



Hispanic Immigrants in the Washington, DC Metropolitan Area

*Findings on Common Values, the American Dream, & the
Political Process*

**Study Prepared for the
Congressional Hispanic Leadership Institute and Ayuda, Inc.
By *Impacto* Group LLC
July 20, 2007**



IMPACTO
GROUP | LLC

INSIGHT

INNOVATION

COMMUNICATION

ACCELERATING SOLUTIONS

Methodology

- 279 interviews conducted on July 7, 2007, among immigrants of Hispanic descent who lived in the Washington, DC metropolitan area.
- Respondents were attending a one-day immigration clinic, which provided individual legal advice at no cost.
- Once at the clinic, respondents were screened and, if qualified, invited to participate in the survey. *(All respondents were at least 21 years of age and born outside of the U.S.)*
- Respondents were given the option to take the survey in English or Spanish.



Key Findings

Key Findings

- **These Hispanic immigrants are defined foremost by the intensity of their beliefs on the importance of the following:**
 - Family values;
 - Self-reliance;
 - Having a strong work ethic;
 - Learning the English language;
 - Becoming an American Citizen; and
 - Participating in the American political process.
- **Respondents want to be engaged civically and politically but are unclear about how to define their own Party ID or political ideology.**

Key Findings

- **Respondents share a strong belief in the American Dream**
 - 91% “strongly agree” that any Hispanic young person in America today can succeed and get ahead if they just get a good education and work hard
 - 95% say it is “very important” to have a strong work ethic
 - 88% say it is “very important” to be able to own their own home
 - 80% say it is “very important” to be able to start your own business

Key Findings: Values

- **Family, cultural and religious values are strong:**
 - 91% say it is “very important” to have a close family network
 - 84% say the language of their country of origin is very important to them
 - 77% say it is “very important” to regularly attend mass or church services
 - 89% send money to family who reside in their country of origin

Key Findings: Allegiance to the U.S.

- **Respondents show strong allegiance to the United States**
 - 85% plan to make the United States their permanent home
 - 93% plan to become U.S. Citizens
 - 95% “strongly agree” that it is important for Hispanics to learn English
 - 88% have a U.S. bank account
 - Even as the country is engaged in an unpopular war, 45% say they would be proud to have a son or daughter serving in the U.S. military

Key Findings: Ideology

- **Their political identity is evolving:** Nearly 1 in 5 do not know how to describe their ideological bent. When asked how they define themselves:
 - 31% say they are conservative;
 - 31% say moderate;
 - 21% don't know; and
 - the smallest percent call themselves liberal (18%).
- **Politically, an overwhelming majority express a strong sense of personal responsibility and opposition to abortion**
 - 85% agree it is necessary for “*people to take control of their lives and not rely on the government or others to help them get ahead*”; and
 - 8 in 10 **oppose abortion** (combined 52% strongly and 28% somewhat); Only 15% are generally supportive.

Key Findings: Ideology

- Overall, even when segmented by ideology, **respondents appear conservative in their thinking as demonstrated by church attendance, opposition to abortion, self reliance and having a strong work ethic**
- **Respondents who believe attending mass or church services on a regular basis is “very important:”**
 - Conservatives (86%), moderates (81%), and liberals (57%)
 - Collectively, these respondents strongly oppose abortion (83%)
 - Even among liberals, 60% oppose abortion
- **All groups ranked having a strong work ethic and being able to own a home as “very important,” which speaks to the intensity on these issues.**
 - The strongest intensity for home ownership came from conservatives (98%), compared to 78% of liberals. Moderates were in the middle at 89%.
- **All groups strongly value learning English and engaging civically and politically in the U.S. process.**

Key Findings: Civic Duty

- **Respondents share a strong belief that political participation and civic involvement are important:**
 - 82% strongly agree that Hispanic Americans could gain a lot more power and respect if they were more united and active in politics.
 - 76% say civic involvement in their community is “very important.”
 - Civic involvement was slightly more important among men than women
 - 70% believe it is very important to participate in the American political process.
 - 80% of respondents age 40-49 believe it is “very important,” compared to 65% of respondents age 30-39

