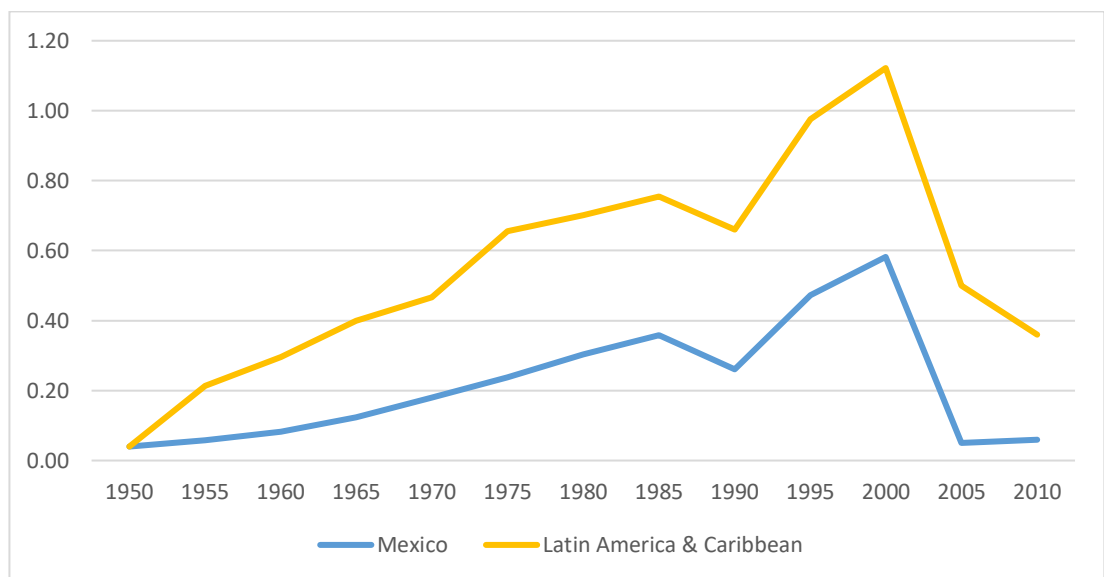
The Facts on U.S. Immigration

One powerful fiction that is widely discussed is the idea that immigrants are “pouring in” across our southern border, so that we need a wall to keep out the armies of illegals seeking to enter the U.S. This picture was true, once, about twenty years ago. But it is no longer anywhere near true today.

In the 1960s, as the U.S. economy boomed and immigration laws were liberalized, the number of migrants leaving Mexico and other parts of Latin America began to rise, reaching a peak in the early 2000s. Particularly from the 1980s to 2000s, emigration was at a historically high level, with the net outmigration rate from Latin America (that is, the number of people leaving minus the number coming in or returning) reaching over one million people per year from 1995-2005. Most of these migrants, about 60%, were coming from Mexico. The great majority of these migrants were headed for the U.S.

Yet since 2005, outmigration from south of the border has crashed. As shown in Figure 1, outmigration from Latin America fell by half between 2000-2005 and 2005-2010, and by 2010-2015 had fallen all the way back to the level of 1965, before America’s last major immigration law reform. Outmigration from Mexico fell even further, to just half of the 1965 levels. In other words, while it is true that America’s 1965 change in immigration laws set off a boom in Latin American migration, that

Figure 1. Annual net outflow of migrants from Latin America and Mexico, 1950-2015 (millions per year)⁵

