

AEI Political Report

Tough Times, Tougher Public

Americans continue to be very pessimistic about the nation's economy. In Pew's question below, the share of Americans who rated their own personal financial situation positively has fallen to a 17-year low. Just 35 percent rate their situation as excellent or good. Large numbers continue to say the country is on the wrong track. Two-thirds—a number that has been stable for months—say they know someone other than a family member who has lost a job in the past six months. The Gallup rating on whether it is a “good time to find a quality job” is at an all-time low, 8 percent. Still, the reservoir of American optimism is deep. Eighty-eight percent say they are satisfied with the life they lead, and a majority say their personal situation will improve in the next five years. Only 15 percent say it will get worse. Sixty-eight percent don't believe the American Dream is out of reach for them, and 69 percent said it is very or somewhat likely their children will achieve it.

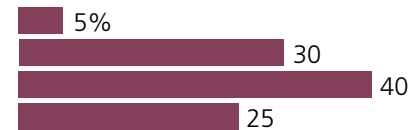
Q: Now thinking about the nation's economy, how would you rate . . . ?

Q: Now thinking about your own personal financial situation, how would you rate . . . ?

Economic conditions in this country today



Own personal financial situation



Note: * equals less than 1 percent.

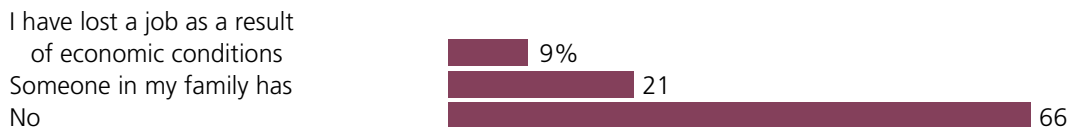
Source: Pew Research Center, October–November 2009.

Q: Generally speaking, would you say . . . ?



Source: GfK Roper/AP, November 2009.

Q: Thinking of the last six months, that is since May this year . . . ?



Source: GfK Roper/AP, November 2009.

Q: And thinking of the last six months, that is since May of this year . . . ?



Source: GfK Roper/AP, November 2009.

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Q: *On the whole, are you . . . ?*

Satisfied with the life I lead	88%
Not satisfied	11

Note: Sixty-three percent of Republicans, 49 percent of Democrats, and 57 percent of independents said they were very satisfied with the life they lead.

Source: Harris Interactive, October 2009.

Q: *In the course of the next five years, do you expect . . . ?*

Expect my personal situation to improve in the course of the next five years	54%
Stay about the same	27
Get worse	15

Note: Fifty-two percent of Republicans, 63 percent of Democrats, and 45 percent of independents expected things to improve.

Source: Harris Interactive, October 2009.

Q: *When you think about how things are going in your life in general, would you say you are . . . ?*

I am happy	79%
Neither happy or unhappy	8
Unhappy	15

Source: GfKRoper/AP, November 2009.

Q: *Would you say . . . ?*

The American Dream is out of reach for me	32%
Is not	68

Source: *Parade* magazine, July 2009.

Q: *How likely is it that . . . ?*

Likely that my children will achieve the American Dream	69%
Unlikely	13

Source: *Parade* magazine, July 2009.

Health Care: The Latest

Most pollsters' results on health care reform questions have been stable this fall, with support or opposition moving in a narrow range.

Q: *In general, do you . . . ? (GfKRoper/AP)*

Q: *As of right now, do you generally . . . ? (Pew)*

Q: *Overall, given what you know about them, would you say you . . . ? (ABC/Post)*

	GfKRoper/AP		Pew		ABC/Post	
	Support	Oppose	Favor	Oppose	Support	Oppose
November	39%	45%	38%	47%	48%	49%
October	40	40	34	47	45	48
September	34	49	42	44	46	48

Note: The GfKRoper/AP poll asked people about the "health care reform plans being discussed in Congress." The Pew poll asked about the "health care proposals being discussed in Congress." The ABC News/*Washington Post* poll asked about "the proposed changes to the health care system being developed by Congress and the Obama administration." The survey dates for the Pew poll labeled "November" above were October 28–November 8; the dates for the poll labeled "October" were September 30–October 4.

