WAVE
POLLING AND RESEARCH

Toplines: Working-Class Subsample — Immigration and the Economy

This report restricts the May 2026 national survey to its working-class respondents — the 1,325 adults with a household income under $60,000 (the low-income oversample together with the low-income respondents in the nationally representative sample). The survey was designed by Wave Polling and Research, LLC and conducted online from May 18 to May 20, 2026 by Verasight, a mixed-mode survey provider. Results below show weighted percentages representative of working-class U.S. adults. The margin of sampling error, which accounts for the design effect, is ±3.1 percentage points (effective sample size 1,007). Some questions were asked of a random half of the sample or of a randomized experimental arm, as noted. Rows may not sum to 100% due to rounding.

2024 Trump voter classification. Trump defectors are 2024 Trump voters who now say they would vote for the Democratic candidate, would not vote, or are not sure in the 2026 generic ballot. Loyal Trump voters are 2024 Trump voters who still intend to vote Republican.

Response	Overall
Trump defectors	7%
Loyal Trump voters	27%
All other voters	66%
Unweighted N	1,325

Trump-voter defection rate: share of working-class 2024 Trump voters who would not vote Republican in the 2026 generic ballot.

Response	Percent
Would defect (vote Democratic, not vote, or unsure)	20%

Stability tracking

Do you approve or disapprove of the way the Trump administration is handling each of the following?

Item	Strongly approve	Somewhat approve	Somewhat disapprove	Strongly disapprove	Not sure	N
Deportations / immigration enforcement	25%	15%	11%	42%	6%	1,325
Border security	29%	16%	12%	37%	7%	1,325
The economy	10%	16%	18%	49%	6%	1,325
Tariffs and trade policy	14%	15%	16%	46%	9%	1,325
Cuts to federal spending	18%	17%	12%	43%	10%	1,325
Health care	13%	18%	16%	44%	8%	1,325

Which ONE issue will be most important to you personally when deciding how to vote in this year's midterm elections?

Response	Overall	Trump defectors	Loyal Trump
Border security	2%	0%	5%
Deportations/immigration enforcement	7%	3%	13%
The economy and inflation	45%	56%	45%
Health care	12%	8%	5%
Democracy and elections	12%	3%	5%
Crime and public safety	8%	16%	11%
Foreign policy	2%	4%	3%
Government spending and the deficit	6%	5%	10%
Something else	6%	4%	3%
Unweighted N	1,325	120	334

Thinking about the 2026 congressional elections, are you more likely or less likely to vote for a Republican candidate who voted in Congress to fund Customs and Border Protection (CBP) and Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) without significant reforms?

Response	Overall	Trump defectors	Loyal Trump
Much more likely to vote Republican	19%	6%	66%
Somewhat more likely to vote Republican	8%	9%	16%
No effect on my vote	21%	45%	13%
Somewhat less likely to vote Republican	4%	7%	1%
Much less likely to vote Republican	37%	19%	3%
Not sure	11%	14%	1%
Unweighted N	1,325	120	334

Who do you blame MORE for the current cost of living in America? (Asked of a random half of the sample.)

Response	Overall	Trump defectors	Loyal Trump
Donald Trump and Republicans in Congress	45%	21%	9%
Joe Biden and Democrats who were in power before	24%	30%	75%
Both equally	25%	41%	14%
Neither	6%	8%	1%
Unweighted N	640	120	334

Who do you blame MORE for the current state of immigration in America? (Asked of a random half of the sample.)

Response	Overall	Trump defectors	Loyal Trump
Donald Trump and Republicans in Congress	39%	21%	9%
Joe Biden and Democrats who were in power before	34%	30%	75%
Both equally	18%	41%	14%
Neither	9%	8%	1%
Unweighted N	685	120	334

Temporary Protected Status (TPS)

Before today, had you seen, read, or heard anything about the government ending Temporary Protected Status (TPS) — a nearly 40-year-old program allowing people from countries facing conflict or disaster to live and work in the United States temporarily — for immigrants from countries such as Haiti and Venezuela?

Response	Overall	Trump defectors	Loyal Trump
A lot	12%	9%	15%
A little	44%	34%	53%
Nothing at all	44%	57%	33%
Unweighted N	1,325	120	334

The Trump administration recently ended Temporary Protected Status (TPS) for approximately 330,000 Haitian immigrants, which had allowed them to live and work legally in the United States. Ending TPS means members of this group can be deported. Do you think this was the right decision?

