

Davos 2026: Behavioral Intelligence Report

U.S. Perception of the World Economic Forum & President Trump's Attendance



Powered by ENODO Global's IaaS Business Intelligence Platform

January 2026



Executive Summary:

The 2026 Davos Conference hosted by the World Economic Forum has emerged as a high-volatility perception event within the United States information environment. ENODO's IaaS platform assigns the U.S. domestic response an Identity Stability Index of 34.5/100 (Volatile), indicating that Davos is no longer interpreted as a neutral economic forum, but as a symbolic proxy battle over sovereignty, legitimacy, and control.



Under the dominant American cultural ontology, constitutional Individualism combined with acute Economic Anxiety, the WEF is widely perceived not as a venue for discussion, but as an unelected, extra-judicial authority attempting to shape domestic outcomes without democratic consent. This perception creates an absolute and widening gap between Official and Street narratives. Official channels frame Davos as a necessary convening of expertise to manage poly-crises spanning artificial intelligence, climate transition, and global supply chains. Street-level discourse, by contrast, interprets the same agenda through a Logic of Identity, where rejection of Davos functions as an assertion of patriotism rather than policy disagreement.

President Donald Trump's attendance acts as a volatile accelerant within this already fractured environment. Unlike prior cycles in which participation could be framed as accommodation to globalism, IaaS data shows that his base interprets his presence as confrontational penetration; a deliberate act of disruption rather than negotiation. This dual validation drives volatility sharply higher: elite audiences see Davos affirmed as indispensable, while large segments of the U.S. public experience the event as confirmation that decision-making has migrated beyond their reach.



For Handshake clients, the implication is clear: Davos-adjacent positioning in the U.S. market now carries material reputational risk. Language associated with WEF frameworks particularly with ESG, DEI, "transition," and AI governance triggers immediate negative decoding among approximately 60% of domestic U.S. audiences, as measured by sentiment and irony propagation across X, Telegram, and long-form commentary platforms.

"For most Americans, Davos is no longer viewed as a problem-solving forum. It is viewed as a symbol of elite decision-making detached from everyday economic reality."

Data Analytics:

Sentiment Analysis:

Positive: 15%

Neutral: 23%

Negative: 62%

IaaS data shows that U.S. reaction to the 2026 Davos Conference is consistently negative, not driven by a single headline or personality. With 62% negative sentiment, public response reflects a broader rejection of what Davos represents rather than disagreement with specific policies.

Negative sentiment is fueled mainly by two perceptions: loss of sovereignty and elite hypocrisy. Many Americans view Davos as a place where powerful actors discuss decisions that affect everyday life without public input, while living by a different set of rules. Images of private jets and luxury travel reinforce this belief and turn policy debates into identity-based opposition.



Neutral sentiment (23%) does not reflect support. It reflects disengagement and distrust; a belief that Davos has little relevance to daily life. IaaS data shows this group can quickly turn negative during economic stress or viral moments.

Positive sentiment (15%) is limited and conditional. It is driven primarily by support for President Trump's confrontational presence and narrow optimism around AI safety discussions. Importantly, this positivity does not extend to the World Economic Forum itself.

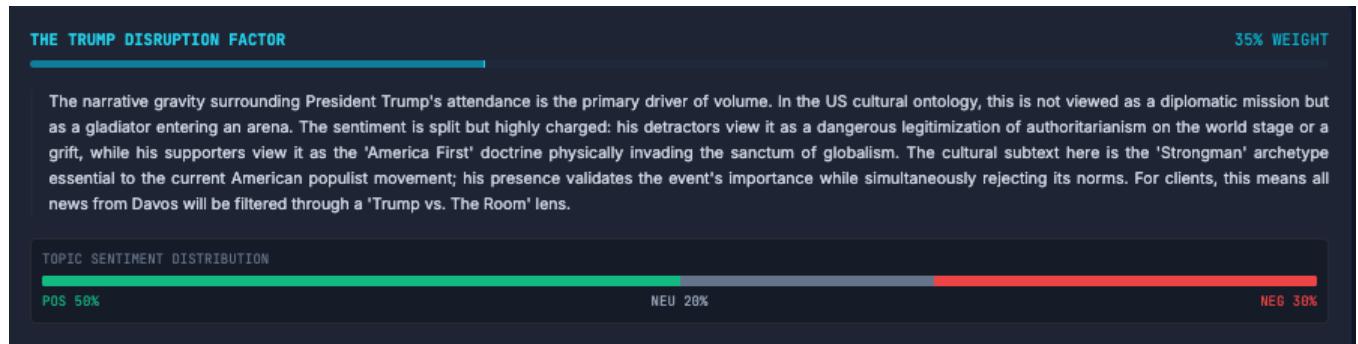
Topic Modeling:

ENODO's IaaS topic modeling identifies the core issues driving U.S. public conversation about the 2026 Davos Conference and President Trump's attendance. Rather than capturing every discussion thread, this analysis isolates the dominant themes shaping perception, trust, and risk. These topics explain why Davos is interpreted less as a policy forum and more as a symbol of elite power, economic control, and political confrontation within the current American climate.

