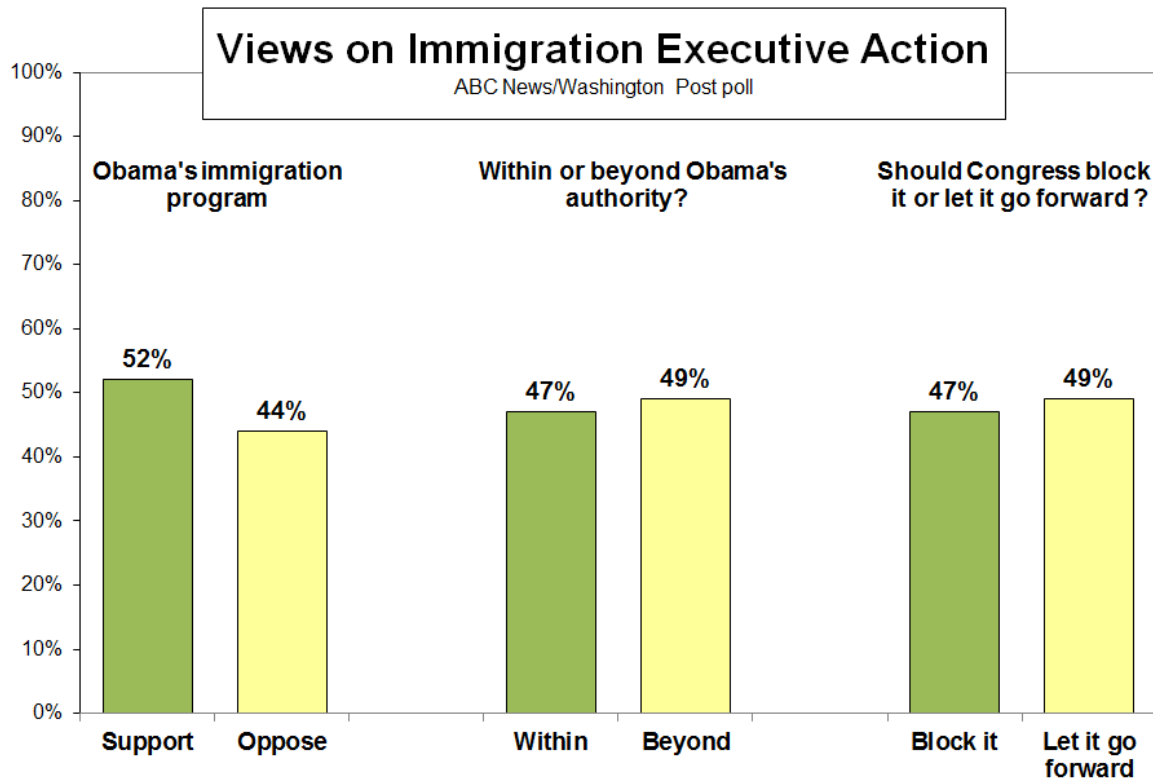


Obama and Immigration: What He Did vs. How He Did it

A slim majority of Americans support the immigration program created by Barack Obama's executive action – but divisions on whether he exceeded his authority impede most of the political capital he might have gained.

Overall, 52 percent support Obama's initiative, with 44 percent opposed. But 49 percent say he exceeded his authority, 51 percent say congressional inaction on the issue doesn't justify his approach and the public also divides closely on whether or not Congress should try to block the program.



These sharp rifts in views of Obama's method, combined with overall post-election advances for the GOP, are limiting the benefits the president may have hoped to glean. Fifty-five percent of Americans disapprove of his handling of the issue – down by 6 points since October, but still a majority. And more now trust Republicans in Congress over Obama to handle immigration issues, by 48-39 percent, reversing an 8-point Obama advantage a year and a half ago.

AUTHORITY – Even among people who support Obama’s program, a third don’t approve of his handling of immigration generally, and as many don’t pick him over the Republicans to handle the issue. That’s particularly true of those who back his initiative, but only “somewhat.”

At least some of this reflects the view that Obama acted outside his authority. Even among people who favor his program, nearly one in four thinks he exceeded his authority in creating it. In that group, 62 percent disapprove of his handling of immigration overall, regardless of the initiative; and 53 percent better trust the GOP on this issue.

RACE – Not surprisingly, this poll, produced for ABC by [Langer Research Associates](#), finds there are very sharp racial and ethnic divisions on the issue. Obama’s executive action wins support from 72 percent of Hispanics, and an equal number of nonwhites overall, compared with 42 percent of whites.

Decidedly more Hispanics approve of the president’s handling of immigration now than in October, but that’s up from a low level – three in 10 then, 53 percent now. It was seven in 10 percent in May 2013, when congressional action on the issue seemed near.

Approval among whites, meanwhile, has held essentially even in the past six weeks, now just 26 percent, and also trails what it was a year and a half ago, by 11 points. Further, six in 10 whites think Obama went beyond his authority; as many say that congressional inaction is not a valid reason for him to have acted and that Congress should block the program.

Many fewer Hispanics feel the same – but that still means that even among Hispanics, three in 10 think that Obama overstepped his authority and that congressional gridlock was an insufficient rationale for acting. One in four Hispanics, moreover, feels that Congress should block the program from going forward. Views among nonwhites overall are similar.

