



Energy Costs and the Iran War

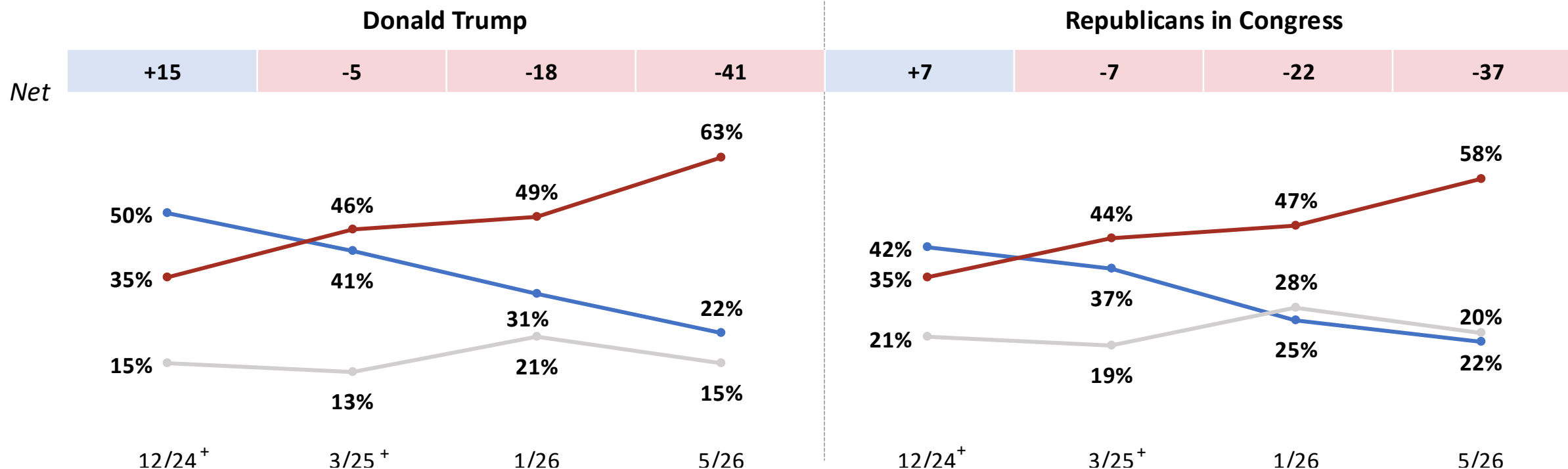
Findings from quantitative and qualitative research in May and June 2026

**CLIMATE
POWER**

Large majorities now see Trump and Republicans as making things worse for consumers on energy prices.

*Is each of the following making things better or worse for consumers when it comes to **energy prices**?*

— Better — Worse — No difference



Democrats in Congress are somewhere between negative and irrelevant—20% better, 37% no difference, 43% worse—with very little change over time

⁺ National data for comparison.

Source: Hart Research, Energy Affordability Survey (May 2026)

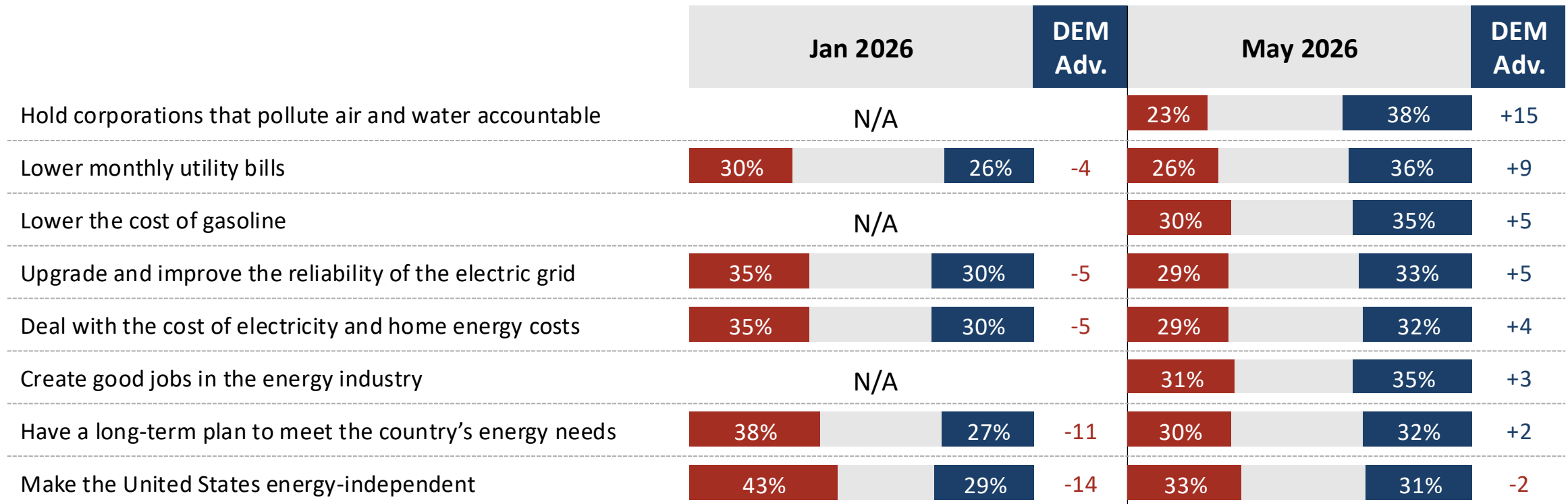
Republican advantages on energy issues have vanished, but Democrats can grow their advantages on lowering costs.

