

RED
BROWN
& BLUE

RAISE *the* TORCH

• SURVEY OF UNDOCUMENTED IMMIGRANTS •



By Rudy Ruiz and Brittani Peña-Gonzales
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FOREWORD

America is a nation of immigrants. We've heard that refrain time and again since our childhood. As a country we take pride in our history of welcoming newcomers from around the world, and putting them to work in building our great nation. Nothing can be more emblematic of this aspect of American culture than the Statue of Liberty, its torch held high to welcome immigrants onto our shores while also lighting the way to freedom and opportunity.

So what happened to that promise and ideal? Today, massive workplace raids root out undocumented immigrants. Technological advancements tighten the noose around them and the businesses that depend on their labor to survive and grow. Detained immigrants waste away in tent cities. Thousands of families are torn apart, American children kept from their undocumented immigrant parents. Border fences rise and the Border Patrol balloons as human beings seeking a better life die in deserts striving to elude them. And despite promises from politicians on both sides of the aisle, immigration reform remains a distant hope typically dangled before Latino voters only as elections near. How did we get to this point of policy failure and political intransigence so severe that it calls our own humanity and conscience as a nation into question?

And how can we break the gridlock and forge a viable solution that upholds our ideals as a nation?

As Red Brown and Blue (RBB) pondered the problem and sought to contribute to that solution, we arrived at this hypothesis:

- Immigrants have always been – and continue to be – beneficial to America's vitality and growth, but our immigration laws are outdated and must be reformed to legitimize the millions living here and contributing from the shadows. However, unfounded fears, misperceptions, and myths dominate public perception of undocumented immigrants and their impact on the American economy, culture, and society, forming daunting obstacles to immigration reform.

With this in mind, we devised *Raise the Torch: the RBB Study of Undocumented Latino Immigrants*. Our vision was to help light the way towards progress based on truths and facts, to inject new and accurate information into a dim and stagnant debate with the hope of:

- Helping to break the gridlock by illuminating new areas of shared understanding and potential consensus with regards to the intentions, attitudes, socioeconomic contributions, cultural characteristics, and long-term outlook of undocumented Latino immigrants
- Informing public policy with data-driven insights that might help policymakers craft legislative proposals which are not only palatable politically but are also highly feasible in implementation and compliance
- Empowering Americans to base their perceptions and opinions of undocumented immigrants, and their corresponding positions on immigration reform, on facts and improved understanding of this group, rather than on unfounded fears, myths, and misperceptions

The study illuminates a fascinating portrait of undocumented Latino immigrants in America. It captures the motivations, resilience, and hopes of a community in search of opportunity. The study depicts a population primed to blossom into patriotic and productive citizens if afforded the opportunity to contribute legitimately

to our society and economy. At the same time, the findings cast a stark light on the harsh realities of immigrant life as well as the threats and challenges faced by this largely disenfranchised population vulnerable to discrimination, abuse, and hate crimes.

Opening our minds and evolving our positions in the face of new information is essential to our learning and growth both as human beings and as American citizens. A willingness to reevaluate complex issues based on a richer perspective is vital to constructive civil discourse. It is my belief that the information within this study can help voters, influencers, and policymakers more accurately understand undocumented Latino immigrants in order to craft well-informed, humane, just, and feasible bipartisan decisions on immigration reform.

In the end, should we not know a person or a group before we pass judgment upon them and determine their fate? At the very least, this study can help serve that purpose. And at its best, it might not only inform – but also inspire – Americans to prove that we can still raise the torch.

Rudy Ruiz
Founding Editor

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The intent of *Raise the Torch: the RBB Study of Undocumented Latino Immigrants* is to provide the American public and its leaders new evidence-based data regarding the motivations, aspirations and mindset of the United States' undocumented Latino immigrant population to better inform related opinions, positions, and potential policies.

Some of the key findings in our major areas of research are found below.

Immigration & Reform

According to the RBB survey, 89.4% of undocumented Latino immigrants said the reason they came to the United States was to improve their economic situation.

During their time here, 90.8% have heard about immigration reform, with nearly 98% of those considering it very important or somewhat important to them and their families.

Interestingly, the reason most commonly cited for prioritizing immigration reform was not the fear of deportation but rather a sense of justice. 43.1% of respondents said reform was important to them because Latinos work to make the U.S. strong and they deserve the benefits of citizenship. 37.7% of undocumented Latino immigrants cited fear of deportation as their primary reason for considering immigration reform important.

Despite their difficult circumstances, 73.5% of undocumented Latino immigrants say if they had it all to do over again, they would still choose to come to the United States.

Citizenship

82.7% of undocumented Latino immigrants are very interested in becoming U.S. citizens, with an additional 6.8% being somewhat interested.

Amongst the most commonly touted types of immigration reform, the Pathway to Citizenship generated the most support among undocumented Latino immigrants.

79.1% of the population responded most favorably to the opportunity to become a citizen along with their spouse and children after living in the U.S. for 5 years, fulfilling a requirement to learn English, passing a citizenship test, paying a fine of \$2,400, and paying back taxes owed.

The Guest Worker Program and DREAM Act proposals were viewed favorably by far fewer respondents.

Nearly 68% stated the most they could afford to pay in fines to legitimize their status was under \$3,000.

87% of undocumented Latino immigrants stated that they would continue to stay in the U.S. if the fines associated with reform were too high or the waiting period too long.

71.4% said that they would be willing to serve in the U.S. military as part of immigration reform in order to earn their citizenship.

Culture & the Allure of America

Most undocumented Latino immigrants are eager to embrace the American way of life.

87.8% of undocumented Latino immigrants want to adopt American values and customs, including holidays.

61.4% prefer that their children and grandchildren identify themselves as Americans.

87.2% believe that America is special compared to other countries.

61.4% of undocumented Latino immigrants respect Americans and another 14% admire them, while only 4.2% fear and 2.5% dislike Americans.

98.1% of undocumented Latino immigrants want to learn how to speak and write English. However, despite that nearly unanimous consensus, only 11.2% feel that they speak and write it well or very well.

Given these insights, if reform requires mastery of the English language, accompanying infrastructure and/or support to facilitate learning English as a second language could help maximize participation and compliance. Such a measure would also expedite the acculturation process, helping to address the fears and concerns of many immigration opponents.

Socioeconomic Considerations

Undocumented Latino immigrants contribute to the American economy, filling vital positions not typically desired by legal residents and citizens. Furthermore, a majority of the Latino undocumented population pays taxes while a much smaller share benefits from access to social services.

99.5% of all undocumented Latino immigrants consider working and providing for their families very or somewhat important. Like most immigrant waves in the past, they largely toil in low-wage, high-risk occupations.

95.3% of undocumented Latino immigrants believe that they are not taking jobs away from Americans. Instead, the vast majority believe they are simply filling a need.

According to the RBB survey's findings, 99.4% of undocumented Latino immigrants want their children to attend college in the United States. They are also eager to build their skills. 58.7% report that, if legalized, they would take classes to qualify for a higher paying job.

51.6% of undocumented Latino immigrants reported paying taxes and Social Security.

A much smaller share, only 23.9% state they have received assistance from social services programs.

Social Justice

Immigration reform is a dimension of broader social justice that Americans can no longer ignore with a clear conscience.

80.4% of undocumented Latino immigrants stated there is either a lot or some discrimination in the U.S. towards immigrants.

40.6% reported that they have personally been victims of racism in the U.S.

32.1% of undocumented Latino immigrants reported that they or someone they knew had personally been victims of a hate crime. Of those, only 16.3% stated that they had reported the crime to the police while 83.7% did not. The primary reason for not reporting a hate crime to the police was fear of deportation (55.6%).

Of additional concern is the effect on families torn apart by the detainment of immigrant parents with young children, and the reduced ability (due to the increased level of border security) of undocumented immigrants to visit children remaining in their nations of origin.

ABOUT THIS REPORT

Methodology

For the survey of undocumented Latino immigrants, the Red Brown and Blue research team conducted 1,100 Spanish-language surveys between December 2009 and January 2010 in six different cities including Houston, Los Angeles, Phoenix, Miami, New York, and the Washington, D.C. area. The markets were selected based on their Hispanic compositions and population concentrations. Within each market, surveys were conducted at laundromats, day labor sites, immigration centers, flea markets, and other places frequented by undocumented Latino immigrants. Participants were required to be at least 18 years of age, of Latino origin, and living and working in the United States without legal permission. The survey included questions on immigration reform, adaptation to the American lifestyle, work ethic, long-term goals, cultural values, the 2010 Census, discrimination, and demographics.

The survey released by Red Brown and Blue is unlike any other survey in that it presents first-hand accounts of undocumented Latino immigrants' perspectives on the American lifestyle and experiences they've had while living in the United States, providing an in-depth, statistically significant demographic and psychographic profile.

The survey was conducted at a 99% confidence level with a confidence interval of 4.

The survey did not collect personal information other than general demographics. Participants were informed of the intent of the survey and notified that their identities would be kept confidential in order to facilitate their participation and ensure the veracity of their answers.

Authors

Rudy Ruiz is the Founding Editor of Red Brown and Blue. His published works include *¡Adelante!* (Random House, 2003) and *Going Hungry* (Anchor Books, 2008). His columns and commentary on social issues, including immigration reform and civil discourse, have appeared in publications and websites nationwide, including CNN.com, The Philadelphia Inquirer, The Houston Chronicle and The Cleveland Plain-Dealer. In 1995 he co-founded Interlex Communications, Inc., one of the nation's leading advocacy and cause-related marketing communications firms. In the latter role, he has spearheaded the design and analysis of national quantitative and qualitative research to inform advocacy and social marketing campaigns for numerous government agencies, major corporations, and non-profit organizations. Rudy Ruiz obtained his BA in Government at Harvard University and his Master's in Public Policy at Harvard University's John F. Kennedy School of Government.

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About Red Brown and Blue

Red Brown and Blue is an independent sociopolitical media organization committed to infusing the mainstream dialogue with diverse perspectives based on facts and unique cultural experiences. Featuring original research, analysis, and opinion commentary, Red Brown and Blue is committed to taking advocacy positions on issues on the basis of factual information, the inclusion of diverse perspectives, and a firm commitment to elevating the state of civil discourse in America. Through its efforts, Red Brown and Blue hopes to contribute to the evolution of the American Dream as an attainable and inclusive goal for all who hope to achieve it.

DETAILED FINDINGS

Immigration & Reform

In striving to better understand undocumented Latino immigrants, it is important to put their population into perspective.

As of March 2010, approximately 11.2 million undocumented immigrants were residing in the U.S., nearly unchanged since 2009, according to the Pew Hispanic Center. This stability follows a two-year decline from

the peak of 12 million in 2007, the first major downturn following a growth trend spanning two decades. The recent decline may be attributed to a reduced inflow from Mexico as well as an increase in deportations. In a report last year, the Pew Hispanic Center concluded that inflows of unauthorized immigrants from Mexico had fallen off sharply. Deportations have more than doubled over the past ten years, approaching nearly 400,000 in 2009, with Mexicans comprising the majority of those removed. In 2009, for example, the Department of Homeland Security reports that over 70% of deportees were Mexican.

Despite the decline, undocumented immigrants comprised 3.7% of the country's population and 5.2% of its workforce in March 2010.

As a whole, people of Latin American origin comprise the vast majority of undocumented immigrants, 81%. Mexicans make up the majority of the "illegal" or "unauthorized" population, accounting for 58%, or 6.5 million. 23%, or 2.6 million, come from other Latin American nations. Asia accounts for 11%, or about 1.3 million, and Europe and Canada account for 4%, or 500,000. African countries and other nations represent about 3%, or 400,000.¹

While undocumented immigrants account for only 3.7% of the total U.S. population, the intense and highly emotional debate surrounding immigration reform, and the growing efforts of various state legislatures to enact their own reforms and controversial laws in the absence of federal action, heighten its importance on the radar of national issues.

The problem, largely seen as a "Latino" one, is the constant source of political debate and media attention. But as the fate of undocumented Latino immigrants is discussed, and politicians and the federal government focus on "securing the border," and deliberating over potential policy reforms, few pause to examine the motivations and perspectives of the most affected group of all: the immigrants themselves.

The intent of the RBB survey was to probe behind the sheer numbers and provide the American public and its leaders a glimpse into the mindset of this population, in order to better inform opinions, positions, and potential policies.

It's no surprise that, like all willing immigrant waves that have preceded, undocumented Latino immigrants have come to America searching for a better life for themselves and their families.

According to the RBB survey, 89.4% of undocumented Latino immigrants said the reason they came to the United States was to improve their economic situation. The second most common reason was to obtain a better education.

During their time here, 90.8% have heard about immigration reform, with nearly 98% of those considering it very important or somewhat important to them and their families.

Interestingly, the reason most commonly cited for prioritizing immigration reform was not the fear of

¹ Jeffrey S. Passel and D'Vera Cohn. "Unauthorized Immigrant Population: National and State Trends, 2010." Washington, DC: Pew Hispanic Center (February 1, 2011).

deportation but rather a desire for justice, which diverges from the calls by immigration reform opponents for greater enforcement and deportations. 43.1% of respondents said reform was important to them because Latinos work to make the U.S. strong and they deserve the benefits of citizenship.

37.7% of undocumented Latino immigrants cited fear of deportation as their primary reason for considering immigration reform important.

Despite living in circumstances prone to daunting challenges, injustice, and fear, an overwhelming 73.5% of undocumented Latino immigrants say if they had it all to do over again, they would still choose to come to the United States. 14.5% said they did not know what they would choose. But only 9.1% stated they would stay in the country where they were born.

This determination and commitment to living and working in America may be a testament to how much better the circumstances are in the United States – despite the sub-optimal conditions for undocumented immigrants – than in their nations of origin. They are also a testament to the staying power of the American Dream, an undeniable force which is further revealed in our findings regarding the hopes and aspirations of this population with regards to citizenship as well as their general feelings and attitudes in relation to American culture.

Citizenship

Opponents of immigration reform and critics of undocumented immigrants often express the sentiment that Latino “illegals” are not committed to America’s wellbeing for the long term, that they are simply here to drain jobs and resources from our society while harboring the long-run intention of “going home.”

