

An Examination of Minority Voters' Views on Immigration

By Steven A. Camarota

While it is sometimes assumed that minorities, particularly Hispanics, favor increased immigration and legalization for illegal immigrants, a new Zogby survey finds that minority voters' views are more complex. The poll of Hispanic, Asian-American, and African-American likely voters finds some support for legalization. But overall each of these groups prefers enforcement and for illegal immigrants to return home. Moreover, significant majorities of all three groups think that the current level of immigration is too high. These views are in sharp contrast to the leaders of most ethnic advocacy organizations, who argue for increased immigration and legalization of illegal immigrants. The survey used neutral language, avoiding such terms as "amnesty," "illegal alien," or "undocumented."

Among the findings:

In contrast to the leadership of many ethnic advocacy groups, most members of minority groups think immigration is too high.

Hispanics: 56 percent said it is too high; 7 percent said too low; 14 percent just right.

Asian-Americans: 57 percent said immigration is too high; 5 percent said too low; 18 percent just right.

African-Americans: 68 percent said it is too high; 4 percent said too low; 14 percent just right.

Most members of minority groups do not feel that illegal immigration is caused by limits on legal immigration as many ethnic advocacy groups argue; instead, members feel it's due to a lack of enforcement.

Hispanics: Just 20 percent said illegal immigration was caused by not letting in enough legal immigrants; 61 percent said inadequate enforcement.

Asian-Americans: 19 percent said not enough legal immigration; 69 percent said inadequate enforcement.

African-Americans: 16 percent said not enough legal immigration; 70 percent said inadequate enforcement.

Most members of minority groups feel that there are plenty of Americans available to fill unskilled jobs.

Hispanics: 15 percent said legal immigration should be increased to fill unskilled jobs; 65 percent said there are plenty of Americans available to do unskilled jobs, employers just need to pay more.

Asian-Americans: 19 percent said increase immigration; 65 percent said plenty of Americans are available.

African-Americans: 6 percent said increase immigration; 81 percent said plenty of Americans are available.



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When asked to choose between enforcement that would cause illegal immigrants in the country to go home or offering them a pathway to citizenship with conditions, most members of minority groups choose enforcement.

Hispanics: 52 percent support enforcement to encourage illegals to go home; 34 percent support conditional legalization.

Asian-Americans: 57 percent support enforcement; 29 percent support conditional legalization.

African-Americans: 50 percent support enforcement; 30 percent support conditional legalization.

Survey Methodology

Zogby International was commissioned by the Center for Immigration Studies to conduct an online survey. A sampling of Zogby International's online panel, which is representative of the adult population of the United States, was invited to participate. Zogby maintains the panel and has used it for other surveys. Slight weights were added to region, party, age, race, religion, gender, and education to more accurately reflect the U.S. population. The survey included roughly 700 Hispanic, 400 African-American, and 400 Asian-American likely voters.

The survey was conducted by Zogby from November 13 to 30, 2009. The margin of error for likely voters is +/- 0.5 percent. The margin of error for Hispanic likely voters is 3.7 percent; for African-Americans it is 4.7 percent; and for Asian-Americans voters it is 5.1 percent.

Conclusion

This survey of minority voters shows that when it comes to the issue of legalizing illegal immigrants, these voters disagree with the leadership of many ethnic advocacy groups. Most voters want the law enforced and illegal immigrants to return to their home countries. Overall they also feel that the current level of immigration is too high. The poll specifically asks voters to put aside the issue of legal status and focus only on the numbers. Even so, most think the level of immigration is too high and very few think it is too low. Not surprisingly, when it comes to allowing more unskilled workers into the country, most Hispanic, Asian-American, and African-American voters feel there are plenty of Americans here to do such work; employers just need to pay more.

The overall findings of this poll show a significant divide between the perception that minority voters want legalization and increased legal immigration and the reality, which is that they want enforcement and less immigration. Like most Americans, minority voters are not anti-immigrant or anti-immigration per se. Moreover there is not unanimity on the immigration issue among or between groups. What the poll does show is that, like most Americans, Hispanic, Asian, and black voters want the law enforced and illegal immigrants to go home. Moreover, they think the overall level of immigration is too high. When some leaders of minority groups speak on immigration and argue for legalization they are merely offering their own personal opinions, not necessarily those of voters in these communities.

