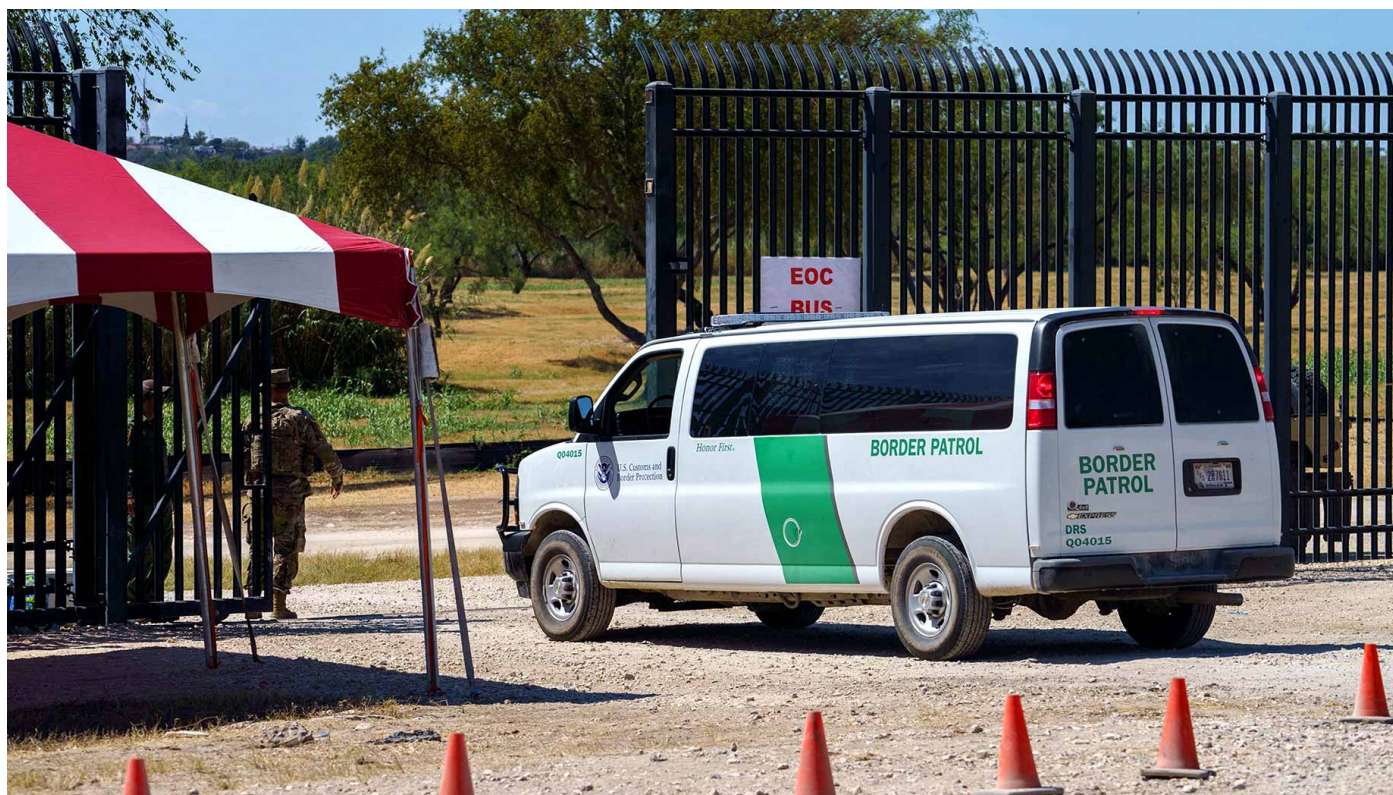


GALLUP®

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Four in 10 Americans Still Highly Concerned About Illegal Immigration

