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Built by Immigrants, Shaped by Immigration

Attitudes of Chicagoland Residents
on Immigration Policies

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LESTER
CROWN CENTER
ON US FOREIGN POLICY

M. SPENCER GREEN / AP

Contents

About the Chicagoland Immigration Survey.....	3
Executive Summary	5
Chicagoland Residents Consider Immigrants a Positive Force.....	5
Most Chicagoland Residents Favor Increasing or Maintaining Legal Immigration.....	6
Having Necessary Skills Considered Most Important for Immigrants	6
Most Criteria for Refugee Status Widely Accepted by Chicagoland Residents	7
Most Favor Allowing Undocumented Immigrants to Apply for Citizenship	8
Conclusion.....	9
Introduction	10
Section 1: Immigration and Diversity	12
Chicago Widely Seen as Welcoming to Immigrants	12
Half or More in Chicagoland Have Personal Relationships with Immigrants	13
Chicagoland Residents See Immigration Having a Positive Impact on their Economy and Communities	14
Immigrants Seen as Important to Most Industries	18
Around Half Say Growing Diversity Makes the United States Better	20
Chicagoland Residents Divided between Increasing or Maintaining Legal Immigration	22
Most See Legal Immigration Process as Difficult	24
Section 2: Pathways and Policies.....	27
Widespread Support for Accepting Immigrants and Refugees.....	27
Important Conditions for Immigrants: Skills, Sponsors, and Speaking English.....	29
Majorities of Chicagoland Residents Support Most Criteria for Granting Refugee Status	32
Most Favor Allowing Immigrants Living Illegally in US to Apply for Citizenship	34
Most Cook and Lake County Residents Favor Legal Status for “Dreamers”	36
Conclusion: Welcoming Chicagoland	39
Methodology	40
Appendix	41
About the Chicago Council on Global Affairs.....	44
About the Lester Crown Center on US Foreign Policy	44

About the Chicagoland Immigration Survey

Chicago is one of the great immigration gateway cities for the United States, and immigrants have left their mark on the city and in the surrounding suburbs. These include the immediate suburbs in Cook County (within which the city of Chicago sits) as well as in the surrounding five “collar counties” of Lake, McHenry, Kane, DuPage, and Will. Often broadly referred to as Chicagoland, the area continues a tradition as home to one of the United States’ [“largest and most diverse”](#) immigrant populations.

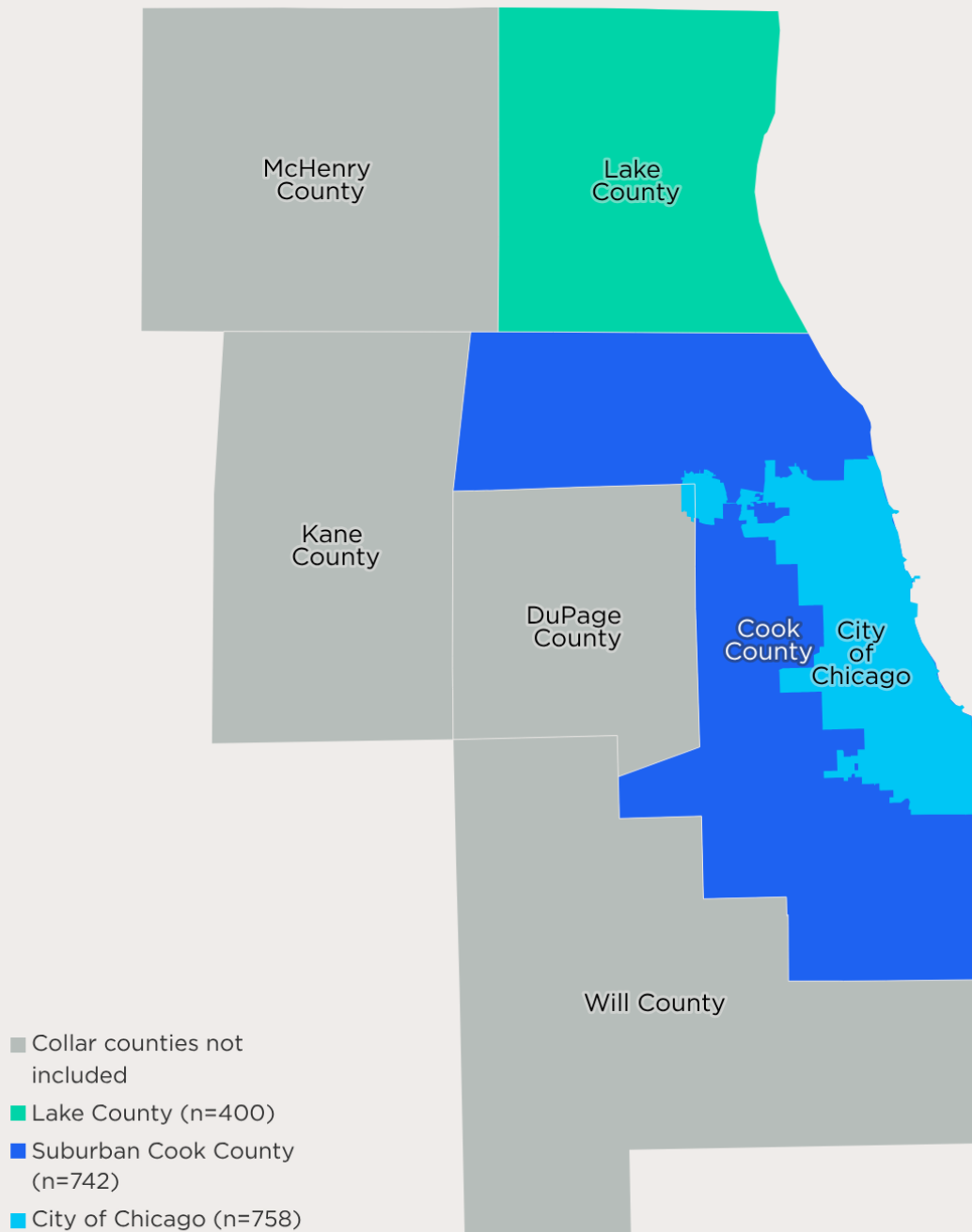
To better understand how Chicagoland residents think about immigration and immigrants, and how local attitudes reflect or differ from national opinion, the Chicago Council on Global Affairs conducted an in-depth survey of local residents: the Chicagoland Immigration Survey, fielded April 13–23, 2026, in Cook County (n=1500) and Lake County (n=400). Cook County can be further divided into the city of Chicago (n=758) and suburban Cook County (n=742). Because of the smaller size of the Lake County samples, analysis by partisanship, race, or education are only reported for Cook County results.

Finally, we want to give special thanks to Ana Gonzalez-Barrera and Caroline Bach for their assistance in preparing this report.

	Chicago	Suburban Cook County	Lake County
N (sample size)	758	742	400
Partisanship (%)			
Republican	13	23	27
Democrat	56	45	39
Independent	30	31	34
Race/Ethnicity (%)			
Black/African American	25	16	6
White/Caucasian	34	49	58
Hispanic/Latino	29	21	23
Asian American/Pacific Islander (AAPI)	8	10	9
Other	3	3	1
Age (%)			
18-29	23	18	21
30-44	32	23	24
45-59	20	24	27
60+	25	34	28

Overview: Chicagoland and Survey Coverage

Highlighted areas covered in the Chicago Council's 2026 Chicagoland Immigration Survey



Survey fielded April 13-23, 2026
CHICAGO COUNCIL ON GLOBAL AFFAIRS



Executive Summary

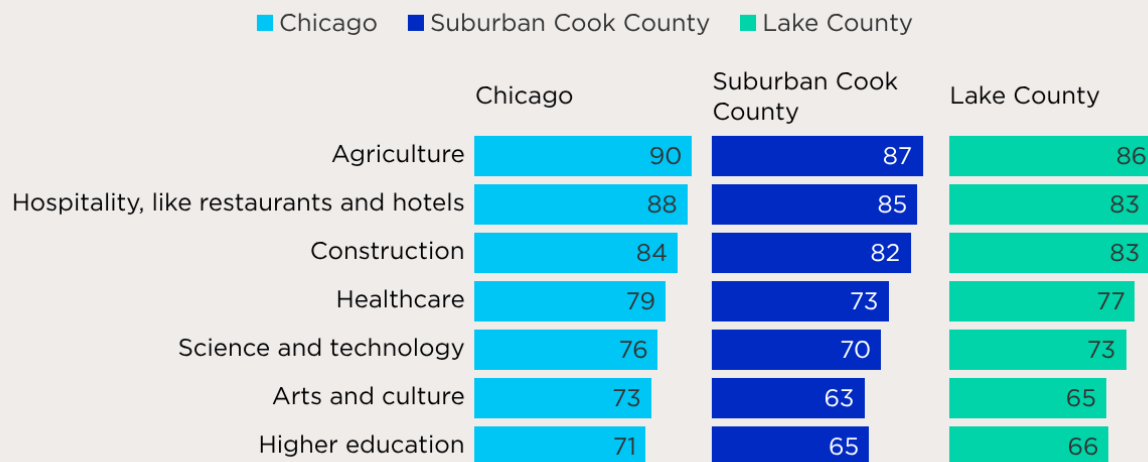
It's no exaggeration to say that immigration made Chicago what it is today. The 19th century saw Chicago transform from a small trading post on Lake Michigan and the Chicago River into a global metropolis. Its railroads, canals, and meatpacking industry beckoned opportunity to [new immigrants](#) and made Chicago the “Hog Butcher for the World” and “the Nation’s Freight Handler.” Today, 1.6 million immigrants [call the Chicago metropolitan region home](#), representing 19 percent of the total regional population.

Chicagoland Residents Consider Immigrants a Positive Force

Across the city of Chicago, suburban Cook County, and Lake County, six in 10 residents say immigrants have been good for American culture, the US economy, their local economy, and their own communities, similar to overall Americans in a [Chicago Council 2025 national survey](#). Majorities also value immigrants’ importance to US agriculture, hospitality industries, construction, healthcare, science and technology, arts and culture, and higher education.

Importance of Immigrants to US Industries

Now I am going to read you a list of industries in the United States, and I'd like to know how important you think immigrants are to each. (% very + somewhat important)



April 13-23, 2026 | n=1,900

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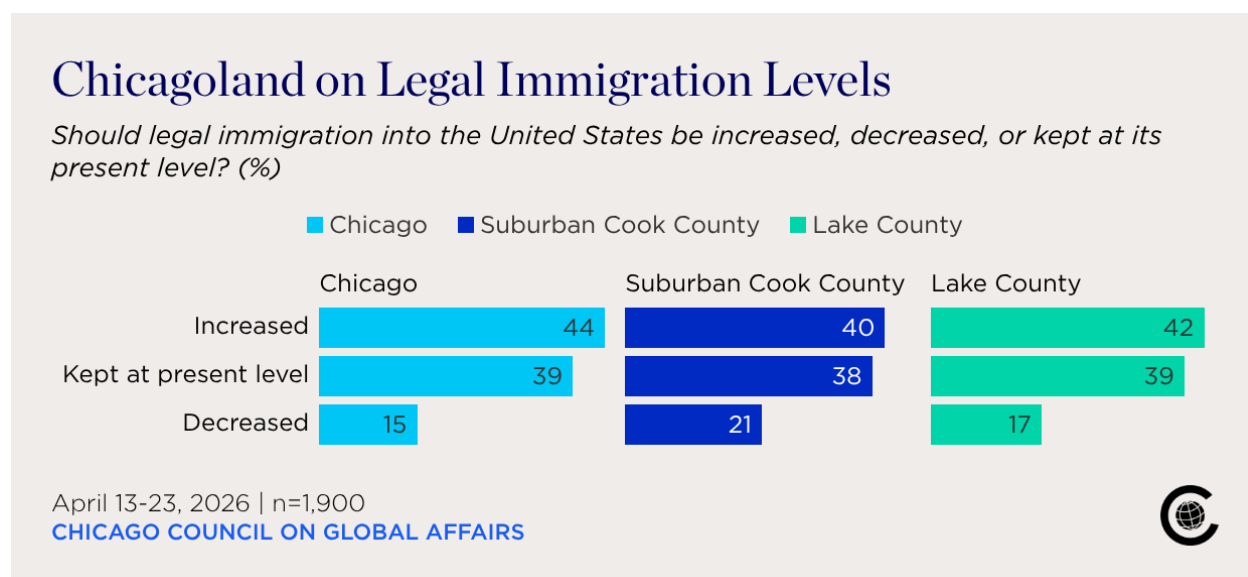


About half of Chicago area residents believe that increasing the number of people of different races, nationalities, and ethnicities makes the country a

better place to live compared to about a quarter who say it makes it a worse place (a quarter say no difference), [similar to US overall opinion](#). And more than nine in 10 residents of Chicago, suburban Cook, and Lake County say Chicago has historically been a welcoming place for immigrants.

Most Chicagoland Residents Favor Increasing or Maintaining Legal Immigration

Roughly eight in 10 in Chicago, suburban Cook County, and Lake County favor either increasing legal immigration or maintaining it at its present level, with opinion split about equally between the two. Relatively few (no more than 21%) in Chicago, suburban Cook County, or Lake County favor decreasing present levels of legal immigration. As a point of reference, support for immigration levels hit a new national high in the [2025 annual Chicago Council Survey](#) of the American public, with 49 percent saying it should be kept at present levels and 28 percent preferring to increase it (21% decrease).

