



CBS NEWS/NEW YORK TIMES POLL
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AMERICAN PUBLIC OPINION: TODAY VS. 30 YEARS AGO
January 11-15, 2009

As *CBS News Sunday Morning* commemorates its 30th anniversary, this poll examines Americans' views on some key issues today compared to three decades ago when the program first aired.

OPTIMISM AND THE FUTURE

Americans are generally more optimistic about the future than they were in 1979. Two thirds of Americans now think the future will get better for people generally, whereas they were divided thirty years ago. (This poll was conducted just before Barack Obama assumed the presidency, at a point when Americans were particularly optimistic about his presidency.)

IN THE FUTURE, LIFE WILL BE..

	CBS/NYT	CBS/NYT
	Now	1/1979
Better for people generally	61%	46%
Worse for people generally	31	46

THE STANDING OF THE U.S. IN THE WORLD

As they did in 1979, most Americans think the U.S. has gotten less powerful as a world leader in the preceding 10 years. Compared to 1979, fewer Americans think the U.S. has gotten more powerful.

HOW POWERFUL IS THE U.S. COMPARED TO 10 YEARS AGO?

	CBS/NYT	CBS/NYT
	Now	2/1979
More powerful	12%	19%
Less powerful	55	53
As powerful	31	23

DOMESTIC V. FOREIGN CARS

Americans are far more critical of the quality of domestic cars than they were thirty years ago. In 1979 more Americans thought U.S. automakers built better cars, but today most give the nod to foreign car manufacturers.

WHO MAKES BETTER CARS?

	CBS/NYT	CBS/NYT
	Now	1/1979*
U.S. automakers	29%	46%
Foreign automakers	55	26

* Conducted by Cambridge Reports/Research International

HOMOSEXUALITY

Public opinion on homosexual relations has changed over the years. In 1978, a Gallup Poll found that 62% of Americans thought homosexual relations between consenting results was wrong. Today, according to a CBS News/New York Times Poll, most Americans (54%) think homosexual relations between adults are not wrong.

HOMOSEXUAL RELATIONS BETWEEN ADULTS

	CBS/NYT	Gallup
	Now	11/1978
Wrong	41%	62%
Not wrong	54	25

PREMARITAL SEX

However, views on premarital sex have changed little in 30 years. A majority of Americans (60%) continue to think sexual relations between a man and a woman before marriage is okay. Today, 32% say such relations are wrong, compared to 37% who thought so in 1979.

SEXUAL RELATIONS BEFORE MARRIAGE

	CBS/NYT	CBS/NYT
	Now	7/1979
Wrong	32%	37%
Not wrong	60	56

51% of older Americans, age 65 and over, think premarital sex is wrong - the only age group in which more people hold that opinion.

LEGALIZING MARIJUANA

Like 30 years ago, a majority of Americans do not think the use of marijuana should be made legal, but the percentage that thinks it should be has grown. Now, 41% of Americans support legalizing marijuana use, compared to just 27% who felt that way in 1979.

SHOULD MARIJUANA USE BE LEGALIZED?

	CBS/NYT	CBS/NYT
	Now	7/1979
Yes	41%	27%
No	52	69

There is a huge generation gap on this issue. More adults under 45 (49%) approve of legalizing marijuana use than oppose (45%), while just 31% of adults over age 45 approve of it; six in 10 are opposed.

ABORTION

Opinions on the issue of abortion have not changed much over the years. According to a May 2008 Gallup Poll, 54% of Americans think abortion should be legal under certain circumstances - the same number who said that in 1979. About a quarter thinks abortion should be legal in all circumstances. Another 17% think abortion should be illegal.

IEWS ON ABORTION

	Gallup 5/2008	Gallup 2/1979
Legal under any circumstances	28%	22%
Legal under certain circumstances	54	54
Illegal in all	17	19

MEN AND WOMEN: WHO HAS THE ADVANTAGE?

Women still think there are more advantages to being a man than a woman - similar to their views 30 years ago. But men's views on this have changed. Fewer men now think there are more advantages in being a man, and more think it doesn't matter.

MORE ADVANTAGES IN BEING A MAN OR A WOMAN?

2009: CBS/NY Times Poll; 1979: ROPER

	Men		Women	
	Now	1979	Now	1979
Man	32%	44%	48%	43%
Woman	9	11	4	9
Doesn't matter	58	45	46	46

WOMEN IN THE WORKPLACE

Thirty years ago, slightly more women preferred to stay home and take care of their house and family to having a job outside the home, and little has changed today. Although now more closely divided, slightly more women today still would rather stay home than have a job outside the home.

WOULD YOU PREFER TO HAVE A JOB OUTSIDE THE HOME?

(Among women)

	Now	10/1979*
Yes	48%	46%
No	50	51

* Virginia Slims Women Poll (Roper)

NEWS SOURCES

Today, most Americans (60%) say they get most of their news from television, with newspapers a distant second (14%), followed closely by the internet (13%), and radio (7%). Thirty years ago, a Los Angeles Times Poll found Americans were equally as likely to get most of their news from newspapers (42%) as television (41%). The internet was not available as a choice in the 1979 poll.

WHERE DO YOU GET YOUR NEWS?

	CBS/NYT	L.A. Times Poll
	Now	12/1979
Television	60%	41%
Newspapers	14	42
Internet	13	n/a
Radio	7	11
Magazines	1	2
Talking to people	4	3

HEALTH INSURANCE

Americans are more likely today to embrace the idea of the government providing health insurance than they were 30 years ago. 59% say the government should provide national health insurance, including 49% who say such insurance should cover all medical problems.

