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Images of the Parties: A Closer Look

GOP Seen as Principled, But Out of Touch and Too Extreme

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT
THE PEW RESEARCH CENTER FOR THE
PEOPLE & THE PRESS**

Michael Dimock

Director

Carroll Doherty

Associate Director

Rob Suls

Research Associate

1615 L St, N.W., Suite 700
Washington, D.C. 20036
Tel (202) 419-4350
Fax (202) 419-4399
www.peoplepress.org

Images of the Parties: A Closer Look

GOP Seen as Principled, But Out of Touch and Too Extreme

At a time when the Republican Party's image is at a historic low, 62% of the public says the GOP is out of touch with the American people, 56% think it is not open to change and 52% say the party is too extreme.

Opinions about the Democratic Party are mixed, but the party is viewed more positively than the GOP in every dimension tested except one.

Somewhat more say the Republican Party than the Democratic Party has strong principles (63% vs. 57%).

The national survey by the Pew Research Center, conducted Feb. 13-18 among 1,504 adults, comes at a time when Republican leaders are debating the party's future in the wake of Barack Obama's reelection. The Republican Party's image has been hit hard over the past decade. [In January](#), just 33% said they viewed the party favorably, among the lowest marks of the last 20 years. The GOP's favorable rating has not been above 50% since shortly after George W. Bush's reelection in 2004.

An earlier release from the survey by [the Pew Research Center and USA TODAY](#) found that while both party's congressional leaders receive negative job ratings, just 25% approve of the job performance of GOP leaders, compared with 37% approval for Democratic congressional leaders.

The new report finds that while the Democratic Party is viewed more positively on most traits tested, opinion is divided about whether the party is out of touch with the American people: 46% say it is, while 50% it is not. And only somewhat more say the Democratic Party is looking out for the country's future than say that about the Republican Party (51% vs. 45%).

Democrats Viewed as More Open to Change, Less Out of Touch

		Rep Party %	Dem Party %	Gap
Negative phrases				
Out of touch with American people	Yes	62	46	R+16
	No	33	50	
Too extreme	Yes	52	39	R+13
	No	42	56	
Positive phrases				
Open to change	Yes	39	58	D+19
	No	56	38	
Strong principles	Yes	63	57	R+6
	No	30	37	
Looks out for the country's future	Yes	45	51	D+6
	No	50	45	

PEW RESEARCH CENTER Feb. 13-18, 2013. Don't know responses not shown.

Republicans More Critical of Their Party

Republicans are more critical of their party than Democrats are of theirs on most issues. For example, 36% of Republicans say the GOP is out of touch with the American people. Just 23% of Democrats say their party is out of touch. And while 30% of Republicans say their party is not open to change, just 10% of Democrats make the same criticism of their party.

However, Republicans overwhelmingly credit their party for having strong principles; 85% say the GOP has strong principles while 13% say it does not. And 80% of Republicans say their party is looking out for the country's long-term future.

The GOP also gets high marks from independents and Democrats for having strong principles. Fully 62% of independents say the Republican Party has strong principles, the most positive measure for any party trait tested. Even about half of Democrats (52%) say the Republican Party has strong principles.

Partisan views about whether the Republican Party is too extreme are mirror images: 78% of Republicans say the GOP is not too extreme, while 19% say it is; 78% of Democrats view the Republican Party as too extreme while 19% disagree.

A Third of Republicans Say GOP Is Out of Touch

<i>Describes the Republican Party ...</i>		Total %	<i>The views of ...</i>		
			Rep %	Ind %	Dem %
Negative phrases					
Out of touch with American people	Yes	62	36	65	77
	No	33	62	29	21
Too extreme	Yes	52	19	51	78
	No	42	78	43	19
Positive phrases					
Open to change	Yes	39	67	39	22
	No	56	30	57	75
Strong principles	Yes	63	85	62	52
	No	30	13	31	42
Looks out for country's future	Yes	45	80	43	26
	No	50	19	51	71

PEW RESEARCH CENTER Feb. 13-18, 2013. Don't know responses not shown.

