

# New Models Messaging on the Affordable Care Act, Sequestration, the Economy, and Immigration

August 2013

## OVERVIEW

Presentation Testing conducted two mixed-gender focus group dial tests with moderate Independents in Aurora, CO, on August 1, 2013. One group was comprised of 11 Romney-voting moderate Independents, and the other was comprised of 12 Obama-voting moderate Independents. All respondents had at least graduated from high school or hold a G.E.D., and were age 22 or older. In our dial test, Jean spoke as the GOP advocate. Carla spoke as the advocate for the Democrats. They conducted a point-counterpoint debate in the dial test video about the Affordable Care Act, or Obamacare, that is referenced throughout the report.

## KEY FINDINGS

- 1) All Romney-voting Independents sided with the GOP advocate in the health care debate. The GOP messaging also had some cross-over appeal with one-quarter (three of 12) of the Obama-voting Independents siding with the GOP advocate.

We conducted an 11-minute point-counterpoint dial test using messaging in the health care debate from Congressional Republicans and from President Obama (read by actresses from a teleprompter). After the video, we asked respondents in each group which argument they found more persuasive.

	Romney-voting Independents	Obama-voting Independents	Total
GOP advocate (Jean)	11	3	14
Advocate for the Democrats (Carla)	0	9	9

Romney-voting Independents who favored Jean's position explained:

*"As a small business owner, what Jean was talking about has been more of my concerns. What does [the Affordable Care Act] mean for [health] insurance if I look at hiring new employees? As far as what Carla was saying, I haven't really seen evidence of any of her arguments for [the Affordable Care Act]. In my personal experience, what Jean was saying is more of what I have seen happening." – Jason, Romney-voting Independent*

*“[Jean’s] arguments as she stated them seemed genuine, with concern, and well-stated whereas Carla’s arguments sounded like a used car salesman’s pitch for trying to get you to buy something that you don’t necessarily want to buy—that particular used car.” – Wilma, Romney-voting Independent*

*“[Jean’s argument about] small business is a big [reason why I sided with her]. The American people should be allowed to choose in a democratic society whether or not they’re going to go along with [the government mandate of getting health insurance]. If you don’t get health insurance, it’s not like you’re going out and murdering somebody. It’s not something that should cause legal problems for you if you choose to go against the government mandate.” – Andy, Romney-voting Independent*

Among Obama-voting Independents who favored Jean’s position, we heard:

*“[I sided with Jean] because she’s kind of playing devil’s advocate. I don’t have any proof of what Carla was saying [is factual]. There’s intention behind it. I get what the [health care] reform was created for and the intention behind it. So far, with regard to people getting rebates and things like that, I can tell you I pay \$700 a month in premiums for myself, my husband who’s had a heart condition, and to insure three of my children under the age of 26 because they can’t get jobs that have [health] insurance. I’ve been paying that for over 18 months. [I’m] absolutely not [seeing the benefits that Carla described]. Actually, I’m still seeing some of the things that Jean was describing. [I like] what [Jean] is saying with regard to big corporations getting [a break from Obamacare]. I understand that they’re putting a hold on that—on the mandate for large corporations because they can’t get it together, but that’s not helping me. I work for a large corporation and that hasn’t helped me so far. [I viewed that as one of Jean’s stronger points] and that it’s truthful whereas Carla was kind of fluffy to me.” – Paula, Obama-voting Independent*

Obama-voting Independents who favored Carla’s position explained:

*“I’m an optimist. We have to do something [about our health care system]. I work in health care. I’ve been working in it for 30 years and if somebody didn’t take a stand—and that’s why I like Obama. At least he took a stand, got the topic on the table, and said, ‘We’ve got to deal with this.’ I look at the government—we’re paying so much in Medicaid now for people, why can’t we be fair across the board to everybody, to the hard-working people? It really saddens me when I see a family of three or four come in that has to make the decision when they need an emergency surgery and they look at me and say, ‘I can’t afford it. I’ll lose my house.’ Then I have somebody else on Medicaid who comes in and doesn’t really care. I think [Carla] is really trying to put [the health care issue] out there—that something has to be done. There’s going to be faults in it, but let’s be positive, move forward, and see what we can do.” – Linda, Obama-voting Independent*

