

## More Americans want to drop the penny than to save it

*Alexander Rossell Hayes, YouGov, March 20, 2025.*

In February, Donald Trump announced that he intends to end production of the penny. If the government goes through with the plan, it would end a decades-long debate: The first bill proposing to eliminate the penny was introduced in Congress in 1990.

Eliminating one-cent coins has precedent. In recent decades, Canada, Switzerland, Australia, and New Zealand all have ceased production of their one-cent coins. The value of each of these coins at the time of its withdrawal is worth more in current U.S. dollars than an American penny is worth today. In most of these countries, customers using coins pay prices rounded to the nearest five cents — or 10 cents in New Zealand, which went further and eliminated its five-cent coin in 2006. The United States also has eliminated a coin in its past: In 1857, the U.S. withdrew the half-cent coin from circulation due to its low purchasing power. It was worth the equivalent of 18 of today's cents.

To better understand Americans' relationship with the penny, we ran a survey examining their use of — and attitudes toward — pennies and other denominations of coins and bills. There is more support than opposition for eliminating the penny, and that is true among both Democrats and Republicans.

### Americans to penny: Drop dead

A half-century after President Gerald Ford's tough stance toward New York City, Americans have a tough message for the penny. Americans are now more likely to support eliminating the penny than they are to oppose its elimination: 42% of Americans strongly or somewhat support elimination while 30% oppose it. This represents a significant shift from a decade ago. A 2014 survey found that about half of Americans (51%) opposed eliminating the penny, while only 34% favored elimination.

Today, Democrats, Independents, and Republicans are all more likely to support than to oppose eliminating the penny. However, partisan differences in opinion about eliminating the penny have changed. Today, Republicans are more likely than Democrats or Independents to support eliminating the penny. In 2014, Republicans were more likely than Democrats or Independents to oppose elimination.

Calls to eliminate pennies have often focused on the cost of producing them — more than one cent per penny. According to the U.S. Mint, in 2024 it cost over three cents to produce each penny. Proponents of elimination argue that minting a penny is essentially throwing away money. It seems that many Americans are familiar with this message: 55% of Americans say that they think producing a penny costs more than one cent.

Americans are less sure about the production costs of other coins. According to the U.S. Mint, producing a nickel also costs more than the coin's face value, but only 36% of Americans say this is the case; 44% say they don't know how much it costs to produce a nickel. Americans are even less sure about dimes and quarters, whose production costs less than their face value: 45% of Americans say they don't know how much it costs to produce a dime and the same share say they don't know how much it costs to make a quarter.

Most Americans who know that producing a penny costs more than one cent support eliminating it: 57% support elimination while only 23% oppose it. In contrast, Americans who say they don't know the cost of producing a penny, or who think production costs no more than one cent, are more likely to be against elimination: 23% support elimination while 39% oppose it.

There is a similar pattern among Americans who know that nickels cost more than five cents to produce, although support for elimination of nickels is more tepid among this group than is support for eliminating the penny among those aware that producing a penny costs more than a cent. Those who know that both pennies and nickels cost more than their face value are more likely to support eliminating both coins than are those who do not know this (39% vs. 18%), but opposition to elimination is similar among both groups (47% vs. 48%). It seems that eliminating the nickel is a bridge too far for many Americans — including a large share of those who know about the nickel's high production cost.

### **Who spends a penny?**

How much would the withdrawal of the penny affect Americans' lives? One way to answer this question is by studying the frequency that pennies are used. We asked how often Americans pay for things using pennies as well as the other most commonly circulating units of American currency: nickels, dimes, and quarters; and bills worth \$1, \$20, and \$100. About one-third (31%) of Americans say they never use pennies, the highest share for any denomination asked about in the survey. A further 24% of Americans say they only use pennies yearly or less than once a year, meaning more than half (55%) of Americans use pennies less than once a month. This is surpassed only by the \$100 bill: 63% of Americans spend a Benjamin yearly, less than once a year, or never. However, more Americans say they never spend pennies than say they never spend \$100 bills (31% vs. 26%). The most universally used denominations are the \$20 bill (only 7% of Americans never use it) and the \$1 bill (never used by just 10%).

Younger adults spend pennies less often than older Americans do. Adults under 30 are less likely to ever spend pennies than are adults in other age groups. 40% of adults under 30 say they never use pennies to pay for things, compared to only 25% of Americans 65 and older.

Americans who never use pennies to pay for things are more likely to support their elimination. About half (51%) of never-pennyers support elimination; only 17% are opposed. Penny-spenders are evenly split: 37% support elimination and 37% oppose it.

### **Take a penny or leave a penny?**

Providing further evidence that Americans value pennies less now than they did in the past, Americans have become less likely to stop in order to pick up pennies they see on the ground. In a [2014 survey](#), 71% of Americans said that if they saw a penny on the ground, they were more likely to stop and pick it up than to leave it on the ground. In 2025, that share is 62%.

This shift is particularly pronounced among younger adults, especially those under 30. Today, more adults under 30 say they would tend to leave pennies on the ground (44%) than say they would tend to pick them up (40%). This marks a sharp decline in penny interest compared to 2014, when 59% of adults under 30 would be more likely to pick up pennies and just 28% would be more likely to leave them on the ground. Similarly, the share of 30- to 44-year-olds who say they'd be more likely to stop to pick up a penny has declined to 49% from 68%.

*Methodology: This YouGov poll was conducted online on February 26 - 28, 2025 among 1,146 U.S. adult citizens. Respondents were selected from YouGov's opt-in panel to be representative of adult U.S. citizens. The sample was weighted according to gender, age, race, education, 2024 presidential vote, 2020 election turnout and presidential vote, baseline party identification, and current voter registration status. Demographic weighting targets come from the 2019 American Community Survey.*

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