INDIVISIBLE

United We Dream ACTION

To: Interested parties
From: Indivisible & United We Dream Action
Date: September 4, 2019
Re: New Polling Shows Voters Support Progressive and Bold Immigration Solutions

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Executive Summary

As the Democratic presidential primary field narrows and the debate over the future of immigration policy intensifies, Indivisible and United We Dream Action conducted two nationwide polls of approximately 1,000 voters each on key immigration questions facing the nation. The YouGov polls were conducted from August 16 to 18, and August 29 to 31, 2019.

Taken together, these polls demonstrate that the voters Democrats will need to win in both 2020 primary and general elections are prioritizing candidates with a clear, people-centered vision for immigration.

- **Immigration is a polarizing 2020 issue, and will be key to turning out base voters on both sides next year.** 81 percent of all respondents feel immigration is a top 2020 issue for them, with even splits of respondents looking for people-first and security-first immigration policies when evaluating 2020 candidates (40 percent and 41 percent respectively). In a general election where base turnout will play a crucial role, immigration is an issue that will motivate core voters.

- **Central planks of a progressive immigration platform enjoy wide support among the electorate.** Progressive, people-first policies including closing detention camps, overhauling ICE, stopping deportations, decriminalizing border crossings and providing health care to undocumented immigrants all have a plurality of support among all 2020 voters and majority support among key primary voters

- **Core Democratic voters whose candidate preference and turnout will decide both the Presidential primary and next year's general election are looking for candidates with a positive vision on immigration.** People-first immigration plans are a top 2020 issue for a number of core Democratic constituencies, including Black, Latinx, young and women voters. These voters also support more progressive immigration priorities by comfortable margins.

Voters Expect a Positive Vision on Immigration from Democrats

Voters in 2020 will be presented with polarized visions for the future of our immigration system: a fear-mongering vision of detention camps, deportations, bans of entire communities, and demonization of immigrants on one side, and a people-first vision of a humane immigration

system on our side. As Democrats figure out how to respond to the other side's hateful rhetoric, there is an open question of how far to lean into a progressive immigration frame.
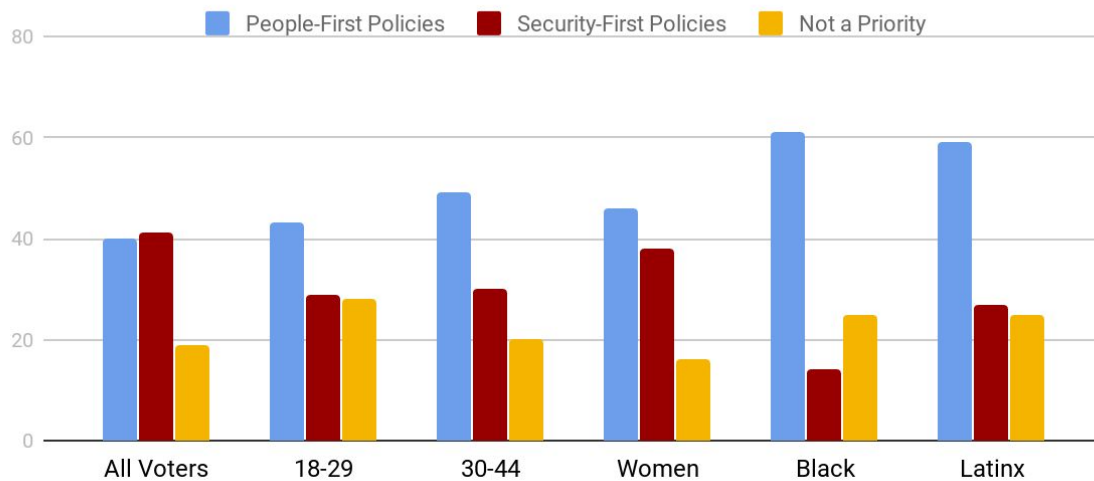
We know many progressives who share our goals of defeating this administration next November are wary of that confrontation, and would rather Democrats downplay immigration as a 2020 issue. This polling indicates that the voters we need to win in 2020 expect Democrats to lead on this issue, and will be looking at candidates' immigration platforms when deciding who and whether to turn out for.

