



Still an Hourglass? Immigrant Workers in Middle-Skilled Jobs

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Animating Questions

- Are immigrants climbing job ladders?
- How are immigrants distributed across high-, low-, and middle-skilled jobs?
- How do immigrants fare across sectors?
- What are the characteristics of immigrants in good middle-skilled jobs (that pay family-sustaining wages)?
- What impact has the recession had on immigrant employment?



Defining Characteristics

- I. **Explore sectoral employment patterns**
 - ***Two highly skilled industries:***
 - Health
 - Information technology
 - ***Two lower-skilled industries:***
 - Construction
 - Hospitality
 - ***All four grew quickly before the recession***
 - ***All four have high shares of immigrants***



Defining Characteristics

2. Classify occupations into skill groups

- High-skilled: require at least a bachelor's education
- Middle-skilled: high school plus an additional credential, substantial work experience, or long-term on-the-job training
- Low-skilled: moderate- or short-term on-the-job training

3. Examine receipt of “family-sustaining wages”

- Earnings of \$30,000 (60% of 2006 median household income)
- Amount workers need on average to support a family; larger families have more workers



Defining Characteristics

4. Describe characteristics of immigrant workers:

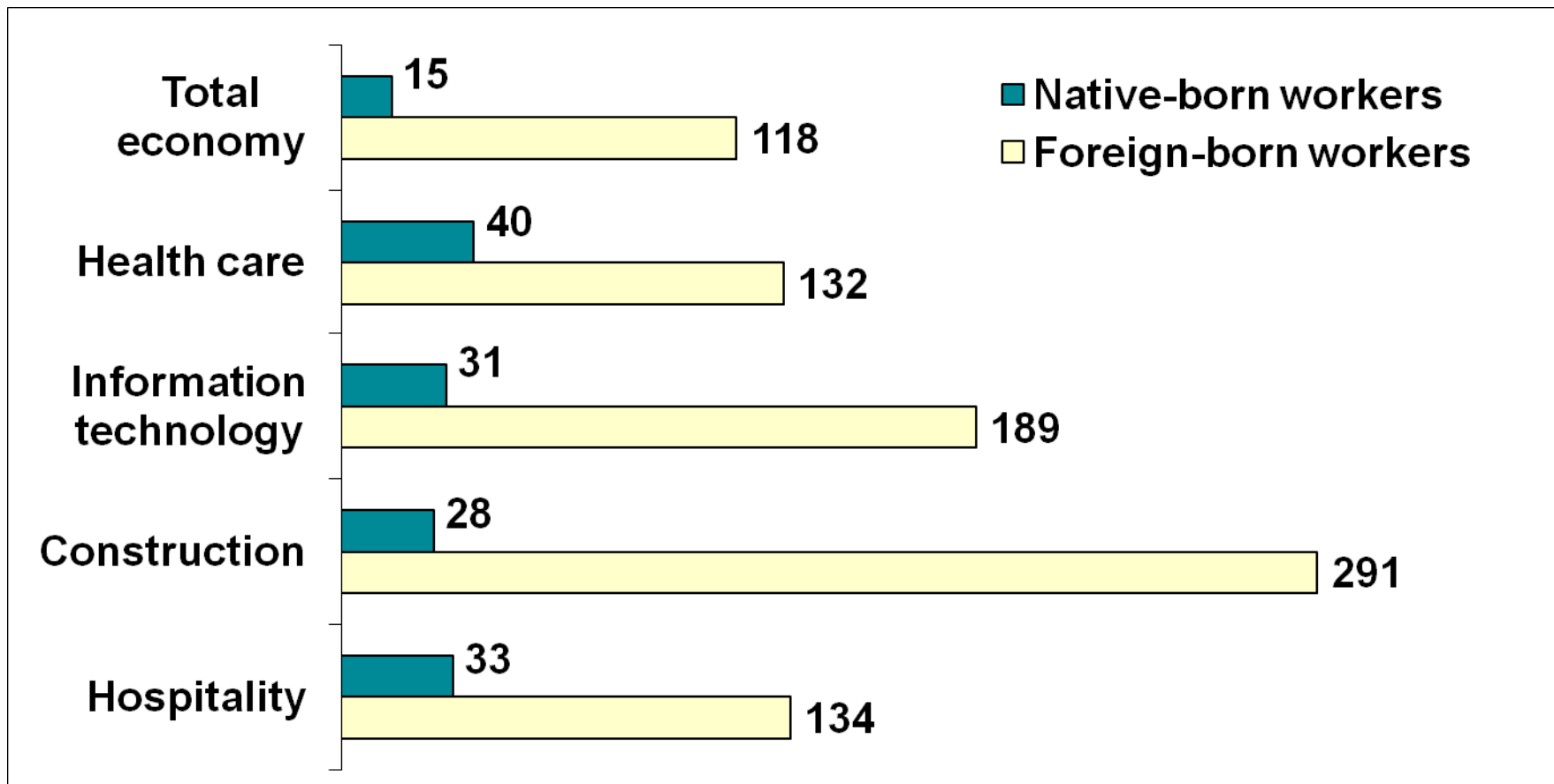
- Educational attainment
- English proficiency
- Time in the US
- Origins (Latin America, Asia, Africa, Europe)
- Age (16 – 26)
- Gender

