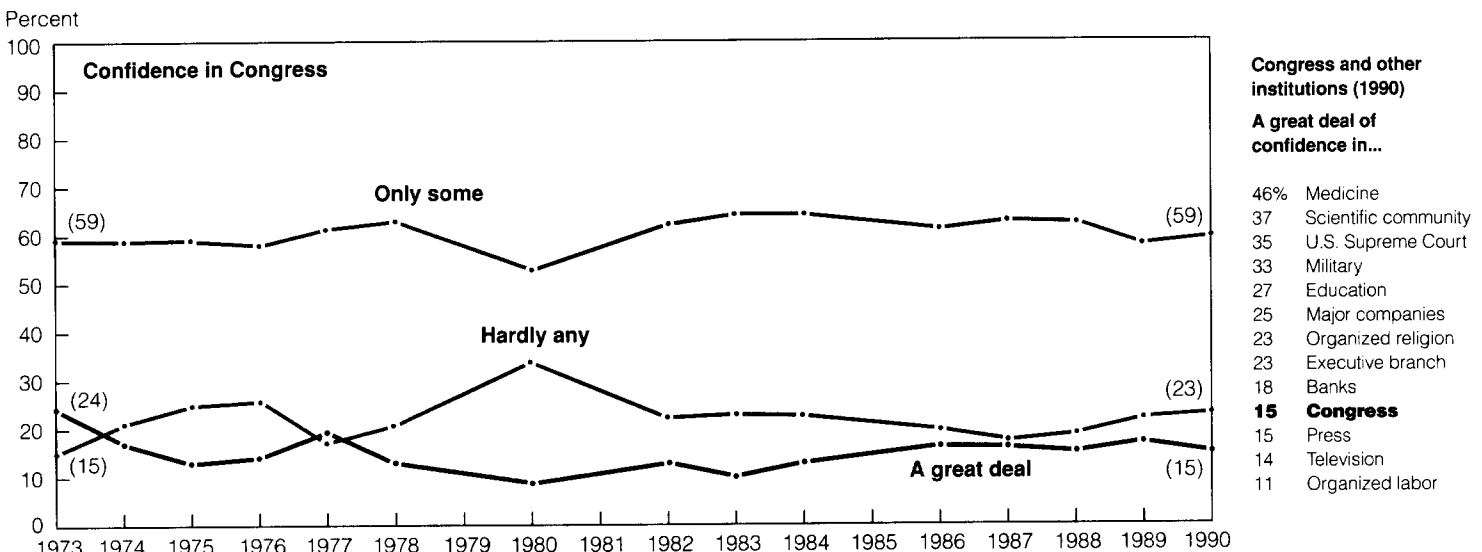


# THE PUBLIC'S CRITIQUE OF CONGRESS

The 102nd Congress will face the task of reversing the public's vote of "little confidence" registered in the following pages. The number of Americans saying they have "a great deal of confidence" in Congress has dropped from 24 to 15 percent over the past two decades and Congress's ranking relative to other institutions has slipped, too.

