

TO: **Interested Parties**

FROM: Kellyanne Conway, President & CEO
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DATE: August 19, 2014

RE: **Immigration: Public Opinion Realities and Policy & Political Opportunities**

Hot-off-the press polling¹ shows that Americans are more focused, and more opinionated on the issue of immigration than in recent years. Among likely voters, 18% believe that immigration is the top issue for leaders in Washington to address, with another 39% saying that it is a top-three issue. Opinion has crystalized in light of the current border situation, the lens through which many Americans now view the larger issue of immigration.

There is a strong desire for the President to work with Congress, rather than around them. Many have suggested that a “pen and pad” executive solution is outside the law, but it is most certainly against the president’s political interests.

President Obama receives low job approval marks overall (40% approve/57% disapprove), but even stronger disapproval on his handling of immigration (32% approve/61% disapprove). Neither party is seen as particularly credible or helpful on the issue, suggesting a substantial opportunity for those who wish to offer workable solutions that address the various moving parts of immigration.

A majority of those surveyed favored the three main aspects of recent legislation passed in the House on immigration policy: enforcement of current law, repatriation of young illegal immigrants to their home countries, and limiting the President’s ability to use executive action to legalize immigrants on his own.

Most pointedly, likely voters were unequivocal in their support of immigration policies that protect the American worker. Their sentiment is the inverse of the oft-repeated phrase, “illegal immigrants do the jobs that Americans don’t want to do,” saying instead that these workers should have a fair opportunity to do the jobs that illegal immigrants currently do.

“Raise the pay” is a rallying call for these voters, who believe there are plenty of Americans to do the work and that better pay and more training is an elixir for labor shortages. Working class voters, married women, and political Independents agree with this in dramatic numbers.

¹ *Methodology: Results are derived from the polling company’s July 16-20, 2014 nationwide dual-frame survey among 1,001 likely voters with a margin of error of ±3.1%. This survey consisted of 80% landline interviews and 20% mobile phone interviews. Some results are also derived from the polling company’s August 7 – 10, 2014 nationwide dual-frame survey of 1,008 adults with a margin of error of ±3.1%. This survey consisted of 60% landline and 40% mobile phone interviews. Both surveys were conducted using live callers from a computer-assisted telephone interviewing (CATI) system.*

Key Findings and Strategic Recommendations

- ▶ The time appears ripe for a national immigration conversation. There is a new open-mindedness to populist approaches, regardless of partisan or ideological preferences.
 - 75% want more enforcement of current immigration laws, **including 63% of Hispanics** and over 50% of Democrats. **Although the administration and their media allies have pushed Obama’s deportation record, few Americans are buying the idea that Obama is enforcing immigration law strongly.**
 - A majority name immigration as the most or one of the three most important issues to their vote this fall.
 - While President Obama is underwater in his job approval (57%-40%), an even greater margin (two-thirds) of Americans disapprove of his handling of immigration. This includes one of his key constituencies, Hispanics, who disapprove of his job performance on immigration by 55% to 39%.
 - Neither Republicans nor Democrats are viewed as doing a good job on immigration, **a clear product of the GOP’s lack of coherent immigration message.** That also means that neither party currently “owns” the issue. The current combination of children-at-the-border-crisis and an increasingly weakened President Obama is awakening a sleeping giant on an issue long eclipsed by the economy and healthcare
- Keep the focus on what you can be for – policies that protect unemployed and low-income American workers and legal immigrants already here from competition with new legal immigrants or illegal immigrants for jobs, compassion but common sense at the border, encouraging repatriation and poking businesses to be “America First.”
- Facts and figures that inform and remind people of the literal costs of immigration, from increased taxes to decreased economic opportunities complement the heartstrings impulses. Emotional appeals are expected, but economic data should carry the day.
- “Fairness” is a core governing value in this country, having replaced “equality” on a number of issues. On immigration, voters demand fairness toward everyone in the equation, not just the immigrants. What is fair to the economy? To blue-collar workers? Are employers doing all they can to be fair to Americans looking to earn an honest day’s wage for an honest day’s work?



