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Public Conversation on Proposed Online Platform Legislation: Summary and Toplines

Prepared by Thinkwell

The open conversation

N Size: 243 people who took a side
Threads: 140
95% interval: 50% to 65%
August to October 2026
People who chose to post in public; not a voter sample

The sponsor's poll, for comparison

N Size: 1,999 Registered Voters
Margin of Error: ± 2%
September 10, 2026

Key Findings

The open conversation leaned much further toward the restrictions than the poll did.

- Averaged across the poll's 22 questions, 27% of respondents who picked a side on a question were on the side of the restrictions. Among the 243 people in the open conversation who took a side, 57% were, with a 95% interval of 50% to 65%. (T1, T2)
- Asked at the end, 45% opposed the laws and 32% supported them. (the sponsor's poll, final question)

Most of the poll's questions were worded toward its sponsor's side.

- 19 of the poll's 22 questions were worded toward the sponsor's side. Averaged over the questions with enough stances in the conversation to compare, the conversation differed from the poll by 26 points where the wording leaned, and by about 7 points the other way where it was neutral. (T3, T4)
- Two AI models, coding each question blind, agreed on all 22. Only 3 questions were neutral, so this is a first look at how the gap varies with wording, not proof that the wording caused it. (T3, T4)

A blind second reading matched Thinkwell's first reading on 95% of checked pairs.

- Thinkwell's AI stance judge read a sample of 161 comment and question pairs a second time, blind, and gave the same reading on 95% of them. An independent AI model, reading blind, agreed with the judge on 92% of the pairs it read. (T5)
- Agree and disagree were never swapped. Both checks compare one AI reading with another, so they show how consistent the readings are, not their accuracy against human reviewers. (T5)

No single thread drives the result: the busiest holds 7.8% of the people who took a side.

- 243 people took a side across 140 threads, each counted once, in the thread where they took the most stances. The busiest thread held 7.8% of them, and the five busiest 22% together. (T6)

Top-level comments posted in a thread's first 15 minutes were 3 times as likely to reach its top quarter by score as those posted 3 to 12 hours in.

- Top-level comments posted in a thread's first 15 minutes reached the top quarter of that thread's comments by score 69% of the time, against 22% for those posted 3 to 12 hours in. This counts 5,444 top-level comments in the collected threads, not only those that took a side. (T7)

Method

This research was conducted by Thinkwell. Thinkwell read public social media threads and news coverage about the same laws, from August to October 2026. Nobody was asked anything. Thinkwell found the people who took a side in their own words and matched what they said to the poll's 22 questions about the laws, then checked a sample of those readings with a blind second reading. 243 people took a side, across 140 threads. They chose to post, and they are not a sample of voters. The analysis took about 45 minutes once the posts were collected. Between August 31 and September 10, 2026, a tech industry group paid a national polling firm to survey registered voters online: 4,103 people about how they use online services, then 1,999 people about the proposed laws. The firm weighted the answers to resemble U.S. registered voters and reports a margin of error of plus or minus 2 percentage points for each survey.

27% is Thinkwell's average of the poll's published toplines. For each of its 22 questions about the laws, Thinkwell left out the respondents who did not pick a side and found the share of the rest on the side of the restrictions, then averaged the 22 shares. It is not the answer to any single question. 57% is a share of people. Each author counts once, however often they posted, and a news article with no named author counts as its outlet. A person's side is the side most of their stances were on; anyone evenly split is left out. A stance reading is the AI judge's call on one passage and one poll question: the passage affirms the question's claim, denies it, qualifies it, or is unrelated. Qualified readings count toward neither side. Each person is placed in the thread where they took the most stances, so the 243 people sit in 140 threads. The

range around 57% is a 95% interval. It reflects the uncertainty that comes from reading these particular people and threads. It is not a forecast of what voters think or of what another poll would find.

The two measure different groups in different ways, so neither number is the truth on its own, and the gap is not a measure of what voters think. The tables that follow look at what may explain the difference, and how far to trust each.

