

IMMIGRATION AFTER TRUMP

WHAT WOULD IMMIGRATION
POLICY THAT FOLLOWED AMERICAN
PUBLIC OPINION LOOK LIKE?



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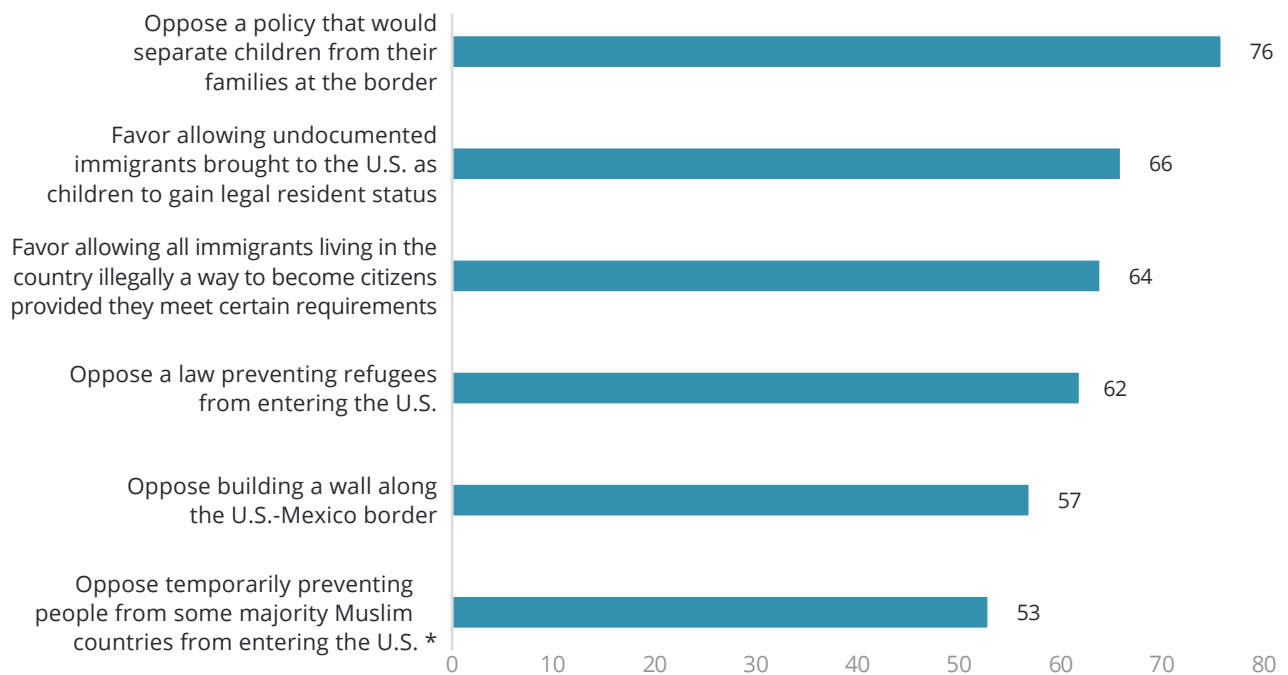
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Immigration Policy and Public Opinion

The last four years of U.S. immigration policy have been driven by the Trump administration's aggressive stance against all types of immigration, legal and illegal.¹ President Joe Biden has promised to reverse many restrictive immigration policies from the Trump era by reforming the asylum system, raising the cap on refugee admissions, revoking the travel ban on immigrants from several Muslim-majority countries, halting the construction of a wall along the U.S. border with Mexico, suspending all deportations for the first 100 days of his presidency, making the DACA program permanent, and sending a comprehensive immigration reform bill to Congress.²

FIGURE 1. Most Americans Want More Welcoming Immigration Policies

Percent who:



Source: PRRI 2020 American Values Survey.

*Source: PRRI 2019 American Values Survey.

¹ <https://www.prrri.org/research/a-nation-of-immigrants-diverging-perceptions-of-immigrants-increasingly-marking-partisan-divides/>

² https://www.washingtonpost.com/graphics/2020/politics/biden-immigration/?itid=sn_transfer%20of%20power_2/

The Republican and Democratic parties offer starkly different perspectives on immigration-related issues. But what would an immigration policy that followed American public opinion look like? The short answer: American public sentiment is much closer to the policies the Biden administration is likely to implement than those put in place by the Trump administration. Sizable majorities of Americans:

- Favor allowing undocumented immigrants brought to the U.S. as children to gain legal resident status (66%)
- Favor allowing all immigrants living in the country illegally a path to citizenship provided they meet certain requirements (64%)
- Oppose a law preventing refugees from entering the U.S. (62%)
- Oppose building a wall along the U.S.-Mexico border (57%)
- Oppose travel bans that temporarily prevent people from some Muslim-majority countries from entering the U.S. (53%)³
- Oppose a policy that would separate children from their families at the border, which was in place briefly during Trump's term in office (76%)

DACA: Legal Resident Status for Dreamers

By a margin of two to one, Americans support allowing undocumented immigrants brought to the U.S. as children to gain legal resident status, the central tenet of the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) policy (66% favor; 33% oppose). Support for this policy has steadily increased since March 2018 (62%), with the exception of a brief downturn in late 2018.

