



# Political Culture

CH. 4

# Tocqueville



- Reasons why democracy could take root in the U.S.
  - No feudal aristocracy, low taxes, no red-tape
  - Vast territory for expansion
  - Small, independent farmers
  - Moral and intellectual characteristics (political culture)

# Political Culture



- Defined: Distinctive and patterned method of thinking about how political and economic life should be carried out (govt. should operate)
  - Ex: Americans believe in political, not economic equality



**Table 4.3** Attitudes toward Economic Equality in America and Europe

Statement	Percentage Agreeing				
	U.S.	Great Britain	Germany	Italy	France
It is government's responsibility to take care of the very poor who can't take care of themselves.	23%	62%	50%	66%	62%
Hard work guarantees success.	63	46	38	51	46
Government should <i>not</i> guarantee every citizen food and basic shelter.	34	9	13	14	10

Source: Adapted from *The Public Perspective* (November/December 1991): 5, 7. © *The Public Perspective*, a publication of the Roper Center for Public Opinion Research, University of Connecticut, Storrs. Reprinted with permission.

# Elements of the American Political System



- Liberty (rights)
- Equality (political, not economic\*)
- Democracy (govt. is accountable to the people)
- Civic duty
- Individual responsibility

# Questions About U.S. Political Culture



- How do we know people share these beliefs?
- How do we explain behavior inconsistent with these beliefs?
- Why is there so much political conflict in U.S. History?
  - Use of the term “Un-American”

# The Economic System



- Americans support “free enterprise”
- Americans believe in equality of opportunity, but not the result
- Shared commitment to economic individualism

# Comparing America with Other Nations



- Swedes: well-developed democracy
  - Defer decision to the govt. (rarely challenged)
  - Believe in “what is best” not “what people want”
  - Equality is greater than liberty
- Japanese
  - Emphasize group decisions
  - Respect hierarchy



# Americans Compared to Europeans



- Americans lag in voting rates
- Americans have more confidence in govt.
- Americans are more patriotic (i.e., “proud” and “willing to fight” for govt.)
- Americans accept income inequality
- Americans are more religious – use pulpit to promote political change

# Sources of Political Culture



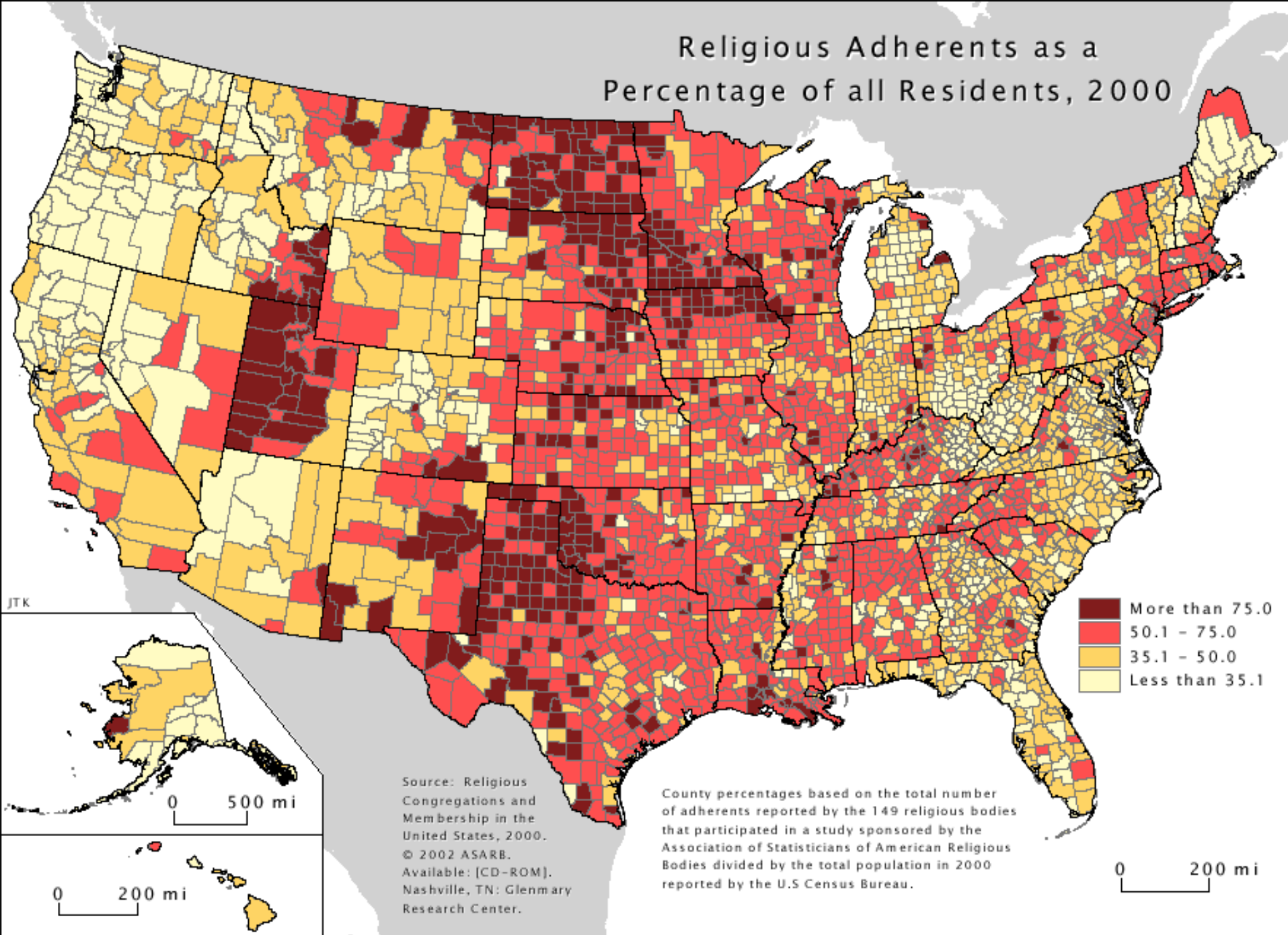
- Historical Roots
  - American Revolution
  - Constitution – reconcile personal liberty with social control
  - Long-standing distrust of authority – human nature is depraved (born sinners)
  - Jeffersonian transition in 1800 – need and suspicion for government
    - ✦ Legitimated role of opposition party

# Legal-Sociological Factors



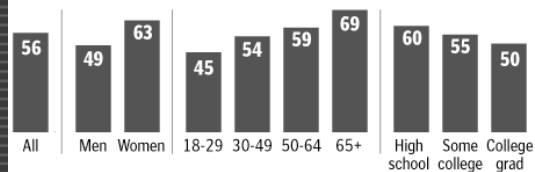
- Widespread participation permitted by Const.
- Absence of established national religion
  - Puritan heritage: work, save money, obey laws, do good works (Protestant ethic)
- Role of the family in thoughts on world and politics
- Absence of a high degree of class consciousness – middle class

# Religious Adherents as a Percentage of all Residents, 2000



## RELIGIOUS PRACTICE

Percent of Americans saying religion is very important:



Attend religious services at least once a week:



Pray at least once a day outside religious services:



Pray or read scripture with their children:

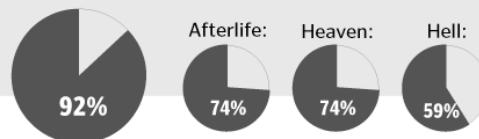


Speak or pray in tongues at least occasionally:



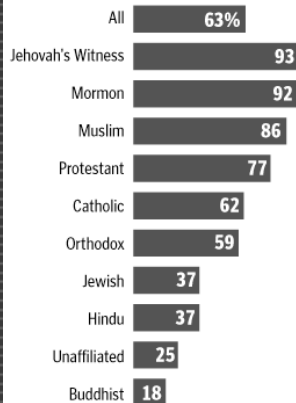
## Percent who believe in . . .