- The children-at-the-border-crisis has brought into sharp relief public opinion about immigration. Out of sight, out of mind is over.
- There is strong consensus on many populist immigration policies that should find new audiences:
 - Strengthen enforcement of current immigration laws.
 - Encourage returning or staying home by tightening access or eliminating public benefits to illegal immigrants – at least adults – and improve enforcement of employment laws.
 - Limit chain immigration for legal immigrants to immediate nuclear family (spouse and minor children).
- Encourage/require businesses to hire American citizens and legal immigrants already here first, offering training as necessary – especially in low or minimal skilled jobs.
- Turning on its head the cynical meme that legal and illegal immigrants do the jobs Americans won't do would be a public relations coup. The idea that *Americans should do – and should be preferred in trying to do – the jobs currently held by immigrants* – enjoys broad public support. Five and a half weeks of children at the border, and five and a half years of the Obama economy has crystallized public sentiment. Leverage that.
- Those who are more pessimistic about the U.S. employment outlook or have lower annual household incomes are more resistant to legal immigration and also more conservative in their approach to policies dealing with illegal immigrants.
- Likely voters are more inclined to believe that immigrants take jobs from Americans rather than create jobs, and nearly 9 out of 10 believe that U.S.-born workers and legal immigrants already here should get first preference for jobs.
- Over two-thirds of likely voters agree that we should deny illegal immigrants jobs and welfare benefits to encourage their return back to their home countries - including 64% of union members. Hispanics were split: 48% support and 46% of them oppose this solution.
- Tolerance for adult foreign citizens who overstay their visas is low – 76% of all respondents say they should not be allowed to stay.
- There was strong agreement, including among all ideological and political party identifications, that chain migration needs to be limited to only spouses and minor



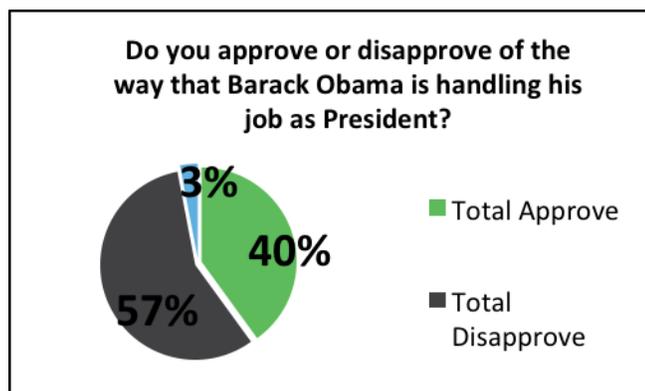
children of legal immigrants. Even half of those who say we enforce our immigration laws “too much” agree that this policy should be limited.

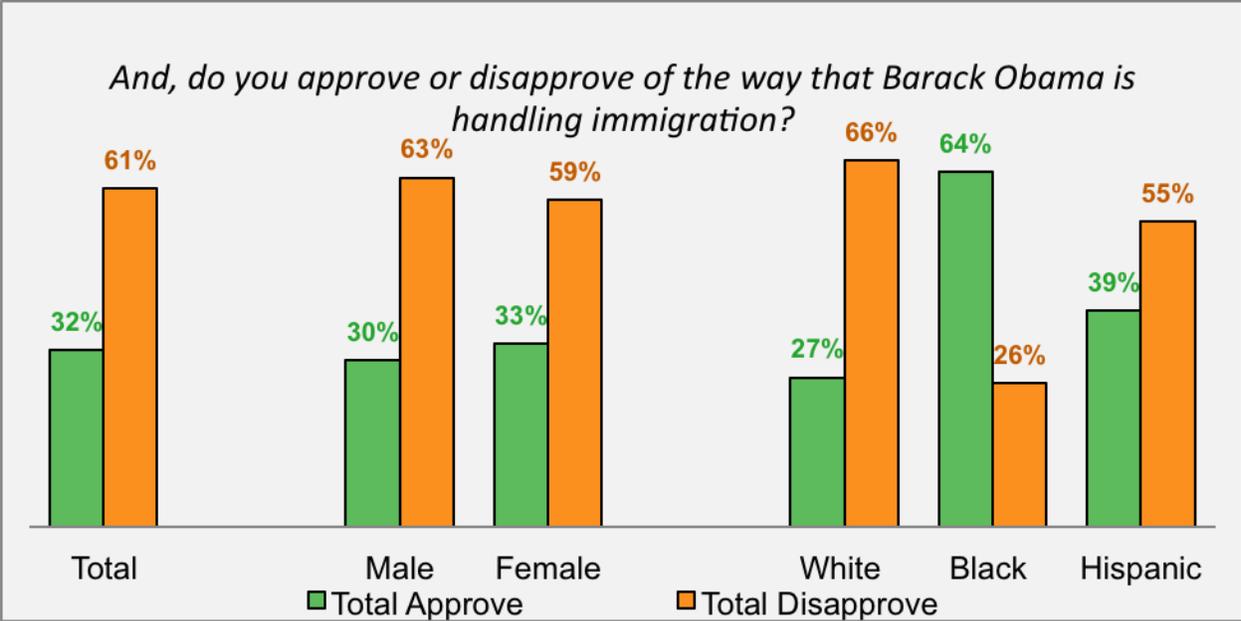
- **Immigration is an issue unto itself AND as part of an overall economic message.**
 - Messaging on debt, unemployment, Obama and Obamacare will not be enough come November. This is not 2010. And that did not work everywhere in 2012. “Economy” means different things to different voters, e.g., everyday affordability, long-term financial security, and immigration is viewed as part of the overall *economic equation*.
 - 50% believe it’s unfair that we bring in one million immigrants who can look for jobs while millions of Americans are having trouble finding work
 - Pessimism persists, and the competition fierce: 45% plurality believe that the unemployment situation will get worse in the next few years
 - 77% believe U.S. born workers and legal immigrants already in the country should be given preference for jobs over new legal immigrants (89% agree over illegal immigrants).
 - 58% agree that there are plenty of Americans to do construction and service industry jobs, with no need for increased immigration to fill them.
 - 80% believe businesses should be required to recruit and train more American workers from groups with high unemployment levels.

