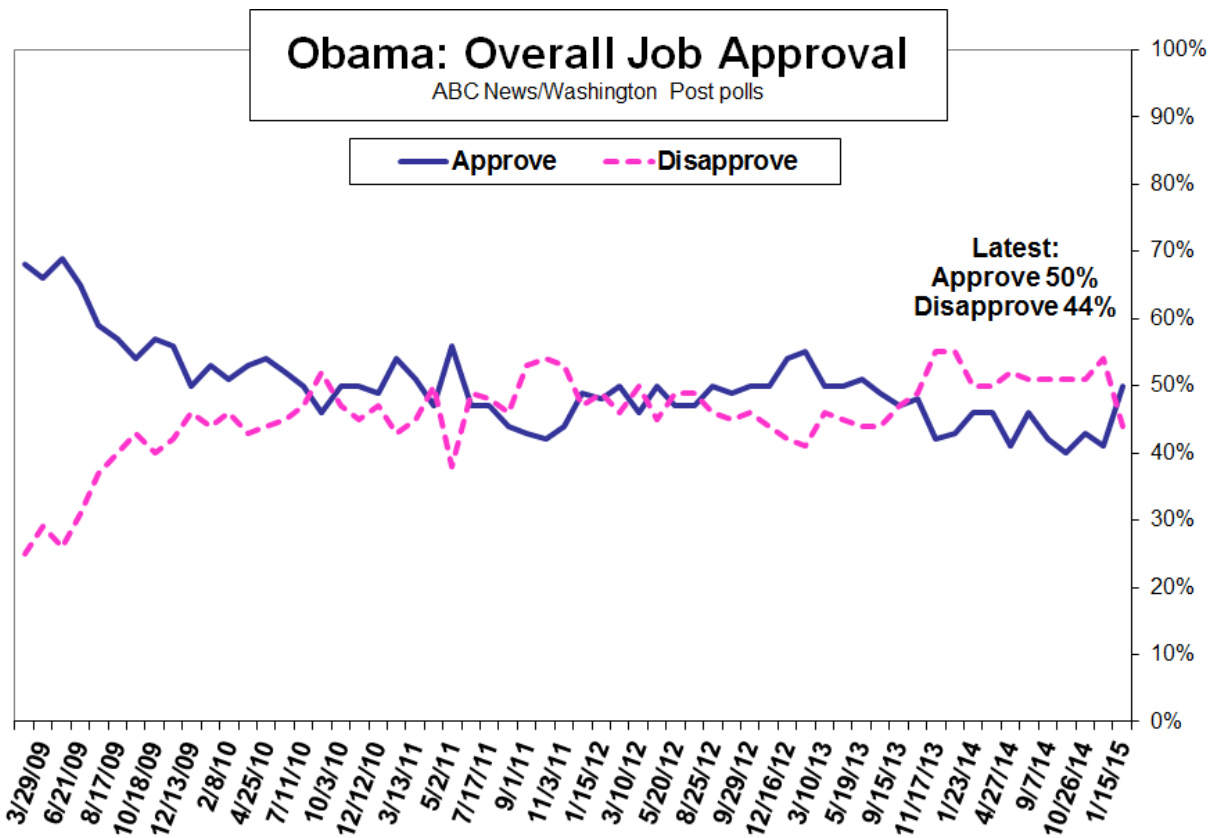


## **An Improving Economy Gives Obama His Game Back**

An improving economy is putting Barack Obama back in the game, boosting the president and his party in a striking turnaround from their devastating midterm losses.