God or a universal spirit:

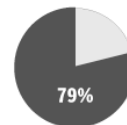


## MORE BELIEFS

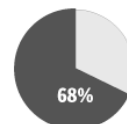
Percent saying their holy book is the word of God:



Percent saying they believe in miracles

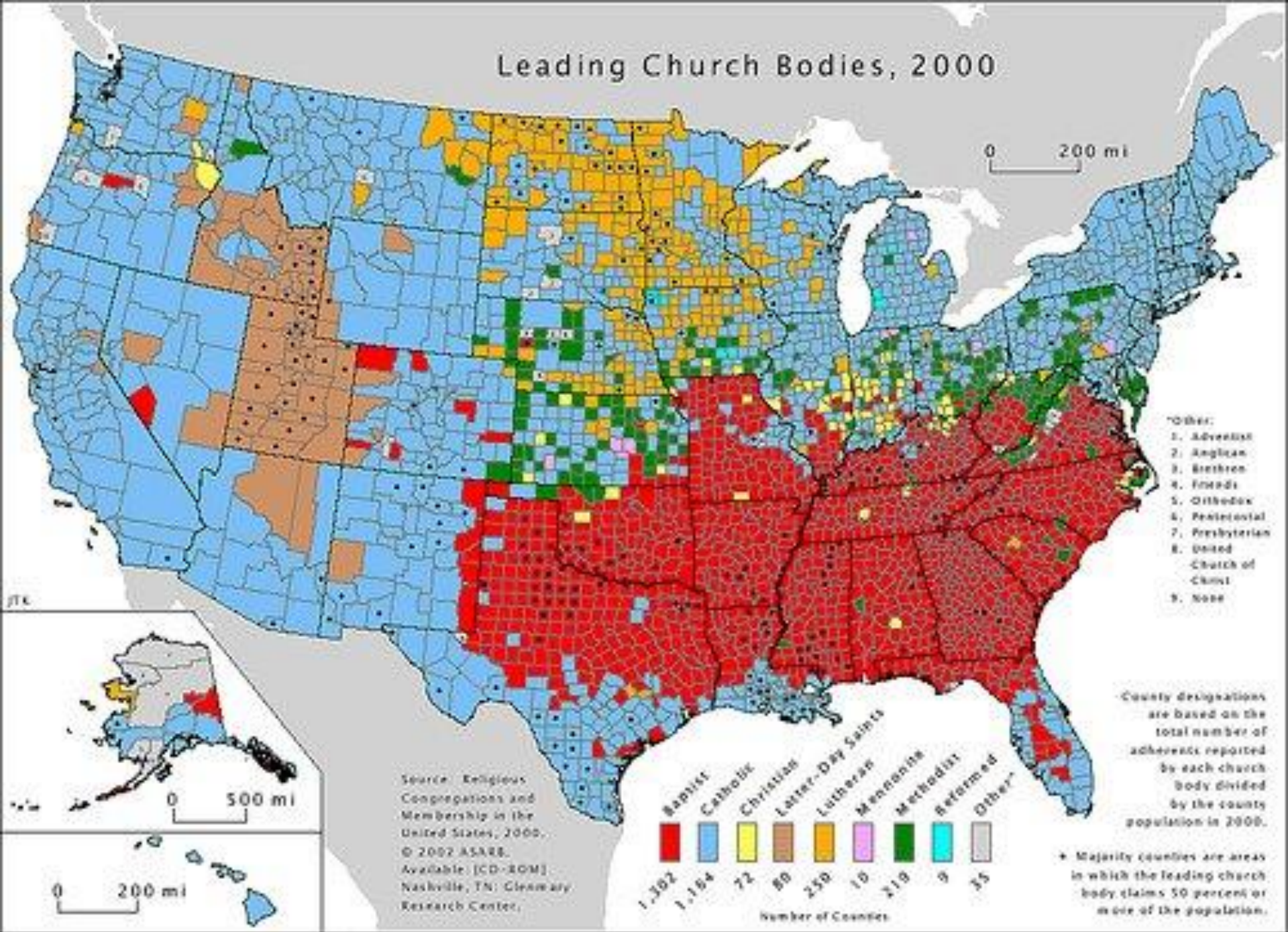


Percent saying they believe in angels/demons



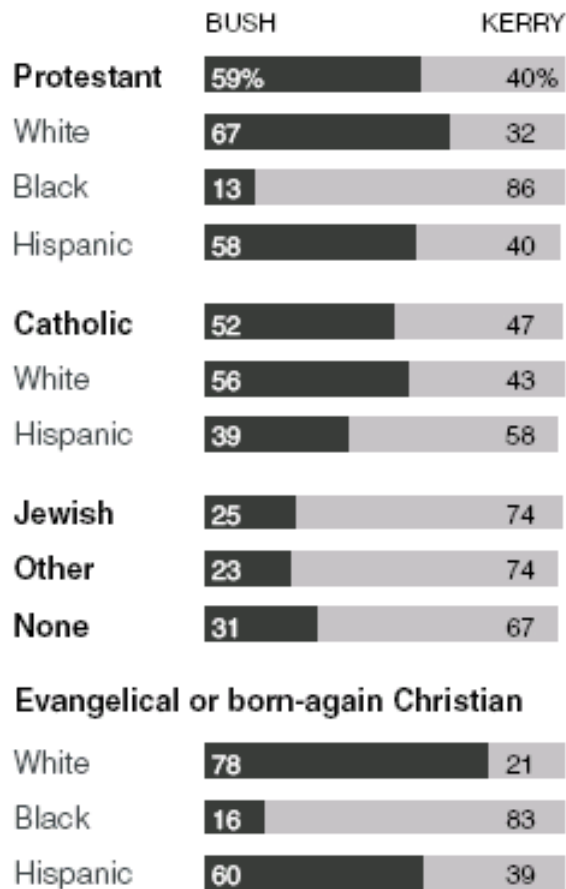


# Leading Church Bodies, 2000



## Voters and Religion

How people of various faiths voted, according to a survey of voters leaving polling places throughout the country on Election Day.



Source: Edison Media Research/  
Mitofsky International







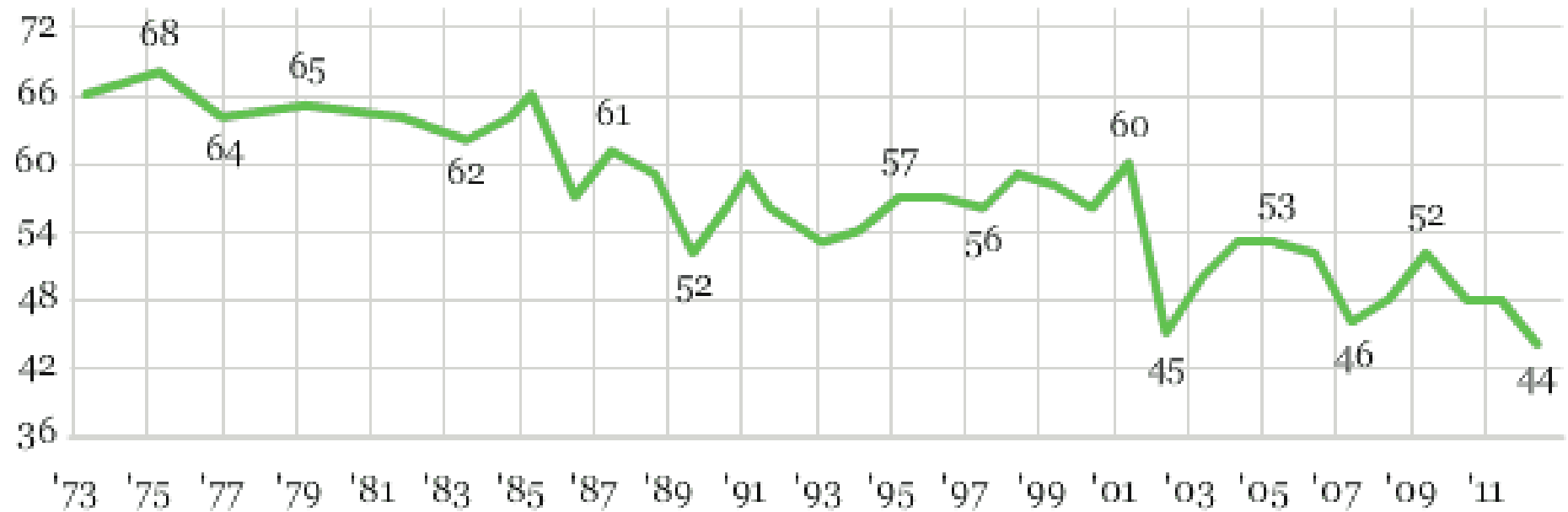
# The Culture War



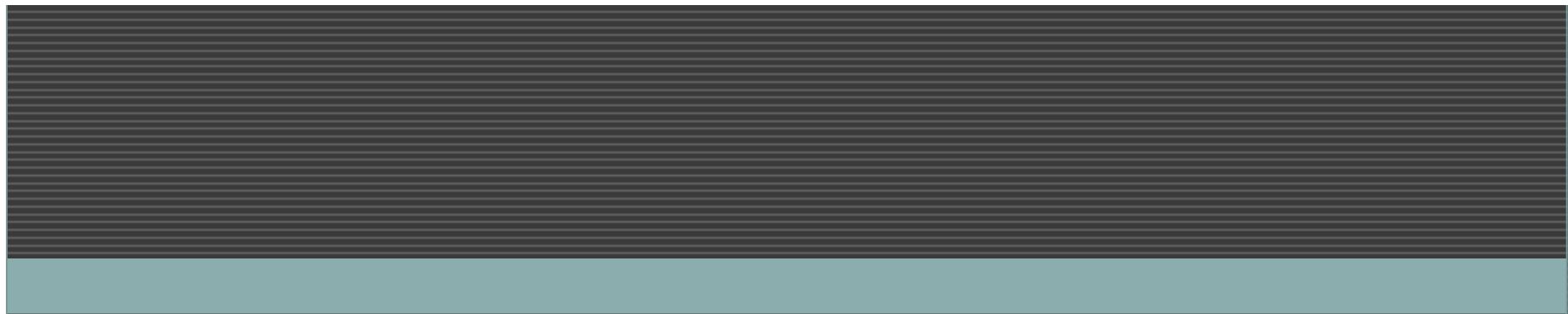
- Battle over values – private and public morality
- Two Camps:
  - Orthodox: morality derived from God
  - Progressive: personal freedom (current trend)

## *"Great Deal"/"Quite a Lot" of Confidence in the Church/Organized Religion*

Now I am going to read you a list of institutions in American society. Please tell me how much confidence you, yourself, have in each one -- a great deal, quite a lot, some, or very little?



