

Trust in American Elections Has Declined Since 2024, Broad Concerns about ICE at Polling Places in 2026

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Trust in the accuracy and integrity of elections in America rose to high levels across the political spectrum shortly after the 2024 presidential election, but in the year since then it has declined significantly among Democrats, Republicans, and independents alike. Looking ahead to the 2026 midterm elections, only 60% of Americans are "very" or "somewhat" confident that votes will be counted accurately nationwide. This is a significant drop from the 77% who reported trust in the vote count after the last presidential election, with every political group experiencing a double-digit decline in confidence. While the sources of skepticism vary by party, redistricting is one concern shared across party lines. Asked whether they trust that "Congressional district lines are drawn in a way that fairly reflects what voters want," only 27% of Democrats, 21% of independents, and 35% of Republicans reported "some" or "a lot" of trust in that aspect of elections. These are findings from a national Center for Transparent and Trusted Elections survey of 11,406 eligible American voters conducted from December 19, 2025 through January 12, 2026. Our research team has been surveying Americans about their confidence in elections since 2022. This allows us to compare trends in trust over time and across political and demographic groups. Our key findings are that:

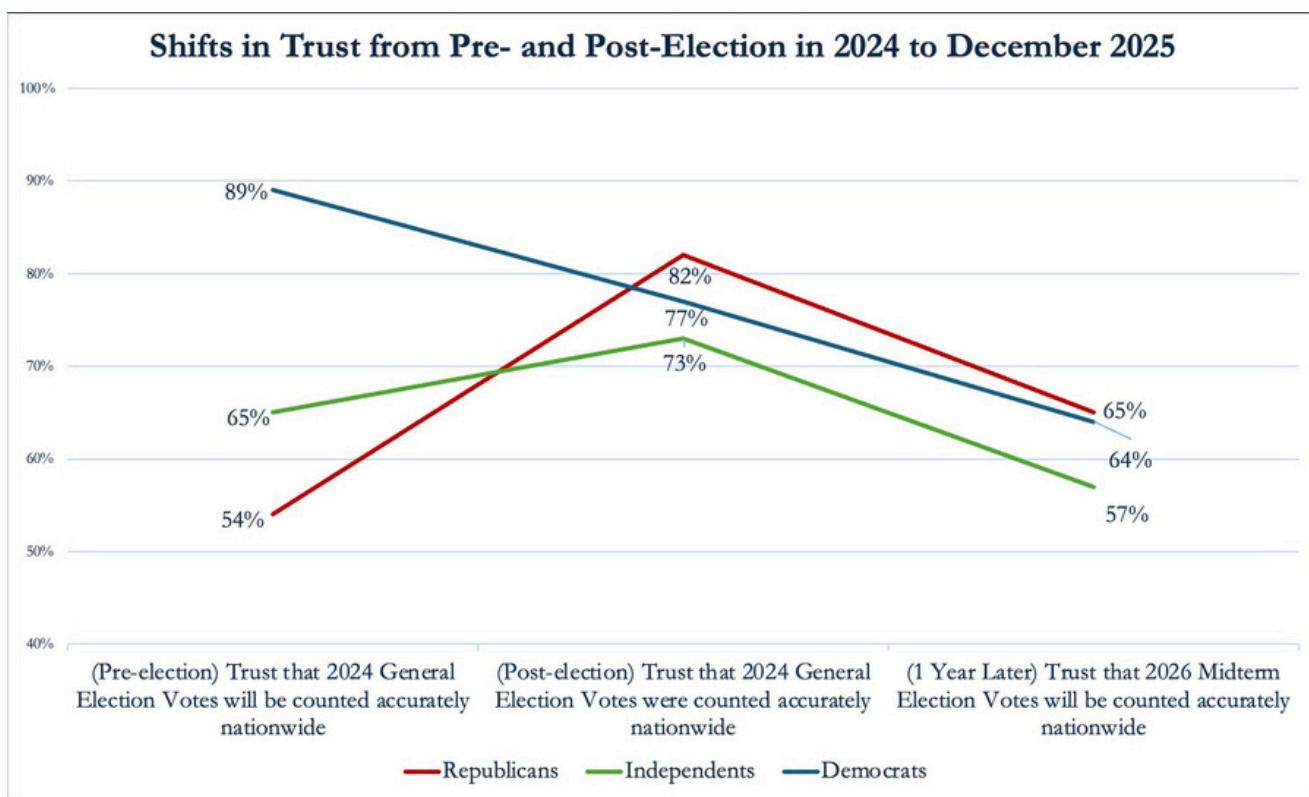
- Confidence in the national vote count registered 70% on the eve of the 2024 presidential election, rose to 77% in the days shortly after that contest, but has fallen to 60% over the year since then. The large partisan divide over trust in elections that was present before President Trump's victory closed just after it, and now trust among all political groups has been declining in parallel.
- Republican respondents voiced particular distrust about mail ballots (50%) and whether non-citizens will be prevented from casting ballots (51%). Democrats (51%) and independents (48%) do not trust that Congressional district lines are drawn in a way that fairly reflects what voters want, compared to 34% of Republicans.
- Looking toward the 2026 midterm elections, 44% of Democrats, 34% of independents, and 30% of Republicans say they think it's likely that Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) officers "will be present at voting locations in your area."
- When asked whether the presence of ICE officers would make them more or less confident "that votes in your county or city will be counted as voters intend," more respondents in every racial and ethnic group responded that it would make them less rather than more confident.
- 31% of Asian Americans, 31% of Hispanics, 21% of Black respondents, and 8% of white respondents agreed with the statement "I worry that going to the polls could put me at risk of being questioned by federal immigration officers, despite being a US citizen."

