

HAMILTON COLLEGE /ZOGBY INTERNATIONAL IMMIGRATION OPINION POLL

The Sixth in a Series of National Polls Conducted by Hamilton Students and Faculty

Developed by

Paul Hagstrom, Associate Professor of Economics

Brian Alward

Amanda Chase

Keith Foster

Lauren Goldblatt

Paul Jones

Jiang Hua Li

Katie McKeon

Aaron Migdol

Erin Smith

Conducted in Collaboration with

Zogby International

Supported by

The Arthur Levitt Public Affairs Center at Hamilton College

HAMILTON COLLEGE IMMIGRATION OPINION POLL

The Hamilton College Immigration Opinion Poll: Analysis

By Paul Hagstrom

Associate Professor of Economics, Hamilton College

The Hamilton College Poll addresses the recent surge in interest concerning immigration and Americans views on U.S. immigration policy. A sample of 1078 randomly selected households was polled on issues ranging from the appropriate level of immigration, to national security, to public assistance, to the treatment of Iraqi refugees fleeing Saddam Hussein. The poll is the sixth in a series of polls designed by Hamilton College researchers, funded by Hamilton's Arthur Levitt Public Affairs Center, and administered by the Zogby International polling firm. The survey has a margin of error of plus or minus 3 percent.

THE NUMBER OF IMMIGRANTS

The Hamilton poll finds that 41 percent of those surveyed believe that the number of immigrants admitted to the U.S. each year should be decreased while only 12.4 percent want immigration levels increased. Residents in the central and southern states (at 46 and 44 percent) are more inclined to decrease immigration than either the eastern states (37 percent) or the western states (32 percent). The sentiment to reduce immigration is supported by questions relating immigration to issues of national security. Nearly 63 percent supported a policy that would stop all immigration from countries suspected of harboring terrorists. Only one-third of those polled thought the U.S. government is taking adequate steps to assure that terrorists are not being legally admitted into the country.

The poll reveals that attitudes on immigration policy vary significantly by age and education. Twenty-six percent Americans in the 18-29 age range would like immigration levels to increase, while the 50-64 age group and those 65 and over, approve of an increase at 9 percent and 7 percent respectively. Younger respondents, at 49 percent, are far more likely to feel that the government is doing enough to prevent terrorists from . 5 Tc 0.0oring29 poll

a t 4 6

immigrants are detrimental to the U.S. economy while 35 percent believe immigrants are beneficial to the economy. More broadly, 57 percent believe immigrants enhance American society while 26 percent feel immigrants are a threat to American society. These results support the thesis that security concerns outweigh opinions about the general impact of immigrants on our society.

Views on the economic impact of immigration become more positive as education and income increase. Whereas 26 percent of high school graduates believe that immigrants benefit the economy, 45 percent of college graduates and 59 percent of those with post-graduate education believe that immigrants have a positive effect on the economy. At 54 percent, those with incomes over \$75,000 are about twice as likely to believe immigrants benefit the economy as those with incomes under \$50,000.

Those with less personal familiarity with immigrants were far less likely to believe that immigrants have a positive economic effect. Only 22 percent of those who do have any friends, relatives, or close acquaintances who are immigrants have a favorable view while 45 percent those personally familiar with immigrants feel that immigrants have positive economic impact for the U.S..

COUNTRY OF ORIGIN

The Hamilton poll finds that attitudes toward immigrants vary significantly with the immigrant's region of origin. The poll asked how comfortable respondents would be if a significant number of immigrants moved into their town or city, followed by a series of questions on level of comfort if a single immigrant from a specific part of the world were to move into their own neighborhood. While only 22 percent would be somewhat or very uncomfortable if a European immigrant moved into their neighborhood, the number increased to over 50 percent when the region of origin was the Middle East. These opinions vary significantly with education, with 64 percent of those with less than a high school degree being somewhat or very uncomfortable with immigrants from the Middle East compared to 43 for those with a college education. Americans are more accepting of immigrants from Asia and Mexico with those uncomfortable at 27 percent and 29 percent, respectively. When asked how they would feel if a "substantial" number of immigrants were to move into their town or city, 39 percent said they would be very or somewhat uncomfortable.

