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AUDIENCE POWERED ANALYTICS

SFOF National Survey

Medicaid & Medicare improper payments
and death-record checks

3,042 registered voters nationwide
October 28 – November 1 2026

Key Questions Explored

1. How much of a priority is fraud and improper payments in Medicaid and Medicare, and how big do voters think the problem is?
2. Do voters support removing deceased enrollees, and does support hold once they hear the counterarguments?
3. Which specific steps and which arguments carry the most weight, and with whom?
4. Who do voters trust to make sure payments go only to eligible people?

Key findings

Removing deceased enrollees is an 80-point consensus, and it survives the counterarguments.

84% support stronger efforts at the outset (net +74); after hearing the privacy and wrongful-removal arguments, 81% still support (net +68). A majority of every subgroup supports it at every stage, including Democrats (77% final).

Age, not party, is the fault line.

The initial party gap is 14 points (Republicans +82, Democrats +68); the age gap is 33 (65+ +91, 18–24 +58). Support among 18–24 year old voters shifts more than in any other group (+58 to +33). They are also the least convinced by all three pro arguments (+29 to +46) and the only group where the privacy argument against the checks outscores them (+50).

Wrongful removal is the real vulnerability, and notice-and-appeal safeguards answer it.

Two-thirds (66%) worry eligible people could be removed by mistake, rising to 78% of Democrats. With notice and the right to appeal, support is 83% (net +72) and runs ahead of final support among Democrats (+68 vs. +61) and 18–24s (+51 vs. +33).

Lead with protecting patients and program integrity, not just taxpayers.

All three pro arguments are 80% convincing. Among Republicans the taxpayer frame is strongest (+75); among Democrats it is the weakest (+57), behind integrity (+65) and patients first (+63).

Inspectors general are the messenger; federal officials are not.

70% trust inspectors general (net +43), the only messenger net +20 or better with Republicans, Democrats and independents alike. Federal officials trail every other messenger (net +7).

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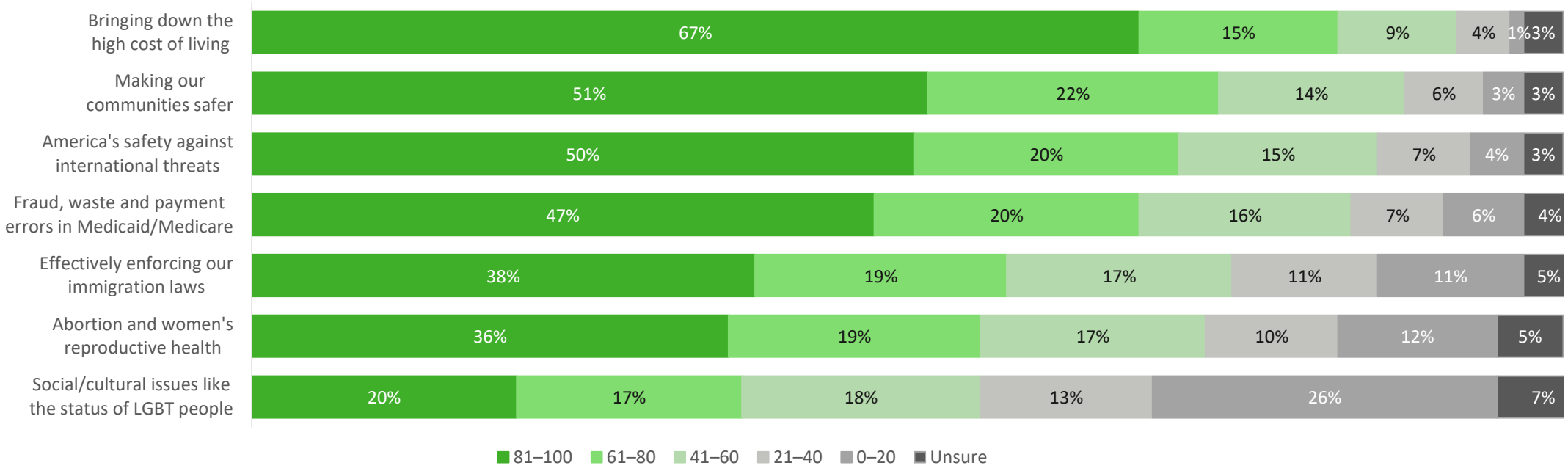
Priorities & the Improper-Payments Problem

Where fraud in Medicaid and Medicare ranks among voters' priorities, and how large they believe the problem is

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Issue priorities | Medicaid & Medicare fraud is a mid-tier priority

Rate how high of a priority each ought to be for elected officials, 0 (not a priority at all) to 100 (top priority). Ranked by % rating it 81–100.



47% put Medicaid/Medicare fraud at the top of the scale, behind cost of living (67%), safety (51%) and foreign threats (50%).

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Priorities by subgroup | cost of living ranks highest with every group

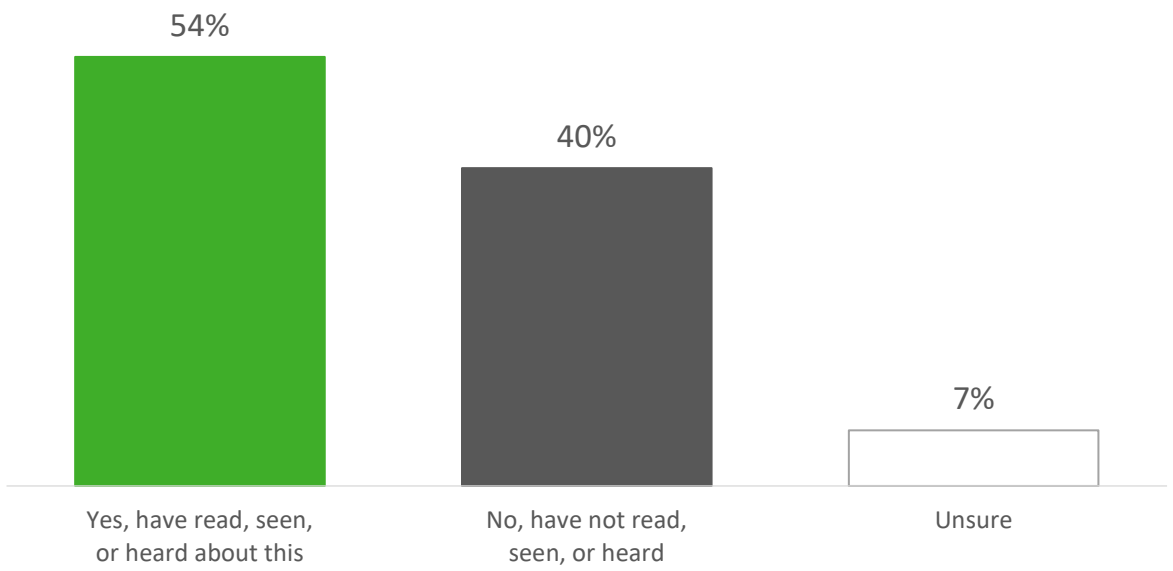
% rating each issue 81–100 on the 0–100 priority scale, by subgroup.

