

What about white mainliners and immigration reform?

by [Tyler Day](#)

April 9, 2013

*The Century recently welcomed a new online-editorial intern: Tyler Day, who has a masters in theology from Boston University and is working on another in journalism at Northwestern. Below is his first post for us; we look forward to more. —Ed.*

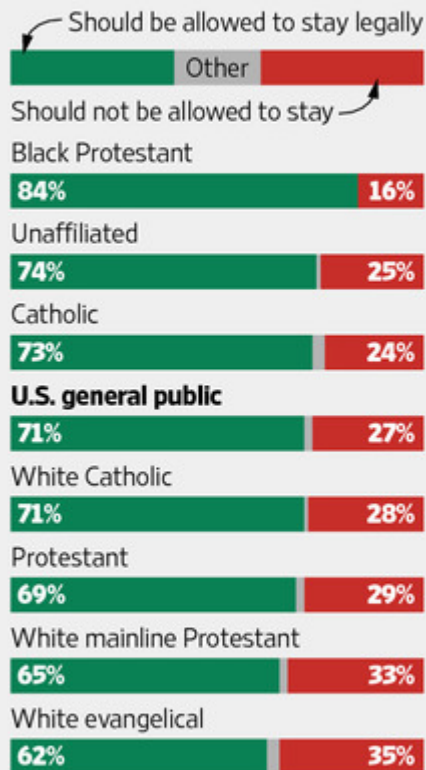
If you happened upon the front page of the *Wall Street Journal* [today] you saw the headline, “Evangelicals Push Immigration Path.” It’s one of several recent articles focused on white evangelicals’ changing tune when it comes to legal paths to citizenship. Megachurch pastors are willing to lose members over the issue. The National Association of Evangelicals is organizing a campaign to educate and prod congregations to political action.

The *Journal* piece illustrates this renovation tale with a chart based on a Pew Research Center poll:

## A Matter of Faith

**Poll results:**

### HOW TO DEAL WITH PEOPLE IN THE U.S. ILLEGALLY



Note: Whites and blacks include only those who are not Hispanic. Source: Pew Research Center telephone poll of 1,501 adults conducted March 13-17, 2013; margin of error for full sample is: +/-2.9 percentage points

The Wall Street Journal

But the chart also dramatizes a different story. White mainline Protestants are now just slightly more likely than white evangelicals to support a path to citizenship, and less likely than the general public. White mainliners—supposed stakeholders of a progressive politic—aren't exactly carrying the banner of justice here.

For years, evangelicals have been told that their social ethic is out of touch. Maybe that pressure has helped spark some honest reflection that has led to transformation. Does the wider culture put any similar pressure on mainline Protestants?

In any case, 71 percent of the general public now supports a legal path to citizenship. White evangelicals may be getting an inordinate amount of attention in the press, but perhaps this has helped get us to this moment: a moment when real

immigration reform seems possible, even probable.