CONGRESS: ELECTION PROSPECTS

With congressional elections only three months away, anti-Congress sentiment is running high. An ever so modest recovery in overall ratings occurred in 1993 and early 1994. Still only about a third rate the institution highly.

Question: In general, do you think the present Congress has done a good job or a poor job? (1946–1947) In general, do you think that the new Congress that took office in January 1953 has done a good job or a poor job up to now? (May 1953) In general, do you think the present Congress in Washington has done a good job or a poor job to date? (July 1953–58)

Approve of the way Congress/Congressman is doing job

Rate the job Congress is doing as...

Congress 30% 47% 35% 32% 38% 29% 28% 24% 36% 40% 34% 36% 35% 29% 20% 25%
Congressman — — — — — — — — — — — — — — —

Approve of the way CBS/NYT Congress is doing job

CBS/NYT Congress 31% 31% 29% 31% 30% 29% 32% 33% 42% 38% 27% 23% 49% 39% 30% 27%
Congressman — — — — 62 60 60 61 — 64 60 — 51 — — —

Approve of the way ABC/Wash. Post Congress is doing job

ABC/Wash. Post Congress 54% 56% 43% 53% 54% 37% 42% 39% 41% 34% 24% 23% 49% 45% 35% 32%
Congressman — — — 71 — — — — — 64 54 57 61 64 60 56

Approve of the way NBC/WSJ Congress is doing job

NBC/WSJ Congress 68% 57 59 — 61 55 — — — — — — — — — —
Congressman — — — — — — — — — — — — — — —

Congress/Congressman doing excellent/pretty good job

Harris Congress 35% 64% 71% 54% 41% 34% 32% 26% 21% 29% 38% 26% 22% 28% 34% 32%
Congressman — — — — — — — — — — — — — — —


What effect will dissatisfaction with Congress have in November? Individual members are more highly rated than the body, but some questions suggest that generalized dissatisfaction may be having an effect on the traditionally favorable reelection prospects for one's own member.

Question: Do you approve or disapprove of the way the U.S. Congress is handling its job? Do you approve or disapprove of the way the representative from your own congressional district is handling his or her job?

![Graph showing approval ratings over time](image)

*Source: Surveys by the Gallup Organization, latest that of March 25-27, 1994, for USA Today and CNN.*

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*Registered voters:

— Likely voters:

* Likely voters.
Widespread Dissatisfaction

Americans don't give Congress sustained, regular attention and questions asked about reelection months before the fact produce different pictures. Still, widespread dissatisfaction with the body may prompt a majority to say (though not necessarily act on the sentiment) that a new person deserves a chance in their district.

**Question:** I am going to read a few statements. For each, please tell me whether you tend to agree or disagree. First, do you agree or disagree that…?

- **Generally speaking, those we elect to Congress in Washington lose touch with the people pretty quickly.**
  - Agree: 80%
  - Disagree: 18%
  - No opinion: 2%
  

**Question:** Compared to twenty years ago, would you say Congress is more corrupt, less corrupt, or have things not changed much one way or the other?

- Congress is more corrupt than twenty years ago: 49%
- Things have not changed much: 30%
- Less corrupt: 7%
- No opinion: 8%

**Source:** Survey by the Gallup Organization for USA Today and CNN, May 31, 1994.

**Question:** Please tell me whether or not you think each of the following political officeholders deserves to be reelected.

- **U.S. representative in your congressional district:**
  - Deserves to be reelected: 60%
  - Does not deserve to be reelected: 23%
  - No opinion: 17%

**Source:** Survey by NBC News/Wall Street Journal, April 30-May 3, 1994.

**Question:** Looking ahead to this year's election for U.S. Congress, do you feel your representative deserves to be reelected, or do you think it is time to give a new person a chance?

- Feel your representative deserves to be reelected: 34%
- It is time to give a new person a chance: 50%
- Not sure: 16%

**Source:** Survey by the Gallup Organization for USA Today and CNN, March 25-27, 1994.

**Question:** Now, thinking specifically about the U.S. Congress for a moment—some people say it is time to send a message to Washington that the American people are unhappy with the way things are being run by voting against every single incumbent up for reelection in 1994. Do you agree or disagree?

- Agree: 41%
- Disagree: 53%
- 6% Unsure

**Source:** Survey by Mellman-Lazanis-Lake and the Tarrance Group, December 6-8, 1993.

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**Note:** Twenty-four percent agreed strongly; 30% disagreed strongly
Here and Abroad

In the United States, the United Kingdom, and Italy, legislative bodies fare poorly in terms of being considered a good influence on the way things are going in the country. Congress trails many other institutions and groups on this dimension in the United States.

Question: "I'd like your opinion of some groups and developments in the (country name here). For each that I name tell me if you think they are having mainly a good influence on the way things are going in this country or a mainly bad influence on the way things are going in this country."

Congress/Parliament/National Assembly is having a...on the way things are going in this country

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U.S. responses

Good influence

- Computers/technology: 85%
- Newspapers: 74%
- Church/religion/religious authorities: 73%
- Newscasts of live events: 73%
- Television network news: 71%
- Radio: 71%
- Military: 71%
- United Nations: 67%
- Environmentalists: 67%
- Women's movement/feminists: 59%
- Business executives/management: 44%
- Trade unions/labor unions: 42%
- Congress: 39%
- Investors from other countries: 33%
- Movies/films: 27%
- TV shows/TV variety shows: 25%
- Rock music: 21%

Note: Volunteered "both" and "neither" responses not shown.
Source: Surveys were coordinated by the Times Mirror Center for the People and the Press (U.S.) and conducted during January 1994 by Princeton Survey Research Associates (U.S.), Environics Research Group (Canada), Liberation (France), the Emnid Institute (Germany), the CIRM Institute (Italy), El Norte (Mexico), Demoscopia (Spain), and Social Surveys (Gallup Poll) Ltd. (United Kingdom).