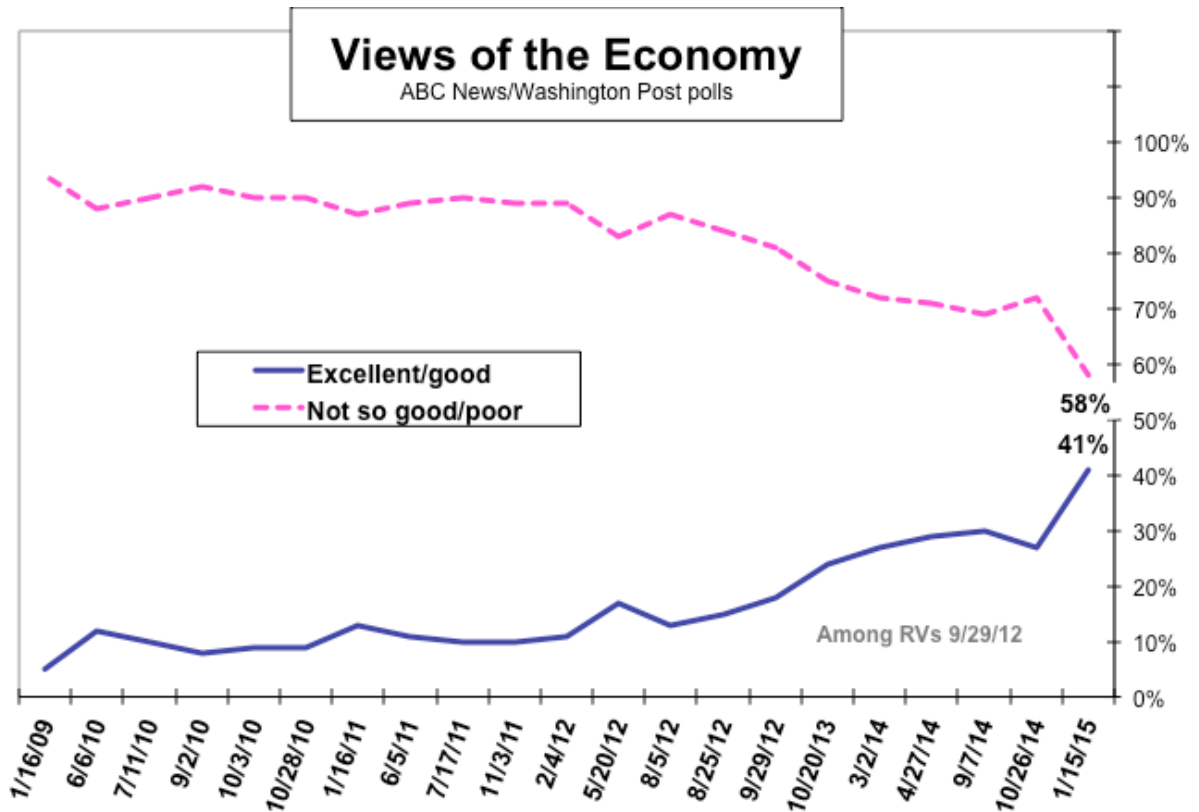
Americans approve of the president's job performance by 50-44 percent in the latest ABC News/Washington Post poll, a remarkable 9-point gain in approval and a 10-point drop in disapproval just since December. It's his best rating in a year and a half, and matches his previous best one-time advance, after U.S. forces killed Osama bin Laden in spring 2011.



Further, while 56 percent in this poll, produced for ABC by [Langer Research Associates](#), still say the country is headed seriously off on the wrong track, that's down by 12 percentage points since late October to its lowest since fall 2012, just before Obama's re-election.

The economy is driving these changes. Three months ago just 27 percent said it was in good shape. Today 41 percent say so, the most since April 2007, before the onset of the Great

Recession and its long aftermath. People who rate the economy positively are vastly more likely than others to approve of the president's performance and the country's direction alike.



These shifts give Obama some political traction after a year in the political wilderness. The public now divides, 40-36 percent, in whom it trusts more to handle the main problems facing the country, Obama or the Republicans in Congress. That's gone from +4 for the GOP last month to today's +4 for Obama. Again, economic sentiment is largely responsible.

	Obama Approve-disapprove	Right direction /wrong track	Trust on main probs Obama-Republicans
All	50-44%	39-56%	40-36%
Economy:			
Excellent/good	75-20	65-30	63-20
Not so good/poor	20-61	20-75	24-48

