

TWO VIEWS OF THE MOST IMPORTANT PROBLEM AT THE START OF THE CLINTON ADMINISTRATION: IT DEPENDS ON HOW YOU ASK IT

Question: What do you think is the **most** important problem facing this country today? **Source:** PSR/Times Mirror, April 1-4, 1993.

	%
Economy (general)	20
Unemployment	18
Deficit	17
Health care	13
Crime/Drugs	9
Morality/Ethics/Values	6

Note: Multiple responses allowed.

Question: What do you think are the **two** most important issues for the government to address? **Source:** Louis Harris and Associates, March 4-10, 1993.

	%
Health care	35
Deficit	26
Economy (general)	26
Employment/jobs	20
Taxes	15
Crime/drugs	9
Education	9
Domestic/social issues	8

PUBLIC OPINION AT PRESIDENTS' BEGINNINGS: TRUMAN TO CLINTON

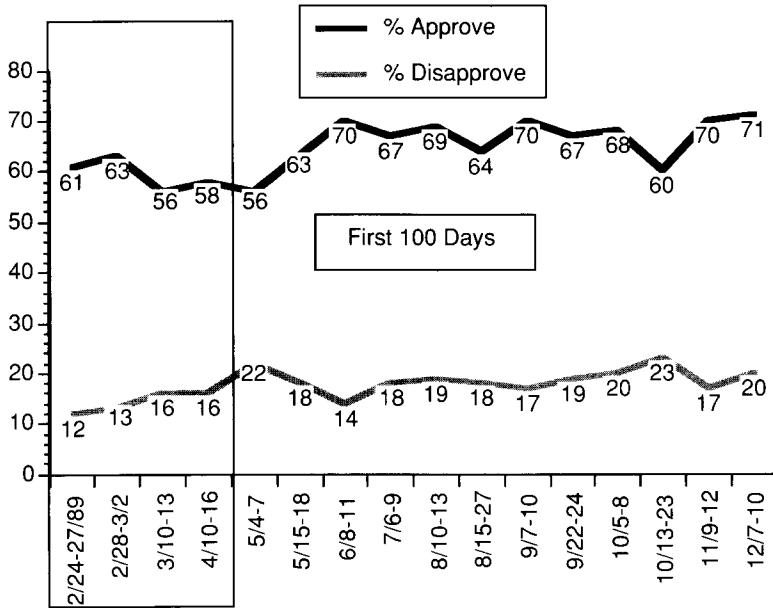
Editor's Note: The first hundred days of a presidency have no magical properties for predicting long-term success or failure. Still, this span is a time for important first impressions. The conclusion of Bill Clinton's first hundred days finds him getting lower approval ratings from the American public than any new president since Franklin Roosevelt, with the possible exception of Gerald Ford. The Yankelovich Partners poll of April 28-29 showed just 48% approving Clinton's presidential performance, 39% disapproving. The Princeton Survey Research survey for *Newsweek* of April 29-30 got an almost identical reading: 46% approving, 37% disapproving. A complete listing of the other surveys asking about Clinton's performance as president may be found in the Public Opinion Report of this issue, page 90.

In the next pages, we take a snapshot of public opinion at the start of eight previous presidencies, from Truman to Bush. (Each page leads with the standard Gallup presidential approval question: "Do you approve or disapprove of the way...is handling his job as President?") The one new presidency not included is that of Ford's. We omit it not because he got low approval scores, but because the terms of his entry into the nation's highest office meant that he could not possibly have enjoyed a "honeymoon." Truman and Johnson did not first win the office on their own, but they entered it with no stigma. Ford came to the presidency under the huge cloud of the Watergate scandal, which saw Richard Nixon, the three-time presidential nominee of the Republican party, forced to resign his office. For the record—while the start of Ford's presidency is fundamentally non-comparable—the Gallup approval scores during Ford's first hundred days are:

	Approve	Disapprove
August 16-29, 1974	71%	3%
September 6-9	66	13
September 27-30	50	28
October 11-14	52	29
October 18-21	54	29
November 8-11	47	33
November 15-18	48	32

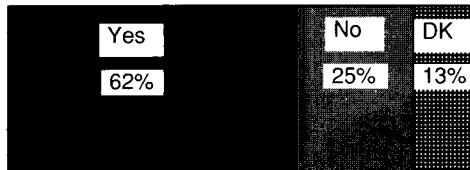
GEORGE BUSH—1989

APPROVAL RATINGS



Yes...

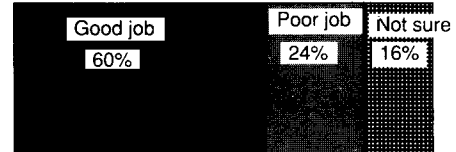
Question: Do you think George Bush has strong qualities of leadership? **Source:** CBS News/*New York Times* April 13-15, 1989.



LEADERSHIP: MIXED READINGS

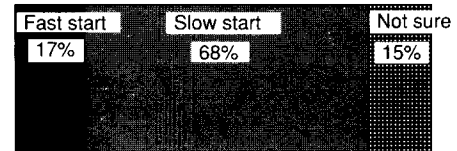
Bush Yes...

Question: Do you think President Bush is doing a good job or a poor job...providing strong leadership for the country? **Source:** Yankelovich/*Time/CNN*, April 4-5, 1989.



