

October 17, 2006

Congress Approval, U.S. Satisfaction Levels Still Low

Congressional approval ratings declined in October; little change in satisfaction

by Joseph Carroll

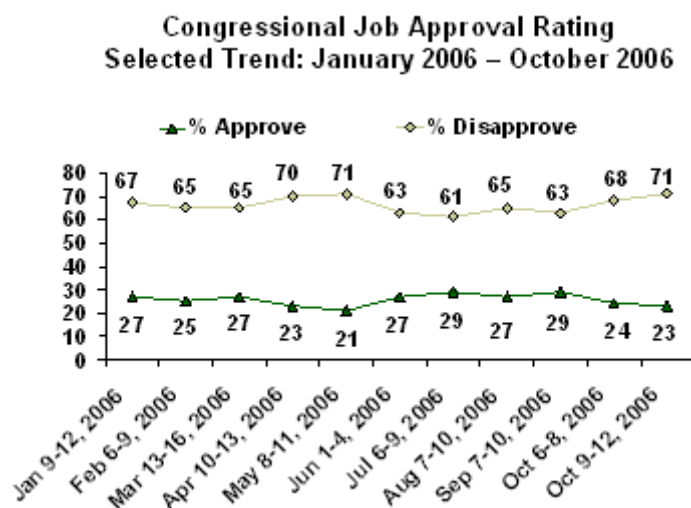
GALLUP NEWS SERVICE

PRINCETON, NJ -- As the midterm elections approach, members of Congress understandably can be nervous about being able to keep their jobs. A new Gallup Poll finds only 23% of Americans saying they approve of the way Congress is handling its job. Additionally, just 30% say they are satisfied with the way things are going in the country at the present time. Both measures are low from a historical perspective, creating an environment that may benefit the Democrats in November. In general, the incumbent party typically loses seats when voters are dissatisfied with the way the government is performing, making Republicans vulnerable this year.

Congressional Job Approval

The Oct. 9-12 poll finds only 23% of Americans approve of the job Congress is doing and 71% disapprove. Americans' ratings of Congress in two October surveys show a decline from levels measured from June to September, when approval ratings were in the upper-20% range. The recent decline may be attributable to the effects of the Mark Foley scandal, which has cast a further pall over an institution already plagued by corruption scandals.

The latest results are more in line with levels recorded this past spring. Over the course of this year, congressional job approval ratings have been quite low, averaging just 26% and ranging between a low of 21% in May and a high of 29% in July and again in September.

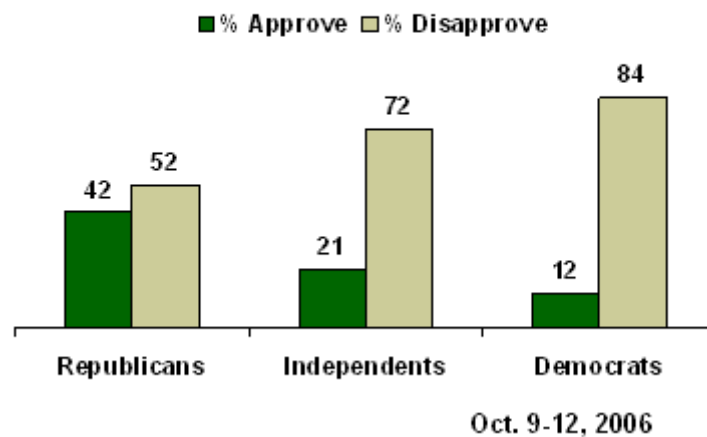


Congressional job approval ratings have been below 30% since October 2005. Prior to that, ratings of Congress had not been this low since 1994. Just before the incumbent Democratic Party lost 54 House seats in the 1994 November elections, congressional approval was the same as it is in the current poll, 23%. The historical low point for Congress' approval rating was 18% in a March 1992 Gallup Poll.

