

Comprehensive Immigration Reform: What Is It and Why We Need It



Migration and Immigration

- One billion people on the move across the world
- 214 million live in a country other than the one in which they were born
- 1 in 7 people is a migrant
- US has the largest share of international migrants: 33 million people, 20% of world's international migrants
- US foreign policy and trade policy drives migration

Land of Immigrants?



- Irish, German, Polish immigrants all experienced animosity. Typically very poor, unskilled and illiterate, spoke little or no English. As Catholics, seen as a danger and threat to Protestant society

Land of Immigrants?

- Anti-immigrant sentiment against Chinese peaked during recession in 1880s, even as Chinese laborers had been brought in to build railroads and infrastructure



Chin Fook Hing was a Chinese importer in Seattle. This 1909 photograph shows him in his shop, located at 114 Second Avenue.

Why Reform Immigration System?

- Immigration laws are out of sync with our economy and our needs
- Supply of and Demand for Workers Don't Match
- Current legal immigration system doesn't work
- Vast underground economy of vulnerable workers
- Increasingly moved to harsh enforcement practices that hurt families but do not fix the problems
- Decreasing due process protections
- Tremendous benefits to the U.S. economy, values and social fabric

Who IS America?

- Nearly a quarter of the U.S. population is either foreign-born or the child of someone who is foreign-born
- In 2004, almost 15% of the labor force was foreign-born
- In Washington state, 12% of the population is foreign-born and 14% of workforce is foreign-born

Changing Demographics

- From 1996-2003, 58% of growth in labor market from foreign-born
- Native-born workforce aging and retiring
- Workers 55 and over will increase by 4%
- Workers 25-54 will only increase by a rate of .3 percent