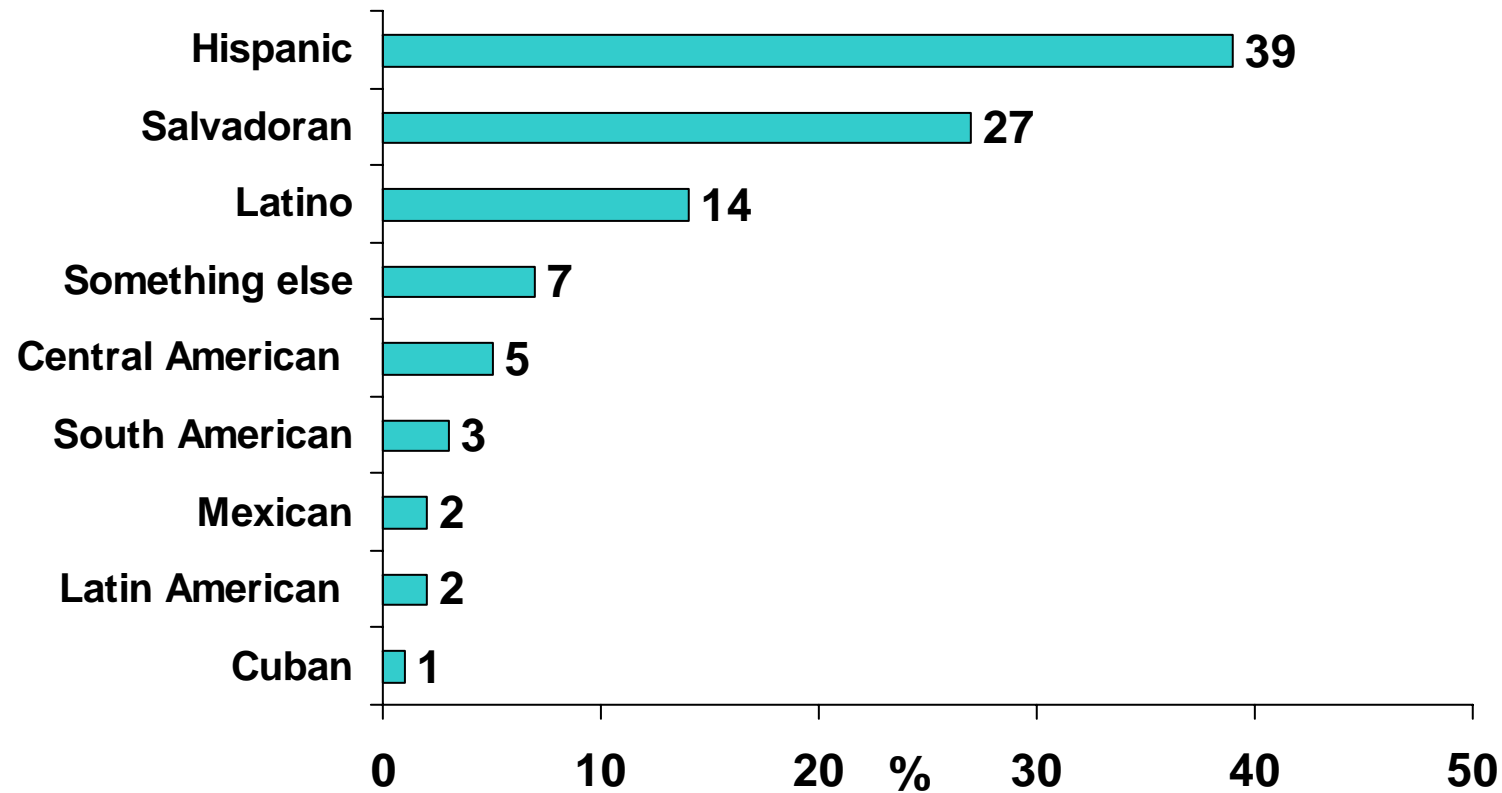
Key Findings: Political IQ

- **Respondents are politically savvy and educated about their surroundings:**
 - Like the country at large, two-thirds (67%) think the country is headed in the wrong direction.
 - 74% say Congress is doing a poor job in handling immigration proposals
 - **84% support and are proud of this country's Hispanic elected officials.** Favorability was strongest among conservatives (66%) and weakest among moderates (42%).
 - **Immigrants are split on whether elected officials share their concerns:**
 - 49% do not believe most elected officials in America care about what these Hispanic immigrants think
 - 45% believe officials do care



