

Center for American Progress



State of American Political Ideology, 2009

A National Study of Political Values and Beliefs

John Halpin Center for American Progress

Karl Agne Gerstein/Agne Strategic Communications

March 2009



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Introduction and summary

The growing progressive movement in the United States finds itself at a historic and propitious crossroads. With large Democratic majorities in both chambers of Congress and an ambitious new president who campaigned and won election on promises of bold changes—both serving a citizenry that is deeply frustrated with the status quo and desperate for new leadership at all levels of our society—the potential for true progressive governance is greater than at any point in decades. Driven by a rising generation of young 18- to 29-year-old “Millennial” generation voters whose vast numbers and unique worldview have already made a significant impact at the ballot box, our country is embracing many core progressive values and shows a real commitment to a progressive vision of government, international affairs, and economic and political policies that could transform the country in a way that has not been seen since FDR and the New Deal.

The 2008 presidential election not only solidified demographic and partisan shifts toward the Democratic Party but also marked a significant turn in the ideological landscape of the electorate. After nearly three decades of public acceptance of the Reagan-Bush model of conservatism—limited government, tax cuts, traditional values, and military strength—a broad and deep cross-section of the American public now holds markedly progressive attitudes about government and society.

Our inaugural “State of American Political Ideology” survey, which employed a unique measurement of ideological self-identification to explore a more complicated ideological landscape than typically described in other studies of public opinion, was primarily designed to assess the ideological balance in America based on responses to 40 questions equally divided between progressive and conservative beliefs. Our survey results show that Americans are solidly center-left in their ideas about role of government, the economy, and domestic politics and somewhat less so on cultural and social issues (see Figure 1).

For years, traditional public opinion polling has broken down ideology into three distinct groupings: liberal, moderate, and conservative. Based on this categorization, there has been remarkable stability in ideological orientation, with roughly one-fifth of Americans identifying themselves as “liberal” and about four in 10 classifying themselves as “moderate” or “conservative,” respectively, according to Gallup polling from 1992 to 2008.

In this study, however, the electorate is broken down using a more expansive five-point scale of political ideology that reflects the variety of approaches people ascribe to today. Employing this more calibrated measure, 34 percent of the country identifies as “conservative,” 29 percent as “moderate,” 15 percent as “liberal,” 16 percent as “progressive,” and 2 percent as “libertarian.” After moderates are asked which approach they lean toward, the overall ideological breakdown of the country divides into fairly neat left and right groupings, with 47 percent of Americans identifying as progressive or liberal and 48 percent as conservative or libertarian. The rest are unsure or scattered among moderate and other approaches.

Combining this five-point scale of political ideology with responses to the 40 specific ideological statements, the progressive leanings of the country become readily apparent. On the domestic front, after years of supply-side tax cuts, support for corporations (especially extractive oil and mining companies), and deregulation of the economy, large percentages of Americans increasingly favor progressive ideas centered on: sustainable lifestyles and green energy; public investment in education, infrastructure, and science; financial support for the poor, elderly, and sick; regulation of business to protect workers and consumers; and guaranteed affordable health coverage for every American. On the international front, the legacy of the Bush years has yielded to an American public far more interested in restoring the country’s image abroad, fighting climate change, and pursuing security through diplomacy, alliances, and international institutions than in the continued pursuit of national objectives through the sole projection of military might.

Approximately two-thirds of Americans—reaching to 70 percent to 80 percent on some measures—agree with progressive ideas in each of these domestic and global areas (see Table 1). Important cleavages emerge in the data, however, between non-college-educated Americans and college-educated elites. Non-college Americans are more populist and progressive than elites on some measures of government and economics and much more conservative on cultural and national security measures.

The rise of progressivism in America is reflected more starkly in direct ratings of various ideological approaches. Today, more than two-thirds of Americans rate a “progressive” approach to politics favorably, a 25-point increase in favorability over the last five years, with gains coming primarily from those who were previously unaware of the term. “Progressive” now equals “conservative” in terms of overall public favorability (67 percent, respectively).

The continuing strength of the conservative brand—if not all of its constitutive ideas—reflects the long-term success of the conservative movement over decades. Despite electoral setbacks and larger proportions of Americans now adhering to progressive ideas about governance and society, the conservative worldview remains appealing to many Americans and creates important cleavages in the electorate, particularly on key cultural and national security beliefs. Conservative principles about markets, spending, national defense, and traditional values enjoy residual strength and could rise in prominence depending on shifts in the economic and political environment. Conservatives may be down but they are not out of the ideology game.

At least two-thirds
of Americans agree
with many core
progressive ideas.

But unless and until conservatives recognize the depth of affinity between President Obama's ideological approach and that of the American electorate, conservative ideas likely will remain in secondary status. According to this research, President Obama himself—and his ideas about governance outlined in his recent address to the joint session of Congress and his budget overview—best embodies in spirit, tone, and ideological and substantive content the emerging center spot in the American electorate today. The strong public support for President Obama reflects personal qualities and strengths that appeal broadly to Americans and genuine consensus among the public about the ideas and prescriptions necessary to navigate the country through turbulent waters.

Notably, the ideological areas of greatest consensus among Americans are all key priorities and investment targets of President Obama: renewable energy; education, science, and infrastructure; universal health care; financial support for the least well-off; public interest regulations; and reductions in inequality financed by increased taxes on the wealthy.

As the “[New Progressive America](#)” report by Ruy Teixeira for the Progressive Studies Program argues, these ideological trends are likely to grow over time as particular demographic groups increase in electoral importance. A companion youth survey by the Progressive Studies Program reveals that progressive attitudes about government and economics are particularly strong among those under the age of 30, suggesting the potential for further strengthening of progressivism within the electorate.

Going a bit deeper, this research shows that ideological labels do not easily map onto predetermined patterns of thought and often mask a fluidity of opinion across and within groups. Case in point: Majorities of self-identified conservatives agree with four out of five progressive perspectives on the role of government while majorities of self-identified progressives and liberals agree with conservative economic positions on things like trade and Social Security.

Additionally, self-identified progressives and liberals share many views and beliefs about government and the economy but hold somewhat differing beliefs on cultural and international concerns. Likewise, although conservatives and libertarians are frequently considered to be part of the same tribe, our research finds that self-identified conservatives look rather poorly upon the libertarian approach (only 35 percent of conservatives rate “libertarian” favorably).

Here is a brief summary of the major findings from our “State of American Political Ideology, 2009 Survey,” beginning with the composite ideology measures crafted by the Progressive Studies Program, followed by a look at our findings related to the American Dream, basic American values, ideological perceptions of President Obama, ideological ratings, and ideological self identification in American society.

The ideological areas of greatest consensus among Americans are all key priorities and investment targets of President Obama.

Composite ideology measures

- Based on an innovative categorization of ideology, calculated from Americans' responses to 40 statements about government and society split evenly between progressive and conservative beliefs, the American electorate as a whole records a mean ideological score of 209.5 in the Progressive Studies Program measure of composite ideology—solidly progressive in orientation. This figure is based on a composite scale of “0” to “400” with “0” being the most conservative position on the continuum and “400” being the most progressive. Americans are most progressive about the role of government and least progressive on cultural and social values. Ideas about economics and international affairs fall in-between.
- Younger Americans (219.7) are more progressive in aggregate than older ones (200.7). African Americans (224.3) and Latinos (228.4) are more progressive than whites (203.7). Women (214.3) are more progressive than men (204.3). The east (217.6) and west (213.0) regions are more progressive than the southern (204.6) and central (207.2) regions. Urban citizens (216.6) are more progressive than suburban (205.8) and rural (198.0) ones. And people who get their news and information from Internet sources and blogs (221.1) are more progressive than those who get their news from national or local television (203.4 and 209.6, respectively).
- Two things of note emerge on the composite scores. First, American ideological attitudes tend to converge in the middle. Although there is a substantial range of ideological positions (from conservative Republicans at 160.6 to liberal Democrats at 247.1), no one group approaches the most extreme poles on either the progressive or conservative side of the continuum. Second, this middle convergence implies that Americans are not fully convinced of many ideological positions on their own side are open to ideological positions that may be different than their own.
- Despite claims to the contrary, there really is no “far right” or “far left” among the electorate in the country. It is more accurate based on this evidence to talk about “far center-right” and “far center-left.”
- Most of the ideas with the strongest consensus (approximately two-thirds total agreement and 40 percent strong agreement), are all progressive positions: the need for more sustainable lifestyles; government investment in education, infrastructure and science; transformation toward renewable energy sources; the need for a positive image to achieve national security goals; and guaranteed affordable health coverage for every American.
- Of the top 15 statements with 60 percent total agreement or more, only 4 are classified as conservative positions—the need to focus more at home, stronger regulation of sex and violence in popular culture and on the Internet, the importance of free trade, and the idea that government spending is wasteful and inefficient.

- Although support is lower than that for many progressive ideas, majorities of Americans (ranging from 55 to 58 percent) agree with a cluster of conservative ideas about markets, taxes, changes in the American family, Social Security, military force, and limited government. This suggests residual strength for many components of the conservative worldview.
- Ideas about race, labor unions, personal responsibility for the poor, patriotism, immigration, religion, foreign aid, talking with enemies, and homosexuality are much more divided and lacking in consensus.
- Notably, compared to college-educated elites, non-college-educated Americans are more populist and progressive than elites in some attitudes about the role of government and fighting inequality and much more conservative on cultural and national security areas.

The American Dream

- The economic recession is clearly affecting many Americans. A full two-thirds of Americans (67 percent) report that their family's income is falling behind the cost of living, with 23 percent saying their income is staying even and only 6 percent saying it is going up faster than the cost of living. The belief that family income is failing to keep pace with rising costs is uniformly held across ideological, partisan, race, and income lines.
- Despite the harsh climate, many Americans continue to believe that they have achieved or will achieve their own understanding of the American Dream in their lifetime. More than one-third of Americans (34 percent) say they have already achieved the American Dream and another 41 percent believe that they will achieve it in their lifetime. Roughly one-fifth of Americans (18 percent) say they will not achieve the American Dream in their lifetime.
- Significant education gaps exist on perceptions of the American Dream. Fifty percent of post-graduate educated Americans say they have they have achieved the American Dream and only 5 percent say they will not achieve it. In contrast, only 30 percent of those with a high school degree or less say they have achieved the American Dream and nearly one quarter believes that they will not attain it in their lifetimes.

Basic American values

- Asked to choose two American political values that are most important to them, four in 10 people selected 'liberty' (42 percent) as their chief political value followed closely by a second tier of principles centered on "opportunity" (34 percent), "justice" (33 percent), and "quality" (32 percent). Occupying a lower cluster are values such as "free enterprise" (22 percent), "community" (15 percent), and "tradition" (11 percent).

- Larger proportions of Democrats and progressives rank “equality” and “opportunity” over other values while Republicans and conservatives gravitate towards “liberty,” “justice” and “free enterprise” at higher rates.
- In a larger context of values, six in 10 Americans believe that “government should do more to promote the common good,” versus 37 percent who feel that “government should do more to promote individual liberty.” There is relative consensus on this sentiment with roughly 70 percent of progressives and liberals agreeing with the focus on the common good over liberty but also 62 percent of self-identified moderates and 54 percent of conservatives.
- When asked to consider the dimensions of freedom, a majority of Americans (57 percent) believes that “freedom requires economic opportunity and minimum measures of security, such as food, housing, medical care and old age protection,” compared to 38 percent who favor the idea that “freedom requires that individuals be left alone to pursue their lives as they please and to deal with the consequences of their actions on their own.”
- Much sharper ideological and partisan divides arise on these competing visions of freedom: 73 percent of progressives, 71 percent of Democrats, and 68 percent of liberals prefer the FDR-style of freedom compared to a majority of Republicans (55 percent) and a plurality of conservatives (48 percent) who prefer the more classical liberal version of freedom.

Ideological perceptions of President Obama

- Overall, the president’s overall job approval is high (58 percent total approve, 40 percent strongly approve). More than six in 10 progressives, liberals, and Democrats strongly approve of the president’s job performance. But, conservatives and Republicans express skepticism of the president’s job performance: only 38 percent of conservatives and 25 percent of Republicans approve of President Obama’s job performance.
- Overall, a plurality of Americans (49 percent) believes that the country is more divided now than in the past compared to 45 percent who believe the country is less divided. This is down considerably from the Bush years. In 2007, two-thirds of Americans said the nation was more divided than in the past according to the Pew Research Center. The remaining perception of divisions appears to be driven extensively by ideological groups—56 percent of those who believe the country is more divided are self-identified conservatives while 52 percent of those who say the country is less divided are progressives or liberals.

- This study asked Americans for their own opinions about Obama’s political perspective. Reflecting the President’s own argument that people of all stripes project themselves onto him, the study finds that plurality of self-identified progressives believes Obama is “progressive” (48 percent); liberals are more likely to say he is “liberal” (31 percent); and a plurality of moderates says he is “moderate” (32 percent).
- The major exception to this trend is among self-identified conservatives: 51 percent of conservatives believe that President Obama’s political perspective is “liberal,” indicating a strong disconnection between their own perspectives and those of the president.
- This study also explored more qualitative understandings of the president by asking Americans to describe the president in their own words. The response patterns overwhelmingly suggest that Obama is considered most for a range of positive personal attributes (32 percent combined) and his capacity to embody change and a new direction (21 percent). Overall negative descriptions of the president are muted with the exception of conservatives and Republicans who are just as likely, if not more, to say that the president is not up to the job or cannot be trusted.

Ideological ratings

- One of the most striking findings in this study is the significant increase in public favorability towards the “progressive” approach to politics and the relative strength of the “conservative” brand in the face of this improvement.
- The “progressive” label enjoys the highest net favorable rating of any ideological approach (+46 percent) and now equals “conservative” in public favorability (67 percent favorable). Favorable ratings of “progressive” increased by 25-points from 2004 to 2009, with almost all of the gains coming from people who previously were unaware of the term or unable to rate it moving into at least a ‘somewhat favorable’ position.
- Both the “liberal” and “libertarian” labels enjoy much lower overall favorability, with only a plurality of Americans rating each positively.
- Notably, self-identified conservatives do not look favorably upon “libertarian:” 35 percent of conservatives rate the term favorably, only 10-points higher than their rating of “liberal.”

Self-identification

- This study also employs an innovative measurement of Americans' ideological self-identification, expanding the traditional liberal-moderate-conservative test with a 5-point measure that more accurately reflects the dominant ideologies in politics today.
- Under this approach, roughly 3 in 10 of Americans classify themselves as “progressive” or “liberal” (31 percent) and “moderate or other” (31 percent), and just over one-third of Americans label themselves “conservative” or “libertarian” (36 percent). After a follow-up question that asks moderates to choose between the other ideological approaches, a roughly even left-right breakdown surfaces: 47 percent of Americans are “progressive” or “liberal” and 48 percent are “conservative” or “libertarian.”

