

American Voters on High-Skilled Immigration

Results from a national survey from Echelon Insights and
the Economic Innovation Group

Key Findings

- Three-quarters of voters support increasing high-skilled immigration (HSI).
- Support for HSI is bipartisan: 71 percent of voters who plan to support President Trump in November and 86 percent of those who plan to vote for President Biden favor increasing HSI.
- More than two-thirds of voters in every swing state (Arizona, Georgia, Michigan, Nevada, North Carolina, Pennsylvania, and Wisconsin) support increasing HSI.
- Four-fifths of voters believe the American immigration system needs “major changes” or “a complete overhaul.”
- Those voters least likely to compete with high-skilled immigrants—rural Americans with a high school degree or less—are nonetheless those most likely to oppose more HSI.
- Two-thirds of voters rate economic conditions throughout the United States as “poor” or “not so good.” Despite Americans’ economic frustrations, voters have not turned inwards; they want the country to remain open to high-skilled foreign-born talent.
- Most Americans do not believe the U.S. immigration system is designed to benefit them. Only 37 percent agreed that “the U.S. immigration system is currently designed to benefit the U.S. economy, its workers, and its communities.”
- Sixty percent of voters overall and 89 percent of GOP voters agree with Donald Trump’s call for a “big, beautiful door”—pairing tough border policies with a welcoming legal immigration system for those who can contribute to our economy.

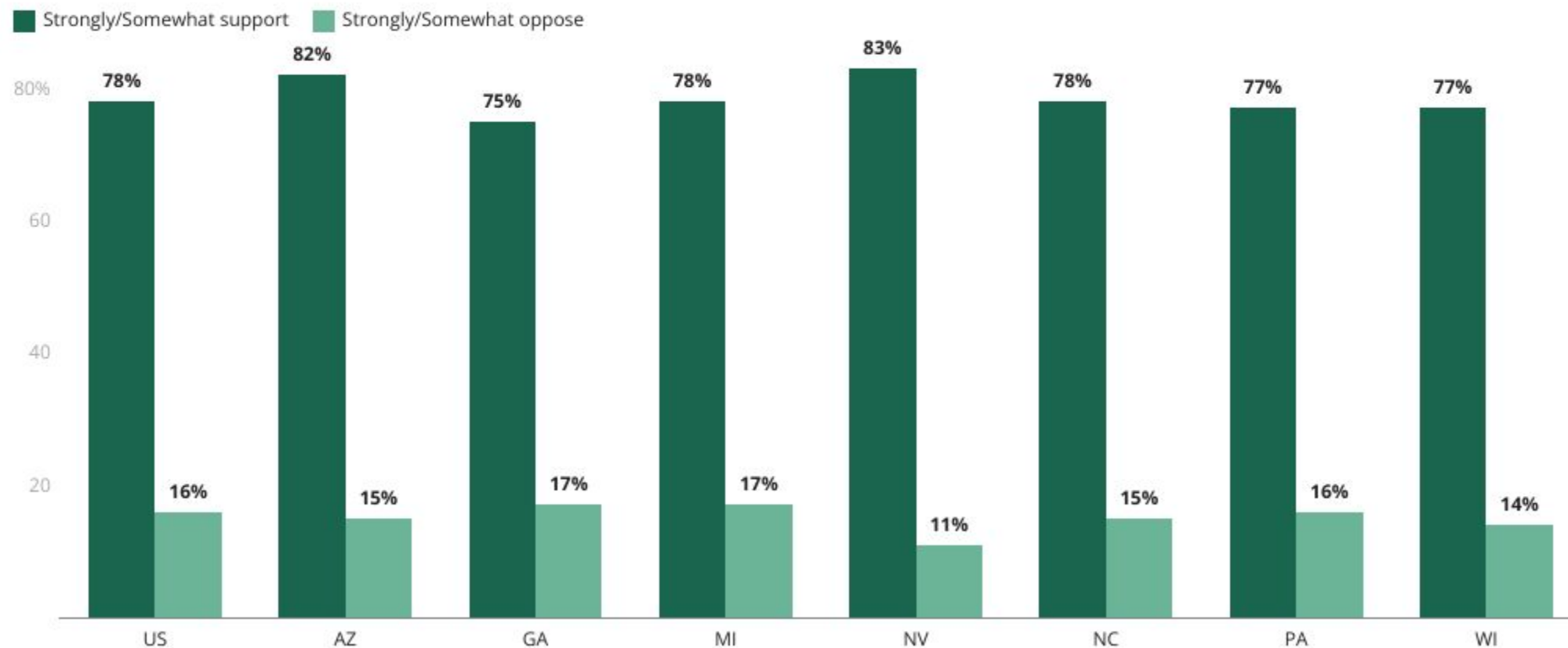
Methodology

- These findings are derived from a nationally representative survey of N = 2,036 registered voters nationwide plus oversamples of voters in swing states including Arizona, Georgia, Michigan, North Carolina, Nevada, Pennsylvania, and Wisconsin.
- The survey was conducted partly via online interviews and partly via text messages inviting respondents to complete the survey online, all matched to the L2 voter-file.
- This survey was fielded April 15 - 22, 2024, and the data was weighted to known demographic and voter turnout characteristics of the registered voter population derived from U.S. Census Bureau estimates and the voter file. Due to rounding, the percentages presented may not always appear to add up to 100 percent.
- The margin of sampling error for the overall sample is +/- 2.1 percentage points.
- Research was conducted by Echelon Insights on behalf of the Economic Innovation Group.

Support for high-skilled immigration is overwhelming, nationally and across swing states.

