



# The Facts on Immigration Today

Ann Garcia

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Below are the latest and most essential facts about immigrants and immigration reform in our nation today. The facts are broken down into the following sections:

- 1 Today's immigrant population
- 2 Demographics and political power of Latinos and Asian Americans
- 3 Immigrants and the economy
- 4 Federal immigration policy
- 5 Public opinion polling on immigration

## Foreign-born population

- **The immigrant population in the United States grew considerably over the past 50 years.** In 2011 there were 40.4 million foreign-born people residing in the United States, whereas the immigrant population in 1960 was 9.7 million.<sup>1</sup> Broken down by immigration status, the foreign-born population in 2011 was composed of 15.5 million naturalized U.S. citizens,<sup>2</sup> 13.1 million legal permanent residents,<sup>3</sup> and 11.1 million unauthorized migrants.<sup>4\*</sup>
- **The foreign-born share of the U.S. population has more than doubled since the 1960s but remains below historic highs.** The immigrant population was 5.4 percent of the total U.S. population in 1960, when 1 in 20 residents were foreign-born. In 2011 immigrants made up 13 percent of the total U.S. population, meaning that they were one in every eight U.S. residents. Still, today's share of the immigrant population as a percentage of the total U.S. population remains below its peak in 1890, when 14.8 percent of the U.S. population had immigrated to the country.<sup>5</sup>
- **Two in three immigrants living in the United States arrived before 2000.** Of the foreign-born population living in the United States in 2011, 38 percent arrived before 1990 and 27 percent arrived between 1990 and 1999.<sup>6</sup>
- **The past decade saw a large increase in foreign-born migrants.** Between 2000 and 2011 there was a 30 percent increase in the foreign-born population. The immigrant population grew from 31.1 million to 40.04 million.<sup>7</sup>
- **The countries of origin of today's immigrants are more diverse than they were 50 years ago.** In 1960 a full 75 percent of the foreign-born population residing in the United States came from Europe, while today only 12 percent came from Europe. In 2010 11.7 million foreign-born residents—29 percent of the foreign-born population—came from Mexico. About 2.2 million immigrants residing in the United States came from China; 1.8 million came from each India and the Philippines; 1.2 million immigrated from each Vietnam and El Salvador; and 1.1 million arrived from each Cuba and Korea.<sup>8</sup>
- **Immigrants today are putting down roots across the United States, in contrast to trends we saw 50 years ago.** In the 1960s two-thirds of U.S. states had populations with less than 5 percent foreign-born individuals, but the opposite is true today. In 2010 two-thirds of states had immigrant populations above 5 percent. In 2010, 67 percent of the

\* Estimates do not add up to the total because they are taken from various sources.

foreign born lived in the West and the South—a dramatic shift since the 1960s, when 70 percent of the immigrant population lived in the Northeast and Midwest.<sup>9</sup>

- **Females outnumber males in the foreign-born population today.** In 2011, 51.1 percent of the U.S. immigrant population was female.<sup>10</sup> Until the 1960s immigrant men outnumbered immigrant women, but by the 1970s the number of female immigrants caught up and even surpassed male immigrants. In 2011 there were 96 immigrant men arriving in America for every 100 immigrant women.<sup>11</sup>
- **There are almost 1 million gay<sup>12</sup> and transgender adult immigrants in the United States today.** The estimated 904,000 gay and transgender adult immigrants are more likely to be young and male compared to the overall immigrant population.<sup>13</sup>
- **Immigrants have a diverse set of educational backgrounds.** About 68 percent of the foreign-born population have a high school diploma, GED, or higher, compared to 89 percent of the native-born population. Approximately 11 percent of immigrants have a master's degree, professional degree, or doctorate, compared to 10.2 percent of the native-born population.<sup>14</sup>
- **More than half of the foreign born are homeowners.** Around 52 percent of immigrants own their own homes, compared to 67 percent of native-born individuals. Among immigrants, 66 percent of naturalized citizens own their homes.<sup>15</sup>
- **The 20 million U.S.-born children of immigrants are significantly better off financially than their immigrant parents.** The median annual household income of second-generation adult Americans is \$58,100, just \$100 shy of the national average. This is significantly higher than their parents' median annual household income of \$45,800.<sup>16</sup>
- **U.S.-born children of immigrants are more likely to go to college, less likely to be living in poverty, and equally likely to be homeowners as the average American.** About 36 percent of U.S.-born children of immigrants are college graduates—5 percent above the national average. Around 64 percent of them are homeowners—just 1 percent under the national average. And 11 percent of U.S.-born children of immigrants are in poverty—well below the national average of 13 percent.<sup>17</sup>