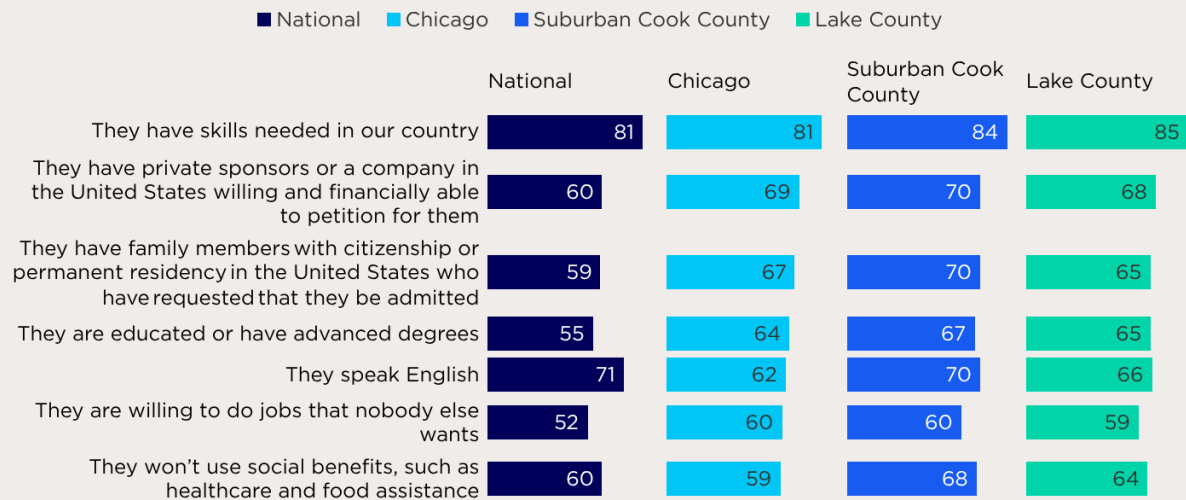


Having Necessary Skills Considered Most Important for Immigrants

More than any other attribute, eight in 10 Chicagoland residents think it is important that immigrants selected for admission to the United States have skills needed in our country. Two-thirds or more also consider having a sponsor or family member in the United States with legal status important, along with speaking English. Majorities—especially those in suburban Cook County—also think it is very important that immigrants selected for admission don’t use social benefits such as healthcare or food assistance.

Importance of Immigrant Admission Criteria

As you may know, the US government has criteria for deciding whether applicants for immigration should be accepted. How important is it that immigrants to the US meet the following attributes? (% very + somewhat important)



National: April 24-26, 2026 | n=1,022
Chicagoland: April 13-23, 2026 | n=1,900
 CHICAGO COUNCIL ON GLOBAL AFFAIRS

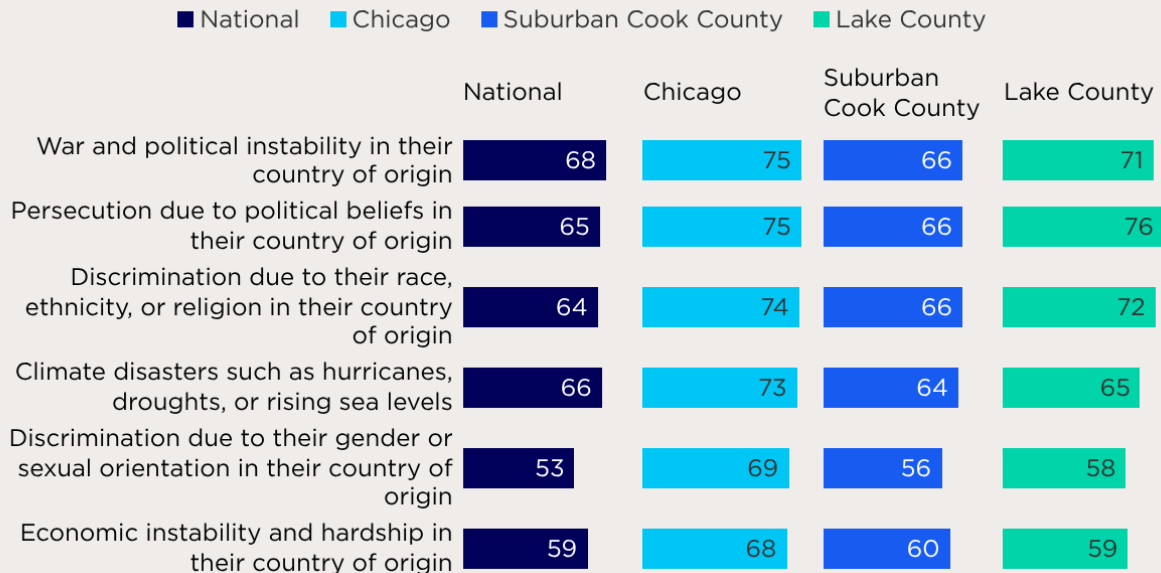


Most Criteria for Refugee Status Widely Accepted by Chicagoland Residents

Asked about reasons refugees might be accepted into the United States, three-quarters of Chicago area residents say that war and political instability; persecution for political beliefs; discrimination due to race, ethnicity, or religion; and climate disasters are all valid reasons for granting refugee status. Roughly seven in 10 Chicagoans say the same about discrimination due to gender or sexual orientation and economic instability. Chicago residents are, in fact, more supportive of accepting refugees than Americans overall, according to a [Chicago Council – Ipsos nationwide survey conducted in April 2026](#).

Reasons for Refugee Admission

Now I have a list of reasons why the United States may accept refugees, and I'd like to know whether you support or oppose each. (% support)



Chicagoland: April 13-23, 2026 | n=1,900

National: April 24-26 2026 | n=1,022

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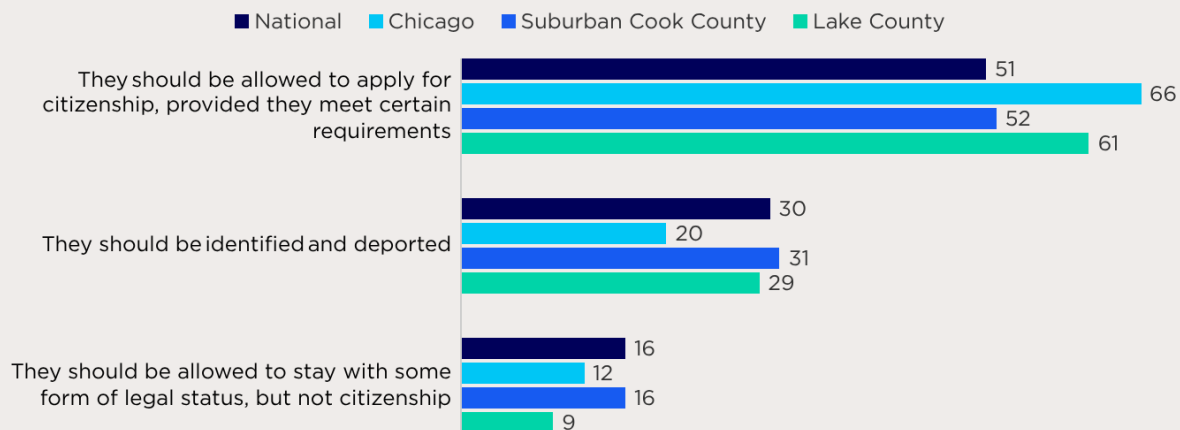


Most Favor Allowing Undocumented Immigrants to Apply for Citizenship

Asked what should be done regarding undocumented immigrants, at least six in 10 Chicagoans (66%) and Lake County residents (61%) favor allowing them to apply for citizenship. Half of suburban Cook County residents (52%) agree. Suburban Cook County residents' attitudes are on par with the national average (51%), according to the [Council's April 2026 nationwide poll](#), while Chicago and Lake County residents are more likely than the national average to favor a path to citizenship.

Policy toward Undocumented Immigrants Living in the US

What should be done about immigrants who are currently living illegally in the United States? (%)



National: April 24-26, 2026 | n=1,022

Chicagoland: April 13-23, 2026 | n=1,900

CHICAGO COUNCIL ON GLOBAL AFFAIRS / IPSOS



Additionally, eight in 10 Chicagoans (79%), and seven in 10 suburban Cook County and Lake County residents (72% each), favor granting permanent legal status to “Dreamers,” those who were brought to the United States without legal status as children. Americans nationally also favor granting permanent legal status to Dreamers (68%), with Chicago residents are disproportionately supportive compared to the national average.

Conclusion

Chicago was built by immigrants, and their impact is evident across the city and in the surrounding suburbs and collar counties. As this survey of Chicagoland shows, residents don’t just see Chicago as having been a welcoming city in the past—they continue to welcome new Chicagoans from around the world. Yet just as is true across the country, there are sharp partisan differences on many immigration-related issues, including which immigrants should be admitted into the country, the best way to address undocumented immigrants, and what criteria merit offers of refuge for those fleeing their countries.

Introduction

*Come and show me another city with lifted head singing so proud to be
alive and coarse and strong and cunning.
— Carl Sandburg, “Chicago”*

In the late 19th century, Chicago transformed from a small trading post into a bustling global metropolis, driven by its railroads, canals, meatpacking industry—and its [many immigrants](#). By 1870, nearly half of Chicago’s population was made up of immigrants (48%), a larger share than any other North American city. In the mid-19th century, [these immigrants](#) came largely from Ireland and Germany, and the next wave included large numbers of Russian Jews, Poles, Slavs, and Italians. These immigrants weren’t welcomed by all residents of the city, and each struggled with [nativist sentiment](#) that rose and fell with each wave of migration. Following the national immigration reforms of 1965, Chicago welcomed increasing numbers of Asian and Latin American immigrants. In recent years, Chicago has greeted a growing number of African immigrants and, in 2022, a [wave of refugees](#) from Ukraine and Venezuela.

As Chicago has grown more diverse, so too have its surrounding suburbs. These include the immediate Chicago suburbs in Cook County (within which the city of Chicago sits) as well as in the surrounding five “collar counties” of Lake, McHenry, Kane, DuPage, and Will. Often broadly referred to as Chicagoland, the area is home to 1.6 million immigrants who represent 19 percent of the total population. As a [2020 Chicago Council report put it](#), metro Chicago’s immigrant population, by itself, would be the sixth-largest city in the United States and the ninth-largest city in North America.

In recent years, Chicago has been front and center in the nation’s immigration debates. While many Chicagoans welcomed with open arms recent Ukrainian and Venezuelan refugees and asylum seekers fleeing war and dictatorship, the efforts by the city to provide for them also raised questions from longtime residents about why similar resources weren’t provided to their own communities. And in 2025, [Operation Midway Blitz](#) put large numbers of Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) and Customs and Border Protection (CBP) agents on Chicago’s streets. The operations mobilized local residents to protect their neighbors and led to frequent clashes between federal agents and protesters.

The survey shows that the vast majority of Chicagoland residents see Chicago as a welcoming place for immigrants. Yet like the rest of the country, there are sharp partisan differences. Democrats are consistently and significantly

more likely than Republicans to view immigration as having a positive impact on America's culture and economy, more supportive of accepting immigrants from a range of nations, and more likely to favor a path to citizenship for undocumented immigrants living in the United States.

Race also plays a role in shaping immigration attitudes. Black and African American residents are more likely to view immigration in more neutral terms than other racial and ethnic groups and are more likely to say the United States should accept immigrants from Haiti and Nigeria. This regional-preference pattern also appears in the views of Asian Americans and Pacific Islander residents and those of Hispanic or Latino heritage.

Education, too, affects peoples' opinion on immigration issues. Those with higher levels of education tend to be more inclined toward promigration attitudes, such as support for higher levels of legal immigration from a broad range of countries and accepting refugees for a wider range of reasons. This is similar to relationships seen in national surveys, in which higher levels of formal education correlate with more prodiversity and proimmigrant viewpoints.

Finally, the survey data demonstrate that Chicagoans' own personal ties to immigrants and refugees have more of an impact on their views on immigration policy than either race or education. More than half of residents of Cook and Lake Counties have relatives, friends, or coworkers who are immigrants or refugees. Reflecting those personal connections, their views are consistently more proimmigrant and proimmigration across a range of issue areas.

Section 1: Immigration and Diversity

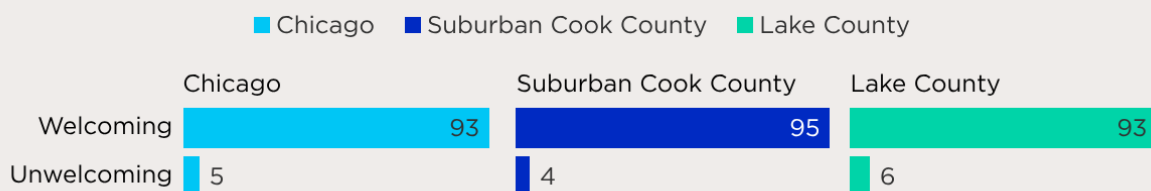
Chicago has long welcomed immigrants, and in the past decades, it has written that welcome into law. Following an executive order from Mayor Harold Washington, Chicago became a “sanctuary city” in 1985, prohibiting city employees or local law enforcement from inquiring about residents’ immigration status in an effort to protect undocumented immigrants from federal immigration enforcement. This was further codified into law in 2006 with the Welcoming City Ordinance. Further efforts to welcome immigrants into Chicago and advance access to city services continue today through the Mayor’s Office of Immigrant, Migrant, and Refugee Rights, work recently recognized in Chicago’s designation as a ‘[4-Star Certified Welcoming](#)’ city by Welcoming America.

Chicago Widely Seen as Welcoming to Immigrants

Chicago is overwhelmingly seen as a welcoming city for immigrants. More than nine in 10 residents of Chicago, suburban Cook County, and Lake County say Chicago has historically been a welcoming place for immigrants, a view that extends across racial and partisan lines. This broad consensus on Chicago’s historical identity as a city of immigrants is striking—and as the rest of the survey results show, many (though not all) Chicagoland residents want the area to remain that welcoming place.

