



Migrant workers add huge value to the countries where they work

As parts of the developed world tighten foreign worker laws and maintain a hostile rhetoric against “immigrants” and “refugees,” a new report shows Asian migrant workers add economic value to their new countries.

US President Donald Trump is sending troops to the Mexican border to clamp down on unauthorized arrivals, and European leaders face a backlash for liberal migration policies, but Asian Development Bank Institute research debunks the myth that new migrants are a drain on the government’s coffers through welfare payments.

It suggests new arrivals in countries, including Australia, Canada, the US, and New Zealand, do integrate into society by finding jobs at no cost to established residents.

The report does not differentiate between the types of migrants, whether they be skilled, unskilled, or refugees, and focuses only on those born in Asia.

In the US, the unemployment rate of Asian-born migrants is lower than that of “official” migrants from other regions and of US-born workers.

In 2016, only 3.4% of migrants from the region were unemployed in their new country, 2 percentage points lower than for the US-born working-age population.

Labor market outcomes of Asian-born migrants in Canada—the US border where President Trump is not planning to build a wall to keep out “criminals” and “rapists”—are very favorable.

Although their unemployment rate, which was 6.4% in 2016, is higher than in the US, it’s similarly well below the rate for other foreign-born and Canadian-born members of the labor force.

The situation of Asian-born workers in the Australian labor market is also favorable. Their unemployment rate is slightly higher, at 6.2%, than for migrants from other parts of the world and Australian-born workers, but the gap with Australian-born workers has narrowed since 2008 and is now very small.

Outcomes were similar in neighboring New Zealand, but in Europe, the situation is a little less positive and is mixed across different countries, which may be due to language and other country-specific issues.

The positive economic influence of Asia on the rest of the world also extends to education, with internationally mobile students increasingly looking to Asian institutions to pursue their studies.

Asia has always sent tertiary-level students to other countries' universities and is now playing its part as a destination region.

The position of the People's Republic of China, including Hong Kong, China, and Macau, China, as a key destination for international students is rapidly growing.

In 2015, almost 170,000 international students were enrolled in China's universities.

Japan is the second main Asian country of destination, with 130,000 international students, far ahead of Malaysia, with 60,000; the Republic of South Korea, with 55,000; Singapore, with 49,000; and India, with 42,000.

Overall, Asian countries host just over 12% of all internationally mobile students.

And when one considers that Australia and New Zealand are both popular destinations, particularly for Asian students, the significance of Asia and the Pacific as a destination of choice for international students should continue to grow.

That episode was based on the Seventh Roundtable of Labor Migration in Asia, Finance and Technology to Increase the Positive Impact of Migration on Home Countries. Participants included Jean-Christophe Dumont and Jonathan Chaloff from the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development; Nilim Baruah, of the International Labour Organization; and Aladdin Rillo, then of ADBI, who organized the event and produced the report.

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