5. Analyze three time periods:

- 1990-2006 (period of growth up to recession)
- 2006 (high water mark prior to recession)
- 3rd quarter 2007 to 3rd quarter 2009 (recession)

Deep Pre-Recession Penetration in Each Sector

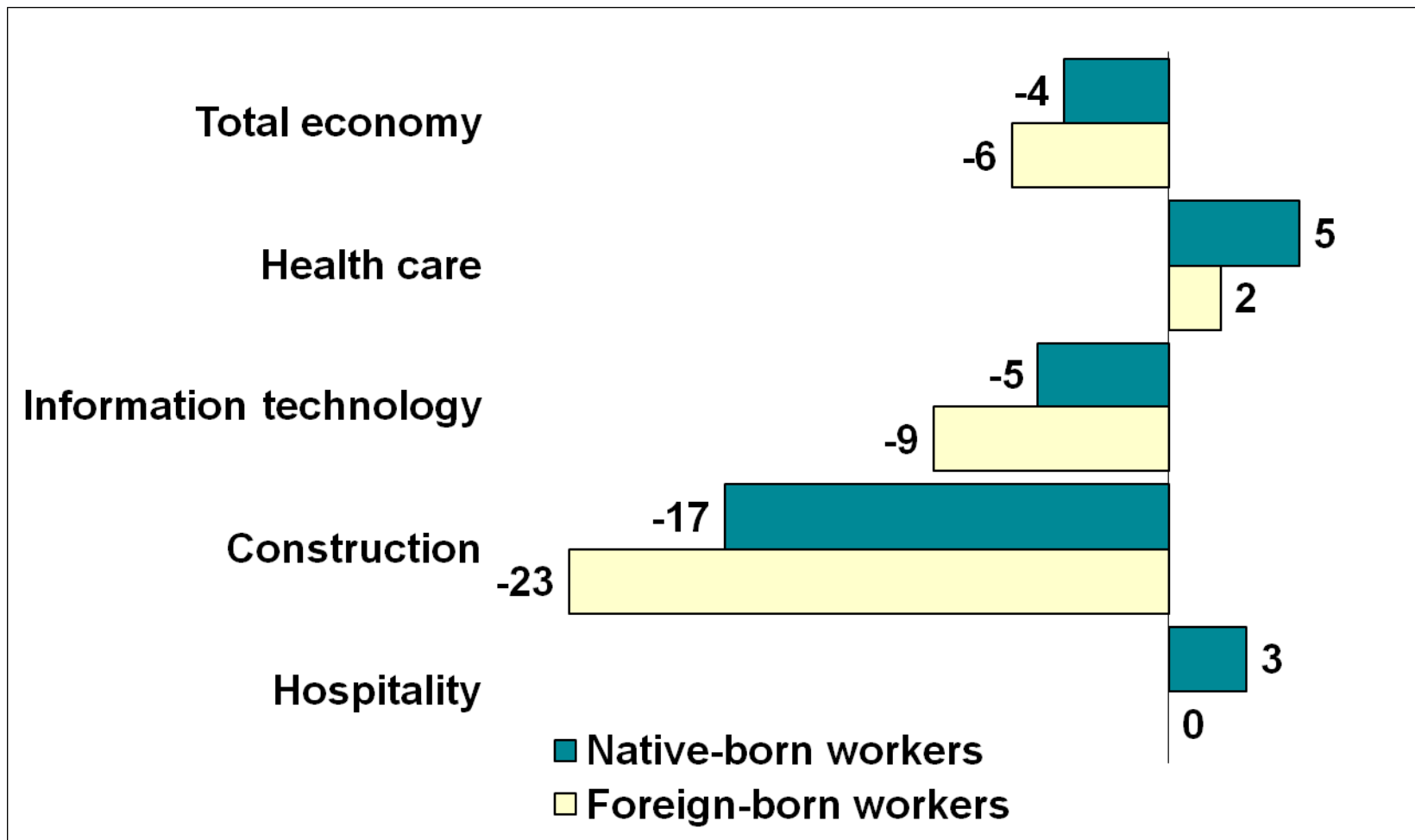
Percent Job Growth by Nativity, 1990 - 2006



Source: MPI analysis of 1990 Census and pooled 2005-07 American Community Survey (ACS) public use microdata samples.

