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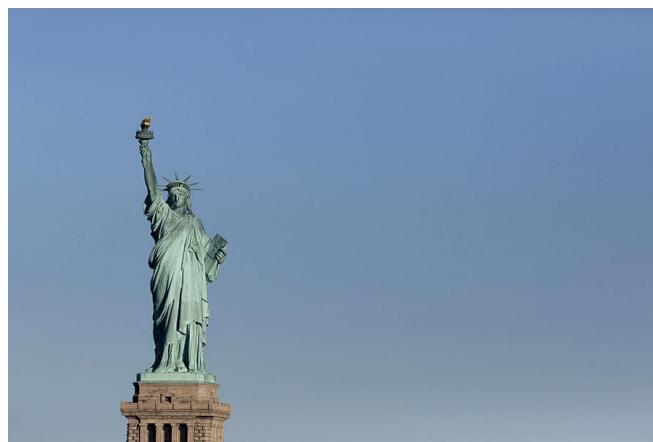
THE AMERICAN IDENTITY: POINTS OF PRIDE, CONFLICTING VIEWS, AND A DISTINCT CULTURE

In the wake of President Donald Trump's executive order last month on immigration and refugees, Americans are supportive of the country's diversity and generally favorable toward immigration. However, according to a recent poll conducted by The Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research, Americans are less favorable toward refugees and illegal immigration, and most express concern about the country losing its national identity.

The idea that the United States is a safe haven for people fleeing violence or persecution, or even simply looking for better economic opportunities is an important aspect of the American identity to most people. Only 15 percent of Americans consider legal immigration a threat to the American way of life, and most regard immigrants who arrive legally as more beneficial to the United States than detrimental.

But refugees and immigrants living here illegally are another story. Nearly half of Americans say illegal immigration is extremely or very threatening to the country. And while two-thirds of Americans say the advantages gained by legal immigration outweigh the risks, less than half say the same about refugees.

The American identity is based on more than diversity, though. A fair judiciary, constitutional protections, and the ability to achieve the American dream are vital aspects of the national identity according to large numbers of Americans. And while sharing a language, customs, and values are also considered important to most Americans, fewer think an essential aspect of the American identity is a culture based on Christianity or European traditions.



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Three Things You Should Know

About The AP-NORC Poll on
The American Identity
Among all Americans:

- 1) Forty-seven percent say illegal immigration is threatening to the American way of life, and 15 percent think legal immigration threatens it.
- 2) Seventy-one percent say the United States is losing its national identity—that is the beliefs and values the country represents.
- 3) Fifty-seven percent say the United States should be a country with an essential culture that immigrants adopt when they arrive, and 42 percent think the culture of the country should change when new people arrive.

Seven in 10 Americans think the United States is losing its national identity, while just 3 in 10 regard the country's identity as secure, and these attitudes are related to threats to that identity and pride in several aspects of the country. While most Americans are proud of the American military and the country's many scientific, creative, and athletic achievements, less than half express much pride in how democracy is working. More than half of the public says political polarization is a major threat to the country's way of life, and nearly as many say the same about the nation's political leaders.

The nationwide poll was conducted February 16-20, 2017, using the AmeriSpeak Panel, the probability-based panel of NORC at the University of Chicago. Online and telephone interviews using landlines and cell phones were conducted with 1,004 adults.

Key findings from the poll include:

