

AEI Political Report

The Black Experience

February is Black History Month, so we decided to look at how blacks view their lives, the state of race relations, and the new president. Although most blacks are satisfied with their lives, significant numbers say that they have experienced discrimination. One telling number in the collection: nearly half of blacks said that they would have been better off if they had been born white.

Q: Overall, how satisfied are you with . . . ?

	Black response
Very satisfied with my life	38%
Somewhat satisfied	42
Somewhat dissatisfied	14
Very dissatisfied	6

Note: Fifty percent of non-Hispanic whites were very satisfied, and 38 percent were somewhat satisfied.
Source: The Gallup Organization, June–July 2008.

Q: Have you . . . ?

	Black response
I have often personally felt that I was being discriminated against because of my race	13%
Occasionally	35
Rarely	26
No	26

Note: The white responses were 2, 14, 14, and 70 percent, respectively.
Source: ABC News/Washington Post, January 2009.

Q: Everything being equal, if you had been born white, do you think . . . ?

	Black response
If I had been born white I would be better off	48%
The same	41
Worse off	5

Source: The Gallup Organization, June–July 2008.

Q: Have you personally ever felt that . . . ?

	Black response
Just because of my race	
I was denied housing I could afford	20%
I was denied a job I was qualified for	35
I was stopped by the police	37
A shopkeeper or sales clerk was trying to make me feel unwelcome	60

Note: The surveyors also asked whether these things had happened to a close friend or someone in their immediate family. The responses for blacks in the order listed above were 16 percent, 18 percent, 24 percent, and 9 percent, respectively.
Source: ABC News/Washington Post, January 2009.

(continued on the next page)

(continued from the previous page)

Q: In general, do you think . . . ?

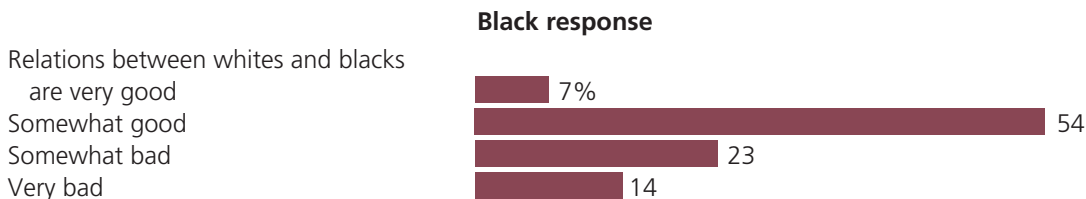
	Black response	
	Yes	No
Blacks have as good a chance as white people in my community to get any kind of job for which they are qualified	43%	56%
Black children have as good a chance as white children to get a good education	49	49
Blacks have as good a chance as white people in my community to get any housing they can afford	52	47

Note: Seventy-two percent of non-Hispanic whites said blacks have as good a chance as white people to get a job for which are qualified. Eighty percent of whites said black children have as good a chance as white children to get a good education. Eighty-five percent of whites said blacks have as good a chance to get housing they can afford in their community.
Source: The Gallup Organization, June–July 2008.

Race Relations: Still Room for Improvement

Six in ten blacks told Gallup last summer that relations between whites and blacks were very or somewhat good. A little more than a decade ago in an ABC News/*Washington Post* poll, 70 percent of blacks said racism was a big problem. Today, that number has dropped to 44 percent. One in five blacks now say that blacks have achieved racial equality. Another 36 percent believe equality will come soon.

Q: Next, we'd like to know how you would rate relations between various groups in the United States these days. Would you say . . . ?



Source: The Gallup Organization, June–July 2008.

Q: How big a problem is racism in our society today?

	January 2009		July 1996	
	Total	Black response	Total	Black response
A big problem	26%	44%	54%	70%
Somewhat of a problem	48	41	35	23
A small problem	22	11	8	5
Not a problem at all	4	4	3	0

Source: ABC News/*Washington Post*, January 2009.

Q: Do you . . . ?

	Black response
Think blacks have achieved racial equality	20%
Will soon achieve racial equality	36
Will not achieve racial equality in your lifetime	23
Will never achieve racial equality	18

Note: The white responses were 38, 38, 17, and 5 percent, respectively.
Source: ABC News/*Washington Post*, January 2009.