Respondent Characteristics

Respondents Self-Identifications



Respondents Self-Identifications

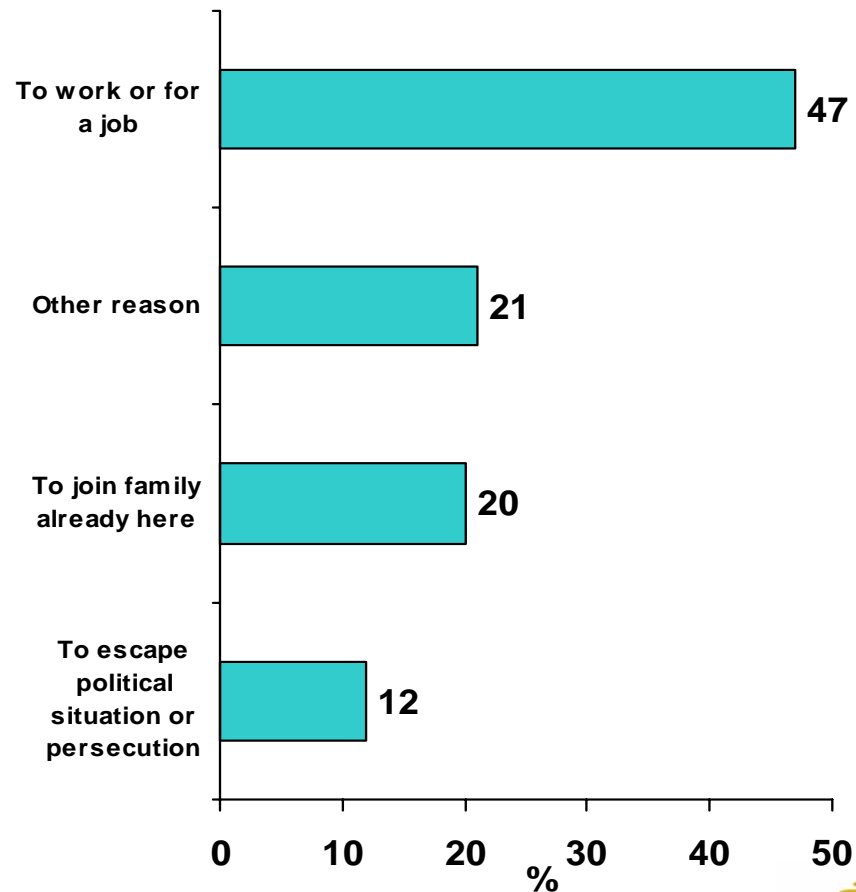
	<u>%</u>
Have Children Born in US	
Yes	49
No	51
Age	
21-29	29
30-39	38
40-49	24
50 or older	10
Length of Time in US	
3 years or less	15
4-5 years	13
6-10 years	33
More than 10 years	38

Respondents Self-Identifications Continued

	<u>%</u>
Marital Status	
Married	52
Single	37
Separated/Divorced	7
Widowed	2
Education	
Less than high school	35
High school graduate	29
Business or some college	21
College graduate/Grad school	13
Employment	
Employed	81
Unemployed	10
Retired or Student	1
Homemaker	6

Main Reason for Immigrating to U.S.

- Almost half (47%) came to the U.S. primarily for work
- 1 in 5 came to join family in the U.S.
- 12% came to the U.S. to escape political persecution
 - Conservatives are more likely than moderates or liberals to say they came to escape political persecution (18% vs. 9% and 14% respectively)