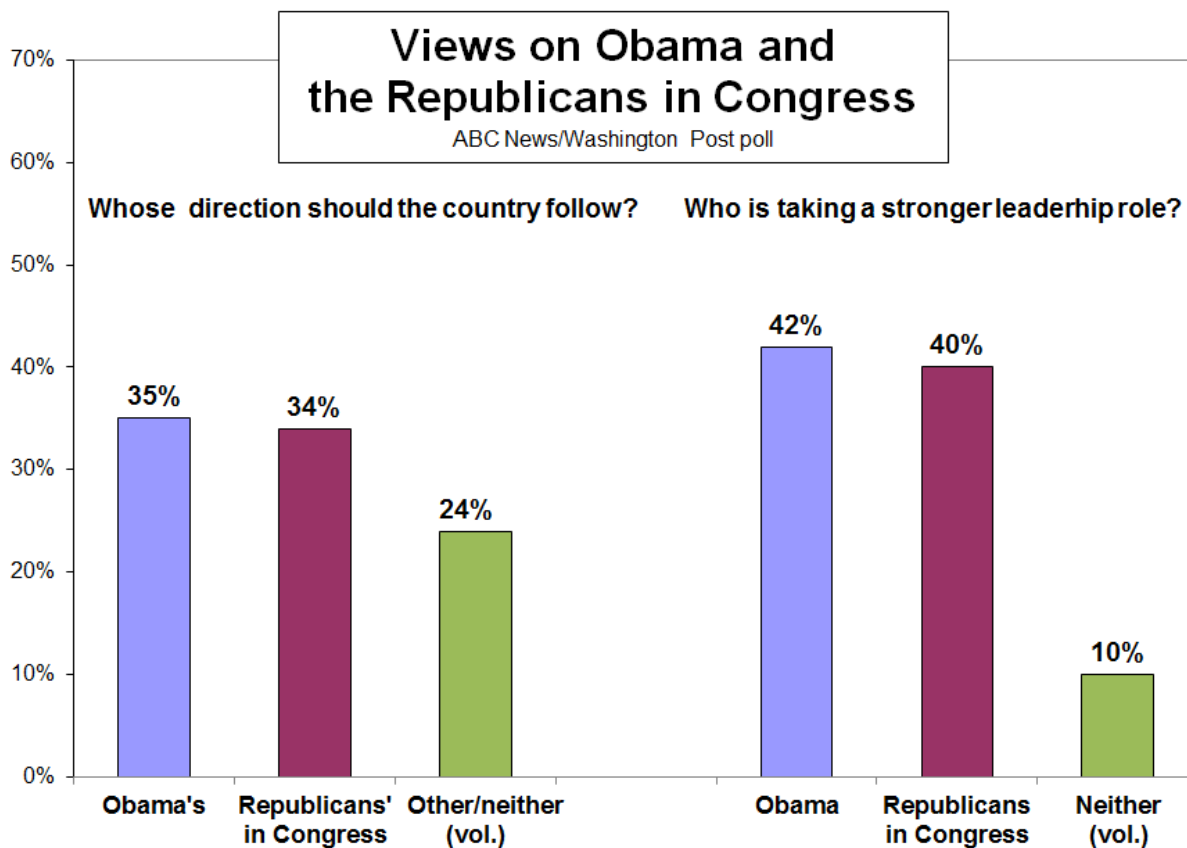
Obama's rating specifically for handling the economy is hardly stellar, a 48-48 percent split. But that's up 6 points in approval from late October.

ISSUES – If the economy is providing new wind in Obama's sails, some issues are puffing along for him as well. This poll finds broad backing, 61-34 percent, for his position on the Keystone oil pipeline, in a question that focuses on the specific dispute at hand – whether to approve it now or await a needs assessment. He has narrower but still majority support (53 percent in both cases)

for his plan for free community college tuition and for maintaining Obamacare’s rule mandating employer-provided insurance for 30+-hour workers. (A GOP proposal would make it 40+ hours.)

At the same time, the public is pushing back against Obama’s executive action on immigration, with 56 percent saying Congress should block it. That reflects conflicted views on the issue of immigration reform, with the devil very much in the details.

More generally, Obama has a vast 61-22 percent advantage over the Republicans in being seen as having better ideas on how to help more students afford college, and a 17-point lead in dealing with climate change. Those shrink to much closer divisions on a range of other issues – helping the middle class (+8 Obama), creating jobs (+5 Obama), increasing home ownership (+1 Obama) and encouraging economic development (+6 GOP).

