University of Maryland Critical Issues Poll
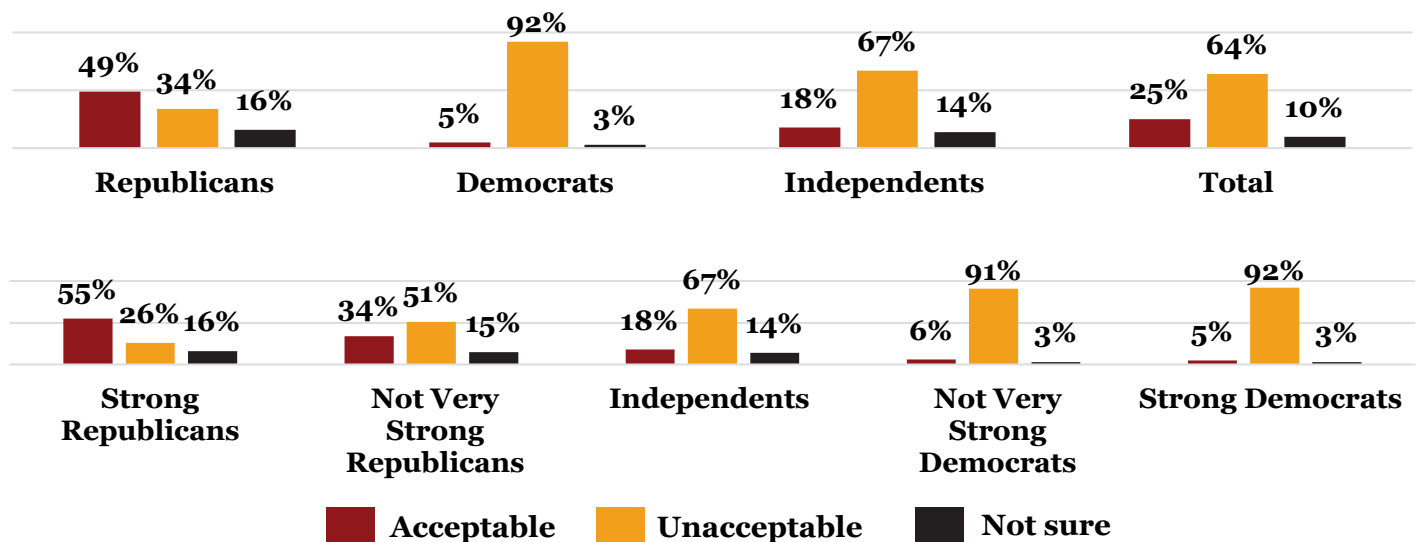## *with Nielsen Scarborough*

Study of American Attitudes on Immigration and Refugees
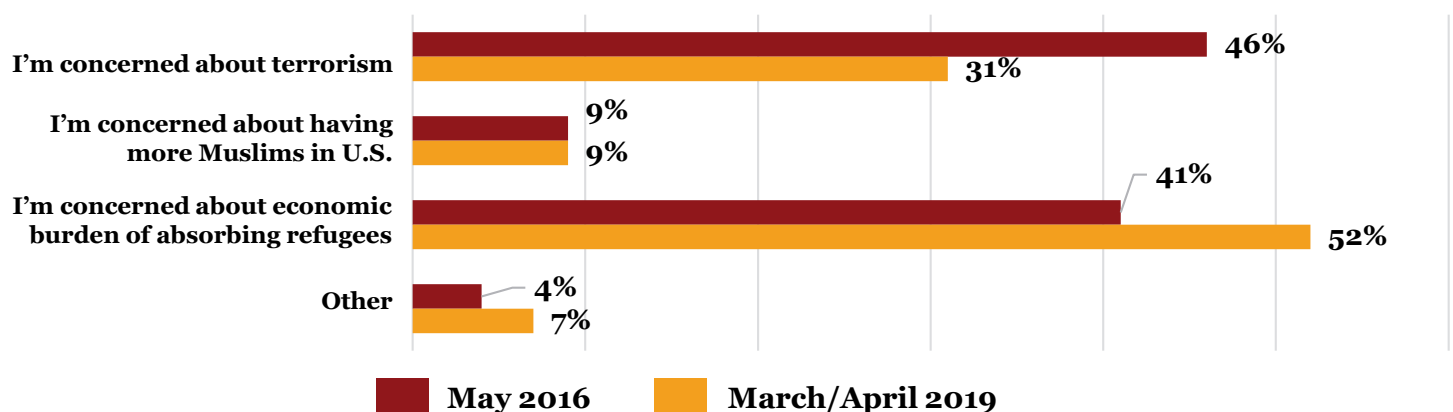### *Shibley Telhami and Stella Rouse, Principal Investigators*

Nearly Two-Thirds Oppose Family Separation
But Majority of 'Strong' Republicans Supportive of the Practice

Do you think this separation of parents and children is acceptable, unacceptable, or haven't you heard enough about it to say?

	Republicans	Democrats	Independents	Total
Acceptable	49%	5%	18%	25%
Unacceptable	34%	92%	67%	64%
Not sure	16%	3%	14%	10%

	Strong Republicans	Not Very Strong Republicans	Independents	Not Very Strong Democrats	Strong Democrats
Acceptable	55%	34%	18%	6%	5%
Unacceptable	26%	51%	67%	91%	92%
Not sure	16%	15%	14%	3%	3%

Legend: ■ Acceptable ■ Unacceptable ■ Not sure

Compared to 2016, Americans are more concerned about economic burden of refugees than terrorism

Which of the following concerns you most about absorbing refugees?
(Among those opposed to admitting Syrian refugees to the U.S.)

	May 2016	March/April 2019
I'm concerned about terrorism	46%	31%
I'm concerned about having more Muslims in U.S.	9%	9%
I'm concerned about economic burden of absorbing refugees	41%	52%
Other	4%	7%

Legend: ■ May 2016 ■ March/April 2019

Leadership for the Critical Issues Poll

Shibley Telhami is the Anwar Sadat Professor for Peace and Development at the University of Maryland, College Park, and non-resident senior fellow at the Brookings Institution.

Professor Telhami has also been active in the foreign policy arena. He has served as advisor to the US Mission to the UN (1990-91), as advisor to former Congressman Lee Hamilton, more recently as senior advisor to George Mitchell, President Obama's United States Special Envoy for Middle East Peace (2009-2011) and as a member of the U.S. delegation to the Trilateral US-Israeli-Palestinian Anti-Incitement Committee.

Professor Telhami has contributed to *The Washington Post, The New York Times*, and the *Los Angeles Times* and regularly appears on national and international radio and television. His best-selling book, *The Stakes: America and the Middle East* was selected by Foreign Affairs as one of the top five books on the Middle East in 2003. He has been a principal investigator in the annual Arab Public Opinion Survey, conducted since 2002 in six Arab countries.

Stella Rouse is an associate professor in the Department of Government and Politics and director of the Center for American Politics and Citizenship.

Professor Rouse earned her Ph.D. from Louisiana State University in 2008. In 2010, she was a visiting scholar at the Center for the Study of Race, Ethnicity and Gender in the Social Sciences (REGSS) at Duke University as a Ford Foundation Post-Doctoral Fellow.

Rouse's book, *Latinos in the Legislative Process: Interests and Influence*, published by Cambridge University Press, was named by Huffington Post as one of the "Best Political Science Books of 2013." Her latest book, *The Politics of Millennials: Political Beliefs and Policy Preferences of America's Most Diverse Generation*, with Ashley D. Ross, was published in August 2018.
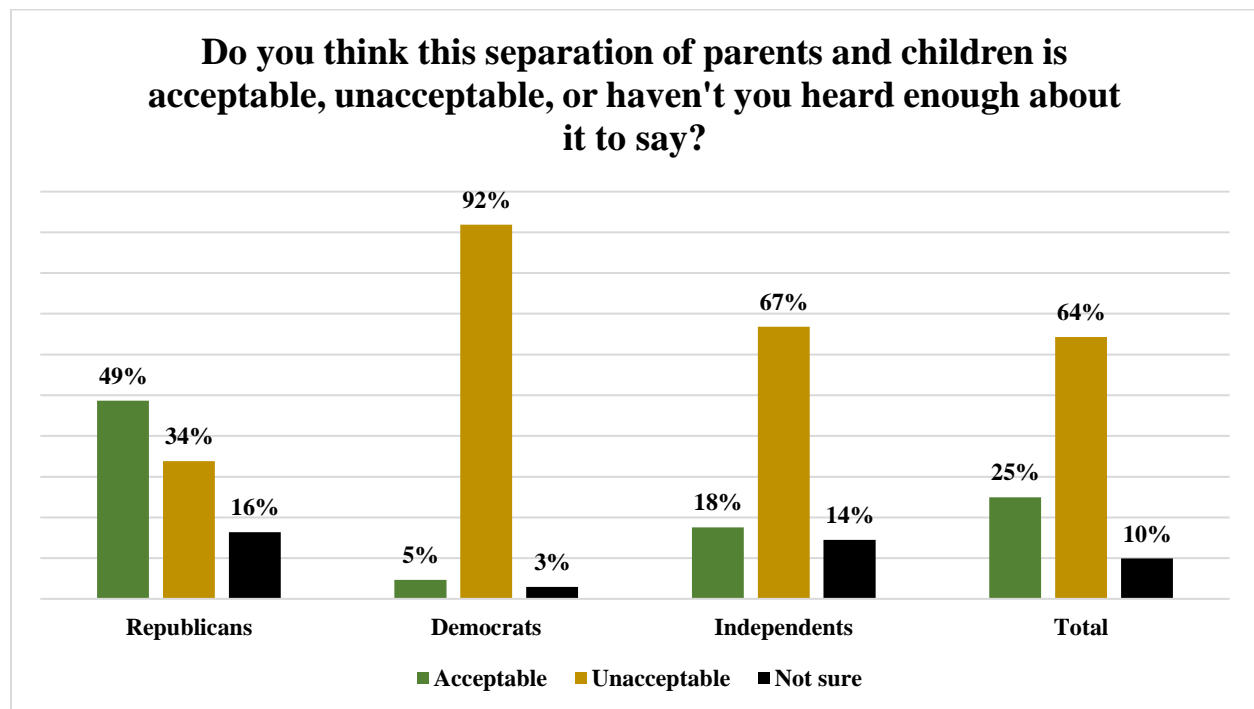
Analysis: Connor Kopchick, Doctoral Candidate in the Department of Government and Politics
Coordinator: Brittany Kyser, Program Coordinator and Executive Assistant for the Anwar Sadat Chair for Peace and Development; Coordinator for the University of Maryland Critical Issues Poll

We are grateful to the Carnegie Corporation of New York for its support of the "Immigrant Stories" event held on April 11, 2019 at the University of Maryland where we released some of the findings from our poll on Immigration and Refugees.