President Obama’s job approval is upside down, and even worse on immigration.

Nearly six-in-ten likely voters disapprove of President Obama overall (40% approve, 57% disapprove). Those disapproving of the President include 61% of men and 53% of women, along with 72% of Independents and 16% of his own voters in 2012.

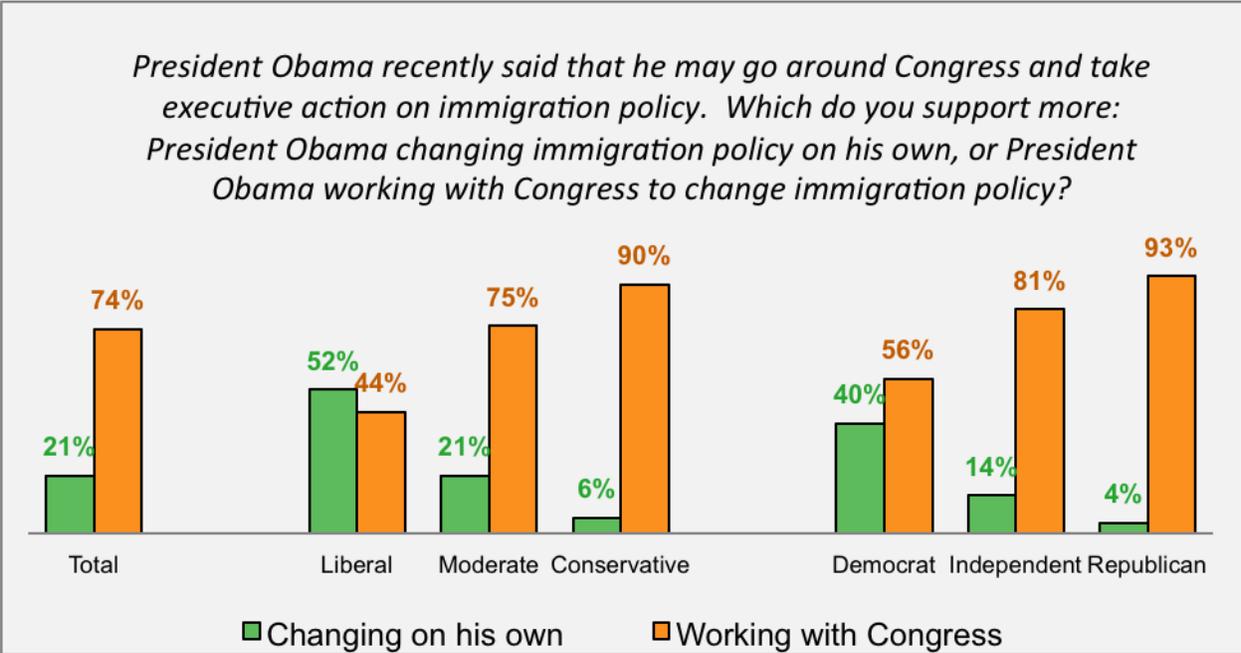
Things look worse for the President in regards to immigration. His approval on this issue is just over three-in-ten (32% approve, 61% disapprove). Included in this majority are constituents like Hispanics who disapprove of the President by 55% to 39%.