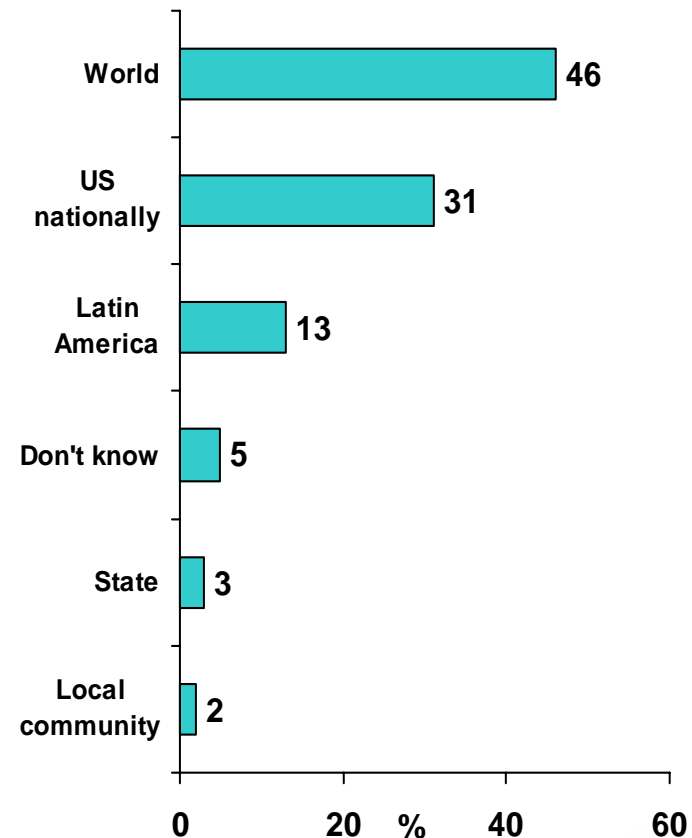




Media Attention

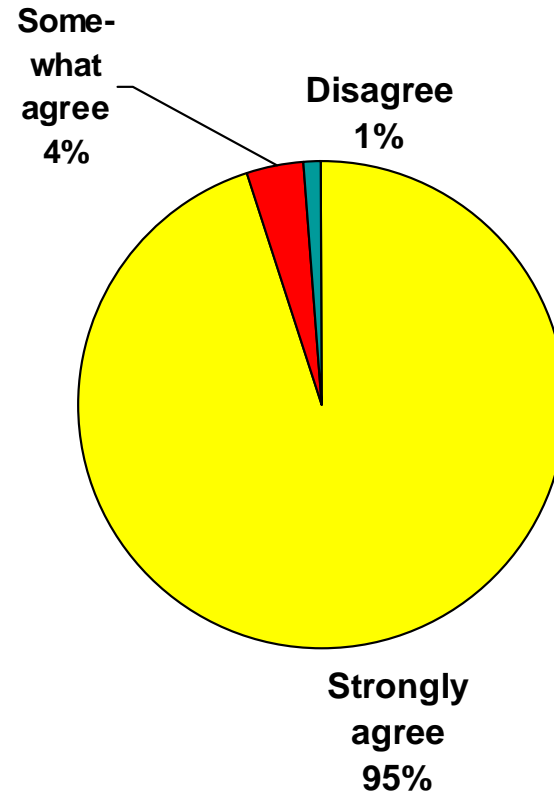
Types of News & Information of Greatest Interest

- Immigrants pay most attention to world and U.S. news
 - 13% pay most attention to Latin America (“LA”)
- Significant Demographic Variations
 - Under age 50 more likely than older immigrants to pay attention to U.S. news (33% vs.12%)
 - Those with at least some college more likely to pay attention to world news (65% vs. 37%)
 - Those with less than a high school education most likely to pay attention to LA news (22%)



Overwhelming Agreement on Importance of Learning English

- While 3 out of 4 Hispanic immigrants frequently watch or listen to Spanish TV or Spanish radio, **95% strongly agree that it is important for Hispanics to learn English**





Achieving the American Dream

Hispanics Immigrants Believe in the American Dream, Participating in the Political Process, and Self-Reliance, but...

Most do not believe elected officials connect with their needs.

Combined Agree

Any Hispanic or Latino young person in America today can succeed and get ahead if they just get a good education & work hard



Hispanic Ams could gain a lot more power & respect from others if they were more united & active in politics



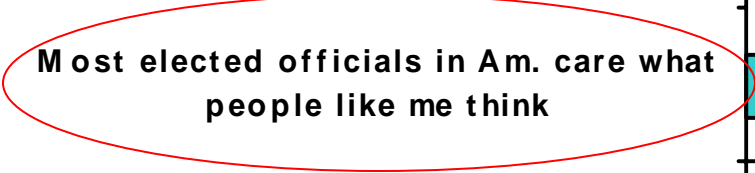
It is necessary for people to take control of their lives & not rely on the govt or others to help them get ahead



Non-His. Americans have stereotypes of Hispanics that are negative and cause a great deal of prejudice



Most elected officials in Am. care what people like me think



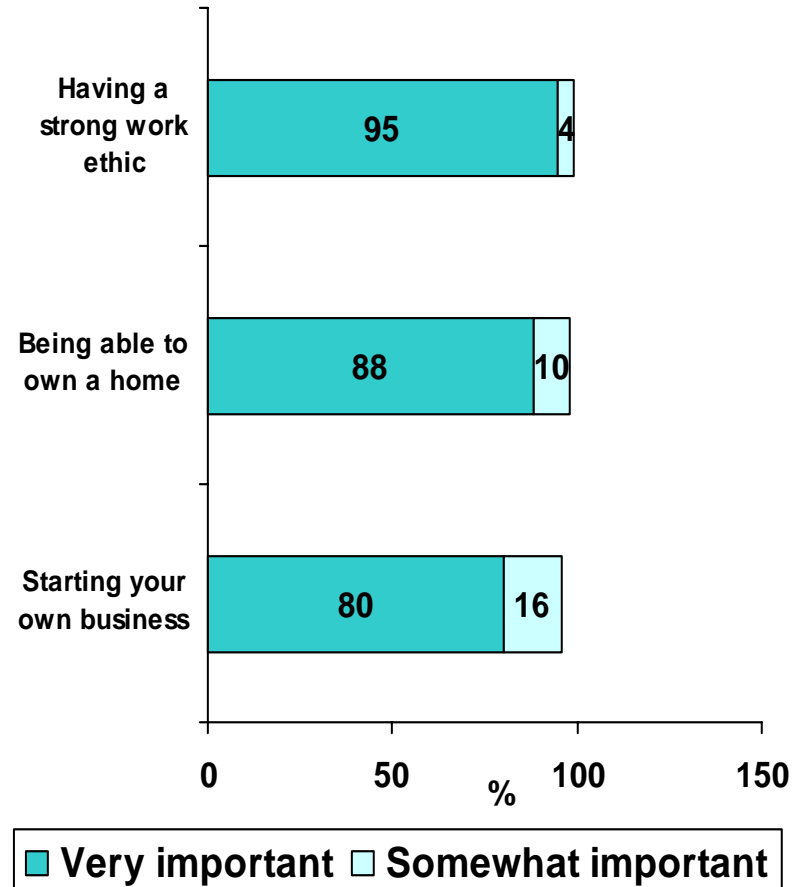
Strongly agree

0 20 40 60 80 100



Hispanic Immigrants Have Strong Work Ethic and Traditional American Dreams

- 95% say it is “very important” to them to have a strong work ethic
- 88% say it is “very important” to own their own homes
- 80% say owning their own business is very important
 - The goal of owning a business is slightly stronger among men than women (85% vs. 75%)

