

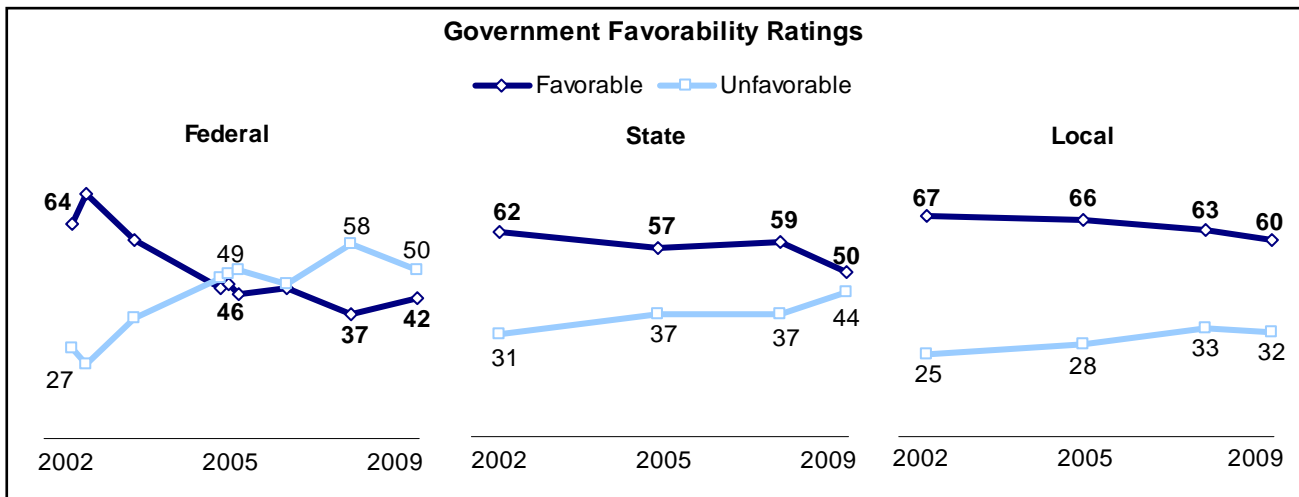


FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:
August 11, 2009

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BUDGET WOES TAKE TOLL ON VIEWS OF STATE GOVERNMENTS

With the economy wreaking havoc on state budgets, the favorability ratings of state governments have declined from a year ago. Overall, 50% of the public now holds a favorable opinion of their state government, down from 59% in April 2008. The falloff in positive views has been greater in states with large and moderate budget shortfalls than in states with smaller budget gaps.



As positive ratings of state governments have declined, people's ratings of their local governments have remained relatively stable. By nearly a two-to-one margin, Americans express a favorable opinion of their local governments (60% favorable, 32% unfavorable), which is largely unchanged from April 2008 (63% favorable).

The latest national survey by the Pew Research Center for the People & the Press, conducted July 22-26, 2009 finds that favorability ratings of the federal government have rebounded somewhat since last year. Currently, 50% have an unfavorable opinion of the federal government while 42% express a favorable view. By comparison, in April 2008 views of the federal government were the lowest they have been in a decade (58% unfavorable, 37% favorable).

Most states are struggling during the recession and nearly all are facing revenue shortfalls. The balance of opinion regarding state governments has turned negative in states with the largest budget gaps – the size of the shortfall relative to the state’s overall budget¹. In the 12 states facing the largest budget gaps, 58% now have an unfavorable view of their state governments while only 38% have a favorable view. In April 2008, opinion was evenly divided in these states (48% favorable, 47% unfavorable).

	Total	State budget gap		
		High	Mid	Low
<i>July 2009</i>	%	%	%	%
Favorable	50	38	52	60
Unfavorable	44	58	40	33
N	1506	481	548	472
<i>April 2008</i>				
Favorable	59	48	64	66
Unfavorable	37	47	35	29
N	747	237	291	218

Q.25b. For budget definitions and listing of states, see note at the bottom of this page.

But the change in opinion is not limited to the states with the biggest budget problems; people in 19 states with more modest budget gaps also are expressing more negative views of their state governments. Currently, a slim majority (52%) in these states has a favorable view while 40% have an unfavorable view. In April 2008, favorable views outnumbered unfavorable ones by a wide margin (64% vs. 35%). By contrast, opinion has remained more stable in the states with the smallest budget gaps. Six-in-ten have a favorable view of their state government while only a third has an unfavorable view.

¹ States were broken into three groups by the size of the budget gap for fiscal year 2010 based on data from [National Conference of State Legislatures](#) and the [Center on Budget and Policy Priorities](#). The group with the highest gaps, where shortfall is 21-35% of their state’s budget, includes CA, NY, NV, AK, AZ, FL, VT, HI, NJ, CT, WA and IL. The middle group (with shortfalls of 12-20.9%) includes NC, WI, LA, ID, RI, CO, ME, OR, KS, AL, MN, SC, VA, PA, UT, DE, GA, MI, and MD. The group with the smallest gaps (shortfall of 11.9% or less) includes the remaining states. Respondents in the District of Columbia were excluded from the analysis.

Partisan Shift in Views of Federal Government

With the change in presidential administrations, partisan views of the federal government have shifted dramatically. Currently, 61% of Democrats have a favorable opinion of the federal government, up from 29% in April 2008. By comparison, favorable views among Republicans have declined from 53% to 24% over the same period. A majority of independents (58%) express negative opinions, relatively unchanged from the spring of last year.