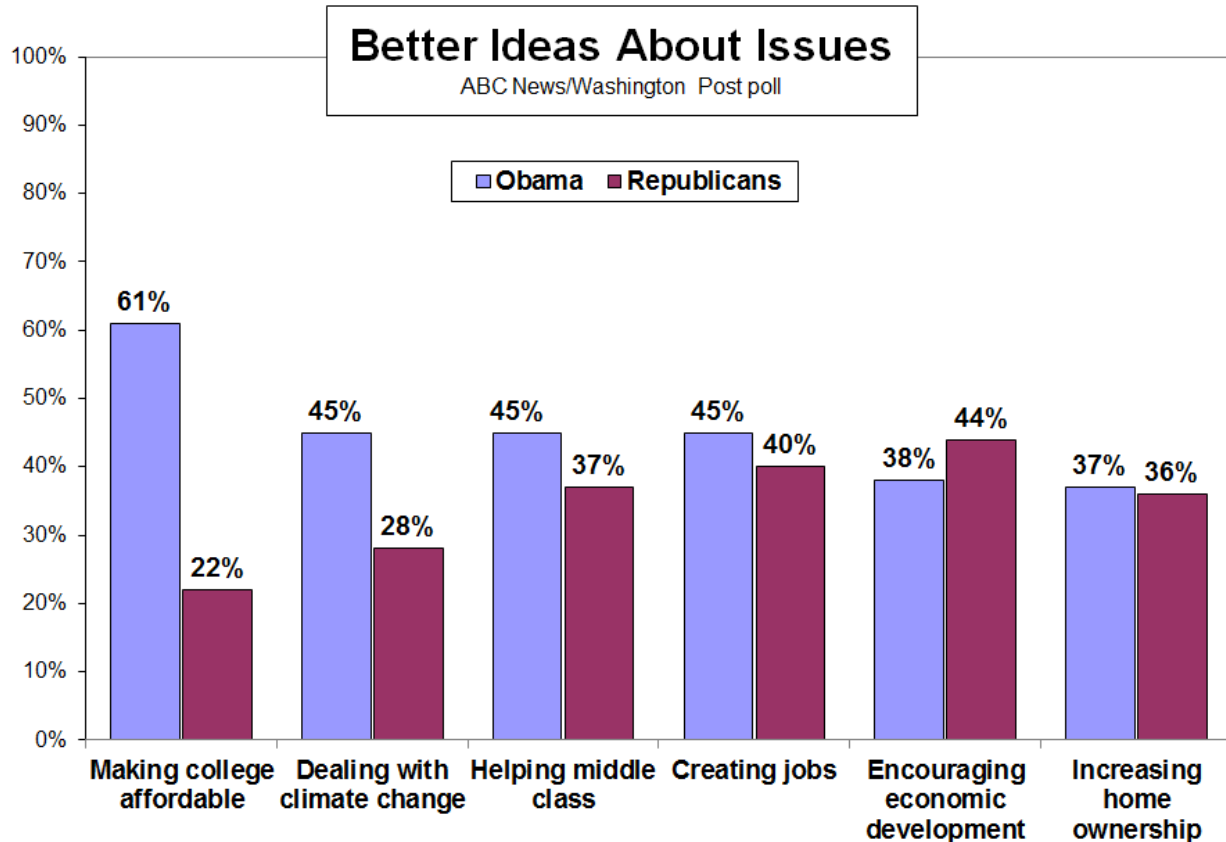


One additional issue may indicate challenges for Obama and the Republicans alike in any deal to try to repatriate offshore corporate profits by cutting the corporate tax rate. In a notably lopsided result, 65 percent of Americans say large business corporations pay too little in taxes; just 19 percent say they pay their fair share.

**DIVISION** – Close divisions mark political attitudes more broadly. The public splits, 50-46 percent, on whether or not it’s justified for Obama to take executive actions to bypass Congress. And people divide just as evenly, 49-46 percent, on whether or not it’s justified for Congress to

pass new laws or sue to block such actions. (These two questions, naturally, attract political and ideological opposites.) There's an additional split on who's taking the stronger leadership role in Washington, Obama or the congressional Republicans, 42-40 percent.

In another telling example, Americans divide almost exactly evenly, 35-34 percent, on whether they'd like the country to go in the direction in which Obama wants to lead it, or in the direction set by the Republicans in Congress. It's notable, moreover, that a quarter says that neither of those directions is what they're looking for – a sign of continued disaffection from both parties.



That sentiment shows up in bold in a further question: A near-unanimous 91 percent say government dysfunction is a problem for the country, and 66 percent call it a major problem. When those who call it a problem are asked whose fault that mainly is, a fifth pick Obama, a fifth pick the GOP – and six in 10 blame both equally.

There's further division on what the political future may hold. On one hand, Americans by 33-20 percent are more apt to say the new Republican-controlled Congress will be better rather than worse than the last Congress. But a plurality, 44 percent, expects no change. About as many expect no relief from government dysfunction more generally, with another split on whether this will get better (23 percent) or worse (29 percent).

All this frustration is reflected in declining party allegiance: As has been the case almost continuously for the past six years, more Americans identify themselves as independents, 37

percent, than as either Republicans (24 percent) or Democrats (30 percent, up 4 points from last month's nearly 34-year low).

GROUPS – Some changes in Obama's approval rating from last month are especially striking. He's up by 19 points among 18- to 29-year-olds, 13 points among nonwhites (including 22 points among Hispanics), 12 points among adults with less-than \$50,000 incomes and 10 points among Democrats. But he's also gained in less-hospitable groups – by 13 points among non-college educated white men, 11 points among men overall and 11 points among conservatives.

There are some similar patterns in views that the country is headed in the right direction, up from late October by 21 points among nonwhites (including 26 points among Hispanics) and 16 points among Democrats, vs. just 3 points among Republicans, despite their party's gains in Congress.

HISTORY – Given the hard knock the Democrats took in November, Obama could be in worse shape. At about this point after his party's losses in 1994, Bill Clinton trailed the Republicans in Congress by 24-61 percent in being seen as taking the stronger leadership role. Obama, as noted, is even on this score.