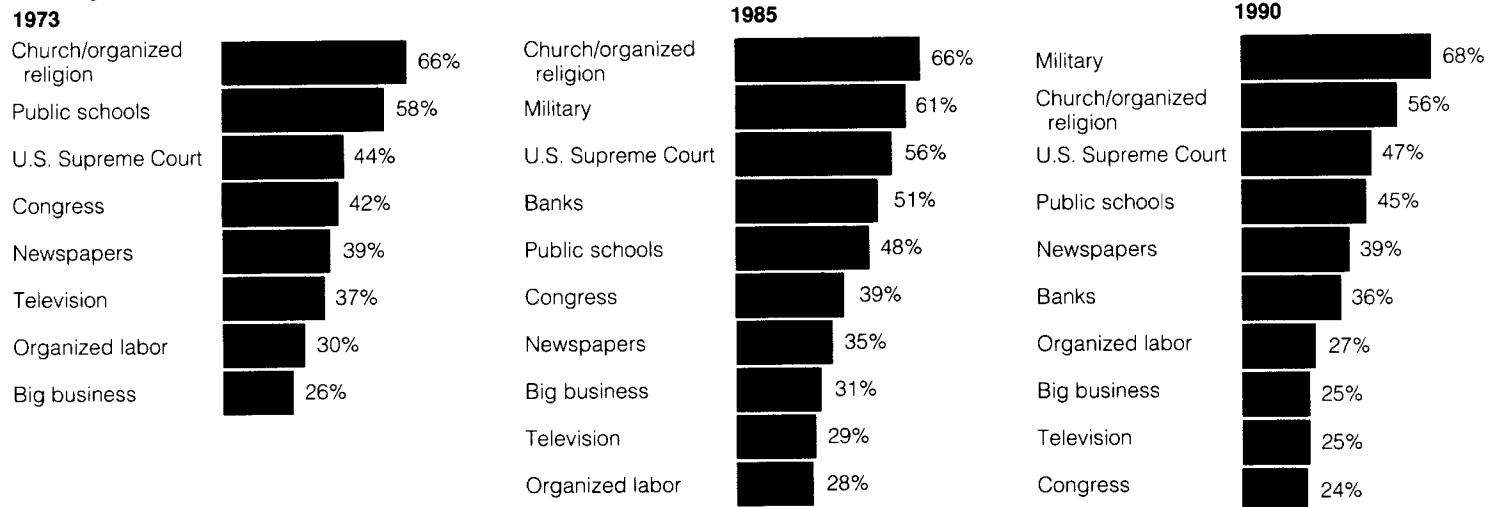
Question: I am going to name some institutions in this country. As far as the people running these institutions are concerned, would you say you have a great deal of confidence, only some confidence, or hardly any confidence at all in them?



Source: Surveys by the National Opinion Research Center, latest that of February-April, 1990.

Question: I am going to read you a list of institutions in American society. Please tell me how much confidence you have in each one—a great deal, quite a lot, some, or very little?

## Have a great deal/quite a lot of confidence in...



Note: Banks and Military not asked in 1973.

Source: Surveys by the Gallup Organization, latest that of August 16-19, 1990.

