



THE PEW RESEARCH CENTER  
For The People & The Press

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## Views of Parties' Ideologies

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# More Now See GOP as Very Conservative

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## Views of Parties' Ideologies

# More Now See GOP as Very Conservative

Though voters' views of the ideologies of the political parties have shifted little since the summer of 2010, an increasing number see the Republican Party as *very conservative*, while slightly fewer see the Democratic Party as *very liberal*.

In 2010, somewhat more, on balance, viewed the Democratic Party as very liberal than said the GOP was very conservative (26% vs. 18%). Currently, nearly identical percentages view the Democratic Party as very liberal and the Republican Party as very conservative (22%, 23% respectively).

This trend notwithstanding, many Republicans' own ideological assessments fall to the right of the assessments they give to the GOP. Nearly four-in-ten (38%) Republican voters rate own ideology as more conservative than their impression of the Republican Party's ideology.

Overall, perceptions of the parties' ideologies are little changed from June 2010. Six-in-ten (60%) say the Republican Party is either very conservative or conservative, while 54% say the Democratic Party is either very liberal or liberal. In June 2010, 56% saw the GOP as conservative or very conservative and 58% saw the Democrats as liberal or very liberal.

The latest survey by the Pew Research Center for the People & the Press, conducted Aug. 17-21 among 1,509 adults (1,205 registered voters), finds that voters' descriptions of their own political views also are little changed. Roughly four-in-ten (41%) say they are either very conservative (8%) or conservative (33%), while about half as many (19%) say they

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### Modest Changes in Voters' Views of Parties' Ideologies

<i>Political views of ...</i>	June 2010	Aug 2011
<b>Republican Party</b>	%	%
Very conservative	18	23
Conservative	38	37
Moderate	26	21
Very liberal	4	5
Liberal	9	7
Don't know	<u>5</u>	<u>7</u>
	100	100
NET Conservative	56	60
NET Liberal	13	12
<b>Democratic Party</b>		
Very liberal	26	22
Liberal	32	32
Moderate	26	26
Very conservative	3	3
Conservative	9	11
Don't know	<u>4</u>	<u>6</u>
	100	100
NET Liberal	58	54
NET Conservative	12	14

PEW RESEARCH CENTER Aug. 17-21, 2011. Based on registered voters. Figures may not add to 100% because of rounding.

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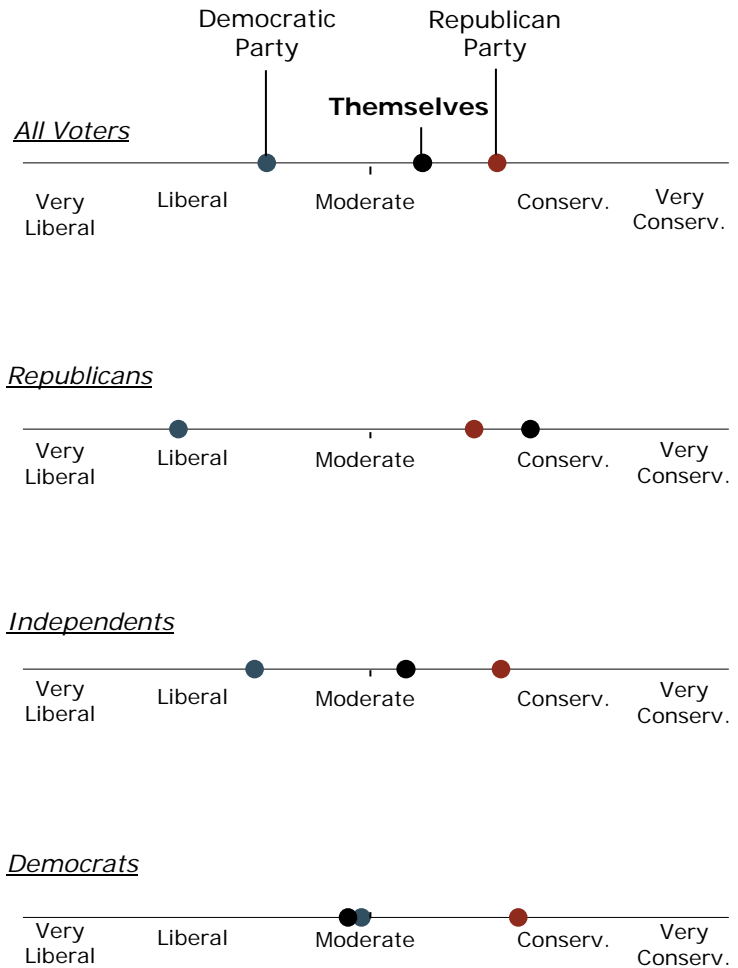
are either very liberal (5%) or liberal (14%); another 38% describe themselves as moderate.

Looking at the ideological perceptions of the parties and voters' descriptions of themselves, voters on average place themselves just right of center and slightly closer to the Republican Party than to the Democratic Party.

Republican voters see themselves as somewhat more conservative than they see their party – and they see the Democrats as solidly liberal. These perceptions are amplified among Republicans and Republican-leaning independents who agree with the Tea Party.

