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On Immigration Policy, Partisan Differences but Also Some Common Ground

Relatively few express negative views of undocumented immigrants

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Relatively few express negative views of undocumented immigrants

The public is divided over many aspects of U.S. immigration policy. However, when asked about the priorities for policy toward illegal immigration, more Americans say better border security *and* a path to citizenship should be given equal priority than favor either approach individually.

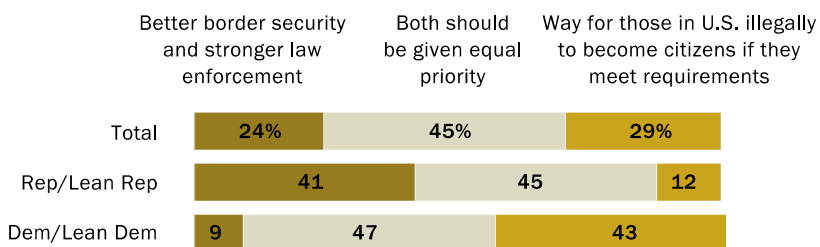
The new national survey, conducted August 9-16 among 2,010 adults, also finds that a large majority (76%) says that undocumented immigrants are as hard-working and honest as U.S. citizens, while 67% say they are no more likely than citizens to commit serious crimes. The survey also finds continued public opposition to building a wall along the U.S.-Mexico border: 61% oppose this proposal, which is little changed from earlier this year.

Overall, 29% of the public prioritizes “creating a way for immigrants already here illegally to become citizens if they meet certain requirements,” while (24%) say the focus should be on “better border security and stronger enforcement of immigration laws.” However, when given the option, a 45% plurality does say that both should be given equal priority.

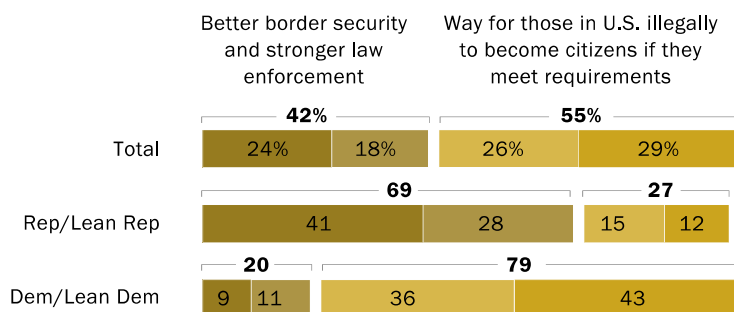
In 2014, approximately 11.3 million undocumented immigrants were living in the United States, according to preliminary [Pew Research Center estimates](#) based on government data – a population

Public’s priorities for dealing with illegal immigration

What should be the priority for dealing with illegal immigration in the U.S., or should both be given equal priority?



When those who say ‘both’ are asked to choose one, overall % saying the bigger priority is...



Note: Don’t know responses not shown.
Source: Survey conducted Aug. 9-16, 2016.

that has largely remained stable since 2009. Undocumented immigrants from Mexico make up the largest share of this population, though [the number of undocumented Mexican immigrants in the U.S. has declined since 2007](#).

Among Republicans and Republican-leaning independents, 41% say better border security and stronger law enforcement should be the focus in dealing with illegal immigration; about as many (45%), however, say that *both* stronger law enforcement and a path to citizenship should be given equal priority. Just 12% say creating a way for those in the U.S. illegally to become citizens should be the main priority.

And among Democrats, while 43% call for a focus on creating a way for immigrants here illegally to become citizens, a comparable share (47%) think both approaches should be given equal priority. Only 9% think better border security alone should be the priority.

However, when pushed to choose a single focus, those who think both should be given equal weight tend to fall in line with the preferred positions of others in their party. Overall, 69% of Republicans say stronger law enforcement is the bigger priority, while fewer (27%) say the country should prioritize a path to citizenship for immigrants here illegally. Among Democrats, the reverse is true: An overwhelming majority (79%) prioritize a path to citizenship for immigrants here illegally, if they have to choose one approach, while 20% think stronger law enforcement and border security should be the priority.

