Poll: Arizonans still see illegal immigration as major problem

Both medical and recreational marijuana have strong support

Arizonans largely continue to see illegal immigration as a major problem but believe undocumented immigrants should be treated humanely, according to a poll by ASU’s Morrison Institute for Public Policy and the Walter Cronkite School of Journalism and Mass Communication.

The Morrison-Cronkite Quarterly Poll also found strong statewide support for the legalization of marijuana for recreational and/or medical use. The marijuana issue is expected to be among the potential ballot initiatives for the 2016 election.

This second wave of findings released today are from the inaugural Morrison-Cronkite Quarterly Poll, which surveyed 754 Arizona adults to assess resident attitudes and opinions about a variety of issues, from care giving to personal financial status to area crime.

“Arizonans remain sharply divided on the issue of immigration, mostly according to their political party but perhaps surprisingly not much according to their ethnicity,” said David Daugherty, associate director of Morrison Institute and director of the statewide poll.

Approaches to illegal immigration run the gamut – from strict deportation measures to a pathway to citizenship – but the nine out of 10 Arizonans agree (64 percent) or strongly agree (25 percent) “undocumented immigrants are a problem, but Arizona needs to treat them humanely.”

For most questions, respondents were asked their level of agreement – strongly agree, agree, disagree, or strongly disagree – regarding a series of statements. For the marijuana issue, respondents were asked:

“Which of the following would you like Arizona to see done regarding marijuana?
• Make all marijuana use illegal, including the use of marijuana for medical purposes
• Allow for the use of marijuana for medical reasons only
• Make all marijuana use legal for those 18 years of age and older”

The plurality (45 percent) would “make all marijuana use legal for those 18 years of age and older,” while 42 percent would “allow for use of it for medical reasons only.” The remainder (13 percent) would “make all marijuana use illegal, including the use of marijuana for medical purposes.

“It is important to keep in mind this research polled a sample of all Arizona adults, not just voters or likely voters,” Daugherty said. “And, since this issue would be decided by voters, the opinions of those who will not vote are of no consequence to a ballot measure.”

There also are age factors to consider regarding legalization of marijuana. While support for fully accessibility to marijuana skews young – more young adults favor full access than older adults – young adults are less likely to vote than older adults, weakening the case for adoption of such.

“However, if the issue is important enough to young adults they may vote in larger numbers than is typical. If that happens, full access to marijuana could be adopted,” Daugherty said.

**Illegal immigration**

Arizonans seem to be somewhat conflicted on issues surrounding undocumented immigrants, including when asked whether they agree or disagree with the following statement:

> “Undocumented immigrants bolster Arizona’s workforce and we should do whatever’s necessary to make it easier for them to come to Arizona.”

Sixty-one percent either disagree (41 percent) or strongly disagree (19 percent) with that statement. Republicans are much more likely to either disagree (47 percent) or strongly disagree (31 percent) than either Democrats (30 percent and 13 percent) or Independents (45 percent and 11 percent). While Whites (64 percent) are more likely than Latinos (51 percent) to disagree with the statement, the difference is not dramatic.

Overall Arizonans are split on whether to pursue aggressive deportation. Fifty-two percent either agree (32 percent) or strongly agree (19 percent) with the following statement:

> “Arizona should aggressively pursue the deportation of undocumented immigrants”
Two-thirds of Republicans (67 percent) either agree or strongly agree with the statement encouraging aggressive deportation of undocumented immigrants, compared with 35 percent of Democrats and 53 percent of Independents. Yet, there is no significant difference in responses to this statement from Whites (53 percent) and Latinos (47 percent).

Slightly more than one-quarter (28 percent) of Arizona adults agree or strongly agree with the following statement:

“I feel less safe because of all the undocumented immigrants living in the state.”

While Republicans are more likely to agree (25 percent) or strongly agree (12 percent) with the statement than either Democrats (11 percent and 9 percent) or Independents (15 percent, 10 percent), the differences are not notable.

Full poll results for both the first and second installments of findings are available at MorrisonInstitute.asu.edu

Methodology

The survey of 754 randomly selected Arizona adults was conducted between Jan. 20-28, 2015. Interviews averaged 12 minutes in length with about 40 percent of interviews conducted via mobile phones. Respondents were given the choice of doing the interview in English or Spanish. To ensure results represent the general state population, data was weighted by using a post-stratification technique to scale the respondents to census population estimates, including geographic distribution. The margin of error for most items, prior to subsample breakdowns, is about 4 percentage points.

