

It is for Trump to loose rather than the Democrats to win

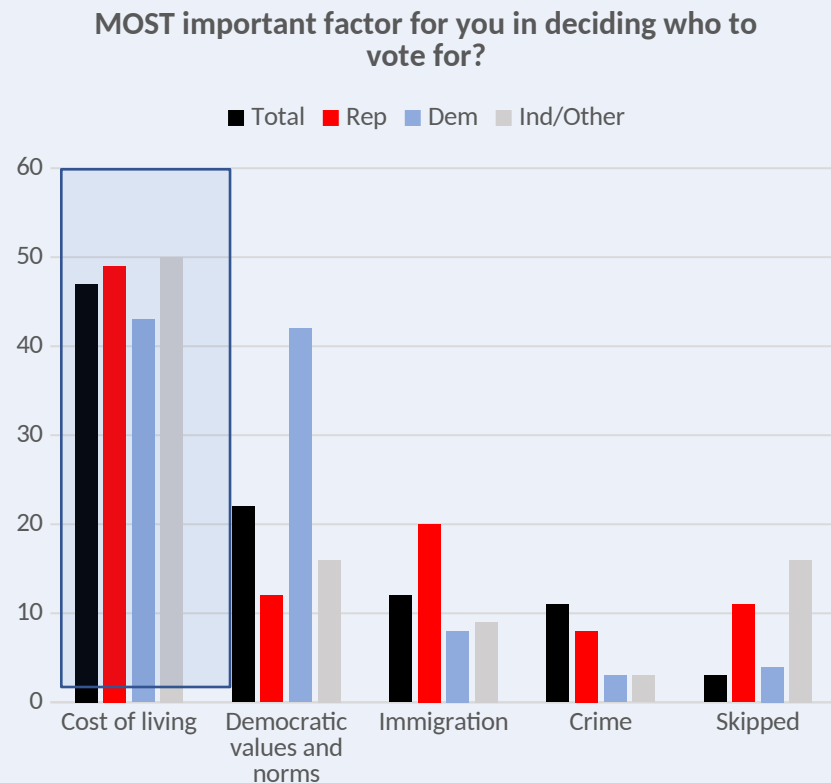
Media Tenor analysis | January 2025–October 2026*

Media analysis suggests that the cost of living will be a decisive factor in the upcoming midterm elections.

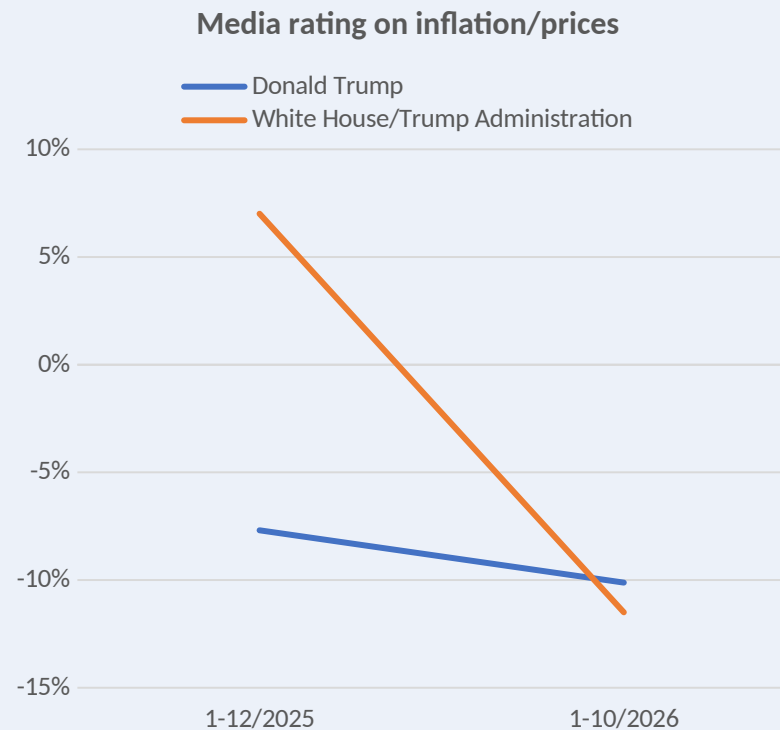


Unsplash: Rubaitul Azad, Yang Xia; until October 23, 2026

U.S. citizens united in their most pressing concern



Source: Ipsos/Reuters poll Aug 28-31, 2026



Media Tenor:
 Trump: 78 / 79 reports;
 White House Administration: 57 / 52 reports

Depending on the source, about 50 per cent and more of the U.S. citizens consider the cost of living the most important factor in their Midterm-voting decision. And this is one of the few issues on the public agenda where Republican and Democratic voters are united. So here it seems to matter most what people see in the media and feel in their purses.

The tone of coverage on U.S. president Donald Trump has declined from -7.6 in 2025 to -10 in the first ten months of 2026. At the same time, the tone of coverage on the White House Administration has dropped from plus 7 to -11 points despite a number of efforts to address the problem.

