

Foreign-born workforce, 2004: a visual essay

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The foreign born are persons residing in the United States who were not U.S. citizens at birth. That is, they were born outside the United States or one of its outlying areas such as Puerto Rico or Guam, to parents neither of whom was a U.S. citizen. The foreign-born population includes legally-admitted immigrants, refugees, temporary residents such as students and temporary workers, and undocumented immigrants.

The native born are persons born in the United States or one of its outlying areas such as Puerto Rico or Guam or who

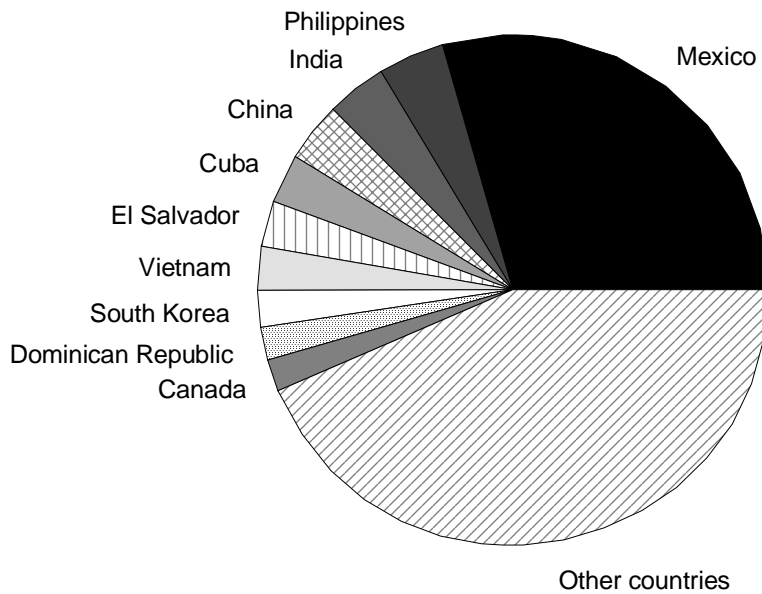
were born abroad of at least one parent who was a U.S. citizen.

The data on nativity are collected as part of the Current Population Survey (CPS). The CPS is a monthly survey of about 60,000 households that obtains information on employment and unemployment among the Nation's civilian noninstitutional population ages 16 and older.

All charts, with the exception of chart 3, are annual averages for 2004. This essay was prepared by Abraham T. Mosisa, an economist in the Division of Labor Force Statistics, Bureau of Labor Statistics. E-mail: Mosisa.Abraham@bls.gov

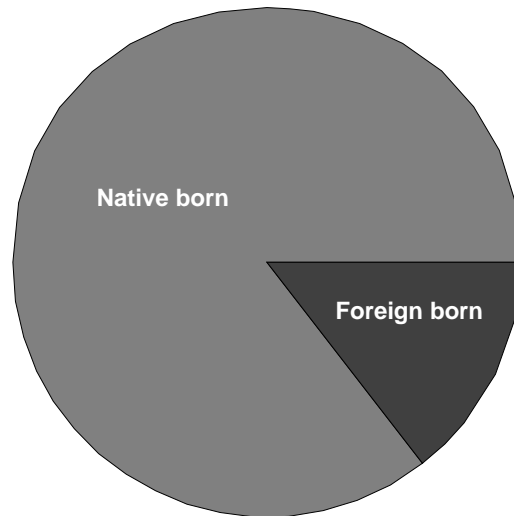
- The foreign born come from a multitude of countries. However, only 10 countries accounted for more than half of the group's population.
- People born in Mexico were by far the largest foreign-born group in the United States. They accounted for 29.5 percent of the foreign-born population in 2004. The second highest contributor—the Philippines—accounted for just 4.2 percent.
- In 2004, 42.9 percent of the foreign born came either from Mexico or from countries in Central and South America.