Nothing could be further from the truth, according to the findings in the RBB survey.

82.7% of undocumented Latino immigrants are very interested in becoming U.S. citizens, with an additional 6.8% being somewhat interested. This overwhelming desire and preference for becoming a citizen reflects a deep commitment to part with their nations of origin permanently and become fully vested in the promise of America.

Within the immigration reform debate, the issue of citizenship – whether it should be offered within any reform policy and, if so, under what conditions – has been hotly debated. On one extreme are those who believe primarily in the need for increased border security and enforcement including mass deportations. On the other extreme are those who favor some form of amnesty. Most of the solutions which have received serious consideration by elected officials and the media fall somewhere in between, including the notion of a Guest Worker Program, a Pathway to Citizenship, and the DREAM Act (which offers college students and those serving in the military an opportunity to earn citizenship.)

The reality is that in order for any policy to work it must be feasible to implement, requiring cooperation from undocumented Latino immigrants themselves. To help assess which policy options would most likely elicit maximum compliance and participation among the undocumented Latino immigrant population, RBB probed deeply into this subject.

Not surprisingly, the Pathway to Citizenship option generated the most interest and support among undocumented

Latino immigrants. Presented with the three options mentioned above, 79.1% of the population responded most favorably to the opportunity to become a citizen along with their spouse and children after living in the U.S. for 5 years, fulfilling a requirement to learn English, passing a citizenship test, paying a fine of \$2,400, and paying back taxes owed. This option also included increased border security and stronger laws regulating employers.

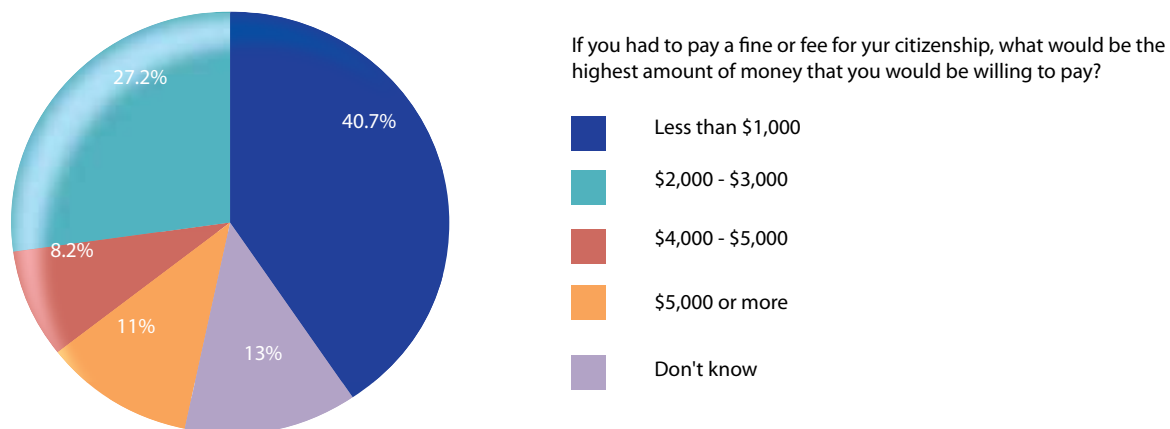
A distant 9.7% favored the idea of a Guest Worker Program, which would allow them to work in the U.S. for 3 years using a temporary visa and send them home after 3 years if they did not gain permanent residency during that time. This option would also include increased border security and stronger laws regulating employers.

Finally, the DREAM Act was favored by 8.1% of undocumented Latino immigrants. This would require a person to graduate from a U.S. high school, be of good moral character, and successfully complete at least 2 years of college or serve in the United States military for at least 2 years in order to obtain citizenship.

More broadly, and of interest to policymakers seeking maximum compliance, when asked how high of a fine or fee they would be willing to pay for their citizenship:

- Nearly 68% stated the most they could afford to pay was under \$3,000
- Specifically, 40.7% stated less than \$1,000
- 27.2% stated their maximum range was \$2,000 to \$3,000
- Only 11% said they were willing to pay \$5,000 or more
- 13% did not know

Figure 1

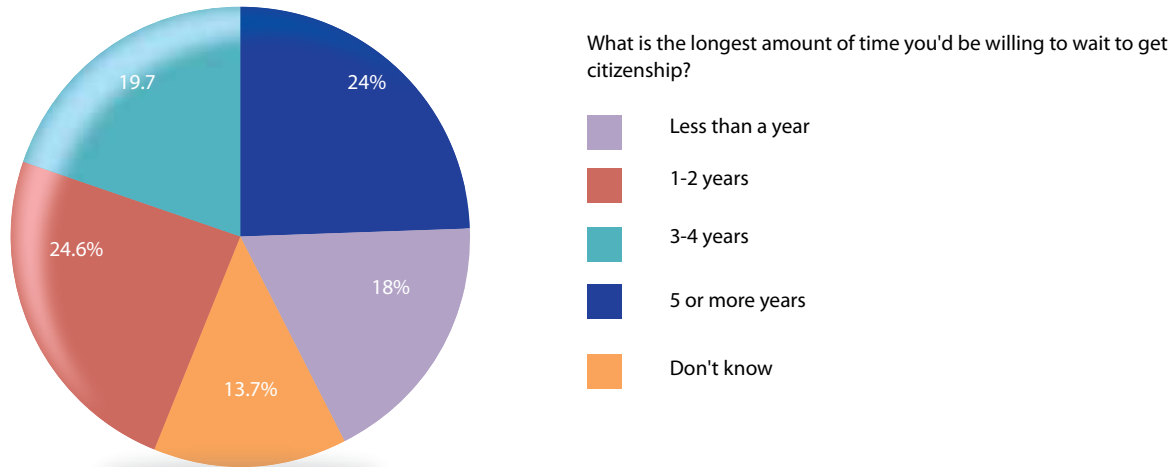


The willingness to pay a fine is significant, as \$3,000 represents a disproportionately large share of their typically lower income. In 60% of the surveyed undocumented immigrants' households, income was reported as less than \$25,000 a year. This accurately portrays the economic hardships and relatively lower income that characterizes the Latino undocumented population. It is important to ensure that – when reform does occur – the path to legalization is realistically within reach of this population, which largely lives below the poverty line.

With regards to a waiting period, 68.3% stated that they'd be willing to wait 1-2 years or more. However, only

43.7% are willing to wait 3-4 years or more.

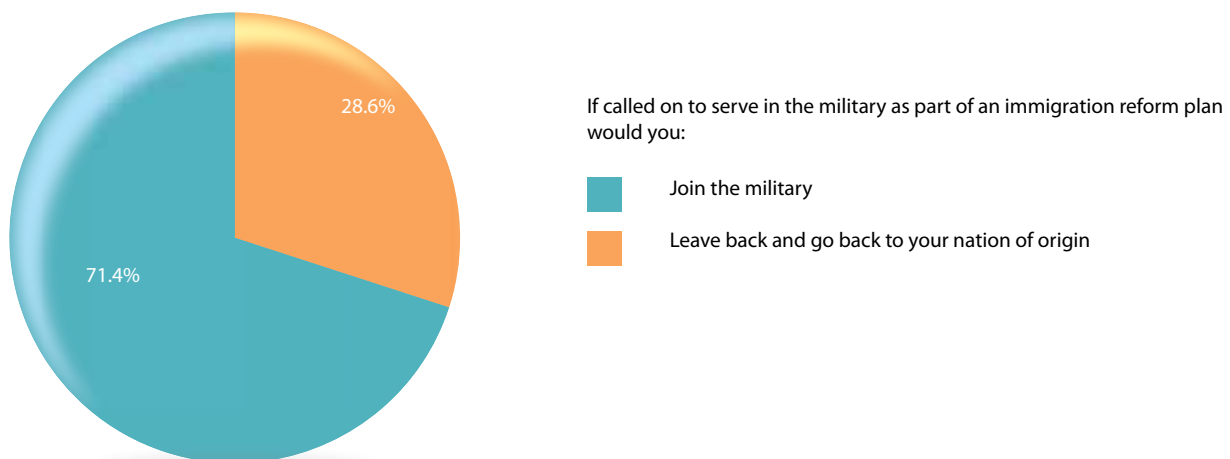
Figure 2



This is an important reality check for policymakers, underscored by the fact that 87% of undocumented Latino immigrants stated that they would continue to stay in the U.S. illegally if a reform was enacted offering a path to citizenship within the time they're willing to wait, but with higher fines than they're willing or able to pay. Similarly, 87.9 percent stated that they would continue to stay illegally if the reform featured fines they were willing or able to pay but the waiting period exceeded the time they are willing to wait.

Another salient finding with regards to the willingness of undocumented Latino immigrants to contribute or “pay” for legal status was that a surprising 71.4% said they would be willing to serve in the military as part of an immigration reform in order to earn their citizenship. According to the Immigration Policy Center, as of October 2009, more than 53,000 immigrants had taken advantage of the special wartime military naturalization statute to gain citizenship through service.²

Figure 3



² Margaret D. Stock. *Essential To The Fight: Immigrants In The Military Eight Years After 9/11*. Washington, DC: Immigration Policy Center (November 2009).

The overwhelming desire to become a U.S. citizen, the willingness to pay and wait for such an opportunity, as well as the readiness to serve in the military demonstrate the deep desire that most undocumented Latino immigrants harbor to be more than faceless, itinerant, and unwelcomed workers. They yearn to belong to this country many risked their lives to enter in the first place. This desire burns more deeply than the simple goal of improving their economic circumstances, as is evidenced by the eagerness undocumented Latino immigrants exhibit to adopt the American culture, a trait which should be relevant to some of the staunchest opponents of immigration, those who believe that Latino immigrants are a threat to the very fabric of American society.

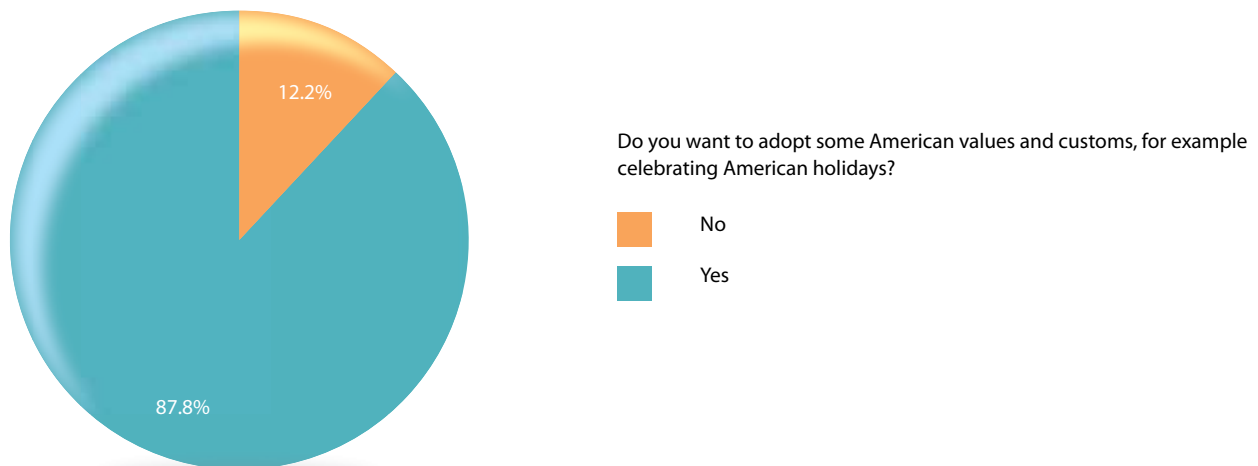
Culture & the Allure of America

While the search for economic opportunity may drive immigrants to cross the border, once here most are permanently seduced by the American way of life.

One of the common myths about undocumented Latino immigrants, propagated by opponents of immigration reform and advocates of stepping up mass deportations and focusing exclusively on increased border security, is that these immigrants have no desire to assimilate or acculturate, that they refuse to learn English or adopt American customs, that they are simply here to take jobs and drain resources rather than participate and contribute as true Americans would. Again, our findings debunk these myths and reveal an immigrant population yearning for acceptance and participation in the American way of life, not just economically but culturally. This is a key insight that could help people who have previously misunderstood undocumented Latino immigrants to see them in a new and clearer light, possibly leading them to reevaluate their positions on how America should deal with this large immigrant population.

According to the RBB survey, 87.8% of undocumented Latino immigrants want to adopt American values and customs, including holidays.

Figure 4



61.4% prefer that their children and grandchildren identify themselves as Americans.

87.2% believe that America is special compared to other countries. Of these, 70.9% believe what makes America so special is the opportunity to do better. 31.6% also believe that the freedoms found in America are what render it special in comparison to other countries. And 10.9% believe that the differentiating factor is democracy (respondents were allowed to select more than one factor).

Along with their highly positive view of America, immigrants also hold Americans themselves in high esteem. 61.4% of undocumented Latino immigrants respect Americans and another 14% admire them, while only 4.2% fear and 2.5% dislike Americans.

It is thus no surprise that most undocumented Latino immigrants yearn to belong legitimately to the United States, its culture, and its people.

However, the process of acculturation takes time. And in the case of Latinos, the process may be somewhat slower and different than exhibited by past waves of immigrants from other parts of the world.

Language adoption, which is considered a key to acculturation and socioeconomic progress by both immigrants and non-immigrants alike, remains a daunting challenge. According to the RBB survey, 98.1% of undocumented Latino immigrants want to learn how to speak and write English. However, despite that nearly unanimous consensus, only 11.2% feel that they speak and write it well or very well. On the other hand, 50.9% believe their English language abilities are bad or very bad. 38% feel their English language abilities are neither good nor bad.

Thus, it is important for policymakers to note that if reform policy requires mastery of the English language, some accompanying infrastructure and/or support to facilitate and expedite learning English as a second language could be a key to maximizing participation and compliance. Such a measure would also go a long way towards expediting the acculturation process, as it is a key component.

Unlike previous waves of immigrants, which lacked access to media and entertainment in their native languages, today's environment and technology offers Latino immigrants an endless source of news and entertainment in Spanish. This landscape tends to slow the acculturation process by enabling undocumented Latino immigrants to remain somewhat immersed in their language and culture of origin maintaining stronger ties to their heritage.