### Undocumented immigrant population

- **The growth of the undocumented immigrant population has slowed in recent years.** In 2000 there were an estimated 8.4 million undocumented persons residing in the United States. This population peaked in 2007 at 12 million, but decreased to 11.1 million by 2009<sup>18</sup> and remains stable at 11.1 million in 2011.<sup>19</sup>

- **People from Mexico account for a large part of the undocumented population living in the United States.** 6.8 million people, or 59 percent of the undocumented population, are from Mexico. Another 6 percent of the undocumented population is from El Salvador; 5 percent is from Guatemala; 3 percent is from Honduras; and 2 percent is from China and the Philippines.<sup>20</sup>
- **The majority of undocumented immigrants are well-settled in the United States.** About 63 percent of undocumented immigrants had been living in the United States for 10 years or longer in 2010.<sup>21</sup>
- **Undocumented immigrants are often part of the same family as documented immigrants.** 16.6 million people were in “mixed status” families—those with at least one undocumented immigrant in 2010. Nine million of these families have at least one U.S.-born child.<sup>22</sup>
- **Undocumented immigrants are more likely than native-born Americans to be rearing children.** About 46 percent of undocumented immigrants, or about 4.7 million people, were part of families with children in 2008. By comparison, the figure for U.S. native adults and documented immigrants who live in families with children is 29 percent and 38 percent, respectively.<sup>23</sup>
- **Millions of U.S.-citizen children have undocumented parents.** 4.5 million U.S.-born children had at least one unauthorized immigrant parent in 2010, an increase from 2.1 million in 2000.<sup>24</sup>
- **There are more than a quarter of a million gay and transgender undocumented adult immigrants in the United States today.** The estimated 267,000 gay and transgender undocumented adult immigrants are more likely to be male and younger relative to all undocumented immigrants.<sup>25</sup> Around 71 percent of undocumented gay and transgender adults are Hispanic, and 15 percent are Asian American or Pacific Islander.<sup>26</sup>
- **Nearly half of settled undocumented immigrants are homeowners.** Among undocumented immigrants who had lived in the United States for 10 years or longer, 45 percent were homeowners in 2008. Among undocumented immigrants who have lived here for less than 10 years, 27 percent were homeowners in 2008.<sup>27</sup>
- **Undocumented immigrants comprise a disproportionately large percent of the labor force relative to their numbers.** About 5.2 percent of the U.S. labor force consisted of undocumented immigrants in 2010, even though they comprised only 3.7 percent of the U.S. population.<sup>28</sup>
- **More than half of the undocumented immigrant population has a high school degree or higher.** 52 percent of undocumented immigrants had a high school diploma or higher in 2008, and 15 percent have a bachelor’s degree or higher.<sup>29</sup>

## Growing in numbers

- **Latinos and Asian Americans comprise significant and growing segments of the U.S. population.** Latinos comprised 16.7 percent of the total U.S. population in 2012, while Asian Americans made up 4.8 percent of the population. Both populations have grown significantly since 2000—Latinos were 12.5 percent of the U.S. population in 2000, and Asian Americans were 3.6 percent.<sup>30</sup>
- **Hispanics accounted for more than half of the U.S. population growth in the past decade.** Hispanics accounted for 55.5 percent of U.S. population growth from 2000 to 2010, while Asian Americans accounted for 16 percent of the population growth.<sup>31</sup>
- **By 2043 there will be no clear racial or ethnic majority in the United States.** By 2060 Latinos are expected to make up 31 percent of the U.S. population, and the Asian American population will grow to 8.2 percent of the total U.S. population.<sup>32</sup>