There continues to be much less of a partisan gap in favorability ratings of state and local governments. A majority of Republicans (57%) have a favorable opinion of their state governments, compared with 49% of Democrats and 48% of independents. When asked about their local governments, majorities across partisan lines continue to have favorable opinions.

Partisan Views of Government				
	Dec	Dec	April	July
<i>% favorable</i>	<u>2002</u>	<u>2005</u>	<u>2008</u>	<u>2009</u>
Federal				
Republican	78	69	53	24
Democrat	59	34	29	61
Independent	56	37	34	35
<i>R-D gap</i>	+19	+35	+24	-37
State				
Republican	67	61	64	57
Democrat	63	61	59	49
Independent	59	53	57	48
<i>R-D gap</i>	+4	0	+5	+8
Local				
Republican	75	69	72	70
Democrat	65	67	62	57
Independent	65	66	61	60
<i>R-D gap</i>	+10	+2	+10	+13
Q.25a-c.				

ABOUT THE SURVEY

Results for this survey are based on telephone interviews conducted under the direction of Princeton Survey Research Associates International among a nationwide sample of 1,506 adults, 18 years of age or older, from July 22-26, 2009 (1,129 respondents were interviewed on a landline telephone, and 377 were interviewed on a cell phone, including 114 who had no landline telephone). Both the landline and cell phone samples were provided by Survey Sampling International. 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/ethnicity, region, and population density to parameters from the March 2008 Census Bureau's Current Population Survey. The sample is also 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 2008 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 sample.

The following table shows the error attributable to sampling that would be expected at the 95% level of confidence for different groups in the survey:

Group	Sample Size	Plus or minus...
Total sample	1,506	3.0 percentage points
Republicans	373	6.0 percentage points
Democrats	505	5.0 percentage points
Independents	532	5.0 percentage points

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 CENTER

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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PEW RESEARCH CENTER FOR THE PEOPLE & THE PRESS
JULY 2009 POLITICAL SURVEY / MEDIA UPDATE
FINAL TOPLINE
 July 22-26, 2009
 N=1506

QUESTIONS 1-2, 4-5a, 8-14, 16-17 PREVIOUSLY RELEASED

NO QUESTIONS 3, 15, 18-24

QUESTIONS 6-7 HELD FOR FUTURE RELEASE

ASK ALL:

Q.25 Now I'd like your opinion of some groups and organizations in the news. Is your overall opinion of... **(INSERT ITEM; RANDOMIZE ITEMS a. THROUGH c. FOLLOWED BY RANDOMIZED ITEMS d. THROUGH l.; OBSERVE FORM SPLITS)** very favorable, mostly favorable, mostly UNfavorable, or very unfavorable? **(INTERVIEWERS: PROBE TO DISTINGUISH BETWEEN "NEVER HEARD OF" AND "CAN'T RATE")** How about **(NEXT ITEM)? [IF NECESSARY: would you say your overall opinion of [ITEM] is very favorable, mostly favorable, mostly UNfavorable, or very unfavorable?[INTERVIEWERS: PROBE TO DISTINGUISH BETWEEN "NEVER HEARD OF" AND "CAN'T RATE."]**

		-----Favorable-----			-----Unfavorable-----			(VOL.)	(VOL.)
		<u>Total</u>	<u>Very</u>	<u>Mostly</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>Very</u>	<u>Mostly</u>	Never heard of	Can't rate
a.	The federal government in Washington								
	July, 2009	42	4	38	50	18	31	*	8
	April, 2008	37	6	31	58	21	37	1	4
	January, 2007	45	7	38	46	15	31	1	8
	February, 2006	43	6	37	50	16	34	*	7
	December, 2005	46	7	39	49	18	31	*	5
	Late October, 2005	45	6	39	48	16	32	*	7
	February, 2004	59	10	49	36	11	25	*	5
	April, 2003	73	14	59	22	5	17	0	5
	December, 2002	64	11	53	27	7	20	*	9
	Mid-November, 2001	82	17	65	15	3	12	0	3
	Late October, 2000 (RVs)	54	7	47	40	10	30	*	6
	October, 1997	38	4	34	59	18	41	0	3
b.	Your state government								
	July, 2009	50	6	44	44	16	28	*	6
	April, 2008	59	9	50	37	16	21	0	4
	December, 2005	57	8	49	37	11	26	*	6
	December, 2002	62	15	47	31	10	21	1	7
	Mid-November, 2001	77	15	62	18	4	14	*	5
	October, 1997	66	10	56	29	7	22	*	5
c.	Your local government								
	July, 2009	60	8	52	32	9	23	0	8
	April, 2008	63	11	52	33	12	21	1	3
	December, 2005	66	12	54	28	10	18	*	6
	December, 2002	67	16	51	25	9	16	*	7
	Mid-November, 2001	78	15	63	17	4	13	*	5
	October, 1997	68	12	56	25	7	18	*	7

QUESTIONS 25d-1, 30-40, 57-58 HELD FOR FUTURE RELEASE

NO QUESTIONS 41-47, 56, 59-64

QUESTIONS 48-55, 65-66 PREVIOUSLY RELEASED