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Executive Summary

In an earlier Nebraska Rural Poll report (August 2006), rural Nebraskans were asked their opinions of newcomers in general to their community. Some parts of rural Nebraska have seen significant growth of a specific group of newcomers, Latin American immigrants. How do rural Nebraskans view recent immigrants from Latin America? How do they view various immigration policies? Do their views differ by community size, the region in which they live, or their education level?

This report details 2,482 responses to the 2006 Nebraska Rural Poll, the eleventh annual effort to understand rural Nebraskans' perceptions of current issues and conditions. Respondents were asked a series of questions regarding immigrants from Latin America and immigration policies. Comparisons are made among different respondent subgroups, that is, comparisons by age, occupation, region, etc. Based on these analyses, some key findings emerged:

- ***Many rural Nebraskans are aware of recent Latin American immigrants living in their community.*** Over one-half (64%) of rural Nebraskans are aware of recent Latin American immigrants living in their community. (page 4)
 - ✓ *Persons living in or near larger communities are more likely than persons living in or near smaller communities to be aware of recent Latin American immigrants living in their community.* Eighty-three percent of persons living in or near communities with populations of 10,000 or more are aware of recent Latin American immigrants living in their community, compared to approximately 46 percent of persons living in or near communities with less than 1,000 people. (page 4)
 - ✓ *Persons living in the Northeast and South Central regions are more likely than persons living elsewhere in the state to be aware of recent Latin American immigrants living in their community.* Approximately 73 percent of persons living in these two regions are aware of Latin American immigrants living in their community, compared to 45 percent of persons living in the North Central region. (page 4)

- ***Many rural Nebraskans support allowing undocumented workers who have been working and paying taxes for five years or more to apply for citizenship.*** Over one-half (56%) of rural Nebraskans agree with this statement, while 29 percent disagree. (page 9)
 - ✓ *Latino respondents are more likely than non-Latinos to agree with allowing undocumented workers who have been working and paying taxes to apply for citizenship.* Seventy-six percent of Latino respondents agree with this statement, compared to 56 percent of non-Latinos. (page 12)

- ***Most rural Nebraskans express agreement with policies that try to prevent illegal immigration.*** Most rural Nebraskans (87%) agree with the statement that the government should tighten the borders to prevent illegal immigration. Over three-quarters (77%) of rural Nebraskans agree with the statement that businesses that employ undocumented workers should be penalized. Seventy-two percent agree with the statement that

undocumented immigrants should be deported. (page 9)

✓ *Non-Latino respondents are more likely than Latino respondents to agree with statements that penalize or prevent illegal immigration.* Seventy-eight percent of non-Latinos agree that businesses that employ undocumented workers should be penalized, compared to 30 percent of Latino respondents. Seventy-two percent of non-Latinos agree that undocumented immigrants should be deported, while 26 percent of Latino respondents share this opinion. Eighty-seven percent of non-Latinos agree with the statement that the government should tighten the borders to prevent illegal immigration, compared to 45 percent of Latino respondents. (page 11)

- ***Opinions are mixed on creating a “guest worker” program.*** One-half (50%) disagree with the statement that a “guest worker” program should be created to allow immigrants to work in the United States without becoming citizens. Approximately one-third (34%) agree with this statement. (page 9)

✓ *Laborers are the occupation group most likely to disagree that a “guest worker” program should be created.* Fifty-eight percent of laborers disagree with this statement, compared to 40 percent of persons with professional occupations. (page 11)

✓ *Latino respondents are more likely than non-Latinos to favor creating a “guest worker” program.* Over one-half (58%) of Latino respondents agree that a guest worker program should be created, compared to 34 percent of non-Latinos. (page 12)

- ***Many rural Nebraskans disagree with policies that grant citizenship or other benefits to young undocumented immigrants.*** Seventy-two percent disagree with the statement that in-state college tuition should be available to undocumented immigrants under the age of 21 who have been living in the United States for at least five years. Fifty-six percent disagree with the statement that citizenship should be available to undocumented immigrants under the age of 21 who have been living in the United States for five years and are in 7th grade or above. (page 9)

✓ *Latino respondents are more likely than non-Latinos to agree with policies that grant benefits to young undocumented immigrants.* Fifty-seven percent of Latino respondents agree that in-state college tuition should be available to undocumented immigrants that meet certain criteria. Only 16 percent of non-Latinos share this opinion. Seventy-two percent of Latino respondents agree that citizenship should be available to undocumented immigrants under the age of 21 who have been living in the United States for five years and are in 7th grade or above. Twenty-seven percent of non-Latinos agree with this statement. (page 11)

- ***Most rural Nebraskans do not support allowing families of immigrant workers to come to the United States regardless of other restrictions on immigration.*** Seventy-three percent disagree with the statement that families of immigrant workers should be allowed to come to the United States regardless of other restrictions on immigration. (page 9)

✓ *Latino respondents are more likely than non-Latino respondents to agree that*

families of immigrant workers should be allowed to come to the United States regardless of other restrictions on immigration. Forty-one percent of Latino respondents agree with this statement, compared to 12 percent of non-Latinos. (page 12)

