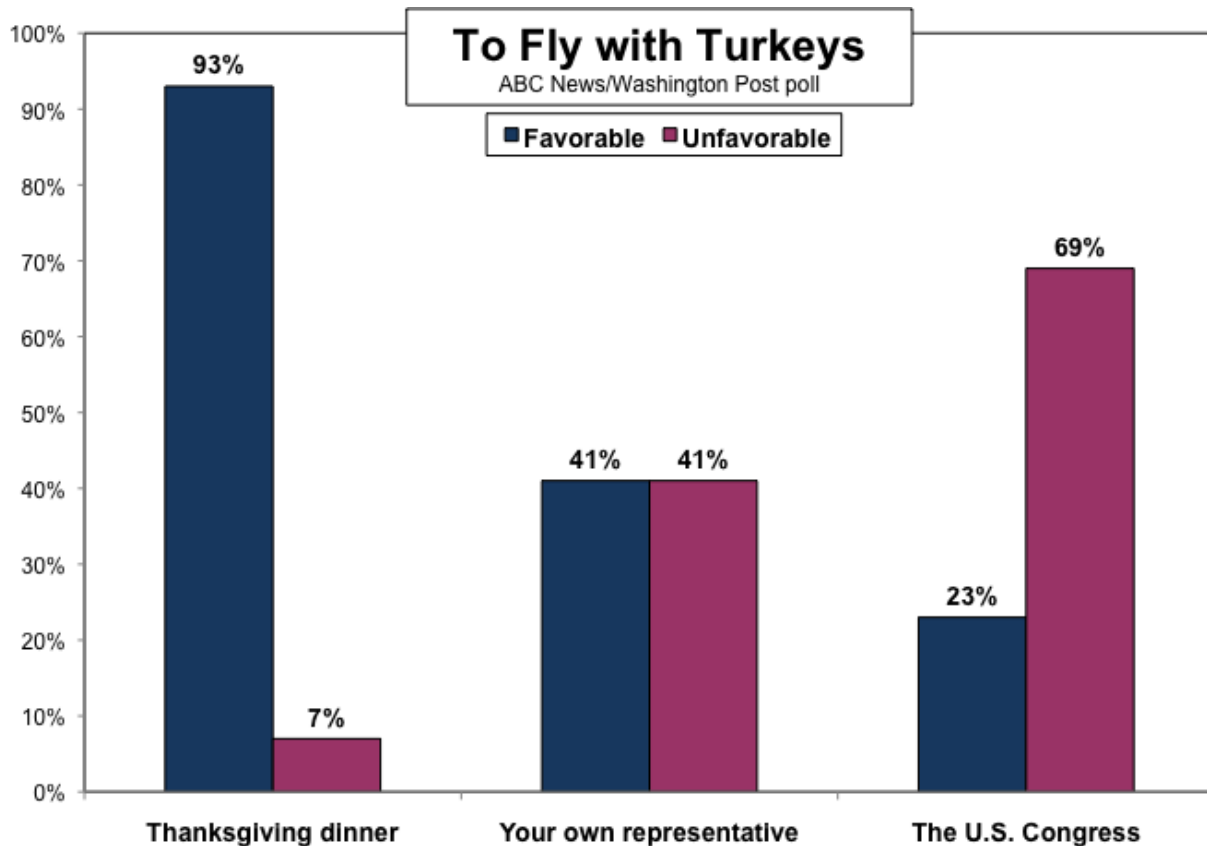


Turkeys Popular; Congress, Not

Few Americans are giving thanks for what many see as the turkeys in Congress. Those on the dinner table, on the other hand, are mighty popular.

Ninety-three percent in this ABC News/Washington Post poll express a favorable opinion of Thanksgiving dinner. In Washington, by contrast, nothing's cooking: Favorable ratings of the U.S. Congress are 70 percentage points lower. Time, perhaps, for the political Pepto-Bismol.

But there are some leftovers for individual Congress members. While just 23 percent of Americans see Congress as a whole favorably, substantially more, 41 percent, express a favorable impression of their own representative. That may ease the indigestion.



