ANGUS REID USA

7-in-10 say Trump has worsened cost of living since taking office; half say they're worse off financially this year than last

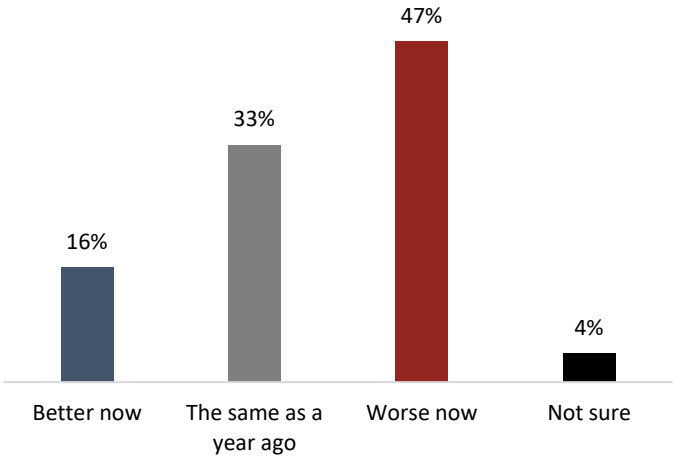
Non-MAGA Republicans critical of President on inflation, debt, political division, and health care

October 8, 2026 – President Donald Trump's return to the White House was partially driven by a backlash to his predecessor Joe Biden's failure to meaningful address inflation. And new data from Angus Reid USA shows that the same issue could change the course of Trump's second term.

Americans' concern over the high cost of living outpaces all other issues at the moment. Approaching two-thirds (63%) of Americans say it is one of their top issues, far higher than second-place health care (32%), and third-place ethics (26%). This comes as half (47%) of Americans say they are in worse position financially than they were a year ago.

If that continues to be the case as Americans head to the polls for the midterms, Republicans have a steep challenge to convince them that they can address it by maintaining control of both the House and the Senate. Seven-in-ten (71%) Americans believe the Trump administration has worsened inflation since he returned to office. That includes two-in-five (42%) self-identified Republicans.

Do you think you are financially better off or worse off than you were a year ago?
(All respondents, n=1,207)



METHODOLOGY:

Angus Reid USA conducted an online survey from September 19 - 25, 2026 among a representative randomized sample of 1,205 American adults who are members of Angus Reid Forum USA. For comparison purposes only, a probability sample of this size would carry a margin of error of +/- 2.5 percentage points, 19 times out of 20. Discrepancies in or between totals are due to rounding. The survey was self-commissioned and paid for by Angus Reid USA. Detailed tables are found at the end of this release.

The Democrats hold an advantage in generic Congressional vote intention according to Angus Reid USA's latest data. That perhaps is driven by some Republican doubt that Trump has delivered on his campaign promises. Two-thirds (67%) of Americans, and one-third (35%) of Republicans, say Trump has "not delivered at all" on his commitment to bring down prices and make everyday life more affordable. Republicans, and Americans in general, are more likely to give him credit on his promises on illegal immigration, an issue fewer than one-in-five (17%) Americans select as a top issue currently.

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Cost of living dominates concerns ahead of midterms

The specter of inflation continues to haunt U.S. consumers, government and monetary policy makers. The White House wants the Federal Reserve to cut rates, but the Fed has been reluctant because of stubbornly high inflation. The war in Iran's impact on the price of gas and diesel threaten to worsen the persistent issue.

For Americans, it remains a primary focus. Three-in-five select it as a top issue facing the country, far outpacing the other issues in the top three: health care (32%) and ethics (26%). There are 10 other issues that are selected by 10 per cent or more.