1. Ten countries accounted for more than 50 percent of the U.S. foreign-born working age population



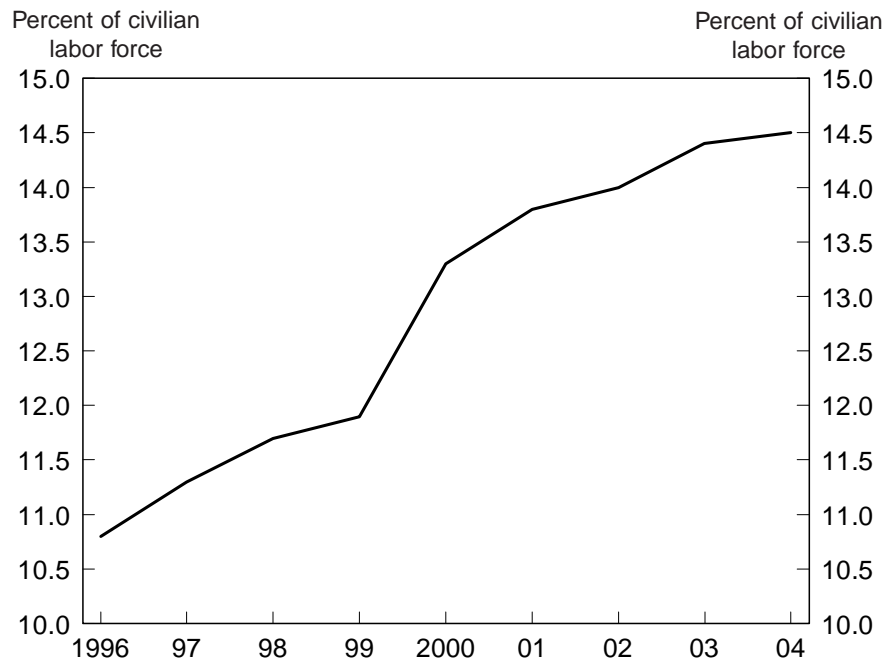
- In 2004, there were 21.4 million foreign-born persons ages 16 years and older in the U.S. labor force, composing 14.5 percent of the total.
- There were about 126.0 million native born in the workforce, and they composed 85.5 percent of the total labor force.

2. Nearly 15 percent of the U.S. labor force was composed of the foreign born



- Since 1996, the first year for which comparable data are available, the number in the labor force that is foreign born increased from 10.8 percent (14.4 million) to 14.5 percent (21.4 million) in 2004.
- The increase in the foreign-born labor force accounted for about half of the total labor force growth over the same period.

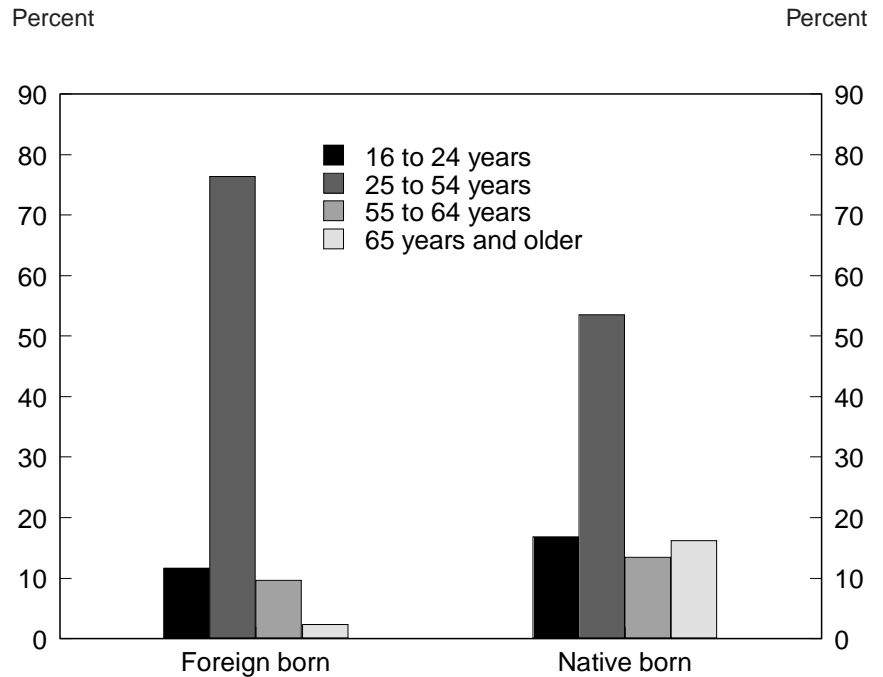
3. Since 1996, the proportion of the labor force that is foreign born has risen dramatically



