



Bipartisan Policy Center
Where democracy gets to work

Immigration

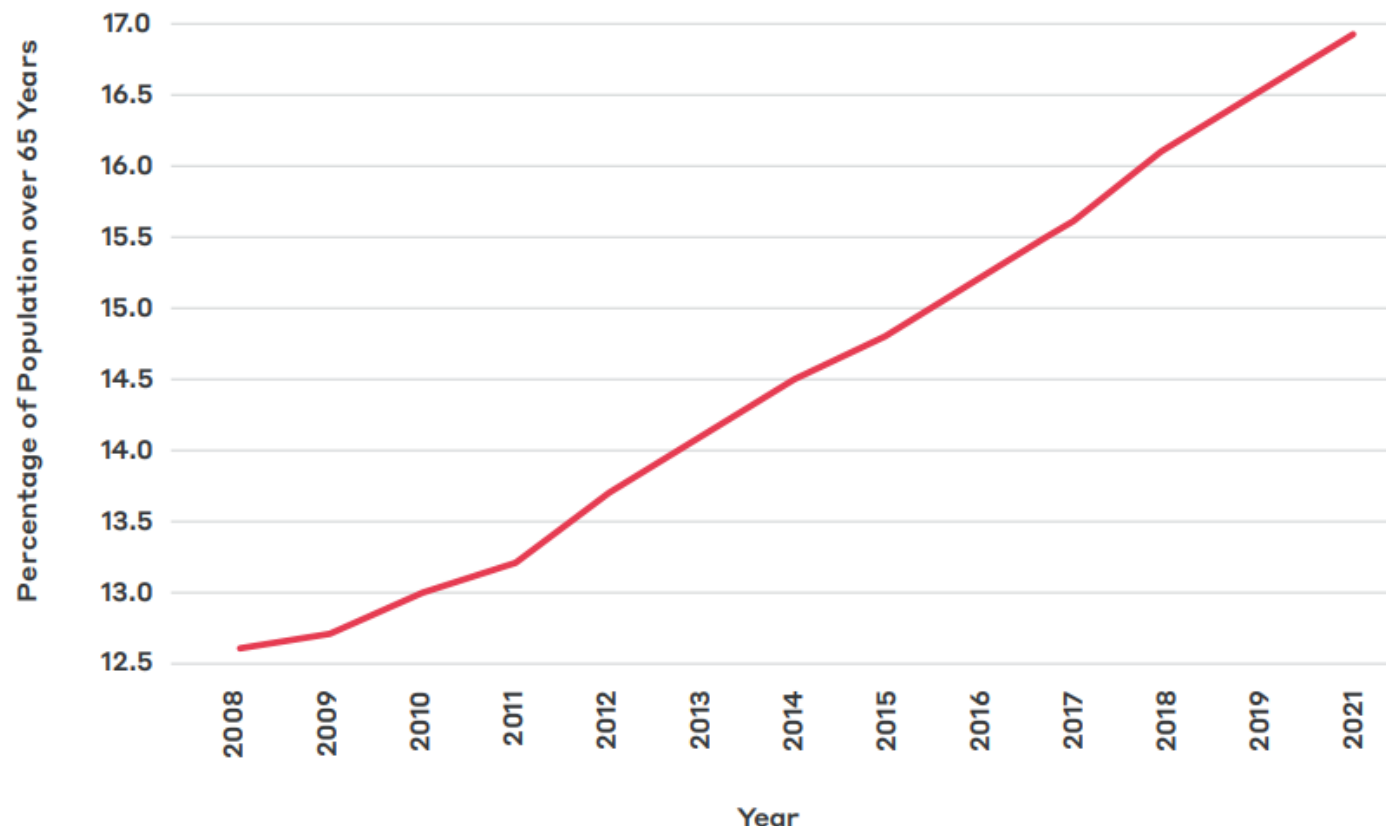
A System in Need of Updating

March 28, 2024

**Why should we care about immigration
policy?**

