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For The People & The Press

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Republicans, Tea Party Supporters More Mellow

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## Fewer Are Angry at Government, But Discontent Remains High

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## Republicans, Tea Party Supporters More Mellow Fewer Are Angry at Government, But Discontent Remains High

The public remains deeply frustrated with the federal government, but fewer Americans say they are angry at government than did so last fall. Overall, the percentage saying they are angry with the federal government has fallen from 23% last September to 14% today, with much of the decline coming among Republicans and Tea Party supporters.

While anger at government has subsided, the public expresses no greater taste for political compromise today than it did last fall. As political leaders head into a tough political debate over the budget, 54% say they like elected officials who stick to their positions, while 40% prefer officials who make compromises with people they disagree with. This is virtually identical to the balance of opinion among registered voters last September.

By roughly two-to-one (63% vs. 32%), more Republicans say they like elected officials who stick to their positions rather than those who make compromises. About half of independents (53%) prefer politicians who stick to their positions compared with 41% who like elected officials who make compromises with people they disagree with. Democrats are evenly divided – 48% like elected officials who stick to their positions, 46% like those who compromise.

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### Anger at Government Subsides

	Sept 2010	Mar 2011	Change
<i>Feeling about the federal government</i>	%	%	
Angry	23	14	-9
Frustrated	52	59	+7
Content	21	22	+1
Don't know	4	5	
	100	100	
<i>Percent "angry" among...</i>			
Republican	33	16	-17
Independent	27	15	-12
Democrat	11	10	-1
Agree with Tea Party	47*	28	-19

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### Most Continue to Support Conviction over Compromise

	Sept 2010*	Mar 2011	Change
<i>I like elected officials who...</i>	%	%	
Stick to their positions	55	54	-1
Make compromises with people they disagree with	40	40	0
Neither/Both/Don't know	5	7	
	100	100	
<i>Percent "stick to positions" among...</i>			
Republican	67	63	-4
Democrat	50	48	-2
Independent	51	53	+2
Agree with Tea Party	66	69	+3

PEW RESEARCH CENTER Feb. 22-Mar. 1, 2011.  
 Figures may not add to 100% because of rounding.  
 \* Based on registered voters.

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The latest national survey by the Pew Research Center for the People & the Press, conducted Feb. 22-Mar. 1 among 1,504 adults, finds a modest recovery in public trust in government from historic lows last year. Yet even with this uptick, the general mood remains overwhelmingly negative.

Just 29% say they can trust the government in Washington to do what is right just about always or most of the time, up from 22% last March. About seven-in-ten (69%) say they trust the government only some of the time or never, compared with 76% a year ago.

The proportion of Republicans saying they can trust the government always or most of the time has increased from 13% to 24% over the past year; opinions among Democrats are unchanged over this period, at 34%.

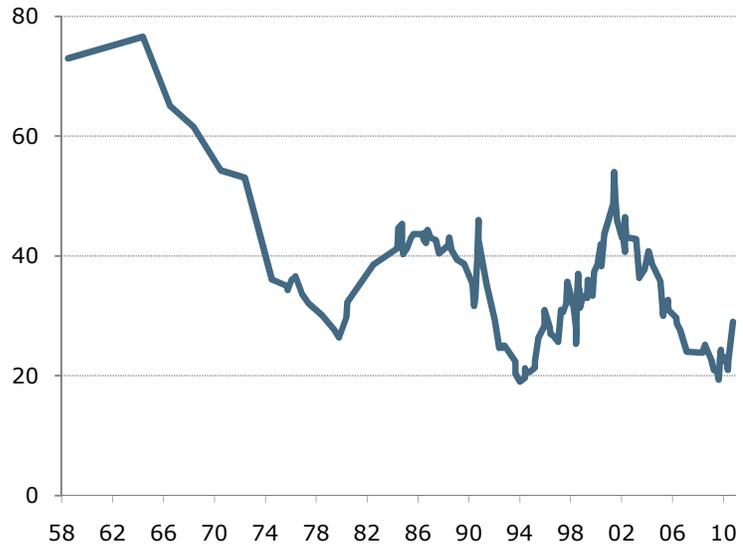
The public continues to express negative views of Congress, as well as Republican and Democratic congressional leaders. Just 34% say they have a favorable opinion of Congress, up slightly from 26% a year ago; a majority (57%) has an unfavorable view. Comparable percentages say they approve of the job performance of Republican (36%) and Democratic (33%) congressional leaders.

By contrast, Barack Obama's job ratings remain positive. Currently, 51% approve of Barack Obama's job performance while 39% disapprove. That is little changed from early February, but Obama's ratings have shown significant improvement since last fall, when about as many approved as disapproved.

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## Public Trust in Government, 1958-2011

*Trust the government in Washington to do what is right "just about always" or "most of the time"*



PEW RESEARCH CENTER Feb. 22-Mar. 1, 2011. QA25. Trend sources: Pew Research Center, National Election Studies, Gallup, ABC/Washington Post, CBS/New York Times, and CNN Polls. From 1976-2010 the trend line represents a three-survey moving average.

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The survey finds a continuing rise in support for same-sex marriage since 2009. Currently, 45% say they favor allowing gays and lesbians to marry legally while 46% are opposed. In Pew Research surveys conducted in 2010, 42% favored and 48% opposed gay marriage and in 2009, just 37% backed same-sex marriage while 54% were opposed.

