

August 5, 2009

Americans Return to Tougher Immigration Stance

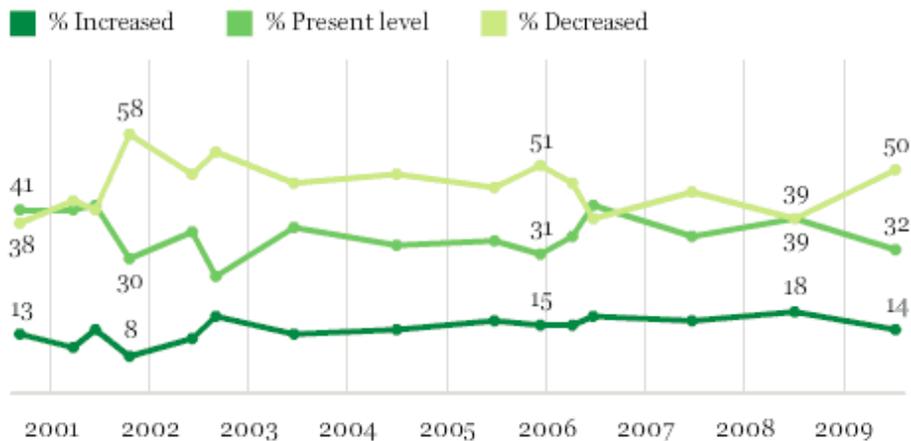
More want immigration decreased than kept the same or increased

by Lymari Morales

WASHINGTON, D.C. -- With some U.S. lawmakers and immigration rights activists stepping up calls for the Obama administration to pursue immigration reform, Gallup finds Americans less favorable toward immigration than they were a year ago. Half (50%) say immigration should be decreased, up from 39% last year. A third (32%) say immigration levels should be kept the same, down from 39%, and 14% say they should be increased, down from 18%.

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

Gallup trend since 2000



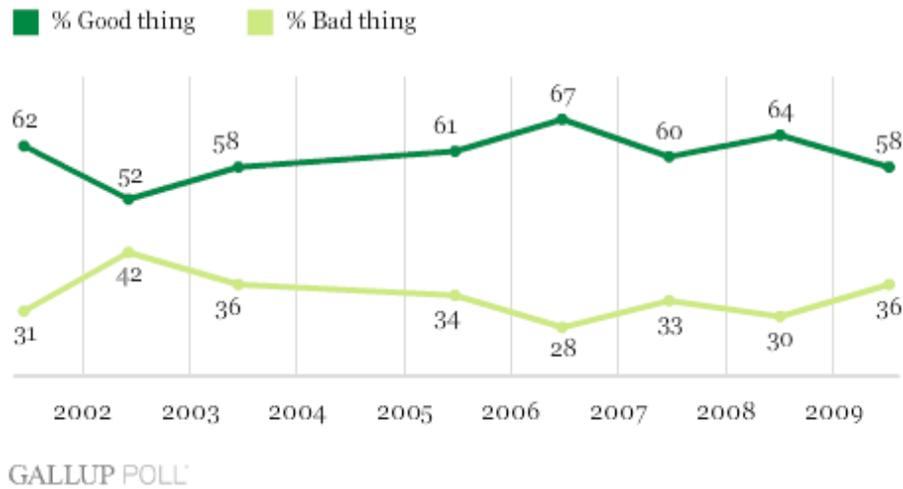
GALLUP POLL

The most recent results, from a Gallup survey conducted July 10-12, 2009, mark a return to the attitudes that prevailed in the first few years after 9/11; attitudes softened from 2006 to [last year](#). The shift toward a tougher stance this time around may reflect the country's economic situation, as Americans tend to become less pro-immigration during difficult economic times.

A similar shift is evident when Americans are asked more broadly whether immigration is a good thing or a bad thing for the country. Currently, 58% say it is a good thing -- the lowest percentage saying so since 2003. The historical low for this measure, 52%, came in 2002,

after the 9/11 attacks.

On the whole, do you think immigration is a good thing or a bad thing for this country today?

