



Unlocking Consumer Insights:

# 2026 Trends Shaping Tomorrow's Markets



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# The Roman God Janus inspired today's presentation

**Key takeaways  
from 2025**

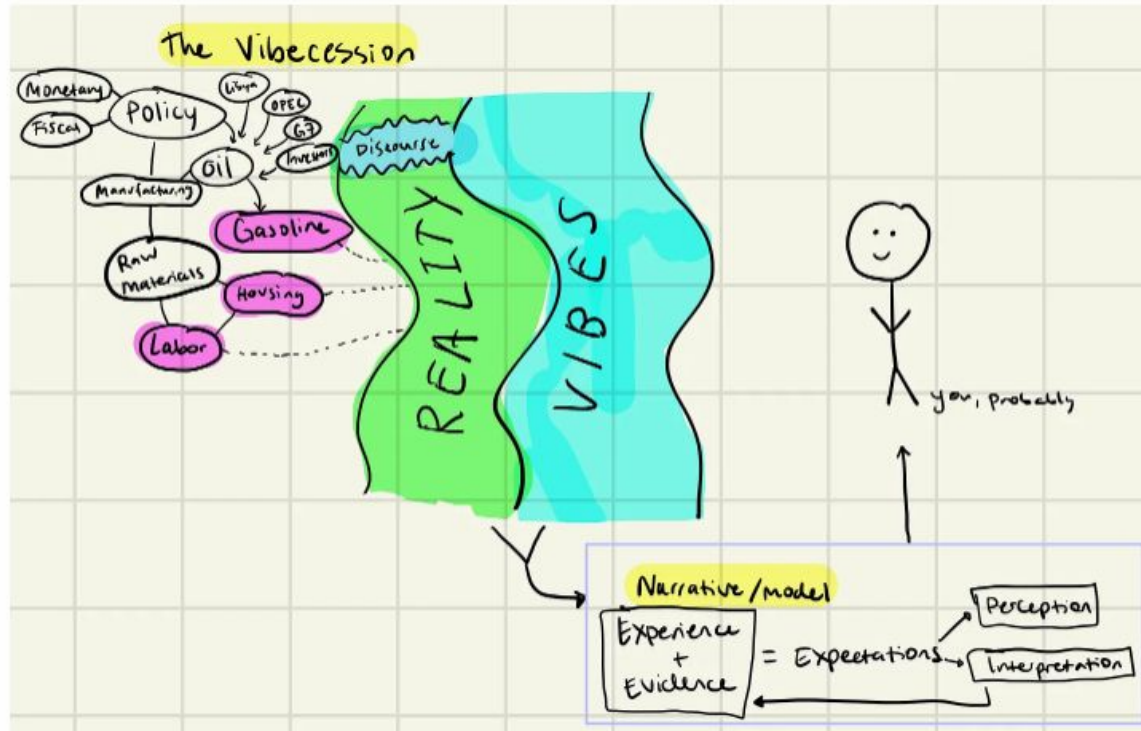


**Our outlook  
on 2026**

Janus: Two-headed Roman God of doorways and beginnings; namesake of January

# Our Headline from Last Year: The “Vibes” Are Off

## The Vibecession



kyla scanlon ✓

@KYLA · 6 LINKS

macro and the stock market

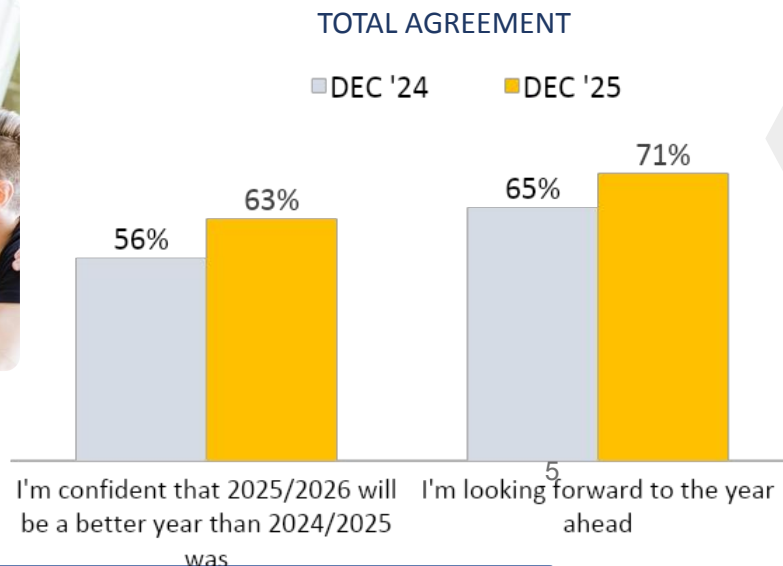
# Insights from the Consumer Optimism Barometer

**SPORTS&  
LEISURE**  
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# Greater Optimism for the Year Ahead..But It's in Context

Q. Looking ahead, please indicate how much you agree or disagree with each of the following statements.



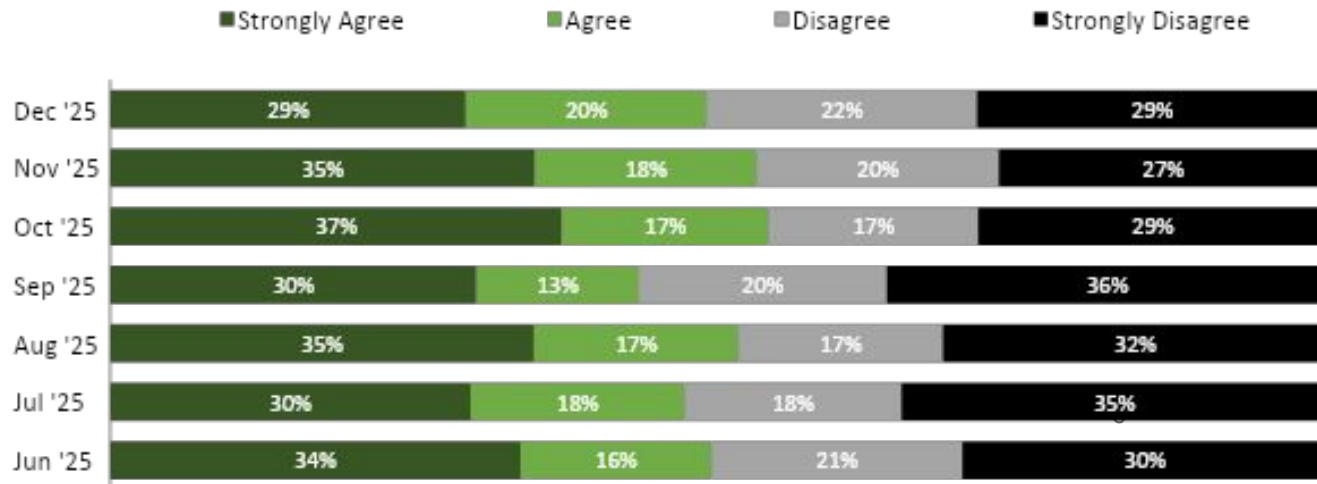
Democrat	68%
Republican	78%
Independent	69%
Age 25-34	77%
Age 35-44	73%
Age 45-64	66%
Age 65+	62%

