

**Letter****Immigrants will be needed as the baby boomers age**

From Daniel Aronoff, Cambridge, MA, US

10 MINUTES AGO

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Janan Ganesh plausibly identifies the rise in its foreign-born population, from 5 to 13 per cent since 1970, as the root cause of US anxiety over immigration (“[Do not mistake Donald Trump’s motives on immigration](#)”, June 21). It is not difficult to understand the reaction induced by over-saturation of a labour market experiencing downward trending real wages and the justifiable fear that further large-scale immigration may cause an already strained social consensus to fray further.

Yet, I believe these concerns will be over-matched by an even more formidable force. The baby boom generation is ageing, and as it heads into retirement the US will soon face a massive labour shortage. According to the [US Census Bureau](#), the age-dependency ratio (the percentage of working age people to retirees) will jump from 67 per cent in 2010 to 83 per cent in 2030. This projection is based on a retirement age of 64, so it surely over-states the impact, as retirement ages are already climbing upward. Even so, the US will need to add immigrants to its domestic-born labour force to support the living standards of the older population. Any politically feasible restructuring of Medicare and social security will require it.

We are witnessing a storm that will subside. The border wall may be built, but it will soon have to be torn down.

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