



WAVE

POLLING AND RESEARCH

The Ground Has Shifted on Immigration

Findings from Wave polling in 2026

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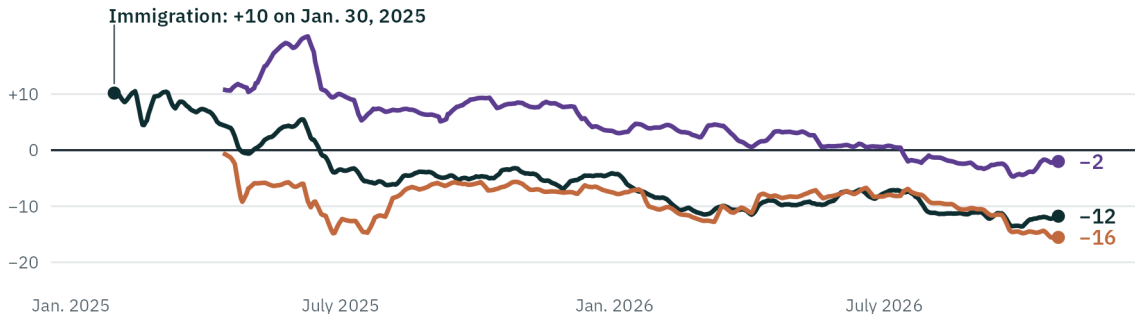
1. Opinion has shifted

Trump's immigration ratings, and which party the public trusts

Trump's best issue has become a liability

Net approval (% approve minus % disapprove) of Trump's handling of each issue, average of all public polls

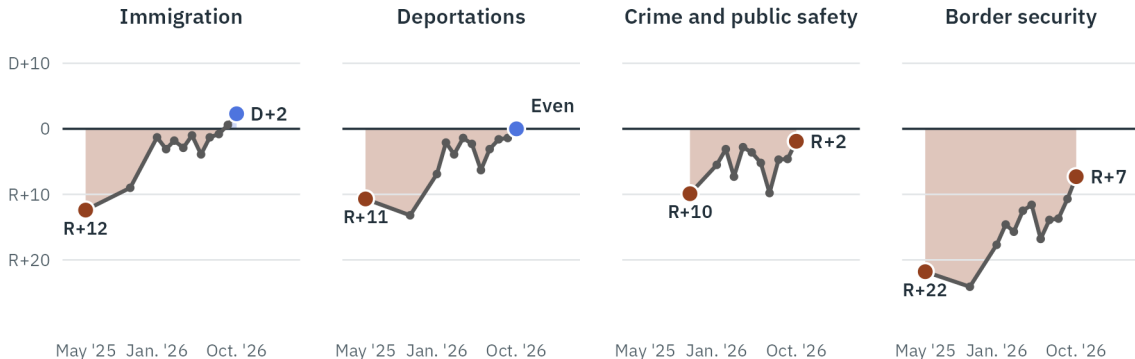
● Immigration ● Deportations ● Border security



Source: FiftyPlusOne average of public polls of adults and registered voters, Jan. 30, 2025-Oct. 26, 2026. Deportations begins in June 2025. Border security isn't a published FiftyPlusOne series: Wave averaged its polls with the same method, from April 2025, once five polls had asked about it.

Democrats now have the edge on immigration

Margin (Democrats minus Republicans) when U.S. adults are asked which party will do a better job handling each issue



Source: Strength In Numbers/Verasight monthly polls of U.S. adults, May 2025-Oct. 2026. Points mark each poll: May and Oct. 2025, then monthly from Jan. 2026. Crime and public safety was first asked in Oct. 2025.

2. The economic costs

What voters think mass deportation is doing to the economy

Most voters say mass deportation is raising costs, not protecting jobs

% of registered voters choosing each answer. Gray: neither, or not sure.

Mass deportation of all immigrant workers...

