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Public Opinion on Immigration in America

An Occasional Paper *

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* Tim Bolin, an Associate of the Merage Foundation for the American Dream, authored this paper. The paper is part of a series of papers published annually by the Foundation to help stimulate a needed dialogue in the nation concerning immigration. Other papers, some commissioned by the Foundation and some completed by staff, have been published on: immigration and crime; the benefits and costs of immigration; immigration and social security. To find out more about the occasional paper series, see www.meragefoundations.com.

Executive Summary

Throughout the nation's history, United States citizens have had mixed feelings about immigrants. Coexisting with the ideals of acceptance and tolerance of immigrants, most famously evoked in Emma Lazarus's words—"Give me your tired, your poor, / Your huddled masses yearning to breathe free"—have been social movements and immigration policies of natives, isolationist, and even racist character.

Formal public opinion polling did not exist prior to the depression. But to the extent that government and social action mirror public opinion, we can glean a sense of the latter through examination of the former. Such analysis suggests strong coalitions on both sides of the major immigration questions of whether to admit more or fewer immigrants and whether immigration was good or bad for America. As to the question of which immigrants should or should not be admitted, various groups opposed certain types of immigration, at different times, and they achieved varied levels of success. Thus, based on policy and social movement through the pre-poll period, America was at once welcoming, indifferent, and hostile to newcomers.

Beginning in the depression, surveys of public opinion indicate how Americans viewed immigration. They suggest that sizeable numbers of Americans have favored maintaining or increasing immigration levels and often simultaneously, sizeable numbers of Americans have favored decreasing immigration levels. Public views concerning immigration policy alternatives seem to vary considerably over time and depend on economic conditions, racial and ethnic prejudices and perceived international threats to the U.S. In this context, a healthy economy combined with reduced ethnic and racial tension and minimal public fears concerning external dangers appears to generate more favorable public views of immigration and immigrants. Surprisingly, despite the 9/11 tragedy, an uneven economy, and the often strident criticism of current immigration numbers, recent surveys suggest that close to 50% of Americans either support current levels of legal immigration or increases in legal immigration. This fact suggests that a civil dialogue, one fostered by civic and business leaders, could generate a fair and effective set of immigration policies.

Before Surveys of Public Opinion:

For the most part, the United States welcomed immigrants during its early history. Labor was in short supply and a seemingly endless frontier called for settlement: the fledgling country needed new citizens. The U.S. government and American industries employed various strategies to entice foreigners to come, including land grants, subsidized passage, and active recruitment abroad. Some foreigners also came unwillingly, as slaves. Between 1783 and 1820, approximately 250,000 immigrants came to America—from all over the world, but mostly from Northeastern Europe. A pro-immigration consensus would reign into the 1840s.

From 1820 to 1845, immigrants came to America at a steady pace of 10,000 to 100,000 a year. Then, immigration spiked. From 1845 through 1854, 2.9 million immigrants arrived, including 1.2 million Irish (fleeing Ireland's potato famine of the mid-1840s) and over a million Germans (rendered jobless by industrialization). Poor and often relegated to disease-ridden slums, immigrants became a flashpoint for the anxieties of nativist, native-born Protestant-Americans. Massachusetts and other eastern states legislated against immigrants—particularly Irish Catholics—but were consistently overruled by the Supreme Court. The Know-Nothings, who called for restrictions on immigration, exclusion of the foreign-born from voting or holding public office, and a 21-year residency requirement for citizenship, became a third political party of considerable popularity and importance during the early 1850s. It elected leaders in local and state government as well as governors and members of Congress. At the party's peak in 1855, it had forty-three U.S. Congressmen.

The Civil War brought the Republicans to power. They embraced immigration as an important component of national economic development. The U.S. would welcome European immigrants with generous terms of admission and naturalization for the rest of the nineteenth century. But though the Civil War fragmented the Know-Nothing party over the slavery issue and in the face of patent patriotism displayed by immigrant troops, anti-immigrant sentiments lived on, directed to new areas of the nation and new groups of newcomers.

