

**PUBLIC OPINION ON IMMIGRATION:
WHAT THE POLLS SAY ON COMPREHENSIVE IMMIGRATION REFORM**

Conventional wisdom holds that most Americans want to continue our current “get tough” approach to illegal immigration. However, a vast body of public opinion research indicates strong support for a more intelligent and realistic approach to controlling immigration. Here is a sampling of results of public opinion polls conducted since 2005:

THE PUBLIC VIEWS IMMIGRATION AS A HIGH PRIORITY FOR THE NEW CONGRESS:

When 2008 general election voters were asked about their views on immigration and what Congress should do¹:

- 78% stated that immigration is a “serious problem”
- 57% thought immigration reform should be a high priority for the new Congress
- 64% of voters would prefer that Congress passes comprehensive reform, while only 27% would rather see the current laws enforced more strongly
- 66% of Americans thought the candidates talked about immigration “too little” during the election

When asked if it’s important for the government to deal with the large number of undocumented immigrants already living in this country, 75% responded that it was important (34% that it was “very important”).²

AMERICANS SUPPORT COMPREHENSIVE IMMIGRATION REFORM:

- 60% of 2008 general election voters favor comprehensive immigration reform (versus enforcing our current laws).³
- 60% of registered voters nationwide support comprehensive immigration reform. Only 15% oppose it.⁴
- 71% of “likely voters” favor comprehensive immigration reform legislation. Support is solid across party lines: 73% of Republicans, 67% of Independents, and 70% of Democrats.⁵
- 72% of likely Republican voters favor an earned legalization immigration reform plan, and 71% say they would be more likely to support a candidate for Congress who supported CIR.⁶
- 75% of likely voters favor bipartisan comprehensive immigration reform legislation.⁷

AMERICANS SUPPORT GIVING UNDOCUMENTED IMMIGRANTS A PATH TO CITIZENSHIP:

Percentages represent those who favor allowing undocumented immigrants to remain in the United States under certain conditions:

- 67% in a Lake Research Partners/Benenson Strategy Group in November 2008
- 58% in an ABC News poll in September 2007
- 51% in a Washington Post/ABC News poll in October/November 2007
- 67% in a Fox News poll in June 2007

- 62% in a CBS News/New York Times poll in May 2007
- 59% in a Gallup/USA Today poll in March 2007
- 79% in a CNN/Opinion Research Corp. poll in May 2006
- 77% in a CBS News poll in May 2006
- 62% in a Fox News poll in March 2006
- 76% in a TIME Magazine/SRBI poll
- 61% in a Washington Post poll in December 2005

AMERICANS REJECT ENFORCEMENT-ONLY APPROACHES TO IMMIGRATION:

- Only 14% of Americans think that the 12 million undocumented immigrants in the US “must leave the country”.⁸
- 66% of Americans oppose building a 700 mile long fence on the border with Mexico.⁹
- Just 28% of Americans think enforcement-only (not comprehensive immigration reform) is the way to deal with our immigration problem.¹⁰
- Only 16% of Americans think the government should “deport all” undocumented immigrants.¹¹

AMERICANS HOLD POSITIVE VIEWS ABOUT IMMIGRANT CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE U.S. ECONOMY:

- When given the choice, 62% of Americans said undocumented immigrants should become legal tax payers, versus 21% who said they should leave the country.¹²
- 79% of Americans think that undocumented immigrants take “jobs that Americans don’t want”. Only 15% think they “take jobs away” from Americans who need them.¹³
- 74% of Americans agreed that “it would be good for the US economy if we could reform our immigration system to ensure that there are enough workers to meet our economic needs”.¹⁴
- A majority of voters in key battle ground states (42% in Florida, 42% in Colorado, and 44% in New Mexico) think that undocumented immigrants help the economy by providing low-cost labor.¹⁵

¹ Benenson Strategy Group/Lake Research Partners, November 5-9 2008.

² Gallup/USA Today. April 7-9, 2006.

³ Lake Research Partners/Benenson Strategy Group, November 2008.

⁴ Los Angeles Times/Bloomberg, November 2007.

⁵ Tarrance Group, July 2006.

⁶ Tarrance Group/Manhattan Institute, October 2005.

⁷ Tarrance Group/Lake Snell Perry Mermin Decision Research, March 2005.

⁸ Lake Research Partners/Benenson Strategy Group, November 2008.

⁹ CBS News/New York Times, May 2006.

¹⁰ Lake Research Partners/Benenson Strategy Group, November 2008.

¹¹ USA Today/Gallup, March 2007.

¹² Lake Research Partners/Benenson Strategy Group, November 2008.

¹³ Gallup, June 2008.

¹⁴ Tarrance Group/Lake Research Partners, April 2007.

¹⁵ NDN, September 2008.