

# Immigrant Employment and Mobility Opportunities in California

FRANK D. BEAN and  
B. LINDSAY LOWELL

MORE IMMIGRANTS COME TO THE UNITED STATES THAN TO ANY OTHER country in the world. In 2000 an estimated 1.20 million foreign-born persons were added to the U.S. population—850,000 who entered legally plus some 350,000 unauthorized entrants (United Nations Population Division 2003).<sup>1</sup> California, which in 2000 had the fifth or sixth largest economy in the world, received the largest share. More than 329,000 (about 217,000 legal and 112,000 unauthorized) immigrants, or 28%, settled in the state. In contrast, about 129,000 arrived in New York, the state with the second largest immigration (U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service 2002, 2003).

Americans in general, and Californians in particular, often display ambivalence about immigration, welcoming the inexpensive labor that immigrants provide, for example, but worrying (probably unnecessarily) that immigration may erode cultural solidarity and national identity and cohesion (Bean and Stevens 2003; Clark 2003). Anxieties about immigration notwithstanding, the latter half of the 1990s witnessed growing recognition that immigrants were playing an important and increasingly prominent role in the U.S. economy (Mexico-U.S. Migration Panel 2001). Eleven percent of the country's total population was foreign born in 2000, but 14% was between the ages of eighteen and sixty-four—the prime employment years (U.S. Bureau of the Census 2000). Among the population in that age group actually working, the percentage of foreign born was equally high, at 14%. The percentage of children in the population who were either immigrants or the children of immigrants was even higher, nearly 20%, indicating that the nation's future workforce will be even more dependent on immigration (Hernandez 1999). And in California, where these percentages are larger still, the immigrant share of the workforce is even more striking.

Many immigrants come to the United States expressly for the purpose of working, including those who come as unauthorized labor migrants from Mexico and those who enter under various kinds of employment-based visas. Most of those who

1. On a net basis. This was over 900,000 more than the number added to the Russian Federation, the world's second leading immigration country.

ostensibly come for non-work-related reasons, including those who enter under the various preference categories for family reunification visas, end up holding jobs that are similar in kind and pay to those who enter the country with work-related visas (Sorensen et al. 1992). Indeed, for legal immigrants, neither placement within the workforce nor economic status is appreciably determined by what type of visa they use to enter the country.

The nature and magnitude of newcomer arrivals must be understood in the context of economic restructuring in the United States and California. The role of immigrants in state and national workforces has grown while employment structures have changed. Both California and the nation are experiencing a relative decline in manufacturing employment (especially high-wage, unionized jobs), a relative increase in service-industry employment, declining or stagnant real earnings at the middle and the bottom of the income distribution, a growing number of working-age males (especially young African Americans) who are dropping out of the labor force, decreasing wage gaps between men and women at equivalent levels of education, and declining levels of childbearing among native-born women (Bean and Bell-Rose 1999; Bean and Stevens 2003).

The bimodal educational distribution of immigrants entering the United States in recent years is another important phenomenon. Immigrants coming to the country have had either a high level of education (i.e., a college degree) or a low level (i.e., without a high school diploma). In 2000, for example, 26% of adult immigrants had completed a college degree or higher, a figure slightly larger than that for the native population (25%). At the same time, 33% of all adult immigrants had not completed high school, compared to only 13% of adult natives. Among those with a high school diploma or some college (but not a college degree), immigrants were relatively less numerous than natives (41% compared to 61%) (U.S. Bureau of the Census 2000). This “hollowed out” educational distribution mirrors the pattern of change in the labor market in recent years, namely substantial growth in the numbers of high- and low-end jobs, with much lower increases in the middle range (Milkman and Dwyer 2002).

The growth in numbers of less-skilled immigrants presents a puzzle for social scientists. The migration has continued even as earnings at the bottom of the income distribution have stagnated and the employment opportunities of disadvantaged native racial/ethnic minorities, especially African Americans, have stalled (Bean and Bell-Rose 1999; Waldinger and Lichter 2003). Given the relative disappearance of manufacturing jobs in cities, where many African Americans live, and the movement of middle-class African American role models to the suburbs, which has further disadvantaged African Americans (Wilson 1987, 1996), how does one explain the growth in less-skilled immigration? Why should more and more less-skilled Mexican migrants come to the United States when the demand for less-skilled labor appears to be declining? The answer has partly to do with imbalances in demography and economy in Mexico, which continue to generate more labor supply than

demand (Mexico-United States Binational Study 1997). Although this disequilibrium is less extreme today than in the past, the lack of job opportunities in Mexico still makes even the worst jobs and limited employment prospects in the United States attractive to many (Porter 2003). Moreover, social networks among less-skilled immigrant groups foster migration and confer recruitment and hiring advantages relative to African American workers at the low end of the wage scale (Massey et al. 1987; Waldinger 2001; Waldinger and Lichter 2003).

Two decades of empirical research on the labor market consequences of immigration have found few adverse short-run effects for native workers, although this research has shown that increased immigration of less-skilled workers does limit employment opportunities for less-skilled immigrants who had arrived earlier (Bean, Van Hook, and Fossett 1999; Friedberg and Hunt 1999). Does this mean that the prospects for moving up the job ladder into the economic mainstream are diminishing for today's immigrants, relative to earlier generations? Are opportunities for immigrants lessening in part because economic restructuring is hollowing out the middle of the job structure, leaving fewer pathways to upward mobility? To what degree is this worrisome possibility exacerbated by the fact that so many of the new immigrants are non-Anglo and thus are presumably subject to racial/ethnic discrimination?<sup>2</sup>

## **IMMIGRATION AND THE STRUCTURE OF EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES**

In recent decades the structure of job opportunities in the United States in general and California in particular has increasingly taken an “hourglass” or “U-shaped” form (Bell 1973; Milkman and Dwyer 2002; Piore and Sabel 1984; Wright and Dwyer 2002). The relative decline in the manufacturing sector (which shifted from employing 33% of private-sector workers in 1970 to 17% in 2000) has resulted in fewer jobs that provide a middle-class lifestyle, especially for persons without college educations. Although many factors affect the structure of the labor market, these trends suggest diminishing opportunities for upward mobility, particularly for workers without college degrees.

Discrimination in hiring, pay, and promotion on the basis of ascriptive characteristics such as race/ethnicity, nativity, and gender is harder to overcome under conditions of declining opportunities, especially for persons at the bottom of the social hierarchy, whose chances for betterment depend on the number and kind of mid-range opportunities for employment as well as the nature and strength of barriers that stand in the way of achievement. Research indicating that racial/ethnic groups,

2. Throughout this chapter, “Anglo” refers to non-Latinos, or what the U.S. Census Bureau calls “non-Hispanic whites”; “African American,” similarly, refers to non-Latino African Americans, or “non-Hispanic Blacks.”

especially female workers, are concentrated at the bottom of the job distribution heightens concerns about emergent hourglass structures of employment and job mobility. This is the context in which we must evaluate the prospects for new immigrants. They are not only newcomers to America's workforce but also new members of ethnic groups whose prospects for mobility are impeded to the extent that they are treated as racialized minorities. Evidence of upward mobility among low-end immigrants would suggest that immigrant status might not constrain opportunity to the degree that perspectives focusing on the effects of race/ethnicity alone (without taking nativity into account) would imply. It is thus crucial to disaggregate outcomes by nativity. Moreover, it is also important to ascertain the extent of gender variation, given that immigrant women may start out in very low-level jobs. In what follows we disaggregate employment and mobility outcomes by race/ethnicity, nativity, *and* gender, something all too often neglected in labor market studies.

## **IMMIGRATION AND RACE AND ETHNICITY**

Ascertaining whether and to what degree racial/ethnic discrimination might worsen opportunities for upward mobility for today's less-skilled immigrants requires considering the extent to which predictions about their economic incorporation involve assumptions about their status as members of racialized groups. Competing theories of immigrant incorporation offer optimistic (in the case of assimilation perspectives) or pessimistic (in the case of ethnic disadvantage perspectives) pictures of the process, or a mixture of the two (in the case of segmented assimilation views) (Bean and Stevens 2003). The predominance of any one of these views has depended substantially, if not always explicitly, on whether a given immigrant group is treated as a racialized, disadvantaged minority group. Ethnic disadvantage perspectives tend to perceive immigrant groups as non-Anglo minorities subject to discrimination, whereas assimilation perspectives tend to deemphasize racial/ethnic status and focus on nativity. Thus, the issue of immigrant economic incorporation in the United States is inextricably confounded with the issue of race/ethnicity (Bean and Bell-Rose 1999). To be sure, the difference between the two perspectives is relative rather than absolute. Nonetheless, the question of the pace of assimilation cannot be separated from the question of the extent to which new immigrants tend to be regarded (and to regard themselves) as members of disadvantaged and racialized minority groups.

The case of the Mexican-origin population exemplifies the difficulty of strictly applying either perspective to new immigrants. Each view finds some evidence in support of its claims. On the one hand, research suggests that persons of Mexican origin often face job discrimination, although less frequently than African Americans do (Bean and Tienda 1987; Perlmann and Waldinger 1999). It is also evident that data *not* disaggregated by nativity present an incomplete picture. The large gap

in education and earnings between immigrant and native-born persons of Mexican origin may have more to do with the different levels of economic development in Mexico and the United States than with discrimination (see, e.g., Bean, Berg, and Van Hook 1996; Bean, Gonzalez-Baker, and Capps 2001; Trejo 1996, 1997). Research that lumps all Mexican-origin persons together thus tends to yield a negatively biased view of the economic position of Mexican natives.

To address the question of the role and position of immigrants in the California workforce, we provide a profile of the California labor force as well as an analysis of job quality and mobility in the late 1990s. We begin by examining employment patterns in California, disaggregated by race/ethnicity, nativity, and gender, in 1990 and 2000. We then go on to look at job quality and mobility, with job quality defined by occupation, industry, and relative earnings, using the 1994 and 2000 Current Population Survey (CPS).