*“[I sided with Carla because of] the affordability piece for everyone as well as the rebate thing is something that I didn’t even know existed. When I saw that [I thought] at least*

*[health insurance companies are] giving back something to the consumers. I also liked the point she made that [the Affordable Care Act] is not perfect right now. She acknowledged that, but it's a step in the right direction, and it's one step in the process to get ultimately where they want to be. [I liked] her honesty in that." – Shanna, Obama-voting Independent*

We asked Romney-voting Independents if there is anything that Jean did not say that she could have said that would have strengthened her argument. Respondents in that group told us that Jean should have said who is going to benefit from the Obamacare fines and who is going to oversee Obamacare. Respondents in that group also told us that Jean should have said that Obamacare promotes more big government and that we should have the choice about whether or not we are going to buy health insurance.

We also asked the nine Obama-voting Independents who sided with Carla if they would describe themselves as “on the fence” about whom to side with in the point-counterpoint debate. Four of the nine Obama-voting Independents who sided with Carla described themselves as “on the fence.” We asked those respondents what Jean could have said that would have caused them to side with her. Among those respondents, we heard that Jean should not have taken shots at big business because they are employing a lot of people, she could have toned down or changed some of her all-or-nothing statements, and she could have been more positive and talk about the direction that she would like to head toward in reforming our health care system.

We also asked respondents if they were troubled by the fact that Jean did not present an alternative health care plan.

Almost all Romney-voting Independents were not troubled that Jean did not present an alternative health care plan because they did not see that as the purpose of her argument, although some in that group think it would have made her argument better.

Most Obama-voting Independents were troubled that Jean did not present a health care plan. In fact, many of those respondents told us that they would have viewed Jean more positively if she had presented a plan.

- 2) Independents are continuing to see health care inflation, even with the Affordable Care Act. However, Obama-voting Independents do not believe that the Affordable Care Act will harm our health care.

During the dial test video, the advocate for the Democrats, Carla, said the following:

The Affordable Care Act is doing what it was designed to do: deliver more choices, better benefits, a check on rising costs, and higher quality care.

At this point in the dial test video, Romney-voting Independents turned their dials down from 24 to 20 (on a zero to 100 scale of agreement) and Obama-voting Independents turned their dials down from 75 to 68 (on a zero to 100 scale of agreement).

During the dial test video, Carla also said the following:

We've got a lot more work to do, but health care inflation is not skyrocketing the way it was.

At this point in the dial test video, Romney-voting Independents turned their dials down from 50 to 33 (on a zero to 100 scale of agreement) and Obama-voting Independents turned their dials down from 77 to 73 (on a zero to 100 scale of agreement).

These responses with their dials caused us to ask Independents in each session what type of health care inflation they are seeing.

Ten of the 11 Romney-voting Independents told us that their health care premiums have increased since last year—and for many, those increases are significant. One respondent told us that her health insurance premiums have doubled or tripled in the past three years. Almost all respondents (10 of 11) in that group told us that they are paying more money for less health care coverage. And it's not just premiums that are rising—deductibles and co-pays are increasing, as well. One respondent in that group told us that his health insurance premiums are the same as last year.

Among Obama-voting Independents, nine respondents have seen their health insurance premiums increase, two respondents have seen their premiums stay the same, and one has seen his premiums go down in the past year.

Interestingly, Obama-voting Independents turned their dials down from 61 to 49 (on a zero to 100 scale of agreement) when Jean, the GOP advocate, said the following:

We know that Obamacare is going to harm our health care, raise our costs, and that's what you're seeing today as families face significant increases in premiums.

We asked Obama-voting Independents why they turned their dials down at this point. Some told us that they were not disagreeing with the idea that health care costs have gone up. They were disagreeing with the idea that the Affordable Care Act is going to harm our health care.

- 3) There is some support among Obama-voting Independents for exempting individuals from the Affordable Care Act as businesses are being exempt, as well. For them, this is an issue of fairness.

During the dial test video, the GOP advocate, Jean, said the following:

There's no fairness when big businesses in this country are getting an exemption from the Obamacare mandates, but American families aren't.

Because let's be fair about this: If the President's going to help out businesses by exempting them from the law, he ought to give the same relief to folks like you.

