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How Americans Followed the 2026 Midterm Results

Most Americans sought out information about the results, but younger and older adults turned to very different sources

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RECOMMENDED CITATION

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About this research

This Pew Research Center report examines how Americans got news about the November 2026 midterm elections.

Why we did this

Pew Research Center has long asked about where Americans get their news. Recent research has also explored how much Americans are hearing or seeing news about the Trump administration and how important they feel it is to stay informed about topics such as voting and elections. This report builds off this foundation to help us better understand how U.S. adults interacted with the news about the November 2026 midterm elections.

This study also builds on previous research on whether Americans tend to get news because they are looking for it or because they happen to come across it.

How we did this

We surveyed 10,247 U.S. adults from Nov. 9 to 15, 2026. Everyone who took part in this survey is a member of the Center's American Trends Panel. The surveys represent the views of the full U.S. adult population.

Here are the survey questions used for this analysis, the detailed responses and the survey methodology.

How Americans Followed the 2026 Midterm Results

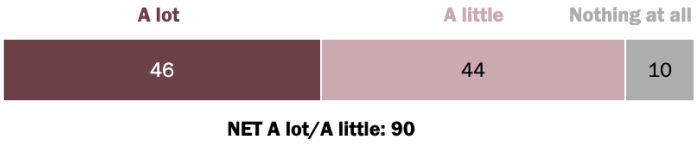
Most Americans sought out information about the results, but younger and older adults turned to very different sources

Nine-in-ten Americans say they've **heard about the results of the 2026 midterm elections, and most went looking for information about the results** rather than happening to come across it, according to a new Pew Research Center survey conducted shortly after the elections.

That is notably different from how Americans say they typically get news: When it comes to news in general, the public is about evenly split between those who seek it out and those who say news finds them.

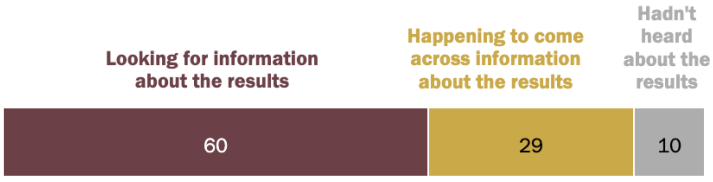
Most Americans heard about the results of the midterm elections, and a majority sought out that news intentionally

% of U.S. adults who say they have heard or read ___ about the results of the November 2026 elections



NET A lot/A little: 90

% of U.S. adults who say they found out about the results of the November 2026 elections by ...



Note: Respondents who did not answer are not shown.
Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted Nov. 9-15, 2026.
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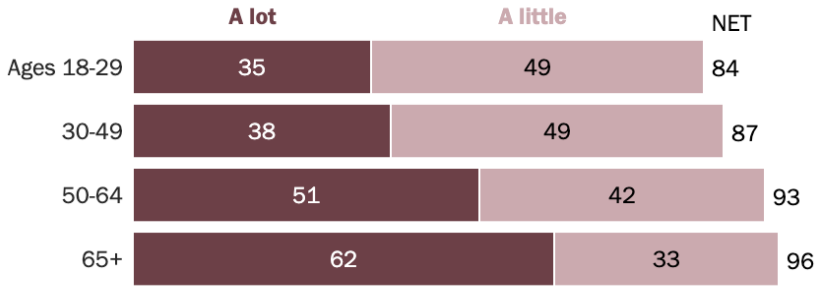
Large majorities of all age groups say they have heard at least a little about the results of the November 2026 elections, although older Americans are considerably more likely to have heard a lot.

How Americans learned about the election results also differs by age: Older adults mostly got information from television, while the youngest adults cited a mix of sources that included social media, search engines, and news websites and apps.

Majorities of all age groups heard about the 2026 election results

% of U.S. adults who say they have heard or read ___ about the results of the November 2026 elections



Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted Nov. 9-15, 2026.
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Regardless of where they heard about what happened, **half of U.S. adults feel they understand the election results extremely or very well.** Half of Americans also say they have generally found it easy to determine what election-related information is true.

