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How Indian Americans Plan to Vote in the 2026 Midterms

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Questions about Indian Americans' place in American society have become an unexpected flash point ahead of the U.S. midterm elections. Indian Americans, who number fewer than 6 million and account for roughly 1.5 percent of the U.S. population, were thrust into the limelight when a Republican candidate for Texas state office posted a photo of University of Texas (UT) students visibly of South Asian origin celebrating the school's football team. "I heard UT graduation this year looked like this. I didn't believe it," the candidate, Bo French, wrote.

That post ignited a debate about national identity and belonging that has arrived at a crucial political moment for Indian Americans. Since at least the mid-2000s, surveys have shown Indian Americans to be among the Democratic Party's most reliable voters. Yet that partisan advantage has narrowed in recent years. In 2020, 68 percent of Indian American citizens planned to vote for Joe Biden, while 22 percent supported Donald Trump. In 2024, 62 percent intended to vote for Kamala Harris while 30 percent backed Trump.

Then came Trump's second term in office. By early 2026, large majorities of Indian Americans disapproved of the president's handling of immigration, the domestic economy, international economic policy, and even U.S.-India relations, once a relative strength. But Democrats gained remarkably little from that disillusionment.

Results from a new survey conducted ahead of the midterm elections reveal a backlash against Trump and the Republican Party accompanied by a rebound in support for the Democratic Party.

The Indian American Attitudes Survey (IAAS) was conducted by Carnegie in partnership with the research firm YouGov. The October 2026 IAAS is a nationally representative online survey of 1,000 Indian American adults, fielded between October 7, 2026, and October 27, 2026, with an overall margin of error of ±3.87 percent. The survey builds on earlier IAAS waves conducted in 2020, 2024, and early 2026, and it provides a detailed portrait of Indian Americans' partisan identities, vote preferences, policy priorities, evaluations of political leaders, and experiences with racism and discrimination.

This article focuses on Indian Americans' political attitudes ahead of the 2026 midterm elections. Subsequent work will examine questions of race, belonging, identity, and discrimination. Given the focus on voting, many analyses here are restricted to the IAAS subsample of U.S. citizens (n=861).

Democrats Widen Their Electoral Advantage

According to the October 2026 IAAS, 62 percent of Indian American citizens intend to vote for the Democratic candidate in their congressional district, compared to just 19 percent who favor the Republican candidate (see figure 1). Another 12 percent remain undecided, while 5 percent say they do not intend to vote and 2 percent support another candidate. Democratic candidates enjoy a similarly commanding advantage in Senate races: 63 percent of respondents in states holding Senate elections support the Democratic candidate, compared to 21 percent who favor the Republican.

