

2026 CHICAGO COUNCIL SURVEY

Americans, Foreign Policy, and the 2026 Midterms

Results of the 2026 Chicago Council Survey of the American Public

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About the Council

Founded in 1922, the Chicago Council on Global Affairs is a nonpartisan, nonprofit organization dedicated to increasing knowledge and engagement in global affairs. Our in-depth analysis and expert-led research influence policy conversations and inform the insights we share with our growing community. Through accessible content and open dialogue of diverse, fact-based perspectives, we empower more people to help shape our global future.

About the Lester Crown Center on US Foreign Policy

We believe the public plays a critical role in determining the direction of US foreign policy and that an informed and engaged public is critical for effective policymaking. We aim to influence discourse and decisions on important US foreign policy and national security issues by researching public opinion and producing original policy analysis.

About the Chicago Council Survey

The Chicago Council Survey provides the most comprehensive view of American public opinion on critical US foreign policy issues, highlighting critical trends and shifts in thinking over time since 1974. The Council's polling experts, their annual report, and related topical briefs compose the Council's most recognized area of research. A signature area of study under the Lester Crown Center on US Foreign Policy, the Chicago Council Survey provides the public with a mechanism for sharing views with politicians and decision makers who each year cite the survey as a valuable resource for influencing policy debates.

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Executive Summary

Americans are approaching the midterm elections on November 3 after 20 months of dizzying policy actions both at home and abroad since President Donald Trump took office for the second time. His administration has enacted sweeping changes to US immigration policies as well as cuts to government agencies, food assistance, and myriad other domestic programs. On the foreign policy side, the administration has combined economic pressure—higher tariffs against trading partners, reduced foreign aid, and demands for increased defense spending from US allies—with substantial military action abroad, most prominently in Iran.

On the surface, Americans rate foreign policy issues a lower priority in the runup to midterm voting than inflation and cost-of-living concerns. But the 2026 Chicago Council Survey, fielded July 10–21, 2026, finds that most Americans believe the Trump administration's foreign policy actions have negatively impacted America's global standing and hurt national and household economic conditions. The direct link perceived by the public between their household finances, the Iran war, and Trump's tariff regime helps elevate foreign policy issues for everyday Americans.

Americans Link Iran War and Tariffs to Higher Costs of Living at Home

Economic issues are front of mind for many Americans heading to the polls this November, and most people think their political leaders have not been paying enough attention to critical pocketbook issues. Pluralities across the political spectrum say inflation and the cost of living are most important to their votes (37% overall), followed by government corruption (19%) and control of Congress (19%).

Few Americans name the US-Iran war as their most important voting issue (2%), yet the war is a factor that has shaped the economic anxieties taking center stage in midterm decisions. And Americans seem well aware of the linkages between the two. According to Council polling, Americans broadly view the US-Iran war as bad for the cost of living in the country (86%), as well as the United States' international relations (72%), reputation abroad (72%), and national security (65%).

It's not just the Iran war that Americans associate with domestic problems. The second Trump administration's widespread tariffs are also deeply unpopular. In Chicago Council polls this year, large majorities of Americans have said that US tariffs on imports have been bad for the US economy (71%) and the cost of living at home (81%). Even Republican Party supporters think

the tariffs have been bad for the cost of living (62%), along with overwhelming majorities of Democrats (94%) and Independents (86%). At the same time, Republicans say tariffs have been good for job creation (64%) and for the US economy (56%), especially those who identify with the Make America Great Again (MAGA) movement (79% good for employment and 71% good for economy).

The public also believes the tariffs placed on imports specifically from China have negatively impacted the cost of living in the United States (76%) and the US economy (66%). And over the past two years, Americans have grown more supportive of pursuing cooperation with Beijing (57%, up from 40% in 2024) rather than actively limiting the growth of China's power.

Most Say Iran War Not Worth the Costs

When weighing the costs of the Iran war against the benefits, the majority of Americans think the war has not been worth fighting (68% vs. 31% worth fighting). Republicans alone express majority support for the war (63% say it is worth fighting). In sharp contrast, nine in 10 Democrats (91%) and three in four Independents (76%) believe it has not been worth the costs.

Aside from its negative economic impacts, the US war with Iran has not been viewed as a success on wider dimensions. Most Americans believe the war has negatively affected the United States' relationship with allies (72%), the country's reputation abroad (72%), and US national security (65%). A majority do, however, think US military action has degraded Iran's position in the Middle East (76%).

US Support for Israel Shaping Up to Be an Electoral Issue

Recent primary elections in key US states have helped to illuminate cracks in American support for Israel. When asked to rate their feelings toward Israel on a thermometer scale (where 100 is the warmest possible feeling), Americans provide an average rating of 44 out of 100, an all-time low in Chicago Council Surveys.

Favorable views have declined among Republicans (from 69 in 2022 to 62 today) and Independents (from 56 to 41). But attitudes have particularly sunk among self-described Democrats (from 52 in 2022 to just 30 today). Some of these declines are likely related to Israel's role in the Iran war, but the drop began earlier during Israeli military action in Gaza following the October 7, 2023, Hamas attacks.

In fact, a combined 56 percent of Americans now favor reducing (21%) or eliminating (35%) US military aid to Israel, an increase from just a third who

said the same in 2014 (37%). This is also a sharply partisan issue. While Democrats (72%) and Independents (64%) think US military aid to Israel should be decreased or stopped altogether, Republicans continue to favor maintaining or increasing this support (68%).

Republicans Favor Increased Immigration Enforcement; Democrats Oppose Such Increases

The Trump administration came in especially focused on immigration policies, [claiming](#) it would execute the largest mass-deportation program in US history by granting wide operational authority to Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE). It also created new barriers to legal immigration, even attempting to revoke birthright citizenship as a constitutional right.

Compared to public opinion in advance of the 2024 presidential election, far fewer Americans consider immigration a critical threat to the country (35%, down from 50% in 2024). Today, just 29 percent of Independents and a record-low 10 percent of Democrats view large-scale migration as a threat. Yet Republicans still consider immigration the top threat facing the country (67% critical threat, tied with 68% who name the Iran war), consistent with their opinion over the past three decades.

Reflecting this difference, Republicans and Democrats diverge sharply on federal immigration enforcement funding. Two-thirds of Democrats (68%) favor cutting the immigration enforcement budget, as do a plurality of Independents (44%)—but just 7 percent of Republicans agree. Instead, six in 10 Republicans (61%) favor expanding federal spending on immigration enforcement (vs. 23% of Independents and 10% of Democrats).

Despite the Chaos, Majorities Still Want to Engage with the World

Overall, six in 10 Americans continue to say the United States should play an active part in world affairs (58%), similar to views over the last four years. But there have been some partisan shifts. For the first time since 2012, GOP supporters are equally likely as Democrats to favor an active US global role. This increase among Republicans (63%, up from 59% in 2025) and decrease among Democrats (60%, down from 67%)—with Independents (52%) staying consistent—most likely reflect partisan assessments of the Trump administration and its policies.

Beyond diverging views toward the administration's specific policies on Iran, trade, and immigration, there are also some clear differences in how Republicans and Democrats would like the United States to operate on the world stage. Two-thirds of Americans (65%)—including 79 percent of Democrats and 67 percent of Independents—prefer the United States share

global leadership with other countries. But Republicans are nearly as likely to say the United States should share leadership (49%) as say it should be the dominant leader (45%), reflecting a significant unilateralist trend among these partisans.

Conclusion

It is usually difficult for policymakers and political leaders to tangibly demonstrate to everyday citizens how foreign policy impacts their daily lives. Former US President Joe Biden even attempted a strategy to do just that with his administration's "[Foreign Policy for the Middle Class](#)." When foreign policy is working in a way that improves, or at least stabilizes, households' standard of living, Americans often don't see behind the scenes. For example, some might not consider how trade relationships could help maintain or lower costs for consumer goods and fuel prices or how the tenor of US relations with allies could affect US national and international security.

By upending some of this stability, the Trump administration's policies may have brought this connection into sharper focus. Most Americans think the administration's current economic and military decisions have put the country in a worse place. Majorities also believe the war with Iran has hurt US relations with allies, the US global reputation, and US national security. And many Americans seem to think the United States has lost some of its soft power: They would prefer that their country be admired by the rest of the world, but instead more say the United States is currently more feared than admired.

While most Americans across party lines oppose withdrawing from global involvement and want the United States to actively participate, an active role in the world means different things to different groups of Americans. For example, partisans diverge on whether it is best for the United States to share global leadership or play a dominant leadership role. Similarly, the public views international trade as good for the United States, but many also favor some protectionist policies to safeguard US jobs. And on immigration, there are enormous partisan divisions on how great a threat it poses and whether Trump's policies have gone too far.

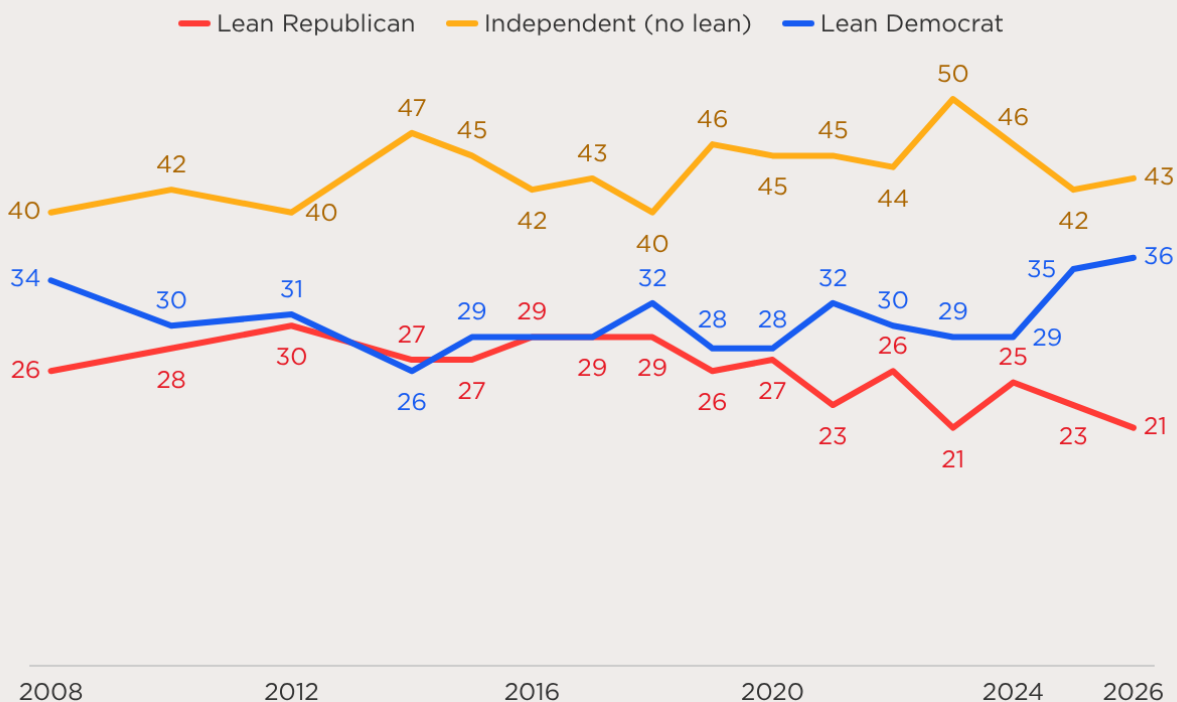
In short, the differences among Americans' US foreign policy preferences seem to be linked to the perceived costs and consequences of various approaches to US foreign policy. With economic factors weighing heavily on midterms voters' minds, these tradeoffs are inextricably linked to many of the country's foreign policy decisions over the past year, particularly US tariff policy and the war in Iran.

About the Partisans

In the 2026 Chicago Council Survey, conducted July 10–21, 2026, 32 percent of respondents identify as Republicans, 31 percent as Democrats, and 37 percent as Independents. Many of these Independents lean toward the Democratic Party (36%, 13% of the overall sample) or the Republican Party (21%, 7% of the overall sample); 43 percent of Independents (15% overall) say they don't lean either way. The share of Independents who lean toward the Republican Party has declined in recent years, while the share of Democratic-leaning Independents has grown—continuing a widening trend. In keeping with past practice to allow for longitudinal comparisons, those Independents who lean Democrat or lean Republican are included in the overall “Independents” label in our analysis of partisan preferences.

Independents' Partisan Leanings

[Asked only of respondents identifying as independents] Do you think of yourself as closer to the Republican Party or to the Democratic Party? (%)



July 10-21, 2026 | n=781

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Intraparty Analysis

In every Chicago Council Survey, respondents are asked whether they consider themselves supporters of the Democratic or Republican parties, or whether they classify themselves as Independents. To better understand the different movements within the Democratic and Republican parties, partisans are further divided into subgroups.

Democrats are divided according to their self-described ideological leanings toward liberal versus a combination of moderate/conservative Democrats. In the 2026 Chicago Council Survey, 62 percent of Democrats identify as liberal to some degree (13% extremely liberal, 33% liberal, 17% slightly liberal), while 37 percent identify as moderate (30%) or conservative to some degree (7%). For analytical purposes, we combine moderate and conservative Democrats into one group for intraparty analyses.

Republicans are divided into MAGA Republicans (the 61% of self-identified Republicans who also say they are part of the MAGA movement) and non-MAGA Republicans (the 37% who say they are not part of the MAGA movement).

Introduction

Since the White House changed hands in January 2025, the Trump administration has implemented an unusually active agenda on domestic and foreign policy fronts. At home, it has pursued a sweeping push on immigration enforcement and deportations; decreased the federal workforce by shuttering offices, offering buyouts, and implementing reductions in force; eliminated diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) programs across government agencies; and initiated a series of White House and other construction projects in Washington, DC.

The administration has also pursued an assertive foreign policy. In addition to escalating tariffs with global trading partners and cutting US foreign assistance, Trump officials executed a large-scale military raid in Venezuela to capture then-President Nicolás Maduro, conducted strikes against boats suspected of drug trafficking in the Caribbean, and launched counterterrorism strikes in Nigeria. Allies and adversaries alike have been under US pressure, ranging from trade intimidation, threats to take over Greenland and make Canada the 51st state, and to eliminate Iran from civilization.

In the Middle East, the administration launched airstrikes against the Houthis in Yemen, claimed to broker a peace agreement between Israel and Hamas,

and initiated—along with Israel—military action against Iran. [Reports estimate](#) the direct US military costs of the war with Iran to be between \$34 billion and \$42 billion, in addition to the loss of 18 service members and injury to more than 800 others since February 28.

Against this backdrop, Americans are getting ready to cast their ballots in the midterm elections.

Traditionally, the midterms draw a smaller turnout than presidential elections. Overall, six in 10 Americans say they are very likely to vote in this fall's midterms, and two-thirds say they are at least somewhat interested in news about the midterm elections. There is an enthusiasm advantage among Democrats at this stage: 71 percent of Democrats say they are very likely to vote, compared to 64 percent of Republicans and 52 percent of Independents. Gallup also reports that [more registered voters now identify as Democrats](#), giving the Democratic Party its largest advantage since 2008 heading into the midterm elections.

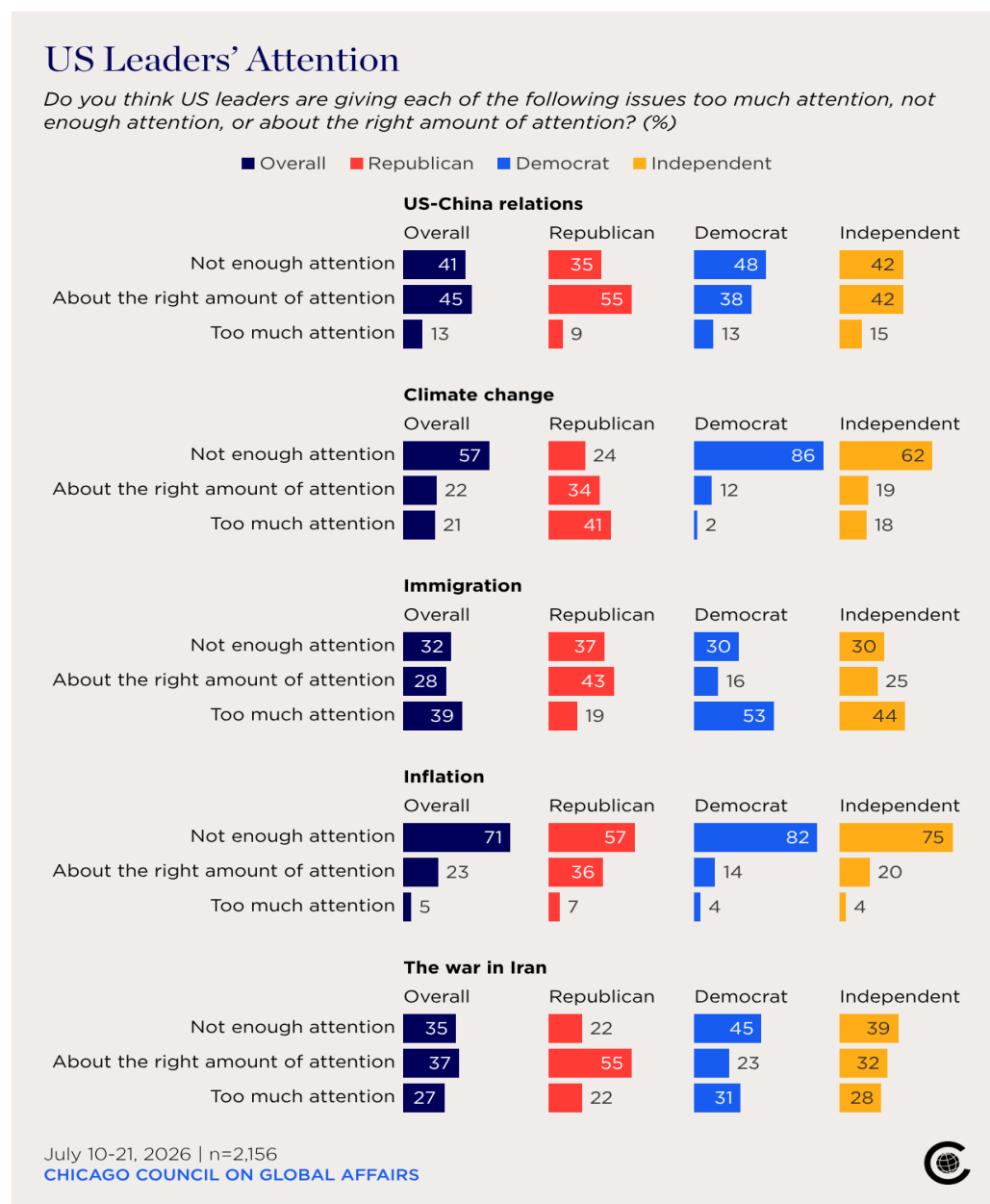
Many polls have reported that Trump's approval ratings have dropped to as low as [33 percent](#), similar to readings from the last year of his first term. The majority of Democrats (94%) and Independents (72%) disapprove of the way Trump is handling his job as president. Yet the Republican base—and particularly the MAGA wing with which 62 percent of self-described Republicans affiliate—has stayed loyal and supportive of most of his policies and actions: 95 percent say they approve of his overall job performance. The upshot is that some of these races could be very close.

Americans Think US Leaders Need to Give Inflation Greater Attention

Economic conditions are always a critical factor in elections, and the 2026 Chicago Council Survey, fielded July 10–21, finds this is also the case this cycle. Americans are heading toward midterms with the economy and high cost of living top of mind, with more saying they are very interested in news about the US economy (47%) than other national news (35%), US foreign relations (35%), or the upcoming midterm elections (34%).

