



Americans' Views on Immigration Policy

Ipsos Poll on Behalf of NPR

Washington, DC, February 6, 2018 – In a recent survey on Americans' views toward immigrants and immigration policy, Ipsos, on behalf of NPR, found that many Americans tend to be unaware of how many of foreign-born people, including undocumented or illegal immigrants, currently live in the country. Additionally, views on immigration policy tend to be largely tied to partisanship.

When asked how many foreign-born people live in the United States, half of the American public (49%) said they didn't know, and just 16% correctly estimated 43 million. Just 1 in 4 (26%) are also correctly able to identify that undocumented or illegal immigrants currently make up less than 10% of the U.S. population. When asked whether they believe the Latino population is the fastest growing demographic group in America, three-quarters of Americans (74%), including equal numbers of Democrats, Republicans, and Independents incorrectly responded that this was their belief (the Asian American and Pacific Islander community grew by a larger share from 2010 to 2015).

Despite showing similar familiarity with immigrants (39% of Republicans, 38% of Democrats, and 38% of Independents have at least one casual acquaintance who was born outside of the U.S.), Americans continue to be divided by partisanship over their support of immigration-related policies. Nearly one-third of Republicans (31%) believe that immigrants are more likely to commit crimes or be incarcerated compared to U.S.-born citizens, compared to just 12% of Democrats and 13% of Independents. Nearly three-quarters of Democrats (71%) believe that America depends on immigrants to sustain our economy; more than half of Independents (55%) and 45% of Republicans agree. When it comes to immigration quotas, a plurality of Democrats (44%) believe that the number of immigrants to the U.S. should be kept the same as it is now, compared to 18% of Republicans. Nearly two-thirds of Republicans (62%) believe the number of immigrants allowed should be decreased; one-third of Independents (35%) and just a quarter of Democrats agree.

On specific policies, partisan contrasts become starker. Less than one in five Democrats (18%) support building a wall or fence along the entire U.S., Mexico border, while two-thirds of Republicans (68%) support the measure. A majority of Republicans (63%) also support a movement to end the ability of legal immigrants to bring extended family members to the U.S., compared to 30% of Democrats and 49% of Independents. Notably, two-thirds of all Americans (65%) support giving legal status to undocumented or illegal immigrants brought to the U.S. as children, though partisan differences are still evident. Half of Republicans (51%) support this plan, along with two-thirds of Independents, and 81% of Democrats.

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1. To the best of your knowledge, are the following statements about immigration true or false?

Note: Asterisk () denotes correct answer.*

a. The number of undocumented or illegal immigrants entering the US has declined recently compared to 5 years ago.

	Total	Democrat	Republican	Independent
True *	42%	46%	40%	45%
False	33%	26%	44%	27%
Don't know	26%	28%	16%	27%

b. Undocumented or illegal immigrants make up more than 10% of all people in the U.S. right now.

	Total	Democrat	Republican	Independent
True	47%	40%	53%	52%
False *	26%	31%	25%	21%
Don't know	27%	29%	22%	28%

c. Most undocumented or illegal immigrants in the United States have been here 10 years or longer.

	Total	Democrat	Republican	Independent
True *	60%	67%	58%	55%
False	14%	11%	18%	13%
Don't know	26%	22%	24%	32%

d. Immigrants are more likely to commit crimes or be incarcerated than the U.S.-born population.

	Total	Democrat	Republican	Independent
True	18%	12%	31%	13%
False *	62%	75%	45%	66%
Don't know	20%	13%	25%	20%



e. The Latino population is the fastest growing demographic group in America.

	Total	Democrat	Republican	Independent
True	74%	77%	77%	76%
False *	8%	8%	11%	5%
Don't know	17%	15%	12%	19%

2. About how many foreign-born people live in the United States?

Note: Asterisk (*) denotes correct answer.

	Total	Democrat	Republican	Independent
13 million	9%	8%	11%	12%
23 million	19%	19%	21%	18%
43 million *	16%	12%	20%	16%
78 million	8%	9%	7%	5%
Don't know	49%	52%	42%	49%

3. After Mexico, which country has the largest immigrant population in the U.S.?

Note: Asterisk (*) denotes correct answer.