Subgroup	Cost of living	Community safety	International threats	Medicaid/Medicare fraud	Immigration enforcement	Abortion	Social/ cultural
All voters	**67%**	51%	50%	47%	38%	36%	20%
Men	**63%**	49%	48%	46%	40%	30%	19%
Women	**71%**	53%	51%	48%	36%	42%	20%
18–24	**42%**	37%	31%	29%	17%	30%	24%
25–34	**58%**	43%	32%	33%	24%	35%	21%
35–44	**60%**	48%	38%	35%	30%	33%	19%
45–54	**70%**	56%	49%	49%	40%	39%	23%
55–64	**77%**	58%	62%	56%	45%	38%	19%
65+	**77%**	55%	66%	62%	51%	38%	17%
Republican	**64%**	57%	60%	58%	59%	24%	11%
Democrat	**72%**	47%	42%	39%	20%	48%	29%
Independent / other	**63%**	45%	41%	40%	29%	31%	12%
Receive assistance	**74%**	56%	54%	50%	35%	39%	22%
Family/friend receives	**65%**	49%	46%	43%	34%	39%	20%
No one close receives	**66%**	50%	50%	48%	40%	34%	18%

Fraud is a top priority for 58% of Republicans and 62% of voters 65+, but only 39% of Democrats and 29% of 18–24s. With Democrats and younger voters, lead on cost of living and patient protection and bring fraud in behind it.

Awareness | a slim majority has heard about improper payments

Have you read, seen, or heard anything recently about fraud or improper payments in Medicaid or Medicare?

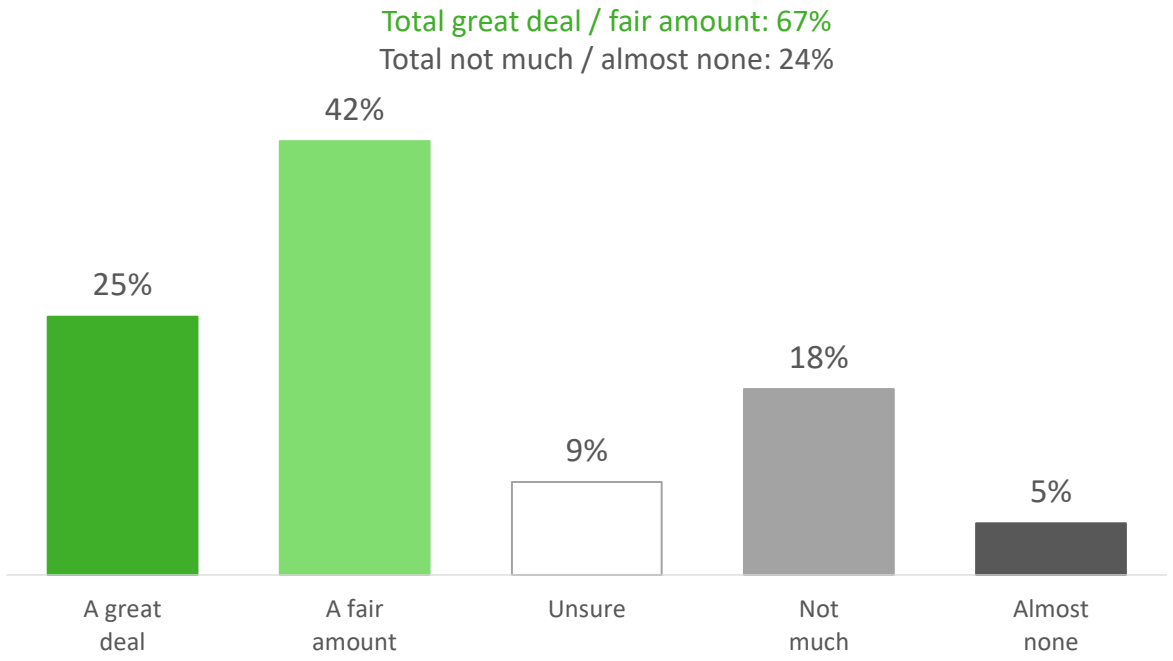


Subgroup	Net	Yes	No
All voters	+14	54%	40%
Men	+23	59%	35%
Women	+5	49%	44%
18–24	-1	46%	47%
25–34	-1	48%	49%
35–44	+4	48%	45%
45–54	+9	51%	42%
55–64	+19	55%	36%
65+	+32	62%	30%
Republican	+26	60%	34%
Democrat	+5	49%	44%
Independent / other	+4	47%	44%
Receive assistance	+10	52%	41%
Family/friend receives	+24	59%	35%
No one close receives	+11	52%	41%

54% have heard about it, but awareness drops to 46–48% among voters under 45. The issue still needs introducing to the voters who are softest on the policy.

Scale of the problem | two-thirds think a lot of money is lost

How much of the money spent on Medicaid and Medicare do you think is lost to improper payments?

