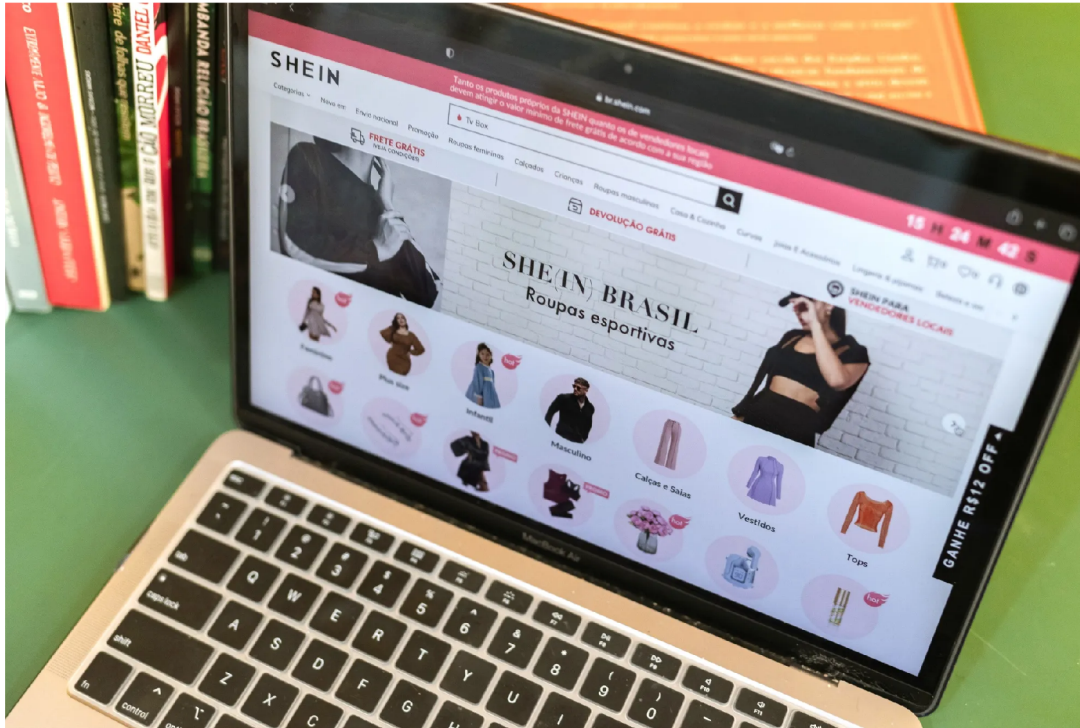


Politics

Young Americans Sour on Trump's China Tariffs Despite Election-Year Bump



The Shein website. Photographer: Tuane Fernandes/Bloomberg

By [Akayla Gardner](#)

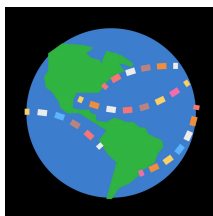
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✦ Takeaways by Bloomberg AI

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- President Trump's escalating tariff feud with China is affecting young Americans who rely on fast fashion, TikTok, and Xbox, and may hurt Republicans in next year's congressional midterms.
- The tariffs are causing price increases, impacting young consumers' daily lives, and threatening the fate of TikTok, which is popular among young Americans.
- Young voters, who were crucial to Trump's election victory, are growing frustrated with the trade war's consequences, and some are reevaluating their support for the president.

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President Donald Trump's escalating tariff feud with China is threatening to upend the lives of young Americans who have grown accustomed to fast fashion, TikTok videos and playing Xbox.

Those perks were the result of close trade relations between the world's two largest economies and now threaten a perfect storm for young consumers already under the stress of inflation and newly entering financial independence. For Republicans – who just enjoyed their best performance with young voters in a generation – the trade war is poised to reverse gains with a demographic that could be key to maintaining control of Congress in the midterm elections.

“Everybody is mad,” said Chelsea Hollins, a 26-year-old content creator and college student based in Detroit. “That’s all that I see on my timeline.”



A Shein Group Ltd. pop-up store inside a Forever-21 store in the Times Square neighborhood of New York, US. *Photographer: Yuki Iwamura/Bloomberg*

Trump's inability thus far to compel China to the negotiating table is already having dramatic consequences. Many goods imported from China now face a 145% tariff, while cheap items from Temu and fast-fashion brands are no longer eligible for the “de minimis” exemption on low-priced shipped goods that allowed for bargain-basement prices for trendy clothes.

The tensions are also toying with the fate of the social video app TikTok, which was nearing a deal to remain available in the US before Trump's tariffs soured discussions.

Now, frustrations are setting in for young Americans who played a critical role in Trump's election victory, helping him to secure the best performance for any Republican presidential candidate in two decades with voters under 30.

Last month, 57% of Americans between 18 and 29 said they disapproved of Trump's handling of his job as commander-in-chief, a 14-point decline since Trump took office and the sharpest compared to other age brackets, a YouGov/Economist poll found.

Although the White House could still change course on its tariffs, the levies on China could have lasting political consequences for the GOP in next year's congressional midterms.

Between 2020 and 2024, Trump made massive inroads with young voters, improving his share of the youth vote by 14% in North Carolina, 15% in Wisconsin, and 18% in Pennsylvania, according to Edison Research exit polls. In Michigan, Trump even tied former Vice President Kamala Harris among voters 18-to-29 years old.