After Democratic candidates made large gains in elections across the country, Democrats (including independents who lean Democratic) are more likely than Republicans and GOP leaners to say they have heard or read a lot about the elections, that they understand the results well, and that they found it easy to tell what is true.

More than half of Americans sought out information about the election results

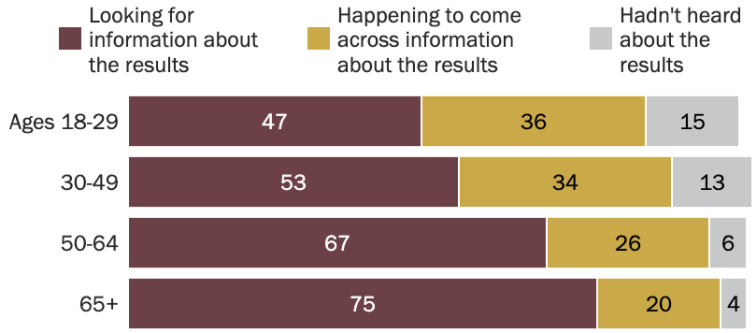
Six-in-ten U.S. adults say they found out about the results of the November 2026 elections by looking for information about them. Far fewer (29%) say they happened to come across information about the election results, while 10% say they had not heard about the results at the time of the survey.

This differs from a pattern we have seen for years around news more generally. In late 2025, for example, Americans were about evenly divided between those who say they tend to look for news and those who mostly happen to come across it.

This contrast is especially striking among younger adults. In the previous survey, 73% of 18- to 29-year-olds said that they generally come across news instead of seeking it out intentionally. But when asked *specifically* about information about the November election results, 36% of adults under 30 say they happened to come across that information, while a larger portion (47%) say they sought it out.

Older Americans were more likely to seek out information about election results, but about half of young adults also did this

% of U.S. adults who say they found out about the results of the November 2026 elections by ...



Note: Respondents who did not answer are not shown.
Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted Nov. 9-15, 2026.
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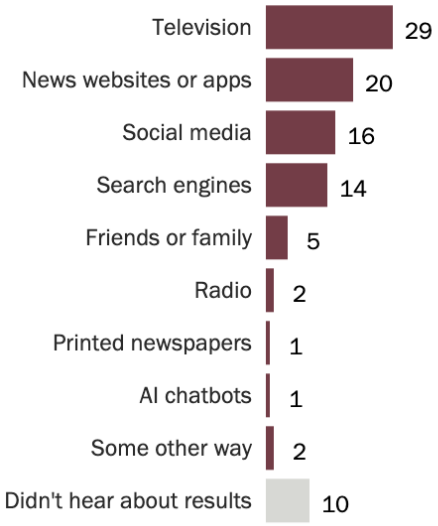
Where did Americans hear about the election results?

Americans relied on a range of sources to learn about the election results. Roughly three-in-ten (29%) say television was their main source, while one-in-five cite news websites or apps. Smaller shares say social media (16%) or search engines (14%) were their main source, while 5% or fewer cite another way such as friends or family, radio, or AI chatbots.

Americans used a variety of platforms to learn about midterm election results

% of U.S. adults who say the main way they found out about the November 2026 election results was ...



Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted Nov. 9-15, 2026.
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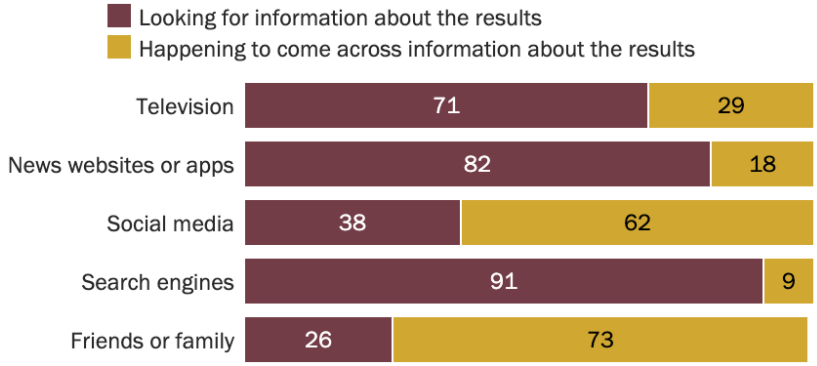
Americans who mainly got information about election results through search engines and news websites overwhelmingly say they were intentionally looking for this kind of information. For example, among those who mainly found out about the results through a search engine, 91% say they looked for information about the results. And a majority of those who mainly got that information from television (71%) also say they were intentionally looking for it.