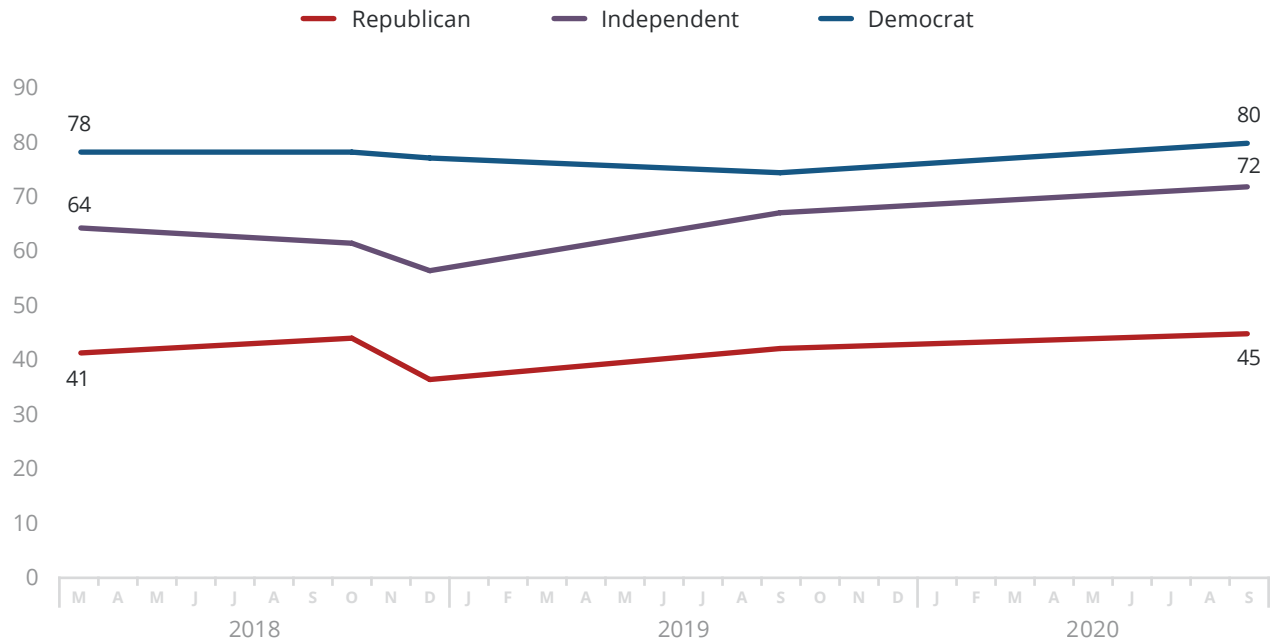
Democrats (80%) are notably more likely than independents (72%) and Republicans (45%) to favor this policy. Republicans have grown more supportive of DACA today (45%) than they were in March 2018 (41%), but the change is not statistically significant. Democrats are more supportive of this policy today than they were in 2019 (74%), but today's level of support is similar to that of 2018 (78%). Support for this policy has steadily increased among independents, from 64% in 2018 to 67% in 2019 and 72% today.

Majorities of every religious group favor DACA, including more than seven in ten Black Protestants (74%), religiously unaffiliated Americans (74%), Hispanic Catholics (72%), and members of non-Christian religions (72%). About six in ten Hispanic Protestants (64%), white Catholics (62%), white mainline Protestants (61%), and other Christians (58%) favor DACA, as do 52% of white evangelical Protestants.

³ Data for this question is from the PRRI 2019 American Values Survey; all others are from the PRRI 2020 American Values Survey.

FIGURE 2. Support for DACA, by Party Affiliation

Percent who favor allowing immigrants brought illegally to the U.S. as children to gain legal resident status:



Sources: PRRI 2018-2020 American Values Surveys.

Majorities of Hispanic Americans (70%), Black Americans (69%), white Americans (65%), and Americans who are multiracial or identify with another race (62%) favor allowing immigrants brought illegally to the United States as children to gain legal resident status. White Americans without college degrees are less likely than white Americans with college degrees to favor this policy (60% vs. 74%).

Young Americans ages 18–29 (72%) are more supportive of DACA than other age groups, including Americans ages 30–49 (64%), ages 50–64 (63%), and senior Americans ages 65 or over (67%).

