



**TRANSATLANTIC
DIALOGUE ON THE
INDUSTRIAL
HEARTLANDS**

NO BACKLASH, NO RETREAT

**Public Support for Green Economy and
Transatlantic Ties in the U.S. and Germany**

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

A representative survey conducted by Das Progressive Zentrum, in collaboration with the Progressive Policy Institute and Georgetown University's Center for German and European Studies, provides new insights into public attitudes toward public investments and green transformation agendas in Germany and the U.S.

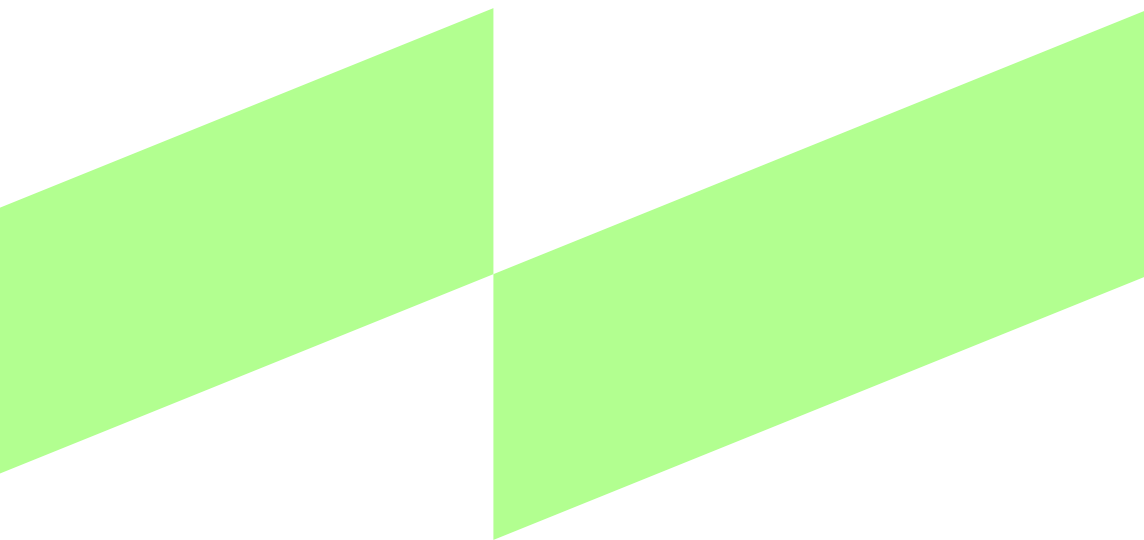
Against a backdrop of political upheaval and economic uncertainty, the findings reveal how these dynamics shape public opinion. The survey was conducted twice—first in early 2024 and again at the turn of 2024/2025—capturing shifts in sentiment following two pivotal events: Donald Trump's election in the U.S. and the collapse of Germany's traffic-light coalition government.

Despite these setbacks for green economic transformation, public support for climate and economic policies remains remarkably stable, with no significant backlash against green agendas in either country. Contrary to assumptions that Trump's victory signals a rejection of green policies, the findings show that a majority of Americans continue to support ambitious climate initiatives that promise economic opportunities. While Trump's "America First" approach has led to the U.S. withdrawing from international agreements like the Paris Climate Accord, public opinion demonstrates that "America First" does not equate to "climate second." Notably, 42% of Trump voters see economic potential in climate action.

In Germany, a similar trend emerges. Despite concerns about economic stagnation and declining competitiveness, almost half of respondents support substantial investment in the green transformation of the economy. There is also broad, cross-party backing for reforming the debt brake and increasing funding for economically disadvantaged regions, reflecting a shared recognition of the need to address regional inequalities and boost public investment in infrastructure, education, and innovation.

In both countries, the cost of living and economic stability remain top concerns, underscoring the financial pressures faced by many. These findings highlight the importance of reframing green policies to emphasize tangible benefits, such as cost savings and job creation, to maintain public support.

The two nationally representative online surveys, conducted by Ipsos GmbH, each polled 1,500 residents in the U.S. and Germany. The first survey ran from February 19 to March 5, 2024, while the second took place from December 23, 2024, to January 13, 2025.





FIVE KEY FINDINGS

- **Strong Support for ‘America First,’ but Climate Action Retains Bipartisan Appeal**

While 55% of U.S. respondents believe Trump’s “America First” policy benefits the country’s future, there is notable bipartisan support for climate action. A majority (56%) agree that ambitious climate policies offer economic opportunities, with 42% of Trump voters supporting green investments despite the administration’s rollback of climate initiatives. While Trump’s “America First” approach has led to the U.S. withdrawing from international agreements like the Paris Climate Accord, public opinion demonstrates that “America First” does not equate to “climate second.”

- **Public Investment in Climate and Infrastructure Faces a Messaging Challenge**

Both in the U.S. and Germany, public support for green energy and infrastructure investments continues, but lessons from the U.S. election and ‘Bidenomics’ suggest that many voters associate increased spending with rising costs. To sustain backing, policymakers must reframe green policies to emphasize cost savings and demonstrate that public investments have tangible economic benefits in the short-, medium-, and long-term.

- **Germany’s Cross-Party Consensus on Debt Brake Reform and Regional Investment**

A large majority of Germans (76%) support reforming the debt brake to boost public investment in infrastructure, education, and healthcare, with 72% backing increased funding for economically disadvantaged regions. This reflects broad, cross-party agreement on addressing regional inequalities and economic growth.