Recession: Immigrants Lag Natives

Percent Job Growth by Nativity, Quarter 3, 2007 to Quarter 3, 2009



Source: MPI analysis of pooled quarterly data from the Current Population Survey 2007 and 2009.

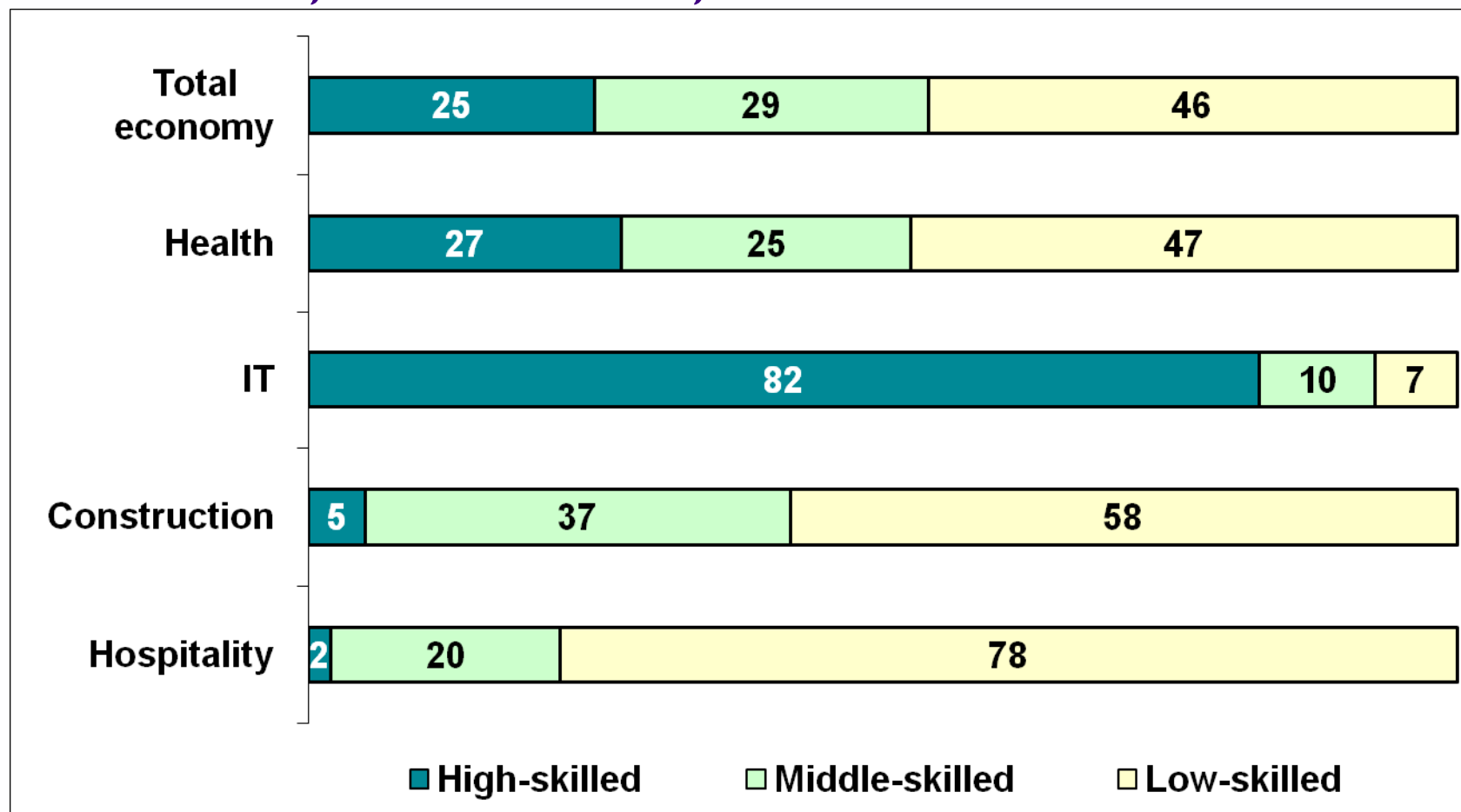
Similar Immigration/Native Distribution by Job Skill Level; Employment in Middle-Skilled Jobs Increased Fastest

	Number of Workers (1,000s)		Change (%)	Skill Distribution (%)	
	2000	2006	2000-06	1990	2006
Foreign-Born	13,058	18,481	42	100	100
High-skilled	2,983	3,643	22	22	20
Middle-skilled	2,983	4,485	50	23	24
Low-skilled	7,091	10,353	46	55	56
Native-Born	95,034	99,800	5	100	100
High-skilled	25,558	25,131	-2	28	25
Middle-skilled	24,778	29,254	18	26	29
Low-skilled	44,697	45,415	2	46	46

Source: MPI analysis of 1990 Census and pooled 2005-07 American Community Survey (ACS) public use microdata samples.

