

AEI Political Report

A MONTHLY POLL COMPILATION

Evaluating Vice Presidents

Americans have never held the office of vice president in high regard, as the quotes below show. Many people cannot correctly identify vice presidents when they are serving, and this is not a new phenomenon. In 2010, around six in ten Americans were able to come up with Joe Biden's name in response to a question from the Pew Research Center. As the data on the next pages show, a vice president's favorability ratings have usually moved in tandem with the president's ratings in recent years, but the vice president's ratings are usually lower.

The most insignificant office that ever the invention of man contrived or his imagination conceived. —John Adams

Not worth a bucket of warm spit. —John Nance Gardner

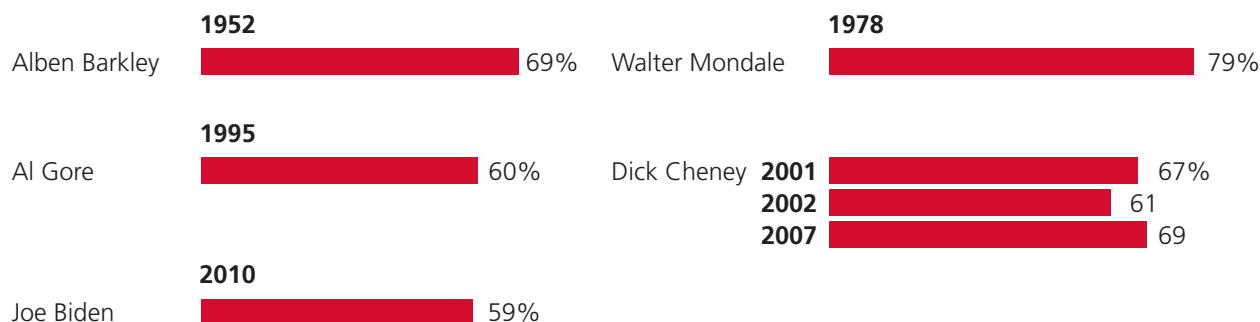
I do not propose to be buried until I am dead. —Daniel Webster of being asked to be Zachary Taylor's running mate

Q: Will you tell me who the Vice President of the United States is? (1952, Gallup)

Q: Who is the Vice President of the United States? (1978, National Opinion Research Center)

Q: Can you tell me the name of the current Vice President of the United States? (1995, Kaiser/Harvard/Washington Post).

Q: Will you tell me who the Vice President of the United States is? (2001, 2002, 2007, 2010 – question wording varied slightly, Pew Research Center)