- **‘Bidenomics’ Lacks Public Awareness but Retains Moderate Support**

Despite low public awareness of ‘Bidenomics,’ only 33% of U.S. respondents want its policies cancelled, while 37% support maintaining them. However, many voters link increased federal spending to higher living costs, highlighting the need for clearer communication of policy benefits.

- **Transatlantic Ties Remain Strong, but Value-Based Alignment Weakens**


While 66% of Germans view the U.S. as a necessary partner, only 11% see it as a value-based ally, reflecting growing skepticism following Trump’s election. In contrast, 36% of U.S. respondents consider Germany and the EU close allies, indicating a pragmatic but increasingly value-divergent relationship.

REPUBLICANS RALLY BEHIND TRUMP'S 'AMERICA FIRST,' BUT SUPPORT EXTENDS BEYOND THE GOP

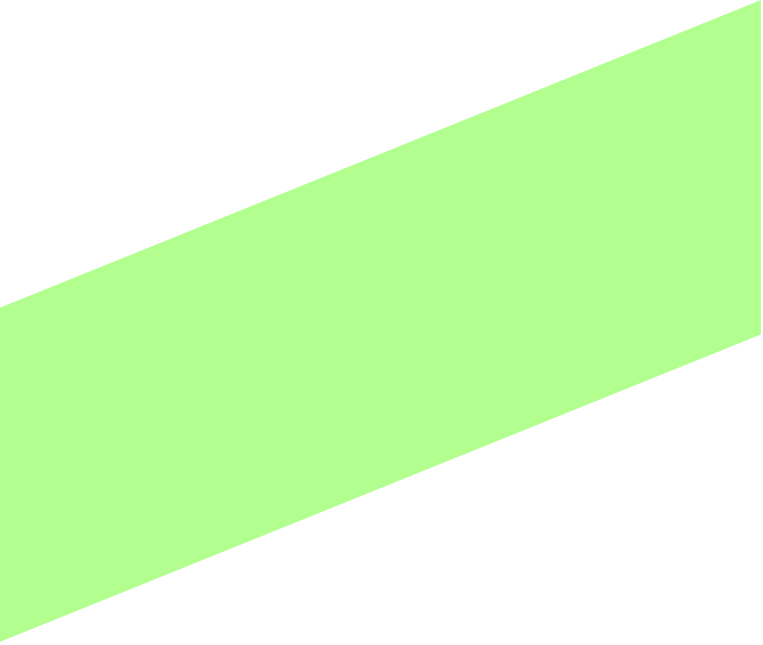
Donald Trump's presidency is anchored in the policy principle of "America First," which prioritizes domestic interests, national sovereignty, and economic self-reliance. On the global stage, this philosophy manifests as a transactional, tit-for-tat approach, coupled with a retreat from multilateral institutions and the broader international order.

In his first weeks in office, the Trump administration took an aggressive approach to sever ties between the U.S. and its allies, international treaties, and global institutions. This included cuts to U.S. foreign aid, reducing financial assistance to developing countries and global organizations, often justified as prioritizing domestic spending, and a retreat from the World Health Organization (WHO). Additionally, the U.S. withdrew from the Paris Climate Agreement, arguing that its provisions placed an unfair economic burden on American businesses and workers.

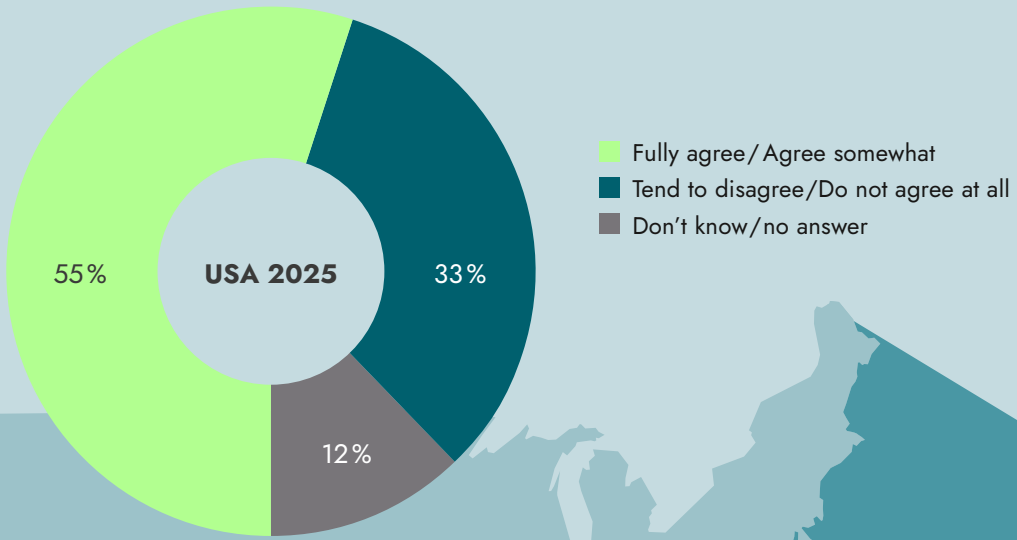
Our polling data reveals that 55% of U.S. respondents believe this strategy benefits the country's future development. A deeper analysis of voter preferences shows that 90% of Trump voters support this approach, while nearly one in four Harris voters (23%) also express approval. This suggests that while the "America First" policy resonates strongly with Trump's base, it also garners some bipartisan support, albeit to a lesser extent.