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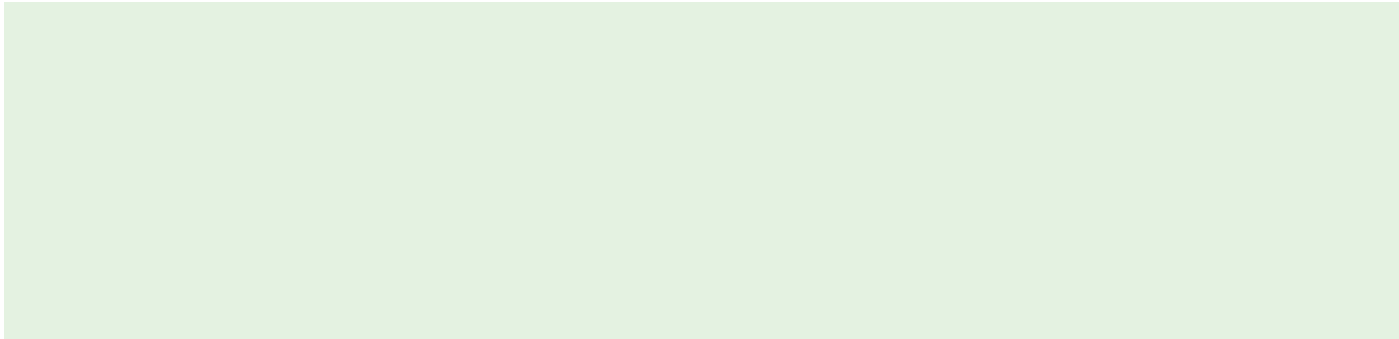
STORY HIGHLIGHTS

- Americans' worry about illegal immigration holds near two-decade high

- Concern still high among GOP while vanishing among many Democrats
 - Independents have been more concerned in key border states than elsewhere
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WASHINGTON, D.C. -- Forty-one percent of Americans report worrying a great deal about the issue of illegal immigration, with another 19% worried a fair amount, according to a March 1-18 Gallup survey. The survey was conducted before the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention announced it will soon terminate the emergency powers given to border agents during the pandemic that have allowed them to turn migrants back without an opportunity to seek asylum.

The 41% currently worried a great deal roughly ties the percentage found a year ago but is otherwise on the high end of Gallup readings taken over the past decade. The only time significantly more Americans were this concerned was in 2007, when 45% worried a great deal as then-President George W. Bush and Congress debated comprehensive immigration reform.



In addition to those worried a great deal about illegal immigration today, 19% of Americans in the March poll reported worrying a fair amount, 17% only a little and 23% not at all. Thus, six in 10 adults worry a sizable amount about the issue, while four in 10 express little to no worry.

While the percentage of U.S. adults feeling highly worried about illegal immigration has varied, the percentage not worried at all has more than doubled since 2006. At the same time, the percentages worried a fair amount and worried only a little have trended down.

Gallup measures Americans' concern about illegal immigration along with numerous other issues facing the country each March. As reported last month, [illegal immigration ties with race relations](#) as a public concern and ranks among the lower half of 14 issues rated this year. The 41% saying they worry a great deal about these contrasts with 59% worried about their top concern, inflation.

Democrats Have Never Worried Less About Illegal Immigration

The modest shifts seen in Americans' concern about illegal immigration over the years mask greater changes beneath the surface among partisans.

Most notably, since 2006, Democrats have become increasingly less concerned about illegal immigration, with the percentage saying they are "not at all concerned" overtaking the percentage concerned "a great deal" in 2019 and surging to a new high of 44% this year. By contrast, just 18% now say they are concerned a great deal, down from as much as 42% being this concerned in 2006 and 28% in 2018.