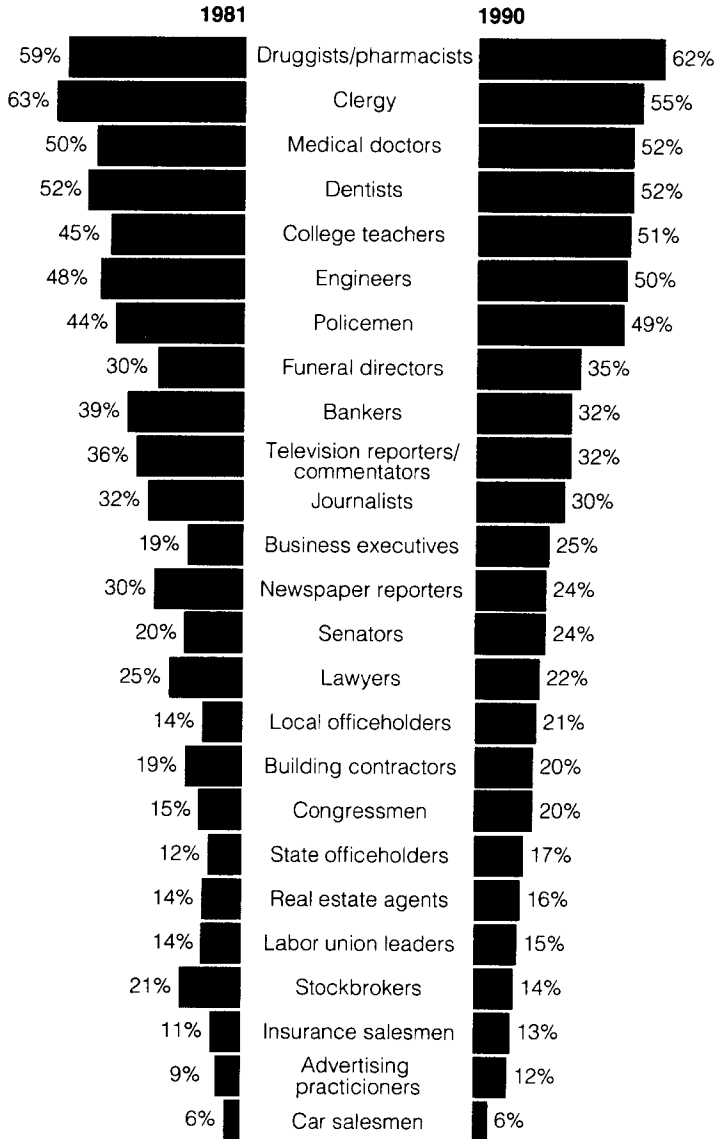
# Ethical Standards

Most people are dubious about the ethical standards of members of Congress. More than seven in ten Americans think congressmen would lie to protect themselves and that they care more about special interests than about Americans in general. While comparisons of the president to the Congress are tricky, it is evident that the latter's standing is comparatively low.

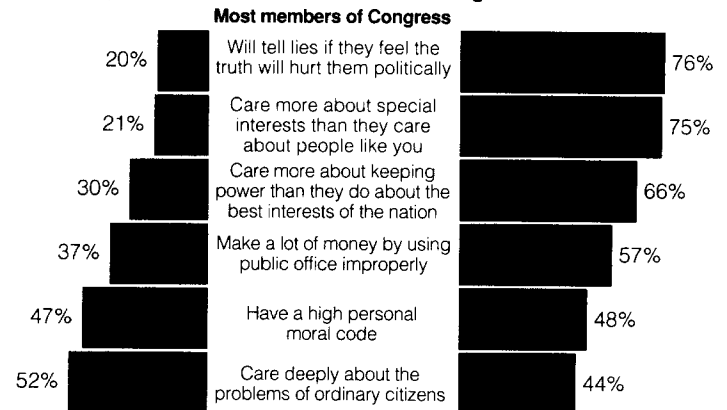
Question: **How would you rate the honesty and ethical standards of people in these different fields—very high, high, average, low, or very low?**

Question: **I am going to read a few statements. For each can you please tell me if you tend to agree or disagree with it, or if, perhaps, you have no opinion about that statement.**

## Rate honesty and ethical standards of... very high/high



## Disagree that ...



## Agree that ...

Source: Survey by ABC News/Washington Post, May 19-23, 1989.

Question: **Do you approve or disapprove of the way George Bush is handling his job as president?**

Question: **Do you approve or disapprove of the way Congress is handling its job?**

## Approve of the way ... is handling job



Note: 33% of respondents disapprove of the way Bush is handling his job and 63% disapprove of the way Congress is handling its job.

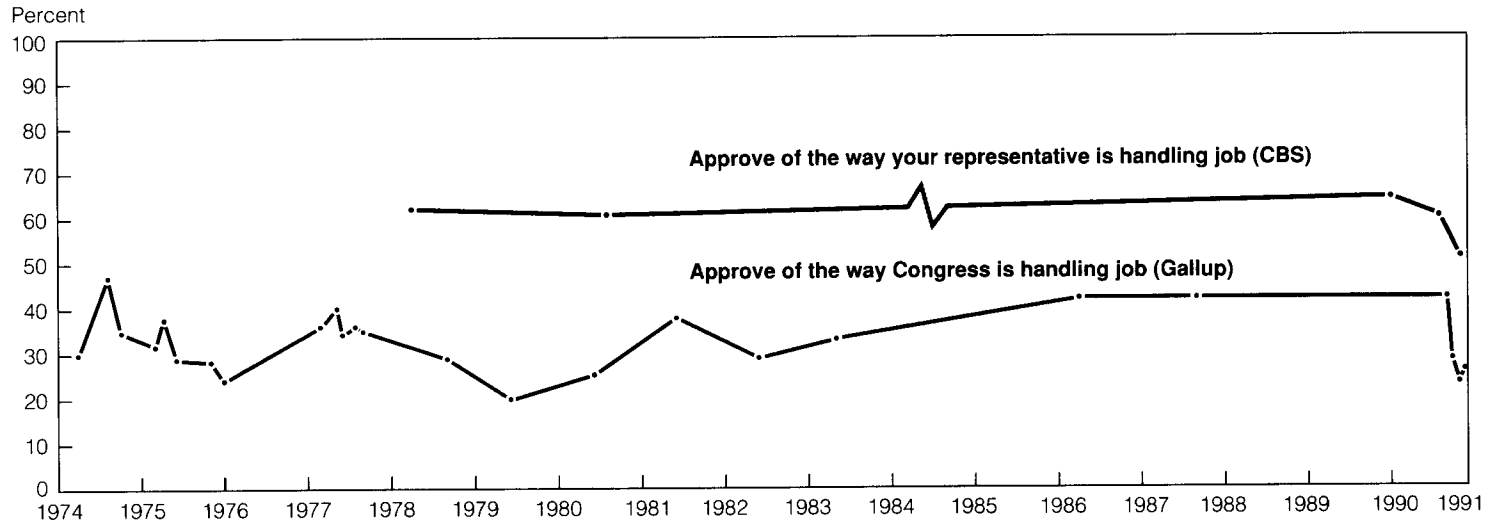
Source: Surveys by the Gallup Organization, November 15-18, 1990 (Bush), November 1-4, 1990 (Congress).