- ***Most rural Nebraskans are concerned with recent immigrants learning to speak English.*** The vast majority (94%) of rural Nebraskans agree with the statement that immigrants from Latin America should learn to speak English within a reasonable amount of time. In addition, over two-thirds (69%) *disagree* with the statement that rural Nebraska communities should communicate important information in Spanish as well as English. Twenty percent agree with this statement. (page 5)
 - ✓ *Differences of opinion on language issues occur between Latino and non-Latino respondents.* Just over three fourths (76%) of Latino respondents agree that rural Nebraska communities should communicate important information in Spanish as well as English. Only 20 percent of non-Latinos agree with this statement. When given the statement that immigrants from Latin America should learn to speak English within a reasonable amount of time, 94 percent of non-Latinos agree, compared to 82 percent of Latino respondents. (page 8)

- ***Approximately one-half of rural Nebraskans do not see immigration from Latin America as being positive for rural Nebraska.*** Fifty-six percent *disagree* with the statement that in general, immigration from Latin America has been good for rural Nebraska. Fourteen percent agree with the statement. Similarly, one-half (50%) *disagree* with the statement that immigrants from Latin America strengthen rural Nebraska. Sixteen percent agree with this statement. (page 5)
 - ✓ *Persons with higher education levels are more likely than persons with less education to agree that immigration from Latin America has been positive for rural Nebraska.* As an example, 27 percent of persons with at least a bachelors degree agree with the statement that immigrants from Latin America strengthen rural Nebraska, compared to approximately 13 percent of persons without a four year college degree. (page 7)
 - ✓ *Persons who have had close contact with Latin American immigrants (have friends, relatives, close acquaintances or coworkers who are recent Latin American immigrants) are more likely than persons without this close contact to agree that immigrants from Latin America strengthen rural Nebraska.* One quarter (25%) of persons with close contact with recent Latin American immigrants agree with this statement, compared to 14 percent of persons without this contact. (page 7)

- ***Opinions are mixed on the reception Latin American immigrants receive from rural Nebraskans.*** Over one-third (38%) of rural Nebraskans agree with the statement that immigrants from Latin America are often discriminated against in rural Nebraska. Twenty-eight percent disagree with that statement. Twenty-eight percent agree with the statement that rural Nebraska communities do a lot to include immigrants from Latin America into the community. Twenty-three percent disagree with that statement. (page 5)

- ✓ *Latino respondents are more likely than non-Latino respondents to say that Latin American immigrants face discrimination and barriers to inclusion in the community. Over one-half (61%) of Latino respondents agree that immigrants from Latin America are often discriminated against in rural Nebraska, compared to 39 percent of non-Latinos. In addition, Latino respondents are more likely than non-Latinos to disagree with the statement that rural Nebraska communities do a lot to include immigrants from Latin America into the community, 46 percent compared to 23 percent. (page 8)*

Introduction

An earlier Nebraska Rural Poll report (August 2006) looked at rural Nebraskans' opinions about newcomers in general to their community. While many rural Nebraskans were aware of new residents in their communities, there were mixed opinions when asked about the impact these newcomers have had on the community. Less than one-third agreed that new residents improve the quality of life in their community while one-quarter disagreed. Just under one-half disagreed that new people moving into the community has been bad for the community.

Opinions were also mixed on the reception new residents receive from the community. While over one-half thought that new residents are made to feel welcome, just over one-third said their community does a lot to include new residents in the community. Almost one half agreed that more people should be encouraged to relocate to their community.

Newcomers to the community (those living in the community for five years or less) were less likely than long-term residents to believe that new residents are made to feel welcome and the community does a lot to include new residents. In addition, one quarter of the newcomers said that new residents are often discriminated against.

Newcomers receiving a lot of media and political attention this past year are immigrants from Latin America (from Mexico, Central America or South America). Latinos have, in the last decades, become the most populous minority group in the United States. As of 2004, Latinos

constituted 14.2 percent of the total U.S. population, and from 2000 to 2004, there was a 14% increase in Latinos compared with a 2% increase in all other groups.

Debates about immigration consumed Congress in its last session. In the end, however, Congress did not pass a major immigration bill and it is clear that the next Congress will again examine legislation to address various issues related to immigration.

This Rural Poll report focuses on perceptions of Latin American immigration in rural Nebraska. Several rural Nebraska communities have seen significant growth of their Latino population since 1990. According to the 2000 U.S. Census, four counties in rural Nebraska had Latino populations representing at least 10 percent of their total population. And, many non-metropolitan counties experienced large growth rates of their Latino population between 1990 and 2000 that exceeded the growth rates of this population in some metropolitan counties. Like for the rest of the country, Latinos are an integral part of Nebraska.

How do rural Nebraskans view immigrants from Latin America? How do they view various immigration policies? Do their views differ by the size of their community, age, or education level? This report addresses these questions.

The 2006 Nebraska Rural Poll is the eleventh annual effort to understand rural Nebraskans' perceptions of current issues and conditions. Respondents were asked a series of questions about immigrants from Latin America and immigration policies.

Methodology and Respondent Profile

This study is based on 2,482 responses from Nebraskans living in the 84 non-metropolitan counties in the state. A self-administered questionnaire was mailed in February and March to approximately 6,200 randomly selected households. Metropolitan counties not included in the sample were Cass, Dakota, Dixon, Douglas, Lancaster, Sarpy, Saunders, Seward and Washington. The 14-page questionnaire included questions pertaining to well-being, community, work, new residents, immigration, and making a living. This paper reports only results from the immigration portion of the survey.