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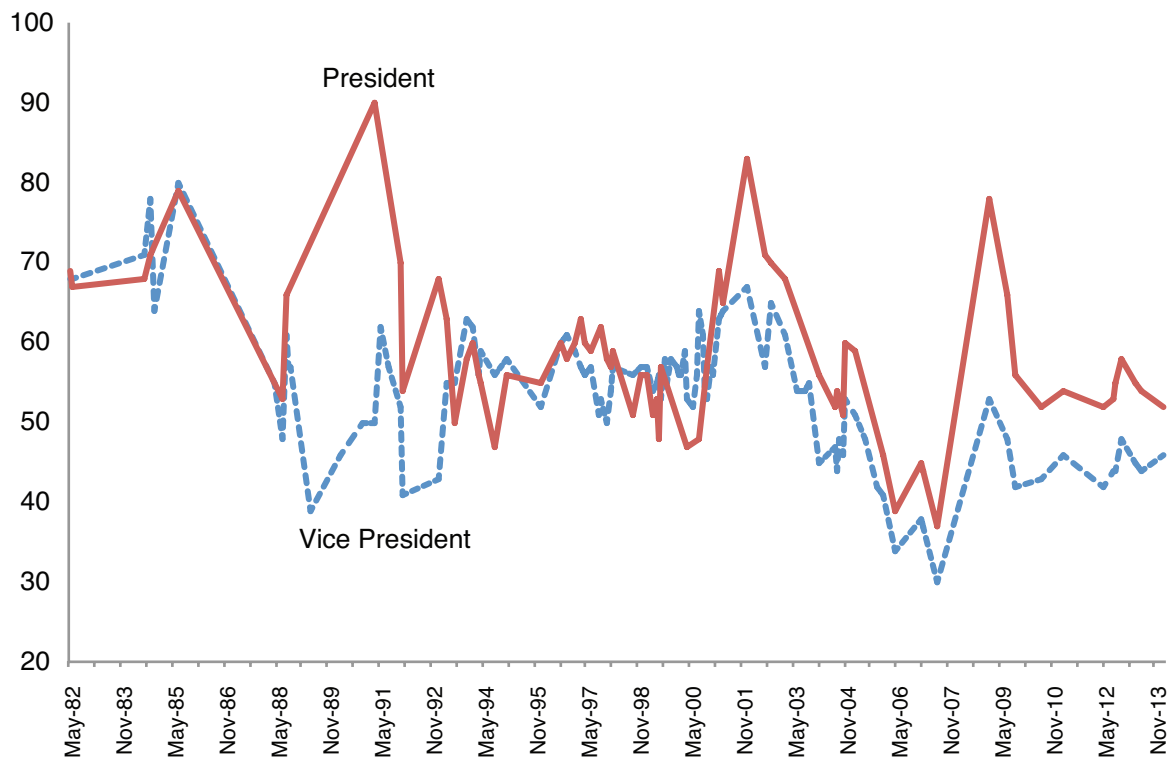
Favorability: How Do Vice Presidents Stack Up?

Since the start of George W. Bush's presidency in 2001, the favorability ratings for presidents and vice presidents have tracked each other closely, with presidential ratings slightly more favorable than those of vice presidents. But prior to 2001, favorability ratings exhibited less predictable patterns. Bill Clinton and Al Gore's favorability ratings remained close, with neither clearly more popular than the other while holding the nation's highest and second-highest offices. George H. W. Bush's ratings far exceeded Dan Quayle's during his presidency, but as vice president, Bush shared nearly identical favorability ratings with Ronald Reagan. We show below approval questions asked at the same points in time for Barack Obama and Joe Biden.

Q: (You will notice that the 10 boxes on this scale go from the highest position of plus five—for someone or something you have a very favorable opinion of—all the way down to the lowest position of minus five—for someone or something you have a very unfavorable opinion of. How far up or down the scale would you rate the following?)...George Bush?*

Q: Is your opinion of _____ very favorable, mostly favorable, mostly unfavorable or very unfavorable?

Q: (We'd like to get your overall opinion of some people in the news. As I read each name, please say if you have a favorable or unfavorable opinion of these people—or if you have never heard of them.) How about _____?



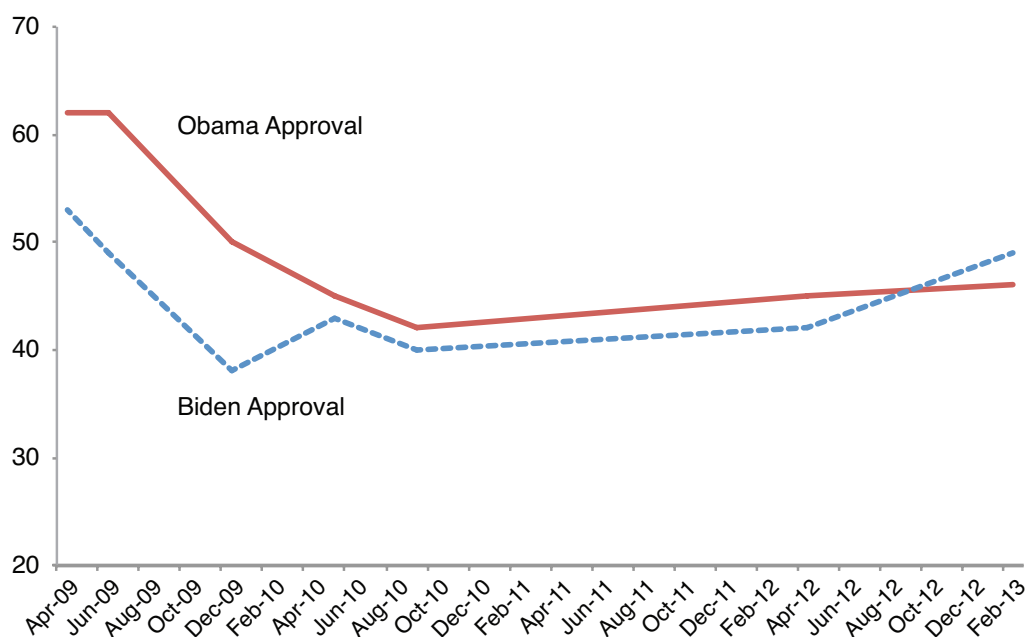
Note: *On the 10-point scale, all positive responses are classified as "favorable" and all negative responses were classified as "unfavorable."
Source: The Gallup Organization, latest that of February 2014.