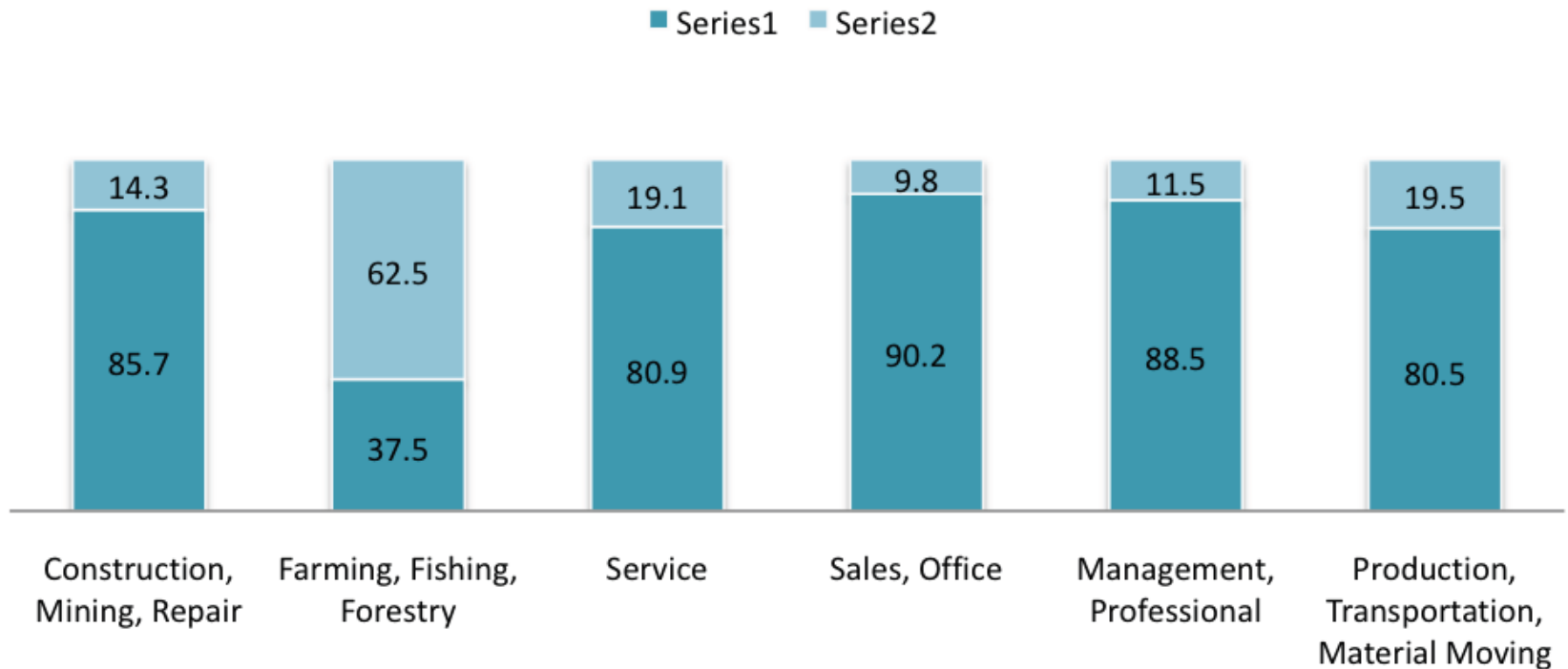


Immigrant Workforce Helps Economy

- U.S. DOL: 28 million jobs for unskilled workers over the next ten years, with only 15 million “unskilled” native born workers entering the job market
- In WA, 78.1 percent of foreign born are working age compared to 64.4 percent of total population and 62.5 percent of the native born population.



Immigrants Play Key Roles and Complement US Born Workforce



Supply and Demand Don't Match

- As of January 2005, 271,000 applications for employment-based green cards pending and DOL had backlog of 300,000 applications for labor certification
- Only 5,000 employment-based green cards each year to workers in less-skilled jobs
- Only 66,000 visa for less-skilled workers in seasonal, non-agricultural jobs like crab processing
- Current H1B visa program imposes arbitrary cap: limits researchers, scientists, tech experts

Underground Economy Hurts Everyone

- Deeply rooted: one-third of undocumented immigrants have lived here for 10 years or more; 1.8 million are children
- Undocumented immigrants come from everywhere
- Many ways to become undocumented
- Harsh enforcement without reform doesn't solve the problem
- Two-tier wage system hurts ALL workers

Legal System Doesn't Work

- As of January 2007, a wife, husband or children of a Permanent Resident has a wait of almost five years (longer from Mexico)
- A U.S. citizen applying for a brother or sister has to wait 11 years; 22 years if from Philippines
- Adult unmarried children of US citizens must wait more than 5 years

Due Process Protections Eroded

- 1996 laws greatly expanded definition of “aggravated felony” to include non-violent crimes such as shoplifting; retroactive; deportable
- Also stripped immigration judges of ability to use their own discretion on individual cases
- Took away judicial review
- Post-9/11, Bush passed laws that allowed for mandatory and indefinite detention
- Too many cases, not enough judges

What Is Comprehensive Immigration Reform?

- Legalization and a path to citizenship for 12 million who are here
- Eliminate family backlogs, promote family reunification
- Protect due process, civil and human rights for all
- Ensure sufficient visas for future worker flows with full rights and protections to close unlawful migration channels
- Ensure humane and sensible enforcement practices
- Promote immigrant integration

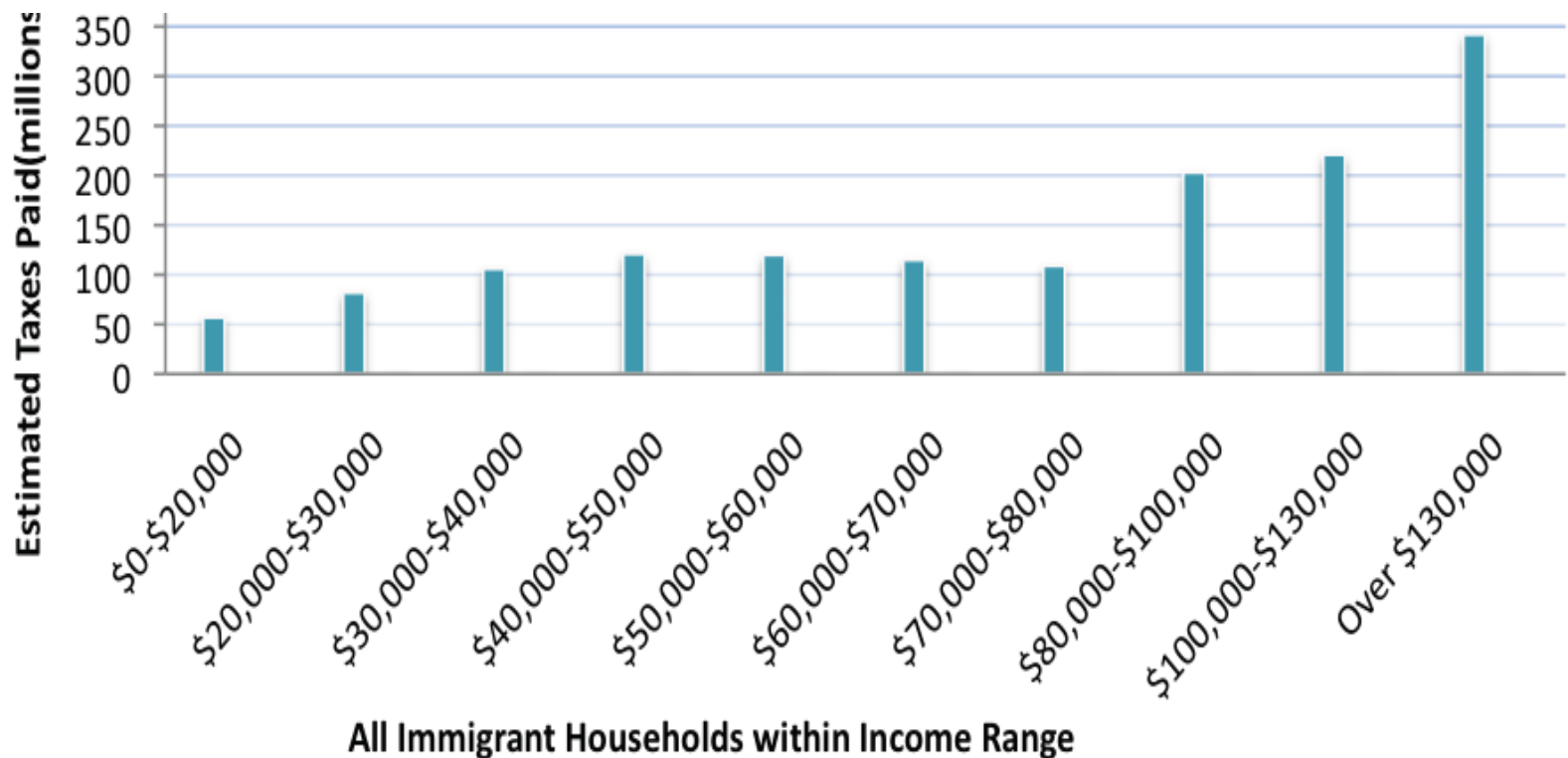
Do Immigrants Contribute?