A 40% response rate was achieved using the total design method (Dillman, 1978). The sequence of steps used follow:

1. A pre-notification letter was sent requesting participation in the study.
2. The questionnaire was mailed with an informal letter signed by the project director approximately seven days later.
3. A reminder postcard was sent to the entire sample approximately seven days after the questionnaire had been sent.
4. Those who had not yet responded within approximately 14 days of the original mailing were sent a replacement questionnaire.

Appendix Table 1 shows demographic data from this year's study and previous rural polls, as well as similar data based on the entire non-metropolitan population of Nebraska (using 2000 U.S. Census data). As can be seen from the table, there are some marked differences between some of the demographic variables in our sample compared to the Census data. For example, a smaller percentage of young people

responded to the poll than exist in the community as a whole according to the Census. The poll had more older respondents and more male respondents than in the population as a whole. Certainly some variance from 2000 Census data is to be expected as a result of changes that have occurred in the intervening six years. Nonetheless, we suggest the reader use caution in generalizing our data to all rural Nebraska. However, given the random sampling frame used for this survey, the acceptable percentage of responses, and the large number of respondents, we feel the data provide useful insights into opinions of rural Nebraskans on the various issues presented in this report.

The average age of respondents is 56 years. Sixty-nine percent are married (Appendix Table 1) and 71 percent live within the city limits of a town or village. On average, respondents have lived in Nebraska 48 years and have lived in their current community 32 years. Fifty-two percent are living in or near towns or villages with populations less than 5,000. Ninety-two percent have attained at least a high school diploma.

Twenty percent of the respondents report their 2005 approximate household income from all sources, before taxes, as below \$20,000. Thirty-six percent report incomes over \$50,000.

Seventy-two percent were employed in 2005 on a full-time, part-time, or seasonal basis. Twenty-five percent are retired. Thirty-five percent of those employed reported working in a professional, technical or administrative occupation. Fourteen percent indicated they were farmers or ranchers. The employed respondents who do not work in their home or their nearest community reported having

to drive an average of 31 miles, one way, to their primary job.

Latino Respondent Profile

In addition to the standard random sample of rural households, this year’s questionnaire was also sent to a random sample of households with Latino surnames in rural Nebraska. A total of 149 surveys were returned out of 686 mailed, for a response rate of 22 percent. Out of the returned surveys, 102 self-identified themselves as

Spanish, Hispanic or Latino. Those respondents were combined with the 24 self-identified Latino respondents in the random rural sample to make comparisons between Latino respondents and non-Latinos.

The average age of the Latino respondents is 46 years (Table 1). Sixty-nine percent are married and 89 percent live within the city limits of a town or village. On average, the Latinos have lived in Nebraska for 24 years and have lived in their current community 18 years. Forty-four percent of the Latinos were

Table 1. Demographic Comparisons Between Latino Respondents and Rural Sample Respondents

	<i>Latino Respondents</i>	<i>Rural Sample Respondents</i>
Average age	46 years	56 years
Percent married	69%	69%
Percent living within city limits	89%	71%
Average years lived in Nebraska	24 years	48 years
Average years lived in community	18 years	32 years
Percent living in or near communities with populations of 10,000 or more	60%	36%
Percent with at least a high school diploma	58%	92%
Percent with household incomes below \$20,000	22%	20%
Percent with household incomes over \$50,000	16%	36%
Percent employed	85%	72%
Percent retired	9%	25%
Percent of employed with professional occupation	24%	35%
Percent of employed that are farmers or ranchers	10%	14%
Percent of employed that are manual laborers	26%	11%

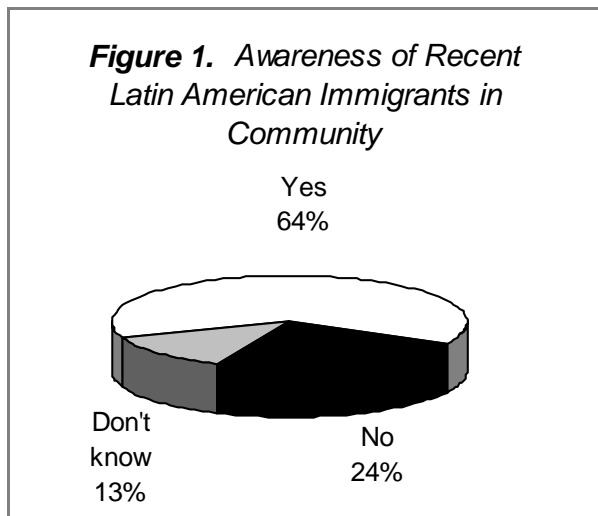
born in the United States. Sixty percent live in or near communities with populations of 10,000 or more. Fifty-eight percent have attained at least a high school diploma.

Twenty-two percent report their 2005 approximate household income from all sources, before taxes, as below \$20,000. Sixteen percent report incomes over \$50,000.

Eighty-five percent were employed in 2005 on a full-time, part-time or seasonal basis. Nine percent are retired. Twenty-four percent of those employed reported working in a professional, technical or administrative occupation. Twenty-six percent are manual laborers and 10 percent indicated they were farmers or ranchers. The employed respondents who do not work in their home or their nearest community reported having to drive an average of 26 miles, one way, to their primary job.