The Trump Disruption Factor: 35% Weight (Pos 50% | Neu 20% | Neg 30% Sentiment)

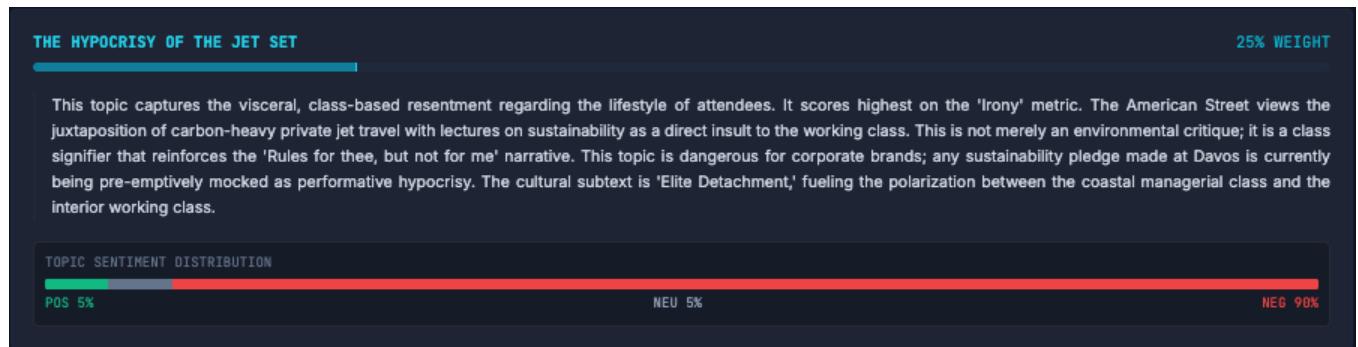
President Trump's attendance dominates U.S. discourse. The event is framed less as diplomacy and more as spectacle: a nationalist figure entering an elite arena to challenge its norms. Supporters decode his presence as "America First" physically confronting globalism, while detractors frame it

as dangerous legitimization of authoritarian populism. All Davos messaging is filtered through a "Trump vs. the Room" lens, amplifying polarization and narrative velocity.



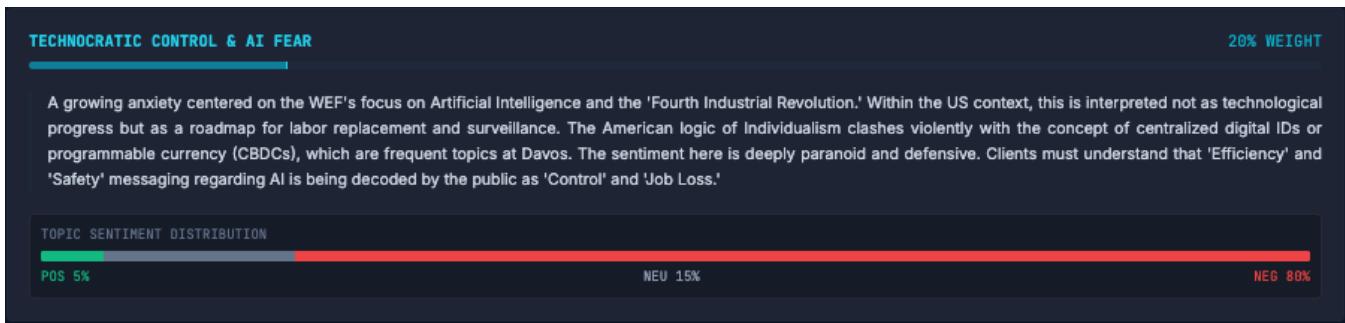
The Hypocrisy of the Jet Set: 25% Weight (Pos 5% | Neu 5% | Neg 90% Sentiment)

This is the most emotionally charged and reputationally dangerous topic. The juxtaposition of private aviation and luxury against sustainability messaging scores the highest irony levels in the dataset. For the U.S. working and middle classes, this is decoded as class contempt rather than environmental policy. Any corporate sustainability announcement made at Davos is pre-emptively framed as performative and detached.