NOTE: Estimates shown for 2000 and later years are based on Census 2000 population controls and are not strictly comparable with estimates for years prior to 2000 which were based on population controls derived from the 1990 census.

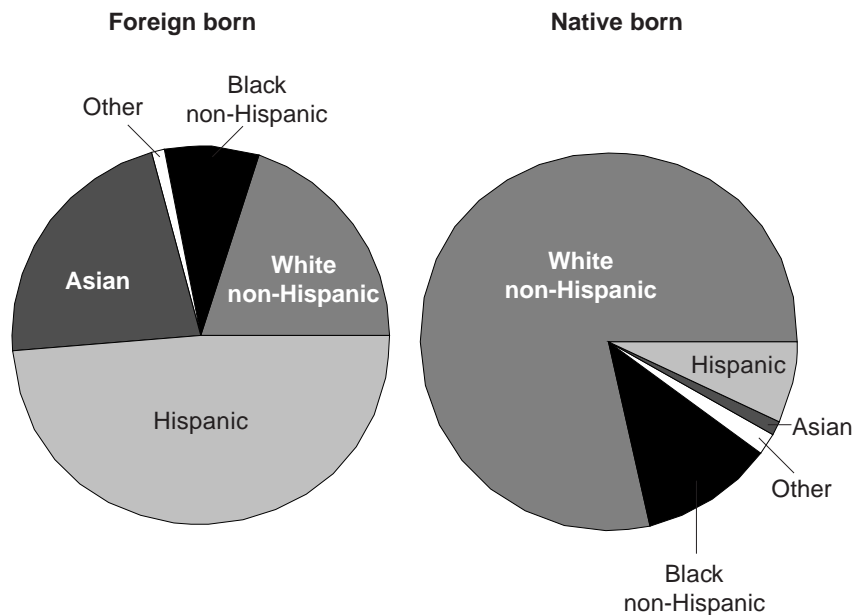
- The proportion of foreign born ages 25–54 was much larger than their native-born counterparts—76.4 percent and 53.6 percent, respectively.
- In contrast, the share of native-born workforce ages 55 and older was larger than their foreign-born counterparts—29.6 percent versus 12.0 percent, respectively.

4. The foreign-born workforce had a higher share of 25- to 54-year-olds than the native-born workforce



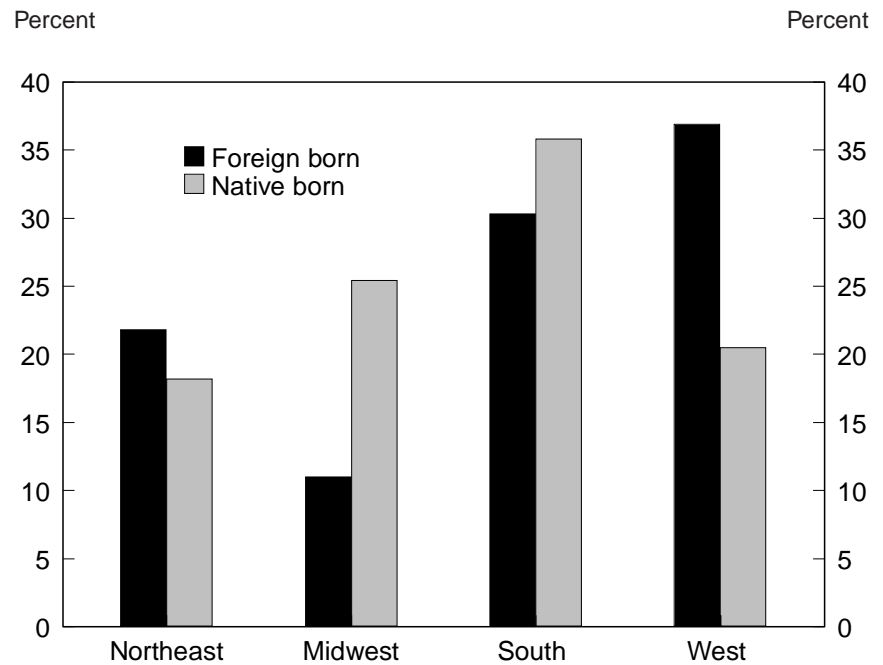
- About 49 percent of the foreign-born workforce was Hispanic in 2004. Just one out of five of the foreign-born labor force was white non-Hispanic.
- By comparison, nearly 80 percent of the native-born labor force was white non-Hispanic and 11.4 percent black non-Hispanic. Hispanics composed 7.0 percent of the native-born workforce.
- Asians composed 22.1 percent of the foreign-born workforce compared with only 1.2 percent of the native-born workforce.

