Kern County Lacks Skilled Immigrants

Kern County has the lowest ratio of skilled immigrants among the nation's 100 largest metropolitan areas, according to a new study released the Brookings Institution. In the study, four of the six areas with the lowest skill ratios are located in the San Joaquin Valley: Kern, Modesto, Fresno, and Stockton.

The study measures immigrant skill by educational attainment as reported in U.S. Census Bureau questionnaires. “Low-skilled” immigrants are defined as those lacking high school diplomas; “mid-skilled” immigrants are those with high school diplomas or some college education without degrees; and “high-skilled” immigrants are those with college degrees.

The study evaluates immigrants residing in Kern County according to their skill levels. It finds that 58.7 percent are low-skilled, 33.5 percent are mid-skilled, and 7.8 percent are high-skilled. The study calculates the percentage of high-to-low-skilled adult immigrants. Kern County has the lowest immigrant skill ratio at 13.3 percent, indicating a predominately unskilled immigrant population.

- Immigrant population evaluated for skill levels: 130,299
- Low-skilled immigrants: 76,512 (58.7%)
- Mid-skilled immigrants: 43,611 (33.5%)
- High-skilled immigrants: 10,176 (7.8%)
- Skills ratio: 13.3%

Kern County also is considered to be a "minor-continuous gateway," an area with a long history of immigrant settlement and a high immigrant ratio. The study divides the county's population to its immigrant population to measure an immigrant ratio of 19.7 percent for Kern County.

- County population: 807,400
- Immigrant population: 159,218
- Immigrants in total population: 19.7%

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1 They study elected to exclude the “middle-skilled” immigrants because the relative size of this group varies little across the 100 largest metro areas.
For the complete report see http://www.brookings.edu/papers/2011/06_immigrants_singer.aspx