

More Americans Say Immigrants Help Rather Than Hurt Economy

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by Art Swift

WASHINGTON, D.C. -- Five months into Donald Trump's presidency, 49% of U.S. adults believe immigrants help the nation's economy by providing low-cost labor, outweighing the 40% who think immigrants hurt the economy by driving down wages. This is a near reversal of the last time Gallup asked this question, in 2005, when more thought immigrants harmed (49%) than helped (42%) the economy.

The latest results come from a June 7-11 Gallup poll.

Gallup's trend on this question stretches back to Bill Clinton's presidency, in 1993. At that time, shortly after the 1990-1991 recession, nearly two-thirds of U.S. adults thought immigrants did more harm than good for the economy. This concern eased in 1999 and 2000, but briefly shot up again in 2004, when former President George W. Bush proposed a temporary worker program that would have allowed 8 million illegal immigrants to obtain legal status before [dropping back to 49% in 2005](#).

Trump campaigned for president in 2015 and 2016 on a platform of blocking undocumented immigrants from entering the country and deporting those already living in the U.S. As a result, debate over immigrants, legal and illegal, came to the fore of the national discourse at the start of Trump's campaign and intensified as he has moved to deliver on his pledges as president. This debate has touched on the potential that immigrants are taking jobs from American citizens and whether illegal immigrants should receive government services such as healthcare and education.

Given Republican President Trump's tough policy on immigrants, it is not surprising that members of his party are less likely to say immigrants help the economy. Democrats are more likely to say immigrants help the economy (59%) than Republicans (28%). This is in contrast to the last time Gallup asked this question, in 2005, when 40% of Democrats said immigration would mostly help the economy, while 35% of Republicans said the same.

U.S. Adults Say Immigrants Take Jobs Americans Don't Want

Public concern about immigrants' effects on the economy may be even less pronounced than it appears to be. Gallup asks respondents if they think immigrants take jobs that Americans want or if they take low-paying jobs that U.S. adults aren't interested in. By a commanding margin, 72% said immigrants take jobs Americans don't want over the 18% who say immigrants take jobs U.S. adults want.

Americans' views on this issue have been relatively consistent since 1993, with the great majority consistently saying immigrants mostly take jobs Americans don't want. This was highest in 2004, when 77% believed immigrants mainly take undesired jobs.

Proponents of immigration often assert that immigrants benefit the U.S. economy due to their willingness to accept lower wages than Americans will work for, keeping the costs of goods and services down. By contrast, opponents of illegal immigration say that illegal immigrants drive down wages, lowering the incomes of Americans who are already employed in the lowest-paying jobs.

Immigrants Aren't Having an Effect on Americans' Jobs or Companies

In addition to Americans' views that immigrants have a positive impact on the economy, and that they take jobs others don't want, most employed adults don't see immigrants having a negative effect on their own work

situation. Specifically, 60% say immigration has no effect on their own job, while 54% say it isn't having an effect on the business or organization they work for either.

Most Americans Say Immigration Has Had No Effect on Their Job and Company

[Asked of employed adults] Would you say immigration has had a positive effect, a negative effect or no effect on -- A. Your job? B. The company, business or organization you work for?

	Positive	Negative	No effect
	%	%	%
Your job	27	11	60
The company, business or organization you work for	33	12	54
Gallup, June 7-11, 2017			

Among U.S. workers who believe immigration has had an impact on their job or company, more say this has been positive rather than negative. Only 11% to 12% say immigration has had a negative effect on their job or company they work for.

Bottom Line

Immigration has long been a contentious issue in the U.S., dating back to the 1800s, when immigrants from outside of Northern Europe began arriving in large numbers. Since then, the issue has never really faded from American consciousness, as waves of immigrants from other areas of the globe continue to arrive in the U.S. As Gallup has determined in recent years, more Americans believed immigrants hurt the economy by driving down wages, rather than helped it. In 2017, this flipped, potentially due to a renewed appreciation for immigrants or a backlash against President Trump's immigration policies.

Public voices on immigration have been mixed, with some major companies continuing to push for additional H-1B visas to lure more legal immigrants to this country, while some Americans decry more immigration at all. It remains to be seen whether there will be increased immigration over time. With the president touting increased "border security" in his first 100 days to keep out

illegal immigrants, there will continue to be controversy over who should or should not be allowed in this country.

Historical data are available in [Gallup Analytics](#).

Survey Methods

Results for this Gallup poll are based on telephone interviews conducted June 7-11, 2017, with a random sample of 1,009 adults, aged 18 and older, living in all 50 U.S. states and the District of Columbia. For results based on the total sample of national adults, the margin of sampling error is ± 4 percentage points at the 95% confidence level. All reported margins of sampling error include computed design effects for weighting.

Each sample of national adults includes a minimum quota of 70% cellphone respondents and 30% landline respondents, with additional minimum quotas by time zone within region. Landline and cellular telephone numbers are selected using random-digit-dial methods.

[View survey methodology, complete question responses and trends.](#)

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