

# **Poll Report: Small Business Owners' Views on Immigration Reform**

*Based on a scientific live phone survey of 515 small business owners nationwide*

*April 2013*



**Main Street Alliance**  
[www.mainstreetalliance.org](http://www.mainstreetalliance.org)



**American Sustainable Business Council**  
[www.asbcouncil.org](http://www.asbcouncil.org)

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction.....	1
Key Findings.....	2
Detailed Findings & Charts.....	3
Methodology.....	8
Poll Toplines.....	9

## INTRODUCTION

Small business owners are on the front lines of job creation and building strong local economies across America. With their perspective on the economic opportunities and challenges facing local economies and the country, small business owners' views on current policy issues can provide valuable insights to decision-makers, surface important priorities for policy development, and inform the general public's understanding of what policies will help or hurt small businesses and the economy.

Addressing immigration reform is one of the central policy challenges before the U.S. Congress in 2013. With widespread agreement that the current immigration system is broken and is not serving the best interests of the economy or the country, growing attention is focusing on how to reform that system. Small business owners have a major stake in this debate because of its implications for their businesses and local economies.

This report, based on the results of a scientific national phone survey of small business owners conducted in March 2013, details small business owners' views on pivotal policy questions relating to reforming the immigration system for current and future immigrants, and explores the considerations underpinning small business owners' views on immigration reform.

The findings of this survey should inform the ongoing dialogue over immigration and point to a set of criteria for evaluating proposals for immigration reform on the basis of whether they address the priorities and concerns of small business owners.

## KEY FINDINGS

Key findings of this report, based on a scientific national phone survey of 515 small business owners conducted in March 2013, include:

- **Two thirds of small business owners support a roadmap to citizenship for immigrants already living in the U.S., with support at two to one or more across party lines:** 67% of small business owners support a roadmap to citizenship for immigrants currently living and working in the U.S., while 27% oppose it. Republican small business owners (62% support – 31% oppose), Democratic small business owners (82%-13%), and Independent small business owners (65%-29%) all support a roadmap to citizenship for current immigrants by margins of two to one or more.
- **Small business owners favor a roadmap to citizenship for future immigrants over a temporary worker program with no roadmap to citizenship by a margin of more than two to one:** 61% of small business owners think the immigration process for future immigrant workers should include a roadmap to citizenship, compared to 27% who think it should be a temporary guest worker program with no roadmap to citizenship.
- **Small business owners' preference for a roadmap to citizenship for future immigrants over a temporary worker program with no roadmap holds across party lines:** Republican small business owners (56% for roadmap to citizenship – 33% for temporary worker program with no roadmap), Democratic small business owners (70%-16%), and Independent small business owners (69%-21%) all prefer a roadmap to citizenship for future immigrant workers over a temporary worker program with no roadmap by 20 points or more.
- **Small business support for immigration reform is animated by multi-faceted views about the role of immigrants in the economy:** Three statements outlining potential rationales for the importance of immigration reform to small businesses were presented, and respondents were asked if they agreed or disagreed with each. Over two thirds of small business owners agreed with each statement, with margins of 30 points or more across party lines:
  - On a statement highlighting **the historical role of immigrant business owners and workers in building strong local economies**, small business owners agreed 82%-14%.
  - On a statement about **the potential of immigrant economic integration to strengthen the small business customer base**, small business owners agreed 71%-25%.
  - On a statement positing **the importance of keeping families together to ensure a productive workforce for small businesses**, small business owners agreed 67%-26%.
- **Respondents in this scientific national phone survey were politically diverse, with a strong plurality of Republicans or Independents who lean Republican:** 47% identified as Republican (36%) or Independent-leaning Republican (11%); 27% as Democratic (19%) or Independent-leaning Democratic (8%); and 26% as Independent (14%) or other (12%).