### Liberal Movement on Gay Marriage, Abortion

	2008	2009	2010	2011	09-11 change
<i>Allow gays and lesbians to marry legally...</i>					
Favor	39	37	42	45	+8
Oppose	51	54	48	46	-8
Don't know	<u>10</u>	<u>9</u>	<u>10</u>	<u>9</u>	
	100	100	100	100	
<i>Abortion should be...</i>					
Legal in all/most cases	55	47	50	54	+7
Illegal in all/most cases	39	44	44	42	-2
Don't know	<u>6</u>	<u>9</u>	<u>7</u>	<u>4</u>	
	100	100	100	100	

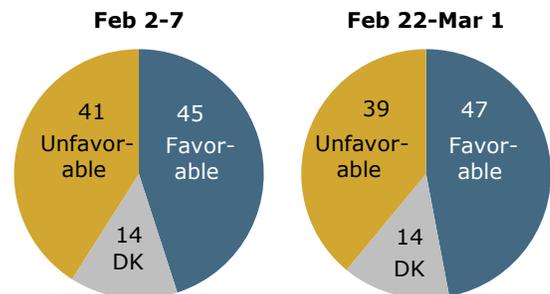
PEW RESEARCH CENTER Feb. 22-Mar. 1, 2011. QA61, A62. Figures may not add to 100% because of rounding. Gay marriage opinions based on yearly averages for 2008-2010; abortion opinions based on yearly averages for 2008-2009.

Over the same period, there has been movement toward a liberal position on abortion. In 2009, for the first time in many years, the public was evenly divided over whether abortion should be legal or illegal in all or most cases. But support for legal abortion has recovered and now stands at about the same level as in 2008 (55% then, 54% today).

Independents have become more supportive of both gay marriage and legal abortion since 2009. Roughly half of independents (51%) now favor same-sex marriage, up from 37% in 2009. And 58% of independents say that abortion should be legal in all or most cases, compared with 47% in Pew Research Center surveys two years ago.

The public's overall views of labor unions have changed little through the lengthy stalemate between Wisconsin's governor and the state's public employee unions over collective bargaining rights. About half (47%) say they have a favorable opinion of labor unions compared with 39% who have an unfavorable opinion. In early February, 45% expressed a favorable opinion of unions and 41% said they had an unfavorable view. However, liberal Democrats and people in union households are more likely to say they have a *very* favorable opinion of labor unions than they were just weeks ago.

### Labor Union Favorability Holds Steady through Wisconsin Dispute



PEW RESEARCH CENTER Feb. 21-Mar. 1, 2011. QA4e.

*(For more on public attitudes toward labor unions, see Pew Research's [Feb. 17 report](#). For more on views of the showdown in Wisconsin between the governor and public employee unions, see [this report](#), released Feb. 28.)*

## SECTION 1: ATTITUDES ABOUT GOVERNMENT

When asked how they feel about the federal

government, a majority of the public has consistently expressed frustration.

Currently, 59% say they are frustrated with the federal government while 22% are content and 14% are angry.

The percent saying they are angry with government has declined nine points since last September.

### Fewer Are Angry with Federal Government

<i>Feeling about the federal government</i>	<b>Oct 1997</b>	<b>Feb 2000</b>	<b>Nov 2001</b>	<b>Mar 2004</b>	<b>Oct 2006</b>	<b>Jan 2007</b>	<b>Mar 2010</b>	<b>Sept 2010</b>	<b>Mar 2011</b>
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Basically content	29	33	53	32	21	21	19	21	22
Frustrated	56	54	34	52	54	58	56	52	59
Angry	12	10	8	13	20	16	21	23	14
Don't know	<u>3</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>5</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>5</u>	<u>5</u>	<u>5</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>5</u>
	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100

PEW RESEARCH CENTER Feb. 22-Mar. 1, 2011. QA24. Figures may not add to 100% because of rounding.

Fewer Republicans say they feel angry with the federal government than did so last fall. In the current survey, 16% of Republicans say they are angry with the government, down from 33% in September. There also has been a decline in anger among independents from 27% last fall to 15% now. Among independents who lean to the GOP, the percent saying they are angry declined from 38% to 20%. Views among Democrats have been fairly stable with 10% now saying they are angry with the federal government. Thus, the gap between Republicans and Democrats is much smaller than it was last year.

Nearly half (47%) of Tea Party supporters said they were angry with the federal government in September of last year. That has dropped to 28% in the current survey. Even among Republicans who support the Tea Party, there has been a decline in the percent saying they are angry with the government. As was the case last year, Republicans and Republican-leaning independents who agree with the Tea Party are more likely to express anger with the federal government than those who disagree or have no opinion of the Tea Party (30% vs. 9%).

There also has been a decline in anger with the government among whites and people 50 and older. In September 2010, a quarter (25%) of whites said they were angry with the government; that has declined to 14% in the current survey. There now is little difference between whites, blacks and Hispanics in the percent expressing anger with the federal government.

Anger is down seven points among those under 50, 14 points among those ages 50 to 64 and 12 points among those 65 and older.