Priorities of voters and media attention

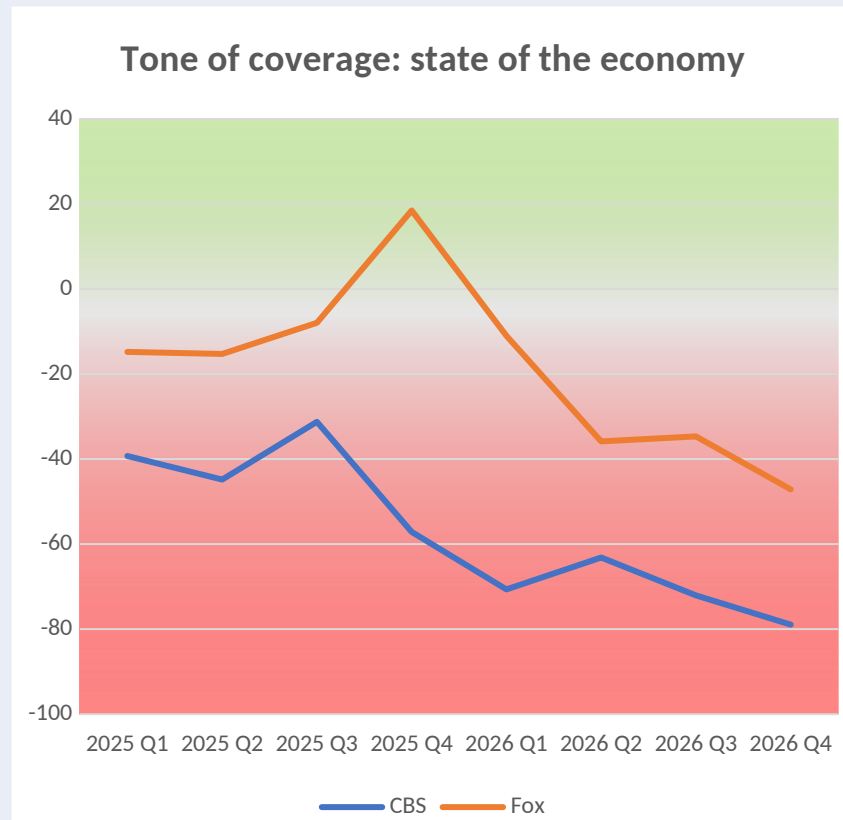
Two different measures: voter importance of the topic and share of coded coverage of the topic 1-10/2026

Issue (polls) / media category	Voters	Media share
Economy / economy and prices	84%	7.5%
Healthcare / health	68%	1.7%
Education / education	62%	0.8%
Immigration / illegal migration	59%	0.5%

The topic labels are approximate: illegal migration is narrower than immigration. Poll percentages are not shares of attention and can total more than 100%.

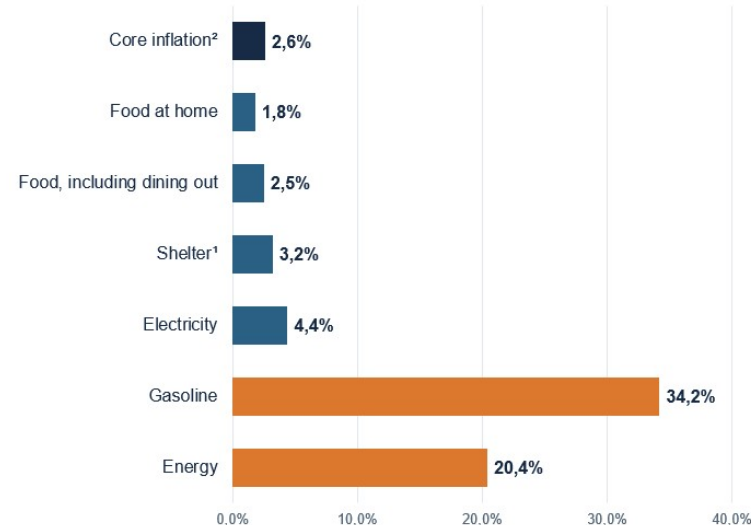
TV news highlight inflation painting a bleak picture of the economy

Tone of coverage on the state of the economy 1/2015 – 10/2026



US inflation by spending category

September 2026 · Year-over-year change in consumer prices



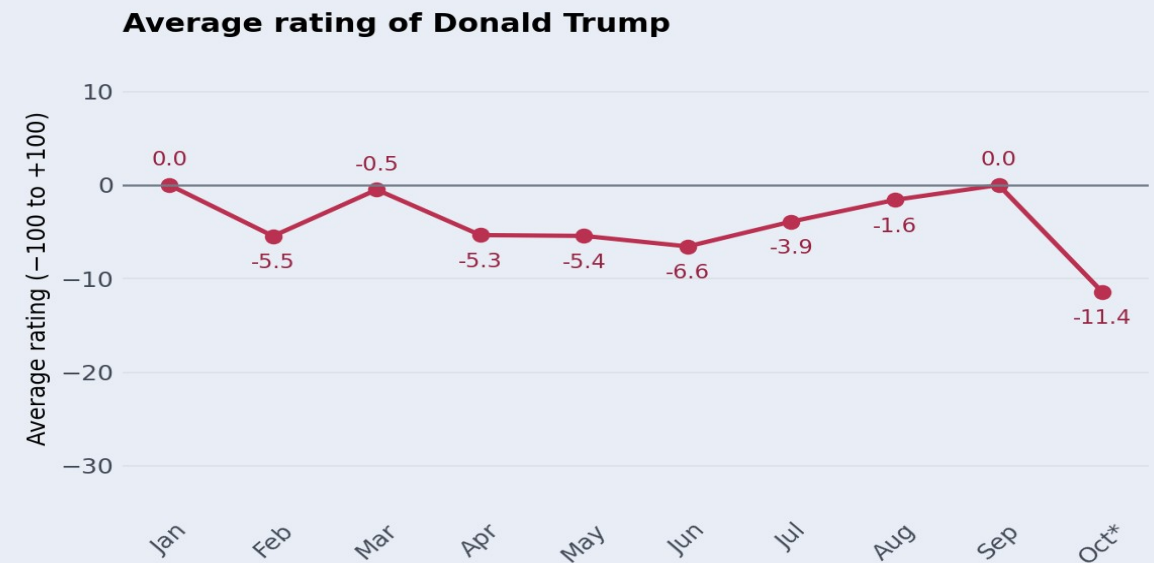
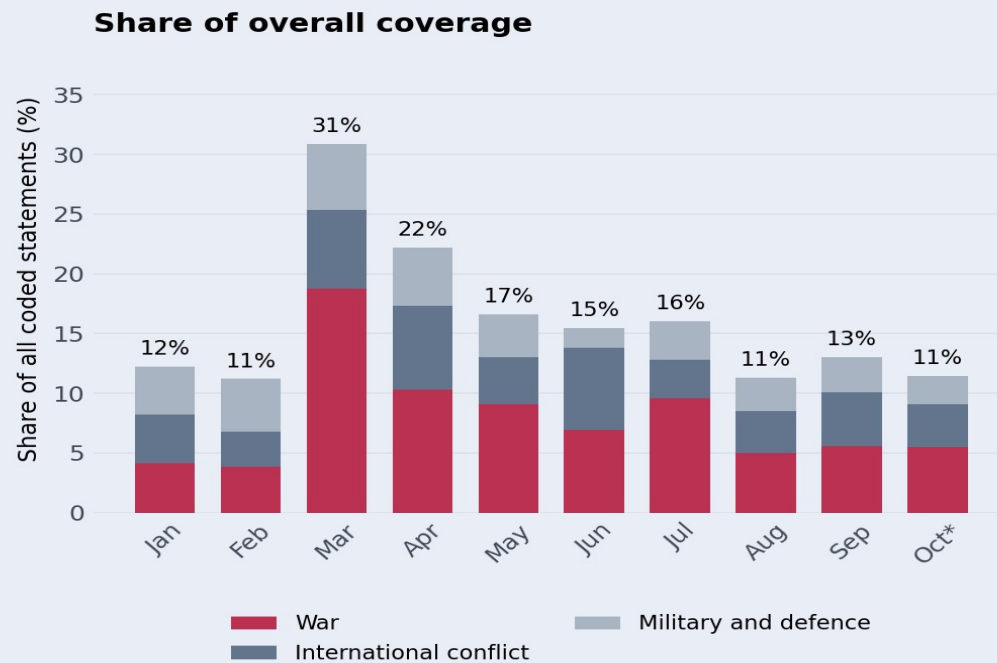
¹ Includes owners' equivalent rent. ² Excludes food and energy.