## **IMMIGRANT EMPLOYMENT IN CALIFORNIA: A PROFILE**

Our profile focuses on immigrant employment in California as a whole and on the state's two largest metropolitan areas—Los Angeles and San Francisco—using the decennial census data for 1990 and 2000.<sup>3</sup> These data not only allow an assessment of patterns of aggregate change since 1990; the large numbers of observations also permit us to gauge variations by nativity, race/ethnicity, gender, industry, and metropolitan area simultaneously. If inequities in employment opportunities and outcomes facing certain groups of Californians are to be improved by public policies, insight into the factors causing the inequities is crucial. This knowledge can be obtained only if we know which groups are most severely affected.<sup>4</sup>

3. We use the 1-percent PUMS (Public Use Microdata Series) for 1990 and 2000, for all California civilian workers between the ages of 18 and 64. Differences exist between the 1990 and 2000 PUMS in geographic, race, and industry/occupational codes. We address these primarily by using the Integrated Public Use Microdata Series version of these data compiled for comparability at the University of Minnesota (IPUMS 2003).

The data for Los Angeles and San Francisco are for two Consolidated Metropolitan Statistical Areas (CMSAs): the Los Angeles–Anaheim–Riverside CMSA, and the San Francisco–Oakland–San Jose CMSA. In the text all references to “Los Angeles” refer to the former CMSA, and all references to “the San Francisco Bay Area,” “the Bay Area,” or “San Francisco–San Jose” refer to the latter CMSA.

4. We classified race using the 1990 census codes and assigned “Spanish write-in” to the “other” race category (hence, our figures correspond to published figures). In 2000 we assigned “primary” race and placed those persons identifying themselves in more than one race category (4.4% of adult respondents in California) into “other” race. Arguments can be advanced to categorize differently, but the alternatives have both advantages and disadvantages, as does the approach we use here. In 2000 it is necessary to combine metropolitan aggregates (PMSAs) with sub-metropolitan aggregates containing at least 400,000 population (“Super PUMAs”) to construct comparable 1990 consolidated metropolitan statistical areas (CMSAs), which

TABLE 3.1. Labor Force Participation Rate, by Race/Ethnicity, Nativity, and Gender, Los Angeles, San Francisco, and California, 2000

<i>Racial/Ethnic and Nativity Group</i>	PERCENTAGE MALE			PERCENTAGE FEMALE		
	<i>Los Angeles CMSA</i>	<i>San Francisco CMSA</i>	<i>California</i>	<i>Los Angeles CMSA</i>	<i>San Francisco CMSA</i>	<i>California</i>
Latino foreign-born	73.6%	76.3%	74.5%	49.1%	55.8%	50.4%
Asian foreign-born	75.4	79.4	76.5	61.1	64.9	61.8
Latino native-born	76.2	77.5	74.0	67.4	74.6	68.2
Asian native-born	74.5	79.2	76.8	71.2	77.2	73.3
Anglo	88.1	84.8	86.9	70.7	75.2	71.3
African American	68.4	67.6	65.4	68.7	71.0	68.9
Other race/ethnicity	73.7	81.9	76.0	65.3	69.9	64.7

SOURCE: IPUMS 2003 (census microdata for civilian workers ages 18 to 64).

TABLE 3.2. Labor Force Participation Rate, by Race/Ethnicity, Nativity, and Gender, Los Angeles, San Francisco, and California, 1990

<i>Racial/Ethnic and Nativity Group</i>	PERCENTAGE MALE			PERCENTAGE FEMALE		
	<i>Los Angeles CMSA</i>	<i>San Francisco CMSA</i>	<i>California</i>	<i>Los Angeles CMSA</i>	<i>San Francisco CMSA</i>	<i>California</i>
Latino foreign-born	90.4%	89.9%	89.3%	59.8%	64.2%	59.8%
Asian foreign-born	81.3	84.9	80.6	64.0	67.6	63.3
Latino native-born	82.6	84.1	82.3	66.6	70.6	66.5
Asian native-born	85.1	83.3	84.5	78.7	76.3	77.1
Anglo	88.1	88.8	87.3	71.0	74.9	70.9
African American	74.9	75.7	73.6	67.7	71.1	68.5
Other race/ethnicity	78.6	80.6	79.2	70.0	75.9	67.2

SOURCE: IPUMS 2003 (census microdata for civilian workers ages 18 to 64).

results in some size discrepancies (with 1990 and with the actual 2000 CMSA size). More difficult is the wholesale change in the nature and codes for industry (and occupation) used in the 2000 census. We use the University of Minnesota IPUMS (2003) that generates a comparable industry coding from the 1950 census to the present. We further aggregate these latter codes into the familiar 13-category classification (further collapsed to 12) often used in the pre-2000 census era.

Table 3.1 shows labor force participation rates (the number of persons employed or looking for work divided by the total adult population) in 2000 for California, Los Angeles, and the San Francisco Bay Area, for each gender, by major racial/ethnic category and by nativity for Latinos and Asians. As would be expected, males of all groups show higher rates of labor force participation than females. Anglo males exhibit notably higher rates than any of the other groups, a pattern that holds nationally and across all parts of the state. Among California's major metropolitan areas, overall participation rates were highest in San Francisco, reflecting the high-tech boom there during the 1990s. Participation rates for male Latino immigrants were lower than those of Latino natives in 2000, in contrast to 1990, when the reverse was true (Table 3.2). Exactly what accounts for this relative drop is not clear, although it may be related to the rapid increase in Latino immigration during the late 1990s (perhaps causing a crowding effect). On the other hand, Asian immigrants' participation rates were generally lower than those of their native counterparts in both 1990 and 2000, especially for women, perhaps reflecting the high proportion of refugees in this population and more traditional gender relations among immigrants.

By 2000 more than one in four of California's workers were foreign born, up from slightly less than one in five in 1990. Figures 3.1 and 3.2 show that the proportion of male and female immigrant workers exceeded that of natives in primary industries (agriculture, forestry, fishing, and mining). Immigrant women also held the larger share in nondurable manufacturing.

The already significant role of immigrants in the state's labor force increased appreciably over the decade. Figure 3.3 shows that changes in the immigrant share varied by industry, as one might anticipate. For example, immigrant women's share of the personal services industry jumped over 8 percentage points, and immigrant men's share of the manufacturing workforce outstripped gains by immigrant women.

In no other state do immigrants play such an important role in the labor force, although their specific contribution varies by gender, metropolitan area, and industry. Tables 3.3, 3.4, and 3.5 show the distribution of immigrant and native-born workers across major industries in California and in its two leading metropolitan areas—Los Angeles and the San Francisco Bay Area. While California's labor force experienced net growth for most industries during the 1990s, marked differences were apparent between immigrants and natives. The state's immigrant labor force grew much faster than its native-born counterpart and was the main source of net growth in the state overall. California's economic recession during the early 1990s also generated a net out-migration of natives, especially among Anglos, even as the immigrant influx continued. Native out-migration slowed somewhat during the boom years of the 1990s (Frey 2002, 2003), but resumed during the post-2001 recession, especially from Los Angeles (Martin 2003).

Table 3.3 shows that the net losses of native workers in California were concentrated in construction and manufacturing; the drop in manufacturing reflected the

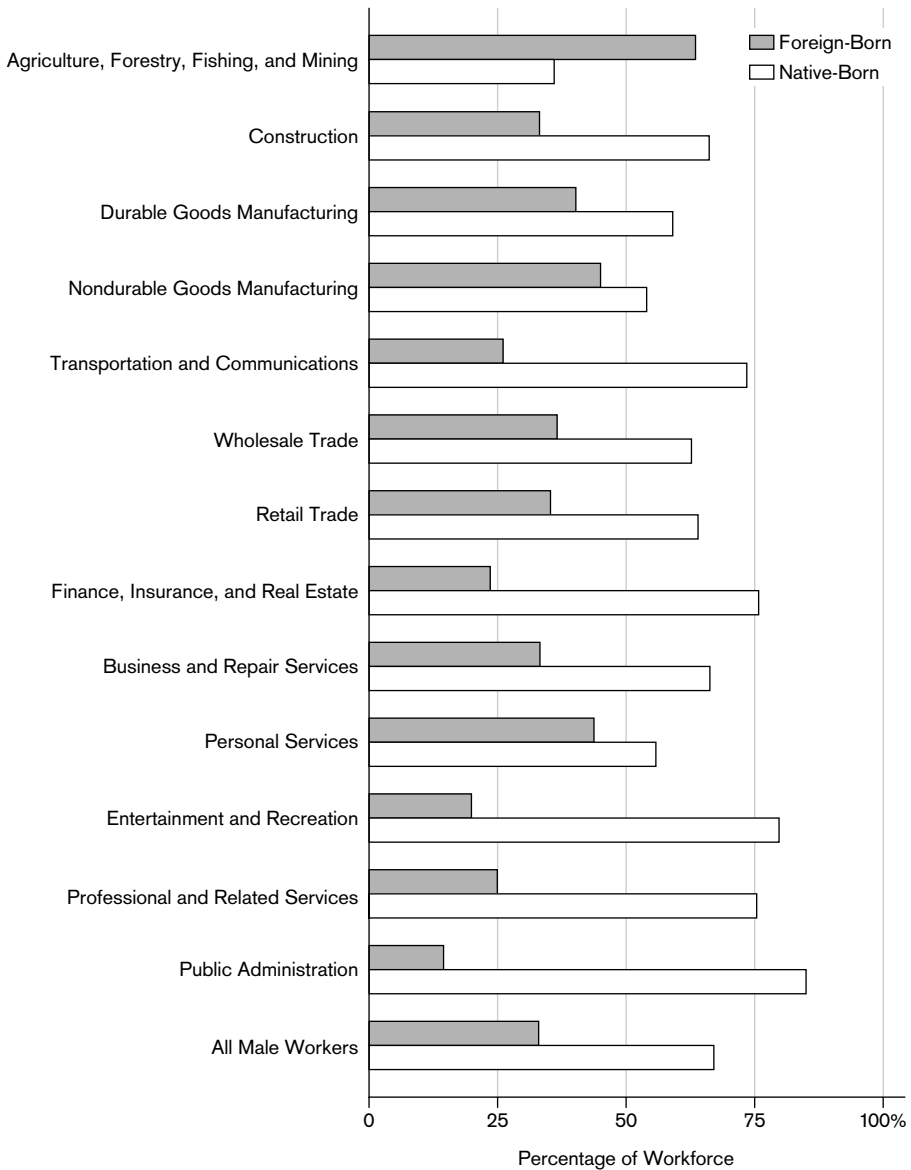


FIGURE 3.1. Male Workforce, by Nativity and Industry, California, 2000  
SOURCE: IPUMS 2003.

