



WAVE

POLLING AND RESEARCH

A Pathway to Citizenship Is a Priority for Voters

And attacks calling it “amnesty” change few minds

G. Elliott Morris

Wave Polling and Research

October 2026

Methods

- Wave Polling and Research surveyed 1,000 registered voters nationally, 1,030 in Florida and 502 in Pennsylvania, Sept. 30–Oct. 5, 2026. Verasight conducted the fieldwork online; respondents came from the Verasight Community panel, with additional SMS-to-web recruitment for hard-to-reach groups in Florida and Pennsylvania, and all were matched to the voter file as registered voters.
- Each survey is weighted separately to registered-voter benchmarks from the Census Bureau's November 2024 Current Population Survey (age, race/ethnicity, sex, household income, education, race by education), certified 2024 presidential results and local Trump vote share by zip code. The national survey is also weighted by Census region and to leaned party identification from Pew's 2026 National Public Opinion Reference Survey.
- Margins of sampling error, including the design effect of weighting: ± 3.4 points nationally, ± 4.4 in Florida and ± 5.6 in Pennsylvania. Experimental effects are reported from the national survey.

The headline

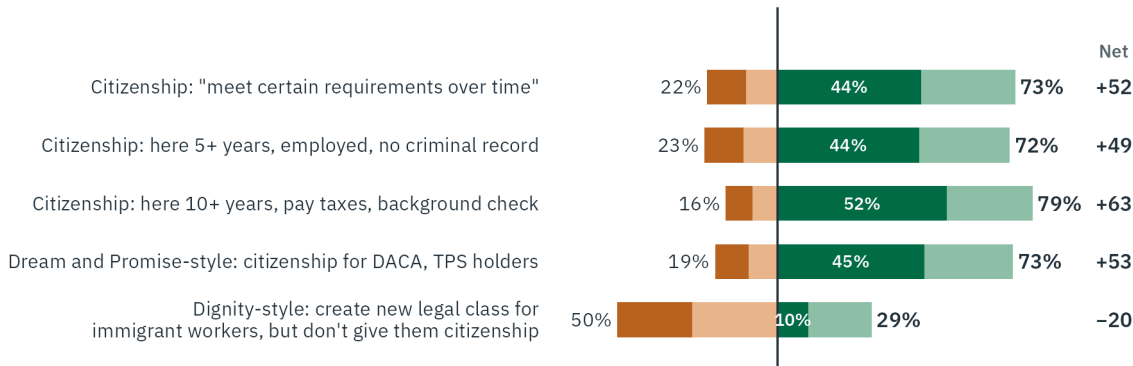
79%

of registered voters back a path to citizenship for immigrants who have lived here at least ten years, pay taxes and pass a background check, including 64% of Republicans

Citizenship wins in every version; status without citizenship 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.

A path to citizenship wins a majority in every group

% supporting citizenship for immigrants here 10+ years who pay taxes and pass a background check

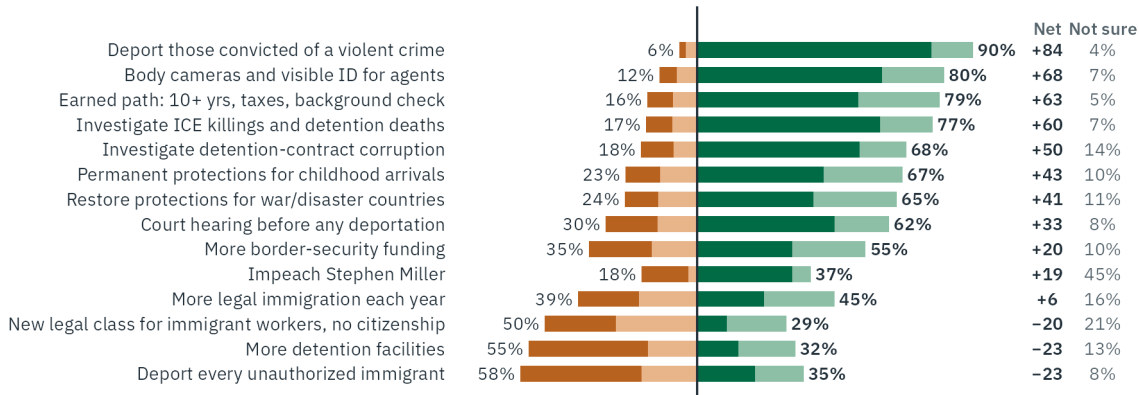
All voters	Party	Race/ethnicity	Age	Education	Income
All voters 79%	Dem 94%	White 77%	18-29 83%	HS or less 74%	<\$50k 77%
	Rep 64%	Black 82%	30-44 78%	Some coll. 77%	\$50-100k 79%
	Ind 73%	Latino 84%	45-64 79%	College+ 84%	\$100k+ 79%
		Other 84%	65+ 77%		