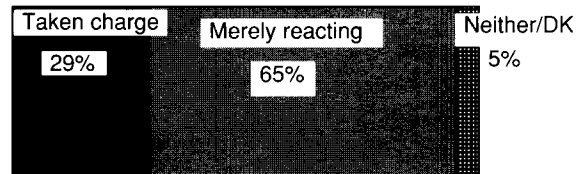
...And No

Question: Do you think the Bush administration is off to a fast start or a slow start in defining its position on the main issues facing the country today? **Source:** Yankelovich/*Time/CNN*, April 4-5, 1989.



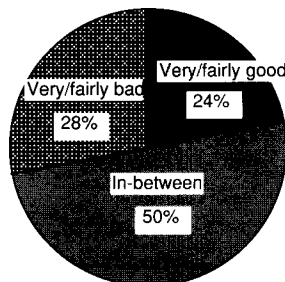
...And No

Question: ...Which...comes closest to your point of view: has [Bush] taken charge or is he merely reacting? **Source:** Gordon Black/*USA Today*, April 12-16, 1989.

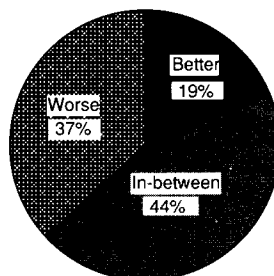


OUTLOOK

Question: Taking into account the cost of living and the money you have to live on, would you say that the economy today is good, or bad, or somewhere in-between?



Question: How about next year? Do you think the economy will be better than it is now, or worse, or about the same as it is today?



Source: *Los Angeles Times*, April 22-25, 1989.

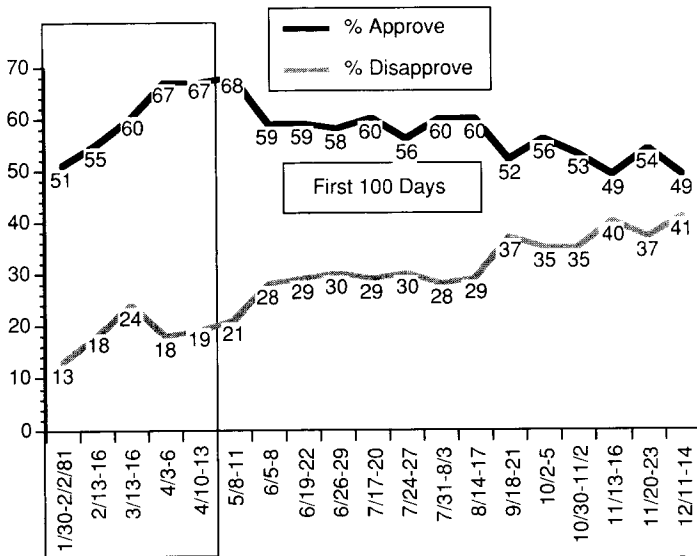
MOST IMPORTANT PROBLEM

Economy	35%
Drug abuse	27
Poverty	10
Crime	6
Moral decline	5

Question: What do you think is the most important problem facing the country today? **Source:** Gallup, May 4-7, 1989. **Note:** Multiple responses allowed.

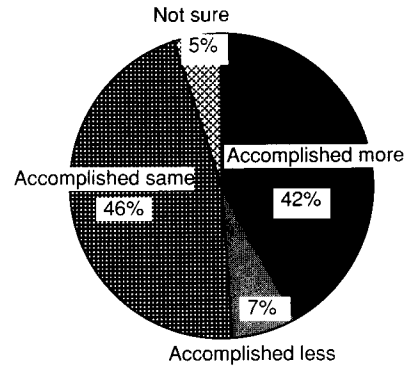
RONALD REAGAN—1981

APPROVAL RATINGS



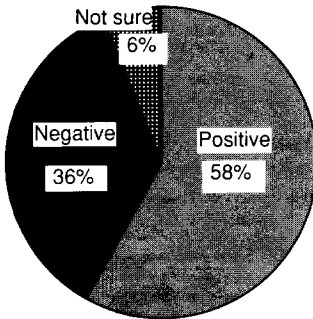
'A' ON LEADERSHIP

Question: Comparing Ronald Reagan to past presidents, do you think he has accomplished more in his first few months in office than past presidents, accomplished less or has he done about the same as other presidents? **Source:** NBC/Associated Press, April 13-14, 1981.

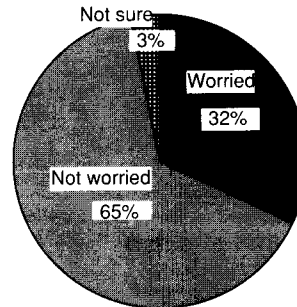


PERFORMANCE AND POLICY

Question: ...How would you rate [President Reagan] on...handling the economy?...**Source:** Louis Harris & Associates, April 29-30, 1981.

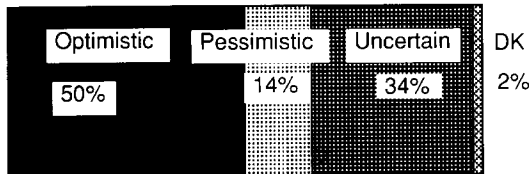


Question: Some people worry that as president, Ronald Reagan might get this country involved in a war. What about you? Are you worried he might get us into a war, or not? **Source:** NBC/Associated Press, February 23-24, 1981.