## Sharp Decline in Tea Party Anger

<i>Percent who are "angry" with the federal government</i>	<b>Mar 2010</b>	<b>Sept 2010</b>	<b>Mar 2011</b>	<b>Sept-Mar change</b>
	%	%	%	
Total	21	23	14	-9
White	23	25	14	-11
Black	12	11	12	+1
Hispanic	17	23	17	-6
18-29	16	15	9	-6
30-49	17	21	15	-6
50-64	26	28	14	-14
65+	26	30	18	-12
Republican	30	33	16	-17
Conservative Rep	32	36	19	-17
Mod/Lib Rep	27	26	11	-15
Democrat	9	11	10	-1
Cons/Mod Dem	10	11	11	0
Liberal Dem	7	8	8	0
Independent	25	27	15	-12
Lean Republican	37	38	20	-18
Lean Democrat	15	17	9	-8
<i>Tea Party</i>				
Agree with	43	47	28	-19
Disagree with	8	10	8	-2
No opinion	15	18	11	-7

PEW RESEARCH CENTER Feb. 22 – Mar. 1, 2011. QA24.  
 Figures may not add to 100% because of rounding.  
 Whites and blacks include only those who are not Hispanic;  
 Hispanics are of any race.

## Trust in Government

Last year, a Pew Research survey on public attitudes toward government found that the proportion saying they can trust the government in Washington to do the right thing had fallen to one of its lowest levels in more than 50 years. (See *“Distrust, Discontent and Partisan Rancor,”* April 18, 2010).

Since then, public trust in government has risen, but it remains very low. Just 29% say they trust the government in Washington to do what is right just about always (4%) or most of the time (25%). Last year, 22% said they could trust the government just about always (3%) or most of the time (19%).

### Trust in Government Rises Modestly

	March 2010		March 2011	
	Always/ Most of the time	Some of the time/ Never	Always/ Most of the time	Some of the time/ Never
Total	22	76	29	69
18-29	32	67	34	65
30-49	20	79	27	71
50-64	20	78	29	70
65+	20	77	27	72
College grad+	27	72	31	68
Some college	20	78	27	72
High school or less	21	76	29	69
Republican	13	86	24	76
Conservative Rep	11	88	17	82
Mod/Lib Rep	17	81	36	64
Democrat	34	64	34	65
Cons/Mod Dem	31	67	30	69
Liberal Dem	40	59	40	59
Independent	20	79	27	71
Lean Republican	14	85	24	76
Lean Democrat	26	71	33	65
<i>Tea Party</i>				
Agree with	7	92	14	85
Disagree with	39	59	35	64
No opinion	25	73	32	67

PEW RESEARCH CENTER Feb. 22 – Mar. 1, 2011. QA25.  
Figures may not add to 100% because of rounding.

While most Republicans (76%) continue to say they trust the government only some of the time or never, the percent saying they trust the government always or most of the time increased from 13% last year to 24% now. Among moderate and liberal Republicans, 36% currently say they trust the government just about always or most of the time, up from 17% in March 2010. Trust is much lower among conservative Republicans; 17% say they trust the government at least most of the time, which is largely unchanged from a year ago (11%).

Tea Party supporters remain overwhelmingly distrustful of the government in Washington. Only 14% trust the government at least most of the time while 85% say they trust the government only some of the time or never.

There has been virtually no change among Democrats; 34% trust the federal government always or most of the time while 65% trust the government some of the time or never. Democrats continue to be more trusting of government than Republicans, but the partisan gap has been cut from 21 points in March and 26 points in September 2010 to 10 points in the current survey.

There is little difference in trust in government among Democrats; 40% of liberal Democrats say they trust the government to do what is right always or most of the time, compared with 30% of conservative and moderate Democrats.

Independents are somewhat more trusting of government than they were a year ago; 27% say they trust the government at least most of the time, up from 20% last March. The overwhelming majority (71%) continues to say they trust the government only some of the time or never (79% said this a year ago).

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### Smaller Partisan Gap in Trust in Government

<i>% who trust the government always or most of the time</i>	<b>Rep</b>	<b>Dem</b>	<b>Ind</b>	<b>R-D Diff</b>
	%	%	%	
March, 2011	24	34	27	D+10
September, 2010	13	39	18	D+26
March, 2010	13	34	20	D+21
June, 2009*	10	35	12	D+25
January, 2007	47	22	28	R+25
February, 2006	56	21	25	R+35
September, 2005	54	18	23	R+36
March, 2004	58	23	33	R+35
January, 2002*	61	41	37	R+20
February, 2000	38	46	37	D+8

PEW RESEARCH CENTER Feb. 22-Mar. 1, 2011. QA25.  
\* Data from CBS/NYT.

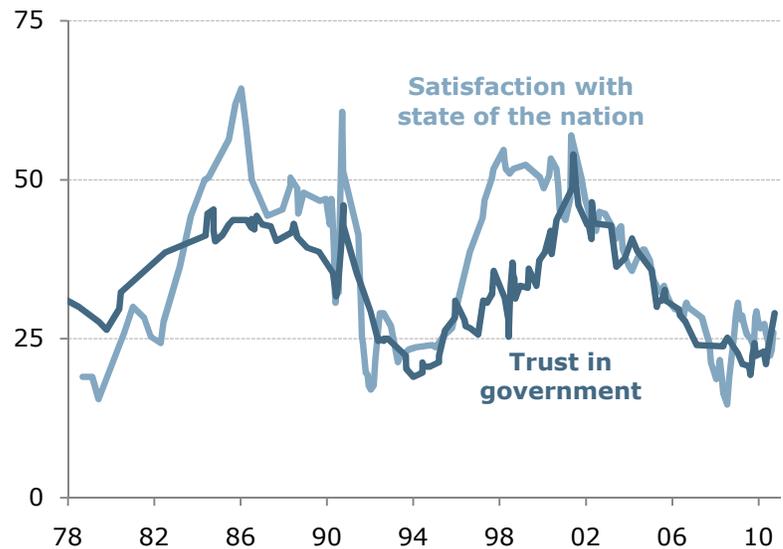
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## Long-Term Trends in Trust in Government

Historically, trust in government is related to broader measures of satisfaction with the state of the nation and economic stress. The low points in government trust over the past half century have mostly occurred during the nation's economic struggles and periods of intense dissatisfaction with the way things were going in the country.