Awareness of Recent Latin American Immigrants

Over one-half (64%) of rural Nebraskans are aware of recent Latin American immigrants



living in their community (Figure 1). Recent Latin American immigrants were defined as Spanish speaking, from Mexico, Central America or South America, who have moved to the community within the past five years. Twenty-four percent are not aware of recent Latin American immigrants in their community and the remaining 13 percent answered “don’t know.”

Awareness of recent Latin American immigrants in the community differed by most of the characteristics examined (Appendix Table 2).

Persons living in or near the largest communities are more likely than persons living in or near smaller communities to be aware of recent Latin American immigrants living in their community. Eighty-three percent of persons living in or near communities with populations of 10,000 or more are aware of recent Latin American immigrants living in their community, compared to approximately 46 percent of persons living in or near communities with less than 1,000 people.

Regional differences are also detected. Persons living in both the Northeast and South Central regions are more likely than persons living elsewhere in the state to be aware of recent Latin American immigrants in their community (see Appendix Figure 1 for the counties included in each region). Approximately 73 percent of persons living in these two regions are aware of Latin American immigrants living in their community, compared to 45 percent of persons living in the North Central region.

Other statistically significant differences were detected by most of the individual characteristics examined. However, many of

these differences tend to be between groups that are more likely to answer “yes” and those who are more likely to answer “don’t know.”

Perceptions of Latin American Immigrants

Respondents were provided a list of statements about immigrants from Latin America and were asked to indicate the extent to which they agree or disagree with each. Rural Nebraskans are concerned with

immigrants learning to speak English. The vast majority (94%) of rural Nebraskans agree with the statement that immigrants from Latin America should learn to speak English within a reasonable amount of time (Table 2). In addition, over two-thirds (69%) disagree with the statement that rural Nebraska communities should communicate important information in Spanish as well as English. Twenty percent agree with this statement.

Table 2. Opinions About Latin American Immigrants

	<i>Strongly Disagree</i>	<i>Disagree</i>	<i>Neither</i>	<i>Agree</i>	<i>Strongly Agree</i>
Immigrants from Latin America strengthen rural Nebraska.	17%	33%	33%	15%	1%
Wages increase for most people in rural Nebraska communities when undocumented immigrants (sometimes referred to as illegal immigrants or aliens) are hired.	33	41	21	4	1
In general, immigration from Latin America has been good for rural Nebraska.	25	31	30	13	2
Immigrants from Latin America are often discriminated against in rural Nebraska.	7	21	34	33	5
Rural Nebraska communities should communicate important information in Spanish as well as English.	41	28	12	16	4
Immigrants from Latin America should learn to speak English within a reasonable amount of time.	1	1	4	29	65
Rural Nebraska communities do a lot to include immigrants from Latin America into the community.	5	18	49	24	4

Rural Nebraskans are also concerned with the effect illegal immigration may have on wages. Almost three-quarters (74%) disagree with the statement that wages increase for most people in rural Nebraska communities when undocumented immigrants are hired. Only five percent agree with this statement.

At least one-half of rural Nebraskans do not see immigration from Latin America as being positive for rural Nebraska. Fifty-six percent disagree with the statement that in general, immigration from Latin America has been good for rural Nebraska. Fourteen percent agree with the statement. Similarly, one-half (50%) disagree with the statement that immigrants from Latin America strengthen rural Nebraska. Sixteen percent agree with this statement.

Opinions are mixed on the reception Latin American immigrants receive from rural Nebraskans. Over one-third (38%) of rural Nebraskans agree with the statement that immigrants from Latin America are often discriminated against in rural Nebraska. Twenty-eight percent disagree with that statement. Twenty-eight percent agree with the statement that rural Nebraska communities do a lot to include immigrants from Latin America into the community. Twenty-three percent disagree with that statement.

The responses to this question are examined by community size, region and various individual attributes (Appendix Table 3). Some differences are detected.

Persons living in or near larger communities are more likely than persons living in or near smaller communities to agree that communities need to and do include Latin

American immigrants in their community. Thirty-five percent of persons living in or near communities with populations of 10,000 or more agree with the statement that rural Nebraska communities do a lot to include immigrants from Latin America into the community. In comparison, approximately 25 percent of persons living in or near towns with less than 10,000 people agree with this statement. Similarly, almost one-quarter (24%) of persons living in or near the largest communities agree with the statement that rural Nebraska communities should communicate important information in Spanish as well as English. Fourteen percent of persons living in or near towns with less than 1,000 people share this opinion.

A few differences of opinion are detected by region. Persons living in both the Northeast and South Central regions are more likely than persons living in other regions of the state to agree that rural Nebraska communities do a lot to include immigrants from Latin America into the community. Approximately one-third of the residents in these two regions agree with that statement, compared to approximately 20 percent of persons living in both the North Central and Southeast regions.

However, residents from the Northeast region are the regional group most likely to *disagree* with the statement that immigrants from Latin American strengthen rural Nebraska. Fifty-five percent of persons in the Northeast region disagree with this statement, compared to 44 percent of persons living in the Panhandle.

