

Independent Center

INDEPENDENT CENTER VOICE

NATIONAL SURVEY · TOPLINES · WAVE 4

Independent Candidates & the 2026 Midterms

A national survey of U.S. adults on awareness of and openness to independent candidates

Field dates: September 25–28, 2026 **Sample:** 1,000 U.S. adults **Registered voters:** 887 (88.7%)

Methodology: AlphaROC conducted a survey of n=1,000 U.S. adults on behalf of Independent Center / Independent Center Voice from September 25–28, 2026. All interviews were conducted online. Survey invitations were distributed randomly, with demographic balances aligned to general population benchmarks. The sample carries a margin of error of ± 3.1 points of the true population value 95% of the time. Figures are unweighted.

JOB APPROVAL

1. Do you approve or disapprove of the job President Donald Trump is doing?

Strongly approve		17.6%
Somewhat approve		17.7%
Somewhat disapprove		12.6%
Strongly disapprove		48.6%
Not sure		3.5%

Total approve: 35.3% · Total disapprove: 61.2%

GENERIC CONGRESSIONAL BALLOT

2. If the election for U.S. Congress were held today, which party's candidate would you vote for in your district?

The Democratic candidate		43.4%
The Republican candidate		37.1%
An independent or third-party candidate		6.0%
Undecided		13.5%

AWARENESS OF 2026 INDEPENDENT CANDIDATES

3. How aware are you of independent candidates on the ballot for the 2026 midterm elections?

I'm actively following them		11.9%
I'm aware of some candidates		28.3%
I'd be interested, but haven't heard anything		20.6%
I'm not aware of any		27.0%
I'm not aware of any and don't care		12.2%

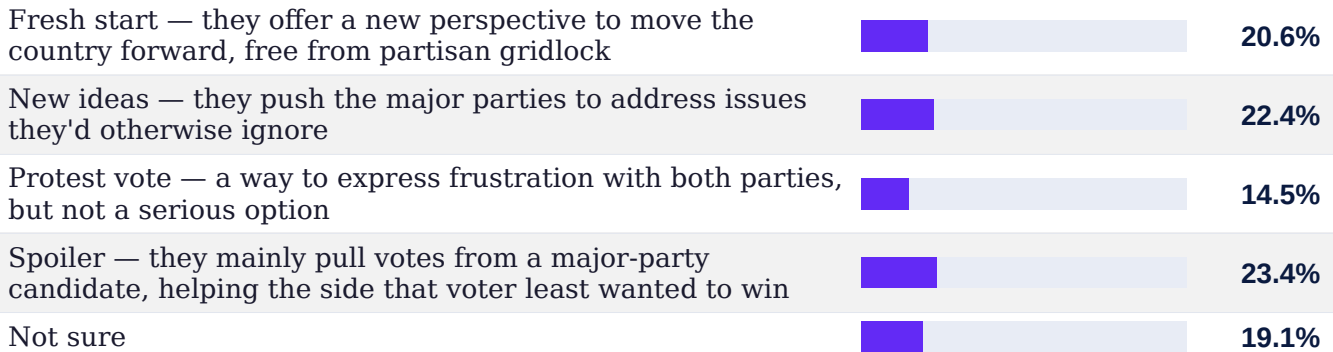
Any awareness (following + aware of some): 40.2% · Interested but uninformed: 20.6%

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FIRST THOUGHT ON THIRD-PARTY / INDEPENDENT CANDIDATES

4. When you think about independent or third-party candidates in elections, which best describes your first reaction?



Net positive (fresh start + new ideas): 43.0% · Net negative (spoiler + protest): 37.9%

HYPOTHETICAL STRONG INDEPENDENT

5. Imagine a future congressional election with a strong, well-funded independent candidate, unaffiliated with either party, who shared many of your views and was willing to work with both sides. How likely would you be to vote for this candidate?



Net likely (very + somewhat): 65.3% · Net unlikely: 18.1%

CONFIDENCE ON AI

6. How confident are you that each of the following can effectively handle the challenges posed by artificial intelligence, such as its effects on jobs, privacy, misinformation, and safety?

	Very confident	Somewhat confident	Not too confident	Not at all confident	Not sure	Total confident
The White House	9.9%	21.8%	22.3%	37.7%	8.3%	31.7%
Congress	6.0%	22.2%	34.1%	29.1%	8.6%	28.2%
State governments	8.3%	29.0%	32.6%	21.4%	8.7%	37.3%
Local governments	8.9%	26.8%	33.9%	20.8%	9.6%	35.7%
The Democratic Party	11.8%	26.3%	24.1%	29.5%	8.3%	38.1%
The Republican Party	12.5%	19.8%	21.8%	37.9%	8.0%	32.3%
Technology companies	12.2%	35.0%	26.6%	18.5%	7.7%	47.2%

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	Very confident	Somewhat confident	Not too confident	Not at all confident	Not sure	Total confident
Scientists, universities and researchers	20.6%	41.1%	20.8%	9.9%	7.6%	61.7%

Most trusted: scientists, universities and researchers (61.7% confident). Least trusted: Congress (28.2%) and the White House (31.7%).

ELECTED OFFICIALS AND AI

7. Which statement comes closer to your view, even if neither is exactly right?

Elected officials are making a serious effort to address the challenges of AI  24.0%

Elected officials are more interested in appearing to address AI than actually addressing it  76.0%

SAMPLE PROFILE

Political affiliation

Democrat 35.5% · Republican 34.0% · Independent 25.0% · Undecided 5.5%

Gender

Female 51.8% · Male 48.0% · Non-binary 0.2%

Race

White 78.5% · Black 13.2% · Asian 3.1% · American Indian/AK Native 1.0% · NH/PI 0.6% · Other 3.6%

Education

Some HS or less 2.5% · HS/GED 25.3% · Some college 18.3% · Associate/technical 13.2% · Bachelor's 25.4% · Graduate/professional 15.3%

Registered voter

Yes 88.7% · No 11.3%

Age

18-29: 12.3% · 30-44: 27.4% · 45-54: 16.9% · 55-64: 17.1% · 65-75: 20.7% · 75+: 5.6%

Hispanic / Latino origin

No 87.7% · Yes 12.3%

Household income

Under \$25k 12.4% · \$25-49.9k 17.5% · \$50-74.9k 18.1% · \$75-99.9k 16.9% · \$100-149.9k 20.9% · \$150k+ 14.2%

Percentages may not sum to 100% due to rounding.