

MARCH 28, 2013

Most Say Illegal Immigrants Should Be Allowed to Stay, But Citizenship Is More Divisive

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT
THE PEW RESEARCH CENTER FOR THE
PEOPLE & THE PRESS**

Michael Dimock

Director

Carroll Doherty

Associate Director

Rob Suls

Research Associate

1615 L St, N.W., Suite 700
Washington, D.C. 20036
Tel (202) 419-4372
Fax (202) 419-4399
www.people-press.org

Most Say Illegal Immigrants Should Be Allowed to Stay, But Citizenship Is More Divisive

A new survey finds that seven-in-ten Americans (71%) say there should be a way for people in the United States illegally to remain in this country if they meet certain requirements, while 27% say they should not be allowed to stay legally. Most who favor providing illegal immigrants with some form of legal status –43% of the public – say they should be allowed to apply for citizenship, but 24% of the public says they should only be allowed to apply for legal residency.

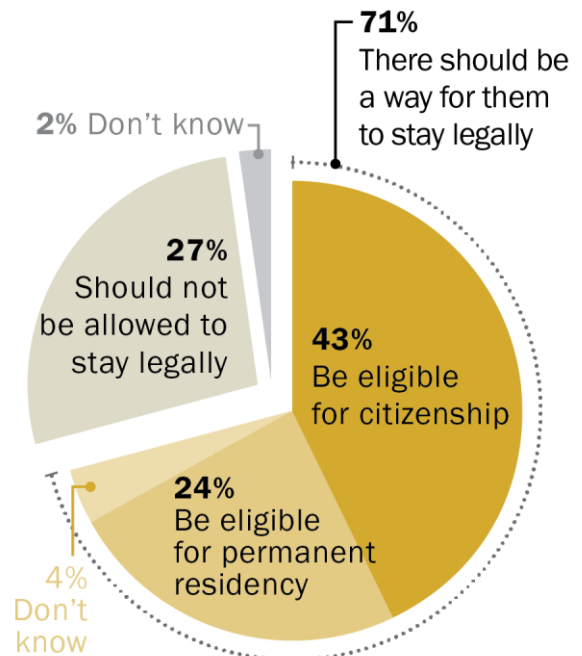
Majorities across all demographic and political groups say there should be a way for illegal immigrants who meet certain requirements to stay in the U.S. legally. Among those who favor providing legal status, the balance of opinion is in favor of allowing those here illegally who meet the requirements to apply for citizenship. However, no more than about half in any demographic group supports permitting illegal immigrants to apply for citizenship.

In 2011, there were about 40 million immigrants in the United States. Of that total, 11.1 million, or 28%, were in this country illegally. (For more see [“Recent Trends in Naturalization, 2000-2011” Feb. 4, 2013.](#))

The national survey by the Pew Research Center, conducted March 13-17 among 1,501 adults, finds that overall attitudes about immigrants in the United States are more positive than negative, despite the nation’s struggling economy.

Thinking about immigrants generally, 49% of Americans say they strengthen the country because of their hard work and talents, while 41% say they are a burden because they take jobs, health care and housing. In a June 2010 poll, 39% said immigrants strengthened the country while 50% said they were a burden.

How to Handle Immigrants Living in the U.S. Illegally?



PEW RESEARCH CENTER March 13-17, 2013.

In addition, more Americans think that the growing number of newcomers in the United States strengthens society than believe that they threaten traditional American customs and values. About half (52%) say the growing number of newcomers in the U.S. strengthens society, while 43% say the influx of newcomers threatens traditional American values and customs.

Broad Support for Legal Status for Illegal Immigrants

Support for granting legal status to illegal immigrants is wide ranging. Eight-in-ten non-Hispanic blacks (82%) and Hispanics (80%) say those in the United States illegally should be allowed to stay if they meet certain requirements; about half of blacks (52%) and Hispanics (49%) say illegal immigrants should be able to apply for citizenship.

