

# ***Addresses the Problem of Aging Population by Immigration in the United States***

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**Abstract:** The aging problem is becoming increasingly serious in various countries. The United States was also not spared and foreshadowed an equally negative future trend, which would lead to many problems in various aspects. Therefore, the United States has taken some policies to adapt to aging, but has not actually solved the problem. Some people believe that immigration can improve the problems brought about by the aging population. This article explores the mentioned approach through literature research and simulation. The way of immigration can improve population structure to alleviate population aging, which can be classified into two types - the age structure and the employment structure. In terms of age structure, the article will discuss how immigrants can alleviate the social risks caused by aging by the increasing number of immigrants at the working age. For the employment structure, the article will illustrate the answer to solve the slow economic evolution led by aging in regards to filling job vacancies for young and middle-aged immigrants.

**Keywords:** Immigration, aging population, population structure, age, employment.

## **1. Introduction**

Nowadays, the global aging tendency has reached an unprecedented level of severity. From 2000 to 2018, the world population raised by 1.4 billion. Among them, the proportion of the world population aged 65 and above has increased by an astonishing four percentage points compared to 1960 [1]. As the largest country in the world at most aspects, America definitely does not avoid the mentioned issue. As the baby boomer generation gradually enters old age, the proportion of aging population in the United States incredibly rises over 300%, from 4.1% to 12.9% in the past century. This inverted pyramid shaped age structure indicates an intensification of future aging trend, which is predicted to lead to an increasing data in the future, from 17% to 23% of the total population [2]. At the same time, the fertility rate in the United States is showing a downward trend. Low fertility rates mean fewer young people to support the increasingly large elderly population, which further exacerbates the problem of aging. There is no doubt that the mentioned situation leads to a series of problems. For example, the labor market is facing enormous pressure. As labor supply decreases, labor costs may rise. In terms of society, the burden on social welfare systems such as social security and medical insurance will also increase, and the government needs to invest more funds to cope with the financial pressure brought about by aging. In view of these troubles, plenty of approaches has been enforced in the United States, like three pillar model of pension. Nevertheless, these policies only take good care of aging people, instead of how to actually solve the problems it brings. America has to find out the

appropriate method with practical outcome in the long term. Since immigration is the most apparent hallmark of America, there is an argument that it can be utilized to overcome the current circumstance.

This article adopts the methods of literature review and data analysis to conduct in-depth research on the aging population problem in the United States and the impact of immigration on population structure. The literature review section mainly reviews existing research in related fields, while the data analysis section quantitatively analyzes the relationship between immigration and population aging based on data released by authoritative institutions such as the United States Census Bureau. In order to further explore the impact of immigration on the aging population in the United States, this study selected nearly 5 years of US census data as the research object. The data covers multiple dimensions such as age, gender, race, and immigration status, ensuring the comprehensiveness and accuracy of the study. In terms of data collection, this article mainly obtained relevant data from official channels such as the United States Census Bureau. In the process of data analysis, this study first conducted descriptive statistics on the number and proportion of immigrant population and elderly population to understand their basic situation. Furthermore, this study explores the degree of correlation between immigration and population aging, as well as the underlying reasons.

## **2. The Background and Reasons for the Immigration Policy in the United States**

Undoubtedly, America is defined as an immigration country. The wave of immigration in the United States had been constantly developing. It is worth mentioning that a tremendous tide can be found in the 17 centuries, in which the British immigrants, following with the Spanish, New Zealanders, Dutch, and others on a large scale, went to the United States with their African slaves despite being reluctant. At that time, the Enlightenment movement in Europe was in full swing, which made these foreigners come to seek their religious freedom and intellectual liberation [3]. In addition, some plantation owners or merchants come to this open land to expand their planting area or seek suitable opportunities for new business. The answer given by history obviously presents that they have all successfully achieved their goals and played a crucial role in the economic development and the population growth of the United States. Another wave occurred from 1850 to 1920, the Age of Mass Migration, in which the US economy was rapidly developing.

