

Americans Rate Computer Industry Best, Oil and Gas Worst

PRINCETON, NJ -- Americans continue to give the computer industry the most positive ratings out of 25 business and industry sectors tested, with the restaurant industry in second place. The oil and gas industry and the federal government have the least positive images, as they did [last year](#).

For each of the following business sectors in the United States, please say whether your overall view of it is very positive, somewhat positive, neutral, somewhat negative, or very negative. How about -- [RANDOM ORDER]?

Industry	% Positive	% Neutral	% Negative	Net positive (positive minus negative, in pct. pts.)
Computer industry	73	14	10	63
Restaurant industry	59	29	10	49
Retail industry	53	29	16	37
Internet industry	55	21	20	35
Farming and agriculture	52	25	20	32
Grocery industry	51	27	20	31
Publishing industry	42	33	21	21
Accounting	39	38	19	20
Travel industry	40	34	21	19
Automobile industry	43	28	28	15
Telephone industry	42	29	28	14
Education	45	22	32	13
Sports industry	43	25	30	13
Movie industry	38	25	35	3
Television and radio industry	37	25	36	1
Healthcare industry	42	15	42	0
Pharmaceutical industry	37	24	38	-1
The legal field	34	25	37	-3
Electric and gas utilities	34	26	38	-4
Advertising and public relations industry	31	33	35	-4
Airline industry	31	32	35	-4
Real estate industry	27	30	41	-14
Banking	25	21	53	-28
The federal government	23	14	60	-37
Oil and gas industry	22	15	61	-39

Aug. 9-12, 2012

Gallup has asked Americans each August since 2001 to indicate whether they have positive or negative views of a list of business and industry sectors. The 2012 update is from Gallup's Aug. 9-12 Work and Education survey.

Americans have widely differing opinions of these business sectors, with positive ratings ranging from 73% for the computer industry to 22% for the oil and gas industry, and negative ratings going from 10% for the computer and restaurant industries to 61% for oil and gas.

Five of the six highest-rated business and industry sectors, according to their net positive scores, are related to either the computer or the food sector of the economy. The one exception is the "retail" industry, which is in third place this year. The images of both the oil and gas industry and the federal government have improved this year compared with last, but they remain at the bottom of the list.

More broadly, the positive ratings of several industries improved significantly this year -- the healthcare, education, and retail sector ratings are up the most. Banking, farming/agriculture, and electric and gas utilities are among the smaller group of industries whose images worsened slightly this year.

Change Over Time in Positive Ratings of Business and Industry Sectors, 2011-2012

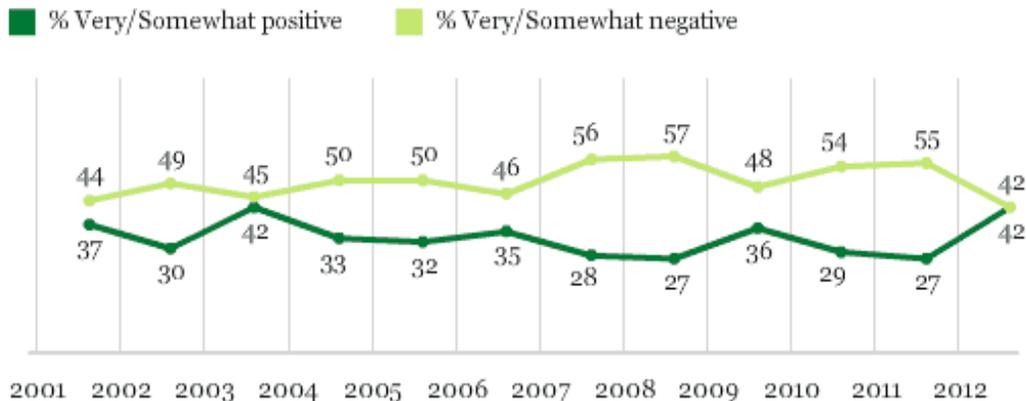
% Positive view of industry

Industry	2011	2012	Change,
	%	%	2011-2012 Pct. pts.
Healthcare industry	27	42	15
Education	35	45	10
Retail industry	44	53	9
Sports industry	37	43	6
Federal government	17	23	6
Legal field	29	34	5
Publishing industry	38	42	4
Real estate industry	23	27	4
Telephone industry	39	42	3
Accounting	36	39	3
Oil and gas industry	20	22	2
Airline industry	29	31	2
Computer industry	72	73	1
Automobile industry	42	43	1
Pharmaceutical industry	36	37	1
Movie industry	38	38	0
Internet industry	56	55	-1
Grocery industry	52	51	-1
Advertising and public relations industry	32	31	-1
Restaurant industry	61	59	-2
Television and radio industry	39	37	-2
Travel industry	42	40	-2
Electric and gas utilities	38	34	-4
Farming and agriculture	57	52	-5
Banking	30	25	-5

Image of Healthcare Sector Best Yet

Americans' views of the healthcare industry this year are the most positive they have been over the past decade. Healthcare industry ratings have been generally quite volatile, becoming more negative in 2007 and 2008, recovering in 2009, and falling back again in 2010 and 2011.