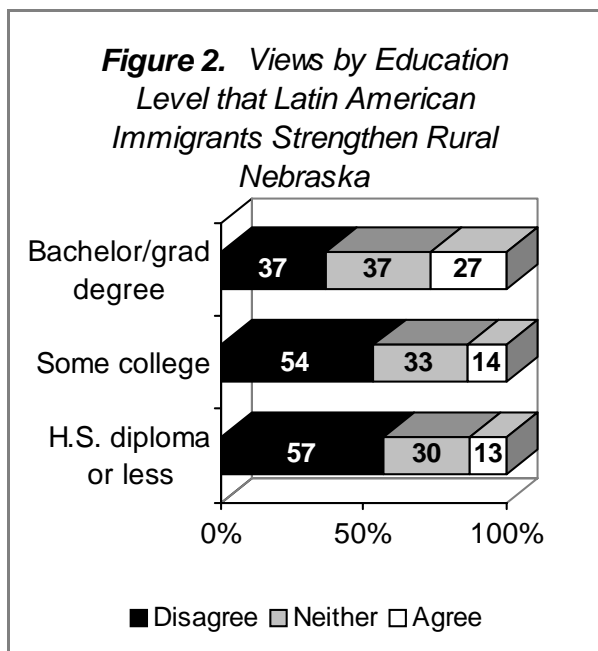
Younger persons are more likely than older persons to agree that immigrants from Latin America are often discriminated against in

rural Nebraska. Over one-half (53%) of persons under the age of 40 agree with this statement, compared to 33 percent of persons age 65 and older.

Younger persons are also more likely than older persons to *disagree* with the statement that rural Nebraska communities do a lot to include immigrants from Latin America into the community. Thirty-three percent of persons age 19 to 39 disagree with this statement, compared to 19 percent of persons age 65 and older.

Persons with higher education levels are more likely than persons with less education to agree with the statement that immigrants from Latin America strengthen rural Nebraska (Figure 2). Twenty-seven percent of persons with at least a bachelors degree agree with this statement, compared to approximately 13 percent of persons without a four year college degree.

Persons with at least a four year college



degree are also the education group most likely to agree with the statement that in general, immigration from Latin America has been good for rural Nebraska. Twenty-two percent of persons with at least a four-year college degree agree with this statement, compared to 12 percent of persons without a four-year college degree.

This same pattern occurs with the responses to the statement that immigrants from Latin America are often discriminated against in rural Nebraska. Forty-seven percent of persons with at least a four-year college degree agree with this statement, compared to 33 percent of persons with a high school diploma or less education.

Persons who have had close contact with Latin American immigrants (have friends, relatives, close acquaintances or coworkers who are recent Latin American immigrants) are more likely than persons without this close contact to agree that immigrants from Latin America strengthen rural Nebraska. One quarter (25%) of persons with close contact with recent Latin American immigrants agree with this statement, compared to 14 percent of persons without this contact.

Persons with professional occupations are more likely than persons with different occupations to agree that immigrants from Latin America strengthen rural Nebraska. Twenty-four percent of persons with professional occupations agree with this statement, compared to 11 percent of laborers.

Persons with professional occupations are also the occupation group most likely to agree with the statement that immigrants from Latin America are often discriminated

against in rural Nebraska. Almost one-half (48%) of persons with professional occupations agree with this statement, compared to approximately 34 percent of laborers or farmers and ranchers.

Many large differences occur by ethnicity. Latino respondents are more likely than non-Latinos to see the benefits of Latin American immigrants. Seventy-two percent of Latino respondents agree with the statement that immigrants from Latin America strengthen rural Nebraska, compared to 16 percent of non-Latinos. Seventy percent of Latino respondents agree with the statement that immigration from Latin America has been good for rural Nebraska, compared to 14 percent of non-Latinos.

Latino respondents are more likely than non-Latinos to say that Latin American immigrants face discrimination and barriers to inclusion in the community. Over one-half (61%) of Latino respondents agree that immigrants from Latin America are often discriminated against in rural Nebraska (Figure 3). Thirty-nine percent of non-

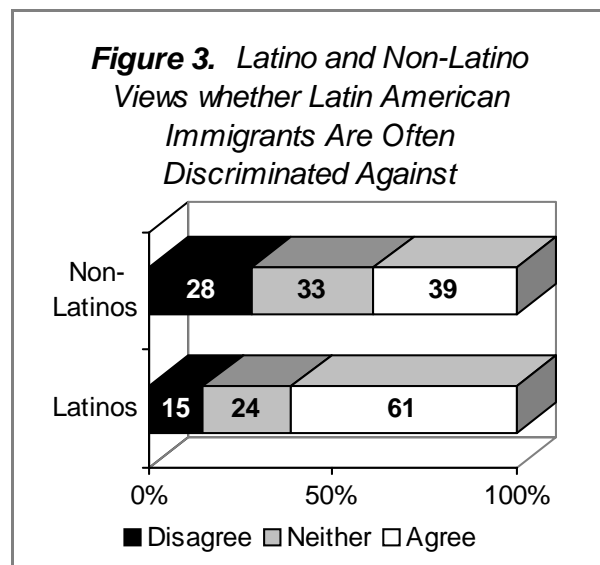
Latinos share this opinion. In addition, Latino respondents are more likely than non-Latinos to *disagree* with the statement that rural Nebraska communities do a lot to include immigrants from Latin America into the community. Almost one-half (46%) of Latino respondents disagree with this statement, compared to 23 percent of non-Latinos.

