

Immigration and Racial Change: Are All Generations On The Same Page?

A Survey of Attitudes toward Race, Immigration, and
Ethnicity

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Strongly Agree

Agree

Below are the percentage

Attitudes Toward Immigration Policy:

Respondents were presented with a number of conditions and asked if U.S. policy should make it easier, less easy, or no difference for immigrants with those conditions to enter the U.S. Across a range of conditions, young Americans were more likely to say that U.S. policy should make it easier for immigration.

% Saying Make It Easier for People With This Condition to Immigrate to the U.S.	18-29	30-44	45-59	60+
They come from a country that has experienced a major natural disaster, like an earthquake or flood.	45	34	33	26
The come from country that is experiencing a major war or genocide	45	35	36	35
They come from a country ruled by a brutal dictator	38	34	33	33
They come from a country experiencing a terrible famine	42	35	38	32
They come from a country that oppresses women	37	25	33	21
They are an unskilled laborer	9	5	1	1
They have AIDS	7	5	2	2
They are elderly	15	11	7	7
They can speak and write English	44	39	31	34
They come from a country that oppresses gays and lesbians	21	13	10	9
They come from a country with extreme poverty	32	19	21	21
They have an advanced education.	40	29	24	32
They have specialized job skills	41	35	32	36
They have family members in the US	43	28	35	35
They come from the Middle East	8	6	0	3
They come from Western Europe	12	11	5	6
They come from Mexico or Latin America	12	12	1	3
They come from Asia	9	8	1	5
They are wealthy	11	10	5	4

The young American's attitudes toward immigrants from different parts of the world present the only exception to their tendency toward more liberal views on immigration policy.

Immigrant Voting:

One important facet of the generational mismatch thesis is the age skew in voting. Since immigrants are disproportionately young and not allowed to vote, this allows older Americans disproportionate influence in the voting booth. One possible remeb4 606y8175.2185 606.06cn

Illegal Immigrant Citizenship:

Respondents were asked whether they thought illegal immigrants should be able to become citizens under the same conditions as legal immigrants, whether illegal immigrants should have to meet special conditions, or whether they were opposed to illegal immigrants becoming citizens at all. On this question, young Americans did not differ significantly from other generations.

	18-29	30-44	45-59	60+
Yes (%)	64	71	79	85

As the table shows, young Americans are much more positive about the impact of these

Strongly/Somewhat Support	78	90	91	90
Church(%)				
Difference (%)				

Conclusions:

While their opinions vary, young Americans display more tolerance for America's changing racial and ethnic character than do older generations of Americans. This evidence provides some support for the "generational mismatch" thesis. Still, it is important to note that on many of these issues the differences between generations is often small and never do you see large majorities of young people on one side of an issue with large majorities of older Americans on the other side. This suggests that while young Americans differ from older generations, they are not a monolithic block and their attitudes and interests are subject to change.