UMassAmherst | UMass Poll

Toplines
University of Massachusetts Amherst
August 2026 National Poll

Field Dates:	August 21 –26, 2026
Sample:	1,000 Respondents
Margin of Error:	3.5%

The respondents were matched to a sampling frame on gender, age, race, and education. The sampling frame was constructed by stratified sampling from the full 2023 American Community Survey (ACS) 1-year sample with selection within strata by weighted sampling with replacements (using the person weights on the public use file).

The matched cases were weighted to the sampling frame using propensity scores. The matched cases and the frame were combined and a logistic regression was estimated for inclusion in the frame. The propensity score function included age, gender, race/ethnicity, years of education, region, and home ownership. The propensity scores were grouped into deciles of the estimated propensity score in the frame and post-stratified according to these deciles.

The weights were then raked (iterative proportional fitting) on 2024 presidential vote choice and post-stratified using a four-way stratification of gender, age (4-categories), race (4-categories), and education (4-categories), to produce the final weight.

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Approve (N=1,000)

Do you approve or disapprove of the way the U.S. Congress is doing their job?

	Aug 2026	Mar 2026	Jul 2025	Aug 2026	Mar 2026	Jul 2025	Aug 2026	Mar 2026	Jul 2025	Aug 2026	Mar 2026	July 2025	Aug 2026	Mar 2026	July 2025
	Strongly Approve			Somewhat Approve			Somewhat Disapprove			Strongly Disapprove			Not Sure		
U.S. Congress	3%	2%	3%	19%	17%	24%	27%	30%	25%	41%	39%	35%	11%	13%	13%

Approve (N=1,000)

Do you approve or disapprove of the way (Respondent's Representative in the U.S. House) is doing their job?

Strongly Approve	9%
Somewhat Approve	19%
Somewhat Disapprove	11%
Strongly Disapprove	27%
Not Sure	33%

Approval of Member of Congress (N=275)*

Only asked of respondents who expressed approval of the U.S. Congress.

In a sentence or two, please explain why you approve of (Insert R's member of Congress).

Theme 1: Representation, Responsiveness, and Constituent Service (N=88)

These respondents approve of their member of Congress because they believe that their representative listens to their concerns, responds to their requests, and delivers benefits.

Illustrative response:

"I live in a rural bad part of the state which means we are the last to get funds. Hardly any politician comes physically to campaign. [Representative name] has done so regularly. Him and his staff do an amazing job to make themselves available to this area"

Theme 2: Policy Agreement and Shared Political Side (N=82)

Respondents in this theme approve of their representative because they believe that they represent their position on specific issues, their policy ideology, and their party identification.

Illustrative response:

"I agree with her stances on most issues."

Theme 3: Diffuse Performance Approval (N=30)

These respondents generally believe that their member of Congress is "doing a good job", but don't provide much detail about how or in what ways.

Illustrative response:

"I think he's doing a good job"

Theme 4: Personal Character, Integrity, and Local Connection (N=42)

Respondents in this theme emphasize the personal characteristics of their representative rather than policy positions, highlighting personal character, integrity, and understanding of the district as key virtues.

Illustrative response:

"She is part of the Community. She knows what it's like to have to work for a living"

Theme 5: Low Salience: Nothing Bad Heard, and No Better Option (N=18)

Respondents in this category note themes like they haven't heard anything bad about the member of Congress, or that the candidate is the best available option.

Illustrative response:

"Because I never heard of anything negative"

Disapproval of Member of Congress (N=392)

Only asked of respondents who expressed disapproval of the U.S. Congress.

In a sentence or two, please explain why you disapprove of (Insert R's member of Congress).

Theme 1: Neglect of the District: Absent, Unresponsive, Ineffective (N=81)

These respondents disapprove of their member because they believe that the representative fails to serve the district. Common complaints include: a lack of interest/understanding of the district, a failure to advance legislation, and an unwillingness to spend political capital on issues constituents care about.

Illustrative response:

"[Representative Name] has done nothing for me and my fellow constituents as he never introduces legislation on our behalf, never holds town halls, and openly does not welcome any feedback if said feedback comes from a democrat who lives in his Congressional district."

Theme 2: Subservience to the President and Party (N=77)

These respondents disapprove of their member of Congress on the grounds that their representative is too beholden to the president or their political party.

Illustrative response:

"STRAIGHT LINE DEMOCRAT VOTING HER PARTY, RATHER THAN HER CONSTITUENCY."

Theme 3: Ideological and Policy Disagreement (N=67)

Disapproval among these respondents is based on perceived ideological and policy disagreement with the representative.

Illustrative response:

"His opposition to minority rights and women's rights, as well as his opposition to good legislation."

Theme 4: Personal Unfitness: Dishonesty, Character, and Competence (N=46)

These respondents disapprove of their representative because they believe the representative suffers from a serious character flaw, such as dishonesty or lack of personal principles.