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Q: Do you approve or disapprove of the job Barack Obama is doing as president?

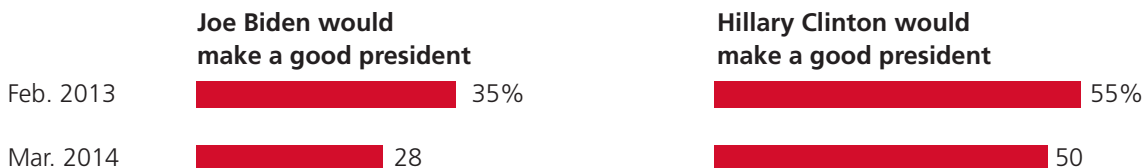
Q: Do you approve or disapprove of the job Joe Biden is doing as vice president?



Note: Sample is registered voters. Only polls in which both Obama and Biden were asked about are included here.
Source: Fox News, latest that of February 2013.

Neither the public nor the pollsters seem to pay a great deal of attention to vice presidents. But Joe Biden’s name is in the mix of possible 2016 candidates, and the pollsters have already asked many questions about the contest. We compare Joe Biden’s ratings here with those of the early front-runner Hillary Clinton.

Q: I’m going to read you a list of names and for each one I’d like you to please tell me if you think that person would make a good president or not. If you have never heard of a person, please just say so.



Note: Sample is registered voters.
Source: Fox News, latest that of March 2014.

Q: We’d like to get your overall opinion of some people in the news. As I read each name, please say if you have a favorable or unfavorable opinion of these people—or if you have never heard of them.

Favorable opinion of Joe Biden	39%	Favorable opinion of Hillary Clinton	57%
Unfavorable opinion	49	Unfavorable opinion	41

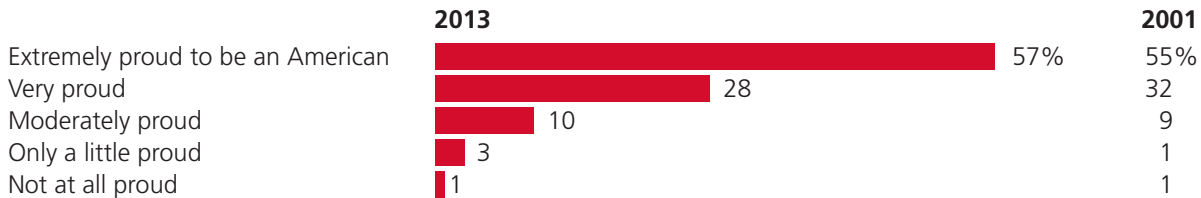
Source: CNN/Opinion Research Corporation, latest that of March 2014.