ABOUT THIS SURVEY

This report details key findings from the survey that we conducted on a sample of 11,406 eligible American voters between December 19, 2025, and January 12, 2026—just over one year after the 2024 presidential election.

Based on an online surveying technique that is now common and [well-vetted](#), our samples include respondents drawn to reflect the United States citizen voting age population along the lines of race, ethnicity, age, gender, and region using the survey firm Forthright, based on data from the American Community Survey. We used attention-check questions to ensure that online respondents were reading the survey carefully, removing those who failed these quality checks from our sample. The margin of error on these surveys is plus or minus 0.9 percentage points. For smaller subsets of voters, such as members of a particular party or demographic group, the margin of error is larger. In this report, we will compare our 2025 findings to similar surveys that we conducted before and after the 2024 election.

TRUST IN ELECTIONS HAS DECLINED AMONG ALL PARTISAN GROUPS



Before the 2024 presidential election, Democratic respondents had higher levels of trust (89%) compared to independent (63%) and Republican respondents (54%). Immediately after the election, there was a decline in trust among Democrats (12 percentage points) but a moderate rise in trust among independents (8 percentage points) and a steep increase in trust among Republicans (28 percentage points). A year later, all three groups declined in trust. In the year since our last survey, trust that votes are counted accurately nationwide has declined by 17 percentage points among Republicans, 13 percentage points among Democrats, and 16 points among independents. You can read more about the prior surveys at <https://yankelevichcenter.ucsd.edu/public-engagement/surveys-and-reports.html>.

HOW DO DIFFERENT GROUPS TRUST THE UPCOMING 2026 MIDTERM ELECTIONS?

Another way to understand how Americans are feeling in advance of the 2026 midterm elections is to break down trust by different demographic groups. This next section focuses on the question asking about confidence that votes all across the country will be counted as intended. We report the percentage of each group that was very or somewhat confident that the nationwide vote count will be accurate.

First, combining all respondents to look at overall trust, 60% of respondents indicate that they trust that 2026 midterm election votes will be counted accurately nationwide. Independents are lowest in trust at 57%. Democrats and Republicans are nearly identical in their relatively low rates of trust at 64% and 65%, respectively. We break down trust for each group in each survey in the table on page 6 of this report.