Previous approval ratings also are illustrative. George W. Bush's party's hammering in 2006 was part of a long, painful tailspin for his presidency. At this point in his career, amid unhappiness with the war in Iraq, Bush had 33 percent job approval – a number that makes Obama's 50 percent look almost good. In other comparisons, Clinton had a 63 percent approval rating at this point in his presidency, while Ronald Reagan's was 50 percent – identical, as it happens, to Obama's today.

METHODOLOGY – This ABC News/Washington Post poll was conducted by landline and cellular telephone Jan. 12-15, 2015, in English and Spanish, among a random national sample of 1,003 adults. Results have a margin of [sampling error](#) of 3.5 points, including design effect. Partisan divisions are 30-24-37 percent, Democrats-Republicans-independents.

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>.

Media contact: [Julie Townsend](#), (212) 456-4934.

Full results follow.

\* in data columns = less than 0.5 percent

2b, 28d, 30-31 previously released; 6-7, 22-27, 28a-c, 28e, 29 held for release.

1. Do you approve or disapprove of the way Barack Obama is handling his job as president? Do you approve/disapprove strongly or somewhat?

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

	NET	Strongly	Somewhat	NET	Somewhat	Strongly	opinion
1/15/15	50	24	26	44	9	35	6
12/14/14	41	21	20	54	13	41	5
10/26/14	43	21	22	51	12	39	6
10/12/14	40	20	20	51	12	39	8
9/7/14	42	24	18	51	12	39	6
6/1/14	46	23	23	51	14	37	3
4/27/14	41	23	19	52	12	40	6
3/2/14	46	25	22	50	12	38	3
1/23/14	46	23	23	50	9	41	4
12/15/13	43	23	20	55	14	41	3
11/17/13	42	22	21	55	11	44	3
10/20/13	48	28	20	49	10	39	3
9/15/13	47	25	22	47	11	37	6
7/21/13	49	25	24	44	12	32	7
5/19/13	51	32	20	44	10	33	5
4/14/13	50	27	23	45	10	35	5
3/10/13	50	29	21	46	11	36	4
1/13/13	55	32	23	41	8	33	4
12/16/12	54	33	21	42	9	32	5
11/4/12 RV	52	33	10	46	10	36	2
11/3/12 RV	51	33	10	47	10	37	2
11/2/12 RV	51	32	11	47	11	36	2
11/1/12 RV	50	31	11	48	11	37	2
10/31/12 RV	50	30	11	48	11	37	2
10/30/12 RV	50	28	12	48	12	37	2
10/29/12 RV	50	28	11	48	11	36	2
10/28/12 RV	51	28	11	46	11	36	3
10/27/12 RV	50	28	11	46	11	36	3
10/26/12 RV	51	29	10	46	10	36	3
10/25/12 RV	50	29	9	47	9	37	3
10/24/12 RV	50	29	10	48	10	38	3
10/23/12 RV	50	29	21	47	9	37	3
10/22/12 RV	50	30	20	47	10	38	3
10/21/12 RV	51	31	20	47	10	37	2
10/13/12	50	30	21	44	10	34	6
9/29/12	50	26	24	46	12	34	4
9/9/12	49	29	20	45	11	35	6
8/25/12	50	27	23	46	13	33	4
7/8/12	47	24	24	49	15	34	4
5/20/12	47	26	21	49	13	36	3
4/8/12	50	30	20	45	10	35	6
3/10/12	46	28	18	50	11	39	4
2/4/12	50	29	22	46	11	36	3
1/15/12	48	25	23	48	11	37	4
12/18/11	49	25	24	47	13	34	4
11/3/11	44	22	22	53	15	37	3
10/2/11	42	21	21	54	14	40	4
9/1/11	43	21	22	53	16	38	3
8/9/11*	44	18	26	46	9	37	10
7/17/11	47	25	22	48	14	35	5
6/5/11	47	27	20	49	13	37	4
5/2/11**	56	29	27	38	14	24	6
4/17/11	47	27	21	50	12	37	3
3/13/11	51	27	24	45	12	33	4
1/16/11	54	30	23	43	15	28	3
12/12/10	49	24	25	47	15	32	4
10/28/10	50	27	23	45	11	34	5
10/3/10	50	26	24	47	13	34	3
9/2/10	46	24	22	52	14	38	3
7/11/10	50	28	22	47	12	35	3
6/6/10	52	30	22	45	12	33	4
4/25/10	54	31	23	44	11	33	3

3/26/10	53	34	20	43	8	35	3
2/8/10	51	29	22	46	12	33	3
1/15/10	53	30	24	44	13	32	2
12/13/09	50	31	18	46	13	33	4
11/15/09	56	32	23	42	13	29	2
10/18/09	57	33	23	40	11	29	3
9/12/09	54	35	19	43	12	31	3
8/17/09	57	35	21	40	11	29	3
7/18/09	59	38	22	37	9	28	4
6/21/09	65	36	29	31	10	22	4
4/24/09	69	42	27	26	8	18	4
3/29/09	66	40	26	29	9	20	5
2/22/09	68	43	25	25	8	17	7

\*Washington Post

\*\*Washington Post/Pew Research Center

2a. Do you approve or disapprove of the way Obama is handling the economy? Do you approve/disapprove strongly or somewhat?