Despite Deep Partisan Divisions on Immigration, Nearly Two-Thirds of Americans Oppose Family Separation
But Republicans are Divided with Majority of 'Strong' Republicans Supportive of the Practice
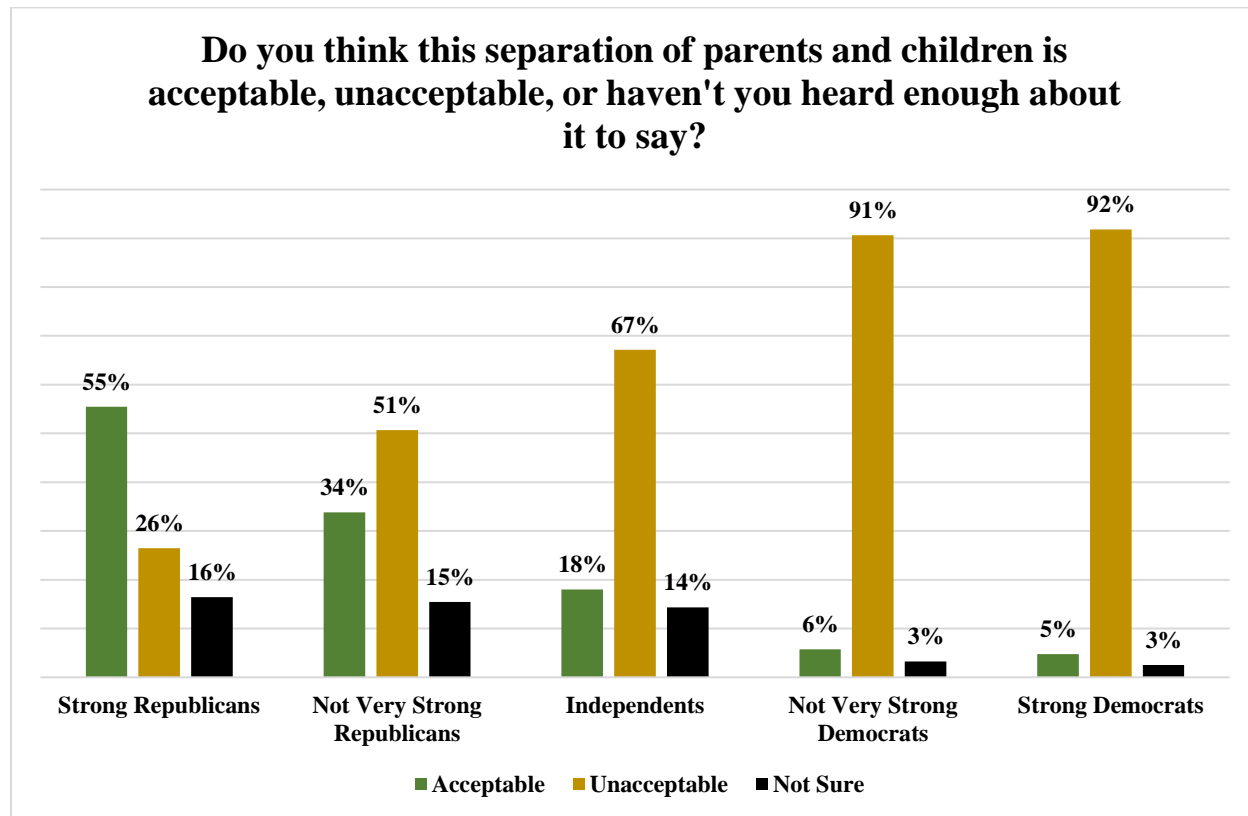
Americans are increasingly divided over issues of immigration as seen in the latest University of Maryland Critical Issues Poll. This poll, which was fielded in March and April of 2019, found Americans increasingly divided over issues of immigration and policies pursued by the Trump administration. On many questions, respondents answered in a highly polarized partisan fashion. However, we found that some issues generated agreement across parties. No issue shows this more clearly than that of family separations at the southern border.

When respondents were asked whether they found acceptable or unacceptable the U.S. policy of separating children from their parents who are trying to enter the U.S. illegally at the southern border, a plurality of Republicans answered that they believed the separations were acceptable, while a large majority of Democrats answered that they were unacceptable. Breaking down the partisan divide between those who identify as 'strong' or 'not very strong' supporters of their party reveals more to the story.

Do you think this separation of parents and children is acceptable, unacceptable, or haven't you heard enough about it to say?

	Acceptable	Unacceptable	Not sure
Republicans	49%	34%	16%
Democrats	5%	92%	3%
Independents	18%	67%	14%
Total	25%	64%	10%

Among Republicans, how strongly one identifies with their party plays a large role in how they respond to the issue of family separation. While a majority, 55%, of those who identify as 'strong' Republicans find the separations acceptable a majority of those who are 'not very strong' Republicans, 51%, find them unacceptable. For Democrats, we barely see any changes in the responses based on how strongly one identifies with their party. Independents

overwhelmingly find the separations at the border unacceptable, with 49 percentage points separating acceptable and unacceptable responses.

Do you think this separation of parents and children is acceptable, unacceptable, or haven't you heard enough about it to say?

Group	Acceptable	Unacceptable	Not Sure
Strong Republicans	55%	26%	16%
Not Very Strong Republicans	34%	51%	15%
Independents	18%	67%	14%
Not Very Strong Democrats	6%	91%	3%
Strong Democrats	5%	92%	3%

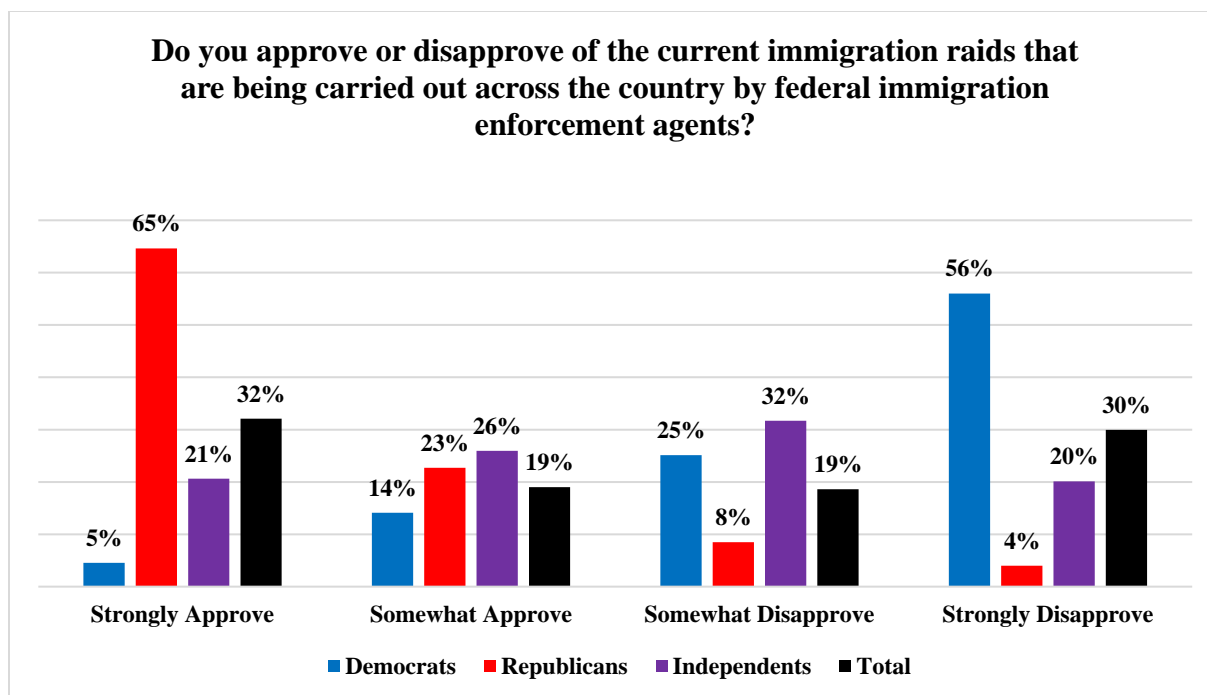■ Acceptable ■ Unacceptable ■ Not Sure

Only 3% of respondents on the Democratic side answered that they were unsure whereas Republicans and independents were more likely to answer this way. Some of these respondents may have found the separations acceptable and did not want to answer this way or perhaps they felt they did not have enough information to provide a response.

When immigrants and their children are detained at the U.S. border for coming into the country illegally, do you think the U.S. should do everything it can to keep such families together, even if it means that fewer face criminal prosecution, or should the U.S. do everything it can to prosecute immigrants entering illegally, even if it means their families are separated?

Legend: ■ Everything to prosecute ■ Everything to keep families together ■ Not sure

Data by group:
- Strong Republicans: 65%, 19%, 16%
- Not Very Strong Republicans: 42%, 40%, 18%
- Independents: 21%, 52%, 26%
- Not Very Strong Democrats: 11%, 78%, 11%
- Strong Democrats: 4%, 90%, 5%
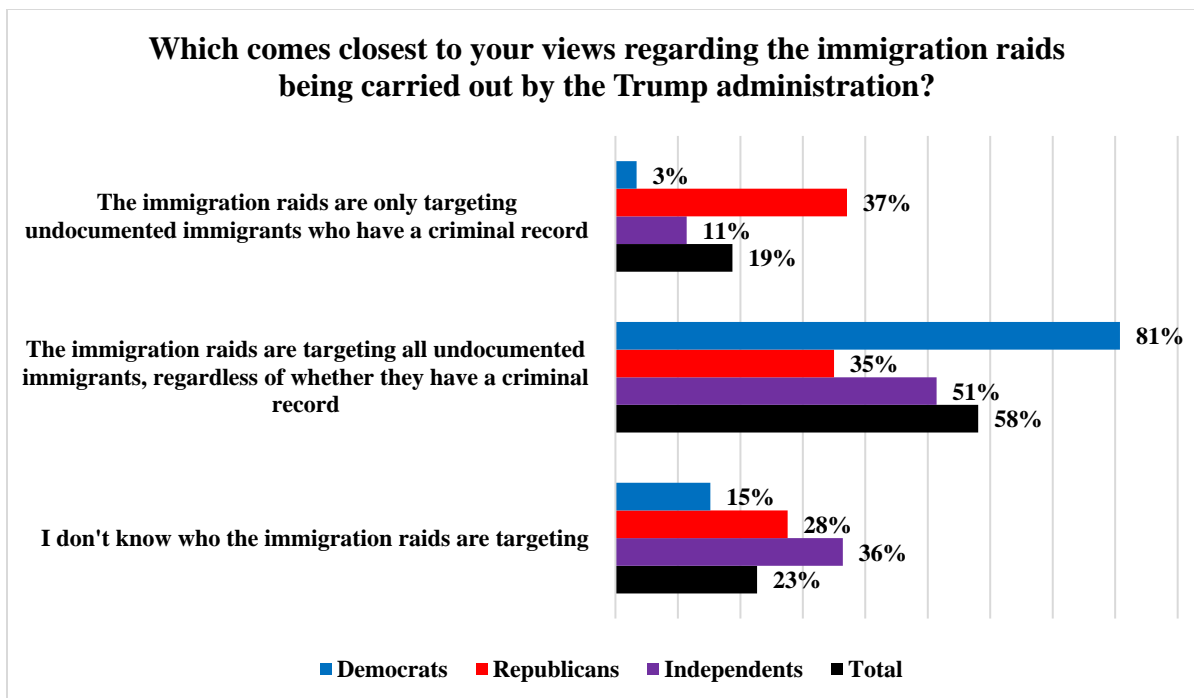- Total: 30%, 56%, 13%

Elsewhere in the poll, respondents were asked whether the U.S. should do everything it can to keep families together, or everything to prosecute offenders when families enter the country illegally. Importantly, this question is phrased in the theoretical, asking about the ideal priorities of U.S. policy, not asking for a response to an ongoing situation.

