2026 National Public Opinion Reference Survey Methodology

Summary

SSRS conducted the National Public Opinion Reference Survey (NPORS) for Pew Research Center using address-based sampling and a multimode protocol. The survey was fielded from Jan. 30, 2026, to June 18, 2026. Participants were first mailed an invitation to complete an online survey. A paper survey was later mailed to those who did not respond. Additionally, the mailings invited participants to call a toll-free number to take the survey over the phone with a live interviewer. In total, 2,473 respondents completed the survey online, 2,694 respondents completed the paper survey, and 344 respondents completed the survey over the phone (total n=5,511). The survey was administered in English and Spanish. The AAPOR Response Rate 1 was 30%.

Sample definition

NPORS 2026 sample design

Strata	Description	Total ABS population distribution %	Total sampled households distribution %
1	Census block groups that are 50%-74.99% Black non-Hispanic and 65%+ HS or less	0.6%	1.6%
2	Census block groups that are 50%-74.99% Black non-Hispanic and <65% HS or less	3.2%	3.4%
3	Census block groups that are 75%+ Black non-Hispanic and 65%+ HS or less	0.6%	1.6%
4	Census block groups that are 75%+ Black non-Hispanic and <65% HS or less	2.6%	2.7%
5	Census block groups that are 50%-74.99% Hispanic and 65%+ HS or less	1.1%	1.6%
6	Census block groups that are 50%-74.99% Hispanic and <65% HS or less	4.6%	5.3%
7	Census block groups that are 75%+ Hispanic and 65%+ HS or less	1.4%	9.5%
8	Census block groups that are 75%+ Hispanic and <65% HS or less	2.3%	6.3%
9	Households modeled as likely Hispanic among remaining census block groups	7.1%	7.5%
10	Households modeled as likely low education among remaining census block groups	16.4%	15.3%
11	All remaining census block groups that are 65%+ HS or less	2.1%	3.2%
12	All remaining census block groups	57.8%	42.2%
		100%	**100%**

Note: Percentages may not sum to 100% due to rounding.

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The sample drawn was a national, stratified random sample of U.S. addresses, with differential probabilities of selection across the mutually exclusive strata. Strata were defined by census block groups, based on the population density of racial/ethnic groups and educational attainment. The

sample was drawn from the U.S. Postal Service Computerized Delivery Sequence File and was provided by MSG (Marketing Systems Group). Occupied residential addresses (including "drop points") in all U.S. states (including Alaska and Hawaii) and the District of Columbia had a nonzero chance of selection. SSRS designed the sample plan as shown in the table above.

Mailing protocol

SSRS sent initial mailings in a 9-by-12-inch window envelope via first-class mail to the 19,860 sampled households. These packets included two $1 bills (visible from the outside of the envelope) and a letter that asked a member of the household to complete the survey. The letter provided a URL and a QR code for the online survey; a toll-free call-in number; a password to enter on the online survey's landing page, or tell the telephone interviewers if they chose to call in; and a FAQ section printed on the reverse side. If two or more adults were in the household, the letter asked the adult with the next birthday to complete the survey. Nonresponding households were later sent a reminder postcard and then a reminder letter via first-class mail.

After the web portion of the data collection period had ended, SSRS sent nonresponding households with a deliverable address a 9-by-12-inch Priority Mail window envelope. The Priority envelope contained a letter with a FAQ section printed on the reverse side, a visible $5 bill, a paper version of the survey and a postage-paid return envelope. The paper survey was one 11-by-17-inch page folded booklet-style. The within-household selection instructions were identical to those used in the earlier online survey request. The same households were later sent a second envelope containing another copy of the paper questionnaire by first-class mail.

The initial mailing was sent out in two separate launches: soft launch and full launch. The soft launch made up 5% of the sample and was sent out several days earlier than the full launch. The full launch consisted of the remaining sample.

Households in Hispanic strata, and additional sample records predicted to likely be Hispanic, received all materials in English and Spanish. All other households received materials in English only. Those who completed the survey online, on the phone, or returned the completed paper survey were sent a $10 post-paid incentive.

Questionnaire development and testing

Pew Research Center developed the questionnaire in consultation with SSRS. The online questionnaire was tested on both desktop and mobile devices. The test data was analyzed to ensure the logic and randomizations were working as intended before the survey was launched.

Weighting

The survey was weighted to support reliable inference from the sample to the target population of U.S. adults. The weight was created using a multistep process that includes a base weight adjusting for differential probabilities of selection and a raking calibration that aligns the survey with the population benchmarks. The process starts with the base weight, which accounted for the probability of selection of the address from the U.S. Postal Service Computerized Delivery Sequence File frame, as well as the number of adults living in the household, and incorporated an adaptive mode adjustment for cases that responded in an offline mode.

