



CBP data: immigrant encounters at the southwestern border

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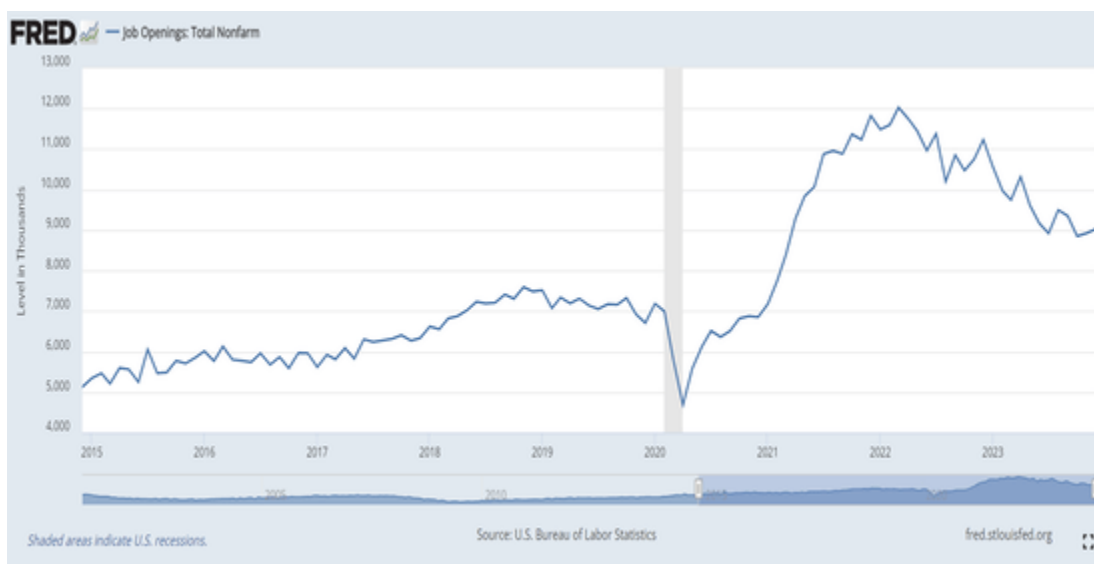
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US Customs and Border Protection publishes monthly data of immigrant encounters at the southwestern land border, grouped by country of citizenship:

Encounter data includes U.S. Border Patrol Title 8 apprehensions, Office of Field Operations Title 8 inadmissibles, and all Title 42 expulsions for fiscal years 2020 to date. Data is available for the Northern Land Border, Southwest Land Border, and Nationwide (i.e., air, land, and sea modes of transportation) encounters.

The chart above shows a big ramp up in encounters in early 2021 as the US was coming out of covid and job openings increased substantially (the monthly jobs data from the [St. Louis Fed](#)). Expulsions under Title 42 ended in March 2023—without a huge effect on the total, although encounters with Venezuelan, Nicaragua, Guatemalan, and Honduran citizens ticked up recently. Temporary Protected Status (TPS) is currently afforded to citizens of Venezuela, Nicaragua, and Honduras.

Here's a wider view of the monthly nonfarm job openings, from 2015 to present:



The CATO Institute, a libertarian think tank, recently published an analysis titled [The US Labor Market Explains Most of the Increase in Illegal Immigration](#). They note:

Many are blaming President Biden’s immigration policies for the rapid increase in border crossings. My colleague David Bier runs through many of Biden’s policy changes in immigration over the last several years in The New York Times. As Bier mentions in that piece and I wrote over a year ago, most of the increase in illegal immigration can be blamed on the strength of the labor market rather than the administration’s tinkering with border enforcement policies. ...

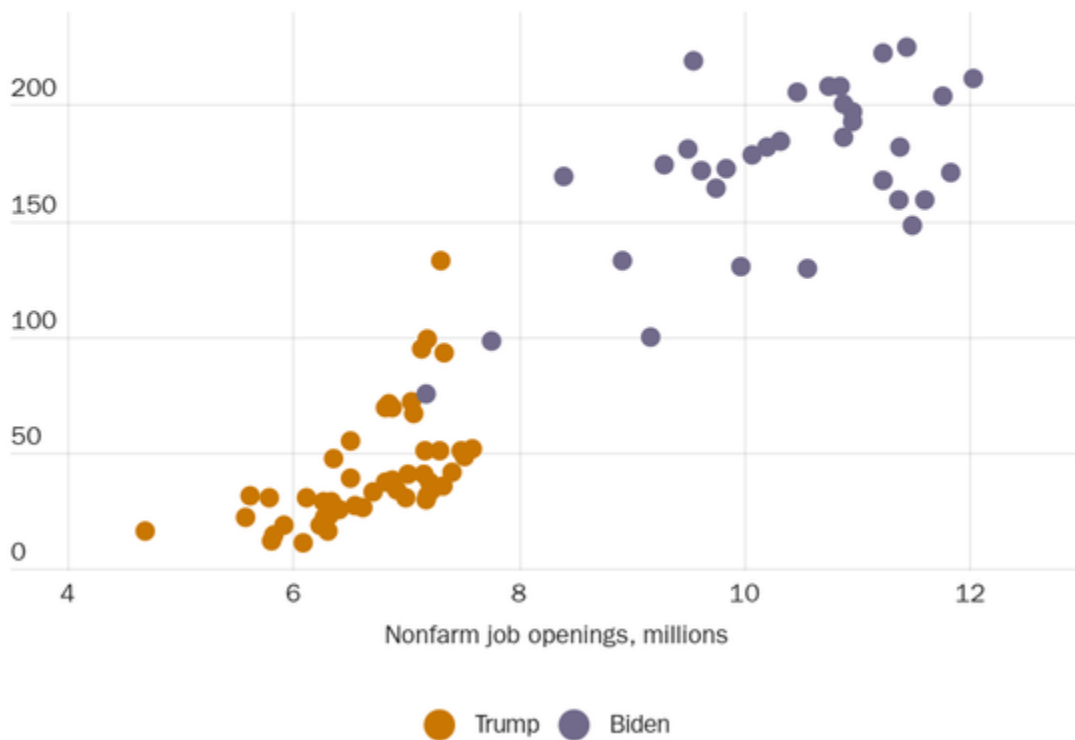
The number of non-farm job openings in September 2023 is higher than at any point during the Trump, Obama, or Bush administrations. The wage gain for immigrants in the United States is already between about a four-fold and a ten-fold increase compared to labor in mostly Latin American and Caribbean countries, even accounting for the higher cost of living in the United States. Since legal migration is very restricted, many come illegally to work.

In support of that point, CATO provides a scatter plot of monthly CPB encounters vs. monthly non-farm job openings during the Trump and Biden administrations:

Figure 2

The strength of the labor market is capable of explaining much of the movement in border encounters for the Trump and Biden administrations

Southwest Border Patrol encounters, thousands



There's much overlap between the two, but encounters rise significantly during the Trump administration as—you guessed it—the number of job openings increased.