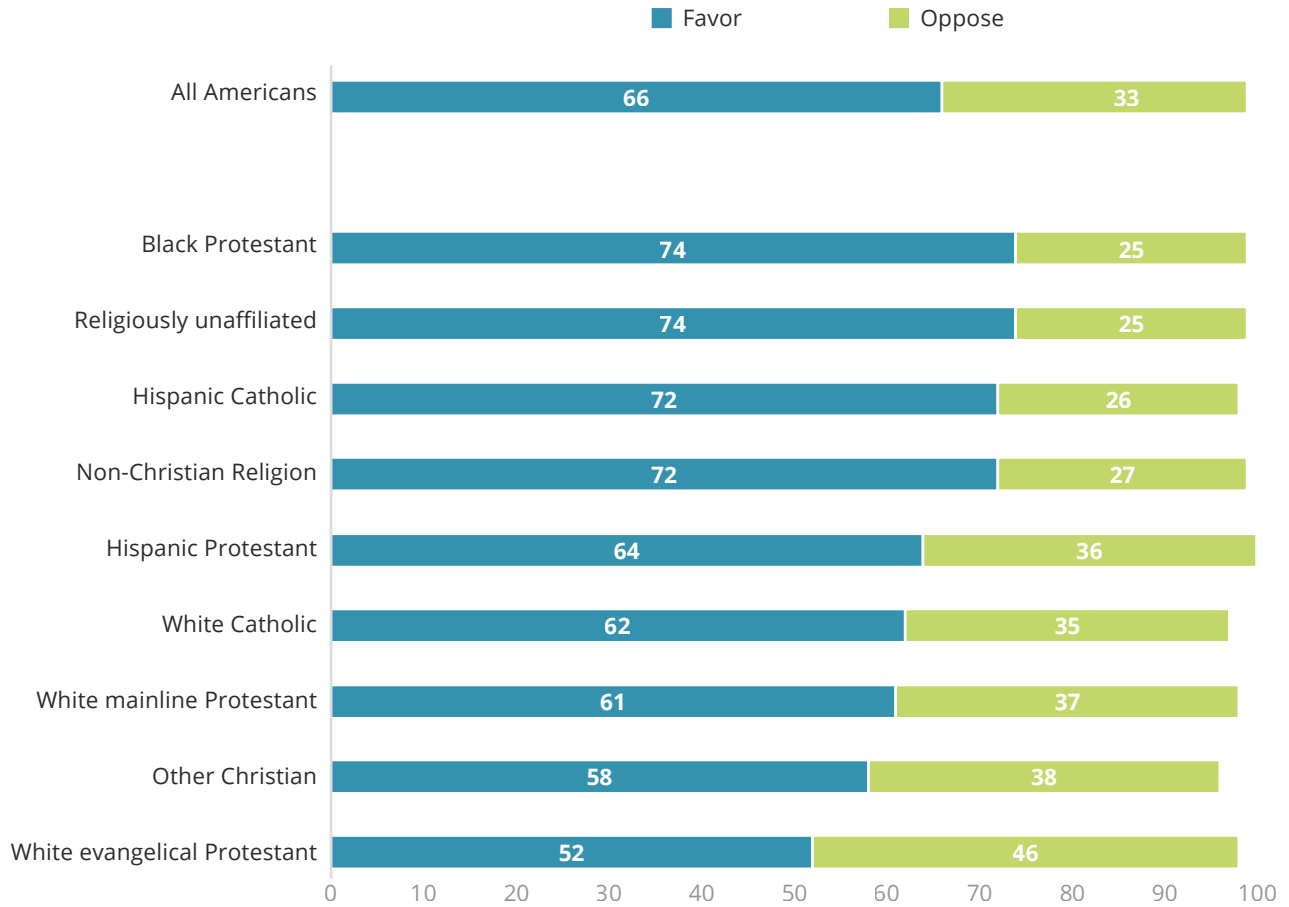
A Path to Citizenship for Those Living in the U.S. Illegally

More than six in ten Americans (64%) say that immigrants living in the U.S. illegally should be allowed a way to become citizens provided they meet certain requirements, compared to 16% who say immigrants living in the U.S. illegally should be eligible for permanent resident status but not citizenship and 19% who think they should be identified and deported. These numbers have been remarkably steady since PRRI began asking the question, in 2013.

Democrats (74%) are more likely than independents (67%) and Republicans (48%) to say that immigrants living in the U.S. illegally should be allowed a way to become citizens. Partisan atti-

FIGURE 2B. Support for DACA, by Religious Affiliation

Percent who favor or oppose allowing immigrants brought illegally to the U.S. as children to gain legal resident status:



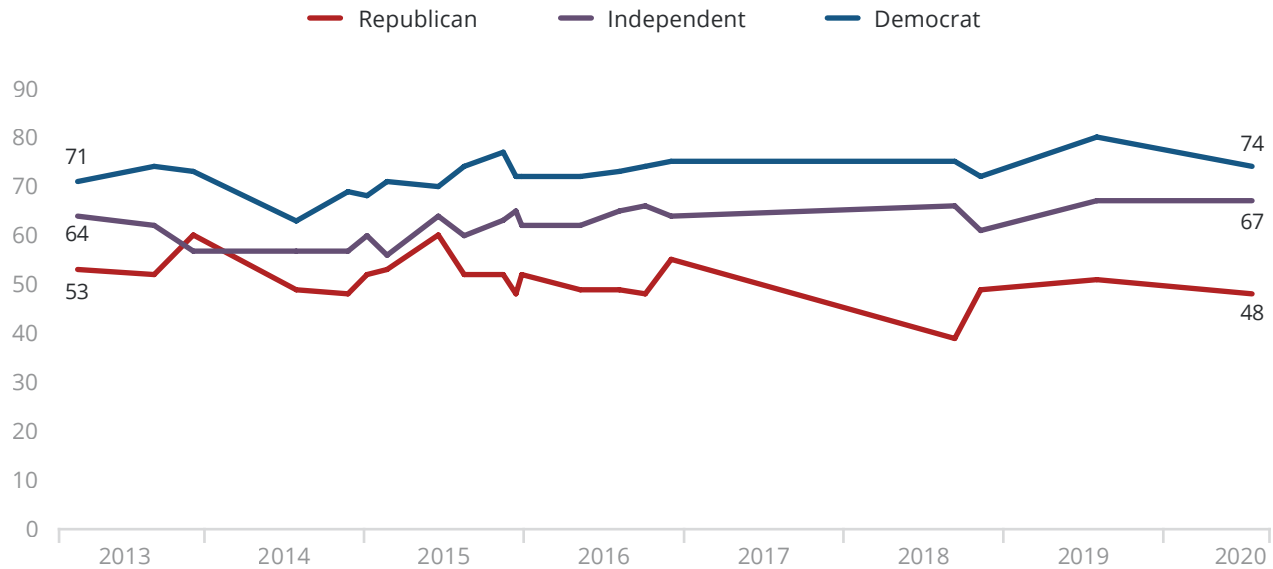
Source: PRRI 2020 American Values Survey.

tudes on this question have remained mostly stable over the last eight years. Republicans have grown slightly less supportive of this policy, from 53% in February 2013, when the question was first asked, to 48% today. There are no significant changes among Democrats and independents during this period.

Majorities of every religious group believe undocumented immigrants should have an opportunity to become U.S. citizens, including about three in four religiously unaffiliated Americans (73%) and about two-thirds of members of non-Christian religions (66%), white mainline Protestants (65%), and Black Protestants (63%). Majorities of Hispanic Catholics (61%), white Catholics (59%), white evangelical Protestants (58%), and other Christians (56%) also support a path to citizenship.

