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Bentley-Gallup

BUSINESS IN SOCIETY SURVEY

2025
Report



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FOREWORD

These are turbulent times. Not just in my industry — higher education — but also across a volatile global marketplace and an acrimonious political arena. Many people are feeling uncertain, and businesses are, too. How can a company successfully market its product or service to a U.S. customer base that is so clearly unsettled and divided?

In unpredictable times like these, it's more important than ever for businesses to do more than simply interpret the financial landscape — they must keep an eye on societal shifts and anticipate how attitudes within their customer base, workforce and competitors are changing.

Business leaders who understand what Americans expect and want from companies can better navigate their way through these rough waters.

The Bentley University-Gallup Business in Society Report was launched in 2022. Each year, it provides clear, quantifiable insights about Americans' attitudes toward businesses. This year's report, based on interviews with 3,007 adults across the country, shows some fascinating trends.

Americans are clearly placing more trust in business. This year's survey shows that 65% of Americans believe businesses have a positive impact on people's lives. That's just a slight increase from last year, but it's a 10-point rise since 2022.

Here's another attention-grabber: More Americans trust businesses than the federal government to act in society's best interest (43% to 31%). And when it comes to companies taking a public stand on current events — a topic where our survey has focused national attention in recent years — more than half of Americans now want businesses to speak out. That's a big jump from last year (38% to 51%).

This year's survey covers other timely topics, too. Tariffs. Artificial intelligence. Diversity in the workforce. Buying American.

Knowing what customers expect is the first step for business executives to lead successfully. It's clear that their expectations for businesses have expanded beyond just making a profit. Americans increasingly believe that good business can affect more than the bottom line — it can change the world.



E. LaBrent Chrite

*President
Bentley University*



KEY FINDINGS



65%
OF AMERICANS

believe businesses have
a positive impact on
people's lives.

Since 2022, Bentley University and Gallup have partnered to annually quantify Americans' general attitudes toward businesses and their effect on individuals and society.

The 2025 *Bentley-Gallup Business in Society Report* builds upon the insights from the earlier studies, identifying changes in attitudes toward businesses, and also examines emerging issues such as artificial intelligence (AI) and tariffs.

The 2025 results are based on interviews with 3,007 U.S. adults, aged 18 or older, conducted May 5-12, 2025.

Most Americans believe businesses are good for society, but they still expect more.

- In 2025, 65% of Americans believe businesses have a somewhat or extremely positive impact on people's lives. While this is a modest increase from 2024, it marks a 10-percentage-point rise since 2022, when 55% reported the same.
- Most Americans (87%) say that businesses have the power to improve lives. Yet far fewer (60%) believe they are using that power effectively and just 43% fully trust their intentions. Still, more trust businesses (43%) than the federal government (31%) to act in society's best interest.
- Americans nearly universally believe it is important for companies to offer quality healthcare to their employees (96%), support their communities (95%), operate sustainably (91%), provide mental health support (91%) and improve the world (90%). However, most Americans see businesses falling short in these areas.

Americans are more supportive of companies taking public stances in 2025, but most employees are uncomfortable hearing from their own employers about current events.

- After two years of decline, public support for businesses speaking out on current events climbed sharply in 2025: 51% of Americans now say companies should take a public stance, up 13 points from the year before.
- At the same time, a majority of employed Americans (60%) say they would rather not hear their employers' views on current events in general, but they do want to hear from them on specific issues related to workplace wellbeing and culture.

Although an increasing number of Americans trust businesses to use AI responsibly, they still expect AI will cost people their jobs.

- Americans still largely lack trust in businesses to use AI responsibly, but their attitudes are starting to shift. In 2025, nearly one in three Americans (31%) say they have “some” or “a lot” of trust in businesses to use AI responsibly, an increase of 10 points since 2023.
- The majority of Americans (57%) continue to view AI as doing equal amounts of harm and good. The percentage viewing it as more harmful (31%) is down nine points since 2023. This drop stems from declining concern among adults over 30, who remain less worried than younger Americans.
- Most Americans expect AI to cost people jobs over the next decade. Since 2023, about three-quarters of Americans have said that AI will reduce the total number of U.S. jobs over the next 10 years. Younger adults are less pessimistic than older adults about AI’s potential to create jobs.

While Americans value buying U.S.-made goods for economic and employment reasons, many question whether tariffs deliver economic gains.

- Despite frequent public discussion about “buying American,” few Americans consistently consider where products are made when making purchases. Nearly four in 10 (37%) Americans are sometimes aware of a product’s country of origin before buying it, while 24% say they are never or rarely aware.
- Of the six product types asked about in the survey, groceries and food are the only ones for which a majority of Americans (64%) say it is important the products are made or grown in the U.S. In contrast, 55% say it matters little or not at all for clothing and footwear to be U.S.-made.
- People who say it is at least somewhat important to buy U.S.-made products cite supporting American jobs and workers (71%), boosting the U.S. economy (57%) and relying less on foreign goods (42%) as the top reasons why it is important to buy these goods.
- A slight majority of Americans (53%) say tariffs do more harm than good for the U.S. economy, while 22% believe they do more good than harm. Self-identified Republicans and political conservatives view tariffs as doing more good than harm.





THE POSITIVE IMPACT OF BUSINESS AND WHERE IT'S FALLING SHORT

Most Americans believe businesses are good for society, but they still expect more.

Americans increasingly see businesses as a positive agent of change.

The public's perceptions of the effect that businesses have on society are becoming more favorable, particularly when it comes to their impact on people's lives and, to a lesser extent, the environment.

In 2025, 65% of Americans believe that businesses have a somewhat positive (39%) or extremely positive (26%) impact on people's lives. While this is a modest increase from 2024, it marks a 10-point rise since 2022, when 55% reported the same.

Republicans (78%) and adults over the age of 45 (68%) are particularly likely to see businesses in a favorable light, outpacing both independents (59%) and Democrats (62%), as well as younger Americans (56%) aged 18 to 29.

Americans' views of the impact that businesses have on the environment have also improved. Just under three in 10 (28%) U.S. adults say businesses have a somewhat or extremely positive impact on the environment, an increase of eight points since 2022. Younger Americans remain the most skeptical: 19% of adults younger than 30 see businesses as a positive force for the environment, compared with 30% of those 60 and older.

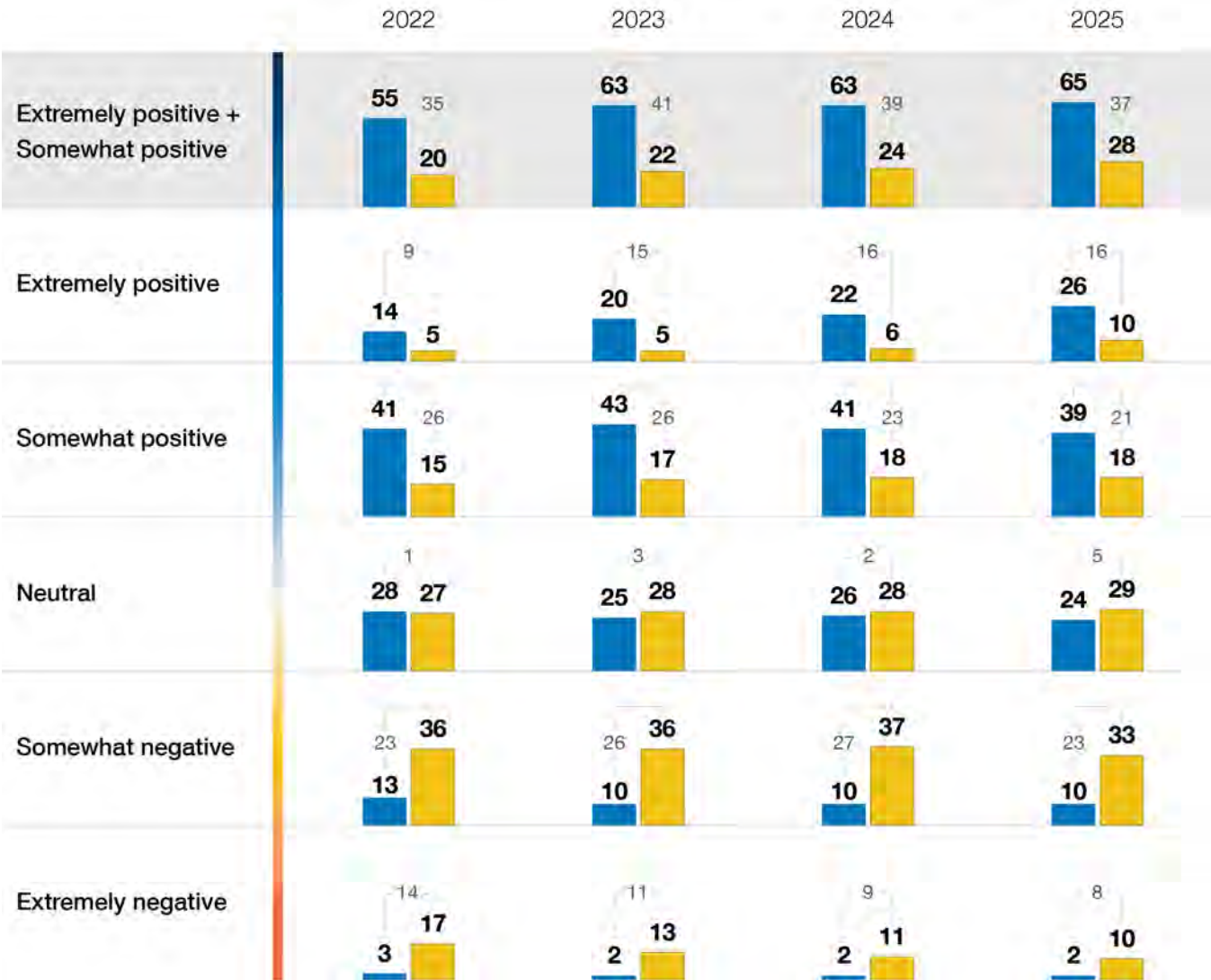


FIGURE 1

Businesses Better for People Than the Environment

In your opinion, which of the following best describes the impact businesses have on...?