Obama-voting Independents, on average, turned their dials up from 58 to 69 (on a zero to 100 scale of agreement) when Jean made this argument. In that group, we heard that if big businesses are getting a break, individuals should as well. Respondents in that group see this as an issue of fairness. In their minds, both businesses and individuals should be treated equally.

Note: We did not discuss this issue with Romney-voting Independents.

- 4) Overall, about half of Independents do not know anything about the sequester, but most **generally think it's** bad for the U.S. economy

During each session, we asked respondents what they know about the sequester.

Five of the 11 Romney-voting Independents told us that they know what the sequester is. In that group, we heard:

- The sequester was imposed by the President to get Congressional Republicans to the table to negotiate a budget deal. Because that didn't happen, expenditures were cut.
- Federal funding for education, health care, and welfare have been frozen.
- Federal workers are facing furloughs, which is cutting their paychecks.
- The sequester cuts programs that are being used and does not cut programs that are not being used.
- Some military benefits are being cut.
- The sequester is an attempt to try to balance the federal budget.
- It is being used to reduce expenses in the government, especially in defense and overtime for federal workers.
- It's a fight over the U.S. budget.

Seven of the 12 Obama-voting Independents told us that they know what the sequester is. In that group, we heard:

- It is a fight that is taking place in trying to work out a budget deal.
- Cutbacks due to the sequester include the Fourth of July fireworks and jets flying over sporting events.
- The sequester is automatic spending cuts that were instituted by Congress that are happening in phases.
- Funding is being cut for aerospace contracts.
- The sequester was created as a failsafe to cut spending automatically in case Congress was unable to reach a budget deal.
- The sequester is in effect, Congress is still in a stalemate, and nothing is being done to address the spending cuts.

During each session, we asked respondents:

*Is the sequester good or bad for the U.S. economy?*

Among Romney-voting Independents, two respondents think the sequester is good for the U.S. economy, one is neutral, and eight respondents think it is bad for the U.S. economy.

Romney-voting Independents who believe that the sequester is good for the U.S. economy told us that we need a budget plan because we cannot continue to spend money blindly. While the sequester is not a budget plan, it is cutting spending and reducing the deficit, which is good for our economy.

The Romney-voting Independent who told us that she is neutral explained:

*“I see [the sequester] as good if we could cut the right things, but [the President and Congress] are not willing to cut the right things, and so I see it then as bad. I think the idea that we’re going to stop spending until we get a budget that is rational is a good idea. I don’t think we just should pass [a budget for the sake of passing a budget].” – Barbara, Romney-voting Independent*

Romney-voting Independents who told us that the sequester is bad for the U.S. economy told us that the Congressional stalemate hurts our economy and that we are cutting spending in the wrong places, such as in education. We heard that we should stop sending money to other countries and take care of our own first. One respondent explained:

*“I think to me [the sequester] seems a lot like political grandstanding and bickering. I think when you have a system that continues to bicker, in no way is that good for the economy. You model that for your citizens that you can fight and get nowhere, and then meanwhile, you’re wasting all this money. There’s no clear leadership. There’s no direction for the country right now. We have [politicians as] bedfellows with corporations. I think that’s a pretty poor state right now. It’s not giving us a direction to go to fix the issues that we’re having.” – Andy, Romney-voting Independent*

Among Obama-voting Independents, none of the respondents think that the sequester is good for the U.S. economy, six are neutral, and six think it is bad for the U.S. economy.

Obama-voting Independents who think the sequester is bad for the U.S. economy told us that we are not doing anything to balance the budget and that is hurting the economy, politicians in Washington, DC are getting paid to fix this problem and they are not doing it—and that’s money out of the budget, and the sequester is a short-term solution. We also heard that the sequester is causing uncertainty in the market and there aren’t enough foreign investments in the U.S. as a result. In addition, we heard that the sequester is hurting the morale of the country and it’s negatively impacting people’s lives, particularly federal workers who are being furloughed, and that hurts the U.S. economy.

Obama-voting Independents who are neutral about this question about whether the sequester is good or bad for the U.S. economy generally believe that the sequester is bad but that it does have some benefits, such as cutting spending in a way that will reduce our deficit.

- 5) Most Independents are unfamiliar with the position of both President Obama and Congressional Republicans on the sequester.

