



To: ModSquad Members & Staff
From: ModSquad, Hart Research & Impact Research
Date: February 5, 2026
Re: New Polling Shows Democrats Must Lean in on Crime & Public Safety

Executive Summary: *To dig in on current attitudes towards crime in the battlegrounds, ModSquad partnered with Hart Research and Impact Research to survey 1,788 registered voters across 10 states (AZ, CO, GA, MI, NV, NH, NC, PA, VA, WI) with oversamples of Black (451) and Latino (343) voters. The survey was conducted online between December 10-17, 2025.*

Topline: Democrats have a key opportunity on crime and public safety in the midterms – but only if they engage directly and lead with the right frame.

Affordability remains the top issue heading into the midterms, and Democrats are making great strides on this issue and on health care, where they traditionally have an advantage. While they must maintain this edge, chipping away at Republicans’ advantage on crime and public safety is essential to shoring up independents and swing voters – and strengthening credibility among Black and Latino voters in the run up to November.

Key imperatives for Democrats ahead of the midterms and beyond:

Push a strong crime and public safety message that leans into accountability to build credibility. Silence creates a dangerous opening for Republicans and reinforces strong existing perceptions of Democrats’ perceived weaknesses on this issue

Lead with toughness on violent criminals.

- Lead with keeping people safe by getting tough on violent criminals.
- Talk about punishment; voters view Democrats as weak on sentencing.
- Contrast messaging is effective, but sequencing is key. Start by establishing your toughness on violent offenders, then highlight GOP hypocrisy by noting they cut police funding.

Prioritize crime and public safety messaging with Black and Latino voters, who express equal or greater concern about crime than white voters.

- 83% of Black voters rate keeping people safe from crime as their single most important issue or very important (vs. 75% of white voters)
- Latino voters are evenly divided between Democrats and Republicans on "cracking down on crime," with Latina women actually preferring Republicans 40% to 36%.
- Both constituencies respond strongly to tough-on-crime Democratic messaging.

Sample and Political Context

The battleground sample reflects an evenly divided electorate: 43% Democrat, 43% Republican. Recalled 2024 vote is tied (45% Harris, 45% Trump).

At the time of this survey, which was conducted before the recent shootings in Minneapolis, President Trump's approval rating stood at 44% approve, 56% disapprove, with particularly poor ratings among Independents (26% approve, 74% disapprove).

Despite the even partisan environment, Democrats hold a 47% to 41% advantage on the generic congressional ballot, driven by strong support among Black voters (75% to 11%) and improved performance with Latino voters (55% to 31%).

Public Safety: Overall Findings

Issue Trust Landscape

Republicans maintain credibility on public safety issues, with Democrats underperforming their overall partisan advantage, which is why it's essential for Democrats to lean into this issue and make it clear to voters they both understand their concerns and will lead with toughness to address them.

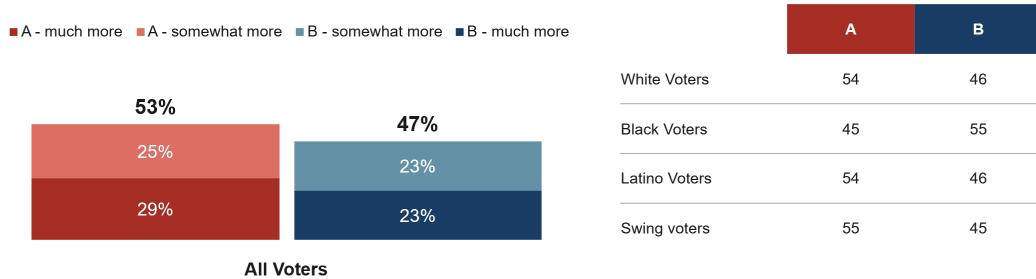
As of now, the Democratic advantage on top issues (especially prices and costs) exceeds the Republican advantage on crime and immigration and Democrats remain competitive on crime with Independents, underscoring a clear opportunity for the party.

<i>Please indicate how important each of the following issues are to you personally.</i>	<i>When it comes to each of the following, who do you trust more – Democrats in the U.S. Senate or Republicans in the U.S. Senate?</i>
% Single most important issue	Net Trust Dems More – Trust Reps More
41% Prices and the cost of living	+12
24% Affordable healthcare	+21
20% The economy and jobs	+8
14% Keeping people safe from crime	-7
11% Immigration and border security	-8
10% Cracking down on crime	-5
6% Making sure law enforcement gets the resources they need	-7

When it comes to addressing crime and public safety, which one of the following do you agree with more?