Question 1. There are an estimated 38 million legal and illegal immigrants currently living in the country. That is one out of every eight U.S. residents. For most of the last decade, 1.5 million new legal and illegal immigrants combined are estimated to have settled in the country each year. Putting aside the question of legal status for a moment, and focusing only on the totals, is the number of immigrants entering the country each year too high, too low, or just right?

	Likely Voters			
	Too High	Too Low	Just Right	Not Sure
All Likely Voters	67 %	4 %	14 %	15 %
Hispanics	56 %	7 %	20 %	17 %
African-Americans	68 %	4 %	14 %	15 %
Asian-Americans	57 %	5 %	18 %	20 %

* Totals do not equal 100 percent in some cases because of rounding.

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Question 2. There are currently estimated to be 11 to 12 million illegal immigrants in the U.S. Which of these statements best reflects your opinion as to why that is? **Statement A:** Past efforts to enforce immigration laws have been grossly inadequate and the government has never made a real effort to enforce the law. **Statement B:** We have made a real effort to enforce our immigration laws, but we have failed because we are not allowing in enough immigrants legally.

	Likely Voters			
	Statement A	Statement B	Neither	Not Sure
All Likely Voters	74 %	13 %	9 %	4 %
Hispanics	61 %	20 %	15 %	5 %
African-Americans	70 %	16 %	7 %	8 %
Asian-Americans	69 %	19 %	7 %	5 %

* Totals do not equal 100 percent in some cases because of rounding.

Question 3. Which of these opinions best reflects your view on immigration and jobs that require relatively little education? **Statement A:** We need to allow more immigrants into the country to fill these jobs because there aren't enough Americans willing or able to do them. OR **Statement B:** There are plenty of Americans already here to do these jobs, if employers can't find workers they should pay more and treat workers better.

	Likely Voters			
	Statement A	Statement B	Neither	Not Sure
All Likely Voters	11 %	71 %	15 %	3 %
Hispanics	15 %	65 %	15 %	5 %
African-Americans	6 %	81 %	8 %	5 %
Asian-Americans	19 %	65 %	13 %	3 %

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Question 4: Do you support or oppose allowing illegal immigrants to stay here legally and be put on a path to citizenship if they pay a fine, study English, and undergo a background check?

	Likely Voters				
	Strongly Support	Somewhat Support	Somewhat Oppose	Strongly Oppose	Not Sure
All Likely Voters	17 %	29 %	15 %	36 %	3 %
Hispanics	30 %	24 %	11 %	33 %	3 %
African-Americans	15 %	34 %	16 %	27 %	8 %
Asian-Americans	21 %	33 %	14 %	27 %	5 %

* Totals do not equal 100 percent in some cases because of rounding.

Question 5. Do you support or oppose reducing the illegal immigrant population over time by enforcing existing immigration laws (such as requiring employers to verify the legal status of workers, increasing border enforcement, and more cooperation with local law enforcement)?

	Likely Voters				
	Strongly Support	Somewhat Support	Somewhat Oppose	Strongly Oppose	Not Sure
All Likely Voters	67 %	21 %	6 %	3 %	3 %
Hispanics	57 %	25 %	7 %	7 %	5 %
African-Americans	64 %	21 %	5 %	3 %	8 %
Asian-Americans	57 %	29 %	6 %	3 %	6 %

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Question 6. Which approach do you prefer to deal with illegal immigrants in the country? **Statement A:** Enforcing the law and causing them to return home over time. **Statement B:** Granting legal status and a pathway to citizenship to most illegal immigrants?

	Likely Voters			
	Statement A	Statement B	Neither	Not Sure
All Likely Voters	61 %	26 %	7 %	7 %
Hispanics	52 %	34 %	7 %	7 %
African-Americans	50 %	30 %	10 %	10 %
Asian-Americans	57 %	29 %	7 %	7 %

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