Source: GfKRoper/AP, November 2009; Pew Research Center, October–November 2009; ABC News/*Washington Post*, November 2009.



AEI POLITICAL REPORT CONTRIBUTORS

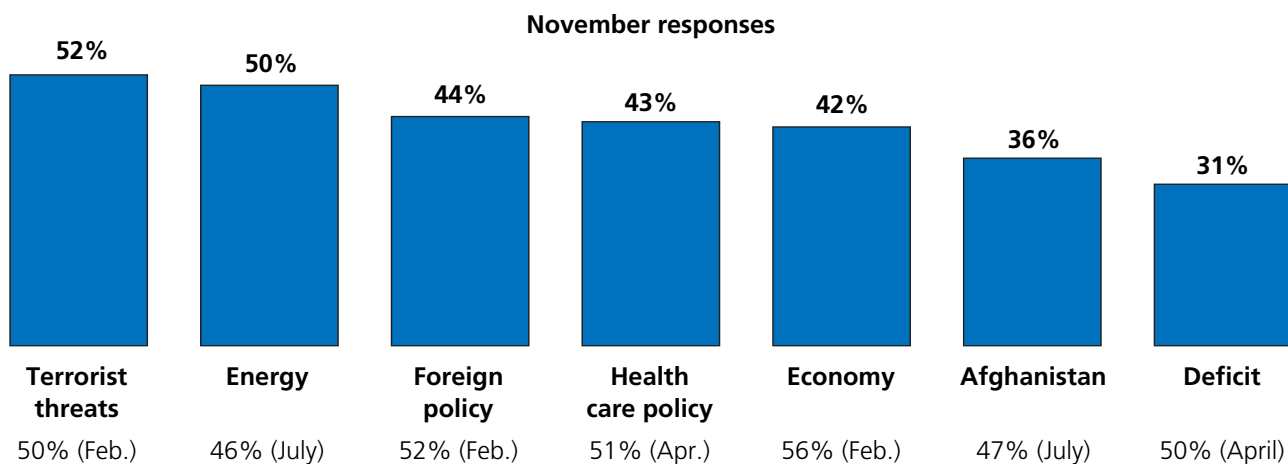
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Obama's Marks . . . And Those of the Democratic and Republican Parties

Q: Thinking about some issues, do you . . . ?

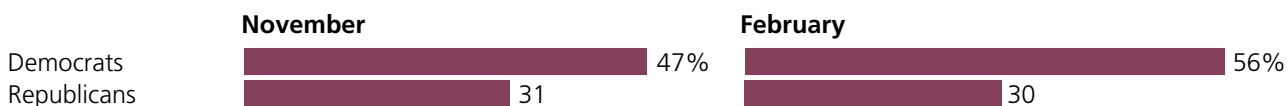
Approve of the way Barack Obama is handling . . .



Source: GfK Roper/AP, November 2009.

Q: Overall, which party, the Democrats or the Republicans, do you . . . ?

Trust to do a better job in coping with the main problems the nation faces over the next few years



Source: ABC News/Washington Post, latest that of November 2009.

Early Congressional Ballot Tests

Recent Pew and Gallup polls conducted around the same times among samples of registered voters provided different impressions of the 2010 race for control of Congress, something that is hardly surprising at this early stage. Pew reports that voters who plan to support Republicans are more enthusiastic than those who plan to support the Democrats.