Whether people seek out or come across election news varies based on which platforms they use

Among U.S. adults who say each source was the main way they found about the November 2026 election results, % who say they found out by ...



Note: Results are shown for the five most common main sources. Radio, printed newspapers, AI chatbots and "some other way" are not shown. Respondents who did not answer are not shown. Those who said they had heard nothing at all about the results were not asked this question.
Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted Nov. 9-15, 2026.
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By contrast, most of those whose main source was social media (62%) or friends and family (73%) say they happened to come across information about the results.

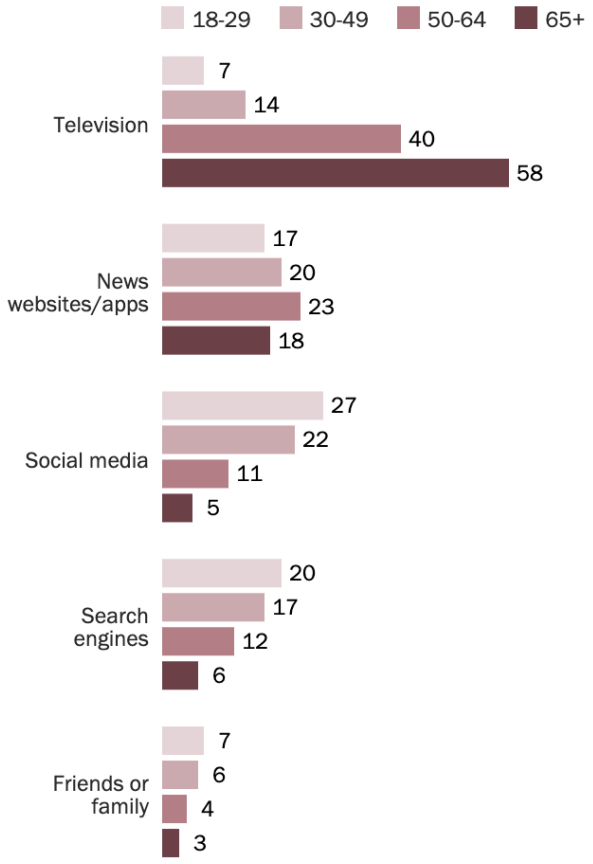
The main way people learned about the results differs sharply by age. The oldest Americans are by far the most likely to say television was their main source: 58% of those 65 and older say this, compared with 40% of adults ages 50 to 64, 14% of those 30 to 49 and just 7% of adults under 30.

The pattern is reversed for social media. It is the most common source among those ages 18 to 29 (27%), while 5% of those 65 and older heard about the results mainly from social media. The youngest adults are also much more likely than the oldest group to say search engines were their top source (20% vs. 6%).

Similar shares across age groups turned primarily to news websites and apps, ranging from 17% of those ages 18 to 29 to 23% of those 50 to 64. AI chatbots remain a relatively rare main source for all age groups – 2% of adults under 30 cite them as their main source.

Television is the top source for election results among older Americans, while young adults more likely to turn to social media and search

% of U.S. adults in each age group who say the main way they found out about the November 2026 election results was ...



