Hispanic Immigrants' Opinions towards Immigration and Immigration Policy Reform

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Immigration and the Economy

- Hispanics are the largest minority and one of the fastest-growing ethnic groups in the U.S.
- Hispanic immigrant labor participation is critical in several industries including construction, landscaping, manufacturing, hotels, restaurants, and agriculture.
- Any changes to the work visa system or prospects for immigrants obtaining legal permanent residence could have substantial impacts on the agricultural labor supply.

Immigration Policy Debate

According to the 2010 National Agricultural Workers Survey, more than 600,000 Hispanic foreign-born with the vast majority (71%) originating from Mexico.

One of the biggest challenges currently facing legislators is how to address the status of 11.2 million unauthorized immigrants living in the U.S.

Current US Senate and House immigration proposals have distinct differences in terms of how they address the current population of undocumented workers and create a system for future temporary workers.

Abstract

This study explores the preferences of Hispanic immigrants for the main attributes of proposed immigration reform policies. Specifically, their individual valuation of those attributes is estimated through the use of stated choice experiments (CE).

Objective

Experimental Procedure

Data were solicited through a questionnaire-based face-to-face interview conducted in Spanish around Northern GA. Participants were asked questions on:
- Socio-demographic and immigration characteristics;
- Motivation to come to the U.S. and their current motivation to stay in the U.S.;
- Preferences towards various immigration policy features.

Survey Responses

This is in line with previous results from Latino Decision polls. However, this simple survey question falls to capture the tradeoff between other immigration reform proposal features.

Sample Characteristics

Method of Entry into the U.S.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable Definition</th>
<th>Entire Sample (n=209)</th>
<th>Stated Illegal Entry (n=139)</th>
<th>Did Not State Illegal Entry (n=70)</th>
<th>p-value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>US Years Number of years in the US</td>
<td>14.37 6.88 14.04 6.12 15.01 8.21</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Initial Status 1 if Permanent resident/green card 0.04 0.20 - - 0.13 0.34</td>
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<tr>
<td>1 if Border crossing Card/Commuter 0.01 0.12 - - 0.03 0.17</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>1 if Temporary Resident-Nonimmigrant visa 0.17 0.37 - - 0.50 0.50</td>
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<tr>
<td>1 if Other entry or reporting status 0.67 0.47 1.00 0.00 - -</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

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Choice experiment Results – Willingness to Pay for Immigration Policy Attributes

VISA Length

- Green Card After 10 Years $9,380.95*** $8,481.69*** $10,445.40*** p-value = 0.001

Access to Medical Care $1,959.58** $1,722.19* $2,044.30* p-value = 0.050

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Conclusions and Implications

- Immigrants who illegally entered the US were primarily motivated by job and wage opportunities, not social services or even the potential to obtain citizenship.
- Other rights such as long-term work visas and family visitation rights have substantial value as well.
- Undocumented Hispanic immigrant is most likely willing to pay a significantly high premium to eventually be eligible for a green card. In contrast, the willingness to pay for a policy provision that allows them to have the same access to medical care is relatively small.