FIGURE 3. Support for a Pathway to Citizenship 2013-2020, by Party Affiliation

Percent who say there should be a pathway for immigrants living in the country illegally to become citizens, provided they meet certain requirements:



Source: PRRI Surveys 2013-2020.

Among religious groups, Hispanic Protestants (50%) are least supportive of this policy. Support for this policy among both Hispanic Protestants and Hispanic Catholics has steadily declined since February 2013, when the question was first asked (71% and 74%, respectively). Support among other religious groups has remained stable over time.

About two-thirds of white Americans (65%), Americans who are multiracial or identify as another race (64%), Black Americans (63%), and Hispanic Americans (61%) favor a policy that would offer undocumented immigrants a pathway to citizenship. Notably, Hispanic Americans declined in their support for this policy since 2019 (74%). White Americans (22%) are more likely than Black Americans (15%) and Hispanic Americans (12%) to say all immigrants living in the U.S. illegally should be deported. Among whites, those without a college degree are significantly more likely than those with a four-year college degree to say undocumented immigrants should be deported (26% vs. 15%). White men are also more likely than white women to favor deportation (25% vs. 18%).

Opposition to Preventing Refugees From Entering the U.S.

A majority of Americans oppose passing a law to prevent refugees from entering the United States (62%), compared to just over one-third who support it (36%). Opposition to and support for this policy has remained stable since 2017 (59% vs. 36%).

There are stark partisan divisions. Republicans (36%) are about half as likely as independents (66%) and Democrats (79%) to oppose the passage of a law that would prevent refugees from entering the United States; 61% of Republicans favor such a policy. Democrats are notably more likely to oppose this policy today than they were in 2017 (72%), while opposition among Republicans and independents remains stable (39% and 63%, respectively).

White evangelical Protestants stand out as the only religious group among whom a majority favor this policy (40% oppose; 58% favor). Majorities of almost all religious groups oppose passing legislation that prevents refugees from entering the United States, including large shares of the religiously unaffiliated (77%), members of non-Christian religions (73%), Hispanic Catholics (68%), Black Protestants (67%), other Christians (60%), and Hispanic Protestants (54%). Majorities of white Catholics (58%) and white mainline Protestants (53%) also oppose legislation banning refugees.

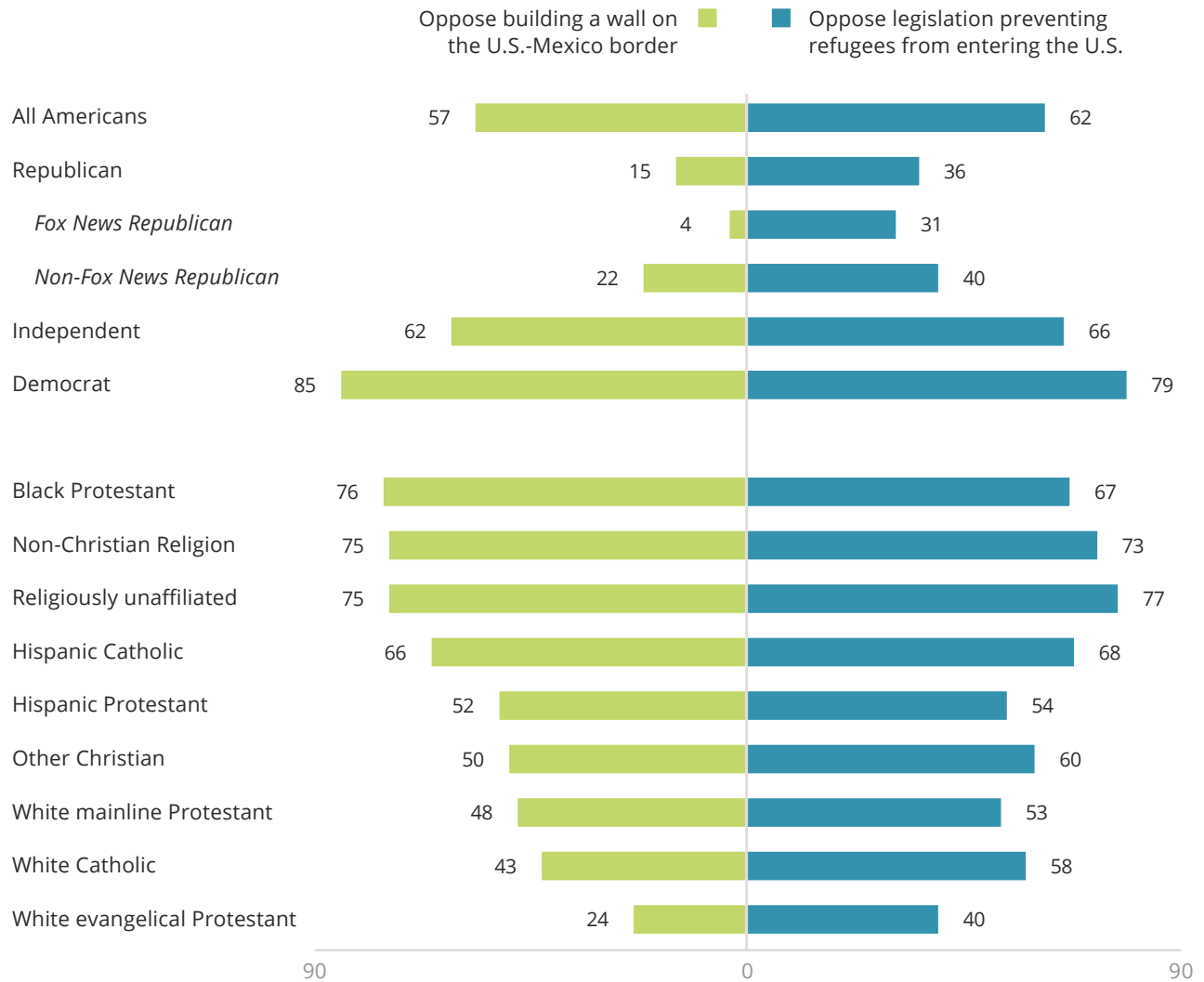
Even though a majority of white Americans (59%) oppose a ban on refugees entering the U.S., they are less likely to oppose it than Americans who are multiracial or identify as another race (69%), Hispanic Americans (67%), and Black Americans (66%). White Americans with college degrees are more likely than white Americans without college degrees to oppose this policy (71% vs. 52%).

