FT election poll US midterm elections 2026

Most US voters say they are worse off under Trump – FT poll

Democrats lead Republicans on economy just months ahead of midterm elections

The findings underscore the uphill battle Trump and his Republican Party face heading into November © Manuel Balce Ceneta/AP

Lauren Fedor in New York and **Ian Hodgson** in Washington

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Most US voters say they have become worse off under Donald Trump, according to an FT poll revealing mounting discontent with the president's handling of the economy and cost of living.

With less than three months until November's midterm elections, the nationwide poll conducted by Focaldata found that over 53 per cent of registered voters said their finances had deteriorated since Trump returned to the White House in January 2025.

Almost 57 per cent of independents and nearly one quarter of self-identified Republicans also felt worse off under the current president.

The FT poll also found that voters were more likely to say they trusted Democrats over Republicans to handle inflation and the cost of living. The nationwide poll also gave Democrats an edge on handling jobs and the economy — issues that have long been seen as Republican strengths.

Americans feel worse off and headed in the wrong direction

Would you say you feel better off or worse off financially since Donald Trump took office in January 2025?

Do you think the economy is going in the right direction or wrong direction? (%)

Source: FT/Focaldata • An FT/Focaldata poll of 1,913 registered voters was conducted August 7-10 2026. Results are statistically significant within ±2.9 percentage points.

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The findings underscore the uphill battle Trump and his Republican Party face heading into November, as the public sours on the president's war in Iran, which has driven up prices for petrol, consumer goods and borrowing costs.

Recent inflation data showed prices rose less quickly in July thanks to a recent dip in fuel costs. But at 3.4 per cent, inflation is higher than when Joe Biden handed the White House to Trump last year.

Separate figures on Friday showed consumer sentiment falling sharply to a near-record low as high prices forced many Americans to dial back spending. Real wages also declined last month, according to government data.

While Trump will not be on the ballot in November, midterm elections are generally seen as a referendum on the current president's leadership.

Nearly two-thirds of registered voters said they thought the economy was going in the wrong direction, including more than two-thirds of independents and more than one-third of Republicans. Just one in four registered voters said they thought the economy was going in the right direction.

The FT poll found 55 per cent of registered voters disapproved of the job Trump was doing as president, including nearly 20 per cent of Republicans.

In a worrying sign for the White House, Trump's net approval rating among Republicans — the difference between the share of people who approve of the president and those who disapprove — fell 8 percentage points compared to the previous month.

Trump's approval ratings were worse on his handling of inflation and the cost of living. Among registered voters, 64 per cent disapproved, including almost seven in 10 independents and around one-third of Republicans.

Voters disapprove of Trump most on economic issues

To what extent do you approve or disapprove of how Donald Trump is doing as president on the following issues? (%)

Total

Approve

Overall

Immigration and border security

An FT/Focaldata poll of 1,913 registered voters was conducted August 7-10 2026. Results are statistically significant within ±2.9 percentage points. "Unsure/neither approve nor disapprove" not shown.

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The numbers are especially problematic for the president because voters consistently cite inflation and the cost of living as the most important issues facing the country.

For months, opinion polls have suggested that Democrats are on course to take back control of the House of Representatives, although winning control of the US Senate is expected to be more difficult.

Registered voters gave Democrats a five-point lead over Republicans — at 44 per cent to 39 per cent — when asked who they were likely to vote for in November.

"The Trump administration continues to deliver on the President's affordability agenda by lowering drug prices, reshoring American jobs, and cutting taxes while simultaneously touting a historic drop in violent crime nationwide and the most secure border in history," White House spokesman Kush Desai said.

The FT poll was conducted online by Focaldata, a London-based, non-partisan research company, from August 7 to August 10. It reflects the opinions of 1,913 registered voters and has a margin of error of plus or minus 2.9 percentage points.

Additional reporting by James Politi, Claire Jones and Myles McCormick in Washington

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