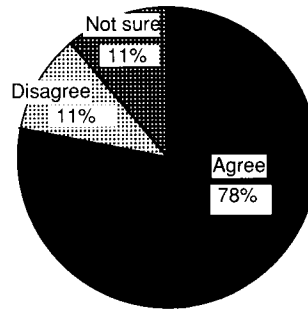


OUTLOOK

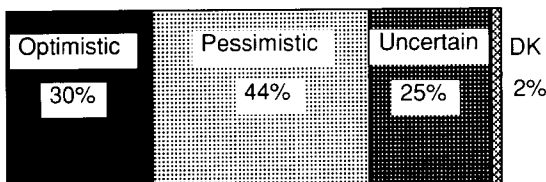
Question: ...Would you say you feel generally optimistic about the future of our country, or generally pessimistic, or that you're uncertain about our country's future? **Source:** Roper Organization, February 14-28, 1981.



Question: Do you agree or disagree...Ronald Reagan is the kind of person who can get things done? **Source:** NBC/Associated Press, February 23-24, 1981.



Question: ...What about...the moral and ethical standards in our country...?



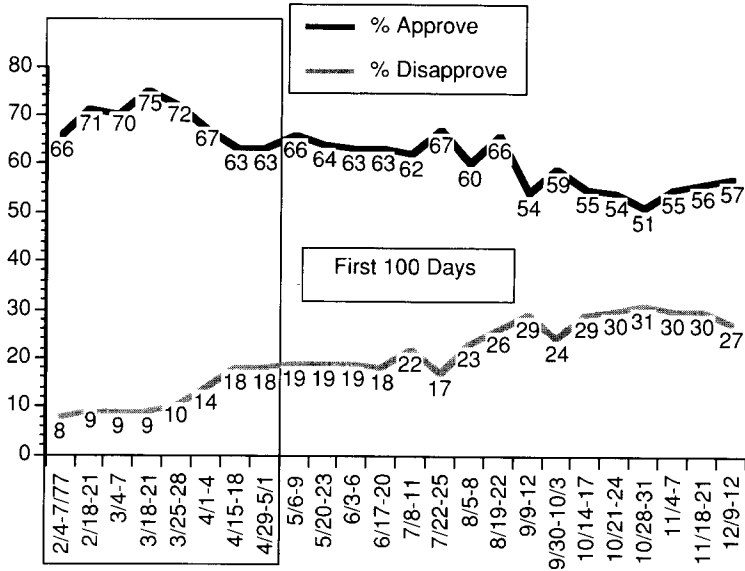
MOST IMPORTANT PROBLEM

Inflation/high cost of living	72%
Unemployment/recession	8
Energy problems/fuel shortages	5

Question: What do you think is the most important problem facing this country today? **Source:** Gallup, January 30-February 2, 1981.

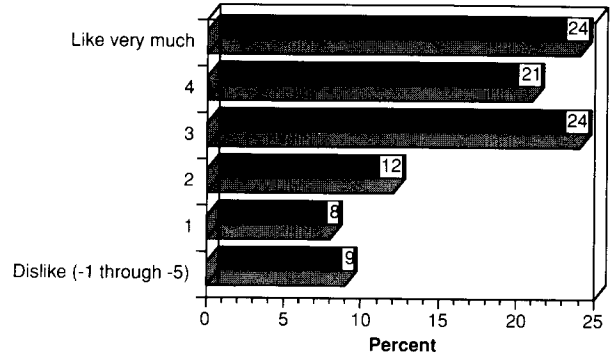
JIMMY CARTER—1977

APPROVAL RATINGS



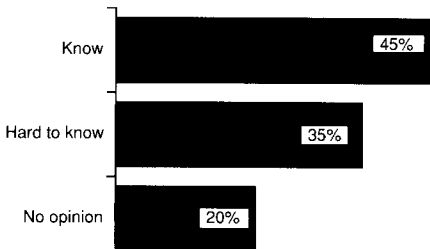
STILL A HONEYMOON

Question: [On a scale of +5 (like very much) to -5 (dislike)]...how far up...or how far down...would you rate...Jimmy Carter? **Source:** Gallup, May 6-9, 1977.

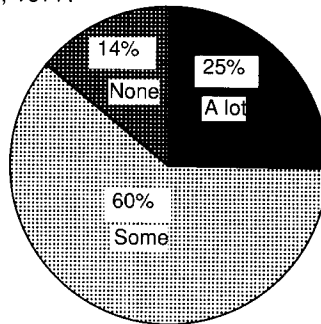


PERFORMANCE AND POLICY

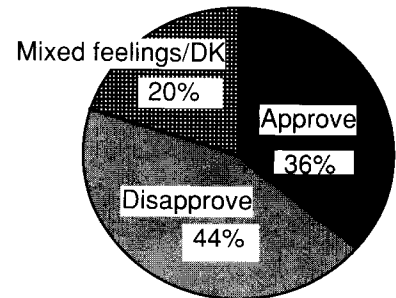
Question:... Please select the term which you feel best describes Carter? You know where he stands on issues; Hard to know where he stands. **Source:** Gallup, February 18-21, 1977.



Question: When it comes to dealing with the economy and inflation do you have a lot of confidence, some confidence or no real confidence in President Carter? **Source:** Yankelovich, Skelly, and White/Time, May 19-23, 1977.