The Gold Rush of the 1850s drew large-scale immigration from China to the American West. The Burlingame Treaty of 1868 formalized U.S.-China commercial ties and guaranteed “the rights of man to change his home and allegiance” and “the same privileges, immunities, and exemptions” held by American citizens for Chinese visiting or residing in the U.S. However, an anti-Chinese movement, characterized by racism and fear of economic competition, gained momentum. In 1870, Senator Charles Sumner led an attempt to amend U.S. naturalization legislation, changing those eligible for citizenship from “free white men” to, simply, “free men.” The proposal was narrowly defeated by senators who wanted to keep the Chinese ineligible, though they compromised somewhat by extending eligibility to “aliens of African nativity and persons of African descent.” Twelve years later, the nation’s first major restriction on immigration was enacted. The Exclusion Act of 1882 prohibited for the next decade entry of Chinese laborers who had not previously been to the U.S. It would not be repealed until 1943.

In 1894, a treaty between the U.S. and Japan, a growing power in the Far East and an important potential ally, allowed free immigration of Japanese citizens to the U.S. But, as their numbers grew, Japanese immigrants—mostly agricultural laborers who came to California via Hawaii—faced, like the Chinese before them, mounting prejudice and discrimination. In 1907, President Theodore Roosevelt got the San Francisco School Board to rescind a policy of segregating Asian students in return for a “Gentlemen’s Agreement” with Japan that regulated the number and educational level of Japanese immigrants, greatly reducing Japanese immigration. The Immigration Act of 1917 introduced a literacy requirement (long a goal of anti-immigration activists) and barred “Asiatics” from entry.

In addition to the backlash against Asian immigrants, the early twentieth century also witnessed increasing public pressure to reduce European immigration. The Congressional Immigration Commission’s 1911 report recommended a twin-pronged approach of limiting overall immigration from Europe while favoring immigrants from Northwestern Europe. Immigration dropped significantly through World War I. As the war came to a close, the national psyche was troubled by the prospect of postwar unemployment, the Bolshevik Revolution, the Red Scare, and sensational press stories about legions of destitute Europeans, with virulent radicals in their ranks, lining up to immigrate to America. In addition to long-standing nativist lobbies, labor unions, members of established immigrant groups, and a variety of civic organizations were arguing for more restrictive immigration policy. Despite protests from industrial leaders that immigrant labor was vital to the economy, and the visible contributions made by immigrants to America’s development and economy, invidious, explicit and implicit, racial, ethnic and religious related caps on immigration were included in the National Quota Acts of 1921 and 1924. They put limits on immigrants according to national origin.

The Quota Acts reduced immigration from 805,000 entries in the year prior to enactment of the 1921 Act, to an average of 503,000 each year between the 1921 Act and the 1924 Act, to an average of 294,000 annually through the six years following the 1924 Act. The harsh economic environment of the United States during the Great Depression compelled many to leave the country, and immigration only slightly exceeded emigration through the 1930s.

Despite greatly diminished immigration during this period, there was a considerable amount of anti-immigration rhetoric at the policy-making level. President Hoover, for example, stressed that the tough economic times of the Depression made it necessary to restrict immigration, in order to preserve diminished employment opportunities for natives. While no major laws were passed to this effect during his administration, regulations governing immigration were tightened.

The Polls: Charting American Public Opinion from the 20th Century into the 21st

The rise of Nazism in the 1930s created a burgeoning refugee crisis in Europe. In 1938, immigration first appeared as an issue in a public opinion poll, which the following question:

<i>What is your attitude toward allowing German, Austrian, and other political refugees to come to the United States?</i>	
Response	Percentage
Encourage, even if we have to raise immigration quotas	5
Allow them to come, but do not raise quotas	18
With conditions as they are, we should keep them out	68
Don't know	9

Source: Fortune, May 1938, from *The Roper Center*, The University of Connecticut, Storrs, Connecticut, in Simon R.: *Public Opinion and the Immigrant* (Lexington: Lexington Books, 1985), 33.

In sum, 86 percent of the public seemed to oppose emergency increases in immigration quotas to help German, Austrian, and other refugees. In 1939, after Germany annexed Austria and invaded Czechoslovakia, an opinion poll asked, "Should we allow a large number of Jewish exiles from Germany to come to the United States to live?" 71 percent of respondents answered, "No." The same poll also asked, "If you were a member of the incoming Congress, would you vote yes or no on a bill to open the doors of the United States to a larger number of European refugees than are now admitted under our immigration quota?" To this question, 83 percent of respondents said they would vote "no."

The U.S. government's tepid reaction to the European refugee crisis and to the terrible tragedy befalling Jews in Germany and throughout Europe in part reflected seeming public opposition to offering asylum to refugees. A more courageous immigration policy, one which led rather than followed apparent public opinion, likely could and would have saved many Jews from death in the Holocaust.