Q: The next congressional elections will be coming up a year from now. If the elections for U.S. Congress were being held today . . . ? (Pew)

Q: If elections for Congress were being held today . . . ? (Gallup)

	Pew	Gallup
Would vote for the Republican Party's candidate	42%	48%
Would vote for the Democratic Party's candidate	47%	44%

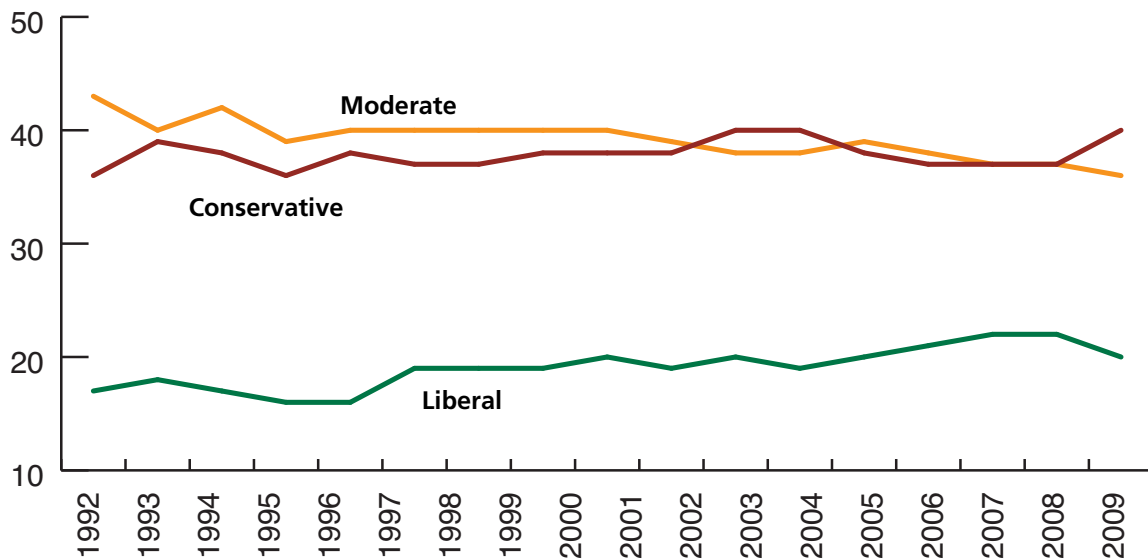
Note: Both polls are of registered voters.

Source: Pew Research Center, November 2009; the Gallup Organization, October–November, 2009.

Ideology = Stable?

Ideological identification in the United States is fairly stable. More people call themselves conservatives than liberals. In Gallup Organization surveys taken between January and September this year, slightly more people identified themselves as conservatives than as moderates.

Q: How would you describe your political views . . . ?



Note: Data based of annual averages.

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

Obama = Liberal?

Polls conducted in the fall show that a majority of Americans now say that the policies President Obama has pursued as president have been mostly liberal. People are evenly divided about whether his views are too liberal for the country or just about right. When asked whether his views are too liberal, too conservative, or just about right for them, a majority describe them as “just about right.”

Q: Do you think . . . ?

	October 2009	March 2009	November 2008
The policies of Barack Obama has pursued as president have been mostly liberal	54%	47%	43%
Mostly moderate	34	40	45
Mostly conservative	7	8	9

Note: In November 2008, the question wording was “Just your best guess, do you think the policies that Barack Obama will pursue as President will be mostly liberal, mostly moderate, or mostly conservative?”

Source: The Gallup Organization, latest that of October 2009.

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

	October–November	July–August	March
President Obama’s views and proposed programs for the country are too liberal	42%	40%	36%
Not liberal enough	14	8	5
Just about right	44	50	58

Source: CNN/Opinion Research Corporation, latest that of October–November 2009.

Q: Do you think . . . ?

	November	September	April	January
Obama’s views on most issues are too liberal for you	40%	39%	33%	29%
Too conservative	7	5	4	4
About right	52	53	62	65

Source: ABC News/Washington Post, latest that of November 2009.

Social Issue Sampler

Abortion Stability

Q: Do you think . . . ?

