

Trump, Tariffs and Trade: what consumers really think about the **EU-U.S. trade battle**



What is the real cost of tariffs?

It is not just about politics or trade talks. It's about people, bills, and day-to-day life.

As trade tensions between the European Union and the United States escalate, consumers across Europe are increasingly aware of the potential impact it could inflict on their daily lives.

Euroconsumers surveyed thousands of people in Spain, Portugal, Belgium, and Italy to better understand what consumers know, how they feel, and what they expect from the EU's response. The results are clear: people are worried and expect action.



People expect impact to be tangible and real

91% of respondents correctly understand that tariffs are taxes on imported goods and services and most see trouble ahead. Beyond this basic understanding, the data reveals a deep concern about the broader consequences of tariffs.



Over 90% believe tariffs will negatively impact both their national economies and the EU economy as a whole.

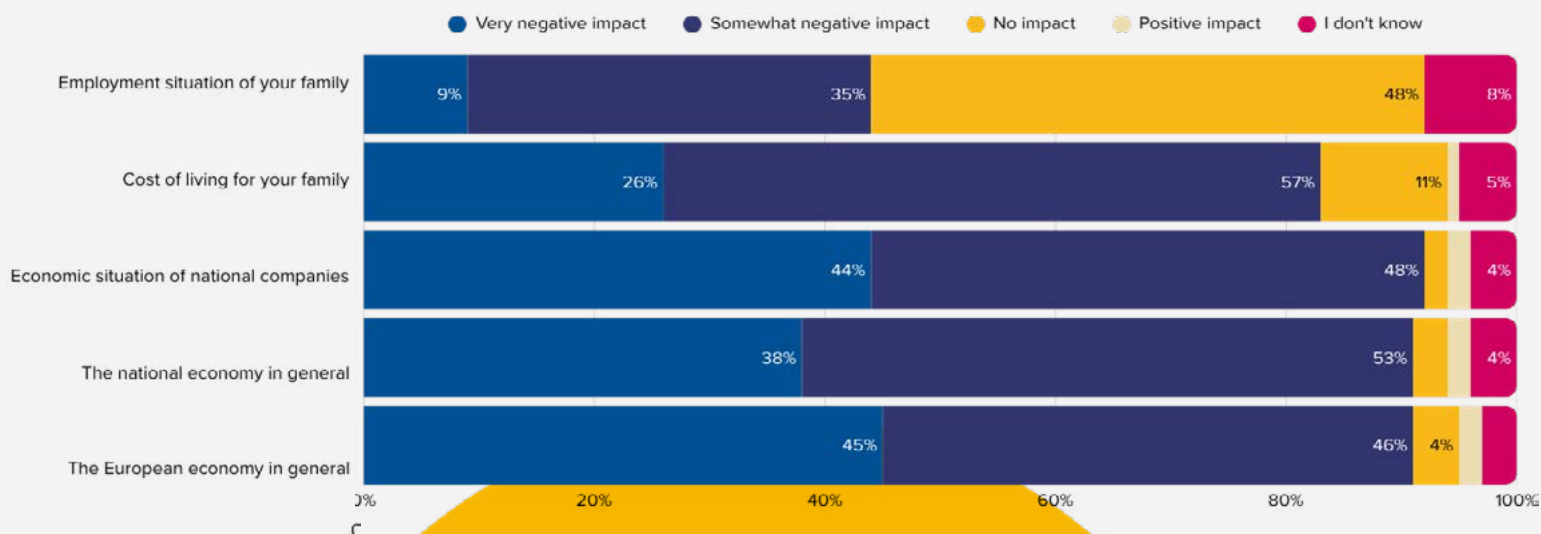


83% expect an increase in their household's cost of living, with 26% anticipating a significant rise.



44% fear job losses or employment consequences for themselves or family members.

What type of impact do you think tariffs will have on the following aspects?





People already struggling financially are even more alarmed:

- 87% expect costs of living to rise
- 56% foresee a negative effect on employment in their household.