Immigration was not granted visibility in most public opinion polls during World War II. Toward the end of the war, in 1944, a poll was undertaken which asked Americans the following question about their preferences for different nationalities as potential immigrants:

<i>Here is a list of different groups of people. Do you think we should let a certain number of each of these groups to come to the United States to live after the war, or do you think we should stop some of the groups from coming at all?</i>			
Nationality	Allow (%)	Stop (%)	No Opinion (%)
English	68	25	7
Swedes	62	27	11
Russians	57	33	10
Chinese	56	36	8
Mexicans	48	42	10
Jews	46	46	8
Germans	36	59	5
Japanese	20	75	5

Source: National Opinion Research Center, September 1944, in Simon, R.: *Public Opinion in America: 1936-1970* (New York: Rand McNally, 1974), 96.

The English were close allies in war as well as close to America in terms of ethnicity, language, and historical ties. Neutral Sweden seemed more favorably viewed than U.S. allies, the Russians and Chinese.

After the Allied victory, pollsters asked America,

<i>Should we permit more persons from Europe to come to this country each year than we did before the war; should we keep the number about the same; or should we reduce the number?</i>	
Response	Percentage
More	5
Same	32
Fewer	37
None at all	14
No opinion	12

Source: American Institute of Public Opinion, January 1946, in *The Roper Center*, in Simon, R.: *Public Opinion and the Immigrant* (Lexington: Lexington Books, 1985), 34.

83 percent of the public opposed letting more Europeans enter the U.S. than were let in each year before the war. Slightly more than half of respondents favored admitting fewer immigrants or none at all. But more than a third—37 percent—wanted the same number or more.

Seven months later, another poll queried American opinion on European refugees:

<i>There are still a lot of refugees or displaced persons in European camps who cannot go back to the homes they had before the war. Which of these four statements comes closest to what you think this country should do about these refugees?</i>	
Response	Percentage
1. We should admit all of these refugees who are well and strong to the United States, no matter what other countries do.	10
2. We should take only our share of these refugees and insist that other countries do the same.	43
3. There are still too many here now and we should not admit any more at all. But we should help to get them settled elsewhere.	23
4. They are a problem for the European countries to worry about and we should let those countries handle the problem.	17
5. Don't know.	7

Source: American Institute of Public Opinion, August 1946, in *The Roper Center*, in Simon, R.: *Public Opinion in America: 1936-1970* (New York: Rand McNally, 1974), 35.

Here, slightly more than half the public favored admitting at least some refugees into the U.S. At around the same time, two polls asked Americans,

<i>Would you approve or disapprove of a plan to require each nation to take a given number of Jewish and other European refugees based upon the size and population of each nation?</i>		
Response	Percentage	
	June	Aug.
Approve	37	40
Disapprove	48	49
No opinion	15	11

Source: American Institute of Public Opinion, June/August 1946, in Simon, R.: *Public Opinion in America: 1936-1970*, 99.

Nearly half of respondents disapproved of a refugee policy that would mean more refugees for America than for other, smaller nations—but a relatively large share of the public favored the proposal.

In the face of imminent congressional action on the refugee question, public opinion seemed to turn more exclusionary. In 1947, Americans were asked,

Would you vote 'yes' or 'no' on a bill in Congress to let 100,000 selected European refugees come to this country in each of the next four years in addition to the 150,000 immigrants now permitted to enter every year under our present quota?

72 percent of respondents said they would vote “no.”¹ Nevertheless, pressured by advocacy groups, as well as their own respective commitments, Congress passed and President Truman signed the Displaced Persons Act of 1948 which allowed admission of 250,000 displaced persons over two years. In 1950 the Act was extended two more years, with its quota raised to 415,000 displaced persons.

The Cold War intensified in the 1950s, resulting in a wave of anti communist hysteria and public concerns over immigration of communists and radicals into the U.S. The political environment of the time generated the first major revision of U.S. immigration policy since 1924. The Immigration and Nationality Act of 1952:

1. eliminated racial barriers to immigration and naturalization;
2. expanded provisions for family reunification;
3. revised the national origin quota system of the Immigration Act of 1924 by changing the annual quota to one sixth of one percent of the numbers of persons from a given nation in the U.S. in 1920;
4. broadened the grounds for exclusion and deportation of subversives and communists; and
5. granted the attorney general authority to allow aliens to enter the U.S. in the event of an emergency or for the public interest.