Chicago Seen as a Welcoming Place to Immigrants

In general, would you say the Chicago region has historically been mostly welcoming or unwelcoming to immigrants? (%)



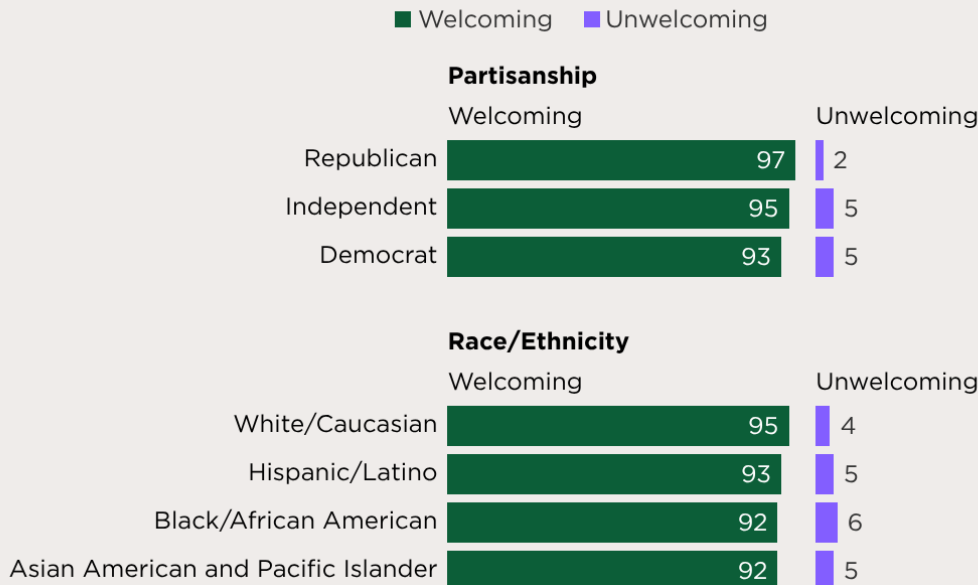
April 13-23, 2026 | n=1,900

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Chicago Seen as a Welcoming Place to Immigrants

[Among Cook County residents] In general, would you say the Chicago region has historically been mostly welcoming or unwelcoming to immigrants? (%)



April 13-23, 2026 | n=1,500

Cook County only

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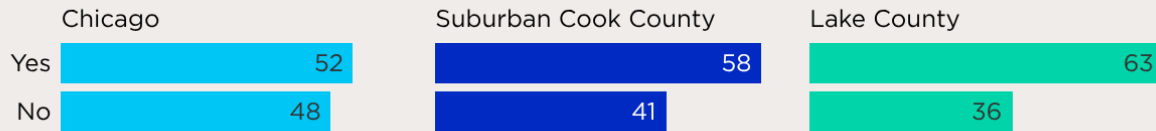


Half or More in Chicagoland Have Personal Relationships with Immigrants

As a city with such a large immigrant population, many Chicagoland residents have a personal connection to immigration. Half of Chicagoans (52%), and even larger majorities of suburban Cook County (58%) and Lake County (63%) say that they have a relative, friend, or coworker who is an immigrant or refugee to the United States.

Personal Relationships with Immigrants or Refugees

Do you have any relatives, friends, or coworkers who are immigrants or refugees to the United States?



April 13-23, 2026 | n=1,900

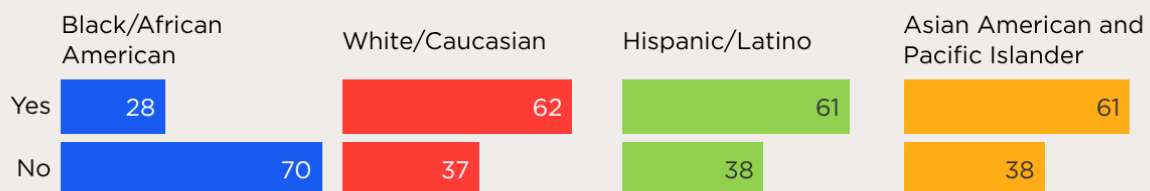
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Different racial groups across Chicagoland have differing levels of personal connection to the region's immigrant communities. In Cook County, similar majorities of White residents (62%), Hispanic or Latino residents (61%), and Asian American and Pacific Islander residents (61%) all say they have relatives, friends, or coworkers who are immigrants or refugees. By contrast, just 28 percent of Black and African American residents report having that kind of personal relationship with someone who is an immigrant or refugee.

Racial Differences on Personal Immigrant Relationships

[Among Cook County residents] Do you have any relatives, friends, or coworkers who are immigrants or refugees to the United States? (%)



April 12-23, 2026 | n=1,500

Cook County only

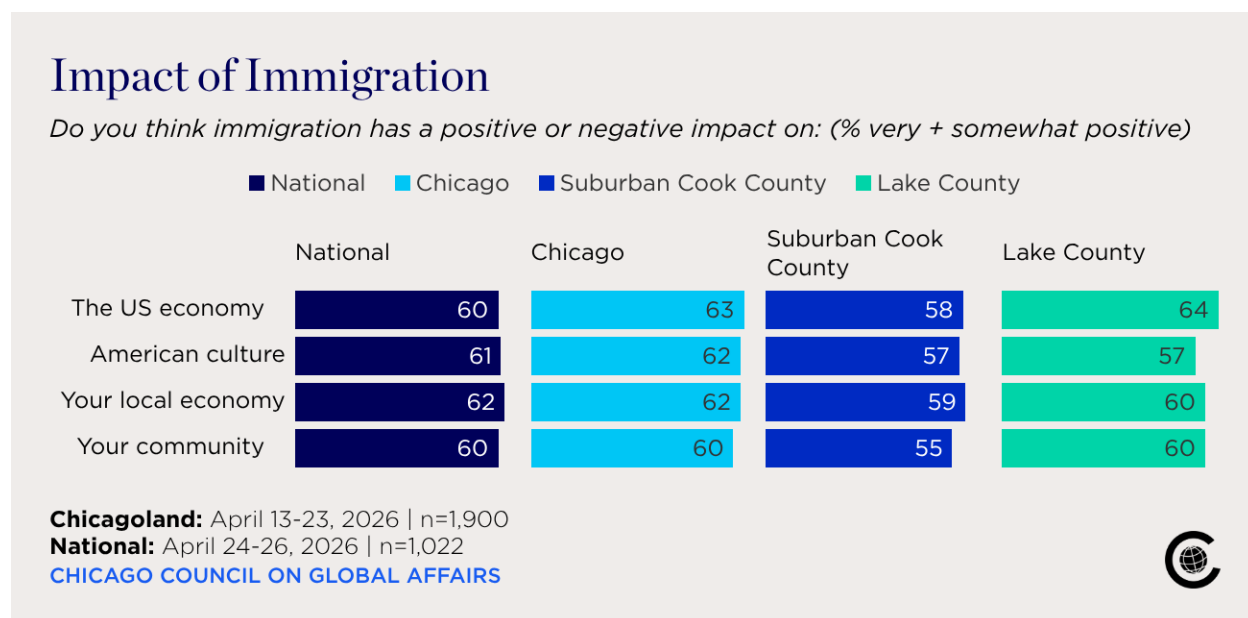
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Chicagoland Residents See Immigration Having a Positive Impact on their Economy and Communities

Across geographies, Chicagoland residents see immigration as having a positive impact on the economy, American culture, and their own communities, with roughly six in 10 across Chicago, suburban Cook County, and Lake County viewing immigration as having a positive impact. Nor are Chicagoans that different from Americans as a whole. An April 2026

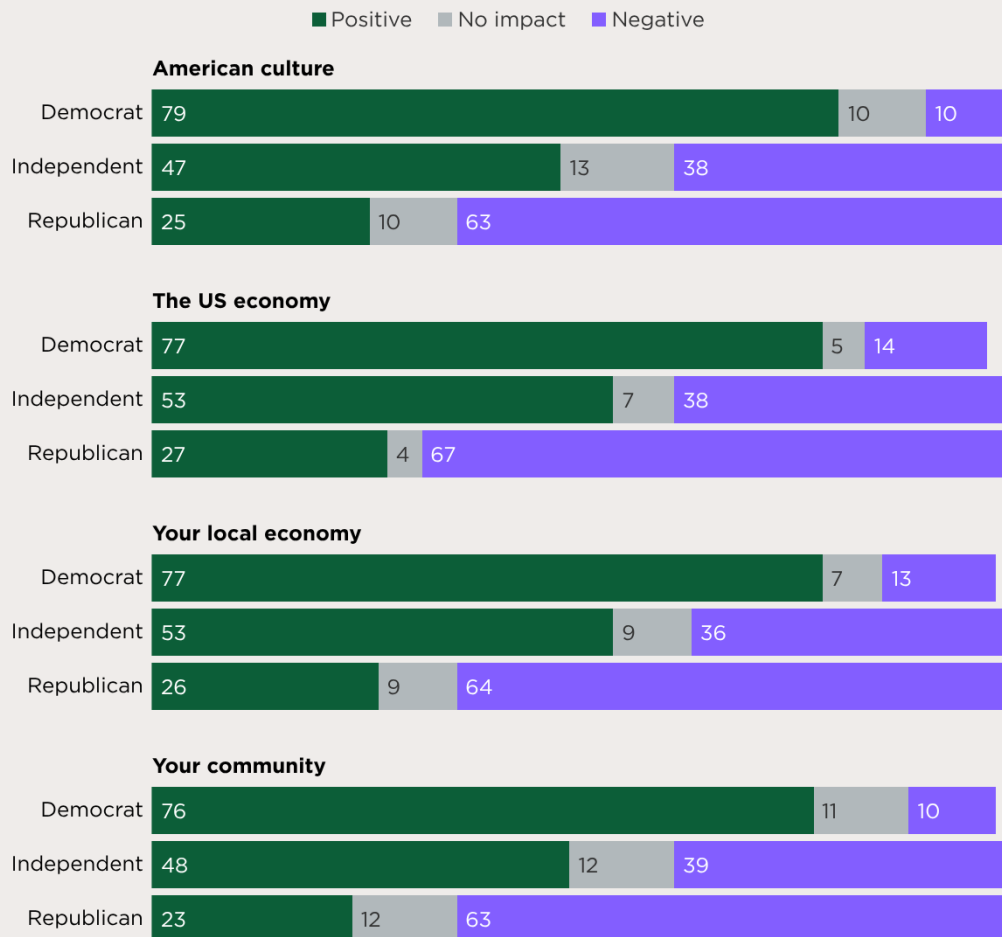
nationwide Chicago Council – Ipsos survey finds [Americans overall view immigration’s impact as similarly positive](#) across issue areas. Chicago residents are particularly positive about immigration’s economic impact, with nearly four in 10 saying it has a *very* positive impact on the national (38%) and local economy (36%), compared to smaller shares of suburban Cook and Lake County residents (see appendix figure 1).



However, partisan affiliation plays a significant role in shaping how Chicagoland residents see immigration impacting their lives. Democrats overwhelmingly see immigration as having a positive impact on American culture (79%), the US and local economies (77% each), and their own communities (76%). By contrast, at least six in 10 Republicans view immigration as having a negative impact on the US economy (67%), their local economy (64%), and both American culture and their own community (63% each). Independents fall in the middle, though they tend to view immigration as having a more positive impact rather than a negative one. Pluralities or majorities say immigration is positive for the US and local economies (53% each), their community (48%), and American culture (47%).

Chicagoland Partisan Divisions on Impact of Immigration

[Among Cook County residents] Do you think immigration has a positive or negative impact on: (%)



April 13-23, 2026 | n=1,500

Cook County only

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Attitudes about the impact of immigration also vary across racial groups. Roughly seven in 10 Asian American and Pacific Islander (AAPI) residents are view immigration's impact as positive on their community (70%), the US economy (69%), the local economy (68%), and American culture (68%). Around six in 10 White or Caucasian residents of Cook County, and similar proportions of Hispanic or Latino residents, also see immigration as having a positive impact across areas. Black or African American residents of Cook County are somewhat less positive on immigration's impact. Though majorities view it as being good for the local (57%) and national (53%) economies, just under half (49%) say it is good for their community. In some cases, this is because Black or African American residents are more likely than

others to say immigration has not had an impact (for example, on their own communities or on American culture). Yet there have also been [real conflicts](#) over how the city of Chicago should allocate scarce resources between newly arrived migrants and local communities grappling with longstanding challenges of poverty and economic underdevelopment.

Chicagoland Racial Differences on Impact of Immigration

[Among Cook County residents] Do you think immigration has a positive or negative impact on: (%)

■ Positive ■ No impact ■ Negative

American culture



The US economy



Your local economy



Your community



April 13-23, 2026 | n=1,500

Cook County only

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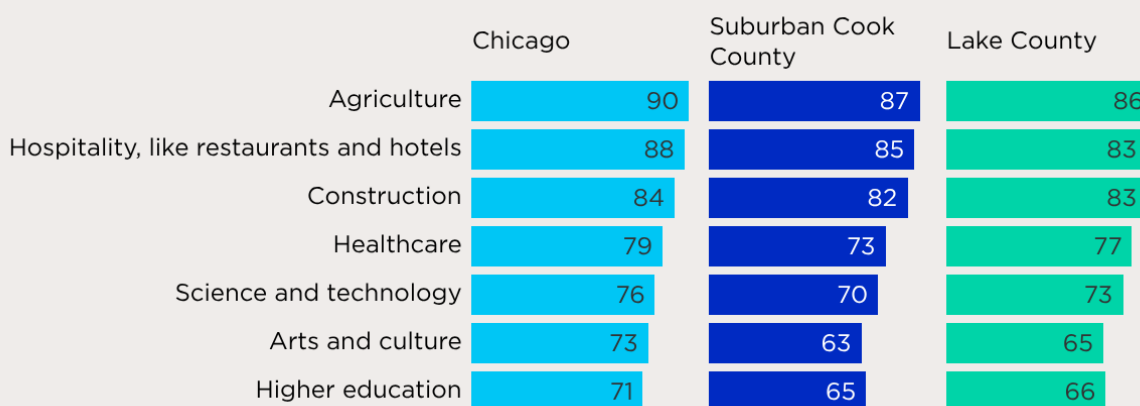
Immigrants Seen as Important to Most Industries

Across the board, majorities of Chicagoland residents see immigrants as important to each industry asked about. In Chicago, at least seven in 10 view immigrants as important to each industry, while in suburban Cook County and Lake County, at least 63 percent say the same. In general, across the region, agriculture, hospitality, and construction lead the list of industries for which immigrants are important, followed by healthcare, science and technology, higher education, and arts and culture. This pattern parallels where residents see immigrants as being *very* important. Majorities across the Chicagoland region also view immigrants as very important to agriculture, hospitality, construction, and healthcare, with pluralities seeing immigrants as very important to science and technology, arts and culture, and higher education (see appendix figure 2).