Changing views about the value of diversity also provide undocumented Latino immigrants a different environment than that found by past waves of immigrants expected to completely assimilate into America's melting pot. Today, it is an accepted norm for Latinos in general – as well other minority racial and ethnic groups – to maintain customs and traditions, celebrating their heritage in harmony with their American citizenship and pride.

Data from The Nielsen Company, which analyzes Hispanic media consumption and purchasing patterns, corroborates this harmonized duality exhibited by Latino immigrants, one in which acculturation takes place in tandem with some retention of Latino culture. According to Nielsen, “recent immigrants are the least behaviorally acculturated, while those who have been in the U.S. for more than 20 years are just as behaviorally acculturated as those born in the U.S. While Hispanics will become more acculturated over time and over generations—particularly in their purchasing behavior—they are not likely to leave their Latino culture behind.”³

³ Doug Anderson. “Below The Topline: U.S. Hispanics and Acculturation.” The Nielsen Company (November 2, 2009).

While Latino immigrant behavior may become increasingly like that of all Americans over time, retention of some Latino cultural identity is likely for a majority of undocumented immigrants. However, the insights provided by the RBB survey should reassure those concerned about the potential for divided loyalties that the aspirations of most undocumented Latino immigrants lie solely within America, and that the majority are likely to follow a path to acculturation and productive participation in the American culture and democracy similar to that of American Latinos in general.

With such strong cultural motivations to embrace what it means to be American as well as positive views of their adopted homeland, undocumented Latino immigrants appear poised to become patriots, if afforded the opportunity.

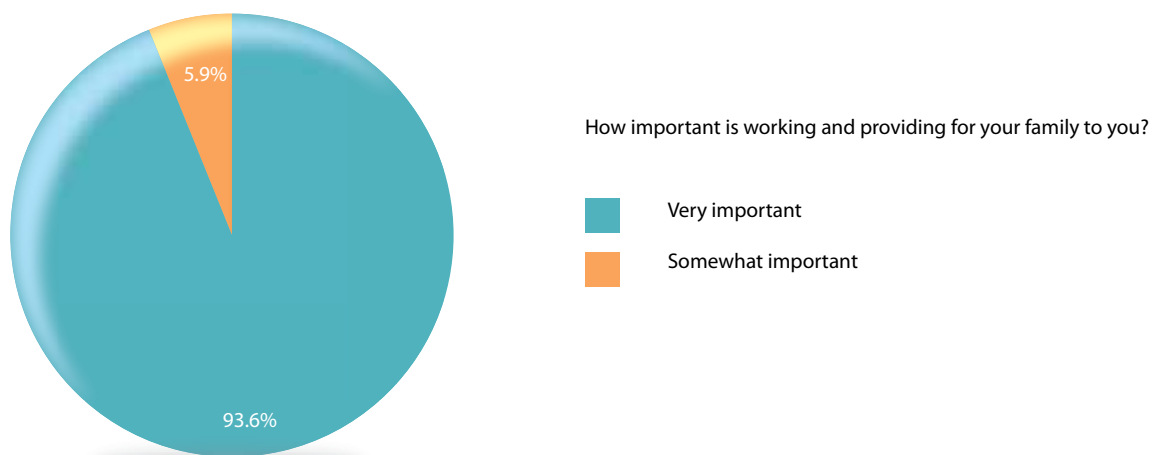
Socioeconomic Considerations

Realizing the American Dream – and contributing to its sustainability – requires more than good intentions; it demands socioeconomic capacity. A hotly debated question has been whether undocumented Latino immigrants contribute to the American economy and society or drain resources and jobs from citizens.

There should be no question that most undocumented Latino immigrants bring with them a strong work ethic and the willingness to perform the types of jobs most Americans would rather avoid.

The RBB study found that 99.5% of all undocumented Latino immigrants consider working and providing for their families very or somewhat important. 55.2% are willing to work 8 to 12 hours a day to reach their goals, with 30.9% willing to work 12 to 16 hours a day to do so.

Figure 5



Like most immigrant waves in the past, undocumented Latino immigrants typically toil long hours at lower wages within occupations requiring little education but exacting great physical tolls and involving substantial hazards and risks. The share of unauthorized workers employed in agricultural occupations (4%) and construction and extractive

occupations (19%) was roughly 3 times the share of native workers in these kinds of jobs. The share in service occupations (31%) was nearly double that of native workers (16%).⁴

According to the U.S. Department of Labor, half of all farm workers in America are undocumented immigrants, the majority comprised of Latinos.⁵ Without undocumented Latino immigrants, many Americans might not be able to enjoy something as American as apple pie.

Most Americans do not want the jobs that undocumented immigrants are eager to perform. An analysis performed by the Associated Press in 2010 demonstrated that during the first six months of the year, "California farmers posted ads for 1,160 farm worker positions open to U.S. citizens and legal residents. But only 233 people in those categories applied after learning of the jobs through unemployment offices in California, Texas, Nevada, and Arizona. One grower brought on 36. No one else hired any."⁶

Another area within which undocumented Latino immigrants are making an indispensable – and irreplaceable – contribution is the restaurant industry. Undocumented immigrants account for more than 700,000 of the industry's 12.8 million employees. The National Restaurant Association is a strong advocate of comprehensive immigration reform and is an outspoken critic of heightened enforcement practices, which undermine the ability of entrepreneurs and small business owners to remain competitive and profitable, particularly amidst a slow economic recovery. Celebrity chef Anthony Bourdain has summed up the sentiments of many restaurateurs by saying "the bald fact is that the entire restaurant industry in America would close down overnight, would never recover, if current immigration laws were enforced quickly and thoroughly across the board. Everyone in the industry knows this. It is undeniable...I know very few chefs who've even heard of a U.S.-born citizen coming in the door to ask for a dishwasher, night clean-up or kitchen prep job. Until that happens, let's at least try to be honest when discussing this issue."⁷

Undocumented Latino immigrants seem keenly aware of this dynamic, with 95.3% believing they are not taking jobs away from Americans, according to the RBB study. Instead, most believe they are simply filling a void and a need while providing for their families and laying the groundwork for a better future for their children.

This future-oriented mindset is characteristic of the American Dream and its effectiveness in propelling socioeconomic advancement during previous immigrant waves. And subsequent U.S.-born generations. Similarly, this largely blue-collar, unskilled labor workforce is characterized by a yearning for the next generation to attend college, eventually working in more skilled fields.

According to the RBB survey's findings, 99.4% of undocumented Latino immigrants want their children to attend college in the United States. They are also eager to build their skills but fear of arrest and deportation tend to create a barrier to seeking out further education and training. 58.7% report that, if legalized, they would take classes to qualify for a higher paying job. An additional 23.2% would stay in their

⁴ Jeffrey S. Passel. "The Size and Characteristics of the Unauthorized Migrant Population in the U.S." Washington, DC: Pew Hispanic Center (March 7, 2006).

⁵ S. Department of Labor. *Findings from the National Agricultural Workers Survey (NAWS) 2001-2002. A Demographic and Employment Profile of United States Farm Workers*. Office of the Assistant Secretary for Policy, Office of Programmatic Policy. Research Report No. 9., Washington, D.C., March 2005.

⁶ Garance Burke. "AP Analysis: Despite Economy, Americans Don't Want Farm Work." Associated Press. September 2010.

⁷ Robb Walsh. "Illegal Immigrants in the Restaurant Industry." The Houston Press. December 2007.

current job but take classes anyway to improve their skills.

As they work towards the American Dream and more skilled positions in the future, undocumented Latino immigrants fill America's unwanted jobs today and provide cheap labor, helping U.S. companies and industries compete effectively on a global scale.

According to a study published by the Federal Reserve Bank of San Francisco in 2010, statistical analysis of state-level data shows that immigrants expand the economy's productive capacity by stimulating investment and promoting specialization. This produces efficiency gains and boosts income per worker. At the same time, evidence is scant that immigrants diminish the employment opportunities of U.S.-born workers."⁸

Committed to working hard in the most demanding of industries, undocumented Latino immigrants also exhibit a resilient drive to pursue opportunities for employment and advancement. This is in sharp contrast to the manner in which some immigration opponents have characterized undocumented immigrants as opportunists, content to take advantage of America's welfare system. In fact, most undocumented immigrants (74.6%) believe that opportunity is something they must make for themselves. This is in sharp contrast to only 11.7% who believe opportunity is something owed to them.

Also contrary to myths propagated by those with anti-immigrant sentiments, undocumented Latino immigrants contribute to the nation's tax revenues. 51.6% of undocumented Latino immigrants reported paying taxes and Social Security, also an important sign of this population's desire to contribute to the nation's economic wellbeing, despite the fact that they cannot currently access all of the social benefits, legal protections, and government services afforded citizens through the collection of such tax revenue.

While a majority of undocumented Latino immigrants are contributing to the nation's tax base, a much smaller share, only 23.9%, state they have received assistance from social services programs (such as WIC and Medicaid, the two most commonly accessed programs).

Overall, in analyzing both primary and secondary sources of data, it is clear that undocumented Latino immigrants contribute to the American economy, filling vital positions not desired by legal residents and citizens. Furthermore, a majority of the Latino undocumented population pays taxes while a much smaller share benefits from access to social services. That said, from a socioeconomic perspective, undocumented Latino immigrants should not be considered a drain, but rather an asset, to the American workforce and economy as immigration reform and a path to citizenship are considered.

Social Justice

As stated, a majority of undocumented Latino immigrants pay taxes and contribute to Social Security, but due to their status they do not have access to the full resources, benefits, and protections afforded legal residents and citizens. This certainly creates a social injustice within our system, although one could argue it is the price to pay for working in the country illegally. It would be mutually beneficial to the undocumented immigrants and the American taxpayer to legitimize the status of these immigrants so that compliance with income tax laws could be maximized while at the same time resolving a social injustice within a country known as a beacon of fairness for all.

⁸Peri Giovanni. San Francisco Federal Bank Reserve. *The Effect of Immigrants on U.S. Employment and Productivity*. Economic Research. 2010.

More pressing humanitarian concerns, however, dominate the social justice aspect of the immigrant reform conversation.

The United States has positioned itself as a world leader in the protection and preservation of human rights. In order to act in accordance with this national commitment, action on immigration reform is an urgent need, which should be prioritized by leaders of both parties and supported by thoughtful, caring Americans regardless of their political affiliation.

The reunification of families as well as protection against – and prevention of – racism, discrimination, and hate crimes should be a high priority in the consideration of immigration reform from a purely humane point of view.

70.1% of undocumented Latino immigrants surveyed stated that they have children. Of those, 31.1% have children still living abroad. In past times, it was common for undocumented immigrants to regularly cross the border back and forth several times a year to visit their families and children in their nations of origin. However, due primarily to today's heightened border security, this has become increasingly rare. Undocumented immigrants working in the U.S. typically cannot risk traveling to their nations of origin to see their children and families because returning to their jobs in America afterwards may be a seemingly impossible, costly, and life-threatening feat. From the perspective of the undocumented Latino immigrant worker, they must continue working in America because the economic conditions in their nations of origin are deplorable and their children typically rely on their remittances for survival. In fact, 70.7% of undocumented Latino immigrants report that they send money to their families in their nations of origin regularly.

Another concern with regards to the reunification of families involves the circumstances of detained undocumented immigrants. According to a New York Times analysis in 2011, approximately 400,000 undocumented Latino immigrants are being held over the course of a year by the federal government awaiting deportation.⁹ Given the findings of the RBB survey, it is likely that approximately half of those detainees have children in the U.S., many of whom are U.S. citizens being kept from their parents due to our broken system.

Immigration reform is vital to address not only these conditions, which affect thousands of families and innocent children, but also the high level of risk and exposure that undocumented Latino immigrants face with regards to racism, discrimination, and hate crimes.

The RBB study reveals stark statistics regarding the harsh social injustices faced by undocumented Latino immigrants in America.

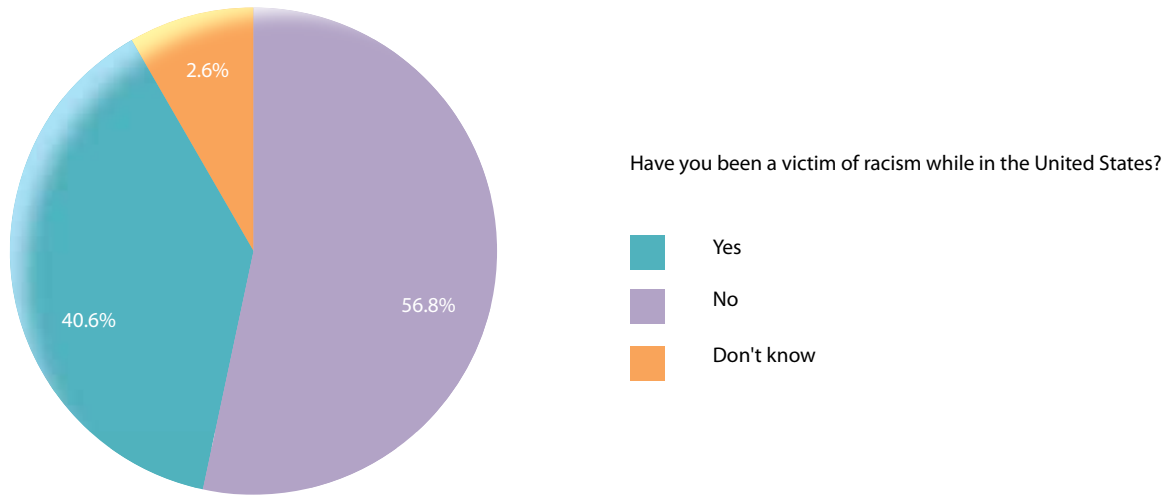
80.4% of undocumented Latino immigrants stated there is either a lot or some discrimination in the U.S. towards immigrants.

56.8% felt racism has kept them from advancing in this country.

40.6% reported they have personally been victims of racism in the U.S. Of these, 52.5% believed that language was the cause. 37.3% believed that the color of their skin was the cause. And 33.6% believed that their immigration status was the cause.