Here we can see that 'strong' Republican support for prosecutions that necessitate family separation grows ten percentage points when framed as a hypothetical versus when respondents are asked whether they find concrete occurrences of family separation acceptable or unacceptable, as depicted earlier in this report. Support among independents for prioritizing keeping families together goes down 15 percentage points and 'not very strong' Democratic support goes down 13 percentage points. Even so, 'not very strong' Republicans are nearly evenly split on prioritizing prosecution or keeping families together.
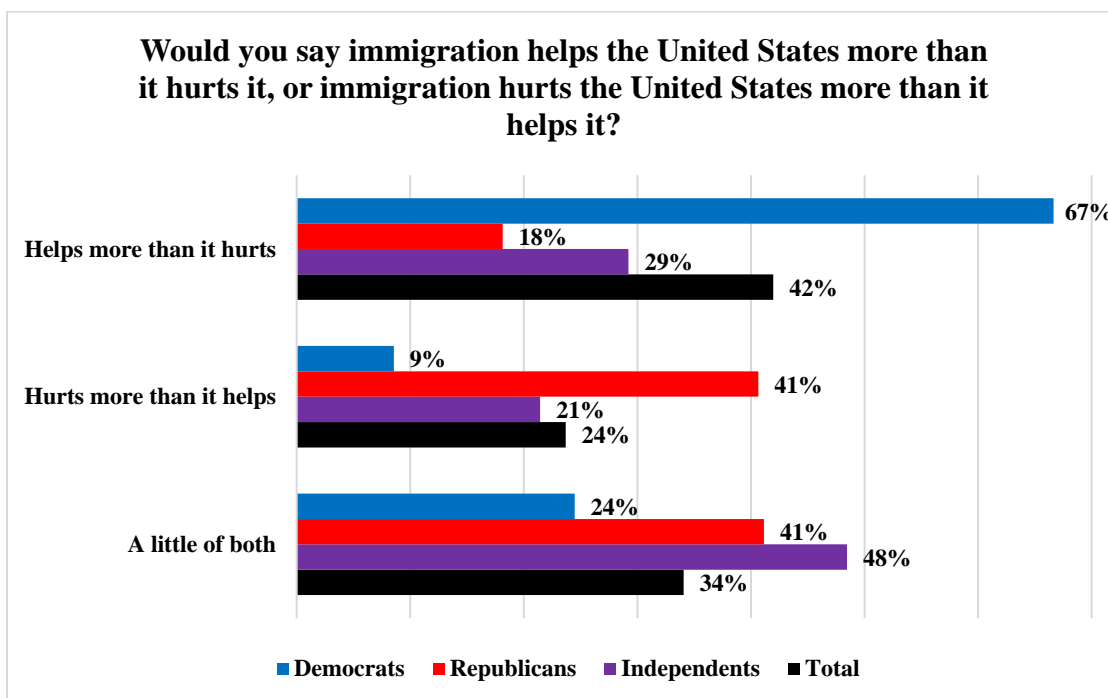
The degree to which the Trump administration lost the support of not only independents but 'not very strong' Republicans as well as portions of 'strong' Republicans when the issue of family separation changed from hypothetical to tangible may help explain why President Trump partially walked back the initial policy.

**Do you approve or disapprove of the current immigration raids that
are being carried out across the country by federal immigration
enforcement agents?**

When asked whether they approved or disapproved of the ongoing immigration raids within the country, the partisan divide among respondents was starker than when asked about family separation at the border. And when this question was followed up by asking whether these raids are targeting all undocumented immigrants or only those with criminal records, Democrats were almost united in believing the raids targeted all undocumented immigrants while Republicans were nearly evenly split on whom the raids were targeting. A majority of independents, 51%, also felt that the raids were targeting all undocumented immigrations. This did not, however, prevent an overwhelming majority of Republicans from approving of the raids.

Which comes closest to your views regarding the immigration raids being carried out by the Trump administration?

The immigration raids are only targeting undocumented immigrants who have a criminal record
- Democrats: 3%
- Republicans: 37%
- Independents: 11%
- Total: 19%

The immigration raids are targeting all undocumented immigrants, regardless of whether they have a criminal record
- Democrats: 81%
- Republicans: 35%
- Independents: 51%
- Total: 58%

I don't know who the immigration raids are targeting
- Democrats: 15%
- Republicans: 28%
- Independents: 36%
- Total: 23%

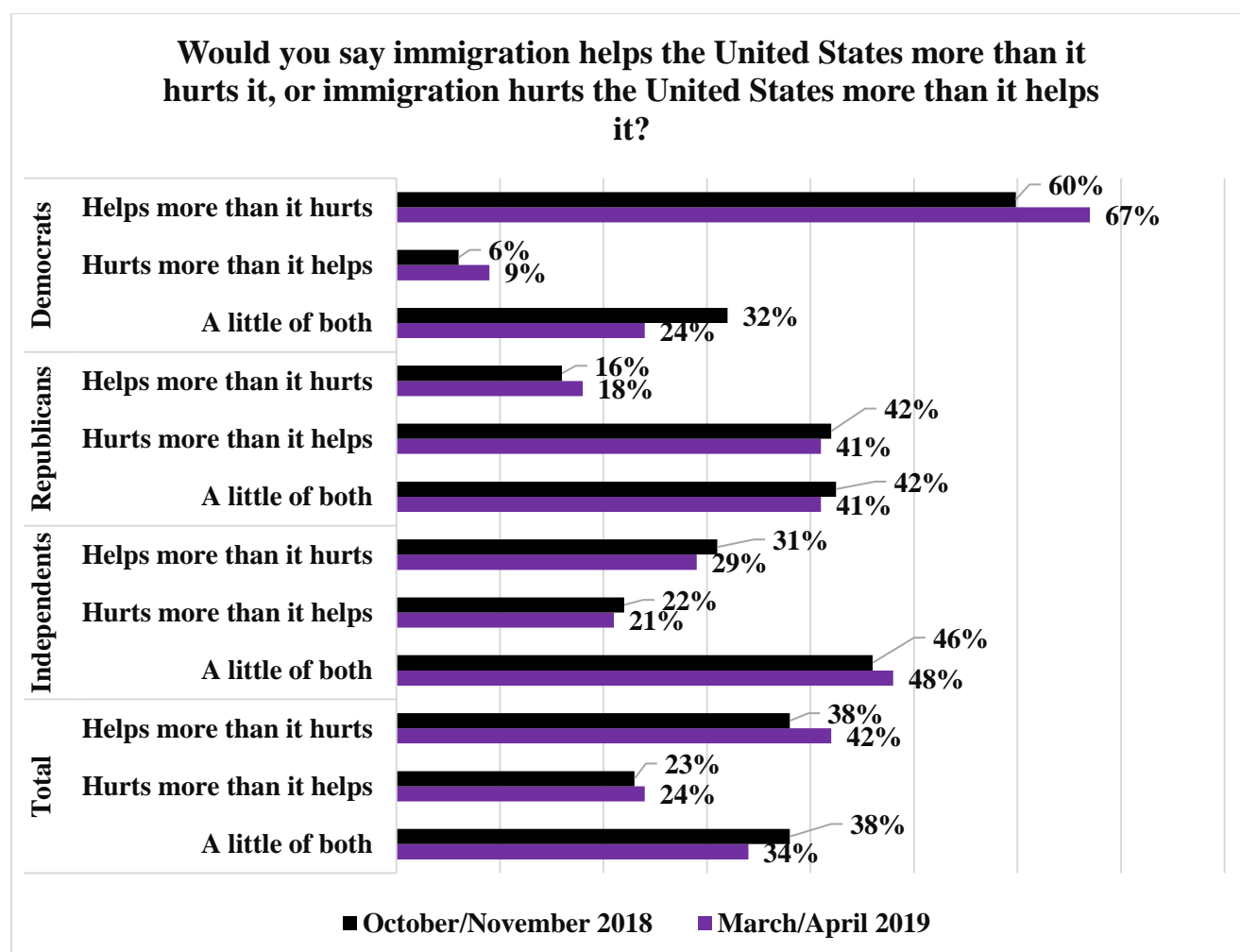■ Democrats ■ Republicans ■ Independents ■ Total

The strong approval among Republicans, regardless of the intended targets of the raids, is indicative of the degree to which Republicans disapprove of undocumented immigration and believe deportation is justified. However, our poll also found that Republican concerns over immigration do not end with undocumented immigration.

Would you say immigration helps the United States more than it hurts it, or immigration hurts the United States more than it helps it?

Helps more than it hurts
- Democrats: 67%
- Republicans: 18%
- Independents: 29%
- Total: 42%

Hurts more than it helps
- Democrats: 9%
- Republicans: 41%
- Independents: 21%
- Total: 24%

A little of both
- Democrats: 24%
- Republicans: 41%
- Independents: 48%
- Total: 34%

■ Democrats ■ Republicans ■ Independents ■ Total

When asked whether they believed immigration helps the United States more than it hurts it or vice versa, Republicans were evenly split in answering that immigration 'hurts more than it helps' or 'a little of both.' Only 18% of Republicans answered that it 'helps more than it hurts.' Republican respondents were 20 percentage points more likely than independents, and 32 percentage points more likely than Democrats, to answer that immigration 'hurts more than it helps.' Noticeably, despite the frequency with which America is described as being a nation of immigrants, a majority of respondents did not answer that immigration helps the U.S. more than it hurts it.

When compared to the last time this question was asked, in our poll conducted in October and November of 2018, these numbers remain static, with the only discernible difference being that Democrats have become more likely to feel that immigration 'helps more than it hurts,' and less likely to answer 'a little of both.'

Would you say immigration helps the United States more than it hurts it, or immigration hurts the United States more than it helps it?

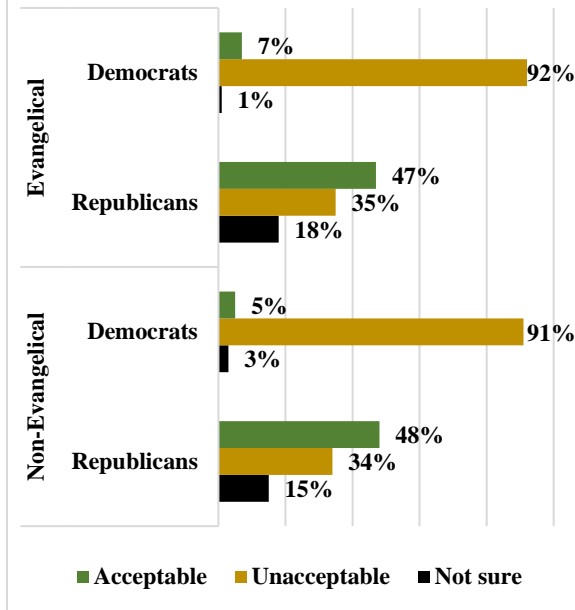|	October/November 2018	March/April 2019
Democrats		
Helps more than it hurts	60%	67%
Hurts more than it helps	6%	9%
A little of both	32%	24%
Republicans		
Helps more than it hurts	16%	18%
Hurts more than it helps	42%	41%
A little of both	42%	41%
Independents		
Helps more than it hurts	31%	29%
Hurts more than it helps	22%	21%
A little of both	46%	48%
Total		
Helps more than it hurts	38%	42%
Hurts more than it helps	23%	24%
A little of both	38%	34%

Religion and Immigration: Partisanship Trumps Faith

There has been reporting that the family separation policy, as well as other Trump administration policies on immigration, have attracted discontent among the President's evangelical base. The Faith & Freedom Coalition, a non-profit which rallied evangelicals to support Donald Trump, sent a letter urging lawmakers "to act now to end the separation of children from parents at the border, reunite families legally entering the country, and secure the border" during the height of the crisis in June 2018.