Democrats, by contrast, view their party's political views as moderate. On average, Democrats' own ideological assessments place them close to the middle of the political spectrum.

### Views of Ideology: Where Voters Place Themselves and the Parties



PEW RESEARCH CENTER Aug. 17-21, 2011. Based on registered voters. The black dot represents the average of how voters describe their own political views ranging from very liberal to very conservative. Red and blue dots represent the average ideological ratings voters give to the Republican and Democratic parties, among those who can offer an opinion of each.

## Partisans Rate Their Own Ideology

A large majority of Republican registered voters (73%) describe their political views as either conservative (55%) or very conservative (18%). About a quarter (24%) say their views are moderate, while very few (3%) say their views are liberal or very liberal.

Among Republicans and Republican-leaning independent voters who agree with the Tea Party movement, 84% say they are either conservative (61%) or very conservative (23%); just 14% describe their views as moderate. Republicans who disagree or have no opinion of the Tea Party are more divided: 51% say they are either conservative (44%) or very conservative (7%) and 41% see themselves as moderate.

Among Democrats, 41% describe their views as moderate, 32% say they are liberal (including 9% who say they are very liberal) and 23% say they are conservative.

Nearly half of independents (47%) say their political views are moderate, about the same as last year. The remainder tilt conservative, with 33% saying they are either conservative (29%) or very conservative (4%); 17% say their views are either liberal (14%) or very liberal (3%).

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## How Partisans See Themselves

<i>Among registered voters ...</i>	<i>Political views of...</i>			
	<b>Total</b>	<b>Rep</b>	<b>Dem</b>	<b>Ind</b>
	%	%	%	%
Very conservative	8	18	3	4
Conservative	33	55	20	29
Moderate	38	24	41	47
Liberal	14	2	23	14
Very liberal	5	1	9	3
DK/Refused	<u>3</u>	<u>*</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>3</u>
	100	100	100	100
NET Conservative	41	73	23	33
NET Liberal	19	3	32	17

PEW RESEARCH CENTER Aug. 17-21, 2011. Based on registered voters. Figures may not add to 100% because of rounding.

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## Many Republicans Place GOP to the Left of Their Own Views

Voters were asked to rate their own political views – and the parties’ political views – on the same scale, from very conservative to very liberal. This makes it possible to compare voters’ own views with their assessments of the parties’ ideologies.

As in June 2010, about half of registered voters (52%) rate their own political views as more conservative than the rating they give the Democratic Party. Fewer voters (42%) see their own ideology as more liberal than the Republican Party’s.

Many Republican voters – particularly those who agree with the Tea Party – place themselves to the right of the GOP ideologically. Nearly four-in-ten Republican voters (38%) rate their own views as more conservative than the Republican Party’s. Just 19% see the GOP’s views as more liberal than their own, while 42% say the Republican Party’s ideology is about the same as their own.

Among Republicans and Republican-leaning voters who agree with the Tea Party, half (50%) place the GOP’s political views to the left of their own. Just 11% see the GOP as more conservative while 37% view the Republican Party’s views as similar to their own. By contrast, just 23% of Republicans and Republican leaners who do not agree with the Tea Party rate the GOP’s ideology as more liberal than their own, while 42% say the party’s views are about the same as their own and 33% see the GOP’s ideology as more conservative than their own.

Democratic voters are about as likely as Republican voters to say their own views are similar to their party’s (38% of Democrats, 42% of Republicans). Comparable percentages of Democrats say their own views are more liberal (31%), or more conservative (24%), than the party’s.

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### Comparing Voters’ Own Views with Their Ratings of the Parties

<i>Compared w/ the _____, your political views are ...</i>	All	Rep	Dem	Ind
	Voters	Rep	Dem	Ind
	%	%	%	%
<b>Democratic Party</b>				
More conservative	52	86	24	52
More liberal	17	5	31	15
The same	24	8	38	23
Don’t know	<u>7</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>7</u>	<u>9</u>
	100	100	100	100
<b>Republican Party</b>				
More conservative	26	38	19	23
More liberal	42	19	60	46
The same	24	42	13	22
Don’t know	<u>8</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>8</u>	<u>10</u>
	100	100	100	100

PEW RESEARCH CENTER Aug. 17-21, 2011. Based on registered voters. Figures may not add to 100%.