During each session, we asked respondents:

*What is President Obama's position on the sequester?*

In our session with Romney-voting Independents, no one was confident that he or she could tell us President Obama's position on the sequester. One respondent in that group told us that she thinks that President Obama wants to use the sequester as a way to penalize Congress and the American people. In her view, President Obama supports keeping the sequester in place unless he gets what he wants in a budget deal, which would involve spending grandiose amounts of money.

Obama-voting Independents are split on what the position of President Obama is on the sequester. Six of the 12 Obama-voting Independents believe that the President supports the sequester. One respondent in that group told us that President Obama signed an executive order to start the sequester process, but it is the responsibility of Congress, which holds the purse strings, to give him a workable budget. In this respondent's view, until that happens, the President is willing to allow the sequester to play out.

During each session, we also asked:

*What is Congressional Republicans' position on the sequester?*

Most Romney-voting Independents have not heard Congressional Republicans talk about the sequester. One respondent told us that Congressional Republicans do not agree with what is being cut, and they want to change what is being cut. In her view, that is where the problem is and why Congress is unable to come to an agreement. Another respondent believes that Congressional Republicans are trying to pass some bills in the House of Representatives that would change some of the aspects of the sequester, but those bills have not gone through the Democratic Senate and the President has promised to veto those bills. We also heard that Congressional Republicans are unwilling to give in to the Democrats' desire for more spending and an enormous budget.

Among Obama-voting Independents, 11 of the 12 respondents told us that they could not tell us what the Congressional Republicans' position is on the sequester. The one respondent who believes he knows the Congressional Republicans' position on this issue told us that Congressional Republicans want to address the mandated entitlement programs, including Social Security and Medicare. In that session, we also heard that Congressional Republicans likely have an opposing position on the sequester than President Obama because they would support what he opposes, or they would oppose what he supports.

- 6) Almost all Independents think it is believable that Congressional Republicans want to cut spending beyond what the sequester requires and all Independents think it is believable that President Obama opposes cutting spending beyond what the sequester requires.

During each session, we asked respondents the following question:

*Is it believable that Congressional Republicans want to cut spending beyond what the sequester requires?*

Ten of the 11 Romney-voting Independents think it is believable that Congressional Republicans want to cut spending beyond what the sequester requires, and one respondent is unsure. All 12 Obama-voting Independents think that is believable, as well.

During each session, we also asked respondents the following question:

*Is it believable that President Obama opposes cutting spending beyond what the sequester requires?*

All 11 Romney-voting Independents think it is believable that President Obama opposes cutting spending beyond what the sequester requires. All 12 Obama-voting Independents agree.

Note: We did not have a discussion about this issue with respondents.

- 7) Almost all Independents think it is believable that a disagreement over how to handle the sequester, as well as future budget cuts, could lead to a government shutdown. If that were to occur, all Romney-voting Independents would blame President Obama; two-thirds (eight of 12) of the Obama-voting Independents would blame both Congressional Republicans and President Obama.

During each session, we asked:

*Is it believable that a disagreement over how to handle the sequester, as well as future budget cuts, could lead to a government shutdown.*

All 11 Romney-voting Independents think it is believable that a disagreement over how to handle the sequester, as well as future budget cuts, could lead to a government shutdown.

All 12 Obama-voting Independents agree. Some respondents told us that while that is believable, we usually get some kind of a deal at the last minute.

During each session, we also asked:

*If there were a government shutdown, would you be likelier to blame President Obama or House Republicans?*

All 11 Romney-voting Independents told us that they would likelier blame President Obama if there were a government shutdown. In our session, we heard that President Obama is supposed to be our leader and he is not leading. Also, we heard that President Obama is not being realistic about how much money we can spend, and he does not want to have a rational budget because he just wants to spend money.

Among Obama-voting Independents, none would blame only President Obama if there were a government shutdown, four respondents would blame only Congressional Republicans, and eight respondents would blame both President Obama and Congressional Republicans. Those who would blame only Congressional Republicans told us that looking at their track record, Congressional Republicans seem to consistently oppose the President’s agenda. Whatever the President is for, Congressional Republicans are against, in their view.

