

To: Interested Parties

Fr: ACLU

Date: 05/31/2024

Re: Messaging on Public Safety and Immigration

Core Message

Our research suggests that voters prefer messaging that focuses on addressing the root causes of crime and pursuing a balanced approach to immigration over messaging that focuses on punitive solutions. This punitive vision for the country erodes support among Black and young voters – many of whom are already fatigued and unenthusiastic about their choices.

Instead, when candidates of either party present real solutions to the root causes of crime and a balanced approach to immigration that includes a humane solution to challenges at our border and a pathway to citizenship for long term residents, voters trust them more than candidates who use fearmongering and promise hardline approaches to public safety and immigration.

I. Public Safety

Voters trust Republicans more than Democrats to handle public safety and crime by a 15-point margin. However, when asked which party they trust more to address the root causes of crime such as poverty, addiction, and mental health issues, voters trust Democrats more by a 12-point margin.

Talking about Public Safety

Voters believe that public safety is not achieved through punitive policies, but by **addressing the root causes of crime**, such as homelessness, poverty, and lack of jobs. Voters are not convinced that more police, prisons, and jails will reduce crime:

- 83% of voters agree that we need to stop crime before it happens by making housing more affordable, helping people with mental health and addiction problems, and creating jobs.
- 78% of voters agree that we should prioritize bipartisan efforts to address the root causes of crime, like poverty, and fix our broken criminal justice system.
- 72% of voters believe that sending behavioral health workers to address issues related to mental health, homelessness, and substance use would help some or a lot.
- 56% of voters agree that mass incarceration causes many of the problems that lead to unsafe communities, such as poverty, homelessness, and drug or mental health problems.

Messaging on Crime and Public Safety

When candidates of either party use messaging that tries to position them as ‘tough on crime’, they perform worse than candidates of the same party who use messaging that emphasizes addressing the root causes of crime. **Tough-on-crime messaging erodes support** among key audiences:

Democratic Candidate Vote Share	All voters	Black Voters	Age: 18-29	Age: 30-44
Root Causes	51%	84%	63%	64%
Tough-on-Crime	38%	66%	44%	39%
Net	-13 pts	-18 pts	-19 pts	-25 pts

Republican Candidate Vote Share	All voters	Black Voters	Age: 18-29	Age: 30-44
Root Causes	60%	43%	60%	65%
Tough-on-Crime	48%	19%	47%	28%
Net	-12 pts	-24 pts	-13 pts	-37 pts

II. Immigration

Voters also trust Republicans more than Democrats to handle immigration by a 17-point margin.

Talking about Immigration

Voters agree that **punitive measures that target families and children seeking safety do not make our communities safer**. They believe that the current immigration system is broken and needs a balanced approach that improves border management while also securing a pathway to citizenship for immigrants who work hard and contribute to our economy.

- 75% of voters agree that policies that target families and children seeking safety do not make our communities safer.
- 70% of voters agree that we need a balanced approach to immigration that includes fair, orderly, and humane solutions that address the challenges at the border and a roadmap to citizenship for long term residents and Dreamers.
- 66% of voters believe that creating a pathway to citizenship for immigrants who have been in the U.S. for many years will help improve our immigration system some or a lot.
- 61% of voters believe that sending more resources to the border to process people seeking safety will help improve our immigration system some or a lot.

Messaging on Immigration

When candidates of either party use messaging that emphasizes enforcement-only policies and parrots tough-on-immigration narratives, they perform worse than candidates of the same party who use messaging that emphasizes a balanced approach to reforming immigration. Critically, **tough-on-immigration messaging erodes support** among key audiences:

Democratic Candidate Vote Share	All voters	Black Voters	18-29	30-44

Balance Approach	49%	81%	63%	58%
Tough-on-Immigration	42%	65%	39%	50%
Net	-7 pts	-16 pts	-24 pts	-8 pts

Republican Candidate Vote Share	All voters	Black Voters	18-29	30-44
Balance Approach	50%	42%	60%	63%
Tough-on-Immigration	45%	18%	34%	38%
Net	-5 pts	-24 pts	-26 pts	-25 pts