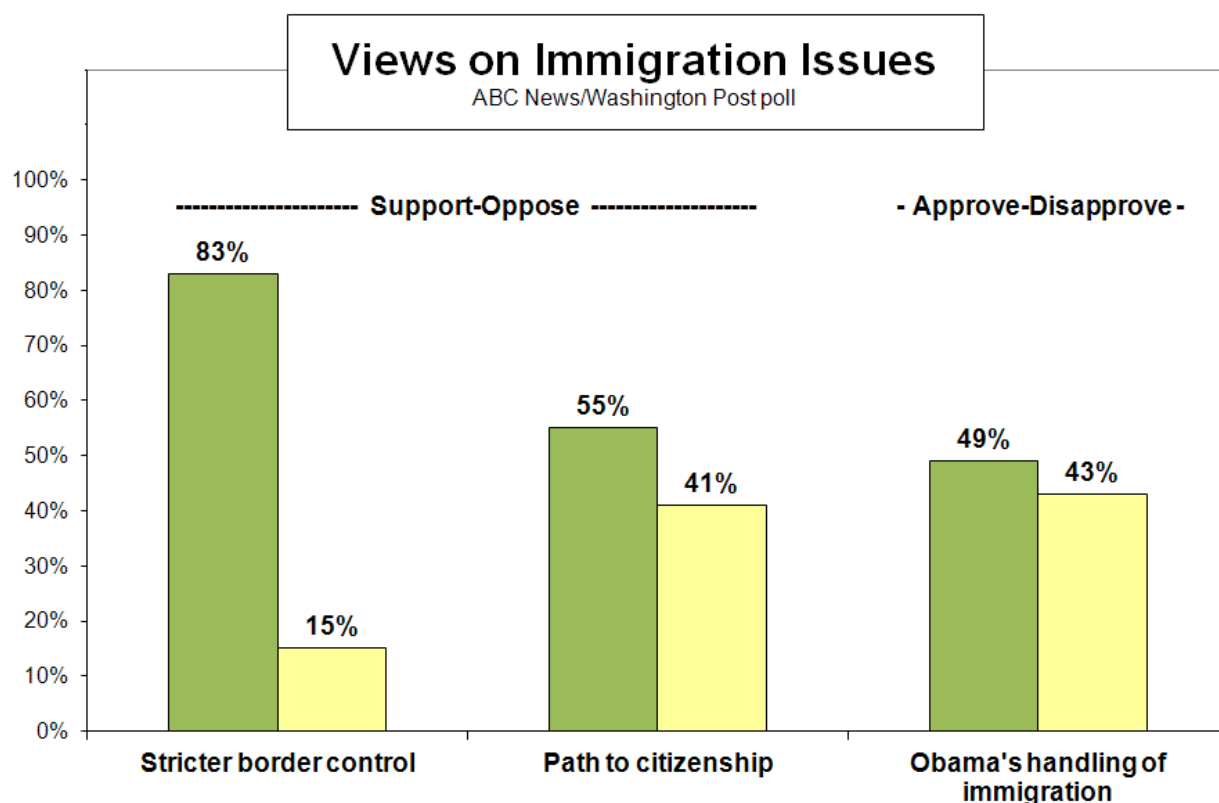


## **Poll Finds a Boost for Obama on Handling Immigration**

Public approval of Barack Obama's handling of immigration has jumped to a career high in the latest ABC News/Washington Post poll, buttressed by majority support for a path to citizenship for illegal immigrants and, much more broadly, endorsement of stricter border control.

While the president lacks majority approval on the issue overall, slightly more Americans now approve than disapprove of his approach, by 49 vs. 43 percent. Obama was underwater on the issue – just 38 percent approved, while 52 percent disapproved – as recently as last July.

In terms of specific policies, an overwhelming 83 percent support stricter border control, including 64 percent who are “strongly” supportive; only 15 percent are opposed. Fewer, 55 percent, also favor a path to citizenship for illegal immigrants, with 41 percent opposed.



**GROUPS** – There are vast differences among groups, underscoring the president's advantage on the issue among nonwhites generally and Hispanics in particular, and the Republican Party's

challenges in finding support within the party for an immigration policy that can boost its support among Hispanics.

Specifically, 67 percent of Hispanics and 71 percent of nonwhites overall approve of Obama's handling of immigration, compared with 38 percent of whites. And a path to citizenship for illegal immigrants is supported by 82 percent of Hispanics and 71 percent of all nonwhites, as well as by nearly seven in 10 Democrats and just over half of independents. It's supported by fewer than half of whites, 47 percent; Republicans, 42 percent; and by just 37 percent of adults who describe themselves as very conservative politically.

Obama lost whites by percentage 20 points in the November election, but won nonwhites by 61 points, including Hispanics by 44 points, en route to re-election.

Making the president's gains on the issue, "strong" approval and strong disapproval of his handling of immigration are essentially even – 27 vs. 28 percent in this poll, produced for ABC by [Langer Research Associates](#). In previous ABC/Post polls, Obama's strongly negative ratings on immigration far outweighed his strongly positive ones.

OBAMA – Obama's approval rating on immigration is 11 percentage points higher than it was seven months ago; disapproval, down by 9 points. His approval score now numerically beats his previous best, three months after he took office, albeit by a single point.