Differences of opinion on language issues also occur between Latino respondents and non-Latinos. Just over three fourths (76%) of Latino respondents agree that rural Nebraska communities should communicate important information in Spanish as well as English. Twenty percent of non-Latinos agree with this statement. When given the statement that immigrants from Latin America should learn to speak English within a reasonable amount of time, non-Latinos are more likely than Latino respondents to agree. Ninety-four percent of non-Latinos agree with this statement, compared to 82 percent of Latino respondents.

Non-Latinos are more likely than Latino respondents to *disagree* with the statement that wages increase for most people in rural Nebraska communities when undocumented immigrants are hired. Three-fourths (75%) of non-Latinos disagree with this statement, compared to one-half (50%) of Latino respondents.

Perceptions of Immigration Policies

Finally, respondents were given a series of statements about immigration policies debated by Congress or the Nebraska legislature. They were asked to rate the extent they agreed or disagreed with each statement.



Most rural Nebraskans express agreement with policies that try to prevent illegal immigration. Most rural Nebraskans (87%) agree with the statement that the government should tighten the borders to prevent illegal immigration (Table 3). Over three-quarters (77%) of rural Nebraskans

agree with the statement that businesses that employ undocumented workers should be penalized. Seventy-two percent agree with the statement that undocumented immigrants should be deported.

Many rural Nebraskans disagree with

Table 3. Opinions on Immigration Policies

	<i>Strongly Disagree</i>	<i>Disagree</i>	<i>Neither</i>	<i>Agree</i>	<i>Strongly Agree</i>
In-state college tuition should be available to undocumented immigrants under the age of 21 who have been living in the U.S. for at least 5 years.	42%	30%	12%	14%	3%
Citizenship should be available to undocumented immigrants under the age of 21 who have been living in the U.S. for 5 years and are in 7 th grade or above.	29	27	16	24	4
Businesses that employ undocumented workers should be penalized.	3	8	12	36	41
Undocumented immigrants should be deported.	4	8	17	35	37
An undocumented immigrant who has been working and paying taxes for five years or more should be allowed to apply for citizenship.	14	15	16	46	10
The government should tighten the borders to prevent illegal immigration.	3	3	8	33	54
Families of immigrant workers should be allowed to come to the U.S. regardless of other restrictions on immigration.	39	34	15	10	3
A “guest-worker” program should be created to allow immigrants to work in the U.S. without becoming citizens.	27	23	17	26	8

policies that grant citizenship or other benefits to young undocumented immigrants. Seventy-two percent disagree with the statement that in-state college tuition should be available to undocumented immigrants under the age of 21 who have been living in the United States for at least five years. Fifty-six percent disagree with the statement that citizenship should be available to undocumented immigrants under the age of 21 who have been living in the United States for five years and are in 7th grade or above.

Almost three-quarters (73%) of rural Nebraskans disagree with the statement that families of immigrant workers should be allowed to come to the United States regardless of other restrictions on immigration.

However, many rural Nebraskans support allowing undocumented workers who have been working and paying taxes for five years or more to apply for citizenship. Over one-half (56%) of rural Nebraskans agree with this statement, while 29 percent disagree.

Opinions are mixed on creating a “guest worker” program. One-half (50%) disagree with the statement that a “guest worker” program should be created to allow immigrants to work in the United States without becoming citizens. Approximately one-third (34%) agree with this statement.

Responses to this question are analyzed by community size, region and various individual attributes (Appendix Table 4). Some differences are detected.

Persons living in the South Central region are more likely than persons living in other

parts of the state to agree that a guest worker program should be created. Thirty-nine percent of persons in the South Central region agree with this statement, compared to 29 percent of persons in the Northeast region.

When comparing responses by household income, persons with household incomes between \$40,000 and \$59,999 are the group most likely to disagree with giving in-state college tuition and citizenship to young undocumented immigrants who meet specific criteria. But persons with the lowest incomes (under \$20,000) are the group most likely to disagree with creating a “guest worker” program. Fifty-five percent of persons with household incomes under \$20,000 disagree with the statement that a “guest worker” program should be created to allow immigrants to work in the United States without becoming citizens. In comparison, 42 percent of persons with household incomes of \$60,000 or more disagree with this statement.

The middle age group (age 40 to 64) is the group most likely to disagree with giving in-state college tuition and citizenship to young undocumented immigrants. Persons under the age of 65 are more likely than persons age 65 and older to agree that businesses that employ undocumented workers should be penalized. Approximately 80 percent of persons under the age of 65 agree with this statement, compared to 71 percent of persons age 65 and older.

Persons with the highest education levels are more likely than persons with less education to agree that a “guest worker” program should be created. Forty-four percent of persons with at least a four-year college degree agree with this statement, compared

to 29 percent of persons with a high school diploma or less education.

