

The Six Big Events that Have Dragged Down Donald Trump's Approval Rating

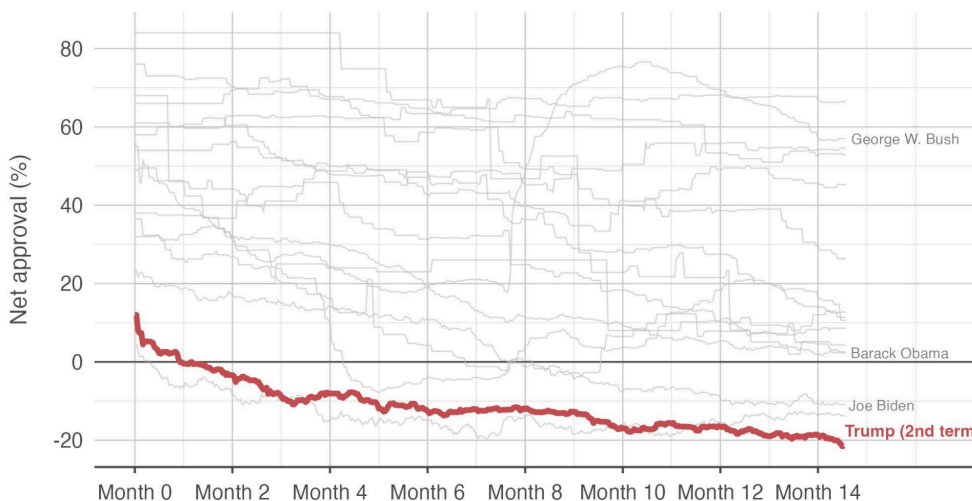
G. Elliott Morris - 4/3/26

Donald Trump's approval rating hit a new low this week. As of April 2, the [FiftyPlusOne average](#) puts his net approval at -21.4 — 37.2% approve, 58.6% disapprove. That's the lowest mark of his second term.

How bad is -21.4? When compared to past presidents, Trump's ratings are the lowest of any president at this point in their term, going back to FDR. The spaghetti chart below lines up every president's net approval by time in office. Trump's red line is all the way at the bottom. Fourteen months in, no one else was this far underwater. Only Joe Biden, at the beginning of the 2022-23 inflation crisis, was close — and Trump is outrunning him by about 10 points:

Trump's net approval hits a new low

Net approval for all presidents since FDR, aligned by time in office

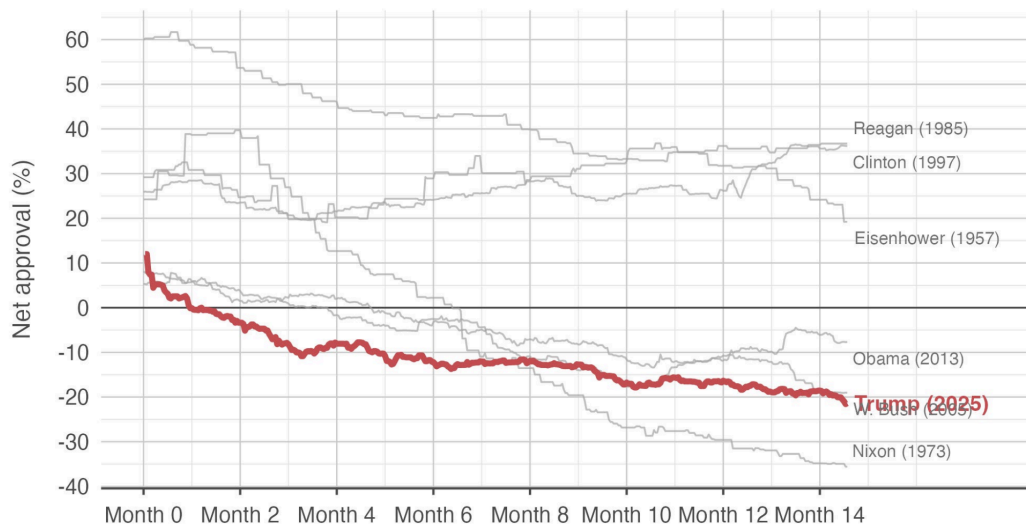


Data: FiftyPlusOne.news (Trump term-2 approval), historical polling archives

If you treat Trump as a second-term president, his rating today is higher only than Richard Nixon's after Watergate and tied with confidence in George W Bush after Katrina a worsening war in Iraq:

Trump's approval is Katrina, Watergate level

Net approval for presidents in their second terms, aligned by time since second inauguration



Data: FiftyPlusOne.news (Trump term-2 approval), historical polling archives

Strength In Numbers

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What's striking about Trump is that he's reached basically the same place without one singular catastrophe doing all the damage. Instead, he has accumulated several negative shocks to his presidency, including fallout from his tariffs, mass deportations, the Oct. 2025 government shutdown, and an unpopular war. None of them alone ended his presidency, but together, they've dragged him down to the same territory that ended other presidents'.

Looking closely at Trump's approval rating over the last 14 months, six events stand out as primary inflection points for the public's view of his presidency. One issue seems to be the dominant factor in his decline.

This week's **Chart of the Week** takes a statistical approach to identifying "change points" in Trump's approval trend, and triangulates one overriding cause of his bad numbers with fresh polling on voters' economic anxieties.

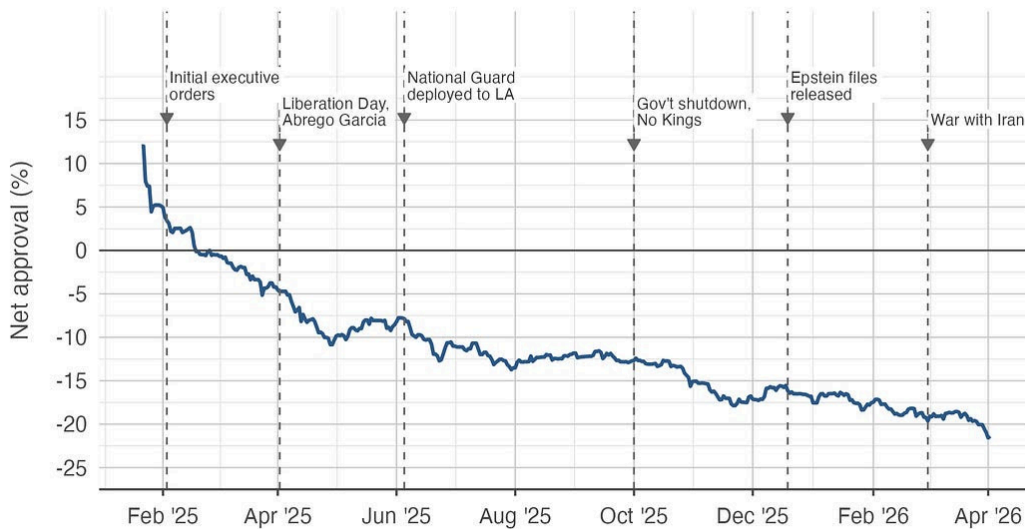
Six events that have dragged down Trump's approval

Trump's approval rating hasn't fallen in one clean, steady line. The trend is a mix of a secular negative slope and political shocks that cause brief stages of accelerated decline.

To examine what events have caused these shocks, I put Trump's approval rating in the 50+1 average into a statistical model called a "Bayesian changepoints detector." This is a mathematical program that looks for events in a time series that, statistically, cause something about the trend to change. Using this model, I can break Trump's approval trend since Inauguration Day into seven distinct segments.

Trump's approval has fallen in distinct phases

Net approval rating (approve % minus disapprove %)



Data: FiftyPlusOne.news (Trump term-2 approval), historical polling archives

The first drop was by far the sharpest. In the couple of weeks after Trump took office and started signing a barrage of executive orders, his net approval cratered at a pace of about 15 points per month. That was the fastest decline of his whole presidency — basically, whatever political “honeymoon” Trump enjoyed after his 2024 victory collapsed almost immediately.