The US Population is Aging

Figure 2: Percentage of U.S. Population 65 Years and Older, 2008-2021^{10,11}



Source: Kaiser Family Foundation

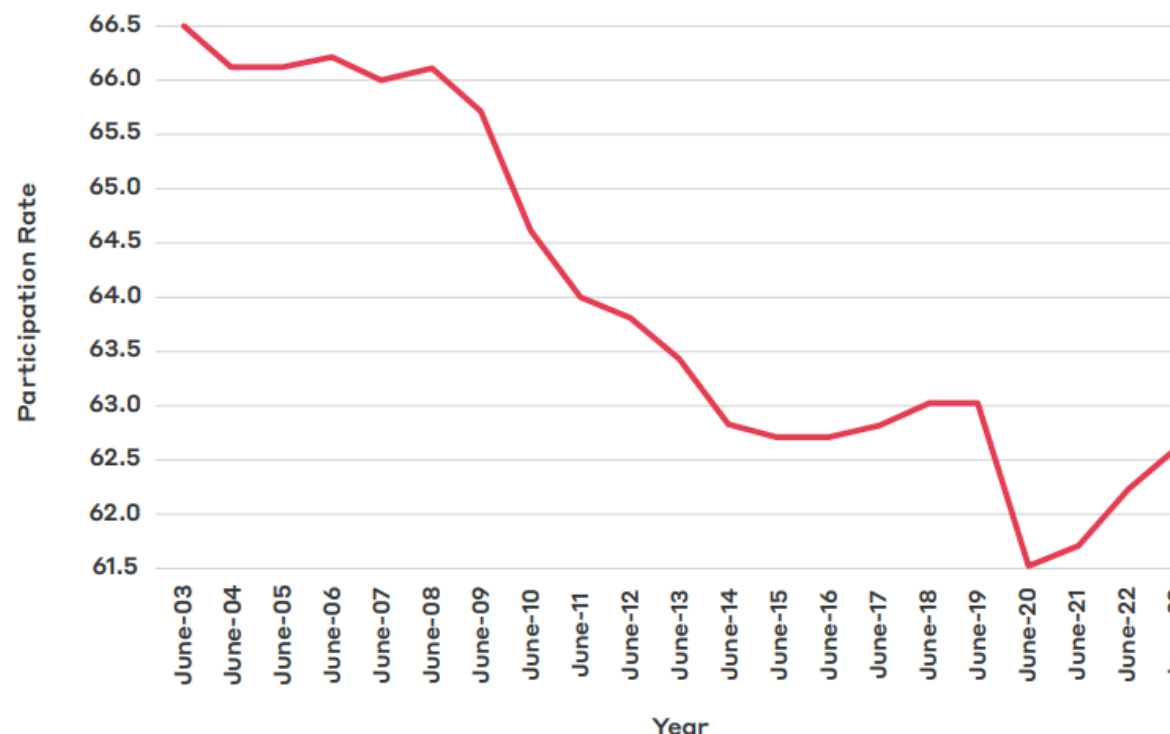
Driven primarily by:

- Improved Life Expectancy
- Aging out of baby boomers

Population Aging Presents a Challenge

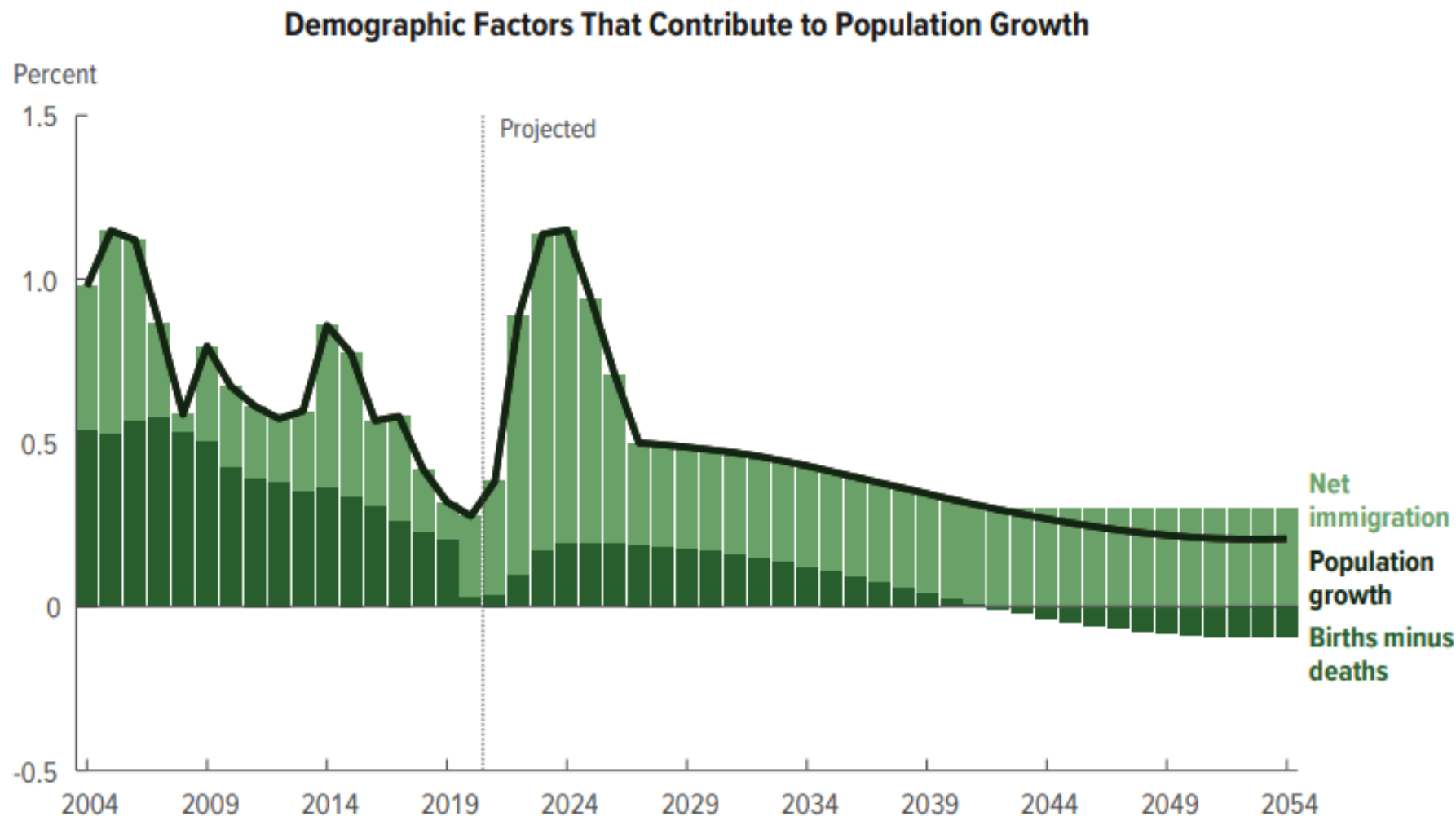
- Fiscal pressures due to increased dependency ratio
- Declining labor force participation leading to workforce shortages
- Declining population growth risking continued economic growth

Figure 6: Labor Force Participation Rate June 2003–June 2023³⁷



Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics

Immigration Drives Population Growth

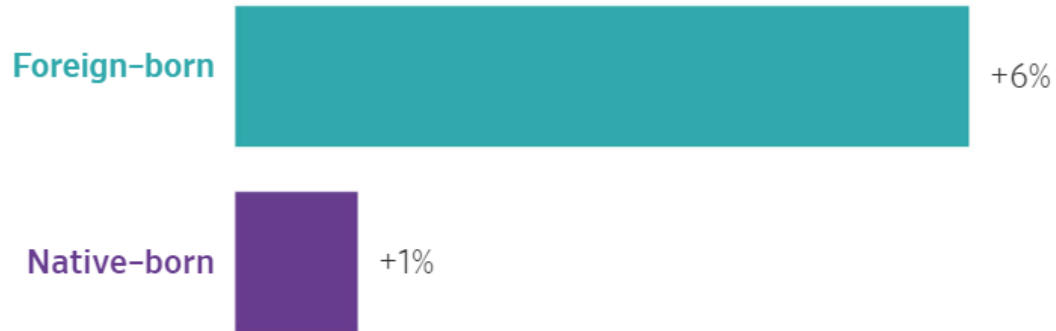


Source: CBO. [The Demographic Outlook: 2024 to 2054](https://www.cbo.gov/publications/2022/04/the-demographic-outlook-2024-to-2054) | Congressional Budget Office (cbo.gov)

Immigrants and the Workforce

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL.