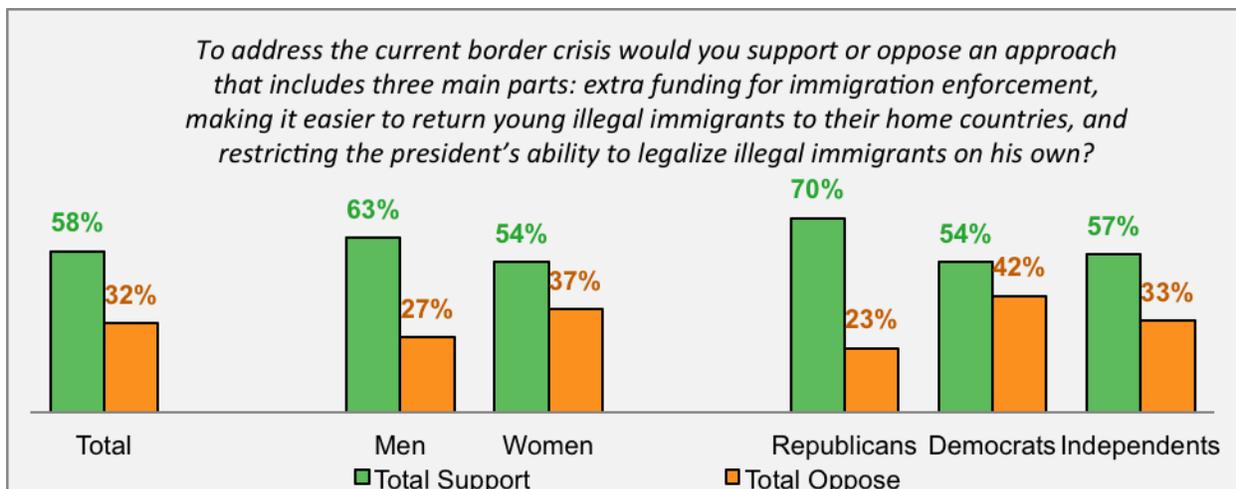
Likely voters want cooperation on immigration.

Nearly three quarters of likely voters want Congress and the President to work together to address immigration policy. This includes majorities of self-identified Republicans, Democrats, Independents, Conservatives, and Moderates, while Liberals are alone in supporting Obama as the executive action Lone Ranger.



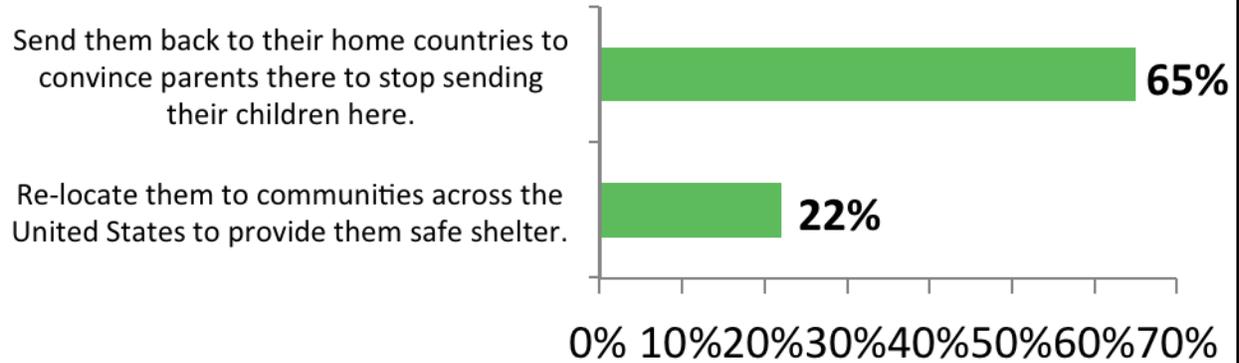
Americans are 26 points more likely to want GOP's three step solution for immigration crisis: enforce, repatriate, and restrict the president from acting on his own; 20% unsure.

