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## **IMMIGRATION IN THE GARDEN STATE**

*New Jerseyans split on impact, but support pathways to legal status*

Although immigration reform legislation now lies dormant in Congress, the issue hasn't gone away. And it is especially relevant New Jersey, where nearly 1-in-5 residents were born outside the United States. The latest *Monmouth University/Gannett New Jersey Poll* finds that New Jerseyans are split on whether immigration in general has been good or bad for the state, but they do support pathways to legal status for illegal immigrants who are already living here.

Garden State residents are divided on the impact of immigration on the state – 40% say it has been a good thing while 44% say it has been a bad thing. The remaining 16% say it has been both good and bad or are unsure about immigration's impact. Residents of central and southern New Jersey tend to be somewhat more negative on the impact of immigration than are residents of the northern portion of the state.

According to the U.S. Census, New Jersey ranks just behind California and New York in the percentage of population born outside the United States. And there is a clear divide in opinion on the impact of immigration between those who are native born citizens – 38% good to 46% bad – or foreign born residents – 53% good to 35% bad.

Public opinion on immigration also depends upon which immigrant groups are being discussed. The poll asked about the impact of immigrants from the top nationalities that have been moving to New Jersey in the past decade. The largest number of immigrants coming to New Jersey has been from India according to U.S. government data. By and large, New Jerseyans feel that immigration from this country has been more of a good thing (51%) than a

bad thing (25%) for the state. The Dominican Republic is the second highest nationality to send immigrants to the state and residents are somewhat more likely to feel that immigration from this Caribbean country has been more good (43%) than bad (24%) on the whole.

Other nationalities with high immigration levels into New Jersey are also seen as having a positive impact on the state. These include Poland (62% good to 11% bad), China (57% to 14%), and the Philippines (51% to 15%). However, opinion is divided on immigration from the top South American country – 38% feel that immigration from Columbia has been more of a good thing for the state compared to 33% who say it has had a bad impact overall.

The poll also asked about immigration from Mexico. While this is not among the top 10 nationalities in terms of documented immigration into the state over the past decade, it has been at the center of the immigration reform debate. Overall, slightly more New Jerseyans feel that immigration from Mexico has been more good (42%) rather than bad (34%) for the state.

Turning to the issue of illegal immigration, more than 2-in-3 residents (69%) say that this is a very serious problem for the United States, 20% call it somewhat serious and 11% say it is not serious. These numbers are in line with a national CBS News/New York Times Poll – conducted in May before the recent immigration legislation was pulled by Congress – that found 61% saw the problem as very serious, 30% somewhat serious, and 7% not serious.

In New Jersey, which has an estimated 380,000 illegal immigrants according to the U.S. Homeland Security Department, the issue is seen as slightly less serious than it is for the country as a whole. Just under half (46%) say illegal immigration into the Garden State is a very serious problem, 30% call it somewhat serious, and 22% say it is not serious.

“Immigration is a mixed bag for New Jerseyans,” remarked Patrick Murray, director of the Monmouth University Polling Institute. “It is undeniable that immigrant groups have made significant contributions to the state. But issues around reforming illegal immigration policy raise serious concerns for many residents.”

On the whole, New Jersey residents report that illegal immigrants who come to the U.S. are more likely to take the kind of jobs that Americans don’t want (57%) rather than take jobs away from Americans (35%). There are no differences on this question among Democrats (53%-38%), Republicans (57%-36%), and independents (59%-33%). These findings are also in line with the May 2007 CBS News/New York Times Poll which found 59% nationally who agree that illegal immigrants tend to take the jobs Americans don’t want.

Nearly 2-in-3 New Jerseyans (65%) feel that most illegal immigrants who have worked in the country for at least two years should be given a chance to apply for legal status. Only 30% say they should be deported. Comparable national numbers from CBS News/New York Times are 62% should be eligible for legal status to 33% should be deported.

Even though immigration reform legislation has stalled, the poll finds that most New Jerseyans approve of many of the specific provisions proposed in these bills. Specifically, 92% favor requiring citizenship applicants to learn English; 79% support hiring more border patrol agents, and 73% support imposing new fines on businesses that hire illegal immigrants.

