

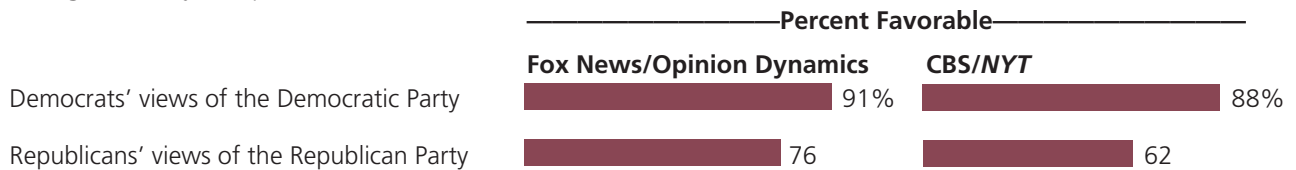
AEI Political Report

The GOP's First Hundred Days

In the past few weeks, pundits and the media have focused on President Barack Obama's first hundred days. We turn here to the GOP's first hundred days in opposition, and the results of our inquiry show a party with deep and serious problems. Party identification changes slowly, but new data from Gallup, Harris, and ABC News/*Washington Post* pollsters paint a grim picture for the GOP. Harris reported in March that in its early 2009 party identification questions, the Democrats had a double-digit lead over the GOP for the first time since 1984. In the poll, more people identified as independents than Republicans for the first time since 1983. Gallup's year-end round-up of its party ID data provided similar bad news for the GOP. The Democrats' eight-point advantage over the Republicans was the largest for the Democratic Party since Gallup began regularly conducting telephone surveys in 1988. ABC News/*Washington Post* interviewers reported the fewest number of Republicans in their 2008 surveys since 1983. Looking specifically at Pennsylvania, where Senator Arlen Specter made news this week by switching his allegiance to the Democratic Party, Pew finds that in the first quarter of 2009, 38 percent of Pennsylvanians called themselves Democrats, 29 percent independents, and only 27 percent Republicans. As the data below show, Republicans need to do some repair work among their own supporters.

Q: Please tell me whether you have a generally . . . ?

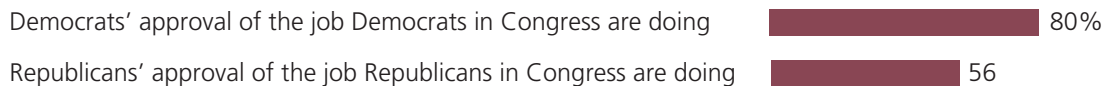
Q: In general, is your opinion of the . . . ?



Note: Fifty-four percent nationally had a favorable view of the Democratic Party (38 percent unfavorable); 41 percent had a favorable view of the Republican Party (50 percent unfavorable).

Source: Fox News/Opinion Dynamics, March–April 2009; CBS News/*New York Times*, April 2009.

Q: Do you . . . ?



Note: Fifty percent nationally approved of the job Democrats in Congress were doing (40 percent disapproved); 36 percent nationally approved of the job Republicans in Congress were doing (52 percent disapproved).

Source: Fox News/Opinion Dynamics, April 2009.

Q: How much confidence do you have in [Democratic/Republican] leaders in Congress . . . ?

Democrats' confidence in Democratic leaders in Congress to do the right thing about fixing the economy

Great deal/fair amount 87%

Republicans' confidence in Republican leaders in Congress to do the right thing about fixing the economy

Great deal/fair amount 66%

Note: Fifty-five percent nationally had confidence in the Democratic leaders in Congress to fix the economy, 38 percent nationally had confidence in the Republican leaders in Congress to do so.

Source: PSRA/Pew Research Center, March–April 2009.

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Q: Regardless of how you usually vote, do you think . . . ?

Republicans' response

The Republican Party is more concerned with the needs and problems of people like you 58%

Democrats' response

The Democratic Party is more concerned with the needs and problems of people like you 85

Note: Twenty percent of Republicans thought the Democratic Party was more concerned with their needs; 4 percent of Democrats felt the Republican Party was more concerned with their needs.
Source: CBS News/*New York Times*, April 2009.

Q: Is it your impression that . . . ?