Methodological note

The State of American Political Ideology, 2009, documents the findings of the first annual study by the Progressive Studies Program at CAP about the nature and contours of political values and beliefs in America. Building on the longstanding good work on political ideology conducted by the American National Election Studies, Pew Research Center, and others in the mainstream media, our national survey (and companion survey of young people) is designed to explore in more depth the foundational ideas and political principles that underlie the policy and political discussions of everyday politics. This survey is intended to serve as an analytical tool for better understanding the American electorate. We hope it will be of value to people across the political spectrum.

The composite measures of political ideology are based on responses to 40 questions that are evenly split between different strands of progressive and conservative thought in four areas:

- The role of government
- Cultural/social values
- Economics and domestic policy
- International affairs and national security

This unique measurement system provides detailed information on overall agreement on key ideas, the intensity of agreement or disagreement, and the overlap and cleavages among and across groups on key ideas and concepts based on their responses. The goal is to track these measures over time to explore the shifts and continuity of political ideology throughout the course of the Obama presidency and beyond.

Given the overwhelming evidence that land-line-only surveying (relying on regular telephone calls) is rapidly becoming obsolete, this study employs an innovative, if slightly more costly and time-consuming hybrid methodology built on land-line calling, cell phone-only sampling, and online Web panels. The companion oversample of young people was conducted solely online. This methodology has been previously tested in election settings and is increasingly becoming the norm in a world of fragmented communications.

The results in this report are based on 1,400 interviews with adults 18 years or older. Results for young people (ages 18 to 29) are based on 915 interviews drawn from both the national sample and an oversample conducted online using the exact same survey instrument. The margin of error for full sample results is +/- 2.62 percent. The margin of error for the youth survey is +/- 3.2 percent. Sub-samples from each survey are subject to a larger margin of error.

- Looking at the underlying beliefs in more depth, it is clear that these ideological labels mask important overlaps and areas of contention across ideological groups. Case in point: self-identified conservatives agree with four out of five progressive ideas about the role of government while majorities of progressives and liberals are open to conservative ideas on the economy—particularly on free trade and Social Security. These trends suggest that although Americans classify themselves in concrete ideological terms, there is far more fluidity in terms of the actual beliefs and values that these groups actually hold.

Overall, this study shows that there is a complexity and richness to American political ideology that may be missed by the old categories and understanding of political beliefs. This conclusion, perhaps more than any other, helps us to understand the rapid rise and support for President Obama among large segments of the electorate. In addition to being a popular leader, President Obama may be the most astute political scientist in America today.

TABLE 1
The 40 ideas that shape American politics

Ranked by % total agreement (dark blue = progressive; light blue = conservative)

	Strongly agree (9-10)	Total agree (6-10)	Neutral (5)	Total disagree (0-4)	Strongly disagree (0-1)	Don't know/ refused	Mean
1. Americans should adopt a more sustainable lifestyle by conserving energy and consuming fewer goods.	47	80	13	7	3	1	7.9
2. Government investments in education, infrastructure, and science are necessary to ensure America's long-term economic growth.	45	79	12	9	4	1	7.6
3. America's economic future requires a transformation away from oil, gas, and coal to renewable energy sources such as wind and solar.	44	76	12	11	4	1	7.5
4. America has taken too large a role in solving the world's problems and should focus more at home.	41	74	13	13	5	0	7.4
5. A positive image of America around the world is necessary to achieve our national security goals.	39	73	14	13	6	1	7.2
6. Government regulations are necessary to keep businesses in check and protect workers and consumers.	32	73	15	12	5	0	7.1
7. Government has a responsibility to provide financial support for the poor, the sick, and the elderly.	33	69	15	15	5	0	6.9
8. There should be stronger regulation of sex and violence in popular culture and on the Internet.	41	68	14	18	9	1	7.0
9. America's security is best promoted by working through diplomacy, alliances, and international institutions.	29	68	20	11	4	1	7.0
10. America must play a leading role in addressing climate change by reducing our own greenhouse gas emissions and complying with international agreements on global warming.	38	67	12	20	12	1	6.8
11. Government policies too often serve the interests of corporations and the wealthy.	34	65	19	15	5	1	6.9
12. The federal government should guarantee affordable health coverage for every American.	44	65	11	23	14	0	6.8
13. Free trade is good for America because it creates new markets for our goods and services and lowers costs for consumers.	28	65	20	14	5	1	6.8
14. The gap between rich and poor should be reduced, even if it means higher taxes for the wealthy.	38	62	12	26	15	1	6.4
15. Government spending is almost always wasteful and inefficient.	30	61	16	23	7	0	6.5
16. Rich people like to believe they have made it on their own, but in reality society has contributed greatly to their wealth.	30	60	19	20	8	2	6.5
17. Religious faith should focus more on promoting tolerance, social justice, and peace in society, and less on opposing abortion or gay rights.	36	59	18	22	14	2	6.5
18. Government must step in to protect the national economy when the market fails.	27	59	16	24	9	1	6.3
19. Human life begins at conception and must be protected from that point forward.	46	58	16	24	14	2	6.7

TABLE 1 (CONTINUED)

	Strongly agree (9-10)	Total agree (6-10)	Neutral (5)	Total disagree (0-4)	Strongly disagree (0-1)	Don't know/ refused	Mean
20. Free market solutions are better than government at creating jobs and economic growth.	25	57	28	14	4	2	6.5
21. Cutting taxes for individuals and businesses is the key to economic growth.	24	57	23	19	6	1	6.3
22. Changes in the traditional American family have harmed our society.	32	57	17	25	14	1	6.2
23. Social Security should be reformed to allow workers to invest some of their contributions in individual accounts.	28	57	19	24	14	1	6.1
24. Military force is the most effective way to combat terrorism and make America safer.	26	57	17	25	10	1	6.1
25. Limited government is always better than big government.	31	55	27	17	7	1	6.5
26. The war in Iraq has proven that the U.S. cannot impose democracy on other nations.	28	54	17	28	13	1	6.0
27. Cultural institutions, the arts, and public broadcasting play an important role in our society and should receive government support.	22	51	22	27	14	1	5.8
28. We must do whatever is necessary to protect America from terrorism, even if it means restricting civil liberties or engaging in methods some might consider torture.	27	51	13	35	19	1	5.6
29. African-Americans and other minority groups still lack the same opportunities as whites in our country.	23	49	14	36	18	1	5.4
30. Government programs for the poor undermine individual initiative and responsibility.	20	48	21	30	10	1	5.7
31. Labor unions play a positive role in our economy.	21	48	19	32	15	1	5.5
32. Healthy economic growth requires eliminating budget deficits, which discourage private investment and raise interest rates.	15	45	34	18	5	3	5.9
33. The primary responsibility of corporations is to produce profits and returns for their shareholders, not to improve society.	18	44	23	31	11	2	5.5
34. It is unpatriotic to criticize our government leaders or our military during a time of war.	24	44	13	42	24	1	5.1
35. Government regulation of business does more harm than good.	17	43	29	28	10	1	5.6
36. Immigrants today are a burden on our country because they take our jobs and abuse government benefits.	22	42	19	36	19	2	5.3
37. Our country has gone too far in mixing politics and religion and forcing religious values on people.	25	41	17	41	22	1	5.1
38. Talking with rogue nations such as Iran or with state-sponsored terrorist groups is naive and only gives them legitimacy.	18	40	27	30	14	3	5.4
39. America should spend more to help meet the basic economic, health, and education needs of people around the world.	14	38	21	41	15	0	5.0
40. Homosexuality is unnatural and should not be accepted by society.	22	34	20	44	32	2	4.6

Part One

Composite ideology and core political beliefs

Progressive Studies Program composite ideology measure

Employing a unique categorization of ideology in America, this study asked respondents whether they agreed or disagreed with 40 ideological statements grouped in four areas: the role of government; cultural and social beliefs; economic and domestic policy; and international affairs and national security. Each battery of questions was divided evenly between progressive and conservative statements, and scores for each area are calculated on a 0 to 100 scale, with 0 representing maximum agreement with all conservative statements and maximum disagreement with all progressive ones, and 100 representing maximum agreement with all progressive statements and maximum disagreement with all conservative ones.

The responses in these four areas were then aggregated on a scale of 0 to 400 to achieve a composite measure of ideological positioning, with 0 being the most conservative position on the continuum and 400 being the most progressive. As Figure 1 displays, the American electorate as a whole records a mean ideological score of 209.5 in the Progressive Studies Program measure of composite ideology.

Looking at these scores in more depth, two things of note emerge on the composite scores:

1. American ideological attitudes tend to converge in the middle. Although there is a substantial range of ideological positions (from conservative Republicans at 160.6 to liberal Democrats at 247.1), no one group approaches the most extreme poles on either the progressive or conservative side of the continuum. The American public may be classified as solidly progressive but not excessively so.
2. This middle grouping implies that Americans are not fully convinced of many ideological positions on their own side and are open to ideological positions that may be different than their own. Despite claims to the contrary, there really is no “far right” or “far left” among the electorate in the country. Based on this evidence, it is more accurate to talk about “far center-right” and “far center-left.”

As Figure 1 displays, interesting ideological patterns emerge across demographic and partisan groups, some expected and some more surprising. Younger Americans (219.7) are more progressive than older ones (200.7). African Americans (224.3) and Latinos (228.4) are more progressive than whites (203.7). And women (214.3) are more progressive than men (204.3). By geography, the east (217.6) and west (213.0) regions are more

Mean ideology by category

Average score per issue area

The role of government	54.0
International affairs	52.3
Economic/domestic policy	52.2
Cultural and social beliefs	50.9
Composite mean score	209.5

Composite is sum of scores from four areas; 0 = most conservative and 400 = most progressive

progressive than the southern (204.6) and central (207.2) regions. Urban citizens (216.6) are more progressive than suburban (205.8) and rural (198.0) ones. And measured by news sources, people who get their news and information from Internet sources and blogs (221.1) are more progressive than those who get their news from national or local television (203.4 and 209.6, respectively).

Examining the responses to the underlying beliefs within these composite scores, there is more clarity about the emerging progressive consensus in America. Trends from Table 1 include the following:

- Most of the ideas with the strongest consensus (two-thirds total agreement and 40 percent strong agreement) are all progressive positions—the need for more sustainable lifestyles; government investment in education, infrastructure, and science; transformation toward renewable energy sources; the need for a positive image to achieve national security goals; and guaranteed affordable health coverage for every American.
- Of the top 15 statements with 60 percent total agreement or more, only four are classified as conservative positions—the need to focus more at home, stronger regulation of sex and violence in popular culture and on the Internet, the importance of free trade, and the idea that government spending is wasteful and inefficient.
- At least six in 10 Americans also agree with progressive beliefs about the importance of diplomacy, alliances, and international institutions; the need to address climate change; concern about the privileged position of corporations and the wealthy; and the need to reduce inequality by increasing taxes on those at the top.
- Majorities of Americans (ranging from 55 to 58 percent) agree with a cluster of conservative ideas about markets, taxes, changes in the American family, Social Security, military force, and

Composite index of political ideology in America

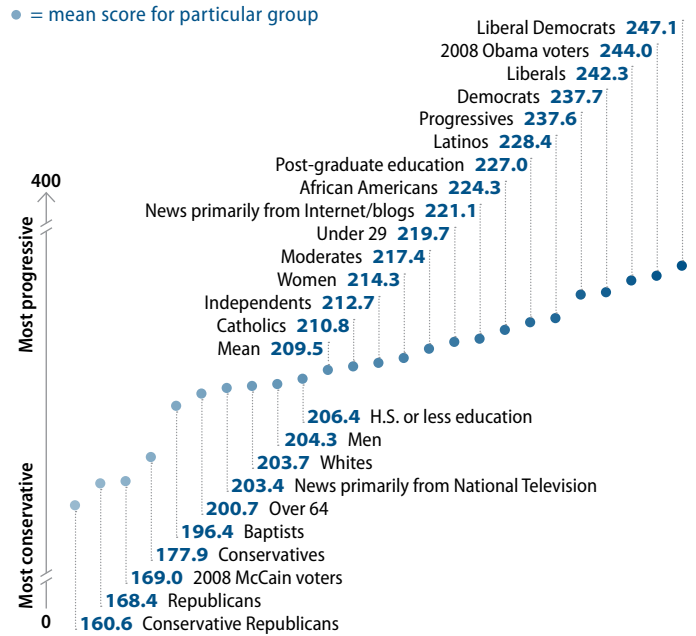


FIGURE 1

Ideology by geography

RURAL = 198.0 SUBURBAN = 205.8 URBAN = 216.6

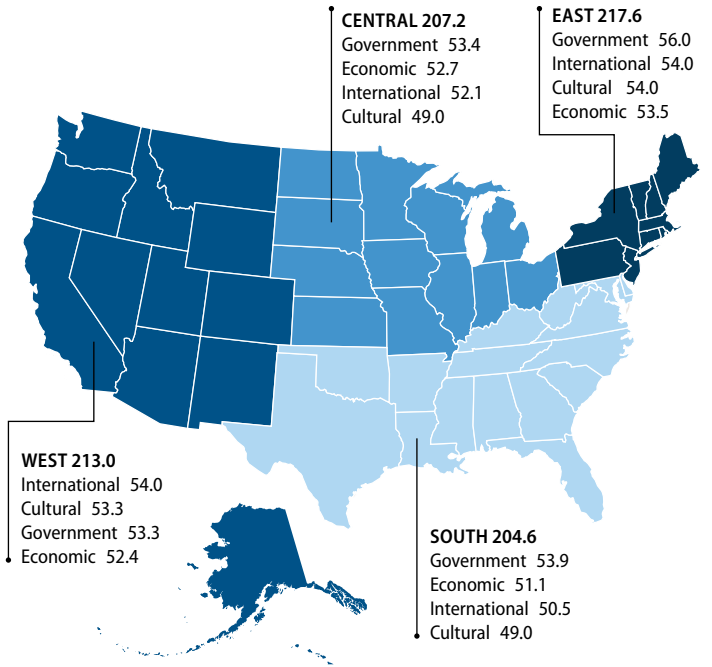


FIGURE 2

limited government. This suggests residual strength for many components of the conservative worldview, although support for these ideas is lower than for many progressive ideas.

- Ideas about race, labor unions, personal responsibility for the poor, patriotism, immigration, religion, foreign aid, talking with enemies, and homosexuality are much more divided and lacking in consensus.

