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Democrats' Ratings of Party's 2020 Field: Better Than in 2016, Similar to 2008

Early attention to presidential campaign hits a 30-year high

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Democrats' Ratings of Party's 2020 Field: Better Than in 2016, Similar to 2008

Early attention to presidential campaign hits a 30-year high

With a large slate of candidates to choose from and the first primary votes still more than six months off, Democratic voters express relatively high levels of satisfaction with the Democratic candidates as a group.

The election also is attracting more attention and interest than past elections did at similar points in the cycle, with about half of voters saying they have given *a lot* of thought about the presidential candidates – higher than at this point in the 2008, 2012 or 2016 elections.

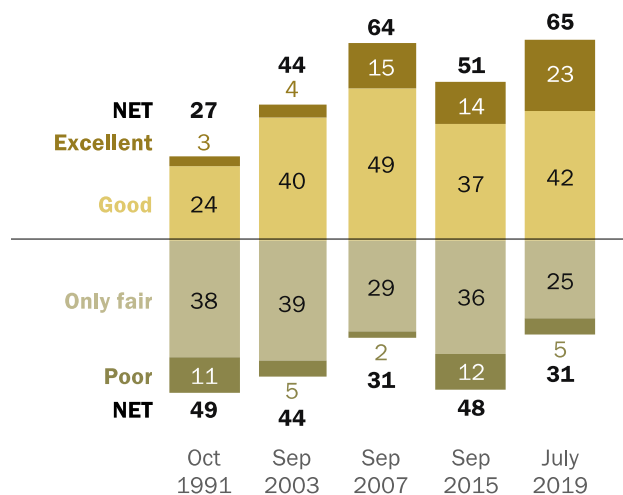
And among the general public, a record share says they have been closely following news about the 2020 candidates – more so than in any of the previous eight election cycles.

Today, roughly two-thirds of Democratic and Democratic-leaning registered voters (65%) say they have an excellent (23%) or good (42%) impression of the Democratic candidates as a group. By comparison, in September 2015, only about half of Democratic voters (51%) said the same.

The current positive evaluations of the 2020 field are roughly on par with levels expressed at a similar point in the 2008 election cycle, when 64% of Democratic voters said they had a positive impression of the field.

Democratic voters' assessments of party's 2020 field are more positive than at a similar point in 2016 cycle

% of **Dem/Lean Dem registered voters** who say they have an ___ impression of the candidates running for the Democratic presidential nomination



Notes: Based on registered voters. Don't know responses not shown.

Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted July 10-15, 2019.

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The new Pew Research Center survey of 1,502 U.S adults, including 1,245 registered voters, conducted July 10-15 also finds there are gender, age, educational and ideological differences in Democratic impressions of the party's field.

Among Democratic and Democratic-leaning registered voters, about seven-in-ten women (71%) say they have an excellent or good impression of the Democratic candidates as a group, while a smaller share of men (55%) say the same.

There are only modest differences in these views among Democratic voters by age, with those ages 65 and older offering slightly more positive evaluations than younger Democratic voters.

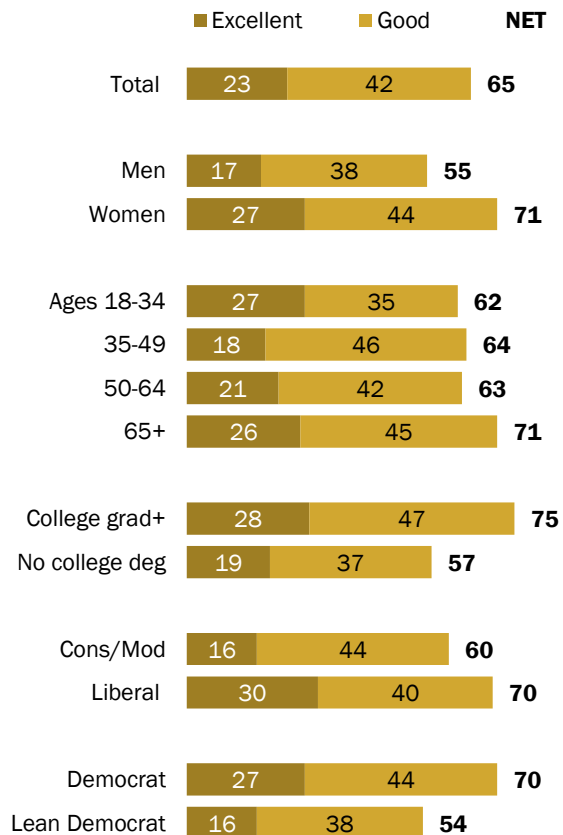
Democrats with a college degree offer more positive assessments of the field than those with less education: Three-quarters of Democratic voters with a college degree or more say they have an excellent or good impression of the field, while 57% of those with no college degree say the same.