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## *Voting Patterns by Marital Status*

Likely voters, Gallup final surveys, 1996-2008

	<b>Republican nominee</b>	<b>Democratic nominee</b>
	<b>%</b>	<b>%</b>
<b>Married</b>		
2012 <sup>^</sup>	54	39
2008	56	44
2004	60	40
2000	57	40
1996	46	44
<b>Not married</b>		
2012 <sup>^</sup>	35	56
2008	35	65
2004	40	60
2000	36	59
1996	30	57

<sup>^</sup> Registered voters, Gallup Daily tracking, June 1-Aug. 31, 2012

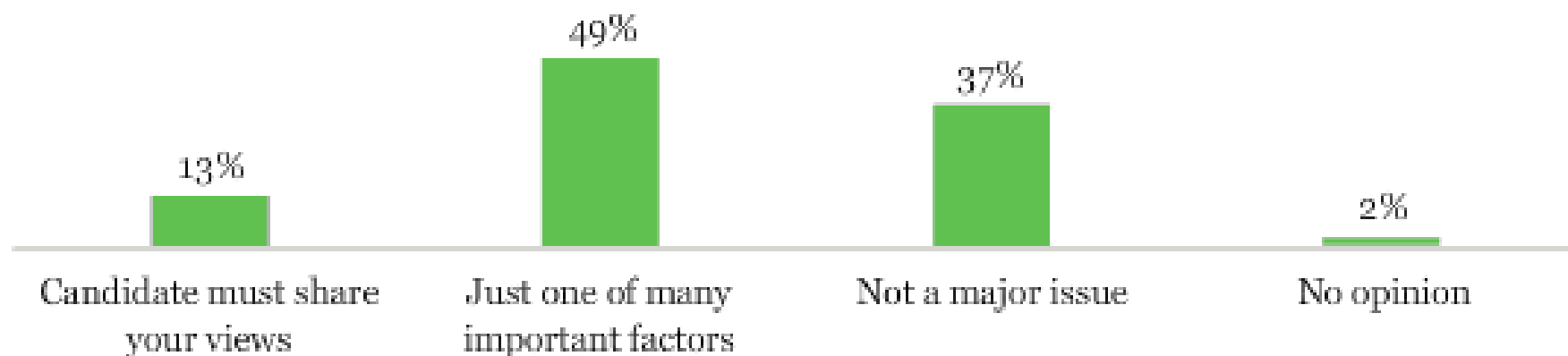
## *Obama vs. Romney, by Religion*

	<b>Barack Obama</b>	<b>Mitt Romney</b>
Protestant/Other Christian	40%	53%
Catholic	47%	46%
Mormon	13%	84%
Jewish	70%	27%
Other non-Christian religion	72%	19%
None/Atheist/Agnostic	69%	23%
All registered voters	47%	46%

Aug. 1-Sept. 16, 2012

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*Thinking about how the abortion issue might affect your vote for major offices, would you -- [only vote for a candidate who shares your views on abortion (or) consider a candidate's position on abortion as just one of many important factors (or) not see abortion as a major issue]?*



May 8-11, 2008

GALLUP POLL

# Same-Sex Marriage, State by State

Forty-one states have banned same-sex marriage.

## OUTLAWING SAME-SEX MARRIAGE

-  Laws banning same-sex marriage
-  Constitutional amendments banning same-sex marriage
-  States with both laws and constitutional amendments
-  No law or amendment



Source: Lambda Legal

## LEGALLY RECOGNIZING SAME-SEX RELATIONSHIPS

**Marriage** MASSACHUSETTS 

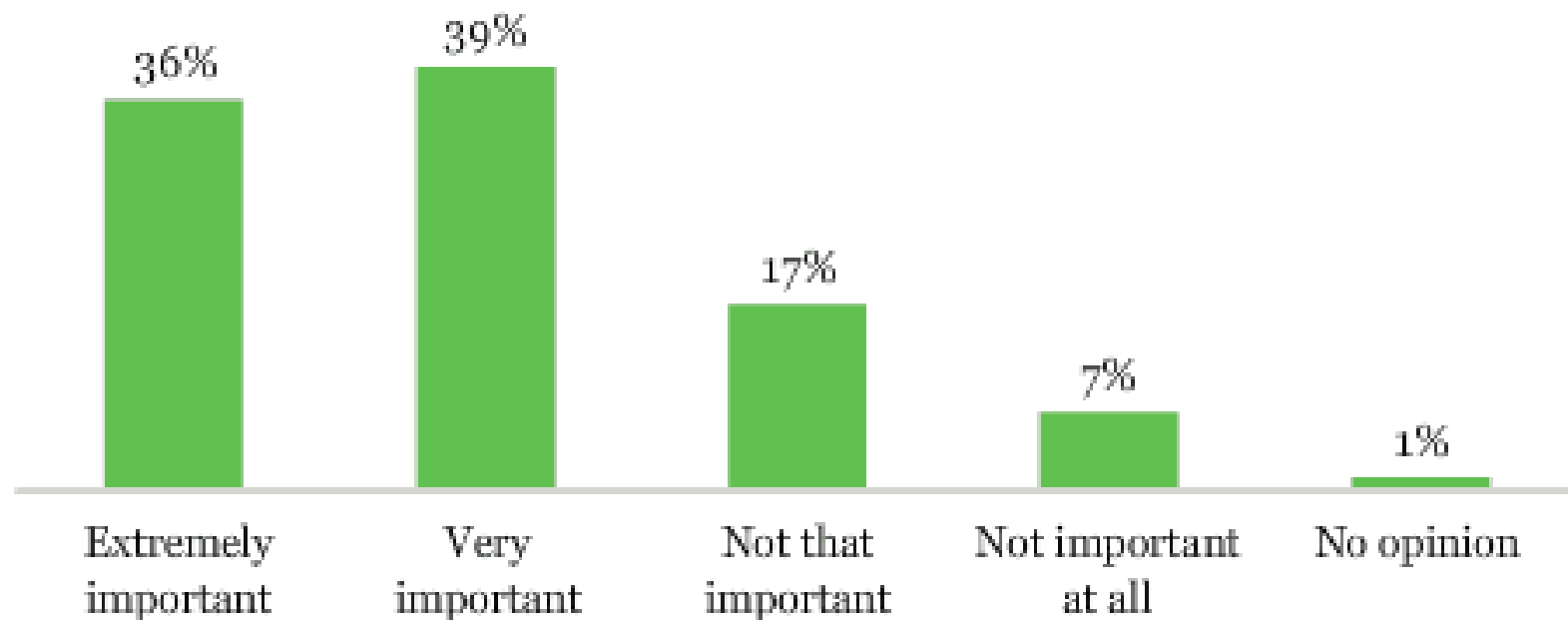
**Civil unions (granting similar rights as marriage)** VERMONT 

**Domestic partnerships (granting fewer rights than civil unions)** CALIFORNIA   
DELAWARE 

MAINE  NEW JERSEY  HAWAII 

also: WASHINGTON, D.C.

*Please tell me how important the presidential candidates' positions on the issue of family values will be in determining your vote for president next year -- will it be -- extremely important, very important, not that important, or not important at all?*



Nov. 2-4, 2007

GALLUP POLL

*When you hear the words "family values" in the context of a political campaign what do you think about? [OPEN-ENDED]*

**2007 Nov 2-4**

Family unit/Family structure/Strong families	32
Political ploy/Way to win votes/Phony issue	12
Healthcare/Health insurance	11
Morals/Morality	10
Abortion	10
Education	7
Religion/Christianity	7
Honesty/Integrity	4
Marriage	4
Gay marriage/Gay and lesbian issues	4
Taxes	2
Other	15
Nothing (vol.)	3
No opinion	8

(vol.) = Volunteered response

NOTE: Percentages add to more than 100% due to multiple responses.