## A political force to be reckoned with

- **President Barack Obama was re-elected in 2012 with the support of 71 percent of Latino voters and 73 percent of Asian American voters.** These groups are a key part of the emerging multiethnic, multiracial, and cross-class progressive coalition, which also includes African Americans, women, young people, professionals, and blue-collar whites. These groups generally support a strong government that will expand opportunities and personal freedom for all Americans.<sup>33</sup>
- **Hispanics increased their share of the voting population in 2012.** About 10 percent of voters in 2012 were Latino—up 1 percentage point since 2008.<sup>34</sup>
- **Asian Americans are the fastest-growing electorate in the United States.** They are a diverse and multiethnic group, comprising 3 percent of voters in 2012—up 1 percentage point from 2008.<sup>35</sup> The number of Asian American voters increased by 128 percent from 1996 to 2008.<sup>36</sup>
- **Over the next four years, the number of eligible Latino voters nationwide is projected to increase by more than 4 million people—an increase of about 17 percent.** By 2016 we can expect the state of Arizona, for example, to have 178,800 new Latino voters, making up 71.4 percent of the net increase in all eligible voters in the state. In Georgia there will be an estimated 189,900 new Latino voters by 2016, representing 51.7 percent of the net increase in all eligible voters in the state.<sup>37</sup>

- **8.5 million legal permanent residents were eligible for naturalization in 2011.** 2.4 million legal permanent residents in California were eligible to become naturalized citizens and voters in 2011, while New York had 1 million eligible residents, and Texas had 920,000. Even in states not typically thought of as gateways for immigrants, these numbers are high. In Georgia, for example, 130,000 legal permanent residents were eligible for naturalization in 2011.<sup>38</sup>
- **Around 90 percent of Latinos under the age of 18 are U.S. citizens and will be eligible to vote once they turn 18.**<sup>39</sup> About 50,000 Latino citizens turn 18 every month.<sup>40</sup> That's compared to the approximately 225,000 non-Hispanic whites that turn 18 every month and 63,000 non-Hispanic blacks that turn 18 every month.
- **Immigrant women are the drivers of naturalization in their families.** Approximately 84 percent of the women surveyed in a February 2011 poll by New America Media wanted to become citizens. Around 91 percent of women immigrants from Vietnam, and 90 percent from Latin American and Arab nations indicated a desire to naturalize. And 58 percent of women immigrants surveyed said they felt the strongest in their household about becoming citizens.<sup>41</sup>

## The economic imperative for immigration reform

- **Permitting undocumented immigrants to earn citizenship would significantly expand economic growth.** If the currently undocumented population were granted legal status in 2013 and citizenship five years later, the 10-year cumulative increase in U.S. GDP would be \$1.1 trillion.<sup>42</sup>
- **Granting legal status and citizenship to undocumented immigrants would create jobs and increase tax revenues.** If undocumented immigrants acquired legal status in 2013 and citizenship five years later, they would create an average of 159,000 jobs per year, and they would pay an additional \$144 billion in federal, state, and local taxes over a 10-year period.<sup>43</sup>
- **Legalization and naturalization of undocumented immigrants would bolster wages.** The annual income of the unauthorized would be 15.1 percent higher within five years if they were granted legal status starting in 2013. If undocumented immigrants earned their citizenship five years after receiving legal status, their wages would be an additional 10 percent higher. This means that by 2022 the wages of today's undocumented population could be 25.1 percent higher than they are today.<sup>44</sup>
- **Immigration reform that includes legalizing the undocumented population would yield huge gains in gross domestic product.** Immigration reform that would legalize the approximately 11 million individuals who currently lack papers in the United States would add a cumulative \$1.5 trillion to U.S. gross domestic product, or GDP, over 10 years.<sup>45</sup>
- **Undocumented immigrants pay billions in taxes annually.** Households headed by unauthorized immigrants paid \$11.2 billion in state and local taxes in 2010.<sup>46</sup> Immigrants—even legal immigrants—are barred from most social services, meaning that they pay to support benefits they cannot even receive.<sup>47</sup>
- **Contrary to common fears, immigrants are not in direct competition with native-born American workers in part because they tend to have different skill sets.** The research shows that American workers are not harmed by—and may even benefit—from immigration because immigrants tend to be complementary workers, helping Americans be more productive.<sup>48</sup>
- **Passage of the DREAM Act would inject billions of dollars into the American economy while creating more than a million jobs.** The DREAM Act would provide a pathway to legal status for eligible young people who complete high school and some college or military service. Approximately \$329 billion and 1.4 million jobs would be