One of the more striking findings in the study involves the emerging divide between non-college-educated Americans and college-educated elites on key attitudes about government and society. Americans with a high school education or less are much more likely than post-graduate-educated elites to believe the following (HS or less–postgrad on strongly agree):

- Government policies too often serve the interests of corporations and the wealthy (+18 strongly agree)
- Government has a responsibility to provide financial support for the poor, the sick, and the elderly (+20 strongly agree)
- Government must step in to protect the national economy when the market fails (+13 strongly agree)
- The gap between rich and poor should be reduced, even if it means higher taxes for the wealthy (+16 strongly agree)
- Rich people like to believe they have made it on their own, but in reality society has contributed greatly to their wealth (+15 strongly agree)
- Labor unions play a positive role in our economy (+17 strongly agree).

At the same time, working-class Americans express far more conservative attitudes than elites on social issues and the role of military strength in international affairs (HS or less–postgrad on strongly agree):

- Human life begins at conception and must be protected from that point forward (+17 strongly agree)
- Immigrants today are a burden on our country because they take our jobs and abuse government benefits (+28 strongly agree)
- America has taken too large a role in solving the world's problems and should focus more at home (+34 strongly agree)

What Americans believe

Issues of consensus

Government investment in education, infrastructure and science
Sustainable lifestyles
Renewable energy sources
Guaranteed affordable health coverage for every American
More regulation of sex and violence
Focusing less abroad and more at home

(Approximately 2 in 3 agree, less than 1 in 5 disagree, 40 percent or more strong agree)

Issues of ambivalence

Impact of government regulation on business
Eliminating budget deficits
Talking with enemies

(Approximately 1 in 4 or more neutral, less than 1 in 3 strong agree/disagree)

Issues of polarization

Mixing of religion and politics
Status of African Americans in society
Impact of immigration
Homosexuality
International spending
Criticizing political leaders or military during time of war

(Fairly even divide, 40 percent or more strongly agree/disagree)

- We must do whatever is necessary to protect America from terrorism, even if it means restricting civil liberties or engaging in methods some might consider torture (+21 strongly agree)
- Military force is the most effective way to combat terrorism and make America safer (+24 strongly agree)
- It is unpatriotic to criticize our government leaders or our military during a time of war (+25 strongly agree).

Overall, these patterns suggest that the most significant divides in American politics over the next few years may not be based solely on ideological or partisan differences, but between two competing and often divergent worldviews of a larger proportion of non-college citizens and a smaller but more powerful elite base.

The role of government

An extensive examination of attitudes on a broad range of questions reveals broad agreement with progressive positions on the role of government, but greater ambivalence toward conservative positions. Many of these questions on the role of government are central to the current debate in the country over the economic recovery package recently signed into law and the role of the government in addressing the continuing decline of large banking, insurance, and financial institutions. The progressive values espoused by American voters in this survey can provide clear guidance to lawmakers seeking to understand public attitudes on these complex questions.

Perhaps the most important trend across all of these measures on the role of government is the significant and consistently one-sided age gap. On four of five progressive measures, agreement among Americans younger than 40 years of age was at least five points higher than among those 40 or older. On the five conservative measures, the progressive bent of younger Americans was even greater.

TABLE 2
The role of government

% agreement by group (dark blue = progressive; light blue = conservative)

	Total	<40	>40	Dem	Ind	Rep	Prog	Lib	Mod	Cons
Government investments in education, infrastructure, and science are necessary to ensure America's long-term economic growth	79	85	75	88	81	65	89	89	83	69
Government regulations are necessary to keep businesses in check and protect workers and consumers	73	77	70	81	73	62	82	82	72	65
Government has a responsibility to provide financial support for the poor, the sick, and the elderly	69	73	67	84	65	51	79	83	71	57
Government policies too often serve the interests of corporations and the wealthy	65	65	65	73	66	55	75	70	68	58
Government spending is almost always wasteful and inefficient	61	53	64	51	60	75	47	46	53	73
Government must step in to protect the national economy when the market fails	59	68	55	75	51	43	71	75	64	45
Free market solutions are better than government at creating jobs and economic growth	57	47	63	44	64	72	52	43	57	67
Limited government is always better than big government	55	45	61	40	62	73	47	38	48	68
Government programs for the poor undermine individual initiative and responsibility	48	45	50	42	44	60	40	41	43	57
Government regulation of business does more harm than good	43	35	46	35	37	57	35	29	35	52

On all five conservative statements, agreement among those under 40 was at least five points lower (and at times as much as 16 points lower) than among their older counterparts. As members of the Millennial generation (those born since 1978)—the largest generation in American history—move more fully into the electorate and take a more active role in politics at a younger age than previous generations, their pronounced progressive leanings could reshape the debate over the role of government.

Progressive views of government

Reflecting a fundamental point of debate in the recent stimulus debate, the greatest consensus on the role of government is found on the importance of government investment to the nation's long-term economic health. By a margin of almost nine to one, Americans agree that *“government investments in education, infrastructure, and science are necessary to ensure America's long-term economic growth”* (79 percent agree, 12 percent neutral, 9 percent disagree).

There are two aspects of the results on this measure that are most striking. First is the intensity of support for this statement, with 45 percent of Americans strongly agreeing, including one-in-three self-identified conservatives and nearly 60 percent of progressives. Overall, the unanimity of opinion found on this issue is rare, showing how out-of-step conservative ideologues opposing new government investments are with the rest of the country:

- 88 percent of Democrats agree, 54 percent strongly agree
- 81 percent of Independents agree, 49 percent strongly agree
- 65 percent of Republicans agree, 29 percent strongly agree
- 89 percent of Progressives agree, 57 percent strongly agree
- 89 percent of Liberals agree, 52 percent strongly agree
- 83 percent of Moderates agree, 42 percent strongly agree
- 69 percent of Conservatives agree, 33 percent strongly agree

There is actually a generational divide among conservatives on this measure, with agreement increasing to 74 percent among conservatives under age 50 but dropping to 65 percent among older conservatives. These older conservatives, a group that is clearly over-represented in much of the recent public debate, are very isolated from the rest of the country in their attitudes toward government investment in the current political environment.

There also is broad agreement on government's responsibility to provide financial support for the neediest in our society. More than two in three Americans agree that *“government has a responsibility to provide financial support for the poor, the sick, and the elderly”* (69 percent), while 15 percent are neutral and another 15 percent disagree. Democrats remain almost unanimously supportive (84 percent agree), and Independents still lean strongly toward this progressive position (65 percent). A majority of Republicans similarly agree (51 percent), although the partisan gap is 10 points larger than on government investment.

Nearly 80 percent of Americans agree that government investments in education, infrastructure, and science are necessary to ensure America's long-term economic growth.

In the wake of the subprime mortgage disaster, criminal investment schemes such as the Madoff scandal, and the misappropriation of government bailout funds, government regulation is once again a front-page issue in the country's political debate. While conservative orthodoxy has long held government regulation as an impediment to economic growth, nearly three in four Americans disagree, saying "government regulations are necessary to keep businesses in check and protect workers and consumers" (73 percent agree, 15 percent neutral, 12 percent disagree). Once again, there is surprising partisan and ideological harmony, with agreement topping 60 percent among both Republicans and conservatives. The reason for this relative consensus could well be that 65 percent agree that "government policies too often serve the interests of corporations and the wealthy." Majorities of every subgroup agree with this premise, with little differentiation based on demographic lines of age, gender, education, or race.

The most controversial of the five progressive statements tested is the one that is perhaps most central to the current economic debate, and while support is somewhat lower overall, the results are unmistakable. In a very strongly worded and difficult test, 59 percent agree that "government must step in to protect the national economy when the market fails," with another 16 percent neutral and 24 percent disagreeing.

As Republicans in Congress and conservative commentators rally around a common attack that Obama's economic recovery efforts and budget proposals represent the birth of "the Union of American Socialist Republics," in Republican Mike Huckabee's words, the contrast between their extreme position and those of a majority of Americans couldn't be more apparent. Three in four Democrats and more than half of Independents agree with this progressive stance. Even within their own party, 43 percent of Republicans agree while 38 percent disagree. With Republicans clearly having made the strategic decision to build their recovery on opposition to Obama and Democrats in Congress rather than working together to achieve common goals, it is clear that this is not the ground on which they should build that foundation.

Conservative views of government

None of the conservative statements tested in this battery of questions match the level of consensus found on government investment, the necessity of government regulation, or the need for financial support for the neediest. Nor does the intensity behind these conservative positions match that found in support of the progressive positions detailed above. Yet there are principles here that at least garner majority support and provide a basis for a constructive conservative critique of the current economic debate. With their almost exclusive emphasis on limited government and deregulation, however, a conservative path forward (as opposed to attacks on the progressive agenda) with the potential to attract significant public backing could be harder to find.

73 percent of Americans agree that government regulations are necessary to keep businesses in check and protect workers and consumers.

An attack on the wastefulness of government spending represents the strongest conservative position and the most effective critique against a more active role for government. Overall, 61 percent agree that *“government spending is almost always wasteful and inefficient,”* while another 16 percent are neutral and 23 percent disagree. It is important to note that this represents a higher level of disagreement than any progressive position receives except the final statement on government intervention when markets fail. In addition to agreement from 75 percent of Republicans and 60 percent of Independents, this is the only conservative statement that attracts a majority of Democrats (51 percent). Conservatives (73 percent agree) drive the high numbers on this measure, with moderates (53 percent), progressives (47 percent), and liberals (46 percent) all significantly lower and grouped together.

There is an education gap among liberals and progressives on this measure, however, which is conspicuous. Majorities of non-college-educated progressives (55 percent) and liberals (53 percent) agree with this critique of government spending, while little more than one in three college-educated liberals (37 percent) or progressives (35 percent) share the sentiment.

Advocacy of the free market as a better means of creating economic growth and a preference for limited government over big government both produce majority agreement as well, though with much more ambivalence than we see on responses to the progressive statements. Comparing free markets to government, 57 percent agree that *“free market solutions are better than government at creating jobs and economic growth,”* but 28 percent are neutral on this proposition while another 14 percent disagree. Similarly, 55 percent agree that *“limited government is always better than big government,”* with 27 percent neutral and 17 percent disagreeing. On both measures, Democrats are significantly lower while Republicans and Independents are less than 10 points apart—closer on these two measures than on any other in this battery of questions on the role of government. And the age gap between voters under 40 and older Americans is greater on these two statements—16 points on each—than on any others on the role of government.

Support for the conservative position falls below 50 percent on whether *“government programs for the poor undermine individual initiative and responsibility”* (48 percent agree, 21 percent neutral, 30 percent disagree). Once again, conservatives (57 percent) are on an island here, with moderates (43 percent), liberals (41 percent), and progressives (40 percent) all aligned together and disagreement peaking among progressives (41 percent) and liberals (40 percent). However, the education gap among progressives (45 percent agree, 33 percent disagree among non-college; 34 percent agree, 51 percent disagree among college-educated) and liberals (48 percent agree, 32 percent disagree among non-college; 30 percent agree, 51 percent disagree among college-educated) is as large as the gap between Democrats and Republicans.

In sharp contrast to the overwhelming agreement on the progressive position on the necessity of regulation to keep businesses in check and protect workers and consumers, the conservative pushback on regulation—*“government regulation of business does more*

55 percent of Americans agree that limited government is always better than big government.

harm than good—garners very weak support (43 percent agree, 29 percent neutral, 28 percent disagree). Only 17 percent of Americans strongly agree with this position—a number that drops below 10 percent if we exclude conservative Republicans. The tremendous gap between non-college progressives (39 percent agree, 24 percent disagree) and liberals (32 percent agree, 30 percent disagree) on the one hand and college-educated progressives (31 percent agree, 53 percent disagree) and liberals (26 percent agree, 43 percent disagree) on the other highlights the class differences on attitudes toward government and the complexity that lies below these traditional ideological labels. At the same time, the gap between Americans under 40 (35 percent agree) and those 40 and older (46 percent agree) underscores the direction the country is headed on these critical issues.

Cultural and social values

This battery of statements on cultural and social issues revealed by far the greatest polarization of opinions and the largest differences between progressives and conservatives. The degree of polarization on these issues is not surprising given the way many of these issues have been used in recent years to inflame passions on both sides of the country’s ideological divide and to distract from issues where greater consensus can be found. In most of these cases, it has been conservatives pressing the cultural issues into the country’s political debate and progressives playing defense or shying away from the debate altogether. This survey makes it clear that Americans are drawn to progressive values and that progressives should not shy away from advancing their own views on issues such as religion, family, civil rights, and the moral responsibilities that we bear as Americans.

TABLE 3
Cultural and social values

% agreement by group (dark blue = progressive; light blue = conservative)

	Total	<40	>40	Dem	Ind	Rep	Prog	Lib	Mod	Cons
Americans should adopt a more sustainable lifestyle by conserving energy and consuming fewer goods	80	81	79	87	77	71	85	88	86	75
There should be stronger regulation of sex and violence in popular culture and on the Internet	68	61	72	67	56	77	63	60	69	76
Religious faith should focus more on promoting tolerance, social justice, and peace in society, and less on opposing abortion or gay rights	59	62	57	71	63	38	71	78	66	42
Human life begins at conception and must be protected from that point forward	58	54	60	51	51	73	44	44	56	75
Changes in the traditional American family have harmed our society	57	45	64	46	60	71	51	39	54	70
Cultural institutions, the arts, and public broadcasting play an important role in our society and should receive government support	51	56	47	65	48	33	67	69	56	34
African-Americans and other minority groups still lack the same opportunities as whites in our country	49	50	48	60	46	36	58	61	49	39
Immigrants today are a burden on our country because they take our jobs and abuse government benefits	42	35	46	36	36	53	34	33	43	52
Our country has gone too far in mixing politics and religion and forcing religious values on people	41	46	38	50	45	27	51	52	43	31
Homosexuality is unnatural and should not be accepted by society	34	28	37	27	27	47	24	22	30	46

Progressive cultural and social beliefs

The highest overall level of support on any measure in this survey—and the only real issue of consensus on cultural measures—is on the need for all Americans to adopt a more sustainable lifestyle. Asked whether “Americans should adopt a more sustainable lifestyle by conserving energy and consuming fewer goods,” 80 percent of Americans agree, including 47 percent who strongly agree, while 13 percent are neutral and just 7 percent disagree. What is most remarkable is the uniformity of agreement on this measure, including 85 percent of progressives and 75 percent of conservatives; no other progressive cultural measure scores higher than 42 percent among conservatives. There is no age or education gap on this measure, but women score significantly higher than men on this issue across the ideological spectrum, especially on strong agreement (+13 among liberals, progressives, and conservatives alike).