RACE AND ETHNICITY

Gaps in overall trust in elections across racial and ethnic groups have narrowed significantly, due to a large decrease in trust among white respondents. Just after the 2024 presidential election, 80% of white respondents trusted that votes were counted accurately nationwide—a year later, only 61% of white respondents trust that the 2026 midterm election votes will be counted accurately nationwide. Hispanic and Black respondents both also decreased by 6 percentage points a year later, to 60% and 62%, respectively. Finally, trust among Asian American and Pacific Islander respondents also decreased by 9 percentage points, down to 62% of this group indicating trust in the upcoming midterm elections.

EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT

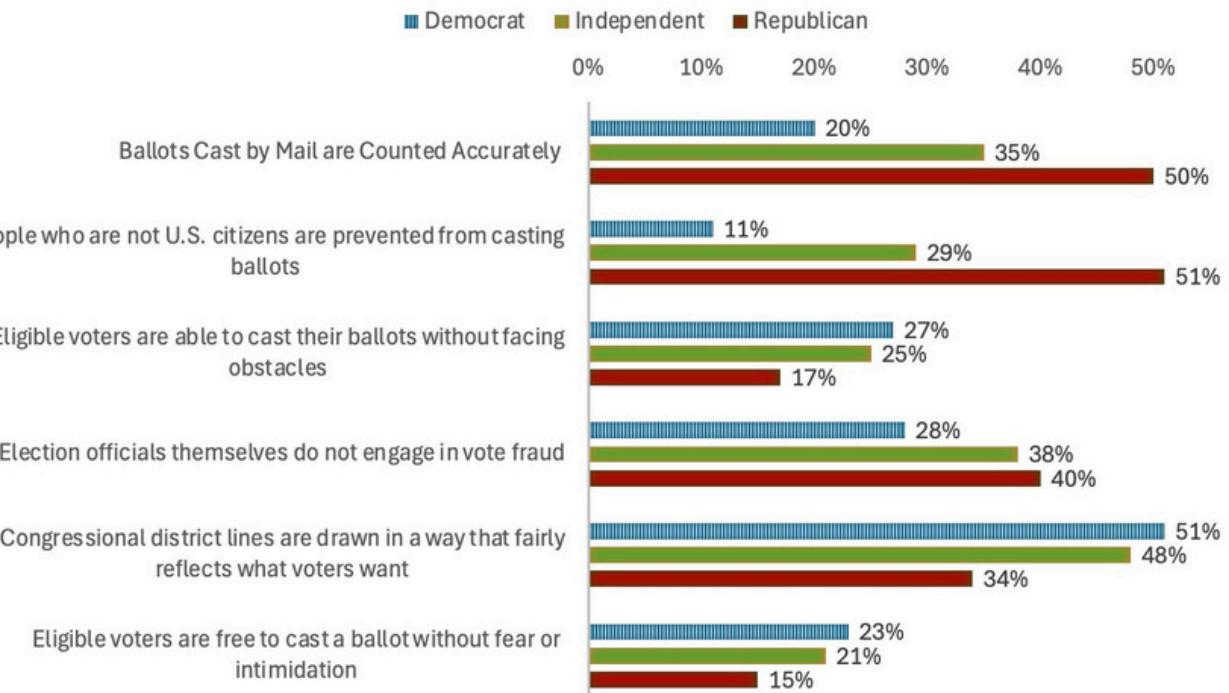
The general pattern of trust in elections increasing with more educational attainment was similar in this survey to past surveys. Respondents with a high school degree had the lowest rates of trust that the 2026 midterm election votes will be counted accurately nationwide, at 59% of respondents. Respondents with a college degree (64%) and those with post-graduate degrees (69%) had higher rates of trust, yet they are significantly lower than they were just after the 2024 presidential election. The decrease in trust among these two groups is 22 percentage points and 12 percentage points, respectively.

AGE GROUP AND INCOME

The gap in trust between age groups declined. Previously, respondents over 60 years of age had the highest levels of trust, and the youngest cohort—ages 18 to 24—had the lowest rates of trust. While this pattern remains, the spread in trust across age groups has shrunk. Younger respondents report the lowest rates of trust (58% among 18-24 year olds), and this moderately increases across cohorts. 60% of respondents aged 25-64 indicated trust, and 61% of respondents over the age of 65 indicated trust that the 2026 midterm election votes will be counted accurately nationwide. Similarly, respondents with the highest household incomes have the highest levels of trust (68%), whereas respondents with the lowest incomes have the lowest levels of trust (55%).