Liberal Democratic voters are more likely than conservatives and moderates to say they have a positive impression of the candidates (70% vs. 60%).

And while 70% of Democratic identifiers express positive views of the field of candidates for the party's nomination, a narrower majority (54%) of those who lean toward the Democratic Party say this.

Among Democratic voters, gender and ideological gaps in views of candidates

% of **Dem/Lean Dem voters** who have a ___ impression of the Democratic candidates



Note: Based on registered voters.

Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted July 10-15, 2019.

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About half of voters – in both parties – say they’ve given election a lot of thought

Today, about half of voters (52%) say they have given *a lot* of thought about the presidential candidates – the highest share at this early point in an election cycle since the question was first asked in the run-up to the 2008 election.

Similar majorities of both Republican and Democratic voters say they have given a lot of thought to the 2020 candidates running for president (55% and 52%, respectively).

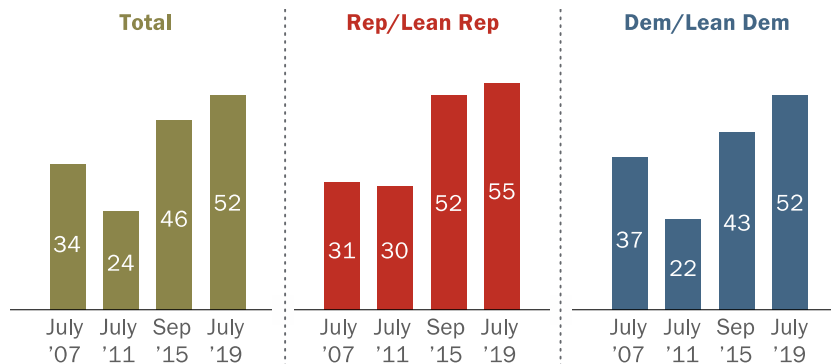
Among registered Democratic and Democratic-leaning voters, the shares who say they have given *a lot* of thought to

the candidates is higher than the shares who said this at similar points in the previous three election cycles. Today, about half of Democratic voters say this (52%), compared with smaller shares in 2015 (43%), 2011 (22%) and 2007 (37%).

Republican voters are about as likely to say they’ve thought about the 2020 candidates as they were in September 2015 – when there were over 15 candidates running for the GOP presidential nomination.

Comparable shares of Democrats, Republicans say they have given ‘a lot’ of thought to 2020 candidates

% of registered voters who say they have given **a lot** of thought to candidates who are running for president



Note: Based on registered voters.

Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted July 10-15, 2019.

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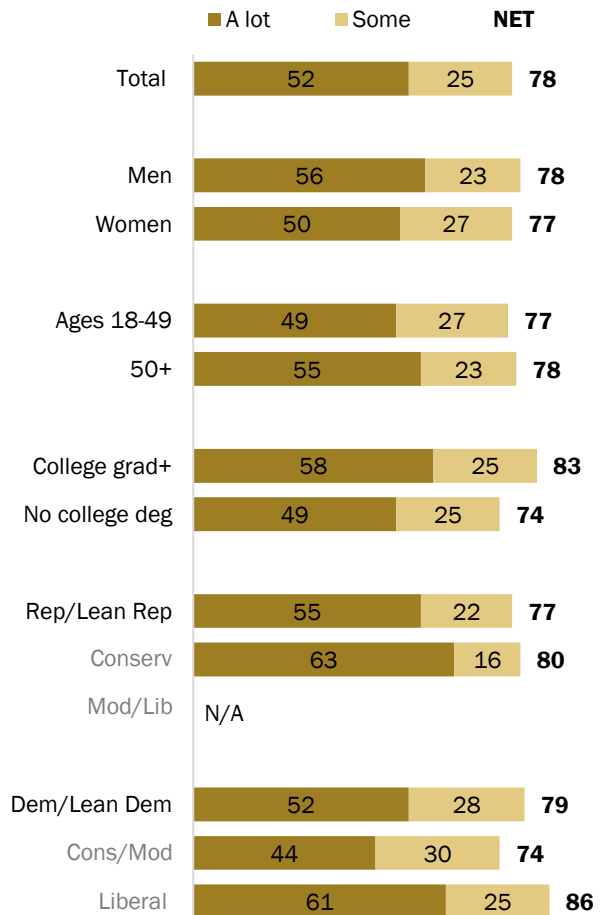
There are only modest gender or age differences in the amount of thought given to the upcoming election. However, as in past elections, college graduates are more likely than those without a college degree to say they have given a lot of thought to the election.