collapse of the aerospace and defense industries after the demise of the Soviet Union. Restructuring of the civilian aerospace industry played a role as well. The impact on manufacturing was especially severe in the Los Angeles metro area. On the other hand, the already large share of native workers in professional and related industries grew markedly, as did the native share of the entertainment industry, particularly in Los Angeles. More surprising, immigrants as well as natives increasingly found

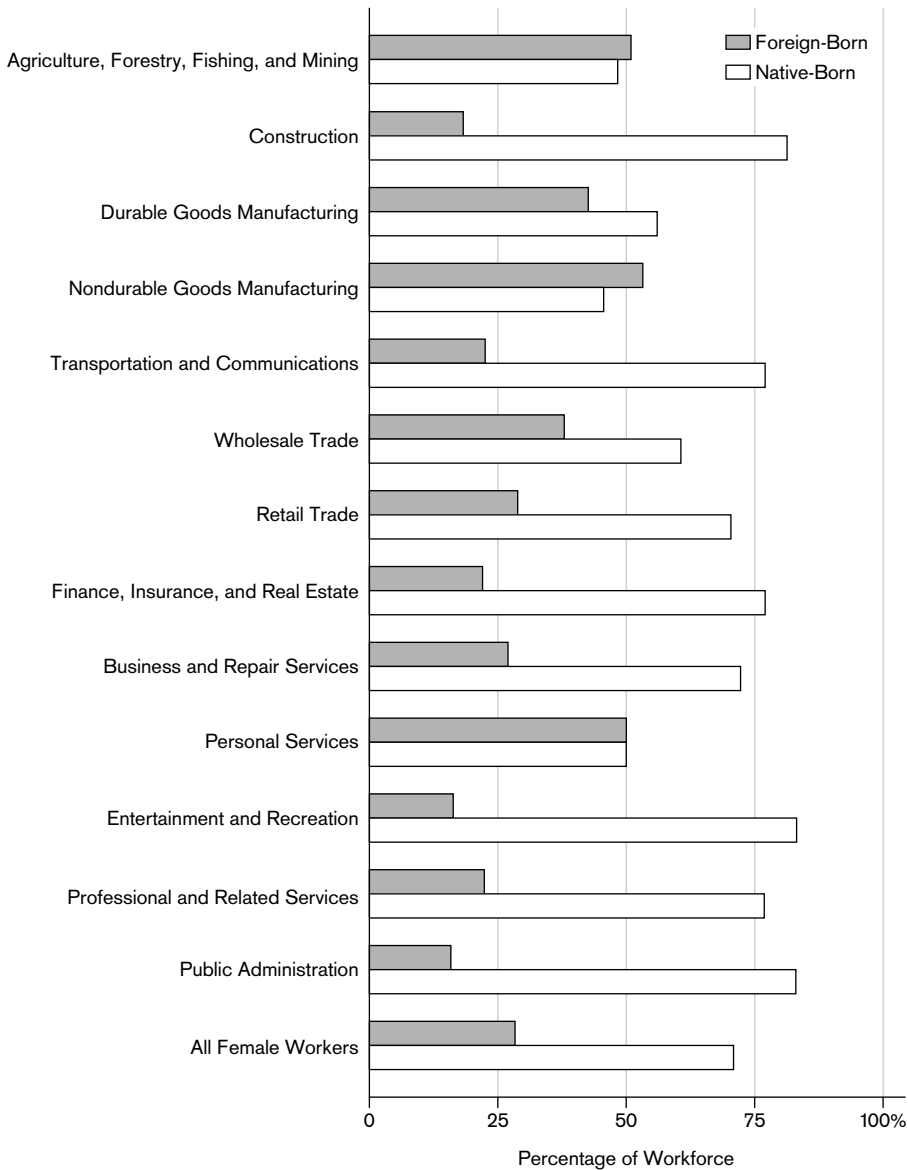


FIGURE 3.2. Female Workforce, by Nativity and Industry, California, 2000  
SOURCE: IPUMS 2003.

employment in professional and related industries. For both groups, employment in manufacturing jobs fell, reflecting the broader shift toward service sector and information jobs in the 1990s.

Employers in California are increasingly likely to employ immigrants (of either gender). Male immigrants now make up over 40% of the state's workforce in four of the twelve industry categories examined here, and female immigrants are a majority

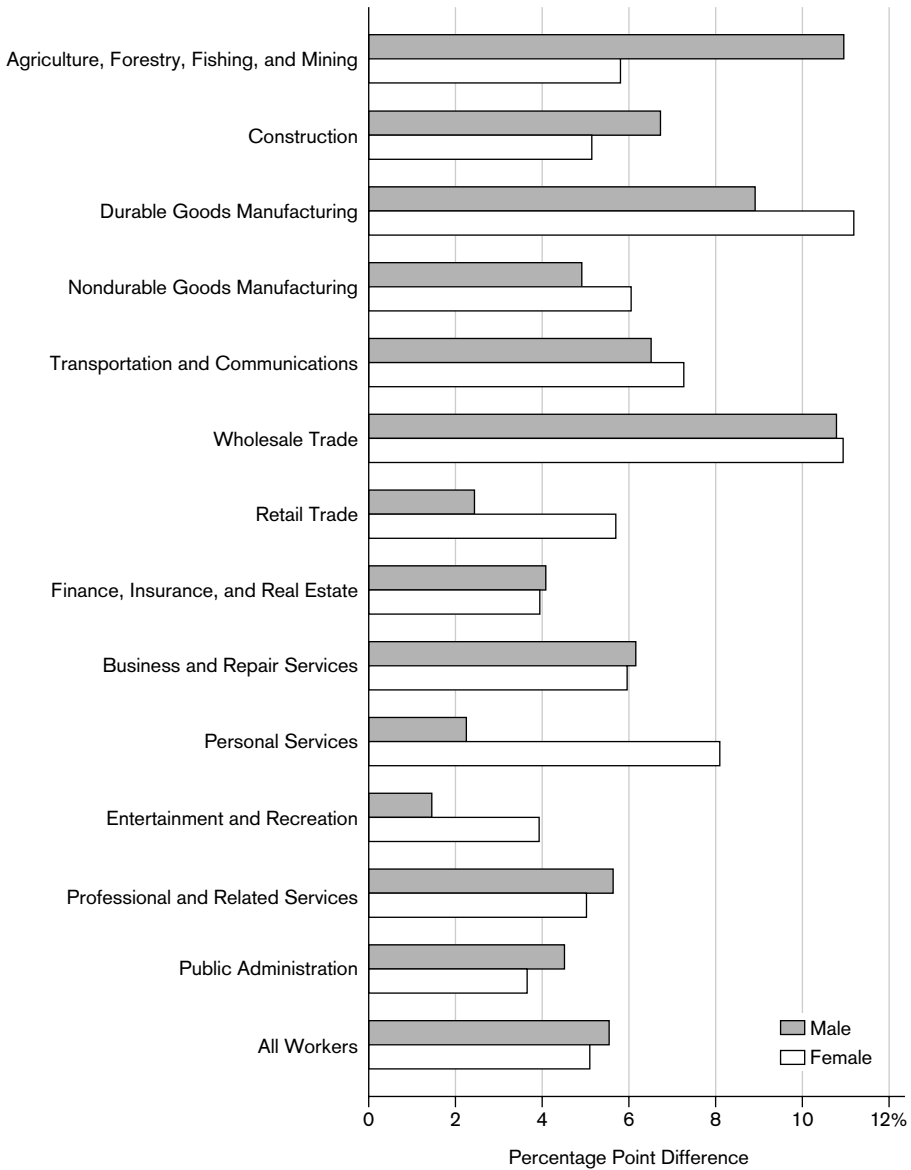


FIGURE 3.3. Net Change in Foreign-Born Workforce, by Industry, California, 1990 to 2000  
 SOURCE: IPUMS 2003.

of workers in three of the twelve. Immigrants comprise an even larger share of the workers in Los Angeles.

Immigrants' share of employment increased more slowly (or not at all) in white-collar industries where natives were most concentrated (entertainment and recreation, professional and related, and public administration), as Figures 3.3, 3.4, and

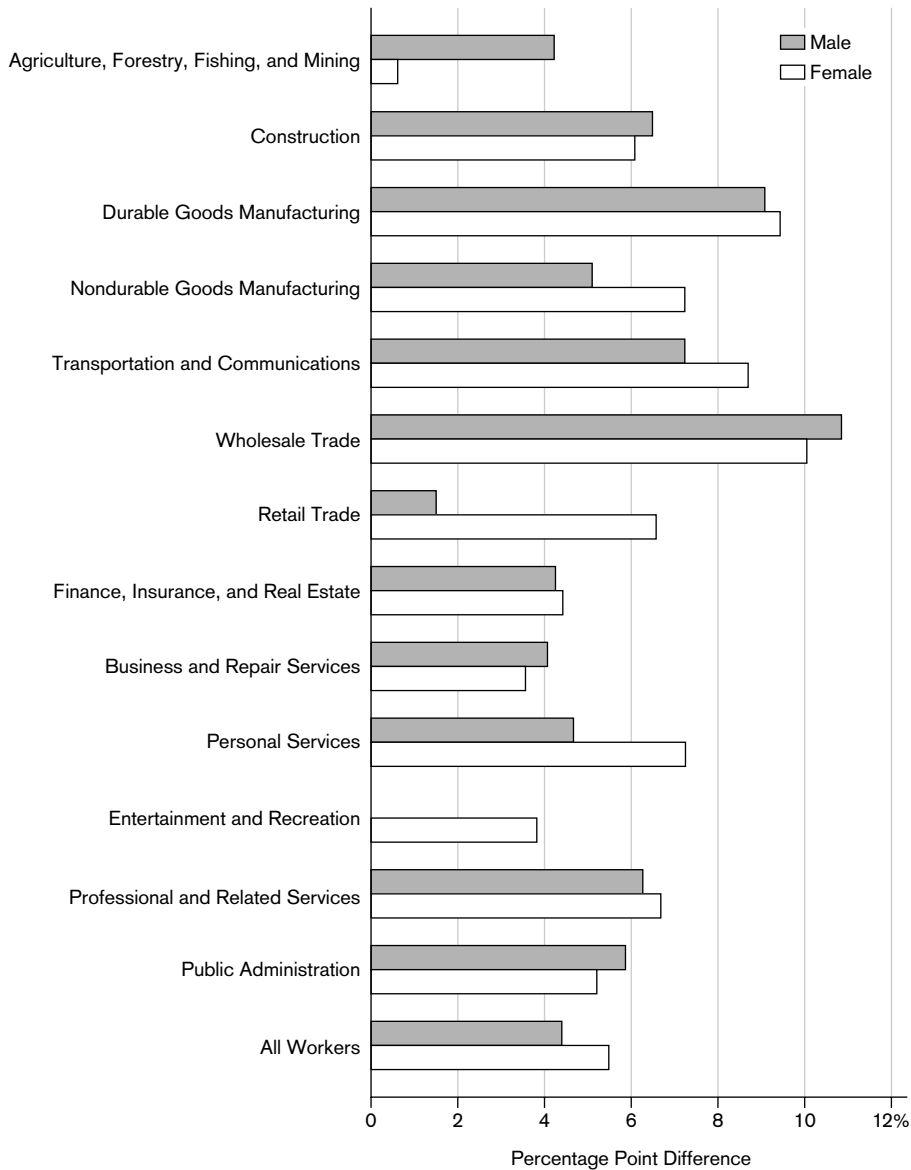


FIGURE 3.4. Net Change in Foreign-Born Workforce, by Industry, Los Angeles, 1990 to 2000  
SOURCE: IPUMS 2003.