## DETAILED FINDINGS & CHARTS

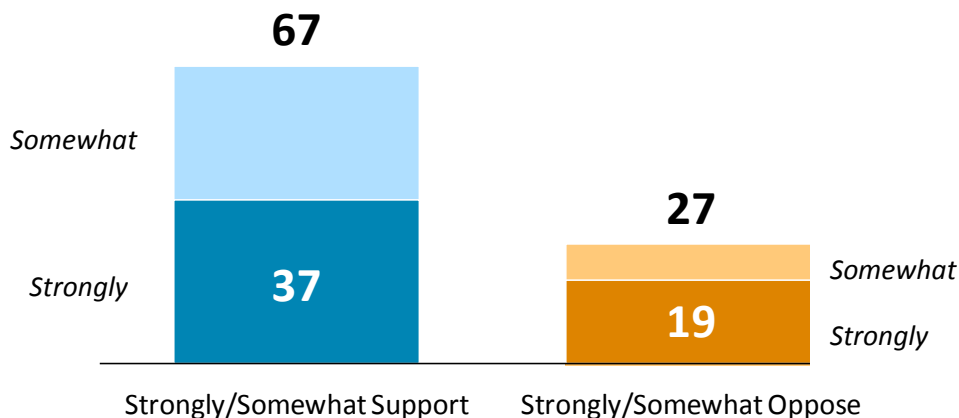
### Small Business Owner Views on Immigration Proposals Affecting Current and Future Immigrants

Two central policy issues in the unfolding national dialogue over immigration reform are: (1) how reforming the immigration system will affect the estimated 11 million undocumented immigrants currently living in the U.S., and (2) how reform will address future immigration. This survey asked small business owners to share their views on these two key policy issues.

One question focused on reforms affecting current immigrants and asked small business owners if they support or oppose reform with a roadmap to citizenship for immigrants already living and working in the country. In response, 67% of small business owners said they support a roadmap to citizenship and 27% said they oppose a roadmap to citizenship for current immigrants.

**Two thirds of small business owners support a new immigration policy that includes a roadmap to citizenship for immigrants who already live and work in the U.S.**

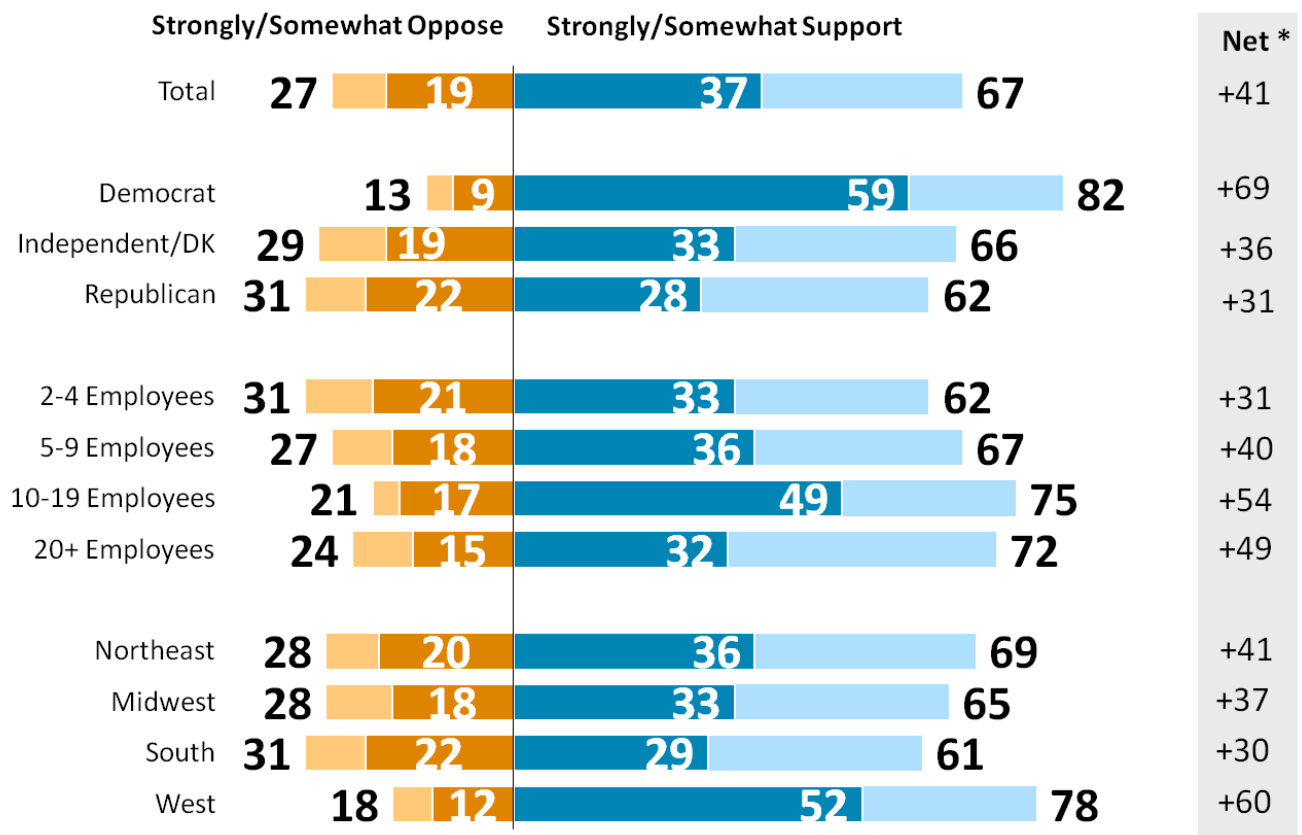
Do you support or oppose a new immigration policy including a roadmap to citizenship for immigrants who already live and work in the U.S. and aspire to be American citizens?



