



# Immigration in 2009

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*Vice President*

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# Lessons from 2008: Immigration

- **After the summer of 2007, conservative strategists were convinced that immigration would be the wedge issue to define the 2008 election.** While Karl Rove and President Bush had tried to court Latino voters to build a permanent Republican majority, the rank and file chose to pursue conservative white men who were angry about illegal immigration. This strategy proved short sighted at best—disastrous at worst.
- **Tom Tancredo was only one of the most extreme examples of a party that tried to run strictly on thinly veiled racism and paranoia.** Conservative candidates all over the country attempted to paint their opponents as supporters of “amnesty.” Even John McCain, whose name was on the 2007 bill, chose to renounce his previous support of comprehensive reform.
- **High profile Democrats like Rahm Emmanuel feared the issue could make Democratic candidates look weak or “out of touch” with voters.** Democratic candidates were worried that they needed to look “tough” on illegal immigration. Others tried to avoid the issue altogether.
- **Several high profile special elections and consistent polling results showed that immigration was not the wedge issue the GOP hoped or Democrats feared. Leaning into the issue with strong, vocal support for comprehensive immigration reform proved an effective way to beat back the “amnesty” attack and go on the offensive.**



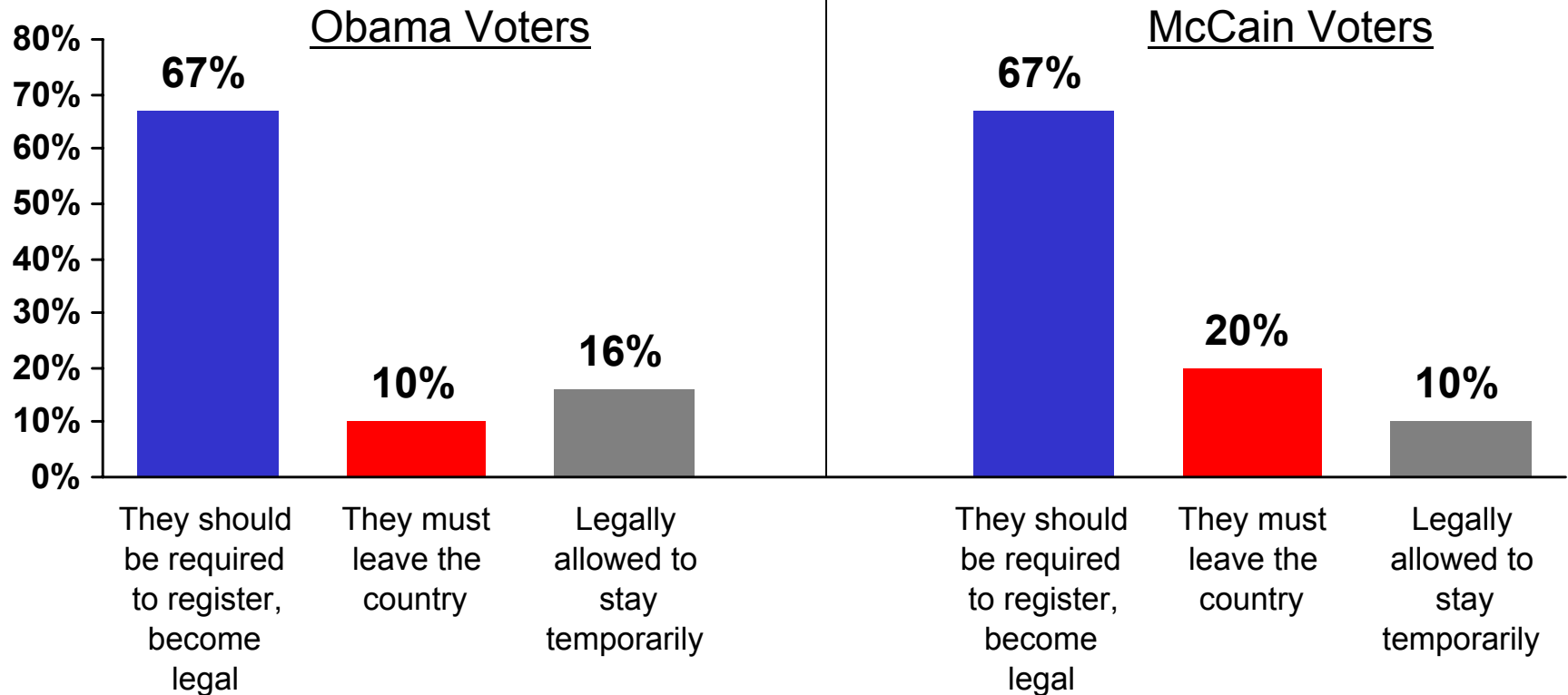
# National Post-election Survey

- **On behalf of America's Voice, Lake Research Partners conducted a national post-election poll\* to gauge the impact of the immigration issue on the 2008 presidential and congressional elections.**
  - We found that immigration was not a defining issue in the election, largely because both Obama and McCain voters supported comprehensive immigration reform over more restrictionist policies in large numbers.
  - Immigration did have an effect, however, in energizing Latinos and turning them against the GOP. The Latino vote was decisive in several key swing states like Florida and Colorado.

\*Lake Research Partners designed and administered this survey that was conducted by telephone using professional interviewers between November 5<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup>, 2008. The Random Digit Dial (RDD) survey reached 1000 2008 general election voters and an oversample of 250 Latino voters with bilingual interviewing, for a total of 371 Latino interviews.