- Yet only 42% agree that “Things are better now than they were before COVID.”

# Inflation Perceptions Persist

Q. Looking ahead, please indicate how much you agree or disagree with each of the following statements.

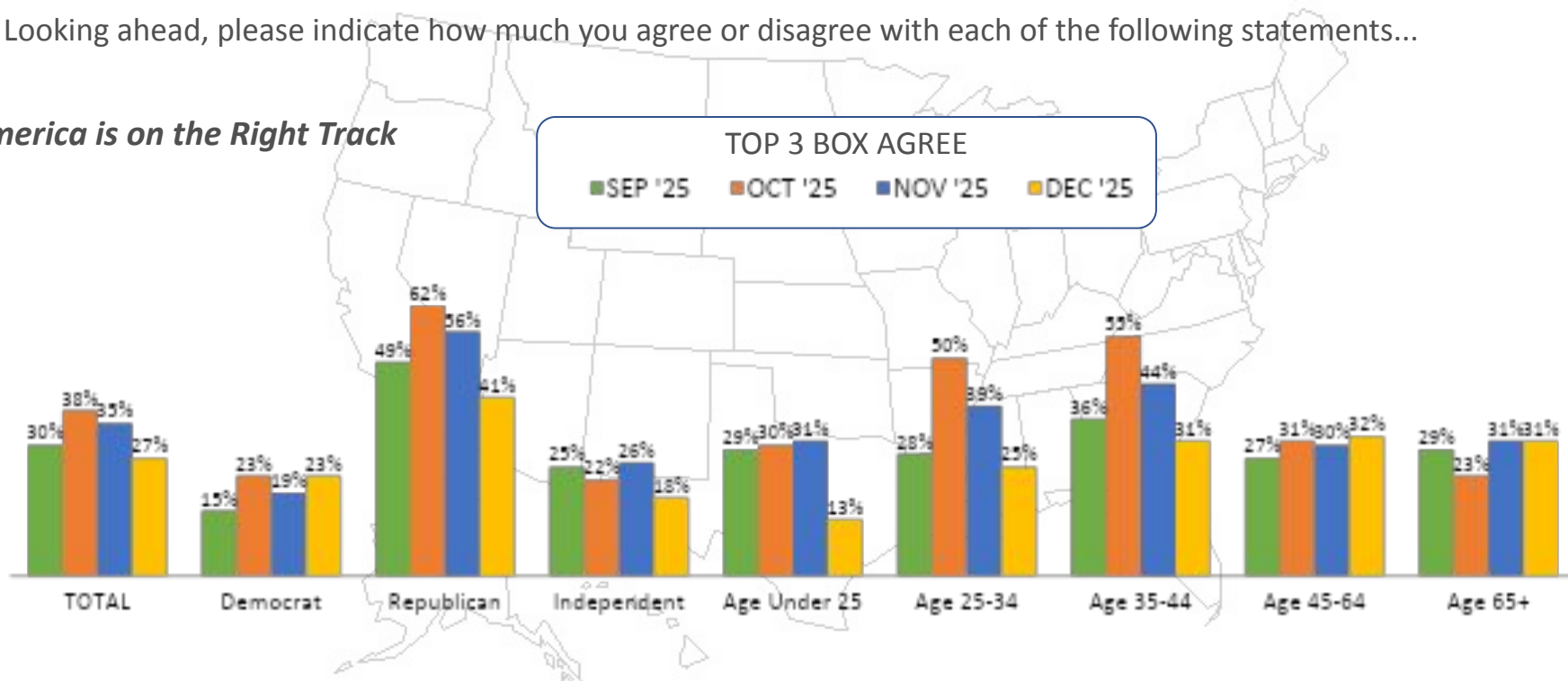
*I believe that the cost of every day goods will improve in the coming months.*



# Perspectives on our National Direction Fall to Four Month Low

**Q.** Looking ahead, please indicate how much you agree or disagree with each of the following statements...

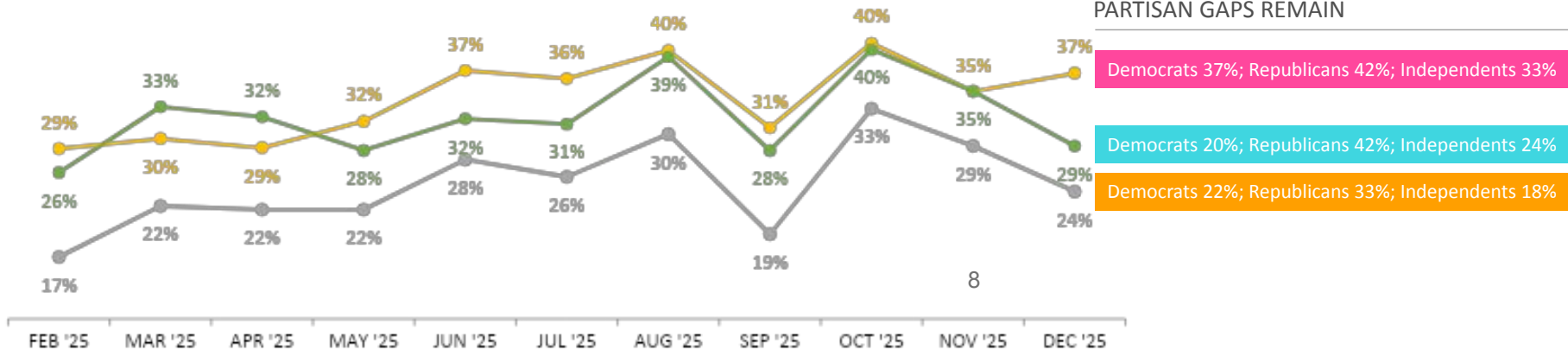
*America is on the Right Track*



# But we Personally See Ourselves as Better Off

TOP 3 BOX AGREEMENT — TOTAL

- ◆ I am better off now than I was four years ago
- ◆ America is better off now than it was four years ago
- ◆ Most of my neighbors are better off now than they were four years ago