Two progressive positions on the role of religion in our public life reveal the delicate balance involved in dealing with faith in a political context. On the one hand, there is broad agreement (59 percent) and little disagreement (22 percent) with the position that the extreme agenda of the religious right does not reflect the spiritual orientation of most Americans and that “religious faith should focus more on promoting tolerance, social justice, and peace in society, and less on opposing abortion or gay rights.” Demographically, there is little dissonance on this measure, with majorities of every major subgroup in agreement. Yet a look at the combination of ideology and education reveals a fascinating trend. Aside from the dramatic drop-off among conservatives, college-educated liberals and progressives are more likely than their non-college counterparts to agree, but the opposite trend exists among conservatives.

TABLE 4
Focus on tolerance, social justice, and peace

By ideology and education

Religious faith should focus more on promoting tolerance, social justice, and peace in society, and less on opposing abortion or gay rights

	Total	Non-college progressive	College progressive	Non-college liberal	College liberal	Non-college conservative	College conservative
Agree	59	64	81	74	84	44	39
Neutral	18	19	13	15	10	24	16
Disagree	22	17	5	10	6	30	44

A much more aggressive assertion that “our country has gone too far in mixing politics and religion and forcing religious values on people” elicits very different and polarized reactions. Overall, Americans are split evenly—41 percent agree, 17 percent neutral, 41 disagree—but deep divisions along partisan, ideological, and demographic lines reveal how differently Americans view the role of religion in our public life. And the fact that more than half of those staking out a position on either side express strong agreement (25 percent) or disagreement (22 percent) shows the intensity of opinion on this controversial issue. Some of the most telling subgroups on this question include (represented with total percent agree / total percent disagree):

Majority Agree

Unmarried with kids (57 / 29)
 Obama voters (53 / 31)
 African Americans (52 / 24)
 Progressive Democrats (52 / 28)
 Under 30 (51 / 30)
 Hispanics (50 / 34)

Lean Disagree

Older non-college (36 / 46)
 Devout Catholics (35 / 45)
 Non-college conservatives (35 / 45)
 Married with kids (35 / 44)
 TV primary news source (40 / 43)

Lean Agree

Younger non-college (47 / 35)
 Internet primary news source (46 / 37)
 Non-devout Catholics (46 / 37)
 Independents (45 / 36)
 Moderates (43 / 38)

Majority Disagree

College-educated conservatives (23 / 63)
 Conservative Republicans (22 / 59)
 McCain voters (25 / 56)
 Born-again Christians (32 / 55)

Shifting from religion to the role of government in supporting the arts and public broadcasting, we find the final progressive principle that attracts majority support in this exercise. Public support for institutions such as the Public Broadcasting Service, National Public Radio, and the National Endowment for the Arts has long been a conservative punching bag, particularly during the “Gingrich Revolution” in the mid-’90s, but 51 percent of Americans agree that *“cultural institutions, the arts, and public broadcasting play an important role in our society and should receive government support,”* with another 22 percent neutral and just 27 percent disagreeing. Support for this statement runs very high among liberals (69 percent agree), progressives (67 percent), and moderates (56 percent alike, but crashes among conservative Republicans (28 percent agree, 49 percent disagree). Even other conservatives are broadly supportive (48 percent agree, 22 percent disagree), but conservative Republicans treat this idea as anathema. And with support for the progressive position peaking among those under 40 years of age (56 percent), this is yet another issue where conservative Republicans find themselves on the wrong side of the country’s rapidly changing demographics.

It is impossible to predict at this early stage how the election of President Obama will impact attitudes toward race in our country. Just as his victory in 2008 represented the realization of many dreams of civil rights pioneers from previous generations, last week’s report from the Southern Poverty Law Center on dramatic increases in membership and activities among hate groups since November is a reminder of the long road ahead. Nearly half of Americans (49 percent) agree that *“African Americans and other minority groups still lack the same opportunities as whites in our country,”* while 36 percent disagree. And nearly half of those on either side of this debate feel intensely about their respective positions (23 percent strongly agree, 18 percent strongly disagree).

51 percent of Americans agree that cultural institutions, the arts, and public broadcasting play an important role in our society and should receive government support.

Once again, we find conservative Republicans (33 percent agree, 52 percent disagree) alone on an island here, with other conservatives (52 percent agree, 28 percent disagree) much more in line with progressives (61 percent agree, 26 percent disagree) and moderates (49 percent agree, 34 percent disagree). Across all ideologies (but particularly among conservatives), older voters are more likely to agree with the progressive position on race while younger voters are more likely to disagree. And there is an unmistakable gender gap, with women of all ideological perspectives more likely to agree with the progressive position.

Conservative cultural and social beliefs

There is little debate that cultural conservatism has represented the grassroots strength of the conservative movement and the Republican Party for decades now. The record of the Bush administration and the Republican Congress laid waste to arguments that Republicans represent small government and fiscal responsibility, with public polls now showing a record low in confidence in the party to provide effective leadership on those issues. As a result, modern conservatism increasingly relies on its cultural values for its strength, but the public appeal of those values is decidedly mixed.

Given the weakness of the conservative critique of government regulation relative to progressive positions on the necessity of such regulations to protect consumers, it is ironic that the strongest conservative cultural position is based on expanded government regulation. More than two in three Americans (68 percent) agree with the conservative stance that “*there should be stronger regulation of sex and violence in popular culture and on the Internet*”; only 18 percent disagree, with another 14 percent neutral. There is relatively little partisan or ideological division on this measure, with large majorities of progressives (60 percent agree), liberals (60 percent), and moderates (69 percent) joining conservatives (76 percent) and Democrats (67 percent) actually much closer to Republicans (77 percent) than Independents are on the same question (56 percent).

Greater regulation of sex and violence is the only conservative principle where agreement runs higher among African Americans (77 percent) and Hispanics (75 percent) than among whites (66 percent). There also is a significant gender gap, with women (76 percent) much stronger supporters of regulation than men (59 percent). And support for this position increases consistently with age, ranging from 59 percent among those under 30 to 74 percent among seniors. Every major subgroup in the population except those without a specific religious affiliation and heavy Internet users expresses majority support.

The centrality of the nuclear family unit to much of conservative social teaching can't be overstated, and their argument that “*changes in the traditional American family have harmed our society*” resonates with a strong majority of Americans (57 percent), while 17 percent are neutral and 25 percent disagree. While support for this statement among conservatives

More than two-thirds of Americans agree that there should be stronger regulation of sex and violence in popular culture and on the Internet.

(70 percent agree) is nearly as high as on regulation of sex and violence, it drops off significantly among moderates (56 percent) and progressives (51 percent) while still remaining at a majority, then falls much lower among liberals (39 percent).

Unlike the previous position, there is no real gender gap, but age remains a strong driver, with large gaps between those 50 years of age or older and those under 50 among liberals (50 vs. 33 percent), progressives (59 vs. 46 percent), and conservatives (74 vs. 66 percent) alike. The differences in attitudes on this issue based on education are even greater; non-college liberals (46 percent agree, 29 percent disagree) and progressives (58 percent agree, 25 percent disagree) demonstrate significantly greater support than college-educated liberals (29 percent agree, 55 percent disagree) or progressives (42 percent agree, 44 percent disagree). But among conservatives, those with a college degree (74 percent agree) are more supportive than those with less formal education (67 percent).

For nearly four decades now, public opinion research has explored attitudes on the volatile issue of abortion, with both sides finding ample data to support their respective positions that the country is fundamentally pro-life or pro-choice. Objective research has demonstrated for years that the majority of Americans do not fit entirely under either banner. Nonetheless, it is striking that 58 percent of Americans agree that *“human life begins at conception and must be protected from that point forward,”* with 16 percent neutral and just 24 percent disagreeing with this opinion. More striking is the intensity underlying this, with 46 percent strongly agreeing and just 14 percent strongly disagreeing. This does not, of course, mean that 58 percent of the country is pro-life or opposes Roe v. Wade, but it does show the resonance of the underlying principle of the pro-life position.

Support for this position is highest among Republicans (73 percent), but small majorities of Democrats and Independents (51 percent each) also agree. Unlike on the traditional family position above, where there was a 12-point gap between liberals and progressives, there is no gap between these groups on this measure (44 percent each). Instead, it is once again the educational divides within these two audiences that are most telling. Non-college liberals (57 percent agree, 26 percent disagree) and progressives (51 percent agree, 21 percent disagree) both side with this conservative position, while college-educated progressives (33 percent agree, 38 percent disagree) and especially liberals (23 percent agree, 59 percent disagree) reject it. Most interestingly, we find that women are significantly more likely to agree (62 percent agree, 22 percent disagree) that life begins at conception and must be protected than are men (54 percent agree, 26 percent disagree).

Among the most polarizing issues in this survey and in the country’s broader political dialogue is immigration. Although intensity is not as high on this issue as it is on life at conception, homosexuality, regulation of sex and violence, or almost any other cultural measure, Americans are clearly divided; 42 percent agree that *“immigrants today are a burden on our country because they take our jobs and abuse government benefits,”* but 36 percent disagree and 19 percent are neutral. The polarization on this issue is multi-faceted. Ideologically, among

conservatives 52 percent agree and 25 percent disagree, but among progressives 34 percent agree and 47 percent disagree. Along ethnic lines, 45 percent of whites agree and 32 percent disagree while 26 percent of Hispanics agree and 58 percent disagree.

By political party, 53 percent of Republicans agree that immigrants are a burden on our country, alongside 36 percent of Democrats and Independents. Generationally, 47 percent agree among those 40 and older, and 35 percent agree among those under 40. And educationally, 49 percent agree and 29 percent disagree among non-college, but 30 percent agree and 50 percent disagree among college graduates.

Because of the methodology employed in this survey—stating principles from each ideological viewpoint in the affirmative and most favorable manner—only one principle among the 40 tested received a mean score below neutral (5.0), and only two had more Americans in disagreement than those agreeing with it. The social conservative position on homosexuality identified by this statement—*“homosexuality is unnatural and should not be accepted by society”*—garnered just 34 percent of Americans who agree, 44 percent who disagree, and 20 percent who are neutral. Conservative Republicans (51 percent agree) and devout born-again Christians (55 percent agree) are the only audiences in the entire population that give this position majority support. Joining in opposition to this conservative statement are Democrats (54 percent disagree), Obama voters (59 percent disagree), Hispanics (62 percent disagree), non-devout Catholics (58 percent disagree), college graduates (52 percent disagree), and Americans under 40 (54 percent disagree).

Economic and domestic policy

The 2010 federal budget recently presented by President Obama for the fiscal year beginning this October represents a bold, progressive vision for the country's future and a radical departure from much of the conservative orthodoxy that has shaped the past few decades. As outlined in his address to the joint session of Congress in February, Obama seeks to invest in America's future by focusing on three areas: energy, health care, and education. At the same time, the president seeks to reverse the fiscal profligacy and soaring deficits of the Bush years by reining in spending in several key areas, most notably Iraq, and creating a more progressive tax structure that increases taxes on the wealthiest and closes many of the loopholes that large corporations have been able to abuse in recent years. This progressive vision seems audacious to many in Washington and the media, but to most Americans, it is a logical approach to economic growth and matches the long-term needs of the country.

TABLE 5
Economic and domestic policy

% agreement by group (dark blue = progressive; light blue = conservative)

	Total	<40	>40	Dem	Ind	Rep	Prog	Lib	Mod	Cons
America's economic future requires a transformation away from oil, gas, and coal to renewable energy sources such as wind and solar	76	78	76	83	81	63	87	83	81	68
The federal government should guarantee affordable health coverage for every American	65	73	61	86	61	39	84	83	71	46
Free trade is good for America because it creates new markets for our goods and services and lowers costs for consumers	65	68	64	65	68	62	71	62	63	65
The gap between rich and poor should be reduced, even if it means higher taxes for the wealthy	62	68	58	80	57	39	75	83	68	45
Rich people like to believe they have made it on their own, but in reality, society has contributed greatly to their wealth	60	62	59	74	52	46	70	75	61	47
Cutting taxes for individuals and businesses is the key to economic growth	57	52	59	50	60	64	51	47	56	64
Social Security should be reformed to allow workers to invest some of their contributions in individual accounts	57	67	51	53	53	65	52	54	50	64
Labor unions play a positive role in our economy	48	55	44	63	48	28	62	60	52	36
Healthy economic growth requires eliminating budget deficits, which discourage private investment and raise interest rates	45	43	46	47	41	45	47	40	42	48
The primary responsibility of corporations is to produce profits and returns for their shareholders, not to improve society	44	45	44	42	46	48	43	44	42	46

Progressive economic and domestic views

The development of a new “green” economy based on alternative energy development and distribution is all the buzz these days, but “old energy” (those that profit from extracting and burning fossil fuels such as coal and oil) remains indispensable to the country’s daily life and unmatched in its influence in the halls of power. More than three in four Americans believe that must end in order for the country to secure its economic future.

In a very strongly worded test, 76 percent agree that *“America’s economic future requires a transformation away from oil, gas, and coal to renewable energy sources such as wind and solar,”* with 12 percent neutral and just 11 percent who say such a transformation is not needed. Nearly half (44 percent) strongly agree that this energy transformation is required, while only 4 percent strongly disagree.

President Obama has made it clear that he believes this transformation is essential to reversing the country’s economic slide, and 87 percent of those who voted for him agree. But so do 64 percent of McCain voters, 63 percent of Republicans, and 68 percent of conservatives—and these are virtually the only subgroups among which agreement drops below 70 percent. Americans understand that such a dramatic transformation can’t and won’t happen overnight, but as far as they are concerned, the debate is settled, and we must act now to hasten these dramatic changes as quickly as possible.

A second pillar of Obama’s economic vision, and the key to his cost-containment strategies, is ensuring affordable health care and coverage for all Americans. While Obama eschews a direct role for government in providing that health care, he has endorsed government as the only vehicle capable of extending coverage to most of those who currently lack it. Again, while this is an issue and a principle of vehement debate in Washington, the American people are clear in their support. Nearly two in three Americans (65 percent) agree, including 44 percent who strongly agree, that *“the federal government should guarantee affordable health coverage for every American”*; another 11 percent are neutral, while less than one in four (23 percent) actually disagree.

It is critical to note the use of the word “guarantee” in this statement. This is not a conditional message, but rather a very clear statement of principle, and it is met with overwhelming agreement from almost every audience except conservative Republicans (33 percent agree, 54 percent disagree). Even other conservatives (74 percent agree) are strongly in line with this position. The most interesting demographic trend in this data is on age, with Americans 40 and over (60 percent agree) significantly less supportive than those under 40 (73 percent), but there is no audience anywhere in the country outside conservative Republicans that does not provide majority support for a government guarantee of affordable health care coverage for all.

More than three-quarters of Americans agree that America’s economic future requires a transformation away from oil, gas, and coal to renewable energy sources such as wind and solar.