# Obama and McCain voters largely agreed on a path to citizenship.

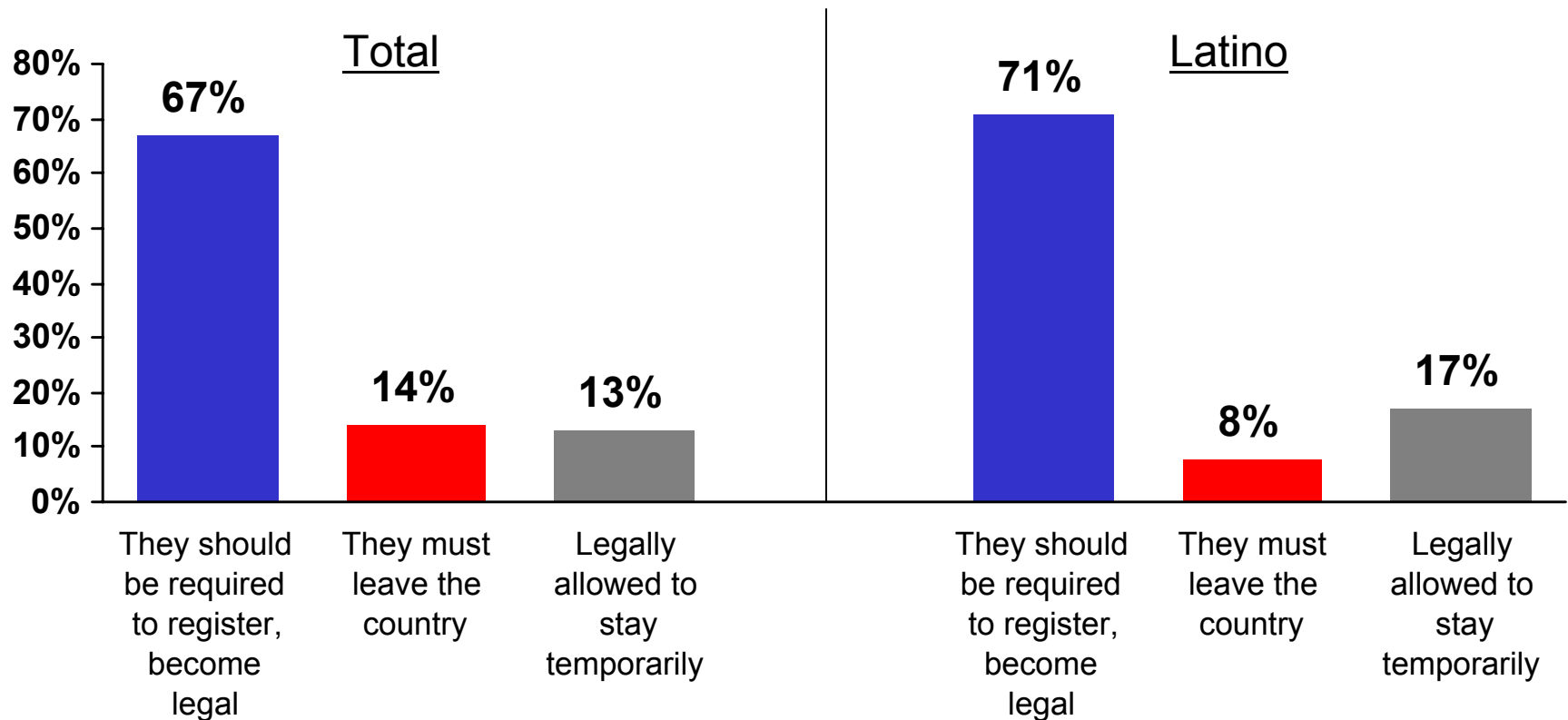


*Most government officials believe that to deal with the problem of illegal immigration, we need to make our borders secure, crack down on employers who knowingly hire illegal immigrants, and deport illegal immigrants who commit crimes. In addition to these steps, what should be done about the 12 million illegal immigrants here in the United States?*

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There was a broad consensus behind a path to citizenship for illegal immigrants, with Latino voters especially supportive.



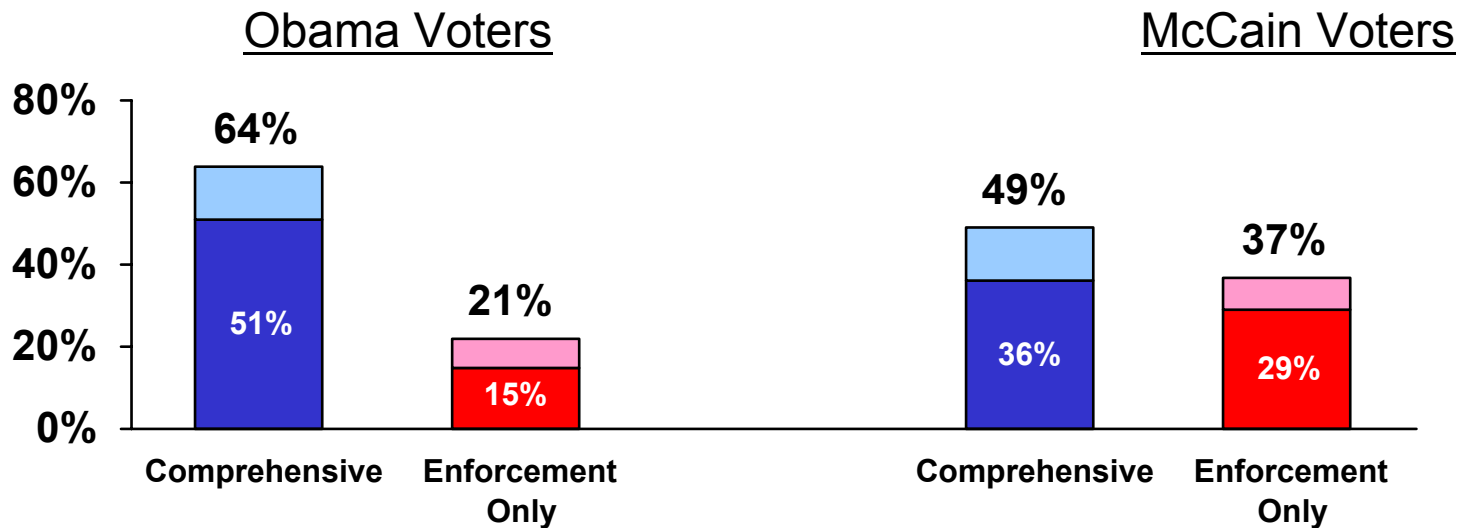
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Both Obama and McCain voters supported a comprehensive solution to the immigration problem over enforcement-only, McCain voters more narrowly.

**Comprehensive:** We need a comprehensive approach that secures the border, cracks down on employers who hire illegal immigrants, and requires all illegal immigrants to register and meet certain requirements to become legal, including working, paying taxes and learning English.

**Enforcement Only:** We need to secure our border, stop giving taxpayer funded benefits to illegal immigrants, and make sure that those who broke our laws by entering this country illegally are forced to leave.



*Now I'd like to read you a pair of statements. Of the two, please tell me which statement is closer to your own views.*