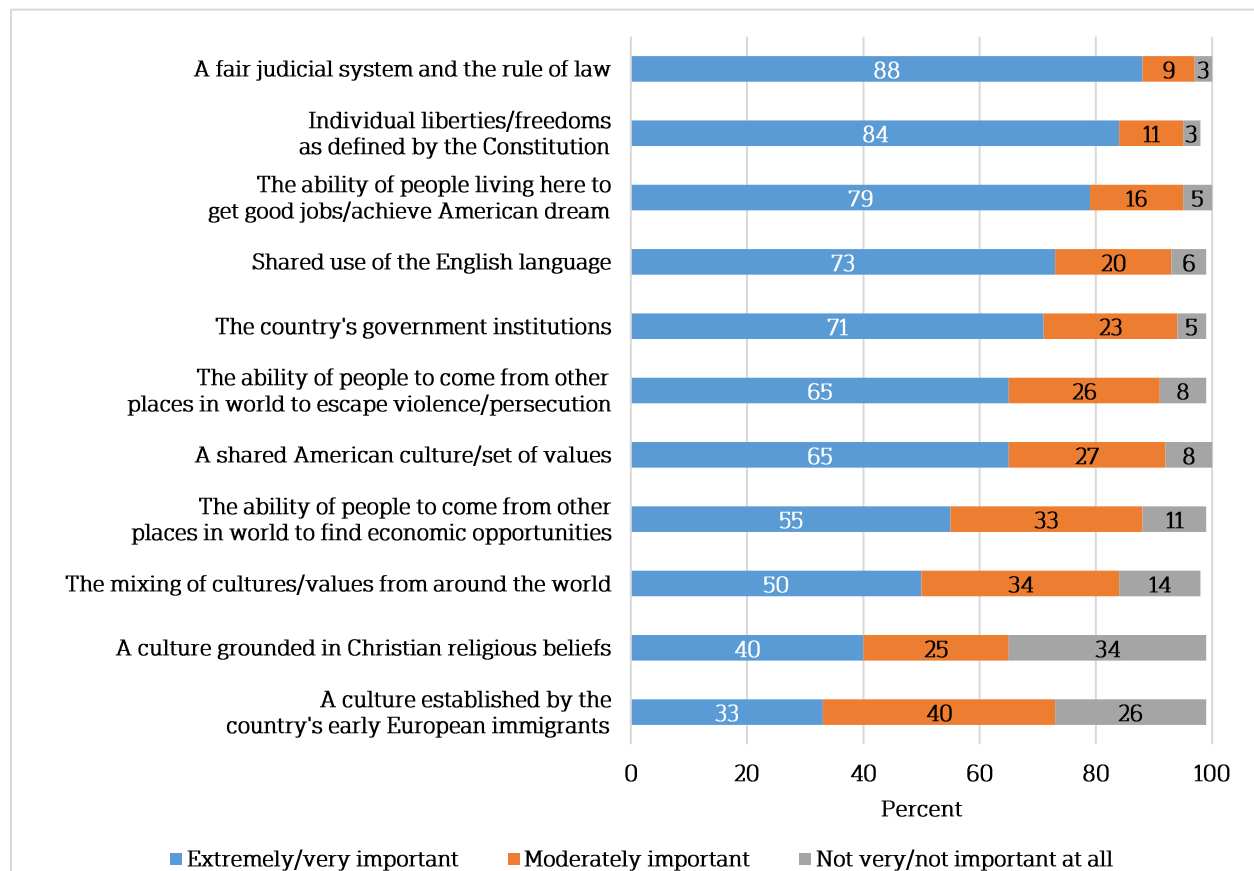
- Sixty-five percent of Americans say diversity makes the United States stronger, up from 56 percent in an AP-NORC poll taken last June. Only 11 percent say it makes the country weaker, and 23 percent think it has no effect.
- Along with a positive view of diversity, Americans see immigration in a largely positive light, although they are less welcoming to refugees.
- Nearly 6 in 10 say the United States should be a country with an essential American culture and values that immigrants take on when they arrive, but just as many say that most recent immigrants retain their own customs, rather than assimilate.
- Americans say legal immigration provides more advantages than disadvantages, and two-thirds think the benefits outweigh any risks. The public is closely split on whether the possible harm from welcoming refugees outweighs potential advantages.
- Six in 10 Americans say legal immigration boosts the reputation of the United States as a land of opportunity and benefits companies with technical expertise.
- A third of the public agrees that the United States stands above all other countries in the world, while 56 percent of the public say the United States is one of the greatest countries in the world along with some others. Just 11 percent think there are other countries that are better.
- Nearly 8 in 10 Americans are proud of the country's armed forces, while less than 3 in 10 have pride in how groups in society are treated and in the Social Security system.
- More than three-quarters consider a fair judicial system and rule of law, Constitutional freedoms and liberties, and the ability to achieve the American dream as central tenets of the country's identity. Half say the mixing of cultures is important, and fewer think the country's identity is tied to Christian values and European traditions. However, 7 in 10 consider the use of English to be important.
- More than half of Americans say political polarization is extremely or very threatening to the United States. Nearly as many consider political leaders, economic inequality, and illegal immigration as important threats to the American way of life. Four in 10 say influence from foreign governments jeopardizes the country, but only 15 percent say that about legal immigration.

SEVEN IN 10 AMERICANS SAY THE UNITED STATES IS LOSING ITS NATIONAL IDENTITY, AND THEY MOST FREQUENTLY CITE CONSTITUTIONAL PROTECTIONS AND A FAIR JUSTICE SYSTEM AS CORE TO THAT IDENTITY.

Most Americans fear the United States is losing its national identity, with 7 in 10 saying so compared to just 3 in 10 who say the country’s identity is secure. Young people are particularly likely to say the country is losing its identity (77 percent) compared to those age 60 and older (66 percent). This is one issue where Democrats, independents, and Republicans are in agreement: about 7 in 10 of each of these groups says the country is losing its identity.

But what do people consider when they think about the country’s identity? Americans most often say the country’s fair judicial system and rule of law, individual freedoms and liberties as defined by the Constitution, and the ability of people to get good jobs and achieve the American dream are central to that identity, with more than three-quarters of Americans citing these ideas. Just half cite the mixing of cultures from around the world as important, and fewer cite values grounded in Christian beliefs and traditions established by the country’s early European immigrants. Many, however, consider the shared use of English as important.

Americans most frequently cite the country’s fair judicial system and the individual freedoms and liberties granted by the Constitution as critical to the U.S. national identity.