Note: Results are shown for the five most common main sources. Radio, printed newspapers, AI chatbots and "some other way" are not shown. Respondents who did not answer are not shown. Those who said they had heard nothing at all about the results were not asked this question.
Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted Nov. 9-15, 2026.
"How Americans Followed the 2026 Midterm Results"

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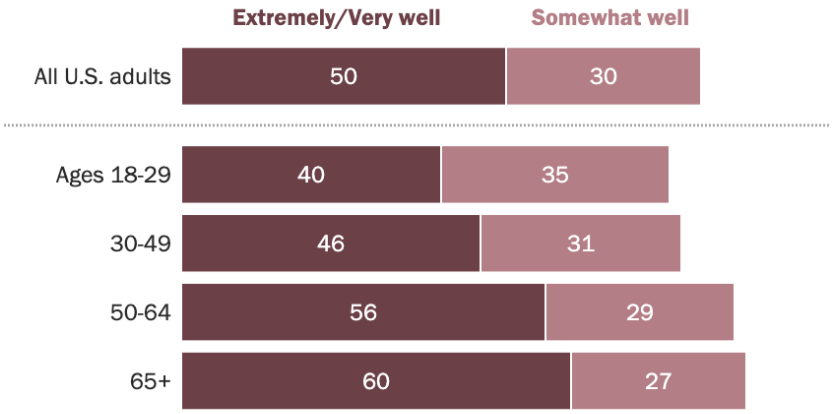
Americans' experiences with information about the midterm results

Half of U.S. adults feel they understand the results of the November 2026 elections extremely or very well. Older adults are more likely than younger adults to say this, just as they are more likely to say they have heard or read a lot about the election results.

Half of Americans say they understand the midterm election results extremely or very well

% of U.S. adults who feel they understand the results of the November 2026 elections ...



Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted Nov. 9-15, 2026.
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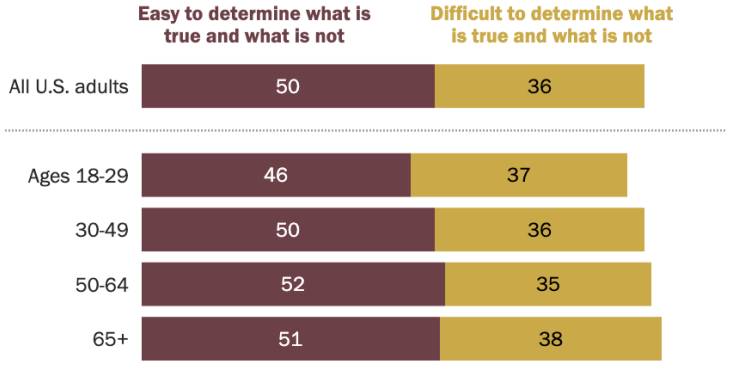
Similarly, half of Americans say it has generally been easy to determine what is true and what is not in the information they have gotten about the 2026 elections. About a third (36%) say it has been difficult to determine what is true.

Around a third of Americans say they found it difficult to determine what election news was true

% of U.S. adults who say that when it comes to the information they've gotten about the November 2026 elections, they have generally found it ...



Note: Respondents who said that they did not get any election information at all are not shown.
Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted Nov. 9-15, 2026.
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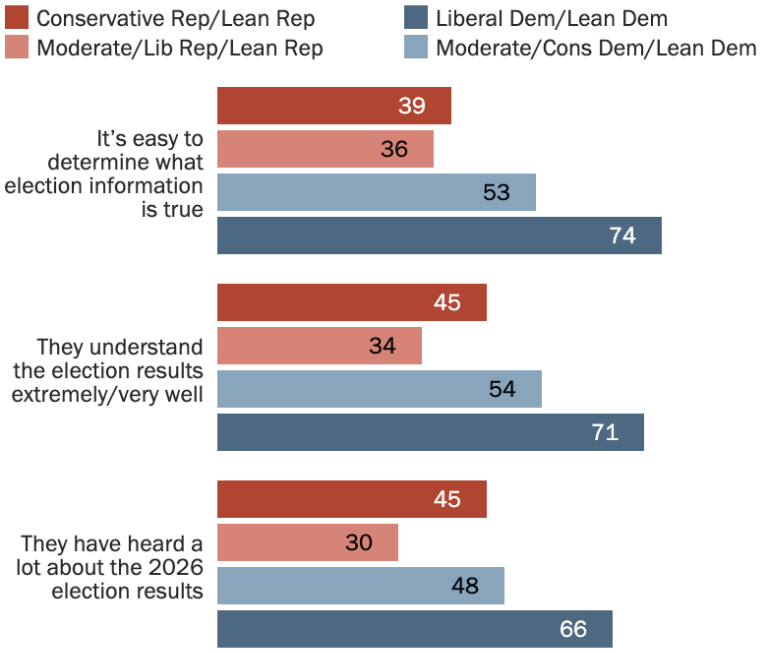
Democrats (including those who lean Democratic) are more likely than Republicans (and Republican leaners) to report understanding the results well and finding it easy to determine what election information is true.