Toward the end of our discussion with respondents about the sequester, we asked:

*Which statement do you agree with more, and to what degree?*

	Romney-voting Independents	Obama-voting Independents	Total (avg.)
0=A government shutdown would occur as a consequence of Republicans protecting the wealthy at the expense of the nation’s economy and poor.	7.3	4.1	5.7
to			
10=A government shutdown would occur as a consequence of President Obama’s desire to take more taxes from the rich to fuel additional government spending.			

We asked respondents in each session who scored this question near the average for the group why they gave it the score they did.

In our session with Romney-voting Independents, we heard that President Obama wants additional government spending and wants to pay for it with higher taxes on the rich and at the same time, neither Congressional Republicans nor Congressional Democrats are interested in cutting wasteful spending.

In our session with Obama-voting Independents, we heard:

*“I hold both sides responsible although to me this really is kind of like they need to be there as a family, not as sides [that oppose each other]. This is the problem to begin with. There needs to be some unification here and vision as to what they’re really there to do. It’s not just to get their agenda. It’s to serve us as a nation. I went with 4 [on the zero to 10 scale on my dial] because I feel the Republicans are a little bit more*

*responsible [for the problem] than President Obama. I feel like he has really tried to reach out. He's tried to be a little more compromising. Do I get frustrated sometimes with him? Yes. But I just lean a little bit more toward feeling like the ultra-conservative Republicans are just being very, very bull-headed sometimes on certain things, especially in this area.” – Sue, Obama-voting Independent*

- 8) If President Obama were to shut down the government unless Republicans agree to replace the sequester with more tax increases, Independents would generally have a negative reaction. However, Independents would generally be more supportive of a government shutdown if they knew that the President and Congress were not getting paid, especially Obama-voting Independents.

During our discussion about the sequester, we asked respondents:

*If the President takes the position that he will shut down the government unless Republicans agree to replace the sequester with more tax increases, what will your reaction be?*

Among Romney-voting Independents, three of the 12 respondents told us that they would be upset if the government were shutdown in this manner. One respondent told us that she would be surprised. Another respondent wondered if President Obama would be out of a job if he shut down the government. One respondent asked if the President and Congress would continue to get paid if there were a government shutdown.

Obama-voting Independents indicated to us that their reaction would be negative, describing such a scenario as bold, demanding, stupid, and a hostage situation.

The question asked by the Romney-voting Independent caused us to ask respondents in each session if they would be more supportive of a government shutdown if they knew that the President and Congress were not getting paid. Six of the 11 Romney-voting Independents told us that they would be more supportive of a government shutdown in that case. Eleven of the 12 Obama-voting Independents agree.

- 9) Almost all Independents believe that shutting down the government is never justified to advance a policy goal

Toward the end of our discussion in each session about the sequester, we asked:

*Is shutting down the government ever justified to advance a policy goal?*

Nine of the 11 Romney-voting Independents believe that shutting down the government is never justified to advance a policy goal. One respondent explained:

*“[Shutting down the government to advance a policy goal] is the government equivalent of a little kid throwing a temper tantrum to get what he wants. Obama has a history of this. He folds his arms and looks the other way and has a hissy fit until he gets his way. That’s not what our government is founded on. Our government is founded on bringing people together—democracy—coming together, making decisions for the greater good, and that’s not what a government shutdown would do. That’s not for the greater good. That’s for the good of one political ideology which completely eliminates 50 percent of the rest of the population.” – Andy, Romney-voting Independent*

The two Romney-voting Independents who believe that shutting down the government could be justified to advance a policy goal, such as defunding Obamacare, told us that states would take responsibility for caring for their own people and the federal government would still fund the military and our national defense so they do not see a government shutdown as a big problem.

All 12 Obama-voting Independents agree that shutting down the government is never justified to advance a policy goal. One respondent explained:

*“We’ve all sat here for the last bit of time talking about compromising, for people to work together, and find a common agenda. That brinkmanship just doesn’t fly, I think, with most of us.” – Rob, Obama-voting Independent*

10) Obama-voting Independents are far more optimistic that the economy is improving than Romney-voting Independents, who mostly believe that the economy is staying as is or getting at least somewhat worse

In the beginning of each session, we asked respondents the following question:

*Compared to one year ago, is the U.S. economy...*

Answer choices	Romney-voting Independents	Obama-voting Independents	Total
1=getting much worse	1	0	1
2=getting somewhat worse	7	0	7
3=staying as is	2	3	5
4=getting somewhat better	1	7	8
5=getting much better	0	2	2

We asked respondents in each session who believe that compared to one year ago, the U.S. economy is getting at least somewhat worse or at least somewhat better what evidence they have for their belief.

