

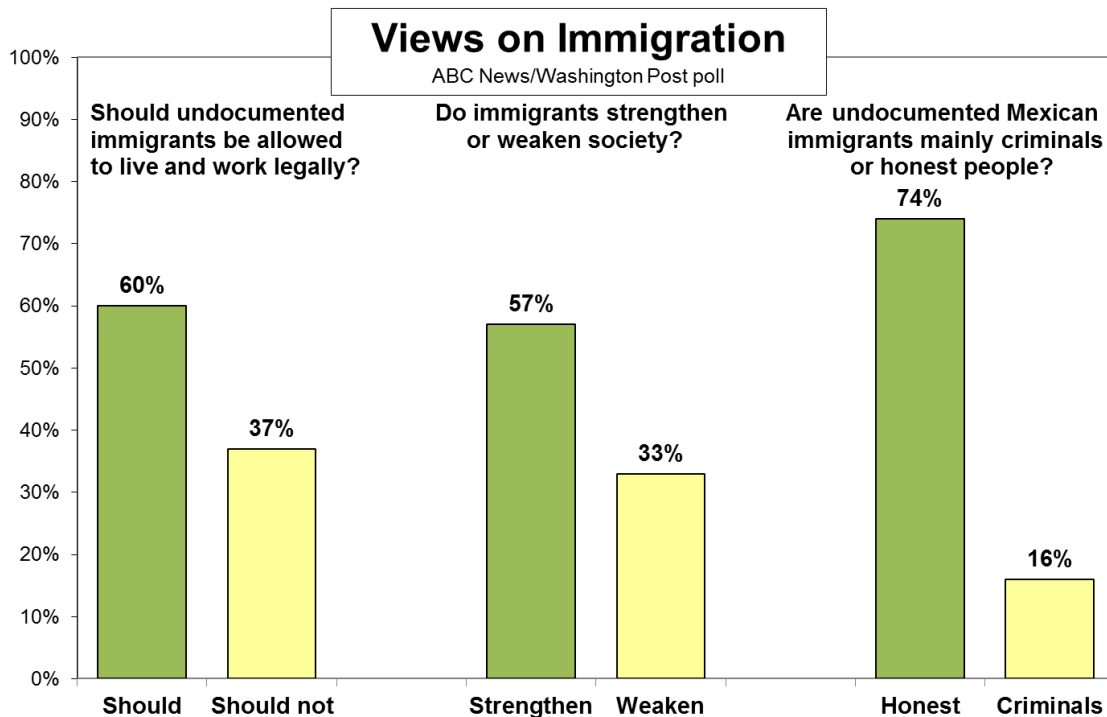
Immigration Critics Drive Trump Surge; Yet Most Americans Favor Legal Status

Donald Trump’s visit to the U.S.-Mexico border marks the extent to which negative views on immigration fuel his candidacy for the Republican presidential nomination – and the limits they may impose.

About half of potential GOP voters in the latest ABC News/Washington Post poll oppose a path to legal status for undocumented immigrants, and Trump wins support from 34 percent in this group, a remarkable tally in a 16-candidate race. Among those who favor providing legal status for undocumented immigrants, by contrast, Trump’s support drops sharply, to 13 percent.

The results pose two challenges for Trump and other sharp critics of immigration policy: First, the issue divides rather than unites potential Republican voters. Second, a pathway to legal status is far more popular beyond the party’s confines, making the position a hard sell in the general election.

In all, this poll, produced for ABC by [Langer Research Associates](#), finds that Americans by a broad 60-37 percent support allowing undocumented immigrants to live and work in this country after paying a fine and meeting other requirements. Indeed, among supporters, two-thirds say these immigrants should be able to apply for citizenship, not just permanent residency.