Importance of Immigrants to US Industries

Now I am going to read you a list of industries in the United States, and I'd like to know how important you think immigrants are to each. (% very + somewhat important)

■ Chicago ■ Suburban Cook County ■ Lake County



April 13-23, 2026 | n=1,900

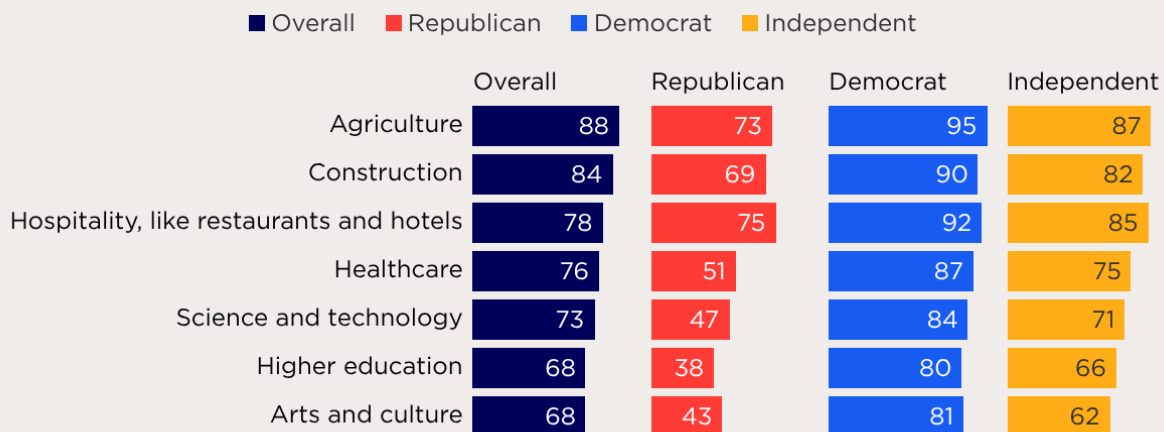
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As with other immigration issues, partisanship plays a notable role in shaping how Cook County residents think about immigrants' importance to various industries. Across partisan lines, residents say immigrants are important for agriculture, construction, and hospitality. However, Republicans are less likely to see immigrants as important for other industries. They are closely divided over whether immigrants are important to healthcare (51% important, 48% not important) and to science and technology (47% important, 52% not important). And majorities of Republicans say immigrants are not important to arts and culture (57% not important, 43% important) and higher education (61% not important, 38% important).

Partisanship and Immigrant Importance to Industry

[Among Cook County residents] Now I am going to read you a list of industries in the United States, and I'd like to know how important you think immigrants are to each. (% net important)



April 13-23, 2026 | n=1,500

Cook County Only

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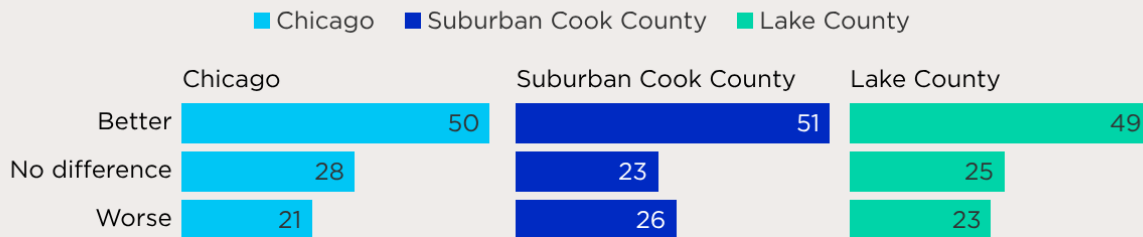


Around Half Say Growing Diversity Makes the United States Better

Among residents of Chicago, suburban Cook County, and Lake County, views of the growing diversity of the United States are similar, with about half saying it makes the country a better place to live in. A quarter believe it makes no difference, while another quarter says it makes the country a worse place to live in. On this measure, Chicagoland residents express views similar to Americans as a whole, according to the nationwide 2025 [Chicago Council Survey](#).

Diversity and the United States

Does the increasing number of people of different races, nationalities, and ethnic groups in the United States make the country a better place to live in, a worse place to live in, or does it make no difference? (%)



April 13-23, 2026 | n=1,900

CHICAGO COUNCIL ON GLOBAL AFFAIRS



Partisanship plays a significant role in Cook County residents' views of the nation's growing diversity. While two-thirds of Cook County Democrats (67%) see greater diversity as making the country better, just four in 10 Independents (41%) and two in 10 Republicans (19%) agree. By contrast, Republicans in Cook County are more likely to say it makes the country a worse place to live (55%, vs. 31% of Independents and 7% of Democrats).

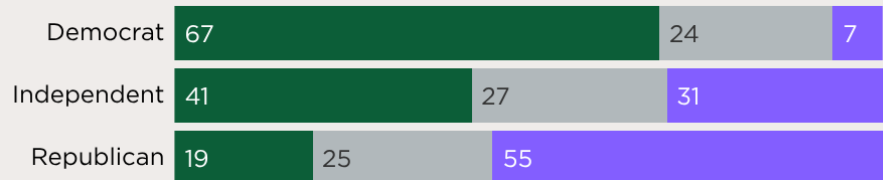
Racial identity is also a factor. More than six in 10 Asian American and Pacific Islander residents of Cook County (63%) say growing diversity makes the nation better, while Black or African American residents are as likely to say it makes no difference (41%) as to say it makes the country better (38%). About half of White or Caucasian residents (55%) and Hispanic or Latino residents (49%) say diversity makes the country better.

Diversity and the United States

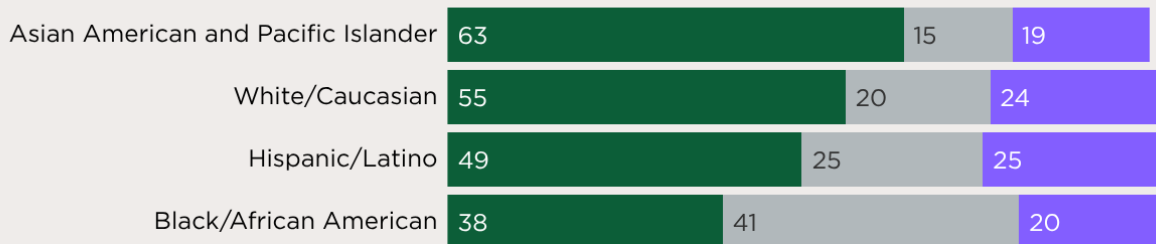
[Among Cook County residents] Does the increasing number of people of different races, nationalities, and ethnic groups in the United States make the country a better place to live in, a worse place to live in, or does it make no difference? (%)

■ Better ■ No difference ■ Worse

Partisanship



Race/Ethnicity



April 13-23, 2026 | n=1,500

Cook County only

CHICAGO COUNCIL ON GLOBAL AFFAIRS

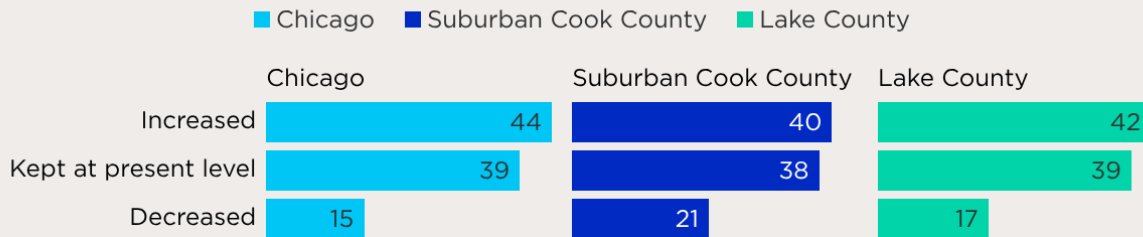


Chicagoland Residents Divided between Increasing or Maintaining Legal Immigration

In 2024, the share of immigrants in Chicagoland [reached its highest level since 2006](#), reversing two decades of decline according to the US Census Bureau's American Community Survey. Experts point to an influx of asylum seekers, largely from Venezuela, as a key factor in this growth. Across Chicagoland, residents are divided between whether legal immigration should be increased or kept at present levels, with roughly four in 10 in Chicago, suburban Cook, and Lake County favoring each side of the argument. Cutting legal immigration is a distinct minority viewpoint, with two in 10 or fewer favoring cuts to legal immigration. As a point of reference, support for immigration levels hit a new high in the nationwide [2025 annual Chicago Council survey](#), with 49 percent saying it should be kept at present levels and 28 percent preferring to increase it (21% decrease).

Chicagoland on Legal Immigration Levels

Should legal immigration into the United States be increased, decreased, or kept at its present level? (%)



April 13-23, 2026 | n=1,900

CHICAGO COUNCIL ON GLOBAL AFFAIRS



Partisan divisions among Cook County residents reflect the national partisan divide on legal immigration levels. Half of Cook County Democrats favor increasing legal immigration (50%, 40% keep at present levels, 8% decrease), while Independents are divided between increasing or maintaining current levels of legal immigration (40% and 38%, respectively). By contrast, Cook County Republicans are divided between decreasing (42%) and maintaining (37%) legal immigration; just two in 10 (21%) favor increases.

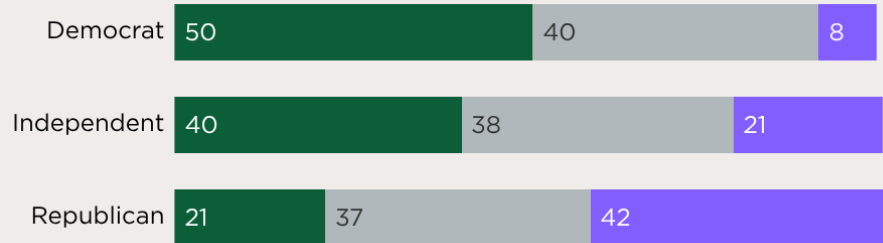
These divisions are broadly similar to the findings of the nationwide 2025 Chicago Council Survey, which found that four in 10 Democrats (40%) and three in 10 Independents (29%) supported increases in legal immigration levels, compared to just 13 percent of Republicans. Conversely, Republicans were most likely to prefer decreasing legal immigration (34%, compared to 20% of Independents and 11% of Democrats).

Chicagoland on Legal Immigration Levels

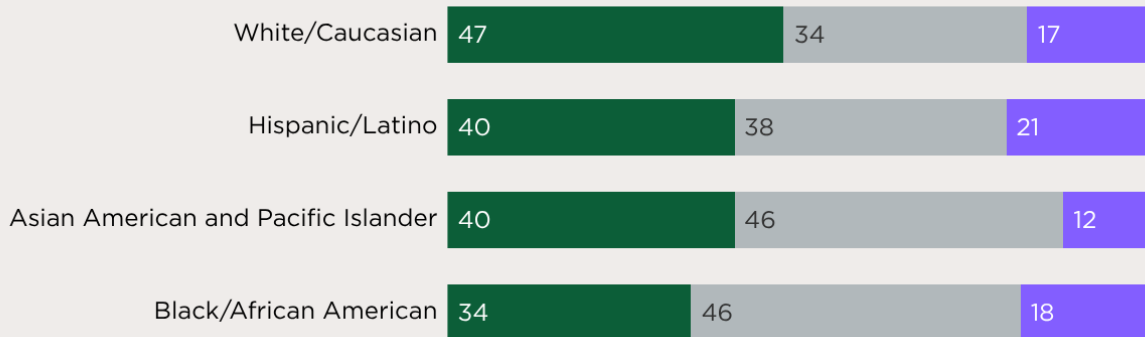
[Among Cook County residents] Should legal immigration into the United States be increased, decreased, or kept at its present level? (%)

■ Increased ■ Kept at present level ■ Decreased

Partisanship



Race/Ethnicity



April 13-23, 2026 | n=1,500

Cook County only

CHICAGO COUNCIL ON GLOBAL AFFAIRS



There are also racial divisions when it comes to Cook County residents' views of legal immigration. White or Caucasian Cook County residents are the most likely group to favor increased levels of legal immigration (47%, 34% maintain, 17% decrease), while Hispanic or Latino residents are divided between increasing (40%) and maintaining current levels (38%), as are Asian American and Pacific Islander residents (46% maintain, 40% increase). Black or African American residents are more likely to favor maintaining legal immigration at current levels (46%), though a third favor increases (34%) and two in 10 support cuts to legal immigration (18%).