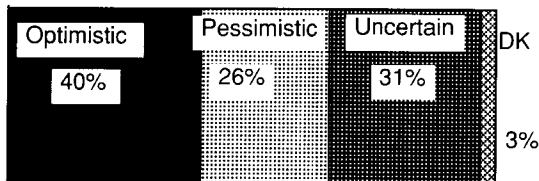


Question: ...Tell me if you approve of President Carter's position, don't approve of it, or have no opinion?...His pardoning of Vietnam draft evaders. **Source:** Roper Organization, March 19-26, 1977.

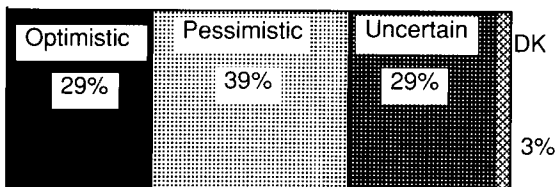


OUTLOOK

Question: [Do you feel generally optimistic, generally pessimistic, or uncertain about...] the economic outlook for the next year or two? **Source:** Roper Organization, February 12-26, 1977.



Question:...the moral and ethical standards in our country?



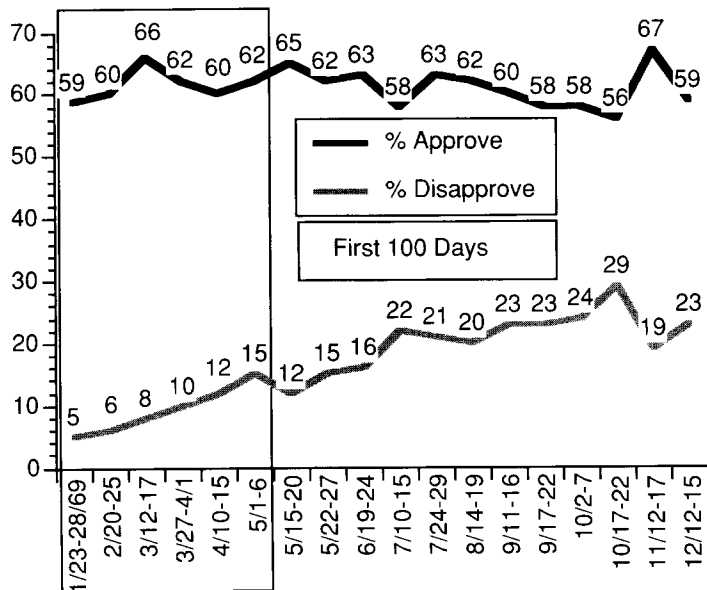
MOST IMPORTANT PROBLEM

Inflation/high cost of living	58%
Unemployment/recession	39
Energy/shortage	23
International problems/national defense	18
Crime/courts	18
Dissatisfaction with gov't/corruption	7
Moral decline	6

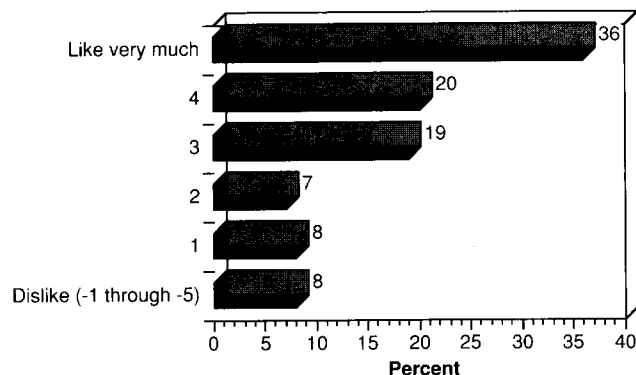
Question: What do you think is the most important problem facing this country today? **Source:** Survey by Gallup, March 18-21, 1977. **Note:** Multiple responses allowed.

RICHARD M. NIXON—1969

APPROVAL RATINGS



THE NIXON HONEYMOON



Question: [On a scale of +5 (like very much) to -5 (dislike)] Please tell me how you would rate...Richard Nixon? **Source:** Gallup, March 12-17, 1969.

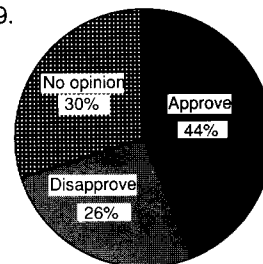
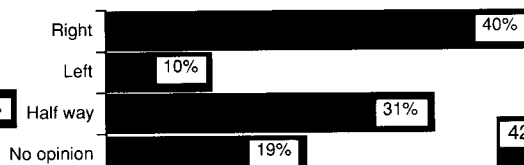
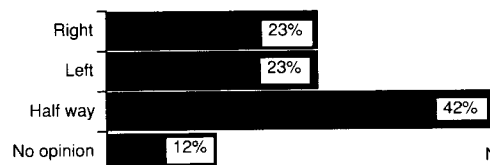
PERFORMANCE AND POLICY

Question: Which of these three policies **would you like** to have President Nixon follow?...

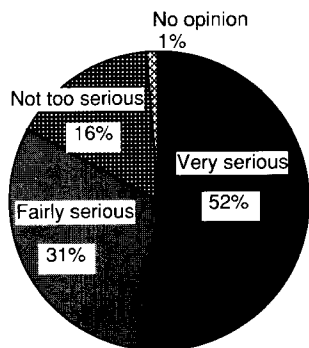
Question: Which of these three policies **do you think** President Nixon will follow?...