Source: Wave Polling and Research poll, Sept. 30–Oct. 5, 2026, N=1,000 registered voters; party includes leaners. Smallest group: Other race (n=77).

Most immigration policies we tested are popular; mass deportation isn't

Support for each policy, asked separately (oppose to the left, support to the right); sorted by net support

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. Net support = % support minus % oppose (± 3 to 6 pts).

How the MaxDiff works: voters have to choose

Example screen (3 of 7)

If Congress acts on immigration next year, which of these should be the highest priority, and which should be the lowest?

Highest Lowest

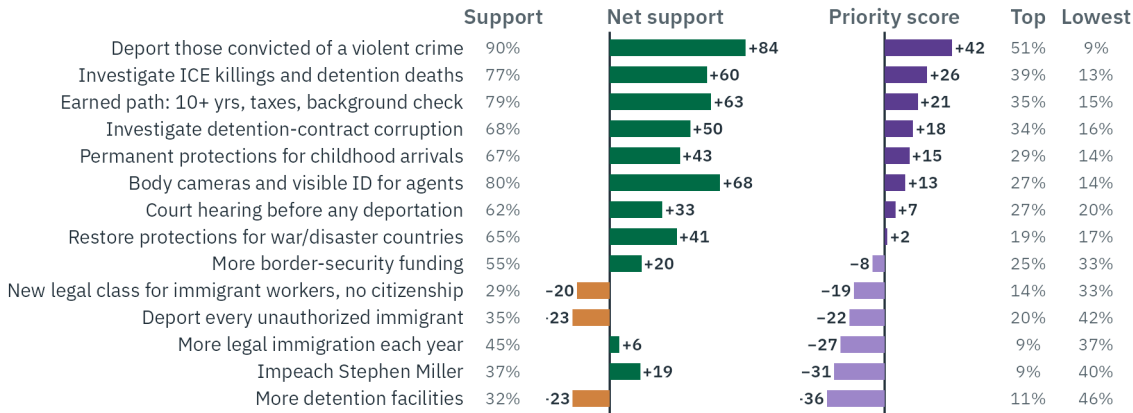
Investigate ICE killings and detention deaths	☒	☐
More border-security funding	☐	☐
Court hearing before any deportation	☐	☐
More detention facilities	☐	☒

- **14 policies, four at a time.** Each voter saw seven screens like this one, and every policy twice.
- **One highest, one lowest.** Nobody can rate everything a 10, so voters have to make trade-offs.
- **The priority score** is the share of the times a policy was picked highest when shown, minus the share it was picked lowest.

An earned path to citizenship: picked highest 35% of the time, lowest 14.5% $\Rightarrow$ **+21**, third of 14. A policy picked at random would score 0.

Accountability for ICE and citizenship are voters' 2nd and 3rd priorities

Net support: % support minus % oppose (±3 to 6 pts). Priority score (MaxDiff): % of times picked as top priority when shown, minus % picked lowest (±3 to 5 pts). Top and Lowest are those two shares.



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

What respondents read: the attack and the response

The attack

“Opponents call this plan blanket mass amnesty. They say it rewards people who broke the law to come here, puts them ahead of immigrants who waited and applied legally, encourages millions more to cross illegally, and hands taxpayer-funded benefits to people who should never have been here in the first place.”