The number of respondents who believe that tariffs will affect their family's cost of living is slightly higher in **Spain (89%), followed by Belgium (84%), Portugal (83%), and Italy (78%).**

Where people expect the biggest price hikes

Consumers foresee rising prices across a wide range of products and services. More than half of respondents expect price increases across all the listed products and services but mortgages and loans. Tech products and vehicles top the list:



84% foresee rising prices for tech products, 75% for cars, with 43% and 32% respectively predicting significant increases.

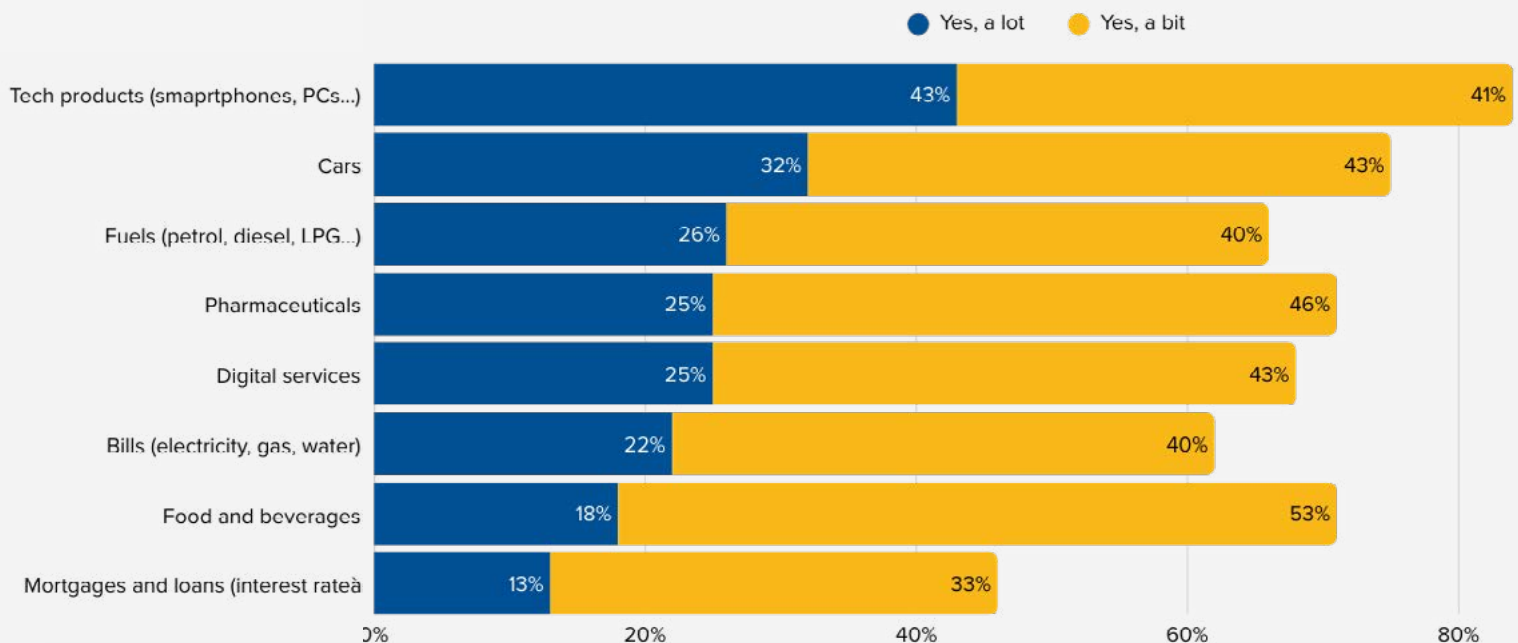


Fuels (26%), pharmaceuticals (25%), and digital services (25%) follow closely behind.



Interestingly, fewer consumers expect sharp rises in essentials like food and beverages (18%).

