



100 Days Roundup: The Current Polling and Politics of Immigration

April 2025

Washington, DC - As Americans have experienced the first 100 days of the Trump administration, they've seen the scope of mass deportations and how the administration's attacks on immigrants also take aim at core pillars of our democracy - such as due process and the separation of powers. As a result, Trump's approval ratings on immigration are declining as Americans see the cruelty and overreach in action and connect it to broader concerns regarding the rule of law, the tanking economy, cuts to Americans' healthcare, and broader chaos and extremism. Notably, a strong majority of Americans recoil from key details of Trump's immigration policies when specifics are provided, preferring a broader, balanced approach to addressing immigration rather than Trump's mass-deportation agenda.

Analysis on the politics and public opinion of immigration must acknowledge this current moment, not just the immediate 2024 post-election landscape. Over its first 100 days, the Trump administration has already lost altitude and approval on the immigration issue and ceded previous advantages. **Below are key lessons for immigration public opinion, the related politics and the way forward for those seeking to offer opposition and an alternative to the Trump administration on immigration:**

- 1. Go deeper than the topline: Support for mass deportation is a mirage.** Trump's mass deportations are unpopular when details are included about who is being targeted and the scope of Trump's enforcement and when Americans see the human impact on their communities and families.
- 2. Americans believe deeply in due process and rule of law.** The public is overwhelmingly opposed to the Trump administration's recent high-profile deportations without due process - viscerally opposed to mistaken deportations and related refusals to abide by court rulings.

3. **Present an alternative: The American public strongly prefers a balanced immigration approach, pairing border security and a path to legal status, rather than enforcement-only and mass deportation.** When offered the choice in polling, a strong majority of the American public prefers a balanced approach to immigration, involving targeted enforcement against criminals, border security *and* legalization for long-residing undocumented immigrants, instead of Trump’s enforcement-only and mass deportation approach.
4. **Leveraging the backlash: The American public wants their government to fix things, not destroy everything.** Trump’s overreach and the above reminders offer a direction for pro-immigration voices to push back, chart broader solutions, and leverage the type of backlash and buyer’s remorse that caused the public to swing sharply in a pro-immigration direction during Trump’s first term.

Point 1: Go deeper than the topline: Support for mass deportation is a mirage. Trump’s mass deportations are unpopular when details are included about who is being targeted and the scope of Trump’s enforcement.

- An array of **public polls from the first 100 days of the administration show a public divided on Trump’s immigration approval** (for example, Quinnipiac polling from early April finds 45% approve and 50% disapprove of Trump’s handling of immigration issues, while AP/NORC polling from early April finds 49% approve and 50% disapprove) and on Trump’s deportations in the abstract (for example, CBS/YouGov’s late March poll finds 58-42% approval for “the Trump administration’s program to find and deport immigrants who are in the U.S. illegally” while a mid-April Quinnipiac poll finds 42% approve, while 53% disapprove of the way President Trump is “handling deportations”). A late-April Fox News poll, meanwhile, finds Trump receiving 55-40% approval on “border security” but 48-47% disapproval on “immigration.”
- **Notably, Trump’s overall immigration approval has declined recently**, likely due to attention to high-profile and mistaken deportations and related refusals to abide by court rulings. For example:
 - Economist/YouGov Economist polling found a 12-percentage point swing in Trump’s immigration approval from March 25 (51-44% approve) to April 22 (50-45% disapprove), including a whopping 31-percentage point shift among Hispanic voters, from 48-47% approval to 64-34% disapproval.
 - The late April Washington Post/ABC/Ipsos poll found a 9-percentage point swing in the “disapprove” direction on Trump’s handling of immigration compared to their February poll, with earlier 50-48% approval of Trump’s handling shifting to 53-46% disapproval in April, including 67-32% disapproval among Hispanics.