Romney-voting Independents who believe that compared to one year ago, the U.S. economy is at least getting somewhat worse cited:

- Interest rates are starting to go back up

- The national debt clock has been frozen just below the debt limit for more than two months, which indicates that the federal government is manipulating the numbers
- The federal government is still printing money
- Gas prices are increasing
- Inflation is increasing
- There is no supply and demand logic in the current market
- We are not promoting manufacturing
- We are importing more and more items from China and other countries
- It's getting harder to find new clients for one respondent's small business
- Sales are down in one respondent's profession
- There's no way we're going to be able to pay off this debt that we've accrued so the national debt is going to continuously sink the U.S. economy

The only Romney-voting Independent who believes that compared to one year ago, the U.S. economy is getting at least somewhat better cited:

- Three people she knows who did not have jobs have gotten jobs in the past six months
- Her profession is in childcare and during the recession, enrollment tanked. However, enrollment has been going back up, which to her, indicates that the children's parents are getting jobs.

Obama-voting Independents who believe that compared to one year ago, the U.S. economy is at least getting somewhat better cited:

- The real estate market, at least in the Denver area, is improving
- The job market is improving—there are a lot more job openings
- One respondent's small business is improving
- A lot of building construction is going on, which indicates that people are now more willing to invest their money
- Automobile sales are more robust
- Improved financing opportunities (less restrictive)
- Improving stock market
- People seem to be more optimistic about the economy

Note: None of the Obama-voting Independents believe that the U.S. economy, compared to one year ago, is getting at least somewhat worse.

11) Obama-voting Independents are far more optimistic than Romney-voting Independents that the unemployment rate will be lower in the U.S. a year from today

In the beginning of each session, we asked respondents the following question:

*The unemployment rate in the U.S. now stands at 7.6%. A year from today, do you expect it to be...*

Answer choices	Romney-voting Independents	Obama-voting Independents	Total
1=Under 5%	0	0	0
2=Between 5% and 6%	0	1	1
3=Between 6% and 7%	2	6	8
4=Between 7% and 8%	4	5	9
5=Between 8% and 9%	3	0	3
6=Between 9% and 10%	0	0	0
7=Above 10%	2	0	2

Seven of 12 Obama-voting Independents believe that the unemployment rate will fall from its current level of 7.6% to 7% and under a year from today. The other five Obama-voting Independents believe that the unemployment rate will remain in the 7% to 8% range one year from today. Only two of 11 Romney-voting Independents believe that the unemployment rate will fall from its current level of 7.6% to 7% and under a year from today. Five Romney-voting Independents believe that the unemployment rate will increase from its current level of 7.6% to above 8% a year from today.

Note: We did not have a discussion about this issue with respondents.

12) Independents are not closely following the current debate in Congress over immigration

In each session, we asked respondents:

*On a scale from zero to 10, how closely have you been following the current debate in Congress over immigration?*

	Romney-voting Independents	Obama-voting Independents	Total (avg.)
0=Not at all closely to 10=Very closely	4.9	5.0	5.0

Note: We did not discuss this issue with respondents.

13) Romney-voting Independents are split on whether they prefer a step-by-step approach or a comprehensive approach to immigration reform. Most Obama-voting Independents prefer a comprehensive approach.

In each session, we asked respondents:

*When it comes to immigration reform, do you prefer...*

	Romney-voting Independents	Obama-voting Independents	Total
1=a step-by-step approach	5	4	9
2=a comprehensive approach	6	8	14

We asked respondents in each session to tell us why they prefer one approach more than the other.