While President Truman approved of parts of the legislation, he opposed the continuation of the quota system and vetoed the bill. Congress overrode the President’s veto. The perpetuation of quotas reflected the view of the majority in Congress and, at the time, perhaps the nation that minimizing the number of immigrants from Eastern Europe and Asia would “best preserve the sociological and cultural balance of the United States.”²

In 1953, President Eisenhower proposed the Refugee Relief Act. It would admit over 200,000 asylum-seekers from Soviet-occupied nations over two years, outside existing quotas. A poll found that 47 percent of the public approved of the law; 48 percent disapproved; and 5 percent had no opinion.³ This relatively balanced split would, through the rest of the 20th century and into the 21st, characterize public opinion on the larger issue of whether to decrease the current immigration level versus maintain or increase it.

In 1955, a poll asked the public for its opinion on the number of immigrants entering the U.S.:

In general, do you think the United States is letting too many immigrants come into this country or not enough?

Response	Percentage
Not enough	13
About the right number	37
Too many	39
Don't know	11

Source: National Opinion Research Center, April 1955, from *The Roper Center*, in Simon, R.: *Public Opinion and the Immigrant* (Lexington: Lexington Books, 1985), 37.

Triple the number of Americans deemed the current immigration level too high as judged it too low. But nearly as many considered it about right as considered it too high.

In 1956, Hungarians revolted against the Soviets. The Soviet Union crushed the rebellion, displacing thousands of Hungarians. The Eisenhower administration began using the parole authority granted to the attorney general under the 1952 Immigration and Nationality Act to admit them to the United States.

Pollsters asked Americans,

Five thousand refugees from Hungary are being admitted to the United States. If you have room would you be willing to have one or more refugees from Hungary in your home for a few months or until such a time as this person could be on his or her own?

50 percent of respondents said they would be willing to have one or more Hungarians in their home; 35 percent said they would not be willing; and 15 percent said they did not know.⁴ A month later, another poll item referred to the first five thousand Hungarian refugees admitted under parole authority:

<i>Do you feel that the United States is letting in too many refugees from Hungary, about the right number, or not enough?</i>	
Response	Percentage
Not enough	11
About right	48
Too many	34
Don't know	7

Source: National Opinion Research Center, December 1956, from *The Roper Center*, in Simon, R.: *Public Opinion and the Immigrant* (Lexington: Lexington Books, 1985), 38.

A year later, a poll asked whether the Hungarians should be allowed to become permanent residents of the U.S.:

Under the present immigration laws, the Hungarian refugees who came to this country after the revolt last year have no permanent residence and can be deported at any time. Do you think the law should or should not be changed so that these refugees can stay here permanently?

Opinion was fairly evenly split: 42 percent of respondents favored the change, while 43 percent opposed it. (15 percent had no opinion.)⁵ A year and a half later, Americans were polled as to their willingness to allow refugees generally to become permanent residents:

There are an estimated 15 million refugees in different parts of the world. These people have been forced to leave their home countries or have fled for various reasons. Are you in favor of or against allowing any of those refugees to come to the United States to make their homes?

60 percent of respondents said they favored admitting some refugees (the polling item did not specify a number); 31 opposed admitting any refugees; and 9 percent did not know or did not answer.⁶

The immigration policy reforms advocated by Presidents Truman, Eisenhower, Kennedy, and Johnson—replacement of discriminatory national origin quotas with quotas unconnected to race, color, or creed—did not come to fruition until 1965, in the political climate of the civil rights movement. Before President Johnson signed the Immigration Act of 1965 at the foot of the Statue of Liberty, the Gallup Poll asked Americans,

In your view, should immigration be kept at its present level, increased, or decreased?

39 percent said it should be kept at its present level; 7 percent favored an increase; 33 percent endorsed a decrease; and 20 percent had no opinion.⁷ A solid core of nearly half the population—46 percent—either accepted current levels of immigration or endorsed an increase. Only 33 percent appeared to endorse a decrease in immigration levels.

Although the 1965 Act is often viewed as the catalyst for new growth in immigration levels, the number of immigrants per decade had in fact been increasing since the 1930s. That said, the 1965 Act allowed a sustained, relatively large, steady increase in the number of immigrants entering the nation from around the world—growth that has continued into the 21st century.