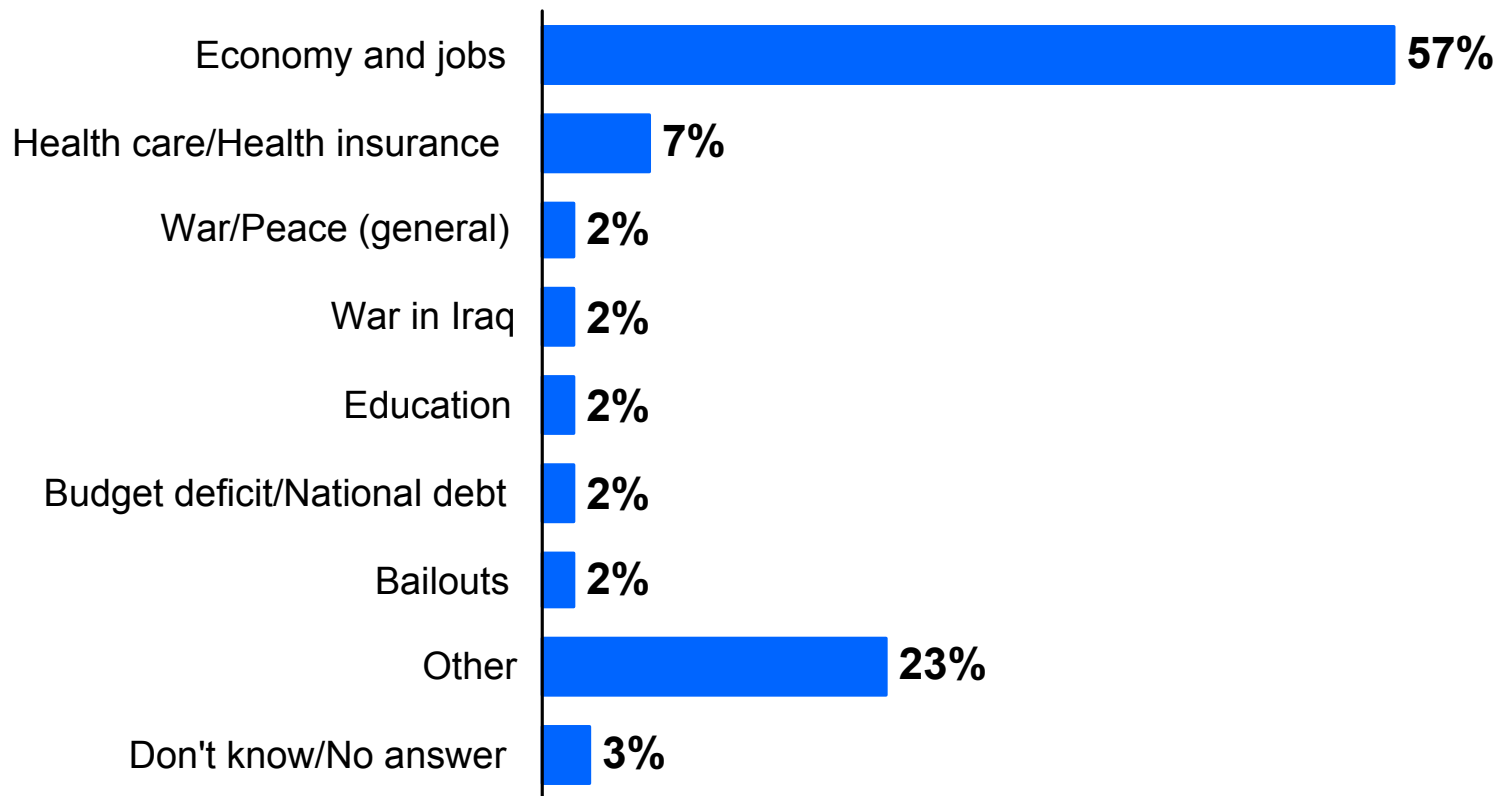


# We have found in focus groups that immigration is not a top of mind issue.

- **The best word to describe the general mood of the country and of focus group participants is “anxious.”** The economic climate is really taking a toll on people, and nobody feels completely secure.
- **Participants express fears about job loss, mortgage payments, and general expenses like gas and groceries.**
- **They are angry at Wall Street, and the seemingly endless string of bailouts has touched a nerve.** The national budget deficit is increasingly important as voters become more and more wary of new spending.
- **Though the immigration issue does interact with the economy, focus group participants do not blame the economic crisis on legal or illegal immigration.** When asked where they direct their anger, participants are most likely to name corporations, Wall Street CEOs, and a general lack of accountability.



Currently, the economy is dominating the national issue landscape. In open ended questions, immigration is mentioned by less than 2% of Americans.

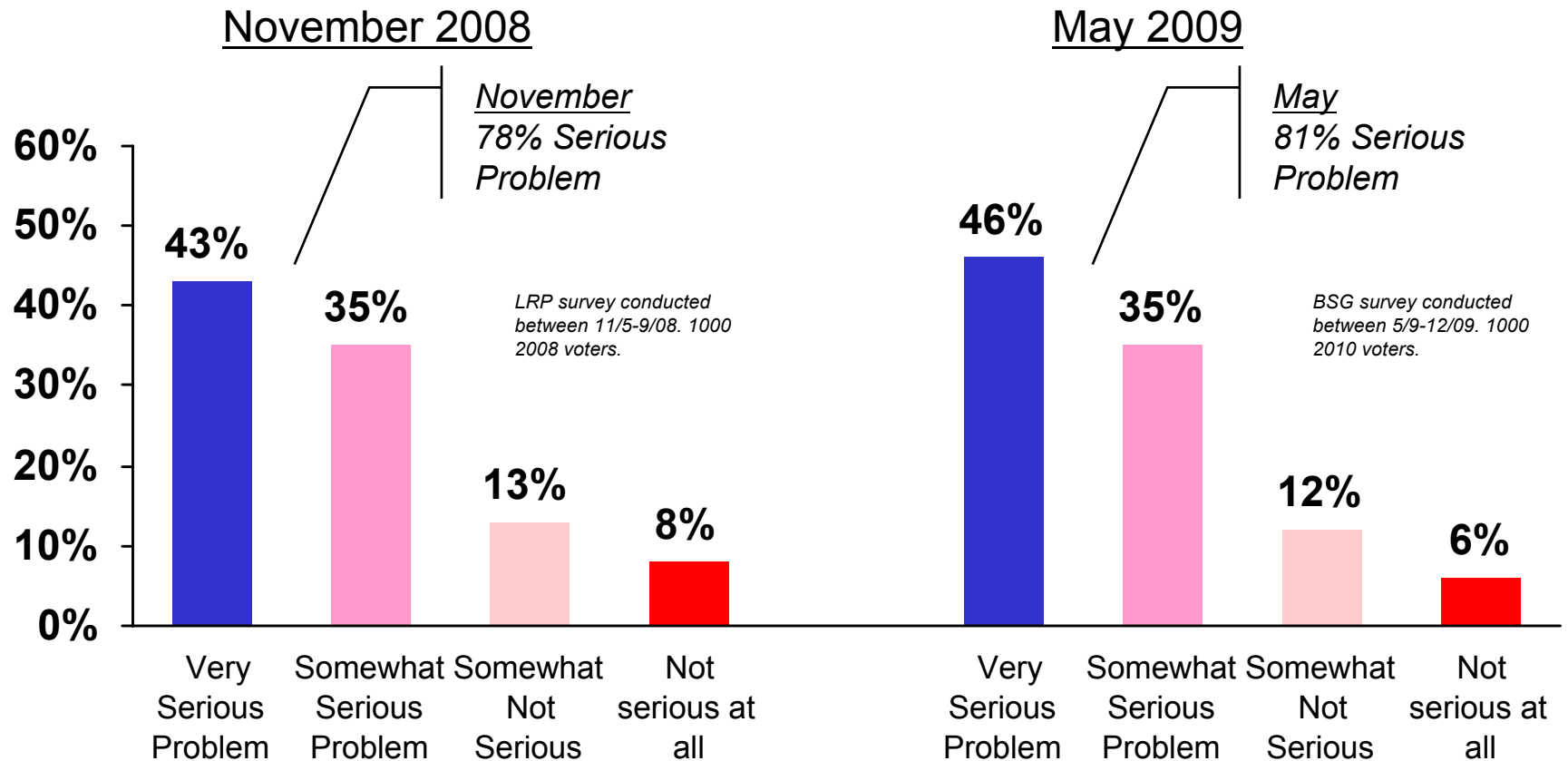


*What is the most important problem facing the country today?*

Conducted by CBS News/New York Times, June 12-June 16, 2009 and based on telephone interviews with a national adult sample of 895. The interviews were conducted by land-line and cell phones.



