Research release – February 17, 2021

Strong public support for rebuilding America’s refugee program
New policy that gives Americans the chance to be directly involved has a 22-point margin of support

Key findings

Restoring America’s refugee program is supported by a margin of 49-39% of Americans, a 10-point margin, according to a national YouGov poll commissioned by nonprofit More in Common.

But support for rebuilding the refugee program more than doubles to a 22-point margin (55-33%) when linked to the opportunity of direct involvement through sponsoring refugees, a central plank in the new Administration’s plan to rebuild the US Refugee Admissions Policy.

The policy giving Americans a direct stake in welcoming refugees, whether individually or through groups such as local churches, neighborhood groups and schools, was announced by President Biden and Secretary Blinken on February 4.

A striking finding is that the opportunity for Americans to get more involved in welcoming refugees makes the policy both more popular among liberals, and less unpopular among conservatives – something that is rare in a time of deep polarization. For example, while opposition to rebuilding the refugee program is high among Americans who identify as ‘very conservative’ (78%), the sponsorship policy reduces opposition to 72%. One in five Americans who voted for President Trump in the 2020 election support the new Administration’s policy.

In addition:

- The new policy is supported a margin of three to one Americans under the age of 45 (65-19%), while more Americans over 65 oppose it (50-41%).
- Black Americans strongly support the rebuilding of the refugee program – especially when given the chance for direct involvement (with support rising from 53% to 67%).
• Religious Americans are more supportive of welcoming refugees when given the opportunity for sponsorship, with the largest effect among Catholics who support the policy by a 9-point margin (50-41%, compared to 43-45% when the sponsorship policy is not mentioned). Among Evangelicals, 42% support the policy, and 45% oppose.

• Support for rebuilding the refugee program is strongly related to a person’s party identification and ideology. Among self-identified ‘very liberal’ Americans there is 93% support, falling to 57% among moderates and 24% among ‘very conservative’ Americans.

• Support varies substantially by educational attainment, but not by income. While those making $100K+ are about as likely to support the policy as those making less than $30,000 (60% versus 58%), postgraduates are much more likely than high school graduates to support it (76% versus 45%).

Details

Following announcements by President Biden and Secretary Blinken on February 4, 2021 about the restoration of the US Refugee Admissions Program (USRAP), More in Common commissioned YouGov to test public attitudes. The research was conducted on February 10-12, with two groups each comprising a representative sample of 1000 adults (total 2000). More in Common is a nonpartisan nonprofit group that works to build a more united America that is resilient against division and polarization. For enquiries: Stephen Hawkins, Research Director: stephen@moreincommon.com