



Center for Immigration Studies

# ANNOUNCEMENT

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## Employment Down Among Natives in Georgia

As Immigrant Workers Increased, Native Employment Declined in Georgia

WASHINGTON (June 20, 2007) — Some businesses in Georgia argue that they need large numbers of immigrants because there are not enough native-born Americans to fill jobs that require relatively little education. However, state employment data show that as the number of less-educated immigrant workers has grown dramatically, the share of less-educated natives holding a job in Georgia has declined significantly.

- Between 2000 and 2006 the share of less-educated native-born adults (ages 18 to 64) in Georgia holding a job declined from 71 percent to 66 percent. (Less-educated is defined as having no education beyond high school.)
- Had employment rates for natives been the same in 2006 as they were in 2000, then 186,000 more less-educated native-born adults and teenagers would have been working. The number of less-educated immigrants holding a job increased by 218,000.
- Less-educated blacks in Georgia have seen a somewhat larger decline in employment, from 66 percent holding a job in 2000 to just 60 percent in 2006.
- There are nearly 800,000 less-educated native-born adults in Georgia not working. There are likely between 250,000 and 350,000 less-educated illegal aliens holding jobs in the state.
- Wages and salary for less-educated adults in Georgia have stagnated. Over the entire six-year time period of the study, real annual wages for less-educated adults grew by just 1 percent. If there was a labor shortage, wages should be rising fast.
- Native-born teenagers (15 to 17 years of age) have also seen a dramatic decline in employment. Between 2000 and 2006 the share of native-born teenagers holding a job declined from 22 percent to 11 percent in the state.
- There are about 300,000 native-born teenagers not working in Georgia.
- Immigrants (legal and illegal) increased their share of all less-educated workers in Georgia, from 7 percent in 2000 to 19 percent by 2006. Other research indicates that at least half of this growth was from illegal immigrants.

**Discussion:** It would be a mistake to think that every job taken by an immigrant is a job lost by a native. However, it would also be a mistake to think that the kind of dramatic increase in immigrant workers that has taken place in Georgia does not have serious implications for the employment of less-educated natives there. The natives impacted by immigrant competition are already the poorest workers and have the lowest rates of employment. This raises

important questions about the fairness of creating so much job competition at the bottom end of the labor market through our immigration policies.

There would seem to be a huge supply of less-educated native-born adults and teenagers in the state to meet the needs of businesses. Of course, a large share of persons who are not in the labor force do not wish to work. But it is also clear that many would be willing to do so if properly paid and treated by employers. This is especially true in light of the fact that so many less-educated natives who are not working were in fact working as recently as 2000.

If, for example, immigration laws were enforced and this resulted in say two-thirds of illegal immigrants leaving the state, it would mean that employers would have to find about 200,000 workers to replace them. Given the very large size of the non-working population in the Georgia, replacing illegal workers would seem to be very possible. Again, assuming they are properly paid and treated properly. It is worth noting that businesses in the state could attract natives from other parts of the country with weaker economies if the large existing pool of less-educated natives in the state was still found to be inadequate. There is also the option of utilizing labor-saving devices and techniques.

While the decline in employment among less-educated natives in Georgia is not in dispute, some may feel that immigrants have little to do with it because they work very different jobs than do natives. While there are some differences in the concentration of immigrants and natives across occupations, the fact remains that less-educated immigrants and less-educated natives very often do the same kinds of work. If we look at the top-five occupational categories done by less-educated immigrants we find that 44 percent of less-educated natives are employed in these same occupations. These include building cleaning and maintenance, construction, production, food preparation and service, and transportation and moving occupations.

**Other Research:** In a paper published last year by the Center for Immigration Studies, Andrew Sum and his colleagues at Northeastern University found that the arrival of new immigrants (legal and illegal) in a state results in a decline in employment among young native born workers in that state. Their findings indicate that young native born workers are being displaced in the labor market by the arrival of new immigrants. In another recent paper published by the National Bureau of Economic Research (Working paper 12518), the authors found that immigration was responsible for 40 percent of the decline in black employment between 1980 and 2000.

**Data Sources:** The data for this analysis come from the Annual Social and Economic Supplement of the Current Population Survey (CPS) collected by the Census Bureau in March of each year. It includes legal immigrants and most illegal immigrants. The occupational data discussed above was based on a combined sample of March 2005 and 2006 CPS. We combined two years to get more statistically robust estimates by occupation for the state of Georgia.

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**Georgia: Less-Educated<sup>1</sup> Immigrant  
And Native Employment 2000 and 2006**

|                                       | Percent Working |        | Percentage-<br>Point<br>Change |
|---------------------------------------|-----------------|--------|--------------------------------|
|                                       | 2000            | 2006   |                                |
| <b>Natives</b>                        |                 |        |                                |
| All Less-educated Adults (18 to 64)   | 70.9 %          | 66.3 % | -4.6 %                         |
| <HS Education                         | 62.1 %          | 54.6 % | -7.5 %                         |
| High School Only                      | 75.0 %          | 70.8 % | -4.2 %                         |
| Less-Educated Black Adults (18 to 64) | 65.8 %          | 60.1 % | -5.7 %                         |
| Teenagers (15 to 17)                  | 22.4 %          | 11.0 % | -11.4 %                        |
| <b>Immigrants<sup>2</sup></b>         |                 |        |                                |
| All Less-educated Adults (18 to 64)   | 73.1 %          | 76.6 % | 3.5 %                          |
| <HS Education                         | 77.8 %          | 78.9 % | 1.1 %                          |
| High School Only                      | 68.1 %          | 73.4 % | 5.3 %                          |

<sup>1</sup> Less-educated is defined as having no education beyond high school. It includes high school dropouts and those who have completed high school but have no additional schooling.

<sup>2</sup> Figures for immigrants are for adults 18 to 64 years of age. Because most immigrants arrive after age 18 there are relatively few immigrant teenagers. Prior research indicates that perhaps half of the less-educated immigrants holding jobs in GA are illegal aliens.

**Source:** Center for immigration Studies analysis of March 2000 and 2006 Current Population Surveys. Total income from wages and salary for less-educated adult workers in the March 2000 CPS (which asks about income in 1999) was \$23,900 compared to the March 2006 CPS (which asks about 2005 income) figure of \$24,210. These figures are in 2005 dollars. Thus real wages increased for less-educated adult workers in Georgia by only 1.3 percent or just 0.2 percent a year.