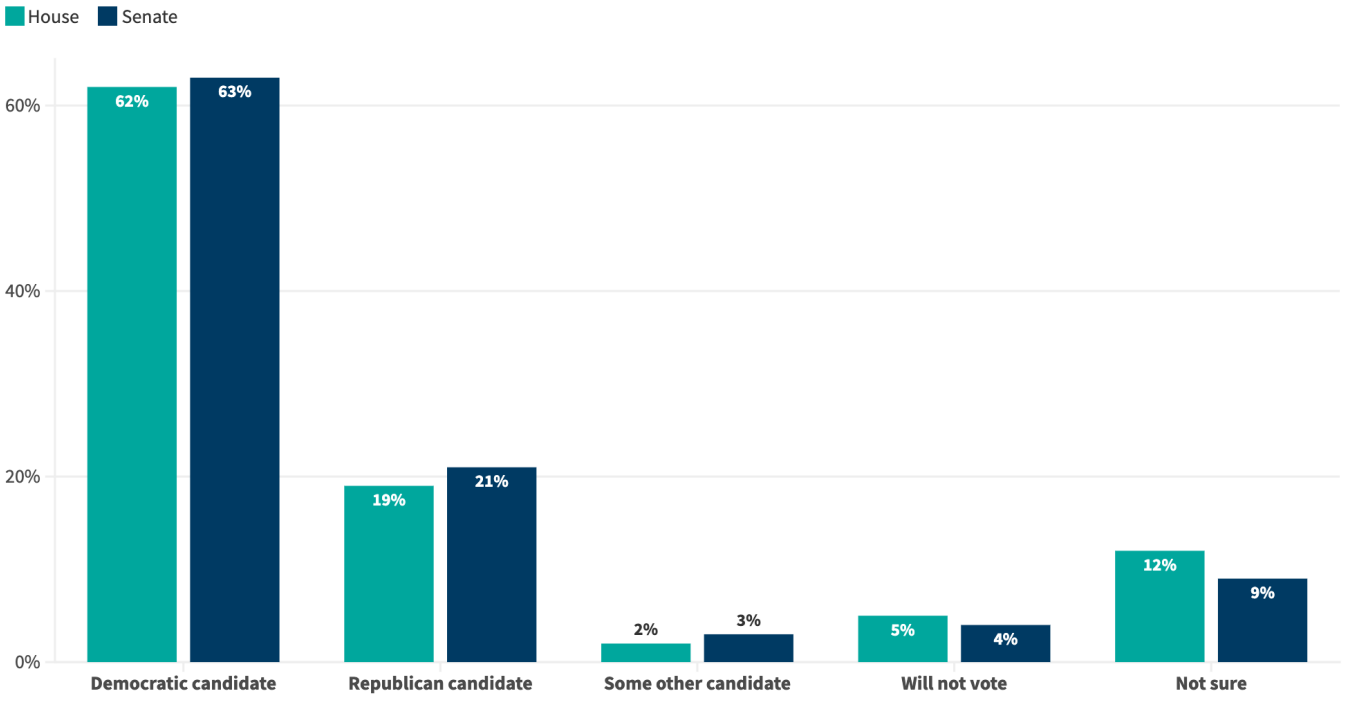
In 2024, 62 percent of Indian Americans supported Harris while 30 percent favored Trump (see figure 2). By January 2026, Democratic support had slipped to 57 percent, with 25 percent expressing support for Trump. The latest figures suggest that the Republican Party's electoral gains among Indian Americans have not translated into durable support for Republican congressional candidates.

To be clear, caution is necessary when comparing across IAAS surveys because previous waves measured voters' preferences in presidential elections, whereas the October 2026 survey measures congressional voting intentions.[1] Nevertheless, the trend is notable. Democratic support has returned to its 2024 presidential level while Republican support has fallen considerably. Indeed, the resulting 43-percentage-point Democratic advantage ahead of the November 2026 midterms is substantially larger than the 32-point advantage Harris enjoyed over Trump in 2024.

How do Indian American voting intentions look compared with the larger U.S. population? To answer this, one can assess the IAAS top-line findings against those from a separate YouGov survey fielded around the same time (see table 1).