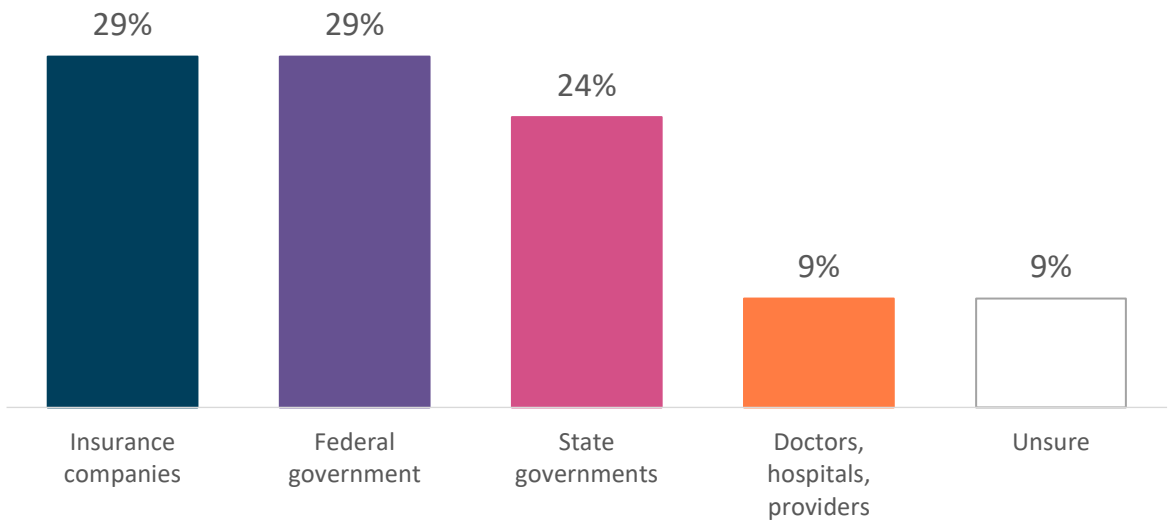


Subgroup	Net	Great / fair	Not much / none
All voters	+43	67%	24%
Men	+43	68%	25%
Women	+43	66%	23%
18–24	+55	75%	19%
25–34	+50	71%	21%
35–44	+43	68%	25%
45–54	+48	69%	21%
55–64	+41	65%	25%
65+	+35	62%	27%
Republican	+70	82%	12%
Democrat	+20	55%	35%
Independent / other	+40	61%	21%
Receive assistance	+37	62%	25%
Family/friend receives	+47	70%	23%
No one close receives	+45	68%	23%

Most voters believe there is a problem with 67% thinking a great deal or fair amount is lost, including 55% of Democrats. Messaging can spend its time on the fix rather than on proving the problem.

Responsibility | no single entity responsible in voters' minds

Who do you think should be most responsible for making sure Medicaid and Medicare payments go only to people who are eligible?



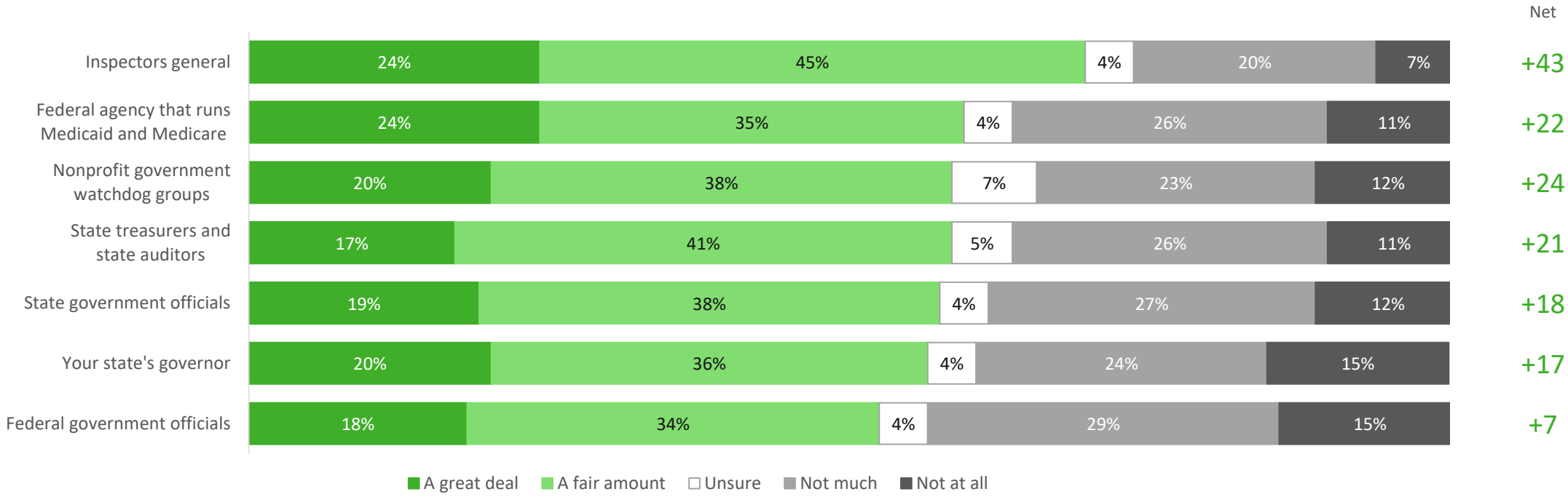
Subgroup	Insurers	Federal	State	Providers
All voters	**29%**	**29%**	24%	9%
Men	28%	**32%**	24%	9%
Women	**30%**	26%	24%	9%
18–24	26%	19%	**30%**	15%
25–34	**29%**	27%	23%	12%
35–44	28%	**29%**	22%	12%
45–54	**34%**	28%	23%	7%
55–64	**29%**	27%	27%	7%
65+	28%	**35%**	23%	6%
Republican	27%	**34%**	25%	7%
Democrat	**31%**	26%	24%	10%
Independent / other	**28%**	22%	20%	11%
Receive assistance	**30%**	29%	24%	8%
Family/friend receives	**30%**	26%	26%	10%
No one close receives	29%	**30%**	23%	9%

Republicans, not Democrats, look to Washington: 34% of Republicans name the federal government vs. 26% of Democrats, who point first to insurance companies (31%). Seniors also look to Washington (35%). Frame federal accountability for Republicans and seniors, insurer accountability for Democrats.

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Trusted messengers | inspectors general lead the field

How much do you trust each of the following to make sure Medicaid and Medicare money goes only to people who are eligible? Ranked by total trust.



