MEMORANDUM
January 23, 2025
To: Interested Parties
From: Immigration Hub

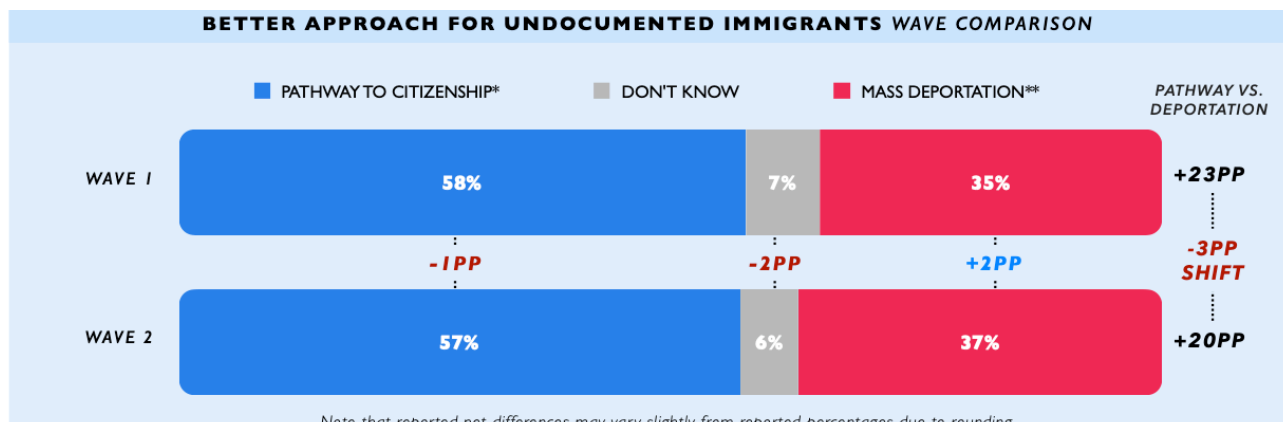**Ref: Trump's Election is Not a Mandate for Cruelty**

In the fall of 2024, BlueLabs partnered with the Immigration Hub to track the impact of key issues, including immigration, in the final weeks of the election. To conduct this survey-based research, BlueLabs administered two surveys with likely voters matched to the voter file in the seven presidential (AZ, GA, MI, NV, NC, PA, WI) and two senatorial battleground states (OH, MT). The first survey of 2,088 voters was conducted between September 6th and 16th and the second survey of 1,824 voters was conducted between October 20th and November 4th.

1. The Economy and Inflation were Top Issues for the Majority of Voters

- Combined with inflation, **the economy was the top issue for one in three voters this cycle**, while immigration (13%) came in fourth behind the economy (20%), inflation (13%), and democracy / rule of law (18%).
- Men, voters under 40, and sporadic voters—key voting groups that defected away from Democrats this cycle—were more likely to report the economy as their top issue by our final survey, but issue salience remained relatively stable between the survey waves in the final weeks of the campaign.
- **Immigration resonated as a top issue among voters who were already in Trump's camp, and most saw it as one of several factors in voting.** Immigration was the second top issue for self-reported Republicans while it trailed behind the economy, democracy, and inflation for Independents.
- For the most part, voters who reported immigration as their top issue were already in Trump's base: 85% supported Trump over Biden (7%) in 2020. **Meanwhile, the majority of battleground voters saw immigration as just one of many factors they considered when deciding who to support (57%).**

2. Strong Support for Pathway to Citizenship Over Mass Deportation

- **57% of battleground voters supported a pathway to citizenship** for undocumented immigrants who meet certain requirements, compared to **37% who favored mass deportation.**
- Even among Trump supporters, **26% preferred a pathway to citizenship and 39% supported a balanced approach** to addressing our immigration system.
- In the second wave of surveying battleground voters, **64% preferred a "balanced approach"** combining border security with protections for Dreamers and pathway to citizenship, versus 31% of voters who preferred an enforcement-only approach.
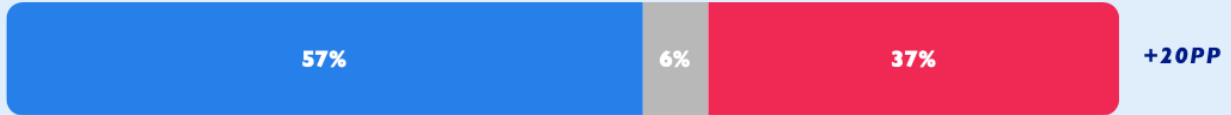