The current findings are in keeping with recent years, when pluralities have said both approaches to immigration policy – enhanced security *and* a path to citizenship – should be equally prioritized, though this is the first time a slightly larger share has preferred creating a path to citizenship to enhancing security (29% vs. 24%).

Views of undocumented immigrants living in the U.S.

Among the public overall, 71% say undocumented immigrants living in the United States mostly fill jobs citizens do not want, while just 24% say they mostly take jobs citizens want. About three-quarters of Americans (76%) say undocumented immigrants are “as honest and hard-working” as U.S. citizens, while 67% say they are no more likely than U.S. citizens to commit serious crimes.

As with views of immigration policy priorities, partisans differ in views of undocumented immigrants. Yet majorities of both Democrats (79%) and Republicans (63%) say that those who are in the U.S. illegally mostly take jobs U.S. citizens don’t want. Majorities in both parties also say undocumented immigrants are as honest and hard-working as U.S. citizens (87% of Democrats, 65% of Republicans).

There is a sharper divide in perceptions of criminality among undocumented immigrants. By a wide margin (80% to 15%), Democrats say those in the U.S. illegally are no more likely than citizens to commit serious crimes. Among Republicans, about half (52%) say undocumented immigrants are not more likely than citizens to commit serious crimes, but 42% say they are – more than double the share of Democrats who say this.

Most say undocumented immigrants are no more likely than U.S. citizens to commit serious crimes

% who say undocumented immigrants currently living in the U.S. ...

	Mostly fill jobs U.S. citizens would like	Mostly fill jobs U.S. citizens do not want	Are not as honest, hard-working as U.S. citizens	Are as honest, hard-working as U.S. citizens	Are more likely than U.S. citizens to commit serious crimes	Are NO more likely than U.S. citizens to commit serious crimes
Total	24	71	18	76	27	67
White	25	71	20	74	30	66
Black	31	61	19	78	23	72
Hispanic	18	79	9	86	18	74
Rep/Lean Rep	32	63	28	65	42	52
Dem/Lean Dem	17	79	10	87	15	80

Notes: Whites and blacks include only those who are not Hispanic; Hispanics are of any race. Don't know responses not shown.

Source: Survey conducted Aug. 9-16, 2016.

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Hispanics overwhelmingly think undocumented immigrants currently living in the U.S. are as honest and hardworking as American citizens (86%), and that they fill jobs that American citizens do not want (79%); and Hispanics are somewhat more likely than white and black Americans to express these views. Similarly, more Hispanics than whites think undocumented immigrants are no more likely than American citizens to commit serious crimes: Nearly three-quarters of Hispanics think this (74%), compared with two-thirds of whites.

Border wall continues to draw opposition

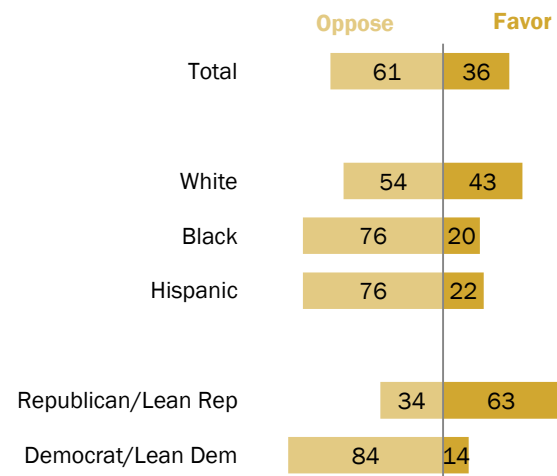
Most Americans today continue to oppose building a wall along the entire border with Mexico: 61% express opposition to the wall, while 36% are in favor. These attitudes have changed little over the past year.

