Connecticut Consumer Outlook

Summer/Fall 2026

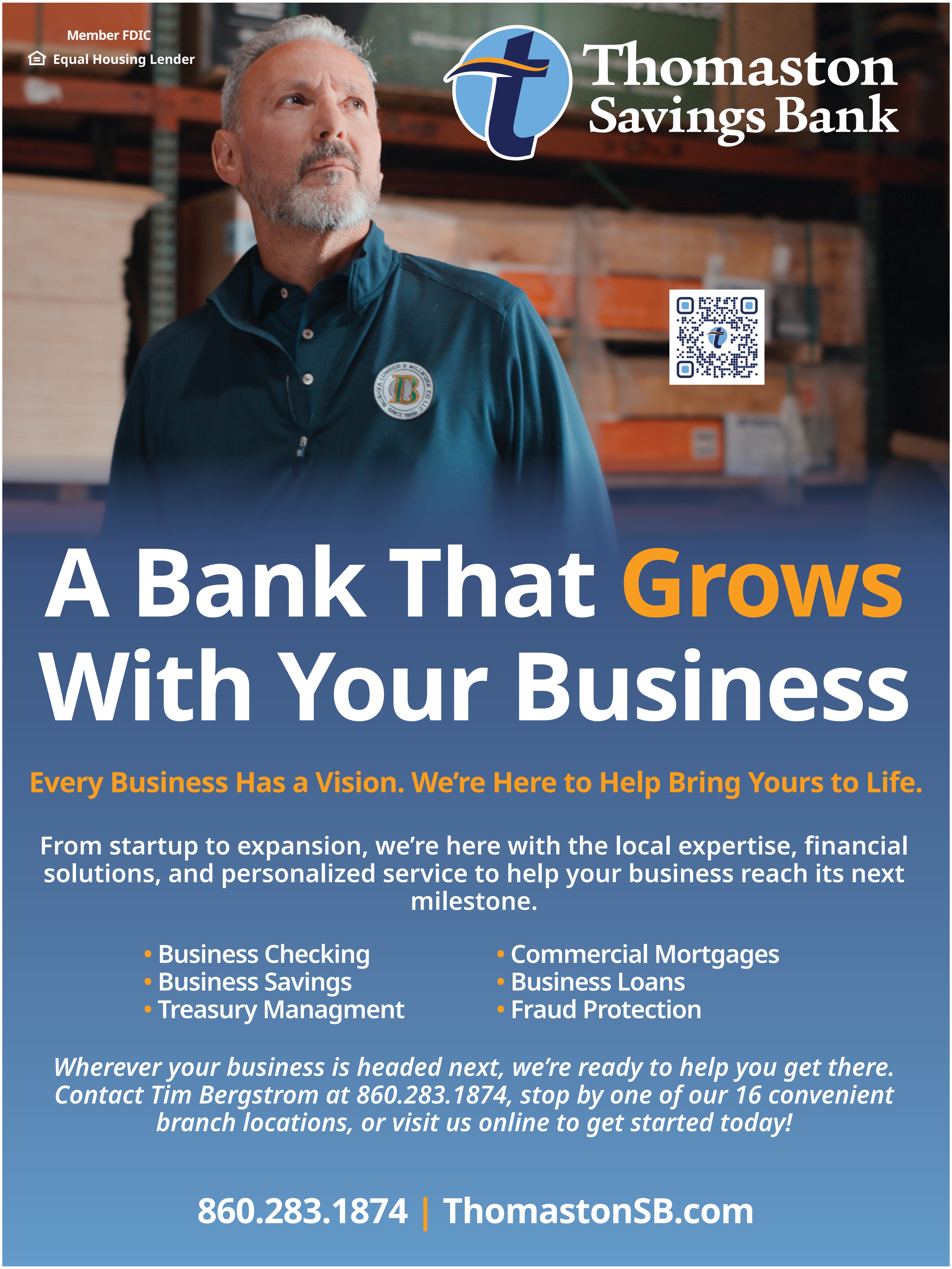
University of New Hampshire

AAPOR American Association for Public Opinion Research

States of Opinion Project ™

cbia foundation

Thomaston Savings Bank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Introduction

Connecticut households say they are feeling the impact of high costs and growing financial pressures.

While opinions about the national economy diverge sharply along partisan lines, the CBIA Foundation Economic Growth & Opportunity's 2026 Summer/Fall Connecticut Consumer Outlook shows residents agree on one thing—life is getting more expensive and many feel worse off financially than a year ago.

The foundation partnered with the University of New Hampshire Survey Center's States of Opinion Project for the first time this summer to produce the Connecticut Consumer Outlook, made possible with the generous support of Thomaston Savings Bank.

The results paint a concerning picture. Half of Connecticut residents say they are worse off financially than they were a year ago, a six-point jump from the UNH Survey Center's November 2025 poll (44%). Just 9% say they are better off, while 40% expect their financial situation to deteriorate further over the next year.

Financial strain is greatest among lower-income households, but it cuts across political lines. Nearly half of Democrats and Republicans, and more than half of Independent voters say they are worse off than a year ago.

Rising costs might have something to do with why. Nearly nine in 10 residents say household expenses increased in the last year—with groceries, gasoline, and electricity topping the list. Nearly half say paying medical expenses is difficult, and 59% report those costs increased during the past year.

When we examine views of the national economy, there's a clear partisan split. Democrats are far more pessimistic than Republicans about economic conditions. Views of the Connecticut economy, however, are considerably less polarized, with most expecting tough times ahead.

> **“Consumer sentiment echoes what we have been hearing from businesses—the cost of living is putting increased pressure on Connecticut residents. When families struggle with affordability, employers struggle to attract and retain talent, and communities feel the impact.**
>
> **Chris DiPentima,** President & CEO, CBIA

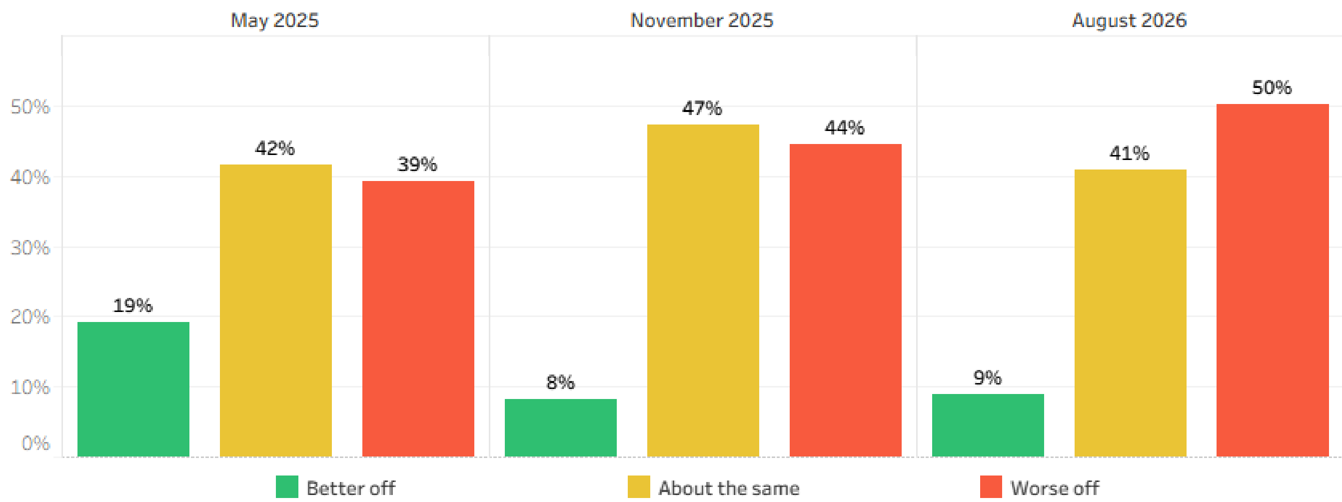
Many residents also believe state policymakers have not done enough to address affordability concerns. Just 22% approve of the Connecticut legislature's handling of the economy and job creation, while nearly three-quarters say state policymakers are doing a poor job addressing affordability.

Taken together, the findings—outlined in greater detail below—tell a consistent story. Connecticut residents are feeling sustained financial pressure, regardless of income or political affiliation.

While partisanship shapes how residents interpret the broader national economy, there is much greater agreement about the pressures they are experiencing at home.