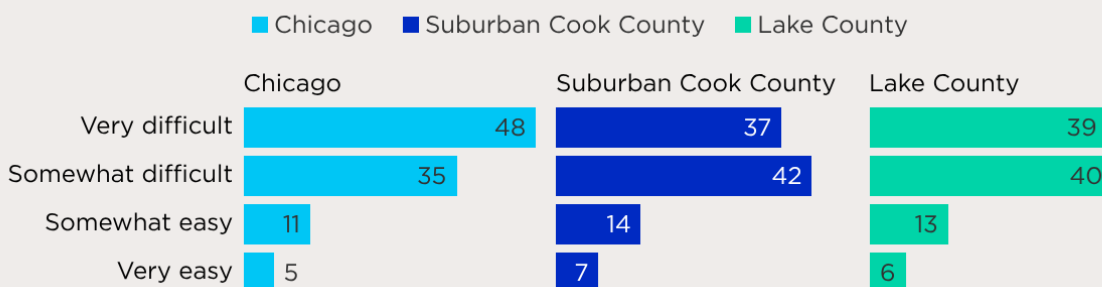
Most See Legal Immigration Process as Difficult

The US immigration process is highly complex, and would-be immigrants often have to rely on expert lawyers, at great cost, to navigate it successfully.

The survey finds that Chicagoland residents are aware of these barriers. Across geographical regions and racial identities, roughly eight in 10 say that legally immigrating to the United States is difficult, with generally similar proportions saying it is very or somewhat difficult. A different pattern emerges by party affiliation. While two-thirds of Republicans (68%) see it as difficult, only 18 percent say it is very difficult.

Legal Immigration to the United States Seen as Difficult

Based on what you know, how easy or difficult is it for someone from a different country to legally immigrate to the United States? (%)



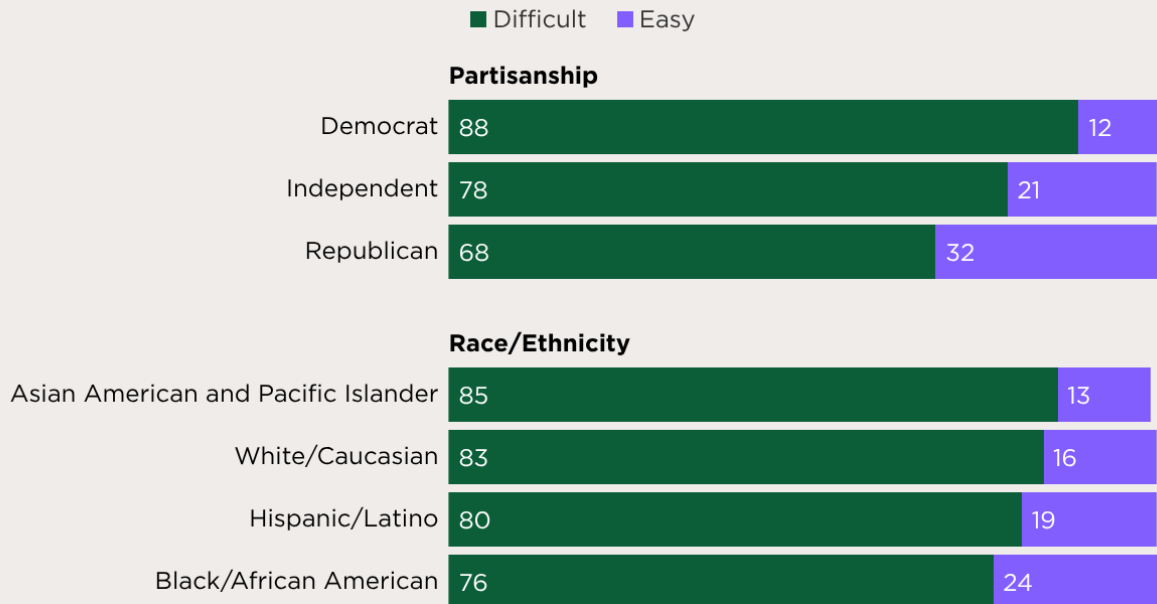
April 13-23, 2026 | n=1,900

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Legal Immigration to the United States Seen as Difficult

[Among Cook County residents] Based on what you know, how easy or difficult is it for someone from a different country to legally immigrate to the United States? (%)



April 13-23, 2026 | n=1,500

Cook County only

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Perception of immigration as a difficult process does not vary by one's personal exposure to that process. Eight in 10 Cook County residents who are themselves immigrants (81%), or whose parents (82%) or grandparents (83%) are immigrants, all say legal immigration to the United States is difficult. And notably, those who want to decrease levels of legal immigration are far more likely to see legal migration as an easy process (42%, vs. 21% of those who want to maintain current immigration levels, and just 6% of those who want to increase legal immigration).

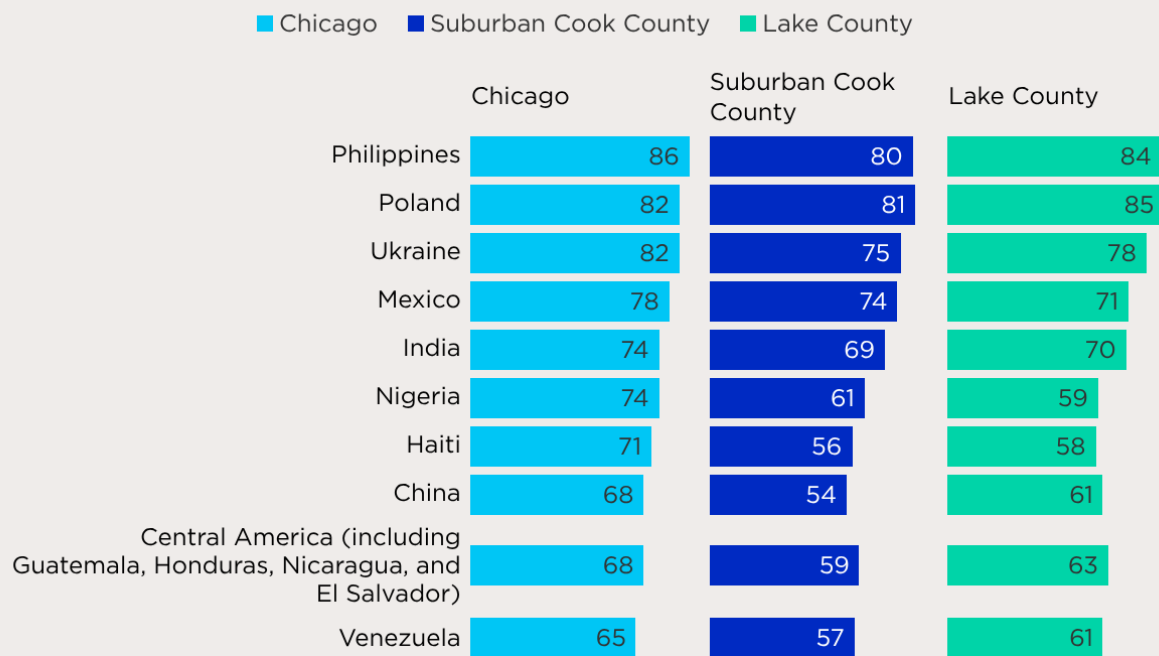
Section 2: Pathways and Policies

Widespread Support for Accepting Immigrants and Refugees

Across the Chicagoland region, majorities favor accepting immigrants and refugees from a wide range of countries included in the survey. Immigrants from the Philippines are the most widely favored group, with at least eight in 10 Chicago area residents in support. At the other end of the scale are immigrants from Venezuela, who still receive support from about two-thirds of Chicagoans (65%), six in 10 Lake County residents (61%), and 57 percent of suburban Cook County residents.

Accepting Immigrants and Refugees from...

Do you support or oppose the United States accepting immigrants and refugees from: (% support)



April 13-23, 2026 | n=1,900

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In some cases, support for admitting immigrants from other countries follows a pattern of racial concordance, meaning that Cook County residents tend to favor admitting immigrants whose racial or ethnic background matches their

own. For example, Black residents of Cook County are more likely than others to support accepting Nigerian and Haitian immigrants. However, there are also some notable exceptions to this pattern. For example, similar proportions across racial groups favor taking in immigrants from Mexico and the Philippines. By contrast, Cook County Hispanic or Latino residents are the least likely group to support taking in Venezuelan immigrants—just half (51%) favor doing so, compared to two-thirds of other racial groups. And AAPI individuals living in Cook County are no more likely than others to support taking in Chinese immigrants.

Immigrant Acceptance by Race/Ethnicity

[Among Cook County residents] Do you support or oppose the United States accepting immigrants and refugees from: (% support)

	Overall	Black/ African American	White/ Caucasian	Hispanic/ Latino	Asian American and Pacific Islander
Philippines	83	84	84	80	85
Poland	81	74	90	72	84
Ukraine	79	69	85	78	78
Mexico	76	73	77	77	77
India	72	71	74	65	79
Nigeria	68	77	65	64	73
Haiti	64	73	62	60	65
Central America (including Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua, and El Salvador)	64	60	65	64	60
Venezuela	62	66	65	51	67
China	61	64	61	59	66

April 13-23, 2026 | n=1,500

Cook County only

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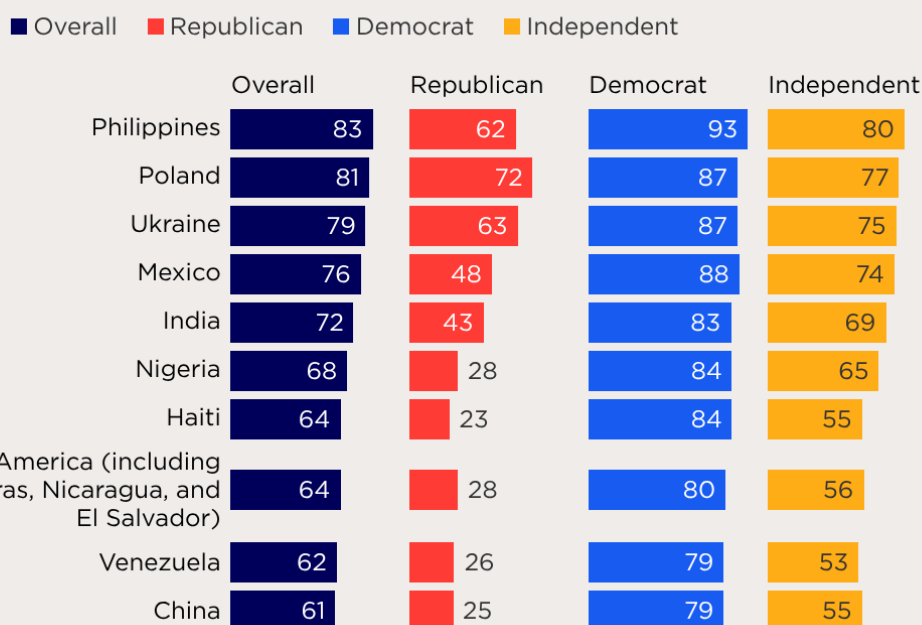
More than region or racial identity, partisanship is the most significant differentiating factor for attitudes from which countries the United States should accept send immigrants and refugees. Cook County Democrats are broadly supportive of taking in immigrants from all countries asked about, with eight in 10 or more in favor. Independents in Cook County are less

enthusiastic, but at least a majority favor taking in immigrants from all countries asked about, ranging from a high of 80 percent for the Philippines to a low of 53 percent for Venezuela.

Republicans, however, are a different story. A majority of Cook County Republicans support taking immigrants from Poland (72%), Ukraine (63%), and the Philippines (62%)—and no others. They are divided over whether to accept immigrants from Mexico (48% support, 51% oppose), and majorities of Cook County Republicans oppose taking in immigrants from other countries asked about.

Partisan Views on Origins of Immigrants and Refugees

[Among Cook County residents] Do you support or oppose the United States accepting immigrants and refugees from: (% support)



April 13-23, 2026 | n=1,500

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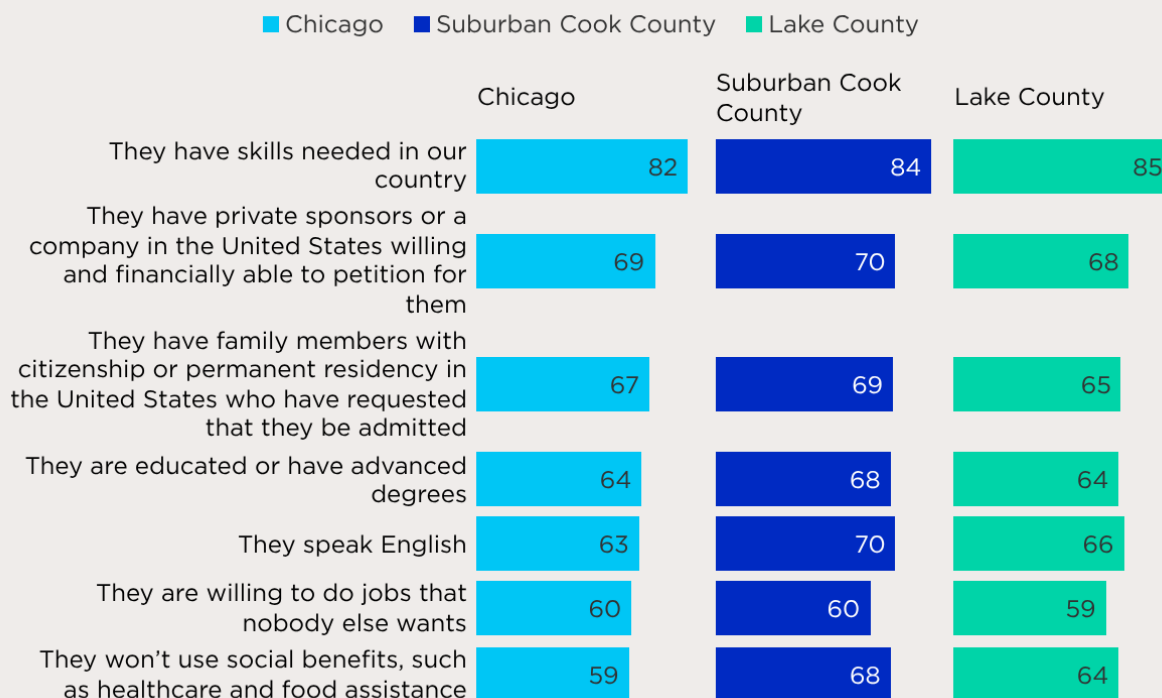
Important Conditions for Immigrants: Skills, Sponsors, and Speaking English

Current US immigration law places greater emphasis on family reunification as admission criteria than work skills, employment sponsorship, or English proficiency. Even so, Chicagoland residents place greater importance on skills, sponsorship, and the ability of immigrants to speak English to gain admission.