# Even though immigration is not a top of mind issue, voters still report that illegal immigration is a serious problem when engaged on the issue.

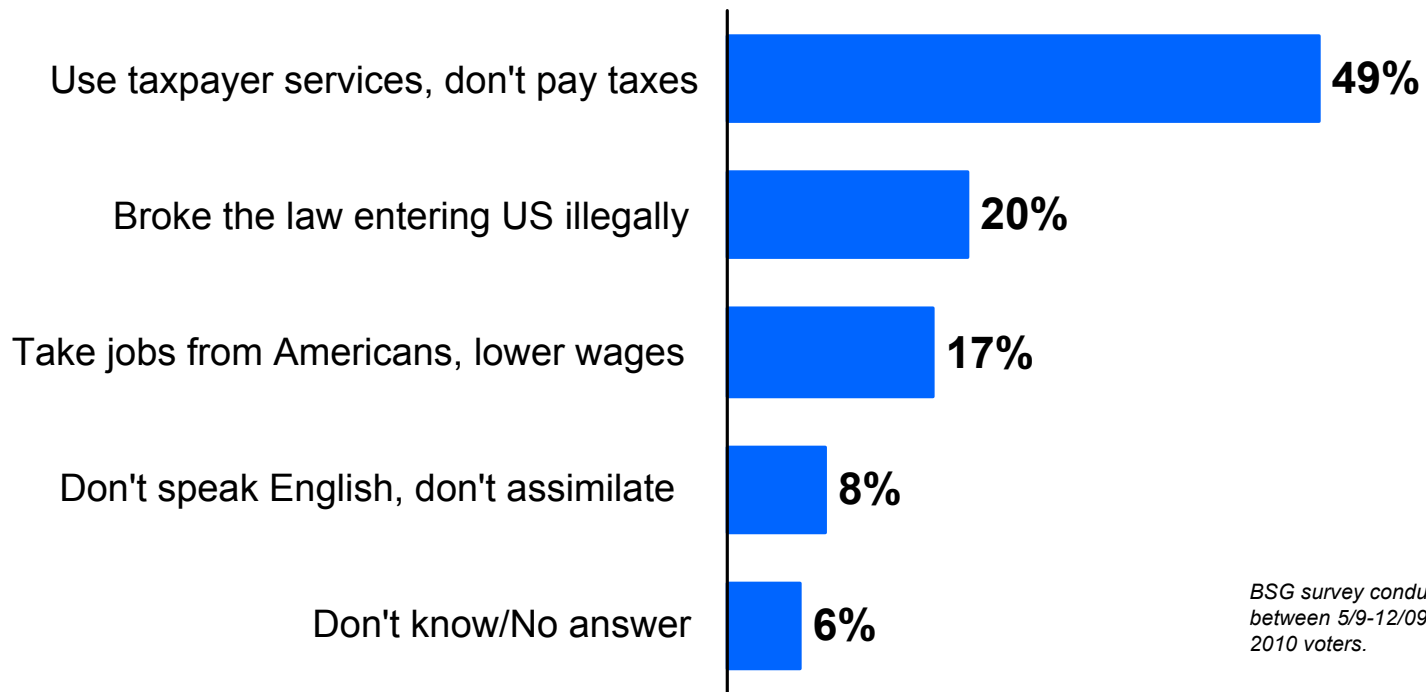


*In your view, is illegal immigration a (READ CHOICES) problem facing the country?*



By far, voters' largest concern about illegal immigration is the idea that illegal immigrants use taxpayer services without paying taxes.

*"Illegal immigrants..."*



*BSG survey conducted between 5/9-12/09. 1000 2010 voters.*

*Which of the following is most concerning about illegal immigration?*



## Voters across demographics still support comprehensive immigration reform. If anything, they see it as more urgent.

- The economy and all the other urgent problems currently facing the country have put voters into a more solution oriented frame of mind. As they were at the time of the election, voters are still receptive to comprehensive immigration reform.
- Unlike earlier this decade, cultural anxiety and the need to “punish lawbreakers” is not the dominant mood on the immigration issue. Instead, voters are much more interested in common sense solutions that fix a system which they see overwhelmingly as broken.
- There is no appetite for mass deportation nor for enforcement-only policies among swing voters.