Obama campaigned and won on a promise to help address the country's economic needs and soaring deficits in part by raising taxes on those who earn more than \$250,000 per year. And yet again, the apoplexy of most Republicans, as well as many Democrats, to this proposal flies in the face of the clear beliefs of most Americans. They strongly agree that *"the gap between rich and poor should be reduced, even if it means higher taxes for the wealthy"* (62 percent agree, 12 percent neutral, 26 percent disagree), with a difference in intensity that is conspicuous (38 percent strongly agree, 15 percent strongly disagree). Their embrace of this position is undoubtedly linked to their agreement that *"rich people like to believe they have made it on their own, but in reality society has contributed greatly to their wealth"* (60 percent agree, 19 percent neutral, 20 percent disagree).

If the wealthy have realized personal gains from the benefits that society as a whole has given them, it is only logical that they should in turn do more to support that society. Both of these positions garner large majorities among almost every audience except conservative Republicans. Even among the wealthiest in our survey—those earning \$100,000 or more—there is majority agreement with both statements. Both the policy and the rationale of progressive taxation remain vital after two decades of failed trickle-down policies and flat tax rhetoric.

The final progressive stance on the economy and domestic policy, and the only one not to attract majority agreement, addresses the role of labor unions. While their role has clearly been transformed by a rapidly changing economy, 48 percent of Americans still say that *"labor unions play a positive role in our economy,"* compared to 32 percent who disagree and 19 percent who are neutral. Attitudes toward unions are closely tied to education, with college-educated Americans of every ideology being 6-to-12 points less likely to agree. But age also plays a powerful role, with those under 40 (55 percent agree) and those 40 and over (44 percent agree), so confidence in unions as a positive force could be growing as the Millennial generation continues to become an even greater part of the national electorate.

Conservative economic and domestic views

Conservative economic principles lack the polarizing impact of so many of their cultural positions, although they still lag behind progressive economic positions in terms of overall support, and particularly, intensity of support. Hanging over all of these conservative economic positions is an implicit issue of credibility. As discussed earlier, the extensive failures of the Bush administration, which consistently received its worst marks on economic and domestic policy, have unquestionably undermined faith in conservative governance and at least raised doubts about many of the principles espoused by that administration and its willing partners in Congress.

Four of the five progressive principles in this battery of questions registered at least 60 percent agreement overall, but only one conservative principle reaches that threshold. The conservative economic position that scores highest holds that *“free trade is good for America because it creates new markets for our goods and services and lowers costs for consumers.”* This statement achieves agreement from 65 percent, with 20 percent neutral and just 14 percent who disagree. Despite the broad agreement, intensity is relatively low, with 28 percent strongly agreeing and just 5 percent strongly disagreeing. This position clearly does not hew to partisan lines as much as other economic principles, and the range of responses reflects this, with Democrats (65 percent) and Independents (68 percent) scoring higher than Republicans (62 percent), and with progressives (71 percent) more supportive than conservatives (65 percent). There are differences on this measure based on age (under 40 at 68 percent, over 40 at 63 percent) and education (non-college at 62 percent, college graduates at 70 percent), but overall support is much more consistent than on most other measures.

The evergreen promise of entitlement reform is once again being debated in Washington in the face of record deficits and an aging population. This has long been a top priority for economic conservatives, and a majority of Americans agree with their position that *“Social Security should be reformed to allow workers to invest some of their contributions in individual accounts,”* with 57 percent in agreement, 19 percent neutral, and 24 percent disagreeing. This statement, of course, does not reflect the requirement of decreased benefits or, in the face of a stock market that has reached a 12-year low, does it address the question of how those funds would be invested. But the continuing support for this idea in the face of the current crisis is telling. Strong agreement with this position matches free trade at 28 percent, but of the 24 percent who disagree with this measure, 14 percent strongly disagree.

As we see with all of the conservative positions in this battery of questions, there is relatively little ideological or partisan division, with just 12 points separating Democrats and Independents (53 percent of each group agree) from Republicans and nine points separating progressives (52 percent) from conservatives. Not surprisingly, the most important variable influencing attitudes on this measure is age—agreement peaks at 74 percent among those under 30, holds at 61 percent among those 30 to 49, drops again to 53 percent among those 50 to 64, then plummets to 38 percent among seniors age 65 or older. This pattern holds across ideologies, education levels, and all other categories.

More than any other principle, the rallying cry of conservative economic policy and rhetoric over the past few decades has been simple and straightforward—in economic good times or bad, with record surpluses or record deficits, *“cutting taxes for individuals and businesses is the key to economic growth.”* More than half of Americans (57 percent) still agree with this fundamental premise, with 23 percent neutral and 19 percent who disagree. Although support for this position is relatively high across the board, it features the largest gaps in this battery of conservative positions between Democrats (50 percent) and Republicans (64 percent), and between liberals (47 percent) or progressives (51 percent) and conservatives (64 percent).

As with government programs for the neediest and many of the cultural and social issues, conservatives are united on this tax position, but a huge gap exists among liberals and conservatives based on education. Non-college liberals (57 percent agree, 17 percent disagree) and progressives (62 percent agree, 16 percent disagree) embrace this tax-cutting philosophy while college-educated liberals (33 percent agree, 35 percent disagree) and progressives (37 percent agree, 35 percent disagree) are much more ambivalent.

Budget deficits have been an enduring and telling narrative for the last 30 years of our economic and political history. Conservative economic thought extols balanced budgets and abhors deficits. Yet it was the two most self-avowedly conservative presidents over this period, Ronald Reagan and George W. Bush, who created record deficits with the combination of decreased taxes and increased spending, while more moderate presidents such as George H. W. Bush and Bill Clinton sought to reduce those deficits because they saw it as critical to broader economic growth. Today, Barack Obama is embracing the latter strategy, seeking to cut the record deficits he inherited in half within four years.

Americans still lean toward the traditional conservative position on this issue, with 45 percent agreeing that *“healthy economic growth requires eliminating budget deficits, which discourage private investment and raise interest rates,”* and just 18 percent rejecting this position. But with 34 percent neutral on this measure—the highest of any of the 40 statements measured in this survey by a significant margin—and only one in five demonstrating strong agreement (15 percent) or disagreement (5 percent), it is clear that Americans aren’t quite sure what they believe when it comes to deficits. There are no significant partisan or ideological differences on this measure, nor are there clear demographic distinctions, although it is interesting to note that agreement is lowest (39 percent) and disagreement highest (23 percent) among those with incomes of \$100,000 or more.

The recent spate of corporate scandals, banking failures and government bailouts have sparked debate not only about regulation and the responsibilities of government, but also about the responsibilities of businesses to the broader society. Conservative ideology rejects this very notion, holding that *“the primary responsibility of corporations is to produce profits and returns for their shareholders, not to improve society.”* A plurality of Americans (44 percent) agrees with this position, but 31 percent disagree while another 23 percent are neutral. Neither Republicans (48 percent) nor conservatives (46 percent) give this position majority support, but there also is little drop-off among Democrats (42 percent) or progressives (43 percent).

Similarly, there are no real distinctions based on traditional demographic lines, not even education or union membership. The only variable that seems to matter is income, with those earning less than \$50,000 a year (40 percent agree), those earning between \$50,000 and \$100,000 (47 percent agree) and those earning more than \$100,000 and up (55 percent agree), the highest of any major subgroup in the population.

Our polling shows that Americans aren’t quite sure what they believe when it comes to deficits.

International affairs and national security

George W. Bush's presidency forced Americans to face fundamental questions about our country's role in the world. The Bush administration sought to use the terrorist attacks of 9/11 as a backdrop for a fundamental rethinking of our relationship with the rest of the world, from wars in Iraq and Afghanistan to rejecting a role in international climate control treaties; from weakening international institutions and abdicating a leading role in the Israeli-Palestinian peace process to deteriorating relations with traditional allies; and from a new doctrine of preventive war and enhanced interrogation techniques to a refusal to negotiate with countries that pose a direct threat to our country. Today, Americans have reached a clear consensus on some of the fundamental issues underlying these challenges but remain sharply divided on others. It is clear that the repercussions of the last eight years will be felt for generations to come—even as President Obama charts a very different course with an explicit promise to roll back many of the Bush administration's proudest accomplishments.

TABLE 6
International affairs and national security

% agreement by group (dark blue = progressive; light blue = conservative)

	Total	<40	>40	Dem	Ind	Rep	Prog	Lib	Mod	Cons
America has taken too large a role in solving the world's problems and should focus more at home	74	74	74	77	74	68	75	77	78	72
A positive image of America around the world is necessary to achieve our national security goals	73	75	72	79	76	62	85	79	74	64
America's security is best promoted by working through diplomacy, alliances, and international institutions	68	73	65	78	72	52	82	78	69	56
America must play a leading role in addressing climate change by reducing our own greenhouse gas emissions and complying with international agreements on global warming	67	73	65	82	67	48	85	79	74	53
Military force is the most effective way to combat terrorism and make America safer	57	54	59	49	46	74	47	39	50	71
The war in Iraq has proven that the U.S. can not impose democracy on other nations	54	57	52	68	56	32	67	70	58	37
We must do whatever is necessary to protect America from terrorism, even if it means restricting civil liberties or engaging in methods some might consider torture	51	43	56	40	42	74	39	33	43	68
It is unpatriotic to criticize our government leaders or our military during a time of war	44	39	47	39	28	61	33	35	38	57
Talking with rogue nations such as Iran or with state-sponsored terrorist groups is naive and only gives them legitimacy	40	34	43	30	39	55	31	26	33	52
America should spend more to help meet the basic economic, health, and education needs of people around the world	38	43	35	52	33	23	53	50	35	25

Progressive international affairs and national security views

A strong majority of Americans believes that our nation's reputation abroad is key to our national security. Seventy-three percent of Americans agree that *"a positive image of America around the world is necessary to achieve our national security goals,"* with just 14 percent neutral and 13 percent who disagree. More than half of those who agree (39 percent) strongly agree that a favorable image of America is necessary—not just beneficial, but necessary—to achieving our national security goals. In a country that is in such desperate straits at home and experiencing strong isolationist sentiments on many fronts (as we explore in more detail below), this is a tremendous level of consensus. Progressives are most focused on this goal (85 percent), with liberals (79 percent) and moderates (74 percent) not far behind. Conservatives (64 percent) are least convinced, but still nearly two in three agree with this position, which receives broad support across the population.

Given this broad assumption of the centrality of America's image to its security, the natural question is how that image is best burnished to meet the country's security goals. More than two in three Americans (68 percent) believe that *"America's security is best promoted by working through diplomacy, alliances, and international institutions,"* with 20 percent neutral and just 11 percent who disagree. This position elicits stronger partisan reactions, with Democrats (78 percent) and Independents (72 percent) in a similar position but Republicans (52 percent) more skeptical, though still largely supportive. Younger Americans under 40 (73 percent) are more supportive than older voters (65 percent), while those with a college degree (74 percent) are similarly more likely to agree with this position than non-college Americans (65 percent).

The third progressive position on international relations and national security that attracts broad-based support is a direct repudiation of Bush administration policies and links directly to the sustainability principle in the cultural battery of questions, which garnered more agreement than any other measure in the entire survey. Once again, two in three Americans agree, and 38 percent strongly agree, that *"America must play a leading role in addressing climate change by reducing our own greenhouse gas emissions and complying with international agreements on global warming,"* while 20 percent disagree and just 12 percent are neutral on the question. Despite the high overall support for this position, the gulf between progressives (85 percent) and conservatives (53 percent), as well as between Democrats (82 percent) and Republicans (48 percent), is greater on this measure than any other progressive position in this battery. The same age and education trends hold for this measure as we saw above on the diplomacy measure, while we also see African Americans (74 percent) and Hispanics (73 percent) expressing particularly strong support for a greener approach to foreign policy.

Of all the foreign policy issues of the past several years, there is little doubt that the war in Iraq has had a larger impact on the country's political discourse and evolving attitudes on these issues than any other event, including 9/11. Without passing judgment on the decision

73 percent of Americans agree that a positive image of America around the world is necessary to achieve our national security goals.

to go to war in Iraq, a majority of Americans (54 percent) agree on the lesson of the war—*“the war in Iraq has proven that the U.S. can not impose democracy on other nations”*—with 17 percent neutral on the question and just 28 percent who disagree. Intensity on this measure also runs approximately two to one, with 28 percent who strongly agree and 13 percent who strongly disagree. Significant majorities of progressives (67 percent), liberals (70 percent), and moderates (58 percent), as well as Democrats (68 percent) and Independents (56 percent), all agree with this statement, whereas conservative Republicans (29 percent agree, 50 percent disagree) stand alone in rejecting this analysis. Aside from this fundamental partisan and ideological divide, there are few significant differences across the population on this measure except among the youngest Americans, those under 30, who strongly endorse the progressive interpretation of the war in Iraq (62 percent agree).

Earlier, we highlighted that the conservative position on homosexuality was one of only two statements across the 40 tested in these batteries with which a plurality of Americans disagreed. The other statement is a progressive argument in favor of an expanded role for the United States in meeting the basic needs of others around the world. Just 38 percent agree that *“America should spend more to help meet the basic economic, health, and education needs of people around the world,”* while 41 percent disagree and 21 percent are neutral. It is important to note that this statement goes beyond simply saying that meeting these needs is in America’s national interest and actually argues for “spending more,” a position that clearly is one step too far for many Americans, especially older white voters and born-again Christians. Progressives (53 percent), Democrats (52 percent), Hispanics (58 percent), African Americans (53 percent), and Americans who are not registered to vote (54 percent) all give this position majority support, while Americans under 30 (48 percent), those with incomes under \$30,000 (46 percent) or over \$100,000 (43 percent), and union households (43 percent) also give it relatively high marks.

Conservative international affairs and national security views

The failure of the final progressive statement above is directly related to the widespread acceptance of the first conservative critique. Nearly three in four Americans (74 percent) now say that *“America has taken too large a role in solving the world’s problems and should focus more at home,”* while 13 percent are neutral and another 13 percent disagree. This position does not take a strictly isolationist stance on complete withdrawal from the world, but it does call for a retrenchment, and most importantly a greater focus on the many challenges facing us within our own country. Support for this position is strong (41 percent strongly agree) and broad, with conservatives trailing progressives, liberals, and moderates and Republicans lower in overall agreement than Democrats or Independents. Large majorities of all audiences agree with this statement, with the gap between non-college (79 percent) and college-educated (65 percent) the only distinction of note.

74 percent of Americans agree that America has taken too large a role in solving the world’s problems and should focus more at home.

