

AN ADTAXI EXCLUSIVE  
**RESEARCH**  
REPORT



adtaxi

# Economic & Political Study

2026 TRENDS & ANALYSIS

FINANCIAL SITUATION • POLITICAL ISSUES • INFLUENCE ON VOTING • MEDIA RELIANCE

# Economic Perceptions Today Shape Tomorrow's Elections

The 2026 Economic & Political Study by Adtaxi reveals how ongoing economic uncertainty, rising consumer pressures, and an increasingly polarized political environment are reshaping voter attitudes ahead of the upcoming 2026 elections.

Leveraging advanced analytics and broad-market U.S. research, this report delivers data-driven insights into how Americans are navigating the intersection of the economy, politics, and everyday life, including media reliance.



For 15 years, Adtaxi has been examining political affiliations, economic data, and shifts in media preferences and message delivery. We have seen firsthand the shifts in behavior in and out of times of economic uncertainty, including the last recession and pandemic. Our data-driven insights and advanced analytics have revealed crucial takeaways about the voter mindset and the imminent activity around the 2026 elections.

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**Adtaxi's 2026 Economic & Political Study reveals that rising living costs, economic uncertainty, and digital-first media consumption are reshaping voter priorities, political engagement, and consumer behavior ahead of the 2026 election cycle.**



### **1. Pocketbook Issues Are Driving The 2026 Election**

The economy and inflation overwhelmingly outrank every other political concern tested, reinforcing that voter sentiment is being shaped primarily by personal financial realities rather than broader ideological issues. Household affordability has become the central lens through which many Americans evaluate politics, policies, and leadership.

### **2. Economic Anxiety Is Widespread Across Party Lines**

Despite differences in intensity, Democrats, Republicans, and Independents all express meaningful concern about the future economy. Majorities across political affiliations expect worsening economic conditions, signaling that economic pessimism is no longer isolated to one ideological group.

### **3. Everyday Essentials Are Reshaping Consumer Behavior**

Groceries, housing, and transportation costs now represent the largest household financial pressure points in America. Consumers are increasingly prioritizing value, delaying discretionary spending, and focusing on practical financial decision-making as inflationary pressures persist.

### **4. Political Engagement Remains Elevated – And Increasingly Digital**

American political and advocacy engagement remains exceptionally high, driven by strong participation in voting, political news consumption, and civic discourse. At the same time, social media has emerged as the dominant source of political information, accelerating the shift toward fragmented, digital-first voter engagement.

### **5. Brands Face Growing Risk In Political Positioning**

Consumers continue to differentiate between social values and overt political activism. While many Americans remain receptive to brands supporting social causes, broad political positioning carries increasing reputational risk – particularly among Republicans and Independents. Brands that focus on authenticity, relevance, and consumer value are likely to navigate the environment more effectively.

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# Today's Environment

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# HOUSEHOLD FINANCIAL SITUATION

## Economic Confidence Weakens As Americans Grow Increasingly Defensive

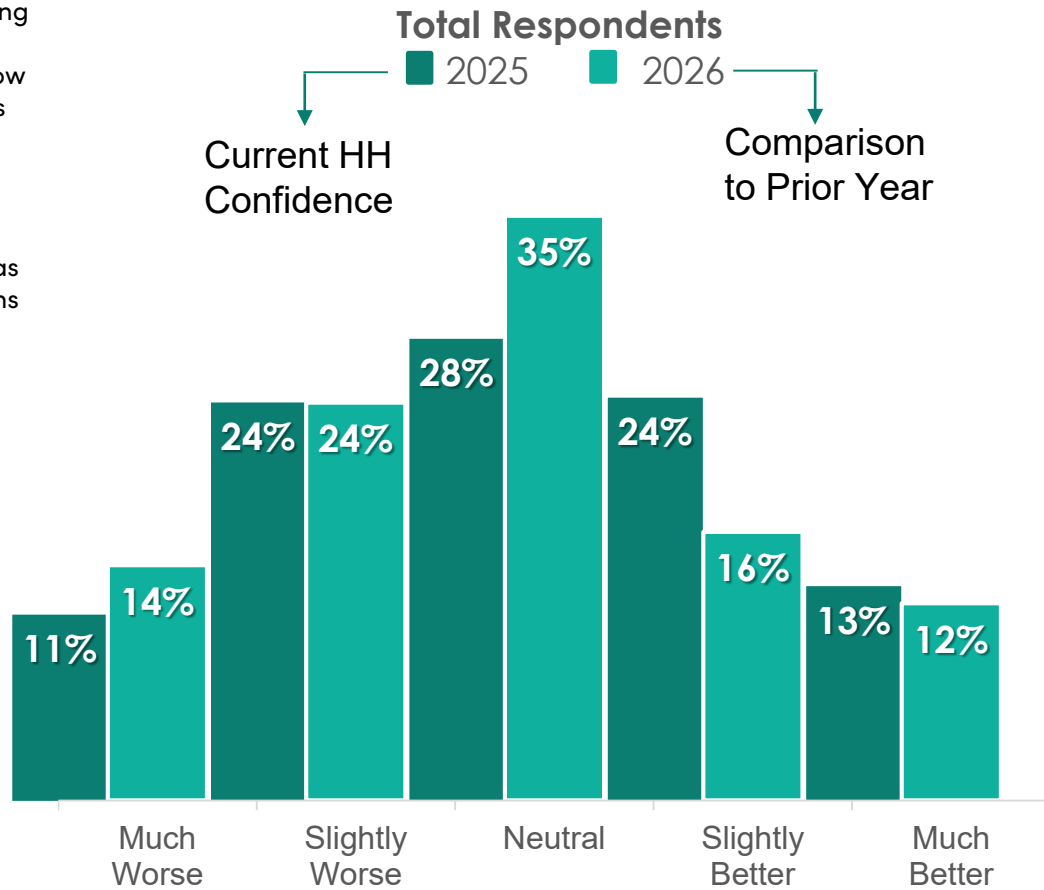


**Compared to 12 months ago, how would you describe your household's current financial situation?**

**Consumers are becoming increasingly cautious as rising costs continue to outpace financial confidence.**

CTV has officially crossed from emerging behavior into mainstream habit. Regardless of age, more U.S. adults now access TV content through CTV devices plugged directly into their sets than through traditional cable cords or antennas. Among the youngest adults, adoption is decisive: 58% use CTV devices—outpacing cable and antennas combined (37%). Even older generations are making the shift, with nearly half (48%) having reconnected their TVs by cutting the cord and embracing CTV.

This isn't a generational anomaly—it's a fundamental reset of how television is consumed. The living room screen remains central, but the delivery mechanism has changed. Streaming platforms and CTV devices now define the viewing experience, giving audiences greater control, flexibility, and personalization than traditional cable and broadcast ever allowed.