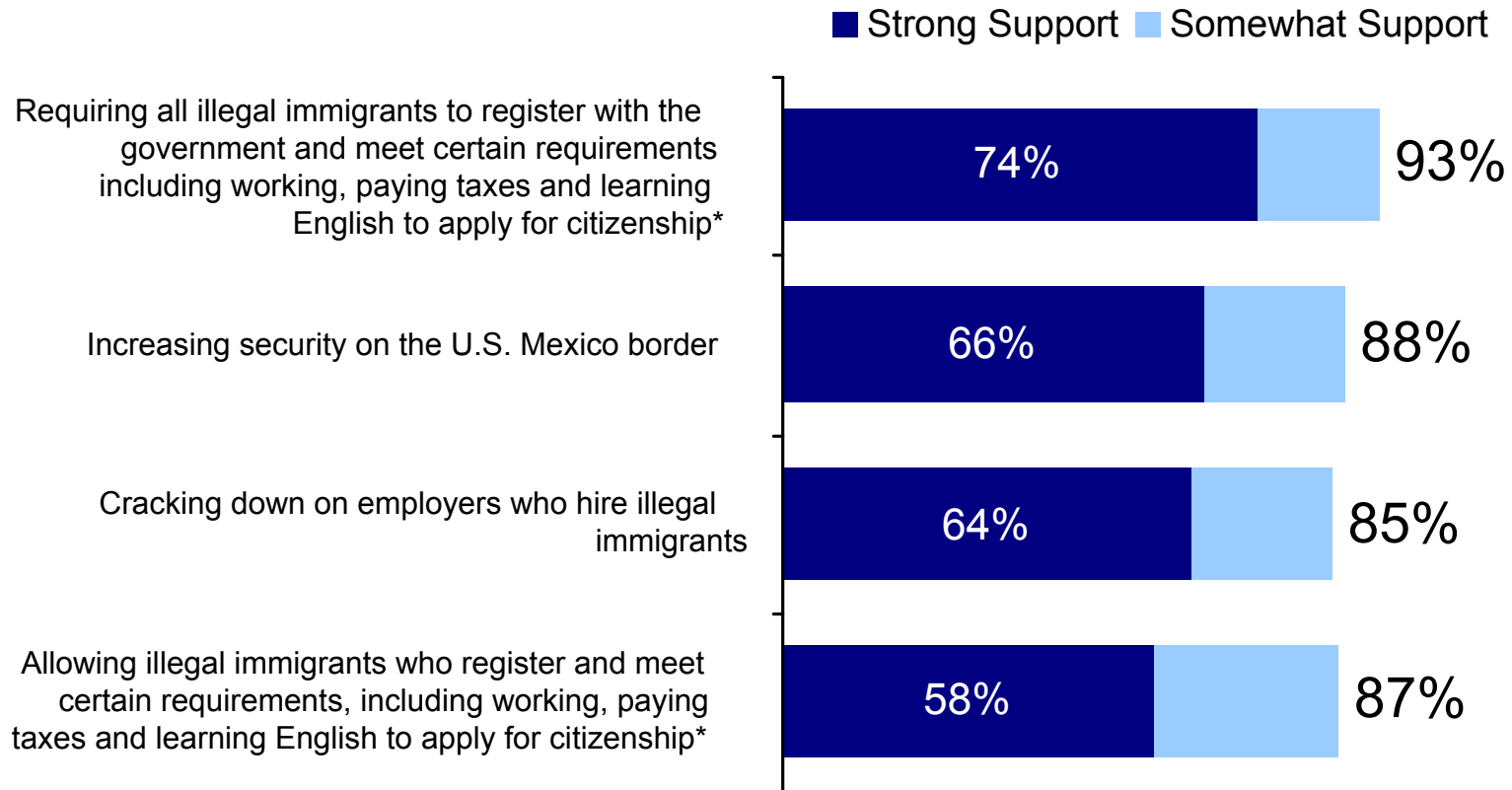


## A standard comprehensive immigration reform proposal tests well in focus groups.

- **The tested proposal for comprehensive immigration reform receives very strong support across focus groups. Participants view it as a practical, common sense solution.**
- **Participants liked that it sets up an orderly process and that immigrants who go through the system are showing a commitment to becoming Americans.**
- **Voters like the combination of requirements of having undocumented immigrants register, work, pay taxes, learn English, and get in line to apply for citizenship.**
- **Voter criticisms are largely constructive, such as arguing that it may not be realistic in this economy to require people to have a current job. They are also more likely to single out certain provisions as too harsh rather than too lenient.**



It is more effective to use strong language like “require” than more permissive language like “allow” when describing the conditions of comprehensive immigration reform.

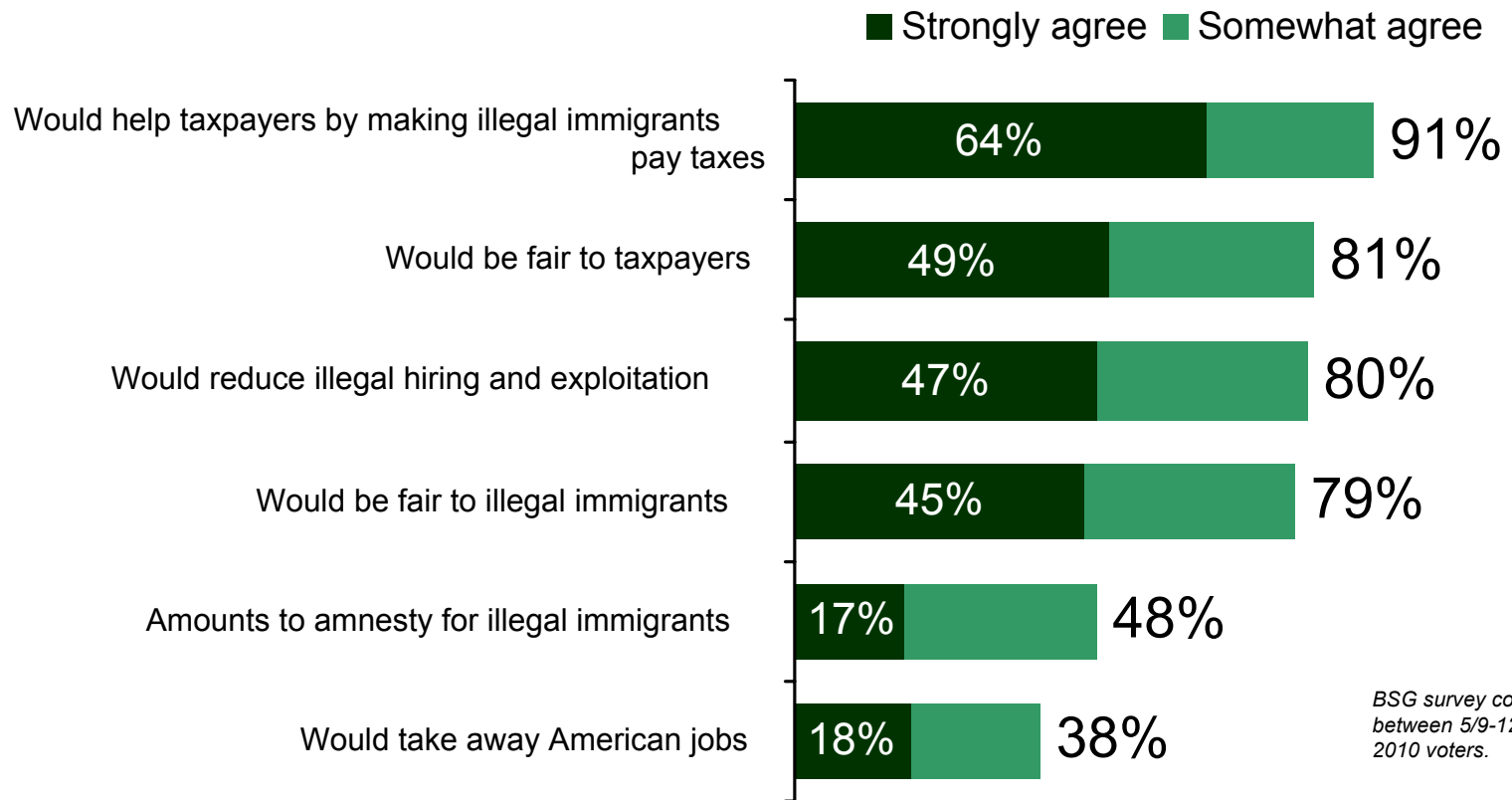


\*Asked of half of sample

*I'd like to read some things that could be included in a comprehensive immigration reform plan. Please tell me if you support or oppose each element.*