This snapshot captures a point in time where residents are yearning for relief, greater affordability, and a strong economy, but many don't believe the

Household Financial Conditions



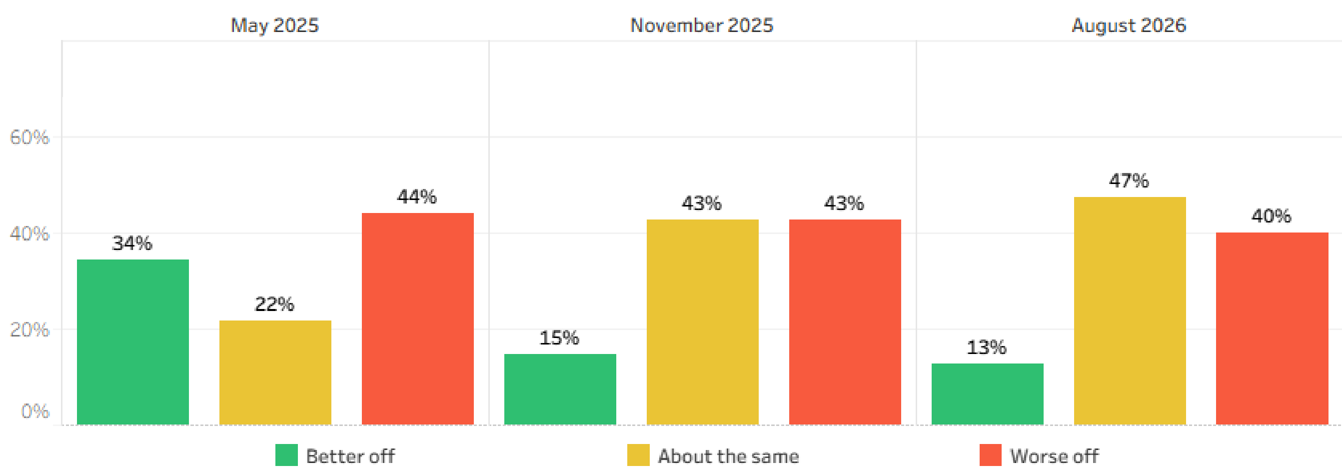
state is moving fast enough to deliver those results and are desperate for local action regardless of what is happening at the federal level.

Personal Finances

Only 9% of Connecticut residents say they are better off financially than they were a year ago; 41% say they are doing about the same; and 50% say they are worse off.

The percentage who say they are worse off (50%) has increased since the UNH Survey Center polled households in November of 2025 (44%). Independents (56%), Republicans (51%), and Democrats (49%) are about equally likely to say they are worse off.

Household Financial Conditions: 12 Months From Now



Of those households making less than $75,000, 62% say they are worse off financially, compared to 52% of those with a household income between $75,000 and $149,999 and 40% of those with a household income of $150,000 or more.

Connecticut residents are also largely pessimistic about the outlook for their personal finances. Thirteen percent of state residents expect to be better off a year from now; 47% think they will be doing about the same; and 40% think they will be worse off.

Residents responded in similar fashion in November 2025 but remain more downbeat than in May 2025. Republicans (44%), Democrats (39%), and Independents (37%) say they expect to be worse off than a year ago, although Republicans are also more likely to say that they expect to be better off (22%).

Forty-one percent of residents with a household income below $75,000 expect to be worse off financially, compared to 46% of those with a household income between $75,000 and $149,999, and 33% of those with a household income of $150,000 or more.

State & National Economics

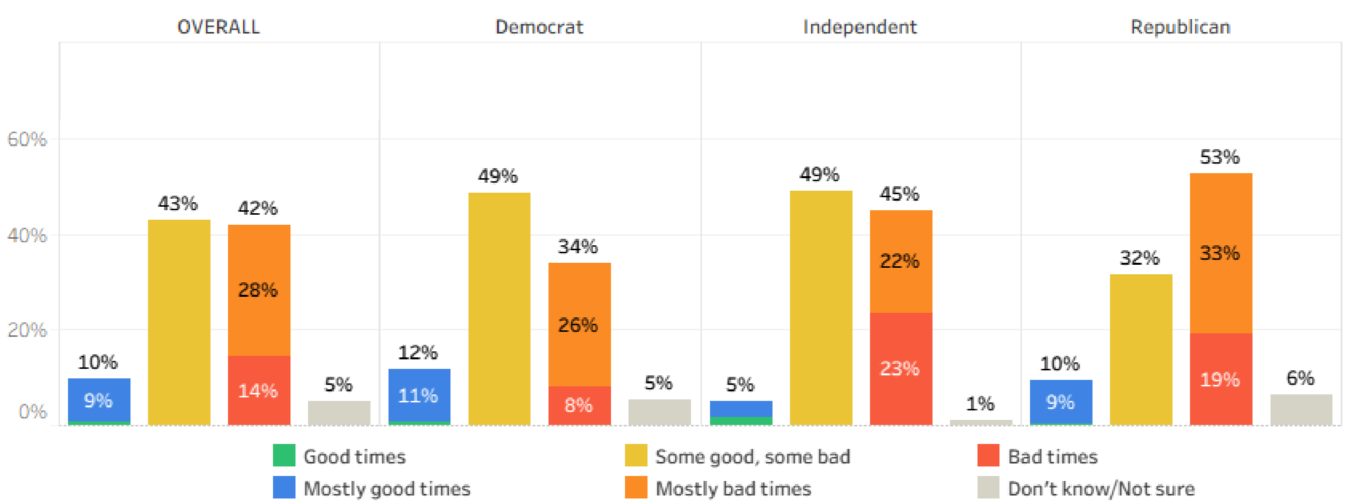
Only 10% of Connecticut residents expect good (1%) or mostly good (9%) economic conditions in Connecticut over the next year, 43% expect some good, some bad conditions, 42% expect mostly bad (28%) or bad (14%) times, and 5% don't know or are unsure.

More than half of Republicans (53%) expect bad or mostly bad conditions, compared to 45% of Independents and 34% of Democrats.

Responses do not differ considerably based on household income—with 43% of those with a household income below $45,000 expecting bad or mostly bad economic conditions. Forty-four percent of those with a household income between $75,000 and $149,999 expect bad or mostly bad economic conditions; 37% of those with a household income of $150,000 or more carry that same sentiment.

Connecticut residents are even more negative about future economic conditions in the country.

Connecticut Economic Conditions: Next 12 Months



Fourteen percent expect good (3%) or mostly good (11%) economic conditions in the U.S. during the next 12 months, 29% expect some good, some bad conditions, 53% expect mostly bad (30%) or bad (24%) conditions, and 4% don't know or are unsure.

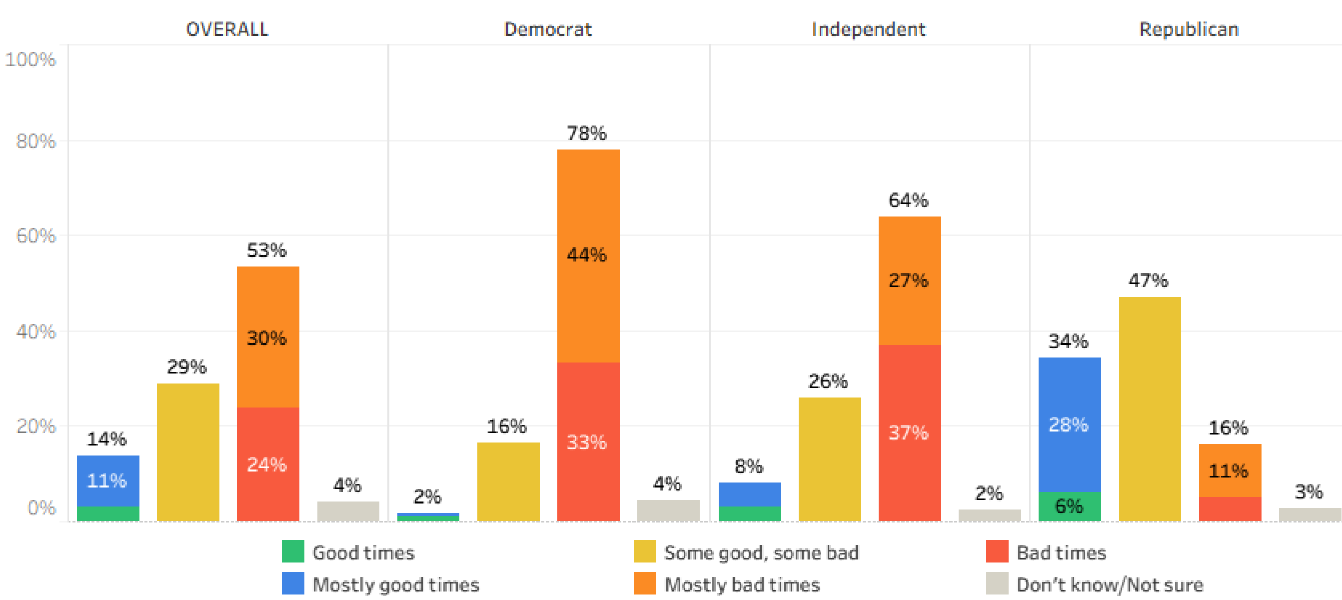
Partisanship plays a much more significant role in these responses—with majorities of Democrats (78%) and Independents (64%) expecting bad or mostly bad economic conditions over the next 12 months, while 34% of Republicans expect good or mostly good conditions and only 16% expect bad or mostly bad conditions.

