

Dems, GOP in Congress: Unlucky in Love

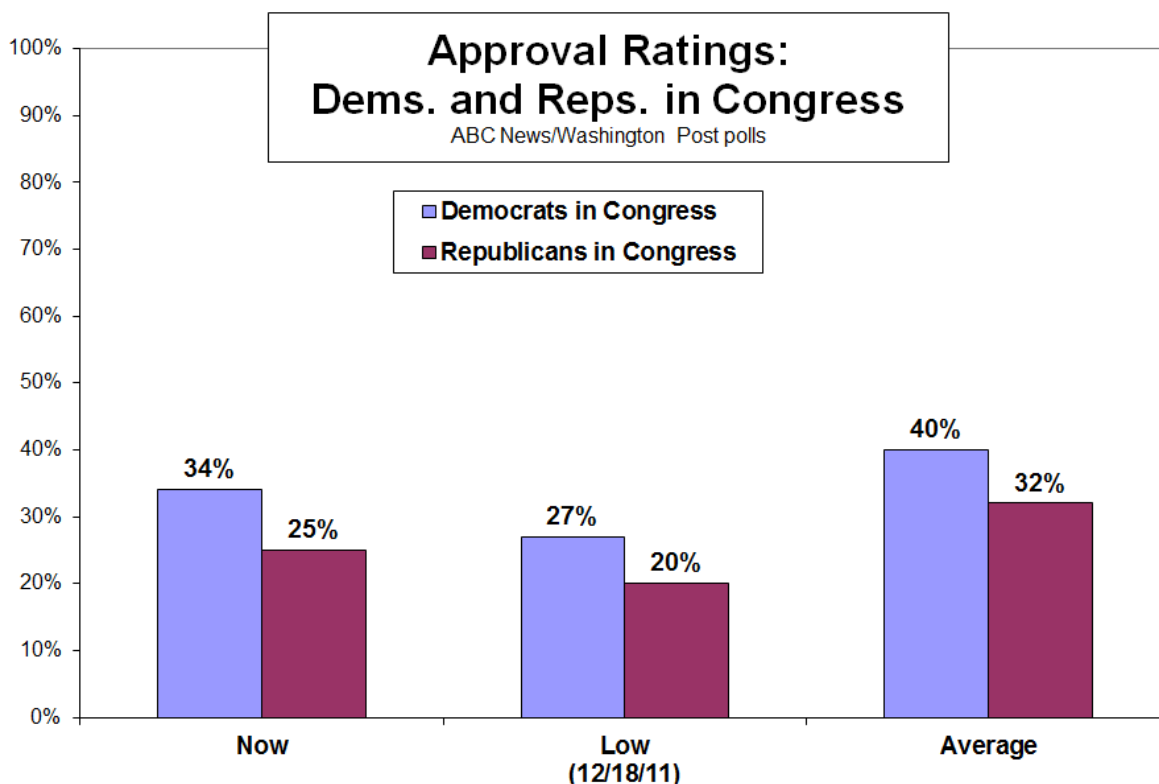
Misery loves company as the top political parties sally forth into the 2014 midterm election year: Merely a third of Americans approve of the way the Democrats in Congress are handling their jobs – and even fewer, just a quarter, approve of their Republican counterparts.

That hold-your-nose result in the latest ABC News/Washington Post poll marks the challenges both parties face gaining traction in election preference between now and Nov. 4. Their solace is that, however unloved, somebody's got to win.

Both parties' ratings, moreover, are less bad than they've been – and not a whole lot worse than usual.

Thirty-four percent approve of the performance of congressional Democrats, stable since last spring, up by 7 percentage points from the low about two years ago and just 6 points worse than the average in ABC/Post surveys since 1994. Sixty percent disapprove, a smidge (4 points) fewer than in December.

As for the Republicans in Congress, 25 percent approve, compared with a low of 20 percent in late 2011 and a 20-year average of 32 percent. Seventy-one percent disapprove.