Support for increasing high-skilled immigration

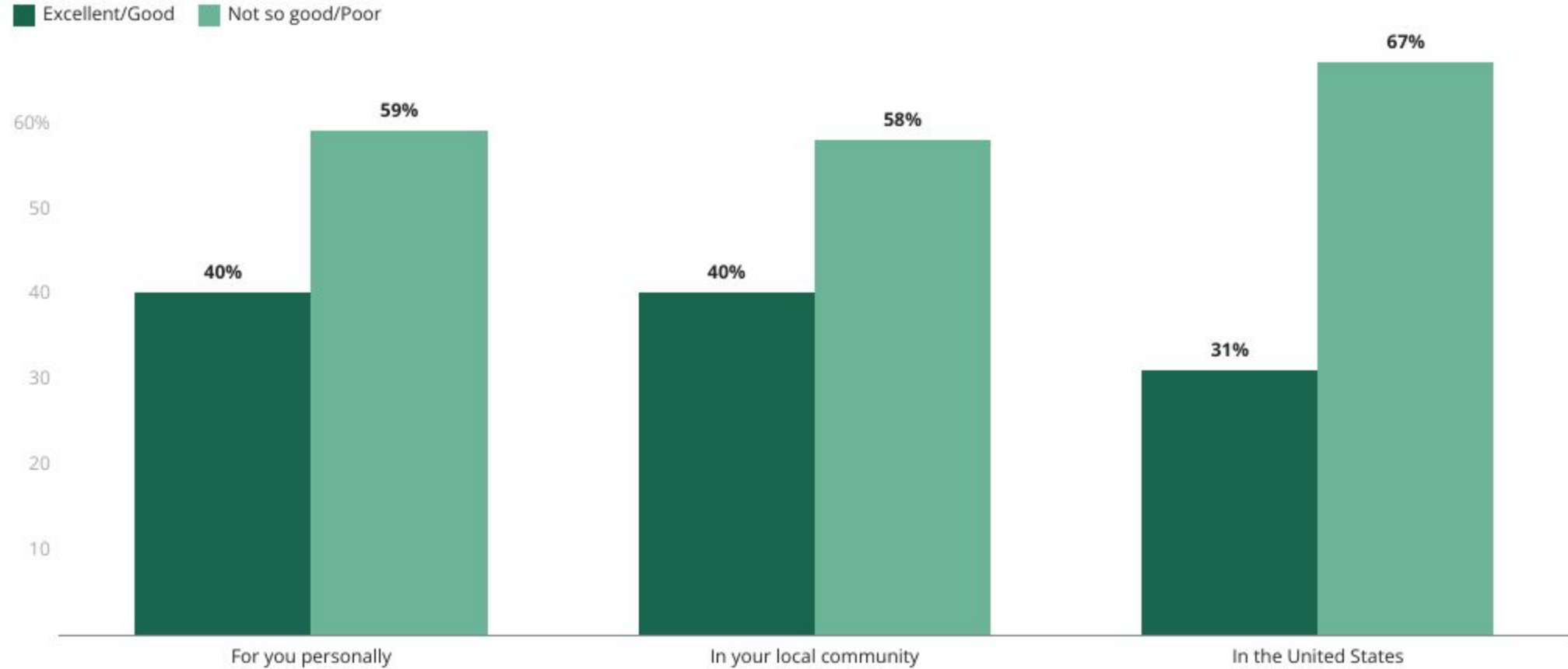
Support for increasing high-skilled immigration after presenting the following definition: "immigrants with a high level of educational achievement or specialized professional skills, such as scientists, medical doctors, computer programmers, engineers, or business finance professionals."



Support for more high-skilled immigration has not been undermined by: 1) voters' pessimistic views about the U.S. economy ...

Voters' economic sentiment

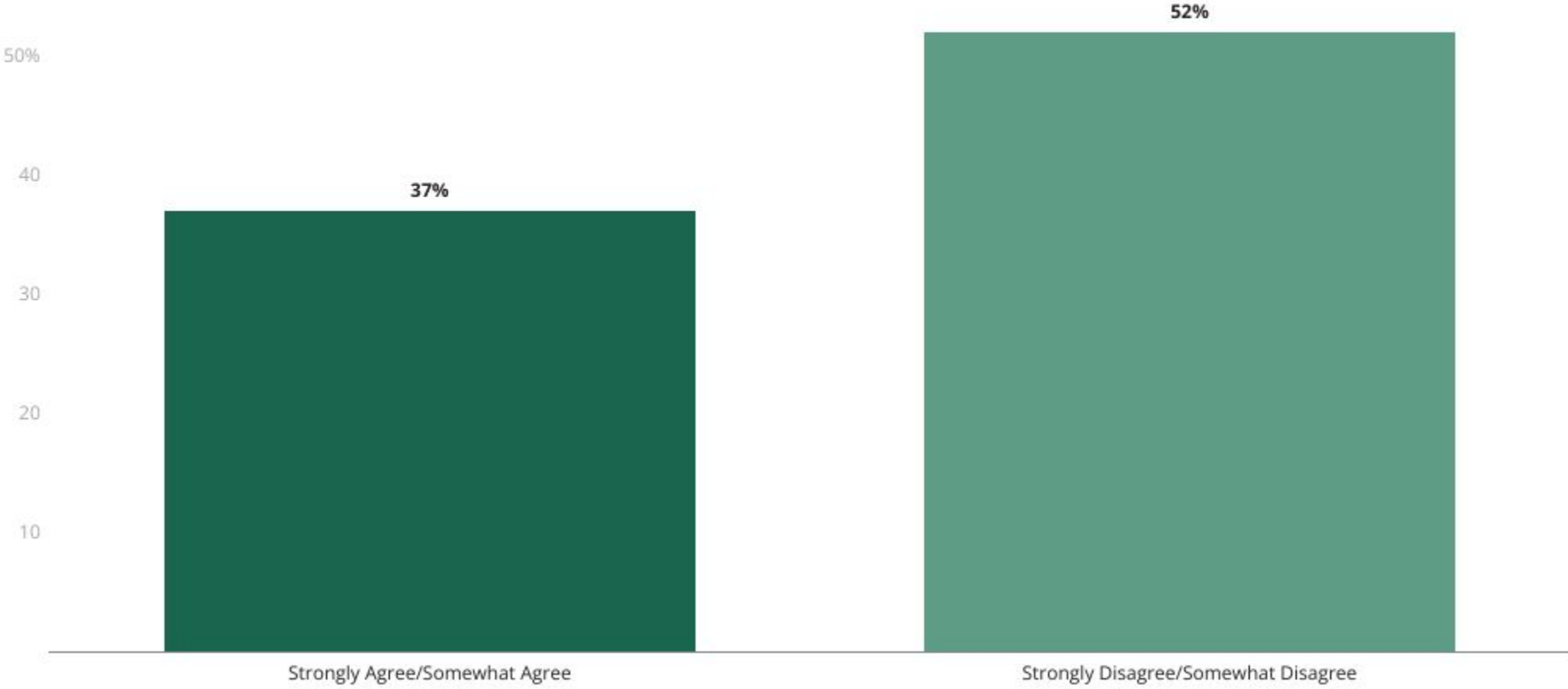
Q: "How would you rate economic conditions these days...?"



