

<https://www.nytimes.com/2025/01/05/us/politics/trump-us-disaster-numbers.html>

Trump Sees the U.S. as a 'Disaster.' The Numbers Tell a Different Story.

President Biden is bequeathing his successor a nation that by many measures is in good shape, even if voters remain unconvinced.

By Peter Baker Reporting from Washington

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To hear President-elect Donald J. Trump tell it, he is about to take over a nation ravaged by crisis, a desolate hellscape of crime, chaos and economic hardship. “Our Country is a disaster, a laughing stock all over the World!” he declared on social media last week.

But by many traditional metrics, the America that Mr. Trump will inherit from President Biden when he takes the oath for a second time, is actually in better shape than that bequeathed to any newly elected president since George W. Bush came into office in 2001.

For the first time since that transition 24 years ago, there will be no American troops at war overseas on Inauguration Day. New data reported in the past few days indicate that murders are way down, illegal immigration at the southern border has fallen even below where it was when Mr. Trump left office and roaring stock markets finished their best two years in a quarter-century.

Jobs are up, wages are rising and the economy is growing as fast as it did during Mr. Trump’s presidency. Unemployment is as low as it was just before the Covid-19 pandemic and near its historic best. Domestic energy production is higher than it has ever been.

“President Trump is inheriting an economy that is about as good as it ever gets,” said Mark Zandi, chief economist of Moody’s Analytics. “The U.S. economy is the envy of the rest of the world, as it is the only significant economy that is growing more quickly post-pandemic than prepandemic.”

Those positive trends were not enough to swing a sour electorate behind Vice President Kamala Harris in the November election, reflecting a substantial gap between what statistics say and what ordinary Americans appear to feel about the state of the country. And the United States clearly faces some major challenges that will confront Mr. Trump as he retakes power.

The terrorist attack by an American man who said he had joined ISIS that killed 14 people in New Orleans early on New Year’s Day served as a reminder that the Islamic State, which Mr. Trump likes to boast he defeated during his previous term, remains a threat and an inspiration to radicalized lone wolves. The wars in Ukraine and Gaza are daunting challenges even without U.S. troops engaged in combat there.

Families remain pressed by the cost of living, including housing, health care and college tuition. The cost of gasoline, while down from its peak, is still about 70 cents per gallon higher than when Mr. Biden took office.

Moreover, Americans remain as divided as they have been in many years — politically, ideologically, economically, racially and culturally. As healthy as the country may be economically and otherwise, a variety of scholars, surveys and other indicators suggest that America is struggling to come together behind a common view of its national identity, either at home or abroad.

Indeed, many Americans do not perceive the country to be doing as well as the data suggests, either because they do not see it in their lives, they do not trust the statistics or they accept the dystopian view promoted by Mr. Trump and amplified by a fragmented, choose-your-own-news media and online ecosphere.

Written comprehension (20 points: 8 x 2.5 points)

1. Introduce the document (type, source, date of publication, author...)
2. Look at the first paragraph, 'To hear President-elect...' and sum up, in your own words, Donald Trump's opinion on the state of the USA.
3. 'Inauguration Day' is mentioned in the third paragraph. Explain, in your own words, what this day consists in.
4. The third and fourth paragraphs present a view of the USA. Is it a positive or negative view of the USA? Justify by picking out two examples of news on the economy and one example of other news.
5. 'Ordinary Americans feel positive about the state of the country.' True or false? Justify your answer based on information in the text.
6. The author says that the USA will have to face 'some major challenges'. Referring to the text, sum up, in your own words, what these challenges are.
7. The eighth paragraph addresses the high 'cost of living' in the USA. What elements are expensive in families' budgets? Explain with your own words.
8. 'The USA is a united and positive nation.' True or false? Justify your answer based on information in the text.

Written expression (20 points): answer question 1 OR 2. You should write at least 150 words

1. Mr. Trump has presented a 'dystopian view' of the USA, almost a nightmare. Yet, many people still believe in the utopian side of the USA, a country where everything is possible. What is your view on this issue?
2. There is a reference in the last paragraph to where people get their news from today. When you get news about the USA or other countries, where do you get it from and why? You should refer to multiple sources, and indicate why you prefer these sources over other possibilities. You might like to address the issue of 'fake news' in your expression.