	July 2009	April 1975
Abortions should be legal under any circumstances	21%	21%
Legal only under certain circumstances	57	54
Illegal in all circumstances	18	22

Source: The Gallup Organization, latest that of July 2009.

Q: Which of these comes closest to your view?

	October 2009	November 1989
Abortion should be generally available to those who want it	41%	41%
Abortion should be available but under stricter limits than it is now	35	42
Abortion should not be permitted	20	15

Source: For October 2009, CBS News. For November 1989, CBS News/New York Times.

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Marijuana Movement

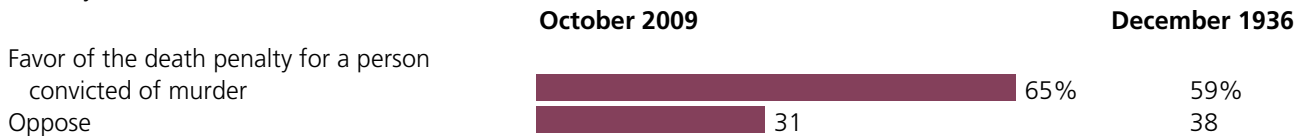
Q: Do you think . . . ?



Source: The Gallup Organization, latest that of October 2009.

Fewer Doubts on Death Penalty

Q: Are you in . . . ?



Source: The Gallup Organization, latest that of October 2009.

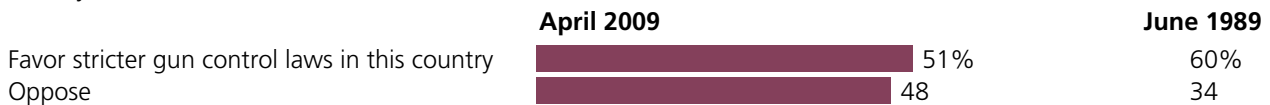
Gun Control Support Slips

Q: Do you . . . ?



Source: NBC/Wall Street Journal, latest that of October 2009.

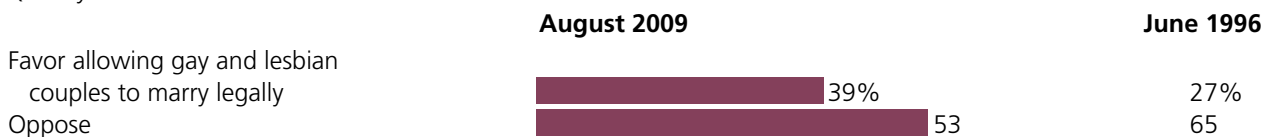
Q: Do you . . . ?



Source: For April 2009, ABC News/Washington Post. For June 1989, the Gallup Organization.

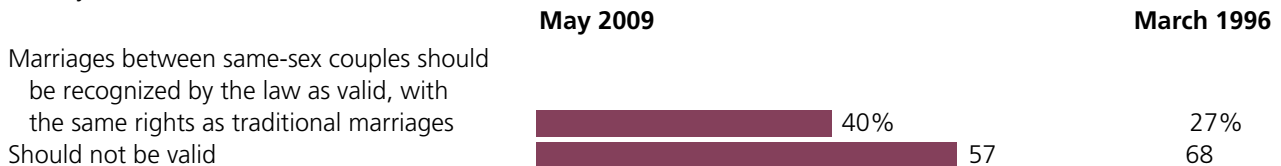
Gay Marriage Gains

Q: Do you . . . ?



Source: Pew Research Center, latest that of August 2009.

Q: Do you think . . . ?



