

Rutgers - Eagleton Poll

July 13, 2006
(Release 159-6)

CONTACTS:

DANIEL TICHENOR, Ph.D., Eagleton Institute of Politics and Department of Political Science, (732) 932-9384, EXT. 283

MURRAY EDELMAN, Ph.D., Eagleton Center for Public Interest Polling, (917) 968-1299 (cell)

TIM VERCELLOTTI, Ph.D., Eagleton Center for Public Interest Polling, (732) 932-9384, EXT. 285; (919) 812-3452 (cell)

NEW JERSEYANS SAY LEGAL IMMIGRATION IS GOOD FOR THE STATE

Two-thirds of adults also support allowing illegal immigrants to seek legal status

By more than a two to one margin, New Jersey adults say that legal immigration is good for the Garden State. Sixty percent also say that legal immigration should be kept at its current level or increased, according to the latest Rutgers-Eagleton Poll.

The telephone survey, with a sample of 803 adults and a margin of sampling error of plus or minus 3.5 percent, also found that 65 percent said illegal immigrants who have lived and worked in the United States for at least two years ought to be allowed to keep their jobs and eventually apply for legal status. Thirty-two percent of New Jersey adults favored deporting illegal immigrants back to their native countries.

“Few states with as large a population of foreign-born and undocumented aliens as New Jersey are anywhere near as favorable in their views of legal immigration and of allowing undocumented aliens to stay,” said Daniel Tichenor, an associate professor of

Rutgers-Eagleton Poll • Eagleton Institute of Politics

185 Ryders Lane, New Brunswick, New Jersey 08901

Distinguished Scholar and Consultant: Murray Edelman, (917) 968-1299 (cell)

Assistant Director: Tim Vercellotti, ext. 285 or (919) 812-3452 (cell)

Phone: 732-932-9384 - Website: <http://eagletonpoll.rutgers.edu> - Fax: 732-932-1551

political science at Rutgers University and an expert on the politics of immigration. “Public opinion in places like Arizona, California, or Texas is decidedly more restrictive.”

The poll, conducted June 14 through 19, found that 65 percent of adults viewed legal immigration as a good thing for the state, while only 25 percent said it is a bad thing. Differences of opinion, however, emerged along the lines of political partisanship, gender, age, and education.

Seventy-five percent of Republicans said that legal immigration is good for New Jersey, compared to 60 percent of Democrats. Men were more likely than women to view legal immigration positively by a margin of 74 percent to 57 percent. As the age of the respondent increased, views became increasingly negative. Seventy-five percent of those ages 18 to 29 said legal immigration is a good thing for the state, compared to 58 percent of those ages 65 and older. Only 53 percent of those with a high school education or less said legal immigration is good for New Jersey, compared to 74 percent of those with at least some college education.

Opinion also varied when linked to attitudes about American identity. The poll asked adults to rate the importance of various aspects of being an American, including speaking English as one’s primary language and having been born in the United States. Respondents who said those characteristics are extremely important parts of being an American were more likely to view immigration in a negative light. For example, among those who said having been born in the United States is an extremely important part of being an American, 41 percent said legal immigration was bad for the state.

Changes in attitudes since 9/11

Support for legal immigration has risen substantially since June 2002, the last time the Rutgers-Eagleton Poll asked a series of questions about immigration and just nine months after the 9/11 terrorist attacks.

In the latest poll, 42 percent of adults said that the current level of legal immigration into the United States should be maintained, compared with 26 percent in June 2002. Only 29 percent said legal immigration should be reduced and five percent said it should stop altogether in the June 2006 poll. In June 2002, 35 percent said the level of legal immigration should decrease some and 24 percent said it should stop altogether.

“New Jerseyans, like most Americans, were very uneasy about immigration and favored new restrictions in the months following the terrorist attacks of September 11th, so that could account for the large change in the latest poll,” Tichenor said. “It is more likely that this latest measure is the more consistent one, barring, of course, another catastrophe.”

Attitudes concerning illegal immigrants

By a two to one margin – 65 percent to 32 percent – New Jerseyans said that illegal immigrants who have lived and worked in the United States for at least two years should be allowed to keep their jobs and seek legal status as opposed to being deported.

Opinion was divided along the lines of political partisanship, race, age and education. Democrats were more likely than Republicans – 69 percent to 62 percent – to support allowing illegal immigrants to stay and apply for legal status. The same was true for non-white respondents (the majority of whom identified themselves as African-Americans) versus white respondents – 73 percent to 62 percent. Seventy-one percent of those ages 18 to 29

avored the idea, compared to 58 percent of those ages 65 and older. Sixty-eight percent of adults with at least some college education supported allowing illegal immigrants to stay and seek legal status, compared to 61 percent of those with a high school education or less.