Ratings of Congress are divided along partisan lines, as might be expected given that Republicans control Congress. Republicans (42%) are much more positive about Congress' performance than

are independents (21%) and Democrats (12%), but even a slim majority of Republicans, 52%, disapprove of the job Congress is doing.

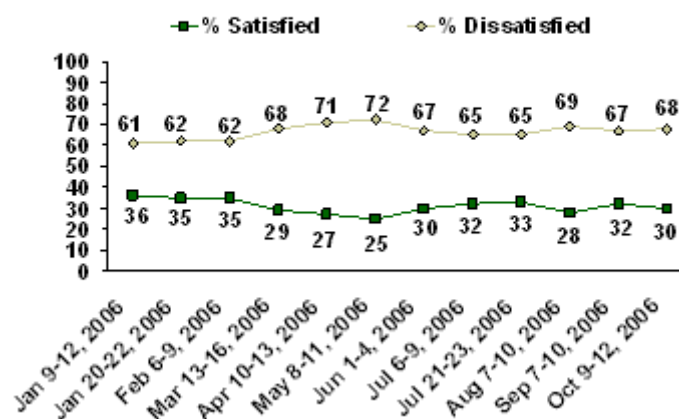
Congressional Job Approval Rating by Partisanship



Mood of the Nation

Thirty percent of Americans say they are satisfied with the way things are going in the country right now, while the majority of Americans, 68%, say they are dissatisfied. The current results are similar to the 31% satisfaction average since the start of the year and have changed little over the past two months. In January and February, satisfaction levels were in the mid-30% range, but then, Americans' satisfaction with the state of the nation began to decline, reaching a low of 25% in May as gas prices began to surge. The percentage of Americans saying they were satisfied started to improve in June and has fluctuated between 28% and 33% since then.

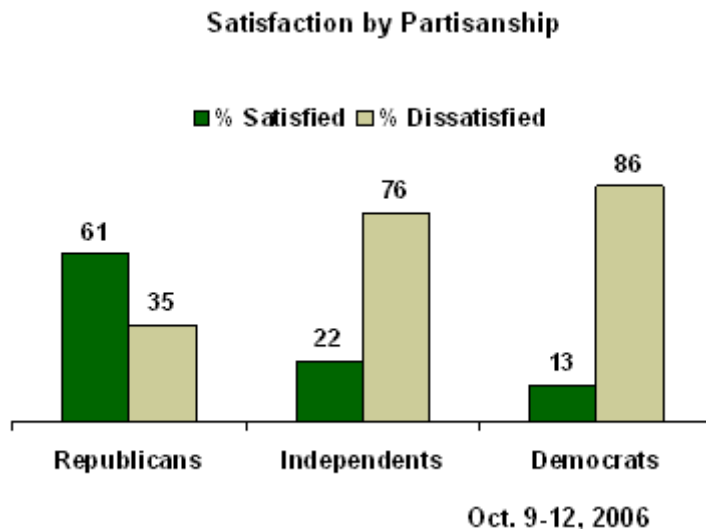
Satisfaction With the State of the Nation Selected Trend: January 2006 – October 2006



Gallup's current 30% satisfaction reading is quite low historically. The average percentage of Americans saying they are satisfied with conditions in the country since 1979 is 43%. Satisfaction was lowest in July 1979, with only 12% of Americans saying they were satisfied. Ratings were highest in February 1999, when satisfaction was 71%.

As is the case with congressional approval, U.S. satisfaction levels are similar to what they were just prior to the landmark elections in 1994. Just before the 1994 elections, satisfaction was 31%.

Satisfaction ratings typically differ by party groups. The latest update finds that 61% of Republicans say they are satisfied with the way things are going, compared with 22% of independents and only 13% of Democrats.



Survey Methods

Results are based on telephone interviews with 1,001 national adults, aged 18 and older, conducted Oct. 9-12, 2006. For results based on the total sample of national adults, one can say with 95% confidence that the margin of sampling error is ± 3 percentage points. In addition to sampling error, question wording and practical difficulties in conducting surveys can introduce error or bias into the findings of public opinion polls.