

## U.S. Grocery Prices Strain Households Amid China Oil Dispute

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Rising grocery prices continue to take a toll on American families, with nearly half of U.S. adults reporting that food costs are now a major source of stress. According to a new poll conducted by the Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research, 50% of respondents say they're heavily burdened by grocery expenses, while only 14% report no stress at all.

The data highlights the pressure on lower-income households. Among Americans earning under \$30,000 a year, 64% cited grocery costs as a major concern. In comparison, just 4 in 10 adults earning \$100,000 or more reported the same level of stress.

Financial challenges extend beyond food. Younger adults, particularly those under 45, are increasingly turning to “buy now, pay later” options to manage spending on essentials. The poll found that many Americans are using installment services not only for entertainment and dining, but also to pay for groceries and medical bills, a clear reflection of inflation’s reach.

Wider economic issues continue to spark debate. While government programs served as remedies to inflation, critics argue that unchecked federal spending and inconsistent economic leadership have worsened cost-of-living pressures. Many Americans remain skeptical about the effectiveness of current inflation policy, while others point to the longer-term impacts of trade decisions made during the Trump administration.

Alongside domestic economic strain, tensions between the U.S. and China remain high, particularly over China’s continued oil purchases from sanctioned nations, Russia and Iran. These deals, which contribute significant revenue to both governments, have drawn U.S. scrutiny as Washington seeks to cut off military funding to regimes engaged in conflict and regional destabilization.

Following trade talks held in Stockholm this week, China’s Foreign Ministry responded to the U.S. push for halting oil deals with a firm message posted to X: “Coercion and pressuring will not achieve anything.” The post came in response to President Donald Trump’s threat to impose 100% tariffs on certain Chinese goods if Beijing doesn’t comply.

Despite the hardline rhetoric, U.S. Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent confirmed on Thursday that negotiations are continuing. “They’re firm negotiators, but the door remains open,” he said, highlighting both sides’ willingness to keep commercial discussions alive.

The U.S. position remains focused on reducing revenue streams to Moscow and Tehran, both governments accused of fueling conflicts in Ukraine and across the Middle East.