Polls on Patriotism

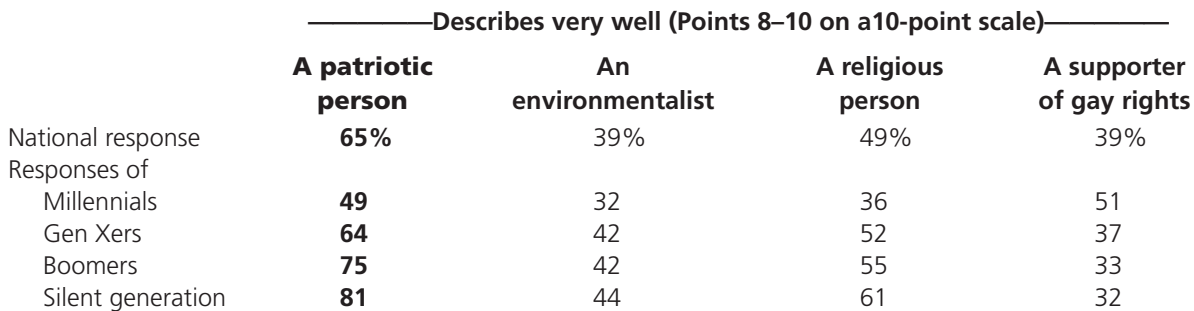
At a time when Americans are deeply dissatisfied with the way things are going in the country and with the performance of key political actors and institutions, they still consider themselves patriots and believe that the United States is the best country in the world. Responses to Gallup's latest question differ little from the first time Gallup posed the question in 2001 before the 9/11 attacks. People are more comfortable with describing themselves as "a patriotic person" than as "an environmentalist," "a religious person," or "a supporter of gay rights."

Q: How proud are you to be an American . . . ?



Source: The Gallup Organization, latest that of June 2013.

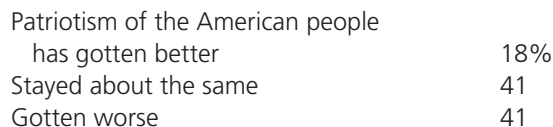
Q: Next, I'm going to read you some words and phrases and ask you to rate how well each describes you. Please use a scale from 1 to 10, where "10" represents a description that is perfect for you, and "1" represents a description that is totally wrong for you. On this scale of 1 to 10, how well does _____ describe you?



Note: Millennials are 18–33 years old, Gen Xers are 34–49 years old, Boomers are 50–69 years old, and the Silent Generation, 69–86 years in this Pew study.

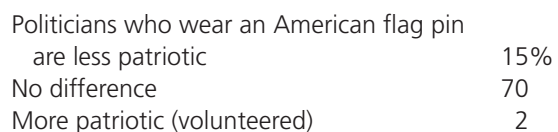
Source: Pew Research Center, February 2014.

Q: Compared with ten years ago, would you say that when it comes to the patriotism of the American people, things in this country have . . . ?



Source: Associated Press/National Opinion Research Center, August 2013.

Q: Generally speaking, do you think . . . ?



Source: 60 Minutes/Vanity Fair, April 2013.

Q: Some people say the United States has a unique character that makes it the greatest country in the world. Others say that every country is unique, and the United States is no greater than other nations. Which view is closer to your own?



Source: Chicago Council on Global Affairs, May–June 2012.

Veterans and the VA

In late 1979, Louis Harris and Associates conducted a survey of the public and of Vietnam-era veterans. The survey included questions about the Veterans Administration. Forty-five percent of veterans said the agency was doing an excellent or pretty good job, and most that had contacted it did so about life insurance or schooling. In 2011, the Pew Research Center asked veterans about the VA using a similar question. Slightly more than half said the VA was doing an excellent or good job meeting veterans' needs.

Q: Now let's turn to the Veterans Administration, the agency of the federal government in charge of veterans' affairs. How well would you say the VA is doing in serving the needs of veterans of the Vietnam era?

	1979-1980	
	National response	Vietnam-era veterans' response
VA is doing an excellent job in serving the needs of veterans of the Vietnam era	5%	10%
Pretty good	30	35
Only fair	36	35
Poor	14	16

Source: Louis Harris and Associates, November 1979-March 1980.