Two-thirds of non-Hispanic whites (67%) say illegal immigrants should be allowed to stay in the country legally, while 31% say they should not. Four-in-ten whites say people in the United States illegally should have the chance to apply for citizenship if they meet certain requirements.

Educational, Racial Differences on How to Deal with Illegal Immigrants

	Should be allowed to stay legally	And be able to apply for...			Should not be allowed to stay legally	DK
		Citizenship	Permanent residency			
	%	%	%	%	%	
Total	71	43	24	27	2=100	
White	67	40	23	31	2=100	
Black	82	52	26	17	1=100	
Hispanic	80	49	26	17	4=100	
18-29	78	44	31	22	0=100	
30-39	71	43	25	27	2=100	
50-64	65	39	22	30	4=100	
65+	69	45	18	28	3=100	
College grad+	84	47	33	14	2=100	
Some college	71	43	24	27	1=100	
HS or less	62	40	19	35	3=100	
Republican	64	38	22	34	2=100	
Democrat	76	48	24	21	3=100	
Independent	70	39	28	29	2=100	
<i>Among whites</i>						
College grad	81	46	31	17	2=100	
No college degree	61	38	20	37	2=100	

PEW RESEARCH CENTER March 13-17, 2013. Whites and blacks include only those who are not Hispanic; Hispanics are of any race. "Don't know" responses to question about citizenship/permanent residency are not shown. Figures may not add to 100% because of rounding.

Among whites with no college degree, 61% favor allowing those in the U.S. illegally to stay legally, while 37% disagree. There is more support among white college graduates

for permitting illegal immigrants to stay in the country legally (81% say they should, while just 17% say they should not).

The partisan differences over providing some form of legal status for illegal immigrants are modest: 76% of Democrats, 70% of independents and 64% of Republicans say illegal immigrants should be allowed to stay in the United States if they meet certain requirements.

Whites in both parties are divided along educational lines over how to deal with illegal immigrants in the United States: Among white Democrats and Democratic-leaning independents, 92% of college graduates favor allowing illegal immigrants to stay in the U.S. legally if they meet certain requirements; support falls to 68% among white Democrats and Democratic leaners who have not completed college. Similarly, there is a 20-point education gap among white Republicans and GOP-leaning independents (75% of college graduates vs. 55% of non-college grads).

Opinions about Immigrants' Impact on the Country

Currently, 49% agree with the statement “immigrants today strengthen the country because of their hard work and talents.” Somewhat fewer (41%) agree with an opposing statement: “immigrants today are a burden on our country because they take our jobs, housing and health care.”

The balance of opinion on these questions has fluctuated over the years. Two years ago, opinions were evenly divided and in June 2010, more said that immigrants were a burden than a strength for the United States (50% vs. 39%).

More View Immigrants as a Strength than as a Burden

	Jul 1994	Sep 2000	Dec 2004	Mar 2006	Jun 2010	Mar 2011	Mar 2013
<i>Immigrants today ...</i>	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Strengthen the U.S. with their hard work and talents	31	50	45	41	39	45	49
Are a burden because they take jobs, health care	63	38	44	52	50	44	41
Both/Neither/DK	<u>6</u>	<u>12</u>	<u>11</u>	<u>7</u>	<u>11</u>	<u>12</u>	<u>10</u>
	100	100	100	100	100	100	100
<i>Growing number of newcomers from other countries....</i>							
Strengthens American society	--	--	50	45	44	52	52
Threatens traditional American customs & values	--	--	40	48	44	39	43
Both/Neither/DK	--	--	<u>10</u>	<u>7</u>	<u>12</u>	<u>9</u>	<u>6</u>
			100	100	100	100	100

PEW RESEARCH CENTER March 13-17, 2013.

Nearly two decades ago, in July 1994, 63% viewed immigrants as a burden, but the percentage expressing this view declined substantially by the end of the 1990s (to 38% in September 2000).

In recent years, there has been little change in opinions about the impact of newcomers from other countries on traditional values. About half (52%) say the growing number of newcomers from to the United States strengthens American society, while 43% say they threaten traditional American customs and values.