Similarly, trust in government recovered during periods of high satisfaction and strong economic growth. Both trust in government and satisfaction with the state of the nation remain quite low today.

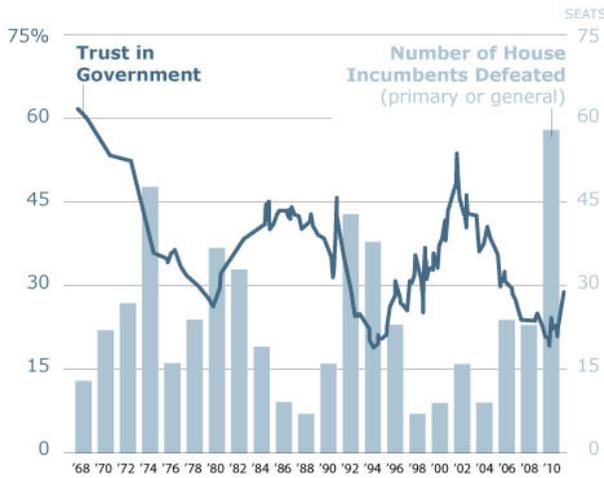
### Trust in Government and Views of National Conditions



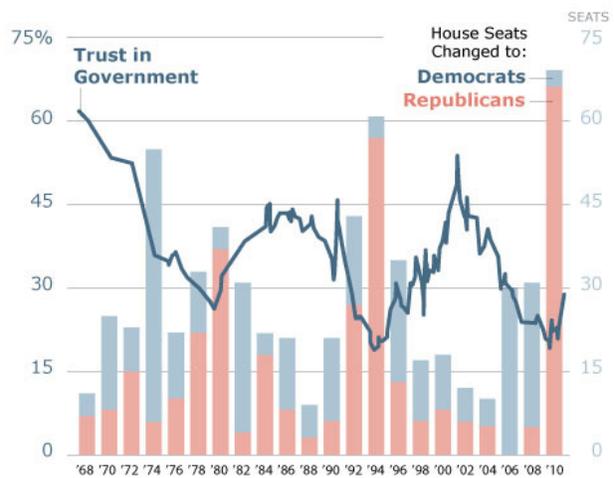
PEW RESEARCH CENTER Feb. 22-Mar. 1, 2011. QA25.  
Trend sources: Pew Research Center, National Election Studies, Gallup, ABC/Washington Post, CBS/New York Times, and CNN polls.  
From 1976-2010 the trend line represents a three-survey moving average with individual data points shown.

Periods of high distrust in government also have corresponded with high turnover in Congress. In general, when public trust in government declines steeply – as it did in 1974, 1980 and in the early 1990s – incumbents are more likely to lose and a larger number of seats usually changes parties. In 2010, when trust reached one of its lowest levels in half a century, rivaling only the early 1990s, 69 seats changed parties, with Republicans gaining 66 seats previously held by Democrats while Democrats took possession of only 3 seats previously held by Republicans. Similarly, 58 incumbents lost in the primary or general elections that year.

**Trust in Government and Number of House Incumbents Defeated**



**Trust in Government and Number of House Seats Changing Party**



PEW RESEARCH CENTER Feb. 22-Mar. 1, 2011. QA25. Percent trusting government to do what is right always or most of the time. Election data source: Harold Stanley and Richard Niemi, Vital Statistics on American Politics 2009-2010.

## Congress Favorability

The public continues to have a negative view of Congress. About a third of the public (34%) says they have a favorable opinion of Congress while 57% have an unfavorable view. This is little changed from July 2010 when 33% expressed a favorable view and 56% had an unfavorable opinion of Congress.

Although the overall opinion of Congress has been stable, there have been shifts among

Republicans and Democrats since last summer. Republicans now have a more favorable view of Congress. Currently, 38% express a favorable opinion of Congress, up 16 points since July 2010. At the same time, fewer Democrats view Congress favorably; 37% now say they have a favorable opinion, down from 48% last summer. These shifts among Republicans and Democrats have virtually erased what was a substantial partisan gap in July.

Although views among independents have been stable, they now view Congress less favorably than Republicans and Democrats. Only 30% of independents say they have a favorable opinion of Congress.

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### Congress Favorability Still Low

<i>Percent who have a favorable view of Congress</i>	<b>Mar 2010</b>	<b>July 2010</b>	<b>Mar 2011</b>	<b>July-Mar change</b>
	%	%	%	
Total	26	33	34	0
Republican	20	22	38	+16
Democrat	38	48	37	-11
Independent	21	29	30	0

PEW RESEARCH CENTER Feb. 22 – Mar. 1, 2011. QA4c.