It's customary, and even sensible, for Americans to rate their own representative more highly than Congress as a whole. The former is a local personage, elected by the voters, presumably with some constituent services on offer. The latter is a large and contentious national institution,

in a country with a highly unhappy populace, courtesy of the long-running economic downturn. Most recently, there's been that little Super Committee thing.

So glum is the public's political mood that it's perhaps encouraging to see the warm welcome still afforded the venerable tradition of Thanksgiving dinner. Not only do nine in 10 see it favorably, 77 percent of Americans have "strongly" positive impressions of this particular upcoming meal. Seven percent in this poll, produced for ABC by [Langer Research Associates](#), see Thanksgiving dinner unfavorably. Presumably they are simply not the roasted fowl types.

For Congress, "favorable" ratings are a bit less harsh than job approval; in an ABC/Post poll last month a record low 14 percent of Americans approved of the way the Congress is doing its job. In this survey, by contrast, 23 percent see it favorably overall, indicating that it gets a little more credit for effort than for performance. But not much: Not only do 69 percent see the Congress unfavorably, a plurality, 44 percent, feels that way strongly.

Moreover, while favorability of Congress hasn't been asked often, this reading hits a new low compared with four previous surveys dating to 1986.

Unfavorable views of Congress peak in some particular groups – soaring, most notably, to 81 percent among conservative Republicans and among very conservative Americans. Negative views of Congress also are 20 points higher among whites than among nonwhites, 12 points higher among Americans 50 and older than among those under 50 and 8 points higher among men than among women.

Republicans are a slight 7 points more apt than Democrats to express an unfavorable view of Congress overall. When rating their own representative, though, 51 percent Republicans give a favorable report, vs. 43 percent of Democrats and just 34 percent of independents.

There's not much partisanship in overall views of Thanksgiving dinner. But there is in intensity: Eighty-nine percent of Republicans see it "strongly" favorably, vs. 77 percent of Democrats and 68 percent of independents. And strongly positive views of the Thanksgiving repast peak in the Midwest and South, at 82 percent, vs. 69 percent in the West and Northeast – both the region farthest removed from the origins of Turkey Day, and, oddly, the one where it all got started with a pilgrim and an ax.

METHODOLOGY – This ABC News/Washington Post poll was conducted by landline and cell phone Nov. 16-20, 2011, among a random national sample of 1,009 adults. Results have a margin of [sampling error](#) of 4 points. The survey was produced for ABC News by [Langer Research Associates](#) of New York, N.Y., with sampling, data collection and tabulation by SSRS/Social Science Research Solutions of Media, Pa.

Analysis by Gary Langer.

ABC News polls can be found at ABCNEWS.com at <http://abcnews.com/pollingunit>.

Media contacts: [David Ford](#), (212) 456-7243, and [Julie Townsend](#), (212) 456-4934.

Full results follow.

*= less than 0.5 percent.

1. Overall, do you have a favorable or unfavorable impression of (NAME)? Do you feel that way strongly or somewhat? (ROTATE items a-b, ask item c last)

a. The U.S. Congress

	----- Favorable -----			----- Unfavorable -----			No opinion
	NET	Strongly	Somewhat	NET	Somewhat	Strongly	
11/20/11	23	4	19	69	25	44	7
3/4/10*	27	4	23	64	27	37	10
12/17/07**	46	11	35	50	24	26	4
11/29/89***	53	9	44	6	39	27	14
2/20/86****	59	7	52	28	23	5	13

*Pew Financial Reform Project survey

**Associated Press/Ipsos-Public Affairs poll

***American Medical Political Action Committee Survey

****Los Angeles Times Poll

b. Your own representative in the U.S. House of Representatives

	----- Favorable -----			----- Unfavorable -----			No opinion
	NET	Strongly	Somewhat	NET	Somewhat	Strongly	
11/20/11	41	10	31	41	19	21	18

c. Thanksgiving dinner

	----- Favorable -----			----- Unfavorable -----			No opinion
	NET	Strongly	Somewhat	NET	Somewhat	Strongly	
11/20/11	93	77	16	7	3	4	*

END