The survey finds that eight in 10 Chicagoland residents say it is important for prospective immigrants to have the skills needed in the United States, more than any other admission criteria, with more than half considering it very important across Chicago, suburban Cook County, and Lake County. Two-thirds or more across the region also say it is important for immigrants to have somewhere to land, either in the form of family members with citizenship or permanent residency in the United States, or sponsorship from a company able to petition for them. And across suburban Cook County (70%), Lake County (66%), and Chicago (63%), speaking English rates as an important attribute, with more naming it very important than somewhat important.

Criteria for Immigrant Admission

As you may know, the US government has criteria for deciding whether applicants for immigration should be accepted. I am going to read you a list of attributes, and I'd like to know how important you think each is for selecting immigrants to the United States. (% very or somewhat important)



April 13-23, 2026 | n=1,900

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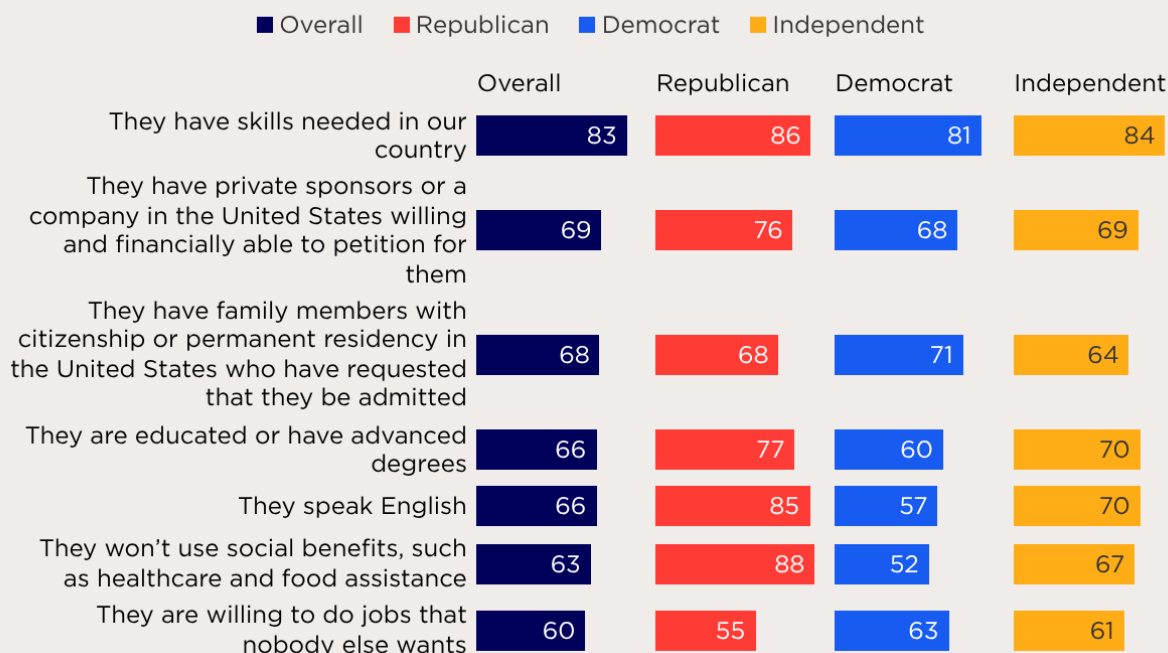


The data show Chicagoland residents on different sides of the partisan aisle have distinctive criteria for accepting immigrants to the United States. While

the partisans agree on the importance of having the skills needed in our country, sponsorship, and family ties, they tend to disagree on other attributes. Cook County Republicans are more likely than Democrats or Independents to think immigrants should be required to speak English, won't use social benefit programs, and have attained college or higher education.

Partisanship and Criteria for Immigrant Admission

[Among Cook County residents] As you may know, the US government has criteria for deciding whether applicants for immigration should be accepted. I am going to read you a list of attributes, and I'd like to know how important you think each is for selecting immigrants to the United States. (% very or somewhat important)



April 13-23, 2026 | n=1,500

Cook County only

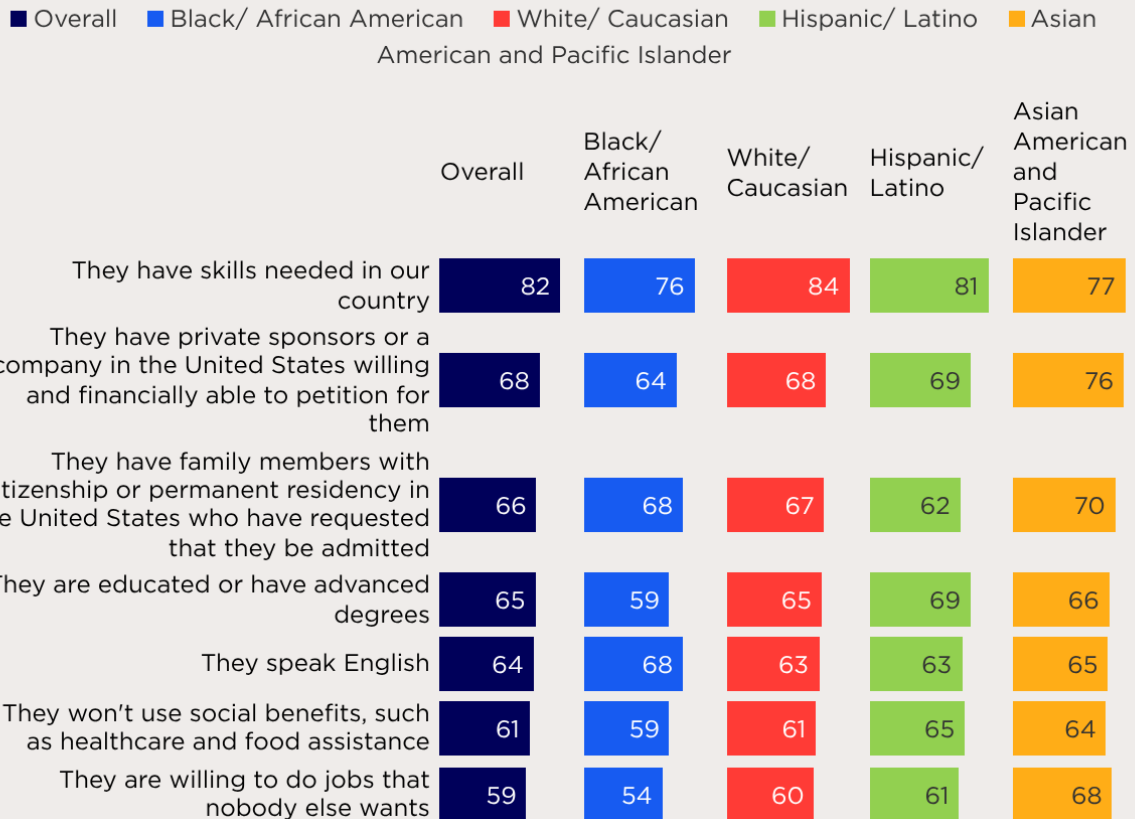
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When looking at racial and ethnic groups, Black or African American Cook County residents tend to see the range of attributes provided as less important for immigrants to have before being accepted into the United States than any other racial and ethnic group.

Immigrant Admission Criteria by Race/Ethnicity

[Among Cook County residents] As you may know, the US government has criteria for deciding whether applicants for immigration should be accepted. I am going to read you a list of attributes, and I'd like to know how important you think each is for selecting immigrants to the United States (% very + somewhat important)



April 12-23, 2026 | n=1,500

Cook County only

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Majorities of Chicagoland Residents Support Most Criteria for Granting Refugee Status

Under the 1980 Refugee Act, individuals pursuing admission to the United States through the US Refugee Admission Program must have well-founded reasons to fear persecution in their home country because of their race, religion, nationality, membership in a social group, or political opinion.

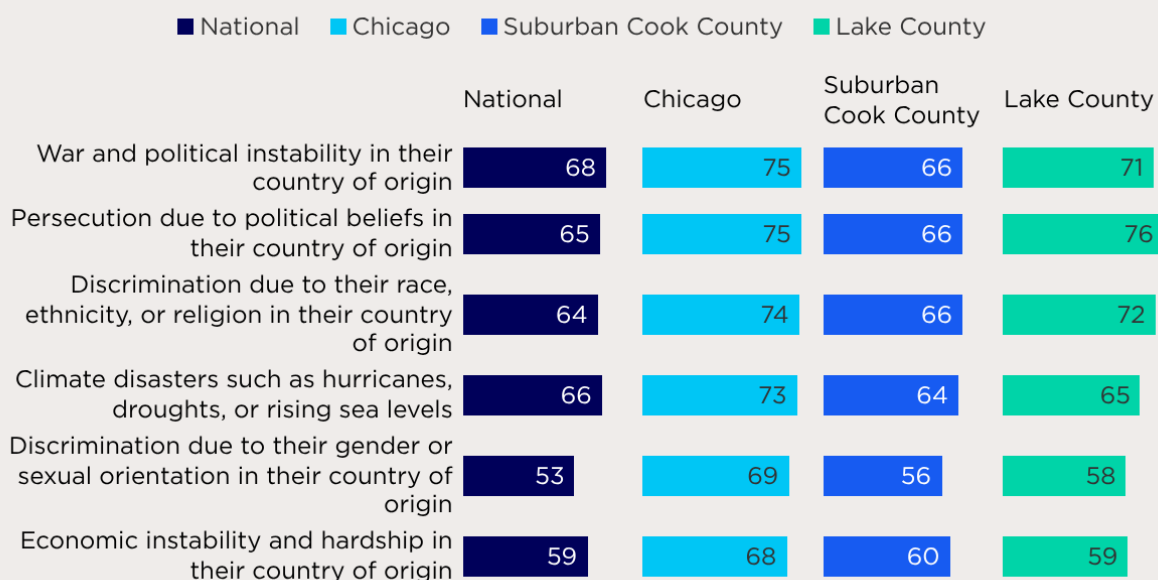
Across the Chicago area, six in 10 or more residents support accepting refugees for a range of reasons. Two-thirds or more of Chicago area residents support admitting refugees due to war and political instability, persecution for

political beliefs, discrimination due to race, ethnicity, or religion, and climate disasters.

Chicagoans are more likely than Americans overall to support each of these reasons for refugee admission. [Recent national Council polling shows](#) smaller majorities of Americans support admitting refugees for each of reasons compared with Chicagoland residents in the current survey. Lake County residents in particular are more likely than overall Americans to support accepting refugees due to racial, ethnic, or religious discrimination as well as persecution for religious beliefs.

Reasons for Refugee Admission

Now I have a list of reasons why the United States may accept refugees, and I'd like to know whether you support or oppose each. (% support)



Chicagoland: April 13-23, 2026 | n=1,900

National: April 24-26 2026 | n=1,022

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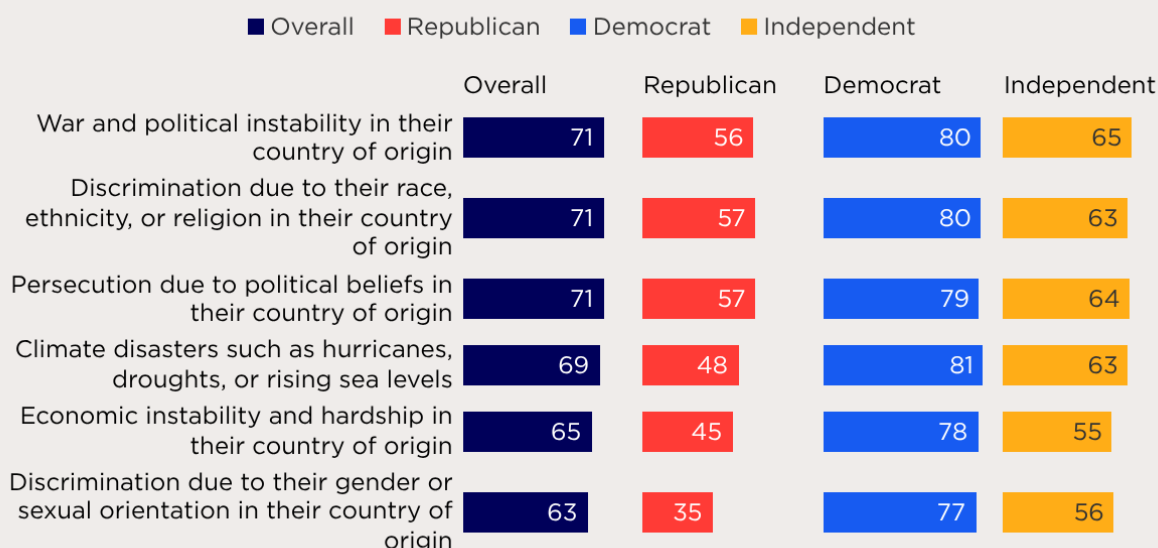


As is true at the national level, partisanship is a significant factor in Cook County residents' attitudes on refugee admission. Though three-quarters or more of Cook County Democrats and at least 55 percent of Cook County Independents support accepting refugees for all reasons asked about, this is not true for Republicans in Cook County. Among Republicans, smaller majorities favor accepting refugees due to political persecution (57%), discrimination due to race, ethnicity, or religion (57%), or war and political instability (56%). Republicans are divided over whether climate disasters

should serve as a reason for accepting refugees (48% support, 49% oppose). And majorities of Republicans oppose accepting refugees for reasons of economic instability and hardship (45% support, 54% oppose) or for discrimination due to their gender or sexual orientation (35% support, 62% oppose).