Donald Trump's presidency is anchored in the policy principle of "America First," which prioritizes domestic interests, national sovereignty, and economic self-reliance.



Graph 01 – Donald Trump’s policy of America first is good for the future development of the country.



Base: All respondents (n=3.000 GER=1.500 USA=1.500)
Q7a: To what extent do you agree with the following statements



'AMERICA FIRST' CLASHES WITH BROAD PUBLIC BACKING FOR AMBITIOUS CLIMATE ACTION

On his first day in office, President Trump announced his decision to terminate the Green New Deal, effectively committing to dismantle the ambitious climate, energy, and industrial policies introduced by the Biden administration. Despite this move, the survey reveals strong public support for investments in the green energy transition and industrial policy, highlighting a disconnect between the administration's actions and public sentiment.

For the majority of U.S. citizens—including 42% of Trump voters—economic growth and climate protection are not viewed as mutually exclusive goals. In short, Trump's election and ongoing economic uncertainty have not sparked a backlash against the green transformation of the U.S. economy. However, his policies are likely to significantly influence the investment climate for green technologies, both domestically and in Europe and other parts of the world.

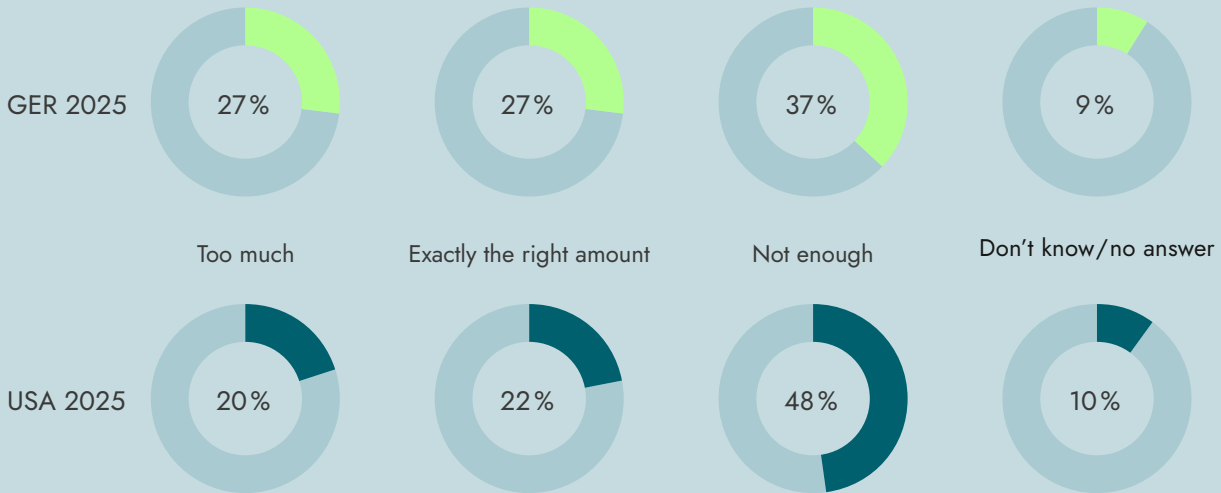
In the U.S., around half of respondents believe now is the time for "massive investments" in the green transition and that the government is not doing enough to combat climate change. Moreover, a majority (56%) agree that the benefits of ambitious climate policies outweigh the risks, citing potential gains in job creation, economic growth, and exports. Notably, this sentiment has remained consistent since our first round of polling in 2024. While support for green investments is strongest among Harris voters, 42% of Trump voters also see economic opportunities in ambitious climate policies, underscoring a surprising level of bipartisan alignment on the issue.

The findings underscore the inherent tension between Trump's "America First" agenda and effective climate policy, which demands global cooperation rather than purely domestic solutions. While the "America First" approach prioritizes national sovereignty and economic self-reliance, addressing climate change necessitates collaborative international efforts, multilateral agreements, and shared commitments—elements that are fundamentally at odds with the administration's unilateral and transactional approach to global issues. This divergence raises questions about the long-term viability of climate action under such a framework.



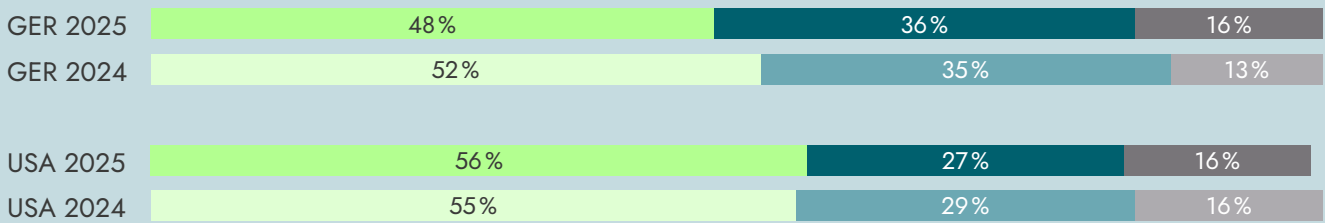
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Graph 02 – Do you think the U.S. / Germany is doing enough to combat climate change...



Base: All respondents (n=3.000 GER=1.500 USA=1.500)
 Q6: To combat climate change, do you believe the US/Germany is doing...

Graph 03 – An ambitious climate protection policy presents more economic prospects than risks, e.g. new jobs or export opportunities.