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## SECTION 2: VIEWS OF POLITICAL LEADERS AND COMPROMISE

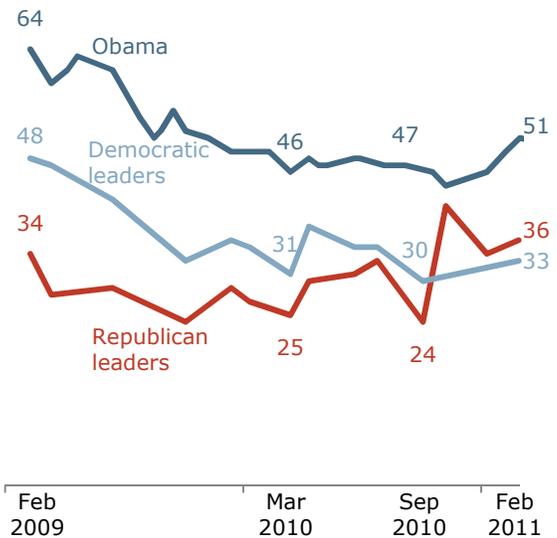
In the new survey, Barack Obama's job approval stands at 51%; 39% disapprove of the way Obama is handling his job as president. That is little changed from early February (49% approve vs. 42% disapprove). Nonetheless, the balance of opinion regarding Obama's job performance remains more positive than it was in the fall, when about as many disapproved as approved.

Obama's job ratings are much higher than those of either GOP congressional leaders or Democratic congressional leaders. Slightly more than a third (36%) say they approve of the GOP leaders' job performance while 45% disapprove. Ratings for Democratic leaders are comparable (33% approve, 48% disapprove).

Approval of Republican leaders rose sharply between October and November, shortly after the GOP's election victory. In early November, 41% approved of Republican leaders' job performance, up 17 points from just a month earlier. Their job ratings have changed little since November. Job ratings for Democratic leaders have been stable in recent months, but are far lower than they were in February 2009 (48% approve), shortly after Obama took office.

Opinions about the political parties also have shown little change recently. Currently, 42% say they have a favorable opinion of the Republican Party; 51% have an unfavorable opinion. About as many say they have a favorable opinion (48%) of the Democratic Party as an unfavorable one (45%). (*For recent trends in party favorability, see Pew Research's [Feb. 10 report](#)*).

**Job Ratings: Obama, GOP Leaders, Democratic leaders**



PEW RESEARCH CENTER Feb. 22-Mar.1, 2011. Q A1. Feb. 24-27, 2011 PEW1a-b.

## Disagreements over Value of Political Compromise

A majority of the public (53%) says they like elected officials who stick to their positions rather than elected officials who make compromises with people they disagree with (40%). That is little changed from last fall.

By about a two-to one margin Republicans prefer elected officials who stick to their positions (63%) over elected officials who compromise with people they disagree with (32%).

Republicans are divided along ideological lines in opinions about compromise: Just a quarter of conservatives (25%) like elected officials to compromise, compared with 47% of moderate and liberal Republicans. There are similar divisions between Republicans and Republican leaners who agree with the Tea Party (20% prefer compromise) and those who do not (39%).

Democrats also are divided; overall, 46% favor elected officials who make compromises while 48% like elected officials who stick to their positions. Nearly six-in-ten liberal Democrats (57%) prefer elected officials who compromise, compared with 41% of conservative and moderate Democrats.

Views of independents overall largely mirror those of the general public's. But far more Republican-leaning independents than Democratic-leaning independents say they like elected officials who stick to their positions (64% vs. 48%).

### Both Parties Split in Views of Compromise

	<i>I like elected officials who...</i>		
	<b>Compromise</b>	<b>Stick to positions</b>	<b>Both/Neither/DK</b>
	%	%	%
Total	40	53	7=100
Republican	32	63	5=100
Conserv. Rep	25	70	5=100
Mod/Lib Rep	49	47	4=100
Democrat	46	48	6=100
Cons/Mod Dem	41	54	4=100
Liberal Dem	57	40	3=100
Independent	41	53	6=100
Lean Republican	29	64	8=100
Lean Democrat	46	48	6=100
<i>Among Republicans/Rep leaners</i>	31	63	6=100
Agree w/ Tea Party	20	74	6=100
Disagree/No opinion	39	56	5=100

PEW RESEARCH CENTER Feb. 22 – Mar. 1, 2011. QA45b.  
Figures may not add to 100% because of rounding.

## SECTION 3: ATTITUDES TOWARD SOCIAL ISSUES

Public support for gay marriage continues to edge upward. At the same time, support for legal abortion has rebounded, after declining in 2009. In contrast, there has been no movement in public attitudes toward gun control. The public remains evenly divided over whether it is more important to protect the right of Americans to own guns or to control gun ownership.

Americans also are divided about whether the use of marijuana should be legalized. Opinion about legalizing marijuana has shifted substantially over the long term. A decade ago, the public opposed legalization by nearly two-to-one.

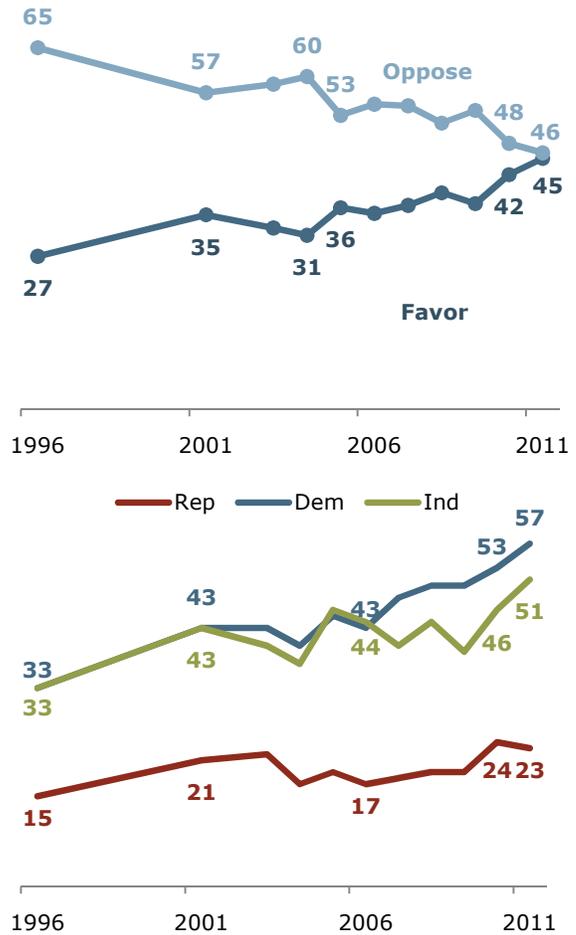
### Shifting Attitudes about Same-Sex Marriage