Majorities of those with a household income below $75,000 (52%), between $75,000 and $149,999 (61%), and $150,000 or more (51%) expect bad or mostly bad economic conditions.

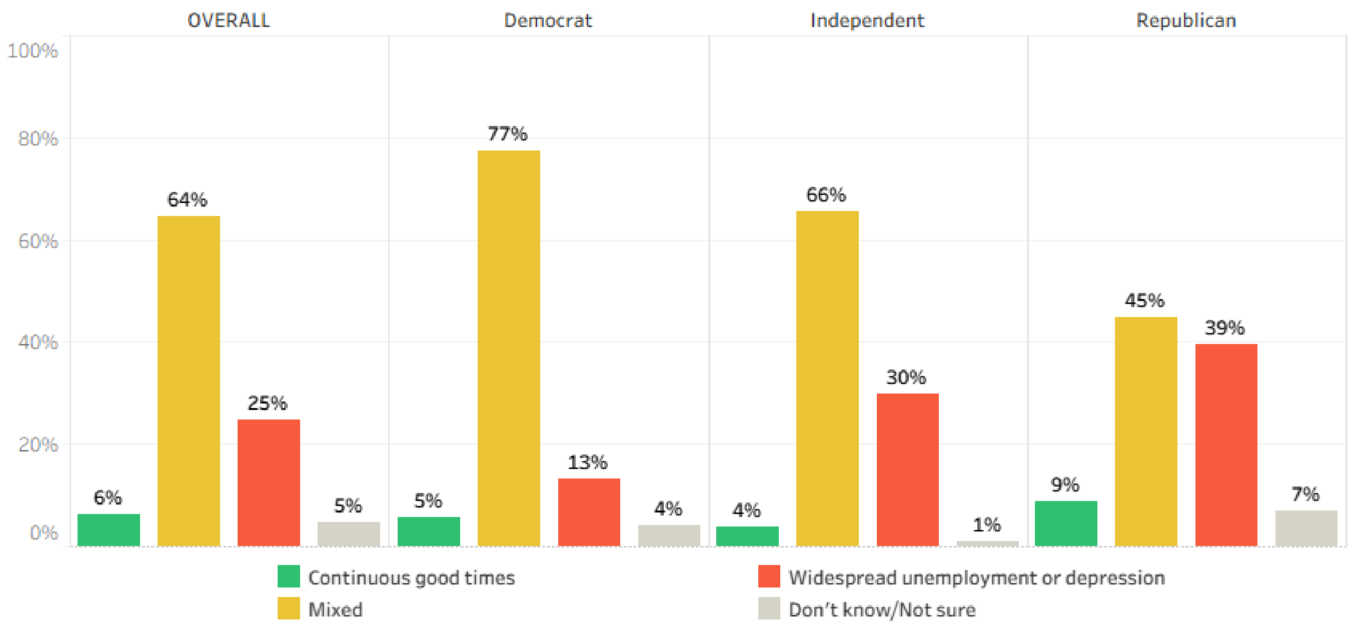
Connecticut residents have a more nuanced opinion when it comes to the long-term economic health of the state. Six percent expect Connecticut to experience continuous good times over the next five years; 25% expect widespread unemployment or depression; 64% expect mixed conditions; and 5% don't know or are unsure.

> **The findings in this report highlight the importance of a strong Connecticut economy, the current concerns that need to be addressed, and the need for organizations to remain committed to the long-term financial well-being of their communities.**
>
> **Stephen Lewis,** President & CEO, Thomaston Savings Bank

Economic Conditions in US: Next 12 Months



Connecticut Five-Year Economic Outlook



About one-third (34%) of those with a household income below $75,000 expect widespread unemployment or depression compared to only about one-fifth of those with a household income between $75,000 and $149,999 (17%) or $150,000 or more (22%).

Republicans (39%) and Independents (30%) are more likely than Democrats (13%) to anticipate widespread unemployment or depression in the state.

Connecticut residents are more negative about the long-term economic health of the country, with 10% expecting the U.S. to experience continuous good times over the next five years, 35% expect widespread unemployment or depression, 49% expect mixed conditions, and 7% don't know or are unsure.

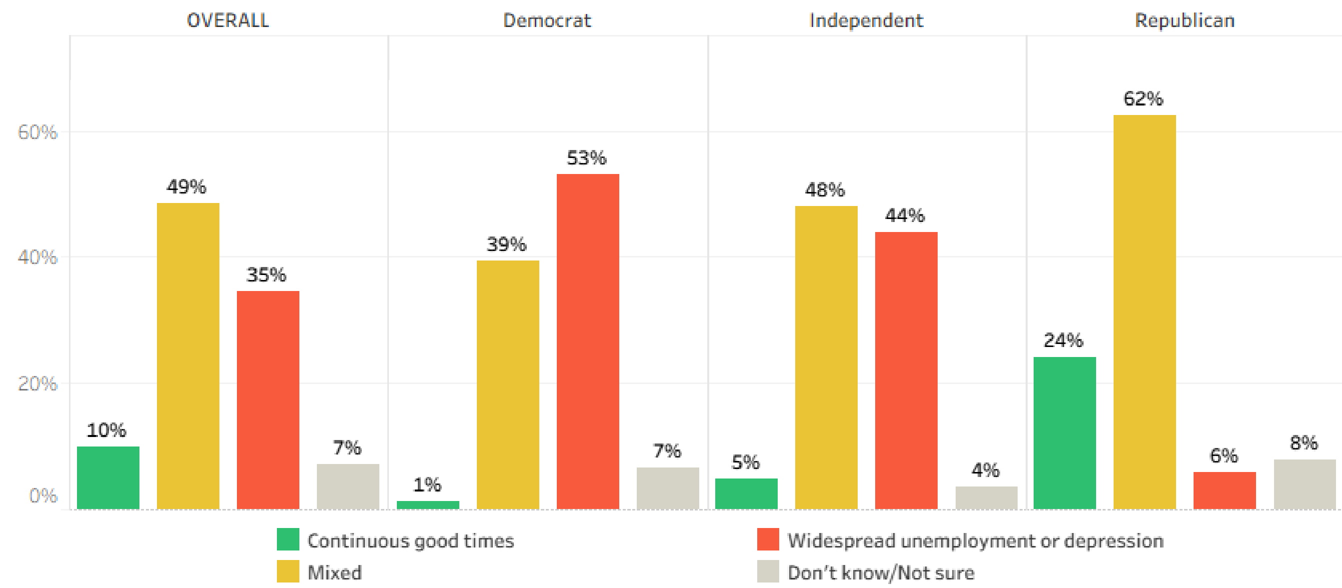
More than half (53%) of Democrats and 44% of Independents believe the country will face widespread unemployment or depression. Nearly one quarter of Republicans (24%) expect continuous good times and only 6% expect widespread unemployment or depression.

Those with a household income below $75,000 (44%) are more likely than those with a household income between $75,000 and $149,999 (31%) or $150,000 or more (34%) to expect widespread unemployment or depression.