■ Fully agree/Agree somewhat
 ■ Tend to disagree/Do not agree at all
 ■ Don't know/no answer

Base: All respondents (n=3.000 GER=1.500 USA=1.500)
 Q4: To what extent do you agree with the following statement?

CONTINUED SUPPORT FOR CLIMATE ACTION IN GERMANY, BUT CLIMATE POLICY REQUIRES REFRAMING

A similar trend is evident in Germany, where public backing for green investment remains robust despite growing economic pessimism. Nearly half of respondents (47%) agree that now is the time for “massive investments” in the green transformation of the economy, while 48% believe ambitious climate policies offer more economic opportunities than risks, such as job creation and export growth. Yet, only one in five respondents regard climate change as one of their main concerns.

Support for climate action is relatively strong across most political groups, except for AfD, BSW, and non-voters, who show significantly lower approval. The same applies to the call for “massive investments” in the green transition, though CDU/CSU voters are evenly divided on the issue.

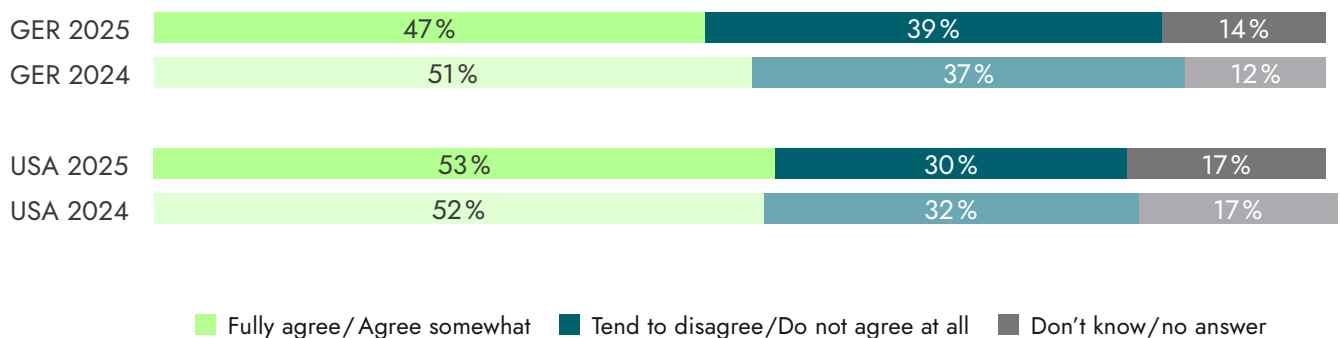
As Germany approaches its federal election, voters remain focused on the same top three concerns as last year: the cost of living, the economic situation, and migration. When broken down by voting preference, BSW voters (62%),

non-voters (59%), and AfD voters (48%) are the most concerned about the cost of living, a trend consistent with findings from the previous survey period.

A striking contrast between the U.S. and Germany lies in their economic outlooks. While nearly half of U.S. respondents express confidence in the economic development of their counties over the next five years, fewer than one-third of Germans share this optimism with regard to their regions. Notably, economic confidence in the U.S. has risen by 10 percentage points since the first survey period, highlighting a growing divergence in sentiment between the two nations.

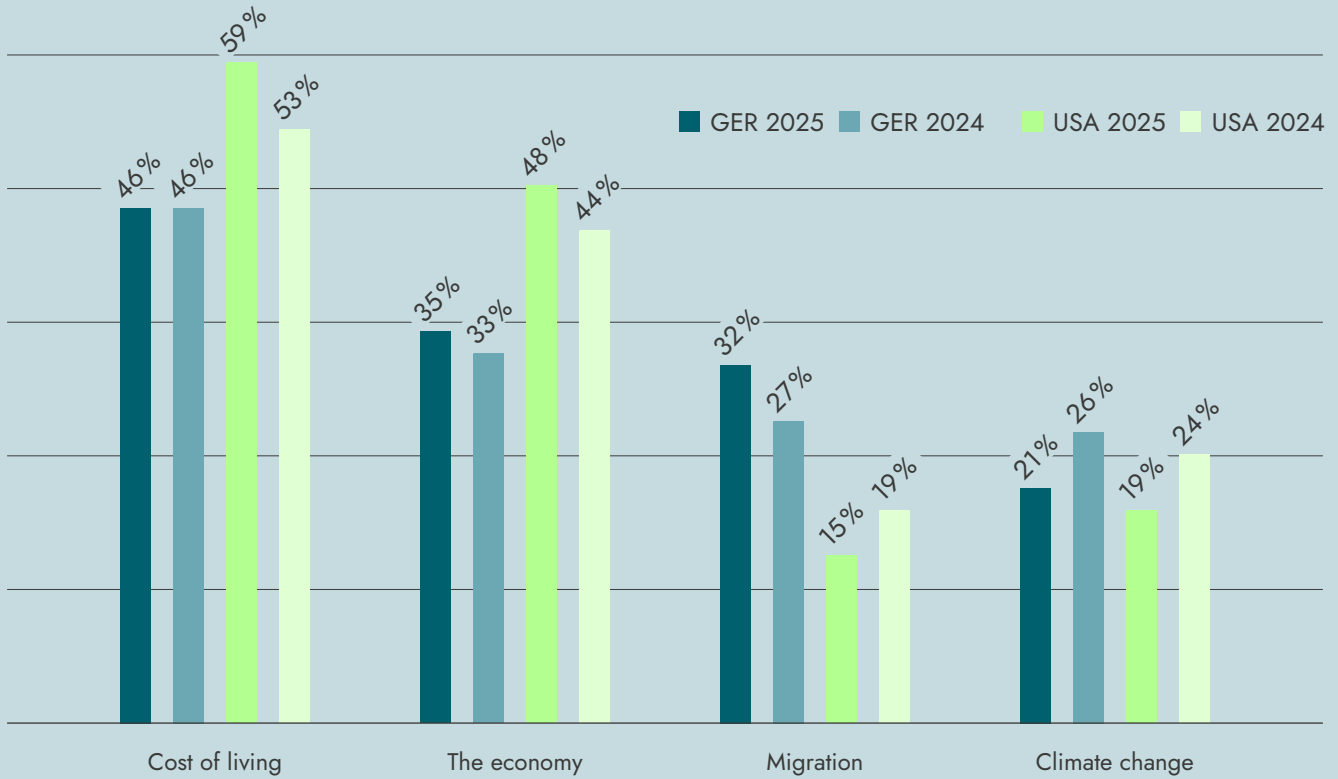
To maintain public backing, green policies must be reframed to demonstrate their potential to lower costs and deliver tangible economic benefits. Without this shift in messaging, there is a risk that such policies could be sidelined or co-opted by a political right agenda focused on fiscal conservatism and short-term economic priorities.