Morrison Institute for Public Policy is Arizona’s premier think tank, examining critical Arizona and regional issues and a catalyst for public dialogue. A unit of the Arizona State University College of Public Service and Community Solutions, Morrison Institute uses nonpartisan research and communication outreach to help improve the state and region’s quality of life. MorrisonInstitute.asu.edu

The Walter Cronkite School of Journalism and Mass Communication is widely recognized as one of the nation’s premier professional journalism programs. Rooted in the time-honored values that characterize its namesake — accuracy, responsibility, objectivity, integrity — the school fosters journalistic excellence and ethics among students as they master the professional skills they need to succeed in the digital media world of today and tomorrow. Cronkite.asu.edu
Other Key Findings

Water

Water and water quality, which along with education was one of the two highest priority issues identified in the inaugural Morrison-Cronkite Quarterly Po, is a complex and oftentimes controversial topic. But most Arizonans indicate concern about the state’s water and the water supply, although most believe careful usage and conservation will stave off any crisis.

When asked whether they strongly agree, agree, disagree, or strongly disagree with the following statement: “Arizona has plenty of water and will be fine into the foreseeable future,” seven in 10 Arizona adults disagree (52 disagree) or strongly disagree (18 percent) with that sentiment. Differences in responses by political party preference are not significant and all lean heavily toward disagreement with the statement (78 percent Democrats, 66 percent Republicans and 74 percent Independents).

Conversely, nearly three-quarters (74 percent) of Arizona adults agree (53 percent) or strongly agree (22 percent) with the following statement: “Arizona is in a water crisis and everything possible needs to be done to resolve it.”

“When it would be an overstatement to say Arizonans are alarmed, on balance, it is clear most are concerned about Arizona’s water supply/water quality,” Daugherty said.

Nearly nine in 10 Arizonans (or 87 percent) agree (65 percent) or strongly agree (22 percent) that: “Careful water conservation will allow Arizona to sustain its water supply and demand challenges.”

And, more than nine in 10 Arizonans (91 percent) believe Arizona should resolve the state’s water quandary before possibly exacerbating it by growth. Sixty one percent agree or strongly agree (29 percent) that: “Sustainable water supplies should be required before new houses are built.”

Crime Rate

More than six in 10 (62 percent) Arizona adults believe that “the crime rate in the town or city in which they live” is staying about where it has been the past few years, while 23 percent believe it is rising. Only 15 percent believe it is falling.
In response to fatalities involving white police and ethnic minorities around the country over the past 12 months, Arizonans were asked how they view police behavior in Arizona:

“In your opinion, do the law enforcement agencies in Arizona treat everyone the same or do they have a different set of behaviors and rules depending upon the ethnicity of the person they encounter?”

Overall, the response is split almost evenly. Forty-eight percent believe law enforcement agencies treat everyone the same, while 52 percent see differences. However, there are significant differences in perception between Democrats and Republicans. Only 29 percent of Democrats believe law enforcement agencies treat everyone the same, regardless of ethnicity, compared with 68 percent of Republicans. Independents fall between the two parties, at 50 percent. Meanwhile, Latinos (39 percent) are less likely to believe law enforcement agencies treat everyone the same compared with Whites (54 percent).

**Pre-school Children**

Nearly three-quarters of Arizona adults (72 percent) agree (53 percent) or strongly agree (19 percent) that: “Arizona has a responsibility to assist families with their pre-school children if they are unable to do it themselves.”

Democrats (88 percent) are more likely than either Republicans (58 percent) or Independents (69 percent) to agree or strongly agree with that statement.

**Caregiving**

More than one-quarter of Arizona adults (26 percent) “help care for a person unable to fully care for himself or herself such as an elderly person or an adult or child with a disability.” More than half (52 percent) of those being cared for are 65 or older, although more than one in five (22 percent) is 17 or younger.

**Job Market**

Forty-three percent of Arizona adults believe, compared with one year ago, the Arizona job market is improving while 40 percent see it as the same and 17 percent perceive it to be worse.

**Financial Status**

Nearly three in 10 Arizona adults (29 percent) say they are better off financially than they were one year ago, while 17 percent of respondents say they are worse off. The remainder (55 percent) says their financial circumstances are about the same as they were one year ago.