Wide Variation across Sectors in Occupational Skill Distribution

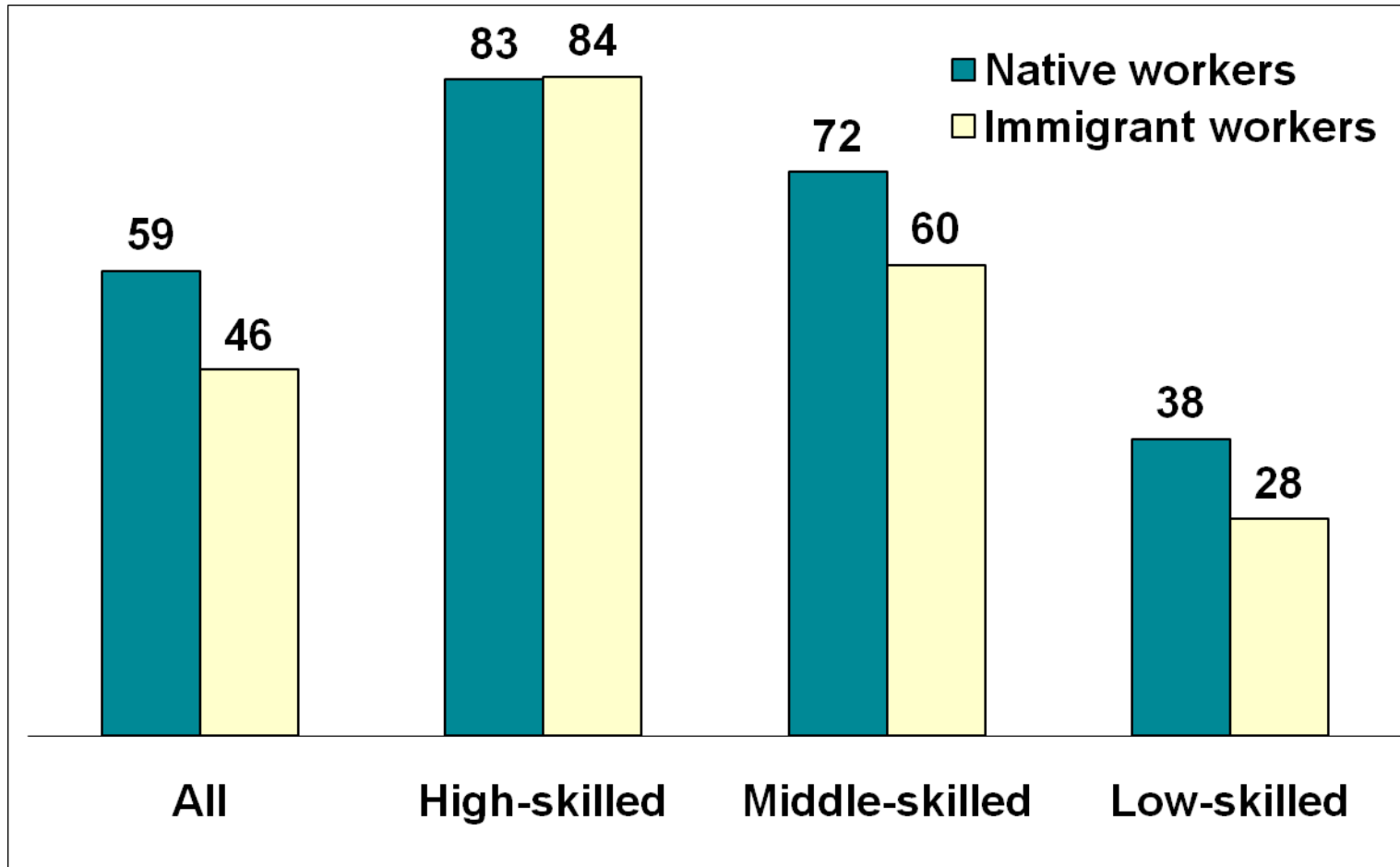
Percentage of High-, Middle-, and Low-Skilled Immigrant Workers, Selected Sectors, 2006



Source: MPI analysis of pooled 2005-07 American Community Survey (ACS) public use microdata samples.

Middle-Skilled Jobs Much More Likely to Pay Family-Sustaining Wage

Share of Workers Earning Family-Sustaining Wages by Nativity and Skill Level of Jobs, 2006



Source: MPI analysis of pooled 2005-07 American Community Survey (ACS) public use microdata samples.