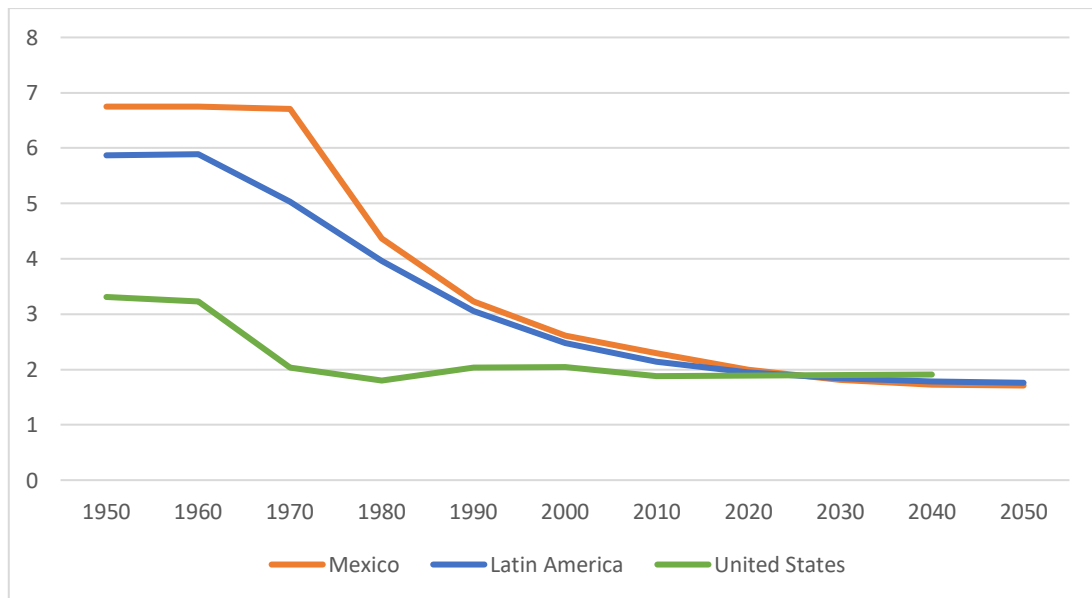


boom is long over, having ended more than a decade ago. Today's Latin American and Mexican emigration rates have fallen back to, or below, the levels of the early 1960s. Indeed, for Mexican migration to the U.S., since 2009 net migration rates are *negative*. That is, more Mexicans are leaving the U.S., mostly to return to their families in Mexico, than are coming into the U.S.⁶

This is true even for illegal immigrants. PEW Research estimates that the number of illegal migrants from Mexico living in the United States has *fallen* by almost one million people since 2009, from 6.4 million in that year to 5.6 million in 2016. Overall, the number of illegal immigrants in the U.S. has *not* been growing at all in the last few years. The estimated number of illegals in the U.S. in 2016 is 11.3 million, unchanged from 2009 and almost a million less than the peak of 12.2 million illegals estimated for 2007.⁷

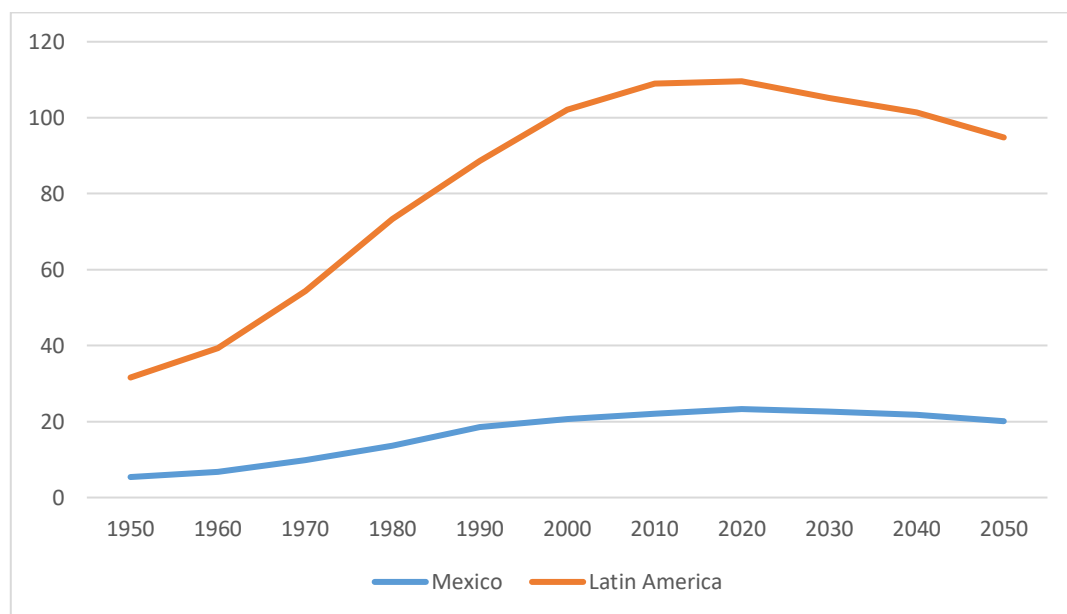
There are two main reasons for this sharp decline in the number of migrants on the southern border, which began eight years before President Trump took office. The first is the Great Recession of 2007-2009. When jobs dried up in the U.S., so did migration; that accounts for the sudden fall in migrants. Yet the bigger reason, and the main reason why migration from Mexico and Latin America has returned to 1965 levels, despite the recovery and current boom in the U.S. economy, is that fertility in our southern neighbors has plummeted since the 1980s, so much so that, according to United Nations data, in a few years we expect families in Mexico to be having fewer children than families in the U.S. (see Figure 2).