Immigration became an issue in American public discourse through the 1970s. In 1975, as the communist North Vietnamese Army closed in on Saigon, President Ford ordered an airlift of some 237,000 anticommunist Vietnamese refugees from Da Nang. A poll asked Americans,

If these South Vietnamese are evacuated, should they be permitted to live in the United States, or not?

36 percent of the public said the refugees should be permitted to live in the U.S., but 52 percent said they should not. 12 percent had no opinion.⁸ Another poll queried public opinion on the question,

Do you favor or oppose 130,000 Vietnamese refugees coming to live in the United States?

37 percent of Americans favored the prospect; 49 percent opposed it; and 14 percent were undecided.⁹ In 1977, when President Carter proposed that 15,000 Indochinese refugees be admitted, in addition to the 15,000 already in the U.S., Americans were asked,

Do you tend to favor or oppose 15,000 more Indochinese refugees coming to live in this country?

31 percent favored; 57 percent opposed; and 12 percent were unsure.¹⁰ Nevertheless, between 1975 and 1979, Ford and Carter would bring in nearly 400,000 Southeast Asian refugees to live in the U.S.

Also in 1977, Gallup repeated its 1965 polling question on immigration. The question secured similar results:

In your view, should immigration be kept at its present level, increased, or decreased?

37% of the public wanted immigration kept at its present level; 7 percent favored an increase; 42 percent wanted a decrease; and 14 percent had no opinion.¹¹ Again, the great majority of the public – 79 percent - was against any increase in immigration levels. At the same time, a strong core of public opinion - 44 percent - favored either maintaining or increasing current levels of immigration.

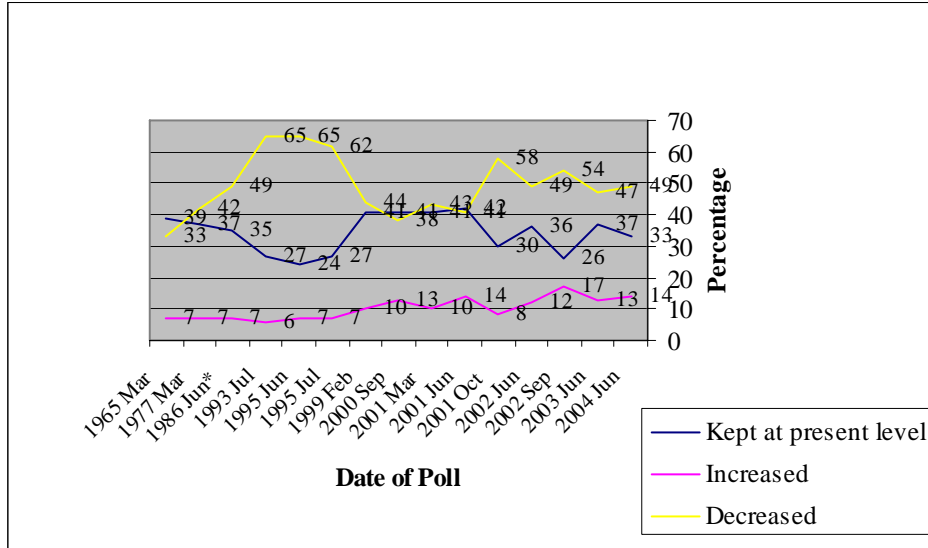
After the 12-year gap between its first two appearances in the Gallup Poll, the question on immigration levels began to appear with increasingly greater frequency: in 1986, 1993, 1995, and then every year after 1999. This mounting frequency reflects the growing topicality of the issue. Certainly, since the 1970s, immigration has become an issue of increasing importance. The Gallup Poll results are listed by year in the table and chart below:

In your view, should immigration be kept at its present level, increased, or decreased?

Date of Poll	Kept at present level %	Increased %	Decreased %	No opinion %
1965 Mar	39	7	33	20
1977 Mar	37	7	42	14
1986 Jun ¹	35	7	49	9
1993 Jul	27	6	65	2
1995 Jun	24	7	65	4
1995 Jul	27	7	62	4
1999 Feb	41	10	44	5
2000 Sep	41	13	38	8
2001 Mar	41	10	43	6
2001 Jun	42	14	41	3
2001 Oct	30	8	58	4
2002 Jun	36	12	49	3
2002 Sep	26	17	54	3
2003 Jun	37	13	47	3
2004 Jun	33	14	49	4

¹ CBS / New York Times poll; Source: Gallup News Service, July 22, 2004.