Consumers are operating in a heightened value-conscious environment. Messaging focused on affordability, practicality, savings, durability, and financial reassurance is likely to outperform aspirational or luxury-oriented positioning.

# PARTISAN ECONOMICS

## Financial Confidence Splits Sharply Along Political Lines

Political identity is increasingly shaping how Americans perceive their personal financial stability. Republicans report greater financial stability, while Democrats and Independents express significantly higher levels of economic strain.

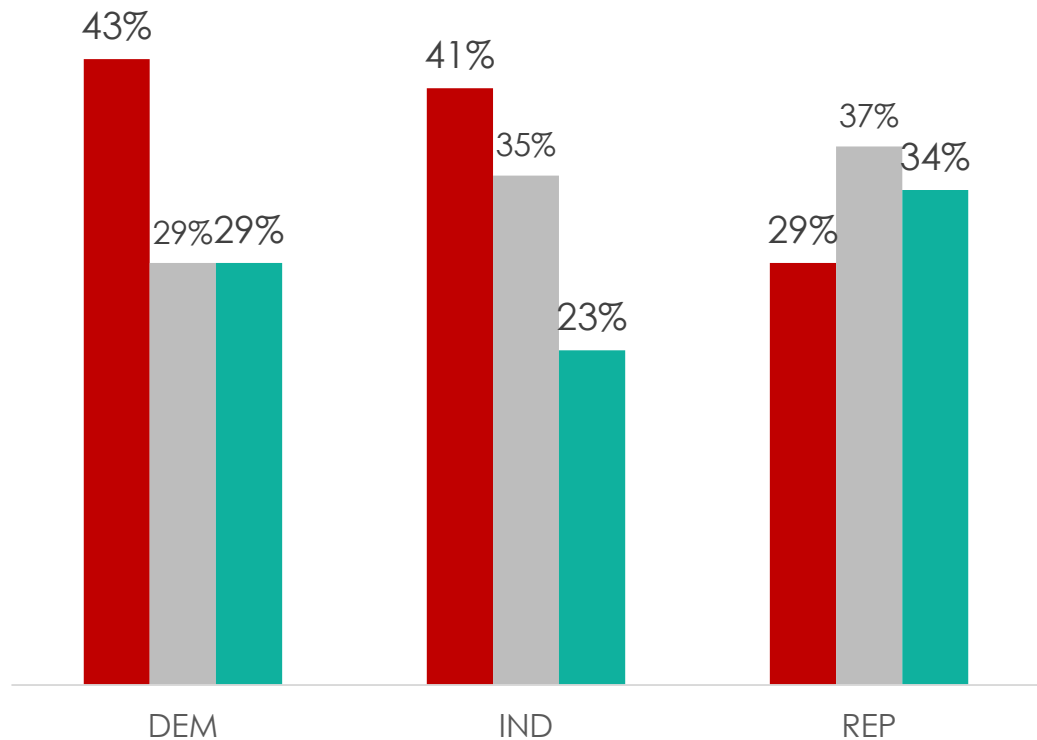
Survey respondents who self-identify as Democrats report the greatest level of economic strain, with fewer than 3-in-10 indicating their household finances have improved over the past year.

By comparison, Republicans express a notably more stable financial outlook. A majority say their household finances have either remained consistent or improved over the last 12 months, while fewer than 3-in-10 report being financially worse off.

Independents, meanwhile, align more closely with Democrats in their economic perceptions. More than 4-in-10 Independents say their household financial situation has deteriorated over the past year. While Independents are slightly more likely than Democrats to say their finances have remained unchanged, only 23% report that their financial position has improved.

Change in HH Finances

■ Worse ■ Same ■ Better



**Marketers should recognize that financial messaging will resonate differently across partisan audiences.**

Value-oriented messaging, affordability, and economic reassurance are likely to perform among Democratic and Independent audiences, while Republican audiences may respond more favorably to messages centered on stability, growth, and confidence.

# MOST IMPORTANT POLITICAL ISSUE

## Pocketbook Politics Now Defines the 2026 Election Environment



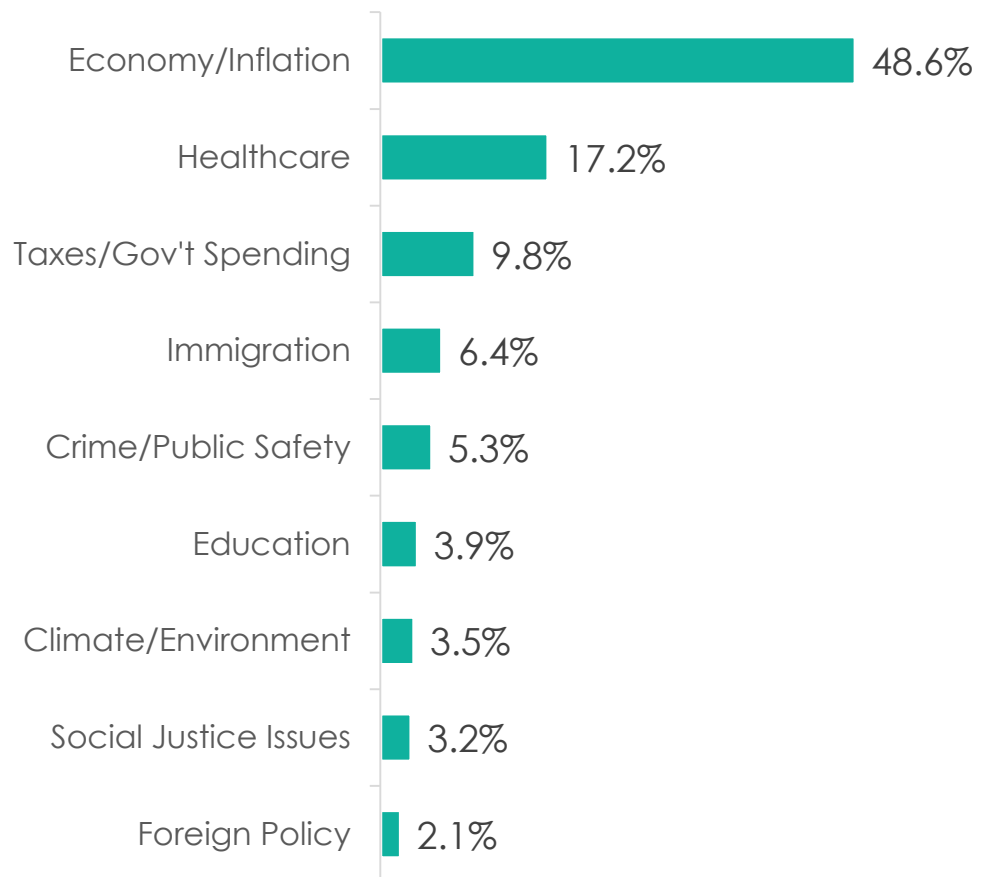
**Which issue matters most to you right now?**

**Rising household costs are reshaping voter priorities and placing economic survival at the center of the national political conversation.**

Economic concerns continue to dominate the national conversation. Nearly half of Americans say the economy and inflation are the issue that matters most to them right now – significantly outpacing healthcare, immigration, taxes, or social issues.