Small business owners support a roadmap to citizenship for current immigrants by margins of 30 points or more regardless of party affiliation, business size, and region.

**Across party identification, business size, and region, small business owners support a new immigration policy including a roadmap to citizenship for current immigrants.**

Do you support or oppose a new immigration policy including a roadmap to citizenship for immigrants who already live and work in the U.S. and aspire to be American citizens?

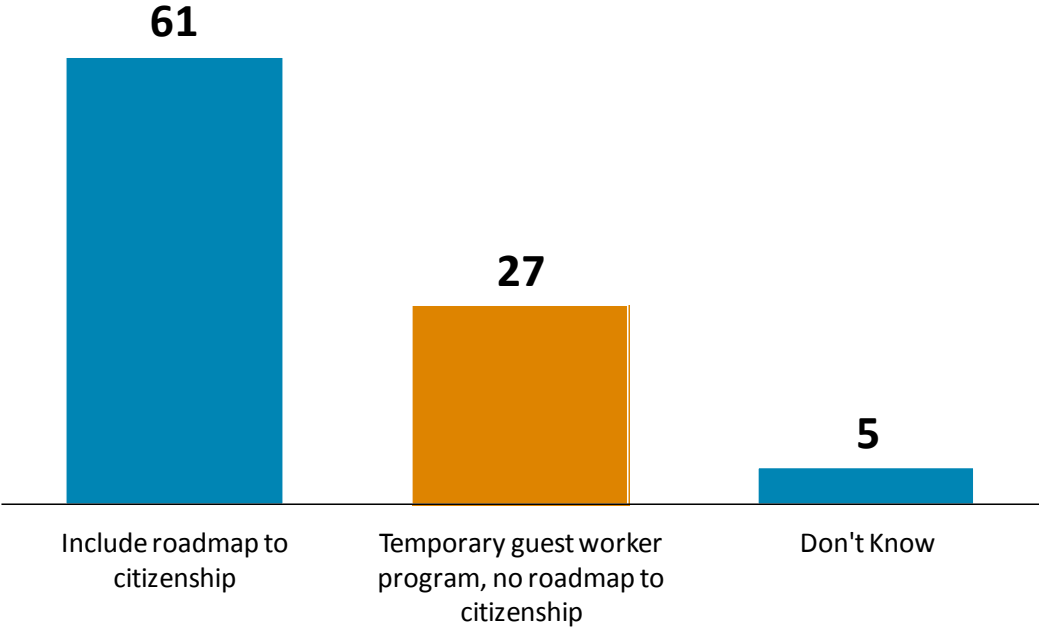


\* Net figures in the shaded column on the right were calculated from raw percentages, before rounding. These net figures sometimes differ by one percentage point from the difference between the rounded Strongly/Somewhat Support and Strongly/Somewhat Oppose figures in the chart.