Source: US Bureau of Labor Statistics, CPI-U, released October 14, 2026.
Categories overlap and do not add up to total inflation.

News coverage of the state of the economy can affect people's perceptions (e.g. consumer sentiment, investment decisions and fertility rates). The tone of economic coverage on CBS and FOX evening news declined in 2026. Most recently, the issue of the cost of living has contributed most to this decline (e.g. fuel prices). Media emphasis contributes to perceived inflation (along with the frequency of purchasing the particular goods).

Scepticism over Trump's approach to warfare is on the rise

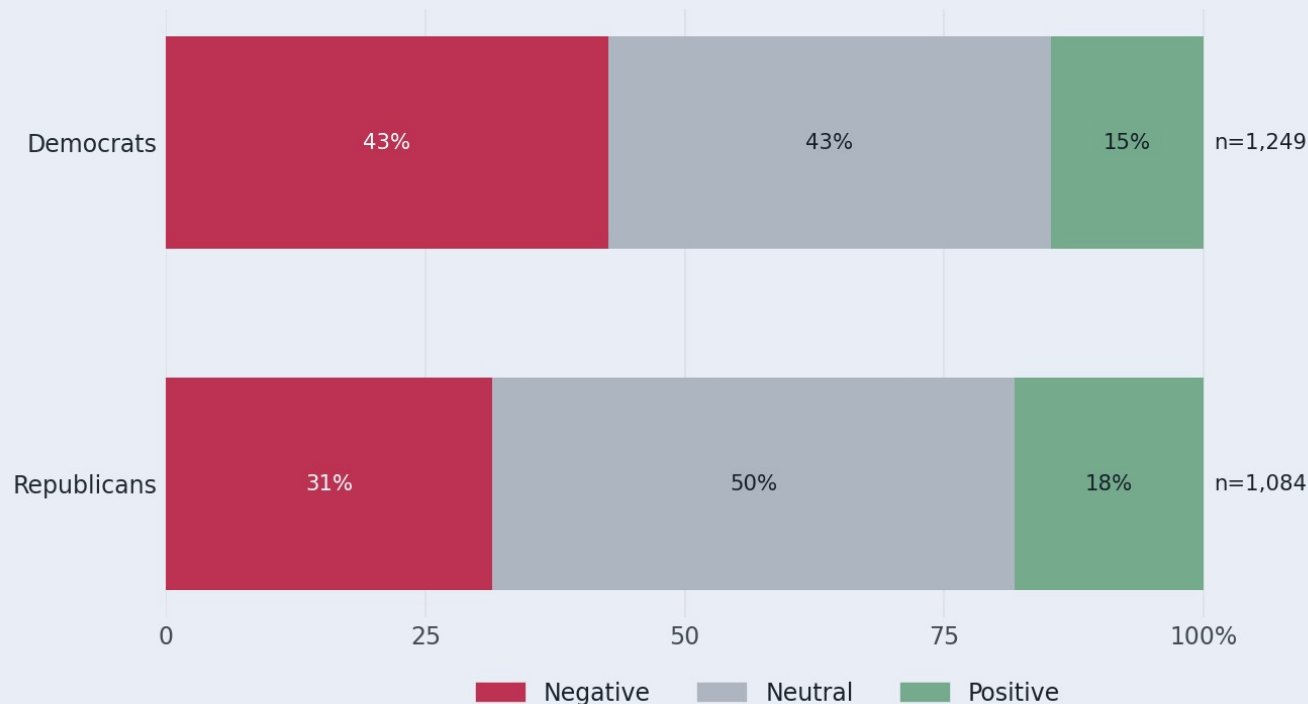
Monthly share of all coverage and tone of Trump on the same topics 1-10/2026



Left: combined share. Right: (positive – negative) / all Trump statements × 100; neutral included.