...is hurting the economy and raising costs for families

**...regardless of how long they have lived in America,
is necessary to protect American jobs and enforce the law**



The bigger reason wages for people like you haven't kept up with the cost of living:

Large corporations holding wages down

Immigrants competing for jobs



The Trump administration is focusing too much on deportations and not enough on the economy and cost of living

Agree

Disagree

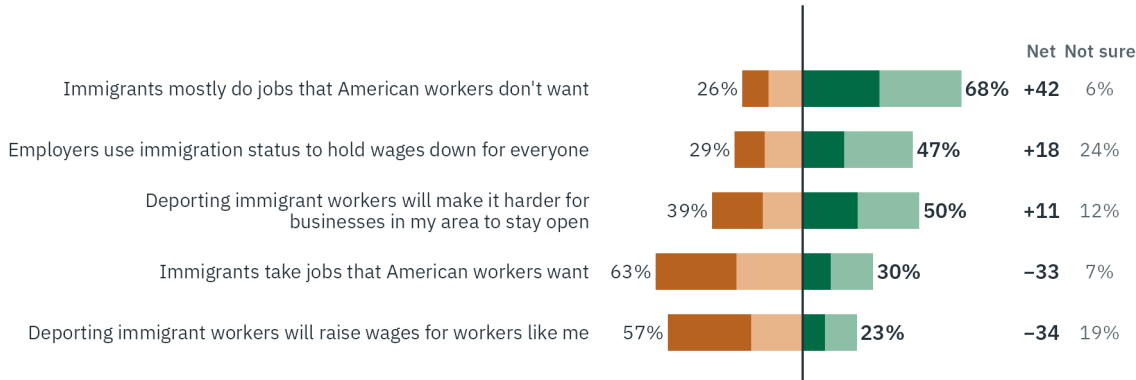


Source: Wave Polling and Research poll, Sept. 30-Oct. 5, 2026, N=1,000 U.S. registered voters. The first question offered only these two answers.

Only 23% think deporting immigrant workers would raise their wages

Agreement with each statement, asked separately (disagree to the left, agree to the right); sorted by net agreement

Strongly disagree Somewhat disagree Somewhat agree Strongly agree



Source: Wave Polling and Research poll, Sept. 30-Oct. 5, 2026, N=1,000 U.S. registered voters. Net = % agree minus % disagree.

Every state and group says mass deportation is hurting the economy

% giving the answer shown to each question, asked separately ("not sure" included in the base)

	By state			By group: all three polls pooled			
	National n=1,000 ±3	Florida n=1,030 ±4	Pennsylvania n= 502 ±6	Latino n= 309 ±8	Black n= 199 ±9	AAPI n= 63 ±17	Under \$50k n= 681 ±5
Mass deportation is hurting the economy and raising costs	62%	60%	59%	74%	79%	76%	66%
Administration too focused on deportations, not the economy	64%	60%	62%	76%	85%	78%	73%
Bigger reason wages lag: corporations, not immigrants	59%	52%	61%	69%	69%	63%	58%
Immigrants mostly do jobs Americans don't want (agree)	68%	66%	64%	80%	66%	77%	66%
Disagree that deporting immigrant workers will raise wages	57%	55%	58%	64%	45%	71%	49%

Source: Wave Polling and Research polls of 1,000 U.S., 1,030 Florida and 502 Pennsylvania registered voters, Sept. 30-Oct. 5, 2026. Latino: any race. Groups pool all three polls, with Florida and Pennsylvania weighted to their shares of U.S. voters (6.2%, 4.3%). AAPI: Asian American/Pacific Islander.

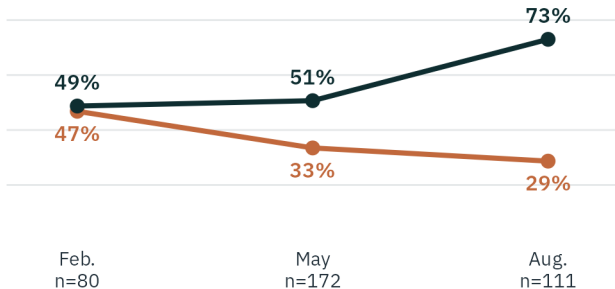
3. Immigration and the vote

Why some of Trump's 2024 voters have turned away

Early defectors cited immigration as often as the economy; now it's costs

% of defecting 2024 Trump voters naming each among the biggest reasons their view changed (up to three)

- The economy and cost of living
- An immigration reason



Source: Wave Polling and Research polls, 2026. Defectors: 2024 Trump voters who no longer back the Republican for Congress.

- **Early on, immigration rivaled the economy.** In February, 47% of defectors named an immigration reason; 49% named the economy.
- **Now it's the cost of living.** By August: 73% the economy, 29% immigration.
- **Immigration still predicts who left.** In August, approving of Trump on deportations went with a 22-point lower chance of defecting, holding five other issue ratings constant, the largest effect of the six.

