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Unemployed Immigrants

By Catherine Rampell

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Last year, and for the first time since 2003, foreign-born workers were more likely to be unemployed than their counterparts who were born in the United States.

These numbers are from a new report released by the Bureau of Labor Statistics.

The bureau found that the composition of foreign-born workers was roughly unchanged from the previous year. In both 2008 and 2009, about half of all foreign-born workers in the United States were Hispanic, and about 22 percent were from Asia.

Native-born American workers typically make significantly more money than foreign-born workers, with median weekly wages of \$761 and \$602, respectively.

This differential likely has to do with the types of jobs that immigrants and native-born citizens are more likely to hold. Foreign-born workers are more likely to be in service occupations, for example, while native-born workers are more likely to be employed in management jobs or professional and related occupations.

Among workers with higher educational attainment, the gap between the earnings for the foreign-born and native-born narrows. College in particular seems to be a great equalizer: Immigrant workers with bachelor's degrees and advanced degrees earn almost as much (99.2 percent) as their native-born peers.