■ % People's lives ■ % Planet/Environment



Americans trust businesses more than the federal government to act in society’s best interest.

Most Americans say that businesses have the power to improve lives. Yet far fewer believe they are using that power effectively or fully trust their intentions. Even so, businesses are still viewed more favorably than the federal government when it comes to serving the public good.

Americans place the least trust in the federal government to act in society’s best interest, with just 31% saying they have some or a lot of trust. Businesses are trusted considerably more, with 43% expressing this level of trust in them, although they still trail state and local governments (50%) and charitable and advocacy organizations (80%).

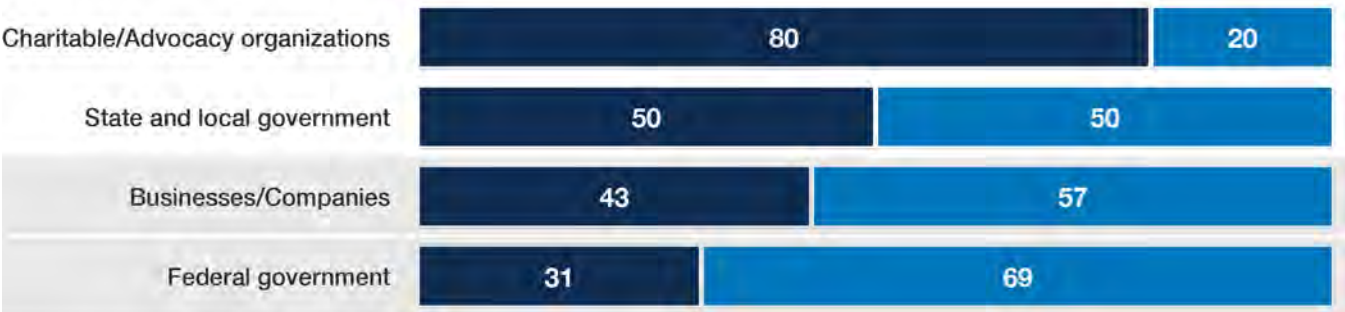
Distrust in the federal government cuts across party lines: 36% of Republicans, 34% of Democrats and 28% of independents say they trust it to act in society’s best interest. In contrast, there are clear partisan divides in Americans’ trust in businesses. A majority of Republicans (57%) express trust in businesses to serve the public good, compared with 39% of both Democrats and independents.

FIGURE 2

Americans Trust the Federal Government Least to Act in Society’s Interest

How much do you trust the following groups to act in the best interest of society?

■ % Some/A lot ■ % Not at all/Not much



Since 2022, Americans have consistently viewed businesses as more effective than the federal government at making a positive impact on people's lives. In 2025, 60% say businesses are extremely or somewhat effective, compared with 51% who say the same about the federal government. While perceptions of business effectiveness have remained steady, views of the federal government's effectiveness have gradually improved, rising from 39% in 2022 to 43% in 2023, 47% in 2024 and now 51%.

Americans view businesses as about equally effective as state and local governments (62%). Among all the groups asked about, charitable and advocacy organizations are seen as the most effective, with 80% saying they have a positive impact on people's lives.

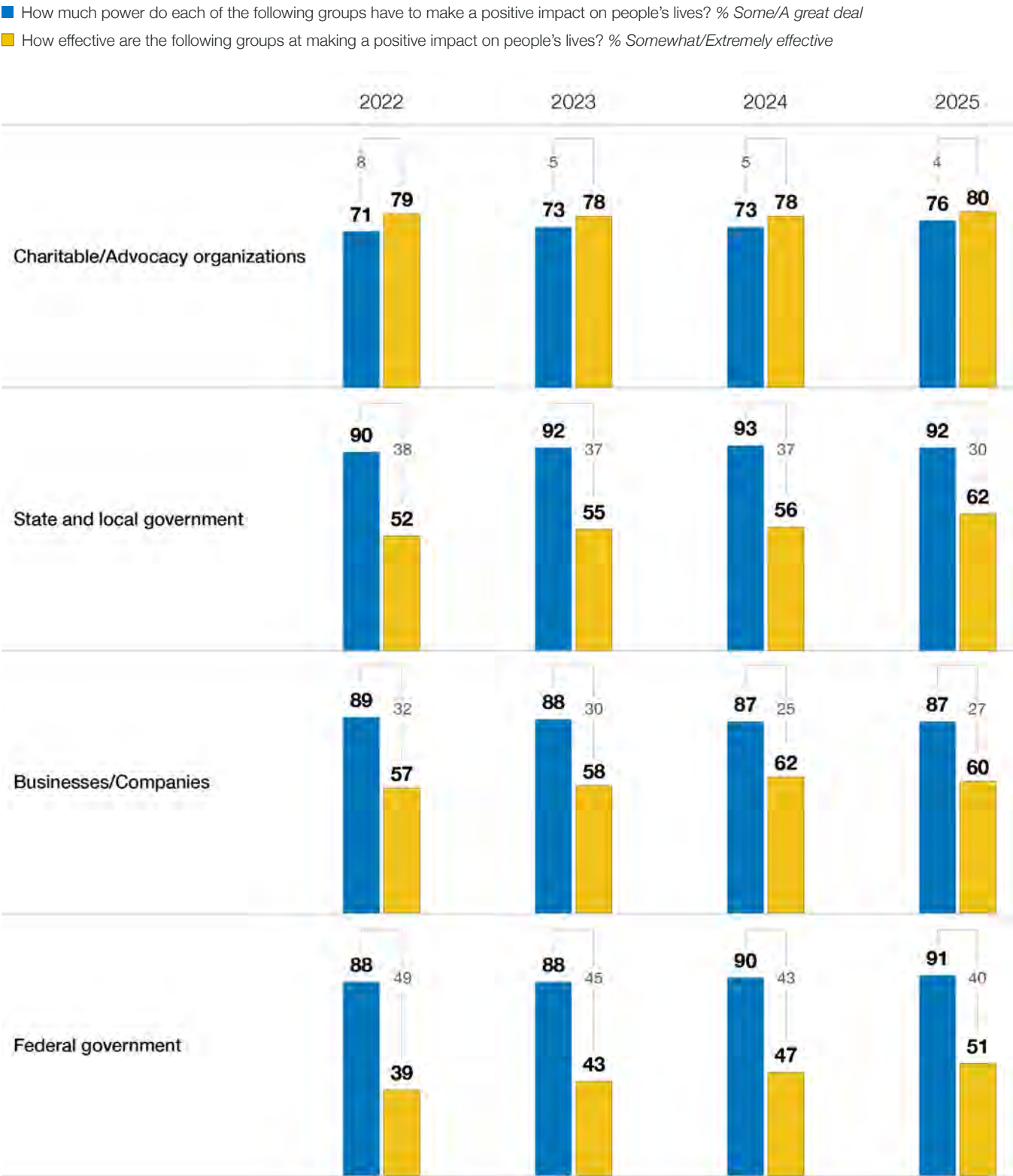
Despite recognizing the potential for businesses to do good, Americans see a gap between that potential and actual performance. Eighty-seven percent of Americans believe businesses have a "great deal" or "some" power to positively impact people's lives; however, substantially fewer (60%) say businesses are extremely or somewhat effective in doing so.

In 2025, 60% say businesses are extremely or somewhat effective, compared with 51% who say the same about the federal government.



FIGURE 3

Americans See a Gap in Perceived Power vs. Effectiveness to Impact People’s Lives



Americans place high expectations on businesses but continue to see them falling short.

Most Americans expect businesses to move beyond profit-making and try to improve employee wellbeing, environmental sustainability and social impact.

Americans consistently place high importance on the role businesses play in society — and those priorities have remained steady over time. In 2025, nearly all Americans say it is somewhat or extremely important for companies to offer quality healthcare to their employees (96%), support their communities (95%), operate sustainably (91%), provide mental health support (91%) and work to improve the world (90%).

Despite these enduring expectations, large gaps remain between these expectations and perceived business performance, particularly in the areas of healthcare, mental health, environmental responsibility and equitable compensation. These gaps have shown little to no improvement since the study began, underscoring a persistent disconnect between business potential and perceived impact.