# Nearly Six in Ten Americans are Bullish About the Stock Market in 2026

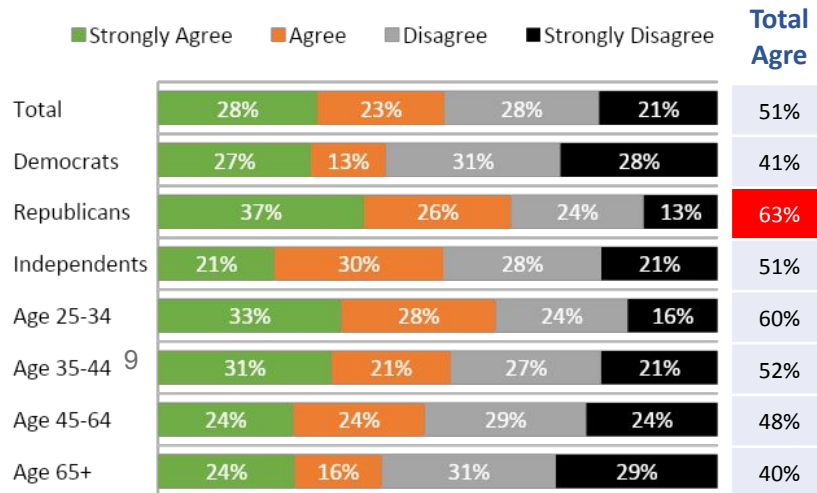
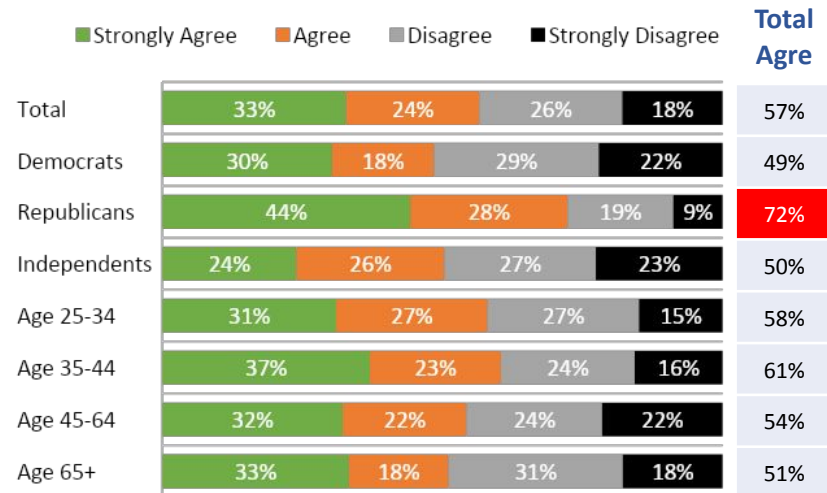
- Attitudes more tepid about future investment

Q. Thinking about the current situation, please indicate how much you agree or disagree with each of the following statements.

*I expect the stock market to be up in 2026.*

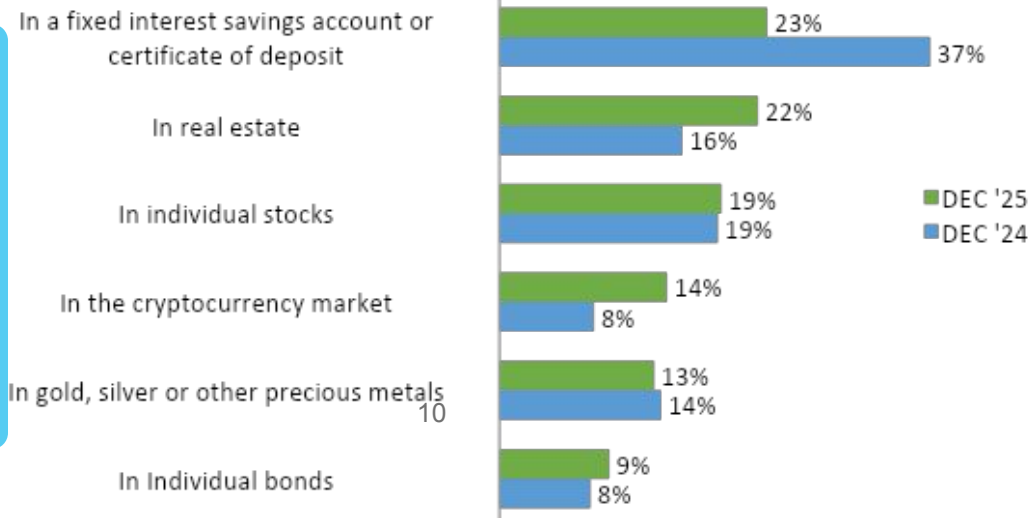


*Now is a good time to invest in the stock market.*



# Americans' Investment Preferences are More Diversified as we Head into the New Year

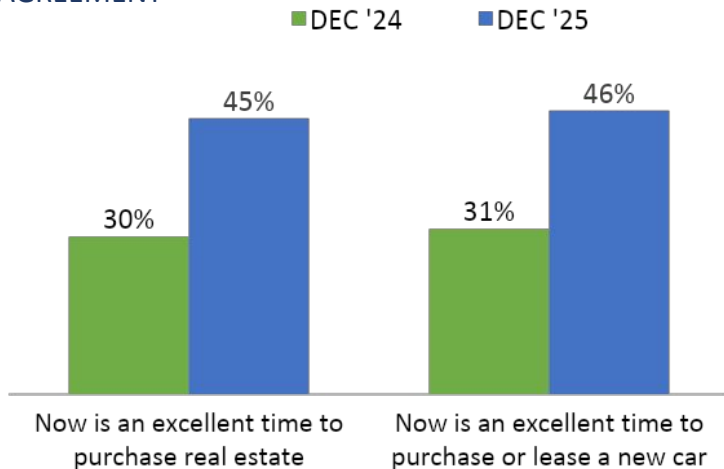
Q. If you had a significant amount of funds available to invest right now, and you could not move it until next year, where would you feel most comfortable investing the largest portion of this money?



