

Inflation causing financial strain for nearly half of U.S. households, poll finds

Among low-income households, more than 7 in 10 say the rising cost of food, gas and other necessities is creating hardship



By [Taylor Telford](#)

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As prices creep higher for food, gasoline and other necessities, nearly half of U.S. households say they are feeling the financial strain, according to a Gallup [survey](#) released Thursday.

Roughly 45 percent of households are being hurt by price increases, according to a [survey](#) of nearly 1,600 people conducted Nov. 3 to Nov. 16. About 1 in 10 said that hardship was severe enough to affect their standard of living, while 35 percent described the hardship as “moderate.”

The effects were most acute in lower-income households, with 71 percent of those making less than \$40,000 a year saying they experienced hardship, compared with 47 percent for middle-income households and 29 percent of those considered upper-income.

“Most low-income households are already hurting,” said Mohamed Younis, editor in chief of Gallup. “You can only imagine what that’s going to look like in the next few months if this continues to get worse.”

Surging inflation is challenging families and policymakers alike, as booming consumer demand collides with snarled supply chains, driving up prices throughout the global economy. The picture is further complicated by a widespread labor shortage and the revolving door of pandemic threats, including the uncertainty surrounding the highly mutated [omicron coronavirus variant](#).

The inflation pain seems to cut across partisan lines, with 53 percent of Republicans saying they’re feeling the effects of price increases compared with 37 percent of Democrats, according to Gallup. But the number of households experiencing severe financial hardship was fairly even across the political spectrum.

Prices jumped more than 6 percent in October, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS), the largest annual increase in about 30 years. As a result, Americans are spending more on necessities, from groceries to fuel to housing.

The nation’s median rent swelled 17.8 percent from January to November, according to the Apartment List’s National Rent Report. The median sales price of a single-family home hit \$353,900 in October, according to the National Association of Realtors, up more than 13 percent year over year. Beef prices are up 20 percent in the same period, according to the BLS, and the cost of a carton of eggs has risen nearly 30 percent. On Thursday, the national average for a gallon of gas was \$2.27, according to AAA, compared with \$2.15 a year ago.

for a gallon of gas was \$3.57, according to AAA, compared with \$2.13 a year ago.

On Wednesday, President Biden called surging prices “a worldwide challenge” and a “natural byproduct” of a global economy that’s rebounding from the pandemic. But he stressed that the average American family is financially better off now than it was before the pandemic, despite the strain from inflation.

“Prices are still out of sync as the world comes back,” Biden said Wednesday in remarks about the supply chain. “But as we continue to overcome these obstacles, the more price pressures will ease.”

The rising prices are hitting families just as the holiday shopping season gets into full swing. Americans are still planning to spend big, even though their dollars won’t go as far: The average consumer plans to spend \$785 this year, according to NPD Group’s Holiday Retail Outlook. That is more than 13 percent higher than last year and 6 percent more than 2019.

PNC’s Christmas Price Index — which has tracked the cost of the items from the “12 Days of Christmas” for 38 years — shows a 5.7 percent increase compared with 2019, for a total of \$41,205,58. While admittedly the cost of partridges and golden rings is not indicative of most family’s holiday purchases, the “lighthearted take on the BLS Consumer Price Index” nonetheless shows that inflation has become tough to avoid.

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