Another question focused on the immigration process for future immigrants, asking small business owners whether they favor a roadmap to citizenship for future immigrants or a temporary worker program with no roadmap to citizenship. In response, 61% of small business owners said they support a roadmap to citizenship for future immigrants, compared to 27% who support a temporary guest worker program with no roadmap to citizenship.

**Small business owners favor a roadmap to citizenship for future immigrants over a temporary worker program with no roadmap to citizenship by more than two to one.**

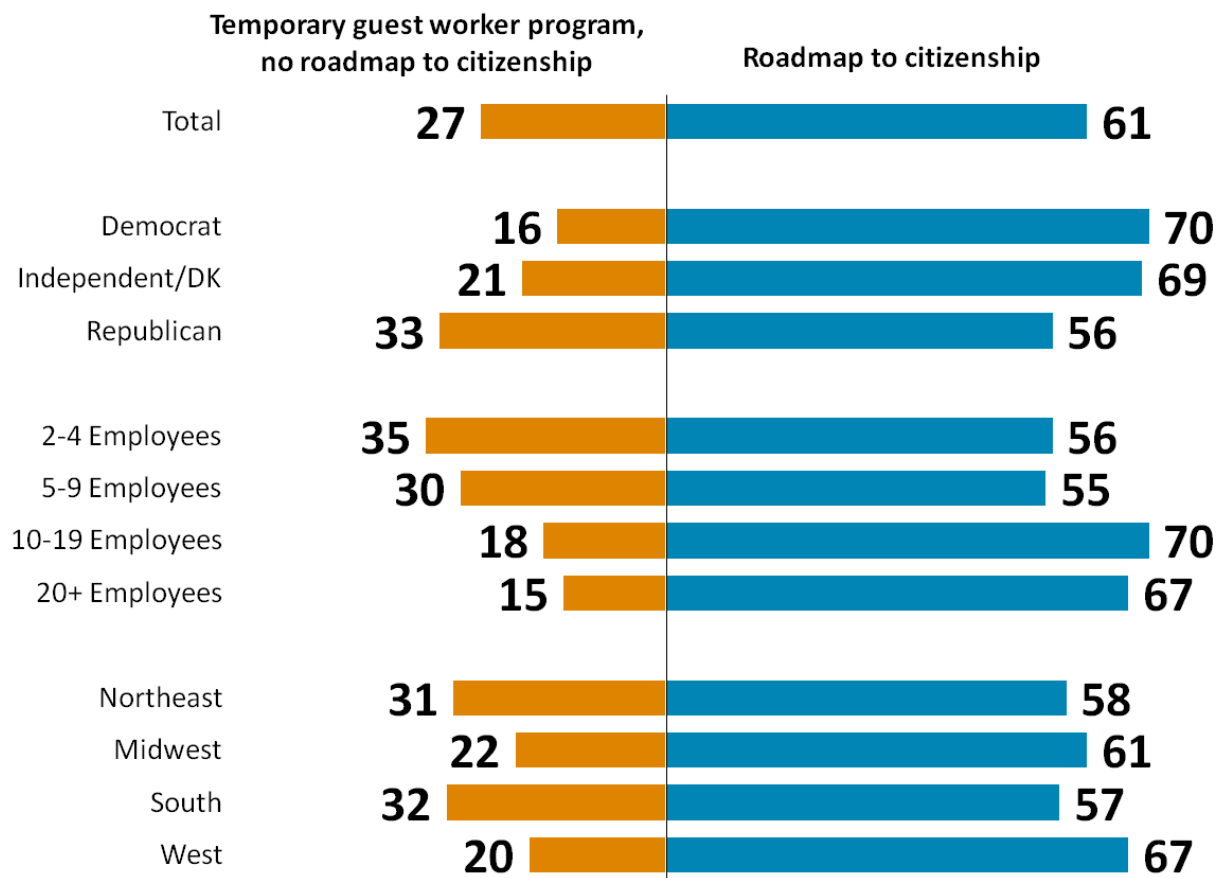
As Congress works to set up an immigration process for future immigrant workers, do you think this process should include a roadmap to citizenship, or should it be a temporary guest worker program with no roadmap to citizenship?