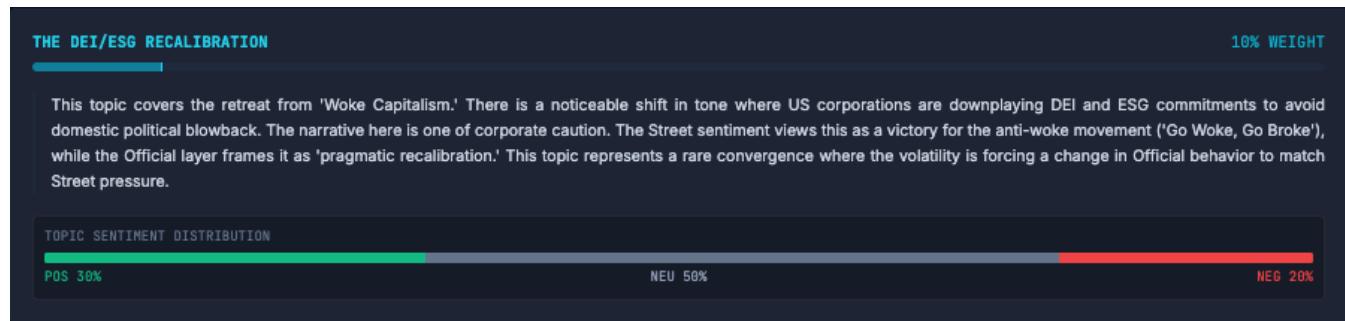
Technocratic Control & AI Fear: 20% Weight (Pos 5% | Neu 15% | Neg 80% Sentiment)

WEF discussions on AI governance, digital identity, and the Fourth Industrial Revolution are interpreted domestically as blueprints for labor displacement and surveillance. Within the American logic of Individualism, concepts such as centralized standards, efficiency, and safety are decoded as control, job loss, and loss of autonomy. This topic is a primary driver of conspiracy-adjacent narratives but is rooted in genuine economic insecurity.



DEI / ESG Recalibration: 10% Weight (Pos 30% | Neu 50% | Neg 20% Sentiment)

U.S. corporations are visibly softening or reframing DEI and ESG commitments in response to domestic backlash. Street-level discourse views this as a cultural victory, while Official narratives label it pragmatic adjustment. This represents one of the few areas where Street pressure is forcing observable change in institutional behavior.



Global Economy vs. Local Wallet: 10% Weight (Pos 5% | Neu 25% | Neg 70% Sentiment)

Macroeconomic discussions at Davos are translated domestically into inflation, cost of living, and wage stagnation. Abstract global models are directly linked by the public to grocery prices and housing costs. Cynicism dominates; decisions made in Davos are assumed to benefit multinational actors at the expense of the American middle class.



Narrative Analysis:

Dominant Narrative: "Sovereignty vs. the Syndicate"

In the U.S., Davos is widely seen as a symbol of unelected global power operating beyond democratic control. President Trump's attendance reinforces this perception, framing the event as a confrontation between national sovereignty and elite authority.



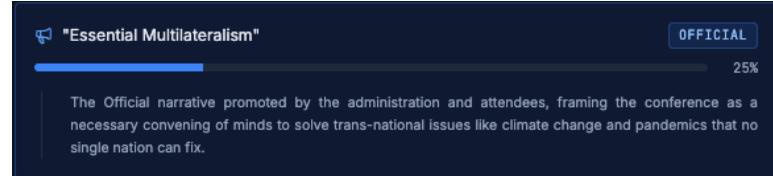
"The Great Reset / Enslavement" (Hostile – 40%)

A pervasive belief that Davos elites seek to erode property rights and national sovereignty. Originating from early WEF messaging, this narrative has solidified into a political axiom on the American right.



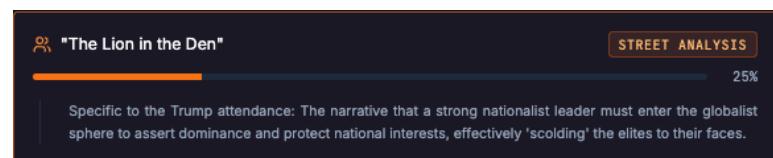
"Essential Multilateralism" (Official – 25%)

The establishment framing that global coordination is unavoidable to manage transnational threats such as AI risk, pandemics, and climate change.



"The Lion in the Den" (Street – 25%)

Specific to Trump's attendance, this narrative casts his presence as necessary confrontation—asserting dominance rather than consensus.



"The Irrelevant Echo Chamber" (Official – 10%)

A quieter but notable view among business elites that Davos has lost practical relevance, functioning more as signaling theater than decision-making authority.



Strategic Takeaway:

Davos 2026 does not function as a consensus-building event within the U.S. perception space. It functions as a symbolic stress test of legitimacy, expertise, and sovereignty. President Trump's presence intensifies this dynamic by validating two opposing realities. For Handshake's clients, success will depend not on participation or avoidance, but on precision framing; anchoring any Davos-related engagement to tangible, local, and economically grounded outcomes that bypass ideological triggers and address lived experience directly.

Association Risk: Public alignment with Davos language or branding carries heightened reputational exposure in the U.S.

Messaging Risk: Terms such as ESG, Equity, Transition, and AI Governance are currently decoded negatively unless paired with explicit domestic economic benefit.

Event Risk: Trump's attendance amplifies volatility rather than moderating it; neutrality is increasingly difficult to maintain.



"No one voted for Davos, yet they talk like they're writing the rules—Trump showing up only proves how far power has drifted from the people."