⁹"Times Topics: Immigration and Emigration." New York Times. June 2011.

Figure 6



The workplace was where most undocumented Latino immigrants experienced discrimination (57.5%), followed by the street (29.9%), retail shops (14.4%), restaurants (12.1%), government offices (10.7%), and schools (10.4%).

Of even greater concern, 32.1% of undocumented Latino immigrants reported that they or someone they knew had personally been victims of a hate crime. Of those, only 16.3% reported the crime to the police while 83.7% did not.

Figure 7

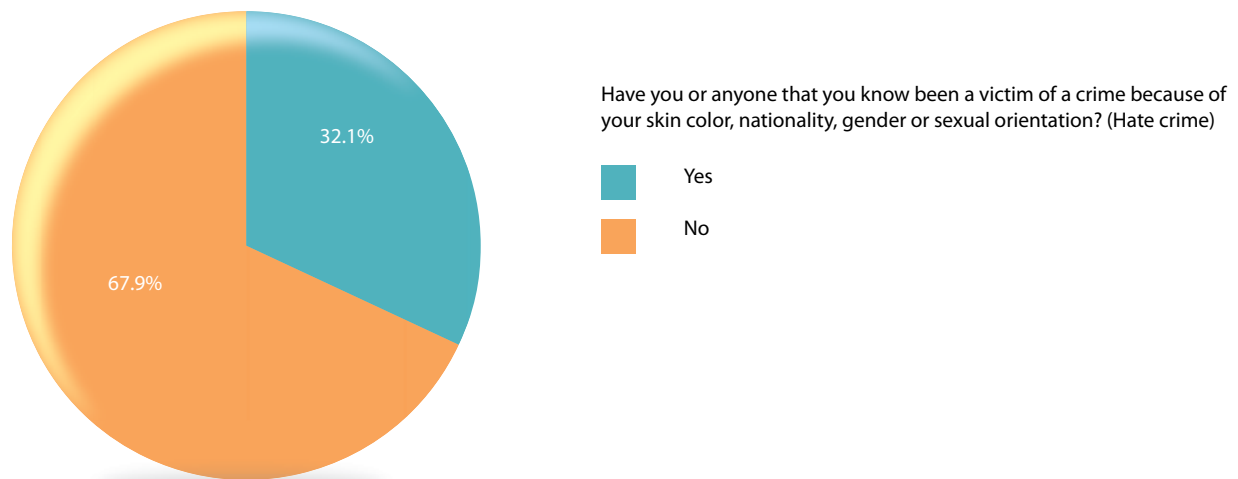
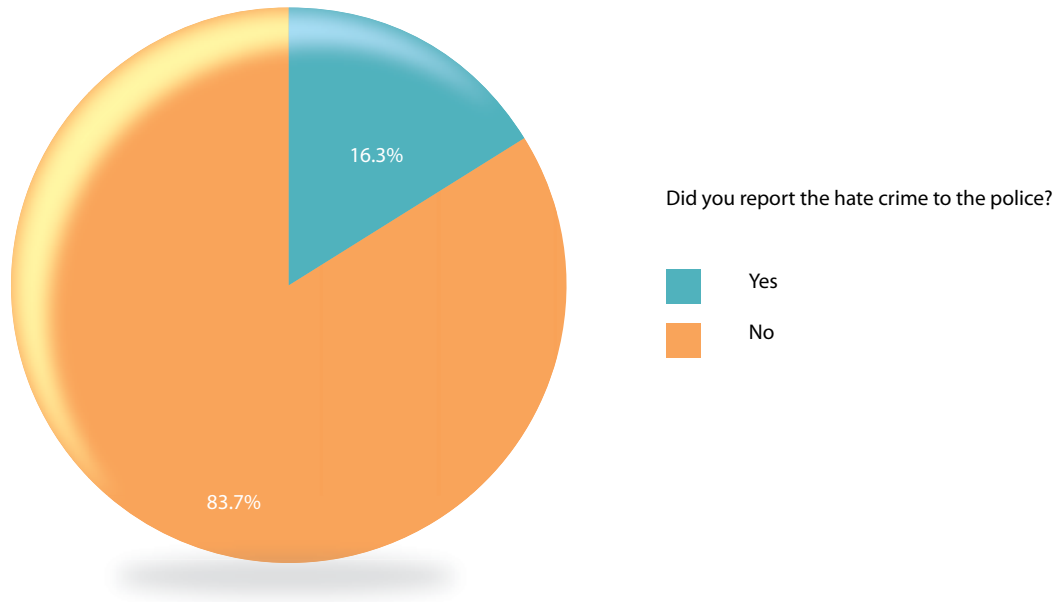


Figure 8



These figures illuminate an enormous disconnect between the actual volume of hate crimes being committed not only against undocumented Latino immigrants but against all people in America and the number documented and reported by the FBI, rendering hate crimes a severely underestimated and overlooked problem in our nation.

According to the FBI's Hate Crime Statistics, law enforcement agencies reported 7,789 offenses in 2009, a slight increase compared to the previous year. 2008 had also witnessed a 2% increase over 2007.¹⁰

However, the reports inherently undercount hate crimes because not all law enforcement agencies participate in the process. They also utilize varying definitions and classifications for what constitutes a hate crime.

Referring to hate crime figures reported by the FBI, Janet Murguia, president of the National Council of La Raza, stated: "The most frightening thing about these numbers is what goes unrecorded... We look at these numbers as the tip of the iceberg, and even then, the trend over the past five years is unmistakable."¹¹

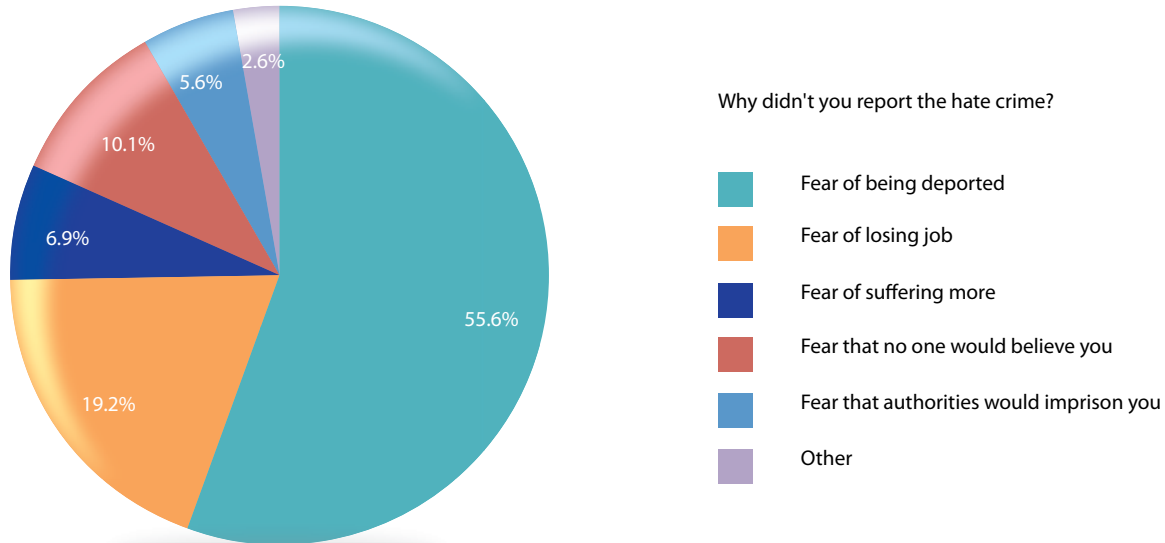
The upward trend in hate crimes affecting undocumented Latino immigrants also does not fully reveal the scale of such attacks due to the heightened tendency for members of this group to not report the incidents to law enforcement authorities.

Naturally, the primary reason for undocumented Latino immigrants to not report a hate crime to the police was fear of deportation (55.6%), followed by fear of losing their job (19.2%), and fear that no one would believe them (10.1%).

¹⁰"Hate Crime Statistics, 2009." Federal Bureau of Investigation. November 2010.

¹¹ Deborah Tedford. "FBI Report Notes Rise in Hate Crimes." National Public Radio. November 2009.

Figure 9



Clearly, this scenario breeds hate crimes and leaves a near absence of justice in their wake. It leaves millions of human beings in an extremely vulnerable position within a nation committed to preserving human rights and dignity. And it is a situation that ultimately can only be addressed through a comprehensive reform of the immigration policies and laws, allowing for this population to step out of the shadows and receive the proper level of rights and protections that should be afforded to any human being living on American soil.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Policy makers should incorporate realistic parameters that take into account the constraints – as well as the financial will and patience – of Latino undocumented immigrants into any future immigration reform legislation.

For maximum compliance with potential reforms, the recommended policy is some form of the Pathway to Citizenship. In order to acknowledge the constraints and willingness of undocumented Latino immigrants, such a policy could include a fine no greater than \$3,000, payment of back taxes owed, and a waiting period of up to 5 years. A fine closer to \$1,000 would help maximize feasibility and compliance further based on our findings.

Given the high levels of willingness to serve in the military to earn citizenship, as well as the burning desire among undocumented Latino immigrants for their children to attend college, it is recommended that any comprehensive immigration reform policy include provisions which accelerate the process or defray penalties and costs if the applicant for citizenship commits to – and completes – military service and/or a college degree.

Furthermore, if reform policy requires mastery of the English language, some accompanying infrastructure and/or support to facilitate and expedite learning English as a second language could be a key to maximizing participation and compliance. Such a measure would also go a long way towards expediting acculturation

(thus addressing the cultural fears often expressed by immigration opponents), as language adoption is a key component in this process.

Data-driven socioeconomic factors and workforce development dimensions must play a key role in crafting a proposed comprehensive immigration reform policy that can overcome economic fears and misconceptions as well lay the groundwork for a policy that maximizes return on investment for our nation.

The evidence shows that undocumented Latino immigrants are vital to certain industries and segments of the economy. It would behoove our nation to maximize the positive impact of this group on our economy and productivity. Any reform package should take this potential into account and include input from the private sector on the creation of effective mechanisms for training, workforce development and financial literacy geared towards accelerating skill attainment and productivity within this group. Educational opportunities should also be developed to tap into the expressed desires of the vast majority of undocumented Latino immigrants to better themselves, increase their income-earning capacity and productivity, and send their children to college. As this line of thinking becomes part of the immigration reform debate it helps transform the conversation from one about how undocumented Latino immigrants pose problems for the security of our nation into one about how they pose opportunities for the benefit of our economy.

Advocacy groups should coalesce to educate voters and the general public about the true intentions, aspirations, socioeconomic contributions and values of undocumented Latino immigrants.

The use of information, such as the data found in the RBB study, could help immigrant advocates debunk myths and stereotypes about Latino undocumented immigrants.

Facts such as the high level of desire for citizenship, the willingness to pay, wait and serve in the military as part of process, the yearning to adopt America's language and customs, the admiration of America, the goals for multigenerational advancement, the work ethic and demand for undocumented Latino immigrant labor could all form key message points within a campaign to educate American voters and influencers about the realities behind the myths which permeate and cloud the immigration reform debate.

Through greater understanding of this population, the general public and voters might re-evaluate their positions on the issue and encourage their elected officials in Congress to support comprehensive immigration reform.

A national campaign to change the image of undocumented Latino immigrants based on facts rather than pure emotion and anecdotal evidence could go a long way in changing attitudes and – in the end – political behavior. In the end, Congress is likely to act only when a majority of all constituents – not just Latinos – get behind comprehensive immigration reform, rendering it not a “Latino” problem, but an American priority.

Our nation's leadership should prioritize comprehensive immigration reform, if only on the grounds of the human rights violations and unsustainable threats posed to this large and completely disenfranchised population living on American soil.

Elected officials and influencers should highlight the types of findings included in this study and others about the precarious position of undocumented Latino immigrants with regards to hate crimes, injustices and discrimination to appeal to American citizens' sense of moral justice in supporting immigration reform.

Broader coalitions with non-Latino advocacy organizations espousing for human rights should be formed and pushed to the forefront of the debate to position this issue as – yet again – not only a Latino concern but a universal American concern vital to the integrity of the moral fabric of our nation.

Reform policies should provide for the reunification of families and facilitate a shared Pathway to Citizenship for undocumented Latino immigrants and their immediate family.

CONCLUSION

For the time being, the urgent need for immigration reform in America remains. It is quite likely that no action will be taken on the issue until after the 2012 elections. Regardless, the issue will surface time and again throughout the electoral season, particularly as presidential candidates address Latino voters and swing through border states. Likewise, the media will continue to cover the immigration reform debate, featuring politicians and pundits alike frequently rehashing the same old tired arguments, myths and stereotypes about undocumented Latino immigrants.

One source of hope for an eventual evolution of the national conversation on immigration is the infusion of new information. As studies like the RBB Survey of Undocumented Latino Immigrants shed new light on the lives, values and aspirations of the millions toiling in the shadows, perhaps advocates, leaders and the media can utilize such factual information to help recast the debate from one based on fear and inaccuracies to one based on hope and facts.

For better or for worse, the harsh reality is that most undocumented Latino immigrants are here to stay, with or without a major immigration reform. Shouldn't Americans get to know the neighbors in their midst before they pass judgment on their fate? We believe that if our citizens and voters invest the time in growing their knowledge about undocumented Latino immigrants the outlook will change. If we choose – as an American people – to raise the torch, we will light the way not only to a better future for the millions of immigrants whose lives are at stake, but also towards a true and noble manifestation of our own ideals and character as a nation of immigrants built on the promise of freedom and justice for all.

