

**DISPELLING THE JOB COMPETITION MYTH:  
AN ANALYSIS OF UNDOCUMENTED IMMIGRANT'S IMPACT  
ON U.S. WORKERS**

By  
Roger Martinez

Fears that U.S. workers are displaced from their jobs and suffer depressed wages as a result of increased undocumented immigration are unfounded, according to the available empirical evidence. The comprehensive range of economic studies conducted at the national, regional, metropolitan, and industrial/sectoral level have clearly demonstrated that undocumented immigrants have a negligible impact on the U.S. labor market.

After a careful analysis of the empirical evidence, three general conclusions can be drawn:

- 1) Immigrants' displacement of native laborers is negligible according to the findings of national, regional, metropolitan, and sectoral/industrial studies;
- 2) Overall, immigrants complement native laborers according to labor market studies conducted at the national and industrial/sectoral level;
- 3) Immigrants do not have an adverse effect on the wage of native workers according to national and regional studies; and
- 4) Immigrants have a complementary effect on the wages of some native workers according to national, regional, metropolitan, and industrial/sectoral studies.

The empirical results suggest that the three theoretical models used to explain the labor market relationship between undocumented immigrants and native workers, the "segmentation" and "job ladder" hypotheses are the best depiction of the data. Segmentation theorists believe that native workers remain unaffected by undocumented immigrants because the labor market is sufficiently divided into at least two different types of job markets: more skilled employment and relatively unskilled employment. Job ladder theorists hypothesize that as native workers move on to better occupations, immigrants take the less desirable jobs that native workers have vacated. These two theories rule out the possibility of job competition between native and undocumented immigrants, as do the empirical results.

Cumulatively, the research and theories call out to policy makers, public officials, and the public to re-evaluate the misguided perceptions that target undocumented immigrants as a source of economic woe. Otherwise, Americans may scapegoat undocumented immigrants instead of identifying the crucial structural factors which are critical to the long-term growth of the economy and the prosperity of the United States.