5. Nearly 50 percent of the foreign-born labor force was Hispanic, while the native-born workforce was predominately white non-Hispanic



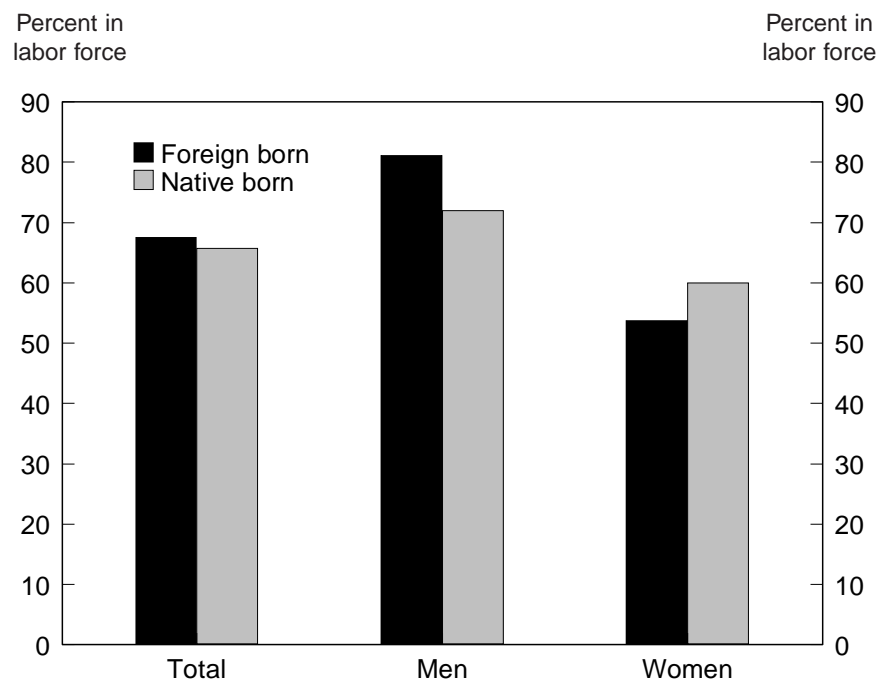
- About two in three of the foreign-born labor force lived in the West (36.9 percent) and the South (30.3 percent) in 2004. Just 21.8 percent lived in the Northeast, and only 11.0 percent in the Midwest.
- By comparison, 35.8 percent of the native-born workforce lived in the South and 25.4 percent in the Midwest.