Republicans' response

Republicans who have opposed Barack Obama's economic proposals have a plan of their own for turning the economy around 45%
Do not 42

Note: Thirty-one percent nationally said the GOP had a plan of their own; 58 percent said they did not.
Source: Princeton Survey Research Associates/*Newsweek*, March 2009.

Still Drawing the Line at Gay Marriage

Recently, the Supreme Court in Iowa and the legislature in Vermont legalized gay marriage, and other states appear ready to follow suit. Majorities of Americans still oppose legalizing gay marriage as the question asked by Princeton Survey Research Associates and *Newsweek* shows. On other questions about homosexuality, public opinion has become more accepting. In California, where courts and voters have been battling the issue back and forth, a slight plurality now approves of legal gay marriage there. Different Protestant denominations view accepting homosexuality differently; 70 percent of members of the Episcopal Church say it is a way of life that should be accepted by society; 40 percent of Baptists believe that.

Q: Now I have a few questions about the situation for gay men and women in this country and the issue of gay rights. Do you think there . . . ?

Should be . . .

Legally sanctioned gay and lesbian marriages

1992 35%*
2008 39

Legally sanctioned gay and lesbian unions and partnerships

2000 47%
2008 55

Gays and lesbians serving openly in the military

1998 56%
2008 66

Note: Wording was "sanctioned gay marriages."

Social Security benefits for gay and lesbian domestic partners

1992 58%*
2008 67

Health insurance and other employee benefits

1998 58%
2008 73

Adoption rights for gays and lesbians

2000 46%
2008 53

Source: Princeton Survey Research Associates for *Newsweek*, latest that of December 2008.

Q: Do you . . . ?

Approve of California allowing homosexuals to marry members of their own sex and have regular marriage laws apply to them
Disapprove

Californians' opinion

49%
44

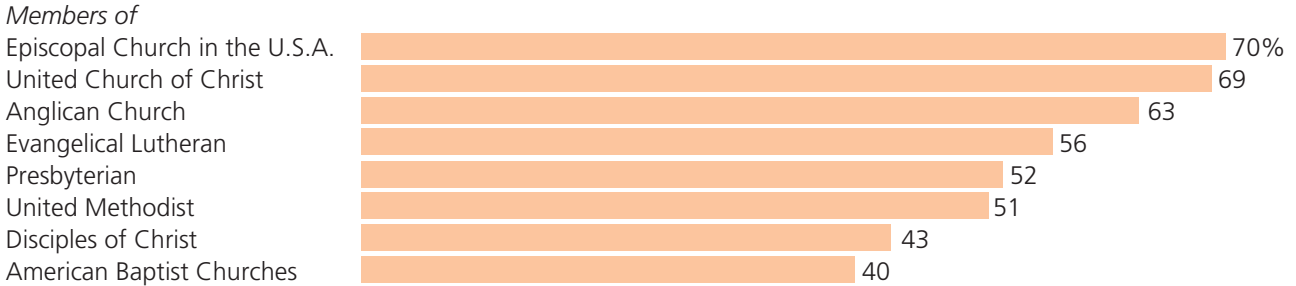
Source: The Field Poll, March 2009.

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Q: Now I'm going to read you a few pairs of statements. For each pair, tell me whether the first statement or the second statement comes closer to your own views—even if neither is exactly right. The first pair is . . . ?

Homosexuality is a way of life that should be accepted by society



Source: Pew Religious Landscape Survey, 2007.

Torture

Q: Regardless of whether or not you think harsh interrogation techniques work, do you think . . . ?

The CIA should be able to use harsh interrogation techniques to obtain information from prisoners that might protect the United States from terrorist attacks	52%
Should not	34

Source: Fox News/Opinion Dynamics, April 2009.

Q: Do you think the use of torture against suspected terrorists in order to gain important information can often be justified . . . ?

	Often/ sometimes	Rarely/ never
July 2004	43%	53%
January 2007	43	54
April 2009	49	47

Note: Selected points shown.

Source: PSRA/Pew Research Center.

Q: Do you . . . ?

Approve of the way Barack Obama is handling the threat of terrorism	55%
Disapprove	28
Don't know/no answer	17

Source: CBS News/New York Times, April 2009.