Figure 2: Average number of children per completed family in Mexico, Latin America and the U.S., 1950-2050⁸



As recently as the 1970s, families in Latin America and Mexico had five to seven children, or three times as many children as those in the U.S. But as of 2010, families south of border had barely over two children each, about the same as in the U.S. The result of this declining fertility has been a sharp change in the rate of growth of young people entering the labor market in Mexico and Latin America. As shown in Figure 3, the number of youth age 15-24 years south of the border tripled from 1950 to 2010, providing a powerful driver for out migration. But since 2010, despite strong growth in the Latin American and Mexican economies, the number of youth has seen no growth at all, and is expected to decline in the future.

Figure 3. Youth aged 15-24 in Mexico and Latin America since 1950 (including projections to 2050)⁹



These demographic facts mean that the notion of immigrants “pouring in” across the southern border is a thing of the past. This also means that the vast majority of the illegal immigrants in America are not recent arrivals. Rather, most have already been here for decades. Indeed, almost two-thirds of all adult illegals in the U.S. have been here for at least 10 years.¹⁰ The net outflow of Mexican migrants means that only a small fraction of Mexican illegals – estimated at about 7% -- have been in the U.S. for less than five years. Moreover, the vast majority of immigrants living in the U.S., about 75% of all foreign-born residents, are *legal* immigrants. Illegal immigrants, whose numbers have declined over the last decade, constitute barely over three percent of the U.S. population.

Given how long most immigrants have been in the country, you would think there would have been plenty of time for them to find their way into prison or to commit crimes if they truly had a strong propensity to do so. Yet the data show *the reverse*. Texas, one of America’s major immigration states, is one of the few states in the U.S. that keep records of crimes according to the immigration status of the criminal. A study this year by the CATO institute, looking at crimes in Texas in 2015, found that immigrants—both legal and illegal—committed *fewer* crimes than native-born Americans. Native-born

Americans in Texas committed crimes at the rate of 1,800 per 100,000 population; for illegal immigrants that rate was just 750 per 100,000, and for legal immigrants it was just 250. Native-born Americans in Texas committed more homicides per 100,000 population than either undocumented or legal immigrants—25% more than illegal immigrants and *nearly eight times more than legal immigrants*. As for larceny, native-born Americans in Texas were convicted four times as much, per 100,000 population, as undocumented migrants and nearly ten times as much as legal immigrants. Even for sex crimes, the data show that there were many fewer sex crime convictions of immigrants, per person, including both legal and illegal immigrants, than against native-born Americans in Texas in 2015.¹¹ If you want to live in a safe area, you should definitely live where there are more immigrants!

Odd as that may sound, that conclusion was borne out by another study. This was an academic analysis of the relationship between the estimated undocumented population, as a percentage of total population, and crime rates in all 50 states and the District of Columbia from 1990 to 2014.¹² Across the United States, those states with a larger share of illegal immigrants had a significantly *lower* rate of violent crimes. Again, the evidence shows that if you want to live safely, you should live where there are more immigrants (even illegal immigrants) in the population.

To sum up, the rapid inflow of migrants from Mexico and Latin America that did occur before 2005 has now slowed to a trickle. The total number of illegal immigrants in the U.S. has been falling since 2009. Legal migration has continued, to be sure, but today most of the migrants to the U.S. are coming from other countries than Mexico, including large numbers from China, India, the Philippines, Vietnam, and other parts of Asia and the Middle East. Most importantly, study after study finds that neither legal nor illegal migrants pose a greater threat of crime than native-born Americans; in fact, they find the reverse: immigrants pose less of a threat of crime in the U.S. than do the native-born.

In addition, with unemployment in the U.S. in 2018 approaching all-time lows, and with unemployment for African Americans and Hispanic Americans at record low levels, it is hard to argue that any jobs are being “lost” due to immigration. In fact, as we look forwards, it is much more likely that we will need to encourage more immigration if we are to keep America’s economy humming, and the future benefits of American taxpayers intact.

America’s Labor Dilemma

Despite warnings that robots, artificial intelligence and globalization will take away today’s jobs, the reality is again different from the fear-mongering fiction. While things may be different half a century or more from now, the problem America faces today and in the coming decades is a shortage of workers, not a shortage of jobs.

Whether it is booming demand for software developers and content providers to feed our array of electronic entertainment devices, or agricultural workers to pick crops and process food, or truckers to take goods to markets, American businesses are struggling, and often failing, to find the workers they need.

These shortages have arisen not just because America’s economy is strong. That certainly is one cause. But the other is that many American workers are simply aging out of jobs they once did, jobs that younger Americans no longer want. So businesses need immigrants simply to get the job done, and they are struggling because of the sharp fall in their numbers.