Even if neither is exactly right, which comes closest to your view?
- Keeping families together, whether at the border or in our communities, is a top 2020 priority for me, and I will be looking for people-first immigration policies when evaluating candidates
- Border security and deporting undocumented immigrants are top 2020 priorities for me, and I will be looking for security-first immigration policies when evaluating candidates
- Immigration is not a top 2020 issue for me, and I won't be looking at candidates' policies on immigration when evaluating candidates
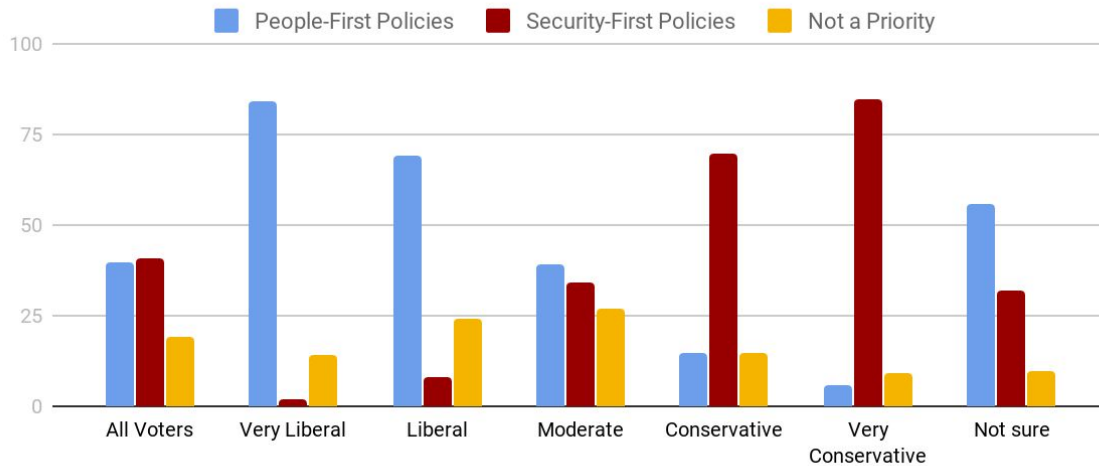

Immigration and keeping families together at the border and in our communities is a top issue for young voters, Black and Latinx voters, and women voters. Pluralities of voters under 45, women voters, and Black and Latinx voters, said they would be evaluating 2020 candidates based on who had people-first immigration plans.

Similarly, pluralities of liberal, very liberal, and moderate voters will be looking for people-first immigration policies from 2020 candidates. When grouped by ideology, the only groups who say security-first policies will be a priority for them are conservative and very conservative voters. Interestingly, across ideological lines, immigration is a top 2020 issue – demonstrating that Democrats don't have the option of not-engaging on immigration in 2020. Core Democratic voters and moderates will be looking for 2020ers with strong frames and messaging on immigration.

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Voters are tired of Trump's pain-only immigration approach and are in favor of solutions that help people without hurting people - key elements of the #FreeToStay platform developed by major progressive organizations.
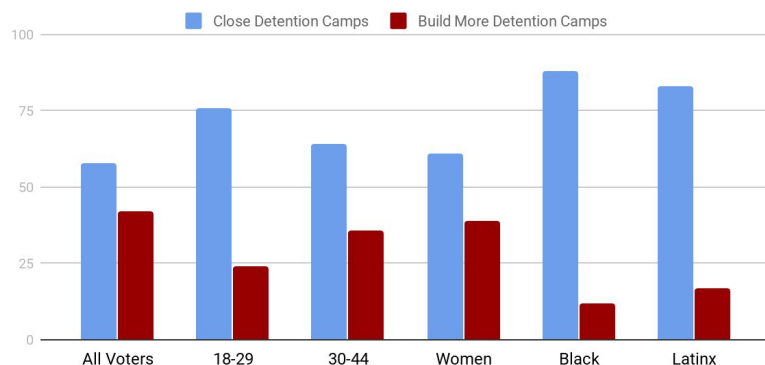
On the Issues

On key immigration issues, the voters Democrats will need to win in November 2020 have progressive views on immigration. Old "comprehensive immigration reform" policy formulations which tie expansions of border security and internal enforcement in exchange for pathway to citizenship, or campaign promises to protect only segments of the undocumented population should be left to the past as voters look for bold action and demand abuses stop.