	Total	Democrat	Republican	Independent
China *	25%	27%	23%	25%
India	20%	21%	23%	20%
El Salvador	12%	11%	16%	14%
Philippines	11%	10%	13%	9%
Don't know	32%	30%	26%	33%



4. Do you think the number of immigrants to America should be:

	Total	Democrat	Republican	Independent
Total increased	16%	22%	11%	15%
Kept the same as it is now	33%	44%	18%	39%
Total decreased	39%	25%	62%	35%
Don't know	11%	9%	9%	11%

Trend data over time, provided by the General Social Survey (GSS). "Total who think the number of immigrants should be decreased" shown.

	Current	2016	2014	2010	2008
Total	39%	27%	30%	35%	35%
Democrat	25%	18%	25%	30%	34%
Republican	62%	41%	36%	43%	37%
Independent	35%	27%	29%	31%	31%

5. Do you agree or disagree with the following statements? – Total Agree

	Total	Democrat	Republican	Independent
Immigrants are an important part of our American identity.	75%	83%	71%	76%
Cultural diversity makes America a better place to live.	74%	85%	68%	69%
America depends on immigrants to sustain our economy.	57%	71%	45%	55%
When jobs are scarce, employers should prioritize hiring people of this country over immigrants.	52%	42%	69%	49%
The U.S. should give priority to immigrants who speak English.	44%	34%	58%	48%
Social policies, such as affirmative action, discriminate unfairly against white people.	37%	21%	61%	37%
Immigrants take jobs away from real Americans.	36%	26%	54%	31%
America would be stronger if we stopped immigration.	21%	15%	32%	18%

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Trend data available for select items in Q.5, from previous Ipsos public polling.

“When jobs are scarce, employers should prioritize hiring people of this country over immigrants” – Total agree

	Current	Aug 2017	June 2016	April 2016
Total	52%	46%	56%	54%
Democrats	42%	35%	45%	46%
Republican	69%	66%	70%	65%
Independent	49%	46%	60%	57%

“Immigrants take jobs away from real Americans” – Total agree

	Current	Aug 2017	April 2016
Total	36%	32%	39%
Democrats	26%	19%	31%
Republican	54%	52%	55%
Independent	31%	33%	33%

“Social policies, such as Affirmative Action, discriminate unfairly against white people” – Total agree

	Current	Aug 2017
Total	37%	37%
Democrats	21%	22%
Republican	61%	66%
Independent	37%	31%

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6. Do you support or oppose the following immigration-related policy proposals? – *Total Support*

	Total	Democrat	Republican	Independent
Giving legal status to undocumented or illegal immigrants brought to the U.S. as children.	65%	81%	51%	66%
Ending the ability of legal immigrants to bring their extended family members to the U.S.	45%	30%	63%	49%
Building a wall or fence along the entire U.S./Mexico border.	38%	18%	68%	32%

7. Legal residents of the U.S. are currently allowed to apply to have their family members in other countries emigrate to the United States. Which of the following types of family members do you think should be allowed under this policy? – *Allowed*

	Total	Democrat	Republican	Independent
Spouse	87%	89%	89%	84%
Minor children under 18	84%	88%	84%	83%
Parents	67%	79%	62%	57%
Siblings	59%	69%	49%	54%
Grandparents	52%	62%	40%	48%
Adult children over 18	49%	63%	36%	48%
Aunts or uncles	24%	32%	13%	19%
First cousins	20%	26%	11%	17%

8. Do you agree or disagree with the following statements? – *Total Agree*

	Total	Democrat	Republican	Independent
Building a wall or fence along the entire U.S./Mexico border wastes taxpayer money.	60%	81%	35%	57%
Building a wall or fence along the entire U.S./Mexico border is insulting to people from other countries.	48%	68%	25%	45%
Building a wall or fence along the entire U.S./Mexico border is unlikely to have a major impact.	46%	59%	32%	43%
Building a wall or fence along the entire U.S./Mexico border is necessary for national security.	35%	20%	61%	29%

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9. Do you agree or disagree with the following statements? – *Total Agree*

	Total	Democrat	Republican	Independent
The U.S. has a moral obligation to take in immigrants from all backgrounds, including those from less economically stable countries.	51%	69%	40%	41%
Immigrants from economically stable countries contribute more positively to the U.S. than those from less economically stable ones.	31%	21%	45%	33%
The U.S. should take more immigrants from places like Norway instead of from African countries and Haiti.	15%	13%	22%	12%

10. Which, if any, of the following applies to you? Please choose as many as apply.

	Total	Democrat	Republican	Independent
One or more of my casual acquaintances was born outside of the United States.	37%	38%	39%	38%
One or more of my closest friends was born outside of the United States.	25%	24%	20%	31%
One or more of my immediate family members (parent, sibling, or child) was born outside of the United States.	19%	22%	9%	24%
I was born outside of the United States.	6%	7%	4%	10%
No one I know was born outside the United States.	39%	38%	43%	34%