... 2) their widespread belief that the immigration system is badly designed, or ...

Americans' views on whether the immigration system is designed to benefit them

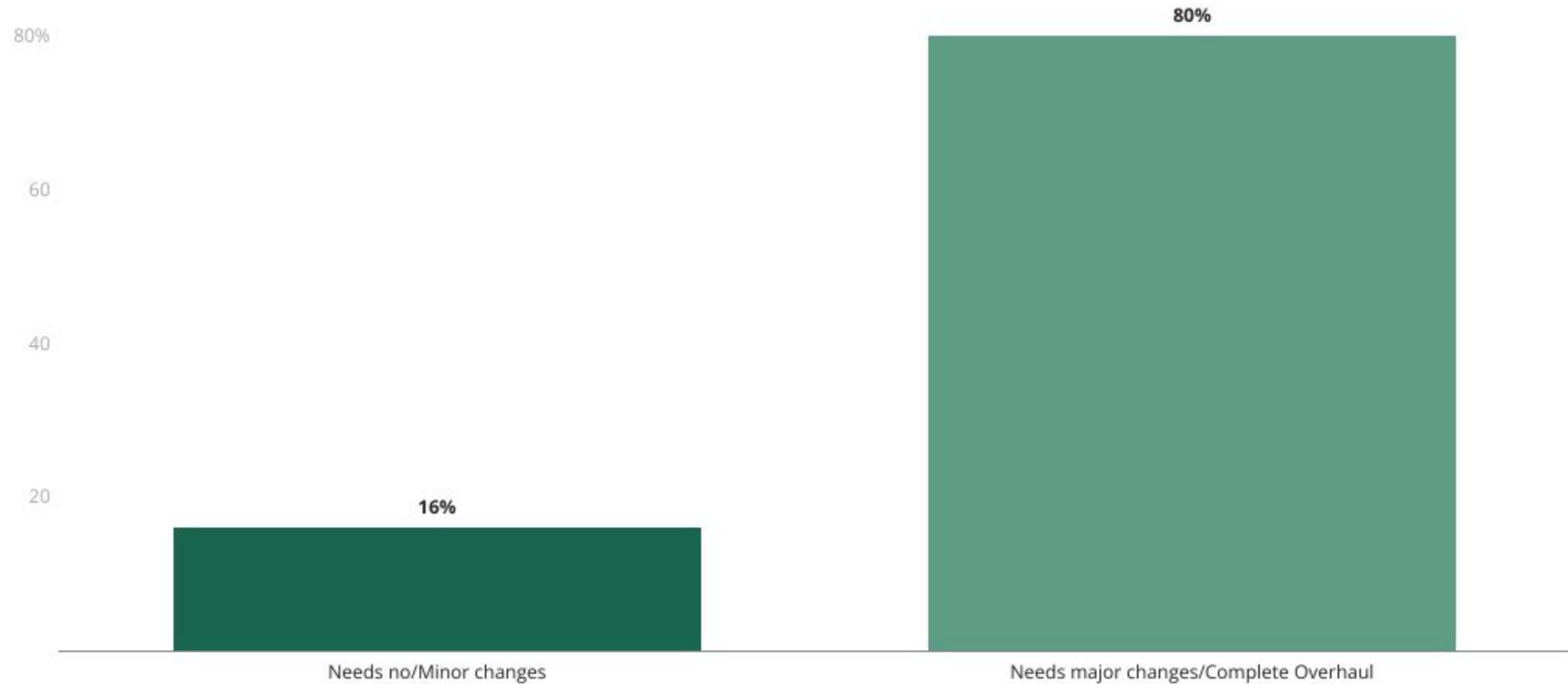
Statement: "The U.S. immigration system is currently designed to benefit the U.S. economy, its workers, and its communities."



... 3) their belief that the system needs either major changes or a complete overhaul, likely fueled by the border crisis.