Ratings of the Healthcare Industry, 2001-2012



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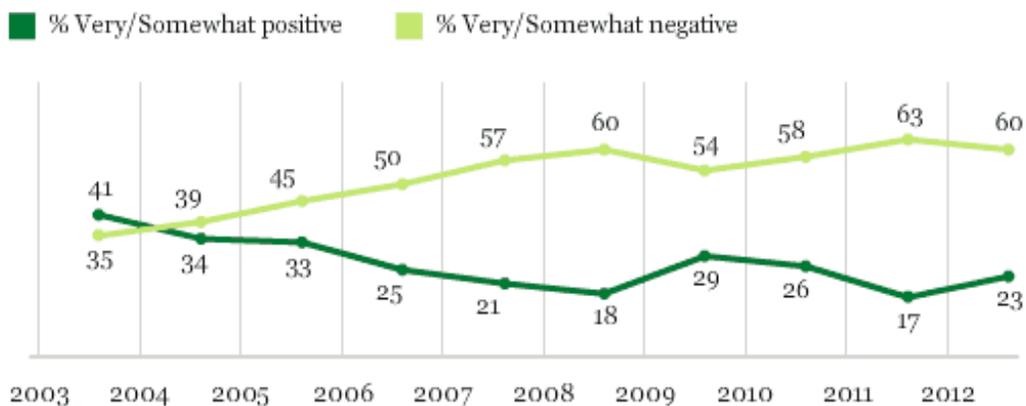
Although it is difficult to isolate precise reasons for these changes, the current uptick in the healthcare industry's positive image may reflect the impact of the Supreme Court's June decision upholding the massive Affordable Care Act.

Federal Government's Image Recovers Again This Year

Americans' ratings of the federal government recovered slightly this year, but are not back to where they were prior to declining to their lowest level on record last year, just after the protracted wrangling and indecision on raising the debt ceiling. Previously, Americans' views of the federal government began to deteriorate significantly in 2004 and then rose slightly in the first two years of the Obama administration.

In the broadest sense, the change since 2003 has been substantial, with a drop in positive ratings of 18 percentage points and a rise in negative ratings of 25 points.

Ratings of the Federal Government, 2003-2012



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Republicans have the most negative image of the federal government, with 85% saying their impression is

either somewhat or very negative. Independents and Democrats are less negative, but notably, even Democrats have slightly more negative than positive impressions of the federal government.

Implications

Most Americans come into frequent contact with the computer, food, oil and gas, and banking segments of the economy, yet the images of these segments differ dramatically. Americans think very highly of the computer, Internet, restaurant, grocery, and agricultural sectors, but very poorly of the oil and gas and banking industries.

Ratings of the Federal Government

	% Very/ Somewhat positive	Neutral	% Very/ Somewhat negative
Republicans	7	3	85
Independents	25	17	56
Democrats	35	22	41

Aug. 9-12, 2012

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The cause of the oil and gas industry's bad image is most likely the frequent and sometimes inexplicably large spikes in the price of gas. At the time of this survey, in fact, the price of gas was on the rise. Plus, the oil and gas industry may get dinged by some Americans for its perceived poor environmental record.

On the other hand, America has remained the world's dominant player in many aspects of the computer industry, with companies like Apple, Google, and Facebook standing as examples of entrepreneurial efforts that arose in short periods of time to offer products and services used the world over. It appears that Americans appreciate these success stories and hold these industry sectors in high esteem.

Food prices are on the rise due to the continuing drought conditions in parts of the U.S., which may help explain why the farming and agriculture sector's image is down slightly this year. Still, overall, Americans apparently think highly of the elements of the food production and distribution chain that provide the country's citizens with their daily sustenance.

Voters' perceptions of the appropriate role of government will play a major role in this November's presidential election. The Romney-Ryan ticket will continue to argue that the government should have a lessened role in America's social and economic spheres, while the Obama-Biden ticket will argue for the importance of government in addressing major social and economic problems. How the poor image of the federal government will affect these debates is not yet clear. The Republicans have an edge in voter sympathy with their criticism of government in general, it would appear, although the fact that Romney's new running mate is himself a sitting member of Congress could in theory negate some of that advantage.

Survey Methods

Results for this Gallup poll are based on telephone interviews conducted Aug. 9-12, 2012, with a random sample of 1,012 adults, aged 18 and older, living in all 50 U.S. states and the District of Columbia.

For results based on the total sample of national adults, one can say with 95% confidence that the maximum margin of sampling error is ± 4 percentage points.

Interviews are conducted with respondents on landline telephones and cellular phones, with interviews conducted in Spanish for respondents who are primarily Spanish-speaking. Each sample includes a minimum quota of 400 cell phone respondents and 600 landline respondents per 1,000 national adults, with additional minimum quotas among landline respondents by region. Landline telephone numbers are chosen at random among listed telephone numbers. Cell phone numbers are selected using random-digit-dial methods. Landline respondents are chosen at random within each household on the basis of which member had the most recent birthday.

Samples are weighted by gender, age, race, Hispanic ethnicity, education, region, adults in the household, and phone status (cell phone only/landline only/both, cell phone mostly, and having an unlisted landline

number). Demographic weighting targets are based on the March 2011 Current Population Survey figures for the aged 18 and older non-institutionalized population living in U.S. telephone households. All reported margins of sampling error include the computed design effects for weighting and sample design.

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

[View methodology, full question results, and trend data.](#)

For more details on Gallup's polling methodology, visit www.gallup.com.