3.5 show. Overall, immigrant employment in the 1990s was concentrated in the lower reaches of the American job structure. This raises the question of the degree to which immigrants may have contributed to the increasingly bifurcated pattern of job growth, with more jobs being added at the high and low ends of the employment distribution and fewer being added in the middle.

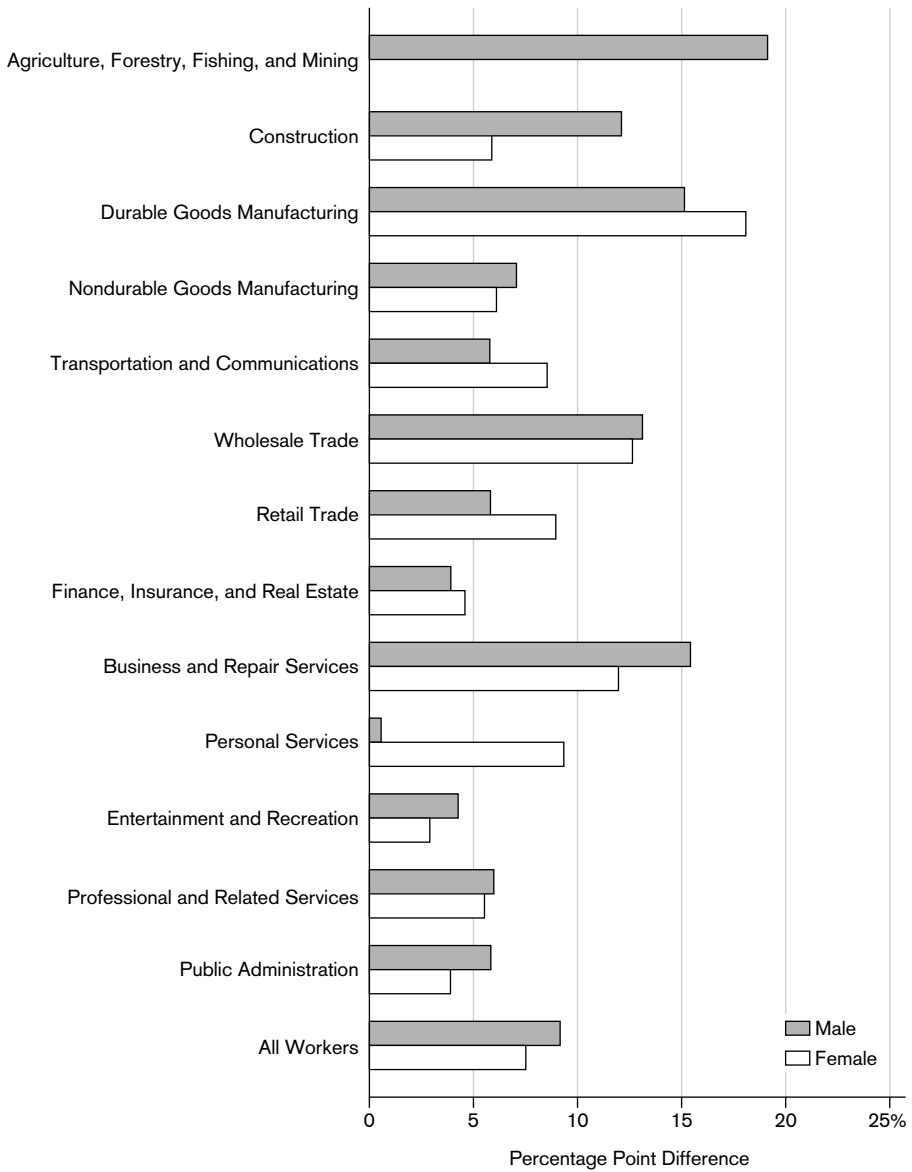


FIGURE 3.5. Net Change in Foreign-Born Workforce, by Industry, San Francisco, 1990 to 2000  
 SOURCE: IPUMS 2003.

TABLE 3.3. Workers Employed in Major Industry Category, by Nativity and Gender, California, 1990 and 2000

<i>Industry</i>	1990			2000		
	<i>Percentage Native Born</i>	<i>Percentage Foreign Born</i>	<i>Total Number</i>	<i>Percentage Native Born</i>	<i>Percentage Foreign Born</i>	<i>Total Number</i>
<b>Male</b>						
Agriculture, forestry, fishing, and mining	2.6%	9.4%	383,071	2.5%	9.5%	380,243
Construction	11.6	11.0	933,777	10.7	10.7	883,535
Durable goods	13.0	16.0	1,102,673	9.3	13.0	873,982
Nondurable goods	5.1	9.1	500,201	4.6	7.7	465,297
Transportation, communications	7.3	4.7	534,066	6.6	4.7	496,443
Wholesale trade	4.9	4.5	387,881	4.4	5.1	384,919
Retail trade	13.9	18.4	1,247,051	15.0	16.9	1,315,545
Finance, insurance, and real estate	5.7	3.6	425,451	5.2	3.3	390,604
Business and repair services	7.5	7.4	615,446	9.5	9.6	803,319
Personal services	1.6	3.0	160,082	1.7	2.7	172,225
Entertainment and recreation	2.8	1.7	207,753	4.5	2.3	314,968
Professional and related	12.9	7.9	950,261	17.3	11.5	1,285,887
Public administration	10.3	3.0	657,202	8.6	2.9	542,527
Total	100.0	100.0	8,104,915	100.0	100.0	8,309,494
<b>Female</b>						
Agriculture, forestry, fishing, and mining	1.3	3.7	117,676	1.0	3.0	100,909
Construction	1.9	1.0	102,076	1.6	0.9	97,336
Durable goods	6.7	10.4	466,128	4.4	8.4	373,872
Nondurable goods	4.1	12.2	373,347	3.3	9.5	340,329
Transportation, communications	4.4	2.6	249,808	3.3	2.4	206,623
Wholesale trade	2.9	3.6	191,009	2.3	3.7	182,410
Retail trade	16.8	16.8	1,053,689	16.7	17.3	1,154,069
Finance, insurance, and real estate	10.6	7.7	620,347	8.6	6.2	543,975
Business and repair services	6.7	5.9	413,673	6.6	6.2	447,186
Personal services	3.9	9.3	324,974	3.5	8.9	340,568
Entertainment and recreation	2.4	1.1	131,534	3.4	1.7	197,432
Professional and related	32.4	22.7	1,875,783	39.0	28.7	2,459,438
Public administration	6.0	2.9	328,120	6.1	3.0	347,242
Total	100.0	100.0	6,248,164	100.0	100.0	6,791,389

SOURCE: IPUMS 2003 (census microdata for civilian workers ages 18 to 64).

TABLE 3.4. Workers Employed in Major Industry Category, by Nativity and Gender, Los Angeles, 1990 and 2000

<i>Industry</i>	1990			2000		
	<i>Percentage Native Born</i>	<i>Percentage Foreign Born</i>	<i>Total Number</i>	<i>Percentage Native Born</i>	<i>Percentage Foreign Born</i>	<i>Total Number</i>
<b>Male</b>						
Agriculture, forestry, fishing, and mining	1.7%	5.5%	118,469	1.4%	4.4%	96,785
Construction	11.2	12.1	467,051	9.4	11.0	380,935
Durable goods	15.2	17.4	625,040	9.9	13.7	426,005
Nondurable goods	5.5	10.8	290,394	5.0	10.0	260,700
Transportation, communications	7.5	4.4	256,737	6.8	4.8	227,301
Wholesale trade	5.3	5.0	205,686	4.8	5.9	195,973
Retail trade	13.5	19.0	621,725	14.7	18.2	611,530
Finance, insurance, and real estate	6.3	3.8	220,519	5.8	3.6	187,749
Business and repair services	8.0	8.0	321,997	9.7	9.6	369,237
Personal services	1.6	3.1	82,290	1.5	3.0	81,424
Entertainment and recreation	4.0	1.9	132,418	6.6	2.5	191,986
Professional and related	13.0	7.1	439,959	17.8	11.3	579,151
Public administration	7.4	1.8	216,398	6.6	2.2	179,568
Total	100.0	100.0	3,998,683	100.0	100.0	3,788,344
<b>Female</b>						
Agriculture, forestry, fishing, and mining	0.8	1.5	29,198	0.5	0.7	18,285
Construction	1.8	0.8	43,693	1.4	0.8	37,766
Durable goods	8.0	11.0	261,079	4.9	7.7	177,451
Nondurable goods	4.3	14.7	220,285	3.4	12.2	193,794
Transportation, communications	4.7	2.6	121,745	3.5	2.5	97,660
Wholesale trade	3.2	3.9	101,829	2.6	3.7	92,549
Retail trade	16.1	16.7	494,403	16.3	17.7	512,107
Finance, insurance, and real estate	11.3	7.8	309,946	9.1	6.2	246,797
Business and repair services	6.7	6.2	200,200	6.7	5.7	195,155
Personal services	3.5	9.8	163,449	3.1	9.3	160,023
Entertainment and recreation	3.0	1.2	75,504	4.5	1.8	110,547
Professional and related	32.0	21.7	872,235	38.9	29.2	1,092,233
Public administration	4.5	2.1	115,466	5.0	2.5	125,880
Total	100.0	100.0	3,009,032	100.0	100.0	3,060,247

SOURCE: IPUMS 2003 (census microdata for civilian workers ages 18 to 64).