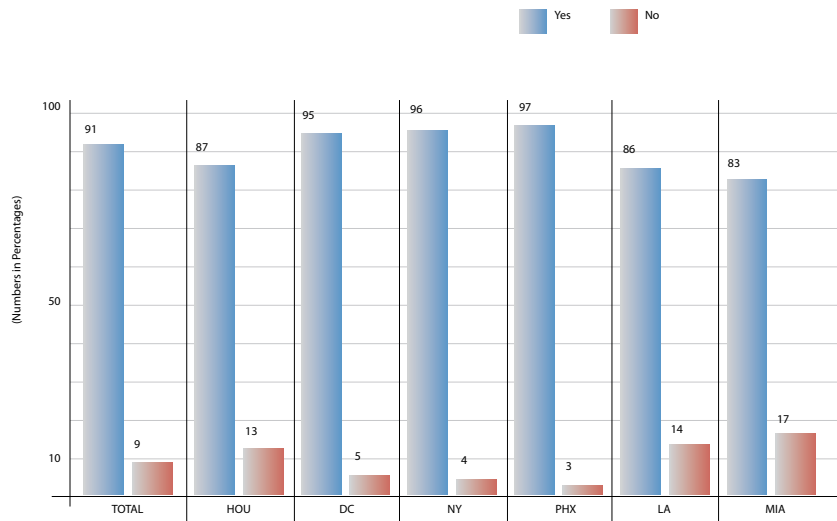
DETAILED FINDINGS (CHARTS)

Immigration Reform

Heard of Immigration Reform

Majority of respondents said "Yes" they have heard of immigration reform

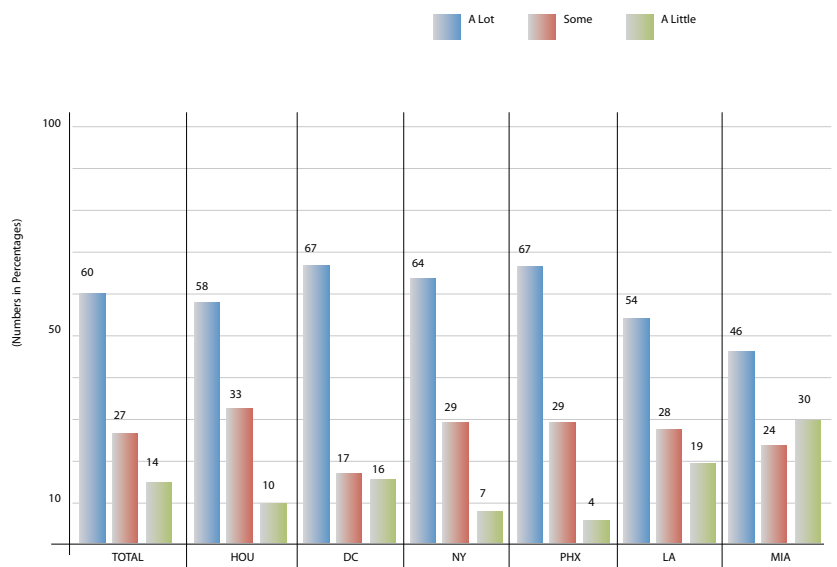
- Markets like Phoenix and New York have the highest percentage of people who said they have heard of immigration reform while Miami and Los Angeles have the lowest



Level of Awareness

A majority of respondents said they have heard a lot about immigration reform

- Phoenix and the Washington, DC area have the highest percentages of people who said they have heard a lot about immigration reform, this could be due to the political climate of the markets

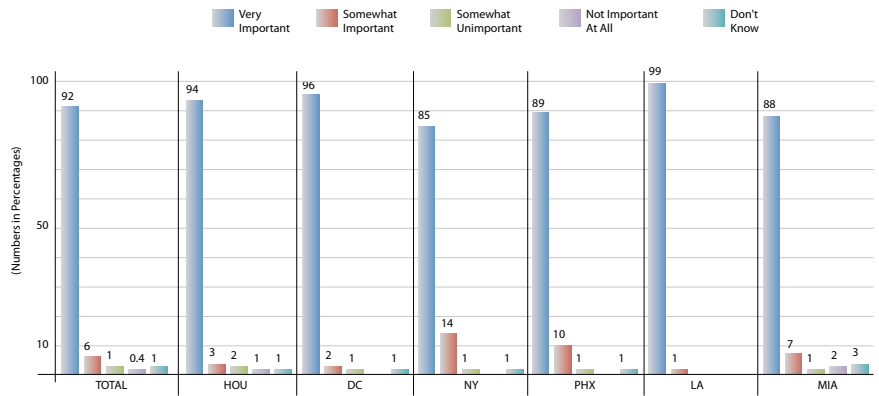


Immigration Reform

Importance

A majority of respondents said immigration reform is very important

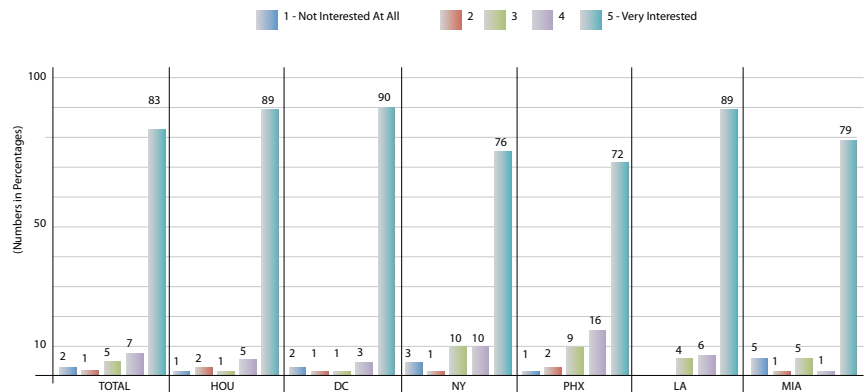
- Los Angeles, the Washington, DC area and Houston had the highest percentage of people who said that immigration reform was very important



Interest in Citizenship

A majority of respondents said they are very interested in becoming a United States citizen

- The Washington, DC area, Los Angeles and Houston had the highest percentage of people interested in becoming a United States citizen

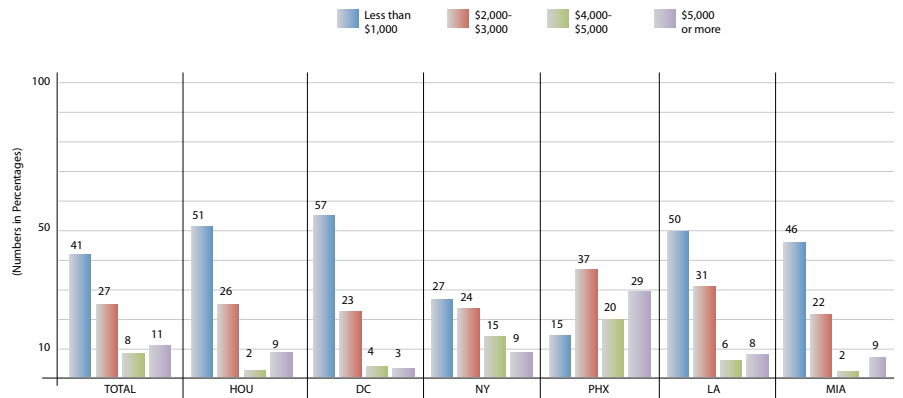


Immigration Reform

Amount Willing to Pay for Citizenship

A majority of respondents said the largest amount of money they would be willing to spend to pay for their citizenship would be under \$3,000

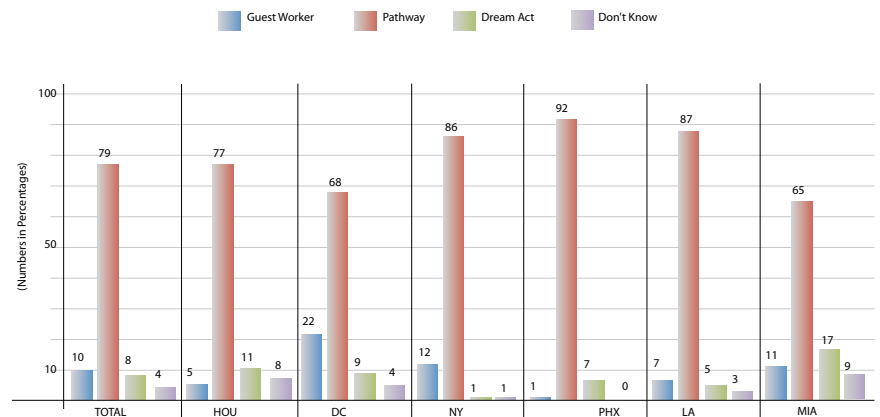
- In Phoenix 29 percent said they are willing to pay \$5,000 or more



Options For Citizenship

A majority of respondents said that if given different options for immigration reform most would select a pathway to citizenship

- In markets like the Washington, DC area and Miami other popular options for citizenship were the Guest Worker Program and the Dream Act

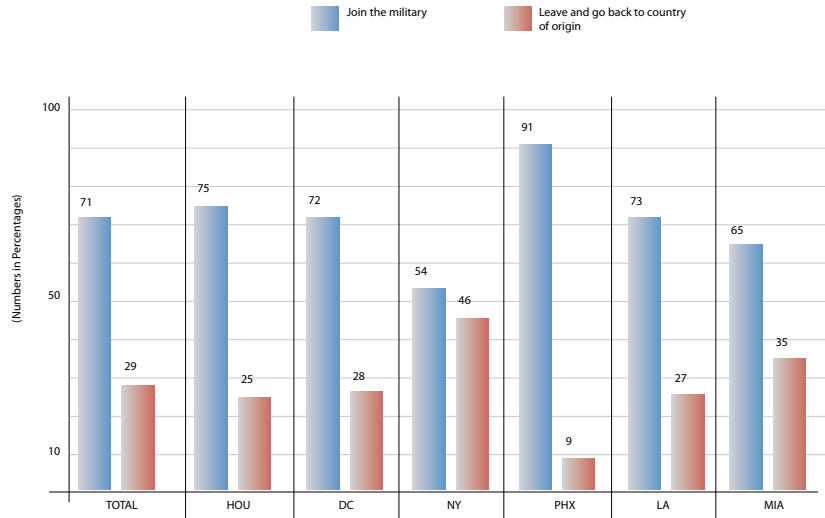


Immigration Reform

Joining the Military

If called on to serve in the military as part of immigration reform, a majority of respondents said they would join rather than go back to their country of origin

- Phoenix and Houston have the highest percentage of undocumented immigrants who said they would join the military

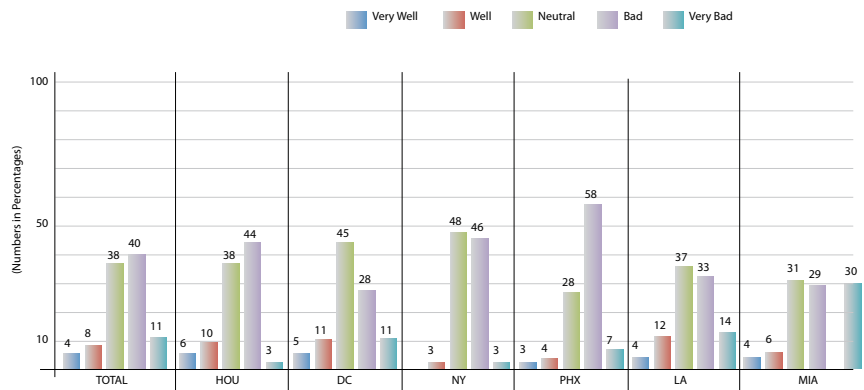


Adapting to the American Lifestyle

Learning English

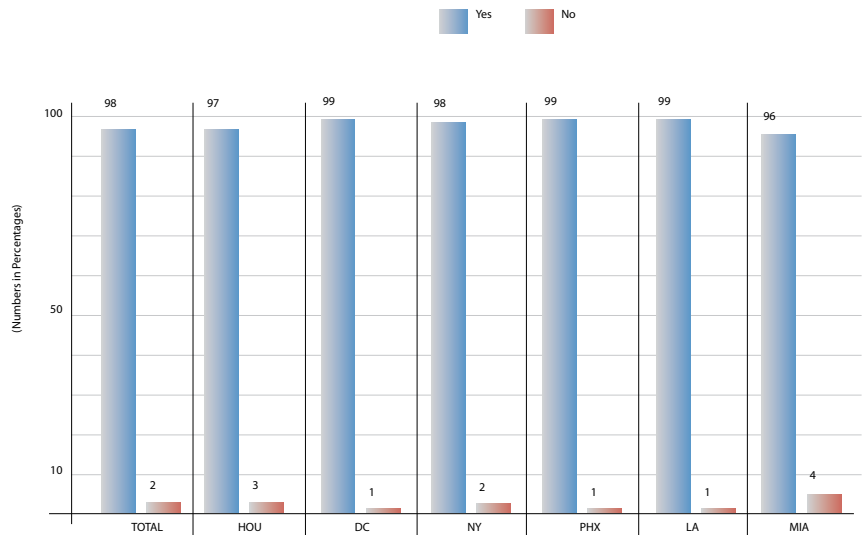
A majority of respondents said they spoke English poorly or were neither well or poor (neutral)

- Phoenix had the highest percentage of undocumented immigrants who said they spoke English poorly
- In cities like Houston, Los Angeles and the Washington, DC area respondents were more likely to say they spoke English well or very well



Want to Learn English

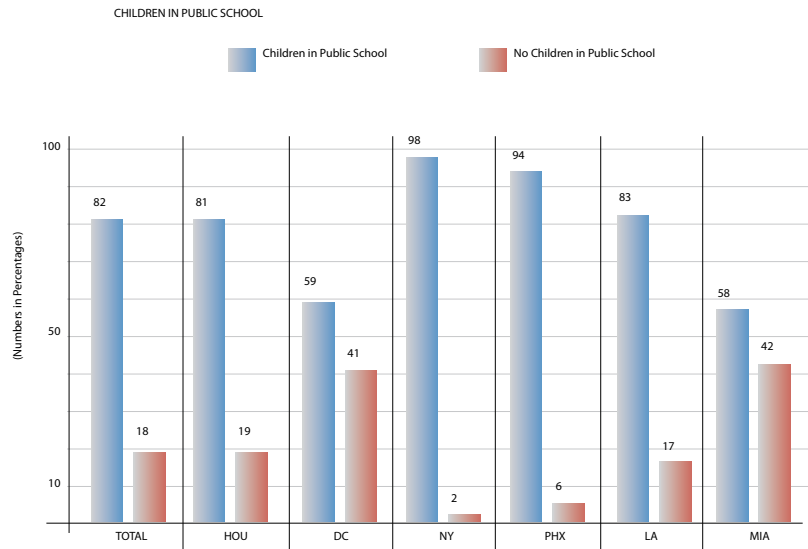
Majority of undocumented immigrants said "Yes" they want to learn English