Illustrative response:

"She does not tell the truth on key local or national issues."

Theme 5: Corruption, Self-enrichment, and Capture by Money (N=39)

These respondents perceive that their member of Congress is engaged in corruption, self-dealing, and/or is captured by special interests.

Illustrative response:

"The guy has been in power for years and only lines his pockets"

Approval of Congress Open Ended Response (N=190)

Only asked of respondents who expressed approval of the U.S. Congress.

In a sentence or two, please explain why you approve of the U.S. Congress

Theme 1: Doing the Job (N=43)

These respondents approve because Congress is, in their view, doing what it is supposed to do.

Illustrative response:

"They're doing their job"

Theme 2: Constitutional Role and Checks on Executive Power (N=39)

Respondents in this theme emphasize the important role of Congress in the United States' constitutional system.

Illustrative response:

"Congress is responsible for making laws and overseeing the executive branch."

Theme 3: Good-faith Effort amid Conflict and Obstruction (N=28)

These respondents approve on the basis of intentions rather than results. The explanations are consistent — "they are doing the best they can," and they are almost always paired with an account of what is preventing them from doing better.

Illustrative response:

"They have produced positive results under very difficult circumstances"

Theme 4: Partisan and Presidential-agenda Alignment (N=23)

Respondents who emphasize this theme are Republicans who support Congress because it is controlled by Republicans and work with President Trump.

Illustrative response:

"Republicans control Congress and I'm Republican. Democratic socialists are ruining the great country of the USA"

Theme 5: Serving and Representing the People (N=23)

Respondents in this theme approve of Congress because, in their view, Congress represents Americans' interests, talks about their concerns, and produces policies that help them.

Illustrative response:

"I approve that the U.S. Congress makes laws that benefit lower income people."

Disapproval of Congress Open Ended Response

Only asked of respondents who expressed disapproval of the U.S. Congress. (N=698)

In a sentence or two, please explain why you disapprove of the U.S. Congress

Theme 1: Capitulation to the President and the Collapse of Checks and Balances (N=258)

Respondents in this theme criticize Congress for failing to check the power of the president, arguing that Congress too often acts as a "rubber stamp" for the president's initiatives/demands.

Illustrative response:

"Congress has abandoned its legislative role and is now subordinate to the executive branch."

Theme 2: Corruption, Self-dealing, and Capture by Money (N=116)

Respondents in this theme complain that Congress is captured by organized interests, and that members of Congress are primarily motivated by money and power.

Illustrative response:

"I think members of Congress are only concerned about staying in office and care more about getting elected and raising money to get elected than doing the jobs they are elected to do."

Theme 3: Failure to Represent Constituents and Address their Needs (N=112)

These respondents disapprove of Congress because they believe that Congress is failing to respond to the needs of constituents.

Illustrative response:

"They are not passing laws that Americans genuinely want, nor are they listening to the voices of their constituents."

Theme 4: A Do-nothing Congress: Inaction and Ineffectiveness (N=76)

These respondents disapprove of Congress because they perceive that it "doesn't do anything" – in their view, it doesn't pass laws, enact budgets, or address the business of the American people.

Illustrative response:

"They don't ever accomplish anything. They are on vacation more than they are in session."

Theme 5: Partisanship: Infighting, Gridlock, and Party over Country (N=69)

These respondents disapprove of Congress because they believe that has succumbed to partisanship. In the view of these respondents, partisan conflict has prevented compromise and cooperation, and led members of Congress to focus on bickering, grandstanding, and party positioning.

Illustrative response:

"They spend too much time fighting each other and not enough time fixing problems that affects working people"

Responsibilities (N=1,000)

Of the following, which do you think is the most important job of the U.S. Congress?

Making laws	18%
Monitoring the federal bureaucracy	7%
Checking the powers of the president	25%
Speaking out on important public issues	8%
Representing their constituencies	41%

Delegate v. Trustee (N=1,000)

Which of the following statements comes closest to your own view?

When voting on legislation . . .

members of Congress should do what they think is right even when their constituents disagree with their decision.	41%
members of Congress should closely follow the preferences of their constituents even if they disagree with their constituents.	59%

Bipartisanship (N=1,000)

Do you support or oppose your member of Congress…

	Strongly Support	Somewhat Support	Neither Support Nor Oppose	Somewhat Oppose	Strongly Oppose
Working with members of the other party on shared legislation?	31%	29%	32%	4%	4%
Attending bipartisan events with members of the other party?	31%	25%	36%	4%	4%
Voting differently from other members of their party based on their conscience?	34%	25%	34%	4%	4%
Voting differently from other members of their party to represent their constituents?	43%	21%	30%	4%	3%

Why Polarized? (N=1,000)

Which of the following do you think are the three most important reasons Congress has become so politically polarized?