More ideological partisans are also more likely to say they are paying a lot of attention to the candidates: 63% of conservative Republican and Republican-leaning voters say they have given a lot of thought to the 2020 candidates, compared with just 55% of Republican voters overall.

By a 17-percentage point margin, liberal Democratic voters are more likely than conservative and moderate Democratic voters to say they have thought a lot about the 2020 field (61% to 44%, respectively).

More educated, ideological voters say they have thought about 2020 field

% of **registered voters** who say they have given ___ of thought about the 2020 presidential candidates



Notes: Based on registered voters. Moderate/Liberal Republican numbers not shown because of low sample size.

Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted July 10-15, 2019.

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Attention to the presidential election at this point in the cycle is also at a historic high in Pew Research Center surveys dating back more than three decades. Today, 63% of all U.S. adults say they have been following news about candidates for the 2020 presidential election very or fairly closely. This is 9 points higher than in August of 2015, and 10 or more points higher than similar points for all elections dating back to when this question was first asked in 1987.

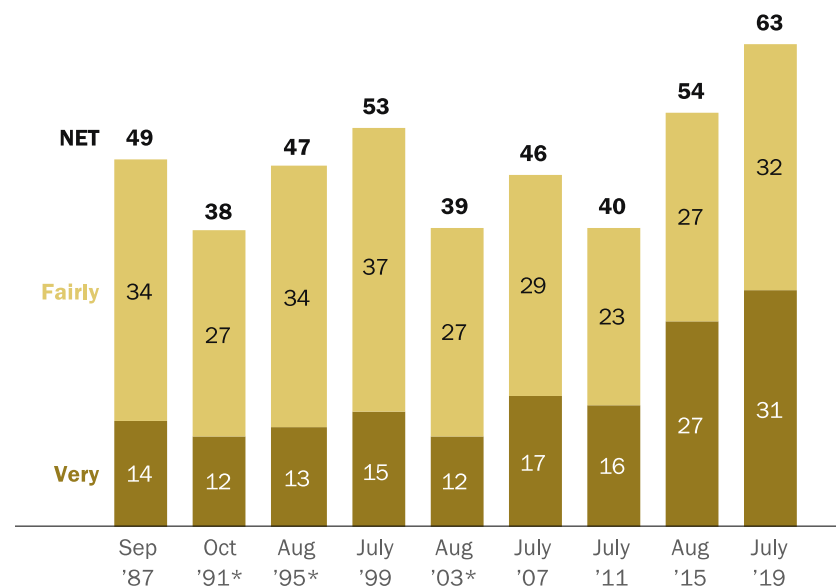
In the past, attention to presidential candidates was generally higher in election years when both political parties held primary contests. For example, early interest in news about candidates was higher in 2015 and 2007 than it was in 2011 – when only one party held primaries for the presidential nomination.

But the 2020 election cycle is the first in which a majority of adults say they are paying at least fairly close attention to the election cycle, despite there being an incumbent president seeking reelection.

Both Republicans and Democrats report higher interest in news about the candidates relative to previous elections.

Public attention to early stage of presidential campaign at three-decade high in 2020

% of U.S. adults who say they have been following news about candidates for the presidential election ___ closely



Notes: Based on all U.S. adults. In August 2003 and October 1991, question asked about the Democratic nomination. In August 1995, question asked about the Republican nomination. See topline for full trend and question wording.

Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted July 10-15, 2019.

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Early interest in the presidential cycle among Democrats and Democratic-leaning adults is at a record high. About two-thirds (66%) say they have been following news about candidates very or fairly closely, higher than the shares who said this at comparable points in the elections of 2016 (55%), 2012 (35%) and 2008 (55%).

But even as Democrats register historic interest in the election, Republicans also report that they are closely following news about candidates.