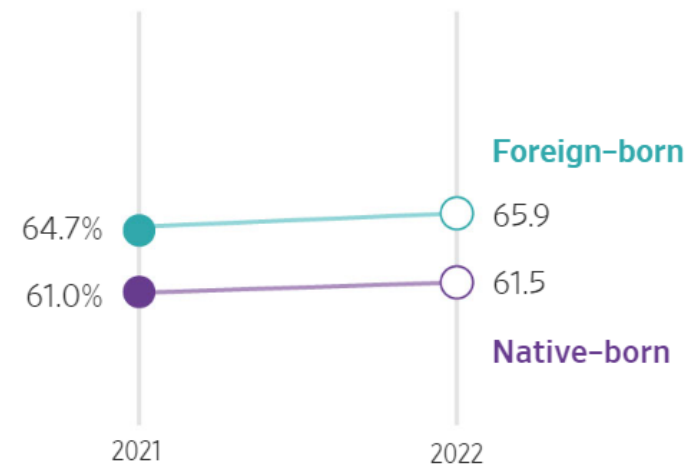
Total growth in the workforce, 2021-22



Foreign-born workers are accounting for the majority of growth of the U.S. workforce.

Participation rate of civilian labor force, 2021-22

Total, 16 years and older



Immigrants are more likely to be in the workforce, either as employees or active job seekers than **native-born** Americans....

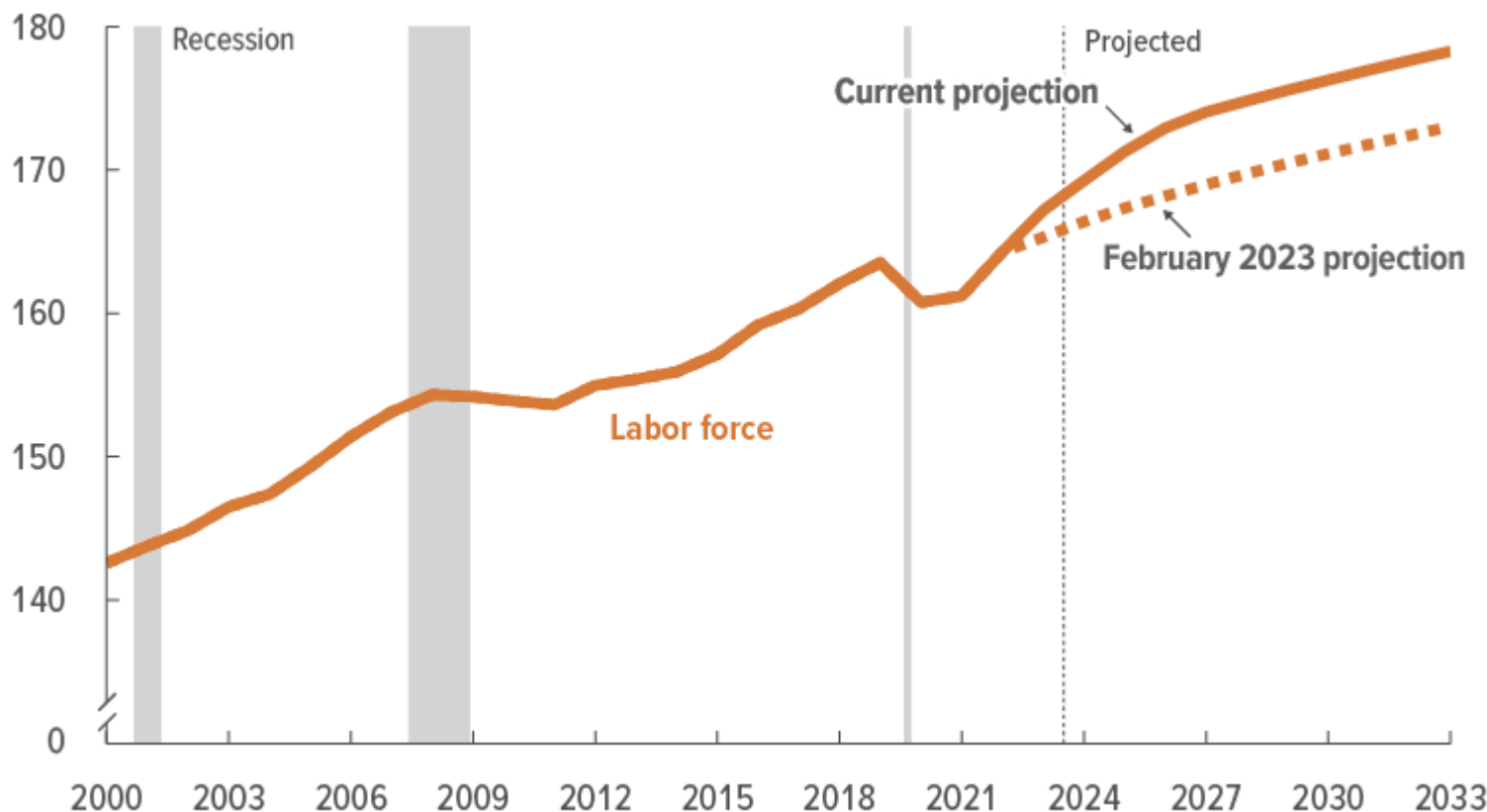
Source: WSJ. [Immigrants' Share of the U.S. Labor Force Grows to a New High - WSJ](#)



