

MIDTERM ELECTIONS 2026

TRUTH
TRENDS

How the road to November is
reshaping media, trust, and
consumer behavior

July 2026

What's Happening and Why We Care.

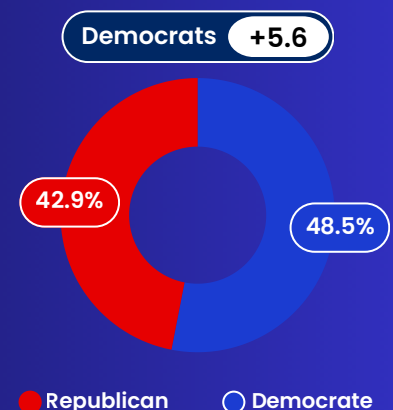
As the 2026 midterm elections approach, this edition of Truth Trends explores the forces shaping today's political and media landscape—from record-breaking political ad spending to declining trust in political messaging—and what these shifts mean for brands. As competition for consumer attention intensifies, brands must navigate a more crowded, polarized media environment where the context in which an ad appears is becoming just as important as the creative itself.

Polling Snapshot

Polling below combines surveys from [multiple polling organizations](#) showing current public opinion on elections, candidates, and key issues. Provided is a snapshot of where voters stand at a given moment, rather than predicting election outcomes.

Political ad spending is on pace to hit \$11.6 billion, and even among likely voters, 87% question the credibility of campaign messaging.

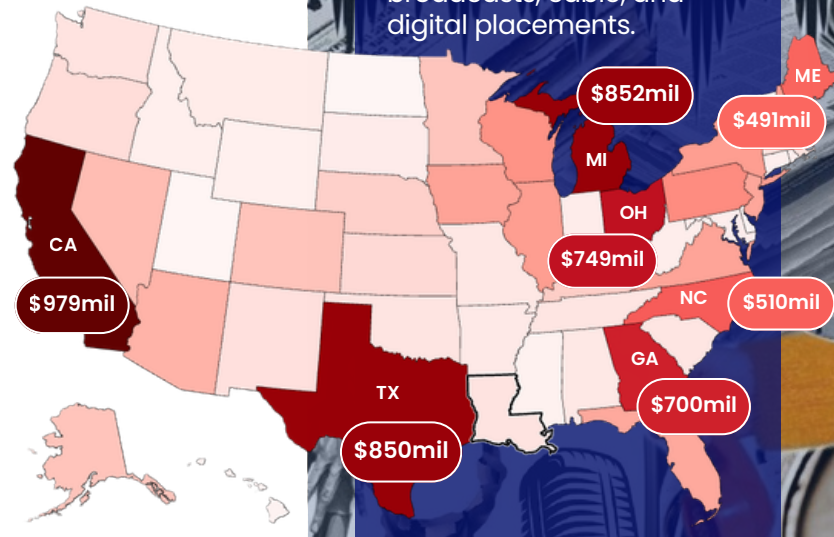
2026 Generic Congressional Vote



CATEGORY

Political Ad Spending Heads for a Record-Breaking 2026

AdImpact projects total political ad spending will hit \$11.6 billion, surpassing the 2024 presidential election cycle by roughly \$400 million. By June 1 alone, spending had already reached \$4 billion—a 46% increase compared to the same point in the 2024 cycle. The biggest share of spending is expected to come from Senate races (\$3.4B), followed by governor races (\$2.4B) and House races (\$2B).



CTV Emerges as the Fastest-Growing Channel

Broadcast television continues to capture the largest share of political ad spending, accounting for nearly half (49%) of all spending. However, connected TV (CTV) is the only channel expected to gain share compared to the 2024 election cycle, signaling a continued shift toward streaming. Meanwhile, digital and social media are projected to account for 13% of total spending, down from 15% in 2024. While the share is smaller, political campaigns are still expected to drive increased competition for digital ad inventory in key battleground states.

WHAT THIS MEANS FOR BRANDS

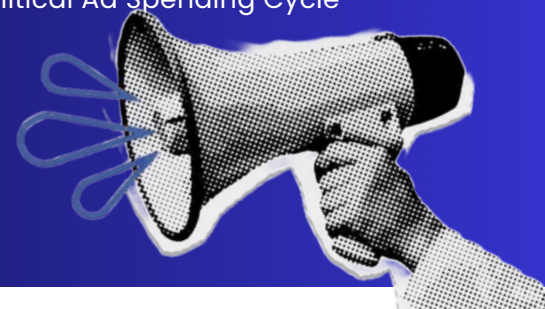
Record political ad spending will create a more competitive media landscape, driving up costs and tightening premium inventory—especially across broadcast TV and CTV. Early planning, flexible budgets, and diversified media strategies will be key to maintaining reach and avoiding political ad adjacency.

How Political Advertising Will Impact the Media Landscape

This article highlights the key trends, risks, and opportunities advertisers should prepare for during the 2026 political ad cycle.