Response	Overall	Trump defectors	Loyal Trump
Definitely the right decision	16%	13%	47%
Probably the right decision	15%	23%	28%
Probably the wrong decision	18%	24%	9%
Definitely the wrong decision	31%	13%	2%
Not sure	20%	27%	15%
Unweighted N	1,325	120	334

The Trump administration recently ended Temporary Protected Status (TPS) for hundreds of thousands of immigrants, which had allowed them to live and work legally in the United States for many years. Ending TPS means members of this group can be deported. Do you think this was the right decision?

Response	Overall	Trump defectors	Loyal Trump
Definitely the right decision	17%	13%	47%
Probably the right decision	14%	22%	28%
Probably the wrong decision	17%	24%	9%
Definitely the wrong decision	35%	16%	3%
Not sure	17%	25%	13%
Unweighted N	1,325	120	334

Treatment of people affected by deportation

For each of the following people affected by deportation, how much sympathy do you feel for them?

Item	A great deal	Some	Not much	None at all	Not sure	N
Undocumented immigrants working at farms, restaurants, construction	38%	24%	14%	19%	6%	1,325
Parents of children who are U.S. citizens	50%	23%	10%	11%	6%	1,325
Spouses of U.S. citizens	47%	29%	9%	10%	6%	1,325
People who were brought to the U.S. as children	54%	23%	7%	10%	6%	1,325
Long-term residents who have lived here 10+ years	49%	24%	10%	12%	6%	1,325
Friends, neighbors, or coworkers in your own community	43%	27%	10%	12%	8%	1,325
People who recently crossed the border illegally	22%	21%	17%	34%	6%	1,325

Which comes closer to your view, even if neither is exactly right?

Response	Overall	Trump defectors	Loyal Trump
Government should not deport U.S. citizens' immediate family	24%	28%	12%
Enforce laws even if it separates U.S. citizen families	26%	23%	70%
All immigrants should have due process rights recognized	36%	30%	11%
Not sure	13%	19%	7%
Unweighted N	1,325	120	334

Which of the following policy outcomes bother you MOST about the Trump administration's current immigration enforcement? (Select up to two.)

Response	Percent
Families being torn apart, including U.S. citizen children losing parents	34%
U.S. citizens and legal residents being wrongly detained or questioned	31%
Masked federal agents and military troops in American neighborhoods	24%
Higher food prices and disruption to local businesses	24%
People being deported to countries they have no ties to	19%
None of these bother me	19%
Long-term neighbors and coworkers being taken from the community	5%

Unweighted N = 1,325. Percentages sum to more than 100% because respondents could select more than one option.

From what you have seen or heard, how would you describe the way detained immigrants are being treated by the federal government?

Response	Overall	Trump defectors	Loyal Trump
They are being treated fairly and humanely	17%	18%	49%
They are being treated fairly, but conditions could be better	18%	23%	32%
They are being treated too harshly	52%	36%	9%
Not sure	14%	23%	9%
Unweighted N	1,325	120	334

Experiment 1: Detention labels

Respondents were randomly assigned to one of three labels for the facilities used to hold people awaiting deportation — "detention facilities," "warehouses," or "detention camps" — and then asked the same concern question. The table shows the response by the label assigned.

The federal government has set up large-scale [LABEL] to hold people awaiting deportation. Does this concern you, or do you think it is a reasonable approach?

Response	Overall	"Detention facilities"	"Warehouses"	"Detention camps"
Very concerning	45%	48%	44%	44%
Somewhat concerning	17%	16%	14%	19%
Not very concerning	10%	8%	10%	11%
Not at all concerning — it is a reasonable approach	19%	17%	21%	19%
Not sure	9%	10%	11%	8%
Unweighted N	1,325	449	435	441

Breadth of immigration overreach

For each of the following immigration enforcement actions, please indicate whether you think it is an acceptable part of immigration enforcement or whether it goes too far.