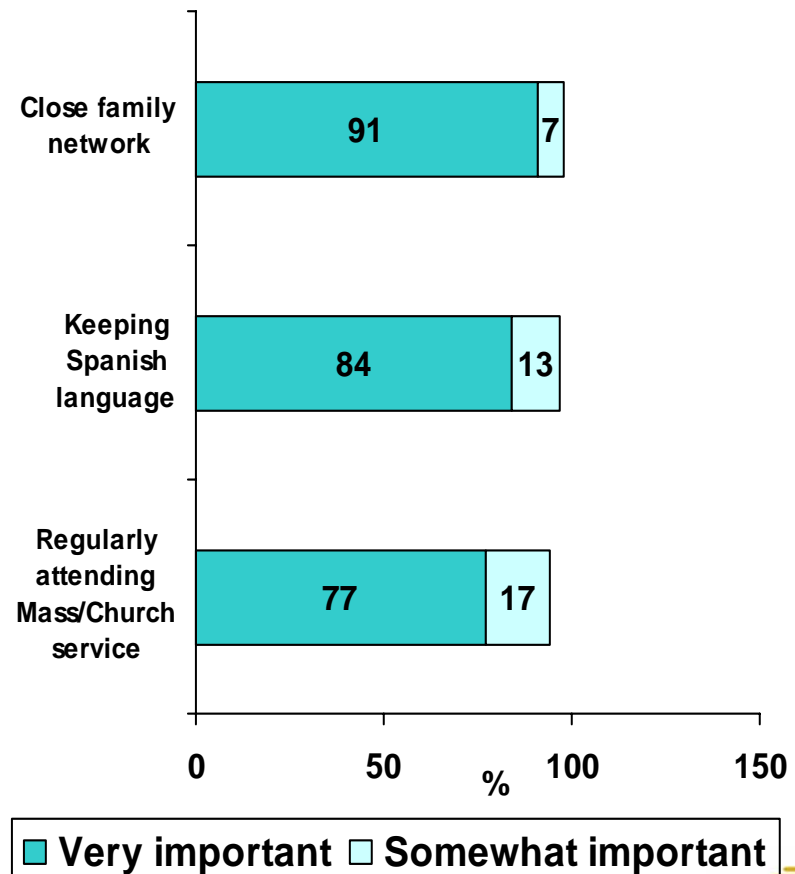




Strong Family Values

Hispanic Immigrants Have Strong Family, Cultural & Religious Values

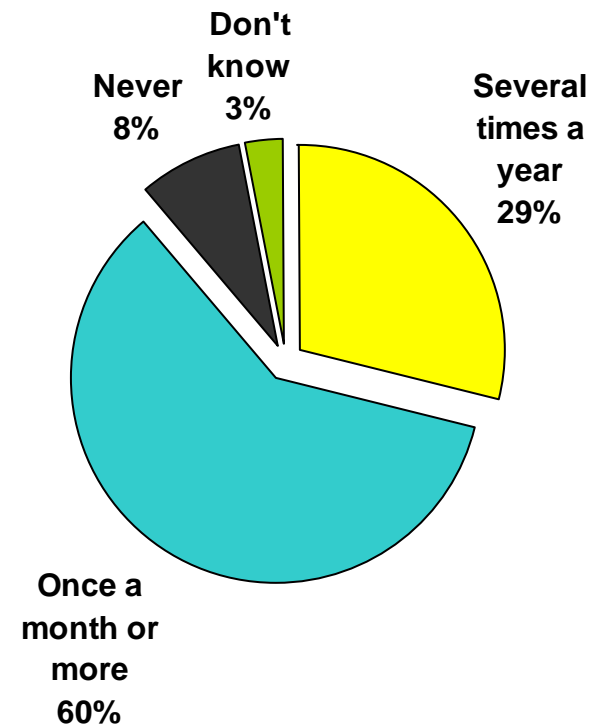
- Hispanic immigrants across the board believe in the importance of a close family network and retaining their Spanish language
- 94% believe it is important to frequently attend some type of religious service
 - Those who oppose abortion are **somewhat more likely** than those who support abortion rights **to say attending religious services is “very important”** (83% vs. 50%, respectively)