6. About 37 percent of the foreign-born labor force lived in the Western region of the United States



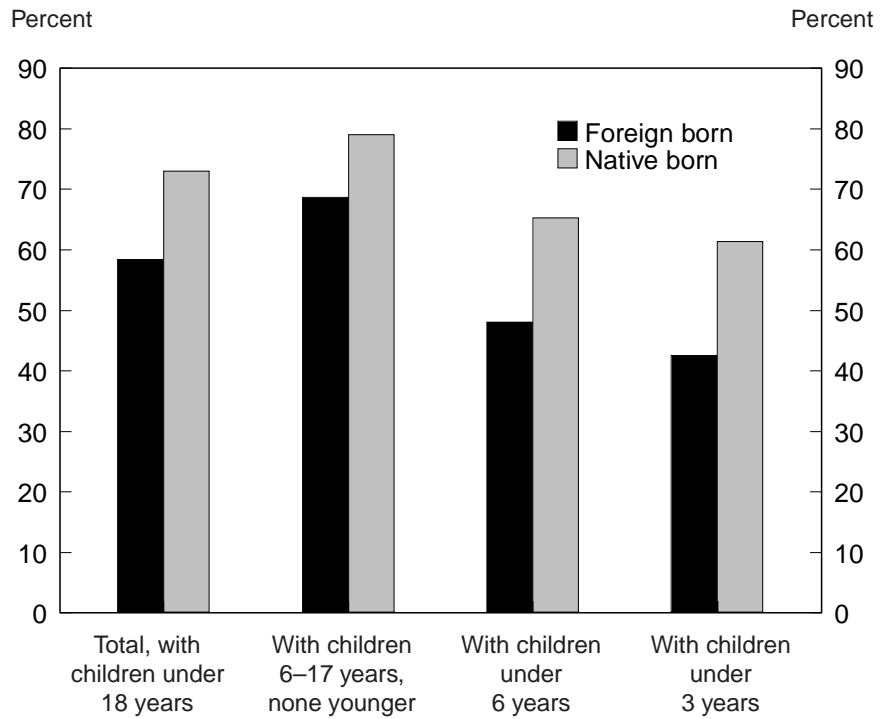
- The labor force participation rate of foreign-born persons ages 16 years and older was 67.5 percent, a little higher than the 65.7 percent participation for the native born in 2004.
- Foreign-born men (81.1 percent) were considerably more likely to be labor force participants than their native-born (72.0 percent) counterparts. In contrast, foreign-born women were less likely than their native-born counterparts overall to be working or looking for work, 53.8 percent versus 60.0 percent, respectively.

7. Foreign-born men were more likely than native-born men to be in the labor force; for women, the opposite was true



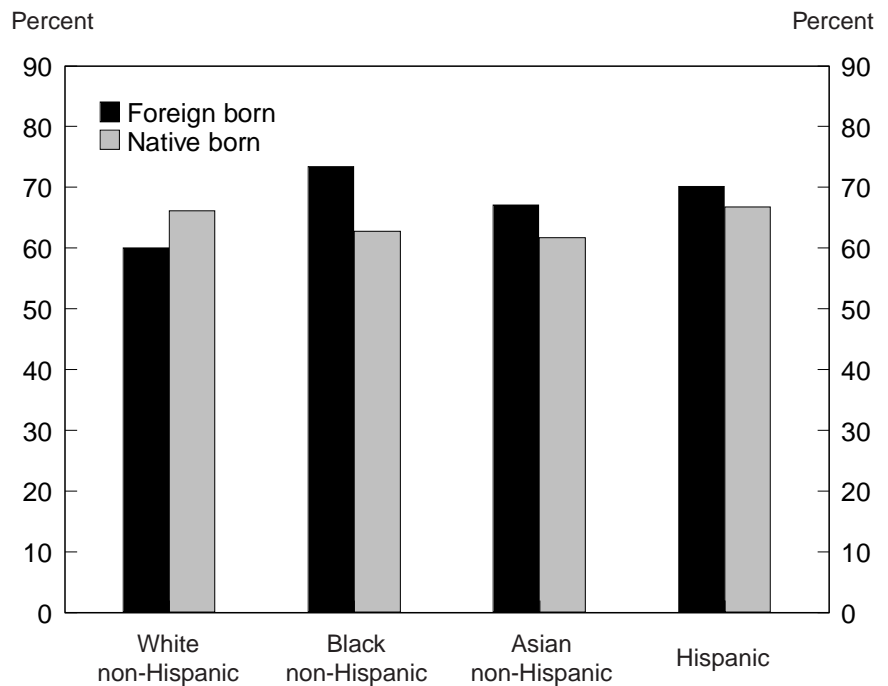
- The size of the difference between foreign- and native-born mothers' participation rates varied by age of youngest child.
- The difference was largest for mothers whose youngest child was under 3, 42.6 percent of foreign born were in the labor force, compared with 61.4 percent for the native born—nearly a 19-percent gap.
- The difference was smallest for mothers whose youngest child was 6–17 years old, 68.7 percent of foreign born were labor force participants compared with 79.0 percent for native born—a 10.3-percent gap.