The new poll finds that about as many adults now favor (45%) as oppose (46%) allowing gays and lesbians to marry legally. Last year opponents outnumbered supporters 48% to 42%. Opposition to same-sex marriage has declined by 19 percentage points since 1996, when 65% opposed gay marriage and only 27% were in favor.

Majorities of the public now support same-sex marriage in the Northeast (59% in favor) and West (56%). In many states in those regions, efforts to legalize same-sex marriage have been underway or have already succeeded. By contrast, support is much lower in the Midwest (40% favor) and the South (34%).

As has been the case since 1996, there is a wide partisan division on the question of same-sex marriage. Currently 57% of Democrats favor making it legal, while only 23% of Republicans

**Support for Gay Marriage Nearly Matches Opposition**



PEW RESEARCH CENTER Feb. 22-Mar. 1, 2011. Data from 1996, 2001, 2005, and 2011 are from individual surveys. Data from 2003-2004 and 2006-2010 represent annual totals of polls conducted in each year.

agree. Independents (at 51% in favor) are more similar to Democrats than to Republicans, in part because 46% of Republican-leaning independents are supportive of same-sex marriage, along with 58% of independents who lean Democratic.

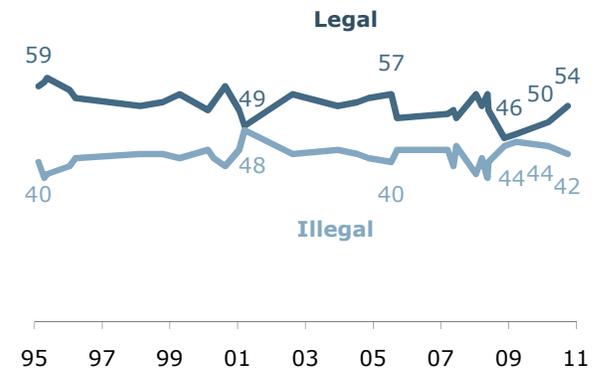
### Support for Legal Abortion Edges Upward

The current survey finds a majority of 54% supporting legal abortion in all or most cases; 42% say abortion should be illegal in most or all cases. This represents a small but significant change over the past two years. In Pew Research polling in 2009, opinion on whether abortion should be legal was evenly divided, with 46% favoring and 44% opposing legal abortion in most or all cases. Last summer, half of respondents (50%) supported legal abortion, while 44% opposed it.

Support for legal abortion is higher among Democrats and independents than among Republicans. Nearly two-thirds of Democrats (65%) say abortion should be legal in all or most cases, as do 58% of independents. Among Republicans, just 34% support legal abortion.

There has been relatively little change in views about abortion among different religious groups. A small majority of Catholics (52%) say abortion should be legal in all or most cases; 45% disagree. In 2010, Catholics were divided (47% in favor of legal abortion, 45% opposed). White evangelical Protestants remain the religious group most opposed to legal abortion, with just 34% saying abortion should be legal and 64% saying it should be illegal in all or most cases.

### Majority Says Abortion Should be Legal in All or Most Cases



PEW RESEARCH CENTER Feb. 22-Mar. 1, 2011. QA62.

### Most Independents Favor Legal Abortion

	Legal in all/most cases %	Illegal in all/most cases %	DK %
Total	54	42	4=100
Republican	34	64	2=100
Democrat	65	31	4=100
Independent	58	38	4=100
Protestant	47	49	4=100
White evangelical	34	64	2=100
White mainline	60	37	3=100
Catholic	52	45	3=100
White Catholic	54	44	2=100
Unaffiliated	71	26	2=100

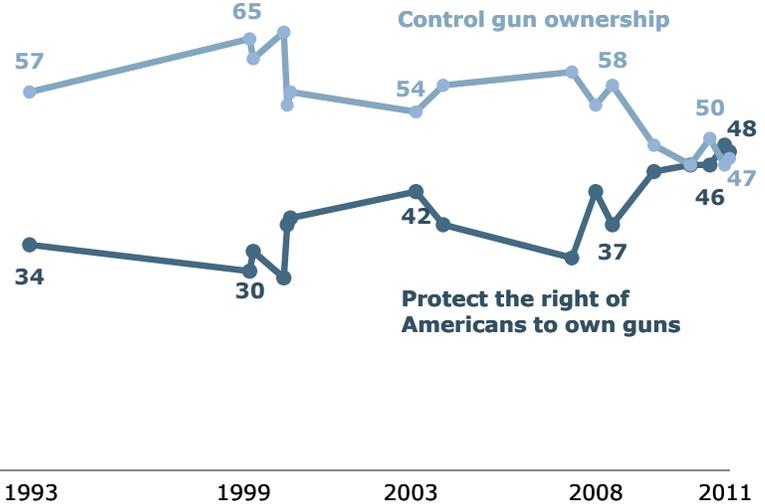
PEW RESEARCH CENTER Feb. 22-Mar. 1, 2011. QA62. Figures may not add to 100% because of rounding.