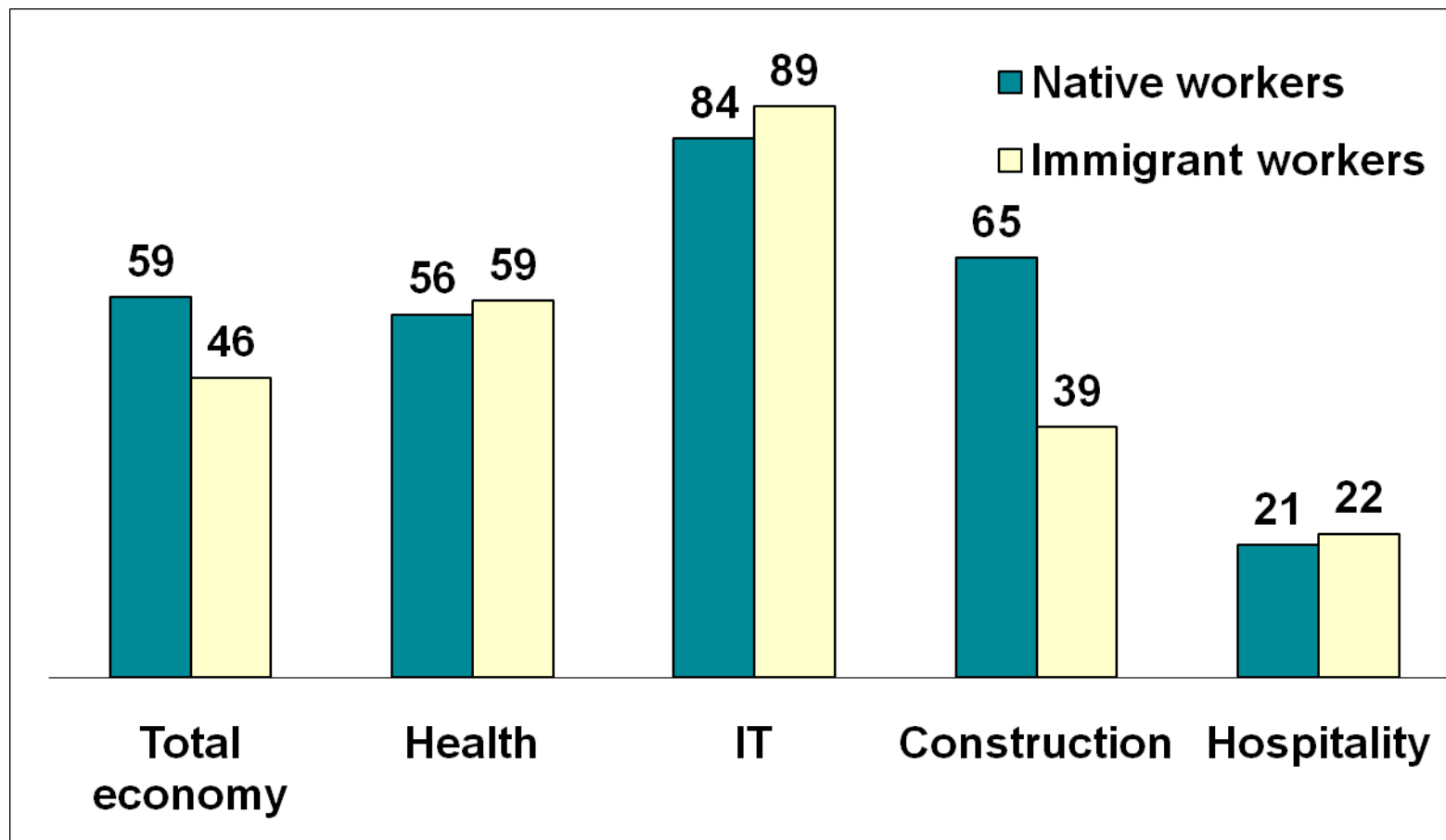
Educational Attainment and Skill Levels of Jobs (Percent), 2006

	Native Workers		Immigrant Workers	
	Educational Attainment	Skill Level of Jobs	Educational Attainment	Skill Level of Jobs
High	31	25	29	20
Middle	62	29	43	24
Low	7	46	28	56

Source: MPI analysis of pooled 2005-07 American Community Survey (ACS) public use microdata samples.

Immigrants More Likely Than Natives to Earn “Good” Wages in 3 of 4 Sectors

Share of Workers Earning Family-Sustaining Wages by Nativity and Selected Sectors, 2006



Source: MPI analysis of pooled 2005-07 American Community Survey (ACS) public use microdata samples.



Summary

- Broad penetration of immigrants across sectors.
- Not just in -and low-, but middle-skilled jobs (most – 56% – in low-skilled jobs).
- Immigrants in middle-skilled jobs much more likely to earn family-sustaining wages.
- Immigrants in the four sectors did worse than natives during recession.
- Construction pathways to middle-skilled jobs narrow for less-educated, LEP, recent immigrants, and youth.
- Language and postsecondary credentials remain critical to good jobs.