Partisan Attitudes on Refugee Admission

[Among Cook County residents] Now I have a list of reasons why the United States may accept refugees, and I'd like to know whether you support or oppose each. (% support)



April 13-23, 2026 | n=1,500

Cook County only

CHICAGO COUNCIL ON GLOBAL AFFAIRS

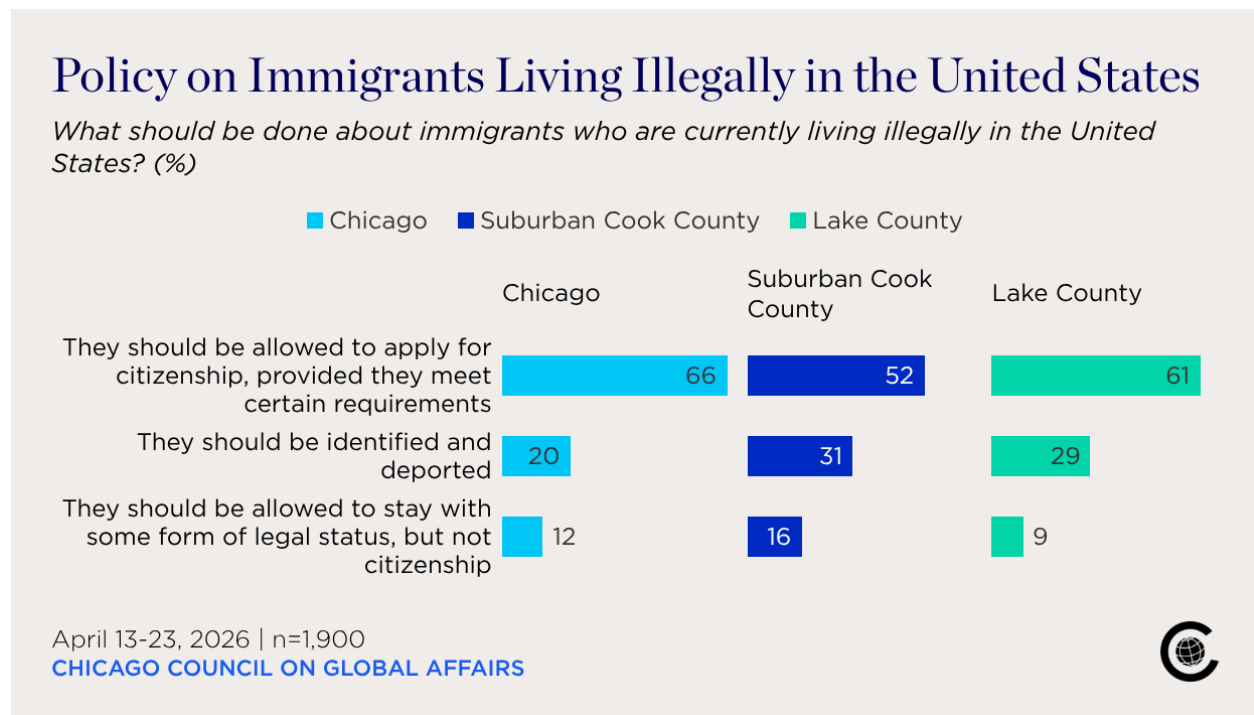


Most Favor Allowing Immigrants Living Illegally in US to Apply for Citizenship

According to a [2023 estimate from the Migration Policy Institute](#), approximately 416,000 undocumented immigrants live in Cook and Lake Counties, approximately seven percent of the total population of the region.

When asked what should be done about immigrants currently living illegally in the United States, a majority of Chicagoland residents favor allowing them to stay and apply for US citizenship, provided they meet certain requirements. Across Cook County, regardless of race or ethnicity, around six in 10 favor allowing immigrants living illegally in the United States to seek citizenship,

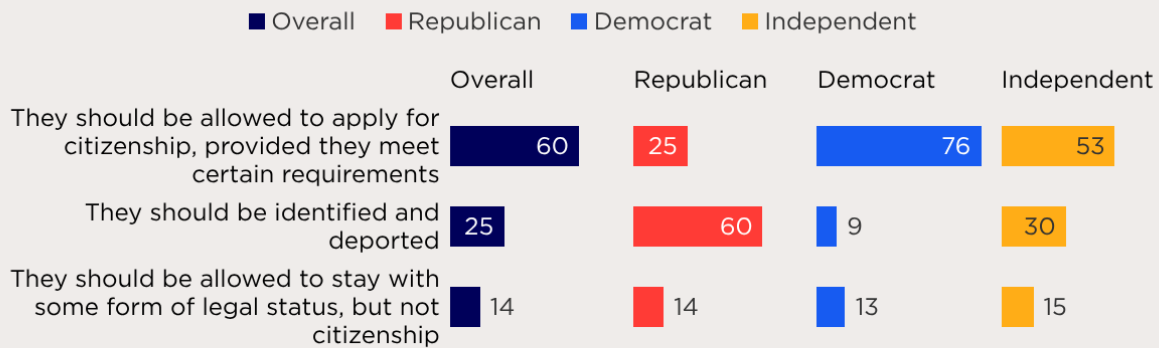
with roughly a quarter favoring deportations instead. A third approach that gives them legal status but not citizenship is the least popular option for nearly all groups. Two-thirds of Chicagoans (66%) favor allowing undocumented immigrants to seek citizenship, with six in 10 Lake County residents (61%) and half of suburban Cook County residents (52%) agreeing. Chicago and Lake County residents are also more supportive of providing undocumented immigrants with a path to citizenship than Americans overall: a nationwide April 2026 Chicago Council-Ipsos survey found that half of Americans overall (51%) say that immigrants currently living illegally in the United States should be allowed to apply for citizenship.



Partisanship is the most divisive factor—both nationally and in Cook County. While three-quarters of Cook County Democrats (76%) and half of Independents (53%) favor a path to citizenship, only a quarter of Republicans (25%) agree. Instead, six in 10 Republicans (60%) say immigrants living illegally in the United States should be identified and deported. These findings mirror divisions along partisan lines found by [nationwide Chicago Council surveys](#) (see appendix figure 3).

Policy on Undocumented Immigrants Living in the US by Partisan Group

[Among Cook County residents] What should be done about immigrants who are currently living illegally in the United States? (%)



April 13-23, 2026 | n=1,500

Cook County only

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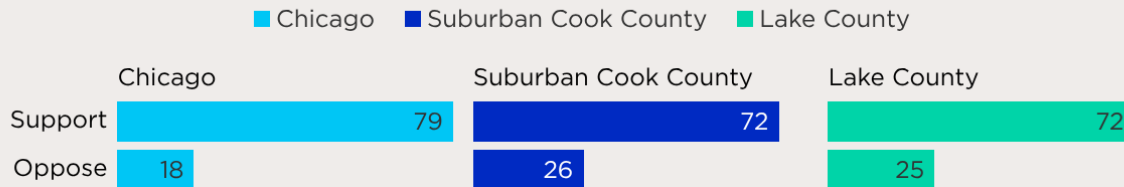
Most Cook and Lake County Residents Favor Legal Status for “Dreamers”

While there is ample support for a path to citizenship for undocumented immigrants in Chicagoland, even larger proportions of Cook and Lake County residents favor granting permanent legal immigration status to “Dreamers”, as undocumented immigrants who came to the United States as children are commonly referred to. The name originates in the [DREAM Act](#), a bipartisan bill that has been repeatedly introduced in Congress to provide legal status and a pathway to citizenship for undocumented immigrants who arrived in the United States as children. In Illinois, Dreamers are [eligible](#) for scholarships and college savings programs in the state under its own IL DREAM Act.

Eight in 10 Chicagoans (79%) and seven in 10 suburban Cook County and Lake County residents (72% each), favor providing these Dreamers with permanent legal immigration status—as do two-thirds of Americans overall, per an [April 2026 Chicago Council-Ipsos poll](#). Support is also widespread across racial and ethnic groups in Cook County, with three-quarters or more in favor.

Widespread Support for “Dreamers” Legal Status

As you may know, many immigrants who were illegally brought to the United States as children, sometimes called “Dreamers,” now have temporary legal immigration status that may be ending soon. Would you support or oppose Congress passing a law granting them permanent legal immigration status? (%)



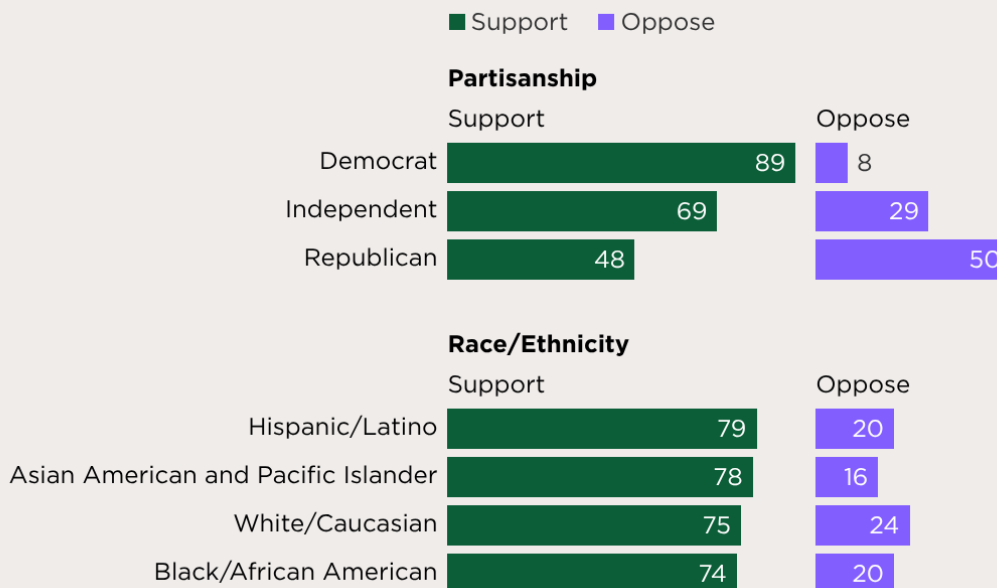
April 13-23, 2026 | n=1,900

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Widespread Support for “Dreamers” Legal Status

[Among Cook County residents] As you may know, many immigrants who were illegally brought to the United States as children, sometimes called “Dreamers,” now have temporary legal immigration status that may be ending soon. Would you support or oppose Congress passing a law granting them permanent legal immigration status? (%)



April 13-23, 2026 | n=1,500

Cook County only

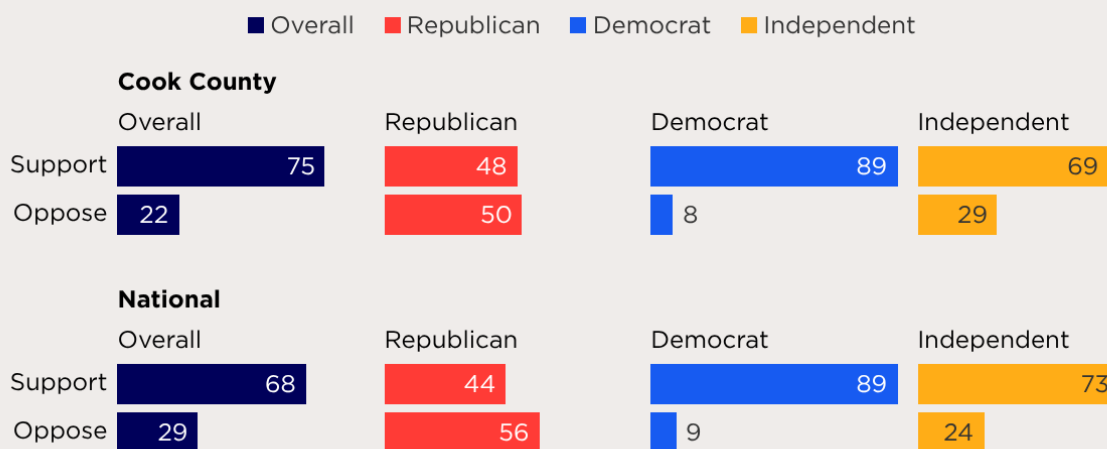
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And though partisanship is a clear point of division, nearly half of Cook County Republicans (47%) favor providing Dreamers with permanent legal status, along with large majorities of Independents (69%) and Democrats (89%). These divisions are nearly identical to national attitudes, with large majorities of Democrats and Independents—and 44 percent of Republicans nationwide—in favor of providing Dreamers with permanent legal status. Notably, Republican support for legal status is substantially higher for Dreamers than for undocumented immigrants overall, suggesting that many Republicans distinguish between immigrants who arrived in the US as children and the broader undocumented population.

Partisan Attitudes on “Dreamers” Legal Status

As you may know, many immigrants who were illegally brought to the United States as children, sometimes called “Dreamers,” now have temporary legal immigration status that may be ending soon. Would you support or oppose Congress passing a law granting them permanent legal immigration status? (%)



Chicagoland: April 13-23, 2026 | n=1,500

National: April 24-26, 2026 | n=1,022

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Conclusion: Welcoming Chicagoland

The 2026 Chicagoland Immigration Survey finds that Chicago remains a welcoming place for immigrants. Across geography, race, and education, the vast majority of residents view Chicago as hospitable to newcomers, see immigration's impact as broadly positive, and support accepting immigrants and refugees from a wide range of countries. In some respects, Chicagoland residents hold more favorable views of immigration than Americans nationally. They are more likely to see growing diversity as beneficial, more supportive of accepting refugees for humanitarian reasons, and more inclined to provide pathways to citizenship for undocumented immigrants and Dreamers alike.