added to the American economy over the next two decades if the DREAM Act became law. Passing the DREAM Act would also increase federal revenue by \$10 billion.<sup>49</sup>

- **The economic gains that stem from legalizing of the undocumented population would also be reflected at the state level.** Gains in selected states are as follows:
  - **Arizona:** Total wages would increase by \$1.8 billion if the 400,000 undocumented immigrants living in Arizona were legalized. The state would also gain \$540 million in tax revenue, and 39,000 jobs would be created.<sup>50</sup>
  - **Florida:** Total wages would increase by \$3.8 billion if the 825,000 undocumented immigrants living in Florida were legalized. The state would also gain \$1.13 billion in tax revenue, and 97,000 jobs would be created.<sup>51</sup>
  - **Texas:** Total wages would increase by \$9.7 billion if the 1,650,000 undocumented immigrants living in Texas were legalized. The state would also gain \$4.1 billion in tax revenue, and 193,000 jobs would be created.<sup>52</sup>

### The costs of deportation

- **A “self-deportation” regime would cost our economy trillions of dollars.** If all undocumented immigrants in the country were deported or were to “self-deport”—meaning they choose to leave the country because life is too difficult—the United States cumulative gross domestic product would suffer a hit of \$2.6 trillion over 10 years.<sup>53</sup>
- **Mass deportation of the undocumented immigrant population would cost taxpayers hundreds of billions of dollars.** Deporting the entire undocumented population would cost \$285 billion over a five-year period, including continued border and interior enforcement efforts.<sup>54</sup> For that price, we could hire more than 1 million new public high school teachers, and pay their salaries for five years.<sup>55</sup>
- **It costs taxpayers more than \$20,000 to carry out the deportation of a single individual.** Apprehending, detaining, processing, and transporting one individual in the deportation process cost \$23,482 in fiscal year 2008.<sup>56</sup>



- **The cost of mass deportation policy would also be reflected in economic losses at the state level.** Costs to selected states are as follows:

- **Arizona:** Deporting the 400,000 undocumented immigrants living in Arizona would cost the state \$13.3 billion in lost gross state product. The state coffers would take a hit of \$2.4 billion in tax revenue, and there would be a \$6.25 billion decrease in total wages.<sup>57</sup>
- **Florida:** Deporting the 825,000 undocumented immigrants living in Florida would cost the state \$31.22 billion in lost gross state product. The state coffers would take a hit of \$5.67 billion in tax revenue, and there would be a \$15.45 billion decrease in total wages.<sup>58</sup>
- **Texas:** Deporting the 1,650,000 undocumented immigrants living in Texas would cost the state \$77.7 billion in lost gross state product. The state coffers would take a hit of \$14.5 billion in tax revenue, and there would be a \$33.2 billion decrease in total wages.<sup>59</sup>

## Administrative relief granted

- **Roughly half of the immediately eligible population for the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals directive has applied since it went into effect in August 2012.**

In June 2012 the Obama administration announced that it would use its inherent executive authority to explicitly protect a group of “DREAM Act eligible” undocumented youth from deportation. The program allows this population to apply for temporary protection from deportation and for work authorization.<sup>60</sup>

