

+ Mobilizing Latino Voters in 2026

Why This Moment Demands a Different Approach

In 2026, approximately 36 million eligible Latino voters — the second-largest racial or ethnic voting bloc in the country — will decide whether to participate in the midterm elections. Our community-grounded research, informed by our own polling and focus groups as well as data from trusted research partners, shows an electorate that is genuinely motivated but also fearful:

- **Approximately 76% say they are certain or almost certain to vote**, on pace with the record-setting 2018 midterms.
- Latino confidence that elections are free and fair dropped 11 percentage points in a single month after the federal request for state voter rolls.
- **Nearly 1 in 5 say they may not vote due to distrust** that their ballot will be counted correctly.
- The single most telling moment in our focus groups came when participants, unprompted, began telling each other that they should vote for all those who can't.

The Landscape We're Working In

Latino voters are navigating a difficult and complicated environment in 2026, across four connected fronts:

- **Redistricting and vote dilution** — Congressional maps are being redrawn in ways that dilute Latino voting power in several states, with fewer legal tools available than in past cycles to challenge the maps.
- **Registration barriers and attacks on ballot casting** — A wave of anti-vote-by-mail and proof-of-citizenship requirements is moving through state legislatures, creating new obstacles to register and vote, even though 8 in 10 Latino adults in the United States are citizens.
- **Voter roll pressure** — Federal requests for state voter data, combined with error-prone data matching, are raising concerns about eligible voters being wrongly flagged or purged.
- **Intimidation and fear** — Visible immigration enforcement activity is already keeping some U.S. citizens, including already registered voters, away from polling sites.

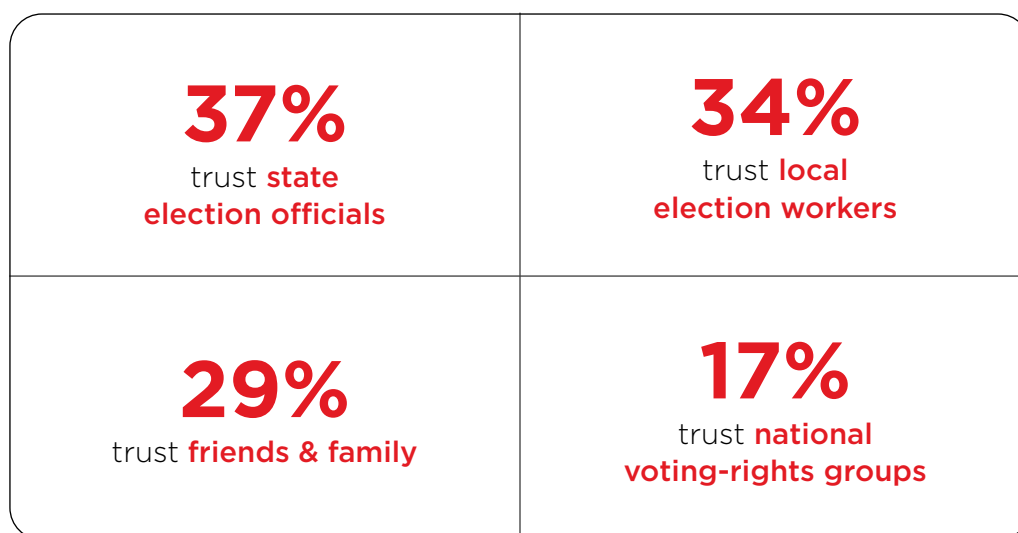
What the Research Tells Us

Our research shows a population changing its behavior in response to enforcement activity, with chilling effects that reach beyond immigrant households:

- A large majority — 82% of respondents — say immigration policy has personally affected their household's economy.
- Many U.S. citizens and lawful permanent residents living in mixed-status households confirm family members are skipping doctor visits, avoiding grocery stores and staying home from work out of fear of deportation.
- In all, 95% say their families have stopped applying for assistance due to immigration enforcement policies.
- Voters understand their rights, but they've stopped trusting that the rules will be enforced:
- Data shows 76% of Latino voters say ICE or FBI presence at or near polling locations is inappropriate.
- The vast majority — 81% of voters — are concerned Congress is giving up too much constitutional authority to President Trump and the executive branch.

Who Latino Voters Trust

Asked who they'd most trust to explain federal election interference, Latino voters ranked local and personal messengers well above national organizations. National nonpartisan voting organizations are trusted by only 17% of Latino voters (the lowest of any messenger category).



Messaging Do's and Don'ts

Reassurances (“you’re safe” or “the system works”) tend to backfire with Latino voters. Many have already witnessed the system fail them or someone they know, so such reassurances read as dismissive rather than comforting. What performs better is acknowledgment of the concern or fear, followed by concrete actions.

WHAT MOVES PEOPLE

- Acknowledging the fear and the failures first — “you’re right that it’s been hard” — before offering information.
- Pairing every hard truth with a clear next step or helpful resource.
- Leaning on civil rights history and community solidarity — “you vote because someone you love cannot.”
- Making voting feel collective and prideful: vote in groups, safety in numbers, celebration.
- Using a trusted, local messenger over an institutional one.

WHAT DOESN'T WORK

- Leading with “you’re safe” or “our elections are secure.”
- Naming a threat (ICE, purges, disinformation) without a measurable next step.
- Reciting policy detail or institutional defense.
- Using a generic one-size-fits-all civics tone.
- Framing that could read as blaming another marginalized group.
- Positioning national orgs/ hotlines as the primary trusted source.

How UnidosUS is Responding

UnidosUS is building a community-based election protection infrastructure by training frontline staff at trusted organizations to serve as on-the-ground election navigators — connecting voters to Know Your Rights resources, legal support and bilingual voter protection services at the moment they need them most. For more information or to partner with us, visit UnidosUS.org/Protect.

About UnidosUS

UnidosUS is a nonprofit, nonpartisan organization that serves as the nation's largest Hispanic civil rights and advocacy organization. Since 1968, we have built a stronger America by creating opportunities for Latinos and breaking down barriers to expand economic and social progress for all. UnidosUS partners with an Affiliate Network of nearly 300 community-based organizations across the United States and Puerto Rico.

For more information on UnidosUS, visit www.unidosus.org, or follow us on [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#), [LinkedIn](#), [Threads](#) and [X](#).