FIGURE 4

Business Priorities vs. Performance

■ In your opinion, **how important is it** that businesses, in general, do the following? % *Somewhat + Extremely important*
■ In your opinion, **how do you think businesses, in general, are doing** in the following areas? % *Good + Excellent*



These results are especially notable in light of people’s overall optimism about the role of business in society. While a majority say businesses have a positive impact on people’s lives, they are far less likely to say companies are delivering in specific, high-priority areas. This disconnect suggests that although Americans see real potential in the private sector, they are also seeking more concrete and measurable action on the issues that matter most to them.



SHOULD COMPANIES SPEAK OUT OR STICK TO BUSINESS?

Americans are more supportive of companies taking public stances in 2025, but most employees are uncomfortable hearing from their employers about current events.

Support for businesses taking a public stance on current events rebounded.

After declining for two consecutive years, the public's appetite for businesses to speak out on current events reached its highest level in 2025.

A slim majority of Americans (51%) say businesses should take a public stance on current issues, a 13-point increase from 2024.

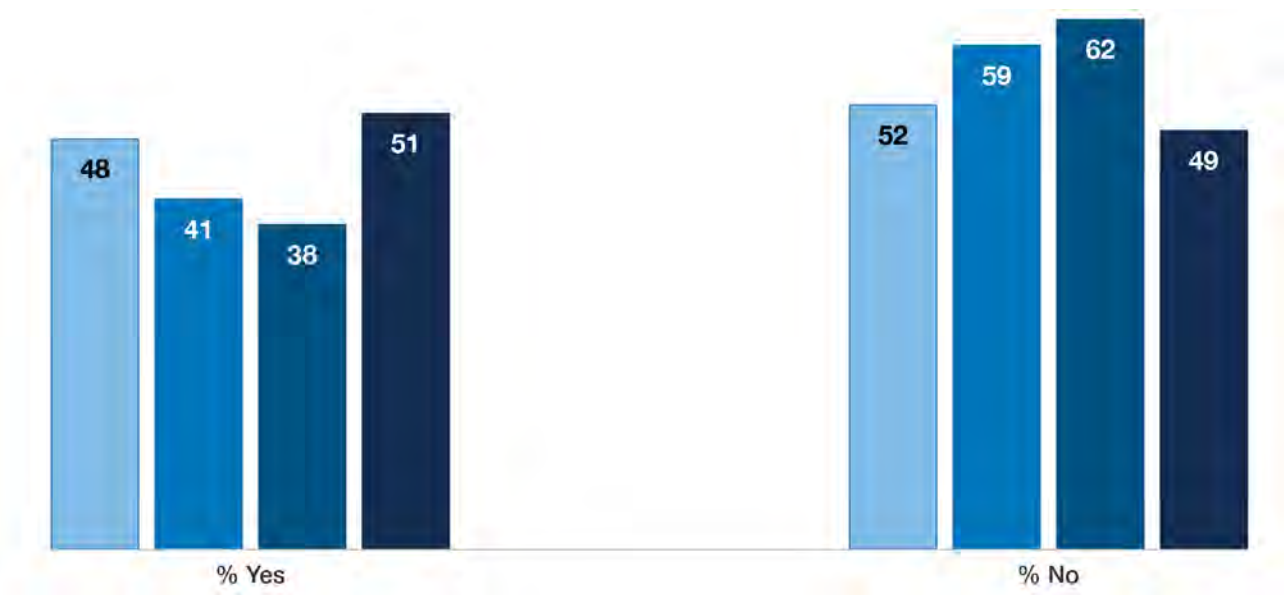
This marks a reversal of the downward trend that began after 2022, when support stood at 48%. Americans are now closely divided on the issue, with 49% saying businesses should not take a stance. In 2023 and 2024, Americans leaned more decisively toward the “no” position.

FIGURE 5

Desire for Businesses to Take Public Stance Rebounds

Do you think businesses, in general, should take a public stance on current events?

2022 2023 2024 2025



Support for businesses taking a public stance increased by at least 10 points in most major demographic subgroups in 2025. As in the past, support remains unevenly distributed across the population, skewing highly Democratic.

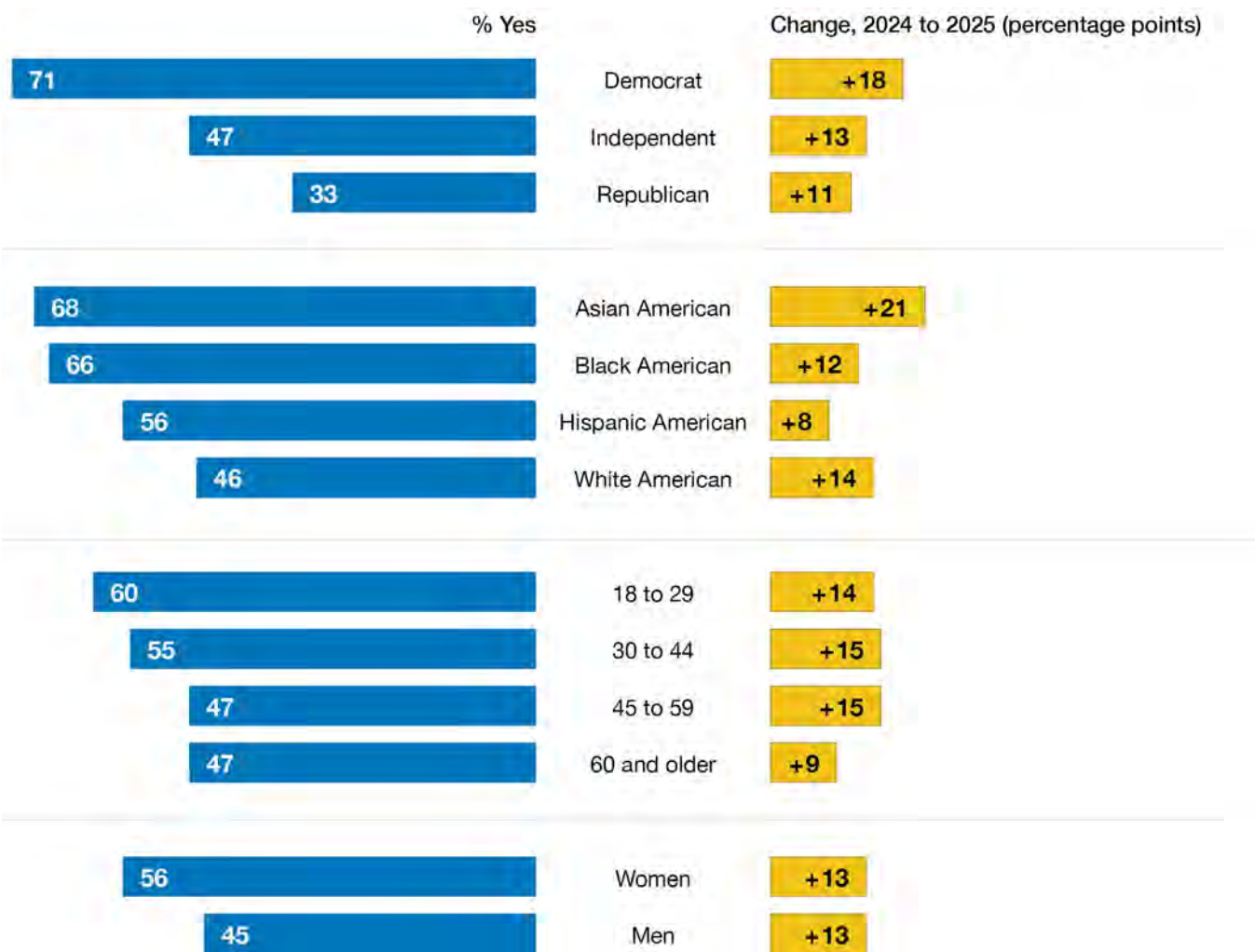
Solid majorities of self-identified Asian, Black and Hispanic Americans, as well as Democrats, younger adults and female respondents now say businesses should take a public stance. In contrast, less than half of men, White Americans and older respondents and one-third of self-identified Republicans agree — although support grew among these groups as well.

These patterns suggest that while support is growing overall, it remains deeply influenced by demographic and political identity.

FIGURE 6

Support for Businesses Taking a Public Stance Up Across All Major Demographics

Do you think businesses, in general, should take a public stance on current events?



More Americans want businesses to speak out on key issues.

Support is expanding for businesses to take public stances on a wider array of societal topics.

Americans were also asked whether businesses should take public stances on 12 different topics ranging from climate change and healthcare to immigration and international conflicts. The question was also asked in the 2023 and 2024 surveys.

Support rose for businesses speaking out on all 12 subjects between 2024 and 2025, reflecting a broad-based shift in public expectations for corporate engagement. The gains spanned all demographics, including political affiliations.