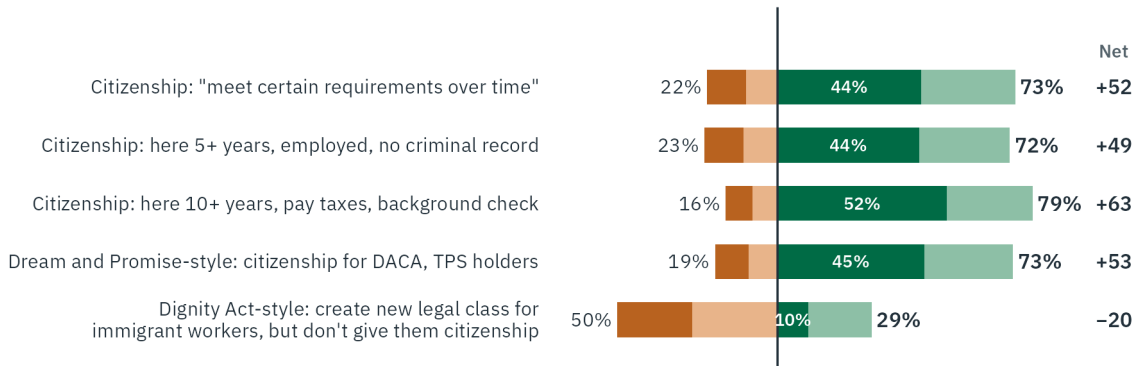
4. A path to citizenship

How it polls against legal status without citizenship, and where it ranks

Citizenship wins in every version; Dignity Act-style status loses

Support and opposition for each proposal, asked separately. The questions did not name the bills.

Strongly oppose Somewhat oppose Somewhat support Strongly support



Source: Wave Polling and Research poll, Sept. 30-Oct. 5, 2026, N=1,000 U.S. registered voters. The first, second and fourth were asked as standalone questions; the ten-year and legal-status items in a battery of 14 policies.

Citizenship is a priority, not just popular

3rd of 14

A path to citizenship ranked 3rd in priority among all voters

Its priority score (+21) sits just behind investigating ICE killings and detention deaths (+26) and is statistically tied with investigating detention-center contracts (+18).

MaxDiff: each voter saw 14 immigration policies four at a time, picking the highest and lowest priority for the next Congress on each screen. Priority score: % of times picked highest when shown minus % picked lowest. Path to citizenship: here at least ten years, pay taxes, pass a background check. Source: Wave Polling and Research poll, Sept. 30–Oct. 5, 2026, N=1,000 U.S. registered voters.

Key takeaways

- **Opinion has shifted.** Trump's net approval on immigration has gone from +10 at the start of his term to -12. Democrats now edge out Republicans as the party trusted on immigration (D+2, from R+12 in May 2025).
- **Voters see mass deportation as an economic cost.** 62% say mass deportation of immigrant workers is hurting the economy and raising costs for families, as do majorities in Florida and Pennsylvania. Only 23% think deporting immigrant workers would raise their wages.
- **Immigration helped start the defection from Trump.** In February, 47% of his 2024 voters who had turned away named an immigration reason, about as many as named the economy. By August, costs dominated.
- **Citizenship beats legal status alone.** 79% back a path to citizenship for immigrants here ten years or more who pay taxes and pass a background check. A Dignity Act-style legal status without citizenship loses, 29-50.
- **It's a priority, too.** A path to citizenship ranked 3rd in priority among all voters, of 14 immigration policies.

About the data

- **Citizenship, priorities and the economy:** Wave Polling and Research poll of 1,000 U.S. registered voters, Sept. 30–Oct. 5, 2026, conducted online by Verasight and matched to the voter file. Margin of sampling error ± 3.4 points.
- **States and groups:** Wave Polling and Research polls of 1,030 Florida (± 4.4) and 502 Pennsylvania (± 5.6) registered voters, fielded alongside the national poll. Group figures pool all three polls, with Florida and Pennsylvania weighted to their shares of U.S. voters.
- **Defectors:** Wave Polling and Research polls of 1,500 U.S. adults, Feb. 6–10, 2026; 2,000 U.S. adults, May 18–20, 2026 (a national sample of 1,000 plus a 1,000-person low-income oversample, weighted together); and 1,591 registered voters, Aug. 7–11, 2026. All conducted online by Verasight.
- **Party trust:** Strength In Numbers/Verasight monthly polls of U.S. adults, May 2025–October 2026.
- **Trump approval:** FiftyPlusOne average of public polls, January 2025–October 26, 2026.



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Thank You

Questions?

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