

# Educated Immigrants Outnumber Low-Skilled Ones in U.S.

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The word "immigrant" often conjures up the negative images of low-skilled and likely illegally residing workers. As Benjamin Johnson, executive director of the American Immigration Council tells the Washington Post, "too often the immigration debate is driven by images on television of people jumping over fences." Yet a new report from the Brookings Institution pushes back against this stereotype, showing there are actually more college-educated immigrants of working age in the United States than those without high-school degrees.

To help understand the chart above, it's useful to look at Brookings terminology. Low-skilled immigrants are those that do not possess a high-school diploma, while high-skilled immigrants are those with a college degree, or more. The shift in the past few decades has been significant: "In 1980, just 19 percent of immigrants aged 25 to 64 held a bachelor's degree, and nearly 40 percent had not completed high school," the report states. By 2010 that 40 percent was down to 28 percent, while the percentage of immigrants holding BAs rose to 30. Mid-skilled immigrants--those that have a high school diploma or some college and no degree--are still the largest group, though the percentage has held pretty steady since the early 90's. It's worth adding that Brookings methodology did not distinguish between illegal and legal immigrants; birthplace was the sole determination of immigrant status.

It looks like good news, but not everyone sees the report as encouraging. "New college graduates are faring very poorly on the labor market, and what the report is telling us is that we're bringing in a high number of workers to compete with them," Steven Camarota, director of research at the Center for Immigration Studies, a self-described "pro-immigrant, low-immigration," think-tank in Washington D.C told the Post.

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