

AEI Political Report

How Are We Doing?

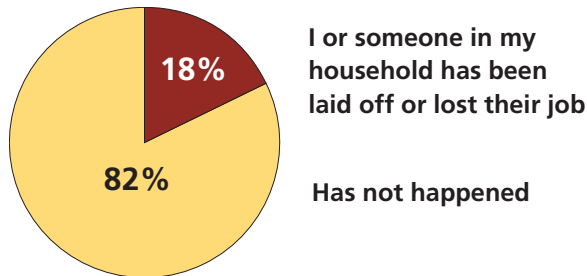
The indicators on this page provide a sense of how Americans have been affected by the continuing economic crisis. Large majorities are not worried about their own job prospects, but 60 percent say they have had close friends or immediate family members who have been laid off or lost a job. Despite these grim tidings, Americans remain optimistic about the future. Two-thirds in the new ABC News/*Washington Post* poll feel optimistic about their family's financial situation in the next twelve months. The data on the next page confirm that the recession has now touched those at the top.

Q: For each of the following, please indicate whether . . . ?

	Not worried	Has happened to me in the last six months	Worried about it happening
Having your work hours cut back, including being furloughed	64%	12%	24%
Having your benefits reduced	59	9	31
Having your wages reduced	68	8	24
Being laid off	68	2	29
Your company moving jobs to countries overseas	88	2	8

Source: Gallup/*USA Today*, January–February 2009.

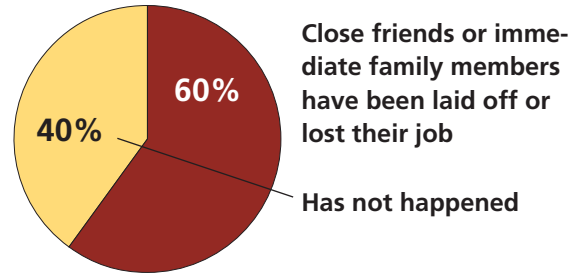
Q: In the last few months, have . . . ?



Note: Eighteen percent reported that they had had work hours or pay cut.

Source: ABC News/*Washington Post*, February 2009.

Q: Thinking beyond your own household, do you have . . . ?



Note: Sixty percent reported that they had close friends or immediate family members who had had work hours or pay cut.

Source: ABC News/*Washington Post*, February 2009.

Q: Would you say . . . ?

This recession has hurt me	
a great deal	30%
Somewhat	34
Not hurt	35

Source: ABC News/*Washington Post*, February 2009.

Q: Thinking about the next 12 months, would you say you feel . . . ?

	Feel optimistic about my family's financial situation in the next twelve months
January 2009	66%
February 2008	67

Source: ABC News/*Washington Post*, February 2009.

Worries for the Wealthy

Those in the highest income brackets are feeling the effects of the sour economy as well. The data below from the Pew Research Center show how much the attitudes of the high-income Americans have changed in recent months. Those making less than \$30,000 a year have been more pessimistic throughout the time periods shown.

Q: *Thinking about the next 12 months, how likely is it . . . ?*

One or more of the following is likely in the next year	February 2009	January 2008
You may be asked to take a pay cut/Be laid off/Lose some or all health benefits/Your employer may move or go out of business		
National response	44%	35%
Among those making		
\$75,000 or more	43	27
Less than \$30,000	42	44

My personal finances will improve in the next year	February 2009	October 2008
National response	54%	59%
Among those making		
\$100,000 or more	44	59
Less than \$30,000 a year	65	61

Jobs are difficult to find in my area	February 2009	July 2008
National	80%	58%
Among those making		
\$100,000 or more	73	40
Less than \$30,000	86	77

Note: Not all income categories shown. Figures shown are household, not individual income.
Source: Pew Research Center.

What's Next: The Banks

Q: *Do you . . . ?*

Approve of the federal government providing money to banks and other financial institutions to try to help fix the country's economic problems

December 2008	46%
Early February 2009	42
Late February 2009	39

Source: CBS News/*New York Times*, February 2009.