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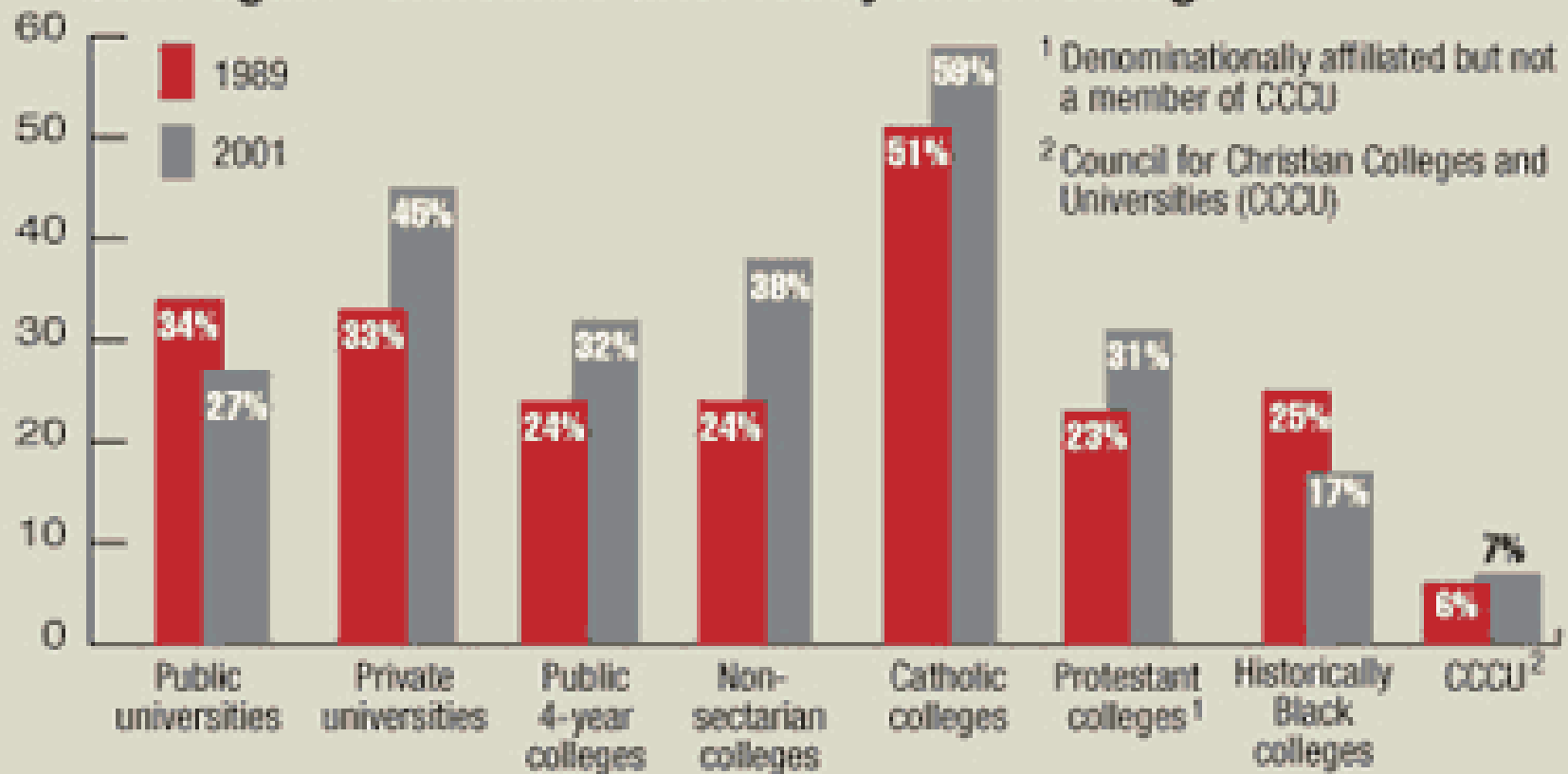


*Do you think the Republican Party or the Democratic Party would do a better job of dealing with each of the following issues and problems?*

	<b>Republican Party</b>	<b>Democratic Party</b>	<b>Party advantage</b>
	%	%	pct. pts.
Healthcare policy	29	59	Dem +30
The housing market	33	48	Dem +15
Protecting Americans' rights and freedoms	36	49	Dem +13
Corruption in government	29	42	Dem +13
The economy	38	50	Dem +12
The situation in Iraq	38	48	Dem +10
Taxes	42	44	Dem +2
Moral values	43	39	Rep +4
Illegal immigration	44	37	Rep +7
Terrorism	48	38	Rep +10

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## Percentage of students who said they were no longer "born-again" Christians after four years in college



Source: *University of Destruction* by David Wheaton; research by Dr. Gary Rallsback

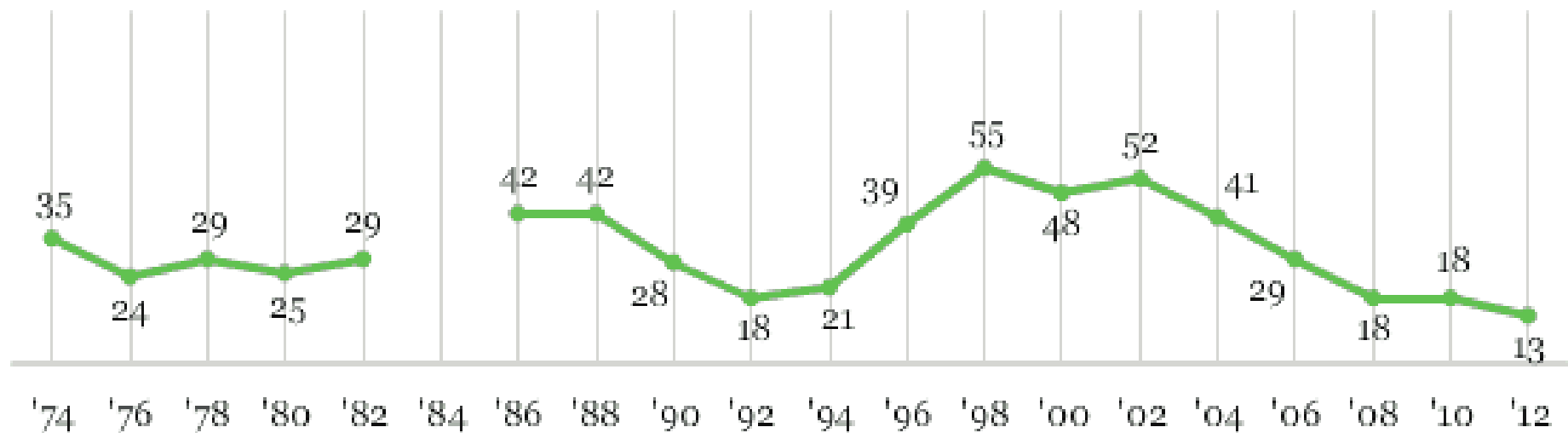
# Mistrust of Government



- Evidence of increase since mid-1960's
  - Mistrust of govt. to “do what is right”
  - Diminished trust in President and Congress
  - No change for Supreme Court
  - Increased trust for State and Local govt.
- Causes:
  - Watergate, Vietnam
  - Jimmy Carter – “a crisis of confidence”

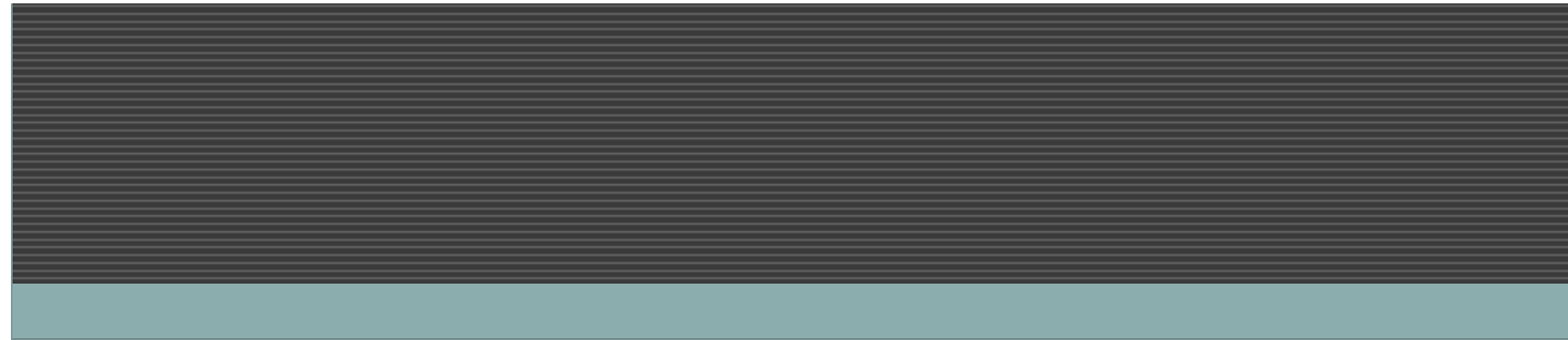
# Congressional Approval Ratings in Election Years