## Attitudes on Gun Control Unchanged

Nearly two months after the shooting of Rep. Gabrielle Giffords and several others in Tucson, Arizona, public attitudes on the issue of gun control are unchanged. In the current poll, 48% say it is more important to protect the right of Americans to own guns, while 47% say it is more important to control gun ownership. This is nearly identical to the result from a poll taken in mid-January, shortly after the Tucson event.

### Long-Term Rise in Support for Gun Rights

More important to...



PEW RESEARCH CENTER Feb. 22-Mar. 1, 2011. QA60.

As in previous polling on the subject, attitudes are highly divided along party lines. About two-thirds of Republicans (66%) place greater importance on protecting gun owners' rights, while nearly as many Democrats (65%) say it's more important to control gun ownership. A small majority of 54% of independents place greater importance on protecting the rights of gun owners. For more detail about the demographic correlates of opinion on gun control, see "[Views of Gun Control – A Detailed Demographic Breakdown](#)," Jan. 13, 2011.

## Increased Support for Legalization of Marijuana

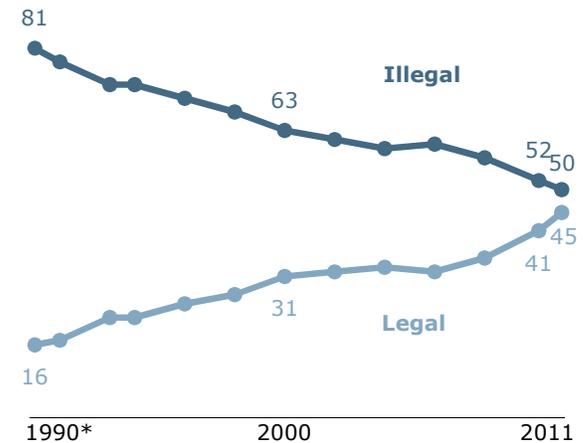
The public is divided over whether the use of marijuana should be legal or not; half (50%) oppose legalization while nearly as many (45%) favor legalizing marijuana. Support for legalizing marijuana is up slightly since March, 2010; and over the past 40 years – drawing on trends from Gallup and the General Social Survey – support for legalizing marijuana has never been higher.

Young people under the age of 30 favor legalizing the use of marijuana by a 54%-42% margin. Opinion is divided among those in middle age groups. Those 65 and older are broadly opposed to legalization (66% illegal, 30% legal).

A slim majority of Democrats (53%) favor legalizing the use of marijuana, while 43% are opposed. Support is particularly high among liberal Democrats, 66% of whom support legalization. Republicans, by contrast, oppose legalization by a wide 67%-30% margin and there are only modest differences between conservative Republicans and moderate and liberal Republicans– majorities of both groups oppose legalization. Independents are divided in their views: 49% say marijuana should be legal, 45% illegal.

About as many favor as oppose legalizing marijuana among those with some college experience. By contrast, those with no college experience oppose legalization by a 55%-40% margin.

### Should Marijuana Use be Legal?



PEW RESEARCH CENTER Feb. 22-Mar.1, 2011. QA63.  
\* 1990-2008 data from the General Social Survey

### Most Democrats Now Support Legalization

Use of marijuana should be ...	Legal	Illegal	DK
	%	%	%
Total	45	50	5=100
Men	48	47	5=100
Women	42	54	5=100
18-29	54	42	4=100
30-49	48	47	4=100
50-64	43	50	7=100
65+	30	66	4=100
College grad+	48	45	6=100
Some college	50	47	3=100
HS or less	40	55	5=100
Republican	30	67	3=100
Conservative Rep	27	69	4=100
Mod/Lib Rep	35	64	1=100
Democrat	53	43	3=100
Cons/Mod Dem	44	53	3=100
Liberal Dem	66	29	4=100
Independent	49	45	5=100

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Figures may not add to 100% because of rounding.

## SECTION 4: OPINIONS OF LABOR UNIONS

The ongoing demonstrations in Wisconsin over public worker benefits and collective bargaining rights have had little effect on overall views of labor unions. In the current survey, 47% hold a favorable view of labor unions, compared with 39% who have an unfavorable view. In early February – before the Wisconsin demonstrations – the balance of opinion was about the same (45% favorable, 41% unfavorable).

Deep partisan divisions remain on views of labor unions. Democrats hold a more favorable than unfavorable view of labor unions by nearly three-to-one (64% favorable, 22% unfavorable). By contrast, 58% of Republicans take an unfavorable view, while 32% view labor unions favorably. Independents are divided: 45% hold a favorable view, 42% an unfavorable view.

### Union Favorability Holds Steady

	Feb 2-7		Feb 21-Mar 1	
	Favorable	Unfavorable	Favorable	Unfavorable
	%	%	%	%
Total	45	41	47	39
Republican	30	56	32	58
Democrat	61	27	64	22
Independent	42	46	45	42

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### Liberals and Union Members Rally

While overall favorability ratings have remained stable, the percentage holding a *very* favorable view of labor unions – as opposed to a *mostly* favorable view – has risen seven points. This rise has come primarily from intensifying views among two groups: liberal Democrats and union households.