Figure 1. House and Senate Vote Choice

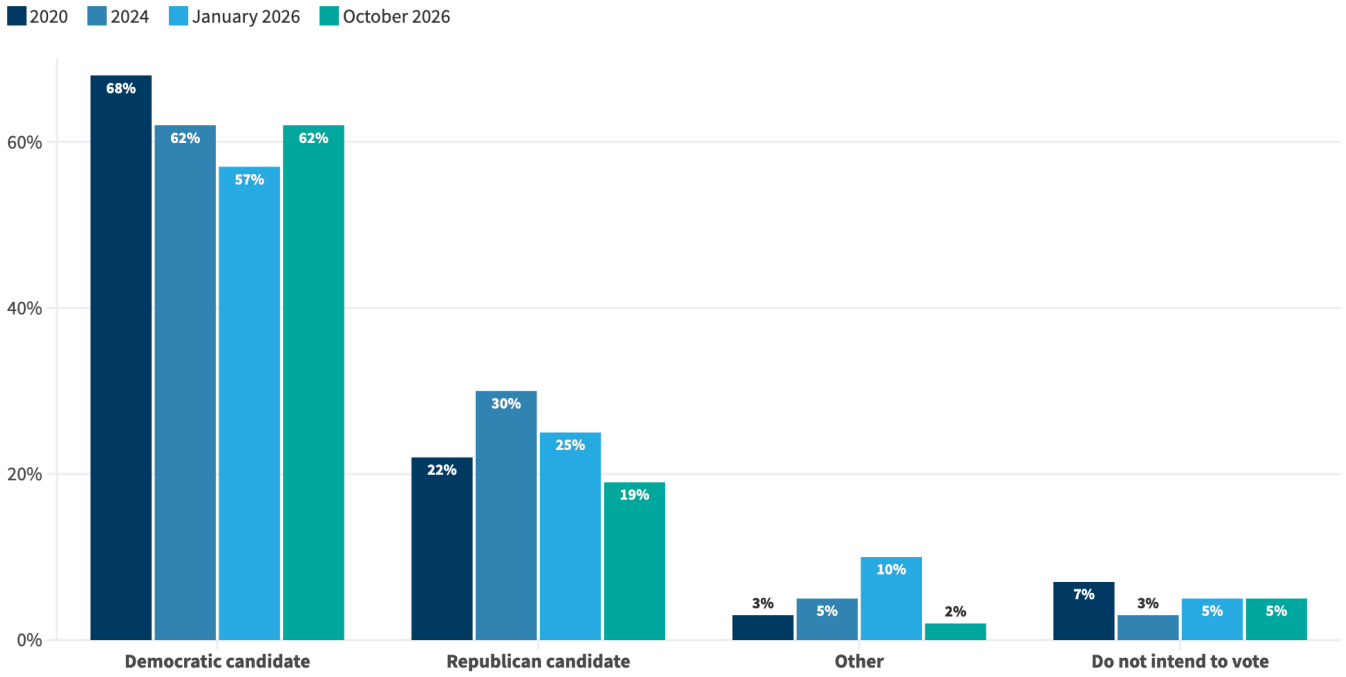
In the elections for U.S. Congress/U.S. Senate in November, who will you vote for?



N=861 (House), 525 (Senate); U.S. adult citizens
Notes: Only respondents in states with a Senate election in November 2026 were asked about Senate voting intention.
Source: October 2026 Indian American Attitudes Survey

Figure 2. Vote Choice

% of U.S. citizen respondents who intend to vote for...



N=936 (2020), N=981 (2024), N=870 (January 2026), N=861 (October 2026); U.S. adult citizens
Note: The 2020, 2024, and January 2026 surveys show presidential vote choice. October 2026 shows congressional vote choice. Respondents from January 2026 and October 2026 who reported "not sure" or "don't know" are not shown.
Source: 2020, 2024, January 2026, and October 2026 Indian American Attitudes Survey

Table 1. Congressional Vote Choice by Race/Ethnicity (U.S. citizens)

In the elections for U.S. Congress in November, who will you vote for in the district where you live?

	Black	Hispanic	White	Indian American
Democratic candidate	76%	46%	40%	62%
Republican candidate	12%	35%	47%	19%
Other candidate	2%	2%	2%	2%
Would not vote	3%	7%	5%	5%
Not sure	8%	9%	5%	12%
Unweighted N	169	176	1047	861

Source: October 2026 Indian American Attitudes Survey; Economist-YouGov Poll, October 19-20, 2026, https://d3nkl3psvxxpe9.cloudfront.net/documents/econTabReport_55Zxk28.pdf.

Among Indian Americans, support for the Democratic Party remains high, in relative terms. Only Black Americans are more supportive of the party, with 76 percent of respondents indicating they will vote for the Democratic congressional candidate in their district while just 12 percent say they will vote for the Republican on the ballot. Among Hispanics, Democrats enjoy only an 11-percentage-point advantage. Forty-seven percent of White voters plan to support the Republican candidate, compared to 40 percent for the Democratic one.

Gender and Generational Dimensions of the Democratic Rebound

The turn against Republicans is most pronounced among older Indian American men, a group that had previously shown growing openness to Republican candidates.