Racial, Ethnic, Partisan Differences in Views of Immigrants

While majorities across all groups support legal status for illegal immigrants, there are sharp differences in opinions about the impact of immigrants on the country. Opinions about immigrants have become somewhat more positive among most groups since 2010.

Fully 74% of Hispanics say that immigrants strengthen the country because of their hard work and talents. About half of blacks (52%) also say that immigrants strengthen the country, compared with just 41% of whites.

While most Democrats (58%) say that immigrants strengthen the country because of their hard work and talents, most Republicans (55%) say they are a burden because they take jobs and health care.

College graduates express far more positive opinions about the impact of immigrants than do those with less education. Fully 67% say immigrants strengthen the country, compared with 41% of those with no more than a high school education.

Democrats Say Immigrants Strengthen the U.S.; Republicans View Them as a Burden

	<i>Immigrants today ...</i>		
	Strengthen country w/ hard work and talents	Are a burden because they take jobs, housing & health care	Neither/ DK
	%	%	%
Total	49	41	10=100
White	41	48	11=100
Black	52	38	10=100
Hispanic	74	19	6=100
18-29	59	33	8=100
30-49	50	40	10=100
50-64	45	46	9=100
65+	37	49	14=100
College grad+	67	23	10=100
Some college	44	47	9=100
HS or less	41	49	10=100
Republican	33	55	12=100
Democrat	58	36	7=100
Independent	51	38	11=100
<i>Among whites</i>			
College grad+	61	27	12=100
No college degree	33	57	10=100

PEW RESEARCH CENTER Mar. 13-17, 2013. Whites and blacks include only those who are not Hispanic; Hispanics are of any race.

By a wide margin (59% to 33%), more 18-to-29 year-olds say that immigrants strengthen the country than say they are burden. Among those 65 and older, more say immigrants are a burden (49%) than a strength (37%).

Opinions about whether the growing number of newcomers to the United States strengthens society or threatens American values break down along similar lines. Whites are divided (45% vs. 49%). Majorities of Hispanics (67%) and blacks (62%) say the growing number of newcomers strengthens American society.

Majorities of Democrats (61%) and independents (55%) say that the increasing number of newcomers strengthens society; just 34% of Republicans agree.

Growing Number of Newcomers from Other Countries ...

	Strengthens American society %	Threatens American values %	Neither/ DK %
Total	52	43	6=100
White	45	49	6=100
Black	62	33	6=100
Hispanic	67	27	6=100
18-29	64	34	2=100
30-49	56	38	6=100
50-64	44	50	6=100
65+	38	52	10=100
College grad+	68	25	7=100
Some college	53	43	4=100
HS or less	40	54	6=100
Republican	34	58	7=100
Democrat	61	35	4=100
Independent	55	41	4=100
<i>Among whites</i>			
College grad+	64	29	7=100
No coll degree	37	58	5=100

PEW RESEARCH CENTER Mar. 13-17, 2013. Whites and blacks include only those who are not Hispanic; Hispanics are of any race.

Religion and Views of Immigrants

Majorities of all major religious groups say there should be a way for immigrants who are currently in the U.S. illegally and who meet certain requirements to stay in the country.

For the most part, those who favor legal status for illegal immigrants say they should be allowed to apply for citizenship.

Modest Religious Differences in Opinions about How to Deal with People in U.S. Illegally

	Should be allowed to stay legally %	And be able to apply for		Should <u>not</u> be allowed to stay %	
		Citizenship %	Permanent residency %	%	%
Total	71	43	24	27	2=100
Protestant	69	41	24	29	2=100
White evang	62	40	20	35	4=100
White mainline	65	35	27	33	2=100
Black Protestant	84	51	28	16	1=100
Catholic	73	49	21	24	3=100
White Catholic	71	46	20	28	1=100
Unaffiliated	74	42	28	25	1=100
<i>Attend services...</i>					
Weekly or more	72	43	25	25	3=100
Monthly/yearly	72	44	24	26	2=100
Seldom/never	68	41	24	29	2=100

PEW RESEARCH CENTER March 13-17, 2103. Whites and blacks include only those who are not Hispanic. "Don't know" responses to question about citizenship/permanent residency are not shown. Figures may not add to 100% because of rounding.