Closing Immigrant Detention Camps is Overwhelmingly Popular:

Evidence of abuse and neglect in detention camps where ICE agents and Border Patrol officers lock up immigrants have been in the news lately. Donald Trump has plans to build more detention camps to hold more immigrants before deporting them. Do you believe that the next President should:
- Continue with the Trump Administration's plan to build more detention camps; OR
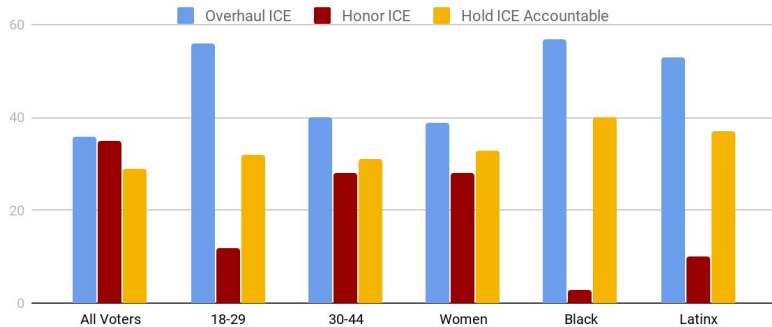*- Close the detention camps and come up with another, more humane solution*

Fully 75 percent of non-white voters, 61 percent of women voters, and 76 percent of voters under 30 think the next president should close the detention camps for undocumented immigrants and come up with another, more humane solution. In fact, 58 percent of all voters prefer closing the camps over 42 percent who believe we should

continue Trump's plan to build more camps.

Voters Support Holding ICE Agents Accountable

ICE agents were recently caught on video breaking the windows of a vehicle to take an immigrant man into custody in front of his children and engaging in other non-professional and abusive behavior. Some say that ICE agents should be allowed to do whatever they need to in order to deport immigrants who are living in this country illegally, otherwise known as undocumented immigrants. Others believe that they should be held accountable for abusive behavior. Which comes closer to your view?
- We need a total overhaul of ICE. All people should be treated fairly and undocumented people should be allowed to apply for citizenship and not be deported in the first place.
- ICE agents are doing a good job and should be honored for deporting people who are living in this country illegally.
- The agents need better training and those who abuse their role should be held accountable for bad acts. The ICE agent abuses must stop.
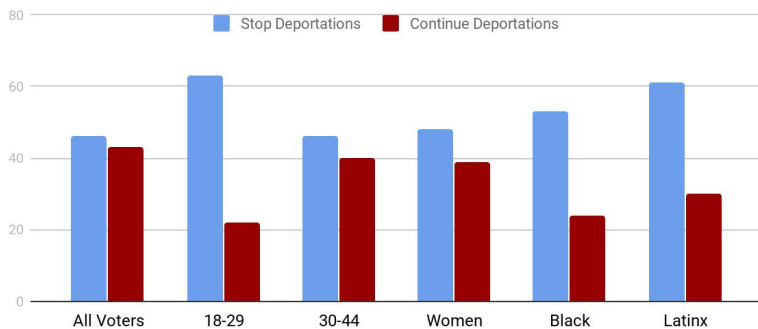
Only 19 percent of Democratic and Independent voters think ICE agents "are doing a good job and should be honored for deporting people who are living in this country illegally." When given a choice of honoring ICE agents or holding them accountable, 36 percent of all voters call for a complete overhaul of ICE, 29 percent say ICE abuses must stop, bad actors held accountable and that agents need better training while only 35 percent say ICE agents should be honored. No demographic group tested chose to honor ICE agents more than hold them accountable.