If Democrats score a home run, it is not because the Media like them

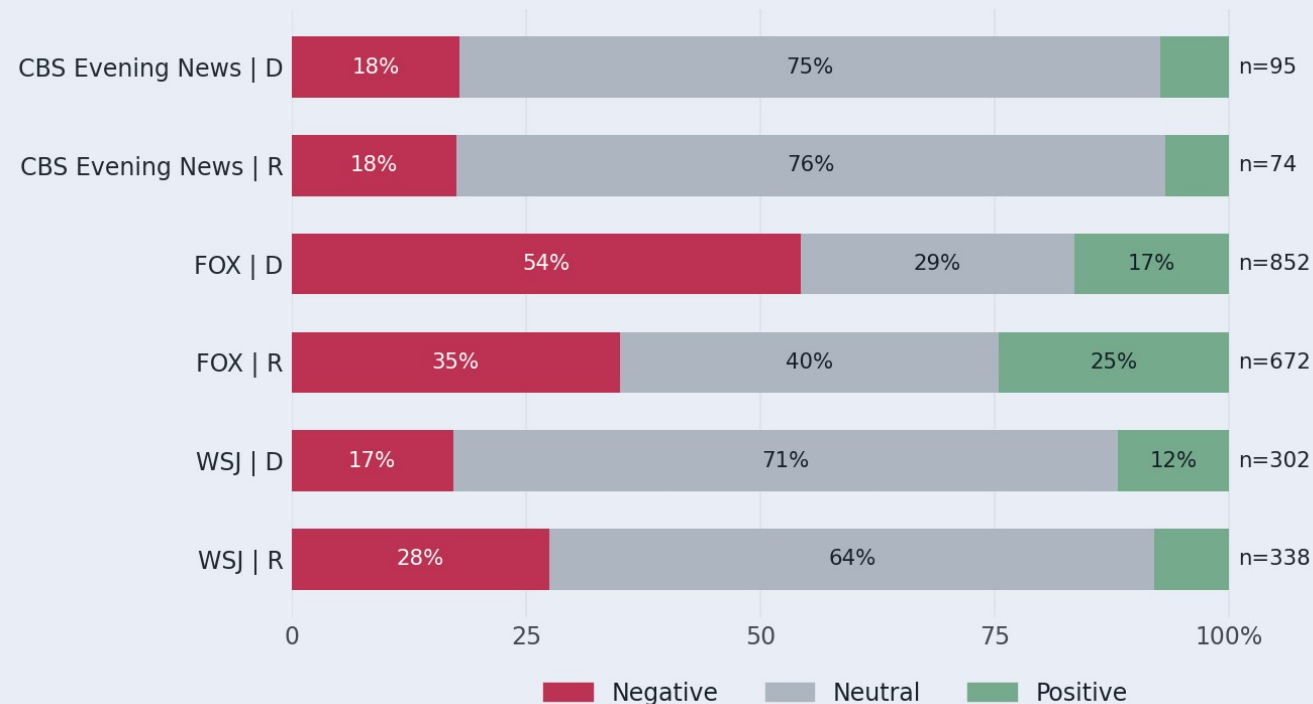
Tone of coverage of party organisations and congressional groups 1-10/2026



The overall tone of the coverage of the Democrats, Republicans and related congressional groups has been negative, but more so for the Democrats than the Republicans. Therefore, despite declining approval rates for U.S. President Donald Trump, the midterm elections are not a home run for the Democrats. But Agenda Setting and Elections teach anyhow only one lesson: The incumbent has to loose it.

FOX News and the WSJ feature notable criticism of Republicans

Tone of party and congressional-group statements

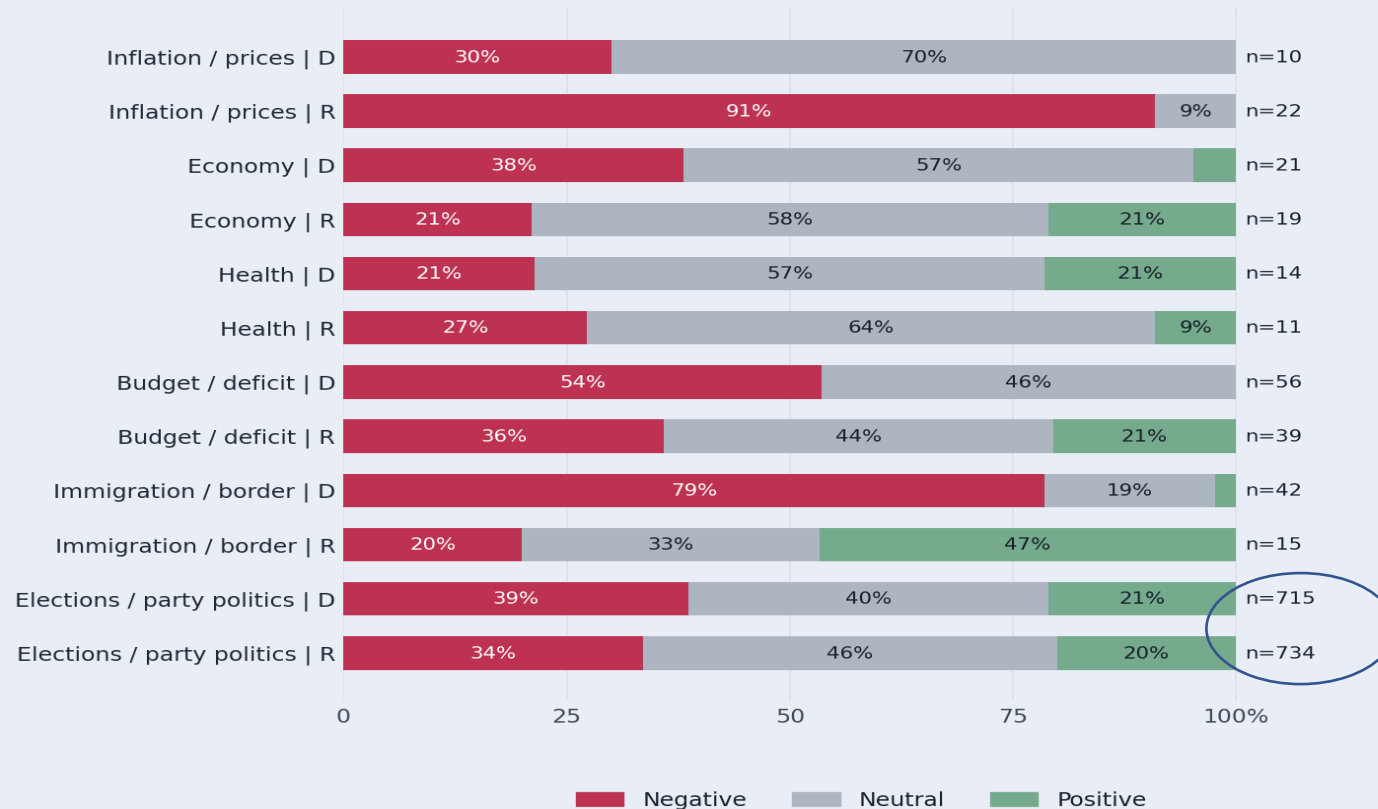


Taking a closer look at FOX News reveals some interesting insights into both parties and their organizations. The Democrats have been criticized most for their parliamentary work, allegations of socialism and an alleged lack of internal unity.