Opinions among major religious groups are more divided when it comes to the impact of immigrants on the country.

A majority of white evangelical Protestants (55%) say that immigrants are burden because they take jobs, housing and health care, while about as many (58%) say they threaten traditional American customs and values.

Other religious groups have less negative views of the impact of immigrants. These differences in opinions, however, are largely the result of underlying differences between religious groups in race, political ideology, party identification and other factors; after controlling for these factors, the independent impact of religion is minimal.

Views of Immigrants by Religion

	<i>Immigrants today ...</i>		<i>Growing number of newcomers ...</i>	
	Strengthen country	Are a burden	Strengthens society	Threatens values
	%	%	%	%
U.S. general public	49	41	52	43
Protestant	42	47	48	46
White evangelical	32	55	36	58
White mainline	40	49	47	47
Black Protestant	48	39	63	30
Catholic	55	37	53	40
White Catholic	42	49	43	51
Unaffiliated	57	35	57	38
<i>Attend services...</i>				
Weekly or more	48	41	50	43
Monthly/yearly	51	41	54	41
Seldom/never	48	42	51	44

PEW RESEARCH CENTER March 13-17, 2013. Whites and blacks include only those who are not Hispanic.

About the Survey

The analysis in this report is based on telephone interviews conducted March 13-17, 2013, among a national sample of 1,501 adults, 18 years of age or older, living in all 50 U.S. states and the District of Columbia (750 respondents were interviewed on a landline telephone and 751 were interviewed on a cell phone, including 385 who had no landline telephone). The survey was conducted by Abt SRBI. A combination of landline and cell phone random digit dial samples were used; both samples were provided by Survey Sampling International. Interviews were conducted in English and Spanish. Respondents in the landline sample were selected by randomly asking for the youngest adult male or female who is now at home. Interviews in the cell sample were conducted with the person who answered the phone, if that person was an adult 18 years of age or older. For detailed information about the survey methodology, see <http://people-press.org/methodology/>.

The combined landline and cell phone sample are weighted using an iterative technique that matches gender, age, education, race, Hispanic origin and nativity and region to parameters from the 2011 Census Bureau's American Community Survey and population density to parameters from the Decennial Census. The sample also is weighted to match current patterns of telephone status and relative usage of landline and cell phones (for those with both), based on extrapolations from the 2012 National Health Interview Survey. The weighting procedure also accounts for the fact that respondents with both landline and cell phones have a greater probability of being included in the combined sample and adjusts for household size among respondents with a landline phone. Sampling errors and statistical tests of significance take into account the effect of weighting. The following table shows the unweighted sample sizes and the error attributable to sampling that would be expected at the 95% level of confidence for different groups in the survey:

Group	Unweighted sample size	Plus or minus ...
Total sample	1,501	2.9 percentage points
White, non-Hispanic	1,048	3.5 percentage points
Black, non-Hispanic	162	9.0 percentage points
Hispanic	155	9.2 percentage points
Republican	420	5.6 percentage points
Democrat	487	5.2 percentage points
Independent	498	5.1 percentage points
Protestant	784	4.1 percentage points
White evangelical	317	6.4 percentage points
White mainline	236	7.4 percentage points
Black protestant	128	10.1 percentage points
Catholic	325	6.3 percentage points
White Catholic	210	7.9 percentage points
Unaffiliated	256	7.1 percentage points

Sample sizes and sampling errors for other subgroups are available upon request. In addition to sampling error, one should bear in mind that question wording and practical difficulties in conducting surveys can introduce error or bias into the findings of opinion polls.