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The Economic Gains Are Clear



*“The labor force in 2033 is larger by 5.2 million people, mostly because of higher net immigration. As a result of those changes in the labor force, we estimate that, from 2023 to 2034, **GDP will be greater by about \$7 trillion and revenues will be greater by about \$1 trillion** than they would have been otherwise.”*

Phill Swagel, Director of
Congressional Budget Office

A closer look at workforce shortages

Most Industries Face Shortages

Overall, we have **9.5 million job openings** in the U.S., but only **6.5 million unemployed workers**.

Industry	Unemployment (thousands)	Job Openings (thousands)	Labor Shortage or Surplus (thousands)
J. Education and Health Services	587	1986	-1399
I. Professional and Business Services	962	1633	-671
M. Government Workers	373	900	-527
H. Financial Activities	242	539	-297
K. Leisure and Hospitality	810	1100	-290
L. Other Services	265	380	-115
C. Durable Goods Manufacturing	270	360	-90
G. Information	121	211	-90
D. Nondurable Goods Manufacturing	180	261	-81
A. Mining and Logging	24	29	-5
F. Transportation and Utilities	424	312	112
E. Wholesale and Retail Trade	926	739	187
B. Construction	711	413	298

January 2024

Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) - U.S. Chamber of Commerce Analysis: [Understanding America's Labor Shortage: The Most Impacted Industries](#) | [U.S. Chamber of Commerce \(uschamber.com\)](#)

Shortage Occupations

Help Wanted: Modernizing the Schedule A Shortage Occupation List

A new data-driven method to identify gaps in the labor market

- **Physical and mental health occupations**

- Surgeons
- Registered nurses
- Nurse practitioners and nurse midwives
- Diagnostic technologists and technicians
- Medical and health services managers
- Psychologists
- Audiologists
- Counselors