Question: Do you approve or disapprove of the way President Nixon is handling the situation in Vietnam? **Source:** Gallup, March 27-April 1, 1969.

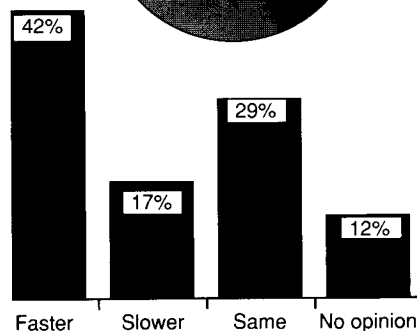
Go more to the right, by following more of the views of business and conservative groups; Go more to the left, by following more of the views of labor and other liberal groups; Follow a policy half way between the two. **Source:** Gallup, January 23-28, 1969.



OUTLOOK



Question: President Nixon has ordered the withdrawal of 25,000 troops from Vietnam in the next three months. ...Do you think troops should be withdrawn at a faster rate, or a slower rate? **Source:** Gallup, June 19-24, 1969.



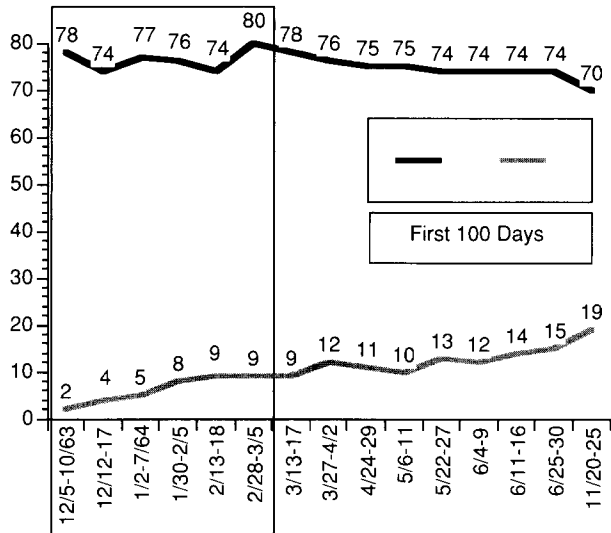
MOST IMPORTANT PROBLEM

Vietnam War	63%
Crime/unrest/riots	18
Economy/cost of living/taxes	6
Poverty	5

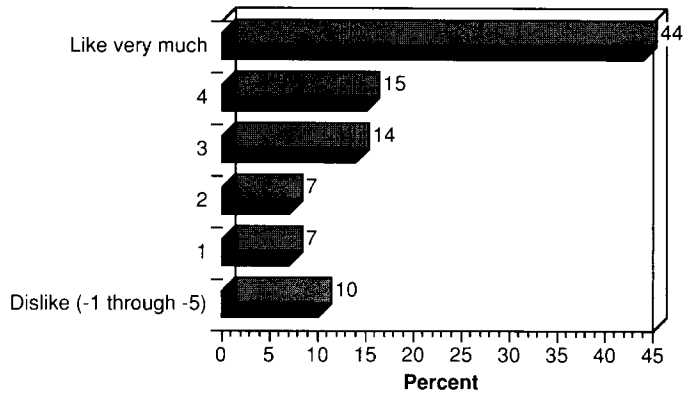
Question: Of all the problems facing the nation, which one do you think the Nixon administration should give most attention to? **Source:** Gallup, April 10-15, 1969.

LYNDON B. JOHNSON—1963

APPROVAL RATINGS



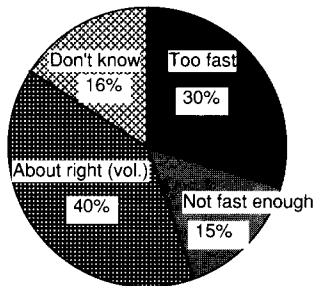
THE JOHNSON HONEYMOON



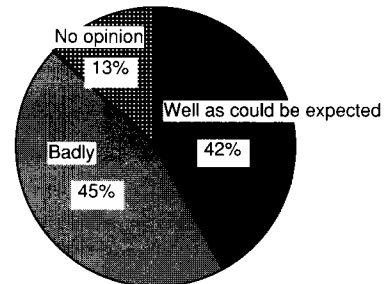
Question: [On a scale of +5 (like very much) to -5 (dislike very much)]...how far up...or how far down...would you rate...Lyndon Johnson? **Source:** Gallup, May 22-27, 1964.

PERFORMANCE AND POLICY

Question: Do you think the Johnson administration is pushing racial integration too fast, or not fast enough? **Source:** Gallup, January 30-February 5, 1964.

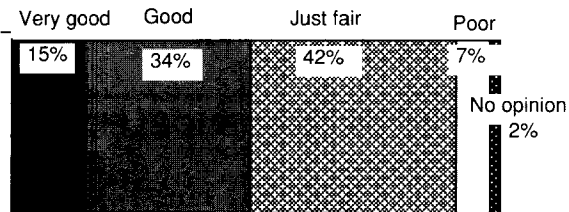


Question: Do you think the U.S. is handling affairs in South Vietnam as well as could be expected, or do you think we are handling affairs there badly? (Asked of those who have paid attention to S. Vietnam developments = 37%) **Source:** Gallup, April 24-29, 1964.