Policy Issues

- **Immigrant worker skill/education challenges:**
 - Capacity of current systems to meet needs of LEP and immigrant workers and students
 - Failure to credit foreign credentials, work experience
- **US immigration policy issues:**
 - Few employment visas for middle-skilled jobs
 - Extent to which family-based visas are filling labor needs
 - Role of Standing Commission on Labor Markets, Economic Competitiveness, and Immigration
 - *wage and employment effects on US workers*



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Still an Hourglass?
Policy Implications & Program Context

Margie McHugh
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MPI National Center on Immigrant Integration Policy

September 20, 2010

- **Penalty for LEP Status:**
 - Expand adult ESL instruction opportunities
 - Improve student progress and quality and cost-effectiveness of instruction
 - Address uneven quality and capacity across and within states
 - Improve integration of ABE, ESL, and workforce programs
- **Additional challenges for low & highly educated:**
 - Combination of low literacy and LEP status
 - Recognition of education, training and/or experience obtained overseas; opportunities to address gaps; transparency and alignment of requirements across states

Environment for Reform:

- Increasing focus on transitions to work credential and higher education
- Successful models exist for LEP and LEP/low literacy or LEP/highly literate/skilled instruction
- Competition for classroom or program seats and funding
- Health care reform and care competency standards will drive demand for new workers with language skills
- DREAM Act implementation would add to demand for spread of best practices in adult education and community colleges



Further Study

- Profile of 16-26 Immigrant Youth Population
- State Analyses: California, New York, Florida, Washington, and Georgia
 - immigrant youth demographics
 - education and workforce success indicators
 - relevant policies, practices, funding measures that support success
- Engagement of key stakeholders by level of government, institutional type and sector.



Contact Information

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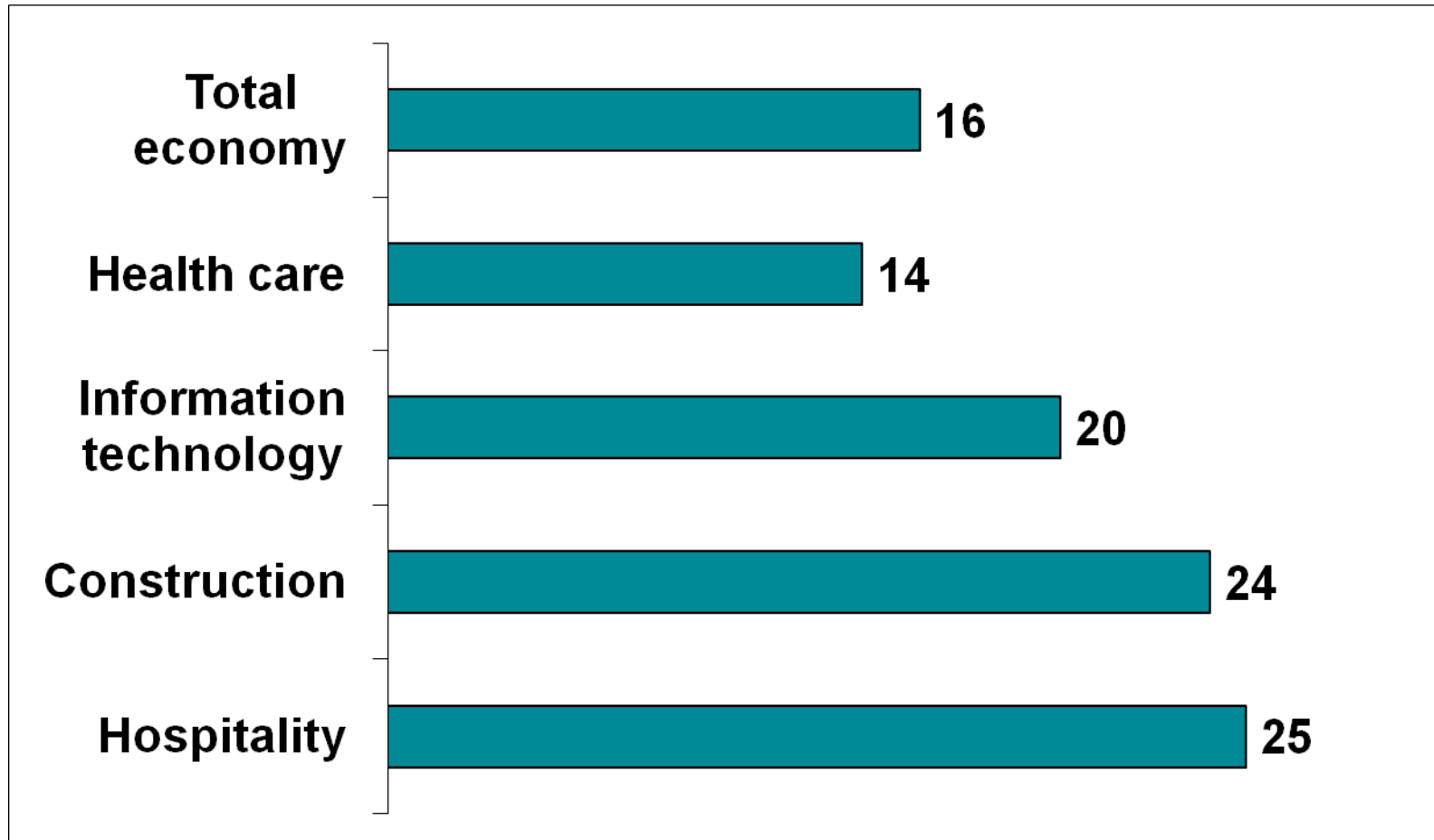
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Immigrants Overrepresented in 3 of 4 Sectors