Just over 6-in-10 residents (63%) favor allowing illegal immigrants to apply for a four-year renewable visa, as long as they pay a \$5,000 fine, show a clean work record, and pass a criminal background check. Support levels are almost identical (61%) if the same process would lead to permanent residency.

Also, 61% of New Jerseyans favor a temporary guest worker program and 55% support building a fence along the border with Mexico.

One area where New Jersey opinion is divided is on providing reduced in-state tuition to children of illegal immigrants living in the state who attend a public college or university. Overall, 46% say that these students should be eligible for the in-state tuition rate while an identical 46% say they should have to pay the higher out-of-state rate.

The *Monmouth University/Gannett New Jersey Poll* was conducted by telephone with 800 New Jersey adults from July 16 to 19, 2007. This sample has a margin of error of  $\pm 3.5$  percent. The poll was conducted by the Monmouth University Polling Institute and originally published by the Gannett New Jersey newspaper group (Asbury Park Press, Courier-Post, Courier News, Daily Journal, Daily Record, Home News Tribune, and Ocean County Observer).

### DATA TABLES

*The questions referred to in this release are as follows:*

(\* Some columns may not add to 100% due to rounding.)

1. Overall, do you feel that immigration into New Jersey has been good or bad for the state?

	TOTAL	REGISTERED VOTER		PARTY ID			BORN IN THE U.S.		REGION OF STATE		
		Yes	No	Dem	Ind	Rep	Yes	No	North	Central	South
Good	<b>40%</b>	38%	45%	51%	36%	34%	38%	53%	43%	39%	36%
Bad	<b>44%</b>	46%	40%	34%	48%	52%	46%	35%	40%	48%	50%
(VOL) Both good & bad	<b>6%</b>	6%	6%	6%	7%	3%	7%	4%	7%	7%	6%
(VOL) No difference	<b>4%</b>	3%	5%	3%	4%	5%	4%	3%	5%	3%	3%
(VOL) Don't know	<b>6%</b>	6%	5%	6%	5%	6%	5%	6%	6%	3%	5%
<i>Unwtd N</i>	<b>800</b>	678	122	234	334	190	710	84	363	179	241

2. I'm going to ask you about specific nationalities that have been coming to New Jersey. For each, please tell me if immigration from this country has been more of a good thing or more of a bad thing for the state? [NOTE: All countries but Mexico asked of half the sample]

	China	Colombia	Dominican Republic	India	Mexico	Philippines	Poland
More of a good thing	57%	38%	43%	51%	42%	51%	62%
More of a bad thing	14%	33%	24%	25%	34%	15%	11%
(VOL) Both good & bad	3%	4%	4%	3%	5%	2%	4%
(VOL) Neither, no difference	8%	9%	8%	9%	7%	8%	9%
(VOL) Don't know	17%	16%	21%	11%	12%	23%	15%
Unwtd N	408	392	408	392	800	408	392

[NOTE: The following two questions were asked of half the sample:]

- 3A. How serious a problem do you think the issue of ILLEGAL immigration is for the UNITED STATES right now – very, somewhat, not too, or not at all serious?

	TOTAL	REGISTERED VOTER
Very serious	69%	71%
Somewhat serious	20%	21%
Not too serious	7%	3%
Not at all serious	4%	4%
(VOL) Don't know	1%	0%
Unwtd N	392	345

- 3B. How serious a problem do you think the issue of ILLEGAL immigration is for NEW JERSEY right now – very, somewhat, not too, or not at all serious?

	TOTAL	REGISTERED VOTER
Very serious	46%	49%
Somewhat serious	30%	30%
Not too serious	16%	17%
Not at all serious	6%	4%
(VOL) Don't know	2%	1%
Unwtd N	408	333

4. Do you think ILLEGAL immigrants coming to this country today take jobs away from American citizens, or do they mostly take jobs Americans don't want?