Q: *As you may know, last fall Congress and President Bush approved a government program that would spend up to \$700 billion to provide assistance to banks and other large financial institutions. About half that money has already been spent. Do you think . . . ?*

President Obama and Congress should provide the remaining money to banks and other financial institutions	36%
Should not	62

Source: CNN/Opinion Research Corporation, February 2009.

What's Next: The Auto Companies

Q: *Two of the major U.S. auto companies have asked the government for a program that would provide them with several billion dollars in assistance. The auto companies say they may go into bankruptcy without that assistance. Based on what you have read or heard, do you . . . ?*

Favor a program that would provide the auto companies with several billion dollars in assistance	
February 2009	37%
December 2008	36

Source: CNN/Opinion Research Corporation.

What's Next: Homeowners

Q: *How concerned are you . . . ?*

Very concerned about not having enough money to pay your rent or mortgage	24%
Somewhat concerned	22
Not so concerned	17
Not at all concerned	33

Note: In December 2008, 37 percent were very or somewhat concerned.

Source: ABC News/*Washington Post*, February 2009.

Q: *Do you think . . . ?*

Providing government aid to certain homeowners who cannot pay their mortgages

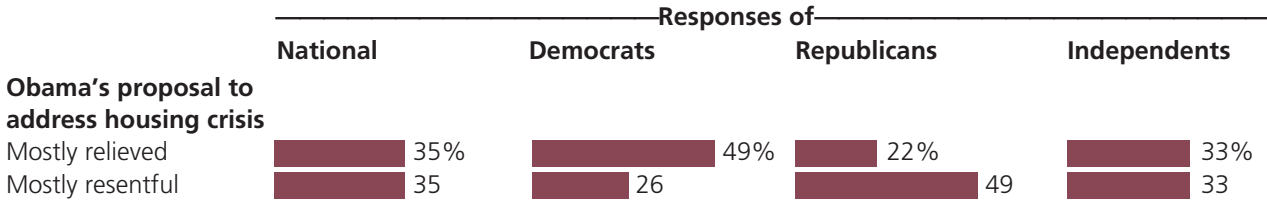
Is necessary	59%	Is fair	46%
Is not	38	Is not	51

Source: Gallup/*USA Today*, February 2009.

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(WHAT'S NEXT: HOMEOWNERS, continued from the previous page)

Q: Which comes closer to your view about the Obama administration's proposal to address the housing crisis: I am mostly relieved that steps are being taken to help people facing foreclosures; or I am mostly resentful that the plan could help homeowners who may have taken out mortgage they weren't certain they could pay?



Source: CBS News/*New York Times*, February 2009.

What's Next: The Stimulus

Q: As you may know, the federal government will be spending about \$800 billion dollars on tax cuts, construction projects, and aid to states and individuals to try to stimulate the economy. Do you . . . ?

Q: As you may know, Congress is considering a new economic stimulus package of at least 800 billion dollars. Do you favor or oppose Congress passing this legislation?

	Support the stimulus plan* ABC/Post	Favor the stimulus package Gallup
December 2008	65%	—
January 2009	70	52%
Early February	—	52
Mid-Late February	64	59

Note: ABC/Post January wording: "about 800 billion dollars on tax cuts, construction projects, energy, education, and health care." ABC/Post December wording: "up to 700 billion dollars on construction projects and other programs."

Source: ABC News/*Washington Post* and the Gallup Organization.

Q: How confident are you that this economic stimulus plan will . . . ?

	Make the economic downturn less severe that it would otherwise be
Very confident	13%
Fairly	45
Not so	19
Not at all	22

Source: ABC News/*Washington Post*, February 2009.

Barack Obama and the Economy

Q: Do you . . . ?

Approve of the way Barack Obama is handling his job as president	63%
Disapprove	22

Approve of the way Barack Obama is handling the economy	57%
Disapprove	32

Source: CBS News/*New York Times*, February 2009.

Q: Who do you trust to do a better job of . . . ?

Trust Obama to do a better job handling the economy	61%
Trust the Republicans in Congress	26

Source: ABC News/*Washington Post*, February 2009.