Who do you trust more to do each of the following?

■ Donald Trump and the Republicans in Congress

■ Both/Neither

■ The Democrats in Congress



Qualitative Methodology

*534 AI-moderated video interviews · Nationally representative registered voters
June 3–8, 2026*

Different starting points to the discussion:

Cost-of-living entry (N = 271)

Affordability, household expenses, gas prices

Iran war entry (N = 263)

Global conflict, national security, gas prices

Both groups converge

Shared discussion questions

Energy costs · Who's to blame · Clean energy frames · GOP accountability

Why We Used ‘Qualitative Interviews at Scale’ For This Research



Scale with depth. Hundreds of individual conversations, capturing respondents’ own words, each probed in real time.



Authenticity & candor. People participate on their own time, in their own environments, often leading to more natural and candid feedback.



New qual research designs. Test multiple entry points or framings across independent, representative samples.



Direct link to evidence. Click from coded themes to video clips and direct quotes captured by them.



Stronger basis for comparison. Larger N sizes and consistent interviewing/probing makes patterns easier to find and trust.



Captures emotional reactions. Measures both sentiment in language and emotional responses from coding of facial expressions.



Rapid access to qual texture. In fast moving environment, listen to hundreds of conversations within days.

Where Do Voters Place Blame for Energy Costs?: TOP TIER

Trump personally — Blamed most often and most intensely. Participants cite his decision to invade Iran without a plan and his diversion of clean energy funding to oil companies. Consistent across both discussions.

Republicans in Congress — Blamed as enablers, described as following Trump ‘even if it's off a cliff’ and a rubber stamp for Trump's oil interests.

Oil and gas companies — Described as profiteering from war-driven price spikes.

*“I absolutely **blame the Republicans because they're enablers** of the president. They make excuses for him, they repeat the same talking points over and over again, and **they're not doing their job.**”*

*“I fully blame the Republicans that **Trump started the Iran war with, which--like gas prices--spiked energy prices.** Before the war, here, the one gas station was like \$2.80 a gallon. Now it's like \$4.50. It went up almost two dollars in the span of less than 3 months. So yes, it is on the Republicans.”*

*“**Oil companies make money when there's scarcity.** So, the oil companies selling oil here in the United States to your local gas stations are obviously **making much larger profits.**”*

Where Do Voters Place Blame for Energy Costs?: SECOND TIER

Utility companies — blamed for overcharging and gouging. Present in both discussions but secondary to Trump and oil companies.

Both parties / bipartisan blame — a consistent minority strand. Several participants say Democrats take oil money too and are equally complicit.

*"I think it's **100% due to price gouging by the power companies**, they charge whatever they want because they can."*

*"Cost of electricity going up is because of Con Ed and the **electric suppliers...they haven't taken care of their infrastructure in years.**"*

*"I blame **Democrats and Republicans for rising energy costs are all complicit.** They've all made policies that have **allowed corporations to run rampant**, rise the costs, they've started wars, and they don't care about the American people."*

Which entry point produces more Republican blame?