Overall, about as many liberal Democrats hold

### Sharp Rise in Number of Liberals Who Have Very Favorable View of Unions

	Percent "Favorable"			Percent "Very Favorable"		
	Feb 2-7	Now	Change	Feb 2-7	Now	Change
	%	%		%	%	
Total	45	47	+2	11	18	+7
Liberal Democrat	64	65	+1	14	32	+18
Mod/Cons Democrat	61	65	+4	17	25	+8
Independent	42	45	+3	10	15	+5
Mod/Liberal Republican	41	47	+6	11	19	+8
Conservative Republican	25	26	+1	5	9	+4
Labor household	69	73	+4	27	45	+18
Non-labor household	42	43	+1	9	14	+5

PEW RESEARCH CENTER Feb. 21-Mar. 1, 2011. QA4e.

favorable views of unions now (65%) as did so in early February (64%). However, the percentage holding a *very* favorable view has ballooned: from just 14% in February to 32% today – an 18-point rise in opinion.

A similar pattern can be seen among union member households. The percentage expressing *very* favorable views of unions has spiked from 27% to 45%. As the intensity of support for labor unions has grown in union households, overall favorability has remained about the same (69% in February, 73% now).

There has been no corresponding shift in opinion among conservative Republicans or non-labor households. Very unfavorable views of labor are about the same as they were in February for these groups, as negative views of labor have become no more intense.

## About the Surveys

Most of the analysis in this report is based on telephone interviews conducted February 22-March 1, 2011 among a national sample of 1,504 adults 18 years of age or older living in the continental United States (1,021 respondents were interviewed on a landline telephone, and 483 were interviewed on a cell phone, including 213 who had no landline telephone). The survey was conducted by interviewers at Princeton Data Source under the direction of Princeton Survey Research Associates International. A combination of landline and cell phone random digit dial samples were used; both samples were provided by Survey Sampling International. Interviews were conducted in English and Spanish. Respondents in the landline sample were selected by randomly asking for the youngest adult male or female who is now at home. Interviews in the cell sample were conducted with the person who answered the phone, if that person was an adult 18 years of age or older. For detailed information about our survey methodology, see <http://people-press.org/methodology/>

The combined landline and cell phone sample are weighted using an iterative technique that matches gender, age, education, race, Hispanic origin, region, and population density to parameters from the March 2010 Census Bureau's Current Population Survey. The sample also is weighted to match current patterns of telephone status and relative usage of landline and cell phones (for those with both), based on extrapolations from the 2010 National Health Interview Survey. The weighting procedure also accounts for the fact that respondents with both landline and cell phones have a greater probability of being included in the combined sample and adjusts for household size within the landline sample. Sampling errors and statistical tests of significance take into account the effect of weighting. The following table shows the sample sizes and the error attributable to sampling that would be expected at the 95% level of confidence for different groups in the survey:

<b>Group</b>	<b>Sample Size</b>	<b>Plus or minus ...</b>
Total sample	1,504	3.0 percentage points
Republicans	393	6.0 percentage points
Democrats	479	5.5 percentage points
Independents	551	5.5 percentage points

Sample sizes and sampling errors for other subgroups are available upon request.

Some of the analysis in this report is based on telephone interviews conducted February 24-27, 2011 among a national sample of 1,009 adults 18 years of age or older living in the continental United States (678 respondents were interviewed on a landline telephone, and 331 were interviewed on a cell phone, including 144 who had no landline telephone). The survey was conducted by interviewers at Princeton Data Source under the direction of Princeton Survey Research Associates International. A combination of landline and cell phone random digit dial samples were used; both samples were provided by Survey Sampling International. Interviews were conducted in English. Respondents in the landline sample were selected by randomly asking for the youngest adult male or female who is now at home. Interviews in the cell sample were conducted with the person who answered the phone, if that person was an adult 18 years of age or

older.

The combined landline and cell phone sample are weighted using an iterative technique that matches gender, age, education, race, Hispanic origin, region, and population density to parameters from the March 2010 Census Bureau's Current Population Survey. The sample also is weighted to match current patterns of telephone status based on extrapolations from the 2010 National Health Interview Survey. The weighting procedure also accounts for the fact that respondents with both landline and cell phones have a greater probability of being included in the combined sample and adjusts for household size within the landline sample. Sampling errors and statistical tests of significance take into account the effect of weighting. The following table shows the sample sizes and the error attributable to sampling that would be expected at the 95% level of confidence for different groups in the survey:

<b>Group</b>	<b>Sample Size</b>	<b>Plus or minus ...</b>
Total sample	1009	4.0 percentage points

Sample sizes and sampling errors for other subgroups are available upon request.

In addition to sampling error, one should bear in mind that question wording and practical difficulties in conducting surveys can introduce error or bias into the findings of opinion polls.

## About the Pew Research Center for the People & the Press

The Pew Research Center for the People & the Press is an independent opinion research group that studies attitudes toward the press, politics and public policy issues. We are sponsored by The Pew Charitable Trusts and are one of seven projects that make up the Pew Research Center, a nonpartisan "fact tank" that provides information on the issues, attitudes and trends shaping America and the world.

The Center's purpose is to serve as a forum for ideas on the media and public policy through public opinion research. In this role it serves as an important information resource for political leaders, journalists, scholars, and public interest organizations. All of our current survey results are made available free of charge.

All of the Center's research and reports are collaborative products based on the input and analysis of the entire Center staff consisting of:

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