Of note, Trump’s support and approval on immigration collapse when specifics about deportation and who this administration is targeting are included in the poll question:

- **Wall Street Journal (April 2025) asked a split sample question that captures the core dynamic - narrow support for Trump's deportation efforts plummet to near 2:1 opposition when details of targeting long residing immigrants are included:** The WSJ found 53-45% support among the sample asked about the Trump administration effort to “detain and deport millions of undocumented immigrants.” Yet the WSJ also found 63-33% opposition among the sample asked about the effort to “detain and deport undocumented immigrants if they have lived in the U.S. for 10 or more years, pay taxes on earnings, and have no criminal record.”
- **Pew Research (late March 2025) finds broad and overwhelming opposition to deporting immigrants who are parents and spouses of U.S. citizens, Dreamers, and undocumented immigrant workers:** Pew's summary includes the topline finding that, “Roughly one-third of U.S. adults (32%) say all immigrants living in the country illegally should be deported, while 16% say none should be deported. About half (51%) say at least some should face deportation.” Yet the poll finds a wide chasm in support for deportation depending on the enforcement target and overwhelming opposition to deporting parents and spouses of U.S. citizens, Dreamers and immigrant workers:
 - While 97% support deporting those who have committed violent crimes and there is 68-30% support for deporting those who have committed non-violent crimes:
 - 56% oppose deporting those who have a job (41% support)
 - 60% oppose deporting those who are parents of children born in the U.S. (37% support)
 - 68% oppose deporting those who came to the U.S. as a child (30% support)
 - 78% oppose deporting the spouse of a U.S. citizen (20% support)
- **The findings underscore the analysis of polling analyst G. Elliott Morris, formerly of FiveThirtyEight, who wrote in mid-April: “Trump's immigration agenda is not popular,” noting, “Polling shows most Americans oppose the details of enforcement and the president's most extreme tactics.”** Morris further assessed a range of Trump immigration policy specifics tested, “ ... The only policy Americans really favor is deporting unlawful immigrants who have been accused of violent crimesOn the specifics of his policy, and especially on the on-the-ground implementation, Americans are mostly opposed to what his administration is doing ... In other words, Trump's critics have an easy opportunity to fight the president in the court of public opinion.”

- **The above polls and the Morris analysis echo points observed before the 2024 elections** - as CNN polling guru Ariel Edwards-Levy stated post-election in November, “[T]he level of public backing for mass deportation varies significantly depending on the framing of the question.” Also see: Christian Paz of Vox in “Polls say voters back “mass deportation.” That’s misleading,” and polling conducted by Professor Tom K. Wong of the US Immigration Policy Center at UC San Diego, which found that support for mass deportation dropped from a net positive for Trump to a net negative when basic context is added to the issue.

Point 2: Americans believe deeply in due process and the rule of law: The public is overwhelmingly opposed to the Trump administration’s recent high-profile deportations without due process - viscerally opposed to mistaken deportations and related refusals to abide by court rulings.

- **YouGov (April 2025) finds 61-26% opposition to Trump’s recent high-profile deportations without due process.** When gauging support for: *“Deporting immigrants without criminal convictions to El Salvador to be imprisoned without letting them challenge the deportation in court,”* Americans overwhelmingly oppose the Trump administration's actions:
 - 61% of respondents oppose Trump’s actions, while 26% support
 - The intensity overwhelmingly is on the side of the opposition, with a plurality of 46% "strongly" opposing while only 15% "strongly support."
 - Broken down by party ID of respondent, Democrats oppose 89-5% (78% strongly oppose); Independents oppose 62-22% (45% strongly oppose); and Republicans support 52-34% (32% strongly support and 18% strongly oppose)
- **CBS/YouGov (March 2025): 71-29% view it as “unacceptable” if the “larger deportation program” leads to “some legal U.S. residents” being “mistakenly detained.”** Notably, this was the same poll that found narrow majority support for deportation overall.
- **Economist/YouGov (March 2025) 76-24% support for solving problems carefully to avoid mistakes vs. “as quickly as possible” that could include some mistakes.** 76% prefer that “the government should try to solve problems carefully, making as few mistakes as possible, even if that means they might solve the problem more slowly” while 26% think “the government should try to solve problems as quickly as possible, even if that means they might make mistakes.”
- **Economist/YouGov (March 2025) finds 64-18% opposition to the Trump administration disobeying court orders regarding deportation:** Even among Republicans, 40% think the Trump administration should obey immigration orders vs. 33% think it should not if the administration disagrees with the judge.

Point 3: Present an alternative: The American public strongly prefers a balanced immigration approach, pairing border security and a path to legal status, rather than enforcement-only and mass deportation. When offered the choice in polling, a strong majority of the American public prefers a balanced approach to immigration, involving targeted enforcement against criminals, border security and legalization for long-settled undocumented immigrants, instead of Trump's enforcement-only and mass deportation approach.