	----- Approve -----			----- Disapprove -----			No
	NET	Strongly	Somewhat	NET	Somewhat	Strongly	opinion
1/15/15	48	26	21	48	10	38	5
12/14/14	44	24	20	52	14	38	4
10/26/14	42	21	20	52	14	38	7
10/12/14	44	25	19	51	12	39	4
9/7/14	42	22	19	54	15	39	5
6/1/14	43	21	21	53	15	38	4
4/27/14	42	20	21	54	13	41	4
3/2/14	43	23	20	54	14	41	2
1/23/14	43	22	21	55	13	42	3
12/15/13	42	24	18	55	14	40	4
11/17/13	41	22	20	57	14	42	2
10/20/13	44	23	20	54	12	42	2
9/15/13	45	25	20	51	14	37	4
7/21/13	45	22	22	49	14	35	6
5/19/13	48	26	22	48	10	37	4
4/14/13	44	22	22	53	12	41	3
3/10/13	44	24	20	52	10	42	4
1/13/13	50	24	25	47	10	37	3
12/16/12	50	27	23	48	10	38	3
10/13/12 RV	47	26	21	51	10	41	2
9/29/12 RV	47	23	25	52	10	41	1
9/9/12 RV	45	24	21	53	8	45	2
8/25/12	44	20	23	54	12	42	3
7/8/12	44	21	23	54	13	41	2
5/20/12	42	20	22	55	11	44	2
4/8/12	44	23	21	54	12	42	2
3/10/12	38	20	18	59	9	50	2
2/4/12	44	23	22	53	11	41	3
1/15/12	41	19	22	57	11	46	2
12/18/11	41	17	24	56	13	43	2
11/3/11	38	18	20	61	13	48	2
10/2/11	35	17	19	61	13	48	4
9/1/11	36	15	21	62	15	47	2
7/17/11	39	18	22	57	15	43	3
6/5/11	40	20	20	59	10	49	2
5/2/11*	40	18	22	55	16	39	4
4/17/11	42	23	19	57	11	46	2
3/13/11	43	22	21	55	13	41	2
1/16/11	46	22	24	51	13	38	2
12/12/10	43	21	22	54	15	39	3
10/28/10 RV	44	21	23	54	15	39	3

10/3/10	45	22	23	53	13	41	2
9/2/10	41	20	21	57	13	44	2
7/11/10	43	20	23	54	13	41	4
6/6/10	50	26	24	49	12	37	2
4/25/10	49	24	25	49	10	39	2
3/26/10	45	23	22	52	12	40	3
2/8/10	45	22	23	53	15	38	2
1/15/10	47	22	24	52	13	39	1
12/13/09	46	23	24	52	12	40	2
11/15/09	51	26	25	47	12	36	2
10/18/09	50	29	22	48	13	35	1
9/12/09	51	28	24	46	13	33	2
8/17/09	52	27	25	46	13	33	2
7/18/09	52	29	23	46	10	35	3
6/21/09	56	28	28	41	13	27	3
4/24/09	58	31	28	38	13	25	4
3/29/09	60	34	25	38	12	26	3
2/22/09	60	NA	NA	34	NA	NA	6

\*Washington Post/Pew Research Center

3. Do you think things in this country (are generally going in the right direction) or do you feel things (have gotten pretty seriously off on the wrong track)?

	Right direction	Wrong track	No opinion
1/15/15	39	56	5
10/26/14	28	68	5
10/12/14	29	66	5
9/7/14	31	65	5
4/27/14	30	66	4
1/23/14	35	62	2
11/17/13	27	70	3
10/20/13	28	68	4
7/21/13	36	60	4
5/19/13	39	57	4
1/13/13	39	57	5
10/31/12 LV	43	55	2
10/13/12 RV	42	56	3
9/29/12 RV	38	60	2
8/25/12 RV	29	69	2
7/8/12	33	63	4
4/8/12	33	64	3
1/15/12	30	68	2
11/3/11	22	74	3
9/1/11	20	77	3
6/5/11	32	66	2
1/16/11	38	60	3
12/12/10	31	67	2
10/28/10 RV	27	71	2
6/6/10	37	60	3
3/26/10	38	60	2
1/15/10	37	62	1
11/15/09	44	55	2
10/18/09	44	54	2
8/17/09	44	55	1
6/21/09	47	50	3
4/24/09	50	48	2
3/29/09	42	57	1
2/22/09	31	67	2
1/16/09	19	78	3

Call for full trend.



