

## **Hispanics Cite Rise In Discrimination; Immigration Debate Is Called a Factor**

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**Byline:** Darryl Fears, Washington Post Staff Writer

### **Body**

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**Hispanics** believe that discrimination has **risen** since the start of the congressional **debate** over illegal **immigration**, according to a survey released yesterday.

But they also think their group is more galvanized after the pro-**immigration** marches that resulted from the **debate**, and many believe they are on the verge of a major social movement, according to the survey by the Pew Hispanic Center.

"Nothing produces a sense of unity more than a common threat," said Roberto Suro, the center's director. "Feeling like you all face the same problem really brings people together. You can see that happening in these results."

In a departure from past polls, both native and foreign-born respondents said they feel empowered to create change. Fifty-eight percent said they believe that **Hispanics**, though coming from a variety of national, ethnic, cultural and political backgrounds, are working to reach similar political goals.

In a 2002 survey, nearly half said **Hispanics** were not striving toward a common political objective.

The 2006 survey, conducted by telephone for a month starting in June, was described by the center as the first major opinion poll of the Hispanic population since the policy **debate** and marches in April and May.

In December, Republicans and some Democrats in the House approved a plan to build a wall at the Mexican border, increase patrols and work toward expelling many of the estimated 11 million illegal immigrants.

Illegal immigrants and their supporters poured into the streets by the millions for demonstrations. A bipartisan group of senators eventually introduced legislation that would allow illegal immigrants to pay a fine and stay in the United States while strengthening border enforcement. President Bush favored the latter plan.

Congress has yet to approve either plan. Meanwhile, Hispanic leaders have vowed that if illegal immigrants are threatened with expulsion, they will take further action with boycotts, demonstrations and increased voting among those who are eligible. Some opponents of illegal **immigration** have promised to protest against political leniency with their vote in the midterm elections in November.

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In the survey, three-quarters of respondents said more Hispanics will vote in those elections. The percentages did not waver much between foreign-born Hispanics (74 percent) and native-born ones (76 percent).

But there is indecision over which party to vote for, the survey shows. Although most Hispanics in the survey believe that Democrats have taken the better position on the immigration issue, the party is not favored by much.

Thirty-seven percent said Democrats have more concern for Hispanics, compared with 9 percent for Republicans. Another 37 percent said there is no difference between the parties in their attitudes about Hispanics.

"It's not surprising that this does not translate cleanly into partisan terms," Suro said. "Both parties are divided."

Among native-born Hispanics, opinion was almost evenly split between those who favored Democrats (42 percent) and those who said there was no difference (40 percent).

More than half of Hispanics -- 54 percent -- who responded to the Pew Hispanic Center's survey reported discrimination, although the survey did not describe the types of bias they encountered. Foreign-born Hispanics who could be ousted from the country if tough legislation against illegal immigrants in the House passes were far more likely to say discrimination is a major problem.

"This isn't just an immigrant thing," Suro said. "It's clearly affected the native-born and foreign-born population."

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