From early February through early April 2025, that decline slowed to around 2 points per month. Then came his “Liberation Day” tariffs announcement, a year ago as of this Thursday, April 2, and the press coverage around the Kilmar Abrego Garcia deportation. That caused Trump’s approval to drop another 5 points in just a month.

After that, things eased off a bit more. The National Guard deployment to Los Angeles in June 2025 coincided with a slower rate of decline, closer to 2 points per month. And from June through October, Trump’s numbers were almost flat, falling by less than a point a month. If there was ever a moment when things looked like they might be leveling off, that was it.

But it didn’t last. The government shutdown and the No Kings protests in October 2025 pushed the trend downward again, roughly doubling the pace of decline. The president lost support after the 2025 statewide elections across the country, then recovered a couple of points of ground.

The trend snapped back to the negative with the first round of the Epstein files release in December. And now the war with Iran has sped things up again, with Trump’s net approval falling at about 2 points per month again — the fastest sustained slide since spring 2025.

Looking at the events that stand out for their impact on public opinion, I have two takeaways from this analysis.

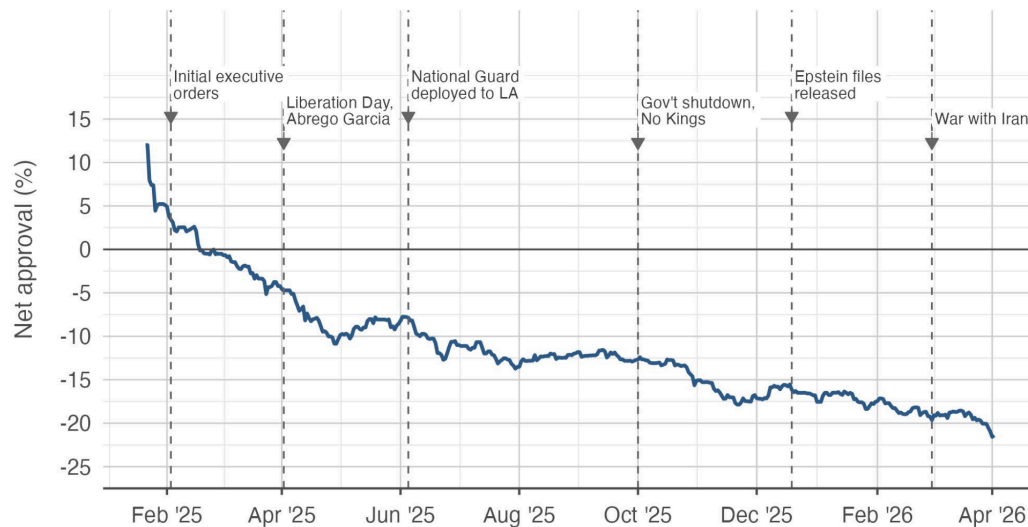
Is economic anxiety a new albatross for all incumbents?

One common thread running through several of the events that hurt Trump most is economic anxiety. The “Liberation Day” tariffs, government shutdown over health care costs, and now the war in Iran — directly linked to a verging-on 40% increase in gas prices since Feb. 28 — all had consequences for the economy or Americans’ spending power that were negative and highly visible.

The public's view of Trump's handling of prices and the cost of living also hit a new low this week of -37.6 net:

Trump's approval has fallen in distinct phases

Net approval rating (approve % minus disapprove %)