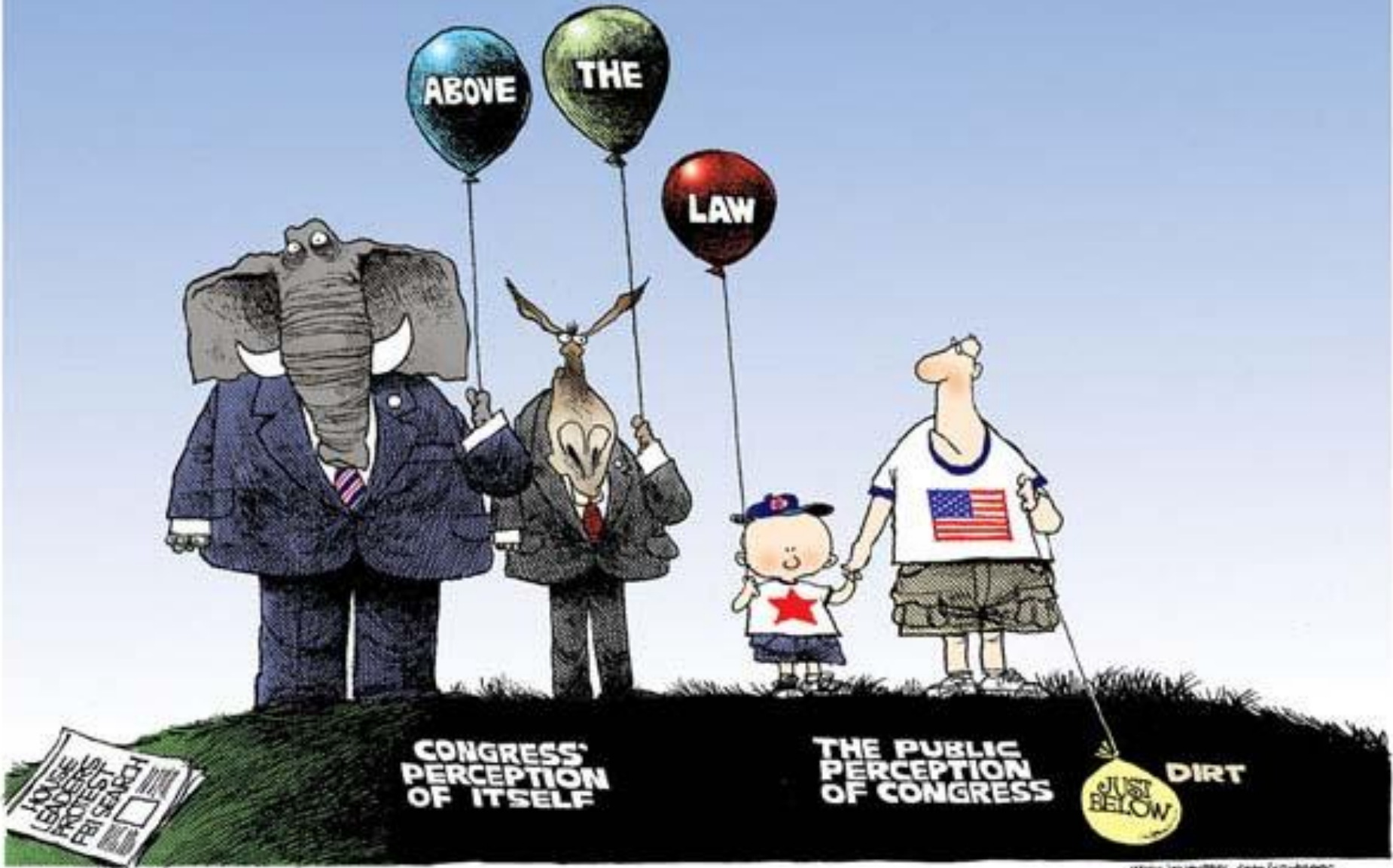
■ % Approve



Results from September of election year except 1996 (August), 1994 (October), 1992 (March), 1990 (October), 1986 (April), 1982 (June), 1980 (June), 1976 (January), 1974 (October).

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**CONGRESS' PERCEPTION OF ITSELF**