Inspectors general are trusted by 70% (net +43), 11 points clear of the next messenger. Cite IG audits and findings as the proof point; avoid putting federal officials (net +7) out front.

Trust by subgroup | Inspectors general are the cross-partisan messenger

Net trust (a great deal / fair amount minus not much / not at all), by subgroup.

Subgroup	Inspectors general	Federal agency that runs Medicaid and Medicare	Nonprofit government watchdog groups	State treasurers and state auditors	State government officials	Your state's governor	Federal government officials
All voters	+43	+22	+24	+21	+18	+17	+7
Men	+45	+22	+29	+26	+19	+19	+11
Women	+41	+22	+19	+15	+16	+15	+4
18–24	+42	+33	+24	+32	+31	+29	+35
25–34	+44	+26	+30	+24	+24	+28	+23
35–44	+41	+19	+21	+20	+19	+22	+5
45–54	+36	+20	+23	+19	+19	+13	+1
55–64	+37	+19	+17	+11	+10	+7	-3
65+	+52	+21	+26	+21	+12	+12	+1
Republican	+47	+24	+15	+16	+12	+15	+20
Democrat	+44	+26	+37	+30	+28	+25	-1
Independent / other	+23	-1	0	-1	-4	-15	-8
Receive assistance	+45	+34	+26	+28	+23	+18	+9
Family/friend receives	+43	+19	+19	+14	+18	+12	+3
No one close receives	+43	+19	+25	+20	+16	+18	+9

Independents are net negative or even on six of seven messengers, but give inspectors general +23. Governors (−15) and federal officials (−8) actively lose independents.

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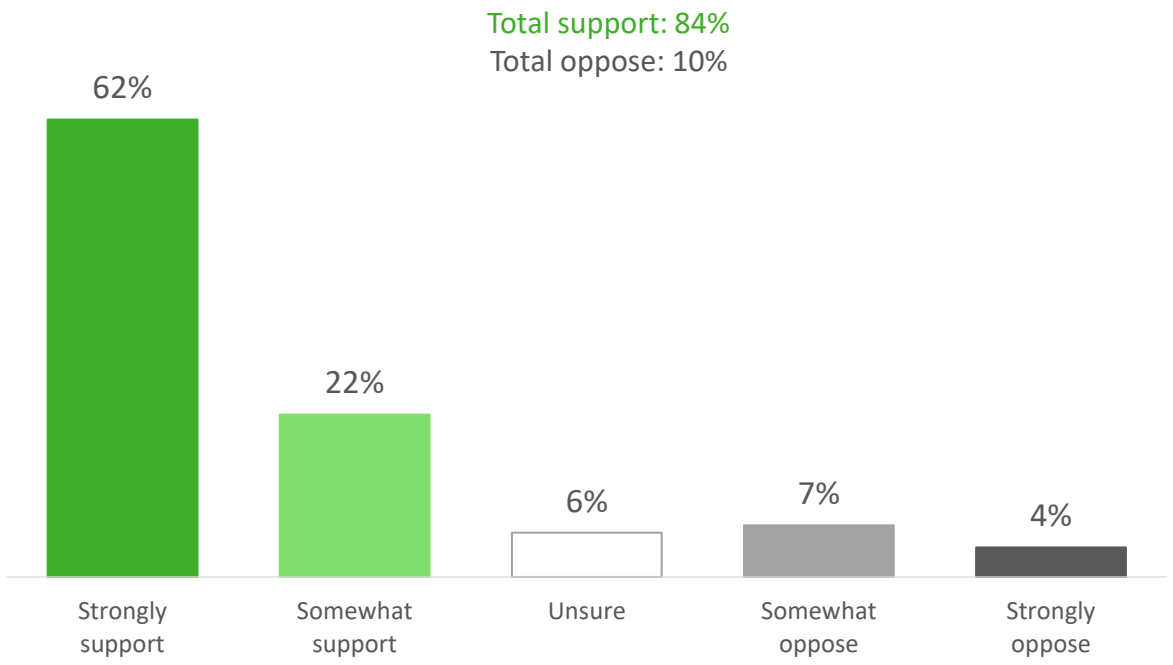
Support for Death-Record Checks

Support for removing deceased enrollees, for the 2025 requirement, and for the specific steps that would put it into practice

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Initial support | 84% back removing deceased enrollees

Do you support or oppose stronger efforts to remove people who have died from Medicaid and Medicare enrollment lists, so that payments stop being made on their behalf?