While partisanship is an important factor in how respondents answer the question on family separation, we decided to see if other factors, such as faith, play a larger or equally important role in responses. An initial examination of responses to the question of whether the current policy of family separation is acceptable or not, based on subsets of respondents who identify as evangelical Christians and those who do not, shows that the majority of evangelicals find the policy unacceptable. However, evangelicals are also more likely to find the policy acceptable than are non-evangelicals and the total population. Evangelicals were eight percentage points more likely to find family separation acceptable and 11 percentage points less likely to find family separation unacceptable than non-evangelicals.
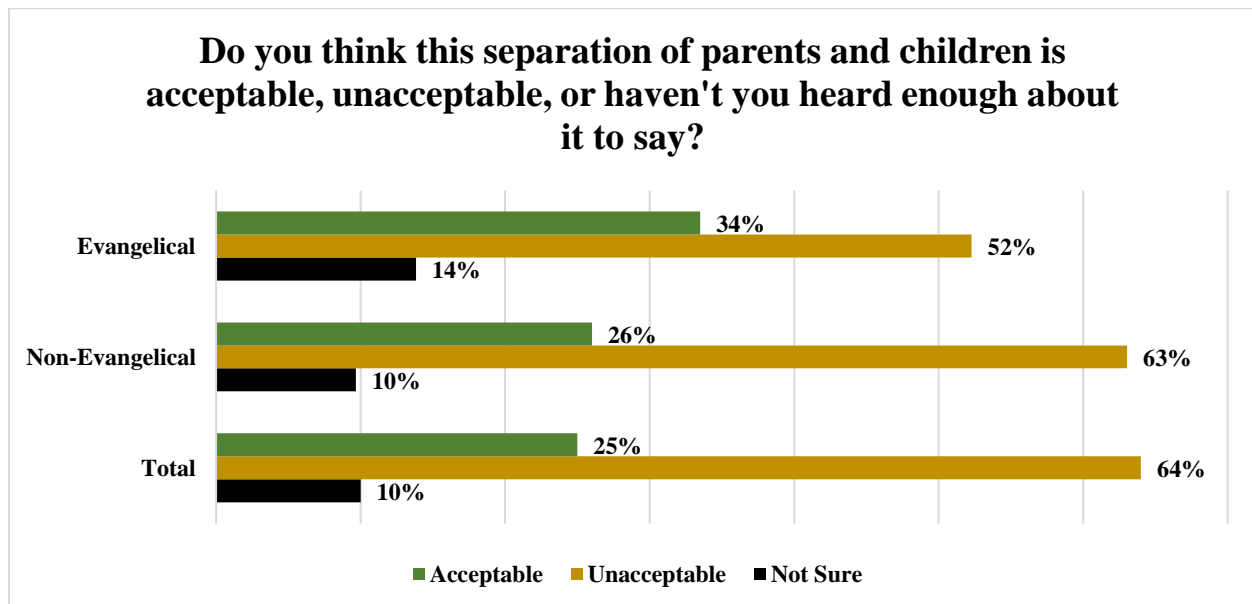
Do you think this separation of parents and children is acceptable, unacceptable, or haven't you heard enough about it to say?

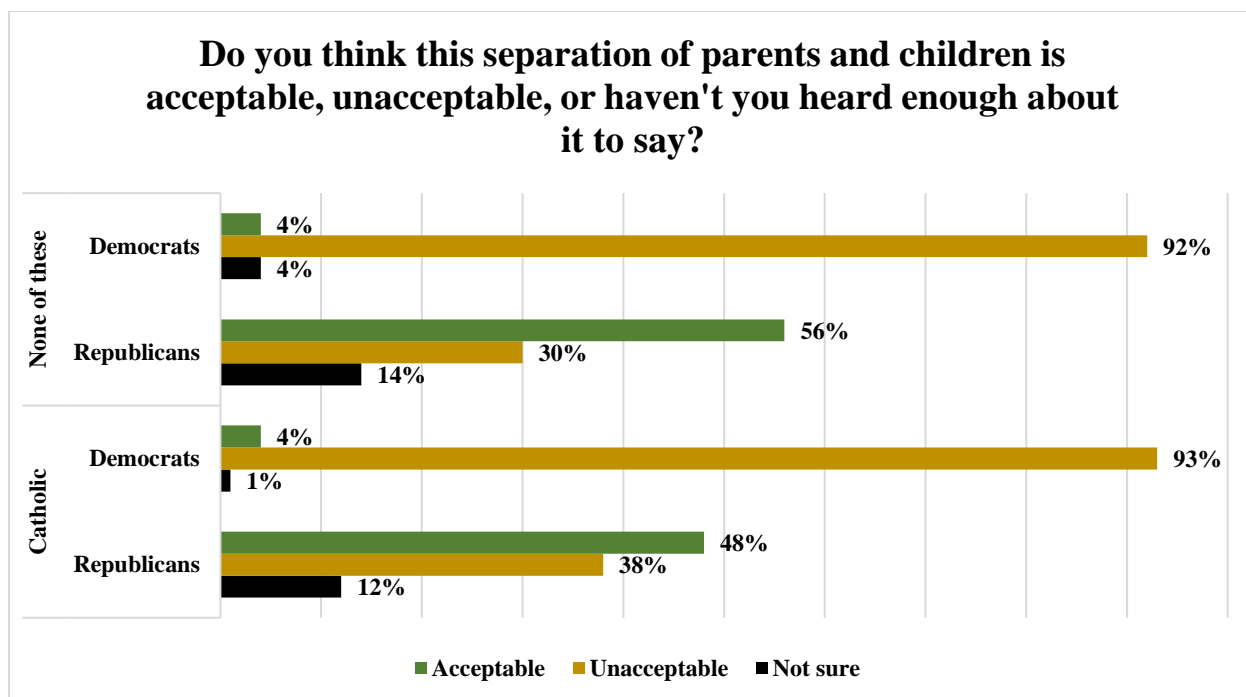|	Acceptable	Unacceptable	Not Sure
Evangelical	34%	52%	14%
Non-Evangelical	26%	63%	10%
Total	25%	64%	10%

Do you think this separation of parents and children is acceptable, unacceptable, or haven't you heard enough about it to say?

Evangelical

Democrats
- 7%
- 92%
- 1%

Republicans
- 47%
- 35%
- 18%

Non-Evangelical

Democrats
- 5%
- 91%
- 3%

Republicans
- 48%
- 34%
- 15%

■ Acceptable   ■ Unacceptable   ■ Not sure

Rather than speaking to a broader growing ideological division between Republicans and evangelicals, however, this initial view fails to account for partisan divisions within the evangelical population. When responses to this question are broken down between Republican and Democratic evangelicals and non-evangelicals, the responses follow party, rather than religious lines. Evangelical and non-evangelical Republicans answer the question at nearly identical rates, as do evangelical and non-evangelical Democrats. While faith may be an important factor, it does not outweigh political party affiliation on the issue of family separation.

The higher rate of support for family separation among evangelicals is a function of the high percentage of Republicans within the evangelical population. The fact that a majority of evangelicals oppose family separation is a product of our earlier graphs, showing that Democrats and independents overwhelmingly oppose the policy, as do a significant portion of Republicans.

Do you think this separation of parents and children is acceptable, unacceptable, or haven't you heard enough about it to say?

None of these
- Democrats: Acceptable 4%, Unacceptable 92%, Not sure 4%
- Republicans: Acceptable 56%, Unacceptable 30%, Not sure 14%

Catholic
- Democrats: Acceptable 4%, Unacceptable 93%, Not sure 1%
- Republicans: Acceptable 48%, Unacceptable 38%, Not sure 12%

■ Acceptable   ■ Unacceptable   ■ Not sure

This trend, however, was not unique to evangelicals. Respondents were given the opportunity to identify their religious affiliations from a number of options including an option for 'none of these.' While the latter could indicate that the respondent is affiliated with a religion or denomination not listed, in most cases it likely means that the respondent is not religious.

By breaking down Catholic respondents and respondents answering 'none of these' by their partisan affiliation and their answer to the question regarding family separation at the border, we see the same trend emerging in these communities as in the evangelical community. Democratic Catholics and 'none of these' respond at nearly identical rates, as do Republicans, though with more variation. Therefore, we can conclude that on the issue of immigration, partisanship plays a stronger role in determining one's response than religious identity.
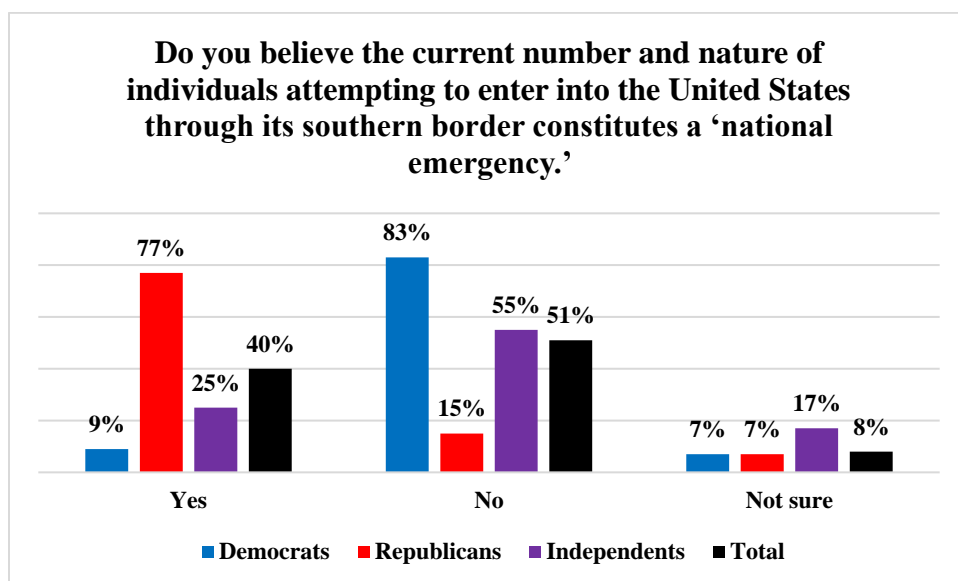
Immigration and Border Security Issues Draw Both Partisan Divisions and Cross-Party Agreement

Among the questions which evoked the most polarizing responses in our survey were those that directly addressed issues of immigration and border security championed by President Trump. When asked whether their view was more in support for the building of a border wall along the southern border or more in opposition to it, respondents answered in a partisan fashion at nearly equal rates of Republicans and Democrats.

Now tell me, which one is ultimately closer to your view?