Differences across demographic and political groups remain stark. While more whites say they are opposed (54%) than say they are in favor (43%) of the U.S.-Mexico border wall, they are far less likely than blacks and Hispanics to oppose the proposed wall. Roughly three-quarters of both blacks (76%) and Hispanics (76%) say they oppose the proposal, while just about one-in-five favor the wall.

Partisan differences in opinion also are wide: A 63% majority of Republicans and Republican leaners support building a wall along the U.S.-Mexico border, while 34% stand opposed to it. By contrast, an overwhelming share of Democrats (84%) are opposed to the wall, while just 14% are in favor.

Most Republicans favor building border wall; even more Democrats are opposed

% who _____ building wall along entire border with Mexico



Note: Don't know responses not shown.
Source: Survey conducted Aug. 9-16, 2016.

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Immigration policy and the 2016 campaign

The differences between registered voters who support Donald Trump and Hillary Clinton in their characterizations of undocumented immigrants, support for the U.S.-Mexico border wall and priorities for dealing with illegal immigration largely mirror partisan differences on these issues.

But among Trump backers in particular, there are some notable differences in these views by strength of support for the candidate. Half of all Trump supporters say undocumented immigrants living in the U.S. are more likely than American citizens to commit serious crimes. However, 59% of Trump supporters who support him strongly say this, compared with 42% of those who do not support him strongly.

Similarly, while fewer than three-in-ten Trump backers who only moderately support the candidate think that undocumented immigrants mostly fill jobs American citizens would like to have (29%), these views are somewhat more prevalent among those who support Trump strongly (41%).

There are only modest differences in views of undocumented immigrants between those who support Clinton strongly and those who do so only moderately.

How Trump and Clinton supporters view undocumented immigrants in the U.S.

% who say undocumented immigrants currently living in the U.S. _____

	Mostly fill jobs U.S. citizens would like	Are not as honest, hardworking as U.S. citizens	Are more likely than U.S. citizens to commit serious crimes
Among Trump supporters			
All Trump supporters	35	33	50
<i>Support Trump ...</i>			
Strongly (50%)	41	34	59
Only moderately/Lean (50%)	29	32	42
Among Clinton supporters			
All Clinton supporters	15	9	13
<i>Support Clinton ...</i>			
Strongly (51%)	13	9	11
Only moderately/Lean (48%)	17	9	15

Note: Based on registered voters.
Source: Survey conducted Aug. 9-16, 2016.

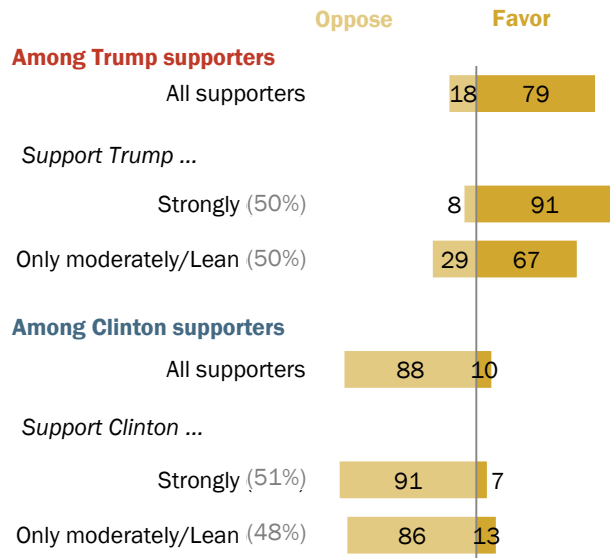
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Similarly, a proposed border wall draws support from 91% of those who support Trump strongly, compared with 67% of those who do not.

Clinton backers are solidly opposed regardless of strength of support for her candidacy. Fully 88% of Clinton supporters express opposition, compared with 10% who are in favor of a wall along the entire border with Mexico.

Deep divide between Clinton, Trump supporters over proposed border wall

% who _____ building wall along entire border with Mexico



Notes: Based on registered voters.
Don't know responses not shown.
Source: Survey conducted Aug. 9-16, 2016.