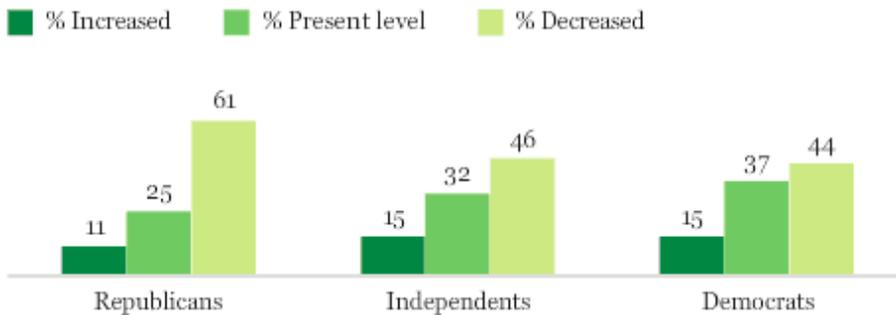


The latest Gallup findings preceded a letter that was circulated Monday by seven Illinois congressmen, aimed at urging the Obama administration to take up immigration reform this year. Immigrant activist groups have been eager for reform since a Bush administration bill was defeated in the Senate in 2007.

While these Gallup data do not specifically ask about proposals that might be included in comprehensive immigration reform, they do suggest that Americans of all political persuasions are taking a tougher stance toward immigration than they did a year ago. Republicans are more likely than Democrats to want immigration decreased, as has typically been the case, but more than 4 in 10 independents and Democrats share this view.

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

By party ID



Gallup Poll, July 10-12, 2009

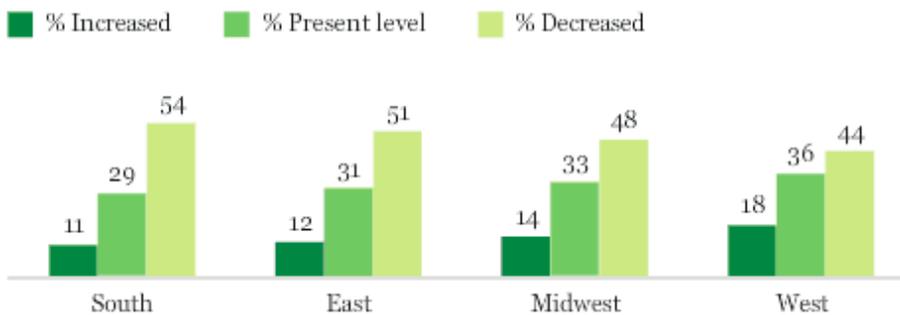
GALLUP POLL

The 61% of Republicans who now say they would like to see immigration decreased is up from 46% in 2008. At the same time, the 46% of Democrats and 44% of independents who would like to see immigration decreased represent shifts in the same direction, up from the 39% and 37%, respectively, who said the same in 2008.

There are slight variations in views on immigration across the four major regions of the country. Americans in the South (54%) are the most likely to want immigration decreased, while those in the West (44%) are relatively less likely to say the same. Here again, each group has shifted toward a more anti-immigration stance.

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

By region



Gallup Poll, July 10-12, 2009

GALLUP POLL

Bottom Line

Americans have returned to a tougher stance on immigration than has been evident for the past few years. Republicans, in particular, have shifted most strongly toward decreasing immigration, with Democrats and independents moving in the same direction, but to a lesser degree. Thus, as lawmakers consider when and how to pursue immigration reform, they should do so mindful that Americans of all political persuasions are generally more resistant to immigration in broad measure than they were a year ago.

Author's note: While the views of Hispanics are important to debate and discussion about immigration, the sample size of Hispanics in the poll is not large enough to allow for meaningful interpretation.

Survey Methods

Results are based on telephone interviews with 1,018 national adults, aged 18 and older, conducted July 10-12, 2009. For results based on the total sample of national adults, one can say with 95% confidence that the maximum margin of sampling error is ± 3 percentage points.

Interviews are conducted with respondents on land-line telephones (for respondents with a land-line telephone) and cellular phones (for respondents who are cell-phone only).

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

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