Safety and Health of Hispanic Construction Workers

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CPWR-The Center for Construction Research and Training

The CERN Meeting
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Overview

I. Magnitude & trends
II. Demographics & employment
III. Safety & health
I. Growing Immigrant Workforce in Construction

- Immigrant employment in construction quadrupled in the last decade (while the overall construction workforce increased 54%)
- 24% of construction workers were foreign-born in 2006
- 31% of immigrant workers entered the U.S. in recent 6 years
- 84% of immigrant construction workers were born in Mexico or other Latin American countries
- 60% of the foreign-born Hispanic workers cannot speak English very well
Growing immigrant workforce, construction vs. all industries, 1995-2006

Number of construction employment, 1995-2006

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Native</th>
<th>Foreign-born</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1995</td>
<td>6.9</td>
<td>0.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1998</td>
<td>7.5</td>
<td>1.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001</td>
<td>8.0</td>
<td>1.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2004</td>
<td>8.6</td>
<td>2.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2005</td>
<td>8.7</td>
<td>2.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2006</td>
<td>8.9</td>
<td>2.8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Number of foreign-born workers in construction, 1995-2006

Year of entry into the United States among immigrant construction workers, 2006

- Before 1970: 31.9%
- 1970-1979: 5.1%
- 1980-1989: 8.4%
- 1990-1994: 13.6%
- 1995-1999: 20.9%
- 2000-2006: 20.2%

Source: The US Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2006
Birth-place among immigrant construction workers, 2006

Source: The US Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2006
Growing Hispanic employment in construction

Foreign-born and English ability among Hispanic construction workers, 2006

- Foreign-born: 70%
- Lack English Ability: 60%

Source: The US Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2006
Percentage of workers who were foreign-born in construction, by state, 2006

Source: The US Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2006
II. Demographics & Employment

- Immigrant construction workers are 6 years younger than native workers on average.
- 63% of Hispanic immigrant workers had less than a high school education. (39% had less than 9-years of education.)
- Most immigrant construction workers are employed in lower-skill occupations.
- Hispanic workers lag far behind non-Hispanic workers in wage, health insurance, and pension enrollment.
- Union construction workers have a great advantage in earnings and benefits, but only 7% of foreign-born workers are unionized.
Age distribution among construction workers, 2006

Educational attainment among construction workers, 2006

- <9th grade: Foreign-born Hispanic 39%, Non-Hispanic 2%
- 9-11th grade: Foreign-born Hispanic 24%, Non-Hispanic 10%
- HS diploma: Foreign-born Hispanic 25%, Non-Hispanic 45%
- Some college: Foreign-born Hispanic 7%, Non-Hispanic 29%
- Bachelor's & above: Foreign-born Hispanic 4%, Non-Hispanic 13%

Occupational distribution in construction, foreign-born vs. all construction, 2006

## Percentage as foreign-born workers, selected construction occupations, 2006

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Occupation</th>
<th>% of foreign-born</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Drywall</td>
<td>48.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Insulation</td>
<td>46.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brickmason</td>
<td>45.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Roofer</td>
<td>44.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Laborer</td>
<td>44.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Painter</td>
<td>41.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Const. Helper</td>
<td>35.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carpenter</td>
<td>26.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plumber</td>
<td>20.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Truck driver</td>
<td>15.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Electrician</td>
<td>14.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heat A/C mech</td>
<td>13.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Foreman</td>
<td>12.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iron worker</td>
<td>12.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sheet metal</td>
<td>11.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Const. Manager</td>
<td>9.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Op engineer</td>
<td>4.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All construction</td>
<td>24.1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Legend:
- Red: Foreign-born, Hispanic
- Blue: Foreign-born, Non-Hispanic
Educational attainment among construction workers, 2006

Unionization among construction workers, 2006

III. Safety and Health

- 25% of work-related deaths were foreign-born workers in 2006; of which 84% were Hispanics.
- Deaths among Hispanic construction workers increased from 108 in 1992 to 354 in 2006, and the death rate for Hispanics is consistently higher (14%-80%) than non-Hispanics.
- Work-related medical conditions from injuries for Hispanic workers were 53% higher than non-Hispanics.*

Note: 2006 data are preliminary.
Work-related deaths among construction workers, 1992-2006

Number of deaths

Year

Native

Foreign-born


P=preliminary (2006 data)
Work-related deaths among foreign-born construction workers, 1992-2006

Note: P= preliminary (2006 data)
Fatal occupational injuries among Hispanic construction workers, 1992-2006

Note: P=preliminary
Rates of fatal injuries in construction, Hispanic vs. non-Hispanic, 1992-2006

Sources: BLS, 1) Census of Fatal Occupational Injuries, 2) Current Population Survey
Rates of fatal and nonfatal injuries in construction, Hispanic vs. non-Hispanic, 1992-2006

Policy Considerations

- Increased movement of construction labor is inevitable
- Currently, it is resulting in lowering labor standards and creating risk at worksites
- It is urgent to protect the prevailing labor standards in nations with high standards
Thank you!

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a world leader in improving the safety and health of construction workers