Democrats Highly Positive about Their Party

<i>Describes the Democratic Party ...</i>		Total %	<i>The views of ...</i>		
			Dem %	Ind %	Rep %
Negative phrases					
Out of touch with American people	Yes	46	23	51	72
	No	50	76	44	27
Too extreme	Yes	39	15	40	72
	No	56	82	54	26
Positive phrases					
Open to change	Yes	58	87	54	27
	No	38	10	42	72
Strong principles	Yes	57	81	53	32
	No	37	16	41	64
Looks out for country's future	Yes	51	86	45	14
	No	45	11	51	84

PEW RESEARCH CENTER Feb. 13-18, 2013. Don't know responses not shown.

Democrats express highly positive views of their party across-the-board, while Republicans' opinions about the Democratic Party are uniformly negative. At least 80% of Democrats evaluate their party positively on every trait except one, being out of touch with the American people. Even there, 76% of Democrats say their party is not out of touch, while just 23% say it is.

Far more independents say the Democratic Party is open to change than say that about the Republican Party (54% vs. 39%). The gap is roughly the same in independents' views about whether the parties are out of touch (65% Republican vs. 51% Democratic) and too extreme (51% vs. 40%).

However, independents are divided over whether the Democratic Party looks out for the country's future: 45% say it does and 51% say it does not. Independents have similar views about whether the Republican Party looks out for the future (43% yes, 51% no).

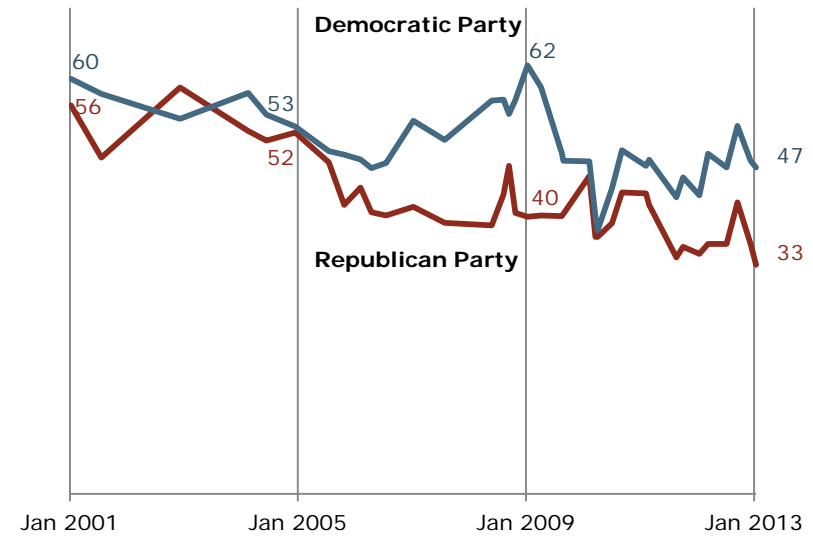
About a quarter of independents (27%) say that neither party is looking out for the country's future. An even higher percentage of independents (37%) say that both parties are out of touch with the American people.

Overall Views of Parties

The Republican Party's overall image stands at one of the lowest points in nearly two decades. And, while impressions of the Democratic Party are much stronger, they are far below where they were four years ago.

In January, 33% of the public had a favorable view of the GOP, compared with 58% who held an unfavorable impression of the party. Among Republicans themselves, 69% had a favorable impression, down from a recent high of 89% reported after the GOP convention. Majorities of both Democrats and independents viewed the Republican Party unfavorably (83% and 58%, respectively).

Democratic Party Viewed More Favorably



PEW RESEARCH CENTER Jan. 9-13, 2013.

Views of the Democratic Party were evenly divided in January: 47% favorable, 46% unfavorable. Among Democrats, 87% had a favorable impression of their party while roughly the same percentage of Republicans held an unfavorable view (84%). Independents, on balance, had more unfavorable impressions of the Democratic Party (52%) than favorable ones (37%).

About the Survey

The analysis in this report is based on telephone interviews conducted February 13-18, 2013 among a national sample of 1,504 adults, 18 years of age or older, living in all 50 U.S. states and the District of Columbia (752 respondents were interviewed on a landline telephone, and 752 were interviewed on a cell phone, including 364 who had no landline telephone). The survey was conducted by interviewers at Princeton Data Source under the direction of Princeton Survey Research Associates International. A combination of landline and cell phone random digit dial samples were used; both samples were provided by Survey Sampling International. Interviews were conducted in English and Spanish. Respondents in the landline sample were selected by randomly asking for the youngest adult male or female who is now at home. Interviews in the cell sample were conducted with the person who answered the phone, if that person was an adult 18 years of age or older. For detailed information about our survey methodology, see <http://people-press.org/methodology/>