One reason for negative opinions about immigrants and U.S. immigration policy is the perception that most immigrants are here illegally. Over 50 percent of households believe that most recent immigrants have come to the U.S. illegally. Americans with no education beyond high school, at 57 percent, were far more likely respond that most immigrants are here illegally. The percentages decrease to 42 and 30 percent for college graduates and post-graduates, respectively.

Despite an exaggerated sense that most immigrants are illegal, survey respondents generally rejected other stereotypes about immigrants. Most disagreed when asked if

they agreed that immigrants do not pay their taxes, that immigrants are more likely than natives to commit crimes, and that immigrants decrease property values.

With regard to language, speaking English is not seen as necessary for citizenship. About 75 percent said that an immigrant who does not speak English could be a good citizen. Moreover, 71 percent would support a bill to increase funding to assist immigrants in learning English.

JOBS

Americans do not appear concerned that immigration will harm their own job prospects. Nearly 60 percent believe that immigrants fill jobs that Americans would not want, while only 23 percent feel that immigrants take jobs away from Americans. Across incomes only 10 percent of high-income families believed immigrants take away jobs that natives want while 26 percent of those with incomes less than \$50,000 hold that view. Only 12 percent reported being worried in the past year about losing their own job to immigrants, and 6 percent said they had ever lost a job due to immigration.

Overall, people appear most comfortable with immigration when they know that immigrants are working jobs where additional workers are needed. When asked if the government should consider peoples' job skills when determining which immigrants to allow entry, 56 percent responded that we should. Only 38 percent believed we should

6 peSeptembey 119 id3Tj5j -30 -14.1 8j -30 /F.094075 0 TD 0 Ttnt of 7.Tj 5j -30 -14.

The poll then asked respondents to differentiate between refugees and other immigrants, asking if people agreed that refugees, defined in the survey as immigrants who flee their home countries for fear of their own personal safety, should receive public assistance such as food stamps and Medicaid upon entry to the United States. About 57 percent of American adults agree with the policy while 41 percent either somewhat or strongly disagree with the policy.

WAR WITH IRAQ

The Hamilton poll asked respondents if Iraqi refugees fleeing from Saddam Hussein should be granted entry to the United States. Overall, 40 percent said the U.S. should allow Iraqi refugees to come to the U.S., but the responses varied significantly by age. The youngest age cohort, those 18-29 year of age, welcomed Iraqi refugees at a rate of 55 percent while only 30 percent of those over 65 years of age would allow Iraqi refugees to enter the country.

POLITICAL PARTY

Views on immigration may differ more and differ more consistently by political affiliation than by any other characteristic. Of those surveyed, 34 percent identified themselves with the Democratic Party, 32 percent with the Republican party, and 26 called themselves Independent even though that option was not read. The remaining 8 percent did not answer this question.

When asked if immigration levels should be increased, decreased, or left unchanged, 18 percent of Democrats versus 7 percent of Republicans said immigration should be increased. Independents fell in the middle at 12 percent. Similarly, 49 percent of Republicans versus 33 percent of Democrats and 41 percent of Independents thought that immigration should be decreased. With regard to legal status, 56 percent of Republicans believe that most recent immigrants to the U.S. are here illegally. The corresponding numbers for Democrats and Independents are 42 and 53 percent, respectively.

When asked about the economic impact on the U.S. economy or whether immigration enhances or threatens American society there is virtually no difference across political affiliations. At 37 percent, Democrats are more like than Republicans (31 percent) to say that immigrants benefit the economy, but 28 percent of Democrats and 30 percent of Republicans feel that immigrants are a detriment to the economy.

Concerning refugees, 26 percent of Democrats would increase refugee inflows to pre-9/11 levels compared to 13 percent for Republicans. Those calling themselves Independents respond similarly to Democrats with 23 percent of Independents willing to increase refugee levels. Similar differentials exist concerning the treatment of Iraqi refugees. Forty-six percent of Democrats versus 31 percent of Republicans would allow Iraqi refugees to come the U.S., compared to 43 percent for Independents.

RELIGION

population. On the more general questions, almost 65 percent of the more urban respondents find immigrants to enhance society compared to about 49 percent for the rural/small town respondents. Similarly, with respect to the economy, 35 percent of those in small towns believe immigrants to be a detriment to the economy compared to 24 percent for those living in larger cities.