Many businessmen from around the world came to the United States through investment immigration project to develop their own companies and businesses, trying to catch up with the trend of the times and get a share of the pie. Therefore, immigration in American history was mainly due to two factors, intellectual liberation and economic development. Besides, the wave of immigration to the United States also occurred after the war. After World War II, many Mexicans came to the United States through temporary legal status on the Bracero Program. This effectively solved the large labor demand in the United States at that time, which was beneficial for the post-war reconstruction work and the economic recovery of the people after the war [4].

## **3. The Impact of Immigration on the U.S. Population Structure - Age Structure**

Turning the focus from history to the present, it is clear to see that immigration has a certain impact on the population structure of the United States, which can be divided into two categories. The first type is the influence of age structure. To begin with, immigration has greatly increased the young labor force in the United States, which has alleviated the pressure on the local middle-aged and young population, while solving the problems of low birth rates and aging.

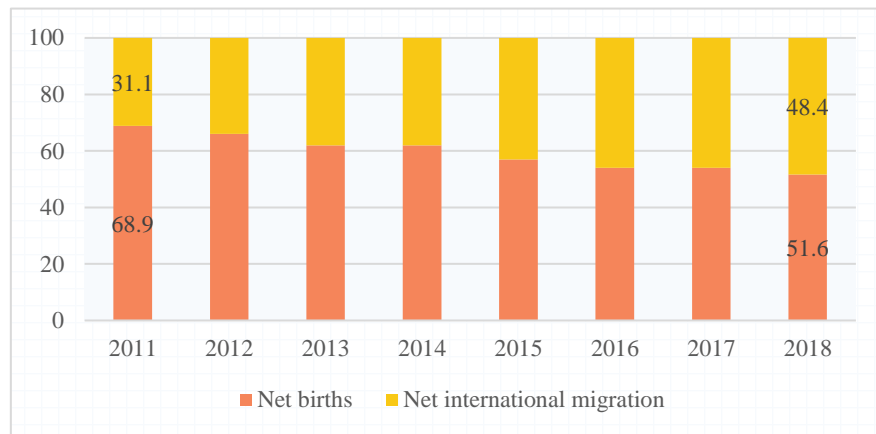


Figure 1: Comparison between the Rate of Net Brith and Net International Migration [5]

It can be clearly seen from figure 1 that the proportion of young and income generating immigrants has been increasing year by year during the continuously lowering rate of net birth [5]. These immigrants have extended their working hours in the United States due to their young age, providing breathing space for local young workers under the dual pressures of low birth rates and aging. In addition, due to their current age of marriage and childbirth, and the fact that immigrants from some countries, such as India, are more willing to have baby in public awareness, this has also increased fertility rates. The birth of a newborn will undoubtedly inject vitality into the "twilight" American population structure, so that the trend of young population brought by immigrants can develop for a long time to better fight against aging. In addition, the impact of immigration on family structure has dramatically affected the low fertility rate in the United States to alleviate aging. Many immigrants come from countries with higher fertility rates and typically have larger family sizes and stronger willingness to have children. These immigrants often have more children after establishing new families in the United States. From the table 1 below, it can be seen that immigrants from most countries have an average fertility rate of 0.5% higher in the United States than in their original countries [6].

