

Latinos and the War in Iraq

Two out of every three Latinos now believe that U.S. troops should be brought home from Iraq as soon as possible and only one in four thinks the U.S. made the right decision in using military force, according to a new survey by the Pew Hispanic Center.

Hispanics have generally expressed more negative views toward the war compared with the rest of the population. The latest survey, however, shows an even stronger opposition on the part of Latinos, especially when it comes to keeping troops in Iraq.

Two-thirds of Hispanics (66%) now favor bringing troops home as soon as possible, up from 51% in January 2005. Conversely, the share of Latinos who favored keeping troops in Iraq until the situation there has stabilized has declined from 37% to 19%.

Native-born Hispanics are generally more supportive of the war than their foreign-born counterparts. But in the latest survey, the native born are almost as adamant about bringing troops home as the foreign born (62% vs. 68% respectively).

The general public also is more inclined to bring the troops home, but not to the same extent as Hispanics. A survey of the general population by the Pew Research Center for the People & the Press in December found that one in two Americans (50%) favored bringing troops home as soon as possible, up from 41% in January 2005.

The changing attitude toward the war is also evident in the answer to a basic question: Do you think the U.S. made the right decision or the wrong decision in using military force against Iraq? Since 2004, a third or more of Latinos responded that using military force was the right decision. In the latest survey, only 24% of Latinos agreed with that assessment. That is down from 39% in April/June 2004 and from 31% in August/October 2006.

By comparison, 42% of the general public believes the U.S. made the right decision in using military force, according to the survey by the Pew Research Center.

The Pew Hispanic Center survey was conducted by telephone from December 5 to 20, 2006 among a nationally representative sample of 1006 Hispanics age 18 and older. The sample was drawn using a stratified Random Digit Dialing methodology. Interviews were conducted by bilingual interviewers in English or Spanish, according to the respondents' preferences. The results for the full sample have a margin of error of +/- 3.1%. All fieldwork was conducted for the Center by International Communications Research of Media, PA.

Latino attitudes on the war in Iraq

The Pew Hispanic Center has regularly tracked Latino public opinion on the war in Iraq since February 2003. As with the rest of the American public, Hispanic views on the war have shifted over time, often in direct response to developments in Iraq. The quick end to the first phase of combat produced a spike, for example, but the subsequent violence and the mounting casualties in 2003 eroded support among Hispanics. The capture of Saddam Hussein in mid-December 2003 rallied Hispanic public opinion, but not to the levels seen shortly after the war started. Since then, Latino views on the war have been marked by increased pessimism.

This fact sheet uses three questions that have been asked in surveys to track how the perception of the war in Iraq has changed among Latinos in the U.S.

Table 1: Do you think the U.S. should keep military troops in Iraq until the situation has stabilized, or do you think the U.S. should bring its troops home as soon as possible?

	Jan-05			Dec. 2006		
	Total Latino	U.S Born	Foreign Born	Total Latino	U.S. Born	Foreign Born
Keep troops in Iraq	37	47	29	19	28	15
Bring troops home	51	46	55	66	62	68
DK/NA	12	6	15	15	10	17

While support for keeping troops in Iraq has eroded across the board, the decline has been especially steep among Latinos.

In January 2005, a majority of Hispanics (51%) were in favor of bringing troops home, compared with 41% among the general population. In the latest survey, two-thirds of Latinos (66%) were in favor compared with half (50%) among the general population.

Fewer than one in five (19%) of Hispanics now favor keeping troops in Iraq, a decrease from 37% in January 2005 and 50% in January 2004, when the question was asked in a slightly different way. The Pew Research Center survey in December 2006 found that among the general population 44% were in favor, down from 54% in January 2005.

Described another way, the share of Latinos who favored keeping troops in Iraq declined by 18 percentage points between January 2005 and December 2006. Among the general population, the drop was 10 percentage points.

Even among Latinos who said the U.S. made the right decision in using military force against Iraq, 43% still supported bringing troops home as soon as possible.

Native-born Latinos were roughly split on this question in 2005. However, in the latest survey, the native-born have significantly swung in favor of bringing troops home. Almost two in three (62%) are now in favor of withdrawal, up from 46%. A solid majority of foreign-born Hispanics (55%) were in favor of bringing troops home in 2005 and that share has now increased to more than two-thirds (68%).

Support for bringing the troops home is stronger among those with lower incomes and lower levels of education. Three out of four (75%) Latinos with household incomes of \$25,000 or less favored this option, as did 72% of those with a high school education or less. By comparison, among those with household incomes of \$75,000 or more, 42% supported bringing troops home. And among Hispanics with college degrees or higher, 57% favored this option.

Table 2: Do you think the U.S. made the right decision or the wrong decision in using military force against Iraq?

	April-June 2004			Jan-05			Aug-Oct.2006			Dec. 2006		
	Total	U.S.	Foreign	Total	U.S.	Foreign	Total	U.S.	Foreign	Total	U.S.	Foreign
	Latino	Born	Born	Latino	Born	Born	Latino	Born	Born	Latino	Born	Born
Right decision	39	50	32	37	48	28	31	40	26	24	40	15
Wrong decision	48	42	51	51	46	54	56	52	59	50	42	55
DK/NA	13	8	17	12	5	18	12	7	16	26	18	30

Perceptions of the war in Iraq vary depending on nativity, with foreign-born Hispanics in general more disapproving. In 2004 and 2005, for example, a plurality among native-born Latinos believed the U.S. had made the right decision

in using military force. Even as attitudes toward the war turned negative, 40% of native-born Latinos still felt this way in the two surveys taken in 2006. Among foreign-born Hispanics, however, a majority has said using military force was the wrong decision and that number has pretty much held steady since 2004.

The latest survey also shows an increase in the number of Latinos who express uncertainty on this question. About one in four said they did not know whether the U.S. had made the right decision or the wrong decision or they simply refused to answer, an increase from 12% in the survey conducted between August and October 2006. The uncertainty is more prevalent among foreign-born Hispanics.

Table 3: How well do you think the U.S. military effort in Iraq is going?

	Dec-03			Jan-04			Dec-06		
	Total	US	Foreign	Total	US	Foreign	Total	US	Foreign
	Latino	Born	Born	Latino	Born	Born	Latino	Born	Born
Very Well	16	15	17	30	25	33	8	11	6
Fairly Well	26	33	21	32	46	23	11	17	7
Not too Well	32	35	30	24	21	25	26	33	23
Not Well at All	17	14	19	9	6	11	42	34	46
DK/NA	9	4	13	5	2	8	13	5	17

Hispanics by a wide margin believe that the U.S. military effort is faring poorly in Iraq. More than two-thirds (68%) said it was either going not too well or not well at all.

Latinos are generally of a mind with the American public in this negative assessment of the military effort in Iraq. In the December 2006 Pew Research Center poll of the general population, 64% of Americans agreed that the military effort was going not too well or not well at all. But while relatively few Hispanics (19%) said the military effort was going either very well or fairly well, in the general population almost a third (32%) cast the military effort in a positive light.

This question was asked of Latinos in December 2003, after a period when American casualties were high and the war was not going well and then again a month later, in January of 2004, shortly after the capture of Iraqi leader Saddam Hussein. As with the rest of the American public, the capture produced a significant spike in support among Latinos. A majority (52%) said in January 2004 that the U.S. military effort was going either very well or fairly well, up from 42% just a month earlier. Today, two years later, only about one in five Hispanics agree with this assessment.