- **In December 2012 Immigration and Customs Enforcement announced it would revise its detainer policy.** The agency will no longer issue a “detainer” request to local police directing them to hold someone identified as potentially undocumented immigrant unless that person has been charged with a serious crime or convicted of multiple misdemeanors. The announcement aligns with the agency’s evolving effort to apply so-called prosecutorial discretion to immigration cases: prioritizing criminals for detention and deportation rather than long-settled and hardworking immigrants.<sup>61</sup>

- **U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services has improved its family unity policy.** Effective in March 2013, the U.S. government reduced the amount of time that spouses and minor children of U.S. citizens are separated from their families when applying for legal permanent resident status. Under current law, individuals who are both eligible to get an immigrant visa or “green card” because their spouse or parent is a U.S. citizen, but who also resided in the United States illegally for more than six months must first leave the country to apply for a “hardship waiver” before receiving their green card.<sup>62</sup> If the applicant has been in the United States illegally for six months or more than a year, they are barred from re-entering the United States for 3 years or 10 years, respectively. The new rule allows qualified applicants to apply for the hardship waiver while still in the United States. In the application, the applicant must establish that if the family were to be separated, extreme hardship would be suffered by the applicant’s spouse or parent with citizenship or legal permanent resident status.

## Our borders are more secure than ever before

- **Five years after the border-security benchmarks were written into the 2007 Comprehensive Immigration Reform Act, all targets have been hit or surpassed.**

- **Border agents:** 21,370 Border Patrol agents patrol the borders—1,370 higher than the goal set in 2007—and 1,200 National Guard troops are on the ground.<sup>63</sup>
- **Fencing:** 651 total miles of fencing have been built along the southwest border, just one mile shy of what the Secure Fence Act of 2006 mandates.<sup>64</sup>

- **Surveillance:** 179 mobile video surveillance systems and 168 radar and camera towers have been installed—more than was required in the 2007 benchmarks. The increase in unmanned aircraft systems and mobile surveillance systems surpassed the 2007 goals by 2 and 47, respectively.<sup>65</sup>
  - **Increased consequences:** Resources are available to detain 1,300 more people per day than the 2007 goal set out to meet. The Border Patrol ended the process of “catch and release,” a practice where two of every three apprehended border crossers from outside of Mexico were released into the United States pending removal hearings. The Department of Homeland Security instead expanded the “consequence delivery system,” to the entire border. This system steps up criminal penalties for people caught illegally crossing the border, and often returns immigrants to unfamiliar and far-away border cities in an effort to cut the migrant off from the smuggler who helped with their previous border-crossing attempt.<sup>66</sup>
  - **“Operational control”:** 81 percent of the U.S. border with Mexico meets one of the Department of Homeland Security’s three highest standards of security: controlled, managed, or monitored. The remaining sections of the border are in the most inaccessible and inhospitable areas of the border.<sup>67</sup> Total control of the border is impossible, but Customs and Border Protection continues to make great strides in gaining control of important sectors.
- **The number of people apprehended crossing the border has decreased to the lowest level in 40 years.** Even though border agents now patrol every mile of the U.S. border daily, and in many places they can view nearly all attempts to cross the border in real time, 27 percent fewer individuals were apprehended in 2011 than in 2010.<sup>68</sup>
  - **Net undocumented migration from Mexico is now at or below zero.** Heightened border enforcement and a worsening U.S. job market together have caused a sharp drop in unauthorized migration from Mexico to the United States. In the future we can expect that improved Mexican economic conditions and falling birth rates in Mexico will continue this trend, even as the American economy recovers from the Great Recession.<sup>69</sup>
  - **A clear path to citizenship for the approximately 11 million undocumented immigrants and a 21st century legal immigration system that meets our economy’s needs will ease our border security burdens in the future.** When immigrants have a legal, practicable, and less onerous way to come into this country to live and work, they will not need to enter the United States by illicitly crossing our borders.