Table 1: Immigrant Birth Rates Higher in U.S. than Home Countries [6]

Country	Total Fertility Rate in Home Country	Total Fertility Rate of Immigrants in the U.S.
Mexico	2.40	3.51
Philippines	3.22	2.30
China	1.70	2.26
India	3.07	2.23
Vietnam	2.32	1.70
Korea	1.23	1.57
Cuba	1.61	1.79
EI Salvador	2.88	2.97
Canada	1.51	1.86
United Kingdom	1.66	2.84
Total Fertility Rate for Top Sending Countries	2.32	2.86

Furthermore, the culture and values brought by immigration have also had an impact on American social customs, indirectly promoting an increase in birth rates. For example, some immigrant communities value family and children, encouraging young people to get married and have children at the appropriate time. This concept is gradually spreading in American society, influencing more people's reproductive decisions. Meanwhile, some traditional customs in immigrant communities, such as the importance of the extended family system and parent-child relationships, also contribute to increasing fertility rates. In fact, the data presented now already prove the mentioned trend. The immigration offspring takes recently 5% of the total population of immigrants and 18% of the U.S.-born population. This percentage definitely will only grow under the trend of low baby boom in the local area [7].

#### 4. The Impact of Immigration on the U.S. Population Structure - Employment Structure

Another demographic structure can be found as the employment structure. In the United States, aging has led to a scarcity of working age labor force, which is followed by the downturn in some industries, especially the hotel and agriculture. Moreover, many people are lazy to work due to good social welfare (according to statistics, about 48 million people resign each year [6]. Although welfare is not the only influencing factor, it does greatly change people's work enthusiasm negatively). As a result, the problem of labor shortage in many positions is becoming increasingly prominent. In order to recruit and retain employees in the impoverished labor market, companies have to put in effort in terms of money, stating that they can provide better treatment. Recruitment is no longer a competitive arena for employees, but has become a self presentation that companies are eager to win the favor of an employee. In a situation where production capacity has already decreased due to labor shortages, significantly increasing salaries and additional benefits not only exacerbates the financial expenditures of enterprises themselves, but also aggravates inflation in the entire market. Fortunately, immigrants have gradually filled the employee vacancies in these positions.

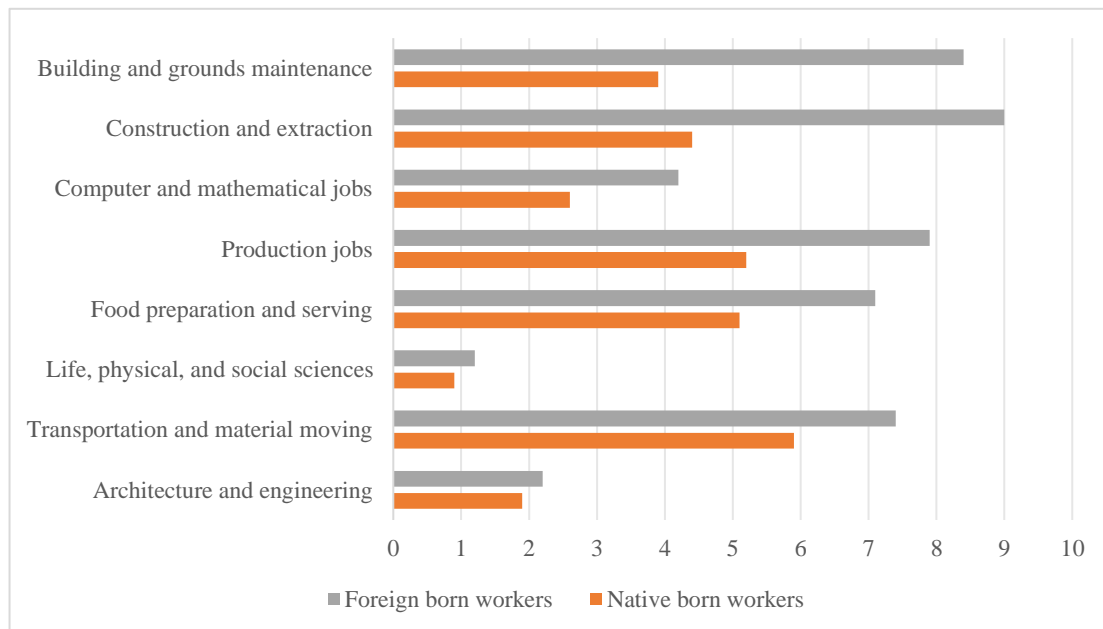


Figure 2: Where immigrants are likely to work [8]

From the figure 2 above, it can be observed that almost the employees in many regular occupations are composed of fewer Americans but a large number of immigrants, especially in construction and extraction, where the number of immigrant employees is almost twice or even more than that of

American workers [8]. A positive work attitude and a large number of immigrant workers in conventional industries can effectively alleviate the local labor shortage in the United States.