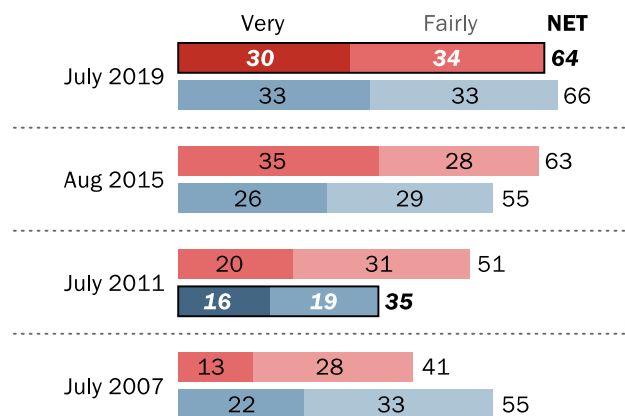
Among Republican and Republican-leaning adults, 64% say they have been following news about the candidates very or fairly closely – much higher than the share of Democrats who reported this in July 2011 (35%), when Barack Obama was seeking a second term in office. This is also roughly similar to the share who said this in August 2015 (63%) or July 2011 (51%).

High interest in 2020 campaign extends to both Republicans and Democrats

% of U.S. adults who say they have been following news about candidates for the presidential election ___ closely

■ Rep/Lean Rep ■ Dem/Lean Dem

□ **Party of incumbent president running for reelection**



Note: Based on all U.S. adults.

Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted July 10-15, 2019.

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Acknowledgements

This report is a collaborative effort based on the input and analysis of the following individuals:

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Methodology

The analysis in this report is based on telephone interviews conducted July 10-15, 2019 among a national sample of 1,502 adults, 18 years of age or older, living in all 50 U.S. states and the District of Columbia (302 respondents were interviewed on a landline telephone, and 1,200 were interviewed on a cell phone, including 807 who had no landline telephone). The survey was conducted by interviewers under the direction of Abt Associates. A combination of landline and cell phone random digit dial samples were used; both samples were provided by Survey Sampling International, LLC. 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. The weighting procedure corrected for the different sampling rates. For detailed information about our survey methodology, see <http://www.pewresearch.org/methodology/u-s-survey-research/>.

The combined landline and cell phone sample is weighted using an iterative technique that matches gender, age, education, race, Hispanic origin and nativity and region to parameters from the Census Bureau's 2017 American Community Survey one-year estimates and population density to parameters from the decennial census. The sample also is weighted to match current patterns of telephone status (landline only, cell phone only, or both landline and cell phone), based on extrapolations from the 2018 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 among respondents with a landline phone. The margins of error reported and statistical tests of significance are adjusted to account for the survey's design effect, a measure of how much efficiency is lost from the weighting procedures.

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

Survey conducted July 10-15, 2019

Group	Unweighted sample size	Plus or minus ...
Total sample	1,502	3.0 percentage points
<i>Half-form</i>	750	4.2 <i>percentage points</i>
Rep/Lean Rep	691	4.4 percentage points
<i>Half-form</i>	341	6.3 <i>percentage points</i>
Dem/Lean Dem	683	4.4 percentage points
<i>Half-form</i>	341	6.3 percentage points
<i>Among registered voters ...</i>		
Total registered voters	1,245	3.3 percentage points
<i>Half-form</i>	615	4.7 <i>percentage points</i>
Rep/Lean Rep RV	602	4.7 percentage points
<i>Half-form</i>	291	6.8 <i>percentage points</i>
Dem/Lean Dem RV	564	4.9 percentage points
<i>Half-form</i>	280	6.9 <i>percentage points</i>

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.

Pew Research Center undertakes all polling activity, including calls to mobile telephone numbers, in compliance with the Telephone Consumer Protection Act and other applicable laws.

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**PEW RESEARCH CENTER
JULY 2019 POLITICAL SURVEY
FINAL TOPLINE
JULY 10-15, 2019
N= 1,502**

QUESTIONS 1, 10 HELD FOR FUTURE RELEASE

NO QUESTIONS 2-9, 11-15

ASK FORM 1 [N=750]:

Thinking about the 2020 presidential election...

Q.16F1 How closely have you been following news about candidates for the 2020 presidential election? **[READ IN ORDER]**

July 10-15,
2019

31	Very closely
32	Fairly closely
21	Not too closely
16	Not at all closely
*	Don't know/Refused (VOL.)

[For past election cycles click here](#)

ASK FORM 2 [N=752]:

Thinking about the 2020 presidential election...