PEW RESEARCH CENTER FOR THE PEOPLE & THE PRESS
MARCH 2013 POLITICAL SURVEY
FINAL TOPLINE
March 13-17, 2013
N=1,501

Q.1 PREVIOUSLY RELEASED**NO QUESTIONS 2-4****QUESTIONS 5a-c HELD FOR FUTURE RELEASE****QUESTIONS 5d, 6-7, 18, 20-24, 26-29, 35-38 PREVIOUSLY RELEASED****NO QUESTIONS 8-14, 15d, 16-17, 19, 25, 30-34, 39-44****ASK ALL:**

Q.15 Here are some pairs of statements. Please tell me whether the FIRST statement or the SECOND statement comes closer to your own views — even if neither is exactly right. The first pair is...
[READ AND RANDOMIZE PAIRS BUT NOT STATEMENTS WITHIN EACH PAIR]

	Immigrants today strengthen our country because of their hard <u>work and talents</u>	Immigrants today are a burden on our country because they take our jobs, <u>housing and health care</u>	(VOL.) Neither/DK/ Ref
a.			
Mar 13-17, 2013	49	41	10
Jan 4-8, 2012	48	37	15
Feb 22-Mar 14, 2011	45	44	12
Aug 25-Sep 6, 2010 (RVs)	44	42	14
Jul 21-Aug 5, 2010	42	45	13
Jun 16-20, 2010	39	50	11
Oct 28-Nov 30, 2009	46	40	14
October, 2006	41	41	18
March, 2006	41	52	7
December, 2005	45	44	11
December, 2004	45	44	11
June, 2003	46	44	10
September, 2000	50	38	12
August, 1999	46	44	10
October, 1997	41	48	11
June, 1997	41	48	11
April, 1997	38	52	10
June, 1996	37	54	9
July, 1994	31	63	6
b.			
	The growing number of newcomers from other countries threatens traditional American <u>customs and values</u>	The growing number of newcomers from other countries strengthens <u>American society</u>	(VOL.) Neither/DK/ Ref
Mar 13-17, 2013	43	52	6
Feb 22-Mar 14, 2011	39	52	9
Jul 21-Aug 5, 2010	38	49	13
Jun 16-20, 2010	44	44	12
November, 2007	50	40	10
March, 2006	48	45	7
December, 2004	40	50	10

QUESTION 15c, 45 PREVIOUSLY RELEASED**QUESTION 15e HELD FOR FUTURE RELEASE****NO QUESTIONS 49-55, 58-60, 64, 66-69, 72, 74-76, 78-84, 93-97****QUESTIONS 46-48****ASK ALL:**

On another subject ...

Q.56 Which comes closer to your view about how to handle immigrants who are now living in the U.S. illegally? **[READ AND RANDOMIZE]****ASK IF ALLOWED TO STAY IN THE COUNTRY (Q.56=2):**Q.57 And do you think immigrants who are in the U.S. illegally and meet the requirements should **[READ AND RANDOMIZE]**

Mar 13-17

2013

27 They should not be allowed to stay in the country legally
There should be a way for those who meet certain requirements
to stay in the country legally

71 to stay in the country legally

43 Be able to apply for U.S. citizenship

24 Be able to apply for permanent residency, but not U.S. citizenship

4 Don't know/Refused **(VOL.)**

2 Don't know/Refused **(VOL.)**

QUESTIONS 61-63, 65, 70-71, 73, 98-102 PREVIOUS RELEASED**QUESTIONS 77, 85-92 HELD FOR FUTURE RELEASE****ASK ALL:**

PARTY In politics TODAY, do you consider yourself a Republican, Democrat, or independent?

ASK IF INDEP/NO PREF/OTHER/DK/REF (PARTY=3,4,5,9):

PARTYLN As of today do you lean more to the Republican Party or more to the Democratic Party?