Voters Support Stopping Deportations of Undocumented People Immediately

There are about 11 million undocumented people who live in the United States, two thirds of whom have lived here for more than 10 years. Congress has not passed a new broad based citizenship law in over 30 years, which leaves these people with no way to apply for citizenship and at risk of being targeted by ICE agents and deported. Which of the following statements best represents your view?
- Until Congress passes a new citizenship law, the government should stop deporting these people and let them work to support their families and go to school
- Until Congress passes a new citizenship law, the government should continue deporting as many undocumented people as they can
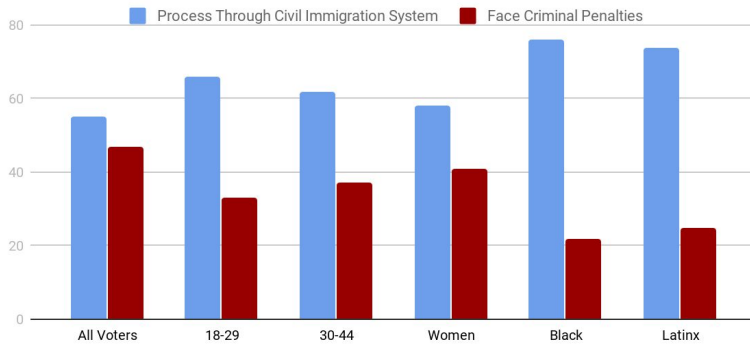
When asked what should be done about undocumented immigrants immediately, voters support a moratorium on deportations. Among all voters, a plurality support stopping deportations as opposed to continuing them (46 percent versus 43 percent). This issue has particular salience among primary voters – 60 percent of Democratic and Independent voters think the government should stop deportations and let undocumented people work as opposed to just 38 percent who believe as many undocumented people as possible should be deported. Key 2020 demographic groups also support stopping deportations, regardless of party ID: including women, 48/39; non-white voters, 52/31; and young voters, 63/22. It is important to note that the question did not specify

any specific group such as "Dreamers," "non-criminals," farmworkers or high tech workers - it only referred to "undocumented people" generally.

Voters Support Making Immigration Violations a Civil Offense
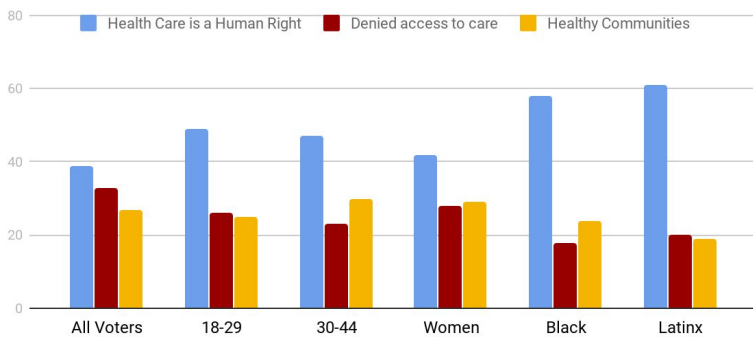
A majority of all likely 2020 voters support processing undocumented immigrants through the civil immigration system, with 53 percent supporting, compared to 47 percent who believe immigrants who cross the border illegally should face criminal penalties. When looking at key 2020 demographics, the numbers are even starker (see chart at left). Notably, 57 percent of moderate voters (along with 98 percent of very liberal voters and 88 percent of liberal voters) support moving to a civil system.

Voters Support Access to Health Care for Undocumented Immigrants

Voters support ensuring access to health care for everyone. Only 33 percent of all voters believe all undocumented immigrants should be denied access to health care, while 27 percent believe "access to health care helps ensure that all of our communities remain healthy, including providing health care to undocumented immigrants," and 39 percent believe "health care is a human right, and that everyone deserves access to affordable health care, no matter their immigration status."

Future Research

This polling of the 2020 electorate demonstrates that voters will be looking to Democrats to put forward bold platforms on immigration, that lean into positive, people-first framing and away from tired, enforcement-centered CIR solutions. Over the coming months, Indivisible, UWD Action and other key progressive and immigration partners will be conducting further research on how immigration will factor into the 2020 election. Questions we'll be looking to answer include which immigration frames work best to motivate turnout among both core Democratic voters and unlikely 2020 voters, convince third-party voters to vote Democrat, and maintain Democrats' growing advantage among white suburban and college-educated women.