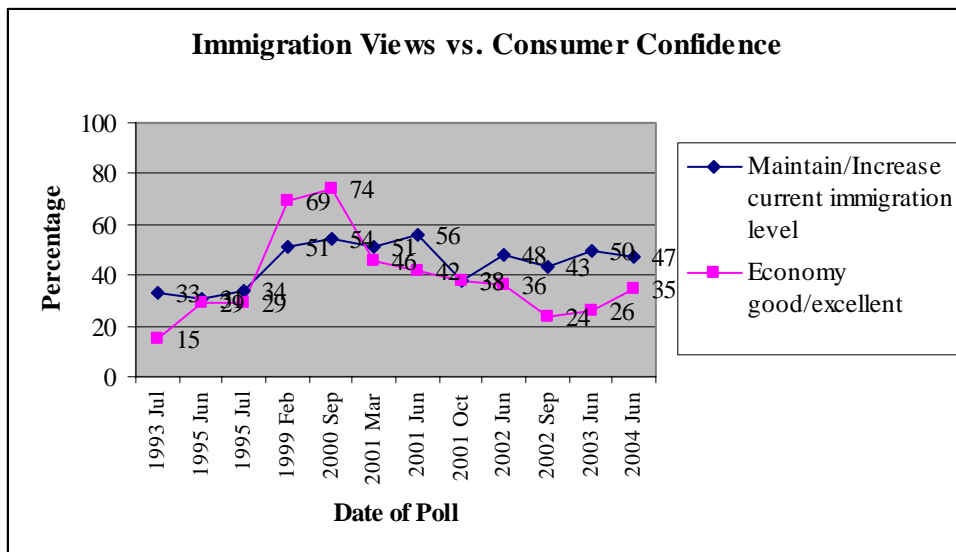
In your view, should immigration be kept at its present level, increased, or decreased?



* CBS / New York Times poll.
 Source: Gallup News Service, July 22, 2004.

From a 1993/1995 high of 65 percent in favor of decreasing the current level of immigration, the proportion of Americans favoring a decrease fell to below half from 2000 through mid-2001. The month following the September 2001 terrorist attacks, the percentage who wanted a decrease spiked to 58 percent. Subsequently the percentage in favor of decreasing immigration has fluctuated around the 50 percent mark in Gallup Polls. Those who oppose increased immigration levels have never significantly outnumbered those who favor either an increase in or sustaining current levels of immigration.

Except for the poll taken almost immediately after 9/11, Gallup data indicates that public views on immigration at least since the 1990s are significantly influenced by perceptions of the national economy. For example, extended support for limiting immigration coincided with heightened public concern about the recession of the early 1990s. Similarly, the strongest showing in favor of maintaining or increasing current immigration levels paralleled very favorable public impressions of the economy.



Source: Gallup News Service, July 2004

In other words, from 1993 to 2004, support for maintaining or increasing current immigration levels tended to be lowest when the percentage of Americans who considered the economy “good” or “excellent” was low.¹²

Currently near 50% of Americans (varies depending on survey) seem to be supportive of maintaining or increasing immigration levels. For example, a 2004 NPR/Kaiser/Kennedy School study found that 37 percent of the American public believed legal immigration should be kept at its present level, while 18 percent believe it should be increased. 41 percent of Americans indicated immigration should be decreased.¹³ Similarly, Gallup in June 2005 found that 34% of all Americans favor present levels of immigration while 16% indicated they should be increased. A recent CBS News Poll completed between July 29-August 2 2005 indicated that 32% of Americans believe immigration levels should be sustained and 13% suggested that levels of immigration should be increased.¹⁴

Conclusion

Strategic in-depth comparisons of public opinion are difficult to develop based on different polls. Surveys often, use different methodology and sampling procedures. Questions aimed at determining public views on similar subjects are sometimes asked in different ways. Most surveys do not record how strong a person’s views are. For example, interviewees, generally, are not asked to develop rankings comparing immigration with other national or local issues.

Despite their weaknesses, surveys have provided useful impressionistic views of public opinion at any one point in time and over time. Through more than half a century of polling, American views of immigration seemed to vary depending on the strength of the economy, prevailing racial and ethnic prejudices and perceived external threats. At present, despite the 9/11 tragedy, modest economic growth, and the stridency of some of the critics of immigration, recent polls suggest that nearly 50% of all Americans favor current or increased immigration levels. Given this fact, a leadership fostered civil dialogue concerning immigration policies- a dialogue premised on accurate numbers[†] and not on emotion- likely could and would lead to a fair and effective set of immigration policies.

