

Immigrants Will Be America's Only Source Of Labor Force Growth

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Workers prepare to lift a new pedestrian bridge into place at the Stamford Transportation Center in Stamford, Connecticut. Getty Images.

Immigrant workers will be the only source of U.S. labor force growth in the economy after 2052, according to new research by the National Foundation For American Policy¹. Long before then, this report states the number of Americans of prime working age will stagnate. The findings represent the latest evidence that U.S. economic growth and living standards will languish without immigrant workers entering the U.S. labor force. Economists like Pia Orrenius and Chloe Smith of the Federal Reserve Bank of Dallas² noted in a public statement that a country achieves economic growth with “growth in the labor force and its productivity.” As such, businesses cannot expand without finding people to hire, and American consumers suffer when companies cannot provide goods and services due to a lack of workers.

Immigrant Workers Play A Key Role In U.S. Labor Force

Over the last five years, only 479,000 U.S.-born workers were added to the U.S. labor force, compared to 3.6 million foreign-born workers, according to new research from the NFAP. That means immigrant workers are responsible for 88% of the labor force growth in America since 2019. (The research involved analysis of the Bureau of Labor Statistics Current Population Survey and Census.)

Labor force growth is crucial to economic growth. Orrenius and Smith affirmed in their joint public statement that economic growth, or gross domestic product growth, raises a country's living standards. “Because economic growth depends on labor, capital and productivity, growth in these factors will set the speed limit of the economy,” according to a July 2024 Dallas Fed analysis. “While technological advances and incentives for investment will contribute to productivity growth, immigration will be vital to propping up labor force growth.”

¹ National Foundation For American Policy (NFAP): A non-profit, non-partisan research organization focused on immigration, international trade and other issues related to globalization and the economy.

² Federal Reserve Bank of Dallas (Dallas Fed): Part of the Federal Reserve System which is the central bank of the United States.

20 **Americans Are Getting Older**

Retiring Baby Boomers remain a significant factor in the American economy. “With the U.S.-born population aging and growing slower, immigrants have become an essential part of American labor force growth,” according to the NFAP research. “In each of the past three decades, the foreign born have accounted for more than half of America’s labor force growth. The number of immigrants in the labor force grew by 19.1 million over the past 30 years, while the U.S. born in the labor force grew by only 16.8 million.”

Children Of Immigrants Play Key Role

The children of immigrants are an essential source of population and labor force growth.

30 The United States would have experienced no labor force growth during the past five years without immigrants and their children. “Between 2018 and 2024, the number of workers with U.S. parents declined by 1.3 million, while the number of immigrants and children of immigrants in the U.S. labor force grew by 5.4 million,” according to the NFAP analysis.

Without immigrants and their children, the U.S. labor force would have declined by more than one million, with negative implications for inflation, growth and Social Security. Instead, the U.S. labor force grew by over four million workers.

Bleak Projections For U.S. Born In Labor Force

The NFAP analysis projects that the total number of U.S. born in the labor force will peak in 2052 at 146.7 million. That is only 8% higher than the number in 2024. After 2052, immigrant workers will be the only source of U.S. labor force growth in the American economy.

40 Even before mid-century, Americans will see a stagnating number of U.S. born between 25 and 54. The U.S.-born population and the U.S. born of prime working age (25-54) will peak in 2042.

American Consumers And Taxpayers Will Pay The Price

Along these lines, the above-mentioned statement published by the Federal Reserve Bank of Dallas noted the recent rise in immigration and stated that returning to lower immigration levels would make it impossible for the United States to sustain its customary level of economic growth. The report concluded: “The nation is in a sort of demographic autumn, and winter is coming.”

50 A lack of workers can show up in many ways. In Prince George’s County, Maryland, the *Washington Post* reported that a shortage of bus drivers caused children to wait 45 minutes or longer for morning pickups. “I know there’s a bus driver shortage everywhere,” one parent told the *Post*. “Expecting buses to be a little late is one thing, but not to show up at all or to not even be assigned at all is completely another thing.”

Without home health aides in an area, seniors are more likely to live in a nursing home. When electricians or plumbers are unavailable, homeowners wait months or years for housing or remodeling projects, reports the *Wall Street Journal*. According to *CNN*, an insufficient number of pharmacists has caused pharmacies to limit their hours. Without enough doctors or nurses, Americans may die prematurely or suffer infections during a hospital stay.

“Consumers pay for labor shortages with subpar service, including fewer hours and higher price,” according to the NFAP analysis. “Increasing the supply of workers through immigration and temporary work visas will reduce illegal immigration, enhance labor force growth and improve Americans’ daily lives.”