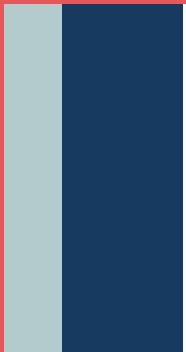


# Main Street's Digital Mandate:

## *What Voters Expect from Policymakers*



How Americans View Digital Tools,  
Innovation, and the Risks of Regulation

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# Executive Summary



Congress and state legislatures are weighing new digital regulations – from privacy laws and advertising taxes to proposals to restructure online platforms. Though often described as targeting "Big Tech," voters see the impact reaching much closer to home. Small businesses, consumers and local economies would absorb the costs.

To measure voter sentiment, Internet for Growth partnered with Echelon Insights to conduct a national survey of 1,030 likely voters from Sept. 5-7, 2025 (margin of error  $\pm 3.4$  percentage points).

Internet for Growth is a nationwide coalition of small businesses, entrepreneurs and creators who depend on digital advertising, media and marketing to reach customers, grow revenue and create jobs. We advocate for policies that preserve access to affordable, data-driven tools powering economic growth across the country. We commissioned this survey to capture how voters view proposed regulations and to ensure policymakers understand what's at stake for local businesses and communities.

The results are striking: digital tools are not luxuries but lifelines. Voters overwhelmingly believe they are essential to small business survival, local commerce and consumer choice. Regulations that raise costs or fragment digital services are broadly viewed as making it harder for local businesses to compete and grow.

The political consequences are also clear. Majorities across party lines say they would be less likely to vote for lawmakers who vote for new digital regulations. In an era when consensus is rare, digital policy is one of the few issues where voters speak with uncommon unity.

## Among American Voters:

**94%**

say digital tools are important for small business survival.

**78%**

oppose new taxes & regulations on digital advertising.

**90%**

say regulation would likely lead small businesses to raise prices.

**87%**

say rules for "Big Tech" could also affect small businesses.

# Rising Digital Costs Put Main Street at Risk



Digital tools are no longer optional — they are the backbone of Main Street commerce. Voters believe that raising the costs of digital tools would harm local businesses.

Across urban, suburban and rural areas, voters view digital tools as essential for payments, promotion and customer discovery. From social media to e-commerce and payment platforms, these tools form a connected system that small businesses rely on to reach customers.

The reliance on digital tools spans generations, with voters using a range of platforms to discover businesses. Gen Z is most likely to turn to social media, while older voters split more evenly between social media and search engines. Overall, digital channels dominate discovery: **39% say they most often find small businesses on social media, 18% through search, and just 11% on traditional TV.**

The takeaway is clear: digital channels are overtaking traditional discovery, and any regulation that raises costs or limits access poses a challenge for local shops and community economies.

## Among American Voters:

**90%**

say nearly every business depends on digital tools to succeed.

**84%**

say digital tools make it easier for small businesses to accept payments, and

**78%**

say they help reach new customers.

**83%**

say increased regulation of digital tools would harm small businesses.

**77%**

say increased regulation of digital tools would harm consumers.

“ Digital isn’t just for Silicon Valley. It’s **Main Street’s survival kit.** ”

# Consumers Want Personalization & Use It to Discover Small Businesses



Consumers see personalized digital marketing and advertising as a lifeline for discovery. Far from intrusive, **91% of voters say these tools are helpful**.

Advertising tailored to people's interests across digital channels helps users find new businesses and learn about new products and services.

At the same time, **85% of voters understand that because digital advertising supports many free online services and content providers, policies that restrict it could lead to fewer free options or higher costs for consumers**.

The takeaway is clear: Personalization across channels — from search and streaming to marketplaces and ad networks — is how entrepreneurs connect with customers.

## Among American Voters:

91%

say personalized ads help them find local businesses.

85%

say restrictions on ads would reduce access to free online content and services.

78%

say they would promote a new business online first.

**“ Personalized digital ads aren’t noise – they’re the **new storefront**. ”**

# Voters Worry About Hidden Costs of Regulation



For voters, regulation isn't an abstract policy debate — it has real-world consequences: higher prices, fewer customers for local shops and greater risk of closures.

Majorities across age groups agree that rules aimed at "Big Tech" could affect small businesses, since nearly every business now relies on technology.