Romney-voting Independents who prefer a step-by-step approach explained:

*“I think [with] comprehensive [reform], you get yourself into trouble. We have Obamacare for comprehensive [health care reform]. I think if you systematically work a little bit at a time, you’re going to get to your end goal whereas if you comprehensively take this huge, huge mess and start working every little angle at once, you’re just going to wind up with a bigger mess.” – Andy, Romney-voting Independent*

*“What they’re talking about is very broad and very expansive, which is the comprehensive [approach]. Unfortunately, there’s going to be a lot of things that are going to get swept under the rug so that they can have their stronger fences, more border guards. The border security is one issue. Immigration is another [issue].” – Keith, Romney-voting Independent*

Obama-voting Independents who prefer a step-by-step approach told us:

*“I think whenever you come for a big change like that, you’re trying to introduce a huge policy which is going to affect millions of lives, and also, when it comes to the economy, it’s going to affect resorts [and] travel. There’s a lot of agricultural [aspects] when you talk about the economy and the immigrants that come in and help with those types of jobs. I think a step-by-step approach [is the way to go] when you introduce something that is going to change or affect so many people’s lives. It’s a process. You can’t just do it overnight. To be accepted, it will have to be a step-by-step process or you’re going to have a lot of very unhappy people.” – Linda, Obama-voting Independent*

*“I think a step-by-step approach and breaking it down into something smaller since it is such a big issue might be more helpful to get the process going because I think it’s going to take a long time to come to an agreement on one comprehensive approach [to immigration reform].” – Shanna, Obama-voting Independent*

Obama-voting Independents who prefer a comprehensive approach explained:

*“[I support a comprehensive immigration reform plan] because I don’t think we have to start from the ground. We already have immigration laws in place. We haven’t done anything with those as far as implementing the things that we have in place already so*

*we're not starting from the ground. If you take a look at how immigration happens in other countries, it is point blank. It is this way, and if you want to be a citizen, you do this. I think that if we stretch it out over a step-by-step process, then you're going to change guards as far as the White House and Congress is concerned. You'll never get an agreement because you may change from a Democratic president to a Republican president and over a period of time, it's just going to hang [causing reform not to happen]. If you don't do it all at once, if you don't put the plan in place all at once, then the step-by-step [approach] is going to take years to implement." – Kenneth, Obama-voting Independent*

*"The sooner we get [immigration reform] in place and we have these immigrants become citizens, the sooner they start paying taxes. We need more money so the sooner we get more taxes, that's like a bonus." – Shirley-Anne, Obama-voting Independent*

*"I just think you've got to strike while the iron is hot, while the plans are in place, while people are really engaged in it. I think if you do a step-by-step [approach], there's going to be some fall off. There [are] going to be changes. I think you should start with something [comprehensive]." – Christine, Obama-voting Independent*

Among Romney-voting Independents who prefer a comprehensive approach, we heard:

*"[Immigration] is a big issue, and I think you do need to look at all the pieces and evaluate whether it is going to affect the nation as a whole. On this particular matter, since our immigration laws are fairly loose and our borders are fairly open, I feel like if you do take a step-by-step approach to it, people who want to get into America will see the writing on the wall. We'll get more and more flooding into our country to try to beat whatever steps are making it more and more difficult [to enter the U.S.]." – Jason, Romney-voting Independent*

14) It is only moderately important to Independents that an immigration reform law is passed this year. Most Independents do not want to rush immigration reform because it is more important to them that we end up with a good immigration reform law that works than getting it done this year.

In each session, we asked respondents:

*On a scale from zero to 10, how important is it to you that an immigration reform law is passed this year?*

	Romney-voting Independents	Obama-voting Independents	Total (avg.)
0=Not at all important to 10=Very important	5.0	5.8	5.4

We asked respondents in each session who scored this question near the average for the group why they gave it the score they did.

In our session with Romney-voting Independents, we heard that they want a good immigration reform law that is going to work as soon as possible, but if the process is rushed, it could turn into a nightmare, like Obamacare.

In our session with Obama-voting Independents, we heard that immigration reform needs to be done—just not overnight. It's an important issue, but we shouldn't rush into it and ignore other important issues that are facing our nation. One respondent explained:

*"I'm fearful that if it were completed by the end of this year, given what's going on with the sequester, that things are going to get overlooked. I think a comprehensive plan takes a little time and we've got a little time. We don't have forever but [we have] more than six months." – Paula, Obama-voting Independent*

#### 15) Few Independents know who the "DREAMers" are.

During our discussion about immigration in each session, we asked respondents if they know who the "DREAMers" are.

In our session with Romney-voting Independents, four of the 11 respondents told us that they know who the "DREAMers" are.