Q: How would you rate the job the Veterans Administration is doing today to meet the needs of military veterans? Is the VA doing alan . . . ?

	2011 Veterans
VA is doing an excellent job today to meet the needs of military veterans	16%
Good	36
Only fair	30
Poor	8

Note: Asked of national adult veterans. Source: Pew Research Center, July-September 2011.

Q: Has the government given you, as a veteran, all the help you think it should?

Government has given you, as a veteran, all the help you think it should	61%
Has not	34

Note: Asked of national adult veterans. Source: Pew Research Center, July-September 2011.

Contact with the VA

In another question in this Harris survey, 82 percent of Vietnam era veterans said they had had contact with the VA since they left the service. Of those who had had contact, 43 percent said they contacted the agency about life insurance, 26 percent schooling, 7 percent a home loan, and 5 percent medical benefits or problems.

The Latest on the VA Scandal

In a new ABC News/*Washington Post* poll, 82 percent of Americans say that the falsification of records about long wait times at some military veteran hospitals is a very serious issue. In a CNN/Opinion Research Corporation poll, 48 percent said they were angry about the situation at the VA and 21 percent upset. Six in ten in the ABC/*Post* poll believe President Obama is not personally responsible for problems at the Department of Veterans Affairs, while 38 percent say he is. In the CNN/ORC poll, however, only 37 percent approved of the way the President was handling the situation.

As for Eric Shinseki, 65 percent told ABC/*Post* pollsters that he was right to resign over the scandal. According to a May *USA Today* survey, only one in five Americans says that the government is doing an excellent or good job providing veterans with medical care.

Barack Obama: Uniter or Divider?

Americans had high hopes that Barack Obama could unite the country. In an October 2008 PSRA/*Newsweek* poll of registered voters, 62 percent said the phrase “can bring the country together” described Obama. In an October 2009 CNN/Opinion Research Corporation survey, people were split about whether the phrase “will unite the country and not divide it” applied to Obama. In 2013 NBC News/*Wall Street Journal* polls, people were divided about his approach.

Q: Regardless of which 2008 presidential election candidate you personally support, please tell me which candidate . . .



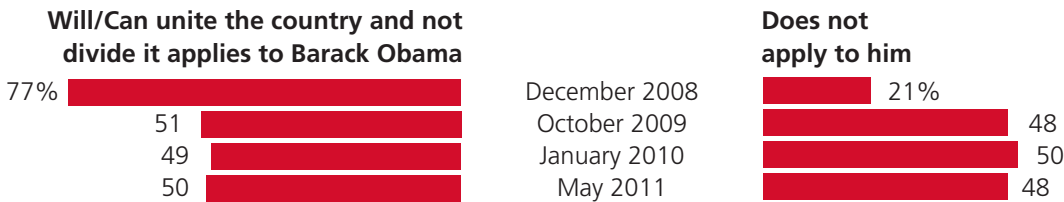
Note: Sample is registered voters.
Source: Princeton Survey Research Associates/*Newsweek*, September 2008.

Q: Please tell me whether or not you think each of the following phrases describes Barack Obama. What about . . . ?



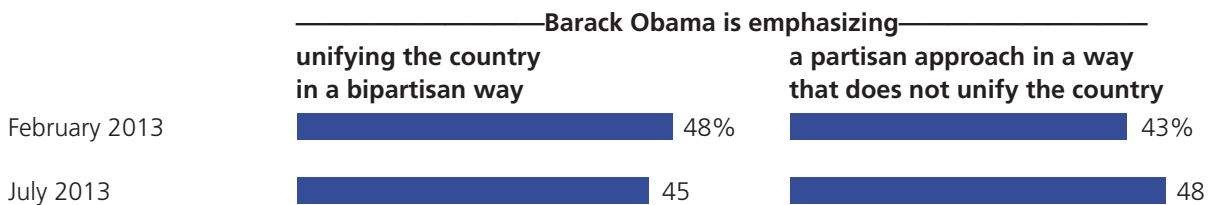
Note: Sample is registered voters.
Source: Princeton Survey Research Associates/*Newsweek*, October 2008.