~~DEMOGRAPHICS FROM 2007 (3) TjvD THE SECOND GENERATION /F0276 n 0 -0.0420 Tw () Tj ET~~

Global Citizen Survey Appendix

Detailed poll results*[?]:

1) Region of the country:

Northeast	268	24.86%
South	285	26.44%
Central	335	31.08%
West	190	17.63%
Total	1078	100.00%

2) If you had to guess, what percentage of adults in your neighborhood are immigrants?

0%	253
1% - 10%	427
11% - 20%	98
21% - 30%	62
31% - 50%	70
51% - 100%	42
don't know	126
Total	1078

3) Do you have any friends, relatives, or close acquaintances who are immigrants?

yes	583	54.08%
no	489	45.36%
don't know	6	0.56%
Total	1078	100.00%

4) Do you work outside the home?

yes	567	52.60%
no	506	46.94%
not sure/don't know/ refuse	5	0.46%
Total	1078	100.00%

5) Are there any immigrants employed in your work place? [unemployed excluded]

yes	305	53.79%
no	236	41.62%
Student/unemployed	2	0.35%
not sure/don't know/ refuse	24	4.23%
Total	567	100.00%

[?] The raw sample size for the survey was 1,078 respondents. The reported weighted sample sizes may vary due to rounding.

6) If a substantial number of new immigrants moved into your city or town, how would you feel?	very uncomfortable	167	15.49%
	somewhat uncomfortable	252	23.38%
	comfortable	526	48.79%
	very comfortable	91	8.44%
	not sure/don't know/ refuse	42	3.90%
	Total	1078	100.00%

7) If an immigrant from Europe moved into your neighborhood, how would you feel?	very uncomfortable	98	9.09%
	somewhat uncomfortable	125	11.60%
	comfortable	671	62.24%
	very comfortable	159	14.75%
	not sure/don't know/ refuse	24	2.23%
	Total	1078	100.00%

8) If an immigrant from Asia moved into your neighborhood, how would you feel?	very uncomfortable	120	11.13%
	somewhat uncomfortable	174	16.14%
	comfortable	611	56.68%
	very comfortable	142	13.17%
	not sure/don't know/ refuse	31	2.88%
	Total	1078	100.00%

9) If an immigrant from the Middle East moved into your neighborhood, how would you feel?	very uncomfortable	255	23.65%
	somewhat uncomfortable	288	26.72%
	comfortable	426	39.52%
	very comfortable	83	7.70%
	not sure/don't know/ refuse	26	2.41%
	Total	1078	100.00%

10) If an immigrant from Mexico, Central or South America moved into your neighborhood, how would you feel?	very uncomfortable	133	12.34%
	somewhat uncomfortable	185	17.16%
	comfortable	614	56.96%
	very comfortable	125	11.60%
	not sure/don't know/ refuse	20	1.86%
	Total	1077	100.00%

11) In your opinion, do you think most of the people who have moved to the United States in the last few years are here legally, or that most of them are here illegally? (NY Times/CBS News 12/01)

legally	399	37.01%
illegally	545	50.56%
Don't know	133	12.34%
Total	1077	100.00%

12) In your opinion, should the number of new immigrants legally allowed into the country each year be kept at its present level, increased or decreased?

increased	134	12.43%
decreased	438	40.63%
stay same	423	39.24%
not sure/don't know/ refuse	83	7.70%
Total	1078	100.00%

13) If Congress proposed a bill to increase funding to assist immigrants in learning English, would you support or not support this bill?

support the bill	762	70.69%
oppose the bill	274	25.42%
not sure/don't know/ refuse	42	3.90%
Total	1078	100.00%

14) How would you describe the overall effects of immigrant

positive	399	37.01%
----------	-----	--------

16) Most immigrants do not pay all of their taxes.

17) Immigrants are more likely than US-born citizens to commit crimes.

18) Immigrants decrease property values in neighborhoods.

19) Do you believe that immigrants are more likely, equally likely, or less likely than US born citizens to use public assistance programs?

20) In your opinion, should immigrants be el

28) In the last year have you worried
about losing your job because

The final 3 questions concern refugees. Refugees are immigrants who flee their home countries for fear of their own personal safety.