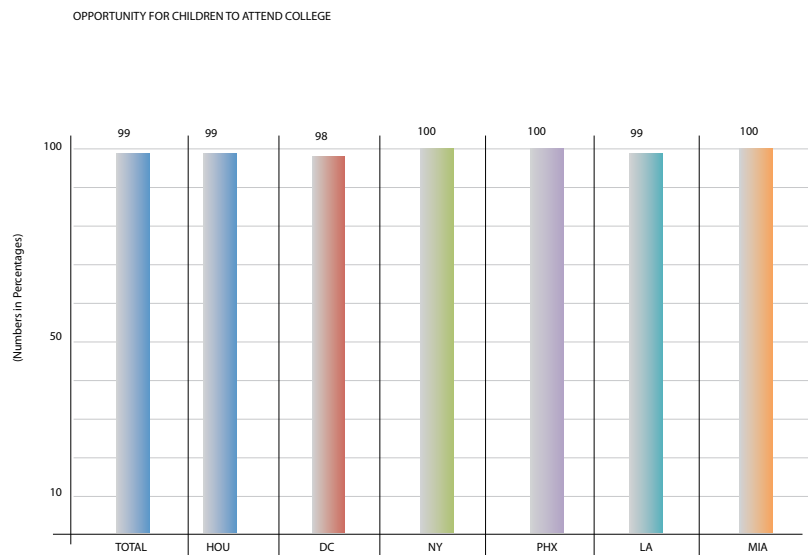
Adapting to the American Lifestyle

Children in School

Of the undocumented immigrants who have children, a majority of them said they have children in public school



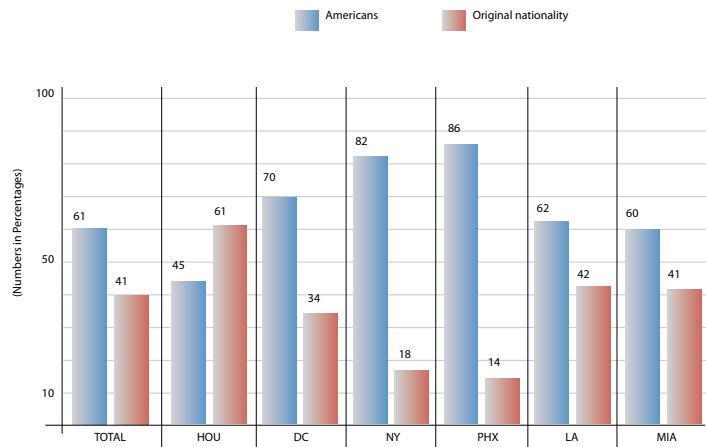
If given the opportunity, a majority said they would want their children to attend college as well



Adapting to the American Lifestyle

Children's Identity

A majority of respondents said they would like for their children to identify themselves as Americans; however in Houston most said they would like for their children to identify with their nation of origin

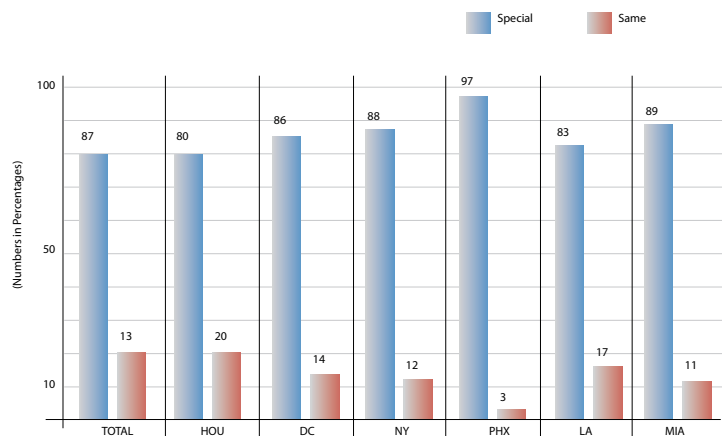


* Percentages may add up to more than 100% if respondents selected more than one answer

Reasons for Choosing the United States

A majority of respondents said they felt that the United States is special compared to other countries

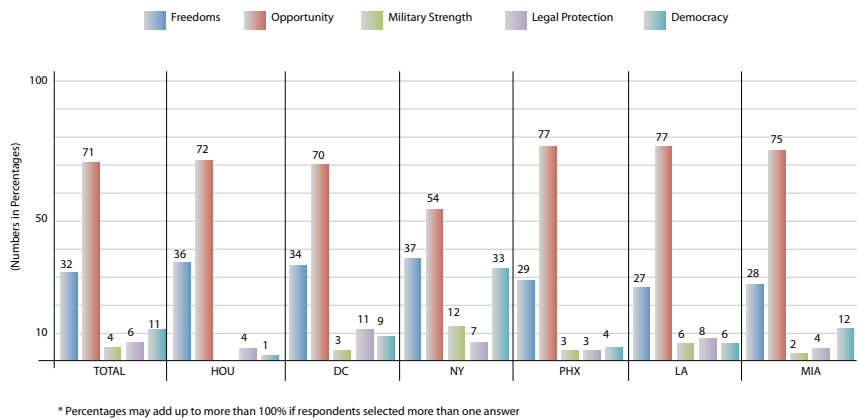
- Phoenix, Miami and New York are the cities that have the highest percentage of undocumented immigrants who feel the United States is special compared to other countries



Adapting to the American Lifestyle

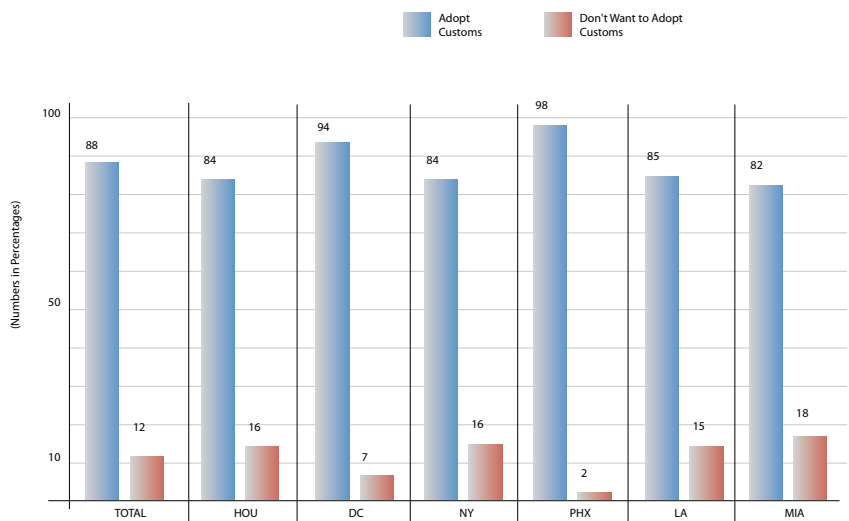
Reasons Chose the United States

Undocumented immigrants said the main reason why they came to the United States was for opportunity



Adopting Customs

A majority of respondents say they want to adopt American customs; however in Miami close to 20 percent say they don't want to adopt American customs

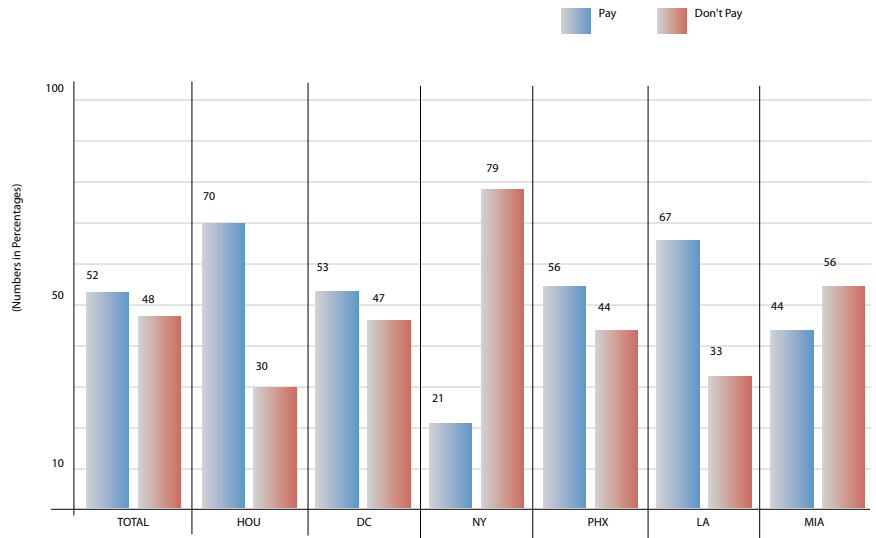


Adapting to the American Lifestyle

Income and Social Security Taxes

In Houston and Los Angeles most respondents said they pay their income or social security taxes

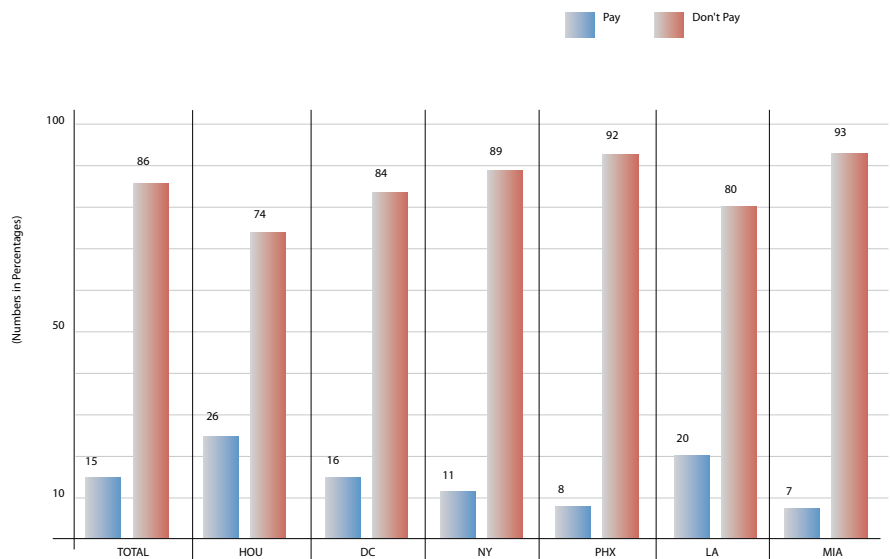
- In New York and Miami respondents were more likely to say they don't pay their taxes



Pay Medical Insurance

A majority of undocumented immigrants are not paying for medical insurance meaning they have no health coverage

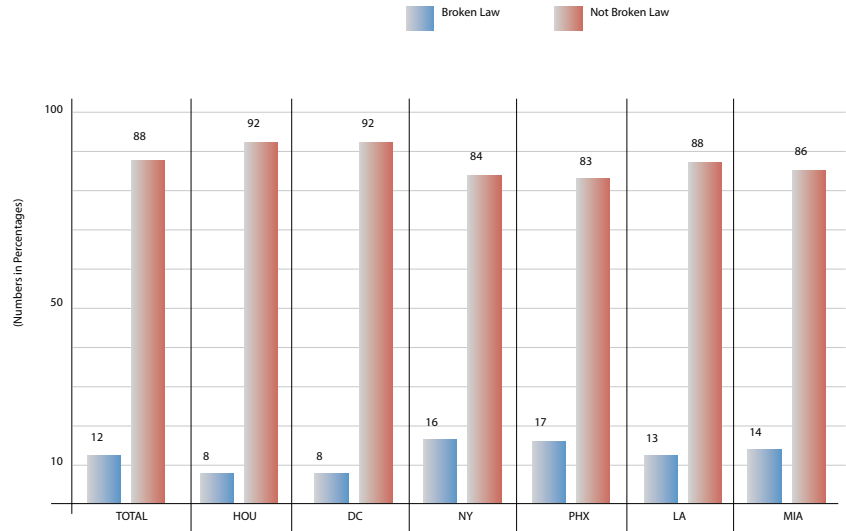
- Respondents in Miami and Phoenix are the cities in which respondents are least likely to pay for medical insurance



Experiences in the United States

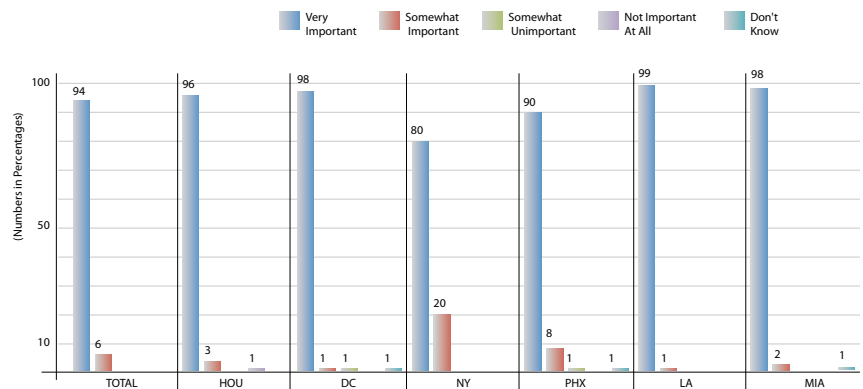
Legal

Majority of respondents said they have not broken the law in the United States after crossing the border especially in cities like Houston and the Washington, DC area



Work Ethic

Close to 100 percent of all respondents said it is very important to work and provide for their family