Q: Next we'd like to know how you feel about the way various groups in society are treated. For each of the following groups please say whether you are . . . ?

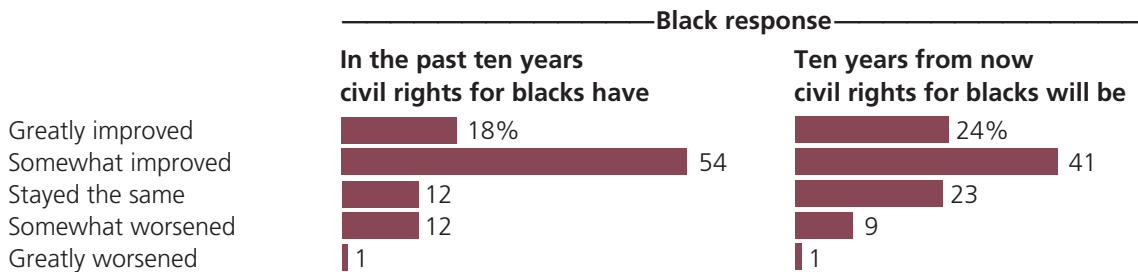
Very/somewhat satisfied with the way blacks are treated	
Black response	35%
White response	63

Source: The Gallup Organization, June–July 2008.

(continued on the next page)

(continued from the previous page)

Q: Thinking over the past ten years, how do you think civil rights for blacks have changed in this country? Would you say the situation has . . . ?



Source: The Gallup Organization, June–July 2008.

President Obama’s Election and Race

Barack Obama’s election to the presidency has had a roundly positive effect on perceptions of race in America. Forty-four percent of blacks told CNN/Opinion Research Corporation interviewers that Obama’s election is the start of a new era of race relations, and another 36 percent said it will result in some improvement for race relations. Still, nearly 60 percent of blacks in a Fox News survey said it does not represent the end of racial barriers in this country.

Q: Thinking specifically about the effect of Barack Obama’s election as president on relations between blacks and whites in this country, do you think . . . ?

Black response

Obama’s election is the start of a new era of better race relations	44%
Will result in some improvement of race relations but not start a new era	36
Will create no real change in race relations	13
Will make race relations worse	5

Note: The white responses were 25, 44, 24, and 6 percent, respectively.

Source: CNN/Opinion Research Corporation, January 2009.

Q: Do you . . . ?

Black response

Think Barack Obama’s election as president represents progress for all blacks in America more generally	64%
It is only a single case that does not reflect broader progress for blacks overall	22

Note: The white responses were 66 and 20 percent, respectively.
Source: ABC News/Washington Post, January 2009.

Q: Do you think . . . ?

Black response

Barack Obama symbolizes the end of racial barriers in this country	38%
Does not	59

Note: The white responses were 27 and 70 percent, respectively.
Source: Fox News/Opinion Dynamics, January 2009.



AEI POLITICAL REPORT CONTRIBUTORS

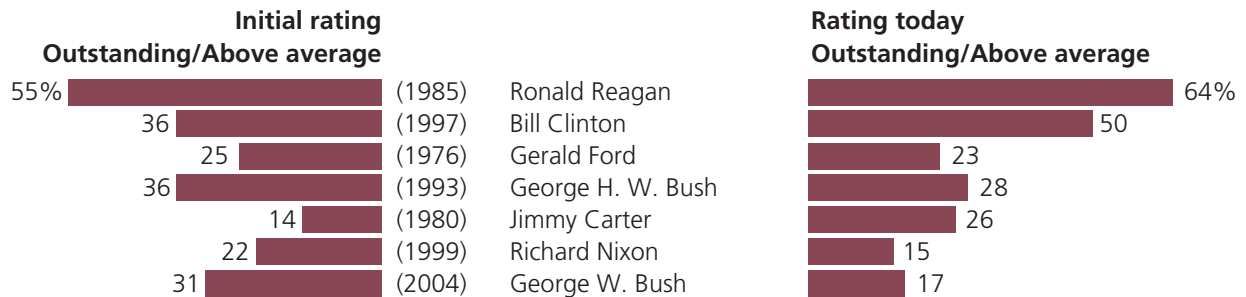
Karlyn Bowman, Senior Fellow; John Fortier, Research Fellow; Norman Ornstein, Resident Scholar; Michael Barone, Resident Fellow.