These partisan differences are driven especially by liberal Democrats. Most Democrats who describe themselves as liberal say it's been easy to determine what's true and false in election information (74%), that they understand the results of the November 2026 elections extremely or very well (71%), and that they have heard or read a lot about the results (66%). On each measure, liberal Democrats are at least 17 percentage points higher than moderate and conservative Democrats.

Liberal Democrats heard more about 2026 election results, are more confident they understand them well

% of U.S. adults who say ...



Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted Nov. 9-15, 2026.
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These questions reflect how Americans assess their own understanding and experiences with election information, rather than measuring factual knowledge of the results. And reaction to the election outcome may be part of the context for these differences: Democrats who feel excited about the results are also more likely to say they have heard a lot (68%, compared with 50% of Democrats who don't feel this way) and that they understand the results extremely or very well (74% vs. 55% of other Democrats).

Majority of voters say it was extremely or very easy to find information needed to vote

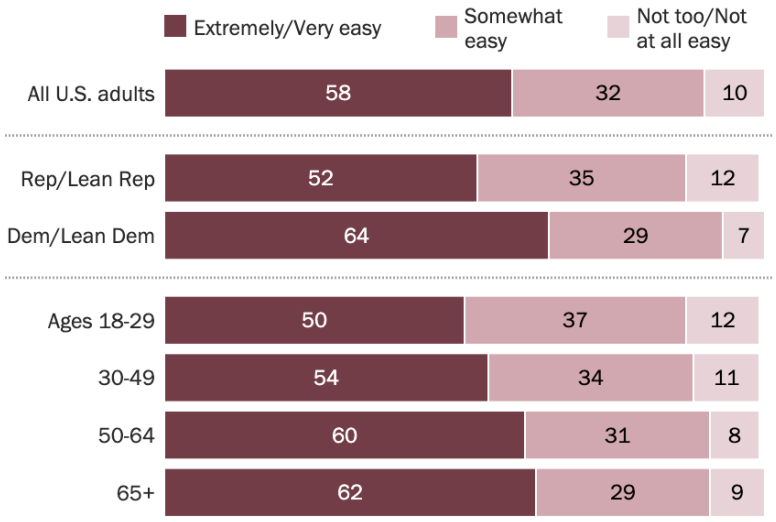
About six-in-ten voters (58%) say it was extremely or very easy to find the information they needed to make voting decisions in the November 2026 elections. Another 32% say it was somewhat easy, and 10% say it was not too or not at all easy.

Voters who identify with or lean toward the Democratic Party are slightly more likely than Republican voters to say it was extremely or very easy to find the information they needed to make voting decisions (64% vs. 52%).

Half or more of voters of all age groups say it was extremely or very easy to find the information they needed to make voting decisions.

A majority of voters say it was easy to find the information they needed to vote in the election

% of voters who say it was ___ to find the information they needed to make voting decisions in the November 2026 elections



Note: Based on self-reported voters. Respondents who did not answer are not shown.
Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted Nov. 9-15, 2026.
"How Americans Followed the 2026 Midterm Results"

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Acknowledgments

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In addition, the project benefited greatly from the administrative work of Meera Ramshankar and the guidance of members of Pew Research Center's Survey Methods and Politics teams.

Methodology

The American Trends Panel survey methodology

Overview

Data in this report comes from Wave 203 of the American Trends Panel (ATP), Pew Research Center's nationally representative panel of randomly selected U.S. adults. The survey was conducted from Nov. 9 to 15, 2026. A total of 10,247 panelists responded out of 11,574 who were sampled, for a survey-level response rate of 89%.