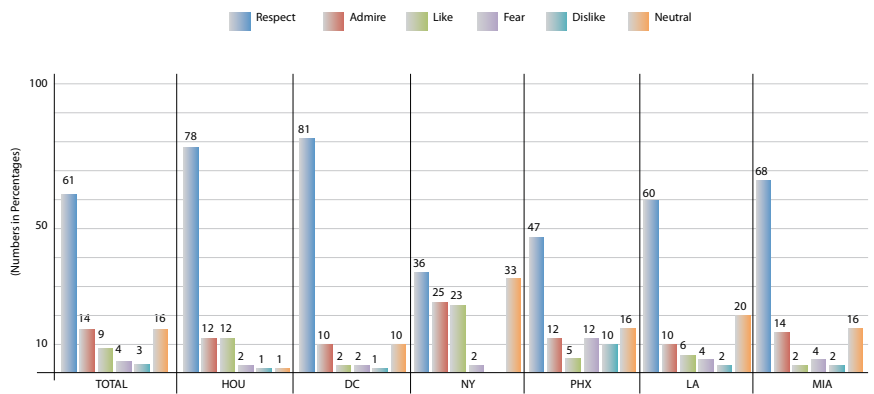


Experiences in the United States

Feelings Towards Americans

A majority of respondents have positive feelings towards Americans

- In Houston and the Washington, DC area undocumented immigrants are most likely to feel respect towards Americans

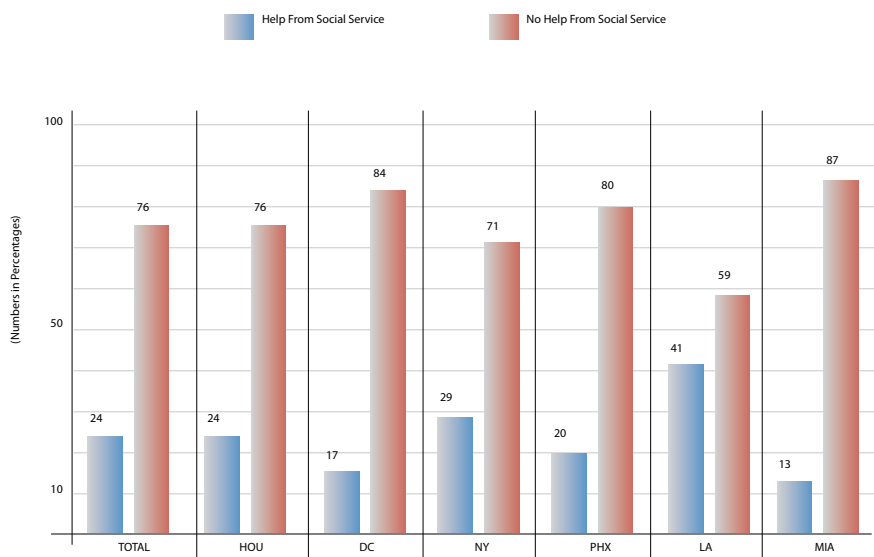


* Percentages may add up to more than 100% if respondents selected more than one answer

Participation in Social Service Programs

A majority of respondents said they do not participate in social service programs

- Miami and the Washington, DC area are places where undocumented immigrants are most likely to say they do not participate in social service programs
- While 41 percent of those in Los Angeles say they do participate in social service programs

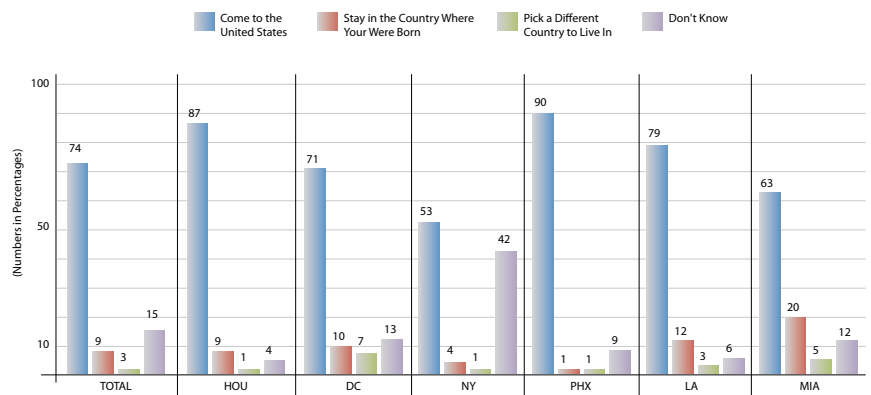


Experiences in the United States

Decision to Come to the United States

A majority of respondents said if they had to choose again on whether to come to the United States, stay in their home country or pick a different country to live in, most said they would still come

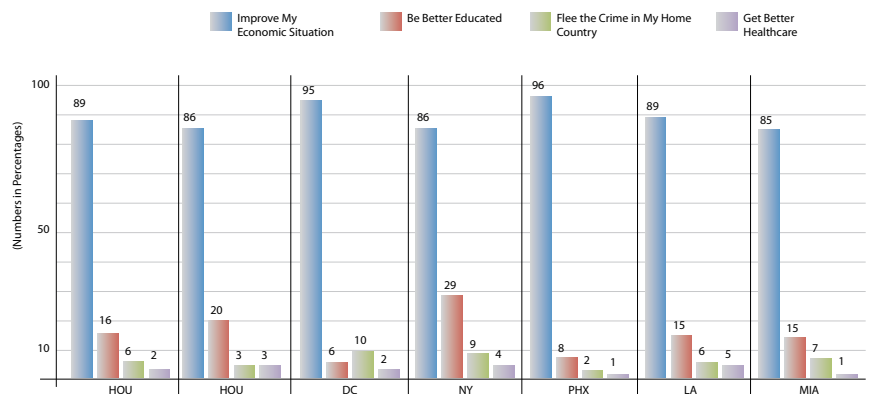
- In New York undocumented immigrants are least likely to say they would come to the United States. This may stem from the impact of the economic recession on New York City



Reasons Came to the United States

A majority of respondents said the reason they came to the United States was to improve their economic situation

- In New York and Houston a high percentage of respondents also mentioned getting a better education



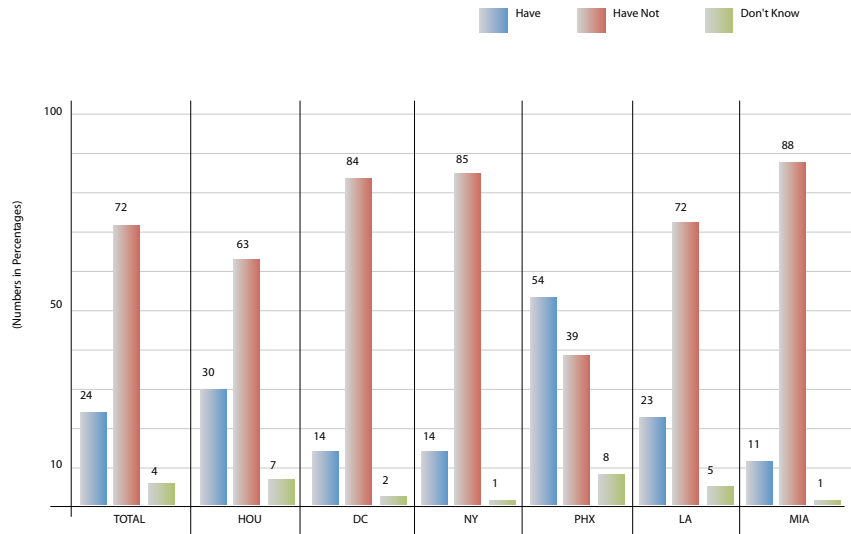
* Percentages may add up to more than 100% if respondents selected more than one answer

The 2010 Census

Past Participation

A majority of respondents said they have not participated in the United States Census before

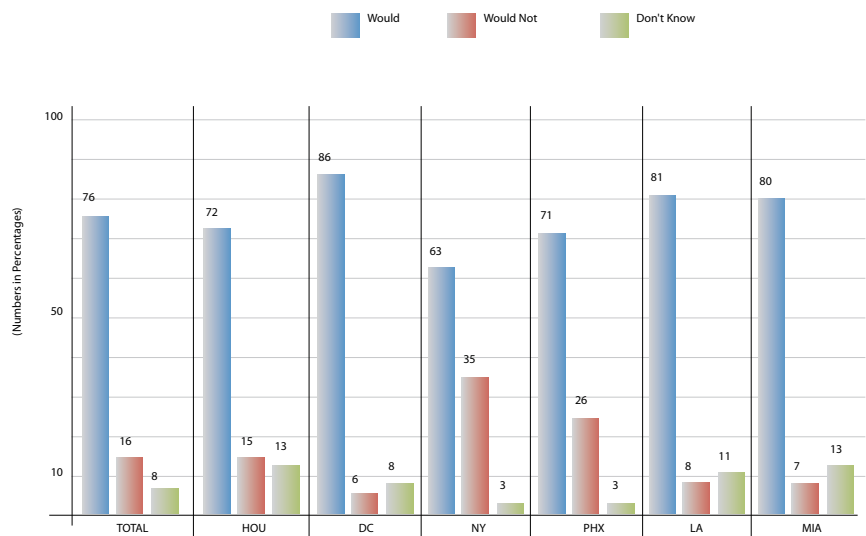
• However in Phoenix, a significant percentage of respondents said they have participated



Future Participation

A majority of respondents said they would participate in the 2010 Census

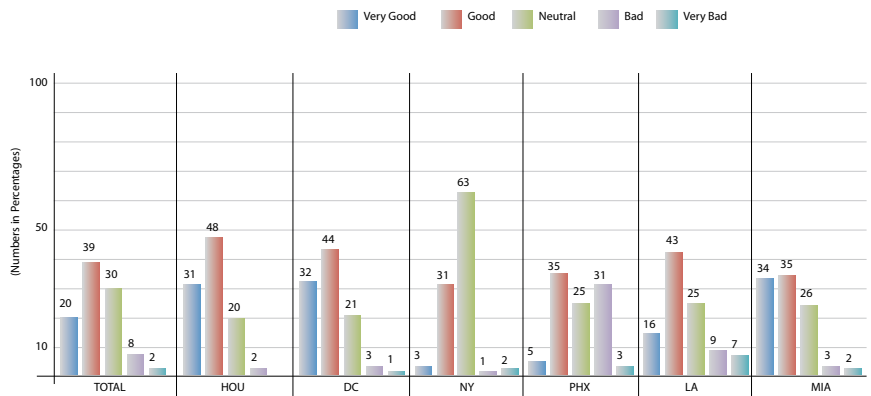
• The percentage of undocumented immigrants who said they would participate were especially high in the Washington, DC area and in Los Angeles



Racism/Discrimination

Treatment by Americans

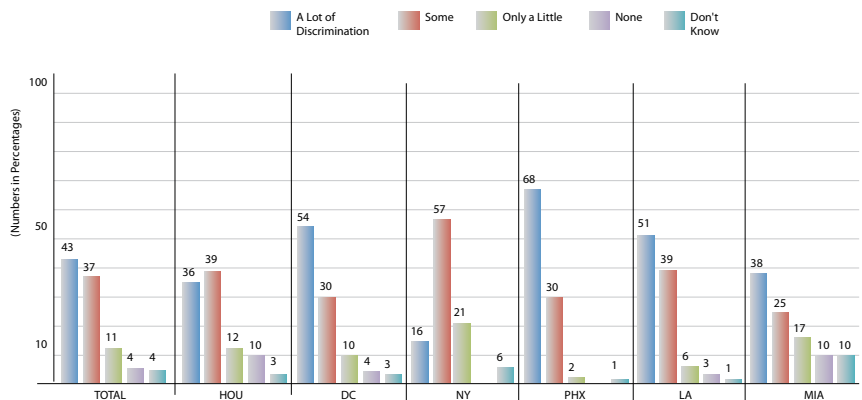
A majority of undocumented immigrants say they are treated well or very well by Americans; however in Phoenix 31 percent say they are treated poorly



Level of Discrimination

In Phoenix and the Washington, DC area undocumented immigrants said there is a lot of discrimination

- In Miami and New York, major entryways for all types of ethnic groups, respondents said they described there being only some for a little discrimination

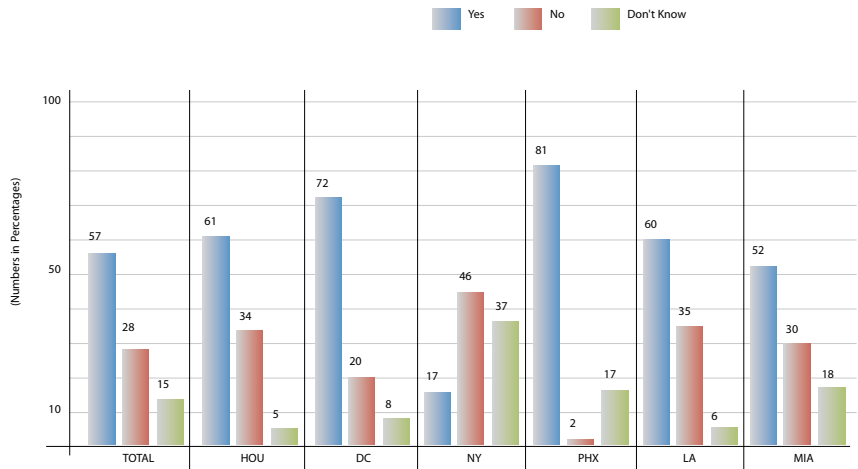


Racism/Discrimination

Barrier to Progress

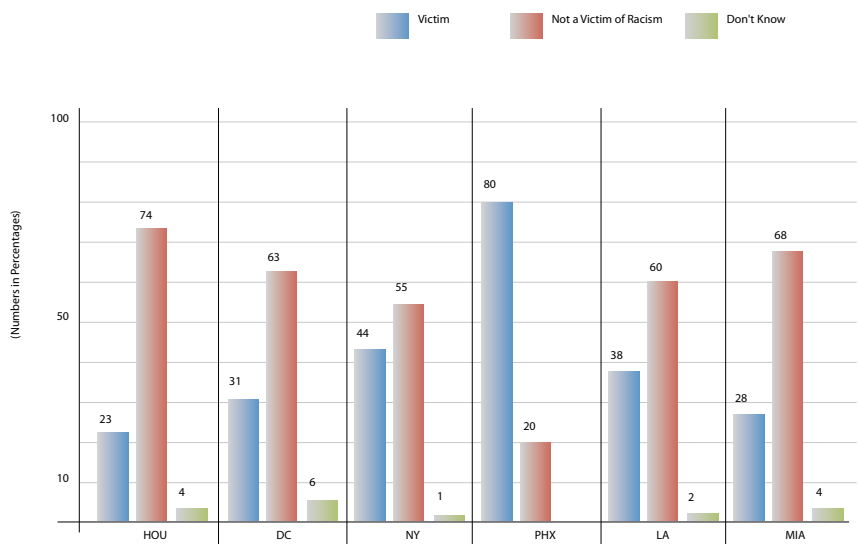
A majority of respondents said they felt that racism has prevented them from progressing in this country

