



THE PEW RESEARCH CENTER  
For The People & The Press

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Little Change in Immigration Views

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# Public Favors Tougher Border Controls and Path to Citizenship

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The public continues to favor tough measures to crack down on illegal immigration. Yet Americans see no contradiction in supporting both stepped-up border security and a way for people already in the United States illegally to gain citizenship.

The idea of changing the constitution to bar the children of illegal immigrants from becoming citizens also remains unpopular. Nearly six-in-ten (57%) oppose changing the constitution for this purpose, a figure that has changed little since 2006.

The latest national survey by the Pew Research Center for the People & the Press, conducted Feb. 2-7 among 1,385 adults, finds that in dealing with illegal immigration 42% say the priority should be to tighten border security and more strictly enforce immigration laws but at the same time create a way for people here illegally to become citizens if they meet certain conditions. Somewhat fewer (35%) prioritize better border security and stronger enforcement, while 21% say the priority should be to find a way for illegal immigrants to become citizens.

At the same time, the public remains supportive of Arizona's controversial immigration law. Roughly six-in-ten (61%) approve of the law, which would require police to verify the legal status of someone stopped or arrested, if the police suspect that person is in the country illegally. These opinions, like other attitudes about illegal immigration, are little changed from last summer.

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### Immigration Views Little Changed From Last Summer

	<b>Aug 2010</b>	<b>Feb 2011</b>
<i>Priority for dealing with illegal immigration in the U.S. ...</i>	%	%
Better border security, stronger enforcement of immigration laws	33	35
Creating a way for illegal immigrants already here to become citizens	22	21
Both should be given equal priority	42	42
None/Don't know	<u>4</u>	<u>3</u>
	100	100
<i>Change constitution to bar citizenship for children of illegal immigrants ...</i>	<b>Jun 2010</b>	<b>Feb 2011</b>
Favor changing constitution	41	39
Leave constitution as is	56	57
Don't know	<u>4</u>	<u>4</u>
	100	100
<i>Arizona immigration law ...</i>		
Approve	64	61
Disapprove	32	34
Don't know	<u>3</u>	<u>5</u>
	100	100

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While the job situation remains [the public's biggest economic worry](#), jobs are not people's top concern when it comes to illegal immigration. Four-in-ten (40%) say their biggest concern is that illegal immigration places a burden on government services; 27% say their biggest concern is that it hurts American jobs. Far fewer say their biggest concerns are that illegal immigration contributes to crime (9%) or hurts America's customs and its way of life.

[Pew Research's annual policy priorities survey](#) in January found that dealing with illegal immigration remains a middle-tier public concern. About half (46%) said it was a top policy priority, placing it far behind the economy (87%), jobs (84%) and a number of other issues.

Opinions about the importance of dealing with illegal immigration – and attitudes toward immigration policies – reflect deep partisan divisions. Fully 61% of Republicans cited dealing with illegal immigration as a top policy priority, compared with 47% of independents and just 33% of Democrats.

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### Top Immigration Concern: Impact On Gov't Services

	<b>Feb 2011</b>
<i>Biggest concern about illegal immigration...</i>	%
Burden on government services	40
Hurts American jobs	27
Contributes to crime	9
Hurts American customs/way of life	6
Other/No concerns (Vol.)	11
Don't know	7
	100

PEW RESEARCH CENTER Feb 2-7, 2011. Figures may not add to 100% because of rounding.

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## Divided Over Immigration Priorities

In the new poll, 55% of Republicans say the priority in dealing with illegal immigration should be on better border security and stricter enforcement of laws against illegal immigration, compared with 34% of independents and just 22% of Democrats.

By contrast, 49% of Democrats and 42% of independents say the priority should be both tougher border security and creating a way for illegal immigrants already in the U.S. to become citizens if they meet certain requirements. Fewer Republicans (33%) favor this approach.

There also are educational differences in these opinions.

A plurality of college graduates (43%) say the priority should be both better border security and finding a way for illegal immigrants to become citizens. Among those with less education, about as many say the priority should be primarily on better border security as on both objectives.