				(VOL.)	(VOL.)	(VOL.)	Lean	Lean
	Republican	Democrat	Independent	No preference	Other party	DK/Ref	Rep	Dem
Mar 13-17, 2013	26	33	34	3	1	3	14	15
Feb. 13-18, 2013	22	32	41	2	*	2	15	19
Jan 9-13, 2013	25	32	38	2	*	2	15	16
Dec 17-19, 2012	21	32	38	4	*	4	15	14
Dec 5-9, 2012	23	33	38	3	1	2	14	19
Oct 31-Nov 3, 2012	26	34	34	3	1	3	13	16
Oct 24-28, 2012	28	33	33	4	*	2	12	16
Oct 4-7, 2012	27	31	36	3	1	3	15	15
Sep 12-16, 2012	24	35	36	2	*	2	14	16
Jul 16-26, 2012	22	33	38	4	*	3	14	15
Jun 28-Jul 9, 2012	24	33	37	3	*	3	15	17
Jun 7-17, 2012	24	33	39	2	*	2	17	17
May 9-Jun 3, 2012	24	32	36	4	*	4	13	14
Apr 4-15, 2012	24	31	39	3	*	2	15	15
Mar 7-11, 2012	24	34	36	3	1	2	16	17
Feb 8-12, 2012	26	32	36	4	1	2	13	17
Yearly Totals								
2012	24.7	32.6	36.4	3.1	.5	2.7	14.4	16.1
2011	24.3	32.3	37.4	3.1	.4	2.5	15.7	15.6
2010	25.2	32.7	35.2	3.6	.4	2.8	14.5	14.1
2009	23.9	34.4	35.1	3.4	.4	2.8	13.1	15.7
2008	25.7	36.0	31.5	3.6	.3	3.0	10.6	15.2
2007	25.3	32.9	34.1	4.3	.4	2.9	10.9	17.0
2006	27.8	33.1	30.9	4.4	.3	3.4	10.5	15.1

PARTY PARTYLN CONTINUED...

				(VOL.)	(VOL.)	(VOL.)	Lean	Lean
	Republican	Democrat	Independent	No preference	Other party	DK/Ref	Rep	Dem
2005	29.3	32.8	30.2	4.5	.3	2.8	10.3	14.9
2004	30.0	33.5	29.5	3.8	.4	3.0	11.7	13.4
2003	30.3	31.5	30.5	4.8	.5	2.5	12.0	12.6
2002	30.4	31.4	29.8	5.0	.7	2.7	12.4	11.6
2001	29.0	33.2	29.5	5.2	.6	2.6	11.9	11.6
2001 Post-Sept 11	30.9	31.8	27.9	5.2	.6	3.6	11.7	9.4
2001 Pre-Sept 11	27.3	34.4	30.9	5.1	.6	1.7	12.1	13.5
2000	28.0	33.4	29.1	5.5	.5	3.6	11.6	11.7
1999	26.6	33.5	33.7	3.9	.5	1.9	13.0	14.5
1998	27.9	33.7	31.1	4.6	.4	2.3	11.6	13.1
1997	28.0	33.4	32.0	4.0	.4	2.3	12.2	14.1
1996	28.9	33.9	31.8	3.0	.4	2.0	12.1	14.9
1995	31.6	30.0	33.7	2.4	.6	1.3	15.1	13.5
1994	30.1	31.5	33.5	1.3	--	3.6	13.7	12.2
1993	27.4	33.6	34.2	4.4	1.5	2.9	11.5	14.9
1992	27.6	33.7	34.7	1.5	0	2.5	12.6	16.5
1991	30.9	31.4	33.2	0	1.4	3.0	14.7	10.8
1990	30.9	33.2	29.3	1.2	1.9	3.4	12.4	11.3
1989	33	33	34	--	--	--	--	--
1987	26	35	39	--	--	--	--	--

ASK REPUBLICANS AND REPUBLICAN LEANERS ONLY (PARTY=1 OR PARTYLN=1) [N=623]:

TEAPARTY3 From what you know, do you agree or disagree with the Tea Party movement, or don't you have an opinion either way?

Mar 13-17 <u>2013</u>		Feb 13-18 <u>2013</u>	Jan 9-13 <u>2013</u>
43	Agree	36	35
7	Disagree	9	10
47	No opinion either way	52	51
1	Haven't heard of (VOL.)	1	2
1	Refused (VOL.)	3	2