A substantial majority of Americans ages 18–29 (73%) oppose passing a law to prevent refugees from entering the United States, compared to two-thirds of Americans ages 30–49 (66%) and 54% of Americans ages 50–64. A majority of Americans ages 65 and over (54%) also oppose the policy, but this is less than the share of people in this age group who opposed it in 2019 (63%).

Americans living in states that border Mexico are more likely to oppose this policy than Americans living elsewhere (67% vs. 61%).

FIGURE 4. Opposition to Building a Wall on the U.S.-Mexico Border and Preventing Refugees from Entering the U.S., by Party Affiliation and Religious Affiliation

Percent who:



Source: PRRI 2020 American Values Survey.

Building a Wall on America's Southern Border

Nearly six in ten Americans (57%) oppose building a wall along the U.S. border with Mexico, while about four in ten support this policy (42%). Opinion about this policy has remained stable since 2016 (58% opposed; 41% supported).

Not surprisingly, more than eight in ten Republicans support Trump's border wall idea (84%), while a similar number of Democrats oppose it (85%). Independents roughly mirror Americans in general (62% oppose; 38% support).

Majorities of Christians of color and non-Christian religious groups oppose building a wall along the U.S.-Mexico border, including Black Protestants (76%), members of non-Christian religions (75%), religiously unaffiliated Americans (75%), Hispanic Catholics (66%), and approximately half of Hispanic Protestants (52%) and other Christians (50%). Opposition dips below half among white Christian groups, including white mainline Protestants (48%), white Catholics (43%), and white evangelical Protestants (24%).

White Americans are almost evenly divided between opposition and support for building the wall (51% vs. 48%). Majorities of all other racial and ethnic groups oppose building a wall along the U.S.-Mexico border, including Black Americans (74%), Americans who are multiracial or identify as another race (70%), and Hispanic Americans (65%). White Americans' opposition to this policy varies by education and gender: 63% with a college degree and 44% without a college degree oppose this policy, as do 46% of white men and 55% of white women.

More than six in ten young adults ages 18–29 (64%) and Americans ages 30–49 (61%) oppose the construction of a wall along the U.S.-Mexico border, compared to about half of middle-aged Americans ages 50–64 (50%) and senior Americans ages 65 and over (53%).

Ban on Travel From Select Muslim-Majority Countries

Shortly after his inauguration in 2017, Trump signed an executive order that temporarily banned travel from seven predominantly Muslim countries. In 2019, Americans were divided over the travel ban, with 45% favoring such a policy and 53% opposing it.

Republicans predominantly favor a Muslim travel ban (74%), while Democrats are much less supportive (27%) and independents fall in the middle (41%). Republicans who most trust Fox News (84%) overwhelmingly favor the travel ban, compared to two-thirds (67%) of Republicans who get their news elsewhere.

Religious groups are also deeply divided over the travel ban. White evangelical Protestants (69%) are most supportive, followed by other Christians (58%), white mainline Protestants (54%), and

white Catholics (52%). Less than half of Hispanic Protestants (49%), non-Christian religious Americans (40%), Black Protestants (39%), Hispanic Catholics (32%), and religiously unaffiliated Americans (25%) favor a Muslim travel ban.

Black Americans (40%) and Hispanic Americans (37%) are less likely than white Americans (49%) to favor Trump's Muslim travel ban.

Separating Children From Their Families

The short-lived Trump administration policy of separating children from their families at the border receives little support among Americans. More than three-quarters of Americans (76%) oppose an immigration border policy that separates children from their parents and charges parents as criminals when they enter the country without permission, compared to less than one in four (23%) who favor such a policy. Such strong opposition to this policy has remained stable since it was introduced, in 2018.

Americans across the partisan spectrum oppose this family separation policy, including majorities of Republicans (53%), independents (79%), and nearly all of Democrats (91%). This is also true among majorities of members of all religious groups, including white evangelical Protestants (63%). Notably, the only group in which the majority supports immigrant family separations are Republicans who trust Fox News the most to provide accurate information about politics and current events (53%).

Most Black Americans (85%), Hispanic Americans (75%), white Americans (75%), and Americans who are multiracial or identify as another race (73%) oppose such family separations. Notably, white women (80%) are more opposed to this policy than white men (69%).

