

Family Diversity Immigrants Are Far Better Educated Than U.S.-Born Americans

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Body

Jan 25, 2018(Cato@Liberty: <http://www.cato.org/blog> Delivered by Newstex) ;; In exchange for a deal on young **immigrant** Dreamers, the White House is demanding that Congress reduce[1] legal immigration by ending the diversity visa lottery and almost all family sponsorship categories. On Fox News last week, Attorney General Jeff Sessions made[2] the case for these changes by stating that he wants legal **immigrants** to 'have the **education** and skill level to prosper in America.' He asked rhetorically, 'What **good** does it do to bring in somebody who is illiterate in their own country, has no skills, and is going to struggle?' But this generalization about diversity and family-sponsored **immigrants** is wildly inaccurate.

Not only are many of them **educated**, they are generally much **better educated** than U.S.-born Americans are. Nearly half of all diversity and family-sponsored **immigrants** who arrived in 2015 had college degrees. Diversity and family-sponsored **immigrants** were 62 percent more likely than U.S.-born natives to have graduated college. At the same time, they are no more likely to have dropped out of high school than natives. Table 1 provides the educational attainment for natives and **immigrants** by type of entry. As it shows, refugees, asylees, and unauthorized **immigrants** are among the least **educated**. Employer-sponsored **immigrants** are by far the most **educated**. But diversity lottery winners and **immigrants** sponsored by U.S. family members are right in the middle, and generally **better educated** than their U.S.-born counterparts. Table 1: Adult **Education** Attainment of U.S.-Born and **Immigrants** Entering in 2015 By Method of Entry Sources: Office of Refugee Resettlement[3]; U.S. Department of Homeland Security[4]; U.S. Department of Homeland Security[5]; American Community Survey 2015 (5-Year Sample)[6]; Because the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) fails to ask legal **immigrants** their **education** level when they enter, the only way to make these estimates was through other sources. To obtain the family and diversity **education** levels, it was necessary to work backwards from the overall foreign-born educational attainment figures for foreign-born adults over the age of 18 from the Census's American Community Survey[7] (ACS). Then it is possible to subtract out the other categories of **immigrants** from the overall figures. The Office of Refugee Resettlement, for example, reports[8] the **education** level of adult refugees and asylees who entered in 2015. Almost all employer-sponsored primary applicants in the first[9], second[10], and third[11] preferences are required by law to have college degrees, and EB-5[12] millionaire investors and EB-4[13] broadcasters and religious workers likely do as well. I assumed that all spouses in EB-1, EB-2, and EB-5 categories had college degrees, and that 75 percent of those in the EB-3 and EB-4 categories do as well. Only 1.3 percent of the adults entering in EB categories were EB-3 'unskilled workers' and their spouses who work in jobs that do not require a college degree, and I assumed that half of these **immigrants** had no high school degree. The Center for Migration Studies used[14] ACS data to estimate the educational attainment of all adult unauthorized **immigrants**. For this analysis, I assumed that new border crossers have the same level of educational attainment as the overall illegal population. According to DHS, about 170,000 border crossers made[15] it into the United States illegally. I assume three quarters were 18 years old or over. While this figure ignores visa overstays who make up roughly half[16] of all new entrants to the illegal population in 2015, illegal **immigrants** are underrepresented in the ACS, so I only included 127,500. Note that assuming more unauthorized **immigrants** would result in diversity and family

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sponsored **immigrants** appearing more highly **educated** than they already do. With these estimates, it is only necessary to subtract refugees-asylees, employment-based workers, and illegal **immigrants** from the overall foreign-born figures in the ACS to obtain estimates for diversity and family-sponsored **immigrants**, who represented 96.2 percent of all other adult legal **immigrants** in 2015. The other 3.8 percent primarily includes Iraqis who worked with the U.S. government in the war and illegal **immigrants** who received cancelation of removal or U visas as victims of crimes. It is unlikely that these populations are skewing the results in any way. Table 2 provides the absolute figures used in this analysis. Column 1 uses DHS figures[17] for each legal immigration category subtracting the children who entered in those categories, as well as three quarters of the illegal border crosser figures estimated[18] by DHS in 2015. The educational distribution is based on the shares in Table 1. Table 2: Adult **Education** Attainment of U.S.-Born and **Immigrants** Entering in 2015 By Method of Entry Sources: Office of Refugee Resettlement[19]; U.S. Department of Homeland Security[20]; American Community Survey 2015 (5-Year Sample)[21]; U.S. Department of Homeland Security[22] No matter what assumptions you use, however, it is just impossible to significantly change the broad conclusions. That's because the family and diversity categories make up 70 percent of all adult legal **immigrants** to the United States, and refugees and asylees make up half of the rest and are the least **educated** group of legal **immigrants**. We know that **immigrants** generally are the highest **educated** that they've ever been, so given the size of the family and diversity population, it is just impossible that they are the unskilled group that the attorney general describes them to be. Diversity and family sponsored **immigrants** are more highly **educated** than U.S.-born Americans. There are **good** arguments for changing the selection process for legal **immigrants**, but claiming that they lack any skills or **education** simply is not one of them. [1]: <https://www.cato.org/blog/house-gop-proposes-largest-restriction-legal-immigrants-1920s> [2]: https://www.realclearpolitics.com/video/2018/01/16/jeff_sessions_what_good_does_it_do_to_bring_in_somebody_who_is_illiterate_in_their_own_country.html [3]: https://www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/orr/arc_15_final_508.pdf [4]: <https://www.dhs.gov/immigration-statistics/yearbook/2015> [5]: <http://www.chicagotribune.com/news/nationworld/ct-us-mexico-border-crossing-captures-20161006-story.html> [6]: <https://dataferrett.census.gov/> [7]: <https://dataferrett.census.gov/> [8]: https://www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/orr/arc_15_final_508.pdf [9]: <https://www.uscis.gov/working-united-states/permanent-workers/employment-based-immigration-first-preference-eb-1> [10]: <https://www.uscis.gov/working-united-states/permanent-workers/employment-based-immigration-second-preference-eb-2> [11]: <https://www.uscis.gov/working-united-states/permanent-workers/employment-based-immigration-third-preference-eb-3> [12]: <https://www.uscis.gov/eb-5> [13]: <https://www.uscis.gov/working-united-states/permanent-workers/employment-based-immigration-fourth-preference-eb-4> [14]: <http://data.cmsny.org/> [15]: <http://www.latimes.com/local/lanow/la-me-border-cross-20161006-snap-story.html> [16]: <http://jmhs.cmsny.org/index.php/jmhs/article/view/45> [17]: <https://www.dhs.gov/immigration-statistics/yearbook/2015/table7> [18]: <http://www.chicagotribune.com/news/nationworld/ct-us-mexico-border-crossing-captures-20161006-story.html> [19]: https://www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/orr/arc_15_final_508.pdf [20]: <https://www.dhs.gov/immigration-statistics/yearbook/2015> [21]: <https://dataferrett.census.gov/> [22]: <http://www.chicagotribune.com/news/nationworld/ct-us-mexico-border-crossing-captures-20161006-story.html>

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