Americans' views on the status quo immigration system

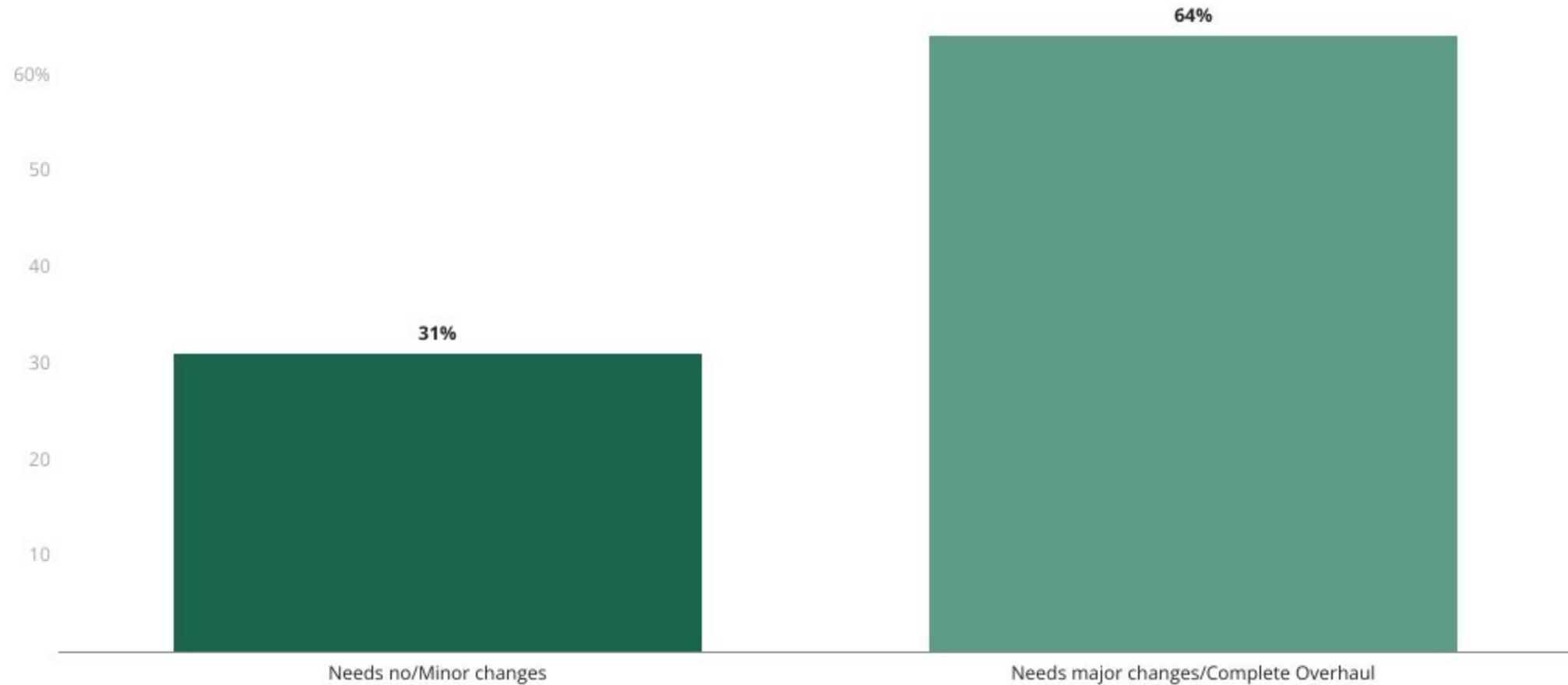
Q: "Do you think the immigration system in the United States...?"



Voters aren't just concerned about border security. They want changes to the *legal* immigration system, too.

Views on the legal immigration system

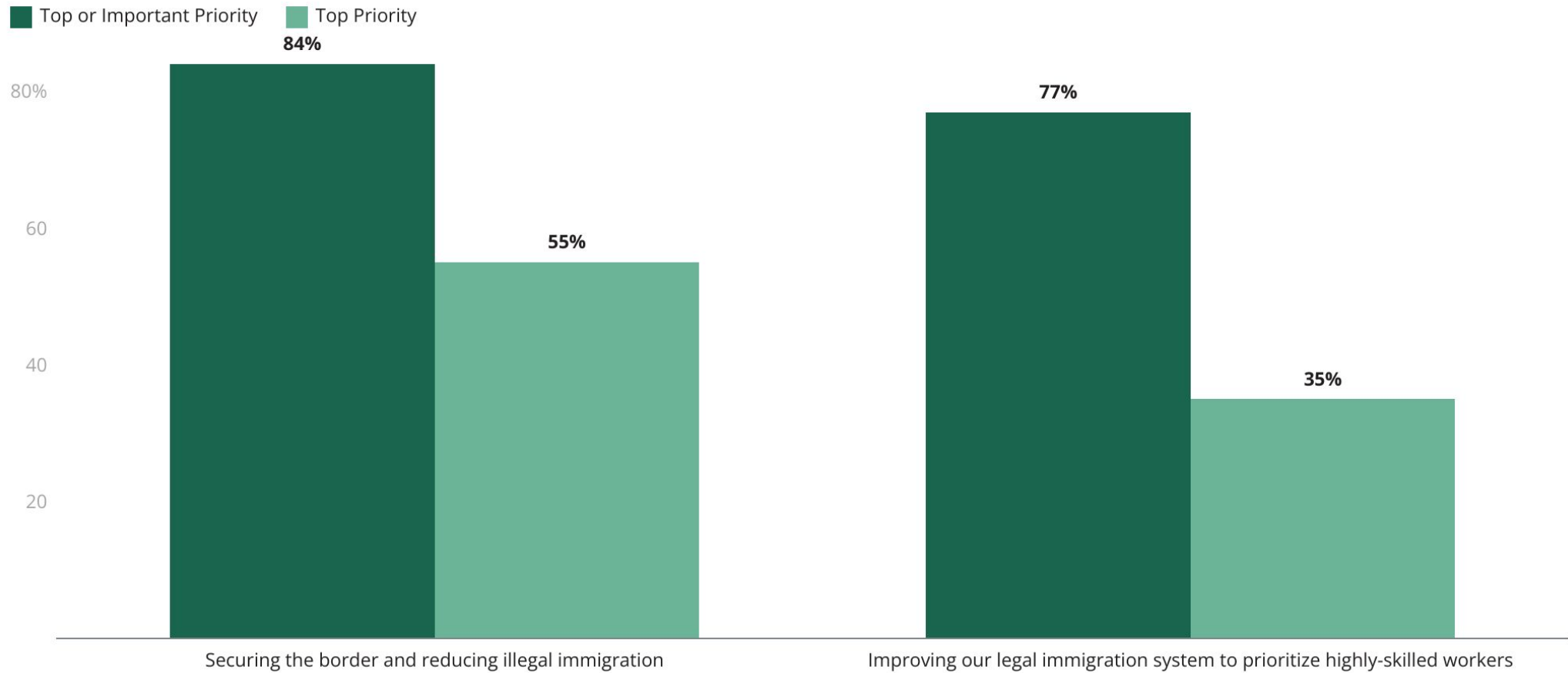
Q: "Setting aside the issues of border security and illegal immigration, do you think the legal immigration system in the United States...?"



