

Help Wanted At Home

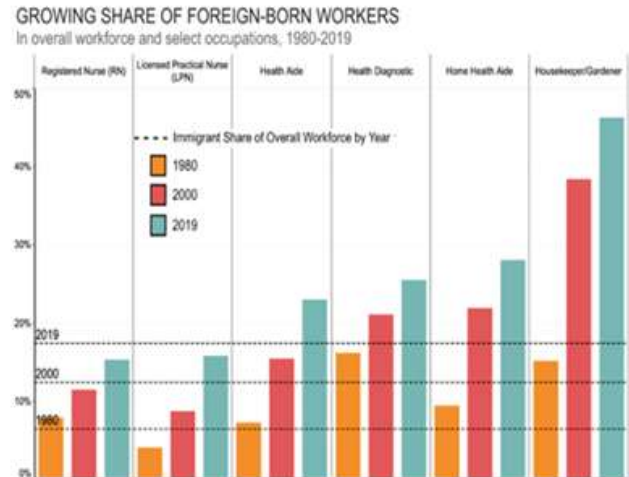
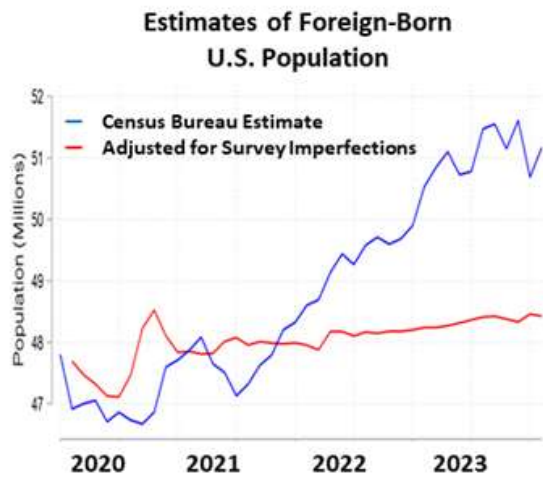
Immigration can answer the unmet demand for caregivers.



As we [discussed](#) one year ago, the pandemic wrought havoc on care giving. At the outset, families were reluctant to expose their loved ones to outsiders who might be transmitters of COVID-19. The interruption in employment prompted a number of those providing care to seek other opportunities. For some, the forced transition turned out to be a blessing in disguise; pay and working conditions for those who look after others are often less than ideal.

As the economy reopened, demand for care returned to normal. Shortages of care givers became acute. Parents of young children as well as adult children of aging parents diverted time to attend to their needs. This development is among the reasons that hybrid work has become so popular.

Hope for relief has largely rested on renewed levels of immigration; caregiving is a common first opportunity for newcomers. With U.S. borders re-opened to legal immigration since mid-2022, the official data suggest that flows have exceeded pre-pandemic levels. But a recent [study](#) by



Sources: Census Bureau, Federal Reserve Bank of Chicago, EconoFact

economists at the Federal Reserve Bank of Chicago suggests that flaws in the survey that estimates immigration may be overstating things. The research finds that America's foreign-born population has not changed that much in recent years.

That is a worrisome result. While conversations around care giving often start with children, the need for elder care in the United States is expected to grow rapidly in the years ahead. Consider:

- According to the Peterson Foundation, the fraction of Americans over the age of 80 is expected to expand from about 3% of the population today to more than 8% by the middle of this century.
- Well over half of Americans over the age of 80 experience some kind of disability.
- 87% of older Americans have expressed a wish to age in place, as opposed to entering assisted living.

All of this means that senior citizens are collectively going to need more help in the decades ahead. Technology will not provide much of an assist. Immigrants are already critical in this space; their numbers will have to increase if needs are to be met.

The impact of demographics on an economy are often overlooked because they develop over time. But demographic imbalances in the United States are becoming increasingly proximate, and they are hitting close to home.

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