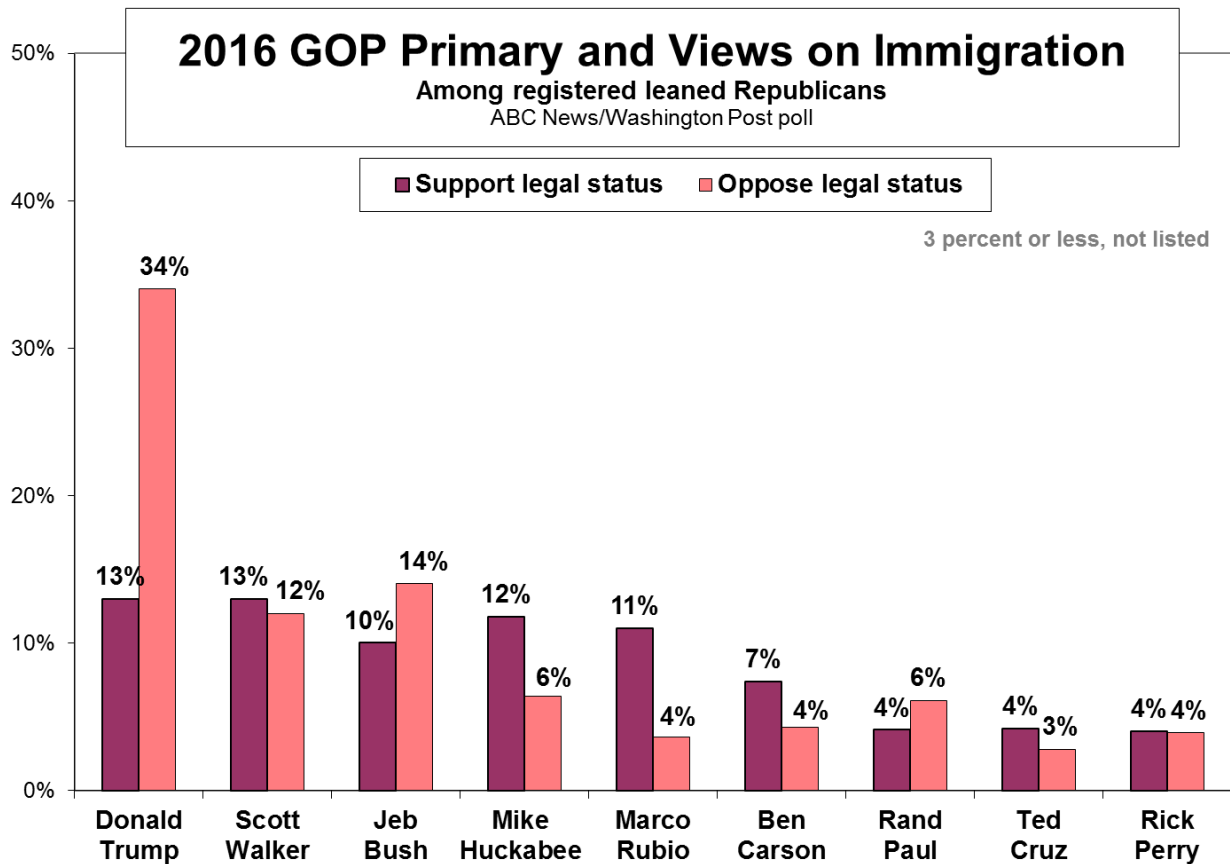


Support for legalization reflects generally favorable views of immigrants. Fifty-seven percent of Americans say immigrants mainly strengthen rather than weaken U.S. society. (Thirty-three percent say they weaken it.) Even more, 74 percent, say undocumented Mexican immigrants are “mainly honest people trying to get ahead,” while just 16 percent say that they are “mainly undesirable people like criminals,” as implied by Trump.

There are sharp political divisions. Majorities of liberals (80 percent), Democrats (74 percent), moderates (60 percent) and independents (58 percent) support a path to legal status. A slim majority of Republicans (51 percent) and a plurality of conservatives (49 percent) oppose it.

That said, opponents of legal status are passionate; 82 percent of them feel strongly about it. Moreover, while legalization is consistent with immigration reform passed in the Democratic-led Senate in 2013, Americans are evenly split over which party they trust more to deal with the issue, 40 percent pick the GOP, 37 percent the Democrats. While partisans tend to favor their own side, independents break for the Republicans by 43-27 percent.

2016 ELECTION – Democratic and Democratic-leaning independents are broadly in favor of legalization; leaned Republicans, as noted, are sharply divided, making the issue a key contrast among candidates in their primary contest.



Among leaned Republicans who are registered to vote, 52 percent oppose legalization – and Trump’s 34 percent support in this group puts him 20 points ahead of his closest competitor.

Among those favoring legalization (44 percent of leaned Republicans), though, he is essentially tied with other candidates – including Scott Walker, Jeb Bush, Mike Huckabee and Marco Rubio.

DEMS – Differences are far more muted on the Democratic side. Bernie Sanders receives 17 percent backing among supporters of legalization vs. 7 percent among opponents. Hillary Clinton and Joe Biden receive roughly equal levels of support regardless of views on immigration.

That said, among the relatively few leaned Democrats who oppose legal status (26 percent), 45 percent are dissatisfied with their choice of candidates, vs. only 19 percent for legal status supporters. There’s no such satisfaction gap on the GOP side.

GENERAL – Opinions on legal status also inform general election preferences. Immigration policy views produce mirror images in a matchup between Clinton and Bush: She prevails among supporters of legal status by 62-33 percent; he leads among opponents, 58-33 percent.

Adding Trump as an independent candidate shows potential vulnerabilities for Bush on the immigration front, while leaving support for Clinton nearly unchanged. Among those who oppose legal status, Trump and Bush are tied at 34 percent each. Supporters of legalization overwhelmingly stick with Clinton, 60-25-11 percent.

2016 vote preference by views of legal status

	All	Support	Oppose
Clinton	50%	62%	33%
Bush	44	33	58
Clinton	46	60	26
Bush	30	25	35
Trump	20	11	34

GROUPS - There are other notable group differences in views on the issue. Education is clearly related to immigration attitudes. Among adults with a high school degree or less, just fewer than half say immigrants mainly strengthen American society and 54 percent support a path to legal status. Those jump to 71 and 69 percent, respectively, among college graduates.