In fact, voters see border security and reform of the legal immigration system in parallel. Both are important priorities.

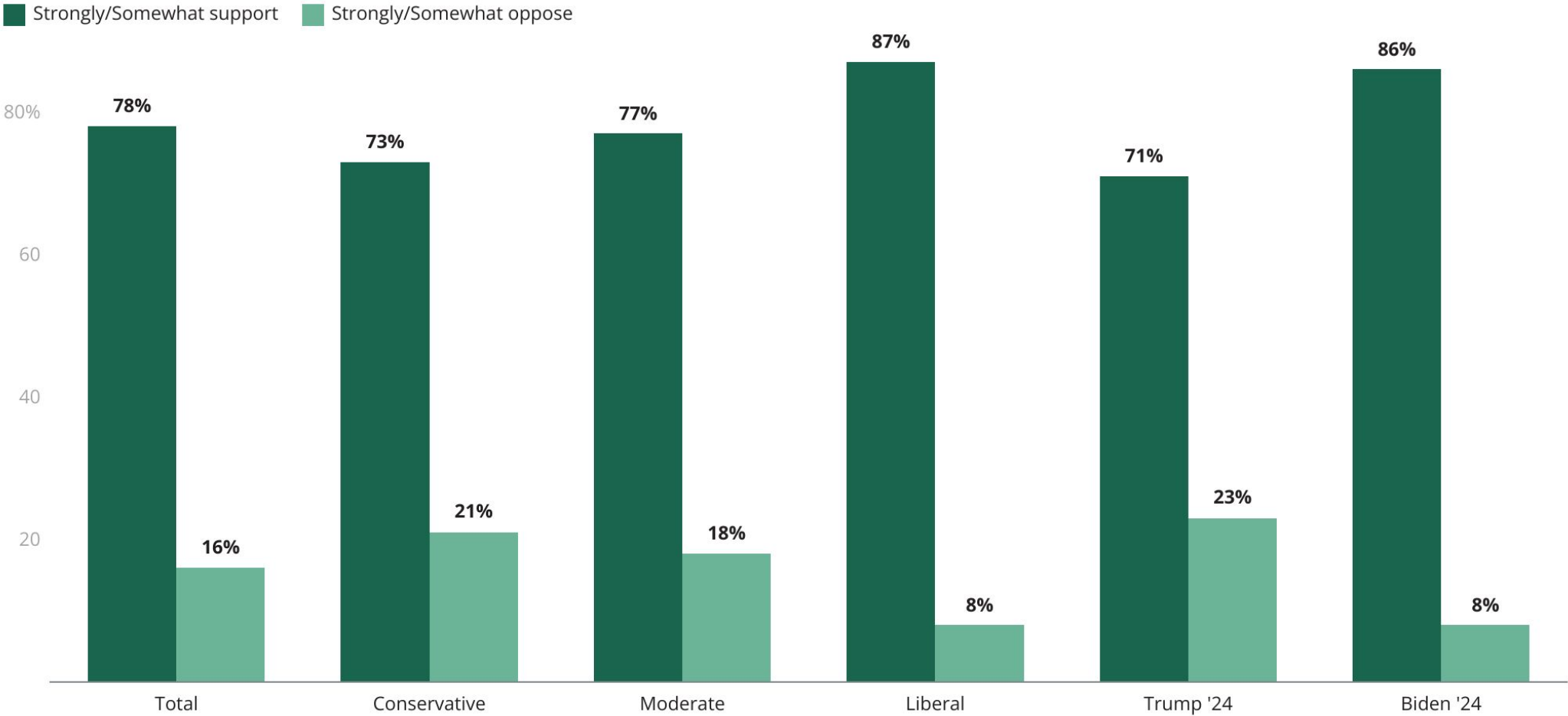
Voters see securing the border and improving the legal immigration system as important priorities

Q: "How much of a priority do you think each of the following should be for Congress in the next 12 months?"



Support for high-skilled immigration is high among conservatives, moderates, liberals, Trump voters, and Biden voters.

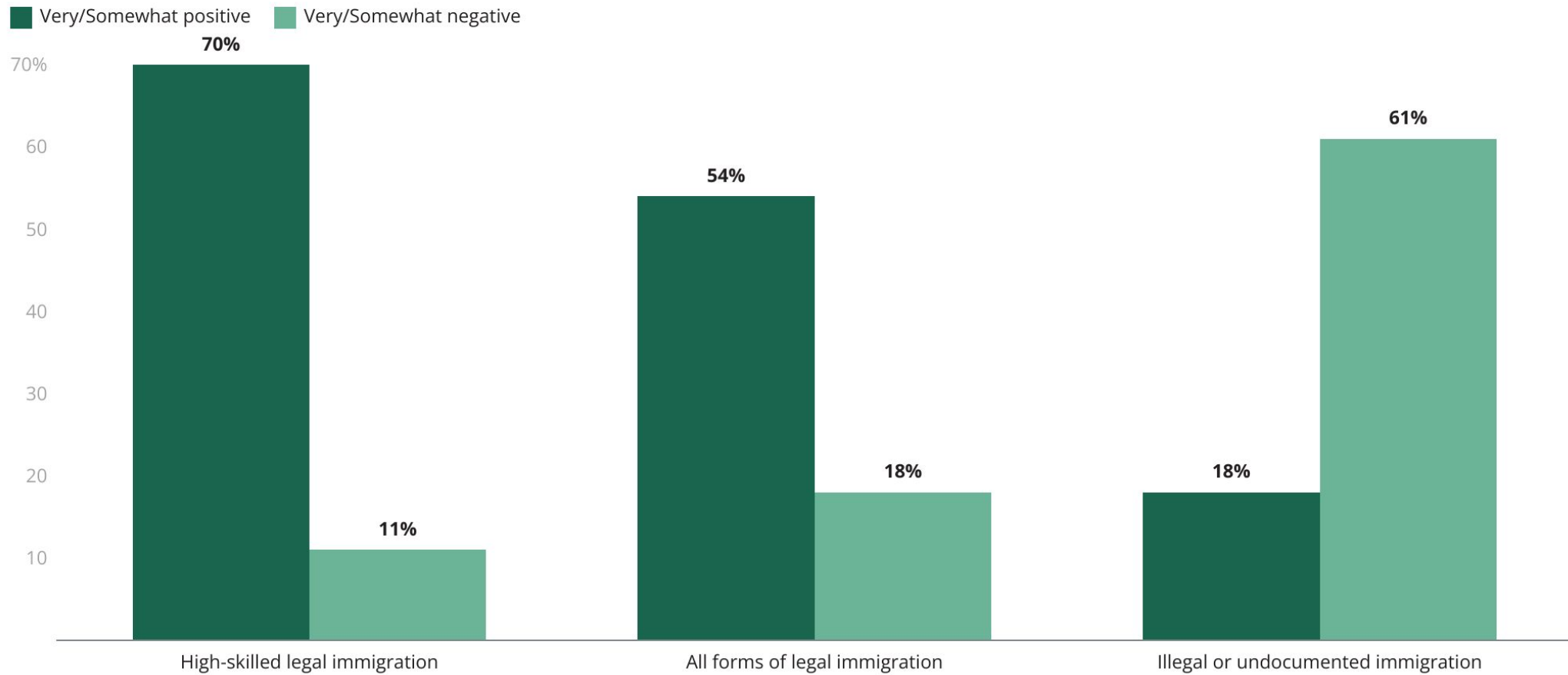
Support for more high-skilled immigration across the political spectrum