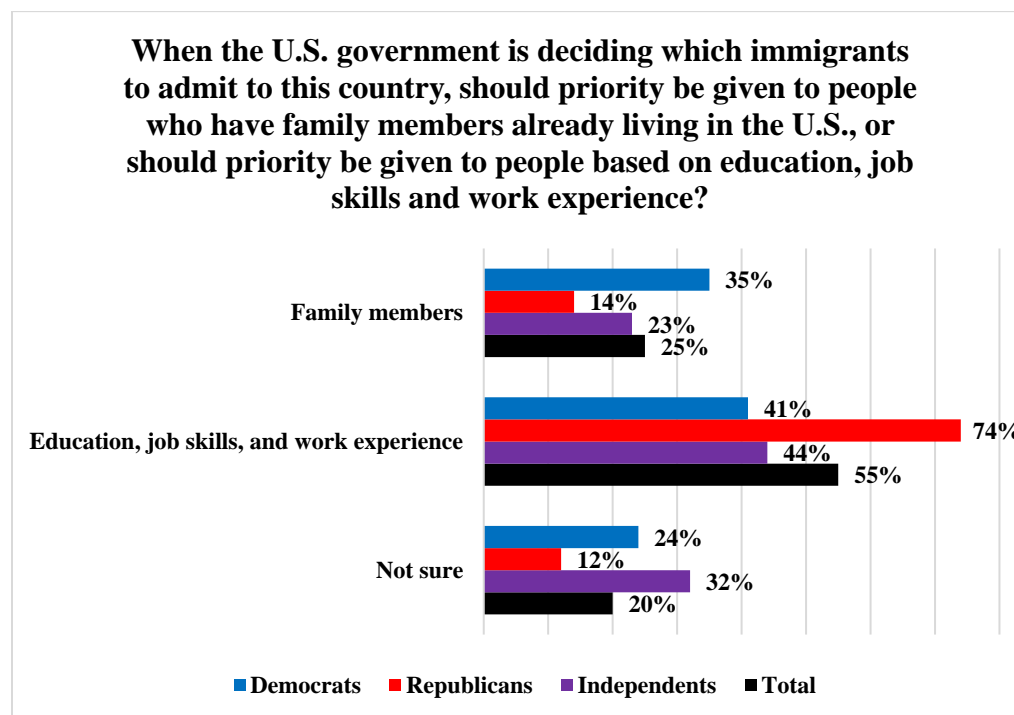|	I support the building of a border wall along the southern border	I oppose the building of a border wall along the southern border
Democrats	10%	89%
Republicans	88%	12%
Independents	40%	56%
Total	46%	52%
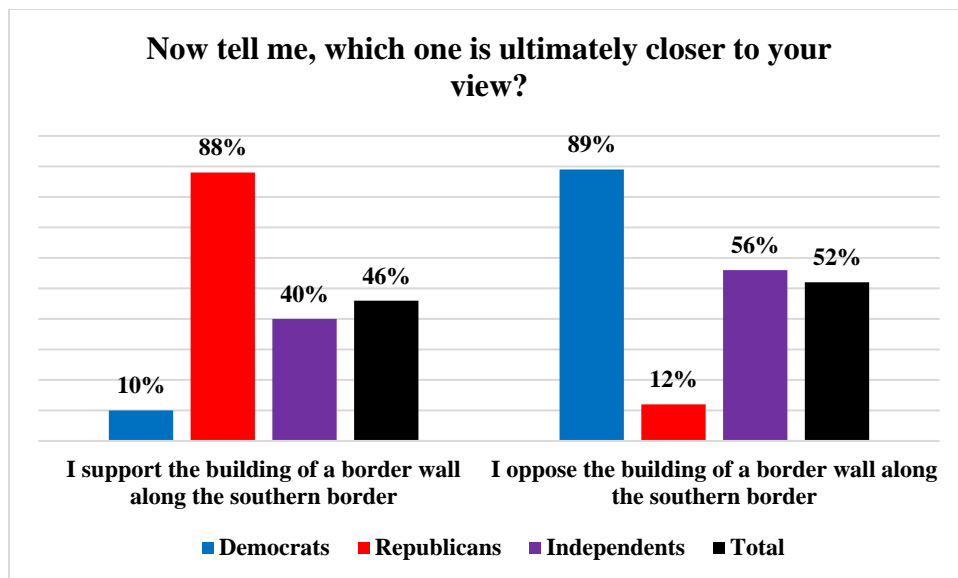
The division among independents seemed to have little effect on the degree of partisan polarization. If independents were less divided on a question, then we would expect partisan polarization to diminish as partisans of the party with the less popular opinion would adjust their answer to be in line with those of independents.
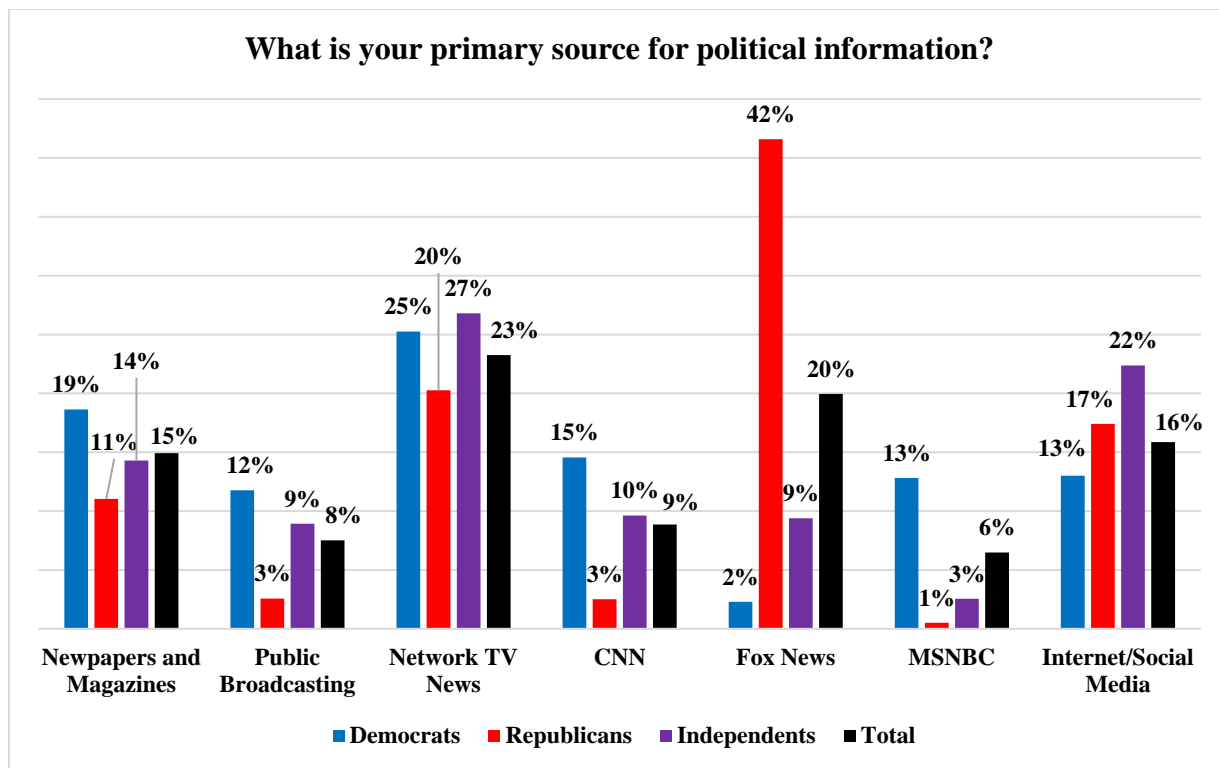
Additionally, when we asked respondents whether they believed the number and nature of individuals attempting to enter the United States through its southern border constitutes a 'national emergency', as the President claimed in an executive action from February of this year, respondents were polarized along party lines in their responses. This was in spite of the fact that independents were 30 percentage points more likely to believe that the crossings do not constitute a 'national emergency.'

Do you believe the current number and nature of individuals attempting to enter into the United States through its southern border constitutes a 'national emergency.'

	Yes	No	Not sure
Democrats	9%	83%	7%
Republicans	77%	15%	7%
Independents	25%	55%	17%
Total	40%	51%	8%

In comparison, a less partisan debate concerns the priorities the U.S. should seek in its immigration policy. When asked whether the U.S. government should give priority to people who have family living in the U.S., versus those with education, job skills, or work experience in terms of which immigrants it should admit, a majority of Republicans, nearly three quarters, and a plurality of both Democrats and independents answered that priority should be given based on education, job skills, and work experience. Looking again at independents, there is a 21 percentage point difference between those who say family ties and those who say education and skills. Independents were also nine percentage points more likely to be unsure than supportive of priority based on family ties. Instead of independents driving or mitigating partisan polarization, this would suggest that Americans are likely to agree on issues of immigration that have not been sensationalized as campaign topics.
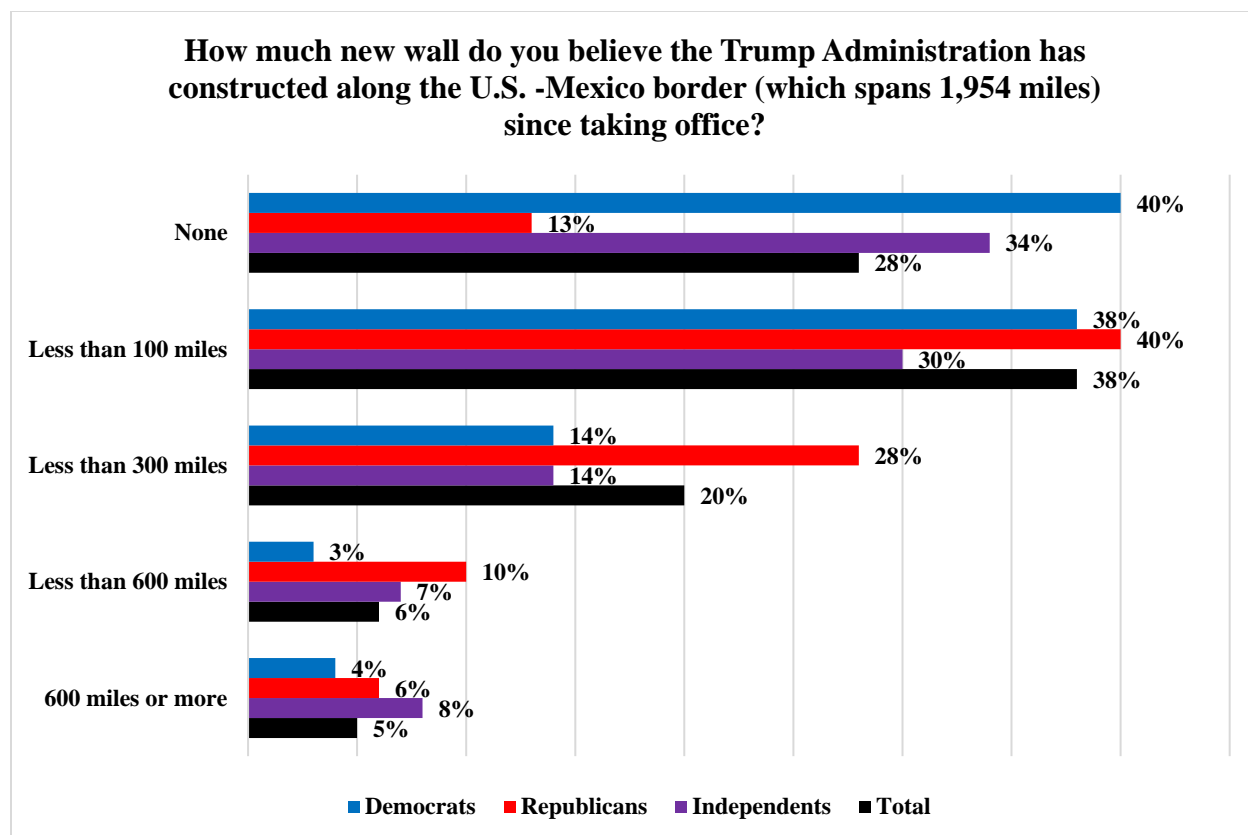
Looking back at the question of whether or not immigration helps or hurts the United States, only 18% of Republicans answered that immigration 'helps more than it hurts' and 41% answered 'a little of both' (the same percentage who said 'hurts more than it helps'). Perhaps Republicans would be more likely to say that immigration 'helps more than it hurts' if priority were given to immigrants based on their education, job skills, and work experience, as they may see these as skills that are beneficial to the United States.

When the U.S. government is deciding which immigrants to admit to this country, should priority be given to people who have family members already living in the U.S., or should priority be given to people based on education, job skills and work experience?

