NPR/Kaiser/Kennedy School

Immigration Survey
The public’s views on immigration are significantly less negative than they were in the months after the 9/11 terrorist attacks.
Should legal immigration be kept at its present level, increased, or decreased?

- Decreased: 50%, 59%, 48%, 41%, 9%
- Kept at present level: 35%, 29%, 37%, 37%, 8%
- Increased: 8%, 9%, 9%, 18%

Percent of native-born Americans saying legal/illegal immigration has helped or hurt the U.S. economy

Those who think most recent immigrants are in the U.S. illegally have more negative views of immigration and immigrants.
Differences between those who think most immigrants are in the U.S. illegally vs. legally

- Federal government not tough enough on immigration
- Immigrants do not pay fair share of taxes
- Immigrants burden the country
- Immigrants take jobs from Americans

Although attitudes are less negative than they have been in years, many negative attitudes toward immigration persist.
Has recent immigration been good or bad for the country, or hasn’t it made much of a difference?

Percent of native-born Americans who say…

- Recent immigrants take jobs away from Americans who want them (51%)
- They or a family member did not get a job because it was given to an immigrant instead (15%)
- They or a family member lost a job to an immigrant (12%)

Americans express ambivalence, if not downright unease, about the cultural impact of immigration.
Immigrants and non-immigrants agree about what kind of country the U.S. is…

Percent who say the U.S. is:

A country with a basic American culture and values that immigrants take on when they come here

- Immigrants: 36%
- Non-immigrants: 34%

A country made up of many cultures and values that change as new people come here

- Immigrants: 61%
- Non-immigrants: 64%

...But they disagree about what kind of country the U.S. should be

Percent who say the U.S. should be:

- A country with a basic American culture and values that immigrants take on when they come here
  - Immigrants: 39%
  - Non-immigrants: 62%

- A country made up of many cultures and values that change as new people come here
  - Immigrants: 57%
  - Non-immigrants: 33%

Generally, native-born Americans with higher levels of contact with immigrants have more positive views of immigrants and immigration than those with less contact.
### Differing views among non-immigrants by level of contact with immigrants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Percent who agree:</th>
<th>Non-Immigrant Total</th>
<th>Personal contact w/immigrants</th>
<th>Immigrants in state population</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>High</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recent immigration bad for U.S.</td>
<td>43%</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>51%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recent immigrants take jobs</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recent immigrants do not pay their fair share of taxes</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Immigrants burden U.S.</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Government not tough enough</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recent immigrants are unfairly discriminated against</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The public is concerned about illegal immigration and wants the government to crack down.
Concerns about illegal immigration and support for government action

- Very or somewhat concerned about illegal immigration:
  - Non-immigrants: 72%
  - Immigrants: 48%

- Federal government isn't tough enough on immigration:
  - Non-immigrants: 66%
  - Immigrants: 26%

- Government should spend more to prevent illegal immigration:
  - Non-immigrants: 55%
  - Immigrants: 34%

### Percent saying they are concerned about illegal immigration because…

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reason</th>
<th>Non-Immigrants</th>
<th>Immigrants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Providing schools and health care to illegal immigrants cost taxpayers too much money</td>
<td>63%</td>
<td>33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Too many people are coming into our country</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increases the likelihood of terrorism in the U.S.</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Illegal immigration has become dangerous and people have died trying to enter the U.S.</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wrong kinds of people coming into our country</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Illegal immigrants take jobs away</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not concerned about illegal immigration</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Immigration is not a particularly partisan issue, and the president’s proposal to deal with it draws stronger opposition than support.
Democrats and Republicans have similar attitudes towards immigration

- **Recent illegal immigration has hurt the economy**
  - Democrats: 54%
  - Republicans: 59%

- **Immigrants today are a burden on the country**
  - Democrats: 49%
  - Republicans: 52%

- **Recent immigration has been bad for the country**
  - Democrats: 41%
  - Republicans: 43%

- **Legal immigration should be decreased**
  - Democrats: 42%
  - Republicans: 40%

Opinions about President Bush’s immigration proposal

44% favor Bush plan
52% oppose Bush plan
4% Don’t know

Opposition to Bush plan is stronger than support

Immigrants’ views differ from those of non-immigrants.
Differing views between immigrants and non-immigrants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Percent who agree:</th>
<th>Immigrants</th>
<th>Non-Immigrants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Immigrants strengthen U.S. because of hard work and talents</td>
<td>81%</td>
<td>42%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Immigrants are more hard-working than other Americans</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recent immigrants unfairly discriminated against</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recent immigration has been good for U.S.</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>25</td>
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<td>17</td>
<td>51</td>
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<td>Government should spend more to prevent illegal immigration</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Immigrants keep some ties to their home country, though not as much as some believe.
Percent of immigrants who say they…

- Return to country of origin at least every year or two: 41%
- Regularly send money back to country of origin: 37%
- Want to move back to country of origin some day: 30%

Percent of immigrants who say they...