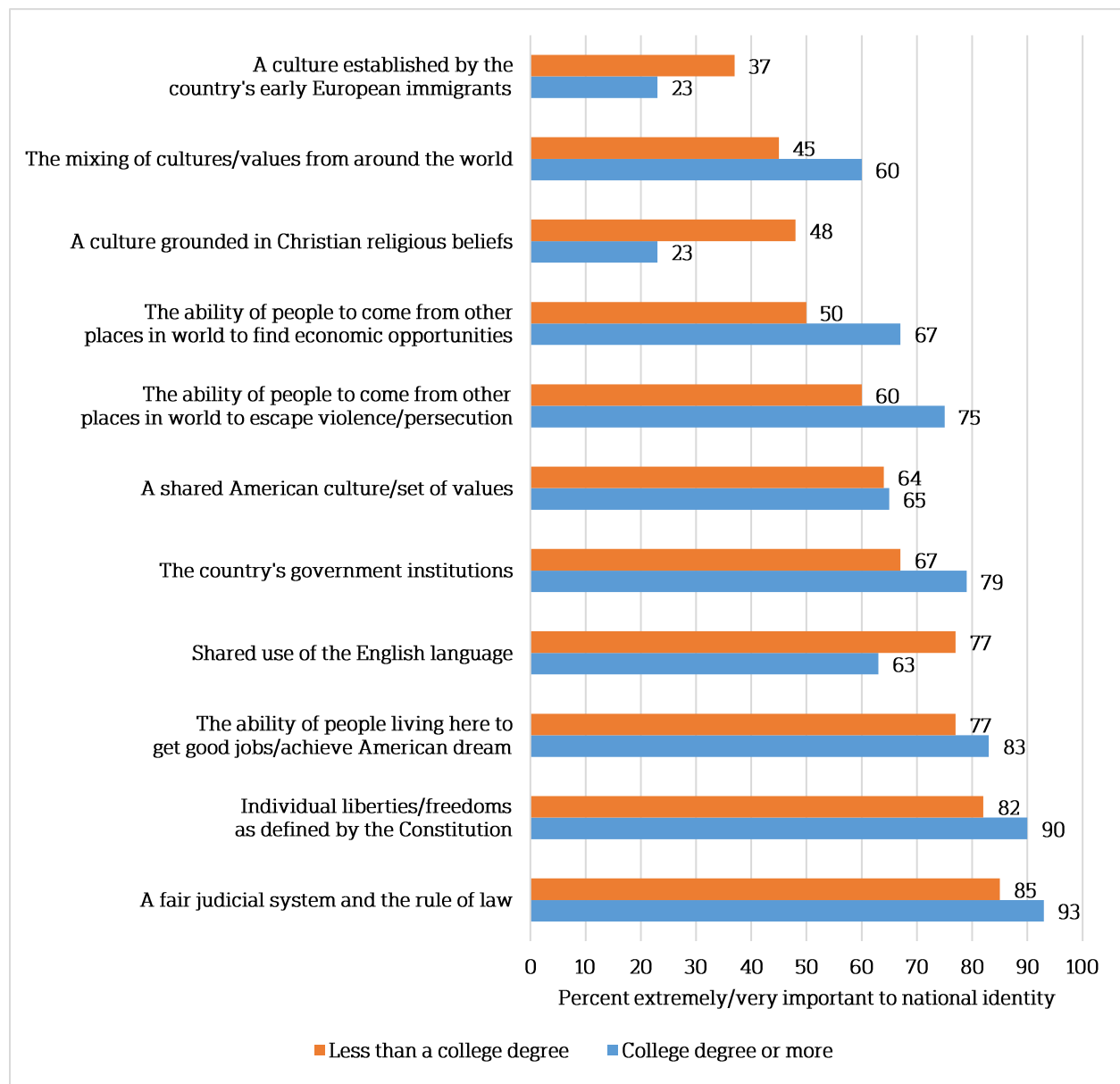


Question: How important is each of the following to the United States’ identity as a nation?
 Source: AP-NORC Center poll conducted February 16-20, with 1,004 adults nationwide.

Not surprisingly, Democrats and Republicans see some different things as core to the nation’s identity. Judicial fairness, liberty and freedom granted by the Constitution, the ability to achieve the American dream, and the country’s government are seen as key to American identity in high numbers, regardless of party identification. But Democrats are more likely than Republicans to consider the nation’s diversity and the ability of people to immigrate to the United States as important, while Republicans are more inclined to cite the importance of the use of English and sharing a culture, preferably based on Christian beliefs and European customs.

Differences in what is important to the U.S. identity also emerge by education, especially when it comes to issues of culture.

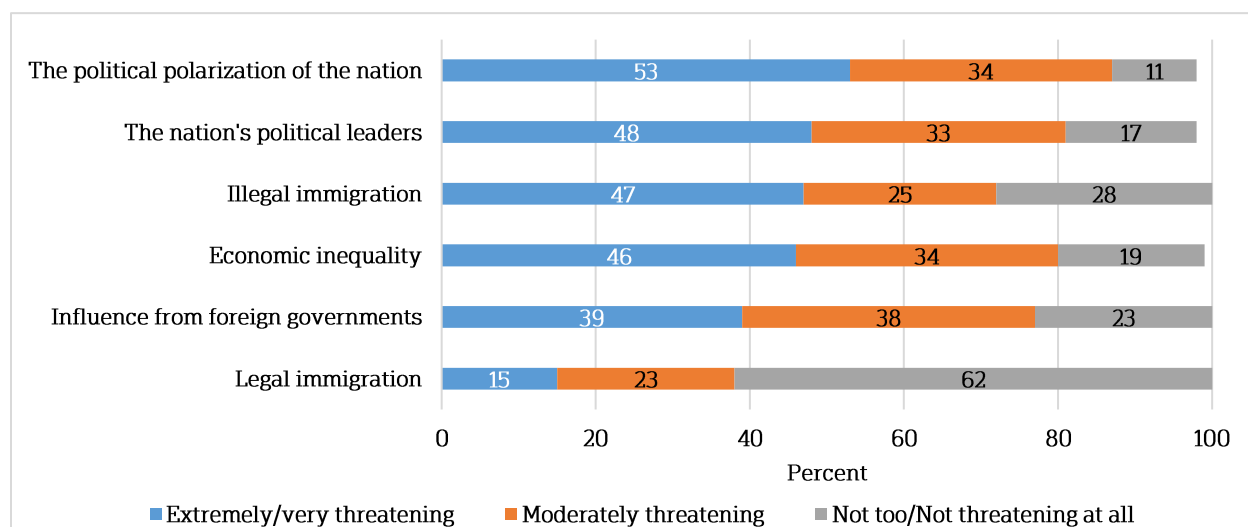
Those without a college degree are more likely to say cultural factors are key to American identity compared to those with a college degree.