[†] A start in this direction would be to premise the dialogue on real numbers concerning the extent of immigration. America is not getting overrun by immigrants-legal or undocumented. For example, contrary to media headlines over the past year, the number of legal permanent residents entering the U.S. declined to 455,000 last year from 647,000 at the peak in 2000. Last year, according to the Pew Hispanic Center, the number of undocumented or unauthorized immigrants totaled 562,000. The total number of immigrants annually now approximates 1.1 to 1.2 million. The proportion of authorized immigrants diminished from more than 50 percent to 40 percent - a good part of the reduction explained by the decline in legal or authorized immigrants. The total numbers of authorized and unauthorized immigrants are far less than suggested by the sometimes shrill headlines and stories in the media suggesting millions of legal and illegal immigrants are now flooding this country. They should help policy makers generate a more rational less strident and needed national immigration debate concerning development of fair and effective immigration policies. (These numbers are from the recent study from the Pew Hispanic Center, a non partisan research group. They appeared in the New York Times on Wednesday, September 28, 2005.)

Endnotes

¹ Fortune Magazine, November 1947, from *The Roper Center*, in Simon, R.: *Public Opinion and the Immigrant* (Lexington: Lexington Books, 1985), 36.

² S. Rep. No. 1515, 81st Cong., 2d sess., 455.

³ National Opinion Research Center, May 1953, from *The Roper Center*, in Simon, R.: *Public Opinion and the Immigrant* (Lexington: Lexington Books, 1985), 36.

⁴ American Institute of Public Opinion, November 1956, from *The Roper Center*, in *ibid.*, 37-38.

⁵ American Institute of Public Opinion, September 1957, from *The Roper Center*, in *ibid.*, 38.

⁶ Minnesota Polls, April 1959, from *The Roper Center*, in *ibid.*, 38.

⁷ Saad, L., “Americans Divided on Immigration,” Gallup News Service, July 22, 2004.

⁸ American Institute of Public Opinion, April 1975, from *The Roper Center*, in Simon, R.: *Public Opinion and the Immigrant* (Lexington: Lexington Books, 1985), 40-41.

⁹ Harris, L., July 1975, from *The Roper Center*, in *ibid.*, 41.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹ Saad, L., “Americans Divided on Immigration,” Gallup News Service, July 22, 2004.

¹² Gallup’s 2004 Minority Rights and Relations poll asked Americans to rate the impact of immigration on six different aspects of life in the U.S.: food, music, and the arts; social and moral values; the economy; job opportunities; taxes; and crime.

Effect of Immigrants on the United States

Aspect of American life	Better %	Not much effect %	Worse %
Food, music, and the arts	44	42	10
Social and moral values	18	50	27
The economy	22	34	41
Job opportunities	11	51	37
Taxes	12	38	45
Crime	6	43	47

Source: Saad, L., “Americans Divided on Immigration,” Gallup News Service, July 22, 2004, 3.

Americans are notably positive concerning immigrants’ affect on food, music, and the arts—44 percent believe immigrants make them better, compared to 10 percent who say they make them worse. More Americans think that immigrants make the situation worse than better with respect to the economy, jobs, taxes, and crime. Nevertheless, even in these categories at least 49 percent of the public believe that immigrants make things better or do not have much effect at all. The combined *better/not-much-effect* percentage outnumbers the *worse* percentage for every aspect of American life in the poll. The data, again, suggests that a strong core group of Americans would respond to a factually based fair dialogue concerning immigration policies with an open mind.

¹³ NPR/Kaiser/Kennedy School Poll, *Immigration in America: Full Written Summary of Findings*, <http://www.npr.org/news/specials/polls/2004/immigration/summary.pdf>, October 6, 2004, 1.

¹⁴ CBS News Poll, July 29th-Aug 2, 2005. A March survey completed for the American Immigration Lawyers Association illustrated relatively similar results. 39% of the public indicated that legal immigration should be kept at the current level while 9% indicated it should be increased. 31% opted for decreased levels and 15% suggested it should be stopped altogether. Different surveys reflect different answers concerning specific immigration policies seemingly based on how the questions are asked and what is asked of the respondent. For example, use of the term illegal instead of undocumented appears to generate more negative responses to questions for example related to creating pathways to citizenship for and granting extended work stays in the U.S. subsequent to some sort of voluntary registration.