Race and ethnicity shape Chicagoans' immigration attitudes in meaningful ways. Chicagoland residents tend to favor accepting immigrants from countries with racial or ethnic backgrounds to their own, though important exceptions exist. Other differences reflect these communities' distinct histories with immigration. Black or African American residents express more neutral views on immigration's community impact, while those groups with more recent experiences of immigration and with more connection to immigrant communities tend to express stronger proimmigration sentiments. Nevertheless, the common thread across racial lines is a proimmigrant and proimmigration consensus.

Underneath this proimmigrant consensus lie sharp partisan divisions. As nationwide surveys by the Chicago Council find, Democrats and Republicans hold starkly opposed views of immigration, including immigration's economic and cultural impact, which countries should send immigrants to the United States, and how to address undocumented immigrants in the country. Chicagoland attitudes mirror these national-level splits almost exactly.

Yet despite those divisions, Chicagoland residents widely see Chicago as a city welcoming to immigrants. And in a polarized nation, Chicago's thriving immigrant communities may offer the most powerful argument for a more welcoming immigration policy.

Methodology

The Chicagoland Immigration Survey was fielded for the Chicago Council on Global Affairs by Global Strategy Group, which conducted a survey of 1,500 adults 18 or older in Cook County and 400 adults 18 or older in Lake County from April 13–April 23, 2026.

The study was fielded in English and Spanish in a mixed-mode telephone (landline and cell) and text-to-web, with the telephone and text-to-web invitations both using random digit dialing. The margin of error for the Cook County sample is $\pm 2.5\%$, and the margin of error for the Lake County sample is $\pm 4.9\%$.

Margin of Error by Subgroup					
Region		Partisanship (Cook Only)		Race/Ethnicity (Cook Only)	
Chicago	± 3.6	Republican	± 6.0	Black and African American	± 6.5
Suburban Cook County	± 3.6	Democrat	± 3.6	White or Caucasian	± 3.4
Lake County	± 4.9	Independent	± 4.5	Hispanic or Latino	± 5.8
				Asian American and Pacific Islander	± 10.1

The data for both the Cook County and Lake County samples were weighted to adjust for gender, age, race/ethnicity, education, PUMA (Public Use Microdata Area), and 2024 presidential vote. The demographic benchmarks came from the US Census Bureau’s 2024 American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates Public Use Microdata Sample (ACS 1-Year PUMS). Self-reported 2024 presidential vote choice was weighted to the 2024 results in Lake and Cook County.

Specific categories used in weighting were:

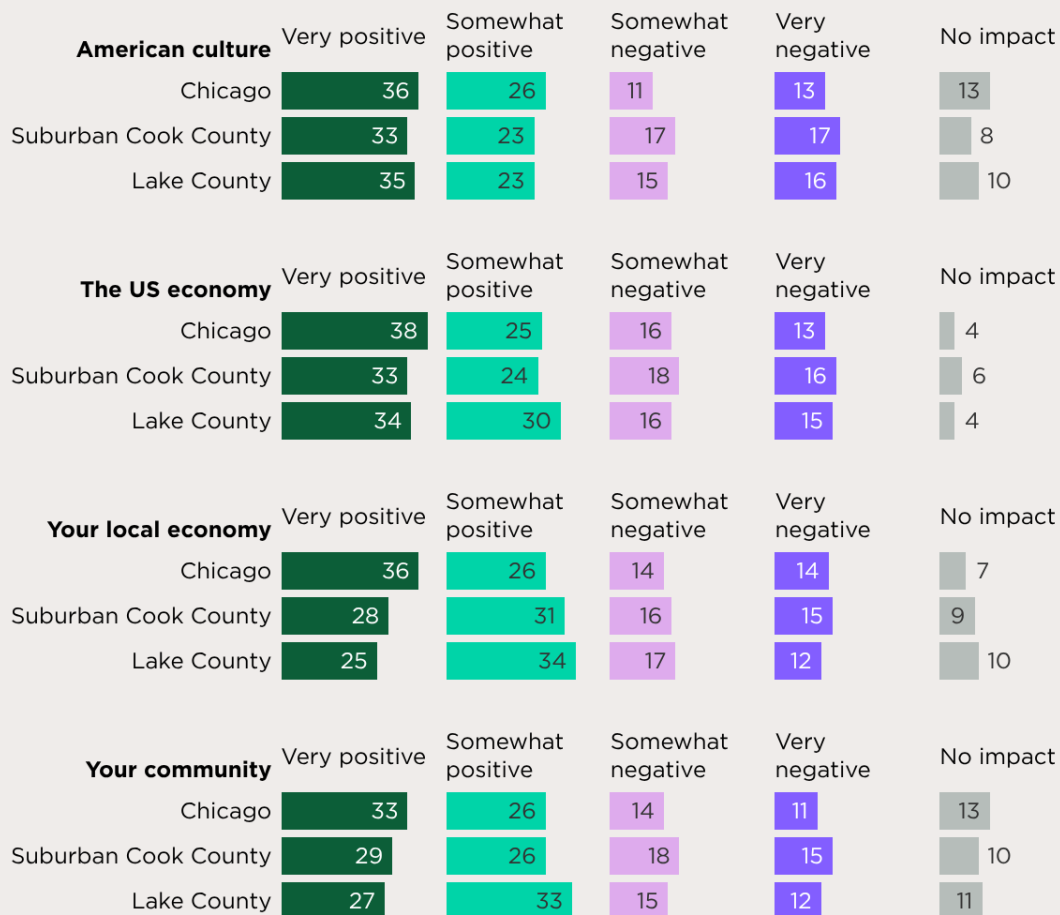
- Gender (Male, Female)
- Age (18–29, 30–44, 45–54, 55–64, 65+)
- Race/Ethnicity (White Non-Hispanic, Black Non-Hispanic, Asian Non-Hispanic, Hispanic, and Other/Multi-Racial)
- Education (College, Non-College)
- PUMA (City of Chicago, Rest of Cook County, Lake County)
- 2024 Presidential Vote (Harris/Trump)

The Chicagoland Immigration Survey was made possible through the generous support of the Walder Foundation and Schreiber Philanthropy.

Appendix

Appendix Figure 1: Chicagoland on Impact of Immigration

Do you think immigration has a positive or negative impact on: (%)



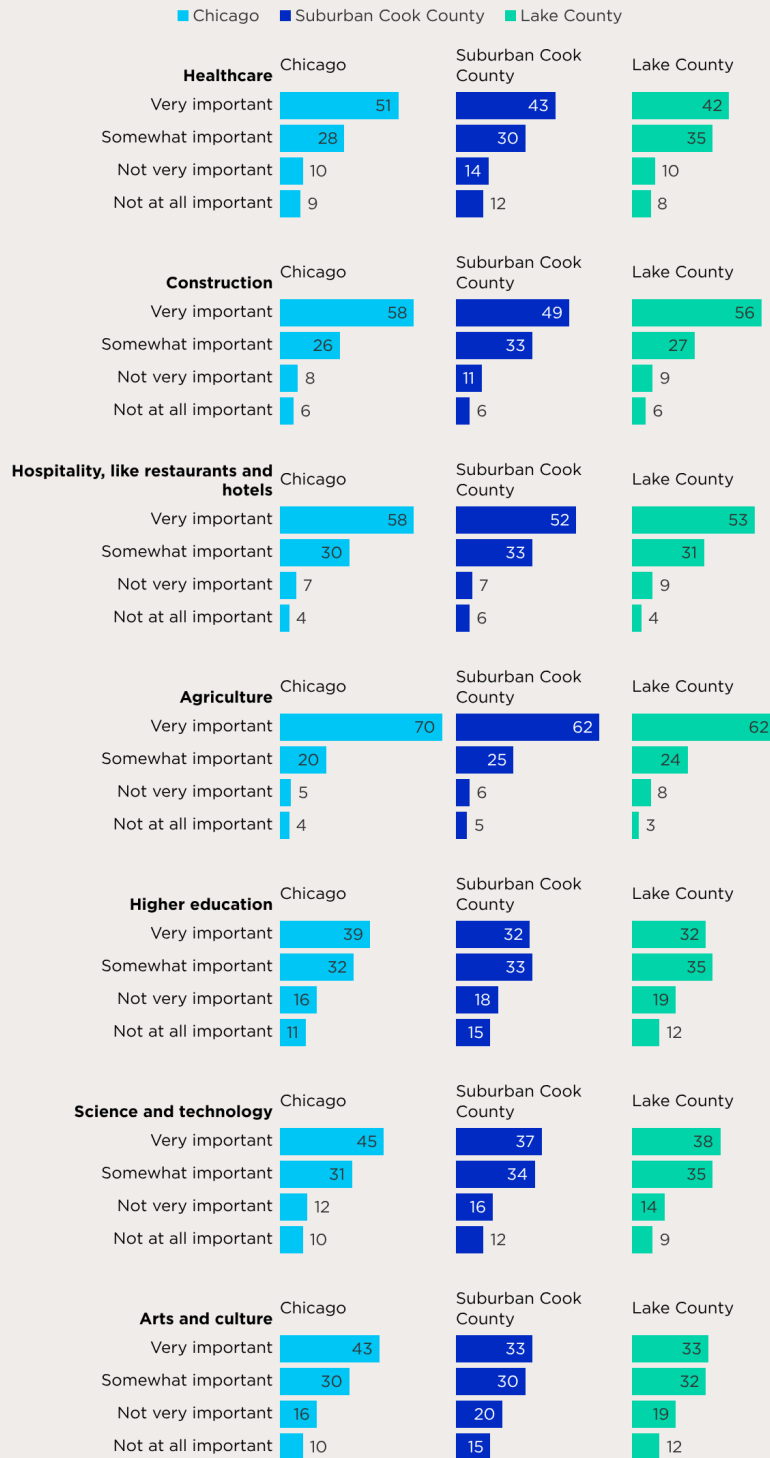
April 13-23, 2026 | n=1,900

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Appendix Figure 2: Immigrants Seen as Important to Range of Industries

Now I am going to read you a list of industries in the United States, and I'd like to know how important you think immigrants are to each. (%)

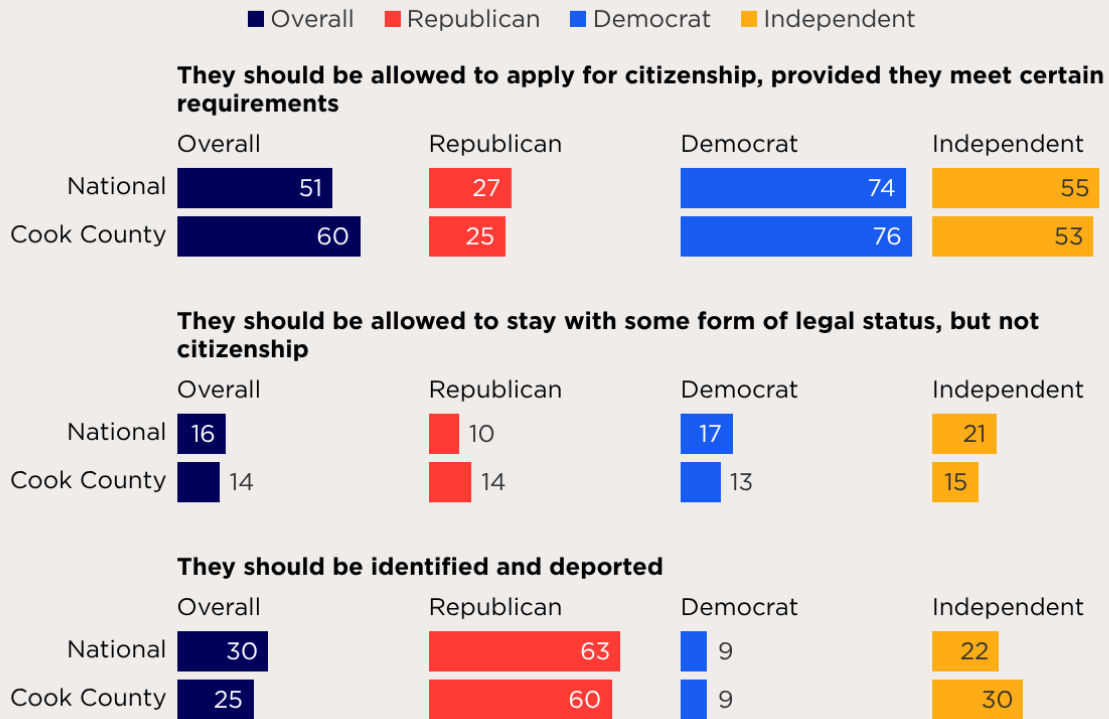


April 13-23, 2026 | n=1,900
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Appendix Figure 3: Cook County Versus National Partisan Attitudes on Immigration Policy

What should be done about immigrants who are currently living illegally in the United States? (%)



Cook County: April 13-23, 2026 | n=1,500

National: April 24-26, 2026 | n=1,022

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About the Chicago Council on Global Affairs

The Chicago Council on Global Affairs is an independent, nonpartisan membership organization that provides insight—and influences the public discourse—on critical global issues. We convene leading global voices, conduct independent research, and engage the public to explore ideas that will shape our global future. The Council is committed to bringing clarity and offering solutions to issues that transcend borders and transform how people, business, and governments engage the world. Learn more at globalaffairs.org.

About the Lester Crown Center on US Foreign Policy

Established in 2018 with a transformative gift from the Crown Family, the Lester Crown Center on US Foreign Policy is driven by the belief that the public plays a critical role in determining the direction of US foreign policy and that an informed and engaged public is critical for effective policymaking. The centerpiece of the Lester Crown Center is its annual survey of American public opinion and US foreign policy, the Chicago Council Survey, which has been conducted since 1974.