The House GOP's three-prong approach to addressing the surge of immigrants on our southern border finds support among 58% of those surveyed. Although a gender gap exists, majorities of both men and women support these policies. This strong support also includes majorities of each of the three political party identifications.



Specifically, nearly two-thirds of likely voters (65%) believe that the unaccompanied illegal immigrant children should be returned to their home countries and reunited with their parents and that this will convince them to stop sending their children to the U.S. border.

As you may know, by the end of this year 70,000 to 90,000 unaccompanied illegal immigrant children are expected to cross the border in to the United States, which is three-to-four times the number that crossed over last year. Which of the following approaches do you think is the best way to handle the flood of children over the border?

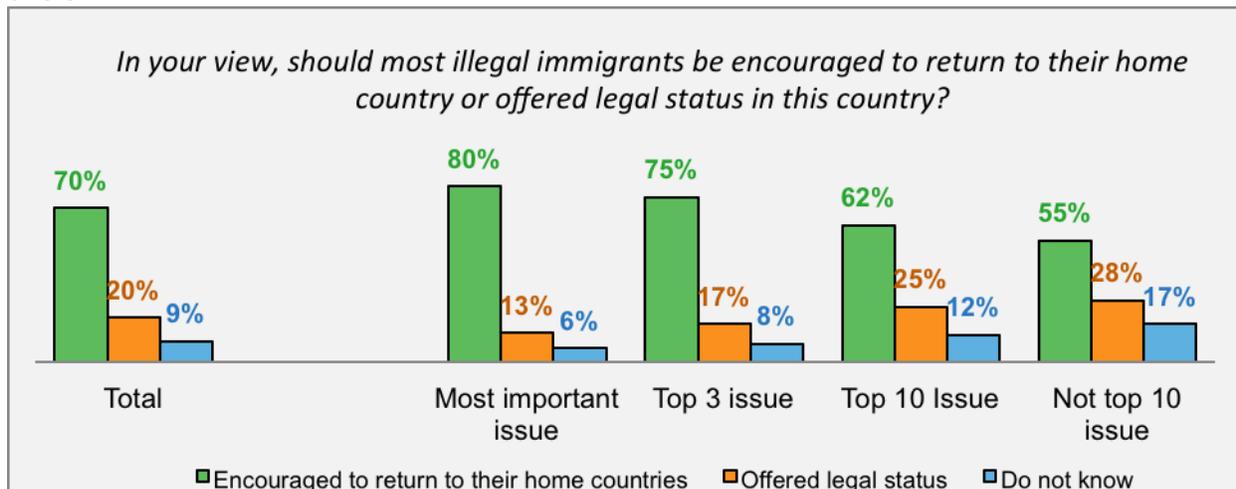


Likely voters strongly support encouraging illegal immigrants to return to their home countries over giving them legal status.

Just 20% of likely voters say that they would prefer to give legal status to immigrants who enter the country illegally. In contrast, the vast majority (70%) believe that illegal immigrants should be encouraged to return to their home countries. Included in this majority is 55% of Hispanics, 65% of Moderates, 73% of Independents, and 53% of Democrats.

No Gender Gap Present		
<i>In your view, should most illegal immigrants be encouraged to return to their home country or offered legal status in this country?</i>		
	Encouraged to return to their home country	Offered legal status in this country
Male	71%	20%
Female	69%	19%

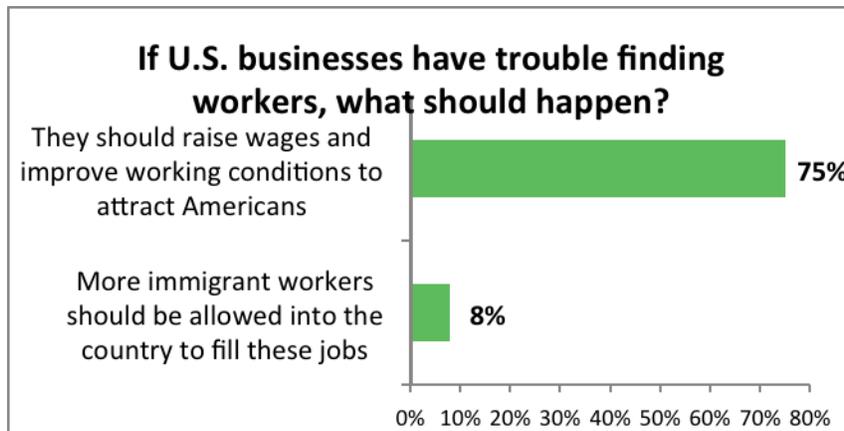
Analyzing these results among those who rank the importance of the immigration issue, those who say that immigration is the most important issue are most likely to want illegal immigrants to be encouraged to return home. While support for encouraging illegals to return home decreases among those who see immigration as a less important issue, majorities in each category agree that legal status is not the answer to the immigration crisis.