The cumulative response rate accounting for nonresponse to the recruitment surveys and attrition is 3%. The break-off rate among panelists who logged on to the survey and completed at least one item is 1%. The margin of sampling error for the full sample of 10,247 respondents is plus or minus 1.3 percentage points.

SSRS conducted the survey for Pew Research Center via online (n=9,910) and live telephone (n=337) interviewing. Interviews were conducted in both English and Spanish.

To learn more about the ATP, read "About the American Trends Panel."

Panel recruitment

Since 2018, the ATP has used address-based sampling (ABS) for recruitment. A study cover letter and a pre-incentive are mailed to a stratified, random sample of households selected from the U.S. Postal Service's Computerized Delivery Sequence File. This Postal Service file has been estimated to cover 90% to 98% of the population.[1] Within each sampled household, the adult with the next birthday is selected to participate. Other details of the ABS recruitment protocol have changed over time but are available upon request.[2] Prior to 2018, the ATP was recruited using landline and cellphone random-digit-dial surveys administered in English and Spanish.

A national sample of U.S. adults has been recruited to the ATP approximately once per year since 2014. In some years, the recruitment has included additional efforts (known as an "oversample") to improve the accuracy of data for underrepresented groups. For example, Hispanic adults, Black adults and Asian adults were oversampled in 2019, 2022 and 2023, respectively.

[1] AAPOR Task Force on Address-based Sampling. 2016. "AAPOR Report: Address-based Sampling."
[2] Email pewsurveys@pewresearch.org.

Sample design

The overall target population for this survey was noninstitutionalized persons ages 18 and older living in the United States. All active panel members were invited to participate in this wave.

Questionnaire development and testing

The questionnaire was developed by Pew Research Center in consultation with SSRS. The web program used for online respondents was rigorously tested on both PC and mobile devices by the SSRS project team and Pew Research Center researchers. The SSRS project team also populated test data that was analyzed in SPSS to ensure the logic and randomizations were working as intended before launching the survey.

Incentives

All respondents were offered a post-paid incentive for their participation. Respondents could choose to receive the post-paid incentive in the form of a check or gift code to Amazon.com, Target.com or Walmart.com. Incentive amounts ranged from $5 to $20 depending on whether the respondent belongs to a part of the population that is harder or easier to reach. Differential incentive amounts were designed to increase panel survey participation among groups that traditionally have low survey response propensities.

Data collection protocol

The data collection field period for this survey was Nov. 9 to 15, 2026. Surveys were conducted via self-administered web survey or by live telephone interviewing.

For panelists who take surveys online:[3] Postcard notifications were mailed to a subset on Nov. 9.[4] Survey invitations were sent out in two separate launches: soft launch and full launch. Sixty panelists were included in the soft launch, which began with an initial invitation sent on Nov. 9. All remaining English- and Spanish-speaking sampled online panelists were included in the full launch and were sent an invitation on Nov. 10.

[3] The ATP does not use routers or chains in any part of its online data collection protocol, nor are they used to direct respondents to additional surveys.
[4] Postcard notifications for web panelists are sent to 1) panelists who were recruited within the last two years and 2) panelists recruited prior to the last two years who opt to continue receiving postcard notifications.

Invitation and reminder dates for web respondents, ATP Wave 203

	Soft launch	Full launch
Initial invitation	Nov. 9, 2026	Nov. 10, 2026
First reminder	Nov. 12, 2026	Nov. 12, 2026
Final reminder	Nov. 14, 2026	Nov. 14, 2026

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Panelists participating online were sent an email invitation and up to two email reminders if they did not respond to the survey. ATP panelists who consented to SMS messages were sent an SMS invitation with a link to the survey and up to two SMS reminders.

For panelists who take surveys over the phone with a live interviewer: Prenotification postcards were mailed on Nov. 6. Soft launch took place on Nov. 9 and involved dialing until a total of eight interviews had been completed. All remaining English- and Spanish-speaking sampled phone panelists' numbers were dialed throughout the remaining field period. Panelists who take surveys via phone can receive up to six calls from trained SSRS interviewers.