11. How do you get most of your news?

	Total	Democrat	Republican	Independent
Television	39%	38%	44%	38%
Online/internet	29%	30%	27%	31%
Social media (Twitter, Facebook)	12%	13%	11%	8%
Print newspapers/magazines	7%	8%	7%	7%
Mobile News apps	7%	6%	6%	10%
Radio	3%	3%	3%	5%
None of the above	3%	2%	1%	2%

12. Of the choices listed below, which is your main source of television news?

	Total	Democrat	Republican	Independent
FOX News	20%	9%	40%	16%
CNN	16%	22%	11%	14%
NBC	12%	16%	9%	8%
ABC	11%	13%	12%	12%
CBS	11%	10%	10%	13%
MSNBC	5%	9%	1%	5%
Public Television	5%	5%	3%	6%
Other	5%	4%	2%	3%
None of the above	16%	12%	12%	23%

13. How would you describe the area in which you live?

	Total	Democrat	Republican	Independent
Suburban	50%	51%	51%	51%
Urban	28%	36%	22%	24%
Rural	22%	13%	27%	25%

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14. With which political party do you most identify?

	Total
Strong Democrat	14%
Moderate Democrat	15%
Lean Democrat	9%
Lean Republican	7%
Moderate Republican	13%
Strong Republican	10%
Independent	21%
Other	3%
Don't know/Refuse	8%

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About the Study

These are findings from an Ipsos poll conducted January 31-February 1, 2018. For the survey, a sample of roughly 1,004 adults age 18+ from the continental U.S., Alaska and Hawaii was interviewed online in English. The sample includes 370 Democrats, 309 Republicans, and 216 Independents.

The sample for this study was randomly drawn from Ipsos's online panel (see link below for more info on "Access Panels and Recruitment"), partner online panel sources, and "river" sampling (see link below for more info on the Ipsos "Ampario Overview" sample method) and does not rely on a population frame in the traditional sense. Ipsos uses fixed sample targets, unique to each study, in drawing sample. After a sample has been obtained from the Ipsos panel, Ipsos calibrates respondent characteristics to be representative of the U.S. Population using standard procedures such as raking-ratio adjustments. The source of these population targets is U.S. Census 2016 American Community Survey data. The sample drawn for this study reflects fixed sample targets on demographics. Post-hoc weights were made to the population characteristics on gender, age, race/ethnicity, region, and education.

Statistical margins of error are not applicable to online polls. All sample surveys and polls may be subject to other sources of error, including, but not limited to coverage error and measurement error. Where figures do not sum to 100, this is due to the effects of rounding. The precision of Ipsos online polls is measured using a credibility interval. In this case, the poll has a credibility interval of plus or minus 3.5 percentage points for all respondents. The credibility interval is 5.8% for Democrats, 6.4% for Republicans, and 7.6% for Independents. Ipsos calculates a design effect (DEFF) for each study based on the variation of the weights, following the formula of Kish (1965). This study had a credibility interval adjusted for design effect of the following (n=1,004, DEFF=1.5, adjusted Confidence Interval=5.0).

For more information about conducting research intended for public release or Ipsos' online polling methodology, please visit our [Public Opinion Polling and Communication](#) page where you can download our brochure, see our public release protocol, or contact us.

For more information on this news release, please contact:

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About Ipsos

Ipsos is an independent market research company controlled and managed by research professionals. Founded in France in 1975, Ipsos has grown into a worldwide research group with a strong presence in all key markets. Ipsos ranks fourth in the global research industry.

With offices in 88 countries, Ipsos delivers insightful expertise across five research specializations: brand, advertising and media; customer loyalty; marketing; public affairs research; and survey management.

Ipsos researchers assess market potential and interpret market trends. They develop and build brands. They help clients build long-term relationships with their customers. They test advertising and study audience responses to various media and they measure public opinion around the globe.

Ipsos has been listed on the Paris Stock Exchange since 1999 and generated global revenues of €1,782.7 million in 2016.

GAME CHANGERS

« Game Changers » is the Ipsos signature.

At Ipsos we are passionately curious about people, markets, brands and society.
We make our changing world easier and faster to navigate and inspire clients to make smarter decisions.
We deliver with security, speed, simplicity and substance. We are Game Changers.

Ipsos is listed on Euronext Paris.
The company is part of the CAC Mid & Small index
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