Support for legalization also dips among whites (53 percent), while peaking among Hispanics (86 percent) and those under 30 (72 percent). In those same two groups – Hispanics and under-30s – majorities support the citizenship option, vs. permanent residency or no legal status.

Additionally, while seniors are less likely than those younger than age 65 to say immigrants mainly strengthen society and are honest, 61 percent support legalization nonetheless.

	Views on legal status			Immigrants...	
	NET	Citizen-ship	Perm. resid.	Strengthen society	Are honest
All	60%	40	17	57	74
HS or less	54	38	14	49	69

Some college	59	41	16	37	53	77
College grad	69	44	23	28	71	79
Whites	53	35	14	44	49	71
Blacks	68	47	20	31	62	76
Hispanics	86	60	27	12	84	89
18-29	72	55	17	27	71	79
30-plus	57	37	18	39	53	72
Democrats	74	54	19	25	70	79
Republicans	43	30	11	51	47	66
Independents	58	36	20	39	54	73

METHODOLOGY – This ABC News/Washington Post poll was conducted by landline and cellular telephone July 16-19, 2015, in English and Spanish, among a random national sample of 1,002 adults. Results have a margin of [sampling error](#) of 3.5 points for the full sample, including design effect. Partisan divisions are 30-21-39 percent, Democrats-Republicans-independents.

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 Chad P. Kiewiet de Jonge.

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

Media contacts: [Van Scott, \(212\) 456-7243](#), or [Julie Townsend, \(212\) 456-4934](#).

Full results follow.

1-20, 25-27 previously released.

21. Do you think undocumented immigrants currently living in the United States should or should not be allowed to live and work here legally if they pay a fine and meet other requirements? Do you feel that way strongly or somewhat?

	----- Should -----			----- Should not -----			No
	NET	Strongly	Somewhat	NET	Somewhat	Strongly	opinion
7/19/15	60	37	23	37	7	30	3

Compare to: Do you think undocumented immigrants currently living in the United States should or should not be given the right to live and work here legally? Do you feel that way strongly, or somewhat?

	----- Should -----			----- Should not -----			No
	NET	Strongly	Somewhat	NET	Somewhat	Strongly	opinion
9/7/14	46	27	18	50	10	40	4
1/23/14	49	31	17	49	11	37	3
10/20/13*	51	31	20	43	10	33	5

*ABC News-Fusion

Compare to: Overall, do you support or oppose a path to citizenship for undocumented immigrants now living in the United States? Do you feel that way strongly or somewhat?

	----- Support -----	----- Oppose -----	No
--	---------------------	--------------------	----

	NET	Strongly	Somewhat	NET	Somewhat	Strongly	opinion
7/14/13	55	29	26	41	15	26	4
3/30/13	57	31	26	40	16	24	4
2/3/13	55	29	26	41	19	22	4
11/11/12	57	30	27	39	12	27	4

*3/30/13 and previous: "a path to citizenship for illegal immigrants"

Compare to: Would you support or oppose a program giving undocumented immigrants now living in the United States the right to live here legally if they pay a fine and meet other requirements? Do you support/oppose strongly or somewhat?

	----- Support -----			----- Oppose -----			No
	NET	Strongly	Somewhat	NET	Somewhat	Strongly	opinion
5/19/13	58	34	23	38	10	29	4
4/14/13*	63	NA	NA	33	NA	NA	4
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

*"undocumented" and "illegal" wordings half sampled
**6/6/10 and previous: "illegal"

22. (ASKED IF SHOULD BE ALLOWED) Do you think undocumented immigrants who meet the requirements should be able to apply for U.S. citizenship, or be able to apply for permanent residency, but not U.S. citizenship?

	Apply for U.S. citizenship	Apply for permanent residency only	No opinion
7/19/15	67	29	4

21/22 NET:

	----- Should be allowed -----					
	NET	Apply for U.S. citizenship	Apply for permanent residency only	No op.	Should not be allowed	No opinion
7/19/15	60	40	17	2	37	3

23. Which political party, the (Democrats) or the (Republicans), do you trust to do a better job handling immigration issues?

	Democrats	Republicans	Both (vol.)	Neither (vol.)	No opinion
7/19/15	37	40	1	15	7
10/12/14	37	40	2	13	7
9/7/14	39	43	1	10	6
4/27/14	40	34	3	14	9
3/2/14	44	36	1	13	7
1/23/14	39	37	2	15	7
10/3/10	37	37	3	17	6
9/2/10	37	40	5	14	4
3/26/10	38	35	3	16	8
2/1/08	40	37	2	12	9
11/1/07	42	35	4	13	6
10/8/06	49	36	4	10	3
6/25/06	45	40	1	9	5
5/15/06	48	34	1	14	4
4/9/06	50	38	1	7	4

24. Overall, do you think immigrants from other countries mainly strengthen or mainly weaken American society? Do you feel that way strongly or somewhat?

	---- Strengthen -----			----- Weaken -----			Neither	Depends	No
	NET	Strongly	Somewhat	NET	Somewhat	Strongly	(vol.)	(vol.)	op.
7/19/15	57	34	23	33	12	21	1	5	4

END