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Toplines

N Size: 243 people who took a side
95% interval: 50% to 65%
August to October 2026

Topline Report

Question	Response	Frequency	Percentage
T1	*Of the people in the open conversation who took a side on the proposed laws, which side were they on?*		
	On the side of the restrictions	138	57%
	Against the restrictions	105	43%
	Total	**243**	**100%**

The 95% interval for the share on the side of the restrictions runs from 50% to 65%. It reflects the uncertainty that comes from reading these particular people and threads, and is not a forecast of what voters think.

Poll: N Size 1,999 Registered Voters, ± 2%
Conversation: N Size 243 people

Topline Report

Question	Response	Frequency	Percentage
T2	*Share on the side of the restrictions: the sponsor's poll and the open conversation, among those who picked a side.*		
	The poll, averaged over its 22 questions about the laws		27%
	The open conversation	138	57%
	The open conversation, 95% interval		50% to 65%
	Difference, conversation minus poll		**+30 pts**

The two figures are counted differently. The poll's 27% is Thinkwell's average, across 22 questions, of the share of decided respondents on the side of the restrictions; the conversation's 57% is a share of people, each counted once. The polling firm's stated margin of error of ± 2 points applies to each survey's full sample, not to this average.

Topline Report **N Size: 22 poll questions**

Question	Response	Frequency	Percentage
T3	*How was each of the poll's 22 questions about the laws worded? Two AI models coded each one blind.*		
	Worded toward the sponsor's side	19	86%
	Neutral wording	3	14%
	Total	**22**	**100%**

Two AI models, coding each question blind, agreed on all 22.

Topline Report **N Size: 16 of 22 poll questions compared**

Question	Wording	Questions compared	Gap (95% interval)
T4	*Conversation minus poll, by how the question was worded. Points between the conversation and the poll, with the 95% interval.*		
	Worded toward the sponsor's side	13	+26 pts (+16 pts to +36 pts)
	Neutral wording	3	−7 pts (−24 pts to +17 pts)

Each gap is averaged over the questions with enough stances in the conversation to compare: 13 of the 19 leaning questions and 3 of the 3 neutral ones. Only 3 questions were neutral, so that row is a first look, not a settled number, and the table does not show that the wording caused the gap.

Topline Report **N Size: 161 pairs read twice**

Question	Response	Frequency	Percentage
T5	*Thinkwell's AI stance judge read a sample of comment and question pairs a second time, blind to its first reading. How did the second reading compare with the first?*		
	Matched the first reading	153	95.0%
	A side read as unrelated	8	5.0%
	Agree swapped with disagree	0	0.0%
	Total	**161**	**100%**

An independent AI model, reading blind, agreed with the judge on 92% of the pairs it read. Both checks compare one AI reading with another: they show how consistent the readings are, not their accuracy against human reviewers.

Topline Report

N Size: 243 people who took a side
Threads: 140

Question	Thread	Frequency	Percentage
T6	*People who took a side, in the five busiest threads, and in the other 135 threads.*		
	1st busiest thread	19	7.8%
	2nd busiest thread	14	5.8%
	3rd busiest thread	7	2.9%
	4th busiest thread	7	2.9%
	5th busiest thread	6	2.5%
	The five busiest together	**53**	**21.8%**
	The other 135 threads	190	78.2%
	Total	**243**	**100%**

Each person is counted once, in the thread where they took the most stances.

Topline Report

N Size: 5,444 top-level comments
August to October 2026

Question	Posted	Comments	Reached the top quarter
T7	*Top-level comments that reached their thread's top quarter, by when they were posted.*		
	First 15 min	747	516 (69%)
	15 min to 1 h	1,148	579 (50%)
	1 h to 3 h	1,254	363 (29%)
	3 h to 12 h	1,408	313 (22%)
	12 h to 1 day	504	163 (32%)
	1 day to 3 days	268	106 (40%)
	3 days or more	115	37 (32%)
	Total	**5,444**	**2,077 (38%)**

Early comments get the reach; the chance falls through the first 12 hours and recovers in slow threads. The table counts top-level comments in the collected threads, not only those that took a side, and ranks each thread's comments by score.

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