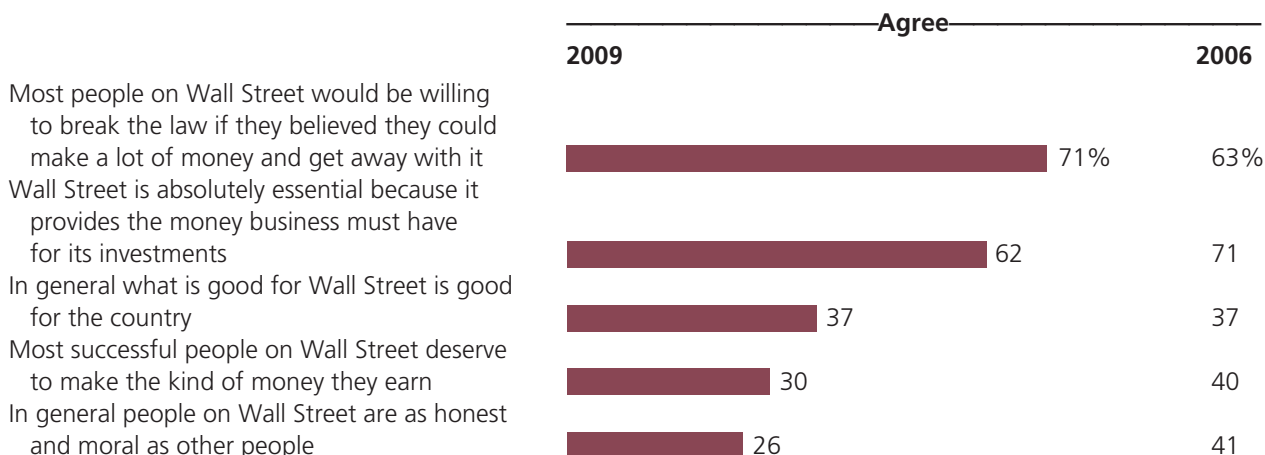
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Wall Street's Woes

Q: Please say if you tend to agree or disagree with the following statements about Wall Street.

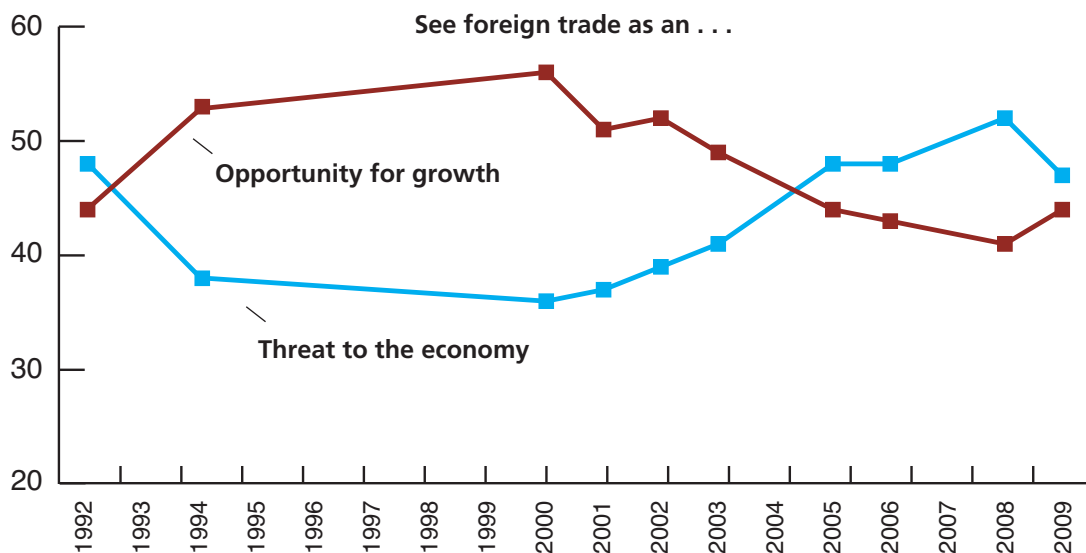


Source: Harris Interactive, February 2009.