In addition, highly skilled workers can also greatly alleviate the problem of labor shortage caused by aging.

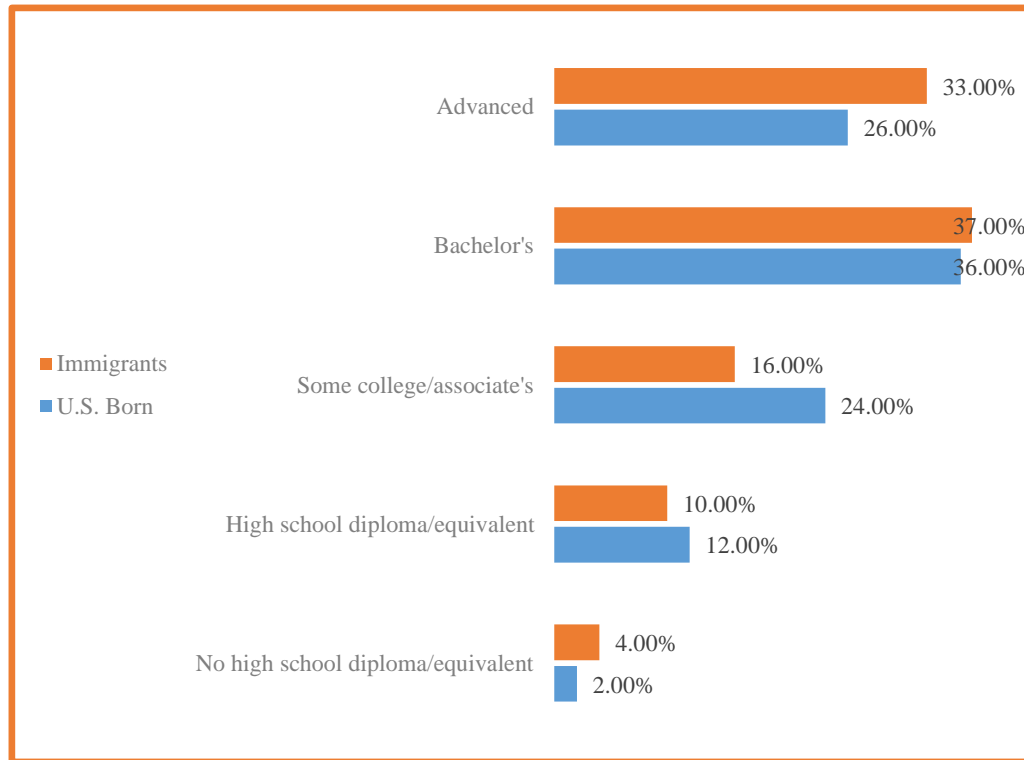


Figure 3: Educational Attainment of Spouses of the College Educated [8]

As shown in figure 3, it can be identified that the advanced or bachelor immigrants take more percentages than the Americans [8]. This indicates that the majority of immigrants have received higher education, even exceeding the education level of local residents. These immigrants can greatly increase the number of highly skilled workers. According to a report from the University of California, Berkeley, a highly skilled worker can create an additional 2.5 job positions [9]. In the short term, the problem of labor shortage can be efficiently addressed by high skilled immigrants who can work more. In the long run, high skilled immigrants with H-1B special visas can even bring additional benefits beyond solving the problem of aging labor force, namely the innovative development of cutting-edge technology in the country. With sufficient employees composed of immigrants, conventional businesses in the United States can continue to thrive, which plays an important role in the country's financial development which is extremely influenced by aging trend.

