



By: TA | AP Insight

Trump's handling of the economy is at its lowest point



President Donald Trump's approval on the economy and immigration have fallen substantially since March, according to a new AP-NORC poll, the latest indication that two signature issues that got him elected barely a year ago could be turning into liabilities as his party begins to gear up for the 2026 midterms.

Only 31% of U.S. adults now approve of how Trump is handling the economy, the poll from The **Associated Press-NORC** Center for Public Affairs Research finds.

That is down from 40% in March and marks the **lowest economic approval** he's registered in an AP-NORC poll in his first or second term.

The Republican president also has struggled to recover from public blowback on other issues, such as his management of the federal government, and has not seen an approval bump even after congressional Democrats effectively capitulated to end a record-long **government shutdown** last month.

Perhaps most worryingly for Trump, who's become increasingly synonymous with his party, he's slipped on issues that were major strengths.

Just a few months ago, 53% of Americans approved of Trump's handling of crime, but that's fallen to 43% in the new poll. There's been a similar decline on immigration, from 49% approval in March to 38% now.

The new poll starkly illustrates how Trump has struggled to hold onto political wins since his return to office. Even **border security** — an issue on which his approval remains relatively high — has declined slightly in recent months.

The good news for Trump is that his **overall approval** hasn't fallen as steeply. The new poll found that 36% of Americans approve of the way he's handling his job as president, which is down slightly from 42% in March.

That signals that even if some people aren't happy with elements of his approach, they might not be ready to say he's doing a bad job as president.

And while discontent is increasing among Republicans on certain issues, they're largely still behind him.

Declining approval on the economy, even among Republicans

Republicans are more unhappy with Trump's performance on the economy than they were in the first few months of his term.

About 7 in 10 Republicans, 69%, approve of how Trump is handling the economy in the December poll, a decline from 78% in March.

Larry Reynolds, a 74-year-old retiree and Republican voter from Wadsworth, Ohio, said he believes in Trump's plan to impose import duties on U.S. trading partners but thinks rates have spiraled too high, creating a "vicious circle now where they aren't really justifying the tariffs."

Reynolds said he also believes that inflation became a problem during the coronavirus pandemic and that the economy won't quickly recover, regardless of what Trump does. "I don't think it'll be anything really soon. I think it's just going to take time," he said.

Trump's base is still largely behind him, which was not always the case for his predecessor

Trump's base is still largely behind him, which was not always the case for his predecessor, President Joe Biden, a Democrat.

In the summer of 2022, only about **half of Democrats** approved of how Biden was handling the economy. Shortly before he withdrew from the 2024 presidential race two years later, that had risen to about two-thirds of Democrats.

More broadly, though, there's no sign that Americans think the economy has improved since Trump took over. About two-thirds of

U.S. adults, 68%, continue to say the country's economy is "poor."

That's unchanged from the last time the question was asked in October, and it's broadly in line with views throughout Biden's last year in office.

Why Trump gets higher approval on border security than immigration

Trump's approval ratings on immigration have declined since March, but border security remains a relatively strong issue for him.

Half of U.S. adults, 50%, approve of how Trump is handling border security, which is just slightly lower than the 55% who **approved in September**.

Trump's relative strength on border security is partially driven by Democrats and independents. About one-third of independents, 36%, approve of Trump on the border, while 26% approve on immigration.

Jim Rollins, an 82-year-old independent in Macon, Georgia, said he believes that when it comes to closing the border, Trump has done "a good job," but he hopes the administration will rethink its mass deportation efforts.

"Taking people out of kindergarten, and people going home for Thanksgiving, taking them off a plane. If they are criminals, sure," said Rollins, who said he supported Trump in his first election but not since then. "But the percentages — based on the government's own statistics — say that they're not criminals. They just didn't register, and maybe they sneaked across the border, and they've been here for 15 years."

Polls have shown it's more popular to increase border security than to deport immigrants

Other polls have shown it's more popular to increase border security than to deport immigrants, even those who are living in the country illegally.

Nearly half of Americans said increasing security at the U.S.-Mexico border should be "a high priority" for the government in AP-NORC polling from September. Only about 3 in 10 said the same about deporting immigrants in the U.S. illegally.

Shaniqua Copeland, a 30-year-old independent and home health aide in St. Augustine, Florida, said she approves of Trump's overall handling of the presidency but believes his **immigration actions** have gone too far, especially when it comes to masked federal agents leading large raids.

"Now they're just picking up anybody," Copeland said. "They just like, pick up people, grabbing anybody. It's crazy."

Health care and government management remain thorns for Trump

About 3 in 10 U.S. adults approve of how Trump is handling health care, down slightly from November.



About 3 in 10 U.S. adults approve of how Trump is handling health care, down slightly from November

The new poll was conducted in early December, as Trump and Congress struggled to find a **bipartisan deal** for extending the Affordable Care Act subsidies that will expire at the end of this month.

That **health care fight** was also the source of the recent government shutdown.

About one-third of U.S. adults, 35%, approve of how Trump is managing the federal government, down from 43% in March.

But some Americans may see others at fault for the country's problems, in addition to Trump. Copeland is unhappy with the country's health care system and thinks things are getting worse but is not sure of whether to blame Trump or Biden.

“A couple years ago, I could find a dentist and it would be easy. Now, I have a different health care provider, and it’s like so hard to find a dental (plan) with them,” she said. “And the people that do take that insurance, they have so many scheduled out far, far appointments because it’s so many people on it.”