89% Send Money to Family Who Reside in their Home Country

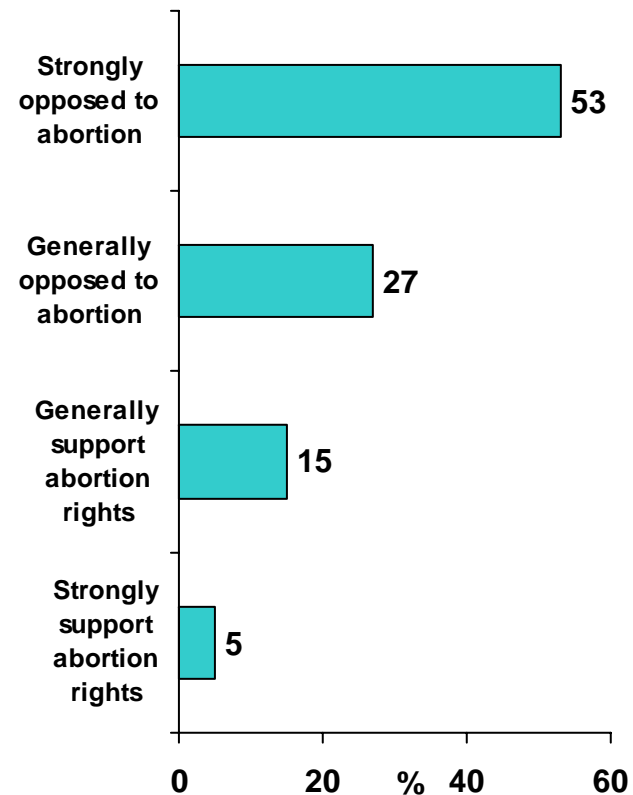
- 89% send money to family in their native country
 - 6 in 10 send money at least once a month
- Married respondents are more likely than single respondents to say they send money at least once a month (67% vs. 53%)

Q. How often do you send money back to family in your home country?



Views on Abortion

- 80% of these respondents oppose abortion and 20% somewhat or strongly support abortion rights.
 - While a majority oppose abortion across demographic groups, those with less than a high school education are slightly more likely than those with more education to strongly oppose abortion (64% vs. 47%)
 - Conservatives are more likely than moderates or liberals to strongly oppose abortion (68% vs. 42% and 44% respectively)
 - The strongest opposition to abortion came from younger respondents ages 21-29 (85% opposed)