At the same time, Americans do not think their political leaders are paying enough attention to these critical pocketbook issues. Seven in 10 Americans say US leaders are not paying enough attention to inflation (71%), viewing it as the single issue that needs to receive more attention from leadership, followed by climate change (57%), US-China relations (41%), the war in Iran (35%), and immigration (32%). While a majority of Republicans do not think inflation is receiving enough attention from US leaders (57%), they do so to a lesser degree than Democrats (82%) and Independents (75%). Democrats are

the most likely to say leaders are not paying enough attention to climate change (86%).

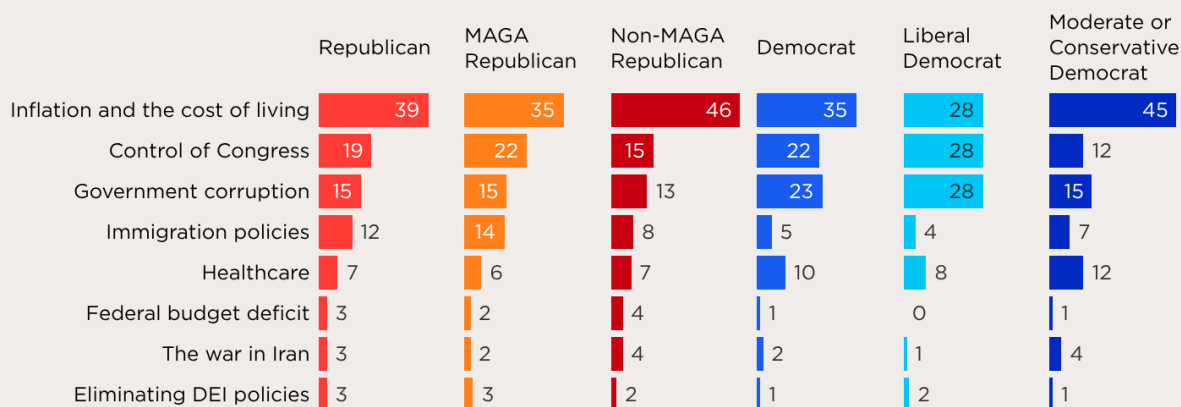


Overall, inflation and the cost of living top the list of concerns for Americans heading to the polls this November. However, for those factions of the parties that are more politically engaged—such as the MAGA wing of the Republican Party and the liberal wing of the Democratic Party—other issues also rank highly. For example, MAGA Republicans and liberal Democrats are more likely than their compatriots to say their top issue is control of Congress—reflecting their greater level of political engagement—and liberal Democrats are more

likely than moderate/conservative Democrats to name government corruption as their most important issue.

Intra-Party Splits: Importance of Issues in Voting Decisions

Which of the following issues is most important to you as you decide how to vote in the upcoming midterm elections: (%)



July 10-21, 2026 | n=2,156

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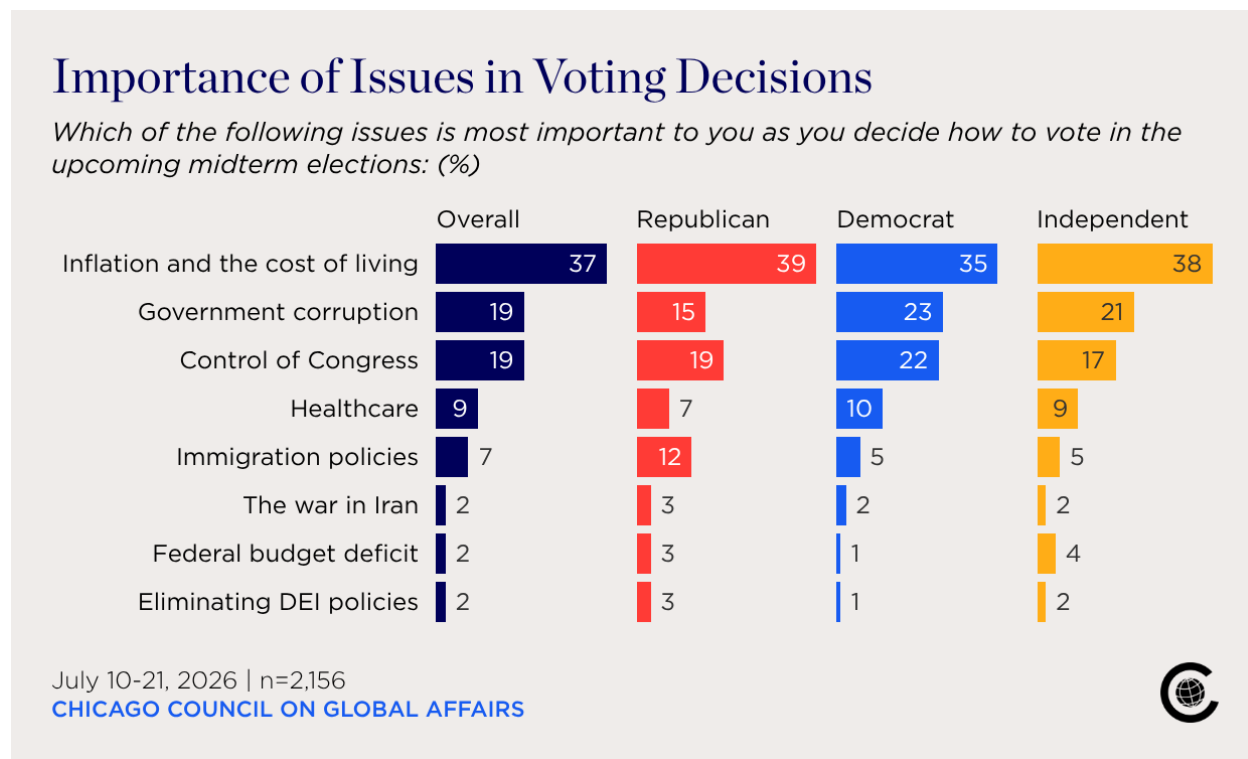
Section 1. Americans Link Economic Worries to US Foreign Policies

As this survey and many others have found, bread-and-butter issues are top of mind as Americans approach the midterm elections. On the surface, foreign policy issues appear to take a lower priority, but the following sections will show that most Americans believe the Trump administration's foreign policy actions have impacted their personal budgets. Chicago Council and other surveys have found that most Americans think the administration's economic and military policies have worsened economic conditions in the country and increased gas prices for everyday consumers.

Economic Anxieties Bear Greatest Weight on Midterm Votes

When asked what issues will be most important to their vote this November, economic issues are front of mind. Pluralities across the partisan spectrum say inflation and the cost of living are most important to their votes (37% overall). Americans also say government corruption (19%) and control of Congress (19%) play a role in their voting decisions. Healthcare (9%)—another cost-of-

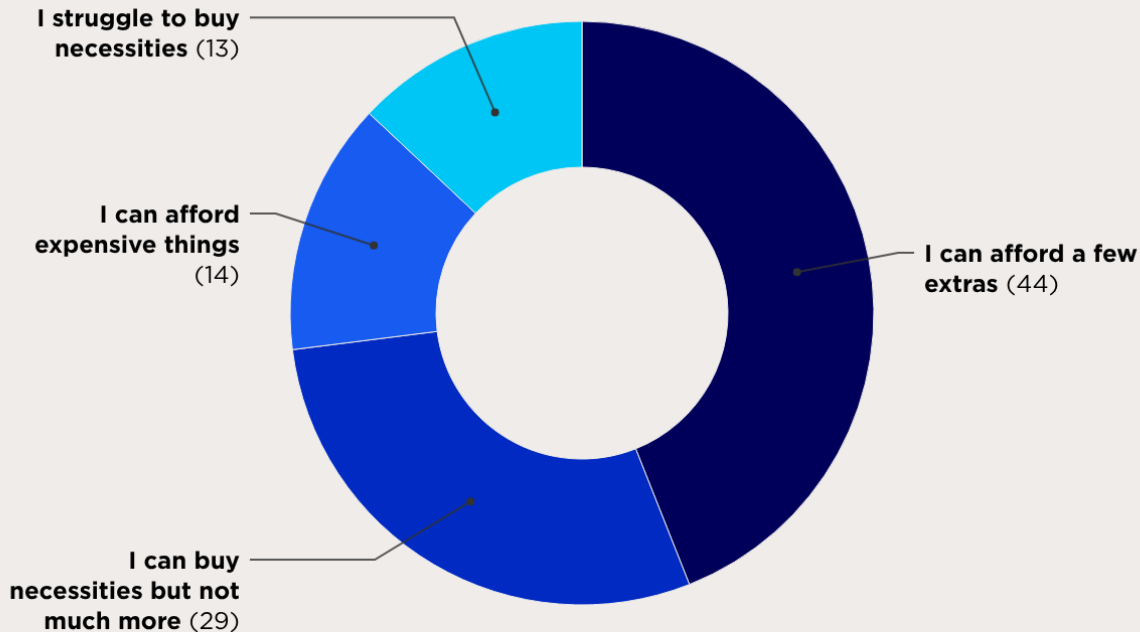
living component—and immigration policies (7%) are the top priorities for a smaller segment of voters.



One reason inflation is so important to Americans' vote this fall: Many are facing tight budgets at home. Thirteen percent of Americans report struggling to buy necessities, with another three in 10 (29%) saying they can afford to buy necessities but not much more. Four in 10 (44%) say they can afford a few extras; just 14 percent of Americans report being able to afford expensive things. Looking ahead, almost half (45%) expect their financial situation to remain the same over the next 12 months, while three in 10 (31%) think their finances will improve and a quarter (23%) think they will worsen. These results help to explain the appeal of recent primary campaigns that focus on affordability.

Personal Financial Situations

Which description of how people are getting by best suits your situation? (%)



July 10-21, 2026 | n=2,156

CHICAGO COUNCIL ON GLOBAL AFFAIRS



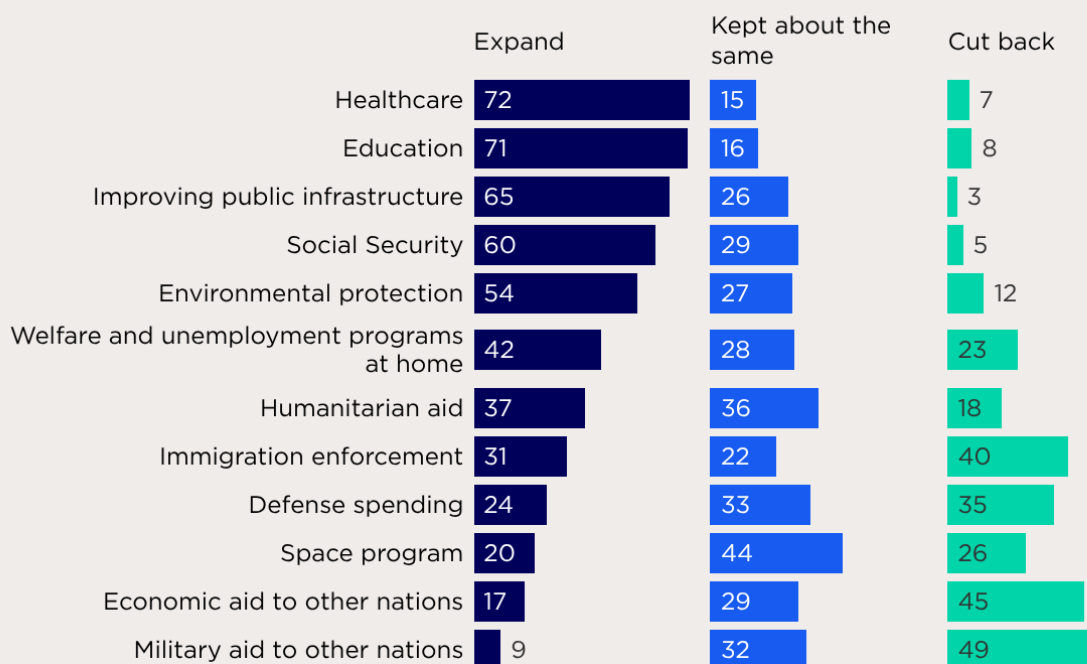
In line with public concerns about inflation and the cost of living at home, majorities of Americans across party lines say the federal government should expand spending in key domestic areas, like healthcare (72%), education (71%), improving public infrastructure (65%), and Social Security (60%). A plurality of Americans (42%) also favor greater spending on welfare and unemployment programs, with a majority of Democrats (63%) and a plurality of Independents (42%) in agreement. By contrast, a plurality of Republicans (45%) favor cuts to welfare and unemployment programs.

Looking abroad, pluralities of Americans continue to favor reduced economic and military aid to other nations, as they have in past Council surveys. But humanitarian aid is seen in a different light: 37 percent of Americans favor expanding US humanitarian aid (36% maintain, 18% cut back). Democrats are the most supportive of expanding humanitarian assistance (62%, vs. 38% of Independents and 12% of Republicans); Republicans would prefer to maintain present levels of humanitarian aid (51%).

Republicans and Democrats are also split over defense spending levels. Half of Democrats (50%) favor cuts to US defense spending, as do four in 10 Independents (41%); Republicans would prefer to expand (41%) or maintain (39%) defense spending levels.

Federal Government Spending

Below is a list of present federal government programs. For each, please select whether you feel it should be expanded, cut back, or kept about the same. (%)



July 10-21, 2026 | n=1,073

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Support for greater domestic spending among the American public may be more salient in an environment of greater economic anxiety, but it is not new. Since 2017, Chicago Council Surveys have consistently found that a majority of Americans favor expanded federal spending on healthcare, education, Social Security, and better public infrastructure.¹

Americans Link Iran War and Tariffs to High Cost of Living at Home

Though few Americans name the US-Iran war as their most important voting issue, the conflict has shaped the economic anxieties that weigh heavily on

¹ For more information on Americans' views of federal government spending, see Appendix Section 2.

their midterm decisions—and Americans are well aware of the linkages between the two. According to a [May 2026 Chicago Council-Ipsos survey](#), majorities view the US-Iran war as bad for the United States' cost of living (86%), international relations (72%), reputation abroad (72%), and national security (65%). And as the 2026 Chicago Council Survey finds, Americans who can't afford necessities or much more are more likely to think the war hasn't been worth fighting (73%, vs. 64% among Americans who can afford a few extras or expensive things).

Other recent surveys add more evidence to the link between the war in Iran and economic concerns. [A July 2026](#) poll finds two-thirds of Americans say the Trump administration's economic and military policies have worsened economic conditions in the country (65%, vs. 22% improved) as well as hurt the United States (67%, vs. 21% helped). [Other polling](#) reported that 63 percent of Americans blame the war in Iran for gas price increases over the past year, and majorities across party lines in the 2026 Chicago Council Survey view a disruption in the energy supply as a critical threat facing the country.

It's not just the Iran war that Americans are linking to domestic problems. The second Trump administration's widespread tariffs are also deeply unpopular. In Chicago Council surveys this year, large majorities of Americans have said US tariffs on imports have been bad for the US economy and the cost of living at home, including the tariffs placed on imports from China (more on tariffs in section 3).

Government Corruption, Weakening Democracy Top List of Critical Threats

Some of the same issues that Americans consider key to their voting decisions also rise to the top of their concerns about potential threats to the United States. The overall US public considers the most critical threats facing the United States to be government corruption (76%), weakening democracy (67%), a disruption in the energy supply (59%), a global economic downturn (54%), and artificial intelligence (51%).²

Partisanship also plays a strong role in these ratings. As was the case last year, Democrats and Independents have similar views on the most critical threats facing the nation. Among the potential threats presented in the 2026 Chicago Council Survey, Democrats and Independents rate US government corruption (85% Democrats, 77% Independents) and weakening democracy in the United States (80% Democrats, 66% Independents) as the top two threats facing the country. Majorities of Republicans are also concerned about

² For more information on Americans' critical threat perceptions, see Appendix Section 1.

government corruption (66%) and weakening democracy (56%), though there are notable differences in how partisans interpret these issues.

When asked to elaborate in their own words what aspects of government corruption and weakening democracy are most concerning to them, Americans point in somewhat different directions according to partisan affiliation.³

Democrats and Independents largely define government corruption as the abuse of office for the self-enrichment of officials (41% Democrats, 35% Independents, 22% Republicans) and a lack of accountability due to the erosion of the rule of law, checks and balances, and democratic integrity (29% Democrats, 27% Independents, 18% Republicans). Republicans also associate government corruption with the misallocation of federal funds and wasteful spending (23%)—and to a greater degree than Independents (16%) and Democrats (15%).

When asked about the threat of weakening democracy, Americans across the partisan aisle express great concern over the system of government in the United States. However, a greater portion of Democrats (73%) and Independents (71%) express concern over the disregard for the rule of law and the erosion of checks and balances, in particular, than Republicans (57%). Democrats and Independents also share heightened concerns about growing authoritarianism in the United States (17% Democrats, 13% Independents, 8% Republicans) and the loss of democratic principles (11% Democrats, 8% Republicans, 8% Independents). Yet a greater share of Republicans than other partisans mention fears of creeping socialism or communism and ideological extremism (19% Republican, 6% Independents, 1% Democrats).

Risk of Economic Downturn and Energy Supply Also Viewed as Top Critical Threats

Majorities of Democrats and Independents also say a global economic downturn (63% Democrats, 54% Independents) and a disruption in the energy supply (62% Democrats, 61% Independents) are critical threats, with a majority of Republicans also naming disruption to the energy supply a critical threat (53%).

³ A random half of the survey sample was asked to explain in their own words what aspects of US government corruption were most concerning to them; the other half was asked the same about weakening US democracy. Their verbatim responses were then coded into topical categories so that overall distributions could be calculated. Since some verbatim responses touched on multiple aspects of the issue, the percentages may total more than 100 percent. Certain themes—such as the erosion of checks and balances—were mentioned in responses to both government corruption and weakening democracy.

Top Five Critical Threats to the United States

Below is a list of possible threats to the vital interests of the United States in the next 10 years. For each one, please select whether you see this as a critical threat, an important but not critical threat, or not an important threat at all. (% critical threat)

▲	Overall		Republican		Democrat		Independent	
1	US government corruption	76	Iran's nuclear program	68	US government corruption	85	US government corruption	77
2	Weakening democracy in the United States	67	Large numbers of immigrants and refugees coming into the US	67	Weakening democracy in the United States	80	Weakening democracy in the United States	66
3	Disruption in energy supply	59	US government corruption	66	Climate change	76	Disruption in energy supply	61
4	A global economic downturn	54	Weakening democracy in the United States	56	A global economic downturn	63	A global economic downturn	54
5	Artificial intelligence	51	[Tie] North Korea's nuclear program / Disruption in energy supply	53	Disruption in energy supply	62	Artificial intelligence	53

July 10-21, 2026 | n=2,156

CHICAGO COUNCIL ON GLOBAL AFFAIRS



Other issues are more specific to partisan groups. Republicans' top two threats to the United States—Iran's nuclear program (68%) and large-scale immigration (67%)—are seen as critical threats by only minorities of Democrats and Independents. Similarly, three in four Democrats (76%) and half of Independents (51%) label climate change a critical threat, while only 19 percent of Republicans agree.

Conclusion: "America First" Foreign Policies Have Not Spared Americans at Home

Experts warned of the domestic implications of the Trump administration's policies and now, more than a year and a half into Trump's second presidency, Americans are feeling the pinch. Prices at the gas pump, restaurants, and shops have dramatically risen since the administration began enacting its

“America First” agenda. Americans are making the connection between the interwoven economic hardships they’re facing at home and the administration’s policies abroad.