The Republicans, on the other hand, have been criticized for their stance on international unity, opinion poll results and parliamentary work. It can be assumed that the purpose of this topic selection is to encourage unity and align with the presidential agenda.

Moderate visibility on pressing issues

Within-issue tone distribution; D = Democrats, R = Republicans

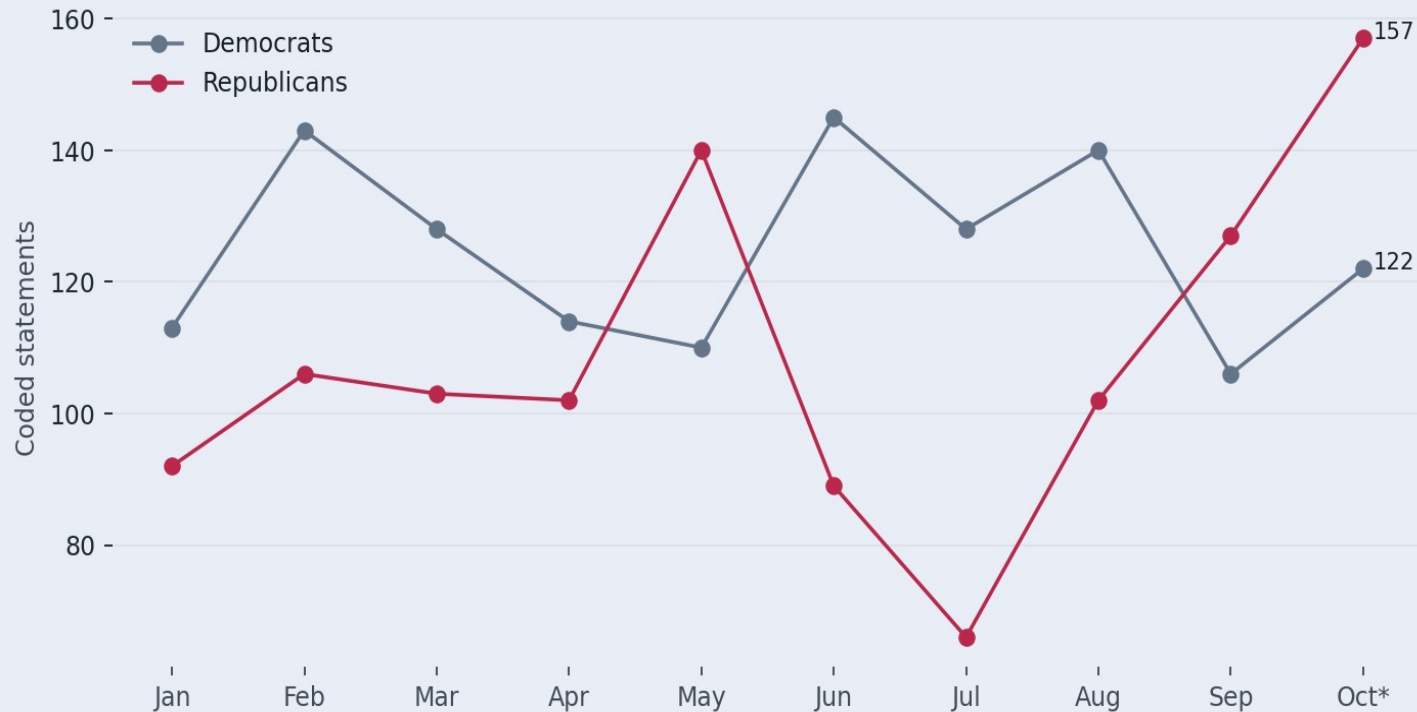


So far in 2026, both parties and their organizations have had moderate visibility on pressing issues. The vast majority of statements addressed elections, opinion polls and party politics.

Taking into account the caution required when interpreting moderate levels of statements, the Republicans achieved a more favorable rating on the economy, budget deficit and immigration/border issues. The Democrats scored higher on health and inflation issues.