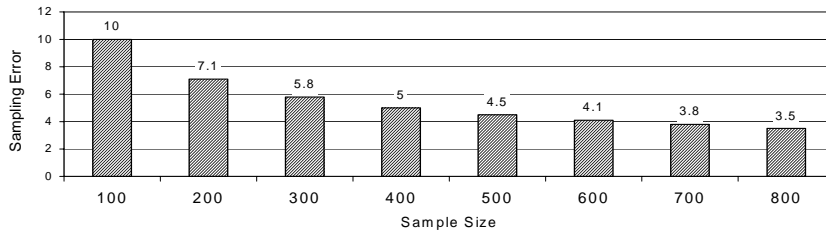
The poll results were consistent with data from a CBS News/*New York Times* national poll conducted May 4-8. Sixty-one percent of respondents to the national poll said that illegal immigrants who have lived and worked in the United States for at least two years should get to keep their jobs and eventually seek legal status, while 35 percent favored deportation.

BACKGROUND MEMO – RELEASE (EP 159-6) July 13, 2006

The latest Rutgers-Eagleton Poll was conducted June 14-19, 2006 with a scientifically selected random sample of 803 New Jersey adults. This sample yielded 699 adult residents registered to vote in New Jersey. Figures in this release are based on the statewide sample of all adults and the sub-sample of registered voters. Sampling and data collection were conducted by Schulman, Ronca, & Bucuvalas, Inc (SRBI).

All surveys are subject to sampling error, which is the expected probable difference between interviewing everyone in a population versus a scientific sampling drawn from that population. The sampling error for a sample of 803 adults is ± 3.5 percent, at a 95 percent confidence interval. Thus if 50 percent of New Jersey adults said legal immigration should be kept at its present level, one would be 95 percent sure that the true figure would be between 46.5 and 53.5 percent (50 ± 3.5) had all New Jersey adults been interviewed, rather than just a sample. The margin of sampling error for 699 registered voters is ± 3.7 percent. Sampling error increases as the sample size decreases, so statements based on various population subgroups are subject to more error than are statements based on the total sample. The following chart shows the relationship between sample size and sampling error. Sampling error does not take into account other sources of variation inherent in public opinion studies, such as non-response, question wording or context effects. This release contains the verbatim wording of all questions featured in the release.

Sample Size and Sampling Error



Now I have some questions about LEGAL immigrants--people who come from other countries to live here in the United States. In your opinion, should LEGAL immigration be kept at its present level, increased, or decreased? IF DECREASED: Should it be decreased some, or stopped altogether? (IM1)

	Kept at current level	Increased	Decreased some	Stopped altogether	DK/RF	(n)
June 2006						
All Adults	42%	18%	29%	5%	6%	803
Registered Voters	41%	17%	29%	6%	6%	699
June 2002						
All Adults	26%	12%	35%	24%	3%	802
Registered Voters	25%	11%	38%	24%	3%	626

Overall, do you feel that LEGAL immigration into New Jersey is a good thing for the state, or a bad thing for the state? (IM7)

	Good thing	Bad thing	DK/RF	(n)
June 2006				
All Adults	65%	25%	10%	803
Registered Voters	64%	25%	11%	699

Next, I'd like to ask you a question about ILLEGAL immigration. If you had to choose, what do you think should happen to most ILLEGAL immigrants who have lived and worked in the United States for at least two years? **[Rotate responses]** They should be given a chance to keep their jobs and eventually apply for legal status. OR, They should be deported back to their native country. (IM11)

	They should be given a chance to keep their jobs and eventually apply for legal status	They should be deported back to their native country	DK/ RF	(n)
June 2006				
All Adults	65%	32%	4%	803
Registered Voters	63%	33%	4%	699
May 2006				
CBS/ <i>New York Times</i> Poll National Sample - All Adults	61%	35%	4%	1,241

Now I have some questions about LEGAL immigrants--people who come from other countries to live here in the United States. In your opinion, should LEGAL immigration be kept at its present level, increased, or decreased? IF DECREASED: Should it be decreased some, or stopped altogether? (IM1)