Q: Obama has said that under his administration the United States will not use torture as part of the U.S. campaign against terrorism, no matter what the circumstances. Do you . . . ?

Support Obama's position not to use torture no matter what the circumstances	49%
Think there are cases in which the United States should consider torture against terrorism suspects	48

Source: ABC News/Washington Post, April 2009.

Q: Do you want Congress to hold hearings to investigate whether the Bush administration's treatment of detainees, the use of wiretaps and other Justice Department practices broke the law, or don't you think that is necessary?

Want Congress to hold hearings	34%
That is not necessary	62
Don't know/no answer	4

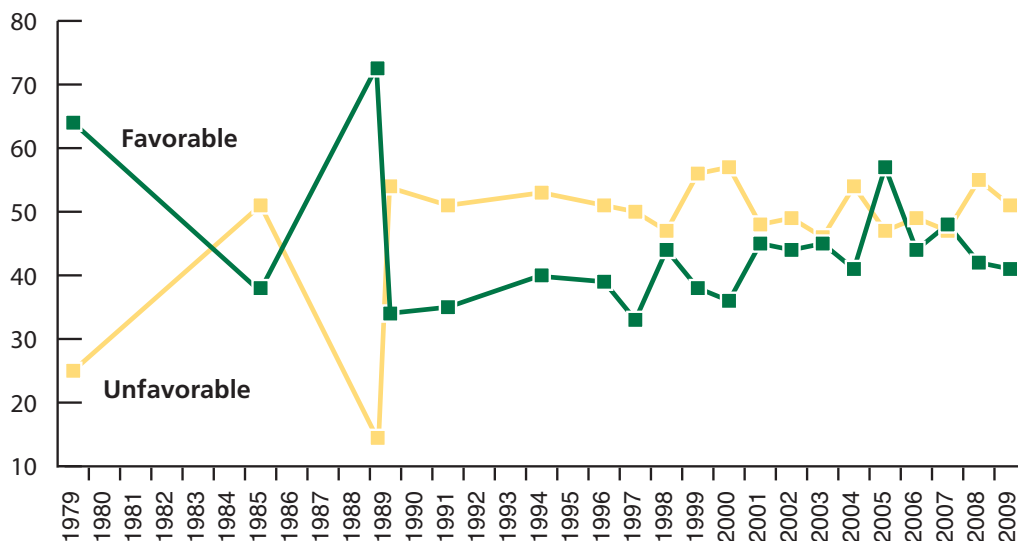
Source: CBS News/New York Times, April 2009.



Twenty Years after Tiananmen

On June 4, 1989, Chinese tanks cleared Tiananmen Square, resulting in the deaths of hundreds of civilians. Favorable views of China dropped sharply. Some expected positive attitudes to improve further after China hosted the Olympics, but Gallup's latest data show no significant change in attitudes about China in recent years.

Q: Next, I'd like your overall opinion of some foreign countries. First, is your overall opinion of China . . . ?



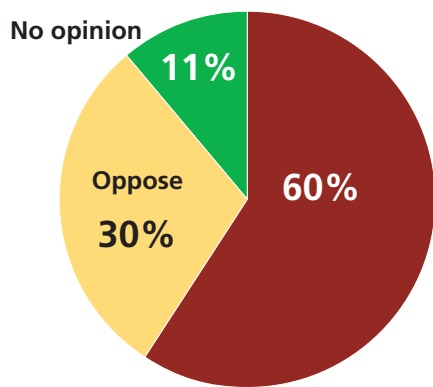
Note: If multiple askings in a year, last asking is shown, except for 1989.
Source: The Gallup Organization.

Cuba: Changing Attitudes?

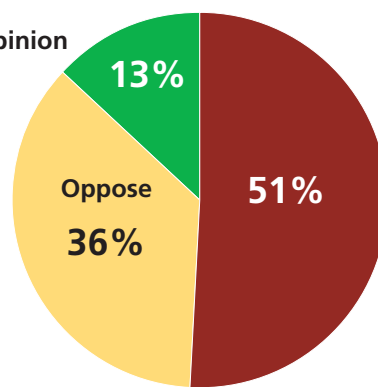
Six in ten Americans favor reestablishing U.S. diplomatic relations with Cuba. A smaller proportion, 51 percent, favor ending the U.S. trade embargo while 36 percent are opposed. A new poll by Bendixen and Associates of 400 Cubans and Cuban Americans in the United States (82 percent of whom resided in Florida) shows stark differences in attitudes about Cuba policy between young and old and those who have arrived recently and those who arrived here in the 1970s or before.

