

Immigrants Don't Take Jobs, They Create Them: Why We Need More Immigration

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How many of the smartest people around the world should be allowed to come to the United States to live and work?

Consider that the working U.S. population, as it stands, is about 150 million people. Remember that U.S. executives are constantly complaining about the challenge of finding highly educated employees with backgrounds in science, engineering and mathematics. And don't forget that some of these people have already lived in the United States for years, earning advanced degrees at our institutions of higher learning.

Currently, the United States issues a paltry 40,000 visas a year to highly skilled immigrants. Yet [59 percent of Americans oppose](#) letting more highly skilled immigrants into the country despite the remarkably low level of legal immigration—and pleas from [economists](#) and [business leaders alike](#) to let them in.

As economist Alex Tabarrok [points out](#), the low number of visas the U.S. grants is further sabotaged by other bad policy decisions, like giving work visas to the families of highly skilled workers—whose immigration should be a given rather than decreasing the overall number of workers who can come to the U.S.—and imposing the same immigration ceiling on China as on Greenland.

This remarkable survey [[PDF](#)] from the National Foundation for American Policy, a pro-immigration think tank, helps explain why all those things need to change. NFAP found that immigrants have started nearly half of America's 50 top venture-funded companies, and that these founders have created an average of approximately 150 jobs per company.

The largest number of these immigrants are from India, followed by Israel, Canada, Iran and New Zealand, among other countries. NFAP argues that allowing the most talented people from around the world to take advantage of the various cultural and institutional advantages provided to entrepreneurs in the United States is a win-win.

Other studies back this up: The conservative American Enterprise Institute has [touted the benefits](#) of welcoming more highly skilled immigrants, [as has](#) the liberal Center for American Progress. While a number of leaders in Congress are trying to move in that direction, immigration remains a touchy subject, especially in the Republican base.

The political problem is that in a time of economic troubles and high unemployment, xenophobic views tend to increase. Many Americans don't make a distinction between highly skilled immigrants and regular newcomers to the country, or are confused about the historically low

level of legal immigration the nation allows today—it's been 20 years since we properly updated many immigration restrictions.

Using the economic benefits of highly-skilled immigrants to tout a more liberal policy and attract innovators to the United States is a smart idea, no doubt, but it would be an awful side effect if that lead people to continue regarding low-skilled immigrants—about 55,000 regular work visas are issued each year—as an economic negative.

Consider the story of Sergei Brin, the Russian-born Google co-founder who came to the United States with his father, a mathematics professor, when he was six years old. Brin's father would likely be a candidate for a highly skilled work visa today, but there was no telling that his son might grow up to start one of the most important companies in the United States.

That's the sort of argument you might hear from proponents of the recently-blocked [DREAM Act](#), which allows the children of illegal aliens to find a path to citizenship. It's hard to predict who's going to be highly skilled, but it's easy to see the economic benefits of increased legal immigration in the United States—whether you're the labor union-funded [Economic Policy Institute](#) or the White House Office of Management and Budget, which notes that an additional 200,000 immigrants a year would significantly lower projected budget deficits.

Inviting more highly skilled workers into the country should be a no-brainer: The best and the brightest want to come to the United States, and we would be better off to welcome them with open arms so they can get to work helping to build a better America.

<http://www.good.is/post/immigrants-don-t-take-jobs-they-create-them-why-we-need-more-immigration/>