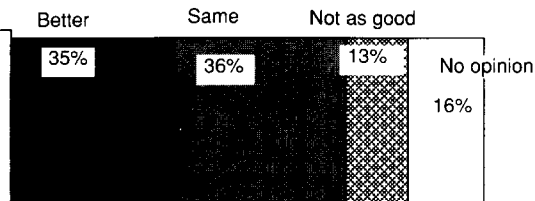


OUTLOOK

Question: How do you feel about the level of prosperity in this part of the nation today...?



Question: How about next year, do you think times will be better than today, or not as good?



Source: Opinion Research Corporation, February-March 1964.

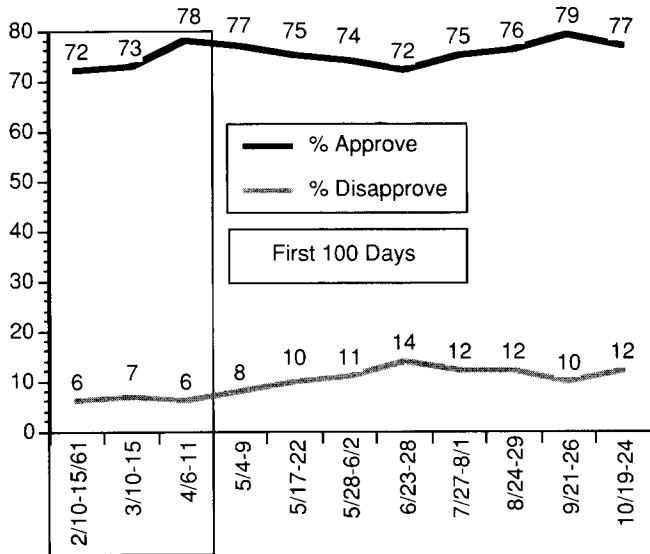
MOST IMPORTANT PROBLEM

Racial discrimination/civil rights	34%
Threat of communism/Russia/Cuba	20
International problems	10
Peace/war	8
Unemployment	8
High cost of living/inflation	6

Question: What do you think is the most important problem facing this country today? **Source:** Gallup, March 27-April 2, 1964.

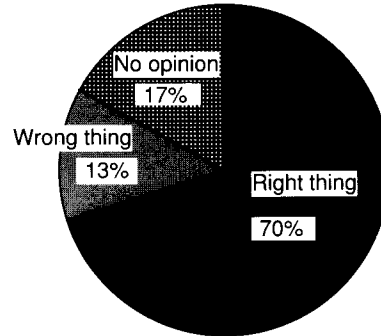
JOHN F. KENNEDY—1961

APPROVAL RATINGS



RIGHT ON CIVIL RIGHTS

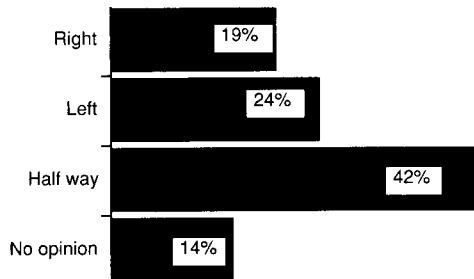
Question: Do you think President Kennedy did the right thing or the wrong thing in sending U.S. Marshals to Montgomery, Alabama? **Source:** Gallup, May 28-June 2, 1961.



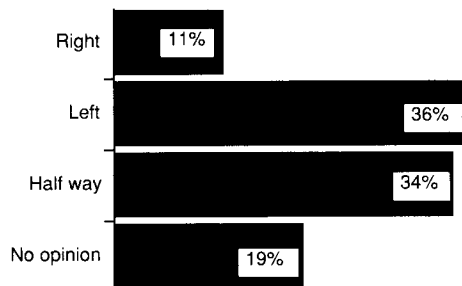
PERFORMANCE AND POLICY

Question: Which of these three policies **would you like** to have President Kennedy follow?:

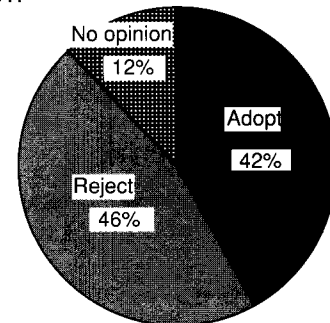
Go more to the right, by following more of the views of business and conservative groups; Go more to the left, by following more of the views of labor and other liberal groups; Follow a policy half way between the two. **Source:** Gallup, April 6-11, 1961.



Question: Which of these three policies do you think President Kennedy **will follow**?

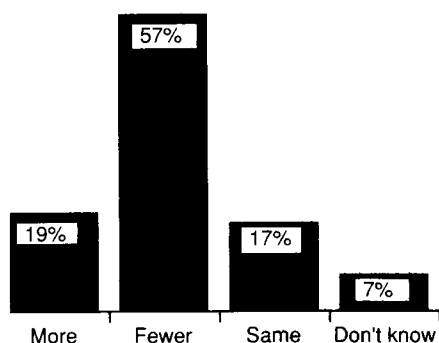


Question: Congress has been asked to approve a program, costing 7 to 9 billion dollars during the next five years, to enable the U.S. to send a man to the moon and bring him back safely. Do you think Congress should adopt the program or reject it? **Source:** Gallup, June 23-28, 1961.



OUTLOOK

Question: Do you think there will be more people out of work or fewer people out of work in this community in the next six months? **Source:** Gallup, April 6-11, 1961.