BETTER APPROACH FOR UNDOCUMENTED IMMIGRANTS *WAVE COMPARISON*

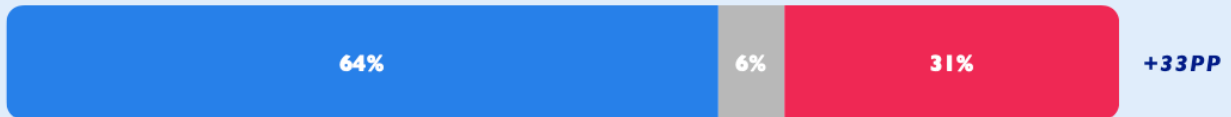PATHWAY TO CITIZENSHIP*   DON'T KNOW   MASS DEPORTATION**   PATHWAY VS. DEPORTATION

WAVE 1: 58% | 7% | 35% | +23PP
-1PP | -2PP | +2PP | -3PP SHIFT
WAVE 2: 57% | 6% | 37% | +20PP

Note that reported net differences may vary slightly from reported percentages due to rounding.

BETTER APPROACH FOR UNDOCUMENTED IMMIGRANTS *WAVE 2*

■ PATHWAY TO CITIZENSHIP   ■ DON'T KNOW   ■ MASS DEPORTATION

| 57% | 6% | 37% | +20PP |

PREFERRED APPROACH TO IMMIGRATION ENFORCEMENT *WAVE 2*

■ BALANCED APPROACH*   ■ DON'T KNOW   ■ ENFORCEMENT ONLY**

| 64% | 6% | 31% | +33PP |

Note that reported net differences may vary slightly from reported percentages due to rounding.

BETTER APPROACH FOR UNDOCUMENTED IMMIGRANTS *AMONG TRUMP SUPPORTERS - WAVE 2*

■ PATHWAY TO CITIZENSHIP   ■ DON'T KNOW   ■ MASS DEPORTATION

| 26% | 5% | 69% | -43PP |

PREFERRED APPROACH TO IMMIGRATION ENFORCEMENT *AMONG TRUMP SUPPORTERS - WAVE 2*

■ BALANCED APPROACH   ■ DON'T KNOW   ■ ENFORCEMENT ONLY

| 39% | 5% | 56% | -17PP |

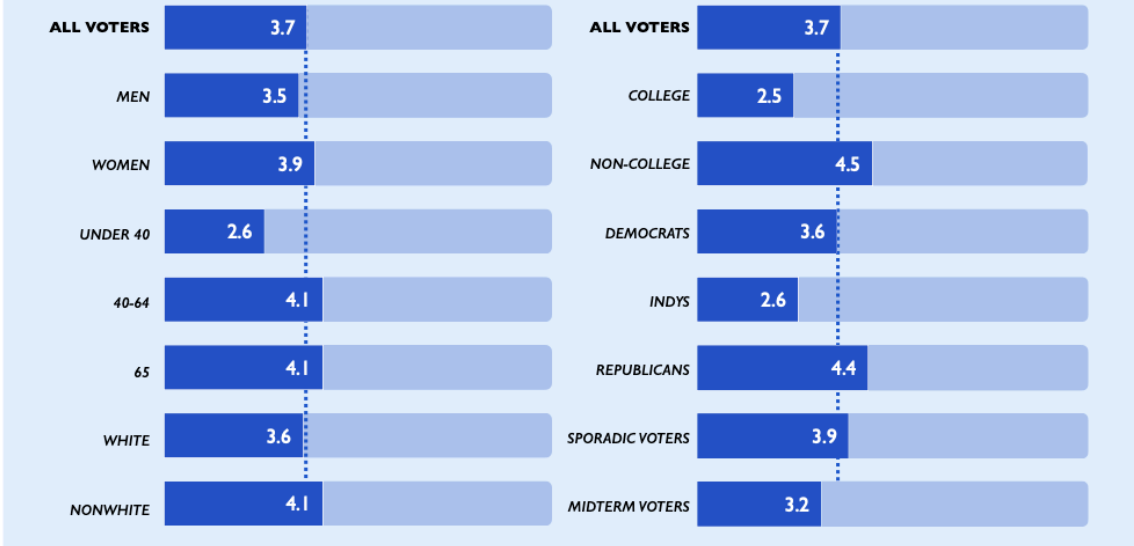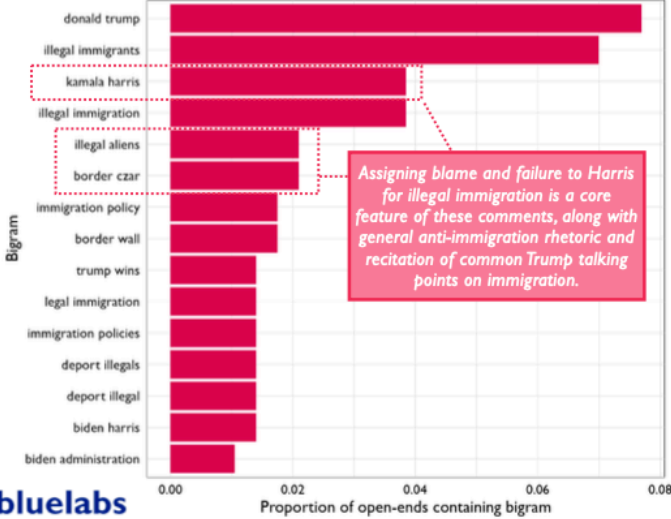### 3.. The Volume of Anti-immigrant Messaging Largely Went Unchallenged