Question: How important is each of the following to the United States’ identity as a nation?
Source: AP-NORC Center poll conducted February 16-20, with 1,004 adults nationwide.

If the national identity is slipping away, what is threatening it? More than half of Americans say the political polarization of the nation is extremely or very threatening, and another 34 percent say it is moderately threatening. More than 7 in 10 say the nation's political leaders, economic inequality, influence from foreign governments, and illegal immigration are at least moderately threatening to the nation's identity. Legal immigration is seen as the least threatening, with 6 in 10 saying it is not too threatening or not threatening at all.

Few Americans think legal immigration is a threat to the country's values and culture, but many see political polarization, political leaders, and illegal immigration as a problem.



Question: For each of the following, please rate how threatening you think it is to the American way of life.
Source: AP-NORC Center poll conducted February 16-20, with 1,004 adults nationwide.

Differences emerge between those who think the country is losing its identity compared to those who say its identity is secure. Those who see the nation's identity slipping away are more likely to say political polarization (57 percent vs. 43 percent), the nation's political leaders (53 percent vs. 36 percent), and influence from foreign governments (42 percent vs. 32 percent) are threatening.

Those with a college degree are also more likely to identify political polarization (70 percent vs. 45 percent), the country's political leaders (57 percent vs. 44 percent), and economic inequality (55 percent vs. 42 percent) as threatening. Less educated Americans are more likely to cite illegal immigration (52 percent vs. 35 percent) and legal immigration (18 percent vs. 7 percent).

THE NUMBER OF AMERICANS SAYING DIVERSITY MAKES THE COUNTRY STRONGER HAS INCREASED SINCE LAST YEAR.

While just 50 percent of Americans say the mixing of cultures and values from around the world is important to the U.S. national identity, an AP-NORC poll taken last June found that more Americans (56 percent) said diversity makes the United States stronger, just 16 percent said it makes the country weaker, and 28 percent said it has no effect.¹ And in the latest poll taken in the wake of Trump's original immigration and refugee ban, even more (65 percent) say diversity makes the United States stronger, only 11 percent say it makes the country weaker, and 23 percent say it has no effect.

¹ <http://apnorc.org/projects/Pages/divided-america-perceptions-of-what-unites-and-divides-the-country.aspx>

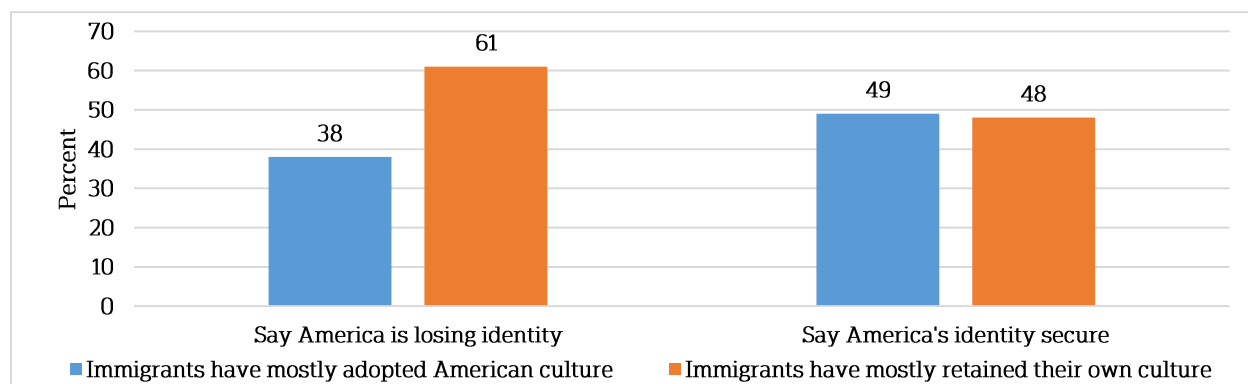
Even with a generally positive view of diversity, nearly 6 in 10 Americans say the United States should be a country with an essential American culture and values that immigrants take on when they arrive, compared to just 4 in 10 who say the country should be made up of many cultures and values that change when new people arrive. Many Americans do not see that assimilation happening, however. When it comes to immigrants who have arrived in the past 10 or so years, just 4 in 10 percent of Americans say these immigrants have adopted that essential American culture, while 6 in 10 say they have mostly retained their own cultures and values.