## 5. Using Immigration Policy to Deal With the Aging Problem

### 5.1. Increase Immigration Quotas for Young Workers

In response to labor shortages and aging in the United States, the government can increase immigration quotas for young workers. This can be achieved by adjusting the number of work visas issued and establishing immigration programs targeting specific industries or fields. For example, for urgently needed talents in fields such as healthcare, technology, and education, specialized immigration channels can be optimized, such as the current skilled immigration program, to attract more young professionals to come to the United States.

## **5.2. Optimize the Age Structure of Immigrants**

Immigration policies should pay more attention to the age structure of immigrants to meet the needs of the US labor market. The government can increase the proportion of young immigrants and reduce the proportion of elderly immigrants by adjusting the age distribution ratio of immigration quotas. This can ensure that immigrants can provide long-term support for the economic and social development of the United States.

## **5.3. Strengthen Education and Skill Training for Immigrants**

In order to ensure that immigrants can better adapt to the needs of the US labor market, the government should strengthen education and skill training for immigrants. This can be achieved by establishing specialized training institutions, providing scholarships and scholarships to attract international students. By improving the education and skill levels of immigrants, they can enhance their competitiveness in the labor market and make greater contributions to the economic and social development of the United States.

## **5.4. Encourage Family Reunification Immigration**

Family reunification immigration is an important component of US immigration policy. The government can encourage more young family members to come to the United States by optimizing family reunification immigration policies. This can not only increase the number of young laborers, but also promote family reunification and social integration, enhancing immigrants' sense of belonging and identity towards the United States.

## **5.5. Strengthen Cooperation with Other Countries**

The United States can strengthen cooperation with other countries to jointly address the issue of aging. For example, establishing talent exchange mechanisms with developing countries to attract young talents with professional skills and experience to come to the United States. In addition, cooperation with other countries in population aging research can be strengthened through international cooperation projects, academic exchanges, and other means to jointly promote solutions to aging issues.

## **5.6. Establish an Immigration Integration Support System**

In order to ensure that immigrants can better integrate into American society, the government needs to establish a comprehensive immigration integration support system. This includes providing language and cultural training, social adaptation guidance, mental health services, etc. By helping immigrants better adapt to the living and working environment in the United States, their social integration and quality of life can be improved, while also helping to alleviate the social pressure brought about by aging [10].

## **6. Conclusion**

In conclusion, immigration stands out as an exceptionally viable option to tackle the aging population challenge in the United States. This assertion is grounded in the capacity of immigration to reformulate two pivotal types of population structures.

The first is the age structure, which is significantly influenced by the influx of young and middle-aged immigrants entering the country in pursuit of job opportunities or further education. This influx not only enriches the cultural diversity of the nation but also rejuvenates its population by



introducing a younger demographic. Moreover, as these immigrants settle in and have families, their descendants become an integral part of American society, further shaping the age structure in a positive direction.

The second type of population structure that immigration impacts is the employment structure. Young immigrants, often armed with a positive work ethic and fresh perspectives, contribute significantly to the labor market. They fill vacancies in various positions, adding vitality and innovation to the workforce. This influx of talent not only addresses the labor shortages caused by aging but also spurs economic growth and development.

However, it is worth noting that the current immigration policy in the United States is not entirely immigrant-friendly, largely due to the complexities of international relations. [10] Despite these challenges, there is hope that the government will recognize the immense benefits of immigration and reevaluate its policies. If the nation opts to prioritize immigration and relax the current regulations, it could significantly mitigate the aging problem in the future, ensuring a sustainable and prosperous society.

In essence, immigration offers a promising avenue to address the aging population issue in the United States. By reforming the age and employment structures, it has the potential to rejuvenate the nation's workforce, drive economic growth, and ensure a vibrant and diverse society for generations to come.

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