The findings reinforce the growing influence of personal financial realities on political attitudes, voter priorities, and issue engagement.

**Total Respondents**



**Total HH Debt: \$18.8 trillion**

Up between \$500–\$600 billion YoY

Mortgages:	\$13.19 trillion
Credit Cards:	\$1.252 trillion
Auto Loans:	\$1.64 trillion
Student Loans:	\$1.63 trillion



Political campaigns and advocacy organizations should prioritize economic messaging tied directly to household affordability, financial stability, and cost-of-living concerns.

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# Finance, Economy & Voting

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# BIGGEST FINANCIAL PRESSURE

## Everyday Costs Are Reshaping Consumer and Voter Behavior



**Which of the following is putting the most pressure on your household finances right now?**

**Groceries, housing, and transportation costs now represent the largest financial pressure points for U.S. households.**

Rising living costs continue to reshape household priorities, with grocery prices emerging as the leading source of financial pressure for U.S. consumers.

Nearly one-quarter of respondents (23.6%) cite food costs as their top economic concern.

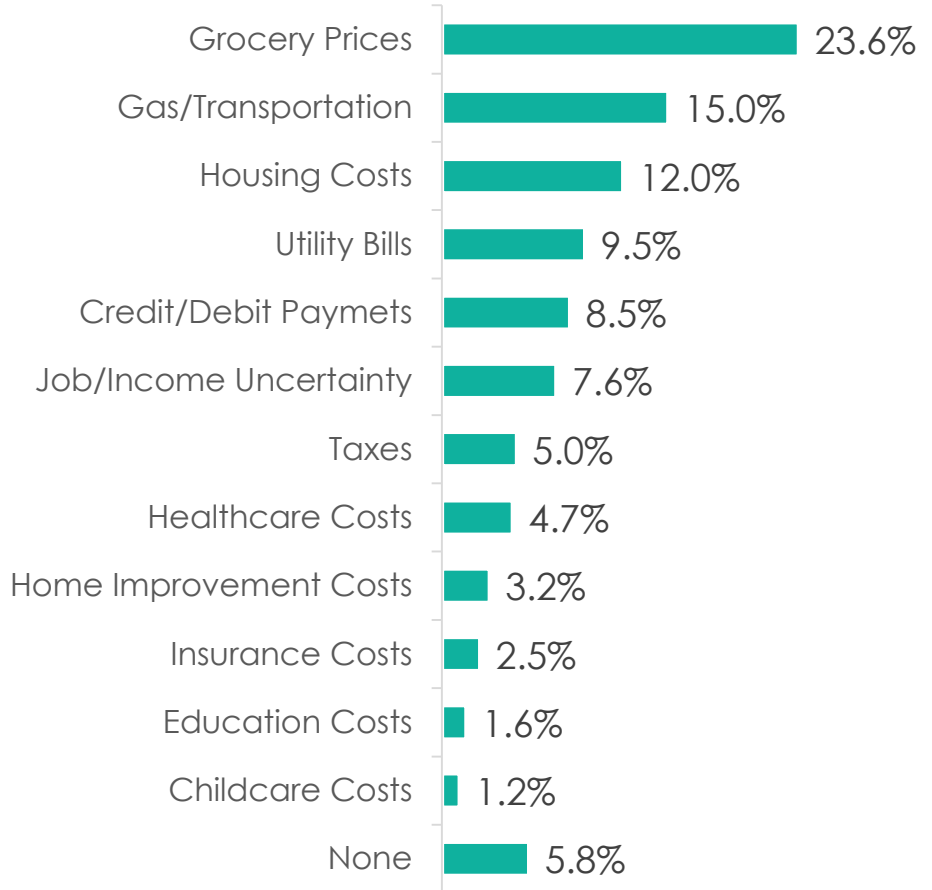
### Why Groceries?

Grocery shopping remains one of the most universal consumer behaviors, with Nielsen Scarborough reporting that 98% of U.S. households shop for groceries weekly, either in-store or online. At the same time, average weekly grocery spending has surpassed \$200 per household for the first time.

*-Scarborough Fall 2025*

Housing affordability remains another major concern, with 12% identifying housing costs as their primary financial challenge, while elevated gasoline and transportation expenses continue to pressure 15% of households.

**Total Respondents**



Marketers should emphasize value, efficiency, and long-term savings. Brands that clearly communicate how they help consumers manage everyday costs will likely resonate more strongly in the current environment.

# BIGGEST FINANCIAL PRESSURE

## Pocketbook Pressures Are Broad-Based Across the Political Spectrum


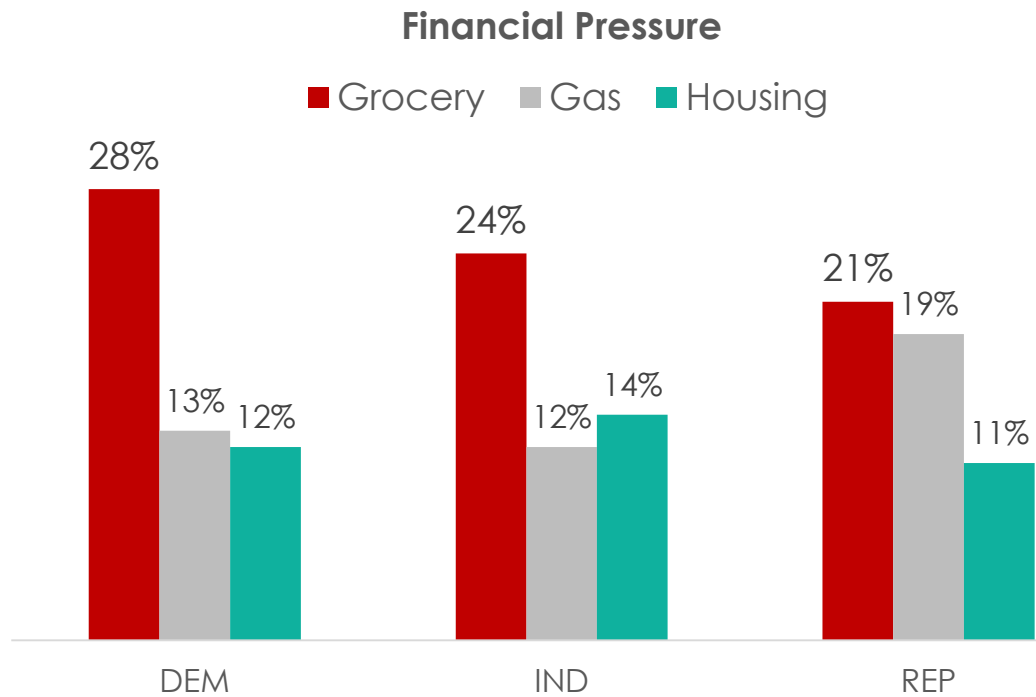
Groceries, housing, and transportation costs are emerging as the shared financial pressures uniting voters across party lines.

