

RESULTS OF NATIONAL IMMIGRATION POLL ANNOUNCED BY HAMILTON COLLEGE

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Despite believing that immigrants enhance our society, few Americans favor increasing immigration, according to a new national poll conducted by researchers at Hamilton College and Zogby International. The Hamilton Immigration Opinion Poll finds that more than 4 in 10 Americans favor decreasing immigration levels. Results also indicate that concerns over national security outweigh support for immigration increases.

The survey of 1,078 randomly selected adults was designed and analyzed by Hamilton Economics Professor Paul Hagstrom and his students. It queried respondents on everything from treatment of Iraqi refugees fleeing Saddam Hussein to public assistance issues, from illegal immigration to issues of national security. The poll is the sixth in a series of polls designed by Hamilton College researchers, funded by Hamilton's Arthur Levitt Public Affairs Center, and administered by the Zogby International polling firm. The survey has a margin of error of plus or minus 3 percent.

The poll's main findings include the following:

- Forty-one percent of U.S. residents favor decreasing immigration levels, despite the fact that 57 percent believe that immigrants enhance American society. Sentiments to reduce immigration are stronger in the central and southern states than in eastern or western states.
- Forty-nine percent of Republicans versus 33 percent of Democrats say immigration should be decreased.
- Only a third of Americans feel that the U.S. government is taking adequate steps to ensure that terrorists are not legally admitted in the country.
- Americans are not concerned that immigrants will take their jobs. About 60 percent believe that immigrants take jobs that Americans do not want while 23 percent feel they take jobs that Americans want. Only 12 percent of workers worried about losing their job to an immigrant.
- Sixty-three percent of Americans would support a policy that stops all immigration from countries suspected of harboring terrorists.
- Younger and higher educated Americans are more likely to favor increases in immigration.
- The highly religious are more uncomfortable with immigrants from the Middle East than the nonreligious.
- Sixty-five percent of urban residents believe immigrants enhance society compared to 49 percent for small town and rural residents.
- Over half of U.S. residents believe that most immigrants are in the U.S. illegally although the true estimate is less than 30 percent.
- Three-fourths believe that an immigrant who does not speak English can be a good citizen.

- Over half of all Americans would feel very or somewhat uncomfortable if an immigrant from the Middle East moved into their neighborhood. This compares to discomfort percentages of 22 percent for immigrants from Europe, 27 percent for immigrants from Asia, and 29 percent for immigrants from Mexico.
- Few, only 20 percent, favor increasing refugee levels (as opposed to immigrant levels) to pre-September 11th, 2001 levels, while 70 percent say they should not be increased.
- Over half of all Americans say immigrants should be eligible for welfare, food stamps, and medical assistance.