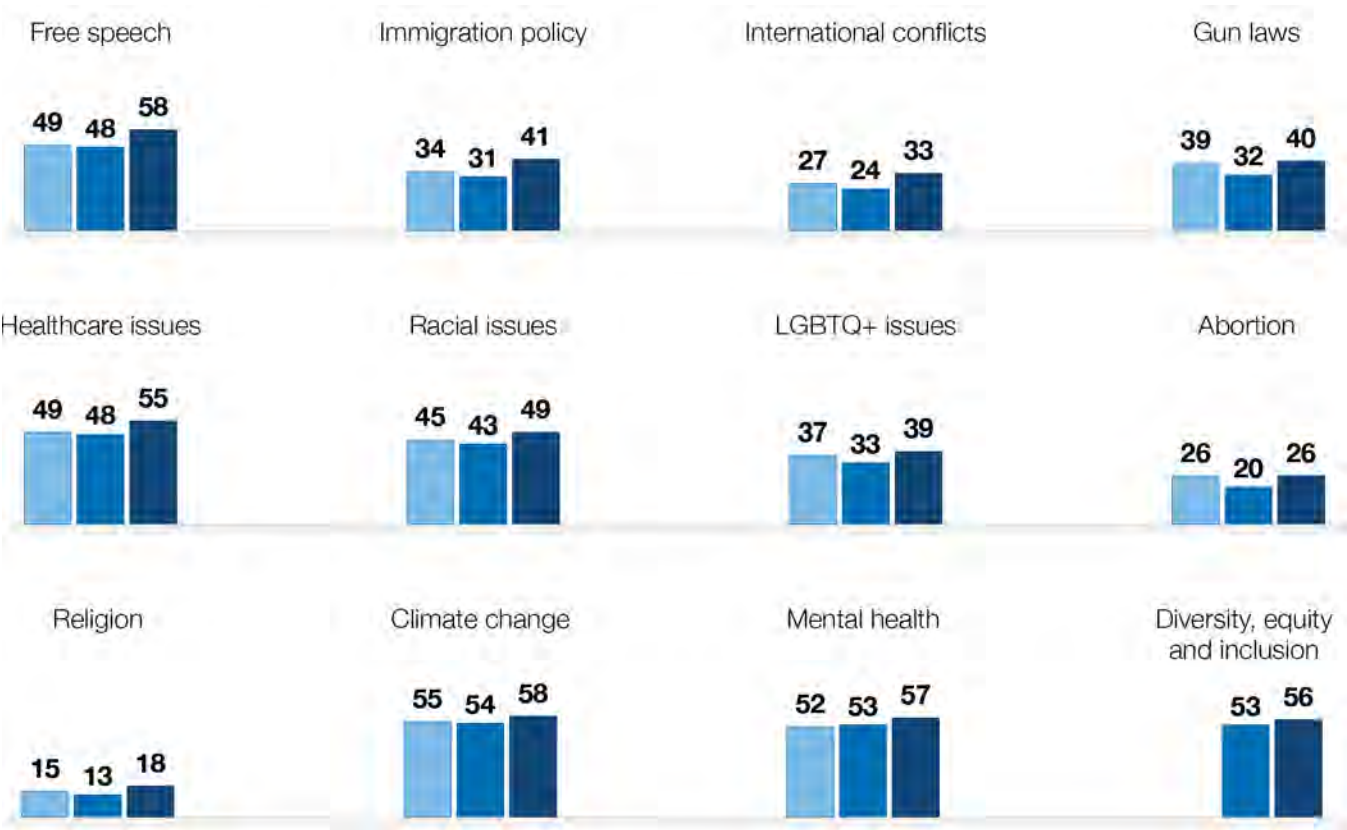
Some of the most notable increases over the past year include support for businesses speaking out on immigration (41% in 2025, up from 31% in 2024), free speech (58% vs. 48% in 2024) and international conflicts (33% vs. 24% in 2024).

FIGURE 7

Support Rises Most for Businesses to Take a Public Stance on Free Speech, Immigration Policy and International Conflicts

Do you think that businesses, in general, should take a public stance on subjects that have to do with the following?
% Yes

2023 2024 2025



Sorted by change between 2024 and 2025

In 2025, a majority of Americans say businesses should speak out on five of the 12 issues included in the survey, up from just three in 2024. Notably, free speech and healthcare issues rose to the top five issues and now receive majority support.

Beyond these five, overall support increased significantly from 2024 to 2025 across all 12 topics, with gains observed across political and demographic groups, including both Republicans and Democrats. This trend points to a broader shift in Americans' expectations about corporate engagement in public discourse.

The five topics with majority support in 2025 are:

58%

FREE SPEECH

58%

CLIMATE CHANGE

57%

MENTAL HEALTH

56%

DIVERSITY, EQUITY
AND INCLUSION

55%

HEALTHCARE ISSUES

Most employees don't want their employers to speak to them about current events, except on a few key topics.

While Americans increasingly want businesses to take a stand, most employed Americans would prefer not to hear from their own employers about where they stand on current events. This contrast points to a growing tension between what customers expect to hear from companies publicly and what employees are comfortable hearing in the workplace.

When asked for the first time in 2025 whether their own employer should communicate a stance to their employees on current events, less than half of employed Americans believe they should. Their reluctance applies not only to current events in general, but also to most specific issues, except those directly tied to workplace wellbeing and organizational culture.

A majority of employed Americans (60%) say their employer should not communicate a stance to employees on current events.

While people may support businesses speaking out publicly, they may be more cautious about such communication in the workplace.

The demographics of employees who want to hear from their employers on social and political issues closely mirror those of Americans who believe companies should take a public stance:

Younger workers, Black and Hispanic employees and Democrats are significantly more likely than their counterparts to want their employers to speak to their employees about current events. At least half in each of these groups say their employers should communicate where they stand to employees.

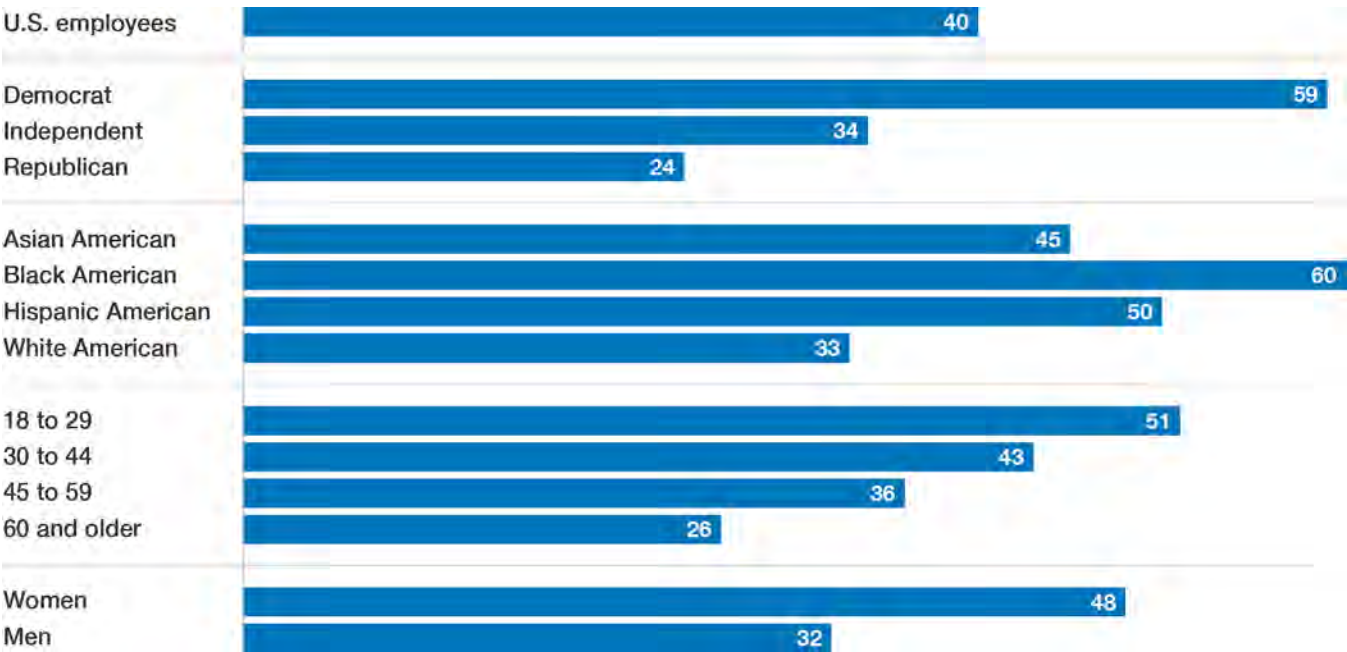
In contrast, majorities of employees over age 30, White and Asian employees, Republicans and political independents tend to prefer silence from their employers on such matters.

FIGURE 8

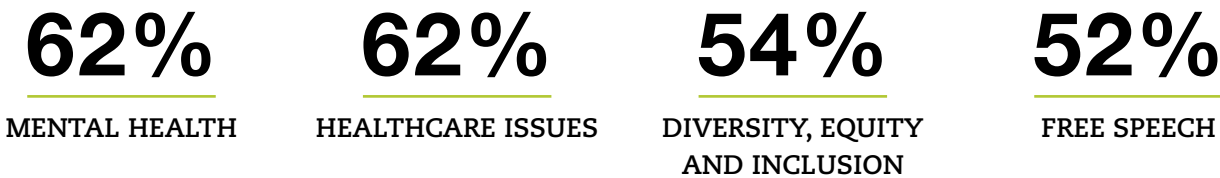
At Least Half of Younger, Black, Hispanic, Democratic Employees Want to Hear From Their Employers on Current Events

Do you think your employer, in general, should communicate a stance to employees on current events?