Q: Do you favor or oppose . . . ?

Q: Apart from diplomatic relations, do you . . . ?



Favor reestablishing diplomatic relations with Cuba



Favor the U.S. government ending its trade embargo against Cuba

Source: The Gallup Organization, April 2009.

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Q: Recently, President Barack Obama announced a new policy towards Cuba. The main changes are to lift all restrictions on visits by Cuban Americans to family members in Cuba and to remove all restrictions on money transfers or Cuban Americans to family members in Cuba. Do you . . . ?

Cubans and Cuban Americans living in the United States	
Support the new policy	64%
18–49 year-olds	74
50+ year-olds	56
Arrived in the 1970s or before	50
1980s–1990s	72
2000 and after	91

Q: What is your opinion about the U.S. embargo against Cuba?

Cubans and Cuban Americans living in the United States	
End the embargo	43%
18–49 year-olds	54
50+ year-olds	33
Arrived in the 1970s or before	30
1980s–1990s	43
2000 and after	65

Note: Eighty-two percent of the sample lived in Florida. Cubans are those living in the United States who immigrated from Cuba and Cuban Americans are those of Cuban descent who were born in the United States.
Source: Bendixen & Associates, April 2009.

Mad for Michelle

In some recent polls, Michelle Obama has higher favorable ratings than her husband. Her favorable ratings are also higher than those of other recent first ladies at roughly comparable times.

Q: As I read some names, please tell me if you have a favorable or unfavorable opinion of each person . . . ?

	April 2009	Sep. 2008
Favorable	76%	56%
Unfavorable	13	25

	Michelle Obama April 2009	Laura Bush July 2001	Hillary Clinton May 1993
National response	76%	64%	60%
Democrats	94	54	78
Republicans	60	87	41
Independents	74	60	57

Source: PSRA/Pew Research Center, latest that of April 2009.

AEI POLITICAL REPORT CONTRIBUTORS

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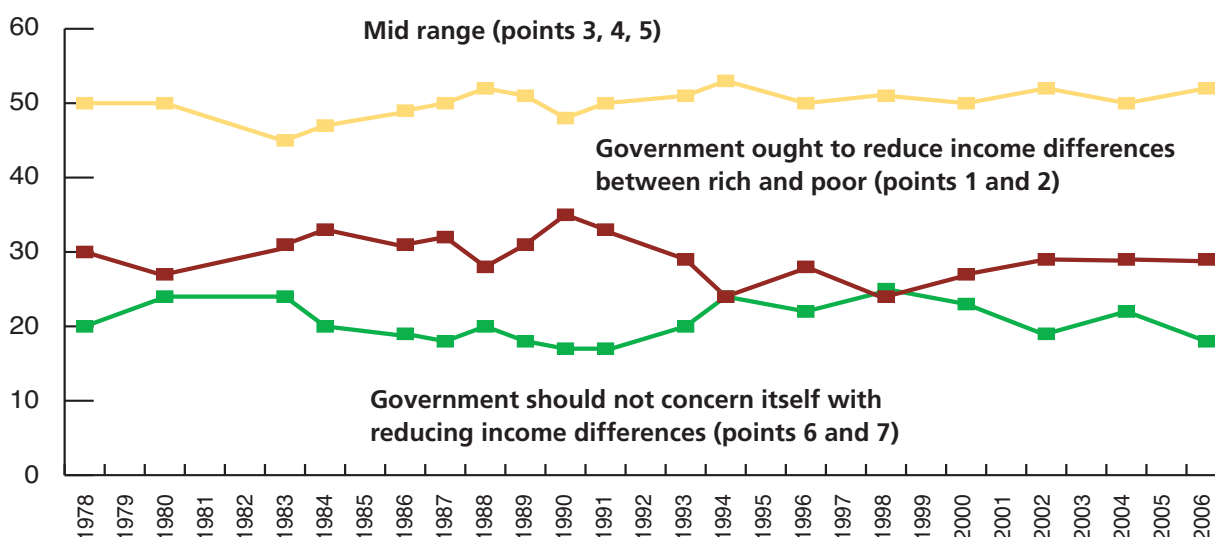
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Redistributing Wealth