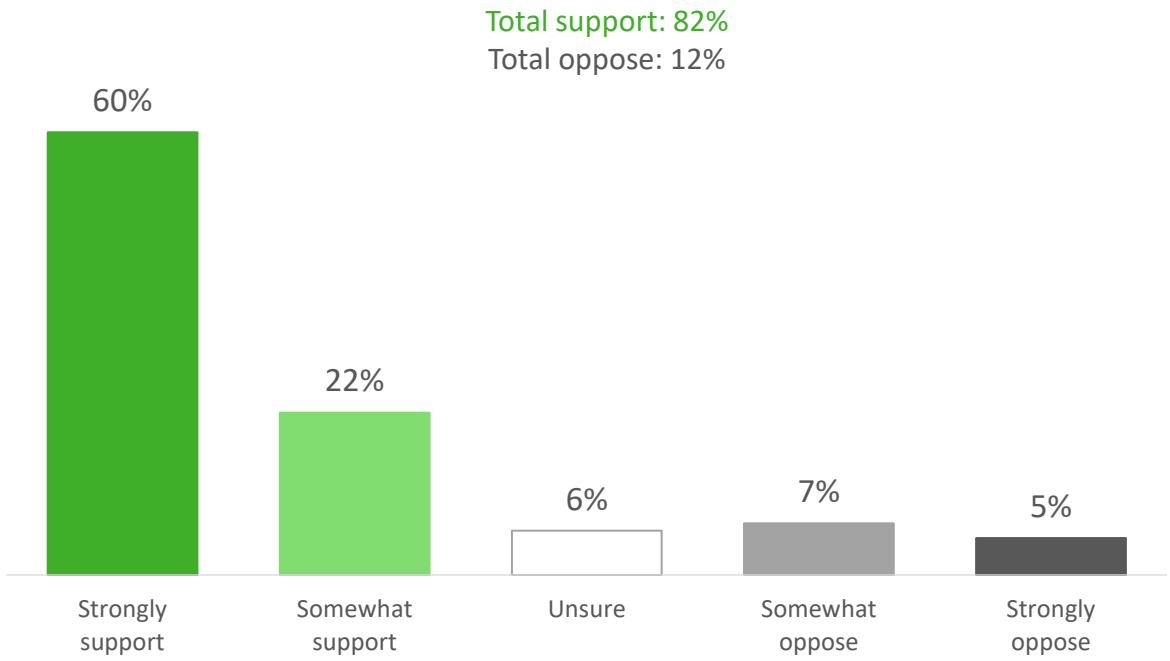


Subgroup	Net	Total support	Total oppose
All voters	+74	84%	10%
Men	+74	84%	11%
Women	+74	84%	10%
18–24	+58	76%	18%
25–34	+56	74%	18%
35–44	+60	77%	16%
45–54	+75	83%	9%
55–64	+84	90%	6%
65+	+91	94%	3%
Republican	+82	90%	8%
Democrat	+68	81%	13%
Independent / other	+69	77%	9%
Receive assistance	+75	85%	10%
Family/friend receives	+70	83%	13%
No one close receives	+75	84%	9%

Support is broad before any argument is made: net +82 among Republicans, +68 among Democrats. The softest groups are voters under 45 (74–77% support), not partisans.

After the IG audit | support holds at 82%.

A 2025 audit by the HHS Inspector General estimated that state Medicaid programs made more than $207 million in monthly payments to insurance companies in a single year on behalf of enrollees who had already died. Knowing this, do you support or oppose stronger efforts to remove people who have died from Medicaid enrollment lists?



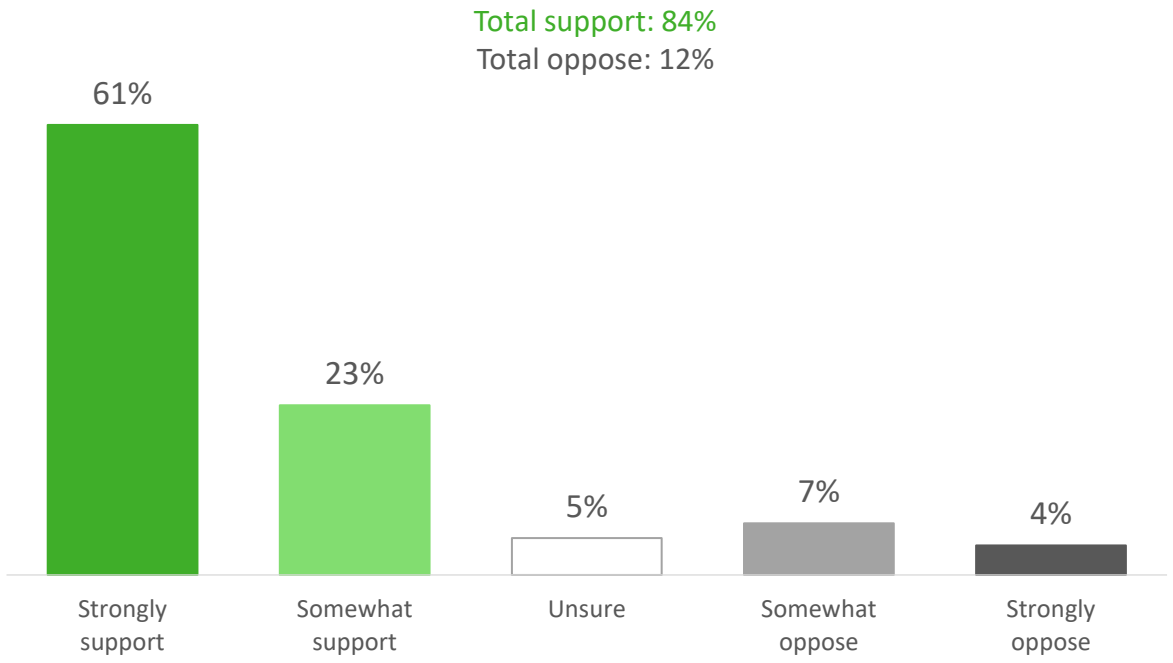
Subgroup	Net	Total support	Total oppose
All voters	+70	82%	12%
Men	+67	81%	14%
Women	+72	82%	10%
18–24	+50	69%	19%
25–34	+53	73%	20%
35–44	+57	74%	17%
45–54	+67	80%	12%
55–64	+79	87%	8%
65+	+88	92%	4%
Republican	+79	88%	9%
Democrat	+62	77%	15%
Independent / other	+67	76%	9%
Receive assistance	+72	83%	11%
Family/friend receives	+61	78%	17%
No one close receives	+72	82%	10%

Support is 82% after the audit fact (net +70), slightly below the initial ask. Support is already near it’s ceiling, so the dollar figure works as a proof point, and less las a persuader.

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The 2025 requirement | 84% support quarterly death-record checks

Congress passed an Act in 2025 that requires states, starting in 2027, to check Medicaid enrollment lists against national death records at least every three months and stop payments for enrollees who have died. Do you support or oppose this requirement?