8. Foreign-born mothers were less likely to be labor force participants than were native-born mothers



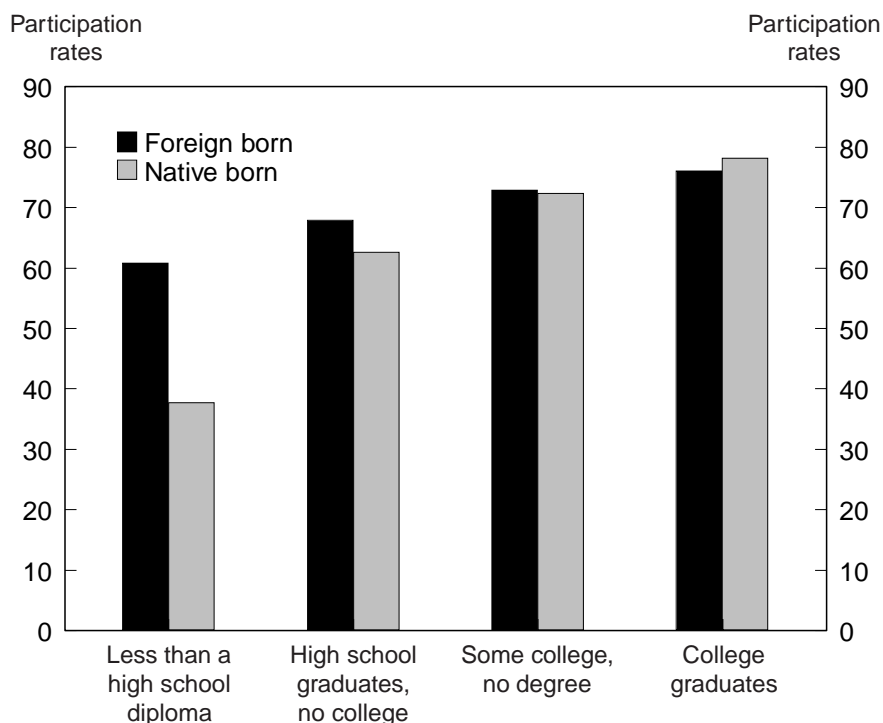
- The labor force participation rates of foreign-born blacks, Asians, and Hispanics were higher than those of their native-born counterparts. However, foreign-born whites were less likely to be in the labor force than their native-born counterparts.
- The difference in participation rates between the foreign-born and the native-born whites was at least partly because foreign-born whites were older on balance (37.1 percent were 55 years and older) than native-born whites (only 32.2 percent were 55 years and older). Labor force participation falls dramatically after age 55.