Click [here](#) for more information
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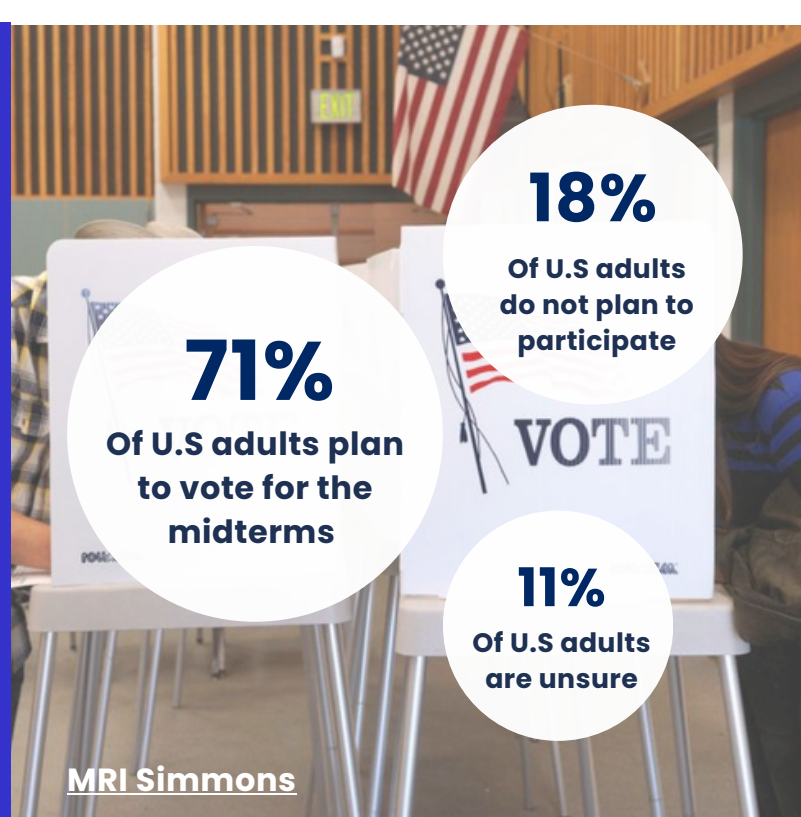
CONSUMER

Economic Outlooks and Political Identity Are Becoming Increasingly Intertwined

As the 2026 fall midterms approach, Consumers continue to grapple with economic uncertainty while navigating a political environment defined by caution, polarization, and growing fatigue. Although the Conference Board's Consumer Confidence Index ticked up slightly to 91.2 in June, the modest gain does little to reverse a year of subdued sentiment. Meanwhile, the share of Americans who say jobs are "hard to get" climbed to its highest level since January 2021, signaling that concerns about the labor market remain front and center. Confidence also continues to split along political lines, rising among Independents and Democrats while softening among Republicans, highlighting how closely economic outlooks and political identity have become intertwined heading into November.

Americans Call for Stability

As global tensions persist, Americans are signaling a strong preference for stability. Nearly 8 in 10 (78%) oppose the U.S. entering new wars, while 69% believe sending troops to sanctuary cities is driven more by politics than public safety. Additionally, 67% worry the current administration is straining relationships with key allies, and 64% fear the nation's political climate could overshadow major global events like the 2026 FIFA World Cup and 2028 Los Angeles Olympics.



The Trust Gap Ahead of Midterms

Trust continues to be one of the biggest challenges heading into the 2026 midterms. Adults who are uncertain whether they'll vote are especially skeptical, with 79% believing political ads are misleading and 75% unsure which news sources they can trust. But the credibility gap doesn't end there. Even among those planning to vote, 87% believe political advertising is misleading or biased, highlighting a widespread lack of confidence in traditional campaign messaging. When it comes to trusted sources, 40% rely on TV or streaming news, 34% trust news websites or apps, 24% lean on family or friends, and 23% turn to social media.

WHAT THIS MEANS FOR BRANDS

Election season will create a crowded media landscape. Brands that prioritize credibility, trusted placements, and consumer value will be best positioned to cut through the noise.

TAKEAWAYS

Trust is Becoming a Media Metric

The Risk:

Consumers increasingly distrust both political advertising and many information sources, making media environment just as important as creative messaging.

The Strategy:

The choice of channel reflects the brand's integrity. Media planners must seek out high-trust environments—like local community newsletters, trusted industry podcasts, or direct-to-consumer SMS networks—to borrow the publisher's credibility.

Brand Safety Reaches "Code Red"

The Risk:

Placing an ad next to polarizing political content can instantly alienate half your client's audience, even if the brand itself is neutral.

The Strategy:

Media planners must implement strict blocklists, aggressive keyword exclusion, and AI-driven contextual verification to keep brands out of the toxic political crossfire.

Overhaul Data Targeting Tactics

The Risk:

Relying purely on traditional demographics (like age or geography) can backfire, as political rifts cut straight through these groups.

The Strategy:

Shift targeting from demographics to psychographics, shared behaviors, and utility-based signals. Use zero-party data to target consumers based on concrete hobbies and buying habits rather than proxy data.

Escapism is the New Premium Inventory

The Risk:

Consumers are increasingly opting out of news and current events to protect their mental health. For brands, the risk is investing media dollars in environments where audiences are actively disengaging.

The Strategy:

Value is shifting away from news-heavy platforms toward "comfort media." Brands should consider pivoting budgets heavily toward ad-supported streaming (CTV), sports, cooking channels, music platforms, and cozy-gaming apps where audiences go to escape the noise.