DIFFERENT GROUPS HAVE DIFFERENT SOURCES OF SKEPTICISM

SOURCES OF SKEPTICISM: % WHO DISTRUST THIS ASPECT OF ELECTIONS "SOME" OR "A LOT"



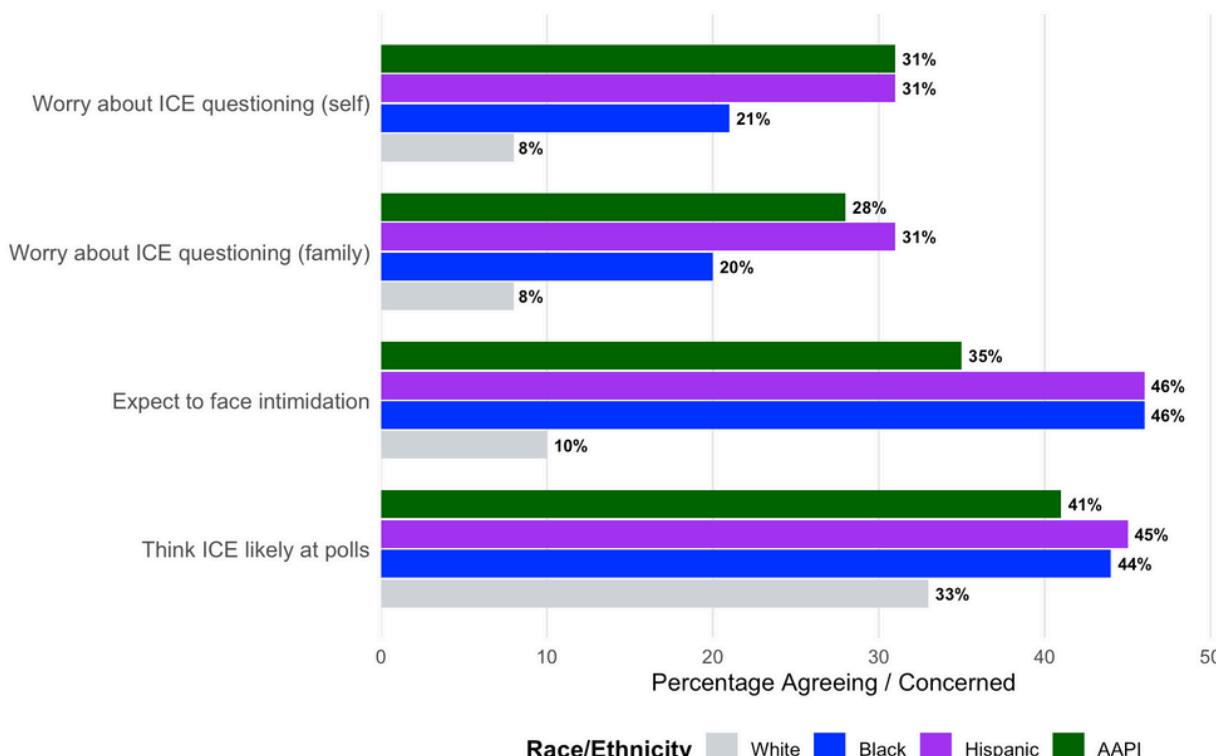
We ask respondents, “To what extent do you trust or distrust that the following features of elections are carried out in practice?” Distinct differences by partisan group appear. 50% of Republicans indicate that they distrust that ballots cast by mail are counted accurately, compared to only 20% of Democrats. Similarly, Republicans have higher rates of distrust in non-citizens being prevented from casting their ballots—40 percentage points higher than Democrats. On the other end, 51% of Democratic respondents indicate distrust in the belief that Congressional district lines are drawn to fairly reflect what voters want, 48% of independents share this concern, along with 34% of Republican respondents.