9. Except among white non-Hispanics, the foreign born had higher labor force participation rates than the native born



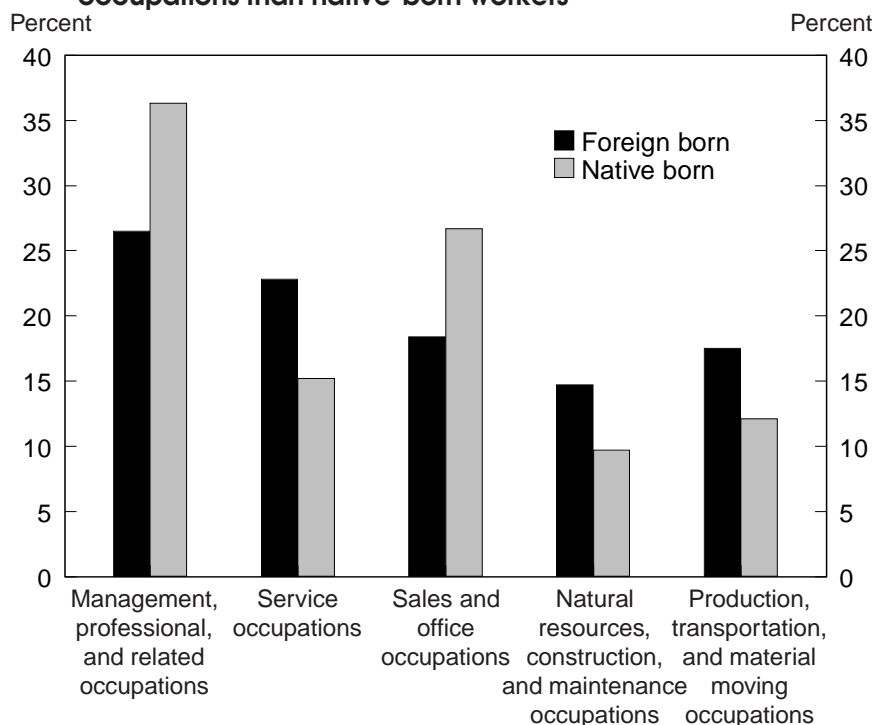
- The foreign born ages 25 years and older who had not completed high school were much more likely to be labor force participants than the native born with that level of education, 60.8 percent and 37.7 percent, respectively, in 2004. The participation rate for the foreign born was also higher than that for the native born among high school graduates who did not attend college.
- At the upper end of the educational scale, however, the participation rate for foreign-born college graduates at 76.1 percent was little different from that for the native born—78.2 percent.

10. The least educated foreign born were far more likely than their native-born counterparts to be labor force participants



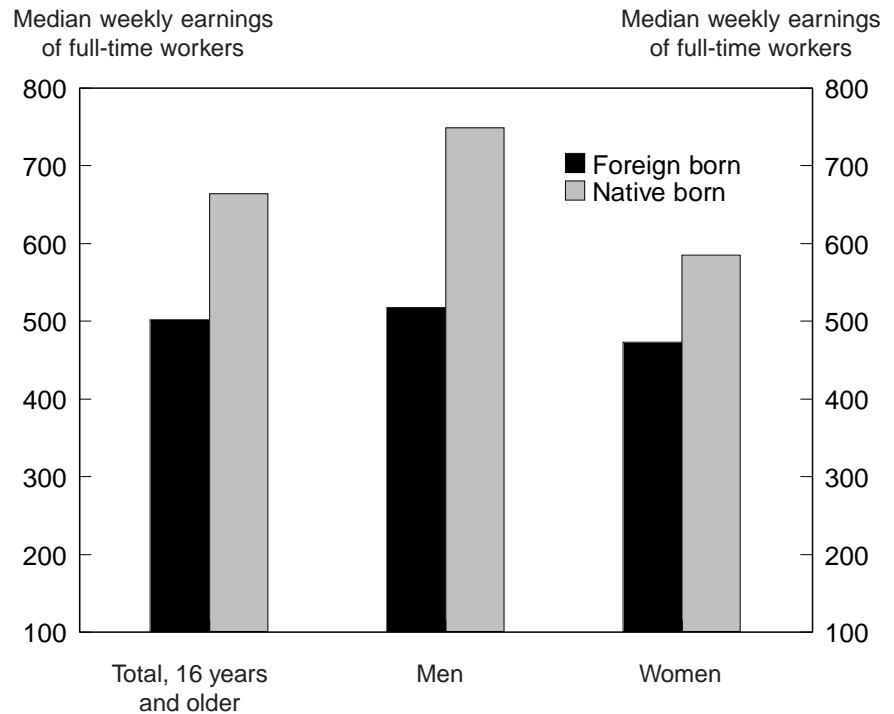
- Foreign-born workers were more likely than native-born workers to be employed in service occupations (22.8 percent versus 15.2 percent); in natural resources, construction, and maintenance occupations (14.7 percent versus 9.7 percent); and in production, transportation, and material moving occupations (17.5 percent versus 12.1 percent).
- Native-born workers were more likely than foreign-born workers to be in managerial-professional occupations and in sales jobs in 2004.

