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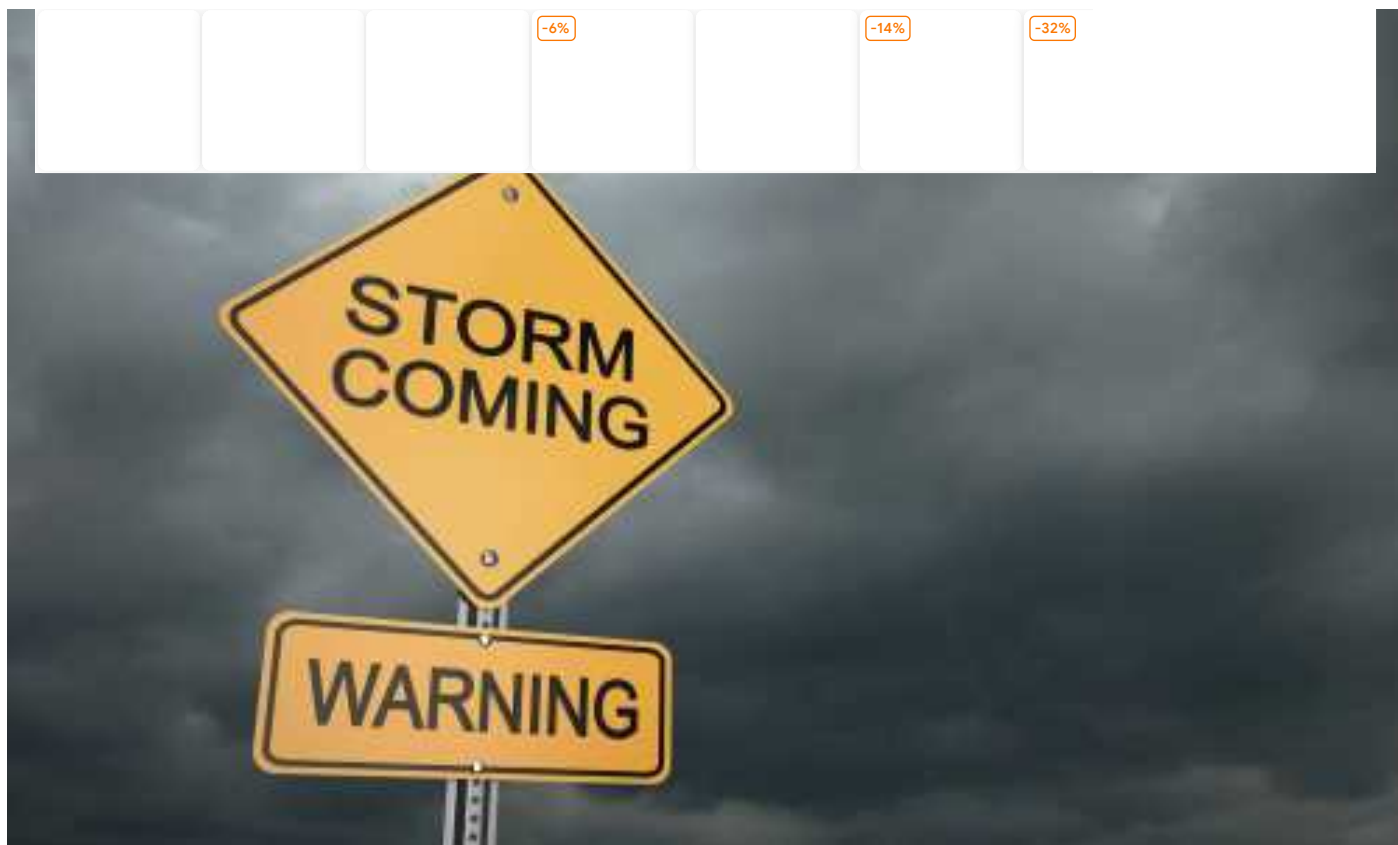


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## ARTICLE

Many Americans Are Pulling Back As They Sense An Economic Storm Brewing





BY PNW STAFF JANUARY 28, 2026

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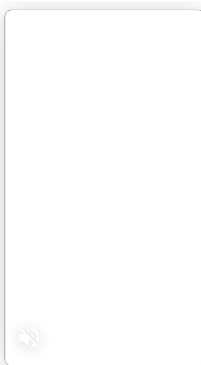
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You don't need an economics degree to feel that something is off.