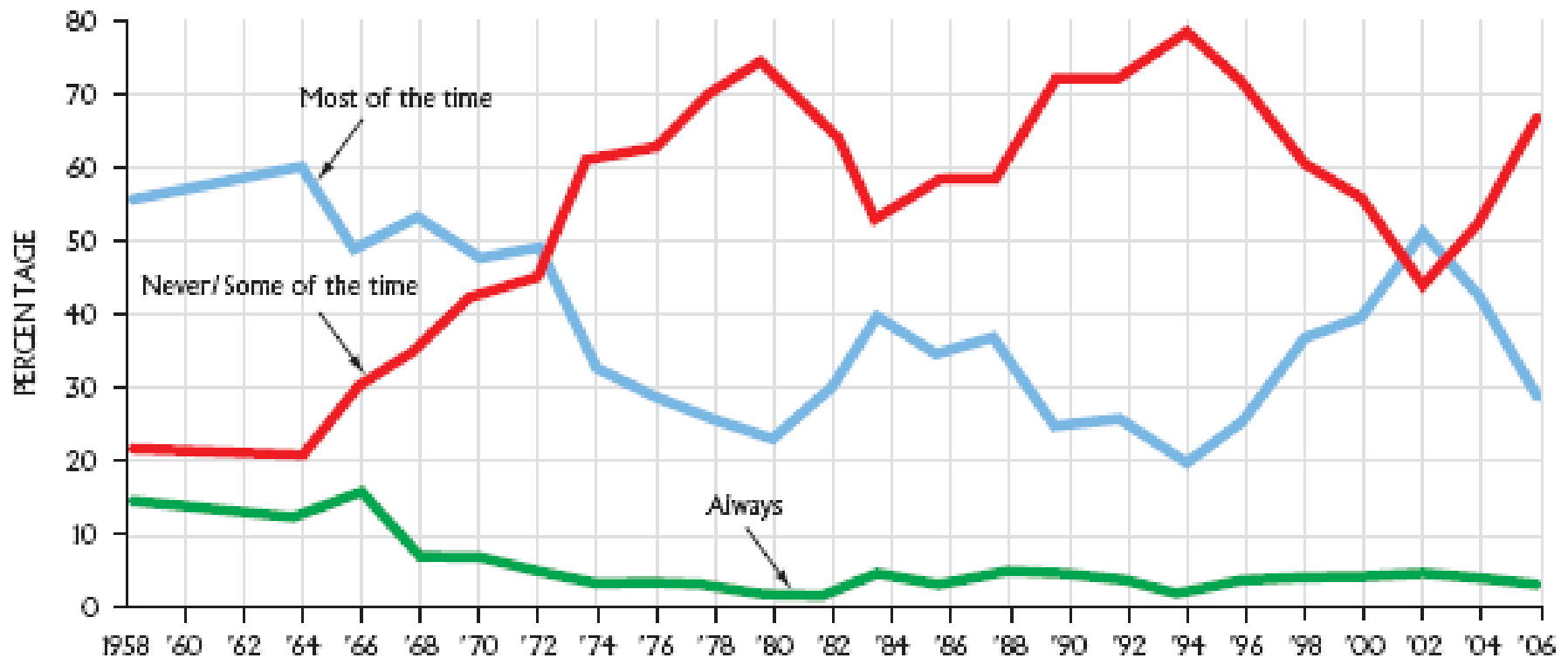
**THE PUBLIC PERCEPTION OF CONGRESS**

**DIRT**  
**JUST BELOW**

**FIGURE 6.4**

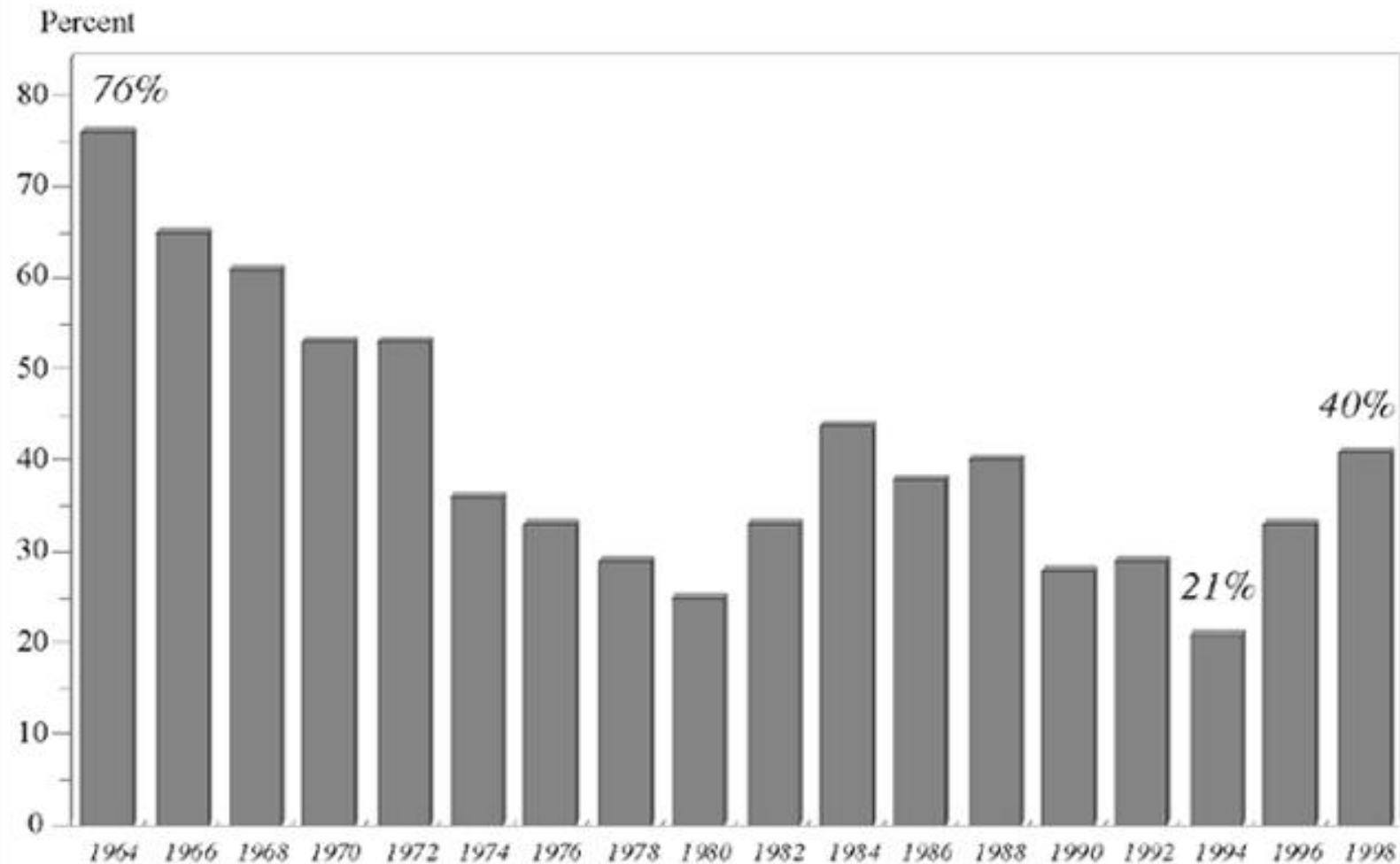
## The Decline of Trust in Government, 1958–2006

This graph shows how people have responded over time to the following question: How much of the time do you think you can trust the government in Washington to do what is right—just about always, most of the time, or only some of the time?



Sources: Authors' analysis of 1958–2004 American National Election Study data; December 2006 Pew Research Center poll.

## Americans' Trust in the Federal Government



Source: University of Michigan, National Election Studies, 1964-98

# Crisis in Context

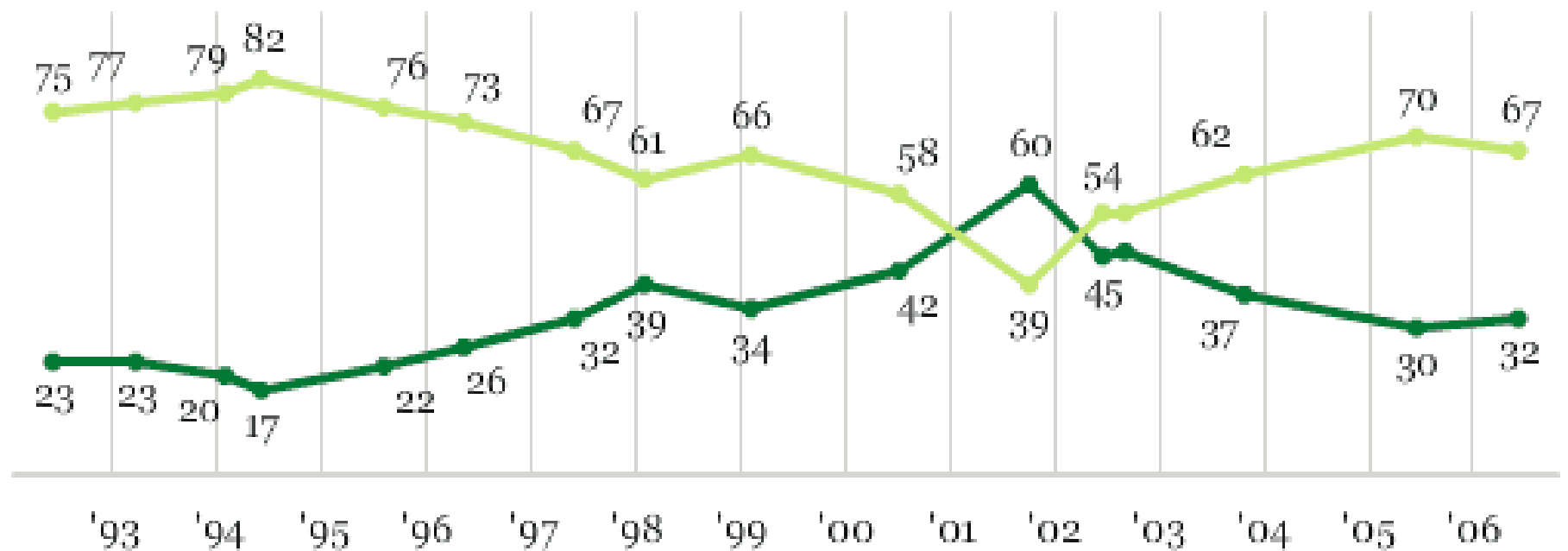


- Mistrust of specific leaders and policies, not of the system
- Present views are closer to historical norm
- Americans no longer support system seen in 1950's



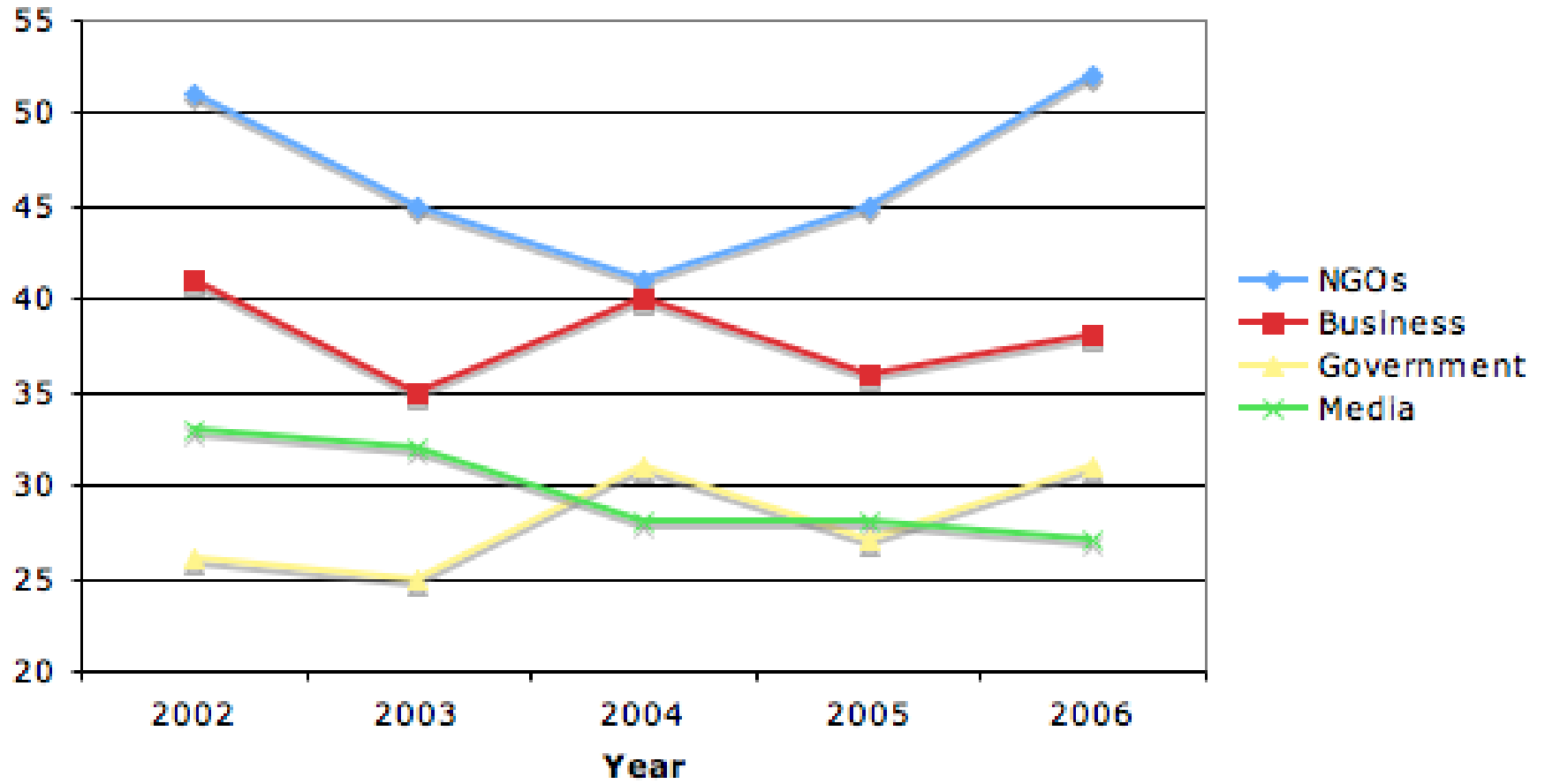
*How much of the time do you think you can trust government in Washington to do what is right -- just about always, most of the time, or only some of the time?*