- **November 2024 exit polls and election eve polling:** In both the national Edison exit poll (relied on by CNN and others) and in the AP VoteCast massive election poll (relied on by AP and Fox News), the option of offering long-settled undocumented immigrants the chance at legal status was more popular than mass deportation in a head-to-head choice, by:
 - a 56-40% margin in the CNN/Edison exit poll
 - a 55-40% margin in the Fox News/AP VoteCast version.
- **The 2024 American Electorate Voter Poll found 60-40% preference for citizenship over deportation:** The survey of more than 9,000 2024 voters found that in a head-to-head battle pitting a fictional Candidate A and Candidate B's approach, voters chose the candidate who offered "a path to citizenship" as opposed to the candidate who offered to "detain and deport immigrants already here" by a 60-40% margin.
- **CNN polling's Ariel Edwards-Levy assessed a range of immigration polling and noted:** "Surveys that ask respondents to choose between deportation and a path to citizenship, meanwhile, often find more support for the latter ... In CNN's final pre-election survey, two-thirds of registered voters said that the government's top priority for dealing with immigrants living illegally in the US should be developing a plan to allow some to become legal residents."
 - See a related roundup of 2024 polls [here](#)
 - October 2024 example [from the University of Maryland, Program for Public Consultation \(PPC\) – finding that voters prefer citizenship over details of mass deportation by a 58-26% margin](#) in 2024 swing states.

Point 4: The American public wants their government to fix things, not destroy everything.

Trump's overreach and the above reminders offer a direction for pro-immigration voices to push back, chart broader solutions, and leverage the type of backlash and buyer's remorse that caused the public to swing sharply in a pro-immigration direction during Trump's first term.

- **Backlash and buyer's remorse - lessons from the pro-immigrant shift during Trump's first term:** After witnessing the chaos and cruelty of family separation and other first term administration policies, the American public shifted in a decided pro-immigrant direction during the Trump first term ([see key details and takeaways on Americans' 2016-2020 shift here](#)). Now, Trump's declining approval ratings on immigration - and overall - may again signal the start of a backlash and buyer's remorse

- **There are key lessons for pro-immigrant policymakers and allies in taking stock of the current public opinion landscape on the issue, including:**
 - Engage the immigration issue and know you can discuss it beyond the context of border security.
 - Call out this administration and their allies' extremism, cruelty and chaos rather than addressing the issue with serious solutions that strengthen the country.
 - Anchor the criticism with unpopular examples of who they are targeting and how they are ignoring the law and core American values in advancing their mass deportation agenda
 - Detail the costs and harms to American citizens due to this administration's mass deportation and anti-immigrant obsessions
 - Highlight your alternative vision for fixing a broken immigration system and advancing real solutions, including:
 - Modeling a "both/and" approach on immigration that addresses public demand for a secure and orderly border, deportations targeted against criminals, and support for solutions on topics such as legal immigration and support for long-settled immigrants becoming U.S. citizens instead of being caught up in this administration's mass deportation dragnet.

- **As polling analyst G. Elliott Morris, formerly of FiveThirtyEight, assessed in the aftermath of Trump's high profile deportations without due process, including of Kilmar Abrego García: "Trump's critics have an easy opportunity to fight the president in the court of public opinion ... not only does the party currently have public opinion on its side, I think Democrats also have an obligation to speak out on moral and constitutional grounds. And, given the data, they have a clear opportunity to take bold action ... Based on the data above, you can argue Democrats should try to take the horns on immigration. Go big on common-sense reforms that protect civil rights for people who have been here long enough and not broken laws. Reach out to moderate Republicans who are concerned about Trump for a pathway to citizenship. Join publicly with the Supreme Court and rally in the street for deported residents and snatched-up tourists."**

Final Thoughts

As the Trump administration continues to advance their mass deportation agenda, their immigration cruelty and overreach will likely continue to cause a backlash and buyer's remorse among the American public.

While the last election cycle revealed Democrats' weaknesses on issues like immigration and border security, the Trump administration already has ceded previous advantages as Americans have witnessed the Trump anti-immigrant and mass deportation agenda in action and connect it to broader concerns regarding the rule of law, the tanking economy, cuts to Americans' healthcare, and broader chaos and extremism. As a result, the politics and public opinion around immigration looks different than it did in the immediate aftermath of the 2024 election and 100 days ago.

Those seeking to offer opposition and an alternative to the Trump administration on immigration have a clear way forward - one that a strong majority of the American public supports.

Follow Vanessa Cárdenas and America's Voice on Twitter: @VCardenasDC and @AmericasVoice

America's Voice – Harnessing the power of American voices and American values to win common sense immigration reform

www.americasvoice.org

###