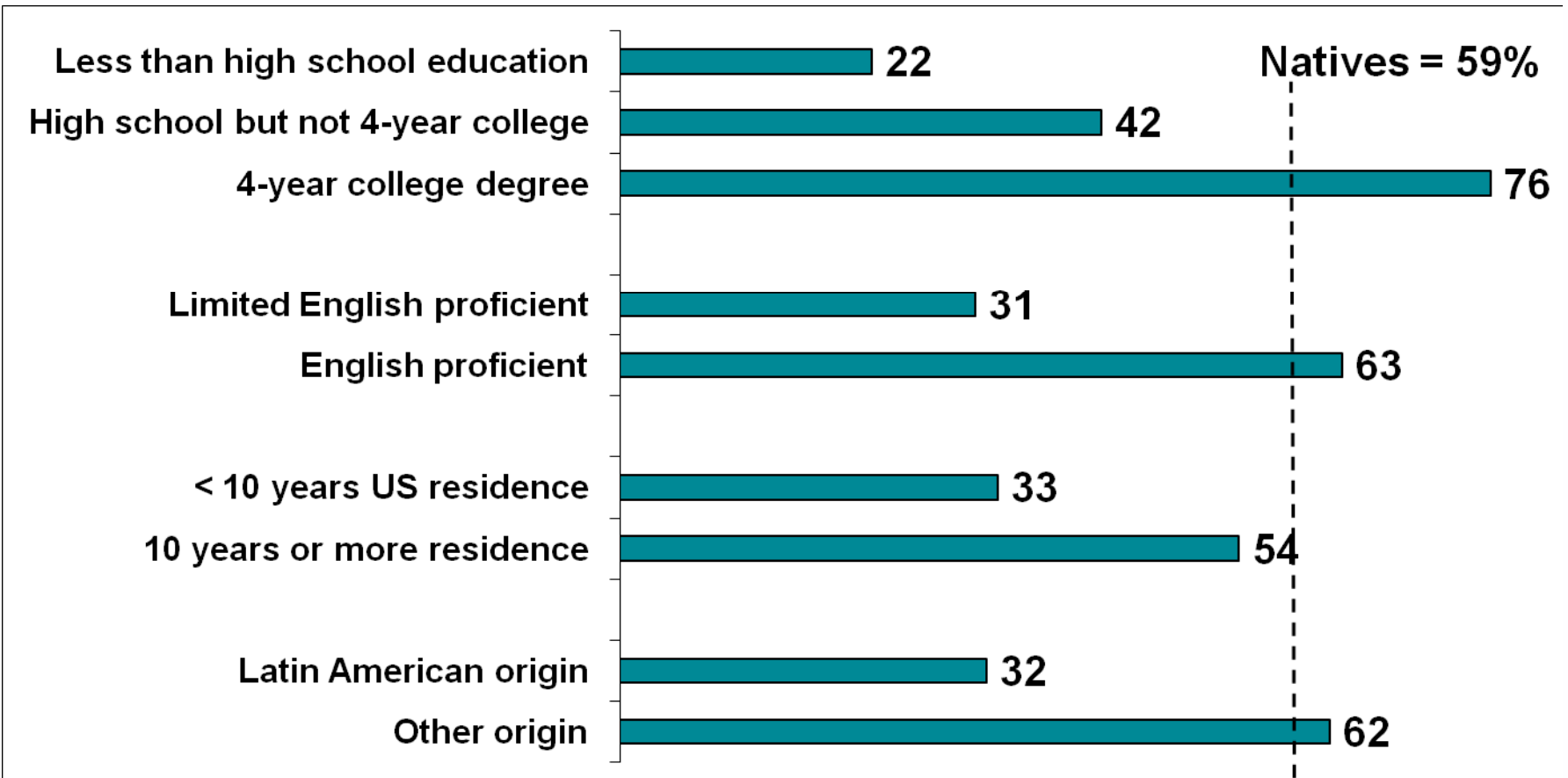
Percentage of Immigrant Workers, 2006



Source: MPI analysis of pooled 2005-07 American Community Survey (ACS) public use microdata samples.