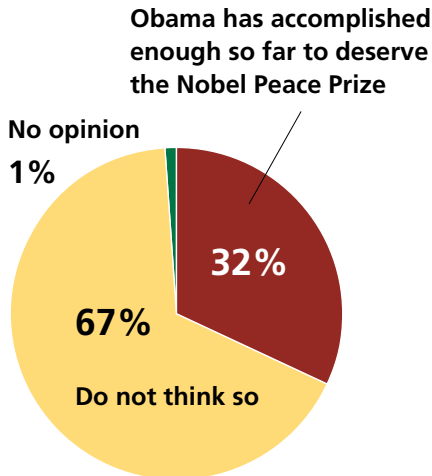
Note: In March 1996, the question wording was "Do you think marriages between homosexuals should or should not be recognized by the law as valid, with the same rights as traditional marriages?"

Source: The Gallup Organization, latest that of May 2009.

Obama in Oslo

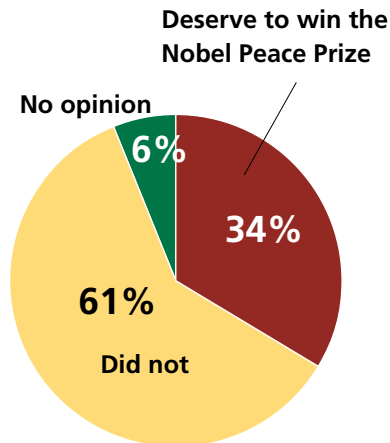
President Obama will receive the Nobel Peace Prize in Oslo on December 10th. Americans say that he hasn't accomplished enough so far to deserve it, but they are proud nonetheless.

Q: Do you think . . . ?



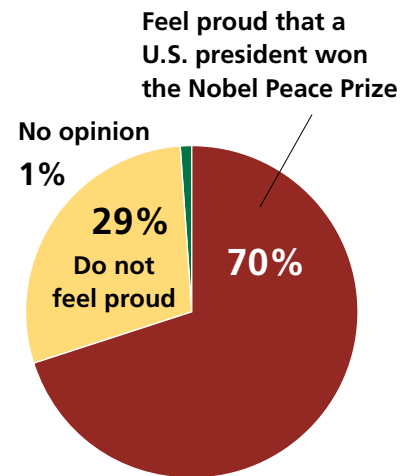
Source: CNN/Opinion Research Corporation, October 2009.

Q: Did Obama . . . ?



Source: Gallup/USA Today, October 2009.

Q: Regardless of how you feel about Obama, do you . . . ?



Source: CNN/Opinion Research Corporation, October 2009.

Cooling on Climate Change?

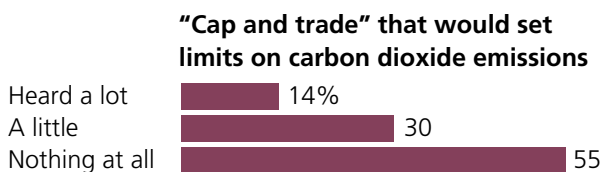
In Singapore, President Obama and other leaders endorsed a scaled-back climate strategy. American public opinion has not been focused on the issue. Only 23 percent in a recent Pew survey knew that the "cap and trade" legislation dealt with energy and the environment.

Q: In your view, is . . . ?



Source: Pew Research Center, latest that of September–October 2009.

Q: How much, if anything, have you heard about a policy being considered by the president and Congress called . . . ?



Source: Pew Research Center, September–October 2009.

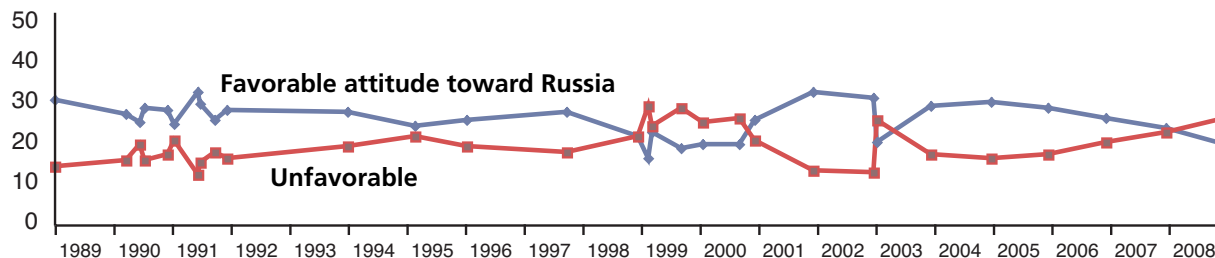
Q: Does the . . . ?