Q: Thinking about the following characteristics and qualities, please say whether you think it applies or doesn't apply to Barack Obama . . .



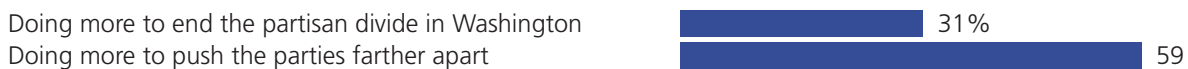
Note: Question wording changed from “will” unite to “can” unite, beginning in 2010.
Source: CNN/Opinion Research Corporation, latest that of May 2011.

Q: Based on what you have seen, heard, or read recently, do you feel that . . . ?



Source: NBC News/*Wall Street Journal*, latest that of July 2013.

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



Note: Sample is registered voters.
Source: Fox News, October 2013.

The Family Dinner Hour: Alive and Well

In April, NBC News and the *Wall Street Journal* asked people whether certain behaviors applied personally to them. Sixty-nine percent said they knew their neighbors well, down slightly from 73 percent in 1999. Forty percent said someone in their household had a tattoo, up from 21 percent in 1999. We were interested in the proportion saying they had a family dinner at least five times a week. The results of this question are shown below along with a trend on the responses of parents of teenagers and teenagers themselves to the question.

Q: For each of the following, please tell me whether that applies or does not apply to you personally. . . .

Have a family dinner at least five times per week



Source: NBC News/*Wall Street Journal*, latest that of April 2014.

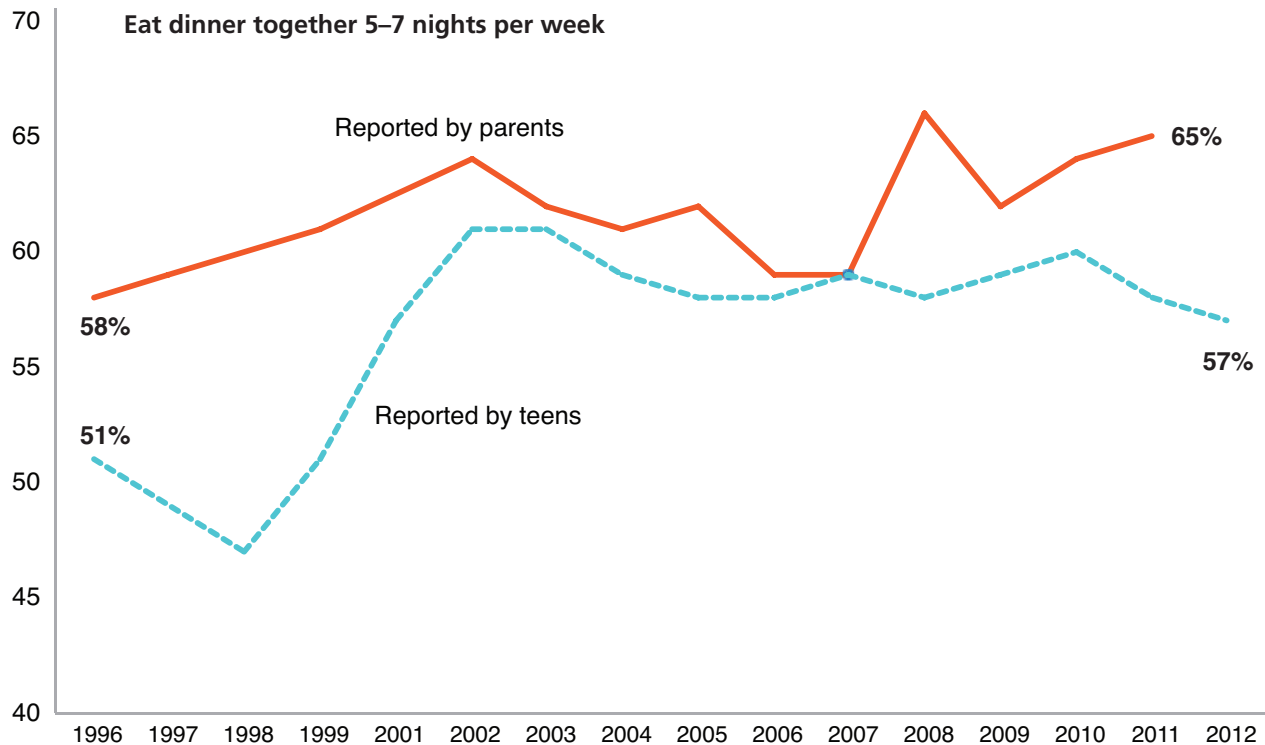
Q: How many nights a week out of seven does your family eat dinner together at home?