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Acknowledgements

This report is a collaborative effort based on the input and analysis of the following individuals:

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Methodology

The analysis in this report is based on telephone interviews conducted August 9-16, 2016 among a national sample of 2,010 adults, 18 years of age or older, living in all 50 U.S. states and the District of Columbia (507 respondents were interviewed on a landline telephone, and 1,503 were interviewed on a cell phone, including 865 who had no landline telephone). The survey was conducted by interviewers at Princeton Data Source under the direction of Princeton Survey Research Associates International. A combination of landline and cell phone random digit dial samples were used; both samples were provided by Survey Sampling International. Interviews were conducted in English and Spanish. Respondents in the landline sample were selected by randomly asking for the youngest adult male or female who is now at home. Interviews in the cell sample were conducted with the person who answered the phone, if that person was an adult 18 years of age or older. For detailed information about our survey methodology, see <http://www.pewresearch.org/methodology/u-s-survey-research/>

The combined landline and cell phone sample are weighted using an iterative technique that matches gender, age, education, race, Hispanic origin and nativity and region to parameters from the 2014 Census Bureau's American Community Survey and population density to parameters from the Decennial Census. The sample also is weighted to match current patterns of telephone status (landline only, cell phone only, or both landline and cell phone), based on extrapolations from the 2015 National Health Interview Survey. The weighting procedure also accounts for the fact that respondents with both landline and cell phones have a greater probability of being included in the combined sample and adjusts for household size among respondents with a landline phone. The margins of error reported and statistical tests of significance are adjusted to account for the survey's design effect, a measure of how much efficiency is lost from the weighting procedures.

The following table shows the unweighted sample sizes and the error attributable to sampling that would be expected at the 95% level of confidence for different groups in the survey:

Survey conducted August 9-16, 2016

Group	Unweighted sample size	Plus or minus ...
Total sample	2,010	2.5 percentage points
Republican/Lean Rep	831	3.9 percentage points
Democrat/Lean Dem	987	3.6 percentage points
<i>Among registered voters</i>		
Hillary Clinton supporters	680	4.3 percentage points
Donald Trump supporters	581	4.6 percentage points

Sample sizes and sampling errors for other subgroups are available upon request.

In addition to sampling error, one should bear in mind that question wording and practical difficulties in conducting surveys can introduce error or bias into the findings of opinion polls.

Pew Research Center undertakes all polling activity, including calls to mobile telephone numbers, in compliance with the Telephone Consumer Protection Act and other applicable laws.

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Appendix: Topline questionnaire

**PEW RESEARCH CENTER
AUGUST 2016 POLITICAL SURVEY
FINAL TOPLINE
AUGUST 9-16, 2016
N=2,010**

QUESTIONS 1-2, 7-8, CAMPNII, THOUGHT, REG, PRECINCT, 12-16, OFTVOTE, PLANTO, 23-25, 27-28, 37-38, 54-58, 61, 66 PREVIOUSLY RELEASED

NO QUESTIONS 3-6, 9-11, 17-22, 26, 29-36, 39-53, 59-60, 62-65, 67-70

Next,

ASK ALL:

Q.71 What should be the priority for dealing with illegal immigration in the U.S.? **[RANDOMIZE;** (one) better border security and stronger enforcement of our immigration laws; OR (two) creating a way for immigrants already here illegally to become citizens if they meet certain requirements] OR should BOTH be given equal priority?

	Better border security and stronger enforcement of our <u>immigration laws</u>	Creating a way for immigrants already here illegally to become citizens if they meet <u>certain requirements</u> ¹	Both should be given equal <u>priority</u>	(VOL.) None of <u>these</u>	(VOL.) <u>DK/Ref</u>
Aug 9-16, 2016	24	29	45	*	1
Aug 20-24, 2014	33	23	41	1	2
Feb 13-18, 2013 (U)	25	25	47	1	2
Jun 7-17, 2012	28	27	42	1	2
Nov 9-14, 2011	29	24	43	2	2
Feb 2-7, 2011	35	21	42	1	2
Aug 25-Sep 6, 2010	30	23	44	1	1
Jul 21-Aug 5, 2010	33	22	42	1	3

¹ In August 2014 and earlier surveys, response option was worded "(two) creating a way for illegal immigrants already here to become citizens if they meet certain requirements."