Immigration as a Critical Issue

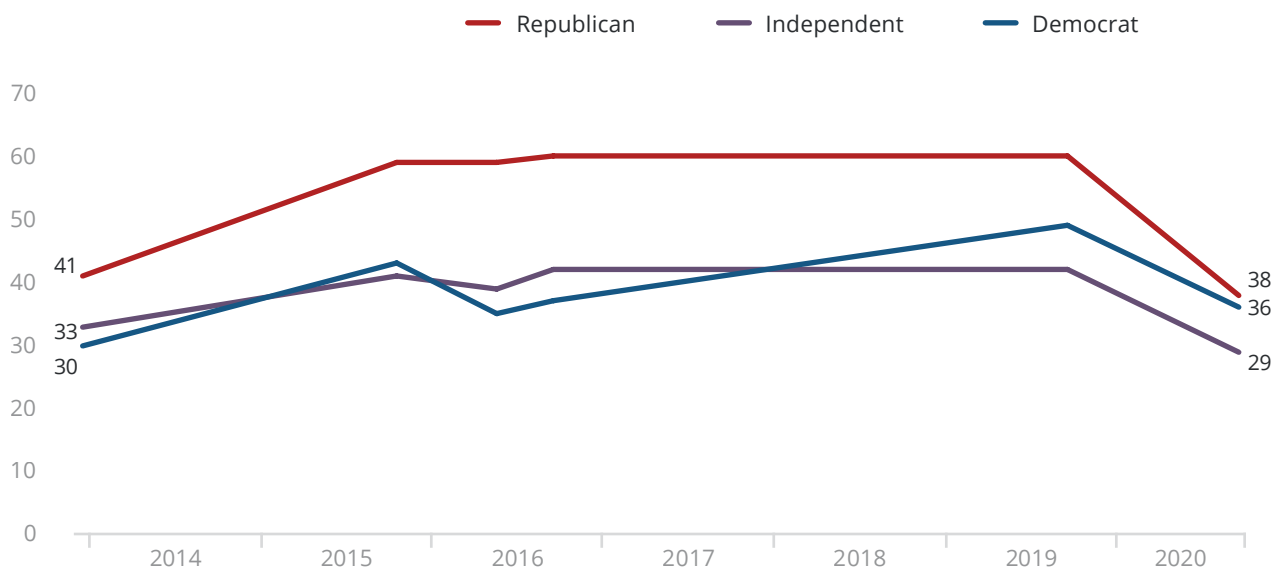
Today, one-third of Americans (33%) rate immigration as a critical issue, 52% say it is one of many important issues, and only 14% say it is not important at all. The importance of immigration has declined significantly since 2019, when nearly half of Americans (49%) said immigration was a critical issue. Moreover, the 2020 number represents the lowest proportion of Americans who see immigration as a critical issue since PRRI first asked this question, in 2013.

For most of the last decade, by double-digit margins, Republicans have been more likely than Democrats to say immigration is a critical issue. But today, about four in ten of both Republicans (38%) and Democrats (36%) say that immigration is a critical issue, compared to nearly three in ten independents (29%). Republicans who most trust Fox News to provide accurate information about politics and current events are notably more likely than Republicans who most trust other media sources to say that immigration is a critical issue (48% vs. 31%).

About four in ten Hispanic Americans (42%) and Americans who are multiracial or identify as another race (38%), as well as about one-third of Black (34%) and white Americans (31%), say immigration is a critical issue.

FIGURE 5. Americans Less Likely to View Immigration as a Critical Issue 2013-2020, by Party Affiliation

Percent who say immigration is a critical issue:



Source: PRRI Surveys 2013-2020.

Americans living in states that share a border with Mexico, including California, Texas, New Mexico, and Arizona, are more likely than Americans living elsewhere to say that immigration is a critical issue (38% vs. 32%).

Perceptions of Immigrants as a Threat to American Culture

About three in ten Americans agree with the statement “immigrants are invading our country and replacing our cultural and ethnic background” (31%), compared to two-thirds who disagree (68%).

There are stark partisan divides on this question. While a majority of Republicans agree with the statement that immigrants are invading America (57%), only 15% of Democrats and 28% of independents think the same. Republicans who trust Fox News most to provide accurate information about politics and current events are particularly more likely to agree with this statement than Republicans who trust different sources (67% vs. 51%).

White evangelical Protestants stand out as the most likely religious group to say that immigrants are invading the United States (59%). Fewer members of other religious groups agree, including white mainline Protestants (42%), Hispanic Protestants (35%), white Catholics (33%), other Christians (25%), Black Protestants (24%), Hispanic Catholics (23%), religiously unaffiliated Americans (20%), and members of non-Christian religions (17%).

White Americans (36%) are notably more likely than Black Americans (24%), Hispanic Americans (24%), and Americans who are multiracial or identify with another race (18%) to agree that immigrants are invading the country and replacing cultural values. Educational attainment separates whites, as those without college degrees are about twice as likely as those with college degrees to agree that immigrants are invading the United States (44% vs. 23%).

Agreement with the statement that immigrants are invading and replacing American culture increases as age increases: 22% of Americans ages 18–29, 26% of Americans ages 30–49, 37% of Americans ages 50–64, and 41% of Americans ages 65 and over agree with this statement.