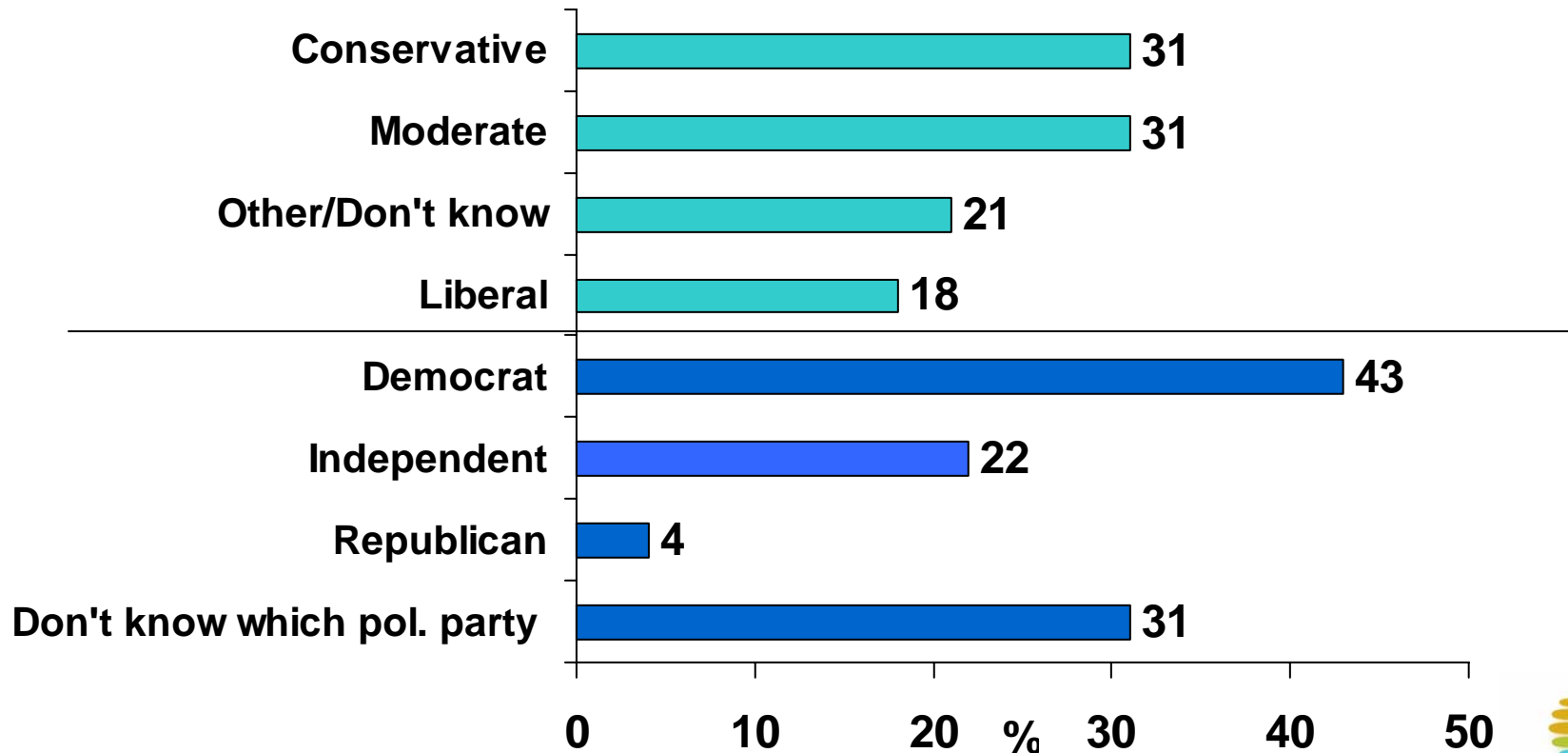




Opinions About Politics & Political Participation

Ideology is Better Indicator of Hispanic Immigrant Beliefs than Party Label

When asked about their political affiliation, Republican ID rates poorly and Democratic ID is consistent with national surveys of Hispanics. Most notably, nearly a quarter classify themselves as Independents and nearly 1/3 do not know which party best aligns with their values.



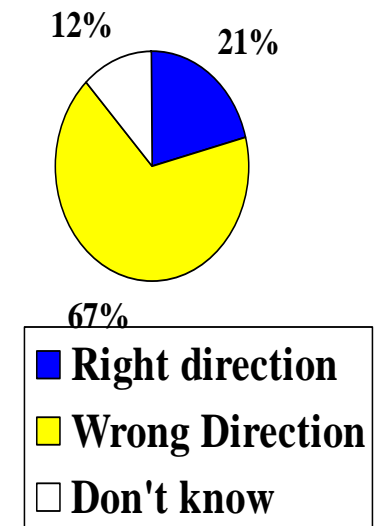
Ideology is Better Indicator of Hispanic Immigrant Beliefs than Party Label

- Of those who called themselves **conservative**:
 - 42% say they are Democrats;
 - 6% say they are Republicans;
 - 26% say they are independent; and
 - 26% don't know in which political party they belong
- Of those who call themselves **liberal**,
 - 52% say they are Democrats;
 - 6% say they are Republicans;
 - 22% say they are Independents; and
 - 20% don't know in which party they belong

Two-Thirds Believe the U.S. is Headed in the Wrong Direction

- **Two-thirds (67%) of these immigrants believe the U.S. is headed in the wrong direction**, compared to 21% who say “right direction” and 12% don’t know
- Significant demographic variations exist:
 - **College graduates are more optimistic with 44% saying the U.S. is headed in the right direction, compared with 16% of non-college graduates.**

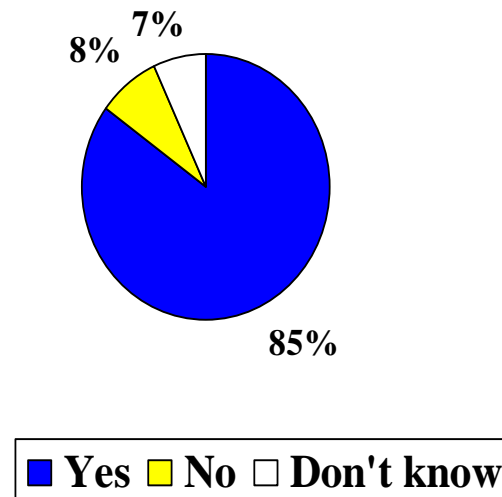
"Do you think that the US is headed in the right direction or the wrong direction?"



Overwhelming Majority Plan to Make the United States their Permanent Home

- 85% say they plan to make the United States their permanent home, 7% aren't sure. (Only 8% do not plan to remain in the U.S.)
- No significant demographic variations exist

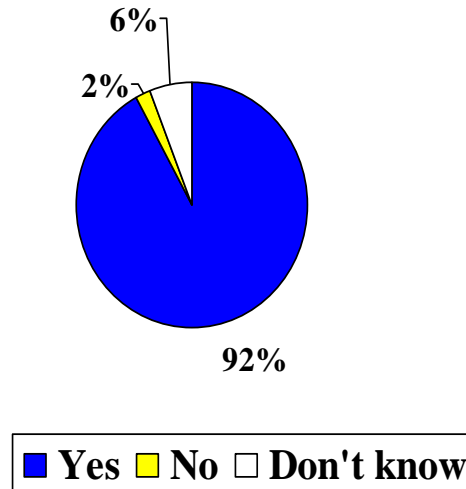
Do you plan to make the United States your permanent home?



