

# Tariff Message Test

September 9, 2025

Survey data for this research includes 1,529 responses from surveys, collected nationally via online web panel September 8-9, 2025.

## Key Findings

- The most effective anti-Trump messaging combines tariff impacts with healthcare cost concerns. The Tariffs + Healthcare message tested in the 100th percentile, the most effective anti-Trump message we've tested across 800+ messages, and is extremely persuasive at increasing House vote choice towards Democrats. This combination successfully frames Trump's economic policies as directly threatening voters' most essential needs - affordable groceries and accessible healthcare.

Trump Disapproval Percentile

| Message                                       | Everyone | Harris | Swing | Trump | Did not vote | Black | Hispanic | White College | White Non College |
|---|----------|--------|-------|-------|--------------|-------|----------|---------------|-------------------|
| Tariffs + Healthcare                          | 100%     | 98%    | 100%  | 100%  | 100%         | 100%  | 100%     | 100%          | 100%              |
| Tariffs + Overreach                           | 88%      | 85%    | 92%   | 88%   | 88%          | 90%   | 90%      | 86%           | 88%               |
| Corruption                                    | 85%      | 81%    | 90%   | 84%   | 86%          | 84%   | 85%      | 84%           | 85%               |
| Tariffs + Authoritarian                       | 84%      | 82%    | 90%   | 84%   | 84%          | 84%   | 83%      | 85%           | 84%               |
| Authoritarian Only (Ezra - Courts/Complicity) | 69%      | 69%    | 83%   | 68%   | 74%          | 71%   | 65%      | 71%           | 68%               |

House Vote Choice Percentile

| Message                                       | Everyone | Harris | Swing | Trump | Did not vote | Black | Hispanic | White College | White Non College |
|---|----------|--------|-------|-------|--------------|-------|----------|---------------|-------------------|
| Tariffs + Healthcare                          | 89%      | 88%    | 92%   | 87%   | 94%          | 82%   | 88%      | 90%           | 88%               |
| Tariffs + Overreach                           | 43%      | 52%    | 54%   | 38%   | 55%          | 39%   | 43%      | 43%           | 43%               |
| Corruption                                    | 43%      | 54%    | 55%   | 38%   | 56%          | 34%   | 40%      | 46%           | 44%               |
| Tariffs + Authoritarian                       | 42%      | 55%    | 55%   | 36%   | 51%          | 32%   | 34%      | 47%           | 42%               |
| Authoritarian Only (Ezra - Courts/Complicity) | 30%      | 45%    | 43%   | 23%   | 41%          | 20%   | 19%      | 37%           | 29%               |

- A corruption-focused message on tariffs, which did not include healthcare, was also effective, testing in the 88th percentile on Trump disapproval, though somewhat less effective on House vote choice.
- While less effective, the versions of the tariffs message that focus on authoritarianism and corruption are still very effective at increasing Trump disapproval, and somewhat effective at increasing Democratic support for the House.

- These alternative messages were more effective with Harris and college-educated white voters at increasing House Democratic support than with Trump voters and non-college whites, suggesting that these variants are best suited for building elite support.
- The cost-focused variants are more effective with the electorate overall.
- An authoritarian-only variant (styled after Ezra Klein’s op-ed), which did not mention healthcare costs or tariffs, was the least effective message from this test.

## Message Details

| Message                                       | Democrats say you should oppose Donald Trump because...   | Trump Disapproval | Percentile | House Vote Choice | Percentile |
|---|---|-------------------|------------|-------------------|------------|
| Tariffs + Healthcare                          | ...he’s making everything cost more – from groceries to healthcare. Trump’s tariffs are raising prices on groceries, clothes, and everyday necessities. And if that’s not enough, he’s also gutting healthcare programs that help you afford prescription drugs and doctor visits. Democrats are fighting to lower costs on both fronts – stopping these harmful tariffs and protecting your healthcare from Trump’s attacks.             | 2.7%              | 100%       | 1.5%              | 89%        |
| Tariffs + Overreach                           | ...he’s overreaching on everything and destroying how our government is supposed to work. Trump is using tariffs to punish countries and states that don’t bow down to him – driving up costs for hard working Americans. And he’s turning the government against anyone who disagrees. Democrats are fighting back against this power grab and fighting to make everyday necessities more affordable.                                    | 1.5%              | 88%        | 0.8%              | 43%        |
| Corruption                                    | ...he’s cutting deals that benefit himself and his billionaire friends, not you. Trump’s tariffs create special exemptions for big corporations that help him and his allies, while regular families have to pay higher prices at the grocery store. While Trump is using government power to benefit himself, Democrats are fighting to stop this corruption and bring down costs for working people.                                    | 1.4%              | 85%        | 0.8%              | 43%        |
| Tariffs + Authoritarian                       | ...he’s an authoritarian, consolidating power for himself. Trump bypasses Congress, ignores experts, sends the military into American cities, and illegally imposes tariffs on the rest of the world – driving the economy into a ditch. Meanwhile, Republicans rubber stamp everything he does. Democrats are fighting to reign in Trump, roll back these tariffs, and bring costs down for working people.                              | 1.4%              | 84%        | 0.8%              | 42%        |
| Authoritarian Only (Ezra – Courts/Complicity) | ...he’s dismantling checks and balances and consolidating power for himself. The courts have stopped restraining him, giving Trump free rein to punish enemies, rewrite laws, and unleash masked agents in our streets. Funding this government means funding authoritarianism. Democrats refuse to be complicit – they’re fighting to hold Trump accountable and restore a system where government power serves the people, not one man. | 1.0%              | 69%        | 0.7%              | 30%        |