	TOTAL	REGISTERED VOTER		PARTY ID			BORN IN THE U.S.		REGION OF STATE		
		Yes	No	Dem	Ind	Rep	Yes	No	North	Central	South
Take jobs away from Americans	35%	35%	32%	38%	33%	36%	37%	25%	33%	31%	40%
Take jobs Americans don't want	57%	56%	57%	53%	59%	57%	54%	73%	59%	56%	54%
(VOL) Both	6%	5%	9%	7%	6%	3%	7%	1%	5%	11%	4%
(VOL) Don't know	3%	3%	2%	3%	2%	3%	3%	2%	4%	3%	2%
Unwtd N	800	678	122	234	334	190	710	84	363	179	241

5. If you had to choose, what do you think should happen to most ILLEGAL immigrants who have lived and worked in the U.S. for at least two years – 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?

	TOTAL	REGISTERED VOTER		PARTY ID			BORN IN THE U.S.		REGION OF STATE		
		Yes	No	Dem	Ind	Rep	Yes	No	North	Central	South
Keep jobs, apply for legal status	65%	62%	74%	68%	60%	67%	61%	82%	71%	62%	58%
Deported to native country	30%	32%	22%	26%	34%	29%	33%	13%	23%	34%	38%
(VOL) Don't know	6%	6%	5%	5%	6%	4%	6%	5%	6%	4%	5%
Unwtd N	800	678	122	234	334	190	710	84	363	179	241

[NOTE: The following questions were asked of half the sample:]

6. Would you favor or oppose the following proposals:

A. Allowing illegal immigrants who came into the country before January to apply for a four-year visa that could be renewed, as long as they pay a \$5,000 fine, show a clean work record, and pass a criminal background check?

	TOTAL	REGISTERED VOTER
Favor	63%	59%
Oppose	32%	36%
(VOL) Don't know	5%	5%
Unwtd N	392	345

B. Requiring all immigrants who apply for U.S. citizenship to learn English?

	TOTAL	REGISTERED VOTER
Favor	92%	93%
Oppose	7%	7%
(VOL) Don't know	1%	1%
Unwtd N	392	345

C. Imposing new fines on businesses that hire illegal immigrants?

	TOTAL	REGISTERED VOTER
Favor	73%	75%
Oppose	23%	21%
(VOL) Don't know	4%	5%
Unwtd N	392	345

D. Building a fence along part of the U.S. border with Mexico?

	TOTAL	REGISTERED VOTER
Favor	55%	57%
Oppose	39%	36%
(VOL) Don't know	6%	6%
Unwtd N	392	345

E. Allowing illegal immigrants who came into the country before January to apply for permanent U.S. residency, as long as they pay a \$5,000 fine, show a clean work record, and pass a criminal background check?

	TOTAL	REGISTERED VOTER
Favor	61%	58%
Oppose	36%	38%
(VOL) Don't know	3%	4%
Unwtd N	408	333

F. Allowing people from other countries to be guest workers in the U.S. for a temporary period of time and then be required to return to their home country?

	TOTAL	REGISTERED VOTER
Favor	61%	62%
Oppose	34%	33%
(VOL) Don't know	4%	5%
Unwtd N	408	333

G. Hiring and training more border patrol agents?

	TOTAL	REGISTERED VOTER
Favor	79%	83%
Oppose	16%	14%
(VOL) Don't know	4%	3%
Unwtd N	408	333

7. Do you think that children of illegal immigrants in New Jersey should be allowed to attend a state college at the same reduced tuition rate as other New Jersey residents, or should they pay the higher out-of-state tuition rate?

	TOTAL	REGISTERED VOTER
Reduced in-state	46%	43%
Higher out-of-state	46%	49%
(VOL) Don't know	8%	8%
Unwtd N	408	333

Results for this *Monmouth University/Gannett NJ Poll* are based on telephone interviews conducted by the Monmouth University Polling Institute on July 16-19, 2007 with a statewide random sample of 800 adult residents. For results based on the total sample, one can say with 95% confidence that the error attributable to sampling has a maximum margin of plus or minus 3.5 percentage points. Sampling error increases as the sample size decreases, so statements based on various population subgroups, such as separate figures reported by gender or party identification, are subject to more error than are statements based on the total sample. 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.

*It is the Monmouth University Polling Institute's policy to conduct surveys of all adult New Jersey residents, including voters and non-voters, on issues which affect the state. Specific voter surveys are conducted when appropriate during election cycles.*

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