ASK ALL:

Q.71 What should be the priority for dealing with illegal immigration in the U.S.? **[RANDOMIZE]**; (one) better border security and stronger enforcement of our immigration laws; OR (two) creating a way for immigrants already here illegally to become citizens if they meet certain requirements] OR should BOTH be given equal priority?

ASK IF BOTH (Q.71=3):

Q.72 If you had to choose, which ONE would you say should be the bigger priority? **[READ ITEMS IN SAME ORDER AS IN Q.71:** (one) better border security and stronger enforcement of our immigration laws; OR (two) creating a way for immigrants already here illegally to become citizens if they meet certain requirements]

Aug 9-16 <u>2016</u>		(U) Feb 13-18 <u>2013</u>
24	Better border security and stronger enforcement of our immigration laws	25
29	Creating a way for immigrants already here illegally to become citizens if they meet certain requirements ²	25
45	Both should be given equal priority	47
18	<i>If had to choose, border security and enforcement</i>	22
26	<i>If had to choose, creating a way to become citizens</i>	24
1	<i>If had to choose, Don't know/Refused (VOL.)</i>	1
*	None of these (VOL.)	1
1	Don't know/Refused (VOL.)	2
42	NET Border security and enforcement	47
55	NET Creating a way to become citizens	49

NO QUESTIONS 73-75

ASK ALL:

Q.76 When it comes to undocumented immigrants currently in the U.S which comes closer to your view — even if neither is exactly right? **[READ AND RANDOMIZE]?** Next, **[NEXT PAIR]?** **[IF NECESSARY:** “Which comes closer to your view, even if neither is exactly right?”]

a.	Aug 9-16, 2016	Undocumented immigrants mostly fill jobs that American citizens <u>would like to have</u> 24	Undocumented immigrants mostly fill jobs American citizens don't <u>want</u> 71	(VOL.) Both/Neither/ <u>DK/Ref</u> 5
b.	Aug 9-16, 2016	In general undocumented immigrants are as honest and hardworking as <u>American citizens</u> 76	In general undocumented immigrants are not as honest and hardworking <u>as American citizens</u> 18	(VOL.) Both/Neither/ <u>DK/Ref</u> 6
c.	Aug 9-16, 2016	Undocumented immigrants living in the U.S. are more likely than American citizens to <u>commit serious crimes</u> 27	Undocumented immigrants living in the U.S. are NO more likely than American citizens to <u>commit serious crimes</u> 67	(VOL.) Both/Neither/ <u>DK/Ref</u> 6

² In February 2013, response option was worded “(two) creating a way for illegal immigrants already here to become citizens if they meet certain requirements.”

NO QUESTION 77**ASK ALL:**

Q.78 All in all, would you favor or oppose building a wall along the entire border with Mexico?

Aug 9-16 <u>2016</u>		Mar 17-26 <u>2016</u>
36	Favor	34
61	Oppose	62
3	Don't know/Refused (VOL.)	4

TRENDS FOR COMPARISON:

	<u>Favor</u>	<u>Oppose</u>	(VOL.) <u>DK/Ref</u>
<i>Building a fence along the entire border with Mexico</i>			
Mar 17-26, 2016	38	58	4
Sep 22-27, 2015	46	48	5
Sep 22-Oct 4, 2011 ³	46	47	6
<i>Building a fence along 700 miles of the border with Mexico</i>			
January, 2007	46	48	6
CNN: September, 2006	54	44	2

NO QUESTIONS 79-82, 87-89**QUESTIONS 83-86, 90 HELD FOR FUTURE RELEASE****QUESTIONS 91F1-93, PVOTE, SCALE10 PREVIOUSLY RELEASED**

³ In Sep 22-Oct 4, 2011, item was asked as part of a list.

