

How the world views migration



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How the World Views Migration provides, for the first time, an insight into public attitudes towards immigration worldwide. The findings presented in the report – based on interviews with over 183,000 adults across more than 140 countries between 2012 and 2014 – represent the first steps towards understanding the lenses through which people view immigration at a global level.

Adults surveyed in Gallup's World Poll were asked two questions about immigration: 1) In your view, should immigration in this country be kept at its present level, increased or decreased? 2) Do you think immigrants mostly take jobs that citizens in this country do not want (e.g. low-paying or not prestigious jobs), or mostly take jobs that citizens in this country want?

One of the key findings of the report is that in every major region of the world – with the important exception of Europe – people are more likely to want immigration levels in their countries to either stay at the present level or to increase, rather than to decrease. This contrasts with the negative perceptions of migration often portrayed in the media in certain regions of the world.

European residents appear to be, on average, the most negative globally towards immigration, with the majority believing immigration levels should be decreased. There is, however, a sharp divergence in opinions among residents in Northern and Southern Europe.

The report also shows that certain sociodemographic characteristics are more consistently associated with favourable or opposing attitudes to immigration. For instance, adults with a university degree are typically more likely than those with lower levels of education to want to see immigration kept at its present level or increased in their countries.

Another key finding is that people's views about their personal and their countries' economic situations may be the strongest predictors of their views of immigration: those who perceive economic situations as poor or worsening are more likely to favour lower immigration levels into their countries, and vice versa.

In terms of perceived job competition between immigrants and nationals, there appears to be a clear divide based on national income: residents of high-income economies overall are much more likely to say immigrants take jobs citizens do not want than jobs that citizens want. In all other economies, residents are more likely to say immigrants take the jobs that citizens want.

The full results from this report will be released for the first time at the Global Forum on Migration and Development summit in Istanbul, during a side event on 15 October. The presenters will also discuss the merits of how a regularly conducted global barometer of public opinion on migration could contribute to the dialogue about migration in relation to the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals.

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