Item	Acceptable	Goes too far	Not sure	N
Deporting undocumented immigrants who committed violent crimes	77%	13%	10%	1,325
Deporting undocumented immigrants with no criminal record, here many years	26%	55%	19%	1,325
Detaining U.S. citizens or legal residents during immigration raids	16%	68%	15%	1,325
Separating parents from their U.S.-born children during deportation	18%	65%	16%	1,325
Sending military troops into American neighborhoods for raids	25%	63%	13%	1,325
Ending legal protections for previously authorized immigrants	22%	60%	18%	1,325
Deporting immigrants to countries they have no connection to	17%	66%	17%	1,325

For each of the following, please indicate whether you think this is an acceptable part of immigration enforcement or whether this goes too far.

Item	Acceptable	Goes too far	Not sure	N
Domestic workers detained/deported, leaving elderly without care	24%	58%	18%	1,325
Childcare providers detained/deported, leaving families without care	24%	59%	18%	1,325
Restaurant cooks and servers detained/deported, forcing closures	28%	54%	18%	1,325
Children disappearing from your child's classroom	23%	60%	17%	1,325
Your church losing congregants or lay ministers	30%	44%	25%	1,325
Fewer homes built because construction crews lost workers	28%	50%	21%	1,325
Higher grocery prices because farm and food workers were deported	20%	62%	18%	1,325
A coworker losing work authorization and being forced out of their job	27%	54%	19%	1,325

ICE funding reallocation

If the federal government redirected some of the money currently being spent on immigration enforcement, which ONE of the following would be the best use of those funds?

Response	Overall
Hiring more local police officers	3%
Lowering health care costs and protecting Medicaid	21%
Reducing grocery and food prices	38%
A tax rebate for working families	7%
Subsidizing the cost of childcare	2%
Funding public schools	4%
Strengthening border security technology	6%
None — the government should not spend the money and reduce the overall government budget	7%
None — the money should stay with immigration enforcement	11%
Unweighted N	1,325

Economic attitudes and party trust

Which of the following economic concerns worry you the MOST right now? (Select up to two.)

Response	Percent
Grocery and food prices	60%
Wages not keeping up with prices	25%
Housing costs	24%
The cost of health care	22%
Tariffs raising costs on things I need	17%
Not having enough money for retirement	12%
Difficulty finding work	10%
None of these worry me	5%
Losing my job or being laid off	3%
The cost of child care	2%

Unweighted N = 1,325. Percentages sum to more than 100% because respondents could select more than one option.

Thinking about your own financial situation, would you say you and your family are...

Response	Overall	Trump defectors	Loyal Trump
Getting ahead financially	6%	4%	11%
Just about keeping up	44%	47%	53%
Falling behind financially	46%	43%	35%
Not sure	4%	7%	1%
Unweighted N	1,325	120	334

Which party's position are you more supportive of for the following issue — Democrats or Republicans, or neither?

Item	Democrats	Republicans	Neither	Not sure	N
The economy	37%	27%	24%	12%	1,325
Inflation and cost of living	37%	26%	25%	11%	1,325
Jobs and wages	38%	29%	22%	11%	1,325
Immigration	34%	35%	20%	11%	1,325
Border security	30%	38%	21%	11%	1,325
Deportations	31%	35%	22%	11%	1,325

Do you agree or disagree with the following statement? "The Trump administration is focusing too much on deportations and not focusing enough on fixing the economy, inflation, and the rising cost of living."

Response	Overall	Trump defectors	Loyal Trump
Agree	68%	74%	27%
Disagree	20%	9%	58%
Not sure	12%	18%	15%
Unweighted N	1,325	120	334

Experiment 2: Border/crime precondition for the economic bridge

Respondents were randomly assigned to one of three versions of an "economic bridge" message and asked how much they agree with it. Arm A presented the economic-bridge argument only; Arm B led with a border/crime caveat (secure borders, deport violent criminals) before the bridge; Arm C presented the bridge first and placed the border/crime caveat at the end. The first table shows agreement with the statement by arm; the tables that follow show the post-experiment questions (asked of everyone) by the arm the respondent was assigned to.