Graph 04 – Now is the time to make massive investments in the green transformation of the German/U.S. economy.



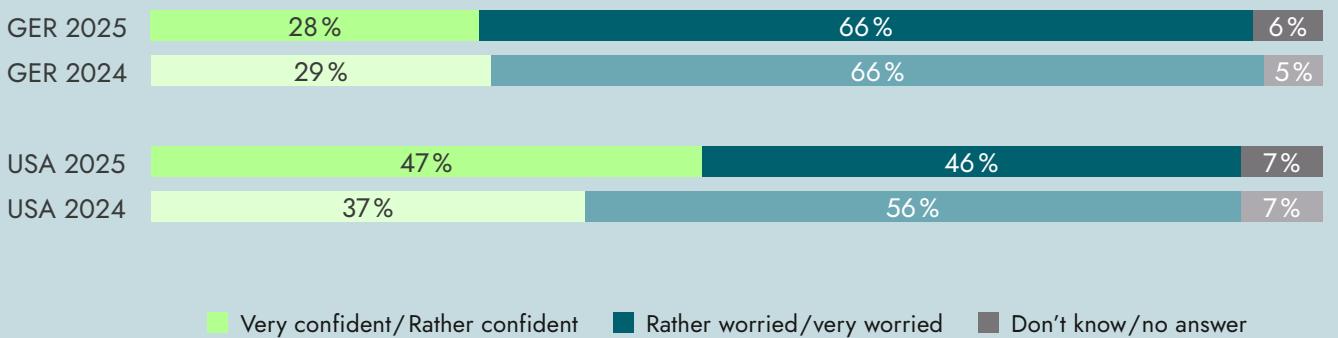
Base: All respondents (n=3.000 GER=1.500 USA=1.500)
 Q4: To what extent do you agree with the following statement?

Graph 05 – What issues are you currently most concerned about?



Base: All respondents (n=3.000 GER=1.500 USA=1.500)
 Q2: What issues are you currently most concerned about?
 (Two answers possible. Further response options were: Right-wing extremism, social inequality and racism.)

Graph 06 – How do you feel about the economic prospects for your county (U.S.)/ region (Germany) over the next five years?



Base: All respondents (n=3.000 GER=1.500 USA=1.500)
 Q3: How do you feel about the economic prospects for your county over the next five years?

BROAD, CROSS-PARTY SUPPORT FOR REFORMING GERMANY'S DEBT BRAKE


In Germany, one of the most contentious challenges facing the next government will be financing additional spending on defense, climate, and infrastructure. This issue is set to become a key point of negotiation between the CDU/CSU, currently leading in the polls, and potential coalition partners, the SPD and Greens.

While the CDU/CSU remains committed to a fiscally conservative approach, defending the debt brake, while the SPD and Greens advocate for reforms to allow greater public investment. This tension underscores the delicate balance between fiscal discipline and the pressing need for strategic spending in critical sectors.

