WAVE
POLLING AND RESEARCH

Immigration Policy & the 2026 Political Landscape

Findings from national and Minnesota surveys

G. Elliott Morris

Wave Polling and Research

February 2026

Key findings at a glance

1. **Wrong priorities:** 69% of Americans say the administration focuses too much on deportations and not enough on the economy
2. **Trump's coalition is fracturing:** ~14% of 2024 Trump voters have defected — immigration is a top driver
3. **Immigration enforcement hurts the GOP:** Pushes more voters away than it attracts; 51% view GOP less favorably
4. **Minnesota deep dive:** Opposition to Trump's immigration policy is strongest in the Twin Cities — and the gap persists even after controlling for 2024 vote choice
5. **Pro-immigrant policies are popular:** 72% support a path to citizenship

Finding 1: Americans say wrong priorities

69%

say the administration focuses too much on deportations and not enough on the economy

By group

Non-Trump voters	**87%**
Trump defectors	**77%**
Loyal Trump voters	**32%**

Top issues for 2026 vote

Inflation / cost of living	26%
Democracy & elections	15%
Jobs & the economy	14%
Deportations	12%

{*National survey of 1,500 US adults, Feb 6–10, 2026.*}

Finding 2: Trump's coalition is fracturing

~14%

of 2024 Trump voters have defected

(now say they'll vote Democratic or are undecided)

Demographic	Trump defectors	Loyal Trump voters
Median age	40	54
Under 45	62%	37%
White (non-Hispanic)	54%	76%
Hispanic / Latino	25%	15%
Urban / suburban	64%	51%

{*National survey of 1,500 US adults, Feb 6–10, 2026.*}

Finding 3: Immigration enforcement is hurting the GOP

Enforcement pushes voters away

- **35%** say enforcement makes them *less likely* to vote Republican
  vs. 26% more likely
- **35%** say ICE deployments make them *less likely*
  vs. 25% more likely
- Only **40%** approve of handling of deportations; **57%** disapprove

GOP image has deteriorated

51% view the Republican Party *less favorably* than a year ago (vs. only 17% more favorably)

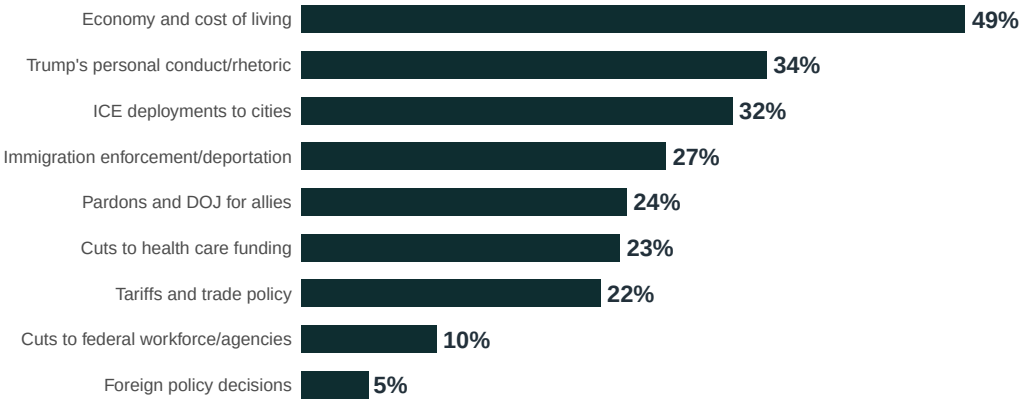
33% would view Dems more favorably if leaders pressed to reduce ICE deployments (vs. 20% less)

{*Q: Are you more likely or less likely to vote for a Republican candidate because of the Trump administration sending thousands of ICE agents to cities across the country? National survey of 1,500 US adults, Feb 6–10, 2026.*}

Finding 3: Why Trump voters are leaving

Why Trump voters are leaving

Reasons for changing opinion among Trump defectors | Select up to 3



National survey of 1,500 US adults, Feb 6–10, 2026.

In their own words: why Trump voters are leaving

“Hearing other people’s experiences give me a different perspective.’’

“I don’t approve of Donald Trump and the Trump administration breaking up families and leaving kids without parents. I don’t like how they interrogate an individual and shoot and kill people…’’

“The way things have been handled with the tariffs, the cost of living rising, and how ICE agents have conducted themselves.’’

“Because I’ve seen that Trump doesn’t care for the American people as a whole…’’

“He spends too much focus on immigration and not enough helping the economy.’’