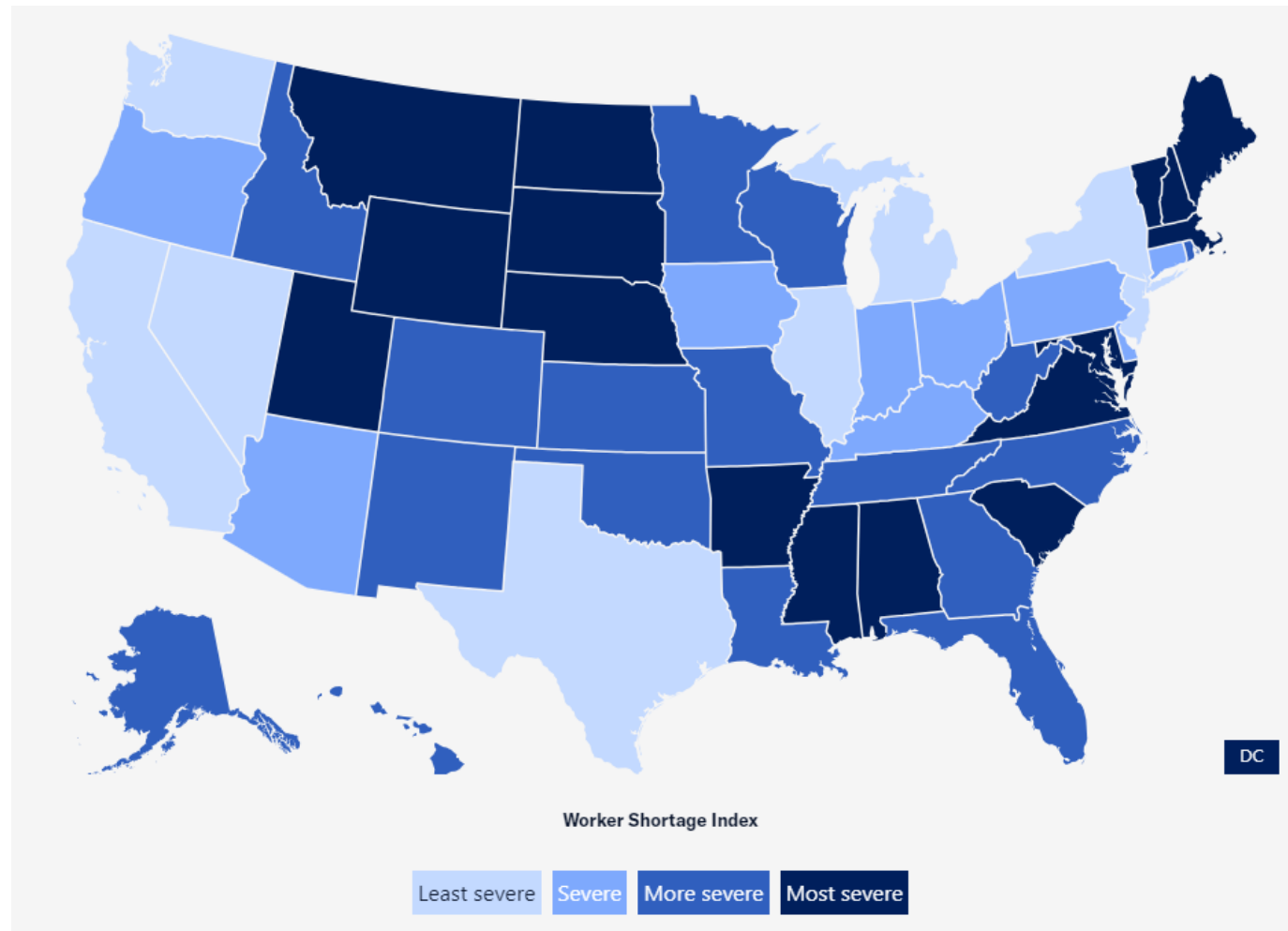
- **STEM occupations**

- Atmospheric and space scientists
- Astronomers and physicists
- Natural science managers
- Electrical and electronics engineers
- Environmental engineers
- Architectural and engineering managers

But this analysis may miss out on some occupations that do not work within free-market conditions

Source: Institute for Progress: [Help Wanted: Modernizing the Schedule A Shortage Occupation List - Institute for Progress \(ifp.org\)](https://ifp.org/help-wanted-modernizing-the-schedule-a-shortage-occupation-list)