There are both generational and gender differences in concerns. Young men are much more concerned about jobs and unemployment (28%) than others. Men older than 54 are the most likely to be concerned about immigration and border security. Women older than 34 are the most concerned about cost and access to health care:

Thinking of the various issues facing the United States, which ones do you personally care about the most?							
	All respondents	Male			Female		
		18-34	35-54	55+	18-34	35-54	55+
The cost of living and inflation	63%	68%	60%	62%	56%	65%	67%
Health care (cost and access)	32%	22%	27%	30%	28%	39%	41%
Ethics, corruption, money in politics	26%	19%	33%	31%	24%	22%	26%
Income inequality and poverty	18%	23%	22%	9%	19%	16%	19%
Immigration and border security	17%	18%	15%	33%	10%	11%	17%
Climate change/The environment	15%	14%	14%	14%	22%	19%	9%
Jobs and unemployment	13%	28%	15%	2%	16%	18%	4%
Taxes	13%	15%	15%	12%	13%	13%	12%
ICE enforcement actions in major cities	13%	11%	9%	16%	14%	15%	13%
The federal deficit and government spending	13%	7%	12%	19%	7%	16%	14%
Crime and public safety / gun violence	11%	11%	10%	9%	9%	14%	12%
International conflicts and foreign policy	11%	12%	4%	15%	13%	10%	10%
Terrorism and national security	10%	5%	8%	17%	6%	7%	14%
Race relations and racism	8%	11%	14%	2%	7%	7%	8%
The strength of democratic institutions	6%	4%	6%	11%	4%	6%	7%
Illegal drugs and addiction	6%	7%	10%	4%	8%	5%	5%
Global trade and tariffs	6%	9%	4%	6%	6%	3%	6%
Other	3%	2%	4%	2%	5%	3%	4%

Financial wellbeing

The midterms will be a key pivot point for the second term of President Donald Trump. And there is much work to do to convince American voters that maintaining Republican control of the legislative branches is in their best interest.

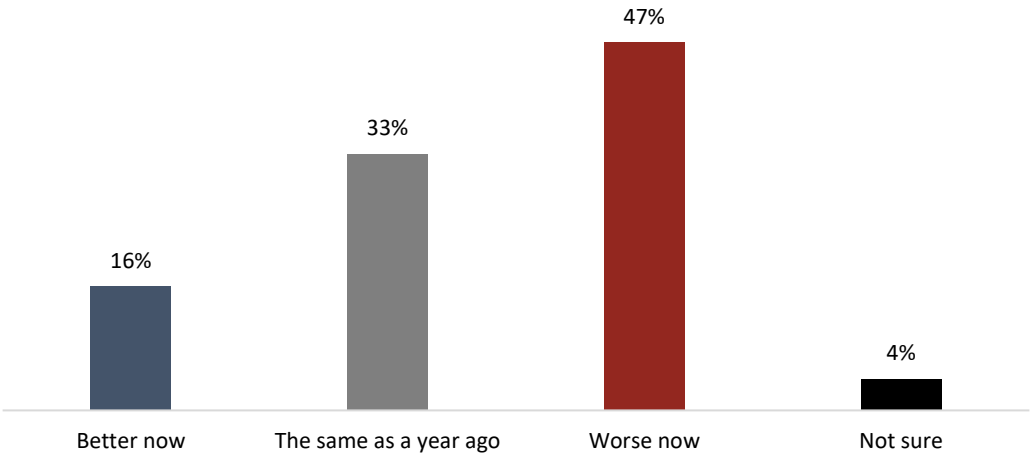
Related: Congressional generic ballot: Democrats lead 53-43

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With cost of living and inflation a key issue, whichever party offers the best path forward on improving Americans' financial well-being will likely hold a significant advantage.

As it stands, half (47%) of Americans say they are worse off financially now than they were a year ago. Just one-in-six (16%) say their economic standing has improved:

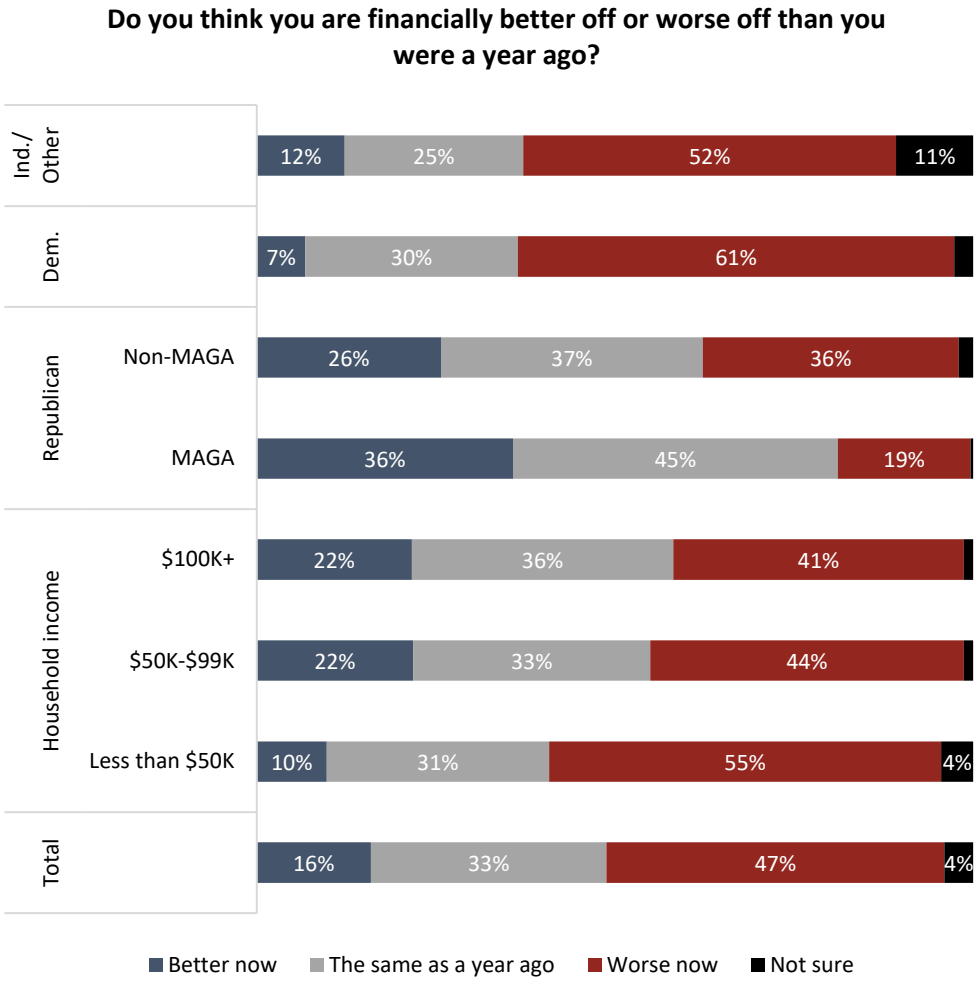
Do you think you are financially better off or worse off than you were a year ago?
(All respondents, n=1,205)



This financial deterioration is expressed by Americans across incomes. By a two-to-one margin, those in households earning $50,000 or more annually believe they are worse off than better off. Those in the lowest income households (55%) are much more likely to say they are worse off financially than they were 12 months ago.

But political lens is also a factor in economic assessments. A majority (61%) of self-identified Democrats say they are worse off now than they were last year. Republicans who place themselves in the MAGA movement are more likely than others to say they are better off (36%). But one-in-five (19%) MAGA Republicans and one-third (36%) of non-MAGA Republicans say they are worse off than a year ago, which may have them considering their options on the ballot looking for financial relief:

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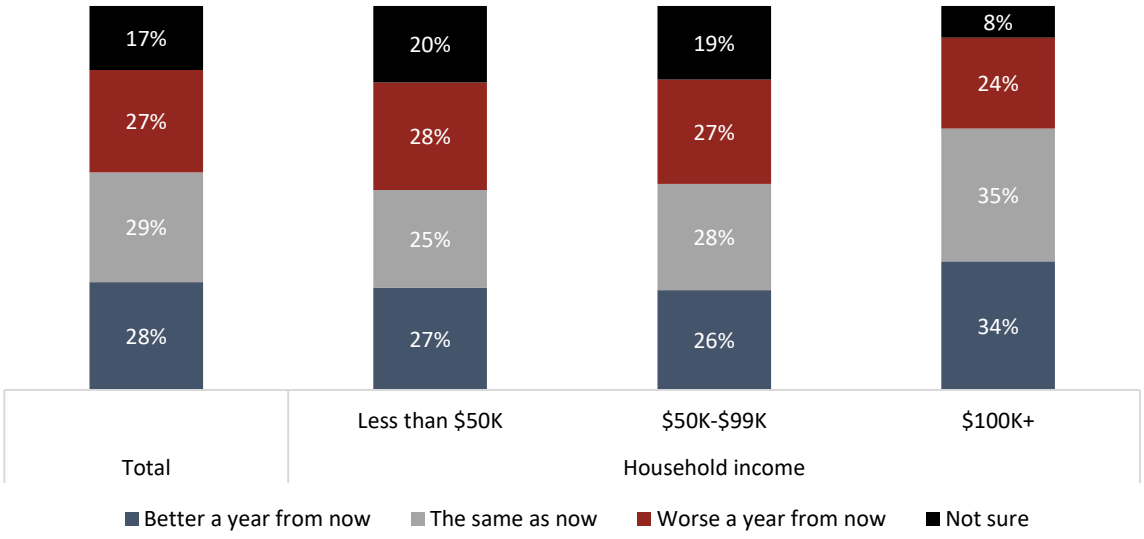
Expectations for the year ahead

Americans are as likely to believe they will be better (28%) as worse (27%) or the same (29%) this time next year financially.

Those in the highest income bracket are more optimistic than others (34% believe they will be better off next year), but that optimism maxes out at one-third in that group. Most in all income brackets believe they will at best tread water financially:

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And a year from now, do you think you will be financially better off or worse off than you are now?



Seven-in-ten say Trump has worsened the cost of living since taking office

The midterms will likely be a litmus test for the American public's assessment of Trump's second term and how he and his administration have addressed their key issues. On the issue that rises above all others, inflation, the assessment is overwhelmingly negative. Seven-in-ten (71%) believe the Trump administration has hurt inflation, outnumbering by four-to-one those who believe it has helped that issue. A majority also believe Trump has hurt the cost and accessibility of health care, the second most chosen issue by Americans.

Americans are most likely to give credit to Trump for addressing immigration and border security (40% helped) and public safety (32%), although in both cases there are more Americans who believe his administration has worsened those issues (46%, 44% respectively):

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Since Donald Trump returned to office as president, would you say his administration has helped or hurt each of the following? (All respondents, n=1,205)			
	Helped	Hurt	Net
Immigration and border security	40%	46%	-6
Crime and public safety	32%	44%	-13
Jobs and employment	27%	54%	-26
America's standing in the world	25%	64%	-39
Democracy and the rule of law in the United States	25%	56%	-31
The U.S. economy	24%	63%	-39
America's relationships with its allies	22%	64%	-42
The amount of taxes my household pays	18%	46%	-28
Government spending and the national debt	18%	65%	-47
The cost and accessibility of health care	16%	57%	-40
Inflation and the cost of living	16%	71%	-55
Political division in the United States	14%	64%	-50

Trump's most ardent supporters, self-identified MAGA Republicans, are much more likely than others to give his administration credit for helping on key issues. Non-MAGA Republicans are more likely than not to say Trump has helped on immigration, crime, jobs, and democracy and the rule of law in the United States, but are much more critical on his administration's performance on America's international relationships, government spending, political division, and inflation.