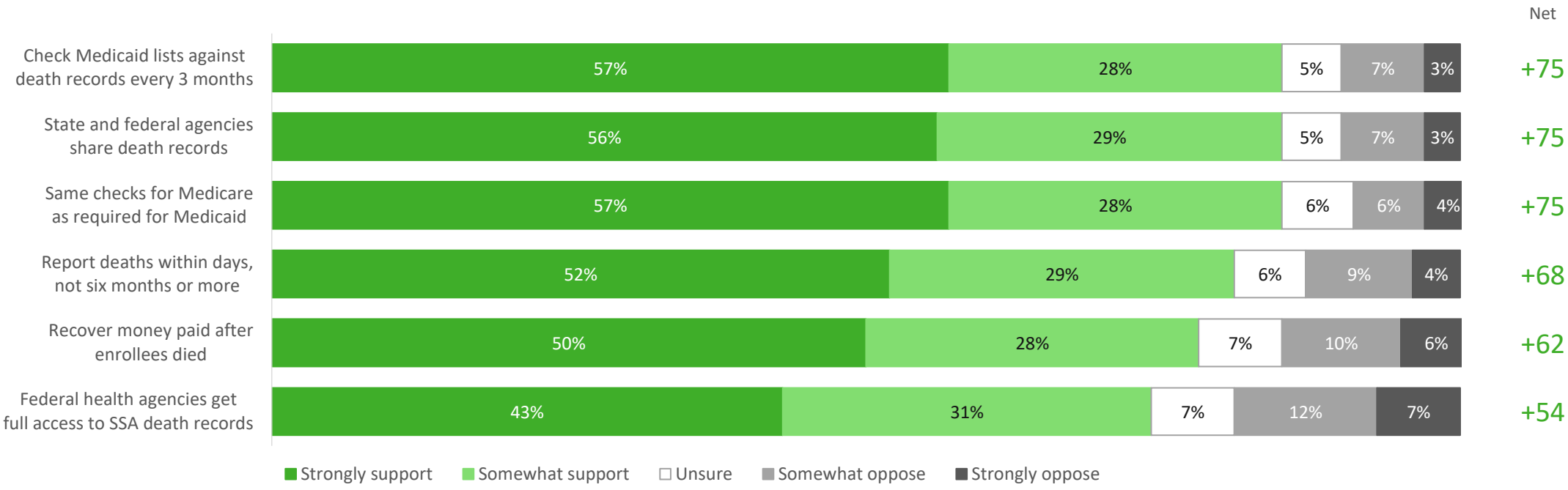


Subgroup	Net	Total support	Total oppose
All voters	+72	84%	12%
Men	+70	83%	13%
Women	+73	84%	11%
18–24	+36	63%	26%
25–34	+61	77%	17%
35–44	+66	80%	15%
45–54	+67	81%	14%
55–64	+78	87%	9%
65+	+92	95%	3%
Republican	+81	89%	9%
Democrat	+66	81%	14%
Independent / other	+62	75%	13%
Receive assistance	+73	85%	12%
Family/friend receives	+64	80%	16%
No one close receives	+75	85%	10%

The enacted requirement polls as well as the general idea (84%, net +72). The one group to watch is 18–24s, where opposition reaches 26% (net +36).

Specific proposals | support clears 70% with all six tested

Here are some specific steps that could be taken to make sure Medicaid and Medicare payments are not made on behalf of people who have died. For each one, please say whether you support or oppose it. Ranked by net support.



Quarterly checks, data sharing and extending checks to Medicare all reach 85%. Giving federal agencies full access to Social Security death records is the weakest step (74%, net +54); lead with the others.

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Specific proposals by subgroup | Democrats split on federal records access

Net support (total support minus total oppose) for each step, by subgroup.

Subgroup	Quarterly checks	Data sharing	Medicare checks	Report within days	Recover payments	Federal access to SSA records
All voters	+75	+75	+75	+68	+62	+54
Men	+74	+72	+74	+66	+62	+53
Women	+76	+77	+77	+69	+62	+56
18–24	+40	+39	+44	+40	+37	+33
25–34	+59	+59	+56	+49	+47	+45
35–44	+66	+65	+67	+57	+50	+48
45–54	+79	+81	+79	+66	+60	+58
55–64	+83	+83	+84	+79	+68	+58
65+	+92	+91	+93	+87	+83	+66
Republican	+84	+82	+82	+80	+73	+72
Democrat	+69	+69	+72	+58	+53	+40
Independent / other	+65	+70	+62	+61	+58	+47
Receive assistance	+76	+78	+76	+70	+62	+56
Family/friend receives	+74	+69	+73	+63	+58	+55
No one close receives	+75	+75	+76	+68	+64	+54

Federal access to SSA records is +72 among Republicans but +40 among Democrats, the widest party gap of any step. Voters 18–24 are the softest group on every step (+33 to +44).

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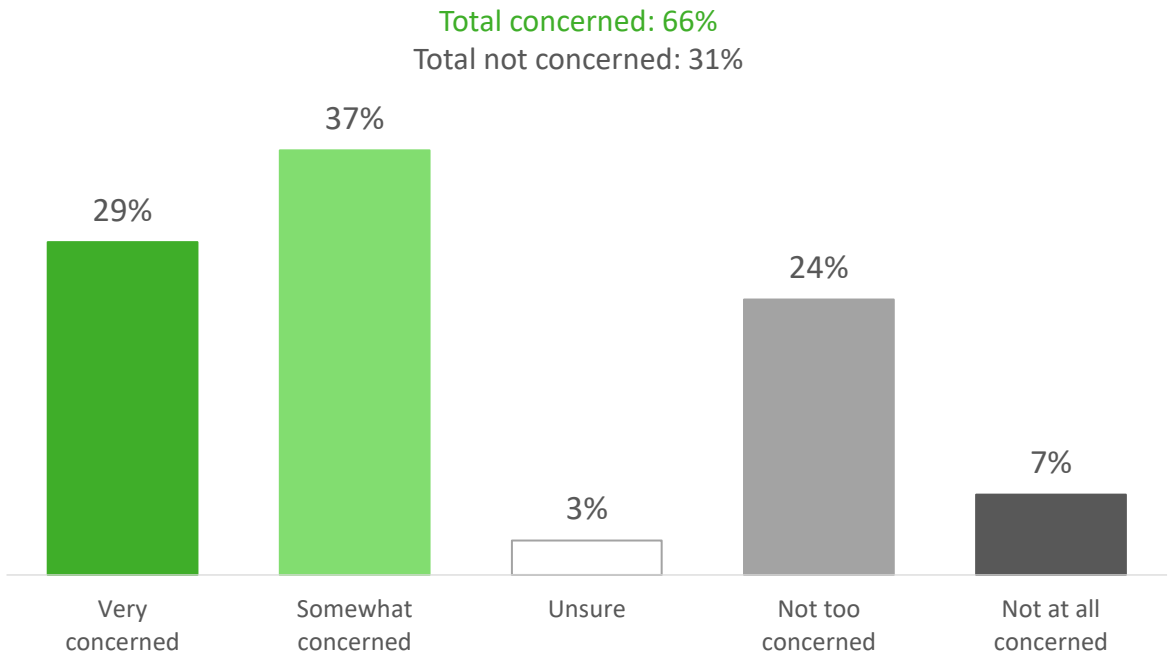
Trade-offs & Messaging

The wrongful-removal concern, the arguments on each side, and where support lands once voters have heard them

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Wrongful removal | two-thirds worry eligible people could be cut off

How concerned are you that people who are alive and eligible could be removed from Medicaid or Medicare by mistake because of an error in death records?