Source: Surveys by the Gallup Organization, latest that of February 8-11, 1990.

# Congress, My Congressman

Americans consistently rate the performance of their own congressmen higher than that of Congress as an institution. Yet the public's discontent with Congress and congressmen alike grew in 1990.

Question: **Do you approve or disapprove of the way Congress is handling its job? (Gallup) Do you approve or disapprove of the way your representative in Congress is handling his or her job? (CBS/NYT)**



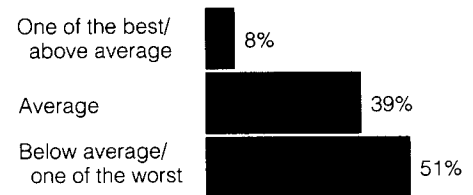
Source: Surveys by the Gallup Organization, latest that of November 1-4, 1990, and CBS News/*New York Times*, latest that of October 28-31, 1990.

## Approve of the way Congress/your representative is doing job

	Apr. 1974	Aug. 1974	Oct. 1974	Mar. 1975	Apr. 1975	Jun. 1975	Nov. 1975	Jan. 1976	Mar. 1977	May 1977	Jun. 1977	Aug. 1977	Sep. 1977
Gallup Congress	30%	47%	35%	32%	38%	29%	28%	24%	36%	40%	34%	36%	35%
Gallup Congressman	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	55	—	—	—	—
	Sep. 1978	Jun. 1979	Jun. 1980	Jun. 1981	Jun. 1982	May 1983	Apr. 1986	Sep. 1987	Aug. 1990	Oct. 1990	Oct. 1990	Oct. 1990	Nov. 1990
Gallup Congress	29	20	25	38	29	33	42	42	—	42	28	23	26
Gallup Congressman	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	66	55	49	61	55
	Aug. 1974	Jun. 1975	Jun. 1977	Sep. 1978	Jun. 1979	Jun. 1981	May 1983	Jun. 1985	Jun. 1987	Jan. 1988	Feb. 1989	May 1989	Jun. 1989
ABC/WP Congress	48	29	34	29	19	38	33	54	56	43	53	54	37
ABC/WP Congressman	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	71	—
	Aug. 1989	Jan. 1990	Feb. 1990	Oct. 1990									
ABC/WP Congress	42	39	41	34									
ABC/WP Congressman	—	—	—	64									
	Apr. 1978	Aug. 1980	Oct.* 1982	Jan.* 1990	Aug. 1990	Oct. 1990	Oct. 1990						
CBS/NYT Congress	31	32	33	42	38	27	23						
CBS/NYT Congressman	62	61	—	64	60	—	51						

Question: **How would you rate the overall performance and accomplishments of this year's Congress—one of the best, above average, below average, or one of the worst?**