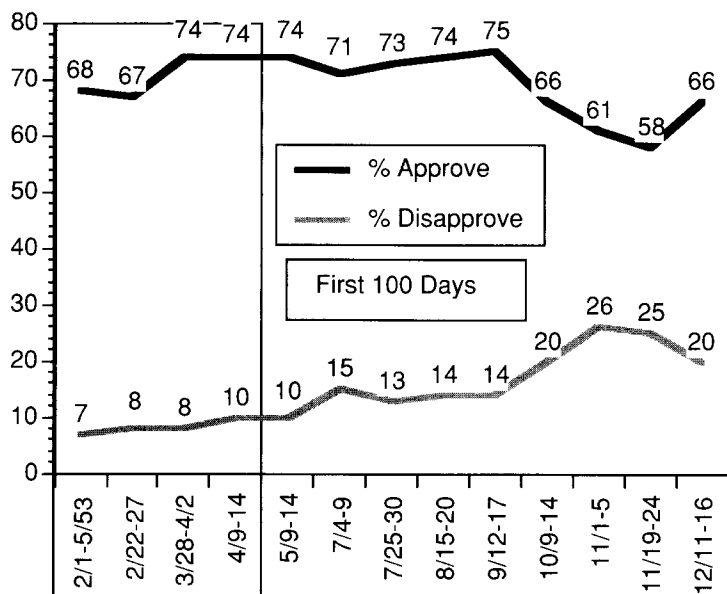
MOST IMPORTANT PROBLEM

Unemployment	25%
Threat of war	19
Threat of communism	14
Foreign relations/getting along with other peoples and nations	10
Relations with Russia (no mention of war threat)	8
Domestic economic problems - general	8
Racial problems	6

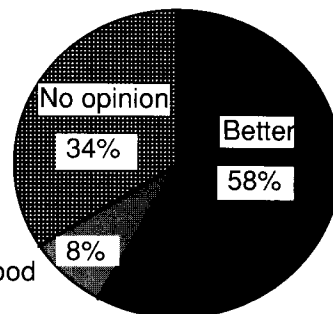
Question: What do you think is the most important problem facing this country today? **Source:** Gallup, February 10-15, 1961.

DWIGHT D. EISENHOWER—1953

APPROVAL RATINGS



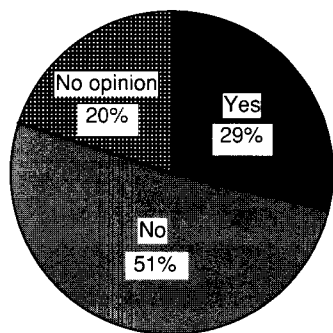
"I LIKE IKE"



Question: From what you've seen so far, do you think the new administration is better or not as good as the last (Truman) one?

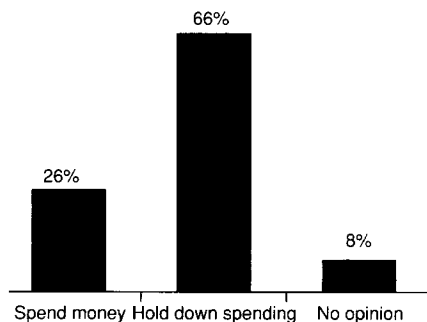
Source: Opinion Research Corporation, February 9-18, 1953.

Question: Do you think Eisenhower has appointed too many men from big business firms to important positions in Washington, or not? **Source:** Gallup, February 1-5, 1953.

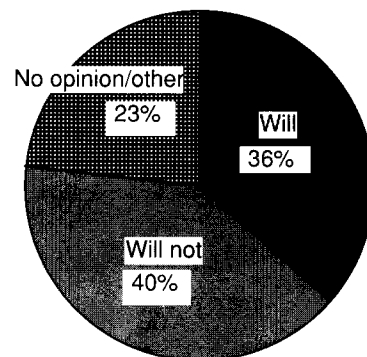


PERFORMANCE AND POLICY

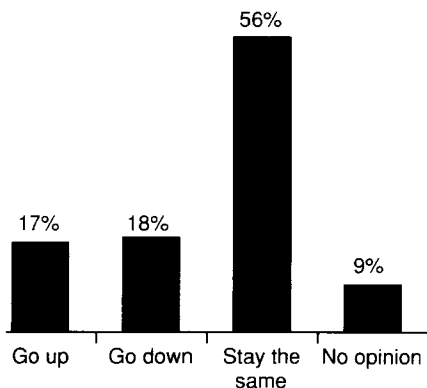
Question: Which do you think is more important at this time—for the federal government to spend money to help employment, or to hold down spending and economize? **Source:** Opinion Research Corporation, April 1953.



Question: Do you think Eisenhower will or will not find some way to end the Korean War within, say, the next year? **Source:** Gallup, February 1-5, 1953.



OUTLOOK



Question: Do you think the wages of the average working man will go up or go down in the next six months? **Source:** Gallup, February 22-27, 1953.

