

# THE LATEST NUMBERS: COLLEGE-EDUCATED IMMIGRANTS IN THE US

# IMPRINT

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Up-to-date statistics are a powerful tool when advocating or writing proposals for programs serving skilled immigrants.

This analysis from the American Institute of Economic Research sheds light on college-educated immigrants, their education, and employment characteristics. It also takes an in-depth look at immigrant STEM graduates.

## Where Does This Analysis Fit in the Research Landscape?

This analysis provides **a national picture of the skilled immigrant population, both US-trained and foreign-trained**, using 2010 data from the National Survey of College Graduates (NSCG).

It is an update of work in 2012-2013 by researchers from Drexel University, Neeta Fogg and Paul Harrington, which analyzed NSCG data from 2003.

Although this current analysis does not encompass all the work of the earlier study, it does find similar trends in skills underutilization by skilled immigrants, particularly descriptive evidence of mismatch between education and employment.



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Nicole is a senior research analyst at AIER. She is skilled in both quantitative and qualitative survey research methods, as well as demographic and geographic analysis.

Her primary research areas are employment, migration, social policy and programs, and poverty.

## A Profile of College-Educated Immigrants in the US

Overall, there are **7.2 million highly-educated immigrants** (those who have a bachelor's degree or higher) living in the US. **Half earned their degrees from abroad.**

### Of immigrants with foreign degrees:

- 46% are naturalized US citizens and 35% are permanent residents
- A majority come from Asia (53%), followed by Europe (20%)
- 34% have a degree *higher* than a bachelor's (i.e. masters, doctorate or professional)



### Of immigrants with US degrees:

- A majority are naturalized US citizens (72%)
- Most come from Asia (52%), followed by Latin America and the Caribbean (21%)
- 52% have a degree higher than a bachelor's

## Education, Employment and Earnings

In comparison to immigrants with US degrees and native-born US graduates, immigrants with foreign degrees have the lowest rate of full-time employment (61%) and the highest unemployment rate (7%).

Across all levels of education and immigration statuses, foreign-trained immigrants earn less than immigrants with US degrees, implying at least some skill mismatch.

When surveyed, **24% of immigrants with foreign degrees responded that their current job did not relate to their field of study, compared to 13% of US-trained immigrants.**

## A Closer Look At STEM Graduates

The overall skilled immigrant population has more graduates with STEM degrees in comparison to their native-born US counterparts.

**Immigrants with foreign degrees have the highest proportion of graduates with STEM degrees, and the highest proportion of graduates working in STEM fields.**

However, when comparing the percentage of graduates with STEM degrees to the percentage actually working in the field, immigrants with foreign degrees have the greatest disparity. (See chart below for more details).



	Foreign Born, Foreign Degree	Foreign-Born, US Degree	U.S. Native-Born Citizen
<b>% with STEM Degrees</b>	53%	46%	26%
<b>% with STEM Jobs</b>	47%	45%	26%
<b>% Difference</b>	-11%	-2%	0%

Immigrants with foreign STEM degrees also earn less, have lower rates of full-time employment, and report lower job-to-education relatedness than immigrants with US degrees.

## Understanding Where This Data Came From

This analysis uses data from the **National Survey of College Graduates**, which provides data on the nation's college graduates, with particular focus on those in the science and engineering workforce.

This longitudinal biennial survey, conducted since 1970s, samples individuals who are living in the United States at the time of the survey, have at least a bachelor's degree, and are under the age of 76.

**Learn more at: [www.nsf.gov/statistics/srvygrads](http://www.nsf.gov/statistics/srvygrads)**

## Suggested Citation For This Research

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