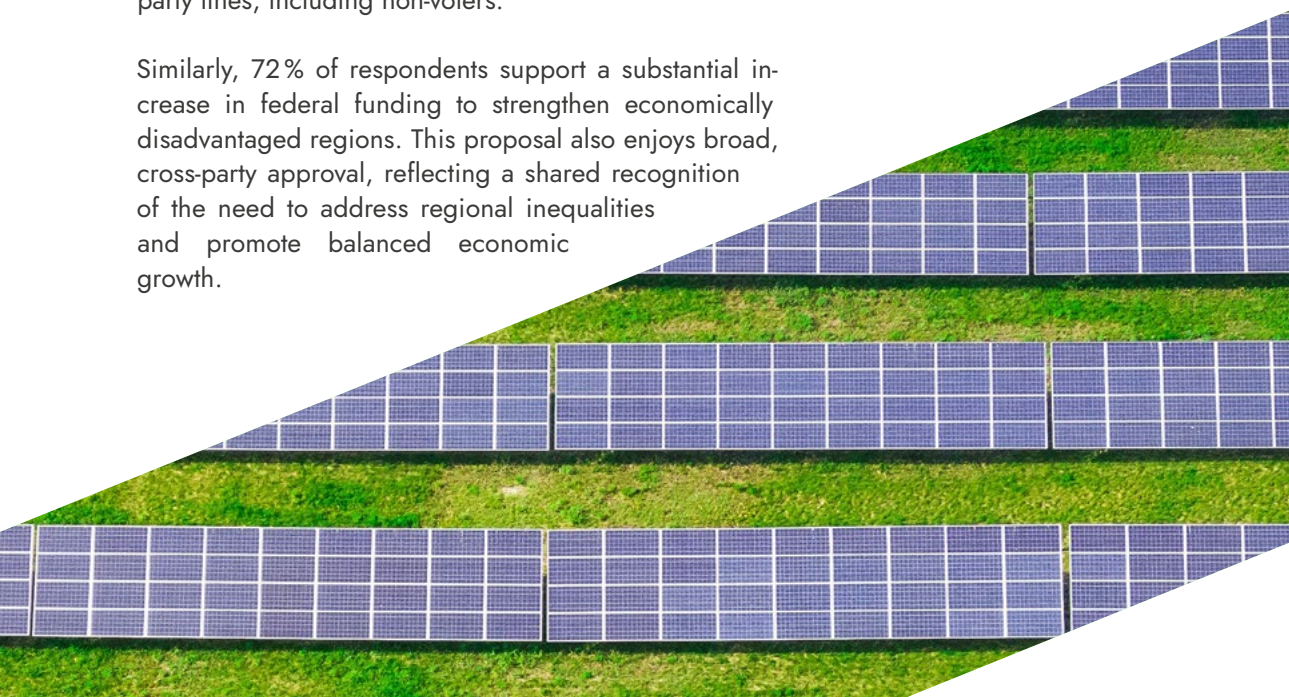
Strikingly, there is not only an overall clear majority on the need to reform the debt brake and increase investment in underdeveloped regions, but clear consensus across all voter groups.

Support for reforming the 'Schuldenbremse' (debt brake) remains strong and unchanged since the first survey period, with a large majority (76%) of respondents agreeing that the federal government should revise the rule and significantly boost investments in public infrastructure, education, and healthcare. This sentiment cuts across all party lines, including non-voters.

Similarly, 72% of respondents support a substantial increase in federal funding to strengthen economically disadvantaged regions. This proposal also enjoys broad, cross-party approval, reflecting a shared recognition of the need to address regional inequalities and promote balanced economic growth.

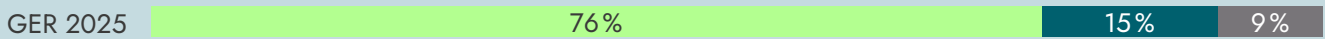


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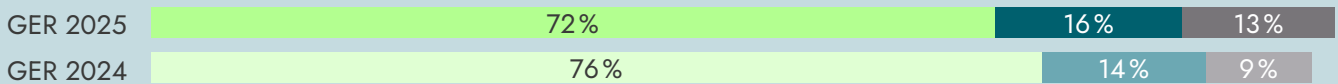
Graph 07 – The government should reform the debt brake (“Schuldenbremse”) and significantly increase investment in public infrastructure, education and healthcare.



■ Fully agree/Agree somewhat
 ■ Tend to disagree/Do not agree at all
 ■ Don't know/no answer

Base: All respondents (n=3.000 GER=1.500 USA=1.500)
 Q4: To what extent do you agree with the following statement?

Graph 08 – There should be a substantial increase in federal government funding aimed at strengthening left behind regions.



■ Fully agree/Agree somewhat
 ■ Tend to disagree/Do not agree at all
 ■ Don't know/no answer

Base: All respondents (n=3.000 GER=1.500 USA=1.500)
 Q4: To what extent do you agree with the following statement?




LITTLE KNOWN, BUT NOT UNPOPULAR: ONE LESSON FROM ‘BIDENOMICS’ FOR GERMANY

Under the Biden administration, the U.S. embarked on an ambitious agenda of major public investments aimed at building the foundations of a resilient, green, and more equitable economy. Known as ‘Bidenomics,’ it introduced a fundamental shift in economic policy, centered around three key legislative measures: the Inflation Reduction Act (IRA), the CHIPS and Science Act, and the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law, totalling public investment of around \$2.2 trillion. These policies aimed to boost domestic manufacturing, invest heavily in green energy and infrastructure, and support middle-class workers.

Despite its significance, public awareness of ‘Bidenomics’ remains low. Half of U.S. respondents (50%) say they have not experienced any positive effects from these policies, a sentiment echoed by a large majority (73%) of Trump voters. In contrast, a majority (55%) of Harris voters reports seeing benefits.