All respondents were asked about partisan redistricting ahead of the 2026 midterm elections. When asked the extent to which they agreed or disagreed with the statement, “Republican-led efforts to redraw Congressional districts amounts to an attempt to rig the 2026 midterm elections,” 62% of Democrats agree, compared to 42% of independents and 25% of Republicans. Conversely, when asked if they agreed or disagreed with the statement, “Democrat-led efforts to redraw Congressional districts amounts to an attempt to rig the 2026 midterm elections,” 47% of Republicans agree with this statement, compared to 30% of independents and 24% of Democrats. While members of each party primarily assign blame to the other party's leaders for gerrymandering over the past year, nearly a quarter of each party also expressed dissatisfaction with their own party about this.

WIDESPREAD EXPECTATIONS OF ICE AT THE POLLS, UNEVEN CONCERNS

Gap Analysis: Voting Concerns Across Racial Groups

Percentage agreeing/concerned



Race/Ethnicity White Black Hispanic AAPI

Respondents were also asked about whether they believed different groups would be present at polling locations in their area. Respondents were most likely to believe that poll watchers would be present at the polls, with 52% indicating that non-partisan poll watchers were likely to be present and 56% indicating a likelihood for partisan poll watchers. Only 22% of the sample expected the National Guard to be present at the polls.

37% of respondents thought it was likely that Federal Immigration Officers (such as ICE) would be present at voting locations in their area. Among Hispanics, 45% expect that ICE will be present, compared to 44% of Black, 41% of Asian American, and 33% of white respondents. Concerns about this potential ICE presence, however, were uneven across groups. When asked whether ICE presence would make them more or less confident that votes in their city or county would be counted as voters intended, Asian American respondents showed the largest difference: 42% said they would feel less confident, compared with only 18% who would feel more confident—a net 24-percentage-point lean toward less confidence. Black respondents were 7% more likely to report decreased confidence (28%) than increased confidence (21%); Hispanic respondents showed a 14-point lean towards lack of confidence (38% versus 24%). Finally, white respondents were almost split, with only a 2-percentage-point difference (29% versus 27%). Broken down by party, 50% of Democrats indicate that ICE being present at polls would make them less confident, while 48% of Republican respondents indicate that it would make them more confident. Among independents, 19% responded that ICE presence at polls would make them more confident in the vote count and 32% responded that it would make them less confident.

Both Hispanic and Black respondents showed the greatest concern about facing intimidation at polling locations (46% each), compared to only 10% of white respondents. White respondents report the highest level of confidence in the belief that “election officials will protect voters from intimidation” at 72%, compared to 66% of Black respondents, 62% of Hispanic respondents, and 56% of Asian American respondents. When broken down by party, 73% of Republican respondents express this confidence, compared to 63% of Democratic respondents and 55% of independent respondents.

TRUST IN THE 2024 GENERAL ELECTION VOTE COUNTING NATIONWIDE, AND LOOKING AHEAD TO 2026 MIDTERM ELECTION VOTE COUNTING NATIONWIDE

	(Pre-election) Trust that 2024 General Election Votes will be counted accurately nationwide	(Post-election) Trust that 2024 General Election Votes will be counted accurately nationwide	(1 Year Later) Trust that 2026 Midterm Election Votes will be counted accurately nationwide
All Respondents	71	77	60
Partisan Affiliation			
Democrat	89	77	64
Republican	54	82	65
Independent	65	73	57
Gender			
Male	73	81	65
Female	68	72	56
Race/Ethnicity			
White (non-Hispanic)	68	80	61
Latino	68	66	60
Black Americans	79	68	62
Asian-American	74	71	62
Education			
High school	67	72	59
Some college	66	75	56
College graduate	73	86	64
Higher degree	84	81	69
Age			
18-24	70	66	58
25-44	73	76	60
45-64	68	78	60
65+	72	80	61
Household Income			
Under \$25,000	67	72	55
\$25,000 to \$49,999	68	74	58
\$50,000 to \$74,999	70	77	61
\$75,000 to \$99,999	69	79	63
\$100,000 to \$149,999	79	84	66
Over \$150,000	78	89	68