Research Assistants: Adam Foster, Editor; Jessica Leval; Jennifer Marsico.

Interns: Mallory Snipes; Emily Lurie; Andrew Rugg.

Presidential Prestige Ratings

Q: How do you think each of the following presidents will go down in history . . . ?

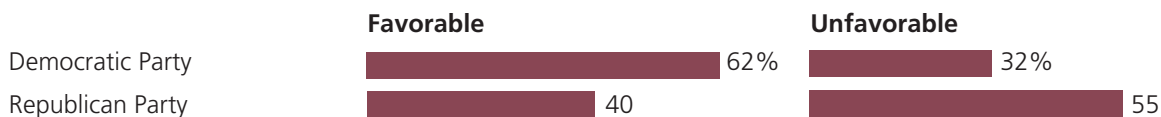


Source: The Gallup Organization.

Which Do You Want to Party With?

President Obama has helped to boost his party's image. Sixty-two percent had a favorable opinion of the Democratic Party in the mid-January Pew Research Center poll. Only 40 percent had a positive opinion of the Republican Party. The gap between the two is the largest in Pew's history. Ninety percent of Democrats had a favorable opinion of their party, compared to 74 percent of Republicans who had a favorable opinion of theirs.

Q: Would you say your overall opinion of . . . ?



Source: PSRA/Pew Research Center, January 2009.

Public Feelings Toward Congress: Whatever

Q: Do you . . . ?

Think the country would be better off if the Republicans controlled Congress	31%
Democrats	56

Source: CNN/Opinion Research Corporation, January 2009.

Q: How much confidence do you have . . . ?

	Confidence to make the right decisions for the country's future	
	Great deal/ good amount	Just some/ none at all
Obama	61%	37%
Democrats in Congress	43	56
Republicans in Congress	29	69

Source: ABC News/Washington Post, January 2009.

Q: As you may know, Democrats are now in charge of both the presidency and the Congress. Which one best describes how you feel?

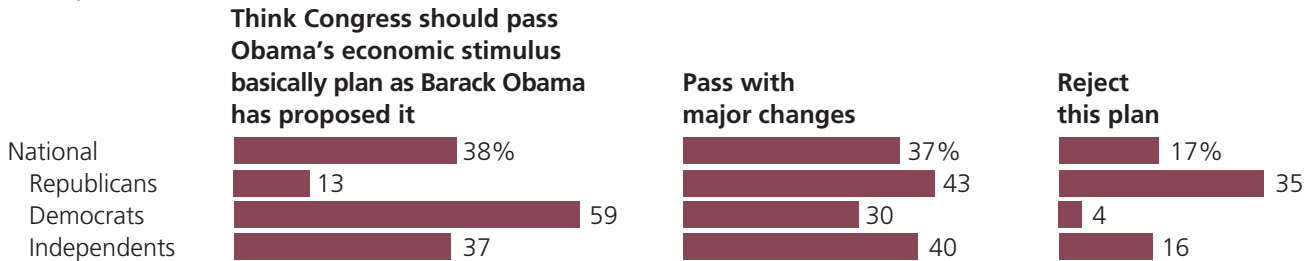
It does not matter to me who is in power as long as they can get things done for the country	51%
I am excited that, for the first time in a long time, the Democrats are in charge of both the presidency and the Congress	28
I am concerned that the Democrats will control both the presidency and the Congress	20

Source: FD/Diageo/Hotline, January 2009.

The Stimulus

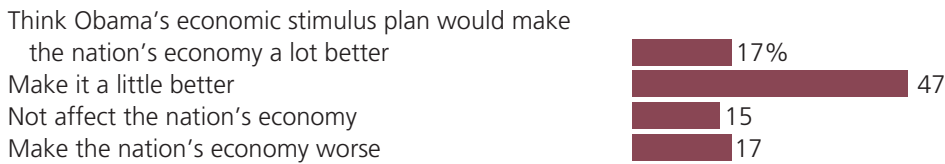
Opinion on the stimulus plan is characterized by strong partisan divisions as the Gallup and question below shows.