4. Overall, who do you trust to do a better job coping with the main problems the nation faces over the next few years, (Obama) or (the Republicans in Congress)?

	Obama	Reps	Both (vol.)	Neither (vol.)	No opinion
1/15/15	40	36	1	17	5
12/14/14	39	43	2	14	3
6/1/14	43	38	1	14	5
12/15/13	41	41	1	15	3
12/16/12	50	35	1	11	3
12/12/10	43	38	2	12	4

Compare to:

	Bush	Democrats	Both (vol.)	Neither (vol.)	No opinion
12/11/06	31	57	1	8	2
1/18/04	45	44	1	6	3
4/30/03	55	37	1	4	3
10/27/02 LV	53	37	1	5	4
9/26/02	54	38	3	3	3
7/15/02	53	37	4	3	3
1/27/02	62	31	2	3	2

	Clinton	Republicans	Both (vol.)	Neither (vol.)	No opinion
1/26/00	45	46	*	7	2
2/14/99*	52	35	2	7	3
2/12/99	53	30	3	11	4
1/19/99	50	32	3	8	7
11/7/98	47	38	4	9	2
9/28/98	51	38	2	6	3
8/21/98	48	38	2	9	3
7/12/98	48	38	1	6	6
5/12/98	47	39	3	8	3
1/31/98	52	35	3	4	6
1/19/98	48	40	2	8	2
3/9/97	49	38	4	8	2
1/15/97**	51	37	3	7	2
1/29/95	40	46	4	8	2
1/4/95	30	54	3	9	4
12/15/94	34	49	3	9	6

\*1999 and previous: "next few years"

\*\*"The Clinton administration"

5. The Republican Party controls both houses of Congress for the first time since 2006, with its largest majority in the House of Representatives in 80 years. Compared with last year's Congress, do you think this Congress will do a better job, a worse job, or about the same?

	Better job	Worse job	About the same	No opinion
1/15/15	33	20	44	4

8. There's been talk about government dysfunction, the idea that the federal government is not working well because the (Democrats) and (Republicans) can't find common ground. Do you see this as a major problem, a problem but not a major one, or not a problem?

	Major problem	Problem but not a major one	Not a problem	No opinion
NET				

1/15/15 91 66 26 7 1

9. (ASKED IF A PROBLEM) Who do you think is mainly responsible for this - (Obama and the Democrats in Congress), (the Republicans in Congress) or both sides equally?

	Obama	Republicans	Both	No opinion
1/15/15	18	20	61	1

8/9 NET:

	NET	Obama	Republicans	Both	No op.	Not a problem	No opinion
1/15/15	91	16	18	56	1	7	1

10. Just your best guess, in the next year do you think government dysfunction will get better, get worse or stay about the same as it's been?

	Get better	Get worse	Stay about the same	No opinion
1/15/15	23	29	47	2

11. Who do you think has better ideas about [ITEM] - (Obama) or (the Republicans in Congress)?

1/15/15 - Summary Table

	Obama	Republicans	Both (vol.)	Neither (vol.)	No op.
a. Encouraging economic development	38	44	3	9	6
b. Helping the middle class	45	37	2	11	5
c. Increasing home ownership	37	36	*	10	17
d. Creating jobs	45	40	1	10	4
e. Helping more students afford college	61	22	2	8	8
f. Dealing with climate change, also known as global warming	45	28	2	13	13

\*Half sample asked items a-c; other half asked items d-f.

12. Who do you think is taking a stronger leadership role in the government in Washington these days, (Obama) or (the Republicans in Congress)?

	Obama	Reps	Both (vol.)	Neither (vol.)	No opinion
1/15/15	42	40	2	10	5
4/17/11	40	45	3	9	2
3/13/11	39	46	2	9	3
12/12/10	43	42	3	8	5

Compare to:

	Bush	Dems	Both (vol.)	Neither (vol.)	No opinion
6/1/07	43	45	3	7	3
4/15/07	34	58	2	4	2
1/19/07	36	56	1	3	3
7/30/01	51	38	3	4	4

	Clinton	Reps	Both (vol.)	Neither (vol.)	No opinion
4/5/95	27	67	2	3	7
1/24/95	24	61	4	5	6
12/15/94	25	59	3	5	7

13. Do you think the country should go in the direction (Obama wants to lead it), go in the direction (the Republicans in Congress want to lead it), or what?