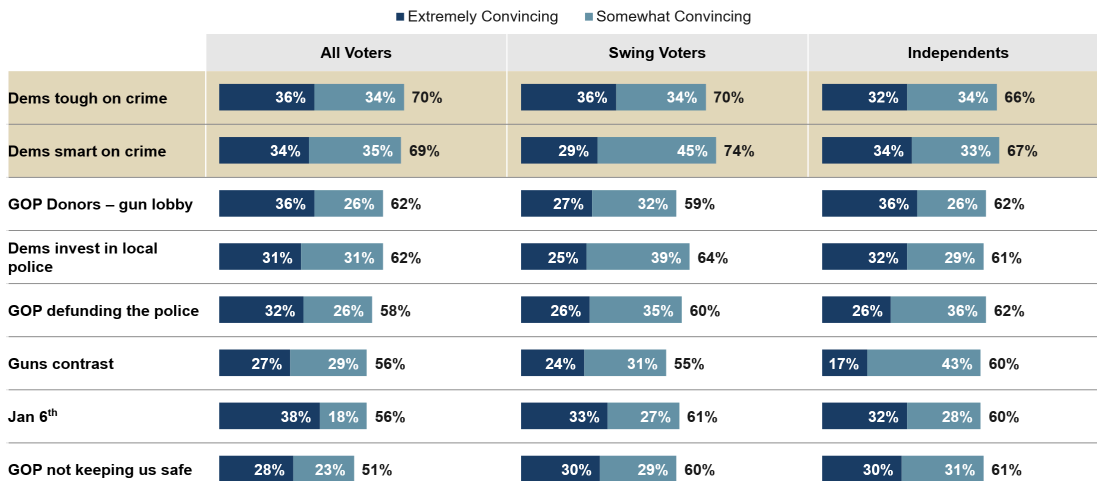
Statement A: Implement 'tough on criminal' policies that focus on increasing law enforcement in high-crime communities and longer sentences for violent crimes including crimes against children and repeat drug offenses, OR

Statement B: Implement comprehensive policies to address the root causes of crime such as more after-school programs, emphasizing rehabilitation and not prison for non-violent, low-level offenders.



Emphasizing Holding Violent Offenders Accountable

Testing revealed that positive messages positioning Democrats as both smart and tough on crime generate the strongest support. The highest-performing statements share a common theme: keeping people safe and stopping crime, with explicit discussion of holding violent offenders accountable.



How Black and Latino Voters are Feeling About Public Safety:

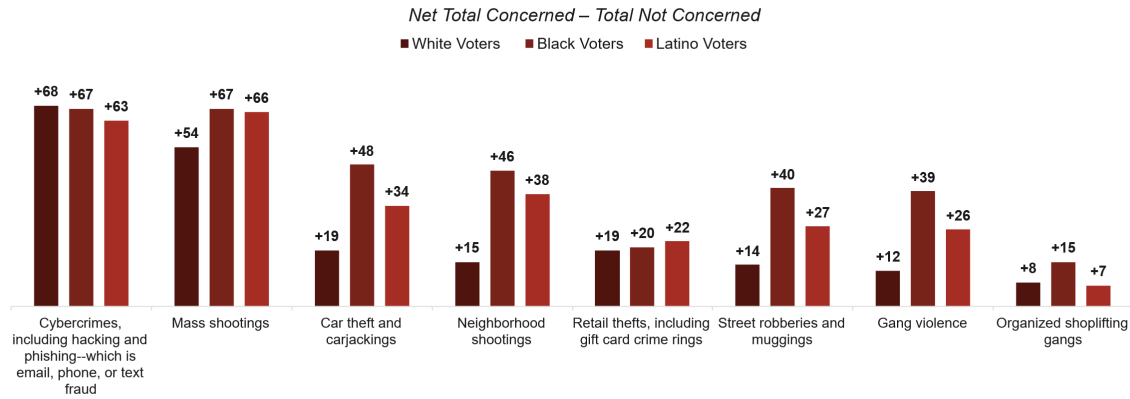
Democrats currently maintain strong electoral advantages with these critical constituencies, but sustained engagement on crime is essential to preserving and expanding support.

Black and Latino voters express equal or greater concern about crime than white or swing voters:

- 83% of Black voters rate keeping people safe from crime as their single most important issue or very important (vs. 75% of white voters)
- 82% of Latino voters (higher among Latina women and Latinos 50+)

These voters show particularly high concern about specific crime categories including violent crime, property crime, and drug-related offenses.

How concerned are you *personally* about each of the following?