■ % Just about always/Most of the time      ■ % Only some of the time/Never



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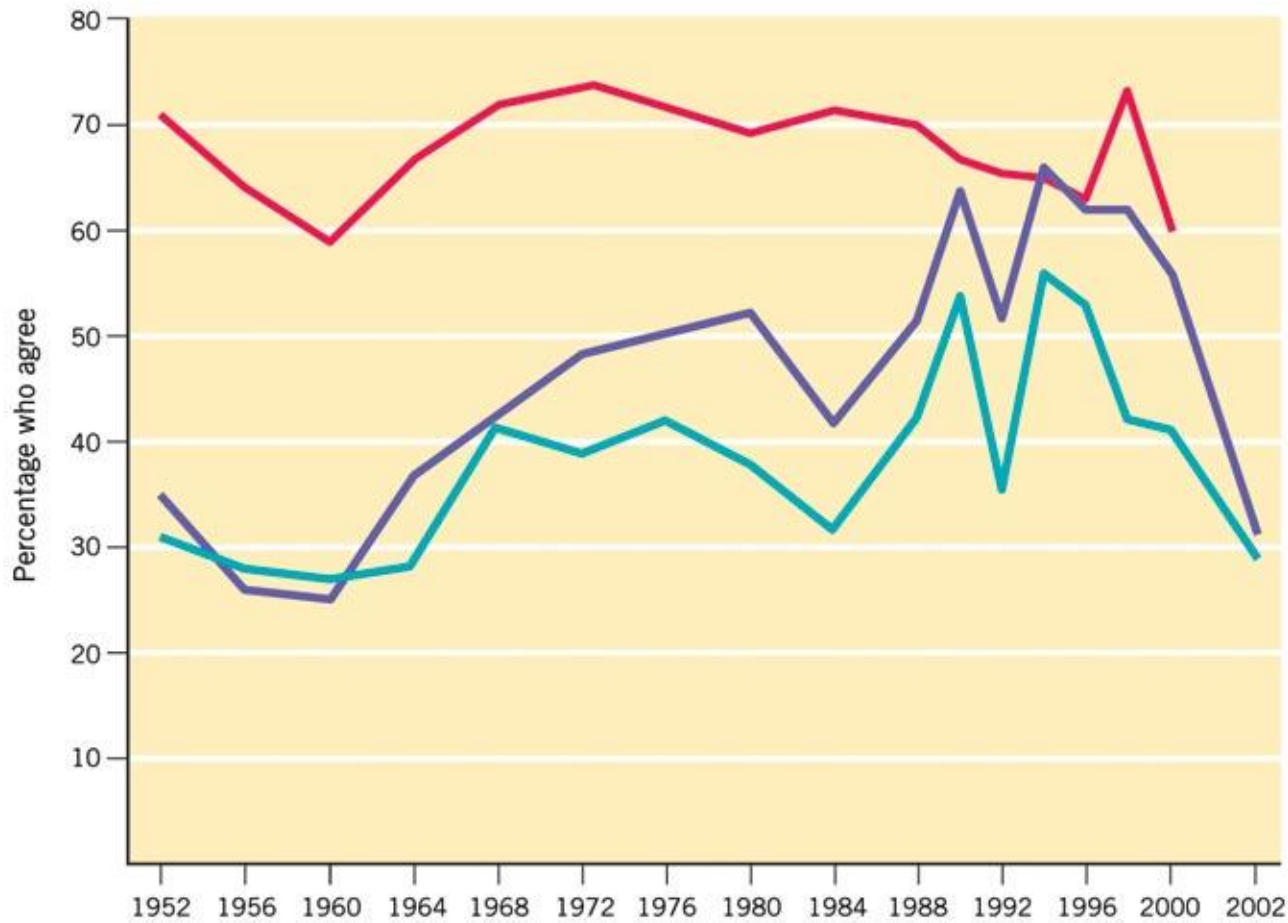
**How much do you trust each instituion to do what is right?  
(source Edelman Trust Barometer, 2006)**



# Political Efficacy



- Defined: citizen's capacity to understand and influence political events
  - Internal: confidence in one's ability to understand events
  - External: confidence that the government will respond to one's concerns
  - Efficacy is still higher for Americans than Europeans



**Internal Efficacy**

STATEMENTS

- *Politics is too complicated.*
- *People don't have a say in what the government does.*

**External Efficacy**

STATEMENT

- *I don't think public officials care much what people like me think.*





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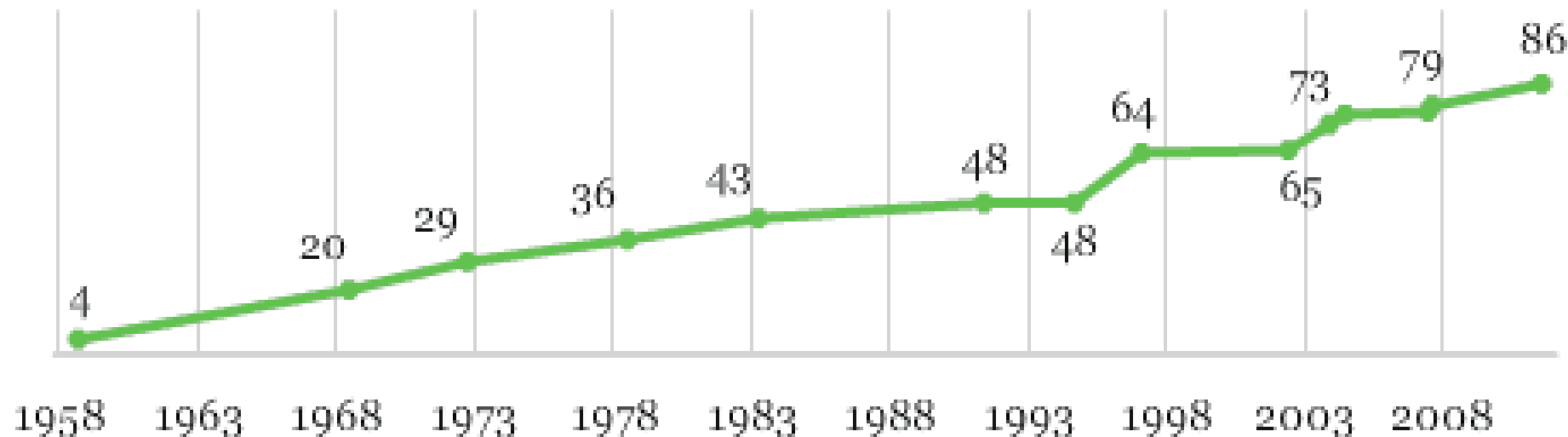
# Political Tolerance



- Crucial to democratic politics because...
  - Free discussion of ideas
  - Selection of rulers without oppression
- Levels of American political tolerance
  - Fear that nation is too tolerant of harmful behavior
  - Still, most allow expression to those they disagree

# Do you approve or disapprove of marriage between blacks and whites?

■ % Approve



1958 wording: "...marriages between white and colored people."

1968-1978 wording: "...marriages between whites and non-whites."