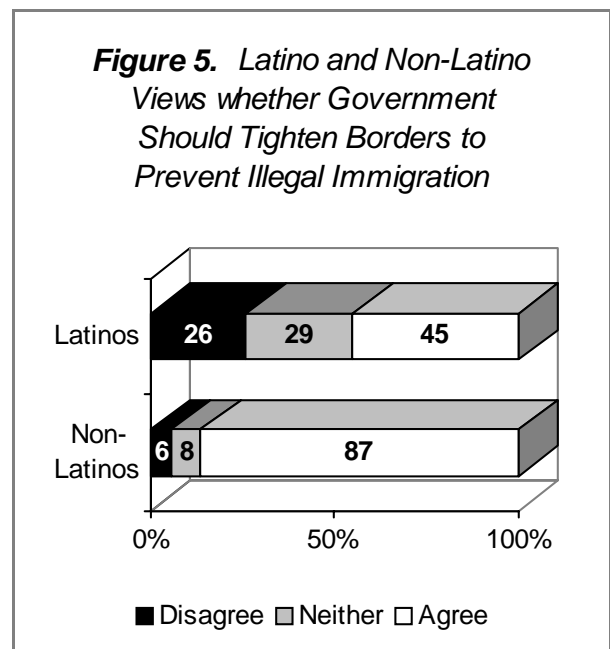
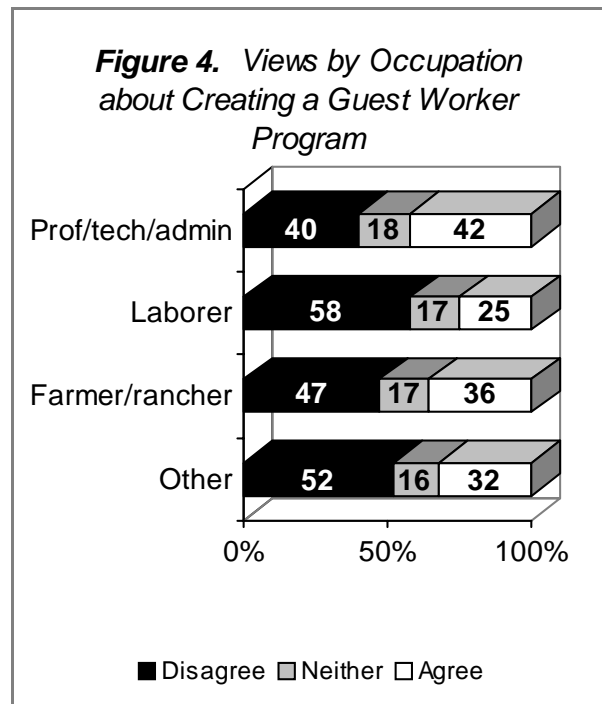
When comparing responses by occupation, the laborers are the group most likely to disagree that a “guest worker” program should be created (Figure 4). Fifty-eight percent of laborers disagree with this statement, compared to 40 percent of persons with professional occupations.

Many differences are detected by ethnicity. Latino respondents are more likely than non-Latinos to agree with policies that grant benefits to young undocumented immigrants. Fifty-seven percent of Latino respondents agree that in-state college tuition should be available to undocumented immigrants who meet certain criteria. Only 16 percent of non-Latinos share this opinion. Seventy-two percent of Latino respondents agree that citizenship should be available to undocumented immigrants under the age of 21 who have been living in the United States

for five years and are in 7th grade or above. Twenty-seven percent of non-Latinos agree with this statement.

Non-Latinos are more likely than Latino respondents to agree with statements that penalize or prevent illegal immigration. Seventy-eight percent of non-Latinos agree that businesses that employ undocumented workers should be penalized, compared to 30 percent of Latino respondents. Seventy-two percent of non-Latinos agree that undocumented immigrants should be deported. Twenty-six percent of Latino respondents share this opinion. In addition, 87 percent of non-Latinos agree with the statement that the government should tighten the borders to prevent illegal immigration (Figure 5). In comparison, 45 percent of Latino respondents agree with this statement.

Latino respondents are more likely than non-Latinos to agree with policies that allow workers to apply for citizenship or to work in the United States. Seventy-six percent of



Latino respondents agree that an undocumented immigrant who has been working and paying taxes for five years or more should be allowed to apply for citizenship. Fifty-six percent of non-Latinos agree with this statement. Forty-one percent of Latino respondents agree with the statement that families of immigrant workers should be allowed to come to the United States regardless of other restrictions on immigration. In comparison, 12 percent of non-Latinos share this opinion. Furthermore, over one-half (58%) of Latino respondents agree that a “guest worker” program should be created, compared to 34 percent of non-Latinos.

Conclusion

The Nebraskans who responded to the Poll display nuanced reactions to Latino immigration issues. Moreover, neither Latino rural Nebraskans nor non-Latino rural Nebraskans are unified in what they believe about immigration issues. The responses show that both groups are heterogeneous in their opinions.

Many rural Nebraskans are aware of recent Latin American immigrants living in their community. Larger communities and the South Central and Northeast regions are the places most likely to have residents of Latin American origin.

Regarding policy matters, rural Nebraskans appear, on the one hand, to be supportive of recent federal and state policies that would give illegal immigrants certain rights. On the other hand, they disagree with policies that provide benefits without some actual evidence of contributions to the community.

For example, Nebraskans appear to support what has been termed “amnesty for workers.” A majority (56%) of the rural respondents support a policy allowing undocumented workers who have been working and paying taxes for five years or more to apply for American citizenship. In other words, those who have been employed tax payers for a period of time should be allowed to become citizens *despite the fact they are currently working without official documents allowing them to do so*. Less than one-third (29%) disagreed with this.