### Priority in Dealing With Illegal Immigration ...

	Better border security	Creating path to citizenship	Both	None/DK	N
	%	%	%	%	
Total	35	21	42	3=100	1385
Men	38	17	41	3=100	635
Women	31	24	42	3=100	750
18-29	31	29	38	2=100	197
30-49	30	20	49	1=100	357
50-64	38	15	42	4=100	465
65+	43	20	33	5=100	343
College grad+	29	26	43	2=100	535
Some college	38	19	41	2=100	350
HS or less	37	18	42	4=100	493
Republican	55	11	33	1=100	339
Democrat	22	27	49	3=100	455
Independent	34	21	42	3=100	511
<i>Tea Party</i>					
Agree	63	8	26	3=100	333
Disagree/No opinion	28	24	47	2=100	1005

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## Opinions about “Birthright Citizenship”

Conservatives in Congress and several state legislatures have proposed legislation to stop granting U.S. citizenship to children born to illegal immigrants, though many legal scholars say this will require a constitutional amendment. The poll finds that a 57% majority of the public opposes such a constitutional amendment, while 39% favor it. This balance of opinion is essentially

unchanged from last year or 2006, when 42% favored changing the constitution and 54% opposed doing so.

Opposition to a constitutional amendment is particularly strong among Hispanics (73%) and people younger than 30 (also 73%). About half of whites (52%) oppose such a change (vs. 43% who favor it), and seniors are divided (45% in favor, 48% opposed).

There also is a sizeable partisan split on the question, with Republicans about evenly split (47% in favor, 49% opposed) and Democrats mostly opposed (66%, vs. 32% in favor). Independents divide in about the same way as the public overall (56% oppose changing the constitution, 39% are in favor).

The strongest level of support for amending the constitution is among Tea Party supporters, 57% of whom favor changing the constitution to eliminate birthright citizenship (38% oppose such a change).

### Tea Party Supporters Oppose Citizenship for Children of Illegal Immigrants

*Change constitution to bar citizenship for children of illegal immigrants...*

	<b>Change Constitution</b>	<b>Leave as is</b>	<b>DK</b>
	%	%	%
Total	39	57	4=100
White	43	52	5=100
Black	38	59	3=100
Hispanic	23	73	4=100
18-29	25	73	2=100
30-49	39	57	4=100
50-64	45	50	5=100
65+	45	48	7=100
Republican	47	49	4=100
Democrat	32	66	3=100
Independent	39	56	5=100
<i>Tea Party</i>			
Agree	57	38	5=100
Disagree/No opinion	34	62	4=100

PEW RESEARCH CENTER Feb 2-7, 2011. Figures may not add to 100% because of rounding. Whites and blacks include only those who are not Hispanic; Hispanics are of any race.

## AZ Law Still Broadly Supported

A solid majority of Americans (61%) continues to approve of the immigration law passed last year in Arizona that requires police to verify the legal status of anyone they detain if they suspect that the person is in the country illegally; 34% disapprove of this law. Approval of the Arizona law is essentially unchanged from June of last year.

The Arizona law is supported by 72% of whites, but only 42% of blacks and just 27% of Hispanics. A majority of Democrats (54%) disapprove of the law, while an overwhelming proportion of Republicans (88%) approve of it. Among independents, 62% approve and 34% disapprove.

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### Most Whites Support Arizona Immigration Law

	<b>Approve</b> %	<b>Dis- approve</b> %	<b>DK</b> %
Total	61	34	5=100
White	72	24	5=100
Black	42	55	4=100
Hispanic	27	70	3=100
18-29	53	43	4=100
30-49	64	33	3=100
50-64	63	32	5=100
65+	63	30	7=100
Republican	88	10	2=100
Democrat	42	54	4=100
Independent	62	34	4=100
<i>Tea Party</i>			
Agree	91	7	2=100
Disagree/No opinion	53	42	5=100

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## Top Concerns about Illegal Immigration

Asked to choose among four options, 40% of the public say their biggest concern about illegal immigration is the burden it places on government services. About a quarter (27%) say their biggest concern is the impact on jobs, while fewer cite the impact of illegal immigration on crime (9%) and America's customs and its way of life (6%).