Voters also value simplicity. They believe small businesses do better when digital tools and advertising services work together as part of one system, not split apart. About two-thirds oppose proposals to break up digital advertising platforms into separate companies, saying that would make operations more complicated and drive up costs for small businesses.

Many also worry that restrictions on digital advertising could limit access to free online content and services — making regulation a kitchen-table issue for households nationwide.

## Among American Voters:

**89%**

say they would be concerned if small businesses had to cut back or close because of higher advertising costs.

**87%**

believe added costs would be passed on to consumers.

**89%**

say digital tools and ads work best when they work together.

**87%**

say regulatory rules for "Big Tech" could affect small businesses.

**57%**

favor one consistent federal rulebook over state-by-state

**“**Raising costs on digital tools means raising costs on small business.**”**

# Voters Across Parties Reject New Digital Regulation



In today's polarized political climate, few issues cut across partisan lines. Digital regulation is one of them. Republicans, Democrats and Independents all oppose new advertising taxes and rules that would increase costs for small businesses.

Trump and Harris voters show similar resistance to additional regulation — and notably, Harris voters are even more likely to oppose it than Trump voters.

The political risk is especially acute among Independents, majorities of whom say they would be less likely to support candidates who back additional regulation. Supporters of different presidential candidates show nearly identical levels of concern, underscoring the broad consensus.

## Among American Voters:

78%  
of Democrats | 75%  
of Republicans | 82%  
of Independents

oppose new regulations that could make digital advertising more expensive or difficult for small businesses.

59%

of Independents say they would be less likely to back candidates supporting more regulation.

A majority (53%) would be **less likely** to vote for candidates who support new digital regulations; only 9% would be more likely.

Trump and Harris voters show similarly **high levels of opposition**.

**“On digital policy, voters speak with one voice.”**

# The Road Ahead: Policy Lessons from Voters



Digital tools are now integral to how small businesses operate — from reaching customers to managing transactions. Voters recognize this connection and view regulation not as an abstract debate about large technology firms, but as a matter of cost for Main Street, household budgets and local economies.

Across partisan and demographic lines, majorities oppose new taxes or rules that would raise the cost of digital tools for small businesses. Seventy-eight percent of voters say they oppose new digital advertising taxes and regulations, and 85% agree that limiting digital ads could reduce access to the free online services households rely on. While some states have led efforts to impose digital ad regulations, voters prefer a consistent, uniform approach at the federal level.

The findings suggest that policymakers who pursue measures that raise costs or limit access to digital tools risk running counter to voter priorities on one of the few issues with broad bipartisan agreement.

## **The survey results point to several priorities:**

- Protect personalization. Voters see personalized ads as a helpful way to discover local businesses.
- Advance a consistent data privacy framework. A single federal standard is preferred to a patchwork of state rules.
- Avoid new digital taxes. Seventy-eight percent of voters oppose new taxes and regulations on digital advertising, citing direct links to higher costs for families and small businesses.
- Preserve connectivity. Nearly 90% say digital tools and advertising services are easiest to manage when they work together as part of one integrated system, not split apart.
- Safeguard free content. Eighty-five percent agree that limiting digital ads risks reducing access to the free online services households rely on.

## **The broader message is clear:**

Small businesses are technology businesses too. Nearly every Main Street shop today relies on digital tools to survive. Policymakers who overlook this risk political consequences, as voters see regulation not as an abstract tech debate but as a kitchen-table issue with an immediate impact on their communities.

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for  
growth

## About Internet for Growth

Internet for Growth is a nationwide coalition of small businesses, entrepreneurs, creators, and digital professionals advocating to keep the internet open, affordable, and ad-supported. The coalition highlights how digital advertising, media, and marketing fuel local economies, jobs, and innovation. By amplifying the voices of small businesses and creators, Internet for Growth works to preserve the data-driven tools that help millions of businesses reach customers, compete online, and power growth in every state and community.

## About Echelon Insights

Echelon Insights is a research and analytics firm that helps organizations understand public opinion, voter behavior and market trends. Founded in 2014, the firm specializes in survey research, data modeling, and advanced analytics to inform strategy for businesses, policymakers and advocacy groups. Its work spans political campaigns, issue advocacy and corporate strategy, with a focus on delivering insights that are both rigorous and actionable.