

The Vermont Legislative Research Service

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Aging Workforce and Immigration

In 2010, 22.6% of the U.S. population was over the age of 55. By 2016 the number of workers over 55 is expected to increase by 36.5%. The U.S. Census Bureau found that, from 2000 to 2010, the number of Vermonters ages 55 and over increased from 22.1% to 28.9% (134,550 to 180,840 people).³ Furthermore, the median age in Vermont is 41.5 years old, making it one of seven states where the average age is higher than 40 years.⁴ Bennington County, Windsor County, Grant County and Essex County, in Vermont, have the oldest populations with median ages ranging from 45.0 to 49.9.⁵ Similarly, between 2000 and 2013 the number of foreign-born individuals living in Vermont increased .5%.⁶ A majority of these foreign-born individuals residing in Vermont are from Africa, Asia and Latin America.⁷

This report will discuss the causes and effects of these demographic changes and possible responses to them. First, the report examines causes which contribute to the growing number of elderly individuals in the labor force and their difficulty in finding employment. United States Department of Development.”

³ These figures were computed by adding data and calculating percentages from the following sources: United States Census Bureau, “Profile of General Demographic Characteristics: 2010 Vermont,” accessed March 30, 2015, <http://factfinder.census.gov/faces/tableservices/jsf/pages/productview.xhtml?src=bkmk>. United States Census Bureau, “Profile of General Population and Housing Characteristics: 2010 Vermont,” accessed March 30, 2015, <http://factfinder.census.gov/faces/tableservices/jsf/pages/productview.xhtml?src=bkmk>.

⁴ Lindsay M. Howden, and Julie A. Mey, “Age and Sex Composition: 2010,” Census Briefs, May 2011, accessed March 30, 2015, http://www.census.gov/prod/cen2010/briefs/c2010br_03.pdf.

⁵ Lindsay M. Howden et al., “Age and Sex Composition: 2010.”

⁶ Migration Policy Institute, “State Immigration Data Profiles: Vermont,” accessed March 19, 2015, http://www.migrationpolicy.org/data/state_profiles/state_demographics/VT.

⁷ Migration Policy Institute, “State Immigration Data Profiles: Vermont.”

Second, the report discusses the steps taken by the federal government, in coordination with state governments and the private sector, to accommodate these individuals. Third, the report provides an overview of the national and state immigrant labor forces. Fourth, the report describes national and state immigration employment and assimilation programs.

National Issues Related to an Aging Population

The national labor force participation rate for individuals aged 55 and older rose from 29.2% to 40.5% from 1993 to 2013.⁸ Even so, “workers in their fifties are about 20% less likely than workers ages 25 to 34 to become reemployed.”⁹ The subsequent sections examine the causes of the growth of elderly labor force participation and their employment rates.

Financial Issues

In 2010 the Bureau of Labor Statistics (“BLS”) published

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recommendations was the Senior Community Service Employment Program (SCSEP), where eligible seniors can receive on-the-job training while also earning minimum wage in the process.³⁵ The program allows participants to work up to 20 hours a week while gaining valuable job training experience serving in

Encore Cornell has three main elements: first, Encore Career provides the elderly with resources, enabling them to seek employment opportunities at Cornell and in the state of New York at large⁴⁴. Second, Encore Engage seeks to “connect retirees with their surrounding communities in a variety of volunteer opportunities run through Cornell and other local agencies.”⁴⁵ Third, Encore Connect is a program that aims at “bringing together a panel of retirees to share their stories at an on-campus lunchtime workshop,” throughout Cornell’s spring semester⁴⁶.

Immigration

Background

The percentage of foreign-born individuals residing in Vermont increased from 3.8% to 4.3% from 2000 to 2013⁴⁷ (23,245 to 27,012 people).⁴⁸ In 2013, immigrants to Vermont comprised 4.4% of the total labor force, which was less than the national average of 16.3%.⁴⁹ A 2013 BLS report found that in the U.S. foreign-born workers were more likely than native-born workers to be employed in grounds, cleaning, maintenance, production, transportation, material moving, natural resources, construction and maintenance occupations.”⁵⁰

According to a special report from the Immigration Policy Center, states that are facing population shortages and economic inactivity are attempting to develop initiatives/strategies that seek to integrate immigrant populations into society and utilize those individuals to effectively combat the aforementioned issues.⁵¹ The following section looks at the strategies adopted by several states to combat these shortages and train immigrants for economic success.

⁴⁴ Encore Cornell, “Encore Career,” accessed March 16, 2015, https://www.hr.cornell.edu/retirees/encore_career.html.

⁴⁵ Encore Cornell, “Encore Engage,” accessed March 16, 2015, https://www.hr.cornell.edu/retirees/encore_engage.html.

⁴⁶ Encore Cornell, “Encore Connect,” accessed March 16, 2015, https://www.hr.cornell.edu/retirees/encore_connect.html.

⁴⁷ Migration Policy Institute, “Immigrant Share of the U.S. Population and Civilian Labor Force, 1980 – Present,” accessed March 19, 2015, http://www.migrationpolicy.org/programs/data_hub/us-immigration-trends-labor.

⁴⁸ Migration Policy Institute, “State Immigration Data Profiles: Vermont.”

⁴⁹ Migration Policy Institute, “Immigrant Share of the U.S. Population and Civilian Labor Force, 1980 – Present.”

⁵⁰ U.S. Bureau Of Labor Statistics, “Foreign Born Workers: Labor Force Characteristics-2013,” Press Release, May 22, 2014, accessed March 17, 2015, <http://www.bls.gov/news.release/pdf/forbrn.pdf>.

⁵¹ Paul McDaniel, “Revitalization in the Heartland of America: Welcoming Immigrant Entrepreneurs for Economic Development,” Immigration Policy Center Special Report, January 2014, accessed March 17, 2015, <http://www.immigrationpolicy.org/sites/default/files/docs/revitalizationinheartlandofamerica.pdf>.

support these aspects⁶⁰ The report made recommendations to “improve licensing, credentialing and support systems for foreigntrained professionals (and) strengthen and standardize training and Englishlanguagelearning (ELL) systems statewide.”⁶¹

Kentucky

The Office for Globalization in Louisville, Kentucky helps immigrants become self-sufficient while, “engaging in economic development through global economic outreach.”⁶² The Office for Globalization created several International Councils, which are “business associations formed around distinct ethnic communities.. [that] assist with networking, city policy and global awareness.”⁶³ Similarly, the Office for Globalization created the Refugees and Immigrants Succeeding in Entrepreneurship program (“RISE”) in 2013.⁶⁴ RISE offers business counseling, as well as connection and funding opportunities, to help facilitate the economic success of immigrants through entrepreneurship.

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