% Yes



When asked about 12 specific topics, more than half of employed Americans say they want to hear from their employer on just four of them:



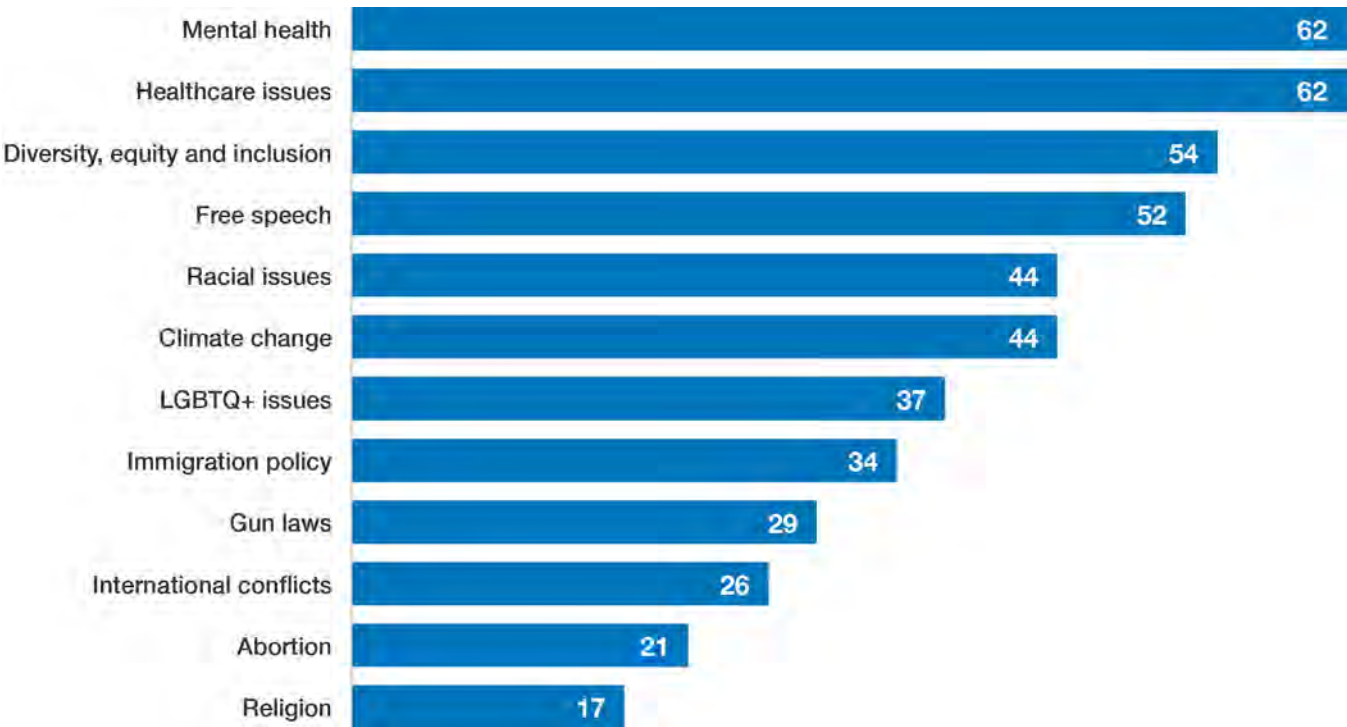
The top three topics — mental health, healthcare and diversity, equity and inclusion — fall squarely within the employer’s purview, reflecting employee interest in hearing from their employer about workplace-related support and policies.

FIGURE 9

Employees Most Open to Hearing Where Employers Stand on Workplace-Related Issues

Do you think your employer should communicate a stance to employees on subjects that have to do with the following?

% Yes



Most adults believe diversity can boost business performance.

Americans largely see workplace diversity as a business strength, though a growing number also associate it with internal challenges.

Roughly six in 10 Americans believe that businesses with a diverse workforce are more profitable (61%) and more innovative (64%). These percentages are consistent with 2024 findings, indicating sustained support for the benefits of diversity.

At the same time, the percentage of Americans who believe diversity leads to greater conflict rose slightly from 32% to 35%, and those who see it as increasing discrimination rose from 32% to 36%.

Notably, more Americans now say each of these diversity-related statements is “completely true,” suggesting a growing belief in both the potentially positive and negative impacts of workplace diversity.

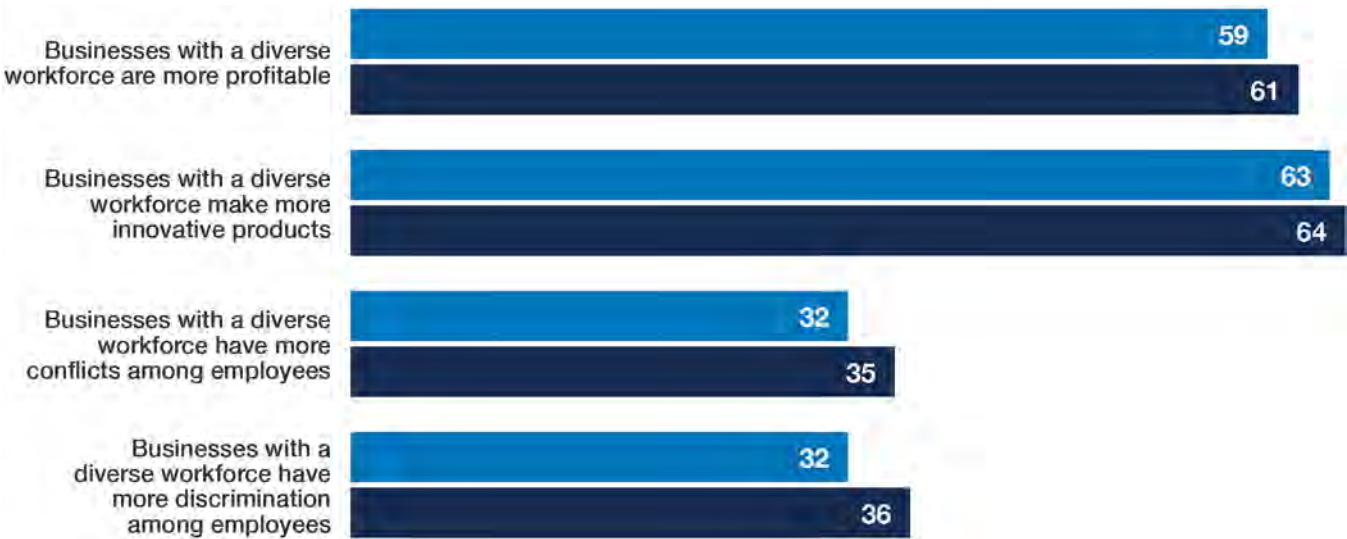
FIGURE 10

Perceptions of Diverse Workforces

Based on what you know, or have experienced, please indicate the extent to which you feel the following statements are true.

% Somewhat/Completely true

■ 2024 ■ 2025





TRUST IN ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE (AI) GROWS, BUT DOUBTS LINGER

Although an increasing number of Americans trust businesses to use AI responsibly, they still expect AI to cost people their jobs.

Trust in businesses to responsibly use AI is slowly increasing.

Although Americans still largely lack trust in businesses to use AI responsibly, their views are becoming more positive.

In 2025, nearly one in three Americans (31%) say they trust businesses “some” or “a lot” to use AI responsibly, an increase of eight percentage points since 2024 and 10 points since 2023.

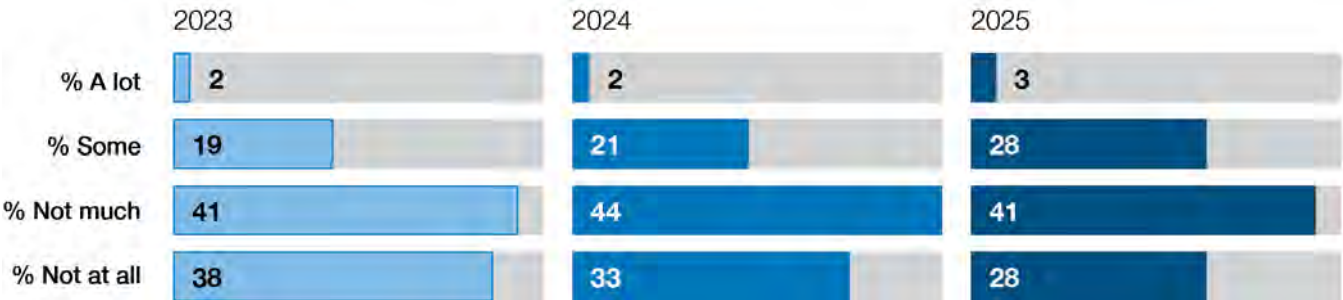
Trust has risen significantly across every major demographic group, indicating broad-based movement, even if overall trust remains modest.

Still, a majority (69%) of Americans continue to express little to no trust in businesses when it comes to AI. However, the percentage who are most skeptical — saying they do not trust businesses at all — declined meaningfully in 2025, down to 28%, from 33% in 2024 and 38% in 2023.

FIGURE 11

Americans Trust Businesses More to Use AI Than in Past Years, but Still Skeptical

In general, how much do you trust businesses to use artificial intelligence responsibly?