For example, there is an estimated shortage of 50,000 truckers in the U.S. today.¹³ There's a lot going on behind the scenes, according to Bob Costello, chief economist at American Trucking Associations (ATA). "We have a demographics problem, demand is strong [but the] average age of our drivers is very high, [and] we don't have enough females," said Costello. "So much of it revolves around demographics." Younger American workers are no longer willing to spend the long hours on the road of a professional truck-driver, and so are not signing up for training to obtain commercial long-haul licenses. Costello adds that "Driverless trucks are decades away. That is not the solution." The ATA says we'll need 898,000 more truck drivers over the next decade to keep up with growth and demand. It's not clear how the trucking industry is going to continue to operate unless it can attract new workers.

Bruce Talbott, whose family runs an orchard and farm in Colorado, says that he and his neighbors are losing business because they can't find workers. He says his farm has been so short-handed that he lost 40,000 pounds of peaches that rotted on the trees because even with his workers putting in 12 hour shifts and 7-day work weeks they simply didn't have the manpower to bring in the harvest on time. Two of his neighbors fared even worse – they had to walk away from entire orchards because their peaches had grown too soft to harvest while they vainly searched for workers to pick them.¹⁴

Talbott says there are three reasons that the labor shortage was especially bad this year. First, "the local workforce is aging out of the industry. ... Every year, more of my best guys [many of them foreign born workers who came to the U.S. a decade or more ago and have worked for him every year] retire or find less strenuous work. The number of field and crop workers in Colorado, Nevada and Utah declined by nearly 37 percent between 2002 and 2014." Second, "there's no fresh supply of new workers to take their place." He says they used to be able to hire "walk-ins" who would show up looking to work each season; this year there were none. Finally, the costs and obstacles to getting workers through temporary work visas like the H-2A program simply make getting sufficient workers that way impossible. Talbott says the labor shortage is so severe that the H-2A program is simply overwhelmed, even though it issued twice as many visas in 2016 (135,000) as it did just five years earlier.¹⁵ The system is costly (it costs farmers \$2,500 per worker in visa-processing fees, transportation and housing for each worker each year) and often late—since 2014, according to the American Farm Bureau Federation, almost three quarters of growers said that their workers arrived, on average three weeks after their "date of need," resulting in crops being lost.¹⁶ Another of Talbott's neighbors, Sakata Farms, announced that after three-quarters of a century they would no longer grow their signature sweet corn crop because of labor shortages.¹⁷

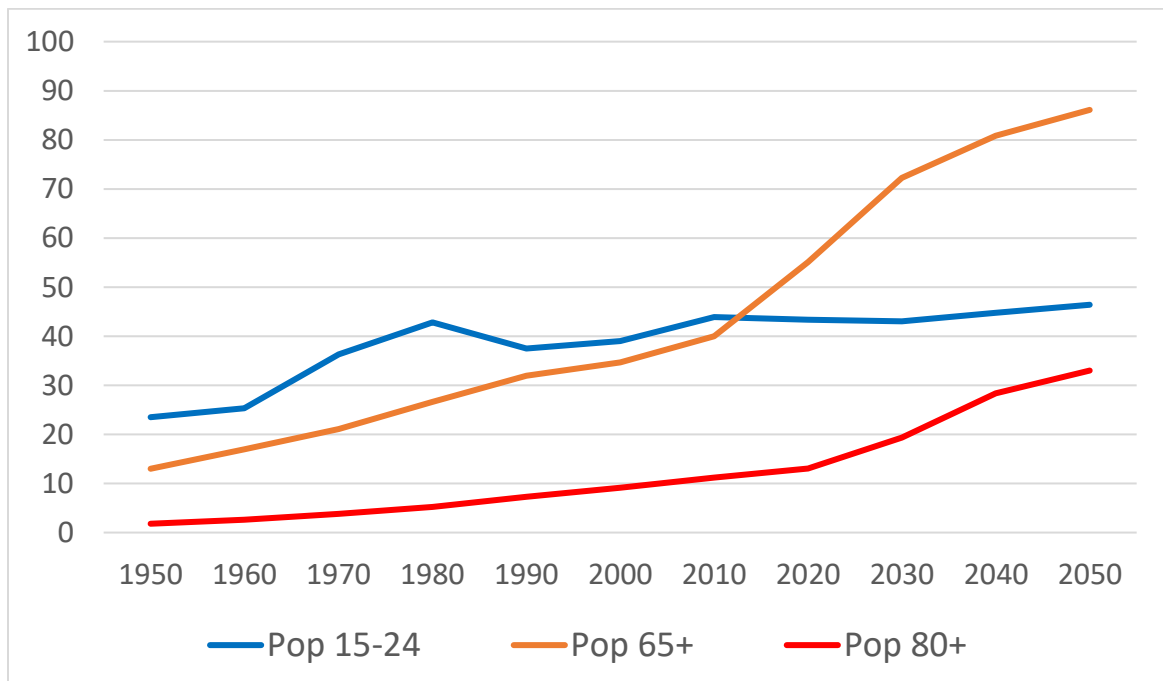
Farmers across America are incensed – they say that they could produce billions of additional fresh produce if they had enough workers. But labor shortages not only affect those picking crops from the ground. They also affect food processors, such as Maryland's traditional blue crab industry. There too, demographics have changed the industry. Since the last generation of Eastern Shore women who once picked crabmeat out of the shells has aged out of the tedious work, the industry has become wholly dependent on seasonal migrant labor, mostly from Mexico. But as you might expect from the recent change in Mexican immigration to net zero workers, the industry is now facing a crisis. "Companies that have been relying on this system for 25 years suddenly have no workers."¹⁸ The temporary work visas that seafood companies have used for decades to bring in immigrant crab-workers are far too few to fill current work needs. Demand for the visas so far exceeds supply that the Trump administration, instead of increasing the number of visas, decided to hold a lottery to allocate the