The combined landline and cell phone sample are weighted using an iterative technique that matches gender, age, education, race, Hispanic origin and nativity and region to parameters from the 2011 Census Bureau's American Community Survey and population density to parameters from the Decennial Census. The sample also is weighted to match current patterns of telephone status and relative usage of landline and cell phones (for those with both), based on extrapolations from the 2012 National Health Interview Survey. The weighting procedure also accounts for the fact that respondents with both landline and cell phones have a greater probability of being included in the combined sample and adjusts for household size among respondents with a landline phone. Sampling errors and statistical tests of significance take into account the effect of weighting. The following table shows the unweighted sample sizes and the error attributable to sampling that would be expected at the 95% level of confidence for different groups in the survey:

Group	Unweighted sample size	Plus or minus...
Total sample	1,504	2.9 percentage points
Republicans	366	6.0 percentage points
Democrats	470	5.3 percentage points
Independents	604	4.6 percentage points

Sample sizes and sampling errors for other subgroups are available upon request.

In addition to sampling error, one should bear in mind that question wording and practical difficulties in conducting surveys can introduce error or bias into the findings of opinion polls.

PEW RESEARCH CENTER FOR THE PEOPLE & THE PRESS
FEBRUARY 2013 POLITICAL SURVEY
FINAL TOPLINE
February 13-18, 2013
N=1,504

QUESTIONS 1-4, 7-8, 10-12, 15-20, 28 PREVIOUSLY RELEASED
NO QUESTIONS 5-6, 9, 13-14, 21, 24-27
QUESTIONS 22-23, HELD FOR FUTURE RELEASE
NO QUESTIONS 24-27, 29-37

RANDOMIZE Q.38 AND Q.39

ASK ALL:

Now I have a few questions about the political parties... [First]

Q.38 The Republican Party. Do you think the Republican Party **[FIRST ITEM]** or not?

		<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>	(VOL.) <u>DK/Ref</u>
a.	Is out of touch with the American people Feb 13-18, 2013	62	33	4
	TREND FOR COMPARISON <i>Please tell me whether you think each of the following descriptions applies or does not apply to the Republican Party ... out of touch with the American people</i> CNN/Gallup: February, 1999	60	38	2
b.	Is too extreme Feb 13-18, 2013	52	42	5
	TREND FOR COMPARISON <i>Please tell me whether you think each of the following descriptions applies or does not apply to the Republican Party ... too extreme</i> CNN/Gallup: February, 1999	56	42	3
c.	Is open to change Feb 13-18, 2013	39	56	5
d.	Has strong principles Feb 13-18, 2013	63	30	7
e.	Is looking out for the country's long-term future Feb 13-18, 2013	45	50	5

RANDOMIZE Q.38 AND Q.39

ASK ALL:

[Now thinking about...]

Q.39 The Democratic Party. Do you think the Democratic Party **[FIRST ITEM]** or not?

		<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>	(VOL.) <u>DK/Ref</u>
a.	Is out of touch with the American people Feb 13-18, 2013	46	50	5
	TREND FOR COMPARISON <i>Please tell me whether you think each of the following descriptions applies or does not apply to the Democratic Party ... out of touch with the American people</i> CNN/Gallup: February, 1999	41	57	2

Q.39 CONTINUED...

	<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>	<u>(VOL.) DK/Ref</u>
b. Is too extreme Feb 13-18, 2013	39	56	6
TREND FOR COMPARISON			
<i>Please tell me whether you think each of the following descriptions applies or does not apply to the Democratic Party ... too extreme</i>			
<i>CNN/Gallup: February, 1999</i>	39	57	3
c. Is open to change Feb 13-18, 2013	58	38	4
d. Has strong principles Feb 13-18, 2013	57	37	6
e. Is looking out for the country's long-term future Feb 13-18, 2013	51	45	4

QUESTIONS 40-42, 61-64 PREVIOUSLY RELEASED

NO QUESTIONS 43-47, 55-60

QUESTIONS 48-54 HELD FOR FUTURE RELEASE

ASK ALL:

PARTY In politics TODAY, do you consider yourself a Republican, Democrat, or independent?

ASK IF INDEP/NO PREF/OTHER/DK/REF (PARTY=3,4,5,9):

PARTYLN As of today do you lean more to the Republican Party or more to the Democratic Party?