Subgroup	Net	Total concerned	Total not concerned
All voters	+35	66%	31%
Men	+33	65%	32%
Women	+37	67%	29%
18–24	+49	72%	23%
25–34	+43	70%	27%
35–44	+49	73%	24%
45–54	+39	68%	29%
55–64	+36	66%	30%
65+	+16	57%	41%
Republican	+11	54%	43%
Democrat	+59	78%	19%
Independent / other	+29	60%	31%
Receive assistance	+52	74%	23%
Family/friend receives	+43	70%	27%
No one close receives	+26	61%	35%

66% are concerned, including 78% of Democrats and 74% of voters who receive assistance themselves. Any advocacy for the checks has to answer this concern.

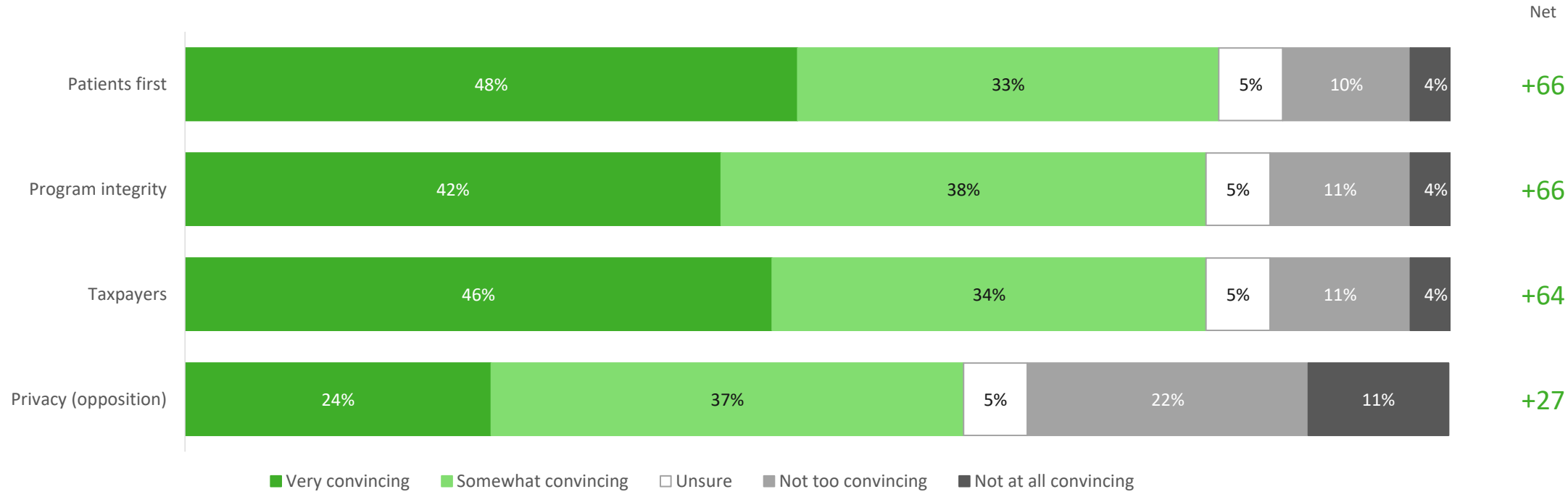
Messaging library | the arguments exactly as respondents heard them

Here are some things people have said about checking Medicaid and Medicare enrollment lists against death records. For each one, please say how convincing it is to you.

HOW WE REFER TO IT	ARGUMENT AS READ TO RESPONDENTS
Patients first	Money paid on behalf of people who have died is money that is not going to eligible patients, like seniors, children, and people with disabilities.
Program integrity	Medicaid and Medicare only work if people trust them. Keeping enrollment lists accurate protects these programs for the people who depend on them.
Taxpayers	Taxpayers work hard for their money. Every dollar paid on behalf of someone who has died is a dollar taken from taxpayers for nothing.
Privacy (opposition)	Giving more government agencies access to death records and sharing them across agencies raises concerns about privacy and how that information is used.

Message testing | all three pro arguments convince 80%

How convincing is each statement? Pro arguments ranked by net convincing; the opposition argument shown last.



The three pro arguments tie at 80% convincing; the privacy argument convinces 61% yet final support still stands at 81%. Pick the frame by audience, not by topline: see the subgroup view.