existing slots – with the result that the Maryland seafood industry has only been able to bring in about one-half the workers they need for the 2018 season.¹⁹ Many shops and warehouses have simply had to shut down for lack of workers, and the cost of crabmeat for restaurants and consumers will likely skyrocket.

Finally, looking ahead, as the U.S. baby boom ages into retirement, the number of health care and elder care workers needed will skyrocket; and these are not jobs that are readily replaced by automation. The McKinsey consulting firm estimates that these demands will generate anywhere from 50 million to 85 million jobs in health care and related industries.²⁰ Many of these are relatively low-skilled and low-paid jobs—changing sheets, carefully washing weak or disabled people, monitoring and administering medications—that are nonetheless vital for caring for and maintaining the quality of life for older Americans.

Today most such low-wage health care work is provided by immigrants. If that stops, the cost to the economy would be enormous. MetLife estimates that up to \$33 billion per year in productivity is already lost by family caregivers who have to take time off work to care for elderly relatives. “The average caregiver over 50 who leaves the workforce to take care of a parent loses \$303,880 in lifetime wages, Social Security, and private pensions, kicking the costs down the line and making the economy as a whole less productive.”²¹ As shown in Figure 4, the number of Americans 80 and older will triple in the next 35 years. If Americans have to leave work to care for their elderly relatives, instead of being able to count on low-wage immigrant workers to fill this labor need, the costs to the U.S. economy will be enormous.

Figure 4: Growth of Elderly vs. Young Americans (cohort sizes in millions)²²



America's population isn't getting any younger – it's getting older, and fast!

The problems of America's labor force, as noted above by several businesspeople, stems largely from the change in its age composition. As the baby boom generation ages, while women continue to have smaller families, the ratio of older to younger Americans will tip sharply upwards.

Figure 4, showing United Nations data and projections, tells the story. In 1950, the number of young people age 15-24 in the U.S. was almost double the number of people over 65, and over a dozen times as large as the number over aged 80. From 1950 to 1980, the number of young people grew more rapidly than the elder population, but then stopped increasing. Meanwhile, the number of those over 65 continued to grow strongly, so that by 2010 the number of elderly and young had nearly converged—the 15-24 age group was barely 10% larger than the 65+ group. After 2010, however, things seem to go haywire, at least by the standards of the previous sixty years. The elder population starts to grow far more rapidly, while the young population remains almost unchanged. By 2050, if projections hold, the situation of 1950 will be virtually reversed: the 65+ population will be nearly twice as large as the number of young people age 15-24. Meanwhile, the portion of the elder population that is 80 years or older will have increased from 11 million in 2010 to 33 million in 2050, at that point being 75% as large as the cohort of youth.