In January 1979, four in 10 thought the federal government should provide national insurance. Back then, more Americans thought health insurance should be left to private enterprise.

HEALTH INSURANCE: PRIVATE ENTERPRISE VS. GOVERNMENT?

	CBS/NYT	CBS/NYT
	Now	1/1979
Private enterprise	32%	48%
Government - all problems	49	28
Government - emergencies	10	12
Don't know	9	12

NUCLEAR POWER

In July 2008, a CBS News/New York Times Poll found that 57% of Americans approved of building more nuclear plants in order to generate electricity. This is a higher percentage than in April 1979, shortly after the nuclear accidents at the Three Mile Island power plant in Pennsylvania.

BUILDING MORE NUCLEAR POWER PLANTS

	CBS/NYT	CBS/NYT	CBS/NYT
	7/2008	4/1979	7/1977
Approve	57%	46%	69%
Disapprove	34	41	21

RELIGIOUS SERVICE ATTENDANCE

Americans are as just as religious - if not more religious - than they were thirty years ago, at least if church or religious service attendance is any indication. Today 35% of Americans say they attend religious service at least once a week, up from 28% who said so back in 1978. About a quarter say they attend religious service less than a few times a year - about the same percentage who said so back then.

HOW OFTEN DO YOU ATTEND RELIGIOUS SERVICE?

	CBS/NYT	GSS
	Now	2/1978
Once a week or more	35%	28%
Nearly every week	11	7
Once or twice a month	14	16
A few times a year	25	24
Less than that or never	23	25

This poll was conducted among a random sample of 1,112 adults nationwide, interviewed by telephone January 11-15, 2009. Phone numbers were dialed from RDD samples of both standard land-lines and cell phones. The error due to sampling for results based on the entire sample could be plus or minus three percentage points. The error for subgroups is higher.

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q6 As you look to the future, do you think life for people generally will get better, or will it get worse?

	**** TOTAL RESPONDENTS ****			1/1979
	Total %	Men %	Women %	%
Better	61	62	61	46
Worse	31	29	33	46
Same (Vol.)	3	4	2	3
Don't know/No answer	5	5	4	6

q87 Now, if you were free to do either, would you prefer to have a job outside the home, or would you prefer to stay home and take care of a house and family?

	Total	Men	Women	Among Women
				10/1979*
Prefer to have a job	59	71	48	46
Prefer to stay home	38	25	50	51
DK/NA	3	4	2	3

*Virginia Slims Women Poll

q88 Do you think that the use of marijuana should be made legal or not?

	Total	Men	Women	7/1979
Legal	41	46	36	27
Not legal	52	46	58	69
DK/NA	7	8	6	4

q89 Generally speaking, do you think U.S. automakers or foreign automakers produce better-quality cars?

	Total	Men	Women	1/1979*
U.S. automakers	29	26	31	46
Foreign automakers	55	54	56	26
Both (vol.)	8	10	5	15
Don't know/No Opinion	8	10	8	13

*Cambridge Reports/Research International

q90 Do you think the United States is more powerful, less powerful, or about as powerful a world leader today as it was 10 years ago?

	Total	Men	Women	2/1979
More powerful	12	15	10	19
Less powerful	55	49	61	53
As powerful	31	35	28	23
DK/NA	2	1	1	5

q91 Where do you get most of your news about what's going on in the world today -- from newspapers, radio, television, the internet, magazines, or talking to people?

**** TOTAL RESPONDENTS ****

	Total	Men	Women	12/1979*
	%	%	%	%
Newspapers	14	16	13	42
Radio	7	9	5	11
Television	60	50	69	n/a
Internet	13	18	9	41
Magazines	1	1	0	2
Talking to people	4	6	3	3
No opinion	1	0	1	1

*Los Angeles Times Poll

q92 Should the government in Washington provide national health insurance, or is this something that should be left only to private enterprise? IF GOVERNMENT, ASK: Should the government insurance be for all medical problems, or only for medical emergencies?

				1/1979
Private enterprise	32	35	31	48
Gov't - All problems	49	44	53	28
Gov't - Emergencies	10	13	7	12
Don't know/No opinion	9	8	9	12

q93 All things considered, in our society today, do you think there are more advantages in being a man, or more advantages in being a woman, or that there are no more advantages in being one than the other?

				10/1979*	
				Men	Women
				%	%
Advantages in being a man	40	32	48	44	43
Advantages is being a woman	6	9	4	11	9
No more advantages	52	58	46	45	46
DK/NA	2	1	2	1	2

*Virginia Slims/Roper Poll

q94 There's been a lot of discussion about the way morals and sex are changing in this country. What is your view on this - do you think it is wrong for a man and woman to have sexual relations before marriage, or not?

				7/1979
Wrong	32	31	34	37
Not wrong	60	64	57	56
DK/NA	8	5	9	7

q95 Do you think homosexual relations between consenting adults is wrong, or not?

**** TOTAL RESPONDENTS ****

	Total	Men	Women	11/1978*
	%	%	%	%
Yes	41	47	35	62
No	54	50	57	25
DK/NA	5	3	8	13

*Gallup Poll

	<u>UNWEIGHTED</u>	<u>WEIGHTED</u>
Total Respondents	1112	
Total Men	468	534
Total Women	644	578