As detailed above, 68 percent of Americans agree that “America’s security is best promoted by working through diplomacy, alliances, and international institutions,” so it is somewhat surprising to see that a smaller number, but still a significant majority (57 percent), also agree that “*military force is the most effective way to combat terrorism and make America safer.*” One in four disagree with this position, while 17 percent are neutral. While these two statements are not directly contradictory, they highlight some of the tensions inherent in Americans’ attitudes on national security. Contrary to the progressive diplomacy position, support for this conservative military force principle increases with age (from 52 percent among under 30 to 64 percent among seniors) and decreases with education (from 64 percent among those with a high school degree or less to 39 percent among those with a post-graduate degree). And more tepid support among Democrats (49 percent) and Independents (46 percent) is offset by huge margins among Republicans (74 percent).

Because of the opposition of Sen. John McCain (R-AZ) to the Bush administration’s position on interrogation techniques and torture, promises made during the presidential campaign by then- Sen. Barack Obama (D-IL) to reverse those policies did not create the type of fulsome national debate that might have been triggered against a more traditional Republican candidate. But with a slim majority of Americans (51 percent agree, 27 percent strongly agree) aligning with the conservative rationale that “*we must do whatever is necessary to protect America from terrorism, even if it means restricting civil liberties or engaging in methods some might consider torture,*” and a smaller but equally passionate group opposing this position (35 percent disagree, 19 percent strongly disagree), it could have been a very powerful and important debate.

Instead, President Obama is advancing a progressive argument based on shared values and human rights and fulfilling these promises with little organized opposition, even though 59 percent of Americans age 50 or older and 56 percent of those without a college degree side with this conservative argument. The president, however, moves forward knowing that the gap between Republicans (74 percent) on the one hand and Democrats (40 percent) and Independents (42 percent) on the other is greater than on any other issue.

Of the many arguments advanced by the Bush administration during the build-up and execution of the war in Iraq, none was more offensive to most progressives than the charge, repeated often during the 2004 campaign in particular and trumpeted by conservative opinion formers at all levels, that “*it is unpatriotic to criticize our government leaders or our military during a time of war.*” Today, Americans are fiercely divided on this argument, with 44 percent agreeing, including 24 percent who strongly agree, compared to 42 percent disagreeing, including 24 percent who strongly disagree, alongside another 13 percent neutral.

Not surprisingly, there is a huge partisan gap on this measure, with Independents (28 percent agree, 57 percent disagree) even stronger in their opposition than Democrats (39 percent agree, 48 percent disagree) and Republicans (61 percent agree, 26 percent dis-

agree) way out on this limb alone. The shift to a new administration could change attitudes among partisans on this question in several possible ways, but it is unlikely to break the passionate opposition of Independents.

One national security debate that was fully joined in the 2008 campaign but failed to deliver the dividend anticipated by Sen. McCain and conservatives was their attack on candidate Obama's willingness to negotiate with countries such as Syria, Iran, and North Korea. The conservative criticism of Obama's position—*"talking with rogue nations such as Iran or with state-sponsored terrorist groups is naive and only gives them legitimacy"*—finds agreement from just 40 percent of Americans, with 30 percent disagreeing and 27 percent neutral. The high level of ambivalence on this measure—less than one in three either strongly agree (18 percent) or strongly disagree (14 percent)—suggests that most Americans are uncomfortable with the conservative critique and are at least willing to give the Obama strategy the benefit of the doubt at this stage. Indeed, while conservatives (52 percent agree, 19 percent disagree) strongly side with this argument, moderates (33 percent agree, 35 percent disagree) join progressives (31 percent agree, 40 percent disagree) and liberals (26 percent agree, 42 percent disagree) in rejecting it.

Part Two

Political values, ideological perceptions, and ratings

Core American political values

To better understand how ideology shapes American politics, this study explored American opinion on a variety of foundational principles and overall beliefs about the country. In general, this research finds that many Americans remain optimistic about their chances of achieving the American Dream despite clear economic hardship across the country. It also shows that although Americans place a premium on “liberty” as a basic value, a majority of Americans desire a government that does more to promote the common good rather than one that focuses more on individual liberty. Finally, this study finds that Americans favor a more expansive notion of freedom that includes basic economic opportunity and security measures (associated with FDR’s political vision) over one based on more individual choice and libertarian values.

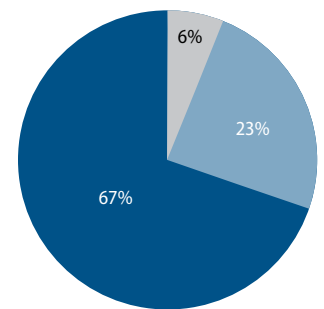
The economic recession is clearly affecting many Americans. A full two-thirds of Americans (67 percent) report that their family’s income is falling behind the cost of living, with 23 percent saying their income is staying even and only 6 percent saying it is going up faster than the cost of living. The belief that family income is failing to keep pace with rising costs is uniformly held across ideological, partisan, race, and income lines. In terms of the impact of the recession, Americans truly do believe they are all in the same boat. The most noticeable gap, as seen throughout much of the data in this report, is between the non-college-educated Americans and college-educated elites: 72 percent of non-college Americans say their income is falling behind the cost of living compared to only 58 percent of college educated citizens.

Even in this harsh financial environment, many Americans continue to believe that they have achieved or will achieve their own understanding of the American Dream in their lifetime. More than one-third of Americans (34 percent) say they have already achieved the American Dream and another 41 percent believe that they will achieve it in their lifetime. Roughly one-fifth of Americans (18 percent) say they will not achieve the American Dream in their lifetime.

As Table 7 shows, significant education gaps exist on perceptions of the American Dream. Fifty percent of post-graduate-educated Americans say they have achieved the American Dream and only 5 percent say they will not achieve it. In contrast, only 30 percent of those with a high school degree or less say they have achieved the American Dream and nearly one-quarter believes that they will not attain it in their lifetimes.

The American rat race

The majority of Americans agree that incomes are failing to keep pace with cost of living



- Falling behind
- Staying even
- Income going up faster

Among those polled were non-college-educated and college-educated Americans. Their perceptions of falling behind are below.

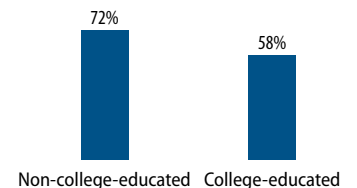


FIGURE 3

TABLE 7

Achieving the American dream

% agreeing by education level

	Total	High school or less	Post-graduate	Margin
Achieved	34	30	50	+20
Not yet but will	41	38	38	-
Will not achieve	18	24	5	-19

Grafting aggregate measures of ideology and voting patterns onto perceptions of the American Dream, we find that those Americans who say they have achieved the American Dream are more conservative than others (203.8) and also disproportionately voted for Sen. McCain in the 2008 presidential race (56 percent). Those who believe that although they have not yet achieved the American Dream they will someday are the most progressive (213.8) and reported the highest levels of support for Barack Obama (63 percent). Those Americans who think they will not achieve it at all in their lives lean progressive (210.3) and favored Obama (53 percent) as well but at lower levels than those in the middle category.

Perhaps not surprisingly for a nation grounded in the Jeffersonian notion of “life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness,” Americans place a premium on “liberty” in their own ideological orientation. Asked to choose two American political values that are most important to them, four in 10 people selected “liberty” as their chief political value, followed closely by a second tier of principles centered on “opportunity” (34 percent), “justice” (33 percent), and “equality” (32 percent). Occupying a lower cluster are values such as “free enterprise” (22 percent), “community” (15 percent), and “tradition” (11 percent).

Interestingly, Democrats and progressives rank “equality” and “opportunity” over other values while Republicans and conservatives gravitate toward “liberty,” “justice” and “free enterprise” at higher rates.

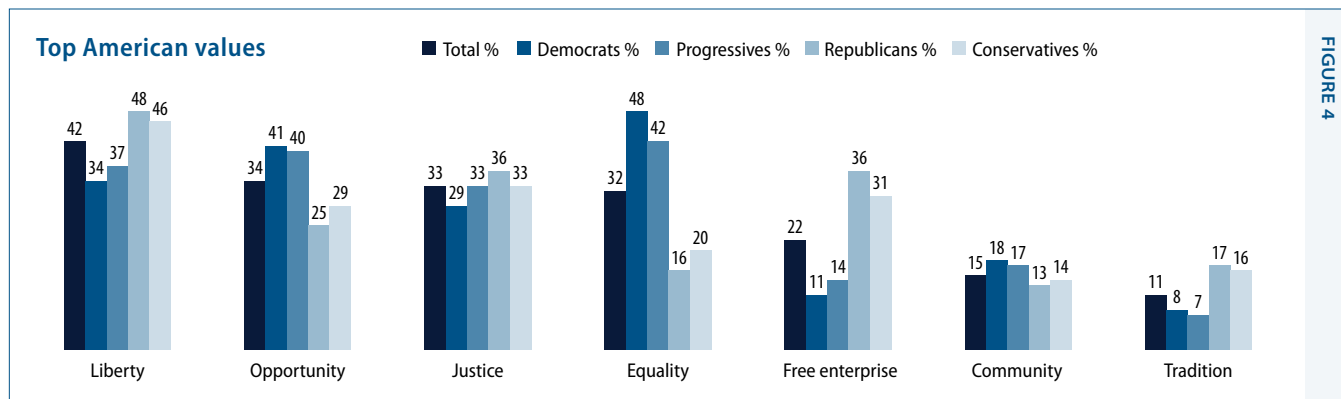


FIGURE 4

TABLE 8
Common good vs. liberty and differing notions of freedom

	1 st much more	1 st somewhat more	Both	2 nd somewhat more	2 nd much more	Neither	Don't know/refused	Total 1 st more	Total 2 nd more	1 st -2 nd
STATEMENT #1 Government should do more to promote the common good.	29	32	1	18	18	1	2	60	37	24
STATEMENT #2 Government should do more to promote individual liberty.										
STATEMENT #1 Freedom requires economic opportunity and minimum measures of security, such as food, housing, medical care, and old-age protection.	26	31	1	21	18	1	3	57	38	19
STATEMENT #2 Freedom requires that individuals be left alone to pursue their lives as they please and to deal with the consequences of their actions on their own.										

Exploring these abstract values in more detail, this study presented people with a series of paired statements and asked them which one they agreed with more. As Table 8 highlights, six in 10 Americans believe that “government should do more to promote the common good” versus 37 percent who feel that “government should do more to promote individual liberty.” There is relative consensus on this sentiment, with roughly 70 percent of progressives and liberals agreeing with the focus on the common good over liberty but also 62 percent of self-identified moderates and 54 percent of conservatives. Notably, those Americans who disapprove of President Obama’s job performance are far more likely to want the government to focus on individual liberty over the common good (57 percent vs. 39 percent, respectively), perhaps foreshadowing a coming battle over the scope and mission of government.

When asked to consider the dimensions of freedom, we find that a majority of Americans (57 percent) believes that “freedom requires economic opportunity and minimum measures of security, such as food, housing, medical care and old-age protection,” compared to 38 percent who favor the idea that “freedom requires that individuals be left alone to pursue their lives as they please and to deal with the consequences of their actions on their own.” Much sharper ideological and partisan divides arise on these competing visions of freedom: 73 percent of progressives, 71 percent of Democrats, and 68 percent of liberals prefer an FDR-style of freedom compared to a majority of Republicans (55 percent) and a plurality of conservatives (48 percent) who prefer the more classical liberal version of freedom. Younger Americans also report a higher level of support for the libertarian framing of freedom than older citizens.

Ideological perceptions of President Obama

President Obama enjoys strong job approval and favorable personal descriptions. Americans respect and admire the president and believe he is making the right decisions for the country. These opinions are not monolithic, however. This research shows very sharp ideological and partisan divides emerging on attitudes about the president and his political perspective.

Overall, the president's overall job approval is high (58 percent total approve, 40 percent strongly approve). More than six in 10 progressives, liberals, and Democrats strongly approve of the president's job performance. But as Table 9 shows, conservatives and Republicans express skepticism of the president's job performance: Only 38 percent of conservatives and 25 percent of Republicans approve of President Obama's job performance.

The president receives strong ratings from those constituent groups that reported higher levels of support for him in the election, and less well with other groups. African Americans (87 percent), Latinos (72 percent), young people (70 percent), women (62 percent) and lower-income Americans (70 percent) all report above-average and strong approval of Obama's presidency while whites (51 percent), men (54 percent), the elderly (50 percent), and higher-income Americans (58 percent) report below-average or average levels of job approval.

In addition to strong job approval, President Obama appears to have made significant headway in reducing political tensions in the country. Overall, a plurality of Americans (49 percent) believes that the country is more divided now than in the past compared to 45 percent who believe the country is less divided. This is down considerably from the Bush years. In 2007, two-thirds of Americans said the nation was more divided than in the past, according to the Pew Research Center. The remaining perception of divisions

TABLE 9
President Obama's job performance

% of each group approving/disapproving

Do you approve or disapprove of the way Barack Obama is handling his job as president?							
	Cons	Libs	Mods	Progs	Dems	Inds	Reps
Approve	38	80	65	76	86	52	25
Disapprove	42	3	15	7	3	20	53

appears to be driven extensively by ideology—56 percent of those who believe the country is more divided are self-identified conservatives while 52 percent of those who say the country is less divided are progressives or liberals.

Going a step further in our examination of the president and ideology, this study asked Americans for their own opinions about Obama’s political perspective. As President Obama wrote in his 2006 book, *The Audacity of Hope*, “I serve as a blank screen on which vastly different political stripes project their own view.” Putting this theory to a test, the research finds that public perceptions of Obama’s ideology largely conform to the president’s description of himself.

As Table 10 highlights, a plurality of self-identified progressives believes Obama is “progressive” (48 percent); liberals are more likely to say he is “liberal” (31 percent); and a plurality of moderates says he is “moderate” (32 percent). The major exception to this trend is among self-identified conservatives: 51 percent of conservatives believe that President Obama’s political perspective is “liberal,” indicating a strong disconnection between their own perspectives and those of the president.

Similar patterns emerge among partisan groups, with 60 percent of Republicans saying that President Obama’s political perspective is “liberal.” Even with concerted efforts by the president to appeal to other side in a “post-partisan” way, conservatives and Republicans remain unconvinced and do not view Obama’s ideological approach as similar to their own or in less polarizing terms.

This study also explored more qualitative understandings of the president by asking Americans to describe the president in their own words. As Table 11 shows, the response patterns overwhelming suggest that Obama is considered most for a range of positive personal attributes (32 percent combined) and his capacity to embody change and a new direction (21 percent). Notably, younger people are much more likely than their elders to view Obama as a change agent rather than for his personal attributes. Overall negative descriptions of the president are muted with the exception again of conservatives and Republicans who are just as likely, if not more, to say that the president is not up to the job or cannot be trusted.

TABLE 10
Ideological perceptions of President Obama

% of self-identified group saying that Obama’s political perspective is...