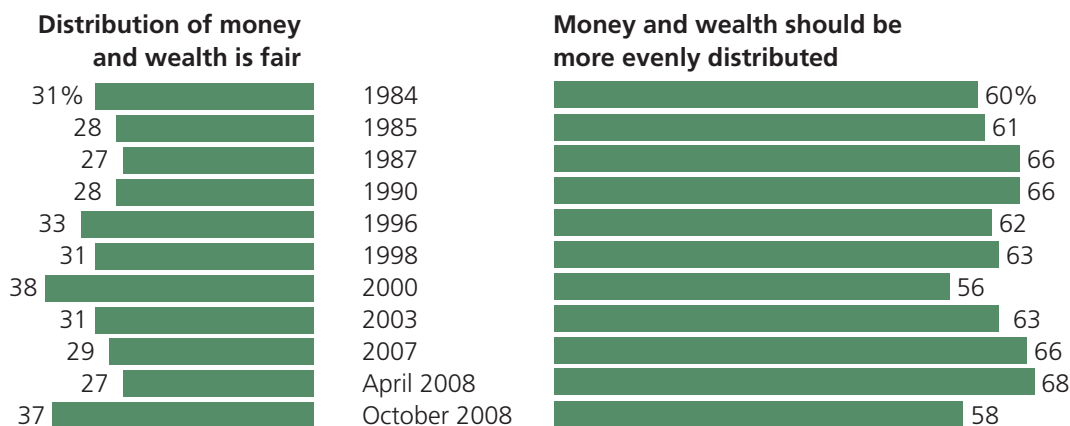
Responses to a question asked by the National Opinion Research Center since 1972 about government's role in redistributing wealth have been quite stable, as the line graph below shows. In 1984, 31 percent told Gallup the distribution of money and wealth in this country is fair; in April 2008, 37 percent gave that response. Sixty-four percent in a new poll say the federal government should be able to regulate the salaries of executives taking federal money; only 38 percent feel that way about regulating executive salaries in general.

Q: Some people think that the government in Washington ought to reduce the income differences between the rich and the poor, perhaps by raising the taxes of wealthy families or by giving income assistance to the poor. Here is a card with a scale from 1 to 7. Think of a score of 1 as meaning that the government ought to reduce the income differences between rich and poor, and a score of 7 meaning that the government should not concern itself with reducing income differences. What score between 1 and 7 comes closest to the way you feel?



Source: National Opinion Research Center.

Q: Do you feel that the distribution of money and wealth in this country today is fair, or do you feel that money and wealth in this country should be more evenly distributed among a larger percentage of people?



Note: 1985 asking was from the *Los Angeles Times*. Source: The Gallup Organization.

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Q: Do you think that our government . . . ?

	Redistribute wealth by heavy taxes on rich	
	Should	Should Not
June 1939	35%	54%
April–May 1998	45	51
April 2007	49	47
April 2008	51	43
October 08	46	50

Sources: 1939 Roper/*Fortune* in-person interviews; Gallup, latest that of April 2008.

Q: What do you think is more important for this country . . . ?

More important to reduce inequality	21%
More important to ensure everyone has a fair chance of improving their economic standing	70

Source: Pew Research Center, January–February 2009.

Q: Do you think asking the wealthiest Americans to pay more in taxes is a . . . ?

Good idea because it levels the economic and social playing field	55%
Bad idea because it punishes hard work and success	39

Source: Fox News/Opinion Dynamics, March 2009.

Q: Do you think . . . ?

Yes, the federal government should be allowed to regulate the salaries of corporate executives at American companies	38%
No	56

Source: Fox News/Opinion Dynamics, March–April 2009.

Q: Do you think . . . ?

Yes, the federal government should be allowed to regulate the salaries of corporate executives at American companies that take taxpayer bailouts	64%
No	32

Source: Fox News/Opinion Dynamics, March–April 2009.

