

Who's Looking Out for the Little Person? **Small Businesses Fly; Congress Flunks**

Americans overwhelmingly say small businesses are on their side, followed by local news media and local government. But helpfulness scores turn middling to mildly negative for a range of other institutions in society – and sharply negative for one, the U.S. Congress.

The latest ABC News/Washington Post poll tested whether people see any of a dozen institutions as more helpful to their best interests, more harmful or not much of an influence either way. The results provide fresh evidence that primary concerns are local; small is beautiful, at least in business; and Congress is, well, just plain unpopular.

Small businesses easily win top credit in this poll, produced for ABC by [Langer Research Associates](#). A broad 72 percent see them as more helpful to their interests, vs. just 5 percent more harmful – a net positive of 67 percentage points, far and away the best score. Half “strongly” think small businesses are helpful, double the next closest in intensity of sentiment.

Next up, 49 percent see the local news media in their area as helpful, 15 percent as harmful – a 34-point net positive score, albeit with 35 percent reporting no impact (vs. 21 percent for small businesses). “The local government where you live” lands a 19-point net positive score – 38 percent say it helps them, 19 percent say it hurts.

	More helpful	More harmful	Neither	Help/harm diff.
Small businesses	72%	5	21	+67 pts.
The local news media in your area	49	15	35	+34
The local government where you live	38	19	39	+19
Your state government	36	26	35	+10
The Democratic Party	35	32	31	+3
The national news media	33	32	33	+1
The Obama administration	36	41	21	-5
The federal government	31	36	31	-5
The Republican Party	27	36	34	-9
Wall Street	19	28	44	-9
Large business corporations	26	37	34	-11
Congress	17	44	35	-27

Americans give their state governments a narrower 10-point net positive score as being more helpful than harmful. Ratings drop in terms of national institutions, with net scores of a scant +3 points for the Democratic Party and +1 for the national news media; -5 for the Obama administration and the federal government overall, and -9- to -11 for the Republican Party, Wall Street and large business corporations.

But it's Congress that gets the gong, partly because partisans on both sides can easily see something there to dislike. Seventeen percent of Americans see Congress as more helpful to their best interests, while 44 percent see it as more harmful – a 27-point net negative rating.

To be sure, some Americans may not expect some of these institutions to act in their personal best interests at all, but rather to provide general social or economic benefits instead of overtly personal ones. Those could include, for instance, security, infrastructure and the rule of law, in terms of government; robust political discourse, in terms of the parties; and a well-functioning commercial system, in terms of financial and business institutions.

Indeed, substantial numbers say the institutions tested neither help nor hurt their best interests, ranging from a low of 21 percent (for small businesses and the Obama administration) to a high of 44 percent (for Wall Street). An additional 10 percent express no opinion of whether Wall Street helps or hurts them, making it the least familiar entity of those tested.

Attitudes vary among groups depending on the institution in question. Here's a summary of some of those results:

Congress. There's a strong economic aspect to views of the U.S. Congress: Among people who say the economy's in especially bad shape, 61 percent also say Congress is harmful to their best interests. That shrinks to 34 percent among those who say the economy's in good condition.

Views of Congress as harmful also peak among political independents (at 50 percent, with just 14 percent seeing it as helpful). Perhaps surprisingly, liberals and moderates are 10 points more apt than conservatives to see Congress as harmful to their best interests. And Congress is seen more negatively by whites than by non-whites, by 11 points; by people in the West and East vs. in the Midwest and South, by 10 points; and by 22 among those in urban and rural areas compared with the suburbs, where more say it doesn't affect them one way or the other.

The Obama administration, the federal government and the political parties. Views of the Obama administration, naturally, are very partisan: Sixty-eight percent of Democrats say it helps their personal interests, while 75 percent of Republicans say it harms theirs. Independents see more harm than help by a 25-point margin. There are similar wide gaps by political ideology, among whites vs. nonwhites, and again by views on the condition and direction of the economy. Views on the federal government overall and the political parties show similar divisions among partisan, ideological and racial groups.