Fifty-seven percent of Connecticut residents think it is very (21%) or somewhat (36%) likely that the national economy will enter a recession within the next 12 months, 28% think this is not very likely (21%) or not at all likely (7%), 8% believe the U.S. economy is already in a recession, and 8% don't know or are unsure.

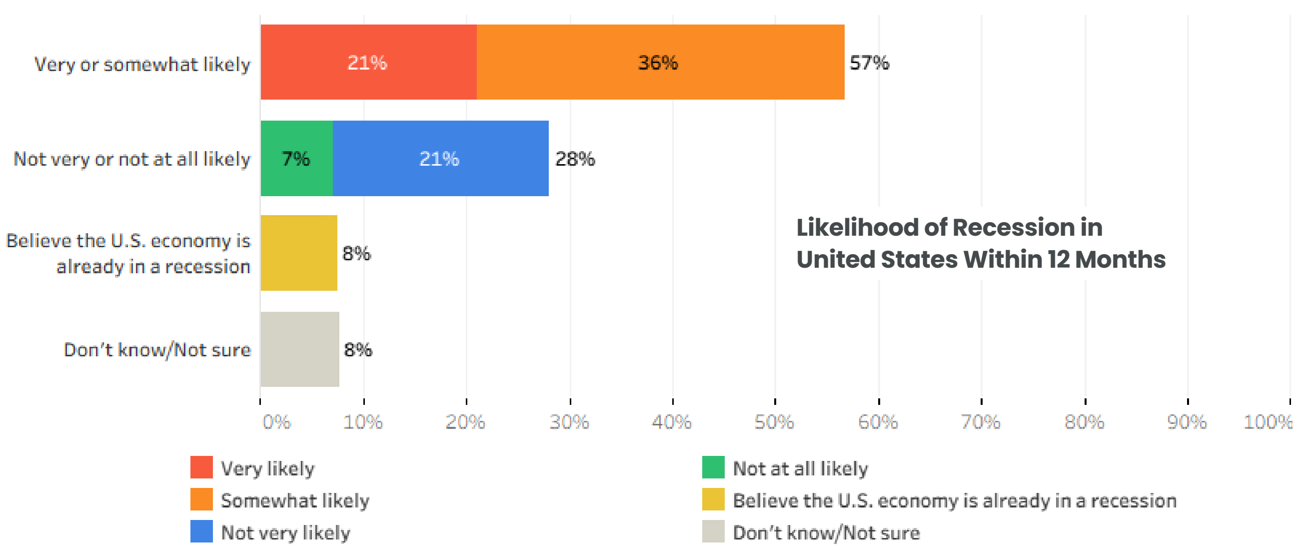
Democrats (85%) and Independents (78%) are far more likely than Republicans (29%) to say it is likely that the U.S. economy will enter a recession or is already in one.

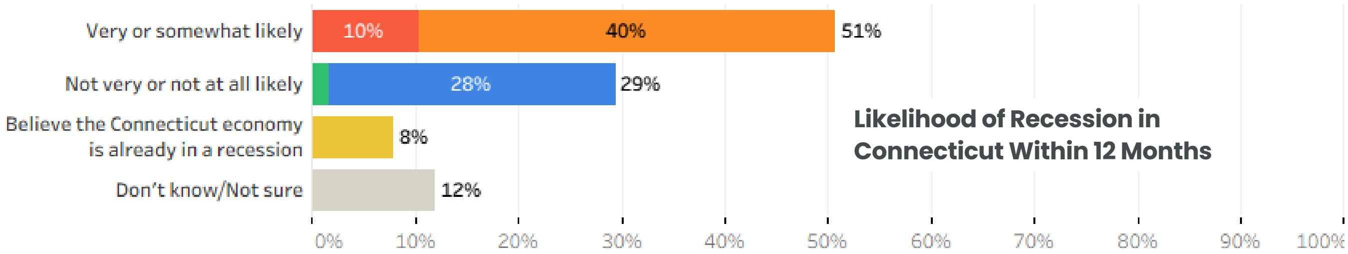
US Five-Year Economic Outlook



Half of Connecticut residents (51%) think it is very (10%) or somewhat (40%) likely that the Connecticut economy will enter a recession within the next 12 months, 29% think this is not very likely (28%) or not at all likely (2%), 8% believe we are in a recession, and 12% don't know or are unsure.

Those with a household income of $150,000 or more (64%) are more likely to believe the Connecticut economy will go into recession within the next 12 months, while those with a household income below $75,000 (14%) are more likely to believe a recession is underway.





Cost of Living

Seven in eight Connecticut residents (87%) say that their cost of living has risen significantly (55%) or slightly (32%) in the past 12 months; 8% say it has stayed about the same; and 5% say it has declined slightly (2%) or significantly (3%).

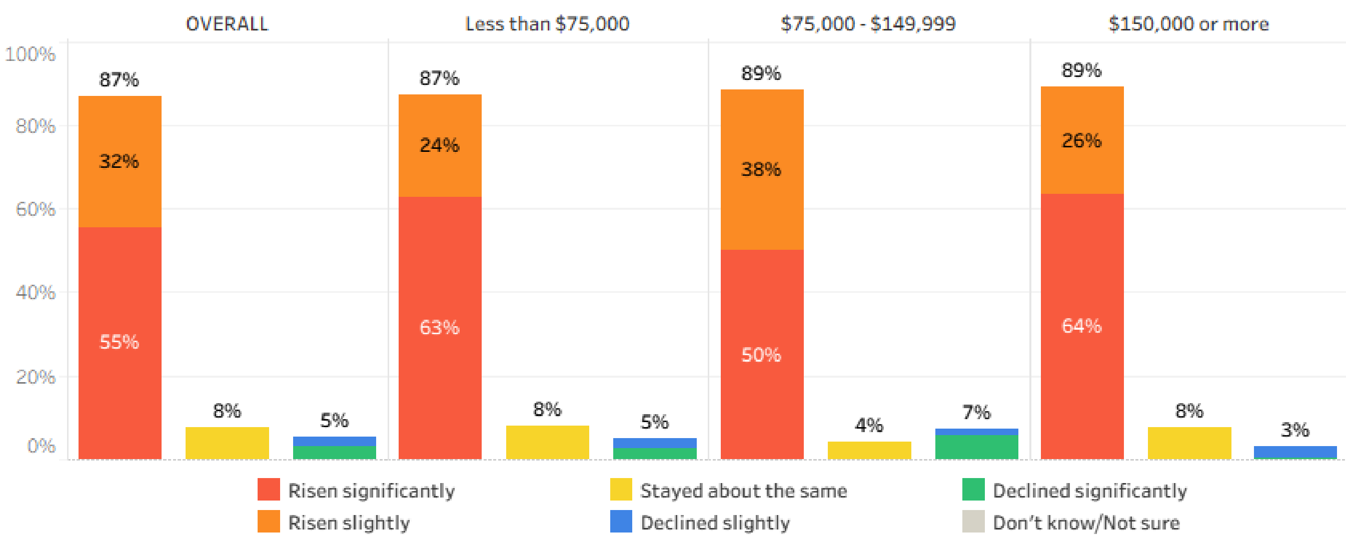
Regardless of income level, most residents say the cost of living has risen in the past 12 months.

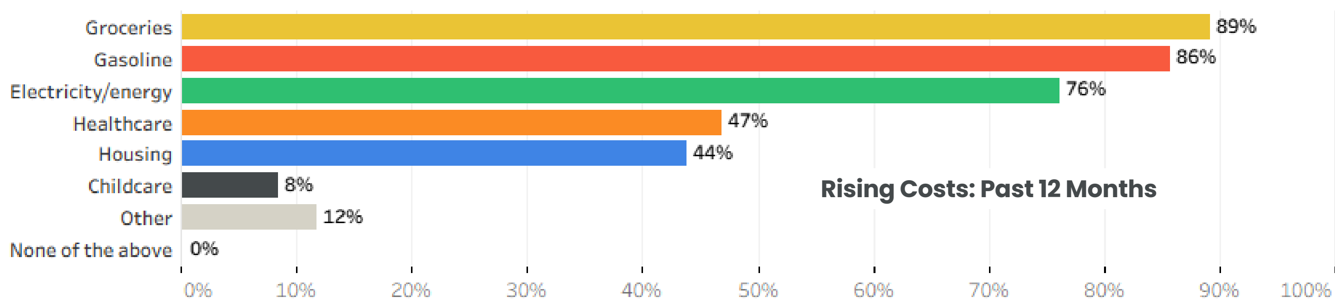
Among respondents who say their cost of living has risen, when asked what specific costs have risen in the past year, 89% mention groceries, 86% cite gasoline, and 76% mention electricity or energy.