Q: Do you . . . ?



Source: Gallup/USA Today, January–February 2009.

Q: How do you . . . ?

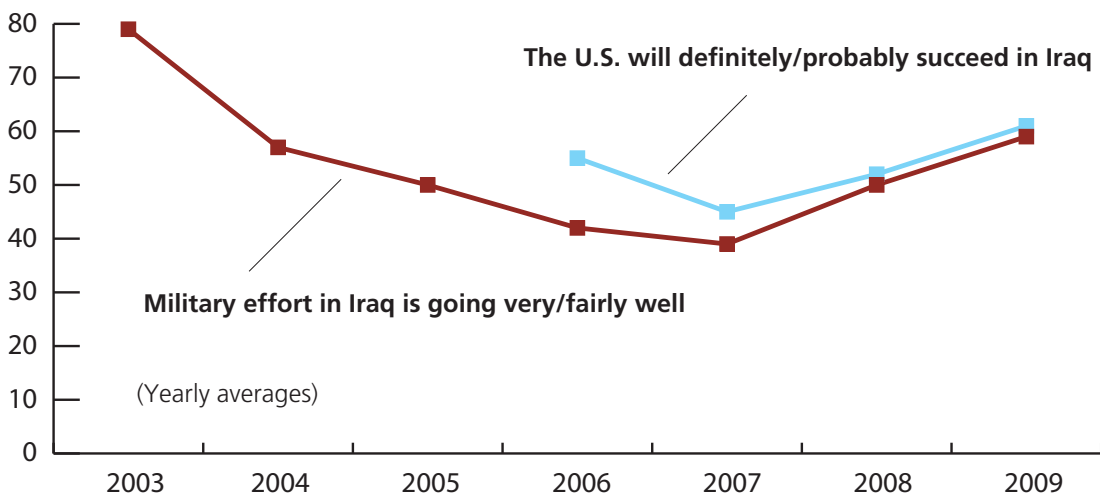


Source: Gallup/USA Today, January–February 2009.

Assessments of Iraq

Q: How well is the U.S. military effort in Iraq going?

Q: Regardless of what you think about the original decision to use military force in Iraq, do you now believe that the United States will . . . ?



Source: PSRA/Pew Research Center, January 2009.

(continued on the next page)

(continued from the previous page)

	Iraq	Afghanistan
Military effort is going very/ fairly well	59%	45%
Not too/not at all well	36	45
Number of troops should be increased	6	33
Decreased	69	39
Kept the same	17	20
Military force was the right decision	43	64
Wrong decision	49	25

Source: PSRA/Pew Research Center, January 2009.

Q: How good a job do you think . . . ?

	Iraq	Afghanistan
President-elect Obama will do an excellent job	11%	10%
Pretty good job	34	32
Only fair job	17	17
Poor	13	13
Not sure	25	28

Source: Harris Interactive, January 2009.

Afghanistan War: Still the Popular War

Q: Do you think . . . ?

	The U.S. made the right decision in using military force in Afghanistan	Wrong decision
January 2006	69%	20%
January 2009	64	25

Source: PSRA/Pew Research Center, January 2009.



Q: Obama has proposed withdrawing five-thousand to ten-thousand U.S. forces from Iraq each month over the next 16 months. Do you think . . . ?

January 2009

The U.S. should withdraw its military forces more quickly than that	15%
More slowly	26
That is about right	55

Source: ABC News/Washington Post.

Household Economics

Q: Some people live paycheck to paycheck, which means just being able to pay regular bills and expenses from each paycheck, with almost nothing left over for savings. How often, if ever, do . . . ?

I and my family live paycheck to paycheck

Always	23%
Most of the time	16
Sometimes	20
Hardly ever	17
Never	21

Source: PSRA/Newsweek, January 2009.

Q: Would you say you and your family . . . ?

Live above your means	8%
Live within your means	85

Source: Fox News/Opinion Dynamics, January 2009.

Q: Think about your household income, would you say . . . ?

It is more than enough so that I can save and buy extras	29%
Just enough to meet my bills and obligations	53
Is not enough to meet my bills and obligations	17

Source: CBS News/New York Times, January 2009.