Small business owners favor a roadmap to citizenship for future immigrants over a temporary worker program with no roadmap by margins of 20 points or more regardless of party affiliation, business size, and region.

**Across partisan lines, business size, and region, small business owners favor a roadmap to citizenship for future immigrants over a temporary worker program with no roadmap to citizenship.**

As Congress works to set up an immigration process for future immigrant workers, do you think this process should include a roadmap to citizenship, or should it be a temporary guest worker program with no roadmap to citizenship?



On these key policy questions about reforming the immigration process, the results present a clear conclusion: small business owners – across lines of party, business size, and region – support a roadmap to citizenship for both current and future immigrants.

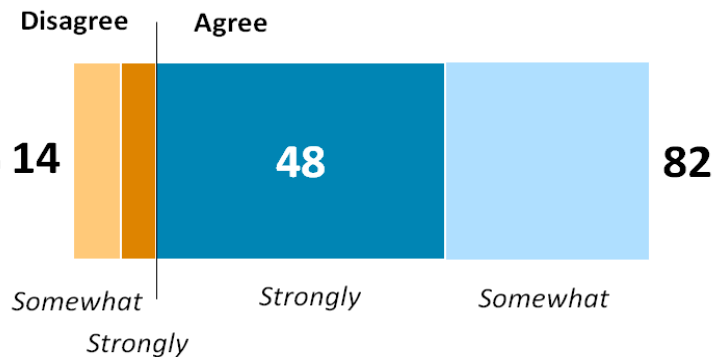


## Considerations Underpinning Small Business Support for Immigration Reform

The survey then explored what considerations were most germane to small business owners as they thought about immigration issues and what reform should accomplish. Three statements were presented, each emphasizing a different rationale that could underpin small business support for immigration reform. Respondents were asked to agree or disagree with each statement.

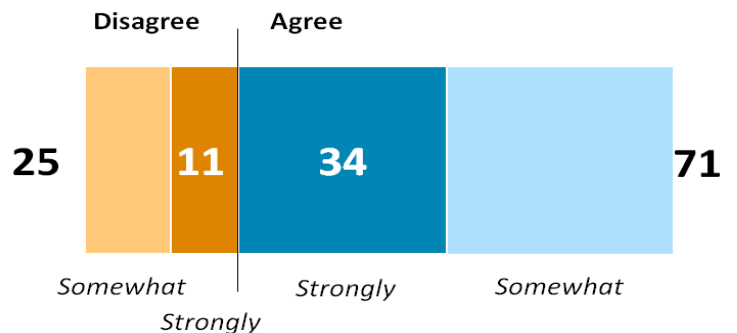
One statement emphasized the historical role of immigrants as both workers and business owners in building local economies, juxtaposed with the idea that the current status quo on immigration policy is hindering the country's economic growth. This statement drew overwhelming agreement: 82% of respondents agreed with the statement (including 48% strongly) while 14% disagreed.

Generations of new Americans, both business owners and workers, have helped build strong local economies and communities. Today, outdated and out-of-touch immigration policies are hindering our economic progress. Addressing immigration is important.



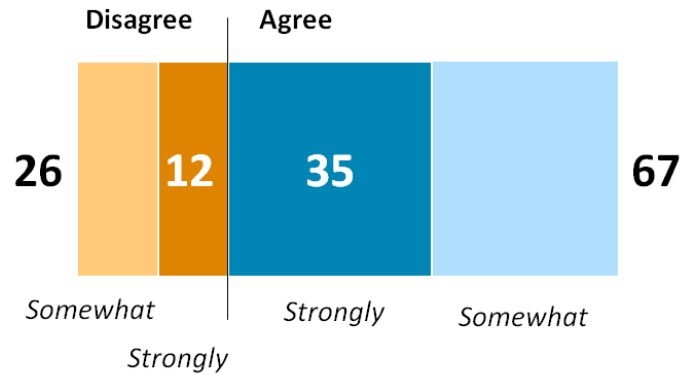
Another statement emphasized the potential of economic integration of immigrants to strengthen small businesses by boosting consumer demand and expanding the talent pool. Respondents agreed with this statement by a margin of almost three to one: 71% agreed, while 25% disagreed.