- **7 in ten voters recalled seeing some ad about immigration in the final weeks of the cycle.** A slightly higher percentage of battleground voters in the Rustbelt (Michigan, Pennsylvania, Wisconsin) reported hearing or seeing some ad on immigration (71%), either positive or negative, compared to voters in the Sunbelt (Arizona, Georgia Nevada, North Carolina) (66%).
- Some voting groups that tend to vote with Democrats, including women and non-white voters, rated immigration ads as *slightly* more impactful on average compared to voters overall.
- **Blame and distrust of Harris on immigration is prominent among comments from Trump supporters who consider immigration one of many factors in candidate choice.** These voters frequently cite the need to deport illegal immigrants, signaling alignment with Trump's stance on immigration. **Multi-issue Harris supporters recall hearing about Trump's plan for mass deportation but were less clear or consistent on Harris' immigration policy positions and often indicate disapproval of both candidates' positions.**
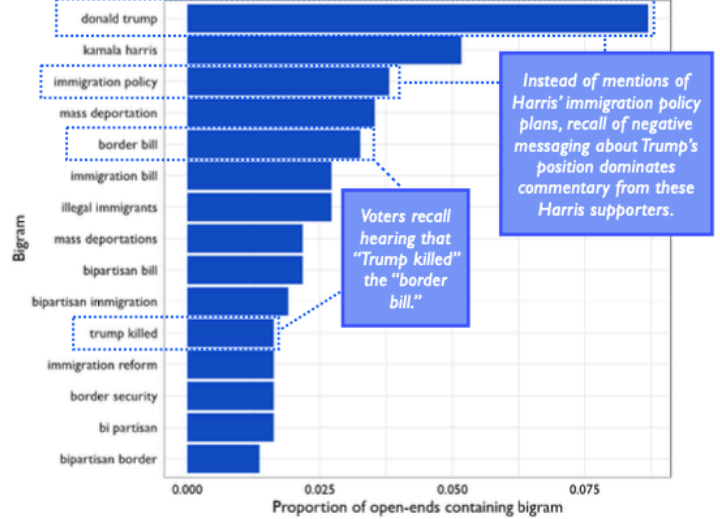
AVERAGE SCORE OF IMMIGRATION AD IMPACT, SCALE 0-10 *WAVE 2, KEY DEMOS*

Demographic	Score		Demographic	Score
ALL VOTERS	3.7		ALL VOTERS	3.7
MEN	3.5		COLLEGE	2.5
WOMEN	3.9		NON-COLLEGE	4.5
UNDER 40	2.6		DEMOCRATS	3.6
40-64	4.1		INDYS	2.6
65	4.1		REPUBLICANS	4.4
WHITE	3.6		SPORADIC VOTERS	3.9
NONWHITE	4.1		MIDTERM VOTERS	3.2

Immigration Policy-Related Messaging Recall Bigram Frequency
Among Trump Supporters Who Consider Immigration as One of Many Factors

Assigning blame and failure to Harris for illegal immigration is a core feature of these comments, along with general anti-immigration rhetoric and recitation of common Trump talking points on immigration.

Immigration Policy-Related Messaging Recall Bigram Frequency
Among Harris Supporters Who Consider Immigration as One of Many Factors

Instead of mentions of Harris' immigration policy plans, recall of negative messaging about Trump's position dominates commentary from these Harris supporters.

Voters recall hearing that "Trump killed" the "border bill."

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CONCLUSION

While economy and inflation were of top concern for most voters, the results of these surveys demonstrate that immigration remains a powerful, polarizing topic in American politics. Despite President-elect Donald Trump's victory, a majority of voters support pragmatic solutions to address undocumented immigrants in the U.S. and the southern border over mass deportation or an enforcement-only approach. Ultimately, however, Trump and Republicans effectively defined their position on immigration, as they weaponized the issue against their opponents. Candidate Kamala Harris and Democrats failed to present a clear alternative vision on immigration and response to the volume of Republican messaging on the issue.

In fact, Democrats largely failed to capitalize on voters support for popular immigration solutions while contrasting Trump and Republicans, with an [analysis of advertising spending](#) showing they invested just $107 million (16%) in immigration messaging compared to Republicans' $573 million (84%). Further analysis of Republican advertising and messaging on immigration and the border during the 2024 election cycle demonstrates that this strategy was effective in exacerbating voters' fears over economic security and public safety.

IMMIGRATION **HUB**