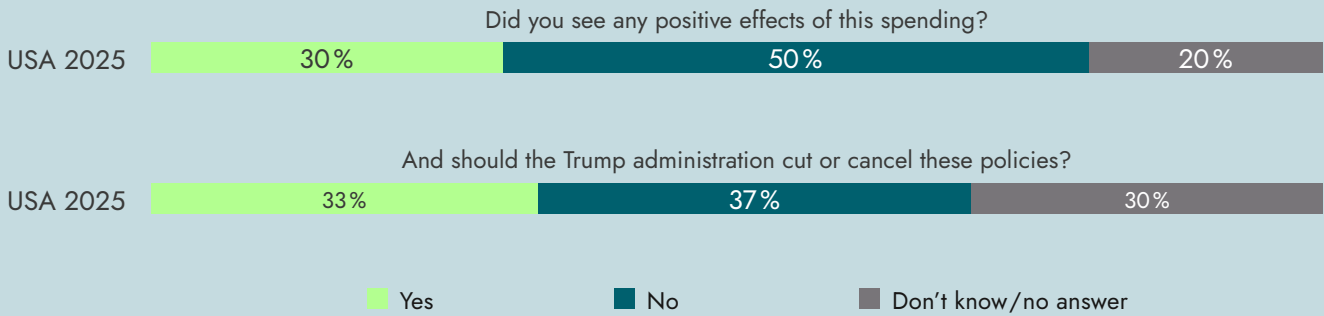
However, while many Americans are unsure of its impact, ‘Bidenomics’ is not widely unpopular. Only 33% of respondents want the Trump administration to cut or cancel these policies, while 37% believe they should be maintained. Notably, 30% remain undecided, highlighting a widespread lack of knowledge or uncertainty about their effects.

An interpretation emerging from an [analysis of the U.S. election outcome](#) by the Progressive Policy Institute (PPI) and this survey on public investment is that the macroeconomic narrative of ‘Bidenomics’ failed to resonate with American voters. ‘Bidenomics’ was the right policy, but it came at the wrong time. Instead, many associated increased federal spending with rising costs of living.



For Germany to successfully pursue an agenda of higher public investment, it must clearly demonstrate how such policies directly improve the everyday lives of voters, particularly those concerned about inflation and limited economic opportunities.

Graph 09 – The Biden Administration and Congress did pass the largest US investment program in history with its Inflation Reduction Act (IRA), CHIPS and Science Act and others.



Base: All respondents (n=3.000 GER=1.500 USA=1.500)
 Q2c: The Biden Administration and Congress did pass the largest US investment program in history with its Inflation Reduction Act (IRA), CHIPS and Science Act and others.




CLOSE AND STABLE TRANSATLANTIC TIES

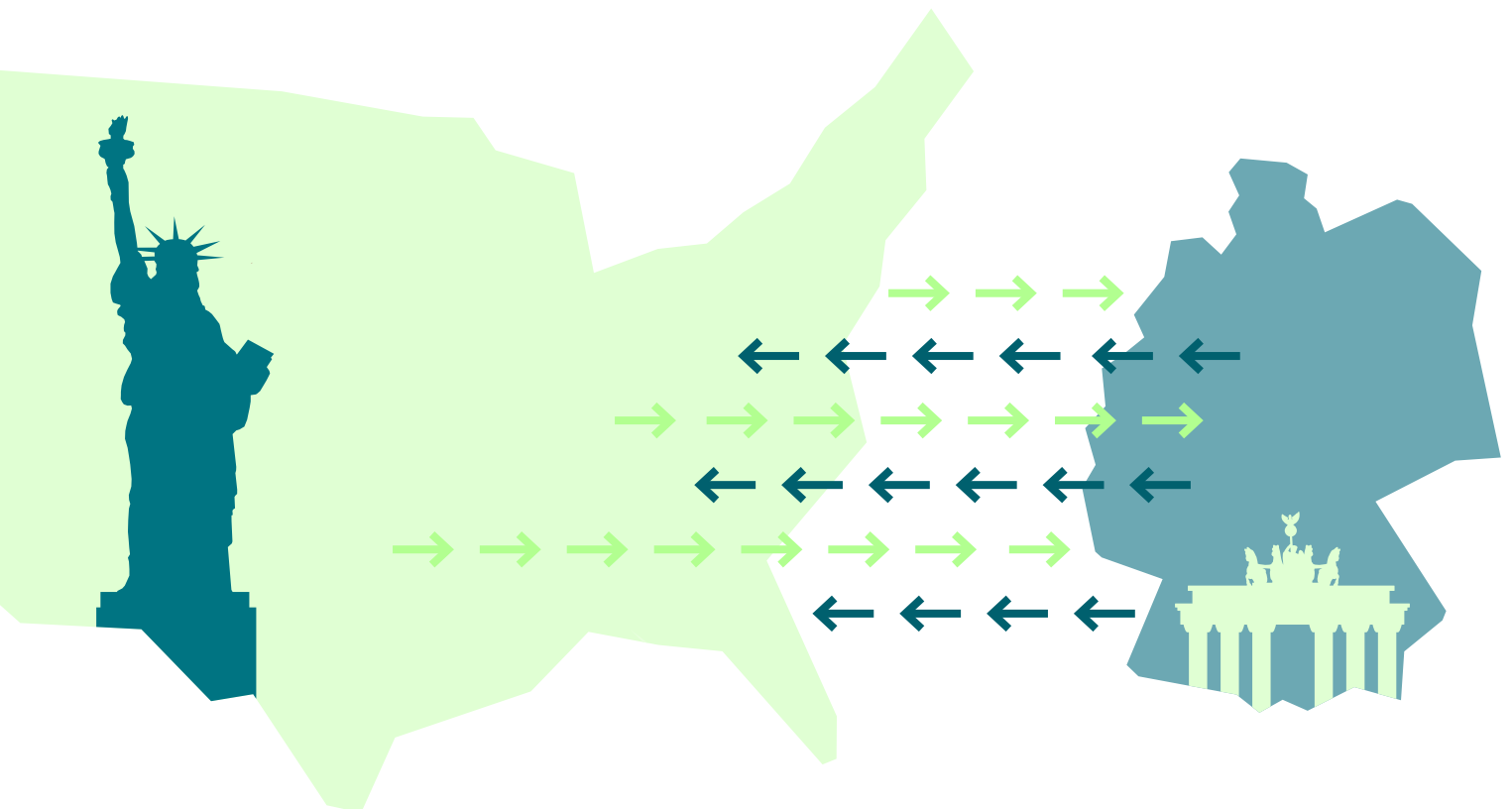
Despite Donald Trump's election and ongoing global challenges, strong transatlantic ties between Germany, the EU, and the United States remain highly valued. This sentiment has remained largely unchanged since the first survey period, countering the notion that the public in both regions has turned inward.