Due to tariffs, do you think that the prices of the following products and services will increase for consumers in your country?





There are also some notable differences between countries:

- Belgians are less worried about tech prices (only 35% expect a significant increase).
- Portuguese show lower concern for bills (12%) and mortgages and loans (8%).
- In contrast, Italians worry more about bills (28%) and mortgages and loans (18%).
- Spaniards are more concerned about food and beverage (23%) and fuel costs (36%).



More Europe, not less!

Consumers perceive the current tariff dispute as a geopolitical challenge. **A significant 62% of respondents believe that the United States introduced tariffs primarily to exert political pressure on the European Union.**

And they expect Europe to stand up:

- Only 1 out of 5 respondents is in favor of their country negotiating a separate tariff agreement with the United States, favoring instead a common EU-level approach.

This suggests that citizens not only value the economic strength of a single market, but also trust the European Union to defend collective interests on the global stage.

People's preference for a unified approach is also reflected in how respondents believe the EU should respond to these external challenges.



The survey found that 86% of consumers think the EU should invest more in technological sectors to develop alternatives to American products and services



83% believe the EU should expand its presence in new markets to secure access to goods and raw materials.



When it comes to a direct response, 69% support the EU imposing counter-tariffs on U.S. products. However, nearly half of respondents (48%) do not believe tariffs are an effective way to protect domestic industries. **This indicates that while consumers may not see economic value in tariffs, they still expect the EU to stand its ground and demonstrate strength.**

To what extent do you agree with the following sentences?

● Agree ● Neither agree nor disagree ● Disagree

The EU should invest more in the technological and digital sectors to develop alternatives to American products and services.



The EU should negotiate new commercial agreements to increase the exchange of products and raw materials with countries other than the United States.



The United States introduced tariffs to exert political pressure on the EU rather than for economic reasons.



My country should negotiate a tariff agreement directly with the United States, without involving the European Union.



The EU should respond to U.S. tariffs with similar tariffs on products and services from the USA.



Tariffs on imports are an efficient tool to protect domestic industry and companies.



Compromise? Not so fast.

The majority of respondents believe that the EU should not weaken its policies on environmental sustainability (60%), digital security (76%), or food safety (80%) in exchange for the removal of U.S. tariffs.

To what extent do you agree with the following sentences?

● Agree ● Neither agree nor disagree ● Disagree

The EU should loosen its regulations on environmental sustainability if, in exchange, the USA eliminates tariffs.



The EU should loosen its regulations on digital security if, in exchange, the USA eliminates tariffs.



The EU should loosen its regulations on food safety if, in exchange, the USA eliminates tariffs.



People with financial difficulties – who are more concerned about the direct impact of the tariffs on their family – are somehow more inclined to national tariffs agreements, and to **sacrifice some EU standards on environmental sustainability, digital security and food safety to achieve the abolition of tariffs.**

However, even among this group, the willingness to weaken these standards is low. **Only around 20–28% support trade-offs in these areas.**

The bottom line

Tariffs aren't just a headline, they're a real life concern. People understand the stakes, feel the pressure of rising costs, and want a European response that is both strategic and principled.

Responses to the current tariff environment **must balance trade interests with the real-world concerns of the people** most affected: the European consumers.



Methodology

The survey was done in parallel in Belgium, Italy, Portugal, and Spain between the 15th and the 23rd of April 2025. A total of 4.636 consumers aged between 25 to 79 years were surveyed. The results were weighted to reflect the distribution of the national population in each country, in terms of age, gender, region, and education level.

About Euroconsumers

Gathering five national consumer organizations and giving voice to a total of more than 1.5 million people in Italy, Belgium, Spain, Portugal, and Brazil, Euroconsumers is the world's leading consumer cluster in innovative information, personalized services, and defense of consumer rights. Our European member organizations are part of the umbrella network of BEUC, the European Consumer Organization. Together, we advocate for EU policies that benefit consumers in their daily lives.