Americans overwhelmingly think high-skilled immigration benefits the U.S. economy, but illegal immigration does not.

The perceived economic impact of immigration, by type

Q: "What kind of effect do you think the following types of immigration have on the United States economy?"



Voters see high-skilled immigration’s economic and competitive benefits.

Views on arguments for high-skilled immigration

Q: "Now that you’ve read the definition of high-skilled immigration, in which ways, if any, do you believe high-skilled immigrants could have an impact on the communities around them?"

Contribution	Very/Somewhat positive	Very/somewhat negative
Helping the US stay ahead in scientific and technological innovation	74%	6%
Increasing the number of doctors and nurses in my community	74%	6%
Starting local businesses that will boost economic growth and create new jobs for American workers	72%	7%
Increasing productivity and wages at local companies by contributing specialized skills	70%	8%
Reinvigotating areas that are dealing with population loss and economic decline	66%	9%

Most voters agree with justifications for more high-skilled immigration—even its opponents.

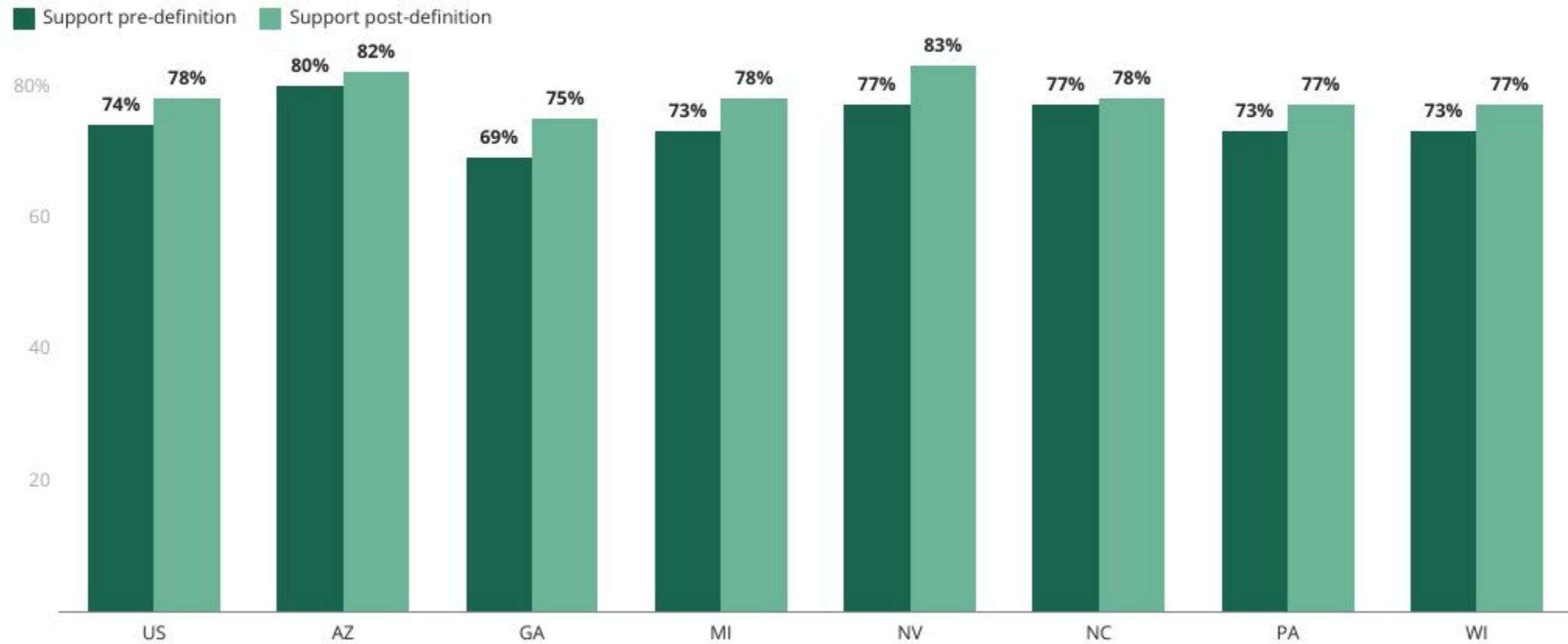
Views on arguments for high-skilled immigration

HSI justification	Opinion	All voters	HSI opponents	HSI supporters	Unsure on HSI
Competitive edge against China	Agree	79%	58%	85%	51%
	Disagree	14%	33%	10%	10%
	Unsure	7%	9%	5%	39%
Don't let the border stand in the way of legal reform	Agree	79%	53%	87%	47%
	Disagree	15%	41%	10%	12%
	Unsure	6%	7%	3%	41%
Helps American businesses	Agree	84%	58%	91%	60%
	Disagree	11%	34%	6%	10%
	Unsure	6%	9%	3%	31%
More jobs for all	Agree	75%	47%	83%	46%
	Disagree	16%	45%	11%	11%
	Unsure	9%	9%	7%	43%

Defining high-skilled immigration boosts support for increasing it.