TABLE 3.5. Workers Employed in Major Industry Category, by Nativity and Gender, San Francisco, 1990 and 2000

<i>Industry</i>	1990			2000		
	<i>Percentage Native Born</i>	<i>Percentage Foreign Born</i>	<i>Total Number</i>	<i>Percentage Native Born</i>	<i>Percentage Foreign Born</i>	<i>Total Number</i>
<b>Male</b>						
Agriculture, forestry, fishing, and mining	1.6%	4.9%	47,632	1.4%	4.6%	46,797
Construction	10.9	9.1	188,370	10.4	10.3	189,202
Durable goods	14.2	18.2	266,162	11.2	17.7	242,344
Nondurable goods	5.4	6.6	105,261	4.7	5.1	88,751
Transportation, communications	7.8	6.8	133,341	6.5	4.9	109,657
Wholesale trade	4.9	3.7	82,316	3.9	3.8	73,378
Retail trade	13.8	19.2	275,418	14.3	16.4	277,854
Finance, insurance, and real estate	6.2	4.6	103,623	6.6	4.0	106,722
Business and repair services	8.4	7.6	149,968	11.3	13.7	220,789
Personal services	1.4	3.1	32,526	1.6	2.3	35,005
Entertainment and recreation	2.0	1.4	34,320	3.3	1.8	50,142
Professional and related	14.6	10.8	245,180	19.0	12.7	305,255
Public administration	8.5	4.1	130,260	5.8	2.7	88,013
Total	100.0	100.0	1,794,377	100.0	100.0	1,833,909
<b>Female</b>						
Agriculture, forestry, fishing, and mining	0.9	1.3	16,250	0.7	0.7	10,972
Construction	1.8	1.2	24,180	1.7	1.1	23,617
Durable goods	8.2	12.5	134,108	5.8	12.8	120,071
Nondurable goods	4.2	7.2	71,240	3.8	5.7	67,638
Transportation, communications	5.0	3.6	70,304	3.7	3.0	51,545
Wholesale trade	3.3	3.0	48,113	2.2	2.5	34,933
Retail trade	15.6	16.5	235,768	14.9	16.7	239,663
Finance, insurance, and real estate	10.9	10.3	157,235	9.1	7.4	133,745
Business and repair services	7.8	6.3	111,488	8.9	9.3	138,091
Personal services	3.0	8.4	63,999	2.9	7.9	68,182
Entertainment and recreation	1.9	1.0	25,298	2.5	1.2	31,626
Professional and related	32.0	24.8	445,601	38.8	28.5	546,370
Public administration	5.1	3.9	71,890	5.0	3.3	68,272
Total	100.0	100.0	1,475,474	100.0	100.0	1,534,725

SOURCE: Census microdata for civilian workers ages 18 to 64.

## JOB QUALITY AND EMPLOYMENT GROWTH

We now turn to the shifting patterns of employment in the United States and California in the late 1990s, disaggregating our data by nativity, race/ethnicity, and gender. Here we define “jobs” as positions occurring at the intersection of industry and occupation, arrayed by their relative earnings into quintiles of the labor force, using the CPS data for the boom years of 1994 to 2000.<sup>5</sup>

Wages are only one measure of job quality, but they are the only consistently available indicator available in most sources of data on the labor force. Moreover, the distribution of jobs by relative earnings is fundamental for tracking the forces driving changes in income inequality. We follow the example of research in this vein by Milkman and Dwyer (2002) who, in turn, elaborated the methods of Wright and Dwyer (2000–01, 2002).<sup>6</sup> We share their interest in the changing distribution of jobs during the 1990s expansion. Where their unit of analysis is job-quality deciles, however, we use job-quality quintiles. Further, our starting date is 1994, not 1992 (when the national economic recovery officially began), because CPS data on nativity were not available before that date. Arguably, 1994 is an appropriate start point because the expansion began later in California than in the country as a whole. In addition, labor market conditions for immigrants and other disadvantaged groups did not begin to improve until well after 1992 (Suro and Lowell 2002).

We examine a matrix of 1,035 possible jobs created by crossing 45 occupational and 23 industrial categories.<sup>7</sup> Median hourly earnings were calculated for each job in

5. Stiglitz originally developed the idea of using industry and occupation matrices to identify “good” jobs—those with earnings greater than the national median wage—and applied the schema to jobs created between 1994 and 1996. He concluded that during the two-year period, 68% of net job creation involved good quality jobs (see U.S. Council of Economic Advisors 1996).
6. The Current Population Survey is a national population survey collected by the Census Bureau for the Bureau of Labor Statistics. We used the Merged Outgoing Rotation Group data (MORG) provided by the National Bureau of Economic Research. These data include just the portion of the CPS sample that is dropped each month and combine all twelve months of CPSs for each year. The resulting MORG data files are roughly three times as large as any single CPS and provide a better sample size.
7. Like Milkman and Dwyer (2002) our sample includes only full-time workers ages eighteen to sixty-four who are not self-employed. We rely on the self-reporting of full time status in the CPS to exclude part-time workers. Like Milkman and Dwyer we also disaggregate one of the typical 22 industry groups into its two components of “business services” and “automotive and repair services” (for 23 industry groups). We also follow them, as well as Wright and Dwyer (2001), in including all jobs with any sample size in the analysis. In a nontrivial number of jobs this means that the sample size is rather small. But because these jobs are further collapsed within the quintiles that are analyzed, the effect of keeping them in the analysis does not substantially affect the results while it retains information. The variation in median earnings for the small jobs-cells would generally not put the job into a different quintile (even if a larger sample were available to generate a different estimate of the job’s median wage).

TABLE 3.6. Selected Characteristics of the Three Largest Jobs in Each Job-Quality Quintile, U.S., 1994

<i>Quintile</i>	<i>Industry/Occupation</i>	<i>Median Wage</i>	<i>National Workforce</i>
1st	Retail trade/Sales workers, retail and personal services	\$6.90	2,408,524
	Retail trade/Food services	\$6.23	1,887,953
	Medical care not in hospitals/Health services	\$6.75	940,472
2nd	Manufacturing (nondurable)/Machine operators and tenders, except precision workers	\$8.10	2,198,567
	Retail trade/Supervisors and proprietors, sales occupations	\$9.78	1,811,759
	Manufacturing (durable)/Machine operators and tenders, except precision workers	\$9.40	1,629,491
3rd	Construction/Construction trades	\$11.50	2,265,207
	Manufacturing (durable)/Other precision production, craft, and repair	\$12.00	1,659,730
	Transportation/Motor vehicle operators	\$10.67	1,126,299
4th	Education/Teachers, except college and university	\$15.00	2,875,860
	Public administration/Protective services	\$14.29	1,276,603
	Finance, insurance, and real estate/Sales, finance, and business services	\$14.40	868,424
5th	Hospital/Health assessment and treatment	\$17.50	1,140,075
	Finance, insurance, and real estate/Other executives, administrators, and managers	\$15.38	930,876
	Manufacturing (durable)/Other executives, administrators, and managers	\$19.80	922,451

SOURCE: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics 1994.

the matrix. We then rank-ordered the jobs from lowest to highest median hourly earnings and divided them into five groups, each containing roughly 20% of all full-time workers. The exact share in each quintile, so defined, is not exactly 20% because the wage cutoffs arrayed across jobs do not neatly divide up the wage array. What results is a fivefold classification of jobs that range from the “lower,” or first, quintile (the lowest 20% of median wage earners) to the “upper,” or fifth, quintile (the highest 20%). Table 3.6 shows the jobs that had the three largest workforces in each quintile in 1994. The lowest wage jobs were in retail trades such as food service. At the upper end were professionals in the health industry, along with executives, administrators, and managers.

Figure 3.6 shows that in 2000 about 20.8 million full-time workers were employed nationally in the top job-quality quintile. In California, as shown in Figure 3.7, over 2.6 million full-time workers had high-quality jobs, a share that was slightly higher

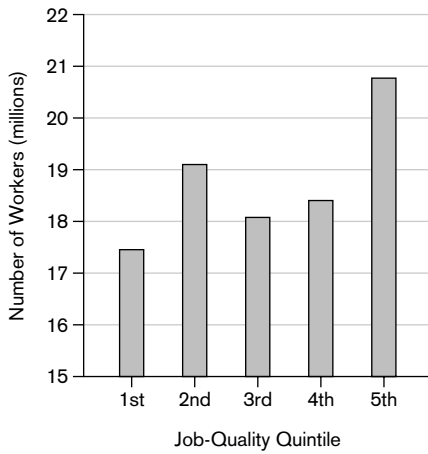


FIGURE 3.6. Distribution of Full-Time Workers, by Job Quality, U.S., 2000  
SOURCE: CPS (see footnote 6).

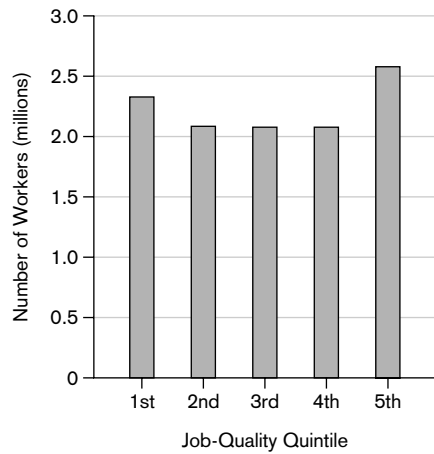


FIGURE 3.7. Distribution of Full-Time Workers, by Job Quality, California, 2000  
SOURCE: CPS (see footnote 6).

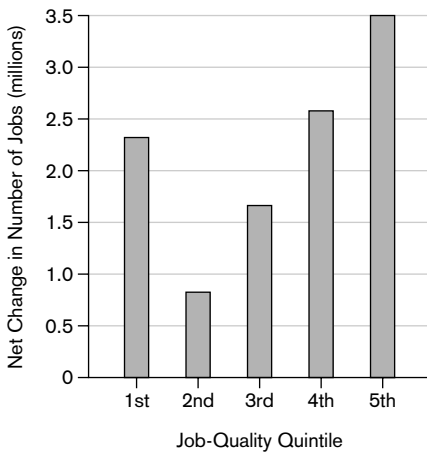


FIGURE 3.8. Job Growth for Full-Time Workers, by Job-Quality Quintile, U.S., 1994 to 2000  
SOURCE: CPS (see footnote 6).