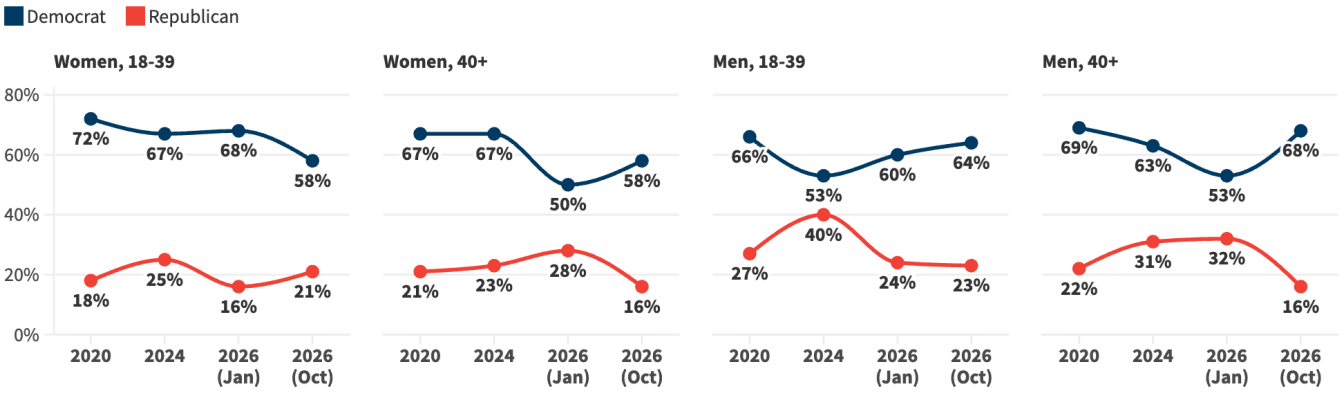
Among men aged forty and older, support for the Republican candidate now stands at just 16 percent, compared to 32 percent who supported Trump in January 2026 (see figure 3). Over the same period, support for Democratic Party candidates increased from 53 percent to 68 percent among this age/gender group. Older Indian American men, who appeared increasingly receptive to Trump earlier in the decade, now register some of the strongest Democratic voting intentions of any demographic subgroup of Indian American citizens.

A different pattern emerges among younger men aged eighteen to thirty-nine. In 2024, 40 percent supported Trump and 53 percent favored Harris. By January 2026, Republican support had fallen to 24 percent, while Democratic support had recovered to 60 percent. Now, 64 percent of younger men favor Democratic congressional candidates, compared to 23 percent supporting Republican candidates. This suggests that the substantial Republican gains among younger Indian American men in 2024 had largely receded by January 2026.

Among women, the picture is more mixed.[2] Younger women aged eighteen to thirty-nine remain strongly Democratic, with 58 percent supporting Democratic congressional candidates and 21 percent favoring Republicans. However, Democratic support is 10 percentage points lower than it was in January 2026, when 68 percent supported the Democratic presidential candidate. Among women aged forty and older, Democratic support has recovered from 50 percent in January to 58 percent in October, while Republican support has fallen from 28 to 16 percent.

Figure 3. Vote Choice by Gender and Age, 2020–2026

% of U.S. citizens who intend to vote for the Democratic or Republican candidate



N=936 (2020), N=981 (2024), N=870 (January 2026), N=861 (October 2026); U.S. adult citizens

Note: The 2020, 2024, and January 2026 surveys show presidential vote choice; October 2026 shows congressional vote choice. Figure does not show respondents who voted for other candidates or who selected "not voting" or "not sure."

Source: 2020, 2024, January 2026, and October 2026 Indian American Attitudes Survey

A Vote for Democrats, or a Vote Against Republicans?

Among respondents who intend to support the Democratic candidate for Congress, 65 percent report that they are motivated primarily by support for the Democratic candidate or party, while 35 percent say their vote is primarily motivated by opposition to the Republican candidate or party (see figure 4).