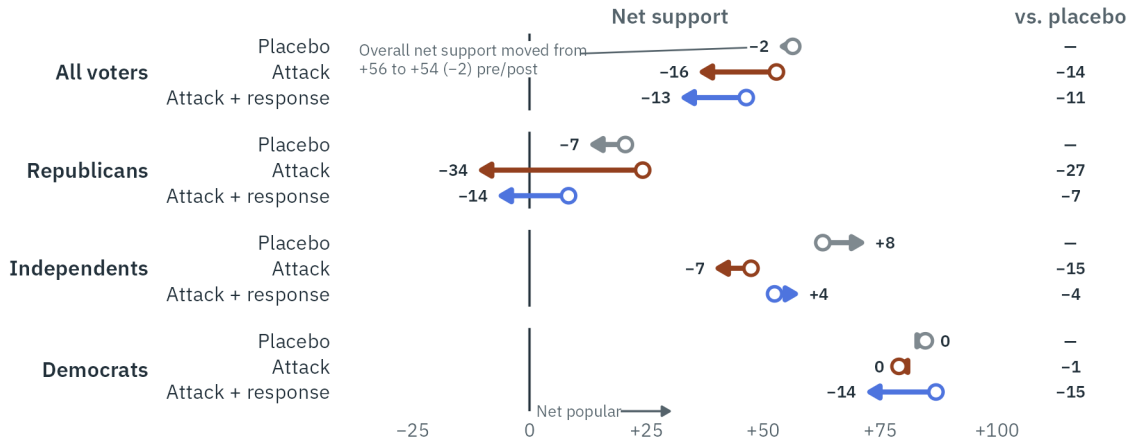
The response (read right after the attack)

“Supporters answer that this is not amnesty: this is the creation of a new lawful pathway for people with strong ties to the U.S., who pay taxes and pass a background check, to get in line for an earned pathway to citizenship. Those who do not meet requirements and have committed serious crimes would be deported. The status quo treats hardworking neighbors [sic] who have lived here for decades as violent criminals, separating families and creating chaos.”

Respondents were randomly assigned the attack, the attack plus the response, or a placebo (roads and bridges). Shown as fielded.

The “amnesty” attack moves Republicans; the response wins most back

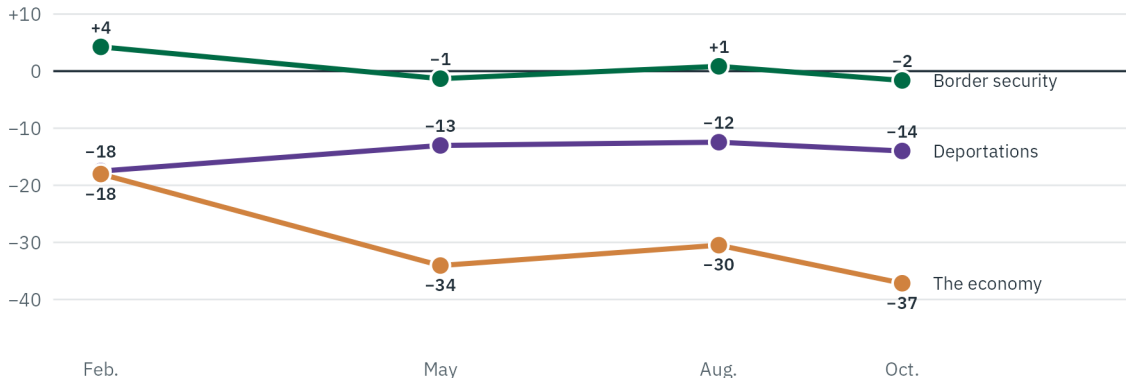
Net support for a path at the first ask (circle) and after each passage (arrow); labels show each change.



Source: Wave Polling and Research poll of 1,000 U.S. registered voters, Sept. 30-Oct. 5, 2026.

Trump's immigration ratings are flat; his economy rating sank

Net approval (% approve minus % disapprove) of the Trump administration's handling of each issue.
Feb. and May: U.S. adults; Aug. and Oct.: registered voters. Feb. asked about "jobs and the economy."



Source: Wave Polling and Research national polls, Feb. 6-10, May 18-20, Aug. 7-11 and Sept. 30-Oct. 5, 2026.