No single financial pressure point surpassed the 30% threshold among any political affiliation, reinforcing that today's economic strain is broad-based rather than driven by one dominant issue. The findings suggest there is no singular economic concern unifying a majority of voters.


That said, the cumulative impact of the top three financial concerns is substantial. Among Democrats, Republicans, and Independents alike, the top three pressure points collectively impact at least half of each political segment, underscoring the widespread nature of economic anxiety heading into the 2026 election cycle.

The rising cost of everyday necessities continues to cut across ideological and demographic divides, making food prices the most universally shared economic reality in America today.

Gasoline along with housing round out the top three and indicate voter anxiety is being driven less by discretionary spending and more by the escalating cost of basic necessities.

Consumers across political affiliations are increasingly focused on essential living costs, creating a powerful opportunity to position messaging around affordability, value, practicality, and financial relief.



# OUTLOOK FOR THE U.S. ECONOMY

## Economic Pessimism Is Becoming Entrenched Ahead Of 2026



**In what direction do you think the U.S. economy is headed over the next 6–12 months?**

**Most Americans expect slowing growth, recession, or stagflation over the next 6–12 months.**

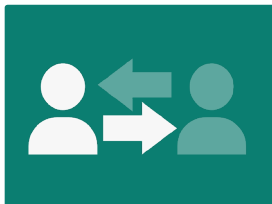
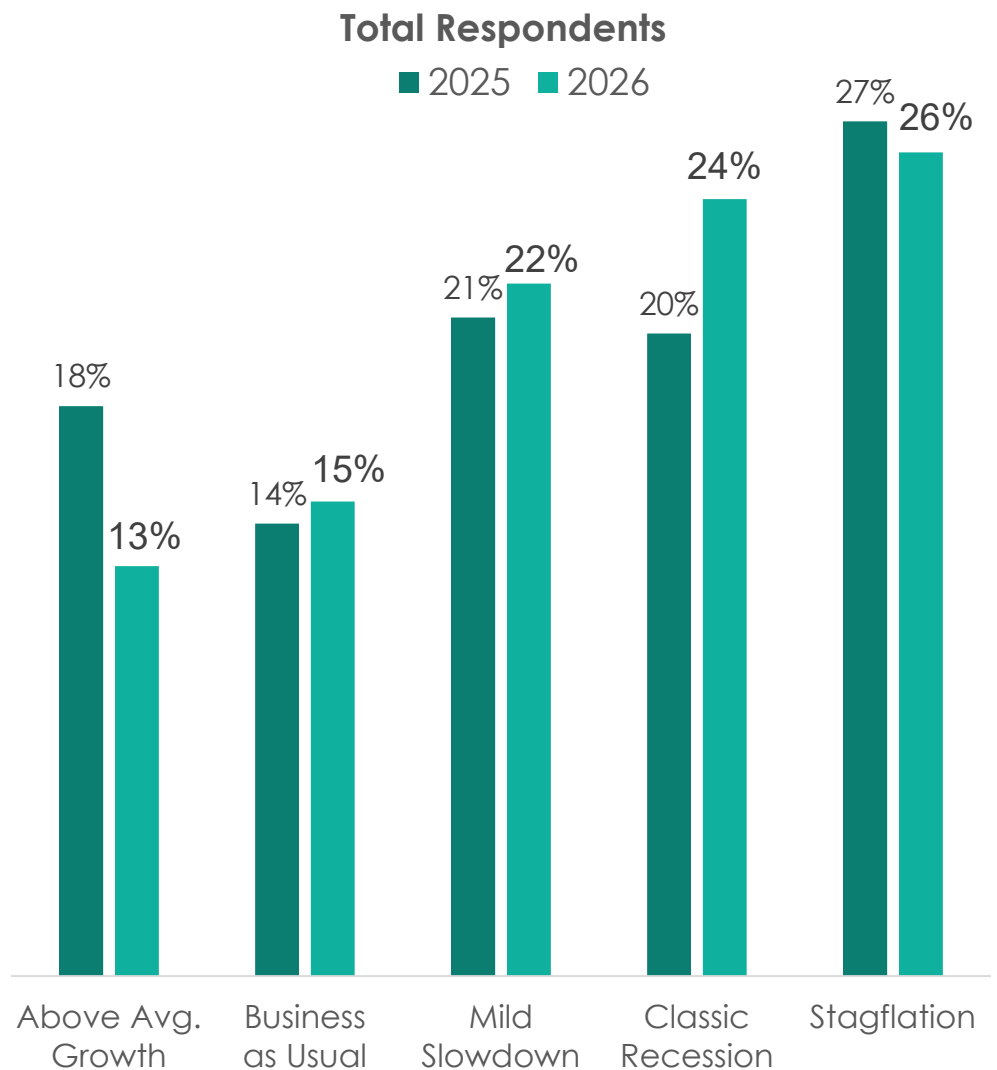
Consumer optimism toward the economy remains limited.

Only 12.9% of Americans expect above-average economic growth – down nearly one-third from last year.

Currently, a majority anticipate slowing conditions, recession, or stagflation.

Consumer Confidence	
2022 Midterms (Oct)	102
2024 Presidential (Oct)	110
Today (Apr)	93
-The Conference Board	

The findings suggest that consumers are preparing for continued economic turbulence rather than recovery. This defensive outlook is likely to shape spending patterns, political attitudes, and brand expectations throughout 2026.



Periods of economic uncertainty reward brands that deliver consistency, trust, and measurable value. Choose performance-focused messaging and financially practical positioning.

# OUTLOOK FOR THE U.S. ECONOMY

## Economic Pessimism Extends Across Party Lines

Large majorities of Democrats and Independents – along with more than half of Republicans – expect the U.S. economy to decline over the next year.