- **President Obama’s administration deported 1.5 million immigrants during his first term in office.** In fiscal year 2012, 409,849 people were deported. Though 96 percent of deportations fell under the Immigration and Customs Enforcement “priority removals” category, the total number of deportations last year sets a record high in the United States.<sup>70</sup>
- **The average daily population of immigrant detainees being held has increased by 1,000 detainees per fiscal year since 2007.** On average, Immigration and Customs Enforcement detained 34,069 people on any given day in fiscal year 2012. Keeping these individuals in detention while proper authorities determine their fates costs taxpayers roughly \$2 million a day, and the average detainee spent 26.5 days in detention in fiscal year 2012.<sup>71</sup>
- **In 2011 at least 5,100 citizen children of undocumented immigrants were living in foster care because their parents were detained or deported.** An estimated 200,000 parents of children who are U.S. citizens were deported between 2010 and 2012. If the rules are not changed, 15,000 more children will face a similar fate by 2016.<sup>72</sup>
- **The Department of Homeland Security’s immigration enforcement program—Secure Communities—is active in 97 percent of jurisdictions.** The Secure Communities program checks the immigration status of those booked into county jails in participating jurisdictions. It was expanded from 14 jurisdictions in 2008 to 3,074 jurisdictions in 2012, but several states and cities such as Washington, D.C., Illinois, and New York have expressed concerns that the program interferes with local policing priorities, and inevitably leads to racial profiling.<sup>73</sup>
- **Until we legalize the currently undocumented population, E-Verify will not help break the jobs magnet that leads many to immigrate without legal status.** E-Verify, an online system to check an employee’s work authorization status, is currently used by 409,000 businesses in the United States. But the program contains significant flaws, including failing to accurately identify unauthorized immigrants 54 percent of the time. If the program became mandatory for all employers today, it would cause 770,000 legally present and legally authorized workers to lose their jobs. Even if E-Verify was fine-tuned, expanding the program to cover all employers could only work in concert with a legalization program that allows the 5 percent of the labor force currently in the shadows to come out and work legally.<sup>74</sup>

- **The federal government has stepped up enforcement against employers who hire undocumented workers by auditing I-9 forms.** All workers and employers upon hiring an employee must complete this federal paperwork. Immigration and Customs Enforcement conducted more than 3,000 worksite audits in fiscal year 2012, up from the 2,496 in the previous fiscal year, and from the 503 that were carried out in fiscal year 2008.<sup>75</sup>

## Immigration legislation at the state level

In the absence of lasting solutions that fix our broken immigration system, some state legislators have passed a wide array of immigration measures, ranging from Arizona's infamous S.B. 1070 to state DREAM Act legislation. The U.S. Supreme Court declared three parts of Arizona's S.B. 1070 unconstitutional in June 2012, but left a provision standing that requires law enforcement officers to demand proof of legal status from anyone they suspect is undocumented—a requirement that directly leads to racial and ethnic profiling.<sup>76</sup>

While the number of immigration-related bills introduced and passed in state legislatures in 2012 fell by 13 percent when compared to 2011, immigration was still a popular topic for many lawmakers—156 immigration-related laws were enacted in 2012.<sup>77</sup>

Laws like Arizona's S.B. 1070, also known as “papers please” laws, hurt community safety, bankrupt state economies, and undermine our national unity. States that have passed anti-immigrant laws have suffered the consequences. Arizona lost \$141 million due to conference cancellations and loss of attendees due to backlash from its immigration law.<sup>78</sup> Georgia's H.B. 87, enacted in April 2011, caused the state to lose an estimated \$300

million in unharvested crops with a total possible statewide impact of \$1 billion due to severe labor shortages.<sup>79</sup> Alabama's H.B. 56, the nation's toughest immigration law, caused serious damage to the state's economy, society, and reputation.<sup>80</sup> It is estimated that Alabama's state economy will lose up to \$10.8 billion, 6.2 percent of its GDP, and up to 140,000 jobs.<sup>81</sup>