	Kept at current level	Increased	Decreased some	Stopped altogether	DK/RF	(n)
All adults	42%	18%	29%	5%	6%	803
Party ID						
Democrat	36%	17%	32%	6%	9%	282
Republican	46%	18%	28%	5%	4%	206
Independent	48%	16%	27%	4%	5%	241
Gender						
Male	45%	20%	26%	3%	6%	385
Female	40%	15%	32%	7%	6%	418
Race						
White	47%	17%	28%	4%	5%	637
Non-white	30%	21%	33%	9%	8%	152
Age						
18-29	55%	20%	20%	1%	4%	69
30-49	40%	20%	29%	6%	5%	284
50-64	42%	17%	29%	5%	7%	266
65+	40%	10%	37%	5%	9%	174
Education						
High school or below	35%	13%	37%	9%	5%	224
Some college and above	47%	20%	24%	2%	6%	576
Citizenship						
Native-born Citizen	41%	16%	31%	5%	6%	727
Naturalized Citizen	52%	31%	10%	0%	6%	61
Non-citizen	***	***	***	***	***	***
Speaking English as one's primary language? ¹						
Extremely important	40%	14%	33%	7%	5%	507
Fairly important	49%	16%	25%	2%	8%	199
Not that important	35%	38%	20%	0%	6%	54
Not at all important	***	***	***	***	***	***
Having been born in the United States? ¹						
Extremely important	33%	16%	36%	8%	7%	227
Fairly important	43%	14%	32%	5%	5%	174
Not that important	43%	21%	27%	2%	7%	217
Not at all important	56%	20%	19%	0%	4%	173

*** Fewer than 50 respondents in this subgroup

¹ Question wording: Being an American means many things to many people. I am going to read a number of activities that people may or may not believe are important parts of being an American. For each activity, I would like you to say if **you** think the activity **should** be an extremely important, fairly important, not that important or not at all important part of being an American. How about . . .

Overall, do you feel that LEGAL immigration into New Jersey is a good thing for the state, or a bad thing for the state? (IM7)

	Good thing	Bad thing	DK/RF	(n)
All Adults	65%	25%	10%	803
Party ID				
Democrat	60%	28%	12%	282
Republican	75%	18%	7%	206
Independent	65%	26%	10%	241
Gender				
Male	74%	16%	10%	385
Female	57%	32%	11%	418
Race				
White	64%	25%	10%	637
Non-white	67%	23%	10%	152
Age				
18-29	75%	18%	8%	69
30-49	66%	24%	9%	284
50-64	62%	27%	10%	266
65+	58%	28%	14%	174
Education				
High school or below	53%	34%	12%	224
Some college and above	74%	18%	9%	576
Citizenship				
Native-born Citizen	64%	26%	10%	727
Naturalized Citizen	81%	6%	13%	61
Non-citizen	***	***	***	***
Speaking English as one's primary language?				
Extremely important	57%	32%	10%	507
Fairly important	76%	14%	10%	199
Not that important	84%	5%	11%	54
Not at all important	***	***	***	***
Having been born in the United States?				
Extremely important	49%	41%	10%	227
Fairly important	66%	23%	11%	174
Not that important	72%	17%	11%	217
Not at all important	84%	11%	5%	173

*** Fewer than 50 respondents in this subgroup

Next, I'd like to ask you a question about ILLEGAL immigration. If you had to choose, what do you think should happen to most ILLEGAL immigrants who have lived and worked in the United States for at least two years? **[Rotate responses]** They should be given a chance to keep their jobs and eventually apply for legal status. OR, They should be deported back to their native country. (IM11)

		They should be given a chance to keep their jobs and eventually apply for legal status	They should be deported back to their native country	DK/ RF	(n)
All Adults		65%	32%	4%	803
Party ID	Democrat	69%	25%	6%	282
	Republican	62%	37%	1%	206
	Independent	60%	37%	3%	241
Gender	Male	64%	33%	3%	385
	Female	66%	30%	4%	418
Race	White	62%	35%	3%	637
	Non-white	73%	21%	5%	152
Age	18-29	71%	26%	3%	69
	30-49	66%	32%	2%	284
	50-64	64%	32%	4%	266
	65+	58%	34%	8%	174
Education	High school or below	61%	36%	3%	224
	Some college and above	68%	28%	4%	576
Citizenship	Native-born Citizen	64%	33%	3%	727
	Naturalized Citizen	72%	22%	6%	61
	Non-citizen	***	***	***	***
Speaking English as one's primary language?	Extremely important	54%	41%	5%	507
	Fairly important	82%	16%	2%	199
	Not that important	84%	15%	1%	54
	Not at all important	***	***	***	***
Having been born in the United States?	Extremely important	56%	41%	3%	227
	Fairly important	67%	28%	5%	174
	Not that important	70%	27%	3%	217
	Not at all important	72%	25%	3%	173

*** Fewer than 50 respondents in this subgroup