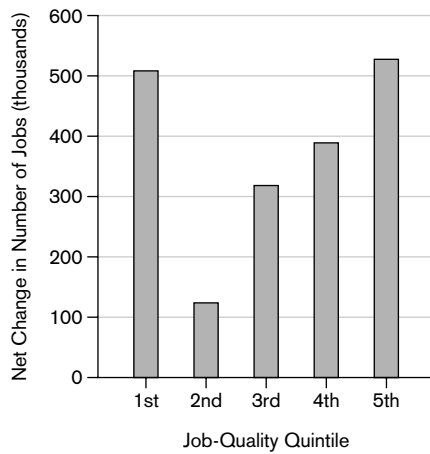


FIGURE 3.9. Job Growth for Full-Time Workers, by Job-Quality Quintile, California, 1994 to 2000  
SOURCE: CPS (see footnote 6).

than might be expected given California's population. The number of persons employed in the lowest quintile, almost 2.4 million, was even more disproportionate relative to the nationwide pattern.

Our analysis next focuses on the *net change* in the number of full-time employees from 1994 to 2000 in the United States and California. The measure captures job destruction as well as creation, and in some cases employment declined over the period. This U-shaped pattern implies that the economic boom of the 1990s did not eliminate (and possibly reinforced) an hourglass pattern of job distribution (see Milkman and Dwyer 2002). Figures 3.8 and 3.9 show the net change in the number of persons employed in each job-quality quintile over the 1994–2000 period. In the United States, and in California especially, growth was disproportionate at each end: both low-quality and high-quality jobs grew to a much greater degree than did those of middle quality. The boom of the 1990s contributed to the state's advantageous position as an economic leader, with substantial gains in the number of high-quality jobs. But this good news for the state's residents and politicians was balanced by apparent bad news: an even greater number of low-quality full-time jobs was created in California, accounting for just over one-fifth of the net growth of these jobs in the United States.

To interpret these data for immigrants, we first disaggregate the findings by gender. Immigrant women start at disproportionately lower points in the United States's job structure than do immigrant men (reflecting women's more traditional roles in many countries of origin and their lower levels of educational and professional achievement), but greater numbers of immigrant women work outside the home in the United States compared to women in their countries of origin. Immigrant women also improve their economic status faster in this country than their male counterparts do (Bean, Gonzalez-Baker, and Capps 2001), at least across successive generations, because of the United States's relatively egalitarian opportunity structure.

As Figures 3.10 and 3.11 show, males and females contributed differentially to employment growth between 1994 and 2000. Women contributed more to the polarized pattern of job growth than men did in both the United States and in California. Nonetheless, in California the gender-specific contributions to the U-shaped pattern were smaller than in the country as a whole. Nationwide, women contributed to growth at both the high and low ends, while growth among men was concentrated at the high end.

The disproportionate presence of immigrants in California's labor force—33% as opposed to 13% nationwide—is a crucial factor in the contrast between California and U.S. growth patterns (see Figures 3.8 and 3.9). Immigrants are likely to start out at low points in the job distribution, as Figures 3.12 and 3.13 illustrate. In the United States as a whole, immigrants were relatively evenly distributed over the quintiles. In California, however, where the job growth pattern was more polarized, and where immigrants were a much larger proportion of the workforce, they accounted for more than half of the growth in both the lowest and highest quintiles, substantially

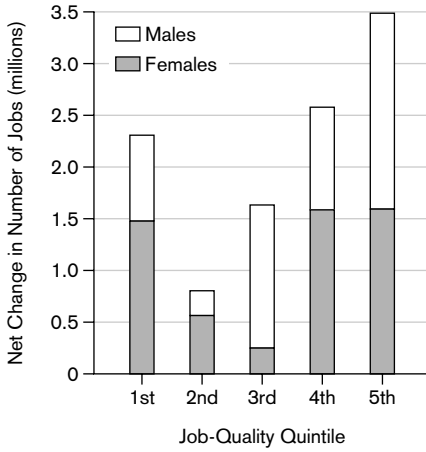


FIGURE 3.10. Job Growth for Full-Time Workers, by Job-Quality Quintile, Stacked by Gender, U.S., 1994 to 2000  
SOURCE: CPS (see footnote 6).

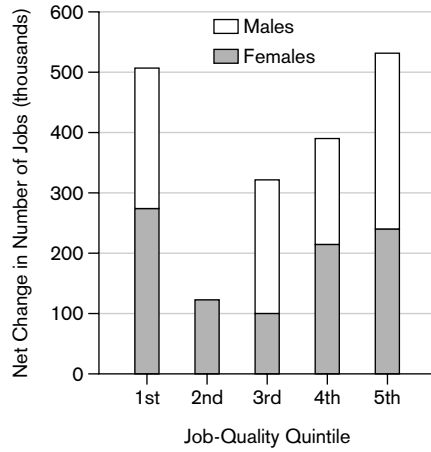


FIGURE 3.11. Job Growth for Full-Time Workers, by Job-Quality Quintile, Stacked by Gender, California, 1994 to 2000  
SOURCE: CPS (see footnote 6).

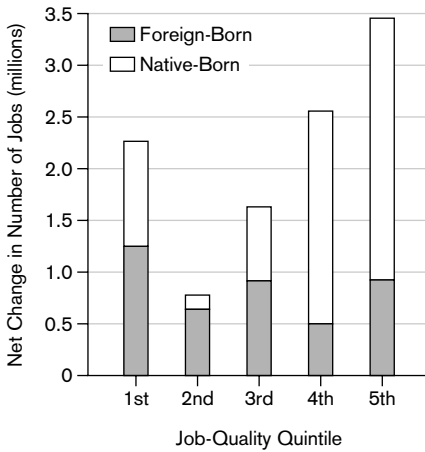


FIGURE 3.12. Job Growth for Full-Time Workers, by Job-Quality Quintile, Stacked by Nativity, U.S., 1994 to 2000  
SOURCE: CPS (see footnote 6).

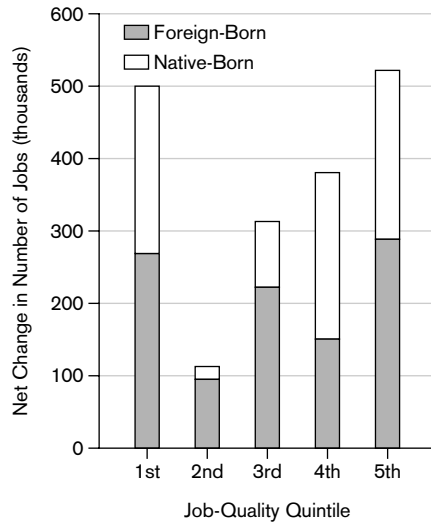


FIGURE 3.13. Job Growth for Full-Time Workers, by Job-Quality Quintile, Stacked by Nativity, California, 1994 to 2000  
SOURCE: CPS (see footnote 6).

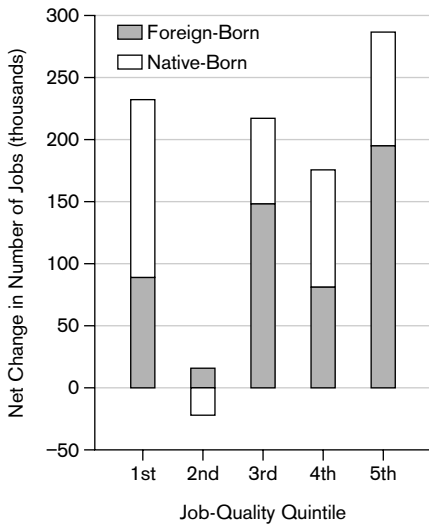


FIGURE 3.14. Job Growth for Full-Time Male Workers, by Job-Quality Quintile, Stacked by Nativity, California, 1994 to 2000  
SOURCE: CPS (see footnote 6).

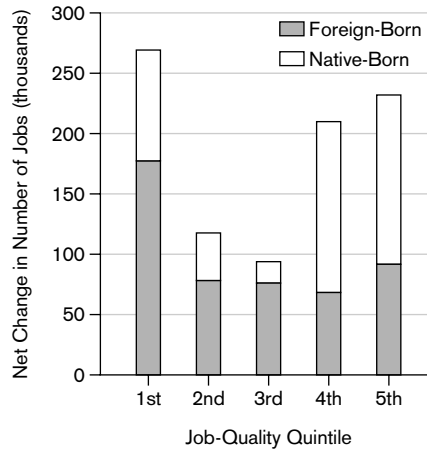


FIGURE 3.15. Job Growth for Full-Time Female Workers, by Job-Quality Quintile, Stacked by Nativity, California, 1994 to 2000  
SOURCE: CPS (see footnote 6).

contributing to the more polarized structure of growth. Immigrants also made up a large share of growth in the middle part of California’s job distribution during 1994–2000, accounting for over three-fourths of that increase.

As Figures 3.14 and 3.15 show, there were strikingly different gender dynamics at work. Foreign-born males accounted for appreciable portions of employment growth in the high and middle parts of the distribution (about two-thirds and three-fifths, respectively), whereas foreign-born females accounted for a large portion (about two-thirds) of the growth in the lower part of the distribution. The U-shaped pattern that characterizes the distribution of job quality growth in California during this period thus has distinctive gender and nativity origins, with immigrant women accounting for the largest single component of low-end growth and immigrant men the largest single component of middle- as well as high-end growth.

Disaggregating these results by race/ethnicity as well as gender and nativity further illuminates the dynamics underlying the job growth pattern in California. As Figure 3.16 shows, Asian male immigrants contributed just under half of the growth of California’s upper quality jobs, while Latino male immigrants and natives made up just over one-third of the growth of the lowest quality jobs. More surprising, however, Latino immigrants contributed almost half of California’s rather strong growth in middle-range jobs among males. This Asian-Latino pattern is not as clear-cut for women. As Figure 3.17 shows, Asian immigrant women made significant contributions to the growth of upper end jobs, but Asian females also made substantial

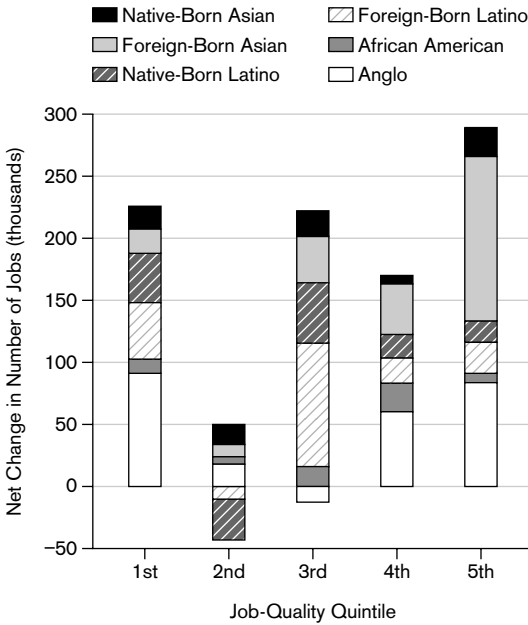


FIGURE 3.16. Job Growth for Full-Time Male Workers, by Job-Quality Quintile, Stacked by Race/Ethnicity and Nativity, California, 1994 to 2000  
SOURCE: CPS (see footnote 6).