## Would rate overall performance and accomplishments of this year's Congress as ...



## Excellent/pretty good

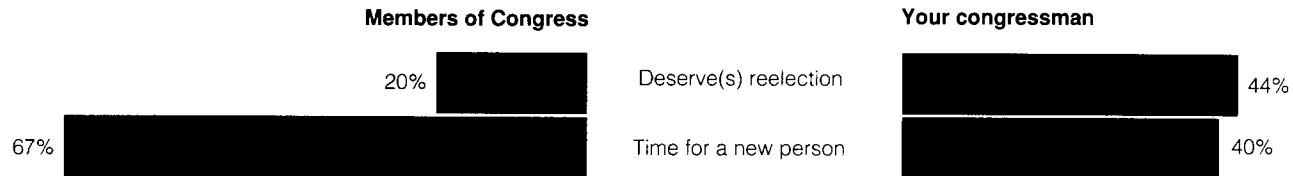
	Nov. 1978	Mar.* 1980	Jul. 1980	Oct. 1981	Oct.* 1982	Jun. 1985	Jul. 1985	Sep.* 1988	Jun. 1989	Nov. 1989	Dec. 1989	Jun. 1990	Jul. 1990
Harris Congress	24	26	20	42	26	53	47	43	46	37	40	46	34
Harris Congressman	57	50	53	53	58	63	59	63	63	—	55	—	52

Note: \* = Registered voters (CBS/NYT) or likely voters (Harris). ABC News/*Washington Post*: Do you approve or disapprove of the way (Congress/your representative to the U.S. House in Congress) is (doing/handling his or her) job? CBS News/*New York Times*: Do you approve or disapprove of the way Congress is handling its job? Harris: How would you rate the job (being done by Congress/your congressman right here in this district)—excellent, pretty good, only fair, or poor?

Source: Survey by Hart-Teeter Research Companies for NBC News/*Wall Street Journal*, October 19-21, 1990

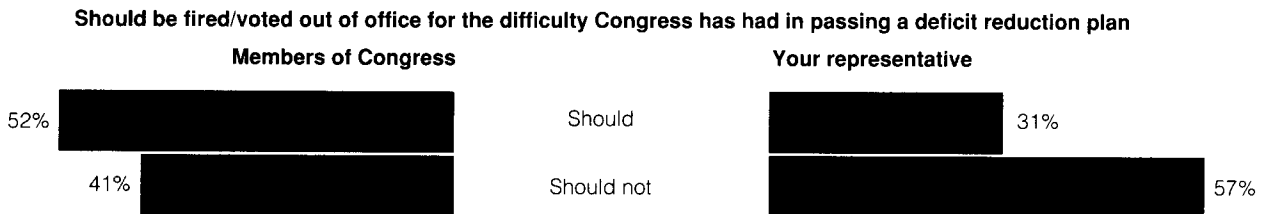
Misgivings about whether one's own representative deserves reelection are clearly visible.

Question: **Do you think the representative in Congress from your district has performed his or her job well enough to deserve reelection, or do you think it's time to give a new person a chance? Regardless of how you feel about your own representative, do you think most members of Congress have done a good enough job to deserve reelection, or do you think it's time to give new people a chance?**



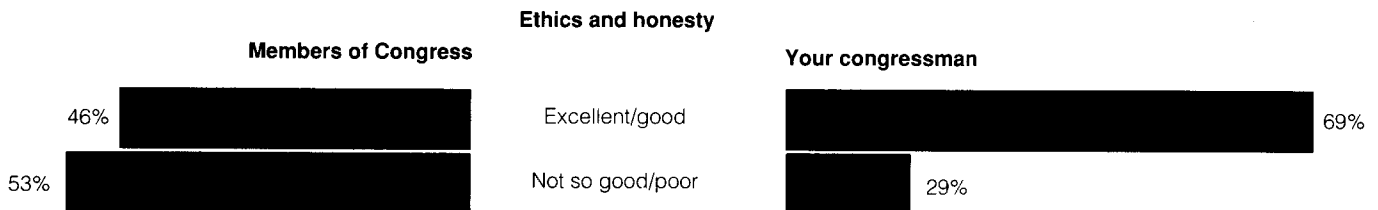
Note: In a NBC News/Wall Street Journal survey conducted October 19-21, 1990, 39% of respondents said their representative deserves reelection, 48% said it is time to give a new person a chance.  
 Source: Survey by CBS News/New York Times, October 8-10, 1990.