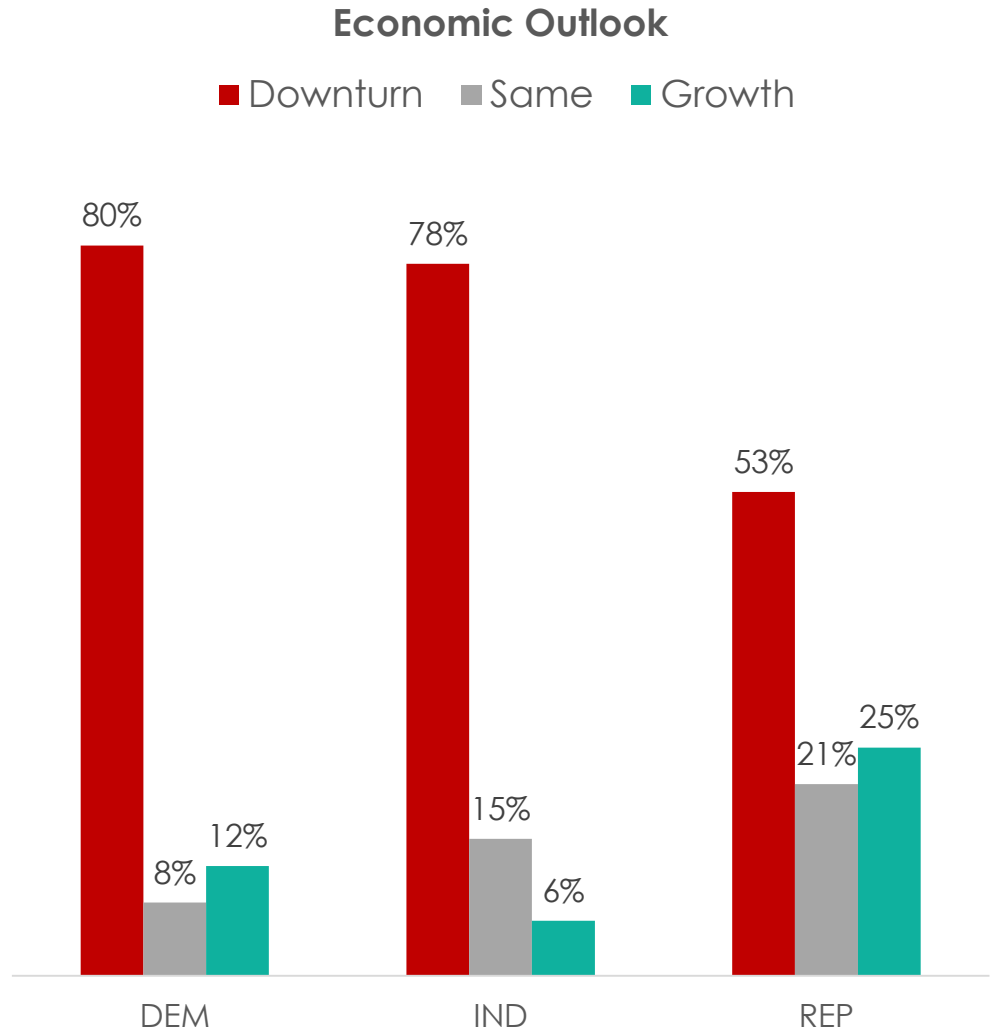
An overwhelming 8-in-10 Democrats say they expect the U.S. economy to worsen over the next 12 months, far surpassing the relatively small 12% who anticipate economic growth.

Republicans express comparatively higher levels of optimism, yet confidence remains restrained overall.

While the percentage of Republicans expecting economic growth is roughly double that of Democrats, it still represents only one-fourth of the group. In fact, a majority of self-identified Republicans (53%) also believe the economy will continue to decline over the coming year.

Independents once again align more closely with Democrats in their economic outlook.

Nearly 8-in-10 Independents (78%) expect worsening economic conditions, while only 6% anticipate economic improvement – the lowest level of optimism among all political affiliations measured.



Marketers should recognize that optimism remains limited even among audiences traditionally viewed as more economically confident.

Messaging centered on stability, financial reassurance, practical value, and economic understanding is likely to resonate more effectively than aspirational or overly optimistic positioning alone.

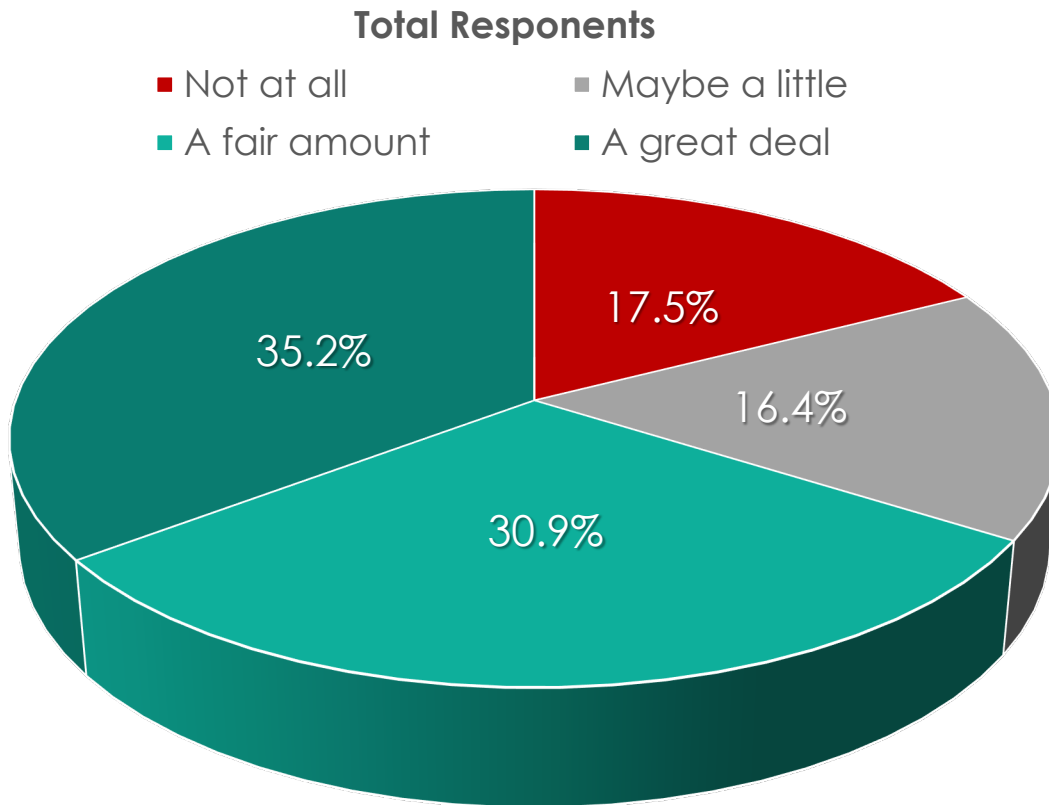
# FINANCIAL SITUATION INFLUENCE ON VOTING

## Economic Pressure Is Directly Influencing Voter Decision-Making



**How much will your personal financial situation influence how you vote in the upcoming elections?**

More than two-thirds say their personal financial situation will influence their voting decisions.



Economic pressure is no longer separate from politics – it is becoming central to voter decision-making. More than 66% of Americans say their personal financial situation will influence how they vote, either “a great deal” or “a fair amount.” The findings suggest that economic perception may become one of the strongest drivers of political engagement and persuasion in 2026.