Section 2: Iran and the Costs of War

For most Americans, the war in Iran is not among the most important issues shaping their voting decisions in the upcoming midterm elections, nor is Iran’s nuclear program perceived as one of the top five most critical threats to the United States. Yet the billions of dollars spent on direct military costs to fund the Iran war, as well as a surge in the cost of gas and other household expenses following Iran’s blockade of the Strait of Hormuz, have fueled economic anxieties among the public.

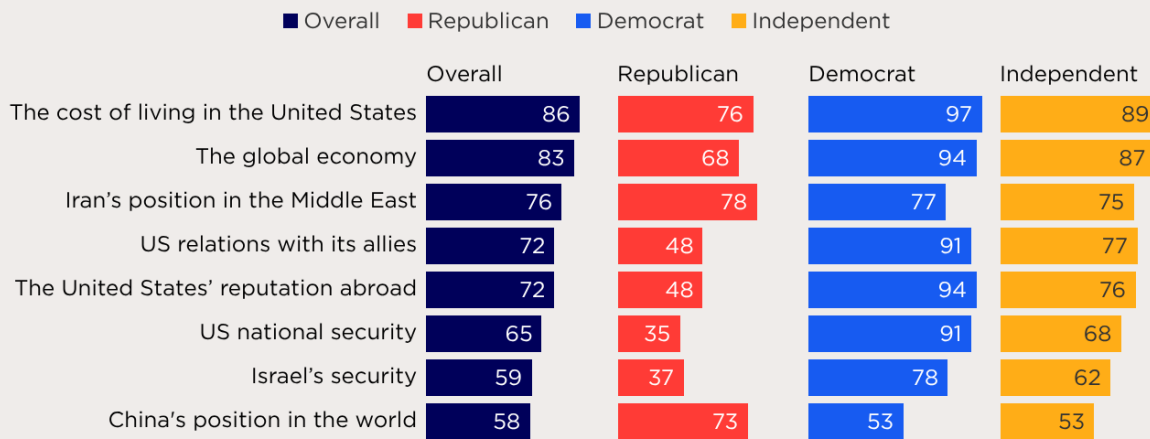
Americans See Iran War as Making US Economic Problems Worse

Chicago Council polling shows Americans are making the connection between the war in Iran and economic conditions at home. As noted in section 1, a Chicago Council-Ipsos survey conducted in May found that most Americans—including majorities across the partisan aisle—viewed the US-Iran war as bad for the cost of living in the United States (86%) and the global economy (83%). Other polling reported nearly two-thirds of Americans (63%) also blamed the war in Iran for the rise in the cost of gasoline over the last year.

The May results also showed that while most Americans across political affiliations think the war has degraded Iran’s position in the Middle East (76%), majorities believe the war has negatively affected US relationships with allies (72%), the US reputation abroad (72%), and US national security (65%). A majority of Americans also think the war has been bad for Israel’s national security (59%) and China’s position in the world (58%).

Impact of US-Iran War

Overall, do you think the US-Iran war has been good or bad for: (% bad)



May 1-3, 2026 | n=1,018

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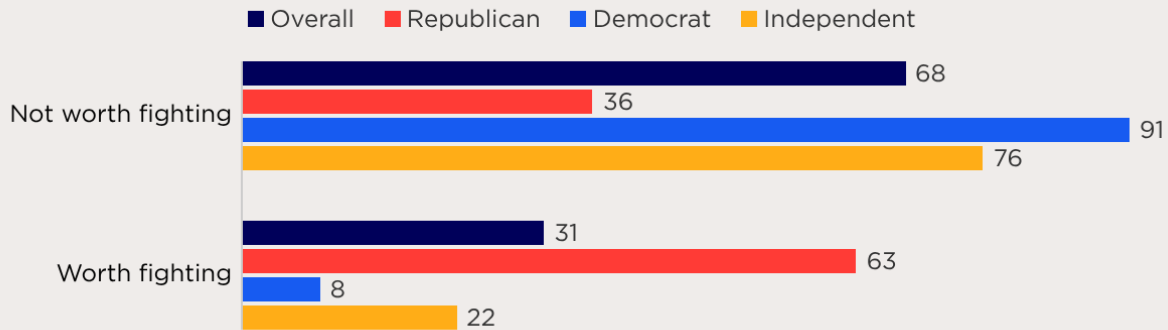
Majorities of Democrats and Independents think the war has been negative for each of the dimensions presented. Republicans stand apart from Democrats and Independents in their perspectives. Majorities of GOP supporters think the war has been beneficial for US and Israeli national security and bad for China's position in the world. But they are divided on the war's impact on the United States' reputation abroad (50% good) and relationship with its allies (49% good)

Most Say Iran War Not Worth the Costs

When weighing the costs of the Iran war against its benefits to the United States, the majority of Americans overall think it has not been worth fighting (68% vs. 31% worth fighting). Republicans are the only partisans with majority support for the war, with about six in 10 believing it has been worth fighting (63%, including 77% among MAGA Republicans). By contrast, nine in 10 Democrats (91%) and three in four Independents (76%) believe it has not been worth the costs.

Iran War Not Worth Fighting

All in all, considering the costs to the United States versus the benefits to the United States, do you think the war in Iran was worth fighting, or not? (%)



July 10-21, 2026 | n=2,156

CHICAGO COUNCIL ON GLOBAL AFFAIRS



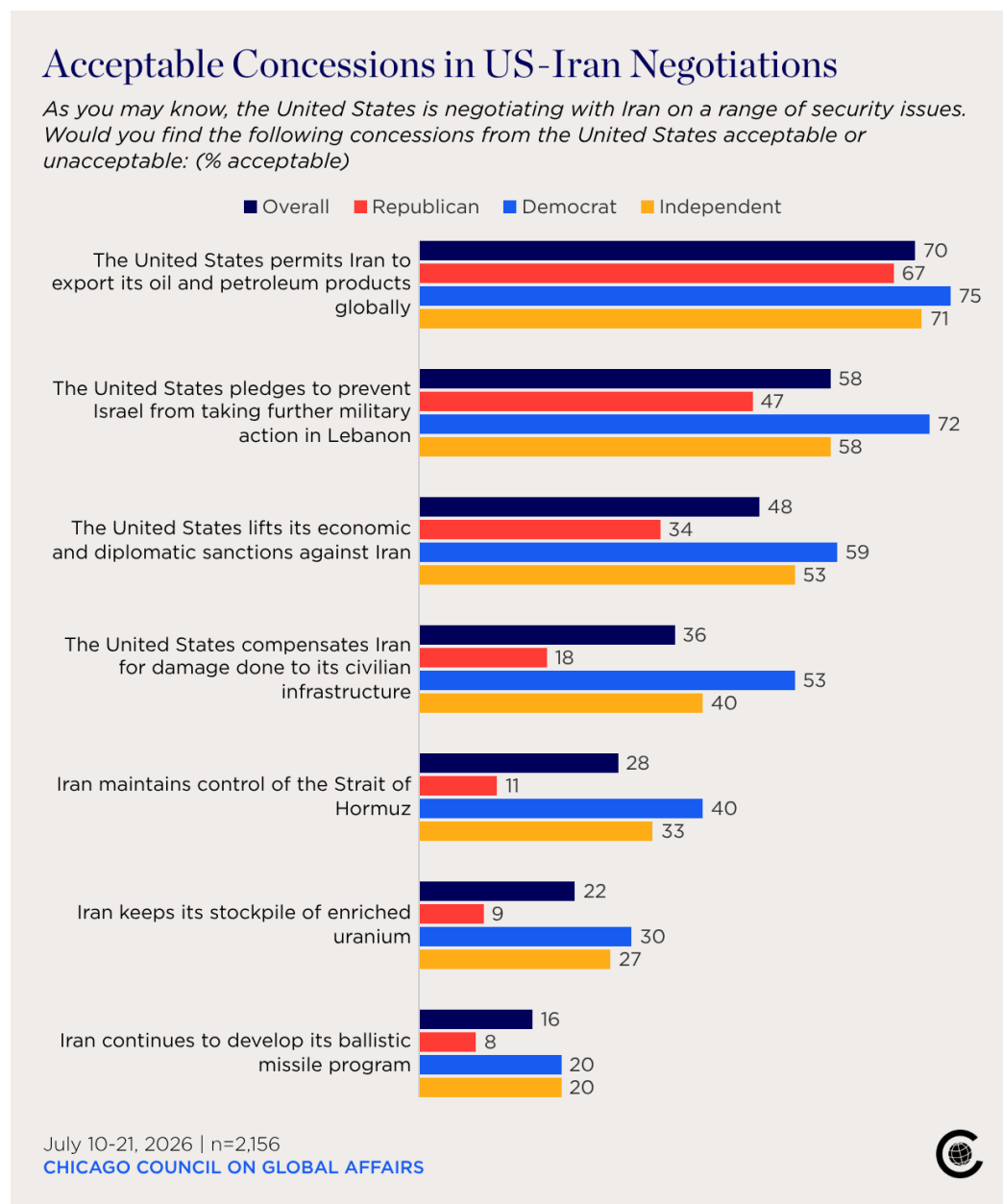
One factor in Republican support for the US war against Iran: A majority of Republicans see Iran's nuclear program as a critical threat to the United States (68%, 74% among MAGA Republicans), compared to just four in 10 Independents (42%) and a third of Democrats (35%). As noted in section 1, Iranian nuclear development is the top concern for Republicans; meanwhile, the issue does not even rank among Democrats' and Independents' top five most critical threats.

Little Support for Concessions to Iran to End War

After the collapse of an interim peace deal between Tehran and Washington, [hostilities between the United States and Iran have resumed](#). Although the two parties have traded a series of airstrikes, Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian has said Tehran prefers to return to the negotiating table.

When weighing elements of a potential agreement with Iran, Americans are unwilling to allow Iran to continue developing its ballistic missile program (80%), keep its stockpile of enriched uranium (74%), or control the Strait of Hormuz (68%)—with consensus across partisan affiliations. Americans also view compensating Iran for damage done to its civilian infrastructure as unacceptable (60%), though Democrats are more divided (53% acceptable vs. 44% unacceptable). The public is broadly divided on lifting its economic and diplomatic sanctions against Iran (48% acceptable vs. 47% unacceptable), with Republicans standing apart from other partisans in their view that such a concession is unacceptable (62%).

MAGA Republicans, matching their greater views of Iran's nuclear program as a threat and their higher support for the war, are also less likely to see any of these concessions as acceptable to the United States.



The American public is, however, willing to concede in two areas: permitting Iran to export its oil and petroleum products globally (70% acceptable) and pledging to prevent Israel from taking further military action in Lebanon (58% acceptable). Allowing Iran to export oil globally is the lone concession with bipartisan acceptance, with majorities of Democrats (75%), Independents (71%), and Republicans (67%) all in agreement—as are two-thirds of MAGA Republicans (65%).

When it comes to pledging to rein in Israel, Republicans are divided on the idea (47% acceptable vs. 49% unacceptable), with both MAGA Republicans (44% vs. 52%) and non-MAGA Republicans (51% vs. 46%) also somewhat split on taking a hard line with Israel. Democrats across the ideological spectrum say a US pledge to prevent further Israeli military action in Lebanon would be acceptable (72%), though to a lesser degree among moderate/conservative Democrats (59%) than among liberal Democrats (80%).

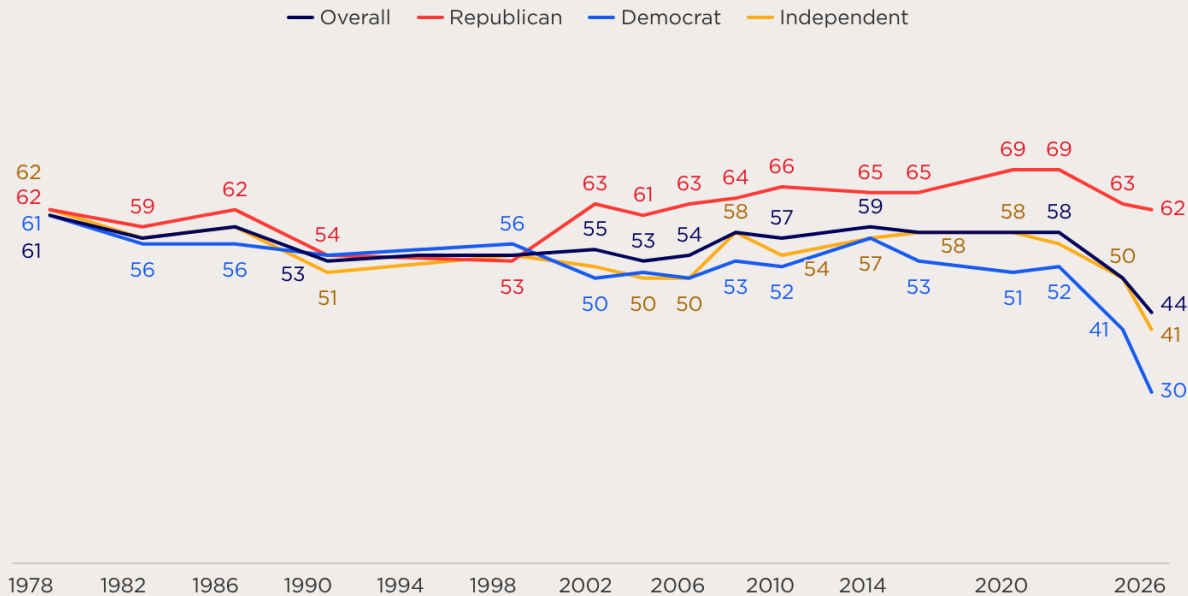
US Support for Israel Shaping Up to Be an Electoral Issue for Some

A [survey](#) conducted by the Institute for Middle East Understanding Policy Project in March 2026 just after the war against Iran began found that 56 percent of Americans believed the war benefits Israel more than the United States (29% believe the United States benefits more, 15% don't know). Israel's role in the US-Iran war, combined with its response to the October 7, 2023, Hamas attacks, seems to have fractured American public opinion of Israel and become a significant factor in several midterm primary races.

On average, Americans give Israel a record-low rating of 44 degrees on a feeling-thermometer scale where 100 represents a very warm, favorable feeling, and zero represents a very cold, unfavorable feeling. This rating follows a steady decline in favorable views toward Israel since 2022 (at which point Americans gave Israel an average rating of 58).

Favorability toward Israel

Please rate your feelings toward some countries and peoples, with 100 meaning a very warm, favorable feeling, zero meaning a very cold, unfavorable feeling, and 50 meaning not particularly warm or cold. You can use any number from zero to 100; the higher the number the more favorable your feelings are toward that country or those people. **Israel** (mean)



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Democrats have soured on Israel to a greater degree than other partisans, dropping from an average rating of 52 in 2022 to just 30 today (a decline of 22 degrees). While favorable views of Israel among Republicans and Independents have also declined since 2022, they have done so to a lesser degree (from 69 to 62 degrees among Republicans and from 56 to 41 degrees among Independents). MAGA Republicans express the most favorable view of Israel, giving the country an average rating of 67.

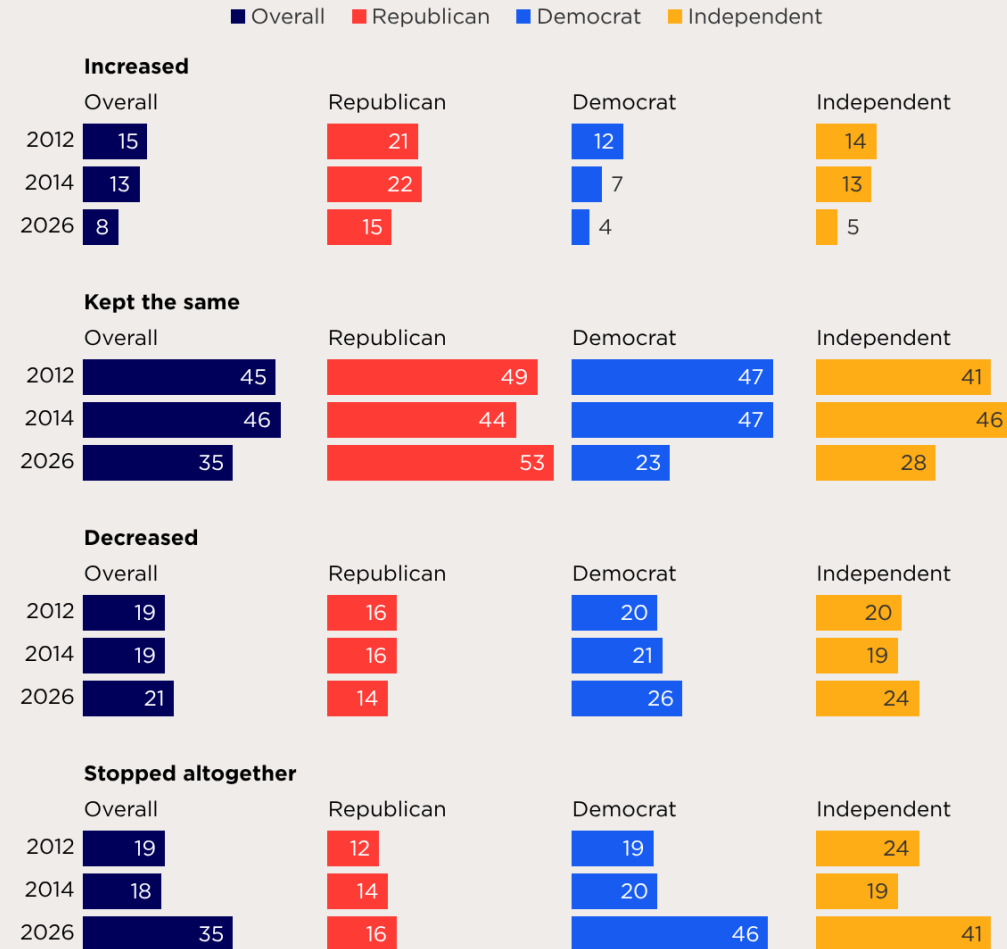
The decline in Israel's favorability among Democrats may be driven by a younger, more liberal faction of the party. Millennial and Generation Z Democrats give Israel a lower rating than older generations of Democrats (23 vs. 35). Similarly, liberal Democrats (27) rate Israel more negatively than moderate/conservative Democrats (34). There are also generational differences on the right: Millennial and Generation Z Republicans stand apart from older Republicans, expressing lower favorability of Israel (52 vs. 69 among older generations of Republicans).

Sharply Lower Support for Military Aid to Israel

Alongside growing negative views of Israel, support for continued US military aid to Israel has also dropped. Today, a majority of Americans say US aid should be decreased (21%) or stopped altogether (35%). On the other hand, a third (35%) favor maintaining present levels of military aid and just 8 percent favor higher levels of aid. This is a notable shift from 2014, when Council surveys last asked this question. A combined 56 percent of Americans now favor reducing or eliminating US military aid to Israel, compared to just 37 percent in 2014. That change has been driven primarily by shifts among Democrats and Independents. More than a decade ago, pluralities of all partisans supported maintaining the level of military aid being sent to Israel. Over time, Democrats and Independents have grown more likely to think it should be decreased or stopped altogether, while Republicans continue to favor maintaining this support.

Views on Military Aid to Israel

Do you think military aid to Israel should be increased, decreased, kept the same or stopped altogether?