- Have never been back to their country of origin: 33%
- Do not regularly send money back to country of origin: 61%
- Do not want to move back to country of origin some day: 58%

Immigrants like the economic opportunities in America, but some are ambivalent about the culture.
## Immigrants’ views of U.S. versus country of origin

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Better in U.S.</th>
<th>Better in country you came from</th>
<th>About the same</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Opportunities to get ahead</td>
<td>84%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women’s legal rights</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Treatment of poor</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The schools</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strength of the family</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Safety from crime</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relations between different races</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moral values of society</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Immigrants are more likely than native-born Americans to say immigrants must believe in God to really be part of American society.
Immigrants are more likely than non-immigrants to say one must believe in God to be part of American society...

...But immigrants themselves are no more religious than non-immigrants

Mexicans and Central/South Americans differ markedly from other immigrants in many respects.
Percent of immigrants saying each is better in the U.S. than in their country of origin...

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Percent saying better in U.S.:</th>
<th>Mexican immigrants</th>
<th>Central/South American immigrants</th>
<th>All other immigrants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Opportunities to get ahead</td>
<td>94%</td>
<td>89%</td>
<td>80%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women’s legal rights</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
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On most questions, children of immigrants have views more like native-born Americans. There are a few differences, which may come from their close association with immigrants.
On most questions, children of immigrants have views like other native-born...

- **Very or somewhat concerned about illegal immigration**
  - Children of immigrants: 70%
  - Other native-born: 72%

- **Immigrants today are a burden on the country**
  - Children of immigrants: 48%
  - Other native-born: 53%

- **Recent immigrants take jobs away from Americans**
  - Children of immigrants: 46%
  - Other native-born: 52%

- **Recent immigration has been bad for the country**
  - Children of immigrants: 38%
  - Other native-born: 44%

On a few questions, there are differences between children of immigrants and other native-born...

- **Recent immigrants more hard-working than other Americans**
  - Children of immigrants: 59%
  - Other native-born: 40%

- **Recent LEGAL immigration has been good for your community**
  - Children of immigrants: 34%
  - Other native-born: 22%

- **Recent ILLEGAL immigration has been good for your community**
  - Children of immigrants: 17%
  - Other native-born: 8%

- **Federal government is too tough on immigration**
  - Children of immigrants: 12%
  - Other native-born: 6%

Generation 1.5 immigrants (those who arrived in the U.S. at age 10 or younger) have views closer to those of non-immigrants than to those of immigrants who arrived after age 10.
Generation 1.5 immigrants compared with other immigrants and native-born

- Native-born Americans
- Immigrants who arrived age 10 or younger (Generation 1.5)
- Immigrants who arrived after age 10

- The federal government is not tough enough on immigration:
  - Native-born Americans: 66%
  - Generation 1.5: 68%
  - After age 10: 20%

- Most immigrants pay their fair share of taxes:
  - Native-born Americans: 66%
  - Generation 1.5: 37%
  - After age 10: 28%

Methods

The NPR/Kaiser/Kennedy School *Immigration Survey* is part of a series of projects of National Public Radio, the Henry J. Kaiser Family Foundation, and Harvard University’s Kennedy School of Government. Representatives of the three sponsors worked together to develop the survey questionnaire and to analyze the results, with NPR maintaining sole editorial control over its broadcasts on the surveys. The project team includes:

**From NPR:** Marcus D. Rosenbaum, Senior Editor; Megan Meline, Assistant Editor.

**From the Kaiser Family Foundation:** Drew Altman, President and Chief Executive Officer; Matt James, Senior Vice President of Media and Public Education and Executive Director of kaisernetwork.org; Mollyann Brodie, Vice President, Director of Public Opinion and Media Research; and Elizabeth Hamel, Senior Research Associate.

**From the Kennedy School:** Robert J. Blendon, a Harvard University professor who holds joint appointments in the School of Public Health and the Kennedy School of Government; Stephen R. Pelletier, Research Coordinator for the Harvard Opinion Research Program; John M. Benson, Managing Director of the Harvard Opinion Research Program; and Elizabeth Mackie, Research Associate.
Methods

The survey was conducted by telephone May 27 – August 2, 2004 among a nationally representative sample of 1888 respondents 18 years of age and older. A total of 1104 interviews were completed with non-immigrants, and a total of 784 interviews were completed with immigrants. The fieldwork was conducted by ICR/International Communications Research of Media, PA. The margin of sampling error (at a 95% confidence level) is +/-3 percentage points for the total population; +/-3 percentage points for non-immigrants; and +/-5 percentage points for immigrants. For results based on subsets of respondents the margin of error is higher. Note that sampling error is only one of many potential sources of error in this or any other public opinion poll.