Data quality checks

To ensure high-quality data, Center researchers performed data quality checks to identify any respondents showing patterns of satisficing. This includes checking for whether respondents left questions blank at very high rates or always selected the first or last answer presented. As a result of this checking, three ATP respondents were removed from the survey dataset prior to weighting and analysis.

Use of artificial intelligence (AI)

Survey responses to some open-ended questions were initially coded using AI-assisted text classification. Human researchers reviewed, validated, and, where necessary, corrected AI-generated codes prior to analysis.

Weighting

The ATP data is weighted in a process that accounts for multiple stages of sampling and nonresponse that occur at different points in the panel survey process. First, each panelist begins with a base weight that reflects their probability of recruitment into the panel. These weights are then calibrated to align with the population benchmarks in the accompanying table to correct for

nonresponse to recruitment surveys and panel attrition. If only a subsample of panelists was invited to participate in the wave, this weight is adjusted to account for any differential probabilities of selection.

Among the panelists who completed the survey, this weight is then calibrated again to align with the population benchmarks identified in the accompanying table and trimmed at the 1st and 99th percentiles to reduce the loss in precision stemming from variance in the weights. Sampling errors and tests of statistical significance take into account the effect of weighting.

American Trends Panel weighting dimensions

Variable	Benchmark source
Age (detailed) Age x Gender Education x Gender Education x Age Race/Ethnicity x Education Race/Ethnicity x Gender Race/Ethnicity x Age Born inside vs. outside the U.S. among Hispanics and Asian Americans Years lived in the U.S. Census region x Metropolitan status	2024 American Community Survey (ACS)
Volunteerism	2023 CPS Volunteering & Civic Life Supplement
Frequency of internet use Religious affiliation Party affiliation x Race/Ethnicity Party affiliation x Age	2026 National Public Opinion Reference Survey (NPORS)
Validated 2024 presidential election turnout and vote choice	Candidate vote share is based on official results from the Federal Election Commission. Turnout is based on estimates from the Election Lab at the University of Florida. The size of the voting-eligible population is based on the 2023 ACS.

Note: Estimates from the ACS are based on noninstitutionalized adults. For weighting to the 2024 presidential election results, panelists are considered validated voters if their self-report of having voted was confirmed after matching to a national voter registry.

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The following table shows the unweighted sample sizes and the error attributable to sampling that would be expected at the 95% level of confidence for different groups in the survey.

Sample sizes and margins of error, ATP Wave 203

Group	Unweighted sample size	Plus or minus ...
U.S. adults	10,247	1.3 percentage points
Rep/Lean Rep	4,660	1.9 percentage points
Dem/Lean Dem	5,274	1.8 percentage points

Note: Unweighted sample sizes do not account for the sample design or weighting and do not describe a group's contribution to weighted estimates. See the Sample design and Weighting sections above for details.

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Sample sizes and sampling errors for other subgroups are available upon request. In addition to sampling error, one should bear in mind that question wording and practical difficulties in conducting surveys can introduce error or bias into the findings of opinion polls.

Dispositions and response rates

Final dispositions, ATP Wave 203

	AAPOR code	Total
Completed interview	1.1	10,247
Logged in (web)/Contacted (CATI), but did not complete any items	2.11	219
Started survey; broke off before completion	2.12	80
Never logged on (web)/Never reached on phone (CATI)	2.20	1025
Survey completed after close of the field period	2.27	0
Other non-interview	2.30	0
Completed interview but was removed for data quality	2.90	3
Total panelists sampled for the survey		**11,574**
Completed interviews	I	10,247
Partial interviews	P	0
Refusals	R	299
Non-contact	NC	1025
Other	O	3
Unknown household	UH	0
Unknown other	UO	0
Not eligible	NE	0
Total		**11,574**
AAPOR RR1 = I/(I+P+R+NC+O+UH+UO)		89%

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Cumulative response rate, ATP Wave 203

	Total
Weighted response rate to recruitment surveys	12%
% of recruitment survey respondents who agreed to join the panel, among those invited	74%
% of those agreeing to join who were active panelists at start of Wave 203	40%
Response rate to Wave 203 survey	89%
Cumulative response rate	**3%**

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