

How do Americans View Immigrants?

by Angela Orlando

As people from other countries make transitions to living here in the U.S., how are they welcomed? What attitudes do Americans have toward immigrants these days? A recent poll conducted from May to August 2004 by National Public Radio, the Kaiser Family Foundation, and Harvard's Kennedy School of Government found that "American's views on immigration are less negative than they were in the months just after the 9/11 terrorist attacks." This is good news.

The survey also found that "nearly as many people (37%) say legal immigration should be kept at its present level as say it should be decreased (41%)." But, the survey also revealed that the public is divided over whether they think immigration is good or bad for the country. One thing that seems to make many people uncomfortable is the cultural impact immigrants are perceived as having. In fact, 62% of non-immigrants said that they think the U.S. should be a country with "a basic American culture and values" instead of "a country made up of many cultures and values that change as new people come here." What concerns people most, though, is illegal immigration. A large majority want the government to crack down on it. What concerns them about illegal immigration?

45% said they worry that immigrants are taking jobs from Americans.

63% said taxpayers pay too much for education and health care for immigrants.

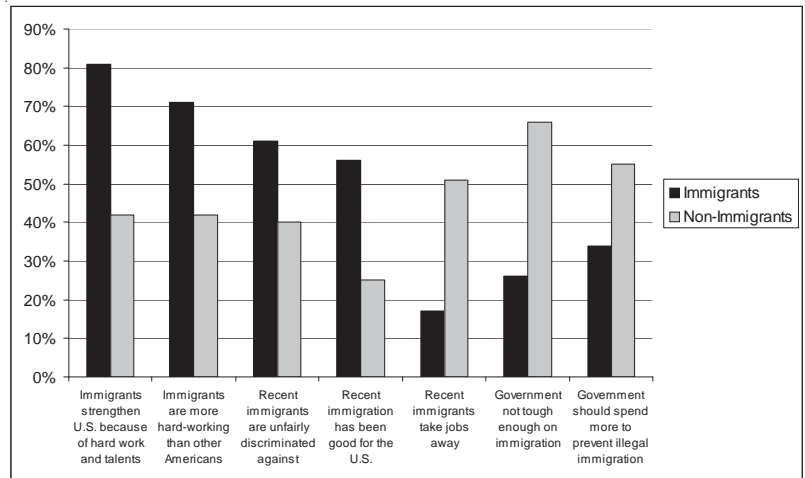
54% said the "wrong kinds of people" are coming to the U.S.

56% believe that "illegal immigration increases the likelihood of terrorism."

You can find the complete report, the questionnaire, and additional charts at: www.npr.org/news/specials/polls/2004/immigration/.

Angela Orlando is the editor of *The Change Agent*.

The survey asked the same questions of both immigrants and non-immigrants. Here is what each group answered to one set of questions.



Source: NPR/Kaiser/Kennedy School Immigration Survey (5/27-8/4/04)

Questions for discussion:

- Do you think immigration is good or bad for the United States? Why do you say so?
- What concerns do you have about immigration?
- Who do you think the "wrong kind of people" might be? Do you agree with this?
- What impact do you think immigrants have on the economy? Why?
- What are the contributions that immigrants make to the United States?