While there is broad concern about the burden that illegal immigration places on government services African Americans, young people and people with less

education are particularly concerned about the impact on jobs. In each of these groups at least as many cite jobs as the burden on government services as their biggest concern about illegal immigration

### African Americans, Young People Worry about Illegal Immigration's Impact on Jobs

<i>Biggest concern about illegal immigration...</i>	<b>Burden on gov't services</b> %	<b>Hurts U.S. jobs</b> %	<b>Adds to crime</b> %	<b>Hurts U.S. way of life</b> %	<b>Other/None/DK</b> %
Total	40	27	9	6	18=100
White	45	27	9	4	15=100
Black	31	39	8	7	14=100
Hispanic	23	16	9	12	40=100
18-29	29	34	10	8	19=100
30-49	41	25	11	5	18=100
50-64	46	24	8	6	17=100
65+	41	26	9	5	19=100
College grad+	55	13	11	5	16=100
Some college	39	29	9	6	17=100
HS or less	31	34	9	7	19=100
Republican	47	30	12	4	7=100
Democrat	38	26	8	7	20=100
Independent	40	27	10	5	18=100
<i>Tea Party</i>					
Agree	52	23	9	5	11=100
Disagree/No opinion	37	28	10	6	19=100

PEW RESEARCH CENTER Feb 2-7, 2011. Figures may not add to 100% because of rounding. Whites and blacks include only those who are not Hispanic; Hispanics are of any race.

## About the Survey

The analysis in this report is based on telephone interviews conducted February 2-7, 2011 among a national sample of 1,385 adults 18 years of age or older living in the continental United States (952 respondents were interviewed on a landline telephone, and 433 were interviewed on a cell phone, including 197 who had no landline telephone). The survey was conducted by interviewers at Princeton Data Source under the direction of Princeton Survey Research Associates International. A combination of landline and cell phone random digit dial samples were used; both samples were provided by Survey Sampling International. Interviews were conducted in English and Spanish. Respondents in the landline sample were selected by randomly asking for the youngest adult male or female who is now at home. Interviews in the cell sample were conducted with the person who answered the phone, if that person was an adult 18 years of age or older. For detailed information about our survey methodology, see <http://people-press.org/methodology/>

The combined landline and cell phone sample are weighted using an iterative technique that matches gender, age, education, race, Hispanic origin, region, and population density to parameters from the March 2010 Census Bureau's Current Population Survey. The sample also is weighted to match current patterns of telephone status and relative usage of landline and cell phones (for those with both), based on extrapolations from the 2010 National Health Interview Survey. The weighting procedure also accounts for the fact that respondents with both landline and cell phones have a greater probability of being included in the combined sample and adjusts for household size within the landline sample. Sampling errors and statistical tests of significance take into account the effect of weighting. The following table shows the sample sizes and the error attributable to sampling that would be expected at the 95% level of confidence for different groups in the survey:

<b>Group</b>	<b>Sample Size</b>	<b>Plus or minus ...</b>
Total sample	1,385	3.5 percentage points
Republicans	339	6.5 percentage points
Democrats	455	6.0 percentage points
Independents	511	5.5 percentage points

Sample sizes and sampling errors for other subgroups are available upon request.

In addition to sampling error, one should bear in mind that question wording and practical difficulties in conducting surveys can introduce error or bias into the findings of opinion polls.



## About the Pew Research Center for the People & the Press

The Pew Research Center for the People & the Press is an independent opinion research group that studies attitudes toward the press, politics and public policy issues. We are sponsored by The Pew Charitable Trusts and are one of seven projects that make up the Pew Research Center, a nonpartisan "fact tank" that provides information on the issues, attitudes and trends shaping America and the world.

The Center's purpose is to serve as a forum for ideas on the media and public policy through public opinion research. In this role it serves as an important information resource for political leaders, journalists, scholars, and public interest organizations. All of our current survey results are made available free of charge.