Among Republican supporters, the corresponding figures are considerably more lopsided: 83 percent say they are voting primarily to support the Republican candidate or party, while just 17 percent are motivated by opposition to Democrats.

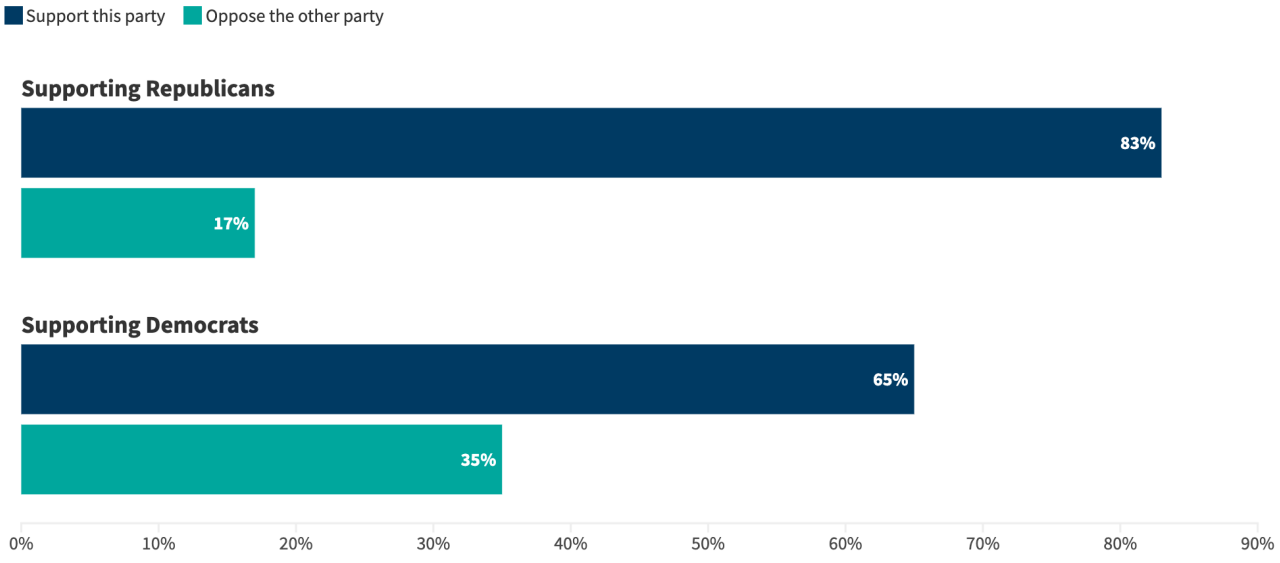
This 18-percentage point asymmetry suggests that among Indian Americans, negative partisanship—the idea that citizens are more repelled by the opposing party than attached to their own party—plays a more prominent role in Democratic voting intentions than in Republican voting intentions. This finding is particularly striking in light of recent research challenging the conventional wisdom that American partisanship is predominantly negative. However, other polls also suggest that in the 2026 midterm elections, many Democratic voters are motivated *against* Republican candidates rather than by their own party.

An Electoral or Partisan Rebound?

Perhaps the most revealing finding of the October 2026 IAAS is that these changes in electoral preferences have occurred without any corresponding shift in partisan identification. Ahead of the 2026 midterms, 46 percent of Indian Americans identify as Democrats, 19 percent as Republicans, and 26 percent as independents (see figure 5). These figures are virtually unchanged from January 2026.

Figure 4. Reason for Supporting the Republicans/Democrats

I'm supporting the Republicans/Democrats because I...