Messages by subgroup | pick the frame by audience

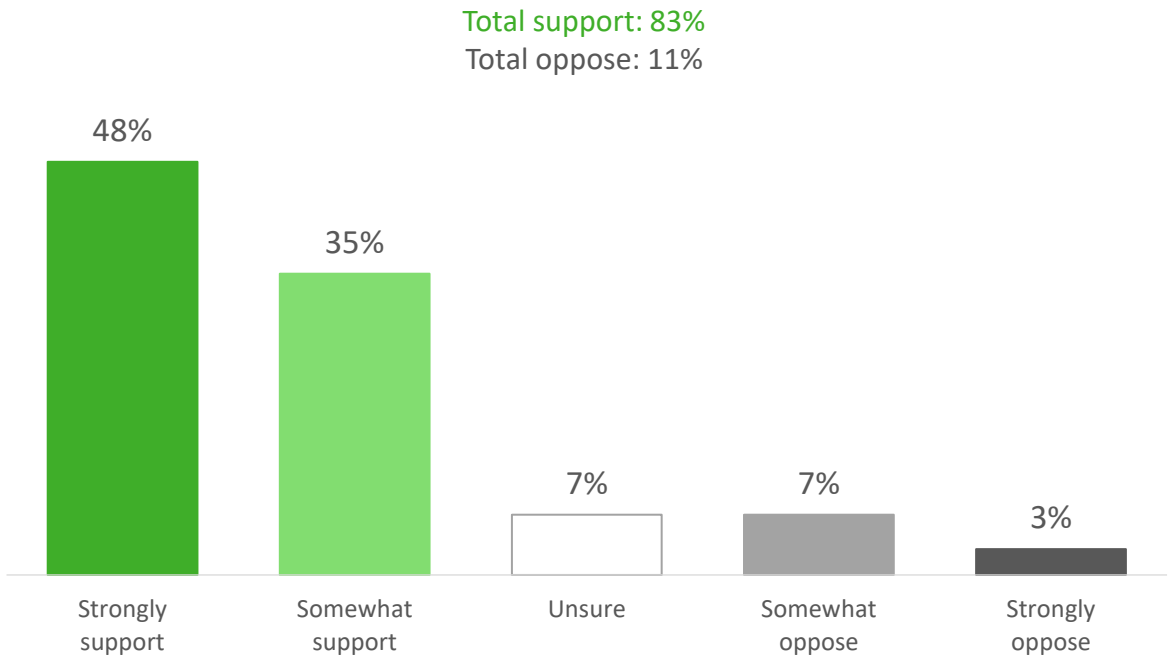
Net convincing (total convincing minus total not convincing), by subgroup.

Subgroup	Patients first	Program integrity	Taxpayers	Privacy (opposition)
All voters	+66	+66	+64	+27
Men	+64	+67	+64	+28
Women	+68	+65	+65	+27
18–24	+29	+45	+46	+50
25–34	+56	+55	+53	+41
35–44	+59	+63	+59	+42
45–54	+68	+66	+65	+32
55–64	+73	+73	+68	+18
65+	+82	+76	+77	+7
Republican	+73	+70	+75	+15
Democrat	+63	+65	+57	+39
Independent / other	+51	+54	+55	+23
Receive assistance	+75	+75	+68	+32
Family/friend receives	+63	+66	+61	+26
No one close receives	+64	+62	+64	+26

Republicans respond most to taxpayers (+75); Democrats to integrity (+65) and patients (+63) over taxpayers (+57). Privacy lands hardest with 18–24s (+50) and barely registers with 65+ (+7). Use patients/integrity for Democrats and younger voters.

With safeguards | notice and appeal hold support at 83%

Suppose these death record checks required that people be notified before their coverage ends and have the right to appeal if they were removed by mistake. With these safeguards, would you support or oppose the checks?

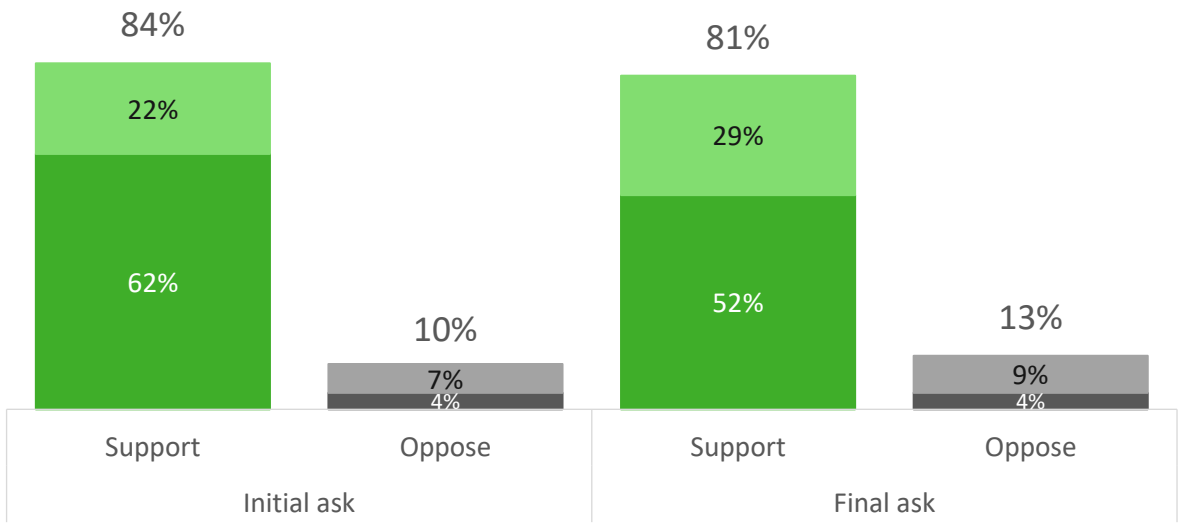


Subgroup	Net	Total support	Total oppose
All voters	+72	83%	11%
Men	+71	83%	12%
Women	+73	82%	10%
18–24	+51	71%	20%
25–34	+63	79%	16%
35–44	+69	82%	13%
45–54	+75	84%	9%
55–64	+72	83%	10%
65+	+83	89%	5%
Republican	+78	87%	9%
Democrat	+68	81%	13%
Independent / other	+68	76%	9%
Receive assistance	+74	84%	10%
Family/friend receives	+71	83%	12%
No one close receives	+72	82%	10%

Safeguards hold support where the policy is softest: 18–24s are +51 with notice and appeal vs. +33 on the final ask, Democrats +68 vs. +61. Put notice and appeal in every message to these voters.

Final support | 81% still back the checks after hearing both sides

Now that you have heard more, do you support or oppose stronger efforts to remove people who have died from Medicaid enrollment lists, so that payments stop being made on their behalf?



Subgroup	Initial net	Final net	Shift
All voters	+74	+68	-6
Men	+74	+68	-6
Women	+74	+68	-6
18–24	+58	+33	-25
25–34	+56	+52	-4
35–44	+60	+58	-2
45–54	+75	+73	-2
55–64	+84	+77	-7
65+	+91	+87	-4
Republican	+82	+78	-4
Democrat	+68	+61	-7
Independent / other	+69	+59	-10
Receive assistance	+75	+71	-4
Family/friend receives	+70	+63	-7
No one close receives	+75	+69	-6

Support slips only 3 points from first ask to last (84% to 81%). The erosion is concentrated in 18–24s (−25 net), then independents (−10) and Democrats (−7); voters 65+ barely move (−4).

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