Less than half say the cost of healthcare (47%), housing (44%), or childcare (8%) have risen for them over the past few months. Another 12% point to other cost increases.

Those with a household income of $150,000 or more are less likely to say gas or housing costs have increased over the past 12 months, but are more likely to say the costs of electricity or energy have increased.

Cost of Living by Household Income: Past 12 Months





Tariffs

Given its direct impact on the national and local economy, the survey captured consumer sentiment as it relates to tariffs.

Four in five Connecticut residents (79%) believe tariffs will generally result in much (46%) or somewhat (33%) higher prices in the U.S., 14% think tariffs will have little or no effect on prices, 4% think they will bring about somewhat (3%) or much (1%) lower prices, and 3% don't know or are unsure.

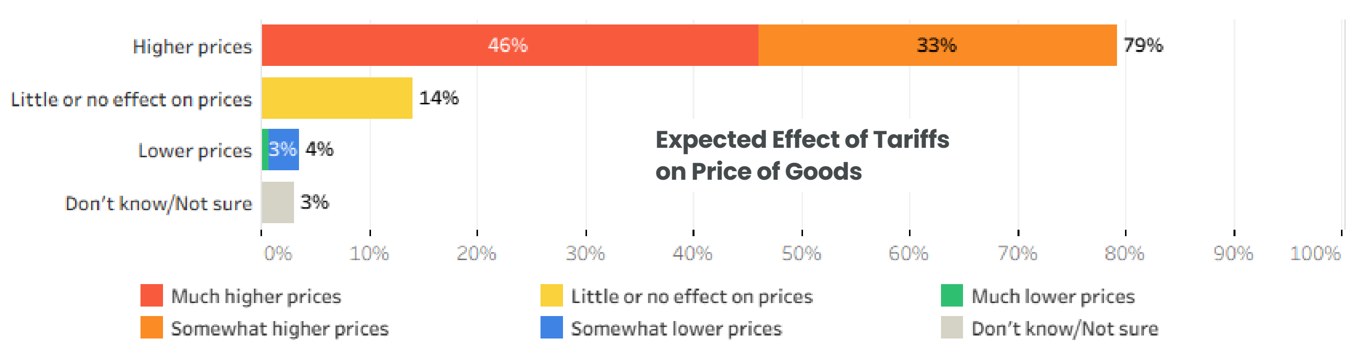
Nearly all Democrats (98%) and a majority of Independents (78%) believe tariffs will result in much or somewhat higher prices in the country, while 55% of Republicans agree.

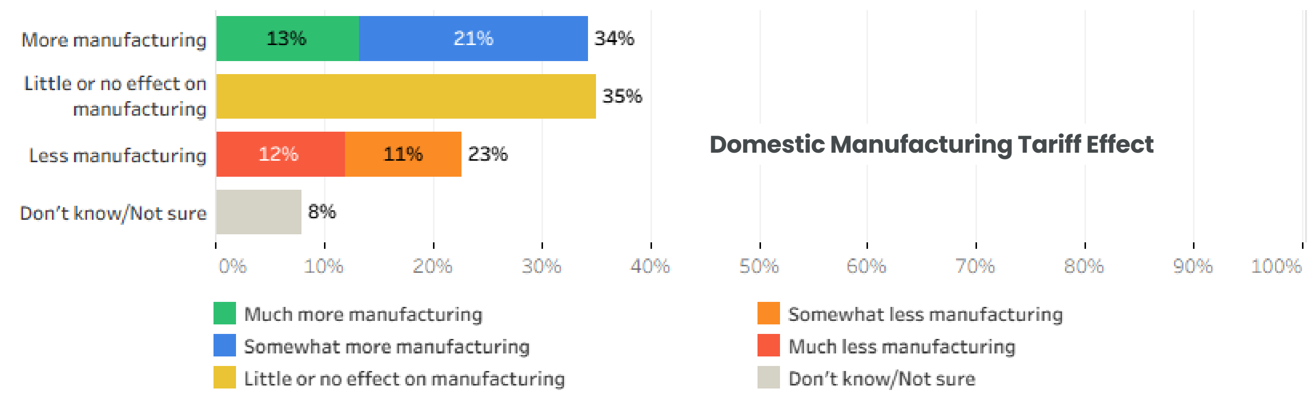
Connecticut residents are more divided on the effects of tariffs on manufacturing—with 34% under the impression that tariffs will result in much (13%) or somewhat (21%) more manufacturing, 35% believe tariffs will have little or no effect on manufacturing, 23% think tariffs will result in somewhat (11%) or much (12%) less manufacturing, and 8% are unsure.

Most Republicans (72%) believe tariffs will result in more manufacturing in the U.S., but pluralities of Democrats (46%) and Independents (40%) believe they will have little or no effect.

Only 28% of Connecticut residents believe tariffs will have a very (10%) or somewhat (18%) positive effect on the U.S. economy, 8% believe they will have little or no effect, 62% think they will have a very (41%) or somewhat (21%) negative effect, and 3% are unsure.

In May 2025, 26% believed tariffs would have a positive effect and 64% believed they would have a negative effect.





Nealy all Democrats (95%) and three-quarters of Independents (76%) believe tariffs will have a negative overall effect on the U.S. economy, while three-quarters of Republicans (76%) believe tariffs will have a positive effect.

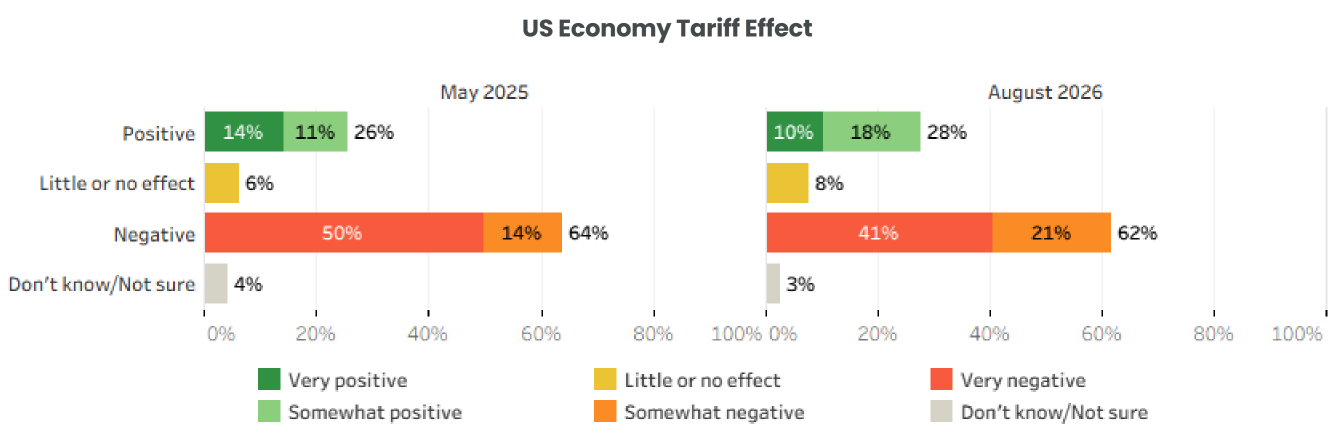
Only 32% of Connecticut residents strongly (18%) or somewhat (14%) approve of the Trump administration's use of tariffs, 4% are neutral or have no opinion, 63% somewhat (7%) or strongly (55%) disapprove, and 1% don't know or are unsure.

Nearly all Democrats (96%) and more than three-quarters of Independents (77%) disapprove of Trump's tariff policies while 82% of Republicans approve.