	<u>Republican</u>	<u>Democrat</u>	<u>Independent</u>	<u>(VOL.) No preference</u>	<u>(VOL.) Other party</u>	<u>(VOL.) DK/Ref</u>	<u>Lean Rep</u>	<u>Lean Dem</u>
Feb. 13-18, 2013	22	32	41	2	*	2	15	19
Jan 9-13, 2013	25	32	38	2	*	2	15	16
Dec 17-19, 2012	21	32	38	4	*	4	15	14
Dec 5-9, 2012	23	33	38	3	1	2	14	19
Oct 31-Nov 3, 2012	26	34	34	3	1	3	13	16
Oct 24-28, 2012	28	33	33	4	*	2	12	16
Oct 4-7, 2012	27	31	36	3	1	3	15	15
Sep 12-16, 2012	24	35	36	2	*	2	14	16
Jul 16-26, 2012	22	33	38	4	*	3	14	15
Jun 28-Jul 9, 2012	24	33	37	3	*	3	15	17
Jun 7-17, 2012	24	33	39	2	*	2	17	17
May 9-Jun 3, 2012	24	32	36	4	*	4	13	14
Apr 4-15, 2012	24	31	39	3	*	2	15	15
Mar 7-11, 2012	24	34	36	3	1	2	16	17
Feb 8-12, 2012	26	32	36	4	1	2	13	17
Yearly Totals								
2012	24.7	32.6	36.4	3.1	.5	2.7	14.4	16.1
2011	24.3	32.3	37.4	3.1	.4	2.5	15.7	15.6
2010	25.2	32.7	35.2	3.6	.4	2.8	14.5	14.1
2009	23.9	34.4	35.1	3.4	.4	2.8	13.1	15.7
2008	25.7	36.0	31.5	3.6	.3	3.0	10.6	15.2
2007	25.3	32.9	34.1	4.3	.4	2.9	10.9	17.0
2006	27.8	33.1	30.9	4.4	.3	3.4	10.5	15.1
2005	29.3	32.8	30.2	4.5	.3	2.8	10.3	14.9
2004	30.0	33.5	29.5	3.8	.4	3.0	11.7	13.4
2003	30.3	31.5	30.5	4.8	.5	2.5	12.0	12.6
2002	30.4	31.4	29.8	5.0	.7	2.7	12.4	11.6
2001	29.0	33.2	29.5	5.2	.6	2.6	11.9	11.6
2001 Post-Sept 11	30.9	31.8	27.9	5.2	.6	3.6	11.7	9.4
2001 Pre-Sept 11	27.3	34.4	30.9	5.1	.6	1.7	12.1	13.5

PARTY/PARTYLN CONTINUED...

				(VOL.)	(VOL.)	(VOL.)	Lean	Lean
	Republican	Democrat	Independent	No preference	Other party	DK/Ref	Rep	Dem
2000	28.0	33.4	29.1	5.5	.5	3.6	11.6	11.7
1999	26.6	33.5	33.7	3.9	.5	1.9	13.0	14.5
1998	27.9	33.7	31.1	4.6	.4	2.3	11.6	13.1
1997	28.0	33.4	32.0	4.0	.4	2.3	12.2	14.1
1996	28.9	33.9	31.8	3.0	.4	2.0	12.1	14.9
1995	31.6	30.0	33.7	2.4	.6	1.3	15.1	13.5
1994	30.1	31.5	33.5	1.3	--	3.6	13.7	12.2
1993	27.4	33.6	34.2	4.4	1.5	2.9	11.5	14.9
1992	27.6	33.7	34.7	1.5	0	2.5	12.6	16.5
1991	30.9	31.4	33.2	0	1.4	3.0	14.7	10.8
1990	30.9	33.2	29.3	1.2	1.9	3.4	12.4	11.3
1989	33	33	34	--	--	--	--	--
1987	26	35	39	--	--	--	--	--

ASK REPUBLICANS AND REPUBLICAN LEANERS ONLY (PARTY=1 OR PARTYLN=1) [N=610]:

TEAPARTY3 From what you know, do you agree or disagree with the Tea Party movement, or don't you have an opinion either way?

Feb 13-18		Jan 9-13
<u>2013</u>		<u>2013</u>
36	Agree	35
9	Disagree	10
52	No opinion either way	51
1	Haven't heard of (VOL.)	2
3	Refused (VOL.)	2