Painfully, congressional Republicans get only a 51 percent approval rating from Republicans themselves, highlighting the party’s popularity problems – including internal rifts over its Tea Party component – among its own core supporters. The Democrats in Congress, by contrast, get a much better rating, 64 percent, from self-identified Democrats in this poll, produced for ABC by [Langer Research Associates](#). (Independents give both the stink eye, with 27 percent approval for the Democrats in Congress, 23 percent for the GOP.)

That said, the 9-point advantage in overall approval for congressional Democrats (34 vs. 25 percent) may not translate into any kind of advantage in the midterms. In the absence of a nationalizing issue, district-level races can have their own dynamic (including the customary advantage of incumbency). While the GOP is comparatively weaker in its base, core Republicans are unlikely to support Democratic candidates as an alternative. And, as usual, the Democrats in Congress are more popular in groups that are less apt to turn out, especially in midterm elections.

Approval of the Democrats in Congress peaks at 61 percent among blacks, and it’s 44 percent among Hispanics, vs. just 27 percent among whites. While racial and ethnic minorities represent a growing share of the population, whites still predominate, especially in midterm elections.

At 24 percent, approval for the Republicans in Congress among whites is no better than it is for the Democrats. But that 3-point gap compares with a 24-point difference among nonwhites.

| | % Approve | | |
|------------|-------------------|-------------------|-------|
| | Dems. in Congress | Reps. in Congress | Diff. |
| Whites | 27% | 24% | 3 pts |
| Non-whites | 50 | 26 | 24 |

Additionally, the Democrats in Congress get 44 percent approval from adults younger than 30, their best age group; and 41 percent from those with incomes less than \$40,000 a year. Younger and lower-income adults also tend to be less apt to vote.

Congressional Republicans, though, don’t answer with any particular strengths; outside of party regulars, their best approval number is among strong conservatives – but there just 37 percent.

A potentially good sign for the GOP is that the parties’ approval numbers now are not so different than they were in October 2010, just before the GOP romped to control of the House and gained six Senate seats; at that time 36 percent of Americans approved of the Democrats in Congress, 30 percent the Republicans – a 6-point Democratic edge, neutralized by differential turnout in the election itself. That compares with a 13-point advantage in approval for the Democrats in October 2006, just before they won both chambers.

Finally, in evidence that two bads make a worse, both parties might reflect on the combined approval rating of the U.S. Congress as a whole. While not repeated in this survey, it was 16 percent in an ABC/Post poll last month – a mere 4 points from its level last October, when approval of Congress hit a low in polling dating back nearly 40 years.

METHODOLOGY – This ABC News/Washington Post poll was conducted by landline and cell phone Jan. 8-12, 2014, in English and Spanish, among a random national sample of 1,011 adults. Results have a margin of [sampling error](#) of 3.5 points. The survey was produced for ABC News by [Langer Research Associates](#) of New York, N.Y.

Analysis by Gary Langer.

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

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Full results follow.