He's gained 13 points since July on the issue among Democrats and independents alike, further strengthening his position within his own party and moving from majority disapproval among independents to an even split. A vast majority of Republicans continues to disapprove.

|                   | Obama's handling<br>of immigration |        |
|-------------------|------------------------------------|--------|
|                   | Approve-disapprove                 |        |
|                   | 2/13                               | 7/12   |
| All               | 49-43%                             | 38-52% |
| Democrats         | 79-16                              | 66-23  |
| Republicans       | 14-81                              | 14-78  |
| Independents      | 46-46                              | 33-57  |
| Liberals          | 72-23                              | 70-25  |
| Moderates         | 52-39                              | 41-45  |
| Conservatives NET | 32-63                              | 17-74  |
| Somewhat cons.    | 34-60                              | 14-74  |
| Very cons.        | 29-68                              | NA     |
| Whites            | 38-54                              | 30-59  |
| Nonwhites         | 71-21                              | 62-31  |
| Hispanics         | 67-23                              | NA     |

Along the ideological spectrum, approval of the president on this issue has moved less on the extremes and more in the middle, gaining 11 points among moderates and 20 points among those who say they're "somewhat" conservative.

The president's also improved disproportionately among people in the lower- to middle-income bracket (+22 points), and Northeasterners and Midwesterners (+20 and +18 points, respectively) and those who haven't graduated from college (+15 points).

Shifts in strong approval generally reflect those on approval overall.

**POLICY DIVISIONS** – While strengthening the country's borders is popular with broad majorities across all groups and in all regions, a path to citizenship is considerably more divisive.

Support for stricter border control includes three-quarters of Democrats and liberals, more than eight in 10 moderates, conservatives and political independents, and a whopping 92 percent of Republicans. Securing the borders is also supported by 87 percent of whites, three-quarters of nonwhites, and bottoms out at a still-high 69 percent among Hispanics.

|                   | Support-oppose         |                            |
|-------------------|------------------------|----------------------------|
|                   | Path to<br>citizenship | Stricter<br>border control |
| All               | 55-41%                 | 83-15%                     |
| Democrats         | 68-30                  | 76-21                      |
| Republicans       | 42-54                  | 92- 6                      |
| Independents      | 52-44                  | 85-14                      |
| Liberals          | 73-25                  | 75-22                      |
| Moderates         | 53-43                  | 83-14                      |
| Conservatives NET | 45-51                  | 87-11                      |
| Somewhat cons.    | 50-45                  | 89- 9                      |
| Very cons.        | 37-61                  | 84-15                      |
| Whites            | 47-47                  | 87-11                      |
| Nonwhites         | 71-28                  | 74-23                      |
| Hispanics         | 82-15                  | 69-25                      |

As noted, views on a path to citizenship are more linked to political preferences. Beyond party affiliation, 73 percent of liberals favor a path to citizenship; that declines to 53 percent of moderates, half of "somewhat" conservatives and fewer than four in 10 strong conservatives.

Notably, support for a path to citizenship reaches majorities across regions, 53 to 59 percent.

**METHODOLOGY** – This ABC News/Washington Post poll was conducted by landline and cell phone Jan. 30-Feb. 3, 2013, among a random national sample of 1,038 adults. Results have a margin of [sampling error](#) of 3.5 points. The survey was produced for ABC News by [Langer](#)

Research Associates of New York, N.Y., with sampling, data collection and tabulation by SSRS/Social Science Research Solutions of Media, Pa.

Analysis by Gregory Holyk.

ABC News polls can be found at ABCNEWS.com at <http://abcnews.com/pollingunit>.

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Full results follow.

1. Overall, do you support or oppose (ITEM)? Do you feel that way strongly or somewhat?

a. a path to citizenship for illegal immigrants

|          | ----- Support ----- |          |          | ----- Oppose ----- |          |          | No      |
|----------|---------------------|----------|----------|--------------------|----------|----------|---------|
|          | NET                 | Strongly | Somewhat | NET                | Somewhat | Strongly | opinion |
| 2/3/13   | 55                  | 29       | 26       | 41                 | 19       | 22       | 4       |
| 11/11/12 | 57                  | 30       | 27       | 39                 | 12       | 27       | 4       |

Compare to: Would you support or oppose a program giving ILLEGAL immigrants now living in the United States the right to live here LEGALLY if they pay a fine and meet other requirements?

|          | Support | Oppose | No opinion |
|----------|---------|--------|------------|
| 6/6/10   | 57      | 40     | 3          |
| 4/24/09  | 61      | 35     | 3          |
| 12/19/07 | 49      | 46     | 5          |
| 11/1/07  | 51      | 44     | 4          |
| 6/1/07   | 52      | 44     | 4          |

b. stricter border control to try to reduce illegal immigration

|        | ----- Support ----- |          |          | ----- Oppose ----- |          |          | No      |
|--------|---------------------|----------|----------|--------------------|----------|----------|---------|
|        | NET                 | Strongly | Somewhat | NET                | Somewhat | Strongly | opinion |
| 2/3/13 | 83                  | 64       | 19       | 15                 | 7        | 8        | 2       |

2. Overall, do you approve or disapprove of the way Barack Obama is handling immigration issues? Do you feel that way strongly or somewhat?

|         | ----- Approve ----- |          |          | ----- Disapprove ----- |          |          | No      |
|---------|---------------------|----------|----------|------------------------|----------|----------|---------|
|         | NET                 | Strongly | Somewhat | NET                    | Somewhat | Strongly | opinion |
| 2/3/13  | 49                  | 27       | 22       | 43                     | 15       | 28       | 8       |
| 7/8/12  | 38                  | 20       | 18       | 52                     | 18       | 34       | 10      |
| 6/6/10  | 39                  | 17       | 23       | 51                     | 14       | 37       | 10      |
| 3/26/10 | 33                  | 14       | 19       | 43                     | 15       | 28       | 23      |
| 4/24/09 | 48                  | NA       | NA       | 35                     | NA       | NA       | 18      |

\*\*\* END \*\*\*