July 10-21, 2026 | n=2,156
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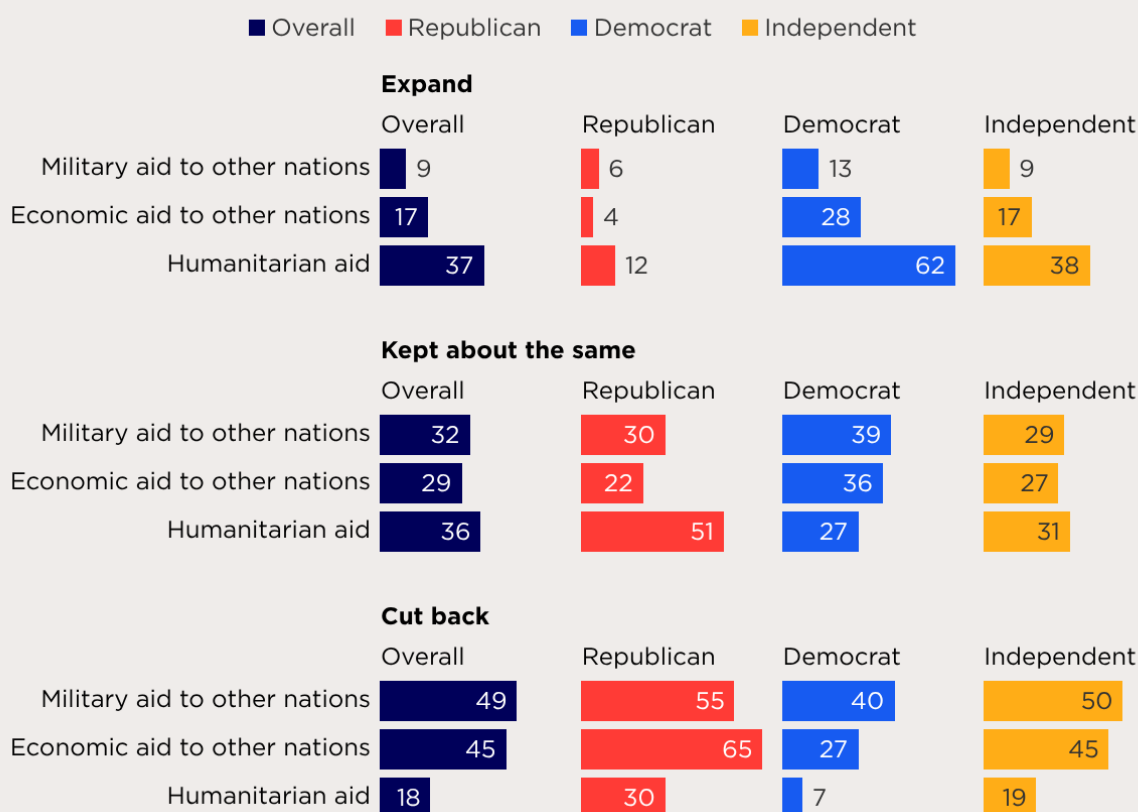
Partisans' Differentiated Views of Foreign Aid

Some Americans' desire to decrease or stop military aid to Israel brings attitudes on aid to Israel more in line with Americans' longstanding preference to cut back on military aid to other nations. Overall, half of the public feels military aid to other nations should be cut back (49%)—more than any other potential item in the federal budget. That includes a majority of Republicans (55%), half of Independents (50%), and four in 10 Democrats (40%). A plurality of Americans also favor cuts to US economic aid to other nations (45%), though views are far more divided along party lines: Two-thirds of

Republicans (65%), a plurality of Independents (45%), and just a quarter of Democrats (27%) favor cuts.

Views on International Aid

Below is a list of present federal government programs. For each, please select whether you feel it should be expanded, cut back, or kept about the same. (%)



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Humanitarian aid is the most-supported aid category; 37 percent of Americans overall favor expanding spending on humanitarian aid, and just 18 percent favor cuts. Democrats in particular favor greater humanitarian spending (62%), while half of Republicans (51%) favor maintaining current humanitarian aid levels. Independents are split (38% expanded, 31% maintained, and 19% reduced).

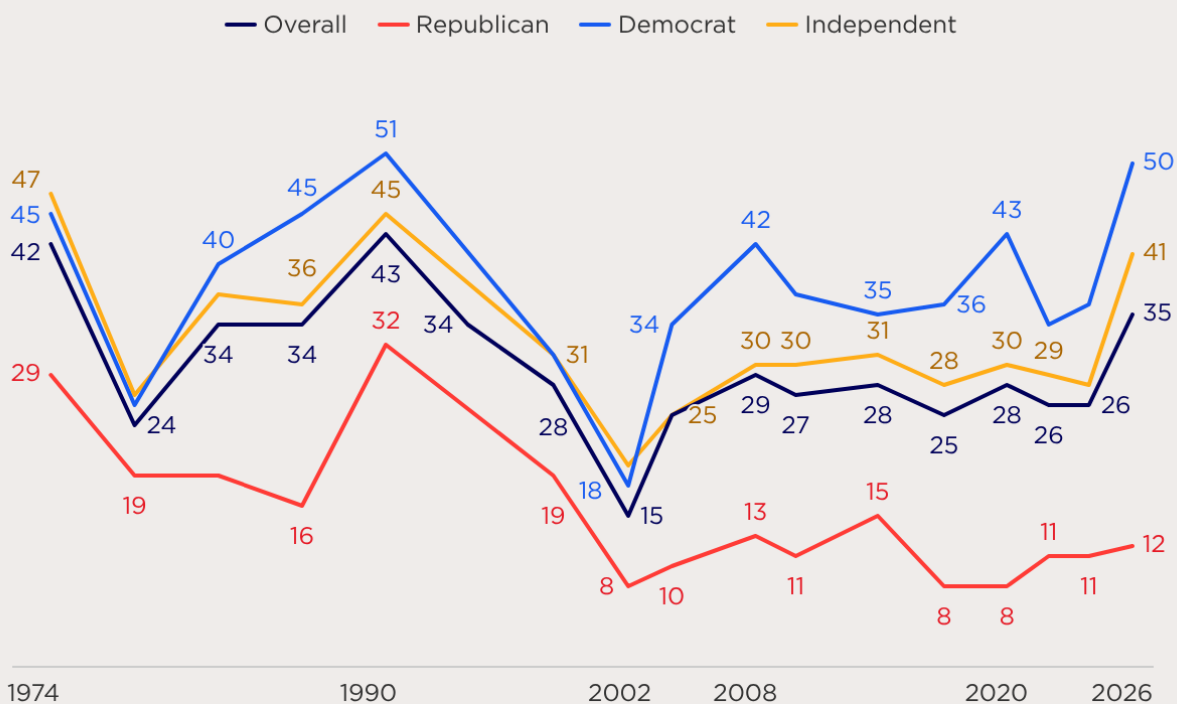
Half of Democrats Favor Cuts to US Defense Spending

Support for cutting the US defense budget has risen sharply. A third of Americans overall (35%), including half of Democrats (50%) and four in 10

Independents (41%)—but just 12 percent of Republicans—favor cutting back US defense spending. For Democrats and Independents, and for Americans overall, this is the highest level of support for defense cuts recorded in the Chicago Council’s surveys since 1990, when the ending of the Cold War raised hopes for a “peace dividend” resulting from cuts in military spending. Republicans would prefer to expand (41%) or maintain (39%) US defense spending.

Support for Defense Spending Cuts

Below is a list of present federal government programs. For each, please select whether you feel it should be expanded, cut back, or kept about the same. **Defense spending** (% cut back)



July 10-21, 2026 | n=1,073

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Conclusion: Iran War Sharpens Partisan Divide over Costs, Purpose of US Military Power

The American public largely opposes the war in Iran and views it as costly and counterproductive. Republicans stand apart, however, believing the conflict is worthwhile and beneficial for both American and Israeli security. The unpopularity of the war with Iran and partisan division also extend to US

support for Israel over its role in the Iran and Gaza wars. Public support for continued US assistance to Israel seems to be wearing thin, especially among younger and more liberal Democrats and younger Republicans. However, the desire to reduce military spending is not isolated to Israel but an emerging trend among Democrats and Independents who favor cutting defense spending across the board.

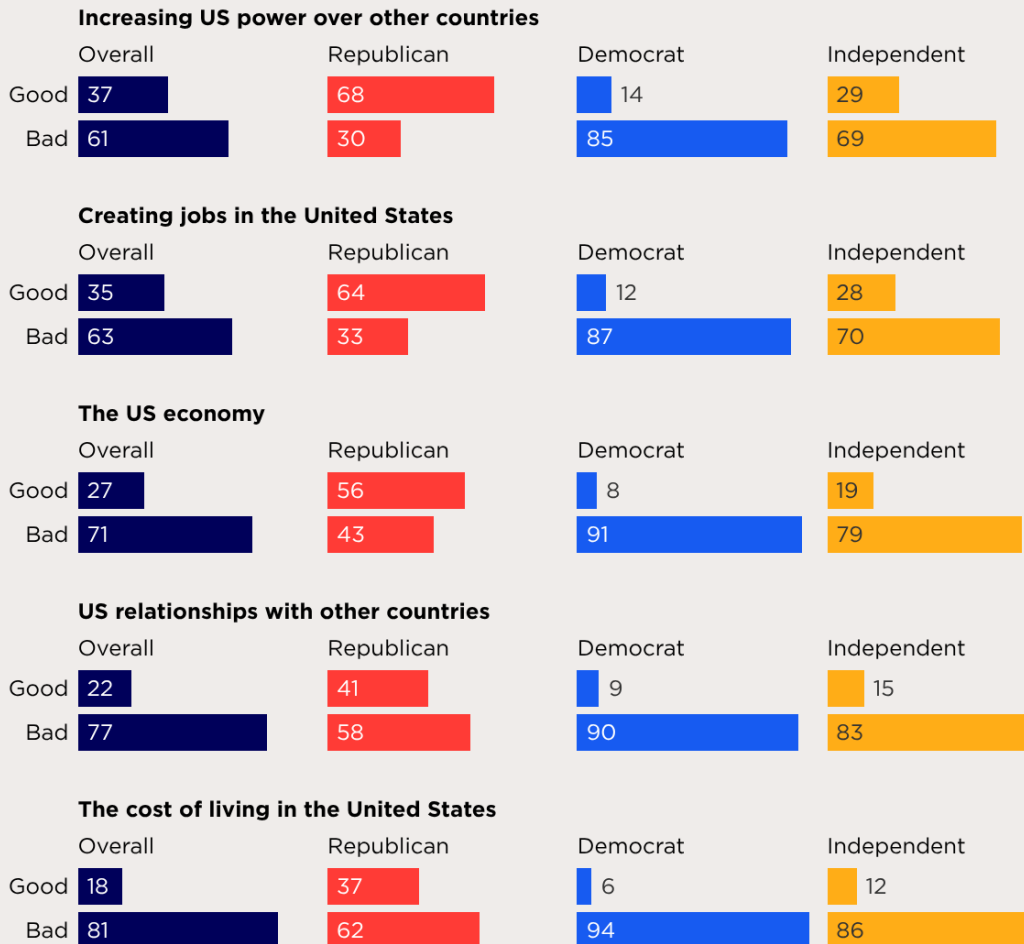
Section 3: Americans Say Tariffs Have Been Bad for Their Cost of Living

Under the second Trump administration, the United States has imposed widespread tariffs on foreign imports. The stated objective of these tariffs is to create jobs in the United States through a domestic manufacturing revival and a reshoring of supply chains into the United States, rather than relying on the productive capacities of other nations—even friends and allies.

However, majorities of Americans think these tariffs have failed to boost the US economy, create jobs in the United States, and reduce the cost of living at home. Democrats and Independents express the most negative opinions on the tariffs. Across the board, Democrats overwhelmingly see the tariffs imposed by the Trump administration as having been bad for the United States, as do at least seven in 10 Independents.

Effects of US Tariffs

As you may know, the United States has imposed significant tariffs on imports from other countries since 2025. Overall, do you think those tariffs have been good or bad for: (%)



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Perhaps most consequentially, eight in 10 Americans (81%) say the tariffs have been bad for the cost of living in the United States—the issue that a plurality of Americans (37%) say is the most important issue to their vote in the upcoming midterm elections. The view that tariffs have been bad for the cost of living includes overwhelming majorities of Democrats (94%) and Independents (86%), as well as six in 10 Republicans (62%).

Republicans are somewhat more positive in some areas: Two-thirds (64%) say tariffs have been good for job creation, and a majority (56%) say they have been good for the US economy. Two-thirds of Republicans—and 37 percent of Americans overall—also say the tariffs have been good for increasing US

power over other countries, though most Democrats (85%) and Independents (69%) disagree.

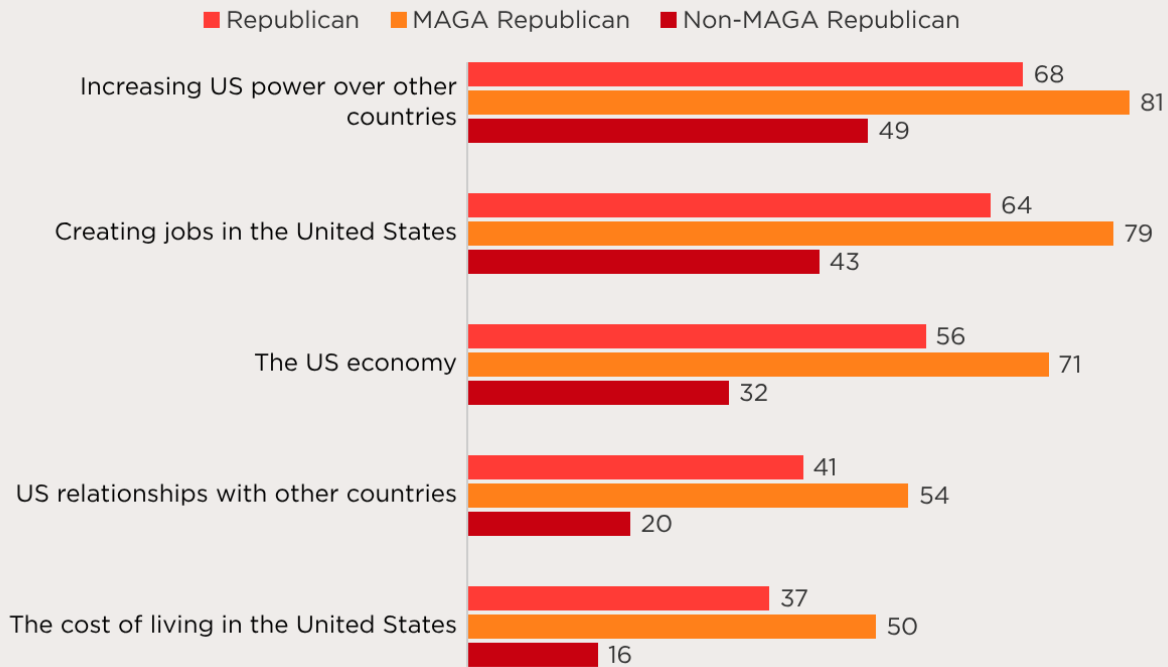
As the 2026 Chicago Council Survey finds, those Americans who are struggling to buy necessities, or who can buy necessities but little more, are the most negative on US tariff policy. In particular, they are more likely than those in better financial situations to say US tariffs have been bad for the cost of living in the United States (85% vs. 78%), the US economy (78% vs. 66%), and creating jobs in the United States (69% vs. 59%).

Opinions of Tariffs Divide Republicans, Unite Democrats

Just as the tariffs divide Republicans and Democrats, Republicans are themselves internally divided over their effects. Across the board, MAGA Republicans are at least 30 percentage points more likely than non-MAGA Republicans to give the tariffs imposed since 2025 a favorable assessment, and majorities of MAGA Republicans say the tariffs have been good for job creation and the US economy. However, even MAGA Republicans are split over their effects on the cost of living (50% good, 49% bad). Meanwhile, non-MAGA Republicans tend to view the tariffs as having been bad for all categories asked about, especially US relationships abroad (80% bad) and the cost of living at home (84% bad).

Republican Divisions over Tariff Effects

As you may know, the United States has imposed significant tariffs on imports from other countries since 2025. Overall, do you think those tariffs have been good or bad for: (% good)



July 10-21, 2026 | n=704

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By contrast, Democrats are broadly united in opposition to the administration's tariff issues. More than three in four moderate/conservative Democrats say the tariffs imposed on other countries have been bad for all of the areas asked about, and nine in 10 or more liberal Democrats agree.

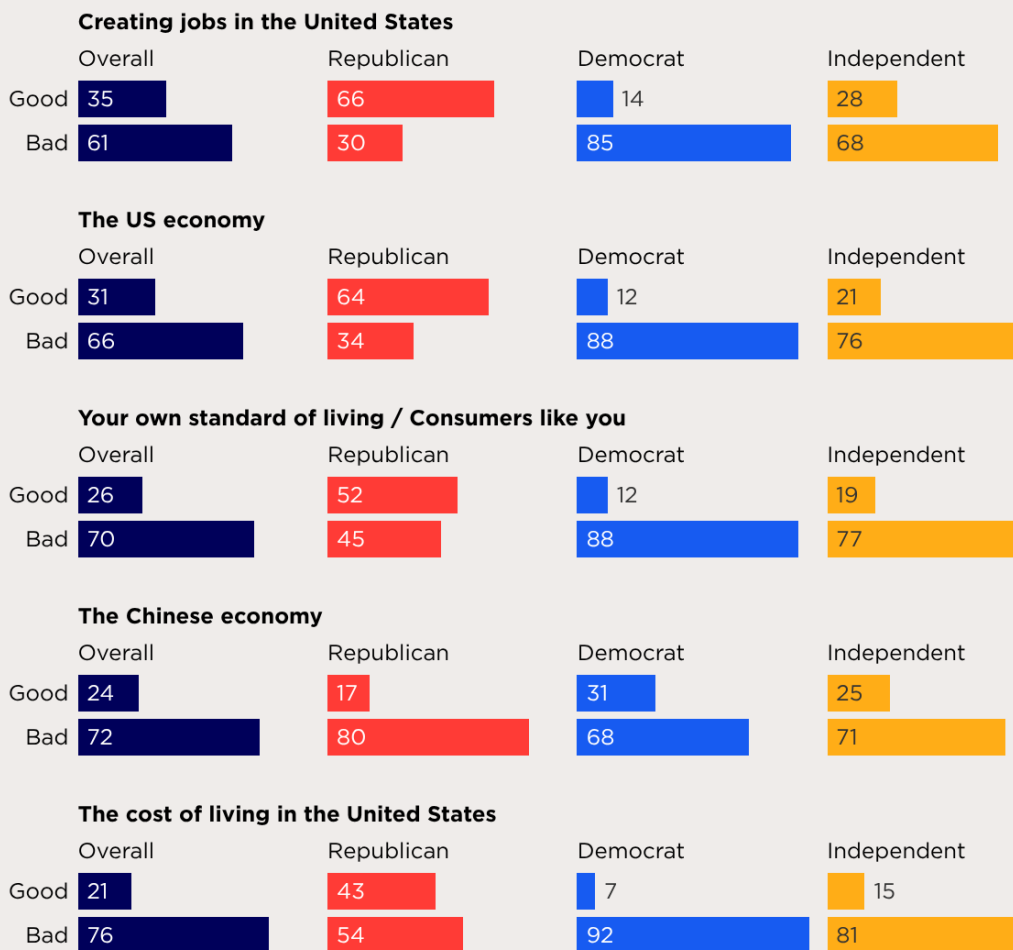
Tariffs on China Seen as Bad for Both Sides

Where this tariff policy has reached its peak has been with China. Imposing tariffs on Chinese companies has been one of several approaches to dealing with China's economic rise taken by successive US administrations. Yet as a [March 2026 Chicago Council-NPR-Ipsos poll](#) shows, majorities of Americans see the tariffs imposed on China as having been bad for creating jobs in the United States (61%), for the US economy (66%), for their own standard of living (70%), and for the cost of living in the United States (76%). That the tariffs have been bad for the Chinese economy (72%) does not seem to be reason enough, to Americans, to expand their use; just 38 percent of Americans favor increased tariffs on Chinese imports, including three in 10

Independents (30%) and 16 percent of Democrats—but a majority of Republicans (74%).