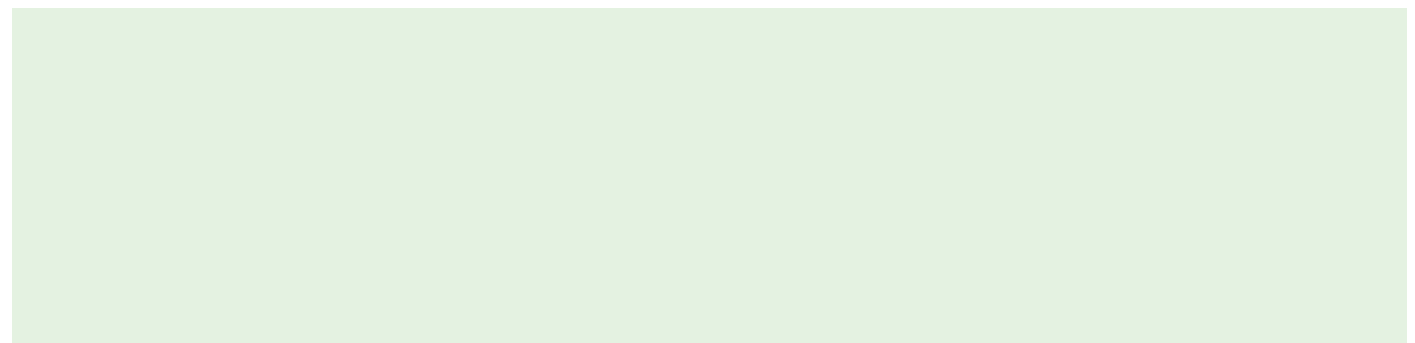
Further, whereas in most years from 2001 to 2014 the majority of Democrats were concerned a great deal or fair amount about illegal immigration, since then, the majority have been concerned only a little or not at all, a wholesale change.

Republicans Maintain Elevated Concern

In contrast to Democrats' declining worry about illegal immigration over the past two decades, Republicans have remained concerned, and to an increasing degree.

Since 2001, the majority of Republicans have consistently been concerned about illegal immigration either a great deal or fair amount. However, an increasing percentage of Republicans have said they are worried a great deal, rising from 29% in 2001 to a high of 76% in 2021. Only 5% of Republicans are not concerned at all.

Strong Republican concern declined slightly in the past year to 68%, but it remains on the high end of the range seen since 2001. More broadly, the overall percentage worried either a great deal or fair amount has expanded from just over half of Republicans in 2001 to nearly nine in 10 today.



Concern Ticking Up Among Independents

Worry about illegal immigration among political independents falls between Republicans' and Democrats' concern -- although, like Republicans, more independents are concerned a great deal (39%) than not at all (21%). And, perhaps important with the midterm elections approaching, independents' concern has been on the upswing, with those worried a great deal rising from 30% since 2018.

Strong Sentiment Among Partisans on Immigration Is Diverging

The different direction each party group has taken on illegal immigration is evident in the accompanying graph that shows the trend in "net worry" about the issue for each group. Net worry is defined as the percentage worried a great deal minus the percentage not worried at all.

Whereas the balance of strong sentiment was similar for all three party groups in the early 2000s, Republicans' concern subsequently increased while Democrats' concern decreased, leading to markedly divergent viewpoints. Independents' concern has fluctuated but recently leveled off with more highly concerned about illegal immigration than unconcerned.

Immigration Concerns Higher in the South

In contrast to the sharp difference in worry about illegal immigration seen by party, the differences by geographic region of the country are more muted, but still significant.

The percentage worried a great deal is slightly greater in the South (48%) than in the West (37%) and Midwest (34%), while similar to concern in the East (41%). Conversely, just 17% of residents in the South are not worried at all about immigration, compared with 24% or more in the other regions.

These regions are too broad to address whether attitudes are different in states along the U.S. southern border where the largest influx of undocumented migrants is occurring. However, a Gallup analysis of 2021-2022 data suggests that public concern in three of those states combined (Texas, New Mexico and Arizona) is not markedly different than in the country as a whole.

Bottom Line

The surge of migrants trying to enter the United States at the southern border has been a political flashpoint throughout President Joe Biden's time in office. While Republican leaders have blamed the administration for creating a crisis, some Democrats have faulted the administration for maintaining the Title 42 emergency powers that were exercised at the start of the coronavirus pandemic under President Donald Trump.

The competing political pressures on the Biden administration regarding how to handle the border are mirrored in the polarization of Americans' views, with two-thirds of Republicans now concerned a great deal about illegal immigration and more than four in 10 Democrats not at all concerned.

Since the CDC recently announced it will withdraw authorization of Title 42 on May 23, officials and activists on both sides of the issue are weighing in and political discord will likely increase as the deadline approaches. As the Gallup data show, this will only mirror the polarization among Americans on illegal immigration, with Republicans highly troubled by it and Democrats not seeing it as a major problem.

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