	Obama	Republicans	Other (vol.)	Neither (vol.)	No diff. (vol.)	No opinion
1/15/15	35	34	15	9	1	5
1/16/11	44	35	7	8	2	4

Compare to: Bush or Democrats in Congress

	Bush	Democrats	Other (vol.)	Neither (vol.)	No diff. (vol.)	No opinion
1/19/07	25	57	4	8	2	4
1/26/06	35	51	4	5	3	2
1/16/05	45	39	3	6	2	5
12/19/01	54	28	4	9	6	0
9/9/01	41	42	4	6	1	5
7/30/01	42	43	4	6	3	3
6/3/01	40	42	5	7	3	3
4/22/01	46	36	4	6	3	4

14. Obama says he'll take executive actions intended to accomplish some of his administration's goals if Congress does not act. Do you think Obama is or is not justified in taking this approach? Do you feel that way strongly or somewhat?

	----- Justified -----			----- Not justified -----			No opinion
	NET	Strongly	Somewhat	NET	Somewhat	Strongly	
1/15/15	50	30	20	46	10	36	4

15. The Republicans in Congress say they'll try to block some executive actions that Obama takes, either by passing new laws or by suing in court. Do you think the Republicans in Congress are or are not justified in taking this approach? Do you feel that way strongly or somewhat?

	----- Justified -----			----- Not justified -----			No opinion
	NET	Strongly	Somewhat	NET	Somewhat	Strongly	
1/15/15	49	31	19	46	14	32	5

16. (ASKED OF HALF SAMPLE) Obama has said he won't decide whether to approve a new oil pipeline from Canada to Texas until a review has determined whether it is in the national interest. The Republicans in Congress are working on a law to authorize the pipeline without Obama's approval. Which side do you support - (should the pipeline be authorized now), or (should the review be completed before deciding)?

	Authorize pipeline now	Complete review before deciding	Do not allow pipeline (vol.)	No opinion
1/15/15	34	61	2	3

17. (ASKED OF HALF SAMPLE) The federal health care law says companies with 50 or more employees have to offer health insurance to those who work at least 30 hours a week. The Republicans in Congress have proposed changing this to at least 40 hours a week. Which of these do you prefer - should employers be required to provide coverage for employees who work at least 30 hours a week, or should it be at least 40 hours a week?

	30 hours a week	40 hours a week	More than 40 hours (vol.)	Less than 30 hours (vol.)	Not required (vol.)	No op.
1/15/15	53	40	0	1	3	3

18. Obama has proposed providing free tuition to attend community colleges at a cost to the federal government of sixty billion dollars over 10 years. Do you support or oppose this proposal? Do you feel that way strongly or somewhat?

	----- Support -----			----- Oppose -----			No
	NET	Strongly	Somewhat	NET	Somewhat	Strongly	opinion
1/15/15	53	38	15	44	10	33	3

19. Obama has taken executive action allowing as many as four million undocumented immigrants to avoid deportation. The Republicans in Congress say they may take away federal funding so this order cannot be carried out. Do you think Obama's action on immigration should go forward, or should it be blocked?

	Should go forward	Should be blocked	No opinion
1/15/15	41	56	4

20. Overall, do you think large business corporations pay their fair share in taxes, pay too (little), or pay too (much)?

	Pay fair share	Pay too little	Pay too much	No opinion
1/15/15	19	65	9	7

On another subject,

21. Would you describe the state of the nation's economy these days as excellent, good, not so good or poor?

	----- Positive -----			----- Negative -----			No
	NET	Excellent	Good	NET	Not so good	Poor	opinion
1/15/15	41	3	39	58	40	18	1
10/26/14	27	1	26	72	44	28	1
9/7/14	30	1	29	69	42	27	1
4/27/14	29	1	27	71	40	31	1
3/2/14	27	2	26	72	44	28	*
10/20/13	24	2	23	75	45	30	1
9/29/12 RV	18	2	16	81	42	39	*
8/25/12	15	1	14	84	39	45	1
8/5/12*	13	1	12	87	42	44	*
5/20/12	17	1	16	83	47	36	*
2/4/12	11	*	11	89	46	42	*
11/3/11	10	1	9	89	43	47	*
7/17/11	10	1	9	90	40	50	*
6/5/11	11	1	10	89	46	44	*
1/16/11	13	1	12	87	45	41	*
10/28/10	9	*	9	90	41	49	1
10/3/10	9	1	8	90	40	50	*
9/2/10	8	*	7	92	40	53	0
7/11/10	10	1	9	90	44	46	0
6/6/10	12	*	11	88	43	45	0
1/16/09	5	1	5	94	32	62	*

\*Washington Post-Kaiser Family Foundation  
Call for full trend.

\*\*\* END \*\*\*