- Immigrants contributed \$1.48 billion to tax revenue in 2007 accounting for 13.2% of all taxes paid in Washington state, which is slightly higher than the percent of foreign born households overall (12.5).

| | Number of Households | Total Tax Paid |
|----------------------|----------------------|------------------|
| Foreign Born | 310,572 | \$1,476,548,485 |
| Total | 2,486,711 | \$11,225,122,134 |
| Percent Foreign Born | 12.5 | 13.2 |

Immigrants Pay Taxes

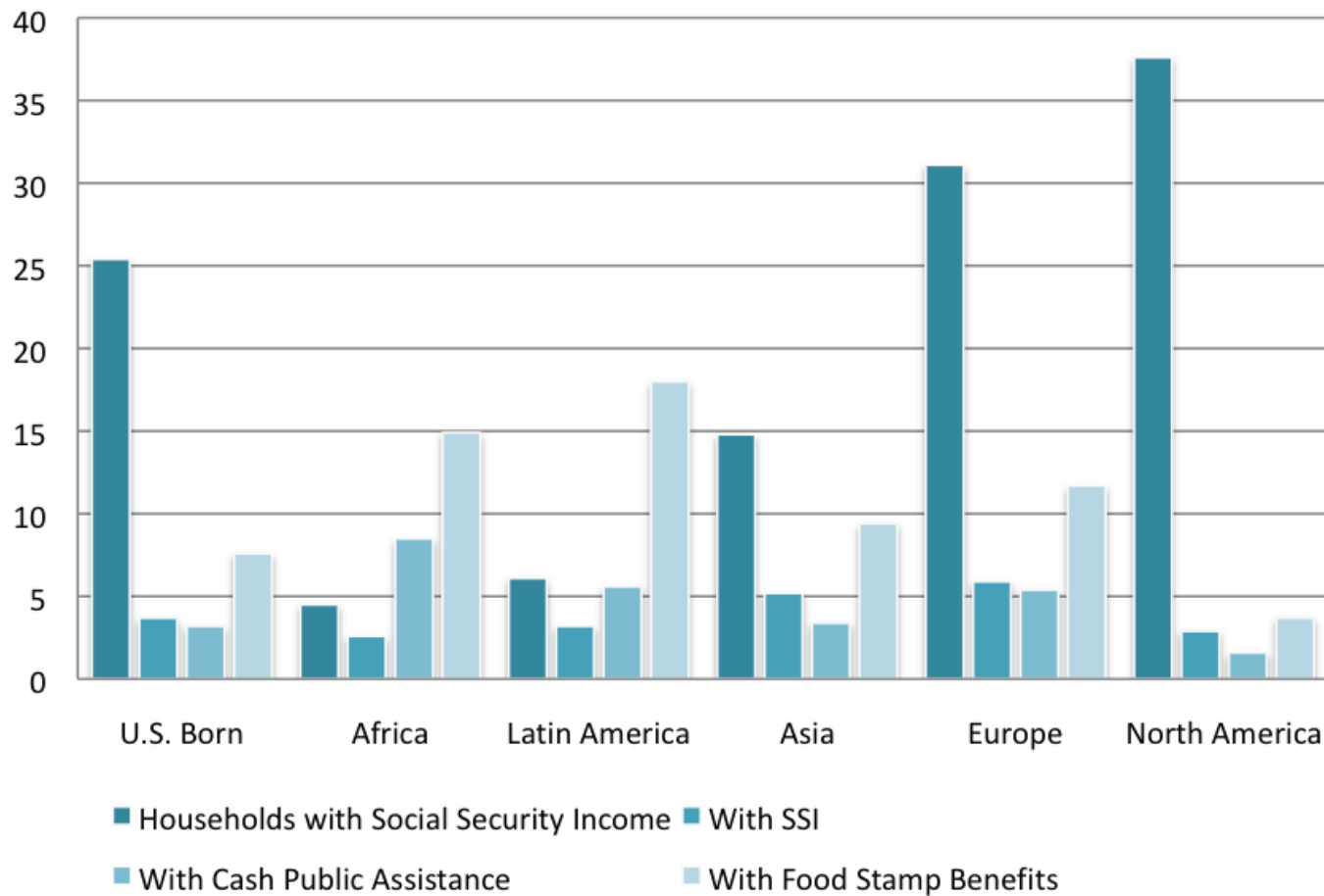
- Even low income immigrant households make significant contributions with households earning less than \$20,000 contributing 50 million in taxes.