Family members
- Democrats: 35%
- Republicans: 14%
- Independents: 23%
- Total: 25%

Education, job skills, and work experience
- Democrats: 41%
- Republicans: 74%
- Independents: 44%
- Total: 55%

Not sure
- Democrats: 24%
- Republicans: 12%
- Independents: 32%
- Total: 20%

■ Democrats   ■ Republicans   ■ Independents   ■ Total

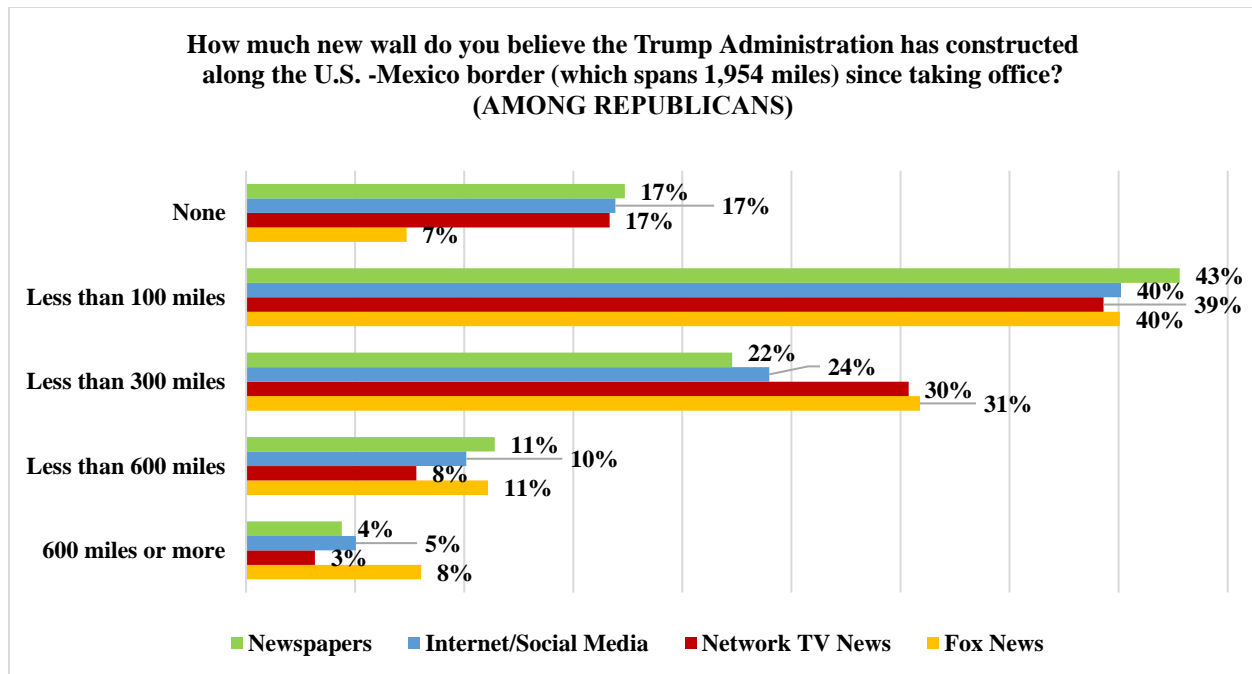**What is your primary source for political information?**

One commonly discussed potential source of polarization in America has been the phenomenon of different media outlets and social media circles creating echo chambers for political opinions. When we asked respondents what their primary source for political information is for example, only 2% of Democrats answered 'Fox News' whereas 42% of Republicans did. Republicans were also nine percentage points less likely than Democrats to list public broadcasting as their primary source, 12 percentage points less likely to list CNN, and 12 percentage points less likely to list MSNBC. The main source of news for Americans may account for the opinions held on different issues.

In the months before this poll was fielded, President Trump repeatedly claimed that construction on a border wall was well underway and ahead of schedule. There was, however, at the time of our poll, no publicly available evidence suggesting that any new wall had been constructed, only that portions of old barrier had been replaced. When we asked respondents how much new wall they believed the Trump administration had constructed so far, only a minority of respondents answered correctly, with Democrats 27 percentage points more likely to answer correctly than Republicans.

How much new wall do you believe the Trump Administration has constructed along the U.S. -Mexico border (which spans 1,954 miles) since taking office?

Legend: ■ Democrats ■ Republicans ■ Independents ■ Total

None
- Democrats: 40%
- Republicans: 13%
- Independents: 34%
- Total: 28%

Less than 100 miles
- Democrats: 38%
- Republicans: 40%
- Independents: 30%
- Total: 38%

Less than 300 miles
- Democrats: 14%
- Republicans: 28%
- Independents: 14%
- Total: 20%

Less than 600 miles
- Democrats: 3%
- Republicans: 10%
- Independents: 7%
- Total: 6%

600 miles or more
- Democrats: 4%
- Republicans: 6%
- Independents: 8%
- Total: 5%

When examining responses of Republicans based on those who selected the four most popular news sources for Republicans, we found similar responses across media preferences. Noticeably, Republican Fox News viewers were ten percentage points less likely than other groups to believe no new border wall had been built. However, apart from another minor increase in probability in answering '600 miles or more,' Republican Fox News viewers responded at rates similar to those of other Republican media consumers, indicating that partisan opinions and information transcends, to a degree, media preferences.

It should be noted that since our poll was fielded, President Trump has responded to criticism that much of the ongoing construction on the southern border is repair work of pre-existing barriers and fencing, countering that these renovations are in fact building new wall where old barriers once existed.
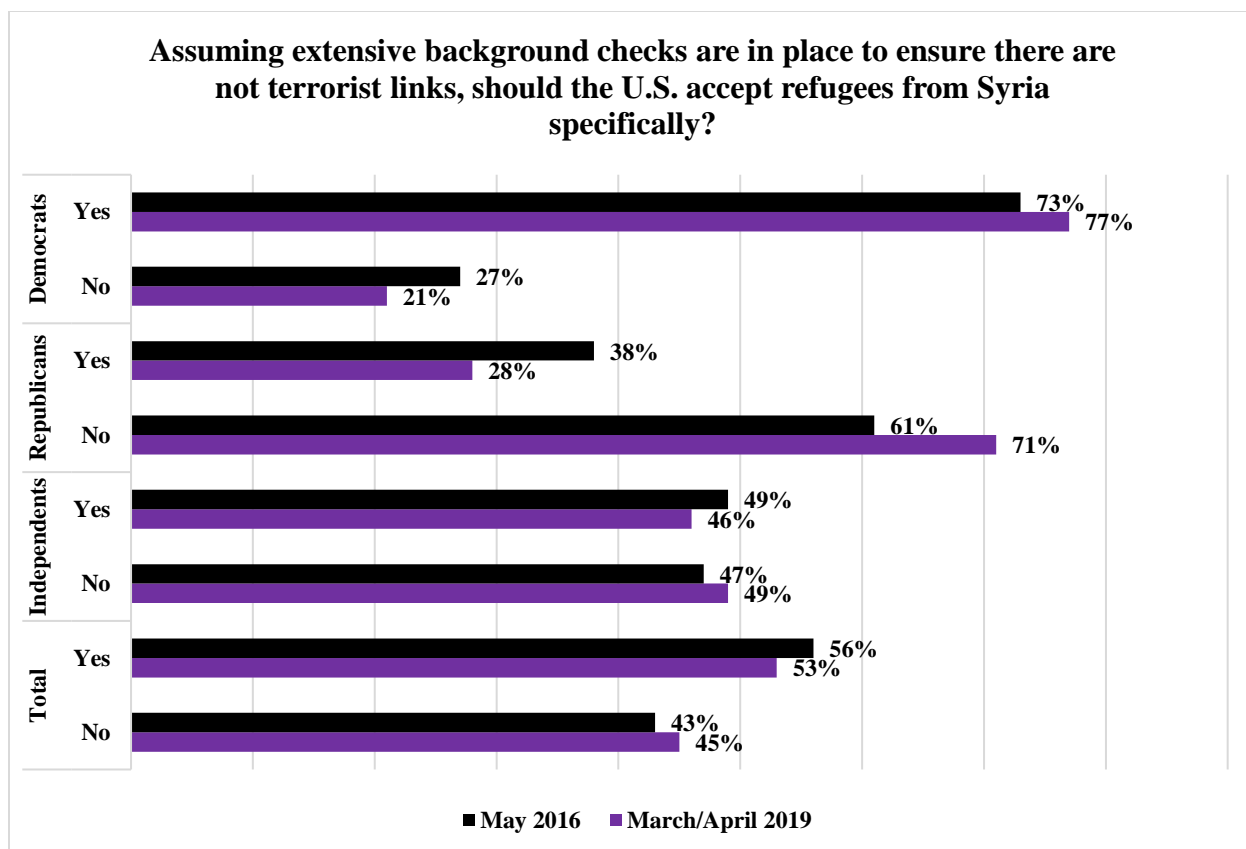
How much new wall do you believe the Trump Administration has constructed along the U.S. -Mexico border (which spans 1,954 miles) since taking office? (AMONG REPUBLICANS)

Category	Newspapers	Internet/Social Media	Network TV News	Fox News
None	17%	17%	17%	7%
Less than 100 miles	43%	40%	39%	40%
Less than 300 miles	22%	24%	30%	31%
Less than 600 miles	11%	10%	8%	11%
600 miles or more	4%	5%	3%	8%

■ Newspapers ■ Internet/Social Media ■ Network TV News ■ Fox News

Fear of Terror Attacks by Refugees Decreases While Association between Refugees and Terrorism Remains Static

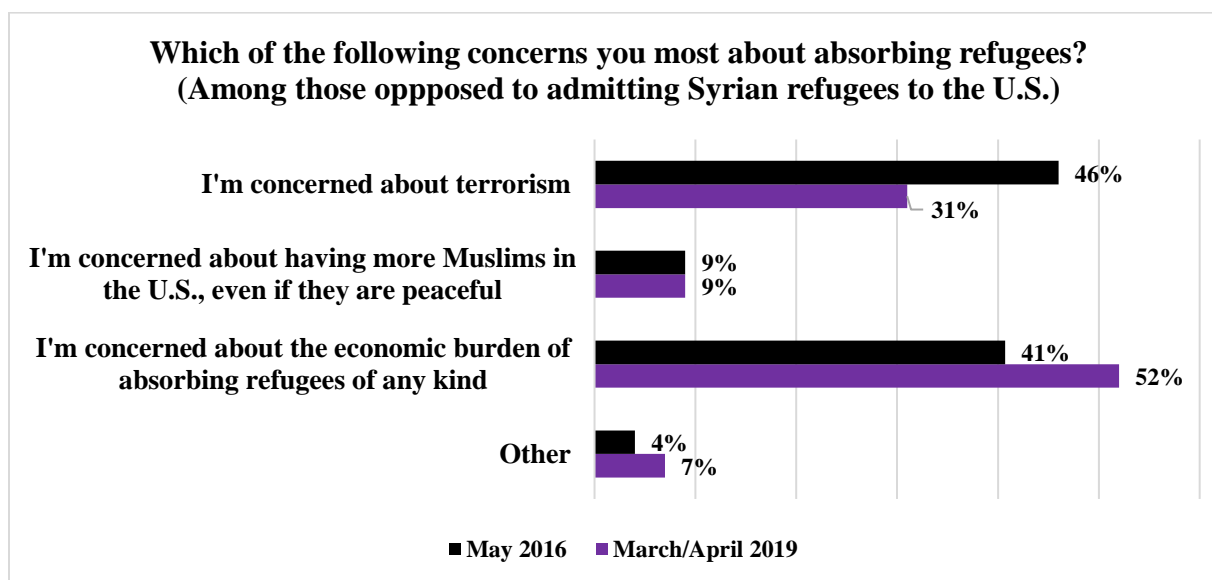In this most recent edition of the Critical Issues Poll, we repeated a series of questions asked in a previous poll conducted by the Anwar Sadat Chair for Peace and Development at the University of Maryland on American attitudes on refugees from the Middle East. This poll was fielded in May of 2016, about a month before the mass shooting in Orlando. Our most recent poll reveals new dynamics in Americans' responses to political discourse surrounding refugees from the region.