Political Potpourri

Voting Rights Act

Q: As you may know, the Voting Rights Act was passed in the 1960s to prevent state and local governments from using rules and procedures which prevented many blacks from voting. Do you think . . . ?

	Total	Black response
The Voting Rights Act is necessary today to make sure that blacks are allowed to vote	52%	65%
No longer necessary	47	33

Source: CNN/Opinion Research Corporation, January 2009.

Cameron to Combat the Crisis?

Q: How would you vote if there were a General Election tomorrow?

	British response	
	January 2009	January 2008
Would vote for David Cameron	44%	37%
Gordon Brown	30	38

Source: Ipsos-MORI, January 2009.

Looking Back at Bush?

Q: Do you approve or disapprove of the way George W. Bush has handled _____ during the last eight years?

	The situation with Iraq	The campaign against terrorism
Approve	25%	47%
Disapprove	71	48

Source: CBS News/*New York Times*, January 2009.

Q: Do you think . . . ?

The Bush administration should be investigated for political wrongdoing	41%
Should not	55

Source: Fox News/Opinion Dynamics, January 2009.

Q: Do you think the Obama administration . . . ?

Should investigate whether any laws were broken in the way terrorism suspects were treated under the Bush administration	50%
Should not	47

Source: ABC News/*Washington Post*, January 2009.

Gitmo

Q: Do you think . . . ?

Closing the Guantanamo Bay military prison would make the United States safer	12%
Less safe	32
Not make much of a difference either way	51

Source: Fox News/Opinion Dynamics, January 2009.

Taking One for the Team

Q: Would you be . . . ?

Willing to take a pay cut if it meant a co-worker would keep their job instead of being laid off	59%
Not willing	19
Depends (vol.)	14
Don't know (vol.)	9

Note: Sixty-four percent of Democrats, 58 percent of Republicans, and 51 percent of independents said they would be willing to take a pay cut if it meant a co-worker would keep their job.

Source: Fox News/Opinion Dynamics, January 2009.

Governors Galore

Over the next two years, thirty-eight governors will be up for election. Governors' races are always important in setting the direction of state policy, but the races have even greater significance now for two other reasons: First, governors elected in 2009 and 2010 will hold office during the upcoming round of redistricting after the 2010 Census; thus, gubernatorial elections may affect which party holds the House of Representatives in the next decade. Second, for Republicans, incoming governors could provide new faces for a party out of power in the White House and in the minority in Congress.

Which are the races to watch?

High on anyone's list is the **Texas** governorship. Not only is Texas the largest Republican state in the country, but it is also growing fast and will likely add four more House seats to its current thirty-two. The state legislature is in Republican hands (although by only one vote in the House), and the election of a Republican governor could mean drawing a map that adds several House seats to the Republican column. Add to this mix the most interesting Republican primary, the 2010 contest between incumbent Governor Rick Perry and Senator Kay Bailey Hutchison.

California. Governor Schwarzenegger is term-limited, and the 2010 gubernatorial race could be wide open on both sides. In 2000, Democrats controlled the governor's mansion and the legislature but chose not to draw a map to increase Democratic numbers. Instead they drew safe seats for incumbents in both parties, and very few seats changed hands. If Democrats win the governorship in 2010, they may seek to draw a map that would improve upon their 34-to-19 edge in their House delegation in Washington.

Republican Sonny Perdue is term-limited, and **Georgia** is likely to add another seat to its current thirteen. Democrats controlled the redistricting process in 2000, but the map they drew ended up favoring the Republicans. Republicans now control the legislature and if one of their own wins the governorship, they will draw the map to improve their 7-to-6 majority in their House delegation.

The **Illinois** landscape has changed dramatically over the past ten years. At the last redistricting, Republicans controlled the governorship and legislature and were able to draw a Congressional map that ensured them a majority of the Congressional delegation. Today, Democrats control the governorship, legislature, and delegation. But former governor Rod Blagojevich's troubles give Republicans hope in this increasingly Democratic state. A Republican governor could block a Democratically gerrymandered map and at least keep the number of Republicans in the Illinois delegation from dwindling.

Florida. Charlie Crist is a popular governor who can seek reelection in 2010. Republicans are firmly in control of the legislature. Crist's reelection could mean an even more favorable Republican map (and Florida will likely add a seat after reapportionment). If Crist chooses to run for the Senate instead, then the governor's race could be wide open. A Democrat in the governor's mansion would likely cost Republicans several House seats if a more neutral map were agreed upon.