Broadly Negative Views of US Tariffs on China

As you may know, the United States has imposed significant tariffs on imports from China in recent years. Overall, do you think those tariffs have been good or bad for: (%)



March 13-15, 2026 | n=1,025

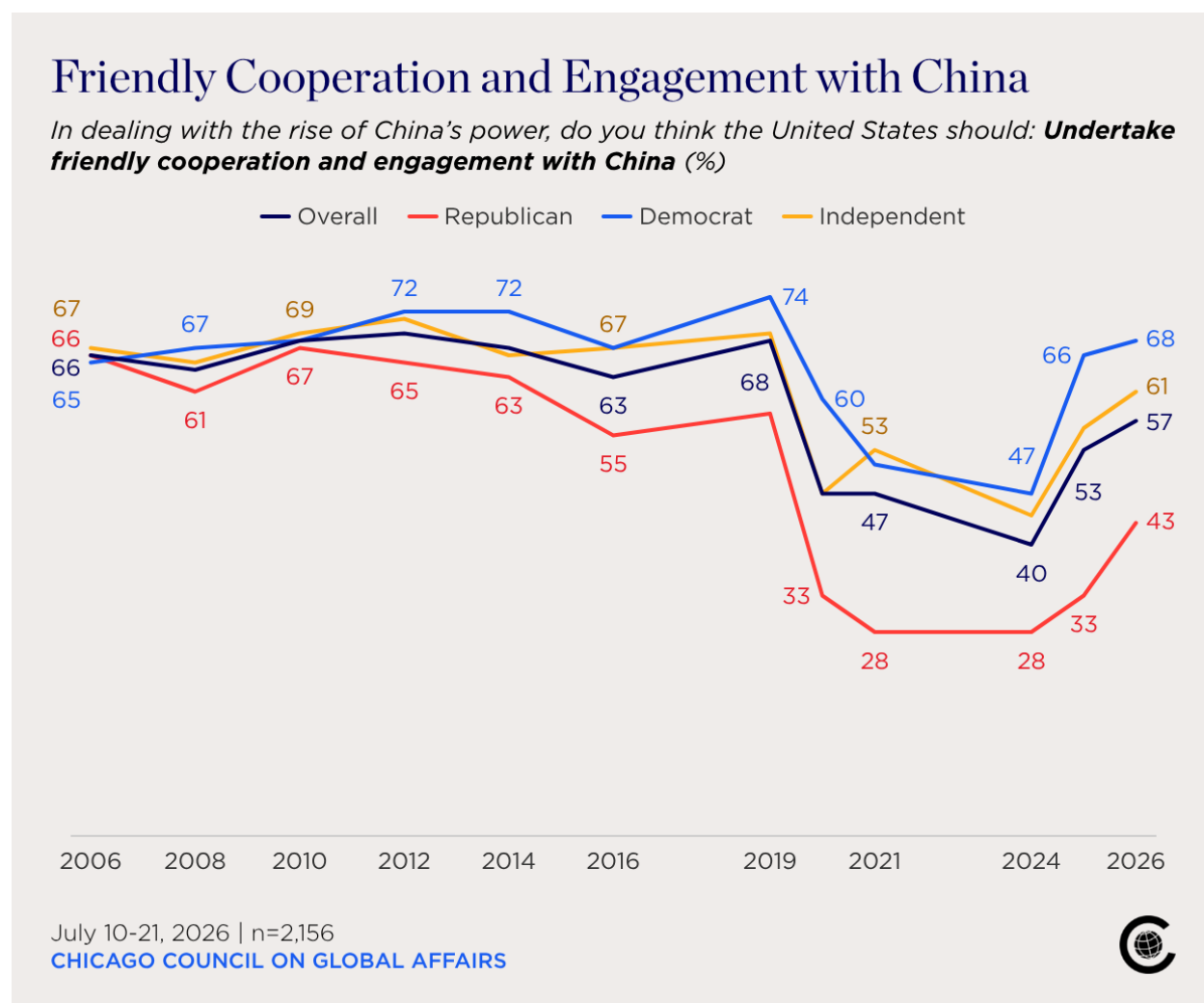
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Growing Support for Engagement with China across Party Lines

Rather than pursuing a trade war, Americans have increasingly supported engagement with China in recent polls. A majority of Americans (57%) say the United States should undertake friendly cooperation and engagement with China, while 40 percent prefer a policy of actively limiting the growth of China's power. Two-thirds of Democrats (68%) and six in 10 Independents (61%) favor engagement, while a majority of Republicans (55%) continue to

favor a policy of actively working to limit the growth of China's power. Republican attitudes have shifted notably over the past year. Four in 10 Republicans (43%) favor pursuing friendly cooperation and engagement with China, up from a third (33%) in 2025 and representing the highest support for engagement among Republicans since 2019.

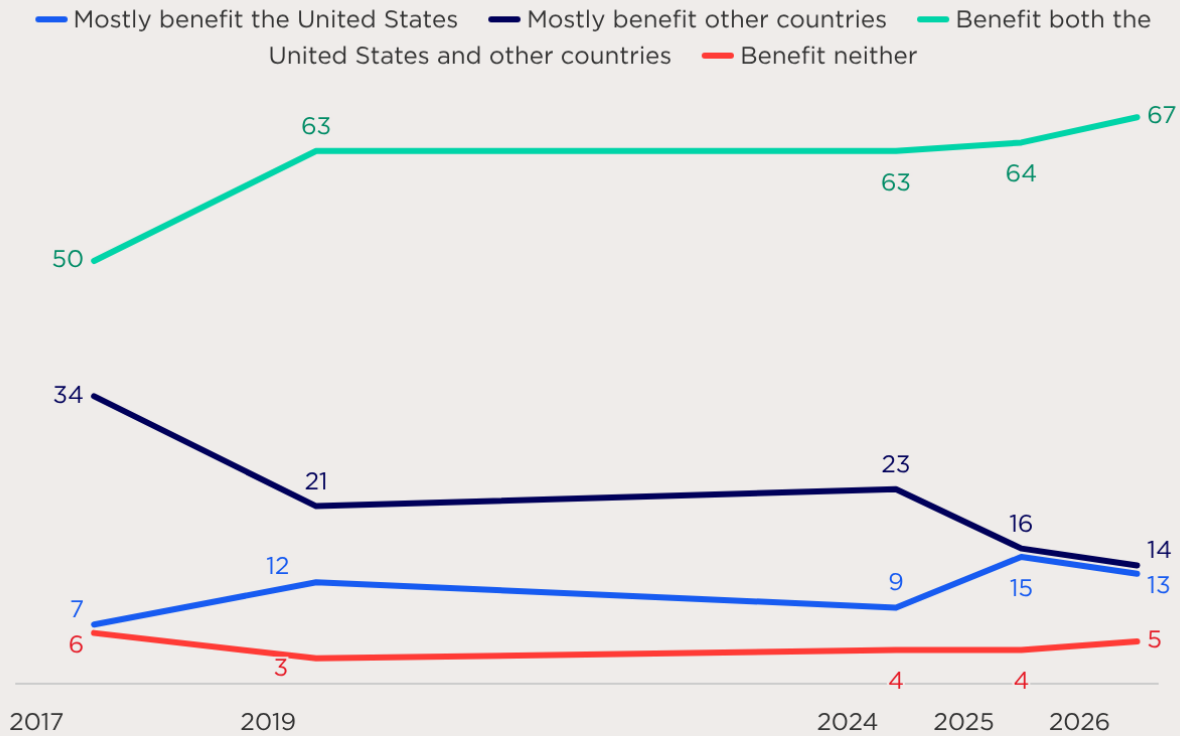


Most See Trade as Good for Both the United States and Trade Partners

While most Americans reject the administration's broad tariffs, they are more likely than ever before to see trade as mutually beneficial to partners and the United States. Over the past decade, Americans have become more likely to believe that trade between the United States and other countries is beneficial, either for both parties (67%, up from 50% in 2017) or mostly for the United States (13%, up from 7% in 2017). Far fewer now say US trade with other countries mostly benefits other countries (14%, down from 34% in 2017).

Most Say Trade Benefits US and Other Countries

Which of the following comes closest to your view on trade between the US and other countries. Does it: **Mostly benefit the US + Benefit both the US and other countries** (%)



July 10-21, 2026 | n=2,156

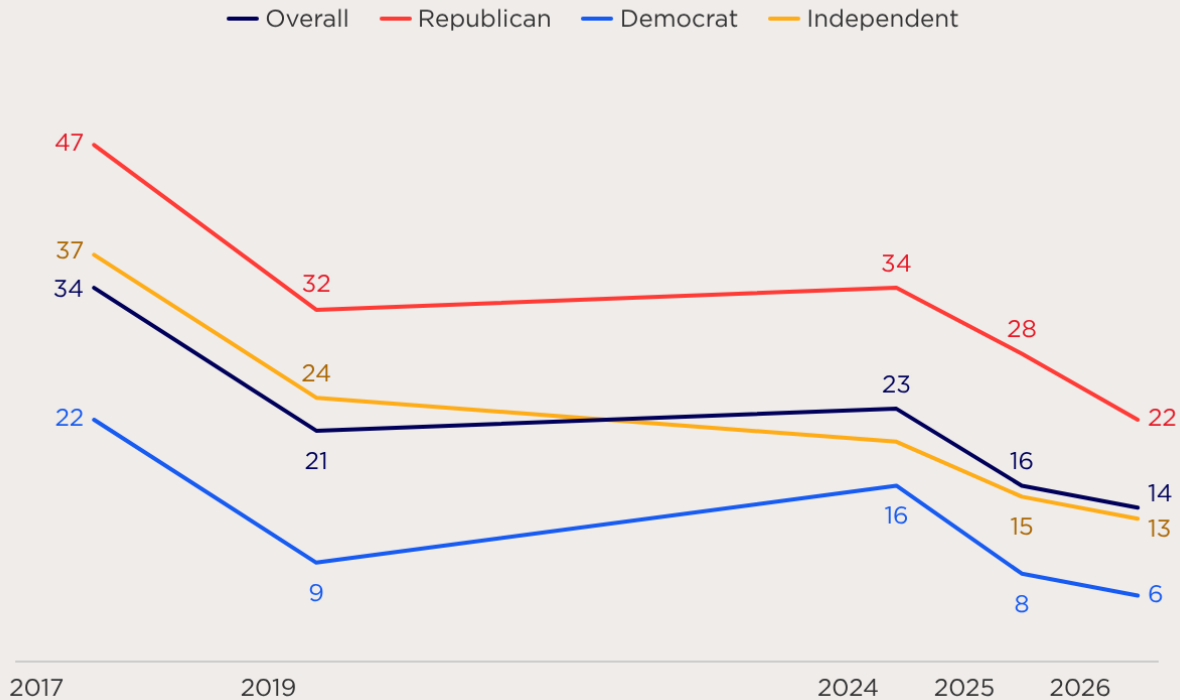
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This shift in American attitudes on trade has taken place across party lines but has been most notable among Republicans and Independents. In 2017, half of Republicans (47%) and a third of Independents (37%) viewed trade as something that mostly benefited other countries. Today, just two in 10 Republicans (22%) and 13 percent of Independents say the same. Democrats have also become even more uniformly pro-trade over that period. Today just 6 percent of Democrats view trade as mostly benefiting other countries, compared to 22 percent in 2017. This pro-trade view among Democrats is most strongly held by liberal Democrats. Three in four liberal Democrats (76%) say trade benefits both the United States and its trading partners, though moderate/conservative Democrats (63%) are not far behind.

Fewer See Trade as Mostly Benefiting Other Countries

Which of the following comes closest to your view on trade between the US and other countries. Does it: **Mostly benefit other countries** (%)



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One likely explanation for this pattern is that Trump's very prominent interventions in US trade policy have the effect of shifting all partisans' viewpoints in the same direction, but for different reasons. Republicans—many of whom support the president's tariff policies—see these changes to trade as making trade *no longer* mostly benefit other countries. At the same time, Democrats who oppose such tariffs double down on their support for international trade when it comes under attack by a president whose policies they deeply dislike.

Conclusion: While Opposing Tariffs, Americans Continue to Favor Trade

Over the past decade, Americans have broadly shifted in a more pro-trade direction, but they don't necessarily share the same views on the effectiveness of the Trump administration's direction on trade. As the Council's surveys have tracked, the pro-trade shift has been led by Democrats, especially liberal Democrats. As a result, Democrats have steadily

become more pro-trade than Republicans, reversing the longstanding positions of those parties on international economic issues. Attitudes toward engagement with China are also shifting, with more Americans favoring an approach of cooperation and engagement. Finally, if the administration's tariffs were aimed at boosting the fortunes of struggling American workers, those struggling Americans don't seem to think they are working.

Section 4: Immigration Issues Still Split the Nation

Immigration was a key election issue in all three Trump campaigns for president and a major area of policy focus in both Trump administrations. Heading into the 2024 election, a majority of Americans (59%), and a large majority of Republicans (84%), said US leaders were not paying enough attention to immigration. Half of Americans (50%)—and an overwhelming majority of Republicans (83%, an all-time high in Council polling)—saw the prospect of large numbers of immigrants and refugees coming into the United States as a critical threat facing the country.

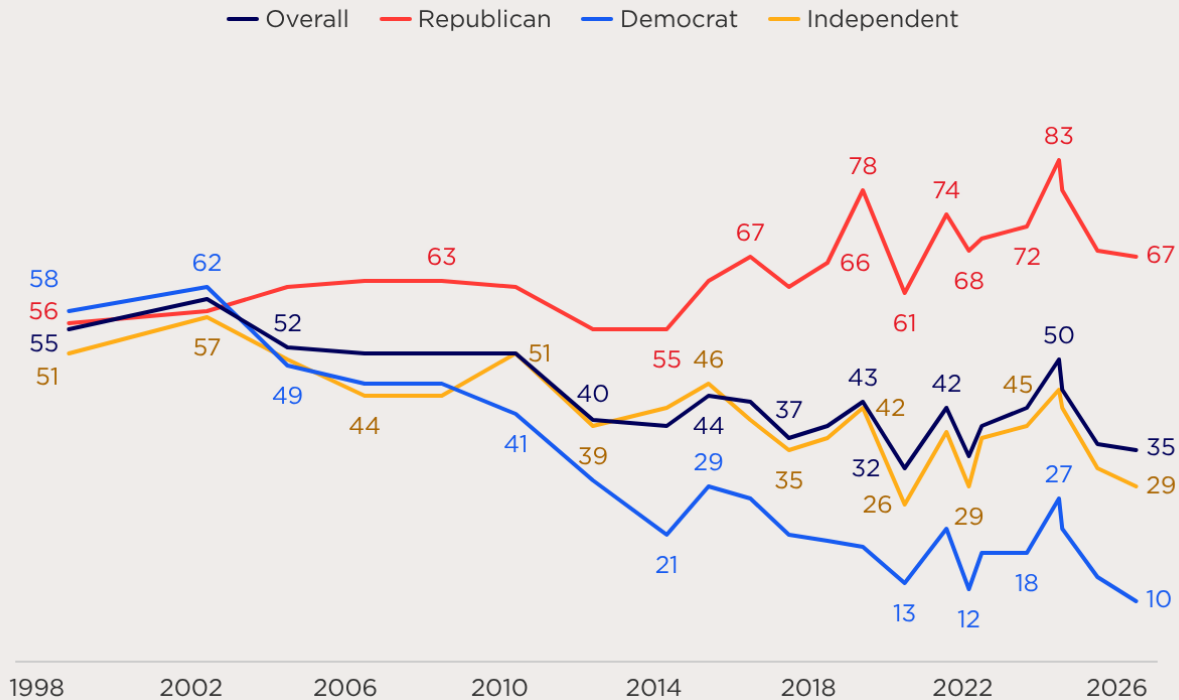
Two years later, attitudes have shifted sharply. Today, a plurality (39%) say leaders are paying *too much* attention to immigration, including a majority of Democrats (53%), a plurality of Independents (44%), and two in 10 Republicans (19%) (see Appendix Section 3). Immigration is also not a leading issue for many Americans in their midterm voting: Just 7 percent of Americans overall say it is the most important issue to their vote, with MAGA Republicans the most likely to point to it (14%).

Threat Perceptions from Immigration Drop Sharply Since 2024

Far fewer Americans see immigration as a critical threat to the country (35%, down 15 percentage points from 2024). Today, just 29 percent of Independents and a record-low 10 percent of Democrats view large-scale immigration as a threat. Yet for Republicans, the prospect of large numbers of immigrants and refugees coming into the United States is still named as a top threat facing the country (67%), consistent with their average level of concern over the past three decades.

Critical Threat: Immigrants and Refugees

Below is a list of possible threats to the vital interests of the United States in the next 10 years. For each one, please select whether you see this as a critical threat, an important but not critical threat, or not an important threat at all. **Large numbers of immigrants and refugees coming into the US** (% critical threat)



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Republicans Favor Increased Immigration Enforcement Spending; Democrats Demand Cuts

Republicans and Democrats also diverge sharply on immigration policies and federal immigration enforcement funding. Additional funding for federal immigration enforcement agencies such as Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) and Customs and Border Protection (CBP) has been a contentious issue in Congress over the past year, with funding held up several months after federal officers shot and killed [Alex Pretti](#) and [Renee Good](#) in Minneapolis.

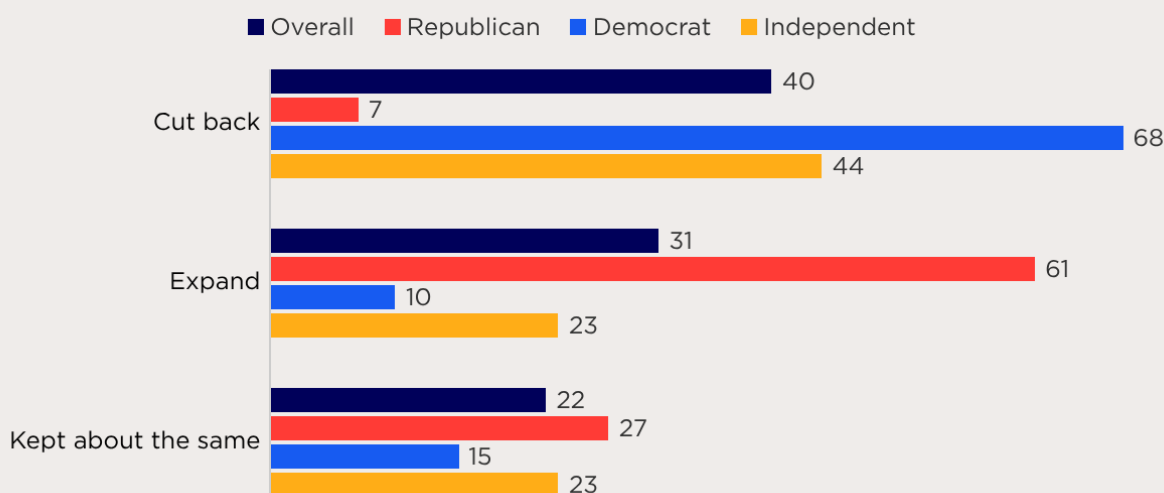
Their deaths, and the wider federal campaigns against immigrants and protesters in cities around the country, have driven approval of Trump's handling of immigration sharply down over his second term in office. Per an [August 2026 Economist/YouGov poll](#), a majority (53%) disapprove of Trump's

handling of immigration (a net -13 percentage points, a shift of 24 points from February 2025).