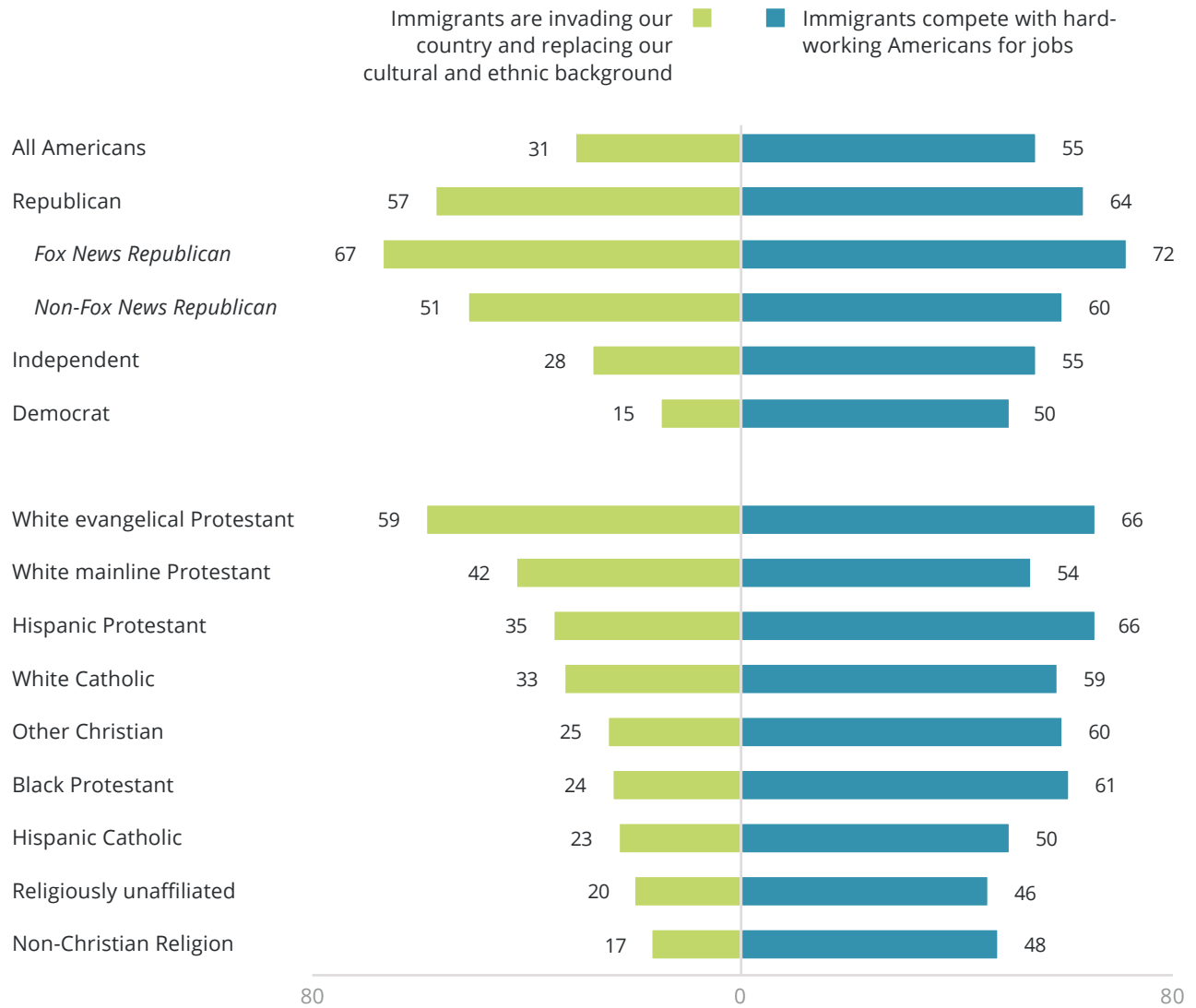
Americans living in states that share a border with Mexico are less likely to agree with the statement that immigrants are invading and replacing American culture than those who live elsewhere (25% vs. 33%).

Perceptions of Immigrants a Threat to American Workers

A majority of Americans (55%) say that the phrase “compete with hardworking Americans for jobs” describes immigrants who are coming to the United States today either somewhat or very well, compared to 44% who say this phrase describes immigrants not too well or not at all well.

FIGURE 6. Some Americans Think Immigrants Pose Cultural and Economic Threats, by Party Affiliation and Religious Affiliation

Percent who say:



Source: PRRI 2020 American Values Survey.

Even though more Republicans (64%) say that immigrants compete with hardworking Americans for jobs, half of Democrats (50%) and a majority of independents (55%) also agree. Republicans who trust Fox News the most are notably more likely to say the statement describes immigrants somewhat or very well than Republicans who trust other sources most (72% vs. 60%).

There are no strong patterns among religious groups. With the exceptions of Hispanic Catholics

(50%), members of non-Christian religions (48%), and religiously unaffiliated Americans (46%), majorities of members of other religious groups agree with the idea that immigrants compete with hardworking Americans for jobs.

Majorities of Americans across all racial groups say that immigrants compete with hard working Americans for jobs: 61% of Black Americans, 56% of Hispanic Americans, 54% of Americans who are multiracial or identify as another race, and 53% of white Americans. White Americans without college degrees are notably more likely than those with college degrees to agree that immigrants compete with hardworking Americans for jobs (60% vs. 42%). White men are also more likely than white women to agree with this statement (58% vs. 50%).

Americans who live in states that share a border with Mexico are notably less likely to say that immigrants compete with hardworking Americans for jobs than Americans living elsewhere (50% vs. 57%).

Appendix I. Survey Methodology

The survey was designed and conducted by PRRI. The survey was made possible through the generous support of the **Carnegie Corporation of New York**, with additional support from the **Ford Foundation**, the **Wilbur and Hilda Glenn Family Foundation**, and the **Unitarian Universalist Veatch Program at Shelter Rock**. Interviews were conducted among a random sample of 2,538 adults (age 18 and up) living in the United States including all 50 states and the District of Columbia. Interviews were conducted both online using a self-administered design and by telephone using live interviewers. All interviews were conducted among participants in AmeriSpeak, a probability-based panel designed to be representative of the national U.S. adult population run by NORC at the University of Chicago. Panel participants without Internet access, which included 42 respondents, were interviewed via telephone by professional interviewers under the direction of NORC. Interviewing was conducted in both Spanish and English between September 9 and September 22, 2020.