2009 Governors' Races

Incumbent	U.S. House Delegation (D/R)	2008 Presidential Election %	Vote in Last 5 Pres. Elections	State House (D/R)	State Senate (D/R)	Control of State Legislature before 2000 redistricting
(D) NJ	8D/5R	57D/42R	5D	48D/32R	23D/17R	R
(D) VA	6D/5R	53D/46R	1D/4R	44D/52R	21D/19R	R

(continued on the next page)

(continued from the previous page)

2010 Governors' Races

Incumbent	U.S. House Delegation (D/R)	2008 Presidential Election %	Vote in Last 5 Pres. Elections	State House (D/R)	State Senate (D/R)	Control of State Legislature before 2000 redistricting
Northeast						
(R) CT	5D	61D/38R	5D	114D/37R	24D/12R	D
(D) MA	10D	62D/36R	5D	143D/16R	35D/5R	D
(D) MD	7D/1R	62D/37R	5D	104D/36R	33D/14R	D
(D) ME	2D	58D/41R	5D	96D/54R	20D/15R	split
(D) NH	2D	54D/45R	4D/1R	225D/175R	14D/10R	R
(D) NY	26D/3R	62D/37R	5D	109D/41R	32D/29R	split
(D) PA	12D/7R	55D/44R	5D	104D/99R	20D/29R	R
(R) RI	2D	63D/35R	5D	69D/6R	33D/4R	D
(D) VT	1D	53D/46R	5D	95D/48R	23D/7R	R
Midwest						
(D) IA	3D/2R	54D/45R	4D/1R	56D/44R	32D/18R	R
(D) IL	11D*/7R	62D/37R	5D	70D/48R	37D/22R	split
(D) KS	3D/1R	41D/57R	5R	48D/77R	9D/31R	R
(D) MI	8D/7R	57D/41R	5D	67D/43R	17D/21R	R
(R) MN	5D/3R	54D/44R	5D	87D/47R	46D/21R	split
(R) NE	3R	42D/57R	5R	nonpartisan	nonpartisan	nonpartisan
(D) OH	10D/8R	51D/47R	3D/2R	53D/46R	12D/21R	R
(D) OK	1D/4R	34D/66R	5R	40D/61R	22D/26R	D
(R) SD	1D	45D/53R	5R	24D/46R	14D/20R	R
(D) WI	5D/3R	56D/42R	5D	52D/46R	18D/15R	split
South						
(R) AL	3D/4R	39D/60R	5R	62D/43R	21D/13R	D
(D) AR	3D/1R	39D/59R	2D/3R	71D/28R	27D/8R	D
(R) FL	10D/15R	51D/48R	2D/3R	44D/76R	14D/26R	R
(R) GA	6D/7R	47D/52R	1D/4R	74D/105R	22D/34R	D
(R) SC	2D/4R	45D/54R	5R	53D/71R	19D/27R	R
(D) TN	5D/4R	42D/57R	2D/3R	49D/50R	14D/19R	D
(R) TX	12D/20R	44D/56R	5R	74D/76R	12D/19R	split
West						
(R) AK	1R	38D/60R	5R	18D/22R	10D/10R	R
(R) AZ	5D/3R	45D/54R	1D/4R	25D/35R	12D/18R	split
(R) CA	34D/19R	61D/37R	5D	51D/29R	26D/14R	D
(D) CO	5D/2R	54D/45R	2D/3R	38D/27R	21D/14R	split
(R) HI	2D	72D/27R	5D	45D/6R	23D/2R	D
(R) ID	1D/1R	36D/62R	5R	18D/52R	7D/28R	R
(D) NM	3D	57D/42R	4D/1R	45D/25R	27D/15R	D
(R) NV	2D/1R	55D/43R	3D/2R	28D/14R	12D/9R	split
(D) OR	4D/1R	57D/41R	5D	36D/24R	18D/12R	R
(D) WY	1R	33D/65R	5R	18D/41R	7D/23R	R

Note: * IL-5 was vacated by Rahm Emanuel; the seat has yet to be filled.