



In Their Words

Trump Voters on Minnesota and Immigration Enforcement

Focus group insights from More in Common US
February 17, 2026

“A dystopian novel.”

“Pro-gun, trigger-happy.”

“We have had two deaths. We need to figure this out now.”

Since last month’s events in Minneapolis, two in three Americans feel ICE has gone [“too far.”](#) While approval rates are split along partisan lines, the skeptics include an [increasing number of Republican voters.](#) Who are these voters, and what do they want from immigration enforcement?

Last week, [More in Common](#) interviewed a key group of 2024 Trump voters about Minneapolis and immigration enforcement. Highly aware and animated, the group had nuanced perspectives on immigration that challenge partisan caricatures. Read what they had to say in the transcript [here.](#)

In a country as polarized as ours, we often struggle to understand why other Americans believe what they do. That’s especially the case on issues that become national flashpoints, like immigration enforcement. For that reason, in coming months More in Common will be piloting a series of focus groups that aim to shed light on how different groups of Americans are thinking about some of our most contested issues. We hope these can provide deeper insights than the daily news cycle and point towards possible solutions.

The next three years will be defined by the question of whether President Trump can hold his coalition together. To better understand this group, More in Common’s newly-released [Beyond MAGA](#) report provides a detailed segmentation of 2024 Trump voters and their views on the major issues confronting our country and the world.

Here, we focus on the “Reluctant Right” segment. Representing a fifth of President Trump’s coalition, the Reluctant Right are his least ideological and least loyal voters. They’re also the most concerned about his immigration policy. Our six Reluctant Right Trump voters are Independents and Republicans alike, hailing from Connecticut to New Mexico. Here are our key takeaways:



All avatars are AI-generated based on demographic information and do not depict the likeness of actual focus group participants.

1. Losing faith in enforcement tactics – but not in President Trump.

A common theme was a skepticism of immigration enforcement tactics. Tim, a 49-year-old white man, described enforcement as “extreme” and wanted a “more controlled approach.” Joe, a 46-year-old Hispanic man who was the most supportive of President Trump’s tactics, expressed his horror at seeing 5-year-old Liam Conejo Ramos being detained in Minneapolis. Lisa, a 58-year-old Hispanic woman, remarked that even though she was a citizen, she could easily be mistakenly detained due to her heritage.

Although the group self-identified as politically moderate, we heard strong reactions to ICE’s actions. Alondra, a 43-year-old Hispanic woman, asked:

“Is it necessary to go knocking door to door? ... Is it necessary to follow a five-year-old kid from school asking them where their parents live? Is it necessary for the public to be hiding in their homes and not be able to drive?”

However, participants distinguished between President Trump and ICE, disagreeing whether President Trump should be held accountable for ICE’s actions. Lisa claimed: “the buck stops with him.” Mary, a 31-year-old white woman, felt that the ICE agents themselves and Secretary of Homeland Security Kristi Noem deserve most of the blame:

“I would say though, at some point, the ICE agents that are committing violent acts should be held accountable. Because at the end of the day, I may be told something by my boss, but it's how I interpret it. I could be told, ‘You need to sell X amount of cars this month.’ And if I don't, it's on my behavior and my actions.”

Ultimately, participants were still supportive of a more restrictive approach. Joe, Mary and Paul noted that they like President Trump's immigration laws and ideas – they just want better enforcement. While Alondra was the most forceful in arguing that President Trump went too far, she appreciated that he was “backing down” and liked that he was “getting a lot of criminals.”

2. More trust in bipartisanship than either party

We did not hear anyone refer to Democrats as a viable alternative, largely due to perceptions that Democrats employ a lax approach to enforcement. Lisa assumed that Democrats had tried to tear the wall down during Biden's Administration, while Joe sternly told Democrats to “get their heads out of their asses.”

More broadly, we heard displeasure with both parties. Tim and Mary discussed extremism and childish behavior from Democrats and Republicans alike. Calls for bipartisanship resonated widely, and Lisa noted the importance of bipartisanship in creating a long-term solution:

“We keep talking about better training for ICE agents, but immigration is broader than just the enforcement agency. And I think we need to think longer term, even though he's only got a few more years in office, imagine a world where everything he's done in two years' time, plus his [previous] four years before, gets reversed when the next administration comes in.

They've got to reach across the aisles and get a better way for the process for immigration. I understand we want to get the criminals out. That makes sense, but it just seems like they're very shortsighted right now.”

3. Reform, not abolish, ICE

Throughout the conversation, we heard numerous ways in which participants wanted to reform ICE. For instance, Mary and Alondra felt that the Trump Administration's push

for 80,000 new officers yielded some less-than-ideal recruits. Alondra remarked that the newly hired ICE officers seemed to be “pro-gun, trigger happy.”

The main reasons for reform included low hiring standards and lack of rigorous training. Mary compared ICE’s recruitment to Oprah’s infamous car giveaway: “You get a badge! You get a badge! You get a badge!” As a result, many remarked that ICE fell short of standards set for other law enforcement agencies. Tim and Joe noted that Pretti would not have been killed if any other law enforcement agents, such as the police, were responding to the same situation.

Ultimately, participants supported the purpose of President Trump’s enforcement – and no one believed that the violence associated with immigration enforcement was intentional, either by agents or President Trump. When asked if they wanted to reform ICE, abolish ICE, or keep things the same, participants nearly universally advocated for reform.

4. Clouded Reality

Low social and institutional trust pervaded the conversation. For example, Tim mentioned that he felt “taken advantage of” by mainstream media outlets because they only gave part of the story. Tim, Joe and Mary spoke about how the mainstream media refused to talk about the good things ICE was doing for the country. Mary also cited competing narratives as inhibiting her understanding of reality:

“You get the Republican leaning media that says, “He had a gun, he was this, he was that, or she was doing da, da, da, da, da.” And then the Democrats are like, “This is murder.” And I’m like, “Okay, but there’s your side and your side, but what’s the truth? What is actually happening and why are they in Minnesota of all places to be?”

Low trust influenced also perceptions of protestors: while participants supported the right to protest peacefully, they were unsure of protestors’ intentions. Lisa and Joe felt they were paid agitators; Joe claimed the protestors were hired by billionaire George Soros and bused in from California or New York. When asked whether Renee Good and Alex Pretti were paid, most participants simply didn’t know. Mary thought Alex Pretti was from Minnesota, which made her feel better. But she didn’t know about Renee Good.

Conclusion

Over the next three years, President Trump’s coalition will inevitably oscillate between holding together and breaking apart. As the most ambivalent type of Trump voter, the Reluctant Right offers a signal for the state of the coalition. More in Common therefore plans to conduct further research to understand the Reluctant Right’s perspectives on immigration and other critical issues.