Eternal Truths About the Rich and Poor

Q: Do you feel or not feel . . . ?

Q: Do you . . . ?

Q: Do you think . . . ?

Agree, the rich get richer and the poor get poorer 71%

Agree, you cannot make the poor rich by making the rich poor 72

Poverty will never be done away with in this country 91

Sources: Harris Interactive (2008), Fox News/Opinion Dynamics (2009), Gallup (1998).

A Different Way of Looking at President Obama

Most pollsters ask people whether they approve or disapprove of a president or whether they have a favorable opinion of him. This question, asked by RT Strategies and the Cook Political Report, approaches the subject in a different way.

Q: Which of the following four statements is closest to your personal opinion?

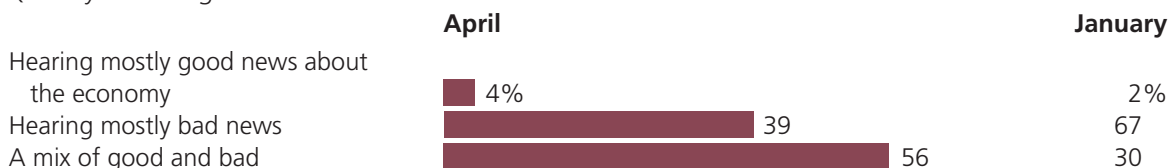
I like Obama personally and I like his policies	51%
I like Obama personally but I do not like his policies	23
I do not like Obama personally but I like his policies	3
I do not like Obama personally and I do not like his policies	13

Source: RT Strategies/Cook Political Report, April 2009.



The Economy: Some Improvement

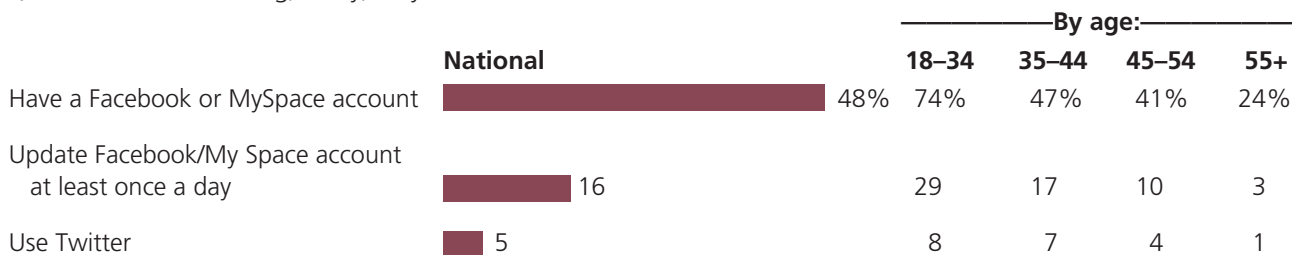
Q: Are you hearing . . . ?



Note: The pollsters also asked about economic news "in the local area where you live." Five percent reported hearing mostly good news, 44 percent mostly bad news, and 49 percent a mix of both.
Source: Pew Research Center, April 2009.

Social Networking Stats

Q: Which of the following, if any, do you do?



Note: Those with a college education or more were more likely to have a Facebook or MySpace account than those with a high school or less education, 52 percent to 40 percent.
Source: Harris Interactive online survey, March–April 2009.

Environmental-ist Decline?

Q: Do you consider yourself an environmentalist?

	Consider myself an environmentalist	Do not
May 1989	76%	20%
Apr. 1990	73	24
Apr. 1991	78	19
Apr. 1995	63	35
Apr. 1999	50	48
Apr. 2000	47	52
Jul. 2008	41	58

Source: The Gallup Organization, 1989–2000, ABC/Planet Green/Stanford, July 2008.

Not Banking on Big Banks

When Gallup asked people about their confidence in banks, just 18 percent expressed a great deal or quite a lot of confidence. That's the lowest reading on this question since 1991.

Q: Now I am going to read you a list of institutions in American society. Please tell me how much confidence you, yourself, have in each one . . . ?

Great deal/quite a lot of confidence in U.S. financial institutions or banks 18%

Source: The Gallup Organization, April 2009.