After providing a brief description of the state of the Syrian refugee crisis, we asked respondents whether the United States should accept refugees from Syria, assuming that they had been vetted for terrorist links. The results, when compared to responses from the Sadat Chair poll fielded in May of 2016, show that the issue has become more polarized along partisan lines in the last three years, most notably among Republicans who oppose the absorption of more Syrian refugees, which increased by ten percentage points.

Assuming extensive background checks are in place to ensure there are not terrorist links, should the U.S. accept refugees from Syria specifically?

■ May 2016 ■ March/April 2019

Of those who answered 'no,' the majority of whom were Republicans, we then asked what their primary concern was about absorbing refugees. The responses show a remarkable shift from 2016 to 2019. In 2016, 46% of respondents said terrorism was their primary concern, which dropped to 31% in 2019. Meanwhile, fear of economic burden from refugees of any kind rose from 41% to 52% in the same period.

Which of the following concerns you most about absorbing refugees?
(Among those opposed to admitting Syrian refugees to the U.S.)

■ May 2016 ■ March/April 2019

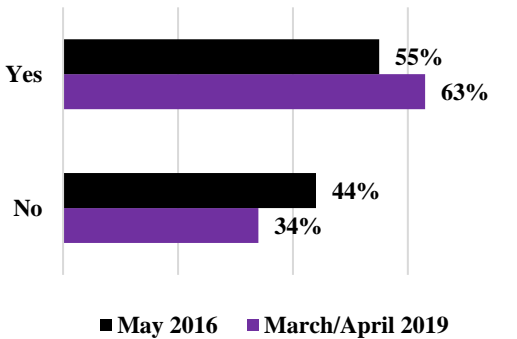Though hesitancy to accept Syrian refugees among Republicans has only grown since 2016, fears of terrorist threats from Middle Eastern refugees have since been superseded by economic anxiety regarding refugees of all types. We only see an increase among Democrats, who increased only slightly by three percentage points, in their concern about terrorism. Independents, however, experienced a decrease both in their concern about terrorism as well as the economic burden of absorbing refugees.

In addition to asking respondents whether or not the U.S. should admit Syrian refugees, participants were also surveyed on whether or not they thought that a refugee from the Middle East (or in the May 2016 poll, Syria) would feel welcome in their state or community.

Which of the following concerns you most about absorbing refugees?
(Among those opposed to admitting Syrian refugees to the U.S.)

Democrats

I'm concerned about terrorism — 41% / 44%

I'm concerned about having more Muslims in the U.S., even if they are peaceful — 11% / 2%

I'm concerned about the economic burden of absorbing refugees of any kind — 41% / 45%

Other — 5% / 7%

Republicans

I'm concerned about terrorism — 50% / 28%

I'm concerned about having more Muslims in the U.S., even if they are peaceful — 8% / 12%

I'm concerned about the economic burden of absorbing refugees of any kind — 38% / 56%

Other — 3% / 4%

Independents

I'm concerned about terrorism — 35% / 28%

I'm concerned about having more Muslims in the U.S., even if they are peaceful — 4% / 4%

I'm concerned about the economic burden of absorbing refugees of any kind — 52% / 45%

Other — 8% / 23%

■ May 2016   ■ March/April 2019

If some of the refugees from the Middle East (Syria in 2016) came to live in your state or community, do you think they would be welcomed?

Yes — May 2016: 55%
Yes — March/April 2019: 63%

No — May 2016: 44%
No — March/April 2019: 34%

■ May 2016   ■ March/April 2019

If some of the refugees from the Middle East (Syria in 2016) came to live in your state or community, do you think they would be welcomed?

Democrats — Yes — May 2016: 61%
Democrats — Yes — March/April 2019: 71%
Democrats — No — May 2016: 39%
Democrats — No — March/April 2019: 27%

Republicans — Yes — May 2016: 48%
Republicans — Yes — March/April 2019: 55%
Republicans — No — May 2016: 51%
Republicans — No — March/April 2019: 42%

Independents — Yes — May 2016: 52%
Independents — Yes — March/April 2019: 60%
Independents — No — May 2016: 46%
Independents — No — March/April 2019: 36%
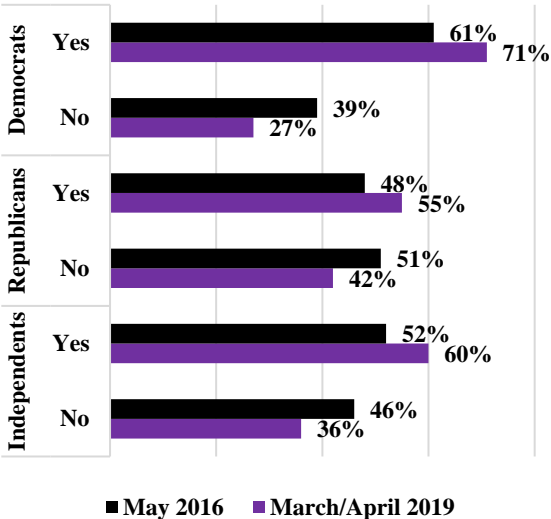
■ May 2016   ■ March/April 2019

Surprisingly, though the rate of opposition to admitting Syrian refugees has not changed dramatically in the past three years, respondents in 2019 were more likely to think that Middle Eastern refugees would be welcomed in their state or community.
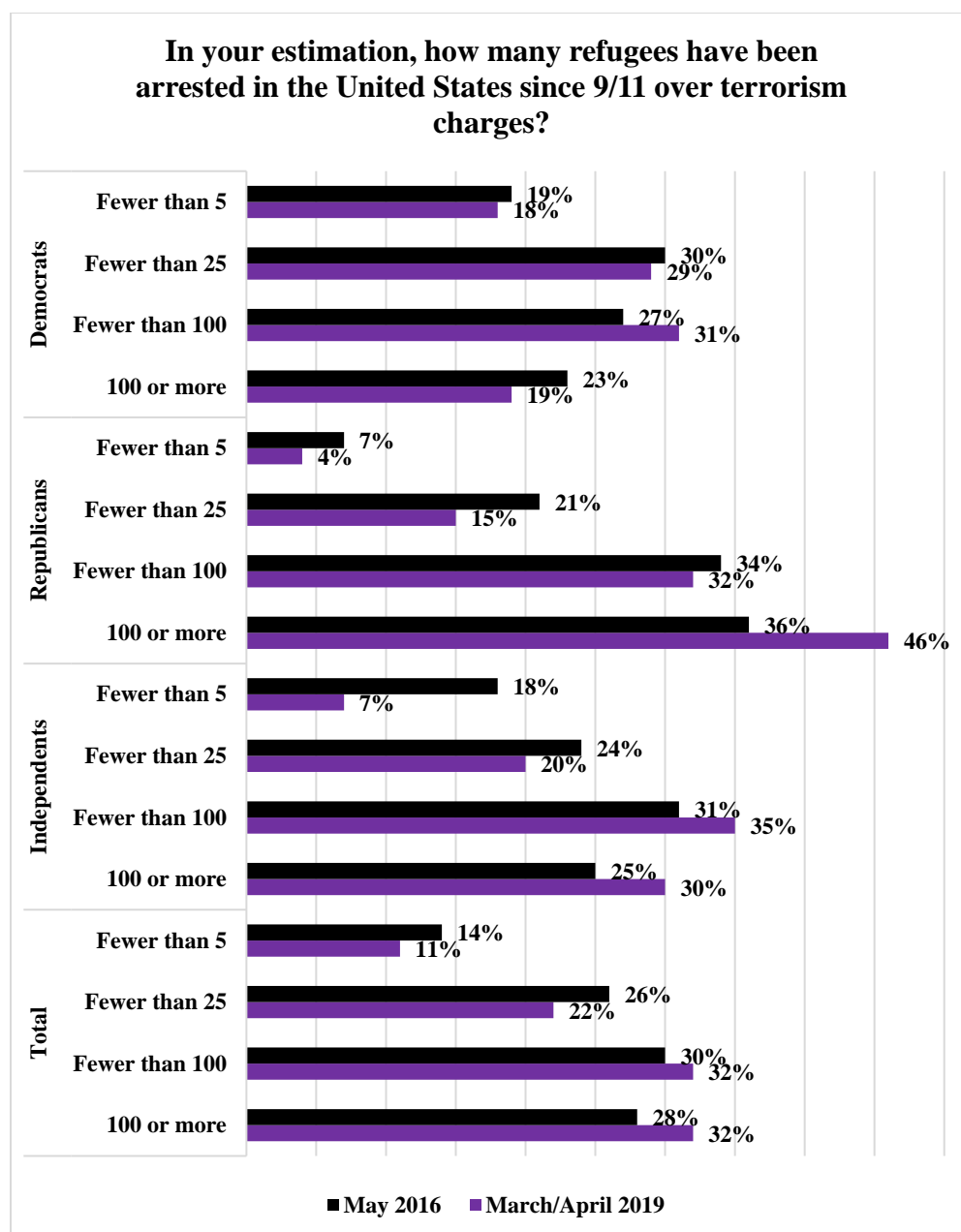
Respondents in 2019 were eight percentage points more likely to answer 'yes' that refugees would be welcomed, and ten percentage points less likely to answer 'no.'

Unlike responses to the question of whether or not to admit Syrian refugees, responses to the question of whether or not these refugees would be welcomed is not trending in a polarized partisan direction. Both Republican and Democratic respondents were more likely to say that they think Middle Eastern refugees would be welcomed in March/April of 2019 than they were in May of 2016. Independents also experienced this trend, with an increase of eight percentage points.

Given Republicans continual opposition to the admission of Middle Eastern refugees, these responses shed light on Americans' thoughts about welcoming refugees.

In your estimation, how many refugees have been arrested in the United States since 9/11 over terrorism charges?