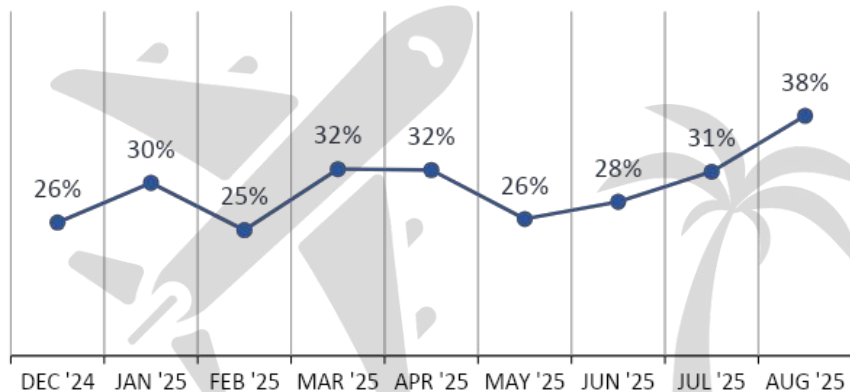
# Year Over Year Growth in Willingness to Make Major Purchases



## TOTAL AGREEMENT

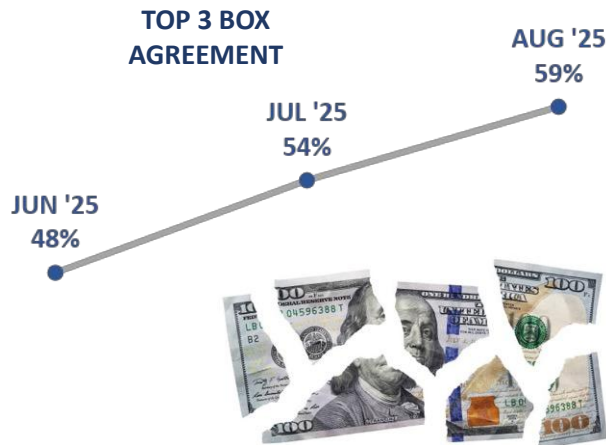


*I plan to spend just as much or more money on travel in the next year as I did in the past year.*

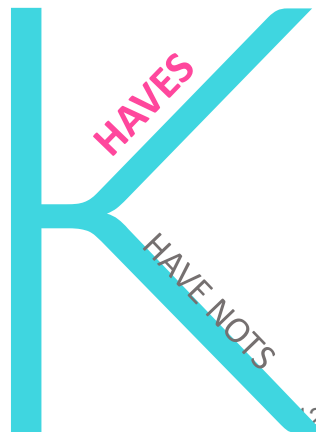


# Greater Perceived Wealth Gap

*Economic realities are creating a greater gap between the wealthiest and poorest Americans.*



We are Living in a K shaped Economy



*America has increasingly become a society of financial haves and have nots.*

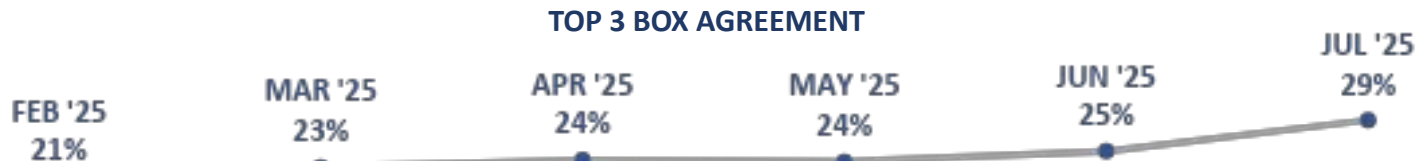
TOP 3 BOX AGREEMENT



# As Credit Card Spending and Financing Escalates



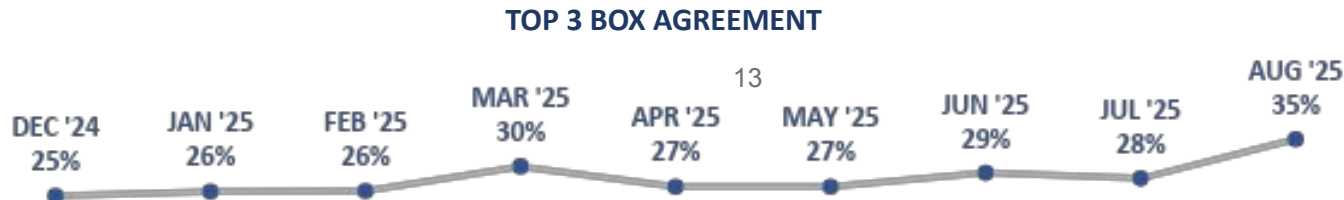
*I've been spending more on my credit cards these days.*



➤ 45% agree that they have been financing their credit card payments, more these days than they did a year ago...up from 33% in February



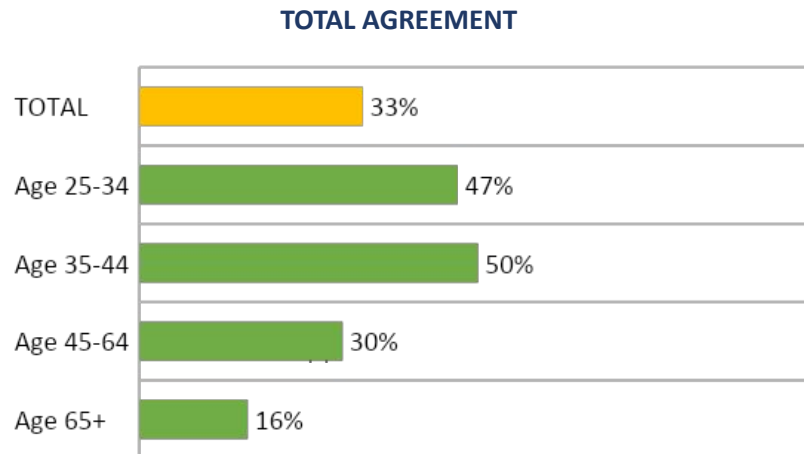
*I've been financing my credit card payments more these days than I did a year ago.*