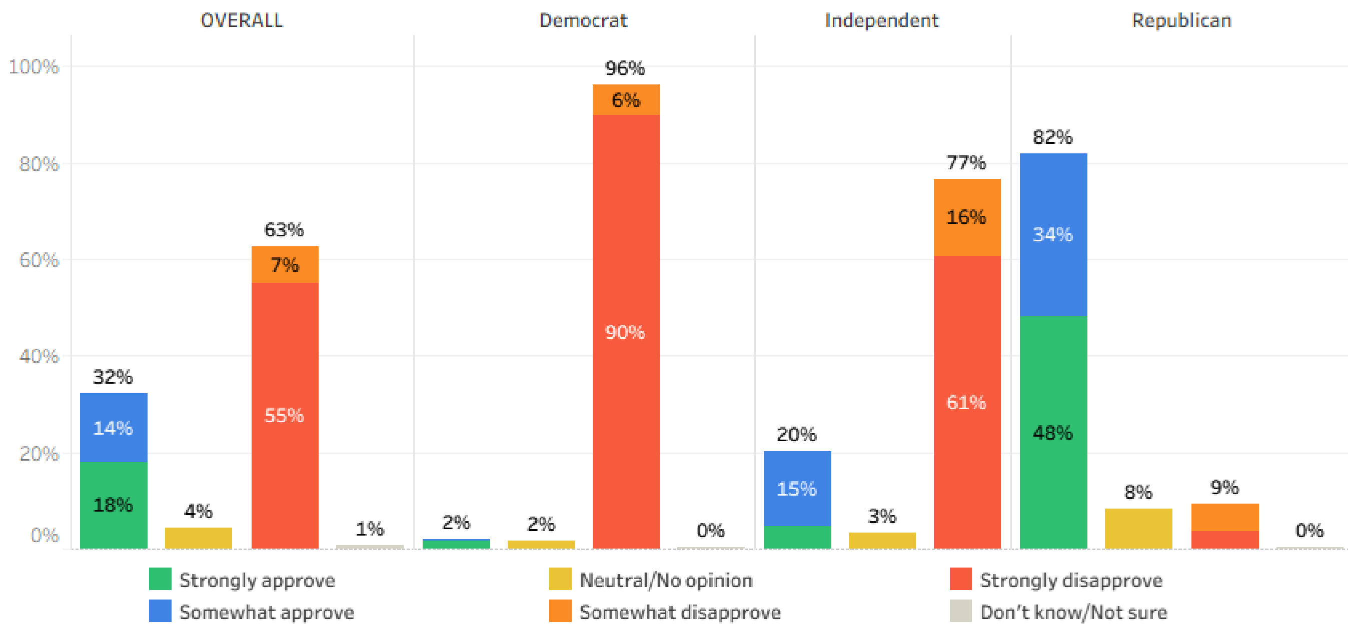
Connecticut's Economy & State Policymakers

Only 22% of Connecticut residents strongly (3%) or somewhat (19%) approve of the Connecticut state legislature's handling of the economy and job creation, 24% are neutral or neither approve nor disapprove, 42% somewhat (19%) or strongly (23%) disapprove, and 12% don't know or are unsure.

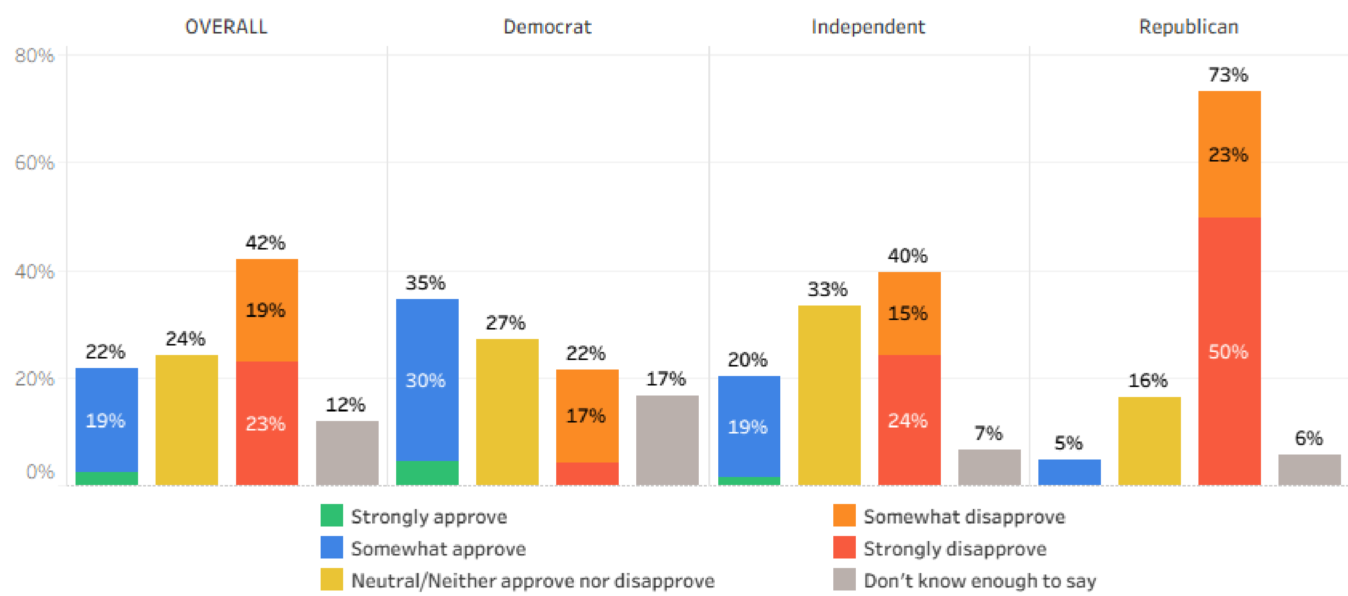
A plurality of Democrats (35%) approve of the legislature's handling of the economy and job creation, but a plurality of Independents (40%) and majority of Republicans (73%) disapprove.

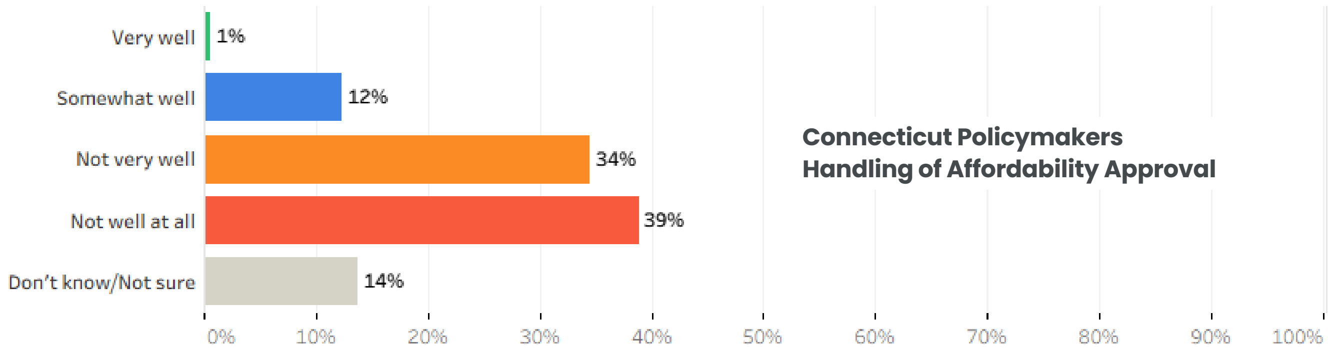


Approval of President Trump's Use of Tariffs



State Legislature's Handling of Economy and Job Creation





Only 1% of Connecticut residents say state policymakers have handled affordability issues very well, 12% say they have managed somewhat well, 34% say they have not managed very well, 39% say they have not managed affordability well at all, and 14% are unsure.

Most Republicans (72%) say policymakers have not handled affordability in the state well at all, while 49% of Independents and 13% of Democrats say the same.

Jobs

Twelve percent of Connecticut residents think the labor shortage is a very serious problem, 38% think it is somewhat serious, 26% think it is not very serious, 7% think the labor shortage is not at all serious, and 18% don't know or are unsure.