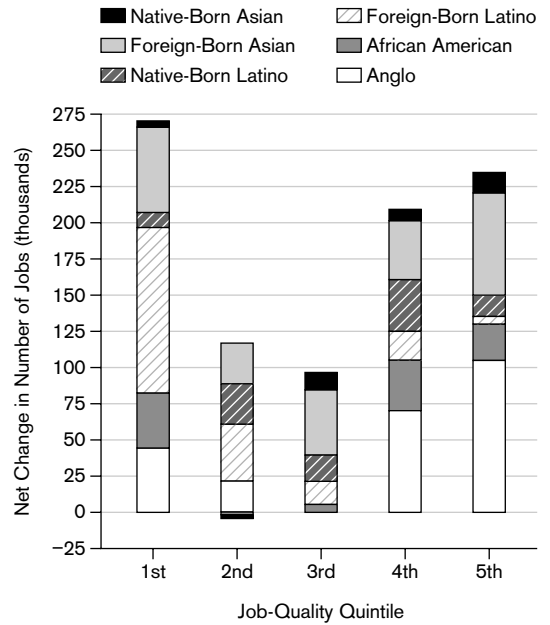


FIGURE 3.17. Job Growth for Full-Time Female Workers, by Job-Quality Quintile, Stacked by Race/Ethnicity and Nativity, California, 1994 to 2000  
SOURCE: CPS (see footnote 6).

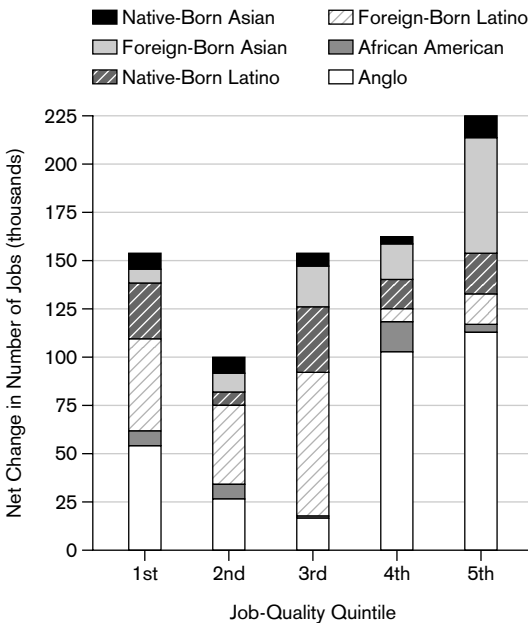


FIGURE 3.18. Job Growth for Full-Time Male Workers, by Job-Quality Quintile, Stacked by Race/Ethnicity and Nativity, Los Angeles, 1994 to 2000  
SOURCE: CPS (see footnote 6).

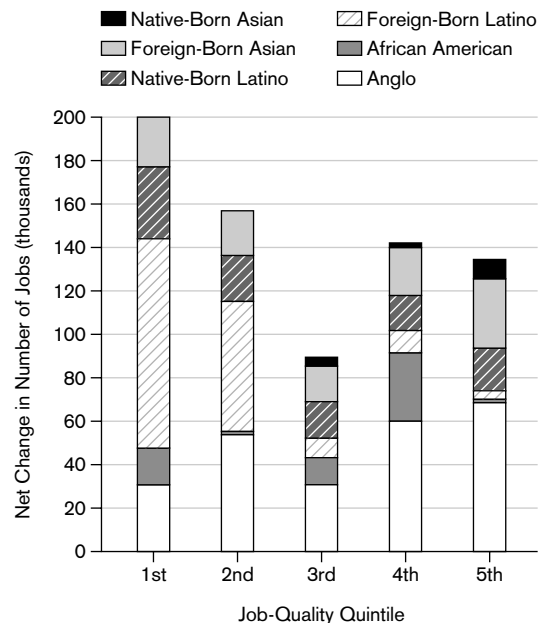


FIGURE 3.19. Job Growth for Full-Time Female Workers, by Job-Quality Quintile, Stacked by Race/Ethnicity and Nativity, Los Angeles, 1994 to 2000  
SOURCE: CPS (see footnote 6).

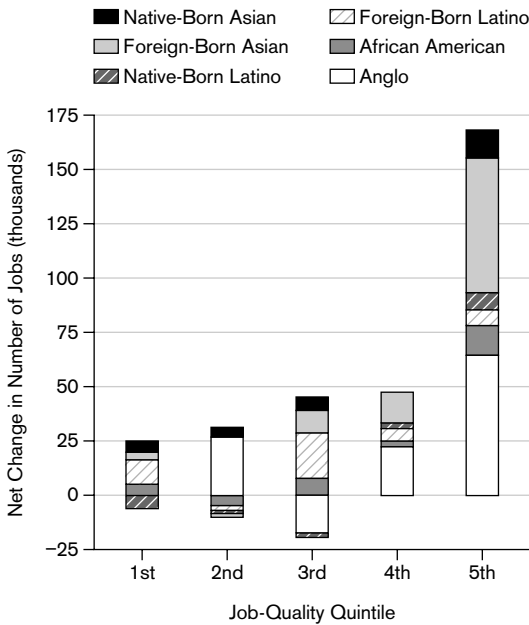


FIGURE 3.20. Job Growth for Full-Time Male Workers, by Job-Quality Quintile, Stacked by Race/Ethnicity and Nativity, San Francisco, 1994 to 2000  
SOURCE: CPS (see footnote 6).

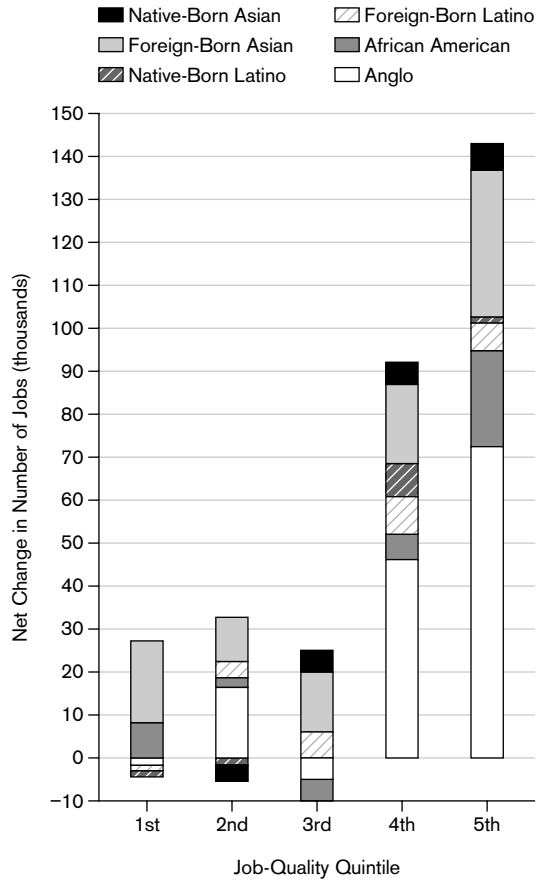


FIGURE 3.21. Job Growth for Full-Time Female Workers, by Job-Quality Quintile, Stacked by Race/Ethnicity and Nativity, San Francisco, 1994 to 2000  
SOURCE: CPS (see footnote 6).

contributions to lower end job growth. Native Latino women made stronger contributions to high-end job growth than did immigrant Latino women, who were the single largest contributors to the growth of low-quality jobs in the state, surpassing their male counterparts. The bimodal pattern of job quality growth, in short, was especially stark for women, regardless of race/ethnic group. For male full-time workers the bimodality loosely mirrored whether workers were Asian or Latino immigrants.

Figures 3.18 through 3.21 provide a similar disaggregation for the Los Angeles and the San Francisco metropolitan areas. The U-shaped pattern of net employment change is again partly driven by upper end growth for males and lower end growth for females. In Los Angeles, as in California, Asian immigrant males tended to dominate jobs in the top quintile, while Latino males, especially immigrants, predomi-

nated in the lower and middle quintiles. Asian female immigrants were distributed across the quintiles relatively evenly, as were Latino native-born women. Latino immigrant women in Los Angeles, however, disproportionately contributed to the growth of lower quality jobs.

The San Francisco Bay Area had a very different pattern of job growth during the 1990s boom, as Milkman and Dwyer (2002) note. Some of the same gender, nativity, and race/ethnicity dynamics seen in the state and in Los Angeles were evident nonetheless, as Figures 3.20 and 3.21 illustrate. For example, Asian male immigrants were the strongest contributors to upper end job growth, and immigrant Latino women played this role at the low end.

## **JOB QUALITY MOBILITY AMONG IMMIGRANTS**

These results illustrate the significance of immigration in employment patterns in California, and they indicate why it is important to consider the possibility that newcomer dynamics, in addition to racialized group dynamics, may play an important role (Bean and Stevens 2003). Although most recent immigrants are members of racial/ethnic groups, this fact may not fully explain why they are more likely to start out at low points in the job distribution. Another possibility is, simply, that they are inexperienced societal newcomers. If this were the case, however, one would expect their labor market outcomes to improve as they gain job experience and familiarity with employment opportunities in the destination country.

The public policies intended to provide avenues for upward mobility for less-skilled members of racial/ethnic groups have generally focused on generating more work opportunities in the middle part of the job distribution by solving demand-side difficulties. Insofar as workers experience prejudice based on their race and ethnicity, the development of successful policies may require further efforts to overcome the effects of discrimination. But if today's Latino and Asian immigrants are more like earlier waves of newcomers (mostly of European origin): they will be able move up once they gain experience in the labor market. The effects of newcomer status and those of discrimination are not, of course, mutually exclusive, but an attempt to disentangle their effects is nonetheless useful.