1. Overall, do you approve or disapprove of (ITEM)? Do you feel that way strongly, or somewhat?

a. the way Democrats in Congress are doing their job

| | ----- Approve ----- | | | ----- Disapprove ----- | | | No opinion |
|----------|---------------------|----------|----------|------------------------|----------|----------|------------|
| | NET | Strongly | Somewhat | NET | Somewhat | Strongly | |
| 1/12/14 | 34 | 11 | 23 | 60 | 19 | 40 | 6 |
| 12/15/13 | 34 | NA | NA | 64 | NA | NA | 2 |
| 3/10/13 | 34 | | | 62 | | | 4 |
| 1/13/13 | 37 | | | 59 | | | 3 |
| 12/16/12 | 39 | | | 56 | | | 5 |
| 3/10/12 | 34 | | | 60 | | | 6 |
| 1/15/12 | 33 | | | 62 | | | 5 |
| 12/18/11 | 27 | | | 66 | | | 7 |
| 4/17/11 | 36 | | | 60 | | | 4 |
| 10/3/10 | 36 | | | 61 | | | 3 |
| 7/18/09 | 47 | | | 48 | | | 5 |
| 4/24/09 | 45 | | | 49 | | | 6 |
| 2/22/09 | 50 | | | 44 | | | 6 |
| 7/13/08 | 35 | | | 57 | | | 8 |
| 2/1/08 | 39 | | | 54 | | | 7 |
| 12/9/07 | 40 | | | 53 | | | 6 |
| 11/1/07 | 36 | | | 58 | | | 6 |
| 9/30/07 | 38 | | | 57 | | | 5 |
| 7/21/07 | 46 | | | 51 | | | 2 |
| 6/1/07 | 44 | | | 49 | | | 6 |
| 4/15/07 | 54 | | | 44 | | | 2 |
| 10/8/06 | 48 | | | 50 | | | 3 |
| 5/15/06 | 39 | | | 58 | | | 4 |
| 11/2/05 | 41 | | | 54 | | | 5 |
| 6/5/05 | 42 | | | 56 | | | 3 |
| 6/6/99 | 51 | | | 42 | | | 7 |
| 3/14/99 | 51 | | | 42 | | | 7 |
| 7/8/97 | 45 | | | 49 | | | 6 |
| 4/5/95 | 36 | | | 60 | | | 4 |
| 10/31/94 | 39 | | | 53 | | | 8 |
| 10/23/94 | 36 | | | 59 | | | 5 |
| 9/11/94 | 41 | " | " | 53 | " | " | 6 |

b. the way Republicans in Congress are doing their job

----- Approve ----- ----- Disapprove ----- No

| | NET | Strongly | Somewhat | NET | Somewhat | Strongly | opinion |
|------------|-----|----------|----------|-----|----------|----------|---------|
| 1/12/14 | 25 | 6 | 18 | 71 | 24 | 46 | 5 |
| 12/15/13 | 24 | NA | NA | 73 | NA | NA | 3 |
| 3/10/13 | 24 | | | 72 | | | 3 |
| 1/13/13 | 24 | | | 71 | | | 4 |
| 12/16/12 | 25 | | | 70 | | | 5 |
| 3/10/12 | 23 | | | 71 | | | 6 |
| 1/15/12 | 21 | | | 75 | | | 4 |
| 12/18/11 | 20 | | | 72 | | | 7 |
| 9/1/11 | 28 | | | 68 | | | 3 |
| 4/17/11 | 34 | | | 63 | | | 3 |
| 10/3/10 | 30 | | | 67 | | | 3 |
| 7/18/09 | 36 | | | 58 | | | 6 |
| 4/24/09 | 30 | | | 64 | | | 6 |
| 2/22/09 | 38 | | | 56 | | | 6 |
| 7/13/08 | 25 | | | 69 | | | 6 |
| 2/1/08 | 30 | | | 63 | | | 7 |
| 12/9/07 | 32 | | | 63 | | | 5 |
| 11/1/07 | 32 | | | 63 | | | 6 |
| 9/30/07 | 29 | | | 67 | | | 4 |
| 7/21/07 | 34 | | | 64 | | | 2 |
| 6/1/07 | 36 | | | 58 | | | 6 |
| 4/15/07 | 39 | | | 59 | | | 2 |
| 10/8/06 | 35 | | | 63 | | | 2 |
| 5/15/06 | 33 | | | 64 | | | 3 |
| 11/2/05 | 35 | | | 61 | | | 4 |
| 6/5/05 | 42 | | | 56 | | | 2 |
| 6/6/99 | 41 | | | 52 | | | 7 |
| 3/14/99 | 40 | | | 56 | | | 4 |
| 7/8/97 | 40 | | | 54 | | | 6 |
| 9/15/96 RV | 46 | | | 48 | | | 6 |
| 6/30/96 | 38 | | | 56 | | | 6 |
| 4/5/95 | 45 | | | 50 | | | 5 |
| 10/31/94 | 33 | | | 59 | | | 7 |
| 10/23/94 | 31 | | | 64 | | | 5 |
| 9/11/94 | 35 | " | " | 59 | " | " | 6 |

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