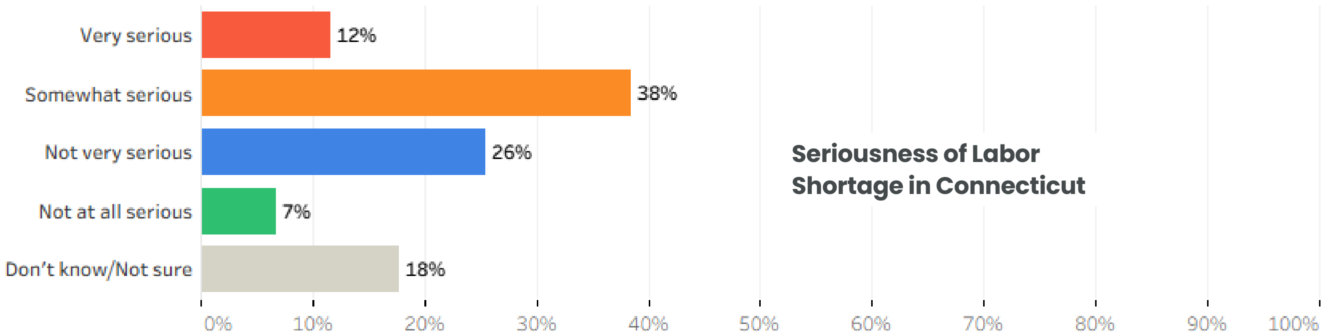
Republicans (55%) and Democrats (51%) alike say the labor shortage is a very or somewhat serious problem, while 35% of Independents say the same.

A majority of those aged 65 and older (61%) believe the labor shortage is a very or somewhat serious problem. Less than half of those under 65 agree (46%).

Among respondents who think that the labor shortage is a very serious, somewhat serious, or not very serious problem in Connecticut, only 1% say that state policymakers have handled the issue very well, 13% say they have managed somewhat well, 32% say they have not managed very well, 21% say they have not managed the labor shortage well at all, and 33% don't know or are unsure.

Three-quarters of Republicans (76%) say state policymakers have handled the labor shortage not very well or not well at all, while 40% of Independents and 39% of Democrats say the same.

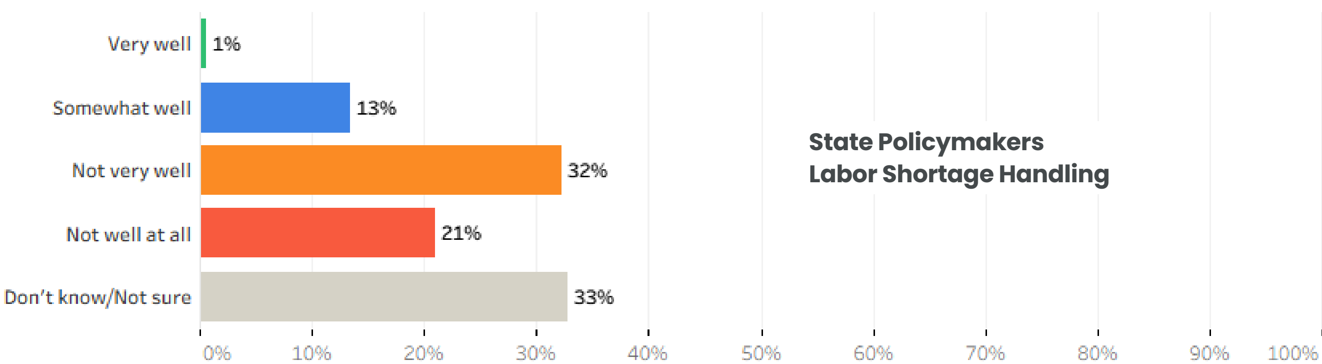
> **"Connecticut residents are really worried about how much things cost, regardless of how much money they make or what party they belong to, and most people think tariffs are going to only make prices go higher without having the positive impact on manufacturing some hope they will.**
>
> **Andrew Smith,** Director, UNH Survey Center



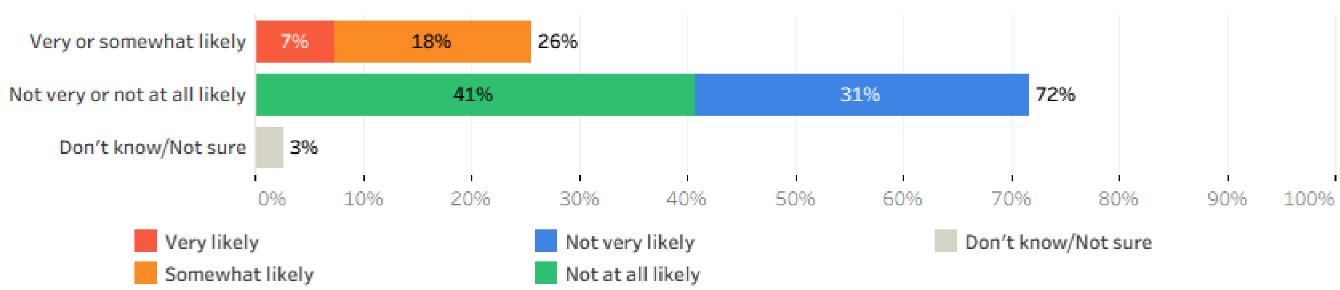
Among those who are currently employed full or part-time, a quarter (26%) think it is very (7%) or somewhat (18%) likely that they will lose their job due to artificial intelligence over the next 10 years, 72% think this is not very (31%) or not at all (41%) likely, and 3% don't know or are unsure.

Younger workers and those with a household income below $75,000 are more likely than others to think it is very or somewhat likely they will lose their job due to AI.

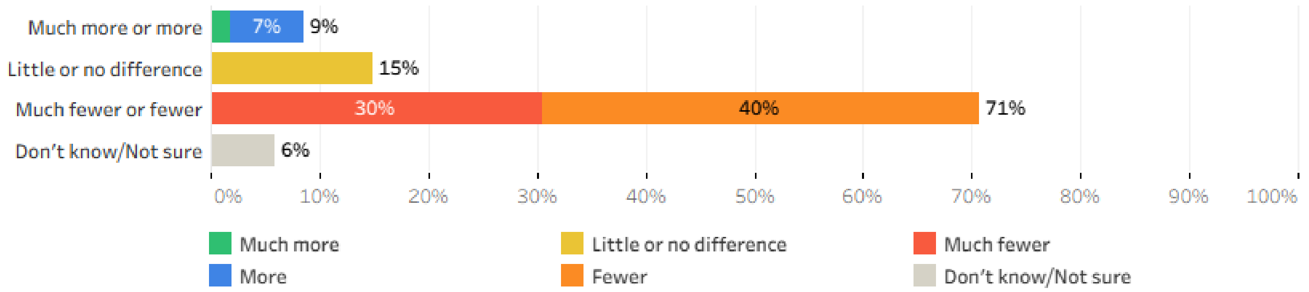
Most Connecticut residents (71%) think artificial intelligence will lead to much fewer (30%) or fewer



Likelihood of Losing Job Over Next 10 Years Due to AI



Effect of AI on Jobs in US: Next 10 Years



(40%) jobs in the U.S. over the next 10 years, 15% think AI will make little or no difference to jobs, 9% believe AI will lead to much more (2%) or more (7%) jobs, and 6% don't know or are unsure.

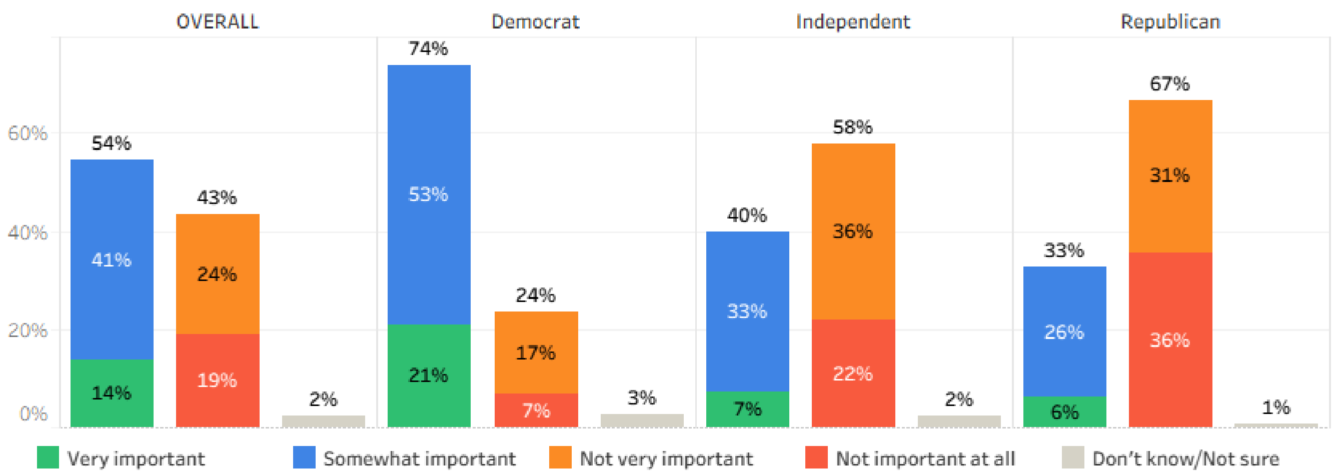
Democrats, Independents, those under the age of 35, and those without a college degree are more likely than others to believe AI will lead to fewer or much fewer jobs.

