

# Research examines stereotypes of immigrants to the United States

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the largest and fastest-growing immigrant population in the U.S. - are viewed most negatively by Ohioans in a survey comparison of stereotypes of immigrants from Europe, Asia, the Middle East and Latin America. The research by sociologists Jeffrey Timberlake, a University of Cincinnati associate professor of sociology, and Rhys Williams, a professor of sociology at Loyola University Chicago, was presented Aug. 8 at the 104th annual meeting of the American Sociological Association in San Francisco.

What's unique about this study, say the researchers, is that it examined four different regions that U.S. immigrants represent, and measured opinions in a state that is not affected by high numbers of immigrants.

"This makes Ohio ideal for understanding public attitudes toward immigrants that are relatively unaffected by actual immigration levels," write the authors. "We contend that Ohioans' attitudes are more likely to reflect national-level debates on immigrants and immigration policy, rather than the personal experience of encountering cultural conflicts or losing a job to lower-wage newcomers. In this respect, our paper provides new information about the extent to which particular stereotypes of immigrants are attached to particular groups in a relatively immigrant-free concept," state the authors.

The data for the study came from two waves of the Ohio Poll, a well-known, UC-sponsored, regularly scheduled survey of registered voters in the state of Ohio. The Ohio Poll data for this study was conducted by the

UC Institute for Policy Research in November 2007 and May 2008. The researchers' findings came from a sample of about 2,150 people.

For each person surveyed, the phone call would examine attitudes toward only one [immigrant](#) group, so that responses would not be affected by prior responses about one or more of the other groups. The poll examined five stereotypes, the extent to which people believe each group is

- Rich versus poor
- Intelligent versus unintelligent
- Self-sufficient versus dependent on government assistance
- Trying to fit in vs. staying separate from Americans
- Violent vs. nonviolent

The researchers found that Latin Americans were rated most poorly on all of the characteristics, but equally with Middle Easterners in the violent vs. nonviolent category and in the category of being unwilling to fit in with Americans. "In a post 9-11 society, we weren't surprised on the two categories indicating Americans' suspicions of Middle Eastern immigrants," says Timberlake. "We were a little more surprised at how positively Middle Eastern immigrants rated in the three other categories, as well as how Ohioans rated Asian immigrants very positively, even more positively than European immigrants, from which most Ohioans are descendants," says Timberlake.

On the question of fitting in, Europeans were judged more positively than the other groups. There were no significant differences in the

ratings of the wealth of immigrants from Asia, Europe or the Middle East, but Latin Americans were judged to be substantially poorer than the other groups. European and Asian immigrants were rated as less violent than Latin American and Middle Eastern immigrants. In the self-supporting category, Asians were rated the most positively and Latin Americans most negatively. Those results were nearly identical in rating intelligence.

The authors' calculations of U.S. Census data found that in 2000, only nine of Ohio's 88 counties featured percentages of foreign-born residents greater than three percent, with no counties reporting more than eight percent of foreign-born residents, primarily in the largest metropolitan areas including Cleveland, Cincinnati, Columbus, Dayton and Toledo.

Source: University of Cincinnati ([news](#) : [web](#))

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