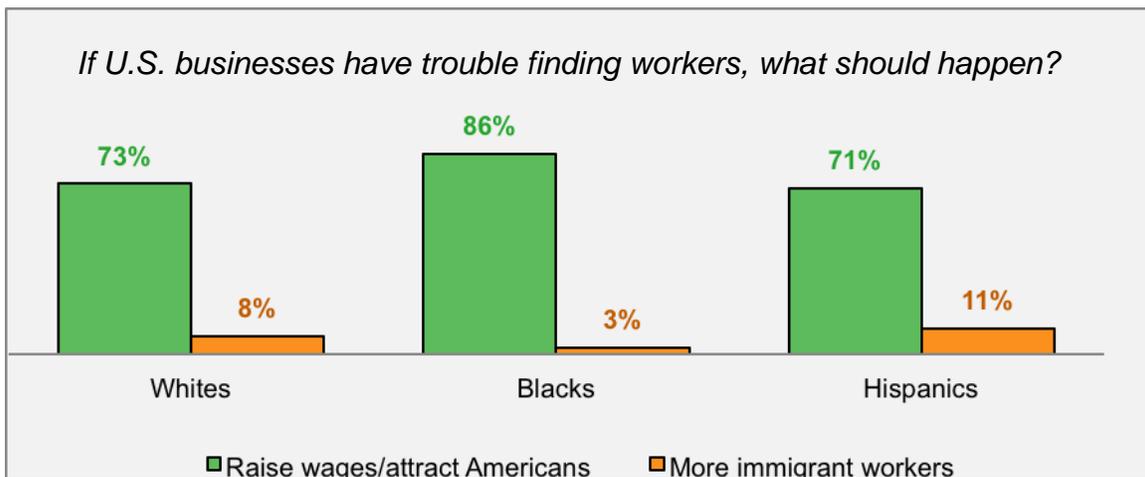
Raise the pay, not the immigration rates.

Americans' support for businesses to be accountable and for government policy to protect vulnerable unemployed and low-wage workers whose opportunities for jobs may be limited by continued levels of both legal and illegal immigration of foreign workers creates a massive opportunity for Republicans to voice their support for a positive, pro-growth policy.

Three quarters of respondents believe that businesses should attract workers through higher wages and improved working conditions rather than recruiting legal immigrants from outside the country, or even illegal immigrants for these positions.



Among those who agree that we should raise wages and improve working conditions to attract native-born workers are key demographic groups; Hispanics (71% believe that businesses should raise wages to attract American workers), and self-identified Democrats, are more likely to agree than Republicans or Independents.