Parents of children under 18



Note: Eighteen percent said five nights a week, 15 percent six, and 38 percent seven.
Source: The Gallup Organization, December 2013.

Q: In a typical week, how many times do you have dinner together as a family?

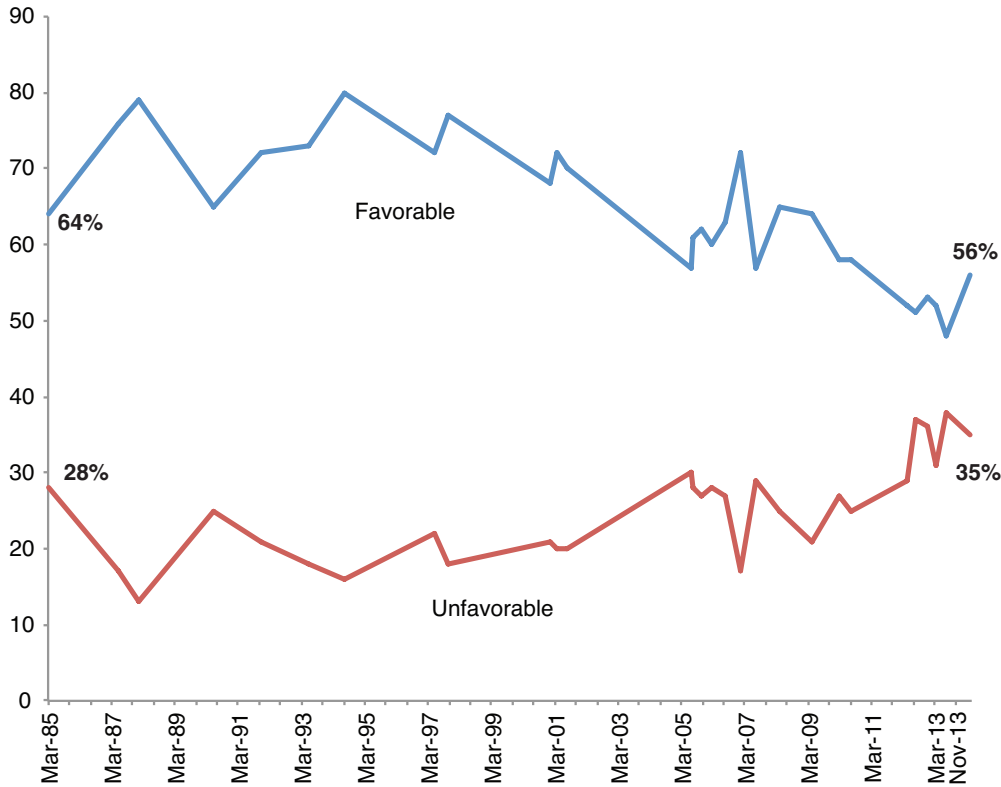


Source: National Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse at Columbia University, latest that of 2012.

The Supreme Court

With the Supreme Court's current term finishing up at the end of June, we look now to Americans' opinions about the nation's highest court. Pew finds that over the past 30 years, favorable opinions about the Supreme Court have slipped, reaching a low point of 48 percent last July. A majority (56 percent), however, held a favorable view of the Court as of April 2014.