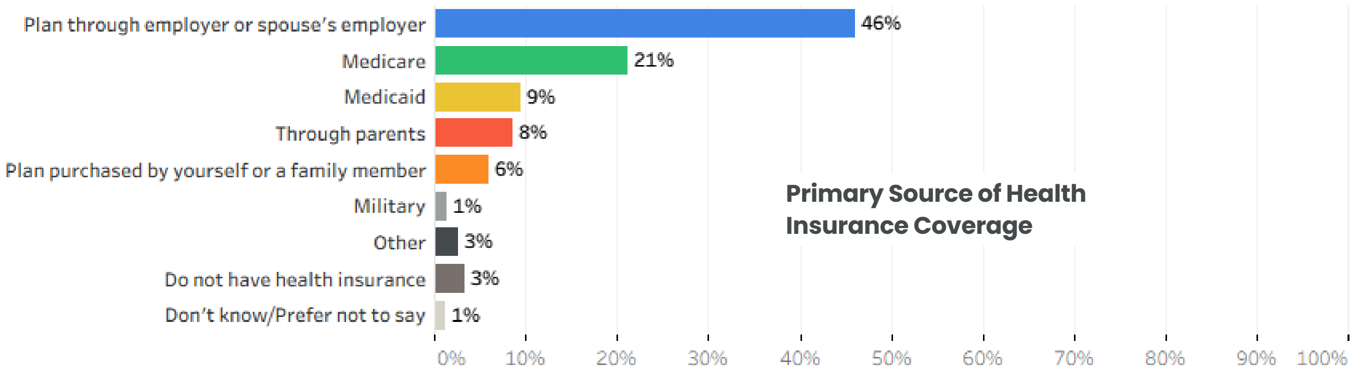
More than half of Connecticut residents (54%) believe a four-year college degree is very (14%) or somewhat (41%) important to get a well-paying, stable job, 43% believe a college degree is not very important (24%) or not important at all (19%) to getting a well-paying, stable job, and 2% don't know or are unsure.

Among those with a college degree or more education, 71% believe a four-year college degree, while only 43% of those without a college degree say the same.

Most Democrats (74%) believe a four-year college degree is very or somewhat important to getting a well-paying, stable job, while less than half of Independents (40%) and Republicans (33%) agree.

Importance of Getting a Four-Year Degree to Getting a Good Job





Health Insurance

Forty-six percent of Connecticut adults say their primary source of health insurance coverage is through their employer or their spouse.

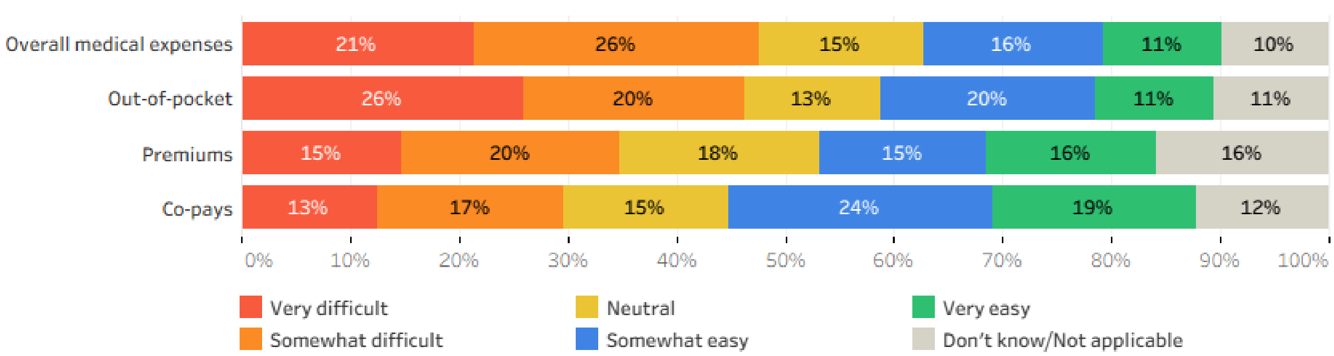
Twenty-one percent primarily get healthcare through Medicare. Less than 10% primarily get their healthcare through Medicaid (9%), their parents (8%), a purchased plan (6%), or the military (1%). Three percent of respondents say they do not have health insurance.

Nearly half of Connecticut residents (48%) say it is very (21%) or somewhat (26%) difficult for them to pay for their overall medical expenses, 15% are neutral on this question, 27% say it is somewhat (16%) or very (11%) easy for them to pay, and 10% don't know or say the question doesn't apply to them.

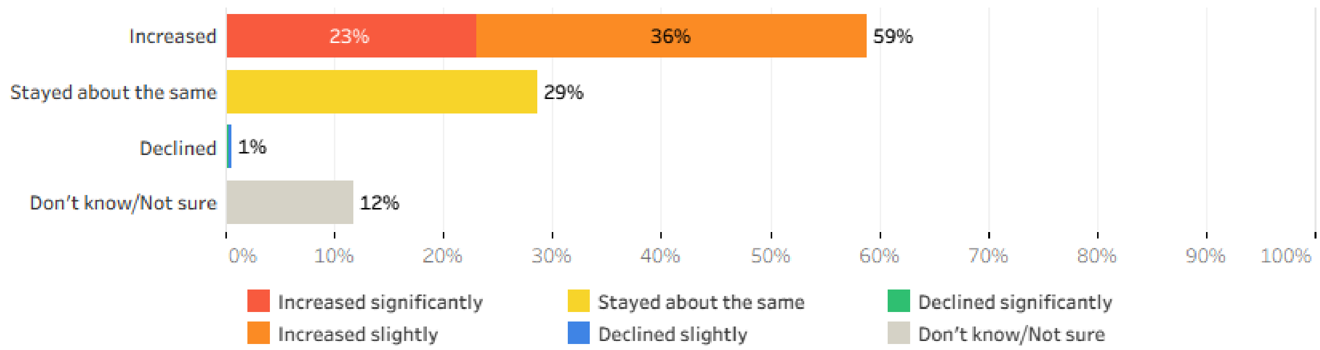
Forty-six percent say it is very or somewhat difficult to pay out-of-pocket expenses, while 35% say it is difficult to pay premiums, and 30% say it is difficult to pay for co-pays.

Self-identified Independents, those between 35 and 49-years-old, and those with a household income below $75,000 are particularly likely to say it is difficult to pay for their overall medical expenses, while those aged 65 and older, those with at least a college degree, and those with a household income of $150,000 or more are more likely to say it is easy for them to pay for these expenses.

Medical Costs Burdens



Overall Medical Costs Changes: Past 12 Months



Six in 10 (59%) Connecticut residents say their overall medical costs increased significantly (23%) or slightly (36%) over the past 12 months, 29% say they stayed the same, only 1% say costs declined, and 12% were unsure.

Those aged 65 and older, and those who receive their healthcare primarily through an employer, through Medicare, or through a purchased plan, are particularly likely to say overall medical costs increased. ■

METHODOLOGY

The University of New Hampshire Survey Center conducted the survey between August 20 and 24. Overall, 917 Connecticut residents completed the survey, including 718 Nutmeg State Panel members and 199 randomly-selected Connecticut residents who received an invitation through text message. The margin of sampling error for the survey is +/- 3.2 percent.

The Nutmeg State Panel is a probability-based web panel of Connecticut residents. Approximately 2,000 Connecticut adults were recruited from phone, text-to-web, or mail-to-web surveys sent to randomly selected phone numbers or addresses.

The Nutmeg State Panel is one of six panels within the UNH Survey Center's States of Opinion Project. The Survey Center has probability-based panels in all six New England states and conducts surveys regularly.

The UNH Survey Center is a member of the American Association for Public Opinion Research's Transparency Initiative.

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