Eighty percent of Americans who think diversity makes the country weaker say the United States should be a country with an essential American culture. They do not see that actually happening, though: 83 percent say recent immigrants have retained their own culture, not assimilated into American culture.

Among those who see strength in diversity, 51 percent think the country should have an essential culture, and 50 percent think new immigrants are not embracing that culture.

Most Americans, regardless of whether they think the country is losing its identity or that that identity is secure, say immigrants *should* assimilate into American culture. However, they differ in what they think recent immigrants *actually* are doing. Those who think the country is losing its identity are more likely to say recent immigrants retain their own culture rather than adopt American culture when they get to this country.

A majority of those who think the United States is losing its national identity say recent immigrants have retained their own culture, not adopted American culture.



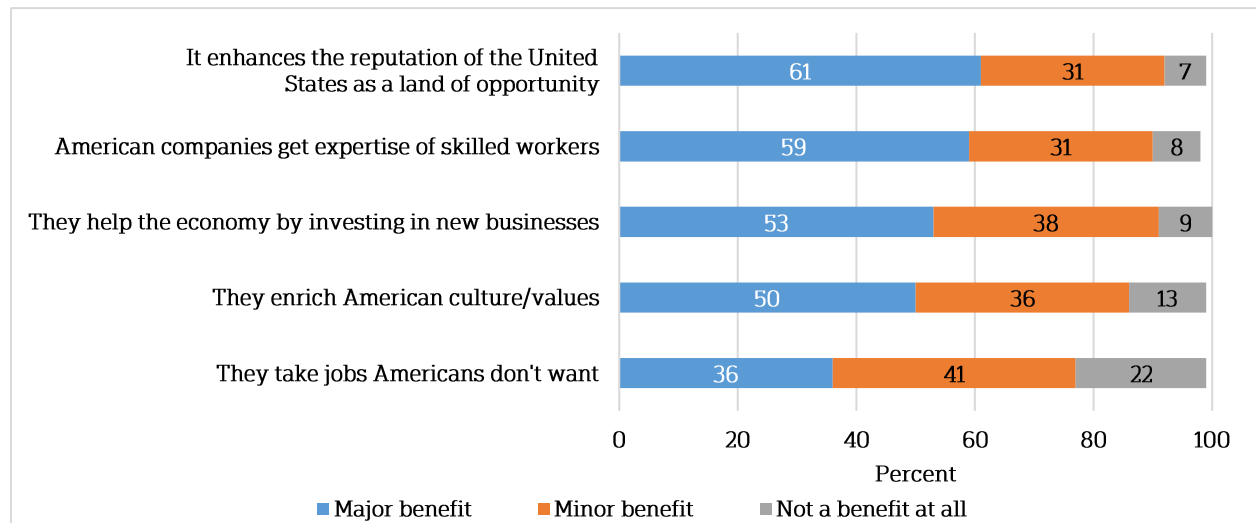
Question: Thinking specifically about recent immigrants, that is people who have come to the United States to live and work in the past ten years or so, which of the following statements is closer to your opinion about these immigrants coming to the United States?

Source: AP-NORC Center poll conducted February 16-20, with 1,004 adults nationwide.

OVERALL, AMERICANS SAY THE BENEFITS OF LEGAL IMMIGRATION OUTWEIGH THE RISKS, THOUGH THE PUBLIC IS MORE SPLIT ABOUT THE BENEFITS VERSUS RISKS OF ADMITTING REFUGEES.

Generally, the public says legal immigration provides more advantages than disadvantages, with two-thirds saying the benefits outweigh the risks. In terms of specific benefits, at least half of Americans say legal immigration enhances the reputation of the United States as a land of opportunity, gives American companies the expertise of skilled workers in fields like science and technology, helps the country's economy by investing in new businesses, and enriches American culture and values.

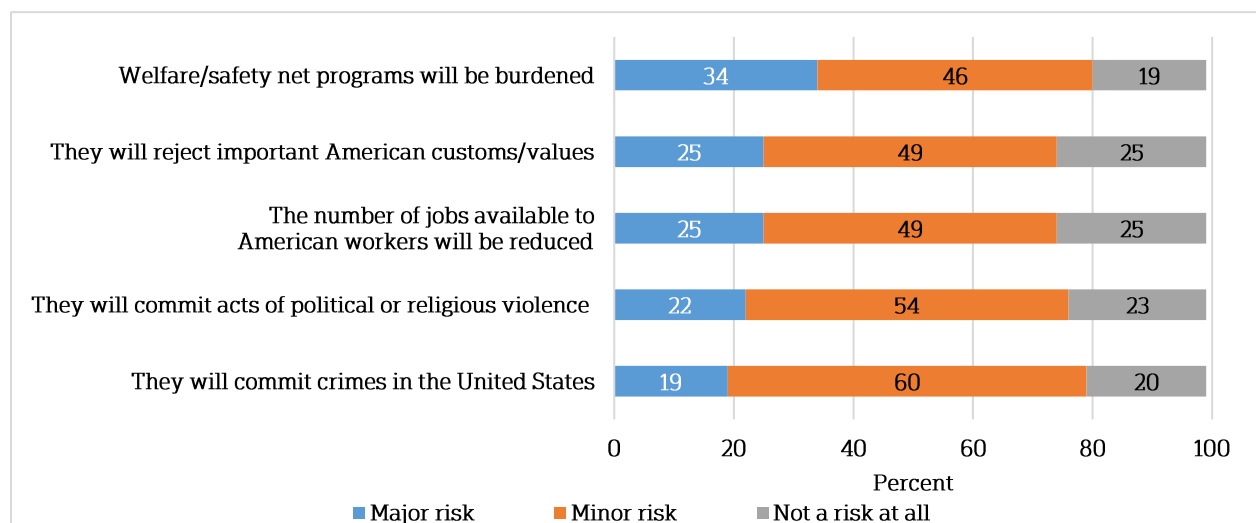
Many Americans say legal immigration provides the country with benefits like an enhanced reputation, skilled labor for American companies, and investment in new businesses.