Major Force As Consumers

- Asian and Hispanic buying power accounted for over \$28 billion or about 11.5% of state's total consumer market.
- Nationally, Washington ranks seventh in size of Asian Consumer Market and 13th in size of Hispanic Consumer Market.
- Asian and Hispanic buying power grew by 442.3% and 495% respectively from 1990-2008.
- As the immigrant population has grown, Washington has experienced tremendous growth in overall buying power and tax revenue contributions of immigrants in the state.

Immigrants are less likely to have their income supplemented than US born



Undocumented and Low Skilled Workers Contribute to GDP

- Washington's GDP dependent on undocumented immigrants who make up about 3.5% of our labor force
- WA apples represent \$1.23 billion dollars to WA
- WA Dept of Agriculture determined that its \$32 billion food and agriculture industry contributed 12 percent to the state's economy



Indispensable Workers. . .

- **H-1B workers** are crucial to Washington's research institutions and hi-tech companies. These workers keep Washington competitive by ensuring that the top scientists and researchers bring innovation to WA.



The National Science Foundation has voiced concern over a decline in foreign science students staying in the United States after graduation combined with the high numbers of U.S. born scientists and engineers beginning to retire.

Immigrant Entrepreneurs

- Washington's 26,890 Asian-owned businesses had sales and receipts of \$7.1 billion and employed 44,938 people in 2002, the last year for which data is available.
- The state's 10,261 Latino-owned businesses had sales and receipts of \$1.5 billion and employed 15,852 people in 2002, according to the U.S. Census Bureau's Survey of Business Owners.
- Immigrants are 30 percent more likely to form new businesses than U.S.-born citizens.
- Foreign-born university graduates are important contributors to U.S. innovation—among people with advanced degrees, immigrants are three times more likely to file patents than U.S.-born citizens.

Economic Benefits of Immigration Reform

- Center for American Progress: \$1.5 trillion into economy (GDP) over 10 years
- Cato Institute: “The overriding impact of immigrants is to strengthen and enrich American culture, increase the total output of the economy, and raise the standard of living of American citizens.”
- Alan Greenspan: Social Security would collapse without contributions of immigrants

Contributions to Social Security

- Stephen Gross, Chief Actuary for SSA: by 2007, unauthorized immigrants had contributed net benefit of \$120 billion to \$240 billion to SS Trust Fund
- Equivalent to between 5.4%-10.7% of total assets
- In 2007 alone, \$12 billion contributed
- Estimates that two-thirds of all unauthorized are paying in
- Without unauthorized, SS Trust Fund would have run dry in 2009
- New legal immigrants will provide a net benefit of \$611 billion to social security over the next 75 years.

Which Way Forward, America?



www.weareoneamerica.org

<http://www.weareoneamerica.org/immigrants-and-economy>