# The Coming Intergenerational Wealth Transfer: Real and Perceived

➡ Estimated **\$106 Trillion** in Wealth Transferred Between Generations by 2048

*I have inherited or expect to inherit a meaningful amount of money in my lifetime.*



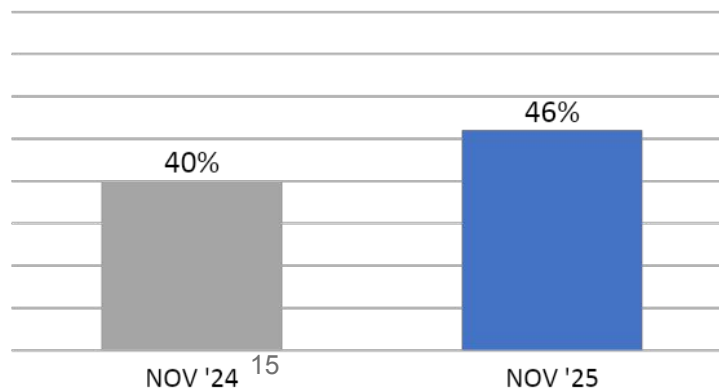
# Leisure is Taking on Greater Prominence in Our Lives

Q. Looking ahead, please indicate how much you agree or disagree with each of the following statements.

*Making time to enjoy leisure activities is more important to me now than it was two years ago.*



TOP 3 BOX AGREEMENT



► **65%** expect to devote more time to leisure activities in 2026 than they did this year

# Year over Year Leisure Activities Trending Upward

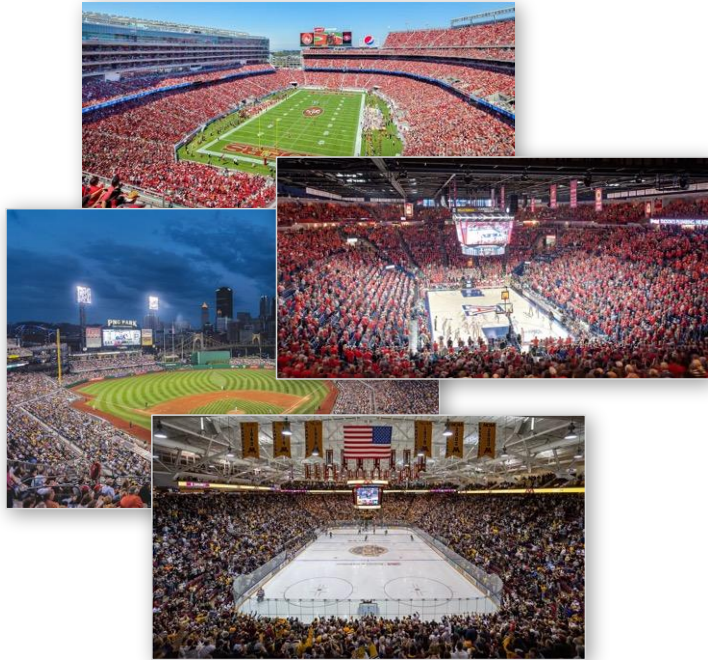
Q. Thinking about the time period of March 2019 to the present, in which of the following activities did you participate in?

	SEP '24	SEP '25
Visit a retail store	84%	82%
See a movie in a theater	72%	69%
Take a trip that included travel of 50 miles or more and 1+ nights in a hotel or other paid lodging	67%	67%
Attend a live sports event	49%	53% ↑
Take a commercial flight	41%	48% ↑
Visit a theme park	41%	46% ↑
Attend a conference or convention	20%	23% ↑
Take a cruise vacation	15%	21% ↑

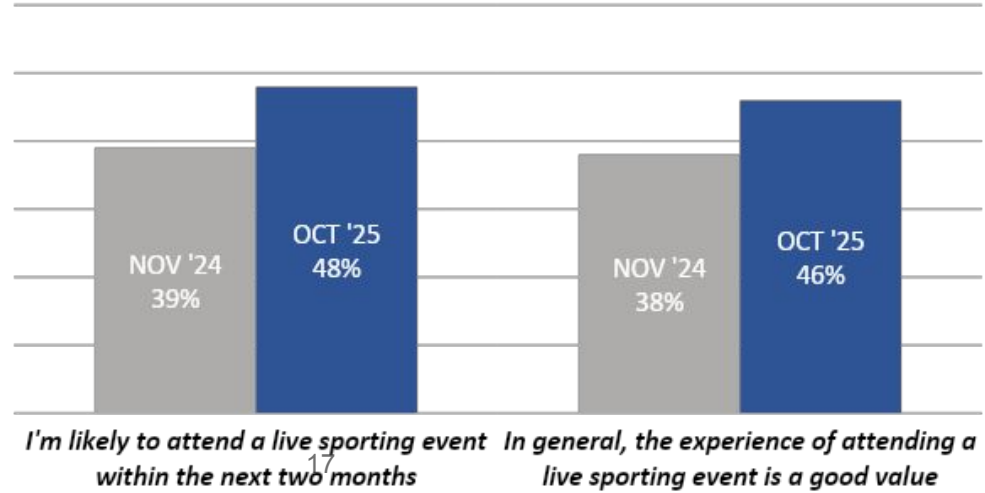
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# A Renewed Interest in Live Sports