Following the administration's extensive anti-immigrant enforcement efforts, a plurality of Americans (40%, up from 30% in 2020) say funding for that enforcement should be cut back. That includes two-thirds of Democrats (68%, up from 49%) and a plurality of Independents (44%, up from 28%)—but just 7 percent of Republicans (similar to 9% in 2020). Instead, six in 10 Republicans (61%) favor expanding federal spending on immigration enforcement, a position shared by 23 percent of Independents and just 10 percent of Democrats.

Views on Immigration Enforcement

*Below is a list of present federal government programs. For each, please select whether you feel it should be expanded, cut back, or kept about the same. **Immigration enforcement** (%)*



July 10-21, 2026 | n=1,073

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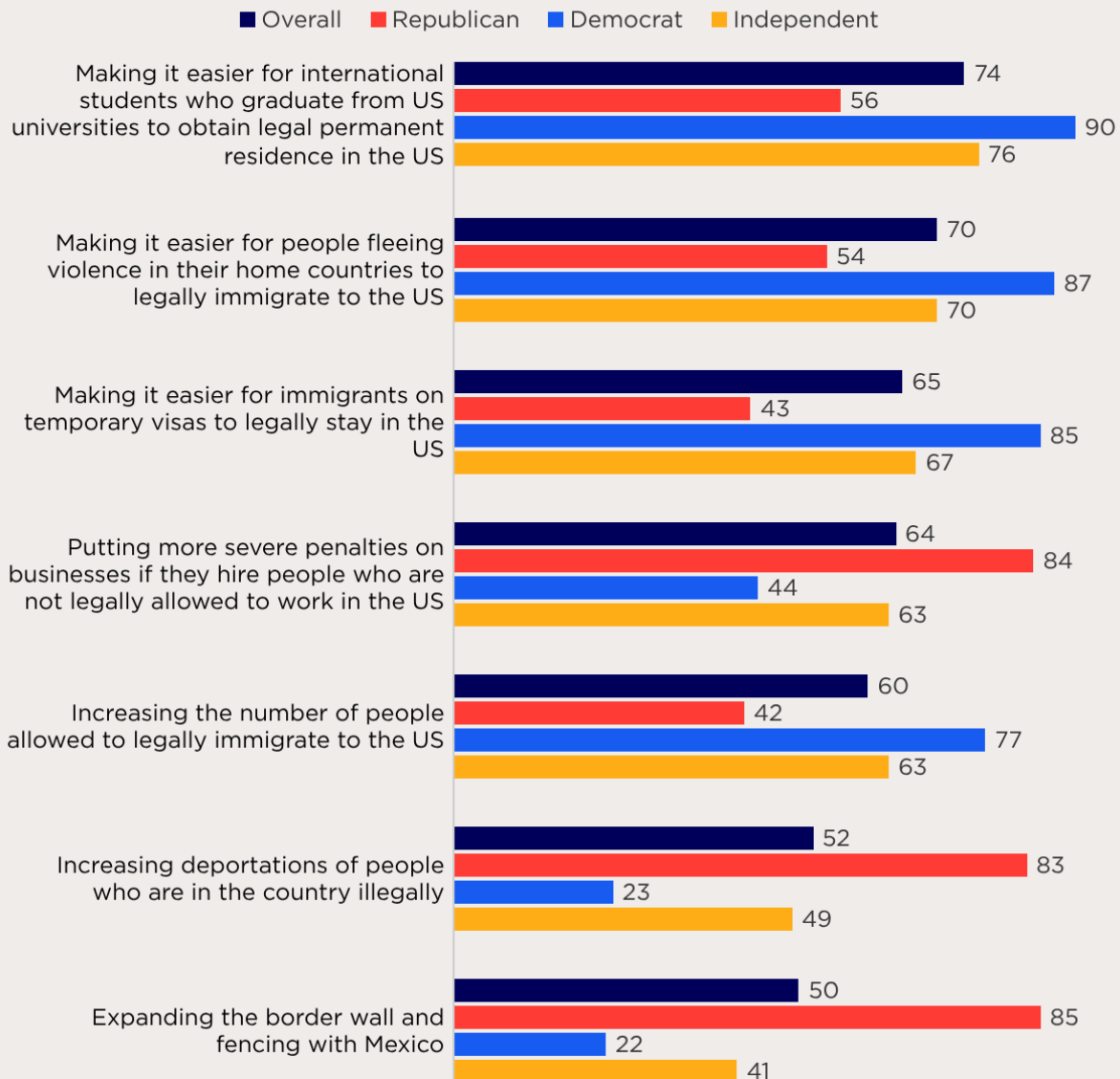


In addition to seeking greater funding for immigration enforcement, Republicans are more likely to favor enforcement-focused policies aimed at restricting immigration and enforcing existing immigration laws. This includes expanding the border wall and fencing with Mexico (85%), increasing penalties on businesses for employing people without legal work authorization (84%), and increasing deportations of people who are in the country illegally (83%). By contrast, Democrats are more likely to favor policies that allow people to come to the United States to live and work legally. Three in four Democrats (77%) want to increase the number of people

allowed to legally immigrate to the United States, and they support policies that would achieve that aim, such as making it easier for immigrants on temporary visas to legally stay in the country (85%).

Views on Immigration Policies

Thinking about the issue of immigration, would you support or oppose the following policies? (% strongly + somewhat support)



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Despite broad divisions on immigration issues, there are some areas of overlap: Majorities of Republicans, as well as at least seven in 10 Independents and nearly nine in 10 Democrats, support making it easier for international students to obtain legal permanent residence after graduating from a US university and for people fleeing violence in their home countries to legally immigrate to the United States.

Conclusion: Dramatically Different Visions for US Immigration Policies

The midterm elections will take place in a significantly different immigration environment than those in the recent past. Perceptions of immigration as a threat have fallen notably from the last national election in 2024. Moreover, the American public has turned negative on the Trump administration's handling of immigration issues over the past two years. Council polling from April 2026 finds that most Americans disagree with the administration's policies on refugee admission and how to handle undocumented immigrants living in the United States.

The potential swing of congressional control matters for immigration policy because the two parties' bases hold such dramatically different opinions on those policies. The partisans also hold distinctly different views on immigration enforcement funding, which—should Democrats win control of one or both chambers of Congress—could lead to efforts to claw back unspent funds, potentially setting up another budgetary showdown in the next Congress.

Section 5: Amid Chaos, Support for Global Engagement Persists

Previous Chicago Council Surveys show that when an administration pursues an active foreign policy agenda, the public tends to favor taking a step back from international engagement. Such was the case in 2023, when the Council's polling found declining support for an active role abroad—particularly among Republicans—amid the Biden administration's strong support for Ukraine. Conversely, when an administration neglects international affairs, the public tends to be more enthusiastic advocates of internationalism. This was the case in 2018 with the first Trump administration's "America First" push, subsequent clashes with US allies, and withdrawals from international agreements such as the Paris Agreement and the Iran nuclear deal.

Yet this year, despite the breadth of the Trump administration's foreign policies and their implications for domestic economic life, Americans continue

to back an active role for the United States in world affairs—and Republicans do so at a higher rate than they have in recent surveys. While still representing a majority view among Democrats, their endorsement of an active US international role has declined over the past year, perhaps reflecting dissatisfaction with the current administration’s approach toward the rest of the world.

Majority of Americans Continue to Support Active US Role Abroad

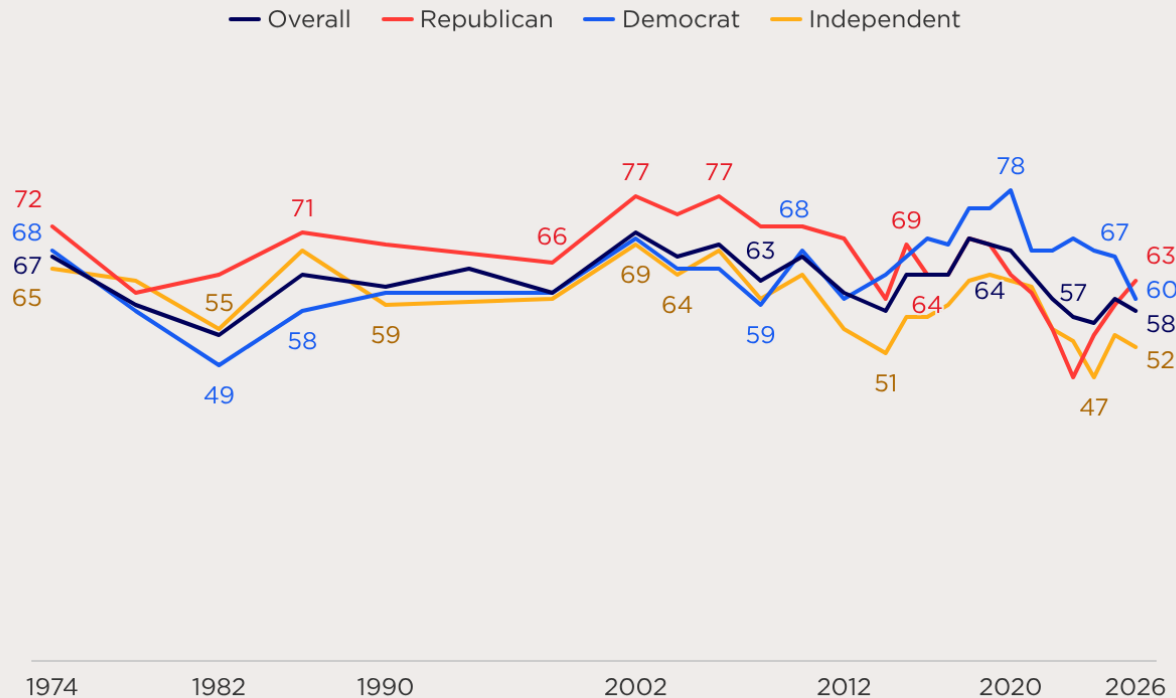
Given most Americans’ pessimistic views about the war with Iran, the state of the economy, and the direction of the country (66% say it is on [the wrong track](#)), it might be expected that the US public would prefer the United States pull back from world affairs at a rate higher than previous surveys.

Yet nearly six in 10 Americans (58%) continue to say the United States should play an active part in world affairs, similar to views over the last four years. In fact, for the first time since 2015, GOP supporters (63%, up from 59% in 2025) are as likely as Democrats (60%, down from 67%) to favor an active US global role.

The greatest percentage-point difference between Republicans and Democrats on this question occurred in 2023, when the gap between them was 23 points. Today, that gap has narrowed to just 3 points. The lower-than-usual Democratic response to the question about the US role likely reflects dissatisfaction with the president’s foreign policies and actions, including [the war in Iran](#), [tariffs](#), [Venezuela](#), and the [unilateral decision-making](#) process the administration has employed at the expense of relations with US allies.

Active US Role in World Affairs

Do you think it will be best for the future of the country if we take an active part in world affairs or if we stay out of world affairs? (% active part)



July 10-21, 2026 | n=2,156

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While some prominent [MAGA or Republican influencers](#) pan US international engagements and interventions abroad, the idea that everyday MAGA Republicans tend toward isolationism is a myth. Perhaps reflecting their confidence in the current administration, MAGA Republicans (66%) are more likely than non-MAGA Republicans (58%) to favor an active role for the United States.

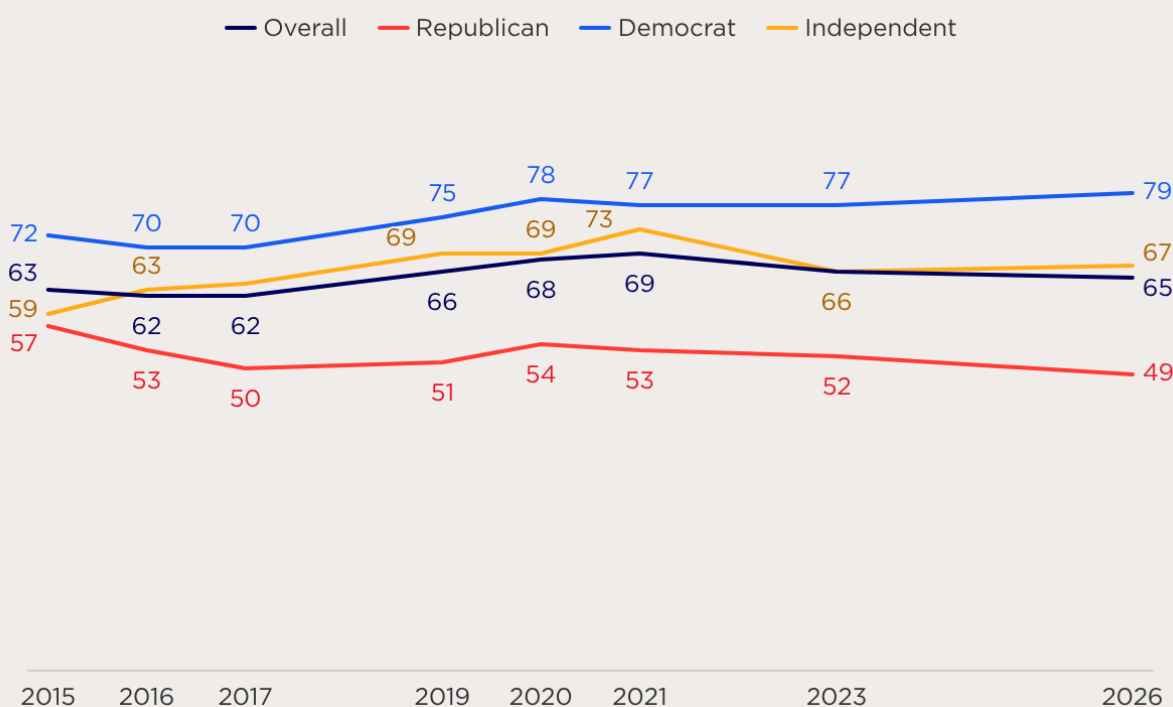
Democrats are somewhat more internally divided on the US role abroad, with two-thirds of liberal Democrats (67%) supporting an active part in the world compared to half of moderate/conservative Democrats (49%; an equal proportion say stay out). A bare majority of Independents favor an active role (52%, similar to their inclinations over the past four years). In surveys from 2022 going back to 1974, solid majorities of Independents had mostly expressed a preference for a more active role.

Most Americans Still Want a Shared Leadership Role

When asked what kind of leadership role the United States should play in the world—whether they prefer the United States to be the dominant leader, to share leadership, or to play no leadership role at all—most Americans choose shared leadership (65%). Support for a shared leadership role has been remarkably steady over the past decade, with between 62 and 69 percent of Americans favoring such a role for the country over that time.

US Support for Shared Leadership Role

*What kind of leadership role should the United States play in the world? Should it be the dominant leader, or should it play a shared leadership role, or should it not play any leadership role? **Shared leadership role** (%)*



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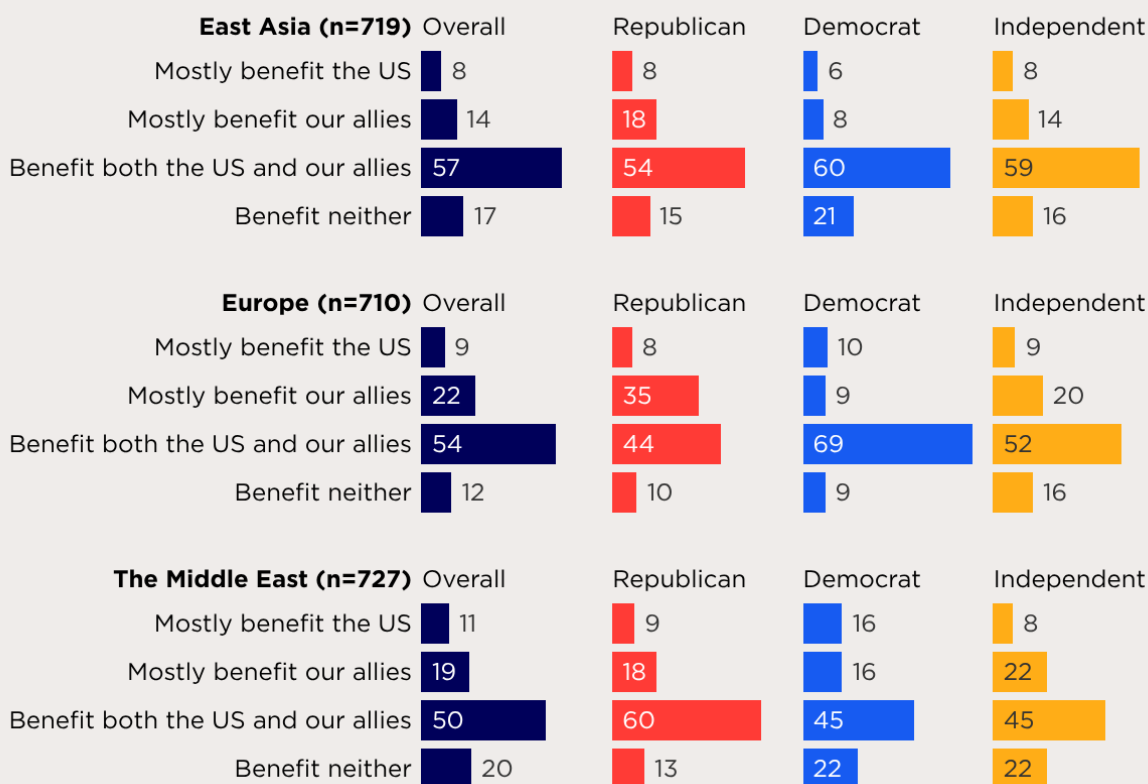
However, there are partisan differences. Eight in 10 Democrats (79%) and two-thirds of Independents (67%) endorse a shared role. Republicans are nearly as likely to say the United States should share leadership (49%) as to say it should play a dominant role (45% vs. 19% Independents and 11% Democrats, a record low). Republican support for a dominant leadership role is highest among MAGA Republicans (57%, vs. 25% of non-MAGA Republicans). By contrast, Democrats in both the liberal and

moderate/conservative wings of the party broadly favor a shared leadership role for the country (82% and 74%, respectively).

Accompanying the majority view that the United States should share global leadership, Americans continue to view US alliances as beneficial for the country. About two-thirds of Americans believe that US alliances in Europe (63%), East Asia (65%), and the Middle East (61%) either mostly benefit the United States or benefit both the United States and US allies. These overall readings are generally consistent with opinion since the question was first asked in 2017.

Who Benefits from US Security Alliances?