Campaigns that successfully connect policies to everyday financial impact may hold a measurable advantage with persuadable voters.

# FINANCIAL SITUATION INFLUENCE ON VOTING

## Pocketbook Politics Will Shape the 2026 Election

Personal finances are expected to influence voting decisions across all political affiliations, with Democrats reporting the strongest level of economic-driven voting intensity.

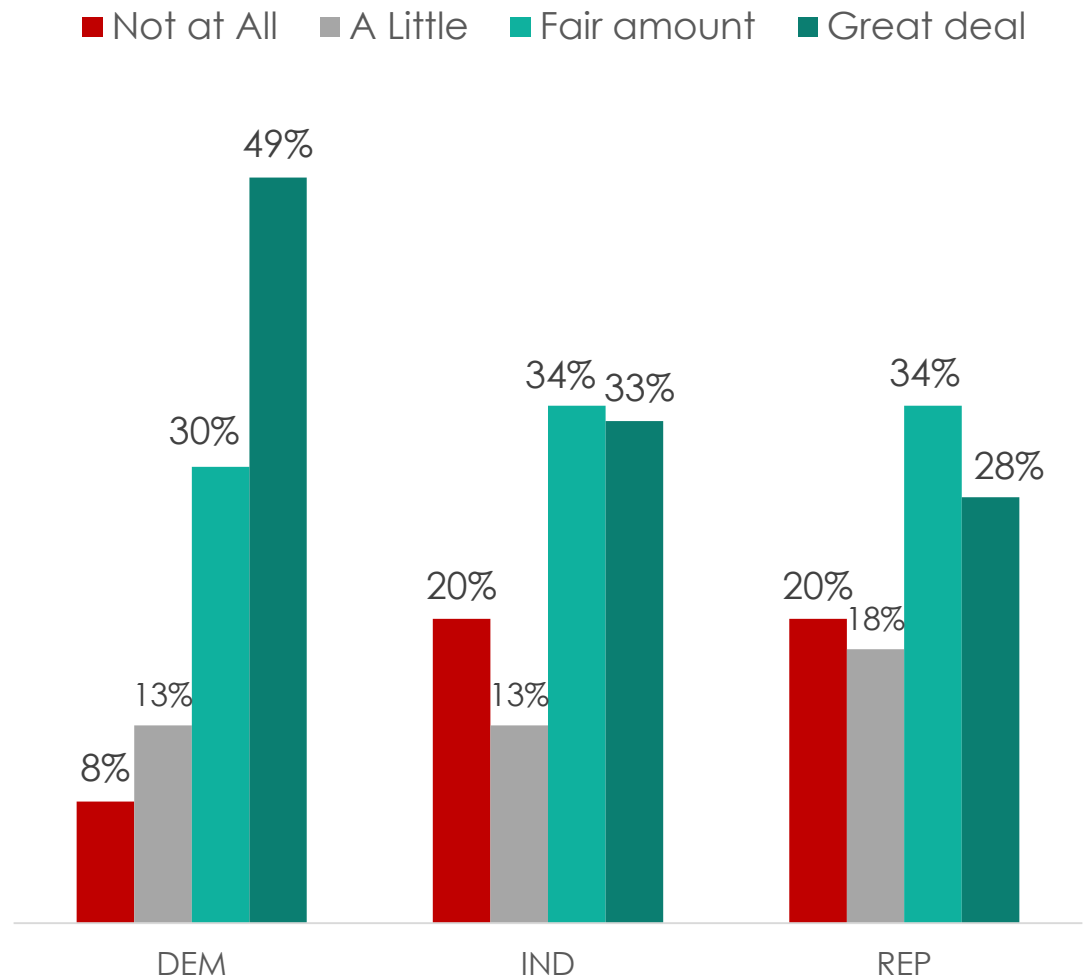
An overwhelming 92% of Democrats say their personal financial situation will factor into their voting decisions, with nearly half (49%) indicating it will have a significant impact on how they vote.

Republicans also report that household finances will influence their political decisions, with 80% saying economic conditions will factor into their vote. However, compared to

Democrats, far fewer Republicans describe the impact as substantial, with only 28% saying their personal financial situation will greatly influence their decisions at the ballot box.

Independents closely mirror Republicans in overall sentiment. Roughly 8-in-10 say their personal finances will influence how they vote, though only 33% say those financial pressures will impact their decisions to a great extent.

Finances & Voting



Voters are increasingly viewing political and brand decisions through a personal financial lens. Messages that acknowledge economic stress and demonstrate real-world relevance are likely to generate stronger engagement and credibility.

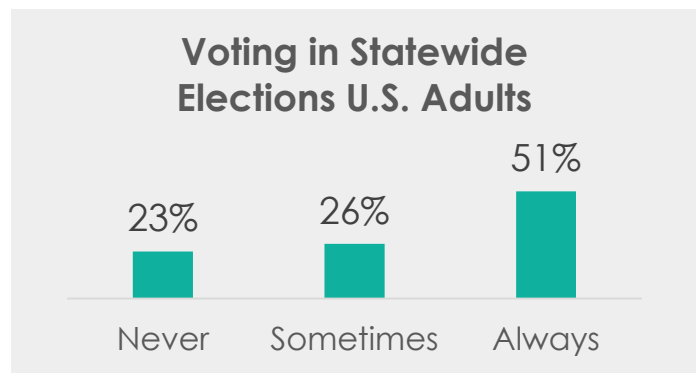
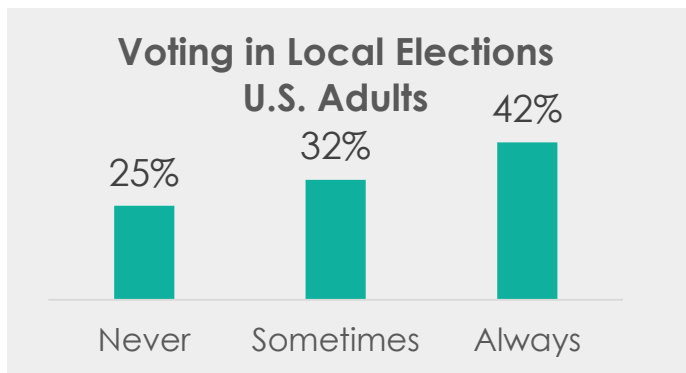
# POLITICAL AND ADVOCACY BEHAVIORS