Question: **If you could, do you think the American people should fire Congress for the difficulty it has had in passing a deficit reduction plan? Do you think that your representative should be voted out of office for the difficulty Congress has had in passing a deficit reduction plan?**



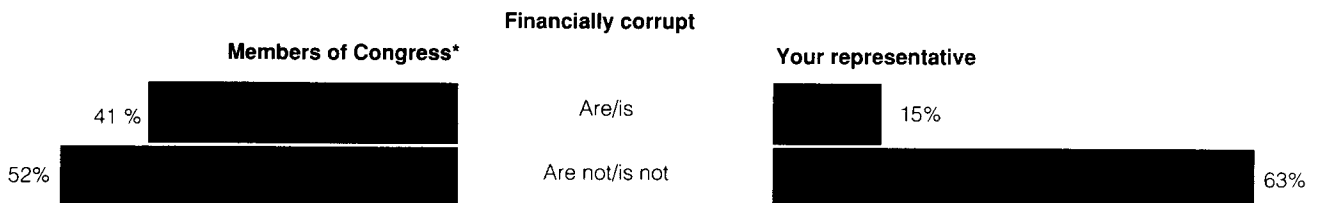
Source: Survey by Yankelovich Clancy Shulman for Time/Cable News Network, October 10, 1990.

Question: **Would you rate the level of ethics and honesty of (members of Congress/your congressman) as ...**



Source: Surveys by ABC News/Washington Post, May 19-23, 1989 (congressman), January 11-16, 1990 (Congress).

Question: **Now think about all the members of the U.S. House and Senate. How many of them do you think are financially corrupt—most, about half, some, or hardly any? Do you think the representative in Congress from your district is financially corrupt, or not?**

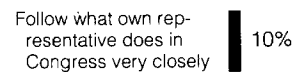


Note: \* Response = "Most" or "About half" = corrupt and "Some" or "Hardly any" = not corrupt.  
 Source: Survey by CBS News/New York Times, August 16-19, 1990.

# Public Scrutiny, Divided Government

Ratings of one's own representative may benefit from low public scrutiny—only 10 percent say they follow very closely what their representative does in Congress.

Question: **How closely do you follow what your own representative to the U.S. House of Representatives does in Congress—very closely, somewhat closely, not too closely, or not closely at all?**



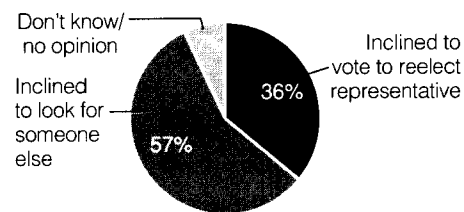
**Note:** 51% said "somewhat closely."  
**Source:** Survey by ABC News/Washington Post, October 10-14, 1990.

Question: **Do you happen to know whether your own congressman voted for or against that budget deficit reduction plan (proposed by Bush and leaders of Congress)?**



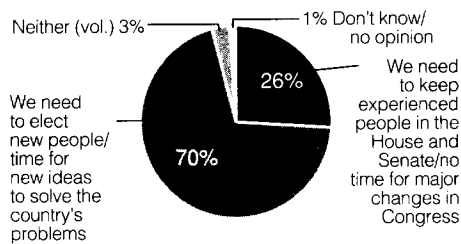
**Note:** In a NBC News/Wall Street Journal poll of October 19-21, 21% approved of the job Congress "is doing handling the problems surrounding the federal budget". 71% disapproved.  
**Source:** Survey by CBS News, October 7, 1990.

Question: **Right now are you inclined to vote to reelect your representative in Congress in the next election or are you inclined to look around for someone else to vote for?**



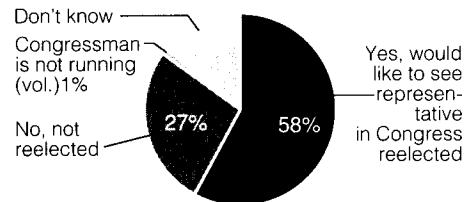
**Source:** Survey by ABC News/Washington Post, October 10-14, 1990.

Question: **Which of the following two statements comes closest to the way you feel?**



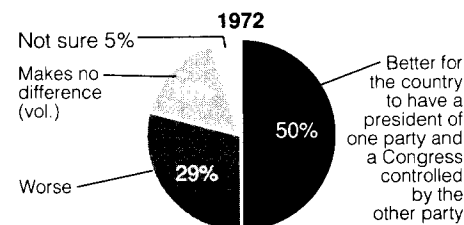
**Source:** ABC News/Washington Post, September 6-9, 1990.