Which of the following do you feel best describes Barack Obama’s political perspective?				
	Conservatives	Liberals	Moderates	Progressives
Conservative	6	8	3	7
Liberal	51	31	25	11
Moderate	11	24	32	23
Progressive	17	29	26	48

TABLE 11
Descriptions of President Obama

% of group saying that Obama is...

Please tell me what one word or phrase best describes Barack Obama in your opinion?			
	Total	Conservative	Republican
POSITIVE PERSONAL ATTRIBUTES	24	15	9
Smart/Intelligent	8	4	3
Trustworthy/Honest	4	2	1
Determined/Persistent	3	2	1
Brave/Bold/Courageous	3	2	1
Eloquent/Good speaker	1	2	2
Down to Earth/Humble	1	0	–
Thoughtful/Calm	1	1	1
Flexible/Adaptable	1	1	1
NEW DIRECTION	21	14	12
Change/New/Diff Bush	9	4	5
Inspiration/Optimistic	6	6	5
Hope/Potential	5	3	2
POSITIVE - GENERAL	8	6	3
Great/Excellent	7	5	2
Cares about America	1	1	–
NOT UP TO THE JOB	8	14	18
Inexperienced/Unqualified	6	10	14
CAN'T BE TRUSTED	7	14	17
Communist/Socialist	4	8	11
Smooth talker/Deceptive	2	5	5
POSITIVE JOB PERFORMANCE	7	6	5
Doing his best	4	5	2
Leader	2	1	1
Doing a good job	1	1	1
Influential/Powerful	1	0	1
TOO EARLY TO SAY	4	6	7

Ideological ratings

One of the most striking findings in this study is the significant increase in public favorability toward the “progressive” approach to politics and the relative strength of the “conservative” brand in the face of this improvement. Despite many descriptions of America as a nation divided between “liberal” and “conservative” views, this study suggests that “progressive” and “conservative” are the more accurate descriptions of the dominant ideological paradigms in politics today.

As Table 12 highlights, the “progressive” label enjoys the highest net favorable rating of any ideological approach (+46 percent) and now equals “conservative” in public favorability (67 percent favorable). Favorable ratings of “progressive” increased by 25 points from 2004 to 2009, with almost all of the gains coming from people who previously were unaware of the term or unable to rate it moving into at least a “somewhat favorable” position.

Both the “liberal” and “libertarian” labels enjoy much lower overall favorability, with only a plurality of Americans rating each positively. Interestingly, in terms of overall identification, “libertarian” is in roughly the same position as “progressive” was five years ago, with more than one-fifth of Americans unaware of the term or unable to rate it. Surprisingly, self-identified conservatives do not look favorably upon “libertarian”: 35 percent of conservatives rate the term favorably, only 10 points higher than their rating of “liberal.” In contrast, a majority (53 percent) of conservatives rate “progressive” favorably. Younger liberals emerge as the group that views the “libertarian” approach most favorably, with nearly six in 10 giving it a positive mark (59 percent).

TABLE 12
Public favorability of major ideologies

% total favorable towards ideological label

	2004 Favorable	2004 Unfavorable	2009 Favorable	2009 Unfavorable	Net Favorable Change
Conservative	67	21	67	28	-7
Liberal	44	42	48	43	+3
Libertarian	NA	NA	41	37	-
Progressive	42	18	67	21	+22

*2004 data from CAP survey conducted March 22-30, 2004.

TABLE 13

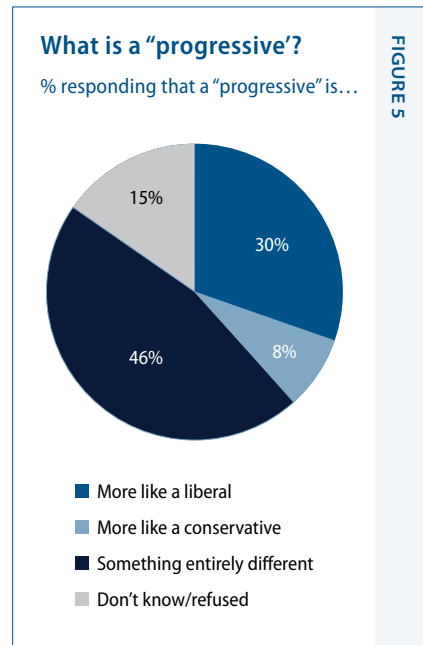
Demographic breakdowns of ideological ratings

% total favorable by group

	Con	Mod	Lib	Prog	Dem	Ind	Rep	White	Black	Latino
Con	90	63	43	49	50	68	89	68	60	64
Lib	25	55	88	59	67	51	21	45	61	62
Libtrn	35	39	50	43	42	47	36	38	42	51
Prog	53	73	77	87	77	65	53	65	74	74

The lack of noticeable partisan differences seems to explain the strength of both the “progressive” and “conservative” labels. Independents rate both approaches highly (65 and 68 percent favorable, respectively) and Democratic and Republican partisans appear open to opposing perspectives: 50 percent of Democrats rate “conservative” favorably and 53 percent of Republicans rate “progressive” favorably. In contrast, only 21 percent of Republicans rate “liberal” favorably.

The rise of progressivism in the public’s eye might be explained by its relative distinction from other ideologies. As Figure 5 highlights, 46 percent of Americans believe that a “progressive” is something entirely different from either a “liberal” or a “conservative.” This figure includes 46 percent of Democrats, 51 percent of Independents, 44 percent of Republicans, 54 percent of moderates, and 46 percent of conservatives who believe that a “progressive” is something different than the other categories.



Self-identification

This study also employs an innovative measurement of Americans' ideological self-identification, expanding the traditional liberal-moderate-conservative test with a five-point measure that we believe more accurately reflects the dominant ideologies in politics today. As Figure 6 shows, this inclusive approach reveals a more complex picture of ideology than previously understood, one that is more center-left and less conservative in orientation.

Under this approach, roughly three in 10 Americans classify themselves as “progressive” or “liberal” (31 percent) and “moderate or other” (31 percent), and just over one-third of Americans label themselves “conservative” or “libertarian” (36 percent). After a follow-up question that pushes moderates to choose between the other ideological approaches, a roughly even left-right breakdown surfaces: 47 percent of Americans are “progressive” or “liberal” and 48 percent are “conservative” or “libertarian.”

How well do these ideological labels match up to the underlying partisanship, ideas, and beliefs? As Table 1 earlier in the report shows, self-identified “liberals” are the farthest left on the composite index (242.3), with Democrats (237.7) and “progressives” (237.6) close to “liberals” but slightly more to the right. “Moderates” (217.4) and Independents (212.7) are grouped together. And “conservatives” (177.9) and Republicans (168.4) emerge further to the right on the index. Table 14 also shows that the public's partisan and ideological self-identification match fairly well: Democrats are evenly split between “progressive” and “liberal” (25 percent each); a plurality of Independents call themselves “moderate” (39 percent); and Republicans overwhelmingly label themselves as “conservative” (68 percent).

TABLE 14
Partisan and ideological identification

	Democrats	Independents	Republicans
Liberal	25	8	4
Progressive	25	14	5
Moderate	29	39	20
Libertarian	1	6	1
Conservative	14	24	68

Looking at the underlying beliefs in more depth, however, it is clear that these ideological labels mask important overlaps and areas of contention across ideological groups. These trends suggest that although Americans classify themselves in concrete ideological terms, there is far more fluidity in terms of the actual beliefs and values that these groups actually hold. For example:

Among Conservatives:

- Conservatives agree with four out of five progressive ideas about the role of government
- Conservatives disagree with most progressive ideas about culture and society, with the exception of the need for more sustainable living
- Conservatives disagree with every progressive idea on the economy, with the exception of energy transformation

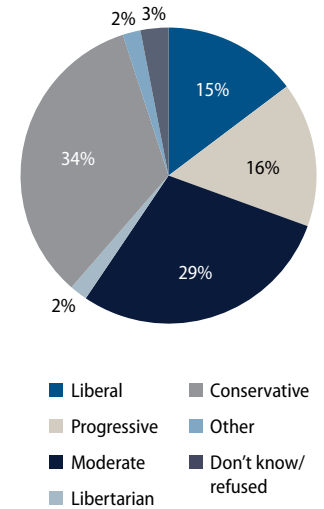
Among Liberals and Progressives:

- Liberals disagree with every conservative idea about the role of government and culture/society, except the regulation of sex and violence
- Progressives disagree with most conservative ideas on government and culture/society, with the exception of the role of markets, regulation of sex and violence and changes in the American family
- Majorities of progressives and liberals are open to conservative ideas on the economy, particularly on free trade and Social Security
- Progressives and liberals disagree with most conservative ideas on international affairs, with the exception of the need to focus more at home.

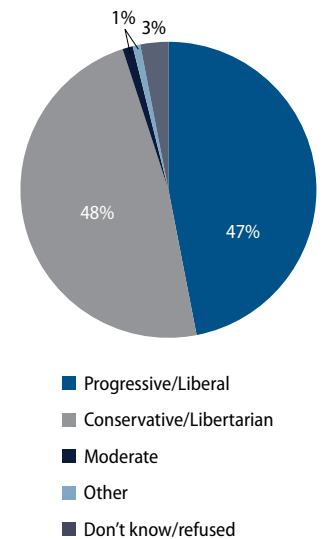
FIGURE 6

Ideological self-identification

What is your ideology?



Combined breakdown after moderates choose from other ideologies



Appendix

Complete results from national questionnaire

Q.4 (LANDLINE ONLY) First of all, are you registered to vote at this address?

1190 Respondents

	Total
Yes	92
No	8
(Refused)	0

(ref:SCREEN1)

Q.5 (CELL ONLY) First of all, are you registered to vote?

210 Respondents

	Total
Yes	83
No	17
(Refused)	-

(ref:SCREEN2)

Q.6 Generally speaking, do you think that things in this country are going in the right direction, or do you feel things have gotten pretty seriously off on the wrong track?

	Total
Right direction	31
Wrong track	60
(Don't know/refused)	10
Right - Wrong	-29

(ref:DIRECT)

Q.7 Do you think your family's income is going up faster than the cost of living, staying about even with the cost of living, or falling behind the cost of living?

	Total
Income going up faster	6
Income staying even	23
Income falling behind	67
(Don't know/Refused)	4

(ref:ECON2)

Q.8 Thinking about the American Dream and what that means for you and your family, do you feel you have already achieved the American Dream, that you have not achieved it yet but will in your lifetime, or that you won't achieve it in your lifetime?

	Total
Have achieved the American Dream	34
Have not achieved it yet but will	41
Will not achieve the American Dream	18
(Don't know/Refused)	7

(ref:ECON3)

Q.9 Do you approve or disapprove of the way Barack Obama is handling his job as president?

	Total
Strongly approve	40
Somewhat approve	18
Somewhat disapprove	6
Strongly disapprove	17
(Don't know/Refused)	19
Total approve	58
Total disapprove	23
Approve - disapprove	35

(ref.PRESAPPR)

Q.10 Please tell me what ONE word or phrase best describes Barack Obama in your opinion? [OPEN-ENDED]

	Total
POSITIVE PERSONAL ATTRIBUTES	24
Smart/Intelligent	8
Trustworthy/Honest	4
Determined/Persistent	3
Brave/Bold/Courageous	3
Eloquent/Good speaker	1
Down to Earth/Humble	1
Thoughtful/Calm	1
Flexible/Adaptable	1
NEW DIRECTION	21
Change/New/Diff Bush	9
Inspiration/Optimistic	6
Hope/Potential	5
POSITIVE - GENERAL	8
Great/Excellent	7
Cares about America	1
NOT UP TO THE JOB	8
Inexperienced/Unqualified	6
CAN'T BE TRUSTED	7
Communist/Socialist	4
Smooth talker/Deceptive	2
POSITIVE JOB PERFORMANCE	7
Doing his best	4
Leader	2
Doing a good job	1
Influential/Powerful	1
TOO EARLY TO SAY	4
Unknown / Waiting to see	1
He is president now	1
Faced with hard decisions / Big challenges ahead	1
Young	1
Other	13
Refused / None / Nothing	4
Don't know	4

(ref.DESCRIBE)

Q.11 Which of the following do you feel best describes Barack Obama's political perspective?

	Total
Liberal	35
Progressive	27
Moderate	18
Conservative	7
Libertarian	2
(Other)	2
(Don't know/Refused)	9

(ref:OBAMAIDEO)

Q.12 (IF MODERATE) If you had to pick one of the following, which do you feel best describes Obama's political perspective?

250 Respondents

	Total
Progressive	46
Liberal	33
Conservative	11
Libertarian	1
(Moderate)	5
(Other)	-
(Don't know/Refused)	4

(ref:OBAMAIDEO2)

Q.11/12 Combined Obama Ideology

	Total
Liberal	41
Progressive	35
Conservative	9
Libertarian	2
Moderate	2
(Other)	2
(Don't know/Refused)	9

(ref:OBAMAIDEO/OBAMAIDEO2)

Q.13 Do you think the country is more politically divided these days than in the past or not?

	Total
Yes, more divided	49
No, not more divided than in the past	45
(Don't know/Refused)	5
Yes - No	4

(ref:DIVIDE)

Q.14 Which TWO of the following American political values are most important to you?

	Total
Liberty	42
Opportunity	34
Justice	33
Equality	32
Free enterprise	22
Community	15
Tradition	11
(Other)	2
(Don't know/Refused)	1

(ref:VALUES)

Q.15 Now I'm going to read you a number of statements about the role of government in our society. For each, please indicate how much you agree on a scale of 0-10, with 10 meaning you completely agree with statement, zero meaning you completely disagree with the statement, and 5 meaning you aren't sure whether you agree or disagree. You can use any number from zero to 10, the higher the number the more you agree with the statement.

	Strng Agree (9-10)	Total Agree (6-10)	Neutral (5)	Total Disagree (0-4)	Strng Disagree (0-1)	DK/Ref	Mean
15 Government policies too often serve the interests of corporations and the wealthy.	34	65	19	15	5	1	6.9
16 Government has a responsibility to provide financial support for the poor, the sick, and the elderly.	33	69	15	15	5	0	6.9
17 Government regulations are necessary to keep businesses in check and protect workers and consumers.	32	73	15	12	5	0	7.1
18 Government investments in education, infrastructure, and science are necessary to ensure America's long-term economic growth.	45	79	12	9	4	1	7.6
19 Government must step in to protect the national economy when the market fails.	27	59	16	24	9	1	6.3
20 Limited government is always better than big government.	31	55	27	17	7	1	6.5
21 Free market solutions are better than government at creating jobs and economic growth.	25	57	28	14	4	2	6.5
22 Government spending is almost always wasteful and inefficient.	30	61	16	23	7	0	6.5
23 Government regulation of business does more harm than good.	17	43	29	28	10	1	5.6
24 Government programs for the poor undermine individual initiative and responsibility.	20	48	21	30	10	1	5.7
Progressive Government Index Mean							54.0

(ref:GOVTINDEX)

Q.25 Now I'm going to read you a number of statements about our society today. For each, please indicate how much you agree on a scale of 0-10, with 10 meaning you completely agree with statement, zero meaning you completely disagree with the statement, and 5 meaning you aren't sure whether you agree or disagree. You can use any number from zero to 10, the higher the number the more you agree with the statement.