N=195 respondents who will vote for or support the Republican candidate, N=574 respondents who will vote for or support the Democratic candidate
Note: Respondents who skipped or were not asked the question are excluded.
Source: October 2026 Indian American Attitudes Survey

In 2020, 52 percent of respondents identified as Democrats and just 15 percent as Republicans. By 2024, Democratic identification had fallen to 48 percent, while Republican identification had risen to 19 percent. Since then, partisan attachments have seemingly stabilized.[3]

The contrast between stable partisan identities and changing electoral preferences is striking. While 46 percent of respondents identify as Democrats, 62 percent intend to vote for Democratic congressional candidates. Conversely, the share identifying as Republican is identical to the share intending to vote Republican, at 19 percent. This suggests that the Democratic Party's electoral advantage among Indian Americans extends beyond its core partisan base, attracting support from respondents who do not necessarily identify with the party.

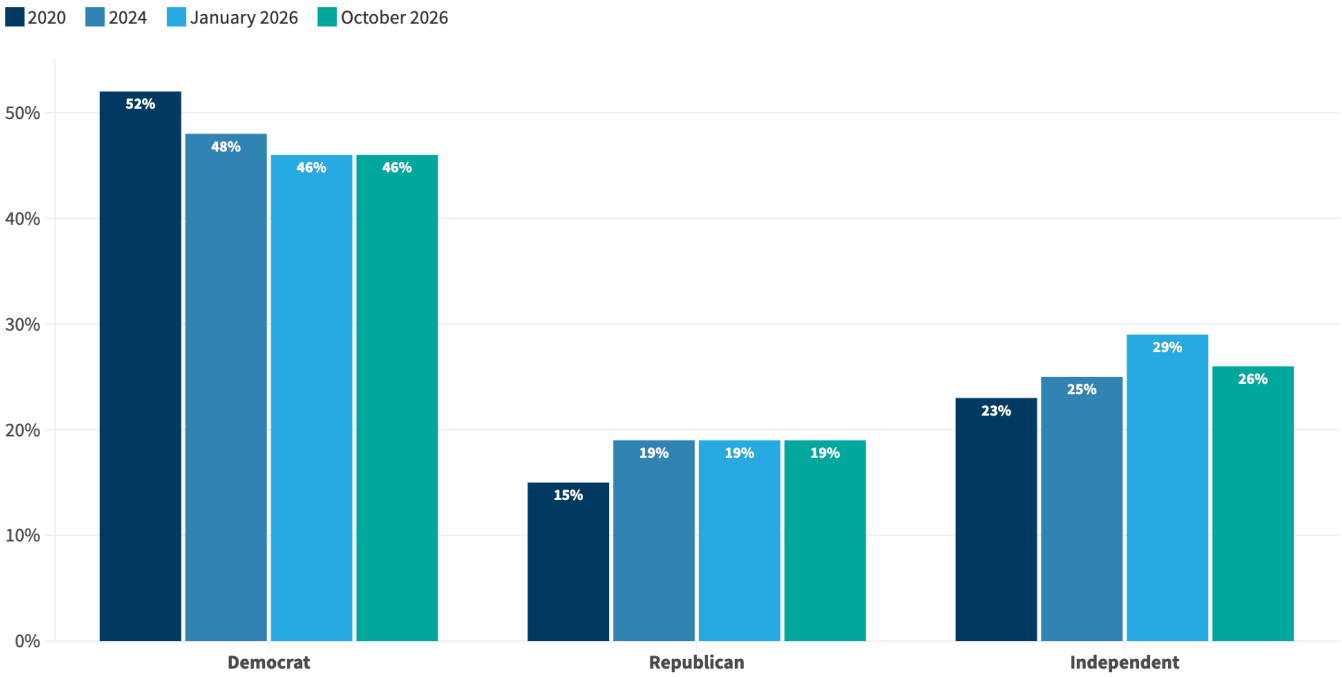
How does party identification vary based on respondents' demographic characteristics, and how has the picture changed since 2024? Table 2 provides a breakdown based on age, education, household income, gender, religion, place of birth, year of arrival/birth in the United States, duration of stay, and U.S. region. A few findings stand out.

First, the share of respondents earning less than $50,000 per year who identify as Republicans has dropped from 18 to 14 percent in the past two years. Among "middle earners," or those making between $50,000 and $99,000, the reverse is true: The share identifying as Republicans has modestly increased, from 19 to 23 percent. And 45 percent identify as Democrats, compared to 54 percent in 2024. Some of these differences are small and not likely to be statistically significant.