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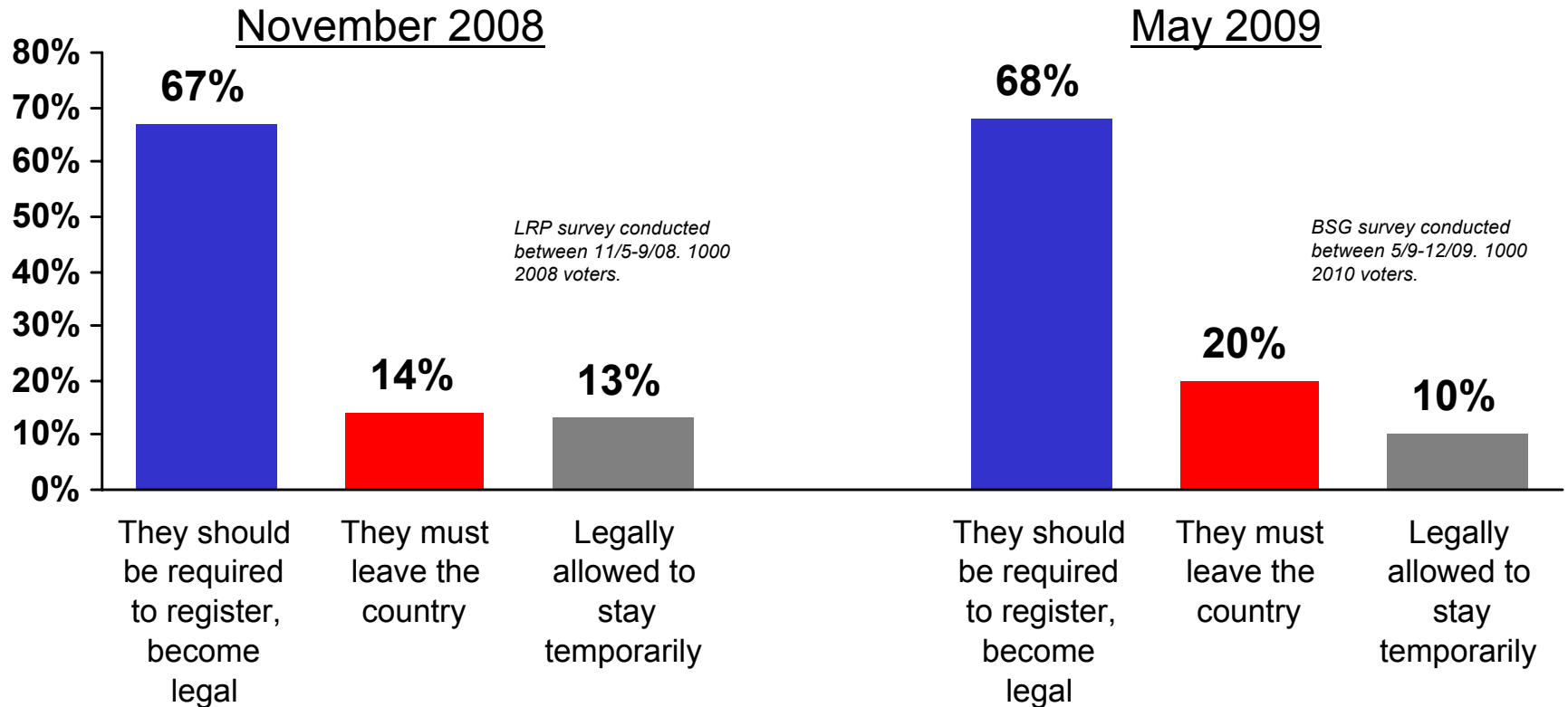


BSG survey conducted between 5/9-12/09. 1000 2010 voters.

*Please tell me if you agree or disagree with each of the following statements about this proposal. Do you agree or disagree that this proposal...*



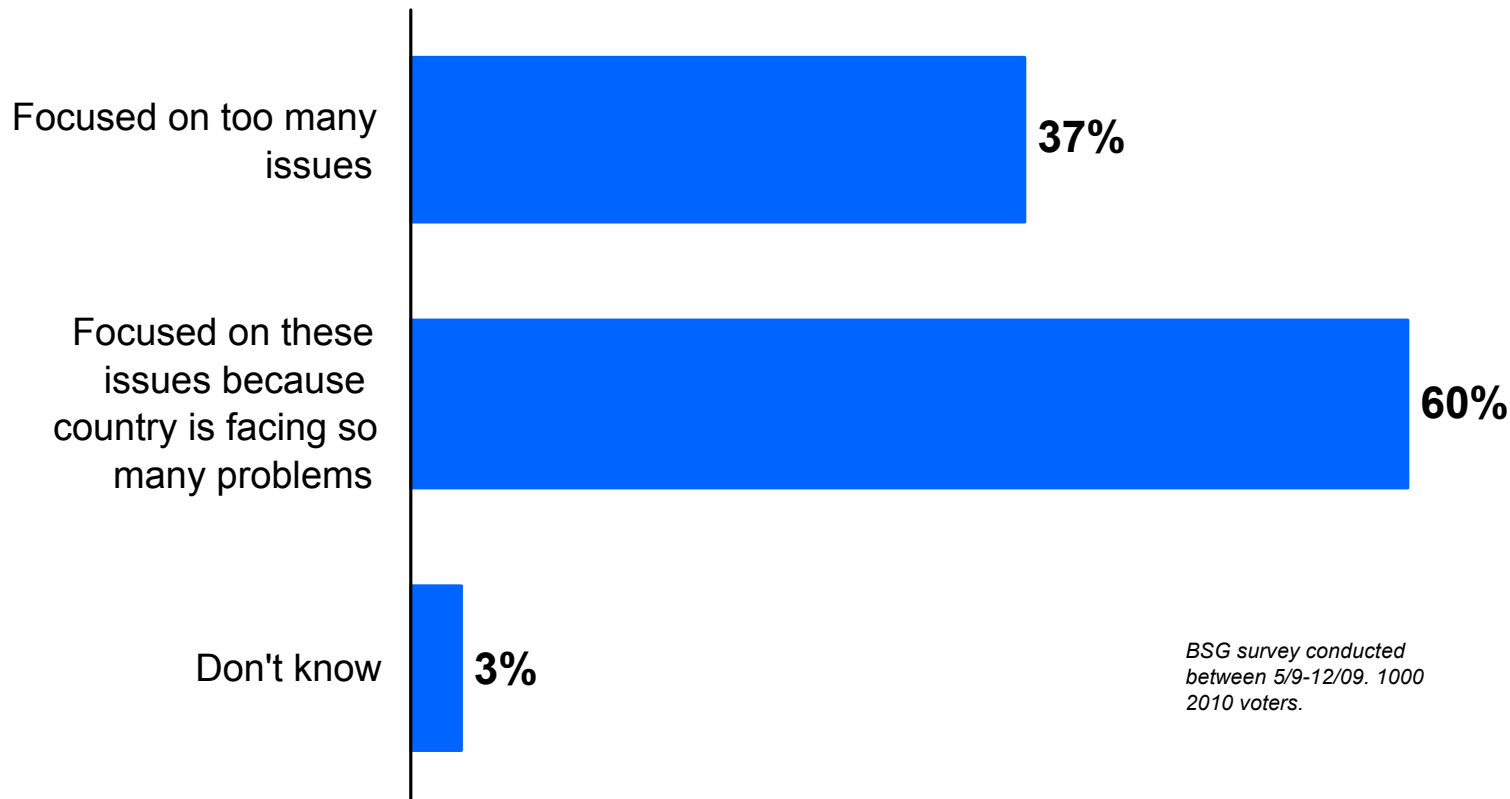
# Numbers in support of comprehensive immigration reform remain basically unchanged since the election.



*Most government officials / members of Congress believe that to deal with the problem of illegal immigration, we need to make our borders secure, crack down on employers who knowingly hire illegal immigrants, and deport illegal immigrants who commit crimes. In addition to these steps, what should be done about the 12 million illegal immigrants here in the United States?*



Voters do not believe that President Obama is trying to tackle too many problems at once. Rather, they believe he is dealing with so much because the country has a lot of problems.