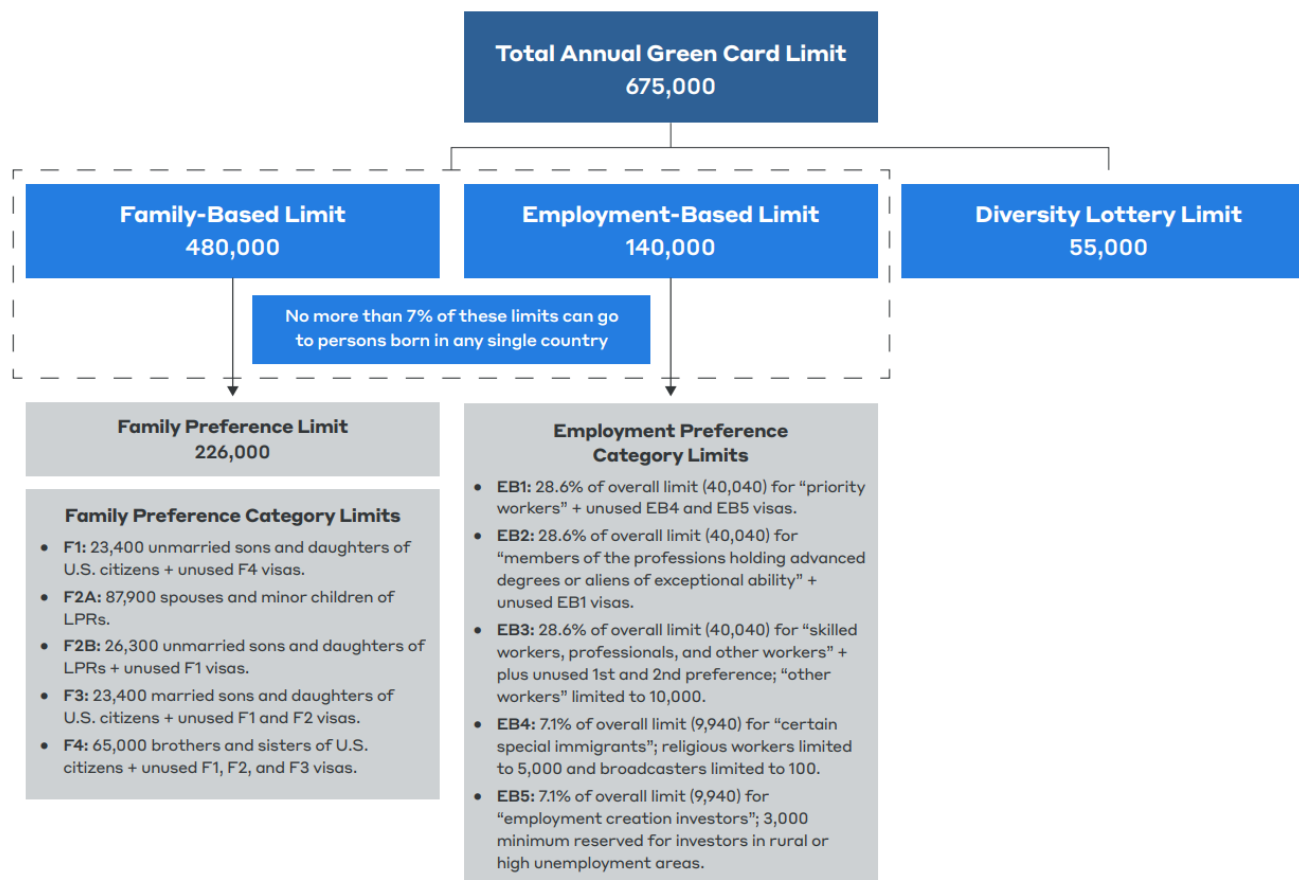
Shortages Vary By State



Source: U.S. Chamber of Commerce Analysis: [Understanding America's Labor Shortage: The Most Impacted States](https://www.uschamber.com/economy/understanding-americas-labor-shortage-the-most-impacted-states) | U.S. Chamber of Commerce ([uschamber.com](https://www.uschamber.com))

What can we do?

Raise Annual Visa Limits



H-1B (Specialty Occupation) Visa

- 65,000 visas for beneficiaries with a bachelor's degree or equivalent.
- 20,000 additional visas for beneficiaries with a master's degree or higher from a U.S. institution.

H-2B (Temporary Non-Agricultural) Visa

- 66,000 visas per fiscal year, divided into two halves.

Source: BPC. [The Demographic Transition: An Overview of America's Aging Population and Immigration's Mediating Role](#) | Bipartisan Policy Center

Agricultural Visa Program Reform

- The **H-2A visa** allows employers to hire **temporary or seasonal agricultural workers** if there are not enough U.S. workers capable of or willing to perform the position.
- There is **bipartisan agreement** that the H-2A program needs reform in areas such as:
 - Streamlining applications with a single portal for filing applications.
 - Reducing volatility of required minimum pay rates and *de minimis* exception for work performed ancillary to main responsibilities.
- The bipartisan **Farm Workforce Modernization Act** would give undocumented agricultural workers Certified Agricultural Worker (CAW) status which enables them to work for a renewable period.