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## About the Survey

The analysis in this report is based on telephone interviews conducted August 17-21, 2011 among a national sample of 1,509 adults 18 years of age or older living in the continental United States (905 respondents were interviewed on a landline telephone, and 604 were interviewed on a cell phone, including 268 who had no landline telephone). The survey was conducted by interviewers at Princeton Data Source under the direction of Princeton Survey Research Associates International. A combination of landline and cell phone random digit dial samples were used; both samples were provided by Survey Sampling International. 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. 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, Hispanic origin, region, and population density to parameters from the March 2010 Census Bureau's Current Population Survey. The sample also is 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 2010 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 within the landline sample. Sampling errors and statistical tests of significance take into account the effect of weighting. The following table shows the sample sizes and 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 ...
Registered voters	1205	3.5 percentage points
Republican voters	346	6.5 percentage points
Democratic voters	364	6.5 percentage points
Independent voters	447	6.0 percentage points

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 FOR THE PEOPLE & THE PRESS**  
**AUGUST 2011 POLITICAL SURVEY**  
**FINAL TOPLINE**  
**August 17-21, 2011**  
**N=1509**

**NO QUESTIONS 1, 4, 10-15, 19-24, 31-34, 38, 41, 43, 45-54, 57, 59-62, 66-69, 71-75, 80, 82-85**

**QUESTIONS 2-3, 5-9, 16-18, 25-30, 35-37, 39-40, 44, 55-56, 58, 63-65, 70, 76-79, 81, 86-87**

**ASK ALL:**

Q.42 Now thinking about the positions of the parties these days ... would you say **[INSERT FIRST ITEM]** is very conservative, conservative, moderate, liberal, or very liberal? How about **[INSERT NEXT ITEM]**? **[IF NECESSARY: "Would you say [ITEM] is very conservative, conservative, moderate, liberal, or very liberal?"]**

		<u>Very conservative</u>	<u>Conservative</u>	<u>Moderate</u>	<u>Liberal</u>	<u>Very liberal</u>	<b>(VOL.) DK/Ref</b>
a.	The Republican Party						
	Aug 17-21, 2011	20	35	22	8	6	9
	Jun 16-20, 2010	17	37	26	9	5	7
b.	The Democratic Party						
	Aug 17-21, 2011	4	13	26	30	19	8
	Jun 16-20, 2010	3	10	28	31	23	6

**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?

	<u>Republican</u>	<u>Democrat</u>	<u>Independent</u>	<b>(VOL.) No preference</b>	<b>(VOL.) Other party</b>	<b>(VOL.) DK/Ref</b>	<i>Lean Rep</i>	<i>Lean Dem</i>
Aug 17-21, 2011	24	30	40	3	*	3	17	18
Jul 20-24, 2011	24	32	38	4	*	2	16	14
Jun 15-19, 2011	26	34	32	4	*	4	13	13
May 25-30, 2011	24	33	38	3	*	2	15	17
Mar 30-Apr 3, 2011	25	32	37	3	*	3	17	16
Mar 8-14, 2011	24	33	38	3	*	2	17	15
Feb 22-Mar 1, 2011	24	33	37	3	*	3	15	16
Feb 2-7, 2011	24	31	39	3	*	2	16	16
Jan 5-9, 2011	27	32	35	4	*	2	15	14
Dec 1-5, 2010	25	33	34	5	1	2	13	14
Nov 4-7, 2010	26	30	37	4	*	2	17	13
Oct 27-30, 2010	25	34	31	6	1	4	13	11
Oct 13-18, 2010	25	31	36	4	*	3	16	13
Aug 25-Sep 6, 2010	24	32	39	2	*	2	15	17
<b>Yearly Totals</b>								
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

## PARTY/PARTYLN CONTINUED ...

				(VOL.)	(VOL.)	(VOL.)	Lean	Lean
	Republican	Democrat	Independent	No preference	Other party	DK/Ref	Rep	Dem
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	--	--	--	--	--

## ASK ALL:

TEAPARTY2 From what you know, do you agree or disagree with the Tea Party movement, or don't you have an opinion either way?

	Agree	Disagree	No opinion either way	(VOL.) Haven't heard of	(VOL.) Refused	Not heard of/ DK
Aug 17-21, 2011	20	27	50	1	1	--
Jul 20-24, 2011	20	24	53	1	1	--
Jun 15-19, 2011	20	26	50	3	2	--
May 25-30, 2011	18	23	54	2	2	--
Mar 30-Apr 3, 2011	22	29	47	1	1	--
Mar 8-14, 2011	19	25	54	1	1	--
Feb 22-Mar 1, 2011	20	25	52	2	2	--
Feb 2-7, 2011 <sup>1</sup>	22	22	53	2	2	--
Jan 5-9, 2011	24	22	50	2	1	--
Dec 1-5, 2010	22	26	49	2	2	--
Nov 4-7, 2010	27	22	49	1	1	--
Oct 27-30, 2010 (RVs)	29	25	32	--	1	13
Oct 13-18, 2010 (RVs)	28	24	30	--	1	16
Aug 25-Sep 6, 2010 (RVs)	29	26	32	--	1	13
Jul 21-Aug 5, 2010	22	18	37	--	1	21
Jun 16-20, 2010	24	18	30	--	*	27
May 20-23, 2010	25	18	31	--	1	25
Mar 11-21, 2010	24	14	29	--	1	31

<sup>1</sup> In the February 2-7, 2011 survey and before, question read "...do you strongly agree, agree, disagree or strongly disagree with the Tea Party movement..." In October 2010 and earlier, question was asked only of those who had heard or read a lot or a little about the Tea Party. In May through October, it was described as: "the Tea Party movement that has been involved in campaigns and protests in the U.S. over the past year." In March it was described as "the Tea Party protests that have taken place in the U.S. over the past year."