Our immigration policies should encourage the economic integration of new American immigrants. This will strengthen the customer base for small businesses, bring new talent to the nation and help those businesses grow and create jobs.



Another statement emphasized the family-oriented nature of small businesses and tested the rationale that keeping families together is important for small businesses' workforce productivity. Two thirds of respondents (67%) agreed with this statement, while one quarter (26%) disagreed.

Small business owners and their employees are like family. When an employee's family is separated by our current immigration laws, it impacts morale and focus in the workplace. Keeping families together is important to ensure a productive and focused workforce for small businesses.



Though specific levels of agreement varied among the three statements, two thirds or more of respondents agreed with each statement. The strength of agreement across party lines was also notable: all three statements registered over 60% agreement (with margins of 30 points or more) across party identification.

## METHODOLOGY

Results reported here represent findings from a scientific live telephone survey of 515 small business owners nationwide conducted by Lake Research Partners over March 14-25, 2013. Survey respondents were drawn from a geographically stratified sample of small business owners from around the country. The data were weighted slightly by gender, region, ethnicity, and business size to match the sample to the national population of small business owners. The survey's margin of error is +/-4.4%.

## POLL TOPLINES

Survey conducted March 14-25, 2013  
515 Small Business Owners

	Total	Demo- crat	Indep- endent	Repub- lican
N=	515	139	72	242

### Gender of respondent

Male.....	73	62	70	79
Female .....	27	38	30	21

Approximately how many people work 30 or more hours per week at your company, including yourself? Please don't include contractors.

2-4 Employees.....	38	36	43	40
5-9 Employees.....	24	27	16	23
10-19 Employees.....	18	20	15	16
20-99 Employees.....	20	16	26	21

Do you support or oppose a new immigration policy including a roadmap to citizenship for immigrants who already live and work in the U.S. and aspire to be American citizens?

### [IF SUPPORT/OPPOSE: Is that strongly, or somewhat [OPPOSE/SUPPORT]?

Strongly support .....	37	59	30	28
Somewhat support.....	31	23	35	34
Somewhat oppose.....	8	5	10	9
Strongly oppose.....	19	9	19	22
(Don't know) .....	5	4	4	6
(Refused).....	1	0	1	0
<b>Strongly /somewhat support .....</b>	<b>67</b>	<b>82</b>	<b>65</b>	<b>62</b>
<b>Strongly /somewhat oppose .....</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>31</b>

As Congress works to set up an immigration process for future immigrant workers, do you think this process should include a roadmap to citizenship, or should it be a temporary guest worker program with no roadmap to citizenship?

<b>Include a roadmap to citizenship .....</b>	<b>61</b>	<b>70</b>	<b>69</b>	<b>56</b>
<b>Guest worker program with no roadmap .....</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>33</b>
(Both).....	4	4	1	5
(Neither) .....	2	1	6	1
(Don't know) .....	5	9	1	4
(Refused).....	1	0	3	1

	<i>Demo-</i>	<i>Indep-</i>	<i>Repub-</i>
<i>Total</i>	<i>crat</i>	<i>endent</i>	<i>lican</i>
N= 515	139	72	242

Now I am going to read you some different statements people have made about immigration. For each one, please say whether you strongly agree, somewhat agree, somewhat disagree, or strongly disagree with the statement.

**RANDOMIZE**

Generations of new Americans, both business owners and workers, have helped build strong local economies and communities. Today, outdated and out-of-touch immigration policies are hindering our economic progress. Addressing immigration is important.

Strongly agree .....	48	60	45	46
Somewhat agree .....	33	30	31	38
Somewhat disagree .....	8	5	11	8
Strongly disagree.....	6	3	7	6
(Don't know /refused).....	5	2	5	3
<b>Strongly /somewhat agree .....</b>	<b>82</b>	<b>90</b>	<b>77</b>	<b>83</b>
<b>Strongly /somewhat disagree .....</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>14</b>

Our immigration policies should encourage the economic integration of new American immigrants. This will strengthen the customer base for small businesses, bring new talent to the nation and help those businesses grow and create jobs.