In Germany, 66% of respondents view the United States as a necessary partner, reinforcing the country's strategic importance. However, in 2025 only 11% compared to 20% in 2024 see the U.S. as an ally that shares Germany's values and interests. This suggests a growing skepticism toward the U.S. among Germans following Trump's election.

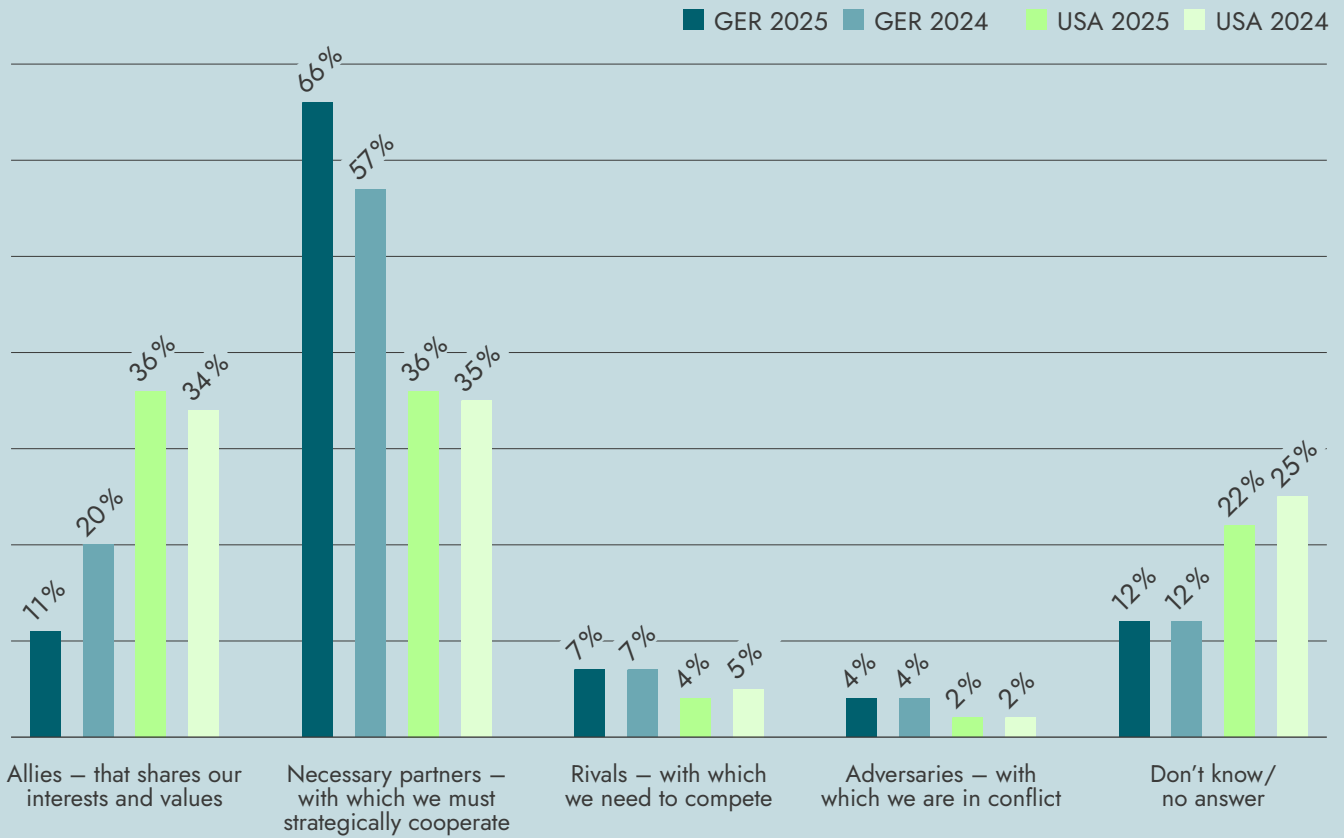
In contrast, U.S. respondents hold a more balanced view of Germany and the EU. 36% consider them close allies who share values and interests, while another 36% see them as necessary partners.



These findings indicate that while pragmatic cooperation remains strong, value-based alignment between the two sides is weakening from the German perspective.



Graph 10 – The United States / Germany and the EU are...



Base: All respondents (n=3.000 GER=1.500 USA=1.500)
 Q8: Germany and the EU are...



ABOUT THE AUTHORS



Florian Ranft is a member of the Management Board and Head of “Green New Deal” at Das Progressive Zentrum. In his role, he works on social, regional, democratic and economic transformation issues in Germany and Europe. He directs the major international conferences and seminars of Das Progressive Zentrum, such as the Progressive Governance Summit and the Progressive Economics Network. Previously, he was Head of Policy and International at Policy Network and Senior Research Analyst at the Centre for Progressive Policy, two London-based think tanks. Florian is Visiting Research Fellow with the Mile End Institute, Queen Mary University, London.



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