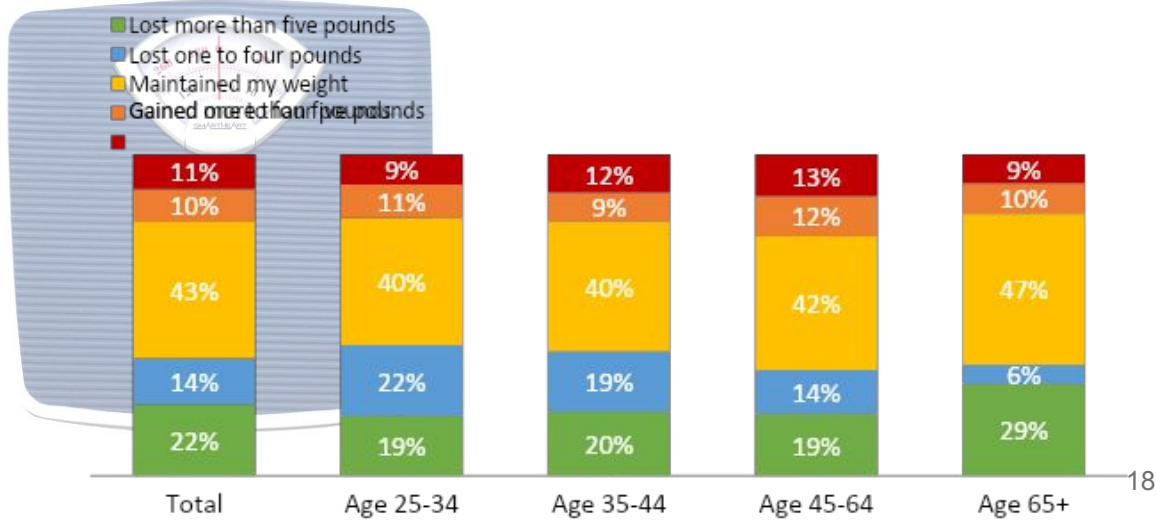


TOP 3 BOX AGREEMENT



# A Fitness Focus?

Q. Which of the following is most applicable to your personal situation over the past six months?



59% have visited a public park within the past month

*I consider myself to be very health conscious*

## TOTAL AGREE

JULY '25	73%
JULY '24	65%

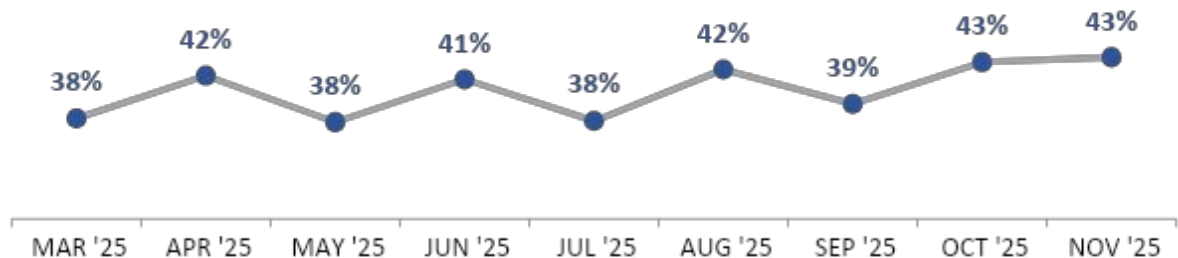


# News Coverage Becomes More Polarized as We are More Unfiltered and Ruder



*There's no such thing as objective news coverage any more .*

TOP 3 BOX AGREEMENT



76% of Americans Agree

- *I typically speak my mind.*



74% of Americans Agree

- *People today are more rude than they were ten years ago.*



36% of Americans Agree

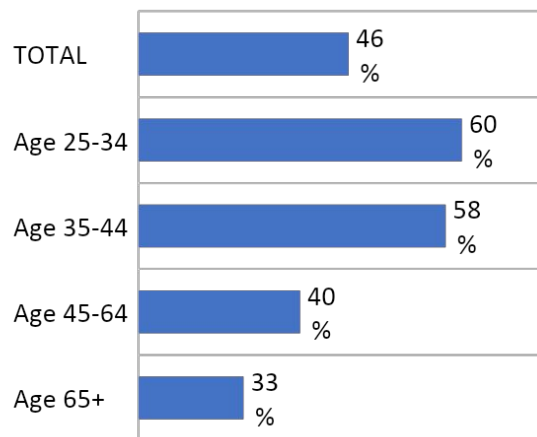
- *Those that I disagree with politically are not just wrong but evil.*

# Nearly Half of Americans Have Used AI

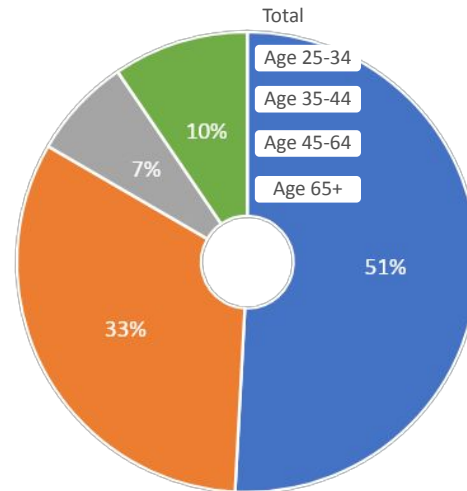
Q. Thinking about the current situation, please indicate how much you agree or disagree with each of the following statements.