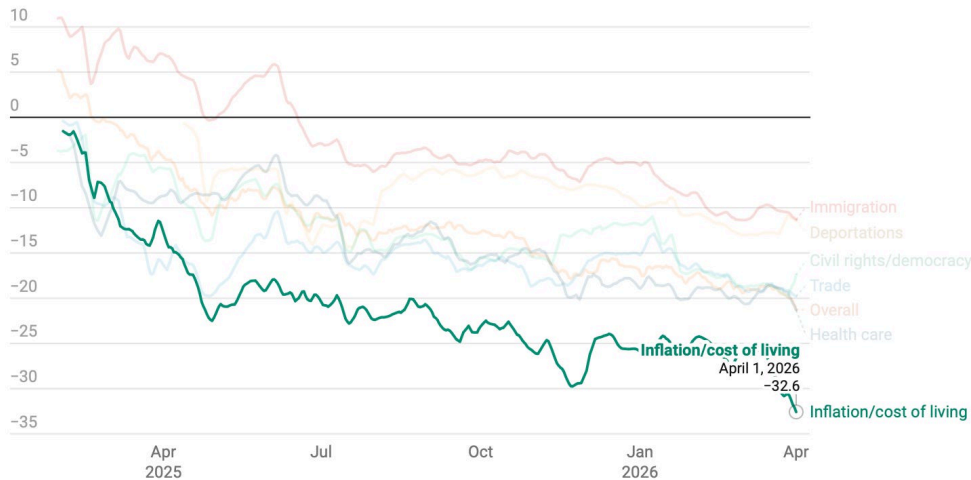


Data: FiftyPlusOne.news (Trump term-2 approval), historical polling archives

And the broader mood on the economy looks awful for him. A new University of Massachusetts Amherst poll out this morning finds that 53% of Americans say Trump is “most responsible for the rise in the price of goods and services” lately.

Trump hits new approval low overall and on prices

Average job approval rating for Donald Trump overall and on issue-specific poll questions. Issue averages are a mix of a 14-day moving average and modeled estimates.*



Averages computed by G. Elliott Morris. Issue approval data from FiftyPlusOne.news.

*Modeled estimates are a blend of the implied issue-specific average given Trump's overall rating on each day, and a polynomial trend line estimating opinion over time.

Source: gelliottmorris.com • [Embed](#) • Created with [Datawrapper](#)

Apart from this, the only events that seem to move Trump's approval are high-profile occasions of executive overreach, such as on immigration and interfering in the Epstein investigation. The Abrego Garcia case and LA protests both look to have hurt him badly. Few or no other events have interrupted the trend the way events that stoke voters' economic anxieties have.

The [more data we get](#), the more it looks like voters are just in the mood to [punish the party in power](#) for high prices and impaired economic mobility. Trump won in 2024 because of this, but now that his party is in power, he's on the wrong end of the stick.

It's hard to win back public support when your agenda is this unpopular

Finally, what really stands out about Trump's trajectory is not just how low his approval is. It's that it basically never bounces, either. Over 14 months, there hasn't been a single sustained recovery in his overall approval rating. He got no rally from the Iran conflict,

despite what history would suggest about the intervention, and no meaningful bounce from any of his legislative wins. Even the apparent “plateau” over the summer wasn’t really a rebound; it was just a slower decline.

Most presidents get at least some back-and-forth in their numbers. They lose support, then win some of it back after a successful policy fight or a crisis that pulls the country together. Trump hasn’t had that. His line only really moves in one direction.

This is to be expected from a president who has pushed the most unpopular policy agenda of all time. And if that pattern holds — and right now there’s not much evidence that it won’t — Trump will head into the 2026 midterms as the most unpopular president in modern polling history.

I wrote for my Deep Dive this week that Democrats aren’t doing as well as you’d expect based on Trump’s bad position. I would encourage you to [read that investigation](#) into the polling data if you want to understand why that is. But one important point is that Democrats don’t *need* to win the generic ballot by 20 points for Republicans to see the consequences of Trump’s most-unpopular-ever presidency. We’re already seeing them right now.

To sum up: Trump’s approval ratings slide doesn’t look like the result of one isolated crisis so much as the cumulative effect of a presidency that keeps making voters feel not listened to and less economically secure. Again and again, the biggest drops in his standing follow events that raised costs, heightened uncertainty, or reinforced a sense that the country is off track. And because the president has shown almost no ability — or interest — in winning back support, his unpopularity looks less like a purely political or economic liability and more like a defining feature of his second term.