ASK ALL:

PARTY In politics TODAY, do you consider yourself a Republican, Democrat, or independent?

ASK IF INDEP/NO PREF/OTHER/DK/REF (PARTY=3,4,5,9):

PARTYLN As of today do you lean more to the Republican Party or more to the Democratic Party?

				(VOL.)	(VOL.)	(VOL.)	Lean	Lean
	Republican	Democrat	Independent	No preference	Other party	DK/Ref	Rep	Dem
Aug 9-16, 2016	27	32	35	2	1	2	13	16
Jun 15-26, 2016	24	33	37	4	1	2	16	16
Apr 12-19, 2016	25	32	37	3	1	2	16	17
Mar 17-26, 2016	25	31	38	3	*	2	15	20
Jan 7-14, 2016	24	30	38	5	1	2	14	17
Dec 8-13, 2015	26	31	37	4	*	2	16	15
Aug 27-Oct 4, 2015	24	29	41	4	*	2	17	17
Sep 22-27, 2015	26	30	40	2	*	2	15	16
Jul 14-20, 2015	22	32	41	4	*	1	15	19
Yearly Totals								
2015	23.7	30.4	40.1	3.6	.4	1.8	16.4	17.3
2014	23.2	31.5	39.5	3.1	.7	2.0	16.2	16.5
2013	23.9	32.1	38.3	2.9	.5	2.2	16.0	16.0
2012	24.7	32.6	36.4	3.1	.5	2.7	14.4	16.1
2011	24.3	32.3	37.4	3.1	.4	2.5	15.7	15.6
2010	25.2	32.7	35.2	3.6	.4	2.8	14.5	14.1
2009	23.9	34.4	35.1	3.4	.4	2.8	13.1	15.7
2008	25.7	36.0	31.5	3.6	.3	3.0	10.6	15.2
2007	25.3	32.9	34.1	4.3	.4	2.9	10.9	17.0
2006	27.8	33.1	30.9	4.4	.3	3.4	10.5	15.1
2005	29.3	32.8	30.2	4.5	.3	2.8	10.3	14.9
2004	30.0	33.5	29.5	3.8	.4	3.0	11.7	13.4
2003	30.3	31.5	30.5	4.8	.5	2.5	12.0	12.6
2002	30.4	31.4	29.8	5.0	.7	2.7	12.4	11.6
2001	29.0	33.2	29.5	5.2	.6	2.6	11.9	11.6
2001 Post-Sept 11	30.9	31.8	27.9	5.2	.6	3.6	11.7	9.4
2001 Pre-Sept 11	27.3	34.4	30.9	5.1	.6	1.7	12.1	13.5
2000	28.0	33.4	29.1	5.5	.5	3.6	11.6	11.7
1999	26.6	33.5	33.7	3.9	.5	1.9	13.0	14.5
1998	27.9	33.7	31.1	4.6	.4	2.3	11.6	13.1
1997	28.0	33.4	32.0	4.0	.4	2.3	12.2	14.1
1996	28.9	33.9	31.8	3.0	.4	2.0	12.1	14.9
1995	31.6	30.0	33.7	2.4	.6	1.3	15.1	13.5
1994	30.1	31.5	33.5	1.3	--	3.6	13.7	12.2
1993	27.4	33.6	34.2	4.4	1.5	2.9	11.5	14.9
1992	27.6	33.7	34.7	1.5	0	2.5	12.6	16.5
1991	30.9	31.4	33.2	0	1.4	3.0	14.7	10.8
1990	30.9	33.2	29.3	1.2	1.9	3.4	12.4	11.3
1989	33	33	34	--	--	--	--	--
1987	26	35	39	--	--	--	--	--

Key to Pew Research trends noted in the topline:

(U)

Pew Research Center/USA Today polls