Fearing Foreign Trade

Americans' attitudes toward trade have fluctuated over the years. In good times, Americans tend to be more receptive to trade as the trend here suggests. In leaner times, populist, anti-trade sentiment rises. In Gallup's most recent asking, Republicans and Democrats were almost equally as likely to label foreign trade as a threat to our economy (50 and 48 percent, respectively).

Q: What do you think foreign trade means for America? Do you see foreign trade as an opportunity for economic growth through increased U.S. exports or a threat to the economy from foreign imports?



Note: In 2008, Republicans and Democrats viewed foreign trade with nearly equal skepticism. Fifty percent of Republicans and 48 percent of Democrats said foreign trade was a threat to our economy.
Source: The Gallup Organization.

Attention to Afghanistan

Americans support the U.S. mission in Afghanistan, but they believe our position there has deteriorated. In Europe, opinion is strongly against involvement in combat operations, but supportive of non-combat roles. In Afghanistan itself, majorities still support the U.S. presence but concerns are rising. Support for President Karzai is down substantially from 2005 when over 70 percent of Afghans said the country was heading in the right direction. Now, only 40 percent say that while 38 percent say it is heading in the wrong direction.

American Opinion

Q: Thinking now about U.S. military action in Afghanistan that began in October 2001, do you think . . . ?

	2009	2004	2001
U.S. made a mistake in sending military forces	30%	25%	9%
Did not	66	72	89

Source: The Gallup Organization, latest that of January–February 2009.

Q: From what you have seen or heard about the situation in Afghanistan, what should the United States do now . . . ?

	National	Rep.	Dem.	Ind.
The U.S. should increase the number of U.S. troops in Afghanistan	42%	46%	43%	39%
Keep the same number of troops	23	28	21	21
Decrease	24	16	27	28

Source: CBS News/*New York Times*, February 2009.

Q: In general, how would you say . . . ?

Things are going very/moderately well for the U.S. in Afghanistan	44%
Moderately/very badly	52

Source: The Gallup Organization, January–February 2009.

Q: Regardless of how you feel about the war in Afghanistan in general, do you favor or oppose . . . ?

	President Obama's plan to send about 17,000 more U.S. troops to Afghanistan in an attempt to stabilize the situation there
Favor	63%
Oppose	36

Source: CNN/Opinion Research Corporation, February 2009.

European Opinion

Q: As you may know, some countries have troops currently engaged in different military operations around the world. To what extent, would you . . . ?

	Approve of the deployment of my country's troops to	Disapprove
Contribute to international reconstruction efforts in Afghanistan	64%	30%
Conduct combat operations against the Taliban in Afghanistan	30	64

Source: Transatlantic Trends/German Marshall Fund, June 2007.

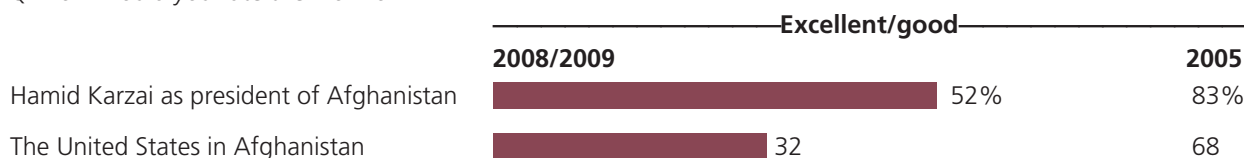
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Afghan Opinion

Q: How would you rate the work of . . . ?



Q: Which of the following do you think poses . . . ?



Note: No other response reached 10 percent. In another question, 43 percent said the Taliban presence had grown stronger over the past 12 months, 24 percent said it was weaker, and 25 percent the same.

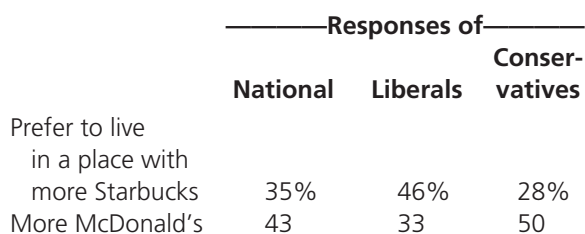
Q: Do you . . . ?



