

Survey: Illegal immigrants back Bush worker plan;
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Body

A **new survey** of **undocumented immigrants** from **Mexico** shows that **most want** to **become permanent U.S.** residents but would participate in a temporary guest-**worker** program that President **Bush** envisions.

The **study** by the Pew Hispanic Center, released yesterday, also offers a first-of-a-kind statistical snapshot of a large sample of **illegal immigrants**. More than 40 percent said they came to the **United States** within the last five years.

They tend to be young, predominantly male, struggling with English, and employed in construction, manufacturing, and the hospitality industry. They are better educated than their counterparts in **Mexico** but poorly educated by **U.S.** standards.

The six-month **study**, completed in January, **surveyed** 4,836 Mexican adults in seven **U.S.** cities with large or growing Hispanic populations: Dallas; Los Angeles; **New** York; Chicago; Atlanta; Raleigh, N.C.; and Fresno, Calif.

The participants were not asked about immigration status, but more than half - 2,566 - said they did not have any form of photo ID issued by a government agency in this country. All the respondents were seeking a basic Mexican ID that serves as minimal documentation in the **United States**, called a matricula consular, when they were **surveyed**. Mexican consulates in participating **U.S.** cities, which issue the IDs, cooperated in the **survey**.

The Pew Hispanic Center is an independent research organization based in Washington. Its director, Robert Suro, said the **survey** provided "an extraordinary view of a population that by its very nature is exceptionally difficult to measure and **study**."

The research findings could further stoke a contentious debate in Congress over how to deal with millions of **illegal immigrants**, primarily from **Mexico**, who are entering the **United States** in search of better jobs and living conditions.

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Bush has made immigration revisions a high priority of his second term and is asking Congress to create a temporary guest-**worker** program that would allow **immigrants** to stay in this country up to six years, filling jobs that Americans do not **want**. Such **immigrants** would be required to return home after completing the program.

Under **Bush's** initiative, those **immigrants** now living illegally in the **United States** - as many as 10 million - would be eligible to participate. Conservative House Republicans think **illegal immigrants** should be deported before being eligible for guest employment.

The Pew Center's **Survey** of Mexican Migrants shows that **Bush's** proposal has strong support among its intended beneficiaries. By a margin of 71 percent to 18 percent, **immigrants** said they would participate in a program that would allow them to work in this country but would require them to return to **Mexico** eventually.

By a similar margin, 72 percent to 17 percent, participants supported **permanent** legalization for migrants who have lived in this country for five years, held steady jobs, and avoided entanglements with the law. Critics of **Bush's** proposal, including Democrats and allied groups, have said it fails to provide an avenue for **permanent** legal status and eventual **U.S.** citizenship.

In a **finding** that could fuel complaints that **illegal immigrants** pose a burden on **U.S.** services, many of the **immigrants** said they had children in **U.S.** schools, though the percentage varied widely from city to city.

The flow of migration from **Mexico** has been changing since the 1980s, the **survey** said, with greater participation from women. Arrivals have continued to flock to traditional destinations, such as Los Angeles, but increasingly are heading to **newer** settlements in Raleigh and **New** York.

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ONLINE EXTRA: To read the **immigrant study** online, go to www.pewhispanic.org.

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