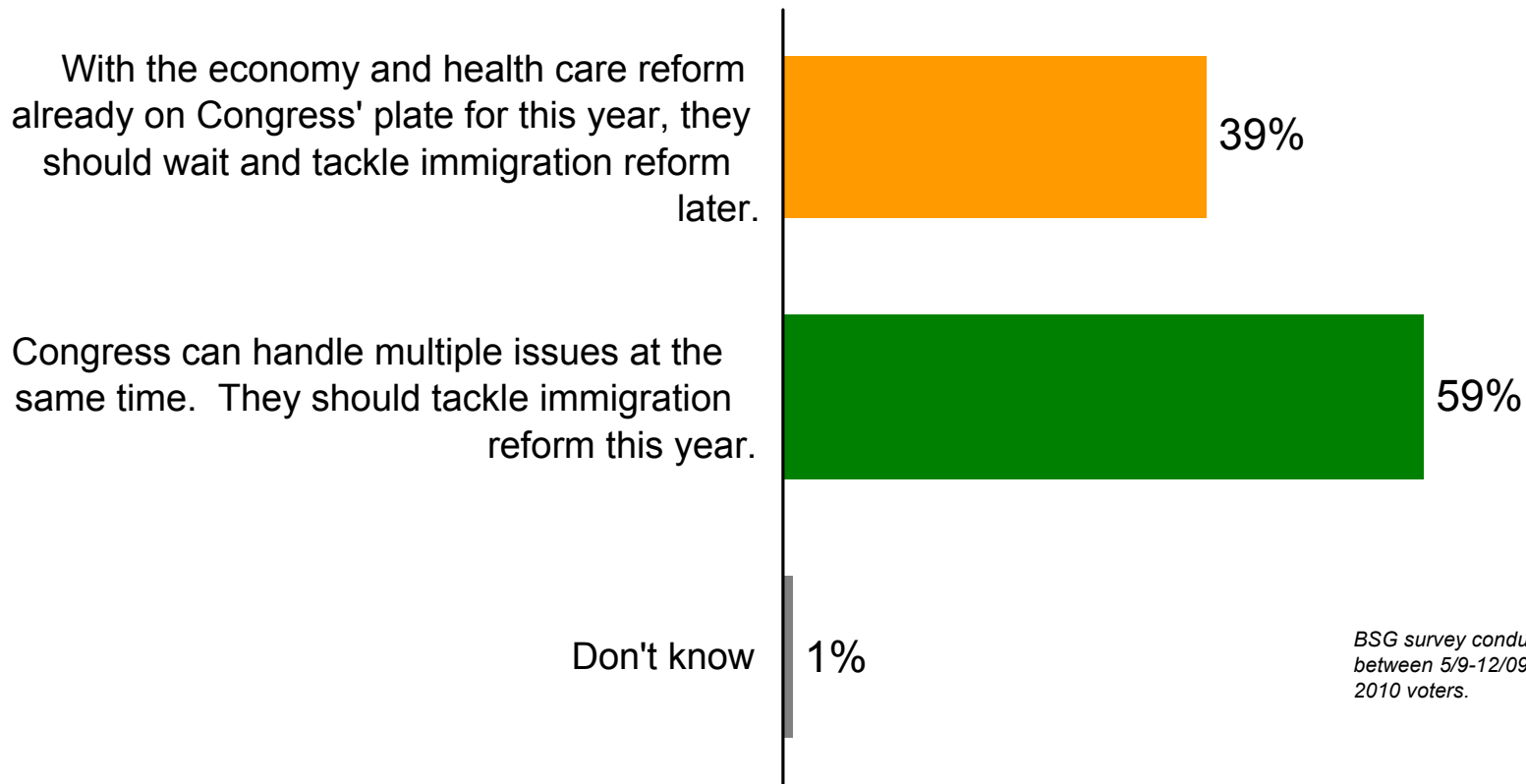


*In general, do you feel that President Obama is taking on too many issues and is not focused enough on the most important ones, or do you feel that President Obama is focused and is taking on this many issues because our country is facing so many problems?*





## Voters believe that Congress should act on comprehensive immigration reform this year.



*BSG survey conducted between 5/9-12/09. 1000 2010 voters.*

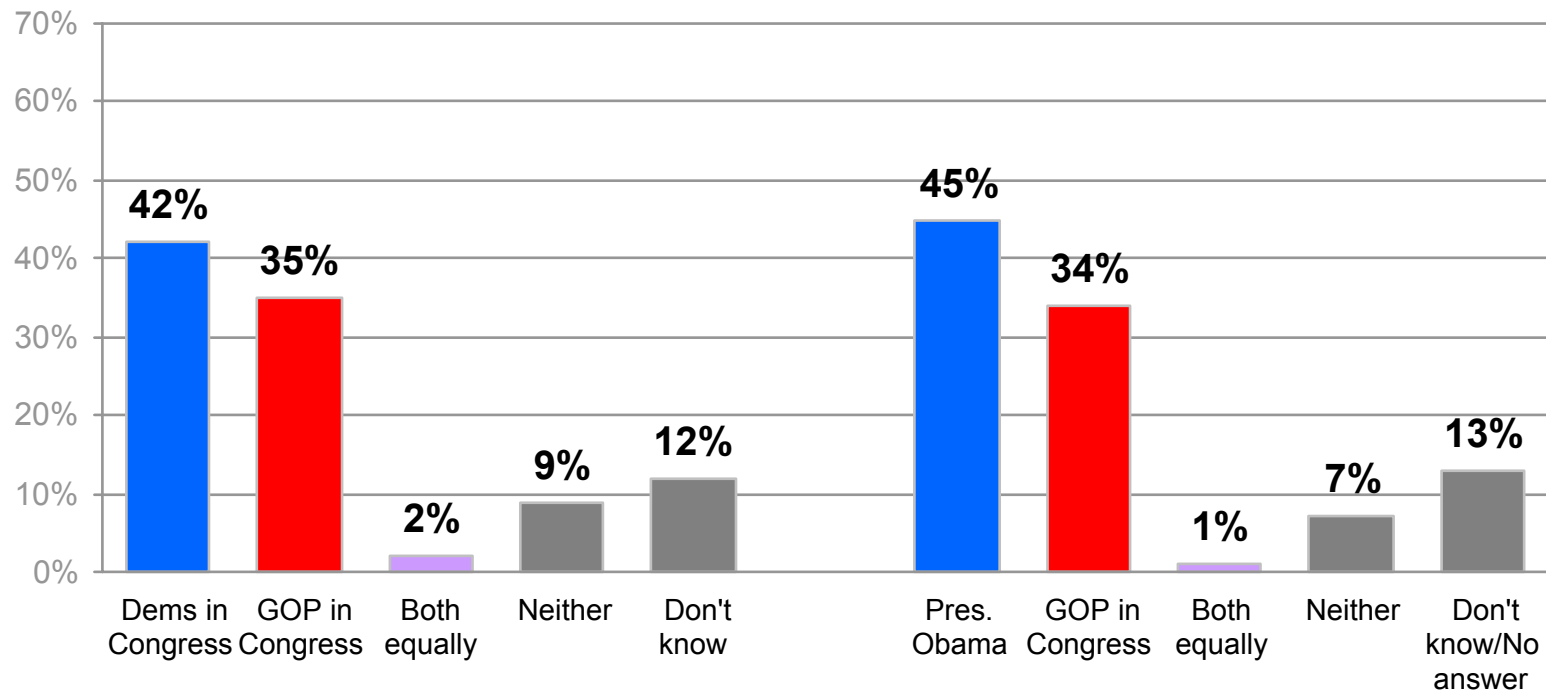
*Which is closer to your view of Congress?*