Q: Next, would you say your overall opinion of the Supreme Court is . . . ?



Note: "Favorable" combines very favorable and mostly favorable responses; "unfavorable" combines mostly unfavorable and very unfavorable responses.

Source: Pew Research Center, latest that of April 2014.

Q: Thinking about the Supreme Court . . . In your view, do you think the current Supreme Court is . . . ?

	Apr. 2014	Jul. 2013	Jul. 2007
Supreme Court is conservative	25%	23%	36%
Middle of the road	35	42	35
Liberal	31	26	14

Note: Other askings not included here.

Source: Pew Research Center, latest that of April 2014.

Q: When the Supreme Court decides an important constitutional case, should it . . . ?

Supreme Court should only consider the legal issues	47%
It should also consider what the majority of the public thinks about that subject	45

Source: Public Religion Research Institute, May 2013.

The Book on Bowe Bergdahl

Early public reactions to the Taliban prisoner exchange that freed Sgt. Bowe Bergdahl are clear in several respects. People disapprove of the administration's actions, they give Barack Obama low marks on handling the situation and believe Congress should have been consulted. They also believe the Taliban fighters who were released could do grave harm. Americans, however, are divided on whether the United States should negotiate with terrorist groups to ensure the safe release of American prisoners.

Q: Do you approve or disapprove of the Obama administration releasing five Taliban prisoners in exchange for the Taliban releasing U.S. soldier Bowe Bergdahl . . . ? (ABC News/Washington Post)

Q: As you may know, Sgt. Bowe Bergdahl, a US soldier who was being held captive by the Taliban, was released in exchange for five Taliban members who were being held by the US at Guantanamo Bay prison. Do you . . . ? (CBS News)

Q: Do you think it was the right thing or the wrong thing for the Obama administration to exchange five Taliban prisoners for captive U.S. soldier Bowe Bergdahl? (Pew Research Center)

	ABC/Post		CBS		Pew
Approve	39%	Approve	37%	Right thing	34%
Disapprove	51	Disapprove	45	Wrong thing	43

Q: Do you approve or disapprove of the way Barack Obama is handling the situation involving the release of Sgt. Bergdahl?



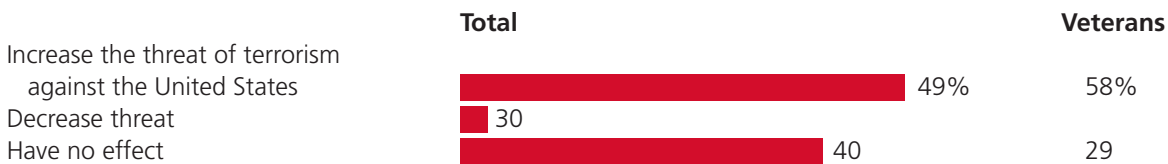
Note: Thirty-one percent of veterans approved and 57 percent disapproved.
Source: CBS News, June 2014.

Q: Do you think President Obama . . . ?



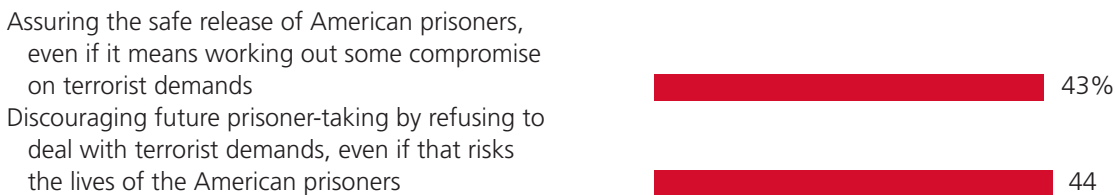
Note: Seventy-one percent of veterans said he should have notified Congress.
Source: CBS News, June 2014.

Q: Do you think the exchange of Sgt. Bergdahl for members of the Taliban will . . . ?



Source: CBS News, June 2014.

Q: Which is more important for the U.S. to consider when Americans are held captive by terrorist groups . . . ?



Source: The Gallup Organization, June 2014.