



Political and
Geostrategic
OBSERVATORY
of the United States

TRUMP'S TERRIBLE POLL NUMBERS ARE IMPORTANT

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Trump's declining approval ratings will not change him, but might concern the people around him.

A year-and-a-half into his second term, most polls indicate that President Donald Trump is very unpopular. According to *the New York Times* poll tracking¹, the five polls taken since August 10th show Trump with 40%, 38%, 37%, 35% and 33% job approval, for an average of 37%. Trump has never been popular, but these numbers are bad even for him. It is possible that these numbers will rebound and Trump will find his approval ratings in the low 40s in time for the midterm elections, or even that after the midterm elections Trump will find his political footing again and suddenly become more popular. However, those outcomes are not likely.

In the pre-Trump era, if a term-limited president had such low approval ratings, the opposition party would be eyeing the White House with growing confidence while presidential aspirants from the President's own party would be seeking to distance themselves from the President. We are no longer in that era but find ourselves in a new one where the unpopular President still commands a cult-like following within his party, makes jokes about seeking a third term in violation of the Constitution and where there is little reason to believe that the President's party will allow free and fair elections or facilitate a peaceful transfer of power if they lose those elections.

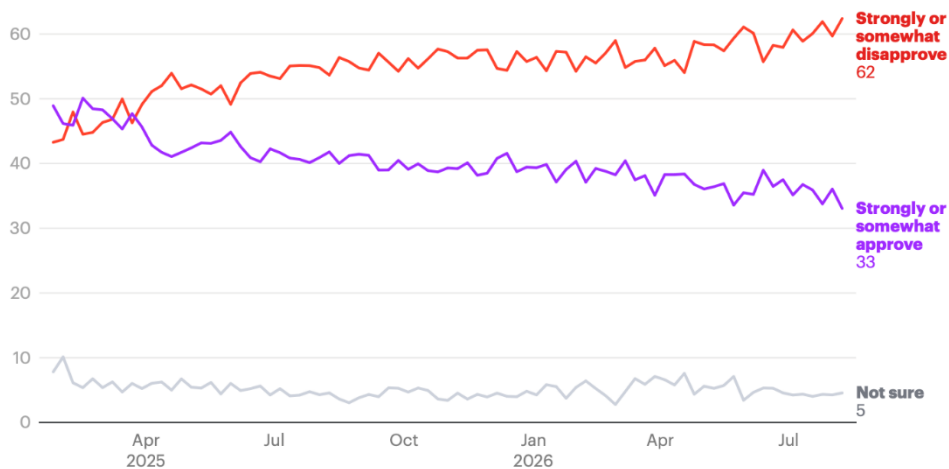
Despite, or perhaps, because of all that, those approval numbers are still important, because as the US careens towards 2028, it remains imperative to understand the challenge facing anti-fascists and supporters of democracy as only in part electoral. Defeating Trump or his MAGA proxies at the polls will be necessary, but additional work must be done through the courts, mass mobilizations and other means, to ensure the defeat of Trump's American fascism. That project will become much easier if as the election approaches, the people around Trump begin to realize that the big majority of the American people oppose them.

A key to bringing down authoritarian regimes is to encourage defectors from within the regime. In the American case, these defections began early with the never Trump movement in the Republican Party that dates back to the President's initial campaign in 2016. However, despite some high-profile defections then, there were too few to make an impact. On the contrary, over the last decade one of the most important and damaging developments in American politics has been the relative ease with which a fascist movement has captured the Republican Party.

¹ Ruth Igielnik, "President Trump's Approval Ratings: Latest Polls" *The New York Times*, 10 August 2026.

Approval and disapproval of Trump's job performance

Do you approve or disapprove of the way Donald Trump is handling his job as President? (% of U.S. adult citizens)



YouGov

The Economist / YouGov | January 26, 2025 - August 10, 2026 • [Get the data](#)

By 2028, more than a dozen years into the MAGA ascendancy, it is foolish to hope that anybody around the President abandons him for reasons or ideology or principle. It is more than apparent that there is no bridge too far for the sycophantic, fascistic mediocrities with whom the President has surrounded himself. However, many of these people still may be concerned about self-preservation.

It has long been true that Trump's post-presidential life, presidential immunity notwithstanding, will almost certainly be defined by legal troubles, but some in the administration are becoming aware that is true for them as well. Many of these people probably believe, not without reason, that Trump will issue them blanket pardons, but even that will not spare them the consequences of having been handmaidens of a fascist movement once the regime change, which will follow a Democratic victory, occurs.

That reality becomes even more stark for Trump's enablers as the President's poor poll numbers and the Republican Party's dismal electoral process sink in. Each of these people will be faced with the choice to either recommit, no matter what it takes, to the MAGA fascist effort or to abandon ship while there is still time. Most will opt for the former, but some will not.

The question that may determine America's future in 2028 and the early days of 2029 is how many Trump loyalists will move to the latter position. These defectors will be acting purely out of self-interest or self-preservation. If they believe that MAGA has no future and that staying with Trump to the bitter end guarantees a life of criminal prosecution, expensive legal fees and reputations that can never be restored, some will realize that it is time to break with the regime. Every one of these defections, particularly if they come from high-level people, will further weaken the regime. If there are enough of these defections, the regime will no longer be able to function.

Trump himself will stop at nothing to stay in power, keep his enormous and ill-gotten wealth and remain free of criminal prosecution. It is easy to imagine an embattled Trump doing something like calling troops in to suppress demonstrations or help steal elections, but if the people around him refuse to follow those orders again not out of any moral or political awakening, but out of self-interest-the regime will be more likely to collapse.

These potential defectors raise a paradox because anybody who has stuck with Trump this long is a true believer who supports the cruel, bigoted and destructive MAGA agenda. Therefore, it is tough for the opposition to welcome these people. Nonetheless, it is important that we incentivize defections because if the people around Trump believe they will face the same legal consequences, ostracism and place in history regardless of whether they defect or stay with the President, then they will stay with Trump.

Trump's declining popularity is good news for democracy, but those who see this only through the lens of how it helps Democrats in 2026 and 2028 once again misread the gravity of the crisis. We are not in a situation, as we have been in previous eras, where the more conservative party has won a few elections and we are simply seeking to change that. Rather, the regime change has already happened and the task we face needs to be understood as one of (re)building democracy. That requires a broader more comprehensive approach of which finding the right electoral strategy is only part.

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