People sense it at the grocery store checkout. At the gas pump. In quiet conversations at the dinner table where bills are discussed a little more carefully than before. There's a tightening -- not just of wallets, but of confidence.

Consumer confidence has fallen to levels not seen in more than a decade. That matters because confidence is what fuels everyday life. When people believe tomorrow will be better, they spend, plan, invest, and take risks. When confidence collapses, fear takes over -- and fear freezes decision-making.

Right now, Americans are pulling back. And it's not because they suddenly became pessimists. It's because too many warning signs are flashing at once.



### A Dollar That Buys Less, and Anxiety That Feels Like More

Over the past several months, the U.S. dollar has weakened noticeably, hitting lows not seen in years. For the average person, that doesn't show up as a headline -- it shows up as higher prices. Imported goods cost more. Travel costs more. Everyday necessities quietly inch upward.



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### More Than Half of Workers Are Under Financial Pressure

Behind closed doors, many households are stretched thin. A majority of American workers now report serious financial stress. That means living paycheck to paycheck, carrying balances month after month, and worrying about what happens if just one thing goes wrong.

And increasingly, one thing does go wrong.

Layoff announcements are no longer rare or shocking. They're becoming routine. Large corporations, once thought to offer stability, are trimming workforces. Tech companies. Financial firms. Retailers. Media companies. Even firms that posted profits.

The message is subtle but powerful: no job feels entirely safe.

When people fear job loss, they stop making big commitments. They delay buying homes. They cut discretionary spending. They hold onto cash -- if they have any to hold.



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### A Housing Market Losing Its Footing

Nowhere is this caution more visible than in housing.

Homebuyers are backing out of deals at the fastest pace in years. Not because they suddenly dislike the houses -- but because the math no longer works. High prices, elevated mortgage payments, insurance costs, and economic uncertainty combine into a simple conclusion: this is too risky.

Sellers are hesitant to lower prices. Buyers are hesitant to commit. The result is a market frozen by fear -- and housing has always been a cornerstone of economic stability.

When housing wobbles, everything else feels it.

### A Tower of Debt That Keeps Growing

Underneath all of this lies the real structural problem: debt.

Government debt continues to grow at levels that would have once seemed unimaginable. Consumer debt -- credit cards, student loans, auto loans -- has become normalized. Interest payments quietly drain household budgets month after month.



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### **What Can You Do in a Time Like This?**

Economic storms don't hit everyone equally, but preparation always matters.

#### **First: Get serious about debt.**

Debt robs future freedom. High-interest balances are financial quicksand -- the longer you stand still, the deeper you sink. Even small, consistent steps toward paying down debt restore control.

#### **Second: Live beneath your means.**

This isn't about deprivation. It's about margin. Margin is what protects you when income changes, prices rise, or emergencies appear. Every dollar not committed is a dollar that gives you flexibility.

#### **Third: Diversify where possible.**

That might mean additional income streams. It might mean skills that make you employable in multiple fields. It might mean investments spread across different areas rather than concentrated in one place. Resilience grows through diversity.

#### **Fourth: Build a buffer.**

Emergency savings are no longer optional -- they are peace of mind. Even a modest reserve changes how you face uncertainty.

But financial strategy alone isn't enough.

### **A Word About Worry -- and a Better Way Forward**

Jesus spoke directly to times like these.

He didn't deny hardship. He didn't pretend needs weren't real. Instead, He addressed worry -- the quiet fear that consumes the heart before a crisis ever arrives.

"Who of you by worrying can add a single hour to your life?"

He pointed to the birds -- creatures with no barns, no savings accounts, no backup plans -- and yet they are fed. Not because they do nothing, but because they live within God's provision.

He reminded His followers of daily dependence, echoing the manna in the wilderness -- enough for today, not tomorrow's hoarding. Trust wasn't passive. It was daily.

This doesn't mean ignoring wisdom or responsibility. Scripture consistently praises good stewardship. But it also warns against placing our security in wealth, systems, or certainty.

The economy will rise and fall. Currencies will strengthen and weaken. Jobs will come and go. Markets will boom and bust.

God remains.



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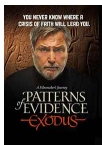
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