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# Immigration: Good for Immigrants, Good for America

[Damon W. Root](#) | July 22, 2009, 12:10pm

Daniel Griswold, the director of the Cato Institute's Center for Trade Policy Studies, has a very interesting new paper arguing that as immigrants arrive in the U.S., native-born Americans become better off in terms of both skills and income. A snippet:

One argument raised against expanded legal immigration has been that allowing more low-skilled foreign-born workers to enter the United States will swell the ranks of the underclass. The critics warn that by "importing poverty," immigration reform would bring in its wake rising rates of poverty, higher government welfare expenditures, and a rise in crime. The argument resonates with many Americans concerned about the expanding size of government and a perceived breakdown in social order.

As plausible as the argument sounds, it is not supported by the social and economic trends of the past 15 years. Even though the number of legal and illegal immigrants in the United States has risen strongly since the early 1990s, the size of the economic underclass has not. In fact, by several measures the number of Americans living on the bottom rungs of the economic ladder has been in a long-term decline, even as the number of immigrants continues to climb. Other indicators associated with the underclass, such as the crime rate, have also shown improvement. The inflow of low-skilled immigrants may even be playing a positive role in pushing nativeborn Americans up the skills and income ladder.

Whole thing [here](#). Read *Reason's* extensive immigration coverage [here](#). And click below to watch Reason.tv's Drew Carey on the tragically high cost of building a border wall.

And click below again to watch the *Wall Street Journal's* Jason Riley make the case for open borders.