	Strng Agree (9-10)	Total Agree (6-10)	Neutral (5)	Total Disagree (0-4)	Strng Disagree (0-1)	DK/Ref	Mean
25 Our country has gone too far in mixing politics and religion and forcing religious values on people.	25	41	17	41	22	1	5.1
26 Americans should adopt a more sustainable lifestyle by conserving energy and consuming fewer goods.	47	80	13	7	3	1	7.9
27 Religious faith should focus more on promoting tolerance, social justice, and peace in society, and less on opposing abortion or gay rights.	36	59	18	22	14	2	6.5
28 African Americans and other minority groups still lack the same opportunities as whites in our country.	23	49	14	36	18	1	5.4
29 Cultural institutions, the arts, and public broadcasting play an important role in our society and should receive government support.	22	51	22	27	14	1	5.8
30 Immigrants today are a burden on our country because they take our jobs and abuse government benefits.	22	42	19	36	19	2	5.3
31 Homosexuality is unnatural and should not be accepted by society.	22	34	20	44	32	2	4.6
32 Human life begins at conception and must be protected from that point forward.	46	58	16	24	14	2	6.7
33 There should be stronger regulation of sex and violence in popular culture and on the Internet.	41	68	14	18	9	1	7.0
34 Changes in the traditional American family have harmed our society.	32	57	17	25	14	1	6.2
Progressive Cultural Index Mean							50.9

(ref:CULTINDEX)

Q.35 Now I'm going to read you a number of statements about the economy and other issues facing our country. For each, please indicate how much you agree on a scale of 0-10, with 10 meaning you completely agree with statement, zero meaning you completely disagree with the statement, and 5 meaning you aren't sure whether you agree or disagree. You can use any number from zero to 10, the higher the number the more you agree with the statement.

	Strng Agree (9-10)	Total Agree (6-10)	Neutral (5)	Total Disagree (0-4)	Strng Disagree (0-1)	DK/Ref	Mean
35 Labor unions play a positive role in our economy.	21	48	19	32	15	1	5.5
36 The gap between rich and poor should be reduced, even if it means higher taxes for the wealthy.	38	62	12	26	15	1	6.4
37 Rich people like to believe they have made it on their own, but in reality, society has contributed greatly to their wealth.	30	60	19	20	8	2	6.5
38 America's economic future requires a transformation away from oil, gas, and coal to renewable energy sources such as wind and solar.	44	76	12	11	4	1	7.5
39 The federal government should guarantee affordable health coverage for every American.	44	65	11	23	14	0	6.8
40 Free trade is good for America because it creates new markets for our goods and services and lowers costs for consumers.	28	65	20	14	5	1	6.8
41 The primary responsibility of corporations is to produce profits and returns for their shareholders, not to improve society.	18	44	23	31	11	2	5.5
42 Cutting taxes for individuals and businesses is the key to economic growth.	24	57	23	19	6	1	6.3
43 Social Security should be reformed to allow workers to invest some of their contributions in individual accounts.	28	57	19	24	14	1	6.1
44 Healthy economic growth requires eliminating budget deficits, which discourage private investment and raise interest rates.	15	45	34	18	5	3	5.9
Progressive Economic and Domestic Policy Index Mean							52.2

(ref:ECONINDEX)

Q.45 Now I'm going to read you a number of statements about our country and its role in the world. For each, please indicate how much you agree on a scale of 0-10, with 10 meaning you completely agree with statement, zero meaning you completely disagree with the statement, and 5 meaning you aren't sure whether you agree or disagree. You can use any number from zero to 10, the higher the number the more you agree with the statement.

	Strng Agree (9-10)	Total Agree (6-10)	Neutral (5)	Total Disagree (0-4)	Strng Disagree (0-1)	DK/Ref	Mean
45 America should spend more to help meet the basic economic, health, and education needs of people around the world.	14	38	21	41	15	0	5.0
46 America's security is best promoted by working through diplomacy, alliances, and international institutions.	29	68	20	11	4	1	7.0
47 America must play a leading role in addressing climate change by reducing our own greenhouse gas emissions and complying with international agreements on global warming.	38	67	12	20	12	1	6.8
48 A positive image of America around the world is necessary to achieve our national security goals.	39	73	14	13	6	1	7.2
49 The war in Iraq has proven that the U.S. can not impose democracy on other nations.	28	54	17	28	13	1	6.0
50 America has taken too large a role in solving the world's problems and should focus more at home.	41	74	13	13	5	0	7.4
51 Military force is the most effective way to combat terrorism and make America safer.	26	57	17	25	10	1	6.1
52 We must do whatever is necessary to protect America from terrorism, even if it means restricting civil liberties or engaging in methods some might consider torture.	27	51	13	35	19	1	5.6
53 It is unpatriotic to criticize our government leaders or our military during a time of war.	24	44	13	42	24	1	5.1
54 Talking with rogue nations such as Iran or with state-sponsored terrorist groups is naive and only gives them legitimacy.	18	40	27	30	14	3	5.4
Progressive International Index Mean							52.3

Q.55 Now I am going to read you a list of terms. Please tell me if you have a favorable or unfavorable opinion of each.

	Strng Fav	Smwt Fav	Smwt Unfav	Strng Unfav	DK/Ref	Total Fav	Total Unfav	Fav-Unfav
55 Conservative	30	37	19	9	6	67	28	39
56 Liberal	16	32	20	23	9	48	43	6
57 Libertarian	8	33	24	13	21	41	37	4
58 Progressive	26	40	14	7	12	67	21	46

Q.59/60 Which of the following do you feel best describes your political perspective?

	Total
Very Progressive	5
Somewhat Progressive	11
Very Liberal	4
Somewhat Liberal	10
Very Conservative	14
Somewhat Conservative	20
Very Libertarian	0
Somewhat Libertarian	2
Moderate	29
(Other)	2
(Don't know/Refused)	3
Total Progressive	16
Total Liberal	15
Total Conservative	34
Total Libertarian	2

(ref:SELFIDEO/SELFIDEO2)

Q.61 (IF MODERATE, OTHER, OR DK/REF) If you had to pick one of the following, which do you feel best describes your political perspective?

473 Respondents

	Total
Progressive	23
Liberal	25
Conservative	35
Libertarian	4
(Moderate)	4
(Other)	2
(Don't know/Refused)	9

(ref:SELFIDEO3)

Q.59-61 Combined Self Ideology with Moderate Push

	Total
Progressive	24
Liberal	23
Conservative	45
Libertarian	3
Moderate	1
(Other)	1
(Don't know/Refused)	3

(ref:SELFIDEO/SELFIDEO2/SELFIDEO3)

Q.62 Would you say that a progressive is more like a liberal, more like a conservative, or something entirely different?

	Total
More like a liberal	30
Something entirely different	46
More like a conservative	8
(Don't know/Refused)	15

(ref:IDEOTS2)

Q.63 Now I'm going to read you some pairs of statements. After I read each pair, please tell me whether you agree more with the first statement or agree more with the second statement.

	1st Much More	1st Smwt More	Both	2nd Smwt More	2nd Much More	Neither	DK/Ref	Total 1st More	Total 2nd More	1st-2nd
63 Government should do more to promote the common good.										
Government should do more to promote individual liberty.	29	32	1	18	18	1	2	60	37	24
64 Freedom requires economic opportunity and minimum measures of security, such as food, housing, medical care, and old age protection.										
Freedom requires that individuals be left alone to pursue their lives as they please and to deal with the consequences of their actions on their own.	26	31	1	21	18	1	3	57	38	19
65 (SPLIT A) Our current economic problems show what happens when you rely too much on the market and reduce regulations on corporations.										
Corporations deserve a lot of the blame for our current economic problems, but the free market is still the best way to organize our economy.	20	21	0	27	26	2	3	41	54	-13
700 Respondents										
66 (SPLIT B) It's time for government to take a larger and stronger role in making the economy work for the average American.										
Turning to big government to solve our economic problems will do more harm than good.	36	26	1	12	23	1	2	62	35	27
700 Respondents										

(ref:BIGTHEME)

Q.67 Now a couple questions about you and your own media habits. On average, how many hours per day do you spend online—that is, actively using the Internet?

	Total
Less than 1 hour per day	34
1-2 hours per day	28
2-3 hours per day	10
3-4 hours per day	5
4 or more hours per day	11
(Don't know/refused)	11

(ref:INTERUSE)

Q.68 (CELL PHONE ONLY) Is your cell phone your only phone for personal use or do you also have a regular telephone at home?

210 Respondents

	Total
Cell phone only	85
Also have regular phone	13
(Don't know/refused)	2

(ref:CELLONLY)

Q.69 (LANDLINE ONLY) We reached you on your telephone at home. Do you also have a cell phone that you use for personal use?

1190 Respondents

	Total
Yes, have cell phone also	76
No cell phone	23
(Don't know/refused)	1

(ref:LANDONLY)

Q.68/69 Combined Phone Usage

	Total
Only landline	20
Only cell phone	13
Both	67
Total landline	87
Total cell phone	80

(ref:CELLONLY/LANDONLY)

Q.70 Where do you get most of your information about what's going on in politics and national affairs today?

	Total
National TV news	30
Local TV news	22
Internet or blogs	19
Local newspapers or magazines	12
Local radio	4
National radio	4
National newspapers or magazines	4
Late-night shows	1
Talking to other people	1
(Other)	2
(Don't know/refused)	1

(ref:SOURCES)

Q.71 Finally, I would like to ask you a few questions for statistical purposes. What is the last year of schooling that you have completed?

	Total
1 - 11th grade	6
High School graduate	28
Non-college post H.S.	2
Some college	26
College graduate	25
Post-graduate school	12
(Don't know/refused)	1

(ref:EDUC)

Q.72 In what year were you born?

	Total
18 - 24	9
25 - 29	7
30 - 34	9
35 - 39	10
40 - 44	10
45 - 49	10
50 - 54	8
55 - 59	9
60 - 64	8
Over 64	18
(No answer)	2

(ref:AGE)

Q.73 Are you married, single, separated, divorced, or widowed?

	Total
Married	57
Single	21
Separated	2
Divorced	10
Widowed	7
(Don't know/Refused)	2

(ref:MARITAL)

Q.74 Do you have any children 18 years of age or younger living at home?

	Total
Yes	36
No	64

(ref:KIDS)

Q.75-77 Generally speaking, do you think of yourself as a Democrat, a Republican or what?

	Total
Strong Democrat	28
Weak Democrat	16
Independent-lean Democrat	8
Independent	7
Independent-lean Republican	7
Weak Republican	13
Strong Republican	18
(Don't know/Refused)	3

(ref:PTYID1/PTYID2/PTYID3)

Q.78 Are you a member of a labor union? (IF YES) Are you a current member or a retired member?

(IF NOT CURRENT OR RETIRED UNION MEMBER) Is anyone in your household a current or retired member of a union?

	Total
Yes: Respondent belongs	8
Household member	6
Retired member	8
No member belongs	75
(Don't know/refused)	2

(ref:UNION)

Q.79 What is your religion?

	Total
Roman Catholic	23
Baptist	15
Non-denominational Christian	7
Methodist	6
Lutheran	5
Presbyterian	3
Pentecostal	3
Congregational/United Church of Christ	1
Evangelical	1
Seventh Day Adventist	1
Anglican/Episcopal	1
Mormon	1
Christian Scientist	1
Jewish	1
Charismatic	0
Eastern Orthodox	0
Unitarian Universalist	0
Buddhist	0
Hindu	0
Islam	0
(Other)	11
NO religious affiliation	12
(Don't know/refused)	6
Total Protestant	42

(ref:RELIG1)

Q.80 (IF LUTHERAN, PRESBYTERIAN, CONGREGATIONAL, EVANGELICAL, CHARISMATIC, BAPTIST, METHODIST, SEVENTH DAY, PENTECOSTAL, OR NON-DENOMINATIONAL) Do you consider yourself to be a born-again Christian?

583 Respondents

	Total
Yes	60
No	37
(Don't know/refused)	3

(ref:RELIG2)

Q.81 How often do you attend religious services—more than once a week, every week, once or twice a month, several times a year, or hardly ever?

	Total
More than once a week	14
Every week	27
Once or twice a month	13
Several times a year	13
Hardly ever	27
(Don't know/refused)	7

(ref:RELIG3)

Q.82 (IF REGISTERED) In the 2008 election for president, did you vote for Democrat Barack Obama or Republican John McCain, or did you not vote in the 2008 presidential election?

1267 Respondents

	Total
Democrat Barack Obama	45
Republican John McCain	39
(Other candidate)	1
Did not vote	7
(Don't know/refused)	8

(ref:VOTE08)

Q.83 What racial or ethnic group best describes you?

	Total
White	66
African American or Black	13
Hispanic or Latino	11
Native American	2
Asian	3
(Other)	1
(Don't know/refused)	4

(ref:RACE)

Q.85 Last year, that is in 2008, what was your total family income from all sources, before taxes? Just stop me when I get to the right category.

	Total
Less than \$10K	6
\$10K to under \$20K	9
\$20K to under \$30K	9
\$30K to under \$50K	17
\$50K to under \$75K	17
\$75K to under \$100K	11
\$100K or more	14
(Refused)	14
(Don't know)	4

(ref:INCOME)

Q.3 Respondent's gender

	Total
Male	48
Female	52

(ref:GENDER)

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The Center for American Progress is a nonpartisan research and educational institute dedicated to promoting a strong, just and free America that ensures opportunity for all. We believe that Americans are bound together by a common commitment to these values and we aspire to ensure that our national policies reflect these values.

We work to find progressive and pragmatic solutions to significant domestic and international problems and develop policy proposals that foster a government that is “of the people, by the people, and for the people.”

About the Glaser Progress Foundation

The Progressive Studies Program at CAP is made possible by the generous support and partnership of the Glaser Progress Foundation, created by Rob Glaser, CEO and Chairman of RealNetworks, Inc, and directed by Martin Collier. The foundation is focused on building a more just, sustainable and humane world through its work in four program areas: measuring progress, global HIV/AIDS, independent media and animal advocacy.

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A decorative blue footer at the bottom of the page, featuring a pattern of white stars of varying sizes, reminiscent of the American flag.