Question: When immigrants come legally to the United States, how much of a benefit is each of the following?
 Source: AP-NORC Center poll conducted February 16-20, with 1,004 adults nationwide.

As far as specific risks, just a quarter or fewer says legal immigration presents a major risk to the number of jobs available to American workers, important American customs and values, or the safety of Americans in the form of crime or political or religious violence. A third say legal immigration presents a major risk to the welfare and safety net programs, however.

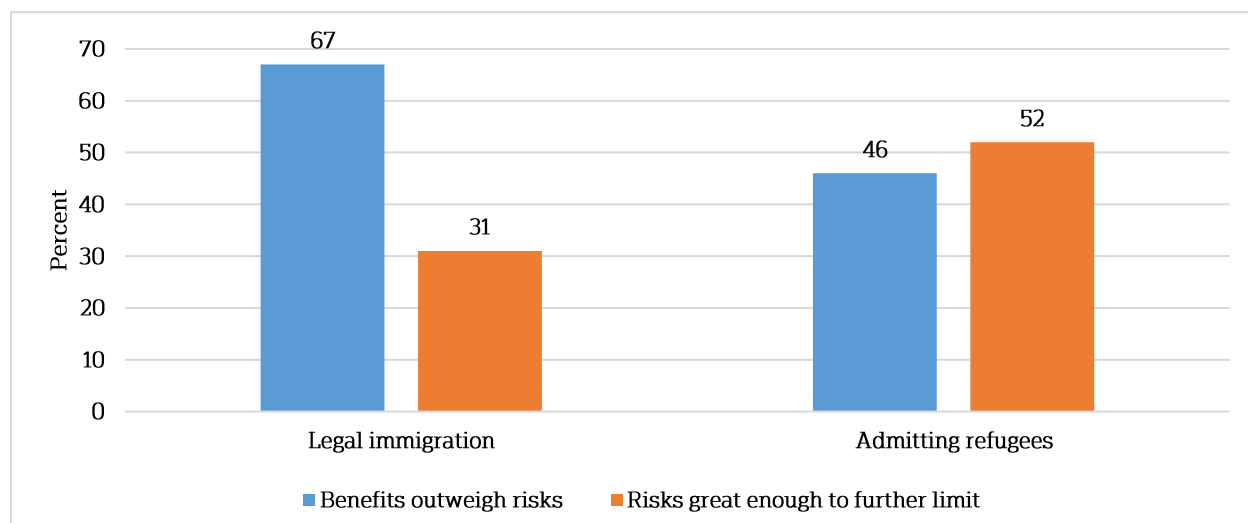
Few Americans see legal immigration as presenting a major risk to the American economy, culture, or the safety of its citizens.



Question: When immigrants come legally to the United States, how much of a risk is each of the following?
 Source: AP-NORC Center poll conducted February 16-20, with 1,004 adults nationwide.

While the public is generally positive about legal immigration, Americans are less convinced about the benefits of admitting refugees into the country.

Two-thirds of Americans say the benefits of legal immigration outweigh the risks, and nearly half say the same about refugees.



Questions: In general, do you think the benefits the United States gets from legal immigration outweigh the risks, or are the risks to the United States great enough so that legal immigration should be further limited?

What about refugees, that is, people trying to escape violence or political persecution? In general, do you think the benefits the United States gets from admitting refugees outweigh the risks, or are the risks to the United States great enough so that allowing refugees into the country should be further limited?

Source: AP-NORC Center poll conducted February 16-20, with 1,004 adults nationwide.