- Phoenix and the Washington, DC area had the highest percentages of people who said they felt racism had prevented them from moving forward



Victims of Racism

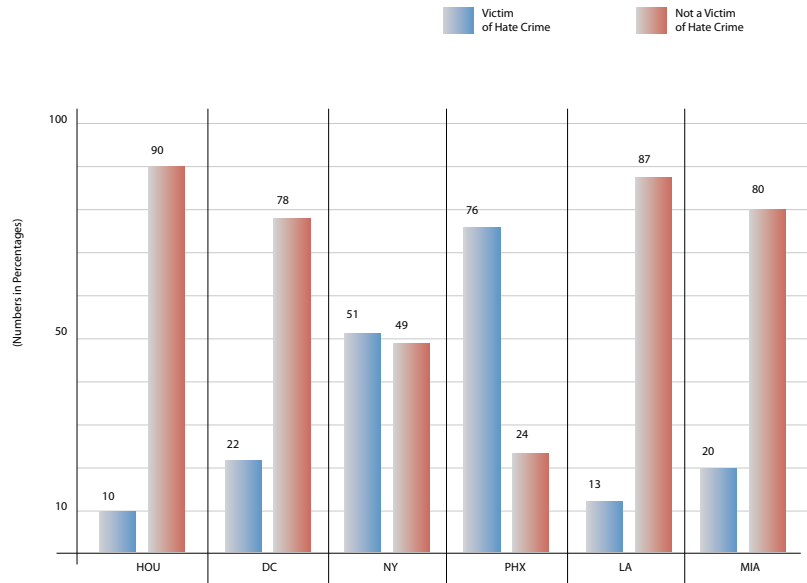
Majority of respondents said they have not been a victim of racism; however in Phoenix 80 percent of respondents said have been a victim of racism



Racism/Discrimination

Victims of Hate Crime

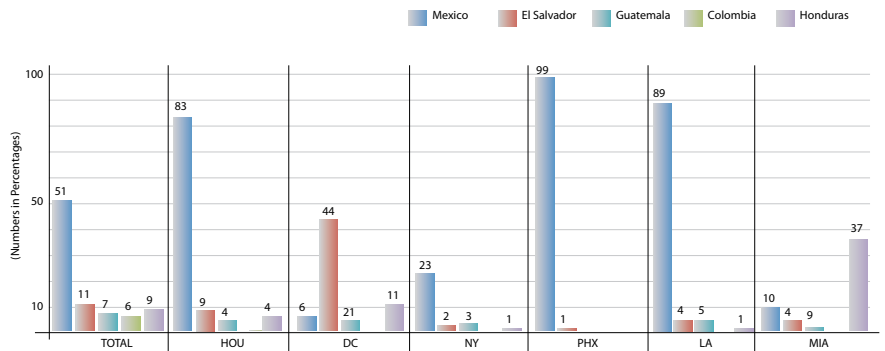
A majority of respondents said they have not been a victim of a hate crime and that someone they know has not been a victim of a hate crime; however in Phoenix and New York more than half say they or someone they know has been a victim of a hate crime



Demographics of Respondents

Country of Origin by City

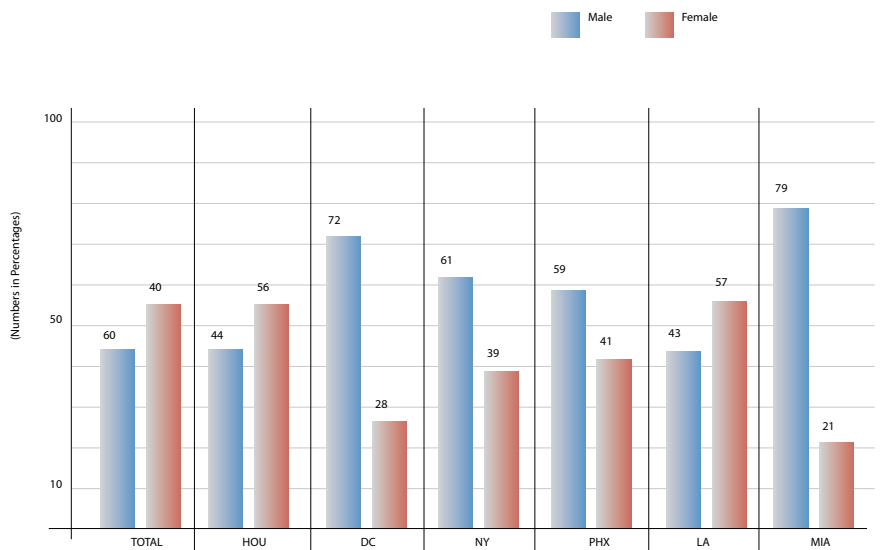
- Cities like Houston, Phoenix and Los Angeles have a high concentration of Mexicans
- The Washington, DC area, New York, and Miami are more diverse and have a mix of Salvadorians, Dominicans and Hondurans



* For Miami 39.2% were other

Male vs. Female

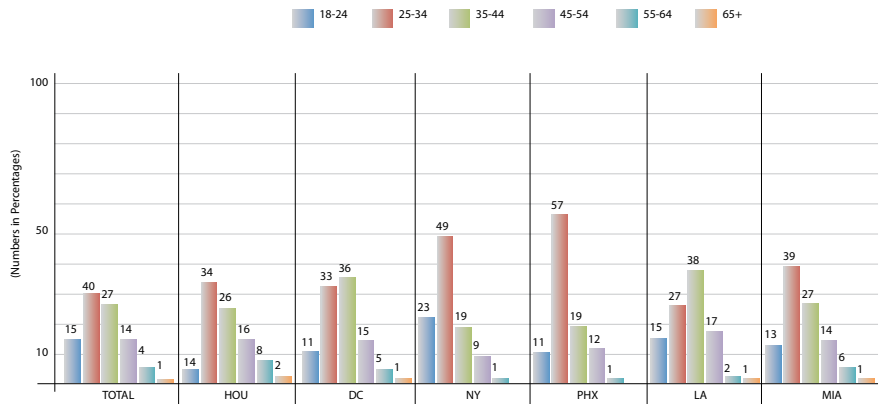
In a majority of the cities there is a high concentration of male undocumented immigrants



Demographics of Respondents

Age Groups

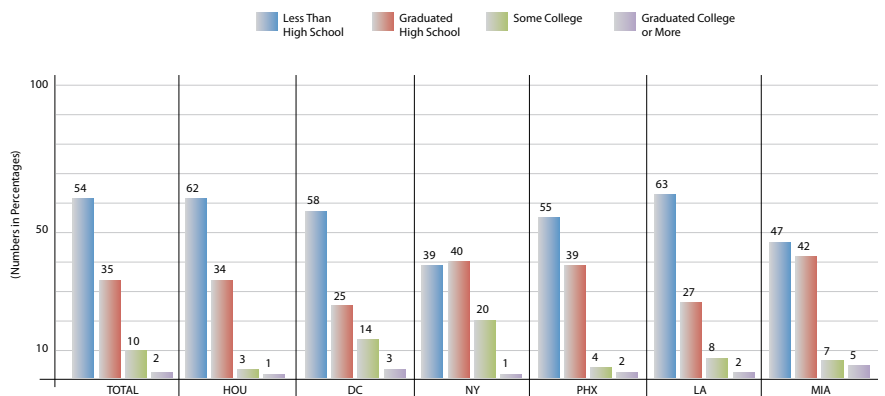
A majority of respondents fell between the ages of 25 to 44



Highest Level of Education Completed

A majority of respondents had less than a high school education

- Los Angeles, Houston and the Washington, DC area had the highest percentage of people who had less than a high school degree

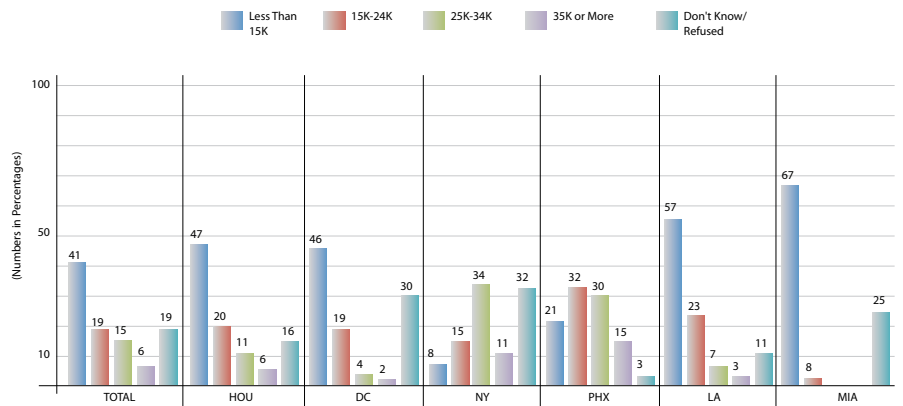


Demographics of Respondents

Household Income

A majority of respondents have a household income of less than \$15,000

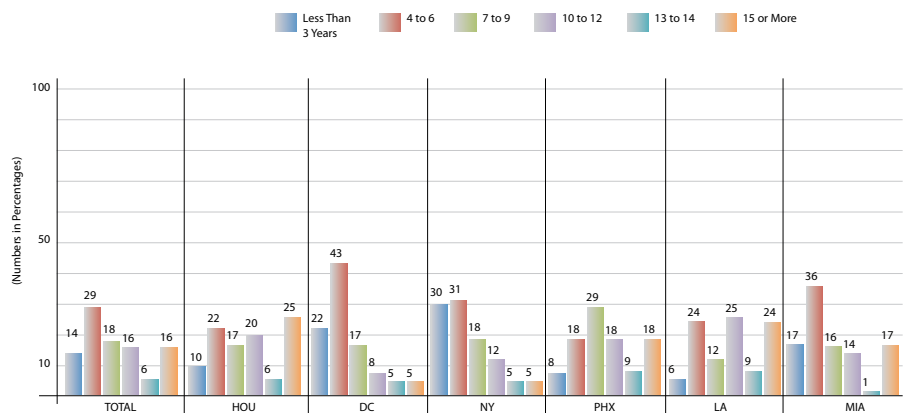
- In New York and Phoenix, household income was higher and this could be due to higher costs of living



Years Lived in the U.S.

Most respondents have been in the U.S. between 4 to 6 years

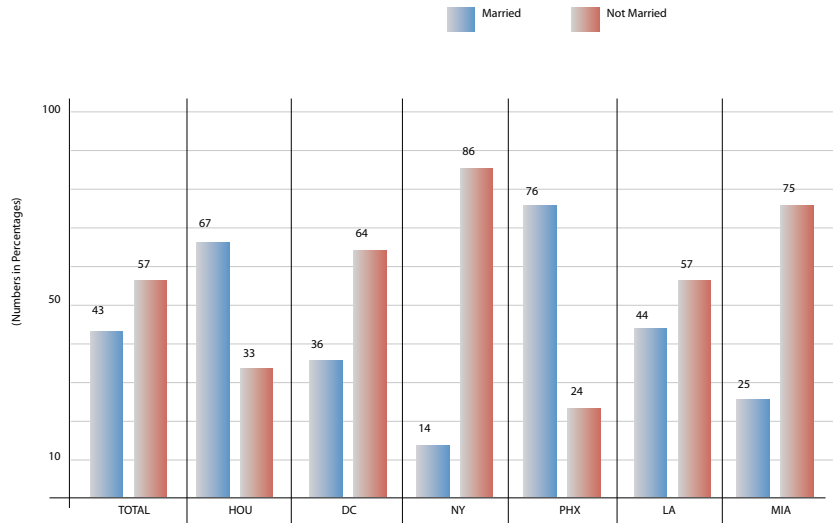
- In markets like Houston and Los Angeles, respondents have been in the United States longer



Demographics of Respondents

Marital Status

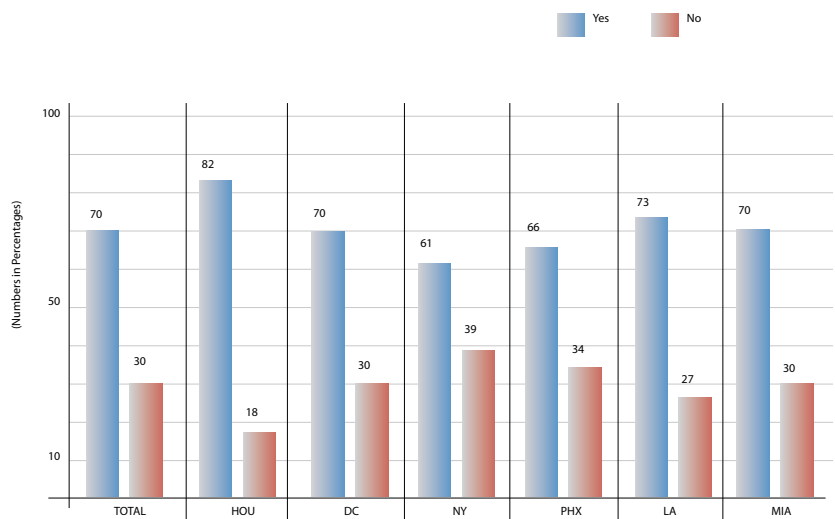
- A majority of undocumented immigrants in the Washington, DC area, New York, Los Angeles and Miami are married



Have Children

Most respondents said they have children

- Houston was the city that had the highest percentage of undocumented immigrants with children



Demographics of Respondents

Hours Worked in a Week

A majority of respondents work 30 or more hours in a week:

- New York has the highest concentration of respondents working 30 or more hours in a week
- In Miami and in the Washington, DC area, at least one in four undocumented immigrants work less than ten hours a week