*I have used AI to search for content on the internet.*

## TOP 3 BOX AGREEMENT

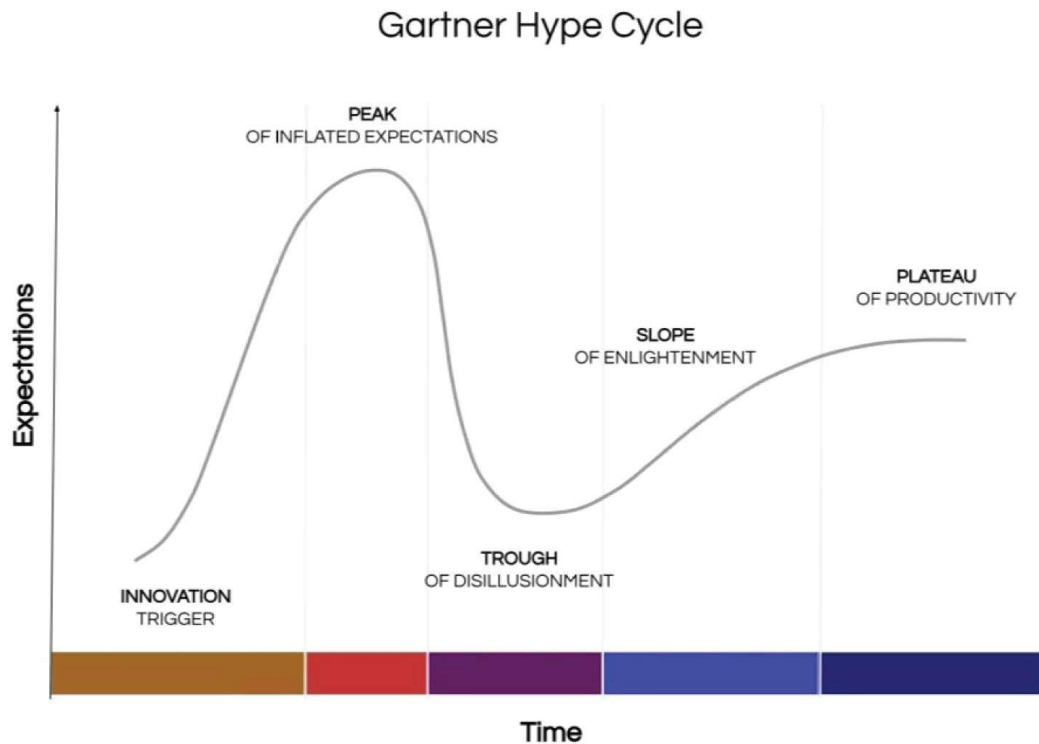


Q. Which do you feel is a bigger threat to U.S. jobs over the next five years?



- Immigration policies in major cities
- Offshoring of jobs that previously were in the U.S.
- None of these will be significant threats to U.S. jobs

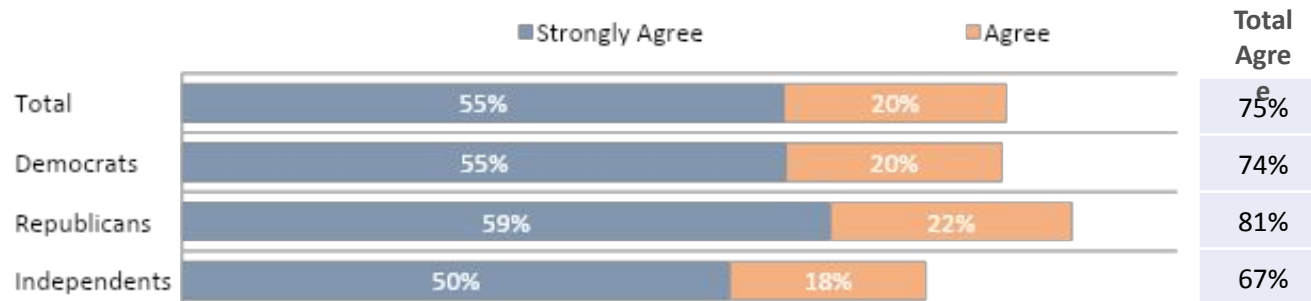
# Gartner Hype Cycle and AI



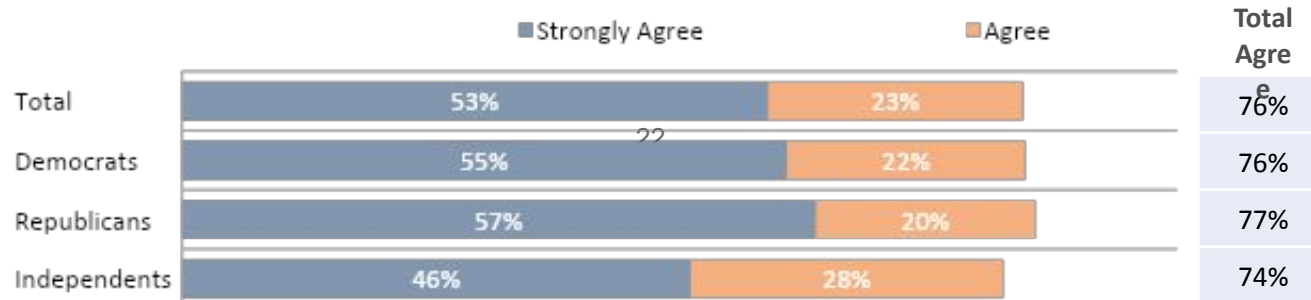
# Something Everyone Can Agree Upon: AI Needs More Government Oversight



*We need more government oversight of the development and diffusion of AI.*



*The government should take active steps to regulate Artificial Intelligence (AI).*



# Insights from the QuestionPro Consumer Tracker

Started in 2020 as the pandemic took hold,  
this study is now in its sixth wave



# Life Is Getting More Difficult – Especially Mental Health

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**How well are  
these going  
TODAY?**

**1=poor,  
10=excellent**

**Averages  
shown**

## PERSONAL

Mental/spiritual health  
Family members' lives  
Your life in general  
Your social life  
Your professional life  
Personal finances

## SOCIETAL

The stock market  
The job market  
The U.S. economy  
Race relations and social justice  
America as a whole  
The world

**Average personal**

**Average societal**

**Average across all dimensions**

January  
2025

January  
2026

7.4

6.9

7.4

7.2

7.2

6.9

6.9

6.6

6.4

6.4

6.2

6.1

6.3

5.8

6.0

5.2

5.5

4.9

5.6

4.9

5.5

5.0

5.2

4.9

6.9

6.7

5.7

5.1

6.3

5.9

**Red =  
decline**



## Social and Personal Concerns Approach “Ceiling Effects”

	January 2025	January 2026
The Founding Fathers would be very disappointed with the condition of America today	73%	74%
The American Dream has become very difficult for most people to achieve	70%	71%
I am more worried about the American Dream than ever before	57%	59%
Young people today will be better off than their parents' generation	30%	26%
<hr/>		
I am more worried about my personal finances than ever before	54%	55%
I live from paycheck to paycheck	54%	56%

# Trying To Prioritize Self Care

Activities vs.  
last year

	Will do more	Same amount	Will do less	I don't do this
Exercise	70%	25%	2%	3%
Take care of myself	68%	26%	5%	1%
Eat healthy	63%	27%	7%	3%
Take active steps to reduce my stress level	62%	32%	5%	1%
Spend time on my hobbies	51%	37%	8%	4%
Get in touch with my spiritual side	51%	38%	6%	6%
Sleep	51%	41%	7%	2%
Spend time at home	41%	44%	12%	3%
Travel for vacation	40%	34%	16%	10%
Be 'green' / environmentally-friendly	39%	46%	7%	8%
Entertain at home	37%	40%	14%	9%
Meet new people	37%	43%	14%	6%
Volunteer for a charitable cause/organization	37%	36%	11%	17%
Take a staycation	37%	41%	14%	9%
Go to movies in theaters	36%	44%	9%	11%
Follow sports	34%	43%	13%	10%
Eat at nice restaurants	31%	42%	19%	7%
Follow political news	30%	47%	15%	8%
Volunteer for a political cause/organization	24%	35%	11%	31%
Spend time on social media	22%	41%	32%	5%
Follow entertainment and/or celebrity news	22%	40%	23%	15%
Drink alcohol	19%	29%	29%	23%

## Anticipated Spending Patterns

	Will spend more	Will spend the same amount	Will spend less	I don't spend money on this
Groceries	44%	42%	12%	2%
Personal care & wellness	29%	51%	16%	4%
Insurance	28%	48%	14%	11%
Vacations & personal travel	25%	34%	22%	20%
Clothing, apparel	25%	43%	29%	4%
Restaurants & dining	21%	37%	34%	8%
Automobiles	20%	42%	19%	19%
Home and garden	20%	44%	19%	17%
Computers & electronics	17%	43%	28%	13%
Alcoholic beverages	12%	32%	25%	32%

## Anticipated Investment Returns

How would you describe the following investments at this time?

	Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor
U.S. stocks	12%	35%	32%	21%
International stocks	9%	30%	40%	21%
Gold	28%	34%	25%	13%
U.S. real estate	13%	33%	31%	23%
Cryptocurrency (such as bitcoin)	11%	27%	32%	31%

# Summing Up & Looking Ahead



# The 4Ps of Marketing



# The 4Es of Marketing



## EMOTIONAL CONNECTION

Just a third strongly prefer to buy things through a digital app than in a store... only **24%** of those over age 45

**Less than Half** strongly prefer making reservations through an app

Just over **1/3 strongly agree** that it's more convenient to handle customer service issues through an app

**47%** of Americans often feel "very lonely"...**63%** of those age 35-44



## EXPERIENCES

Those who strongly agree that ***"It's important for my life to include a number of unique experiences"*** has **risen +14** points from December'24 to December'25...to **53%**

Significantly stronger agreement among younger adults



## EAGERNESS

From November'24 to November'25, those strongly agreeing that ***"My life philosophy is more about living for today than it is about living for tomorrow"*** has gone from **57% to 66%**

**78%** of Americans agree with the statement: ***"I need a vacation"***



## ENTITLEMENT

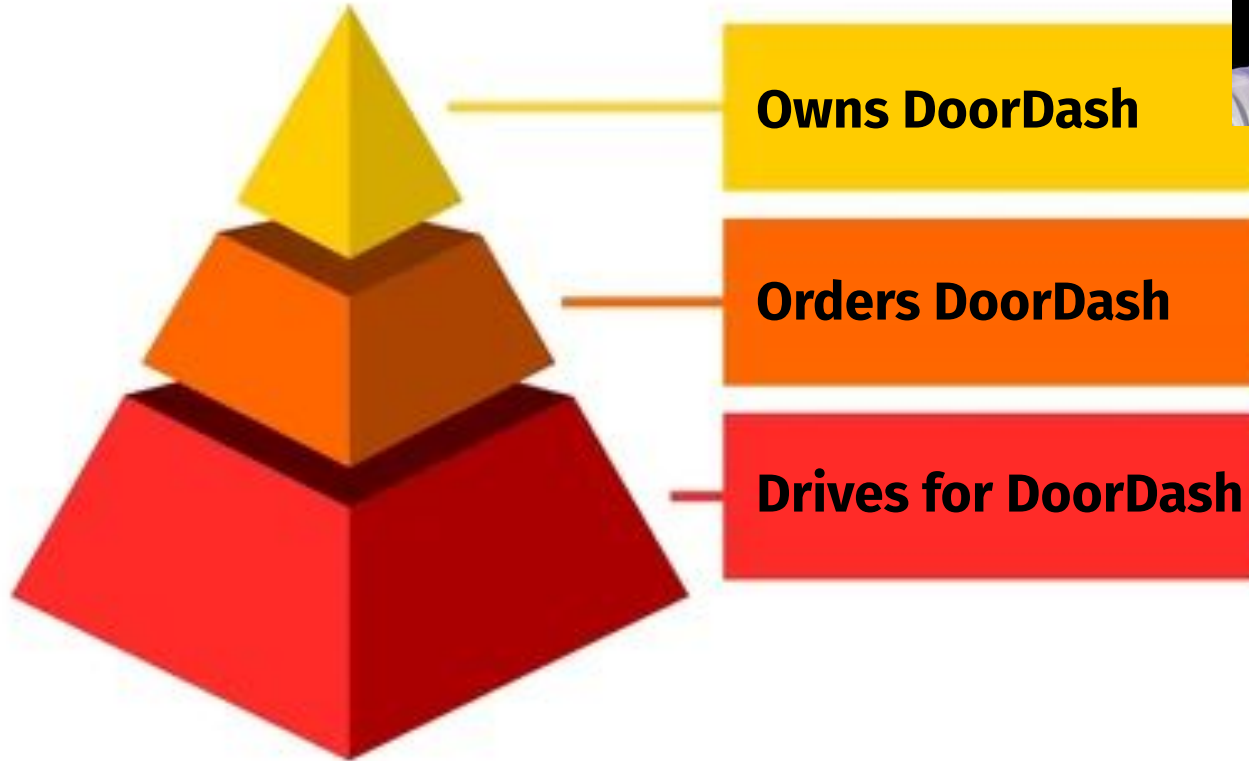
**80%** of Americans agree that they deserve a vacation; **87%** of those under age 45

The incidence of those who feel that they have been passed over for a promotion at work for someone less qualified than they are is **up +10** points in the past year, to **41%**...A Majority of those under age 45

**4/5 believe** that ***"People are more in it for themselves than they were twenty years ago."***

**More than 75%** agree that ***"People today are more selfish"*** than in their parents' generation

# Summing Up: The Three Americas





Q&A





# JON LAST

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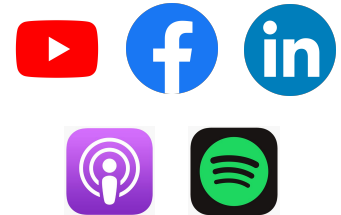
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- I pair companies needing market research with teams of graduate business students.
- I supervise students as they conduct secondary, qual and quant research. They then deliver an insights-based final report.
- **No cost:** this is a free extension of your research team

[sjkraus@usfca.edu](mailto:sjkraus@usfca.edu)



# DAN FLEETWOOD

President of Research and Insights, QuestionPro



# Thank you!

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