Second, women's identification with the Democratic Party has dipped slightly from 50 to 46 percent in the last two years, while men's partisan attachments have stayed roughly the same.

Figure 5. Partisan Identity

Generally speaking, do you think of yourself as a...?



N=1,200 (2020), N=1,206 (2024), N=1,000 (January 2026), N=1,000 (October 2026); U.S. adult residents
Note: Figure does not show respondents who selected "other" or "not sure."
Source: 2020, 2024, January 2026, and October 2026 Indian American Attitudes Survey

Third, there are no major changes among religious subgroups between 2024 and 2026, with one exception. In 2024, 17 percent of Indian American Muslims identified with the Republican Party. Today, that share stands at 10 percent.

Fourth, the share of foreign-born respondents and those who are more recent arrivals (defined as having spent less than twenty years in the United States) who identify as Democrats has declined since 2024. Today, forty percent of foreign-born Indian Americans identify as Democrats, compared to 45 percent in 2024. Similarly, 31 percent of recent arrivals identify as Democrats, a 6-percentage-point decline from 2024 levels.

Finally, there are some modest changes in partisan identification based on regional demographics. Democrats continue to receive the strongest support

Table 2. Demographics and Party Identification, 2024 vs. October 2026

All figures are expressed as percentages. Red denotes a ≥ 4-point decrease since 2024; blue a ≥ 4-point increase

		Democrat		Republican	
		2024	October 2026	2024	October 2026
Overall		48	46	19	19
Age	18-29	51	52	20	24
	30-49	47	44	19	19
	50+	47	45	17	16
Education	No college degree	48	47	19	20
	College degree	48	46	19	19
Income	<$50K	48	51	18	14
	$50k-$99,999	54	45	19	23
	$100K+	46	48	20	19
Gender	Man	46	46	22	21
	Woman	50	46	16	17
Religion	Hindu	49	47	18	21
	Muslim	49	52	17	10
	Christian	41	40	33	31
	No religious affiliation	45	46	11	8
Nativity	Foreign-born	45	40	16	16
	U.S.-born	52	54	23	23
Duration of stay in the United States	1-19 years	37	31	17	16
	20+ years	53	52	20	20
U.S. Region	Northeast	55	53	13	16
	Midwest	42	41	25	16
	South	43	39	20	23
	West	48	52	21	19

N=1,206 (2024), N=1,000 (October 2026); U.S. adult residents
Note: The cells shaded red indicate those declining by four percentage points or more. The blue-shaded cells, by contrast, indicate those gaining by at least four percentage points.
Source: 2024 and October 2026 Indian American Attitudes Survey

from Indian Americans based in the Northeastern and the Western states. While Democratic identification is unchanged in the Midwest, it has dropped from 43 to 39 percent in the South. On the other side, the share of Indian Americans who reside in the Midwest and identify as Republicans has dropped from 25 to 16 percent.

Warming Toward Democrats

To explore respondents' views on the two major national parties in a slightly different manner, the survey collected responses to a feeling thermometer, whereby respondents were asked to rate political parties or individual leaders on a scale of 0 to 100—a technique popularized by the American National Election Studies.

Ratings between 0 and 49 mean that respondents do not feel favorable (that is, they feel "cold") toward the person or entity, a rating of 50 means that respondents are indifferent toward them, and ratings between 51 and 100 degrees mean that respondents feel favorable (or "warm") toward them.

As of October 2026, the Democratic Party has received a rating of 58, which is higher than its January 2026 rating of 53 but slightly lower than the rating of 60 it received in 2024 (see figure 6). Notably, the rebound in the Democratic Party's rating is largely due to Republican respondents; among this group, the Democratic Party's rating jumped from 30 to 40 between January and October 2026.

