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PUBLIC OPINION

## Survey of U.S. Likely Voters Oct. 2- Oct. 4, 2026

**N = 1,000 U.S. Likely Voters**

**The sample has an adjusted margin of error of +/-3.84 percentage points, adjusted for design effects**

See <http://uml.edu/polls> for full questionnaire/topline results and detailed methodology disclosure.

Survey design and analysis by John Cluverius, director of survey research, and Rodrigo Castro Cornejo, associate director, University of Massachusetts Lowell Center for Public Opinion.

Do you have a question about this poll? If so, reach out to us on social media via Bluesky or Instagram(@umlcpo)

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### **HIGHLIGHTS**

*"It took a couple months of campaigning, but now Democrats are securely converting Trump disapproval into meaningful electoral support. Trump's past mistakes on tariffs and Iran aren't just hurting him, they're hurting the electoral chances of congressional Republicans. Democrats, rightfully, have big expectations for Election Night. "*

#### **Democrats lead in generic congressional ballot, 52% to 43%**

Democrats now lead in generic ballot polling for the 2026 midterm elections, according to a new poll from the University of Massachusetts Lowell Center for Public Opinion and YouGov. Fifty-two percent of likely voters in the poll say that they will vote for the Democratic candidate for the U.S. House of Representatives, while 43% say they will vote for the Republican candidate. Democrats have also slightly increased their margin in the generic ballot from a March 2026 UMass Lowell/YouGov poll, where they led by three percentage points among American adults.

#### **Public feeling economic pain, blaming Trump policies**

Almost two-thirds of likely voters in the poll said either the war in Iran (64%) or tariffs (9%) are the primary source of higher fuel and utility prices. Opposition to the Iran war remains high in the poll; 71% of respondents said that the country is spending too much on the Iran war, while 24% say the U.S. is spending about the right amount and 5% say the U.S. is spending too little.

President Donald Trump's job approval rating in the new poll remains at 39%, unchanged from the March 2026 poll. Sixty-four percent of respondents to the poll say they think the country has gone pretty far off on the wrong track, about the same as the March 2026 poll.

Fifty-eight percent of respondents in the poll say that it has become somewhat or much harder to pay for basic necessities in the last six months, while 33% say things have stayed about the same and 8% say it's become easier. Notably, the percentage of likely voters who say it has become much harder to afford basic necessities is 27%, slightly higher than the 23% who said it had become much harder in the March 2026 poll.

### **Americans skeptical of AI, tech CEOs**

Likely voters in the poll are skeptical about artificial intelligence technologies and the leaders of major technology firms. Seventy percent of respondents say they oppose construction of an artificial intelligence (AI) computing center in their community, compared to 29% who support it. Fifty-one percent of respondents say they support a national ban on construction or expansion of AI data centers, compared with 48% who oppose such a measure. More than half of respondents (52%) say that artificial intelligence technologies will do more to harm humanity than help it, while 19% say it will keep things about the same. Less than a third of respondents (30%) say AI will do more to help humanity.

Tech industry leaders are viewed remarkably poorly in the poll. Mark Zuckerberg, CEO of Meta, is the least favorably viewed American in the poll, with a net favorability rating of -38, slightly higher than his -43 net favorability in the March 2026 UMass Lowell poll. Other tech leaders have negative net favorability, but do better than Zuckerberg. Palantir Technologies Chairman Peter Thiel has a net favorability of -20, due to the 68% of respondents who had no opinion of Thiel or said they had never heard of him; Tesla CEO Elon Musk has a net favorability of -14 among likely voters, largely due to his high net favorables among self-identified Republicans in the poll (+60).

### **A hypothetical look at 2028 and look back at 2024**

The poll offers interesting insights into the 2028 presidential race, creating a series of head-to-head matchups and asking about the favorability of many potential 2028 candidates. In hypothetical 2028 presidential matchups, California Gov. Gavin Newsom is slightly ahead of Vice President JD Vance, 46% to 42%. Matchups between Newsom and U.S. Secretary of State Marco Rubio, U.S. Rep. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez and Vance are about even, while the hypothetical matchup between Ocasio-Cortez and Rubio is tied.

A hypothetical matchup between Hunter Biden and Donald Trump Jr. is also close, 37% to 36%. This matchup also has a slightly larger percentage of respondents who say they will not vote compared to the other contests, at 9%.

When asked how they would vote if given the chance to go back in time and cast a ballot in the 2024 presidential election, 51% of respondents said they would support Democratic candidate

and former Vice President Kamala Harris, while 43% said they would vote for Trump. The popular vote in 2024 supported Trump, 50% to 48%.