Support for increasing high-skilled immigration: Before and after defining

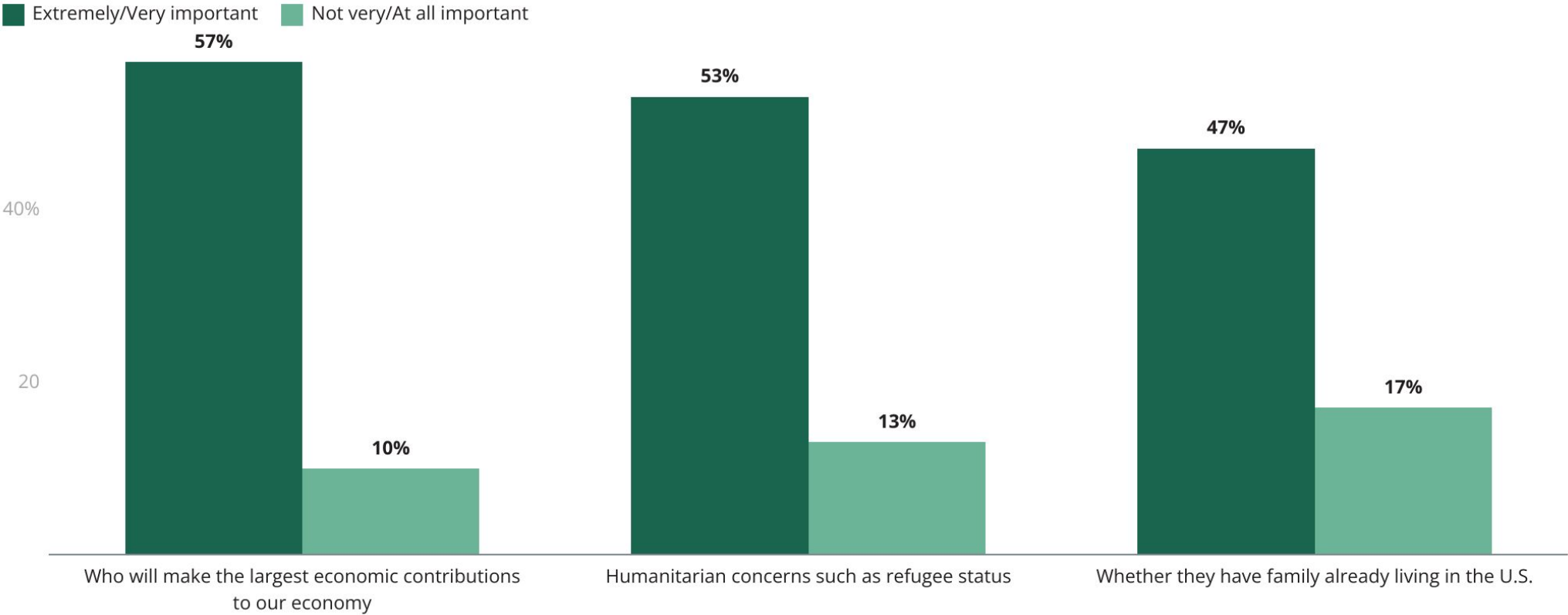
Definition: "immigrants with a high level of educational achievement or specialized professional skills, such as scientists, medical doctors, computer programmers, engineers, or business finance professionals."



Voters (narrowly) see economic factors as the most important immigrant selection criteria.

Americans' views on selection factors the U.S. immigration system should prioritize

Q: "U.S. immigration policies must balance a variety of competing goals in determining how many people are allowed to legally immigrate to the country each year, and who those people can be. How important should each of the following factors be in deciding who and how many people are allowed to immigrate legally to the U.S.?"