	1st	2nd	3rd
Money in politics	**37%**	**17%**	14%
Party Leaders	14%	15%	13%
Partisan gerrymandering	9%	13%	13%
Social Media	11%	12%	12%
Party primaries encourage extreme candidates	7%	13%	**15%**
Close competition between the parties in elections	5%	7%	7%
Cable News	6%	7%	8%
Increasing racial and ethnic diversity	6%	8%	8%
Extreme Voters	5%	9%	10%

Reforms (N=1,000)

From the following list, select the **three reforms** to the U.S. Congress that you think are the most important for making Congress work better.

	1st	2nd	3rd
Public financing of campaigns	7%	7%	9%
Ending the filibuster	6%	8%	9%
Establishing term limits for members of U.S. Congress	**32%**	**21%**	11%
Establishing a maximum age limit to serve in the U.S. Congress	19%	20%	15%
Holding more frequent elections	2%	3%	5%
Tightening limits on campaign contributions	11%	17%	**22%**
Establishing restrictions on partisan gerrymandering	14%	16%	15%
Passing election reforms that promote third parties	5%	6%	10%
Expanding the size of the U.S. House of Representatives	2%	3%	5%

Midterm Enthusiasm (N=1,000)

How enthusiastic are you about voting in the 2026 midterm election?

	Aug 2026				Mar. 2026			
	All (N=1,000)	Democrats (N=440)	Republicans (N=341)	Independents (N=219)	All (N=1,000)	Democrats (N=397)	Republicans (N=316)	Independents (N=286)
Very Enthusiastic	31%	42%	30%	14%	33%	49%	34%	11%
Somewhat Enthusiastic	24%	25%	29%	15%	23%	21%	29%	18%
Not Too Enthusiastic	21%	16%	24%	23%	20%	18%	18%	25%
Not At All Enthusiastic	24%	17%	16%	48%	24%	12%	19%	46%

U.S. House Vote (N=1,000)

Looking ahead to the 2026 midterm congressional election, if this election were being held today, which party's candidate would you vote for in your congressional district?

	Without Leaners	With Leaners
Democratic Party's Candidate	40%	42%
Republican Party's Candidate	33%	34%
An Independent Candidate	9%	10%
Don't Know	19%	14%

U.S. Senate Vote (N=631)

*Only shown to respondents in following states (*AL, AK, AR, CO, DE, FL, GA, ID, IL, IA, KS, KY, LA, ME, MA, MI, MN, MS, MT, NE, NH, NJ, NM, NC, OH, OK, OR, RI, SC, SD, TN, TX, VA, WV, WY*)*

Looking ahead to the 2026 midterm congressional election, if this election were being held today, which party's candidate would you vote for in the Senate election?

	Without Leaners	With Leaners
Democratic Party's Candidate	39%	40%
Republican Party's Candidate	36%	38%
An Independent Candidate	9%	10%
Don't Know	15%	12%

Trump Motivation (N=1,000)

Ask only of respondents who indicate they will vote in the 2026 congressional elections.

Do you agree or disagree with the following? In the 2026 congressional elections, I will be voting in significant part based on how I feel about President Donald Trump.

	All Respondents (N=699)	Democratic Respondents (N=352)	Republican Respondents (N=261)	Independent Respondents (N=86)
Strongly agree	44%	62%	26%	39%
Somewhat agree	21%	20%	23%	19%
Neither agree nor disagree	16%	9%	22%	22%
Somewhat disagree	6%	3%	10%	6%
Strongly disagree	13%	5%	19%	15%

Demographic Breakdown of the University of Massachusetts Amherst August 2026 National Poll

Men	49%
Women	51%
18-29	20%
30-54	41%
>55	39%
HS or less	37%
Some Coll.	18%
Coll. Deg.	32%
Postgrad	13%
<$40K	36%
$40K-$100K	38%
>$100K	26%
Democrat	40%
Independent	22%
Republican	38%
Liberal	29%
Moderate	35%
Conservative	36%
White	70%
African American	13%
Hispanic	12%
Asian	5%
Harris	49%
Trump	51%
Not at all MAGA	32%
Somewhat MAGA	37%
Very Much MAGA	31%
Not at all DSA	46%
Somewhat DSA	42%
Very Much DSA	12%

* Thematic Analysis of Congressional Approval

Data and Method

Data. 707 and 570 respondents who expressed substantive responses explaining their approval or disapproval of the U.S. Congress and their member of the U.S. House of Representatives respectively.

Method. Inductive thematic coding, conducted separately for each candidate group. Five substantive themes were derived per group, plus a sixth residual category for responses that state no interpretable reason (Don’t know, Unclear, NA). Each response is assigned to exactly one theme; where a response raised multiple considerations, it was assigned based on its leading or explicitly decisive claim.