## Political Engagement Remains High Despite (or Due to) Growing Economic Anxiety



**Which of the following are you more likely to do over the next 12 months?**

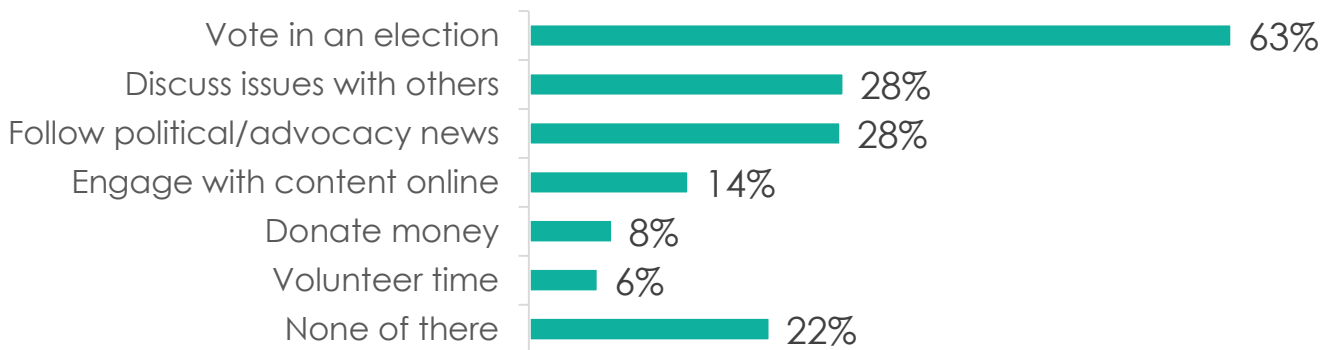
Voting, political news consumption, and issue discussion continue to dominate civic participation.



Scarborough Fall 2025

Political engagement remains elevated heading into the 2026 cycle. Nearly two-thirds of Americans say they are more likely to vote, while large shares are also more likely to follow political news, discuss political issues, and engage with advocacy-related content online.

### Total Respondents



Campaigns and advocacy organizations should maintain persistent, cross-platform visibility rather than relying solely on late-cycle advertising surges.

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# Marketing & Media

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# AD RESPONSE FOR POLITICAL/ADVOCACY NEWS

## Digital Media Has Become the New Political Battleground

Search, streaming TV, mobile, and social media have fundamentally transformed how modern voters discover, engage with, and respond to political messaging.

### Frequent Voters

- #1 Search
- #2 Mobile
- #3 Social

Among **frequent voters**, search emerged as the leading advertising response channel, followed by mobile and social. This suggests highly engaged voters are increasingly information-driven, actively researching candidates, issues, and advocacy topics rather than passively consuming campaign messaging.

### Infrequent Voters

- #1 Mobile
- #2 Streaming TV
- #3 Social

**Infrequent voters** show stronger responsiveness to mobile and streaming TV advertising. This audience appears less likely to seek out political information independently and more likely to engage through entertainment-driven, mobile-first media consumption. Streaming TV's presence among this group highlights the growing importance of digital video in reaching lower-propensity voters.

### Liberal Supporters

- ( Causes / Issues )
- #1 Search
  - #2 Mobile
  - #3 Streaming TV

Among **liberal supporters**, search ranked first, followed by mobile and streaming TV. This indicates a more research-oriented and digitally navigated media journey, where issue exploration and information gathering play a central role in persuasion and engagement.

### Conservative Supporters

- ( Causes / Issues )
- #1 Social
  - #2 Mobile
  - #3 Streaming TV

Meanwhile, **conservative supporters** responded most strongly to social media advertising, followed by mobile and streaming TV. The findings suggest social platforms continue to play an outsized role in conservative political communication, amplification, and community-driven engagement.

AdMall / AudienceSCAN 2026



Today, digital channels dominate ad response across all political segments. The modern voter journey is highly interconnected, making precision targeting and cross-platform media strategies essential for organizations in 2026.

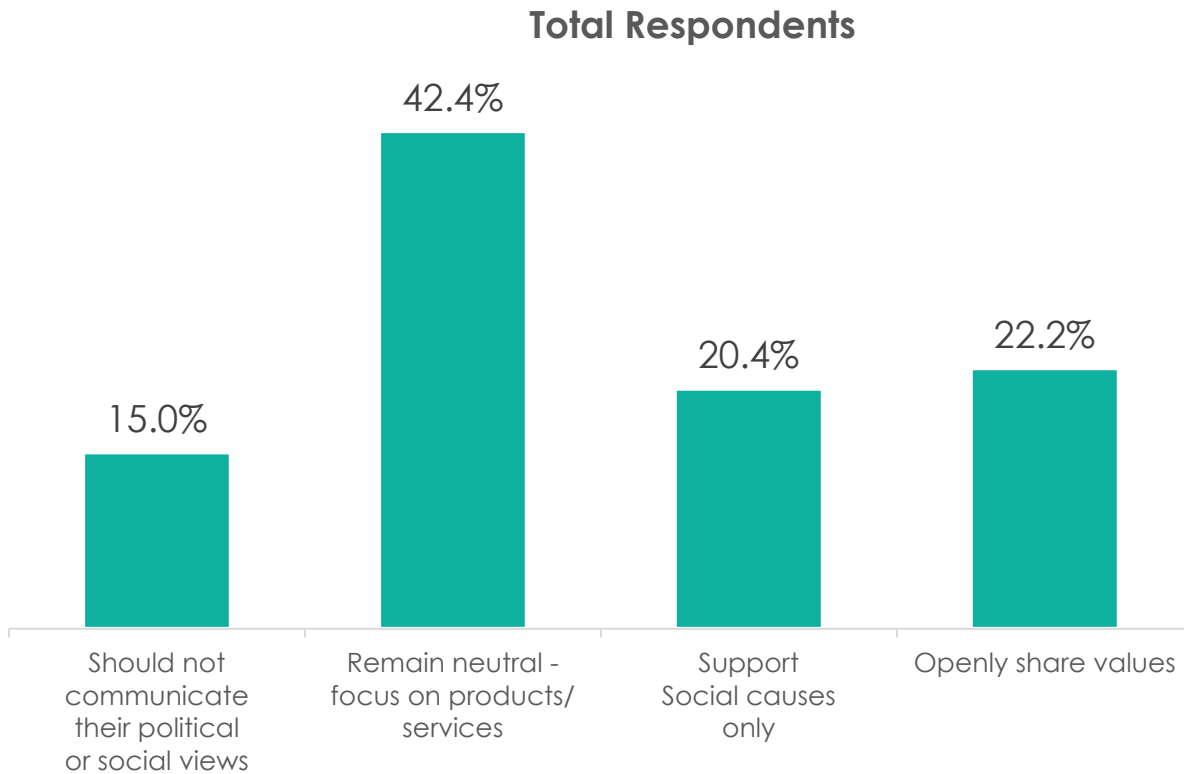
# VIEWS ON BRANDS AND POLITICAL/SOCIAL ISSUES

## Consumers Continue To Favor Brand Neutrality in Politics



**Which statement best reflects your views of brands when it comes to political or social issues?**

Consumers overwhelmingly prefer brands remain neutral and focused on products / services rather than politics.