Question: **Would you like to see your representative in Congress be reelected in November, or not?**



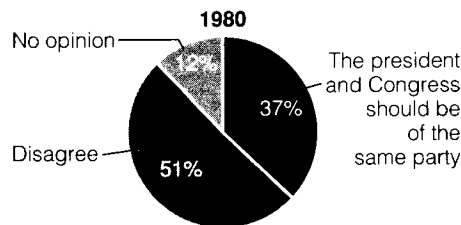
**Source:** Survey by the Gallup Organization for Newsweek, October 11-12, 1990.

Question: **As you know, the country has a Republican president and a Congress controlled by the Democrats. Do you think it is better or worse for the country to have a president of one party and a Congress controlled by the other party, or doesn't it make a difference?**



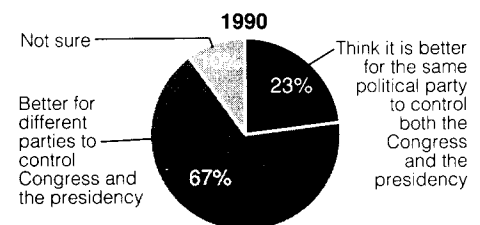
**Source:** Survey by Louis Harris and Associates, November 21-22, 1972.

Question: **Some people say that when a president and a Congress are of opposite political parties it gives balance to our government. Others say that with the problems we face, we need a president and Congress to be of the same political party to enact laws efficiently and quickly. Do you agree or disagree and how strongly, the president and Congress should be of the same party to enact laws efficiently and quickly?**



**Source:** Survey by Civic Service, Inc., February 1-15, 1980.

Question: **In general, do you think it is better for the same political party to control both the Congress and the presidency, so they can work together more closely, or do you think it is better to have different political parties controlling the Congress and the presidency, to prevent either one from going too far?**

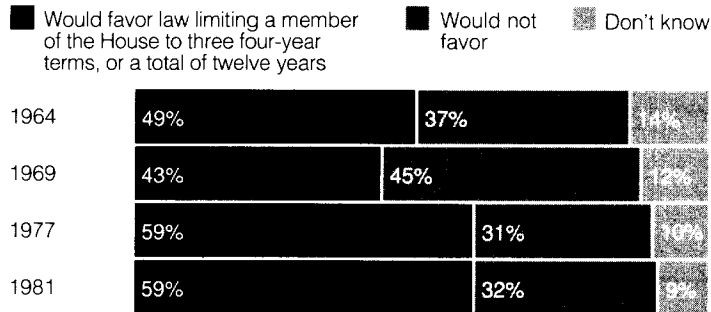


**Source:** Survey by Hart-Teeter Research Companies for NBC News/Wall Street Journal, October 19-21, 1990.

# Term Limits

Dissatisfaction with Congress's performance leads to support for term limits. In California and Colorado, voters affirmed this general sentiment by passing measures limiting the service of state elected officials.

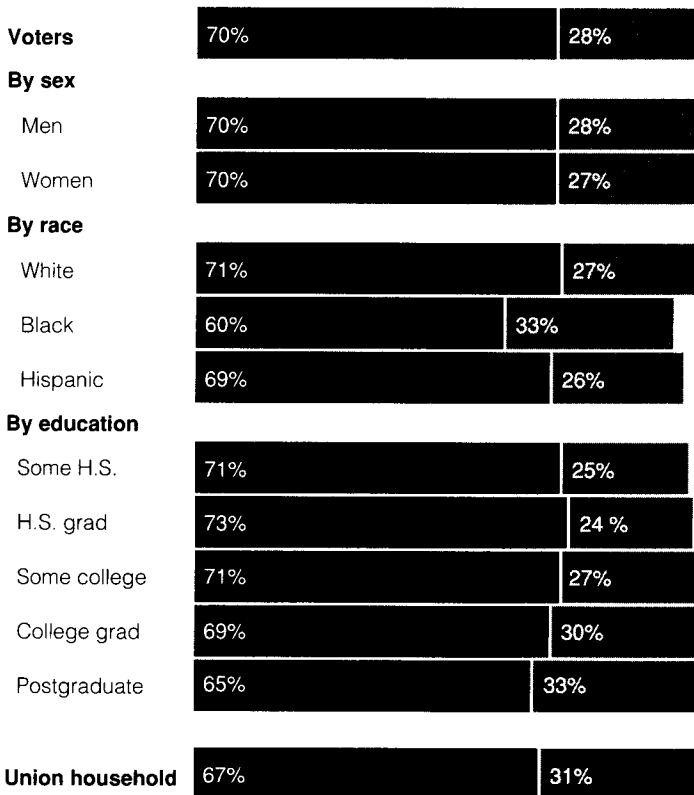
Question: **A law has been proposed which would limit a member of the House of Representatives to three terms of four years apiece, or a total of 12 years. Would you favor or oppose such a law?**