Republicans gain visibility ahead of the midterms

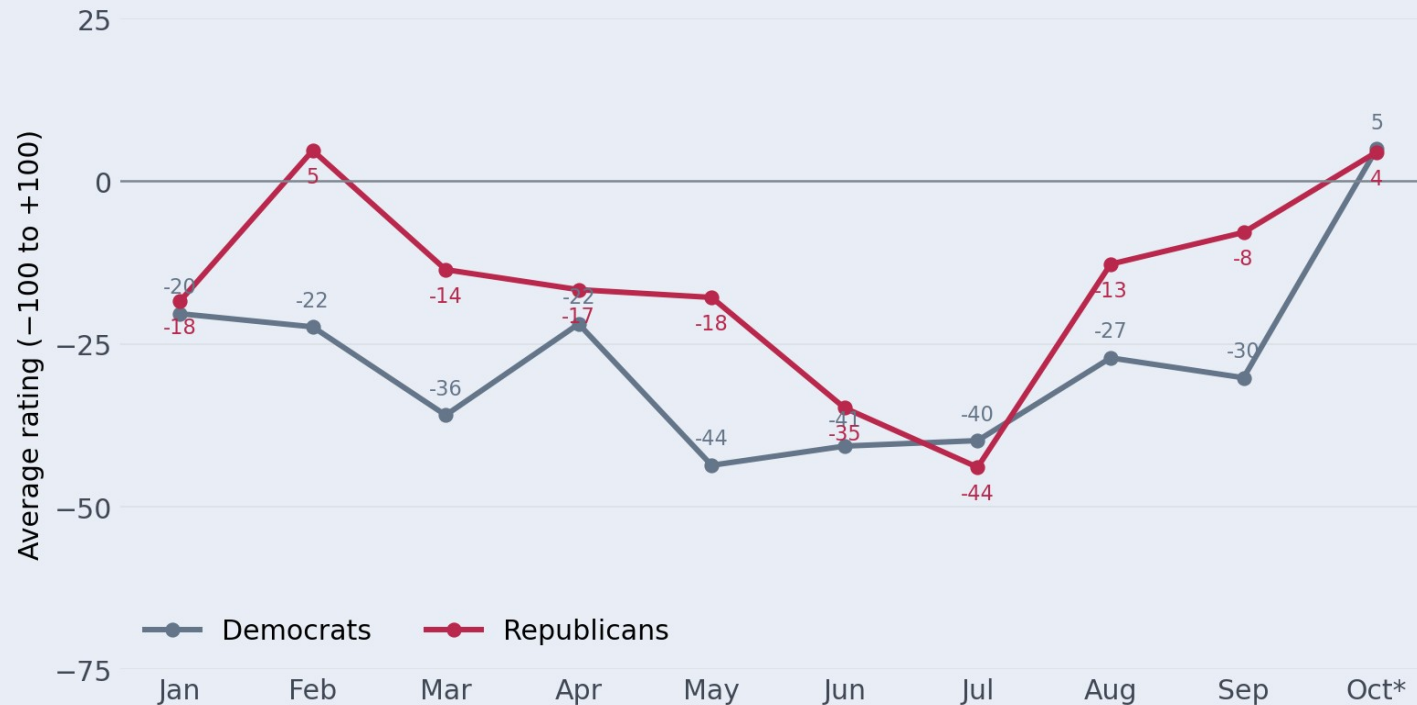
Coded statements per month



So far in 2026, both parties and their organizations have experienced varying degrees of visibility. Overall, the news has focused much more on the president and the White House administration.

Horse race coverage adds positivity to Democrats' image

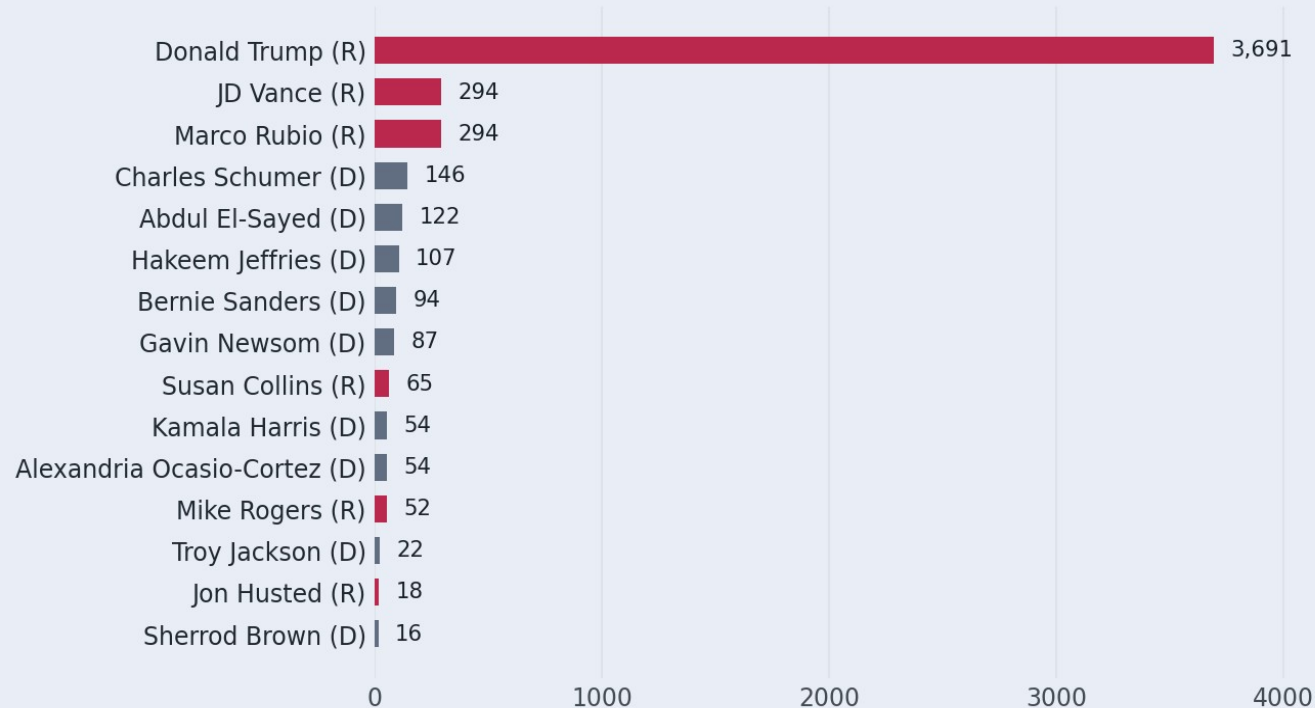
Average tone of party organisations and congressional groups



Election forecasts and approval rates have been the main driver behind the favorable trend in news reporting on the Democratic Party and its organizations.