Strongly agree .....	34	50	35	28
Somewhat agree .....	36	30	37	38
Somewhat disagree .....	13	9	9	18
Strongly disagree.....	11	7	18	12
(Don't know /refused).....	5	4	2	3
<b>Strongly /somewhat agree .....</b>	<b>71</b>	<b>80</b>	<b>72</b>	<b>66</b>
<b>Strongly /somewhat disagree .....</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>31</b>

Small business owners and their employees are like family. When an employee's family is separated by our current immigration laws, it impacts morale and focus in the workplace. Keeping families together is important to ensure a productive and focused workforce for small businesses.

Strongly agree .....	35	55	22	30
Somewhat agree .....	32	27	47	32
Somewhat disagree .....	14	7	8	20
Strongly disagree.....	12	7	20	12
(Don't know /refused).....	6	3	4	6
<b>Strongly /somewhat agree .....</b>	<b>67</b>	<b>83</b>	<b>69</b>	<b>62</b>
<b>Strongly /somewhat disagree .....</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>32</b>

	Total	Demo- crat	Indep- endent	Repub- lican
N=	515	139	72	242

Generally speaking, do you think of yourself as a Republican, a Democrat, an independent, or something else?

**[IF REPUBLICAN OR DEMOCRAT:]** Do you consider yourself a strong (Republican/Democrat) or a not-so-strong (Republican/Democrat)?

**[IF INDEPENDENT:]** Would you say that you lean more toward the Republicans or more toward the Democrats?

Strong Republican .....	23	0	0	49
Not-so-strong Republican .....	13	0	0	27
Independent - lean Republican .....	11	0	0	24
<b>Republican</b> .....	<b>47</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>Independent</b> .....	<b>14</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>Democrat</b> .....	<b>27</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>
Independent - lean Democratic.....	8	29	0	0
Not-so-strong Democrat .....	8	31	0	0
Strong Democrat .....	11	41	0	0
(Other).....	7	0	0	0
(DO NOT READ, BUT RECORD VOL: Libertarian) .....	1	0	0	0
(Don't know) .....	4	0	0	0

In what country were you born?

U.S. ....	90	84	90	95
(Other country) _____ RECORD .....	9	16	10	5
(Refused).....	2	0	0	0

What is your age? **IF REFUSED:** I am going to read you some categories. Stop me when we get to your category.

**READ CATEGORIES:**

18-24 years .....	1	2	1	1
25-29 .....	2	1	1	2
30-34 .....	5	2	5	6
35-39 .....	6	5	2	7
40-44 .....	9	11	6	9
45-49 .....	9	9	13	9
50-54 .....	14	16	12	15
55-59 .....	16	20	17	16
60-64 .....	19	19	19	18
65-69 .....	8	10	3	9
70-74 .....	4	3	5	4
Over 75 .....	1	1	2	2
(Refused) .....	6	0	15	3

	<i>Total</i>	<i>Demo- crat</i>	<i>Indep- endent</i>	<i>Repub- lican</i>
N=	515	139	72	242

Just to make sure we have a representative sample, could you please tell me whether you are from a Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish-speaking background? **[IF “NO”, ASK:]** What is your race--white, black, Asian, or something else?

**DO NOT READ**

White/Caucasian .....	81	72	81	88
Black/African American.....	4	9	0	2
Latino/Hispanic .....	4	6	5	3
Asian/Pacific Islander .....	6	8	6	5
Native American .....	1	1	1	0
(Other) .....	2	3	3	1
(Don't know/refused).....	3	1	4	1



**The American Sustainable Business Council** and its member organizations represent more than 165,000 businesses nationwide, and more than 300,000 entrepreneurs, executives, managers, and investors. ASBC informs and engages policy makers and the public about the need and opportunities for building a vibrant and sustainable economy.

[www.asbcouncil.org](http://www.asbcouncil.org)



**The Main Street Alliance** is a national network of state-based small business coalitions. MSA and its state affiliates create opportunities for small business owners to speak for themselves on issues that impact their businesses and local economies.

[www.mainstreetalliance.org](http://www.mainstreetalliance.org)