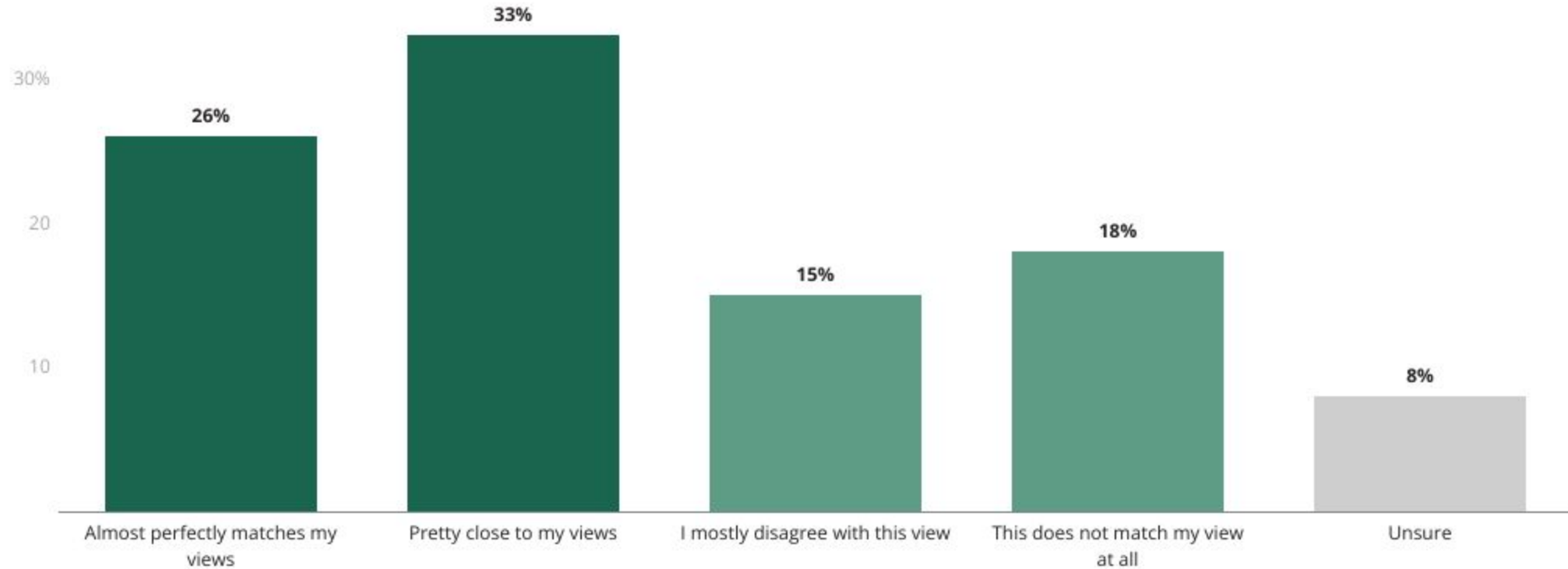


A message tying border security to a welcoming legal immigration system is popular.

Voters on Trump's "big beautiful door"

Reactions to:

"President Donald Trump has spoken out about the need to fix our immigration system. As president, he pushed for a wall to be built along the southern border and called for tougher immigration policies. However, he also said it was important to have a 'big, beautiful door' to allow in legal immigrants who could work hard, do things the right way, and make a positive contribution to our country's economy. This is the right approach to immigration in our country."



Only sixteen percent of voters oppose more high-skilled immigration.

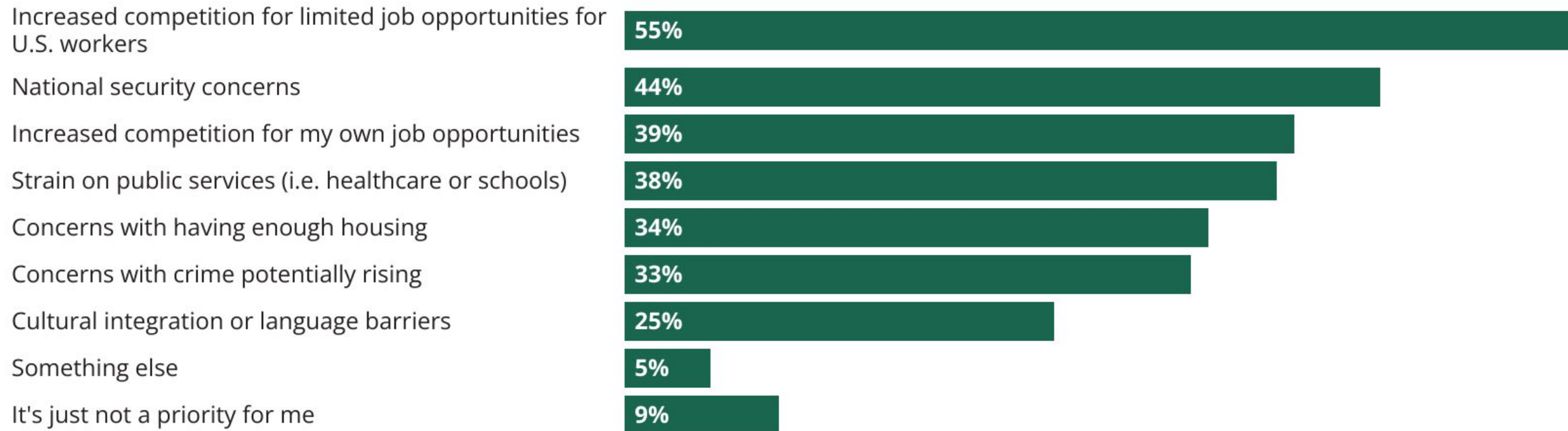
The opponents of HSI are disproportionately:

- **Trump voters:** 67% of opponents vs 47% of voters overall
- **Negative on the economy:** 78% vs 67% of voters overall
- **Less likely to think HSI reform is important:** 68% vs 80% of voters overall
- **More likely to think immigration system needs big changes:** 89% vs 80% of voters overall
- **Skeptical that the status quo system benefits Americans:** 28% vs 37% of voters overall

Four of the top five reasons given for opposing high-skilled immigration are economic.

Top reasons for opposing more high-skilled immigration

Q: Which of the following best describes why you are opposed to increased high-skilled immigration in the United States? Select all that apply.



But opponents of high-skilled immigration are actually *least* likely to compete directly with skilled newcomers.

Educational composition of each HSI camp

Highest educational credential	All voters	HSI opponents	HSI supporters	Unsure on HSI
High school or less	31%	43%	28%	41%
Some college	21%	20%	22%	21%
Associate's degree	11%	12%	11%	11%
Bachelor's degree	23%	14%	25%	17%
Graduate degree	14%	10%	14%	9%
Prefer not to say	0%	0%	0%	1%

For candidates, supporting more high-skilled immigration is not a political risk.

Pro-immigration candidates are competitive even among opponents of more high-skilled immigration

Q: "Knowing this, if the election for Congress were held today and you had to make a choice, for whom would you vote?"

Candidate	Total Support	Opponents of more high-skilled immigration	Supporters of more high-skilled immigration	Unsure on more high-skilled immigration
Candidate A says that the United States already has too many legal and illegal immigrants entering each year. We need to secure the border and possibly reduce legal immigration, even if that means losing out on the contributions of highly-skilled workers who play by the rules and want to contribute to our economy.	46%	45%	47%	32%
Candidate B says that immigration can be beneficial for the U.S. but we need to be careful. The ideal is to have secure borders with increased legal immigration for those who can be self-sufficient and make a strong contribution to the country and our economy.	49%	49%	49%	39%
Unsure	6%	6%	4%	29%

EIG brings together leading entrepreneurs, investors, economists, and policymakers from across the political spectrum to address America's economic challenges.



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