Source: ABC News/BBC/ARD German TV.

Latte Liberals or Freedom Fries

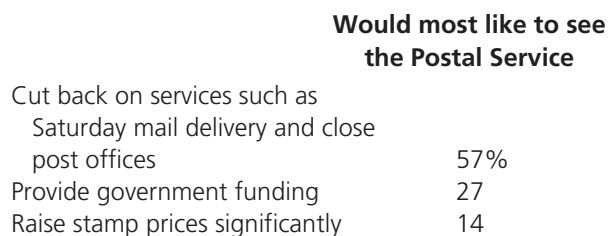
Q: Would you . . . ?



Source: Pew Research Center, October 2008.

Post Office Polls

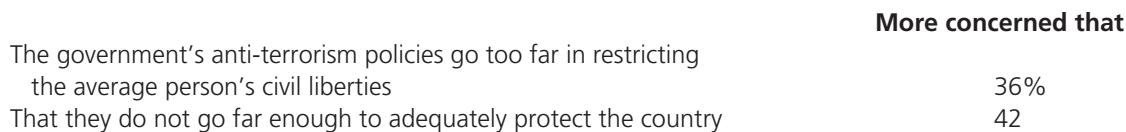
Q: What would you most like to see done to help the Postal Service out of its financial difficulties?



Source: Gallup/USA Today, January–February 2009.

A Split on Civil Liberties

Q: What concerns you more about the government's anti-terrorism policies?



Source: Pew Research Center, February 2009.

Conservative Talk: Limbaugh's Legions

The Pew Research Center data here compare the size of Rush Limbaugh's audience to those of other popular conservative commentators. One interesting footnote: Rush Limbaugh's audience is overwhelmingly (72 percent) male.

Q: Now I'd like to ask you about some other television and radio programs. For each that I read, tell me if you watch, listen or visit the show's website regularly, sometimes, hardly ever, or never.

	Regularly watch or listen to		
	Limbaugh	O'Reilly	Hannity & Colmes
National response	5%	10%	7%
Conservative response	10	19	12

Source: The Pew Research Center, April-June 2008.

Ornstein v. Fortier

AEI scholars Norm Ornstein and John Fortier have a friendly disagreement on the topic of the Feingold amendment and gubernatorial appointments of senators. See each side of the debate in these two articles.

"Feingold Amendment Could Shortchange Senate Representation"

Norm Ornstein in *Roll Call*

<http://www.aei.org/publication29448/>

"No Good Alternative to Appointments"

John Fortier in *Politico*

<http://www.aei.org/publication29464/>

The Also Rans

Q: We'd like to get your overall opinion of some people in the news. As I read each name, please say if you have a favorable or unfavorable opinion of these people . . . ?

	John McCain	
	Favorable	Unfavorable
November 2008	61%	36%
February 2009	52	40
	George W. Bush	
	Favorable	Unfavorable
August 2008	38%	61%
February 2009	33	63

Source: CNN/Opinion Research Corporation.

Beware the Ides of March

Over 2,050 years after Julius Caesar was assassinated, the day of his death is still famous and filled with ominous superstition. While we could find no questions that ask about the Ides of March, we show below public views on other superstitions.

Q: Are you . . . ?

Very/somewhat superstitious	25%
Not very/not at all superstitious	75

Superstitious about . . .

Knocking on wood	27%
A black cat crossing my path	13
Walking under a ladder	12
Breaking a mirror	11
The number 13	9
Speaking ill of a person making it come true	9

Source: The Gallup Organization, September 1996.

Coming Attractions

Later this spring, the AEI-Brookings Continuity of Government Commission will issue its second report, *Preserving Our Institutions: The Continuity of the Presidency*. The Commission, which seeks to ensure that core constitutional institutions are able to reconstitute themselves after a catastrophic terrorist attack, issued *Preserving Our Institutions: The Continuity of Congress*, in May 2003.

www.continuityofgovernment.org/report/FirstReport.pdf