Candidates have visibility issues

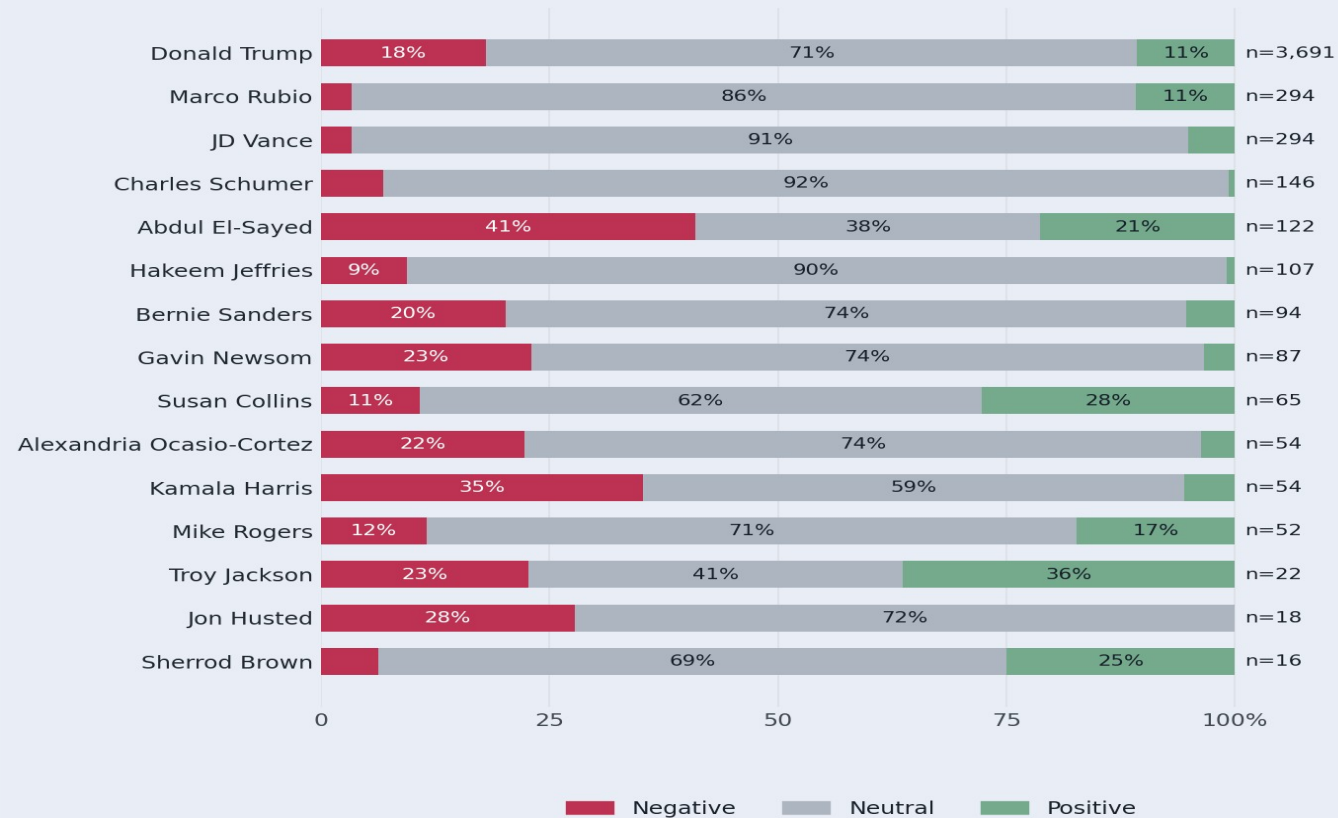
Salience: volume of coded statements



Looking at the news coverage on some of the candidates and comparing it with Donald Trump and members of his administration, we see that the “news machine” Donald Trump has dominated the entire political arena, making it rather difficult for candidates to achieve a distinguished profile on their respective issues.

How political figures are portrayed

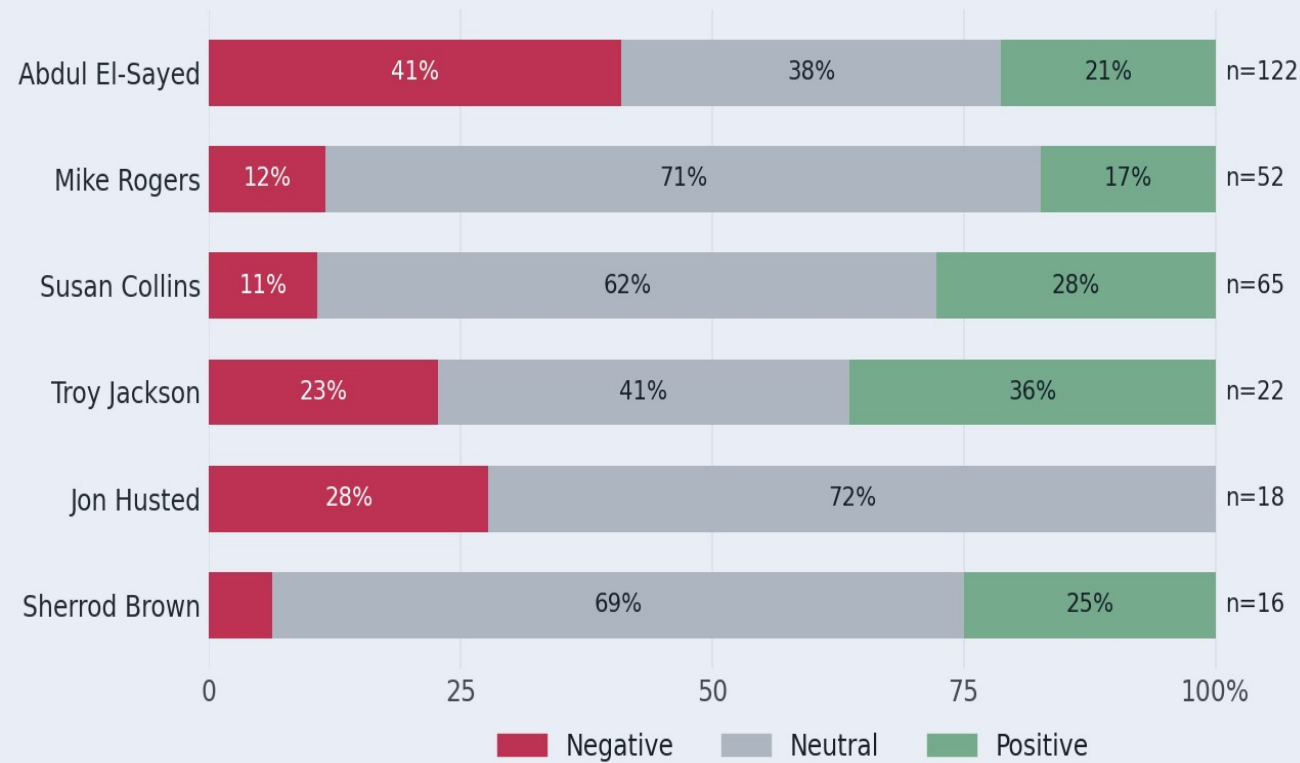
Tone by protagonist; ranked by coverage volume



Source: Media Tenor, supplied dataset. Coded statements, Jan–Oct 2026; October incomplete.

Senate candidates: visibility and tone

Selected Senate candidates in Maine, Michigan and Ohio



Scope and interpretation

Definitions and limitations

Unit: a coded statement about a protagonist, topic and outlet. Rows are aggregates of statement counts.

Party comparison: party organizations and congressional party groups only. Individuals and administrations are separate.

Positive, neutral and negative shares use all statements in the respective group.