MOST IMPORTANT PROBLEM

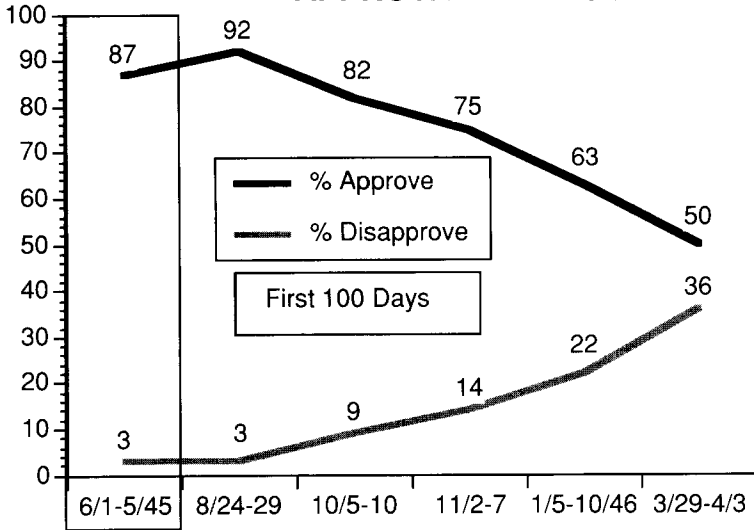
Settling the Korean War	60%
The economy/preventing a depression	41
Reducing taxes	29
Foreign affairs	16
Keeping the peace	12
Communism	8
Efficiency and economy in government	7

Question: In your opinion, what are the main problems facing the country today that the new administration should tackle?

Source: Survey by the Opinion Research Corporation, February 9-18, 1953.

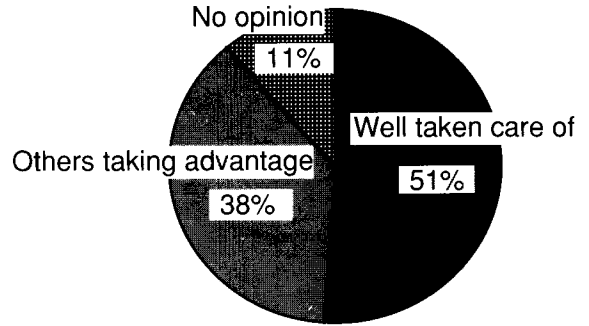
HARRY S. TRUMAN—1945

APPROVAL RATINGS



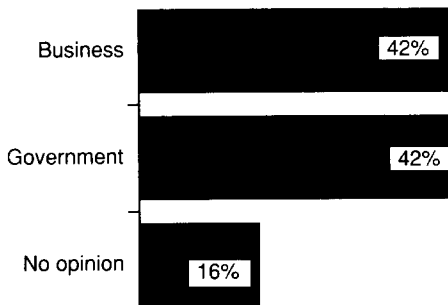
FOREIGN POLICY LEADERSHIP

Question: Do you think this country's interests abroad are being well taken care of by the President and other government officials, or do you think other countries are taking advantage of us? **Source:** National Opinion Research Center, August 1945.



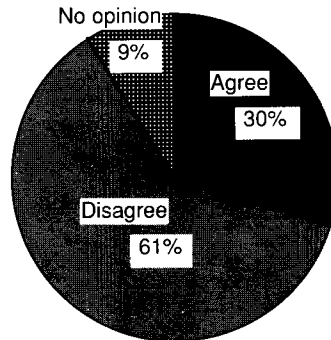
PERFORMANCE AND POLICY

Question: Do you think that business firms in this country will be able to provide enough jobs for nearly everyone during the next five years, or will the government have to step in and provide work like the W.P.A. (Works Progress Administration) or P.W.A. (Public Works Administration)? **Source:** Gallup, August 24-29, 1945.

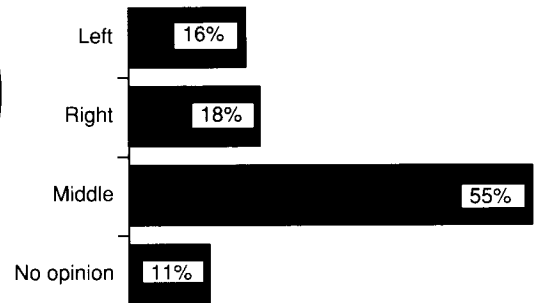


Question: President Truman says that we should not ask for any repayment for lend-lease goods sent to England. Do you agree or disagree with this? **Source:** Gallup, September 8-13, 1945.

Source: Gallup, September 8-13, 1945.

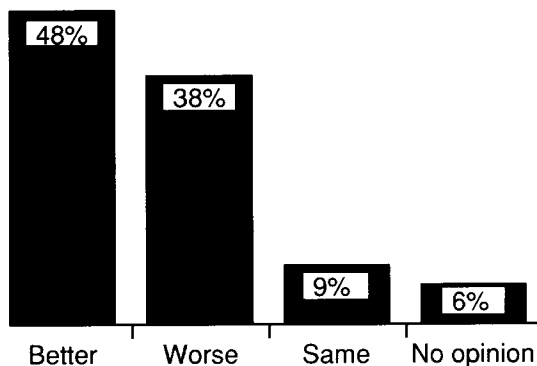


Question: Which of these three policies would you like to have President Truman follow: Go more to the left by following more of the views of labor and other liberal groups; Go more to the right by following more of the views of business and conservative groups; or follow a middle-of-the-road policy? **Source:** Gallup, August 10-15, 1945.



OUTLOOK

Question: Do you think the unemployment situation will be better or worse a year from now? **Source:** Gallup, September 8-13, 1945.



MOST IMPORTANT PROBLEM

Jobs/unemployment	62%
Reconversion/demobilization	17
Peace	5
Labor trouble/strikes	4

Question: What do you think will be the most important problem facing this country during the next year? **Source:** Gallup, August 24-29, 1945.