State government engenders some partisanship, but far less sharply. Forty-eight percent of Republicans see it as helpful, compared with 32 percent of Democrats and independents. And conservatives are 13 points more apt to see their state government as helpful vs. harmful. Republicans and conservatives therefore are far more ill-disposed toward the federal government specifically than toward government more generally.

Local government is more likely to be seen as helpful by suburbanites compared with people in either urban or rural areas, college graduates vs. non-grads, whites vs. non-whites and (as with state government) Republicans compared with Democrats or independents, all by 10- or 11-point

margins. Satisfaction with representation in Congress is an even bigger factor: Among people inclined to re-elect their Congress member, 55 percent also see their local government as helpful. That falls to 34 percent among anti-incumbents.

Small and large businesses and Wall Street. Ideology marks one of the few group differences in views of small businesses, with their ratings as helpful ranging from 63 percent among liberals to 78 percent of conservatives – a 15-point difference, but substantial majorities regardless. Liberals instead are 10 points more apt than conservatives to see no impact of small businesses on their personal best interests.

Large business corporations engender more divisions. Forty-eight percent of young adults (those under age 30) see them as harmful, compared with 28 percent of seniors. Republicans are twice as likely as Democrats or independents to see large corporations as helpful, and half as likely to see them as harmful. Half of liberals say corporations are harmful to their interests; that declines to 38 percent of moderates and 25 percent of conservatives. And whites are more skeptical than nonwhites of major corporations, 41 vs. 29 percent.

Liberals also are somewhat more critical of Wall Street – 38 percent see it as harmful to their best interests, vs. 28 percent of conservatives and 24 percent of moderates. And here there's a sharp gender gap, with men more apt than women to see Wall Street as harmful, 36 vs. 21 percent.

Local and national news media. There are partisan, ideological and racial differences in views of local and national news media alike, with Democrats, liberals and nonwhites more favorably inclined. But the partisan and ideological gaps are wider when it comes to national as opposed to local media.

Forty-four percent of Democrats see the national news media as helpful to their best interests; that falls to about a quarter of independents and Republicans alike. Just more than four in 10 Republicans and independents instead see the national media as harmful, while only 14 percent of Democrats agree.

Similarly, liberals are more apt than moderates or conservatives to see the national news media as helpful, by 12 and 13 points, respectively; 49 percent of conservatives call the national media harmful to their best interests, vs. 27 percent of moderates and 21 percent of liberals. And there are similarly sharp differences between whites, who are far more apt to see the national media as harmful, and nonwhites, who are far more likely to see national news outlets as helpful.

METHODOLOGY – This ABC News/Washington Post poll was conducted by telephone April 24-27, 2014, in English and Spanish, among a random national sample of 1,000 adults, including landline and cell-phone-only respondents. Results have a margin of [sampling error](#) of 3.5 points, including design effect.

The survey was produced for ABC News by [Langer Research Associates](#) of New York, N.Y., with sampling, data collection and tabulation by Abt-SRBI 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.

1-14, 16-24 previously released.

15. For each group I name, please tell me if you think it's more helpful to your best interests, more harmful to your best interests, or neither helpful nor harmful? Do you feel that way strongly or somewhat?

	-- More Helpful --			-- More Harmful --				No
	NET	Strgly	Smwht	NET	Smwht	Strgly	Neither	op.
a. The local government where you live	38	15	23	19	8	11	39	4
b. Congress	17	3	14	44	14	30	35	4
c. The Obama administration	36	22	14	41	7	34	21	2
d. The Republican Party	27	12	15	36	14	22	34	3
e. The Democratic Party	35	19	16	32	11	21	31	2
f. Your state government	36	16	20	26	11	15	35	3
g. Small businesses	72	50	23	5	2	2	21	2
h. Large business corporations	26	12	15	37	14	22	34	3
i. Wall Street	19	6	12	28	12	16	44	10
j. The national news media	33	18	16	32	14	19	33	2
k. The local news media in your area	49	25	24	15	5	9	35	2
l. The federal government	31	11	19	36	11	25	31	2

*Half sample asked items a-f.; other half sample asked items g-l.

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