More than Nine in 10 Non-Citizens Want to Become American Citizens

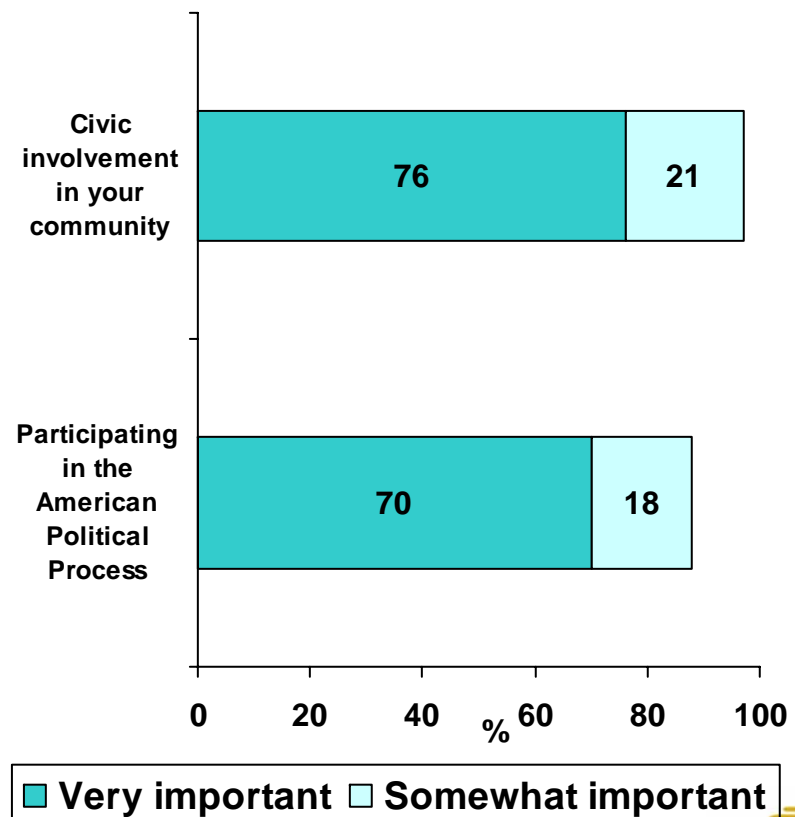
- 92% plan to become American citizens. By ideology:
 - 93% of conservatives;
 - 97% of moderates; and
 - 86% of liberals say they plan to become U.S. citizens.
- 9% of the respondents said they are already U.S. citizens

*Do you plan to become a US
citizen in the future?*



Hispanic Immigrants Believe in the Importance of Political Participation

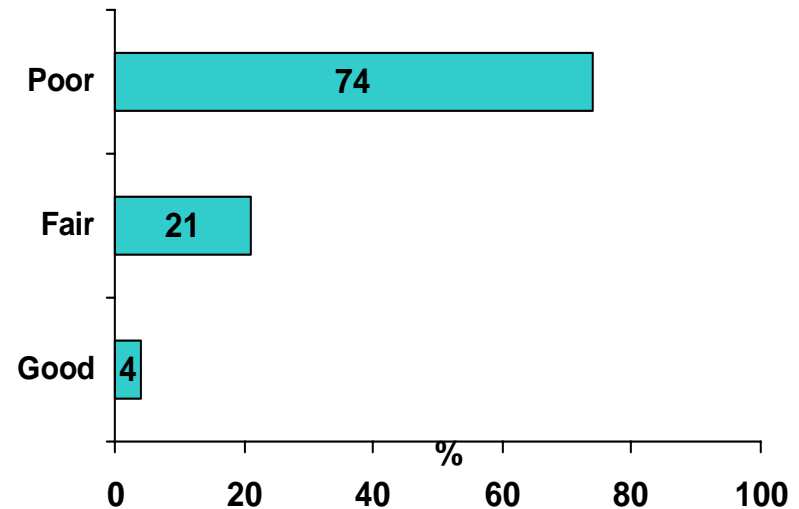
- Hispanic immigrants across the board say it is important to be civically involved in their community.
 - Males are somewhat more likely than females to say community civic involvement is “very important” (80% vs. 70%)
- 88% say it is important to participate in the American political process.
 - Those ages 40-49 are more likely than others to strongly agree with this statement (80%).



Congress Gets Low Marks for it's Handling of Immigration Reform

- 3 out of 4 respondents say Congress is doing a poor job at handling immigration proposals, 21% rate them fair, and 4% rate them good.

"How would you rate the job Congress is doing in handling of immigration proposals?"





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