October's data up to 10/2025.

Analyzed media: CBS evening news, FOX evening news, WSJ (sample coded)

Method

MediaTenor CodingApp - [Coding / Markup]

Login Coding / Markup Task list Completed Help Synchronization Switch Language Language: English Kerenkewitz, Martin

Markup ☐ No Cited Media / Economist ☐ Coded from Fundstellen Check?

Medium Name 4018205 FOX: News at Ten (NY) Mt-Archive
Date 23 / 08 / 2024 23 Aug 2024 Article URL
Headline
Page Number 1
Article Number 2
Style 43 brief report (film) Section 11 politics&news, other pages
Source/Journalist 10 Add More
Cited Add More
Cited Branch Add More
Cited Topic Add More
Project Add More
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Select coding form 0 Combined Article

Combined Article Analyst Coding Political Coding Wacker Otto Cited Media WEF Eccles KOF Deutsche Bank Volkswagen

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Time 1 the present
Source 00 00 All Journalists Only for special projects as directed
Area 4038 Pennsylvania
Explicit 3 Neutral(0) Positive(1) More Positive(2) Ambivalent(3) More Negative(4) Negative(5)
Implicit 2 Neutral(0) Agree(1) Agree More(2) Ambivalent(3) More Reject(4) Reject(5)
Me / Others 1 About the Protagonist
Topic Add Topic Topic Specific
Additional Source Add Source
Remark CTRL-D to enter additional sources; press enter twice to add new protagonist.
Add Protagonist Cancel

Project List Favourite

Journalist
Bream, Shannon - Journalist Master

Project
General profile

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Sort A - Z

Topic
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[12] Party politics
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[14] Domestic security/crime
[15] Domestic policy
[16] Minorities
[17] Elections
[18] Justice
[19] Media
[20] Foreign policy/international politics
[21] International conflicts
[22] Warfare
[23] Development aid
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[37] Competitiveness/demand
[38] Consumption/business climate

Coded for this article below. To add additional topics, double click on the line. To make edits to the coded variables, click on the Edit button.

	Project ID	Main Protagonist	Main Article Topic	Main Topic	Protagonist Type	Protagonist	Source	Area	Topic	Topic Specific	About Me / About Others	Expl Rating	Impl Rating	Delete	Edit
▶		☒	☒	☒	Persons	Trump, Donald	All Journalists	Pennsylvania	Assassinations, bomb attacks		1	3	2	Delete	Edit
		☐	☐	☐				Pennsylvania	Health/death		1	3	2	Delete	Edit
		☐	☐	☐				Pennsylvania	Election campaigns		1	3	2	Delete	Edit
*		☐	☐	☐											

Scientific content analysis carried out by trained staff – inter-coder reliability: 87% Q4 25

Background

Roland Schatz is a fifth-generation journalist. As founder and CEO of Media Tenor International, he served as Senior Advisor to UN Director-General Michael Moller from 2013 to 2019, and in the same capacity to Mafalda Duarte, Head of the World Bank's Climate Investment Fund, from 2019 to 2020. In 2020, Pope Francis appointed him to his Covid Commission to report via weekly newsletters in 10 languages.

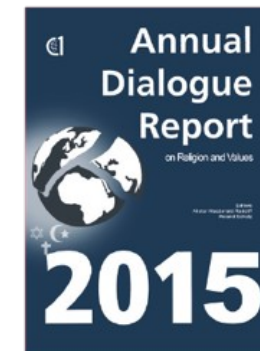
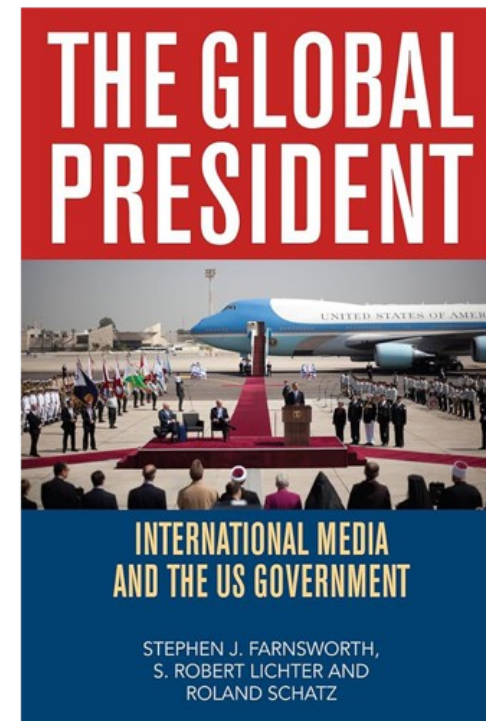
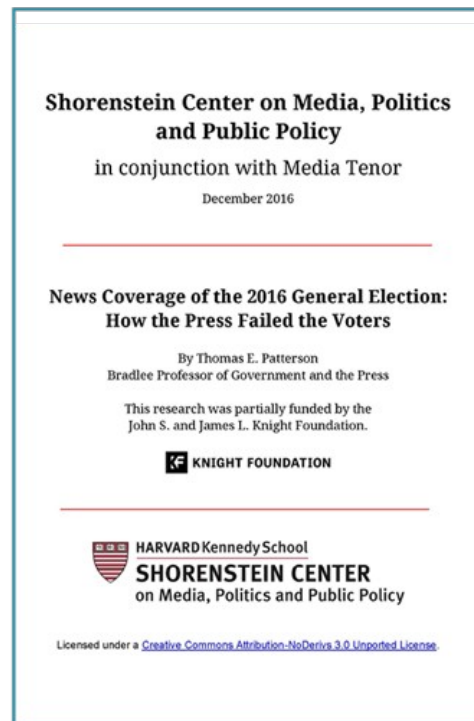
Media Tenor International
Roland Schatz

Lüssirainstrasse 96

CH – 6300 Zug

r.schatz@mediatenor.com

Tel.: +49 151 237 19 786



Media Tenor has been publishing analyses of US presidential election campaigns since 2000. These have been published in reports by the Shorenstein Center at the Harvard Kennedy School. Media organisations such as the BBC, CzechTV and SABC have been using Media Tenor's analyses for decades. The studies are available free of charge at www.mediatenor.com.