Language, Tenure, Origins Linked to Incorporation

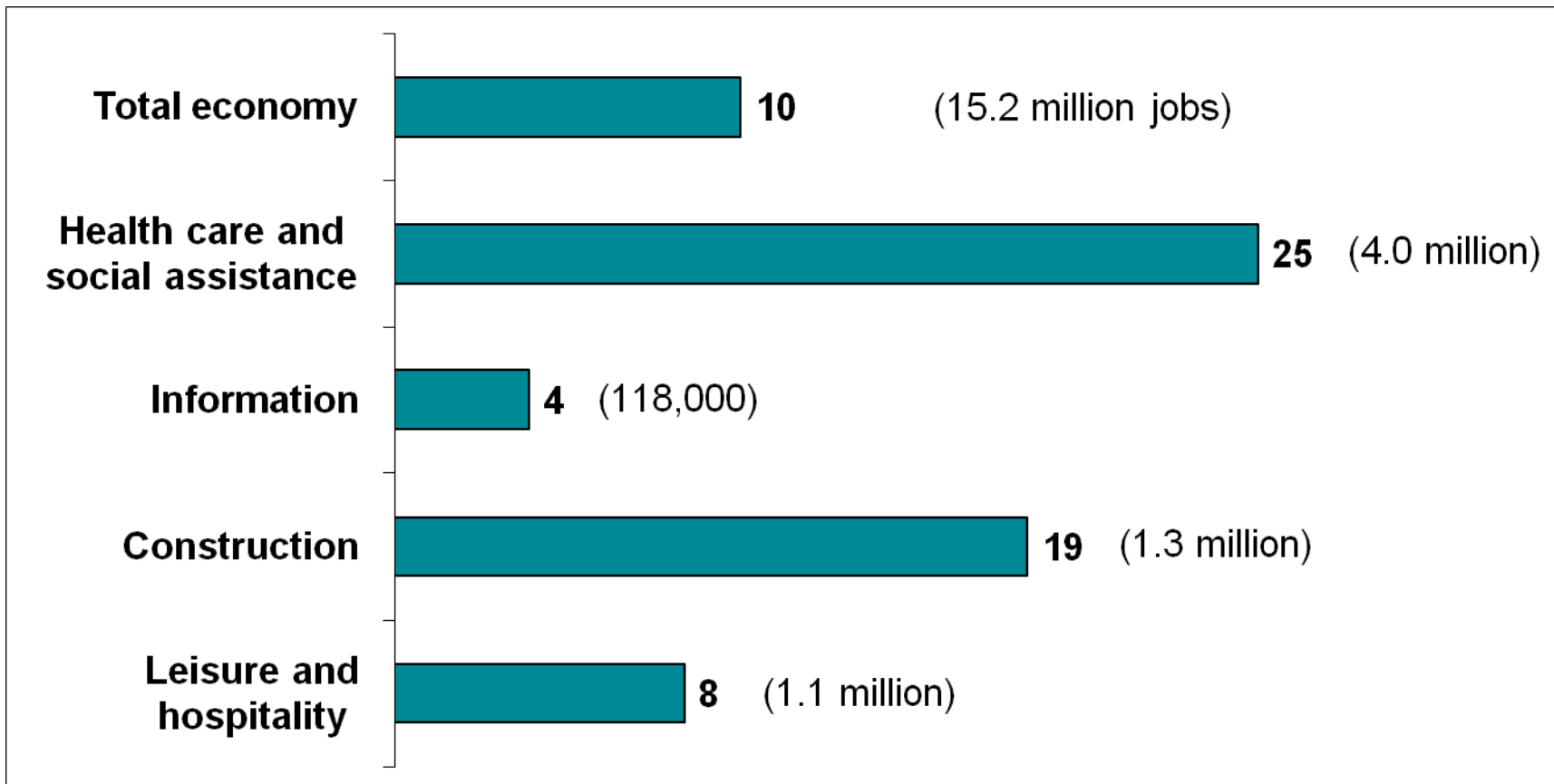
Immigrant Workers Earning Family-Sustaining Wages by Nativity and Selected Characteristics, Percent, 2006



Source: MPI analysis of pooled 2005-07 American Community Survey (ACS) public use microdata samples.

Uneven Future Growth Across Sectors

Projected Percent Job Growth, 2008 to 2018



Source: BLS, 2009, "Table 2. Employment by major industry sector, 1998, 2008, and projected 2018," Economic News Release, December 11.