All of the Center's research and reports are collaborative products based on the input and analysis of the entire Center staff consisting of:

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**PEW RESEARCH CENTER FOR THE PEOPLE & THE PRESS**  
**FEBRUARY 2011 POLITICAL SURVEY**  
**FINAL TOPLINE**  
**February 2-7, 2011**  
**N=1,385**

**QUESTIONS 1-66 PREVIOUSLY RELEASED**

**ASK ALL:**

Now thinking about the issue of immigration...

**ASK ALL:**

Q.67 What should be the priority for dealing with ILLEGAL immigration in the U.S.? **[RANDOMIZE;** (one) better border security and stronger enforcement of our immigration laws; OR (two) creating a way for illegal immigrants already here to become citizens if they meet certain requirements] OR should BOTH be given equal priority?

Feb 2-7 <u>2011</u>		Aug 25-Sep 6 <u>2010</u>	Jul 21-Aug 5 <u>2010</u>
35	Better border security and stronger enforcement of our immigration laws	30	33
21	Creating a way for illegal immigrants already here to become citizens if they meet certain requirements	23	22
42	Should BOTH be given equal priority	44	42
1	None of these <b>(VOL.)</b>	1	1
2	Don't know/Refused <b>(VOL.)</b>	1	3

**NO QUESTION 68**

**ASK ALL:**

Q.69 As you may know, last year the state of Arizona passed a law that requires police to verify the legal status of someone they have already stopped or arrested if they suspect that the person is in the country illegally. Do you approve or disapprove of Arizona's immigration law?

Feb 2-7 <u>2011</u>		Jun 16-20 <u>2010</u> <sup>1</sup>
61	Approve	64
34	Disapprove	32
5	Don't know/Refused <b>(VOL.)</b>	3

**NO QUESTIONS 70-71**

**ASK ALL:**

Q.72 Were you aware that a child born to illegal immigrants in the U.S. is automatically a U.S. citizen, or weren't you aware of that?

Feb 2-7 <u>2011</u>		Jun 16-20 <u>2010</u>	March <u>2006</u>
87	Yes, aware	85	80
12	No, not aware	14	19
1	Don't know/Refused <b>(VOL.)</b>	*	1

<sup>1</sup> In June 2010, the question began, "As you may know, the state of Arizona recently passed..."

**ASK ALL:**

Q.73 Would you favor changing the Constitution so that the parents must be legal residents of the U.S. in order for their newborn child to be a citizen, or should the Constitution be left as it is?

Feb 2-7 <u>2011</u>		Jun 16-20 <u>2010</u>	March <u>2006</u>
39	Favor changing Constitution	41	42
57	Leave Constitution as is	56	54
4	Don't know/Refused <b>(VOL.)</b>	4	4

**ASK ALL:**

Q.74 What, if anything, is your biggest concern about illegal immigration? Is it that... **[READ AND RANDOMIZE]**?

Feb 2-7 <u>2011</u>	
40	It's a burden on government services
27	It hurts American jobs,
9	It contributes to crime
6	It hurts American customs and its way of life
4	Other <b>(VOL.)</b>
7	No concerns <b>(VOL.)</b>
7	Don't know/Refused <b>(VOL.)</b>

**NO QUESTION 75****ASK ALL:**

PARTY In politics TODAY, do you consider yourself a Republican, Democrat, or independent?

**ASK IF INDEP/NO PREF/OTHER/DK/REF (PARTY=3,4,5,9):**

PARTYLN As of today do you lean more to the Republican Party or more to the Democratic Party?