Cost of Living Discussion:

Republican blame is reached indirectly. Participants start with personal financial pain (groceries, gas, utilities) and blame accumulates toward Republicans through the lens of corporate protection and broken promises. There is a notable share of bipartisan frustration. **Numerous participants say Democrats are equally complicit in high cost of living.**

GOP blame in this lane of messaging has to **travel through corporate greed** first. The path is: rising costs → corporations profiting → politicians protecting corporations → Republicans specifically.

*“Well, the **Republicans let big oil do whatever they want.** They don't keep them in check. They have no problem with letting oil companies pillage the average American consumer.”*

Iran Discussion:

Republican blame is more direct and arrives earlier.

- The war itself is the inciting event, and Trump is immediately assigned responsibility.
- Republicans in Congress are then blamed for enabling the war decision.
- **When informed about Republicans blocking clean energy, that amplified concerns.**

The Iran discussion surfaces a specific additional accountability vector: Republicans are criticized for not adopting clean energy methods after the war drove prices up — failing at both prevention and response.

*“**I blame the Republican Party and President Donald Trump for starting unnecessary wars,** which causes our gas and oil prices to go sky high.”*

In their own words...

*"This is the same conversation we're having over and over. Of course, **oil companies are making massive profits from the Iran War**. They don't want to use the clean energy in this country."*

*"This is interesting. Yeah, the Iran **War does factor in** because they're sitting on a great big pile of puddle of oil, and the Republicans want Exxon and Mobil to be sure and have plenty of oil that they can sell to us at huge prices. Yeah, there's probably more to why Trump went into this besides just Netanyahu wanting him to do it. So yeah, I don't know. I'm just an ordinary person."*

*"Republicans in Congress have taken millions from oil and gas companies, and in turn, they have blocked and canceled clean energy that would lower bills and protect the next price strike. **They are choosing their big money donors over us**. It absolutely factors into why they have created the war and why they did what they did. It's not a question; it's a fact."*

The Narrative: How the Iran War Raises Concerns About GOP Energy Incompetence

1

War is Trump's decision: Participants assign the war directly to Trump (not Iran, not outside forces). In both discussions participants describe it as a blunder made without a plan.
"Trump got us into this war for no reason."

2

Republicans own the war by silence: Congressional Republicans are blamed for not stopping it and for continuing to support Trump. ("Rubber stamp," following Trump "off a cliff")

3

The war spikes energy prices across the board: Participants in both discussions connect the war to gas prices through the Strait of Hormuz and Middle East oil supply disruption. This understanding is broadly shared, not limited to the Iran entry group.

4

GOP did nothing to *prepare or protect*: Republicans are criticized for engaging in 'unnecessary military actions that spike energy prices' while failing to develop any domestic energy alternative. **They started the problem and cut off the solution.**

5

Oil company ties explain the motive: Both discussions surface the inference that Republicans wanted high oil prices because their donors profit from them. The war is reframed as a donor payoff, not a strategic decision. This is the deepest and most durable level of distrust.

Which Frame is Most Compelling for Clean Energy?

Myths, Fears, and Knowledge Gaps

1. High upfront costs for consumers and utilities
2. Cost trajectory of clean energy sources
3. Grid capacity
4. Build time
5. Reliability/dependability
6. No such thing as “clean”

Positive Clean Energy Framing

1. **Affordability/lower bills:** Many are open to clean energy as a means to cut household energy costs and ease financial strain.
2. **Energy independence / security:** Respondents appreciate the link between domestic clean energy production and national security by reducing reliance on foreign oil and potential conflicts.
3. **“Breakthroughs” in clean energy:** People know clean energy is healthier, but they’re unsure if its more affordable or more (or as) reliable. Speaking in terms of “breakthroughs” that have made affordability/reliability possible can make people excited about clean energy and help alleviate some of these concerns.

The Iran War and the Looming Energy Crisis: Messaging Recommendations

1

Frame the Iran war as a **war of choice**, initiated entirely at **Donald Trump's discretion** and with **full support (and no pushback)** from congressional Republicans.

2

Emphasize that **Republicans had no plan** to deal with the (totally foreseeable) impacts on Americans' wallets.

3

Highlight that, in fact, **Republicans made things worse by very intentionally canceling clean energy** projects that would have saved Americans money.

4

All of the above was **done specifically to help Republicans' friends and benefactors in the oil and gas industry**.

5

As a result, **Americans are left holding the bag for sky-high energy costs**. And while we could be working toward true energy independence by building up our clean energy production, instead we're falling further and further behind.