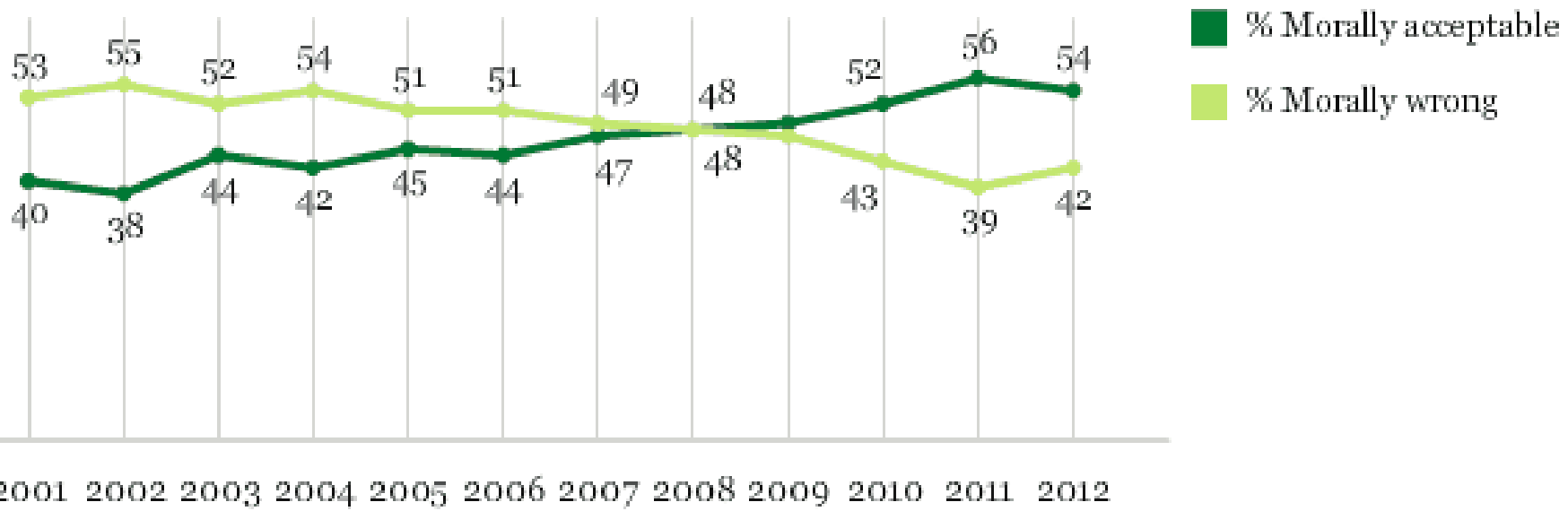
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# Morality of Gay/Lesbians Relations -- 2001-2012

Do you personally believe gay or lesbian relations are morally acceptable or morally wrong?



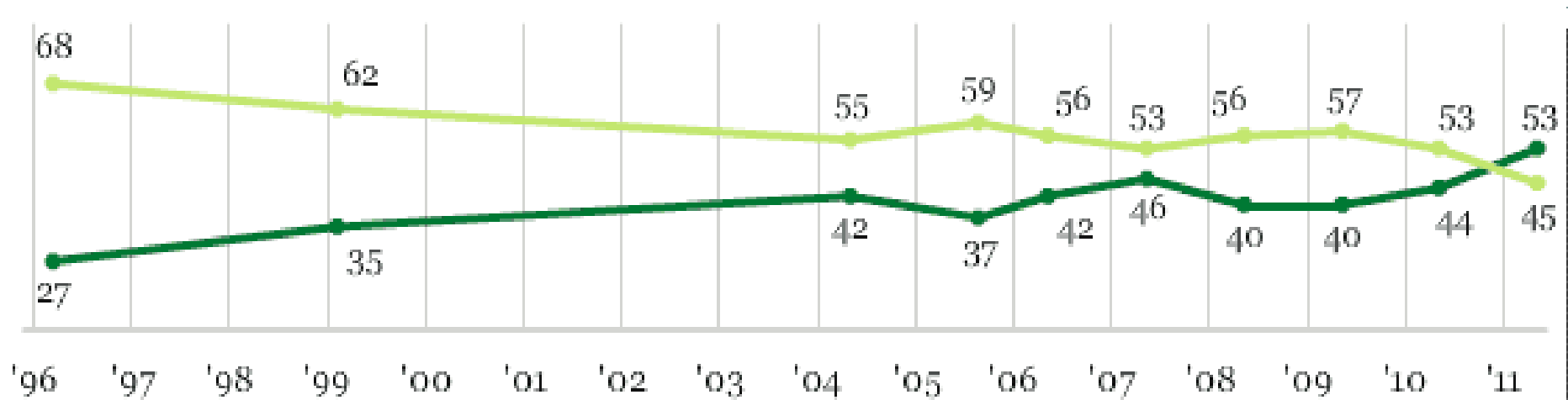
Note: 2001-2004 wording: Homosexual behavior  
Note: 2006-2008 wording: Homosexual relations

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*Do you think marriages between same-sex couples should or should not be recognized by the law as valid, with the same rights as traditional marriages?*

■ % Should be valid      ■ % Should not be valid



Note: Trend shown for polls in which same-sex marriage question followed questions on gay/lesbian rights and relations

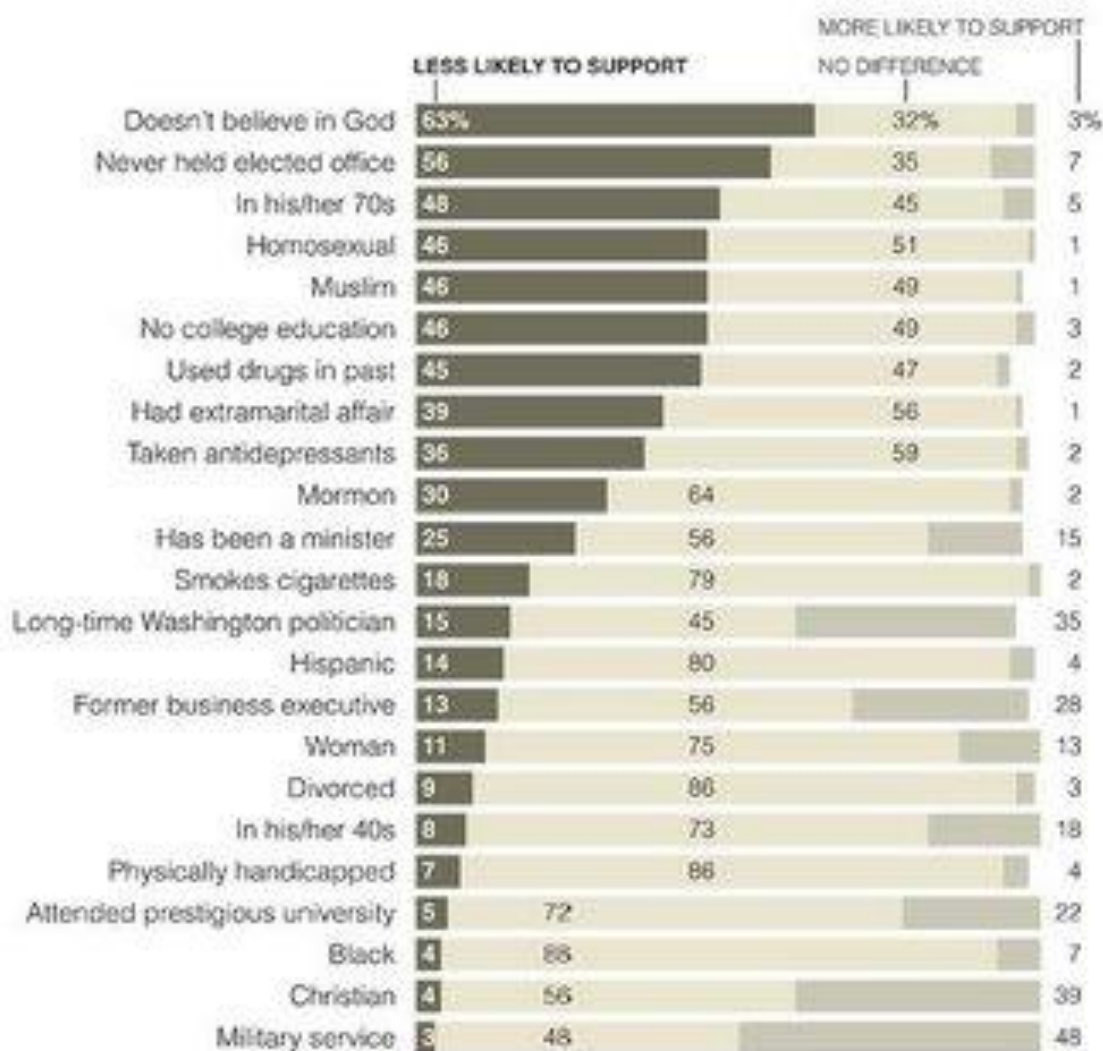
1996-2005 wording: "Do you think marriages between homosexuals ..."

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## Candidates, à la Carte

Percentage of respondents who said they would be less (or more) likely to vote for candidates with the following traits, as reported in a Pew survey released in February.



Figures do not add up to 100 percent because they omit those who answered "don't know."

# Summary



- The American Revolution had liberty as its object, and the founding experience created a preoccupation with the assertion and maintenance of rights
- The absence of an official religion encourage religious pluralism and ultimately, political pluralism
- The dominance of Protestantism promoted a participant-oriented culture
- Child-rearing practice stresses equality among family members and freedom for children produced corresponding political values