				(VOL.)	(VOL.)	(VOL.)	Lean	Lean
	Republican	Democrat	Independent	No preference	Other party	DK/Ref	Rep	Dem
Feb 2-7, 2011	24	31	39	3	*	2	16	16
Jan 5-9, 2011	27	32	35	4	*	2	15	14
Dec 1-5, 2010	25	33	34	5	1	2	13	14
Nov 4-7, 2010	26	30	37	4	*	2	17	13
Oct 27-30, 2010	25	34	31	6	1	4	13	11
Oct 13-18, 2010	25	31	36	4	*	3	16	13
Aug 25-Sep 6, 2010	24	32	39	2	*	2	15	17
Jul 21-Aug 5, 2010	26	33	34	4	*	3	14	14
Jun 16-20, 2010	27	34	34	3	1	2	15	15
Apr 21-26, 2010	26	33	36	3	1	3	16	13
Mar 11-21, 2010	28	34	32	3	*	3	13	12
Mar 10-14, 2010	22	33	37	6	*	3	14	13
Feb 3-9, 2010	26	31	37	3	*	3	14	17
<b>Yearly Totals</b>								
2010	25.2	32.7	35.2	3.6	.4	2.8	14.5	14.1
2009	23.9	34.4	35.1	3.4	.4	2.8	13.1	15.7
2008	25.7	36.0	31.5	3.6	.3	3.0	10.6	15.2
2007	25.3	32.9	34.1	4.3	.4	2.9	10.9	17.0
2006	27.8	33.1	30.9	4.4	.3	3.4	10.5	15.1
2005	29.3	32.8	30.2	4.5	.3	2.8	10.3	14.9
2004	30.0	33.5	29.5	3.8	.4	3.0	11.7	13.4
2003	30.3	31.5	30.5	4.8	.5	2.5	12.0	12.6
2002	30.4	31.4	29.8	5.0	.7	2.7	12.4	11.6
2001	29.0	33.2	29.5	5.2	.6	2.6	11.9	11.6
2001 Post-Sept 11	30.9	31.8	27.9	5.2	.6	3.6	11.7	9.4
2001 Pre-Sept 11	27.3	34.4	30.9	5.1	.6	1.7	12.1	13.5
2000	28.0	33.4	29.1	5.5	.5	3.6	11.6	11.7

## PARTY/PARTYLN CONTINUED...

				(VOL.)	(VOL.)	(VOL.)	Lean	Lean
	Republican	Democrat	Independent	No preference	Other party	DK/Ref	Rep	Dem
1999	26.6	33.5	33.7	3.9	.5	1.9	13.0	14.5
1998	27.9	33.7	31.1	4.6	.4	2.3	11.6	13.1
1997	28.0	33.4	32.0	4.0	.4	2.3	12.2	14.1
1996	28.9	33.9	31.8	3.0	.4	2.0	12.1	14.9
1995	31.6	30.0	33.7	2.4	.6	1.3	15.1	13.5
1994	30.1	31.5	33.5	1.3	--	3.6	13.7	12.2
1993	27.4	33.6	34.2	4.4	1.5	2.9	11.5	14.9
1992	27.6	33.7	34.7	1.5	0	2.5	12.6	16.5
1991	30.9	31.4	33.2	0	1.4	3.0	14.7	10.8
1990	30.9	33.2	29.3	1.2	1.9	3.4	12.4	11.3
1989	33	33	34	--	--	--	--	--
1987	26	35	39	--	--	--	--	--

## ASK ALL:

TEAPARTY

From what you know, do you strongly agree, agree, disagree or strongly disagree with the Tea Party movement, or don't you have an opinion either way?

						(VOL.)	(VOL.)	Not
	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	No opinion either way	Haven't heard of	Refused	heard of/ DK
Feb 2-7, 2011	5	17	12	10	53	2	2	--
Jan 5-9, 2011	6	18	12	10	50	2	1	--
Dec 1-5, 2010	5	17	14	12	49	2	2	--
Nov 4-7, 2010	8	19	11	11	49	1	1	--
Oct 27-30, 2010 <sup>2</sup> (RVs)	12	17	11	14	32	--	1	13
Oct 13-18, 2010 (RVs)	9	19	11	13	30	--	1	16
Aug 25-Sep 6, 2010 (RVs)	11	18	12	14	32	--	1	13
Jul 21-Aug 5, 2010	8	14	9	9	37	--	1	21
Jun 16-20, 2010	9	15	10	8	30	--	*	27
May 20-23, 2010	10	15	8	10	31	--	1	25
Mar 11-21, 2010	9	15	7	7	29	--	1	31

<sup>2</sup>

In October 2010 and earlier, question was asked only of those who had heard or read a lot or a little about the Tea Party. In May through October, it was described as: "the Tea Party movement that has been involved in campaigns and protests in the U.S. over the past year." In March it was described as "the Tea Party Protests that have taken place in the U.S. over the past year."