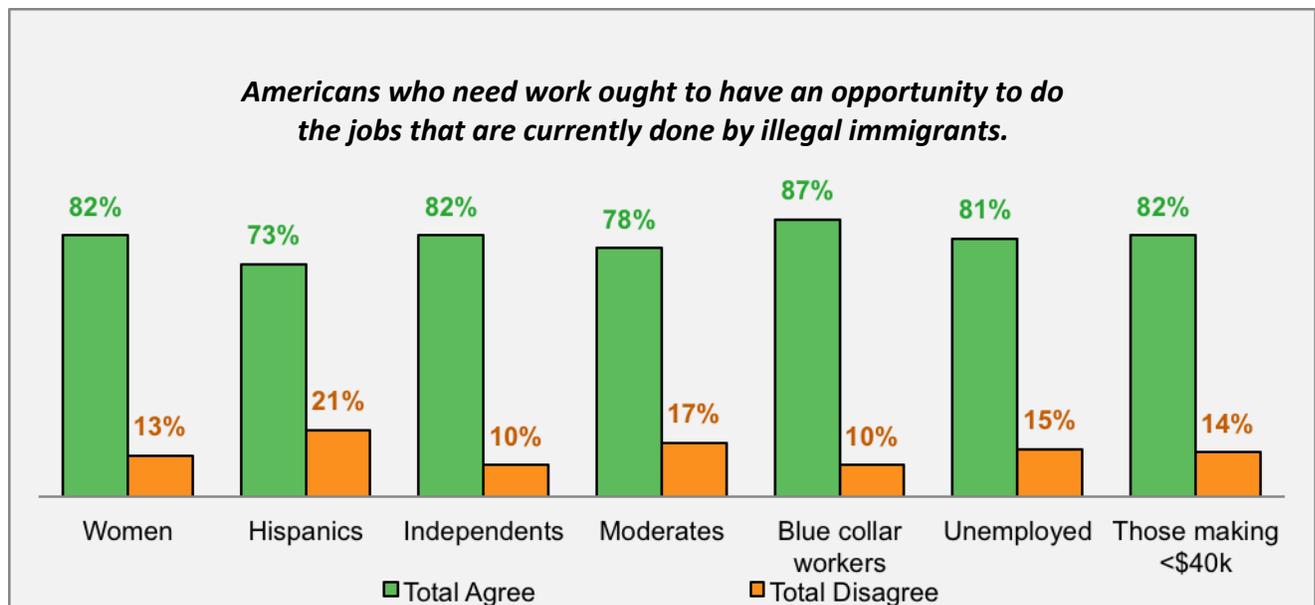
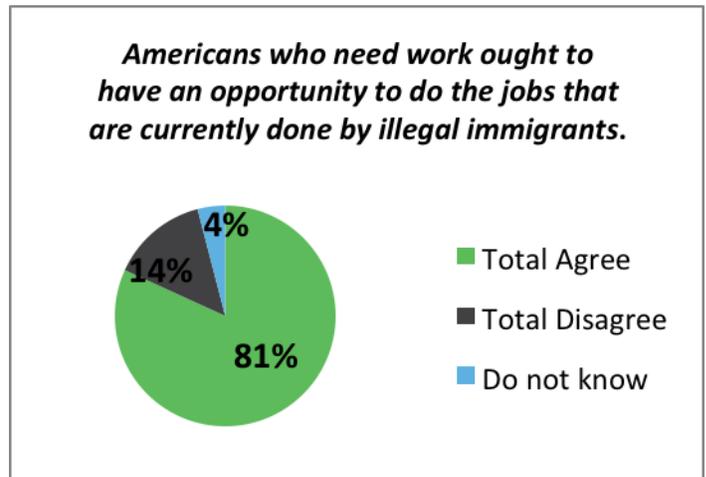
	Republicans	Democrats	Independents
They should raise wages and improve working conditions to attract Americans	74%	79%	74%
More immigrant workers should be allowed into the country to fill these jobs.	6%	8%	8%



Protection of U.S. workers is top priority for Americans

As seen in the graph to the right, **the vast majority of likely voters want policies that make American workers the priority.**

These results turn the often-heard statement that illegal immigrants do the jobs that Americans won't do on its head. Over 8-in-10 respondents believe that American workers and legal immigrants already in the U.S. should get first pick at these jobs before illegals. As one can see from the graph below, blue collar workers support having the opportunity to take these positions more than the any other demographic group studied.



Rule of Law, National Security and Economic Consequences are Compelling, but JOBS is the Primary Motivator for an Awakening (and Action) on Immigration.

There is broad agreement that the government should enforce policies that protect unemployed or low-wage American workers and legal immigrants already here.

Particularly striking is the support for defending American workers among all political and ideological stripes. This support also extends to normally reliable Democratic constituencies like women, single women, moderates and yes, Hispanics.

The government has a responsibility to adopt immigration policies that protect its own unemployed or low-wage American workers from competition with illegal immigrants for jobs.		
	Total Agree	Total Disagree
Total	74%	21%
Women	75%	19%
Single Women	65%	29%
Hispanics	63%	27%
Liberals	58%	36%
Moderates	72%	22%
Independents	74%	21%
Democrats	65%	29%
Those making <\$40k	77%	19%
Blue Collar Workers	85%	9%