These findings suggest a gradual but notable shift in public sentiment about how businesses use AI. While most Americans remain skeptical, signs of increased openness and less outright distrust point to evolving perceptions.

Americans continue to see AI as doing more harm than good.

Aside from how businesses employ it, Americans remain cautious about AI overall, with concern continuing to outweigh optimism among those with strong opinions.

Most Americans (57%) continue to believe AI does equal amounts of harm and good. However, among those whose opinions on AI are not neutral, more believe AI does more harm than good (31%) than believe its benefits outweigh its drawbacks (12%).

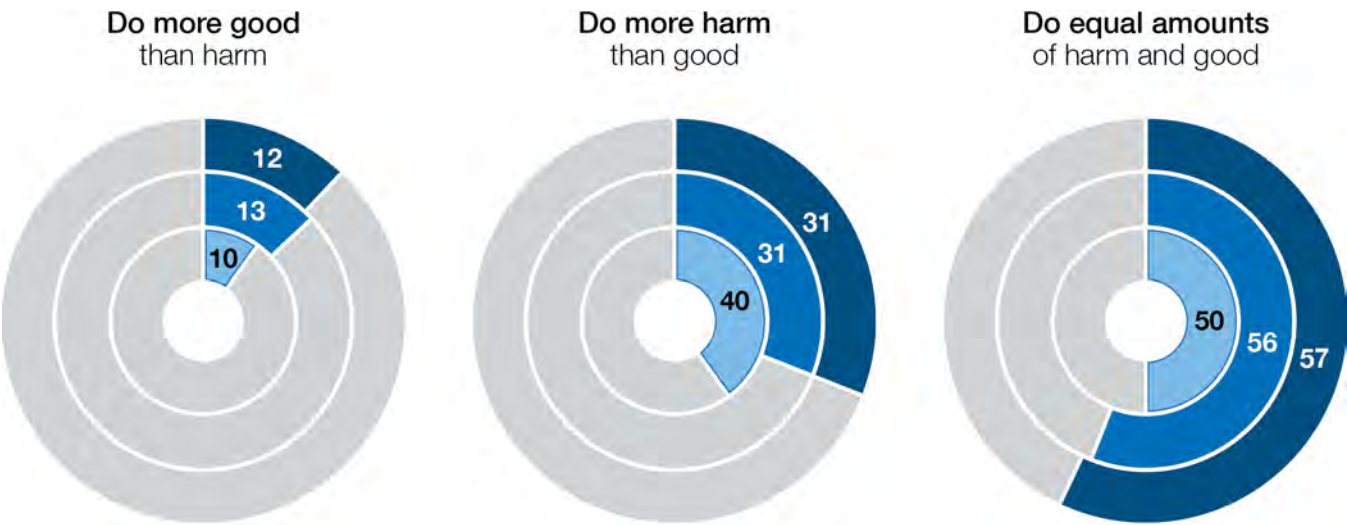
The share of Americans who view AI as doing more harm than good is unchanged from 2024, but down sharply from 40% in 2023. This decline is primarily driven by adults over age 30, who remain less concerned than younger Americans about AI's impact. While skepticism persists across all age groups, it tends to decline with age.

FIGURE 12

Americans Largely Neutral on AI, but See More Harm Than Good

In your opinion, does artificial intelligence...?

■ % 2023 ■ % 2024 ■ % 2025



Most still believe AI will cost U.S. jobs.

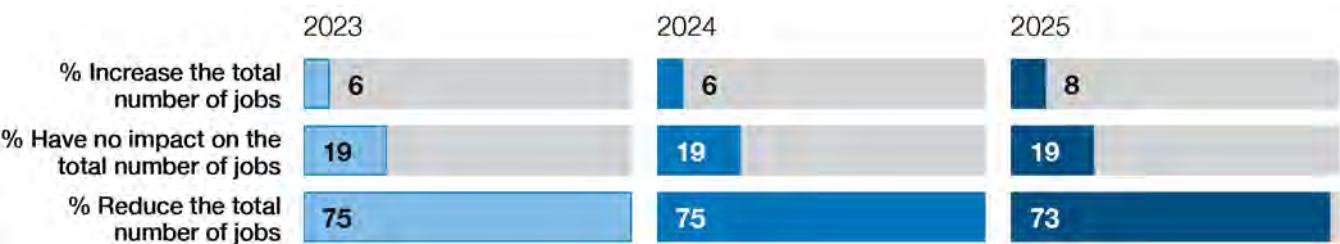
Job displacement remains a top concern about AI, though younger adults show slightly less pessimism about its job-creating potential.

Most Americans anticipate AI will lead to job losses and disrupt the labor market for the next decade. Since 2023, roughly three in four adults have believed that AI will reduce the total number of U.S. jobs over the next 10 years.

FIGURE 13

Job Impact Remains Chief Concern About AI

In your opinion, what type of effect will artificial intelligence have on the total number of jobs in the United States over the next 10 years?



Younger adults (aged 18 to 29) are the most optimistic about AI's job-creating potential: 14% believe AI will increase employment, compared to 6% to 9% in other age groups. However, this optimism exists alongside broader concerns. This same age group is also the most likely to believe AI does more harm than good, showing that optimism about job growth does not necessarily equate to overall positivity about AI.

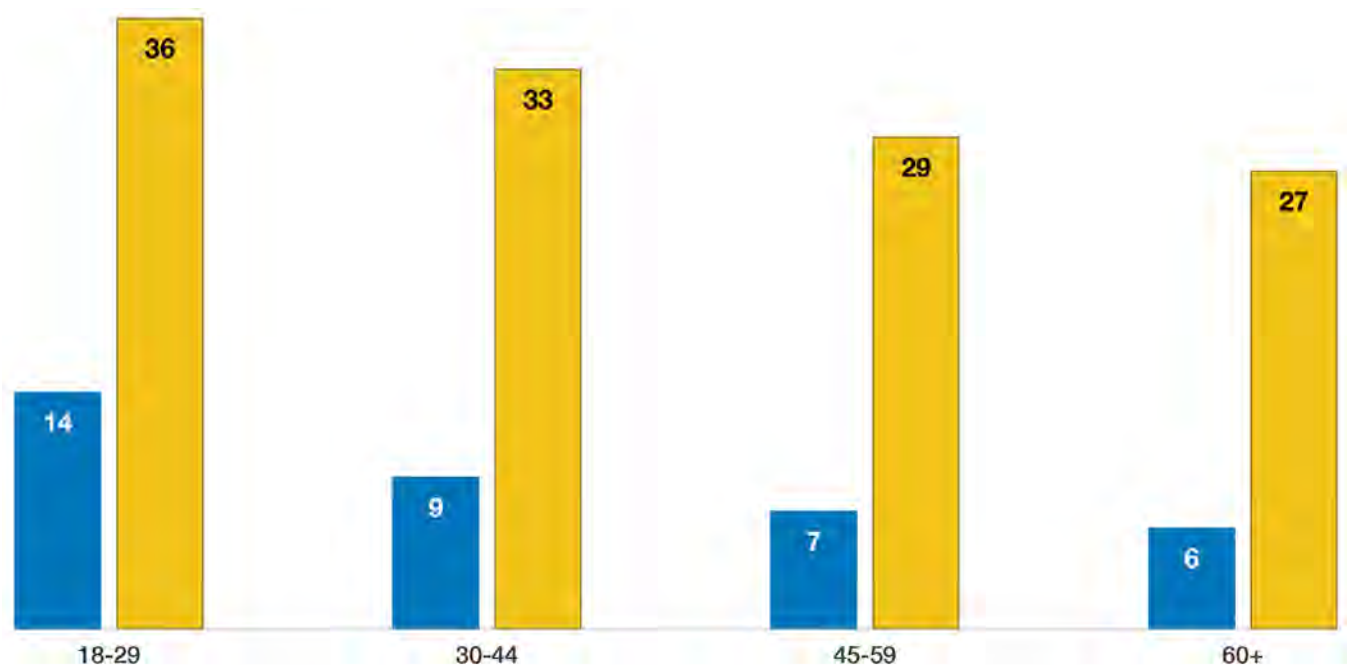
FIGURE 14
Young Adults Less Pessimistic About AI's Job Creation Potential but Concerned About Broader Implications

In your opinion, what type of effect will artificial intelligence have on the total number of jobs in the United States over the next 10 years?

In your opinion, does artificial intelligence...?

% of Americans

■ AI will increase total number of jobs ■ AI does more harm than good



AI in hiring, AI in self-driving cars and AI in healthcare remain top concerns.

Americans continue to express strong concerns about several uses of AI, especially when it comes to decisions that potentially affect employment, safety and health.

A majority of Americans are somewhat or extremely concerned about all six AI use cases included in the survey. The top three concerns in 2025 — using AI for hiring decisions (83%), driving vehicles (81%) and recommending medical advice (78%) — mirror the top concerns in 2024. This shows sustained public unease in these high-stakes areas.

FIGURE 15

Concerns About AI Applications

How concerned are you about artificial intelligence being used in the following areas?

% Somewhat/Extremely concerned



Views diverge somewhat when it comes to the use of AI in education. Younger adults are less concerned about its use in this context: 56% of those aged 18 to 29 express concerns about AI helping students with homework or studying, compared with 65% to 78% among the older age groups.