Q.17F2 How much thought, if any, have you given to candidates who are running for president in 2020? **[READ IN ORDER]**

	<u>A lot</u>	<u>Some</u>	<u>Not much</u>	<u>None at all</u>	(VOL.) <u>DK/Ref</u>
July 10-15, 2019	47	26	15	12	1
2016 Presidential Election					
Jan 7-14, 2016 ¹	47	30	14	9	1
Dec 8-13, 2015	48	26	12	12	1
Sep 22-27, 2015	39	26	17	17	1
May 12-18, 2015	25	33	21	20	1
Mar 25-29, 2015	22	28	26	23	1
2012 Presidential Election					
Feb 8-12, 2012	44	25	16	13	1
Jan 11-16, 2012	38	27	19	16	1
Jan 4-8, 2012	31	30	18	19	1
Nov 9-14, 2011	36	26	21	15	1
Sep 22-Oct 4, 2011	29	29	22	19	2
Aug 17-21, 2011	27	30	23	18	1
Jul 20-24, 2011	20	29	27	23	1
May 25-30, 2011	23	30	27	19	1
2008 Presidential Election					
February, 2008	48	29	10	11	2
January, 2008	44	32	11	11	2
December, 2007	35	33	13	18	1
November, 2007	34	35	16	14	1
October, 2007	30	37	17	14	2
September, 2007	27	33	21	17	2
July, 2007	30	38	16	15	1
June, 2007	29	34	20	16	1
April, 2007	26	34	21	17	2
March, 2007	24	36	20	18	2
February, 2007	24	34	22	18	2
December, 2006	23	36	20	20	1

NO QUESTION 18

¹ In 2015 and 2016, question read: "How much thought, if any, have you given to candidates running for president in 2016?" In 2011 and 2012, question read: "How much thought, if any, have you given to candidates running for president in 2012?" In 2006, 2007 and 2008, question read "How much thought, if any, have you given to candidates running for president in 2008?"

ASK ALL:

Q.19 Overall, what's your impression of the candidates running for the DEMOCRATIC presidential nomination? AS A GROUP, would you say they are excellent candidates, good candidates, only fair candidates or poor candidates?

BASED ON REGISTERED VOTERS [N=1,245]:

	<u>Excellent</u>	<u>Good</u>	<u>Only fair</u>	<u>Poor</u>	(VOL.) <u>DK/Ref</u>
2020 Presidential Election					
July 10-15, 2019	12	23	22	38	5
2016 Presidential Election²					
Sep 22-27, 2015	7	22	32	38	2
May 12-18, 2015	7	27	30	30	5

Q.19 FULL TREND:

Overall, what's your impression of the candidates running for the DEMOCRATIC presidential nomination? AS A GROUP, would you say they are excellent candidates, good candidates, only fair candidates or poor candidates?

BASED ON DEMOCRATIC AND DEMOCRATIC-LEANING REGISTERED VOTERS [N=564]:

	<u>Excellent</u>	<u>Good</u>	<u>Only fair</u>	<u>Poor</u>	(VOL.) <u>DK/Ref</u>
2020 Presidential Election					
July 10-15, 2019	23	42	25	5	4
2016 Presidential Election					
Sep 22-27, 2015	14	37	36	12	2
May 12-18, 2015	12	42	33	8	5
2008 Presidential Election					
February, 2008	30	50	16	2	2
January, 2008	28	50	18	2	2
November, 2007	16	51	28	2	3
October, 2007 ³	16	48	26	5	5
September, 2007	15	49	29	2	5
2004 Presidential Election					
January, 2004	8	39	41	6	8
December, 2003	5	40	39	7	9
September, 2003	4	40	39	5	12
1992 Presidential Election					
February, 1992	6	39	47	4	5
October, 1991	3	24	38	11	23
1988 Presidential Election					
January, 1988 (GP)	4	33	45	11	7

NO QUESTIONS 20-24, 26-29, 31-32, 34, 36, 38-39, 42-58, 61, 64, 66, 68-74, 77, 79, 81-84, 86-89, 92-94, 97-98, 100-101, 104

QUESTION 25a, 25c, 30, 33, 35, 37, 40-41, 59-60, 62-63, 65, 67, 75-76, 78, 80, 85, 90-91, 95-96, 99, 102-103, and 105 HELD FOR FUTURE RELEASE

QUESTION 25b PREVIOUSLY RELEASED

² In 2008 and earlier, question only asked of registered Democrats and Democratic-leaning.