{*Q: In your own words, what is the main reason your view has changed? Verbatim responses from 2024 Trump voters who now say they will vote Democratic or are undecided. National survey, Feb 6–10, 2026.*}

Zooming in: Minnesota

{A companion survey of 800 Minnesota adults reveals that the national patterns hold in a key battleground state — and in some cases are even stronger:}

- **61%** say the administration focuses too much on deportations
- **57%** disapprove of Trump's handling of deportations
- **35%** say ICE deployments make them *less likely* to vote Republican (vs. 30% more likely)
- **80%** support a path to citizenship (vs. 72% nationally)
- Democrats lead the generic ballot **51–41**

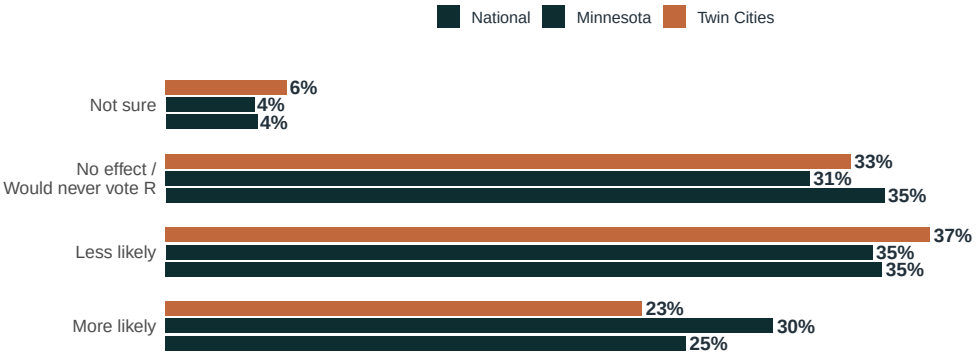
{The following slides explore the geographic divide *within* Minnesota — Twin Cities metro vs. the rest of the state.}

{*Minnesota survey of 800 MN adults, Feb 6–10, 2026. Margin of error ±3.5 pp.*}

ICE deployments push voters away — especially near the Twin Cities

Effect of ICE deployments on likelihood of voting Republican

National vs. Minnesota statewide vs. Twin Cities metro

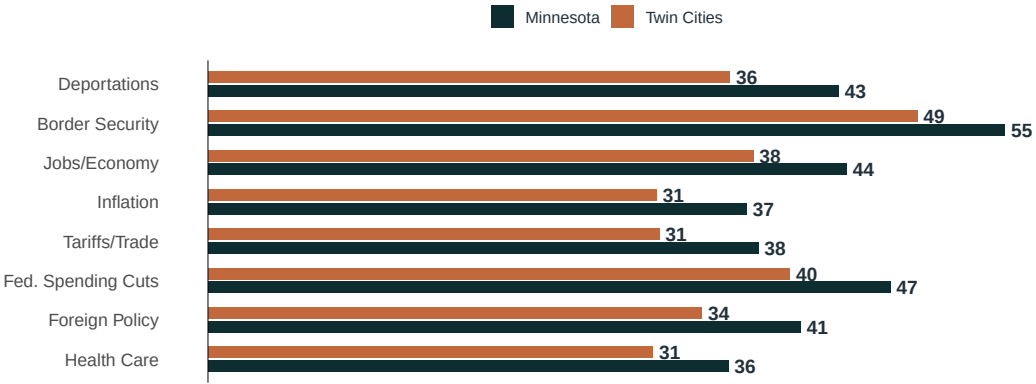


Q: Are you more or less likely to vote for a Republican candidate because of the Trump administration sending thousands of ICE agents to cities across the country?

Minnesota: Opposition grows closer to the Twin Cities

Trump issue approval

Minnesota statewide vs. Twin Cities metro | Twin Cities consistently more critical



Minnesota survey of 800 MN adults, Feb 6–10, 2026.

Minnesota: The gap persists after controlling for past vote

{As the previous slide showed, Twin Cities residents are consistently more critical of Trump's deportation policies than Minnesotans statewide. But could this just reflect the metro's more Democratic composition?}

{**No.** After controlling for 2024 presidential vote, Twin Cities residents were **3 percentage points** more likely to disapprove of the administration's deportation policies than other Minnesotans who voted the same way.}

Twin Cities effect on disapproval	
Marginal effect	**+3 points**
95% bootstrap CI	(-1, 7)
p-value	0.063

{*Weighted ordinal logistic regression controlling for 2024 presidential vote. Marginal effect is the difference in predicted probability of disapproval between Twin Cities and rest-of-MN residents who voted the same way. MN survey of 800 adults, Feb 6–10, 2026.*}

Finding 5: Large majorities support a path to citizenship

72%

support a path to **citizenship** for undocumented immigrants (44% strongly)

71%

support a path to **legal residency** for undocumented immigrants

{*National survey of 1,500 US adults, Feb 6–10, 2026.*}

Strategic implications

Immigration enforcement is a vulnerability for Republicans

- Net **–9 points**: enforcement makes more voters *less* likely to vote Republican
- ∼14% of Trump's 2024 coalition has defected; immigration is a top driver
- In Minnesota, backlash is sharpest in the Twin Cities — the state's largest vote center

The Twin Cities gap is not just partisanship

- Opposition to deportation policy grows closer to the Twin Cities, even after controlling for 2024 vote
- Proximity to immigrant communities may independently drive opposition

A two-front strategy: immigration + economics

- 69% say the administration is too focused on deportations vs. the economy
- Paths to citizenship (72%) and legal residency (71%) have supermajority support
- Opposing ICE deployments is a net positive for Democratic favorability (+13 pts)

WAVE

POLLING AND RESEARCH

Thank You

Questions?

wavepolling.com