But those results yielded Republicans only the narrowest of majorities in the House of Representatives. Now, young voters are worried that Trump's trade efforts are reshaping the economy in a way that hurts them.

'All Aspects'

Hollins, who is studying communications at Wayne State University, says tariffs are impacting costs "in all aspects" of her life, including price increases from her cellphone provider, electricity company and her favorite online clothing store.

She almost exclusively shops for clothes on Shein, the Chinese company where she purchases hauls of new outfits seasonally and frequently shares them with her social-media followers.

Read More: [Shein Hikes US Prices as Much as 377% Ahead of Tariff Increases](#)

"That's really the only place that I get clothes from at this point," she said, adding that she buys other household items from the website, too. "I won't feel like I can be creative in my fashion anymore."

Similar to other young Americans, Hollins finds shopping malls have become less valuable, offering a smaller selection of clothing at more expensive prices. Several affordable retailers

have gone out of business or decreased their brick-and-mortar footprints as a result of the changes in consumer behavior.

For those preferring at-home entertainment, Microsoft Corp. announced it would raise prices on its Xbox devices, which are manufactured in China, by as much as \$100 for one console model in the wake of tariffs. Nintendo Co Ltd. delayed pre-orders of its new Switch console because of the new tariff impacts.

Young Americans who have built virtual businesses are also feeling the pinch.

Chelsey Brown, a 32-year-old who owns a home goods company, took out her first loan to ease the costs of the administration's tariffs on China, where some of her most popular products are custom made.

With a mid-to-low profit margin, fronting the costs of tariffs will be unsustainable. "We obviously cannot afford a 145% tariff," she said, noting that she has two full-time employees along with contractors. "Truly, I don't know what to do."

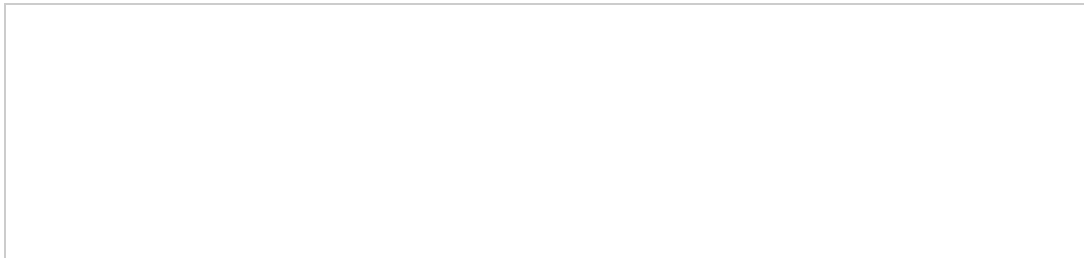
Brown, known online as the "heirloom hunter" for her discoveries of lost family artifacts, has begun shifting her company's social media strategy away from TikTok to Instagram under the threat of a possible ban, despite half of her traction coming from the vertical video-app.

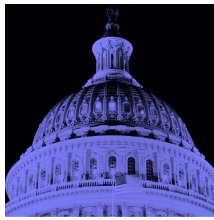
"It has done amazing things for my business," she said of TikTok, adding that she surpassed over a million in sales last year without spending on ads.

Courtship Continues

Trump credits his strong performance with young voters, at least in part, to TikTok. If there is a sale that meets the requirements of a bipartisan divest-or-ban law, the White House would seriously consider making an account on TikTok, according to an administration official, who requested anonymity.

While TikTok is banned on government devices, the White House continues to court millions of eyeballs online on other sites like X, Instagram and YouTube.





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White House Press Secretary Karoline Leavitt releases almost weekly vertical videos, optimized for smartphones, recapping the administration's moves. Trump's 17-year-old granddaughter, Kai Trump, has been vlogging from inside the Pennsylvania Avenue residence and on the road with the president. The 78-year-old president recently put her in front of cameras in a gaggle with reporters on Air Force One during a trip to Florida for a Ultimate Fighting Championship fight.

Moderates Falter

Still, young, independent voters moved from "mildly pro-Trump" to "sharply against him" in April, according to YouGov data analyst David Montgomery.

Jacob Fox, a 22-year-old independent voter graduating with an economics degree at Hillsdale College, referred to Trump's stance on tariffs as "extreme."

Despite supporting him in 2020, he declined to back Trump in November out of concern for how Trump's pledges on trade and immigration would impact the economy. "I feel like I've been proven right," he said.

His peers, he added, are also anxious or struggling with their job search and grad school prospects amid fears of an economic downturn. "That's been really hard to see," he continued.

Benjamin Rothove, a 20-year-old who chairs the College Republicans chapter at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, called Trump's initial tariff roll-out "shockingly high" and "kind of crazy."

Rothove, who said he voted for Trump but supported another Republican in the primaries, said Trump should "move away from people like Peter Navarro," a reference to a senior White House trade adviser who has been one of the staunchest proponents of tariffs in the administration.

Still, most young Republicans remain loyal to Trump, according to Montgomery.

Nick Gross, an 18-year-old college student living in Wisconsin who supports the president's agenda, says young people want "instant gratification."

"We want things to change overnight," Gross added, urging patience with Trump's approach to revive domestic manufacturing through tariffs. "That's the main reason why people need to give

the president time.”

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