³ Before October 2007, answer choice read "Fair" not "Only fair." In October 2007 the question was asked both ways and no difference was found. As a result, October 2007 numbers combine both versions of the question. In 1988, 1991 and 1993 question asked about "men running for the [party] presidential nomination."

ASK ALL:

PARTY In politics TODAY, do you consider yourself a Republican, Democrat, or independent?

ASK IF INDEP/NO PREF/OTHER/DK/REF (PARTY=3,4,5,9):

PARTYLN As of today do you lean more to the Republican Party or more to the Democratic Party?

				(VOL.)	(VOL.)	(VOL.)	Lean	Lean
	<u>Republican</u>	<u>Democrat</u>	<u>Independent</u>	<u>No</u>	<u>Other</u>	<u>DK/Ref</u>	<u>Rep</u>	<u>Dem</u>
				<u>preference</u>	<u>party</u>			
July 10-15, 2019	28	30	36	3	1	2	15	17
Mar 20-25, 2019	26	30	37	3	1	3	14	19
Jan 9-14, 2019	25	31	40	2	1	2	16	18
Sep 18-24, 2018	25	32	37	3	1	2	15	18
Jun 5-12, 2018	25	31	38	3	1	2	15	18
Apr 25-May 1, 2018	27	28	38	4	1	2	14	19
Mar 7-14, 2018	26	28	41	3	*	1	17	18
Jan 10-15, 2018	26	33	34	3	1	3	12	18
Yearly Totals								
2018	25.7	30.8	37.6	3.0	.8	2.0	14.7	18.3
2017	23.6	31.4	39.4	3.3	.6	1.7	15.8	18.7
2016	25.4	32.0	36.5	3.4	.5	2.2	14.6	17.0
2015	23.7	30.4	40.1	3.6	.4	1.8	16.4	17.3
2014	23.2	31.5	39.5	3.1	.7	2.0	16.2	16.5
2013	23.9	32.1	38.3	2.9	.5	2.2	16.0	16.0
2012	24.7	32.6	36.4	3.1	.5	2.7	14.4	16.1
2011	24.3	32.3	37.4	3.1	.4	2.5	15.7	15.6
2010	25.2	32.7	35.2	3.6	.4	2.8	14.5	14.1
2009	23.9	34.4	35.1	3.4	.4	2.8	13.1	15.7
2008	25.7	36.0	31.5	3.6	.3	3.0	10.6	15.2
2007	25.3	32.9	34.1	4.3	.4	2.9	10.9	17.0
2006	27.8	33.1	30.9	4.4	.3	3.4	10.5	15.1
2005	29.3	32.8	30.2	4.5	.3	2.8	10.3	14.9
2004	30.0	33.5	29.5	3.8	.4	3.0	11.7	13.4
2003	30.3	31.5	30.5	4.8	.5	2.5	12.0	12.6
2002	30.4	31.4	29.8	5.0	.7	2.7	12.4	11.6
2001	29.0	33.2	29.5	5.2	.6	2.6	11.9	11.6
2001 Post-Sept 11	30.9	31.8	27.9	5.2	.6	3.6	11.7	9.4
2001 Pre-Sept 11	27.3	34.4	30.9	5.1	.6	1.7	12.1	13.5
2000	28.0	33.4	29.1	5.5	.5	3.6	11.6	11.7
1999	26.6	33.5	33.7	3.9	.5	1.9	13.0	14.5
1998	27.9	33.7	31.1	4.6	.4	2.3	11.6	13.1
1997	28.0	33.4	32.0	4.0	.4	2.3	12.2	14.1
1996	28.9	33.9	31.8	3.0	.4	2.0	12.1	14.9
1995	31.6	30.0	33.7	2.4	.6	1.3	15.1	13.5
1994	30.1	31.5	33.5	1.3	--	3.6	13.7	12.2
1993	27.4	33.6	34.2	4.4	1.5	2.9	11.5	14.9
1992	27.6	33.7	34.7	1.5	0	2.5	12.6	16.5
1991	30.9	31.4	33.2	0	1.4	3.0	14.7	10.8
1990	30.9	33.2	29.3	1.2	1.9	3.4	12.4	11.3
1989	33	33	34	--	--	--	--	--
1987	26	35	39	--	--	--	--	--