Anti-immigrant laws fail to make undocumented immigrants “self-deport.” Instead, immigrants make the decision to stay because most have been in the country for more than a decade, live in families with children, and know that if economic conditions are bad in this country, they are even worse in their home countries.<sup>82</sup> Rather than leaving the United States, undocumented immigrants in anti-immigrant states simply move to friendlier neighboring states.<sup>83</sup>

Twelve states currently grant access to in-state tuition at public colleges and universities to undocumented students who graduated from a state high school and meet other criteria. Maryland voters approved a ballot measure allowing undocumented youth to pay in-state tuition by an impressive 59-51 margin. The Colorado and Oregon state legislatures have passed in-state tuition bills, which await signature by their governors.<sup>84</sup>

Americans want immigration reform with a road map to citizenship

- **Three-quarters of all Americans support a pathway to citizenship for the undocumented.** Hart Research Associates/Public Opinion Strategies found in January 2013 that 77 percent of all Americans support an immigration-reform plan that includes a pathway to citizenship for the 11 million undocumented immigrants living in the country, a plan for strengthened border security, employment eligibility checks in the workplace, and future legal immigration levels tied to our economy.<sup>85</sup>
- **Immigration reform is supported by majorities across all political parties.** The Brookings Institute and Public Religion Research released polling in March 2013 showing that 71 percent of Democrats, 64 percent of independents, and 53 percent of Republicans support a pathway to citizenship for the approximately 11 million undocumented immigrants currently living in the United States.<sup>86</sup>
- **At least two-thirds of Americans favor each of five proposed components of an immigration-reform bill.** Gallup polls show that 72 percent of those polled would “vote for” allowing undocumented immigrants a chance to become legal residents or citizens if they meet certain requirements, and 71 percent would “vote for” an increase in the number of visas for legal immigrants who have advanced skills in technology and science.<sup>87</sup>
- **Small business owners support immigration reform that includes a road map to citizenship.** Three-quarters of small-business owners polled by Small Business Majority agreed that the most appropriate solution for handling our approximately 11 million undocumented immigrants is to create a path toward citizenship, according to their March 2013 survey.<sup>88</sup>

Latino voters have a deep connection to immigration and want reform

- **Immigration reform has become the number-one political issue for Latino voters.** Polling by Latino Decisions in February 2013 found that 58 percent of registered Latino voters cited immigration reform as the top priority that Congress and the president should address. That figure is up from 35 percent in November 2012.<sup>89</sup>
- **Latino voters have a direct and personal connection to the immigration debate.** Approximately 63 percent of those polled by Latino Decisions in February 2013 said they personally know someone who is an undocumented immigrant. And 39 percent of Latino registered voters said they personally know someone who has faced deportation or detention for immigration violations. That marks a 14 percent increase from responses in 2011.<sup>90</sup>

- **Latino voters strongly support immigration reform that includes a pathway to citizenship independent of border-security measures.** A Latino Decisions poll released in March 2013 shows that 70 percent of registered Latino voters favor an immigration-reform plan that includes a clear path to citizenship over an immigration-reform plan that makes citizenship for undocumented immigrants contingent on strengthened border security.<sup>91</sup>
- **Republicans could gain from supporting immigration reform that includes a road map to citizenship.** Approximately 32 percent of registered Latino voters polled by Latino Decisions in February 2013 said they would be more likely to vote for Republicans if they worked toward an immigration-reform bill that includes a pathway to citizenship. Additionally, almost 40 percent of Latino voters said that they would be less likely to vote Republican if an immigration bill passes in the Senate but is defeated in the House of Representatives due to Republican opposition.<sup>92</sup>
- **Latino voters strongly support immigration-reform legislation that includes gay and transgender couples.** An Immigration Equality/Latino Decisions poll released in March 2013 shows that 64 percent of Latinos favor inclusive immigration reform that allows lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender people to sponsor their partners for residency in the United States. Among Latino Catholics, support in this category reached 71 percent.<sup>93</sup>

*Ann Garcia is a Policy Analyst for the Immigration Policy Team at the Center for American Progress.*

## Endnotes

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