	Obama’s action Within-Beyond	Congress inaction Good reason-Not	Congress should Block-Not
All	47-49%	46-51%	47-49%
Whites	35-61	33-63	59-37
Nonwhites NET	71-24	71-26	24-73
Hispanics	64-30	69-31	24-71

Additionally, the number of Hispanics who trust the GOP over Obama to handle this issue has doubled, from 16 percent in May 2013 to 34 percent now, likely reflecting hesitation about the way immigration reform has been achieved. Whites’ preferences for the GOP over Obama also have grown – from a 45-36 percent split a year and a half ago to 59-27 percent now.

One takeaway is that even Hispanics are not monolithic in their attitudes on immigration. That should not be a surprise; while 46 percent of Hispanics are Democrats or lean toward the Democratic Party, an additional 33 percent are Republicans, or lean that way.

GROUPS – There also are profound political and ideological differences in views of Obama’s immigration program. Eight in 10 Democrats and 73 percent of liberals support it, compared

with a quarter of Republicans and a third of conservatives. Independents and moderates fall in between, with 51 and 58 percent supporting the initiative, respectively.

Eight in 10 Republicans think Obama exceeded his authority, while an equal number of Democrats think he did not; independents divide, 51-45 percent. Views of the president’s rationale for acting, and whether Congress should try to block the program, are similarly divided.

	Obama’s action Within-Beyond	Congress inaction Good reason-Not	Congress should Block-Not
All	47-49%	46-51%	47-49%
Democrats	80-18	78-19	19-79
Republicans	15-80	15-83	74-24
Independents	45-51	46-51	51-46
Liberals	74-25	75-21	27-73
Moderates	53-44	52-46	43-54
Conservatives	26-71	23-76	68-29

Further, approval of Obama’s handling of immigration issues has increased by 14 and 13 points since mid-October among independents and Democrats, respectively, while holding essentially steady among Republicans. But even with that gain Obama has just 34 percent approval on the issue from independents, and they prefer the GOP in trust to handle it, by 47-37 percent.

Among other groups, support for Obama’s executive action peaks at 64 percent among adults younger than 30, compared with 45 percent among seniors. And approval for Obama’s handling of immigration overall has increased disproportionately among young adults, from 27 percent six weeks ago to 46 percent now – better, but still less than half.

METHODOLOGY – This ABC News/Washington Post poll was conducted by telephone Dec. 11-14, 2014, in English and Spanish, among a random national sample of 1,000 adults, including landline and cell-phone-only respondents. Results have a margin of [sampling error](#) of 3.5 points, including design effect.

The survey was produced for ABC News by [Langer Research Associates](#) of New York, N.Y., with sampling, data collection and tabulation by Abt-SRBI of New York, N.Y.

Analysis by Julie E. Phelan.

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

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Full results follow.

* in data columns = less than 0.5 percent

1, 2a,c,d, 3, 4a, 5-15, 29-30 previously released; 20-28, 31 held for release.

2b. Do you approve or disapprove of the way Obama is handling immigration issues? Do you approve/disapprove strongly or somewhat?

	----- Approve -----			----- Disapprove -----			No
	NET	Strongly	Somewhat	NET	Somewhat	Strongly	opinion
12/14/14	38	22	16	55	11	45	7
10/12/14	29	13	16	61	15	45	10
9/7/14	31	14	17	59	14	45	10
6/1/14	38	17	21	50	15	35	12
7/21/13	43	23	20	44	13	31	13
5/19/13	46	25	21	41	11	30	13
4/14/13	44	24	21	43	12	30	13
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

4b. Who do you trust to do a better job handling immigration issues, (Obama) or (the Republicans in Congress)?

	Obama	Reps	Both (vol.)	Neither (vol.)	No opinion
12/14/14	39	48	1	9	3
5/19/13	45	37	2	10	6
3/10/13	45	39	1	9	6

Compare to: Who do you trust to do a better job handling immigration issues - (Bush) or (the Democrats in Congress)?

	Bush	Dems	Both (vol.)	Neither (vol.)	No opinion
6/1/07	31	48	2	13	5
12/11/06	34	49	1	10	6
1/18/04	38	44	2	8	8

Changing topics,

16. Obama has taken an executive action under which as many as four million of the country's undocumented immigrants will not face deportation over the next three years if they pass a background check and meet other requirements. Most will need to show that they have been in the United States for at least five years and have children who were born here. Do you support or oppose this immigration program? Do you feel that way strongly or somewhat?

	----- Support -----			----- Oppose -----			No
	NET	Strongly	Somewhat	NET	Somewhat	Strongly	opinion
12/14/14	52	32	20	44	11	33	4

17. Regardless of what you think of the program, in taking this action do you think Obama (acted within his authority as president), or do you think he (went beyond his authority as president)?

	Acted within his authority	Went beyond his authority	No opinion
12/14/14	47	49	4

18. Obama says he took the executive action creating this program because Congress would not act on a new immigration law. Do you think that is or is not a good enough reason for Obama to have taken action?

	Is a good enough reason	Is not a good enough reason	No opinion
12/14/14	46	51	3

19. Do you think Congress should try to block this immigration program, or let it go forward? Do you feel that way strongly or somewhat?

	---- Try to block it ----			--- Let it go forward ---			No opinion
	NET	Strongly	Somewhat	NET	Somewhat	Strongly	
12/14/14	47	34	13	49	16	33	3

END