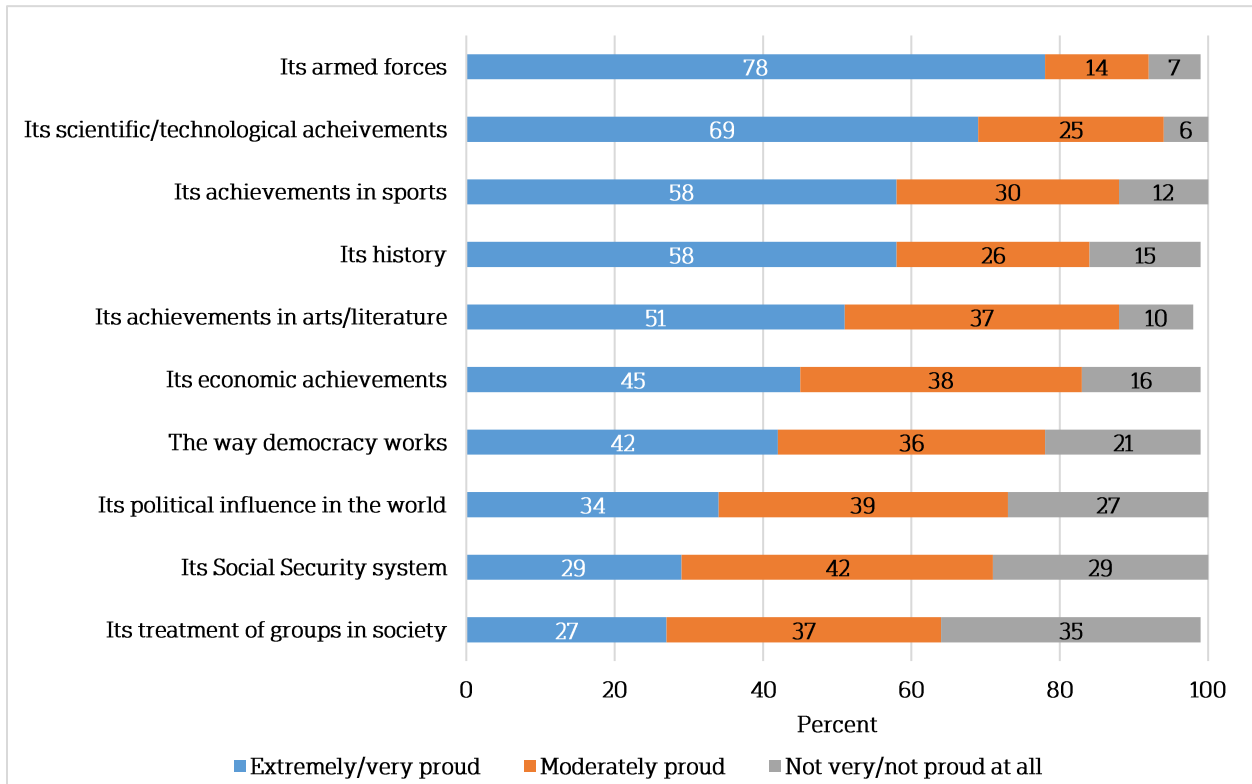
Majorities of Democrats, independents, and Republicans say the benefits of legal immigration outweigh the risks, but Democrats are most likely to say so (81 percent vs. 57 percent and 51 percent, respectively). Democrats are also more likely to say the benefits of admitting refugees outweigh the risks (67 percent vs. 46 percent of independents and just 17 percent of Republicans). This makes sense considering that Republicans are less likely than Democrats to say the ability of people to come here from other countries to escape violence and persecution is important to the country's identity.

A THIRD OF AMERICANS SAY THE UNITED STATES IS THE BEST COUNTRY IN THE WORLD, AND MOST AMERICANS ARE PROUD OF THE COUNTRY'S ARMED FORCES AND ITS SCIENTIFIC AND TECHNOLOGICAL ACHIEVEMENTS.

Is the United States the best country on earth? Nearly a third of the public agrees that the United States stands above all other countries in the world, while 56 percent of the public says the United States is one of the greatest countries in the world along with some others. Just 11 percent think there are other countries that are better. Among those who say the United States stands above all others, three-quarters say that is because the country has a unique character that makes it great, while just a quarter say it is possible for other countries to be as great as the United States. Those who say America's national identity is secure are more likely than those who say it is slipping away to state that the United States is the best country on earth (41 percent vs. 29 percent).

When asked about what makes them proud about the United States, nearly 8 in 10 say the country's armed forces and 7 in 10 say its scientific and technological achievements make them extremely or very proud. More than half also say its achievements in sports, its history, and its achievements in the arts and literature. The country's political influence abroad, the Social Security system, and how groups in society are treated produce less pride.