PATRIOTISM AND POLICIES

While Americans value buying U.S.-made goods for economic and employment reasons, many question whether tariffs deliver economic gains.

Buying American matters in principle, less in practice.

Despite frequent public discourse about the importance of “buying American,” the reality is more nuanced.

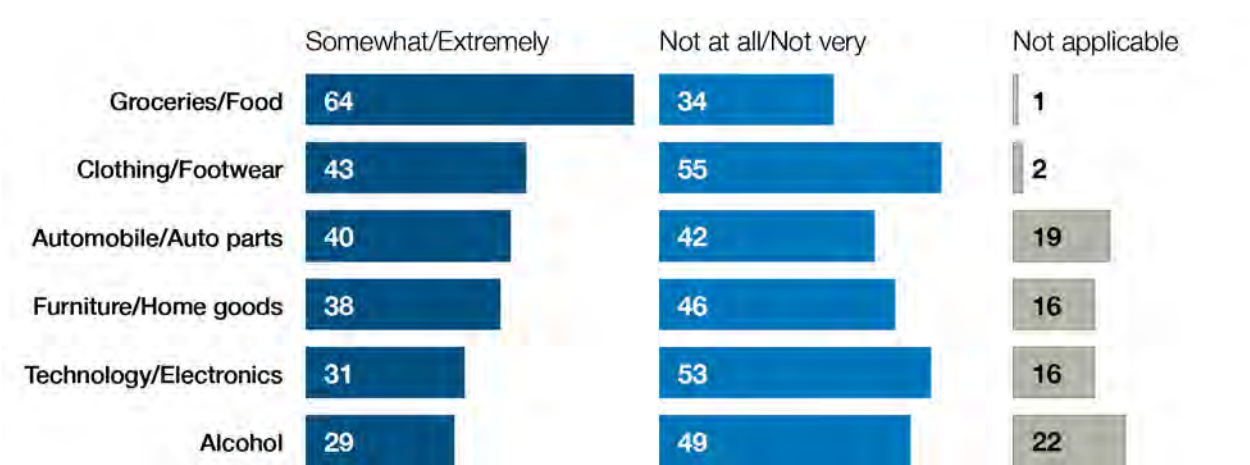
Among the product categories measured in the survey, only groceries and food are considered somewhat or extremely important to be made in the U.S. by a majority of respondents (64%). This indicates that for most everyday items, a product’s U.S. origin is not a dominant factor in consumer decision-making.

FIGURE 16

Majority Say Important to Buy Food, but Not Other Products, Made in U.S.A.

When you purchased the following types of products in the past year, how important was it to you that they were made in the United States?

% Level of Importance



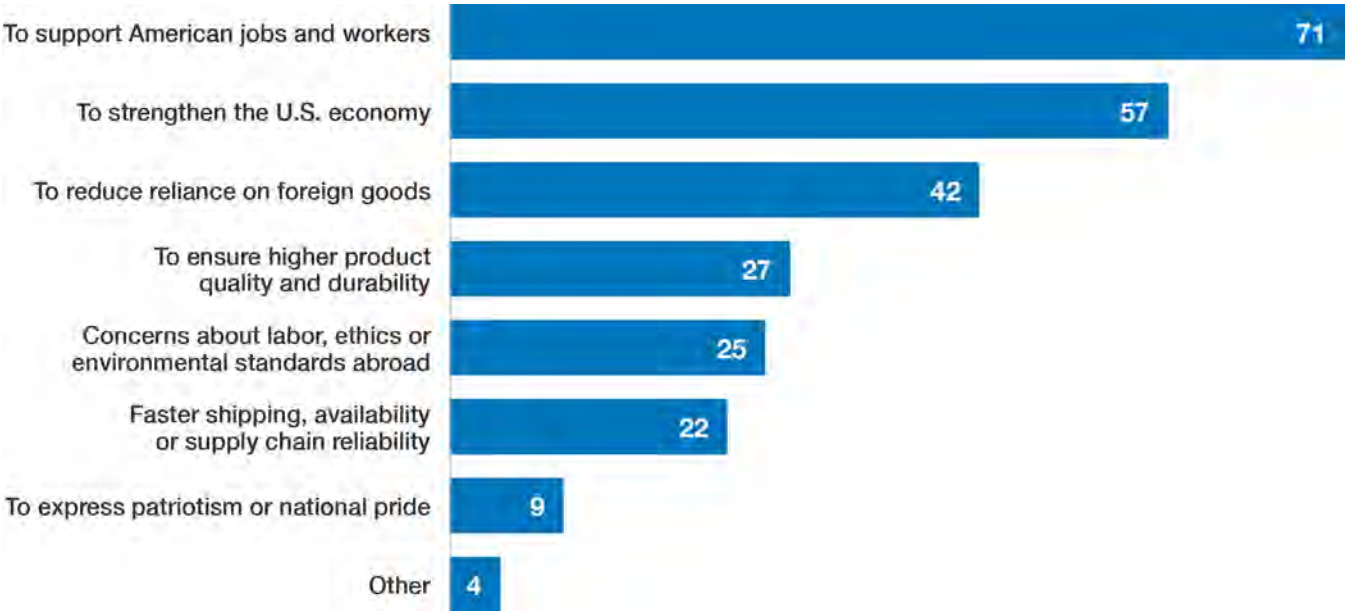
When it comes to their purchasing habits, nearly four in 10 Americans (39%) say they consistently consider where products are made. Another 37% are only sometimes aware of a product’s country of origin before buying, while 24% say they are rarely or never aware. These findings suggest that while “Made in the USA” carries symbolic weight in conversation, it plays a limited role in Americans’ actual purchasing decisions.

Respondents who consider it somewhat or extremely important to purchase American-made products in at least one category were asked to identify their primary motivations. The most commonly selected reasons are to support American jobs and workers (71%), to strengthen the U.S. economy (57%) and to reduce reliance on foreign goods (42%).

FIGURE 17

Economic Reasons Spur Buying American

What are the main reasons it is important to you to buy products that are made in the United States? Select up to three.
Among those who said it was somewhat or extremely important to purchase American-made goods in at least one category (%)

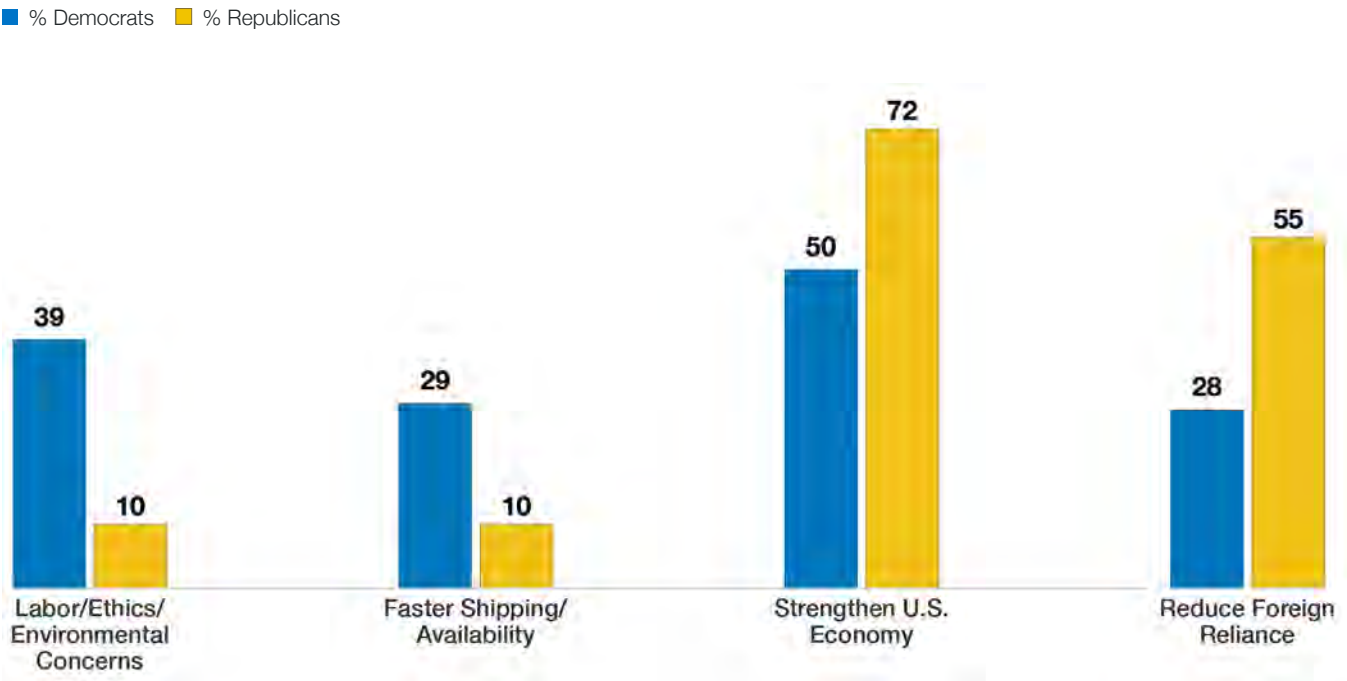


Republican and Democratic respondents have somewhat different motivations. Democrats are more likely than Republicans to name concerns about labor, ethics or environmental standards abroad (39% vs. 10%) and faster shipping, availability or supply chain reliability (29% vs. 10%) as the main reasons they buy American-made goods. Republicans, on the other hand, are more likely than Democrats to cite strengthening the U.S. economy (72% vs. 50%) and reducing reliance on foreign goods (55% vs. 28%).