Which of the following comes closest to your view on US security alliances in _____. Do they: (%)



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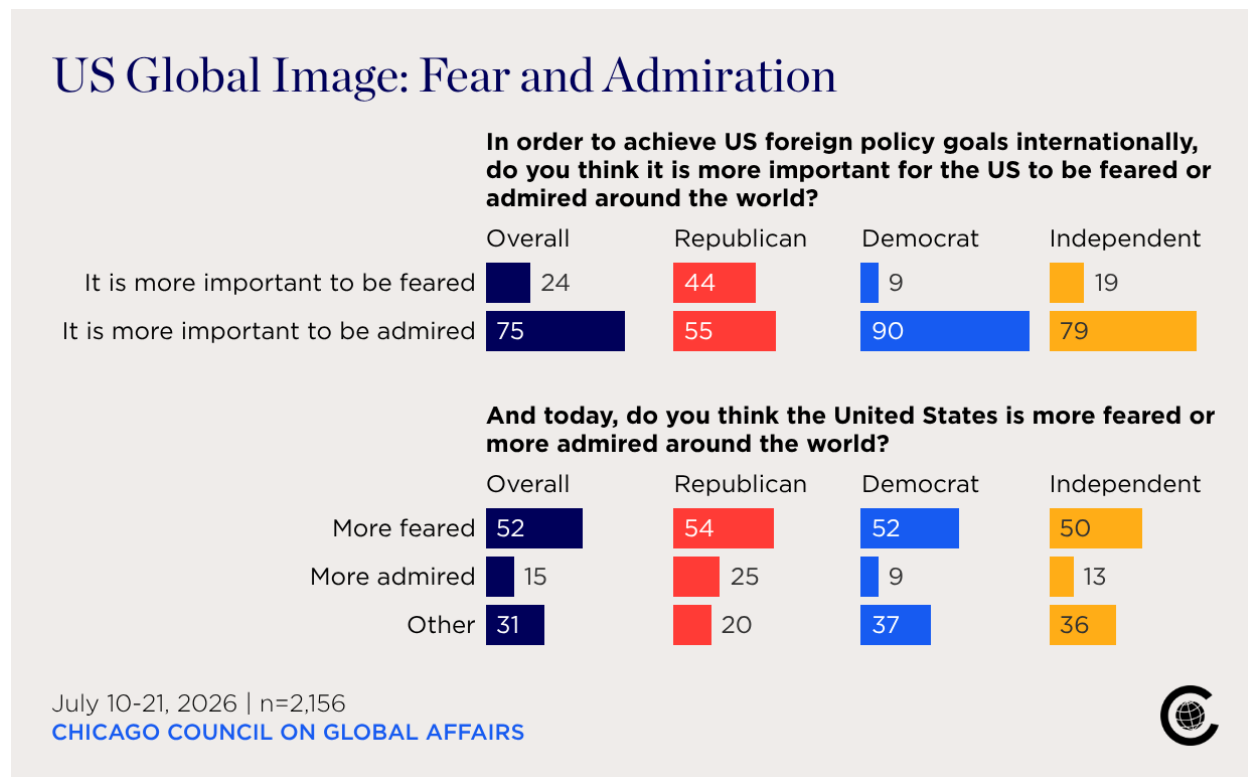
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Americans' majority support for alliances and shared leadership stands in sharp contrast to their understanding of how the United States is viewed today. In other words, many Americans seem to think the United States has lost some of its soft power. More than three times as many Americans now

say the United States is more feared (52%) than admired (15%) around the world. When the Council last asked this question in 2018, during Trump's first term, views were more closely divided, with twice as many believing the United States was feared (39%) than admired (20%).

Most importantly, this is not the position Americans want to be in. Three in four (75%) say it is more important to be admired around the world than feared, a view expressed by majorities across party lines.



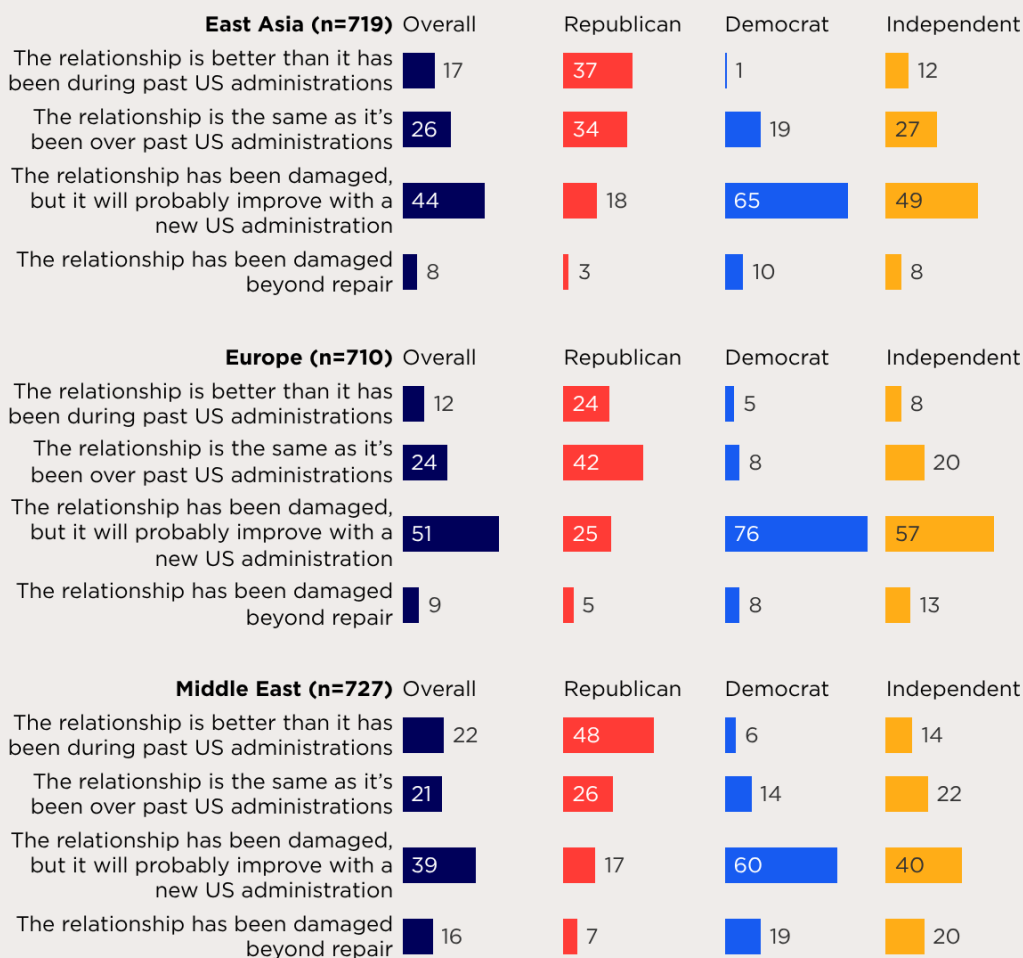
A Temporary Problem? Americans See Allies Coming Back Home

Despite this, Americans don't see the situation as irrevocably damaged. When asked about US relationships with Europe (51%), East Asia (44%), and the Middle East (39%), pluralities or majorities of Americans say US relationships have been damaged but will improve with a new administration. Smaller minorities believe US relationships with those regions are the same as in past administrations (26% East Asia, 24% Europe, 21% Middle East), or that relations are better now than in the past (22% Middle East, 17% East Asia, 12% Europe). The least common response across all three regions: that the relationship has been damaged beyond repair (16% Middle East, 9% Europe, 8% East Asia). In a pattern evident across this study, Republicans are more positive and tend to think relations are the same as they ever were, while

Democrats and Independents think they've been damaged but will improve with a change in the Oval Office.

US Relationships around the World

Which of the following best reflects your view about current relations between the United States and ____?



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Conclusion: A Difference of Method Rather than Purpose

While Americans have not retreated into isolationism and still favor active US international involvement, they have different visions of the best way for the United States to project its influence.

Republicans are fairly divided on whether shared leadership or dominant US leadership is the best approach, though a majority of MAGA Republicans

prefer dominant US leadership. Republicans are also divided on whether the United States should aspire to being admired internationally or feared, as most believe it is today. Most Republicans consider international trade beneficial for the country, but many also support some protectionist policies, such as Trump's tariffs. Immigration and the Iranian nuclear program are perceived by Republicans as the most critical threats facing the United States, and in turn, they support the war in Iran, continued assistance to Israel, maintaining or increasing US defense spending, and increasing funding for immigration enforcement.

Democrats (along with Independents) embrace a shared leadership role for the United States, view international trade as beneficial, and oppose the broad tariffs the administration has levied against other countries—including on China. They see the Iran war as a waste of US resources and support cuts to aid to Israel and US defense spending writ large. They believe the United States is feared abroad when they would rather it be admired. And they are concerned that the current administration has damaged critical US alliances around the world—alliances which they see as mutually beneficial.

Taken together, these results show that Americans want the United States to remain involved in the world but through different means and for different purposes.

Conclusion

As midterm elections approach, Democrats, Republicans, and Independents have inflation and economic concerns foremost in their minds. Financial worries are usually part of the equation when voters cast their ballots, but this year, most Democrats and Independents—and some Republicans—see a link between current economic conditions and the administration's foreign policy initiatives. Overall majorities believe the economic and military policies currently in place have damaged the US economy, their own standard of living, the US reputation worldwide, US relationships with allies, and US national security.

Democrats and Independents link the high costs of living at home with the US war with Iran and the Trump administration's tariff regime. They feel that both of these projects have negatively impacted the country on a series of dimensions as well as their own household budgets. On the domestic front, they think Trump's immigration policies have gone too far and oppose increased funding for continuing immigration enforcement.

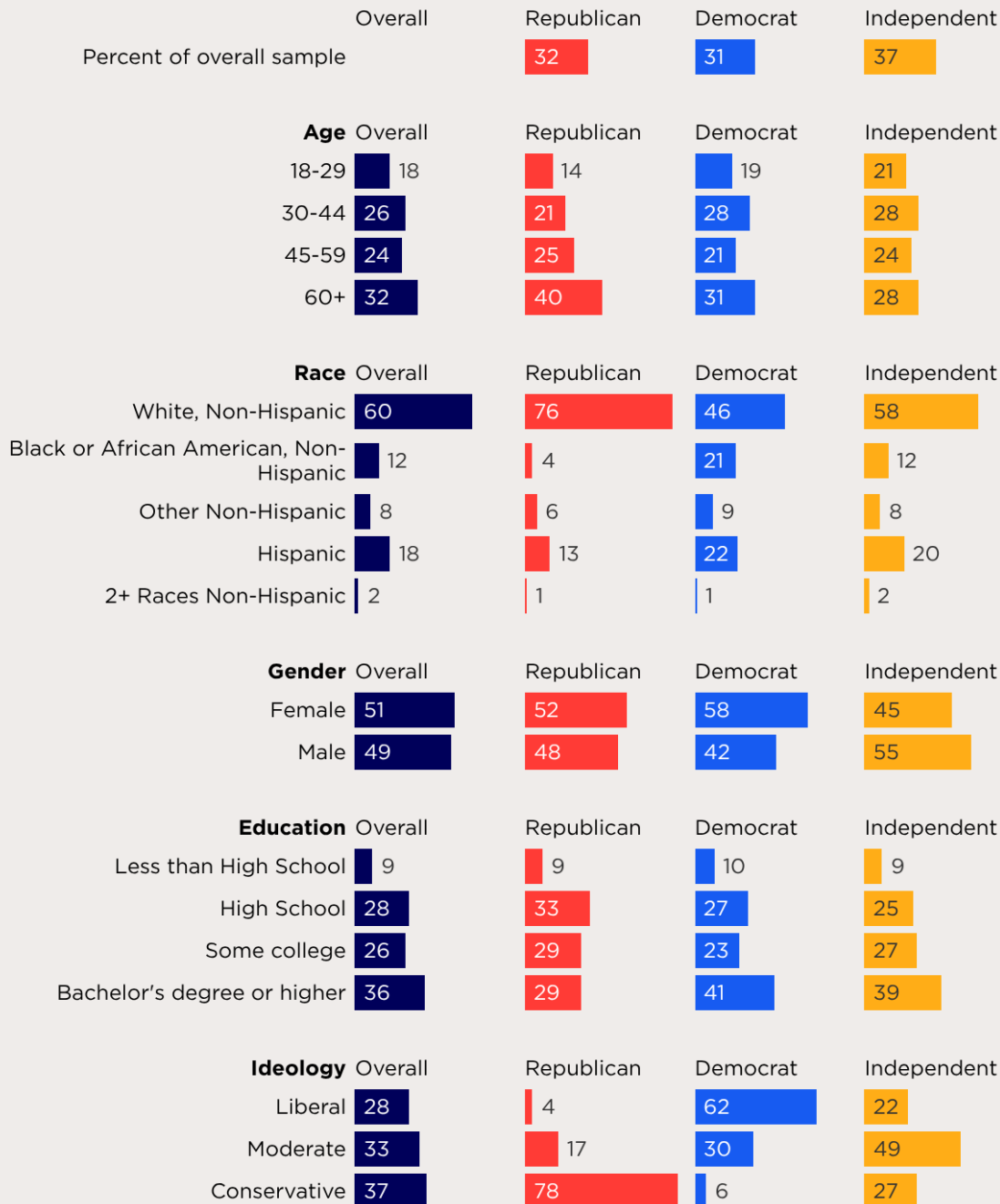
Republicans stand alone in their assessment that the war in Iran has been worth fighting, likely driven by their confidence in the administration and sense of threat from Iran's nuclear program. They also differ from other partisans in their concerns about immigration and their support for immigration enforcement and deportation. Yet Republicans are not unanimous in their assessments of the administration's other policies. Tariffs, in particular, receive mixed reviews from everyday Republicans, with many seeing them as a cause of higher costs of living at home—an issue that is front and center for all Americans this November.

The distinct split in policy preferences between partisans may have political impact following the midterm elections, should Republicans lose their grip on one or both chambers of Congress. A Democratic House, or Congress, would likely attempt to restrain the administration on tariff and trade policy, immigration enforcement funding, and even potentially on military aid to Israel. Moreover, Democrats in Congress who are considering running for president in 2028 will cast those votes with one eye on the party base. That incentivizes lawmakers to take votes of opposition to the administration and in line with the base's broader set of priorities. As the 2026 Chicago Council Survey shows, these include a strong focus on corruption and democratic resilience alongside pro-immigration, pro-trade, and pro-internationalism attitudes.

The upshot of these results is that while Americans of various political affiliations have different ideas on the best strategies for optimizing US foreign policy goals, they are united in the view that the United States must remain engaged in the world. Both MAGA and non-MAGA Republicans, liberal and moderate Democrats, and left-leaning and right-leaning Independents recognize the value of active US participation in the world. Majorities across the board endorse American alliances in Europe, Asia, and the Middle East, and the highest levels yet say that free trade benefits both the United States and its trading partners. Ironically, by disrupting some of the stability in traditional US foreign policy stances, the Trump administration's policies may have sharpened Americans' understanding of the connections between US foreign policy and their daily lives.

About the Survey Sample

About the 2026 Chicago Council Survey Sample



July 10-21, 2026 | n=2,156

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Methodology

This analysis is based on data from the 2026 Chicago Council Survey of the American public on foreign policy, a project of the Lester Crown Center on US Foreign Policy. This work was made possible through the generous support of the Crown Family, the Dr. Scholl Foundation, and the Observer Research Foundation America.

The 2026 Chicago Council Survey was conducted July 10–21, 2026, by Ipsos using its large-scale, nationwide, online research panel (KnowledgePanel) in English and Spanish among a weighted national sample adults 18 or older living in all 50 US states and the District of Columbia. The margin of sampling error for the full sample is ± 2.2 percentage points, including a design effect of 1.04.

The survey was fielded among a total of 3,381 respondents, of whom 2,304 completed the survey, a completion rate of 68.1 percent. Of those 2,304 completions, 2,156 were determined to be valid cases for inclusion in the final analysis, with 148 cases excluded for failing one of the following three criteria:

1. **Speedsters:** Respondents who completed the survey in eight minutes or less.
 - Total cases removed: n=112
2. **Refused 50 percent or more of questions:** Respondents who refused to answer 50 percent or more of the eligible survey questions.
 - Total cases removed: n=51; n=29 unique to criteria group
3. **Data Check Score:** Respondents who failed two or three of the quality checks implemented (see criteria below).
 - Total cases removed: n=9; n=7 unique to criteria group
 - 1) Did not accurately input a “4”, refused, or skipped Question Q3_1 in the survey, which was designed to make sure respondents were paying attention to the survey. (“In order to make sure that your browser is working correctly, please select number 4 from the below list.”).
 - Total cases failing check: n=85
 - 2) Refused one or more full battery of five attributes or more (Q131, Q5, Q144, Q25, Q26, Q30, Q45, Q191G, QIRAN26, Q250, QINDIA1, Q407)
 - Total cases failing check: n= 286

- 3) Respondents who straight-lined their responses to a battery of grid questions (Q131, Q5, Q144, Q407).
- Total cases failing check: n=513

The data were weighted to adjust for gender by age, race and ethnicity, education, census region by metropolitan status, household income, and language dominance. The demographic benchmarks came from the 2025 March supplement of the US Census Bureau's Current Population Survey (CPS). Additionally, the language-dominance benchmark was obtained from the 2024 American Community Survey (ACS).

- Gender (Male, Female) by Age (18-29, 30-44, 45-59, and 60+)
- Race/Hispanic Ethnicity (White Non-Hispanic, Black Non-Hispanic, Other Non-Hispanic, Hispanic, 2+ Races Non-Hispanic)
- Education (Less than High School, High School, Some College, Bachelor's Degree or Higher)
- Census Region (Northeast, Midwest, South, West) by Metropolitan Status (Metro, Non-Metro)
- Household Income (Under \$25,000, \$25,000-\$49,999, \$50,000-\$74,999, \$75,000-\$99,999, \$100,000-\$149,999, \$150,000+)
- Language Dominance (English-Dominant Hispanic, Bilingual Hispanic, Spanish-Dominant Hispanic, Non-Hispanic)

Partisan identification is based on how respondents answered a standard partisan self-identification question: "Generally speaking, do you think of yourself as a Republican, a Democrat, an Independent, or what?"

To examine differences within the Republican and Democratic parties, we further divide Republicans and Democrats into subgroups.

Republicans are divided into MAGA Republicans (the 61% of Republicans who also say they are part of the Make America Great Again, or MAGA, movement) and non-MAGA Republicans (the 37% of Republicans who say they are not part of the MAGA movement).

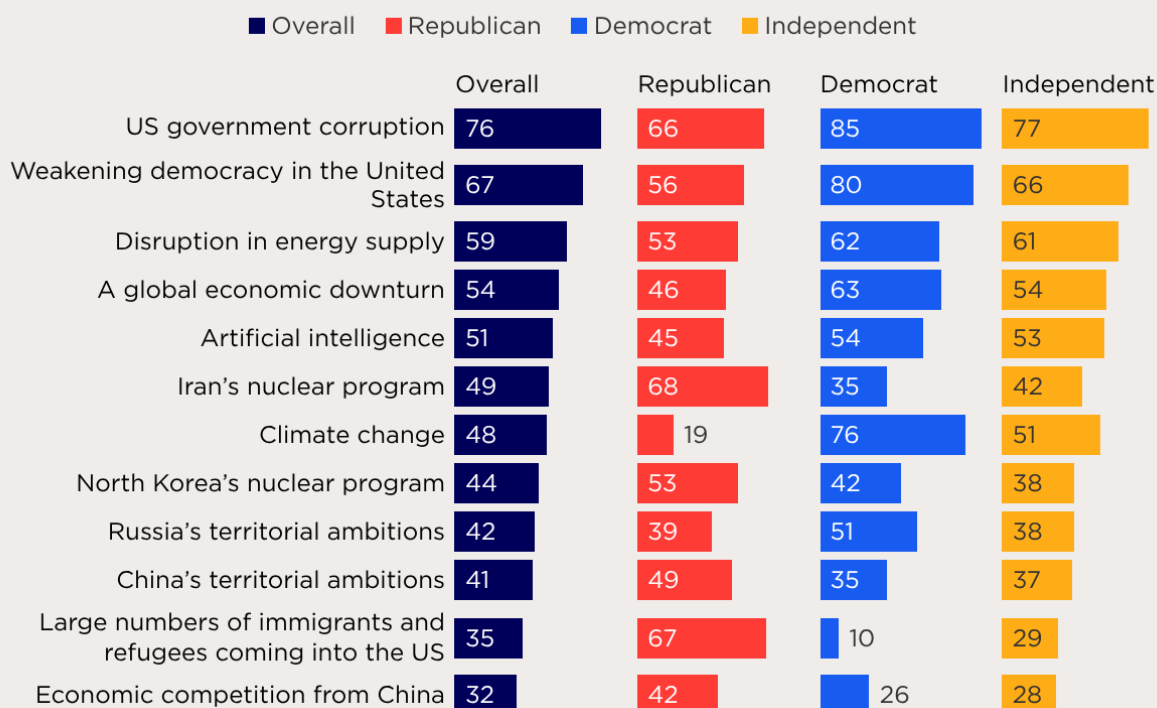
Democrats are divided into ideological groups: 62 percent of Democrats identify as liberal to some degree (13% extremely liberal, 33% liberal, 17% slightly liberal), while 37 percent of Democrats identify as moderate (30%) or conservative to some degree (7%).