Democrats

- Fewer than 5: May 2016 19%, March/April 2019 18%
- Fewer than 25: May 2016 30%, March/April 2019 29%
- Fewer than 100: May 2016 27%, March/April 2019 31%
- 100 or more: May 2016 23%, March/April 2019 19%

Republicans

- Fewer than 5: May 2016 7%, March/April 2019 4%
- Fewer than 25: May 2016 21%, March/April 2019 15%
- Fewer than 100: May 2016 34%, March/April 2019 32%
- 100 or more: May 2016 36%, March/April 2019 46%

Independents

- Fewer than 5: May 2016 18%, March/April 2019 7%
- Fewer than 25: May 2016 24%, March/April 2019 20%
- Fewer than 100: May 2016 31%, March/April 2019 35%
- 100 or more: May 2016 25%, March/April 2019 30%

Total

- Fewer than 5: May 2016 14%, March/April 2019 11%
- Fewer than 25: May 2016 26%, March/April 2019 22%
- Fewer than 100: May 2016 30%, March/April 2019 32%
- 100 or more: May 2016 28%, March/April 2019 32%
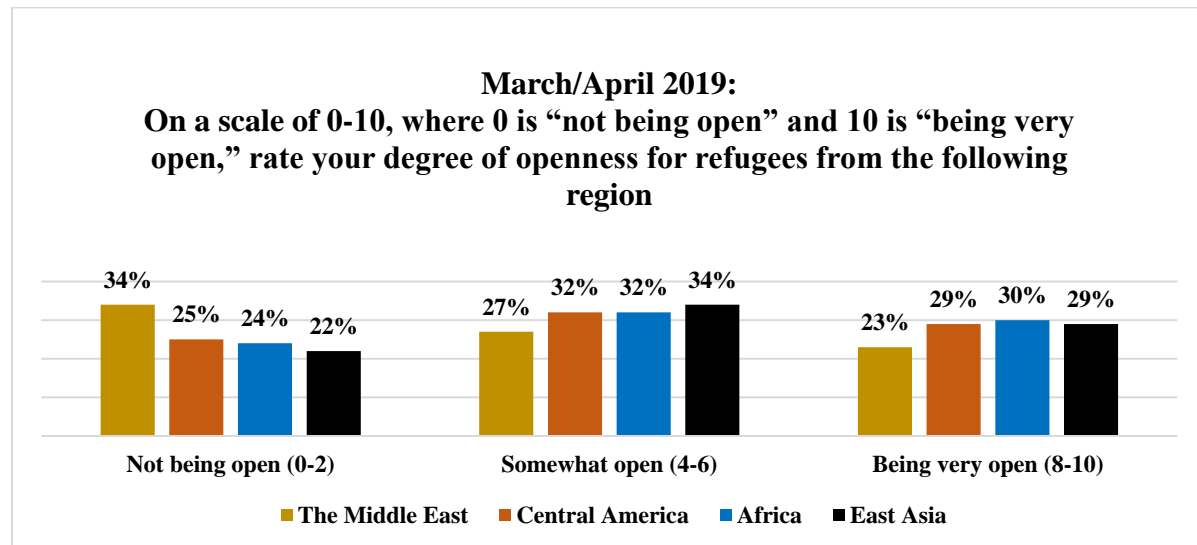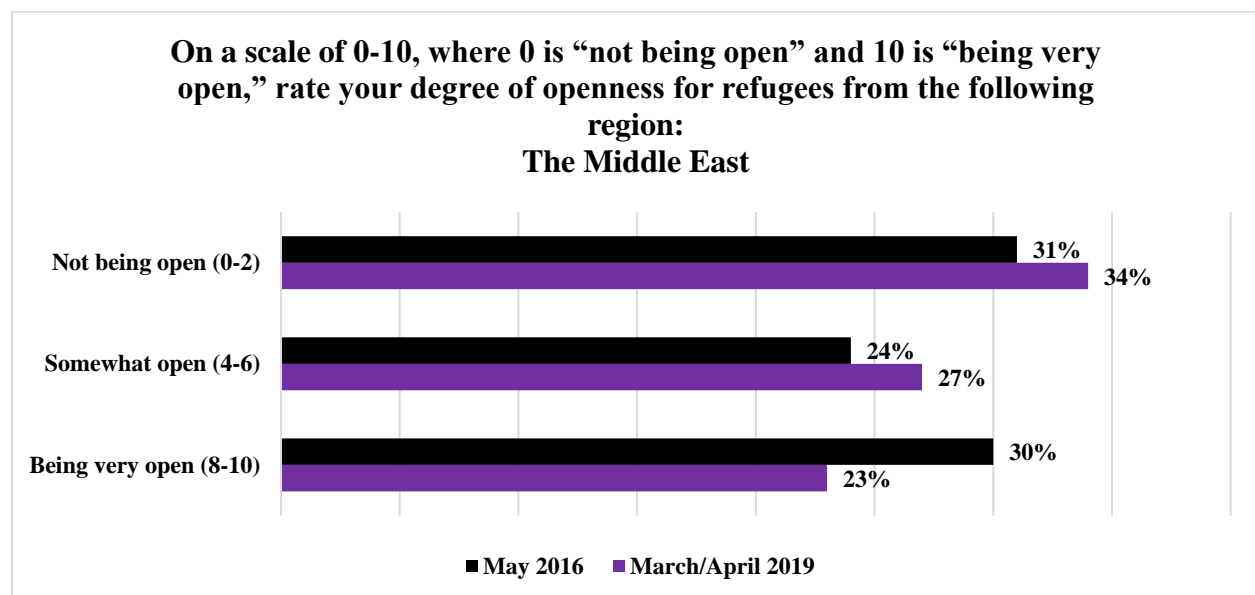
■ May 2016 ■ March/April 2019

In this poll, as well as in the Sadat Chair poll fielded in May of 2016, participants were asked to estimate the number of refugees who have been arrested on terrorism charges in the United States since the September 11th attacks. While definitive figures on this phenomenon are hard to come by, a Cato Institute report lists the number of refugees arrested in the United States on terrorism related charges between 9/11/01 and 12/31/15 at nine, and Cynthia Sewell of the *Idaho Statesman* identifies five such arrests, and the arrest of six persons of Bosnian origin, three of whom had "refugee or legal resident status," between 9/11/01 and 2/06/17.

Despite our results showing that less Republicans oppose admitting Syrian refugees based on fears of terrorism, they also indicate that Republicans associate refugees with acts of terrorism at a greater rate in 2019 than in 2016. Specifically, Republican respondents were ten percentage

points more likely to estimate the number of arrests at '100 or more' in 2019 than they were in 2016.

March/April 2019:
On a scale of 0-10, where 0 is "not being open" and 10 is "being very open," rate your degree of openness for refugees from the following region
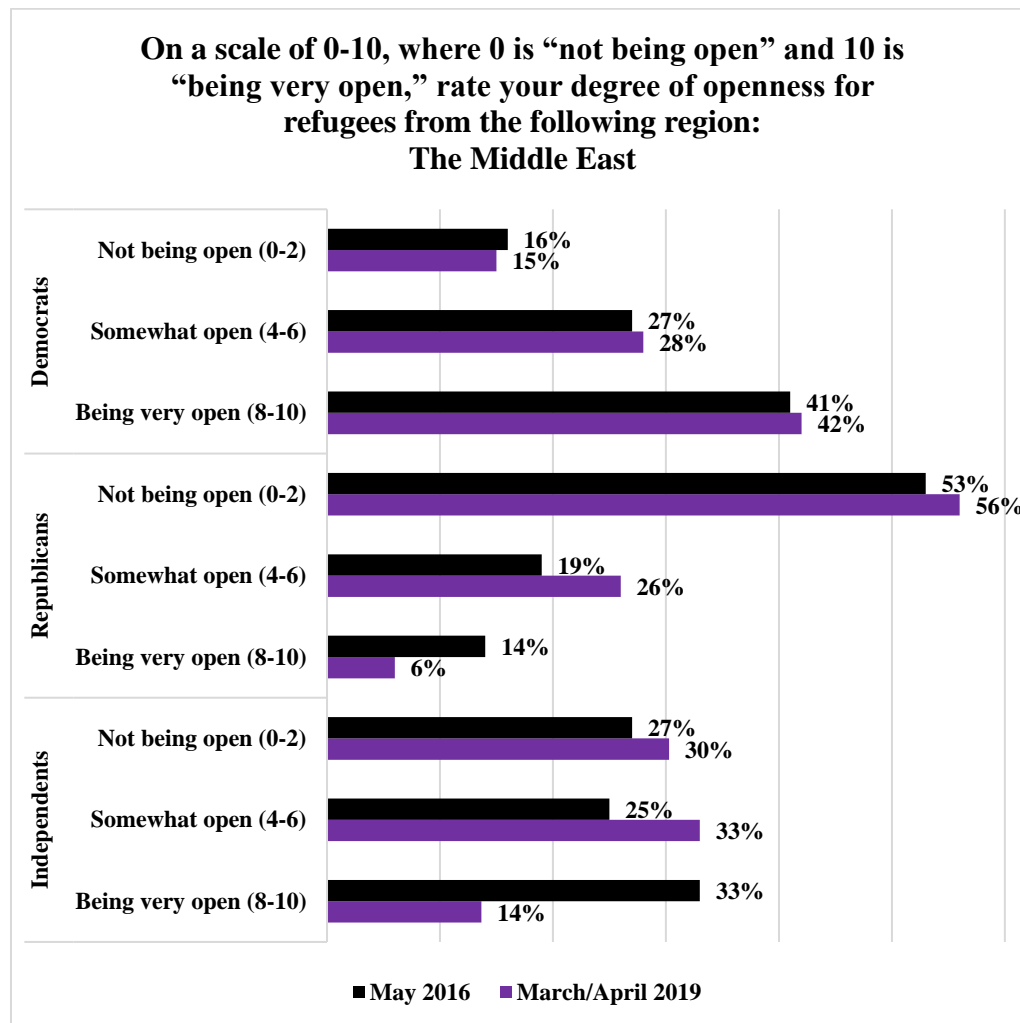

In addition to questions about refugees and terrorism, we asked respondents to rank their openness to refugees based on their region of origin. The results show a higher probability of 'not being open' to refugees from the Middle East, versus other regions of the world, including Central America, Africa, and East Asia.

On a scale of 0-10, where 0 is "not being open" and 10 is "being very open," rate your degree of openness for refugees from the following region:
The Middle East

Moreover, by examining 'openness' to Middle Eastern refugees, we can see that over the past three years Americans have become less open to refugees from the Middle East. Specifically, the total number of respondents were seven percentage points less likely to select options around 'being very open' to refugees from the Middle East, with Republicans eight percentage points

and independents 19 percentage points less likely to answer this way. Although Americans are more likely to say that refugees from the Middle East would be welcomed in their state or community compared to three years ago, as shown earlier in this report, their degree of openness for refugees from this region has decreased.

On a scale of 0-10, where 0 is "not being open" and 10 is "being very open," rate your degree of openness for refugees from the following region:
The Middle East

	May 2016	March/April 2019
Democrats		
Not being open (0-2)	16%	15%
Somewhat open (4-6)	27%	28%
Being very open (8-10)	41%	42%
Republicans		
Not being open (0-2)	53%	56%
Somewhat open (4-6)	19%	26%
Being very open (8-10)	14%	6%
Independents		
Not being open (0-2)	27%	30%
Somewhat open (4-6)	25%	33%
Being very open (8-10)	33%	14%

How then do we explain the results showing Americans being more likely to think Middle Eastern refugees would be welcomed in their community and reporting less fear of links between refugees and terrorism? As Professor Shibley Telhami has written before, American perceptions of Islam experienced a favorable rise in part thanks to a counternarrative pursued by opponents of President Trump. Respondents to our poll could be experiencing the effects of this counternarrative pushing tolerance and acceptance of Muslims. Also, there could be a case of response bias in which respondents do not feel comfortable openly expressing opinions which could be considered biased against Muslims or Middle Eastern people in the wake of this counternarrative. Or, there could be a markedly lower perception of threat from terrorism as it has been almost eighteen years since the attacks on September 11th. The Critical Issues Poll will continue to monitor this trend, and others seen in this report, in upcoming polls.

Survey Methodology (March-April 2019)

The survey was carried out March 15–April 2, 2019 online from a nationally representative sample of Nielsen Scarborough's probability-based panel, originally recruited by mail and telephone using a random sample of adults.
The poll was conducted among a national poll of 3,015 respondents, with a margin of error of +/- 1.78%. Overall, the sample was adjusted to reflect population estimates (Scarborough USA+/Gallup) for Americans. The survey variables balanced through weighting were: age, gender, race/ethnicity, household income, level of education, census regional division, and political party affiliation.

For the survey methodology of the May 2016 poll, please visit:
https://sadat.umd.edu/sites/sadat.umd.edu/files/Refugee%20Questionnaire.pdf

To view the full questionnaire for this poll, please click here. For more information, please visit: criticalissues.umd.edu.

Note: These questions were fielded as part of a larger poll on foreign and domestic issues. Participants in this study were provided by Nielsen from Nielsen's sample of respondents.