Source: Surveys by the Gallup Organization, latest that of April 3-6, 1981.

Question: **Should there be ...**

■ Limits on the number of years a member of Congress can serve    ■ No limits



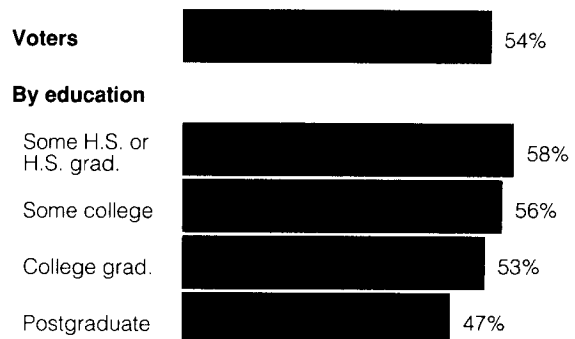
Note: Sample = 9,001 voters as they left voting booths. In a NBC News/Wall Street Journal survey conducted December 8-11, 1990, 74% of respondents favored a limit on the number of terms a senator or member of Congress can serve.

Source: Voter Research and Surveys, November 6, 1990.

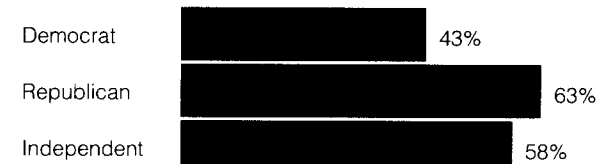
Question: **How did you vote on the following propositions?**

**California, Proposition 140 [Passed]**

**Limit service to 8 years in the State Senate, 6 years in the State Assembly, and limit legislative benefits and spending**



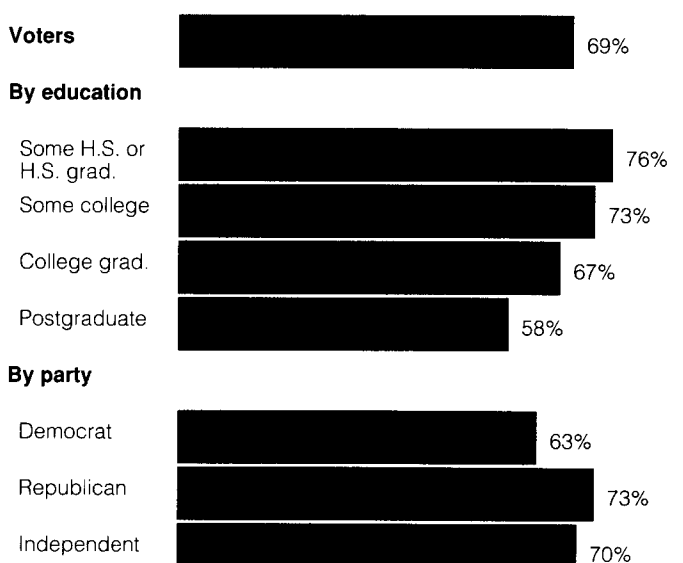
**By party**



Question: **How did you vote on the following propositions?**

**Colorado, No. 5 [Passed]**

**Limit the number of consecutive terms that may be served by state elected officials**



Source: Survey by Voter Research and Surveys, November 6, 1990.