

## Macro Roundup Article

**Headline:** [The Contribution of High-Skilled Immigrants to Innovation in the United States](#)

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Publication	Stanford University
Publication Date	December 20, 2022

**Tweet:** First generation immigrants make up 16% of American inventors, but are responsible for 23% of total innovation output. Including the spillover effects on native born collaborators, they drive 36% of aggregate innovation. @bibipousada @shaibrn @rebeccardiamond

**Summary:** We link patent records to a database containing the first five digits of more than 230mm of Social Security Numbers (SSN). By combining this part of the SSN together with year of birth, we identify whether individuals are immigrants based on the age at which their Social Security Number is assigned. We find immigrants represent 16% of all US inventors, but produced 23% of total innovation output, as measured by number of patents, patent citations, and the economic value of these patents. Immigrant inventors are more likely to rely on foreign technologies, to collaborate with foreign inventors, and to be cited in foreign markets, thus contributing to the importation and diffusion of ideas across borders. A simple decomposition illustrates that immigrants are responsible for 36% of aggregate innovation, two-thirds of which is due to their innovation externalities on their native-born collaborators.

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