Appendix

Appendix Section 1. Critical Threats

Critical Threats to the United States

Below is a list of possible threats to the vital interests of the United States in the next 10 years. For each one, please select whether you see this as a critical threat, an important but not critical threat, or not an important threat at all. (% critical threat)



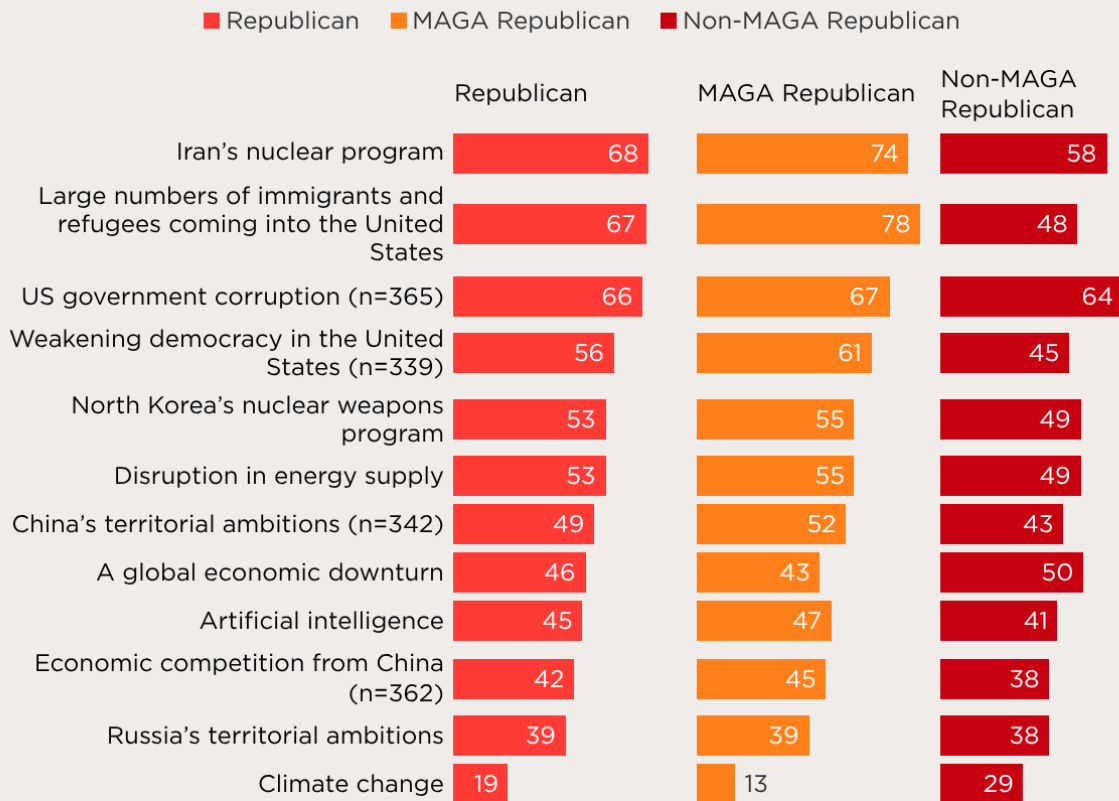
July 10-21, 2026 | n=2,156

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Critical Threats: MAGA and non-MAGA Republicans

Below is a list of possible threats to the vital interests of the United States in the next 10 years. For each one, please select whether you see this as a critical threat, an important but not critical threat, or not an important threat at all: (% critical threat)



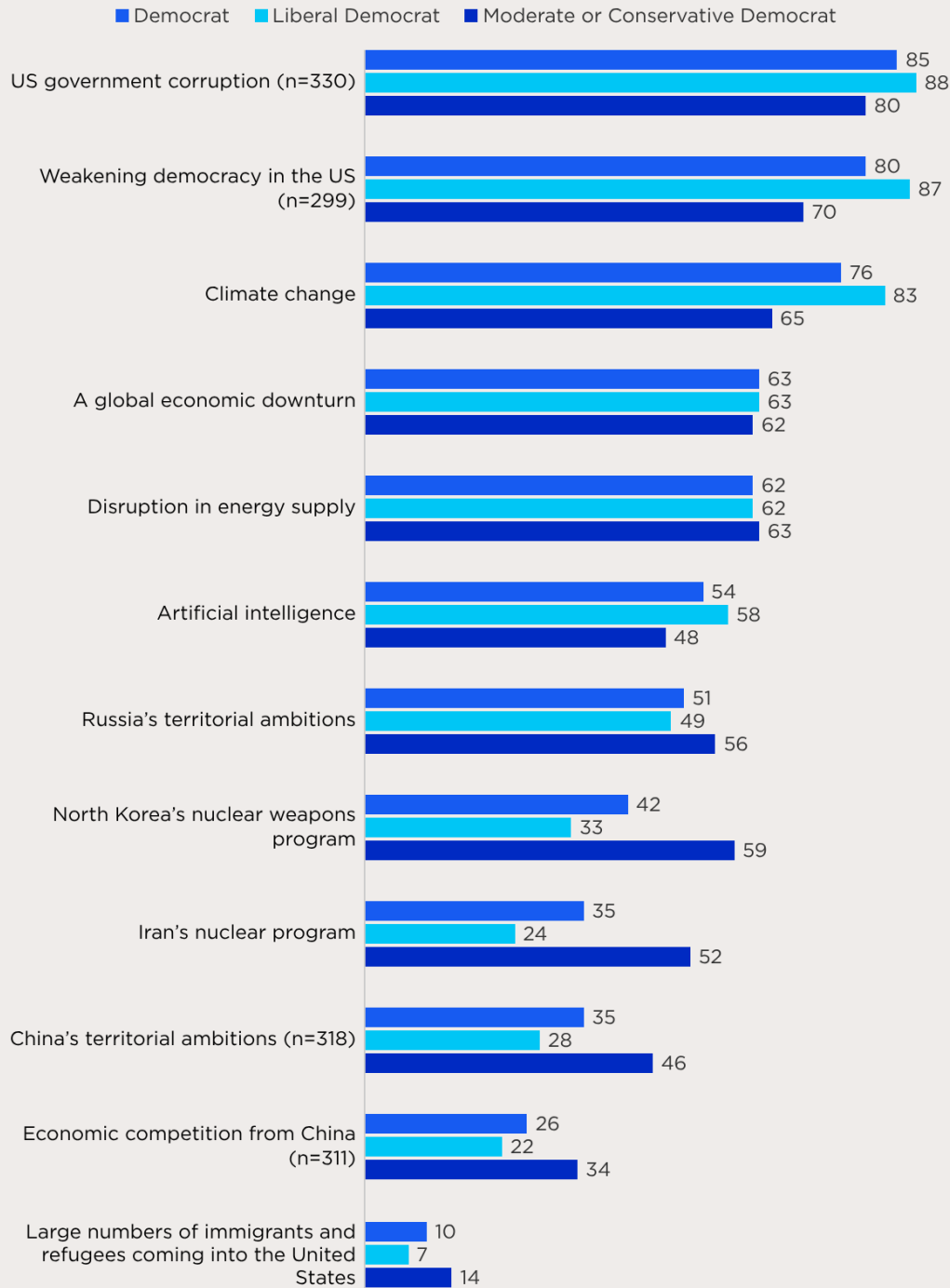
July 10-21, 2026 | n=704

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Critical Threats: Liberal and Moderate Democrats

Below is a list of possible threats to the vital interests of the United States in the next 10 years. For each one, please select whether you see this as a critical threat, an important but not critical threat, or not an important threat at all: (% critical threat)



July 10-21, 2026 | n=629

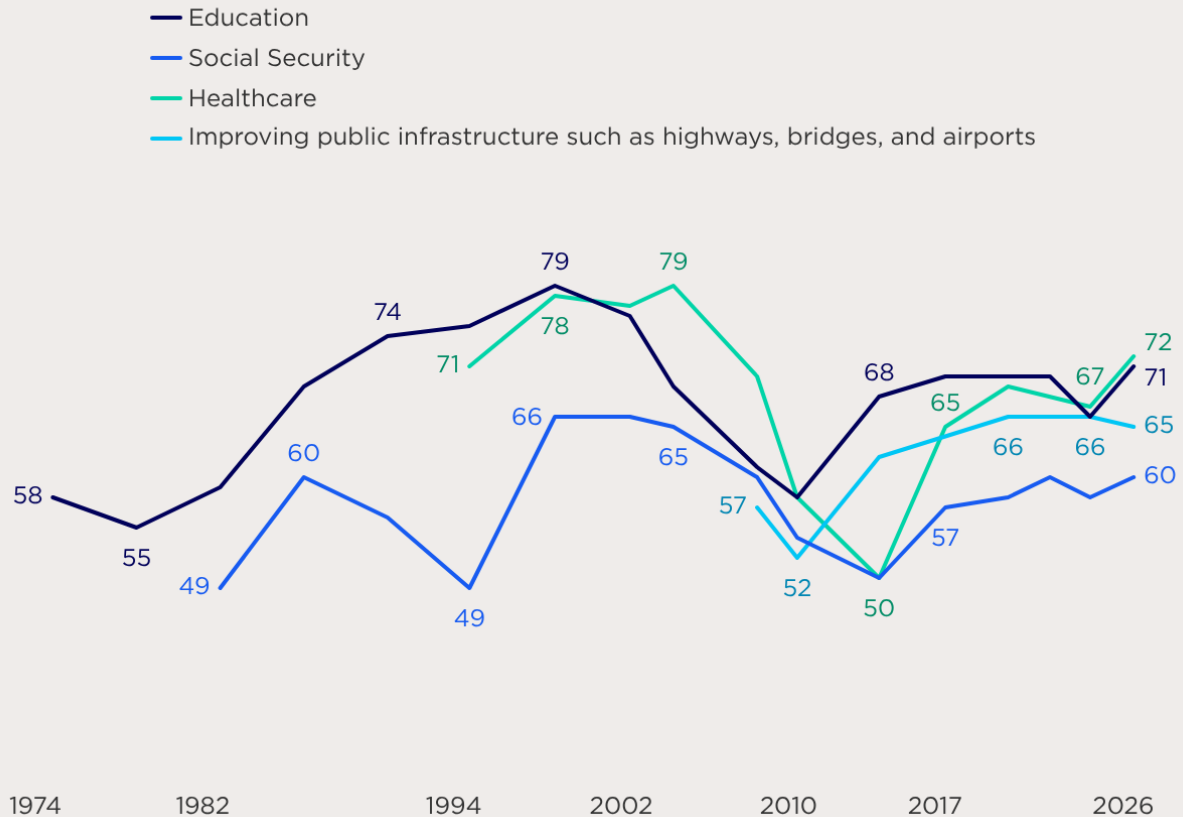
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Appendix Section 2. Federal Government Spending

Support for Expanded Federal Government Spending

Below is a list of present federal government programs. For each, please select whether you feel it should be expanded, cut back, or kept about the same. (% expanded)



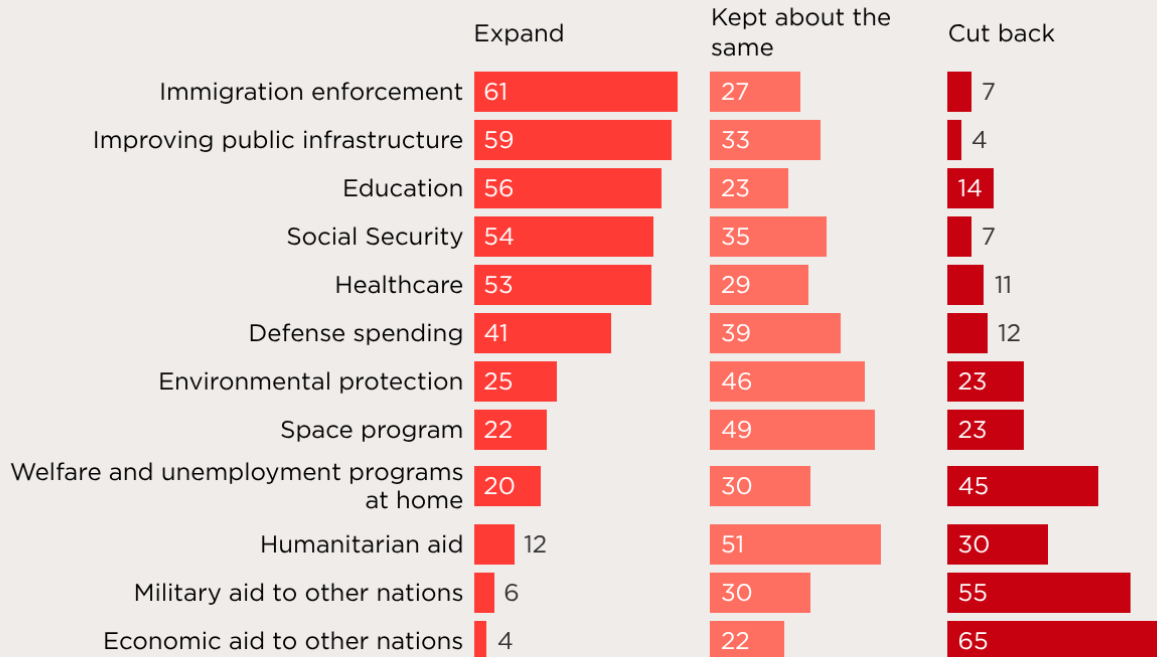
July 10-21, 2026 | n=1,073

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Republican Views on Federal Spending

Below is a list of present federal government programs. For each, please select whether you feel it should be expanded, cut back, or kept about the same. (%)



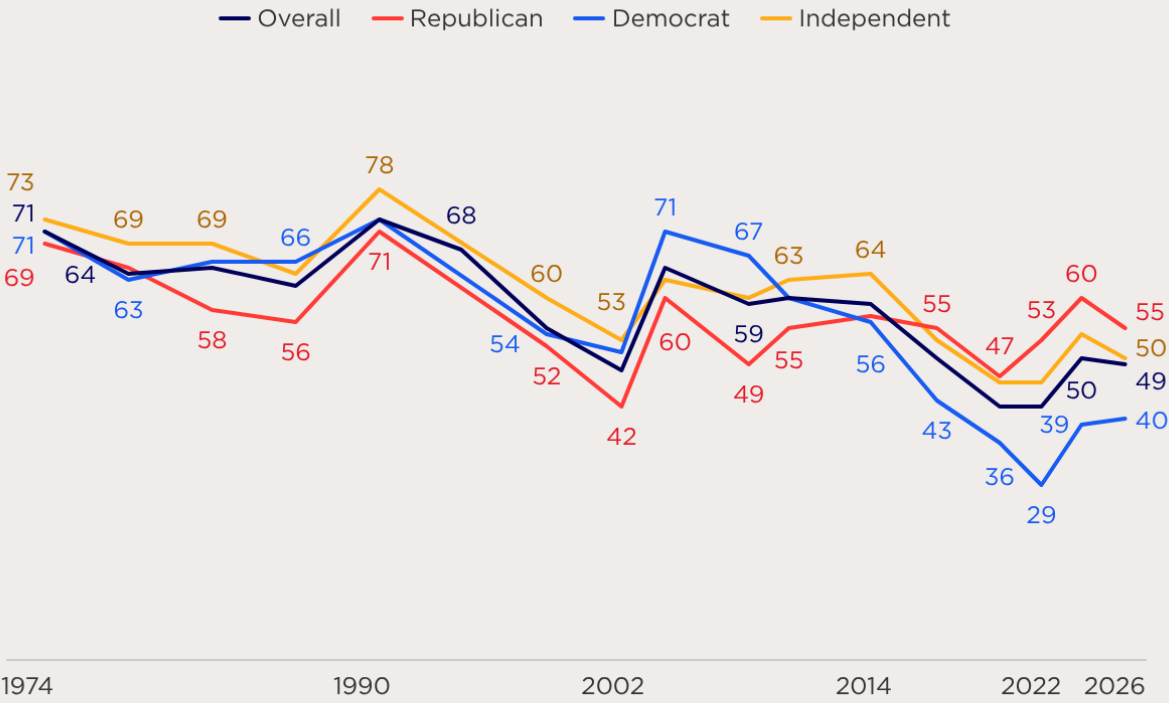
July 10-21, 2026 | n=345

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Support for Military Aid Cuts

Below is a list of present federal government programs. For each, please select whether you feel it should be expanded, cut back, or kept about the same. **Military aid to other nations** (% cut back)



July 10-21, 2026 | n=1,073
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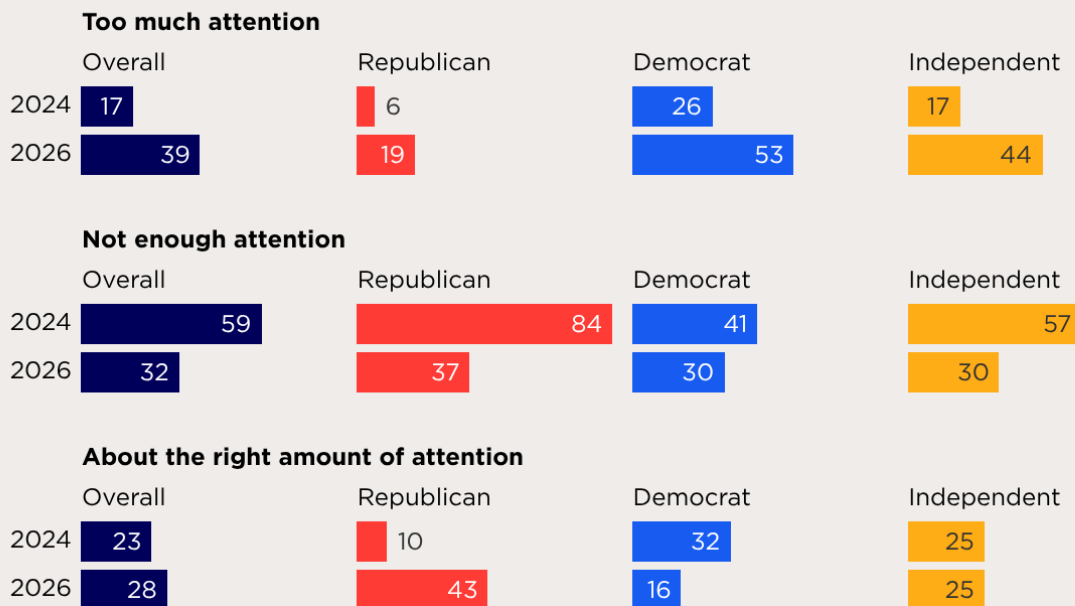


Appendix Section 3. Immigration

US Leaders' Attention on Immigration

*Do you think US leaders are giving each of the following issues too much attention, not enough attention, or about the right amount of attention? **Immigration** (%)*

■ Overall ■ Republican ■ Democrat ■ Independent



July 10-21, 2026 | n=2,156

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Related Chicago Council Survey Analysis

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