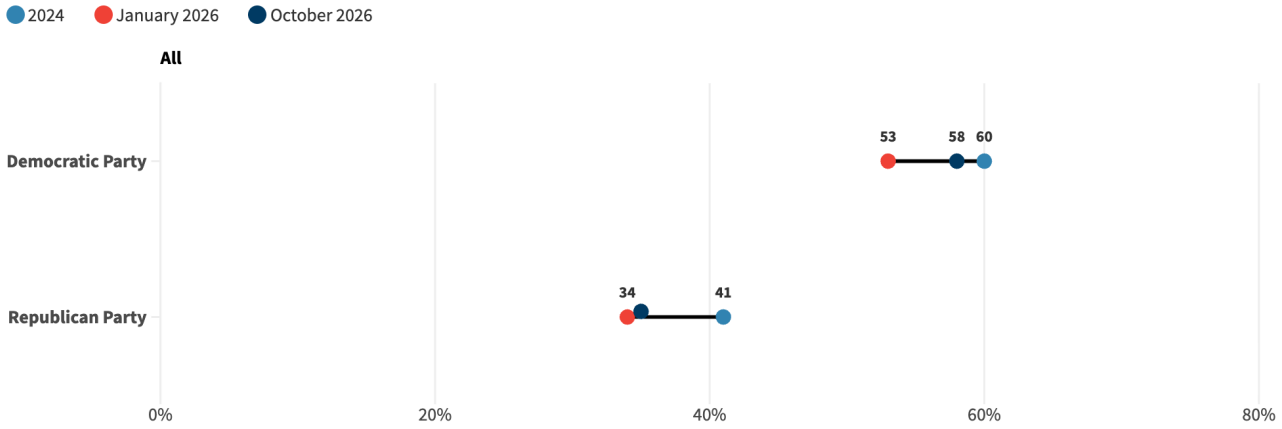
The aggregate rating for the Republican Party is 35, roughly the same level as in January 2026. However, this is down from a 41 rating in 2024. Democrats now give the Republican Party a 22 rating, lower than 2024 levels (when it received a 28). Today, Republicans rate their own party lower (66) than they did in January 2026 (72) (see figure 6).

A Rebound, with Limits

The results of the October 2026 IAAS suggest a few conclusions.

First, the Democratic Party has recovered ground among Indian Americans, but only partially, likely due to the pull of negative partisanship. More than one-third of Indian Americans who plan to vote for Democrats in November 2026 do so largely out of opposition to

Figure 6. Feeling Thermometer Ratings, 2024 vs. January 2026 vs. October 2026
Mean feeling thermometer ratings (0-100)



N=1,202 (2024), N=993 (January 2026), N=1,000 (October 2026); U.S. adult residents
Note: Measured on a scale from 0-100 where 0=least favorable, 100=most favorable, and 50=indifferent.
Source: 2024, January 2026, and October 2026 Indian American Attitudes Survey

the Republican candidate. Furthermore, the degree of partisan identification among Democrats has remained largely unchanged since 2024.

Second, the Republican Party has found it difficult to sustain the gains it has made among Indian Americans in recent years. In the 2024 election, the Democratic Party's advantage—while still sizeable—narrowed considerably as the Republican Party made new inroads in this community. The data from voting intentions in the 2026 midterm elections suggest those gains have largely been reversed.

Third, recent shifts in the voting preferences of Indian Americans suggest that, even within a community that has long backed the Democratic Party, there exists a pool of persuadable voters. While Democrats will be buoyed by the fact that support for the party has rebounded somewhat, this recovery has not led to stronger partisan attachment. The Republican Party, in turn, should consider why its recent inroads have not translated into sustained gains at the ballot box.

Notes

1 Additionally, the January and October 2026 IAAS waves included a "not sure" option, which also might account for some of the differences over time.

2 The gender-based differences here can be partially explained by the fact that a higher share of women report that they are unsure about their 2026 voting intentions.

3 In terms of political ideology, the October 2026 IAAS does not reveal significant differences from the January 2026 IAAS. Forty-nine percent of Indian American respondents identify as liberal, 31 percent identify as moderate, and 20 percent identify as conservative.

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