



NPR/PBS News/Marist National Poll: 2026 Midterm Elections, September 2026

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Trump Shadows the Race for Congress as Democrats Lead by Double Digits

Registered voters across the country favor Democrats for Congress by 12 points, but the contest may be less about Congress than about President Donald Trump. Voters are more likely to say their congressional vote is mainly a vote against President Trump than a vote for him. And voters now perceive the Democratic Party as the party to better handle the issues of the economy, foreign policy, and gas prices. They divide about whether the Democrats or Republicans are better equipped to address the issue of immigration. The battle for Congress plays out as President Trump's job approval rating remains under 40%.

- 53% of registered voters say they are more likely to vote for the Democratic congressional candidate on the ballot in their district than the Republican (41%). In May, the Democrats held a comparable 10-point advantage over the Republicans on the generic ballot question.
- Independents give the Democratic candidate for Congress a 25-point advantage. Independents break 57% for the Democrat running for office to 32% for the Republican on the ballot.
- A plurality of registered voters (45%) describes their congressional vote as mostly a vote against President Trump. This compares with 24% who call it mostly a vote for President Trump. Three in ten voters nationally (30%) say President Trump is not much of a factor in their vote for Congress. However, 41% of these voters are Republican.
- 80% of Democrats report their vote for Congress is a vote against President Trump while 59% of Republicans say their vote is mostly for Trump. 35% of the GOP say the President does not factor into their vote.
- A majority of independents (54%) describe their congressional vote as a vote against President Trump.

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- 56% of registered voters say they prioritize candidates with new ideas over candidates with a proven record (38%), signaling an anti-incumbent sentiment among the electorate.

Democrats Edge GOP on Most Issues

On the issues, Democrats hold an advantage over Republicans on which party would better handle the economy (42% Democratic Party to 34% Republican Party), foreign policy (42% Democratic Party to 36% Republican Party), and gas prices (40% Democratic Party to 27% Republican Party). The gap narrows considerably on immigration. Here, voters divide with 41% reporting the Democratic Party would do a better job and 38% saying the Republican Party would handle the issue better. Impressions of the Democratic Party's handling of immigration have improved, though, since 2024. At that time, 30% of registered voters thought the Democrats would do a better job on immigration, and 42% said the Republicans would better address the issue.

Independents' views widen the Democratic advantage on three of the four issues. On gas prices, independents favor Democrats by 26 percentage points (41% to 15% Republican Party). On foreign policy, the Democrats (47%) hold a 22-percentage point advantage over the Republicans (25%), and on the economy, Independents give a 19-percentage point advantage to the Democrat Party (41% to 22% Republican Party). On immigration, independents still favor Democrats but by a narrower 14 percentage points (41% Democratic Party to 27% Republican Party). Of note, 18% of independents think that neither party would do a good job handling immigration.

Four in Ten Say Personal Finances are Status Quo, But...

The plurality of voters nationally (42%) says things have stayed about the same, but 54% of registered voters say their finances have changed. 34% say their family finances have gotten worse over the past year, and 20% say they have gotten better. Republicans are net positive on their own finances (31% better vs. 15% worse), with nearly half (49%) saying their finances are status quo. Democrats, though, are a net negative (13% better vs. 46% worse), with 39% reporting their finances have remained about the same. Independents are more aligned with Democrats. 16% say their personal finances have gotten better, and 41% say they have gotten worse. An additional 41% of Independents say their financial picture is little changed from a year ago.

Majority of Voters Say Democrats Will Win Mids... Most Care about Outcome

52% of registered voters, including 55% of independents, say they believe the Democratic candidate running for Congress in their district will win while 44% of voters say the Republican candidate will be victorious. Nearly nine in ten voters say they care, at least, quite a bit about which party will win control of Congress in November. 67% say they care a great deal, and 19% report they care quite a bit. Seven percent say they care

somewhat. Four percent say they do not care very much, and 2% say they don't care at all.

Three in Four with Close Eye on the Midterm Elections

About three in four voters nationally say they are following the midterm elections this year either very closely (35%) or closely (40%). In contrast, one in four report they are not following the elections very closely (20%) or not closely at all (5%).

Trump Approval Rating at 39%

President Trump's job approval rating among registered voters is a net negative and more intense on the disapprove side. Overall, fewer than four in ten registered voters (39%) either strongly approve (27%) of President Trump's job performance or just approve (12%). 53% of voters, though, strongly disapprove of how President Trump is doing his job, and 6% just disapprove — highlighting a net disapproval of 20 points. This indicates an electorate with hardened, high-intensity views rather than soft or persuadable ones.

In June, 38% of registered voters approved of how President Trump was performing in office, and 59% disapproved.

General favorability toward President Trump tracks his approval rating. 37% of registered voters have a favorable opinion of him versus 58% with an unfavorable impression of him. President Trump's image has taken a hit. At the start of President Trump's second term, his favorability stood at 44% among registered voters. 50%, at that time, had an unfavorable view of President Trump.

Voters Confident in Fair Elections & USPS; Fewer Trust Validity of Mail-In Ballots

Voters express confidence in the mechanics of the election, itself. 75% are either very confident or confident that their state or local government will run a fair and accurate election. This includes 86% of Democrats. 66% of Republicans, and 74% of independents. The proportion of voters who express confidence in the election process is up from 69% in March.

Voters (58%) also trust that the United States Postal Service will deliver election-related mail to voters and election officials in a timely way. However, there has been a significant drop in confidence since 2024 when 71% of registered voters reported they trusted the USPS to deliver election-related material. Regardless of political affiliation, a majority has a high degree of confidence in the USPS.

These findings sit beside a wide partisan divide in relation to voter fraud. 41% of voters, overall, think there is a great deal or good amount of voter fraud when people are given the option to vote by mail. Here, Republicans (70%) are more likely than Democrats (18%) and Independents (32%) to say the likelihood of fraud exists in mail-in ballots. A majority of the overall electorate (55%) say there is little to no fraud in relation to mail-in ballots.

A slim majority of voters (52%) plan to vote in person on Election Day while 23% plan to vote by mail or absentee ballot. The proportion of those who plan to vote by mail is little changed from 2024. An additional 22% plan to vote in-person at an early voting location. A stark partisan divide exists. Democrats are far more likely to vote by mail (32%) than Republicans (12%). Republicans, though, are more likely to vote in-person on Election Day (63%) than Democrats (44%). Still, the plurality of Democrats expects to visit a polling place on Election Day.

Data Centers? Majorities Oppose, Especially Locally

Registered voters are more likely to believe the nationwide construction of AI data centers by companies like Amazon, Google, Meta, Microsoft, and OpenAI will have a negative impact on the country (58%) than a positive one (34%). Views split by party. Republicans are the only group where a majority (54%) perceives a positive national impact. However, that partisan pattern reverses once the question turns local. When asked about a data center being built in their own community, more than eight in ten Democrats (82%) and more than seven in ten independents (72%) oppose or strongly oppose such developments. Republicans divide (46% strongly favor or favor to 44% strongly oppose or oppose).

Methodology

This NPR/PBS News/Marist Poll national survey of 1,280 registered voters was conducted September 14th through September 15th, 2026, by the Marist Poll in partnership with NPR and PBS News. Registered voters 18 years of age and older residing in the United States were contacted through a multi-mode design: By phone using live interviewers, by text, or online. Results for registered voters (n=1,280) are statistically significant within ± 3.8 percentage points.