Arm A — Economic bridge only. *"Attacks on immigrant workers go too far. We're deporting immigrant workers who pay taxes and haven't committed a crime. Meanwhile, grocery prices are skyrocketing, chaotic tariffs are raising prices on hard-working Americans, and people are losing their Medicaid coverage."*

Arm B — Border/crime caveat first, then economic bridge. *"We need secure borders, and we should deport undocumented immigrants who have committed a violent crime. But Trump goes too far. He's driving up food costs with ICE raids at restaurants and farms, deporting immigrants married to U.S. citizens, and using masked agents to take people to undisclosed locations. Instead, we should focus on lowering costs and building an economy where hard-working Americans can get ahead."*

Arm C — Economic bridge first, border/crime caveat after. *"Trump's immigration policies are driving up food costs with ICE raids at restaurants and farms, deporting immigrants married to U.S. citizens, and using masked agents to take people to undisclosed locations. We should focus on lowering costs and building an economy where hard-working Americans can get ahead — while keeping our borders secure and deporting undocumented immigrants who commit violent crimes."*

How much do you agree or disagree with the assigned economic-bridge statement?

Response	Overall	Bridge only	Border/crime caveat first	Bridge first
Strongly agree	43%	48%	43%	39%
Somewhat agree	20%	14%	20%	24%
Somewhat disagree	11%	10%	11%	11%
Strongly disagree	14%	14%	17%	13%
Not sure	12%	13%	10%	14%
Unweighted N	1,325	416	453	456

How would you describe your view of the Trump administration's current deportation policies?

Response	Overall	Bridge only	Border/crime caveat first	Bridge first
They are doing the right thing overall	21%	16%	24%	22%
They go too far in some ways but are mostly on the right track	19%	23%	18%	16%
They go too far and are causing more harm than good	50%	49%	49%	52%
Not sure	10%	11%	9%	9%
Unweighted N	1,325	416	453	456

Which comes closer to your view, even if neither is exactly right? (1) Mass deportation of immigrant workers is necessary to protect American jobs and enforce the law; (2) Mass deportation of immigrant workers is hurting the economy and raising costs for American families.

Response	Overall	Bridge only	Border/crime caveat first	Bridge first
Mass deportation is necessary to protect jobs and enforce the law	31%	27%	34%	31%
Mass deportation is hurting the economy and raising costs	51%	51%	48%	52%
Not sure	18%	21%	17%	17%
Unweighted N	1,325	416	453	456

Experiment 3: Enforcement framing

Respondents were randomly assigned to one of three framings before being asked whether the Trump administration's immigration enforcement is appropriate or goes too far. Arm D was a no-prime control; Arm E used a militarization frame; Arm F used a community/neighbors frame. The table shows the appropriate/too-far outcome by the arm the respondent was assigned to.

Arm D — Control / no prime. No framing text; respondents went straight to the appropriate/too-far question.

Arm E — Militarization frame. *"The Trump administration has deployed military troops and armed federal agents to American cities and neighborhoods to carry out immigration raids, including in Minneapolis, where soldiers were sent into residential areas and killed two people."*

Arm F — Community/neighbors frame. *"The Trump administration's deportation operation has swept up long-term residents — people who have lived in their communities for years, who work at local farms and restaurants, pay taxes, and have children who are U.S. citizens."*

Thinking about the assigned framing, do you think the Trump administration's immigration enforcement is appropriate or does it go too far?

Response	Overall	Control (no prime)	Militarization frame	Community/neighbors frame
Completely appropriate	16%	17%	19%	12%
Mostly appropriate	14%	14%	10%	16%
Goes somewhat too far	20%	22%	15%	22%
Goes much too far	51%	47%	56%	49%
Unweighted N	1,183	405	399	379

Downstream measures

The following questions were asked of all respondents after the experiments.

How much have you personally seen or heard about immigration raids and enforcement actions in your area or in cities near you?

Response	Overall
A lot	24%
Some	33%
Not much	27%
Nothing at all	16%
Unweighted N	1,325

If the 2026 election for U.S. Congress were held today, would you vote for the Democratic candidate or the Republican candidate in your district?

Response	Overall
The Republican candidate	30%
The Democratic candidate	41%
Would not vote	12%
Not sure	16%
Unweighted N	1,325

Which comes closer to your view? (1) The Trump administration's immigration enforcement is making America safer and protecting American workers; (2) The Trump administration's immigration enforcement is tearing apart families and communities while driving up costs for everyone.