All workers, native and immigrant, tend to earn more as they age and as they gain job experience. For many immigrants, however, years of work experience can be separated into experience in the home country and experience gained after entering the U.S. labor market. Upon arrival, immigrants often lack language and U.S.-specific job skills; as skills and language improve, they are rewarded with better jobs and earnings. Research on earnings that compares natives' work experience in the United States and immigrants' experience outside the country generally supports the claim that recent immigrants earn less than natives who have an equal number of years of work experience. Yet, even after two decades of U.S.-specific experience, immigrants

generally fail to catch up to the earnings levels of otherwise similar native workers (controlling for such factors as education) (Smith and Edmonston 1997).<sup>8</sup>

Lacking longitudinal data, a fully adequate analysis of the earnings growth process is not possible, but we can get a good approximation of immigrant mobility by tracking year-of-arrival cohorts over time. To do this, we grouped immigrants into three cohorts according to the years that they reported arriving in the United States:<sup>9</sup> those who arrived between 1980 and 1983, between 1984 and 1989, and between 1990 and 1994–95 (the 2000 CPS data do not differentiate 1994 and 1995). To the degree that job quality mobility occurs, one would expect that immigrants in these arrival cohorts shifted into higher quality jobs during the economic boom years, from 1994 to 2000.

Figures 3.22, 3.23, 3.24, and 3.25 show the percentage point change for each cohort across job-quality quintiles for the United States, California, San Francisco, and Los Angeles.<sup>10</sup> For example, Figure 3.22 shows that the percentage of the 1990–1994–95 cohort in the top quintile increased by about half a percentage point in the United States as a whole. In contrast, the share of the 1980–1983 arrival cohort in the same quintile increased by four percentage points. More to the point, the entire pattern for the 1980–1983 cohort is one of upward mobility, with substantial losses in lower quality jobs and strong gains in upper quality jobs. But even the most recent arrivals experienced some upward mobility between 1994 and 2000. This was also the case in California, as Figure 3.23 shows, although the large presence of the most recent arrivals in the top quintile is striking here (and differs from the U.S. pattern).

As Figure 3.24 shows, this is driven by the San Francisco Bay Area, where the cohort that arrived most recently has an especially strong presence in the highest quality jobs, gaining nearly fifteen percentage points over the 1994–2000 period. Asian immigrants, most likely the wave of highly skilled immigrant professionals recruited in the San Francisco–San Jose area during the high-tech boom, were undoubtedly responsible for this leap. Figure 3.25 shows evidence of job mobility during the economic expansion in Los Angeles as well. Indeed, the pattern for Los Angeles looks much like that for the state of California (Figure 3.22), and it mirrors the national pattern of stronger shifts into better quality jobs by the cohorts that had been in the country for longer periods of time. The 1990–1994–95 cohort, for example, moved from the lowest quality jobs into those of middle quality.

8. Some research finds very fast wage assimilation, especially among Europeans and high-skilled Asian immigrants. Otherwise, there is substantial agreement that Latino immigrants, Mexicans in particular, may experience slower assimilation patterns.

9. The results described in the text, for example, one of improving job mobility for the earlier arrival cohorts, also hold for those who came to the United States in the 1970s and the 1960s.

10. The percentage distribution in 1994 is subtracted from the percentage distribution in 2000 to get the percentage-point change across the time period. In 1994 there are five years' worth of immigrants (1990–1994), while in the 2000 data there are six years' worth of immigrants (1990–1996). A numerical change, as shown elsewhere in this study, would be biased because the span of years is uneven. Also, the sample design of the CPS makes a comparison of counts for immigrants in small year-of-arrival cohorts less reliable than a comparison of percentages.

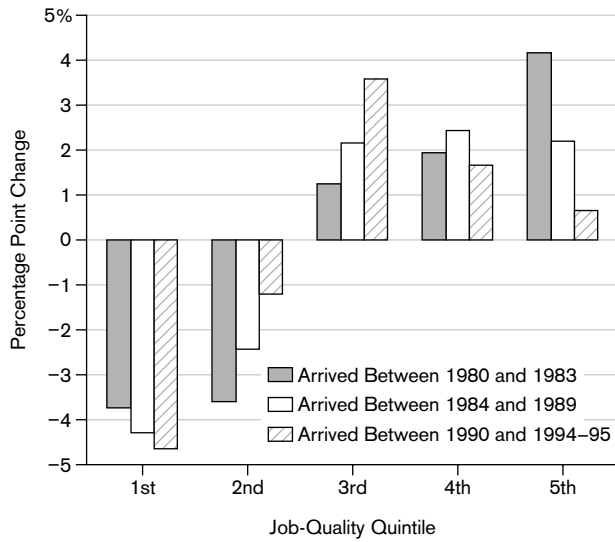


FIGURE 3.22. Job Mobility for Foreign-Born Workers, by Date of Arrival, U.S., 1994 to 2000  
SOURCE: CPS (see footnote 6).

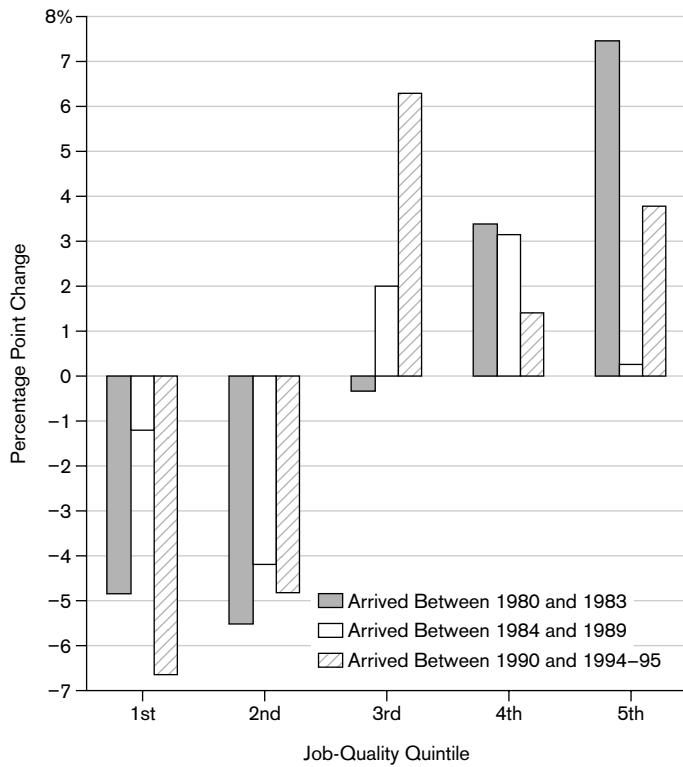


FIGURE 3.23. Job Mobility for Foreign-Born Workers, by Date of Arrival, California, 1994 to 2000  
SOURCE: CPS (see footnote 6).



FIGURE 3.24. Job Mobility for Foreign-Born Workers, by Date of Arrival, San Francisco, 1994 to 2000  
SOURCE: CPS (see footnote 6).

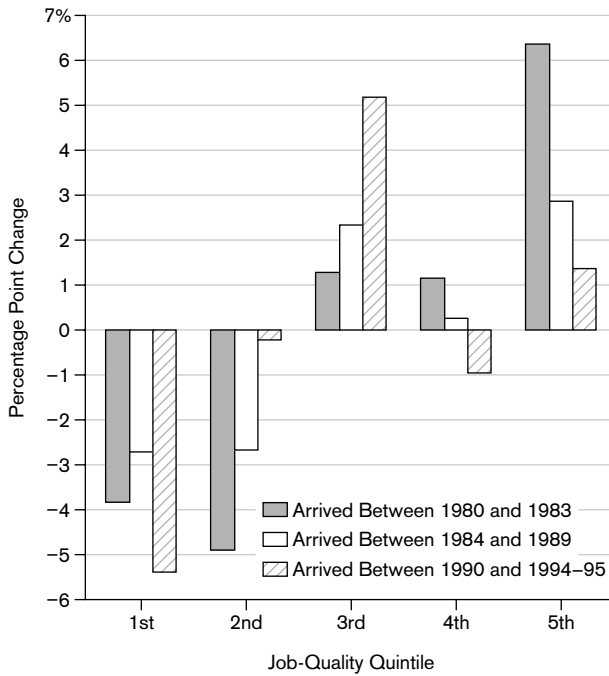


FIGURE 3.25. Job Mobility for Foreign-Born Workers, by Date of Arrival, Los Angeles, 1994 to 2000  
SOURCE: CPS (see footnote 6).

These findings suggest that many immigrants do move into better quality jobs over time. These findings also suggest the importance of disaggregating immigrant labor market experiences. Failing to do so yields a more pessimistic portrait of the constraints facing recent immigrants than may be warranted.

## CONCLUSION

The 1990s were a period of record immigration to California and the United States, with both legal and unauthorized immigrants arriving in the country and state, a trend that will likely continue in the twenty-first century. Immigrants make up a proportionately larger share of the workforce than of the population—and this is nowhere more true than in California. Although many highly skilled as well as less-skilled immigrants have been coming to the United States, most are among the less well educated, a fact that is consistent with the employment patterns described above. Many observers have been concerned that a bimodal pattern of immigrant education, with many immigrants either being poorly or very well educated, overlaps too closely with the increasingly polarized distribution of job growth in the country. Our analysis of changing employment patterns and the shifting distribution of bad and good jobs in the 1994–2000 economic boom suggests, however, that immigration is not fundamentally driving the emergence of a polarized job structure in either the United States or California. That structure derives largely from changes among the native born, suggesting that shifts in labor demand explain the pattern, rather than increases in the supply of less-skilled and highly skilled immigrant workers. Immigrants in California, however, do contribute to the polarization, to varying degrees depending on race/ethnicity, gender, and location.

Disaggregating results by race/ethnicity, nativity, gender, and metropolitan area reveals the importance of newcomer dynamics to labor market outcomes. In both Los Angeles and the Bay Area, immigrants do not in general appear to be stuck in low-end jobs. Our analyses of arrival cohort data suggest substantial immigrant upward mobility, mainly from lower to middle-range jobs in Los Angeles and from middle to higher range jobs in the Bay Area. This does not mean that predictions based on racial/ethnic stratification theories are wrong, but it does suggest that such perspectives should be modified by taking into account the effects of newcomer status and the likelihood that immigrants may experience more upward mobility than many commentators presume.

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