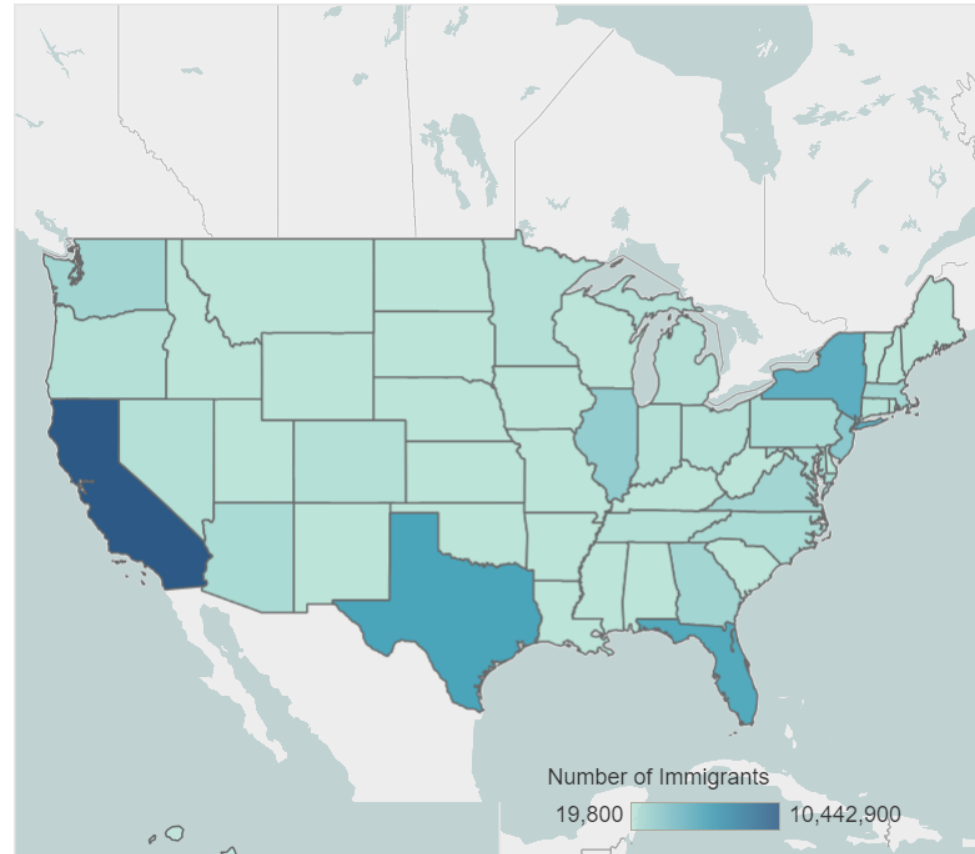
Agricultural Labor Working Group
House Committee on Agriculture

Final Report with Policy Recommendations
March 7, 2024

State-Based Visas

- State governments have little ability to direct foreign workers to their state or to specific industries or regions within the state.
- The State Sponsored Visa Pilot Program Act of 2017 would create a new W visa classification for foreign workers and distribute visa recipients to participating states. The number of W visas would be adjusted in subsequent years using a formula that would consider states' economies as well as their compliance with the program.

U.S. Immigrant Population by State and County, 2018-2022

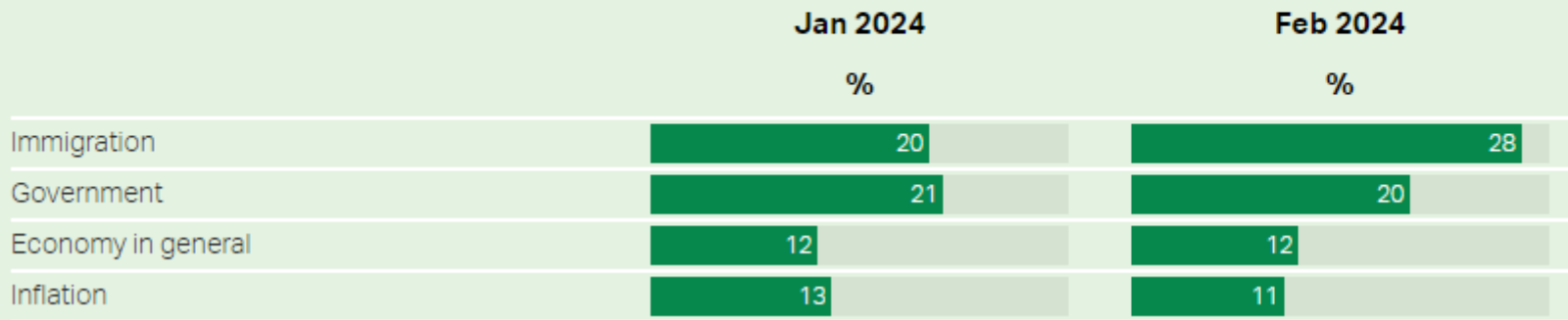


Source: MPI. [U.S. Immigrant Population by State and County | migrationpolicy.org](https://migrationpolicy.org)

Action on the border is required

Americans Most Likely to Say Immigration Is the Most Important Problem

What do you think is the most important problem facing this country today?



What we need

- Engage with people long before they get to the U.S. border and expand legal immigration pathways to stem the flow of migrants.
- More resources - immigration judges, asylum officers etc.
- Congress to get a bill passed.

Thank you!

If you have any questions about the content of this presentation or the wider research project please contact us at immigration@bipartisanpolicy.org



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