

Are Immigrants Stealing Jobs?

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We do not choose where we are born or the circumstances of the land we are born to. By pure luck, some people are born in richer, more developed countries, while most people are born into poverty and human rights crises. It is no surprise then, that these people would want a chance to move and start a new life in one of those more well-adjusted worlds. And sometimes, some people just like to move, simply because they would prefer to live somewhere else. Those who move to a different country in order to obtain a residence permit or citizenship at their new location are called immigrants. This action is often met with a whole spectrum of opinions from the citizens of the said local country, the reactions mainly depend more on side factors such as race, the financial standing of the newcomer, reasons for the move, and the skillset of the newcomer.

Immigrants are often accused of having a negative effect on the local economy and more interestingly, this seems to show up in different countries with different economic dynamics. However, this is a myth. Research shows that immigration is useful both for the sending and the receiving countries (1) and that making migration easier would increase world GDP 67 to 147% (2). Development economists suggest that allowing free movement between developing and developed countries would be an efficient way to reduce poverty (3). However, the research seems divided when we look at the labor market for low skilled natives. This is where exploitation comes in.

It is not hard to find studies detailing how immigrants earn less than natives (15 to 25% less (4)). Considering that your rights in a new country are directly dependent on you having a job and the time window they get to achieve that is short, most immigrants are desperate and willing to take any job they come across to stay in that country. Alongside racial biases and xenophobia, they tend to be offered jobs below their qualifications for cheaper pay than would be offered to a native to the extent where those who would be highly skilled workers in their home countries are forced to work entry-level jobs. Immigrants tend to take these offers because the choice to migrate is a difficult and expensive decision to make, considering that these people are likely running away from many more complex issues they find themselves in a position where they *have to* take these jobs.

Above mentioned situation often results in low skilled natives claiming that the immigrants are stealing their jobs and destroying the economy. However, their anger is extremely misguided. In most conditions, immigrants do not have a bad impact on the economy. The job market for natives shrinks not because the immigrants are stealing their jobs but because their fellow citizens who own businesses choose to take advantage of foreign people in desperate positions. Immigrants are not to blame for this, and it is not immigrants who you should put regulations on. Furthermore, deporting immigrants will not solve this problem as businesses are more likely to find another demographic to exploit than to start hiring locals for higher pay.

To summarize this brief look at immigration and the labor market, it is important to keep in mind that immigrants make the difficult decision to move because staying in their home countries brings them more harm than the citizen of a developed country could likely understand. Despite the growing claims of anti-immigration rhetoric, this move has positive impacts on the global economy. However, due to their pressing need to be employed in their new country, immigrants accept jobs that are below their qualifications and deserved wages. Politicians use this exploitation to fuel locals against immigrants, although the anger should be directed at the business owners who are making the hiring decisions.