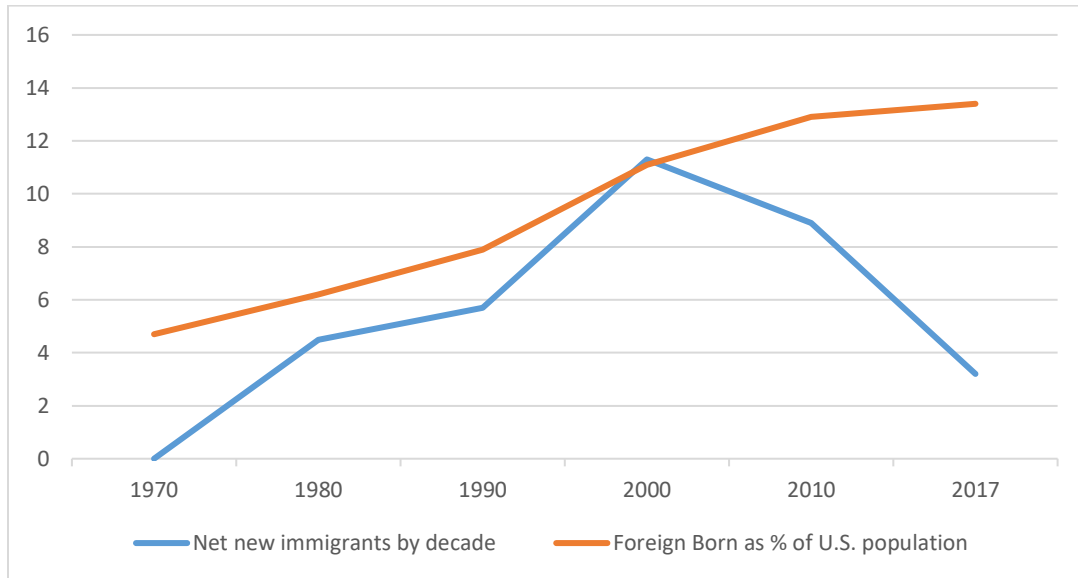
These numbers may seem bizarre, especially if you have heard that America does not have an aging problem, compared to countries in Europe or South Korea or Japan, where aging is a serious threat. America, we have been told, benefits from the dual forces of more open immigration and higher birth rates, fending off the problems of population aging.

Yet again, facts on the ground are overtaking these false stories. Three recent changes are driving these new trends: First, the decline in immigration to the U.S.; second, the decline in the birth rates of immigrants within the U.S.; and third, the continued low birth rates of native-born Americans.

First, despite the scare stories of high volumes of immigrants coming to the U.S., those stories are out of date. The number of immigrants from Mexico and other parts of Latin America have fallen so fast that as of five years ago, fewer immigrants came from Mexico to the U.S. each year than from China or from India.²³ Even with these Asian migrants, the total number of people moving into the U.S. has declined dramatically since 2010. Figure 5 shows that, although there was a huge surge in immigrants, in both numbers and as share of U.S. population, from 1970 to 2010, the inflow then sharply dropped. From a peak of 11.3 million net additional immigrants coming to the U.S. in 1990-2000, the number of net new immigrants fell to 8.9 million in 2000-2010, and then to just 3.2 million in 2010-2017. Since 2010, the total number of immigrants in the U.S. has grown only half as much as in the years before 2010, and even fell from 2016 to 2017. As a percentage of all Americans, the total of foreign-born, including both legal and illegal immigrants, has barely budged in the last 8 years, going from 12.9% in 2010 to 13.4% in 2017.²⁴

Prior to 2007, immigration was not only seen as a threat because the number of immigrants in the U.S. was rising quickly, but also because immigrants, once arrived, usually had significantly more children than native-born Americans. This meant that the second-generation of immigrants would be even larger than the first. Yet after the Great Recession, this too has changed. In 1980, the crude birth rate for white mothers in the U.S. was 15.1, which had fallen further to 12.0 by 2015. For Hispanic

Figure 5: Net increases in Foreign Born Population (in millions), and Total Foreign-born as Percent of U.S. population, 1970-2017²⁵



mothers, the crude birth rate in 1980 was 23.5, or 56% higher than for whites. But by 2014, their crude birth rate had fallen much faster than that of white mothers, sinking to 16.3, or just 33% higher than whites.²⁶ And their fertility is expected to continue to decline.²⁷

The combination of fewer immigrants, and immigrants having fewer children, means that the U.S. population will grow much less rapidly than we had only recently expected. Far from overwhelming the U.S. economy, Hispanic immigration is being lost as a driver of the economy. Before the recession of 2007, the U.S. Census bureau had forecast the U.S. population to reach 439 million by 2050. By contrast, the latest forecast, issued in 2018, is for the U.S. population to reach only 389 million by that date – 50 million people fewer!²⁸ That means 51 million fewer workers and taxpayers to support the U.S. economy.

Finally, the birth-rate among native-born Americans continues to fall. In 2017, total births in the U.S. hit a 30 year low. As the Center for Disease Control noted in a recent report, “The birthrate fell for nearly every group of women of reproductive age in the U.S. in 2017, reflecting a sharp drop that saw the fewest newborns since 1987.” Instead of the 2.1 children per woman required to simply replace the existing population, the current U.S. female population is having only 1.74 children; this means that the U.S. population would decline, if not for immigration.²⁹

The U.S. against the world in immigration?