Source: Pew Research Center, October 2009.

Hitting the Reset Button with Russia? Americans Aren't So Sure

Skepticism of Russian intentions has returned.



Note: November 2000 and March 2003 questions asked of a half sample. 1989 through 1992 questions used "Soviet Union" instead of "Russia".
Source: The Gallup Organization, latest that of February 2009.

Q: *In general, do you . . . ?*

	June 2009	August 2008	April 2002	May 1996	March 1995
Think of Russia as more of an ally or more of an adversary	29%	19%	52%	48%	56%
More as an adversary	49	62	26	28	35

Note: In August 2008, the question was asked of registered voters.
Source: NBC/Wall Street Journal, latest that of June 2009.

In Russia, Restoration?

Vladimir Putin gets high marks from Russians, who tell pollsters that they prefer a strong hand to a democratic form of government. Fifty-eight percent echo Putin's belief that the demise of the Soviet Union is a great misfortune. A bare majority in Russia endorses the change to a multiparty system, and half endorse the new market economy. Young people are much more enthusiastic than older ones about the changes.

Q: *Do you . . . ?*

Approve of the way Vladimir Putin is handling his job as prime minister	78%
Disapprove	16

Source: Pew Global Attitudes Project, August–September 2009.

Q: *Some feel that we should rely on a democratic form of government to solve our country's problems. Others feel we should rely on a leader with a strong hand to solve our country's problems. What comes closer to your opinion?*

We should rely on a democratic form of government	29%
We should rely on a leader with a strong hand	60

Note: In the spring of 1991, 51 percent wanted to rely on a democratic government, and 39 percent a leader with a strong hand. In five questions since then, majorities have said they preferred a leader with a strong hand.
Source: Pew Global Attitudes Project, August–September 2009.

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Q: For each statement please tell me whether you . . . ?

	It is a great misfortune that the Soviet Union no longer exists	It is natural for Russia to have an empire
Completely agree	30%	16%
Mostly agree	28	31
Mostly disagree	23	23
Completely disagree	15	12

Source: Pew Global Attitudes Project, August–September 2009.

Q: After the dissolution of the Soviet Union, we changed from a country where there was just one party to a country with a multiparty system. Overall do you . . . ?

Q: Again, thinking back to 1991, do you . . . ?

	Approve of the change to a multiparty system	Approve that our country moved from having a state-controlled economy to having a market economy
	53%	50%
By age:		
18–29 years	65%	63%
30–49	60	56
50–64	46	39
60+	27	27

Note: Thirty-five percent disapproved of the change to a multiparty system. Forty-one percent disapproved of the change to a market economy.
Source: Pew Global Attitudes Project, August–September 2009.

Palin's Prospects

Q: Is your opinion of . . . ?

Opinion of Palin is favorable	23%
Unfavorable	38
Undecided	20
Haven't heard enough	17

Q: Would you like to see . . . ?

Palin run for president	24%
Would not like to see her run	66

Source: CBS News, November 2009.

Terrorists' Crimes

Q: When it comes to dealing
with people accused in terrorist
attacks . . . ?

Prefer trying them in open criminal court with a jury and a civilian judge	40%
A closed military court with a military judge	54

Source: CBS News, November 2009.

Aiding Afghanistan

Q: Do you . . . ?

Trust Obama to make the right decisions about U.S. troop levels	53%
Do not	42

Q: Do you . . . ?

Approve of the way Obama is handling the situation in Afghanistan	38%
Disapprove	49

Source: Quinnipiac, November 2009.