# Both President Obama and Democrats in Congress are more trusted on immigration than Republicans in Congress.

## Democrats in Congress

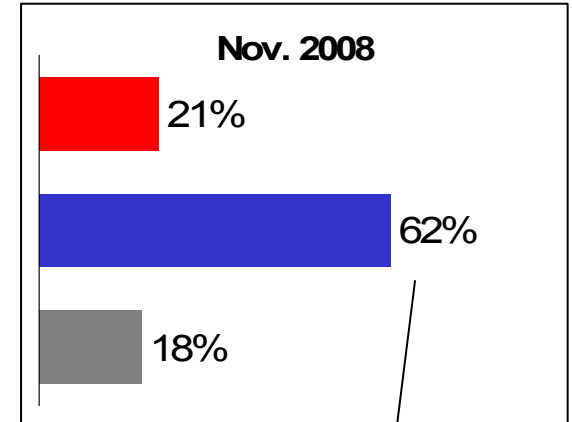
## President Obama



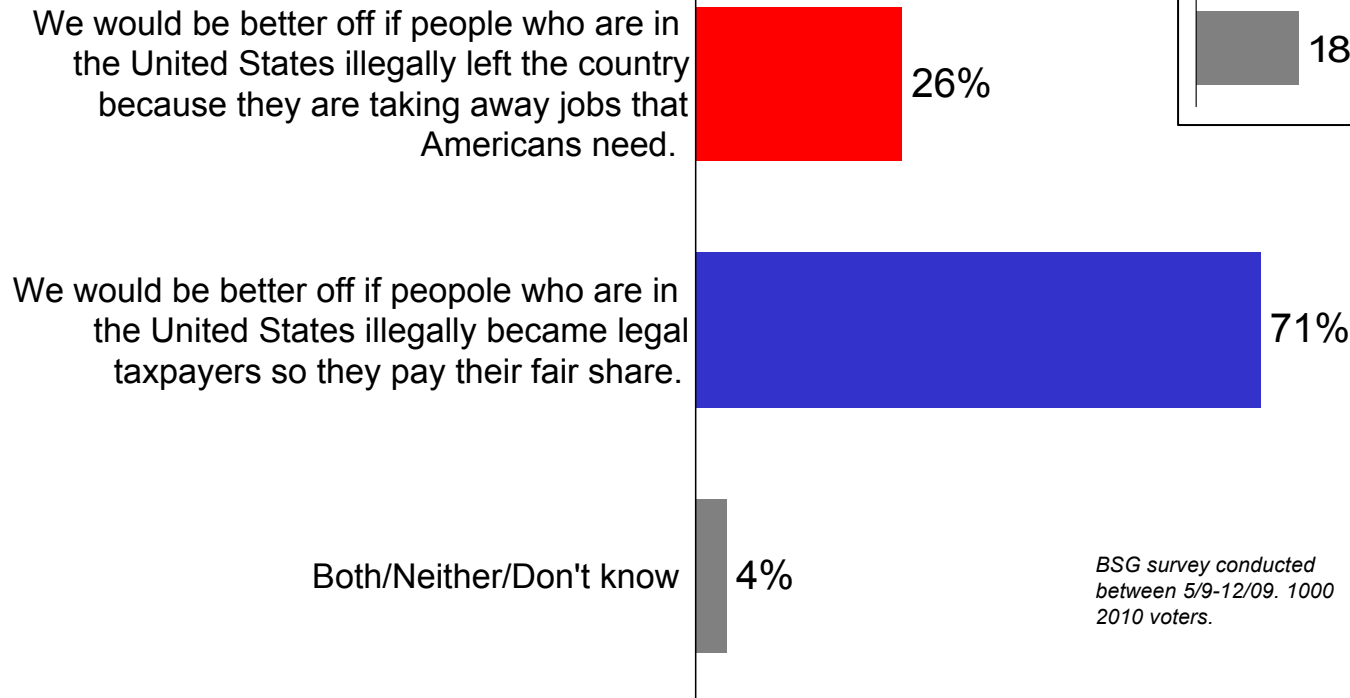
*Whose approach on immigration reform more closely reflects your point of view?*



7 in 10 voters agree that we would benefit more by making illegal immigrants legal taxpayers than by making them leave the country. This number has increased since the election.



May 2009



9 point gain since November

BSG survey conducted between 5/9-12/09. 1000 2010 voters.

*Which is closer to how you think about the issue of immigration and this economy?*



# Latino voters and immigration reform

- **Immigration is an intensely personal issue for Latino voters.**
  - 82% of Latino voters call the immigration issue personally important (59% very important), and 69% say they personally have an undocumented friend, family member, or other acquaintance.
- **A candidate's immigration position is a threshold issue.**
  - 87% of Latinos say they would not consider voting for a Congressional candidate who is in favor of forcing most of the undocumented population to leave the country.
- **The divisive rhetoric of the immigration debate has corroded the GOP brand image.**
  - 64% of Latinos agree that during the last two years, discrimination against Latinos has increased because of the negative tone and the rhetoric of the immigration debate.
  - Many respondents assign blame towards the GOP. By a 71% to 11% margin, Latinos believe the Democratic Party best represents the opinions of the Latino community on immigration issues vs. the Republican Party.
  - Additionally, only 23% of Latino voters think that Republicans “will do the right thing” on immigration issues, while a whopping 60% think Republicans “will not do the right thing.”



# Latino voters and Obama

- **Latino voters think Obama should tackle immigration reform alongside the economic recovery.**
  - 69% of voters support President Obama working on both the economic recovery and immigration reform in 2009, while only 29% think he should focus on the economic recovery and put off immigration reform until after the 2010 elections.
- **Latino voters overwhelmingly support a path to citizenship over a more restrictionist position.**
  - By a margin of 89% to 4%, voters favor giving the undocumented population a path to citizenship over “forcing most of them to leave the country.”
- **While Latinos trust Obama on immigration, they are less trusting of Congressional Democrats and wholly suspicious of Congressional Republicans.**
  - 83% of respondents trust President Obama to “do the right thing” on immigration, compared to 69% trust in Democrats in Congress and 23% trust in Congressional Republicans.
- **These voters will continue to make their voices heard.**
  - 91% of respondents say they are likely to vote in the 2010 midterm elections, including 75% who say they are “very likely” to vote.