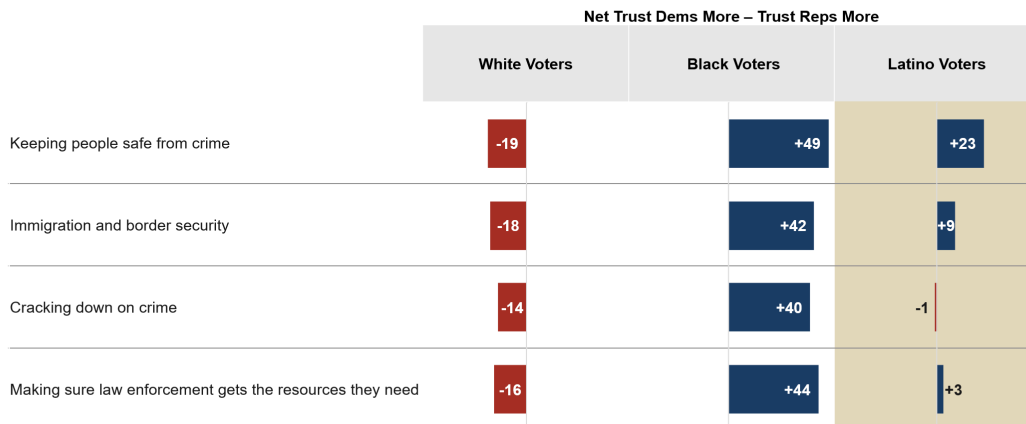


How to Improve Trust on Public Safety with Black, Latino & Swing Voters

Black voters trust Democrats significantly on crime issues, but by narrower margins than on other priorities. For example, Black voters trust Democrats over Republicans on cost of living by nearly seven-to-one (76% to 10%). On crime issues, Democratic advantages are smaller though still substantial.

Latino voters are evenly divided between Democrats and Republicans on "cracking down on crime," with Latina women actually preferring Republicans 40% to 36%. This represents a critical vulnerability requiring immediate attention.

When it comes to each of the following, who do you trust more – Democrats in the U.S. Senate or Republicans in the U.S. Senate?



Both constituencies respond strongly to tough-on-crime Democratic messaging:

- 85% of Black voters find the "Dems tough on crime" message convincing (focuses solely on cracking down on criminals)
- 69% of Latino voters find the same message convincing
- Similar results for "Dems smart on crime" message (includes reforms for non-violent crimes)

Please indicate how important a priority it is for you personally using a scale from 0 to 10, where 0 means not important at all and 10 means extremely important.

All Voters		Black Voters	Latino Voters
9-10	Mean	9-10	9-10
78% Keeping people safe	9.3	78	76
68% Cracking down on violent crime	8.8	73	63
63% Reducing crime	8.7	71	65
59% Preventing crime before it happens	8.5	65	57
59% Punishing criminals	8.4	61	58
56% Being smart and tough on crime	8.3	59	57
54% Supporting law enforcement	8.0	45	44
43% Investing in rehabilitation efforts to avoid repeat offenders	7.7	56	47
48% Protecting the border	7.4	38	44

Swing voters and Independents show nearly identical response patterns, confirming that effective messaging with these Democratic constituencies also resonates with persuadable voters.

Full text of Democratic messaging on crime/safety

Dems tough on crime

Democrats believe everyone should feel safe in their community, so that means violent criminals should go to jail, and people who break the law should pay the price and shouldn't be given the means and opportunities to commit crimes again.

Dems smart on crime

Democrats believe everyone should feel safe in their community, so that means people who break the law should pay the price and shouldn't be given the means and opportunities to commit crimes again. But they also believe in commonsense reforms to deal with non-violent, low-level offenders, especially juveniles, outside the criminal justice system to try to prevent crime before it happens.

Attitudes Toward ICE and Reactions to Possible Reforms to ICE:

Note: While public opinion has likely shifted even more against ICE since this mid-December survey, the data reveals significant vulnerabilities in ICE's public standing and strong support for reforms.

ICE is vulnerable but requires nuance. Voters support detaining those here illegally who have committed serious crimes (by 20 points), but a majority believe ICE raids go too far, even before Minneapolis. The effective Democratic position:

1. Emphasize protecting communities from crime, including detaining those here illegally who have committed crimes
2. Then pivot to criticizing the Administration for going too far and detaining as many people as possible regardless of criminal background

There is also widespread support for local police among voters, and Democrats should emphasize their support for local law enforcement as they make the case that they support public safety in their communities but ICE is going too far.

Bottom Line: Democrats Must Lean Into Crime and Public Safety

While Democrats must continue to maintain and grow their advantage on prices, costs, and affordability, they also must engage proactively on crime and public safety to be successful in the midterms. All voters remain concerned about these issues, with heightened concern among Black and Latino voters.

Democrats must lead with toughness on violent criminals and highlight Republican hypocrisy on public safety by noting they cut police funding. The good news: tough-on-crime messaging that works with swing voters also resonates strongly with these critical Democratic constituencies.

Democrats must be thoughtful when navigating ICE. Support detaining those here illegally who have committed serious crimes, while criticizing indiscriminate enforcement and supporting professional standards reforms. This balanced approach aligns with majority opinion, including among swing voters.