Response	Overall
Enforcement is making America safer and protecting workers	30%
Enforcement is tearing apart families and driving up costs	54%
Not sure	16%
Unweighted N	1,325

Do you think the Trump administration's deportation policies will make prices and the cost of living...

Response	Overall
Go up significantly	46%
Go up a little	15%
Stay about the same	19%
Go down a little	3%
Go down significantly	4%
Not sure	13%
Unweighted N	1,325

There are an estimated 14 million undocumented immigrants living in the United States. Of those, about how many do you think should be deported?

Response	Overall
Every undocumented immigrant (14 million)	18%
Most of them (10 million)	8%
About half (7 million)	6%
Very few (1 million)	3%
Only those who committed serious crimes (~500,000)	44%
None	4%
Not sure	17%
Unweighted N	1,325

Attribution (Trump defectors only)

Which of the following are the BIGGEST reasons your opinion on the Republican Party has changed since 2024? (Select up to 3. Asked only of Trump defectors — 2024 Trump voters who now say they would vote Democratic, would not vote, or are not sure in the generic ballot.)

Response	Percent
The economy and cost of living	60%
Trump's personal conduct and rhetoric	31%
Tariffs and trade policy	27%
Immigration enforcement and deportation policies	23%
Cuts to health care funding	22%
Foreign policy decisions	18%
Treatment of legal immigrants and U.S. citizens in enforcement	16%
Cuts to federal workforce and agencies	15%
Other	11%

Unweighted N = 120. Percentages sum to more than 100% because respondents could select more than one option.

About Wave Polling and Research

Wave Polling and Research is a survey research and strategic consulting firm founded by G. Elliott Morris. The firm provides data-driven research and advising for clients working in politics, media, and public policy. Wave Polling and Research emphasizes methodological transparency, rigorous survey design, and a commitment to letting the data speak for itself. For more information, visit wavepolling.com.

Methodology

This survey was conducted by Wave Polling and Research. Data were collected by Verasight, a mixed-mode survey provider, from May 18 to May 20, 2026. The sample consists of 2,000 U.S. adults aged 18 and older: 1,000 in a nationally representative sample and 1,000 in an oversample of low-income respondents, defined as those with a confirmed household income under $60,000. The margin of sampling error — which accounts for the design effect and is calculated using the classical random-sampling formula — is ±3.1 percentage points for the nationally representative sample and ±3.4 points for the low-income oversample.

Recruitment and data quality

All respondents were recruited via email from the Verasight Community, composed of individuals recruited through random address-based sampling, random person-to-person text messaging, and dynamic online targeting. Community members are verified through multi-step authentication, including an SMS response from a mobile phone registered with a major U.S. carrier and within-survey technology such as Google reCAPTCHA v3; members who exhibit low-quality response behavior over time, such as straight-lining or speeding, are removed. Because respondents are never routed from one survey to another and are compensated for every invited survey, there is no incentive to answer screener questions strategically. After data collection, the Verasight team confirms that responses correspond to U.S. IP addresses, removes duplicate and non-human responses, and drops respondents who failed in-survey attention or straight-lining checks or who completed the survey in under 30% of the median completion time. Verasight is a member of the American Association for Public Opinion Research Transparency Initiative; as in any survey, unmeasured error may exist.

Weighting

The data are weighted to match the April 2026 Current Population Survey on age, race/ethnicity, sex, income (nationally representative sample only), education, region, and metropolitan status, as well as to a running three-year average of partisanship distributions from the Pew Research Center NPORS benchmarking surveys and population benchmarks of 2024 vote. To produce nationally representative estimates across all 2,000 respondents, the two samples are integrated with a combined national weight that holds low-income adults to their correct national share while pooling the full set of low-income respondents.

Definitions and comparisons

Trump defectors are 2024 Trump voters who now say they would vote Democratic, would not vote, or are unsure in the 2026 generic ballot. February 2026 figures are from a separate national survey of 1,500 U.S. adults fielded February 6–10, 2026; because the generic-ballot question wording changed between waves, the May defection rate is adjusted to February's wording for a like-for-like comparison. The crime-and-border-caveat and detention-facility-label findings come from questions randomized between respondents.

For questions about this report or the underlying survey data, contact Wave Polling and Research at contact@wavepolling.com.