FIGURE 18

Motivations for Buying American-Made Goods by Political Affiliation

What are the main reasons it is important to you to buy products that are made in the United States? Select up to three.
Among those who said it was somewhat or extremely important to purchase American-made goods in at least one category (%)



Tariffs in 2025: Patriotism meets pragmatism.

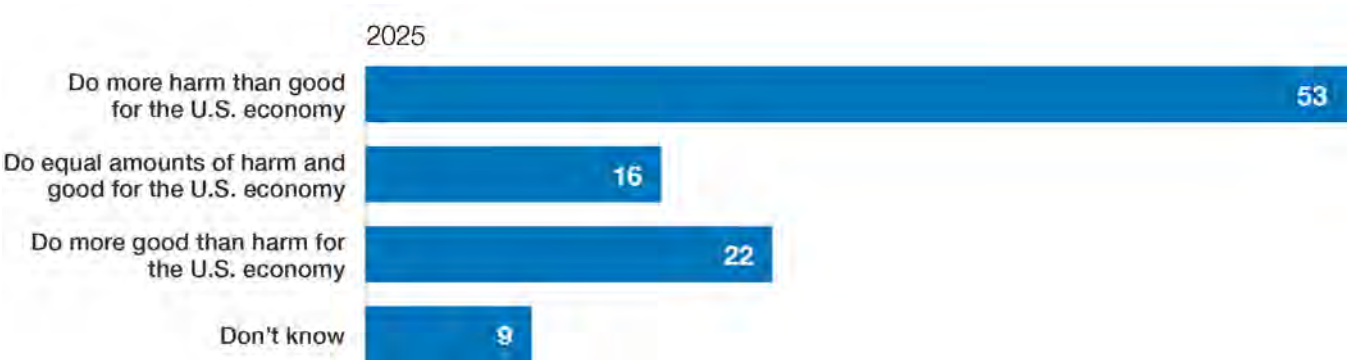
Despite support for U.S.-made goods in theory, Americans remain skeptical of tariffs, which aim to enforce this preference through trade restrictions.

A slight majority of Americans (53%) say tariffs do more harm than good for the U.S. economy, while 22% believe they do more good than harm.

Another 16% think tariffs offer an equal mix of positive and negative effects, and 9% are unsure. Self-identified Republicans and political conservatives are the only groups to view tariffs as doing more good than harm (49% vs. 12% of Republicans, 63% vs. 14% of very conservative, 44% vs. 19% of conservative).

FIGURE 19
Americans Skeptical of Benefits of Increased Tariffs

As you may know, tariffs are a type of tax on goods imported to the U.S. from other countries. Do you think increased tariffs...?



Americans' skepticism about tariffs may reflect concerns about higher consumer prices, strained global trade relationships and inflationary effects. These are issues that have surfaced in public discourse throughout 2025 as tariffs remain a key point of contention in U.S. trade policy.

The tension between valuing American-made products and opposing tariffs highlights a nuanced public perspective: Americans want to support domestic industry, but not at the expense of affordability and economic stability.

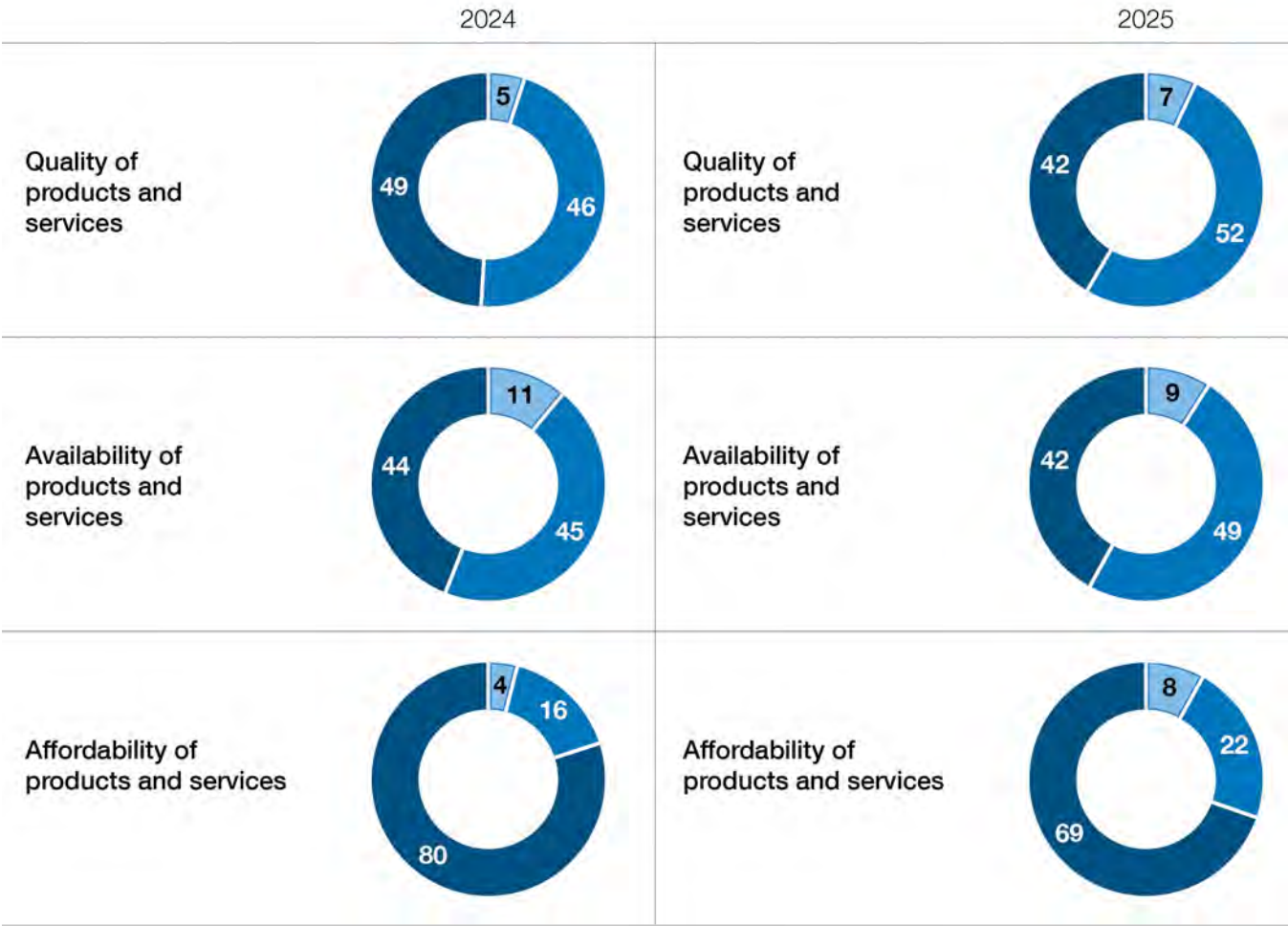
Against the backdrop of trade wars and tariffs, Americans are less likely in 2025 than in 2024 to report worsening affordability. A majority of U.S. adults (69%) say they have noticed a decline in the affordability of products and services over the past year, a sizable decline from 80% in 2024.

Perceptions of quality and availability have also improved slightly. In 2025, 42% of Americans report a decline in the quality of products and services, down from 49% the previous year. Marginally fewer Americans in 2025 say they have experienced a decline in product availability, with 42% reporting such issues (compared with 44% in 2024).

FIGURE 20
Product and Service Perceptions in the Past Year

Over the past 12 months, have you noticed an overall improvement, no change or a decline in the following from businesses you buy products or services from?

■ % Improvement ■ % No change ■ % Decline



While concerns regarding cost and quality have moderated, many Americans continue to place value on buying U.S.-made goods, particularly when it comes to supporting jobs and the economy and reducing dependence on foreign imports.



METHODOLOGY

Results for the 2025 Bentley-Gallup Business in Society Survey are based on a Gallup Panel™ web study completed by 3,007 U.S. adults, aged 18 and older, conducted May 5-12, 2025. For results based on this sample of adults, the margin of sampling error at the 95% confidence level is ± 2.8 percentage points for response percentages around 50% and is ± 1.7 percentage points for response percentages around 10% or 90%, design effect included.

2024, 2023 and 2022 results are from previous iterations of the Bentley-Gallup Business in Society Survey. In 2024, the survey was conducted between April 29-May 6, 2024.

For these results, the maximum margin of sampling error at the 95% confidence level is ± 2.1 percentage points, design effect included. In 2023, the survey was conducted between May 8-15, 2023. For these results, the maximum margin of sampling error is ± 1.8 percentage points at the 95% confidence level, design effect included. In 2022, the survey was conducted between June 8-19, 2022. For these results, the maximum margin of sampling error is ± 1.9 percentage points at the 95% confidence level, design effect included.



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