Notably, especially with midterms around the corner, independents are more likely to believe Trump has hurt than helped all the issues provided to respondents. Democrats overwhelmingly believe Trump has worsened those issues:

Since Donald Trump returned to office as president, would you say his administration has helped or hurt each of the following? (NET shown – Helped minus hurt)					
	Total	Republican		Dem.	Ind./ Other
		MAGA	Non MAGA		
Immigration and border security	-6	+78	+54	-59	-24
Crime and public safety	-13	+78	+46	-66	-36
Jobs and employment	-26	+62	+25	-76	-48
The amount of taxes my household pays	-28	+43	+7	-64	-43
Democracy and the rule of law in the United States	-31	+64	+17	-81	-54
America's standing in the world	-39	+62	+1	-88	-64

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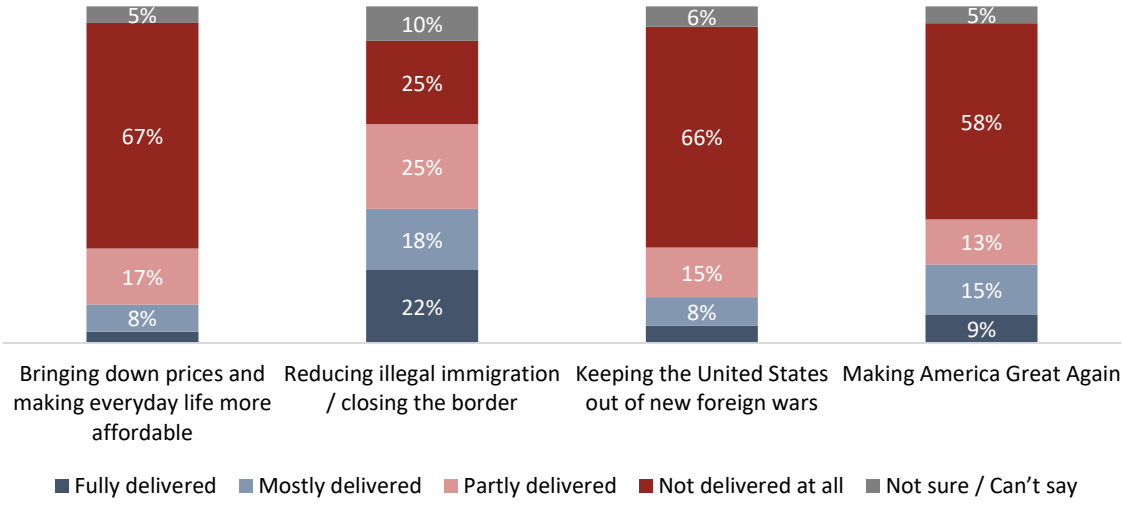
The U.S. economy	-39	+52	+8	-83	-67
The cost and accessibility of health care	-40	+40	-4	-81	-60
America's relationships with its allies	-42	+52	-16	-84	-63
Government spending and the national debt	-47	+43	-24	-85	-65
Political division in the United States	-50	+18	-35	-82	-67
Inflation and the cost of living	-55	+29	-35	-91	-70

(Undelivered) Promises, promises

Trump's 2024 campaign brought a host of promises especially on affordability, combatting illegal immigration, staying out of foreign conflicts and generally Making American Great Again. Immigration stands out as a promise that Americans believe Trump has delivered on more than others. Two-in-five (40%) believe Trump's second term has mostly or fully delivered on reducing illegal immigration; half (50%) disagree.

On the other three, majorities believe he has not lived up to commitments on bringing down prices (67%), keeping the U.S. out of new foreign wars (66%) and Making America Great Again (58%):

And thinking about this another way, how would you rate President Trump in terms of delivering on each of the following commitments he made to Americans?
(All respondents, n=1,205)



Along the political divide, there appears to be some doubts among MAGA Republicans that Trump has lived up to his promise to make everyday life more affordable. Only on the promise to reduce illegal immigration do non-MAGA Republicans believe Trump has mostly or fully delivered. Elsewhere, that group is more likely to say he has only partially or not at all lived up to that commitment:

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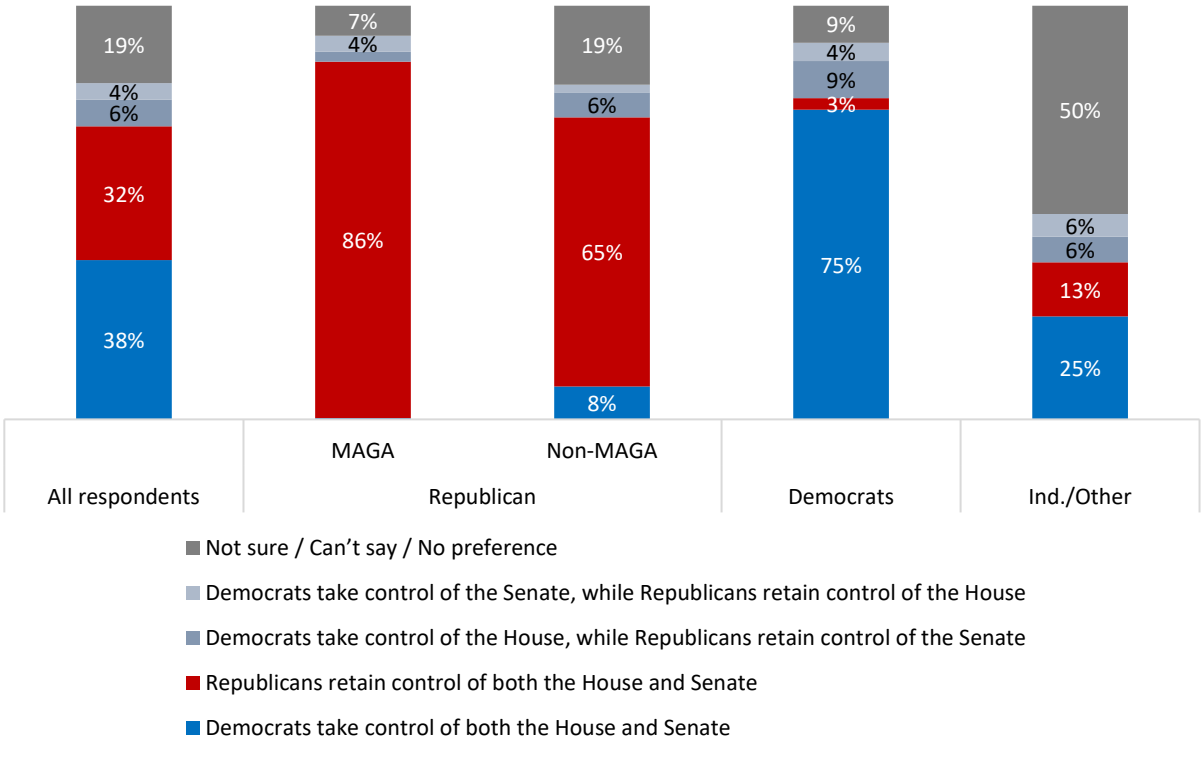
How would you rate President Trump in terms of delivering on each of the following commitments he made to Americans? (NET shown – Fully/Partly delivered minus partly/not at all)					
	Total	MAGA	Non MAGA	Democrats	Other
Reducing illegal immigration / closing the border	-10	+76	+39	-58	-33
Making America Great Again	-48	+55	-23	-91	-69
Keeping the United States out of new foreign wars	-67	+4	-70	-93	-72
Bringing down prices and making everyday life more affordable	-72	-8	-75	-95	-77

Preferred outcome for November?

Americans overall are split as to their preference for the lay of the political land post-midterms. Two-in-five (38%) prefer a Democrat-controlled House and Senate; one-third (32%) would like to see the Republican retain control of both. MAGA Republicans (86%) vastly prefer the status quo; a majority of non-MAGA Republicans agree, but one-third either say they have no preference (19%) or that they would like the Democrats to take control of one or both houses (16%).

Half of Independents say they don't have a preferential outcome for the midterms. For those that do, more would like to see the Democrats take one of or both the House and Senate (37%) than for the Republicans to maintain control (13%):

Thinking about the remainder of President Trump's term, which of the following outcomes would you most prefer following this November's midterm elections?



For detailed results by age, gender, region, education, and other demographics, click here.

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