NORC's AmeriSpeak Panel provides a representative panel of civilian, non-institutional adults (age 18 and over) living in the United States. The sample frame was developed using a two-stage probability sample design to create a representative sample of households in the United States. The first stage uses National Frame Areas (NFAs), geographic areas that have a population of at least 10,000 people. The National Sample Frame contains almost 3 million households and includes 80,000 rural households. Additionally, NORC oversampled housing units in segments (Census tracts or block groups) that include hard-to-reach populations, including young adults, Hispanics and African Americans. Panel recruitment proceeded in two stages. First, a mail solicitation is sent to a randomly selected household along with follow-up telephone calls and email solicitations if necessary. In the second stage, households that have not responded to the initial inquiry or follow-ups receive an enhanced incentive offer and a personal visit from NORC field interviewers. Members typically participate in panel surveys two or three times a month. For more information about AmeriSpeak, please visit: <http://amerispeak.norc.org>

The weighting is accomplished in two separate stages. First, panel base weights are calculated for every household based on the probability of selection from the NORC National Frame, the sampling frame that is used to sample housing units for AmeriSpeak. Household level weights are then assigned to each eligible adult in every recruited household. In the second stage, sample demographics are balanced to match target population parameters for gender, age, education, race and Hispanic ethnicity, and division (U.S. Census definitions), housing type, and telephone usage. The telephone usage parameter came from an analysis of the National Health Interview Survey. All other weighting parameters are derived from an analysis of the U.S. Census Bureau's Current Population Survey.

The sample weighting is accomplished using an iterative proportional fitting (IPF) process that simultaneously balances the distributions of all variables. Weights were trimmed to prevent individual interviews from having too much influence on the final results. The use of these weights in statistical analysis ensures that the demographic characteristics of the sample closely approximate the demographic characteristics of the target populations.

The margin of error for the survey is +/- 2.6 percentage points at the 95% level of confidence, which includes the design effect for the survey of 1.83. In addition to sampling error, surveys may also be subject to error or bias due to question wording, context and order effects.

Likely Voter Models

Three questions were used to identify likely voters: Whether the respondent is registered to vote, how they plan to vote (e.g., by mail or in person on Election Day), and how likely they think they are to vote (including an option for having already voted). Due to the overwhelming majority of respondents saying they are both registered and absolutely certain to vote or had already voted (76%), we determined that a "cutoff" model based on those factors alone resulted in an unrealistic estimate of voter turnout. Using the assumption that if people are unsure of how they will actually cast their ballot, they are a bit less likely to vote, we used the plan to vote question

TABLE A1. Demographic, Political, and Religious Subgroup Sample Sizes

	General Public (unweighted)
Total Sample	2,538
Male	1,245
Female	1,293
Democrat	893
Independent	716
<i>Leans Democrat</i>	292
<i>Independent (no lean)</i>	209
<i>Leans Republican</i>	214
Republican	656
White, non-Hispanic	1,618
Black, non-Hispanic	305
Hispanic	435
Asian	64
Multiracial	87
Something else	29
Age 18-29	361
30-49	954
50-64	673
65+	550
White evangelical Protestant	326
White mainline Protestant	406
Black Protestant	214
Hispanic Protestant	139
Catholic	415
<i>White Catholic</i>	251
<i>Hispanic Catholic</i>	164
Other Christian	148
Non-Christian religion	223
Religiously unaffiliated	667

to decrease the likelihood of voting among those who report not knowing how they would vote. Then a probability model was applied in order to avoid the sharp exclusions of a cutoff model. This process resulted in a model in which 68% of adults are deemed likely to vote and constitutes the high turnout estimate reported.

Because 68% would be historically high turnout, we estimated a second likely voter model that forced the data to replicate the roughly 55% voting age population turnout of 2016. This was achieved by adjusting the probability of turnout downward among one key demographic of the likely voter sample that was highly overrepresented compared to the 2016 national exit polls – those who report their ideology to be moderate. Remaining demographics were not significantly impacted. After this process, the sample resembled 2016 turnout at 55% and constitutes the lower turnout estimate reported.

The 68% turnout model includes 1,736 likely voters, with a margin of error of +/- 3.2 percentage points at the 95% level of confidence, which includes the design effect. The 55% turnout model includes 1,387 likely voters, with a margin of error of +/- 3.6 percentage points at the 95% level of confidence, which includes the design effect.

Appendix II. About PRRI

PRRI

PRRI is a nonprofit, nonpartisan organization dedicated to research at the intersection of religion, values, and public life.

Our mission is to help journalists, opinion leaders, scholars, clergy, and the general public better understand debates on public policy issues and the role of religion and values in American public life by conducting high quality public opinion surveys and qualitative research.

PRRI is a member of the American Association for Public Opinion Research (AAPOR), the American Political Science Association (APSA), and the American Academy of Religion (AAR), and follows the highest research standards of independence and academic excellence.

We are also a member organization of the National Council on Public Polls, an association of polling organizations established in 1969, which sets the highest professional standards for public opinion researchers. PRRI is also a supporting organization of the Transparency Initiative at AAPOR, an initiative to place the value of openness at the center of the public opinion research profession.

As a nonpartisan, independent research organization, PRRI does not take positions on, nor do we advocate for, particular policies. Research supported by our funders reflects PRRI's commitment to independent inquiry and academic rigor. Research findings and conclusions are never altered to accommodate other interests, including those of funders, other organizations, or government bodies and officials.

History

Since PRRI's founding in 2009, our research has become a standard source of trusted information among journalists, scholars, policy makers, clergy, and the general public. PRRI research has been cited in thousands of media stories and academic publications and plays a leading role in deepening public understanding of the changing religious landscape and its role in shaping American politics.

For a full list of recent projects, see our research page: <http://www.prii.org/research/>

PRRI also maintains a lively online presence on Facebook (<http://www.facebook.com/prripoll>) and Twitter (<http://www.twitter.com/prripoll>).

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