

Constitution Day Civics Survey — Topline Report

2026 Annenberg Constitution Day Civics Survey
Fielded by SSRS on the SSRS Opinion Panel Omnibus | August 6–9, 2026

September 2026

Methodology

This report presents findings from the 2026 Annenberg Constitution Day Civics Survey, conducted for the Annenberg Public Policy Center (APPC) of the University of Pennsylvania by SSRS as an insert on the SSRS Opinion Panel Omnibus, a national, twice-per-month, probability-based survey of U.S. adults.

Scope. This topline covers the items reported in the accompanying press release: the three branches of government, open-ended recall of First Amendment protections, and the closed-ended items on the rights of people in the country illegally, veto overrides, birthright citizenship, the Tenth Amendment, a 5-4 Supreme Court ruling, and who decides whether a presidential action is constitutional. Every percentage below is for all U.S. adults.

All results are weighted to represent the U.S. adult population 18 and older. SSRS applied a base weight for probability of selection, raked the sample to population parameters for U.S. adults 18 and older, and trimmed the final calibrated weights at the 2nd and 98th percentiles.

Percentages include “Don’t know,” “Not sure,” and refused / web-blank responses in the denominator; refused / web-blank responses are folded into each item’s own don’t-know level rather than shown as a separate row. * = greater than zero but less than 0.5%; rounds to zero. Percentages may not sum to 100 due to rounding. NETs are summed unrounded and rounded once, so they may differ from the sum of the rounded categories.

Field dates: August 6, 2026 to August 9, 2026

Sample size (unweighted): 1,034 U.S. adults ages 18 and older

Mode: web (n = 1,003) and telephone (n = 31), in English (n = 1,008) and Spanish (n = 26)

Design effect: 1.28

Margin of error (95% confidence, full sample): ± 3.5 percentage points (SSRS reported; ± 3.45 computed from the final weights). Subgroup margins are larger.

Cumulative response rate (RR3): 2.1%, taking panel recruitment into account.

Trend note

The 2024 and 2025 measures of the three-branches and First Amendment items were collected on APPC's Institutions of Democracy (AIOD) and Science and Public Health (ASAPH) Panel, respectively; the 2026 readings were collected on the SSRS Opinion Panel Omnibus. Differences between years may reflect differences in panel as well as real change in public knowledge. Year-to-year differences are shown descriptively here. Significance tests for 2025 versus 2026 and for 2024 versus 2026 were run and are available on request.

Weighted Toplines

All figures are weighted percentages of all 1,034 respondents unless a base is stated otherwise. Open-ended items (APPC03, APPC04) are coded by APPC, which recovers mentions that the vendor's coding leaves in "other"; the APPC coding is the authoritative coding and is more complete than the vendor's, most visibly on "right to bear arms."

APPC02. Do you happen to know any of the three branches of government?

Response	%
Yes	87
No	13

APPC03. Would you mind naming any of them, the three branches of government?

Asked of respondents who said they know any branch of government ($n = 912$). Percentages below are based on all respondents ($n = 1,034$); those who said they did not know any branch, and the 1% who declined to answer, are counted as naming none.

Branches correctly named, by year

Year	0	1	2	3
2026	16	8	11	65
2025	13	6	12	70
2024	15	8	13	65

Specific branches named, 2026 (base: all respondents)

Branch	2026 %
Legislative branch / Congress	77
Judicial branch / the courts / Supreme Court	74
Executive branch / the president / the White House	72

APPC04. As you may know, the First Amendment is part of the U.S. Constitution. Can you name any of the specific rights that are guaranteed by the First Amendment of the Constitution, or not?

First Amendment protections named, by year

Year	Freedom of speech	Freedom of religion	Freedom of the press	Right of assembly	Right to petition	Right to bear arms
2026	73	43	29	31	12	25
2025	79	48	34	36	12	21
2024	74	39	29	27	11	22

The right to bear arms is a Second Amendment right, not a First Amendment protection; it is shown because a quarter of respondents offered it. It is not counted toward the number of protections named below.

Number of the five First Amendment protections named, by year

Year	0	1	2	3	4	5
2026	24	27	16	13	11	9
2025	18	24	17	18	13	9
2024	21	29	19	16	7	7

In 2026, 18% said at the outset that they could not name any First Amendment right and were scored as naming none.

APPC05. We are going to show you some statements about the U.S. Constitution. For each one, please indicate how accurate you think that statement is.

APPC05a. Those who are in the country **ILLEGALLY** do not have any rights under the U.S. Constitution.

This statement is inaccurate: the Constitution’s core protections are written in terms of “persons,” not citizens, and apply to people in the United States regardless of immigration status.

Response	%
NET Accurate	44
NET INaccurate	56
Very accurate	23
Somewhat accurate	21
Somewhat INaccurate	27
Very INaccurate	28
Don’t know	*

APPC05b. Under the U.S. Constitution, when a president vetoes legislation, the bill becomes a law if two-thirds of the members in each house of the U.S. Congress vote to override the president’s veto.

This statement is accurate (Article I, Section 7).

Response	%
NET Accurate	83
NET INaccurate	17
Very accurate	42
Somewhat accurate	41
Somewhat INaccurate	11
Very INaccurate	6
Don’t know	*

APPC06. According to the U.S. Constitution, as interpreted by the Supreme Court, children who are born in the U.S. and are subject to the jurisdiction thereof are citizens of the U.S., if neither of their parents is a citizen. Would you say this is:

“Correct” is the accurate response. A companion statement about children with one U.S.-citizen parent was fielded in the same randomized pair but is not reported here because it shows a large presentation-order effect; it is available on request.

Response	%
Correct	76
Incorrect	11
Not sure	13

APPC07. Which of the following more accurately describes the Tenth Amendment to the U.S. Constitution?

The Tenth Amendment states that “the powers not delegated to the United States by the Constitution, nor prohibited by it to the States, are reserved to the States respectively, or to the people.”

Response	%
The federal government has only those powers granted to it by the Constitution. Powers not granted to the federal government are reserved to the states or to the people. (Correct)	50
State governments have only those powers granted to them by the Constitution. Powers not granted to the states are reserved to the federal government.	13
Not sure	37

APPC08. If the U.S. Supreme Court rules on a case 5 to 4, does this mean:

This item was also fielded in 2024 (n = 1,590); it was not fielded in 2025. The 2024-to-2026 change is not statistically significant for the correct answer; the share saying the case returns to Congress rose significantly, from 13% to 18%.

Response	2026 %	2024 %
The decision is the law and needs to be followed (Correct)	69	73
The decision is sent back to Congress for reconsideration	18	13
The decision is sent back to the federal court of appeals to be decided there	12	13
Don't know	1	1

APPC09. If the president and Supreme Court differ on whether an action by the president is constitutional, who has the final responsibility for determining if the action is constitutional: the president, Congress, or the Supreme Court, or are you not sure?

Response	%
The Supreme Court (Correct)	60
Congress	17
The president	4
Not sure	19

Prepared by the Annenberg Public Policy Center of the University of Pennsylvania. Analysis scripts: Constitution_Day_2026_Release.R (2026 readings and the 2025 trend tests) and Constitution_Day_2024_trend.R (the 2024 comparisons). All percentages in this report are generated from output/ by Constitution_Day_Topline_2026.Rmd.