On the other hand, the majority of Rural Poll respondents reject what might be termed “family friendly” policies that grant benefits to those who have not specifically demonstrated their economic contributions. Over one-half (56%) of the respondents disagree with making citizenship available to young (under 21) undocumented immigrants even though they have been living in the U.S. for 5 years or more and are in 7th grade or above. A large majority (72%) of the rural Nebraskans reject providing the economic benefit of in-state college tuition to non-citizens. Only 17% of the respondents are favorable. Perhaps it is because these young people have not yet worked or paid taxes. A similar large majority (73%) disagree that families of immigrant workers should be allowed to come to the U.S. Only 13% favor a family reunification policy.

Thus, on the whole, Nebraskans take a strict stance on undocumented immigration. Most rural Nebraskans favor policies that work to prevent illegal immigration, such as tightening the borders, deporting illegal immigrants and penalizing businesses that employ undocumented workers. The respondents also tend to disagree with a

policy that would create a legalizing scheme for “guest workers,” with 50 percent disagreeing and approximately one-third agreeing.

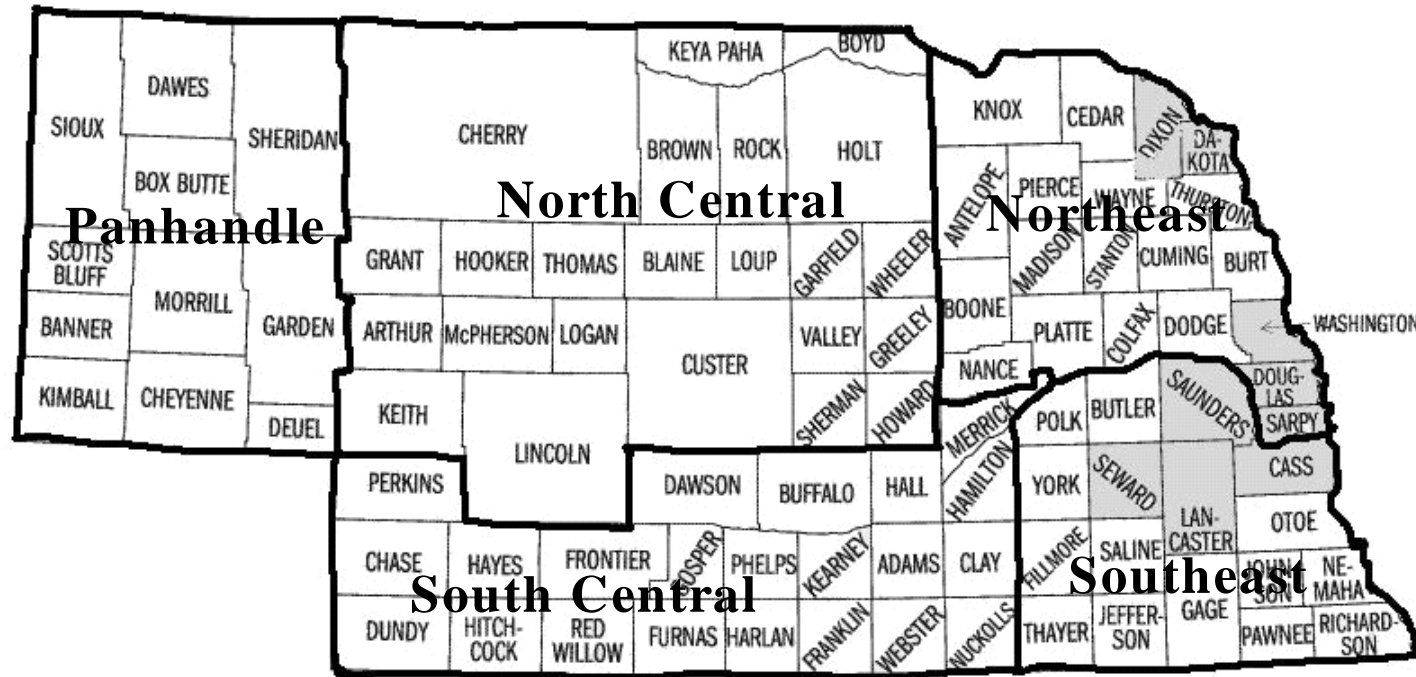
Most rural Nebraskans are concerned about immigrants learning to speak English. The vast majority (94%) feel new immigrants from Latin America need to learn to speak English within a reasonable amount of time. Many (69%) also disagree with having communities communicate important information in both English and Spanish.

A majority (56%) of rural Nebraskans do not think immigration from Latin America has had a positive effect on rural Nebraska. However, these views tend to generally improve as the respondents’ education level increases and if they have had close contact with recent immigrants. But, these were modest gains. Even though rural Nebraskans do not think immigration has been positive for their communities, many have said they

want more people to move to their community (see Rural Poll report 06-2, August 2006, “*Newcomers in Nebraska’s Rural Communities*,” available at http://cari.unl.edu/ruralpoll/new_residents.pdf, showing that about one-half of rural Nebraska residents believe people should be encouraged to relocate to their rural community.

Over one-third of rural Nebraskans agree that immigrants from Latin America are often discriminated against in rural Nebraska. However, over one-quarter disagree with this statement. And, almost equal proportions both agree and disagree that rural Nebraska communities do a lot to include immigrants from Latin America into the community. Yet, over one-half of Latino respondents say these immigrants are often discriminated against in rural Nebraska. This suggests that rural communities might need to do a better job of making these new residents feel at home.

Appendix Figure 1. Regions of Nebraska



■ Metropolitan counties (not surveyed)