11. Foreign-born workers were less likely to be in managerial-professional occupations and more likely to be in service occupations than native-born workers



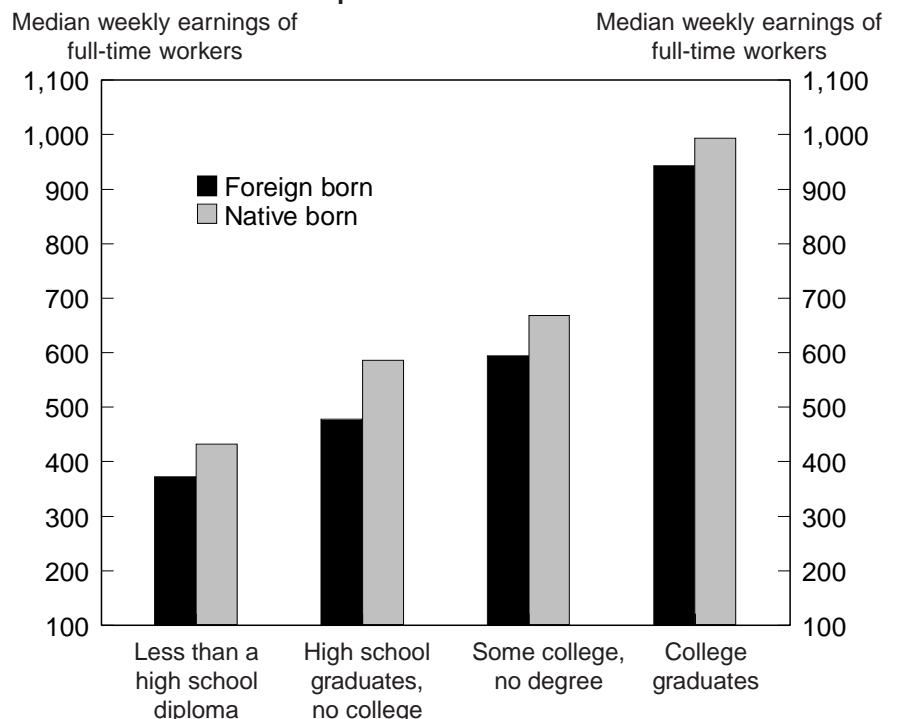
- In 2004, the median usual weekly earnings of foreign-born full-time wage and salary workers was \$502 compared with \$664 for their native-born counterparts.
- Foreign-born men earned about 70 percent as much as native-born men per week (\$518 compared with \$749, respectively). Women’s earnings were much lower for both groups, and foreign-born women earned about 80 percent as much as native-born women (\$473 compared with \$585, respectively).

12. Among full-time wage and salary workers, overall, the foreign born earned about 75.6 cents for every dollar earned by native born in 2004



- Foreign-born workers ages 25 years and older earned less than their native-born counterparts at all education levels. The gap was largest among those with only a high school diploma—the foreign born earned 82 percent as much as the native born—and smallest among college graduates (95 percent).
- Earnings of both the foreign and the native born increased with education. For example, in 2004, the foreign born ages 25 years and older with less than a high school education earned \$373 per week; earnings of those with college degrees were 2.5 times higher—\$943 a week.
- The foreign born earned less than the native born partly because foreign born are younger on balance than the native born. Skilled older workers usually earn more than less-experienced younger workers.

13. At all education levels, the median weekly earnings of the foreign born who work full time were less than those of their native-born counterparts in 2004



- Overall, the unemployment rates of the foreign born and the native born were the same in 2004, 5.5 percent.
- The unemployment rate of foreign-born men was lower than that for the native-born men, 5.0 percent and 5.8 percent, respectively. Among women, however, the jobless rate of the foreign born was 6.3 percent, compared with 5.3 percent for the native born.

14. The foreign born were about as likely to be unemployed as the native born