A falling population would make it very difficult for the U.S. economy to have significant growth. The U.S. is currently enjoying an economic boom, but most of that has been due to putting the workers who

lost their jobs in the Great Recession, when unemployment briefly reached 10 percent, back to work. With unemployment now at historic lows, touching just 4 percent, where will future growth come from?

Over the next twenty years, the size of the American labor force – that is, those aged 25-64 – is projected to *decline*, if not for the increase in immigrants and the children of immigrants. From 2015 to 2035, the number of working age Americans who are US-born with U.S.-born parents will fall by eight million workers. Even with the projected level of immigration before President Trump took office, at 18 million net immigrants in the next 20 years, the total workforce will still grow only by 0.3 percent per year.³⁰

Yet the demands on that stagnant work force to support a rapidly aging population will undergo a considerable increase. The most recent report by the Social Security Trustees observed that since 2010 there has been a substantial deterioration in the projected ability of Social Security to pay future benefits.³¹ They note that the Social Security Trust program will start running a permanent annual deficit in 2018, and that the Trust Fund will be exhausted in just 16 years. They expect that either future payments to beneficiaries will have to be cut by one-quarter, or the social security taxes paid by the future, smaller workforce will need to be increased by one-third from today's levels. The recent report by the Medicare Trustees Fund shows that Medicare is in even worse shape.³² The fund that pays hospital benefits will be insolvent in just eight years. Cuts in Medicare payments of at least 9 percent will then have to be made in 2026, with further cuts reaching 22 percent of benefits likely required by 2040.

Having those 50 million additional young people that we had expected to join the U.S. population, by immigration and higher births, by 2050, would have gone a long way to filling these gaps, as they joined the work force and paid taxes. Yet with birth rates falling for all U.S. groups, the only way to restore those workers to the U.S. labor force would be by increasing immigration rates. If the U.S. simply returned to the immigration rates of the early 2000s, it would make up about 40 million of the 50 million in expected "lost" population relative to the 2008 census projection. Yet can the U.S. do so?

The U.S. is not alone in facing an aging and shrinking native-born population. Almost every developed country in the world is facing the same problem, and many to an even greater degree. Japan, South Korea, Germany and Italy are aging especially rapidly. Even China, due to the one-child policy it adopted in the 1980s to suppress population growth, is facing a rapid decline in its workforce, in its case a decline of several hundred million by mid-century. Almost every developed country in the world, in other words, will be trying to attract immigrants to fill its labor needs, and thus will be competing against every other country to do so.

The United States used to have huge advantages over other countries in attracting immigrants. First, in Mexico it had an immediate neighbor with a fast-growing and youthful population, something that, due to falling fertility in Mexico, is no longer the case today. Second, America had a reputation as a country of immigration, along with only a few other, much smaller countries, such as Canada and Australia. By comparison, countries like Japan, Germany and South Korea, though they had rapidly growing economies, strongly discouraged immigration and made acquiring citizenship difficult or impossible. Only in America was it relatively easy, by spending a number of years as a law-abiding resident and taking a fair and reasonable exam, to acquire citizenship. As a result, America thrived as a magnet for immigrants.

A recent World Bank study of immigration showed that the United States in 2010 attracted more high-skilled immigrants than *all other countries in the world combined*.³³ America's benefits from high-skilled migration include huge numbers of immigrants who have won Nobel Prizes and started Fortune 500 companies. This does not count the further benefits to America from the children of immigrants who, after being born in America, went on to great accomplishments. *Almost one-half* of the companies in America's Fortune 500 today were founded by immigrants or their children.³⁴ Eight U.S. presidents had at least one immigrant parent, including both Barack Obama and Donald J. Trump.

Yet other countries have eyed America's success and are now ramping up their own programs to attract fresh immigrants. South Korea and Japan have now changed their laws and developed new immigration agencies to attract foreigners and ease their transition to life in these countries.

In South Korea, a country so famously xenophobic that it was known for centuries as "the hermit Kingdom," official policy was changed in 2000 to promote South Korea becoming "a first-class nation, with foreigners." By 2020, fully one-third of all children born in S. Korea are estimated to be of mixed South Korean and Asian or other foreign descent. S. Korea now has 218 offices across the country that provide aid to immigrant families. As in the U.S., many S. Koreans initially associated immigrants with crime, job losses, or a great tax burden. Yet recognition of how fast S. Korea is aging, how much it needs immigrants for its economy to expand, and the success of other countries with immigration have changed attitudes: "A majority of South Koreans now see immigration as essential to their country's future – both as a thriving economy and as a modern, advanced nation."³⁵

Migration scholars James Hollifield and Michael Orlando Sharpe recently wrote that "Japan is making halting moves toward a national immigration policy [leading to a] potential transformation of Japanese society."³⁶ Japan has gained more than any other advanced nation in terms of extending the lifespan of its population, and was one of the earliest countries to see its fertility drop far below replacement. As a result, Japan has advanced furthest in the direction of an aging society. As an additional result, Japan's economy is suffering from shortages of labor in a variety of fields, from agriculture and restaurants to nursing and elderly care.