Initially, none of the Obama-voting Independents could tell us who the "DREAMers" are. When one respondent asked if the "DREAMers" are related to the DREAM Act, we asked respondents if they had ever heard of the DREAM Act. Eight of the 12 Obama-voting Independents told us that they have heard of the DREAM Act.

#### 16) Both Romney-voting Independents and Obama-voting Independents are split on whether it makes sense, as part of a step-by-step approach to immigration reform, to give legal status to children of undocumented individuals. Some Independents in each group agreed with the idea that giving legal status to the children of undocumented individuals would constitute **"giving citizenship to children while deporting their parents."**

In each session, we asked respondents the following question:

*As part of a step-by-step approach, does it make sense to give legal status to children of undocumented individuals?*

Among Romney-voting Independents, five of the 11 respondents told us that it does make sense to give legal status to children of undocumented individuals. The other six respondents in that group disagreed.

Among Obama-voting Independents, seven of the 12 respondents told us that it does make sense to give legal status to children of undocumented individuals. The other five respondents in that group disagreed.

Romney-voting Independents who support that idea told us that they have a soft-spot for taking care of children, many of these children only know English, the U.S. is the only place they have ever known as home, sending them back to their home country does not help anyone, and we should let them pay taxes.

We asked those respondents in each group who object to giving legal status to children of undocumented individuals why they oppose that idea. Among Romney-voting Independents, we heard:

*“I just think that we have laws, and right is right and wrong is wrong. They’re born there. They are citizens there unless something else has changed [such as] green cards [and] citizenship later on. I realize that the concept is that we’re penalizing the three year old for what the parents did. We do that all the time when the parents do something illegal. If you’re dealing in heroin and you have a three year old and you go to prison, you’re penalizing that child for what the parent did because you did something illegal. I believe that the law is the law and that they should be following it just like everybody else. Let me just say that I’m speaking from where I have cousins and everything else that have come up here—my generation— that are all immigrants. They came legally, but they’re immigrants, and they went through this system. They learned English and all this other stuff so it’s not like I don’t know how difficult it is, but I do think that laws are laws. It’s useless if we just decide, ‘Well, we’re not going to apply it to you because you came when you were five [years old], but you’re screwed because you came at 17 [years old].’ That’s wrong.” – Barbara, Romney-voting Independent*

*“If something happens to the family, we’ve now let this child be legal. If his parents are illegal, we could be splitting up a family now. There’s no one to take care of this legal child and that is purely the main reason [I oppose this idea]. Who’s going to take care of this legal child when his illegal parents are gone? You’re just abandoning a child here.” – Teresa, Romney-voting Independent*

Among Obama-voting Independents who oppose giving legal status to children of undocumented individuals, we heard that we all came to this country as undocumented and those children just need to go through the process of obtaining legal status like everyone else. Obama-voting Independents do not see their opposition as a punishment to those children.

We also asked respondents in each session:

*Some people say that giving legal status to the children of undocumented individuals would constitute “giving citizenship to children while deporting their parents.” Who agrees with that assessment?*

Four of the 11 Romney-voting Independents agree with that assessment. Six of the 12 Obama-voting Independents agree with that assessment, as well. There was concern in each group about who would take care of the children of undocumented individuals if they were given legal status and their parents were deported.

17) There is no support among Independents for rounding up the estimated 11 million illegal immigrants and deporting them

During our discussion about immigration in each session, we asked:

*Does anyone in this room support rounding up the estimated 11 million illegal immigrants and deporting them? If yes, how would you go about doing that?*

None of the respondents in either group supports rounding up the estimated 11 million illegal immigrants and deporting them.

As a follow-up question, we asked:

*Can I interpret your answer to the last question to mean that all of you support a pathway to citizenship for the illegal immigrants already in the U.S.?*

All of the respondents in each group—except one Romney-voting Independent—support a pathway to citizenship for the illegal immigrants in the U.S. The only Romney-voting Independent who does not totally support a pathway to citizenship for the illegal immigrants already in the U.S. told us that while it is not practical to send them back to their home country, she does not believe it is necessary to give them a pathway to citizenship. She supports giving *some* of the illegal immigrants a pathway to citizenship, but only those who get educated and work for a living.

Note: This Romney-voting Independent did not explain to us what she would want to do with the illegal immigrants already in the U.S. who do not get educated and work for a living.