Then the base weights are calibrated to population benchmarks using raking, or iterative proportional fitting. The raking dimensions and the source for the population parameter estimates are reported in the table below. All raking targets are based on the noninstitutionalized U.S. adult population (ages 18 and older). These weights are trimmed at the 1st and 99th percentiles to reduce the loss in precision stemming from variance in the weights.

Raking dimensions and source for population parameter estimates, NPORS 2026

Raking dimension	Source
Age(5)	2024 American Community Survey
Gender(2) x Age(3)	2024 American Community Survey
Gender(2) x Education(3)	2024 American Community Survey
Age(3) x Education(3)	2024 American Community Survey
Race/ethnicity(5)*	2024 American Community Survey
Education(3) x Race/ethnicity(4)**	2024 American Community Survey
Race/ethnicity(4) x Born inside or outside the U.S.(2)**	2024 American Community Survey
Census region(4) by metro status(2)	2024 American Community Survey
Phone type(3) x Education(3)***	2024 National Health Interview Survey
Phone type(3) x White/non-White(2)***	2024 National Health Interview Survey
Phone type(3) x Age(3)	2024 National Health Interview Survey
2024 presidential election turnout and vote choice	Candidate vote share is based on official results from the Federal Election Commission. Turnout is based on estimates from the Election Lab at the University of Florida. The size of the voting-eligible population is based on the 2023 American Community Survey.

* The standalone raking dimension for race/ethnicity includes Asian non-Hispanic as its own category, but this category is combined with Other non-Hispanic when crossed with other dimensions.
** Education is collapsed for the "Other non-Hispanic" category. Born inside or outside the U.S. is crossed only among Hispanics.
*** Cellphone only, landline only or both.

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Design effect and margin of error

Weighting and survey design features that depart from simple random sampling tend to result in an increase in the variance of survey estimates. This increase, known as the design effect, or "deff," should be incorporated into the margin of error, standard errors and tests of statistical significance. The overall design effect for a survey is commonly approximated as 1 plus the squared coefficient of variation of the weights.

For this survey, the margin of error (half-width of the 95% confidence interval) incorporating the design effect for full sample estimates at 50% is plus or minus 1.8 percentage points. Estimates based on subgroups will have larger margins of error. It is important to remember that random sampling error is only one possible source of error in a survey estimate. Other sources, such as question wording and reporting inaccuracy, may contribute additional error. A summary of the weights and their associated design effect is reported in the table below.

Sample sizes and margin of error, NPORS 2026

Group	Unweighted sample size	Weighted %	Plus or minus...
Total sample	5,511		1.8 percentage points
Men	2,362		2.8 percentage points
Women	3,082		2.3 percentage points
White, non-Hispanic	3,576		2.2 percentage points
Hispanic	880		4.7 percentage points
Black, non-Hispanic	554		5.5 percentage points
Asian, non-Hispanic	230		8.5 percentage points
Ages 18-29	540		5.3 percentage points
30-49	1,569		3.2 percentage points
50-64	1,379		3.5 percentage points
65+	1,967		2.8 percentage points
Household income			
< $30k	1,026		4.2 percentage points
$30k-$69,999	1,627		3.4 percentage points
$70k-$99,999	742		4.8 percentage points
$100,000+	1,861		2.9 percentage points

Group	Unweighted sample size	Weighted %	Plus or minus...
HS or less	1,277		3.5 percentage points
Some college	1,739		3.2 percentage points
College +	2,452		2.5 percentage points
Urban	1,468		3.6 percentage points
Suburban	2,652		2.6 percentage points
Rural	1,318		3.6 percentage points
Rep/Lean Rep	2,322	43%	2.7 percentage points
Dem/Lean Dem	2,759	47%	2.6 percentage points

Note: Unweighted sample sizes do not account for the sample design or weighting and do not describe a groups' contribution to weighted estimates. Refer to the Sample Definition and Weighting section for details.

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Dispositions

The table below reports the disposition of all sampled households for the survey.

Dispositions and response rates, NPORS 2026

	Code	Cases
Interview		
Complete	1.10	5,511
Partial	1.20	0
Eligible, non-interview		
Refusal	2.11	64
Unknown eligibility, non-interview		
Nothing returned or completed	3.199	12,862
Housing unit, unknown if eligible respondent	3.20	20
Not eligible		
Selected respondent screened out of sample	4.10	12
No such address	4.313	1,391
Total sample used		**19,860**
Complete interviews (1.1)	I	5,511
Partial interviews (1.2)	P	0
Refusal and break off (2.1)	R	64
Non-contact (2.2)	NC	0
Other (2.3, 2.9)	O	0
Unknown household (3.1)	UH	12,862
Unknown respondent eligibility (3.2, 3.9)	UO	20
Not eligible (4.1, 4.313)	NE	1,403
TOTAL		**19,860**
AAPOR RR1 = I/((I+P) + (R+NC+O) + (UH+UO))		**30%**

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