Japan has responded by relaxing its once strict restrictions on immigration and legal residence for foreigners. According to Professor Kiyoto Tanno of Tokyo Metropolitan University, "Practically every vegetable in the supermarkets of Tokyo was picked by a 'trainee' [i.e. foreign worker]."³⁷ Foreigners appear in every occupation from high-skill areas of finance, IT, and education to construction and even sumo wrestling. The upcoming 2020 Tokyo Olympics have adopted as one of its promotional themes "Unity in Diversity." Celebrities of mixed Japanese and foreign parentage, such as Miss Japan 2015 Ariana Miyamoto and tennis star Naomi Osaka, are changing the once highly negative views that Japanese had of intermarriage and children of mixed parentage. In 2016, more than 1 in 50 legal residents of Japan were foreign-born, mainly from China, South Korea, the Philippines, Vietnam, Brazil, Taiwan and Peru.³⁸ Japan faces among the greatest cultural obstacles to immigration in terms of its homogenous history and difficult language; yet having already piled up debts over 200% of GDP, a UN report argued that for Japan immigration will be essential to fill gaps in the labor market, to support aggregate demand, and to head off a possible collapse of the pension system.³⁹ Japan will therefore be competing to attract skilled and productive immigrants.

China, even more than other aging East Asian countries, has aggressively pursued immigrants. Its "1,000 Global Talents" program offers numerous incentives to high-skill individuals to move

themselves and their families to China.⁴⁰ Even America's good neighbor, Canada, has adopted a "Choose Canada" program for potential immigrants, and has adopted a target to welcome 980,000 new permanent residents in 2018-2020, or roughly 1% of Canada's population per year.⁴¹ That is roughly *three times as many immigrants*, relative to its population, as the U.S. admitted in 2016.⁴²

Around the world, wealthy advanced countries have admitted more immigrants, not just because of external demands, but because of a conscious decision to strengthen their economies by seeking diversity as a way to compete and advance. Despite the fear that the U.S. is being over-run by immigrants, the U.S. is far from having the most foreign-born residents among wealthy nations. According to a UN report, in 2015 the U.S. ranked behind Switzerland (29%), Australia (28%), New Zealand (25%), Canada (22%), Croatia (18%), Ireland (16%), Austria (15.2%), and Germany (15%) in the percent of the population that were foreign born—in the U.S. it was 14%.⁴³ Yet all of these countries with a higher percentage of foreign residents, that same year, had much *lower* rates of homicide than the U.S.

In sum, other countries have recognized that, as their population ages and their native-born work force shrinks, they will have to seek and attract immigrants in order to keep their economies growing and strong. Many have already admitted more immigrants, as a fraction of their population, than has the U.S., and they have done so without seeing their rates of crime or homicide approach those of the U.S.⁴⁴

Conclusion

It is understandable that many Americans have fears about immigration. They have been told frightening stories about a flood of immigrants pouring into the country, an out-of-control immigration system, and dangers from criminal immigrants. But these stories are fictions, based on data that is either out of date or demonstrably false. At the same time, the vital contributions of immigrants to America's economy and society are being minimized or overlooked.

The facts about immigration to the U.S. today are that immigration from Mexico and Latin American has dropped precipitously in the last ten years; most immigrants to the U.S. no longer come from these regions. Both immigration to the U.S., and the birth rates of migrants within the U.S., have fallen so rapidly that America's population in 2050 is now projected to be fifty million people fewer than we expected just a decade ago. These 'missing' people in the future U.S. population would almost all be people of working age. Meanwhile the number of Americans who will be over sixty-five years of age, and especially those who will be over eighty years of age, are rising so rapidly that within a few decades they will far outnumber young workers aged 15-24.

Other countries facing similar pressures have come to recognize that they need to admit more immigrants, not fewer, if they are to meet their obligations to seniors, maintain growth, and compete in the global economy. The U.S. rose to become the world's leading economy in large part because of its success in attracting the most skilled, energetic, and entrepreneurial people in the world to its economy, regardless of where they were born. If America ceases to maintain this advantage, its days as the largest and richest economy in the world will be numbered. It will then be America's workers and seniors who are left behind, while other countries and their peoples move forward.

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