Consumers remain cautious about brands engaging in political or social debates. A plurality say brands should remain neutral and focus primarily on products and services rather than political messaging.

The findings suggest that while values-based marketing still resonates with some audiences, broad political positioning may create growing risk in an increasingly polarized environment.



Brands should carefully evaluate when and how to engage in political or social conversations. Authenticity, relevance, and alignment with core customer expectations are critical.

# VIEWS ON BRANDS & POLITICAL/SOCIAL ISSUES

## Consumers Draw a Line Between Social Values and Political Activism

Democrats are far more likely to support brands taking public stances, while Republicans and Independents remain significantly more cautious toward political engagement.

By and large, U.S. adults are not demanding that brands remain completely neutral on social or cultural issues. However, support for brands openly expressing political and social viewpoints varies significantly across political affiliations.

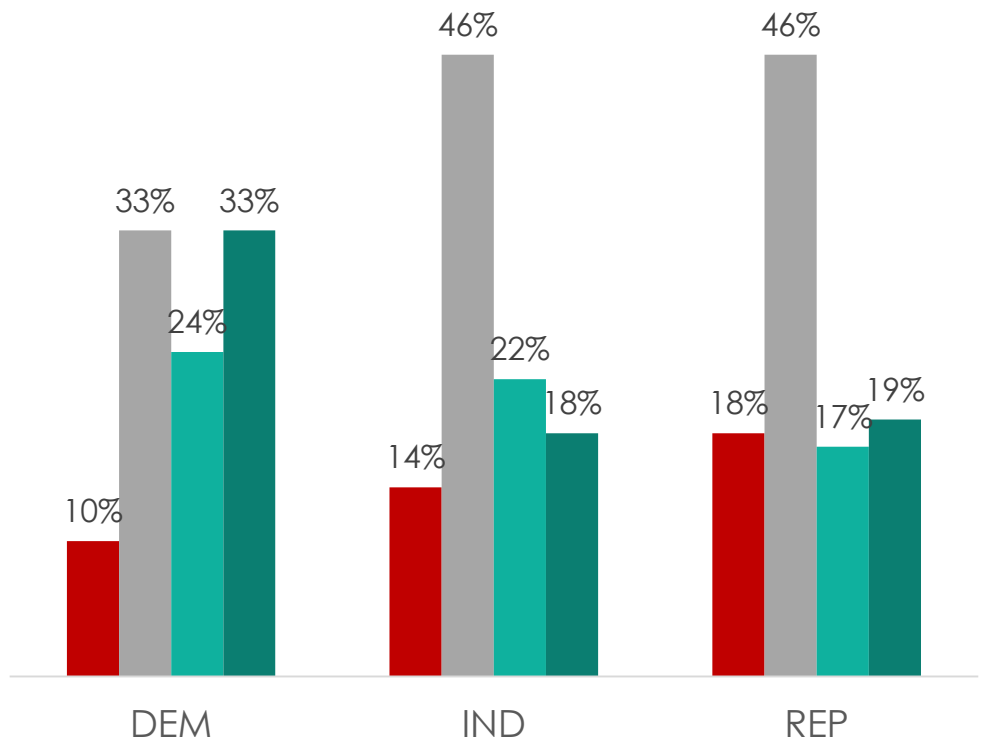
Democrats posted the highest level of support for brands openly sharing their political and social positions, with one-third (33%) favoring corporate engagement on these issues.

In contrast, fewer than one-fifth of Republicans and Independents support brands taking public stances on political and social matters.

Interestingly, the findings suggest that much of the resistance toward brand activism may be driven more by political messaging than social messaging alone. Support for brands engaging exclusively on social issues closely mirrors support for brands openly addressing both political and social topics, indicating consumers may be more comfortable with values-based social engagement than overt political positioning.

### Views on Brands

■ Nothing   ■ Stay Neutral   ■ Social Only   ■ Openly Share



Consumers appear more receptive to values-based social messaging than overt political positioning, reinforcing the need for brands to carefully balance authenticity with audience expectations.

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# Report Summary

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# Key Takeaways



## 1 Economic Anxiety Is Now Driving Political Behavior

Americans are increasingly evaluating politics through the lens of personal financial pressure, making affordability and economic stability central to voter engagement.

## 2 The Consumer Mindset Has Shifted Into Defensive Mode

Consumers are prioritizing essentials, delaying discretionary purchases, and seeking measurable value amid persistent economic uncertainty.

## 3 Digital Media Now Dominates Political Influence

Search, streaming TV, social media, and mobile platforms have fundamentally transformed political communication and voter engagement.

## 4 The Traditional Political Media Model Is Breaking Down

Mass-reach television strategies alone are becoming less effective as voter attention fragments across digital environments and on-demand platforms.

## 5 Precision Targeting Has Become Essential

Different political audiences now engage through entirely different media ecosystems, increasing the importance of data-driven audience segmentation and cross-platform orchestration.

## 6 Brand Neutrality Remains the Safer Position

Most consumers continue to prefer that brands focus on products, services, and practical value rather than overt political positioning.

## 7 Relevance, Trust, and Economic Empathy Will Define Winners in 2026

Organizations that align messaging with financial realities and modern digital behavior are likely to outperform competitors across both politics and commerce.



## The 2026 election environment is being shaped by far more than political ideology alone.

Adtaxi's 2026 Economic & Political Study reveals an electorate increasingly influenced by economic uncertainty, rising household costs, and rapidly evolving media behavior. Americans are evaluating politics, brands, and everyday decisions through a deeply personal financial lens.

Pocketbook concerns now dominate voter priorities as economic confidence continues to weaken across party lines. This shared anxiety reinforces a cautious, defensive consumer mindset that is poised to influence spending behavior, media consumption, and voting decisions throughout 2026.

Equally important, the media environment surrounding politics has fundamentally changed. Search, streaming TV, social media, and mobile platforms now dominate political information discovery and advertising responsiveness across many voter groups — a dramatic shift from the traditional television-centric model that defined campaigns just two decades ago. The modern voter journey is fragmented, digital-first, and increasingly driven by personalized media experiences rather than shared mass-media environments.

The findings also reinforce that consumers continue to favor authenticity, value, and practical relevance over overt political positioning from brands. Organizations that align messaging with financial realities, communicate with clarity and empathy, and adapt to rapidly changing digital behaviors are likely to earn stronger engagement and trust in the years ahead.

Ultimately, the 2026 election will not simply be a contest of politics — it will be a reflection of economic perception, consumer confidence, and the ability to connect with voters in a fragmented media world. Those who understand these shifts and adapt accordingly will be best positioned to succeed.

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adtaxi

[www.adtaxi.com](http://www.adtaxi.com)



[info@adtaxi.com](mailto:info@adtaxi.com)



877.856.4668

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