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Record Early Voting, Rising Prices: A Data Study of the 2026 Midterm Electorate

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

A record 47.9 million early ballots, final polls and trust data sketch a price-driven, sceptical electorate two days before the November 3 midterms.

KEY RESEARCH FINDINGS & STRATEGIC OUTLOOK

Executive Summary Two days before the November 3 midterm elections, the United States has already set a turnout record. The University of Florida’s Election Lab counted 47,922,669 early ballots by midday on October 30, passing the previous midterm record of 45.9 million set in 2022, with days of early voting still to run. The surge, carried by wire-service reporting, is the clearest hard number of the campaign’s final week. This study tests what that record does and does not prove. Early ballots show who voted first, not how the full electorate will divide on Tuesday, and party registration in reporting states is not a vote choice. Set against final polls, growth-versus-inflation data and trust measures, however, the early vote sketches an electorate defined above all by prices, and by scepticism toward the institutions asking for its vote. Methodology The core inputs are the Election Lab’s early-vote tally as reported by wire services, the RealClearPolling generic-ballot average as reported in final-week coverage, Gallup’s final pre-midterm congressional survey, a Harris poll on corruption, youth polling from Generation Lab and Harvard, and official economic releases covering growth, prices and interest rates. Every load-bearing figure below is corroborated across at least two independent outlets. Two limits frame the findings. Party-registration shares cover only the states that report them, and early-vote totals were still rising after the October 30 midday count used here. Our earlier polling study examined approval and ballot averages in depth; this study focuses instead on turnout itself, its composition, and what it can and cannot predict. Empirical Findings The scale of the record is the first finding. At 47,922,669 ballots by midday on October 30, early voting had already passed

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