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AP-NORC POLL

# Americans end 2024 with a grim economic outlook

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WASHINGTON>> The unemployment rate is healthy and the stock market is up, but Democrats are feeling more pessimistic about the U.S. economy after Donald Trump's election victory, according to a new poll.

Republicans, meanwhile, are still dour about the current state of the economy but hopeful that growth will be stronger next year when Trump returns to the White House as president.

The latest survey from The Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research suggests that some Americans are evaluating the economy more by who holds political power than on what the underlying trends suggest. This was a persistent challenge for President Joe Biden that Trump appears to be inheriting — and it raises the possibility that Trump, too, might struggle to translate his economic policies into political wins. \*

About 7 in 10 U.S. adults rate the country's economic state as very or somewhat poor, up slightly from about 6 in 10 in October. Self-identified Democrats are primarily driving the recent negativity. About 6 in 10 Democrats described the U.S. economy as "good" in October. With Republicans on the verge of controlling the executive and legislative branches, only about half of Democrats say that now.

"Next year, if Trump gets his tariffs, prices are going to go up and things are going to be more costly," said Karen Claussen, 77, who lives in suburban Columbus, Ohio, and voted for Democrat Kamala Harris in November's election. "I don't see any hope right now. No, I'm very worried." \*

The long-standing pessimism about the economy reveals a disconnect between the traditional measures used to judge performance and how people are feeling.

The unemployment rate is a healthy 4.2% as hiring continues to be solid. Inflation has fallen from its 2022 peak, yet progress has stalled in recent months. The stock market was already up under Biden and has further increased since the election in anticipation of Trump's promised tax cuts and efforts to curb regulations.

Perhaps because the poll was conducted with Biden still in office, just 16% of Republicans say the nation's economy is good right now. But they see positive change on the horizon: About 7 in 10 Republicans say 2025 will be a better year than 2024 for the U.S. economy.

In the November election, AP VoteCast indicated that voters favored Trump in large part because of dissatisfaction over inflation, a global phenomenon coming out of the pandemic that raised prices for groceries, gasoline, cars and housing.

The new AP-NORC poll shows about one-third of Americans say they are "extremely" or "very" concerned about their ability to afford groceries over the next few months. About 3 in 10 are highly worried about being able to afford holiday gifts, gas or electricity.

"Right now, it's Christmas time, and we're struggling to make sure our son has Christmas this year," said Jeremie Spratley, 39, from Westland, Mich.

Spratley is on disability, and he said his family is getting less in food aid at a time when affordability has become a problem. He voted for Trump even though he thinks the former president cares more about the wealthy than about people like him.

"I know that he's not looking out for the poor people like me, but even if it trickles down, that will be a benefit," Spratley said.

People in households earning \$50,000 or less are also more likely to be concerned about affording their basic needs and year-end expenses, compared with those with higher incomes. About half of those with a household income below \$50,000 are worried about being able to pay for groceries, and about 4 in 10 say the same about buying gas, electricity or holiday presents. \*

Among Republicans who already hold a negative view of the economy, about 7 in 10 expect next year to be better. Only about 4 in 10 independents who see the economy as weak say it will improve. And about 1 in 10 Democrats who currently think the economy is weak say it will advance next year.

It's common for some Americans to shift their views about the economy after a new president takes office. \*

For example, Democrats' view of the economy dramatically improved between December 2020 and February 2021, after Biden took office. Only 15% of Democrats at the end of 2020 rated the economy as "good," but that jumped to 41% by February. Over the same period, Republicans' views dropped from about 7 in 10 saying the economy was in good shape to 35%. The topline view stayed the same, and independents did not shift their views significantly.

Beyond a series of bold and brash statements, it's unclear which policies Trump would prioritize in hopes of helping growth.

He has threatened universal tariffs against partners such as Canada and Mexico, as well as geopolitical rivals such as China, unless those nations conduct their policies on trade, immigration and other matters to his liking. He would also like to renew and expand parts of his 2017 tax cuts that are set to expire, but that could incur a higher level of debt that could hinder growth.

But for voters like Benjamin Lebert, 41, what matters is that Trump marks a change from the current administration. The resident of Roanoke, Va., voted this year for Trump, after not doing so previously in 2016 or 2020.

"With Trump in office, maybe new things will happen to America that weren't happening under Joe Biden," Lebert said.