32) When refugees arrive in the US, they receive public assistance such as Medicaid and food stamps. Do you strongly agree, somewhat agree, somewhat disagree, or strongly disagree with this policy?

33) Since September 11th, 2001,

D104. Are you an American citizen?

yes	1055	97.87%
no	23	2.13%
Total	1078	100.00%

D105. Were you born in another country?

yes	119	11.04%
no	959	88.96%

959.75 702.7 1.5 re f 475 15 re f 420e8e f 425 112rol

D106. Were either of your parents born in another country?

D107. Were any of your grandparents born in another country?

D108. How much education have you completed?

D109. If you had to make a rough guess, what will your household income be this year?

D110. Which of the following **best** describes your occupation?

manager	84	7.79%
medical	55	5.10%
professional/technical	132	12.24%
sales	44	4.08%
clerical	29	2.69%
service	42	3.90%
blue-collar/production	58	5.38%
student	61	5.66%
homemaker	101	9.37%
teacher/education	58	5.38%
retired	274	25.42%
military	2	0.19%
government	16	1.48%
other	106	9.83%
not sure/refuse	15	1.39%
Total	1077	100.00%

D111. Which category best describes your ethnic or racial background?

White, non Hispanic	898	83.30%
Black or African American/non Hispanic	67	6.22%
Hispanic	46	4.27%
Asian	9	0.83%
Other or mixed	49	4.55%
Refuse	9	0.83%
Total	1078	100.00%

Table A4

	Age
--	-----

Table A11

Take into account people's job skills before allowing them to immigrate	Education level					
	Less than High School	High School	Some college	College	Post grad.	Total
Yes	.617	.5288	.5156	.586	.625	.563
No	.3191	.3894	.45	.3694	.3542	.3809
Not sure/don't know/ refuse to answer	.0638	.0817	.0344	.0446	.0208	.0562
Total	.0638	.0817	.0344	.0446	.0208	.0562
Key: column proportions						

Table A12

Table A17

In regards to the U. S. economy, immigrants are a benefit or a detriment	Democrat	Republican	Political party Independent/ other
---------------------------------------------------------------------------------	-----------------	-------------------	-----------------------------------------------

Table A19

Since 9/11 the U.S. has cut back on the number of refugees	Political party				Total
	Democrat	Republican	Independent / other	Not sure /don't know/ refuse to answer	
Yes	.2564	.1255	.2331	.1915	.2026
No	.6307	.7837	.7149	.5547	.6956
Not sure/ don't know/ refuse to answer	.1129	.0908	.052	.2538	.1018
Total	1	1	1	1	1
Key: column proportions					

Table A20

Should Iraqi refugees fleeing from Saddam Hussein be permitted to enter the US?	Political party			
	Democrat	Republican	Independent / other	Not sure /don't know/ refuse to answer

Table A22

Since 9/11 the U.S. has cut back on the	How religious
----------------------------------------------------	----------------------

Table A25

Table A28

Feel comfortable with immigrants	Region
---------------------------------------------	---------------

Table A31

Significant number of immigrants moved to their town or city	City	Small town/rural area	Total
Very uncomfortable	.1412	.1717	.1546
Somewhat uncomfortable	.2011	.2757	.2339
Comfortable	.5164	.4525	.4883
Very comfortable	.1092	.0517	.084
Don't know	.0321	.0484	.0393
Total	1	1	1
Key: column proportions			

Table A32

Immigrants moved from the Middle East to their town or city	City	Small town /rural area	Total
Very uncomfortable	.2185	.2594	.2365
Somewhat uncomfortable	.2421	.3003	.2677
Comfortable	.4234	.3588	.395
Very comfortable	.0953	.0533	.0768
Don't know	.0207	.0282	.024
Total	1	1	1
Key: column proportions			

Table A33

Immigrants are a threat to American society	City	Small town/rural area	Total
Threat to society	.1987	.3343	.2583
Enhance society	.6405	.4856	.5724
Both/neither	.0804	.1016	.0897
Not sure/don't know/refuse to answer	.0803	.0786	.0796
Total	1	1	1
Key: column proportions			

Table A37