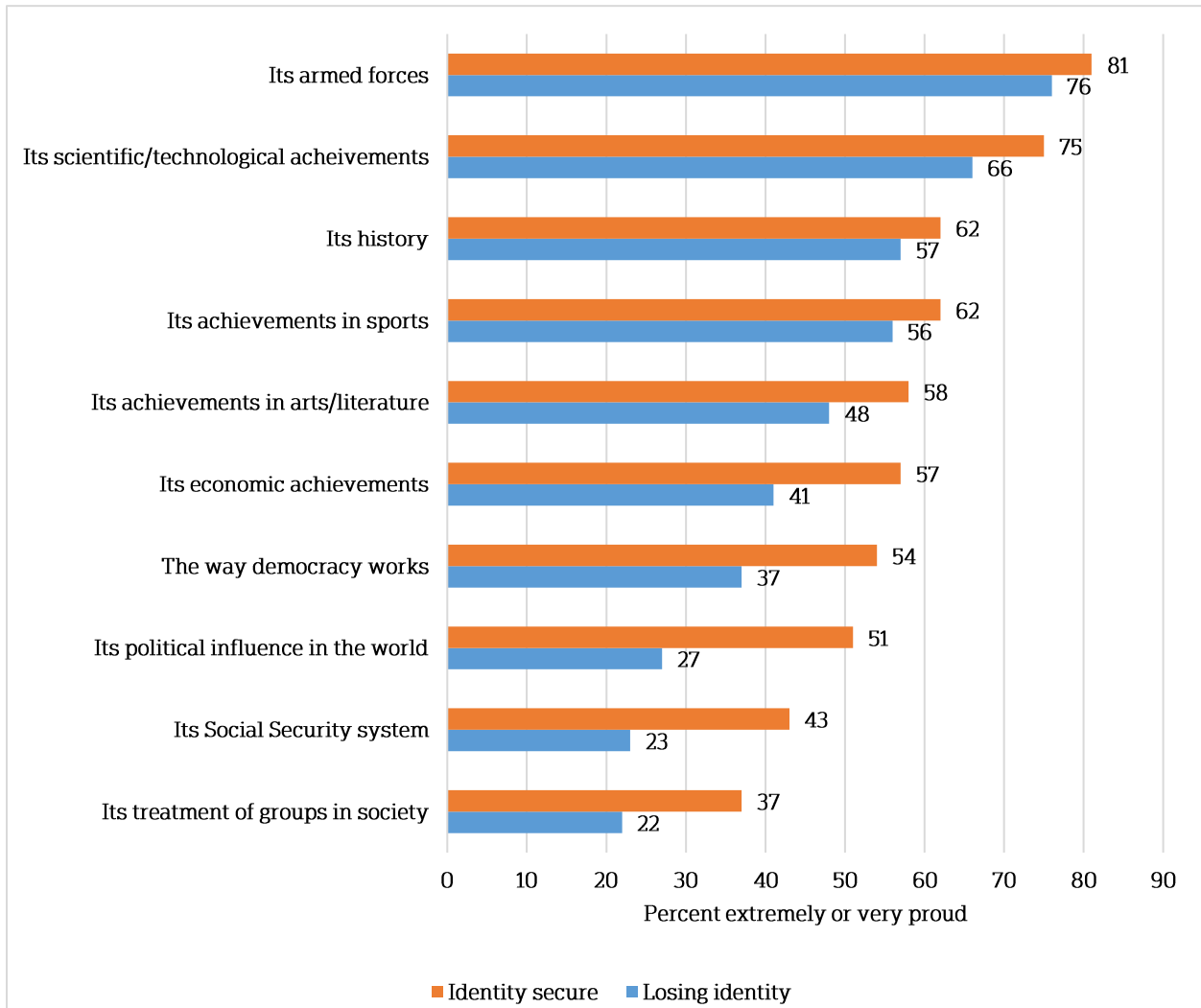
Americans are most proud of their armed forces, their achievements in sports and science/technology, and their history.



Question: How proud are you of the United States in each of the following?
Source: AP-NORC Center poll conducted February 16-20, with 1,004 adults nationwide.

Americans who feel secure about the United States and what it represents are more inclined to express pride in various aspects of the country and its accomplishments, while those who think the national character is slipping away are less likely to say they are proud.

Americans who say the U.S. national identity is secure are more likely than those who say it is losing its identity to report that they are proud of a variety of aspects of the country.



Question: How proud are you of the United States in each of the following?

Source: AP-NORC Center poll conducted February 16-20, with 1,004 adults nationwide.

ABOUT THE STUDY

Survey Methodology

This survey was conducted by The Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research and with funding from NORC at the University of Chicago. Data were collected using AmeriSpeak Omnibus®, a monthly multi-client survey using NORC's probability-based panel designed to be representative of the U.S. household population. The survey was part of a larger study that included questions about other topics not included in this report. During the initial recruitment phase of the panel, randomly selected U.S. households were sampled with a known, non-zero probability of selection from the NORC National Sample Frame and then contacted by U.S. mail, email, telephone, and field interviewers (face-to-face). The panel provides sample coverage of approximately 97% of the U.S. household population. Those excluded from the sample include people with P.O. Box only addresses, some addresses not listed in the USPS Delivery Sequence File, and some newly constructed dwellings.

Interviews for this survey were conducted between February 16 and 20, 2017, with adults age 18 and over representing the 50 states and the District of Columbia. Panel members were randomly drawn from AmeriSpeak, and 1,004 completed the survey—786 via the web and 218 via telephone. The final stage completion rate is 30.2 percent, the weighted household panel response rate is 34.4 percent, and the weighted household panel retention rate is 94.7 percent, for a cumulative response rate of 9.8 percent. The overall margin of sampling error is +/- 3.9 percentage points at the 95 percent confidence level, including the design effect. The margin of sampling error may be higher for subgroups.

Once the sample has been selected and fielded, and all the study data have been collected and made final, a poststratification process is used to adjust for any survey nonresponse as well as any non-coverage or under- and oversampling resulting from the study specific sample design. Poststratification variables included age, gender, census division, race/ethnicity, and education. Weighting variables were obtained from the 2016 Current Population Survey. The weighted data, which reflect the U.S. population of adults age 18 and over, were used for all analyses.

All differences reported between subgroups of the U.S. population are at the 95 percent level of statistical significance, meaning that there is only a 5 percent (or lower) probability that the observed differences could be attributed to chance variation in sampling.

A comprehensive listing of the questions, complete with tabulations of top-level results for each question, is available on The AP-NORC Center website: www.apnorc.org. For more information, email info@apnorc.org.

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